FREE PROGRAMS FOR WORK AND FOR PLAY:

Outline of Program
- How to find free applications on the web
- How to install them properly
- How to search for them, and how to determine if they are indeed free, or shareware, or trial programs, or pay programs.
- Determined if they are safe programs, in other words not spyware or worse, simply checking what others have to say about a particular program is always a good start, as well as reviews and ratings.
- Get their rating from other users

How to find the kind of program I'm looking for. Google search for example 'free DVD burning software'.
Another way is to go to one of the many download websites that host these programs and browse through various categories.

Safe Websites to download from:
- CNET
- Brothersoft
- Filehippo
- Soft32
- Softpedia

These are just a few, but these are very trusted download sites. I usually download from CNET personally because their download speed is very fast.

Use caution when installing free programs. Many free programs try to get you to install additional programs you may not want or will even try to change your home page. Be sure to read through the installation very carefully and uncheck mark items that you do not want. When in doubt, uncheck everything not having to do with the program you're installing.

Applications such as word processors, spreadsheets, presentation programs, and other productivity apps.

Open office.org (instead of MS Word) Sun Microsystems – a suite of free programs that are a nice substitution to MS Office. MS Office 2010, now offering a free online version, coming out in June

To get to any of the Google applications, simply do a Google search for Google Docs, that should take you right there.

Google Docs – online document editor/word processor
Google Spreadsheet
Google Presentation
Google Drawing
Google Calendar
To use the Google program suite you must create a secure login. If you already have a gmail email account, you can simply use it. If not sign up for a free account. The reason for doing this is because the program stores all your files online, and Google gives you 2GBs of online storage, but you have to have an account to access this storage.

DVD/CD Burning software:
Free Easy CD DVD burn – nice alternative to Roxio or Nero burning ROM

Audio Recorders:
Cool Record Edit Pro – record and edit wav files, add sound f/x, cut and paste audio tracks
Wave Pad Sound Editor

Converters:

Switch Sound File Converter (converts many audio formats including .wav, .m4p, .ogg, .ape, .mp3, .wma) Very powerful program that allows you to convert dozens of audio file formats from one to another. Useful for converting popular iTunes (m4p) files to mp3 files.

Media Players:

VLC (instead of media player) plays many more formats than media player including HD formats, image capture ability, plays practically every media format out there, including audio and video formats. Create play lists, sync to portable devices like mp3 players just like you would in media player.
UltraPlayer (instead of media player) simple media player. UltraPlayer can be used when you're having problems with media player.

Video Programs:

Debut Video Recording Software: Capture web cams, internet video broadcasts, and screen movements and save it as AVI or WMV files.
VideoPad Video Editor Basic: Create movie projects from various video clips or a single video file. The basic version can be upgraded to a paid version that offers more features.
Windows Movie Maker: comes free with XP, Vista, 7. Capture & edit video files, add audio, f/x, burn to disc.

Graphics programs:

Picasa 3.0 (free graphics program/ photo organizer) organize, find, crop, rotate, add f/x, print and email all from Picasa.
PDFCreator (instead of Acrobat Pro) create .pdf documents from any program.

Spell checker:

ieSpell- great free program that gives you spell checking online and on any website.

Other common free programs:

(some of these programs may already be on your computer, or may have been preloaded when you purchased it)
Quicktime –plays apple video formats .mov files
Acrobat Reader a viewer for pdf documents
Flash Player (IE pluggin) helps internet explorer run animations online
Java (IE pluggin)
Shockwave (IE pluggin)
Firefox (instead of Internet Explorer)
Thunderbird (instead of Outlook)
Google Chrome (instead of Internet Explorer)
Google Earth – free mapping program of the world
Google toolbar – can be used if you need a good pop-up blocker
Yahoo Instant Messenger
Windows Live Mail
Windows Messenger
CPU-Z (reporting tool that tells you what's in your computer, CPU type & speed, motherboard info, RAM info, graphics info)

Typical free stuff to stay away from; toolbars, search assistants or search bars, some free games, some free screen savers, coupon printers.