

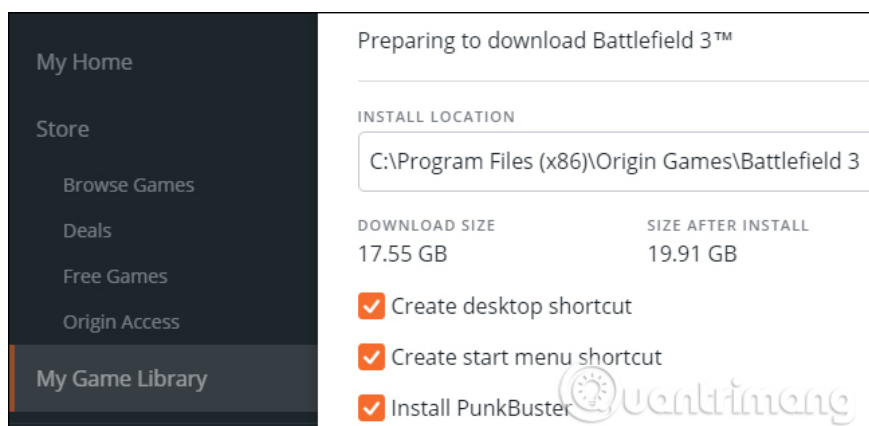
# What is PunkBuster and can it be uninstalled?

PunkBuster is an anti-cheating program that is installed by some PC games. It consists of two processes, PnkBstrA.exe and PnkBstrB.exe, running in the background on the computer. PunkBuster monitors your system for evidence of fraud in online games.

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PunkBuster, developed by Even Balance, Inc., has a long history. It was created in 2000 and was first integrated into Return to Castle Wolfenstein in 2001. It is currently available for Mac and Linux as well as Windows, so even Mac or Linux gamers may notice PunkBuster is running in the background. PunkBuster is installed automatically when you install the game using it.

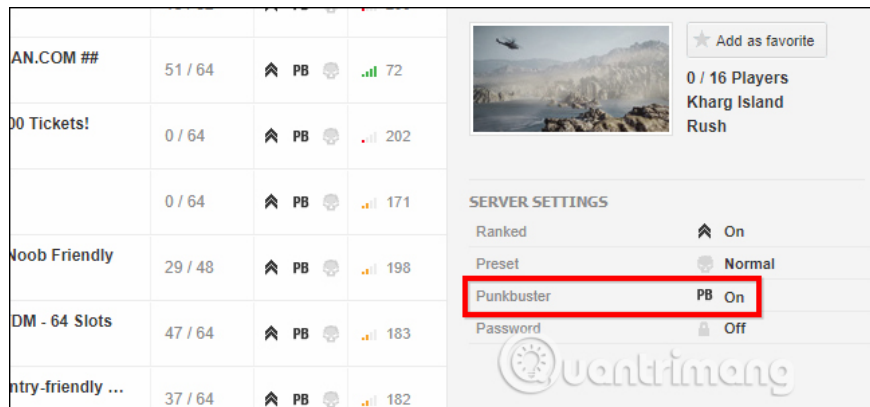


This software runs in the background on your computer. If you are playing a multiplayer online game using PunkBuster and have connected to a PunkBuster-protected server, it will scan your computer memory for evidence of phishing or hacking programs. PunkBuster has an auto-update feature that downloads the database of 'definitions' of known phishing programs.

In other words, it acts as an antivirus program, except to scan your computer for a phishing program instead of malware. In particular, PunkBuster also looks for utilities such as aimbot for shooting games, map hack shows full maps in online games, tools that allow players to see through walls and anything brought unfair advantage by breaking multi-player game rules. It doesn't care if you cheat in the game alone.

PunkBuster not only considers the processes running on the computer, it can also check if you have edited game files. PunkBuster is designed to circumvent those frauds.

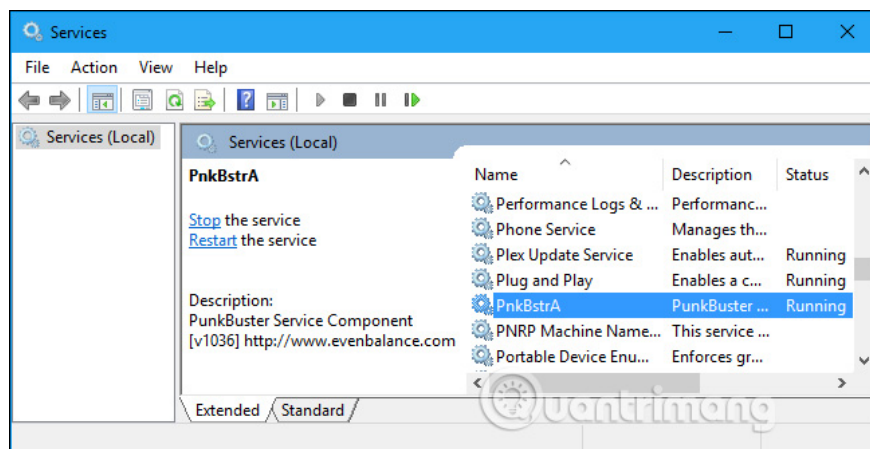
## When is PunkBuster activated?



Anti-cheating features are only activated when you are playing PunkBuster-enabled games on a server that supports PunkBuster. Games must be specially designed to enable PunkBuster and depending on whether the operator of the game server has chosen to use PunkBuster. However, while you are connecting to a server that requires PunkBuster, it will monitor your computer in the background to ensure you are not cheating. And meanwhile, server administrators use a variety of tools to test your system, including capturing game screen shots and viewing keystroke information.

If PunkBuster finds anything suspicious, the server that supports PunkBuster can ban you from playing the game. Sometimes you will receive a warning but can be permanently banned based on the game CD key or the computer hardware information playing on it. These permanent ban can prevent you from playing any game that activates PunkBuster on a PunkBuster-enabled server on that computer.

## Does PunkBuster track users?



If PunkBuster is installed, it always runs in the background on your computer. That is why you will see the PnkBstrA.exe process in Task Manager and the PnkBstrA service in the Service application.

However, most of the time PunkBuster doesn't really do anything, it only boots when you're playing an integrated online game with PunkBuster and is playing on a server that supports PunkBuster. Otherwise PunkBuster will not do anything but update.

## Which game uses PunkBuster?

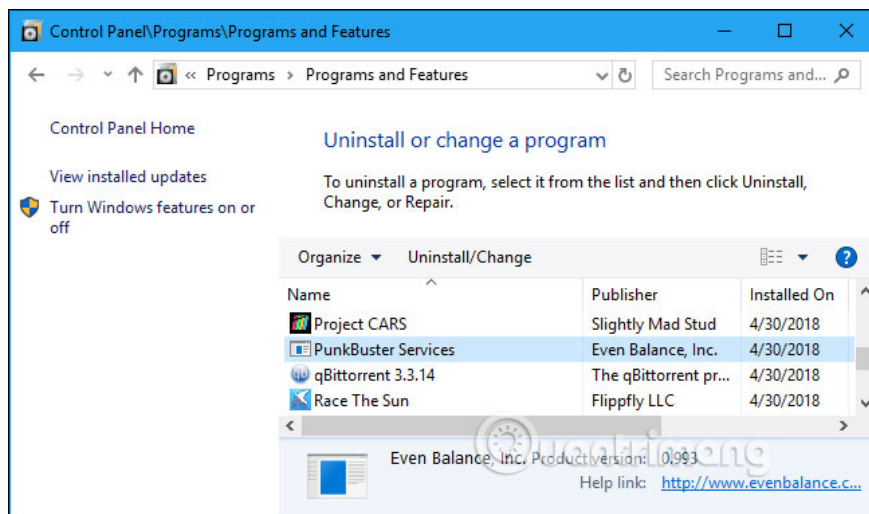
PunkBuster is not as popular as before. Modern games have largely shifted to other anti-phishing tools, such as Valve Anti-Cheat System (VAC) integrated into Steam. Blizzard games like Overwatch also feature integrated fraud protection. However, if you have installed some games on your computer, maybe PunkBuster is running in the background.

The last big integrated PunkBuster game is Battlefield Hardline, released in 2015, but it is also integrated into many older Battlefield games. PunkBuster is also part of the old Call of Duty game like Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare, as well as games like Far Cry 3 and Assassin's Creed 4: Black Flag.

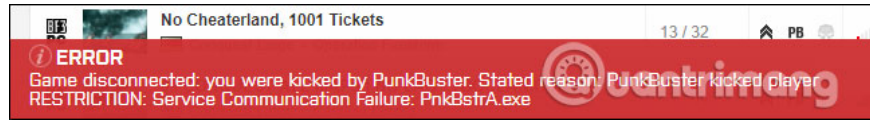
However, PunkBuster has not been integrated into new online games since 2015. If you are playing online multiplayer games released in the past few years, it does not require PunkBuster.

## Can I uninstall PunkBuster?

If you don't play multiplayer games that require PunkBuster anti-fraud software, you can uninstall if you want. To do this, navigate to **Control Panel > Uninstall a Program**, select **PunkBuster Services** from the list of installed software and then click the **Uninstall / Change** button.



If you need PunkBuster for some reason, you will see an error message related to PunkBuster when trying to connect to the multiplayer online server in the game. You can visit the official download page of PunkBuster to download and install it on the system. Again, you can connect to PunkBuster-enabled servers again after installing it.



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