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To improve your privacy, you need a virtual private network, or VPN such as HMA (formerly Hide My Ass). This VPN has an excellent user experience and has taken steps to improve its practices to better protect its customers. However, it has a high front value, and comes without many of the tools more available competitors include. What is a VPN? When you activate a VPN, it creates an encrypted tunnel to protect your data when it passes from your computer to a server controlled by a VPN. From there, your data goes online. This prevents anyone who is hiding in your local network from monitoring or intercepting your activities. VPN also makes it difficult to track your online activity by hiding your true IP address, and it prevents your ISP from collecting information about your online activities so that it can sell anonymous user data at the highest price. While a VPN is a powerful tool to improve your privacy, it doesn't protect against all illusions. I strongly encourage people to activate two-factor authentication, wherever it is available, use a password manager and install antivirus software on their computers. Prices and features if you want to try the HMA VPN before you buy it, you can with its seven-day trial. This free trial requires you to create an account and pass on your credit card information. At the end of the trial, expect to be billed. If you need a large VPN but have nothing in your wallet, you can always try a free VPN. Most of these services are imposed by restrictions on service if you pay, however, TunnelBear, for example, limits its free users to a certain allocation of data. The free ProtonVPN plan does not set limits on user data, making it easily the best I've tested. HMA offers a monthly subscription, but not in Australia, the UK or the US. In these regions, prices start at \$59.88 per year. That's significantly less than the \$72.72 average annual cost I tracked across the industry. But that's significantly more than the \$10.18 average cost of a monthly subscription, which is what I use to compare a VPN. The HMA is also offering a three-year plan for \$143.64. Why do I pay so much attention to monthly subscription plans? This is partly because of their ubiquity. Almost every VPN offers one, and I prefer apples to comparison apples. This is also because I recommend not starting with a long-term subscription, however. There's no way to know how a VPN will work for you until you try it out. The annual plan may end up saving money, but not if it's hopeless and you have to find a new product. Many VPNs come in well below the industry average for and annual costs. The winners of the Mullvad VPN and TunnelBear Editors competition cost only 5 pounds (\$5.65 at the time of writing) and \$9.99 per month. Both Mullvad and TunnelBear run about \$60 a year, and Kaspersky Secure Connection could be available for \$29.99 a year. To buy an HMA subscription, you can use credit cards or These are convenient options. What you can't use are cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, which are accepted by many VPN services (Private Internet Access, NordVPN and others). Mullvad accepts cash sent to their headquarters, and TorGuard allows you to use prepaid gift cards from other companies to purchase subscriptions. Most VPN services offer at least five licenses without restrictions, and HMA follows suit. That's good, but a lot of companies have started to do better. A solid piece of service allow more than five devices to use the service at a time, while some have done the post with the restriction completely. Avira Phantom VPN, Encrypt.me VPN, Ghostery Midnight, IPVanish VPN, Surfshark VPN and Windscribe VPN do not limit the number of devices. (Please note that IPVanish Encrypt.me company is owned by j2 Global, the parent company of PCMag's publisher, Sieff Davis.) Charging more than the average for a VPN is not a big sin, provided that the company can justify the costs. The HMA, however, does not include many additional privacy tools. It includes a separate tunneling feature that lets you determine which apps or sites send their data through a VPN. Wonderful. However, the company does not provide access to the Tor Anonymous network and does not offer multihop connections that route your traffic through two VPN servers for additional privacy. ProtonVPN is the only service I have reviewed that offers all three VPN Protocols. There are many ways to create a VPN connection. My preferred method is the OpenVPN protocol, which is known for its speed and reliability. It is also open source, and has therefore been selected for potential vulnerabilities by anyone with an interest to do so. HMA supports different protocols across platforms. Apps for Windows and Android use OpenVPN, which is great. iOS and macOS apps use IKEv2, which is another modern and secure protocol. The heir to OpenVPN is WireGuard, another open source VPN protocol. What makes it attractive is the new security technology it's built on, and apparently the excellent speed it provides users. I didn't thoroughly test WireGuard, but the initial results were promising. HMA does not currently support WireGuard, but that is not a problem, but. Other VPNs, such as Mullvad and NordVPN, have gone all in place in this new technology. Servers and servers LocationEd, VPN company will offer a server that is located near where you are. The theory has always been that the closer the server is, the better the performance. Having a large number of server locations also gives you plenty of room to spoof. At first glance, HMA is a winner for geographic diversity. The company can that offers servers in 290 locations, in 190 countries. This far exceeds the next largest rival, Express VPN, which has servers in 94 countries and then CyberGhost with servers in 90 countries. The list of available server locations offered by HMA is particularly notable for covering regions, often other VPN companies. It has, for example, numerous server locations throughout the continent of Africa. Some VPNs may offer one or two server locations in Africa, while most ignore the continent completely. The HMA also carefully covers South America, another often neglected region, and is one of the few companies that have Iran as a server. It even offers the location of servers in places with repressive internet policies such as Vietnam and Russia. There's a big caveat to this coverage: Most of them are not what it seems. HMA uses virtual servers intensively. These are software-defined servers, which means that one hardware server can host multiple virtual servers. In addition, virtual servers can be configured to appear somewhere other than the true location of their hardware hosts. There is nothing wrong with virtual servers per se. Many VPN companies use them to cope with sudden demand in their networks. Some of them skillfully used virtual servers to provide access to dangerous regions by placing the host machine in a safer place. As long as it's clear to users where their data is actually headed, I have little problem with virtual servers. HMA checks my tolerance. It has servers in 66 real locations in 36 countries, all of which serve 130-plus other countries. No other VPN service that I've reviewed has so many virtual server locations. HMA also doesn't do a great job of communicating which servers are virtual, or where they are located. The company must explain this practice to users, both in the app and on the company's website. An HMA spokesperson explained to me that the company does not own all of its server infrastructure, but has taken steps to ensure the security of all of its servers. These include full disk encryption to prevent data center employees from accessing information, retaining their private key certificate authority on isolated infrastructure, and so on. These are reasonable precautions. Other companies prefer to own all their machines, and some like ExpressVPN have moved into RAM-only servers that will be destroyed once they are disabled to prevent tampering. Privacy with HMA When I review VPNs, I read the company's privacy policy and talk to representatives to better understand how your data is used and stored. In the case of HMA, the company should be commended for its clear privacy policy. The company has also made huge changes to its practices, as it collects much less data than the last time I reviewed it. The policy states, and company representatives confirm that HMA does not collect or register users' IP addresses, DNS requests or browsing data. It's excellent, and that's it. Companies should strive to collect as little information as possible. The company still logs the day of connectivity (but not the time) and rounded the amount of data transmitted within 35 days. Although the company says that none of this data can be connected to the user, it should seek to collect less information or save it for over the course of its time. These improvements come with a caveat. The company says its free browser proxy plugin still registers IP addresses, domain names of visited sites, and timestamp. The company's privacy policy states that this information is deleted every 30 days and is necessary to prevent abuse of the free service. This is an inconvenient amount of personally identifiable information. The HMA should either rethink its proxy plugin, or stop using it if so much customer data is required. The company confirmed to me that it only makes money by selling a VPN subscription. This is great, since the company you trust your privacy should not profit from the sale of your data. HMA is owned by Privax, which in turn is owned by Avast Group. Avast's antivirus fame. Please note that Avast SecureLine VPN, AVG Secure VPN and HMA! VPNs are owned by the same company. While HMA VPN works on its own infrastructure, VPNs under the Brand Avast and AVG have the same back end. Earlier this year, an investigation by PCMag revealed that Avast had already monetized data from its users collected through a browser plug-in linked to Avast's antivirus product. It appears that any VPN data was involved. The actual location of a VPN company also matters, as it can tell you what protections are provided to customers. HMA is headquartered in London and is under united Kingdom legal jurisdiction. It is noteworthy that there are mandatory data storage laws in the UK. It's not perfect. Many other VPN services operate in countries without mandatory data retention laws or those that have favorable privacy protections for consumers. The company tells me that most of its infrastructure is located in the Czech Republic, where Avast is headquartered. The owner of HMA Avast publishes a transparency report that includes information about HMA. This document shows how many requests the company received for information from law enforcement agencies and how the company responded. Unfortunately, it's not easy to find (I had to ask for my PR contact) and hasn't been updated since 2018. The report does not paint a flattering picture of the HMA during this time period, revealing that it responded to 43 percent of requests in 2017, and includes a note that says the company also disclosed root IP addresses as part of inquiries. Given the changes that the HMA has recently made to its service, it is unlikely that this kind of information will be released again, but this cannot be said without a report. Many VPN companies have begun to publish the results of third-party audits to establish their confidentiality bona fides. These audits are not always helpful, but a good audit is a great way for a company to make itself accountable to customers. TunnelBear has pledged to hold annual public and sticks to that promise. In August, the HMA announced that VerSprite had completed an audit of its logging-free policy. The entire report has not been publicly published, but explained to me that VerSprite considered both the HMA application and its backend, giving HMA low risk users a privacy impact rating. The audit seems comprehensive and I would like to see HMA release more information in the future and expand the scope of its audits beyond the company's non-journal policy. Avast, HMA's parent company, also publishes a canary order. This subtly allows the company to communicate if it has been subject to legal requirements that prevent the company from even recognizing these requirements. The canary document mentions that the company has not been ordered to create any backdoors to access user-generated content, which is great. More companies should include this language, and update their warranty Canary Islands in a similar way. Safety is trust. If you don't feel like you can trust the company for any reason, you should look for one that you feel comfortable with. Fortunately, there are so many to choose from, especially when it comes to VPNs. Hands On With HMA! had no problem installing a Windows version on the Intel NUC Kit NUC8i7BEH (Bean Canyon) desktop running the latest version of Windows 10. Interestingly, you have the ability to log in with a username and password or with an activation code. Mullvad and ExpressVPN have completely interfered with logins, and instead use codes to activate customer software. The latest version of the HMA client deftly balances the ease of use without skipping on some surprisingly useful tools. The app is built around a single, monochrome blue window with Jack, formerly the HMA donkey of the same name, in the center. Between the colorful interface and the cartoon mascot, it shares a lot in common with TunnelBear, although I think TunnelBear has an advantage in the friendliness and ease of using the department. However, HMA is not a court. The tutorial will walk you through your first session. Even if you ignore this, a big switch that activates a VPN is hard to miss. By default, the app will connect you to what it thinks is the fastest VPN server. You can, however, run a speed test to confirm your choice. It's a surprisingly powerful little tool that pulls up nearby servers, conducts tests on all of them, and then picks the winner. If you know the region you're looking for, you can just press the button at the bottom of the main screen and you'll be presented with a list of servers. You can search for the list, or it is broken down by region. I prefer map interfaces because clearly marked, but still not which servers are virtual and which are not. In the app you will find a kill switch that turns off Internet access your VPN is shutting down. You can also choose to allow HMA to restrict Internet access only from specific apps. While HMA does not have the speed privacy tools that the VPN industry offers (or even all the typical ones), it has some unique features that are very convenient. On the homepage, you can press a button next to your IP address to switch to a new IP address. The app says it can unlock sites that refuse access to VPN users, although I just like the privacy implications of being able to change your IP address so easily. You can also set up an app to automatically cycle your IP address at set intervals, which is very great. Having a VPN that doesn't change your visible IP address or leaking DNS information isn't very much of a use. During the testing, I confirmed that HMA had indeed changed my public IP address and confused my ISP. Using the DNS Leak verification tool, I confirmed that the service did not leak my information. Please note that I only tested one server. Other servers may be mis-configured. HMA and Netflix you're alive so far into the 21st century, you're probably streaming video and music on a daily basis. Unfortunately, many streaming companies, especially Netflix, block VPN users. I had no problem streaming Netflix when I was connected to the HMA server in the US. That's great. Note, however, that THE VPN is a locking a bit of a cat-and-mouse game. A service that works to watch Netflix with a VPN today may be blocked tomorrow. In addition to VPN services such as Private Internet Access and CyberGhost, include advertising and tracker blocking, but the HMA does not offer this kind of capability. TunnelBear offers a free standalone browser tracker and a subscription-based password manager. TunnelBear is not the only company diversifying its product portfolio. NordVPN also offers a password manager product as well as an encrypted NordLocker file system. ProtonVPN and TorGuard offer secure email services. HMA has no comparable sweeteners or side effects. Although it is owned by the same company that owns Avast and AVG antivirus, HMA is not bundled with any of these products. Hotspot Shield, in particular, comes with a Pango account, which entitles you to several other privacy services. The speed and performance Using VPN makes your web traffic jump through more hoops than usual, or optimal. As a result, you are likely to see a decrease in speed and an increase in delay. To get an idea of this impact, I compare the average results from the Ookla speed test tool to find a percentage change from the VPN on and off. (Note that Ookla is owned by Sieff Davis, who also owns PCMag.) To learn more about our testing and restrictions, look literally named How we test VPNs. HMA performed remarkably well in speed tests. This reduced the download speed of test results by only 42.2 percent, and downloaded the test results speed by 58.9 percent. It increased the delay by just 35.4 percent. Those points were enough to put him in third place all the VPNs I've been testing. You can see how HMA compares with the best contenders from almost 40 VPN products that I tested. In general, Hotspot Shield VPN has the title of the fastest VPN, but it is a close competition. Surfshark is right behind, and has a shockingly good boot score. Even so, I strongly recommend not choosing a speed-based VPN. There's no guarantee that you'll have similar results. In fact, I'm sure you won't. Instead, consider protecting privacy and the overall value of the product. HMA has apps for Android, iOS, macOS and Windows on other HMA platforms. The company also provides instructions on how to set up Linux computers to use the service. While any device can be configured manually in this way, it is better to use the first app. They're easier to use and provide access to other features you're already paying for. HMA also has proxy extensions for Chrome and Firefox browsers. This will allow you to fake the location of browser traffic, but a different mechanism is used to encrypt traffic than what is used in the VPN application. You can also manually set up a router to use HMA, which extends VPN protection to every device on your network. You can also purchase a pre-configured router that works with HMA. I haven't tested this arrangement, but it sounds a little tiring. New name, new direction While we mourn the retirement of the cheeky Hide My Branding, HMA continues the best of this legendary brand. The colorful design is easy to use and available for beginners. The company uses solid VPN technology, has an impressive array of servers and servers, and some of the best speed tests we have not seen. More importantly, the company has also made strides to better protect the privacy of its customers. This is particularly gratifying given that over the years, we felt HMA had lost its luster as the VPN market became more competitive. When we started working on this review, we fully expected that we might have to lower the HMA score again, but the efforts made to improve customer privacy protection changed our minds. However, there is still room for improvement. The HMA needs to update its transparency report and continue to improve its privacy practices, especially with regard to its proxy browser plugin. The HMA should strive to exceed the privacy and transparency standards set by competitors. The company should also review its use of virtual servers, or at least better communicate how these servers are used and where they are located. Virtual servers should not be responsible, but their use should be clear to users. Check out Price Pros Excellent Speed Score Test Friendly, Simple Interface. View more Expensive, monthly subscription is not available in some regions Need to continue to improve its privacy practices Unclear where servers are located No recent transparency reports View More HMA offers a large speed and incomparable number of server locations; but it's not clear about these servers are located and it charges quite a penny for its maintenance. HMA VPN Specs Allows 5 Simultaneous Connections Yes 500 Servers Yes Geographically Diverse Servers Yes Blocks Ads No Free Version No Server Places 190 Countries Best VPN Sampling Further Reading hidemyass.com proxy. hidemyass.com reviews. hidemyass.com download. hidemyass.com/vpn-config/vpn-config.zip download. hidemyass.com free trial. hidemyass.com/vpn-config/vpn-config.zip android. hidemyass.com youtube. hidemyass.com free alternative

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