






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 Windows 10



SAVE YOUR EYES!



Turn on 'dark mode' now
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**MAKE YOUR PASSWORDS
IMPOSSIBLE TO HACK**

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Computer **active**

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Learn something new in every issue



WINDOWS SETTINGS

YOU **MUST** CHANGE

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- ☒ Remove annoying tools
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- ☒ Make it faster
- ☒ Override defaults
- ☒ Add right-click options

+ Five settings to **AVOID**



PLUS

**STREAM TV & FILMS
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**UPGRADE TO
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Which router will suit your home? **p24**



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520
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DENNIS PUBLICATION
 Computeractive is published fortnightly by Dennis Publishing, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP.
 Company registered in England. ISSN 1461-6211

abc Average sales, Jan-Dec 2020 59,649 copies per issue.

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Distributed by Marketforce

Computeractive
 Printed in the UK

I knew I was going to enjoy editing this issue's Cover Feature when I saw that the first tip explained how to turn off Aero Shake in Windows. I'm a fidgety mouse user, all fiddly fingers and twitchy thumbs, so I know how easy it is to trigger this spectacularly pointless tool, and its sibling Aero Snap. The only Aeros I like are the chocolate kind (peppermint, preferably).

The feature reveals the best tools in Winaero Tweaker, which despite its name covers more than Aero and makes changes that feel deeper than tweaks. An alternative name could be

Registry Avoider, because it lets you improve Windows without having to leave its interface.

My next favourite tip is making scrollbars thicker, so I can aim my arrow cursor with more precision, unlike my previous click-and-hope method. When lockdown ends and coffee shops reopen, I'll be using the Battery Flyout option so I can monitor my power when miles – or several tables at least – from the nearest free plug socket. Which settings have you turned on? Let us know.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk



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\$5bn

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60 days

How long you can 'resurrect' an Outlook.com account after closing it – [p67](#)

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Number of different Royal Mail scams in circulation – [p11](#)



HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

We use snipcas to turn long URLs that are hard to type into ones that are short and simple. They aren't websites themselves, which means they won't be recognised if you type them into Google. Instead, you need to type them into your browser address bar, then press Enter. Doing this will take you to the correct website.

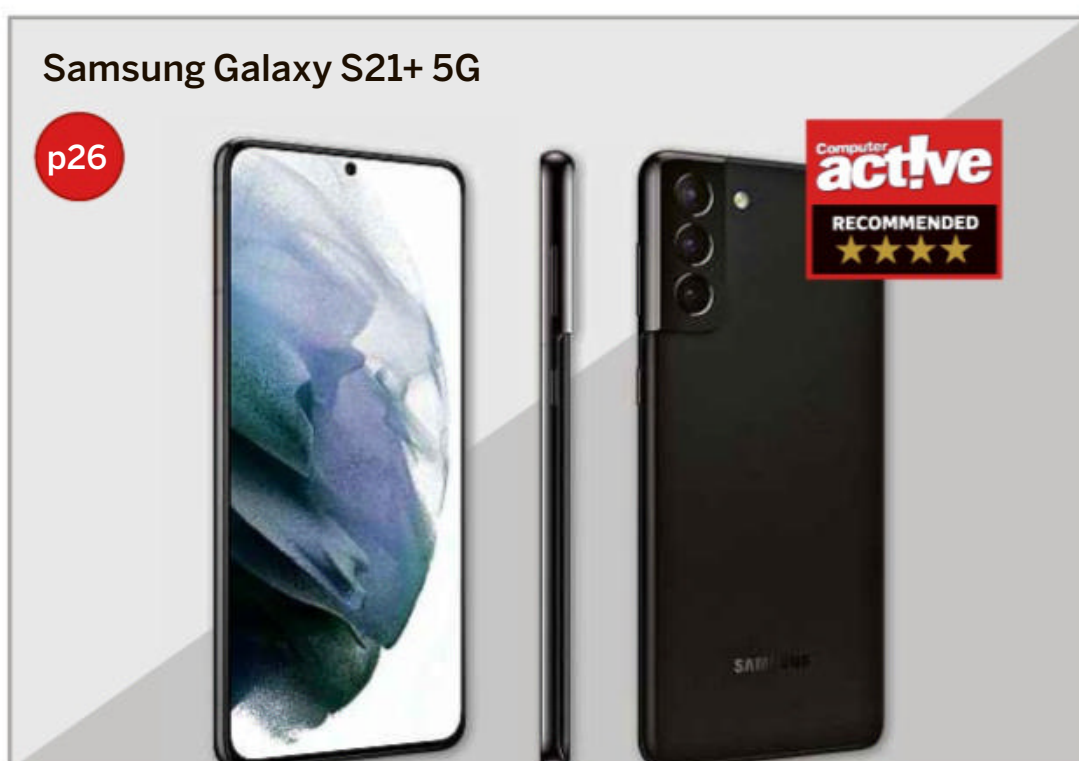
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COVER
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WINDOWS SETTINGS

YOU MUST CHANGE

Every tweak to make it just right for YOU

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p60



Microsoft disables Edge tool that actually *breaks* Edge

Microsoft has temporarily disabled a tool designed to make Edge load more quickly after admitting it was causing “frustrating” problems with the browser.

WHAT WE THINK

It sometimes feels like Microsoft's motto should be, 'If ain't broke, let's fiddle with it until it is'. We've been using Edge regularly since it relaunched in early 2020 and can't recall it ever being slow to load. It's not as if the benefits of 'Startup boost' are spectacular – just 29 to 41 per cent faster – and a browser's stability is more important than its speed anyway. We're sure Microsoft will come up with a fix, but who's going to risk using the tool now?

The 'Startup boost' feature, released in January as part of version 88 of Edge, keeps the browser running in the background with “minimal processes”, so that it can launch faster when you open it from the taskbar, desktop, or from links in other programs. Microsoft claims that tests show the tool can improve startup times by 29 to 41 per cent.

But the company has now turned off 'Startup boost' while it fixes a problem that repeatedly relaunched Edge immediately after you close it, and shows you a message about reopening tabs.

Microsoft acknowledged the problem on its 'Startup Boost FAQ' page (www.snipca.com/37724), and said it would update the page when “we believe this to be resolved”.

Before Microsoft disabled



the feature, users had reported online that turning it off seemed to solve the problem. Some had also complained that it was making games slow.

'Startup boost' is being rolled out gradually to users, so you may not yet have it. To check, click the three dots at the top right of Edge, followed by Settings at the bottom, then System on the left. You can also check by typing

<edge://settings/system> into your browser bar.

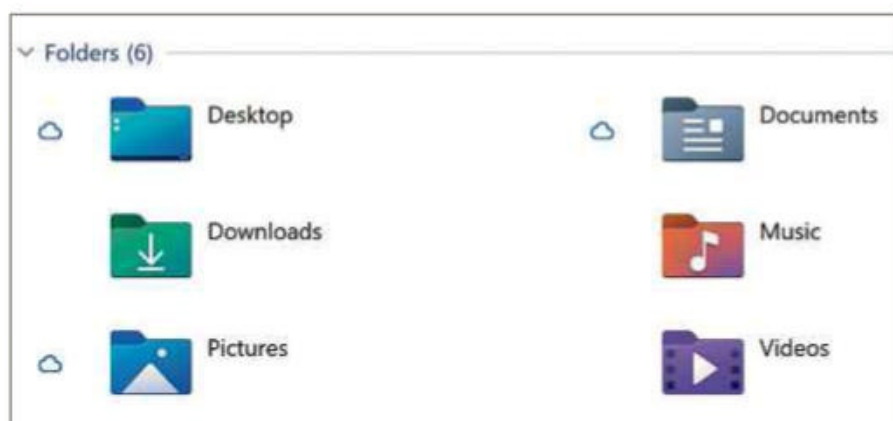
If you have the tool, you'll see it turned off – as shown in the screenshot. You can turn it back on if you're happy to live with the problems.

To see whether you've had the bugs, open Task Manager (press Ctrl+Shift+Esc) and check whether you have lots of Edge processes running – such as in this screenshot: www.snipca.com/37725.

NEW ICONS FOR FILE EXPLORER REVEALED

New-look icons are coming to File Explorer, Microsoft has confirmed. It has released a preview build of Windows 10

showing new designs for several icons, including the recycle bin, documents folders (pictured right), and disk drives.



In a blog post (www.snipca.com/37726), Microsoft said that the changes bring “greater consistency” across its tools, making it easier to “tell them apart at a glance”.

It has been updating Windows icons since last year, having already released previews of new designs for Windows Security (www.snipca.com/37727), Narrator (www.snipca.com/37728) and Notepad (www.snipca.com/37729).



The new designs appear in Build 21343, available now to users signed up to the Windows Insider Programme. However, Microsoft may still tweak the icons before releasing them fully, possibly as part of the major redesign of Windows 10 expected in the autumn.



You'll like this... The £50 note featuring computer pioneer Alan Turing has been unveiled (www.snipca.com/37735)



but not this... Ofcom saw a surge in nuisance calls in the last three months of 2020 (www.snipca.com/37730)

Sales of PC monitors break records in 2020

Worldwide growth in sales of PC monitors broke new records in 2020, as people bought new models to use at home during the lockdowns.

Analyst firm IDC found that sales rose by 8.3 per cent compared with 2019, the biggest rise ever recorded. The final quarter of the year (October to December) saw a particularly big jump of 16.9 per cent, with 39.2 million monitors sold – the highest numbers since 2011.

IDC also said that shortage in components led manufacturers to beat price rises by building stocks of monitors, meaning there were plenty of models available for sale.

Dell led the way with 19.3 per cent of sales, followed by Chinese company TPV, HP and Lenovo. However, it was Samsung who enjoyed the biggest growth, with sales rising by 30.6 per cent, taking it to a market share of



8.6 per cent.

The analysts predict that gaming and the rise of ‘hybrid’ working – where staff split their work between the home and the office – will help to keep sales of monitors high in 2021.

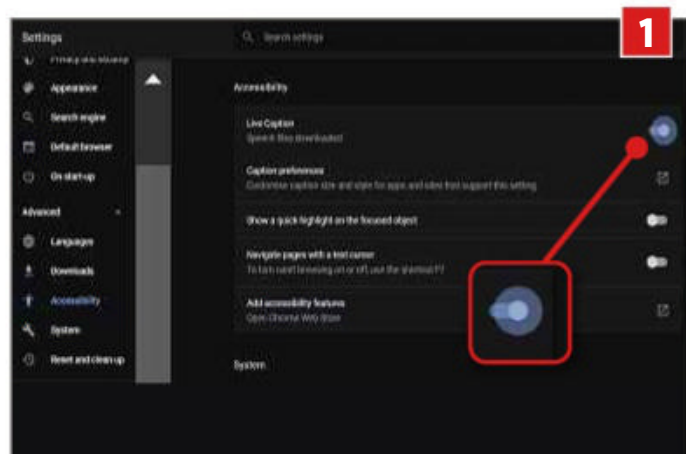
The rise in monitor sales is part of a huge increase in technology sales generally. In the UK alone, sales of laptops in the final quarter of 2020 rose by 91 per cent, totalling 3.5 million units.

IDC said this rise is a sign that the UK has become a ‘one device per person’ country, rather than just ‘one device per household’.

Currently, our favourite monitor is the 27in GL2780, made by Taiwanese firm BenQ (see page 32), while our top laptop is Lenovo’s Yoga Slim 7 (page 30).

 Have you bought a new monitor or laptop in the past 12 months? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

Add real-time captions to videos in Chrome



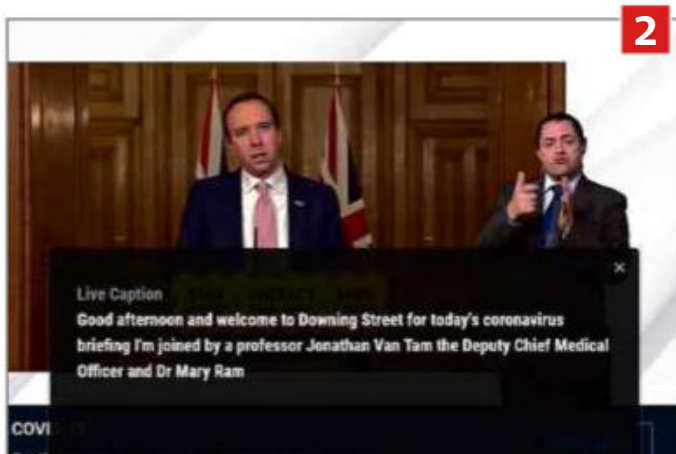
Chrome now adds real-time captions to videos as they’re being played online, though the feature is turned off by default.

To activate it, click the three vertical dots top right, followed by Settings. Next, click the Advanced menu on the left, then Accessibility. Now click the slider next to

Live Caption so it turns blue (see screenshot **1**). Chrome will now download ‘speech recognition’ files, which takes just over a minute.

Once it’s turned on, you’ll see captions in a small box at the bottom of the browser **2**. You can reposition the box by clicking and moving it.

Captions, which appear



only in English for now, will continue to appear should you turn the volume down or mute it, letting you ‘read’ videos or podcasts without irritating others near you. Previously Chrome provided captions only on some Google Pixel and Samsung phones.

• Add captions to your videos – page 40

IN BRIEF

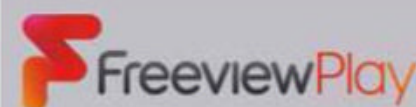
CHEAP VODAFONE DEALS FOR ‘DISADVANTAGED’

Vodafone has launched discounted mobile-broadband packages to tackle “digital poverty” and help “disadvantaged people” access the internet. The ‘communities.connected’ deals are available to schools, colleges, universities, local authorities and charities, which will be able to offer them to people in need. Prices start from £15 a month for a SIM-only, unlimited data contract. Read more at www.snipca.com/37659.



FREEVIEW PLAY ON ALL NEW LG TVs

Freeview Play will be available on all LG smart TV sets released in 2021, after being absent from last year’s models. The service, used by nine million people in the UK, offers 85 channels and nine on-demand players, including BBC iPlayer, BBC Sounds, ITV Hub and UKTV Play. There is no information yet about whether it will be added to TVs sold in 2020.



TOMORROW’S WORLD



“Alexa, find my car keys”. You may soon be issuing such commands if Amazon’s Vesta robot comes into being. Reports online say it’s in the “late-prototype” stage, and will work like an Echo smart speaker on wheels. A camera will identify objects, and there’s a small compartment for carrying items. There are no images yet, but insiders say it’s the size of “two small cats”. Let’s hope it comes house trained.

IN BRIEF

ROYAL MAIL TRIALS
SUNDAY DELIVERIES

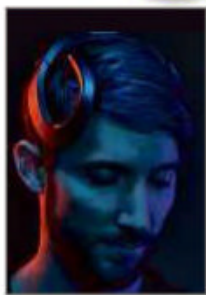
Royal Mail is to trial Sunday deliveries in order to cope with a huge rise in online shopping caused by the pandemic lockdowns. It will work with “a number of retail brands”, but hasn’t named them yet. Rivals such as DPD and Hermes already deliver on Sundays for major retailers such as Amazon.

DROPBOX MAKES
PASSWORD TOOL FREE

Dropbox will soon make its password-management tool available for people signed up to its free Basic account, having launched it last year to users on paid-for accounts. It will let you store your 50 most important passwords, and sync them across three devices. It comes soon after LastPass started charging for password syncing (see Issue 601, pages 62–63). Visit Dropbox’s site for more details: www.snipca.com/37668.

THE WORLD’S
GONE MAD!

This preposterous contraption is The Crown, a ‘personal brain computer’ that can tell when you’re feeling distracted and so play the right kind of music to keep you focused. It costs \$900 (about £650), which seems an awful lot to pay for something that looks like it might perm your hair in the 25th century.



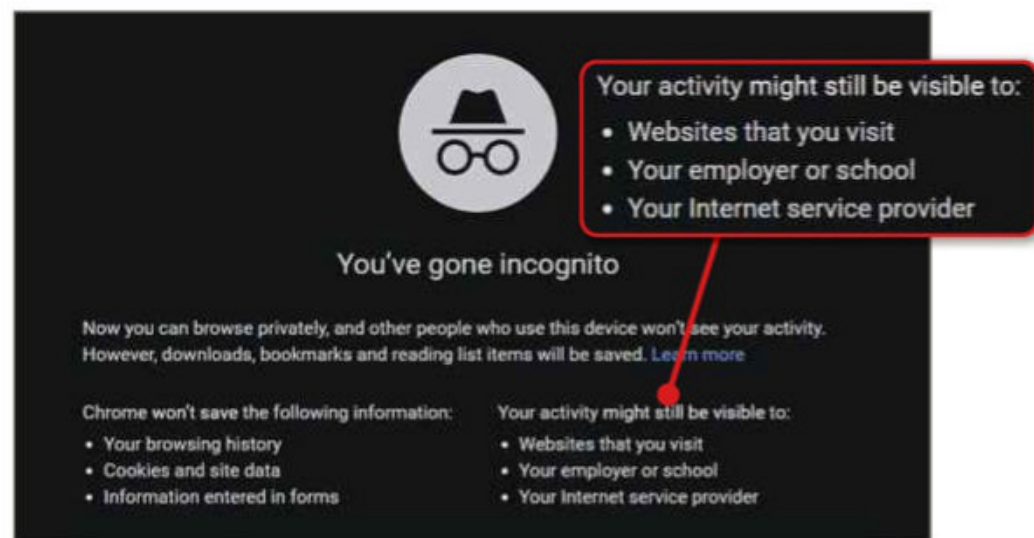
Google faces \$5bn lawsuit for ‘tracking’ Incognito users

Google might have to pay billions of dollars to users for allegedly tracking them as they browse the web in Chrome’s Incognito Mode.

A US judge has ruled that a class-action lawsuit against the firm can proceed. It seeks at least \$5,000 per user – \$5 billion in total – from Google and its parent company Alphabet, claiming they collect data through Google Analytics, Google Ad Manager, website plug-ins and other tools, including mobile apps.

The complaint alleges that Google collects the “most intimate and potentially embarrassing things” from “virtually every American with a computer or phone”. Attorneys for the plaintiffs said Google gathers “an unaccountable trove of information so detailed and expansive that George Orwell could never have dreamed it”.

Incognito Mode claims to let you browse the web without Google collecting your search



history, or placing cookies on your computer. It does state that web activity may still be visible to websites that you visit, your employer or school, and your internet service provider (see screenshot).

However, US District Judge Lucy Koh said Google doesn’t notify users that it collects data while the user is actually browsing in Incognito Mode.

Google said it would challenge the claims “vigorously”. It added: “As we clearly state each time you open a new Incognito tab, websites might be able to

collect information about your browsing activity during your session”.

The case comes amid growing scrutiny over how closely Google and other tech giants track users online. In March privacy-focused browser DuckDuckGo accused the company of “spying” on its users: www.snipca.com/37672.

For more information on the dangers of Google’s Incognito Mode, read Issue 590 (pages 62–63), available on our 2020 Back Issue CD: www.snipca.com/37026.

Bitcoin pensioner advert banned

An advert promoting Bitcoin to pensioners has been banned because it “irresponsibly” recommended investing in the cryptocurrency as an alternative to a conventional pension.

The advert (pictured), from Bitcoin investment firm Coinfloor, quoted a 63-year-old woman saying that there’s no point keeping a pension in the bank because “the interest rates are insulting”.

It continues: “That is why when I received my pension, I put a third of it into gold, a third of it into silver and the



remainder into Bitcoin”.

Coinfloor isn’t regulated in the UK, so consumers can’t complain about it through services such as the Financial Services Compensation Scheme or the Financial Ombudsman Service.

In its verdict (www.snipca.com/37667), the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) said the campaign had

targeted pensioners who were “unlikely to know” much about the risks of Bitcoin. It ruled that a disclaimer in the small print explaining that you could lose money was

“insufficient to counteract the overall message”.

It said that in future ads Coinfloor must make it “sufficiently clear that the value of investments in Bitcoin was variable and could go down as well as up”.

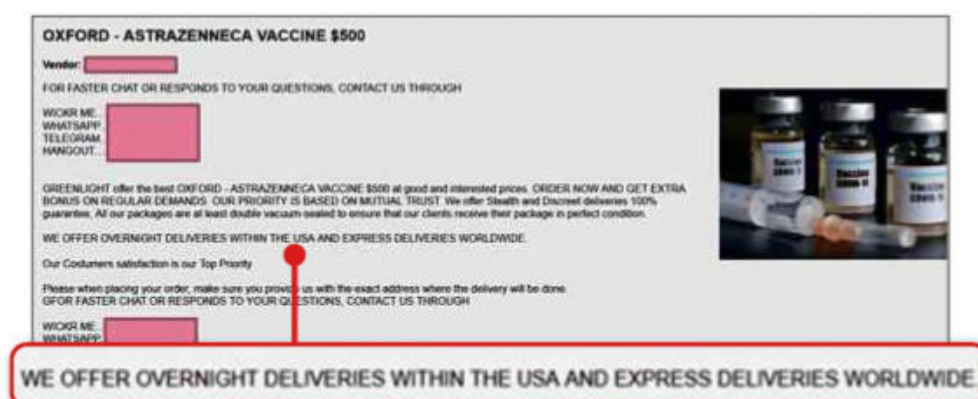
The *Northamptonshire Telegraph*, which published the ad, said it wouldn’t run it again unless it was changed.

Adverts for 'scam' Covid jabs spread on the dark web

Adverts for Covid-19 vaccines on the **dark web** have increased by over 300 per cent in the past three months, according to researchers at Israeli security firm Check Point. Prices range from \$500 (£360) to \$750 for doses of the AstraZeneca jab, as well as the Russian-made Sputnik, China's Sinopharm and the US-approved Johnson & Johnson jabs.

Check Point first highlighted the illegal sale of vaccines in January, since when the number of adverts has tripled to around 1,200, with anonymous sellers based in the US, Spain, Germany, France and Russia. One of the AstraZeneca adverts promises "overnight deliveries within the USA and express deliveries worldwide" (pictured).

Sellers are also offering vaccine 'passports' and fake negative tests. One advert



reads: "We do negative Covid tests, for travellers abroad, for getting a job etc. Buy two negative tests and get the third for free!"

One advert, supposedly from a UK seller, was offering a vaccination card for a \$150 Bitcoin payment, making it harder for authorities to trace. The seller told the researchers they just needed to provide their names and some dates for when the fake jabs occurred.

Oded Vanunu, head of product vulnerabilities research at Check Point, said that obtaining a certificate or

vaccine through unofficial sites is "extremely risky" because hackers are interested only in your money and exploiting your personal information.

He told the BBC that his team had bought a dose of the Sinopharm vaccine for \$750 as part of their research, but it has yet to arrive. He suspects the seller was a scammer.

Check Point has called on countries to add **QR codes** to vaccine documentation to make forgeries much harder. See more fake ads on its blog: www.snipca.com/37703.

'Stop using Windows 10 1909' warns Microsoft

Microsoft has started warning people running the November 2019 Update (version 1909) of Windows 10 that support will end on 11 May, after which it will no longer receive security updates.

A message (pictured) appearing in the system tray reads: "Your version of Windows 10 will reach end of service soon. Click to download a newer version of Windows 10 to stay supported."

If you click the link Windows will check whether your computer has the specifications required to install either Windows 10 May 2020 Update (2004) or

October 2020 Update (20H2). If so, you can then choose to install it from the Windows Update section.

Some 1909 users have reported not being able to update their machine to a newer version, and instead see the following message on the Windows Update page: "The Windows 10 May 2020 Update is on its way. Once it's ready for your device, you'll see the update available on this page."

This is probably because Microsoft has placed a 'compatibility hold' on the computer, having decided

that it lacks the necessary technical requirements to install the update without problems. If you don't want to update at the moment, you can simply close the message and carry on using version 1909.

Microsoft supports versions of Windows 10 for 18 months after they're released. Support for version 2004 is due to end on 14 December this year. Two new Feature updates are expected before then: version 21H1, due this spring, and 21H2, which should be released in the autumn.

IN BRIEF

TAKE NCSC's TEST TO BOOST YOUR SECURITY

The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which is part of GCHQ, has launched a new test that recommends a personalised 'to-do' list to boost your online security. Visit www.snipca.com/37714, select whether you're a business/sole trader or an individual/family, then answer the questions, which cover passwords and the devices you use. You'll then be given a 'Cyber Action Plan' suggesting changes, such as updating your email password.

LOCKDOWN SEARCH TRENDS REVEALED

Google has revealed that searches for positive terms like 'hug', 'prayer' and 'hope' have surged over the past 12 months. However, searches for 'panic attack' and 'hypochondriasis' also hit record highs, while 'party' and 'festival' plummeted. It released the data to mark one year passing since the start of lockdown in the UK. Visit www.snipca.com/37717 to see Google's 'Coronavirus search trends'.

TURN WORD DOCS INTO POWERPOINT

Microsoft 365 subscribers using the online version of Word can now easily turn documents into PowerPoint presentations. To use the new tool, open a document then click File, Export, then 'Export to PowerPoint presentation'. Now select a theme and wait for it to be converted into a presentation. It's being made available gradually to users worldwide, and doesn't work in Internet Explorer and Safari. Follow Microsoft's instructions at www.snipca.com/37719.

Question of the Fortnight

When will your area get Gigabit broadband?

The Government wants 85 per cent of premises connected by 2025

Faster speeds are coming to the fishing towns of Cornwall, the commuter suburbs of Essex and the country lanes of Dorset. Those three counties, along with Cambridgeshire, Cumbria, Durham, Northumberland, South Tyneside and Tees Valley, will be the first in England to get Gigabit broadband as part of the Government's plan to deliver 1Gbps (1,000Mbps) to most of the UK by 2025.

Work on providing this speed to 510,000 homes and businesses will begin in the first half of 2022. Next in line will be 640,000 premises in Norfolk, Shropshire, Suffolk, Worcestershire, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, with new areas expected to be



Project Stratum. In Wales, the £2.6bn Superfast programme (above 24Mbps) is now mainly funding Gigabit-capable connections.

Much of the UK – around 40 per cent – can already get Gigabit speeds, with the figure expected to hit 60 per cent by

programme as the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk>), providing up to £1,500 for residents and up to £3,500 for businesses to help pay for the cost of installation.

It means they won't have to wait for providers signed up to Project Gigabit to offer services in their area. Under the existing scheme more than 66,000 vouchers worth up to £127m have been given to premises across the country.

In addition, the scheme is investing up to £110 million to supply Gigabit to 7,000 rural public buildings, including schools, doctors' surgeries and libraries. Ministers claim this will "help GPs provide remote video consultations and allow whole classes of schoolchildren to be online at once with no interruptions".

However, despite such impressive-sounding figures, the Government has actually downgraded its Gigabit ambition. At the 2019 election, the Conservative manifesto promised to give *every* home and business a Gigabit

THE FACTS

- Cornwall, Dorset and Essex are among the first nine locations to receive Government funding for 1Gbps broadband
- It's also giving £210m in rural broadband vouchers and £110m for Gigabit speeds in 7,000 public buildings
- It hopes to reach 85 per cent of the UK by 2025, despite pledging it for every home and business in its 2019 election manifesto

“Project Gigabit aims to connect five to six million premises that would otherwise get left behind”

announced every three months.

This is Project Gigabit, which the Government hopes will “accelerate our recovery from Covid, fire up high-growth sectors like tech and the creative industries and level up the country, spreading wealth and creating jobs the length and breadth of Britain”.

More than 5,300 homes in central Scotland have already been allocated Gigabit funds from Westminster, while £150m has been given to connect 76,000 premises in Northern Ireland as part of

the end of 2021. But most of these areas are densely populated towns and cities where it makes financial sense for providers – chiefly Virgin – to invest in laying fibre cables.

Analysts expect around 80 per cent of the country to be eventually covered without Government assistance. Project Gigabit aims to help most of the remaining 20 per cent – between five and six million premises – that would otherwise get left behind.

As part of the project, the Government is renaming the Rural Gigabit Connectivity

connection by the end of 2025. Last November it cut that target to 85 per cent of premises.

There's also the problem of how to connect premises in what the Government now calls 'Very Hard to Reach Areas'. There are 100,000 of these, most in the remotest parts of Scotland and Wales, as well as some national parks in England.

It says building Gigabit broadband in these areas might be too expensive even with Government funding, and has asked the industry to develop solutions such as 5G and satellite broadband.

There's a lot riding on Project Gigabit. It's precisely the kind of major infrastructure work that needs to be completed smoothly for the public to buy into Boris Johnson's pledge to “level up the country”. You can expect many more headline-grabbing announcements over the next few years.

Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Surge in Royal Mail delivery scams

What's the threat?

There's been a sharp rise in the number of scam messages, both text and email, claiming to be from Royal Mail, as fraudsters exploit the popularity of online shopping during the latest lockdown.

Most of the scams claim your package couldn't be delivered and ask you to click or tap a link to reschedule, though some say the delivery was delayed and provide you with a link for tracking it. The specific wording of these scams varies widely, so Royal Mail has listed 17 examples on its site (www.snipca.com/37655).

Some of the scams say that you need to pay customs duties before delivery can be arranged, while others claim the package is from 'HM Revenue & Customs' (see screenshot), or that the item was sent to the wrong address. The authentic Royal Mail logos make them look legitimate, and they appear to come

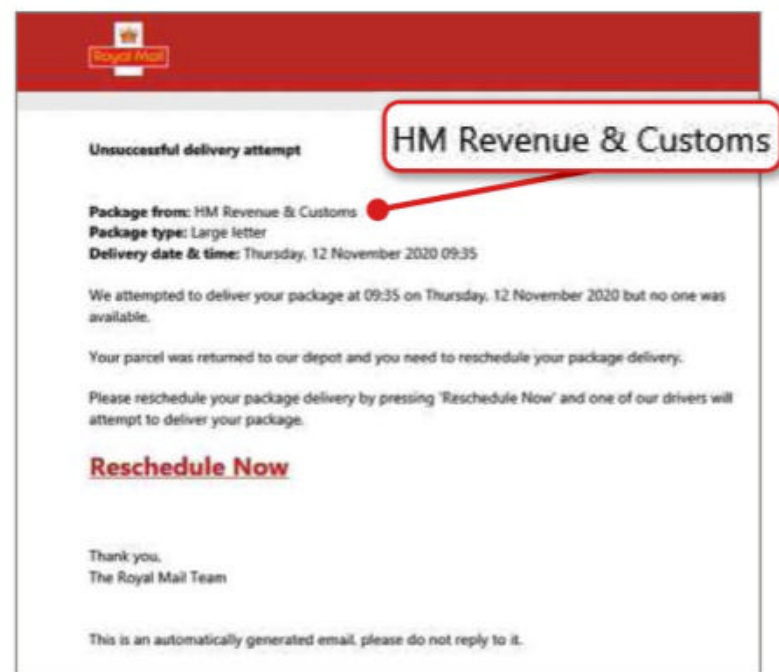
from real addresses such as 'delivery@royalmail.com'.

They also contain what look like genuine details, including a reference number, the date and time of attempted delivery, and the amount owed.

How can you stay safe?

First, never assume that a message claiming to be from Royal Mail is genuine. Fraudsters will continue targeting the service long after lockdown ends, particularly given its plans to trial Sunday deliveries (see page 8). Also be suspicious if any message begins on an impersonal note, such as 'Attention Royal Mail Customer', rather than using your name.

For further protection, bookmark this web page (www.snipca.com/37658), where Royal Mail lists things it will never



do. For example, "under no circumstances" will it ask for account details, passwords, payment details or any other personal information by email. Nor will it ever ask you to enter information on a page that isn't part of the Royal Mail website.

New tools | Bitwarden Send www.snipca.com/37677

Unless you have access to the world's fastest supercomputer and expect to live for longer than the universe has already existed, you'll never crack a file encrypted using **AES-256**. It's as close to unhackable as you can get, which is why Bitwarden uses it for its new Send tool. This lets you send sensitive messages that the recipient can open only if they know your password.

Once you've created an account, click Send at the top, then 'Create new send'. Enter your name (1 in our screenshot) and choose Text (2) (to send a message) or File (a file saved on your computer – this is available only on Bitwarden's paid-for premium services: <https://bitwarden.com/pricing>).

If you tick the 'When accessing the Send...' box (3), the recipient won't be able to read the message until they click



the 'Toggle visibility' option. This lets them select a safe time to read it, away from prying eyes. Click 'Options' and set an expiration date (optional), then click Save at the bottom. Finally, on the Send page, hover over your message, click the cog menu that appears, then 'Copy send link' and send your message. For more instructions visit www.snipca.com/37678, and turn to page 38 to create passwords using Bitwarden.

ScamWatch

Readers warn readers

'Debt write off' message

I now seem to be getting just as many scams on WhatsApp as I do on email, which I guess is a sign of WhatsApp's popularity. One recent message claimed to be from the Money Advice Service (MAS) saying that an application to have my debt written off will be approved. I don't have any debt, so it was obviously a scam, but others may find it more believable. I read up about it online (www.snipca.com/37654), and apparently the scammers ask for bank statements, payslips, forms of identification and letters from creditors. I reported the scam to scams@maps.org.uk.

Helen Presley



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

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

Be careful of 'quack cures' on Google

✉ I'd like to add a note of caution to Peter Setter's enthusiasm for searching Google for help researching medical conditions (Letters, Issue 602). The problem is quite simple: there are a lot of quack cures out there ranging from those who are sincere but wrong to those who just want to con other people.

I've been impressed by how defiantly Google and other tech firms have clamped down on Covid misinformation since the pandemic struck. They've stuck to it despite what I'd call bullying from conspiracy theorists. I'm hoping this new zero-tolerance policy will be applied to other forms of pseudo-medicine, like homeopathy. For example, asking Google 'Does homeopathy work?' should result in a big, bold 'No' as the first result.

Alan Denver

Boo to Google's music restrictions

✉ Regarding Google 'scaring' people into paying for photo storage, it seems that the company has decided to boost its financial position during a global pandemic.

I say this as an owner of Google Home and Google Mini smart speakers, which I've had for a couple of years and have been reasonably pleased with both. I uploaded my music library (25.5GB) to Google Music so I can play my old CDs (after ripping them) wherever I like in the house.

This worked up to a point. I just wanted to listen to my own music (not listen to new music), so I chose not to subscribe to Google Music. Unfortunately, for reasons unknown, this meant I was forced into setting up playlist after playlist on Google Music.

This worked until recently. Last year Google contacted me and millions of others to tell us that our music storage was moving over to YouTube Music, so we had to transfer all our music libraries before a certain date or lose them. I did this, but ever since I've not been able to play music in the same way as before, only YouTube or Spotify playlists (made by someone else) via the speakers, or



streamed from my phone to the speakers.

Google has told me that these services are not like for like, and to listen to my own music I now need to subscribe for £9.99 a month. So I'm now looking for alternatives. Do smart

speakers with storage exist that don't need to be subscribed to?

Boo to you Google and all your discounted speakers. It's a very underhanded way of milking money from customers.

Delme Jones

In the name of the father

✉ I enjoyed Issue 601's Grow Your Family Tree ('Find fathers of illegitimate children'), particularly the tip that single mothers used the father's name for their child's middle name. Since childhood (I'm now in my 70s), I've been intrigued by the name on a 'death penny' issued during World War 1 to my paternal great-grandmother after the loss of her second husband on HMS Majestic in 1915.

His name was shown as Percy Adolphus Simon Baggs Tryphook Cornish. This seemed to me to be quite a mouthful, so a few years ago I tried to trace his history. Long story short, I drew

a complete blank with the exception of finding his mother's name and his date of birth. I researched 'Tryphook' (being such an unusual surname) and found an army officer in Southsea at that time by the name of Simon Bagge Tryphook.

Percy Cornish's mother was working in Southsea just before his birth, so I think there can be no doubt who the father was, and that his complete name was given to his offspring with just one minor spelling difference. She obviously wanted to ensure that there would be no doubt as to her son's parentage in future years!

Graham Gollar

No idea I was paying LastPass £31 a month

✉ As a long-time user of LastPass, I was interested to read your article in Issue 601 (pages 62-63) about it ending free syncing across all your devices. I enjoyed using LastPass so much that about five years ago I decided to upgrade to a Premium account. I thought for about £7 a year it was worth having. I've had automatic renewal emails each year since, so I assumed the change wouldn't affect me.

But then in your article I got to the part where you mention LastPass Premium costing £31.20 per year. That set the alarm bells ringing. I logged into my

Oil just show you my old phones...

✉ Regarding your request for old phones that still work, here are all my Nokia phones from 1995 to 2021. They all work, some only with battery help from the charger. Back in the 1990s the oil industry went digital, and I had a good signal in Aberdeen, so I bought the Nokia 2110 (1 in picture) in February 1995.

I upgraded to the Nokia 6310i (2 at the end of 2002. It's one of the best phones Nokia ever produced, and was for years the dominant GSM device in the corporate world (especially in the oil industry). We've used it in the family for over 19 years! I was eventually forced to get a smartphone, so got a relatively cheap Nokia 8.

Roger Dyer



CA SAYS We were about to call time on the challenge to find our readers' oldest phone, but we couldn't resist Roger's impressive collection. Perhaps he could open Scotland's first Nokia museum.

account and checked my payment history – and there it was! In 2016, the payment had started at \$14. My last two payments have been \$43.20, and with today's exchange rate that would be about the £31.20 you mentioned. I cannot recollect any mention of price increases in the renewal emails. Needless to say I have cancelled any further automatic renewals.

I've since switched to Bitwarden (<https://bitwarden.com>), which you recommend in your article, and exported my passwords from LastPass having followed your Workshop. I now use Bitwarden on all four of my devices for free.

Thanks to *Computeractive* I've been taught a valuable lesson, which is never to click the auto-renewal button on subscriptions. You've also saved me £31.20 this year.

Terry Reed

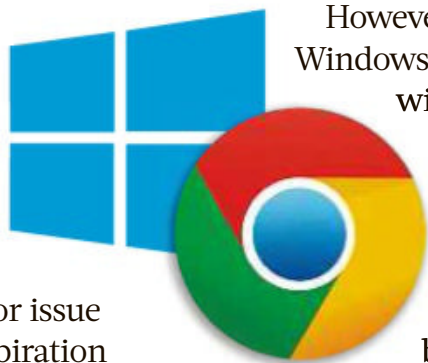
CA SAYS Terry was one of several readers who told us they've ditched LastPass for another service. Bitwarden is certainly an excellent alternative. It recently launched a tool for sending encrypted messages (see page 11), and makes it easy to create uncrackable passwords (see page 38). Dropbox too has launched a free password manager (see page 9). LastPass's rivals have wasted no time in targeting users looking to leave. Please tell us if you've switched.

Room for both Windows and Chromebooks in a relationship

✉ I've been following with great interest the recent debate concerning Chromebooks. Last June, I took the plunge and bought myself an Acer Chromebook 311 for £199.99, having been a devoted Windows user since 1992.

I can now understand both its benefits and drawbacks, as well as the major issue regarding the Auto Update Expiration (AUE) Date linked to Chromebooks.

I certainly love the speed of my Chromebook and how it instantly opens apps, plus it's great not having to endure long and laborious updates. I readily accept that my device will only last a few years, though this is not justifiable due to the environmental damage caused by discarded electrical devices.



However, when it comes to Windows, nothing can compare with Microsoft 365. Also, once its updates are complete, I can work quite happily on my research and writing. I just need to learn to be more patient and understanding with Windows.

In the end, I think you have to embrace both systems, using them to suit your individual needs, though I know not everyone will agree. I'm happy with my current 'marriage', and won't be 'divorcing' my Windows laptop.

There is mutual respect for both systems in my household!

Helena Bailey

STAR LETTER

Govt will use broadband speed as excuse to keep licence fee

✉ At first I didn't understand media minister John Whittingdale's idea of linking the survival of the TV licence fee with the availability of fast broadband (News, Issue 602, page 9). Why should we have to wait until everyone has 100Mbps (or even Gigabit) broadband before axing the anachronistic TV licence?

But then I thought about it more, and I guess it comes down to technology. If you make the BBC a subscription service like Netflix, then presumably it would be much easier to turn that on or off if it's delivered through the internet.

My big question is what happens to BBC radio. I suspect there are millions of people in the UK who value the BBC's radio content over its TV output, which sadly has been declining for many years. How easy will it be to separate the BBC's TV and radio services, so people like me would be allowed to pay only for the latter?

I'd also want the BBC to offer tiers of programming that you can pay for, like Sky does. I might be tempted to pay for



BBC Four, but not the other channels, or specialised music, sport and movie channels. At the moment it's all or nothing, which is deeply unsatisfactory.

My questions are probably hypothetical anyway because I suspect the problem of the licence fee will be kicked down the road when the charter comes up for renewal in 2027. No matter what the UK's average broadband speed is by then, I reckon the Government will decree that it's not fast enough and postpone any decision. This will continue until the BBC's audience withers to a fraction of what it is now, by which time it might be too late to save.

Sam Dodds



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

My photos are too fuzzy for Facebook

✉ I must admit I've never been into Facebook, but during the pandemic it's been a useful way to keep up to date with the local situation. However, earlier this month Facebook blocked my account and asked me to prove my identity. Initially I took this as a scam, but some research shows that it's genuine.

Now this is where the fun started. The photos on both my driving licence and passport are too fuzzy for Facebook, and it wouldn't accept my birth certificate. Doesn't Facebook realise I have no control over the quality of these photos? The only solution for some would be to open another account under a different email address.

John Palk



We stand up for your legal rights

Should Hermes refund me for losing my printer?

Q In August last year I bought a Canon printer for £249.97 from Technology Geeks (www.snipca.com/37623). It became faulty so I returned it via Hermes, but Technology Geeks says it never arrived. I suspect that Hermes lost the printer, and so it should refund me for the cost of it, but I can't get through to anyone. Can you help?

Mick Flynn

A We were happy to give it a go, though Mick was entitled only to a refund of the delivery cost he paid Hermes plus £20 compensation, not the full price of the printer. This is because he didn't pay for insurance to cover the cost of the printer. This may sound unfair, but it's how couriers work. If they were liable for replacing every item sent, they wouldn't be able to stay in business.

However, after we spoke to Hermes it agreed to refund the full price of the printer as a goodwill gesture. It strongly urged other readers to pay for insurance when sending valuable items. You can



calculate how much this would cost by entering the weight, value and destination at www.snipca.com/37621. It doesn't cover items worth more than £300. Without insurance, Hermes covers items only up to £20, excluding "non-compensation items" such as laptops and expensive jewellery (see the full list at www.snipca.com/37620).

Mick would have been able to claim back the cost of returning the printer (plus any insurance paid) from Technology Geeks had it actually received the device and then agreed it was faulty.

CASE CLOSED

Can Currys refuse a refund for a failed repair?

Q A friend's Lenovo laptop, which he bought in 2017 and sent back to Currys for repair at a cost of £179.99, came back after eight weeks with the same problem. I've repaired it since, but Currys isn't interested in refunding him this money. Is he entitled to a refund?

Gareth Williams

A Yes, we think he is, and Currys has now agreed because it has refunded him in full. Section 4, Subsection 56 of the Consumer Rights Act (www.snipca.com/37501) entitles customers to a refund if a repair hasn't been carried out with "reasonable skill and care". Plus, because the repair took eight weeks, it wasn't performed within a "reasonable time", causing Jim "significant inconvenience" because he had to buy a tablet for the interim.

Currys might have argued the repair wasn't a total failure and therefore reduced Gareth's refund, but we believe this would've been unfair. After all, the problem that existed before the attempted repair remained after the laptop was returned. If that's not a failed repair, we don't know what is.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE

TalkTalk refunds reader for unwanted engineer visit



TalkTalk has managed to keep reader Ronald Fearn as a customer after resolving his two complaints. Ronald was surprised when a TalkTalk engineer called at his home unexpectedly, and then shocked to get a £65 bill for the visit. As explained in Issue 602, he was unhappy to be charged for an appointment he hadn't booked. He was also angry that TalkTalk increased his monthly bill by £10 without telling him.

We got TalkTalk to admit that Ronald

shouldn't have been charged £65 for the engineer's visit and it has refunded him. The price rise was a more complicated issue. By law, providers have to tell you when your bills are increasing during your contract. If the increase is higher than the RPI rate of inflation, you've got 30 days to cancel without paying an early-termination fee.

Ronald says he wasn't told about the price rise, in which case he would've been entitled to leave without paying a fee no matter how high the increase was. However, it's possible

he overlooked TalkTalk's email announcing the rise. As it happened, the increase was above the rate of inflation – from £27 a month to £37 – so Ronald would've been allowed to leave without a penalty. TalkTalk could've insisted he stayed on this contract or paid a fee to leave, but instead it did the decent thing and said he could terminate his contract for free.

In the end though, keen to keep Ronald as a customer, it offered to move him to a £25 monthly contract, which he accepted.

Contact us so we can investigate your case

✉ **Email:** consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk
Please include your name, phone number and address.

Why is PayPal taking money from me?

Q PayPal has been taking £4.99 a month from me even though I don't use it. My bank refunded me this money, but the demands for more money are ongoing and I'm unable to close my account. What's going on?

Maurice Griffiths

A We're rather perplexed by this payment. It doesn't seem to be the annual 'inactivity' fee that PayPal introduced in December for accounts that haven't been used in a year.

Maurice said he rarely used his account, but that doesn't mean PayPal should be charging him £4.99 a month. We'll ask the company what's happened.

PayPal gives more information on the inactivity fee at www.snipca.com/37614, explaining that it will charge users £9 a year or the remaining balance (whichever is greater). You don't need to make any payments to avoid this fee. Simply logging into your account counts as using it.

To close his account, Maurice needs to log into the website from a browser (not



the PayPal app), transfer any outstanding funds to his bank, then go to Settings, select 'Close your account', and follow the instructions. PayPal has more info at www.snipca.com/37589. He may need to verify ownership of the account, which might be the reason he hasn't been able to close it yet. We've asked PayPal to look into this also.

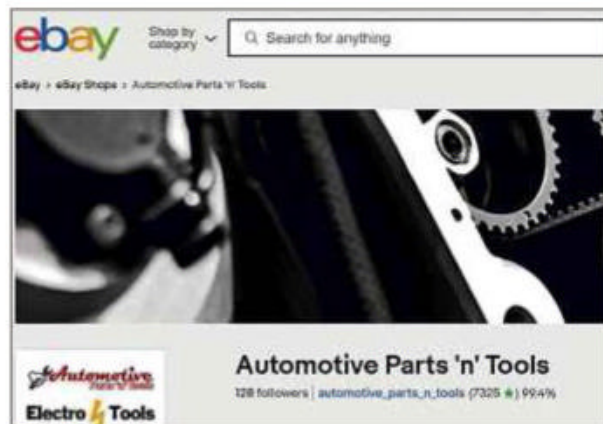
CASE CLOSED

Who's responsible for a missing parcel?

Q I bought a Fluke Volt light LVD1 voltage detector from the eBay seller Automotive Parts 'n' Tools (www.snipca.com/37616), paying by Mastercard. The item turned out to be

faulty, so I sent it back via Hermes and the seller finally agreed they had received it. But they then said they were sending it back to me for reasons I don't understand. However, I've got nothing back, and eBay has said I'm not covered by its Buyer Protection scheme. What's going on?

Geoffrey Evans



A We wish we knew. If the item was inherently faulty then under the Consumer Rights Act Geoffrey would be entitled to a refund, and that would be that. What we don't know is whether the seller rejected the returned item – in which case we'd

assume it thought he wasn't due a refund – or accepted it, fixed it, then sent it back. We'll try to find out, using Hermes' tracking number (we'll check with the courier that this is valid).


We're also puzzled why eBay said he's not covered by its protection, though perhaps it thinks the seller is trying to resolve the case. It seems clear to us that, having first received a faulty item and now having no item at all, Geoffrey should get his money back. We'll ask eBay why his claim was rejected.

We've also suggested Geoffrey tries asking Mastercard for a chargeback. He needs to contact his bank and fill in the requisite forms, but hopefully he'll be covered.

CASE ONGOING

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Face the Vax – eBay reseller worked wonders

 I recently purchased a refurbished Vax UCPMSHV1 vacuum cleaner from Direct Vacuums' eBay store (www.ebay.co.uk/usr/direct-vacuums). I did this while waiting for Vax to respond about repairing an old model that was still under guarantee. I ordered it on Sunday, it was dispatched on Monday, and I received it on Tuesday.

It cost only £70.99, £60 less than the full price. It was in great condition too, with no



signs of being used. There was only issue: the plastic collar on the extension tube was back to front and upside down. I contacted the company via eBay, and received a replacement part on Saturday.

✉ Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know: editor@computeractive.co.uk

Compare that service with Vax. A month after contacting them, I've had no reply apart from auto-generated 'holding' emails. I'll never buy a brand-new vacuum again.

Ian Nicholson

Contact
Direct Vacuums

• **Email** support@directvacuums.co.uk
• **Phone** 01582 66 46 00

Grow Your Family Tree



Nick Peers shows you which search tools will help you...

Create a list of overseas ancestors

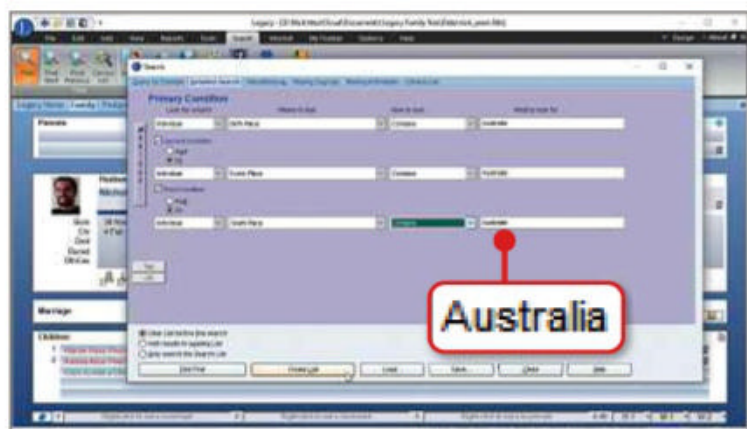
There may come a point in your research where you need to find a piece of information from your tree, but the search tools aren't up to the task. That's what reader Malcolm Smith discovered when he attempted to produce a list of all relatives and ancestors based outside the UK. Neither tool he uses for his tree – Ancestry and Family Tree Maker (FTM) – lets you do this.

Set the right 'conditions' in Legacy

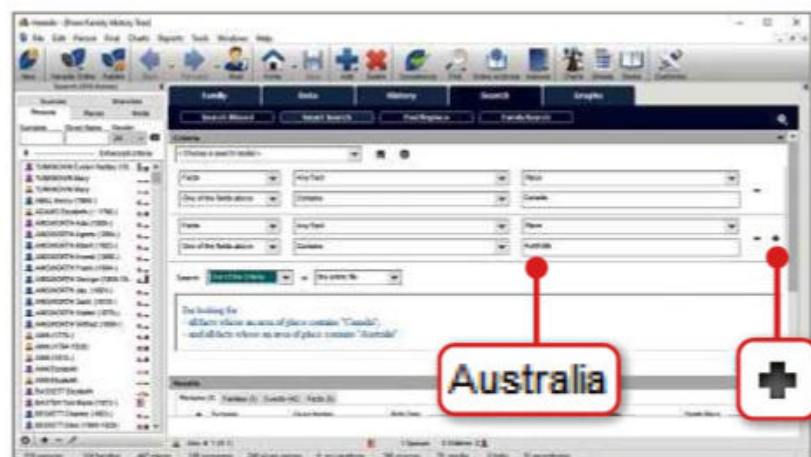
There are more sophisticated tools to help you, such as the two we'll recommend here. The first, completely free, is the Standard version of Legacy from www.legacyfamilytree.com. Malcolm can transfer his tree from FTM to Legacy using the universal GEDCOM format (see

Issue 561 for instructions – you'll find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD: www.snipca.com/37026).

Once transferred, switch to Legacy's Search tab at the top, then click the Find button. Select the Detailed tab to reveal tools that let you search for up to three keywords at a time. Set the first ('Primary') condition to: 'Individual, Birth Place, Contains', and then type **Australia** (or whichever country you're looking for). Set the second condition to 'Individual, Event-Place, Contains' (again with Australia), and the third to Individual, Death Place, and Contains (Australia). The screenshot below shows these selections.



You can search for three conditions at a time with Legacy



Click the '+' symbol in Heredis to add countries to a search

Create List again. This will add matching individuals from your second country to the existing list. Repeat for each country you want to add.

It's not a perfect list. Anyone who spent time in the countries will appear, even those who subsequently returned to Britain, but it's still a handy summary.

Use Heredis's Smart Search

If you're willing to pay, then Heredis (around £28, www.heredis.com/en) offers a better solution. After importing your file into the program, open the Find menu and choose 'Smart Search...'. You'll see a search panel with five dropdown menus and one search field to fill. Set the dropdown menus to Facts, Any Fact, Place, 'One of the fields above', and Contains respectively, then type the name of your first country into the search box next to these.

Next, click '+' (the plus symbol) to the right of the search box and type the name of the second country you're looking for ('Australia' in the screenshot above). Add as many new countries as you need. Next, select 'One of the criteria', then click Search to reveal the results. Beneath the results you'll see buttons letting you process this list further – click Edit to generate a custom report or click the floppy-disk icon above the search criteria to save the results.

Your Genealogy Problems Solved

I'm having trouble finding details of Swiss relatives. I've tried country searches on Ancestry and FamilySearch, but drew a blank. Do you have any suggestions, please?

Stuart Baker

Unfortunately, most Swiss records haven't been digitised, so you're left with two options. First, search Google using the

free tool AncestorSearch (www.randymajors.org/ancestorsearch) to see if your ancestors have been added to someone else's online tree. If that fails, you'll have to trek through FamilySearch's Switzerland pages, region by region (www.snipca.com/37534).



Have a genealogy question for Nick? Email letters@computeractive.co.uk with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.

UNLEASH YOUR FULL GAMING POTENTIAL



AMD
FreeSync
Premium

Get the competitive edge you need to unleash your full gaming potential with the 24" and 27" G-Masters offering 0.8ms MPRT and 165Hz refresh rate. Armed with FreeSync Premium you can make split second decisions and forget about ghosting effects or smearing issues. The ability to adjust brightness and the dark shades with the Black Tuner delivers greater viewing performance in shadowed areas and the IPS panel technology guarantees superb image quality.



Fixed stand versions:
24" G2470HSU-B1 & 27" G2770HSU-B1
Version with height adjustment:
24" GB2470HSU-B1 & 27" GB2770HSU-B1



Find your match at
gmaster.iiyama.com

Best Free Software

Will Stapley recommends new programs that won't cost you anything

AUDIO EDITOR

Audacity 3.00

www.snipca.com/37713

What you need: Windows 8.1 or 10



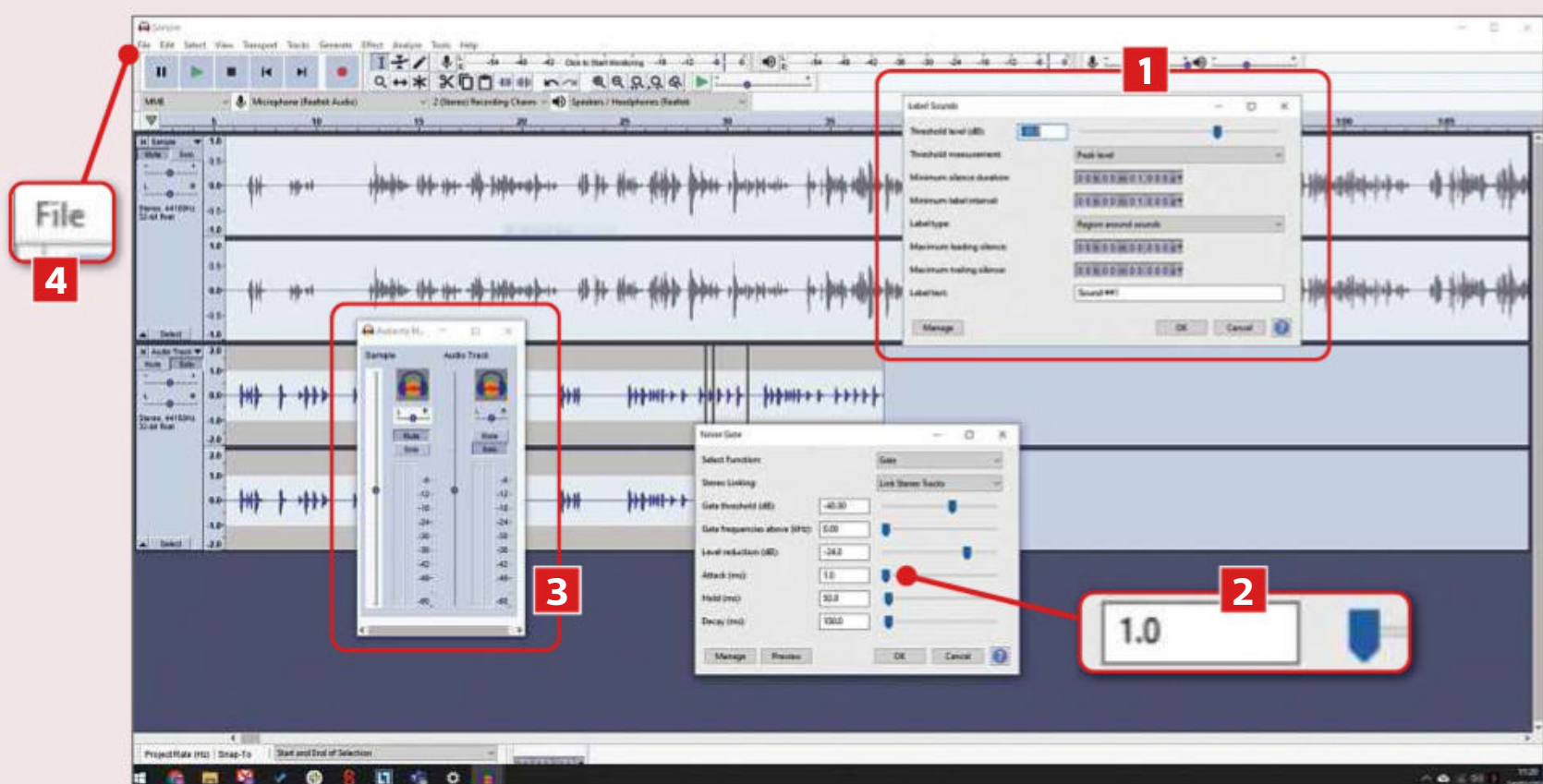
Audacity is a powerful, **open-source** tool that lets you record and edit audio. Version 3.00 (select the Audacity Windows Installer option at the top of the Download section at the URL above) is a major release that introduces a range of new features, but the design remains remarkably similar to its first release back in 2000 (if it ain't broke...). Note that although Audacity runs on Windows 7, it's not *officially* supported – you can see a list of known compatibility problems at www.snipca.com/37715.

One of the biggest new features is the Label Sounds tool, which makes it much easier to split long audio recordings (such as an entire album that you've digitised) into individual tracks. This tool is a simpler alternative to using the separate Sound Finder and Silence Finder tools of the previous version (though these are still available). Once the Label Sounds process is complete, Audacity will add labels to each track that it has found. You can then edit these labels (renaming

them with the track titles) and export them as separate MP3 files (see below).

Audacity projects are now saved in the new AUP3 format. Unlike the previous AUP format, which saved associated data files for each project in a separate folder, AUP3 stores everything in one file, which makes it easier to move your Audacity projects from one PC to another. The new format also improves performance when applying effects, albeit only slightly (adjusting the pitch of an hour-long track took us 15 seconds compared with 18 seconds in the previous version).

Other improvements (all referred to below) include faster transitions when using the Noise Gate tool (this lets you add a background track that fades in and out over a voice recording), Mixer Boards that now always stay on top of the main Audacity window, and the ability to create backups of your projects.



1 To split a recording into individual tracks, select the entire recording (press Ctrl+A). Open the Analyze menu and select Label Sounds. Click File, Export, then 'Export Multiple...' to save the tracks as MP3s.

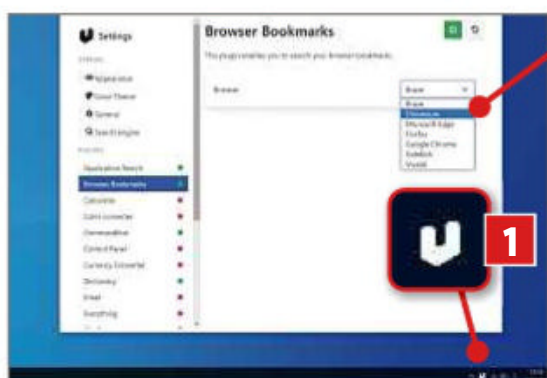
2 You can now apply faster transitions when using the Noise Gate tool. Select 'Noise Gate...' in the Effects menu, then reduce the Attack value (determines how fast the background track fades in and out) to a minimum of 1ms.

3 The Mixer Board window, which lets you adjust the volume of each track, now remains visible even when using the main Audacity interface. To open it, click View, then 'Mixer Board...'. The volume slider for the selected track is shown in the callout.

4 To use the new backup feature, click File, Save Project, 'Backup Project...' and give your backup a name. Unlike when using Save As to create backups, Audacity will then return you to your original project.



PROGRAM LAUNCHER



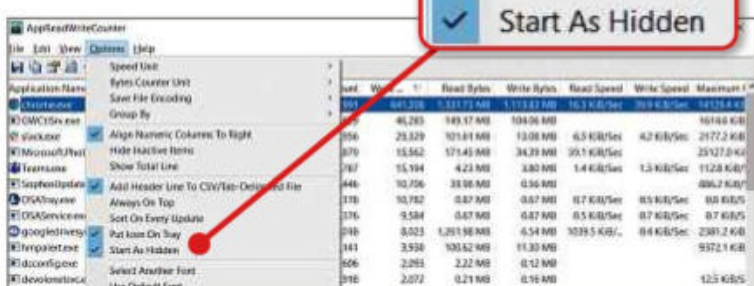
Ueli 8.12

www.snipca.com/37738

What you need: Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

We've never found the search tool in the Windows Start menu particularly reliable (even when we type a program's name in full, it often fails to find what we're after). Ueli is a much faster and more accurate alternative. Once installed, press Alt+Space to open the search box, then start typing your search term (programs, documents, images and so on). The results will appear as soon as you start typing - select the one you want using the arrow keys or your mouse. This version lets you search for bookmarks in Firefox and Chromium browsers (Chrome, Edge, Brave and more). To select your browser, right-click the Ueli icon in the system tray **1**, select Settings, then click the dropdown menu in the Browser Bookmarks section **2**.

HARD-DRIVE TOOL



AppReadWriteCounter 1.32

www.snipca.com/37734

What you need: Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

Does your hard drive constantly click and whirr (known as 'thrashing')? Does Windows slow down even though Task Manager indicates your processor isn't under much stress? The problem could be due to a particular program reading and writing an unusually high amount of data on your hard drive. AppReadWriteCounter from NirSoft (use the download links near the bottom of the page at the URL above) monitors how hard each program is working your hard drive, letting you quickly identify resource hogs. The tool records this data only while it's open, but this version lets you load it as soon as you boot Windows - select Put Icon On Tray and Start As Hidden (see screenshot) in the Options menu to do this.

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

What can I use to find duplicate files?

Q

Could you please recommend a free program that will identify and remove duplicate files, including photos, music and videos?

Alan Wilson

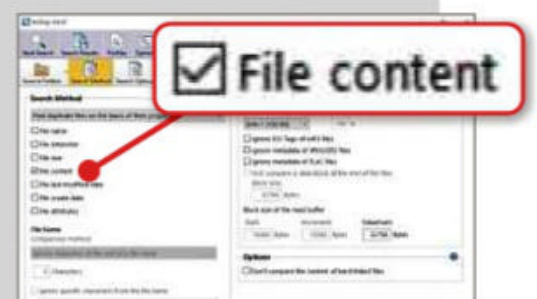
A

It's interface could do with a makeover (the huge array of buttons can be confusing for newcomers), but our favourite duplicate file finder is AllDup (www.snipca.com/37732 - click the 'Server #1' link in the Download section). Before using any duplicate file finder, we recommend creating a complete backup of *all* your files, preferably on an external hard drive.

Once you've done this, load AllDup, then click the Source Folders button (top left) and tick the folders you want it to search for duplicates. The 'Comparison Method' section lets you choose how to search for duplicates (for example, only comparing files in the same folder or across all sub-folders).

Next, click the Search Method button (to the right of Search Folders) and, in the top-left box, select which type of duplicate files you want to look for. Be wary of selecting 'Find duplicate files on the basis of their properties' - if two files happen to have the same name, they may get marked as duplicates. To avoid this, tick the 'File content' box (see screenshot), which compares files based on their hashes. Each file generates a unique hash (a long string of characters based on its contents), so it's a reliable way to detect duplicates. This method also finds duplicates that have different file names (the file name isn't used when generating a hash).

When you're ready, click 'Start Search' (top left). Once complete, a new window will open, showing all possible duplicates. Expand each file in the left-hand pane, then select the duplicates you want to remove (use the preview pane on the right to check they are indeed duplicates). Finally, click the File Manager button (icon of a file with an 'X', top left), then in the 'What action is to be performed?' section choose whether to delete the selected files, send them to your recycle bin or move them to a different folder.



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

HOW I USE...

PDF24

Will Stapley reveals why he ditched Adobe Reader in favour of a more capable PDF tool



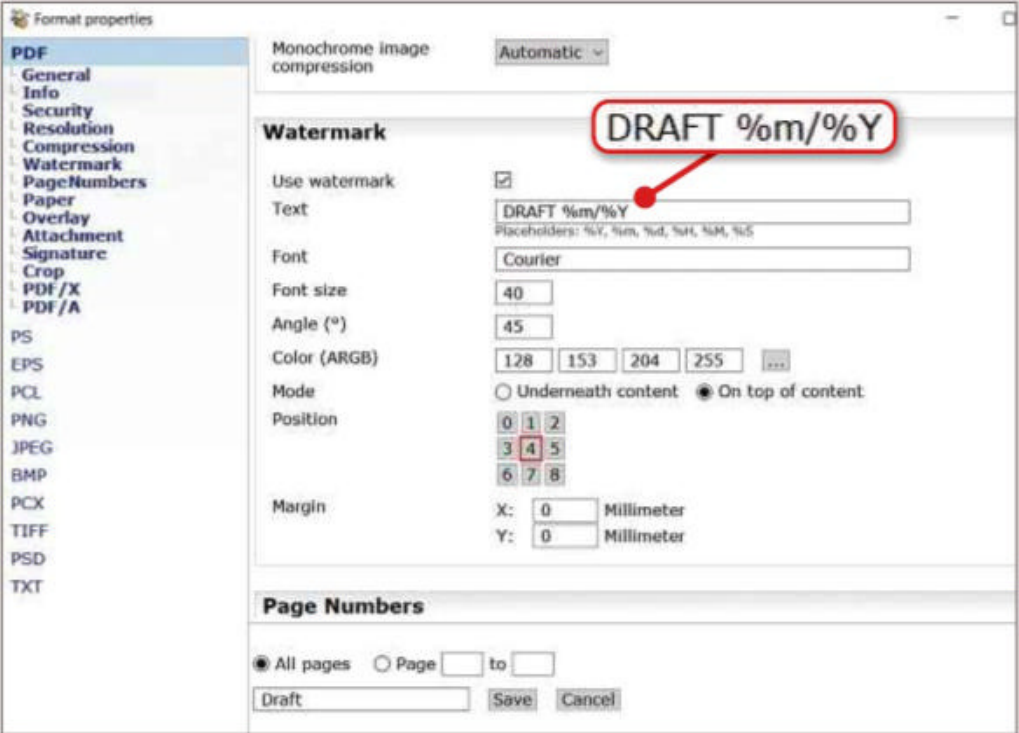
Use PDF24's profiles feature to quickly add watermarks to your PDFs

At the start of the year I wasn't alone in saying good riddance to Adobe Flash. Full of bugs and blighted by a series of security flaws, it should have been killed off years ago. In stark contrast, Adobe's PDF format (which it created in 1993) should be around for decades to come and is popular among both home and business users (every page of every *Computeractive* issue is sent to the printers as a PDF).

Adobe has made a complete hash of its free Reader tool, though. Despite having few features beyond reading PDFs, it's slow and takes up over 350MB of hard-drive space. While there are plenty of free alternatives, only one does *everything* I want: PDF24 (www.snipca.com/37711).

In fact, it does so much that the main menu, which comprises a mind-boggling 41 tools, can be a little overwhelming at first glance. Besides that, you also have to cope with the developer's obsession with sheep (each tool has its own sheep-based icon – no, I'm not sure why either).

I'm willing to forgive PDF24's unconventional design when all my



favourite PDF tools are just one click away. I can create, split, merge, redact, annotate, compare and even flatten PDFs (that last option removes any boxes from PDF forms).

What I particularly like is that it lets me create profiles with which to create different types of PDFs. I've amassed a small collection of profiles, including one that applies a draft watermark to each page (useful when I'm sending a document for review, not publication).

To create a profile, I select 'Manage output profiles' (grinning-sheep icon) from the main menu, click New at the bottom of the window that appears, then give the profile a name. I then scroll through the options, tweaking the profile to suit my needs.

To add the watermark in my Draft profile, I ticked the 'Use watermark' box, then typed **DRAFT %m/%Y** into the Text box (see screenshot above) – the '%m/%Y

adds the month and year, so the watermark appears with the current month and year. I then adjust details such as the colour, size and position of the text, before clicking Save.

If I want to use a profile I've created, I select 'Open PDF24 Creator' from the main menu (another smiling-sheep icon), drag the source files into the preview window on the right, then click Save (floppy-disk icon) before selecting the profile I want to use.

I've never been keen on using free PDF online tools, mainly because I've no idea what they actually do with the content I upload (probably nothing, but I'd rather not take the chance). This is another reason I use PDF24 because it keeps everything on my PC.

That said, if PDF24 can't complete a PDF task on your PC, it will upload the document to its PDF service and try doing it online instead. To ensure my documents stay on my PC, I've turned this feature off by selecting Open Settings from the main menu, then Online PDF Converter and unticking 'Use the PDF24 online converter as fallback method' (see screenshot above left).



Disable PDF24's online conversion fallback to avoid uploading your PDFs

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN PDF24

As mentioned above, the PDF24 menus can be daunting, so they need simplifying. Also, I'd like to see a PDF24 extension for

LibreOffice that lets me create PDFs (and use any profiles I've created) without having to leave the document I'm working on.

Named & Shamed



Jonathan Parkyn puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software stuffed with junk

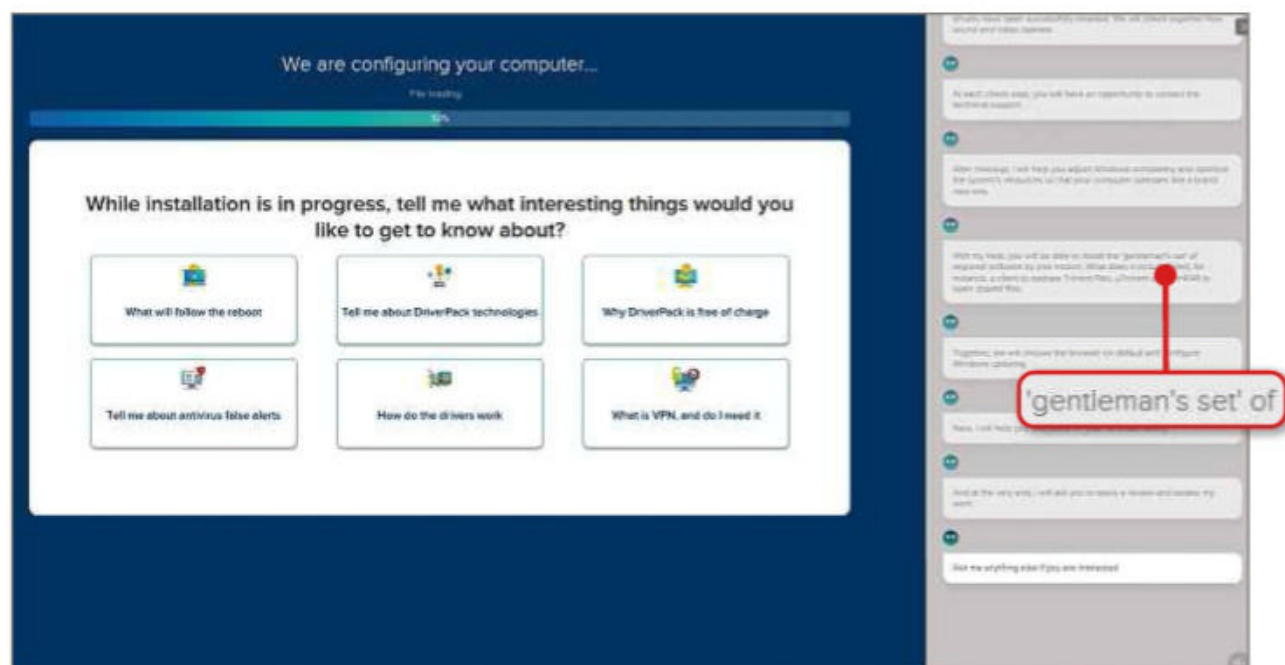
WARNING: JUNK AHEAD

Junk offender: DriverPack Solution

If you're looking for a free tool to update your PC's **drivers**, make sure you avoid DriverPack Solution. Its website – which ranks high in a Google search for 'driver installer free' – displays company logos of several reassuringly well-known tech "partners", boasts about an impressive (but wholly unsubstantiated) worldwide user base of almost 50 million, and promises to "install drivers for free and solve driver problems on any device".

Oh, and there's a YouTube video showing Russia's former Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev singing the tool's praises. Yep, you read that right.

Frankly, DriverPack Solution is one of the weirdest junk offenders I've had the misfortune to come across. Run it, and the program will take over your entire PC desktop, displaying a full-screen window that's clearly intended to look like the official blue Windows Update that states "we are configuring your computer". Various unspecified "drivers and toolkits" are installed on your computer whether you want them or not, while an



There's nothing gentlemanly about DriverPack's attempt to shove junk on to your PC

"assistant" provides a somewhat surreal running commentary in text bubbles down the side of the screen.

Among other things, the assistant promises that – after a reboot – it will install what it describes as a "gentleman's set of required software" (see screenshot), as though it was a Victorian barber offering me something for the weekend.

Sadly, I never got to find out what gentlemanly treats the tool had in store for me. The whole experience proved too

much for my poor test PC, which crashed during installation, forcing me to quit. Even without this promised set of gender-specific junkware, however, DriverPack Solution still managed to fill up several hundred megabytes of hard-drive space with unwanted tat.

Avoid this bizarre tool at all costs. In fact, avoid dodgy-looking driver updaters altogether – Windows Update will do that job for you, without installing a ton of rubbish into the bargain.

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

Marina Storti, Managing Director, Now

www.snipca.com/37679

"By moving from Now TV to Now, we marry our world-class quality with brilliant simplicity. This immediacy creates a true destination and community for those who love and live for the best entertainment."

WHAT THEY MEAN

Now that's what I call a pointless exercise in rebranding, but it gives us something to feel pleased about at our next board meeting.



JONATHAN'S VILLAINS OF THE FORTNIGHT

Graham Ivan Clark (and friends)

I might moan about how much my teenage son plays computer games, or how he's seemingly glued to TikTok every time I look at him, but there are worse ways he could spend his daily screen time.

Take Tampa teen Graham Ivan Clark (pictured). At just 17, he hacked into high-profile Twitter accounts (including Barack Obama, Kim Kardashian, Elon Musk, Apple and Uber) in order to scam their



unsuspecting followers into donating Bitcoin to various non-existent coronavirus-relief projects.

With the help of several other youthful hackers, including 19-year-old Mason Sheppard of Bognor Regis, Clark managed to steal as much as £84,200 before he was caught and sentenced to three years in prison, after pleading guilty. PC games and TikTok suddenly seem a lot more wholesome.



LAPTOP | £999 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/37648

Samsung Galaxy Book S Intel

Core, blimey!

The Samsung Galaxy Book S Intel is a wafer-thin laptop, measuring 11.8mm at its thickest point. It contains a hybrid Intel Core i5-L16G7 processor, which has been specifically designed to run on highly portable laptops, consisting of one 'big' **core** and four 'small' ones.

The big core is the kind that's found in a normal Intel Core processor, while the other four are based on Intel's low-power Atom processors, usually reserved for lightweight, more portable laptops. The idea is that the power-hungry main core should be called into action only when it's required for intensive tasks.

“Its focus is on mobility, and weighing in at just 950g, it's incredibly light”

In general use it feels responsive but it was by no means outstanding in our **benchmark** tests. It's faster than the Chuwi HeroBook Pro+ (see our review, Issue 601) but not by much, and the Chuwi is significantly cheaper. You can also forget about serious gaming. It runs basic games but failed to run some of our more complex tests.

So this laptop hasn't been designed for intense use. Instead, its focus is on mobility, and weighing in at just 950g, it's incredibly light. However, it still feels

robust enough to withstand the knocks of a daily commute, thanks to its sturdy aluminium alloy chassis.

It has **Wi-Fi 6** and Bluetooth 5 built in, and also a combination **microSD card** and **4G SIM** slot, letting you choose between expanding the storage or adding a mobile-data connection. With all this focus on mobility, it's therefore surprising that its battery lasted only a tad under eight hours in our video-playback test.

Samsung caters for use outdoors by offering a simple way to boost screen brightness quickly. Press the Fn button+O and the screen jumps from its standard peak brightness of around 350cd/m2 to 600cd/m2.

Overall it's an impressive screen. Full HD resolution in a screen measuring 13.3in across the diagonal ensures the detail is sharp. Samsung also gets the colour right, covering 95 per cent of the sRGB colour standard.

We're less positive about the keyboard, which has a mushy feel compared with some we've tested recently. This led to occasional missed keystrokes – though you can get around this by adapting your typing style. The touchpad is better, being

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Core i5-L16G7 processor • 8GB memory • Intel UHD graphics • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 512GB UFS storage • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.0 • 2x USB-C ports • 1x 3.5mm audio jack • 1x SIM/microSD card slot • Windows 10 Home • 11.8x305x203mm (HxWxD) • 950g • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/37563



a large, glass-coated surface that's a pleasure to use.

The fingerprint sensor built into the power key works equally well, but there's no Windows Hello webcam. Nor will this laptop appeal to those wanting to make regular video calls, with an adequate **720p** webcam but a microphone that adds echo to your voice.

We were pleasantly surprised by the laptop's speakers, however, which were clear and fairly powerful, with plenty of volume and enough definition to make music listening a pleasure.

If you'd prefer to use a 3.5mm jack headphones then there's good news: Samsung found room for only three connectors and that's one of them. The other two are both **USB-C** ports, both of which can be used for power delivery, video output and data transfer.

VERDICT The Galaxy Book S stands out from the crowd thanks to its super-lightweight design, though it would be improved by better battery life and keyboard

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Asus ZenBook 14 UX425 **£941**
With an Intel i7 processor, this is a larger and more powerful laptop for a similar price



LAPTOP | £1,500 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37653

LG Gram 16

The light fantastic

On the opposite page we've reviewed a small laptop for people who want to travel with a minimum of bulk. This laptop is different. It's still light and portable, but with a 16in screen it's much easier to work at.

The screen has a resolution of 2560x1600 pixels. This is the same size and resolution as an Apple MacBook Pro 16in, but thanks to its lightweight magnesium alloy chassis, at 1.19kg it's significantly lighter than Apple's 2kg laptop. In fact it's lighter than some 13in laptops, including the 13.3in Samsung Galaxy Book Flex2 5G (1.26kg) and the 13.3in M1 MacBook Air (1.29kg).

“Its stunning screen provides vast space and accurate colours”

The Gram 16 has large keys and a spacious touchpad. There's a full number keypad squeezed on to the right and the keys produce a pleasing punchy click when you press them. Taken together, the keyboard and trackpad make the laptop comfortable and easy to use.

You charge it via either of its two **USB-C** ports. It also offers a full-size **HDMI** port and 3.5mm headset jack, two **USB 3.0** ports and a **microSD card** slot (all pictured below). The webcam is a disappointing **720p** resolution and can't be used to log into Windows, but there is a fingerprint sensor embedded in the power button in the top-right corner of the keyboard.

It's the screen, however, that is this laptop's outstanding feature. Its tall 16:10 **aspect ratio** makes it feel as if you can squeeze more on to it than with other



16in laptops. Compared with 16:9 13in and 14in laptops, it seems vast. It showed itself to be more than capable of displaying all the colours in the several colour standards we test against, and it looks superb when streaming video via Netflix or Amazon Prime Video.

There is a selection of processors available in the range but we reviewed an Intel Core i7-1165G7 model. Its Windows performance was smooth – the i7 chip and 16GB of **RAM** providing a significant boost over laptops with older processors. However, it didn't appear much faster than comparable laptops with Intel's latest Core i5 processors, and also suffers in comparison with 4000-series AMD-based laptops, such as the Honor MagicBook Pro (see our review, Issue 591).

If you're keen to play games on the device, the latest Intel processors feature its integrated Iris Xe graphics hardware, which is as good as laptop graphics get at the moment, though this model is still best used for basic gaming.

As for battery life, that's excellent as well, with the laptop lasting 11 hours 51 minutes in our video-playback test.

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Core i7-1165G7 processor • 16GB memory • Intel Iris Xe graphics • 16in 2560x1600-pixel screen • 1TB SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.0 • 2x USB-C ports • 2x USB 3.0 ports • 1x 3.5mm audio jack • 1x SIM/microSD card slot • Windows 10 Home • 16.8x356x243mm (HxWxD) • 1.19kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/37653

HOW WE TEST

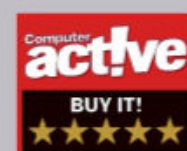
Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which employs a team of specialist technical reviewers. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every phone and tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazine *PC Pro* and the websites Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk) and IT Pro (www.itpro.com). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

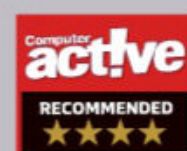
Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

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 Recommended 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 A laptop that's extraordinarily lightweight considering the size of its vast 16in screen



ALTERNATIVE 16in Honor MagicBook Pro £899 This 16in laptop has an older AMD processor rather than the latest Intel chip, but it's a great-value alternative



LEFT EDGE

RIGHT EDGE

Best Wi-Fi 6 routers tested

Strong, fast Wi-Fi throughout the house has been the holy grail of home computing for years. Could a new Wi-Fi 6 router be the answer to your prayers?

Wi-Fi 6 is the consumer-friendly name for the latest 802.11ax wireless standard. It's up to twice as fast as the previous **802.11ac** system (now rebranded as Wi-Fi 5) and it's been designed to share **bandwidth** better when multiple devices want internet access at the same time.

To get the full benefit, the devices you wirelessly connect to these routers also need to use Wi-Fi 6. Most laptops, tablets and phones produced in the last year or so will have this built in.

However, older Wi-Fi 5 devices can still benefit from some of the updated technology that's built into the Wi-Fi 6

routers we review here. We tested each router in a real house – a maisonette with a total floor area of 90m². Each router was placed in the same location, in the study at the front of the house on the first floor. The living room is directly below and the furthest test position is in a bathroom at the back of the house.

We measured performance on both Wi-Fi 6 and Wi-Fi 5, so we could see exactly which routers are fastest on both networks. Our results are quoted in Mbps, but note that this is the speed of files transferred over the network, not your internet speed. Internet speed will still be governed by your

broadband connection.

These routers won't replace the device your ISP provides to bring the internet into your home, but can be connected to it via Ethernet and used to supply your house with a vastly improved Wi-Fi network. If you opt for one of these models, it's a good idea to switch off your old Wi-Fi network to avoid clashes.

It's worth noting that Ethernet cables, even longer ones, are relatively cheap so we'd recommend taking this opportunity to position your new router more centrally in your house, particularly if your existing device is tucked away in a corner.

£300 from Netgear www.snipca.com/37674

Netgear Nighthawk RAX80



This was the fastest router we tested on the Wi-Fi 6 standard, transferring data at speeds of 520Mbps in the same and adjacent rooms. However, when we tested it over the longest distance in our house it dropped to 252Mbps, falling behind the Netgear Orbi RBK752's performance (see page 25).

It's not as fast on the Wi-Fi 5 networking standard, though, if you're looking to boost older devices, and was particularly disappointing at

longer range, dropping to 31.2Mbps.

As you might expect from a more expensive router, it's packed with extra features such as four spare Ethernet ports and two USB ports, but some of its extra tools, such as parental control and a number of extra security options, require a paid-for subscription.

RATING



£175 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37675

Asus RT-AX82U



The Asus RT-AX82U can't quite manage the impressive Wi-Fi 6 speeds achieved by the Nighthawk RAX80, with nearby speeds of 416Mbps dropping off to 112Mbps at a distance. However, it was much faster on Wi-Fi 5, so if you're still running several older devices, it's well worth considering.

It comes with four spare Gigabit Ethernet ports and a USB port on the rear. It also

has plenty of features available via its web-based interface, including parental controls and the ability to connect to a **VPN** for anonymous browsing and streaming. However, while the menu is comprehensive, it can also seem a little daunting unless you're familiar with router settings.

RATING



£64 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37681

Honor Router 3

Those on a tighter budget can also benefit from Wi-Fi 6, with this affordable router from Honor. It cuts a few corners – it provides only three spare Ethernet ports if you use its fourth to connect to your existing router, but at

this price we're willing to forgive that.

It's also not as fast as its pricier alternatives. It did manage an admirable speed of 460Mbps within the same room, but the signal drops away steeply when walls and

floors get in the way.

This applied in both Wi-Fi 6 and Wi-Fi 5 tests, but if you live in a small open space and don't share your connection with many others, it's a great option for the price.



RATING



£440 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37682

Netgear Orbi RBK752

This isn't Netgear's best performing Wi-Fi 6 mesh router – that honour goes to the more expensive £750 Orbi Pro SXK60 – but even with its lower specifications this model delivers strong signals

at long range.

Nearby it transferred data at 452Mbps on Wi-Fi 6, only dropping to 307Mbps at the furthest distance. It showed similar long-range strength on Wi-Fi 5, ranging from

169Mbps down to 141Mbps across the entire house.

It's pricey because you get the two devices in the pack, and these are effectively two routers that work incredibly well together.



RATING



£249 from Broadband Buyer www.snipca.com/37683

TP-Link Deco X20

The Deco X20 is fairly average when it comes to network speeds, but with three units in the box for less than the price of a single Netgear Nighthawk RAX80, this could be a better option for those wanting to spread their network over a

wider area.

However, it was certainly no slouch, reaching speeds of 448Mbps in the same room, but dropping to 208Mbps at its furthest point. Wi-Fi 5 coverage is also reasonable, ranging between 205Mbps

and 137Mbps.

The devices themselves are small and compact but each unit only has two Ethernet ports. You have to control the network using a smartphone app, as there's no tool for doing so online.



RATING



WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best monitor for Xbox Series X gaming?

Q

My sons have an Xbox Series X (www.snipca.com/37687).

Between them they have saved up £400 to buy a monitor that shows off the console in its full glory. What specifications are best? They would prefer a curved model as they play sitting at a desk.

David Lisle

A

Although it may seem like a lot of money, you still need to compromise on some features when you're looking to spend £400 on

a gaming monitor. We think the sensible option would be to prioritise refresh rate over resolution, as this makes the whole gaming experience smoother, even if you lose some detail. Also, 4K monitors aren't generally as responsive as lower-resolution models.

Our choice would be the BenQ EX3203R (www.snipca.com/37676, pictured). It's slightly over your budget at £426, but we think it's worth the extra. It's a 32in curved monitor, with QHD resolution (2560x1440 pixels) and a maximum refresh rate of 144MHz. It uses



AMD's FreeSync, which is compatible with the Xbox's graphics hardware, so it can alter its refresh rate according to the requirements of the game.



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

PHONE | £845 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37692

Samsung Galaxy S21+ 5G

Star power

In Issue 599 we reviewed the Samsung Galaxy S21 (www.snipca.com/37212), awarding it five stars thanks to its great screen, powerful performance and reasonable price. Here we're testing the S21+, which is a step up in terms of price, but comes with a larger screen and longer battery life.

Inside is Samsung's latest Exynos 2100 processor and a generous 8GB of memory. The screen has a resolution of 1080x2400 and a **refresh rate** of 120Hz, making it silky smooth to use. There are three cameras on the back of the phone: a 12-megapixel main sensor; a 64-megapixel telephoto camera; and a 12-megapixel **ultrawide** unit. It also offers **5G** connectivity and runs Android 11.

“A powerful phone that's smooth to use, lovely to look at and lasts for longer”

At 6.7in across the diagonal, the Galaxy S21+'s **AMOLED** screen is roughly five per cent larger than the basic Galaxy S21, but it shares the same resolution. It has a small hole in the top centre of the screen, which houses the 10-megapixel selfie camera, and there's an in-screen fingerprint reader.

In terms of quality, the screen is as good as we'd expect from a Samsung device. It covers 96 per cent of the **sRGB** colour standard in the phone's default settings, and reached a dazzling maximum brightness of 1,099**cd/m²**.

The phone comes with 128GB or 256GB of storage, depending on how much you're willing to spend. However, as we

SPECIFICATIONS

Octa-core Samsung Exynos 2100 • 8GB memory • 6.7in 120Hz 1080x2400 resolution AMOLED screen • 128GB or 256GB storage • 64-megapixel rear camera • 10-megapixel front camera • Wi-Fi 6 • Android 11 • 7.8x76x162mm (HxWxD) • 200g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/37692



were writing this review, both capacities were available for a similar price on Amazon. Note, there's no opportunity to upgrade it later with a memory card.

When it comes to general performance, the Exynos 2100 chip is around 30 per cent faster than its predecessor, the Galaxy S20+, with similar performance levels to the Xiaomi Mi 11 (see our review, Issue 602). It also trounces its predecessor in graphics performance, doubling the **benchmark** test scores of the Galaxy 20+.

At 4,800mAh, the S21+'s battery is 20 per cent larger than the one in the regular Galaxy S21 and this helped it last two hours longer in our video-playback test.

Photos taken on the devices are rich with detail, with excellent use of **HDR** and colours that look as if they're going to leap right out of the screen. Our only complaint is that we found we often had to adjust the exposure slider down a notch or two, because the auto-exposure has a tendency to boost the brightness of an image a tad too much.

VERDICT An astonishingly good smartphone, but we're not sure the larger screen size and longer battery life is worth the extra you'll pay over the Galaxy S21

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Xiaomi Mi 11 £660 A cheaper phone with a similar specification that offers better value for money



CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

IPS screens



What are they?

IPS stands for In-Plane Switching and is a type of **LCD** (liquid-crystal display) screen. Most affordable monitors, laptops and smartphones now use IPS panels, because they offer a huge improvement in colour quality and viewing angles over previous flatscreen technologies, such as **TN** (Twisted Nematic) and **VA** (Vertical Alignment). However, IPS screens aren't as good at displaying contrast as **OLED** screens, which tend to be more expensive.



How do they work?

The key difference with IPS screens is how they are lit. IPS technology uses a bright light situated behind the pixels. The colour of each pixel is changed to let through just the right amount of light, so your eyes see the whole picture on screen made up of thousands of pixels. To become black, the pixels need to block this light. This is the main weakness of IPS as some light will usually leak through. This is why contrast is improved by more expensive **OLED** screens, where each pixel has its own light that can be switched off to display a perfect black.

What are the specs?

The key thing to look out for on an IPS screen is the refresh rate – the length of time it takes for an individual pixel to change colour. Older and cheaper IPS screens might have a response rate of five milliseconds (5 ms), while newer, higher-priced models may get this down to 1ms. If you're using the monitor for games and home entertainment, opt for a low response rate. You won't notice a 5ms response time when you're using Windows, but it can cause 'ghosting' – leaving a ghostly image behind – in a fast-moving game or video.

Can I change it later?

If you're using a desktop PC you can always switch your monitor, but laptops and mobile phones are stuck with the screen they come with.



£499.99

Impulse

AMD IMPULSE (RYZ7)

AMD Ryzen 5 2600 - 6 Cores (O.C 4Ghz)

ASUS PRIME B450M-A

CORSAIR 8GB DDR4 3000Mhz

INTEL 512GB M.2 nVME 660P

AMD RX 560 2GB

GAMEMAX Expedition

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro



£599.99

mercury

INTEL i5 MERCURY (COF9)

INTEL Core i5 9600K (O.C 5Ghz)

ASUS PRIME Z390-P

CORSAIR 16GB DDR4 3000Mhz

INTEL 1TB M.2 nVME 660P

INTEL UHD 630 Integrated Graphics

KOLINK Stronghold

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro



£1249.99

NAVIGATOR

AMD NAVIGATOR (RYZ8)

AMD Ryzen 5 3600X (O.C 4.3Ghz)

ASUS TUF X570-Plus Gaming

CORSAIR 16GB DDR4 3600Mhz - RGB

INTEL 512GB M.2 nVME 660P

SEAGATE 2TB Sata3 HDD

AMD 5700XT 8GB

CORSAIR iCUE 220T RGB White

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro

palicomp

01270 898 104
sales@palicomp.co.uk

*Sales subject to our terms of sale available online - www.palicomp.co.uk - Configuration issues will be advised by phone - any alternatives will also be advised by phone before proceeding with the order. Systems Custom built then are tested 100% prior to dispatch - dispatched via courier for next working day delivery - other delivery options available online. 0% Finance upto 12 months only - terms online - early settlement fee just £29.00 - apply online or phone. Prices inclusive of VAT and free UK mainland shipping. Q-jump cut-off time 15.00pm.

Reviews

ACTION CAMERA | £295 from Insta360 www.snipca.com/37670

Insta360 Go 2

Wear your camera on your sleeve

You don't have to be skiing down a mountain or jumping out of an aeroplane to make use of an action camera. They're useful for capturing memories on any expedition, even if it's only walking the dog or enjoying a day at the beach.

Insta360's Go 2 is tiny, as small as your thumb, and light enough (27g) to clip magnetically to your shirt. It comes with a pocket-size charging case, which can boost the camera's 30-minute runtime up to a maximum of 2 hours 30 minutes. The case charges via **USB-C** and also functions as a remote control to start and stop recording on the camera. It also lets

SPECIFICATIONS

2560x1440-pixel video resolution • MP4 file format
• Standard tripod mount • Charging case included •
53x24x21mm (HxDxW) • 27g with stand • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/37670

you change some of the settings.

Alternatively, control the camera using the smartphone app.

It records **1440p** footage (2,560 x 1,440 pixels) at **frame rates** up to 50 frames per second (fps). Slow-motion clips can be recorded in **1080p** at 120fps; timelapse and **hyperlapse** clips in 1440p at 30fps; and HDR footage in 1440p at 24fps. It can also use its built-in **image stabilisation** technology, complete with horizon-levelling, to create ultra-smooth shots.

The resulting footage is impressive in daylight and, even in low light, doesn't look too grainy. Colours are rich and natural, and details look sharp. Image stabilisation also works well, with walking and cycling footage looking so smooth it could have been recorded using a mechanical stabiliser.



VERDICT A great video camera in a case that's so light and small you'll forget you're wearing it, even when you stick it on your clothes

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE GoPro Hero 8 Black **£324** This GoPro offers **4K** video resolution up to 60fps and a better battery life, but it's bulkier and more expensive



MOUSE | £80 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37669

Logitech MX Anywhere 3

Mouse proud

The MX Anywhere 3 is expensive for a wireless mouse, but it's packed with features that go some way to justifying its high price. Take the stainless steel central mouse wheel, for example. This sits on electromagnets, so you can switch between frictionless smooth scrolling, or add a ratched feel to it depending on your preference. You can even use it to scroll sideways by pressing the shortcut buttons on the side as you scroll.

All these buttons can be configured to other tasks using the supplied Logitech Options software. It also includes a clever system that lets you control three PCs at the same time, simply by moving the

SPECIFICATIONS

Darkfield 1,000dpi sensor • 6x configurable buttons
• Electromagnetic scroll wheel • 10m range • 500 mAh Li-Po battery • Includes USB dongle and USB-C charging cable • 34x65x100mm • 99g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/37669

cursor to the edge of one screen, at which point it jumps across and appears on the next, as if it were a second screen rather than a separate PC. It connects to devices via an included wireless USB dongle or Bluetooth.

It uses Logitech's 'Darkfield' laser tracking, which is designed to work on highly reflective surfaces – such as glass – as well as it does on desktop surfaces and mouse pads, so you can work pretty much anywhere. We even used it on our trouser leg when working off our lap.

The mouse feels comfortable and snug in the hand, but it's a little smaller than the average mouse. The battery should last for 70 hours of continuous use, and a three-minute blast through its USB-C charging cable should be enough to keep the mouse moving for an average day of work.



VERDICT An expensive option that's still just about worth it, if you want a full-featured device that's ideal for any kind of work surface

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Logitech M187 Ultra Portable Wireless Mouse **£20** A cheaper, smaller, more portable option – ideal for smaller budgets and daintier hands



SOUNDBAR | £249 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37709

Polk React

All bar one



There seems little point in buying a speaker for your home that doesn't have a voice assistant built in, because the ability to turn lights off around the house, play music or send messages hands-free will always be a handy option to have (either now or in future). With this in mind, if you're looking to upgrade the sound on your TV or home-entertainment centre with a soundbar, the Polk React is well worth considering.

“High-quality audio for your TV – all controlled by Alexa”

This particular model only supports Amazon's voice assistant Alexa, though Polk offers access to Google Assistant in some of its other models (see our Alternative below).

This soundbar is relatively compact, measuring 57x121x864mm and looks sleek, with dark grey fabric covering the front and top sides, only interrupted by the simple control panel (pictured above). This has just four buttons: volume up and volume down; an action button used to wake Alexa; and one to mute the mics when you want a bit of privacy. Connections on the rear are limited to an **HDMI** port and an optical port.

In terms of wireless connectivity, the React needs to be connected to your

home's Wi-Fi network to use Alexa, but also offers Bluetooth streaming should you want to play audio directly from your phone, tablet or laptop.

The speaker has three main sound profiles to choose from: music, movie and sport. There's also a night mode, which reduces bass while boosting dialogue. This is useful for watching programmes whose audio levels vary and means you can maintain a relatively high volume without the risk of waking the rest of the house when there's a sudden on-screen explosion. At the other end of the scale, movie mode boosted a soundtrack's low-end thumps and rumbles without obliterating dialogue and other higher-pitched sounds.

Alexa is seamlessly integrated and lets you control the soundbar's functions without having to use the remote control, as well as any other Alexa-supported devices in the vicinity. It also lets you make phone calls or send messages around the house, and supports Multi-Room Music, so you can pair it with other Alexa speakers.

VERDICT Good sound quality and well-implemented integration of Alexa make this a great home-entertainment upgrade for Alexa fans

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Polk Signa S3
£279 For those who'd prefer Google Assistant instead, Polka offers a Chromecast-powered soundbar and subwoofer combination



SPECIFICATIONS

Amazon Alexa built in • Supports Dolby Digital • HDMI port • Optical in • 2x 25 mm tweeters • 2x96x69mm mid-range • 2x110x100mm (passive radiator) woofers • 57x121x864mm • 2.9kg • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/37709

DO I REALLY NEED...

A USB-C DAC?

What is it?

This USB-C Dual DAC Cable from Astell & Kern (£109, www.snipca.com/37710) lets you connect high-quality wired headphones to a phone or PC that doesn't have its own headphone jack.



What does it do?

A DAC (Digital to Analogue Converter) can be found in any phone or PC that doesn't have headphone sockets. These devices don't normally need a high-quality DAC because any sound they send to a Bluetooth headset isn't converted until it arrives at the headset's speakers. Built-in DACs only need to be good enough to play through the built-in speaker. The USB-C Dual DAC Cable will offer significantly improved sound over your device's built-in DAC.

What's the catch?

Because the device needs power, it won't work with iPhones, which aren't able to power even small devices from their USB-C ports.

So can I do without it?

Yes, if you're happy using Bluetooth or devices with headphone sockets, or just don't care much about sound quality.

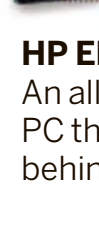
NEXT ISSUE

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Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

LAPTOP

PRICE
DROP

Lenovo Yoga Slim 7
£799 from www.snipca.com/37348
Tested Issue 601



Weighing just 1.16kg, this is an excellent lightweight laptop with a great screen and an AMD processor faster than many Intel rivals. It has two USB-C ports, two USB 3.0 ports and a microSD card reader. Battery lasts nearly 16 hours.

ALTERNATIVE Dell XPS 13 New Intel CPUs and a taller screen make this a more powerful, all-round slim laptop. Prices start at £1,199 from www.snipca.com/36642

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp Intel Mercury
£600 from www.snipca.com/34223
Tested Issue 576



If you don't need advanced gaming, your money's well spent here on a six-core Intel i5-9600K processor overclocked to 5GHz. 16GB of memory and a full terabyte of fast SSD storage round off a powerful PC with good expansion potential.

ALTERNATIVE Chillblast Photo Zen Fast Ryzen 7 CPU plus adequate GPU makes a superb work PC. £1,809 from www.snipca.com/35840

APPLE IPAD

Apple iPad 10.2in
£329 from www.snipca.com/36178
Tested Issue 566



The basic iPad is great value, especially now it's been updated with a powerful A12 processor and iPadOS 14. It includes Scribble handwriting recognition with the £89 Apple Pencil. Storage isn't expandable; consider 128GB at £429.

ALTERNATIVE iPad Mini With an even better, but smaller, screen than the 10.2in iPad, the Mini also supports the Pencil and has 64GB of storage. £399 from www.snipca.com/33050

ANDROID TABLET

Samsung Galaxy Tab S6 Lite
£299 from www.snipca.com/35795
Tested Issue 582



Competing with Apple's cheapest 10.2in iPad, this slim aluminium tablet comes with an S Pen stylus and a generous 64GB of storage at a reasonable price. It's less powerful, but a great buy if you prefer Android.

ALTERNATIVE Amazon Fire HD 8 Now with USB-C and 32GB of storage, this plastic-cased tablet is more limited, with no stylus option, but good for the money. £90 from www.snipca.com/35336

APPLE IPHONE

Apple iPhone 12
£799 from www.snipca.com/36582
Tested Issue 595



The latest iPhone has a modest increase in already exceptional processing power plus even better photos and videos from the front and twin rear cameras. It comes in a redesigned case with aluminium frame and even tougher glass. Consider paying the £50 extra for 128GB of storage.

ALTERNATIVE iPhone SE With a single camera and smaller screen but the same powerful A13 processor and 64GB storage as the iPhone 11, it's great value. £399 from www.snipca.com/34773

ANDROID PHONE

Realme X50 5G
£279 from www.snipca.com/36037
Tested Issue 590



Amazing value for a big 5G phone with three rear cameras (including ultra-wide and macro), a pretty quick Snapdragon 765G processor and a decent IPS screen. There's a fingerprint reader, but no wireless charging or waterproofing.

ALTERNATIVE Google Pixel 5 Cheaper than previous Pixels, this has great cameras, wireless charging and a superb screen. Battery life is 23 hours. £599 from www.snipca.com/36586

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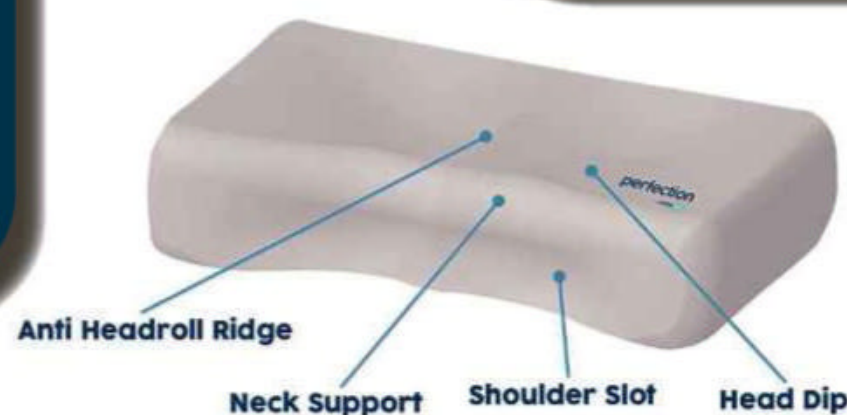
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Buy It

Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

EBOOK READER

Amazon Kindle (2019)

£70 from www.snipca.com/31621

Tested Issue 555



Now with built-in light and audiobook support, this budget model is fine for most users, though limited by its 4GB of storage. The Paperwhite (£120) is even sharper, waterproof, and has bigger storage options as well as a cellular data option (£100 extra).

ALTERNATIVE Kobo Clara HD

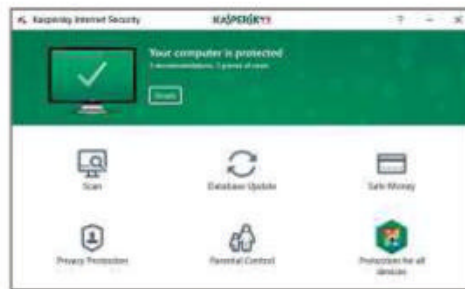
Not waterproof, but has more lighting options to avoid blue light. £90 from www.snipca.com/32586

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2021

£14.99 from www.snipca.com/21532

Tested Issue 564



Kaspersky Internet Security has won our past nine antivirus tests and the 2020 version is now available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-year, one-device licence or buy a two-year, two-device licence for just £26.99.

ALTERNATIVE Norton 360 Deluxe

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but blocks more legitimate software. £15 from www.snipca.com/32069

PHOTO EDITING

Serif Affinity Photo

£24 from www.snipca.com/23739

Tested Issue 498



Designed for both full-time professional image retouchers and the rest of us keen amateurs, this is a beautifully designed and comprehensive program for both Windows and Mac users, although so far it performs better on Macs.

ALTERNATIVE Xara Photo & Graphic Designer

For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £50 from www.snipca.com/26514

PC MONITOR

BenQ GL2780

£160 from www.snipca.com/34834

Tested Issue 581



This budget 27in screen offers accurate sRGB colour with good contrast, plus auto brightness and low blue light modes. Speakers are built in. Using TN LCD rather than IPS, it needs to be viewed straight on, but works well for games too.

ALTERNATIVE Philips Brilliance

241B7QPIEB With a great picture, stylish design and speakers, this 24in Full HD IPS is an excellent smaller screen. £191 from www.snipca.com/37096

ROUTER

D-Link DIR-1960

£100 from www.snipca.com/32849

Tested Issue 564



Giving us download and upload speeds of 460Mbps and 375Mbps respectively, this is phenomenal value. Even two floors away we got 329Mbps and 284Mbps. It has four Ethernet ports for wired devices and a USB 3.0 socket to share storage via your network.

ALTERNATIVE Synology RT2600ac

Comprehensive sharing features, controls and plenty of add-on apps complement excellent long-range performance. £202 from www.snipca.com/30710

PRINTER

Epson Expression Premium XP-6105

£139 from www.snipca.com/37271

Tested Issue 554



With many leading all-purpose printers having sold out during lockdown, this white version of the XP-6100 wireless six-ink printer/scanner/copier is a good choice for photos first and text second. It's easy to use and speeds aren't bad, but ink costs can work out high.

ALTERNATIVE Epson EcoTank ET-2711

This inkjet printer/scanner/copier isn't cheap but will save you a lot on ink (1p for two colour pages). Photo quality isn't the best, but scans are good. £180 from www.snipca.com/36183

COMPETITION

Win a Dell laptop & Acronis Cyber Protect software



Leading cyber protection company Acronis has given us a brand new Dell Inspiron 15 laptop containing its Cyber Protect software to offer as a prize to one lucky winner.

Acronis Cyber Protect offers a revolutionary approach to cyber protection by integrating data protection with cybersecurity. This method eliminates gaps in defences, delivers better protection against threats, and saves you time and money.

You'll benefit from the global network of Acronis Cyber Protection

Operation Centers (CPOC) by receiving real-time alerts on malware, vulnerabilities, natural disasters, and other global events that may affect data protection.

It protects you against troublesome security updates by performing an image backup, letting you easily roll back to a working state if there are any problems. It also monitors changes made by software you have installed, continuously backing them up so recent changes aren't lost if you need to recover from a backup.

To enter this competition, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Acronis' in the subject line by midnight Tuesday 20 April.

Prices for **Acronis Cyber Protect** start from £39. To buy and find out more visit www.acronis.com/en-gb/products/cyber-protect. The Dell laptop has a 15.6in screen, runs Windows 10 Pro, is powered by Intel's I7-1165G7 processor, and has 16GB DDR4 memory. It has a 1TB SSD and an Nvidia GeForce graphics card.

MESH ROUTER

BT Whole Home Wi-Fi
£200 from www.snipca.com/26990
Tested Issue 496



BT's set of three discs, managed from an Apple or Android app, connects to your broadband and spreads high-speed Wi-Fi all around the house. Reception is far better than a single router, and the price is lower than any rival.

ALTERNATIVE Zyxel Multy X
These two pillow-shaped boxes are powerful enough for most homes and provide four Ethernet ports apiece. £255 from www.snipca.com/27309

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Samsung 970 Evo Plus
500GB
£76 from www.snipca.com/31265
Tested Issue 552



Although its price has fluctuated since we tested it at £99, this is a very fast (over 3GB per second) M.2 SSD unfazed by tests that make others slow to a crawl. Also consider the Adata XPG SX8200 Pro if you find it a bit cheaper.

ALTERNATIVE Crucial MX500 500GB
As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £59 from www.snipca.com/37304

SMART SPEAKER

Google Nest Audio
£90 from www.snipca.com/36475
Tested Issue 593



Produces a rich, clear sound, and better understands your questions than Amazon's Echo devices. You can use Google's app to control audio from other units around your home (pair two of them for £160). The clever Ambient IQ tool increases the volume if it detects external noise, such as a hairdryer.

ALTERNATIVE Amazon Echo (4th generation)
The latest version of the Echo changes the shape from a cylinder to a ball, which improves sound quality – though the Nest's is still superior. £90 from www.snipca.com/36602

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Workshops & Tips

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

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HOW TO... by Will Stapley

Use a projector to stream TV, films and photos

What you need: A projector **Time required:** One hour

You'd be forgiven for thinking that projectors are incredibly expensive and only intended for home-cinema enthusiasts with a few thousand pounds to spare. While this is

true for high-end projectors, the rest of us can save most of that money by opting for something less powerful. Although cheaper projectors can't match the image quality and projection size (particularly

in daylight) of more expensive models, they're still great for watching films, projecting your PC's desktop and reliving those family Kodak slideshows of yesteryear.

1 Choose your projector
When considering your ideal projector, first decide how big you want your projections to be. Projectors measure their brightness levels in **lumens**, and if you want to produce large projections (around 100 inches) during the day without having to draw the curtains, you'll need a projector that's rated no lower than 2,000 lumens. Such models are expensive, though, costing

over £1,000 (see box on page 37 for our recommendations).

If you're happy viewing only in darker conditions, or simply want to project smaller images, you can opt for something much cheaper. Our favourite is the ViewSonic M1 Mini Plus (pictured below left), which recently dropped in price on Amazon to just £192 (www.snipca.com/37680).

Like most budget projectors, the M1 Mini Plus uses **LEDs** rather than the traditional lamp to produce illumination. While projector lamps are replaceable (usually lasting between 2,000 and 4,000 hours, and costing over £100 to replace), LEDs are fixed – so when they die, so does your projector. However, LEDs also last *much* longer than lamps – those in the M1 Mini Plus are rated at 30,000 hours, which is equivalent to using the projector for five hours every day for over 16 years, at which point you'll probably want a new projector anyway.

The M1 Mini Plus is rated at 120



Even in a room with ambient light, we managed to produce a 60in display with the M1 Mini Plus

like much, we found it was enough to create a perfectly viewable 30in display during the day with the curtains open. With the curtains drawn, we projected a decent 60in display (pictured above), while in pitch-black conditions we managed to extend this to over 100 inches.

At about the same size as five stacked coasters, and similar in weight to an



The ViewSonic M1 Mini Plus is portable, affordable and performs well with low ambient light levels

empty pint glass, the M1 Mini Plus is very portable. Although the built-in battery won't quite stretch to a feature-length movie (lasting around 80 minutes in our tests), it's fine for showing shorter clips or for photo-sharing. As we'll explain later, the projector is packed with connection options, including **HDMI**, USB, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and even some built-in storage.

Budget projectors come with compromises. The 854x480-pixel resolution of the M1 Mini Plus means it won't do HD or **4K** content justice, and on larger projections you'll be able to make out individual pixels if you look closely enough. It also has a relatively low contrast ratio (the difference between its brightest white and darkest black) of 500:1, which means its results aren't as vivid as those from more expensive models – the BenQ W2700 (see box on page 37) has a contrast ratio of 30,000:1, for example.

Cheaper projectors also tend to have slower refresh rates (how many frames they can show each second). The M1 Mini Plus is rated at 60Hz (60 frames per second), and we noticed it struggled to maintain a sharp image in fast-paced movie scenes. More expensive projectors let you project at 120Hz, which allows for much smoother video.

2

Set up your projector

Most projectors take you through an initial setup process when you turn them on for the first time. On the M1 Mini Plus, this involves selecting how you've positioned the projector (if you hang it from the ceiling, the display will be flipped over) and connecting it to your home Wi-Fi. Entering a long Wi-Fi password using a tiny remote control is fiddly, so we were glad we were able to connect our Logitech keyboard and mouse via the M1 Mini Plus's USB port.

Once you've learned the basics, you can start configuring your projected display. Some high-end projectors offer **auto-focus**, but with most models you'll need to adjust focus using a focus wheel. To do this we recommend projecting a screen containing text (such as the projector's main menu). One of our few complaints about the M1 Mini Plus is that its focus wheel doesn't scroll smoothly, which makes fine adjustments tricky.

If you position your projector lower or higher than the spot on the wall you want to project on to (as is often the case),

How I use my projector

If anything I need fewer screens in my home, not more, but a portable projector opens up so many opportunities. I use mine for everything from impromptu photos-sharing sessions, to letting the kids enjoy the occasional movie night in their bedrooms (where they don't have TVs – yet). And although I usually go camping to get a break from technology, on the rare occasion my football team Brighton win I celebrate by projecting *Match of the Day* on to the side of my tent.



Will Stapley



How do you use your PC and TV set in combination?
Please let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

you'll need to adjust the projector's angle – this is done using the flip-out stand that surrounds the projector. To avoid the 'trapezium effect' this creates (depending on the angle, the projection will be wider at either the top or bottom), most projectors include a tool called keystone correction. The M1 Mini Plus does this automatically, adjusting the keystone correction as you tilt the projector. This worked well in our tests, but you can fine tune it if needed via the Basic Settings section in the main menu.

You can also adjust image settings depending on what you're watching (on the M1 Mini Plus, hold the OK button on the remote control for a few seconds to access these), tweaking the brightness, contrast and **colour temperature** to suit your needs.

3

Project live TV and films

Most projectors have an HDMI port, which lets you quickly connect video sources such as a Sky or Freeview set-top box, or DVD player. Because your video source is probably already attached to your TV set via an HDMI cable, you can simply remove the cable from the TV and plug it directly into the HDMI socket on your projector.

Your projector should detect that you've plugged in a new video source and start displaying it immediately (on some models you may need to select the HDMI source in the main menu).

Depending on which projector you have, you may also be able to connect video sources other than via HDMI. Thanks to its built-in Wi-Fi, the M1 Mini Plus lets you stream TV programmes and films via apps (which you can install by selecting AppsCenter from the main menu).

The results are a mixed bag, though. In our tests, the Amazon Prime Video app worked well – once we'd logged into our Prime account. We were able to browse and watch shows as easily as we can on our PC. Additionally, the Plex app let us connect to the Plex server on our PC, allowing us to stream content from our PC as well as from Plex's range of free TV and movie offerings. However, the BBC iPlayer app didn't work and just displayed a message telling us to 'upgrade to the latest version'.

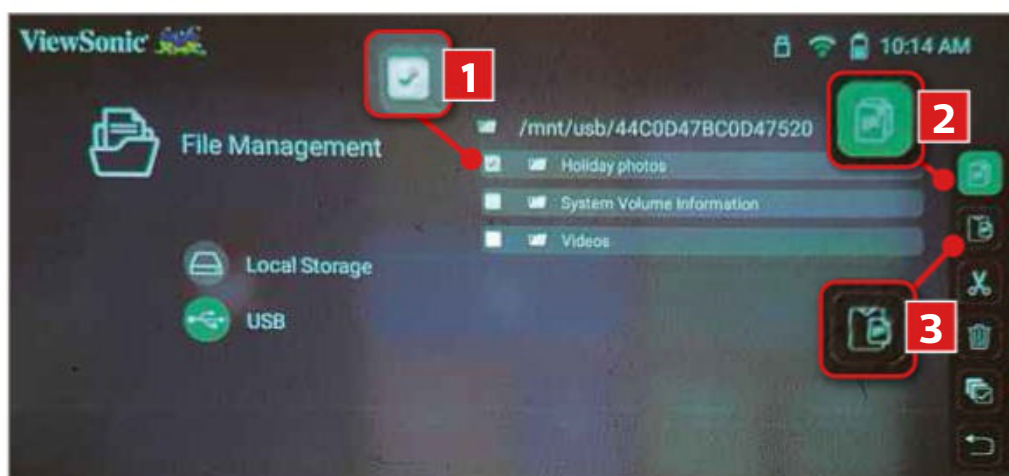
While most projectors have built-in speakers, they're often pretty quiet. The M1 Mini Plus manages to produce better audio than most thanks to its built-in 2W speaker, but you'll want something more powerful when watching a film.



Boost volume on the M1 Mini Plus by pairing it with a set of Bluetooth speakers

Use a projector to stream TV, films and photos

Copy content from a USB stick to the internal storage of the M1 Mini Plus



One option is to connect a set of speakers to the video source (if you're projecting from a DVD player, you could attach speakers to the audio outputs on the DVD player itself). Because the M1 Mini Plus has built-in Bluetooth, you can also connect the projector directly to a set of Bluetooth speakers or headphones. First, set your speakers to pairing mode (this is usually achieved by pressing a dedicated pairing button), then go to the main menu on the M1 Mini Plus and select Bluetooth, Bluetooth Out (see screenshot below left) and select your speakers.

If your chosen projector supports **screen mirroring** (as the M1 Mini Plus does), you can also stream video from your phone – either your own videos stored on the phone or from apps like BBC iPlayer. However, on our Android phone (a Samsung Galaxy S8), video streamed in this way had a nasty juddery effect. Instead, mirroring is best left for photo-sharing sessions, as we explain below.

4

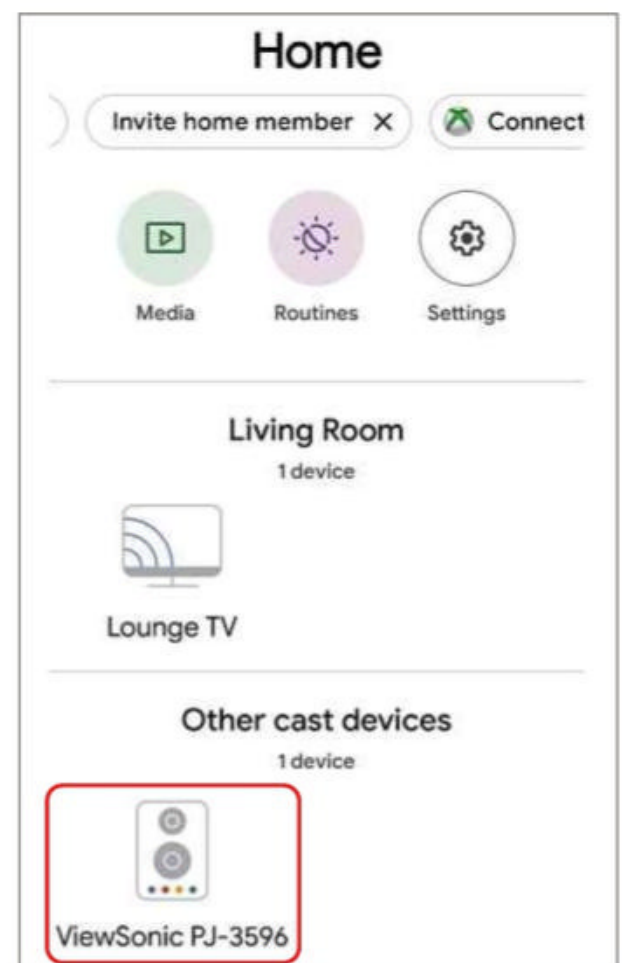
Set up a photo slideshow

Once holidays are permitted again, we'll all have new batches

of photos we'll want to share with friends and family. Don't make them squint at your phone's tiny display or crowd around your PC screen – instead, use your projector to display your photos in all their glory.

You can do this simply by connecting the projector to your PC, but that will mean trailing an HDMI cable between the two. The M1 Mini Plus provides neater alternatives. One is to copy your photos to a USB stick, then insert this directly into the projector's USB port. Accessing the USB stick is a little fiddly – you have to select File Management from the main menu, press the Back key on the remote control, then select the USB stick and navigate to the folder containing your photos. Once you've located your photos, however, you can browse them using the remote or simply let the M1 Mini Plus cycle through them in order.

With your USB stick inserted, you can copy photos (and videos) to the M1's 4GB internal storage. In the File Management window (see screenshot above), hold the OK button on the remote control for three seconds, select the files or folders



Use screen mirroring to share photos from your phone

you want to copy **1**, then select the Copy option **2**. Next, press the back button on the remote, select Local Storage, then the folder you want your photos copied to, then hold OK again, followed by Paste **3**.

For photos stored on your phone, it's best to use the screen mirroring feature of the M1 Mini Plus. Select 'Screen Mirroring' in the main menu, then follow the instructions for iOS and Android devices. On our Samsung Galaxy S8, we had to open the Google Home app on the phone, select the projector (ViewSonic projectors are listed as 'PJ-', followed by four numbers – see screenshot above), then 'Cast my screen'. Our phone's screen was then projected, allowing us to open the Google Photos app and locate the photos we wanted to share.

5

Project your desktop

If your PC or laptop has an HDMI output, you can connect it to your projector in the same way as any other video source, letting you browse the web, share a document at a club meeting or even enjoy Microsoft Flight Simulator on a big screen.

Once connected, you can tell Windows how to use the projector. Press the Windows key+P to open the Projector sidebar, then choose whether to duplicate your PC screen on the projector, extend the desktop across both your monitor and the projector, or only use the projector.

THE BEST THREE HD & 4K PROJECTORS

Although the M1 Mini Plus can connect to HD and 4K video sources, it **downscales** the video. To get the best image quality, you'll need to spend more and buy an HD or 4K projector. Here are our top picks.

BenQ W2700

£1,398 from www.snipca.com/37684



This 4K projector has a brightness rating of 2,000 lumens and is able to create sharp projections that are up to 200 inches, which look better than those produced by models more than twice its price.

ViewSonic X10-4K

£1,270 from www.snipca.com/37685

It can't quite match the image quality of the BenQ W2700, but this model projects impressive 4K images using an LED light source, and lasts 30,000 hours compared with the 4,000-hour lifespan of the W2700's lamp.

LG PF50KS

£499 from www.snipca.com/37686

This HD projector is less than half the price of most 4K models, but still performs impressively. It's rated at 600 lumens, so you'll need to draw the curtains when using it for larger projections.

Workshop1

Make your passwords unhackable

What you need: Bitwarden (free account); Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

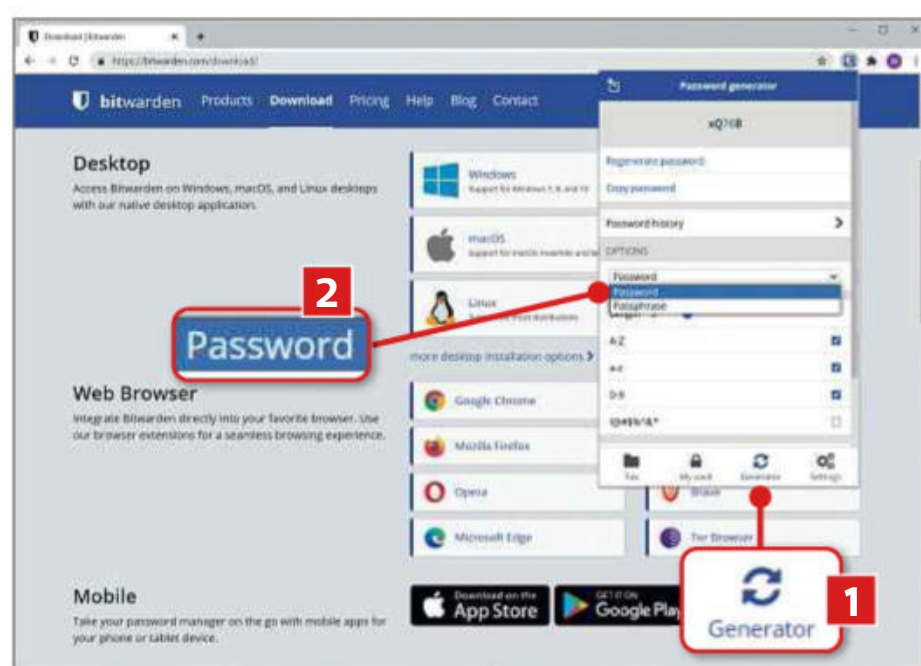
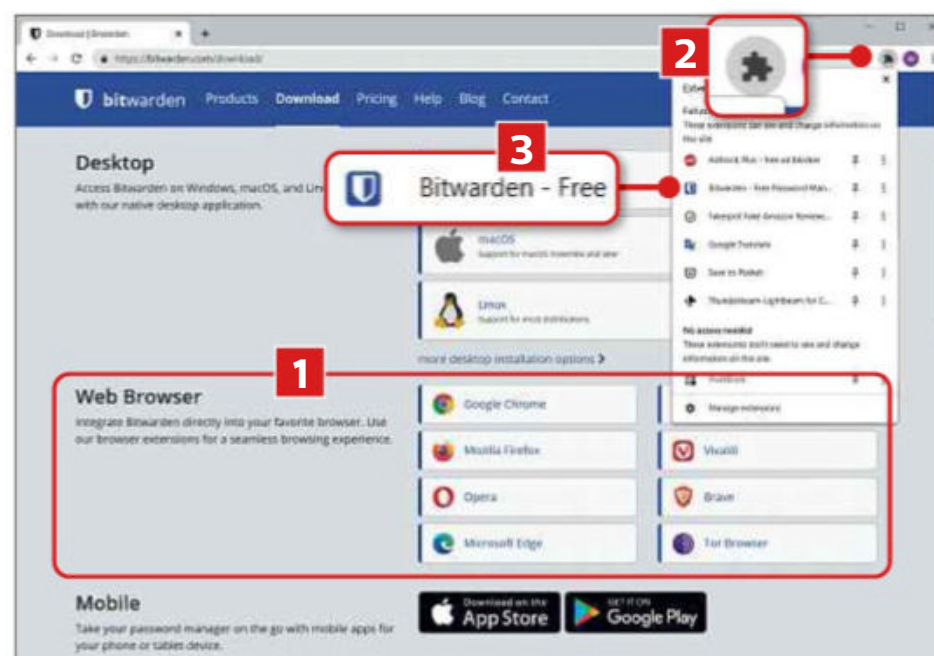
Time taken: 20 minutes

In March, password manager LastPass imposed new restrictions on free accounts, meaning you can now only access your passwords on computers or mobile devices (but not both). In Issue 601 (page 62), we explained how to move your passwords from

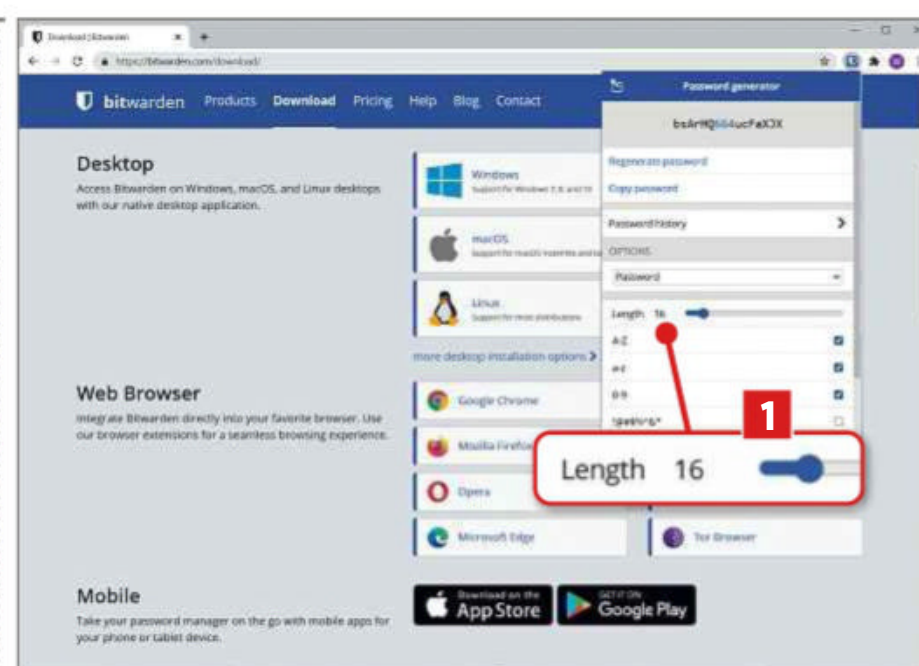
LastPass to a less restrictive tool – we recommended Bitwarden. Here, we'll show you how to tweak Bitwarden to make the passwords it generates unhackable and reveal its hidden tools that can add even more protection to your online accounts.



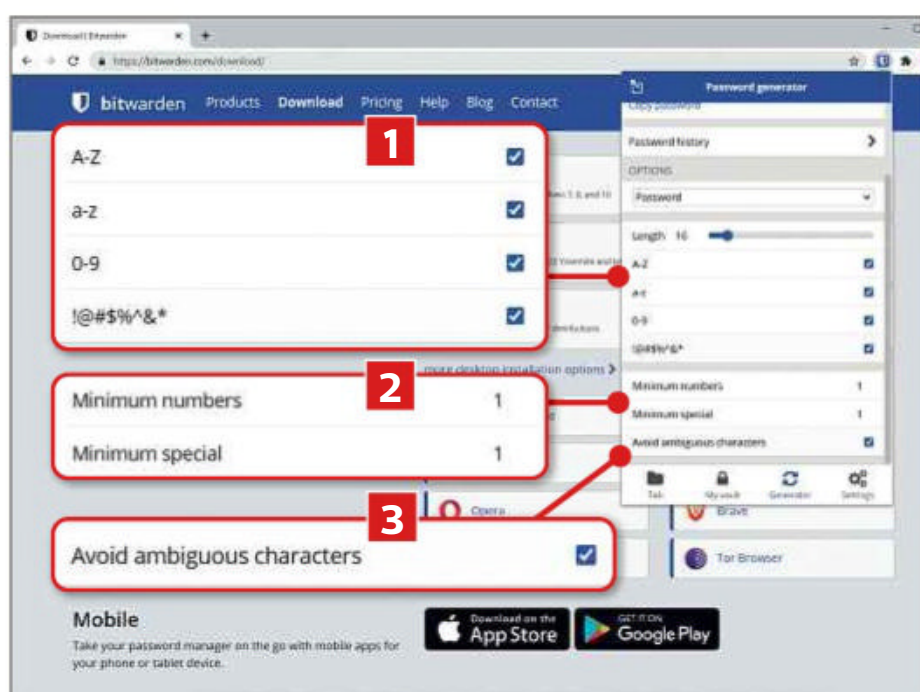
STEP 1 If you don't already have a Bitwarden account, create a free one at www.snipca.com/37640. Once you've registered, download the Bitwarden extension for your browser by going to www.snipca.com/37641, scrolling down to the Web Browser section, then selecting the version for your browser **1** (it's available for all major browsers, including Chrome and Edge). Open the Bitwarden extension in your browser (in Chrome, you may need to click the jigsaw icon **2** to reveal it **3**), then enter your master password to unlock your Bitwarden vault.



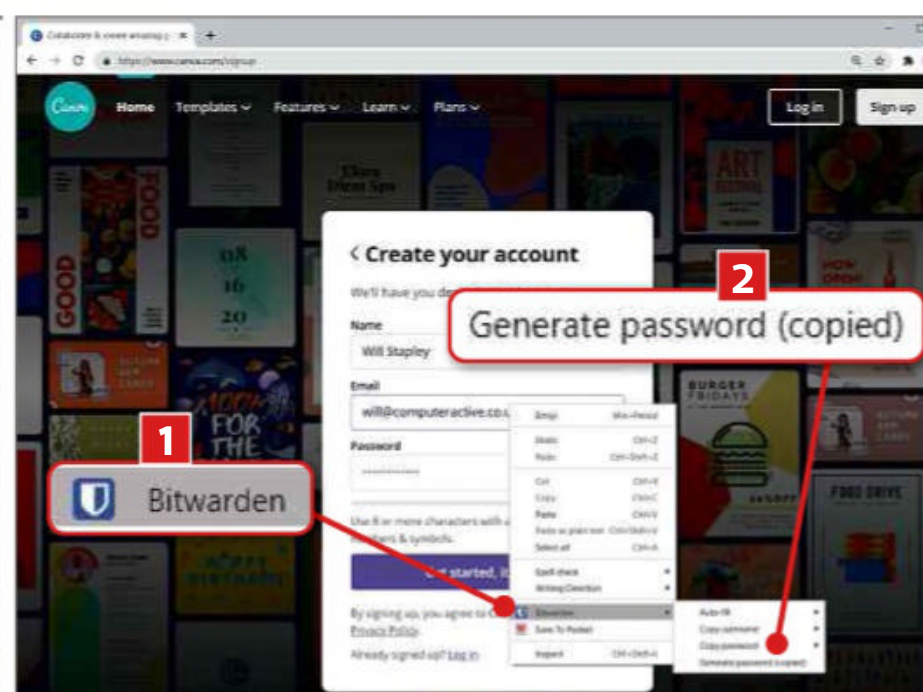
STEP 2 Click Generator **1** at the bottom of the Bitwarden extension window. In the next screen, you can tell Bitwarden to generate passwords (a random series of characters) or passphrases (random words). Passphrases are easier to remember, but because they use real words they are more susceptible to **brute force attacks**, where hackers use tools that combine random words in an attempt to match your password. Because Bitwarden will be handling all your passwords for you (including automatically filling relevant login fields), we recommend setting this box to Password **2**.



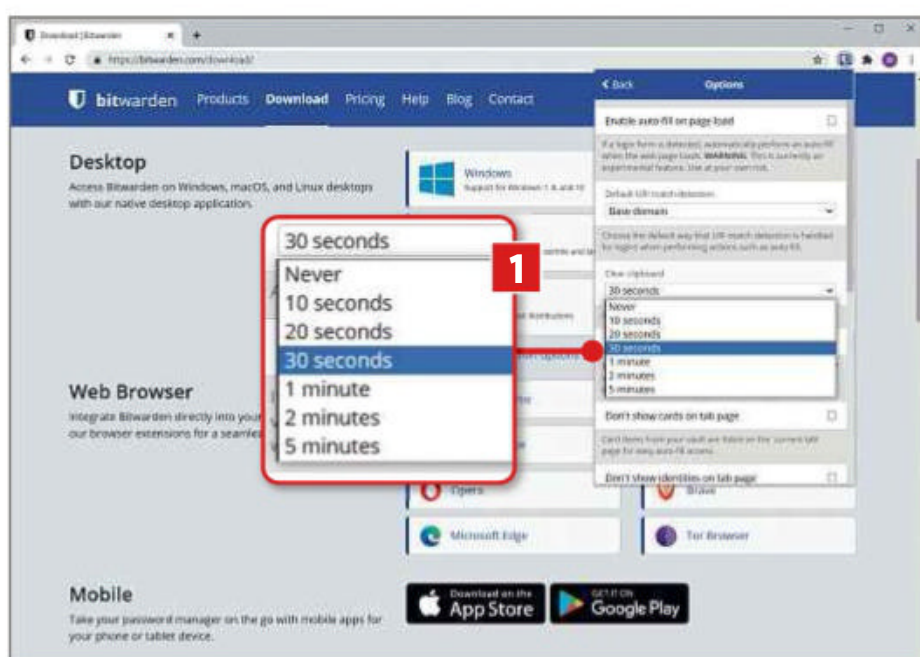
STEP 3 Bitwarden can generate passwords of between five and 128 characters long. The more characters a password has, the more secure it will be. However, if you ever have to type a password yourself (such as if you're using a device on which you don't have Bitwarden installed), you probably won't appreciate having to tap out a 128-character password. We therefore recommend you strike a balance between security and convenience, setting the Length slider **1** to between 10 and 16 characters.



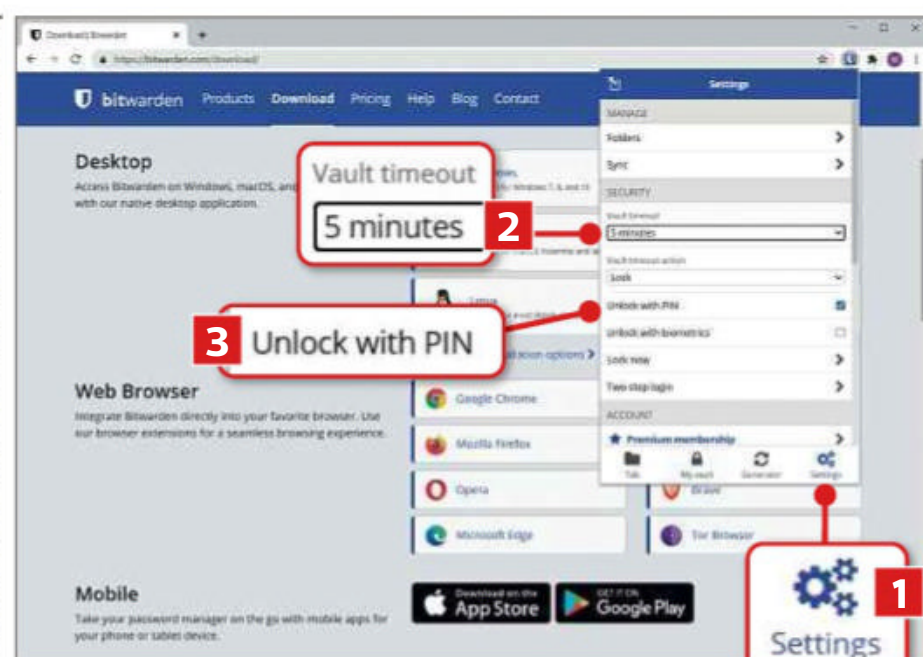
STEP 4 Below the password-length slider you can choose the types of characters you want Bitwarden to use when generating passwords. We suggest ticking all four boxes **1** because the variety of character types will make your password harder to hack. Bear in mind some websites won't let you use special characters when creating a password, in which case you'll need to return to this option and temporarily untick it. Below this, you can choose how many numbers and special characters you want in your passwords (we recommend at least one of each **2**). You can also choose to avoid ambiguous characters **3** (such as a capital 'I', which can be mistaken for a 1) – doing so makes your passwords slightly less secure, but easier for you to type when needed.



STEP 5 When you want to generate a new password (for example, when signing up for a new online account), right-click the password box on the website in question, then select Bitwarden **1** followed by 'Generate password (copied)' **2**. Bitwarden will now create a new, random password based on the settings you made earlier. Note that Bitwarden won't fill the password box with your new password automatically – instead it copies the password to the Windows clipboard. To paste it into the password box, right-click and select Paste or simply press Ctrl+P.



STEP 6 By default, your generated password will remain in your clipboard until you copy something else, which means you might accidentally paste the password into a document or email later on. More worryingly, someone using the same computer after you might be able to view your password. To avoid this, set Bitwarden to clear the clipboard after generating a password. In the Bitwarden extension, select Settings, scroll down and click Options. Next, click the 'Clear clipboard' box and set a time of between 10 seconds and 5 minutes **1**.



STEP 7 Bitwarden will keep you logged into your vault for as long as you have your browser open. While this can be convenient, if you leave your PC unattended someone else may gain access to your passwords. To prevent this, return to the Settings section of the Bitwarden extension **1**, then click the box under 'Vault timeout' **2** – you can choose to close the vault after a set period of time or after an action such as restarting your browser or locking your PC. For an easier way to unlock your vault, tick 'Unlock with PIN' **3**, enter a series of numbers (we recommend at least four), then click Submit. You can then unlock your vault by typing this PIN rather than entering your master password. Note that the PIN will only work on *your* PC.

Workshop 2

Add captions to your videos

What you need: Subtitle Edit; VLC; Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

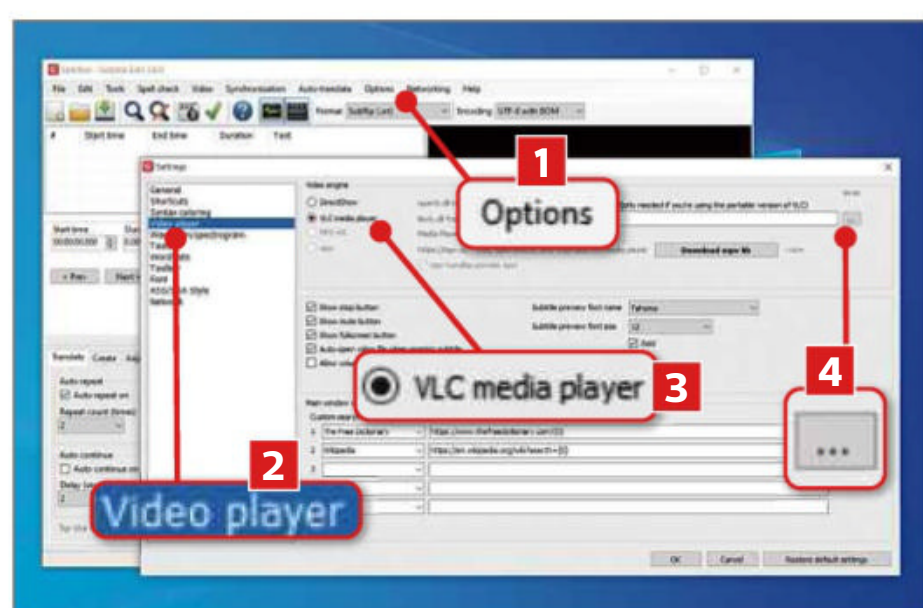
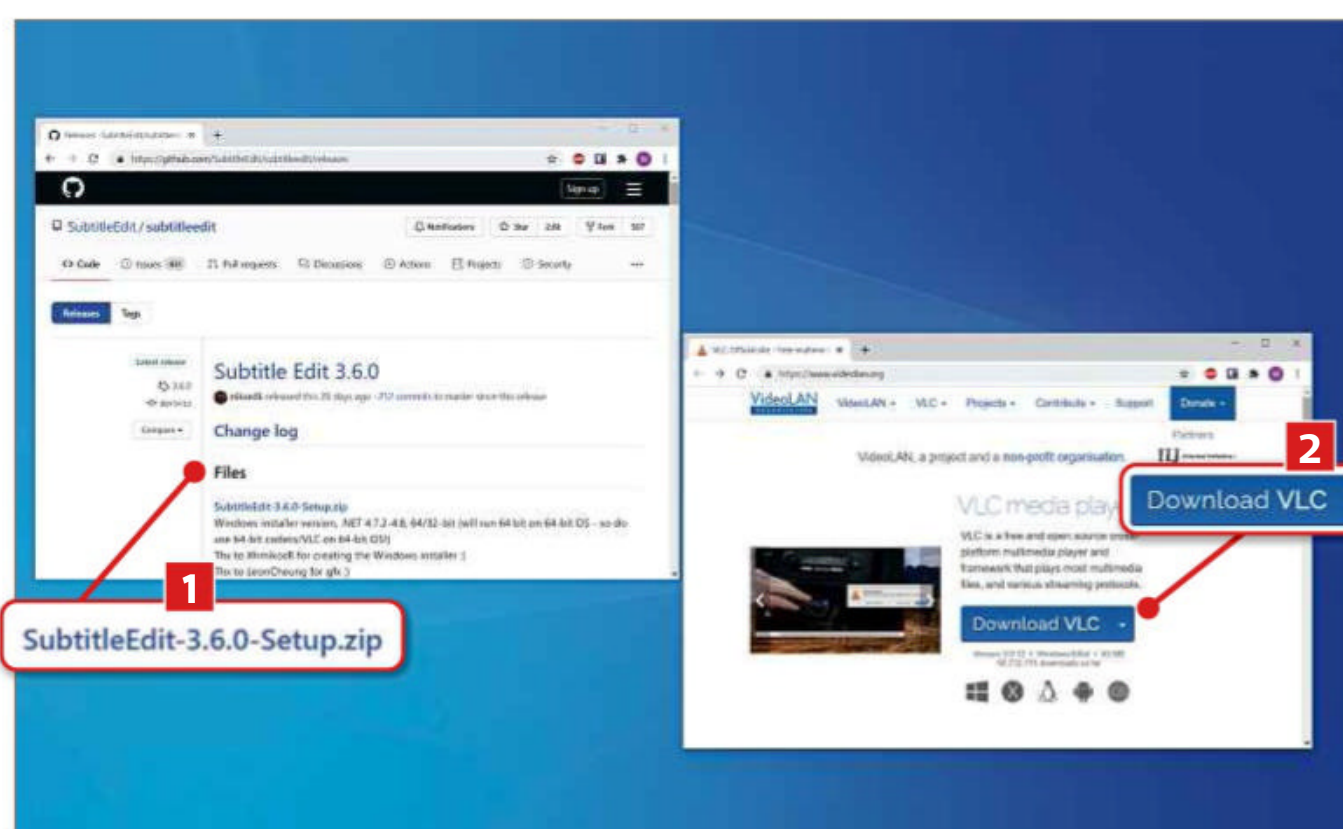
Time required: 30 minutes

YouTube (and now Chrome – see page 7) can create captions for your videos automatically, but you'll first have to upload the videos to the web, which you may not be comfortable doing. In this Workshop, we'll show you

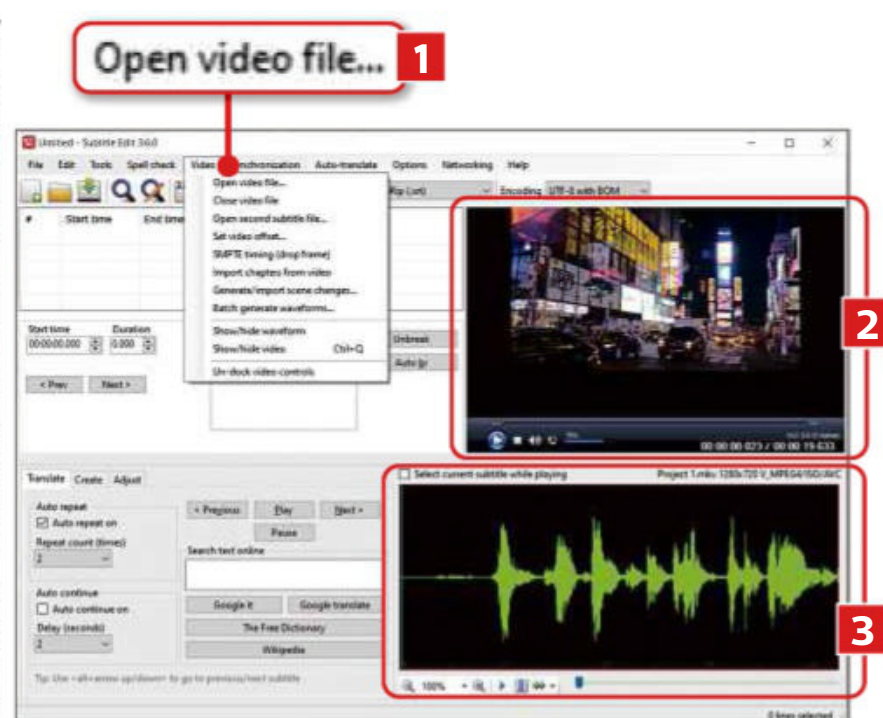
how to create captions – either exact transcripts of dialogue or simply text explaining what's going on in each scene – for videos stored on your PC. We'll also explain how to turn them on and off when watching.



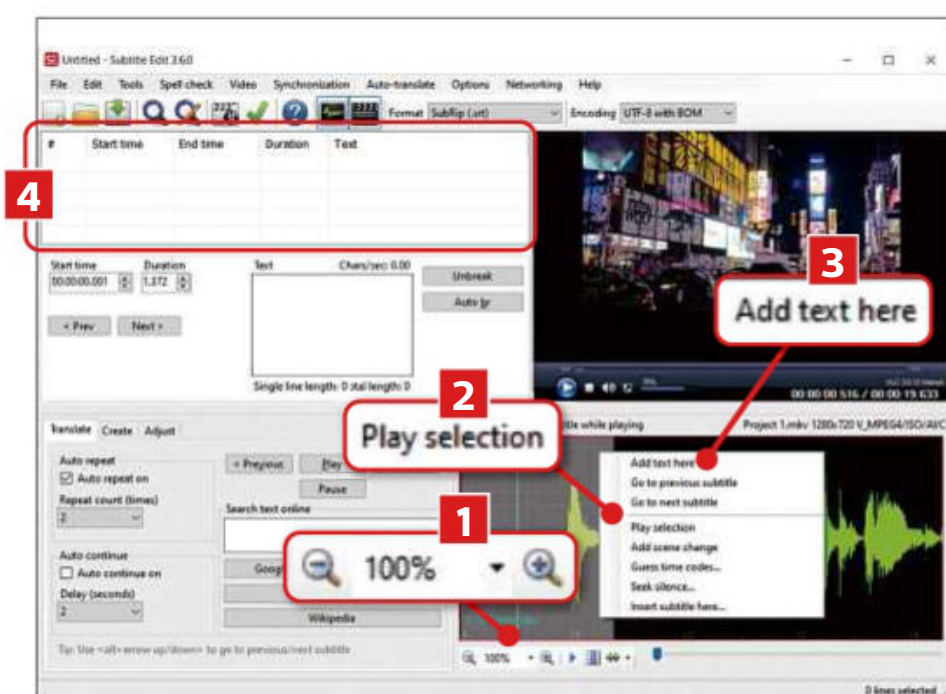
STEP 1 Download the latest version (3.6.0 at the time of writing) of Subtitle Edit from www.snipca.com/37673 – click the link for the **ZIP** file just above 'Windows installer version' **1**. Subtitle Edit doesn't have a built-in video player to preview your videos, but it works with the free VLC player. If you don't already have VLC installed, download it from www.videolan.org – click the blue 'Download VLC' button **2** in the middle of the page. Once you've installed both programs, open Subtitle Edit.



STEP 2 Before loading your video file, you first need to tell Subtitle Edit that you want it to use VLC to preview your videos. Open the Options menu **1**, then select 'Settings...'. In the window that opens, select 'Video player' **2** from the list on the left, then 'VLC media player' on the right **3**. If you installed the portable version of VLC, click the three dots **4** to the right of the 'VLC path...' box, then navigate to the folder where you saved VLC and double-click the 'vlc.exe' file. Click OK to save your changes.



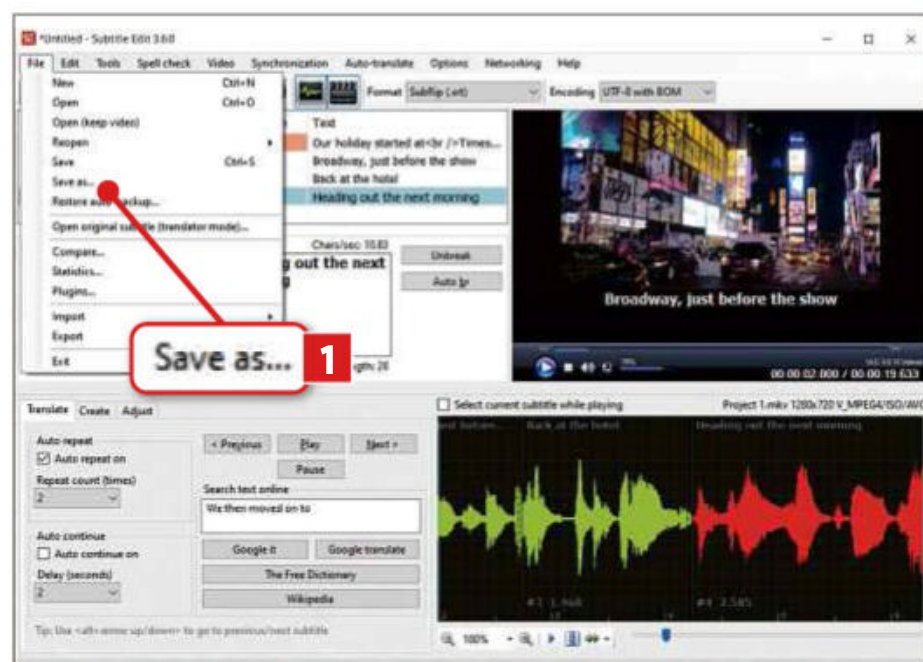
STEP 3 Click the Video menu, 'Open video file...' **1**, then locate the video you want to caption (Subtitle Edit works with all popular video formats). Alternatively, you can drag the video file directly into the preview window **2**. Your video's waveform (a visual representation of its audio track) should now appear in the bottom-right window **3**. If not, click this window once and the waveform should appear within a few seconds.



STEP 4 In the bottom-right window, click and drag your cursor to where you want your subtitle to appear; for longer videos, use the zoom controls **1** to focus on specific sections. Once you've made your selection, right-click it then select 'Play selection' **2** to preview it. You can adjust the selection by clicking and dragging its left and right edges. Once you're happy with it, right-click the selection once again, but this time select 'Add text here' **3**. You'll notice a new entry appears in the panel at the top **4**, along with your chosen section's start and end times, and total duration.



STEP 5 Type your caption for the section in the Text box **1**. Click 'Auto br' **2** and Subtitle Edit will add line breaks after every 42 characters, making the caption easier to read. To remove these automatic line breaks, click Unbreak **3**. As you type, Subtitle Edit displays the 'Chars/sec' value **4** – this calculates the length of the section and how many characters the viewer will need to read every second. If this value goes over 25, the label turns red (indicating the viewer may not have enough time to read the caption before it disappears). If this happens, either cut down the caption or extend the length of the section (as explained in Step 4).



STEP 6 Repeat Steps 4 and 5, adding as many sections and captions as you need. Note that you can't add sections that overlap. If you want to remove a caption, select it in the table, then press Delete. When you've finished, click File, followed by 'Save as...' **1**. You can now select the format the captions will be saved in, but it's best to leave it at the default of SRT because this is supported by most video players. By default, the subtitle file will have the same name as your video (albeit with the '.srt' extension) and will be saved in the same folder – it's best to leave both of these file names unchanged, otherwise your video player won't be able to automatically locate the relevant subtitle file for the video.

STEP 7 Open your favourite video player, load your video, then turn on subtitles. Precisely how you do this depends on the video player. In VLC, press V to display subtitles **1** while your video is playing. If your subtitle file doesn't have the same name as the video file or is located in a different folder, first load the video then open the Subtitle menu, select 'Add Subtitle File...' **2**, then locate the file. To view subtitles in Plex, load the video, click Settings (three-sliders icon **3**), then select 'Unknown (SRT External)' **4** under Subtitles.



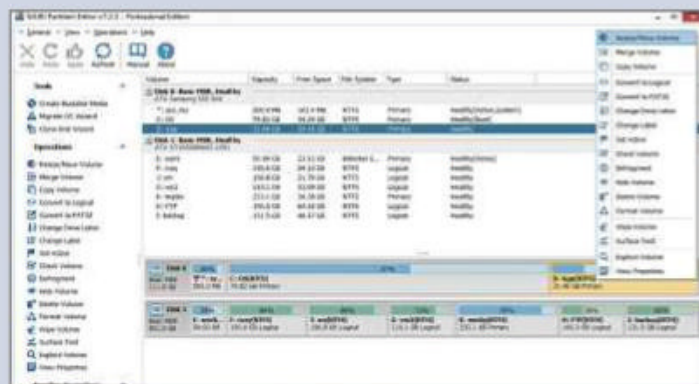
Readers' Tips

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Increase System Reserved partition to get update

I read your News story in Issue 600 (page 6) about the May 2020 Update being ready for everyone, and so thought I'd better check to see if my three computers have been updated or still need updating. My desktop PC and mini PC had been, but my wife's laptop hadn't. I started the update process only to be greeted with the error message 'We couldn't update system reserved partition'.

I checked the **partitions** and it showed I had 300MB reserved, which wasn't enough to accommodate this



update. I thought it would be simple to enlarge the C partition using Disk Management in Windows, but you can do it only if there's existing free drive space

immediately to the right of it. I needed to be able to move the *whole* of the partition to the right.

After some research online I downloaded NIUBI Partition Editor (free from www.snipca.com/37627, pictured), which very simply allowed me to 'slide' the C partition along and then enlarge the System Reserved partition. The update then finished without a hitch.

Robert Togneri



Robert wins a copy of our 2020 Back Issue CD **Buy it on Amazon www.snipca.com/37026**

WINDOWS

Replace and upgrade components to make updates install

✓ Readers having difficulty upgrading Windows 10 to the latest version may find my experience helpful. My PC, built in 2019, has been stuck on version 1909 (released in November 2019). Windows Update has attempted 11 times to upgrade to the next version (20H2), normally failing at the 48-per-cent mark with the dreaded **Blue Screen of Death**.

My searches online suggest these problems aren't uncommon. Online 'experts' advise solutions such as running Windows Troubleshooter, typing various Command Prompt commands, updating **drivers** and so on. None have worked for me.

With support for 1909 ending on 11 May, I made preparations for a **clean**



install of Windows 10. But I then had an idea. The error codes I was getting indicated a hardware driver problem. I replaced the Radeon RX 570 graphics card with a spare Nvidia GTX 750 Ti (pictured above), and as a further safeguard disconnected three **SATA** drives leaving only the **M.2 NVMe** Windows drive.

Restarting the PC, the 20H2 upgrade then installed successfully. Typing **winver** into the search box verified that, at last, I was on 20H2. Then a simple task: to shut down, replace the graphics card, reconnect the SATA drives, reboot and reinstall graphics drivers.

Lessons learned: not to just rely on internet advice; use some critical thinking; and never get rid of old computer components. A written record of all changes made to my various computers since 2001 also helped.

Ian MacLachlan

Wi-Fi

Use LAN cable to get signal in summer house

✓ In Issue 600 (page 43), JJ Reynolds offers a solution for David Edwards' powerline networking problem (see Issue

Why I stopped using...

Webcams

✓ I'm sure the devices mentioned in Issue 601's feature on adding a webcam to a PC (pages 60-61) are good, but they are a little pricey.

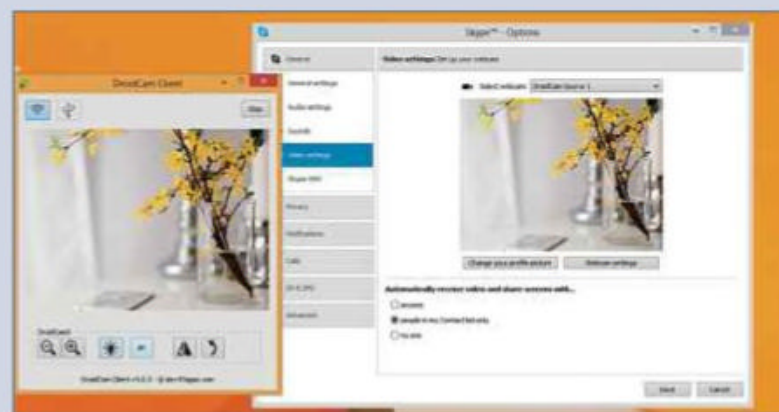
And what I use instead...

A cheaper option is to turn a phone into a camera using the app DroidCam (free for Android or iOS: www.dev47apps.com,

pictured).

The results are excellent and certainly better than most laptop cameras. The only difficulty is mounting the phone, but a small tripod from my camera gear has solved that. It certainly makes sure the people I meet on Zoom don't have to spend the meeting looking up my nose!

Chris Cheetham



Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: letters@computeractive.co.uk



598, page 13), caused by having two separate electrical circuits in his house. He suggests using an extension lead.

I have a separate electric circuit that runs down our garden and isn't part of the main network for the house. I wanted a reliable internet connection in our summer house, which is connected to the garden electricity supply at the end of the garden.

I managed to achieve this by plugging a 50-metre LAN cable (such as this one from Amazon www.snipca.com/37618, pictured above) into the back of my router and using two TP-Link powerline plugs. Using a socket on the garden's electric circuit nearest the router, I plugged in one powerline plug and connected the cable from my router to it. Using the second powerline plug in the summer-house socket, I was able to get a good network connection of 10Mbps.

I hope this might be useful for anyone with similar problems.

Mike Johnston-Price

MUSIC

Create your own media server for under £10

✓ Incarceration as a lockdown hermit has given me time to attend to computer matters that have slipped down my to-do list.

For example, at the back of our router there's a USB port that's compatible with Universal Plug and Play (UPnP), so popping in an old 2GB USB stick (FAT32 format) instantly created a network drive. I loaded the stick with an MP3 and plugged it in. I then downloaded 'Hi-Fi Cast' to my Android phone (from www.snipca.com/37515, pictured right), switched on Bluetooth and, voila, music plays!

I then wondered how to deal with a sizeable CD collection of classical music? I ditched MP3 and ripped the discs to FLAC using Exact Audio Copy (www.snipca.com/37516 – click the link below

Reader recommends...

Lenovo Yoga Slim 7

£849 from Amazon www.snipca.com/37348

✓ I'd been umming and ahing about buying a new laptop for a year or so. I didn't fancy *Computeractive's* previous 'Buy It' recommendation (Honor's MagicBook 14), so kept waiting for it to be replaced with a new favourite. This appeared in Issue 601 (page 30) with the Yoga Slim 7.

I've had several Lenovo laptops in the past, and have been impressed by the build quality and durability. I got the same impression with the Yoga Slim 7 when I opened it. I've only had it for a few weeks, but I've used it enough to know it's fast, and – unlike many previous laptops – doesn't get uncomfortably hot where the wrists rest.



Lockdown means I've not used it outside, so I've not been able to test the 15-hour battery, but I agree with your claim that it's one of the best sounding laptops ever. I listen to music all day working at home, and the audio is stunning.

Shaun Mansell

✉ Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?
Email letters@computeractive.co.uk

the green 'Download' heading).

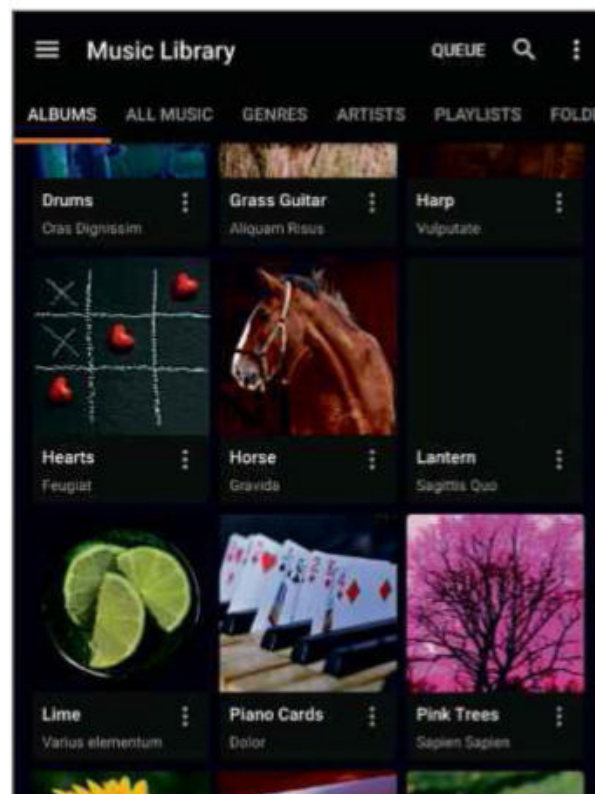
Next, I bought a 100GB USB stick from Amazon (for £9.99), which I converted to FAT32 using the free version of Paragon Partition Manager 12 (www.snipca.com/37517). I've now got a music server, and it cost me under a tenner!

Dr Egils Praulitis

SOFTWARE

Use Sumatra to view PDFs

✓ Having read the 'Stop making these PDF mistakes' feature in Issue 600



(pages 60–61), I'd like to say that while I completely agree that Adobe Reader is cumbersome, PDF-reading software is still better than using web browsers.

I use Sumatra PDF (www.snipca.com/37468), which I think was recommended in *Computeractive* several moons ago. The functionality is limited, but viewing a PDF is almost instantaneous – much faster than Adobe or a web browser. Lots of ebook formats are supported as well.

I sort of agree with you that you shouldn't use a program to convert PDFs, but on occasions I still use PDFCreator (www.pdfcreator.org, pictured below). You've previously 'named and shamed' it as a 'Junk Offender', but if you manage to skip the junk (like PDF Architect), then this is actually quite a useful bit of software as you can save documents not only as a PDF but as JPEG and TIFF.

Adam Pride



Phone and Tablet Tips

ANDROID & iOS

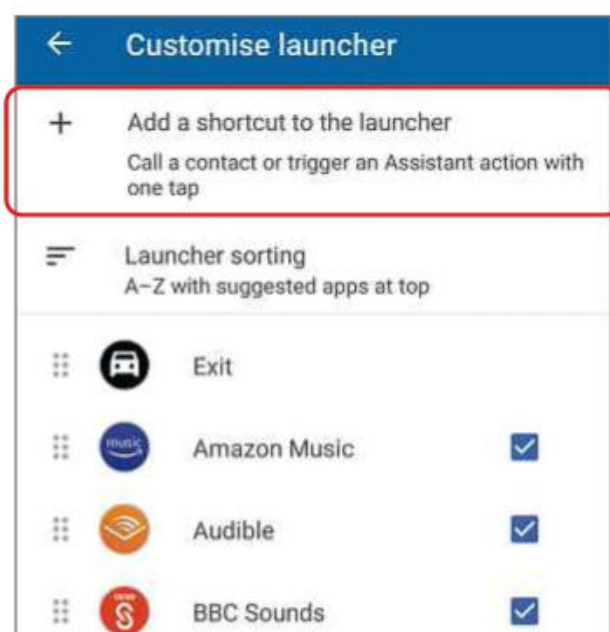
Customise Android Auto and Apple CarPlay



More and more new cars now come with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto built in. These big-screen interfaces for your phone let you control it more safely when driving as they give you big, chunky controls to jab at instead of the smartphone's fiddly buttons. They also let you manage these controls via buttons on your steering wheel, and can read out incoming text messages, which you can respond to using your voice.

At first glance, though, you may find your newly installed apps don't show up on the car's built-in screen. To resolve this, iOS and Android give you extensive control over the apps that appear on the screen.

If you're using Android Auto, open



Settings on your Android device and tap 'Connected devices', followed by 'Connection preferences', then Android Auto. To change the range of apps that show on the dashboard screen, tap 'Customize launcher', then use the tick boxes beside the name of each app to show or hide it. Notice, also, the option to 'Add a shortcut to the launcher' at the top of the screen (see screenshot below left). Tap this and you can add a button to call a contact or carry out an action using Google Assistant. This lets you, for example, call a family member to tell them you're on your way home or get the latest weather forecast for your destination with just one tap.

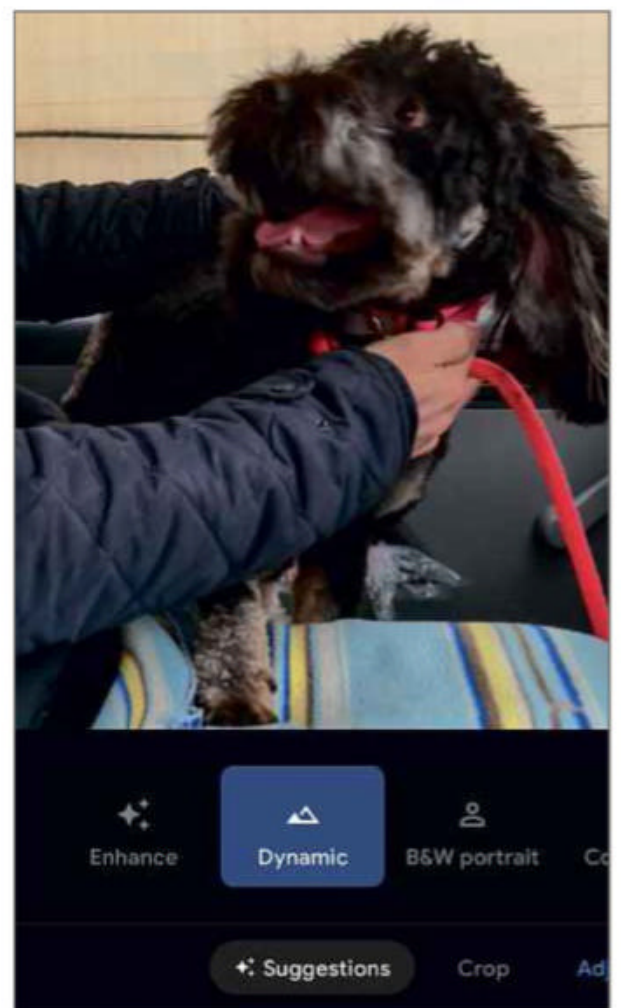
On an iPhone, open Settings and tap General followed by CarPlay. Select your car in the list of registered vehicles, then tap Customize. Use the '+' and '-' buttons to add and remove apps to the choice that's shown on the car screen, and hold down on the three bars to the right of each one to drag them into your preferred order.

ANDROID

Use advanced photo-editing tools



Google's £1.99-a-month One service (<https://one.google.com>) has always struck us as good value. It increases your storage space on Google web apps like Drive and Gmail. Plus, as well as photo storage (accessible via the built-in Photos app on Android, or Google Photos on iOS



from www.snipca.com/37595) it provides additional photo-editing options for Android users.

If you've already signed up for Google One, open the photo you want to edit using the Google Photos app on your Android phone or tablet, then tap the edit button (an icon with three adjustment sliders) on the bottom toolbar. You'll now find a range of smart editing options when you tap Suggestions (see screenshot above), and extra editing features under Adjust.

BEST NEW APPS

What you should install this fortnight

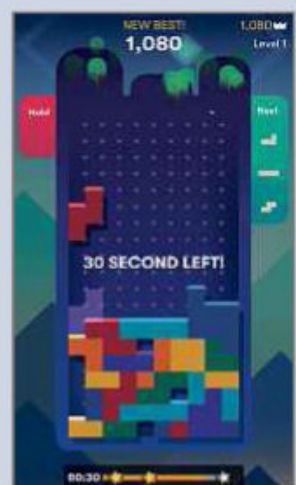
Tetris

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/37598

iOS www.snipca.com/37598

The classic block-dropping game is back. This app was chosen by Apple as one of



its highlights of the day and we can see why: it's colourful, tactile and quite addictive. It also preserves that bombastic tune you'll remember from the original playing in the background.

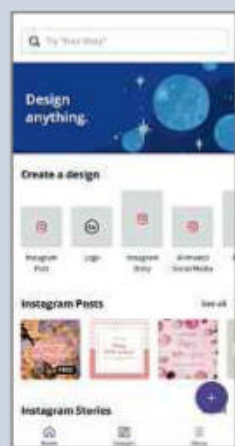
Canva

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/37602

iOS www.snipca.com/37601

Canva is a refreshingly simple tool for creating great-looking content, whether it's a social-media post, a flyer or a poster for printing. This latest release includes a couple of important new features, including a nudge tool that lets you move objects up, down, left and right using on-screen buttons. There's also a range of new templates to get you started.

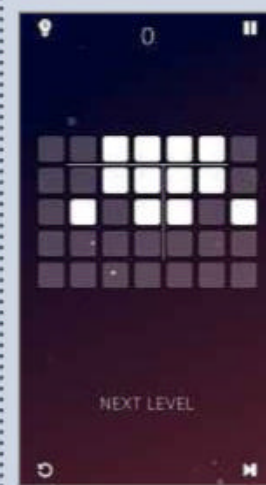


Zen Symmetry

Free

Android www.snipca.com/37600

If Tetris (left) is a bit too frenetic for you, check out Zen Symmetry. It's a wonderfully simple concept: you have a



series of blocks and one or more mirrors. Some of the blocks are illuminated already. All you need to do is tap the ones that should be illuminated in the reflection. It sounds easy, and it is – to start with – but it soon gets tricky.

*Contains in-app purchases

Brilliant things to do on your device

Note that you need to be running at least Android 8 (released in 2017) on your device and have at least 3GB of storage.

iOS Control your iPhone using your voice

Imagine you're doing the washing up and have wet hands, or holding some tools while doing a spot of DIY – both scenarios when you want to avoid touching your phone if possible. But what if you need to check a recipe, or check guidance on the next step of your project? That's when voice control comes in handy. It works on iOS 13 and later, which is available for the iPhone 6S and more recent devices.

To turn it on, open Settings and tap Accessibility, followed by Voice Control. Tap 'Set Up Voice Control', followed by Continue, then Done. Your phone will now start listening to you and interpret whatever it can. There's no need to use a trigger word like "Hey Siri": just say something like "tap Messages", or "press home button". You can also ask it to do things that don't involve an on-screen icon, like "turn up volume" or "open mail" (or any other app name).

However, one of the smartest tools is the on-screen grid. Imagine you're trying to tap a button in an app. How would you do that with your voice? Well, by saying "turn on grid", your iPhone will overlay the screen with a grid of numbered squares (see screenshot below). Speak the number of the square in which the button appears. This zooms in on that square, which is broken down further. Again, say the number of the square in which the button appears. When you've zoomed far enough to have isolated the

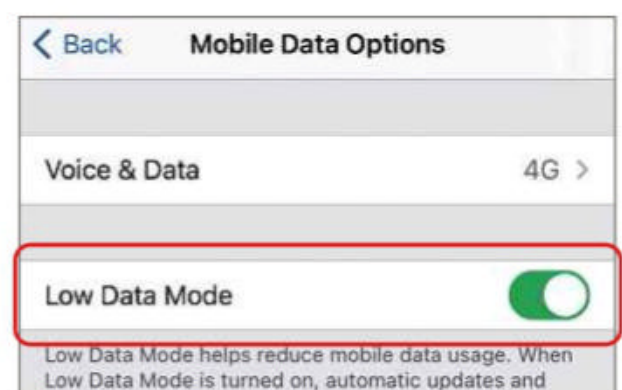
button, say "single tap", "double tap" or "long tap" as appropriate.

To turn off Voice Control, return to its screen in the Accessibility section of Settings and tap the slider beside Voice Control so it slides to the left.

ANDROID & iOS Reduce your data use

If you're not on an unlimited mobile-data contract, you might be getting close to your limit every month. Rather than risking additional charges or being cut off, turn on low data mode, which reduces the amount of data your phone transmits in the background when it's otherwise sitting idle.

On iPhones running iOS 13 and later, open Settings and tap Mobile Data followed by Mobile Data Options. If you're on a 4G connection, tap Low Data Mode to switch it on (see screenshot above right). However, if you're already



using 5G, you'll need to do one extra tap – on Data Mode – followed by Low Data Mode.

On Android, tap 'Network and Internet' followed by Data Saver. Tap the switch beside Use Data Saver to switch it on.

BEST APPS FROM... NASA

NASA

Free

Android www.snipca.com/37604

iOS www.snipca.com/37603

The space agency's main app is packed with more than 16,000 images, live NASA TV and more. Read up on past and current missions, find out where satellites like the Hubble Space Telescope are right now, and check what's visible from your current location.

Best For Current developments in NASA

NASA Glenn Research Center: The Early Years

Free

iPadOS www.snipca.com/37609

If you're more interested in how the US got to grips with spaceflight, this beautiful digital-book app is a treat. Flick through the incredible archive photos with every page accompanied by a detailed explanation. It will provide hours of reading if you want the full experience.

Best For Learning the history of space travel

ISS Explorer

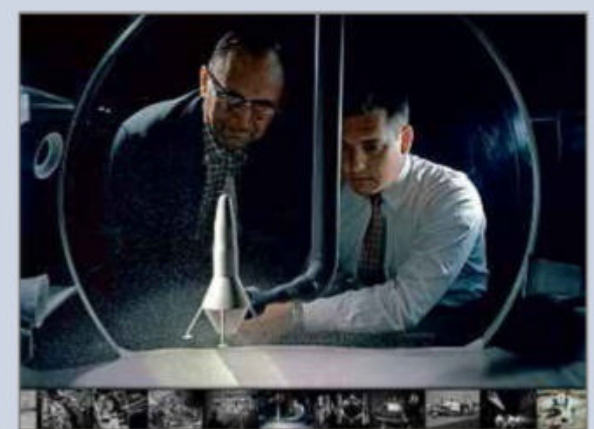
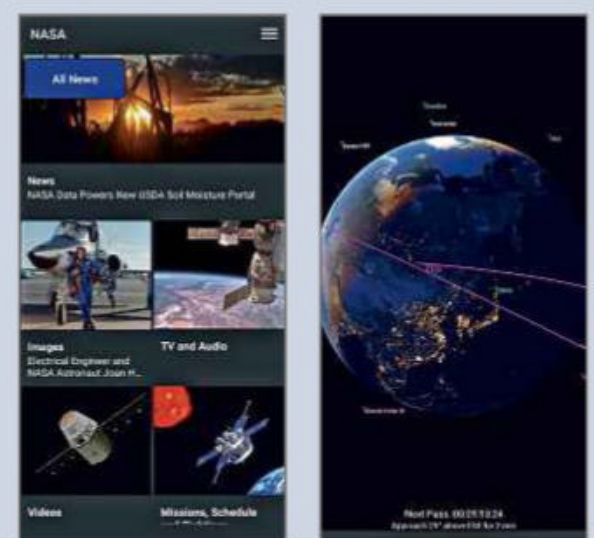
Free

Android www.snipca.com/37608

iOS www.snipca.com/37607

This interactive tool lets you explore the various parts of the International Space Station (ISS) in 3D. The quality of the images – and the lighting – is extraordinary, and you can isolate specific sections to rotate them in isolation, at which point you can see bits that would otherwise be obscured. A dedicated information tab for each one tells you what it does.

Best For Exploring the ISS



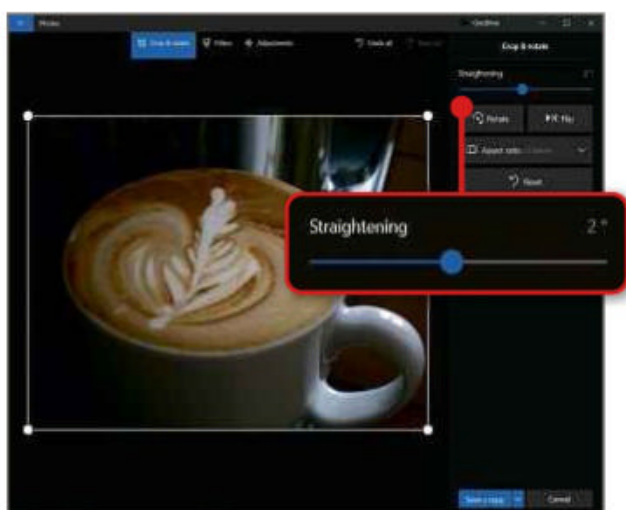
WINDOWS 10

Crop images without downloading software



There are plenty of programs you can download that let you crop photos and other images, such as Paint.NET (www.getpaint.net), but you can also use Windows built-in Photos app for this task.

Press Windows+E to open File Explorer, navigate to the photo you want to crop, then double-click it to open it in the Photos app (if you've set your default photo viewer to a different program, right-click the photo, select 'Open with', then Photos). In the top-right corner of the Photos app, click 'Edit & Create', followed by Edit.



Next, drag the small white circles in each corner of your photo so that only the section you want to keep is selected (as you do this the app will zoom in on the area you've selected). You can then apply other tweaks (such as rotating it using the Straightening slider – see screenshot above), before clicking 'Save a copy' (bottom right).

The cropped photo will now be saved in the same folder as the original, but with a '(2)' added to the end of the file name. If you want to overwrite the original photo with the cropped version, click the small up arrow next to the 'Save a copy' button and instead select Save.

WINDOWS 10

Make Windows read text out loud in magnification mode



If the Windows Magnifier tool (press '+' while holding the Windows key to enable it) isn't enough to help you read whatever's on screen, Windows has another trick. With the Magnifier tool switched on, press Ctrl+Alt+Enter and Windows will read the text out loud to you. To stop the page being read, simply press any key.

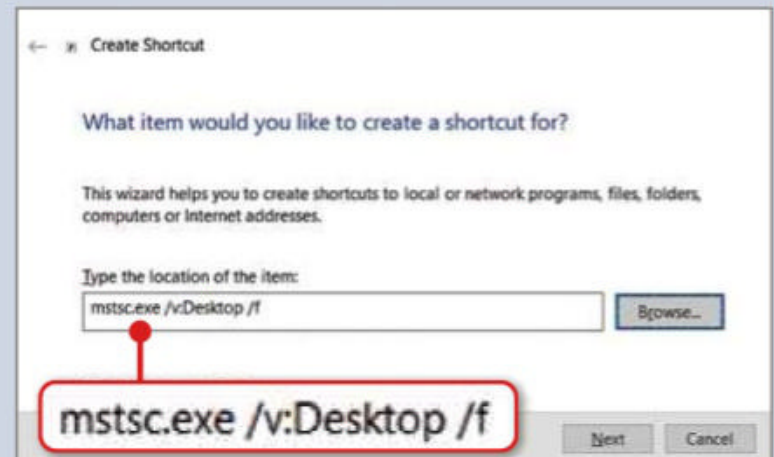
WINDOWS 10

Create remote access shortcuts



Windows 10 has a built-in tool that lets you remotely access the other PCs on your home network, which is ideal if you need to check something on your computer in the study, but don't fancy traipsing up and down the stairs. You will need Windows 10 Pro on the PC that you're accessing remotely, but you can remotely access that from any Windows 10 PC (Pro or Home edition).

If you regularly connect to the same PC, save yourself the hassle of loading the Remote Desktop tool each time (which you can find by searching the Start menu) and instead create a dedicated shortcut. Right-click an empty section of your desktop, select New, then Shortcut. In the Create Shortcut window that opens, type `mstsc.exe /v:Desktop`, replacing 'Desktop' with the name of the PC you



want to connect to (you can find this by typing **about this pc**, pressing Enter then looking under 'Device name'). Alternatively, you can use the PC's **IP address** – for example, `mstsc.exe /v:192.168.1.117`. To make your remote session run in full-screen mode, simply add a space, then `/f` to the end of the command (see screenshot).

Click 'Next', give your shortcut a name, then click Finish. The shortcut will now be added to your desktop. For even easier access to it, drag the shortcut on to your taskbar.

WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

Keep your PC running fast by reminding other users to log off



When you lock your screen (press the Windows key+L), Windows doesn't sign you out. This makes logging back in much faster – you simply have to enter your password. However, if you share your PC with other people, having multiple accounts logged in simultaneously can slow Windows considerably.

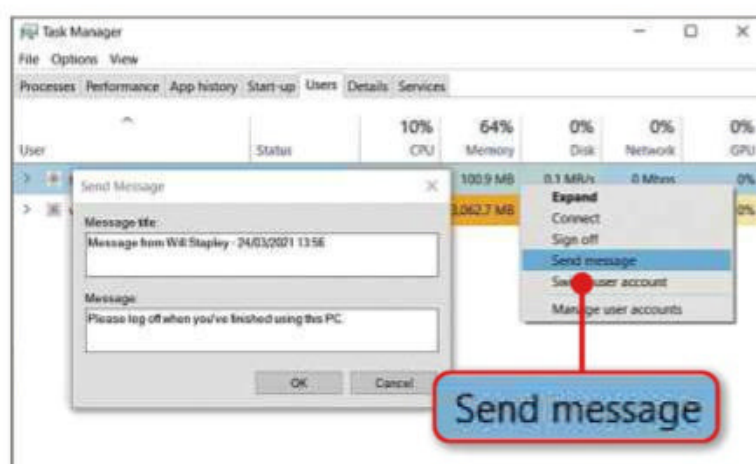
You can forcibly log people out by restarting your PC, but this will result in other users losing any unsaved work.

Instead, you can leave a note (polite or otherwise), reminding them to sign out of their account (the digital equivalent of leaving a note on the windscreen of a badly parked car).

First, open Task Manager by pressing Ctrl+Alt+Escape, then select the Users tab. You'll now see all user accounts that are currently logged in (including your own). Right-click the account you want to leave a note for, click 'Send message' (see screenshot below left), then type your reminder in the Message box. The 'Message title' box will be pre-filled with your name, as well as the time and date of the message, but you can edit this if you like. Click 'OK' to send the message.


When the recipient of your note logs back on, your message will appear in its own window on their desktop.

Only those accounts with administrator privileges are able to send messages to other users, so you won't be on the receiving end of any unpleasant messages in return.



LIBREOFFICE WRITER & CALC

Check document properties before saving

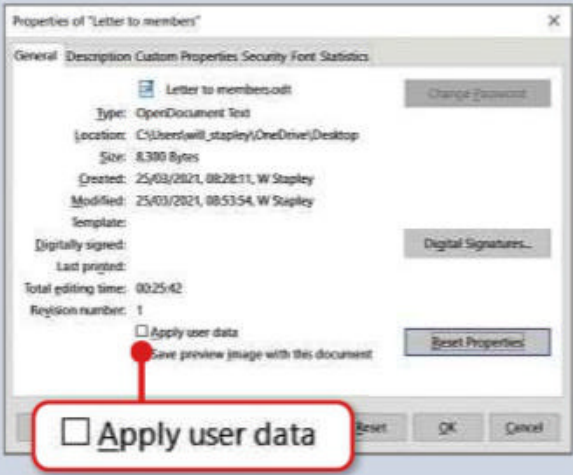


LibreOffice automatically applies properties to each document you save, such as your name and how long you've spent editing it. To review, edit or add to these properties before saving, open LibreOffice Writer or Calc, select the Tools menu, then Options (or just use the Alt+F12 keyboard shortcut). Expand the Load/Save option in the left sidebar, then select General. Under the Save heading on the right, tick the box labelled 'Edit document properties before saving', then click OK.

When you next save a document, the

Properties window will appear. You can then move through the tabs, editing or removing the various properties as you see fit. To remove your name, select the General tab, untick 'Apply user data' at the bottom (see screenshot right), then click Reset Properties. This resets all properties in the General tab, but doesn't affect those in the other tabs. In the 'Custom properties' tab, you can add extra properties, such as a document reference number or who it was checked by – just click Add Property, then fill the Name, Type and Value boxes accordingly.


Note that the Properties window will only appear the first time you save a



document or spreadsheet. To change the properties on subsequent saves, open the File menu, then click Properties.

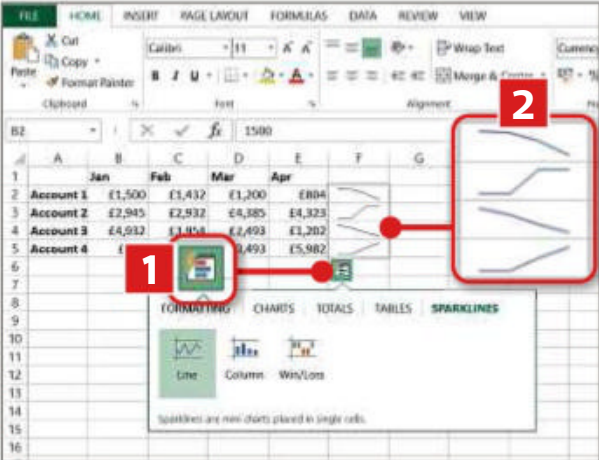
MICROSOFT EXCEL

Spot trends using 'sparklines'




Excel is loaded with fancy charts, graphs and other ways to visualise data in a spreadsheet. Sometimes, however, it's best to keep things simple. In our spreadsheet, we've got the bank balances of various accounts over a three-month period. Using Excel's Sparklines tool, we can get a visual representation of how each one is fairing, without inserting a large chart.

First, select all the data you want in the Sparklines tool (in our example, we've selected cells with account figures). Next, hover your mouse over the selection and click the chart icon that appears in the bottom-right corner **1**. In the box that appears, select the Sparklines tab, then Line. In the column to the right of your data you'll now see trend lines for each row in your selection. In our case, these show how each account has fluctuated **2**. These lines fill the cells they're in, so to make them bigger you simply need to increase the size and width of your cells.



LIBREOFFICE WRITER & CALC

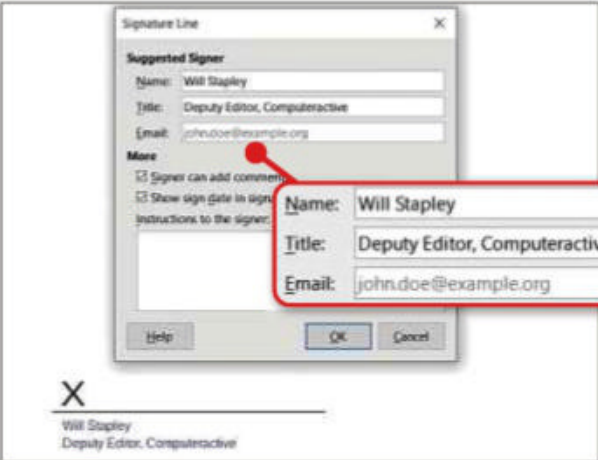
Add signature lines to your documents



When you're printing a document or spreadsheet that needs to be signed off (such as an expenses form for purchases made for a local club), LibreOffice helps by letting you indicate where the form should be signed and by whom.


Whether you're using Writer or Calc, open the Insert menu, then click 'Signature Line...'. In the window that opens, type the name of the person who should sign the document, their title and email address (these are all optional fields), then click OK.

A large 'X' along with a line to sign on will now appear in your document. If you added details of the person who needs to sign it, these will also appear here (see screenshot below). You can then drag this signature box to wherever you want it on your document or spreadsheet. You can now repeat this process, adding as many signature lines as you need.



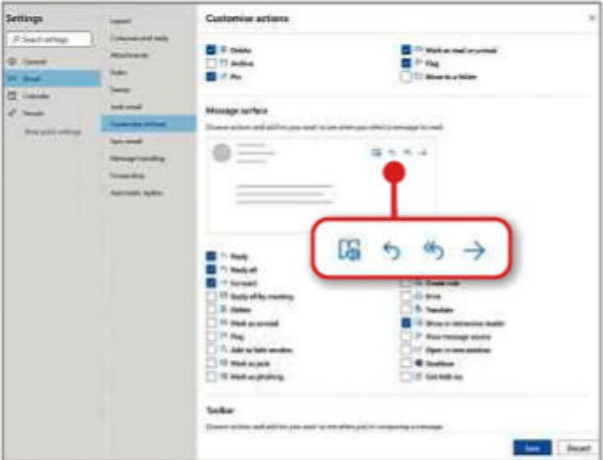
MICROSOFT OUTLOOK

Customise your online Outlook toolbar



When you double-click an email in Microsoft's online version of Outlook (www.outlook.com – you'll need a free Microsoft account to log in), the window that opens has three shortcut buttons at the top-right: Reply, Reply All and Forward. To add shortcuts for tools you use often, click the Settings button (cog icon, top-right corner), then 'View all Outlook settings' (bottom-right).

Next, select the Email tab, then 'Customise actions'. Scroll to the 'Message surface' section, then choose from the available shortcuts. We've added 'Show in immersive reader' to ours, which lets us view emails in a distraction-free window and, by clicking the play button, even have them read out loud. As you add shortcuts, the preview window shows how they will look when reading emails (see screenshot below). Once you've made your changes, click the Save button, then close the Settings window.



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In The Club



Run a club or society? Here's how your tech can make it easier

Share your screen during club meetings

Screen sharing on club video calls is a great way to do everything from demonstrating a new process through to reviewing ideas for a club logo redesign. Although all video-chat tools offer basic video-sharing features (see box below), none can match those offered by Zoom (www.zoom.us).

Share your desktop or a window

To start sharing your screen in Zoom, click the green Share Screen button at the bottom (hover your cursor over the main Zoom window to reveal this). The sharing options are split across three tabs: Basic, Advanced and Files. In the Basic tab, you can share the desktop of a specific monitor (these will be labelled Screen 1, Screen 2 and so on) or a single window.

A green border will appear around whatever you're sharing. Hover over the 'You are screen sharing' label and you'll see several options, including Annotated, which lets you draw over what's being displayed. Click 'Pause Share' to temporarily stop sharing, or Stop Share to return to the main Zoom call.

Share video and audio

When sharing a window that's playing audio (such as a YouTube video), click the 'Share sound' box at the bottom so participants can hear the audio. Although your microphone won't be muted when you do this, the audio from your screen-share will take precedence. It's therefore



Zoom lets you use presentations as virtual backgrounds

best to pause the video if you want to speak to the other people on your call. We also recommend ticking the 'Optimise for video clip' option – this prioritises **frame rates** over image quality, which ensures a smoother, if slightly less detailed, video.

To share a video stored on your PC, select the Advanced tab, Video (Zoom will automatically tick the 'Share sound' and 'Optimise for video clip' boxes), Share, then select the relevant video. Your clip will now play in full screen to everyone on your call, and you can control playback using the buttons at the bottom.

Share presentations and more

The 'Advanced' tab also provides other sharing options, including 'Portion of Screen', which lets you share just a section of your desktop. There's also a **beta** sharing option ('PowerPoint as Virtual Background') that lets you superimpose yourself over a presentation. Once you've chosen your presentation (**PPT** and **PPTX** formats are supported), it

will appear as a virtual background, allowing you to point towards areas of interest (click and drag the blue box to adjust the size and position of your video feed – see screenshot left).

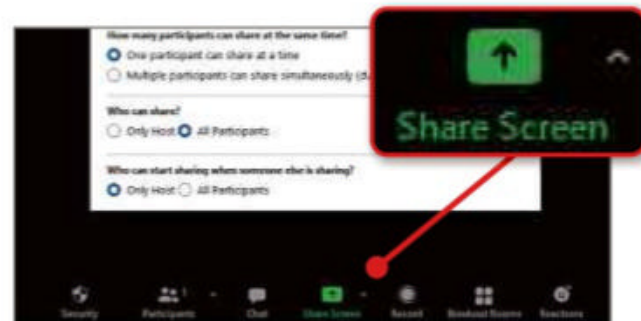
Share using your phone or tablet

The Zoom mobile app (<https://zoom.us/download> – scroll to the Zoom Mobile Apps section) also lets you share your screen, but it has fewer options. Tap the Share button (you may need to tap the screen to reveal this), then choose what to share. The 'Bookmark' option lets you quickly share previously saved web links (to add a bookmark, select this option, then click Add Bookmark at the top left). Unlike on the desktop version, you can't share audio on a mobile device, so we don't recommend sharing videos.

Control who can share

To prevent others in your call from sharing their screen, click the small up arrow next to the Share Screen button (see screenshot below), select 'Advanced Sharing Options...', then – under 'Who can share?' – select Only Host. If you select All Participants, the 'How many participants...' section lets you choose whether multiple people can share their screen simultaneously.

Precisely how everyone sees multiple screen shares depends on whether they're using the desktop or mobile version of Zoom. On desktop PCs, the most recently shared screen will appear in full screen, but people can switch between the other shared screens via the View Options button (top right) – those with two monitors can view two shared screens simultaneously. On mobile devices, only the most recently shared screen will be visible.



Zoom lets you control who can share their screen during a call

Share your screen in Skype, Meet & Teams

To screen share when using **Skype** (www.skype.com), click the 'Share screen' button (bottom right), then choose whether to share your entire desktop or a specific window. Click 'Share computer sound' to also share the audio from your PC. On the Skype mobile app, tap the three dots, then 'Share screen'. To stop sharing, return to the Skype app on your phone, then tap the 'Stop sharing' link at the top.

Google Meet (www.google.com/meet) lets you share your desktop, a window or a browser tab (Chrome only). You can share your audio only from a Chrome tab. Like Skype, the mobile app limits you to sharing the entire screen.

In **Microsoft Teams** (www.microsoft.com/teams) press Ctrl+Shift+E during a call, then choose to share your desktop, window or a whiteboard. Share a file from your PC by clicking Browse.

What's All the Fuss About...



Your wrist

Facebook wants you to click your fingers, not a mouse

What is it?

You don't know what your wrist is? It's just there, at the end of your arm – that bendy bit before your hand. Or, to quote Wikipedia, it's “the complex of eight bones forming the proximal skeletal segment of the hand”. Ring a bell?

Yes, alright. But why is it in the news?

Because Facebook has unveiled an as-yet-unnamed wristband that lets you control lights, play games, boil kettles and move virtual objects from a distance with tiny movements of your fingers. It's some years away yet, but Facebook is confident it'll be the long-term replacement for the computer mouse.

Crikey. How does it work?

Using electromyography (EMG), a medical technology that tests for nerve or muscle damage by stimulating them with electricity. Facebook is using it to translate motor nerve signals sent from the brain to the wrist into digital commands, letting you control devices. These signals are so clear that EMG can understand finger motion of just one millimetre, making it incredibly easy to use (so Facebook claims, anyway). Apparently, the wrist is the ideal body part for EMG sensors.

Why is that?

Because it's where we usually wear a watch, so any new device would “reasonably fit into everyday life and social contexts”. Also, it's “right next to



the primary instruments you use to interact with the world” – namely, your hands. You can see the wristband in the photo above.

What is she doing in that photo?

Holding an invisible joystick. That thumb at the top is pressing down on a button. The wristband will ‘read’ that motion and transmit the signal to the game she's playing. Other uses suggested by Facebook include typing on an invisible keyboard (pictured below left); starting a music playlist while cutting vegetables; and dimming a lamp by touching your palm. It'll use artificial intelligence to learn the specific way you move your body, eventually creating a personalised “interface” that adapts to your needs. It all sounds incredibly clever (and it certainly makes for an excitingly

futuristic video: www.snipca.com/37688), but we foresee two major problems.

What's the first?

That it looks like the kind of tag prisoners wear so they don't break curfews when released home. It's

**Where's his keyboard gone?
It was never actually there**

certainly no Tiffany bracelet. But that pales next to the second problem.

Which is?

Trust. Facebook's privacy reputation still hasn't recovered from the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Many people would feel uneasy about wearing a Facebook device that they'd perceive is reading their thoughts.

And can it do that?

No, and Facebook has been quick to counter this fear. Mike Schroepfer, the firm's chief technology officer, said: “It is simply motor information – the intent for you to move your hand. It is nowhere near some sort of brain or thoughts or anything like that.” He said also that Facebook wouldn't have access to any data read by the wristband. But the fact he had to address these concerns is telling. The company knows it will have a battle to persuade people that the device is totally private.

And will it win that battle?

It depends how useful the wristband proves to be. As the rise of Facebook itself shows, lots of people are prepared to sacrifice some privacy for technology that transforms their lives. We won't know for several years whether it'll produce a thumbs up or another, far cruder wrist gesture.





WINDOWS SETTINGS

YOU **MUST** CHANGE

You don't need to be a registry wizard to get Windows working the way you want. Robert Irvine reveals how to make it faster, smarter and better suited to your needs – all using a free tweaking tool

We love Windows, but it's by no means perfect. Whether it's minor irritations, fiddly controls or the tools that Microsoft has either removed or needlessly updated, everyone has their pet gripes. One way to get Windows working the way *you* want is to dive into the Windows registry. However, unless you know exactly what you're

doing, the registry can be a confusing place and you may end up making changes that make things worse.

Thankfully, help is at hand in the shape of a brilliant free program called Winaero Tweaker (www.snipca.com/37666). This tool provides easy access to hundreds of Windows tweaks, letting you customise and enhance Windows quickly and safely – and without having to get your hands dirty in the registry.

Thanks to a major update in March, it's now our preferred system-tweaking tool, edging out our previous favourite Ultimate Windows Tweaker (UWT – www.snipca.com/37625). Alongside a range of new features, the latest version (0.19) of Winaero Tweaker introduces an easy way to review all changes you've made using the tool, then reverse any you no longer want (see Workshop opposite).

On first opening the tool, we wouldn't blame you for finding the sheer range of

settings a tad overwhelming. That's why we've tested every option in Winaero Tweaker and selected only the very best ones for improving how Windows looks and works. We've also printed the name of each setting in **bold**, so you know exactly what you're looking for.

When installing Winaero Tweaker, you may find Microsoft's SmartScreen tool flags it as a risk and states that the tool was created by an 'unknown developer'. This is a **false positive** – VirusTotal confirms the tool is completely clean (www.snipca.com/37629), so you can ignore the warning and click 'More info', then 'Run anyway'. Also, note that Winaero Tweaker doesn't provide an option to create **system restore points**. As mentioned, all tweaks are easily reversible, but you can create your own restore point before making any changes – click Start, type **restore**, press Enter then select 'Create a restore point'.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Override default system settings for windows, icons and fonts
- Speed up Windows shutdown and make menus open faster
- Restore the classic volume and power controls to the taskbar
- Add useful new options to your right-click context menu

MAKE WINDOWS LESS ANNOYING

Disable the features you don't need

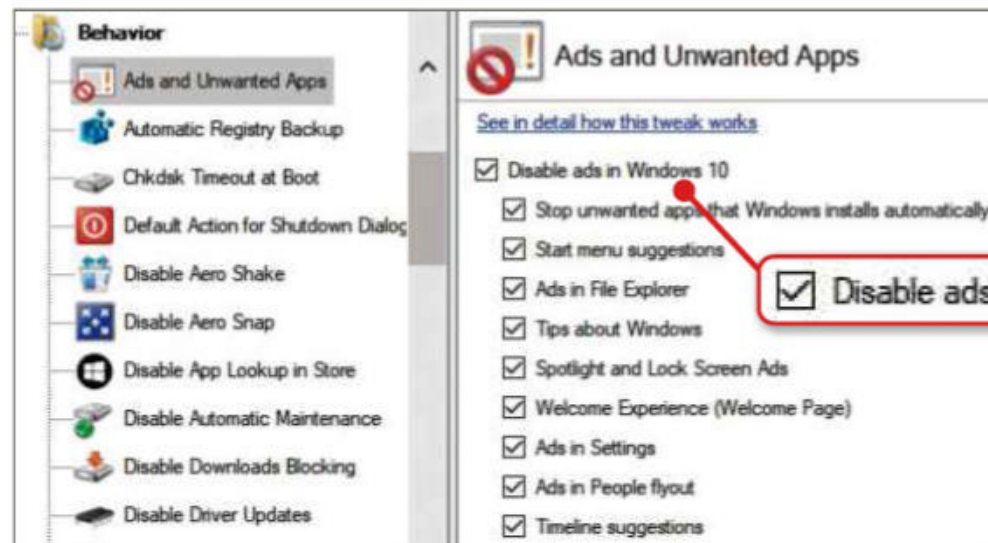
Some Windows features are so pointless, you don't even notice them until they start annoying you. One we particularly dislike is Aero Shake, which is supposed to let you focus on a specific window (give the window a shake with your mouse and all other windows will minimise). However, this is far too easy to do by accident.

To turn it off, go to the Behavior section, select **Disable Aero Shake**, then tick the Disable Aero Shake box on the right – as with most settings in Winaero Tweaker, there's no OK button, so the change takes effect immediately. In the same section, **Disable Aero Snap** lets you stop Windows automatically (and often inconveniently) resizing your windows when you drag them to the edge of the screen.

We also recommend visiting the 'Ads and Unwanted Apps' section and ticking 'Disable ads in Windows 10' (see screenshot above right). This removes all annoying adverts and pop-ups in Windows, including those that appear in Microsoft apps, the Start menu and your lock screen.

Speed up sluggish menus

Hover your cursor over a menu item – such as those that appear when you



Tick this option to quickly disable annoying ads in Windows

right-click a file – and there's a small but frustrating delay before the sub-menu is displayed. You can reduce this lag with a registry hack, but Winaero Tweaker provides a much easier way to do it.

In the Behavior section of the program, select **Menu Show Delay** and drag the slider under 'Change a delay before a submenu pops up' to the left, to reduce the number of milliseconds a sub-menu takes to open. Tempting as it is, don't set this to '0' as menus will then open too fast, producing a nasty flickering effect as you move your cursor over the various menus. Instead, we recommend cutting the opening time from the default of 400 milliseconds (0.4 seconds) to between 100 and 200 milliseconds.

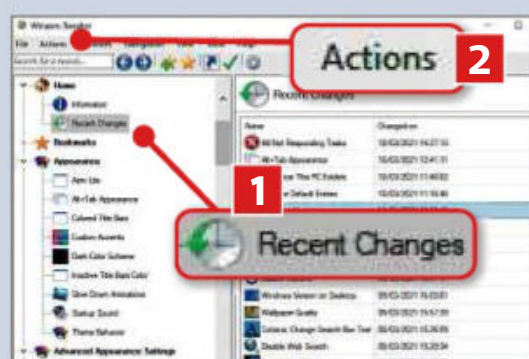
Turn off automatic Windows updates

Windows 10 installs regular updates that add new features and fix bugs, but they can sometimes force you to restart your PC at the most inconvenient times. Many of us have experienced problems caused by an update.

Winaero Tweaker puts you in control of Windows updates by letting you disable them with a single click, then re-enable when it's convenient to do so. Click the **Disable Windows Update** option in the Behavior section and select 'Disable Windows updates and notifications'. Note that this won't stop Windows Defender updates, so your PC will still be protected against new threats.

WORKSHOP Master Winaero Tweaker

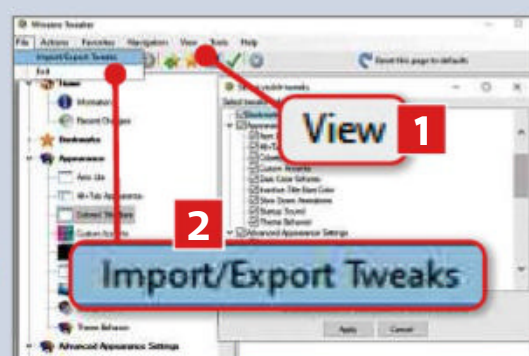
1 To view all the tweaks you've made using Winaero Tweaker, click **Recent Changes** **1** in the Home section. This tells you when each change was applied and lets you double-click a tweak to open its settings page. To undo a tweak, press Ctrl+R; or to undo them all, click the **Actions** menu **2** and choose 'Reset all tweaks'.



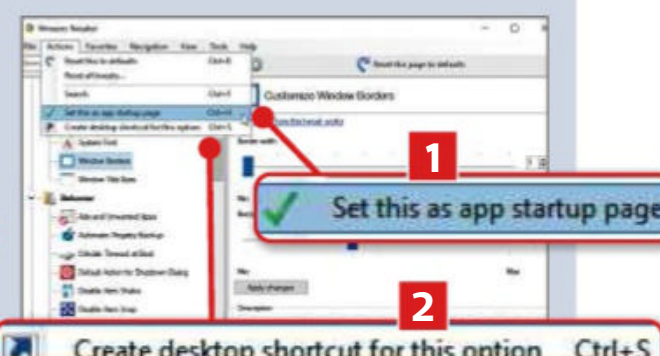
2 Clicking a section name displays all its tweaks in the right-hand pane. Use the buttons on the toolbar **1** to switch from Icons view to Details or Tile, which show more information about each tweak. You can save specific tweaks to apply later by clicking the 'Bookmark this tweak' button **2**.



3 If you find the number of settings overwhelming, click the **View** menu **1** and choose 'Select visible tweaks'. Deselect any that you're never likely to use. To save all the tweaks you've made, so they can be reapplied on a new or reformatted PC, click the **File** menu and choose **Import/Export Tweaks** **2**.



4 To set a specific tweak as your startup page in Winaero Tweaker (so you can quickly turn it on and off), either click the green tick on the toolbar or choose 'Set this as app startup page' **1** in the **Actions** menu. You can also create a desktop shortcut for any tweak **2**, so that Winaero Tweaker opens on that page.



CHANGE HOW WINDOWS LOOKS

Add colours to Windows

Compared with the colourful Windows XP, Windows 10 can seem a little dreary. To brighten things up, Winaero Tweaker lets you customise Windows 10's appearance with the click of a button.

Click the **Aero Lite** option in the Appearance section, then select Enable Aero Lite (see screenshot right) and you'll unlock Windows' hidden Aero Lite theme. This turns the taskbar and Start menu attractive shades of blue, and makes your windows' title bars and borders dark blue. The theme takes a few seconds to apply, and if you decide you don't like it you can quickly switch back to the default style by selecting 'Set Windows default theme'.

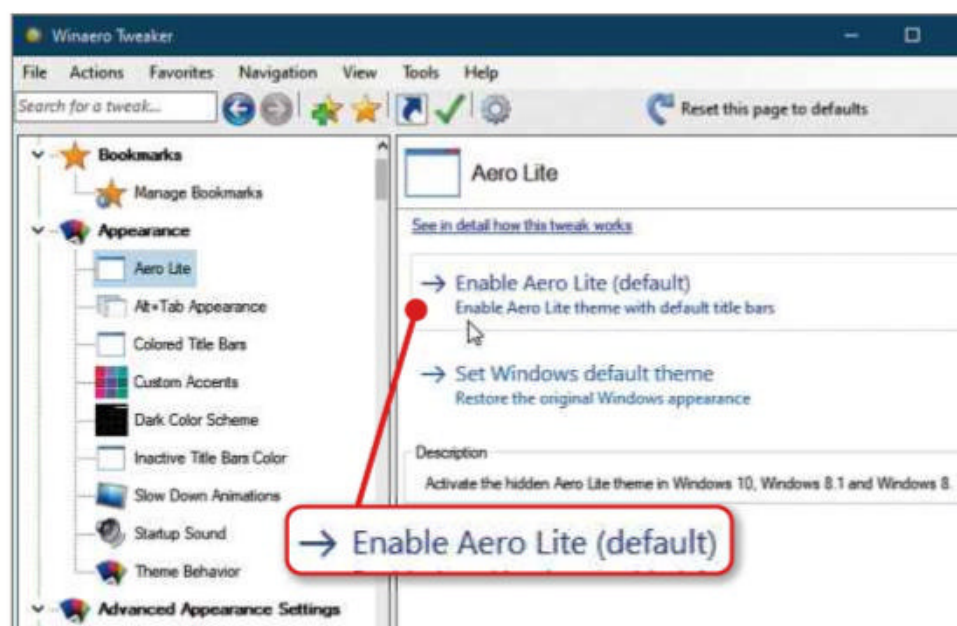
Alternatively, click **Colored Title Bars**, then Enable Colored Title Bars to apply Windows 8.1-style colours to the top of your windows, while leaving other colours as they are. For a less garish redesign that makes Windows easier on the eyes, select **Dark Colour Scheme** under Appearance. Here you can turn on Windows' dark theme by deselecting Apps Use Light Theme and System Uses Light Theme. This will apply a night mode to your windows' title bars, toolbars, menus, backgrounds and more (see page 62 for more dark mode tips).

As with other tweaks that make system-wide changes to Windows, you'll need to sign out of Windows then log back in for these changes to take effect.

Make scrollbars thicker and increase space between icons

Winaero Tweaker offers several other options for tailoring the appearance of your windows. If, like us, you find the

Increase the width of scrollbars to make it easier to navigate long pages



Enable the hidden Aero Lite theme to apply a blue colour scheme to Windows 10

scrollbars in folder windows too narrow, you can make them wider. Simply click **Scrollbars** in the Advanced Appearance Settings section, drag the 'Scrollbar width' slider (see screenshot below) to the right to thicken your scrollbar, then click Apply Changes. This also widens the scrollbar in other programs, such as your web browser. You can use the second slider to increase the size of your scrollbar's arrow buttons so they match.

You can also add space between file and folder icons in File Explorer. To do this, select **Icons** in the Advanced Appearance Settings section, then use the sliders to increase the horizontal and vertical spacing of icons in File Explorer and on your desktop. Click 'Apply Changes' to save your settings.

Other useful tweaks in Advanced Appearance Settings include increasing the height and width of **Window Title Bars** and **Window Borders** (thereby making windows easier to move and resize), and adjusting the spacing above

and below **Menus** at the top of each window (such as the File and Edit menus).

Winaero Tweaker even lets you change the **System Font** that's used throughout Windows (such as on title bars) from the default of Segoe UI to dozens of other styles, including Arial, Times New Roman or – if you fancy something a little more quirky – Comic Sans MS.

Redesign your shortcuts

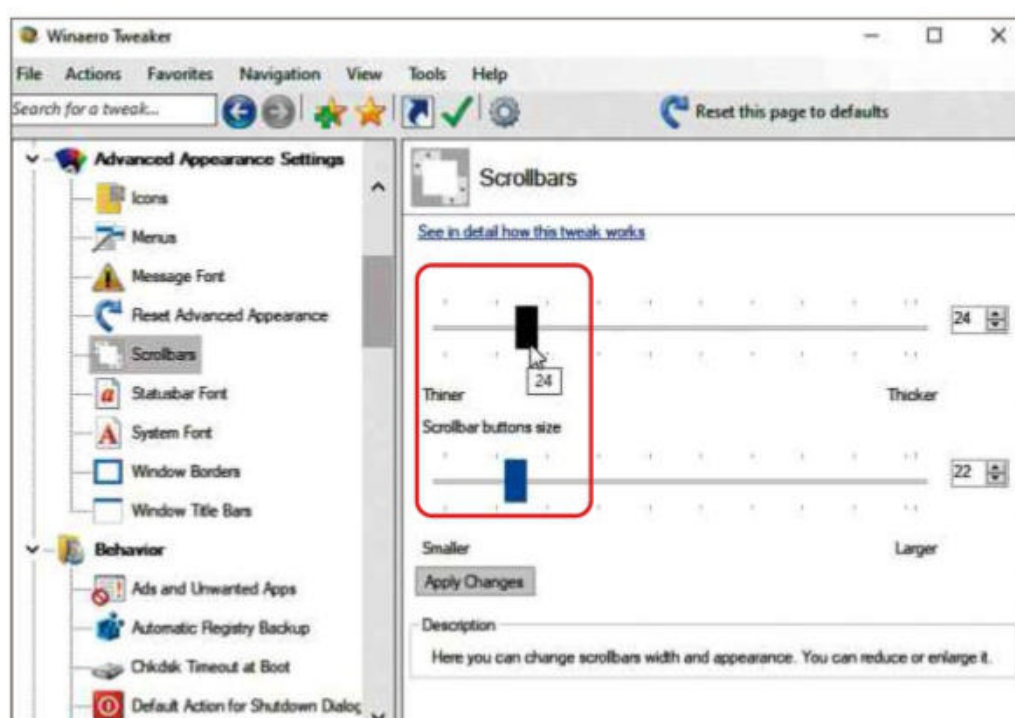
Shortcut icons on your desktop are useful, but the arrows in the bottom-right corner of each can look messy. With Winaero Tweaker, you can quickly remove them.

Scroll down to the Shortcuts section and click **Shortcut Arrow**. Here, you can switch from the default Windows arrow to a smaller 'classic' one, disable shortcut arrows altogether or choose a 'custom' icon design.

You can also remove the '– Shortcut' suffix that's added to the name of any shortcuts you create by selecting **Disable "- Shortcut" Text**. You'll need to click the Restart Explorer button to apply these changes.

We also like the option to create a **Classic Shutdown Shortcut**, which restores the shutdown menu from the days of Windows XP and lets you turn off your PC more quickly than the Windows 10 method of clicking the Start button, choosing Power and then 'Shut down'.

Select the tweak in the Shortcuts section, then click Create Shutdown Shortcut. Drag the new shortcut from your desktop to your taskbar for easy access. You can then click this shortcut to bring up the 'classic' Windows shutdown box, allowing you to switch off your PC simply by clicking OK.



MASTER YOUR BOOT & LOGIN SETTINGS

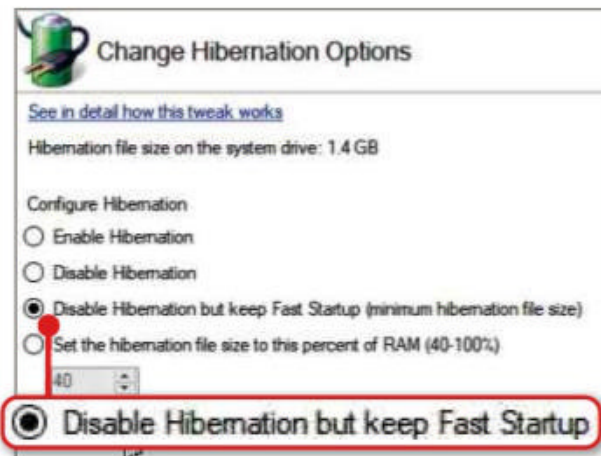
Change the way Windows boots

Whether you're bored of seeing the same screen every time you turn on your PC or just want easier access to different startup modes, Winaero Tweaker can help. Select the **Boot Options** entry in its 'Boot and Logon' section and you'll see options for hiding the Windows logo and animated loading circle (you'll instead see a blank screen while Windows boots).

More usefully, you can choose 'Always show advanced boot options' to display the Startup Settings screen each time you boot your PC. This lets you load Windows in **Safe Mode** or launch the Recovery Environment; the latter includes options to repair your PC if Windows won't boot.

You can also create shortcuts on your desktop to restart your PC into the various versions of Safe Mode. Go to the Shortcuts section, click **Safe Mode Shortcuts**, choose from options such as 'Safe Mode with Networking', then click Create Safe Mode Shortcuts.

When your PC hasn't shut down properly – for example, when you force it to turn off by holding down the power button – Windows may run its Chkdsk tool on the next boot (this scans your hard drive for errors). On larger hard drives this scan can take up to 10 minutes, and you're given only a few seconds to stop it from running. To give yourself more time, go to the Behavior section, select **Chkdsk Timeout at Boot**, then enter how many seconds grace period you want before running Chkdsk automatically (see screenshot below).



Save time and drive space by disabling hibernation while keeping Fast Startup

Reduce the size of your hibernation file

Windows stores a hidden system file called 'hiberfil.sys' in the **root directory** of your hard drive (in most cases, that's 'C:\'). This file contains the current state of your desktop – in other words, all the programs, documents and other files you have open. If you choose to hibernate your PC (click Start, Power, then Hibernate), instead of shutting down normally, Windows uses this file to restore your desktop when you next restart your PC, letting you pick up from where you left off.

The problem is, the 'hiberfile.sys' file is huge – just under 7GB on our PC. If you never use the hibernate feature, you can free up space on your hard drive by turning it off – click **Hibernation Options** in the Behavior section, then Disable Hibernation. However, this also disables Windows' Fast Startup feature, which speeds up boot times by using the 'hiberfil.sys' to load Windows instead of

loading everything from scratch. We therefore recommend selecting 'Disable Hibernation but keep Fast Startup' instead (see screenshot left). On our PC, this reduced the 'hiberfil.sys' file to a little over 3GB.

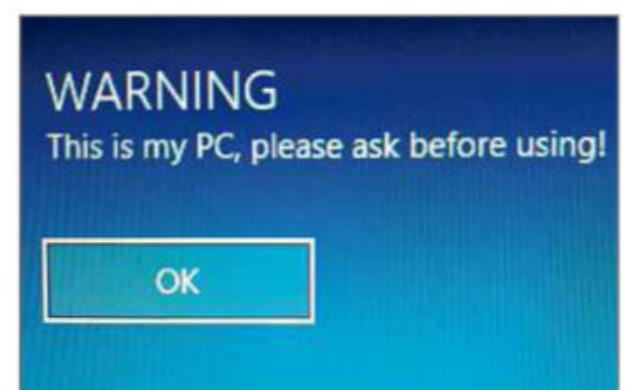
Customise the Windows lock screen

You can choose which picture appears on your lock screen in Windows by going to Settings, Personalisation, 'Lock screen' and selecting your preferred image. But this appears only when you're signed into your Microsoft account. If you're not signed in, the screen displays a default picture. To change this in Winaero Tweaker, click **Default Lock Screen Background** in the 'Boot and Logon' section, click Browse to choose an image, then select 'Change default lock screen background' to apply it for all users.

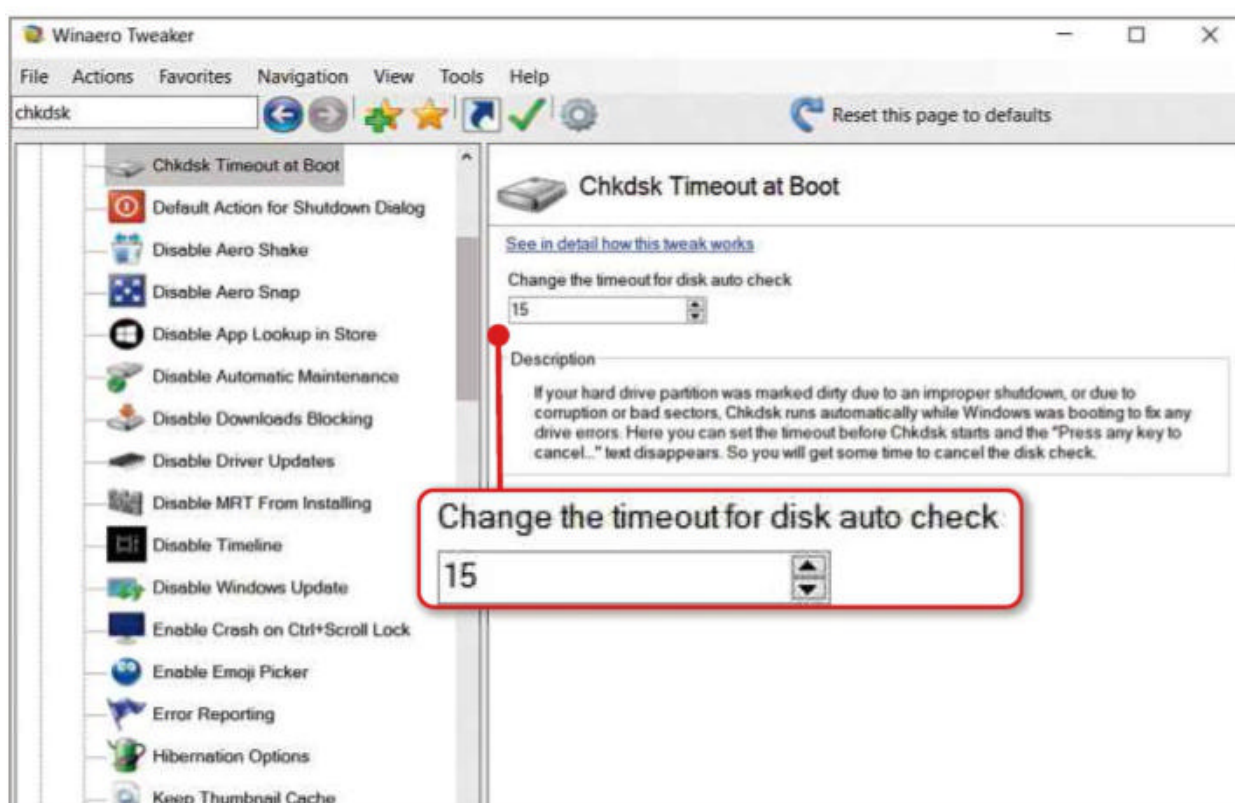
If you'd prefer not to see the lock screen at all, click **Disable Lock Screen** and deselect that option to show a blank screen and sign-in box instead. Similarly, you can simplify the login screen that appears when you start Windows, by clicking **Login Screen Image** then selecting Disable Login Screen Background Image.

Discover who's been using your PC

If you suspect someone has been attempting to use your PC without your permission, Winaero Tweaker can expose the intruder. Click **Show Last Logon Info** in the 'Boot and Logon' section and select 'Show the last logon information'. Each time you boot your PC, you'll now see the dates and times of successful and unsuccessful sign-ins, letting you spot if anyone has tried to sign in. Click **Sign-in Message** and you can set a message – such as a warning (see screenshot below) – that will appear every time someone attempts to sign in on your PC.



Let people know they shouldn't use your PC without asking your permission



Give yourself more thinking time during boot-up to decide whether to run Chkdsk

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TWEAK YOUR TASKBAR & DESKTOP

Make the taskbar more useful

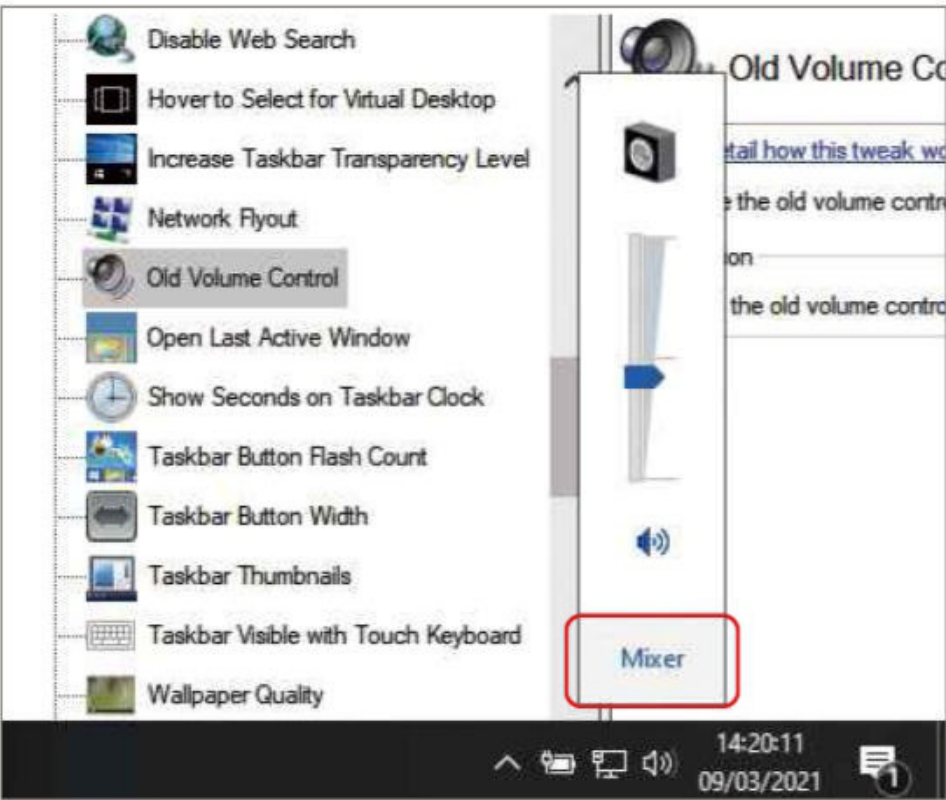
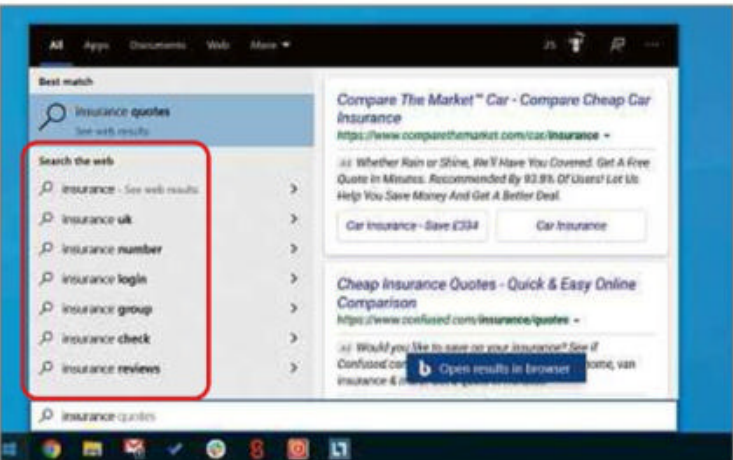
The taskbar has been around since Windows 95 and it's easy to take for granted. Winaero Tweaker's 'Desktop and Taskbar' section lets you give the long-neglected taskbar a makeover. Always keen to know the exact time, we've used it to set the taskbar clock to show seconds as well as hours and minutes. To do this, click the **Show Seconds on Taskbar Clock** option, select 'Make taskbar clock show seconds', then click Restart Explorer.

You can also ditch the horizontal volume slider that was introduced in Windows 10 in favour of the traditional vertical slider from previous versions of Windows - select **Old Volume Control** and tick the box next to 'Enable the old volume control'. Unlike the modern control (which requires you to right-click the speaker icon), this also gives you quick access to the Mixer (see screenshot above right), letting you quickly change the volume of different programs. Equally helpful is **Battery Flyout**, which lets you switch your laptop's power plan in a flash - particularly useful if your battery is running very low on charge.

We also like that you can tweak the preview windows that appear when you hover your cursor over program icons on your taskbar. Select **Taskbar Thumbnails**, then move the 'Thumbnail size' slider to the right to make the preview windows easier to see (we've set ours to 400). Alternatively, if you find the previews more of an annoyance, tick 'Disable thumbnails completely'.

Improve the Start menu and search box

According to Microsoft, the animated Live Tiles in the Windows Start menu are supposed to make it feel more 'dynamic', but for many of us they're merely irritating. You can disable them by right-clicking each tile and choosing



Restore the old Windows volume control, complete with quick access to the volume mixer

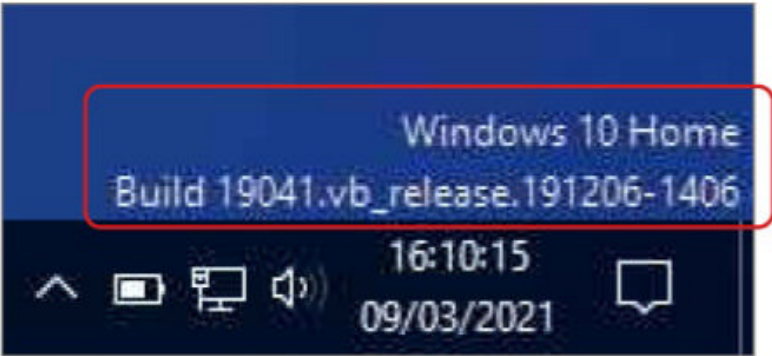
More, then 'Turn Live Tile off', but Winaero Tweaker lets you turn them all off with one click. Click **Disable Live Tiles** in the 'Desktop and Taskbar' section, and when you next sign into Windows your Start menu will be less 'dynamic'. Note that this won't actually remove tiles, only their animations, but it will prevent any new pinned apps from using Live Tiles.

This isn't the only irritation in the Start menu. Type a query into the Start menu and Windows mixes the results from your hard drive with web-search suggestions (see screenshot below left) - something we've never found useful. To stop this, click **Disable Web Search** and select 'Disable web search in Cortana and taskbar'. Restart your machine and future searches will be limited to your PC.

Winaero Tweaker also lets you create a backup of your current Start menu layout. So if you've got it looking just as you want it, you won't have to do it all again if you need to reinstall Windows.

Click **Backup/Restore Start Menu Layout**, choose Export Start Menu Layout and save it as a registry file in the 'winaerotweaker' folder. You can then choose Restore Start Menu Layout to reapply your preferences.

Remove annoying web-search results from your Start menu enquiries



Add your Windows build version to your desktop

Enhance your Desktop wallpaper

You may not realise that when you set one of your own pictures as your desktop wallpaper (by going to Settings, Personalisation, then Background) Windows compresses the image, reducing its quality to 85 per cent of the original. This is intended to strike a better balance between resolution and file size, but it's unlikely your PC will struggle to display photos as intended. You can override this unnecessary restriction by clicking **Wallpaper Quality** in the 'Desktop and Taskbar' section. Drag the slider to the right to apply desktop background images at their original resolution.

We also like the tweak that shows information about your Windows version on your desktop, saving you from digging through settings to check your current build. Windows Insider releases already do this, but it's just as useful for stable editions of the operating system. Select **Windows Version on Desktop** to activate this, sign out and back in, and you'll see the version details in the bottom-right corner of your screen. The text is small (see screenshot above), so shouldn't distract or obscure your view.

HACK YOUR RIGHT-CLICK MENU & FILE EXPLORER

Add new options to your right-click menu

The context menu that opens when you right-click a file or your desktop lets you perform common Windows tasks quickly, but its default options are pretty limited. You can use Winaero Tweaker to add more useful functions to the menu. Here are the best ones to enable via the Context Menu section.

App for 'Edit' Image Context Menu

By default, right-clicking an image file and choosing Edit opens it in Microsoft Paint. This option lets you set your preferred image editor instead. Click 'Browse' and navigate to **C:\Program Files** to select the **EXE** file for the relevant program.

Control Panel

Microsoft may be phasing out the Control Panel in favour of the Settings app, but many advanced options are still available only in the former. This tweak lets you directly access the Control Panel by right-clicking your desktop, then choosing from three view options: Category, 'Large icons' and All Tasks.

Kill Not Responding Tasks

Don't waste your time waiting for programs that have frozen to close themselves. Add this handy option to your desktop's context menu to kill troublesome programs instantly, without needing to go through Task Manager.

SFC /Scannow

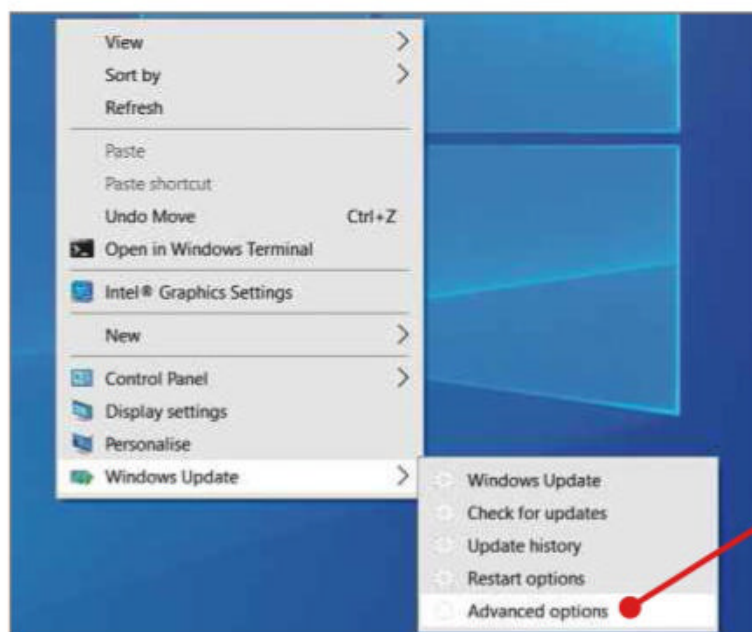
SFC (System File Checker) is a built-in Windows tool that scans and repairs corrupted system files, but by default it can be accessed only through Command Prompt or PowerShell. This tweak lets you run SFC simply by right-clicking your desktop and choosing 'Run SFC / Scannow'.

Take Ownership

When you attach a hard drive that you've salvaged from one of your old PCs, you may find Windows displays a permissions error and refuses to let you access the files on it. This right-click option lets you gain access by taking ownership of specific files or entire folders.

Windows Update

If you're not keen on disabling Windows Update (see our tip on page 51), this



Winaero Tweaker lets you access advanced Windows update settings by right-clicking your desktop

Advanced options

tweak gives you easier access to its various settings. Right-click your desktop and choose an option from the Windows Update sub-menu – including an option to temporarily pause updates via 'Advanced options' (see screenshot above).

Remove entries from your right-click menu

Adding all those new entries to your context menu can make it cluttered and awkward to use, so make room by removing the default options you don't need. Click **Remove Default Entries** in the Context Menu section and select all the items you want to get rid of. These will include 'Pin to Start', 'Cast to Device', 'Edit with Paint 3D', 'Rotate Left/Right', 'Include in library' and BitLocker-related entries – click the question-mark button next to an item if you're unsure what it does (see screenshot below). Essential options such as 'Send to', Delete and Copy aren't listed, so you won't remove them accidentally.



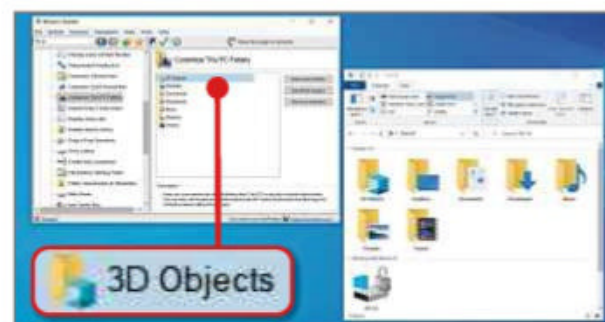
Remove default entries you never use to clean up your right-click menu

Change how folders appear in File Explorer

Winaero Tweaker offers 20 ways to customise File Explorer, but most of these tweaks are insignificant, such as removing border shadows from thumbnail images. The most useful involve how your hard drives and folders are displayed.

Go to the File Explorer sections, then **Hide Drives** to hide specific drives – such as those containing sensitive content or backups that mustn't be tampered with – from File Explorer. In the same section, select **Drive Letters** to change the order of drive labels and letters – such as from 'Local Disk (C:)' to '(C:) Local Disk' – or to hide the drive letter altogether. You can also click **Customize Libraries Item** to rename the Libraries section of File Explorer and give it a different icon.

Our favourite File Explorer tweak is **Customize This PC Folders**, which lets you choose which items appear when you select 'This PC'. Simply select the items you don't want to see, then click 'Remove selected'. We removed the pointless 3D Objects folder that's bothered us for so many years (see screenshot below), though Microsoft will soon start hiding it: www.snipca.com/37664. You can hide other entries in the left-hand navigation pane by clicking **Navigation Pane - Default Items** and unticking items such as Network, Libraries and Favourites.



Customise File Explorer to remove unwanted folders from the This PC view

RESTORE CLASSIC WINDOWS FEATURES

Microsoft is notorious for needlessly removing or 'improving' popular Windows tools. The 'Get Classic Apps' section in Winaero Tweaker lets you resurrect some of these features, either by re-enabling them or by installing versions created by Winaero's developer.

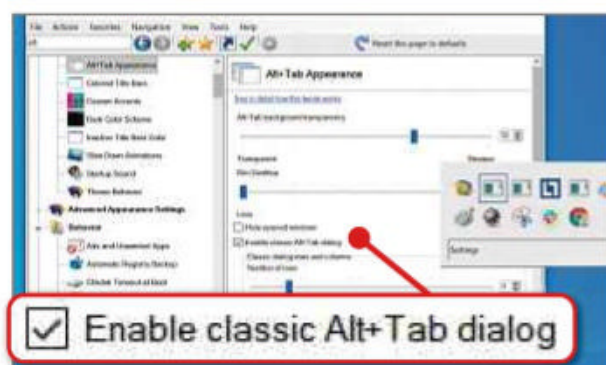
Revive desktop widgets

Windows 7 lets you add handy floating **widgets** to your desktop, providing at-a-glance access to your clock and calendar, as well as a CPU meter that lets you keep an eye on how close to capacity your processor is running (high usage is often a sign that a program has crashed).

Microsoft ditched these widgets with the launch of Windows 8, saying that hackers could use them to gain access to your PC (read more at www.snipca.com/37665). If you're happy with the risks, you can restore them by selecting **Desktop Gadgets**, selecting the 'Get Desktop Gadgets' link on the right, then following the installation instructions. You can also get the old Windows calculator back by clicking the link in the click **Classic Calculator**. This version offers Standard and Scientific modes, unit conversion, date calculation and more – pin it to your taskbar for easy access.

Use a more compact task switcher

The task switcher in Windows 10 (press Alt+Tab) displays large thumbnails of all your open windows. For a more compact, classic view that only shows icons



Tick this option to use a more compact alternative to task switcher

Five Winaero Tweaker settings to avoid

Disable Windows Defender

Microsoft's built-in security tool is reliable and unobtrusive, so turning it off is risky and pointless. Should you install other antivirus software, Defender will be disabled automatically anyway.

Disable UAC

User Account Control (UAC) is no longer the annoying tool it was in Windows Vista and is now an essential security measure. Turning it off could allow malware to make changes to your PC – so leave it switched on.

Run As Trusted Installer

This advanced setting lets you grant administrative privileges to any program. Even Winaero's developer admits this is "very risky". Should you inadvertently

run malware as a trusted installer, the consequences would be grave.

Don't Display Last Login User Name

This option boosts your security by forcing you to enter both your username and password whenever you sign into Windows. However, some users say it locked them out of their computers because they weren't using administrator accounts.

Enable Crash on Ctrl+Scroll Lock

Fancy being able to trigger the Blue Screen of Death whenever you want? No, we didn't think so. We therefore recommend leaving this setting unticked. It's aimed at software developers to help them test their programs.

(reminiscent of Windows 7) click **Alt+Tab Appearance** in the Appearance section and select 'Enable classic Alt+Tab dialog' (see screenshot below left).

View photos in the old-fashioned way

In Windows 8, Microsoft replaced the classic Photo Viewer tool with the Photos app. While it certainly offers more features, the new version can be slow to load on older PCs. The good news is that Photo Viewer is still available in Windows 10 – you just need to enable it. To do this, select **Activate Windows Photo Viewer** to open the 'Default apps' screen, then click 'Choose a default' under 'Photo viewer' and select Windows Photo Viewer from the list.


Enjoy classic games

Nobody rejoiced when Microsoft killed off classic games like Solitaire, FreeCell and Minesweeper. The reason behind Microsoft's decision soon became



Dodge Microsoft's 'updated' version of Minesweeper and download Winaero's ad-free alternative

obvious: money. It subsequently released revamped versions in the Microsoft Store, and packed them with infuriating adverts (including some incredibly irritating video-based ads).

Avoid this junk and click the link in the **Classic Games from Windows 7** option (or simply go to www.snipca.com/37622, then scroll down and click the green Download Games button). They all feature a slightly updated design (see screenshot above), but unlike the Microsoft Store versions they won't interrupt your games with adverts. 

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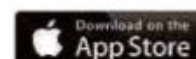
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Make your PC quieter

Fed up with your computer constantly making a racket? **Will Stapley** shares the secret tips that will make it run cooler and quieter



The harder it works, the hotter your computer will get. If left unchecked, this can cause Windows to crash and possibly even damage components such as your processor and **graphics card**. Your PC prevents this from happening using a combination of fans and **heat sinks** to dissipate all that built-up heat.

The downside is that those fans generate noise. Even if you don't notice the fans whirring away when there are other distracting sounds around you, they'll be the *only* thing you hear in an otherwise silent room. As we explain in our Mini Workshop opposite, you can find out just how loud your fans are using Sound Meter (Android www.snipca.com/37701) or Decibel X (iOS www.snipca.com/37702). Here, we explain how you can keep that noise to a minimum.

Keep your computer cool

First, it's a good idea to ensure you're doing everything you can to keep your PC as cool as possible. The cooler your computer is, the less need there is for its fans to ramp up.

Laptops typically have a single fan underneath the chassis or on one side of it, whereas desktop PCs usually have a pair of large fans at the front and rear of the case (one to draw in cool air, the other to expel hot air). It's vital you don't block these fans – for example, by placing your computer too close to a wall (we recommend allowing at least 30cm of

breathing space). Any less than that and your PC will struggle to draw in or expel enough air, which will increase the temperature inside the case and force your fans to work harder (and noisier).

When using a laptop, a simple stand will help to keep it cool, such as Kensington's Easy Riser (£15 from www.snipca.com/37695). By lifting your laptop off the desk, the stand allows more air to circulate within it. It's also less likely that any items on your desk, such as books, will block the laptop's fan. Bear in mind you'll need to use a separate keyboard while using the stand.

Make your laptop run quietly

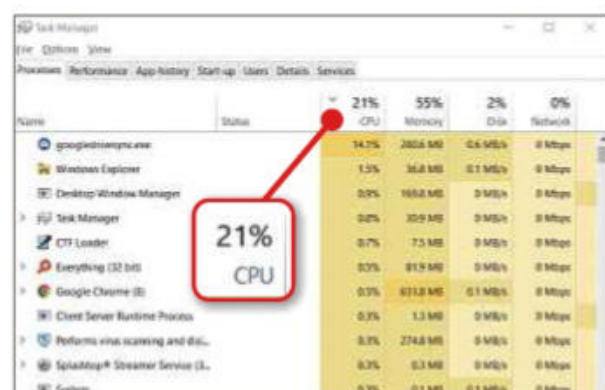
Laptops will usually do a decent job of controlling their built-in fans. But if you hear your fan going up through the gears, it's because your processor is working harder and generating more heat. Although you can use tools such as SpeedFan (www.snipca.com/37694) to slow your fan, we don't recommend it. If

you set the fan speed too low using it, your processor will overheat and may suffer damage.

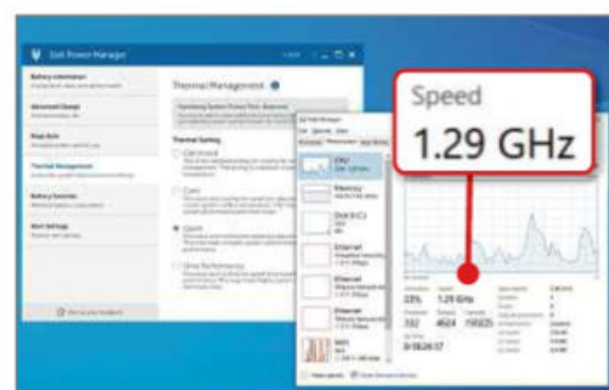
Instead, use Task Manager (press Ctrl+Alt+Delete) to find out what's causing the workload. Select the Performance tab, then click the CPU column header (see screenshot below left) to see which programs are placing the most demand on your processor (click 'More details' at the bottom if you can't see these details).

On our laptop, the fan often becomes audible when our backup software is running – pausing the backup process using Task Manager soon silences it. Of course, you'll need to run these demanding tasks at some point, but it's a quick way to make your PC quieter when you're watching a film, for example.

Some laptops let you enable a 'quiet' mode, which makes the fan run more slowly (or turns it off completely) – check your laptop's manual or website to find out whether yours has this.



Click Task Manager's CPU column to see which programs are working your laptop fan



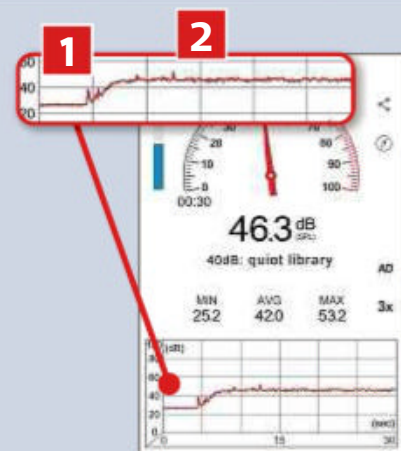
Some laptops offer quiet modes, but these can slow your processor and reduce performance

WORKSHOP Adjust fan speeds in your PC's BIOS

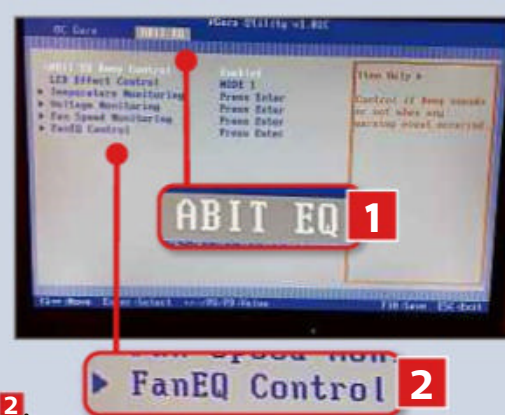
With six fans, my 14-year-old PC can get very noisy. Before trying fanless components, I wanted to see whether I could slow these fans by adjusting fan speeds in the BIOS. This isn't without risk

– set them too low and your components may overheat and get damaged. Therefore, when setting fan controls, it's a good idea to go with settings suggested by your PC's BIOS.

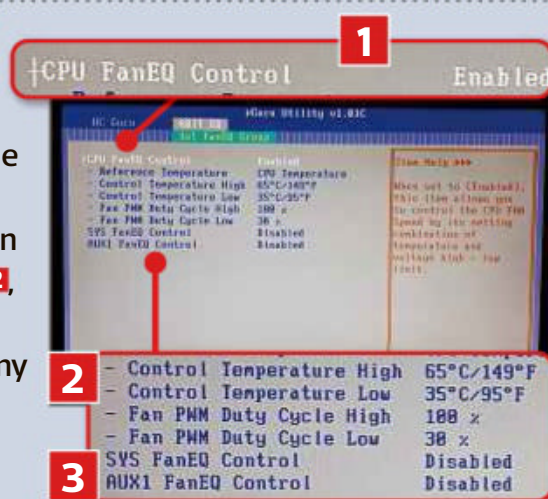
1 In a quiet room, I ran the Sound Meter app (www.snipca.com/37701) on my Android phone to gauge background noise – the app recorded around 25 decibels (dB) **1**. I then turned on my PC and the level increased to around 46dB **2**, which seemed much louder than the 'quiet library' rating suggested by the app.



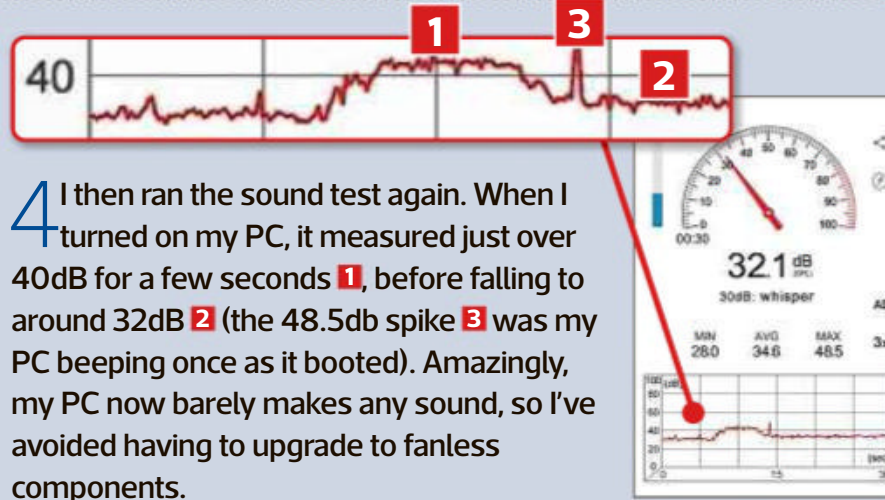
2 I then loaded my PC's BIOS (pressing Delete shortly after switching it on) and discovered my Abit AB9 QuatGT motherboard includes a utility called uGuru. I opened this, then selected the ABIT EQ section **1**, followed by FanEQ Control **2**.



3 Next, I turned on fan control for my processor by enabling the CPU FanEQ Control **1**. I left the High and Low fan settings at their defaults **2**, meaning the fan would increase to full speed if my processor needed it to. I then repeated this step for the other two fans **3**.



4 I then ran the sound test again. When I turned on my PC, it measured just over 40dB for a few seconds **1**, before falling to around 32dB **2** (the 48.5db spike **3** was my PC beeping once as it booted). Amazingly, my PC now barely makes any sound, so I've avoided having to upgrade to fanless components.



We downloaded Dell's Power Manager tool (www.snipca.com/37696) on our XPS 13 laptop. By selecting the Thermal Management tab, we were able to choose from four profiles: Optimized, Cool, Quiet and Ultra Performance. Although 'Quiet' made the fan barely audible, Task Manager revealed it also capped the processor speed at 1.29GHz (see screenshot below left). Because our processor is capable of speeds up to 4GHz, this caused a noticeable drop in performance levels, with programs taking longer to load and Windows feeling more sluggish. Once again, this is something you can use when you want to prioritise low noise over performance in the short term.

Adjust your desktop PC's fans

Due to the number of fans inside desktop PCs (along with two case fans, most PCs have fans for the processor, graphics card and power supply), they are usually noisier than laptops. On top of this, most of the fans are set to run at full speed by default. Depending on the make and model of your motherboard, you may be able to set your PC to slow the fans. Precisely how you do this varies, but it's usually done via the BIOS (typically

accessed by pressing the Delete or F1 key a few seconds after turning your PC on). In the BIOS, look for an option called Fan Control, Power Management or similar. Here you should find options for controlling each fan's speed (see how we reduced our PC fan speeds via the BIOS in the Mini Workshop above).

You can also try to reduce the number of fans inside your PC. One option is to replace your graphics card with a fanless model, which instead use heat sinks to disperse heat and is therefore silent. Bear in mind that fanless cooling is typically only found on low- to mid-range graphics cards, such as MSI's GeForce GT 730 (£73 from www.snipca.com/37697), so they won't be suitable if you enjoy playing advanced games such as Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020. They are, however, perfectly fine for everyday tasks such as web browsing and video streaming.

You could also upgrade to a fanless cooler for your processor. This is more complicated than installing a new graphics card because you'll need to remove your existing processor fan, then connect your new fanless cooler to the processor. This involves applying thermal paste to bind the two (the paste will



NoFan's CR-80EH can cool processors with a maximum power consumption of 80W

either be pre-applied to the cooler or will come in a small tub that you need to apply yourself). You'll also need to make sure that the new cooler is capable of keeping your processor cool enough. First, check the TDP (thermal dynamic power), which is the maximum power consumption in watts of your processor – Intel lists its processor specs at www.snipca.com/37698; for AMD visit www.snipca.com/37699. Once you know your processor's TDP, make sure it's lower than the power rating of your chosen fanless cooler. NoFan's CR-80EH (£66 from www.snipca.com/37700, pictured above), for example, is rated to work with processors with a TDP of up to 80W. **ca**

Switch software and websites to

dark mode

Dark mode is now available in more programs, websites and apps than you realise. **Robert Irvine** explains how to protect your eyes by applying the option to your favourite tools

As we spend more and more time staring at our screens, dark mode has become a welcome and some would say essential feature. Not only does it significantly reduce eye strain – not only at night, but throughout the day – it also uses less power on phones and tablets and makes headache-inducing websites and apps look more attractive.

It's no wonder that nearly every tech company now offers a dark theme for its products, though some of the biggest names – including Google, Facebook and Amazon – have been slow to catch on. Here, we reveal the latest ways to apply a light text-on-dark colour scheme to the tools you use every day.

TURN GOOGLE & ITS MOBILE APPS DARK

The glaring white background of Google Search can really strain your eyes, so it's great news that Google is finally introducing a dark mode to its desktop website. This much-requested feature is still being tested, so at the time of writing only select users can see it. Look out for a notification in the corner of the Google Search homepage that says 'Dark theme is now available', then click Turn On.

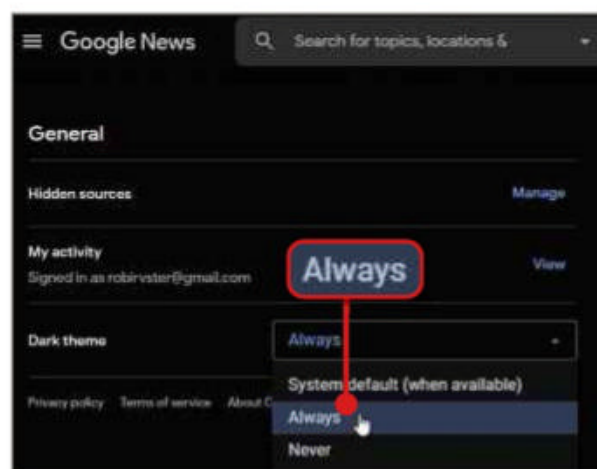
Rival search engine DuckDuckGo (<https://duckduckgo.com>) already offers this option: click the menu button in the top-right corner and choose Themes, then Dark.

Google's Dark theme will be applied

automatically when Windows is using its own Dark mode (see next tip), and was recently added to Google News. To activate it, click Settings in the bottom-left corner of Google News and choose Always (see screenshot below) or 'System default (when available)' from the 'Dark theme' menu.

Most Google mobile apps now offer a dark theme, with Google Maps adding the option in February. To enable the mode, tap your profile picture in the top-right corner of the Maps app, choose Settings, Theme, then select 'Always in dark theme'. This is currently available only in Android, but in iOS you can switch to Night mode when viewing directions. Go to Settings, Navigation, then select the Night colour scheme under 'Map display'.

Similarly, you can go dark in YouTube by tapping your profile picture and choosing Settings, General, Appearance,



Select 'Always' in Google News to get your results in dark mode

then 'Dark theme'. In Gmail and Google Calendar, tap the three-line menu button and select Settings, 'General settings', Theme, Dark; while in the Google Drive and Play Store apps, go to Settings, Theme then choose Dark.

ENABLE DARK MODE IN MICROSOFT SOFTWARE

Windows 10 now makes it easy to apply dark mode to all compatible apps and programs on your computer, as well as built-in features such as the taskbar, Start menu and File Explorer. Go to Settings, Personalisation, Colours then select Dark in the 'Choose your colour' menu. Alternatively, select Custom and set Dark as your default Windows mode and/or app mode.

If you find the system-wide dark mode too gloomy, set the default app mode to Light and activate the feature on an app-by-app basis. In Microsoft Office apps such as Word and Excel, go to File, Options, General and, in the 'Personalise your copy of Microsoft Office' section, set the Office Theme to Black. Annoyingly, this won't turn the white backgrounds of documents or spreadsheets black, but Microsoft is currently testing a 'full' dark mode in the Word Office Insider programme (www.snipca.com/37656). It plans to bring the feature to its Office suite for Android soon.

Dark mode is already available in several Microsoft tools, including its Edge browser (see next tip) and Outlook for

Windows, Android and the web – just click the Settings cog and switch on ‘Dark mode’. In February, the option was also added to the OneDrive website, in line with the service’s mobile apps, but only for paying subscribers – hopefully it will be rolled out to everyone soon.

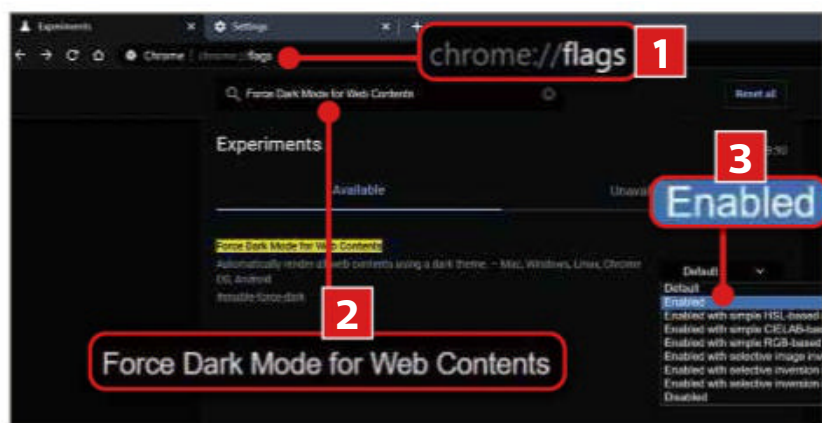
ACTIVATE DARK MODE IN YOUR BROWSER

The desktop version of Google Chrome still lacks a dedicated dark mode, but if you set Windows to use its Dark theme, this will be applied to the browser’s toolbars, menus, settings and homepage.

To make Chrome use dark mode for all web pages, type **chrome:flags** into your address bar (1 in our screenshot above), press Enter and type **Force Dark Mode for Web Contents** (2). Select ‘Enabled’ in the dropdown menu (3) and restart your browser to turn the web dark, including Google Search. The Chrome mobile app does have a dark mode: tap the three-dot menu in the top-right corner and choose Settings, Theme, then Dark.

To apply a dark theme to the desktop or mobile version of Microsoft Edge, go to Settings, Appearance and choose Dark in the ‘Default theme’ menu. As with Chrome, you can force the browser to also turn web content dark by enabling that option by typing **edge:flags** and following the same instructions..

Firefox will turn dark along with Windows, but also offers its own Dark theme. Click the menu button, choose



Follow these three steps to force Chrome to apply dark mode to the contents of web pages

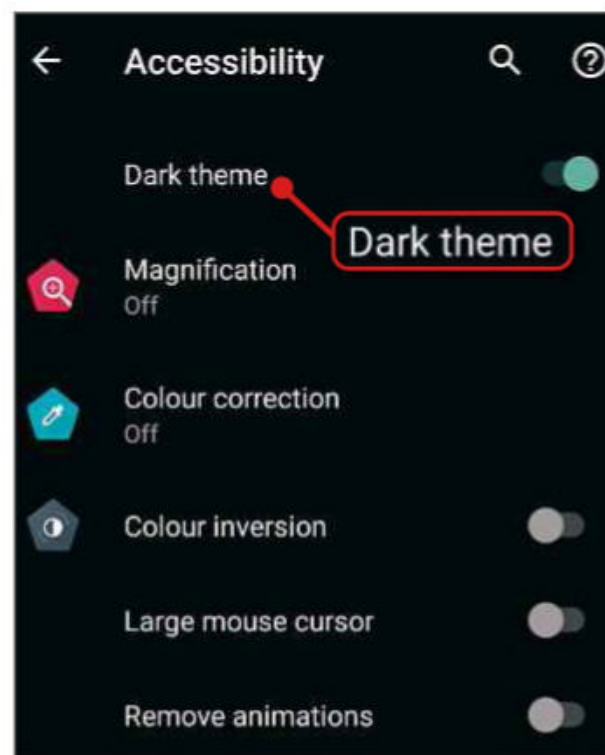
Add-ons, Themes, select ‘Dark (disabled)’ then click Enable. In the Firefox mobile app, go to Settings, Customise, then choose Dark.

APPLY DARK MODE ACROSS ANDROID & iOS

On your phone or tablet, you can apply a system-wide dark theme to all compatible apps, to save you configuring them individually. This also forces apps to go dark when they don’t offer that option – Google Photos being a notable example.

On an Android device (running Android 10 or above), go to Settings, Display, Advanced then switch on ‘Dark theme’; or go to Settings, then Accessibility and choose the option there (see screenshot above right). If dark mode doesn’t make things easier to read, select ‘Colour inversion’ to change, for example, black text on a white background to white text on black.

On an iPhone or iPad, either go to Settings, ‘Display & Brightness’ then choose Dark, or swipe down to open the Control Centre, press the Brightness indicator and switch ‘Appearance: Light’



Turn on ‘Dark theme’ in Android’s Accessibility settings

to ‘Appearance: Dark’. Alternatively, use your voice to activate dark mode by saying: “Hey, Siri, turn on Dark Mode” or “Hey, Siri, turn on Dark Appearance”.

USE DARK MODE IN SOCIAL-MEDIA & MESSAGING APPS

Considering the amount of time we spend on social networks and messaging apps, their default white backgrounds can be particularly bad for our eyes. Happily, most services now offer a dark mode, although Facebook didn’t add one until last year. To activate it on the Facebook website, click the down arrow in the top-right corner, choose ‘Display & accessibility’ then switch on ‘Dark mode’. In the Facebook mobile app, tap the menu button, select ‘Settings & privacy’ then choose ‘Dark mode’. In Messenger, simply tap your profile picture and switch on ‘Dark mode’.

WhatsApp also introduced a long-overdue dark mode last year, which you can turn on by tapping the three-dot menu then choosing Accounts, Chats, Theme, followed by Dark. To make dark mode look more interesting, tap Wallpaper, Change, select a custom dark background then press Set Wallpaper.

To apply Instagram’s new Dark theme, tap your profile picture, then the menu button and choose Settings, Theme, then Dark. Twitter, meanwhile, now has two night modes for users who tweet into the early hours. On the Twitter website, go to More, ‘Setting & privacy’, Display then choose between Dim (dark blue) and Lights Out (black) themes. These options are also available in the Twitter app under ‘Settings and privacy’, ‘Display and sound’, then ‘Dark mode’. **ca**

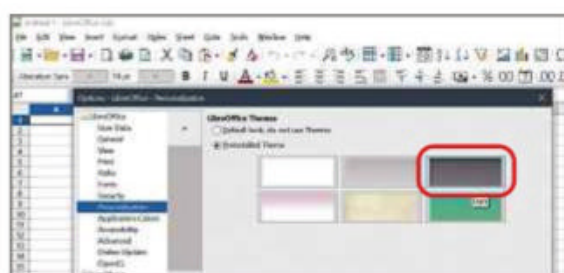
Three dark modes we want to see

Amazon

Amazon has stayed curiously quiet about any plans to add a dark mode, and – unlike eBay – its mobile app isn’t compatible with device-wide themes. The browser extension Super Dark Mode (www.snipca.com/37662) will darken its website – along with any other sites.

BBC News

The BBC News app added a dark mode to its iOS app last year, but Android users are stuck with the eye-straining red-and-white colour scheme. However, if you go to Settings, ‘Enable beta mode’ and then sign in, the app will comply with Android’s dark theme.



LibreOffice

LibreOffice doesn’t have an official dark mode, but there is a workaround. Go to Tools, Options in a LibreOffice program such as Writer or Calc, click Personalisation on the left and select the preinstalled dark theme (a dark grey box – see screenshot). Next, click Application Colors, select Black from the ‘Document background’ and ‘Application background’ menus, then click OK.

Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

How can I see if my emails are viewed?

Q A while ago I read about software that revealed if sent emails had been opened, but I never made a note of it. Is it still available?

Michael Clear

A Plenty of email tools and services offer the option to request 'read receipts', as they're known. However, their reliability is heavily dependent on what happens at the receiving end.

In the desktop version of Outlook, for example, it's easy to add read-receipt requests. Compose your message but, before clicking Send, click the 'More commands' button (three dots, top right) and then choose 'Request a Read Receipt' (see screenshot **1**).

However, whether you actually get a read receipt depends both on the recipient's email service supporting this facility and also on whether they allow the read receipt to be sent – neither of which are a given.

By contrast, the free version of Gmail does not even offer the option to request read receipts (and any received will just be ignored). If you use a commercial Gmail account, such as one that's paid for by a business or educational establishment, then it might offer the option to send (and

receive) read receipts – but that's up to the administrator of your particular service. Moreover, the ability to receive receipts is still bound by all we mentioned above: the receiving end must accept the read receipt request, and the recipient may need to agree for it to be sent.

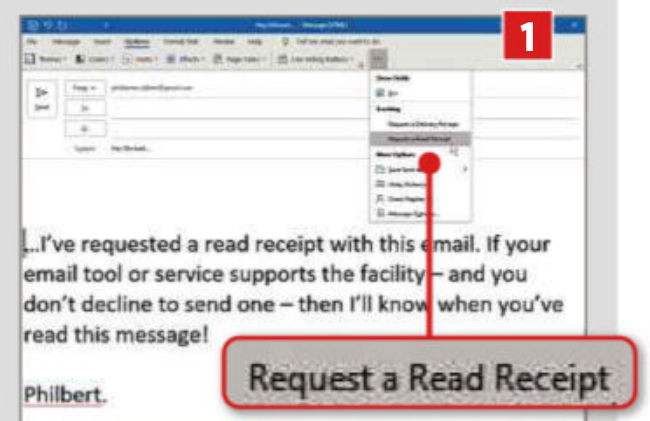
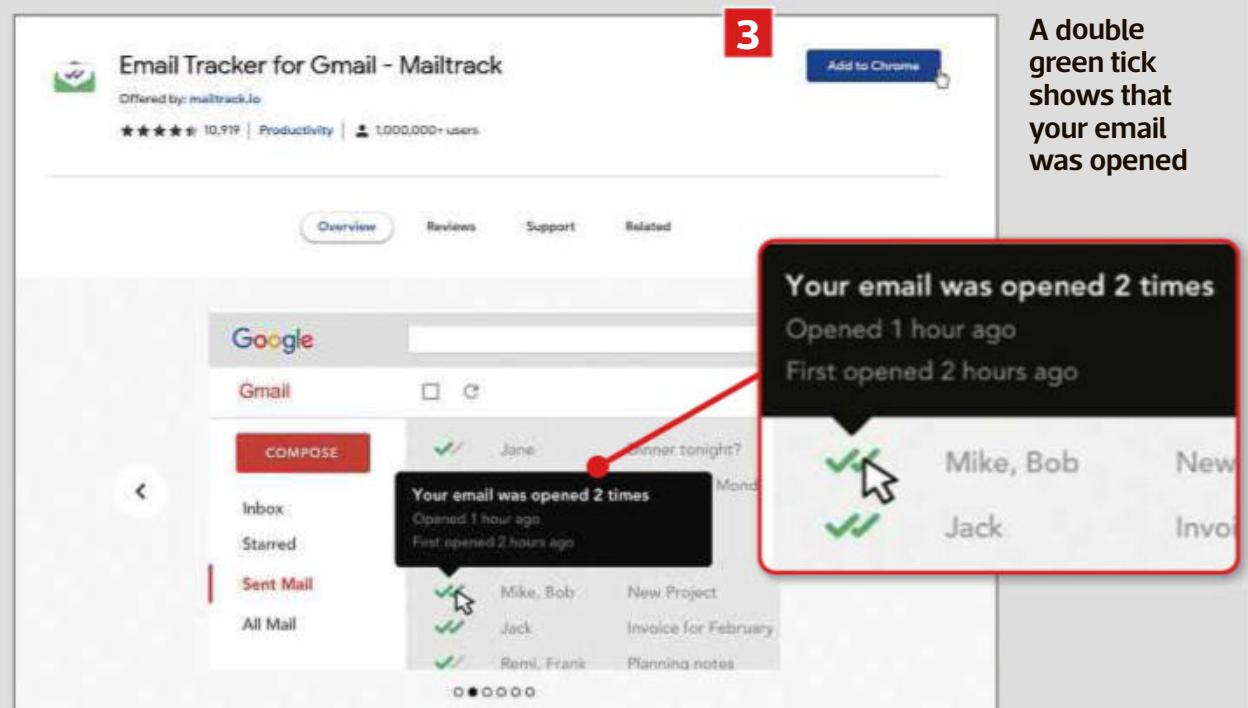
So where does that leave us? Well, with third-party solutions. However, many feel these may sometimes work where traditional read receipts fail, many feel creepy, because in order to work they have to use methods some would consider underhand.

The leading option here – and most likely the one you're thinking about – is called 'Email Tracker for Gmail', by an outfit called MailTrack. It's a free extension for Chrome, from www.snipca.com/37574.

Just click the 'Add to Chrome' button to install it and then follow the prompts to connect it to your Gmail account **2**. From there, it works by embedding a request for an invisible, single-pixel image into any messages you send – an old trick known as a 'web bug'.

When the recipient opens the email, HTML code in the message body tells Gmail to download the tiny, invisible image from MailTrack's service – just as it

A double green tick shows that your email was opened

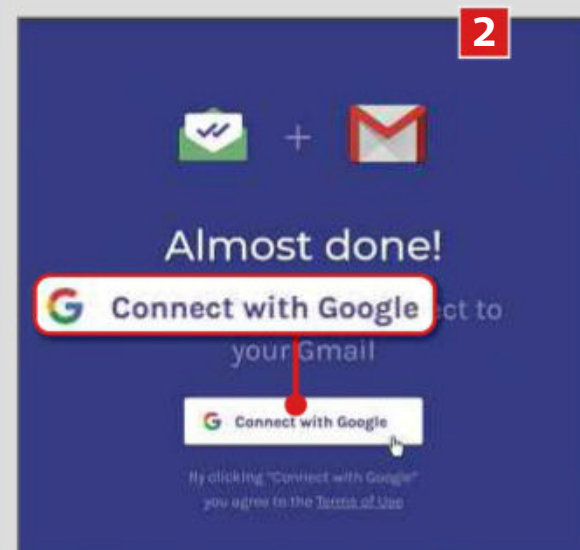


You can ask for a 'Read Receipt' in the desktop version of Outlook

might a normal, visible photo. This request in effect tells the MailTrack server that the email has been opened, and MailTrack in turn informs the Email Tracker extension in your Chrome browser. This results in a little double-tick mark alongside messages, to tell you that they've been opened **3**.

The free version of Email Tracker inserts a signature into each message, alerting the recipient that you're using the service.

Whether or not you consider this a problem depends on your intentions. If you wish to send tracked emails without the MailTrack signature, then you'll have to pay for the Pro or Advanced version – at £4.99 or £5.99 a month respectively.



Connect 'Email Tracker for Gmail' to see if your messages are opened by recipients

Why are my CD files out of order on a USB stick?

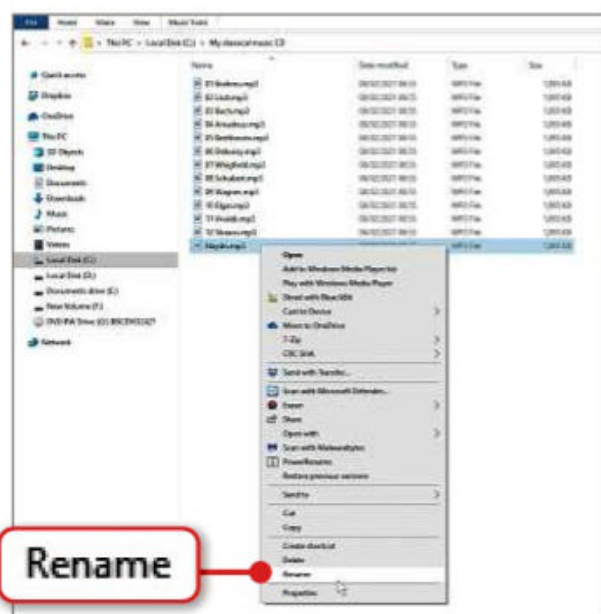
Q I've just become a reader of your magazine and, in my late 70s, I'm a bit frightened of technology. I've transferred some opera CDs to a USB stick to use in the car. When I check the memory stick after transferring them I notice that they do not appear in the order that they were on the CD. They won't stay in the correct order no matter what I do to rearrange them. Can you help?

Roger Currie

A There are a few things that can affect the file order on a USB stick. You can sort them by clicking on one of the column headings – so Name for an alphabetic sort, or 'Date modified' to order them by when they were copied on to the stick.

However, for reasons we'll explain, the way they're listed in File Explorer within Windows 10 typically won't bear any relation to the order they'll play when you insert the USB stick in your car.

In fact, for your purposes, it's the play



Select MP3 files and choose 'Rename' to add numbers for an ordered playlist

order that matters. While we don't know your vehicle's make or the particular CDs you're ripping, these kind of problems usually boil down to the filenames given to the MP3s.

The fundamental problem is this: most if not most in-car stereos play back MP3 files in alphabetic sequence. So, no matter

what order they are on the original disc or were copied to the USB stick, the car's player will work through them from A to Z. Actually, and more accurately, it's usually alphanumerically – meaning nought through nine, and then A to Z.

That last detail is important for an effective solution. The easiest way to ensure your car plays the files in the correct order is to first use File Explorer to rename the files so that they reflect the track listing. Click on a file and press F2 (or right-click and choose Rename), which will allow you to add numbers before each track – so '1 Brahms.mp3', '2 Liszt.mp3', '3 Bach.mp3' and so on.

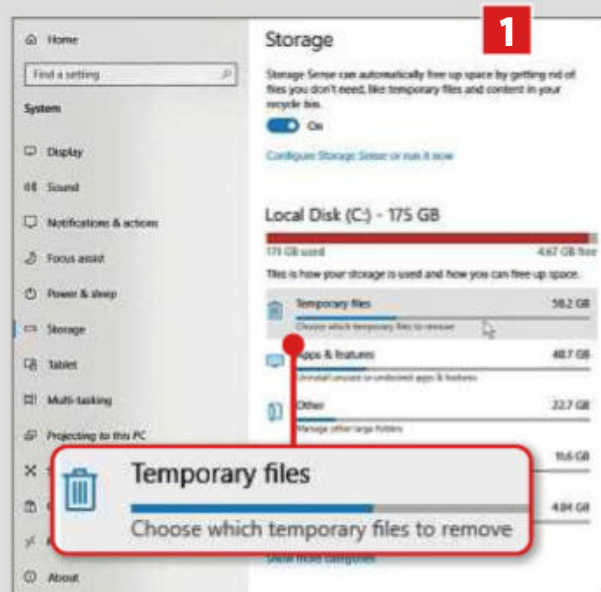
However, note that for CDs with more than nine tracks, be sure to use the format '01 Brahms.mp3', '02 Liszt.mp3', '03 Bach.mp3' for the first nine. Otherwise, your car might play '1 Brahms.mp3' followed by '10 Elgar.mp3' and then '11 Vivaldi.mp3' because, logically and alphanumerically, all the tracks labelled '1' would play before those labelled '2', '3' and so on.

Is an old version of Windows 10 taking up space?

Q The SSD installed in my Dell Inspiron laptop is quite small and is running short of space. It contains Windows 10 and my other installed programs, such as Microsoft Office. All of my personal files are located on a 1TB hard drive that's also in the machine. I have read somewhere that Microsoft sometimes hides away a copy of a previous version of Windows 10 after updating. I would like to check if this is present and under what conditions it can be safely deleted. How can I safely identify whether I have an old copy of Windows 10, and how would I delete it?

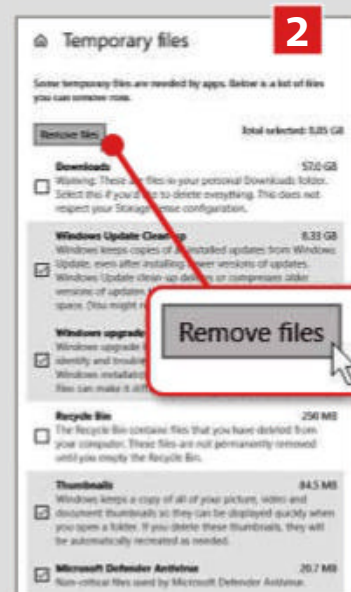
Dave Selway

A What you've read is correct. However, it's unlikely that there's an older operating system still on your SSD, as these are automatically deleted 10 days after an upgrade to Windows 10. However, that



doesn't mean that there isn't a whole load of junk you can dump in order to free up space.

To see what's what, first click Start followed by the Settings cog, and then System followed by Storage. Next, on the right, click 'Temporary files' **1**. You'll now be presented with a list of tick boxes, each with a detailed explanation.



In Storage select 'Temporary files' (1) and then carefully choose those you can safely remove (2)

Windows will pre-tick all the ones it believes are safe for you to remove, but we recommend reading through each and every one to make your own informed choices.

When you've done that, click the 'Remove files' button **2** to recover all the space hogged by these unneeded files.

Why does my Toshiba laptop think it's a Dell?

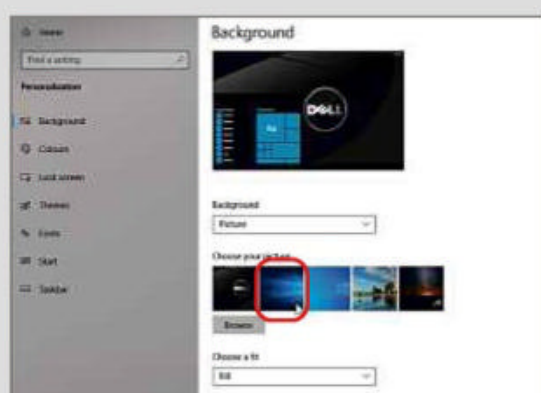
Q After my Toshiba laptop stopped working I used my Dell desktop PC to create a recovery disk. However, after resetting the laptop it now thinks it's a Dell. How can I get things back to normal? Resetting it again made no difference.

Richard Saunders

A If we understand you correctly, the Dell recovery disk did the job of getting your Toshiba back on its feet, though we don't know what knocked it over in the first place. So, Windows 10 is working but your PC is now having a personality crisis?

After scratching our heads for a few minutes, we think this problem has a really simple cause – and that's that the Dell recovery disk has applied a Dell-themed wallpaper to your Windows desktop.

This is nothing more than a cosmetic confusion, but it's easy to fix. First, right-click on a blank part of the desktop and then choose Personalise from the pop-up menu. Next, under the Background heading, click to choose a preset image (see screenshots below) or click Browse and then navigate to find and select your own. That's all there is to it!



Go to Background to select your preferred look (above), such as the Windows 10 background (right)



What's wrong with my Bluetooth?

Q My Toshiba Satellite L750 has lost its Bluetooth connection, showing a 'Code 43' error. I've tried updating the driver but I'm told the best is already installed. Remembering a fix from an ancient edition of *Computeractive*, I uninstalled the device and restarted and, sure enough, it worked. Unfortunately, after shutting down, the problem recurred the next day. This time the same fix didn't work! I've tried other fixes, such as sfc/scannow and a DISM scan, but to no avail. Can you help me?

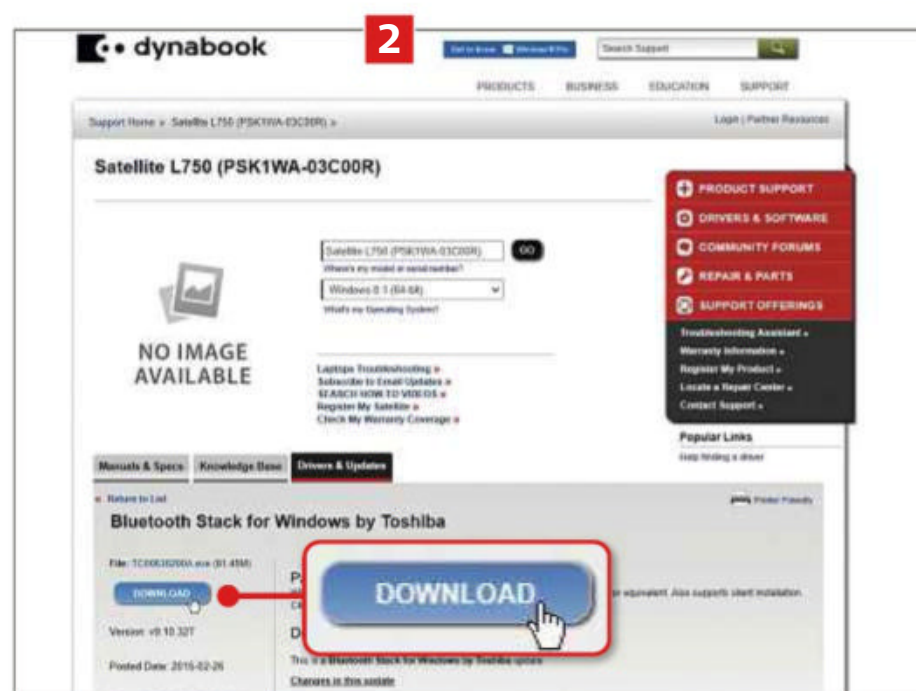
George Rimini

A It's not clear to us when this occurred, or if it coincided with some other event – such as upgrading the machine to Windows 10. That would make sense, as support for your model ended with Windows 8.1. So, while installing Windows 10 might work, it could lead to hiccups like this.

Regardless, a message from Device Manager about the best driver being installed is not always accurate. Rather, it is better interpreted as the installed driver being the best that Windows knows about.

Toshiba no longer makes laptops, but it does maintain a support website for old models. We found a Bluetooth driver there for Windows 8.1 that might work in place of the generic driver Windows is currently using. Download it at www.snipca.com/37523. Click the 'Bluetooth Stack for Windows by Toshiba' link (see screenshot 1), followed by the blue Download button 2.

Then, double-click the downloaded EXE file to install the driver.



Click the 'Bluetooth Stack for Windows by Toshiba' link (1) followed by the blue Download button (2)

Q: Can I make my old laptop work with Windows 10?

A: Issue 590, page 66 - find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD

Buy it from www.snipca.com/37026



Can I connect a DVI screen to my computers?

Q I have acquired a nice large screen, hardly used. It has what I believe is a **DVI** connection. It also came with a cable that had the matching DVI connector on each end. However, I do not have this socket on either my laptop or desktop computer, so there is no way to marry up the two. Would there be a method of overcoming this problem?

I would like to use this screen because it is somewhat larger than what I already have.

Arthur Bedford

A Assuming your laptop is relatively modern, it's likely to have a standard **HDMI** port. Many recent desktop PC **graphics cards** have this port, too.

The HDMI port is an all-digital connection that carries both video and audio signals, so has become the

accepted standard for hooking up all manner of digital audiovisual gear – be it a laptop or desktop PC, games console or any of the various digital boxes that you might well have under your TV.

DVI is a common but older connection standard that's mainly used between computers and screens, such as the one you've just acquired. It carries video only rather than audio *and* video, but the good news is the video part of the signal is the same as that of HDMI. So, if you happen to have an HDMI-to-HDMI cable floating around, then a simple adapter, such as the pictured Vmojo model (around £5, www.snipca.com/37395), is all you'll need to connect your laptop (or desktop PC) to your screen.

Alternatively, you can spend just a little



Use the Vmojo DVI-to-HDMI adapter to connect your screen to your computer

bit more to buy a dedicated HDMI-to-DVI cable, like the £7 cord from this AmazonBasics range (www.snipca.com/37394).

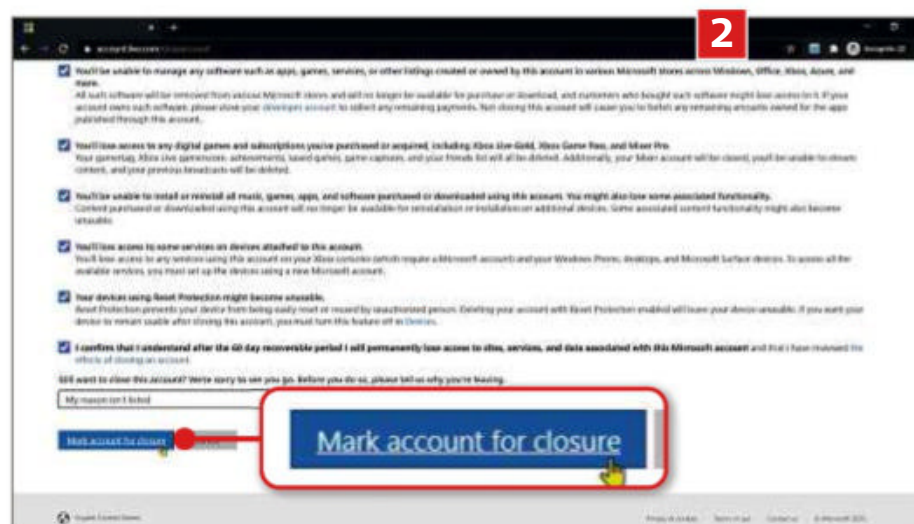
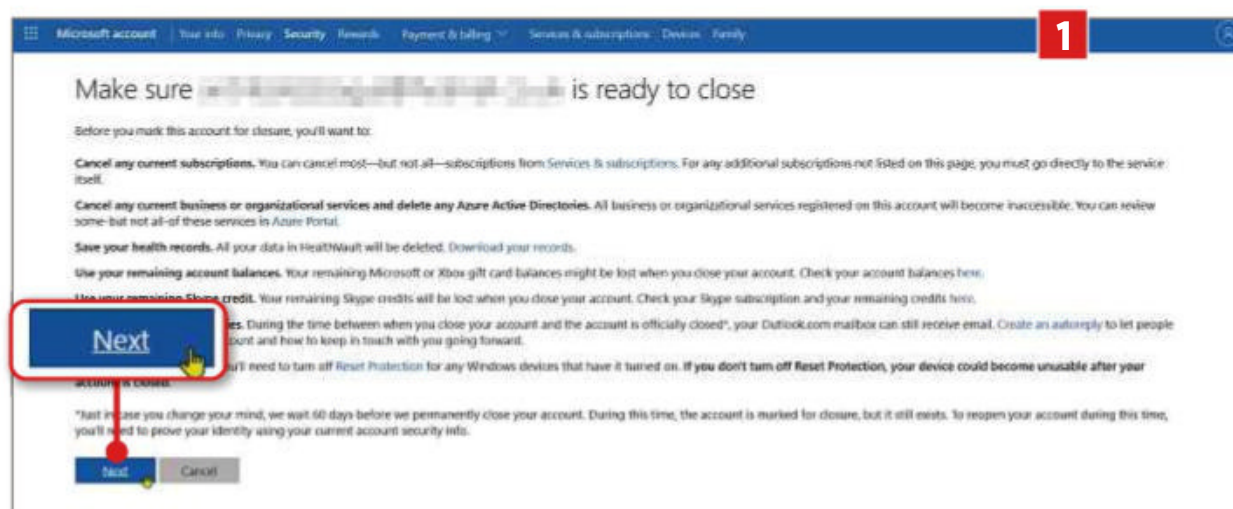
How do I cancel my late friend's email account?

Q My 86-year-old friend died quite a while ago. During his ill health I looked after his computer and printed his emails for him. His Outlook.com account is still live, and I go into it every couple of months to empty the various folders. But how do I get rid of it all together? Some firms, like BT, shut you down automatically when the account is not used.

Doug Makinson

A Actually, Outlook.com is exactly the same: if you leave any Microsoft account dormant for two years then the company will terminate it, deleting all content. So, all you have to do is leave your friend's account alone and, 24 months after the date of the last login, Microsoft will erase it and everything pertaining to it.

If you wish to speed up the process, you can request a manual deletion by visiting <https://account.live.com/closeaccount>. First, make sure you're logged into the correct account. Then,



Read the warnings before clicking Next (1). Then click the 'Mark account for closure' button and the Outlook.com account will be closed and erased after 60 days (2)

read through the lengthy warning before clicking Next (see screenshot 1). You now need to tick a whole load of checkboxes to confirm you know what you're doing, because this is a one-way process. If you're sure you wish to proceed, click the

'Mark account for closure' button 2.

This initiates an invisible 60-day timer, during which the account can be resurrected simply by logging in. But on day 61 of no logins, that's it – the account and its contents will be gone, forever.

Problems Solved

How do I get rid of Meet Now?

Q Meet Now has appeared in my taskbar. I have not installed any new programs for some time, so I'm puzzled. Could it have come via a Microsoft update? It appears to be related to Skype, which I don't have. I cannot find it in Services or Control Panel so I cannot disable or remove it. I would love to hear your thoughts and advice.

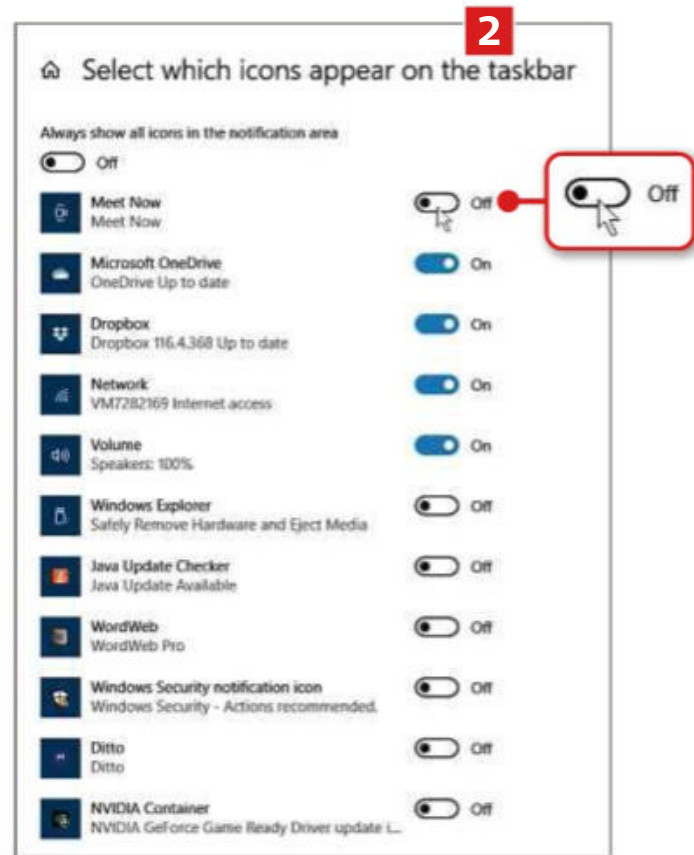
John Gray

A Yes, this is the result of a Microsoft update and Windows 10 20H2 – the so-called October 2020 Update. For many people this didn't actually become available until November, and plenty more have had to wait even longer.

Meet Now is indeed part of Skype, which itself is now built into Windows 10 (though if you don't use it, you might remain blissfully unaware of this change – it happened midway through last year). It is Microsoft's attempt to get more



Click the 'Select which icons appear...' link (1) and move the Meet Now slider to Off (2)



people using Skype for video meetings instead of rivals, such as Zoom.

The Meet Now icon actually appears in the notification area, which is the bit at the far right-hand side of the taskbar. It's harmless but easy enough to disable if you wish. First click Start followed by the

Settings cog and then Personalisation followed by taskbar. Then, under the 'Notification area' heading, click the 'Select which icons appear on the taskbar' link (see screenshot 1) and, there, scroll down to find and then flip the Meet Now switch to its Off position 2.

Where's my Windows 10 search bar?

Q My Windows 10 computer has stopped showing the search bar when I click the Start button. I have not altered any settings or downloaded anything. I've tried to find a solution myself but have failed. Can you help me?

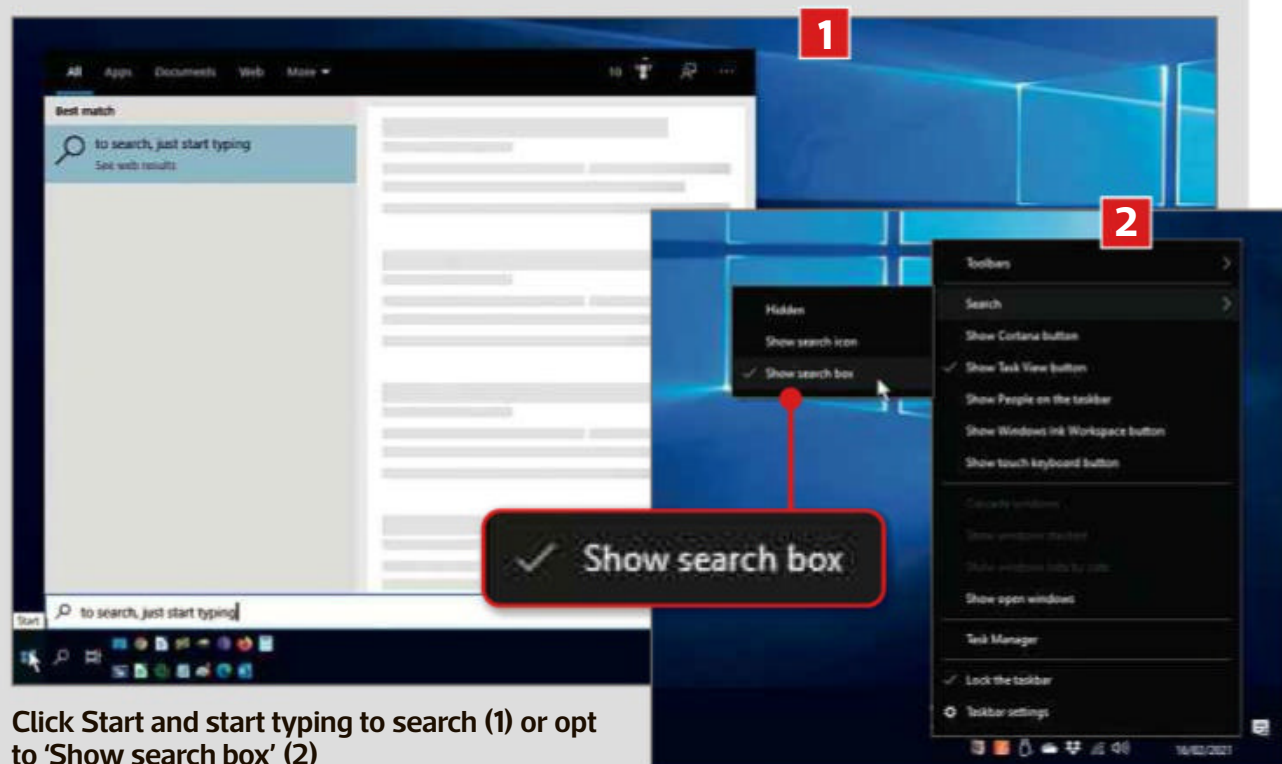
Paul Smith

A We're a little confused by the phrasing of your question but we suspect it's nothing more than a minor inaccuracy in the description.

What we mean is that the Start menu itself does not display a search box. Rather, if you click Start and want to search, you just start typing and then the search box appears automatically (see screenshot 1).

However, what we think you mean is that the search box has gone missing from the taskbar. Ordinarily, it sits just to the right of the Start-button menu, and you click it to use it – so we think that's what you mean.

We don't know why the box has



Click Start and start typing to search (1) or opt to 'Show search box' (2)

disappeared but odd stuff can happen after a Windows update, so we wouldn't be surprised if this was the cause.

To get it back, first right-click a blank part of the taskbar and then point to Search. We imagine you'll find that the Hidden option is currently ticked. To get your box back just click to tick 'Show

search box' 2 and that's that.

As a final tip, though, note that if you instead click to tick 'Show search icon' then you'll instead get a little magnifying-glass icon next to the Start button. It does exactly the same job as the box but just takes up a little less room.



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

VPN and Tor?

Q

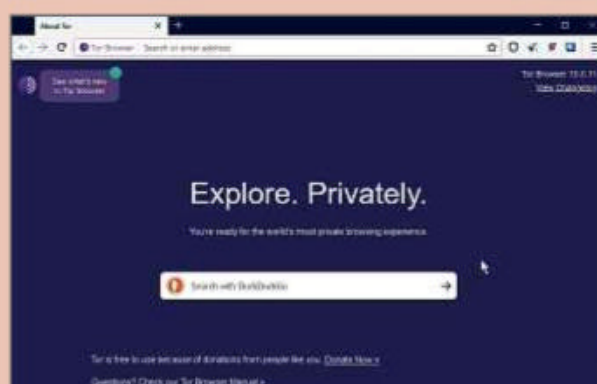
You often talk about the benefits of using a **VPN**. However, most of them seem to cost money. While I don't object to paying for extra privacy and safety, a friend recently told me about the Tor web browser (www.torproject.org), saying that for most people it'd probably do just as well as a VPN – but that it was free. However, he couldn't really explain the specific ways in which Tor was better or different to a VPN. Can you help me out here?

Kevin Barrett

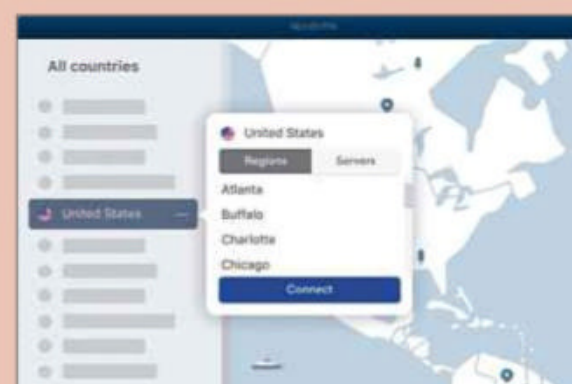
A

There's plenty of crossover but if you're looking for a condensed answer then it is this: a VPN (such a NordVPN – see screenshot above right) hides all your computer's internet 'traffic' behind an **IP address** other than the one assigned by your internet-service provider, while Tor does the same but only what you do within the Tor browser.

A VPN, or virtual private network, is a service that's typically accessed by installing a small app on your




Online activity while using Tor (left) is anonymous, while a VPN – such as NordVPN (right) – hides all your internet traffic



computer. Your computer's online activity – from web browsing to email and downloads – is encrypted and routed through an IP address that belongs to the operator of the VPN service. Your data is secure in transit, and nothing you do can be easily tracked back to your IP address

But 'easily' is the operative word. If for whatever reason a law-enforcement agency served notice on a VPN then it might have to reveal details of your account and activities that had been conducted through its servers, meaning websites you've visited could be revealed. So, the VPN's anonymity might turn out to be nothing more than a veneer.

Tor, on the other hand, is stronger on the anonymity front, but strictly within the Tor browser. The name originally stood for 'The Onion Router', which is a loose description of the way the Tor browser works – routing your in-browser activities through multiple server layers, each of which strips originating IP address data from the last. In this way, it is practically impossible for the end website to ever know the IP address of the originating request (ie, your computer).

 Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

How do I add File Explorer Favorites?

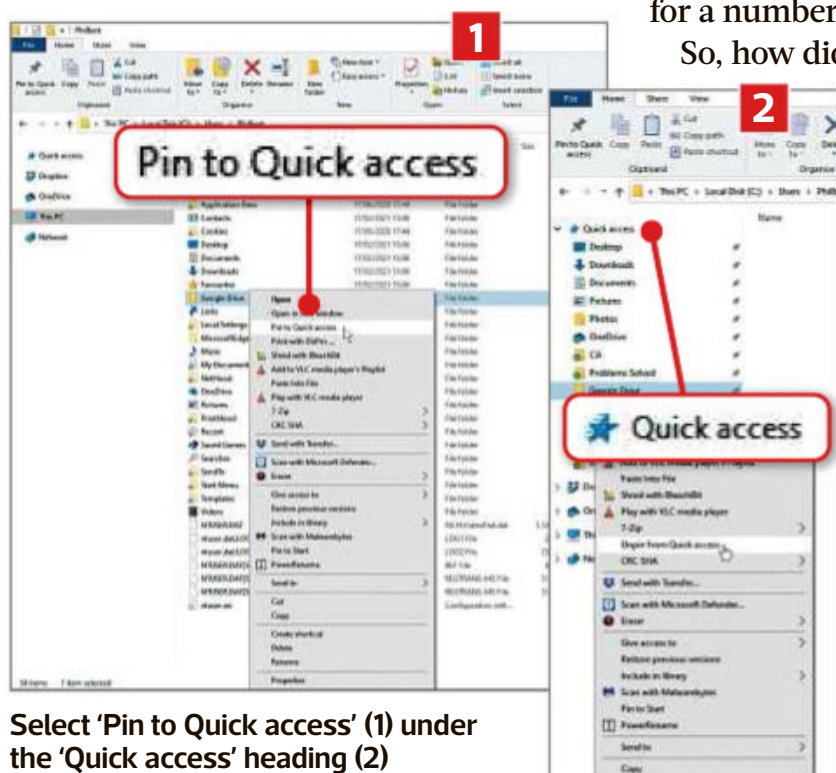
Q

I'm in the process of looking for a new Windows 10 desktop PC. This has led me to wonder how I once added my Google Drives under the

Favorites heading in Windows Explorer, on my current Windows 7 computer. Its real location is at C:\Users\Tony\Google Drive, and I use it as the autosave location for a number of my Excel workbooks.

So, how did I manage this on my Windows 7 PC, and would I be able to replicate this on a Windows 10 model?

Anthony Littlejohn



Select 'Pin to Quick access' (1) under the 'Quick access' heading (2)

A

It's funny how many of these little things we do once and then instantly forget.

In this case, you simply right-clicked on your Google Drive folder in Windows Explorer then choose 'Add current location to Favorites' from

the pop-up menu.

You'll be able to do exactly the same on a Windows 10 PC, in File Explorer (as Windows Explorer is now known). The relevant option is called 'Pin to Quick access' (see screenshot 1) – and correspondingly the Favorites heading has become 'Quick access' 2.

Next Issue

ONSALE
Weds
21 Apr

- Where do I get drivers for my old printer?
- How do I record my own audiobook?
- Why can't I hover to select in Edge? ...And many more

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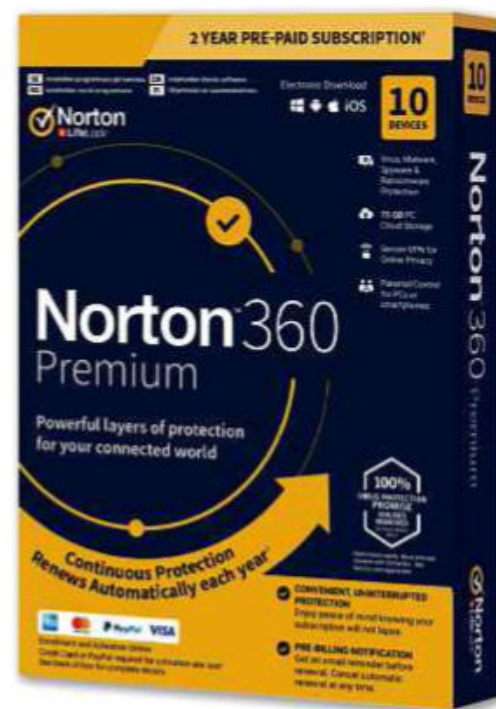
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Why won't Ueli find anything?

Q I have been a subscriber to *Computeractive* for many years, but this is the first I have asked for your advice. I downloaded the Ueli launcher utility (www.snipca.com/36726) after reading Ryan Sutton's tip ('Turn on Control Panel to include in searches' Issue 597, page 42). The search bar duly appears when I press Alt+Space bar. However, when I type a search, such as 'Notes', and press Enter nothing happens. Any idea what the problem might be?

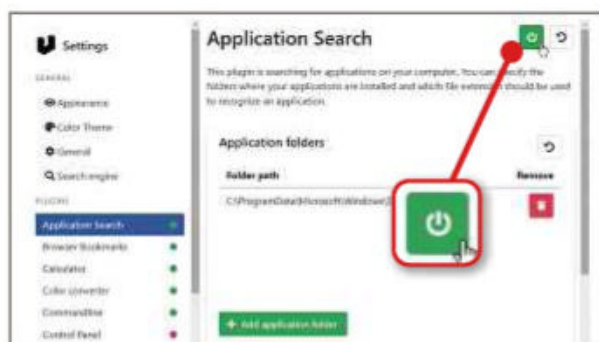
Peter Fawcett

A We're not sure. Pressing Enter in Ueli will have an effect *only* if the tool finds a match. The list of search results is actually dynamic, meaning it's refined automatically as you type. If you type quickly without ever looking up then you might not even notice this. If your completed input results in no match then Ueli will display a 'No search results found message'.

Now, for your specific example – 'Notes' – there isn't actually any app in Windows that would match this (Microsoft's freebie note-taking tool is actually called Notepad). However, we don't suppose you tried just one search term and then gave up.

Rather, we'd guess that Ueli isn't set up to index items that you might want to find. Ryan alluded to this in his own message to us, saying he couldn't find any Control Panel item. The solution for you will be very similar, but you might need to experiment with which **plug-ins** are switched on or off.

First, right-click the Ueli icon in the notification area at the far right of the taskbar, then choose Settings. Next, in the left-hand navigation pane, under the Plugins heading work through all the items marked with a red dot. These items are currently not within Ueli's search scope. Click one and then, in the right-hand pane, click the red Off button so it becomes a green On button (see screenshot above right). We'd advise



Turn this button on to make sure items are included in Ueli searches

doing this for Control Panel, File Browser and Shortcuts at the very least, but to be honest, the more the merrier – because if you leave something Off, Ueli won't be able to find anything in that category.

Why can't I download Colorize Images?

Q I tried to download the Colorize Images app you recommended for Android in Issue 598's 'Phone and Tablet Tips' (page 45). However, the tool would not download to my PC. In the Help section it states this will not work on computers – only on phones. Is this true? If so, can you recommend one for a pensioner like me who still uses a PC?

Ted Flack

A Yes, Android apps are designed for Android phones and tablets only, and will not run on a Windows 10 PC. There are convoluted ways to get Android apps to run in an **emulator** within Windows but very few people will derive any practical benefit from doing this.

Besides, in almost all cases there'll be an equivalent app or web service for PCs that'll do the same – if not a better – job. For your specific needs, there are plenty of free colouriser tools online you can use. We like the simplicity of Playback.fm (www.snipca.com/37591). Click the Upload Photo button, choose a black-and-white image from your PC, then click Open. Wait a few moments while the tool does its job, then click the Download Color Photo button (see



Use online service Playback.fm to colourise your old black-and-white photos

screenshot above) to grab the coloured version.

Why can't I delete Edge?

Q I'm a subscriber and have been since almost the beginning, and enjoy your excellent magazine. In Issue 599's 'Remove All Windows Junk' Cover Feature you show how to remove Microsoft Edge permanently. I have followed your instructions, but after pressing Enter I'm told the system cannot find the path specified. Is there a misprint or have I done something wrong?

Colin Rout

A We've checked and there was no misprint, so yes – we'd guess you're doing something wrong. That something is probably a typing error, as it's not always easy to follow commands that, because of the width of the magazine's columns, go over more than one line. That's particularly true when the command includes multiple spaces, as this one does.

To try to avoid this common problem we did explain how to copy and paste the correct full path from File Explorer's address bar. To recap, the full command you need to type into the Command Prompt window (including all spaces) is `cd C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft\Edge\Application`.

To help, we've put this on a Pastebin page at www.snipca.com/37590. You can simply copy (press Ctrl+C) it from there, then paste (Ctrl+V) it straight into your Command Prompt window.

Jargon Buster

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

1440p High-definition video of 2560x1440 pixels.

3G/4G/5G Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

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

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

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

AES-256 Military-grade level of encryption.

AMOLED Active-Matrix Organic Light-Emitting Diode. An alternative technology to LCD for creating flat-panel displays. Most commonly used in smartphones, tablets and smartwatches.

Aspect ratio A measurement of the shape of a display. Traditional computer screens are 4:3. Widescreen displays are 16:9 or 16:10.

Auto focus Sensors in a camera that detect how far the subject is so the lens can use an electronic motor to adjust the focal distance.

Benchmarking Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Software built into every PC that connects the vital components. It's visible for a few seconds when the PC starts.

Blue screen of death Technically called a 'Stop error', this is shown when your PC crashes.

Brute-force attack A method of breaking encryption by simply guessing all possible passwords until the right one is found.

cd/m² Candela per square metre. Standard unit of brightness.

Clean install An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

Colour temperature How blue and yellow-orange combine to produce the overall colour of your monitor.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

Core Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

Cryptocurrency An online currency not backed by any country. The most popular is Bitcoin.

Dark web Websites that can only be accessed using specialised software, not through conventional search engines or browsers.

DISM Deployment Image Servicing and Management. A command-line tool that can perform tasks on a Windows installation image.

Downscaling Reducing a video's quality so it can be played on a device with a lower resolution.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

DVI Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector that can carry a digital signal.

Emulator A program that makes one computer act like another, letting it run that computer's software.

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows. Has the file extension .exe.

False positive When an antivirus program wrongly detects a malware infection.

FAT32 An old system used for formatting hard drives, and still used for some portable drives.

FLAC Free Lossless Audio Codec. A type of digital audio file that can be created from CD with no loss of audio quality.

Frame rate The number of still images, or frames, shown per second to create a moving image. Higher frame rates make games appear smoother and more realistic.

FreeSync AMD's technology for varying the screen's refresh rate to avoid two frames being shown at the same time.

GEDCOM Short for Genealogical Data Communication. A file format used by genealogy programs to share data.

Gigabit Internet connection offering speeds of at least 1Gbps (1,000Mbps).

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

GSM Global System for Mobile Communications. The system for digital mobile phones used in the UK and Europe.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

HDR High-dynamic range. A camera that takes more than one photo with different levels of colour and contrast. These images are then combined to create a better-quality image.

Heat sink A block of metal used to help dissipate the heat from a computer chip.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

Hyperlapse Timelapse videos formed of photos taken at regular intervals, with the camera moving to show different angles.

Image stabilisation The mechanism built into digital cameras and video cameras that compensates for any shaking or vibrations that occur during shooting.

IP address Internet Protocol address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

JPEG Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras. Some image quality is lost with each save.

Keylogger A piece of malicious software that records all the letters and numbers typed on a PC in an effort to find passwords or other valuable information.

LAN Local-area network. A computer network in one place, such as a home or office.

LCD Liquid-crystal display. The technology used to create almost all flatscreen monitors.

LED Light-emitting diode. An electronic device that emits light. Used on almost all electronic devices, and to provide the backlight for some LCDs.

Lumen A measure of brightness.

M.2 A standard specification for internal PC expansion cards and connectors.

Mesh router Wireless network system that uses multiple connected routers to stretch Wi-Fi further than a traditional router.

MicroSD card A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

NVMe Non-Volatile Memory Express. An interface that lets solid-state drives work faster.

OLED Organic light-emitting diode. A thin-film organic light-emitting diode used in computer displays and television screens.

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.

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

PPT/PPTX The default file formats for Microsoft PowerPoint before and since version 2007 respectively.

QHD Quad High Definition.

QR code Quick Response code. A rectangular barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR-reading devices.

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.

Refresh rate Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn. Slight changes in the image each time it is updated combine to give the illusion of movement.

Root directory The top folder in any hierarchy.

Safe Mode A way of starting Windows so that various programs and peripherals are prevented from working. This is useful to help diagnose the cause of problems if a computer is behaving oddly.

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

Screen mirroring To display on your TV what's on your PC or tablet screen.

SIM Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones. The SIM card carries the user's identity and phone number for accessing the network.

Speech recognition A way for a computer to recognise what you're saying and take dictation or obey your spoken commands.

sRGB A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

System 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.

TIFF Tagged Image File Format. A standard file format used to store graphics images.

TN Twisted nematic. A common, cheap type of LCD.

Ultrawide Offering a field of view that's wider than traditional digital cameras.

UPnP Universal Plug and Play. A standard for sharing media between computers and network devices.

USB 2.0/3.0/3.1 Faster successors to USB.

USB-C A new connector that's reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

VA Vertical Alignment. A form of LCDs in which the liquid crystals naturally align vertically between the panes of glass.

VGA Video Graphics Array. An older standard socket for connecting a monitor to a PC.

VPN Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.





Wi-Fi 6 Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called 802.11ax.

Widget A small program such as a calendar that runs on the Windows desktop.

ZIP file A file that contains compressed documents or files.

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Easy when you **Know How**

Worried by things that go bump in the night,
Robert Irvine grabs an old phone and tries to...



Set up a surveillance camera

Regular readers of this column, or those of you who accidentally skim the first line while flicking to Jargon Buster, will recall that in Issue 597 I was complaining about noisy pipes in my block of flats. That problem has been fixed thanks to Dave the plumber, but now I have a new audio dilemma: my home is too quiet at night.

This domestic silence means that every tiny sound – a rumble from the boiler, a gurgle in the fridge – is significantly amplified, and I lie awake at 3am convinced that burglars are fiddling with my water pressure and eating my cheese. More seriously, they could be stealing my wallet, laptop, kettle and other valuables, while I'm in my bedroom unsure if the imagined invaders are human, rodent or draught.

To allay my nocturnal unease, I decided to set up a security camera. A quick browse of Amazon found surveillance devices for as little as £20, but as you can't put a price on peace of mind, I preferred to avoid paying anything. I'd often read about how easy – and eco-friendly! – it is to convert a spare smartphone into a security cam, so I dug out my ancient (2017) Moto E4 and

“
**Alfred is named
after Batman's butler,
because it knows how
to deal with robbin'**
”

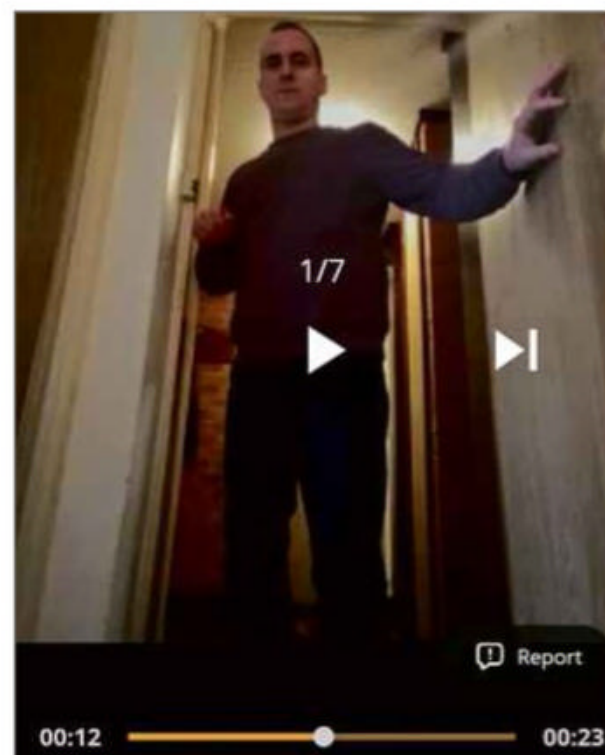
charged it up ready for a second life.

My first step was to choose a suitable home-surveillance app. Based on numerous glowing reviews and the fact that it's free, I chose a service called Alfred (<https://alfred.camera>). This is named after Batman's butler, presumably because it's efficient, loyal and discreet, and knows how to deal with robbin'.

I installed Alfred on my current Android phone (it's also available for iOS) and on my old phone, after solving the conundrum of how to get the app on a handset without a SIM (use Wi-Fi, stupid!). After signing in using my Google account on my main phone, which I'll call phone A, I did the same on phone B and granted Alfred permission to use the camera and microphone.

The two devices were instantly connected, with phone A – the Viewer – displaying a live video stream of what phone B – the Camera – could currently see. I was amazed by the speed and simplicity of the setup process, especially as it hadn't cost me a penny.

Alfred then asked me to turn on Motion Detection for phone B, so the app could record movement automatically, and make sure the feature was working properly. I tested this by propping the phone on a table in another room and walking in front of the camera. A 'thunk' sound indicated that a recording had




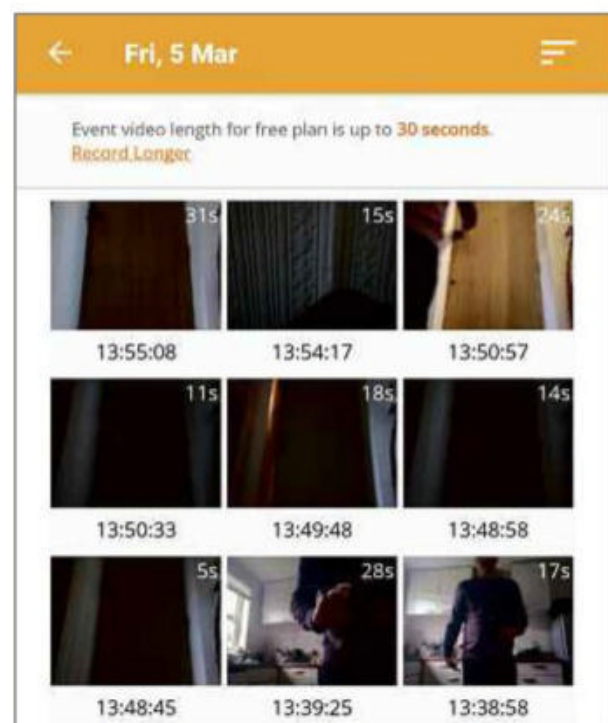
Have you seen this man? Robert's been caught on camera by Alfred

been triggered and when I returned to phone A, I was able to watch a video of the captured 'event'. I also noticed that I'd missed a bit at the back when I cut my own hair recently, leaving an embarrassing ducktail.

Usefully, Alfred stores 30-second event videos for up to seven days, so you can leave it running while you're on holiday (when that's allowed again). It also lets you view live streams on your PC via its Web Viewer (<https://alfred.camera/webapp>). You can also switch between phone B's rear and front cameras, activate low-light mode and play a loud burglar-scaring siren, using one-tap controls on phone A. I wasn't so keen on the large ads at both ends, but you can remove these (and extend the time limits) by upgrading to the Premium version for £27.46 a year.

With Alfred duly mastered, I set up phone B in my hall and have left the app running overnight for the last week. No intruders have been caught so far, but I'm sleeping more peacefully knowing that Alfred's got my back – ducktail and all.

 **Need help setting up your own home-surveillance system?**
Let us know: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk



The free version of Alfred records 30-second clips of motion events

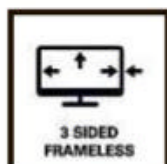
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