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IN SKYPE**

And other software  
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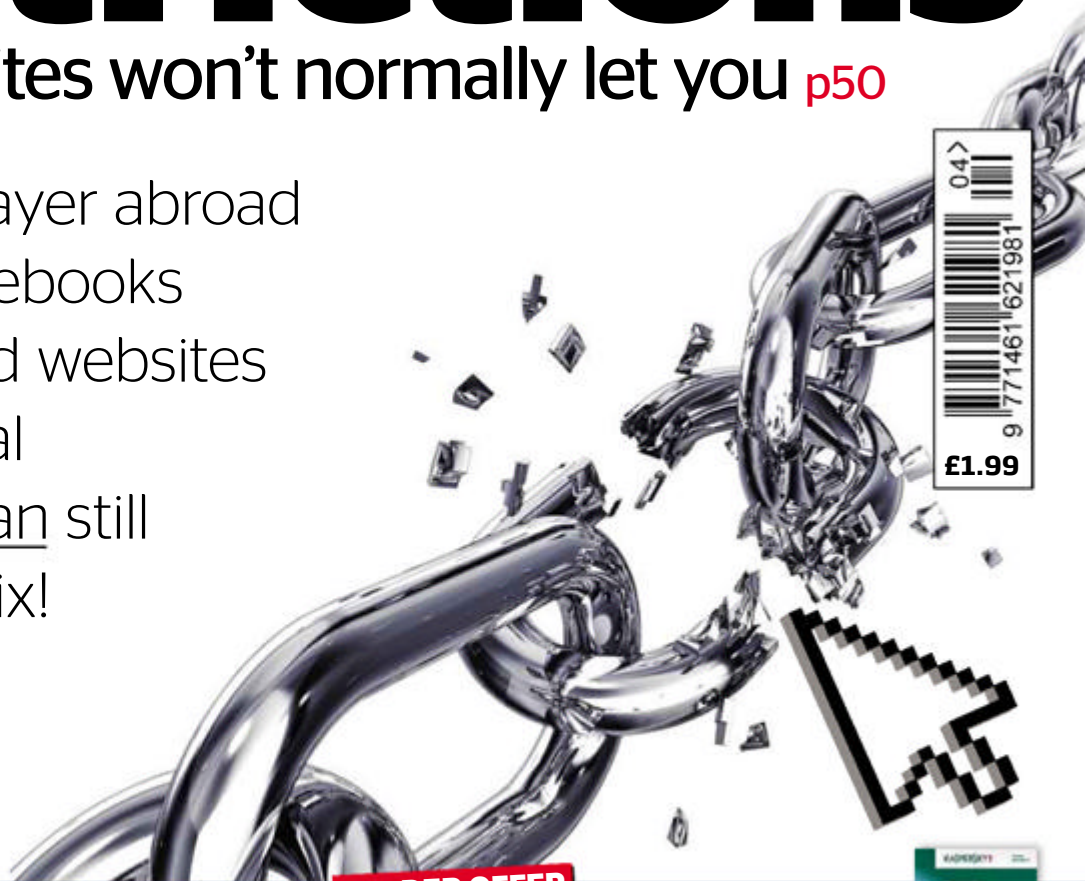
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Your friendly guide to technology

# Beat Internet Restrictions

Do what websites won't normally let you p50

- ✓ Watch BBC iPlayer abroad
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## From the Editor

In our Cover Feature (page 50) we reveal tricks to beat some of the internet restrictions that take the fun out of going online. Follow our instructions and you'll be able to watch BBC iPlayer the next time you're abroad, and access websites blocked in the UK. We also explain where you stand legally.

Many readers have asked me when the *Computeractive* 2014 Back Issue CD ROM will be available. I'm happy to say that you can now pre-order it on Amazon via [www.snipca.com/14981](http://www.snipca.com/14981). For more information on the CD, which contains all 26 issues from 2014, turn to page 54.

Finally, congratulations to John Anderson from Birmingham who won our Quiz of the



Year competition (Issue 439). He wins the Neato Botvac 85 robot vacuum cleaner. Howard Hyman won the shorter quiz, and will soon be receiving a shiny *Computeractive* mug. Thanks to everyone who entered. You'll find the answers at [www.snipca.com/14974](http://www.snipca.com/14974). How many did you get right?

**Daniel Booth**  
[editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk)



## THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

**€250,000**

Amount donated by Google to Charlie Hebdo - **p7**



**17 months**

How long an alleged Moonpig flaw exposed customers' details - **p14**



**£399**

Price of Apple's cheapest ever Mac computer - **p21**



**175,000**

Total requests to use Microsoft Sway in first 10 weeks - **p49**



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Computer **active**  
**GREAT PICK**  
★★★★★



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Computer **active**  
**GREAT PICK**  
★★★★★

Garmin Nuvi 2599 LMT-D p28



Computer **active**  
**BUY IT!**  
★★★★★

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## Computeractive offer of the fortnight

**Kaspersky Total Security 2015 page 27**



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## Microsoft 'to replace IE' with new browser in Windows 10

Details and screenshots of a new Microsoft web browser, codenamed Spartan, that could replace Internet Explorer have emerged.

Reports suggest that Spartan will come with Windows 10 alongside Internet Explorer 11, the current version of the browser.

The screenshot, posted online by technology website BGR (<https://bgr.com>), shows a browser devoid of almost all the usual browser clutter. It has little more than an address bar and buttons for favourites, settings and your homepage (see image above right).

Some industry experts have drawn comparisons between Spartan and the minimalist feel of Google's Chrome browser.

But reports say that Spartan will contain advanced new features not found in rival browsers. One such feature



is 'inking' – the ability for users to make notes on web pages. This will be powered by Microsoft's OneDrive cloud storage and will let users access, edit and share the web pages through any browser across multiple devices.

Spartan will also reportedly accept voice commands, enabling users to add a site to their bookmarks, set a new homepage or even speak the name of a website they want to visit (for example, "go to

eBay.co.uk").

It's already been revealed that Microsoft is building its Cortana voice assistant into Windows 10, and voice-command in Spartan may be an extension of that work.

It's not clear whether Spartan will be an outright replacement for Internet Explorer or will run alongside it, though some industry insiders claim that the current version of IE will be the last.

Microsoft is expected

### COMMENT

Killing off Internet Explorer would be a bold move by Microsoft, but it may be just the kind of radical measure needed to encourage people to switch from Chrome and Firefox. We like the sound of Spartan, especially the voice-command tools. If it crashes less than Chrome and is faster than Firefox, we'll definitely start using it. These rumours add to the growing sense that Microsoft is on the right track with Windows 10. The more we read about it, the more we find to look forward to.

to unveil the Windows 10 Consumer Preview at a launch event on Wednesday 21 January. We'll have full details of what's announced in our next issue, out 4 February.

## iPad apps cost more as EU changes tax law

Apple increased the cost of apps in its App Store in the first week of January following a change to tax law by the European Union.

Previously, companies operating in the EU were able to charge VAT on items according to where the company is based, rather than the location of the purchaser.

Because Apple is based in Luxembourg, it could apply a flat rate of 4 per cent across the whole EU territory, meaning UK residents didn't pay the UK VAT rate of 20 per cent on apps.

However, this was seen by many politicians, including



chancellor George Osborne, as a tax loophole that needed closing. New legislation, which came into effect on 1 January, was brought in to deal with it.

Up to now the starting price of an app had been 69p. This has risen to 79p, making the

UK store on average 20 per cent more expensive than its US counterpart.

Apple has also increased the top-line cost of apps from £1.99 to £2.29. The price of mid-point apps remains the same at £1.49.

The new EU rule also affects the price of ebooks and movie-streaming services like Netflix.



**You'll like this...** Website Waterloo 200 is searching for ancestors of soldiers who fought in the battle ([www.waterloo200.org](http://www.waterloo200.org))



**...but not this** Microsoft is limiting advance notice of Patch Tuesdays to paying customers only ([www.snipca.com/14986](http://www.snipca.com/14986))



# Tech giants support Charlie Hebdo following terrorist attack

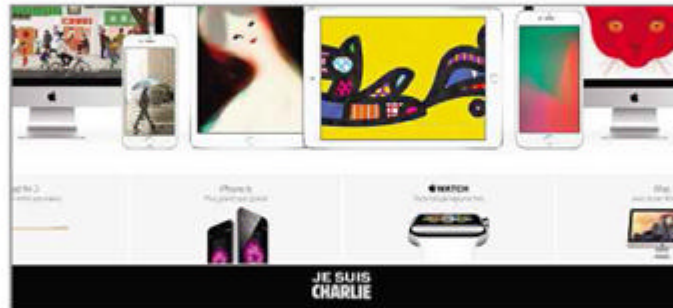
Technology companies have stressed the importance of freedom of speech in response to the murders at the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris on 7 January.

In a post on his profile page ([www.snipca.com/14963](http://www.snipca.com/14963)) Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg condemned "extremists trying to silence the voices and opinions of everyone else around the world".

He referred to the attempt by an extremist in Pakistan in 2010 to have him sentenced to death because he refused to remove an 'Everybody Draw Muhammad Day' competition from Facebook.

Zuckerberg wrote: "We stood up for this because different voices - even if they're sometimes offensive - can make the world a better and more interesting place".

He added: "We follow the laws in each country, but we



never let one country or group of people dictate what people can share across the world".

Within six hours of being posted, Zuckerberg's statement had received nearly 300,000 'likes' and been shared over 25,000 times.

Apple showed support for *Charlie Hebdo* by adding a

banner to the homepage of its French website with the words "Je Suis Charlie" (I am Charlie). The phrase has become a popular slogan for people wanting to express solidarity with the magazine.

Google added a black ribbon to its homepage. The message 'Remembering the victims of the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*' appeared when you hovered your mouse over the ribbon. The company also donated €250,000 (around £195,000) to support the magazine.

## Office for Android now open to everyone (if you have the right tablet)

Microsoft has made the preview versions of its Office for Android apps available to everyone, letting you use Word, Excel and PowerPoint on your tablet.

Previously the apps were only available to people who signed up to a beta version via Microsoft's Google+ page.

However, the apps aren't compatible with every Android tablet, only those that run KitKat or Lollipop, have a screen size of between 7 and 10.1-inches, and are powered by an ARM processor.

This means you can't use the apps on tablets powered by Intel's Atom processor, which includes the Samsung Galaxy

Tab 3 10.1, Lenovo Yoga and Tesco Hudl 2. Most other Android tablets, including all Nexus devices, contain ARM processors.

You'll find links to the apps, taking you to the Google Play Store, on Microsoft's Office blog: [www.snipca.com/14961](http://www.snipca.com/14961). The company said that during the beta phase it received feedback from users that "has helped us shape and optimize the Office experience for Android tablet users".

Microsoft hopes those using the preview versions will provide even more feedback and discover bugs that can be



fixed before the apps are fully released.

The company hasn't scheduled a final release date, but last year it said it hoped this would be in early 2015.

Before you can start using the apps, you'll need to set up a Microsoft account if you don't have one. This means you can save files using the OneDrive cloud-storage service.

## Tomorrow's world

Three of the most interesting things at the 2015 show

### BIONIC BIRD AEROPLANE DRONE

Remember the toy aeroplanes powered by rubber bands that you played with as a kid?

The modern equivalent is the Bionic Bird, which you control using a phone app. The wings flutter as it flies, making it look surprisingly realistic. It is powered by the Turbo-Charge 'egg' that fits into your pocket. Watch it in action at [www.snipca.com/14958](http://www.snipca.com/14958).



### TRACK YOUR DOG USING NEW SMART COLLAR

If you're worried about your pet pooch going walkies, consider buying the Motorola Scout 5000 collar. It has a camera that streams live footage to your phone, letting you track your dog's location, and a microphone that allows you to bark orders. Motorola says the collar is splash, paw and chew proof. Read more at [www.snipca.com/14959](http://www.snipca.com/14959).

### CHARGE YOUR PHONE IN JUST 2 MINUTES

Israeli company StoreDot unveiled a "bio-organic" charger that fully powers phones in just two minutes. It was built by researchers at Tel Aviv University using tiny crystals, called NanoDots. The charger can't be used on existing phones, but StoreDot says it is in talks with phone manufacturers about bringing its technology to handsets soon. For more information watch this BBC report: [www.snipca.com/14960](http://www.snipca.com/14960).

## IN BRIEF

### NEW £19 PHONE BATTERY LASTS 30 DAYS

Microsoft has unveiled a phone that lasts 30 days between charges and costs only \$29 (about £19). The Nokia 215 has a relatively small screen and a large keyboard, resembling handsets that were popular before the rise of touchscreen phones. Online features already confirmed are the Opera Mini browser, Bing Search, MSN Weather, Twitter and Facebook. See more on this YouTube video: [www.snipca.com/14916](http://www.snipca.com/14916).

### FACEBOOK LEGAL HOAX RE-APPEARS

Thousands of people on Facebook have been tricked into posting a hoax legal statement that claims to forbid the social network from using your content, such as videos and photos. But as security expert Graham Cluley explained on his blog ([www.snipca.com/14920](http://www.snipca.com/14920)), posting the message, a version of which has been around for years, has no legal effect.

## EU says all web devices must be switched off overnight

All new internet-connected devices must automatically switch off when not in use, under EU law introduced on 1 January.

This means manufacturers must make sure that every new Smart TV, router and printer moves automatically into a low-power standby mode when it hasn't been used for a period of time.

EU officials say the average internet gadget uses between 25 and 100 watts of electricity overnight.

The law is designed to reduce electricity usage and cut bills. The European Commission claimed the average household would save £32 a year.

The measure is part of the EU's Ecodesign Directive ([www.eceec.org/ecodesign](http://www.eceec.org/ecodesign)), which aims to establish "a framework under which manufacturers of energy-



using products are obliged to reduce the energy consumption and other negative environmental impacts occurring throughout the product life cycle".

Other changes include compulsory energy ratings on all gas ovens, to help customers make a more informed buying choice. EU officials say the most energy-efficient gas ovens would typically save customers around £143 in reduced bills across the course

of the product's life.

The law even applies to coffee machines. New models that come with non-insulated jugs must power down 40 minutes after brewing. Last year, EU officials used the Directive to ban high-powered vacuum cleaners.

Opponents of the law say the EU shouldn't force these rules on manufacturers.

"EU officials apply these blanket regulations from Brussels without looking into the problems," said UKIP MEP Roger Helmer.

"This really should be a matter for the industry, the market and, perhaps, national legislation rather than yet more interference from Brussels," he continued.

But the EU said the measures will cut carbon dioxide emissions by 28 million tons, which, it claims, is equivalent to the annual total of 1.5 million households.

## Bungling Muslim extremists mistakenly hack Bristol bus website

A group of Muslim extremists hoping to cause widespread travel chaos across the Western world unwittingly hacked an online British bus timetable.

The cyberterrorists, who call themselves Darkshadow, were seemingly thrown by the name of the company operating the website - TravelWest ([www.travelwest.info](http://www.travelwest.info)). It's thought they were trying to target a major international travel website for Europe and the US, rather than a journey planner run by several councils in the south

west, including Bristol, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset. As well as bus information, it provides details about rail services and cycle paths.

The hackers replaced the site with a sinister ISIS-style black page and logo (see screenshot). It played Middle Eastern music and included a link to the extremists' Facebook page, on which members of the public asked mocking questions.

"What time is the number 8 to the town centre?" asked Jake Bradley. Richard Moore



wrote: "These idiots are the laughing stock of the world. Are the buses running today?"

Darkshadow describe themselves as an 'Arab Security Team', and say they are based in Tunis in Tunisia.

Their Facebook page claims they have previously hacked web pages run by Philippine Airlines and the El Salvador government.

## What's new from Google

Google has enjoyed huge success with its Chromecast device, which lets you 'cast' video and web content from one device to another, such as games from your PC to your TV (see our Workshop on page 38). In early January it launched 'Cast for audio', which does the same for music by connecting to networked speakers through Wi-Fi. Read more at [www.google.com/cast/audio](http://www.google.com/cast/audio).



## Question of the Fortnight

# How soon will we be using robots at home?

Humans have dreamt about having a mechanical Jeeves for decades, but the current reality is a lot more limited

When science-fiction writers of the Fifties and Sixties imagined what household robots of the future would look like, they typically described a friendly humanoid cyborg who walked and talked much like we do. These were in effect robot butlers, emotionless machines built to serve us.

What these writers didn't appreciate is just how difficult it is to build a robot that does everything. There were many robots on display at the 2015 Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, held in early January, but none of them looked like they could Hoover, wash up and do a spot of gardening, then give you a shoulder massage as you relaxed in front of the TV. Casey Nobile from the



sprinkler that can be programmed to propel different amounts of water to individual plants. Joining Droplet in the garden is Grillbot (<http://grillbots.com>), which cleans your barbecue. Inside the home you could use the Atmobot ([www.snipca.com/14944](http://www.snipca.com/14944)), a mobile

air-purification machine that removes airborne dust and odours. These devices are all called robots, and are all used for domestic chores we'd rather not have to do ourselves.

But for many people this may feel like a very loose definition of the word 'robot'. To those raised on Isaac Asimov novels and *Star Trek*,

these machines may seem clever and useful, but they lack the artificial personality and humanoid appearance that's traditionally associated with robots. Many experts believe it's unlikely we'll be using an 'all-in-one' robot within any of our lifetimes. "Maybe in the very long term that could happen," Steve Fernholz, Droplet's founder, told the BBC. "While I think an all-in-one homebot is theoretically possible, it would either be cost-prohibitive or, in the act of trying to make it do everything, it could end up doing everything poorly," he warned.

Casey Nobile agrees that all-in-one robots are a long way off, citing the "the limitations with manipulation technology and the issues with battery life".

But some companies are trying to create robots that can do more than one thing. One leading example is South Korea's Futurorobot, which has recently launched the

## THE FACTS

- Many robotics companies are concentrating on specialised devices that do one thing, rather than 'all-in-one' machines
- There are already robots that can water your garden, clean your barbecue and remove airborne dust
- Canadian company Spin Master makes the Meccanoid, which can tell jokes and play games

Furo-i Home, a cone on wheels with a face that resembles a startled penguin (see it at [www.snipca.com/14946](http://www.snipca.com/14946)). You can command it to turn lights, heating and music on and off, and also use it as a teaching aid for children.

Another device aimed at educating children is the Meccanoid G15 KS ([www.meccano.com/meccanoid](http://www.meccano.com/meccanoid)), made by Canadian company Spin Master. The company describes it as "your personal robot friend that you get to build using the latest Meccano parts". It can speak phrases, tell jokes, play games, and looks more like the traditional image of a robot companion (see photo).

But it's no C-3PO. We'll probably have to wait centuries for robots that advanced to appear.

Until then, we'll have to accept that today's household robots are not what we were promised by film-makers and sci-fi writers.

“Rather than concentrating on building a mechanical slave, most robotics companies are making devices that perform a limited set of tasks”

Robotics Trends website told the BBC: "It's very hard to make a robot do everything, like in the *Jetsons* analogy that everyone likes to refer to".

Rather than concentrating on building a mechanical slave, most robotics companies are making devices that perform a limited set of tasks. One such robot is Droplet (<http://smartdroplet.com>), an internet-connected garden

com/14944), a mobile air-purification machine that removes airborne dust and odours. These devices are all called robots, and are all used for domestic chores we'd rather not have to do ourselves.


But for many people this may feel like a very loose definition of the word 'robot'. To those raised on Isaac Asimov novels and *Star Trek*,

# Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

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## TPS does work - you just need to be patient


 While I sympathise with Tim Boddington's plight (Letters, Issue 438), I think £99.99 (plus delivery) for TrueCall Blocker is simply not worth it. I have used the Telephone Preference Service (TPS) three times in the past decade (yes, I move house a lot). It's free and it does work if you give it enough time to kick in. In my experience, there's little or no improvement until after two months, when the rate of nuisance calls halves (in my case, from five or six to two or three a day). A further month sees the rate fall to one a day; six months later, it's down to one a week; 18 months later, one a month. Today, if I were to receive a nuisance call it would be a real surprise.

Maybe Tim is excessively unlucky in being targeted by particularly tenacious callers, but I believe it's unfair to label TPS "ineffective, toothless and not worth the effort". I suspect there are many TPS subscribers who are as satisfied as me, and I recommend that anyone afflicted by nuisance callers should at least investigate TPS and give it a chance to work before shelling out hard-earned cash. Register at [www.tpsonline.org.uk](http://www.tpsonline.org.uk).

John Lawrence




## Windows 10 will be 'awesome'? Beware hubris, Microsoft

 Oh dear. I was looking forward to upgrading to Windows 10. I love Windows 7, but realise that eventually it will run out of steam, and so was planning to skip Windows 8 and go straight to the next operating system.

But then I read in News (Issue 440) that Microsoft has codenamed Windows 10 'Awesome', and my heart sank. It's only


right that developers will want to make a product as good as possible, but giving it such a name is simply conceited. To me, it suggests the developers were in love with the idea of creating a silly bit of hype. They knew 'Awesome' would make headlines, and so it proved. But don't Microsoft know the meaning of the word 'hubris'? Windows' customers will judge whether the next version is awesome, not those creating it.

Derek Alexander

 Don't tell anyone, but I've just hacked into Microsoft's servers to discover what their codenames were for previous versions of Windows. They called XP 'Will last for years, killed too early'; Vista was named 'It's rubbish - don't tell anyone'; Windows 7 was titled 'Rather good, actually'; and Windows 8 had the name 'Impossible to use, designed by idiots'.

Jim Hacker

## Positive experience using Windows 10


 My experience of the Windows 10 Technical Preview has been positive. I downloaded the ISO file, burned it to disc then installed it on a separate partition on the hard drive, no problem at all. The installation went as smoothly as other Windows installations.

The only feature that didn't work properly was Internet Explorer, though a quick update fixed it. In any case, I prefer Firefox, which works as it should. I have now installed a lot of other programs, including Photoshop and LibreOffice - all of which work well on my laptop. So far it has only crashed once, which is not bad for a very, very early build.

I do like the look of Windows 10 with its Start menu (with stop button) and the ability to rid myself of the fancy tiles. It's as intuitive as Windows 7 and the built-in apps work smoothly. Do try it if you can, but only on a separate partition or PC.

A.K.W.


## Keep Facebook 'frothy, fun and frivolous'

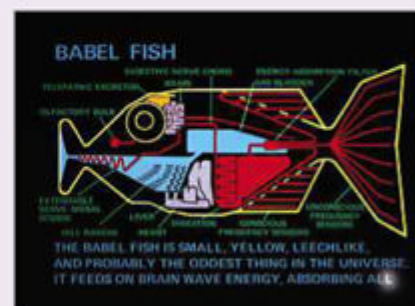
 I think Douglas Graham (Star Letter, Issue 440) misunderstands what Facebook is for. It's not an outlet for serious discussions about art, philosophy and politics. If it was, it wouldn't be so popular. I like the silly nonsense that my friends talk on Facebook. Yes they can be flippant and petty, but that's what real people are like. If they started talking about more weighty matters, they would sound pretentious. Let's keep Facebook frothy, fun and frivolous.

Gerry Harley



## Sorry Babel fish, I'll be using Skype Translator

 I'm glad Skype has introduced an instant-translation service (News, Issue 440). It sounds amazing. I don't have any Spanish relatives, so there's no point in me trying it yet, but as soon as Skype launch a German version I shall test it on my in-laws, who live in Munich. Most of all, I'm relieved that I won't have to wait for the Babel fish to evolve, which may have taken several millennia. Of all the wonderful creatures in Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the Babel fish are my favourite. If you don't know what I'm talking about, you should. Read the aforementioned book or for a quick



explanation visit Wikipedia ([www.snipca.com/14872](http://www.snipca.com/14872)). The most pleasing difference between the Babel fish and Skype Translator is that you don't need to stick the latter into your ear!

James Dack



## Royal Mail staff can't also collect parcels

✉ I must take exception to the remark made by Clive Richards in Issue 440, stating that Royal Mail staff do not work hard enough. I have a daughter who works for Royal Mail. She is just over five feet tall and every weekday she pushes an unwieldy and heavy trolley, nearly as tall as herself, full of letters and packages up a hill from the sorting office delivering to numerous streets in our town. To suggest that she should, at the same time, collect parcels is ludicrous.

Peter Stallard

## Unrealistic to ban hands-free phone calls

✉ While I agree with the law that bans mobile phones while driving, I can't help but wonder what planet Mr Roger Castle-Smith is living on (Letters, Issue 440). His argument relates to concentration being diverted while talking on the phone. Has he never been driving with a nagging wife, an interfering mother-in-law, or two kids scrapping in the back seat? If he objects to the pressing of a button to answer a hands-free call then we will also have to ban people switching on lights, sounding a horn and even changing gear, as all these involve the use of a hand.

Alan Knaggs

## Not happy with TalkTalk

✉ Where is this average broadband of 23Mbps (News, Issue 439)? I live in Teddington, west London, and our speed this week has been between 1.8 and 4.6Mbps. How can BT talk about delivering superfast speeds when they can't even supply London areas with a decent speed? We can't use iPlayer and such because they need at least 5Mbps to work without buffering. Our ISP TalkTalk blames our BT line, which is only one mile from the exchange, and we live in a new-build. BT Openreach reckons we can expect 6Mbps at best.

Fortunately, Hyperoptic ([www.hyperoptic.com](http://www.hyperoptic.com)) has installed fibre into our building, so we'll soon be getting speeds of 20Mbps (with a maximum of 1GB), and at a cheaper price than TalkTalk. Incidentally, when I complained to the CEO's office at TalkTalk I got a reply asking me to call and talk to them. When I received their email I was just off on holiday and I informed them of this. So, they binned my complaint and asked

## STAR LETTER

### Libraries should be places of learning, not coffee shops

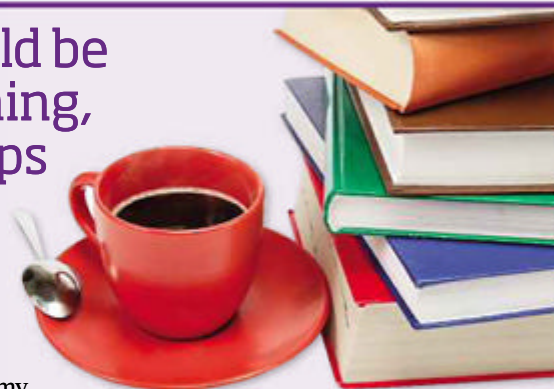
✉ In Issue 440 you asked whether we agreed with a Government report that suggested libraries should turn into coffee shops in order to survive. I knew instantly what my answer was: no I don't agree. I'm a former librarian and think this proposal completely misunderstands the primary purpose of a library, which is to provide a place for learning and reading. I became increasingly disillusioned during my last few years working because my managers introduced trendy schemes which, in my view, abandoned the tradition of learning. Instead, they wanted libraries to serve as community centres – so we had coffee mornings, playgroups, and lots of other activities that are better suited to a church or village hall.

Where I do agree with the compilers of the report is that every library should offer free Wi-Fi (though it isn't 'free' really, because we would pay for it through taxes). But this isn't so libraries can become a replacement for coffee shops, where people spend

hours drinking an overpriced cappuccino just so they can chat rubbish on Facebook. Instead, free Wi-Fi should be restricted to sites that provide learning resources. Facebook should be blocked, as should Twitter. That would prevent people from using libraries as places to waste a few hours.

I realise my views may seem old-fashioned, and I don't want to sound like a mean-spirited old fogey depriving young mothers of their coffee mornings. But libraries have a proud history of helping underprivileged people better themselves through learning, and free Wi-Fi should play a part in that. If libraries are going to turn into community centres, then we should stop using the word 'library' to describe them.

Charles Evans



### The Star Letter writer wins a Computeractive mug!

me to complain again on my return. That's how important my custom is to them!

Peter Vining

## Not happy with BT

✉ I read with interest Michael Mullaney's question in Problems Solved, Issue 439. You said in reply that you had never heard of BT reducing a low-usage customer's broadband speed. You've been extremely lucky then.

A year ago, having just tried for the first time ever to stream a movie, I was appalled to find it buffering every 10 seconds. So I checked my download speed, and it was 0.25Mbps! And this was in Stoke-on-Trent, not some cabin in a

remote highland glen. My ISP (BT) had promised "up to 17Mbps, with a minimum of 10 Mbps". What was going on? After a series of increasingly acrimonious phone calls BT finally owned up to having capped my line to a maximum of 0.288Mbps. Why? Because my use was labelled as "intermittent". Did they expect me to spend 12 hours a day online? "No," they said, "but you keep on switching off your router". "You mean when I'm not using it?" I asked. "Yes," was the reply. Note that not only did BT do this without my leave, they didn't even have the courtesy to inform me of what they'd done.

Since this happened I've left my router switched on 24/7, and if it ultimately fries itself I will demand a free replacement from BT.

John Todd



# Consumeractive

## Do I have rights if hardware doesn't work with XP?

**Q** I recently bought a Microsoft USB wireless keyboard-and-mouse set from Argos, but it won't work on my old XP computer. Microsoft has told me the set isn't compatible with XP, but it didn't warn me about this when I bought it. Argos won't accept a return saying I should've checked this. Can I do anything?

Michael Bond

**A** We're afraid there's little Michael can do. Windows XP is an old operating system and there's no legal requirement that says Microsoft, or other software developers or hardware manufacturers must make new products compatible with it – or any other bygone operating system. The only way Michael would have a legal case is if the sales assistant in Argos had told him the set was compatible with XP. In this scenario, it would be a misleading sale, and Michael could use the Sale of Goods Act because the goods were “not as described”.

We've asked Michael what the model of the keyboard and mouse is, just in case there's a clever workaround that makes them compatible with XP. Using this information we would be able to find out whether there's a technical fix, because sadly there isn't a legal one.



## Can I sue a firm that's lost my tablet?

**Q** I dropped and cracked the screen on my Samsung Note 10.1 tablet (which cost £400), so I sent it to a company called Gamer-Tech (<http://gamer-tech.co.uk>) for repair. The company sent FedEx to collect it, but it was lost in transit. I'd already paid £29.99 towards the £80 repair cost and we've been waiting 11 weeks for Gamer-Tech to find the tablet, replace it, or give us money equivalent to the value of a new tablet. Should I consider suing them?

Kate Greenslade

**A** It's a possibility. But it should always be a last resort, so we contacted Gamer-Tech to try to resolve this without legal action. The company says it's trying to find out from FedEx what happened to the tablet, but this shouldn't have taken 11 weeks (and counting).

Gamer-Tech hired FedEx to pick up the tablet, so it is equally responsible for the loss and can claim back any losses from the courier. However, the company doesn't seem to be in a hurry to help Kate. The company told us that *Computeractive* “threatening” to write about the case won't make things go faster. That may be true, but we're still going to advise Kate, who has been waiting far too long.



Kate should write to Gamer-Tech asking what it intends to do, and when. If she's not happy with what the company offers she can take the matter to the small claims court. However, if she wins her case, she can only expect a pro-rata refund and not the full £400. This is because she'd already used the tablet for eight months, and it was still working, albeit with a cracked screen. The company already seems to have decided it won't offer a lot of money as a refund, telling us it imagines “that is not the outcome your friend would be happy with”.

However, a judge may disagree, and rule that Gamer-Tech should reimburse Kate more money than it currently wants to. Gamer-Tech is charging £80 for the repair, so a judge may conclude that the tablet is worth £400 minus £80, plus a bit more deducted for wear and tear. £300 sounds fair to us.



## My out-of-warranty printer doesn't work. What should I do?

**Q** In June 2013 I bought £90 worth of inkjet cartridges from an online company called IJT Direct ([www.ijtdirect.co.uk](http://www.ijtdirect.co.uk)) and was given a free Canon Pixma 5350 all-in-one printer-scanner-copier. It now doesn't work properly because no black ink is printing.



IJT says it can't help because the printer is out of warranty. What can I do?

Kevin Merchant

**A** Kevin will be able to get a refund if the printer is inherently faulty because he is protected by the Sale of Goods Act. The fact that the printer was free makes no difference to his rights – it was part of the deal he and the company agreed to. However, because he's had the printer for more than six months he has to prove the problem

wasn't caused by fair wear and tear or accidental damage.

His biggest problem is proving the printer is inherently faulty. Kevin says he has run diagnostic tests and put in new Canon cartridges, but while all the other colours print and the print heads seem to be in working order, the problem with black persists. We've asked Canon if it knows what's causing the problem – we'll let you know what it says in a future issue.







We stand up for your legal rights

✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: [consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk](mailto: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.

## Is it misleading not to mention app limitations?

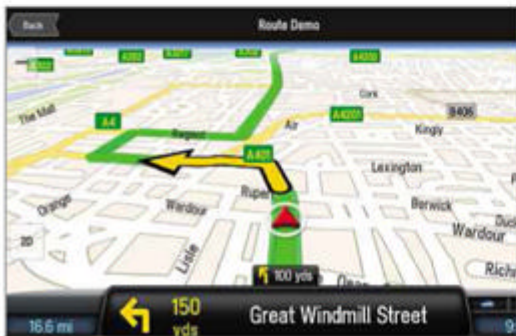
**Q** I bought a new Sony Xperia Z3 Android phone in October and upgraded my CoPilot mapping software to v9 Europe from the Google Play Store for £34.99. But I can't download the data to the SD card in my phone. I asked for my money back from ALK Technologies ([www.alk.com](http://www.alk.com)), the

company which makes CoPilot, but they refused. I was told that the CoPilot website makes it clear the upgrade requires sufficient internal memory and I should have checked. But none of this was mentioned in the Play Store. Isn't this misleading?

John Edge

the buyer. It's an interesting point, though: what type of info should a buyer be reasonably assumed to know about a product before buying it? And how much info should a company provide about what the product can and can't do?

We've checked the app's page on the Play Store ([www.snipca.com/14808](http://www.snipca.com/14808)). It's true that the description blurb doesn't mention you can't download data to an SD card, but we think this isn't enough to call the information misleading. However, the page contains reviews from other disappointed people complaining about this limitation. It may be that with enough pressure ALK will develop a fix, so we'd advise anyone with this complaint to post on the company's forum: <https://forum.copilotlive.com/copilotlive>.



**A** Probably not. We do sympathise with John, but legally ALK can reasonably expect people to visit its website to check the specifics of any upgrades. John could argue that any limitations should have been made clear on the app's Play Store page, but ALK would probably respond by saying that checking limitations is the responsibility of

**CASE CLOSED**

## CASE UPDATE



### Samsung investigating bug-infested TVs

We've been on a mission since the autumn to find out why a number of readers have been having problems with their Samsung TVs.

Strange though it sounds, a couple of readers have found insects trapped behind the LCD screen of their TV. Others readers have seen their TV develop horizontal black lines, indicating faulty pixels. These cases prompted other readers with the same problems to get in touch.

We asked Samsung to investigate because we were concerned that this was possibly an old manufacturing problem on some models, which was only now making itself known. We also gave Samsung the details of the readers who'd been in touch (with their permission). Our contact at the company has assured us that it is investigating these complaints at a

"global level" and this was taking longer than usual because the issues weren't "common" – unless of course other readers beg to differ and want to let us know. We'll keep in touch with Samsung and let you know what it concludes.



## THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

### Refunds and compensation from train companies

#### Abellio Greater Anglia

Details: [www.snipca.com/14745](http://www.snipca.com/14745)

#### ScotRail

Details: [www.snipca.com/14718](http://www.snipca.com/14718)

#### CrossCountry

Details: [www.snipca.com/14706](http://www.snipca.com/14706)

#### Southeastern

Details: [www.snipca.com/14695](http://www.snipca.com/14695)

#### East Coast

Details: [www.snipca.com/14699](http://www.snipca.com/14699)

#### Southern

Details: [www.snipca.com/14715](http://www.snipca.com/14715)

#### East Midlands Trains

Details: [www.snipca.com/14707](http://www.snipca.com/14707)

#### South West Trains

Details: [www.snipca.com/14691](http://www.snipca.com/14691)

#### First Great Western

Details: [www.snipca.com/14700](http://www.snipca.com/14700)

#### Thameslink

Details: [www.snipca.com/14717](http://www.snipca.com/14717)

#### London Midland

Details: [www.snipca.com/14716](http://www.snipca.com/14716)

#### Virgin Trains

Details: [www.virgintrains.co.uk/contact](http://www.virgintrains.co.uk/contact)

londonmidland



# Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

## WATCH OUT FOR...

### Moonpig security flaw

#### What happened?

Moonpig disabled its mobile app after it was claimed that the company's online security is "vulnerable".

The company, which lets you customise greeting cards online using your own messages and photos, said it had taken the measure "as a precaution".

It followed a claim from web developer Paul Price that he told the company in August 2013 about a security flaw in the app that could lead to information about millions of customers, including credit-card details, being stolen.

Writing on his blog ([www.snipca.com/14924](http://www.snipca.com/14924)) on 5 January, Price said that he made the alleged security flaw public because "17 months is more than enough time to fix an

issue like this".

He added: "It appears customer privacy is not a priority to Moonpig".

Moonpig issued a statement ([www.snipca.com/14923](http://www.snipca.com/14923)) denying that customer information was at risk, but said it was "investigating the detail" behind the claim "as a priority".

There have been no claims that the flaw exists in Moonpig's website.

#### What should you do?

Because Moonpig has disabled its app (available for iOS and Android), preventing customers from making payments, you're not in danger. Hopefully by the time you read this Moonpig would have fixed the alleged flaw and re-enabled the app.

But that's when you've got a decision to make. If Moonpig admits the flaw



existed and that it knew about the risk 17 months ago, then you should ask yourself whether you feel safe handing over your personal details to a company that reacts so slowly to security vulnerabilities – even if you just use the website.

If you have any concerns, phone Moonpig on 0345 4500 100 (8.30am to 9pm, Monday to Friday), or email them: [www.snipca.com/14926](http://www.snipca.com/14926).

## New tools

Bitdefender CryptoWall  
Immunizer  
[www.snipca.com/14913](http://www.snipca.com/14913)

Reports of the lethal ransomware CryptoLocker have died down in recent months, but its clones are still encrypting files worldwide.

One of the worst is CryptoWall, the second version of which was spotted last year lurking in adverts on Yahoo. To protect yourself, install Bitdefender's new CryptoWall Immunizer (free for XP, Vista, 7 and 8), which blocks versions one and two of the malware, preventing it from encrypting your files. The company says it is "making all efforts" to update the tool as CryptoWall evolves into



deadlier strains.

Once you've downloaded the tool, switch the Immunization tab to 'on'. If you want to run the program every time Windows starts, click the cog icon to open the settings then switch the 'Run when Windows starts' tab to 'on'.



**ScamWatch**

READERS WARN READERS

#### Indian scammer pretends to be from TalkTalk

Late last year I was phoned by someone with a strong Indian accent. I thought: here we go again, another scammer claiming to be from Microsoft. But no. He said he was from TalkTalk. That got me interested, because I am a TalkTalk customer. He knew my name, address and account number. It was obviously a con, so I hung up, then checked online to see if anyone else had been targeted. Indeed, some people had reported the scam on the TalkTalk forum ([www.snipca.com/14820](http://www.snipca.com/14820)).

**Name and address supplied**



Warn your fellow readers about scams at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



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\* Chillblast won more awards in the leading IT press publications PC Pro, PC Advisor and Computer Shopper combined than any other retailer 2010-2013

\*\* World's fastest PC as tested by PC Pro Magazine - <http://www.pcpro.co.uk/reviews/desktops/371152/chillblast-fusion-photo-oc-iv>

# Best Free Software

Brilliant new programs that won't cost you anything

## PRIVATE FILE SHARING

### Pushbullet 322

[www.snipca.com/14994](http://www.snipca.com/14994)

**What you need:** Windows 7 or 8



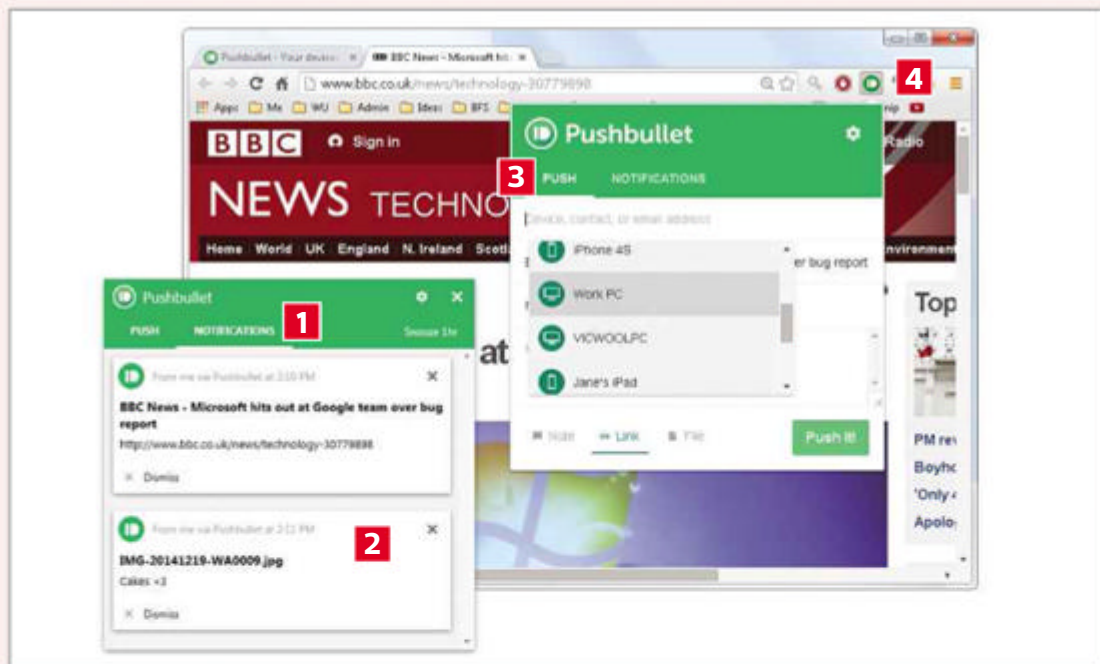
We mentioned this cross-platform gem in our Cover Feature in Issue 440, where we described it as one of the programs (and apps, and browser extensions) you must download in 2015. Haven't downloaded it yet? Then you'd better do it now.

Pushbullet lets you send messages, photos, files and web links for free between all your devices that have Pushbullet installed, and to any of your Pushbullet contacts. Everything you send and receive is stored securely in your Pushbullet account on your PC, tablet, browser (Chrome, Firefox or Internet Explorer) and wherever else you use it. We still can't believe it's free.

The Windows program, which is described as 'beta' but seems very stable to us, has been updated with a Notifications

tab where you can see a list of all your recent incoming 'pushes'. It also includes 'Universal copy & paste' for copying text from your PC to your tablet (the Pushbullet blog explains all: [www.snipca.com/14995](http://www.snipca.com/14995)) and adds a Pushbullet option to the right-click menu so you can push photos, documents and other files to your friends or devices without opening the program or site. Another new feature, Channels, lets you sign up to notification news feeds ([www.pushbullet.com/channels](http://www.pushbullet.com/channels)).

To download Pushbullet, go to the link above and click 'Windows (beta)', then run the installer. There's no adware to opt out of, but the installer does force your PC to restart, which was annoying for us because we were writing this at the time!



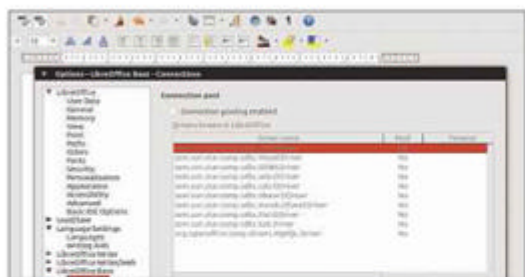
**1** Pushbullet now includes a Notifications tab containing all your incoming messages, file shares and link shares. Notifications also appear at the bottom-left of your Desktop.

**2** There are no previews in the Windows version of Pushbullet; you have to click a link or file name (a photo, for example) to view the contents. The browser and mobile versions do include previews.

**3** To send ('push') a message, link, photo or other file, click Push and click Note, Link or File. Select a device or recipient (or 'All of my devices'), then click 'Push it!' to send it securely.

**4** The Pushbullet browser extension lets you 'push' the current web page to your PC and other destinations with one click. Here, we chose our own PC, and the link arrived instantly.





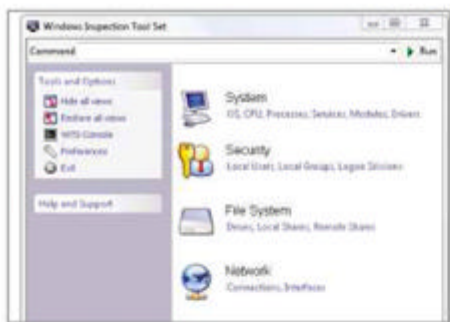
## OFFICE SUITE

# LibreOffice Fresh 4.3.5

[www.snipca.com/14992](http://www.snipca.com/14992)

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

With Microsoft making its Office apps free for mobile users (see our cover feature in Issue 440) and ditching its traditional ‘pay-once, use-forever’ software model in favour of expensive Office 365 subscriptions, traditional PC users are sorely in need of an alternative. LibreOffice is it – and it’s free. This new ‘Fresh’ version focuses on bug fixes (more than 70 of them) rather than headline-grabbing new features, but the improvements are significant enough to include the update here. Besides, we love LibreOffice. It does all Microsoft Office does, with equivalent components including Writer (similar to Word) and Calc (similar to Excel), plus has tools, templates and extensions that you don’t get from Office. It’s **open source**, so it will always be free.



## SYSTEM TOOL

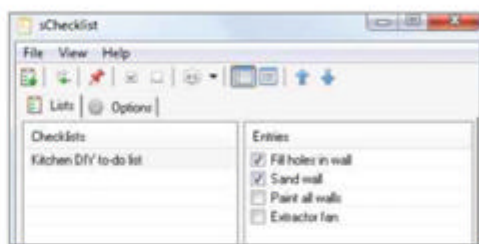
# Windows Inspection Tool Set 3.2

[www.snipca.com/14997](http://www.snipca.com/14997)

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

Open-source program Windows Inspection Tool Set (‘WiTS’) looks neat, tidy and simple, but it gives you highly detailed insights into the state of your PC, with five main categories: System (including processes and drivers), Security, File System, Network, and Events (including Windows logs). Go to Preferences and click the Hotkeys tab to set up keyboard shortcuts for certain tasks, then go to the General tab and untick ‘Start automatically’ to prevent WiTS slowing down your PC’s boot time.

To download the installer, click ‘SourceForge download area’ (or go straight to [www.snipca.com/14983](http://www.snipca.com/14983)), then click the ‘Download setup-wits’ link. There’s no adware to opt out of.



## SYSTEM TOOL

# sChecklist 1.1.13.2

[www.snipca.com/14987](http://www.snipca.com/14987)

**What you need:** Windows 7 or 8

This tiny program lets you create Desktop tick lists (‘checklists’) for your projects: from the week’s shopping, to a holiday-packing list. It’s tiny, portable and very easy to use – just click the top-left icon to start a new list, then click the second icon to add entries with tick boxes. You can create as many lists as you want, and print them if you prefer to tick off your chores with a pencil and paper.

To download it, scroll down the page and click the orange ‘sChecklist.zip’ link, then extract the ZIP and double-click ‘sChecklist.exe’ to run the program instantly.

## WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

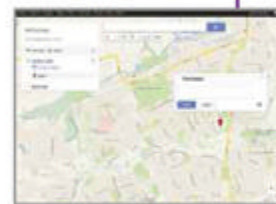
We tell you what software to use

# Which map program should I buy?

**Q** I am looking for an easy map-making program that I can use to produce digital maps of the area where I live. As an example, I’d like to show how the street layout has changed over the years. Many thanks.

Anthony Barnes

**A** As we revealed in Issue 440 (page 17), map tools just aren’t available to download any more – they’re all online and free. Google’s new My Maps tool ([www.snipca.com/14993](http://www.snipca.com/14993)) sounds like just what you’re looking for. Click ‘Create a new map’, zoom



into your home town, then add your street-layout information and other data. You can create as many maps as you want. Your maps are private by default, but you can share them online with one click. All your work in progress is saved automatically if you have a Google Drive account.

If you really don’t want a browser-based tool, look at the open-source program Modest Maps (<http://modestmaps.com>). It doesn’t qualify as “easy”, but it’s ideal if your map-making turns into a long-term project.



Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)

# Reviews

New products tested by our experts

**SMARTWATCH** | £180 from [www.snipca.com/14940](http://www.snipca.com/14940)

## Asus ZenWatch

A stylish but flawed Android Wear smartwatch

Smartwatches are difficult to judge. Because they're so new, we're not just evaluating each individual smartwatch on its own merits - we're also determining if there's any worth in the very idea of a smartwatch itself. When so many of us already own smartphones, tablets and laptops, it's hard to see the value in having yet another portable computer.

Many other smartwatches have been ugly and chunky, but the Asus ZenWatch looks far more attractive with its brown leather strap and metal construction. The strap is not only adjustable but interchangeable with other standard watch straps - any high-street jeweller will be able to replace it for you. The curved body is just slim enough to slip under a shirt sleeve, but it's still around twice as thick as a standard watch and 25 per cent

“It has potential, but is let down by its battery, bulk and software”

heavier. Even after weeks of use, we still found its bulk and weight obtrusive.

You can optionally turn off the watch's screen so you have to tap it to see any information - useful when you're in a cinema or want to be inconspicuous. The battery lasted around a day, three days with very light use, and is recharged using a removable USB adapter.

Like other Android Wear smartwatches, the ZenWatch pairs with your Android phone or tablet over Bluetooth and uses its internet connection. Everything on the watch's touchscreen appears as a series of cards that you can swipe to dismiss or tap

### SPECIFICATIONS

1.6in 320x320 pixel resolution touchscreen • 1.2GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 400 processor • 512MB memory • 4GB of storage • replaceable wrist strap • Android Wear • 75g • 10x40x51mm (HxWxD) • requires Android 4.3 smartphone • [www.snipca.com/14941](http://www.snipca.com/14941)

to show more detail on the screen of your phone or tablet.

Without internet access, the ZenWatch can only tell the time and record basic fitness data such as how many steps you've taken. With internet access, you get the benefit of information from the Google Now personal assistant. The information can be very useful - examples include live departure details for nearby bus stops and train stations, and advice to leave early for your next appointment due to heavy traffic. The Google Now cards should appear automatically as you need them, but this can be frustratingly unreliable. The live public transport cards, for example, sometimes didn't appear.

You can trigger Google Now by speaking to the watch, but the accuracy of this speech recognition is highly variable. It depends not only on your enunciation and accent and the ability of the watch's microphone to filter out any intrusive background noise, but also on the strength of your internet connection because the speech recognition runs on Google's servers. You can also speak to the watch to accomplish other tasks such as dictating texts, checking your calendar and getting directions on Google Maps.

The latter appears as a series of step-by-step directions similar to those on a sat-nav. When walking, the watch vibrates every time you need to turn and the screen shows the name of the street you need to turn on to and the distance until the next turn. But the directions didn't always update promptly if we had to make a detour and the only way to see an overview of your route on a map is to use your phone or tablet.

You can also see notifications from your mobile device on the watch, such as incoming texts and tweets. There's no option to only see notifications from certain people or that match a certain criteria - you can only block notifications from entire apps - so the torrent of



notifications can be very intrusive.

What sets the ZenWatch apart from other Android Wear watches, aside from its looks, is Asus's own set of apps, which add extra features. These give you the ability to use the watch as a remote for your phone or tablet's camera. They also provide a wider choice of clockfaces than built-in ones, although we found many of them cluttered and ugly. There's also the option to use the watch instead of a passcode to unlock your phone or tablet. This works based on proximity, so your device will lock itself automatically if it is lost or stolen. More apps are available from the Google Play store.

The Asus ZenWatch is flawed due to its weight, bulk, short battery life and the immature state of its software. The potential is there, though - Google Now, when it works, and Asus's extra features are surprisingly useful. For now though, the ZenWatch is for eager early adopters only, rather than a must-have for all.

**VERDICT:** It looks elegant, but both the hardware and software are rough around the edges

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE:** Google Glass £1,000  
A promising wearable computer in the shape of glasses, but eye-wateringly expensive and battery life is very poor





# MSI Wind Box DC111

## A very cheap mini PC

The MSI Wind Box DC111 is an incredibly cheap mini Windows 8.1 PC that's roughly the size of a router. Although we've seen even smaller mini PCs, this is still impressively compact. The DC111 comes with a stand as it needs to be kept upright due to the cooling vents on both sides, but it doesn't come with a keyboard, mouse or monitor.

The stand angles the DC111's four front USB 2.0 ports and audio jacks upwards for easy connection. All other ports are at the rear and include two USB 3.0 connectors, a Gigabit Ethernet port, a HDMI connector and a VGA port. However, we found it far too easy to inadvertently press the power button when turning the PC around to access the rear ports. Another annoyance is the close proximity of the USB 3.0 ports to the HDMI port. Attempting to plug in a particularly chunky cable or USB stick was often a tight, fiddly fit.

The DC111 comes equipped with a dual-core 1.8GHz Intel Celeron 1037U processor and 4GB of memory. It's fast

“The MSI Wind Box DC111 is a cheap, space-saving PC, but it's far from perfect”

enough for basic tasks, such as web browsing and office work, but far too slow for photo and video editing. Just using Windows sometimes proved to be a chore, with programs slow to open and respond. 3D graphics performance is also far from ideal due to the lacklustre Intel integrated graphics chip.

Even if you're willing to put up with this slow performance, the noise can be intrusive. The fans produce a distracting high-pitched noise when the processor is grappling with demanding programs.

Even if cracking open the slim casing didn't void the one-year warranty, the MSI Wind Box isn't designed to be upgraded. You can't add any more



memory and if the 500GB hard drive isn't large enough, it's far easier to use external hard drives rather than attempting to replace the internal one.

The MSI Wind Box DC111 is a cheap, space-saving PC, but it's far from perfect. The design of its casing could've been better thought out, while its performance is only sufficient for basic tasks and there's little upgrade potential. Unless you need a new Windows mini PC right now, you're much better off waiting for the new generation of budget mini PCs coming from other manufacturers such as HP and Acer (see Coming Soon, page 29).

### SPECIFICATIONS

1.8GHz Intel Celeron 1037U dual-core processor • 4GB memory • 500GB hard drive • Intel integrated graphics chip • 802.11b/g/n • Windows 8.1 • 192x151x35mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty  
[www.snipca.com/14905](http://www.snipca.com/14905)

### 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](http://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 impressively small and cheap PC, but you'll have to be very forgiving of its numerous flaws

★★★★☆

### ALTERNATIVES: Intel NUC

D54250WYK £280 More expensive and requires more effort as it's a DIY kit PC, but it's even smaller and has far faster performance too



# Reviews

**LAPTOP** | £430 from [www.snipca.com/14925](http://www.snipca.com/14925)

## Acer Aspire V3-371

A sleek and inexpensive Windows 8.1 laptop with an infuriating flaw



Inexpensive laptops tend to be cheaply made and plain in appearance – or even downright ugly. The Acer Aspire V3-371 proves this doesn't have to be the case. Despite costing just £430, it's a surprisingly well-made and classy-looking laptop.

Most of the V3-371 is made of rigid white plastic. The exception being the lid, which is all eye-catching brushed metal, giving the laptop a touch of style. While it looks good, the lid is the one weak spot in the laptop's otherwise robust construction – flexing as it does under pressure more than we'd like. But this is a price we're willing to pay, given how slender and lightweight the laptop is – at just 1.5kg, carrying it around all day is a breeze.

The V3-371's appeal isn't just skin deep. It comes equipped with a 2GHz Intel Core i3 dual-core processor and 4GB of memory, so it's fast enough to run most programs. It'll only struggle with really demanding tasks such as editing video or playing the latest 3D games, which is mostly down to the unimpressive performance of the Intel integrated graphics chip. Although in theory you can upgrade the memory to a maximum of 16GB, this is easier said than done as the casing is tricky to prise open.

The 500GB hard drive is joined by an 8GB SSD, a very welcome addition that helps reduce startup and wake-from-sleep times when compared to laptops that only have a hard drive. Battery life was impressive for a laptop at this price, coming in at just over 11 hours in our light-usage test.

Although we'd prefer the keys to have a little more travel, they're still very comfortable to type on. Because there's no touchscreen, you use the touchpad to perform gestures such as pinch to zoom. Unfortunately, the touchpad is frustratingly laggy and would often become completely unresponsive. It's a common problem with this model and the only solution is to get Acer to repair it.

Acer has made several compromises with the 13in screen, but these are understandable given the low price. Although bright, colour accuracy and

contrast are mediocre at best, while viewing angles are narrow. There's also a slight grainy sheen, but it's not too bad. Unusually, the screen has a matte finish instead of a glossy one, which reduces the amount of glare caused by light reflecting off the screen.

The Acer Aspire V3-371 is a good-value laptop with long battery life, good performance, sleek looks and a bright, anti-glare screen – all at a low price. It's therefore a real shame that its touchpad is so flawed. We'd buy it from a reputable retailer with a good returns policy and check the touchpad as soon as you get it out of the box.

**VERDICT:** A good-value ultra-portable laptop let down only by its badly designed touchpad



**ALTERNATIVE:** Dell Inspiron 15 5547 £449 Heavier and with shorter battery life, but this similarly priced laptop does have faster performance, a bigger screen and a better designed touchpad



### SPECIFICATIONS

2GHz Intel Core i3 4158U dual-core processor • 4GB memory • 500GB hard drive • 8GB SSD • Intel integrated graphics chip • 13in 1366x768-pixel screen • 802.11a/b/g/n • Windows 8.1 • 1.5kg (1.8kg with charger) • 20x327x228mm • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/14925](http://www.snipca.com/14925)

## WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

### How can I speed up my Windows 7 PC's start-up time?

**Q** I have a Sony Windows 7 PC that runs fine except it takes a long time to turn on and to wake from sleep. I've tried many of the system cleaner programs recommended by Computeractive in the past, but they didn't make much of a difference. Is there another program you would recommend that can fix this problem?

Marion Aubrey



**A** There are two highly effective ways of speeding up your PC's startup and wake from sleep times, but both are more complicated than simply running a maintenance program. The first is to upgrade to Windows 8.1 (£84 from [www.snipca.com/14934](http://www.snipca.com/14934)). On our test PC, this cut the start-up time from just over 50 seconds to just 24 seconds, while wake from sleep times were cut from

40 seconds to 20 seconds.

The second is to install a SSD in your PC and use it as your Windows drive. On the same Windows 8 test PC, startup was cut further to around 10-15 seconds while wake from sleep was almost instantaneous. Our favourite SSD is the Crucial MX100 – the 512GB model costs £150 from [www.snipca.com/14169](http://www.snipca.com/14169).

✉ Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



PC | £569 from [www.snipca.com/14900](http://www.snipca.com/14900)

# Apple Mac mini (2014)

Apple's smallest and cheapest desktop computer

Although there are smaller desktop computers, this one is still compact enough to fit inside a laptop bag. There are several variants of the Mac mini but we tested the mid-range £569 version which comes with 8GB of memory, a 2.6GHz dual-core Intel Core i5 4278U processor and a 1TB hard drive.

There is an even cheaper version available for £399, but it's not great value. Equipped with 4GB of memory a 1.4GHz dual-core i5 processor and a 500GB hard drive, it's almost 50 per cent slower yet only costs 35 per cent less. The drop-off in performance is significant, especially if you want to edit photos and movies or run multiple programs simultaneously, so the cheaper model is best avoided unless you're really strapped for cash. Both are sold without a keyboard, mouse or monitor so you'll have to supply your own.

It may be small but, because of its metallic construction, the Mac mini is very sturdy. The metal casing doesn't just

“A fast, stylish, compact computer, but it lacks flexibility to upgrade”

feel robust and look great – it's also integral to the computer's cooling system, ensuring that the cooling fan only comes on when absolutely necessary. This kept the Mac mini's noise levels to a whisper during most of our test.

Upgrading the amount of memory in older Mac minis (from the 2010 model onwards) has always been easy. Simply

## SPECIFICATIONS

2.6GHz Intel Core i5 4278U dual-core processor • 8GB memory • 1TB hard drive • Intel Iris integrated graphics • 802.11a/b/g/n/ac • Mac OS X 10.10 Yosemite • 1.2kg • 36x197x197mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/14901](http://www.snipca.com/14901)



unscrewing a round panel on the base of the unit gave instant access to memory slots with no tools required. Disappointingly, this is no longer the case because Apple has sealed both the casing and the memory chips in place. If you want to upgrade to the maximum of 16GB, you'll need to choose this option when ordering from Apple. This will add £160 to the price, which is £40 more expensive than performing the same upgrade yourself on older Mac minis.

This limits when and how you upgrade, which is baffling and infuriating, especially when you factor in the increased costs involved. Moreover, we can't see the point. While sealing a laptop can contribute to slimmer, lighter designs, this is not the case here.

At least there are plenty of ports for external expansion, although it's a shame they're all located round the back, making them harder to reach. There are four USB 3.0 ports, two Thunderbolt 2 connectors, an HDMI port, an SD card slot, an optical audio socket and a Gigabit Ethernet connector. You can connect up to two monitors simultaneously.

The latest version of Mac OS X (10.10 Yosemite) is pre-installed. The new features generally fall into two camps: those in the revamped interface and those providing greater integration with iOS devices. The interface has been tidied, with a flatter appearance and greater use of animations. It's more logically organised and attractive on the whole, but some changes feel like they've been made for change's sake. The most

irritating example is the new system font, which looks fuzzier and is harder to read.

We're big fans of the features integrating OS X with iOS (most of which require your iOS device to have Bluetooth 4.0 built in). If you have an iPhone, you can use your Mac mini to answer or reject calls as well as send and reply to text messages. You can now wirelessly transfer files between the Mac mini and an iOS device using the AirDrop feature – it's very simple to use and doesn't rely on online storage. Most impressively of all, you can start a task on an iOS device, such as typing a long document on your iPad on the train, and pick up where you left off on the Mac mini when you get home. Bear in mind, this latter feature requires apps installed on both your iOS device and Mac that support it.

The Mac mini's lack of upgradeability is a real shame, but it's the only black mark against what is otherwise a fast, stylish, quiet and compact computer.

**VERDICT:** The lack of upgradeability is a disappointment, but this is in every other respect a great little computer



**ALTERNATIVE:** Intel NUC D54250WYK £280 An even smaller Windows mini PC that's easy to upgrade because it's a customisable kit that you assemble yourself



# Reviews

**SMARTPHONE** | £200 (without contract) from [www.snipca.com/14795](http://www.snipca.com/14795)

## Asus ZenFone 5 LTE

A cheap Android 4G phone with one critical flaw

There are plenty of cheap Android phones and the standard by which we judge all of them is Motorola's Moto G 4G (see our review, Issue 432). While it's by no means perfect, its combination of performance, responsiveness, battery life and price makes it hard to beat. This means Asus has its work cut out with the ZenFone 5 LTE. Not to be confused with its cheaper 3G-only stablemate (which has a different processor), it costs £200 without a contract – £50 more than the Moto G.

The ZenFone 5 LTE comes wrapped

“The phone's build quality is alarmingly poor”

in a plain plastic casing with a boxy shape. This makes it somewhat uncomfortable to hold, especially given the expansive five-inch screen, but it's manageable. The rear panel comes off easily, giving you quick access to the micro SIM and microSD slots, but the battery is fixed in place.

This is all well and good, but the phone's build quality is alarmingly poor. Applying just a modicum of pressure causes the screen to bend and can result in the rear panel popping off with several loud creaking and snapping noises. This came as such a surprise, given the far sturdier build quality of the smaller ZenFone 4 (see our review, Issue 432), that we carried out the same test on a second review model to make sure – with the same appalling results.

This substandard construction is a shame, especially as the ZenFone 5 LTE is otherwise a pretty good phone. Unlike other ZenFones, which have Intel Atom

processors, this model uses a quad-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 400 processor paired with 2GB of memory. It's the same processor used in the Moto G, but with double the amount of memory, enabling it to perform much more smoothly when running multiple apps simultaneously, or when you browse the web with lots of open tabs. Although its 3D graphics performance was unimpressive, this isn't a problem unless you're interested in games or graphic-design apps.

The responsiveness of the ZenFone's touchscreen was also better than that of the Moto G, with less lag between touch and response. Plus, it has a handy optional mode that lets you use it while wearing gloves, which is especially useful in winter. The screen's image quality, while decent, is inferior to many cheaper phones. Text looks sharp, thanks to the 720p resolution, and it's reasonably bright, but images have a blue-ish tint. The Moto G's screen is brighter with more accurate colours.

Battery life was impressive. It lasted just under eight and a half hours playing video on a loop. When connected to O2's 3G network in central London and used for browsing the web, phone calls, GPS and photography, the battery lasted a lengthy 31 hours and 17 minutes. Calls did sound a little fuzzy and distant, but the din of a nearby construction site was effectively filtered out.

Unsurprisingly, the camera wasn't up to scratch. Even photos taken in bright daylight suffered from a lot of noise and a soft focus. Fiddling with the extra shooting options that have been added to the camera app made little difference. It's definitely a camera of last resort.

Asus hasn't confirmed whether the ZenFone 5 will receive the Android 5.0 Lollipop upgrade, leaving it on Android



4.4 KitKat for now. It's still a good operating system, especially as Asus hasn't altered it too radically, with most of its modifications limited to extra apps, such as a file manager and a note-taking app. The exception to this rule is the notifications drawer, which is now overflowing with settings shortcuts, and cluttered as a result.

The Asus ZenFone 5 LTE has a lot going for it, but we can't recommend it unconditionally because of its very low-quality construction. The Moto G is far sturdier, and cheaper too, so unless you're put off by its modestly flawed responsiveness, it's a better buy.

**VERDICT:** A good Android phone let down by its shoddy build quality

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE:**

**Motorola Moto G 4G**  
**£150** Its touchscreen and performance aren't quite as good, but its build quality is far superior



### SPECIFICATIONS

5in 1280x720-pixel touchscreen • 1.2GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 400 quad-core processor • 2GB memory • 16GB storage • 4G • Micro SIM • MicroSD slot • Android 4.4 KitKat • 145g • 148x73x10mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty • Part code: A500KL  
[www.snipca.com/14796](http://www.snipca.com/14796)



**TABLET** | £170 from [www.snipca.com/14894](http://www.snipca.com/14894)

## Toshiba Encore 2 (8in)

A cheap but cheerless Windows 8.1 tablet

Windows 8 mini tablets have always been relatively cheap. The 8in Toshiba Encore 2 is very affordable at just £170. However, this particular edge over the competition is being eroded fast now that iPads and Android tablets are cheaper than ever, so the Encore 2 can't just continue to coast by on its low price.

While the Encore 2 is cheap, it isn't cheaply made. The gold and ivory coloured plastic construction is sturdy and – at 350g – light, although the weight should have been more evenly distributed to make it more comfortable to hold and use for long periods of time. Usefully, there's a **microSD** slot for additional storage, which is essential given half of the 32GB of built-in storage is eaten up by the operating system. You can also plug in USB sticks and other peripherals, such as printers, using a USB On-The-Go adapter (£2 from [www.snipca.com/14896](http://www.snipca.com/14896)).

There's also flexibility with the tablet's software – at least in theory. Because the Encore 2 runs the full version of Windows 8.1, you can use older Desktop-style programs as well as touchscreen apps downloaded from Microsoft's app store. It's unlikely you'll want to do this on a regular basis though because the 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3735G **quad-core processor** is excruciatingly slow. Plus, the interfaces of those older programs aren't designed for use with the touchscreen.

The Encore 2 is fast enough for surfing the web, checking email and other simple tasks, but browsing and editing documents and spreadsheets in Microsoft Office and playing simple games is frustratingly laggy. Attempting to run multiple programs at once was particularly slow due to the meagre 1GB of memory.

### SPECIFICATIONS

8in 1280x800-pixel touchscreen • 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3735G quad-core processor • 1GB memory • 32GB storage • Intel integrated graphics chip • Windows 8.1 • 350g • 9.5x132x211mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty • Part code PDW0AE-00900PEN [www.snipca.com/14899](http://www.snipca.com/14899)



This poor performance would be more bearable if battery life is exceptional, but it was merely average in our tests, lasting eight and a half hours when playing videos on a loop.

The 8in screen is bright with pretty good contrast, but the backlight is a little uneven, so parts of the screen are darker than others. Its biggest problem though is its relatively low **resolution** of 1280x800 pixels. As a result text looks fuzzy compared to other similarly sized but higher-resolution tablet screens.

The Toshiba Encore 2 is a very run-of-the-mill tablet. The most striking thing one can say is how similar it is to Windows 8 mini tablets from a year ago. While the Encore 2 has stood still, tablets from rival manufacturers running alternative operating systems have steamed ahead with improved features and lower prices. Unless the ability to directly connect a printer or run old Windows programs is of absolute importance, you're much better off with an iPad Mini 2 or Tesco Hudl 2.

**VERDICT:** This tablet is simply outclassed by the competition, so only buy it if you really want to use old Windows programs and peripherals.

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE:** Tesco Hudl 2 £129  
A cheaper 8in tablet with a sharper screen that has a microSD slot and the benefit of Android too



## The best... USB power banks

### EnerPlex Jumpr Slate 5K

£46 from [www.snipca.com/14928](http://www.snipca.com/14928)

A thin and light power bank that's the shape and size of a thick pamphlet. The cable for connecting your mobile device is built in, with separate Lightning and **micro USB** versions available. It added an extra 20 hours and 18 minutes of video playback time to our Moto G phone.



### Cobra JumPack

£70 from [www.snipca.com/14929](http://www.snipca.com/14929)

A chunky power bank, but it provided a whopping 27 hours and 42 minutes of extra battery life for playing videos on our Moto G. Plus, you can even use it to jump start your car with the included leads.



### Proporta Mohawk TurboCharger 8000

£30 from [www.snipca.com/14930](http://www.snipca.com/14930)

Not much bigger than a smartphone, yet this power bank can charge two devices simultaneously and provided a staggering 34 hours and 40 minutes of extra battery life for our Moto G.



### STK Micro USB Power Bank

£16 from [www.snipca.com/14931](http://www.snipca.com/14931)

A credit card-sized power bank with both the charging and micro USB leads built into its slim body. It only provided 16 minutes of extra battery life, but it could be a lifesaver in a pinch.



# Reviews

**PC MONITOR** | £140 from [www.snipca.com/14801](http://www.snipca.com/14801)

## Samsung S24D590PL

A stylish 24in monitor with great image quality



Samsung's previous 24in monitors have been all style and not much substance, but the S24D590PL is different. It's attractive with a super-slim appearance that is in complete contrast to the majority of monitors (such as the Dell UZ2215H below), and it has good image quality too.

The sturdy, angular, metallic-effect stand is certainly unusual but very classy, and won't take up much space on a crowded desktop. You can only tilt the monitor because there's no height or swivel adjustment, but this isn't unusual in a monitor at this price. It lacks built-in speakers, but these invariably provide dire sound quality so this is no great drawback. You're always much better off

using external speakers or headphones.

We were initially stumped when trying to activate the on-screen menus to adjust image quality, until we realised this is done using the circular control pad which is located near the bottom right-hand corner on the back. The menus are easy to navigate with key settings immediately accessible instead of being buried in numerous sub-menus. We didn't feel the need to change any settings though because the screen looks good out of the box.

Image quality is very good – especially for a 1080p monitor at this price. Contrast was excellent with plenty of detail in dark scenes when we watched movies or played games. Brightness, colour accuracy and viewing angles were impressive too, while the backlight was very even without any fading at the edges – a common flaw in other similarly priced monitors.

The S24D590PL is a great monitor – stylish and affordable with great image quality. It just misses out on our Buy It award due to its lack of height adjustment. The similarly priced AOC i2360PHU (see our review, Issue 422) doesn't look as good, but it has comparable image quality and a more flexible stand.

**VERDICT:** A great monitor let down by its inflexible stand

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE:** AOC i2360PHU £140 A 23in monitor that's not as stylish, but it does have comparable image quality and height adjustment



### SPECIFICATIONS

24in • 1920x1080-pixel resolution • 2x HDMI and 1x VGA ports • 421x542x169mm (HxWxD) • 4kg  
[www.snipca.com/14804](http://www.snipca.com/14804)

**PC MONITOR** | £170 from [www.snipca.com/14912](http://www.snipca.com/14912)

## Dell UZ2215H

A monitor with some unusual built-in features

The UZ2215H is the first monitor we've seen from Dell in quite some time that doesn't include ergonomic features such as height adjustment and screen rotation. Plus, it costs £170 which is a little pricey for a 1080p 21.5in monitor.

It's hardly a bare-bones monitor though. It has a two-megapixel webcam and microphone built in, as well as speakers and a headphone port – everything you need to make Skype video calls. Although we found the webcam's video quality to be a little grainy, it's still more than good enough for Skype and other video-calling services. The monitor also has a built-in two-port USB 3.0 hub alongside its VGA, DisplayPort and two HDMI connectors. Unusually, for a

monitor at this price, the stand can be tilted but not height adjusted.

Image quality is a mixed bag. Colour accuracy was generally good with particularly pure whites, while the backlight was even with no dark patches near the edges or corners. It's not especially bright though and there was a noticeable lack of contrast in movies and games which had lots of dark scenes.

The Dell UZ2215H is a very odd and unbalanced monitor, sacrificing image quality and a height adjustable stand in favour of a built-in webcam and microphone. If you regularly make Skype calls and don't want the added clutter of a separate webcam and speakers, then this is the monitor for you. Everyone else can get a better deal elsewhere. Spending £40 more, for example, gets you the 24in Dell



Ultrasharp U2412M, which has far better image quality and a more adjustable stand.

**VERDICT:** An imperfect monitor that will only appeal to serious Skype addicts

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE:** Dell UltraSharp U2412M £210 More expensive, but with superior image quality and a better stand



### SPECIFICATIONS

21.5in • 1920x1080-pixel resolution • 2x HDMI, 1x VGA and 1x DisplayPort ports • 408x531x180mm (HxWxD) • 3.5kg [www.snipca.com/14912](http://www.snipca.com/14912)





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# Reviews

**PHABLET** | £600 (without contract) from [www.snipca.com/14624](http://www.snipca.com/14624)

## Samsung Galaxy Note 4

Samsung's latest phablet gets nips and tucks rather than a big makeover

The Galaxy Note phablet is one of Samsung's most popular products and it's easy to see why. In theory, it combines the best of a smartphone and a tablet in one 6in device. The Note 4 isn't dramatically different from its predecessor the Note 3 (see our review, Issue 414), offering a number of modest improvements rather than an overhaul.

Previous Notes have felt cheaply made, but that's not the case with the Note 4. It's bounded by a metal band that runs around its edge, providing welcome rigidity. The Note 4 retains the plastic rear that's meant to resemble leather, but the absence of fake stitching makes it far less tacky than the Note 3.

Unlike the Galaxy S5 (see our review, Issue 423), the Note isn't waterproof, but it has several other features that first arrived with the S5. You can use the fingerprint reader instead of a passcode to unlock the phablet. It recognised finger

“Improvements on the Note 4 are modest, but most welcome”

swipes more accurately than the S5, although it's still not as reliable as the fingerprint reader built into recent iPhones and iPads.

There's a sensor that counts the number of steps you've walked or run, as well as a sensor for measuring your heart rate. This data is recorded in the S Health app, so you can keep track of your vital signs – although it doesn't explain what the heart-rate readings mean, while the step counter isn't as accurate as a dedicated fitness tracker.

Like all phablets, the Note 4 isn't

### SPECIFICATIONS

5.7in 2560x1440 pixel touchscreen • 2.7GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 805 quad-core processor • 3GB memory • Adreno 330 graphics chip • 32GB storage • 4G • Micro SIM • MicroSD slot • Android 4.4 KitKat • 176g • 154x79x9mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/14625](http://www.snipca.com/14625)

comfortable to use with one hand. Samsung has modified Android 4.4 KitKat to include a one-handed mode that shrinks the contents of the screen into a resizable window, although this feature is pretty much unchanged since the Note 3.

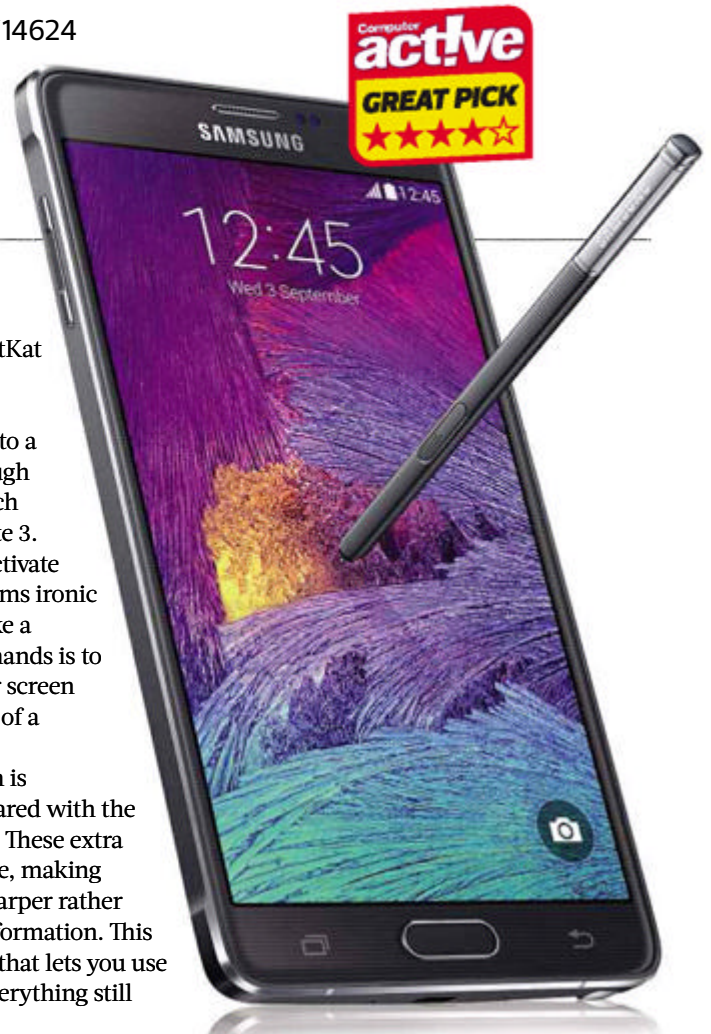
The gesture you use to activate it is still fiddly, and it seems ironic that the only way to make a phablet usable in small hands is to make it imitate a smaller screen and therefore lose many of a phablet's advantages.

The screen's resolution is 2560x1440 pixels, compared with the 1920x1080 of the Note 3. These extra pixels are put to good use, making onscreen text slightly sharper rather than displaying more information. This means that in the mode that lets you use two apps side by side, everything still feels a bit cramped.

This use of pixels also means it's not easy to take notes and draw sketches (using the included stylus). Samsung's note-taking and drawing software hasn't changed much over the years, which means the handwriting recognition is sufficient for short notes and lists, but is less accurate over longer paragraphs. Moreover, there's still only a handful of apps that take advantage of the stylus' pressure sensitivity. Still, if you can't abide touchscreen keyboards then the stylus is a good alternative.

The screen itself is very bright with accurate, vivid colours and plenty of contrast. The Note 4 blazed through our benchmark tests, thanks to its 3GB of memory and pacy quad-core Snapdragon processor, while the touchscreen was almost perfect in its responsiveness. The camera is top notch, taking sharp and detailed photos in both daylight and dimly lit conditions.

The Note 4's battery life of 22 hours on O2's 3G network when used for calls, photography, web browsing and GPS was somewhat disappointing. This was made especially so by the phablet's impressive



performance when playing videos on a loop, lasting a lengthy 17 hours 30 minutes. Call quality was also imperfect. While it blocked out the pandemonium of a nearby building site, voices sounded a little distant and fuzzy.

The various improvements in the Galaxy Note 4 may be modest, but they're still very welcome and help make it one of the best phablets available. There's little reason to upgrade if you own a Note 3, but if you want a phablet and can afford it, then this is good value.

**VERDICT:** The Note 4 is as good as ever, but the software still needs work

★★★★☆

**ALTERNATIVE:** Asus Zenfone 6 £250 It doesn't have a stylus or anything similar to the Note 4's fancy software features, but if you just want a really big, inexpensive phone then this fits the bill





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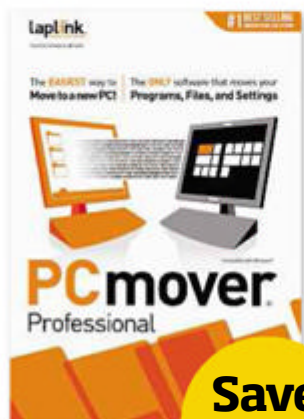
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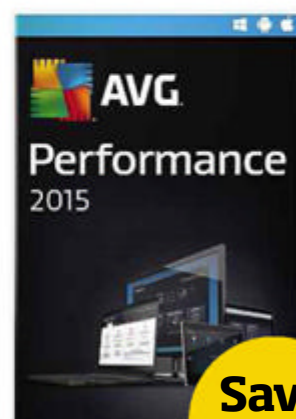
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# Reviews

**SATNAV** | £150 from [www.snipca.com/14562](http://www.snipca.com/14562)

## Garmin Nuvi 2599 LMT-D

Features don't get in the way of simple operation with Garmin's latest satnav

The Garmin Nuvi 2599 LMT-D has an unwieldy name, but it looks great with its slim dimensions and 5in glass screen. It costs half the price of competing high-end satnavs yet it still has a huge feature list including free live traffic updates, free updates for the included Europe-wide maps and, for the first time, Foursquare integration.

Foursquare is the social-media service that lets you "check in" at locations so your followers know where you've been. Even if you have no interest in this, having Foursquare built into a satnav is still useful as the service has a database full of useful points of interest such as shops, restaurants and tourist attractions.

The Nuvi 2599's Digital Traffic feature sends up-to-date traffic and accident information directly to the Nuvi rather than through a paired smartphone as with other satnavs. According to Garmin, it uses DAB radio signals and it updates every minute.

Throughout our testing the Nuvi 2599 reported traffic updates less than a minute after entering our route, with problems shown hours ahead into the projected itinerary. Unsurprisingly, coverage is limited to motorways, A roads and town/city routes, with no data for smaller, rural roads. The Nuvi also needs to be connected to its power cable for Digital Traffic to work as this doubles as an antenna.

Traffic alerts are shown to the side of the map, so you can still see your route as well as any upcoming delays or



diversions. Each alert is also spoken, and responds to voice commands, so you can adjust your route or avoid a particular road without having to reach for the touchscreen. By default, the Nuvi reacts to the key phrase "Voice Command", but you can change it to whatever you like.

Your current street, speed, speed limit and arrival time are all shown onscreen, but the interface never feels cluttered. It's easy to understand, as are the visual and spoken driving instructions. Directions such as "Turn left at the next traffic lights" and "Stay in the right two lanes" are paired with images of junctions as you approach them. These are invaluable aids when you're driving on unfamiliar roads. The speed limit will update to reflect average speed-camera zones, which is a welcome inclusion.

The Nuvi 2599 also doubles as a hands-free speakerphone. After pairing your smartphone, you can make and receive calls without having to reach for your phone. In our test, the

microphone was able to clearly detect the voices of both driver and passenger, while the speaker was clear and loud enough to be heard while we cruised down a busy, noisy road.

To get the most out of Foursquare you'll again need to pair the Nuvi with your smartphone via Bluetooth and install the Garmin Smartphone Link app (free for iOS and Android from [www.snipca.com/14561](http://www.snipca.com/14561)) to see up-to-date opening hours, ratings from Foursquare users and other information for each location.

The Nuvi 2599 LMT-D is an affordable and well-built satnav that has an impressive number of easy-to-use features. Plus, map updates and traffic data are free, making it even better value.

**VERDICT:** A superb, great-value satnav

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE:** TomTom GO 500 £150

It has more detailed maps, but you'll have to pair it with your smartphone to get the best from it, and it lacks voice control



### SPECIFICATIONS

5in 480x272-pixel touchscreen  
• European maps included •  
Bluetooth • Accepts microSD cards  
• 180x140x8mm (HxWxD) • 184g  
[www.snipca.com/14563](http://www.snipca.com/14563)





**E-READER** | £59 (Wi-Fi-only with ads) from [www.snipca.com/14742](http://www.snipca.com/14742)

## Amazon Kindle (late 2014 version)

The cheapest touchscreen Kindle yet

You'd be forgiven for thinking that Amazon would play it safe with its cheapest and most basic Kindle, such as cutting the price and little else. The company has instead added a touchscreen, an unexpected surprise at this price. This addition means that all Kindles now have touchscreens.

The touchscreen is responsive and accurate so we greatly prefer it to the cheap-feeling plastic buttons of older budget Kindles for turning pages. The touchscreen also makes it much quicker and easier to buy new ebooks on the Kindle itself – with previous budget Kindles we often resorted to using a computer to make our purchases instead.

While text looks good enough on the 6in screen to be readable, the low resolution of 800x600 pixels means text isn't as sharp as it is on the higher resolution screens of the Kindle Paperwhite and Kindle Voyage. Text also looks bolder on the more expensive Kindles. These differences are especially noticeable if you have less than perfect eyesight. Although you can change the font, the choice of typefaces is limited and there are few other text- customisation options. Unsurprisingly, the screen doesn't have the backlight for reading in the dark that is present in more expensive Kindles.

As with all Kindles, this model is designed to work with ebooks bought from Amazon. You can't use it to read books from other stores unless they're DRM-free.

The battery should last about a month and there's 4GB of internal storage, which is enough to hold thousands of books. There's Wi-Fi for connecting to Amazon's store, but there's no 3G, not even as an option, although few people will miss it. We reviewed the £59 version, which comes with adverts plastered on the lock

### SPECIFICATIONS

6in touchscreen • 800x600-pixel resolution • 4GB storage • No card slot • 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi • 169x119x10mm (HxWxD) • 191g • Supports AZW, mobi and DRM-free PDFs only [www.snipca.com/14742](http://www.snipca.com/14742)



screen and home screen. For £10 more you can have them removed – the ads are very annoying, so you'll probably want to do this.

Aside from the lower resolution screen, one of the downsides to this budget Kindle is that its chunky casing feels very cheap. Previous budget Kindles felt better made. Even so, this is a fine no-frills e-reader – you'd have to spend almost twice as much to get one with sturdier build quality and a sharper, backlit screen. If these factors are important to you, the Kindle Paperwhite is worth the extra money (£109 from [www.snipca.com/14741](http://www.snipca.com/14741)), but for everyone else the new basic Kindle is a great alternative.

**VERDICT:** The cheapest touchscreen e-reader we've seen and a good choice if your budget is tight



**ALTERNATIVE:** Amazon Kindle Paperwhite £109 Almost twice as expensive, but the better quality screen is worth it – especially if your eyesight isn't great



## COMING SOON



### FEBRUARY 2015

Acer has announced the Revo One RL85, a striking mini PC that will come with up to 6TB of hard-drive space and a remote control with a mini keyboard on the other side. Prices will start from €269 with UK pricing to be confirmed.



### SPRING 2015

HP has unveiled a pair of mini PCs, the Pavilion Mini and the Stream Mini. The former will be more powerful with faster processors, more storage and more memory. The Pavilion Mini will cost \$319, while the Stream Mini will cost \$179 with UK prices to be confirmed.



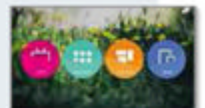
### SPRING 2015

Apple is rumoured to be radically redesigning its MacBook Air laptop. It will reportedly be much lighter and thinner because it will use Intel's new fanless Broadwell processors and only have a single USB 3.0 Type-C port for power and peripherals.



### SUMMER 2015

Panasonic is coming out with a smart TV that will all use the new TV-specific version of Firefox OS. The revamped interface should be much easier to use than the previous Panasonic-designed system.



## NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE  
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## LAPTOP

**Apple MacBook Air 13in 128GB**  
**£849** from [www.snipca.com/10020](http://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:** **Asus Chromebook C200**  
 A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and great keyboard. £200 from [www.snipca.com/13460](http://www.snipca.com/13460)

## DESKTOP PC

**Palicomp AMD Kaveri Evolution**  
**£500** from [www.snipca.com/11804](http://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**  
 A cheap, complete PC system that's powerful enough for basic tasks. £350 from [www.snipca.com/12606](http://www.snipca.com/12606)

## TABLET

**Apple iPad Mini 2**  
**£239** from [www.snipca.com/14467](http://www.snipca.com/14467)  
**Tested:** Issue 416



Apple's mini tablet from last year is now available at an even lower price. The only thing it lacks compared with this year's Mini 3 is a fingerprint sensor and the option of lots of built-in storage. Otherwise, it's an absolute bargain.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **Apple iPad Air 2 A**  
 A thin and lightweight 10in tablet with a fingerprint reader, an excellent screen and peerless selection of apps. £399 from [www.snipca.com/14309](http://www.snipca.com/14309)

## PHONE

**Motorola Moto G 4G**  
**£150** without contract from [www.snipca.com/14162](http://www.snipca.com/14162)  
**Tested:** Issue 432



Motorola's budget Android smartphone is an absolute steal. It's very responsive, well made, fast and has a good screen. Plus, it's now been updated with 4G and a microSD card slot.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **Apple iPhone 5s** An excellent smartphone with a great camera and performance. £459 without a contract from [www.snipca.com/10171](http://www.snipca.com/10171)

## DIGITAL CAMERA

**Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6**  
**£300** from [www.snipca.com/12607](http://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/13701](http://www.snipca.com/13701)

## E-READER

**Kobo Aura H20**  
**£140** from [www.snipca.com/13859](http://www.snipca.com/13859)  
**Tested:** Issue 435



A waterproof e-reader with an easy-to-read, high-resolution touchscreen that's easy on the eyes and great for reading in the bath. There's no 3G version, but, unlike the Amazon Kindle, you can buy ebooks from independent retailers that use the ePub format.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **Amazon Kindle Voyage**  
 The best Kindle yet, with a sharp, extremely responsive touchscreen and easy-grip design. £169 from [www.snipca.com/14451](http://www.snipca.com/14451)



## SECURITY SOFTWARE

### Kaspersky

#### Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from [www.snipca.com/14212](http://www.snipca.com/14212)

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2015 has won our past four antivirus tests, making it last year's standout performer. The 2015 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Click the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at [www.snipca.com/14221](http://www.snipca.com/14221).

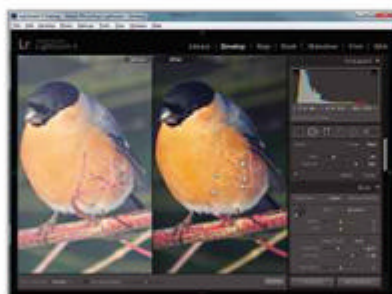
**ALTERNATIVE: Norton Internet Security 2014** Cheaper than Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. £29 from [www.snipca.com/14947](http://www.snipca.com/14947)

## PHOTO EDITING

### Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 5

£99 from [www.snipca.com/14348](http://www.snipca.com/14348)

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 13** A fast and polished photo-editing program with excellent advanced editing tools. £61 from [www.snipca.com/14731](http://www.snipca.com/14731)

## PC MONITOR

### Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£210 from [www.snipca.com/14610](http://www.snipca.com/14610)

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: AAOC I2360PHU** A good quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB 2.0 hub too. £140 from [www.snipca.com/14948](http://www.snipca.com/14948)

## SECURITY CAMERA

### Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£147 from [www.snipca.com/11646](http://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. £67 from [www.snipca.com/14349](http://www.snipca.com/14349)

## ROUTER

### Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£106 from [www.snipca.com/14612](http://www.snipca.com/14612)

Tested: Issue 427



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

**ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC** More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £200 from [www.snipca.com/14950](http://www.snipca.com/14950)

## NAS

### Synology DiskStation DS213j

£140 from [www.snipca.com/10575](http://www.snipca.com/10575)

Tested: Issue 404



This NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. It's not perfect – disk installation is a little fiddly and it's a little pricey – but there are few other NAS devices we would rather buy.

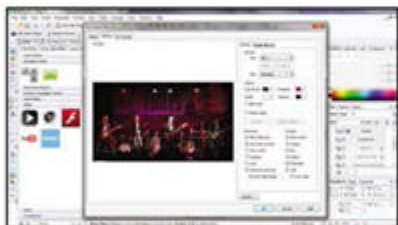
**ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j** A four-drive NAS that's generally fast and easy to set up and use too. £260 from [www.snipca.com/12545](http://www.snipca.com/12545)

## WEB DESIGN

### Serif WebPlus X7

£78 from [www.snipca.com/12338](http://www.snipca.com/12338)

Tested: Issue 414



WebPlus X7 is one of the best programs available for designing a website without having to write a line of code. It comes with lots of templates, with more available for purchase if you need them. It also has lots of specialist tools for building a small business website.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **Jimdo Pro** This browser-based program for creating websites is slick and feature packed, but lacking in high-quality templates. £60 a year from [www.jimdo.com/pricing](http://www.jimdo.com/pricing)

## SMART TV

### Samsung UE32H6200

£320 from [www.snipca.com/13101](http://www.snipca.com/13101)

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:** **Sony KDL-42W705B**

Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 42in screen. £430 from [www.snipca.com/12931](http://www.snipca.com/12931)

## COMPETITION

### MAGIX Rescue Your Videotapes 7

Win 1 of 5

Using MAGIX's Rescue Your Videotapes you can back up your beloved recordings from old VHS cassettes on your computer, DVD or Blu-ray Disc. It's easy to do, even if you have no technical knowledge. You simply connect your VHS player to your computer using the USB video converter included and digitise your videos. The software also includes a SCART lead. To enter, email your address to [cacomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:cacomp@dennis.co.uk) by midnight 3 February.



**MAGIX Rescue Your Videotapes 7** is available now priced £59.99. For more information visit [www.magix.com/gb](http://www.magix.com/gb) and follow MAGIX on Twitter @MAGIX\_UK.

## MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

### Canon Pixma MG4250

£50 from [www.snipca.com/12457](http://www.snipca.com/12457)

Tested: Issue 382



This budget multifunction printer (MFP) isn't the fastest available, but it's cheap to buy and inexpensive to run. Just as importantly, both prints and scans look great. Unless you need faster print speeds or separate ink tanks for each colour, this MFP is the one to buy.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **Canon Pixma MX535**

An MFP aimed at small offices with duplex, ADF and fax, but also good photo print quality. £70 from [www.snipca.com/12909](http://www.snipca.com/12909)

## SOLID-STATE DRIVE

### Crucial MX100 512GB

£155 from [www.snipca.com/12743](http://www.snipca.com/12743)

Tested: Issue 427



A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a remarkably low price. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge. It's far faster than any hard drive and is one of the best upgrades you can fit to your computer.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **Crucial M550 SSD 1TB**

If you need a bigger SSD, this fast 1TB model is great value. £359 from [www.snipca.com/14951](http://www.snipca.com/14951)

## HOMEPLUGS

### Devolo dLAN 650 Triple+ Starter Kit

£100 from [www.snipca.com/13655](http://www.snipca.com/13655)

Tested: Issue 433



Devolo's latest Homeplug adapters are not only very fast, but they're well designed too. They have a passthrough socket so you can still power another device and the design should avoid skirting boards and other obstacles.

**ALTERNATIVE:** **TP-Link AV500 Nano Powerline Adapter Starter Kit (TL-PA4010KIT)**

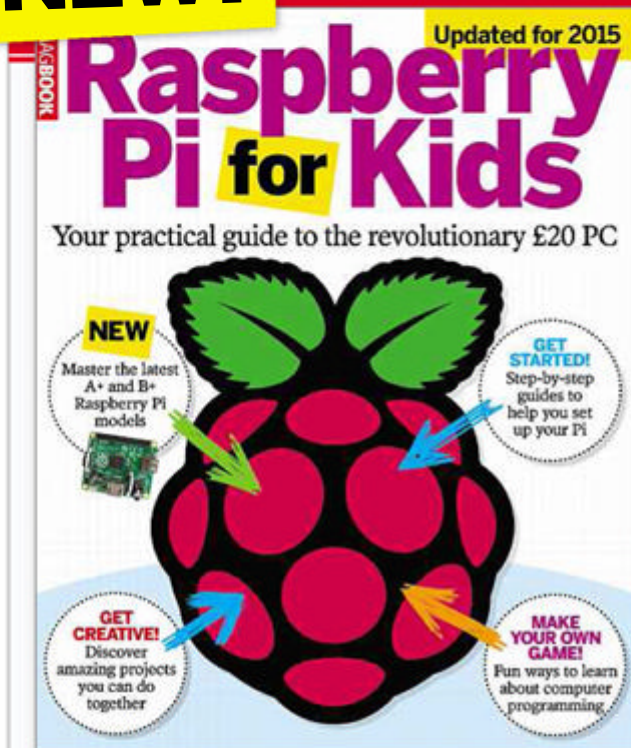
These tiny Homeplug adapters are a great choice, especially if socket space is at a premium or you don't want to block an adjacent socket. £25 from [www.snipca.com/10742](http://www.snipca.com/10742)



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The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking the world by storm. It's ideal for children of all ages to experiment, play games and learn valuable skills. We've updated this 148-page book for 2015 to include instructions on mastering the new Pi models (A+ and B+), helping children learn the coding skills needed to excel at the new school curriculum. We take you step by step through the basics of setting up and configuring the Pi and introduce many fun projects for families.

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## THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE HIDDEN TOOLS

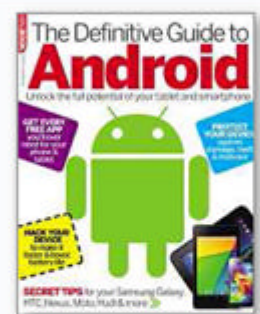
Inside the 164-page *The Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools*, we lift the lid on Google's most popular tools to reveal more than 430 ways to make them even more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. These include clever new add-ons for Chrome, amazing free apps for Android and stunning sights in Google Maps.



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Inside this 148-page book 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. You'll find buying advice, including reviews of the latest tablets and phones, and everything you need to know about taking your first steps with your new device.



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# Like Computeractive? Then you'll love

# WebUser

Hi everyone. . .

As you may know, we have a sister title called **Web User**, which is every bit as good as **Computeractive**. It focuses more on internet advice, giving you tips on browsers, websites, apps and online safety, and has the same plain-English ethos as we do.

I think you'll love **Web User**, so I've persuaded them to offer **Computeractive** readers an exclusive, one-off subscription deal (in return, they've told me I've got to make the tea for a week!). Subscribing to both means you'll get a great read delivered through your letterbox every week. I hope you enjoy reading **Web User** as much as I do.



All the best. . .

Daniel Booth  
Editor, Computeractive



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# Workshops & Tips

PULL OUT  
& KEEP  
Issue 441

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

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**38** Fix corrupted drivers on your PC

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## Force restore points to run on your schedule

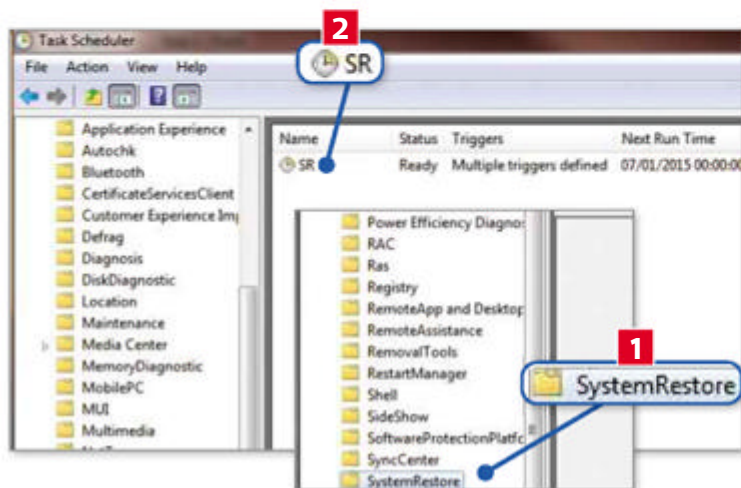
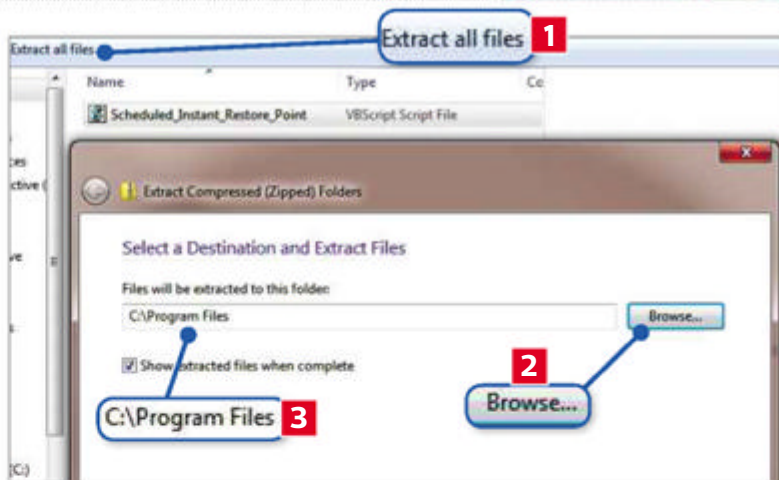
**What you need:** Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 20 mins

If your PC starts misbehaving after a Windows update or the installation of a new program, System Restore can rewind your computer to how it was before the changes were made. While Windows lets you create your own **restore points**, it doesn't let you schedule

them, or set your PC to create them automatically when you run certain programs that can sometimes cause errors, such as Registry Editor or system cleaners. We'll show you how to schedule restore points to be created automatically whenever you want.

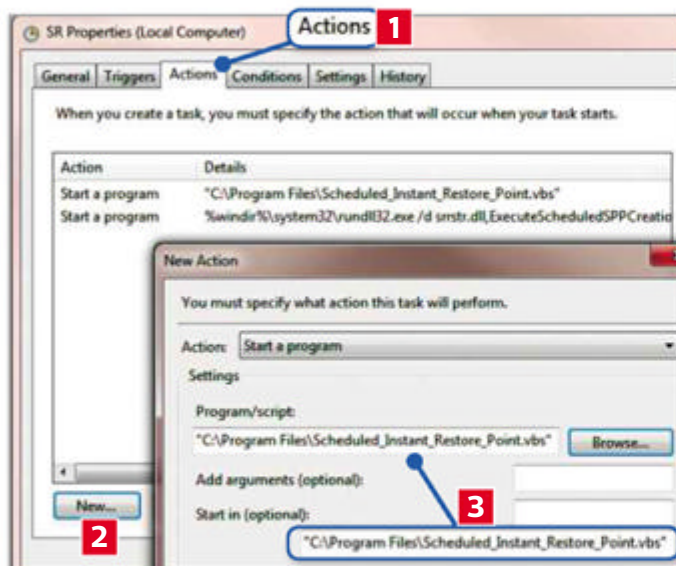


**STEP 1** You can schedule the creation of a restore point in Task Scheduler, but this is only activated if a restore point hasn't been created in the past 7 days. To override this 7-day rule and unlock the option to schedule restore points in Task Scheduler, download the following zip file: [www.snipca.com/14888](http://www.snipca.com/14888) (the download will begin automatically). Once it's downloaded, open the zip file, click 'Extract all files' **1**, Browse **2**, navigate to Computer, C:, Program Files **3** then click Extract. A VBS file called Scheduled\_Instant\_Restore\_Point will now appear in Program Files. This file will unlock the option to schedule restore points when it suits you – not when it suits Windows.

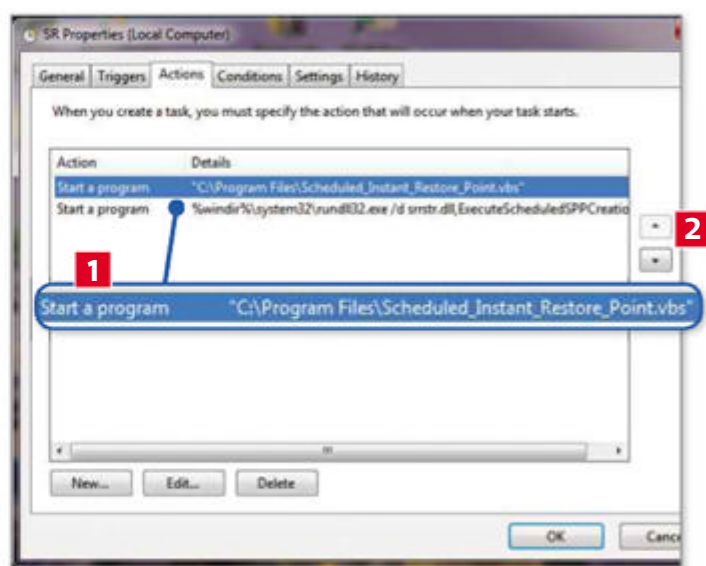


**STEP 2** Next, right-click the new file in Program Files, click Properties, then click Unblock at the bottom of the new window. Next, click the Start button, type **task scheduler** and press Enter. In the left-hand pane, click the arrows next to Task Scheduler Library, Microsoft, Windows, then SystemRestore **1**. In the middle pane, you'll see a task called SR **2** – this is the task used to create restore points.

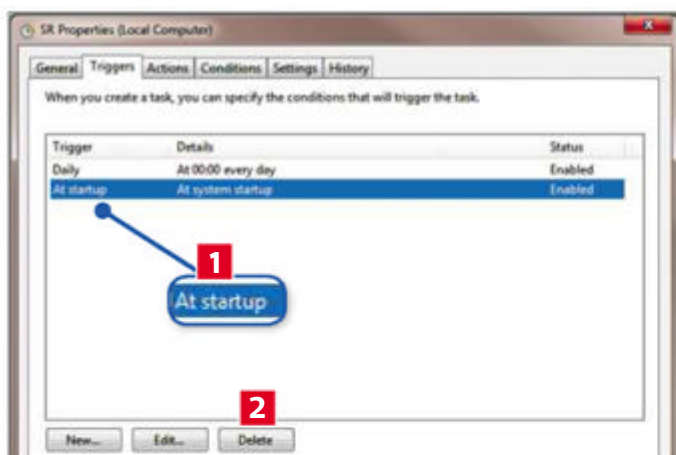
# Workshops



**STEP 3** Double-click the SR task. In the SR Properties box that appears, click Triggers. Here you'll see two restore-point creation triggers: one at midnight every day and the other every time your start up your PC. For these triggers to work you first need to override Windows' 7-day block on creating restore points. Click the Actions tab **1**, New **2**, then in the new window click Browse and navigate to C:\Program Files\Scheduled\_Instant\_Restore\_Point **3**. Click it, click open, then OK.

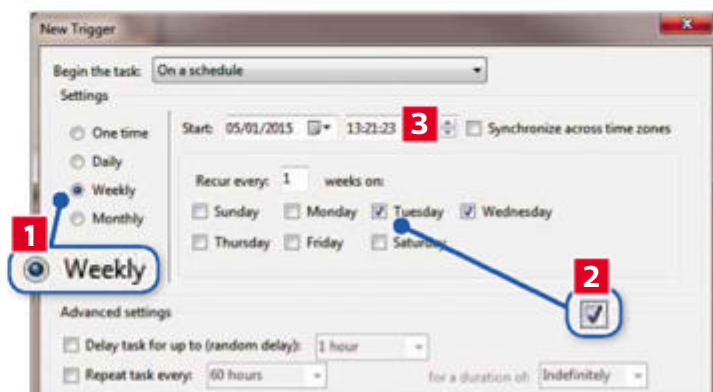


**STEP 4** In the SR Properties box, you'll now see two entries in the list under the Actions tab, including a task with a long entry under Details starting '%windir%\'' (this is the command to create a restore point). The other entry in the list is the VBS file you downloaded. Click it **1**, then click the up arrow **2** to the right of the list. This moves the VBS file to the top, which ensures it runs before the restore-point creator. This is crucial to avoid Windows blocking your scheduled task.



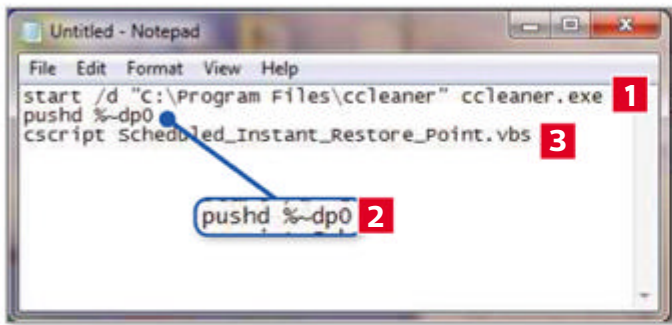
**STEP 5** Click the Conditions tab, then untick the box next to 'Start the task only if the computer is idle for:'. Next, click the Triggers tab, 'At startup' **1**, then Delete **2**. Do the same for Daily. Deleting these triggers is important because the restore points they create could overwrite the more important ones that automatically get created before Windows updates and program installations, or before you run certain programs. Restore points for these events should be your priority because they are tasks that may leave your PC vulnerable to crashing.

**STEP 6** Next, under the Triggers tab click New. In the new dialogue box, we'll schedule two restore points each week. To do this, select Weekly in the left-hand pane **1**, then tick the relevant boxes **2** for to determine which days you'd like to create restore points. Next, click the time box **3**, type a convenient time for the restore-point trigger, then click OK.

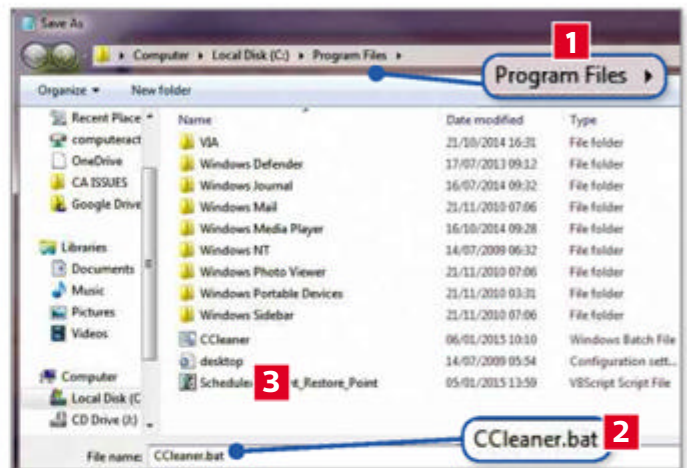




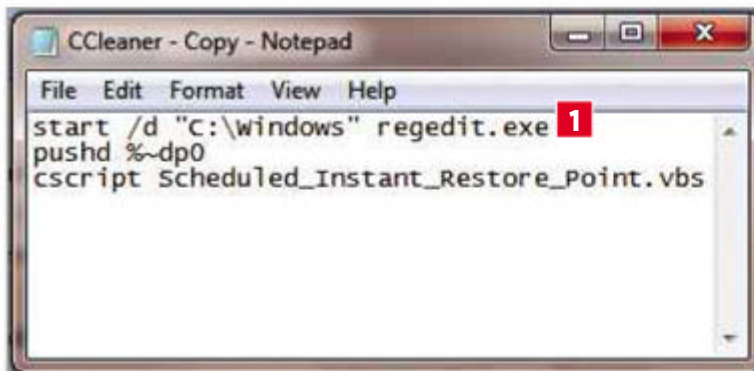
## Force restore points to run on your schedule



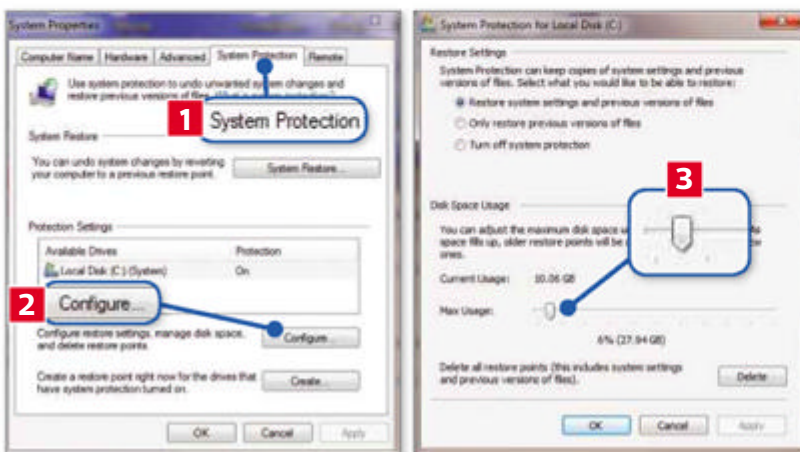
**STEP 7** Next, we'll set restore points to be created automatically when you launch certain programs, such as antiviruses and system cleaners that can sometimes delete files and cause errors on your PC. As an example, we'll show you how to create a restore point each time you run CCleaner. Open Notepad, type `start /d "C:\Program Files\ccleaner" ccleaner.exe` (1). Press Enter, type `pushd %~dp0` (2), press Enter again, and finally type `cscript Scheduled_Instant_Restore_Point.vbs` (3).



**STEP 8** Click File, Save As, and navigate to Program Files (1) in the new window. In the 'File name' box, type `CCleaner.bat` (2). Click the dropdown menu next to 'Save as type', All Files, and then click Save. You've now created a batch file which will launch CCleaner at the same time as creating a restore point. Just double-click the CCleaner file (3) in Program Files to open CCleaner and create a restore point simultaneously. To make things easier, create a Desktop shortcut for this by right-clicking the CCleaner batch file in Program Files, clicking 'Create shortcut', then dragging the shortcut to your Desktop.



**STEP 9** By making a copy of this batch file and using it as a template, you can avoid repeating all of Step 7 each time you want create a restore point with a program. Right-click CCleaner in Program Files, click Copy, then right-click a blank space in Program Files and click Paste. Next, right-click the new file that's been created (CCleaner - Copy) and click Edit. Now, the only thing you need to do in the Notepad file is delete the text in the first line after the /d and replace it with the location of the relevant program (for example, type `"C:\Windows" regedit.exe` (1) to create a restore point every time you run Registry Editor). Next, follow the steps in Step 8 (replacing CCleaner with the program of your choice).



**STEP 10** Depending on how often you've scheduled Windows to create restore points, you may want to change the amount of space your PC has reserved for them. Click any folder to enter Windows Explorer, right-click Computer in the left-hand pane and click Properties. In the new window, click 'System protection', the System Protection tab (1), then Configure (2). Adjust the Max Usage slider (3) to what you want (we recommend 3-7% disk usage), then click OK. ●

## Fix corrupted drivers on your PC

**What you need:** DriveTheLife; Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1

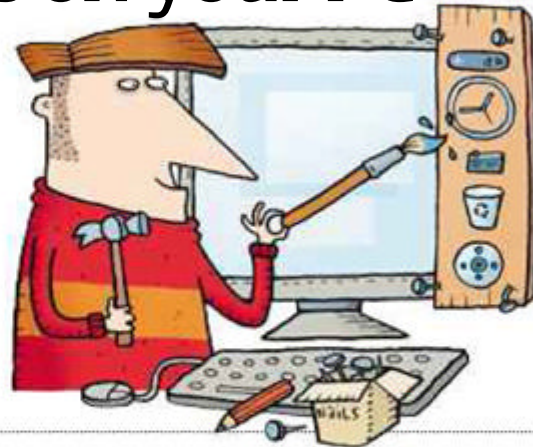
**Time required:** 20 minutes

If your PC crashes regularly, it may be down to corrupted or outdated drivers.

DriveTheLife is a free program that scans all the drivers on your PC, tells you which ones need to be repaired and lets you fix them all in one go.

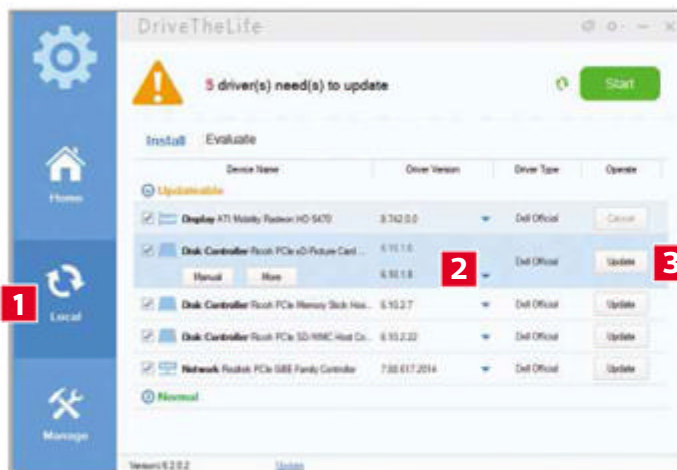
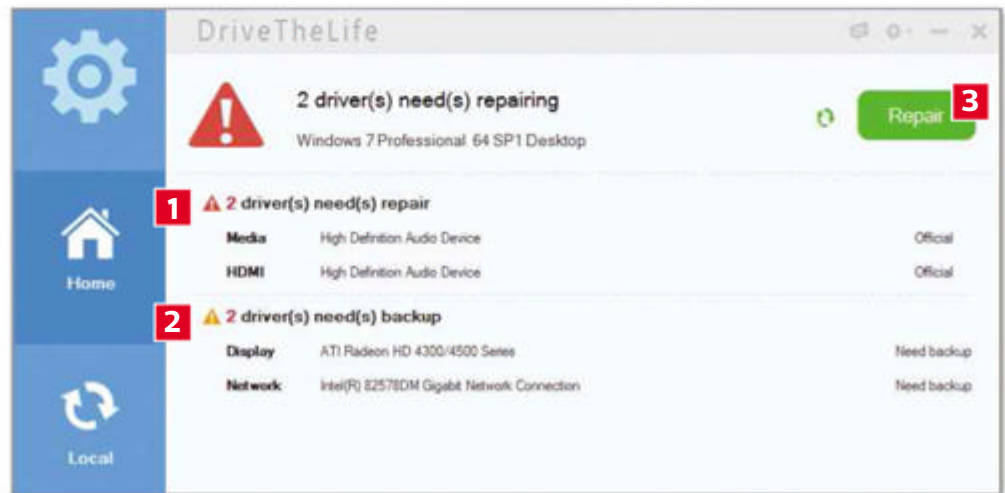
It also detects outdated

drivers, which you can then update. Another unique feature is the ability to back up and restore your drivers, which is useful if a new driver update is causing problems and you want to revert to an older, more stable version.

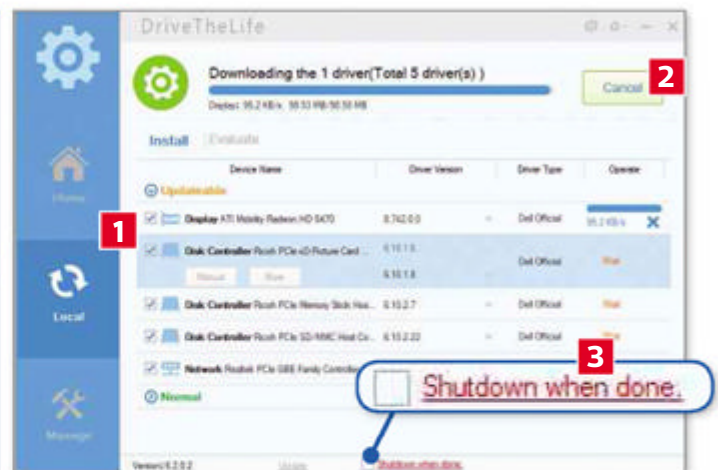


**STEP 1** Go to [www.drivethelife.com](http://www.drivethelife.com) and click the yellow Download Now button.

Click the setup file that downloads to your PC, Yes, Install and then Launch. As soon as it opens, DriveTheLife will scan the drivers on your PC and tell you which ones need to be repaired **1** and backed up **2**. Click Repair **3** to fix any corrupted drivers. Once that's done, it'll begin backing up the others. Click Recheck to run the scan again and confirm that all your drivers have been repaired and backed up.

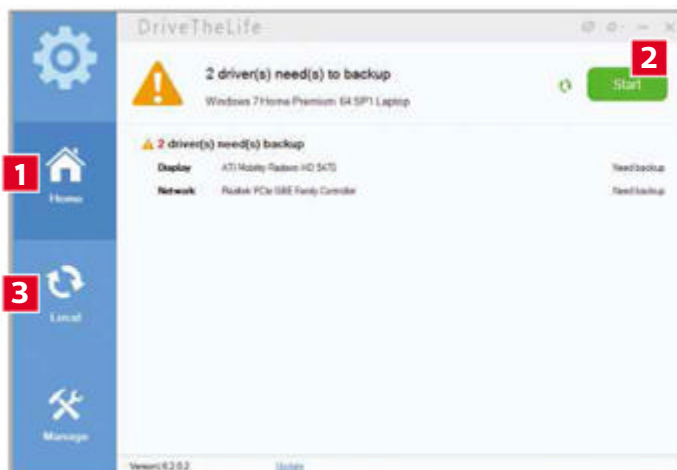


**STEP 2** Click the Local section **1** to see two categories of drivers - Updateable and Normal. If a driver has not been fixed in Step 1, you'll also see a Needs Repair category. Click Repair to fix it. The Updateable category contains all drivers that are out of date. Click any of the drivers in that category to see more options. For example, click the dropdown menu **2** if you want to see the latest version of that driver. Click the More button and then Details to see further information, such as when the last update was released and its file size. To update a driver individually click Manual or Update **3**.

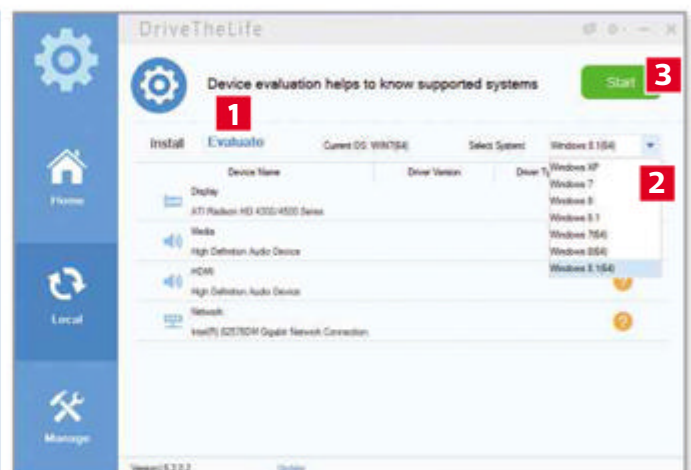


**STEP 3** To update all your drivers in one go, tick all the drivers in the Updateable category **1** and then click Start at the top right. If you want to cancel these updates, click Cancel **2**. Some updates may require a PC reboot. Click Reboot Now if you see that option in a pop-up message. If you want to shut down your PC after updating all your drivers, tick 'Shutdown when done' **3**.



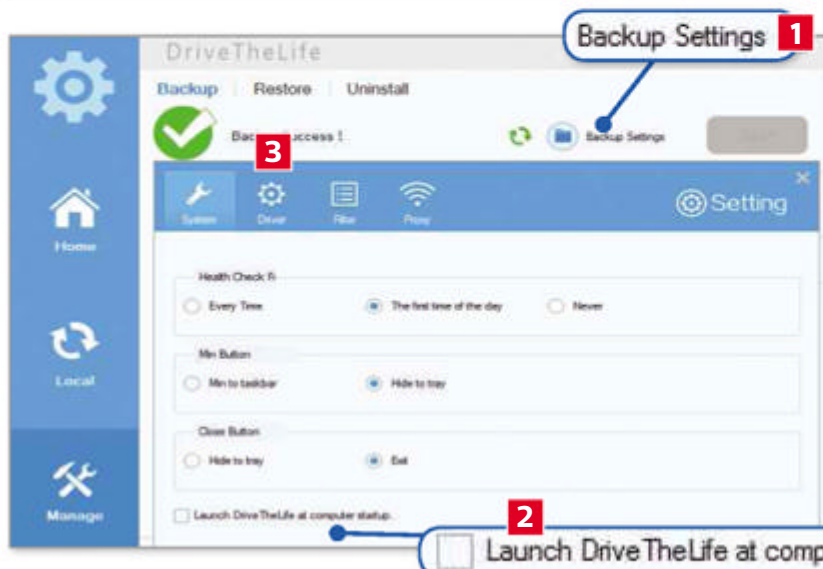
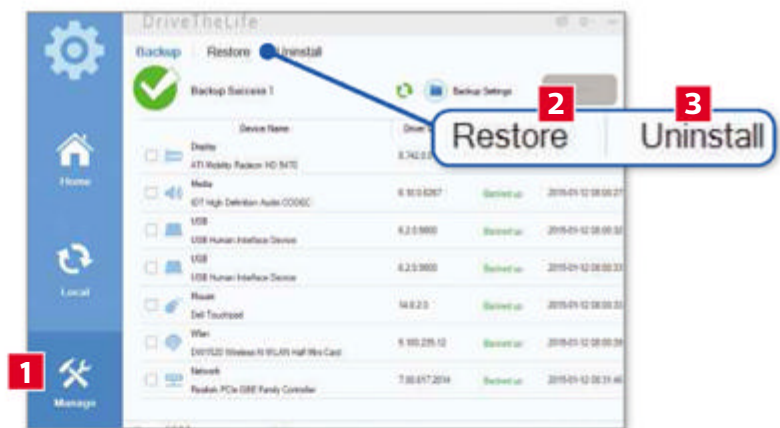


**STEP 4** After rebooting your PC, open DriveTheLife to make sure your drivers have been updated. Click Home **1**, then Start **2** to begin the scan. You may need to back up the drivers that you've updated. Click Start to do that and click OK on the notification telling you they're backed up. Next click Local **3**. You should see an option saying 'Congratulations! All drivers are perfect!'. If you don't see this, repeat Steps 2 and 3.



**STEP 5** DriveTheLife also lets you find out whether the current drivers on your PC will work with a different version of Windows, which is useful if you're planning on upgrading your operating system. Click Local, Evaluate **1** and then click the Select System dropdown menu **2**. You'll see options for Windows XP, 7, 8 and 8.1. Select the Windows version you're planning on upgrading to and then click Start **3**. Green ticks indicate those drivers will work with the new version, while red exclamation marks indicate incompatibility.

**STEP 6** Click Manage **1** to see three categories across the top - Backup, Restore and Uninstall. The first category lists all the drivers you've backed up. To restore a driver you've backed up, click Restore **2**, tick the box beside the driver you want to restore and then click the green Restore button. Again, you may need to reboot your PC for changes to take effect. Only uninstall a driver if you're absolutely sure you don't need it. To do that, click Uninstall **3** and then click Uninstall beside the driver you don't want.



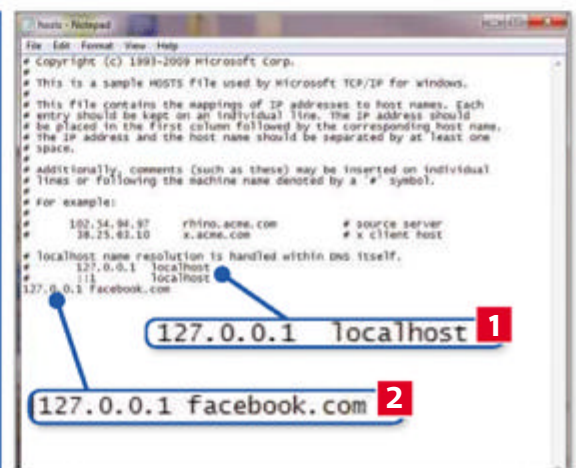
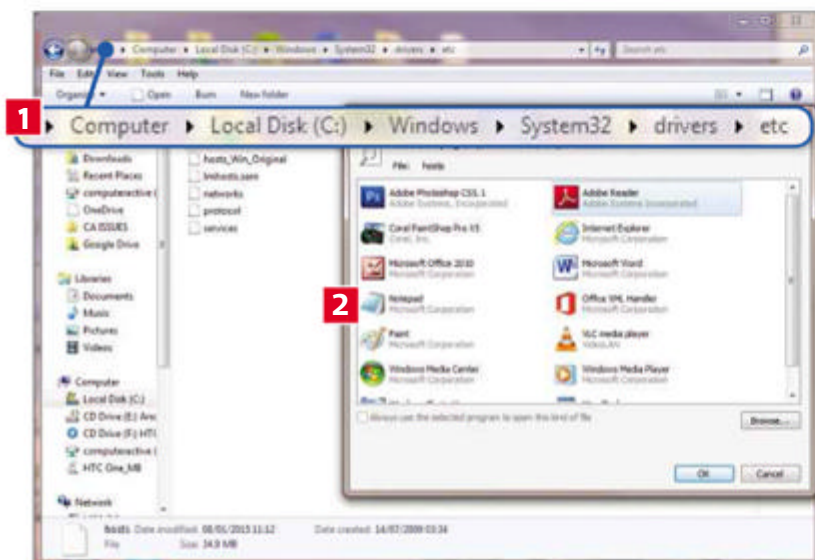
**STEP 7** To change the program's default settings, click Backup at the top and then click Backup Settings **1**. By default, closing DriveTheLife will minimise it, meaning it will continue to run in the background. To exit the program when you click close, click System at the top left and select Exit in the Close Button field. DriveTheLife will automatically start up with your PC and therefore increase its boot time. To disable this, untick 'Launch DriveTheLife at computer startup' **2**. To open the folder your drivers are downloaded to, click Driver **3** and then click Open beside the option you want. Click Apply at the bottom right to save your changes. ●

## Stop adverts appearing in your software

**What you need:** Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 10 mins

Online adverts are nuisances that usually appear when you're browsing the internet. For the most part, these are easily stopped with browser extensions like Adblock. But these extensions only block ads in your browser. It becomes more difficult if

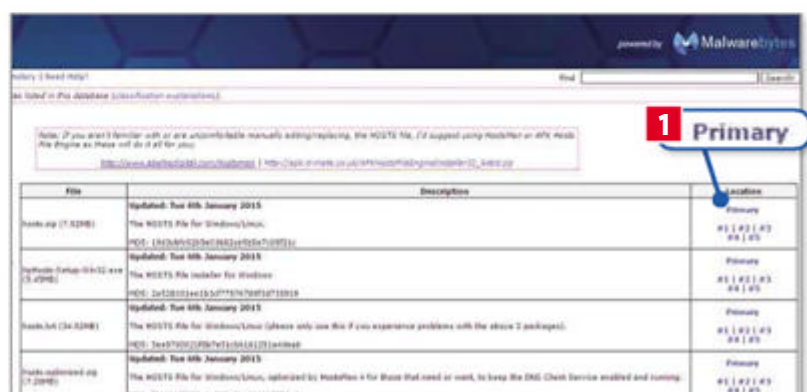
you want to block ads in programs such as Skype and other free, ad-supported software. However, here we show you a small Windows hack that will stop ads appearing in all your browsers and software – and you won't even need to install anything to make it work.



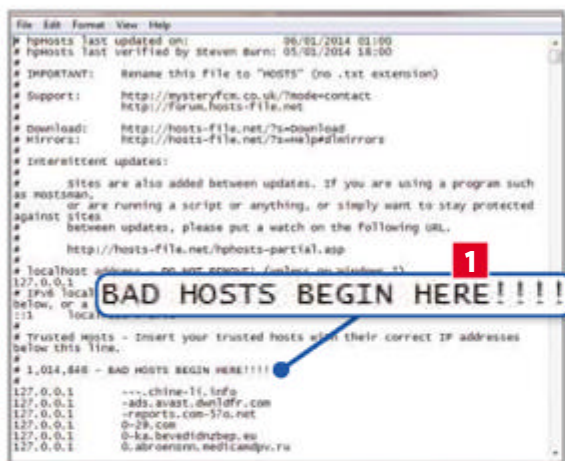
**STEP 1** Before you start this Workshop you'll need to locate what's known as the 'hosts' file, which can be found in C:\Windows\System32\drivers\etc **1**. This file is like an address book that logs domain names you type into your browser (such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) and translates them into IP addresses to connect to websites. You can also use this hosts file to block any web addresses (including ad domains) from accessing your PC. To look at your hosts file, go to its directory, double-click 'hosts', then in the 'Open with' window double-click Notepad **2**.

**STEP 2** You'll now see a Notepad document containing text. Do not edit anything at this stage; this step is designed to explain how the hosts file works. Near the bottom of the file, you'll see the IP address '127.0.0.1 localhost' **1**. This is known as a 'loopback address' and is the same on every PC you use. To block a site, all you'd need to do is press Enter at the end of the last line of text, then write '127.0.0.1 facebook.com' **2** (or whichever site you want to block). You can do this for as many domains as you like. The hosts file now searches for that domain at the loopback address, but won't find it because the address isn't online.

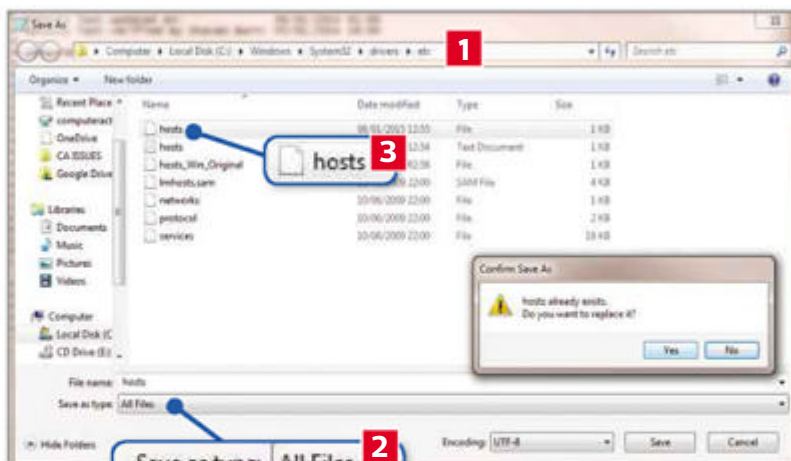
**STEP 3** Now we'll fill your hosts file with the names of over a million dubious domains in order to block them. Thankfully, you won't have to enter them manually because there are plenty of websites that let you download host files that contain lists of advertising, malware and other undesirable domains. We recommend the host file hpHosts ([www.hosts-file.net](http://www.hosts-file.net)), which is officially endorsed by the reputable anti-malware program Malwarebytes. To download it, go to [www.snipca.com/14939](http://www.snipca.com/14939) and download the topmost file in the list, called hosts.zip, by clicking the Primary link **1**.



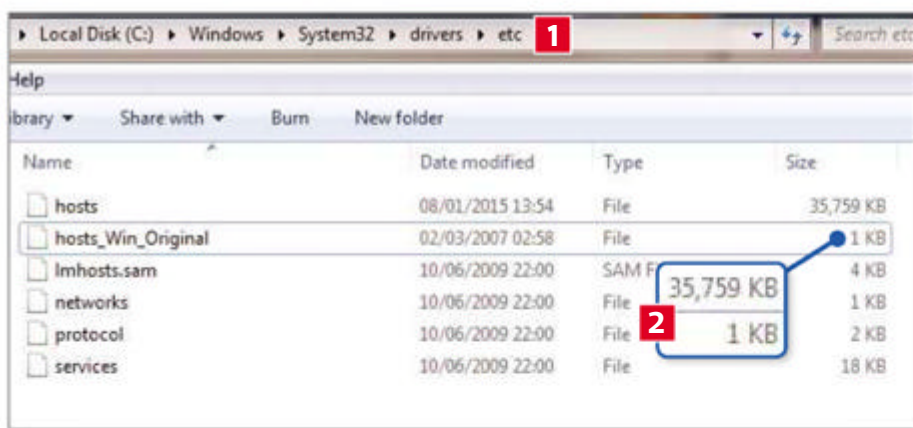




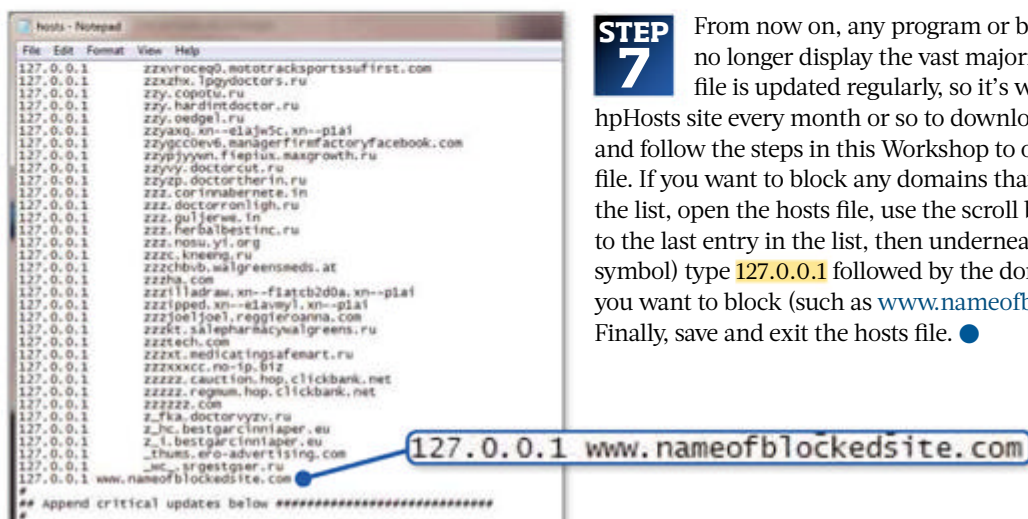
**STEP 4** Once you've downloaded the hosts zip file, right-click it, then click Extract All. Click Browse, choose the location you want to extract the zip file to, then click Extract. Next, open the extracted folder called hosts and double-click the text document called hosts. This may take a while to open because it's a large file. Once it's open, you'll see under the text 'BAD HOSTS BEGIN HERE' **1** the names of the (millions of) domains you're about to block.



**STEP 5** Next, click File, Save As, and in the new window navigate to C:\Windows\System32\drivers\etc **1**, where the Windows hosts file is located. Click the dropdown menu next to 'Save as type' **2**, All Files, then double-click the file in the 'etc' folder called 'hosts' **3** (if there is more than one hosts file, double-click the one whose file type is File, rather than Text Document). Windows will notify you that a file already exists with that name and ask you to confirm whether you want to replace it. Click Yes.



**STEP 6** Again, you might have to be patient as the new hosts file replaces the old one, and should the new hosts Notepad file stop responding entirely, navigate to C:\Windows\System32\drivers\etc **1** and check out the Size column next to the hosts file. If it's around 35MB **2** rather than around 1KB, then the new hosts file has successfully replaced it, and you can close the Notepad file. If you see a message saying the program is 'not responding', click 'Close the program' to force-close it.



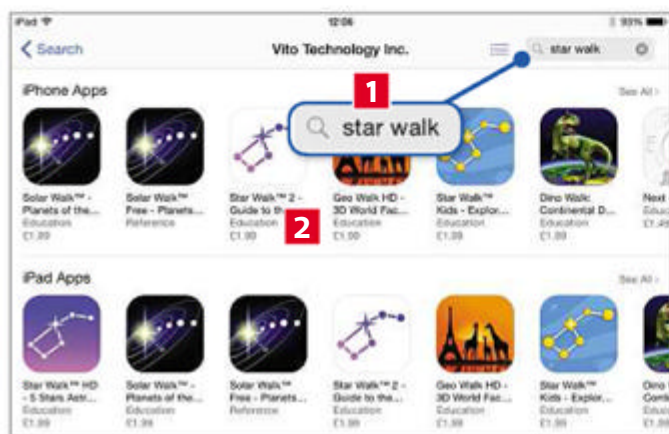
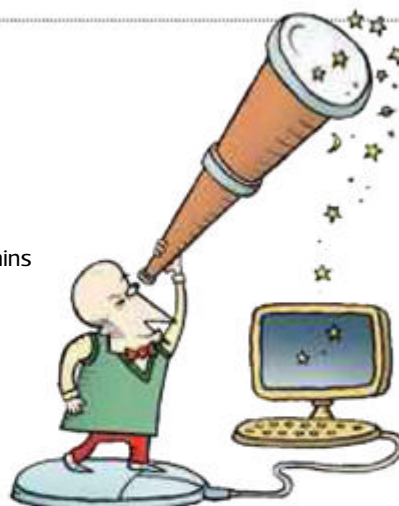
**STEP 7** From now on, any program or browser you open will no longer display the vast majority of ads. The hpHosts file is updated regularly, so it's worth going back to the hpHosts site every month or so to download the latest version, and follow the steps in this Workshop to overwrite the old hosts file. If you want to block any domains that aren't currently in the list, open the hosts file, use the scroll bar on the right to go to the last entry in the list, then underneath it (but above the # symbol) type 127.0.0.1 followed by the domain name of the site you want to block (such as www.nameofblockedsite.com). Finally, save and exit the hosts file. ●

## See the night sky on the day you were born

**What you need:** iPad or iPhone; Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 10 mins

These days, you don't need to be an astronomer to know what's what in the night sky. If you have a smartphone or tablet with an astronomy app, just point your device at the sky to see a wealth of information about the stars and

planets. But Star Walk 2 for iOS goes that extra light-year by letting you see the sky in the past and future. Here, we'll show you how to see what the night sky looked like the day, hour, and even minute you were born.



**STEP 1** First, you need to download and install Star Walk 2 for your iPad (£1.99, [www.snipca.com/14710](http://www.snipca.com/14710)). Tap App Store on your device, then the search box at the top right, type **star walk** **1** and press Enter. In the search results, tap 'Star Walk 2' **2**, rather than Star Walk HD, because it is the more up-to-date version. Tap '£1.99', BUY, then enter your iTunes login details if requested. Once the app has downloaded, tap its icon on the homescreen.

**STEP 2** Star Walk 2 will open, and request that you allow it to 'access your location while you use the app'. Tap Allow. This won't work if Location Services are switched off. To turn them on, tap Settings on your iPad's homescreen, Privacy in the left-hand pane, Location Services on the right, and then tap the switch **1** next to Location Services to switch them on. You'll see Star Walk 2 **2** listed below Location Services. Tap Star Walk 2 in the list, then 'While using the App'. It will now say While Using **3** next to Star Walk 2, indicating that Location Services will be activated when the app is in use.

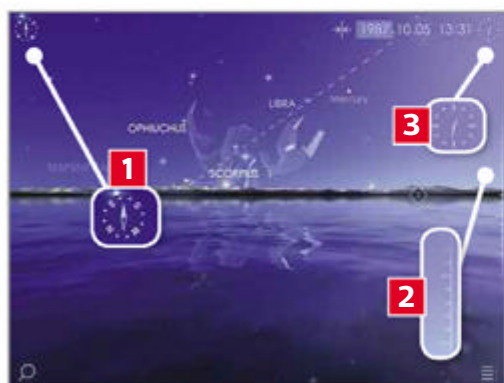


**STEP 3** Back in Star Walk 2, swipe right to go through the tutorial, or tap Skip. When you've finished, you'll see a screen showing a sea and the night sky. Point your iPad camera to any

point in the sky, and you'll see what celestial objects are at that location at that moment.

To see the constellations at a different point in time, tap the clock icon at the top right (if there's a camera icon there, tap the compass **1** at the top left to make the clock reappear). You'll now see the current time and

date. Tap the year, then swipe down the bar at the right of the screen **2** to travel back in time to your date of birth. The stars and planets shown on screen will be in the exact positions they were when you were born. You can even see the sky the minute you were born by tapping the time at the top right, then swiping the bar on the right.



### NEXT ISSUE

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- Create presentations using Microsoft Sway
- Keep your brain active with Windows 8.1
- Control your PC's volume using your mouse

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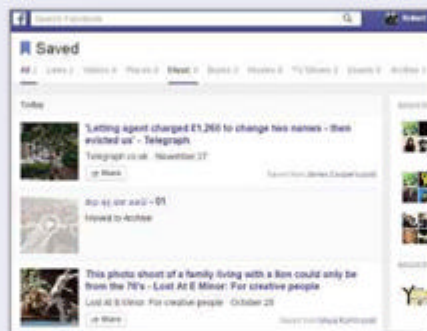


## TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

### Save interesting Facebook content for later

A couple of issues ago, a reader wrote in explaining how to filter from your news feed people who constantly post uninteresting content (Issue 438). I thought that tip was a great start to making Facebook a source of information that actually interests me, rather than one that has me clicking through it like a Social Media Zombie.

In the interest of making Facebook even more worthwhile, I recently found out that I can save useful articles to read later. When you stumble upon a post that you find interesting (the post needs to contain a link to a video, event, article and so on), click the down arrow



at the top right of the post.

Next, click Save [Name of Article].

A new category will appear at the top of Facebook's left-hand pane called Saved. Click it, and you'll be taken to a page

showing all the posts that you've saved (see screenshot). Use the options at the top to filter saved posts by Links, Videos, Places and so on.

You can remove posts from your Saved collection by moving your mouse over a saved post, then clicking the cross at the top right of it. This will send it to your archive, which you can access by clicking Archive in the options going across the top of the Saved page.

Thanks to the Saved page, Facebook is increasingly becoming a good news source for me, though I'm still quite partial to the occasional silly cat video!

Tim Stanley



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

## E-READERS

### Download free daily news to your e-reader

I never thought I'd come round to the idea of doing most of my reading on a screen rather than on paper. But here I am, a year after apprehensively receiving a Kindle for Christmas – it's been the best present I've opened in years!

You occasionally cover e-readers in *Computeractive*, but there's not been enough mention of Calibre, a fantastic PC program for keeping ebooks organised. It even downloads news to your e-reader from the world's best newspapers and magazines.

To schedule news to download to your device, download the latest version of Calibre at [www.snipca.com/14805](http://www.snipca.com/14805). Once it's installed, click 'Fetch news' in the banner at the top of the program. Next, either type a news source in the Search bar or select one from the list. Once

you've found a source, tick the 'Schedule for download' box, then select the days of the week you want it to download (see screenshot).

At the bottom of the window, you can choose to delete old news automatically. When you're ready, click Save. You can select as many news sources as you like, and Calibre will automatically download them when you plug your device in with Calibre running.

Claudia Lowther

## GOOGLE

### Fine-tune your Google searches

Scary though Google's plans of world domination are, you have to give the wily corporation credit for continuing to offer us an incredible search engine. I've recently started dabbling in its more advanced search features, and found that they've greatly helped me find things I'm looking for.

For example, if you write search terms in quotation marks (" "), then Google will search for that exact phrase. In the same search, you can also include other words outside of quotation marks, which Google will also look for, but in non-specific order. For example, type "samsung galaxy s6" rumours to get results that won't include other Samsung products or Galaxy devices.

You can also specifically exclude certain words from your search by putting the

minus (-) sign in front of them without a space. For example, if you want to look up chrome metal without results for Google Chrome, type **chrome metal -google**.

Eric Tatum

## FIREFOX

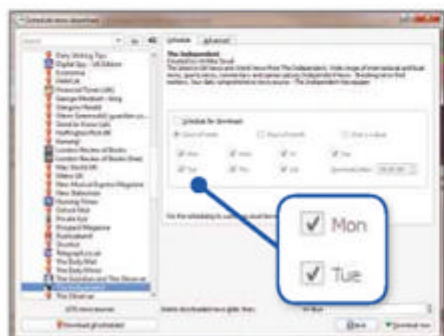
### Give Firefox a health check-up

I've been an avid Firefox user for a good few years, and have become obsessed with its built-in Health Report feature, which tracks how quickly Firefox starts up, how regularly it crashes, etc.

To access this fascinating feature, open Firefox, click the menu icon at the top right (three horizontal lines), then click the question mark icon at the bottom of the menu. In the Help list, click Firefox Health Report to see Firefox's Vital Stats. Particularly interesting is the graph in the middle, which gives you an overview of Firefox's startup time by day in seconds.

I used Health Report to discover that my Firefox startup times went up on a particular day, and worked out that an extension was slowing it down. To help work out which extension is slowing Firefox, click the menu icon, 'Add-ons', then 'Extensions'. Click More under an add-on to see when you installed it (Last Updated), then see if it coincides with the date Firefox's startup time increased. If it does, you've found your culprit!

Derek Johnson



# Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

## ANDROID

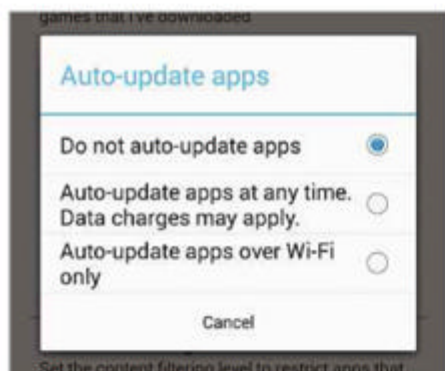
### Stop apps updating automatically



Most people like having their apps updating automatically each time they connect to a Wi-Fi network, but there are good reasons why you may not want to do this. For example, certain app updates can lead to the apps not working with certain devices, so you might want to check online to see if it contains any bugs. Or you may have limited space on your device and want to avoid downloading big updates.

You can turn off automatic app updates so you can update them individually or in bulk at a time that suits you. Go to the Play Store app on your device, tap the menu icon at the top left (three horizontal lines), then tap 'Auto-update apps'. In the pop-up menu, tap 'Do not auto-update apps' (see screenshot below).

To update apps manually, tap the Menu icon in the Play Store, 'My apps', Installed, and then Update All.



Alternatively, you can tap an app in the list that says 'Update' next to it before updating, see if you're interested in the update by looking at the green 'What's New' box, then tap Update if you want to update it.

## ANDROID

### Add multiple accounts to your device



If you live with someone, then it's likely that the other person will occasionally dabble with your tablet or smartphone. But if they're not an experienced user, you may find that the next time you use your device after them, your apps have disappeared from the homescreen, your email account has been switched, and random bookmarks have been added to your browser.

To avoid such mishaps, you should create a separate profile for each person who regularly uses your device. This will let each person use apps, web browsers and emails without affecting other users. Setting this up is easy. Go to Settings, Users, then tap 'Add user or profile' or the '+' symbol, depending on your device manufacturer and Android version. Next, choose between User and 'Restricted profile' (a good idea if children will be using the device). Assuming you're not setting up an account for a child, tap User, OK, then 'Set up now'.

Each time your device is on the lock screen from now on, you'll see separate icons for each user on the device. Just

drag an icon into the padlock to log in with that user.

## ANDROID

### De-clutter your homescreens



By default, any app you download automatically appears on your homescreen. If the first screen is full, then it will appear on the second screen, then the third screen, and so on. You can stop downloaded apps automatically appearing on your homescreen by going to the Play Store, tapping the Menu icon at the top left, Settings, then unticking the box next to 'Add icon to Home screen'.

An even better solution is to organise your homescreen apps into folders. To do this, tap and hold an app icon until it turns translucent. You'll now be able to move it around the screen. Drag the app icon into the centre of another app icon that you want to put it in a folder with so a large black box appears, then let go. If you hold the app icon near the edge of another icon, rather than the centre, it will simply swap their positions on the homescreen rather than create a folder. You can also drag apps between homescreens by holding the grabbed app icon at the edge of the screen.

A new folder should now be on your homescreen, containing the icons for the apps you placed inside. Tap the folder, Unnamed Folder, then name it whatever you like (we've called ours 'Tech stuff' – see screenshot right). You can add apps to

## Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

### Group Text

£1.99

iOS: [www.snipca.com/14762](http://www.snipca.com/14762)

This app lets you set up groups and distribution lists, so you can easily send texts in bulk. There are plenty of presets, such as adding your contact details into messages, and any replies you receive automatically go to your default text-messaging app, so you don't need to switch.



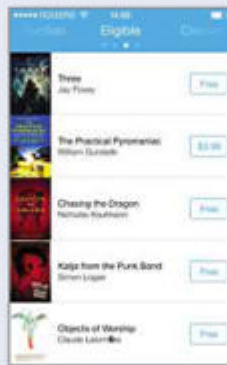
### BitLit

Free

Android: [www.snipca.com/14763](http://www.snipca.com/14763)  
iOS: [www.snipca.com/14764](http://www.snipca.com/14764)

Having a book collection is great, while storing hundreds of ebooks on your tablet or Kindle is very practical.

This app offers the best of both, by scanning your physical books, then looking for cheap (or free) digital versions of them. It's also a fine way to keep your physical collection catalogued on your device.



### Think Like Churchill

£2.49

iOS: [www.snipca.com/14766](http://www.snipca.com/14766)

A great game for people interested in one of Britain's most inspirational prime ministers. You get asked questions based on some of Churchill's toughest decisions (e.g. Should Britain fight or negotiate with Germany?), and can read archive documents and stories to help you make the right decisions. At the end, you receive an analysis of how your behaviour compared with Churchill's.





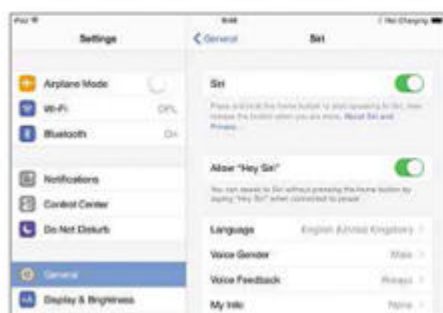
this folder either by dragging them into the centre of it, or by tapping the '+' symbol, tapping all the apps you want to add, then tapping Done.



## iOS Use Siri without touching your phone

A new feature in iOS 8 lets you use the voice-activated assistant Siri without even having to pick up your phone. The feature, Hey Siri, will only work when your device is plugged into a power source, because it requires Siri to be on constantly and uses a lot of battery power.

To enable Hey Siri, go to Settings, General in the left-hand pane, and ensure that the switch next to Siri is moved to the right. Then do the same with the switch next to Allow Hey Siri. Now, every time your iPhone or iPad is charging, you'll be able to activate Siri simply by saying "Hey Siri" when you're near it. It then starts listening for further voice commands, at which point you can ask it all the weird, wonderful and practical questions you usually ask Siri.

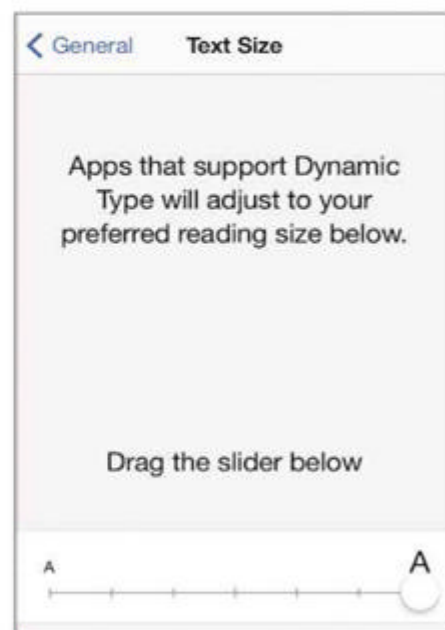


## iOS Make fonts bigger and clearer

Even though Android and iOS have become more customisable, letting you tweak their appearance to suit your needs, they've lacked flexibility with font usage.

Apple changes all that in iOS 8. You can now make fonts on your device bigger, and therefore easier to read. Tap the Settings icon on your homescreen, Display & Brightness, Text Size, then drag the slider to the left or right until you're happy with the size. Apps that support Dynamic Type will also adapt their text size to what you set in this slider.

For fonts to stand out even more, tap the switch next to Bold Text in the Display & Brightness menu. You'll need to restart your device for this change to take effect.



## Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

### AGES 0-5

#### Short Vowel Word Study

£1.99 [www.snipca.com/14767](http://www.snipca.com/14767) (iOS)

This app is a more fun way for children to learn about spelling than making them go through monotonous lists. It features a series of colourfully illustrated games based on sorting words, including Odd One Out, and spelling short words. Children earn stars for doing well, giving them an extra incentive to keep learning.

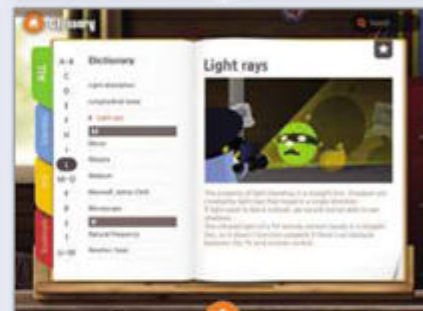


### AGES 6-10

#### Meet Science: Light and Sound

£2.49 [www.snipca.com/14765](http://www.snipca.com/14765) (iOS)

The second app in the popular Meet Science series is one of the best ways to engage children with the basics of science. Featuring experiments, videos, funny visuals, games and glossaries, this will keep children engaged for hours.



### AGES 11-16

#### Chess With Friends

Free [www.snipca.com/14774](http://www.snipca.com/14774) (Android)

Free [www.snipca.com/14773](http://www.snipca.com/14773) (iOS)

From the same developer as the brilliant Scrabble clone Words With Friends, Chess With Friends gives the ancient game a modern makeover. You can challenge your opponent over the internet, making your moves when convenient, or play him in the same room over Wi-Fi or Bluetooth.



## WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

### Sync images you edit in Microsoft Paint with Wordpad



Wordpad is one of the more overlooked programs that come pre-installed with every version of Windows. It's essentially a free, stripped-back version of Microsoft Word (it has a near-identical interface), and is perfectly good for carrying out basic writing tasks.

Wordpad also has a great trick for editing pictures. You can edit images in Microsoft Paint and any changes you make will sync with the picture in Wordpad instantly. To do this, insert a picture into Wordpad by clicking the Home tab, the Picture icon in the Insert section, then selecting it in the dialogue box.

Once the picture is inserted, click it, then press Ctrl+D, which will temporarily make the picture disappear and open Microsoft Paint. In Paint, press Ctrl+V to paste the picture. This also makes the picture reappear in Wordpad, and any edits you make to it in Paint will be replicated in the Wordpad image. When you finish editing, you can close Paint without saving, because your edits are automatically saved in the Wordpad version.

## WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

### Browse your PC and the web from your Taskbar



If you have some space to spare on the Taskbar at the bottom of your Desktop, why not set it up so you can instantly visit any website and access any folder on your PC?

To do this, right-click any empty space in the Taskbar and click Properties. In the new window, click the Toolbars tab, tick the boxes next to Address and Desktop, then click OK. A search box will appear next to the word Desktop at the right side of the Taskbar (see screenshot below). Type a web URL (such as [www.outlook.com](http://www.outlook.com)) into this box and press Enter to immediately go to that site in your default browser. You can also type the names of library folders such as 'pictures', 'music' and 'videos' into the search bar and press Enter to open them.

## WINDOWS 8, 8.1

### Reinstall Windows 8 while keeping your files and settings



If your PC has slowed to a crawl, then it's worth doing the usual maintenance checks – running an antivirus scan, defragging your hard drive, and cleaning your PC using a tool like Glary Utilities ([www.snipca.com/14758](http://www.snipca.com/14758)) or System Mechanic ([www.snipca.com/14759](http://www.snipca.com/14759)). However, if all these efforts fail to improve things, it may be time to reinstall Windows (it's recommended that you do this every 6 months or so).

Thankfully, you can reinstall Windows 8 without losing any of your settings (such as network settings and shortcuts) or files. You will, however, need to manually reinstall any programs and Windows updates. To do this, first insert your Windows 8 installation or recovery disk. Next, go to the Charms menu (move your mouse to the bottom right corner of the Desktop, then up), click Settings, then 'Change PC settings'. Click 'Update and Recovery' at the bottom of the left-hand pane, Recovery, then 'Get started' under 'Refresh your PC without affecting your files'. In the 'Refresh your PC' window

#### Refresh your PC

Here's what will happen:

- Your files and personalization settings won't change.
- Your PC settings will be changed back to their defaults.
- Apps from Windows Store will be kept.
- Apps you installed from discs or websites will be removed.
- A list of removed apps will be saved on your desktop.

that appears, click Next, then Refresh.

The Refresh process takes around 20 minutes, during which time your PC may restart a few times. Once the process completes, your PC will reboot and a screen will appear saying 'Press any key to boot from disc'. This happens because the installation disk is inserted in your PC's drive. Don't press any key, let Windows boot, then remove the disk from the DVD drive.

When Windows starts up, let it carry out all the necessary updates. You'll also see a folder on your Desktop called Removed Apps, in which you'll find links to all the apps and programs that were removed from your PC. Use these links to reinstall your programs.

Click the two arrows next to Desktop to open a list. From this list you can navigate to any folder on your PC without opening a new window.

## WINDOWS VISTA, 7, 8, 8.1

### Cycle through open programs – as in Windows XP



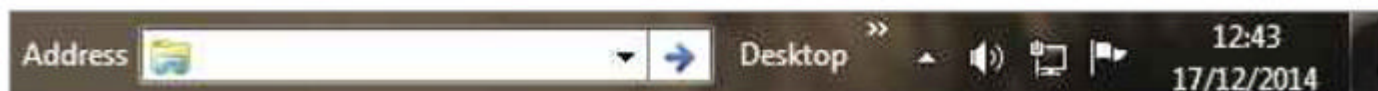
Windows XP was a much-loved operating system. Microsoft seems to recognise this and has added several small features that hark back to the popular OS.

One such feature is hidden in the program-switching keyboard shortcuts in more recent versions of Windows. By default, Windows shows thumbnails of any open programs when you browse through them by holding the Alt key and



pressing Tab. To make this feature more reminiscent of its XP version, tap the second Alt key as you're holding Alt, then press Tab. Instead of thumbnails, you'll see program icons as you browse them (see screenshot above), as in Windows XP.


While most people will think the more recent Alt+Tab program-switching feature is better, it's nice to see Microsoft tipping its hat to XP. It also lets you see how far Windows has come since then.



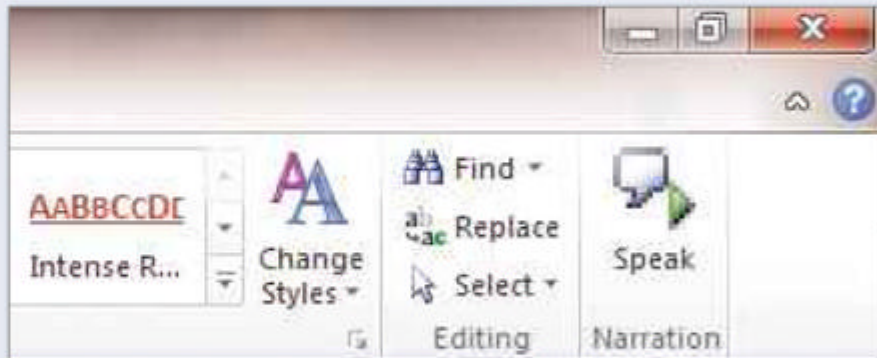


## OFFICE

### Make Office speak text out loud

 In Word, Excel and PowerPoint 2010, you can add a tool to the Ribbon (the palette of tools that runs across the top of the window) that speaks whatever you've written. This is useful for the visually impaired, but also those who want to hear what they've typed on the page to make sure it sounds as good when verbalised – for example, if you're writing a speech (it's surprising how different a sentence sounds spoken out loud than it does in your head).

To enable the narrator – or 'Speak' feature – open a document in Excel, PowerPoint or Word (you'll have to go through this process separately for each one), right-click anywhere in the Ribbon underneath the Home tab and click 'Customize the Ribbon'. Right-click Home in the right-hand pane,



click Add New Tab, right-click New Group, then click Rename. Call the group "Narration" or something similar, choose a relevant symbol from the grid (we recommend the microphone in the fourth row) and click OK.


Next, click the dropdown menu under 'Choose commands from', All Commands, then scroll down in the

left-hand pane and click Speak (Speak Cells in Excel). Click "Narration" (or whatever you named the group) in the right-hand list, click Add in the middle and then click OK.

The Speak button will now appear at the far right under the Home tab (see screenshot). Highlight a section of text, then click Speak to hear it spoken.

## ONENOTE

### Make notes without opening OneNote


 One of the reasons notes are so useful is that they're so quick to jot down – very handy when you need a short, snappy reminder about something important. This being the case, having to open OneNote and wait for it to load before making a note can defeat the point of the program.

Thankfully, there's a much quicker way to access some of OneNote's most useful features. Just press Win+N whenever you're using your PC to open the Send To OneNote menu. You'll then see options to write a quick note, clip a section of the screen to add to OneNote, or send documents to OneNote (see screenshot below). Clicking any of

these opens a small window in which you can carry out the task (rather than opening the full program) and automatically saves what you do to OneNote.

## WORD

### Align an image in your document

 Anyone familiar with Word will have aligned their text at some point, positioning it to the left, right or centre of a document. But did you know you can also align any image you insert into your document?


First, insert your image into Word, either by dragging it from your Desktop into your document or by clicking the Insert tab at the top, then Picture, then navigating to the image you want. Once the image is in your document, the Format tab at the top should say Picture Tools above it, under which you'll find all the picture-editing options.

Click Wrap Text, and choose any option apart from 'In Line with Text'. Next, click Align in the Arrange

section, then choose your preferred alignment (left, right, centre, and so on).

## POWERPOINT

### Make multiple animations happen at the same time

 To animate objects in PowerPoint, click an object, the Animations tab, then Add Animation. This is fine if you want animations to occur one after the other, but what if you want to make several animations occur at the same time? For example, you may want one picture to fade in at the same time as another fades out.

Every time you add animations to your presentation, they appear in the Animation Pane on the right-hand side. Here, you can use the Re-Order arrows at the bottom to change the order in which they take place. But to animate several objects at the same time, hold the Ctrl key while clicking the objects in your presentation that you'd like to animate simultaneously (either in the Animation pane or on the page itself).

Once you've selected the objects, click the Animations tab, the dropdown menu next to Start in the Timing section, and then With Previous.





# Process Hacker

Block programs accessing the web, add info to Notifications and replace Task Manager

### Stop programs accessing the internet

Closing certain programs that connect to the internet can speed up your PC, because it will stop them installing updates in the background. To see all your processes that connect to the internet, click the Network tab in Process Hacker ([www.snipca.com/14619](http://www.snipca.com/14619)). You may initially be shocked by how many processes you have connected to the internet, but don't panic. If you look in the 'Name' column you'll see that a single program can have multiple connections to the internet.

To close a process that connects to the internet, double-click it under the network tab and you'll be taken to the process within a colour-coded list. Use the tip below to help you decide whether it's safe to stop the process. If so, right-click it and click Terminate or Suspend (Suspend is a safer option, because it lets you easily resume the process).

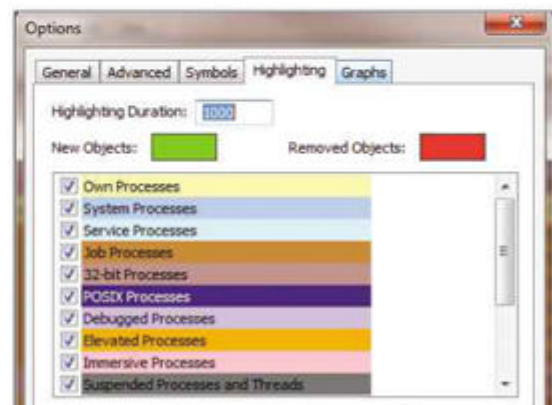
### Understand Process Hacker's colour-coding

One of the first things you notice when you open Process Hacker is that the entries in the processes list are colour-

coded. To find out what each colour signifies, click Hacker at the top left, Options, then the Highlighting tab (see screenshot right). Here you'll see that processes highlighted in blue are System Processes. As a general rule, you should never disable these because it can destabilise your PC. Similarly you shouldn't disable '.NET Processes and DLLs' (bright yellow) or Service Processes (light blue) unless you know what their functions are. Processes highlighted in dark grey are 'Suspended Processes and Threads', which are processes that have been suspended by you or another program.

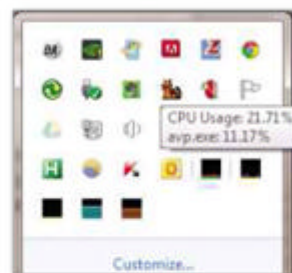
### Add more information to the Notifications menu

Process Hacker displays a small icon in the Notifications menu at the right side of the Windows Taskbar, which displays the amount of resources your CPU is using as a percentage. You need to hover your cursor over the black graph with green and red lines. You can use Process Hacker to display other live information about your PC in the Notifications menu.



Click the Highlighting tab to see what Process Hacker's colours mean

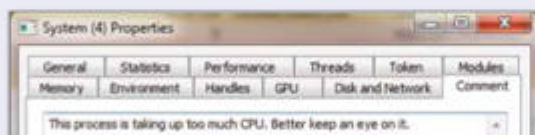
In Process Hacker, click View, Tray Icons, then click any of the options in the list to display them in the Notifications area. We recommended selecting Disk History and Physical Memory. The Disk History graph should only spike when you're doing something very demanding, such as opening a program or browsing the web with several tabs open. Physical Memory should ideally be no higher than around 60 per cent.



Add small graphs to your Notifications menu to better monitor your PC's workload

## Make notes as you research processes

If a System Process (blue) is consistently using 60 per cent or more of your CPU's resources, it will slow down your PC. But you shouldn't instantly disable it because it may be crucial to the smooth running of your PC. Instead, carry out some research online to see whether it's safe to disable. Process Hacker helps your research by letting you add comments to a process. Double-click the process you want to



Use the Comment tab to leave notes on processes you want to monitor

comment on, click the Comment tab, type your description then click Close. Next, right-click the grey bar at the top of the Processes list, click Choose Columns, Comment in the left list, Show, then OK.

### Replace Task Manager with Process Hacker

Once you get to grips with Process Hacker, you'll find that it's essentially a much deeper and more insightful version of Windows Task Manager (which you access by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Delete, then clicking Start Task Manager). If you prefer Process Hacker to Task Manager, you can make it launch as your default when you press Ctrl+Alt+Delete.

In Process Hacker, click Hacker at the top left, then Options. Next, click the Advanced tab, tick the 'Replace Task Manager with Process Hacker' box and click OK.





# Microsoft Sway



Fed up using PowerPoint? So too, it seems, is Microsoft. The company has a new presentation tool it wants you to try

## What is it?

Microsoft's new, free online presentation tool, which it hopes will "reimagine the way your ideas come to life". It was made available to anyone with a Microsoft account in mid-December, after launching as an invite-only preview in October. The company claims that in its first 10 weeks the Sway website ([sway.com](http://sway.com)) received more than a million unique visitors and 175,000 requests to join.

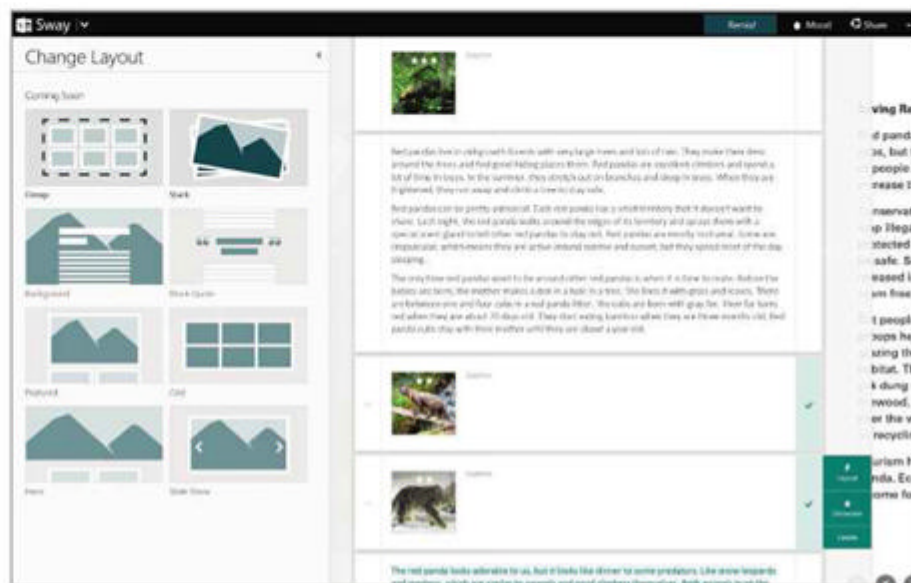
Sway is in many ways a threat to Microsoft's own PowerPoint software, and the company's response to the many online PowerPoint rivals that have emerged in recent years, such as Google Slides ([www.google.com/slides](http://www.google.com/slides)).

## What can I do with it?

You can create scrolling presentations – or 'Sways' – using photos, videos, text and social-media updates pulled in from your Desktop, and websites, including OneDrive, Facebook, YouTube, Bing and Twitter. Its drag-and-drop interface is very easy to use, and Microsoft provides a host of themes with which you can "remix" your presentations. When your presentation is complete, it can be viewed online by anyone – just email them the link.

## How is it different to PowerPoint?

The key difference is that PowerPoint gives you greater control over a presentation's design. It is still the best tool for business presentations. But Sway will appeal to people put off by PowerPoint's vast array of options. It's



perfect for creating school projects, holiday slideshows and visualising your hobbies and interests with the minimum of fuss.

The best way to get a feel for what Sway can do is to look through the presentations users have created – you'll find these at the bottom of the home page under 'Sways we love'. Microsoft has picked some great examples, including Amazing Animal Migrations ([sway.com/animal\\_migrations](http://sway.com/animal_migrations), see screenshot below, left) and The Universe (Condensed) ([sway.com/universe\\_cheatsheet](http://sway.com/universe_cheatsheet)).

Next, you should read Microsoft's post on its Office blog ([www.snipca.com/14769](http://www.snipca.com/14769)) to learn about the new tools added in December, then click the 'Get started!' button on the Sway website. You'll be asked to sign into your Microsoft account if you haven't already done so.

## Which new tools have been added?

The most useful are undo and redo buttons, letting you easily correct mistakes. This was, the company said, "by far the most-requested feature" from users of the preview. Also new are bullets and auto-numbering, which have been

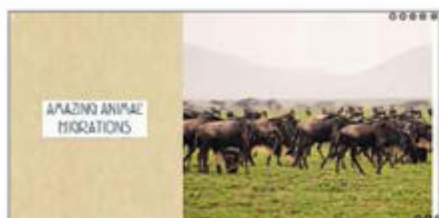
added to the text tools, giving Sway even more of a PowerPoint feel. Text can also now be edited directly on the "Canvas" – the layout that shows how the presentation will appear to viewers. PDFs can be embedded into Sway presentations for the first time, and Microsoft is improving the colour palette options.

## Is Sway available on tablets?

Yes, but only on the iPad, and only in Australia ([www.snipca.com/14770](http://www.snipca.com/14770)) and New Zealand. This isn't a sign of Microsoft's fondness for all things Antipodean, but a deliberately limited test to see how well the app works, and to receive feedback, before releasing it in more countries. If Sway's early popularity continues, it's likely to arrive as an iOS app worldwide, and on Android, next year.

## Does Computeractive like Sway?

Yes. It's fast, slick and simple – a great example of less is more. Even the logo looks neat and modern (above right), fitting in with the current Office style. We'll have a Workshop on Sway in our next issue, out Wednesday 4 February.





# Beat Internet Restrictions

The web is full of frustrating rules and 'geo-blocks' that stop you browsing freely. Jane Hoskyn shows you how to break down the borders and do what the web says you can't

## KEY POINTS

- Use easy proxy tools to watch BBC iPlayer when you're abroad
- ...and US Netflix in the UK
- Download ebooks and apps from foreign websites
- Access sites that try to block you
- Discover the hidden security benefits of breaking web rules

**T**he World Wide Web isn't really worldwide. If you've ever tried downloading Kindle ebooks from Amazon's US site, or watching your favourite BBC shows on iPlayer when you're on holiday in Spain, you'll know the internet has got more borders than the former Soviet bloc. It should be renamed the 'World Wide (except for all the stuff that's not available in your country) Web'.

### 'Not available in this country'

Internet restrictions made headlines recently when online video service Netflix ([www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)) was said to be tightening its so-called 'geo-blocks'. Geo-blocks are the invisible borders that prevent you watching TV shows and films which aren't licensed for the UK (or whatever country you're in) – just as with DVD regions.

Netflix rubbished the report as a non-story, saying nothing has changed; its terms and conditions have always banned people from viewing content they're not supposed to. If you get around geo-blocks, you're breaking the rules.

The Netflix logo, consisting of the word "NETFLIX" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters, set against a red rectangular background.

You'll find similar clauses in the small print on most websites.

Are you happy to break a few rules? Well, read on. Over the next few pages we'll reveal the brilliant free tricks and tools that smash through licensing restrictions so you can watch video, download ebooks, install apps and access other content the web says you can't. It's legal (within reason; we'll come to that later), not immoral and definitely won't make you fat\*. All the workarounds we mention here are free, and many don't even involve downloading software.

(\*Here are The Beverley Sisters to explain the reference – [www.snipca.com/14957](http://www.snipca.com/14957). If YouTube won't let you see the video, you'd better read this feature.)



## WATCH TV AND FILMS BLOCKED IN YOUR COUNTRY

### Watch US Netflix in Chrome with one click

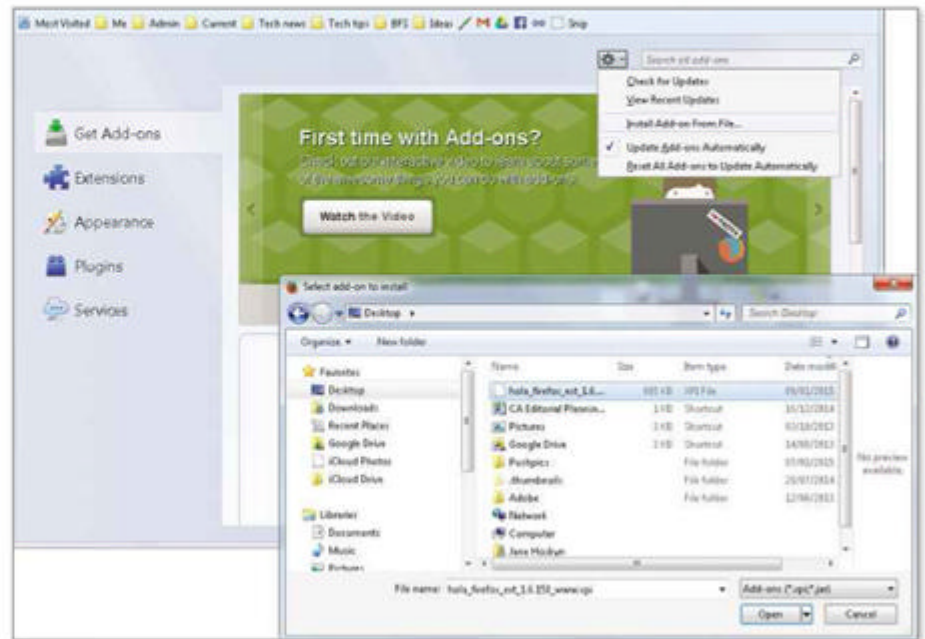
Despite the recent hoopla about Netflix shoring up its borders, not much has changed yet. At the time of writing, we found it perfectly straightforward to watch US-only TV programmes and films on Netflix, simply by pretending we were in America. Naughty, perhaps, but not against the law (see box, page 55). And it works.

You don't need expensive VPN (virtual private network) or proxy server software to disguise your location. Free tool Hola (<http://hola.org>) does the job, and if you're using Chrome you don't even have to download anything.

Get the extension from Hola's homepage by clicking the Chrome logo below the blue download button, or from the Chrome Web Store ([www.snipca.com/14942](http://www.snipca.com/14942)). The extension adds a bookmarklet to your browser bar – it looks like a little smiley face on fire.

Now go to a website where you want to view content that's automatically blocked in the UK, such as Netflix. It's important to note at this stage that 'US Netflix' and 'UK Netflix' are misnomers – it's actually one site ([www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)), but it looks different according to where you are. Same goes for YouTube, the Google Play Store and other sites that provide licensed content. They detect your location automatically, and often stick a couple of letters on the end of their URL just to rub it in ([www.netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com) turns into [www.netflix.com/gb](http://www.netflix.com/gb), for example; see address bar in the screenshot below).

So to get round the restrictions, you have to beat the location-detectors at their own game. Hola's bookmarklet does this



Hola works in Firefox too, but you have to import it manually

for you by instantly jumping to attention when you visit Netflix, opening a box that you can click to "change" your location to the US. If you're on a central server (such as a work PC), the trick may not work, but we had no trouble on our home laptop.

Your location doesn't actually change, of course. You're still in your spare room. What's changed is your IP address, which sites use to detect where you are (and much more besides).

Remember that Netflix is a subscription service, so you'll need to pay to use it (from £5.99 a month), whatever location you pretend to be in. Your first month is free, though, so if you just want to try it or blast through the first two series of the excellent political drama *House of Cards* before the third is available on 27

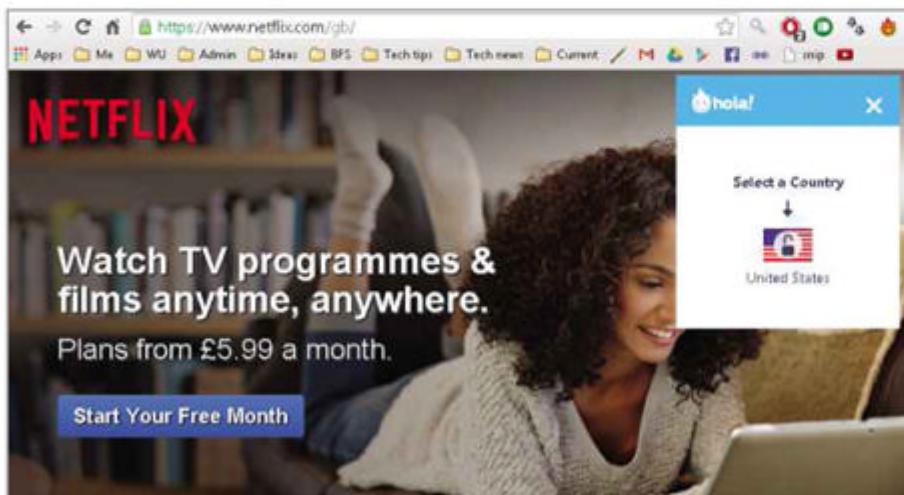
February, you can do so without paying a penny. You can use Hola to access US Netflix with your UK subscription.

If the major film studios do end up forcing Netflix to crack down on proxies and VPN usage, you may need to try one of the other solutions we suggest over the page. But at the time of writing, Hola still works with Netflix – and many more international video services.

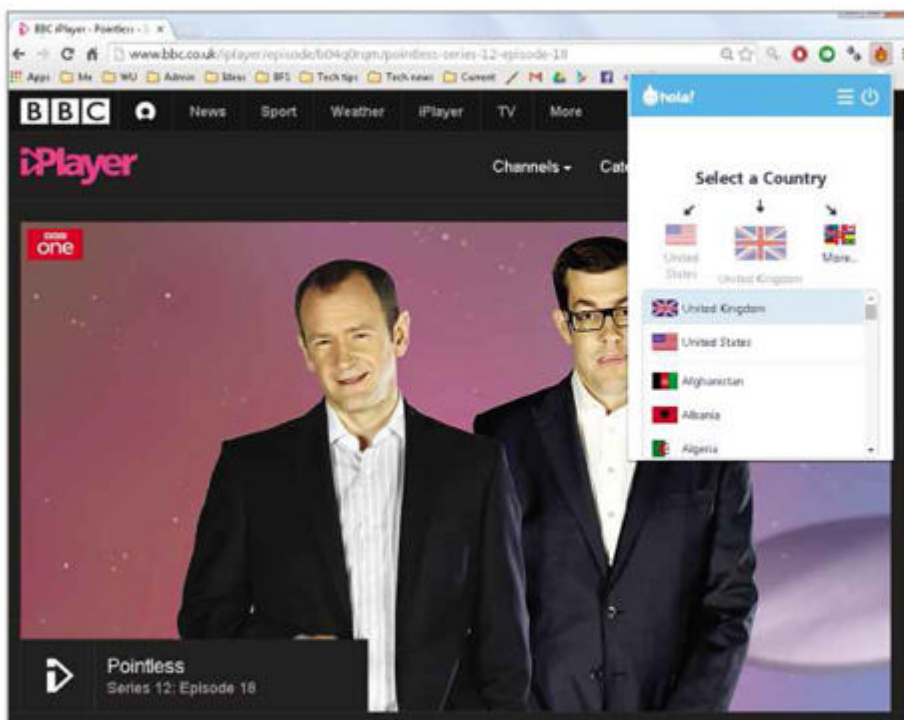
### Watch US Netflix in Firefox and IE

Hola also has extensions for Firefox and Internet Explorer (IE), and they work in the same way as the Chrome extension. However, you have to download them to your computer first, so the process is a bit more finicky – especially with IE.

To get the Firefox extension, click the Firefox icon on the Hola homepage and save the XPI file ('hola\_firefox\_ext\_1.6.150\_www.xpi') to your Desktop, then import it into Firefox by clicking the settings cog on the 'Add-ons' page and selecting 'Install Add-on from File'. If IE is your default browser, you can get the extension by downloading Hola for Windows (here's a direct download link: [www.snipca.com/14943](http://www.snipca.com/14943)). Hola for Windows isn't a Desktop program in the traditional sense; it describes itself as an "engine". As far as we can see, you don't need to bother with it unless you want the IE extension. Our Chrome extension worked fine on our home PC without the need to download anything at all.



Fool Netflix into thinking you're in the US by using Hola's free Chrome extension



Select UK in Hola if you want to catch up on iPlayer programmes from abroad

Alternatively, use a different extension. Hola is particularly easy to use and highly rated by users, but it's not the only restriction-smashing browser tool on the block. Firefox extension ZenMate (or 'ZenMate Security & Privacy VPN 4.1.7', to give it its full name; [www.snipca.com/14968](http://www.snipca.com/14968)) is well-rated by users and has a strong emphasis on security (see box, page 56).

## Watch BBC iPlayer when you're abroad

Breaking down location barriers follows the same principle whatever location you're in. So you can pretend you're in the UK when you're actually in Spain, just as you'd pretend you're in the US when you're actually in Guildford or Rochdale or wherever you happen to be.

We'll stick with Hola for now, because it's the easiest proxy tool we've found, and it's safe and regularly updated – vital factors when you're choosing tools that have a whiff of rule-breaking about them. Add it to your browser as described above, go to the BBC iPlayer website ([www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer](http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer)) – or any website that contains UK-only content – and click United Kingdom in the Hola bookmarklet window. To revert to your usual server again afterwards, click the bookmarklet again and click 'Back to United Kingdom'.

We noticed that Hola offered us lots more virtual locations (IP addresses) once we'd installed Hola's Windows engine on our PC. The list was huge, ranging from

Afghanistan to Zambia (see screenshot above). That's nice but, if you just want to watch UK or US telly, unnecessary. The list is a pain to scroll through, and we'd hesitate to switch to a server based in a country whose security we don't trust. North Korea is on the list, for example, but we're not clicking it, and we suggest you don't click it either.

While we're on the subject of provisos, we should mention that we found the location-switching process prohibitively difficult on our work PC, but it was easy and almost instantaneous on our laptop at home – and US Netflix worked just fine. Servers are tetchy beasts, and your experience may also differ according to your broadband provider, PC

configuration and bandwidth. That's enough disclaimers for now – let's get back to the fun.

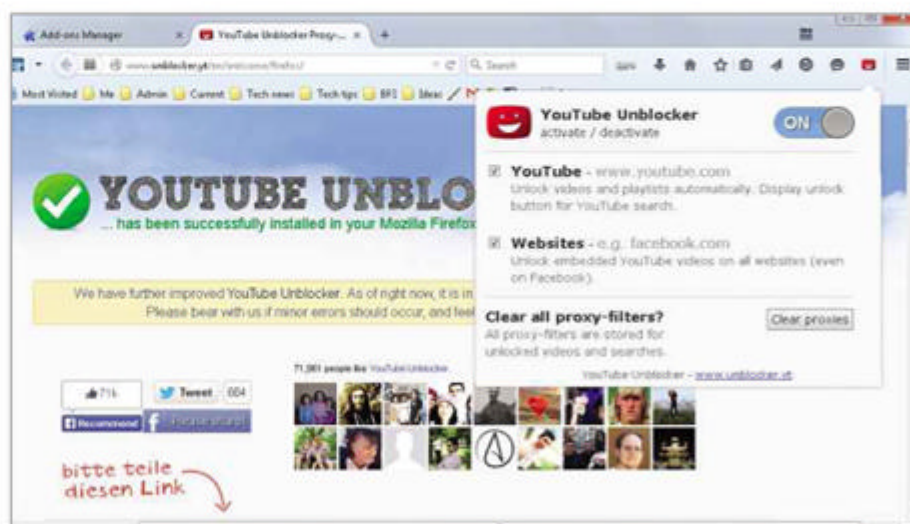
## Unblock YouTube videos automatically

YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)) has been blocking licensed content since before Netflix was a twinkle in the internet's eye. It's not YouTube's fault, just as it's not Netflix's fault – these sites are at the mercy of film studios, record companies and other content owners who don't want the fruits of their labours made available for all and sundry to enjoy for free. But never mind the politics. You just want to see that Beatles concert YouTube has teased you with but won't let you see.

Hola will help if you only want to unblock occasional YouTube videos, but you may need to try a couple of different proxy locations before the video will play. If you're a regular YouTube user, Hola isn't quite the right tool for you. Every video you watch may be from a different location, so you may find you're constantly fiddling with different locations to find one that works.

Instead, use an extension that switches you to a proxy automatically every time you try to play a blocked video. YouTube Unblocker ([www.snipca.com/14967](http://www.snipca.com/14967)) is free and works in Chrome and Firefox. It's particularly useful in Firefox, partly because Hola is such a faff to install in Firefox (see page 51), but also because it unblocks more videos in Firefox than in Chrome, at least in our experience. This may be because Google owns both Chrome and YouTube, and therefore keeps a tight rein on Chrome tools that try to bend YouTube rules.

Add the extension to either Firefox or



Add YouTube Unblocker to Firefox or Chrome to unblock web videos automatically



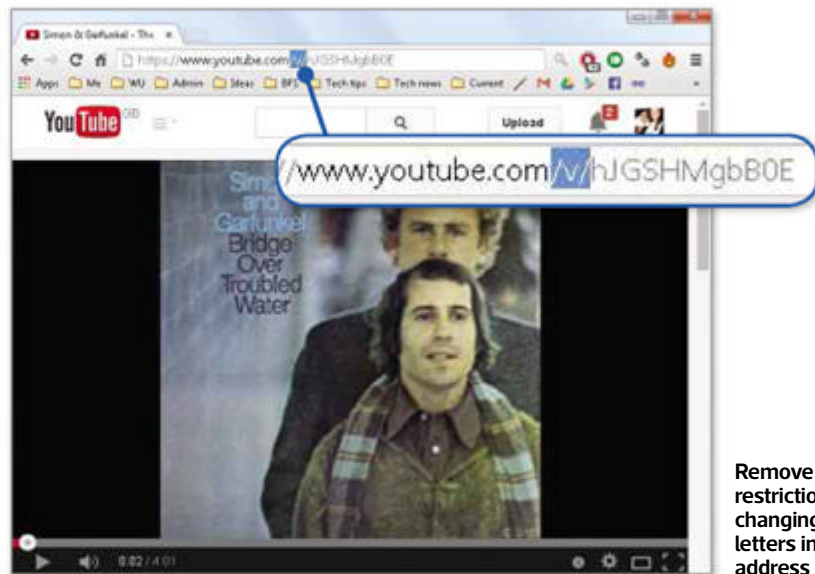
Chrome by clicking the green button on the page above, or go to Firefox's Add-ons Manager, search for 'unblocker', then click the Install button next to YouTube Unblocker (it's version 0.6.5 at the time of writing). The little red bookmarklet appears on your browser bar in seconds, and it's instantly ready to use. Click it to set your preferences.

By default, YouTube Unblocker is switched on and set to unblock videos on YouTube and Facebook. It actually says 'all websites', but it didn't let us access US Netflix and other commercial content with non-UK licensing. So 'all websites' means 'lots of websites'.

If you'd rather use YouTube Unblocker on an ad hoc basis, like Hola, move the blue slider to OFF and just switch it on when you come across a video that won't play.

### Hack YouTube's URL

While YouTube Unblocker was the best automatic proxy-switcher we tried, it didn't unblock every restricted video we threw at it. Rule-breaking is an inexact



Remove YouTube restrictions by changing a few letters in the web address

and inconsistent science, as we've seen, so it's worth having a spare trick up your sleeve, and there's none easier than a spot of quick URL hacking.

If you go to a YouTube video page, you'll see 'watch?v=' in the middle of the web address (see screenshot above). Replace

that section with 'v/', leaving the rest of the address as it was. So instead of [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1234](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1234), the URL will now be [www.youtube.com/v/1234](https://www.youtube.com/v/1234) (we've just used '1234' as an example) – and it should play, regardless of where in the world you are.

## ACCESS WEB CONTENT YOU NORMALLY CAN'T

### Make blocked websites open on any PC

Internet restrictions go far beyond a few TV shows. **Torrent** services and file-sharing sites may be blocked by your ISP for legal reasons, and news websites are blocked by certain governments in case their citizens find out what's really going on in the outside world. The 'Great Firewall of China' is only too solid to the people living inside it.

Blocking doesn't always have unfair or dodgy motives. Your local library may block Facebook on its public Wi-Fi to prevent people browsing their friends' cat videos for hours and using up all the bandwidth.

Again, Hola will help you get around these restrictions. However, if it's struggling to connect you to a server, or you're on a PC that isn't your own, try the free proxy service Anonymouse instead.

Anonymouse (<http://anonymouse.org>) works entirely online and doesn't even need adding to your browser, let alone downloading to your PC. Just visit the website (make sure you include the 'e' at the end of 'anonymouse' in the URL), click the UK flag, type a web address, then press Enter to access it.

Behind the scenes, Anonymouse will redirect you through a safe proxy server



Access blocked websites and protect your privacy by browsing via Anonymouse

that disguises who and where you are, so it's a great way to protect your privacy as well as overcome location and IP-based lock-outs.

### Download US ebooks to your Kindle

Ebooks and online newspapers are geo-blocked for the same reason as films, TV shows and music, and you can unblock them just as easily using the tools we've

already mentioned.

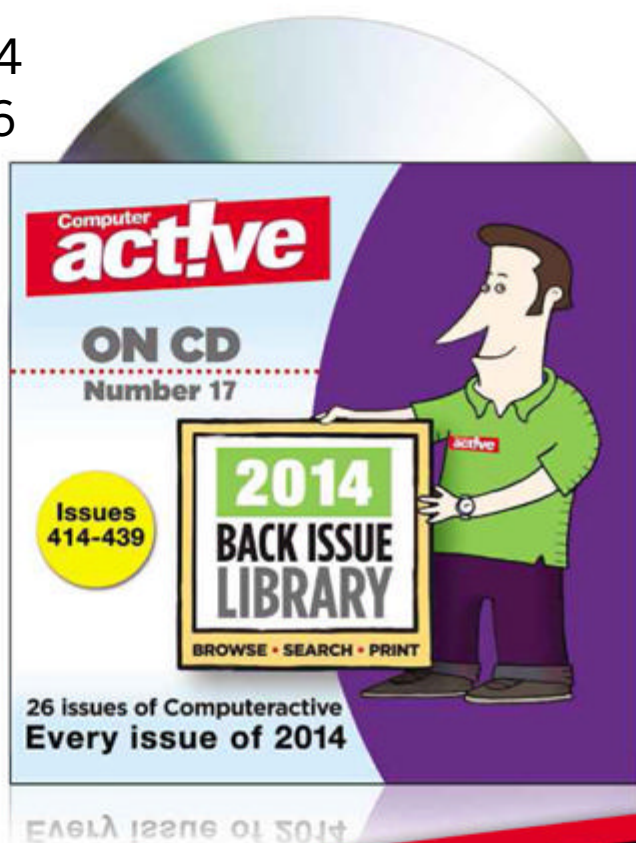
There's a whole list of sites containing restricted content on Hola's 'Popular' page of sites frequently accessed by its UK users ([www.snipca.com/14975](http://www.snipca.com/14975); you can also get there by opening your Hola extension and clicking the menu icon, then My Settings, then 'More sites...'). One of the sites listed is, inevitably, US Amazon ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). Normally, when you type this address into your

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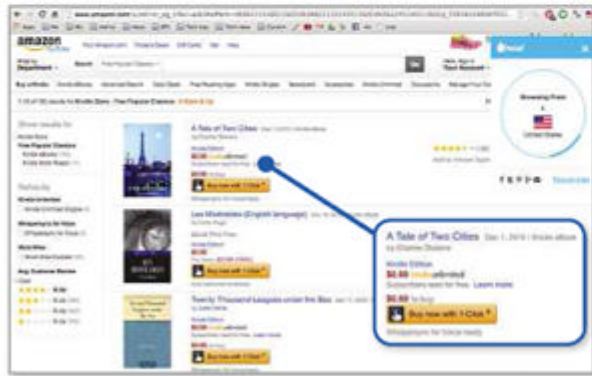
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browser it switches automatically to UK Amazon ([www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)), because it detects your UK IP address. But when you access it via Hola, you see the US site, including US ebooks and other downloadable content.

Once you're on US Amazon, go to the Kindle Store, then click 'Free & Cheap reads for Kindle' to browse and download free Kindle ebooks that aren't normally available in the UK. The selection has a US bias as you'd expect, but there are hundreds of titles to choose from,



Find free Kindle books on Amazon's US site

including Mark Twain's *On the Decay of the Art of Lying* and the full text of Barack Obama's inaugural speech. You'll need a Kindle account to download any books, just as on the UK site.

If you've got Amazon Prime membership, you'll also be able to access US films and TV on the US Amazon Instant Video site, which includes every single episode of *Downton Abbey*, *Deadwood* and *Rome*.

You may hit a snag if you try to download anything that needs paying for, because you'll be asked for a US billing address – and no proxy tool can invent that for you. Unless you can persuade a kind American friend to let you use their payment information (not a bad idea, actually), you'll need to use a virtual credit-card service like Entropay ([www.entropay.com](http://www.entropay.com)). We can't attest to its effectiveness, but it is safe and legal.

## Download apps and extensions from non-UK sites

Like Amazon, Google's Chrome Web Store defaults to its UK version when viewed from a UK IP address. As soon as the site loads, you'll see the '?hl=en-uk' suffix on the end of the URL, indicating that you're on a UK IP address whose default language is English.

You can switch to a different virtual location using the steps we've already described, but we've noticed that you can view a foreign version of the Web Store simply by changing its suffix; no VPN or proxy needed. For example, if you change the suffix to '?hl=en-us' and reload the page, you'll see US extensions that you won't find in the UK store. Try other two-character suffixes to visit other international versions of the site – for example, '?hl=de-de' takes you to the German site, and '?hl=fr-fr' takes you to the French site.

To browse Android apps in the US version of Google's Play Store, you'll need to use your location-switching extension. Go to the Play Store as usual (<https://>

## IS ALL THIS LEGAL?

VPNs and proxies don't break UK law *per se* – it's what you do with them that counts. You probably know that if you watch any BBC TV without a UK TV Licence you're breaking the law and stand to pay a hefty fine. So cough up for that licence ([www.tvlicensing.co.uk](http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk)) – whether you're watching on iPlayer or on a box in the corner of your living room.

Watching iPlayer programmes abroad is not prohibited under UK law, but it breaks the BBC's terms and conditions. The BBC's terms, and all the other restrictions we've mentioned in this feature, are a product of business agreements between content owners (for example, Warner Brothers, which owns the *Harry Potter* films) and content distributors (for example, Netflix, iTunes, Spotify, Amazon and YouTube), and they allow the distributors to, well, distribute. Content owners add restrictions (say, 'this content must only be shown in the US'), but they pass the enforcement buck to the distributor. That's why you see messages such as 'The uploader has not made this



You must have a UK TV Licence to watch BBC programmes, including on the iPlayer

video available in your country' on YouTube.

US content owners tend to sign contracts with US distributors first, which is why US Netflix gets films and TV shows months earlier than UK Netflix. The same goes for Region 1 (US) DVDs and US TV networks.

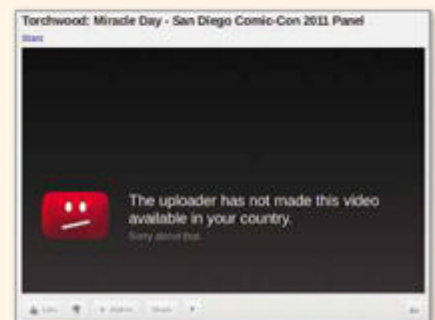
### WHEN PROXIES STOP WORKING

You won't go to prison for hacking your DVD player to play Region 1 DVDs, or for using a VPN to access US Netflix or Spotify (unless you make a profit out of doing so – the mixtape principle, we like to call it). But if a distributor catches lots of people using a VPN or proxy, it may tighten its barriers

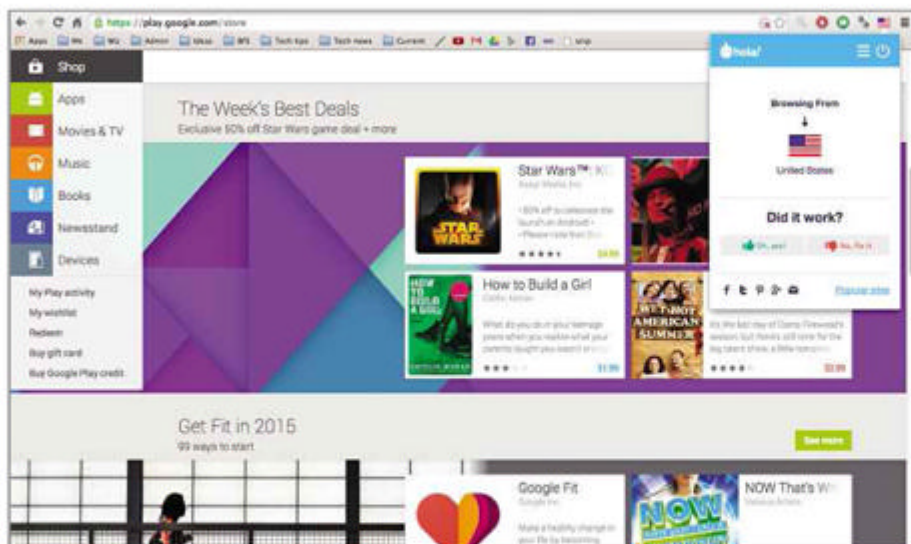
to stop the tool working.

The good news is that developers can tweak their barrier-busting tools to get around this. All they have to do is add a new IP address to get you back online or make the content accessible again. So if your proxy stops working one day, it'll probably be back in action the next.

We hope developers continue to stay one step ahead of the rules. But we feel very strongly that the internet should not be a nest of virtual barbed wire. Geo-blocking goes against the spirit of the world wide web. In any case, we strongly begrudge paying £5.99 a month to use Netflix, only to find that we can actually only watch a quarter of its content because we happen to live outside the US.



It's the content owner, not YouTube itself, that decides a video should be blocked



Browse foreign versions of the Google Play Store using your location-switching extension

[play.google.com/store](https://play.google.com/store)), click your Hola bookmarklet and click the US flag or choose another location. The page will reload with a huge choice of Android apps and other content you never knew existed (see screenshot above).

The catch is you'll be automatically signed out of your Google account when this happens, and you'll need to sign in again after the switch. We didn't realise this, and we were writing this feature online in Google Docs at the time. At first it looked as though we'd lost a good couple of pages' worth, but we quickly switched back to our usual UK IP address and nothing had been lost. Still, it got our heart beating faster.

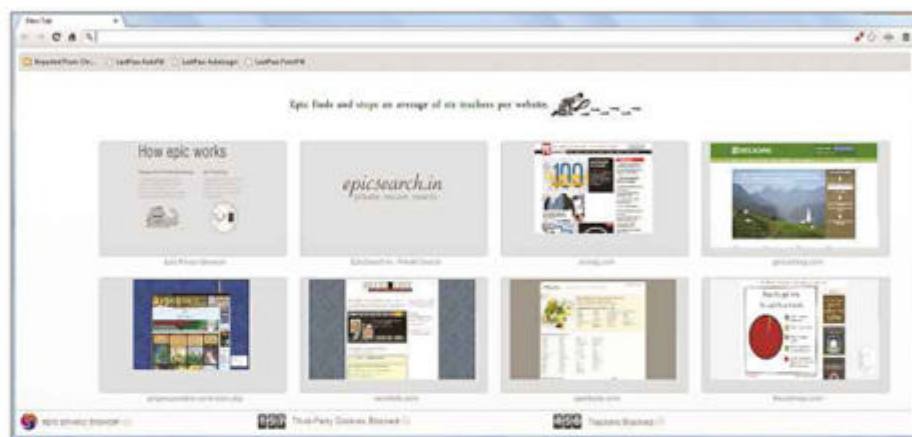
## Do all your browsing in a proxy

Location-switching tools are great for hopping in and out of servers now and then, but if you want to do all your browsing without tracking or geo-blocks, you'll need to install a proxy browser.

Epic Privacy Browser ([www.epicbrowser.com](http://www.epicbrowser.com)) is a free Chrome-style browser that lets you switch to an 'always-on' anonymous IP address for all your browsing. You can switch the proxy on or off with a single click at any time. Epic is based on the same Chromium software as Chrome, but its

privacy settings are much more strict. It automatically blocks adverts and cookies, bans extensions and clears your history and **cache** every time you close it.

Tor ([www.torproject.org](http://www.torproject.org)) is a free **open-source** program that gives you an even greater level of anonymity by cloaking everything you do in a proxy, offline as well as online. Tor has an air of illegality about it, because it has been abused to commit criminal activities such as online drug dealing and looking at images of child abuse ([www.snipca.com/14998](http://www.snipca.com/14998)). But Tor itself is not illegal - in fact it's also the ultimate line of defence against hackers and web restrictions.



Break down web barriers permanently by using Epic Privacy Browser

## WHY BREAKING THE RULES KEEPS YOU SAFE

Proxy and VPN services tend to promote themselves as security tools rather than rule-breakers. Hola is happy to shout about its naughty uses, but Anonymouse sells itself purely as a privacy tool ("Protect your privacy, protect your data, protect it for free," says its homepage) and the Firefox VPN extension ZenMate even includes the phrase 'Security & Privacy' in its full name. To get it, search for 'zenmate' in your Firefox Add-ons Manager.

Are they just pretending to be security tools so they won't get banned by the copyright police? Partly. But they're also justified in flagging up their security advantages, and we're surprised Hola doesn't make a bigger deal of it.

If you hide your location, websites can't track you - and neither can hackers. When you switch your IP address you effectively hide your identity, and even mask the fact that you're online at all. So if you have any residual feelings of guilt about using these tools to get around copyright licensing, remind yourself that it's all in the interests of personal security. **ca**

**NEXT ISSUE** On sale Wednesday 4 February

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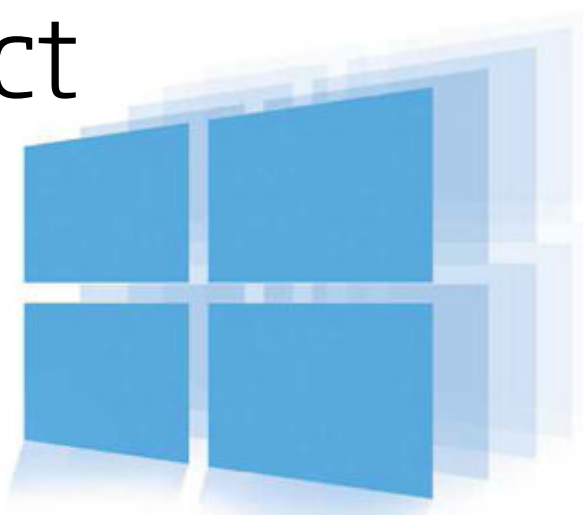
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## PART 1

# Build your perfect Windows 8 Start screen

In a series of guides to Windows 8 and 8.1, Jane Hoskyn shows you how to improve Microsoft's much-maligned operating system



### Step 1: Switch on, sign in

Let's start at the very beginning. Switch on your Windows 8 PC, or – if you're me – someone else's Windows 8 PC.

If you're a regular reader of my tech adventures, you'll know that once upon a time I had a Windows 8 hybrid (half laptop, half tablet; one-tenth as good as either), and that I winded it badly by shoving the Windows 10 Technical Preview straight into its guts, with no VirtualBox to protect it (see Issue 435, page 57).

I spent Christmas trying to rescue my hybrid by wiping it completely and re-installing Windows 8, then doing the Windows 8.1 upgrade/update shuffle (we'll come to that in a sec). This turned out to be as productive as fitting a Subaru engine in a gutted rust-bucket, so I'm now using the lovely office laptop instead.

Whatever machine you're using, if it's newly toolled-up with Windows 8/8.1, you may see a nudge to sign into your Microsoft account (formerly Windows Live ID). This account keeps your PC, laptop and other devices in sync, and lets you access your files securely in Facebook and Flickr as well as Microsoft's cloud service OneDrive. If you don't already have an account, you can create one at Microsoft's website (<https://signup.live.com>).

Alternatively, don't bother. At the dawn of Windows 8 you needed a Microsoft account to even get into your PC, but that's no longer the case. You don't need one to install Windows 8 apps, either. In fact you don't even need a Microsoft account to set up and use the Windows 8.1 Mail App (see Microsoft's own blog for details at [www.snipca.com/14884](http://www.snipca.com/14884)). Of course, you'll see seductive pop-ups tempting you to sign in or create an account, but you can safely ignore these, much like those iCloud account pop-ups



**Make the default Start screen even more useful than your Desktop**

that plague Mac computers (she growls, from experience).

### Step 2: Upgrade and update

If you've got a Windows 8 PC, the first thing you must do with it is upgrade it to Windows 8.1. Or do we mean update it to Windows 8.1? Microsoft doesn't seem sure which word to use, so here's a quick primer to clear things up.

Windows 8.1, which was released on 18 October 2013, is an upgrade (in other words, replacement) for Windows 8, which was released almost exactly a year earlier. It's what Windows 8 should have been right from the start, not least because it doesn't assume that everyone's got a touchscreen computer. It's free to anyone with Windows 8.

Until recently, you couldn't install Windows 8.1 from scratch – you needed Windows 8 first – so 8.1 felt more like an update than an upgrade. But it's technically a different operating system (OS), so it's an upgrade. You can now do a clean install of Windows 8.1 without installing Windows 8 first (it involves 'creating media', to use Microsoft's irritating terminology: [www.snipca.com/14886](http://www.snipca.com/14886)), as long as you buy a licence.

Now, the first thing you must do with

Windows 8.1 is update it via Windows Update, just like you update any other version of Windows. For more details, have a look at Microsoft's FAQ ([www.snipca.com/14887](http://www.snipca.com/14887)).

Incidentally, when we refer to 'Windows 8' as a minimum requirement for programs in Best Free Software (page 16), we mean Windows 8 *and* Windows 8.1 – because Windows 8.1 is basically a version of Windows 8. Elsewhere in the magazine, we tend to refer to 'Windows 8/8.1' for clarity. Sorry. It's confusing for us as well, but it's Microsoft's fault for not getting Windows 8 right in the first place.

### Step 3: Ditch your Desktop habit

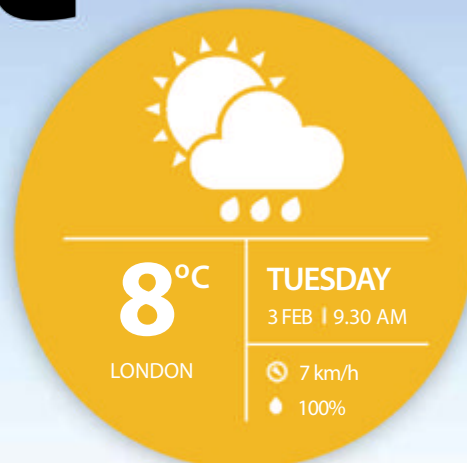
Windows 8 and 8.1 both boot to the Start screen by default, and you can toggle between the Start screen and Desktop by pressing the Windows button (or tapping the Windows icon, if you're using a tablet – though personally I think tablets are best left to Android and iOS).

Let's assume you're now using Windows 8.1 rather than Windows 8 (if not, please go back to Step 2 and try again). You can now boot straight to the Desktop instead of the Start screen if you want by going to 'Taskbar and Navigation' and ticking, you guessed it, 'go to the desktop instead of start'.

If you're that wedded to the Desktop, stick with Windows 7, but I genuinely think you'd be missing a trick. The Start screen is more versatile, more customisable and faster. Of course it looks different, and this unfamiliarity can be a stumbling block. Over the next few issues I'll show you how to turn your Start screen into such a great HQ for your PC that you'll see Windows 10's forthcoming Start menu as a step backwards. **ca**

# Forecast the weather with your PC

Your computer can do far more than just check for rain. Robert Zak finds the best free PC tools for predicting weather and even contributing to climate science



**B**ritain is a weather-obsessed country. Don't take our word for it – survey company Brandwatch found that a fifth of all the internet's weather-based comments are made by British people ([www.snipca.com/14949](http://www.snipca.com/14949)). When it comes to weather, we lead the world.

So why not get more actively involved in tracking and understanding our weather and climate? Using your PC, you can monitor global wind patterns in real time or trawl through historical records to see how the world's climate has changed in your lifetime. You can even play an important role in predicting meteorological patterns and contribute to international weather databases and climate studies.

Here, we reveal the best free tools for turning your PC into an interactive weather station.

## See the rain that's heading your way

Rather than relying on TV weather forecasts or trying to gauge which one of the hundreds of weather websites is the

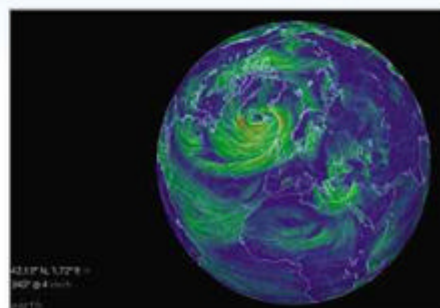


Track various weather conditions using Sat24's satellite-powered map

most accurate, you can now monitor and predict the weather yourself.

Go to the website Sat24 ([www.snipca.com/14927](http://www.snipca.com/14927)) to see a time-lapse view of the current weather above the UK (see screenshot above). You can view a range of weather conditions such as cloud banks, rain and lightning over the previous two-hour period.

The default map shows the weather across all of Europe, but click the dropdown menu where it says Europe on the left-hand side and select 'UK & Ireland' to see a more localised picture of the weather. At the bottom-right of the



See the world's wind patterns moving in real time using online tool Earth

map, click 'Set up my location' to add up to three specific areas where you want to monitor the weather.

The free online tool Earth ([www.snipca.com/14915](http://www.snipca.com/14915)) is more of a novelty than a weather-forecasting tool – but we love it. This interactive graphic globe (see screenshot above) displays wind currents around the world, so you can see what's heading your way. Watching the winds flow from one current to the next is mesmerising and gives you an overview on how these currents are all connected. To check out different parts of the world, click and drag the globe.

## TURN YOUR TABLET INTO A WEATHER STATION

With their array of sensors and GPS connectivity, smartphones and tablets are brilliant devices for tracking and reporting the weather. Some even have built-in barometers ([www.snipca.com/14921](http://www.snipca.com/14921)).

Free app WeatherSignal (Android [www.snipca.com/14918](http://www.snipca.com/14918); iOS [www.snipca.com/14919](http://www.snipca.com/14919)) takes advantage of these features by logging the weather conditions where you are, then submitting the data to its crowd-sourced weather map. So you not only get your own barometer, but also contribute valuable weather

data to the scientific community.

To view detailed weather information such as winds, pressure and humidity, it's worth forking out £1.99 for WeatherGeek Pro 2 ([www.snipca.com/14922](http://www.snipca.com/14922), iOS only). The app gives you access to the same numerical weather models used by professional meteorologists, including the European ECMWF Model ([www.ecmwf.int](http://www.ecmwf.int)). You can draw or write notes on the animated maps with your finger, and they look fantastic on the iPad's Retina Display.



Use your tablet to help create a huge crowd-sourced weather map with WeatherSignal





## Forecast weather on your PC

### Be part of a forecasting supercomputer

The Climate Prediction project ([www.climateprediction.net](http://www.climateprediction.net)) harnesses the power of people's home PCs to predict the weather of the future.

The project, run by Oxford University, relies on the processing power of thousands of volunteers' computers to carry out complex calculations that help predict changes in the global climate.

To get involved, you first need to download and install the free **open-source** program BOINC (Berkeley Open Infrastructure for Network Computing) from [www.snipca.com/14936](http://www.snipca.com/14936). This tool lets you contribute to science projects like SETI (the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence, [www.snipca.com/14937](http://www.snipca.com/14937)) and the medical initiative Rosetta ([www.snipca.com/14938](http://www.snipca.com/14938)) as well as the Climate Prediction project. After installing BOINC on your computer, you can connect it to as many of these projects as you like, committing a small portion of your PC's processing power to each one. You can find instructions on setting up and using BOINC at [www.snipca.com/14917](http://www.snipca.com/14917).

BOINC runs quietly in the background, and you shouldn't notice any impact on your PC. Its creators recommend installing it in a **partition** or in a **virtual PC** such as VirtualBox (available free from BOINC's download page), but you don't have to.

To see the progress of the tasks you've assigned your PC, open BOINC, click View, Advanced View, then click the Tasks tab. As well as listing its projects, BOINC also visualises your PC's calculations on a globe. To see this, go to the Tasks tab, click 'climateprediction.net' in the list, then 'Show graphics'. You'll see an image of the Earth (see screenshot above right) showing the climate conditions worked out so far by your PC, and based on the data provided by Climate Prediction.

You can even set this globe as your screensaver. Right-click your Desktop, click Personalize, then Screen Saver at the



Use your PC to help the Climate Prediction project forecast the weather of the future

bottom right. In the new window, click the 'Screen saver' dropdown menu and select BOINC.

### Monitor historical weather patterns

Were your childhood summers really sunnier and the winters more snowy? Put your rose-tinted memory to the test by checking what the weather really was like at specific times since the dawn of the 20th century.

The UK Met Office ([www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)) has a vast database of records on the UK climate, including average temperatures, extreme weather events and anomalies. The site's monthly climate anomaly records ([www.snipca.com/14932](http://www.snipca.com/14932)) date back to 1919, so you can check the weather in the month and year you were born and see how it compares with today. The page also features summaries of UK climate by region and national weather extremes in the UK.

The Met Office's 'Past weather events' records ([www.snipca.com/14933](http://www.snipca.com/14933)) only go back as far as 1990, but they're still fascinating. Click a year to discover the

most significant UK weather events in that year, including storms, floods and record temperatures – for example temperatures in August 1990 reached over 35 degrees Celsius in many parts of the UK. All the records are free to access.

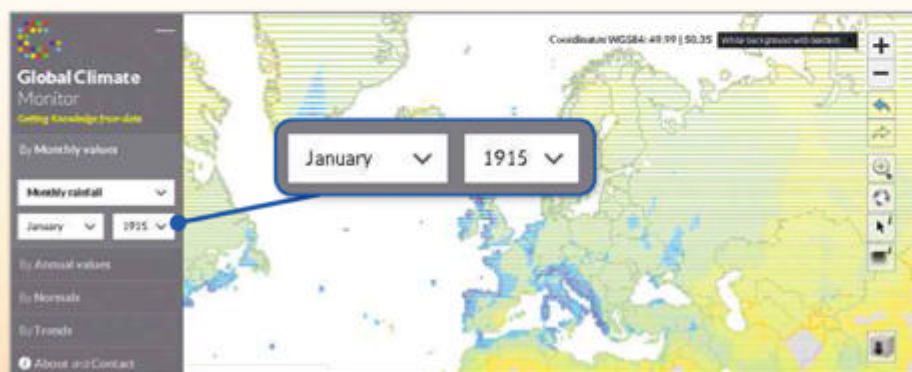
For a world-wide perspective, use the free Global Climate Monitor site ([www.globalclimatemonitor.org](http://www.globalclimatemonitor.org)) to analyse global monthly temperatures and rainfall, dating all the way back to January 1901. Everything is presented in a clear, colour-coded map, so you can see which parts of the world have warmed (and cooled) the most since the start of the 20th century (see screenshot below left).

### Watch weather webcams around the world

Do you ever torture yourself by checking the weather in warmer parts of the world while we're in the middle of winter? If so, you should bookmark websites that show weather-monitoring webcam footage uploaded by people all over the world.

The best of these is Weather Underground's Weather Webcams Directory ([www.snipca.com/14909](http://www.snipca.com/14909)). The site features nearly 20,000 webcams that can be viewed by anyone for free.

Some feeds are displayed as pictures that are updated every 15 minutes, others are time-lapses, and there are even live video streams. In the right-hand pane of the site you'll see an option to set up your own webcam to stream weather footage to the world, so other people can get a taste of our gloriously unpredictable British weather. **ca**



Compare today's weather with that of a century ago using the Global Climate Monitor

# Find your lost serial numbers

Without your software serial numbers, you can't re-install the programs you paid for – including Windows. Jane Hoskyn reveals free tools for finding lost licences

**H**ave you written down the serial numbers, licence codes and product keys for every program you've ever paid for, and filed them all in a safe place? No? We haven't, either.

Serial numbers are boring until you need them. They're certainly not as interesting as technical specifications such as your **processor's** speed and your hard drive's **cache** size, which we showed you how to discover in Issue 422 using free tools such as Speccy ([www.piriform.com/speccy](http://www.piriform.com/speccy)) and the Windows Upgrade Assistant website ([www.snipca.com/14911](http://www.snipca.com/14911)).

But as fascinating as those 'tech specs' are, they're far less useful than serial numbers in a crisis. If you ever need to wipe your PC, you won't care about the speed of your processor – you'll want the licence details for all those programs you paid for, including your operating system (OS). Or the programs will be lost forever.

Here we reveal the best free tools, including a couple of notable newcomers, for digging up the serial numbers you (and we) never got round to writing down.

## Find your paid programs' serial numbers

One of the free tools we mentioned in Issue 422 was Belarc Advisor ([www.snipca.com/14906](http://www.snipca.com/14906)), which is even more adept at revealing your installed programs' serial numbers than it is at



Discover your installed programs' serial numbers in minutes using Belarc Advisor

profiling your PC specs.

When we ran the Advisor on our PC, it quickly found several serial numbers we assumed we'd lost, including those for Kaspersky antivirus, Microsoft Office and Adobe Photoshop Elements. Belarc even listed its own serial number, despite the fact it's a free program.

Unlike the other tools we'll mention here, Belarc Advisor needs to be installed before you run it. Click the red, white and blue 'Click Here To Download... Belarc Advisor' box, run the installer, then click OK to dismiss the pop-up advertising Belarc's new Android security app ([www.snipca.com/14907](http://www.snipca.com/14907)). There's no adware to opt out of. Click Yes to check for new **security definitions**, then click

OK to scan your PC for serial numbers and specifications. This should only take a couple of minutes.

When the scan is done, the results open automatically in your web browser. Click Software Licenses on the left to skip straight to your serial numbers.

No information is sent to a **server** – it's stored in your browser for your eyes only, which is why you won't see 'http' or even 'https' in the address bar. You can save the page in your browser bookmarks or as a PDF for quick access later on, but ideally you should run the tool again whenever you need an accurate, up-to-date profile of your PC and its software.

## Recover serial numbers from old PCs

New program LicenseCrawler (free from [www.snipca.com/14889](http://www.snipca.com/14889)) also scans your PC for serial numbers, but it's a portable program, so you can run it from a USB stick on any PC. This makes it ideal for recovering licences from old computers (Windows 95 or later), including those that can't or won't connect to the internet, or from the PC of a friend who has no idea what a software licence is, let alone where to find one.

You have to download LicenseCrawler from one of the **mirror sites** listed on its download page; we chose FreewareFiles ([www.snipca.com/14891](http://www.snipca.com/14891)). FreewareFiles is a useful site, but we'd strongly recommend using an advert-blocking

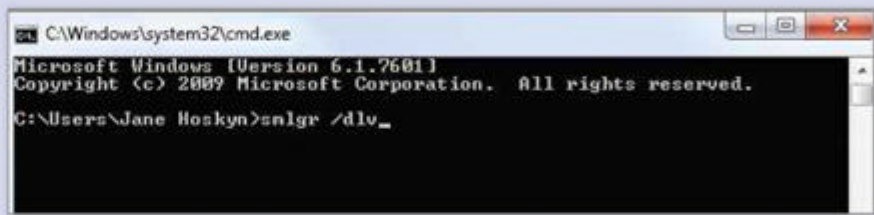


## WHEN TO LOSE YOUR KEYS ON PURPOSE

As you can see, it's easy to recover serial numbers from a new or old PC. Bear that in mind next time you're thinking of selling an old laptop on eBay. Its next owner can use your licensing leftovers to re-install your bought software – which, in turn, prevents you installing it on your new PC.

Don't just find your serial numbers in the Registry and delete them. Paid software has to be 'deactivated' before you can re-install it somewhere else. You can find specific deactivation guidelines on the software maker's website; you'll need your serial number to complete the process.

The most important program to deactivate is your Windows OS. To do this,



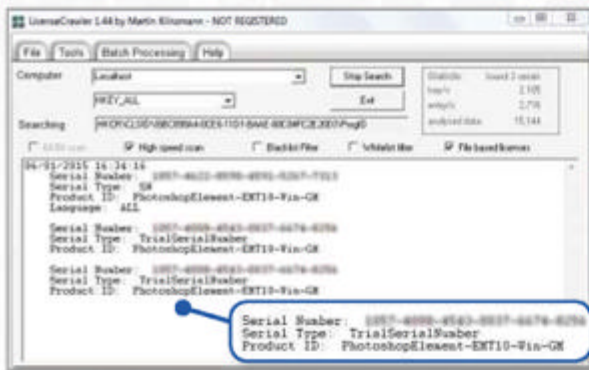
Type this command to get your Windows Activation ID

'uninstall' your Windows product key via the command line. Open the Command Prompt as an administrator, type **slmgr /dlv** (see screenshot) and press Enter. Make a note of the Activation ID. Actually, make a note of everything you see, and save it to an external hard drive.

Back in Command Prompt, type

**slmgr /upk**, followed by another space, followed by your Activation ID, then press Enter to see a confirmation pop-up.

Besides depriving the PC's next owner of a freebie, uninstalling your product key means you can use it again, for example by installing your old OS in a **partition** or **virtual PC** on your new computer.



Generate a text file of any PC's paid software licences using LicenseCrawler

extension such as Adblock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org>) to get rid of adverts disguised as Download buttons.

Sadly, the ads don't stop there. When we ran LicenseCrawler and clicked Start Search, we saw a series of pop-ups advertising other programs. It almost made us drop LicenseCrawler from this feature. But the pop-ups quickly vanished without leaving any adware behind, and once the program got down to work it was extremely efficient.

You can see which section of the Registry LicenseCrawler is scanning at any time, and all retrieved serial numbers are displayed in plain text in the program window. Click Stop Search once you've found the number you need, or let the scan complete. If you're planning to wipe and restore the PC, make sure you save

your retrieved info on an external hard drive or USB for safekeeping.

A couple more tips: ignore the 'you must register' warnings – the program is free for unlimited personal use – and don't be put off by the captcha-style requirement to click a number when you run it. The developer is over-cautious, but not malicious.

### Instantly see your Windows product key

Microsoft calls your OS serial number the 'Windows product key', with confusing consequences. If you search Google for 'Windows key' you'll get loads of results about your keyboard's Windows button.

New program WinKeyFinder (free from [www.snipca.com/14897](http://www.snipca.com/14897)) calls them 'CD

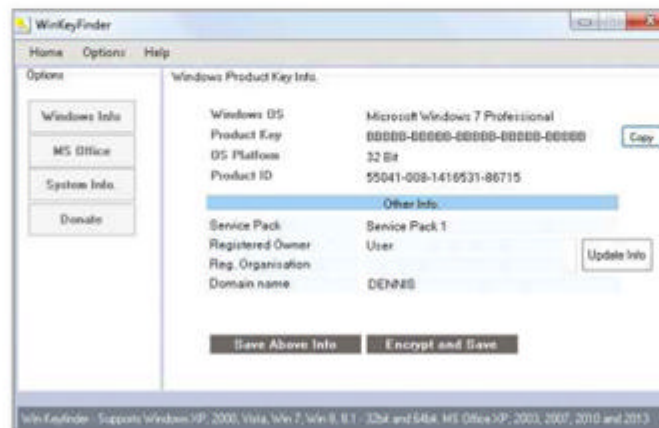
keys' instead, which either clears up or adds to the confusion (we haven't decided). What matters is that it's really easy to use – much quicker and simpler than the tools we've mentioned so far – and doesn't need installing.

Run the program on any PC (Windows 98 and later) to instantly see its Windows and Office product keys. From the program window you can copy and print your keys with one click; encrypt them so no-one else can see them; and change the Windows registration details stored on your PC. Keep these details safe, ideally away from your PC, because you'll need them if you ever re-install your OS.

The stable release of WinKeyFinder works on Windows 7 and earlier, and the latest **beta** on Windows 8/8.1. But, unusually for a new program, WinKeyFinder works best on Windows XP, where it lets you change your Windows and Office product keys with one click.

Why would you want to do that? You may have to. If you discover that your current version of XP or Office 2000 is pirated or illegal, you can use WinKeyFinder to change the dodgy key to a new, legal one without having to reinstall Windows. The process involves an automated Registry tweak, so create a system **restore point** first (see our Workshop on page 35).

You can also change your product key in Windows 7 or Vista, but you'll need to do it manually – the WinKeyFinder website reveals how ([www.snipca.com/14903](http://www.snipca.com/14903)). **ca**



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# Problems Solved

## PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

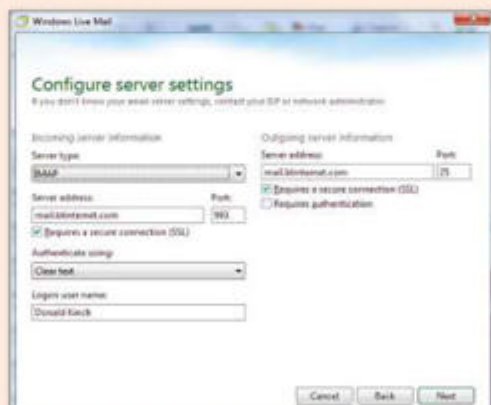
### Do I have to use BT Mail?

**Q** I used to be relatively happy with my BT Yahoo email service, but its replacement, BT Mail, causes me intense irritation. When I type 'My BT' the webpage that appears is busier than a beehive. Invariably the Email button is off the edge of the screen, so I have to change the size of my browser window. The need to sign in each time with my username and password is particularly time-consuming, and the search for Delete and other important options causes me no end of headaches. At 85, I'm seeking an easier solution. On one of my two computers I use Outlook Express and I love its user-friendly feel, but I believe it's a relatively costly program. Why did BT make this change? If I were to change email programs, would I be required to change my long-held email address? Would my ISP still be BT? Would BT tolerate a change of this nature and still process my emails? How would I do it? I'd appreciate your advice.

Donald Kinch

**A** BT's switch from Yahoo as a mail provider began after the latter firm's email service was subject to hack attacks that targeted BT customers. The replacement, BT Mail is managed by BT directly, giving the company more control over security. The switching process was rolled out to customers over several months, which is why you've been forced to make this change now. There isn't any way back to the BT Yahoo Mail service. You could sign up for a new Yahoo Mail account at <https://login.yahoo.com>, but that would mean using a new (Yahoo) email address instead of (or in addition to) your BT one.

However, you've indicated that you want to keep your BT email address but



If you want to change webmail programs but keep your current address, try Windows Live Mail

use it with a different email program. As long as you keep paying BT for its broadband and email services, you can indeed do this. You can't use Outlook Express in Windows 7 or 8/8.1, though Microsoft does offer a free alternative called Windows Live Mail (WLM) – a free download from [www.snipca.com/14556](http://www.snipca.com/14556).

With this installed, adding your BT email account is pretty straightforward. Click the down arrow at the top left to open the menu, point your cursor to Options, and then click 'Email accounts'. Next, click Add, followed by Email Account and then Next. Type your BT email address and tick both the 'Make this my default email account' and 'Manually configure server settings' boxes. Click Next.

Now choose IMAP as the server type then type [mail.btinternet.com](http://mail.btinternet.com) into both 'Server address' boxes and tick both 'Requires a secure connection (SSL)' boxes. Click Next to add the account – and that should be it. If you struggle with any of these details, visit BT's help page at [www.snipca.com/14557](http://www.snipca.com/14557) for more guidance.

Incidentally, you suggest you're still using Outlook Express on an old PC. These same tips would work in that program. Just select Accounts from the Tools menu and then click Add, followed by Mail.

### How can I test my computer's security?

**Q** Is there any easy way to test a computer's security? I am particularly concerned because I work for a national charity and it would be disastrous for me if I lost any information from my PC.

John Fisher

**A** Your employer is a national charity, so we'd hope and assume that your IT department has installed good security software on your computer. If you're worried that it hasn't then you might want to have a quiet word with someone in authority, because it sounds like a disaster waiting to happen. Regardless, there are a couple of easy checks you can carry out to see how your computer would respond to an attack, without actually putting it or your organisation's data at risk.

Open a web browser and visit the ShieldsUP website, at [www.grc.com/shieldsup](http://www.grc.com/shieldsup). This website examines your computer's online profile and defences, revealing what it can discover about you and any security holes it comes across. Read the warnings then click Proceed followed by the GRC's Instant UPnP Exposure Test button. The tests are safe and no personal data will be at risk, but if you get anything other than a 'good news' result, you need to take action – and the site will advise accordingly.

You could also attempt to download the fake (but safe) Eicar test virus to gauge your security software's response. Visit [www.snipca.com/14628](http://www.snipca.com/14628) and then click to download one of the test files, though be warned that not all anti-virus tools will flag Eicar because they know it to be a test virus and will thus ignore it.

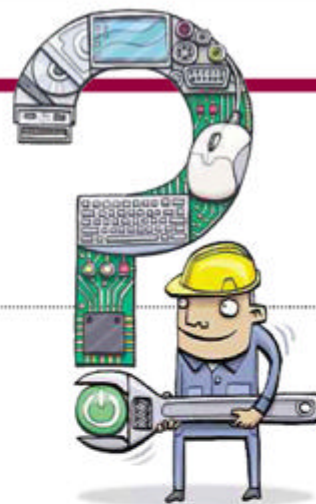


Run the tests on the website ShieldsUP to check the strength of your PC's defences



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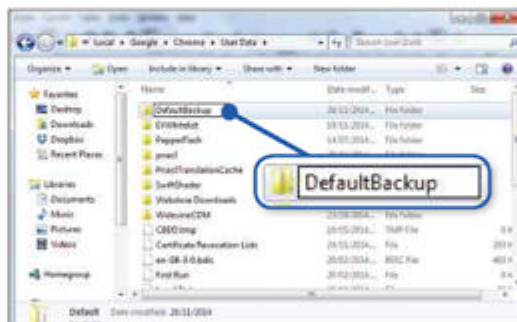


## Why has Chrome stopped web pages?

**Q** I have used the Chrome web browser for many years without any bother. Recently, though, it has simply stopped working. It will launch but when I try to visit websites, they will not load. Following advice on various internet forums I tried disabling my Chrome extensions, but that did no good. Eventually, I reinstalled Chrome, but the same thing happens – no web pages load. Adding to the mystery, if I select Settings or About in Chrome's menu, both those tabs load okay. My internet connection is definitely working because both Firefox and Internet Explorer still load web pages, but I don't really want to use either of those. Do you have any bright ideas?

Alex Tickell

**A** This can happen when your Chrome user profile becomes corrupted, perhaps because of a 'bad' exit (maybe you switched off the PC with a Chrome session still open?). Surprisingly, reinstalling Chrome won't fix this problem, as the browser does not



**If your Chrome browser stops loading web pages remove your existing Chrome profile via Explorer**

overwrite the existing profile.

The answer is to create a new user profile. You didn't tell us which version of Windows you're using, but the process is similar for all. First, close Chrome and then press Windows key+E to launch Windows Explorer (or File Explorer in Windows 8/8.1). In Explorer, click the top bar and (assuming you're using a recent version of Windows) type `%localappdata%\Google\Chrome\User Data\` and press Enter. If you use XP, type `%userprofile%\Local Settings\Application Data\Google\Chrome\User Data\` and

press Enter.

Next, click the folder called Default, then press F2 to rename it and type a new name, such as 'DefaultBackup' (see screenshot). Launch Chrome and a new default browser will be created, and web pages should once again load.

Obviously the newly created user profile will lack any of your customisations or previous bookmarks. We recommend accepting this state of affairs because it's impossible to know what aspect of your old profile has caused the problem. However, transferring old bookmarks should be safe.

To do this, use Windows Explorer to open the DefaultBackup folder created earlier and then copy the file called Bookmarks.bak to the new Default folder. Finally, open the Default folder, click to select Bookmarks.bak then press F2 to rename it and delete the '.bak' part.

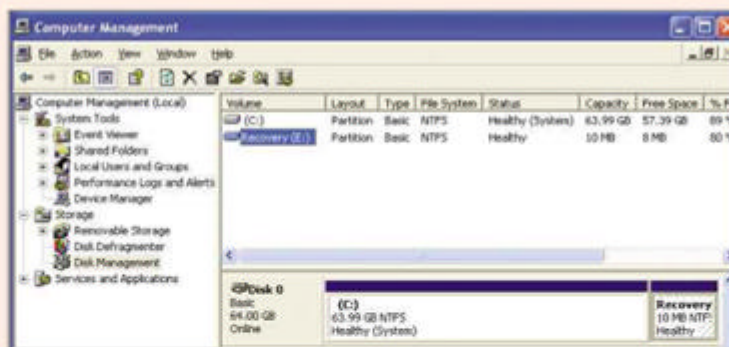
## How do I restore my computer to factory condition?

**Q** Is it possible to restore my Windows XP laptop to its default factory settings? Is there a piece of software I can download to do this? My laptop is quite old and getting slow. I'm not bothered about keeping anything that's currently on it – I just want to start afresh.

Robert Greaves

**A** From your current position there are two ways to do this: make use of the manufacturer's recovery partition (if one exists) or perform a 'clean' install using a Windows XP installation disc.

To check if your laptop contains a



**Before resetting your laptop to factory settings, check that it has a recovery partition via My Computer**

recovery partition, click Start then right-click My Computer and choose Manage. Now click to expand the Storage section, click Disk Management then look in the right-hand pane for a partition labelled Recovery (see screenshot). If one exists, restart your PC and look for a message telling you which key to press to enter recovery mode (usually F12) and then follow the displayed instructions.

Alternatively, if you have a Windows XP installation disc, start up your computer

with it in the disc drive and then, when prompted, press a key to boot from it. When the blue setup screen appears, press Enter, choose the laptop's main hard drive (almost certainly C:), press Enter, then follow the prompts to install Windows afresh.

Later, you could use the free nLite tool ([www.nliteos.com](http://www.nliteos.com)) to create a 'slipstreamed' version of XP that contains all available Windows updates, making it easier to refresh your laptop in future.

# Problems Solved

## Why am I getting these failure messages?

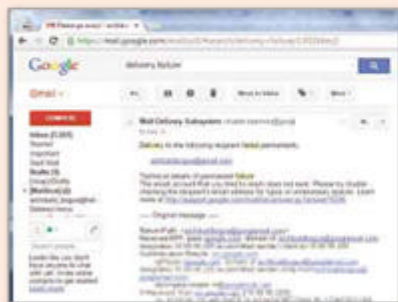
**Q** I use TalkTalk webmail for emailing, which is great. Recently, though, I've had numerous messages in my inbox notifying me that delivery of emails from me have failed. These are not emails that I have sent (and I have never heard of the sites mentioned). Is this some kind of scam?

Nick Rowlands

**A** This probably isn't a scam. Rather, some miscreant has 'spoofed' your email address, so that they can send out junk emails that'll get past filters that would otherwise block messages from known spammers.

As is their modus operandi, spammers send their junk emails to a vast list of email addresses. However, not all of those email addresses will be valid, so the receiving mail provider will respond with a failure notice – and because your email address is the 'sender', it is to your inbox that they arrive.

Unfortunately, there's really nothing you can do about it, other than ignoring (or deleting) the failure messages. If it really bothers you, you could set up a rule to move or delete messages with 'failure' in the Subject (click Settings followed by Mail then click Add in the Filters section). However, we'd suggest just sitting tight, as you'll probably receive a wave of these failure notices and then nothing, as the spammer responsible moves on to the next spoofed address.



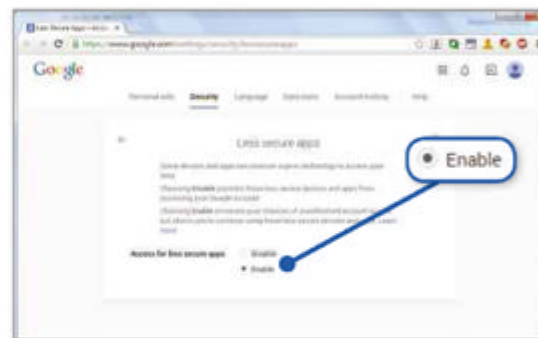
Strange email delivery failure notices may mean your email address has been spoofed

## Is it safe to use Windows Live Mail 2011?

**Q** I have a Gmail account, but I prefer to keep my contacts, compose my outgoing emails and save incoming messages on my own PC. I use Windows Live Mail 2011 for this purpose. However, Google has recently blocked me from using Windows Live Mail to access my Gmail account, saying that I would need to agree to allow "less secure apps" to access my account – but Google also says doing may constitute a security risk. Is it unsafe to continue using Windows Live Mail and, if so, can you suggest a secure alternative that would be acceptable to Google?

Michael Sharp

**A** Google has taken the decision to prevent some older programs from connecting to its servers, which is why you're seeing this message. Microsoft does still issue security updates for Windows Live Mail (WLM) 2011, so it should be still safe to use, but this is really a moot point, because it is Google's

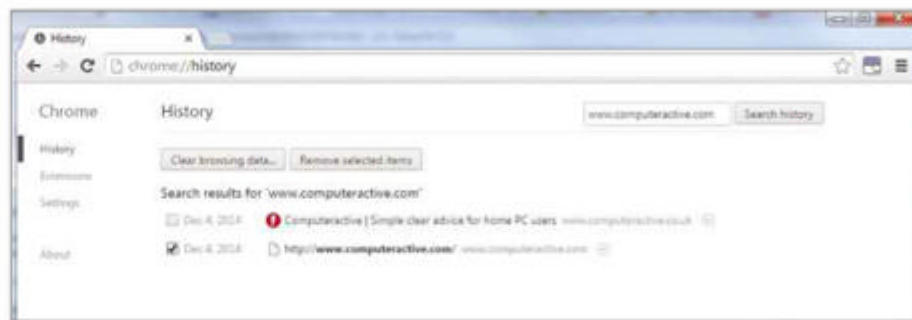


Enable your Google account to work with older tools via your security settings

decision to block it by default.

You can continue as before at your own risk, by enabling your account to work with older tools. Google doesn't recommend this because at some point WLM 2011 (or some other program you use to connect to Google services) will become unsafe to use. If you wish to proceed, go to [www.snipca.com/14631](http://www.snipca.com/14631), log into your Google account and select Enable (see screenshot above). Alternatively, download WLM 2012 ([www.snipca.com/14632](http://www.snipca.com/14632)) as Google does not currently block this.

## Is it possible to delete Chrome's auto suggestions?



Remove erroneous suggestions from Chrome's search history via the menu button

**Q** I sometimes make use of Chrome's address-bar auto suggestions, by clicking one or clicking the arrow keys then Enter. Among the useful suggestions are some that are mis-typed or incorrect destinations, which are my own past mistakes. I'd like to root these out. I followed one of your tips to clear all browsing data and, while this worked, it wiped all the suggestions. I've now built up a new bunch of errors. Is there a way to remove them individually?

Janice King

**A** Yes, you can do this. In Chrome, click the menu button (three stacked lines at the top right) and choose History. Now either scroll through the history list to look for the offending items or, probably quicker, type a matching search term into the box at the top and click 'Search history'. Next, tick the boxes next to the items you want to remove then click 'Remove selected items'. Finally, click Remove to confirm your choices.



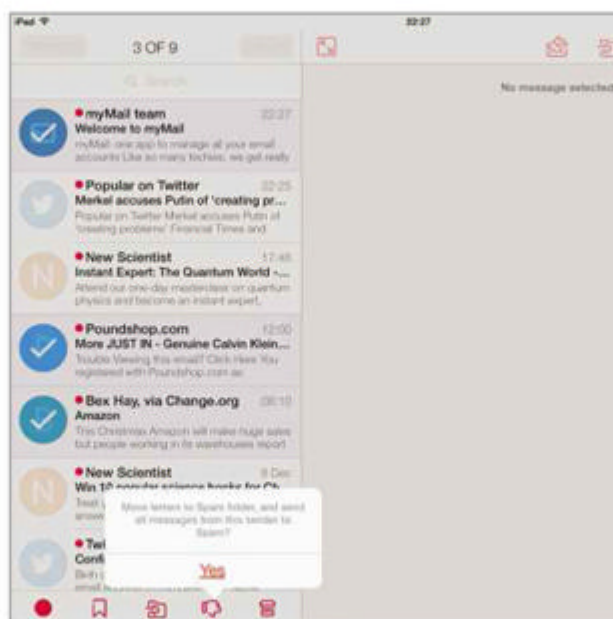
## How do I block spam on my iPad?

**Q** Every day I receive spam emails on my iPad, usually from the United States. These emails often include an unsubscribe link, but instead of clicking this, I move them to the Junk folder. My Windows 7 computer blocks subsequent messages from that sender automatically, so I'm wondering if there's any way of having the iPad block them also?

David Thornton

**A** The iOS Mail app (which is the default email tool for both iPads and iPhones) lacks spam-filtering capabilities – it's as simple as that.

You describe a Junk folder, so we're guessing you're synchronising your email via a mail provider that offers the **IMAP** protocol. This means any folders you've set up on your desktop computer are



Download the free myMail app to your iPad from the App Store if you want an email app that filters spam

mirrored on other devices. We're also guessing that your email provider doesn't offer spam filtering at server level, meaning your Windows 7 computer does

this in an email program such as Windows Live Mail – and it's this that creates the Junk folder that's been mirrored to your iPad.

However, as explained, the iOS Mail app has no way to detect and filter spam, so when new junk messages arrive they sit in the inbox until you move them manually. Until Apple sees fit to equip Mail with spam-filtering options, you'll have to put up with this or install and use an alternative email app that has built-in spam filtering. The App Store is awash with choice but we'd suggest trying

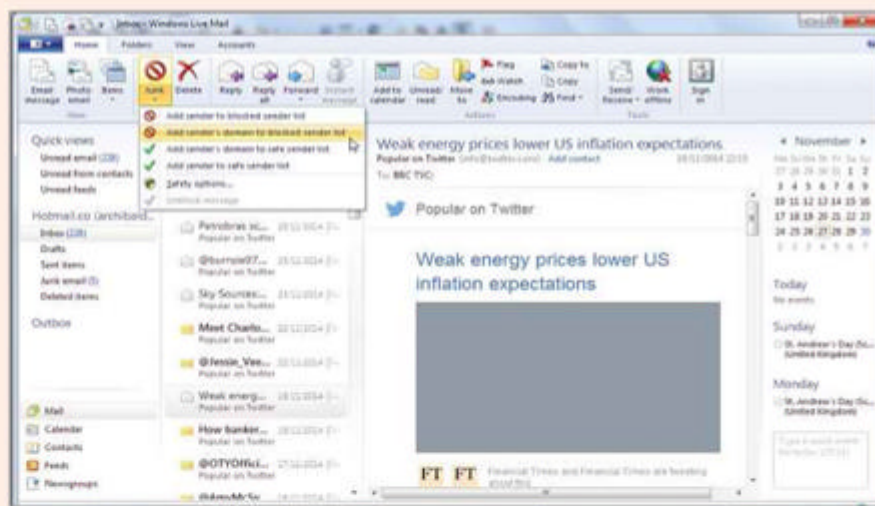
myMail app, which is a free download from [www.snipca.com/14615](http://www.snipca.com/14615). Select the relevant emails, then tap the down-pointing thumb and tap Yes to confirm.

## How do I unsubscribe from this unwanted mailing list?

**Q** I keep receiving emails from a company called Nova Development, which I no longer require. I click the 'unsubscribe' link and each time they acknowledge this and say that they will comply with my request. However, the only action they've taken is to increase the volume of emails they send to me. They give an email address and although I've used three variations of this to complain they have all been "not delivered". I would be most grateful if you could advise me how to get these unwanted emails stopped once and for all.

R J Thompson

**A** Clicking unsubscribe links is a bit like playing Russian roulette, because it often results in yet more spam – as in your case. This is because unscrupulous operators use these clicked links as



Stop receiving unwanted mailing-list emails by blocking the sender's domain

confirmation that a given email address is valid and working.

Now, while we cannot suggest that this is intentional behaviour on Nova Development's behalf, or that the company is acting unscrupulously, it certainly sounds like its unsubscribe mechanism isn't working. As you've tried to contact the firm without success, we'd suggest forgetting about trying to get your name removed from its mailing list.

Instead, use the tools built into your

email software to mark these messages as spam, and soon enough they'll stop appearing in your inbox. You didn't tell us which tool you use but most have a spam-blocking facility of some description. In Microsoft's Windows Live Mail, for example, first click one of the emails in your Inbox, then click the down arrow on the Junk button at the top. To block all messages from Nova Developments, choose 'Add sender's domain to blocked sender list' (see screenshot above).

# Problems Solved

## How do I wipe my Tesco Hudl?

**Q** I want to sell my Tesco Hudl. Is there any way to wipe everything from it before I do this?

Sylvia Tollfree

**A** Yes. First switch off the device by holding down the physical power button and then, when the menu appears on screen, tap 'Power off' followed by OK to confirm. Wait a few seconds until you're sure the Hudl is off.

The next step requires a little dexterity with your fingers: hold down the physical power button while at the same time holding down the volume-up button. You'll need to keep both buttons pressed for several seconds. The 'Android system recovery' menu will appear, at which point you should release both buttons. Your Hudl's touchscreen is disabled in this mode, so instead use the volume-down button to move down to select the 'wipe data/factory reset' option and then push the physical power button to confirm (see screenshots right).

Your Hudl will now spend around 10 minutes wiping its memory and resetting itself. When the 'Android system recovery' menu reappears, choose the 'Reboot system now' option and once more press down the physical power button to select it.

This is the end of the job but, as Hudl is an Android device, there is a small risk that some personal data might remain somewhere in the device's memory chips. Indeed, Tesco itself warns customers about this risk and recommends taking further steps if you're planning to sell the device (as you are).

We stress that the risk is small, and with its advice Tesco is really just covering its back. However, if you are paranoid about security then we'd suggest transferring a load of dummy data to your device to completely fill its memory, which will ensure that any remnants of your own data are overwritten. Now repeat the above steps from the top.



Clear all your data from your Hudl tablet via Android System Recovery

## What is this huge file on my Samsung Galaxy S5?

**Q** I have a Galaxy S5 Phone, which is wonderful except for one problem: there is a thumbnails file taking up 4.65GB of my device storage! I've deleted it lots of times, but it always comes back the next day. I have a large amount of music and home videos stored on the microSD card – are they something to do with the problem? If so, how do I tell the phone not to keep making thumbnails from these videos? What is the purpose of it doing so in the first place?

Anne Couch

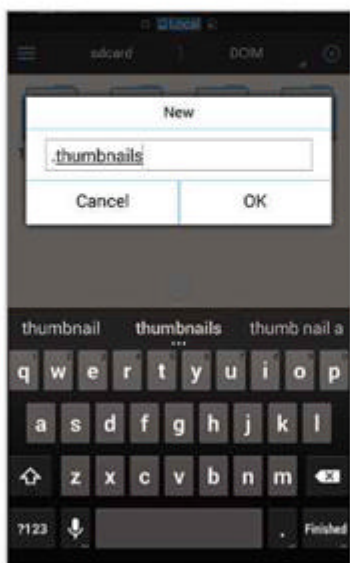
**A** This file is not unique to Samsung devices:

it is created by Android when you use tools like Gallery that synchronise with online services, such as Google Photos. Basically, these thumbnails are **cached** versions of your full-size images, which speeds up operation. But if you have a lot of photos you'll end up with a giant thumbnails file, as in your case.

Unfortunately, there's no way to manage how much space this file uses and, as you've discovered, deleting it is only a temporary measure, as apps or services that make use of it will soon enough

rebuild the thumbnails file.

A workaround is to delete the file then create a new, blank file with the same name (usually '.thumbnails') and in the same location (usually the DCIM folder). This will prevent any app or service from rebuilding the file. To create a dummy file, download the free ES File Explorer app from [www.snipca.com/14605](http://www.snipca.com/14605), navigate to the DCIM folder, tap New, type **.thumbnails** then tap OK.



Replace your .thumbnails file on your phone with a blank file to save space on your device

### NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE  
4 Feb

- Can I reset a Windows 7 password?
- Where are my missing Control Panel items?
- Why won't my Bluetooth work? ...And many more

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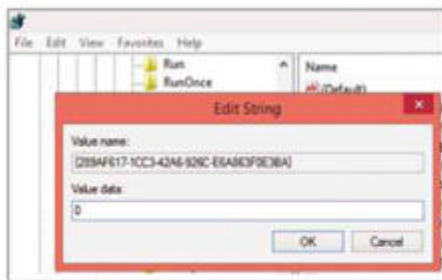
# File Explorer

Prevent crashes, see photo thumbnails and restore your Desktop

### File Explorer keeps crashing

If you recently upgraded from Windows 7 to Windows 8 (or 8.1) on your PC, and File Explorer keeps crashing, it may be caused by a leftover Registry file from Windows 7.

You can track down and disable the file using Windows' built-in Registry Editor, which you can open by typing **regedit** into Start and pressing Enter. Go to the root key **HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE**, then navigate through this series of folders: SOFTWARE, Microsoft, Windows, CurrentVersion, Shell Extensions, Approved. If you see the Registry value {289AF617-1CC3-42A6-926C-E6A863F0E3BA} in the right-hand pane, that's your rogue Windows 7 file. To disable it, double-click it to open the Edit String window (see screenshot below), then enter '0' (zero) in the 'Value data' box and click OK. You'll need to restart your PC for the edit to take effect.



Disable a leftover Windows 7 Registry file to stop File Explorer crashing

### Your Desktop is blank

File Explorer, like Windows Explorer before it, is more than just a window for navigating to your files and folders. It's also responsible for making items on your Desktop, such as the Taskbar and shortcut icons, appear on your screen. If Windows 8 starts up with an empty Desktop, then it's usually because a third-party program is conflicting with File Explorer.

You can resolve this by using Windows' built-in tool System File Checker to automatically find and fix Registry errors.

On your blank screen, press Windows Key+R to open the Run command, type **cmd**, then press Enter to open the Command Prompt. Type **sfc /scannow** and press Enter to run System File Checker. Once it's finished scanning, reboot your PC.

### The Navigation pane is missing

The list of Libraries and drives on the left-hand side of File Explorer is called the 'Navigation pane' and it's crucial for quickly accessing folders in different areas of your hard drive. As with your Desktop, your Navigation pane can disappear if there's a conflict with a third-party program you've installed, usually because the program has accidentally disrupted Explorer's default viewing options.

You can fix this quickly by clicking View in File Explorer, then 'Navigation pane' at the far left and making sure that 'Navigation pane' is ticked. If it's ticked but the pane still doesn't appear, there may be a problem with the File Explorer Registry, and you'll need to run System File Checker (see previous tip).

### File Explorer keeps opening unexpectedly

If File Explorer keeps opening without you having launched it, it may be being triggered by a connected device such as a USB stick or external hard drive.

You can fix this by tweaking the settings in Power Options in the Control Panel.

Type **power options** into Start, press Enter, then click Power Options. Click the small blue 'Change plan settings' link to the right of whichever power plan is selected, then 'Change advanced power settings', click the '+' symbol next to 'USB settings', the '+' symbol next to 'USB selective suspend settings', click Enabled and Disabled from the dropdown menu that opens. Finally, click OK. This will prevent USB devices switching off and on again to save power, and should stop File Explorer opening by itself.

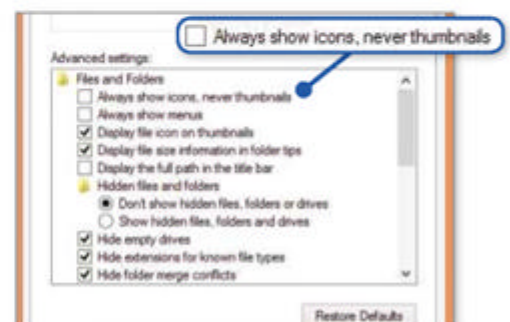
If this doesn't work, your connected devices may have Windows 8.1 compatibility problems. These can be fixed by unplugging your USB stick or external hard drive whenever you're not using it. An alternative solution is to switch off AutoPlay, the Windows 8.1 setting that lets you choose an action for a removable device when you plug it in (get more information at [www.snipca.com/14768](http://www.snipca.com/14768)). Type **autoplay** into Start and click AutoPlay, then click the dropdown menu next to 'Removable drive' and click 'Take no action'.

### Photos won't display as thumbnails

When you're organising your photos in File Explorer, it helps to be able to identify your photos at a glance – which is why thumbnails are so useful.

If File Explorer is working properly, you can set your thumbnails to display in various default sizes by clicking View in File Explorer, then 'Extra large icons', 'Large icons' or 'Medium-sized icons'. But if something's gone wrong, you may not see any thumbnails, just program icons. This can happen after you install programs, such as cloud-storage software, that changes your File Explorer settings to show icons instead of thumbnails.

To restore the settings, click View, Options on the right, then the View tab. Next, untick 'Always show icons, never thumbnails' (see screenshot below), then click OK.



Untick 'Always show icons, never thumbnails' to see photos as thumbnails



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T007 Black	£29.99 16ml	£3.99 20ml, 3 for £10.99	Photo 790, 890, 990, 915, 1290
T008 Colour	£23.99 46ml	£4.99 50ml, 3 for £13.99	Photo 790, 870, 890, 915, 915
T009 Colour	£29.99 16ml	£4.99 50ml, 3 for £13.99	Photo 800, 1270, 1290
T026 Black	£39.99 16ml	£3.99 20ml, 3 for £10.99	Photo 810, 830, 830a, 925, 935
T027 Colour	£29.99 46ml	£4.99 50ml, 3 for £13.99	
T040 Black	£44.99 17ml	£3.99 20ml, 3 for £10.99	C62, C63200
T041 Colour	£39.99 17ml	£4.99 48ml, 3 for £13.99	
T050 Black	£32.99 16ml	£2.99 16ml, 3 for £7.99	440, 640, 660 Photo 700, 1200
T051 Black	£36.99 24ml	£2.99 26ml, 3 for £7.99	740, 790, 800, 850, 860, 1160
T052 Colour	£36.99 24ml	£3.99 36ml, 3 for £10.99	440, 640, 660, 740, 760, 1160
T053 Colour	£26.99 46ml	£3.99 48ml, 3 for £10.99	Photo 700, 750
T0441-4 Set of 4	£44.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	C6A, C6B, C6C, C6E,
T0441 Black	£19.99 13ml	£4.99 13ml, 3 for £13.99	C6060, C6065, C6040, 6600
T0452-4 Set of 4	£9.99 4ml	£3.99 13ml, 3 for £10.99	
T0481-6 Set of 6	£69.99	£19.99, 3 sets for £57.99	R200, R220, R300, R320, R340
T0481-6 each	£11.99 13ml	£3.99 13ml, 3 for £10.99	R0500, R0500, R0520, R0540
T0540-9 Set of 9	£109.99	£35.99, 3 sets for £99.99	Photo R800, R1800
T0540 Gloss	£8.99 13ml	£3.99 21ml, 3 for £13.99	
T0541-9 each	£14.99 9ml	£4.99 21ml, 3 for £13.99	
T0551-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	Photo R240, R245
T0551 Black	£8.99 4ml	£4.99 3ml, 3 for £10.99	R0420, R0425, R0520, R0525
T0552-4 Set of 4	£8.99 4ml	£3.99 3ml, 3 for £10.99	
T0581-9 Set of 9	£39.99	Check Website.	Photo R2400
T0591-9 each	£12.99 9ml	Check Website.	
T0611-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	D68, D69
T0611 Black	£8.99 4ml	£4.99 3ml, 3 for £10.99	D3000, C03850, D34200, D4250
T0612-4 Set of 4	£39.99	£3.99 3ml, 3 for £13.99	D3400, D4850
T0711-4 Set of 4	£34.99	£14.99, 3 sets for £42.99	S0021, S1000, S1100, S2002, S2025
T0711 Black	£8.99 7.4ml	£4.99 7.4ml, 3 for £13.99	S0400, S0515, S1000, S1100
T0711-4 each	£8.99 5.5ml	£3.99 7.4ml, 3 for £10.99	D3400, D4850, S0021, S1000, S1100, S2002, S2025
T0791-6 Set of 6	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo R1400
T0791-6 each	£12.99 9ml	Check Website.	
T0801-6 Set of 6	£51.99	£19.99, 3 sets for £57.99	P50, R0525, R0580, R0585, R0585
T0801-6 each	£8.99 7.4ml	£3.99 7.4ml, 3 for £10.99	R685, R690, P1000, P1100, R0580, R10
T0870-9 Set of 9	£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 9	£74.99	Check Website.	Photo R2850
T0961-9 each	£9.99 11.4ml	Check Website.	
T1281-4 Set of 4	£29.99	£14.99	S22, S25, S310, S325, S350,
T1281 Black	£7.99 5.5ml	£4.99 5.5ml	S3420, S3425, S3430, S3435, S3435,
T1282-4 Set of 4	£7.99 3.5ml	£3.99 3.5ml	R0005F
T1291-4 Set of 4	£42.99	£16.99	S3250, S3420, S3430, S3435, S3435,
T1291 Black	£10.99 11ml	£5.49 11ml	S3250, S3420, S3430, S3435, S3435,
T1292-4 Set of 4	£10.99 7.4ml	£4.49 7.4ml	S3250, S3420, S3430, S3435, S3435,
T1571-9 each	£20.99 25ml	Check Website.	R3000
T1591-9 each	£14.99 17ml	Check Website.	R5000
T5801-9 each	£24.99 80ml	Check Website.	Pre 3800, 3880
No.16 Set of 4	£14.99	£14.99	Workforce WF-2010W, 2510WF,
No.16 Black	£6.99 5.4ml	£4.99 5.4ml	2520NF, 2530WF, 2540WF
No.16 CMY, each	£5.99 3.1ml	£3.99 3.1ml	
No.16 Set of 4	£22.99	£14.99	Expression Home XP300,
No.16 Black	£6.99 5.2ml	£4.99 5.2ml	XP162, 252, 305,
No.16 CMY, each	£5.99 3.3ml	£3.99 3.3ml	XP322, 305, 402, 405
No.24 Set of 8	£44.99	No.24XL Set of 8	£69.99
No.24 B&C&M, each	£7.99 5.1ml	No.24XL B&C&M, each	£11.99 9.8ml
No.24 CMY, each	£7.99 4.6ml	No.24XL CMY, each	£11.99 9.8ml
No.26 Set of 4	£30.99	No.26XL Set of 4	£54.99
No.26 Black	£6.99 6.2ml	No.26XL Black	£14.99 12.9ml
No.26 Photo Black	£7.99 4.7ml	No.26XL Photo Black	£13.99 6.7ml
No.26 CMY, each	£7.99 4.5ml	No.26XL CMY, each	£13.99 9.7ml
			Expression Premium XP700, 850 XP700, 850



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1		TalkTalk: Broadband	<b>£3.50</b> (FREE for 12 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>17Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>CHEAPEST</b> <b>£0.00</b>
2		Sky: Broadband & Calls	<b>£7.50</b> (FREE for 12 months)	<b>12</b> months	<b>17Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£0.00</b>
3		EE: Broadband & Calls	<b>£9.95</b> (£1.95 for 12 months)	<b>12</b> months	<b>17Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited **	<b>£23.40</b>
4		Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	<b>£9.99</b> (£2.50 for 12 months)	<b>12</b> months	<b>17Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£30.00</b>
5		TalkTalk Fibre Broadband	<b>£13.50</b> (£5.00 for 12 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>38Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£60.00</b>
6		Plusnet: Fibre Broadband & Calls	<b>£14.99</b> (£3.75 for 6 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>38Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£112.44</b>
7		Sky: Fibre Broadband & Calls	<b>£20.00</b> (FREE for 6 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>38Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£120.00</b>
8		Virgin: Broadband & Calls	<b>£17.50</b> (£12 for 12 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>50Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited **	<b>£144.00</b>
9		EE: Fibre Broadband & Calls	<b>£19.95</b> (£9.98 for 6 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>38Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£179.58</b>
10		Virgin: Broadband & Calls	<b>£30.00</b> (£24.50 for 12 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>152Mbps</b> max speed	∞ unlimited **	<b>FASTEST</b> <b>£294.00</b>

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Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

\*First-year cost does not include line rental. Cost is calculated at monthly price x12 with all introductory offers subtracted. Additional charges incurred outside of free inclusive calls not included in first-year cost.

\*\* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by [www.broadbandgenie.co.uk](http://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk). Correct as of 07/01/2015

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# Jargon Buster

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

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

**Beta** A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

**Bookmarklet** A small, very simple program stored as a bookmark in your web browser.

**Cache** A temporary space for storing information. Can be memory used on a computer processor, or space on a hard drive used by a web browser.

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

**Crowdsourcing** The process of obtaining ideas, information or money from a large group of people, usually online, rather than from more traditional sources.

**DisplayPort** A new socket for connecting monitors that's still relatively rare.

**DRM** Digital Rights Management. Software that limits the copying of a file.

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

**File extension** The part of a file name after the full stop. For example, .doc is the file extension for Word documents.

**Gigabit Ethernet** A very fast networking standard that can transfer data at up to 1,000Mbps.

**HDMI** High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals. It is found on many new TVs, media PCs and high-definition products such as Blu-ray disc players and the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 games consoles.

**IMAP** Internet Message Access Protocol. A method for email that lets the user manage messages stored on a remote server.

**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. A unique set of numbers, separated by full stops, used to identify computers and websites on the internet. For example, Google's IP address is 74.125.224.72

**IPv6** A new version of the Internet Protocol that assigns a unique number to devices attached to the interwebs. The prime aim of version six is to increase the number of available addresses to provide for the rising number of web-connected devices.

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

**Megapixel** A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image. A one-megapixel image is made up of a million dots (pixels).

**MicroSD card** A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

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

**Mirror site** A website that contains the same downloadable software as others, so it's available from more than one place.

**Noise** Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images. In photos, they are caused by the camera's own sensor. In TV images, they can be caused by the TV's processor or by a flaw in the broadcast signal itself.

**Open source** Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

**Partition** A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives. Once partitioned, each section is treated by Windows as though it were a completely separate, smaller hard drive.

**Processor** The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer. Processors now are tiny and are capable of carrying out millions of calculations every second.

**Proxy server** A computer that sits between your computer and the internet and filters the connection. Sometimes used simply to remove internet threats such as viruses, but can also be used to block access to websites and internet services as well as masking the identity of a computer, giving its user anonymity on the internet.

**Quad core** A computer that has four processors on a single chip, which allows it to operate faster than standard (single-core) computers.

**RAM** Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. Its capacity is measured in megabytes (MB): the more memory your PC has, the more things it can process simultaneously and the faster it will seem. Any information in Ram will be lost when the power is switched off.

**Ransomware** Malware run by hackers who take over your PC and demand a payment to release it.

**Resolution** The amount of detail shown in an image, whether on screen or printed.

**restore point** The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

**SD card** Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

**Security definitions** A file downloaded by an antivirus program, giving it details of how to spot the latest threats.

**Server** A computer on a network, such as the internet, that distributes information to other PCs.

**SLR** Single-Lens Reflex. A type of camera in which the same lens is used for viewing subjects in the viewfinder and for taking pictures.

**SSD** Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

**Torrent** A file that can be downloaded using Bittorrent software. This method is generally faster than a normal download, which provides a direct connection to other PCs running the software anywhere in the world. Torrent files are not illegal but record and film companies claim many are illegal copies of copyright-protected material.

**Trackball** A popular alternative to mice, trackballs are pointing devices with a flat base and an upward-facing ball. You roll the ball around 360 degrees with your fingers or thumb in order to position the cursor.

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

**USB** Universal Serial Bus. A standard that allows quick and easy connection of external peripherals such as storage devices to your PC. Devices can be added or removed while your PC is switched on.

**USB 2.0** Faster successor to USB that's used by devices such as external hard drives.

**USB 3.0** A faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

**VGA** Video Graphics Array. A standard socket for connecting a monitor to a computer.

**Virtual PC** A Windows tool that enables you to run a second 'virtual' operating system on a PC, such as running a version of XP in a Windows 7 computer to use older programs.

**VPN** Virtual Private Network. A technology for keeping all internet communication safe and private even on insecure networks.

**Waveband** The radio waves on which a communication technology operates. Wireless networks operate on one of two wavebands.

# The Final Straw



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

This issue Stuart Andrews fears being clouted by...

## The selfie stick

I hoped that we'd be over the whole selfie thing by now, but I should have known it wouldn't go away that easily. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are still chock-full of fools putting on their best duckface pouts, while the new must-have feature in a smartphone isn't a faster processor or a better screen, but a higher-resolution front-facing camera for those all-important 'look at me!' shots.

Meanwhile, authorities in the US and Australia are having to warn young people against the dangers of taking selfies while driving, a practice so stupid that I'd consider it natural selection were innocent road users not at risk.

The selfie is even helping fuel a boom in plastic surgery. Apparently, there has been a 17-per-cent rise in nose jobs since 2012. Charles East, a spokesman for the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons, told *The Times* that more patients were bringing in selfies to consultations, concerned that their features looked out of whack. In fact, those in the nip-and-tuck trade often have to point out that these selfies aren't accurate likenesses, perhaps because pointing a wide-angle lens at your nose from close range is a surefire way of

“  
We already have  
enough smartphone  
zombies on the  
streets of the UK. Do  
we really need them  
weaponised?”

making it look uglier and more bulbous than it actually is. God forbid these self-obsessed twits should ever look at the back of a spoon.

The selfie, then, is a phenomenon that continues to get on my nerves, but now I'm frightened that it's getting worse. The world's most narcissistic craze now has its own accessory: the selfie stick.

It's a compact rod that extends to around one metre, with a grip at one end and a clamp at the other. Your smartphone clips into the latter, you hold on to the former, and the more advanced models even come with a Bluetooth shutter release. Brace yourself: this contraption will soon be everywhere. You'll already have seen it if you've recently visited Stratford-upon-Avon, the Tower of London or Stonehenge (see photographic proof at [www.snipca.com/14772](http://www.snipca.com/14772)).

Its principal purpose is to get

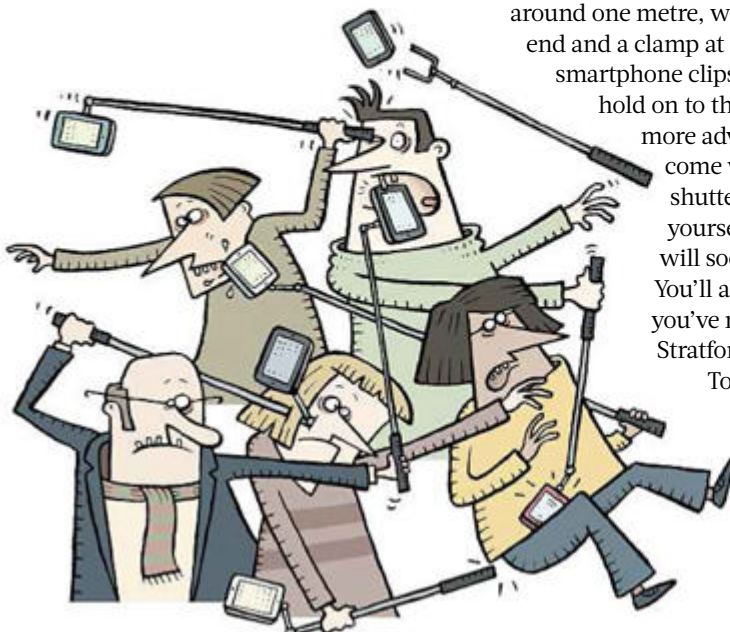
a better angle and a bit more distance when you're taking selfies, but it also gives your smartphone a few extra feet when you're trying to shoot stills or video above the crowd.

What have I got against this invention? Well, partly it's a question of safety. In South Korea the authorities were concerned about the effect of thousands of unregulated Bluetooth devices on the streets of Seoul interfering with medical devices. Me? I'm more concerned that the kind of borderline cretin who might wield a selfie stick is also the kind who won't worry too much about where they poke it. We already have enough smartphone zombies on the streets of the UK. Do we really need them weaponised?

I also find them obtrusive. It's already a challenge to see what's going on at public events, with all the people waving their big-screen smartphones around or – worse – shooting videos on their iPad. Now you'll be trying to peer through a forest of selfie sticks, as the goons try to get a better shot. There are already reports of selfie sticks appearing at rock and pop gigs. Why not do us all a favour? Stay at home.

But I have a heart, and I worry about the poor selfie-stick users. Not only are they sticking a device costing hundreds of pounds at the end of a three-foot rod (good news for muggers), but they're making it almost impossible to take calls in a hurry. What's the etiquette? Do you try to answer with the three foot of selfie stick protruding from your phone, or do you remove the clamp and risk missing the call. I can already see the queues for A&E growing.

So, congratulations to those pioneering the selfie stick. You've transformed what was already an annoyance into a genuine public menace. My advice? Extend your selfie stick, then take your next photo somewhere the sun doesn't shine.



✉ Do you agree with Stuart?  
Let us know at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



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