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ISSUE 428 | 23 JULY – 5 AUG 2014

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- Date confirmed
- What you should do
- Are you still safe?

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From the Editor

We live in the age of 'switching', dominated by a simple message: if you're getting a bad deal – whether it's your energy, ISA or broadband – it's your own fault for not finding the time to research a better alternative. This does help drive competition, but many of us don't have the time to switch, or just want to improve the service we currently use.

It's a problem we tackle in our cover feature (page 50), suggesting ways you can make your broadband faster without the hassle or expense of upgrading to a new deal. Whatever your current speed is, our tips will help you go faster.

We're always looking for ways to make your life easier, so we've introduced a new section in Consumeractive called 'This Will Come In Useful' (page 13). Every fortnight we'll include handy information to cut out and keep, starting with ISPs' contact details, with security companies to follow in the next issue. You may not need this info today, but it'll prove invaluable some time soon.

Daniel Booth
editor@computeractive.co.uk

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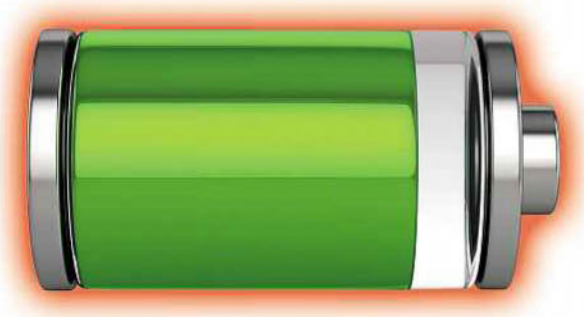

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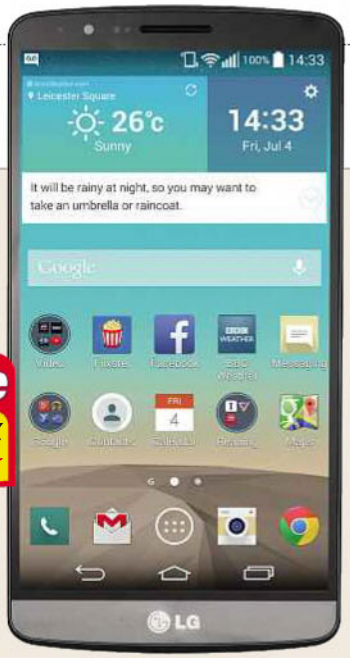

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Computeractive offer of the fortnight

Kaspersky Internet Security 2014 **page 33**

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News

The top stories in the world of technology

Mainstream support for Windows 7 to end in early 2015

Microsoft has confirmed that it will end 'Mainstream' support for all versions of Windows 7 on 13 January 2015, but continue offering security updates for another five years.

The end of Mainstream support means that Windows 7 will no longer receive new features or tools. There will be no further updates beyond Service Pack 1, which was released on 22 February 2011.

From January, Windows 7 will enter the 'Extended' support phase, which only includes free security updates. When that ends, on 14 January 2020, Windows 7 will enter the 'end of support' period, during which no security fixes will be released and Microsoft won't offer online technical help. That's the critical phase Windows XP entered in April this year, although Microsoft did release an emergency fix after the deadline.

On its website Microsoft warns users about continuing with operating systems after support ends: "You will no longer receive security updates that can help protect your PC from harmful viruses, spyware, and other malicious software that can steal your personal information."

Microsoft lists the support dates on its 'Windows lifecycle fact sheet', which you can read at www.snipca.com/12735. It says that Extended support for Windows 8 will end in January 2023.

The end of Mainstream support will come relatively soon into the life of Windows 7 – five years and three months after it launched.

By contrast, Windows XP survived seven-and-half-years before Microsoft ended Mainstream support.

Microsoft also confirmed that Mainstream support of Office 2010 Service Pack 1 will end on 14 October 2014. To see which other services are soon ending, visit the company's site at www.snipcacom/12736.

COMMENT

As we recently named Windows 7 the best operating system ever (Issue 411), we're not celebrating the end of Mainstream support. The news comes as no surprise, but it's disappointing that Microsoft has made this decision after just five years, the same period of time Vista received full support. Some industry experts predict Microsoft will extend support, but that's unlikely if it plans to target Windows 9 at Windows 7 users who want to upgrade (see page 9).

Will you upgrade from Windows 7 following the end of Mainstream support? Please let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

END OF MAINSTREAM SUPPORT - WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Does this mean I should upgrade?

Not at all. The end of Mainstream support simply means that Windows 7 won't receive any new features, but it will continue working fine. You'll just have to accept that the version of Windows 7 you're currently using will remain the same until you do decide to upgrade – and you should do that before January 2020.

If I do want to upgrade, what should I do?

That's a very interesting question, given recent rumours that Microsoft is ready to abandon Windows 8 (see Question of the Fortnight, page 9). You may want to consider waiting a few months to see if Microsoft announces Windows 9. If it doesn't, choose Windows 8.1, or ditch Windows entirely and try Linux.

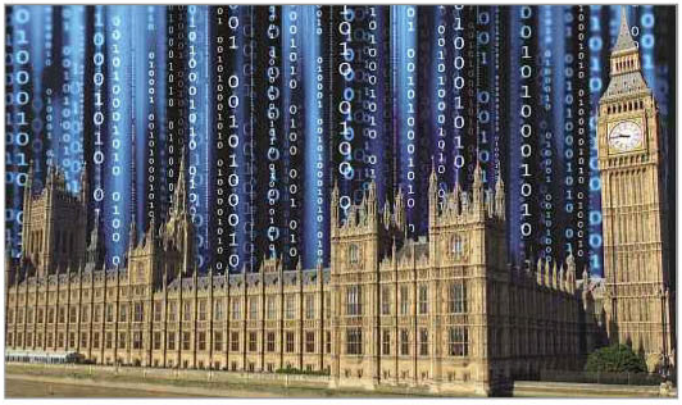
Can I still buy Windows 7 PCs?

Yes, but only until 31 October for Home versions of Windows 7. Microsoft hasn't said when it will stop manufacturers selling PCs with Professional editions. There are some excellent Windows 7 PCs you can still buy, such as the Chillblast Fusion Slipstream Z97, which won a Buy It! award in Issue 427. It runs Windows 8.1 too, so it would also be a good choice if you wanted to upgrade.

You'll like this... A Chromecast update lets you 'mirror' what's on your phone and tablet to your TV (www.snipca.com/12788)

...but not this 45,000 UK small businesses are still suffering dial-up speeds according to a report (www.snipca.com/12794)

Government's emergency data law 'breaches your human rights'



Privacy campaigners have slammed a new law rushed through by the Government to force phone and internet companies to keep records of customer calls, texts and internet use.

The Data Retention and Investigatory Powers (DRIP) Bill will reinforce the right of the Government to demand that companies keep this data after the European Court of Justice ruled in April that they aren't obliged to retain it.

Under the new legislation companies will have to retain data for 12 months, a year less than the previous law. Without a new law the Government claims that information already gathered could be destroyed within weeks.

However, privacy groups have attacked how quickly the law was drawn up. A statement from Big Brother Watch said: "The speed that the Bill is tabled to progress at raises concerns over the amount of scrutiny it will receive".

The bill is supported by Labour and the Liberal Democrats, but not all MPs are on board. Labour MP Tom Watson said it will "override the views of judges who have seen how the mass collection of your data breaches the human rights of you and your family". Writing in the *Daily Mail* Conservative MP David Davis said the Government had "engineered a 'theatrical emergency'" to justify the new law.

It's not what you actually say or write that will be kept, but information about when messages were sent, and to what number. This is data that can place people at the scene of a crime, and is used daily in courts to fight terrorism and paedophile rings. One of the first cases in which this proved crucial was the Soham murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman in 2002.

Prime Minister David Cameron said that the Bill was essential to make sure "law-enforcement and intelligence agencies maintain the right tools to keep us all safe".

The Bill includes a termination clause that ensures the legislation only lasts until the end of 2016, forcing the next Government to re-assess it.

Gameover Zeus returns in email scam

Deadly botnet Gameover Zeus has returned in a scam email that claims to come from NatWest.

Security company Malcovery spotted the scam on 10 July, saying that the malicious emails claim to contain an online statement in an attachment. Opening it could leave your PC at risk of infection because many antivirus programs are unable to detect the malware.

Gameover Zeus, along with CryptoLocker, was taken down for two weeks in June by an international police operation. Malcovery said that the hackers have boosted the infrastructure of Gameover Zeus to make it more resistant to further police action: "This discovery indicates that the criminals responsible for Gameover's distribution do not intend to give up on this botnet even after suffering one of the most expansive botnet takeovers/takedowns in history".

The criminals behind the malware still have the same intention - to steal money from victims' bank accounts. It is estimated that Gameover Zeus has been responsible for the theft of over $100m since it was first identified in 2007.

For more information read Malcovery's blog post: www.snipca.com/12792.

IN BRIEF

UK POLICE TAKE DOWN BANK MALWARE

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has taken down malware that stole money from UK bank accounts. Called Shylock, the malware had attacked 30,000 Windows PCs worldwide – almost a third of them in Britain. It spread by criminals sending malicious links in emails and Skype instant messaging. The NCA worked with the FBI, the German Federal Police and Europol to seize the servers controlling Shylock.

NEW RASPBERRY PI HAS FOUR USB 2.0 PORTS

A new version of the Raspberry Pi has been released. Called the B+, it comes with four USB 2.0 ports, two more than the current model, and a microSD card slot. It uses less power, which means you can use devices attached to the USB slots without requiring mains power or an external hub. Buy it for £26 at www.snipca.com/12786, and read more on the official Raspberry Pi site: www.snipca.com/12784.

Tomorrow's world

Tech experts have been predicting the death of the PC mouse for many years. The latest device that could replace it is the 3DTouch, a smart 'thimble' that's worn on the finger and uses a built-in accelerometer and gyroscope to control the PC. A button on the surface of the forefinger replaces the left-click function of a traditional mouse. Watch a demonstration of it at www.snipca.com/12718.

IN BRIEF

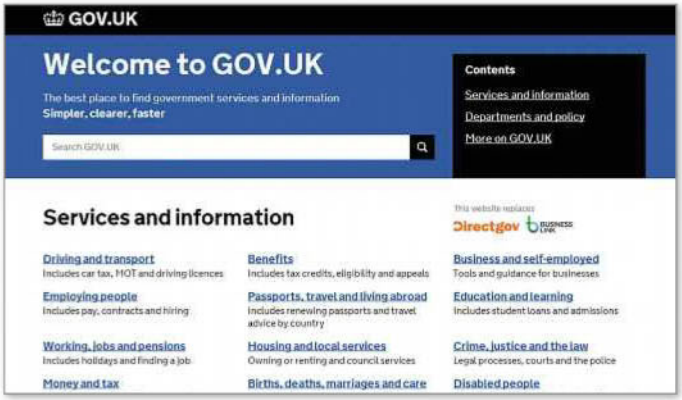
RAILWAY IS ON TRACK FOR FASTER WI-FI

The Government says it will use a £53m fine imposed on Network Rail to help pay for faster Wi-Fi on trains. The new service, which aims to provide speeds 10 times faster than those currently available, should be ready by 2018. In total, £90m will be spent to provide what the Government calls "a seamless mobile broadband connection".

YET ANOTHER FLASH FLAW EXPOSED

Google engineer Michele Spagnuolo has explained in his blog (www.snipca.com/12707) how he built an exploit kit that exposed another security flaw in Adobe's notoriously vulnerable Flash plug-in. Adobe has since updated Flash to fix the flaw. Chrome and Internet Explorer 10 and 11 will be updated automatically, but Firefox users should add it from www.snipca.com/12709.

Five arrested in crackdown on fake websites that con people



Five people have been arrested and 25 websites suspended in a move to take on the criminals conning people out of money by running fake sites that mimic the Government's online services.

The sites are made to look like real Government websites for official services, such as filing tax returns or booking a driving test. Instead of paying the Government to perform these service, victims inadvertently give money to the fraudsters behind the sites.

The sites look legitimate because they appear in search results. Google has previously allowed the sites to pay for promoted listings in results, so they appear at the top when people search for a key phrase such as 'file tax return'.

However, the National Trading Standards Board (NTSB) said it was working with Google and Bing to remove the adverts. Its chairman, Lord Harris, says he wants to make it "as difficult as possible" for online fraudsters to operate.

The Government has launched an awareness campaign to warn people about copycat websites, advising that they often use URLs that contain phrases which make the site sound genuine, such as 'directgov'.

People are advised not to search online for Government services, but to find them directly on the official website (www.gov.uk - see screenshot). Every other website offering 'official' services should be treated with extreme caution, and reported to Citizens Advice (www.snipca.com/12689).

More than 5,700 complaints about the websites have been made to the Advertising Standards Authority and Citizens Advice. The number of *Computeractive* readers emailing us to complain about these highly misleading websites has risen sharply in the past 12 months.

One reader lost nearly £3,000 earlier this year after filing their tax return on one of the bogus websites.

The people arrested are on police bail.

Post Office to launch mobile phone network

The Post Office is planning to take on the likes of O2, Vodafone and Three with the launch of its own mobile network in the autumn.

It will use EE's network to deliver its services, which will be offered in addition to its existing range of home phone and broadband products. The company claims half a million people in the UK already use these services.

From the autumn, it plans to start offering mobile contracts in 50 Post Office branches, as well as online and over the phone, before embarking on nationwide rollout by the end of the year.

The move is being undertaken as part of the Post Office's wider commercial plans to diversify into other areas, as the volume of mail sent via the post each year continues to dwindle. In recent years, that has seen the firm expand its financial services offerings to include mortgages and travel insurance. Martin George, the company's chief commercial officer, said the plans are a "significant milestone in the Post Office's journey of change".

The plans come on the back of last year's £640m cash injection from the Government to help the Post Office revamp its branches and extend their opening hours.

What's new from Google

Did you know that the world's largest cruise ship has an ice-skating rink, a surfing simulator, a climbing wall and a merry-go-round? You'll see them all on Google's new Street View website for Royal Caribbean International's Allure of the Seas (www.snipca.com/12692), which also gives you a peek inside the cabins and restaurants. Look out for the amazing chairs that seafaring diners sit in at 150 Central Park.

Question of the Fortnight

Is Microsoft planning to abandon Windows 8?

New rumours suggest that Windows 9 will arrive next year, with features originally expected in Windows 8 updates

Microsoft is reportedly getting ready to announce that Windows 9 – codenamed Threshold – will be launched next spring. Several impressive features are expected to be revealed, such as the return of the Start menu and interactive live tiles that let you read emails and control your music player without opening their associated program. It's understood that Microsoft will make the new operating system easier to use with a keyboard and mouse than Windows 8, which will certainly make it more appealing to people still using Windows XP, Vista and 7.

If all of this sounds familiar, it's probably because you heard about these features in an announcement made by Microsoft in April. At the time, Microsoft said they would be included in a "future update" later this year. Many assumed this meant they would arrive in an update to Windows 8. However, leaked reports now suggest the new features won't appear until Windows 9. So are these the first signs that Microsoft is preparing to abandon Windows 8?

Blogger and Microsoft expert Mary Jo Foley, who has second-guessed what the company is planning to do with Windows on many occasions, said: "Microsoft is basically 'done' with Windows 8." In late June, she wrote: "Regardless of how usable or functional it is or isn't, it has become Microsoft's Vista 2.0 – something from which Microsoft needs to distance itself, perception-wise. At this point, Microsoft is going full steam ahead toward Threshold and will do its best to differentiate that OS release from Windows 8."

> "Windows 8 will go down as the shortest-running flagship version of the operating system ever"

Indeed, reports suggest that Microsoft is so keen to move on from Windows 8 that it's even considering offering Windows 9 as a free (or very cheap) upgrade to Windows 8.1 users.

Until recently, Microsoft was addressing the problems Windows 8 users had by tweaking the operating system via its updates. First, a Start button appeared in Windows 8.1 (released in October 2013). While this didn't perform the same functions as the old Start menu - many of its options still took you to the Modern tile interface – at least it showed that Microsoft was listening to users' complaints.

More useful improvements followed in April 2014, when Microsoft released Update 1. This lets PC users boot directly to the Desktop, as well as minimise and close Modern apps as though they were normal windows.

But many now suspect that Update 1 will be the last substantial update for Windows 8, although the operating system will continue to receive security support for many years. Update 2 is expected in August, but most experts think it will only comprise small tweaks and security fixes.

If Windows 9 does come out in spring 2015, Windows 8 will go down as the shortest-running flagship version of the operating system ever, ruling the roost for a shorter period even than the much-despised Vista. Windows 8 users can't be blamed for wondering whether they should keep using an operating system that's being shunned by its developer.

THE RUMOURS

- Windows 8.1 Update 2 will be released in August, but will only contain small tweaks and security fixes
- Windows 9 will be released in Spring 2015, making Windows 8 Microsoft's shortest-lived flagship operating system ever
- Windows 9 will have a Start menu, which will combine a traditional list menu with interactive live tiles

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind
Email: letters@computeractive.co.uk
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Why be surprised that Facebook manipulates us?

I can't say I was angry to read the news story in Issue 427 that Facebook ran a psychological test on its users without telling them. And I can't say I was surprised. But I *was* surprised that it angered other people.

As a retired scientist myself, I doubt the empirical rigour of the test, but that's by the by. What really matters is that Facebook exists not as a feelgood service for people to comment on their friends' holiday photos, but as a rapacious gatherer of personal information that it can sell to advertisers. It can make a lot of money this

way, as, of course, can Google. So if a group of scientists asks Facebook whether it can run a test to reveal how people behave on the site, it's not going to say no, is it?

Passwords for the Godless

As an atheist, I'd like to proffer an alternative to the recent letters from the religiously minded who use hymn books and the Bible to inspire passwords. Possibly provoking divine retribution, I use 'thereisnogod' as my default password, then try to find as many variations as possible (for example, 'thErE1snog0d'). I've yet to be hacked, which I think backs up my philosophical position!

Andrew Furlong

Google Glass zombies coming next?

Just one issue after Stuart Andrews diagnoses the modern plague of smartphone zombies (Final Straw, Issue 426), I read about another type of technology that will turn people into the living dead - Google Glass (Question of the Fortnight, Issue 427). You ask whether we'll ever find a use for these daft spectacles, concluding that it won't catch on as quickly as smartphones and tablets. Well, here's hoping! The last thing we need is another device that will absorb the attention of people so greatly

that they'll jaywalk through busy streets not caring whether they bump into people (or cars).

Coleen O'Sullivan

Slow broadband not just a rural problem?

I continue to read the letters on the issue of rural broadband speeds with frustration and mounting annoyance. To suggest slow speeds are solely a "rural" problem is naive and pays no heed to people elsewhere who may not have high-speed access.

I live in Hackney Wick in east London. If we are lucky, we get speeds of around 6Mbps, but what most of the coverage of broadband access omits to mention is the issue of contention ratios. At least in a rural area this is less of an issue with fewer residences but, particularly of an evening, it is terrible for us. Many times speeds will drop to below 1Mbps as people log on when they get home from work. I use it for my business and it is often unusably slow. Despite being in London we have no access to cable services and have to rely on ADSL. The frustrating thing is that we live less than 100 yards from the Olympic Media Centre which, less than two years ago, had the largest, fastest internet hub in Europe.

Pigeon-holing high-speed broadband access problems as a rural issue is narrow-minded and an insult to the people who may have issues elsewhere. We should be aiming for universal high-speed access with no exceptions and you should be able to expect it wherever you live.

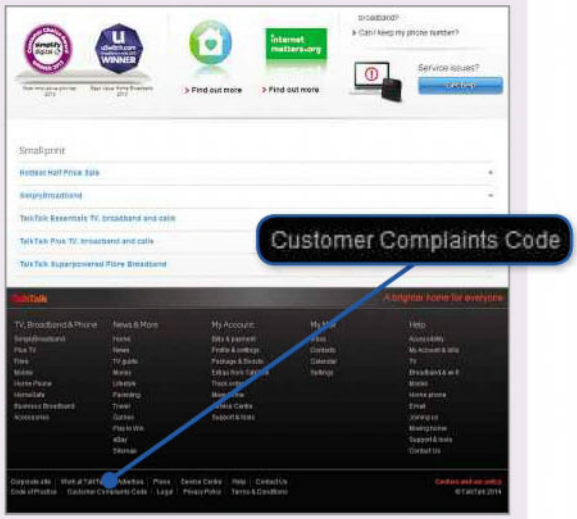
Dave Bunce

Recharging mobile batteries is no big deal

Mr Battershill is certainly not alone in thinking that battery life in mobile devices can seem rather short (Letters, Issue 426), but I think he's going a bit far in saying "practicality has been thrown out for worthless style". Frequent

How to get TalkTalk to talk back

Like Maureen Jenner (Letters, Issue 426), I have had nonsense replies from TalkTalk which just repeated what I told them, and offered a useless solution. I'm sure no real person is so stupid, so they must be written by a computer which simply picks phrases from your letter, and sends the most "appropriate" reply from its very limited library. This probably fobs off a large number of complainants, but the best solution is to use the Customer Complaints Code link at the very bottom of every page of the TalkTalk website. Write to the address under "What happens if I'm not satisfied?" if you don't get a sensible answer from the manager, or nothing happens regarding his/her promise. I found this stirs up a hornet's nest and you get a call from a real person in the UK who knows how to fix the problem.



John Pawson

recharging is surely a small price to pay for the extra utility.

If battery technology had advanced to the same extent as computing power, I dare say a battery would be an insignificant sliver embedded into all devices, and it would never need to be recharged. However, it obviously can't evolve as much and a rechargeable battery is a fairly crude thing, even though you don't usually have to replace it.

Surely taking a recharger with us when we are away from home isn't a lot to ask? My tablet adapter has a slide-up earth pin so it isn't even the size of a mains plug!

David Panton

XP users are 'an endangered species'

I agree with Chris Chant that XP users aren't dinosaurs (Letters, Issue 426), and shouldn't be treated with contempt for sticking with the operating system. Some of the language used in the XP debate has been over the top. However, we can't pretend that these dedicated XP users aren't missing out on the advantages of using a faster, better system, whether that's Linux or Windows 8. A little perspective is needed. They're not dinosaurs, but an endangered species – more like pandas than pterodactyls.

Harold Reece

Kaspersky's English should be better

In Issue 426 you included a screenshot of Kaspersky's latest ransomware tools in Protect Your Tech. It was right next to ScamWatch and initially I thought that it must also be a warning for another scam. Why? Just read the message from Kaspersky in the screenshot: "Utility tries to calculate decryption key automatically. If it is not possible You need to find original copy of at least one of encrypted files."

I'm not a native speaker of English, but I did teach it as a foreign language, and if any of my students had produced this bit of prose, I'd have made them re-write it.

We are warned again and again about scams and phishing emails and one of the things by which we are told we can often recognise them is by their ungrammatical English. If bona fide companies can't proof-read the texts for their programs, it muddies the waters.

Ilke Cochrane

CA says Kaspersky is a Russian company, **so it appears the instructions have got lost in translation. But the tools themselves are excellent, and Kaspersky Internet Security remains our favourite antivirus software - buy it for just £17.99 (usual price £39.99) from www.snipca.com/11134.**

STAR LETTER

Outage exposed my web addiction

I had to face an uncomfortable truth a few days ago when I couldn't use my BT broadband due to a massive, nationwide fault (I wasn't the only one - read the BBC's story here: www.snipca.com/12649).

It happened at the worse time, on Saturday morning, when my wife normally goes shopping, giving me a couple of precious hours to spend on the web. But I was deprived of my usual fix, and spent more than 30 minutes trying to phone BT to see what the problem was (I wouldn't have bothered if I knew thousands of other frustrated people would also be trying).

Being without the internet, even for just a few hours, felt horrible - and that's what made me feel uncomfortable. I remember that during the power cuts of the early Seventies, when I was father to two young boys, we didn't moan and rant because we had no television. Instead, out came the candles and we invented games to entertain ourselves.

Has that sense of invention been lost with the internet? Am I so addicted to browsing and clicking that a mere morning without it is enough to give me serious withdrawal symptoms? It's worrying to think so. Maybe our expectations are unrealistically high these days. We demand the fastest of everything at the cheapest price, and throw a tantrum when the smallest thing goes wrong.

Since that irritating Saturday morning, I've calmed down. It's obvious to me that I do rely on the internet too much. I'm still going to browse the web every day, but I'm not going to let it dictate my mood. And if my broadband cuts out, or pages fail to load, or downloads take forever, I'm just going to take a deep breath and stroll through the park.

After all, they say: "Stop and smell the roses", not "Download and click the roses".

Stephen Clemence

The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!

Too many parents are hooked on smartphones

I couldn't agree more with Stuart Andrews, Final Straw rant about smartphone users in Issue 426. Last week, my husband and I were out for a walk and were behind a young mother with a toddler walking along the top of a small wall. Mum was talking on her mobile phone and unfortunately the child slipped off the wall and fell. The mother, begrudgingly, with phone now clamped between shoulder and ear, did drag the distressed child upright by her arm while berating her: "Can't you see I'm on the phone?" Surely the response should have been: "Sorry, my daughter has hurt herself, can I call you back?"

How many times do you see people pushing children in buggies while texting? It's no wonder children struggle when they go to school when parents have never commented on the butterflies and bees collecting pollen. Or even on the steaming heap left by the dog in front being pulled along by its owner glued to his smartphone. Oops, the smartphone user behind has just trodden in it!

Sue Berrieman

Consumeractive

How can I stop an ISP's threatening letters?

Q I ended my telephone contract with New Call Telecom on 5 May and on 6 June cancelled my direct debit payments to it. I received what I thought was my final bill for £16.48, which I paid on 16 June. On the same day, New Call also sent me a final reminder notice for an overdue balance of £7.13. The tone of the letter was very threatening. How can I stop these letters?

Sameh Strauch

A There isn't much Sameh can do except make a formal complaint to Ofcom at www.snipca.com/12620. If the regulator receives enough complaints about this behaviour, it will investigate and clamp down on New Call if it believes the ISP is acting unfairly. We've asked New Call for a comment and will let you know what it says in a later issue.

Other New Call customers have complained about these unnecessarily aggressive letters on a number of forums, including on The Consumer Action Group forum (www.snipca.com/12619).

Sameh could have avoided this unpleasantness by contacting New Call before he cancelled his direct debit to ask for a final bill.

How do we get a refund if a seller blames us for a fault?

Q We bought a table on eBay from a company called 1home Outlet (www.snipca.com/12626) in December last year. In April we found one of the legs had woodworm. The company won't do anything, saying the woodworm infestation comes from our house and its supplier agrees. Is there anything we can do?

Karen Blade

A Yes there is. Karen should contact 1home Outlet to say that she is getting the table examined by a furniture specialist. After researching the problem of woodworm, Karen has learnt that the life cycle of the pest means that it takes two years from the start of infestation for damage to appear. Therefore, she expects an independent expert to conclude that the infestation existed when she bought the table, which would mean, legally, the table was 'inherently faulty'.

In her email to the company Karen should insist that if her claim is upheld the company must pay the cost of examination, and give her a refund or replacement.

At this point 1home Outlet may offer to examine the table without Karen needing to get it examined.

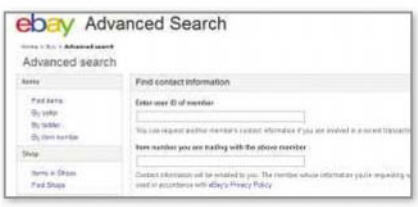
Alternatively, the company can dispute Karen's expert report. Either way, she needs to take very good photos of the damage done to the table so she's got plenty of evidence if she has to take the case to court.

We're advising this course of action because 1home Outlet are proving so unco-operative. When she made her initial complaint she'd had the table for less than six months, which means that under the Sale and Supply of Goods to Consumers regulations she doesn't have to prove there's an inherent fault with the table. Instead, the company would need to prove it wasn't inherently faulty, and they can only do this by accepting the return of the item for examination. The company broke the law by assuming the fault was caused by Karen and refusing to take the table back.

How can I contact an eBay seller who's not answering?

Q On 16 February I bought an Allwinner (www.allwinnertech.com) A13 Android tablet for £64.95 from an eBay seller. Recently, it stopped changing screen orientation from portrait to landscape. The seller is refusing to answer any of my emails. The tablet is only four months old, so I believe I still have rights under the Sale of Goods Act. What should I do now?

Peter Carr



A As this is a relatively recent transaction, Peter should ask eBay for the seller's telephone number or address (via www.snipca.com/12618, see screenshot below) and explain that his emails are being ignored. EBay's Privacy Notice policy lets it pass on these details unless domestic privacy laws are violated. In the UK this is the Data Protection Act, which normally prevents a company revealing a customer's personal data, so we've asked the Information Commissioner's Office for clarification. We'll update you in a later issue about instances when it would be legal for eBay to send this information.

We checked the seller's identity, gp-online (www.ebay.co.uk/usr/gp-online), and saw that he's registered as a business seller, which means he'll need to prove there's nothing wrong with the tablet under the Sale and Supply of Goods to Consumers regulations.

We stand up for your legal rights

Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD
Please include both your phone number and address.
Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Can I get a refund if my broadband speed is too slow?

Q Plusnet has been my ISP for the past four years and, although I live only 500 yards from the exchange and should enjoy a broadband speed of up to 8Mbps, I can only get around 1Mbps. I'm paying £35.57 per month for phone and broadband. Where do I stand about getting a refund?

Edgar Mills

A Edgar may well be able to get a refund, but first he needs to find out from Plusnet why his speed is so slow. If he was sold an 'up to' 8Mbps service he should be getting at least 6Mbps because he lives so near to the exchange. We asked Plusnet to look at Edgar's case.

Despite suffering slow speeds for four years, Edgar has only recently contacted Plusnet. Under law he has to give the ISP up to eight weeks to try to fix the problem. He should ask Plusnet for what's called a deadlock letter in which the ISP must explain what it's done to try to resolve the problem and whether it will offer a partial refund. He also needs evidence to support his claim, with dates and the time of day his broadband speed drops. With this, he can make a formal complaint to Communications and Internet Services Adjudication Scheme (CISAS, www.cisas.org.uk) – the mediation body Plusnet belongs to.

CASE UPDATES

Orange's 'goodwill' refund for reader who lost receipt

In Issue 426, we highlighted the problems Brian Turton would face trying to get a refund for a £20 top-up voucher from Orange he bought from a BP Express garage. He wasn't able to enter the voucher code successfully – although he was unable to prove this. He then lost both the voucher and the receipt confirming his purchase. Despite this, Orange has given him a full refund as a gesture of goodwill, even though it wasn't legally obliged to.

Without proof of purchase it's usually impossible to get your money back. But although we explained this to Brian, and he thanked us for publishing his predicament, he decided to keep pestering Orange.

If you buy an item with a debit/credit card or cheque, a bank or credit-card statement is sufficient proof of purchase, so a retailer can't deny you a refund. The statement won't name the item like a receipt does, but it will log the time, amount, date and company you bought the goods from.

We'd love to take credit for this result, but Brian should take a bow. He's shown that persistence can pay off when the odds seem stacked against you.

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Contact details for ISPs

BT Broadband
0800 111 4567
Online help: www.snipca.com/12565
Twitter: @BTCare

Sky
08442 411 653
Email: mysky@bskyb.com
Twitter @SkyHelpTeam

Virgin Media
0845 454 1111
Online help: www.snipca.com/12567
Twitter: @virginmedia

TalkTalk
0203 441 5550
Online help: www.talktalk.co.uk/contactus
Twitter: @TalkTalkCare

Plusnet
0800 432 0200
Online help: www.plus.net/home-broadband/contact
Twitter: @Plusnet

Primus
0800 036 3839
Email: savers@newcalltelecom.co.uk
Twitter: @PrimusSavercare

EE
0844 873 8586
Online help: www.snipca.com/12566
Twitter: @EE

Zen Internet
01706 902009
Email: customerservices@zen.co.uk
Twitter: @zeninternet

Tesco
0345 30 400 30
Online help: www.snipca.com/12629
Twitter: @TescoBroadband

Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Personal data left on phones you sell

What happened?

Security firm Avast warned that your personal info may still be accessible on an Android phone even after a factory reset. If the phone falls into the wrong hands after you've sold it, this leftover data could be used to steal your identity.

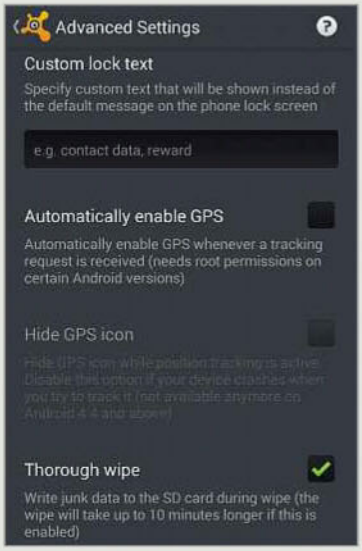
Avast bought 20 second-hand phones from eBay in the US, and using "simple and easily available recovery software" was able to restore files – including 40,000 photos, 750 emails, 250 contacts and even a completed loan application.

"The amount of data we were able to retrieve was astonishing and proves that simply deleting is not enough," the company said in a blog post (www.snipca.com/12715).

Avast didn't hold back in assuming the worst, saying that because as many as a thousand of the photos it recovered were of a personal nature, criminals could use them for blackmail or to exploit the victims' "strange fetishes". It said that more than 750 photos were "of women in various stages of undress".

What should I do?

If you're planning to sell your Android phone, you need to overwrite the files on it, which makes them irretrievable. Avast's free Anti-Theft app (www.snipca.com/12716) performs this action. Once it's installed, turn on the "thorough wipe" feature (see screenshot), then create a 'my.avast' account to connect to the phone.



As the name suggests, the app's main function is to remotely wipe your phone's data if it's stolen. One clever feature in the paid-for version ($1.99 a month/$14.99 a year) is 'Remote identification', which takes a photo of the thief when they try to unlock the phone, and emails it to you.

New tools

Privacy Icons add-on

https://disconnect.me/icons

Many of us are guilty of skipping through websites' lengthy privacy policies and clicking the first 'I accept' box we see. This small print is rarely easy to understand, which is why the new Privacy Icons extension is useful. It converts sites' privacy policies into colour-coded icons (red is bad, green is good) which are shown next to the search result for a website. These tell you how transparent the site is in nine privacy categories, including whether they tell you if other companies can track what you do on the website.

Once you install the extension and search for a site, click the Options arrow under Privacy Icons on the left of the search results page. Currently, it only works in Chrome, Firefox and Opera, but a version for Internet Explorer is coming. You're asked for a donation when you add the extension, but you don't have to pay anything to use it.

ScamWatch

READERS WARN READERS

Fake Google Drive email scam

I received an email supposedly from Google Drive. The subject line looked convincing: 'You have 1 new unread message on Google Drive!' I had created a Google Drive account only two days earlier, so I assumed the unread message would be a 'hello' from Google. The sender was 'e-doc@google.com', which sounded a bit odd. But alarms only rang when I hovered my mouse over the 'Continue to Google Drive page' link, and saw it was going to a website I'd never heard of. A quick search online confirmed it was a scam: www.snipca.com/12625.

Pauline Wilcox

Warn your fellow readers about scams at letters@computeractive.co.uk

British rocket fuel

Many things drive your business, especially what your customers see online. Now the **.uk** domain is available from Fasthosts, for your own supercharged top-level spot on the internet.

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or call **0808 1686 777**

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Inspiring Better Business

Best Free Software

Brilliant new programs that won't cost you anything

FILE ORGANISER

Rummage

http://getrummage.com
What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8

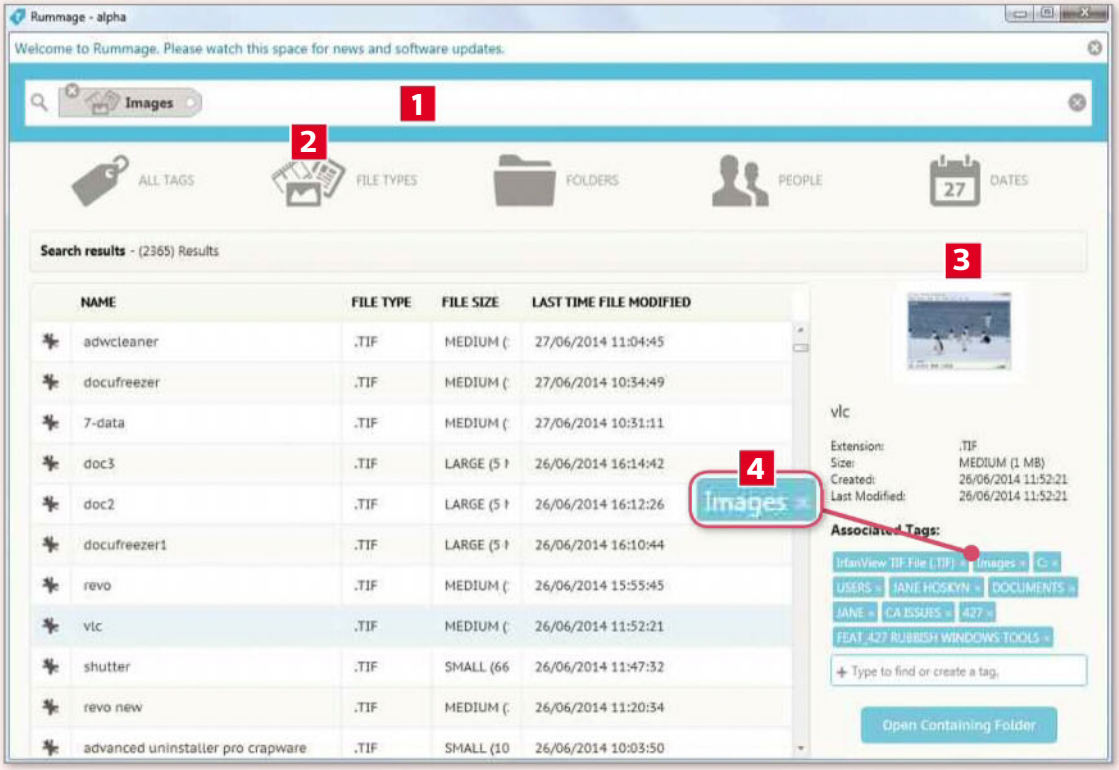
Windows Explorer is a pretty blunt tool for organising your files, and it's no use at all for organising your online contacts and emails. Rummage is a brilliant new alternative that gives you one window for managing all the documents, photos and other files on your computer, as well as contacts and emails imported from your online accounts (Facebook, Gmail).

The first time you run Rummage, it indexes your files and automatically sorts them by date, format, program and even subject matter. If you choose to include any online data, Rummage imports it to your PC for indexing, but doesn't send any data to the web. This means that nothing is shared from your computer, and you can run Rummage completely offline after indexing. The indexing can take several hours if you've got lots of files, but once it's finished it makes it much quicker and easier to manage them. Whenever you save a new document, it's automatically indexed.

Rummage tags your documents automatically for easier searching. For example, if a document looks like a receipt, it will be tagged 'receipt'. You can edit, remove and add tags manually, but the automatic tagging is very good and it gets more accurate the more you use it.

Use the search bar to search by tag(s), or by using a free text search that's handy for finding files that are hard to categorise and whose names and locations you can't recall.

Rummage is quick and easy to install and doesn't include any adware or other annoying extras.



1 Once Rummage has indexed your documents, click in the empty search bar to see your indexed documents and other files.

2 Click a toolbar icon to see groups of documents organised by, for example, file type. Click a file type to see a list of matching items.

3 Click an item to open a column on the right where you can see its thumbnail, file information and tags added automatically by Rummage.

4 Click the cross to the right of a tag to remove it from that item, or type a new tag in the 'Type to find' box. Double-click an item to open it instantly in its default program.

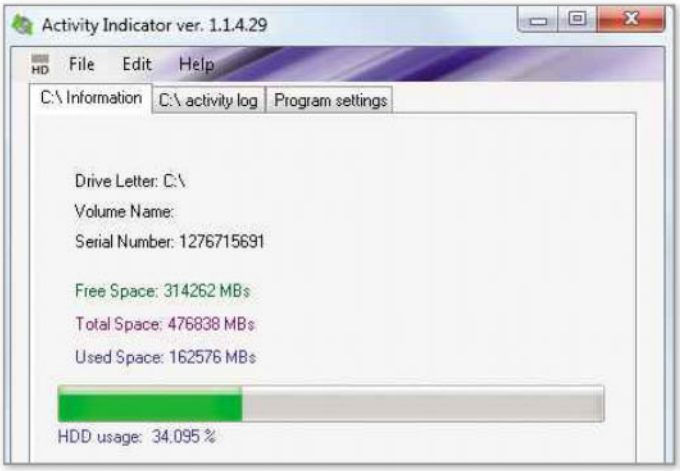
FILE ENCRYPTION

Secryptor

www.secryptor.com

What you need: Windows 7 or 8

Encrypt any file and save it on your computer or in Dropbox with this new drag-and-drop security tool. There are a few new programs around that let you encrypt files, but Secryptor rises above the crowd with its slick program window, supportive website and efficient cloud integration, albeit with Dropbox only. Click 'Download Win 7/8.x' on the site to download the installer. It doesn't try to dump any unwanted extras on your computer during setup, though we'd recommend unticking 'Associate "skt" extension' to avoid it changing your file associations.



SYSTEM MONITOR

Activity Indicator

www.snipca.com/12777

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8

This new open-source tool adds a disk-activity indicator to your Desktop system tray, so you can see at a glance whether your processor is active. But there's more to this efficient little program than that, as you'll discover if you right-click the system tray icon ('HD') and select Show Window. The 'C:\ Information' tab gives you real-time updates on your processor and hard drive, and the 'C:\ activity log' tab lists every single file on your computer. Our snipca link takes you to the open-source download mirror SourceForge. Click the green Download link, extract the portable EXE from the ZIP and double-click it to run.

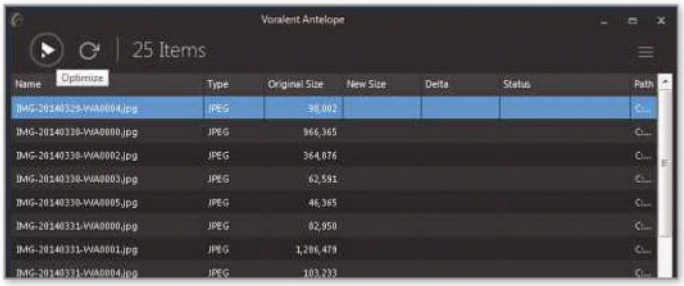


PHOTO OPTIMISER

Voralent Antelope

www.snipca.com/12779

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8

This beautifully designed new program keeps your digital photos small, but ensures they're perfectly formed. Drag and drop a batch of photos (PNG or JPG only) onto the program window, click the Play button and all the photos will be re-compressed for optimum size and quality. Be warned, this overwrites the original photos unless you click the menu icon and tick 'Backup original file' before clicking Play. Antelope is relatively quick to install and doesn't try to add any junk.

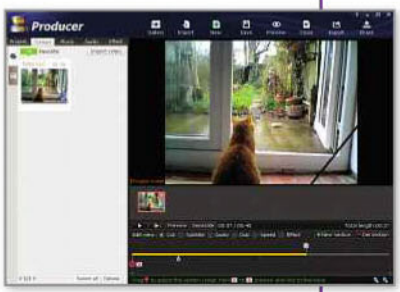
WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

How can I make my videos look more professional?

Q I have been making YouTube videos for a while now and I'm looking for new video-editing software. At the moment I use Windows Movie Maker 2012, which is very good, but doesn't have many effects and transitions. Can you recommend a free program with professional features?

Samuel Lucas



A SmartPixel (www.smartpixel.com) is ideal for graduates of Movie Maker. It offers scores of effects and transitions, along with dubbing, subtitling and screen recording. Unlike many free video programs it doesn't try to install any crapware, but untick 'What's New' during setup to skip straight to the program. Click Producer to open the editing tool, and 'Import video' to choose a film to work on.

If you have an Android tablet, try the free app VideoPad Video Editor (www.snipca.com/12785). It's more basic than SmartPixel, but lets you record and share videos, and has editing tools such as transitions.

Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Reviews

New products tested by our experts

LAPTOP-TABLET | **£295** from www.snipca.com/12652

Acer Aspire Switch 10

A tiny, lightweight Windows 8.1 laptop-tablet hybrid with flaws

Although Windows 8 laptop-tablet hybrids are supposed to offer the best of both worlds, the models we've seen so far have actually been irritatingly inflexible. As a tablet, they're often quite heavy with low-resolution screens, while as a laptop they suffer from screens that can't tilt back fully making it difficult to get a comfortable viewing angle.

On the face of it, the Acer Aspire Switch 10 seems to solve these problems. As a tablet, it weighs just 550g, which is only 72g heavier than the iPad Air (see our review, Issue 411). As a laptop, you can tilt its screen so that it lies almost parallel to the keyboard. However, the Switch has other problems that make it less than ideal.

Tablet

While the Switch has a metallic appearance, it's actually made of plastic, though it is undoubtedly attractive with a subtle cross-hatch pattern. The casing isn't as robust as we'd like, but it was sturdy enough to survive an accidental tumble onto a hardwood floor from a height of five feet without so much as a scratch. Although lightweight for a 10in tablet, it's not especially comfortable to hold for long periods due to its boxy contours that dig into your skin.

> "For all the things it gets right, it gets many more wrong"

A bigger flaw is that the 10in screen only has a miserly resolution of 1366x768 pixels. This makes text look jagged, which is instantly noticeable, at least when you first use the Switch. Colour accuracy is merely okay, but the screen is bright.

Like many other Windows 8 tablets, the Switch has a useful selection of ports and slots. There's a microSD card slot for adding extra storage. This is essential because the 32GB SSD has less than 20GB of usable space and will fill up quickly. Alternatively, you can plug external storage into the microUSB port using a USB-On-The-Go cable (£3 from www.snipca.com/12655). There's also a micro HDMI port for connecting the Switch to a TV or monitor.

You can of course use Desktop programs designed for a keyboard and mouse with the touchscreen, but it makes more sense to use apps specifically designed for tablet use. You can download these from Microsoft's app store, but the selection isn't as broad as the range of apps available for the iPad.

Battery life was about average at just over eight hours when playing videos on a loop. Disappointingly, the keyboard dock doesn't have a battery of its own to boost this even further.

Laptop

The tablet connects magnetically to the keyboard dock to form a laptop the size of a netbook. You can even connect the screen back to front and upend the Switch when it's positioned in a tent-like shape (see image on page 19). It's less fiddly than many other hybrid docking systems, although it's not quite as seamless as Acer claims. You still need two hands to dock or undock the tablet and you have to line up both precisely for a successful connection. The relatively large screen hinge digs into your thighs a little when the Switch is used on your lap, but it's not nearly as uncomfortable as other hybrids.

The keyboard increases the weight of the Switch to 1.1kg which is light enough to carry around all day with ease. And while there's no second battery, it does come with a full-size USB2 port for connecting drives, printers and scanners, although it's a shame it's not USB3.

The Switch's biggest letdown is its keyboard. The keys are small and a little spongy, so typing isn't as comfortable as we'd like. We still managed to type fairly

CORE M - THE FUTURE OF WINDOWS TABLETS

Today's Windows tablets are divided between those that use Core processors and those that use Atom processors, both of which are made by Intel. Core processors are much faster than Atoms, but, unlike Atoms, they need cooling fans. This not only means intrusive noise and uncomfortable heat, but also tablets that are far thicker than those that use ARM processors such as the iPad.

Intel claims its upcoming Core M processors, codenamed Broadwell, will use 30 per cent less power and generate 60 per cent less heat than existing Core processors, thereby doing away with fans and allowing for Windows tablets to be as thin or even thinner than the iPad. The first Core M-equipped tablets will start arriving in time for Christmas, but most models won't be available until next year.

quickly and accurately after some practice, but you'll find it very difficult if you have big fingers.

Another serious flaw is performance. The Switch is equipped with a 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3745 quad-core processor. Although this sounds powerful, it's actually just one quarter the speed of a typical Intel Core i5 dual-core processor found in – admittedly – more expensive laptops. Anything over and above basic video- and photo-editing tasks is out of the question. It's just about fast enough for web browsing and office work, although the paltry 2GB of memory means the Switch often becomes sluggish when using multiple programs simultaneously. Laptop-tablet hybrids with the upcoming Core M processors should be much faster. At least battery life was respectable at just over seven hours, although other laptops can last almost twice as long.

SPECIFICATIONS

10.1in 1366x768-pixel touchscreen • 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3745 quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 32GB SSD • Intel HD integrated graphics chip • Windows 8.1 • 550g (650g with charger) • 1.1kg when docked (1.2kg when docked and with charger) • 9x262x177mm • 20x262x177mm when docked (HxWxD) • One-year warranty • Part code NT.L47EK.004 www.snipca.com/12654

Conclusion

The Acer Aspire Switch 10 is frustrating. For all the things it gets right, it gets many more wrong. The Switch is really best seen as a cheap computer for a child or as a tablet with a keyboard accessory for occasional use rather than as a full-time replacement for a laptop. We'd rather have a better tablet, such as the iPad Air, with a Bluetooth keyboard. Alternatively, consider a superior budget lightweight laptop such as the Dell Chromebook 11 (see our review, Issue 426).

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper*, *Web User*, *Micro Mart* and *MacUser*, and the website Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS

We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.

Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

PRICES

Our reviews contain a link to the best price we found online at the time of press.

VERDICT: An average tablet paired with a so-so keyboard. Better-value alternatives are available

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVES: Dell Chromebook 11 £215 A far better budget ultra-portable laptop as long as you're happy to use Chrome OS instead of Windows

LAPTOP | **£329** from www.snipca.com/12638

Samsung Chromebook 2 13.3in

The first 1080p Chrome OS laptop

Up until now just about every laptop running Google's Chrome OS has had a comparatively low-resolution 1366x768-pixel screen – the one exception being the expensive Chromebook Pixel (see our review, Issue 394). That has now changed with the 13.3in Samsung Chromebook 2, the first Chrome OS laptop to have a 1920x1080-pixel screen.

Despite its name, the Chromebook 2 is actually Samsung's fourth Chrome OS laptop. As with Samsung's latest Galaxy Note phablets and tablets, its screen has a fake leather casing. While this gives it a tacky appearance, the grey shade and less conspicuous fake stitching make it less garish than the white Galaxy Notes. Although the lid flexes a little too easily for our liking when put under pressure, it's reasonably sturdy for a cheap laptop.

The 13in screen's 1080p resolution makes it easier to work on two documents side by side than on other, lower-resolution Chromebooks. It's also better for seeing fine details in high-resolution photos. However, so many pixels in a relatively small 13in screen means text is often too small to read. You can of course increase the size of text, but not all Chrome OS apps work properly when this is done. Although quite bright, the screen's image quality isn't ideal for serious photo editing – colours are a little washed out and can change depending on your viewing angle.

> "A good budget laptop, but it has performance problems"

The Chromebook 2 isn't equipped with a dual-core Intel processor, like most other Chrome OS laptops, but uses a Samsung Exynos 5 Octa 5800 processor instead. This eight-core processor is similar to the one found in the Samsung Galaxy S5 and while it sounds powerful, we encountered more performance problems here than with many Intel-powered Chromebooks. Even when running simple apps, such as Google Docs, we sometimes noticed the computer struggled to keep up with our typing.

Battery life was nothing special at seven hours 37 minutes when using undemanding apps such as Google Docs and Spotify. Although this is respectable, we've seen Intel-powered Chromebooks (albeit with smaller and lower-resolution screens) last almost twice as long.

Typing is fast, accurate and comfortable thanks to the well designed keyboard. The keys are a good size with plenty of feedback and travel. The touchpad is spacious and accurate, though it sometimes lagged behind our finger swipes and – due to the limitations of Chrome OS – it doesn't support basic gestures such as 'pinch to zoom'.

Chrome OS is very different to Windows. Apart from a few basic apps such as a file manager, most apps run inside the Chrome browser. Although these web apps don't have as many features as their Windows equivalents, most are free (or very cheap) and easy to use. Compared to Windows, there's little maintenance required. The apps and the operating system are updated automatically. By default, all your files are automatically backed up to the Google Drive online storage service and there's no need to run antivirus software because malware scanning is carried out on Google's servers.

The 13in Samsung Chromebook 2 is a good budget laptop, as long you're happy to forego Windows in favour of Chrome OS. However, while the high resolution of the 13in screen is useful, it won't suit you if you have less-than-perfect eyesight. Plus, compared to other Chromebooks, it has performance problems and relatively short battery life. Overall, the Dell Chromebook 11 (see our review, Issue 426) is better value.

SPECIFICATIONS

Samsung Exynos 5 Octa 5800 processor • 4GB memory • 16GB SSD • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 802.11ac/a/b/g/n • Chrome OS • 1.4kg (1.7kg with charger) • 17x224x323mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty • Part code XE503C32

www.snipca.com/12637

VERDICT: A fine Chromebook but not as good value as rival models due to some annoying flaws

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: Dell Chromebook 11 £215 A smaller, lower-resolution screen but longer battery life and faster performance

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SMARTPHONE | **£479** from www.snipca.com/12656

LG G3

The large phablet from the makers of the Nexus 5

TV maker LG is almost unknown for its range of Android phones, but the Korean giant is the company that actually makes the Google-branded Nexus 4 and 5 smartphones. The G3 is LG's flagship phablet - a smartphone that's so big, it could almost be considered a tablet.

The G3 is a huge phone due to its 5.5in screen. It's difficult to hold and use single handed unless you have big hands. It's so cumbersome, we accidentally dropped it several times. Although the back cover did come off, and the battery tumbled out, the phone was unscathed, despite smacking onto pavements. This is all the more impressive as the metal construction is plastic. Unusually, the power and volume buttons are on the back of the phone, rather than the sides, and are slightly recessed to prevent accidental presses.

The G3 is the first phone to have a gargantuan screen resolution of 2560x1440 pixels, which is usually reserved for tablets and desktop PC monitors. The screen doesn't actually display any more information than a phone screen with a 720p or 1080p resolution, though. The extra pixels are instead used to increase the sharpness of text, but we only noticed a slight increase in sharpness when compared to both the Sony Xperia Z2 and the iPhone 5s (see our reviews, Issues 426 and 408 respectively). It's still a good quality screen, though – bright with accurate-looking colours.

LG tries to compensate for the G3's unwieldy size by including a setting to shrink the size of the onscreen keyboard and dialling pad so that they're easier to use with a thumb. This looks strange, but it does help, although there's no shortcut for quickly turning it on and off - you instead have to find the option buried in Settings.

LG has modified Android 4.4 KitKat in other ways, many of which will be familiar to owners of Samsung's Galaxy Note range of phablets. You can run two apps side by side simultaneously, although doing so can be very cramped and only a handful of apps are supported. The phone can use the front-facing camera to track your eyes so the screen doesn't go to sleep when you're reading a long block of text. This didn't always work in our test, but it had a higher rate of success than the same feature on the Galaxy Notes. You can scribble notes on the screen with your finger, handy for quickly jotting down phone numbers.

Many of LG's additions to KitKat are of little value though. The option to unlock the phone by tapping the four corners of the screen in a pattern you set is hardly more convenient than Android's standard unlocking methods. The Smart Notice personal assistant tries to automatically provide useful information, such as reminding you to return a missed call, but most of its functions aren't that helpful or are already included as part of Google Now.

We had no complaints about performance - the quad-core processor and plentiful memory made short work of our benchmark tests. Battery life was in line with what we expected. When used for web browsing, photography, GPS and making calls, it lasted 22 and a half hours on 4G and 25 hours on 3G.

LG claims its 13-megapixel camera uses lasers to achieve superfast focusing and it is a split second or two faster than other smartphone cameras. This doesn't sound like much, but could be crucial for capturing fleeting moments. Photos in both bright sunlight and darker conditions were sharp and reasonably detailed, but there was also a lot of noise. It can record video in 4K, but you'll need a 4K TV or monitor to see the difference.

The LG G3 is a good phablet, but its super high-resolution screen isn't a huge benefit and other large Android phones are even better. Our favourite is the Sony Xperia Z2 (see our review, Issue 426) which is waterproof, has a better camera and longer battery life too.

SPECIFICATIONS

5.5in 2560x1440 pixel touchscreen • 2.5GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 801 quad-core processor • 578MHz Adreno 330 graphics chip • 3GB memory • 16GB storage • 4G, micro SIM • microSD slot • Android 4.4 KitKat • 149g • 146x75x9mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/12657

VERDICT: A quality phablet that's fast and sturdy, although competing models are even better

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Sony Xperia Z2 £480 A big 5in Android phone with a waterproof design and longer battery life

MINI PC | **£353** from www.snipca.com/12693

Zotac ZBox Sphere OI520 Plus

A spherical Windows 7 PC

Computer active GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

As its name implies, the ZBox Sphere is a mini PC designed to resemble an orb, but it isn't completely spherical because it has a flat base and back. Even so, it's still unconventional and eye-catching. While the Sphere is pretty compact at just 154x154x161mm, its height means you may find it difficult to use it as a media-centre PC placed underneath your TV.

Another visual flourish is the blue strip around the Sphere's circumference that lights up when the PC is powered on. You can even change its behaviour in the Sphere's BIOS so that it pulsates, stays lit or gradually orbits around the PC. You can also turn the light off if you find it too distracting.

The Sphere has plenty of connections despite its unconventional shape, the most unusual of which is built-in 802.11ac Wi-Fi - uncommon for a PC. The Sphere comes equipped with 4GB of memory, a 500GB hard drive and an Intel Core i5 4200U 1.6GHz dual-core processor that can temporarily increase its speed up to 2.6GHz when needed.

The Sphere doesn't come with Windows, so you'll need to buy your own copy or install Linux which is free. Both Windows 7 and Windows 8/8.1 will work. Zotac provides the drivers on a USB stick, which is convenient as the Sphere does not have a built-in optical drive.

The Sphere sped through our benchmark tests, yet it runs almost silently and generates very little heat. It's also fast enough to play 4K video files due to the extra power provided by its Intel HD 4400 integrated graphics chip. This chip isn't powerful enough to play the latest 3D games, though, unless you're willing to settle for less detailed graphics.

An even cheaper version of the Sphere – the OI520 (without the 'Plus') – is available for £270, but it doesn't come with any memory or storage. Instead, you choose and fit these yourself. Doing so is easy, as you simply unscrew the top of the PC to access the interior. There are both SATA and mSATA ports so you could connect both an SSD and a hard drive.

The Sphere is a good mini PC, but unless you're really taken with its appearance the Intel NUC D54250WYK is better value. It's much smaller, has a faster graphics chip and is cheaper than either version of the Sphere. You have to fit your own memory and SSD, though, so the Sphere is still a good choice if you'd rather skip the mild hassle of installing these parts yourself.

VERDICT: An eye-catching mini PC that's fast and easily upgradeable

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Intel NUC D54250WYK £258 An even smaller DIY mini PC kit

SPECIFICATIONS

1.6GHz Intel Core i5 4200U dual-core processor • 4GB of memory • 500GB hard drive • Intel HD 4400 integrated graphics • 154x154x161mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/12750

Weird... but useful

In1Case for iPhone 5/5s

£30 from www.snipca.com/12731

A bizarre iPhone 5/5s case that has several built-in flip-out tools – a flathead screwdriver, Philips screwdriver, kickstand, tweezers, nail file, scissors and even pens and a toothpick. Ideal for tinkerers and DIY enthusiasts.

Olloclip 4-in-1

£60 from www.snipca.com/12732

A set of wide-angle, macro and fish-eye snap-on lenses that make your iPhone's camera even more flexible. The lenses won't fit if you use a case, unless you also buy Olloclip's own Quick-Flip case, which also lets you mount the phone on to a tripod.

Coach's Eye

£3 from www.snipca.com/12733

An Android, Windows 8 and iOS app that lets sports coaches record their athletes then annotate and play the footage in slow-motion. The Android version is free, but with in-app purchases.

Griffin Kazoo MyPhones

£15 from www.snipca.com/12734

These cute animal-themed headphones are designed for children. The plug has a colourful chunky grip for small fingers. The volume is limited to 85 decibels.

TV TUNER | **£56** from www.snipca.com/12685

Elgato EyeTV W

Watch live TV on your tablet or smartphone

The Elgato EyeTV W is a TV tuner that lets you watch, rewind and record live TV on your Android, Kindle Fire or iOS device. This seems old-fashioned because a huge range of programmes is available online using TV catch-up services such as iPlayer, but the EyeTV W is still potentially useful if you live in an area with slow broadband or want to enjoy your favourite show in the garden – especially programmes that aren't available online.

The matchbox-sized EyeTV W connects to your mobile device using Wi-Fi, with no need for a router. It comes with two TV antennas - a small portable antenna and a larger retractable antenna for use in areas with poor reception. It is easy to set up. Once you've installed the app (free from www.snipca.com/12681), switch the tuner on and it will appear in your phone or tablet's list of available Wi-Fi networks.

TV reception in our living room and in a public park, both in north London and within five miles of the nearest broadcast tower, was average at best when using the larger antenna. Small dips in signal quality don't just result in a fuzzy picture like old analogue TV tuners, but a glitchy image that jumps. Using the smaller antenna resulted in no picture at all. Unless you get a perfect signal, using the EyeTV W will be frustrating. The app recommended that we turn off our phone's GPS to improve reception, but this made no difference.

If you do manage to get a good signal, then the EyeTV works well. You change channels by swiping the screen, and you can record whatever you're watching with a single tap. You can't schedule recordings, though, so the ability to record is of limited use and certainly no replacement for a dedicated PVR. The battery life lived up to its claimed four hours.

The EyeTV W is easy to use, but it's far too sensitive to dips in signal quality so it's only worth buying if you live in an area with strong TV reception.

SPECIFICATIONS

Freeview • 802.11b/g • 1x micro USB port • 1x retractable antenna • 1x mini antenna • 11x16x64mm (HxWxD) • 44g www.snipca.com/12681

VERDICT: A tiny, easy-to-use portable TV tuner, but it needs a very strong TV signal for watchable picture quality

★★★☆☆

ALTERNATIVE: PCTV Broadway 2T £150 Needs to be connected to a router to work so it's not portable, but it's two tuners in one so two people can watch different shows at the same time

MUSIC SOFTWARE | **£20** from www.snipca.com/12690

Ashampoo Music Studio 5

An alternative to iTunes for organising your music collection

Most people choose a program to organise their music library based on which portable music player they own – so iPod and iPhone owners tend to stick with iTunes for example. These programs also have the benefit of being free. All of this makes it difficult for Ashampoo to tempt users to switch to Music Studio 5 – especially as it costs £20.

Music Studio is designed to work alongside these programs rather than replace them. The program can be used to tag, edit and convert your music files, rip and burn CDs as well as make CD covers and inlays.

Music Studio loads very quickly, especially when compared to iTunes, and has a Windows 8 Modern-style interface so you can use it with a touchscreen or a keyboard and mouse. Some features can only be accessed using a wizard-style interface, though, which will irritate advanced users who know what they're doing. When organising your music collection, you can choose whether to work on the originals or to work on copies. The program will scan your collection and offer to automatically fix any problems it finds, such as missing tags. If the program can't automatically fill in any missing tags, you can use the Tag editor to add them by hand. You can select multiple tracks and change an individual tag for all of them at the same time – to add a cover to an album, for example. The Tag editor doesn't support some tags which serious music collectors will want, though, such as Composer.

Music Studio can read and convert between all the common file formats, as well as a few obscure ones too. A basic editor is included for cutting up tracks, evening out inconsistent volume levels and adding basic effects such as crossfades. The Video-2-Music feature can extract the audio from MPEG-4, AVI and WMV video files out of the box – you'll need to install extra codecs to handle anything else – and convert them into any of the supported audio formats.

You can rip audio CDs with several quality settings available, letting you set the balance between audio quality and file size to suit your needs. You can also create sophisticated-looking CD covers and inlays that look far better than anything iTunes or Media Player can produce.

If you have a large but disorganised music collection, then Ashampoo Music Studio 5 is just the program to sort it out.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS
Windows Vista or later • 2.4GHz processor or faster • Monitor with 1024x768 resolution or higher • www.snipca.com/12691

VERDICT: Not everyone will need Music Studio 5, but if your music library is a mess then this program can bring order to chaos

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Magix MP3 Deluxe MX £40 A music organiser aimed at advanced users, although some of its features are gimmicky

WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

Which device is best to film gigs?

Q I want to record my band's gigs and post the videos on YouTube. Do I need to buy an expensive video camera or could I use my smartphone or tablet? I would like to use a wired link from the band's mixing desk to get the best sound, rather than use a microphone.

Paul Brown

A If you're not too fussy about video quality and don't mind a bit of leg work, then the cheapest option is to replace the audio track in the video recording from your phone or tablet with the band's own sound recording of their performance. You'll need video-editing software, such as Adobe Premiere Elements 12 (£60 from www.snipca.com/12745) to do this.

If you want the best video quality and more convenience, then you'll need to cough up for a dedicated video camera such as the Panasonic HC-W850 (£619 from www.snipca.com/12747).

You can then connect the feed from the band's mixing desk to the camcorder using a Beachtek DXA-2T adapter (£149 from www.snipca.com/12748). In either case, it would be wise to do a test run to make sure everything works.

Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at letters@computeractive.co.uk

SMART THERMOSTAT | **£265** from www.snipca.com/12705

Heatmiser neoKit 2

Make your home more efficient with 'smart' heating and hot water

Computer active GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

Few of us bother to program our thermostats properly because they're difficult and fiddly to use, but this can be a big waste of energy. Heatmiser Neo is a smart thermostat designed to put your home's heating back into your hands.

The basic neoKit 1 (£187 from www.snipca.com/12704) consists of a single thermostat and a 'Neohub' that connects the thermostat to your router so that you can control it using your smartphone or tablet. The thermostat must be wired in directly to the boiler. Unless you're very confident with home mains wiring, get a qualified electrician to do this.

The neoKit 2 includes a hot water programmer and, like the neoKit 1, must be wired to the boiler, but if you only want to control your heating, get the neoKit 1. You can divide your home into multiple heating 'zones', such as one upstairs and another downstairs, so that you can set the temperatures for each independently. To do that, you will need additional thermostats, which cost £69 each. The system supports up to 32 zones, which can even include electric underfloor heating. All devices are available in black and white and look fairly attractive.

Once everything is installed, setup is quick and surprisingly painless. The colourful picture-led manual is easy to follow, taking us through using a smartphone to complete the process. This is where we hit a potential snag: the neoKit 2 will work without a smartphone or tablet, but without one, it's a just a fairly conventional thermostat which you programme using the control panel on the front.

With an iOS, Android or Windows Phone device, things get much more interesting. Once you've downloaded the free app (from neo.heatmiser.com) and registered for a free account, you can control your home heating from anywhere you have internet access. However, there is no web interface you can use to control it from a computer. If your internet connection goes down, so does the app, though the control panel and any timings you've already set will still work.

The thermostat has four customisable 'comfort levels' corresponding to different times of day: wake, leave, return and sleep. We set 'wake' to heat our bedroom to 21 degrees Celsius at 7am, then 'leave' to 16 degrees at 8am when we went to work, 'return' to 21 degrees at 6pm and 'sleep' to 17 degrees at 11pm.

If you have multiple heating zones, each one can have different settings for each comfort level. Zones can also be put into standby, meaning the heating won't come on unless the temperature drops low enough for you to need to protect your pipes from frost. For hot water, you can set different times for each day of the week or have one set of times for weekdays and another for weekends.

By setting those levels and then tweaking them to suit you, your home and water will be heated much more efficiently, which means you save energy and money. The process of setting all this up is a little fiddly, due to the sluggish apps, but still far easier than with a conventional thermostat. There was a delay of approximately 10 seconds after changing a setting before the screen reflected it. Heatmiser has promised new and improved apps later this year.

Even so, the current apps are still very useful. If it starts raining while you're out for a walk, then you can set the thermostat to temporarily boost the temperature in time for your return home. If you forget to turn off the heating when you're away on holiday, you can do so using the app. Clever in-app profiles allow, for example, one set of comfort levels for winter and another for summer, switching when the seasons change.

The Heatmiser neoKit isn't cheap, but it makes programming your heating and hot water much easier and more convenient, and it should save you money in the long run. If you're one of the few to have mastered your programmable thermostat, the neoKit won't be that useful, but for the rest of us, it's a good buy.

VERDICT: It's not cheap, but this kit really does make it easy to heat your home more efficiently and comfortably

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Heatmiser PRT-TS Wi-Fi £99 The previous-generation Heatmiser smart thermostat is more fiddly to set up and has less sophisticated programming options, but it's cheaper and still works fairly well

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Requires iOS, Android or Windows Phone device • NeoHub requires Ethernet connection to your router

neo.heatmiser.com

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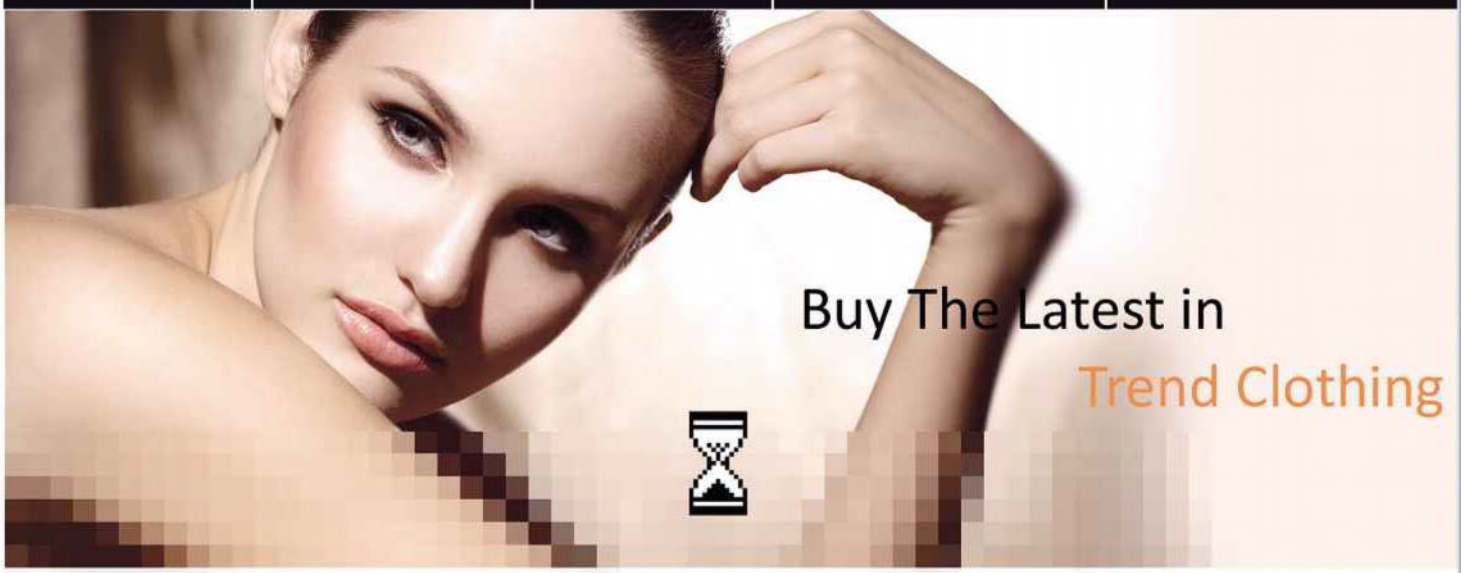

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Sony Alpha A5000

SLR quality meets point-and-shoot convenience

We've been singing the praises of Sony NEX cameras for years. With their SLR-quality sensors and interchangeable lenses squeezed into slim, lightweight builds, they deliver premium image quality without the bulk and complexity of a conventional digital SLR.

Sony has killed off its NEX brand name, but the Alpha A5000 is cut from the same cloth as last year's impressive NEX-3N (see our review, Issue 408). It's one of the cheapest models in the new Alpha range. Compared to its pricier stablemates, its controls are more basic, its performance slightly slower and there's no touchscreen. It retains the NEX-3N's pop-up flash, slim bundled lens and hinged screen (see photo, bottom right), which flips right over for those who like to take selfies.

The NEX-3N didn't have Wi-Fi capability, but the A5000 does. Using the free app (Android: www.snipca.com/12627; iOS: www.snipca.com/12628), you can wirelessly transfer photos to your devices. You can also use your devices as a remote control for the camera. The remote-control feature sounds complicated to set up, but is easy to configure on Android devices that support NFC (hold them together to make the connection and launch the app). It took us longer to

> "Image quality is top notch with balanced, vibrant colours"

enable it for Apple devices because the option is buried in the camera's huge number of menus.

There's something to be said for menus that offers tons of options, but key settings such as autofocus, white balance and JPEG/RAW settings should be easier to find for advanced users keen to experiment with them. Whereas the NEX-3N – and virtually all other modern digital cameras – include a quick-access menu for the most commonly used functions, this is notably absent here. You can change the functions of buttons on the rear of the A5000, but there aren't enough buttons to cover all the features you'd want to use on a regular basis.

Computer active GREAT PICK ★★★★☆

Still, as a purely point-and-shoot camera, the A5000 is hard to fault. It's comfortable to hold, its burst-shooting mode is very fast and its In-Camera Guide feature is packed with useful tips for novices. Image quality is top notch, with vibrant, balanced colours and fast, reliable autofocus. The big SLR-style sensor keeps grainy image noise to a minimum, producing immaculate skin tones and subtle textures in bright conditions. The 20-megapixel resolution means there's enough detail for big prints. Video quality is also excellent, with flattering colours, fast autofocus and little noise in low light.

For all its strengths, the A5000 doesn't quite dislodge the Panasonic Lumix GF6 (see our review, Issue 405) as our favourite CSC. The two are similar, but the GF6's better controls and wider range of compatible lenses suit both casual and keen photographers, so it's less likely you'll outgrow it. The A5000 takes better photos in low light, though, so if this is a priority for you then it's still a good buy.

SPECIFICATIONS

20-megapixel sensor • 3.1x zoom (24-75mm) • 3in hinged screen • accepts SD, SDHC, SDXC and Memory Stick Pro Duo storage cards • 385g • 63x118x65mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/12631

VERDICT: Superb image quality, but the basic controls are suitable only for casual users

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6 £329 Small, elegant, fast and with lots of features. Photo quality is excellent and videos are even better

PROJECTOR | **£500** from www.snipca.com/12730

Epson EH-TW490

A bargain HD projector

Budget projectors almost always use DLP technology which helps keep the price low, but produces unwanted rainbow effects in videos with black-and-white or fast-moving scenes. That's not the case with the Epson EH-TW490 as it uses LCD technology instead, which is unusual for a budget projector.

Unsurprisingly for a projector at this price, the EH-TW490 only has a 720p resolution and a fairly low 12,000:1 contrast ratio. There are dials for adjusting the focus and zoom, but there aren't controls for shifting the position of the lens. There is a control for straightening the projected image if the projector isn't facing your wall

> "Picture quality is very good given the price"

straight on, although this should be used a last resort as it can distort the image

The remote control doesn't light up for use in the dark, but it does have every control you'll need, including switching inputs. There are plenty of ports to choose from for a budget projector, including one HDMI port, composite, S-Video, VGA and stereo phono ports.

The EH-TW490 is small enough to sit out of sight on a bookshelf, so it's ideal if you want to avoid installing a dedicated shelf or ceiling mount for the projector. It's also light enough to take with you on the move using the included carry case. The cooling fan exhaust points forwards, so it won't ever get blocked while projecting an image, although the built-in speaker points behind so it could get muffled depending on where you put it.

You'll want to use external speakers anyway because the built-in speaker lacks bass and is so tinny that we often struggled to hear quiet dialogue in films over the noise of the cooling fan, which isn't that loud.

Picture quality is very good given the price, although we spotted some noise and a mild lack of contrast in our Blu-ray and Netflix test footage, especially in darker scenes. It nonetheless looked impressively bright with vibrant colours. It's good enough that you don't have to draw the curtains just to watch a TV show, but for the very best picture quality you'll still have to watch in the dark.

It's a good job the picture looks as good as it does out of the box, as there are relatively few image-quality options. There are enough settings to compensate for the lack of contrast, but there aren't any controls to prevent the juddery motion that occurs in some movies with fast-moving scenes.

Despite these niggling flaws, the EH-TW490 is still a good-value projector. Simply put, you can't get a better home cinema projector at this price.

VERDICT: Although Epson has made a few sacrifices to keep the price down, this is still a great-value HD projector

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: BenQ GP10 £394

Even cheaper and supports 3D playback, but makes do with DLP projection

SPECIFICATIONS

1280x800 pixel resolution • 12,000:1 contrast ratio • 3000 lumens • HDMI, composite, S-Video, VGA and phono ports • 77x297x234mm (HxWxD) • 2.4kg • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/12729

COMING SOON

SUMMER 2014

The Motorola Moto 360, one of the first smartwatches to use Google's Android Wear operating system, has been announced. Due out later this summer, the 360 will apparently support wireless charging.

SEPTEMBER 2014

Rumours suggest the iPhone 6 will come in two sizes – 4.7in and 5.5in, with the smaller model released first. The screens will reportedly have a resolution of 1704x960 and a sapphire coating.

Image credit: Martin Hajek

AUTUMN 2014

Reports say that the Nexus 9, the 9in successor to the Nexus 7, will be made by HTC not Asus. The tablet is rumoured to have an Nvidia Tegra processor and Android L.

Image credit: Android Police

WINTER 2014

LG has announced a smartwatch for kids, the KiZON. It will let parents track the wearer via GPS and listen in via phone. The child will also be able to ring their parent's phone with a single button press. The KiZON is due to arrive by the end of year.

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Buy It

Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Apple MacBook Air 13in Mid-2013 128GB
£849 from www.snipca.com/10020
Tested: Issue 402

Apple's latest MacBook Air isn't cheap, but it's the best lightweight laptop available. It has excellent battery life, a comfortable keyboard, a sensibly sized screen, a sturdy and classy build and great bundled software.

ALTERNATIVE: Dell Chromebook 11 A ChromeOS ultra-portable laptop with good battery life and a great keyboard £179 from www.snipca.com/12413

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Kaveri Evolution
£500 from www.snipca.com/11804
Tested: Issue 422

A budget PC with a fast overclocked processor. It also has good upgrade potential and comes with a surprisingly good 24in monitor, as well as a quality USB keyboard and mouse.

ALTERNATIVE: Braebo Hemera A cheap complete PC system that's powerful enough for basic tasks. £350 from www.snipca.com/12606

TABLET

Asus Nexus 7
£199 from www.snipca.com/9993
Tested: Issue 407

An excellent budget 7in Android tablet with a high-resolution screen and good battery life. It's not quite as cheap as the original Nexus 7 and Android still needs more high-quality tablet apps, but it's still a fantastic bargain.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air A lightweight 10in tablet with an excellent screen and peerless selection of apps. £399 from www.snipca.com/10545

PHONE

Motorola Moto G
£150 without contract from www.snipca.com/12031
Tested: Issue 413

Motorola's budget Android smartphone is a steal. It's responsive, well made, fast and has a good screen. It's better than many phones at twice the price.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPhone 5s An excellent smartphone with a fingerprint scanner, a great-quality camera and very fast performance. £549 without a contract from www.snipca.com/10171

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6
£300 from www.snipca.com/12607
Tested: Issue 405

This compact interchangeable lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE: Fujifilm XF1 If you don't need the flexibility of removable lenses, this slim compact is a great choice. £130 from www.snipca.com/11115

E-READER

Kobo Aura
£119 from www.snipca.com/12147
Tested: Issue 410

A great e-reader with an easy-to-read lit touchscreen that can be tweaked extensively through its settings. There's no 3G version for downloading books on the go, but, unlike the Amazon Kindle, you can buy ebooks from independent retailers that use the ePub format.

ALTERNATIVE: Amazon Kindle Paperwhite (2013) An e-reader with a brilliant screen and some useful features. £109 from www.snipca.com/10532

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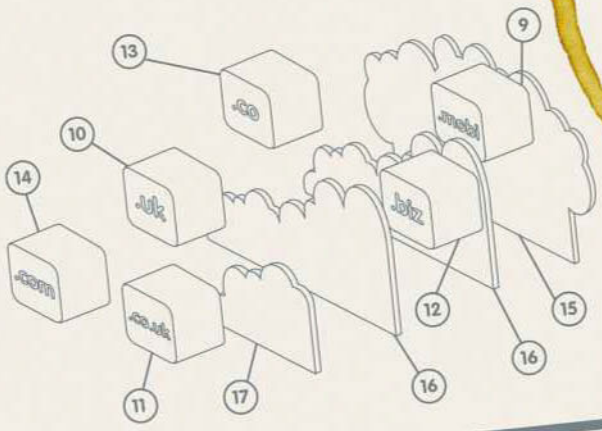

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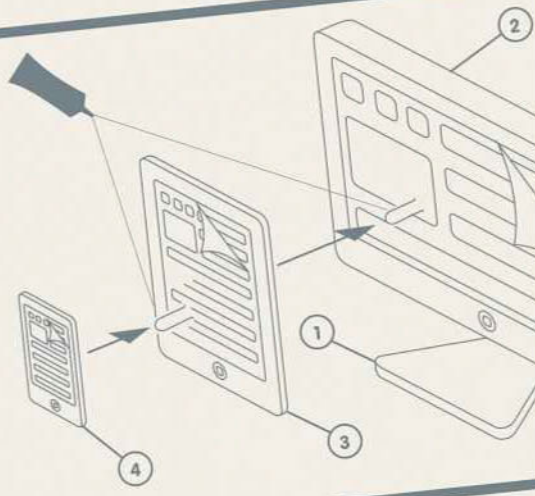

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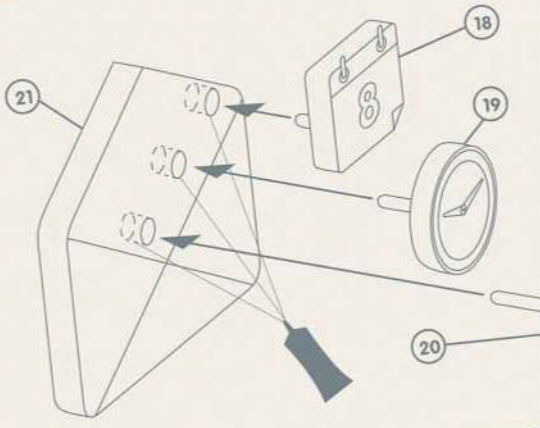

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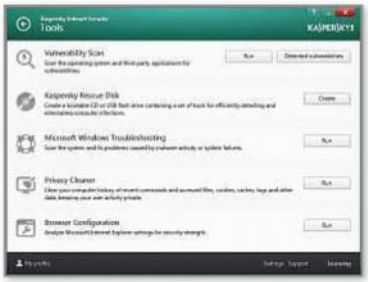
Buy It

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2014

£24 from www.snipca.com/12054
Tested: Issue 425



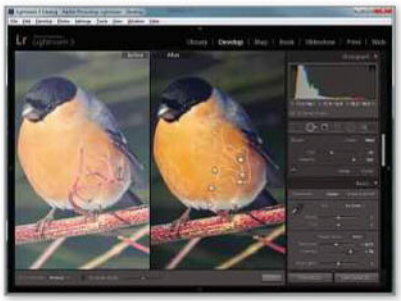
The best malware protection suite for the second year running also has good parental controls and the ability to create a rescue disc for emergencies. Click the link above for a 3-device licence, or buy a 1-device licence on our Software Store for just £17.99 (www.snipca.com/11134).

ALTERNATIVE: Norton Internet Security 2014 Great antivirus software but sometimes blocks legitimate software. £34 from www.snipca.com/11279

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5

£101 from www.snipca.com/12738
Tested: Issue 402



Lightroom is a consistently elegant, powerful and fast photo-management program packed with sophisticated features. If you want to keep on top of your photos and make them look great, there's no better software to do it with.

ALTERNATIVE: Adobe Photoshop Elements 12 A fast and polished photo-editing program with excellent advanced editing tools. £50 from www.snipca.com/12739

PC MONITOR

PRICE DROP

Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£200 from www.snipca.com/12740
Tested: Issue 378

An exquisite monitor with superb image quality, an adjustable stand, a high resolution and even a built-in USB hub. It costs a little more than other monitors, but it's money well spent. It's easily the best value monitor we've seen and is the one by which all others are judged.

ALTERNATIVE: AOC i2360PHU A good-quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB2 hub, too. £157 from www.snipca.com/12453

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£147 from www.snipca.com/11646
Tested: Issue 420

A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless-N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £90 from www.snipca.com/12741

ROUTER

NEW ENTRY

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£68 from www.snipca.com/12609
Tested: **Issue 427**

An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac. It's easy to set up, too.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features, too. £235 from www.snipca.com/12610

SMART TV

NEW ENTRY

Samsung UE32H6200

£420 from www.snipca.com/12490
Tested: Issue 427

A stylish 32in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras, too, such as recording-to-USB storage, 3D, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick, and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: Panasonic Smart Viera LED TV TX-L32E6B Excellent image quality at a low price £350 from www.snipca.com/12456

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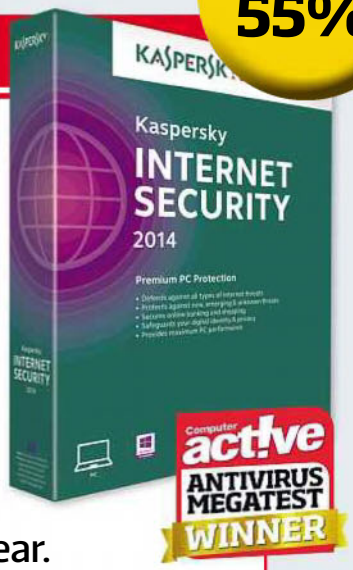

Kaspersky Internet Security 2014

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Workshops & Tips

PULL OUT & KEEP
Issue 428

14 pages of easy-to-follow workshops and expert tips

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38 Prevent programs from launching
40 Connect any printer to your Linux PC
42 Synchronise notes and events across every device

PLUS

43 Readers' Tips
44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better
47 Make Office Better
48 Secret Tips For... Windows 8.1

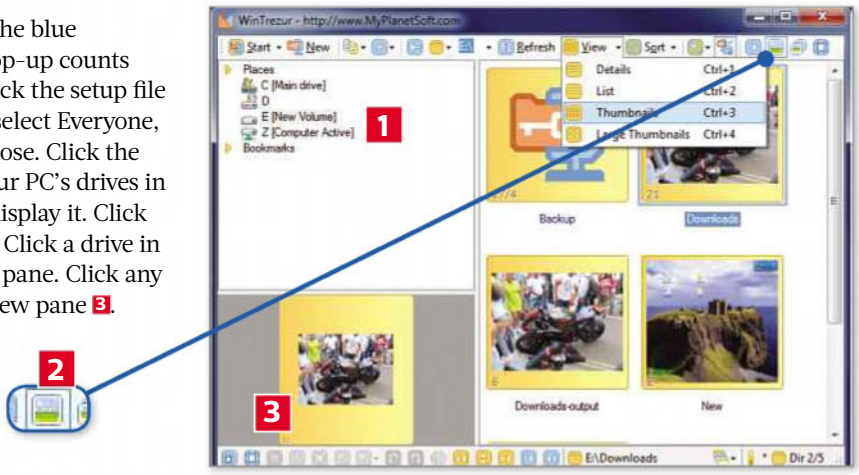
Turn any photo into a password

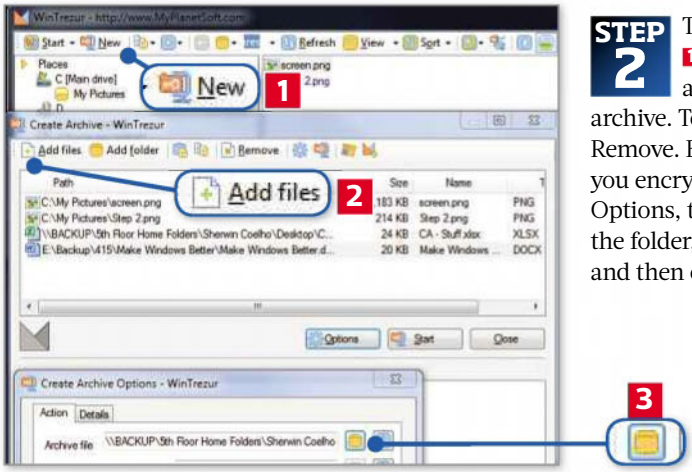
What you need: WinTrezur; Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1
Time required: 40 minutes

The new, free file-management program, WinTrezur, lets you create an encrypted file archive which can only be opened using a photo password. It also takes security a step further by letting you encrypt archives with two passwords that need to be entered one after the other. Other tools in the software let you find and delete duplicate files, batch-convert and resize a group of photos, create slideshows and edit images on your PC.

STEP 1

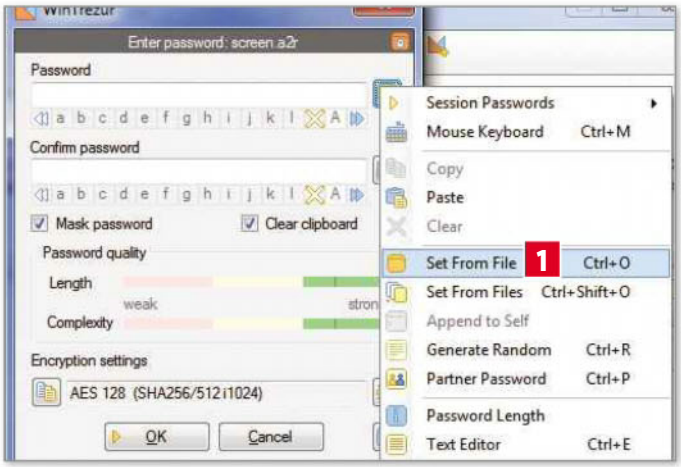
Go to www.snipca.com/12686 and click the blue 'WinTrezur.msi' button. Wait until the pop-up counts down to '0' and then click Download. Click the setup file that downloads to your PC, then click Run, Next, select Everyone, click Next (twice) to begin installing it and then Close. Click the WinTrezur icon on your Desktop to see a list of your PC's drives in the left pane 1. Click the Preview pane icon 2 to display it. Click the View dropdown menu and select Thumbnails. Click a drive in the left pane to see its files and folders in the right pane. Click any item on the right to see a preview of it in the Preview pane 3.



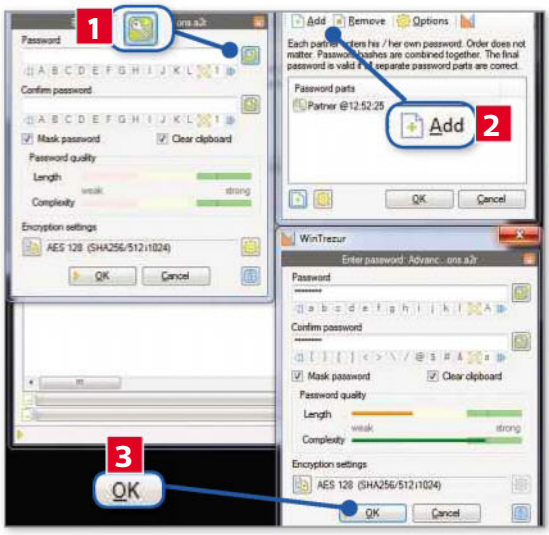


STEP 2

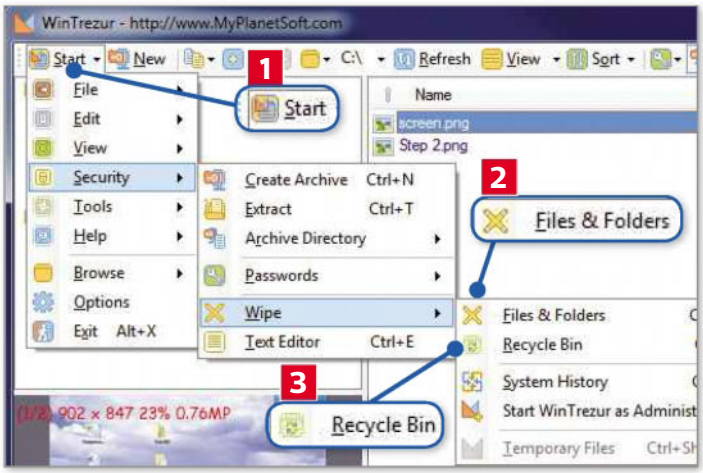
To create an encrypted archive and lock it with a photo, click New 1, 'Add files' 2, navigate to the file on your PC you want to encrypt and then click Open. Repeat this to add multiple files to your archive. To remove a file you mistakenly add, click it and then click Remove. By default, this archive is saved in the same folder as the first file you encrypt. If you want this saved in a new folder on another drive, click Options, then click the Folder icon 3, navigate to the drive you want, name the folder, click Save then OK. Click Start to begin encrypting your drive and then click OK.



STEP 3 You'll now be asked for a password with which you can unlock this encrypted archive. To add a photo as a password, click the key icon beside the Password field and then click Set From File 1. Navigate to the folder containing the photo you want to set as your password, click it, click Open and then OK. You'll see your encrypted archive in the folder you created. To access this archive, double-click it, click the Key icon and then click Set From File. To access the archive, navigate to the photo you set as your password, click Open and then OK.

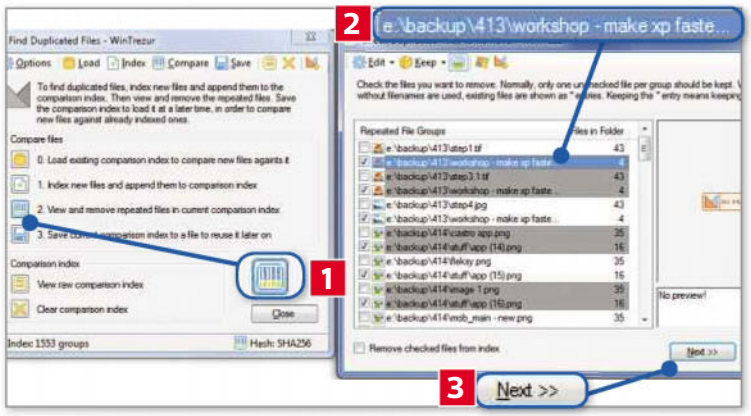


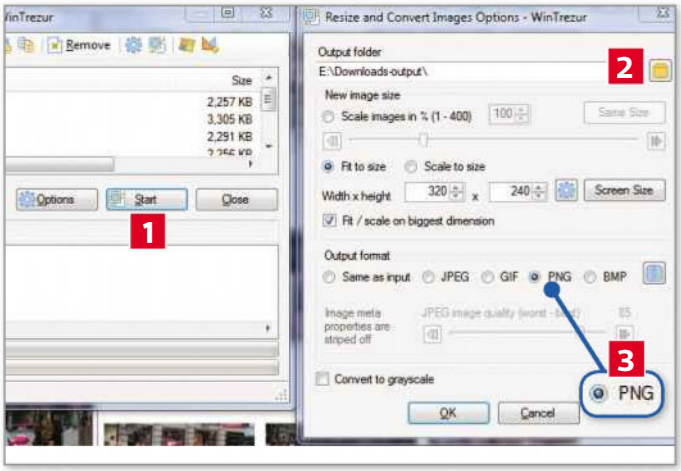
STEP 4 You can lock files with partner (two) passwords using the same process, with slight variations. Click New at the top, 'Add files' to add the files you want to the encrypted archive, click Start and then OK. Now click the key icon 1 and then click Partner Password. In the box that opens, click Add, enter and confirm your first password and then click OK. Click Add again 2, enter and confirm your second password and then click OK 3. To access this archive, double-click it, click the key icon, Partner Password, Add, enter your first password and click OK. Click Add, enter your second password and then click OK twice.



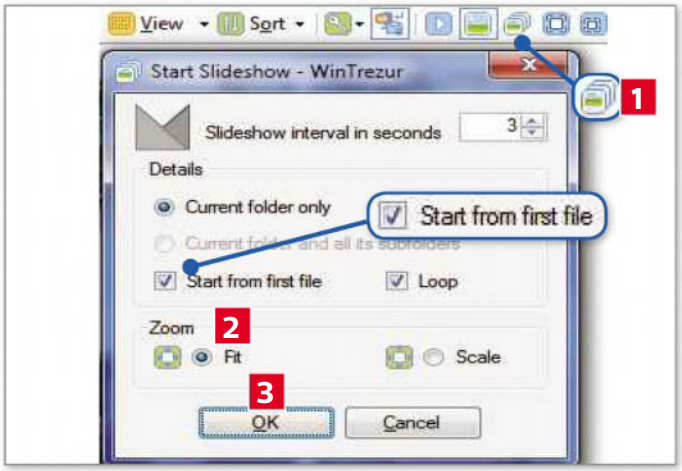
STEP 5 You can also delete items you no longer need securely so they cannot be accessed from the Recycle Bin or retrieved later using any recovery program. To do this, click Start 1, move your mouse over Security, then move it over Wipe and click 'Files & Folders' 2. Click 'Add files' (or 'Add folder') at the top, click the file (or folder) that you want to wipe and then click OK. Repeat this to add more files and folders you want to delete. When you've added all of them, click Start and then OK to wipe them. If you want to delete the items in your Recycle Bin to free up space on your PC, then click that option 3 after navigating through the Start menu.

STEP 6 To find duplicate files in a folder, click Start, move your mouse over Tools and then click Find Duplicate Files. Click 'Add folder', navigate to the folder you want to find duplicates from and then click OK, Start and Yes to begin scanning that folder for duplicates. Click OK after the scan's done, then the icon beside 'View and remove repeated files in current comparison index' 1. You'll see the original files, along with their ticked duplicate versions. Click a file 2 to see a preview (if available). Untick the duplicates you don't want to delete. Click Next 3 to see the folders containing the originals and duplicates and then click Delete, Start and OK to delete the duplicate files.

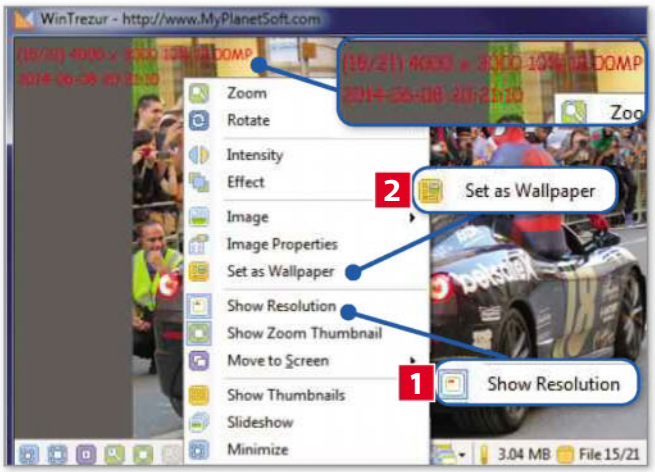




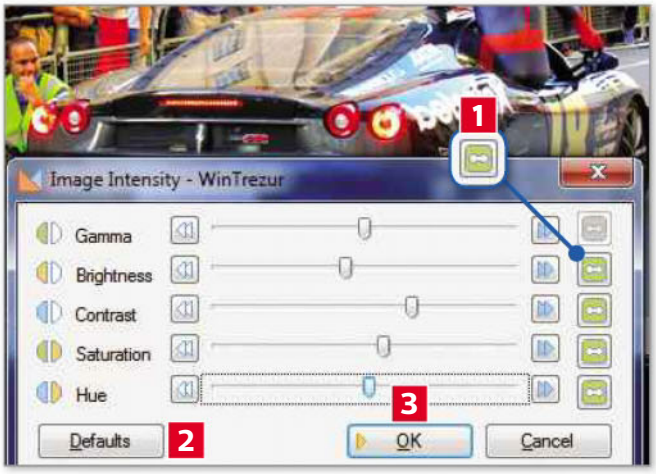
STEP 7 To resize and convert a group of images in one go, open the folder containing the images, click any image inside and then drag and drop it into the left pane of WinTrezur. It'll automatically open the folder containing that image on the right pane. Press Ctrl and click the images you want to resize. Next, click Start at the top left, move your mouse over Tools, click Resize Images and then click Start 1. Click the folder icon 2 and select a folder where you want to save these converted images. Select 'Fit to size' and enter the new size values you want in the width and height columns. Select the file format you want to convert to 3 and then click OK.



STEP 8 WinTrezur also lets you create a slideshow of images in a folder. To do this, navigate to the folder containing the images in the right pane, then click the Start Slideshow icon 1. Next, change the interval between images by clicking the up and down arrows at the top. Untick 'Start from first file' if you want the slideshow to play images randomly. Select Fit 2 if you want the photos to fit to your screen or Scale to scale them to their maximum resolution, then click OK 3 to begin your slideshow. Press Esc on your keyboard during the slideshow if you want to return to the WinTrezur screen.



STEP 9 To edit an image, navigate to its folder by clicking the drives on the left pane and double-click the image you want to edit. Press and hold your cursor to zoom into a particular area of that image. Right-click the image to get editing options. Click Show Resolution 1 to remove the EXIF data (size, width, megapixel count and date and time) that appears on the top left of the image by default. Click Image Properties to see more details about the Camera it was taken from, such as its ISO, and shutter speed. Click 'Set as Wallpaper' 2 to do that.



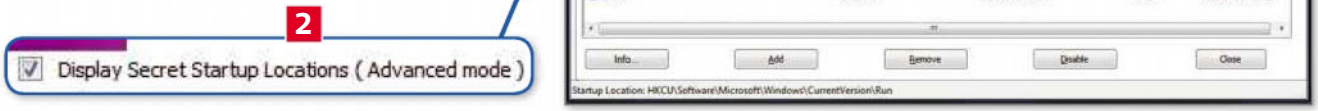
STEP 10 To add a preset effect to the image, right-click it, move your cursor over Effect and select one. To rotate the image, move your cursor over Rotate and select the orientation that you want. To increase the image's brightness, colour and contrast, right-click it, then click Intensity and move the sliders to see how the image would look. Click the Default icon beside any slider 1 to restore that effect to its default value. Click the Defaults button 2 to restore the image to its original state and OK 3 to save your changes.

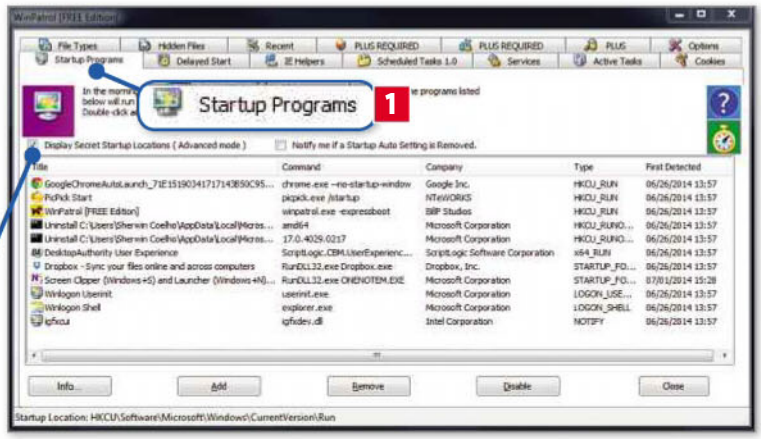
Stop programs that launch without you knowing

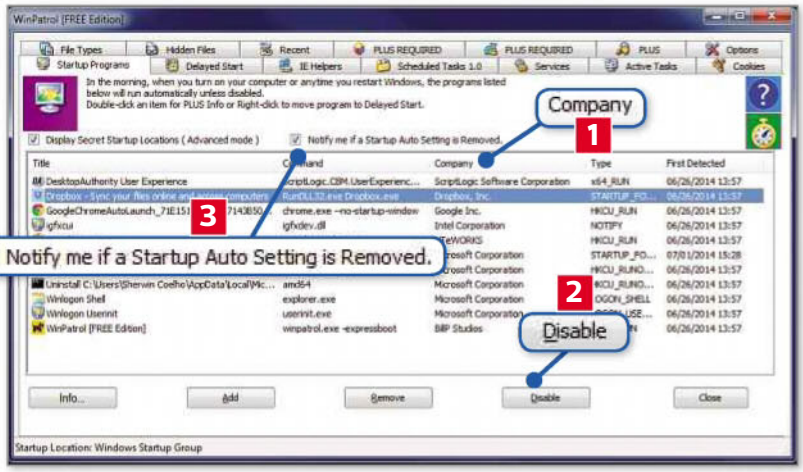
What you need: WinPatrol; Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 25 minutes

The latest version of free security software WinPatrol includes a new option that displays hidden startup programs, which – in our experience – are overlooked by other similar programs. You can disable these programs to speed up your boot time or make them start at a later time. Aside from this, WinPatrol lets you find and delete cookies that track your browsing habits. It also shows you everything that's running on your PC, so you can identify programs that are slowing it down.

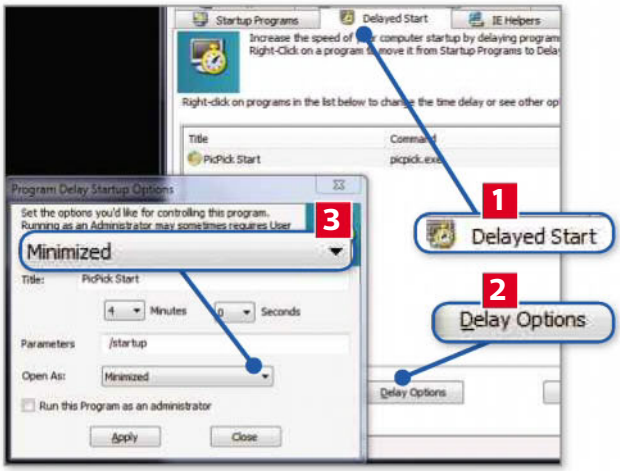
STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/12641 and click the 'Download WinPatrol v31.0' link. Click the setup file that downloads to your PC, click Next (twice), Install and then Finish. The program automatically opens in the Startup Programs tab 1, which gives you a list of programs that launch when you start up your PC. A new check box reveals startup programs that otherwise go undetected. Tick Display Secret Startup Locations 2 to see these.



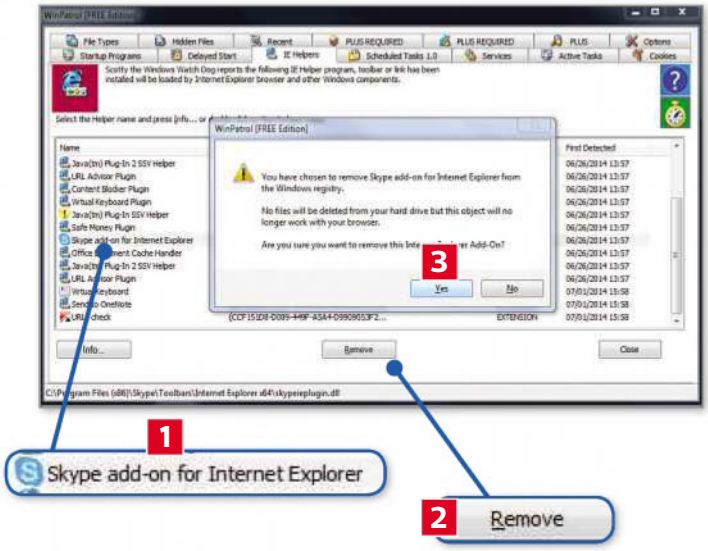




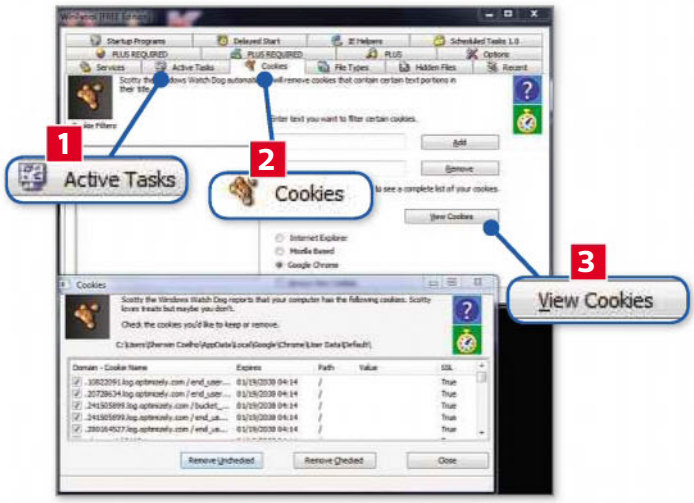
STEP 2 The more programs you disable at startup, the quicker your PC will boot. However, certain programs are needed for your PC to boot properly. Check the Company column 1 and leave any programs made by Microsoft Corporation or Intel Corporation enabled. Click a program you want to disable, then click Disable 2. If you want to remove it completely from this list, click Remove after clicking the program. Tick the box at the top 3 to be notified if these programs reappear in the startup list without your permission.



STEP 3 WinPatrol also lets you delay when a program starts up. Right-click a program you want to delay in the Startup Programs tab and then click 'Move to Delayed Start Program List'. Click the Delayed Start tab 1 to see your delayed programs. Click the program, then click Delay Options 2. Click the Minutes and Seconds dropdown menus to select how long after your PC starts you want this program to launch. Click the Open As dropdown menu 3 and select whether you want the program to open as a Normal Window, Maximised or Minimised.

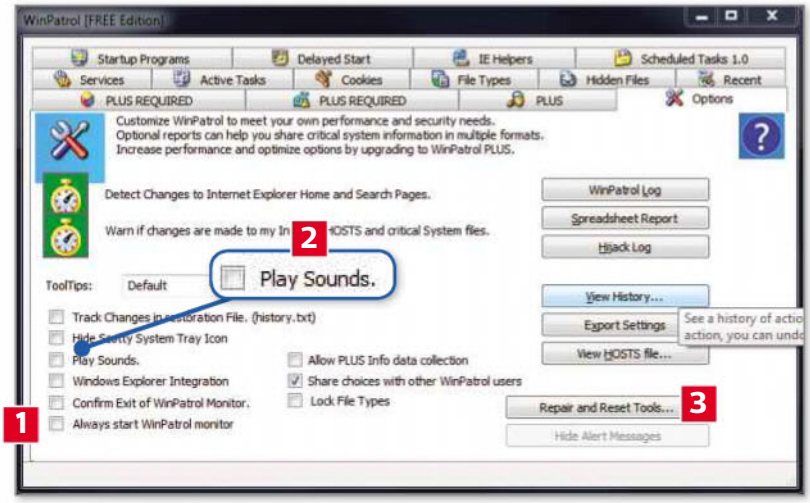


STEP 4 Click the IE Helpers tab to display your Internet Explorer plug-ins and extensions. If there are a lot of these running, it can slow down IE. To remove the ones you don't want, click an item 1, Remove 2 and then Yes 3. Sometimes programs you install automatically schedule tasks to run on your PC without your knowledge. To view and remove these tasks, click the Scheduled Tasks 1.0 tab, click a task you want to remove, click Remove and then click Yes.



STEP 5 A good alternative to Windows Task Manager is Active Tasks 1. Click the tab to see all the tasks running on your PC. If you want to stop a particular task from running, click it and then click Kill Task below. Most websites you visit download cookies that are stored on your PC to track your browsing habits, monitor your preferences and tailor content to suit your needs. To find and delete these cookies, click the Cookies tab 2, select your browser below and then click View Cookies 3. To delete all the cookies in one go, click Remove Unchecked. To delete only selected cookies, tick the cookies you want to delete and then click Remove Checked.

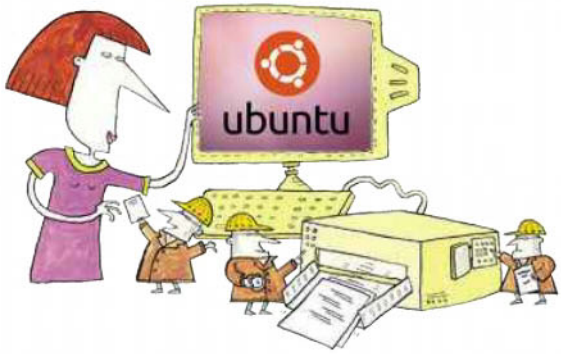
STEP 6 Anytime WinPatrol detects a program making changes to your PC, a pop-up alert will appear asking you what you want to do. Click Disable 1 to prevent the program from making any changes to your system or Open Folder 2 to open the folder containing the program's setup file. Click Accept Change or Reject Change 3. To launch WinPatrol after you've closed it, click the up arrow on the right of your taskbar and click the WinPatrol (Scotty the dog) icon.



STEP 7 If you want to prevent WinPatrol starting up with your PC and mute the sounds it makes every time it detects a change, click the Options tab and untick 'Always start WinPatrol monitor' 1 and Play Sounds 2. If you've made changes to a program using WinPatrol and it's affecting your PC's performance, click View History to see a log of the changes you've made, then go back and undo the change. If you don't have the WinPatrol icon in your taskbar system tray, click 'Repair and Reset Tools' 3, tick the seventh box and then click Apply.

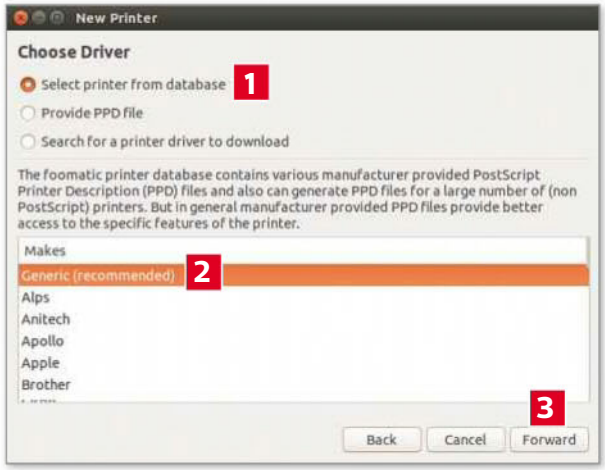
Connect any printer to your Linux PC

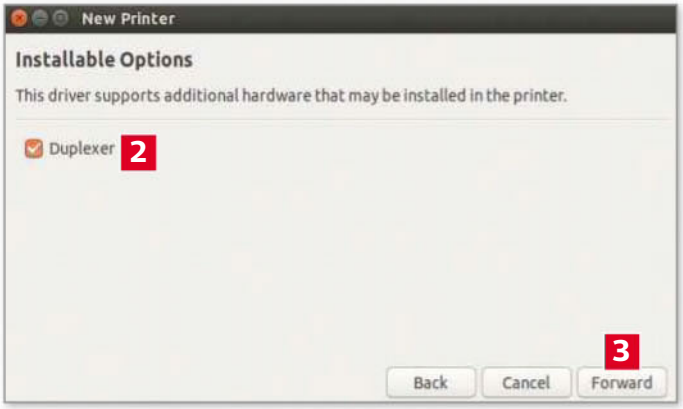
What you need: Ubuntu 14.04; printer **Time required:** 25 minutes



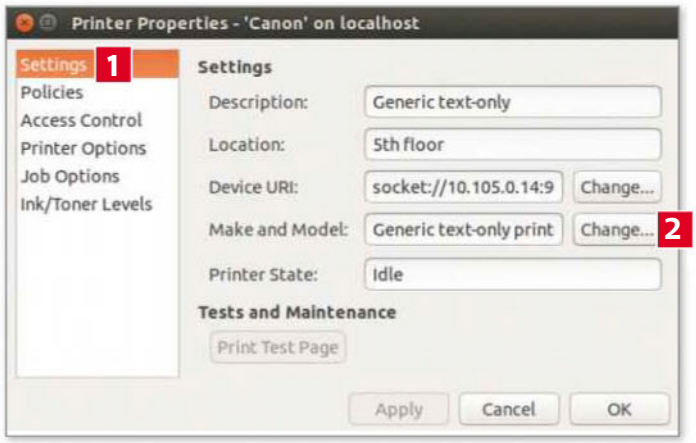
Installing a printer in Linux is not as easy as in Windows. If you're having problems with installation, try one of these five solutions, such as updating your printer driver configuration and using CUPS (Common UNIX Printing System), which is the standard for printing on most Linux distributions (distros). To check if your printer is compatible with Linux, go to www.snipca.com/12695 and click the links under Supported Printers. We're using Ubuntu 14.04 with different network printers.

STEP 1 Ensure your printer is connected to your PC and switch it on. Ubuntu will automatically detect some printer drivers. Click Dash, type printing and click Printers. Click +Add at the top left and then click the Network Printer dropdown menu. After a few seconds, it'll list the printers connected to your PC. Clicking your printer should display its Host and Port number. Click Forward to begin searching for the relevant printer drivers. Choose 'Select printer from database' 1, click 'Generic (recommended)' 2 and then click Forward 3 (twice). Give your printer a name and then click Apply. You'll see the printer added to 'localhost'. Click Print Test Page to test the printer.



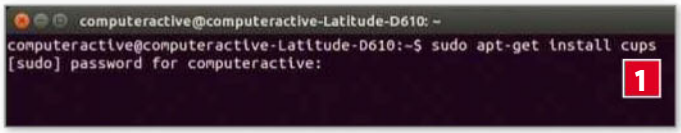


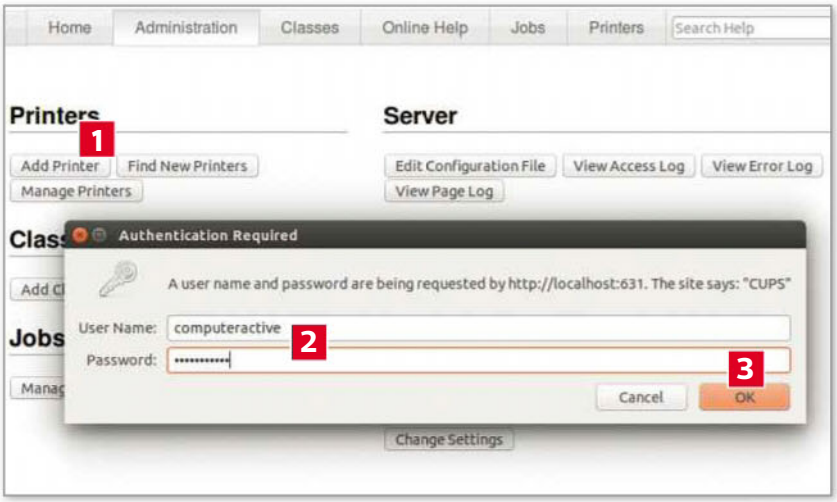
STEP 2 If the page doesn't print, try updating your printer configuration from the command line. To do this, click Dash, type terminal and click the Terminal. In the terminal, type sudo system-config-printer 1, press Enter, enter your password when prompted and press Enter again. If this works, it should bring up the New Printer window from Step 1. Click +Add and follow the steps in Step 1 to set up your printer. If after selecting your printer from the Network Printer dropdown menu you get the Duplexer option, tick it 2, click Forward 3, Apply, Print Test Page and then OK.



STEP 3 If your printer still doesn't work, try downloading its drivers manually. To do this, open Printers by going to Dash, clicking +Add, the Network Printer dropdown menu, then your printer and Forward. Click Settings 1 and then Change 2 beside 'Make and Model'. The printer make and model will be found on your printer (such as Canon IRC 2880). Select the make of your printer and then click Forward. Next, select your printer model and its corresponding driver (same name as the model), click Forward and follow the steps to install the printer driver and print a test page.

STEP 4 If you get a CUPS server error upon clicking Print Test Page, it may mean that your PC doesn't have CUPS installed. To install it, open the Terminal, type sudo apt-get install cups 1, press Enter, type your password and press Enter again. The packages should automatically download and install, launching the CUPS server. Next, open Printers from Dash and repeat Step 1 to check if it works.





STEP 5 If Step 4 doesn't work, open your Firefox browser – because the following method won't work with other browsers – type localhost:631 in the URL bar and press Enter. Click 'Adding Printers and Classes', Add Printer 1, enter your Ubuntu user name and password 2 (when prompted to), then click OK 3. It'll display a list of all the printers on your network. Click the Home tab at the top left, then 'Adding Printers and Classes' and Find New Printers to see all the printers connected to your network. Click Add This Printer beside the printer you want to add and then click Continue. Select your printer make, click Continue, select the printer model, click Add Printer, then click Set Default Options to confirm.

STEP 6 If Steps 1-5 don't work, open any browser, go to www.snipca.com/12695, click the name of your printer under Manufacturer-Specific Installation and follow the steps to manually install its correct driver. You can also contact your printer manufacturer to find out if your printer is compatible with Linux PCs. Another way of getting valuable feedback from people with similar problems is to post a question on the Ubuntu forum. Visit www.askubuntu.com/questions and click Ask Question at the top right.

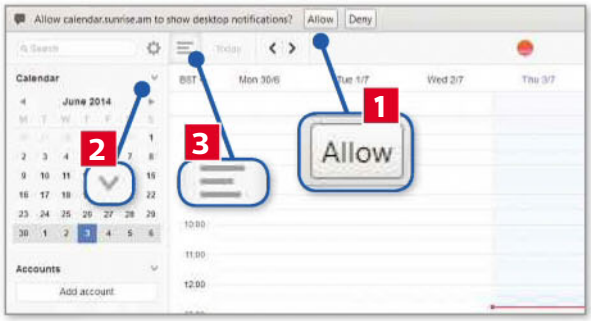
STEP 7 If you have more than one printer and want to set one as the default, open Printers from Dash, right-click the printer 1 you want to set as your default and click Set As Default 2. Select 'Set as my personal default printer' and then click OK. If you want to adjust your default printer's settings, double-click the printer to see its Properties. Click Printer Options on the left and click the dropdown menus beside the options you want to change. For example, to set your printer to print on both sides by default, scroll down to 2-Sided Printing, click the dropdown menu beside it and click On. Click Apply and then OK.

Synchronise notes and events across every device

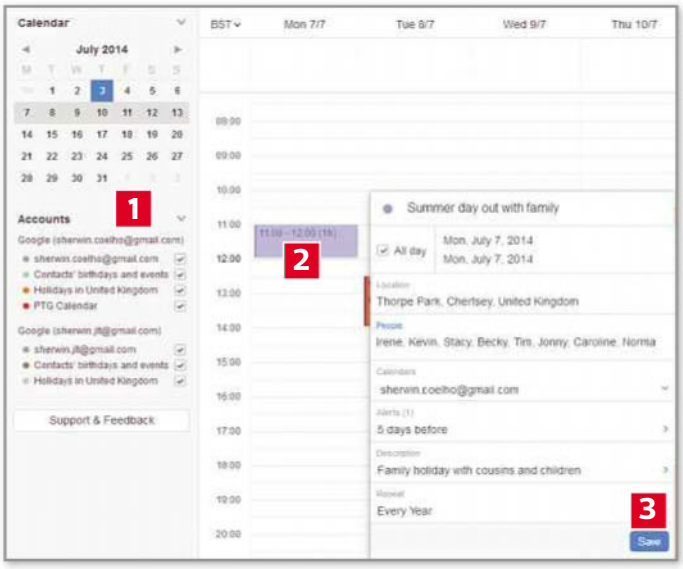
What you need: Sunrise Calendar; Android or iOS **Time required:** 20 minutes

Previously only available as a free iOS app, Sunrise Calendar is now available on Android. The latest update lets you add your Evernote account and sync notes and events across Evernote, Google Calendar and Sunrise. We'll show you how to add accounts, create events, customise your alerts, send invites to others, and keep track of your notes and events across every device.

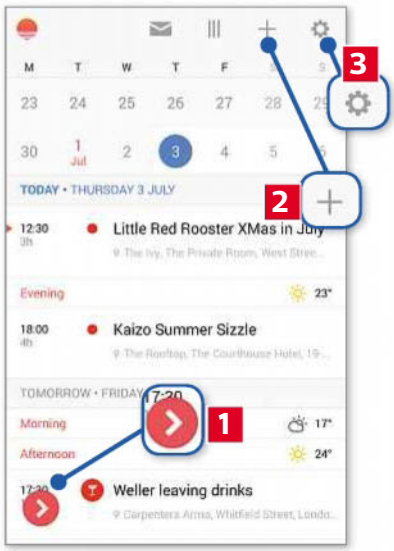
STEP 1 Go to www.sunrise.am, click 'Connect with Email', enter your email address and then click Next. Enter a password and then click Create New Account. Click Allow 1 to activate Desktop notifications. To move between days, click the left and right arrows next to Today at the top. Click the dropdown menu 2, if you want to minimise the Calendar at the top left. To hide the left-hand panel, click the button with three lines 3. To add other accounts to Sunrise Calendar, click 'Add account' on the left and then click Connect beside the account – such as Google, iCloud, Facebook or Evernote – you want to add. Enter your login details, click 'Add account', Accept and then Done.



STEP 2 You'll see the calendars you've added on the left 1. To hide particular types of event such as birthdays, untick the relevant box. To add an event to Sunrise, click a time slot 2, name your event, tick 'All day', click Location and enter where it takes place (public locations are included in the autosuggest options). Add the names (or email addresses) of people attending. Next, click Calendars and select the account you want this event synced to. Click the 'More options' link, Alerts, the dropdown menu and select when you want to be notified about it. Click Description to describe the event in more detail. Click Repeat, the dropdown menu and select at what interval the event occurs, then click Save 3. Click Send if you want to email an invitation to the people you've included.



STEP 3 Download the Sunrise Calendar app for Android (www.snipca.com/12647) or iOS (www.snipca.com/12648). We'll use Android, but it works the same on iOS. Open the app, tap 'Connect with Email', enter your login details and tap 'Sign in'. Tap to untick particular types of event you don't want to see, then tap Done. You'll see your notes and events automatically synced to your device. Swipe up or down from the bottom half to scroll through notes and events. Tap the red icon 1 to jump to the current day. To add a new event, tap '+' 2. Read any invitations you receive by tapping the Email icon beside it. To add another account and change your preferences, tap Settings 3.



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 6 Aug

- Fix PC problems that CCleaner can't
- Record everything you do on your PC
- Update your contact list automatically
- Convert every file in one click

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TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Create private chatrooms for free video calls

My son's studying in Exeter and my daughter in Oxford. When we use Skype to make family video calls, my children receive other Skype calls and get distracted. I discovered a new, free website that lets you create your own private chatroom and give anyone access to it (up to a maximum of eight people).

Ensure your microphone and camera are connected to your PC (unless your laptop already has these). Open Chrome, Firefox or Opera (it doesn't work in Internet Explorer yet) and go to www.appear.in. The field beside Create has a list of suggested room names you can create. To create your own, click inside the field, type a room name you want (such as 'familychat' or 'the-smiths-family'), click Create and then Allow.

If you want to lock that room name so that others can't use it, click 'Claim room' at the top right, enter your email address, untick the box (unless you want to receive emails about new features) and then click Claim. Now, enter the email addresses of the people you want to invite to this room. Click Next (twice) and then click 'Or select a file', navigate to a file you want to set as your room background, click Open and then click Complete. Next, click 'Start using your room!' and email the people you invited the link of your chatroom or simply tell them to open it in their browser.

They can even access this room and video chat from their iOS device using the free appear.in app (www.snipca.com/12726).

Jenine Smith

The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!

AUDIO EDITING

Create ringtones on your PC

I used to play in a rock band in the Eighties. I don't listen to our songs anymore, but when I heard of a new free audio-editing software called Ocenaudio, I thought it'd be great to edit sections of our songs and use them as ringtones.

Go to www.ocenaudio.com.br, click Free Download, click the setup file and follow the steps to download the program to your PC.

Drag and drop the track you want to edit from your PC to the left pane. You'll see it appear as waves on the right. Click anywhere on this wave to play your track from that point. To only edit a section of a track, click the Zoom icon at the top right. Highlight the section with your cursor and press the spacebar to only play that part. Right-click the section, then click Copy.

Now click File at the top left, New and then OK. Right-click anywhere in the blank window that appears and click Paste. Click File at the top left, Save As, navigate to where you want to save this file and name it whatever you want. Next, click the 'Save as type' dropdown menu, MP3 (MPEG Layer 3), then Save. Copy this track to your phone and then set it as your ringtone.

Jon Butt

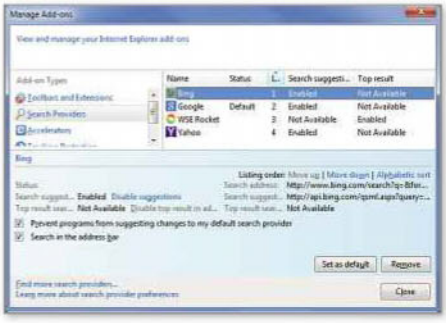
SEARCH

Stop programs changing your default search engine

One of the Windows programs I downloaded changed my Internet Explorer (IE) search engine to WSE Rocket. A friend showed me how to change it back to Bing and lock my search engine so other programs can't change it.

Open IE and click the Tools (cog) icon at the top right. Click 'Internet options', the Programs tab and then click the 'Manage add-ons' button in that section. Click Search Providers at the left, click the search engine you want to set as your default and then click 'Set as default' at the bottom right. Now tick the first and second boxes at the bottom left to lock your search engine and enable searching from the address bar.

Hattie Churchill



PASSWORDS

See all your saved passwords

I really liked your Google Chrome Secret Tips which you brought to my attention in Issue 427. However, there's another useful Chrome trick I use regularly because I tend to forget my saved passwords on different websites.

Whenever you type a password in Chrome, the browser offers to remember it so you don't need to re-type it the next time you visit the website. If you click the Save Password button, all your passwords are not only saved in Chrome, but can be accessed at any time on that PC.

To see your saved Chrome passwords, click the three lines at the top right, Settings, the 'Show advanced settings' link below and then 'Manage saved passwords' (under 'Passwords and forms'). You'll see all your account passwords denoted as dots. Move your cursor over a password that you want to see and then click Show. Type the password you use to log into your PC and then click OK to reveal it. Move your mouse over any other hidden passwords and click Show to reveal them.

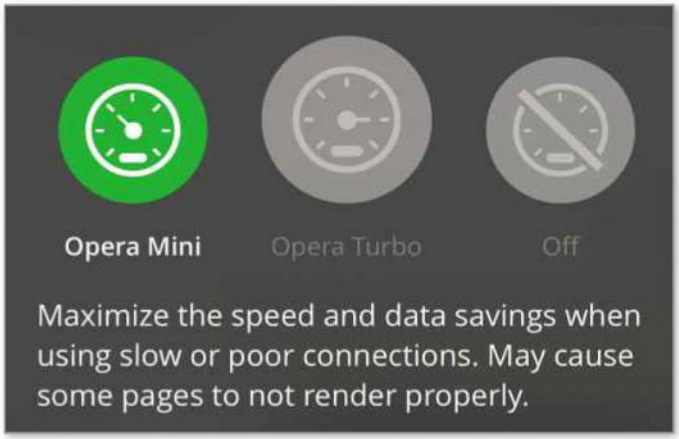
Timothy Abrahams

Phone and Tablet Tips Brilliant things to do on your device

iOS

Enable flash light notifications

Every time you get an app notification, miss a call or receive a message, your iPhone will vibrate or ring (depending on what mode it's on). However, if you'd rather have it emit an LED flash with the ringtone and vibration, there's an easy way to turn this on. Tap Settings, General, Accessibility, scroll down and then tap the slider beside 'LED Flash for Alerts'. Obviously, it helps if you keep your phone face down so that you can see the LED's bright flash blink.



iOS

Load webpages faster on slow connections

Opera Mini is a browser that lets you maximise your mobile data plan by compressing web pages so that they load faster. This is useful, especially if you're on a limited data plan (such as 1GB). It also has a hidden mode that lets you load webpages faster when your network connection is slow. Download the app from www.snipca.com/12756, open it, type a term you want to search for or a website address in the search bar at the top and then tap Go. Tap 1 at the bottom right and then tap '+' to open a new webpage. Swipe right to see your browser history and left to see news headlines.

To see how much data you've saved by using the app, tap the 'O' (Opera) sign at the bottom. You'll see a percentage of data savings, which is how much mobile data Opera has saved you. To enable the mode that makes pages load faster, tap Savings Enabled and then tap Opera Mini (see screenshot above). Tap Opera Turbo when your speed is back to normal or when you return to a Wi-Fi network.

ANDROID

Customise your keyboard to type faster and more accurately

Using the superb app SwiftKey Keyboard, you can swipe across the letters you want to type. It remembers what you type to predict words you can then tap to add. It recently became a free app (previously priced £2.99) with new themes and better predictive text. Download it from www.snipca.com/12757 and then tap Open, Accept and Enable SwiftKey. Then tap 'Get better predictions' and untick the box at the bottom (to avoid getting SwiftKey emails). In order to better predict what you type, SwiftKey will request access to your Gmail account. This is safe as it only analyses your typing patterns and what words you use often. Swiftkey doesn't read your emails. If you don't want this, type 'Not now' and then Finish. If you want to get better predictions immediately, tap 'Sign in with Google', select your Gmail account and then tap Yes. Now keep tapping the Back button until you exit the app.

Best New Apps What you should install this fortnight

Pipes

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/12759

iOS: www.snipca.com/12760

While other news apps let you select categories you can follow, Pipes lets you create 'pipes' to follow specific subjects, such as Roger Federer, Ukraine Crisis and Wayne Rooney. Tap each pipe to read news gathered from many online sources.

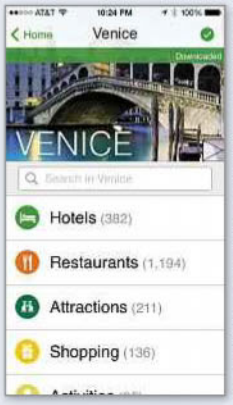
TripAdvisor Hotels Flights

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/12761

iOS: www.snipca.com/12762

TripAdvisor now lets you download maps and reviews which can be accessed when you're offline. This will help you save roaming charges when you're abroad. Maps and reviews can be large files so download them over Wi-Fi before you leave.

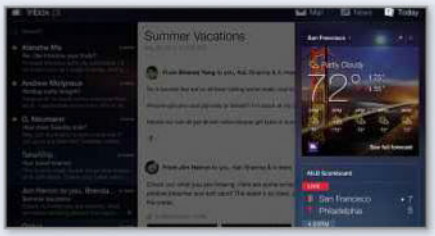


Yahoo Mail

Android: www.snipca.com/12763

iOS: www.snipca.com/12764

Updated for iPad and Android tablets, Yahoo Mail now lets you view messages in full screen and auto-select all messages (such as emails from the same person) when you tap a few similar items. Tap News at the top right to see the news or tap the Today link to see the weather and sports scores.



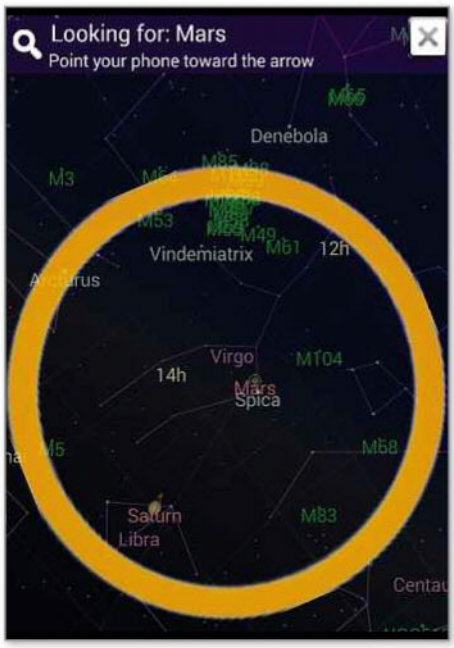
Open any app which requires you to type (such as Chrome) and tap any field (such as the URL bar) to display your SwiftKey keyboard. Long-press the 123 key at the bottom left (see screenshot on previous page) to bring up your keyboard options. Tap Settings, Themes and select a different theme (such as Cobalt or Forest).

Tap the Back key and then tap Advanced. Tick 'Quick period' which lets you add a full stop by double-tapping the space bar. If you don't want your keys to vibrate when you type, tap 'Sound & Vibration' and untick 'Keypress vibration'. Long-press the bottom-right 123 key again and tap Thumb or Compact to select those keyboard layouts. Tap Resize, select the keyboard size that you want and then tap OK.

ANDROID

Locate any star or planet in the night sky

Point your device to the night sky and free app Sky Map (www.snipca.com/12758) will show you the names of stars and constellations. It also lets you find specific stars or planets by telling you where to point your device. Pinch or expand your fingers to zoom in and out. If you want to search for a particular star or planet, tap the three lines at the bottom right and then tap Search. Type the name of what you want to search for and then tap Go. You'll see a circle with an arrow telling you which direction to point your device. Do so and you'll see an orange circle around what you searched for.



ANDROID & IOS

Charge your device faster

There's a small tweak you can do to make your phone and tablet charge faster. This involves closing all your background apps and switching your device to Airplane/Aeroplane/Flight Mode (depending on your device).

After doing this this, you won't be able to make or receive calls or use apps that require a data connection or Wi-Fi, but you'll still have access to your saved photos, music and movies, and your clock and alarm.

To access and close all the background apps on your iOS device, press the Home button twice quickly and swipe the background apps upwards to close them. To switch to Airplane Mode, swipe up from the bottom of your device (to access your Control Center) and then tap the top-left aeroplane icon.

To access and close the background apps on an Android Nexus device, tap the bottom-right menu icon and swipe right or left. To switch your device to Aeroplane Mode, swipe down from the top, tap the icon at the top right and then tap Aeroplane Mode.

On a Samsung Galaxy device, long-press the Home button then tap the icon at the bottom right to close all background apps. To switch to Flight Mode, swipe down from the top of your device with two fingers to see your notification toggles, then tap 'Flight mode'.

Remember to turn Airplane/Flight Mode off when you unplug your device from your charger by repeating the steps above and tapping the icon.

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Count, Sort and Match

69p www.snipca.com/12765 (iOS)

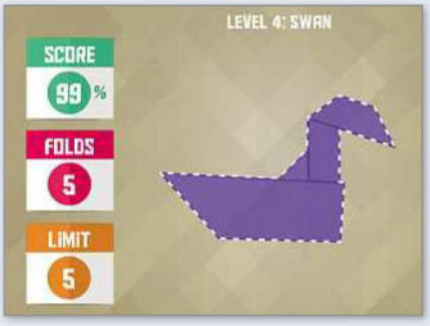
This game will teach your kids three basic maths skills. Apples appear on the tree with a voiceover counting them. Players need to group clothes by shape, colour and size. Finally, they need to match the correct number with how many objects there are to complete a picture puzzle.

AGES 6-10

Paperama

Free www.snipca.com/12766 (Android)
Free www.snipca.com/12767 (iOS)

Paperama introduces your child to origami, by challenging them to create shapes that could also be made with paper. Your children will need to tap and drag the corners to fold the virtual paper and perfectly match the given outline.



AGES 11-16

UNO & Friends

Free www.snipca.com/12769 (Android)
Free www.snipca.com/12770 (iOS)

Swipe across your Uno cards to see them better and tap the one you want to play when it's your turn. You can customise the boards with new backgrounds and add your profile picture. Challenge your family members or players online. Don't forget to tap Uno after playing your second-last card.

WINDOWS XP, VISTA, 7, 8, 8.1

Block harmful email attachments in Outlook

If you use Outlook, there's an easy way to block suspicious email attachments that may contain viruses. To do this, you first need to access the Local Group Policy Editor.

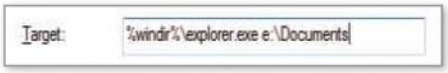
To access this in Windows 7, click the Start button, type gpedit.msc and then press Enter. In Windows 8.1, on the Modern tile interface, type gpedit.msc, press Enter and then click 'gpedit'. In XP, click the Start button, Run, then type gpedit.msc and click OK.

In the left-hand pane, navigate through the following folder path: **User Configuration\Administrative Templates\Windows Components**. Next, click Internet Explorer to see its settings options in the right-hand pane. Scroll down to Configure Outlook Express. Double-click it, select Enabled, tick 'Block attachments that could contain a virus', click Apply then OK.

WINDOWS 7

Make Windows Explorer open in a folder of your choice

By default, clicking the Windows Explorer folder on your taskbar will open the Libraries folder. However, there's an easy way to set up the Windows Explorer folder so it opens any folder of your choice. Right-click the Windows Explorer folder on your taskbar, right-click Windows Explorer and then click Properties.



Next, open the folder you want Windows Explorer to open in and make a note of the drive it's located in and its name (you'll find this at the top). In Windows Explorer Properties, type this path into the Target field after '%windr%\explorer.exe'. For example, to add a folder on your E drive called Documents, press the spacebar and type e:\Documents (see screenshot above). Click Apply and then OK.

WINDOWS 8, 8.1

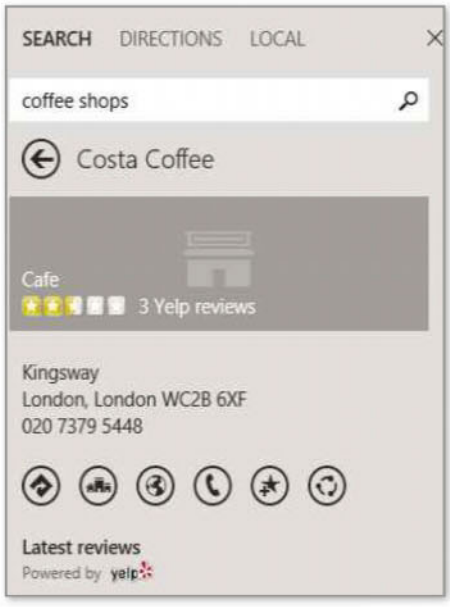
Get instant recommendations in the Maps app

Microsoft recently updated the (Bing) Maps app on Windows 8.1 to include instant search, a permanent search box and recommendations from Yelp and TripAdvisor.

Navigate to the Modern tile interface, type maps and click the Maps app. It'll open showing your current location with an orange circle depicting your approximate position and a new search box at the top right.

Another new feature lets you type your search term without clicking the search box. For example, type coffee shops and press Enter. You'll see a list of all the coffee shops near your location with Yelp or TripAdvisor's star ratings beside each. Click any of the options to see its full address and contact number, with options to get directions, to phone and to add it as a favourite location (see screenshot right). Click the '+' and '–' symbols on the left to zoom in or out.

One other improvement lets you quickly access search terms you've previously used by clicking inside the empty search box.



WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

Select a default action when you insert discs or devices into your PC

When you insert media (such as CDs or DVDs) or devices (such as digital cameras, phones or tablets) into your PC, the AutoPlay window opens asking you what you want to do. You can set up AutoPlay to automatically perform a specific action, such as playing DVDs when you insert them.

To do this, click the Start button, Control Panel, 'Hardware and Sound' and then click 'Change default settings for media or devices' under AutoPlay.

You'll see dropdown menus beside the various types of media (Audio CD, DVD movie, Pictures, Blank CD, Video CD and so on), followed by a list of the types of devices you've connected to your PC – cameras, phones and tablets. Click the dropdown menu beside the item you want to set a default action for and select the action. For example, if you click the Audio CD dropdown menu, you'll see options to play it with Windows Media Player or VLC (if you have this installed), or to import files using Dropbox (if you use it).

If you want the AutoPlay window to offer you a choice when you attach/connect a particular item, then click 'Ask me every time' after clicking the dropdown menu. Click Save at the bottom right to save your changes.

WORD

Add comments and download your Word Online files as PDFs

Microsoft recently updated its Office Online apps so that for the first time, you can download them from the Chrome Web Store. Moreover, multiple users can make changes to a Word Online document simultaneously, while a new Comments pane lets you view, reply to and edit comments from each user. Finally, you can download your Word Online document as a PDF.

To add Word Online from the Chrome Web Store, open your Chrome browser, go to www.snipca.com/12632, click the Free button beside Word Online and then click Add. Click the Word Online application in your Chrome Apps page to open a new blank document. You'll need to sign in using your Microsoft account details.

If you don't have a Chrome browser installed, log into your OneDrive account (www.onedrive.live.com), click the dropdown menu at the top left and then click Word Online.

To share a document that others can edit, click Share at the top right, enter the relevant email addresses and add a message. Next, click the 'Recipients can edit' link, ensure the first dropdown menu is set to 'Recipients can edit' and the second to 'Recipients don't need a Microsoft account', click Share, then Close.

Recipients will need to click the link in their email and then Edit In Browser at the top left of the document to edit it. The changes they make will take effect instantly in your document. Each change will appear in a different colour to indicate who made which change.

You can add comments and reply to others by clicking the Review tab, then Show Comments. Click New Comment to add one of your own. Click a comment and then click the icons below to reply to it, mark it as read or delete it (see bottom right of screenshot). Any changes you make are automatically saved in OneDrive. To download the document as a PDF, then click File at the top left, Save As and then click 'Download as PDF'.

OUTLOOK

Display images from trusted sources

By default, Outlook won't display images within an email because they may contain potentially offensive material, malicious content or a file that's so large it may slow Outlook down. However, there are various ways you can change these settings.

If you trust the sender, click the header at the top (below the sender's email address), then click Download Pictures (see screenshot below) to instantly display all images in that email. If you're confident this particular sender would never send you offensive or malicious images, click 'Add Sender to Safe Senders List'. All images within future emails from that sender will be displayed in full.

If the email has been sent by a website (for example, a newsletter or website update), click 'View in Browser' to open a web-based version of the email within Internet Explorer. Some domains (for example, those belonging to the BBC and *The Guardian*) have strong filters which mean you're highly unlikely to receive malicious content from them. If you trust a site, click 'Add the Domain to the Safe Senders List' to see all future images from that site.

OFFICE

Change the background of Office programs

While all previous Office programs came with themes you could customise (see 'Change your calendar's appearance', Make Office Better, Issue 425), Office 2013 took this a step further by introducing backgrounds (small designs that decorate the top right of your Office window). There are lots of backgrounds available, which you can change to make your Office more attractive.

To do this, open any Office 2013 program, click File at the top left, Options, then the Office Background dropdown menu (in the 'Personalize your copy of Microsoft Office' section) and select a new background (such as Calligraphy or Circuit). Next, click the Office Theme dropdown menu to change it, then click OK. Any background and theme changes you make in one Office program will also be applied to all your other Office programs.

ONENOTE

Quickly scroll through pages within a section

If you use a mouse with your PC, there's an easy way to quickly scroll through the pages of a section in OneNote. Move your mouse to the section header at the top of your current note and hold down the Ctrl key. Now move your mouse's scroll wheel up to access the pages at the top, or down to see the pages below.

Windows 8.1

Customise notifications, create a lock-screen slideshow and replace tiles with lists

Schedule and switch off system and app notifications

Windows 8.1 makes it easy to turn off system and app notifications for set periods of time or switch them off completely. In the Modern tile interface, move your cursor to the bottom right of the screen to access the Charms menu, click Settings, then 'Change PC settings' at the bottom. Next, click 'Search and apps', then Notifications. Click the sliders beside the system notifications you want to turn off. Under Quiet Hours, click the From and To dropdown menus to set times between which you don't want to receive notifications. Scroll down to see a list of the apps on your device and click the sliders beside those whose notifications you want to turn off completely.

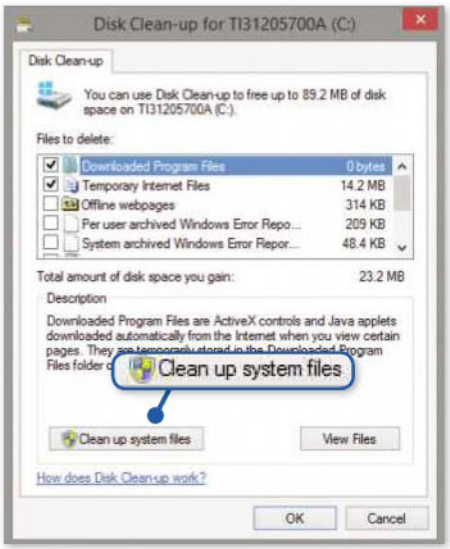
Create a Lock Screen slideshow

Windows 8.1 lets you create a slideshow of your favourite photos to display on the lock screen. Open the Charms menu, click Settings, 'Change PC settings', 'PC and devices' and then 'Lock screen'. Click the slider under 'Play a slide show on the lock screen' to turn it on. Next, click 'Add a Folder', navigate to a folder containing the images you want to use for your slideshow and then click OK.

Scroll down to the 'Lock-screen applications' sections to add apps to your lock screen that will run in the background. For example, you can add your email and Skype apps to receive notifications of incoming messages and missed calls. Click the icon beside the apps you want to add to the lock screen, or the '+' symbol to add other apps from your PC.

Delete old Windows installation files to free up space

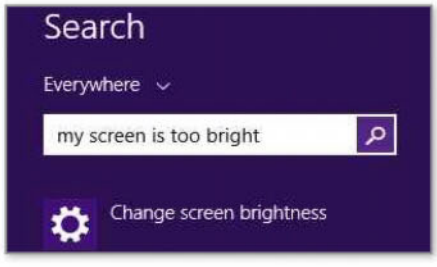
If you upgraded to Windows 8.1 from XP, Vista, 7 or 8, the earlier file versions will still be stored on your PC. You can delete these files to free up space. Open the Charms menu, click Search, type disk cleanup, then click 'Clear disk space by deleting unnecessary files'. Wait for the Disk Clean-up dialogue box to open, tick all the boxes and then click 'Clean up system files' (see screenshot, above right). When the new box opens, tick the Previous Windows Installation(s) box, then click OK. If you don't see this option, it means there are no old Windows files on your PC.



Delete old Windows installation files to save space on your PC

Type questions into the search bar

Windows 8.1 added Bing Smart Search to its Charms menu. This means that when you search for anything on your PC, the results also include online suggestions from Bing. A recent update to Smart Search also lets you type questions and requests relating to your Windows system and hardware setup. For example, go to the Modern tile interface and type install a printer and you'll see relevant suggestions like 'Device settings', which will show you how to install a printer. Or type why is my screen is too bright? to see options for adjusting your screen.



Type a Windows query in the search bar to get relevant suggestions

Replace tiled apps with a list of programs

If you prefer to see the programs and apps on your PC displayed in a list rather than in Windows 8.1's tiled design, there's an easy way to do this. On your Desktop, right-click the taskbar, click Properties and then click the Navigation tab. In the 'Start screen' section, tick all the boxes except the second one (see screenshot), click Apply and then OK. Now, when you go to the Modern tile interface, you'll see all your PC programs as a list. The programs with shortcuts on your Desktop will appear first, followed by the other programs and apps in separate categories.

Tick these boxes to see your tiled apps as lists

Next issue Secret Tips For... System Mechanic

Android L

Will Android L be lovely or lacklustre? Here's what you need to know

What is it?

The biggest update to Android since 4.0 (called Ice Cream Sandwich), which launched in October, 2011. In fact, it's probably the most substantial Android update so far because it has 5,000 new features. Of course, most of these improvements will only be noticed by the most tech-savvy people. But what matters is that Android L looks like it'll be more than just a huge pile of small tweaks. Some of the features look very impressive.

Which ones?

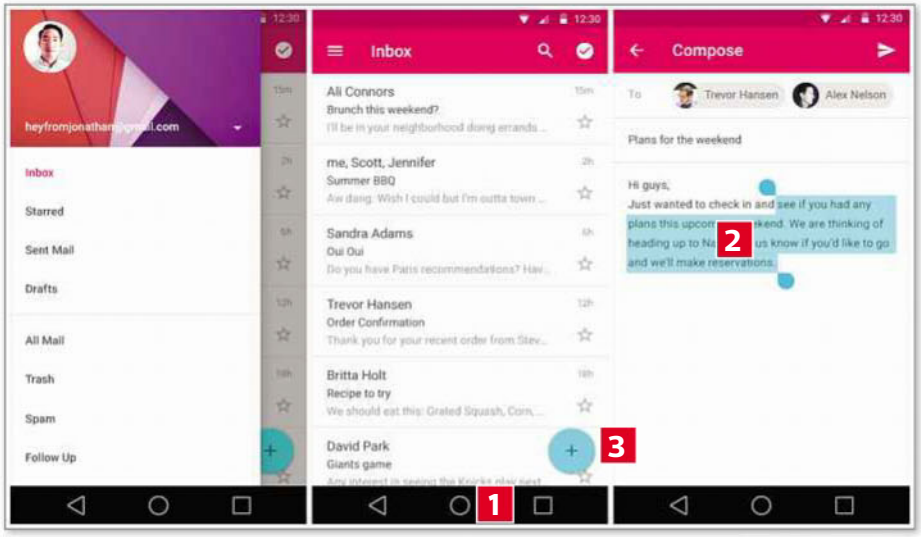
The built-in battery tool called Project Volta, for example. Google says it will boost your phone's battery life – claiming it'll increase it by as much as 90 minutes on the Nexus 5 phone. Results will no doubt vary for different phones.

Cleverly, Android L will know when you're using your device at home, so you won't need to unlock your device every time you use it there. The lock activates automatically when you leave the house with your device. Also new is the ability to temporarily turn off notifications by switching on the 'Do not disturb' feature.

It will also look different. Google says Android L "uses a design metaphor inspired by paper and ink that provides a reassuring sense of tactility".

What does that mean?

It's Google's rather laboured way of saying that it has added 'depth' to the interface, so apps that are open can be viewed in a 'stacked' format, similar to webpages in Chrome for Android. New 'shadows' on elements – such as widgets, apps and notifications – will indicate what you can move and tap. Notifications will now appear as neat, swipeable cards like those on Google Now (www.google.co.uk/landing/now). To get a preview of what this "material design" looks like, visit the Android Developer website (www.snipca.com/12636).



Does all this mean I'll need to re-learn how to use my phone?

No because Google's design changes aren't so extensive that they'll confuse people already familiar with Android. We think they'll make your phone easier to use in the long run.

The screenshot above, displaying the Gmail app for Android L, shows you what's changed. The menu buttons along the bottom 1 are more minimalist; the colours are brighter overall, such as on highlighted text 2, though you can change them; and there is a moveable bubble 3 that you tap to quickly write emails.

When will it appear on my phone?

Depends what type of phone you have. If you bought a mid- to high-range phone or tablet in the past 12 months, such as the HTC One, Galaxy S4, LG G2, Nexus 5, or Nexus 7, then you should be using Android L by the end of 2014. The only company so far to suggest a timeline for the Android L update is HTC, which said it will arrive on the One M8 and One M7 between October and December.

HTC's older high-end phones, such as the One X (which is two years old), won't be getting Android L. Samsung's two-year-old Galaxy S3, however, recently got the KitKat update (Android 4.4), so it may become eligible for an Android L upgrade because it's such a popular phone.

What does the 'L' stand for?

Google hasn't said yet. All previous versions of Android have been named after confectionery (Jelly Bean and KitKat being the previous two), so some experts think 'Lollipop' is a good bet. Call us nostalgic, but wouldn't Lemon Bon Bon be better?

OUR NEW GUIDE TO ANDROID

Inside this 148-page MagBook you'll find all the free apps, expert tips and easy-to-follow workshops you need to get the most out of your phone or tablet. Written in plain English, The Definitive Guide to Android also shows you how to protect your device from damage, theft and malware.

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FASTER INTERNET FOR FREE

You don't have to switch ISP or buy a new router to get faster broadband. **Jane Hoskyn** reveals the best free tools and tricks for speeding up your internet today

Ever get the feeling that broadband isn't all it's cracked up to be? You're paying for supposedly fast internet, but web pages still take ages to load, YouTube videos still buffer you round the bend and you've given up trying to back up your photos to the cloud because your bandwidth can't cope.

KEY POINTS

- Find out your real broadband and Wi-Fi speed
- Make your old router work like new
- Automatically switch to the fastest DNS server and Wi-Fi channel
- Load web pages and download files twice as fast

Welcome to the world of the missing megabit. Politicians tell us that the UK's internet is getting faster, and they reckon that most of the nation will be on 'superfast' broadband of 30Mbps (megabits per second) within two and a half years. That's double the current UK average and faster than France or Germany. Meanwhile, ISPs (internet service providers) compete to offer bigger and better packages that take advantage of these headline speeds. Rightmove lets you compare headline speeds by postcode at www.snipca.com/12703.

Trouble is, you're not getting the broadband you pay for. Recent studies show that less than half of UK users get the speed promised by their ISP – but you don't need a statistician to tell you that. It's even worse if you rely on Wi-Fi. If, like most of us, you use your ISP's default router settings, the signal can be so slow and unreliable that you're better off using your tablet's mobile data (3G/4G) even at home, and that costs money.

Why fast internet matters

Is uSwitch right to describe people on slow broadband as "suffering" (www.snipca.com/12696)? Broadband only overtook dial-up in the UK in 2007, and, not so long ago, "video on demand" meant nipping round to Blockbuster. Now we're moaning because we can't get last week's TV programmes instantly.

WHAT'S YOUR *REAL* BROADBAND SPEED?

To find out if you're getting the broadband you're paying for, check your internet (download) speed with Nirsoft's DownTester tool (www.snipca.com/12407; scroll to the bottom of the page and click the EXE link). This simple, tiny (89KB) program measures the time a web page takes to load in your default browser, and lets you save the results as a text or Excel file to show to your ISP. It's a portable program, so you don't have to install it – just double-click the EXE to run it. Keep it on a USB stick to run a quick test of any computer's internet speed.

Ookla's SpeedTest (www.speedtest.net) works entirely online. Click Begin Test and wait a few seconds while the tool calculates your download speed. Your speed fluctuates over days and weeks, as you've probably noticed, so run a test every couple of weeks and click Share This Result to copy the result to your clipboard for your records.

Alternatively, you can create a free SpeedTest account and use the My Results page to track your changing measurements, which you can then export as a CSV file to show to your ISP.

The free SpeedTest app (www.speedtest.net/mobile; Android, iOS or Windows Phone) lets you measure the strength of your Wi-Fi signal from different points in and around your house using your tablet or phone.

For an even quicker speed check from your browser, type bytes per second to Mbps into Google and hit Enter.

Measure your real internet download speed with SpeedTest

But fast internet is a necessity in today's world. You use your broadband for information, communication and shopping as well as for entertainment, so a bad connection isolates you. It could even slash the value of your home, according to home buyers who told Rightmove that fast internet availability is now more important than transport links and schools (www.snipca.com/12697).

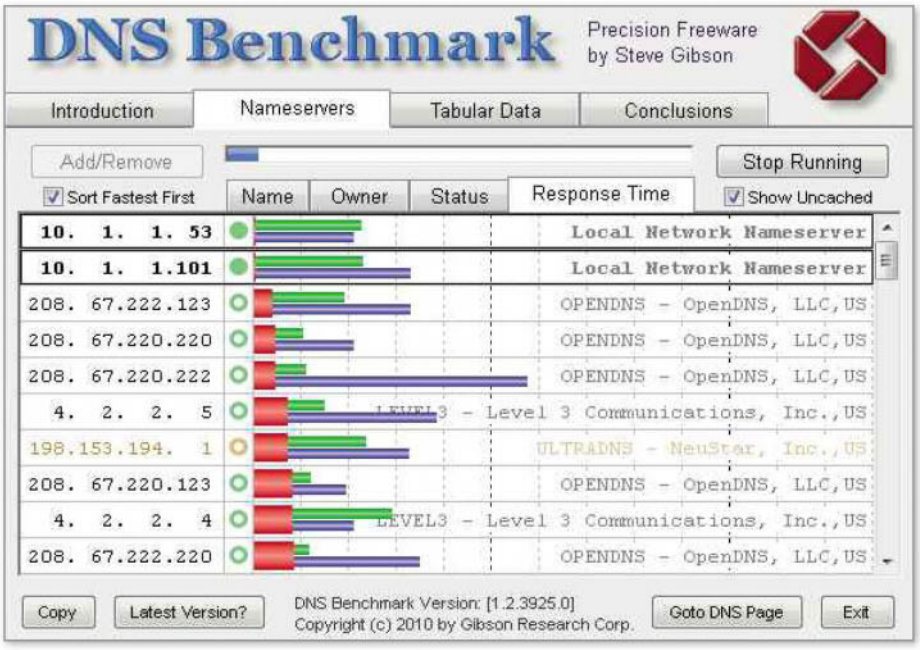
Over the next few pages we'll explain why you don't have to move house, switch your ISP or even buy a new router to push your broadband up to the speed you're paying for. We'll reveal how to strengthen your Wi-Fi so your wireless connection is as fast as your wired connection, what to do with your router for maximum speed, and how to stop your browser, ISP or even your neighbours slowing you down.

SPEED UP YOUR BROADBAND IN MINUTES

Switch to a faster DNS server

DNS (domain name system) is the technology that web servers use to deliver a web page when you type a URL. Different servers will deliver pages at different rates, so if you switch to a different server you may see a significant bump in your internet speed – even if that server is based on the other side of the world.

First, use DNS Benchmark (www.snipca.com/12727) to check your DNS settings and sniff out the fastest available server. Click the big screenshot on the web page to download the program EXE, double-click the EXE to run the program and click the Nameservers tab to see a list of all your available servers. The server in bold at the top is the default that your ISP has chosen for your router, but there are many others you can choose from, as you can see from the list. To find out which is



Find and switch to the fastest DNS server for better internet speeds

New tips, tricks and hacks for your tablet and smartphone

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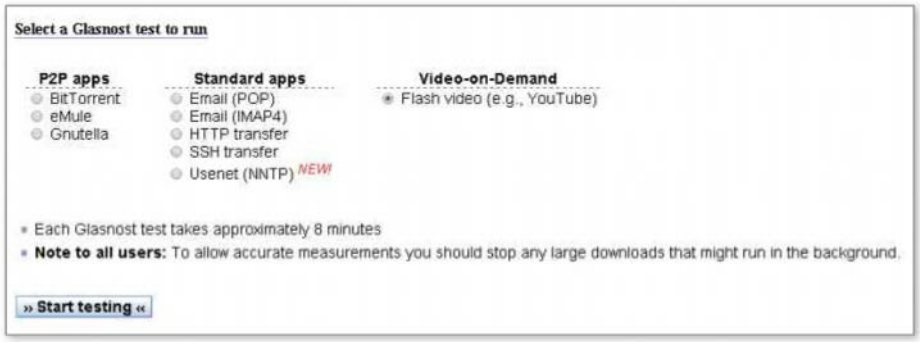
fastest and see how your default server matches up, click Run Benchmark and wait a few minutes while the program requests a random batch of web addresses from every server in the list. When the test has finished, the servers are sorted in order of speed (fastest at the top), with their names and response times displayed to their right.

You can switch servers manually under 'Change adapter settings' in the Control Panel, but this involves quite a few clicks and requires that you have the name and number of your chosen server to hand. An easier alternative is to use the small program DNS Jumper (www.snipca.com/12789) to list all your available servers and switch to one straight away – or click the Find Fastest DNS button to find and switch to the fastest server in one go.

If you've tried out a few different servers and want to go back to where you started, click the star icon and choose Restore. DNS Jumper also lets you sort servers into customised groups (for example, you can create a group of servers that are based in the UK, or which offer particularly high levels of security).

Both DNS Benchmark and DNS Jumper are portable, so you can store them on a USB stick and run them on any computer to check its server speed and boost its broadband.



Find out whether your ISP is limiting access to Flash video and other content with M-Lab's Glasnost tool

Catch your ISP throttling your broadband

There are two reasons why your broadband slows down when your neighbours come home and go online. Your routers may be using the same channel and clogging it up like a busy road (see page 54) or – more infuriating still – your ISP may be slowing down ('throttling') traffic deliberately.

Not all ISPs throttle bandwidth at busy times, but if yours does it could make your internet slower when you're most likely to be online, especially if you use file-sharing services such as BitTorrent or Gnutella, which are regular targets of throttling and blocking (and not just at peak times).

If you suspect that your ISP is deliberately slowing down your broadband at certain times or to certain services, run some tests using the free online service M-Lab (www.measurementlab.net). Its Glasnost tool (www.snipca.com/12744) is particularly useful and has three separate tests that reveal whether your ISP is throttling traffic to and from file-sharing (P2P) services, email, HTTP (web pages) and Flash video.

If the tests reveal that your ISP is regularly throttling or blocking your bandwidth so that you're not getting the service you're paying for, complain. Contact customer service and show them your SpeedTest records and your Glasnost results. Keep records of all your calls and emails. If you do decide to dump your ISP, look for a provider that uses local loop unbundling (LLU), which helps to avoid outages during peak times and prevents the need to throttle bandwidth.

MAKE YOUR WI-FI FASTER AND STRONGER

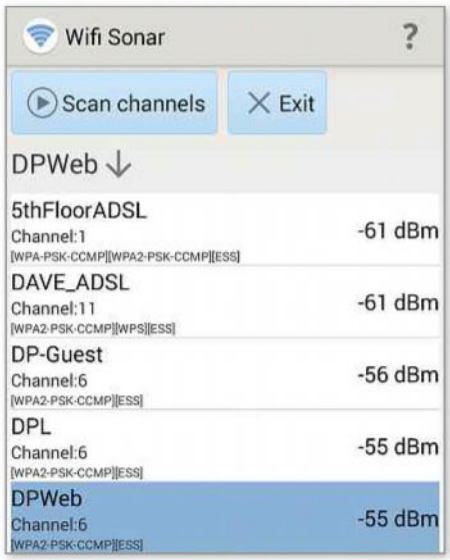
Hack your router

Broadband speed checkers such as SpeedTest tend to give faster readings when you're connected via wired Ethernet rather than Wi-Fi. That's not surprising, because Wi-Fi has to travel through thin air and is more susceptible to interference, but the difference shouldn't be significant. If it is, your router may be the weakest link.

The expensive way to fix this is to replace your old ISP-issued router with one of the latest 802.11ac routers, some of which can connect at a cable-busting 1,300Mbps. But that's a bit like buying a car than can do 1,300 miles an hour – not much practical use when the speed limit is 60mph or 30Mbps.

Instead, tweak your existing router to get your Wi-Fi speed closer to the wired one. DD-WRT (www.dd-wrt.com) is open-source Linux-based firmware that lets you upgrade your old router for free by adding new features. For example, you can add bandwidth priority for certain programs (say, Skype over Windows Update to ensure that your calls aren't interrupted) and even turn a spare router into a wireless repeater to improve your Wi-Fi signal around the house. Not all old routers support DD-WRT firmware, but you can check by typing your make and model into the website's Router Database (www.snipca.com/12737). Select your router in the results for instructions on installing the firmware.

Incidentally, turning your router off and on again really does work, albeit for short-term troubleshooting. Just switch it off, wait a few seconds and switch it back on.



Choose a Wi-Fi network in Wifi Sonar to find out where the signal is strongest

Position your router for perfect Wi-Fi

A strong Wi-Fi signal means fast wireless broadband. If your Wi-Fi signal has to struggle through walls, around furniture and past interfering appliances such as your microwave and your neighbour's router, it will get weaker and your internet download speed will slow down.

Android app Wifi Sonar (www.snipca.com/12749) turns your tablet or phone into a signal detector, so you can use it to ▶

find the perfect spot to sit and browse on your Wi-Fi-connected tablet or laptop.

The first time you run the app, it covers your screen with a 'Rate it!' pop-up, but you can remove this by tapping the back button. It then shows you a list of available Wi-Fi networks, which will include your neighbours' networks if you're close enough to pick them up. Tap your home network in the list and, if you're within range, your tablet will start to beep (loudly, so you probably shouldn't do this in the local library to find the best Wi-Fi spot). As you walk around with your tablet, the beep will get louder and softer as the Wi-Fi signal gets stronger and weaker.

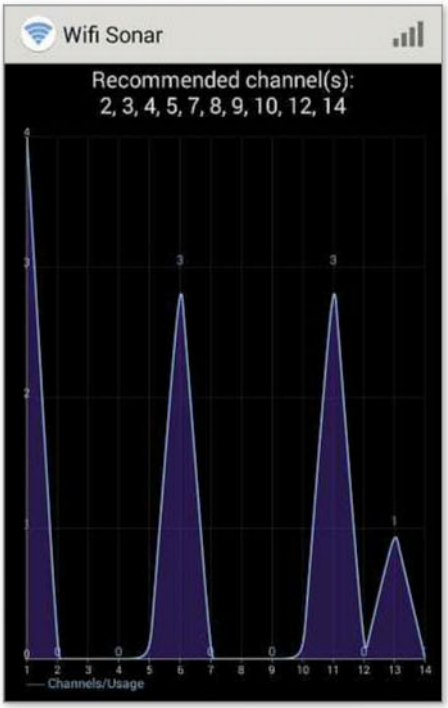
If you mainly use a desktop PC, use Wifi Sonar to find the perfect spot for your router. Put your tablet next to your PC, run the app and tap your network so that your tablet starts to beep. Move your router around and wiggle its antennae until the beep is nice and loud.

Switch to a faster Wi-Fi channel

Many Wi-Fi routers in a local area connect to the internet using the same channel, which can slow down your connection when your neighbours go online. Rather than go round and tell them to get off the internet, use WifiChannelMonitor (www.snipca.com/12790) to compare the speed of all 13 available channels and see who's using them. It's a portable program, so you can run it without installing it, but you do need to install Microsoft Network Monitor first (www.snipca.com/12791). Alternatively, you can use Wifi Sonar on your tablet or phone. Run the app and tap 'Scan channels' to open a graph showing which channels have the most traffic, and for an instant recommendation of which channels to use. There's no equivalent app for iOS.

Click Start Capture in WifiChannelMonitor to compare all your available Wi-Fi channels

Neither WifiChannelMonitor nor Wifi Sonar will switch your channel for you, but it's very easy to do this manually in the Control Panel (you can't do it from your Android or iOS settings). Go to 'Network and Internet', open your router settings page and click a channel that WifiChannelMonitor or Wifi Sonar has recommended. Restart your PC and see if you can open web pages more quickly. If not, try another channel.



Run a channel scan in Wifi Sonar to find out which Wi-Fi channels are fastest

WHO'S BEEN EATING YOUR WI-FI?

If you can see your neighbour's router with a simple app like Wifi Sonar, your neighbour can see yours, too – and potentially use it to get online. As well as slowing down your internet by leeching your broadband, your neighbour could land you with a hefty bill if you're on a capped bandwidth package.

Who's On My WiFi (www.snipca.com/12752; click Download Free Edition) reveals which IP addresses and computer names have been accessing your Wi-Fi, and from that you may be able to work out the identity of any bandwidth burglars nearby. The program continues to run in the background and alerts you with a pop-up saying Unknown Computer Found as soon as anyone tries to use your router's signal. The program is quick to install and doesn't add any nasty extras, but you may have to run it as an administrator before it will open.

By the time you spot someone joyriding on your Wi-Fi, it's too late to stop them. Instead, keep them away in the first place by securing your router. Open your router's settings in the Control Panel and change the encryption type to WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access), which is much stronger than the old default WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy), and change the default password (also known as passphrase or key) to something that only you can work out.

Find out which computers are accessing your wireless signal with Who's On My WiFi

IS YOUR 3G FASTER THAN WI-FI?

Mobile data isn't faster than Wi-Fi as a rule, especially if you're on 3G rather than the newer, faster 4G. But if your home Wi-Fi signal suffers from any interference, and you live in a built-up area where there are plenty of mobile data signals, you may well notice that you can browse faster using mobile internet than with your Wi-Fi.

To find out for sure, run the SpeedTest app to measure mobile data and Wi-Fi in various locations. If mobile data outpaces Wi-Fi in your garden and other places around the house, you may be using far more mobile data than you realise, because your tablet switches automatically to 3G/4G when it can't pick up your Wi-Fi. This unwitting data usage could cost you dear if you're on a limited data contract or pay-as-you-go, so set a mobile data limit in your device settings to ensure that you don't go over your allowance. Alternatively, increase your data allowance. Mobile data is getting cheaper as well as faster, so ask your provider what they can offer you without paying any extra per month.

Older and cheaper tablets often don't support 4G, but you can try speeding up your 3G with the Android app Internet Speed Master (www.snipca.com/12771), which tweaks your TCP/IP settings in an attempt to strengthen your signal and speed up your internet. You don't have to root your tablet to use it, despite what you may read in some reviews. We saw a very slight improvement in our mobile data speed after running the app, but not as much as we saw after crossing the room to find a better 3G signal. You can also speed up your page downloads by switching from your default mobile browser to Maxthon (www.maxthon.com), which compresses data to save battery life (see page 60).

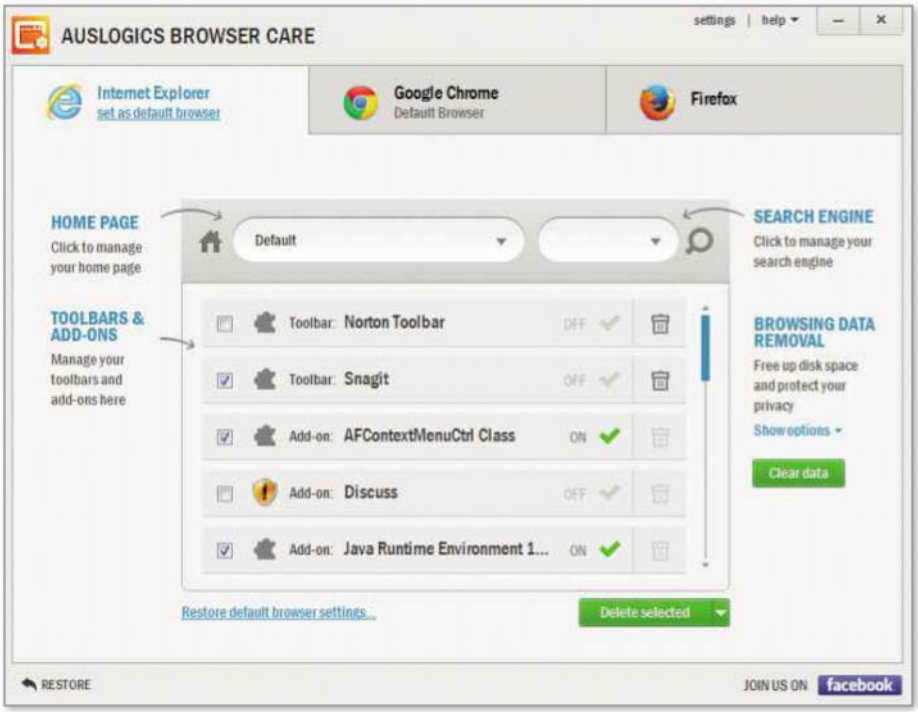
Set a mobile data limit to prevent your tablet using too much data behind your back

SPEED UP YOUR BROWSER

Remove hidden junk from all your browsers

Your browser is the final frontier between your internet connection and you. Strong, fast broadband and Wi-Fi can be let down by a browser clogged with years' worth of extensions, plugins, caches and other junk that slows your PC and your internet.

You could clear out the junk manually by using either Chrome's built-in Task Manager; the 'about:addons-memory' extension for Firefox (www.snipca.com/12754); or from the Tools menu in Internet Explorer. Alternatively, clean them all at once with the excellent Desktop tool Auslogics Browser Care (www.snipca.com/12751). Click a tab to choose one of your installed browsers and explore the options for cleaning it up. These include changing its default home page to 'Blank page' to make the browser open faster; removing cookies, login files and other hard-drive clutter that slows it down; and disabling or removing RAM-clogging plug-ins such as Flash and Java. You can also wipe and restore your browser from the Browser Care window. To apply any of these changes in Chrome, you'll need to temporarily unlink Chrome from your Google account.



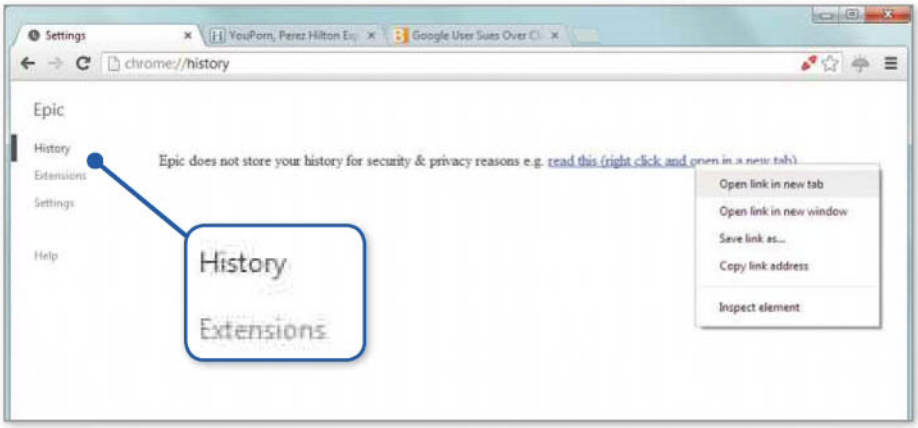
Delete browser-slowing junk in IE, Chrome and Firefox with Auslogics Browser Care

Browser Care is simple to install and doesn't bring any junk along with it, but we'd recommend disabling a couple of default settings during installation. In the setup window, click 'more options' and untick 'Create a desktop icon' and 'Launch program at Windows startup'. Extras like these may not be as disruptive as adware, but they will slow down your computer.

Switch to a faster browser

The big three browsers have a very nippy competitor called Epic Privacy Browser (www.epicbrowser.com). Epic will look familiar if you use to Chrome, because it's based on the same Chromium code (indeed, chrome://settings takes you to Settings in both browsers).

However, it's a lot faster because it automatically blocks content and ▶



If you click History or Extensions in Epic, you won't find anything – the browser ditches these extras for better privacy and faster speed

settings that slow other browsers down, including adverts and cookies.

Its automatic cache-clearing after every session may seem counter-productive, because cache files help your browser reload web pages quickly, but if you're visiting lots of different sites these files will clog up your memory and slow down your PC and internet.

Epic doesn't save your browsing history or support any extensions at all. If you click History or Extensions in Settings, all you'll see is a disclaimer telling you why there's nothing there. This may seem to defeat the fun and convenience of browsing, and it certainly makes it harder to share video and other content with friends and family, but Epic's priorities are speed and privacy – and its strict streamlining makes it much faster and more secure than better-known browsers.

Epic is appropriately quick and easy to install, and there's no adware to worry about. Just double-click the EXE installer and wait a couple of minutes, and Epic will open automatically when installation has finished. Epic's website warns that some antivirus software may identify the installer file as a potential threat, but it has been certified malware-free by Kaspersky and Norton (the two most accurate and thorough antivirus programs in our latest lab tests) and we had no trouble installing it.

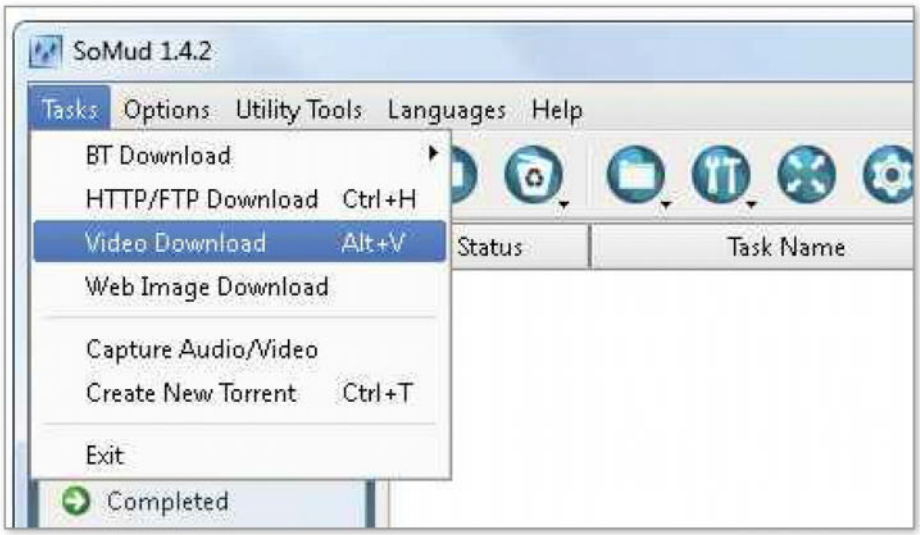
Download huge files in half the time

When you download files via your browser, you rely on one connection to the server to get the file onto your computer. Download manager programs such as SoMud (www.somud.com) work independently of your browser and break up files to send them via lots of different servers, so they arrive on your computer much more quickly.

SoMud installs easily and doesn't try to sneak any adware or other extras onto your PC, though there are some big and annoying adverts in the program window. It's a sophisticated but easy-to-use program that lets you do much more than just download files quickly: you can preview them before they've finished downloading; view videos in the built-in player as soon as they've downloaded; and convert downloaded files to other formats. You can even record everything you do on your screen as a video tutorial and save it for future reference or share it with other users online. The program also supports fast downloads from torrent sites such as BitTorrent.

You can set up SoMud to download files via a proxy server for extra privacy. When the program is running, it creates a Desktop icon that you can right-click to pause or stop your downloads, among other tasks. Click Exit in the icon's right-click menu to close the program.

Open-source program Free Download Manager (www.freedownloadmanager.org) serves many of the same basic functions as SoMud, including support for torrents, but because it has fewer media features it uses less memory and may be better suited to an older or slower PC. If you create a free account, you can check all your active and completed downloads securely online, which is very useful if you want to start downloading big files in the morning and check on them from your tablet browser while you're out and about. ca



Download video, photos and torrents faster with the Desktop download manager SoMud

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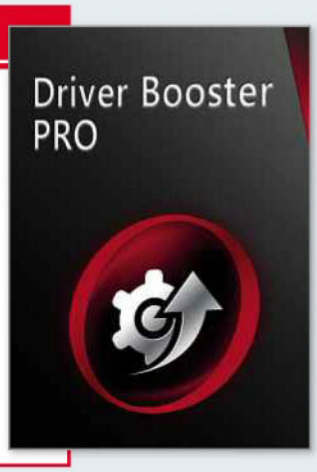

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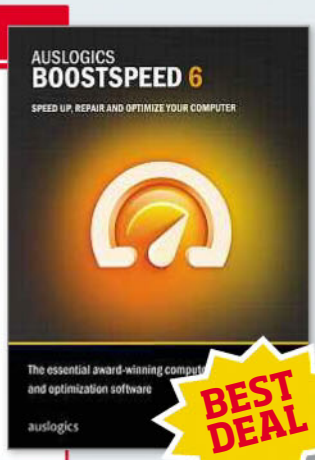

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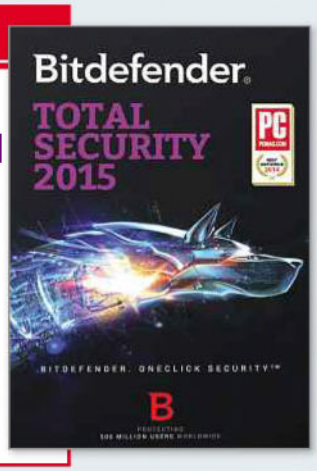

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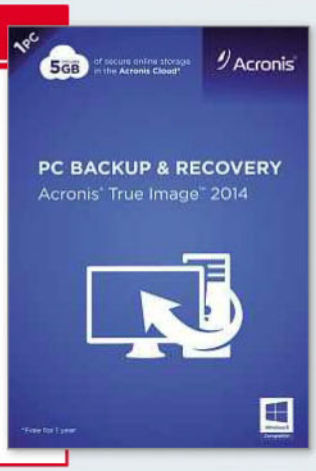

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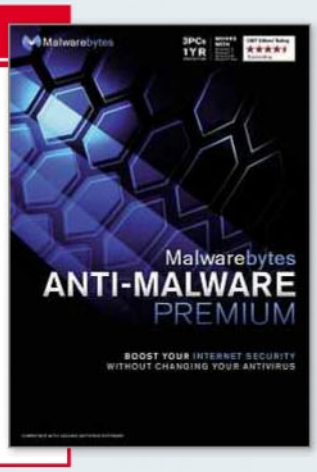

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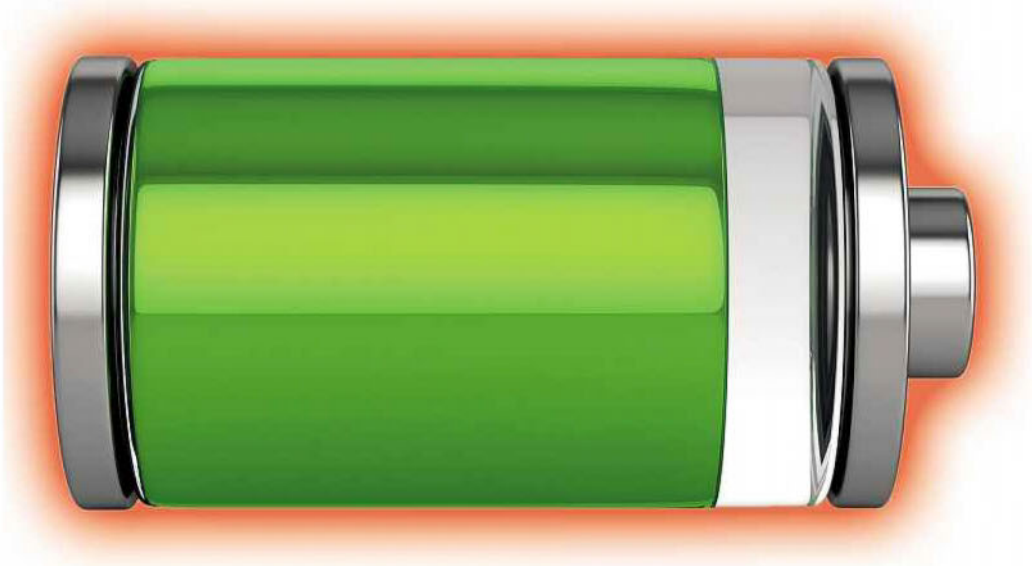


Double your tablet's battery life

Fed up with having a tablet that dies every few hours? **Jane Hoskyn** reveals the best free new tools to make your tablet last as long as your laptop

Your tablet can browse the web, play video and give you beautiful pictures of next week's weather, but its battery life is pathetic. Well, of course it is. It's working too hard. If you were to close all your tablet's apps, switch off its Wi-Fi and leave it in the sock drawer, you wouldn't have to charge for weeks. But then you might as well not have a tablet.

That said, a portable device that habitually dies half way through films on train journeys is not doing its job, and we want better. A recent survey by research company GMI found that battery life was the biggest factor when people shopped for a new smartphone (May 2014, www.snipca.com/12679). If you have a tablet and a smartphone, you'll know that battery life is even more important in your tablet, which is better suited to battery-hungry tasks such as playing videos and displaying webpages

Tablet makers are well aware of this, so your battery has become their latest battleground. Android 4.4's successor, currently codenamed Android L (see page 49), will include an improved Power Saver mode which Google says can extend your tablet's battery life by 90 minutes, while iOS 8 will let you see which apps are draining your iPad's power. App makers have woken up to

DO iPADS HAVE BETTER BATTERIES?

Most of the tools we feature here are for Android. This is partly because the open nature of the Android platform makes it easier for app-monitoring tools to measure and control what's using your battery, and partly because iPads have a longer battery life anyway.

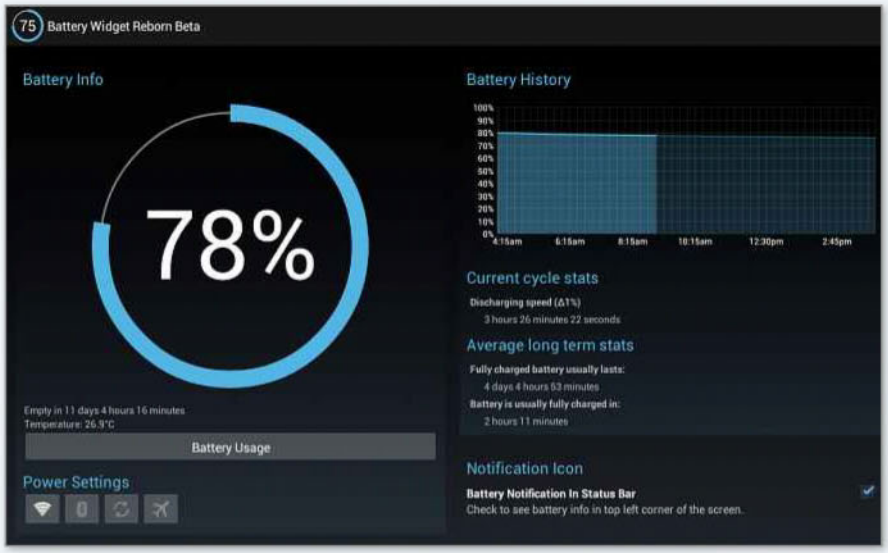
It's not that iPad batteries themselves are better. The sandboxing that keeps third-party system apps out of Apple's App Store (and helps to control malware) also prevents lots of rogue apps running in the background and wearing down your iPad's battery. What's more, iOS saves battery life by putting apps in a suspended state when you're not using them, even when they're open in the background. You can overrule this and keep all your apps running when they're open (for example, if you want to receive email notifications while using other apps) by ticking Background App Refresh in your iPad Settings, but your battery life would be cut dramatically as a result.

There have been complaints about fast-draining batteries in iOS 7, but iPads still fare better than Android tablets (which tend to be cheaper) in the latest tablet battery life surveys. However, there's still no tablet on any platform whose battery performance can touch that of a laptop, which has more space for a bigger battery. This is why the Android-based Asus Transformer Pad (www.snipca.com/12680) zooms ahead of any iPad for battery life as soon as you attach its optional keyboard – or, in other words, when you turn it into a laptop.

HOW HARD IS YOUR BATTERY WORKING?

The Android and iOS Battery Doctor apps give more accurate readings of your battery's status than you'd get from your tablet's settings, but you can get a deeper insight into your battery's secret life from the brilliant new Android app Battery Widget Reborn (BWR, www.snipca.com/12683). It's still in beta, but we found it to be very stable. If you download it now you can get some premium features that will only be available in the pro version (£1.49, www.batterywidgetreborn.com) after the beta-testing period. BWR is a superb tool which, as its name suggests, gives you all the information that your tablet's built-in battery widget doesn't. Its customisable widget and notifications instantly reveal your battery's remaining percentage and how it has changed over the past few hours; its temperature in Celsius or Fahrenheit; and what time you'll need to plug your tablet in. Open the app to discover more information including voltage, battery health and statistics such as the average time it takes to fully charge your tablet. The free new Android version of CPU-Z (www.snipca.com/12684) lets you save information about your battery's current temperature and the rate at which it's draining. You can store this information online and have it emailed to you as a reminder.

The options for iOS are more limited unless you jailbreak your tablet, and we wouldn't recommend doing that because it voids your warranty and can make some apps malfunction. A commendable exception for iOS is Accura Premium (www.snipca.com/12700; free despite the name), which alerts you when your battery is charged enough for a specific activity, such as watching a whole film.



See all your battery stats at a glance with Battery Widget Reborn

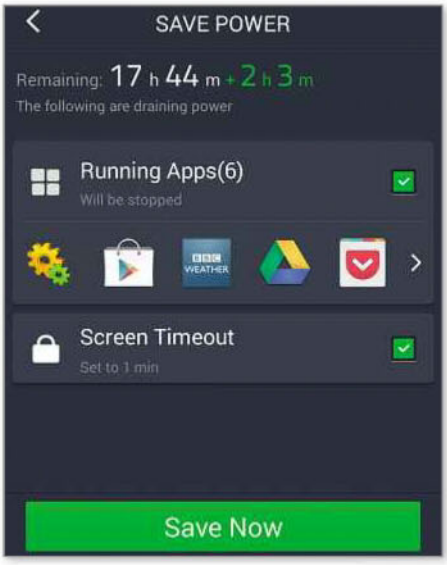
battery power, too: Skype claims that you can leave the latest version of its Android app (www.snipca.com/12658) running "all day without having to worry about your battery" (www.snipca.com/12659).

It's good to know that they're listening to us, but these announcements don't change much. Skype stills burns up your battery if you actually use it to make calls, and power-saving apps have been around for years. If you really want that film to last for the whole train journey (and back again), you'll need to look beyond your tablet's built-in tools and explore the latest innovative ways to boost your battery.

Find and kill battery-draining apps

All apps run down your battery, especially those which (like Skype) have processes that run in the background after you've closed the app. App-monitoring tools are no exception: they record activity constantly, and that uses power. But a few new app monitors far offset their own battery usage by giving you a deep insight into what your different apps are doing, and giving you control over them.

Android app GSam Battery Monitor (www.snipca.com/12660) has an App Sucker tool that reveals the proportion of battery power each of your running apps is using. Your App Sucker list may contain apps that you've never opened and never even knew were there, such as 'Google Text-to-speech' and weather apps that aren't included in the list of running apps that open when you tap the bottom-right corner of your Android screen. You may be shocked to discover that they're each using up to 20 per cent of your battery's power. To reduce an Android app's battery-load, tap it in the list, tap Manage, 'Clear data', 'Clear cache' and untick 'Show notifications'. To stop it running, at least until you restart your tablet, tap 'Force stop' and tap OK in the warning box. If you rarely use the app, tap Uninstall. You can re-install apps at any time by logging into the Google Play Store and clicking 'My apps'.



Find and kill several battery-draining apps in one tap with Battery Doctor

The hugely popular app Battery Doctor (www.snipca.com/12661) gives you less information than GSam, but more immediate control. It reveals your running apps' memory usage rather than battery usage and lets you close multiple apps in one tap. You can either choose which apps to close, or tap Save Now to let Battery Doctor automatically close everything it identifies as draining your battery. If you're in the habit of using lots of apps at once and you like getting notifications whenever you receive an email, you'll find Battery Doctor's Save Now tool too heavy-handed – but it's a great quick fix for when you're out and about with a low battery and no charger.

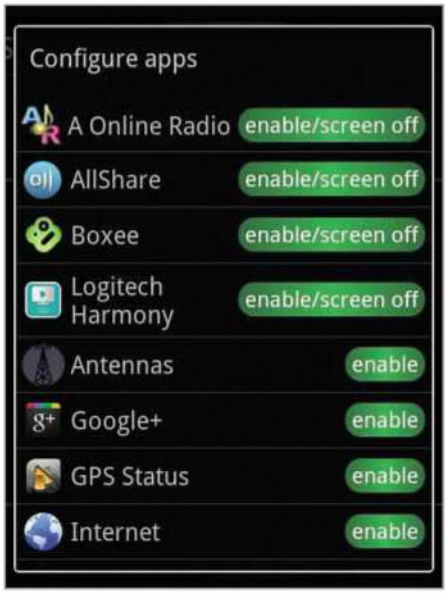
The iOS app Battery Doctor (www.snipca.com/12667) is made by a different developer and is less powerful than the Android Battery Doctor, but like GSam it lists how much battery power each of ▶

your running apps is using, and it can let you know when to start and stop charging your tablet for optimum battery life.

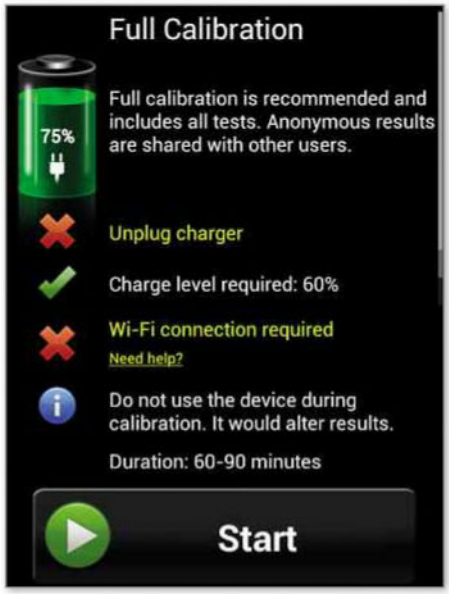
Disable greedy settings automatically

Settings such as Wi-Fi and GPS continue to drain your tablet's battery when no apps are running. Android app Battery Mix (www.snipca.com/12671) reveals how each setting affects your battery in real time and lets you save a log of their battery-drain history, while the Android and iOS Battery Doctor apps show you how much battery power you'd save if you shut down different settings such as Wi-Fi and Bluetooth. iOS app SYS Activity Manager (www.snipca.com/12159) tells you which background processes are running and how much battery they're using. However, none of these apps will shut down the processes for you.

JuiceDefender for Android (www.snipca.com/12687) shuts down processes on your behalf, though you have to set it up first. For example, tell it which apps are allowed to connect automatically via Wi-Fi or 3G/4G; set your limits on screen brightness (a huge and underrated battery-killer); and designate Wi-Fi networks as 'home', 'work', 'local library' and so on. Once you've configured it, JuiceDefender works automatically, enabling and disabling settings according to your preferences.



Tell JuiceDefender how to treat different apps when your battery is low



Compare your battery's health with users of similar tablets using Battery HD

ReOn Extra Time (www.snipca.com/12669) lets you reduce your screen's timeout setting to as low as 15 seconds, significantly saving your battery. It also has a handy toggle switch to keep your screen on until you decide to switch it off, which prevents the screen going to sleep when you're reading. If you've got a Samsung tablet, ReOn adds a clever eye-tracking tool that only keeps the screen on while you're looking at it.

Deep Sleep Battery Saver (www.snipca.com/12668) gives you greater control over your Android's built-in Deep Sleep mode, which normally kicks in after the screen has been asleep for a few minutes. The app lets you switch quickly between several Deep Sleep profiles including Gentle, which wakes up your tablet for a minute every half-hour, and Aggressive, which only wakes it up every two hours.

Every time your tablet checks for new messages and notifications, it saves temporary files and caches that slow it down – just like on your PC – so use new Android app Battery Life Repair (www.snipca.com/12673) to remove the junk.

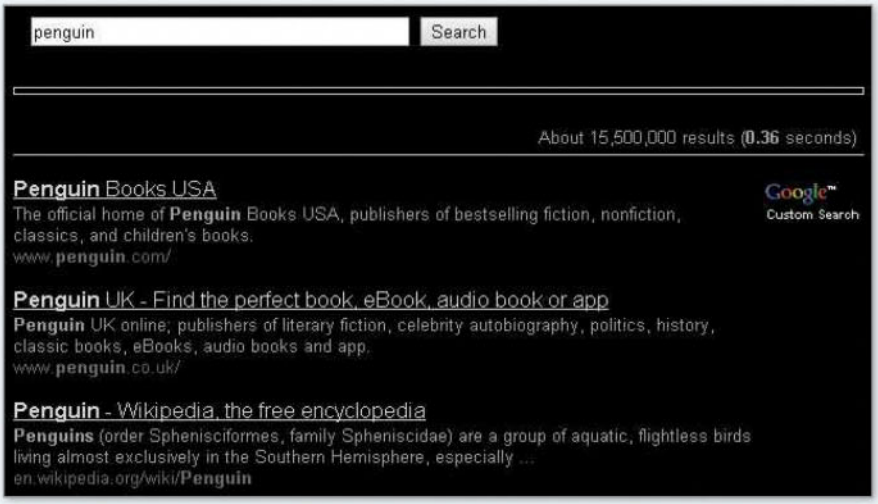
Even the best-cared-for battery loses capacity over time, and eventually you'll need to calibrate it. Calibration resets the battery's built-in meter so that you get a more accurate power-level reading. The app Battery HD for Android (www.snipca.com/12670) has an ingenious way of doing this: it collects anonymous information from users about the battery-drain level of different tablets so that you can see how your tablet's drain-rate compares, and re-calibrate it if necessary. ca

MAKE THE WEB BATTERY-FRIENDLY

If you regularly use your tablet to browse the web, switching your default browser to Maxthon (www.maxthon.com) will give your battery a big boost.

Maxthon has a special version for Android tablets (www.snipca.com/12688) and also supports Android phones, iOS, Windows Phone and PC. It compresses data to ease the load on your tablet's processor and data usage as well as your battery, so you'll get far more use out of your mobile data allowance.

Black Google Mobile (http://bgoog.com) is a good site to include in your Maxthon bookmarks (Favorites). It lets you search Google as normal, and makes your battery work less hard simply by using a black screen rather than the usual white.



Search using a battery-friendly black screen with Black Google Mobile

Find any user **manual online**

Need an instruction manual for your PC, tablet or other device old or new? **Robert Zak** shows you where to find any user guide online

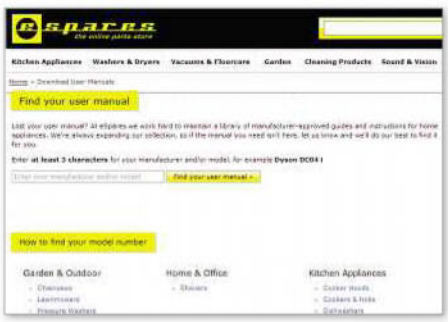
Modern hardware – from PCs to fridges – often comes without any instruction manual. You can't "read the flipping manual" because there isn't one, as Stuart Andrews knows only too well (see The Final Straw, page 74).

You can often find an online manual on the manufacturer's website, or by typing your equipment's make and model into Google, and most new PCs, tablets, phones and digital cameras include instructions in their pre-installed software. You may prefer a paper manual, but online and digital manuals have many advantages – you can access them from any device, download them again, back them up and print them if you still want a paper copy.

But what if you need instructions for an older piece of equipment that's no longer listed on the manufacturer's website, or the manufacturer doesn't even have a site? Luckily, the web has databases of instruction manuals for all types of hardware, including older equipment.

Find old manuals online

If you can't find the manual for a piece of equipment or you never had one in the first place, eSpares (www.espares.co.uk/usermanuals) is the best place to find it. The site has a simple search bar where you type the manufacturer or model number. If you don't know the model number, eSpares tells you where on your equipment you're likely to find it.



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UsersManualGuide (www.usersmanualguide.com) has a huge archive of manuals and guides for lots of appliances, ranging from LCD monitors and AC adapters to electric organs and massage chairs. The site doesn't have a search engine, but its extensive archive of manuals is neatly organised by brand to help you find what you're after.

Find out how to fix any device

Even if you have a user guide for a piece of kit, it may not tell you how to fix problems. The website eService Info (www.eserviceinfo.com) gives you all the information you need to troubleshoot thousands of products. The site contains a searchable database of instruction manuals, schematic diagrams, datasheets, service manuals and software downloads. Its database has around 20,000 repair tips for products from nearly 200 manufacturers.

PDF SB (www.pdfsb.net) is home to a huge collection of PDF manuals, guides, ebooks, exam papers and even board-game rulebooks. It may not focus solely on repair manuals, but with nearly 72 million books in its database, it's worth a peek. The site is well-organised and easy to use, and for every document you view it offers a list of related documents that it thinks you might also find useful.

Get user guides on your tablet

New devices can help you use and fix your old devices, thanks to 'how to' apps like the excellent iFixit. This free app works on tablets and phones and has versions for Android (www.snipca.com/12640), iOS (www.snipca.com/12639) and Windows Phone (www.snipca.com/12642). It contains illustrated step-by-step instructions for hundreds of technical and mechanical tasks, including replacing hard drives and repairing cracked screens. If you'd rather read the guides on your PC or laptop, iFixit also has a website (www.ifixit.com/Guide), but we found the apps to be more convenient and easier to use.

Free app iFixit helps you troubleshoot your tech with step-by-step guides

New devices often have accompanying apps that include instruction manuals, so it's worth searching for your device on Google's Play Store, Apple's App Store or the Windows Phone website and seeing what comes up. For instance, searching for 'Canon PIXMA printer' finds Canon's PIXMA Printing Solutions (Android www.snipca.com/12544; iOS www.snipca.com/12646), a free app that contains manuals for all PIXMA printers and lets you print wirelessly from your Android tablet or phone.

Camera manufacturer Nikon has a free app with manuals for all its SLR cameras (Android www.snipca.com/12541; iOS www.snipca.com/12645). Some popular devices, such as the Raspberry Pi, have inspired scores of mobile user guides – the RPi Hardware Guide for Android (www.snipca.com/12543, also available for iOS and Windows Phone) is a great free example. ca

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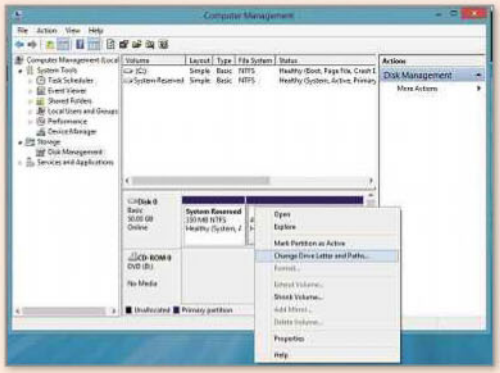
Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

How do I change boot drive letters?

Q I am going to clone a 128GB SSD – which is currently 'Disk 0, Local Disk (C:)' – to a new 448GB SSD that I have already fitted to the computer. This latter drive is currently 'Disk 1, New Volume (G:)'. The 128GB SSD contains the operating system so I want to know how to change the drive letters and the disk numbers when I have cloned, such that the new drive is 'Disk 1' (drive C:) and the old drive becomes 'Disk 1' (drive G:). How do I do this?

Brian Battershill



Use Windows' Computer Management console to check the drive letters after accessing the BIOS

A First, don't worry about the disk numbers, as these are managed by your computer's SATA controller and Windows. The numbers will generally remain unchanged in day-to-day use, but your SATA controller could in theory alter them and it wouldn't affect Windows or your experience of using the drives – they would keep their C: and G: labels, even if their numbers were reversed.

What you need to do here is change the boot order of the drives so that the computer knows to launch the operating system from the new SSD. You didn't say which operating system, but from your description of the drive labels we can safely assume it's Windows. This doesn't matter for older computers running versions of Windows before 8/8.1 because the required changes are made in your computer's BIOS. Newer computers, pre-installed with Windows 8/8.1, require you to access a new-style BIOS known as UEFI. Don't worry, we'll explain both.

You didn't ask for our help with the cloning process, so we assume that you're comfortable doing this task – so do the job now and then return here.

For Windows 7 (or earlier), restart your PC and then look for the option to access the BIOS: this is usually by pressing a key such as Delete (Del) or F2. Every BIOS is different, but you're looking for the Boot Options screen or Boot Order section. Now use the cursor (arrow) keys and Enter to rearrange the drive order so that your new (448GB) SSD is above the older (128GB) in this list. Exit the BIOS (usually by pressing Escape) and opt to save your changes.

The process is much the same with a newer Windows 8/8.1 computer, but accessing the UEFI BIOS requires a different process. First, press the Windows key+C to open the Charms bar, then click Settings, followed by 'Change PC settings'. Now click 'Update and recovery', followed by Recovery, then click the 'Restart now' button under the 'Advanced startup' heading. Now click Troubleshoot, followed by 'Advanced options', then UEFI Firmware Settings. Click Restart and the PC will launch into its UEFI BIOS.

Finally, restart your PC and use Windows' Computer Management console to check that the drive letters are as you expect. From the Windows Start menu or Start screen, type compmgmt.msc and press Enter then Disk Management under Storage. The new SSD should be drive C:, but if the old one isn't drive G:, right-click its entry and choose 'Change Drive Letter and Paths'.

Can I change Epic's search behaviour?

Q I really like the Epic Privacy Browser (www.epicbrowser.com) that you recommended a little time ago. However, there is one problem with it. When I execute searches the result list is always filled with American web addresses, ending in .com. For example, if something I want is available from Amazon, the search results always point to Amazon.com rather than Amazon.co.uk. Can you explain why this happens and tell me if there's any way to overcome it? By the way, if I type a website's UK URL then all is fine.

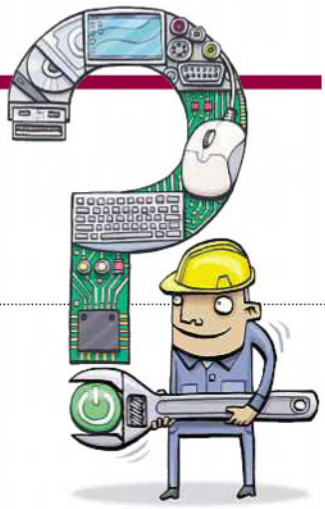
Arnold Kingston

A One of the many ways that Epic protects your privacy is by directing all search requests to its own search engine at www.epicsearch.in. This search engine in turn routes all search requests through a proxy, which is basically a server computer that hides your computer's real IP address from any websites you may visit.

While not 100 per cent accurate, a computer's IP address gives the internet a broad idea of where the device is located – London or Edinburgh, say. Traditional search engines use this information to localise their results list. Because Epic's search engine uses an American-based proxy, the results reflect this 'locale'. Epic doesn't allow users to change the default search engine so, if you use Epic's search bar, you're stuck with this.

But, as you note, Epic lets you visit UK websites, so you could simply execute searches within the Amazon.co.uk website.

Epic's search engine routes all search requests through a proxy



Our experts solve all your tech problems

✉ **Email us your problem and we'll try to help:** noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Why do some people receive multiple emails from me?

Q I have recently been asked to help with sending out emails to members of a local choral society. There are approximately 65 members, so I've set up three distribution lists, on the assumption that one list might be too large to handle. I attempted to send a copy of the poster for the next concert as an attachment. It went out successfully but some people received about 20 copies of the email and were unable to open the attachments. I use Outlook Express to email and I'm running Windows XP. Any thoughts on what's going on here and how to solve it?

Christine Isted

Avoid sending out large attachments multiple times by tweaking your Outlook settings

A We're certain that this is caused by an Outlook Express feature that breaks attachments up into smaller chunks, with each being sent as a separate message. This is a way to get around the limits many internet service providers (ISPs) place on the size of attachments that their email servers will accept. For example, Outlook Express might break a 10MB attachment into 20 messages, each with a 500KB chunk. At the receiving end, Outlook Express is able to reassemble all the chunks into the single large attachment that was originally sent. This all happens automatically, incidentally, leaving both sender and recipient unaware of what's gone on.

Even today it would be a pretty handy feature, but for whatever reason Microsoft removed the capability from later versions of Outlook, and it isn't compatible with any other email program. So, unless your recipients are using Outlook Express they'll receive multiple copies of the email, each with a small fragment of the attachment.

The fix is to disable the break-apart feature (or at least set the limit to match the maximum attachment size allowed by your ISP). In Outlook Express, first choose Accounts from the Tools menu. Now select the Mail tab, click to highlight your email account and then click Properties. Now select the Advanced tab and either remove the tick from the 'Break apart messages larger than' box or increase the figure alongside to match your ISP's limit – 10,000KB is more or less 10MB, for example.

Finally, you may not need to create multiple distribution lists, as Outlook Express places no limit on the number of recipients to whom you can send a single email (though you should check whether this is the case with your ISP).

How can I rescue photos from my dead laptop?

Q Recently I had an accident when a can of Coke leaked while in my bag and some of it went into my laptop. Now, when I try to turn my laptop on, nothing happens. I'd taken a lot of photos of my ill father when he was down visiting me at Christmas, and they're all stored on this laptop. I really don't want to lose them, so is there any way to rescue them?

Ian Murdoch

A It sounds like liquid ingress has damaged components inside the machine, perhaps causing a short circuit when you tried to fire it up. While a repair might be possible, it is often impractical or very expensive to fix or replace laptop components, which are typically custom parts.

However, while you didn't tell us anything about the laptop, assuming it is a relatively modern machine (say, no older than seven or eight years) then it'll almost certainly contain a SATA hard drive, which are standard components and usually removable.

Look for a screw cover on the laptop's underside, remove it and then gently slide the drive out and disconnect the SATA connector. Now, place the drive into a special USB caddy (such as this £9 model from Amazon, www.snipca.com/12396) and connect it to another PC. If the drive hasn't been damaged by your fizzy-drink accident, you'll be able to use Windows Explorer (Windows key+E) to navigate to the folder containing your photos.

Use a USB caddy to retrieve files from the hard drive of a damaged laptop

Where has my Hibernate option gone?

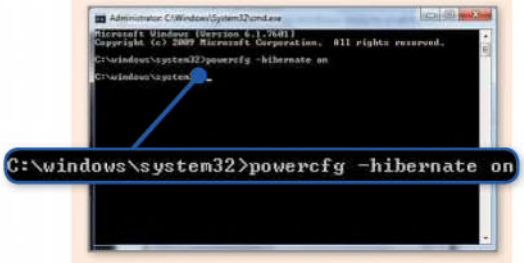
Q I have a Dell laptop running Windows Vista Home Edition. Recently, the Hibernate option vanished from the button on the Start menu. Now, when I leave the computer I have to choose the Sleep option instead. In Issue 418 you demonstrated how to restore Hibernate to Windows 8, but that method doesn't work for Vista. Why did Hibernate disappear and how do I get it back?

Eddie Doick

A There is a known bug in Vista that leads to the Hibernate option being disabled after running the Disk Cleanup utility that's part of Windows. So our guess is that you ran this utility and then fell victim to this flaw.

Fortunately, it's pretty easy to fix. First, click Start and type cmd into the search bar. Next, look for the cmd.exe entry that appears above, under the Programs heading, right-click it and choose 'Run as administrator'. The Command window will now open, providing options for manipulating aspects of your computer at a very fundamental level. At the Command window's flashing prompt, carefully type powercfg -hibernate on and press Enter.

It might look as though nothing has happened, but close the Command window (by clicking the red cross at the top right), restart your PC and your Hibernate option should be back in place.



Restore the lost Hibernate option in Windows Vista via the Command window

How do I kill Task Manager automatically?

Q I'm still using Microsoft Money, which I love, but I now have a small problem closing the program. This is because the 'msmoney.exe' process will not terminate. I know Microsoft won't fix this because Money is no longer supported, so I've written my own small batch file:

```
@ECHO OFF
Start "" C:\Windows\System32\taskmgr.exe
taskkill /f /im "msmoney.exe"
```

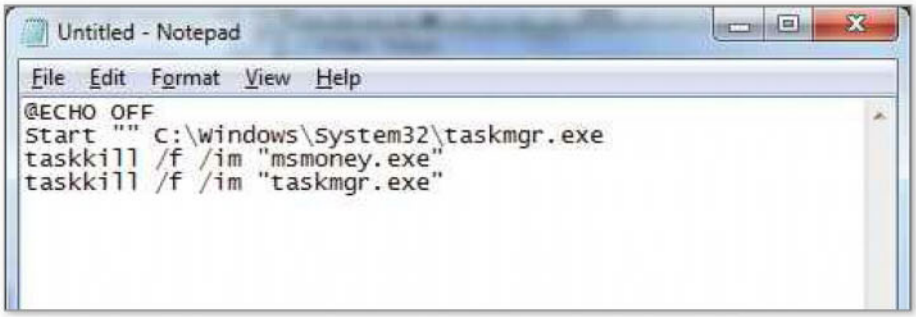
This works but it leaves Task Manager on the screen. Is there anything I can add to this code to close Task Manager and return to the Windows Desktop?

Cecil Deacon

A Yes there is. You've already used the taskkill command to terminate the msmoney.exe process, so just use another one to kill Task Manager. In other words, you need to add this line to the bottom of your code:

```
taskkill /f /im "taskmgr.exe"
```

Save your batch file and that's the job done and dusted.



Close down your Task Manager by adding a taskkill command at the end of your batch file

Why won't my 6.3GB file fit on my 8GB USB stick?

Q I've just tried to copy an MPEG2 video file to my USB stick, so I could play it on my TV. The computer refused, saying the file was too big. The stick is 8GB, while the file is only 6.3GB. I am running Windows 7. Do you know what the problem might be and is there any way around it?

David Chalice

A The most likely answer is that your USB stick is formatted with the FAT32 file system, which imposes a 4GB size limit on individual files. You can remove this limit by reformatting the stick to use the NTFS file system, though it might then become incompatible with your TV (not all sets can deal with NTFS).

To find out which file system is in use, right-click the drive in Windows Explorer and choose Format. If the 'File system' dropdown menu reads NTFS then skip the rest of this paragraph. Otherwise, select NTFS from the 'File system' dropdown menu, tick the Quick Format box then click Start.

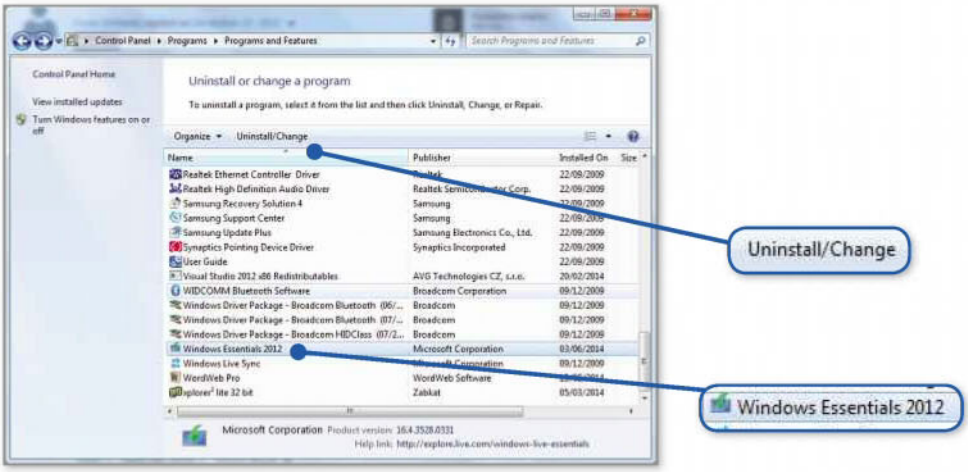
If the stick is already NTFS, then the file might simply be too large. Companies use different methods to calculate capacity, so a drive sold as an '8GB' drive might only have 7.45 'real' gigabytes, as calculated by Windows. Add in a bit of hidden 'overhead' needed by the file system for storing and indexing files and your file simply might not fit.

Use Windows Explorer to identify the file format used by your USB stick

How do I uninstall Windows Messenger?

Q I read in *Computeractive* that Microsoft has discontinued Windows Messenger in favour of Skype. I still have Windows Messenger installed and it launches every time I start Windows. Because I don't use it anymore, I tried to uninstall it. However, I could find no entry for it in the list of installed programs. Has Microsoft removed its entry without me knowing, perhaps with a Windows update? If so, how am I supposed to uninstall Messenger now? Also, do I have to install Skype in its place? What would it do for me? I use Windows 7.

Brian Dawson



Remove Windows Messenger via these steps

A Microsoft has not removed the Messenger entry from your installed-programs list. Instead, you'll find it wrapped up in the Windows Essentials group – as Messenger is part of that suite.

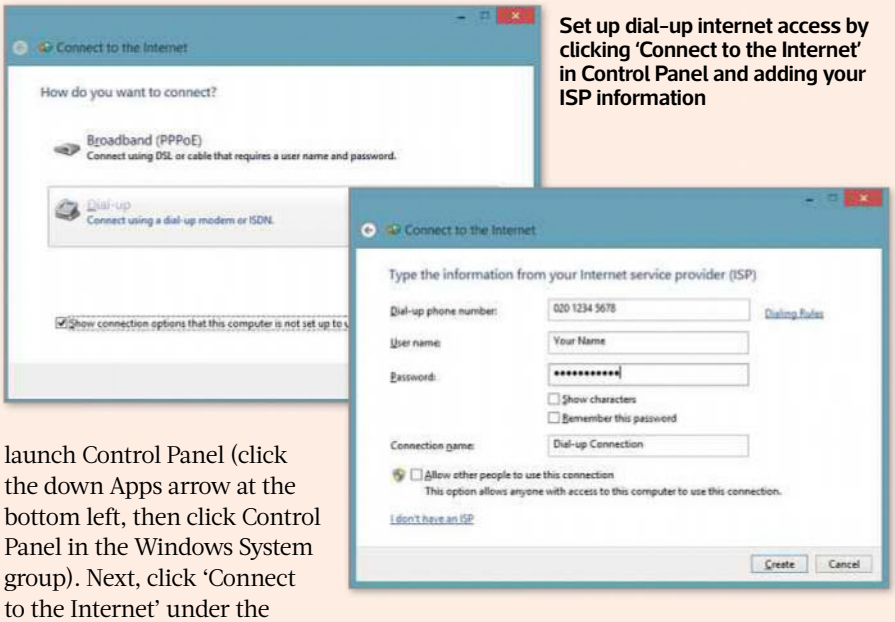
In Control Panel, click 'Uninstall a program' then select the Windows Essentials 2012 entry before clicking the 'Uninstall/Change' button at the top. Next, click 'Remove one or more Windows Essentials programs', tick the Messenger box and then click Uninstall.

As for Skype, it's a communications tool that includes many of the same features as Messenger, but it also offers the ability to make and receive telephone calls (audio and video). You do not need to install it, unless you wish to use it. Should you decide to do so, the login details you used for Windows Messenger – the same as your Microsoft account details – will log you in.

How do I get dial-up access for my new laptop?

Q We live in an isolated rural area with dial-up internet being our only option. My current Windows XP laptop is getting old and cranky and I'm looking to replace it very soon. The problem is getting anyone to give me coherent advice as to how I can get my new laptop to access my dial-up connection. Can you help?

Shauna Whall



Set up dial-up internet access by clicking 'Connect to the Internet' in Control Panel and adding your ISP information

A A 56Kbps USB modem is what you need, such as this £17 model from Amazon (www.snipca.com/12370). It should work with the drivers built into any version of Windows, so your new laptop should recognise it when you plug it in and it'll be ready to connect.

However, you'll need to provide Windows with the details for your dial-up ISP. You didn't say which laptop model or which version of Windows you have in mind but, unless you plan to install Windows 7 yourself, your new computer will come with Windows 8.1.

To set up dial-up internet access, first launch Control Panel (click the down Apps arrow at the bottom left, then click Control Panel in the Windows System group). Next, click 'Connect to the Internet' under the 'Network and Internet' heading, then Dial-up. In the 'Connect to the Internet' dialogue box type your ISP's telephone number, along with the username and password your ISP has given you. Type a description for the connection ('My dial-up', for example) then click Connect.

To disconnect (or connect for any future online activity), press the Windows key+C to open the Charms bar, then click Settings followed by the Network icon (labelled 'Available' in dial-up mode). Under connections, click 'My dial-up', then click Disconnect (or Dial to connect).

Problems Solved

Can I still activate Windows XP by phone?

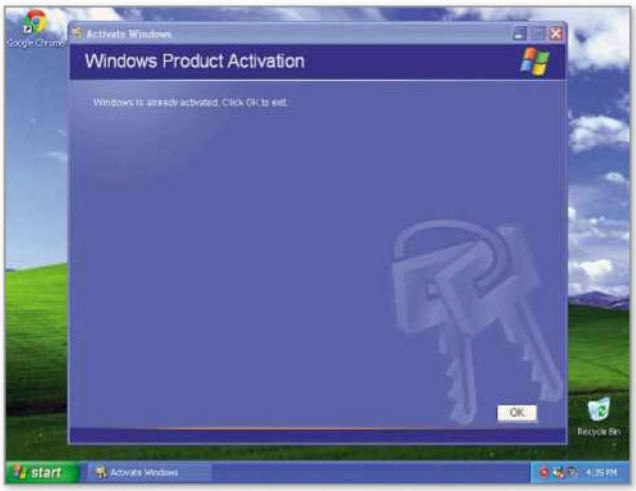
Q With Windows XP support now ended, do new installations of it still have to be activated? If so, has the option to activate by phone also disappeared over the blue horizon? If that's the case, is there a way around it – perhaps by editing the Windows Registry? Also, is there any way to rescue data from a damaged CD-ROM? All the advice I've read focuses on hard drives.

Rob Godwin

A New Windows XP installations still require activation and Microsoft has not shut down the activation servers or phone system. So, if you set up a new XP install you can still activate it online. Assuming that your concern about activation stems from the dangers of taking XP online, we should point out there's really very little risk given the short time XP would spend online (though our view might change if major flaws are discovered in the future). Regardless, you can always call Microsoft – the UK activation number is currently 0800 018 8354.

As for your damaged discs, you didn't explain exactly what was wrong with them but there are a couple of things that might help. If the disc has just a few scratches that stop Windows from reading it, then a free utility such as CD Recovery Toolbox (www.snipca.com/12362) will scan it then display a list of recoverable files and folders. Just tick the ones you want to recover then click the Save button.

If the disc is so heavily scratched that it's totally unreadable then a gadget such as SkipDr – £10 from Maplin (www.snipca.com/12365) – might help. Your data is stored on the thin metal substrate in the middle of the disc, but large scratches prevent the drive's laser from focusing to read it. So, pop your disc into SkipDr, turn the handle and an abrasive strip will polish the plastic to remove deeper scratches – and this is often sufficient to allow the laser to focus properly.



Activate new installations of Windows XP online or by phone

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 6 Aug

- How do I get the data off my broken Nexus 7?
- How do I obtain a virus-free version of WirelessKeyView?
- Why do I get sound but no video?

...And many more

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Why is Word's text cursor jumping to the beginning of the line?

Q I'm using Word 2010 and Windows 7. Recently, whenever I'm typing a document, I get halfway across the page, then the text cursor returns to the left margin. I press Delete and the cursor moves back and I can continue to the end of the line. The problem returns on the next line. I've cleared all the tabs, so the ruler doesn't show any tabs, and the indents stay the same. Can anyone help?

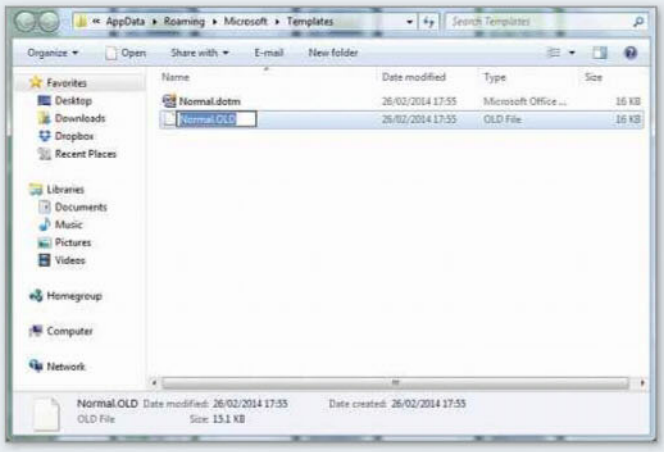
Treasurer, Computeractive Forum

A Word's Normal.dotm template might be corrupted, so I'd suggest creating a new one.

Close Word then type %UserProfile%\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Templates into the Start menu's search bar and press Enter. Check to see you have the right Normal file by switching to Details view and expanding the Name column to check for a 'dotm' extension. If the file extensions are hidden – as they are by default – press Alt to display the menu bar, then choose Tools followed by 'Folder options'. Next, click View, then click again to remove the tick from 'Hide extensions for known file types'.

When you have established that you have the correct Normal file, right-click it and rename it as 'Normal.old'. Close the Templates folder, open Word 2010 and a new Normal.dotm file will be created.

Steel, Computeractive Forum



If your Normal.dotm template in Word is corrupted, create a new Normal file and rename it

Kaspersky Internet Security 2014

Make Kaspersky easier to install, hog fewer resources and update automatically

Kaspersky won't install

Kaspersky achieved the best antivirus test scores we've ever seen in the latest lab tests by our colleagues at Dennis Technology Labs (see Issue 425). But it isn't perfect, and you may even struggle to install it if you haven't had the right Windows updates. If you see the error message 'Installation error. NetFramework' during installation, you need to install a system update (www.snipca.com/12516 for Windows 7 and 8/8.1; www.snipca.com/12515 for XP).

You may also have problems installing Kaspersky if you're on Windows XP and your computer's list of root certificates is out of date. This list tells your computer which programs are safe to run on your PC. Download the latest (and final) root certificate update for XP from www.snipca.com/12517.

Kaspersky slows down your PC

Antivirus suites can hog a lot of your PC's processing power, and Kaspersky hogs more than most. To prevent your PC becoming too slow, click Settings in Kaspersky, then Performance and tick all three boxes under 'Computer resources'. The first box cancels Kaspersky's automatic startup so that it doesn't run as soon as you switch on your PC; the second ensures that virus scans don't take place while your CPU is in heavy use; and the third tells Kaspersky to perform its more taxing security tasks when your PC is idle.

Tick the boxes under 'Computer resources' to help prevent Kaspersky slowing down your PC

You can also set Kaspersky to pause scanning when you run specific programs. Scroll to the bottom of the Performance menu, click Pause File Anti-Virus, click Add and choose the programs you want Kaspersky to pause for.

Kaspersky conflicts with other programs

One of our readers recently emailed to say that security program Trusteer Rapport, which has been recommended by her bank, was stopping Kaspersky (her existing antivirus) working properly. She fixed this by uninstalling Trusteer. This is because antivirus suites conflict with each other. If you have more than one installed, they identify each other as viruses and effectively cancel each other out. Only use a program like Trusteer it if you don't already have another antivirus suite.

Kaspersky may also interfere with other types of software. For example, it can stop iTunes working properly by treating all downloads as a threat. To fix this, go to Settings in Kaspersky, click Protection Center, Firewall, 'Configure application rules'. Scroll down to iTunes in the 'All applications' list, right-click it, click 'Details and rules', Exclusions and tick the second, third and fifth boxes.

Kaspersky won't work in Windows 8.1

If you installed Kaspersky Internet Security 2014 on Windows 8 you may find that it stops working in Windows 8.1. This is because you need a crucial patch (patch 'b') to make Kaspersky work in Windows 8.1. If you're already on Windows 8.1 and have this problem, install the latest patched version of Kaspersky (www.snipca.com/12514). If you're still on Windows 8, check which patch you have installed before you update to Windows 8.1. Open Kaspersky, click Support and look at your patch version next to 'Application version'. If you have patch 'b', 'c' or 'd', you can update to Windows 8.1 without causing any problems with Kaspersky. If you only have patch 'a', right-click Kaspersky in the notification menu, click Update and restart your computer. Kaspersky will now work when you update to Windows 8.1.

Look at 'Application version' to check which patch is installed in Kaspersky

Kaspersky won't update automatically

Kaspersky should be set to update automatically by default. If it hasn't been updating on your PC, check that automatic updates are enabled. Open Kaspersky, click Settings, Additional, Update. Make sure 'Download and install updates automatically' under 'New application versions' is ticked. If Kaspersky still won't update, a proxy server might be interfering with your connection to Kaspersky's servers. From Kaspersky's main menu, click Settings, Additional, Network, Proxy Server and tick 'Do not use proxy server'.

On laptops, Kaspersky sometimes blocks automatic updates to help save your battery. So if you're having trouble with Kaspersky updates on your laptop, click Settings, Performance and untick the Battery Saving box.

To buy Kaspersky Internet Security 2014 for the special price of £17.99, go to the *Computeractive* Software Store (www.snipca.com/11134).

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52mm UV / Haze	£4.99
55mm UV / Haze	£5.99
58mm UV / Haze	£6.99
62mm UV / Haze	£7.99
67mm UV / Haze	£8.99
72mm UV / Haze	£8.99
77mm UV / Haze	£11.99
Skylight filters from:	£6.99
Circular Polarising filters from:	£18.99
ND4 and ND8 filters from:	£11.99
Starburst filters from:	£11.99

P-Type Square Filter System

The P-Type square / rectangular filter system comprises three parts:
1) An adapter ring that screws onto the front of your DSLR lens
2) A filter holder clips onto the ring
3) One or more P-Type filters

49-82mm Adapter Rings	£4.99
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ND2 Grad Filter	£11.99
ND4 Filter	£9.99
ND4 Grad Filter	£11.99
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PRINTER INK CARTRIDGES

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BCi6 B/C/M/Y 15ml	£2.99
BCi6 PC/PM/R/G 15ml	£2.99
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CLi8 B/C/M/Y/PC/PM 15ml	£3.99
PGi520 Black 19ml	£4.99
CLi521 B/C/M/Y/GY 9ml	£3.99
PGi525 Black 19ml	£4.99
CLi526 B/C/M/Y/GY 9ml	£3.99
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PG50 Black 28ml	£12.99
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PG540XL Black 21ml	£13.99
CL38 Colour 12ml	£12.99
CL41 Colour 24ml	£16.99
CL51 Colour 24ml	£14.99
CL511 Colour 11ml	£15.99
CL513 Colour 15ml	£16.99
CL541XL Colour 15ml	£15.99

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BCi6 PC/PM/R/G 13ml	£8.99
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CLi8 PC/PM/R/G 13ml	£10.99
PGi9 All colours, each	£9.99
PGi29 All colours, each	£22.99
PGi520 Black 19ml	£10.99
CLi521 B/C/M/Y/GY 9ml	£9.99
PGi520/CLi521 set of 5	£46.99
PGi525 Black 19ml	£10.99
CLi526 B/C/M/Y/GY 9ml	£9.99
PGi525/CLi526 set of 5	£46.99
PGi550 Black 15ml	£10.99
CLi551 B/C/M/Y/GY 7ml	£8.99
PGi550/CLi551 set of 5	£42.99
PG40 Black 16ml	£14.99
CL41 Colour 12ml	£18.99
PG50 Black 22ml	£21.99
CL51 Colour 21ml	£25.99
PG510 Black 9ml	£11.99
CL511 Colour 9ml	£15.99
PG510/CL511 Combo	£24.99
PG512 Black 15ml	£16.99
CL513 Colour 13ml	£20.99
PG540 Black 8ml	£11.99
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LC970 / 1000 C/M/Y	£2.99
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LC980 / 1100 Black	£3.99
LC980 / 1100 C/M/Y	£2.99
LC980 / 1100 Set of 4	£11.99
LC985 Black	£3.99
LC985 C/M/Y	£2.99
LC985 Set of 4	£11.99
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LC1240 C/M/Y	£2.99
LC1240 Set of 4	£11.99

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No.57 Colour 24ml	£12.99
No.58 Photo 24ml	£12.99
No.78 Colour 38ml	£9.99
No.88XL Black 58ml	£9.99
No.88XL C/M/Y 17ml	£8.99
No.110 Colour 12ml	£10.99
No.300XL Black 18ml	£14.99
No.300XL Colour 18ml	£16.99
No.336 Black 10ml	£7.99
No.337 Black 24ml	£10.99
No.338 Black 24ml	£10.99
No.339 Black 34ml	£12.99
No.342 Colour 12ml	£10.99
No.343 Colour 21ml	£12.99
No.344 Colour 21ml	£14.99
No.348 Photo 21ml	£12.99
No.350XL Black 34ml	£14.99
No.351XL Colour 21ml	£16.99
No.363 Black 20ml	£6.99
No.363 C/M/Y/PC/PM 6ml	£4.99
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No.364 PB/C/M/Y 5ml	£5.99

HP Originals

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No.57 Colour 17ml	£28.99
No.110 Colour 5ml	£19.99
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No.300 Colour 4ml	£12.99
No.301 Black 3ml	£9.99
No.301 Colour 3ml	£11.99
No.301B/C Combo	£17.99
No.336 Black 5ml	£12.99
No.337 Black 11ml	£18.99
No.338 Black 11ml	£18.99
No.339 Black 21ml	£25.99
No.342 Colour 5ml	£14.99
No.343 Colour 7ml	£20.99
No.344 Colour 14ml	£28.99
No.348 Photo 13ml	£23.99
No.350 Black 4.5ml	£11.99
No.351 Colour 3.5ml	£14.99
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No.364XL Black 14ml	£14.99
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No.29 Colour	£12.99
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No.33 Colour	£11.99
No.34 Black	£11.99
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No.33 Colour	£24.99
No.36 Black	£19.99
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EPSON

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At Premier Ink, we stock two types of cartridges for Epson printers - **Originals**, which are made by Epson, and **Compatibles**, which are made by a UK company called **Jet Tec**. Using **Jet Tec Compatibles** is a way of saving money, without compromising on the quality of your prints. Here're the results from two **independent** ink tests that agree...

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- Total Digital Photography Magazine

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- Computer Upgrade Magazine

Total Digital Photography ★★★★★

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T009 Colour	£29.99 66ml	£4.99 70ml, 3 for £13.99	Photo 900, 1270, 1290
T026 Black	£39.99 16ml	£3.99 20ml, 3 for £10.99	Photo 810, 830 ,830u, 925, 935
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T040 Black	£44.99 17ml	£3.99 20ml, 3 for £10.99	C82, CX3200
T041 Colour	£39.99 37ml	£4.99 46ml, 3 for £13.99	
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T051 Black	£36.99 24ml	£2.99 26ml, 3 for £7.99	740, 760, 800, 850, 860, 1160
T052 Colour	£36.99 35ml	£3.99 39ml, 3 for £10.99	440, 640, 660, 740, 760, 1160
T053 Colour	£26.99 43ml	£3.99 48ml, 3 for £10.99	Photo 700, 750
T0441-4 Set of 4	£44.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	C64, C66, C84, C86,
T0441 Black	£19.99 13ml	£4.99 13ml, 3 for £13.99	CX3600/3650, CX6400, 6600
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T0591-9 each	£12.99 13ml	Check Website.	
T0611-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	D68, D88
T0611 Black	£8.99 8ml	£4.99 8ml, 3 for £13.99	DX3800/3850, DX4200/4250
T0612-4 each	£8.99 8ml	£3.99 8ml, 3 for £10.99	DX4800/4850
T0711-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	S20/21, SX100/105/115/200/205/215
T0711 Black	£8.99 7.4ml	£4.99 7.4ml, 3 for £13.99	SX400/405/415/515, D78/92/120
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T0791-6 Set of 6	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo 1400
T0791-6 each	£12.99 10ml	Check Website.	
T0801-6 Set of 6	£51.99	£19.99, 3 sets for £57.99	P50, R265/285/360, RX560/585
T0801-6 each	£8.99 7.4ml	£3.99 7.4ml, 3 for £10.99	/685/650, PX700/710/800/810
T0870-9 Set of 8	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo R1900
T0870 Gloss	£7.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T0871-9 each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T0961-9 Set of 8	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo R2880
T0961-9 each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T1281-4 Set of 4	£29.99	£14.99	S22, SX125, SX130, SX235W,
T1281 Black	£7.99 5.9ml	£4.99 5.9ml	SX420W/425W/435W/445W,
T1282-4 each	£7.99 3.5ml	£3.99 3.5ml	BX305F
T1291-4 Set of 4	£42.99	£16.99	SX235W/420W/425W/435W/445W,
T1291 Black	£10.99 11ml	£5.49 11ml	SX525WD/535WD/620FW, B42WD,
T1292-4 each	£10.99 7ml	£4.49 7ml	BX305F/320FW/525WD/625FWD
T1571-9 each	£20.99 25ml	Check Website.	R3000
T1591-9 each	£14.99 17ml	Check Website.	R2000
T5801-9 each	£41.99 80ml	Check Website.	Pro 3800, 3880
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Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

4K Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels

720p A common resolution of high-definition video: 1280x720 pixels.

802.11ac A standard for wireless networks that allows for much higher speeds than 802.11n.

Adware Unwanted adverts that come with software.

AVI Audio Video Interleave.

Batch-convert A software feature that automatically converts multiple files in one go.

Beta A version of software that's being tested.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System.

Burst-shooting mode A camera mode for taking several pictures very quickly.

Cache A temporary space for storing information.

Channel Wi-Fi routers that can communicate on multiple frequencies.

Clone In image-editing software the clone tool allows you to copy one area and paint it over another.

Codec Short for Compressor/Decompressor.

Contention ratio Refers to the maximum number of customers that at any one time can connect to an internet service provider's equipment.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website.

Contrast ratio A measure of the difference between the darkest and lightest possible shades shown by a screen.

CPU Central Processing Unit. Another term for a computer processor.

CSC Compact system cameras.

CSV Comma Separated Value.

DLP Digital Light Processing.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with a peripheral device.

Dual core When two processors are combined into a single chip.

Eight-core When eight processors are combined into a single chip.

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows.

Exploit kit A ready-made program for taking advantage of security flaws in another piece of software.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

FAT32 A system for formatting hard drives used by Windows 98 and ME.

Feedback The tactile response that the keys on a keyboard give when they are pressed.

Firmware Basic software stored on a device, such as a music player, to control its operation.

GHz Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second.

HDMI High-definition media interface.

Integrated graphics chip A device that has a chip for processing graphics data built on to its motherboard, rather than having a separate graphics card.

IP address Internet Protocol Address.

ISO A type of image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD disc.

Jailbreak Modifying an iPhone, iPod or iPad to get around Apple's restrictions.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display.

Local Loop Unbundling A rule that allows ISPs other than BT to install their equipment in phone exchanges for providing broadband.

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image.

Memory See Ram.

Micro HDMI A miniature version of HDMI often found on smartphones and tables.

Micro SD card A small type of memory card.

Micro USB A miniature version of USB, often found on smartphones, tablets and portable hard drives.

MPEG2 Motion Picture Experts Group 2.

MPEG-4 A standard for compressing digital content.

mSATA A smaller version of the SATA interface.

NFC Near-field communication.

Noise Dust-like speckles that appear in camera and TV images.

NTFS NT File System. A file system used by all recent versions of Windows.

Optical drive A computer device for reading or writing 5in discs.

Overwrite A way of ensuring data is securely erased by writing new data or nonsense data in place of the data to be deleted.

Patch Software file that fixes problems with a program.

Phablet A smartphone with a screen size that is midway between that of a typical smartphone and a tablet.

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications.

Port A channel through which a PC communicates with the internet.

Processor The processor is the brain of a computer.

Proxy server A computer that sits between your computer and the internet and filters the connection.

PVR Personal video recorder.

Quad core A computer that has four processors on a single chip.

Ram Random-access memory.

Raw A format for digital photos.

Registry A file integrated into Windows that stores information.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image.

Root To perform tasks on Android devices that aren't permitted by the manufacturer.

Sandbox A digital barrier that protects an operating system.

SATA Serial ATA. An interface for connecting modern hard drives and optical discs to a computer.

SATA controller A chip that manages everything that relates to SATA.

Sensor The part of the camera that captures each image.

SLR Single-lens Reflex.

SSD Solid-state drive.

Tag A keyword used to describe a file or web page.

TCP/IP Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol.

Travel The distance the keys of a keyboard have to be pressed before the keystroke is recognised.

UEFI Unified Extensible Firmware Interface.

USB2 Faster successor to USB that's used by devices such as external hard drives.

USB3 A even faster version of the USB standard.

Web apps Programs that aren't stored on your computer, but on a web server instead and run through your web browser.

White balance Adjusts the balance of colours in the image to produce natural-looking images.

WMV Windows Media Video. A Microsoft file format for video.

The Final Straw

STUART ANDREWS is *Computeractive*'s Mr Angry
@SATAndrews

In this issue Stuart Andrews goes flipping mad over...

Missing manuals

When I first started out in journalism, I had a colleague who had worked in tech support. "Read the flipping manual," he used to rage, eyes rolling, face a beetroot shade of purple. "If only people would read the flipping manual, I wouldn't have had to deal with all their stuff." Well, maybe he didn't say 'flipping' – or 'stuff' if truth be told – but I know that you, gentle reader, don't want to read that kind of language.

> The loss of manuals reflects the strange belief that – in this shiny, happy post-PC world – our devices are now so easy to use we don't need them

These days we can't read the flipping manual. There is no flipping manual to be read. Some years ago, hardware and software manufacturers started ditching them, and now they're as rare as hens' teeth. If you're lucky, you can read the flipping PDF they provided you on the disc you flipping lost within days of getting it. If you're not so lucky, you can read the flipping online help. Good luck finding it on the website amid the flipping FAQs, statements of brand values and all the rest of that flipping ghastly stuff.

Manufacturers never liked manuals. They'll tell you that it added to their negative environmental impact by killing trees, increasing package weights and wasting ink. Personally, I can't help thinking it was just too much cost and bother for something that few users actually read. Well, a PDF might be cheaper and a little more tree-friendly, but I pity those poor souls who can't get their only laptop up and running so they can read the PDF. And have you ever tried prodding one device while reading instructions from another? Online help isn't any better, particularly if what you need a manual for is to find out why your internet connection isn't working.

It doesn't help that there's such a disconnect between those who make and sell the hardware, and those who make the software. Sure, your friendly smartphone manufacturer could come up with a manual, but isn't telling you how to use Android a job Google should do? Once your laptop-maker has told you how to charge the battery and switch it on, they feel their work is done – urging you to run off and bother Microsoft instead.

The loss of manuals reflects the strange belief that – in this shiny, happy post-PC world – our devices are now so easy to use we don't need them. Several times I've heard Apple fans claiming that an iPad doesn't need a manual – just use it and you'll soon learn all there is to know.

Me? I think a lot of things could do with a manual. Our laptops, our cameras, our smartphones and our tablets all come packed with more features than we'll ever understand, yet all we get – if we're lucky – is a two-page guide. I'm sure that the 'digital natives' – those in their teens and twenties who can't remember a world without Google – pick things up through some kind of touchscreen osmosis, but there are many of us still using tech who can't. And yes, we could just search Google for an answer, but have you tried trawling through the help pages and forums when you don't know exactly what you're looking for? (Instead, turn to page 61 for the best way to find manuals online).

Not everyone used to read the flipping manual, and not all of them were even worth your time. Yet there was something great about a good, comprehensive, well written booklet. It didn't just tell you how to use your hardware or software, it also helped you explore what it could do. You discovered features you'd have never found without it, and it even helped explain what they did. Whether you've bought a smartphone, some software or a camera, that's a very lovely, very useful thing. So, come on guys, why not bring back those flipping manuals? Or if you won't supply them, at least give us a means of getting them for ourselves.

Do you agree with Stuart?
Let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

Next week Stuart gets riled about Facebook's manipulation

'With moments of real genius, some of his poems will last as long as poetry is read.'

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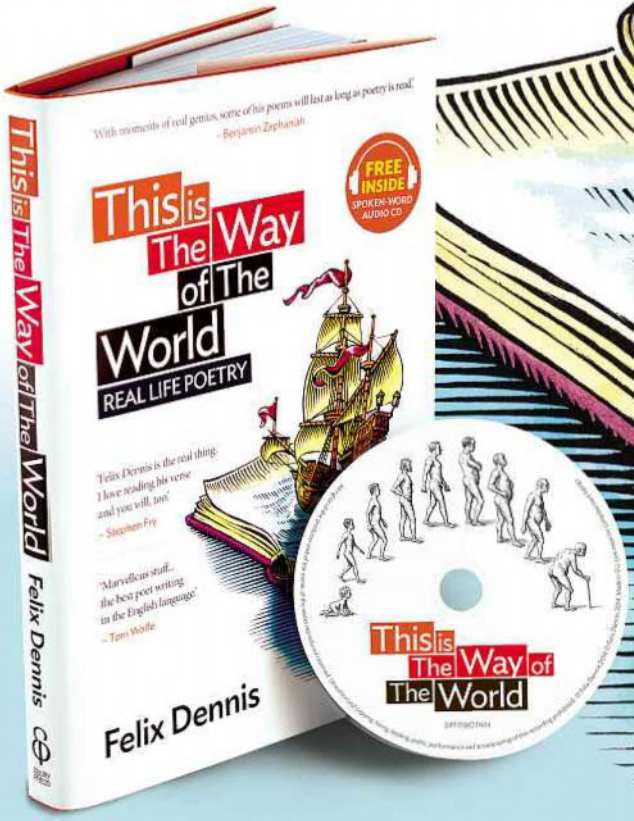

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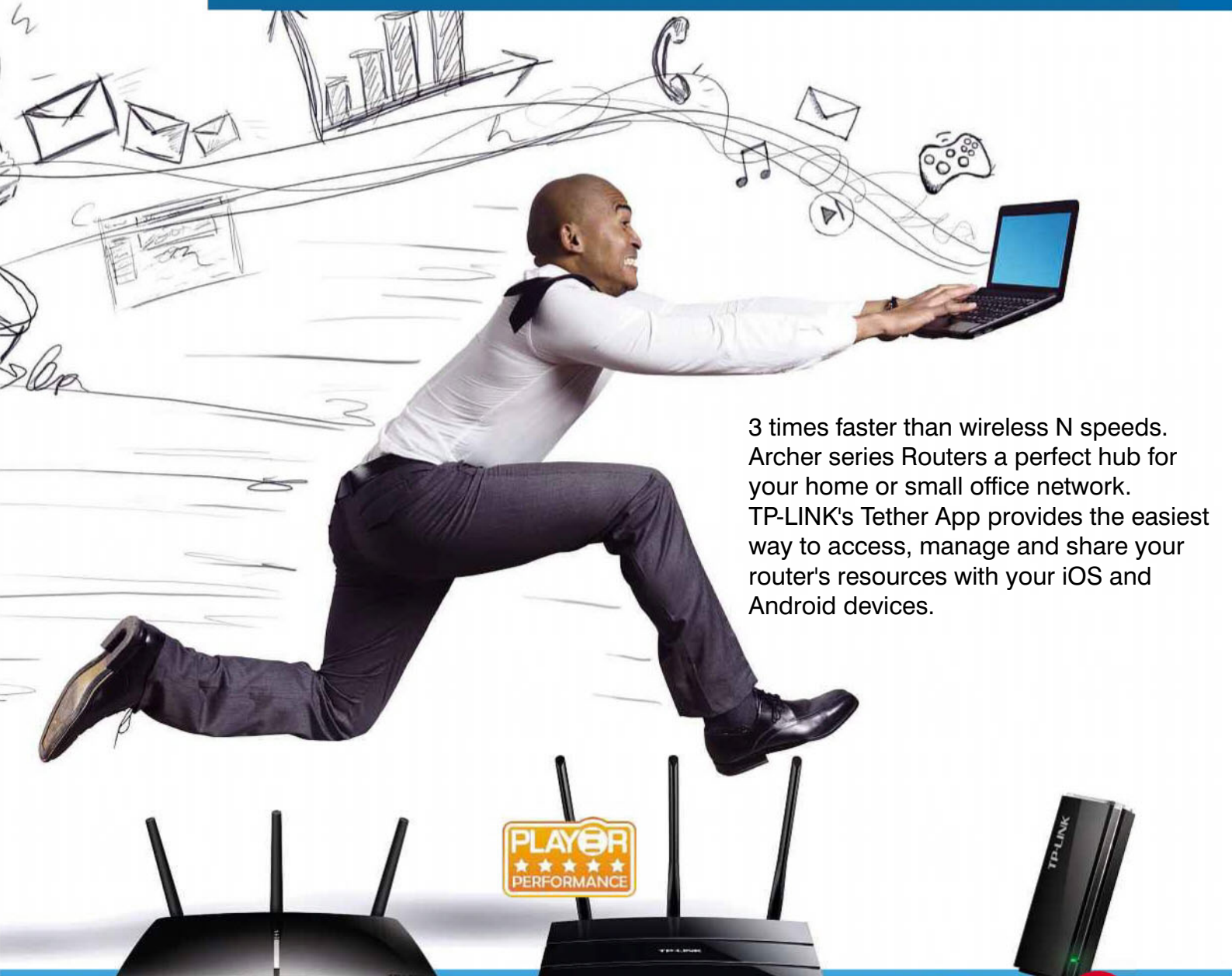

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