

Norton 2000 Version 1.0 for Windows

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Back in the early dark age of computers (the 1950s–1960s) computers were big, expensive, and had little memory. Programmers in those days of old decided the way to save on memory space and speed up calculations was to use shortcuts and abbreviations. One such abbreviation was to use two digits to represent the year instead of four digits. So 1960 was written as 60. Now that we are approaching the year 2000 in our calendar system, there is great concern that on January 1, 2000 many computer programs and systems will think it is January 1, 1900 (or perhaps some other date based on the computer BIOS). This means that some computers might shut down vital processes thinking, for example, that someone born in 1908, being only 8 years old (1908 minus 1900), doesn't deserve their social security check anymore. It is possible that some backup/archival software will not be able to tell when a file was created. Will a file with a creation date of 01/01/00 be moved off to backup and possibly erased because the computer system thinks it has not been used since 01/01/1900? This real and/or potential hardware and software problem is called the Y2K problem.

While one cannot solve the world's problems in this area, you can at least check your own IBM compatible personal computer (PC) for potential problems. (Macintosh owners can start gloating now and need read no further—the Mac is not in jeopardy. It's operating system and hardware were well designed.) A number of software program for the PC have recently come to market which allows a user to test their computer for Y2K problems. This review is for the Norton 2000 software program that checks PCs (desktops and laptops) for problems in this area.

The program comes on a CD-ROM, installs very easily and quickly. Norton 2000, version 1.0 requires Windows 95 or NT and at least 10 MB of disk space. The first thing the program recommends after installation is to connect to their LiveUpdate Internet site for updates to the software. Once this is done it performs three scans of your hard disk drive. The first is a system date check. This checks to see if you are using the Windows short (two digit) or long (four digit) date format and some leap year and nonleap year dates. The second is an application scan of all software programs on the hard disk drive, and the third is a data file scan of all

data files on the computer hard disks.

I tested the Norton 2000 on three computers and could not install it on a fourth. One was a Micron 166 MHz computer purchased in 1996, the second was an IBM 133 MHz laptop purchased in 1997, and the third was a Dell 200 MHz purchased in 1997. The fourth computer, a Gateway 90 MHz computer, built in 1994, gave an error message "Error launching Norton 2000 setup" every time I tried to install the program. I tried it from the CDROM and then from a copy I put on the hard disk, but nothing worked. After checking the Symantec Web site while waiting 45+ minutes on hold for technical support (on a long distance call I was paying for), I gave up with this computer installation and wrote this review. In all three cases where I was able to install the software the computers passed the critical date and BIOS tests, but I intend to get LiveUpdates during the year and recheck all these computers at least twice before January 2000. The application (computer programs) and data file scans create detailed reports on the problem found, giving a severity rating of 1–5. The highest (worst) rating I found on any of my programs or files was severity 3, which is a minor date issue. Many could be fixed by downloading patches from vendors (easily done since the program usually gives the internet url to get the patch). Probably the most useful immediate value to running Norton 2000 on my computers was that I discovered a lot of software on these systems which I do not use and in a number of cases which I thought I had uninstalled.

In summary, Norton 2000 is a useful program to test your PC computer system. Some of the problems encountered may not really be problems or may not be serious problems, but it is nice to at least know what they are and where they are located. While there is certainly no guarantee that your computer will work perfectly next January, Norton 2000 is certainly worth running on your computer. As for me, I will be in Maui, just in case there is a really serious problem.

Norton 2000, version 1.0 has a retail price of \$49.95 with free upgrades (via LiveUpdate) and is available from Symantec Corporation, 10201 Torre Avenue, Cupertino, CA 95014. Phone: 800-441-7234; e-mail: <http://www.symantec.com>.

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