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**p62**

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ISSUE 608 | 16 – 29 JUNE 2021

Learn something new in every issue

Juicy plum, anyone? **page 9**

# YOUR SECRET GUIDE TO amazon



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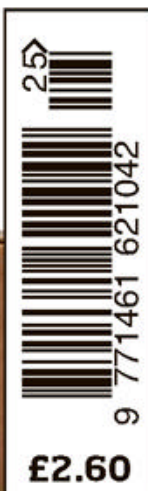
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**Deputy Editor** Will Stapley  
**Production Editor** Graham Brown  
**Art Editor** Katie Peat  
**Contributors** Dinah Greek, Robert Irvine, Jonathan Parkyn, Nick Peers, Nik Rawlinson, Andy Shaw

### ADVERTISING

**Group Advertising Director** Andrea Mason  
**Deputy Ad Manager** Rebecca New

### MARKETING AND CIRCULATION

**Subscriptions** Charline Kuehn  
**For subscription enquiries ring** 0330 333 9493

### PRODUCTION

**Head of Production**  
Stephen Catherall  
**Senior Production Manager**  
Lawrence Brookes

### MANAGEMENT

**Managing Director** Dharmesh Mistry  
**MD of Advertising** Julian Lloyd-Evans  
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**Computeractive**  
Printed in the UK

When I'm planning to buy something online, my first instinct is still to check eBay before Amazon. It's where I assume I'll get a better bargain (though I also accept it will probably take longer to arrive).

But this issue's Cover Feature has shaken my assumptions. I had no idea that buried beneath Amazon's confusing mass of categories, sub-categories and sub-sub-categories lurked so many ways to find cheaper prices. Robert Irvine's tips should help me (and hopefully you) save several hundred pounds every year.

I won't abandon eBay though. I still like the

challenge of tracking down auctions ignored by other shoppers, particularly for items like headphones, speakers, USB sticks and webcams. It's incredible how many gadgets worth around £50 you can grab for a fifth of that price.

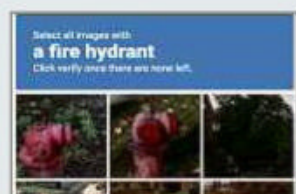
It would be interesting to know *your* strategy for finding the best price. Perhaps it depends on the condition of the item: eBay for second-hand books, Amazon for brand new? We'll publish the best advice on our Readers' Tips pages.

**Daniel Booth**

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



## THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS



**500 years**  
How long humans waste every day trying to work out CAPTCHAs - [p49](#)

**240 Watts**

USB-C's new power limit - [p8](#)

**2TB**

Maximum RAM the 64bit edition of Windows 10 Pro can use - [p68](#)

## 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.



# Contents

16 – 29 June 2021 • Issue 608

- 6 News** WhatsApp to let you send messages on four devices
- 10 Question of the Fortnight** Will Royal Mail's new delivery slots beat Amazon?
- 11 Protect Your Tech**  
Fake phone giveaways 'from Currys'
- 12 Letters** Our Salvation Army meetings worked well on Zoom
- 14 Consumeractive**  
Are Tyl and Smartpay covered by Section 75?
- 16 Grow Your Family Tree**  
Track down school admissions records
- 18 Best Free Software**  
OBS Studio 27.0
- 21 Named & Shamed**  
Junk Offender: Express Rip CD Ripper

## Reviews

- 22 Intel NUC 11 Pro**  
Mini PC makes a small impression
- 23 Honor MagicBook 14 (2021)**  
MagicBook laptop does the trick
- 24 The best Full HD webcams**  
We review five of the best standalone webcams that'll give you a clear edge in your video chats
- 26 Apple iMac 24in**  
Apple's latest PC takes the fast M1 route
- 28 Xiaomi Poco F3**  
Impressive phone is pixel perfect
- Nokia X20**  
Nokia handset fails to press the right buttons
- 29 Huawei Sound**  
Bluetooth speaker with bass instincts
- 30 Buy It/Competition**  
Win Lindy BNX-100XT headphones

WhatsApp gets syncing feeling

p6



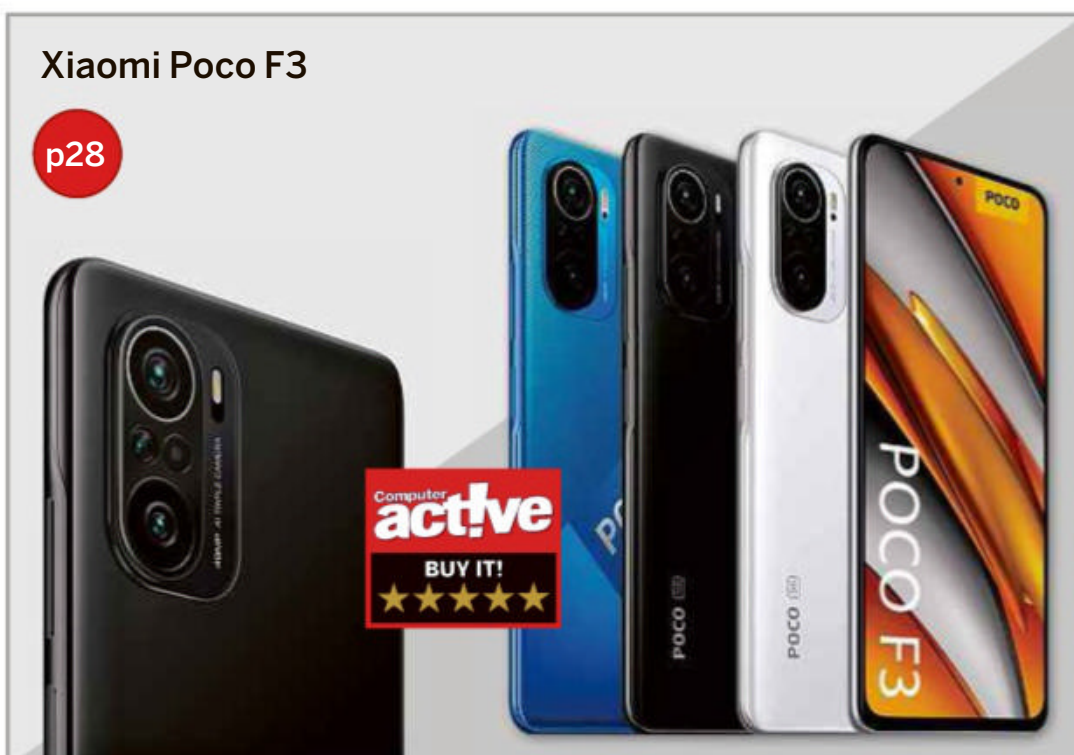
Honor MagicBook 14 (2021)

p23



Xiaomi Poco F3

p28





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## Workshops & Tips

**35 How to... Improve your computer's audio with new speakers**

**38 Securely share your passwords**

**40 Label and track objects in your videos**

**42 Readers' Tips**

Add Chrome tips to its Help menu

**44 Phone and Tablet Tips**

Organise and print reminders

**46 Make Windows Better**

Set default save locations

**47 Make Office Better**

Dictate your Word documents

**48 In the Club**

Collaborate on spreadsheets in real time

**49 What's All the Fuss About?**

Cryptographic Attestation of Personhood

**50 COVER FEATURE**

**Your secret guide to Amazon**

As Amazon's Prime Day looms, we explain how you can get the best bargains, hidden discounts, reduced subscriptions and more

**60 Master and create QR codes**

How you can do much more than just access web pages with the scanning technology

**62 Watch TV in your caravan**

Enjoy the best TV viewing experience possible while you carry on camping

**64 Problems Solved**

Why do emails capitalise new lines?

**71 Reader Support**

Why won't PDF24 work for me?

**72 Jargon Buster**

**74 Easy When You Know How**

Robert Irvine stress-tests his processor

Upgrade your computer sound

p35



## YOUR SECRET GUIDE TO amazon

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- ✓ Visit Amazon's 'Treasure Truck'
- ✓ Cut the cost of Amazon Prime
- + Get Prime Day deals early!



COVER  
FEATURE  
P50

## Watch TV in your caravan



Make your holiday  
TV picture perfect

p62



## WhatsApp to let you send messages on four devices

**Y**ou'll soon be able to read and send WhatsApp messages on up to four devices, after Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg confirmed it was working on adding this feature. It means you'll be able to read messages on one

phone, then reply to them on another.

In an interview with the website WaBetaInfo (<https://wabetainfo.com>), Zuckerberg – who bought WhatsApp in 2014 – said it's been a “big technical challenge to get all your messages and content to sync properly across devices even when your phone battery dies”, but that this has been solved and it'll be added to the service “soon”.

Syncing accounts so messages can be read across different devices has long been one of top features requested by WhatsApp users. Currently, the only way to do this is through WhatsApp Web (<https://web.whatsapp.com>), a Windows program that shows on your desktop conversations you've had on your phone or Android tablet, and lets you send messages by typing on your keyboard.

While useful, WhatsApp Web is limited because it requires your phone to be



switched on and connected to the web. Zuckerberg's comments suggest this won't be the case when the new feature launches.

In the same interview WhatsApp boss Will Cathcart hinted that the company might also launch an iPad app, because this will be easier once syncing between devices is possible.

Cathcart and Zuckerberg

did confirm that a forthcoming 'View once' mode will let you send messages, videos and photos that disappear once they've been viewed.

They added that the 'Disappearing mode' will soon be expanded to let you remove messages across all chat groups, rather than just one group as it is now (see Issue 605, page 45 for instructions).

### WHAT WE THINK

For such a widely used tool (two billion people worldwide), WhatsApp remains severely restricted. When Facebook bought it in 2014, few would have believed that seven years on there still wouldn't be an iPad version. Perhaps it got sidetracked working on its Messenger app, which we've always found harder to use. But WhatsApp is as important to modern communications as Zoom, Twitter or Gmail, so we're delighted these limitations will soon be gone.

## Record 600 hours on BT's new 4K HDR TV box

**B**T has launched its first set-top TV box that supports HDR, showing programmes in “up to four times the detail of HD, offering vivid, pin-sharp detail”.

Called the TV Box Pro (pictured), it has 1TB of storage – double the capacity of BT's previous leading box, the Humax DTR-T4000 – enough to record 600 hours of shows.

For now it works only through an

Ethernet cable connected to your router, though an update later this year will add Wi-Fi.

It also has four tuners, letting you record up to three shows while watching a fourth at the same time. The Bluetooth remote control offers a “quicker, smoother experience”, allowing you to store the box out of sight if you prefer.



However, to start with it's available only to customers on BT's VIP package ([www.bt.com/packages/vip](http://www.bt.com/packages/vip)), which costs £65 a month. Read more on BT's site: [www.snipca.com/38536](http://www.snipca.com/38536).



**You'll like this...** TV guides are now easier for people with poor eyesight to use ([www.snipca.com/38538](http://www.snipca.com/38538))



**but not this...** There's been a surge in email scams promising sexual content ([www.snipca.com/38537](http://www.snipca.com/38537))



# Microsoft to reveal ‘next Windows’ on 24 June

Microsoft has promised to unveil the “next generation of Windows” at a major event scheduled for 24 June. Called ‘What’s Next for Windows’, it will be presented by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and chief product officer Panos Panay.

It’s widely believed that Microsoft will reveal the most significant changes to Windows 10 since the operating system launched in 2015. The company has been working on a major redesign, codenamed ‘Sun Valley’, which is expected to be part of the 21H2 Feature Update, due for release this autumn.

The revamp is likely to be based on Microsoft’s ‘Fluent Design’ style, which will introduce more colour to sections within Windows, as well as rounded corners to boxes.

It will also add depth to boxes, making them easier to click, while translucent boxes will be placed on solid ones



– the opposite of the flat blocks of colour that were central to Windows 8’s design.

Additionally, Microsoft looks set to ditch many of the system icons it has used since Windows 95. These include the icons for folders, devices and settings you’ll find in `C:\Windows\System32\Shell32.dll` on your hard drive.

To see the new icons, which were added to a recent preview build of Windows 10, visit [www.snipca.com/38489](http://www.snipca.com/38489) and look at the box on the right. These look simpler and more modern than the

existing icons in the box on the left.

An image (above) in the email sent to journalists to announce the event even hints that Windows might have a new logo.

Rumours that Sun Valley would be a substantial redesign grew in January when Microsoft published a job advert for a software engineer to work on a “sweeping visual rejuvenation of Windows experiences”.

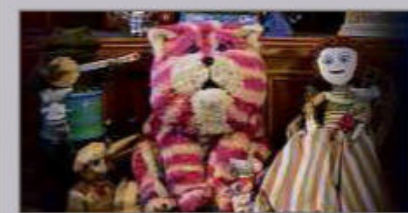


What changes would you make to Windows 10? Let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)

## IN BRIEF

### THREE RAISES COST OF OVERSEAS CALLS

Phone network Three is increasing the cost of calls from the UK to non-EU countries that fall outside your allowance. These will jump from £1.75 to £2.75 on 1 July (see [www.snipca.com/38480](http://www.snipca.com/38480)), while sending texts to non-EU countries will rise from 35p to 65p. The cost of Three’s ‘Additional services’, such as making video calls, are also rising – visit [www.snipca.com/38481](http://www.snipca.com/38481) for the full list.



### BAGPUSS MAKES DEBUT ON BBC iPLAYER

All 13 episodes of the much-loved children’s TV show *Bagpuss* are available on BBC iPlayer for the first time, though they’ll be removed on 29 June. It was first broadcast in 1974, and was last aired in 1986. Visit [www.snipca.com/38490](http://www.snipca.com/38490) to watch the episodes.

## Take digital notes on Kobo’s biggest ever ebook reader

Kobo has launched its biggest ever ebook reader, which is also the first that lets you take notes using a digital stylus. Described as a cross between an iPad and a Kindle Pro, the Kobo Elipsa has a “glare-free” 10.3in screen and 32GB of storage, which is more than any previous Kobo device.

It has a ComfortLight setting that adjusts the screen’s brightness to make it easier on your eyes at night, and for the first time on a Kobo there’s a Dark Mode for white text on black. Kobo claims the Carta 1200 E Ink technology provides a “faster

display, quicker page turns, and deeper contrast”.

The stylus lets you take notes and draw diagrams within ebooks and PDFs, and also on blank screens. You can convert handwritten notes to typed text with one tap, and save them to Dropbox using a built-in tool. You can change the pen type of the stylus to suit your needs, along with the size of its eraser and the thickness of lines drawn.

The Elipsa comes with the SleepCover case, which turns off the device when you shut it. You can also use the



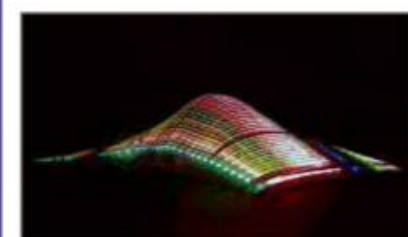
SleepCover as a stand to place the Elipsa at a suitable angle for reading and writing.

Priced £349.99, the Kobo Elipsa pack – containing the device, stand and stylus – is released on 24 June, and is available to pre-order now: [www.snipca.com/38496](http://www.snipca.com/38496). Replacement tips for the stylus cost £9.99 for a pack of five.

## TOMORROW’S WORLD



According to its website (<https://global.royole.com>), US-Chinese firm Royole makes “next-generation human-machine interface technologies”. Or ‘fancy screens’, to put it another way. Its latest innovation is a ‘stretchable’ display that works even when being pulled, bent, rolled and twisted. You can read more and watch it bulge at [www.snipca.com/38461](http://www.snipca.com/38461).





## IN BRIEF

## ROYAL MAIL 'SCAMMER' CHARGED AFTER RAID

A man from Enfield has been charged with fraud in relation to phone messages asking people to pay a fee to retrieve a Royal Mail parcel. He was arrested along with seven other men after police raided homes across the country in late May. The Dedicated Card and Payment Crime Unit said it will continue to work with Royal Mail to tackle such scams, which have become widespread in the past few months.

## PHONES TO SHOW HOW GREEN THEY ARE

Some phones will soon carry an 'Eco Rating' to show how environmentally friendly they are. The system, created by rival phone networks across Europe, will give a score out of 100 based on five criteria: durability, repairability, recyclability, climate efficiency and resource efficiency. The networks have persuaded 12 manufacturers to sign up, including Huawei, Motorola, Nokia and Samsung. Read more at [www.ecoratingdevices.com](http://www.ecoratingdevices.com).

## THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!



What's crazier? That on average our thumbs travel 52 miles a year scrolling through phone screens, or that a marketing agency actually bothered to work this out? The firm, called Illk, has built the mobile game Thumb Run ([www.snipca.com/38413](http://www.snipca.com/38413), pictured) to illustrate our phone addiction. Yes, it's as daft as it sounds.



## McAfee to refund customers who were automatically renewed

**M**cAfee customers whose subscriptions were automatically renewed can now get refunds, following pressure from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

It follows a wider investigation by the CMA into the antivirus sector over concerns that some firms may be breaking consumer law by making "long-term customers" pay more than they should. This was triggered in 2018 by a 'super-complaint' from Citizens Advice.

Until now, McAfee offered a full refund of the auto-renewal fee only within 60 days from the date money was taken. But McAfee has voluntarily changed this so customers can get partial refunds after 60 days, based

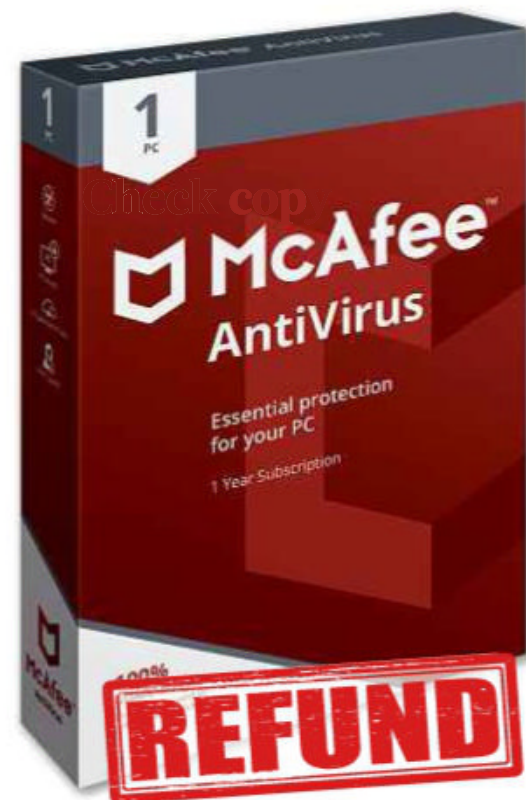
on the remaining months left on the contract. It applies to customers who were initially refused a refund in 2020.

The company has also agreed to make it easier for customers to turn off auto-renewal, and explain more clearly that the price for the second year is higher than the first.

In addition it will display more prominently online and in emails how customers can request refunds.

Andrea Coscelli, CMA Chief Executive, said: "Subscriptions should be clearly described, easy to exit and customers should not be tied into ongoing auto-renewals without adequate refund rights".

He added that companies



who use auto-renewals unfairly "risk action from the CMA". Earlier this year, the CMA announced it was taking Norton to court over claims it refused to provide certain information about its auto-renewal policy.

McAfee said it was "pleased to have reached agreement with the CMA on our shared goal of improving the ease, fairness and transparency of business-to-consumer practices and policies".

### HOW TO REQUEST A REFUND

Visit McAfee's site ([www.snipca.com/38417](http://www.snipca.com/38417)) then click 'Request a refund' followed by Unexpected Renewal. Next, fill in your details, click Continue,

then ring the number given on the following page. Make a note of your 'service request number' shown below the phone number.

## USB-C power more than doubles to 240 Watts

**T**he amount of power that **USB-C** can handle is set to more than double to 240 Watts, letting you charge devices such as bigger laptops, docking stations and **4K** monitors.

USB-C's current limit of 100 Watts is increasingly seen as too restrictive, particularly by those who need more power for fast gaming laptops.

The increase was announced in May by the USB


Implementers Forum (USB-IF), which develops USB technology. It said the new power level will be called Extended Power Range (EPR), adding that it expects compatible devices to be available in the second half of 2021.

You'll also need to buy new USB-C chargers and cables. The USB-IF said these will be marked by an industry-standard icon so you can tell they're capable of carrying



240 Watts.

Lower-power cables will be renamed Standard Power Range (SPR).

 Which devices do you charge by USB-C? Let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



# Edge and Chrome both faster as browser wars intensify

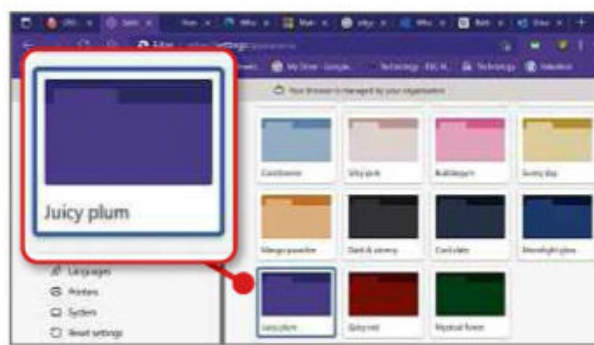
Microsoft has boasted that its Edge browser is now “the best performing browser on Windows 10” despite Google claiming that Chrome is now 23 per cent faster than before.

Both companies announced speed improvements to mark the release of the 91st version of their respective browsers.

Microsoft said the tools Startup boost and sleeping tabs, both added earlier this year, have made Edge faster. Startup boost launches Edge quicker by running core processes in the background without affecting any browser windows you have open.

Sleeping tabs frees up system resources from tabs you haven't clicked in a while, letting the rest of Edge run more smoothly.

However, Google says that new JavaScript code used to



build Chrome makes the new version nearly a quarter faster than previously.

Both companies have also added new tools to the browsers. Microsoft now has 14 new colour themes that change how Edge looks. Click the top-right menu button (three dots), then Settings at the bottom, followed by Appearance on the left. Select one of the themes on the right (it's 'Juicy Plum' in our screenshot).

You can also now remove much of the clutter on Wikipedia pages, such as the

menu on the left, making articles easier to read.

To do this, visit any Wikipedia page then click the Immersive Reader icon (an open book) in Edge's address bar.

In Chrome, you can now copy (press Ctrl+C) and paste (Ctrl+V) files into a Gmail message to add them as attachments. Previously you had to drag and drop the file from File Explorer.

Both Chrome and Edge update automatically, and so you should now be running versions 91. To check in either browser, click the menu button top right, then Settings, followed by About Chrome/Edge bottom left. The browser will now check for updates, and show its version in the middle of the screen.

## Openreach promises fast broadband for 6m rural homes by 2026

Openreach has nearly doubled the number of rural homes and businesses it plans to upgrade to full-fibre broadband.

It now aims to connect 6.2 million premises by December 2026, up from the previous target of 3.2m.

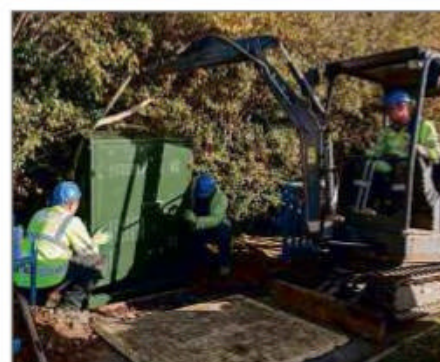
The new goal comes after BT announced its intention to deliver full-fibre speeds to 25 million premises by 2026, rather than 20 million by the “mid-to-late 2020s”. It said this will create 7,000 new jobs, including 1,000 new Openreach engineering roles over the next year.

Openreach's CEO Clive Selley said that its commitment to reach more

rural homes means the Government will have to spend less taxpayer money on subsidising broadband in extremely remote areas where it's not financially viable for companies to invest.

He added: “This is a hugely complex, nationwide engineering project – second only to HS2 in terms of investment. It will help level up the UK because the impact of Full Fibre broadband stretches from increased economic prosperity and international competitiveness, to higher employment and environmental benefits.”

Openreach said that the work will improve around 1,100 exchanges in “market



and coastal towns, villages and hamlets spread across the entire UK”.

It added that the locations include Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands, Cardigan in Wales, Keswick in Cumbria and Allhallows in Kent.

The locations will soon be added to Openreach's 'Full Fibre Build Programme', which you can download from [www.snipca.com/38262](http://www.snipca.com/38262) – just scroll to the bottom and click the green link.

### IN BRIEF

#### SAVE PICS FROM GMAIL TO GOOGLE PHOTOS

Google now lets you quickly save images emailed to your Gmail inbox to your Google Photos collection. The 'Save to Photos' option appears when you preview an image in Gmail. It works for **JPEGs** only at the moment. Read more at [www.snipca.com/38450](http://www.snipca.com/38450).

#### FB ALLOWS 'COVID IS MAN-MADE' CLAIM

Facebook will no longer remove claims that Covid-19 is man made, having discussed the issue with public-health experts. It comes after US President Joe Biden ordered intelligence officials to investigate whether the disease could have escaped from the Wuhan Institute of Virology. Facebook has updated its policy ([www.snipca.com/38451](http://www.snipca.com/38451)), having been widely criticised for censoring such views until now.

#### SAMSUNG LAUNCHES TWO NEW TABLETS

Samsung has unveiled two new tablets at opposite ends of its price range. Starting at £149, the Galaxy Tab A7 Lite (pictured) has an 8.7in screen and 64GB of storage – which, Samsung says, makes it the ideal “carry-along companion”. More expensive is the Samsung Galaxy Tab S7 FE 5G (from £589), which has a 12.4in screen and is designed for “creative work, and multi-tasking”. Visit Samsung's site for more details: [www.snipca.com/38449](http://www.snipca.com/38449). We'll review both soon.





# Question of the Fortnight

## Will Royal Mail's new timed delivery slots beat Amazon?

Those 'Sorry, you were out' cards may soon be a thing of the past

**Y**ou've got a busy day planned. You need to nip to the shops, meet a friend for lunch, return some library books and pick up a prescription. You then receive a text that ruins your plans: "Your parcel will be delivered today between 10am and 6pm". Drat.

This is likely to become a regular annoyance as we continue to rely on online shopping. But the smartest companies know how to convert customer irritations into money-making opportunities. Fix the problem and the public will reward you with repeat business.

That's the thinking behind Royal Mail's new three-tier delivery model, explained in a video to staff by chief



place to hide the parcel if you're not at home. That leaves the 'Best' and most expensive tier, in which you'll be able to pick a time slot.

**“Boosted by the surge in online shopping, Amazon Logistics has risen to become the UK's second biggest courier”**

commercial officer Nick Landon. He called the tiers “good, better and best”, which rather brings to mind how coffee shops describe their cup sizes (Large, Extra Large, Super-Mega-Large etc).

Landon says the 'Good' tier will be cheapest, and will let Royal Mail choose how and when the item is delivered, similar to what happens now. The middle tier ('Better') will probably be called 'My Choice', and will let you select the day of delivery, and add a safe

Royal Mail hopes this will give it an advantage over Amazon, which offers same-day delivery on orders made before noon (or 1pm in Scotland), but no guaranteed time (see [www.snipca.com/38543](http://www.snipca.com/38543)). It does however offer four-hour delivery windows for large items up to 14 days in advance ([www.snipca.com/38544](http://www.snipca.com/38544)), and lets Prime members combine multiple orders to arrive on the same day (see page 53).

While it has traditionally

fought courier firms like FedEx and DHL for business, Royal Mail now sees Amazon as the bigger rival – or rather Amazon Logistics, which is the division of the company that handles deliveries, and launched in the UK just nine years ago (and a mere 496 years after Royal Mail).

Boosted by the surge in online shopping during the lockdowns, it has risen to become the UK's second biggest courier, accounting for 15 per cent of parcel deliveries, ahead of Hermes, UPS and DHL.

Royal Mail is still the biggest, with 35 per cent of the market, but it's worried about this rising threat. Executives were shaken earlier this year when internal research showed that more customers would recommend Amazon to deliver items than Royal Mail. The research indicated that customers still trust Royal Mail's staff, but they think its parcel-tracking information is inaccurate, while items are too

### THE FACTS

- The Royal Mail is planning to offer timed delivery slots next year as it bids to fight off Amazon.
- Amazon is now the UK's second biggest courier, and offers same-day delivery on items ordered before noon (1pm in Scotland).
- Research shows that the public is more likely to recommend Amazon than Royal Mail for home deliveries.

often delivered late and in a poor condition.

The three-tier scheme, likely to be implemented next year, isn't Royal Mail's only plan to take on Amazon. It recently started delivering parcels on Sundays, boasting that it delivered a record 500 million items in the final three months of last year.

In addition it has launched the Parcel Collect service ([www.royalmail.com/collection](http://www.royalmail.com/collection)) that lets you pay for the postage of up to five items (72p each), then print the address labels. Your items are then collected by a postal worker.

Such initiatives should broaden Royal Mail's appeal, but it'll still struggle with the new reality of shopping: the more people shop at Amazon, the more it will feel natural to get the items delivered by Amazon. Without this compelling hold over shoppers, Royal Mail might already be fighting a losing battle.



# Protect **your tech**

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

## WATCH OUT FOR...

## Fake phone giveaways 'from Currys'

### What's the threat?

There's been a surge in emails offering a Samsung Galaxy S21 phone as a reward for joining Currys PC World's 'Loyalty Program'. The emails look reasonably convincing, with the Currys PC World logo at the top, and a stylish photo of the S21 below (pictured, and at [www.snipca.com/38456](http://www.snipca.com/38456)).

The 'Answer & Win' headline is well designed also, while there's no spelling or grammatical errors in the text: 'You have been chosen to participate in our Loyalty Program for FREE! It will take you only a minute to receive this fantastic prize.' If you click the 'Get Started Now!' button below, you'll go to a genuine-looking site that asks for your personal and banking details.

However, there is a clue that the email is a scam. It calls the phone 'Samsung S21', omitting the 'Galaxy' part of the name. If it was an official offer between Currys and Samsung, it would've included 'Galaxy',

which is a vital part of Samsung's branding (see [www.snipca.com/38455](http://www.snipca.com/38455)).

### How can you stay safe?

Scammers are increasingly using the Currys PC World brand in emails and texts offering competition prizes, as well as incentives for joining loyalty schemes. They'll update these scams to include new devices that are likely to prove popular with the public, such as this Samsung phone.

In recent months we've seen offers supposedly from Currys offering a Dyson vacuum cleaner, Nespresso coffee machine and MacBook Pro.

Currys does run competitions and offers, but only through its official accounts, such as Twitter (<https://twitter.com/curryspcworld>), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/curryspcworld>) and Instagram ([www.instagram.com/curryspcworld](http://www.instagram.com/curryspcworld)). It also says that all genuine emails will always have



'currys.co.uk' in the email address, and will contain website links that go to [www.currys.co.uk](http://www.currys.co.uk).

## New tools

Firefox's Total Cookie Protection  
[www.snipca.com/38472](http://www.snipca.com/38472)

Total Cookie Protection may sound like padlocking your chocolate hobnobs in an underwater vault, but it's actually Firefox's method of preventing sites from tracking you across the web. It keeps a site's **cookies** locked inside their own 'jar', so they can't be shared with other sites. It means that any personal information recorded by a site can't be used by *another* site to build an advertising profile of you based on what you do online.

Mozilla added it to Firefox in version 86, released in February, but it wasn't turned on by default when you used the Private Browsing mode (which keeps your browsing secret from other people using your computer – read



more at [www.snipca.com/38473](http://www.snipca.com/38473)). Mozilla has changed this in Firefox 89, launched in early June, so your cookies will now be sealed within jars when you browse privately. You can open a Private Browsing tab by pressing Ctrl+Shift+P.

To check you have Firefox 89, click the top-right menu button (three horizontal lines), then Help, followed by About Firefox. It should now update to the latest version (see screenshot).

## ScamWatch

Readers warn readers



### 'New Payee' HSBC warning

I got a text apparently from HSBC telling me a 'New Payee request was attempted from a unregistered device'. The 'a' rather than 'an' was clearly suspicious, but what made it obviously a scam is that I don't bank with HSBC. I didn't click the link telling me to "confirm or cancel this request", but I can imagine that less vigilant people would be fooled, particularly if they *do* bank at HSBC. The bank does actually identify this scam as one to look out for ([www.snipca.com/38329](http://www.snipca.com/38329)), so it must be quite common, though I'd never received it before.

Ian Walwyn



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



# Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

## Don't forget local broadband providers

✉ In Issue 607's 'Question of the Fortnight' ('Will you get full-fibre broadband sooner than expected?', pictured right), you don't mention developments beyond the BT Openreach network.

In recent months many other small and local companies have started building their own full-fibre networks.

In the small town where I live, just south of Hull, every house is being networked by underground full-fibre cables installed by Kcom (the privatised company stemming originally from Hull Corporation telephones). Of course, only those who choose to change will actually be able to use the new connection. Moreover, Kcom isn't the only supplier of competing fibre networks.

Peter J Large

## Forcing people to use 2FA discriminates against the old

✉ I fully agree with the readers in Issue 607 who are concerned about Google introducing **two-factor authentication** (2FA) by default to sign in. But this isn't just a problem with Google – it also affects the financial sector. And it's not only older people without smartphones who will lose out. Many people prefer to limit who they disclose phone numbers to. Some, like myself, don't have their phone turned on in the home, plus many don't have a reliable signal at home.

The Financial Conduct Authority guidelines state that alternatives should be available for those who either don't have a smartphone, or who choose not to disclose their numbers to commercial organisations. As many firms ignore these guidelines, they should be made a legal requirement. As it's mainly older people affected, this could also be considered a form of discrimination.

Andrew Bebbington

✉ I've only recently upgraded my £25 Nokia phone, which was very



un-smart, but I still managed to use it to receive 2FA codes from banks like Santander, or from Lloyds who also give you the option of receiving a call to your landline. I often need to identify myself before being allowed to change a password, and usually receive an email to confirm this. Somewhere in this range of options there's something for anyone who uses a computer.

Alan Thomas

## Phone makers trick us into using built-in apps

✉ In Issue 606's Letters, Liam Hughes says that the likes of Apple and Samsung have "carried out an astonishing marketing trick" by persuading consumers that there is a benefit in a product becoming obsolete after only a few years. I agree with Liam. Can I add that another part of the trick played by manufacturers has been the apps placed on their phones, which can't be removed (at least not easily or safely), even though in some cases you've paid close to £1,000 for the device. Perhaps there is room here for advice from *Computeractive* on how to remove apps that we don't want and don't use.

Rob Anning

## Please KISS 'pre' goodbye

✉ Your habit of crowbarring the prefix 'pre' in front of things – such as pre-installed – is becoming very tiresome. It's a practice that's become widespread in the UK. Wiping your nose is 'pre-sneezing'. Opening the car door is 'pre-driving'. Doing the weekly shop is 'pre-cooking'. Waking up in the morning is 'pre-working'.

Using the KISS principle ('keep it simple, stupid'), you just need to say something like: "such and such comes installed with Windows". Absolutely no need for the 'pre'.

Edward Moss

**CA SAYS** We actually agree with Edward – the prefix 'pre' is usually unnecessary. There's certainly no reason to use 'pre-installed' when 'installed' works just as well. We'll try to avoid it in future. But if it does slip through, please accept this as a pre-apology.

## Websites should let you buy items as a guest

✉ In a similar vein to Elspeth Christie's letter (Issue 606) about how irritating it is when you're asked for your mobile-phone number when ordering online, I get annoyed when I have to create a new account to place an

## What's the Issue...?

✉ Not very long ago you mentioned a program that's good at dividing and combining PDFs. I intended to download the program, but can't recall which issue it was in. Can you help?

Michael Kennedy

**CA SAYS** Certainly. We think you mean PDF24 ([www.snipca.com/37711](http://www.snipca.com/37711)), which Will Stapley recommended in Issue 603 (page 20). We get several similar requests every fortnight, so we've decided to answer them in the Letters page in every issue. Here are a couple more.

✉ You suggested an alternative to Windows' Sticky Notes in a recent issue. Was it called Stickies?

Roger Hearn

**CA SAYS** Yes it was. We mentioned it in Issue 599's 'Remove All Windows Junk' Cover Feature (page 53). Download it from [www.snipca.com/37165](http://www.snipca.com/37165).

✉ Can you help an 80-year-old find an article that answered a reader's question on the best program for typing speech?

Trevor Boam

**CA SAYS** It appeared on page 19, Issue 605. We recommended options for Windows and Google Drive (on PCs), and Google Keep for phones and tablets. If you can't remember in which issue a particular program or tip appeared, email us and we'll let you know.



order which I know is going to be a one-off. I can count the number of websites that have a 'guest' login facility on the fingers of one hand. Why can't this be made compulsory? It would simplify matters no end.

David Buckley

My wife and I share a phone and it doesn't get a great deal of use. We also have separate savings accounts with the same building society. Recently, the society informed us that to access our accounts online we would need our own individual mobile numbers. I pointed out that the interest they were paying us wouldn't cover the cost of buying an otherwise unneeded second phone. I proposed an alternative solution. One – if not both – of us would move our accounts elsewhere. I did not get a reply. Their loss.

Trevor Bushell

### Laptop manufacturers: don't neglect keyboards

I have a Dell 17in 9700 i9 laptop and it's a powerful and hi-spec machine that works hard and has been reliable so far.

But here's my gripe: I've just bought from eBay a Toshiba Satellite 17in with Windows XP because I have to recover some old Visual Basic work and bring it into Visual Studio. The keyboard on this Toshiba is an absolute delight and knocks spots off the Dell (both pictured below). It even has a proper numeric keypad! Of course, however, it's as slow as a tortoise in use.

The keys on the more modern Dell laptop are poor and result in a high error rate when typing, to the point where I normally use a plug-in keyboard.

So, here's my message to laptop makers: please don't sacrifice the quality of keyboards to get the tiniest reduction in weight and thickness that you think we want, because we curse

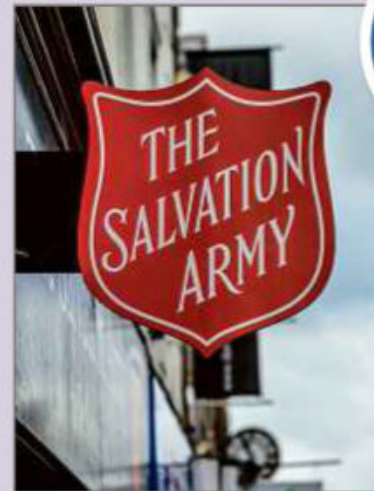
## STAR LETTER

### Our Salvation Army meetings worked well on Zoom

I'm writing in response to recent letters about how confident older people feel using computers. Last year, during lockdown, I wasn't sure about hosting our Salvation Army Sunday worship session on Zoom. Most of our congregation are over 70, which made me cautious.

However, I made enquiries and received a very positive response. Many of the folk who I believed had a mobile phone for emergencies also had a tablet or laptop that they used regularly for talking to family members and watching 'old time' movies. All they needed from me were the meeting details. In one case, I was asked to contact a lady's family carer to enable her to join in while the meals were being prepared.

When we finally made it back into our hall for real services, just a few weeks ago, a request was made to keep



the Zoom feed going for people who might not be able to make it every Sunday. Without *Computeractive's* guides on using such software, I know many church fellowships

around the UK would be worse off. Thank you all and keep the good advice coming.

Morvyn Finch

**CA SAYS** We suspect Morvyn's experience will chime with a lot of readers. Many organisations that switched to video meetings during lockdown are continuing to offer this option for those who can't or don't want to attend actual meetings. Please let us know of any examples you have.



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

this when trying to concentrate to get our work right!

Mike Buckland

### YouTube is turning into AdTube

Has anybody else noticed that there are more adverts on YouTube these days, and it's becoming harder to avoid them? As well as the ads on the main channel pages, which seem to be getting bigger, there are now usually one

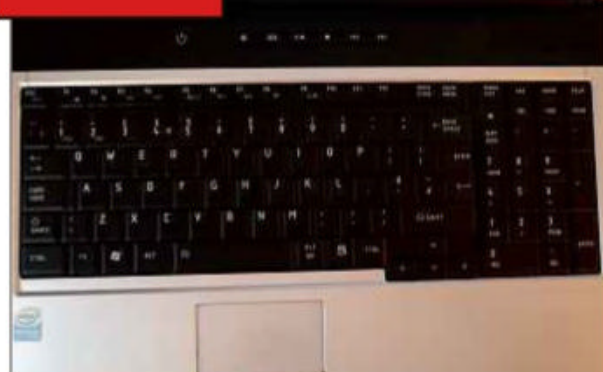
or two before the videos start, plus about every five minutes or so during the video.

The creators of videos are now also including their own adverts or promotions from their sponsors – not just at the beginning, but also halfway through. Some of these seem to be getting longer and longer. Maybe we should rename YouTube and call it AdTube instead!

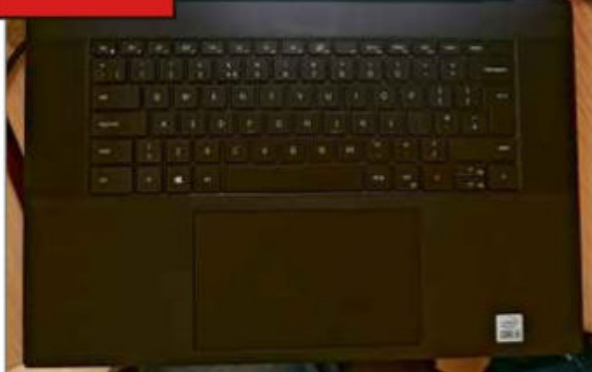
Michael Albin

**CA SAYS** Michael's not alone in complaining about the sudden increase in YouTube adverts. Several *Computeractive* staff have noticed it too, as has reader Terry Gibbon who in Issue 607 (page 42) recommends switching to the Brave browser (<https://brave.com>), which seems to block all YouTube ads. We'll have more on Brave, and other alternatives to Chrome and Edge, in a forthcoming issue.

**TOSHIBA**



**DELL**







We stand up for your legal rights

## Are Tyl and Smartpay covered by Section 75?

LEAD  
CASE



**Q** In Issue 607, you explained how buyers lose Section 75 protection if they use PayPal to buy goods. You told us to bear this in mind when using other payment services such as Worldpay. But what about services such as NatWest's Tyl ([www.tylbynatwest.com](http://www.tylbynatwest.com), pictured) and Barclays' Smartpay ([www.snipca.com/38335](http://www.snipca.com/38335))?



George Dunston

buyer through the credit-card company and on to the seller. This chain is broken if a third-party payment provider – for example, PayPal – is used. This also applies to Worldpay and Sage Pay, though these often run in the background without the buyer realising they've used them, meaning they don't know they're not protected by Section 75 until it's too late.

**A** George has touched on a grey and extremely tricky area of law when buying goods and services online, over the phone or from a catalogue.

To recap, Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act makes the bank issuing a credit card "jointly and severally responsible for any breach of contract or misrepresentation by a retailer or trader". So, if you've bought faulty goods with a credit card and the seller is refusing to refund you, the bank must step in.

However, for Section 75 to apply there must be a direct connection from the

But Tyl and Smartpay are different. These are payment services provided to retailers for processing purchases, not aimed at buyers for sending money. The Financial Ombudsman Service told us that neither service should break the buyer-provider-seller link.

However, that "should" makes us nervous. We'd have preferred something more concrete, and feel there's not enough clarity in this area of law. If you find yourself in a situation where you believe Section 75 applies but was denied by your bank, file a claim with the Financial Ombudsman Services: [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk).

CASE CLOSED

## Can I get refund for damaged desk?

**Q** On 8 March I bought a desk from Furniture@Work ([www.furniture-work.co.uk](http://www.furniture-work.co.uk)), which arrived damaged. I contacted customer service and was told someone would be in touch. Two months later, I've heard nothing. What's going on?

Pierre Reynaud

**A** We emailed and phoned Furniture@Work and have hopefully resolved this situation. After two months Pierre just wants his money back, which he's entitled to under the Consumer Rights Act. The retailer has now emailed him to arrange a refund. Apparently the desk's manufacturer had asked the retailer whether Pierre wanted a replacement or refund, though this wasn't passed on to him.

Incidentally, while we got help on the phone, our email was met with more resistance. Companies don't have to tell us anything, and most use data-protection laws, legitimately, to avoid revealing specific info about a case. They're more likely to respond if we send an email from customers allowing us to mediate on their behalf, so please include this permission when contacting us.

CASE CLOSED

### CASE UPDATE

## PayPal's 180 days rescues eBay buyer



Here's a question that regular Consumeractive readers shouldn't find too difficult: what does eBay offer for 30 days that PayPal offers for 180? Answer: buyer protection. It means that if you miss eBay's deadline for a refund, you have another five months to try to get one via PayPal (assuming that's how you paid).

Reader Michael Oxlade has reason to be thankful for this. As we explained in Issue 607, an eBay seller refused to refund him for

a faulty gas lighter because more than 30 days had passed since purchase.

The seller was probably thinking of how long eBay's Money Back guarantee lasts. What they clearly don't realise is that consumer law overrides buyer-protection schemes run by retailers (and warranties from manufacturers). If a product is faulty, buyers always have six years (five in Scotland) to claim a refund, regardless of the schemes and warranties offered.

Happily, Michael won't have to wait that



long. He took our advice to make a claim through PayPal, and received his money back. Of course, had he missed PayPal's 180-day deadline, he would still have been entitled to a refund under the Consumer Rights Act – though because six months had passed since purchase he would have had to prove the fault was inherent, and wasn't the result of damage or fair wear and tear.



Contact us so we can investigate your case

✉ **Email:** [consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk)  
Please include your name, phone number and address.

## Can you get Visa to respond to my claim?

**Q** I paid over £2,500 for some very technical and rare audio equipment that requires computer control, but it turned out to be faulty. The eBay seller refuses to give me a refund and so has PayPal. I'm now trying to claim the money back from Visa, who I used to pay for it, but it's not responding to my online claim. Can you help?

Steve Bullman

**A** Steve's caught between a rock and a hard place. He isn't protected by consumer law because the eBay seller is a private

individual. He's also finding it difficult to provide acceptable proof that the equipment is faulty. He says he can quote the view of an expert on an online forum that the kit is faulty, though this counts as hearsay and is no substitute for testing and written documentation from a qualified technician.

This may have been why PayPal refused his request for a refund, and it may also discourage Visa from doing so. Steve could consider suing the seller in the small claims court, which allows hearsay



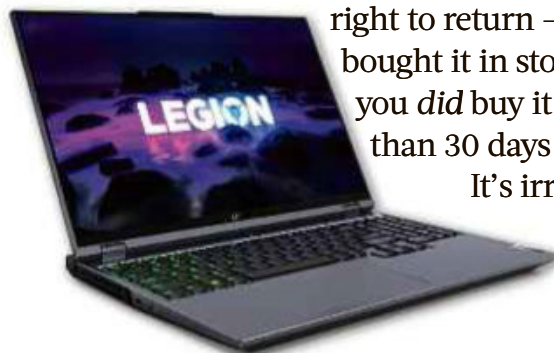
evidence, but it's unlikely to help because he hasn't found anyone else with the same problem.

But we don't want Steve to have to go down that route. Instead we've sent Visa details of his claim and asked it to consider a refund under its online shopping protection ([www.snipca.com/38339](http://www.snipca.com/38339)). It told us it examines claims on a case-by-case basis, and is checking whether purchases from a private individual are covered.

**CASE ONGOING**

## Can Currys insist on a credit note, not refund?

**Q** Less than a week after buying a Lenovo Legion laptop (pictured) from Currys PC World, I found that the advertised battery life of up to eight hours is incorrect. It actually lasts for only four hours. Lenovo couldn't fix this and Currys said the promise was



**A** Retailers can offer a credit note if there's nothing wrong with the item and you have no other legal right to return – such as if you bought it in store (not online), or you *did* buy it online but more than 30 days have passed.

It's irrelevant now anyway because Stephen has since told us that

only “up to” eight hours. It said I can have a credit note to spend in its store, but not a refund. Can Currys do this?

Stephen Kirk


Currys has changed its mind, and has promised to refund him. That's just as well, because we think it's absurd that Currys claimed a four-hour battery life is covered by the term “up to eight hours”.

Clearly it's a matter of opinion – and we were rather looking forward to giving Currys ours – but the Consumer Rights Act does cover such subjective cases, allowing customers to return items that are “not as described”. This would surely cover a battery that doesn't last more than half of its “up to” life. Stephen should have used this argument had Currys not seen sense.

**CASE CLOSED**

### CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

## Palicomp's 'world record' email response

 I've subscribed to your magazine for several years and when I wanted a new computer I settled for a Palicomp Mercury (pictured) because it has been your recommended PC in your Buy It section for over a year.

We were very pleased with it until it developed a display fault. When I tried their helpline I found it was closed because they were short-staffed due to the pandemic.



So I emailed their support team and had an answer back within seven minutes, which must be a world record.

After an exchange of emails we diagnosed a faulty RAM stick. I posted it back to them and they dispatched a new one within a day. There were problems with their courier, which delayed delivery for a few days, but after fitting the new stick the problem appears to have been solved. Many thanks to Palicomp for their prompt response.

Mike Whitehead

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

### Contact Palicomp

- **Email** [support@palicomp.co.uk](mailto:support@palicomp.co.uk)
- **Live chat** [www.palicomp.co.uk/contact-us](http://www.palicomp.co.uk/contact-us)
- **Phone** 01270 898078



# Grow Your Family Tree

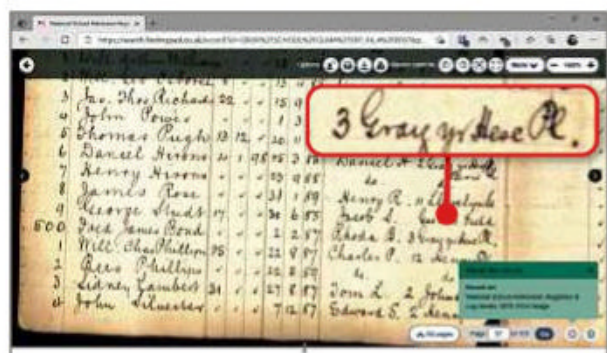


Studying education records for ancestors can reveal more details than you might think. **Nick Peers** explains how to...

## Track down school admissions records

**S**chool admission records provide useful information about our ancestors' early lives. They can reveal their birth date (handy if you can't track down a birth certificate) and the date when they began or ended their education at a particular school. They also reveal their father's name and home address during that period.

Records started to be kept in 1870, when the Government made provisions for a national education system. Ten years later, another act made school compulsory for all children aged five to 10. Even then, truancy was common – in the 1890s as many as 18 per cent of children never set foot in a school, so don't be surprised if some ancestors don't appear in these searches even if their area is covered by the records.



Check the original document as well as the transcript – it often contains additional info such as your ancestor's home address

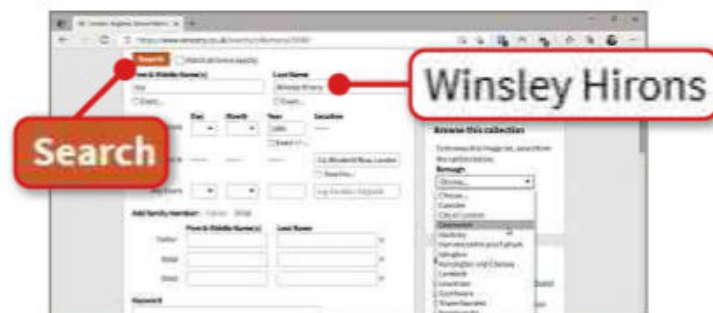
### Search the National Schools Register

The most comprehensive set of records covering English and Welsh schools can be found in the National Schools Register (1870-1914), which you can search for free at Find My Past ([www.findmypast.co.uk/school-registers](http://www.findmypast.co.uk/school-registers)). They've been collated from dozens of record sets held in offices and archives across the country, but it's not a complete set – entire counties such as Essex and Somerset are missing, for example. To make sure you don't waste time looking for records that aren't there, read the 'Where have these school records come from?' section in the FAQs of the School Registers page.

Once done, scroll down to the bottom of the page to type your ancestor's name into the search box along with their birth date, then click Search. You'll need to sign in or register for a free account to view the search results. If you want to view the records themselves – either as transcripts or the original scanned image (see screenshot left) – you'll need a Plus subscription (£12.99 per month, or £119.99 for a year).

### Visit Ancestry to fill in the gaps

Some of the gaps in the National Schools Register are filled in on Ancestry's website,



Enter your ancestor's name in Ancestry then click Search at the top

specifically London boroughs (1840-1918) and Somerset, plus Perthshire and Fife in Scotland. Visit [www.snipca.com/38280](http://www.snipca.com/38280) and click the green 'View all in Card Catalogue' link on the right, followed by the collection you wish to search. Finally, enter your ancestor's details and click Search (see screenshot above).

Sadly, the two Scottish counties are as good as it gets for those researching ancestors north of the border – records from other counties haven't yet been digitised. Irish ancestors who attended school up to the outbreak of World War I are better served by Find My Past's separate National Schools Register collection for Ireland – search this at [www.snipca.com/38288](http://www.snipca.com/38288) (again, a Plus subscription is required to access transcripts and images).

These national registers aren't the only educational records held online. Individual schools – particularly fee-paying ones – can also be found online at Ancestry, Find My Past, and The Genealogist ([www.thegenealogist.co.uk](http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk) – Gold subscription required, £38.95 for three months).

The Family Search Wiki holds plenty of useful background information about schooling in the years before 1870. There are dedicated sections for each of the home nations: England ([www.snipca.com/38289](http://www.snipca.com/38289)), Wales ([www.snipca.com/38290](http://www.snipca.com/38290)), Scotland ([www.snipca.com/38293](http://www.snipca.com/38293)) and Northern Ireland/Republic ([www.snipca.com/38294](http://www.snipca.com/38294)).

## Your Genealogy Problems Solved

Is there a quick and easy way I can check for any key missing information from my family tree?

Frank Turner

If you load your tree into FTAnalyzer (<https://ftanalyzer.com>) and switch to the Errors/Fixes tab, you'll see another row of tabs offering five types of check: data errors (such as births recorded after the

mother's death), duplicate entries, so-called 'loose' births and deaths (where the specific dates aren't recorded), and a summary of all 'loose' info. Work through each tab to track down the errors and fix them manually in your main family history program.

✉ Have a genealogy question for Nick? Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk) with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.



Eternal Spring of the Mind by Elena Paraskeva



# AFFINITY Photo

The fastest, smoothest, most powerful professional photo editor for macOS, Windows and iPad

Experience the new way to edit photos with a **10 day free trial**: [affinity.serif.com/photo](https://affinity.serif.com/photo)



APPLE DESIGN  
AWARD WINNERS

Editors' Choice



worldwide customer rating

**50%  
discount  
until June  
30th**



# Best Free Software

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

## VIDEO TOOL

### OBS Studio 27.0

[www.snipca.com/38495](http://www.snipca.com/38495)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

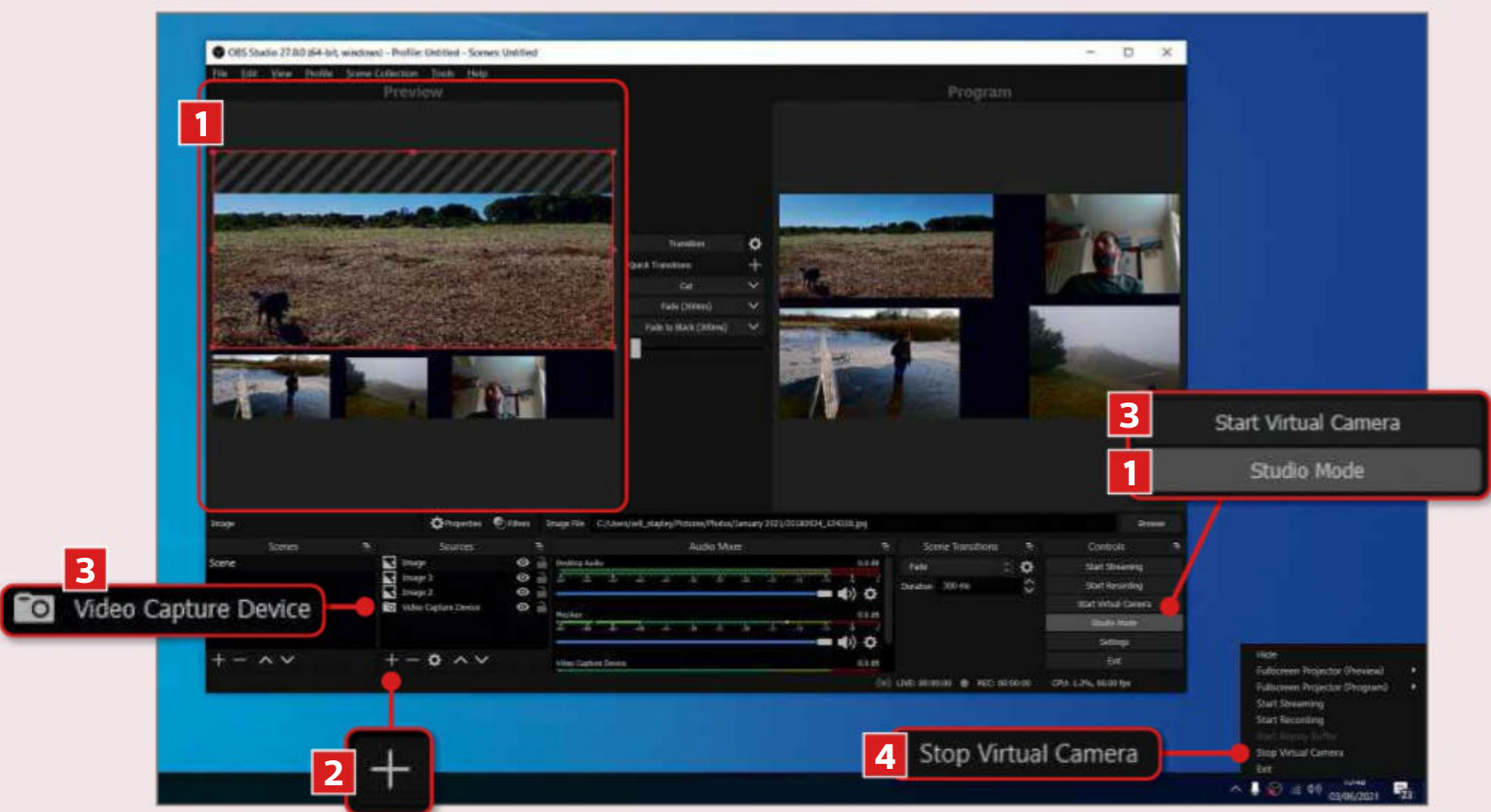
OBS Studio is a powerful **open-source** broadcasting tool that lets you record and stream video from multiple sources, such as your webcam, a browser window or files on your computer. You can arrange your feeds from the various sources and adjust their size in the Preview window on the left. Once you're happy, click Transition to move the video to the live Program window on the right. This live feed can then be broadcast to services such as YouTube Live (click Live Stream), recorded to a file on your computer (Start Recording) or even used as a **virtual camera** (Start Virtual Camera).

The virtual camera option is ideal for video chats because it lets you display the feed from your webcam alongside other sources. It's a more powerful alternative to the screen-sharing options in video-chat tools such as Skype and Zoom, and is perfect for showing your latest photos/videos or even run an

online quiz. Version 27 adds a shortcut to turn the virtual camera on and off from the system tray.

Once you've added the various sources for your video, you can drag and drop them into the Sources pane to rearrange how they appear (those at the top will be placed above the ones at the bottom). You can also switch their visibility on and off (in other words show or hide them) by clicking the eye icon next to the relevant entry. This new version lets you use transitions when showing/hiding a source – right-click a filter then select from the options in the Show Transition and Hide Transition menus.

Finally, there are now Undo (press Ctrl+Z) and Redo (Ctrl+Y) options, so if you regret any edit you can restore things to how they were.



**1** Click 'Studio Mode' to bring up the Preview window, which you can use to arrange your various video sources before broadcasting them.

**2** To add a new source to your video, click the '+' button in the Sources pane, then select from the several options available.

**3** Click this button to start the virtual camera, then select OBS Virtual Camera as the camera in your chosen video-chat tool. To add your webcam to the video, add Video Capture Device in the Sources pane.

**4** You can now quickly cut the feed from the OBS virtual camera. Right-click the OBS icon in the system tray, then select Stop Video Camera.





## IMAGE VIEWER

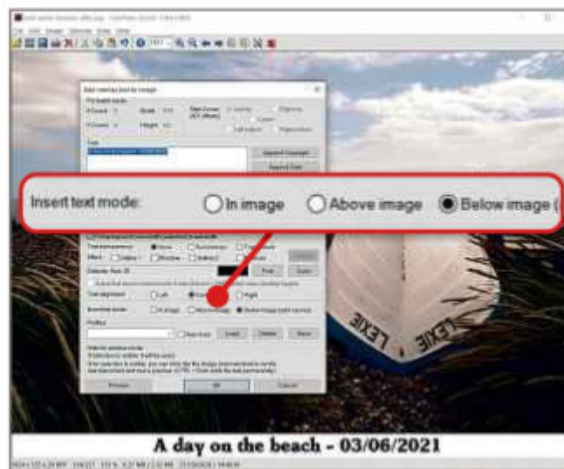
### IrfanView 4.58

[www.snipca.com/38499](http://www.snipca.com/38499)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

Version 4.58 of IrfanView isn't a major update, but it does include one feature we particularly like: the ability to add captions above or below images. When you add captions in this way, IrfanView will

expand the canvas of your image so your photo won't be cropped nor obstructed by the caption. To add a caption, load your image then open the Edit menu and select 'Insert text...' (or press Ctrl+T). Enter your caption in the Text box at the top, then select the text style and colour. Finally, to set the caption to appear above or below your photo, choose the appropriate option in the 'Insert text mode' section (see screenshot). Click OK to add your caption.



## SYSTEM TOOL

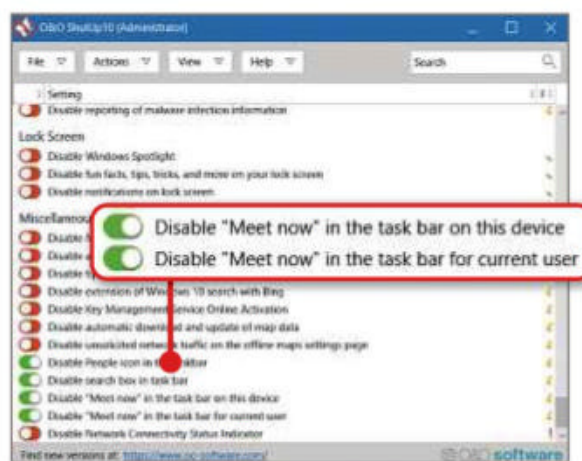
### O&O ShutUp10 1.8.1421

[www.snipca.com/38500](http://www.snipca.com/38500)

**What you need:** Windows 10

Microsoft is slowly getting better at letting us turn off the Windows features we don't want or use, but it still scatters the settings to do so across all manner of different windows. O&O ShutUp10 lets you turn them off

from a single, scrollable window. This version adds support for the latest Windows Feature update (version 21H1), along with settings to disable the taskbar's 'Meet now' button that lets you quickly launch a video chat via Skype (see screenshot). You can either browse through the list of settings or use the top-right search box. When you find one you want to turn off, click the slider so it turns green. Before making any changes, it's worth creating a **system restore point** from the Actions menu, allowing you to roll back settings if needed.



## WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

### What can I use to check for duplicate files?

Q

Can you recommend a tool that will tell me which files in specific folders on two separate drives are duplicates?

Andrew Walker

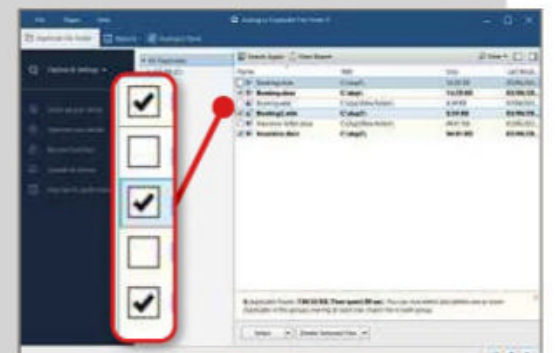
A

The easiest tool to use is Auslogics Duplicate File Finder (DFF, [www.snipca.com/38540](http://www.snipca.com/38540)) – just take care during installation to avoid sending data to Auslogics about how you use the program (untick the 'Send anonymous info...' box) and decline the offers to install other Auslogics tools.

When you launch the program, use the drive and folder tree to specify which folders you want DFF to check for duplicates. Click the Next button at the bottom to continue through the installation process, changing settings such as the type of files you want to include in the search (narrowing it down helps speed up the scanning process). By default, DFF will ignore files with identical contents if they have different file names or **timestamps** – to prevent this, tick the Ignore File Names and Ignore File Dates boxes. At the end of the installation, you can choose what you want DFF to do when it finds duplicates – for example, send them to the recycle bin or delete them permanently (it will only do this when you tell it to delete the files).

Click 'Search' to start the scan. The results page will show all files that have duplicates along with their locations. Tick those you want to remove (see screenshot), then click Delete Selected File.

For more control over the search, try AllDup ([www.snipca.com/38541](http://www.snipca.com/38541) – click the grey 'Server #1' button). Once you've told it which drives and folders to scan, click the Search Method and Search Options buttons to fine-tune the process, including scanning for files with names that start with specific characters. Next, click 'Start Search' (top left). Although powerful, AllDup has a somewhat daunting layout, so you may need a little time to get to grips with the multitude of buttons and options it provides.



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



## HOW I USE...

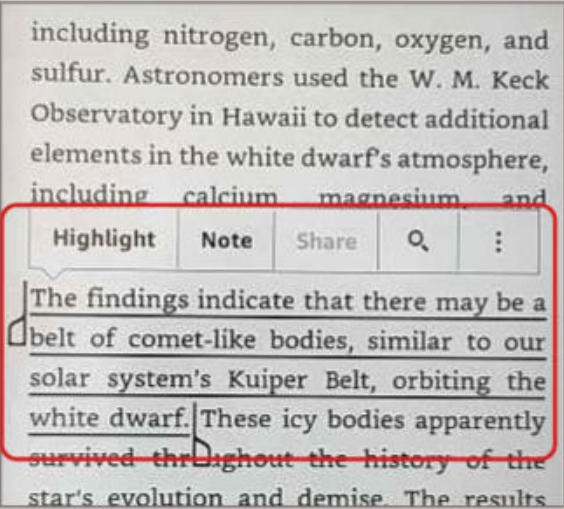


# Kindle bookmarks

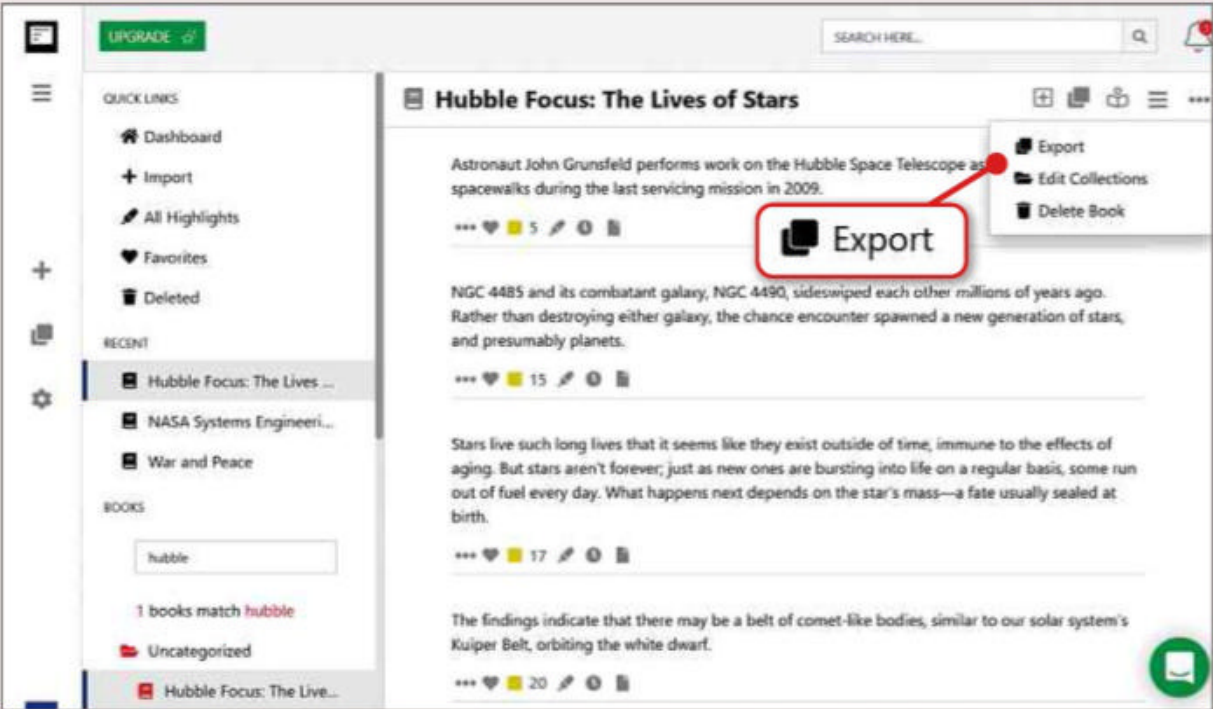
**Will Stapley** reveals the free online tool that lets him bypass Amazon's ludicrous restrictions

Ebooks may not have the same appeal as their paper-based counterparts (you can't beat the feel and smell of an old book), but at least the bookmarks I use with them don't fall out whenever I go to read one. It's one of many reasons I love my Amazon Kindle (I have the basic model, which costs £70 from [www.snipca.com/38452](http://www.snipca.com/38452)). As well as letting me take my personal library with me wherever I go, I can add as many bookmarks as I like so I never lose my place.

I simply tap the top-right corner of the screen, then the '+' button to add a bookmark on the current page or jump to an existing one. I can also mark sections using what Kindle calls 'clippings', which let you highlight text (the digital equivalent of a yellow marker pen) and make notes (memos added using the on-screen keyboard).



You can highlight specific passages on your Kindle as you read



View your Kindle notes and highlights and export them to PDF and other formats using Clippings.io

I used this feature most recently while reading *Hubble Focus: The Lives of Stars* – a free ebook released last month by Nasa (you can browse its impressive range of free ebooks at [www.snipca.com/38454](http://www.snipca.com/38454)). I simply dragged the start and end markers of any section I wanted to research later online (see screenshot left), then tapped Highlight.

Amazon offers a web service (at <https://read.amazon.co.uk>) that lets me view my clippings from any computer. This is ideal for following up on sections I've highlighted, but it shows clippings only for ebooks that I've bought from Amazon. The company clearly wants to discourage me from getting ebooks

from anywhere but the Kindle Store. However, there is a workaround.

The Kindle stores all clippings in a simple text file called 'My clippings.txt'. However, they're listed in the order in which they were created, making them difficult to navigate. This is where Clippings.io (create a free account at [www.clippings.io](http://www.clippings.io)) comes to the rescue.

I connect my Kindle to my computer, then log into Clippings.io and select '+ Import' from the menu on the left, followed by File Import, then Browse. From here, I navigate to the Documents folder on my Kindle, then select 'My clippings.txt'. Finally I click the green View In Explorer button, then click Open Navigation (three horizontal lines, top right) to browse my clippings by book or by using search terms.

It even lets me export everything to a PDF by clicking the three dots (top right), then Export (see screenshot above) – though free accounts are limited to 100 words per highlight.

## WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE ON KINDLE

As well as notes and highlights, I often fill my ebooks with bookmarks. I can easily view all my bookmarks (as explained above), but the Kindle's naming system doesn't make it easy to identify them. Each bookmark is

labelled 'Loc' followed by a sequence of numbers that tells the Kindle precisely where in the book it relates to. The chapter is also displayed, but an option to rename bookmarks would make them much easier to navigate.



# Named & Shamed



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

## WARNING: JUNK AHEAD

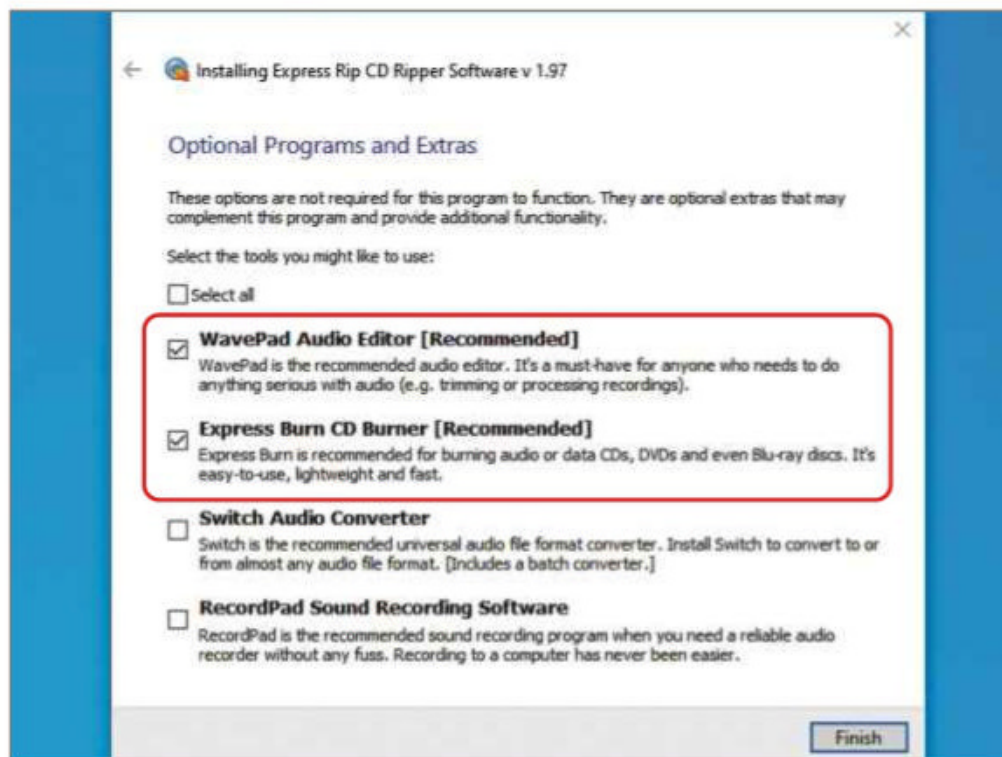
### Junk offender: Express Rip CD Ripper



Search the web for a CD-ripping tool and you're likely to see a link for Express Rip CD Ripper among the first few results. It boasts that it's "the fastest CD ripper in the world" – ideal if you have a big stack of discs to digitise. It also claims to be one of the most stable, easy-to-use and comprehensive CD rippers available", and is free for non-commercial use. Sounds like a pretty good deal, right?

Except that Express Rip is made by NCH Software. I've encountered tools from this Australian company before and they tend to follow a similar pattern. Install one and you'll invariably discover that a second has been added to your computer (one that you almost certainly didn't want). It's called NCH Suite and clutters up both your desktop and your Start menu.

It's basically a digital storefront for NCH's other software – a way to try to get



Express Rip might be the "fastest CD ripper in the world", but it also adds these two tools to your machine

you to buy the company's products. At no point during installation are you provided with the chance to opt out of installing this.

Not only does Express Rip install NCH Suite, but it also attempts to trick you into adding even more junk – namely WavePad Audio Editor and Express Burn CD Burner (see screenshot) – via a screen of pre-ticked setup options. On top of

that, I noticed a nasty clause in NCH's licence terms, granting it "anonymised collection of usage statistics" – again without any way to opt out.

So, basically, Express Rip will fill your computer with junk and, in return, it'll monitor how you use the program. Suddenly that deal isn't sounding so good after all, is it?

### WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

#### WHAT THEY SAY

Microsoft

[www.snipca.com/38430](http://www.snipca.com/38430)

"Instead of bringing a product called Windows 10X to market in 2021 like we originally intended, we are leveraging learnings from our journey thus far and accelerating the integration of key foundational 10X technology into other parts of Windows and products at the company."

#### WHAT THEY MEAN

Our key 'learning' is that jargon disguises the time and money we wasted on an operating system nobody wanted.

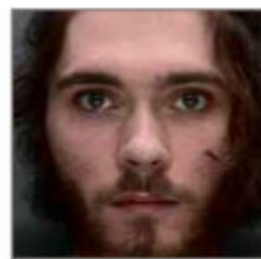


### JONATHAN'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

## Teige Gallagher

It takes a lot to impress me, but I've been genuinely blown away by the NHS's Covid vaccine rollout. It's a truly awe-inspiring effort that's made all the more impressive when you consider how many scammers have been attempting to take advantage of it.

Take Teige Gallagher, for instance. This 21-year-old Londoner is the youthful mastermind behind a nationwide scam aiming to steal thousands of people's financial details



via bogus text messages claiming to be from the NHS. They linked to an equally fake website, designed to look like an official GOV.UK page, which asked victims to enter personal information and bank details so they could verify their eligibility for the vaccine.

Thankfully, we won't need a vaccine to protect us from Gallagher's vile scams. He pleaded guilty to fraud last month and is now serving four years, three months behind bars.





**MINI PC** | £640 from Comet [www.snipca.com/38381](http://www.snipca.com/38381)

## Intel NUC11 Pro

### No mighty mouse

Intel has launched a new range of mini PCs in its NUC (Next Unit of Computing) range. These are consistently some of the most impressive small computers around, with surprising levels of power crammed into feature-packed enclosures. The latest models are among the smallest Intel has ever produced. The Core i5 model reviewed here has 8GB of memory and a 500GB SSD, though if you shop around you can get a choice of configurations. Some retailers even let you configure your own – try Simply NUC (<https://simplynuc.co.uk>) if you already own some key components that you want to keep using or if you want to beef up your model of choice with more RAM or a larger SSD.

“It has a wide range of connections and can be upgraded, but struggles to do more than the basics”

The NUC 11 Pro case is incredibly compact at just 117mm wide, 112mm deep and 37mm tall, and it weighs 504g. It's small enough to be secreted almost anywhere on a typical desk, but can also be connected to the back of a monitor, if it has an industry-standard VESA mount, which is normally used to hang screens



on walls. The sides and lid are made of plastic, while the base and underlying core are metal, and build quality is robust throughout.

In our tests the Core i5-1145G7 processor provided faultless performance in Windows, as long as you stick to everyday tasks such as working with office software, emailing and web browsing. When handling these type of low-resource tasks, the PC remains virtually silent. Under more pressure its fans whirr into action, but no more than you'd hear from a laptop.

It struggled to do much more than the basics, however, with poor multi-core performance in our tests. Here the Intel chip fell behind similarly priced rivals containing Apple and AMD processors, namely the M1 Mac Mini (see our review, Issue 600, [www.snipca.com/37282](http://www.snipca.com/37282)) and the Asus Mini PC PN50 (see Issue 593 and alternative, below right).

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Quad-core Intel Core i5-1145G7 processor • Intel Iris XE graphics • 8GB memory • 500GB SSD • 2x USB-C ports • 3x USB 3.0 ports • 1x USB 2.0 ports • 2x HDMI ports • Wi-Fi 6 • Windows 10 Home • 37x117x112mm (HxWxD) • 504g • Three-year warranty [www.snipca.com/38381](http://www.snipca.com/38381)

Being an 11th-generation Intel chip, it features built-in Iris Xe graphics hardware. This configuration provides the necessary muscle to play videos, carry out basic photo editing and play some undemanding games, but it's not powerful enough for more serious gaming.

The NUC may be tiny, but it's packed with ports. On the front it has two USB 3.0 ports (pictured above). There's another USB 3.0 and a USB 2.0 port on the back, along with two USB-C, two HDMI and an Ethernet port (pictured below left). Wireless connectivity is via dual-band Wi-Fi 6 and Bluetooth 5.1.

The biggest omission is probably dedicated audio outputs, though you can play sound via HDMI if you use a monitor with speakers, or through a USB device. It's possible to open the case and upgrade components. There are four screws that hold it all together, which are easily removed to provide access to the memory and the storage.



**VERDICT** For such a small PC it has a surprising number of connectivity options, but its performance is lacklustre. However, if space is at a premium, this is one of the smallest PCs around.

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Asus Mini PC PN50 £479 The AMD processors in the PN50 range ensure better performance at a lower price





**LAPTOP** | £1,003 from Honor [www.hihonor.com](http://www.hihonor.com)

# Honor MagicBook 14 (2021)

## Old body, new brains

Eagle-eyed readers will know that we've reviewed an Honor MagicBook 14 before (see Issue 580). However, Honor has just refreshed its line-up, replacing the previous generation's AMD processors with the latest Intel alternatives.

The new model is available in two versions, powered by 11th-generation Intel Core i5 or Core i7 processors. We're reviewing the £1,030 i7 model, while the i5 model costs £730. At the time of writing, these new models weren't listed on Honor's website, so we can't link to them directly, but we expect them to appear by the time you read this.

Build-wise, this is indistinguishable from its predecessor, which has its plus and minus points. The aluminium alloy body has been retained, so it remains a solid machine. It's also compact (323x215x15.9mm), light (1.25kg) and looks very smart.

## “Benefits from improved screen and better components”

However, it was already falling behind its rivals in terms of ports, and the lack of expansion in this area isn't ideal. There's only one **USB-C** port (which is also used for charging and connecting secondary monitors), one **USB 3.0** port and one **USB 2.0** port. Wireless connectivity is better, though, with Wi-Fi 6 and Bluetooth 5.1 built in.

One other lingering downside is that the webcam is still located in the same place. Rather than sitting at the top of the screen, Honor hides it among the function buttons on the top row of the keyboard. This is good for privacy, because it can be pushed into the keyboard when not in



use. However, the low angle is unflattering, giving people you're talking to an unappealing view up your nostrils.

On paper, the new MagicBook has an identical screen to the previous version: a 14in **IPS** model, with a resolution of 1920x1080 pixels. However, our tests showed that brightness levels and colour accuracy were much improved. There's a slight drop in contrast, however.

The big changes have been inside. The old model had an AMD Ryzen 5 3500U processor with Radeon **Vega 8** graphics and 8GB of **RAM**. The 2021 model has a quad-core Intel Core i7-1165G7 processor, integrated Iris XE graphics and 16GB of RAM. This configuration makes for a much more powerful laptop.

It has more than enough power to chew through everyday computing tasks, and you can even run reasonably demanding games such as Doom, as long as you're prepared to knock the resolution down to 1280x720 in order to achieve 60fps. Battery life has also been improved by about three hours, lasting 11 hours 16 minutes in our video-playback tests.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Quad-core Intel Core i7-1165G7 processor • 16GB RAM • Intel Iris XE graphics • 14in 60Hz 1920x1080-pixel screen • 500GB SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.1 • 1x USB-C port • 1x USB 3.0 port • 1x USB 2.0 port • 1x 3.5mm audio jack • 1x HDMI port • Windows 10 Home • 15.9x323x215mm (HxWxD) • 1.25kg • One-year warranty [www.hihonor.com](http://www.hihonor.com)

### 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](http://www.expertreviews.co.uk)) and IT Pro ([www.itpro.com](http://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.

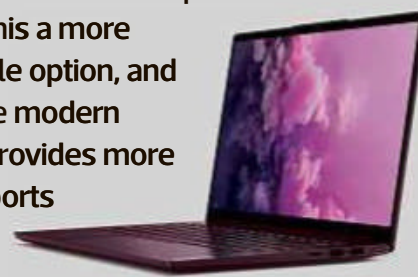
### PRICES

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

**VERDICT** A decent if unambitious upgrade to one of our favourite laptops of last year, though the price hike makes this less of a bargain



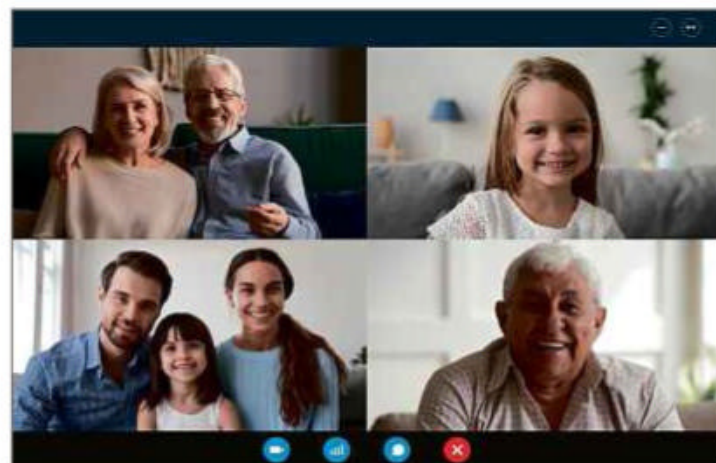
**ALTERNATIVE** Lenovo's Yoga Slim 7 £799 The AMD processor makes this a more affordable option, and the more modern design provides more USB-C ports





## The best Full HD webcams

Lockdown made us all appreciate the importance of having a good webcam, so you can have slick video-chats with friends, family and colleagues. Here we test five of the best Full HD models you can buy



If you spent much of the past year or so video-chatting with friends, family and work colleagues, you'll know whether your current webcam is any good or not. Those with a sub-standard model should consider buying one of the alternatives that simply plug into a USB port on your PC.

You can't tell how well a camera will perform just from its specifications, so we've put five 1080p (Full HD) models to the test, to check whether they

capture sharp, colourful and focused video.

There are a few specifications that are worth considering, though. The field of view is the angle that the webcam can capture.

A small field of view is fine if you're likely to be using it alone and want your face to fill the frame. However, if you video chat while sitting in a larger group of people (with children, for example), a wider field of view will stop you having

to squeeze together.

It's also worth considering the software. Some cameras connect directly to your PC's video-chat tools, which is great if you're looking for no-fuss basics. Others have their own software for tweaking settings and making recordings, which is better if you want control over how you look.

£71 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38385](http://www.snipca.com/38385)

### Logitech C925e Business Webcam



With its drab grey exterior the Logitech C925e doesn't look particularly special. However, switch it on and start a video call, and the difference in quality is clear. Like the more expensive C930e (reviewed right) it does a fantastic job of adjusting itself automatically to get your picture looking perfect.

It offers a 78-degree field of view, which is adequate for everyday video chats with one person in front of the camera.

The 90-degree view of the C930e is better if you want to huddle with several people or show more background.

The C925e is wide (126mm), with space on either side of the lens dedicated to two large microphones. They're no match for a dedicated headset, but they're good enough for family calls.

**RATING**  
★★★★★

£109 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38387](http://www.snipca.com/38387)

### AVerMedia PW315



The AVerMedia PW315 is one of the more expensive webcams in this group test, but it's worth the money if you need the best features. It has a 95-degree field of view and streams 1080p resolution at up to 60fps, making calls look smoother. Every other webcam we've reviewed here has a limit of 30fps.

Image quality is solid, with fine detail and vibrant colours, though it isn't any better than the cheaper Logitech C925e.

The software, however, is superb and can use the webcam's wide angle to track you if you move, making calls far more dynamic.

The stand is also impressive, letting you twist the camera through 360 degrees, while the two side-mounted mics include noise reduction if your surroundings are noisy.

**RATING**  
★★★★★



£110 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38389](http://www.snipca.com/38389)

## Logitech C930e Business Webcam

The Logitech C930e has an unmatched ability to capture details and naturalistic colours, working hard even in poor light. The main benefit over the C925e (see left) is its wider 90-degree field of view, which means more people can sit in front of the camera

without huddling up. If you happen to be demonstrating or presenting something, it will help you include more in the frame.

The Logitech software is effective for fixing the picture quality but it doesn't have as many automated features as

the AVerMedia PW315.

You can, however, use the camera's 4x digital zoom to take control of what people can see.

The biggest problem is the fixed base, which makes it hard to point it in different directions.



**RATING**



£33 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38388](http://www.snipca.com/38388)

## Jelly Comb W10 1080p HD Webcam Pro

The colour accuracy of this Jelly Comb webcam is as good as we've seen for less than £50. However, this level of excellence isn't replicated in its autofocus feature, which zooms in and out when it's seeking the right focus and

becomes annoying if you aren't sitting still.

With an 80-degree field of view, it strikes a sensible balance between capturing your environment and keeping you centre stage. Its two built-in mics do a fine job

of capturing your voice, but because they sit one on top of the other, they don't work in stereo.

Sensibly, Jelly Comb has also built in a privacy cover, which is cheap and plasticky, but it works well.



**RATING**



£50 from Acer [www.snipca.com/38391](http://www.snipca.com/38391)

## Acer ACRO10

This is a frustrating webcam. In some ways, it excels with pleasantly vibrant colours and an impressive resolution of 2592x1944 pixels (with a 4:3 aspect ratio). The biggest

problem is that the image it produces is distorted, giving your video streams a sort of fishbowl effect.

The other problem is that its privacy features are limited to

a plastic cap that could easily be lost and is no match for an integrated shutter.

Worse still, there's no light to show when the camera is recording.



**RATING**



### WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

## Can you recommend a small monitor?

**Q** I have an old HP monitor that I want to replace with something better. My present screen is a low-resolution 15in model, and because I have limited space, I'm not looking to increase the size. Do you know if there are any similar monitors still available?

John Lynn

**A** 15in monitors tend to be considered as 'portable' as they're easy to set up and pack away, and have integrated fold-away

stands. Our choice would be the Corprit 15.6 Inch Portable Monitor, which you can buy from Amazon for £166 ([www.snipca.com/38394](http://www.snipca.com/38394), pictured). This has a wide selection of ports, including USB-C and Mini HDMI, which should make it compatible with any PC or laptop you want to connect to it.

It's worth noting, however, that if you can limit yourself to a USB-C connection, you could save a few quid. For example, the Acer PM161Q is available from Currys PC World for £129 ([www.snipca.com/38393](http://www.snipca.com/38393)). The USB-C



port can power the screen and be used instead of a display cable, but you'll need to ensure it's compatible with your device. The Corprit monitor is a safer bet if you're not sure.



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



**ALL-IN-ONE COMPUTER** | From **£1,249** from Apple [www.snipca.com/38426](http://www.snipca.com/38426)

## Apple iMac 24in

Up the M1

It's been nine years since Apple's iMac last had a makeover, but it's finally happened thanks to the addition of Apple's M1 processor. This chip has already been added to the MacBook Pro (see our review, Issue 596) and the Mac mini (see Issue 600), though their overall designs didn't change that much. That isn't the case with the iMac, which has undergone a complete overhaul.

“Apple's latest all-in-one PC gets an upgrade in design and performance”

The iMac is now available in a range of fruity colours that hark back to Apple's original models from 1998. Where the previous iMac bulged gently out at the rear from very thin edges, the new version is a flat slab, measuring just 11mm thick across the entire chassis and looking not unlike a huge iPad on a stand. The 24in model is now the smallest in the range, up from the previous 21.5in minimum.

The only choice you need to make, once you've decided on colour, is how much **RAM** and storage your budget can stretch to. The cheaper variants come with a seven-core graphics card instead of eight-core, but that shouldn't significantly impact performance.

Prices start at £1,249 for 8GB of RAM and a 256GB **SSD**. Prices rise in £200 increments from there, to increase either the memory (up to 16GB) or the storage (up to 2TB). You could save on storage by buying an external SSD, instead.



Performance matches what we'd expect, having tested Apple's other recent M1 devices. Like them, it's blisteringly fast when running macOS software designed specifically for it, but it won't run Windows programs, even using an **emulator**.

The only data ports on the device are **USB-C**, with two available on the £1,249 model and four on all the others (pictured below left). Fortunately you won't need to use one of these for the power cable, which connects magnetically to a circular port behind the stand. There are a couple of other hidden sockets - a 3.5mm headphone jack on the power brick and an Ethernet port secreted on the left edge.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Apple M1 processor • 8GB or 16GB memory • Seven- or eight-core M1 graphics processor • 24in 4480x2520-pixel resolution IPS screen • 256GB, 512GB, 1TB or 2TB storage • 1080p front camera • 2-megapixel front camera • 2 or 4x USB-C ports • 1x Ethernet port • Wi-Fi 6 • 461x547x147mm (HxWxD) • 4.46kg • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/38426](http://www.snipca.com/38426)

**VERDICT** Slimmer, sleeker and faster than the previous iMacs, but you could get similar performance for much less with a £699 Mac mini and separate 24in monitor

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE HP Pavilion

24-k0017na All-in-One **£880** If you'd prefer a Windows 10 equivalent, this HP has a powerful AMD Ryzen 7 processor, 8GB of memory and a 512GB SSD



## CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

### Processor speed



#### What does it do?

The processor is the brain of your device, performing all the complex calculations that let your computer, smartphone or tablet operate. You'll also find processors in a



range of other devices, from routers to televisions, but it's in computers and mobile devices where the processor speed is most important, as it effects the performance of the device.

#### How does it work?

Processor clock speed is a measure of how many instructions can be performed per second, and is measured in hertz (Hz). Because modern processors can perform billions of these instructions, it's common to see the speed as gigahertz (GHz). 4.6GHz is another way of writing 4,600,000,000Hz - which means 4.6 billion instructions a second.

#### What are the specs?

Intel's latest 11th-generation processors vary in clock speed depending on the model. The Core i5 chips range from 3.7 to 4.9GHz, while the Core i7 ones (pictured above) go from 4.4 to 5GHz. That doesn't sound like much of an increase, but note the i5 series has four or six cores, while the i7 range goes up to eight. A higher core count will keep your PC running faster than a high clock speed, particularly if you're performing complex tasks such as editing photos and videos.

#### Can I change it later?

You can increase a processor's clock speed using a process called **overclocking**. The processor's manufacturer will have spent a lot of time measuring the best balance between speed and heat generation in order to keep your processor stable, so it carries some risk. Avast has a good guide on it at [www.snipca.com/38428](http://www.snipca.com/38428).





£499.99

**Impulse**

### AMD IMPULSE (RYZ7)

AMD Ryzen 5 2600 - 6 Cores (O.C 4Ghz)  
ASUS PRIME B450M-A  
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KOLINK Stronghold  
MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro



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CORSAIR iCUE 220T RGB White  
MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro

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# Reviews

**PHONE** | £329 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38395](http://www.snipca.com/38395)

## Xiaomi Poco F3

Screen to be believed



The Poco F3 is the latest **5G** phone from Chinese firm Xiaomi that attempts to rival top-of-the-range smartphones from the likes of Apple and Samsung, while keeping the price well below those models. And it rises to the challenge.

The front of the phone is taken up by the 6.67in screen surrounded by a wafer-thin bezel. A pinhole camera is embedded at the top of the screen, and a fingerprint reader is built into the power button on the right-hand side. The screen is an **AMOLED** display, so has perfect

contrast, excellent colour accuracy and high brightness levels. It's phenomenal for the price. It's also capable of a 120Hz **refresh rate**, though it's limited to 60Hz by default to save battery life.

The phone has the Qualcomm Snapdragon 870 processor, backed up by 6GB of **RAM**, and either 128GB (£329) or 256GB (£349) of storage. Choose your model wisely, though, as there's no **microSD card** slot to expand it later.

Performance is great for the price. In our tests, the only phone we've reviewed for under £450 that is faster is the iPhone SE (see our review, Issue 577). The Poco F3 is significantly faster than the Motorola Moto G100, which costs £100 more. Battery life is impressive, too, lasting 21 hours 19 minutes in our tests.

There are three cameras: a 48-megapixel main lens, an 8-megapixel **ultrawide**

camera and a 5-megapixel **macro** lens for close-ups. Photos aren't as impressive as performance, but good for the price.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 870 • 6GB of RAM • 128 or 256GB storage • 6.67in 2400x1080-pixel AMOLED screen • 48-megapixel main rear camera • 8-megapixel wide camera • 20-megapixel front camera • 5-megapixel macro camera • Android 11 • 7.8x164x76mm (HxDxW) • 196g • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/38395](http://www.snipca.com/38395)

**VERDICT** Simply a superb phone for the price, with outstanding performance and a brilliant screen, though serious photographers might be disappointed by the camera

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE

Motorola Moto G100 **£430** The only Android phone under £450 that's almost as fast, but it's significantly more expensive



**PHONE** | £320 from Nokia [www.snipca.com/38411](http://www.snipca.com/38411)

## Nokia X20

Bigger but not better

Like the Xiaomi Poco F3 above, the Nokia X20 is a 5G smartphone, and has a similar price. However, it's significantly larger, weighing 220g and is a chunky 9.1mm thick. It has a 6.67in **IPS** screen, with a resolution of 2400x1080 pixels. The screen is limited to a 60Hz refresh rate, and its contrast and colour accuracy fell short of the Poco F3 in our tests, though it is brighter.

Inside it has a Qualcomm Snapdragon 480 processor, a choice of 6GB (£300) or 8GB (£320) of RAM, and 128GB of

expandable storage, thanks to its microSD card slot. Performance scores in our tests lagged behind the Poco F3, coming in closer to the Xiaomi Redmi Note 9T (see our review, Issue 600). Note, however, that the 9T is significantly cheaper at £159 ([www.snipca.com/37269](http://www.snipca.com/37269)).

The phone has a 64-megapixel main camera, with a 5-megapixel wide lens, while the front selfie camera is 32-megapixels. Results in our photo tests were a bit of a mixed bag, taking decent shots from the main camera in daylight, but it was disappointing at night. Shots taken with the wide lens lost a lot of detail, ending up looking more like watercolours than photos.

A few months ago, this might have been a perfectly decent phone for the price. However, competition has

stiffened. Indeed, the Poco F3 already leaves Nokia's alternative in need of a price cut to keep it competitive.

**VERDICT** The X20 struggles to compete with similarly priced rivals, while there are plenty of cheaper phones that offer the same performance

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE

Xiaomi Redmi Note 9T **£159** An even cheaper phone if you're looking for a 5G bargain



### SPECIFICATIONS

Octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 480 • 6GB or 8GB RAM • 128GB storage • 6.67in 2400x1080 pixels IPS screen • 64-megapixel main rear camera • 5-megapixel wide camera • 32-megapixel front camera • Android 11 • 9.1x169x80mm (HxDxW) • 220g • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/38411](http://www.snipca.com/38411)



**BLUETOOTH SPEAKER** | £150 from Huawei [www.snipca.com/38422](http://www.snipca.com/38422)

## Huawei Sound

House music

The Huawei Sound is ideal for providing a bigger sound to tracks on music-streaming apps such as Spotify. It needs to be plugged into the mains, so it isn't suitable for taking with you on a day out. The speaker itself is 187mm tall, 147mm in diameter and weighs 2.2kg. The upper section of the speaker's case is made of a highly reflective plastic, while the bottom section is wrapped in cloth.

“Home-based speaker pumps up the volume”

It has four buttons (pictured below right) that illuminate when your hand reaches to within a few centimetres. There's a mute button (though you can also mute/unmute by covering the entire top panel with your hand), buttons for adjusting volume, and a multi-function button, which you'll primarily use for Bluetooth pairing. The controls are simple and work well, although there's no way to skip tracks – you'll need to use your phone for that. It also doesn't support Google Assistant or Amazon Alexa, so you can't control it with your voice.

One of the best features is quick audio sharing via Huawei's OneHop technology. If you own an NFC-enabled smartphone running Android 5.1.1 or above, you can tap your phone on an icon located on the front edge to switch any music that's playing from the phone to the Sound. Tapping again swaps it back to your phone. It also connects through the usual Bluetooth setup if you don't have this feature on your device, and you can even

### SPECIFICATIONS

1x woofer • 3x full-range speakers • 2x passive units  
• 3.5mm audio port • Bluetooth 5.0 • 187x147x147mm (HxWxD) • 2.2kg • One-year warranty  
[www.snipca.com/38422](http://www.snipca.com/38422)



plug a non-Bluetooth device into the 3.5mm jack port located under a small flap on the rear speaker.

Inside the speaker, the hardware has been developed by renowned French audio company Devialet, and the sound quality doesn't disappoint. The unit's various speakers are arranged to provide 360-degree audio output. The result is a deep, undistorted bass sound, even at maximum volume (which is very loud), while trebles are clear and sharp. It wasn't quite as impressive with some frequencies between these extremes, but there's a useful Voice profile you can choose that brings vocals in songs to the forefront for improved clarity.

**VERDICT** A powerful Bluetooth speaker for the home, but you might miss the ability to control it with your voice or take it outdoors

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** JBL Charge 5 £160

A more versatile, portable and waterproof Bluetooth speaker you can take wherever you go



### DO I REALLY NEED...

## A smart monitor?

### What is it?

Samsung is known for its smart TVs, but now also offers a Smart Monitor series. Like its TVs, these connect to your Wi-Fi and use apps to provide additional tools. There are four models available, in 24, 27, 32 and 43in sizes.



### What does it do?

It lets you use a range of apps from TV streaming to Microsoft 365 without switching on your PC. The monitor can connect wirelessly to Android and Apple devices for screen sharing. They come with a solar-powered remote control that's compatible with Alexa and Google Assistant.

### What's the catch?

Not all the prices have been announced yet, but the 32in model is around £399. That's about twice the price of Samsung's standard monitors of the same size.

### So can I do without it?

If you use your computer screen for entertainment, this could be useful, particularly if it avoids the need to buy a second screen to watch TV on.

### NEXT ISSUE

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#### Asus PN51

A powerful desktop PC in a tiny case



#### Lenovo Tab P11 Pro

A superb Android tablet that can be used like a laptop



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

### LAPTOP

PRICE  
DROP

**Lenovo Yoga Slim 7 (256GB)**  
**£749** from [www.snipca.com/38429](http://www.snipca.com/38429)  
**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 £780 from [www.snipca.com/36642](http://www.snipca.com/36642)

### DESKTOP PC

**Palicomp Intel Mercury**  
**£600** from [www.snipca.com/34223](http://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. £1,900 from [www.snipca.com/35840](http://www.snipca.com/35840)

### APPLE IPAD

**Apple iPad 10.2in**  
**£329** from [www.snipca.com/36178](http://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](http://www.snipca.com/33050)

### ANDROID TABLET

**Samsung Galaxy Tab S6 Lite**  
**£299** from [www.snipca.com/35795](http://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](http://www.snipca.com/35336)

### APPLE IPHONE

**Apple iPhone 12**  
**£799** from [www.snipca.com/36582](http://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](http://www.snipca.com/34773)

### ANDROID PHONE

NEW  
ENTRY

**Xiaomi Poco F3**  
**£329** from [www.snipca.com/38395](http://www.snipca.com/38395)  
**Tested** Issue 608



This is a phenomenal phone for the price. It's 5G, has a brilliant screen, and comes with 6GB of RAM and 128GB storage (256GB costs £349). Performance is exceptional – in fact, the only phone under £450 that's faster is the iPhone SE.

**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](http://www.snipca.com/36586)



# Now's the time to tackle your iPhone or Android Smartphone

**Are you missing out on everything you could do with it? With these helpful books, there's nothing to fear about using smartphones.**

## Find out more...

Modern mobile phones – smartphones as they're called – can do so much more than just make phone calls.

From browsing the web wherever you are, checking train times, acting as a sat-nav... And best of all they can make it so easy to keep in touch with family and friends – in so many ways, from sharing photos to making video calls.

But using them isn't always as easy as you'd want – and that's putting it mildly!

## Do the manufacturers do it on purpose?

Sometimes it can seem like the manufacturers deliberately make them complicated – and how you do things is often hidden away. It might be easy once you know, but until you've been shown the easy way, it can drive you mad.

In fact only yesterday I was talking to someone whose Mum had got a new all-singing-all-dancing phone – but she couldn't work out how to answer a phone call on it! She's not daft – it's just that it's different from what she'd used before and the phone didn't come with a manual telling her what to do.

Whether you have similar problems or you're trying to do something slightly more advanced, the thing is, it can be easy to use them... once you know how. But until you've been shown, it can be like talking a different language.

That's why we've published two books: *iPhones one Step at a Time* and *Android Smartphones One Step at a Time*.

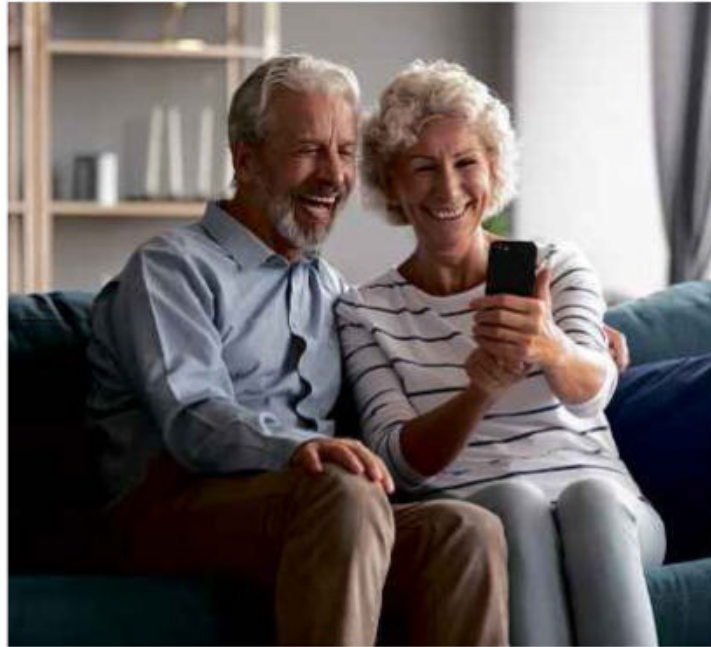
## Plain English... and that's not all

They explain how to use the phone, in plain simple language with pictures of the screen showing you exactly where to tap or slide your fingers. No jargon!

## What's covered?

I can't list it all here. But amongst other things, you'll discover:

- The basics of controlling it – swiping, tapping, opening apps & so on.
- Send emails from your phone.
- Most phones have a good camera so you can take photos: here's how to use it properly (and for videos).
- Browse the web at home or out and about.



*Suitable for iPhones and Android smartphones like Samsungs, and DORO (not sure what phone you have? Best send off for the free info pack)*

- Video phone calls – a great way to keep up with family who live a long way away
- Share photos with friends around the world – quickly and easily.
- See updates, photos and video clips from friends and family – as soon as they “post” them.
- Instant messaging and how to use it.
- Make it easier to read the screen.
- How to use it as a sat-nav... in the car or even on foot.
- Choosing and downloading apps.
- And obviously, you can make phone calls and send and receive text messages. (“Voicemail” is covered, too)

All explained nice and simply. (Find out more in the free information pack – read on...)

## What one reader had to say:

*“Thanks for a fantastic smart phone book. Very pleasant staff as usual.*

*I think this book should be sold with every smart phone. I have learnt so much from it, the info you get with the phone is non-existent.*

*Smart phones are quite complex, and your books speak in plain English.”*

## Only half the story

That's only half the story but I don't have room to explain here. I've put together full

information on the books – who they're for, what they cover and so on.

What's more the books also come with a free gift – no room to explain that here either.

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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](http://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. £110 from [www.snipca.com/32586](http://www.snipca.com/32586)

## SECURITY SOFTWARE

**Kaspersky Internet Security 2021**  
**£14.99** from [www.snipca.com/21532](http://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 £32.99.

### ALTERNATIVE Norton 360 Deluxe

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but blocks more legitimate software. £15 from [www.snipca.com/32069](http://www.snipca.com/32069)

## PHOTO EDITING

**Serif Affinity Photo**  
**£24** from [www.snipca.com/23739](http://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. £45 from [www.snipca.com/26514](http://www.snipca.com/26514)

## PC MONITOR

**BenQ GL2780**  
**£160** from [www.snipca.com/34834](http://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. £205 from [www.snipca.com/37096](http://www.snipca.com/37096)

## ROUTER

**D-Link DIR-1960**  
**£104** from [www.snipca.com/32849](http://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. £205 from [www.snipca.com/30710](http://www.snipca.com/30710)

## PRINTER

**Canon Pixma TS8350**  
**£150** from [www.snipca.com/38079](http://www.snipca.com/38079)  
**Tested** Issue 606



For an affordable general-purpose printer, its photo prints are stunning. They come out in phenomenal detail, with rich, bold colours and deep blacks. It uses six cartridges, so stick to Canon's own reasonably priced XXL cartridges to reduce running costs.

### ALTERNATIVE Epson Expression

**Premium XP-6105** This six-ink printer/scanner/copier is a good choice for photos first and text second. It's easy to use, but ink costs can be high. £90 from [www.snipca.com/37995](http://www.snipca.com/37995)



## COMPETITION

# Win 1 of 3 Lindy BNX-100XT headphones

Winner of a Recommended award in Issue 598 (page 26), Lindy's BNX-100XT headphones have advanced noise-cancelling technology for a superior listening experience.

They have noise-detection microphones on the earpieces (Feedforward) and inside the speaker driver assembly (Feedback). This hybrid system lets the headphones

suppress noise over a wider range of frequencies regardless of the direction of the sound.

They've also been built to deliver superb quality hi-fi sound using advanced aptX technology, providing deep bass, perfect clarity and crystal-clear treble.

Its brilliant Auto Pause feature turns off the audio when you remove the headphones, then resumes when you put them back on. Equally clever is Audio Pass-Through, which you can set to reduce playback volume when you need to hear something important, such as a train announcement.

To enter this competition, email your home address to [cacomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:cacomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'Lindy' in the subject line by midnight Tuesday 29 June. Good luck!

You can buy the **Lindy BNX-100XT headphones** for £100 from Amazon ([www.snipca.com/37065](http://www.snipca.com/37065)). You get a pair of headphones that operate using Bluetooth 5, a durable hard-shell carrying case, a 3.5mm audio jack cable, a USB-C charging cable, an aeroplane plug adapter and a 6.3mm stereo-plug adapter. Battery life is an impressive 15 hours.



### MESH ROUTER

**BT** Whole Home Wi-Fi  
**£200** from [www.snipca.com/26990](http://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](http://www.snipca.com/27309)

### SOLID-STATE DRIVE

**Samsung** 970 Evo Plus  
500GB  
**£78** from [www.snipca.com/31265](http://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. £65 from [www.snipca.com/37304](http://www.snipca.com/37304)

### SMART SPEAKER

**Google** Nest Audio  
**£90** from [www.snipca.com/36475](http://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](http://www.snipca.com/36602)



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**38** Securely share your passwords

**40** Label and track objects in your videos

**42** Readers' Tips

**PLUS**

**44** Phone & Tablet Tips

**46** Make Windows Better

**47** Make Office Better

**48** In The Club: Collaborate on spreadsheets

## HOW TO... Improve your computer's audio with new speakers

by Will Stapley

**What you need:** Logitech Z207 speakers (or similar); APO Equalizer

**Time taken:** One hour

In Issue 607's How To we explained how to improve how you sound in video calls. Now it's time to improve the audio *you* hear – whether that's during a video call, when streaming video or while listening to music. Although it's convenient to use the

speakers built into your laptop or those that came with your desktop PC, they're often very poor quality, producing tinny audio with little bass.

The good news is that buying new speakers needn't cost a fortune and some



come with features you'll wonder how you ever did without. As well as showing you how to choose and set up your new speakers, we'll reveal the tools that guarantee you get the most out of them.

**1 Choose your speakers**  
There's no shortage of PC speakers to choose from, so our advice is to keep things simple. Unless you're looking for pitch-perfect audio or theatre-style surround sound, avoid the expensive options (some of which cost many hundreds of pounds).

If you're on a particularly tight budget, consider the Creative Pebble V2 speakers



The Creative Pebble V2 lack Bluetooth, but they're great value at just £25

(just £25 from [www.snipca.com/38482](http://www.snipca.com/38482), pictured below left). Rated at 8 Watts (W), the audio they produce won't fill a large room, nor will they deliver thumping bass (for that you'll need speakers with a separate **subwoofer** – see box on page 36), but they'll be a big improvement on the speakers built into most laptops.

They're also a great choice if you want something that you can take on your travels. Not only are the Pebble's two circular speakers relatively small (24.3 x 12.6 x 12.6mm), they're powered via USB so you don't need to plug them into a mains socket. The USB cable doesn't carry audio signals, however, so you also need to attach the speaker's 3.5mm cable into your computer's headphone socket.

However, our favourite set of PC speakers – and the one we'll be using in the rest of this article – is the Logitech Z207 (£45 from [www.snipca.com/38483](http://www.snipca.com/38483),

pictured below, also available in white). Although the power rating of 5W is lower than that of the Pebble, because the Z207 speakers are larger they provide richer audio with more bass. Along with the 3.5mm wired jack connection, the



Logitech's Z207 have 3.5mm input and Bluetooth, letting you connect up to three devices



Z207 speakers include Bluetooth, which means you can connect them wirelessly to devices like your PC, laptop, phone and tablet (we'll explain how in a moment). There's also a headphone port, so you can listen privately if needed without having to first unplug or disconnect the speakers.

If you have no need for wireless connectivity, opt for the Logitech 200, which are essentially the same speakers without Bluetooth (£28 from [www.snipca.com/38484](http://www.snipca.com/38484)).

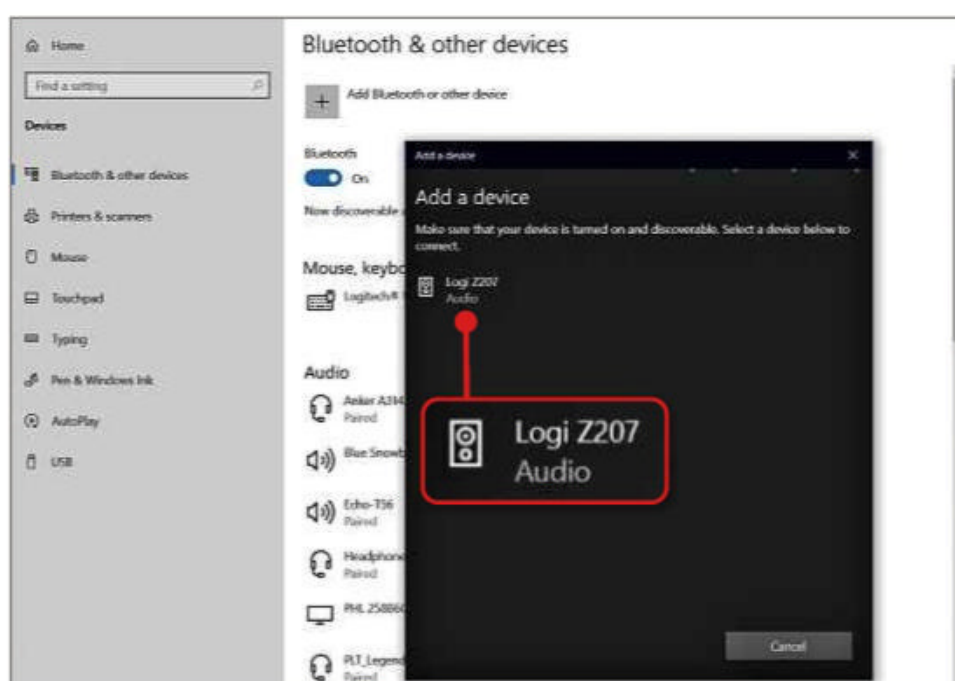
2

### Connect your speakers

Logitech's Z207 speakers are quick to set up. The left and right units connect to each other via a non-removable 3.5mm cable, with a second cable from the right-hand speaker leading to a mains adapter (we've noticed some online stores, including Amazon, also sell them with a two-pin EU adapter, so make sure you look for 'UK plug' in the product's name or check with the store before buying).

Next, you need to connect the speakers to your PC, which you can do using Bluetooth or the included 3.5mm audio cable. For the latter, plug one end of the cable into the socket on the right-hand speaker, then attach the other end to the headphone socket on your computer (if your laptop has a single 3.5mm audio socket for speakers and headphones, you can plug it into this).

To avoid the palaver of plugging and



To connect the Z207 speakers using Bluetooth, scan for any devices nearby via Settings

unplugging the speakers every time you move your laptop to and from your desk, connect your computer to them via Bluetooth. Note that this doesn't eliminate wires entirely – you'll still need the cable that connects the two speakers and the mains power connection.

Of course, your computer will also need to have Bluetooth built in. Most do these days, but if yours doesn't, you can add it with a USB Bluetooth adapter (like the TP-Link adapter – £10 from [www.snipca.com/38485](http://www.snipca.com/38485)).

To set up the Bluetooth connection, you first need to put the Z207 speakers into pairing mode by turning them on, then holding the Bluetooth button (to the right of the volume control) for a couple of seconds until the light flashes blue and green. Next, go to Settings on

your computer (press the Windows key+I), then select Devices. Make sure the Bluetooth slider at the top is set to On, then click 'Add Bluetooth or other device' and select Bluetooth. Windows will now scan for nearby Bluetooth devices. After a few seconds, the Z207 speakers will be listed alongside any other Bluetooth devices it finds. Click their name (they'll be labelled Logi Z207 – see screenshot above) and they will be set as the default speakers for your computer.

If you've connected the speakers to your laptop via Bluetooth, you can switch between them and your laptop's built-in speakers at any time by clicking the volume icon in your system tray, then selecting the speakers you want to use. When you turn off the Z207 speakers, Windows will automatically switch to your laptop speakers. Turn the Z207 units back on again, and Windows will reconnect to them via Bluetooth.

Bluetooth is relatively short range, so it's best to keep the speakers within five metres of whatever device they're connected to, otherwise you may experience occasional drops in audio. Interference from other Bluetooth devices (such as your phone or tablet) can also cause connection problems – if you can't move these devices away from the speakers, consider switching to the speaker's 3.5mm wired connection.

## Should you switch to a soundbar?

If your desk is short on space, a soundbar might be a better idea. Normally used with TVs, soundbars house their speakers in a single elongated case – usually with a separate subwoofer to provide the bass. This design also makes them well suited to sitting below a PC monitor.

They're more expensive than standard speakers, but at £100 the Creative Stage V2 ([www.snipca.com/38488](http://www.snipca.com/38488), pictured) is a great value option. It measures 680x78x100mm and comes with a separate subwoofer. Unlike the soundbar, which you should position directly in front of you, the subwoofer can be hidden away under your desk without affecting sound quality. Connection options include USB, Bluetooth, optical audio and a 3.5mm jack socket.

At 80W, the Stage V2 is much more powerful than the Z207 speakers, with its rich, well-defined audio easily filling even large rooms. It also includes a Dialogue sound mode (activated using the included remote control), which aims to boost the clarity of speech. We found this worked well, but we still used APO Equalizer (see page 37) to fine-tune the audio.



3

### Connect multiple devices

As we mentioned, you can connect up to three devices to the Z207 speakers – two via Bluetooth and one using the 3.5mm cable. If you use the cable and Bluetooth to connect two devices, the audio from both will play simultaneously. However, connect two Bluetooth devices and the speakers



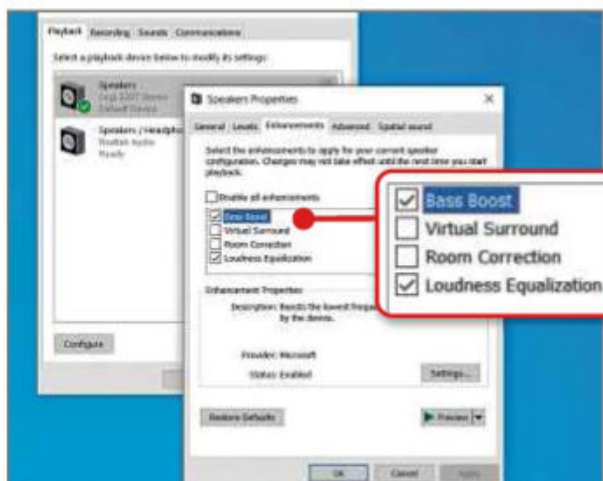
can play audio from one at a time only. Thanks to a feature called Easy Switch, the speakers automatically switch between two connected Bluetooth devices. This worked well in our tests – with our laptop and phone connected to the speakers via Bluetooth, we were able to switch between them simply by pausing the audio playing on one, then pressing play on the other.

## 4 Configure your speakers in Windows

Windows includes some basic tools to help set up your speakers. Right-click the volume icon (a speaker) in the system tray, then select Sounds. In the Sound window that opens, select your speakers then click Configure. To check both speakers are working and that you've positioned them the right way round (left and right), click Test. A short tune will now play on the left speaker, then the right (you can repeat the test on either speaker by clicking the appropriate speaker icon in the graphic).

You can also try tweaking your audio within the Sound window by selecting your speakers, then clicking Properties. In the window that opens, select the Levels tab, then click Balance to adjust the volume of the left and right speakers individually (useful if one speaker is slightly further from you than the other).

Select the Advanced tab and you can apply effects to your audio. Precisely which effects are available to you depends on the audio chip inside your computer, but common ones include Bass Boost and Loudness Equalization (see screenshot below). The latter attempts to avoid sudden changes in volume level, such as when you're listening to different music videos on YouTube. Simply tick the effects you want to use, click Apply, then play a piece of audio to test their impact.



Windows offers some basic effects – including Bass Boost and Loudness Equalization – to enhance your audio

## How I improved my laptop's audio

The speakers built into my Dell laptop are just about adequate for basic use (short video calls and the like), but lacking any bass and with a tendency to produce the occasional high-pitched squeal, they're not great when listening to music or streaming video.

I recently bought Logitech's Z207 and although squeezing them on to my already cluttered desk wasn't easy, they provide much more immersive audio. They're also significantly louder than I expected.

I have mine connected to both my laptop and Amazon Echo Dot smart speaker. As explained below, connecting



both via Bluetooth would mean I'd hear audio from only one device at a time – so if I'm listening to the radio on my Echo Dot, I wouldn't hear notifications (or any other audio) from my laptop.

I've therefore connected my laptop to the speakers via the 3.5mm cable, allowing me to hear the audio from both my laptop and my Echo Dot simultaneously and making sure I never miss those all-important instant messages from the editor.

Will Stapley

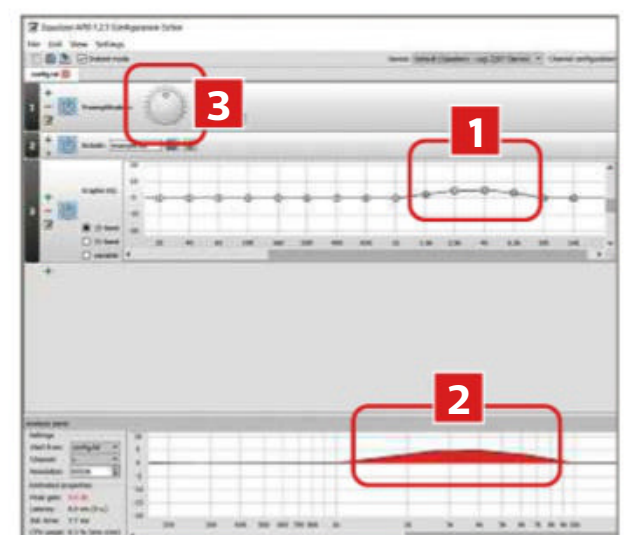
How do you edit videos on your phone or tablet? Please let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)

## 5 Install a graphic equaliser

Windows' built-in tools only go so far. To get the most from your new speakers, you need to use a free tool called APO Equalizer ([www.snipca.com/38486](http://www.snipca.com/38486) – click the green Download button). This comprises two tools: the Configurator and the Configuration Editor. First, run the Configurator tool by searching for it in the Start menu. This displays all speakers on your PC (including any Bluetooth speakers that aren't currently connected. Tick the box next to your speakers (Z207 will be listed as 'Logi Z207 Stereo'), then click OK and restart Windows.

To start tweaking your audio, run the Configuration Editor from the Start menu. This lets you apply a series of filters – the Preamplication and 15-Band Equalizer filters are added by default, but you can add more by clicking the green '+' button next to any filter. All changes are made in real time, so you can try the various filters to see which works best for your audio. To turn off a filter, click the power button to its left so it turns black.

We often use APO Equalizer to improve the muffled dialogue that plagues so many current TV shows. To do this, add the Preamp filter (you'll find it under Basic) and the '15-band graphic equaliser'. Next, try boosting the 1.6k to 6.3k frequencies (see 1 in our screenshot above right). As you do this, the Analysis panel at the bottom will display red sections 2, indicating that you may experience some



APO Equalizer's Configuration Editor lets you apply tweaks to your audio in real time

distortion. To fix this, turn the Preamplication filter's dial 3 to the left until the red sections disappear. This makes your audio quieter, but you can turn your speakers up to compensate.

Once you have your audio just as you want it, you can save the filter settings (press Ctrl+S). You can then load them in future by pressing Ctrl+O and selecting the appropriate file.

If you'd prefer not to add and adjust filters yourself, Peace Equalizer ([www.snipca.com/38487](http://www.snipca.com/38487)) does the hard work for you with a range of preset filters (it uses APO Equalizer, so you need to install that first). When you run Peace Equalizer, select 'Simple interface', then choose from the filter presets in the bottom-right corner – you'll find ones for specific music genres and spoken dialogue.



# Workshop1

## Securely share your passwords

**What you need:** Bitwarden

**Time required:** 30 minutes

You probably share some of your online accounts with other people (Amazon or Spotify, for example). Using the Organisation feature of our favourite password manager, Bitwarden, you can share passwords for these joint accounts with one other

person for free, or unlimited numbers of people for \$3 (around £2) per month. In this Workshop, we'll show you how to set up Bitwarden's Organisation feature, then choose which passwords to share and how to control access to them.

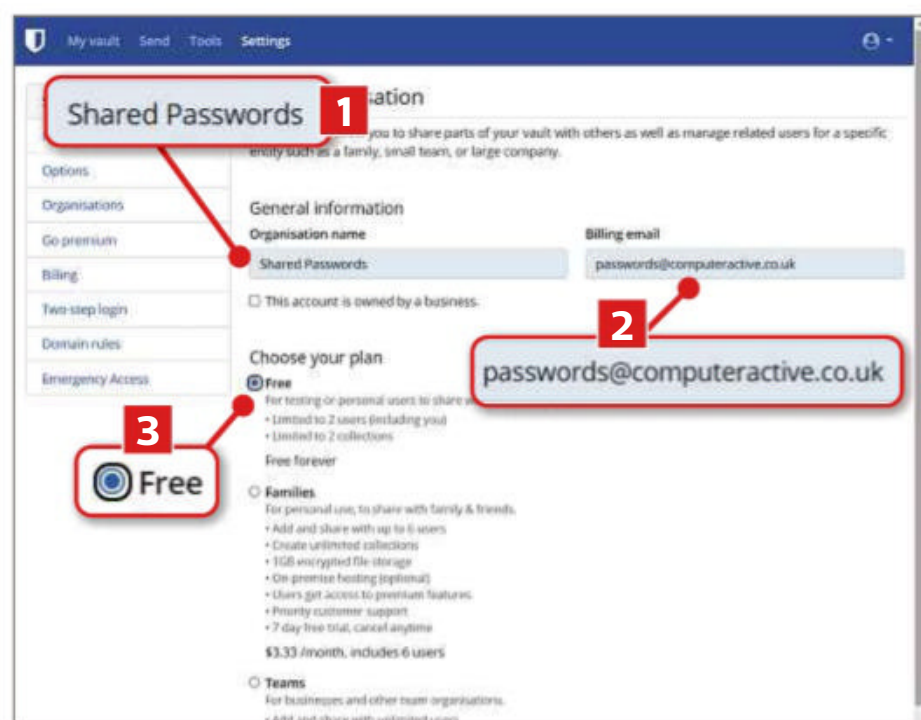
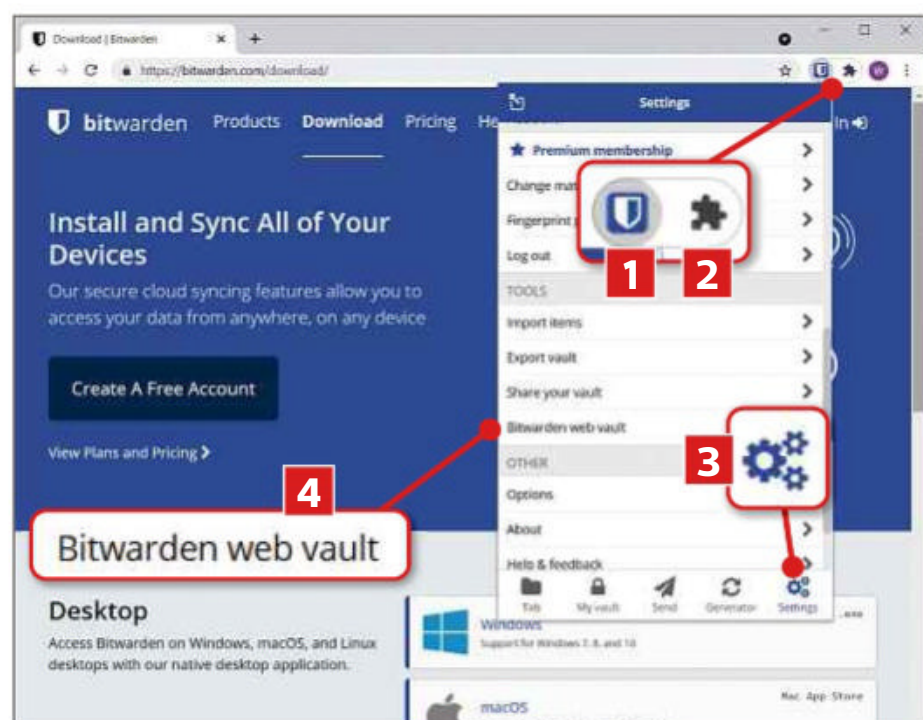


### STEP 1

If you don't already have a Bitwarden account, create a free one at [www.snipca.com/38419](https://www.snipca.com/38419), then download the Bitwarden extension at [www.snipca.com/38420](https://www.snipca.com/38420) (it's available for all major browsers). Once installed, click the extension's icon **1** at the top right of your browser (in Chrome, you may need to click the jigsaw icon **2** to reveal it) and, if prompted, log into your account. Now click the Settings button (cog icon **3**), then scroll down to the Tools section and select 'Bitwarden web vault' **4**.

### STEP 2

Your web vault will open in a new browser window and you'll be prompted to log into your account. Locate the Organisations section on the right-hand side, then click '+New organisation'. Give your organisation a name (we've called ours Shared Passwords **1**), enter your email in the 'Billing email' box **2** – you'll be charged only if you select a paid-for plan. Because we want to share passwords with only one other person, we've selected the Free plan **3**. Click 'Submit' at the bottom of the window to continue.



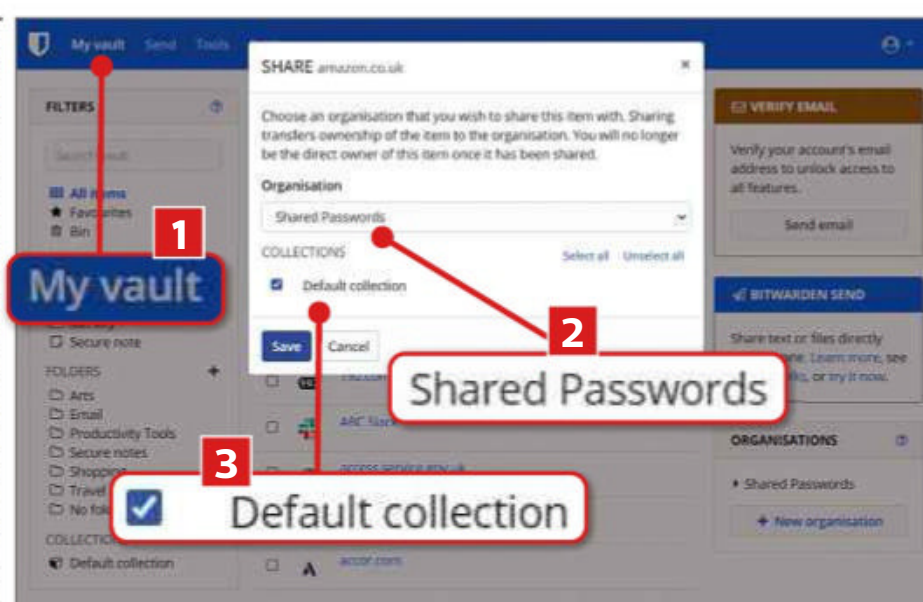
### STEP 3

To share passwords with another person, select the Manage tab, click '+Invite user', then enter their email address **1**. Next, choose the 'User type' you want to use for them – we recommend leaving this set to User **2**, which lets the person access the shared passwords, but not edit them. Next, tick the 'Default collection' box **3**. You can also choose to hide your shared passwords **4** – if you tick this box, the person will be able to use Bitwarden to log into accounts using the shared passwords, but they won't be able to view the passwords. Click 'Save' and an invite will be sent to the email address you specified.

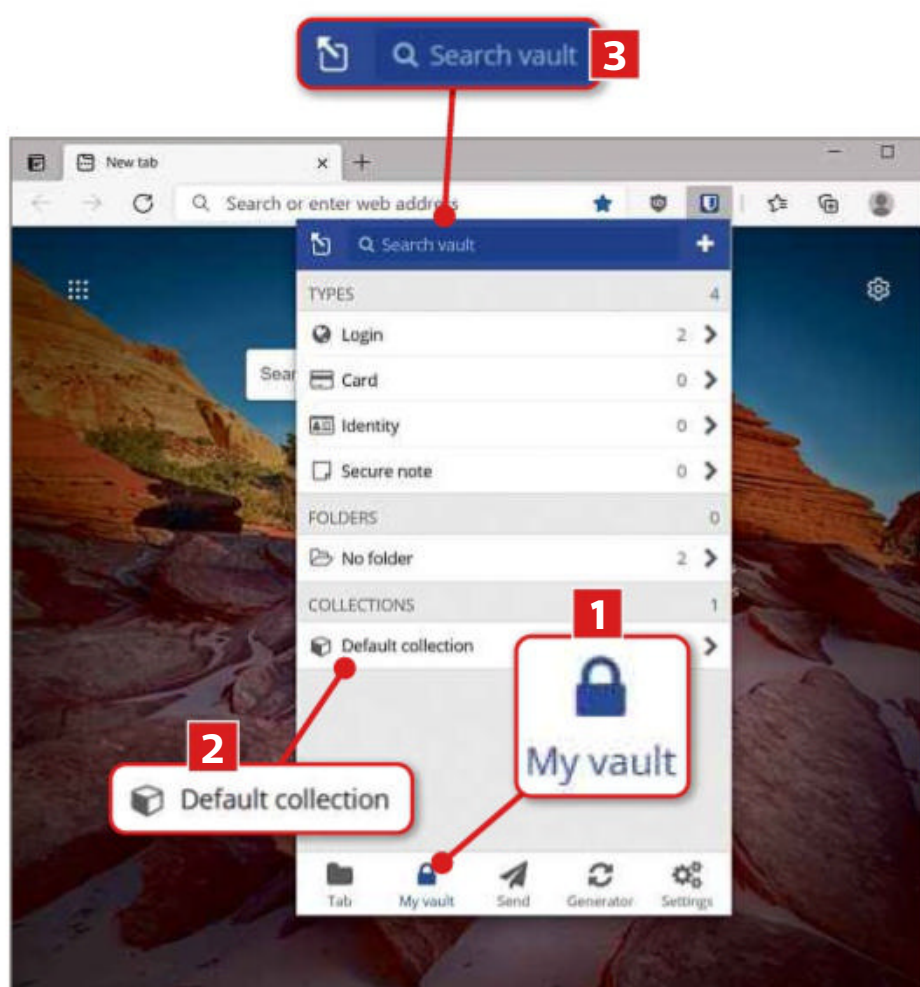




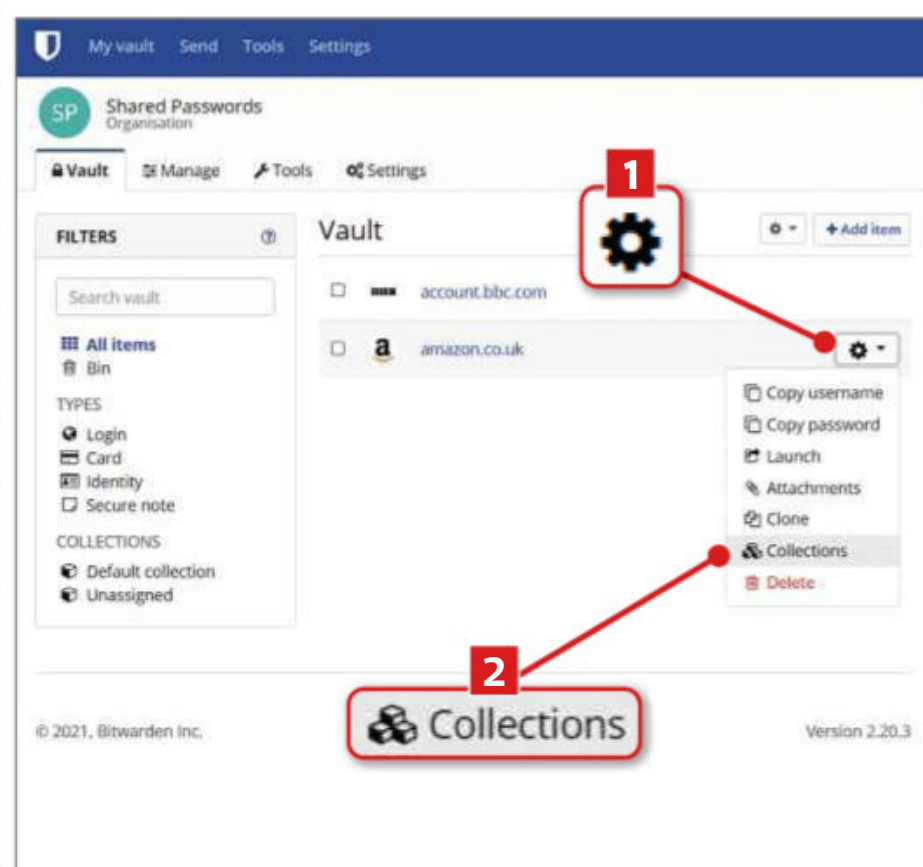
**STEP 4** Once the person you've invited agrees to join your Bitwarden organisation, you'll need to confirm their membership. To do this, click the Manage tab **1** in your organisation vault, select People **2**, click the cog icon next to the name of the person you invited, then Confirm **3**. If you later want to remove this person from your organisation (and prevent them from accessing your shared passwords), repeat this process but select Remove **4**.



**STEP 5** To create a new shared password, click the Vault tab, then '+Add item' and enter the relevant details (the account's user name, password and so on). Click 'Save' when that's done. You can also share an existing password in your personal vault. Click 'My vault' **1** at the top, then the cog icon next to the relevant item and select 'Share'. In the window that opens, make sure your organisation is selected **2**, tick 'Default collection' **3**, then click Save. To share multiple passwords, tick the boxes next to each, then click the cog icon at the top, followed by Share.



**STEP 6** The person you've shared your organisation with will now be able to access all shared passwords within their Bitwarden browser extension. To view them, they need to select the 'My vault' option **1** at the bottom, then 'Default collection' **2**. They can also search for them using the box at the top **3**. If you decided to hide the shared passwords from them (as explained in Step 3), they'll be able to log into sites using the passwords, but the 'View password' option within Bitwarden will be greyed out.



**STEP 7** You can revoke access to a shared password at any time. To do so, go to your web vault, click your organisation (located in the Organisations box, bottom right), then click the cog icon **1** next to the password you want to stop sharing, followed by Collections **2**. Untick the collection associated with the password, then click Save. Note that the password will still be shared with your Bitwarden organisation, but because it's not assigned to your Default collection it will no longer be visible to the person you originally shared it with.



# Workshop 2

## Label and track objects in your videos

**What you need:** Shotcut; Windows 7, 8.1 or 10 (64bit)

**Time required:** One hour

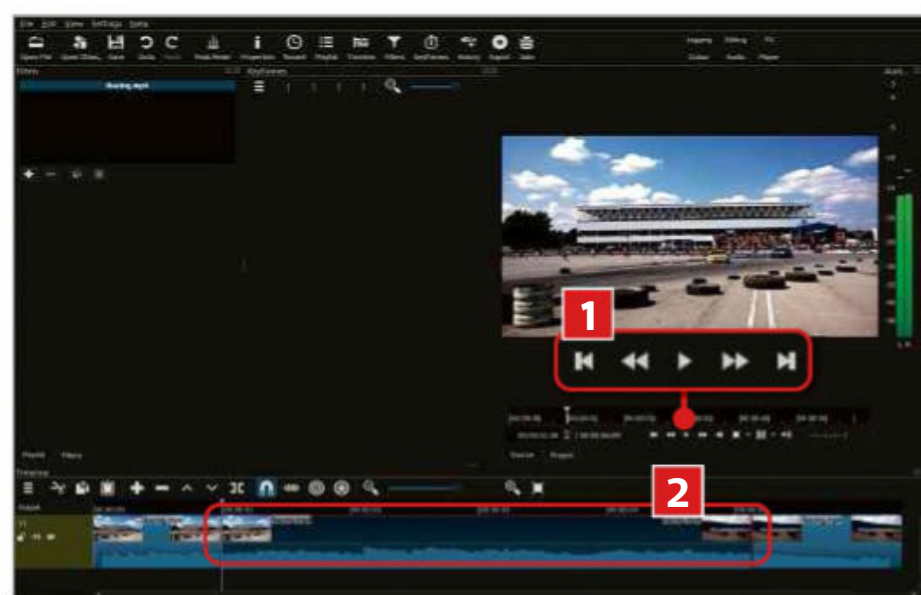
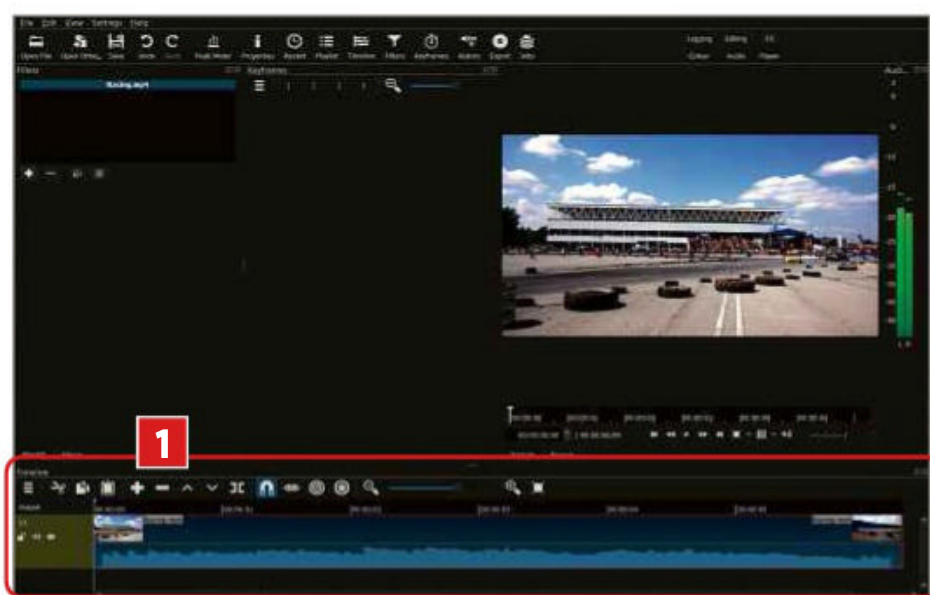
**A**dding simple labels to your videos to highlight objects or people isn't difficult, but what if that labelled subject starts to move? In this Workshop, we'll show you how Shotcut lets you use 'keyframes' (hidden markers that

let you choose when to apply or change a filter) to animate your labels so that they track objects. It's perfect for highlighting a specific person in a crowd or – as we demonstrate here – identify drivers in a car race.

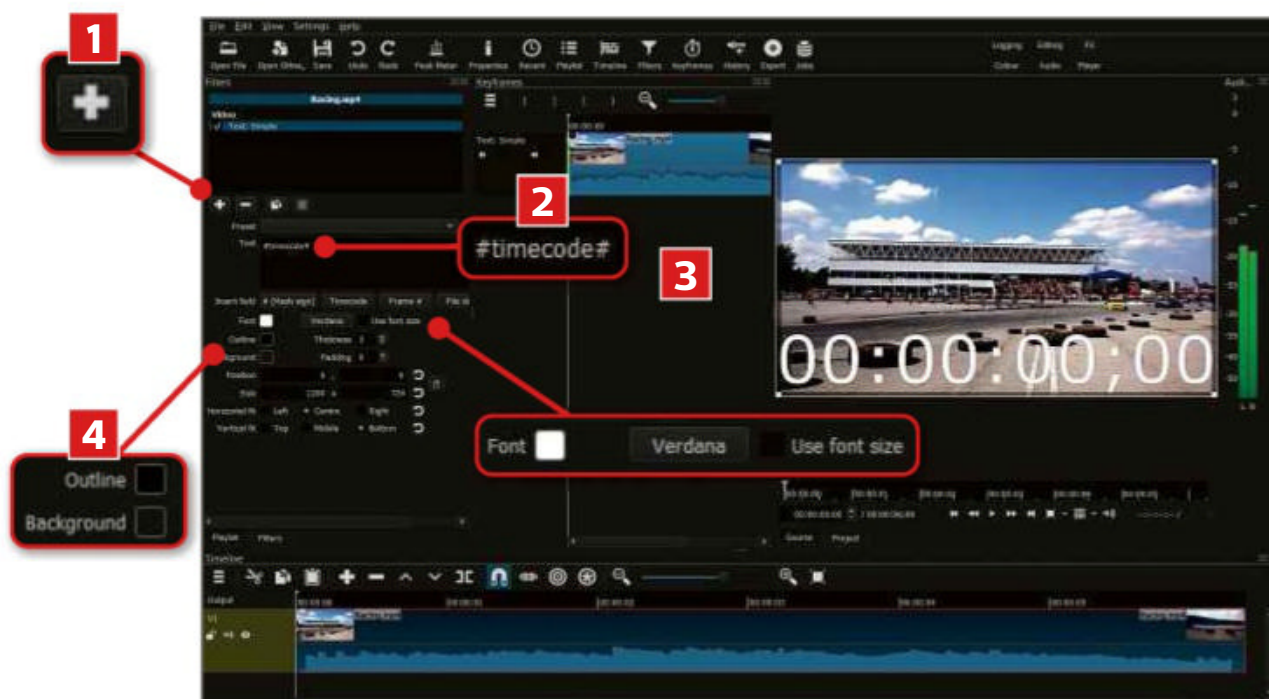


**STEP 1** Install Shotcut by visiting <https://shotcut.org/download> and clicking either of the two 'Windows installer' links (they both download the same file). Run the installer, then launch Shotcut, give your project a name in the 'Project name' box then click Start. Next, drag your video clip directly into the Timeline pane **1**. This is usually at the bottom of the window, but because Shotcut lets you rearrange its layout you may find it elsewhere (if you can't locate it, press Ctrl+5 to reveal it). If you have additional video clips, add them to the timeline in the same way.

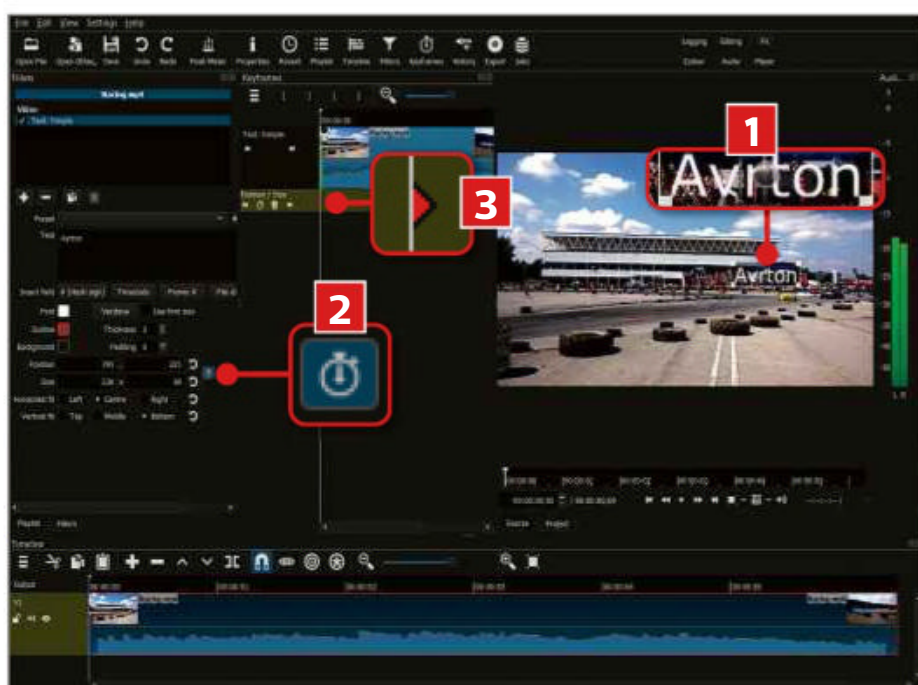
**STEP 2** If you want your labels to be visible throughout your entire video, skip to Step 3. To show them only during a specific section, navigate to the start of that section in your timeline (using the control buttons below the preview window **1** or clicking the appropriate point on the timeline), then press S to split the clip at this point. Now move to the point where you want your labels to disappear, then press S again to create a second split. You'll now have a separate video clip **2** that you can apply your labels to. Select this section, then rewind to the start of it.



**STEP 3** Locate the Filters pane (by default, top-left – press Ctrl+6 if you can't find it) and press the '+' button **1**. In the search box that appears, type **text**, then select 'Text: Simple'. A large timer label will now appear in the preview window. To change this to a text label, click the Text box in the Filters pane, delete '#timecode#' **2**, then type whatever you want your label to display. You can use the controls below this box to change the font style, size and colour **3**. If you find the label difficult to read (for example, when it's placed over a multicoloured background), try adding Outline and Background colours **4**.







**STEP 4** In the preview window, click and drag the edges of the label to resize it **1**. To change the position of the label so that it appears over the relevant object in your video, hold down the Shift key while clicking and dragging. Once you're happy with the label's size and position, click the stopwatch button **2**. The 'Keyframe' pane will now appear, with a small arrow head **3** indicating that you've inserted a keyframe at the point where you want the text label to appear. If you want to add more labels, repeat the process as with the first, remembering to click the stopwatch button on each.

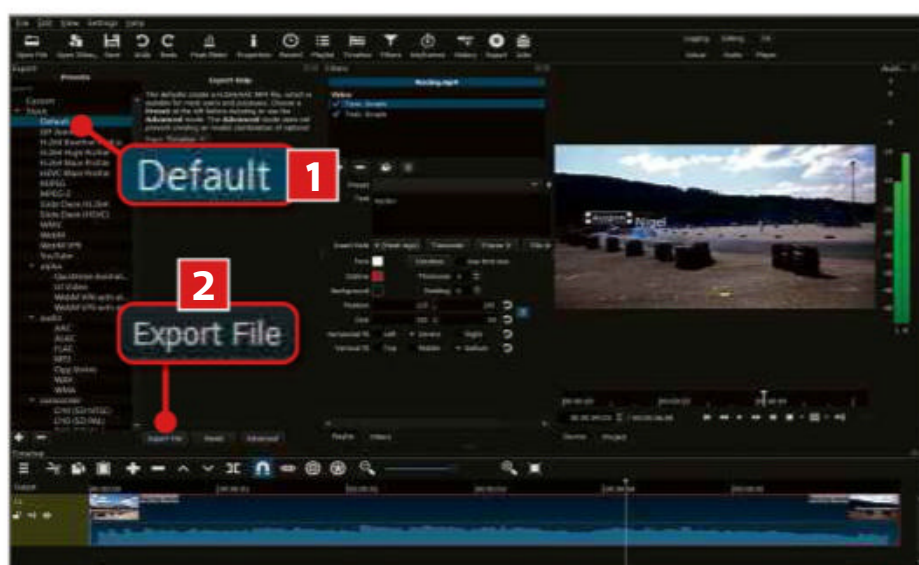


**STEP 5** Navigate to the last point in your video where you want your labels to be visible. The objects you want to track will no longer be aligned with their labels. To fix this, select your first label from the Filter window **1**, then click and drag it into position in the preview window **2**. If the object you are tracking moves towards or away from the camera, resize the label accordingly. Now repeat this process for your other labels (select them by clicking the relevant label in the Filters pane).



**STEP 6** Rewind to the start of the section, then press Play. Unless the objects move in a uniform way, you'll find that although the labels start and finish in the right places, they'll lose their respective objects during the clip. Rewind to the start of the clip, press Play, then Pause when your labels shift away from their objects. Move and resize the labels as before **1**. Repeat this process, making adjustments to the labels as you go until you reach the end of your clip. To undo a change, delete the appropriate keyframe by selecting it **2**, then clicking the Bin icon **3**.

**STEP 7** When you've finished, rewind the clip to the start, then play it. Your labels should now smoothly follow their associated objects (if you need to make any additional adjustments, return to Step 6). To export your video, press Ctrl+E to open the Export pane, select a video format (choose Default **1** to create an MP4 file), then click Export File **2** and choose where to save your video. Depending on the length of your video and speed of your computer, the export process can take a long time (you can monitor progress in the status window that appears).





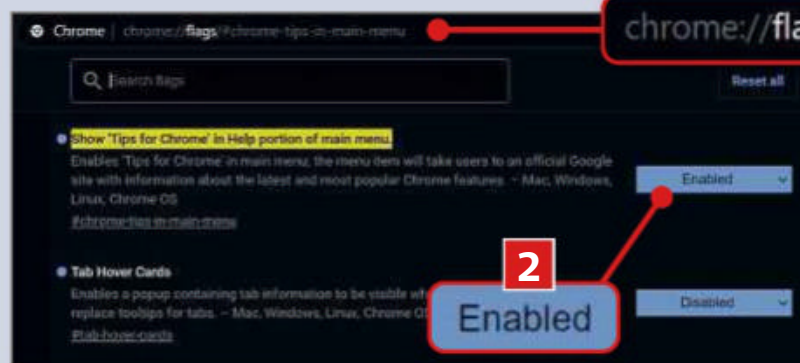
# Readers' Tips

## TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

### Add Chrome tips to its Help menu

As a Chrome user, I was somewhat envious to read about the 'What's Next' page ([www.snipca.com/38033](http://www.snipca.com/38033)) that Microsoft has introduced for Edge (Issue 605, page 6). Where's my equivalent for Chrome tips, I thought?

I found that you could see something similar by typing `chrome://flags/#chrome-tips-in-main-menu` into Chrome's address bar (1 in screenshot), then pressing Enter and selecting Enabled in the dropdown



menu next to the top result 2. This adds a link to [www.google.com/chrome/tips](http://www.google.com/chrome/tips) to your Chrome menu. To see this, you'll need to relaunch Chrome, then click the three vertical dots at the top right and

select Help, followed by 'Tips for Chrome'. I found loads of useful tweaks on the site. I suppose instead you could just bookmark [www.google.com/chrome/tips](http://www.google.com/chrome/tips) and visit it every now and then. But I've already got too many bookmarks cluttering up

Chrome. It makes more sense for me to hide it away behind Chrome's menu.

James Pinter

James wins a copy of our 2020 Back Issue CD

Buy it on Amazon [www.snipca.com/38164](http://www.snipca.com/38164)

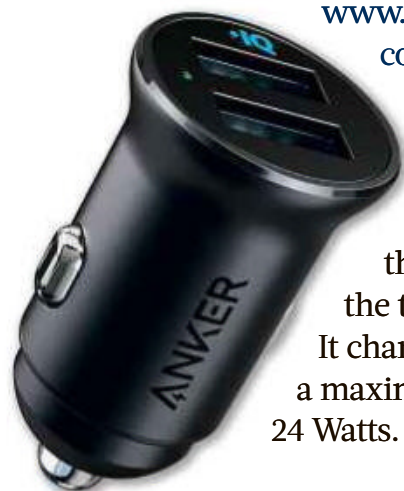


## HARDWARE

### Charge your phone in your car

✓ One charging method you didn't mention in your feature on alternative chargers (Issue 607, pages 60-61) is using your car battery. Most cars these days have a USB socket tucked away somewhere, but I still drive an old banger that doesn't.

I get around this by plugging Anker's Car Charger Mini (£9.50 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38287](http://www.snipca.com/38287),



pictured left) into the cigarette lighter, then connecting the phone to one of the two USB-A ports. It charges quickly, with a maximum output of 24 Watts.

Richard Parks

## EMAIL

### Use wildcard characters to filter spam

✓ Gmail helpfully collects potential spam messages which makes them easy for you to delete, send to your inbox, or forward to [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk). However, since buying a new phone I've been flooded with spam from Japan or maybe China, addressed to me in their language.

When I try to use Gmail to 'filter messages like these', it fails to identify the source addresses because the companies keep changing parts of their email address. But I've discovered a method that seems to work - using the \* (asterisk) character to replace parts of the sending address.

For example, I change the address `piymJg6D@somecompany.com` (see screenshot above right) to `*@*somecompany.com`, then ask the filter to delete any further messages from



that source. The \* symbol acts as a **wildcard**, which stands in for unknown text or characters. Gradually, the number of spam messages is reducing. Hopefully other readers can benefit from this workaround.

John Hook

## OFFICE

### Add pre-1900 dates to Excel spreadsheets

✓ While researching my family tree, I set up an Excel spreadsheet to calculate people's ages at various Census

## Why I stopped using...

### Apple's AirTags

✓ Being a gadget freak, I was seduced by Apple's AirTags ([www.snipca.com/38323](http://www.snipca.com/38323), see Issue 607, page 28), and accepted the offer of a free engraving of my initials to personalise it. It connected with my phone in seconds.

### And what I use instead

However, the **Tile** ([www.thetileapp](http://www.thetileapp),

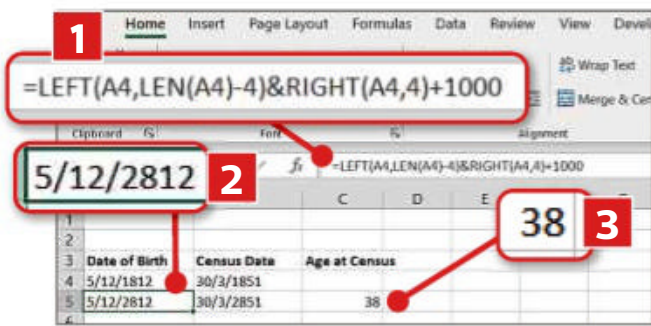
[com](http://www.thetileapp)) wins hands down, partly because it's better designed and slimmer. It also has its own attachment ring, unlike Apple's. If you buy an AirTag, you've then got the extra expense of buying an accessory to attach it to a keyring.

David Stevenson



Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)





dates. With 'Date of Birth' in cell A4 and 'Census Date' in B4, the age at the Census should be obtained by typing the formula: `=DATEDIF(A4,B4,"Y")`.

However, I couldn't get this to work and eventually discovered that Excel can't handle dates before 1900. One way around this is to add, say, 1000 years to both dates before using DATEDIF.

So, an adjusted 'Date of Birth' is obtained by typing the formula: `=LEFT(A4,LEN(A4)-4)&RIGHT(A4,4)+1000` (1 in our screenshot above). You use the same formula to get the adjusted Census Date, replacing A4 with B4. Using DATEDIF on these adjusted dates gives the expected answer – so typing 5/12/1812 adds a thousand years and makes it 5/12/2812 (2). This calculates the age when the Census was done at 38 (3).

You may have to format the adjusted dates as 'Date format' for this to work, and you could probably combine it all into a single formula.

Dave Duncan

## ONLINE STORAGE

### Re-upload files to Google Drive to reclaim space

Google Drive offers a generous 15GB of free storage, which should be more than enough for most households. I was therefore surprised to see our limit had almost been reached. Clicking the amount used (at the bottom of Gmail) showed nothing in Photos, 1.5GB in Gmail (too many attachments), and 12GB in Drive itself.

I emailed Google for help via [google-drive-help@google.com](mailto:google-drive-help@google.com), and they said the amount included items in the Gmail and Google Drive bins and that we could delete these to recover space. They're automatically deleted after 30 days anyway.

Our problem is that Google Drive keeps older versions of documents (for 30 days, and up to 100 edits), which can be recovered. We frequently update one very large spreadsheet, which probably caused our account to be so large. Google said we should re-upload all our files from our computer to Google Drive while our

Google Drive is completely empty.

First, you need to disconnect your account from Google's 'Backup and Sync' on your computer. To do this, click the 'Backup and Sync' icon, then the three dots, followed by Preferences, Settings, then 'Disconnect account'.

Once the account has been disconnected, delete all your files in Google Drive online (except all Google Docs, if any). Your files on your computer won't be affected because you've disconnected your account. Now wait until your online storage has gone down to 0GB, which means there are no more files eating up your storage. You now just need to sign into your 'Backup and Sync' account to re-upload your files to Drive.

This way, you'll be able to have the same storage usage on Google Drive online and the Google Drive folder on your computer. It was a bit scary, but it worked. Hopefully, I'll not need to repeat it too often.

Will Clements

## IPHONE

### Add your signature to sign documents digitally

Following your useful Workshop in Issue 606 (page 40) on adding your signature to a PDF, I'd like to explain

## Reader recommends...

### Acer Spin 713 Chromebook

£599 from Currys PC World [www.snipca.com/38241](http://www.snipca.com/38241)

I had been interested in buying a Chromebook, and was underwhelmed by a second-hand model I bought from CeX ([www.snipca.com/38371](http://www.snipca.com/38371)). It had a very basic Intel Celeron processor and, as you pointed out in Issue 604 (page 60), such machines struggle even when only having to cope with Chrome OS.

However, that didn't put me off Chromebooks, and last year, having seen many favourable reviews, I bought the Acer Spin 713. It's been a revelation. Having an Intel Core i5 processor, 8GB of memory and 128GB NVMe drive, it starts up almost instantly and handles pretty much everything I throw at it, whether that's browsing, emails, social media, YouTube or catch-up TV.



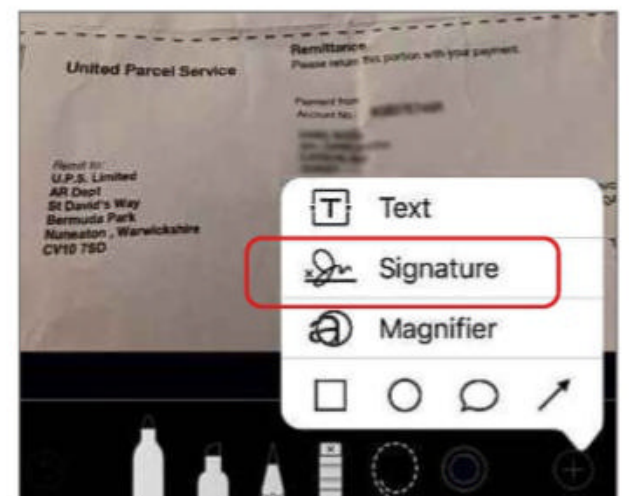
It's not perfect. The speakers are almost unusable and I still need my Windows 10 PC for heavy-duty stuff such as photo editing, but it's ideal for everyday use.

Robert Brown



Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?

Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



how I do it on my iPhone.

First, here's how to create a digital signature so it's always ready to add. You need to take a photo of the document you want to sign, then open it in the Photos app. Next, tap the screen, then tap Edit at the top right. At the bottom, tap the circle with three dots, then Markup. Now tap the + (plus) sign at the bottom right and select Signature (see screenshot above). You can now 'draw' your signature on screen using your finger. Click 'Done' to finish.


The next time you want to add your signature, follow the above steps up to selecting Signature, then tap the signature when it appears in the options that slide up from the bottom. You can also tap 'Add or Remove Signature' to do either.

Phil Bowman



# Phone and Tablet Tips

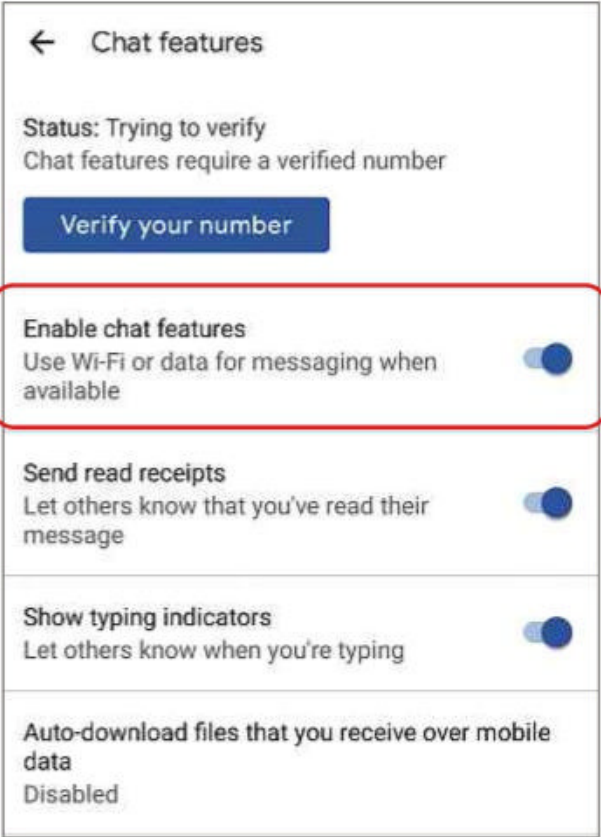
## ANDROID Check whether your device supports improved messaging

 In Issue 601 (page 69), we explained that Rich Communications Services (RCS) was a more up-to-date version of the SMS and MMS messaging technology offered by older phones.

To recap briefly, RCS has a number of benefits over traditional messaging services, including the potential to add iMessage and WhatsApp-style features to Android's messaging apps, such as Google Messages. It lets you send messages over any internet connection (not just mobile networks) and also send

and receive texts that are longer than 160 characters. But we also mentioned that not all Android devices currently support RCS. Thankfully, there's a quick way to find out whether yours does.

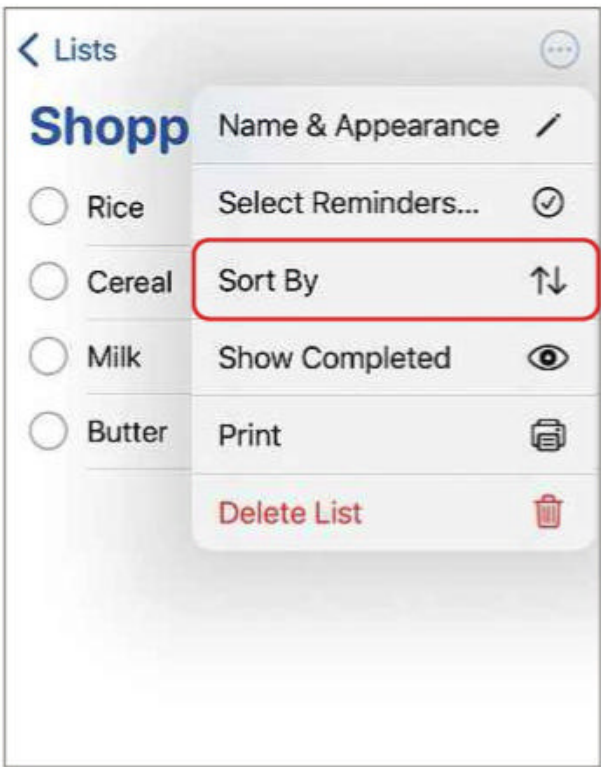
You'll need Google Messages installed for this so get it from Google Play Store ([www.snipca.com/38421](http://www.snipca.com/38421)) if you don't already have it on your device. Now, open the app, tap the menu button (three dots, top right) and select Settings. Here, tap 'Chat features' at the top (on some devices you may need to tap General first). If you see an option to 'Enable chat features' here (see screenshot below left), your device supports RCS and you can enable the option if it isn't already switched on. If you don't see the option, RCS isn't available for your device.



## iOS Organise and print reminders

 A reminder app is an essential tool for those of us who need a little nudge to remember appointments and events in our lives. The Reminders app that comes with iOS has a lot to recommend it, including the ability to set alerts by asking Siri and the option to share these reminders with other iOS users. However, until now, Apple's app didn't let you organise your lists or print them when you needed a hard copy. Thanks to the recent iOS 14.5 update, however, you can now do both of these.

Now you can open any list of reminders and tap the menu button (three dots),



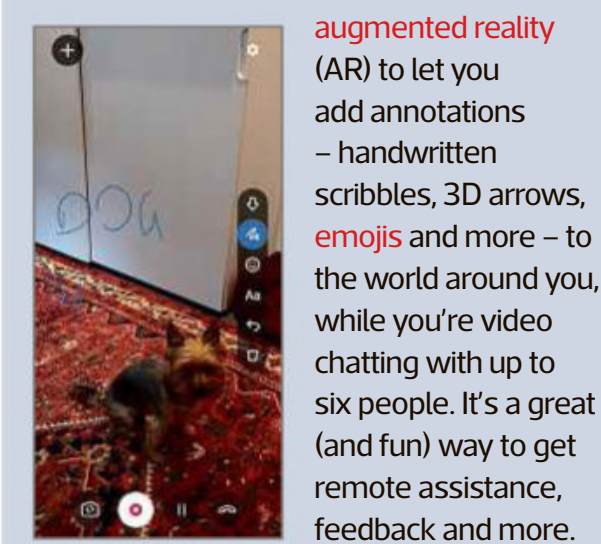
then tap Sort By (see screenshot above) to organise your list by Deadline, Creation Date, Priority or Title. You'll then be asked to choose Ascending or Descending order – tap to make your choice. You can also opt to sort them manually.

To print your list, just open it, then tap the menu button and select Print. Tap 'Select Printer' to choose your printer, then tap Print.

Remember – these options will only be accessible if you've updated your device to iOS version 14.5 (or newer). Tap 'Settings', General, then Software Update to check which version you're using – if you need to update, tap 'Download and Install' and follow the steps to complete the process.

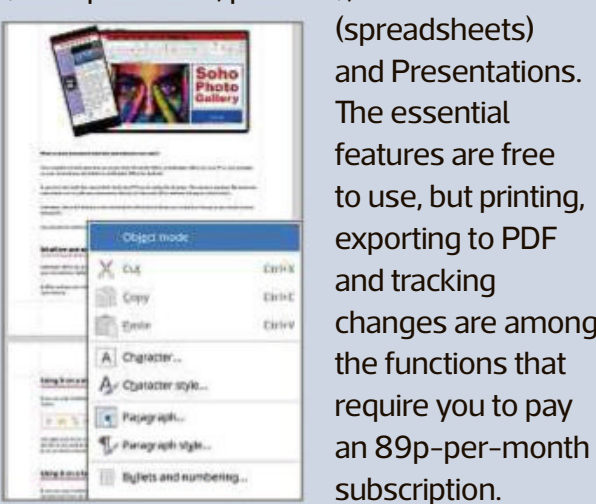
## BEST NEW APPS What you should install this fortnight

**LifeAR**  
**Free**  
**Android** [www.snipca.com/38400](http://www.snipca.com/38400)  
**iOS** [www.snipca.com/38401](http://www.snipca.com/38401)  
New from TeamViewer, LifeAR uses



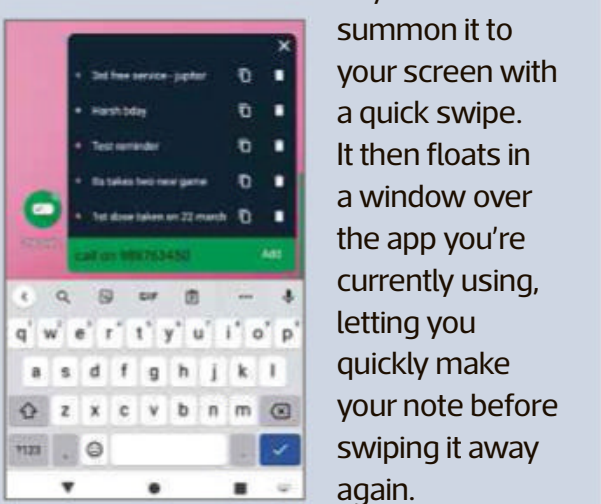
**augmented reality** (AR) to let you add annotations – handwritten scribbles, 3D arrows, **emojis** and more – to the world around you, while you're video chatting with up to six people. It's a great (and fun) way to get remote assistance, feedback and more.

**SoftMaker Office 2021**  
**Free\***  
**Android** [www.snipca.com/38403](http://www.snipca.com/38403)  
SoftMaker has released a free Android office suite, available as separate apps: TextMaker (word processor, pictured), PlanMaker



(spreadsheets) and Presentations. The essential features are free to use, but printing, exporting to PDF and tracking changes are among the functions that require you to pay an 89p-per-month subscription.

**One Swipe Notes**  
**59p**  
**Android** [www.snipca.com/38402](http://www.snipca.com/38402)  
As with other note apps, One Swipe Notes lets you jot down ideas, set reminders and more. The difference is you can



summon it to your screen with a quick swipe. It then floats in a window over the app you're currently using, letting you quickly make your note before swiping it away again.

\*Contains in-app purchases



## Brilliant things to do on your device



### iOS

#### Prevent iMessage audio messages from disappearing

Apple's iMessage app lets you send or receive audio messages. To send one, tap and hold the **waveform** button in the iMessage box to start recording, then release the button to stop and tap the arrow button to send.

If you've ever sent or received one yourself, however, you may have noticed that audio messages will suddenly disappear. By default, audio messages are set to expire two minutes after being sent or listened to. And once they're gone, there's no way to recover them. This is designed to protect your privacy, but there are ways to keep your audio messages, should you wish.

To keep an individual message, tap the Keep option that appears below the audio message bubble within two minutes. To keep all messages, tap Settings, then Messages and scroll down to Audio Messages. Tap 'After 2 Minutes' next to Expire (see screenshot above) and instead select Never.

Now any audio messages you send or receive will remain on your iOS device until you delete them. Audio clips you send to others, however, will still disappear from their device, unless they also change their iMessage settings.

### ANDROID & iOS

#### Share a specific section of a podcast in Spotify

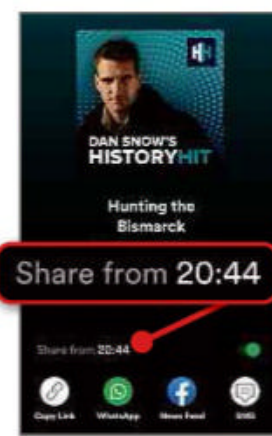


Have you ever wanted to send someone a particular moment from a lengthy podcast episode, rather than share the entire thing? Previously, you needed to make a note of the time you want your recipient to start (and stop) listening, then send this along with a link to the episode itself.

Spotify has now removed the need for

all this palaver, thanks to a recent update. Now, when you share a podcast episode with someone you can point them to a specific **timestamp**, which will take them directly to the section you want them to listen to.

To do this, make sure Spotify is up to date, then open it, tap the Your Library tab and browse for the podcast you want to share. Tap this, then look for the episode and start playing it. Tap the 'now playing' bar at the bottom of the screen to bring up the full-screen playback controls and use



the progress slider under the show's title to navigate to the point at which you want your recipient to listen. When you find the right place, hit Pause, then tap the Share button in the bottom-right corner.

You'll see an option to 'Share from...' with a timestamp that corresponds to the place you paused playback (see

screenshot left). Tap the slider next to this to enable the timestamp, then choose how you want to share from the options below and follow the remaining prompts to add your recipient(s).

## BEST APPS FOR...

## Gardening for summer

### Gardenize

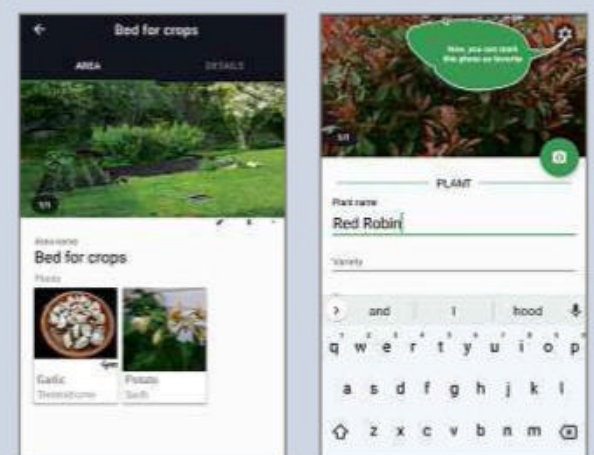
Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/38404](http://www.snipca.com/38404)

iOS [www.snipca.com/38405](http://www.snipca.com/38405)

Billed as a 'plant diary', Gardenize helps you look after your plants by logging them – adding photos, notes and more so you can track their growth rate and health at various times of the year. Get your friends and family to install the app and you can follow their gardens, too.

**Best For** Tracking your garden's progress



### PictureThis

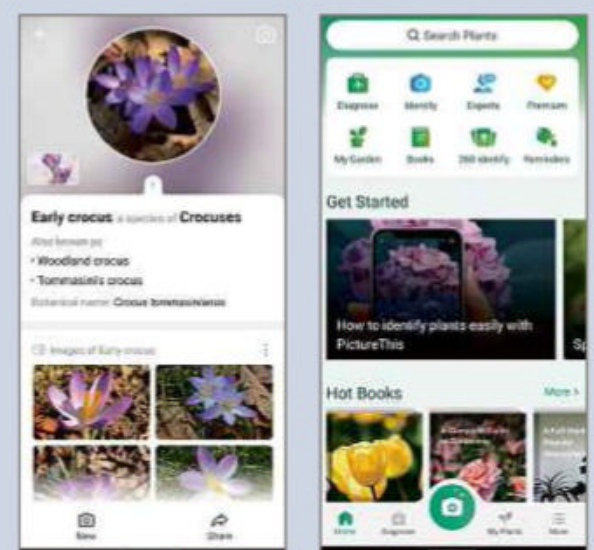
Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/38408](http://www.snipca.com/38408)

iOS [www.snipca.com/38409](http://www.snipca.com/38409)

PictureThis helps you sort the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, by letting you identify plants, wildflowers and weeds simply by pointing your camera at them. It also offers plant-care reminders, weeding tips and more. The app is free to try for seven days, after which it costs £2.89 per month.

**Best For** Distinguishing weeds



### RHS Grow Your Own

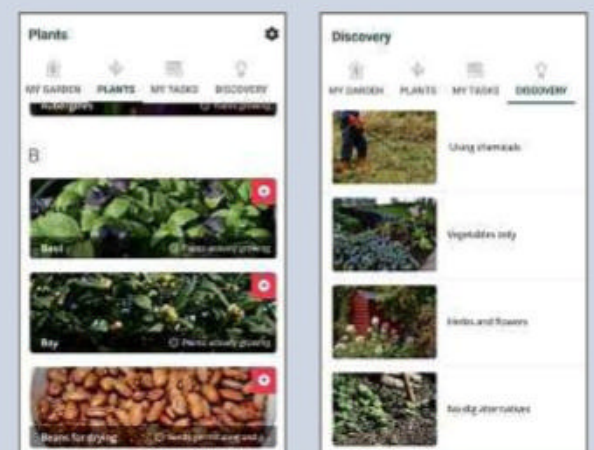
Free

Android [www.snipca.com/38406](http://www.snipca.com/38406)

iOS [www.snipca.com/38407](http://www.snipca.com/38407)

This app from the Royal Horticultural Society is aimed at gardeners looking to cultivate their own fruit, vegetables and herbs. The app provides tools for planning your patch, useful information about the best time to plant and harvest a variety of crops, and advice on specific topics, such as raised beds and fertilisers.

**Best For** Cultivating fruit and veg



\*Contains in-app purchases



### WINDOWS 8.1 & 10

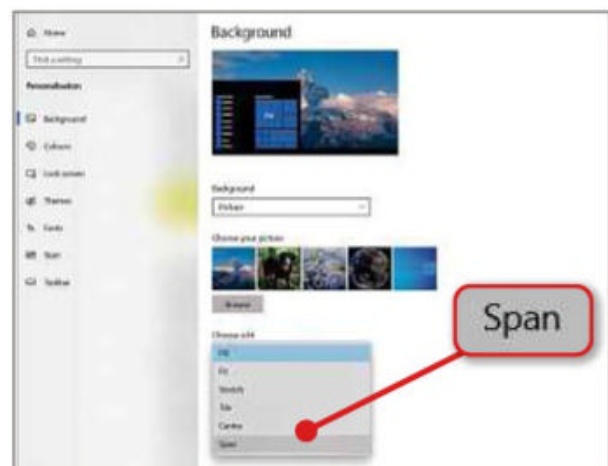
#### Set different wallpapers for multiple monitors



If you have more than one screen attached to your computer (such as an external monitor and your laptop's built-in display), you can set a different background image for each.

Right-click an empty section of the desktop on either screen, then select Personalise. If the wallpaper images you want to use aren't displayed in the 'Choose your picture' section, click Browse to locate and add them. Next, right-click the image you want to display on your first screen then select 'Set for monitor 1'. Repeat this process until you've added wallpaper to all your desktops.

Alternatively, you can set a single image to stretch across all your desktops. First, click your chosen image from the list – this sets it to appear on all desktops. Next, click the 'Choose a fit' dropdown menu and select Span (see screenshot below). The image will now span all your screens, though depending on the resolution of your image, you may find some sections of it have been cropped.



### WINDOWS 10

#### Prioritise which notifications you see



Windows frequently displays notifications in the bottom-right corner of your desktop. Although these disappear after a few seconds, they can still be an unwelcome distraction when you're hard at work on a document or watching a video in full-screen mode.

The 'Focus assist' mode in Windows 10 lets you temporarily block notifications in specific circumstances – to turn it on, open Settings, select System, then 'Focus assist'. In the 'Automatic rules' section on the right, select when you want this mode to be turned on (such as at specific times or when you're using an app in full-screen mode). Click an option and

### WINDOWS 10

#### Set default save locations



Whether you have multiple hard drives installed in your PC or a single hard drive split into **partitions**, Windows lets you choose which one to use when saving files such as documents, music and video.

Open Settings (press the Windows key+I), then select System followed by Storage. Scroll down the options on the right-hand side and click 'Change where new content is saved'. You'll now see a list of file types along with the drive Windows currently saves new files to. By default, these will all be set to the same drive where Windows is installed (usually C: drive).

To change the location for one of the file types, click the dropdown menu next to it, then select from the available drive letters and click Apply (see screenshot). When you select a new drive, Windows will create a new folder in the **root directory** of that drive and rename it according to your Windows username. It will then create a

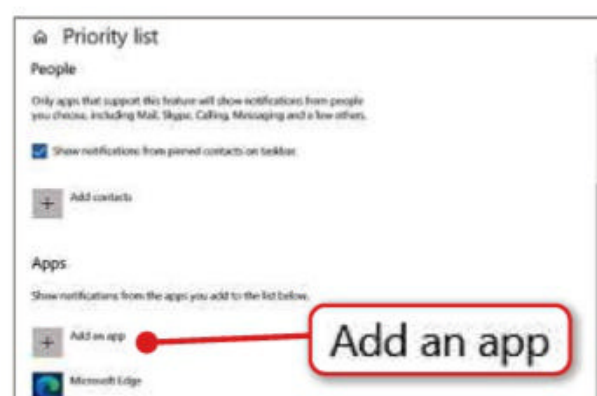


subfolder for the file type you selected.

Note that if you later change the save location to another drive, Windows won't delete the folders or files from the previously selected drive – the change will affect new files only.

you can view additional settings, including whether to allow 'priority' notifications to appear. If you choose to do this, it's worth regularly reviewing these as your priorities may change over time. From the 'Focus assist' window in the Settings app, click the 'Customise your priority list' link (located below the 'Priority only' option at the top).

In the window that opens, tick the notification types that you want to prioritise, such as phone calls and reminders. Further down the page you can include specific apps – so if you always want to see notifications from Edge, click 'Add an app' at the top of the list (see screenshot below), followed by Microsoft Edge. To remove an app from the priority list, select it, then click Remove.



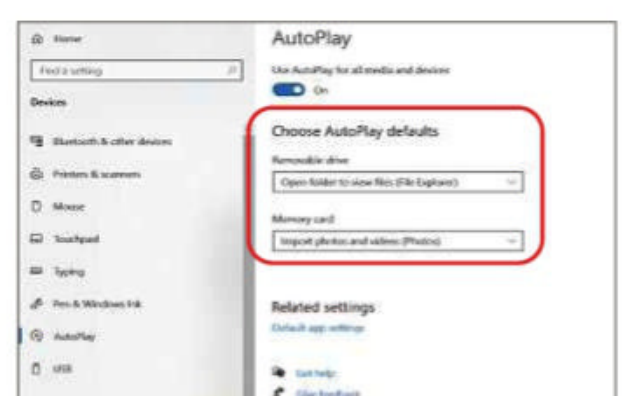
### WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

#### Manage your autoplay options



Windows lets you choose what happens when you insert a USB stick or memory card into your computer – for example you may want to open a new File Explorer window or copy all photos on your memory card to your hard drive.


To view and change these settings, click the Start button, type **autoplay**, press Enter then select an option from the two dropdown menus (see screenshot below). Sometimes, however, you may want to temporarily disable your autoplay settings. To do this, simply hold the left Shift key down when inserting the USB stick or memory card.





### MICROSOFT WORD

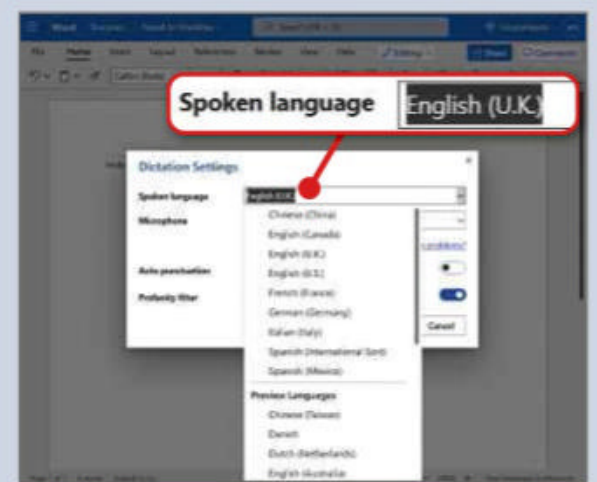
## Dictate your documents

 Still typing documents using your keyboard? Why not dictate them instead? You'll need a Microsoft 365 subscription to use the Dictate tool in the offline version of Word, but it's also available in the online version at [www.office.com](https://www.office.com) (you'll need just a free Microsoft account to use this).

Whether you're using the offline or online version, open a new document, then select the Home tab in the ribbon menu at the top and click Dictate. A small window will now appear at the bottom of your document with a red microphone icon indicating Word is

listening. Start talking and Word will generate words as you speak. When you pause, Word will scan what it's produced, then apply suitable edits (capitalisation and so on). You can add punctuation as you speak (such as by saying "full stop") as well as remove words ("delete") and start new paragraphs ("new paragraph"). When you've finished dictating, click the microphone button to turn off dictation.

Alongside existing options such as English, French and Spanish, Microsoft recently added new languages to the tool, allowing you to dictate in Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Polish, Portuguese,




Russian and Thai.

To change the language, click the cog icon in the Dictate window, then select from the 'Spoken language' options (see screenshot). Switch on the 'Auto punctuation' setting and Word will attempt to add punctuation for you – in our tests, this worked very well.

### MICROSOFT EXCEL & LIBREOFFICE CALC

## Make formulas easier to create

 Spreadsheet formulas are usually made up of confusing cell references.

To make formulas easier to create and understand in Excel and Calc, you can give cells (individual ones and groups) a name.

First, select the cell or highlight the group of cells you want to name. Next, click the Name box in the top-right corner of your spreadsheet (to the left of the formula bar) and replace the text (this will be the cell reference by default) with the name you want to use. Make sure you press Enter once you've entered the name, otherwise it won't be saved. Repeat the process to name any other cells.

Once you've finished naming cells you can start using them in formulas. So instead of using a formula such as `=SUM(A1:A10)`, you could name the


A1:A10 range 'Units', then use the formula `=SUM(Units)`.

You can view all your named cells and groups by clicking the down arrow next to the Name box. Click on a name in the list and you'll be directed to the relevant cell or group of cells.

To remove a named entry in LibreOffice Calc, click 'Manage Names...' in the Names dropdown menu (see screenshot below left), select the name you want to remove, then click Delete (this deletes only the name, not the contents of the cells). You can similarly remove names in Excel by clicking the Formulas tab, then Name Manager.

### MICROSOFT EXCEL

## Have spreadsheets read to you



 If you've entered a lot of financial data from a printout into a spreadsheet, it's worth checking you haven't made any errors. To make this process easier, use Excel's hidden 'Speak Cells' tool. This reads the contents

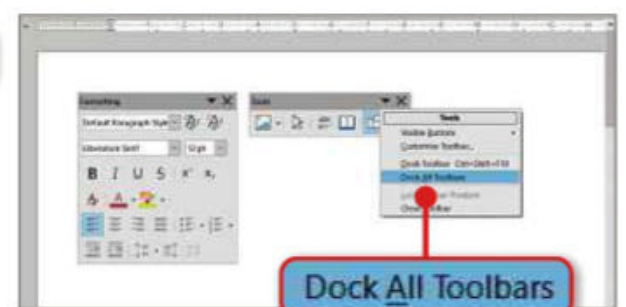
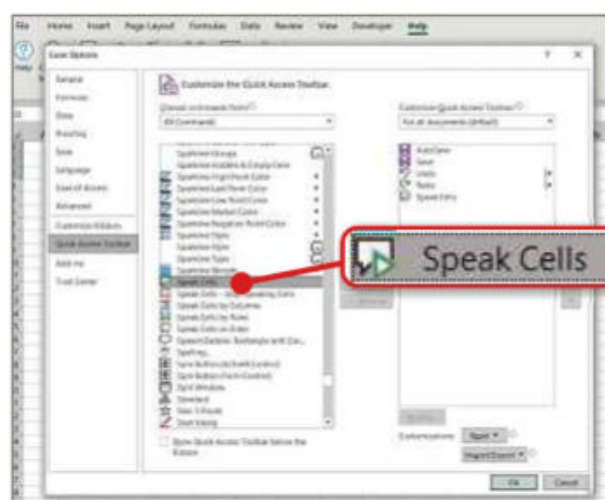
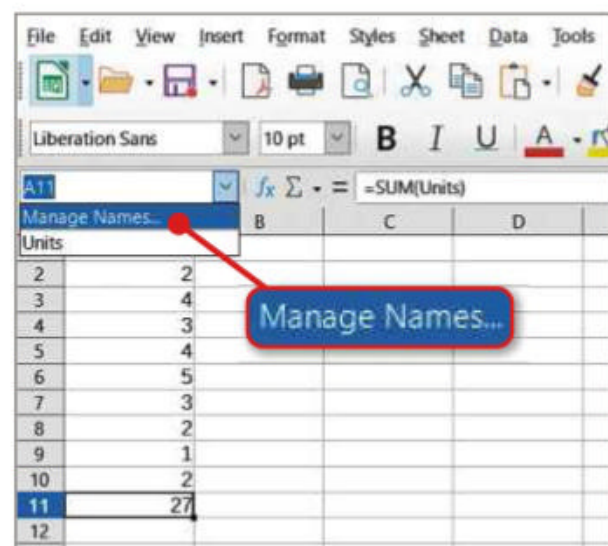
of cells out loud, letting you check them against the original.

To use it, click the down arrow in the title bar of the Excel window (next to the undo and redo buttons), then select 'More Commands...'. Next, select All Commands in the dropdown menu at the top, then scroll down, double-click Speak Cells (see screenshot below left) and click OK. The 'Speak Cells' button (a speech-bubble icon) will now appear in the title bar. To hear the contents of cells, highlight them in your spreadsheet, then click the Speak Cells button.

### LIBREOFFICE WRITER & CALC

## Dock and undock toolbar sections

  Writer and Calc let you undock sections from the main toolbar so they appear in their own windows, which you can then resize and move. To undock a section, click the dotted horizontal bar next to a section, then drag it away from the toolbar. When you've finished, you can drag it back to the toolbar, where it'll snap into position. Alternatively, click the down arrow at the top right of any undocked toolbar, then select Dock All Toolbars (see screenshot below).





# In The Club



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

## Collaborate on spreadsheets in real time

Large spreadsheets can take time to put together, so when you have to share one with your club's members you may worry about changes made by others. Google Sheets ([www.google.com/sheets](http://www.google.com/sheets) - sign up for a free Google account if you don't already have one) lets you not only share your spreadsheets, but also control what people can do with them.

If you have an existing spreadsheet that you want to share, click the folder icon (top left of the Google Sheets home page), select the Upload tab, then click 'Select a file from your device' or simply drag the spreadsheet into the Upload section. Alternatively, create a new spreadsheet by selecting one of the templates at the top.

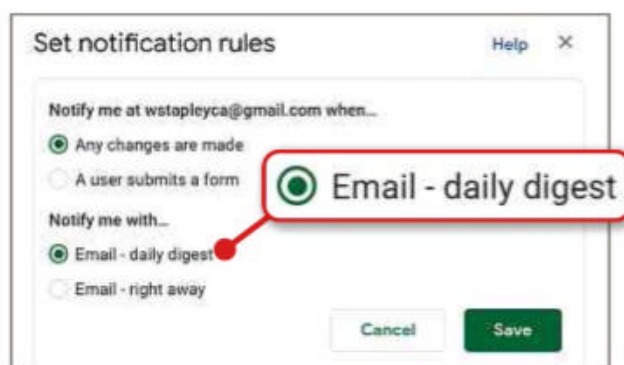
With your spreadsheet open, make sure it has a suitable title (click the name in the top-left corner to change this if necessary), then click the green Share button (top right).

If you've previously created a Google Group for your club (see page 48 in Issues 600 and 601 for more on these), enter its email address in the 'Add people or groups' box. Alternatively, enter the email addresses of the people you want to share the spreadsheet with (each person will need a Google account). The box on the right of the email addresses lets you choose from three access levels: Editor (can change cell contents), Commenter (can't edit, but can comment) and Viewer (read-only). Click 'Send' to share the spreadsheet.

When people are working on the spreadsheet, you'll see their initials in the top-right corner of the Google Sheets window and all their edits will appear in real time.

### Make and review comments

To add a comment, right-click the relevant cell, then select Comment. You can 'tag' someone (meaning they'll get an email notification about the comment) by typing @ followed by their name. The cell you added the comment to will have a small orange triangle in the top-right corner. If someone hovers over the cell, the comment will appear - they can then



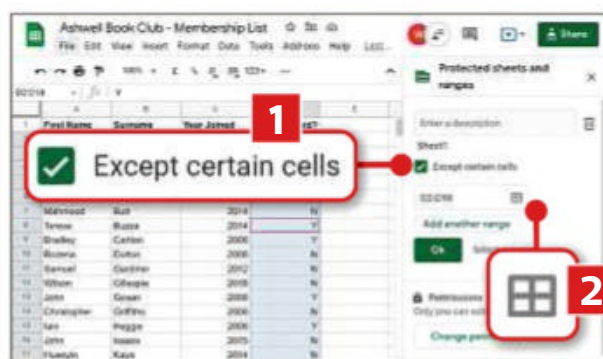
Select 'daily digest' to keep an eye on edits without flooding your inbox

reply to it or, by clicking the tick button, mark it as 'resolved'. To view all comments, click the square speech bubble (top right of the Google Sheets window).

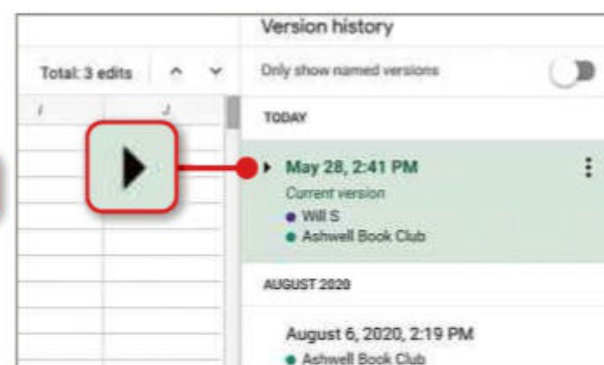
Sometimes you may just want to add a simple instruction to a specific cell (for example, what you want people to enter in it). For this, it's best to create a note (right-click the cell, then select 'Insert note'). Unlike comments, notes are simple text-based annotations, meaning you can't assign them to anyone, nor mark them as resolved.

### Get edit notifications

To stay abreast of changes to your spreadsheet, open the Tools menu, then select 'Notification rules'. Select the 'Any changes are made' option, then choose when to receive the notifications. To get an email as soon as someone makes a change, select 'Email - right away'. However, for spreadsheets with a lot of collaborators this will probably result in your inbox being flooded with notifications, so we recommend selecting the 'Email - daily digest' option instead (see screenshot above).



You can select which cells you want your club's members to edit



Click the small black triangle to view further edits on a specific date

### Protect your spreadsheet

To ensure the people you share your spreadsheet with don't mess up your carefully crafted formatting, you can permit them to edit specific cells only. Open the Tools menu, select 'Protect sheet' then click 'Set permissions'. In the window that opens, click the Custom box, select 'Only you', then click Done. You can now set the cells you do want people to edit. In the 'Protected sheets and ranges' menu on the right, click 'Can edit', tick the 'Except certain cells' box (1 in our screenshot below left) followed by the 'Select data ranges' button (2), then drag your mouse over the cells you want people to edit and click Done.

### View and reverse edits

The beauty of Google Sheets is that all edits are recorded and can be reversed if necessary. To view all edits, open the File menu, select 'Version history', then 'See version history' (or press Ctrl+Alt+Shift+H). The 'Version history' column will now appear on the right-hand side of the window, showing the dates of all edits (if you see a small triangle next to an entry, click it to reveal additional edits on this date - see screenshot above). To revert to a previous version, select it, then click 'Restore this version'.

You can also see any edits made to an individual cell. To do this, right-click the cell, then select 'Show edit history' (this is marked as a new feature, but it was actually added over a year ago). A small pop-up window will appear, in which you can use the arrow buttons to cycle through all edits for that cell.



# What's All the Fuss About...



## Cryptographic Attestation of Personhood

Proving you're not a robot may soon require less squinting

### Catchy name. What is it?

A new way of confirming you're a human when signing into websites. With some luck it might lead to the death of CAPTCHAs.

### Remind me – what are those again?

They're security systems websites use to prove you're a real person, and not a robot. At their most annoying they were squiggly, distorted letters and numbers that you had to type.

### Why were they squiggly?

So they couldn't be understood by automated software – called bots. Hackers use bots to sign into websites, blogs and forums in order to steal email addresses or leave spam. Bots can read ordinary, upright letters, but not when they're leaning forward as though staggering home drunk. The problem was that humans *also* struggled to read them. Thankfully, Google came up with a superior alternative called reCAPTCHA.

### How is that better?

Partly because it uses images as well as words. You're shown a photo divided into a grid and asked to click squares that contain specific items – such as traffic lights, taxis or fire hydrants. This is slightly easier than deciphering distorted text, but the images are sometimes blurred or obscured. It's a nuisance that accounts for a wasted 500 years every day.

### Eh? How do you come to that figure?

It's from Cloudflare – the US firm behind Cryptographic Attestation of Personhood (let's call it 'CAoP' to stay sane) – and uses "very simple back of the envelope maths". On its blog ([www.snipca.com/38383](http://www.snipca.com/38383)), it says there are around 4.6 billion internet users, and they take an



average of 32 seconds to complete a CAPTCHA. They encounter one of these every 10 days. Crunch those numbers and you get 500 years.

### Hmm. It's hardly Einstein, is it?

No – it's nonsense, frankly. But it is a striking figure that helps Cloudflare promote the CAoP "experiment". The idea is that when you're asked to tick a 'I'm a human' box, you need to plug in a USB security key, which are small devices that sign you into a computer or website without having to type a password. The most popular are those made by YubiKey (see product range above), which is what Cloudflare is using. The website will recognise this key and log you in.

### Hold on – isn't that still a CAPTCHA?

Well, it still requires you to prove you're a human, but not by squinting at spidery letters. It also bypasses the problem that Google's photographic CAPTCHAs are US-centric, which means you're stuck if you don't know that New York taxis are yellow, or what

American fire hydrants look like (such as those pictured below left). We're not convinced it'll come to anything though.

### Why not?

Well, Google's reCAPTCHA now works mostly in the background, planting **cookies** on your computer to decide whether your online behaviour passes for human. Sometimes you have to tick 'I'm not a robot' ([www.snipca.com/38382](http://www.snipca.com/38382)), though often you don't need to do anything. It's far less irritating than it once was. But if you're not keen on Google's cookies, and you have a YubiKey, you can test CAoP now at <https://cloudflarechallenge.com>. Cloudflare claims it takes just three clicks and five seconds.

### And is it that easy?

Yes, but it requires having a YubiKey to hand all the time. Cloudflare wants it to work on your phone also, which you're more likely to carry around, though this would require Google (which makes Android) and Apple getting on board. Only then will it CAPTCHA the public imagination.



Everyone's favourite online game: Spot the Fire Hydrant



# YOUR SECRET GUIDE TO amazon

**Robert Irvine** reveals how to uncover the biggest discounts, avoid fake bargains and add money-saving tools to Amazon



**A**s success stories go, Amazon is hard to beat. What started out in 1998 as a simple online bookshop is now a multi-billion pound company that wants to sell

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Identify genuine bargains by seeing how prices have fluctuated over time
- Enjoy Prime Day deals without paying for a Prime subscription
- Find short-lived discounts by creating your own 'bargain basements'
- Track down hidden voucher codes to buy items cheaper

you everything from Bluetooth headphones to baked beans. The company is showing no signs of slowing down, either. While the coronavirus pandemic was bad news for high-street shops, the various lockdowns and work-from-home orders saw Amazon's global revenue last year soar to a record £272 billion, with a staggering 84 per cent increase in net profit ([www.snipca.com/38367](http://www.snipca.com/38367)).

Although we know from your emails that many of you – like us – use Amazon almost every day, the company's rapid expansion has come at a cost. Its once-simple website is now a sprawling mess of menus, sub-menus and ads for sponsored items. Prices can fluctuate on a

daily basis and the site is packed with fake reviews, which makes knowing what to buy – and when – a real headache.

Here, we'll show you how to make sense of it all. We reveal the hidden Amazon tools and the best browser extensions to help you find what you really want and ensure you avoid paying over the odds. We'll also explain how to simplify Amazon's website by removing those annoying adverts and hiding unnecessary menus.

Amazon's annual Prime Day is also fast approaching. The two-day event (21–22 June) provides special offers on thousands of items. On page 57, we reveal the bargains to watch out for and how to avoid deals that aren't what they seem.

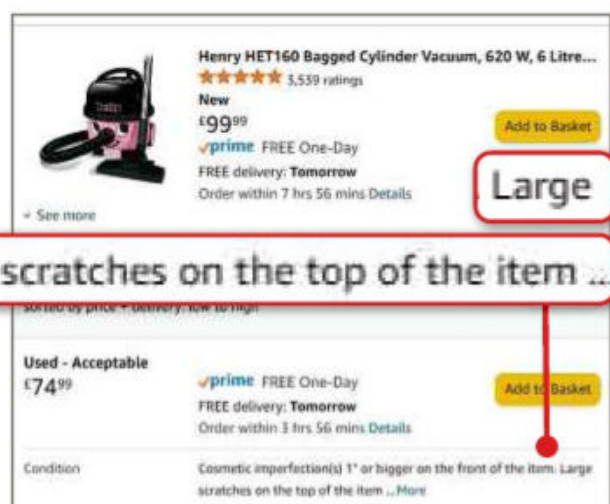


## FIND HIDDEN BARGAINS AND DISCOUNTS

### Buy returned, refurbished and surplus items

Auction sites such as eBay might be your first port of call when looking to buy second-hand items, but it's also worth checking out Amazon's Warehouse section ([www.snipca.com/38295](http://www.snipca.com/38295)). Here you'll find discounts on thousands of returned and used items, all of which come with a one-year warranty and are covered by Amazon's return policy, meaning you have the right to return anything you buy within 30 days.

Click the 'used offers' or 'New & Used' link on a listing to view deals on returned products, as well as details about their condition (see screenshot below). The best, marked as 'Used - Like new', may only have slight damage to the packaging, while 'Used - Acceptable' means the item may be missing parts and have cosmetic damage (see more information on product condition at [www.snipca.com/38380](http://www.snipca.com/38380)). The 'Condition' section in a listing will provide more precise details about the item's state ("Large scratches on the top of the item" in our screenshot below).



**Spend less using Amazon Warehouse, but make sure you check the item's condition first**

Amazon's Renewed section ([www.snipca.com/38299](http://www.snipca.com/38299)) offers low prices on (mostly electronic) items that have been refurbished and tested so that they work and look like new (these come with a one-year warranty). The selection isn't huge, but we identified savings of over £100 on 'previously owned' Samsung smartphones and HP laptops.

It's also worth visiting Amazon Outlet ([www.snipca.com/38302](http://www.snipca.com/38302)) for discounts on thousands of overstocked goods (any that Amazon has a surplus of). The eclectic offerings are randomly arranged – for example, we saw toy figures of various footballers next to an Eastpak laptop sleeve. However, there are plenty of great bargains to be found.

### Track prices to buy items at their cheapest

Prices on Amazon are constantly fluctuating, which makes it difficult to know when the best time to buy is. To keep on top of these changes you can monitor price drops using CamelCamelCamel ([uk.camelcamelcamel.com](http://uk.camelcamelcamel.com) – the name is inspired by the hump-shaped graphs the site uses to show price rises and falls). The site is particularly good for identifying 'fake' bargains during promotions like Prime Day and revealing whether an item has recently increased in price (if so, it's probably worth waiting a week or so to see if the price drops again).

You can search for a specific item on CamelCamelCamel or copy and paste the web address of a product's listing on Amazon. The site will then produce a price-history chart for the past year. It told us that the cost of the latest Apple iPad (10.2in screen, 32GB storage), has ranged from a high of £369.97 to a low of £309 since Amazon started selling it last September (see screenshot above right).

Specify how much you're willing to pay for an item, and CamelCamelCamel will monitor its price, then alert you via email as soon as it drops to or below your stated price. The site also lets you import your Amazon wishlist to create automatic price alerts for any items on it.

We also recommend you visit PriceSpy (<https://pricespy.co.uk>) to find out how much a 'discounted' item sells for elsewhere. For example, we found that the Motorola Moto G8 Power phone that Amazon claimed to be offering at a 39 per cent (or £85) discount was as cheap or cheaper on many other online stores. Indeed, no retailer was selling the phone for the recommended retail price (RRP) of £220.

PriceSpy also provides graphs that chart the price history of a product, so you can check if a Prime Day bargain is genuine or fake by monitoring its cost over time.

### Compare Amazon to high-street prices

Buying stuff on your local high street is usually more expensive than shopping on Amazon, but it has two big advantages:



**CamelCamelCamel will show you a product's fluctuating price range over a 12-month period**

you don't have to wait for delivery and you can try items before buying. Although Amazon's phone app ([www.snipca.com/38377](http://www.snipca.com/38377)) won't let you get items delivered any faster, it does include a hidden tool that lets you browse high-street shops and – once you've found something you like – check whether the shop (or Amazon) is cheaper.

To use the tool, open the Amazon app, tap the camera icon in the search box at the top, then press Camera to take a photo of the item or Barcode to scan its barcode (see screenshot below). The app will show matching and similar results, along with customer reviews. We saved £5.47 on the recipe book whose barcode we scanned in the screenshot below after finding it on Amazon.



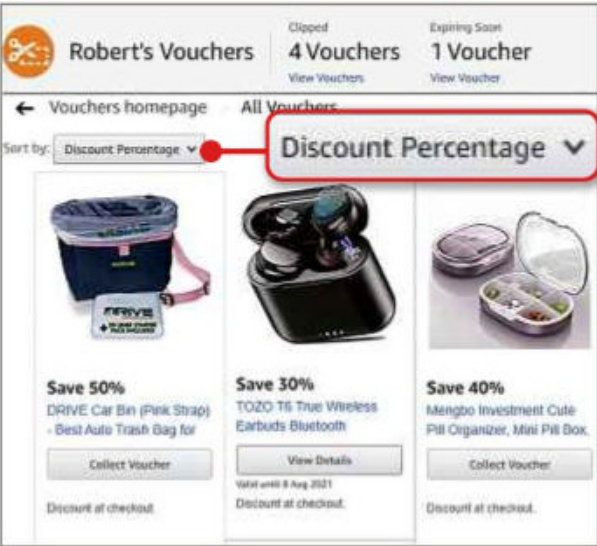
**Use Amazon's app to check whether you can buy an item that you've found in store cheaper online**



Browse secret voucher codes

Compared with rival online stores, Amazon doesn't hand out many discount codes, but it does offer a dedicated Vouchers section ([www.snipca.com/38311](http://www.snipca.com/38311)). Here you'll find time-limited vouchers offering savings on dozens of products – just click Collect Voucher to copy (or 'clip') the code and apply it at the checkout stage.

At first glance many of the deals seem unappealing – such as a five per cent voucher for Premium Fungal Nail Destroyer – but sort the items by Discount Percentage (see screenshot below) and you should uncover more worthwhile bargains. We found vouchers offering 30 per cent off £36 Bluetooth headphones, £20 off an £90 Wi-Fi-enabled projector and 11 per cent off 'smart' bathroom scales.



Find the best Amazon Vouchers by filtering items by Discount Percentage

Find hidden discounts

You can browse Amazon's latest discounts in its Today's Deals section ([www.snipca.com/38313](http://www.snipca.com/38313)), including time-limited Lightning Deals on Prime Day, though you may have to wade through a lot of junk to locate the best bargains.

Save yourself time by installing the Amazon Discount Finder extension ([www.snipca.com/38325](http://www.snipca.com/38325)), which is available for Chrome and Edge (for the latter, type `edge://extensions` into the address bar, then click the 'Allow extensions from other store' slider bottom left so it turns blue. This lets you install all Chrome extensions mentioned over the next few pages on Edge (click the 'Add to Chrome' button to install them)

This extension tweaks Amazon's web links to create custom 'bargain basement' pages. Choose 'United Kingdom' in the extension's Select Country menu, specify a department and enter a few keywords related to the items you're looking for. Use the sliders to set a discount range, enter a minimum and maximum price



Use Amazon Discount Finder to get the biggest and most relevant deals

(see screenshot above), and click the Search Discount button. The Finder will impartially present all relevant results, which you can sort by price, popularity or customer rating. We instantly found a £110 saving on a 50in LG smart TV that usually sells for £600.

Save 15 per cent on regular purchases

While browsing the site you may have noticed Amazon's 'Subscribe & Save' option. This reduces the cost of items that you buy regularly (mostly food and household products) by five per cent, but you may have dismissed this as too small a saving to justify subscribing to. However, this discount increases to 15 per cent when you request repeat deliveries of five separate products, and applies to all your subscribed products even if you cancel one – you just need to have received at

least one delivery of the item you cancel. You can specify the frequency of repeat deliveries (from every two weeks to every six months), letting you secure your discount without the risk of over-ordering.

You should also check whether you can get further savings by applying an Amazon voucher (as explained earlier) to a subscribed item: we saved 20 per cent on a family pack of Heinz Baked Beans by combining a 15-per-cent-off voucher with a subscription (see screenshot bottom of the page).

Find and add cheap items to secure free delivery

If you're not a Prime member, you may have to pay for delivery on orders of less than £20 that don't qualify for Amazon's free Super Saver Delivery service – delivery charges range from 99p to £4.49, although orders that include at least £10 of books are delivered for free.

To avoid delivery charges, add a cheap 'filler' item to your order to help you reach the £20 threshold. Go to Super Saver Tool (<https://supersavertool.co.uk>) then enter the amount you need to spend to qualify for free delivery (see screenshot below), and the site will suggest cheap items to add to your basket. These include small but useful products such as cotton buds, batteries and hair gel. It then lets you click straight through to Amazon to buy them.



Find filler items to add to your order so that it qualifies for free Super Saver Delivery



Save money by combining subscriptions to items you buy regularly with vouchers



## MAKE THE MOST OF AMAZON PRIME

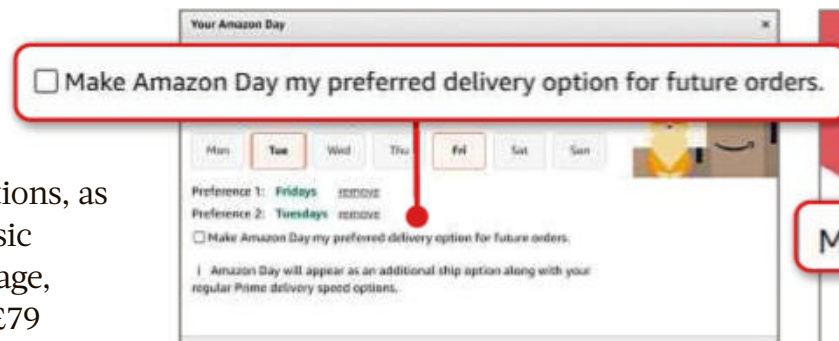
### Share your subscription to cut the cost

Amazon Prime now offers so many benefits – next-day free delivery (same-day in some locations, as we explain later), video and music streaming, unlimited photo storage, free ebooks and more – that its £79 annual membership fee is good value for those who regularly take advantage of these services. But if you can't afford to pay that amount in one go, or you're likely to use Prime features only occasionally, there are ways to reduce the cost.

One way to cut the cost is to share your Prime subscription with family and friends using Amazon Household ([www.snipca.com/38324](http://www.snipca.com/38324)). This lets you add another adult (and up to four children) to your Prime account, so they can reap the shopping benefits on Prime Day without paying separately. You don't need to live at the same address, but you must use the same payment account for purchases.

You could also sign up for Prime's free 30-day free trial and cancel before Amazon charges you. This will let you enjoy all the discounts and free, speedy deliveries of Prime Day without having to commit to the full subscription – just be aware that you can sign up for the free trial only once.

Choose the option to pay monthly when you sign up for the trial and you'll be charged only £7.99 rather than the annual rate of £79 should you forget to cancel in time.



Once you've chosen your Amazon Days, you can set all future deliveries for those days

### Choose your preferred Prime delivery day

One drawback to buying multiple products during a Prime Day promotion is that they are likely to come from different suppliers and arrive on different days. To avoid a lot of waiting in to receive your packages, Prime lets you nominate up to two 'Amazon Days'. This limits all your deliveries for that week to those nominated days, so all your orders arrive when it's most convenient to you.

You can either choose your preferred days at checkout or go to [www.snipca.com/38330](http://www.snipca.com/38330) and click the Manage Your Amazon Day button. Select a day (or two) and (optionally) select 'Make Amazon Day my preferred delivery option for future orders' (see screenshot above), before clicking Save.

### Get free same-day grocery deliveries

If you're a Prime member, you can order items to arrive before 10pm on the same day, without paying for delivery (this costs £5.99 for non-Prime members). To take advantage of this you must place



Check whether Amazon Prime's free Same-Day Delivery is available in your area

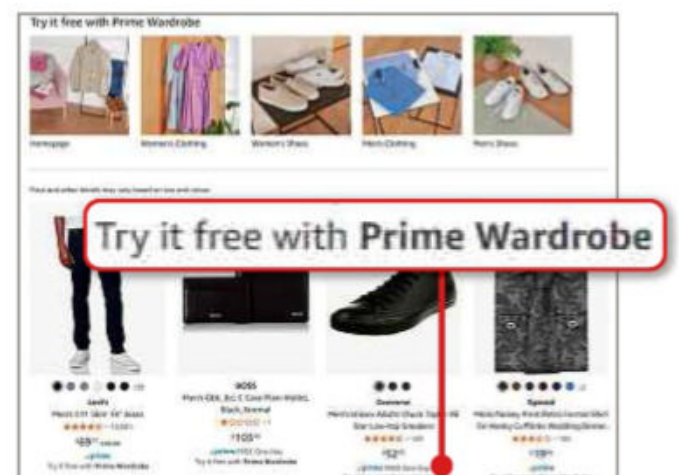
your order before 12 noon (1pm in Scotland) and live in an eligible area – enter your postcode at [www.snipca.com/38327](http://www.snipca.com/38327) to check (see screenshot above).

Amazon recently expanded this free Same-Day Delivery service to include groceries from its Fresh department and from Morrisons, although this only applies to orders over £40 (anything below costs £3.99).

### Try clothes on before you buy with Prime Wardrobe

The Prime Wardrobe service makes it easier to buy shoes, shirts, jackets and other clothing. It lets you order multiple sizes of the same item, keep them for seven days, then send back anything that doesn't fit. You pay for only those items that you keep after the seven-day period, so you don't have to worry about chasing refunds for the items you returned.

Prime members can order up to six items at once, which are delivered to your home free of charge and come with a resealable bag and prepaid label for free returns. To use it, just look for the 'Try it free with Prime Wardrobe' tag when shopping (see screenshot below) or browse the entire Prime Wardrobe selection at [www.snipca.com/38338](http://www.snipca.com/38338).



Prime Wardrobe lets you order multiple sizes of clothing and only pay for the items you keep

## Get exclusive deals from Treasure Truck

Like a travelling circus of bargains, Amazon's Treasure Truck (pictured) tours the UK to deliver what the company calls "awesome" goodies (discounted products to the rest of us) at free events. The pandemic put the brakes on the truck, but it is still offering special discounts through its website ([www.snipca.com/38337](http://www.snipca.com/38337)) and the Amazon mobile app.

You don't need to be a Prime member and there's an exclusive new deal every day – when we visited, there was a 22 per cent saving on a Corsair gaming mouse. There's often limited stock, so you need to claim your bargain fast.

When Treasure Truck is due back on



the road later this year, you'll be able to text **TRUCK** to 65018 to receive alerts about events in your area. Follow Treasure Truck on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/treasuretruckUK>) and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/treasuretruckUK](http://www.facebook.com/treasuretruckUK)) for regular prize draws and giveaways.



# READER OFFER!



## Buy **Windows 10 Pro** for just **£69.99!**

In this special offer exclusively for *Computeractive* readers, you can buy **Windows 10 Pro** for only £69.99.

That's a whopping £150 cheaper than Microsoft's full price of £219.99.

To buy **Windows 10 Pro**, visit [www.snipca.com/38453](http://www.snipca.com/38453) and click the red Buy Now button on the right.

If you have any questions about your purchase, please email *Computeractive* Editor Daniel Booth: [editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk).



### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

This offer can be used by one person only, and expires at midnight on **29 June, 2021**. It's a lifetime licence for one computer.



## DISCOVER AMAZON'S BEST SECRET TOOLS

### Use augmented reality to preview items in your home

Rather than risk buying an expensive item of furniture from Amazon only to find it doesn't go with your decor, you can use **augmented reality** (AR) to preview how it will look in your home.

This tool is available in the Amazon app for Android and iOS, for selected large products including smart TVs and furniture. Just tap the 'View in your room' option below the photo carousel, then point your phone's camera at the area of the room where you plan to locate the item. The app places the product on screen with your target area in the background. You can drag the item with your finger to try different positions and align it with the wall (see screenshot below). For more info and details of supported devices, visit [www.snipca.com/38334](http://www.snipca.com/38334).

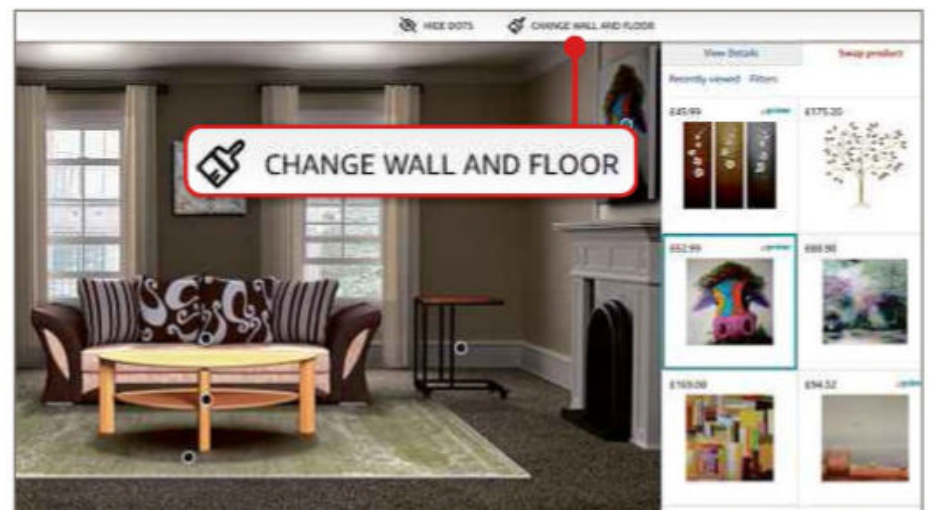


Use Amazon's 'View in Your Room' tool to preview how items will look in situ – drag the bar to align it with a nearby wall

### Mix and match furniture in a virtual showroom

Amazon's Showroom feature ([www.snipca.com/38336](http://www.snipca.com/38336)) lets you map out a virtual room with different products of your choice, helping you to decide which items you like. Unlike 'View in Your Room', it works in your browser and uses idealised bedroom and living-room

Choose the perfect items for your living room or bedroom using Amazon Showroom



designs rather than your actual home, but it still gives you a good idea of how items will look together. You can mix and match sofas, chairs, beds, cupboards, tables, lamps and more by clicking an item in the main picture and choosing 'Swap product'.

Make the room's colour scheme look more like your own by choosing 'Change Wall and Floor' (see screenshot above), and click View Details to learn more about an item and add it to your basket. Your showroom can be saved for future reference and shared with friends and family if you need a second opinion.

### Create public wishlists

Until 2019, all Amazon wishlists (lists of items you're considering buying) were public by default, meaning anyone could see them. Your wishlists are now entirely private, but they also have a link to 'Send list to others' if you want to share gift suggestions. If you liked using a public wishlist, you can create an Idea List instead – these are public lists, available for all Amazon customers to view.

To get started, go to [www.amazon.co.uk/ideas](http://www.amazon.co.uk/ideas), click 'Create an Idea List' and enter a name and description. You can then search for items you want to add from the Idea List page, or click the 'Add to List' button on a product page, and (optionally) enter comments for each entry. Click the Share button in the top-right corner of your list to copy its web address to share with others.

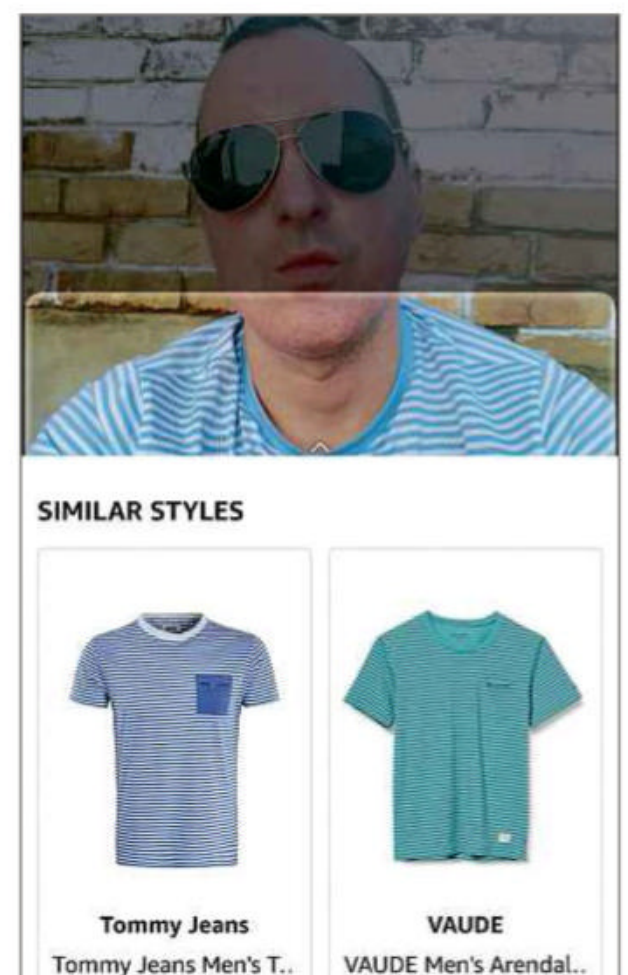
### Receive style recommendations based on your tastes

Clothes shopping comes naturally to some, but for the rest of us the sheer scale of the choice can cause headaches. The Amazon app can make life much easier. Press the camera icon in the search bar, choose StyleSnap and tap the 'Upload a photo' button. Select a picture

stored on your phone or tablet – either of yourself or of someone else wearing clothes you like – and Amazon will suggest suitable styles for you to try (see screenshot below). StyleSnap currently recognises and recommends tops, trousers, jackets and footwear, but not accessories.

To remove these uploaded photos from your Amazon account, go to Your Account, then Manage Amazon App Camera Images and select Delete Amazon App Camera Images.

Further style recommendations for clothes, furniture, lighting, home decor and more can be found in the Discover Your Style section of the Amazon website ([www.amazon.co.uk/discover](http://www.amazon.co.uk/discover)). Browse the items in each category and click 'See similar', thumbs-down or 'Less like this' to tailor the suggestions to your tastes.



Use StyleSnap to get recommendations for clothes that match your tastes



# IMPROVE HOW AMAZON LOOKS AND WORKS

## Make searching Amazon easier

Unless you know the exact name of the product you're looking for, navigating Amazon's scattershot search results can prove frustrating. Even the search filters down the left-hand side don't always help – why, for example, can't you view only items with five-star ratings (rather than 'four stars and up'), or browse beyond the first seven pages of results?

You can speed up and narrow down your searches by installing the Chrome extension Trusty Search Assistant for Amazon ([www.snipca.com/38345](http://www.snipca.com/38345)). When you click its toolbar button, this handy tool applies 'infinite scroll' to Amazon search results, so you don't need to keep clicking a button to view the next page (as well as reaching beyond that annoying seven-page limit).

The extension also places a set of sliders at the top of the page, which let you filter results by customer rating (including only five-star items), number of reviews and price (see screenshot below), while still

using Amazon's own filters, such as 'Prime delivery'.

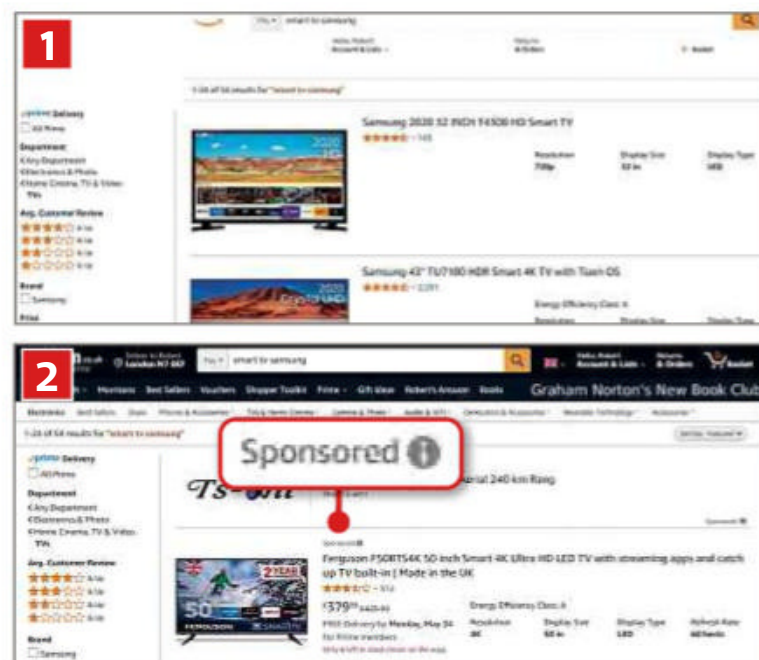
It's a more efficient way to search Amazon and you're more likely to find top-quality products that you'd otherwise miss. We found it particularly useful for finding birthday gifts that aren't too expensive but aren't rubbish, like this handy wooden docking station for your phone, wallet and keys ([www.snipca.com/38347](http://www.snipca.com/38347)).

## Remove sponsored listings and clutter

Amazon's many sponsored listings and adverts can make you forget what you wanted to buy in the first place. For a more focused and less annoying shopping experience, install the Amazon Lite ([www.snipca.com/38348](http://www.snipca.com/38348)) extension, which strips unnecessary distractions from the site, so you don't get diverted.

The extension reduces Amazon's homepage to a Google-style search box, with a dropdown menu for choosing a department and other menus for your account, order history and shopping basket. When you look for an item, you'll see 'pure' search results that won't include promoted items and other distractions. You can disable Amazon Lite when you want to return to the unfiltered site.

Note that some reviews in the Chrome Web Store complain about

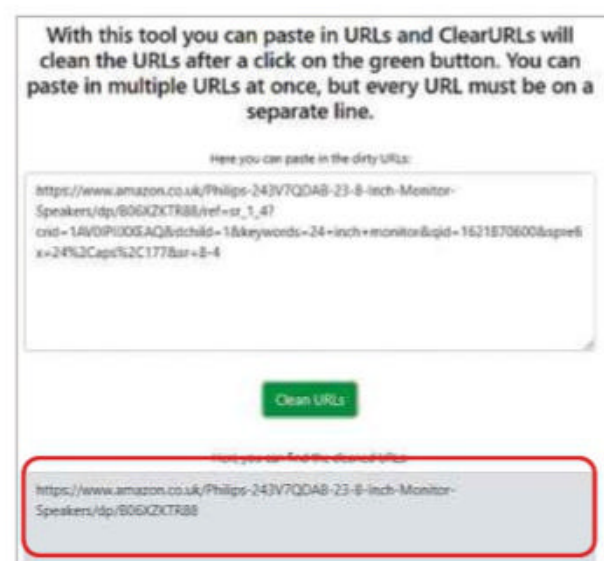


Amazon Lite **1** removes sponsored listings and other distractions from Amazon pages **2**

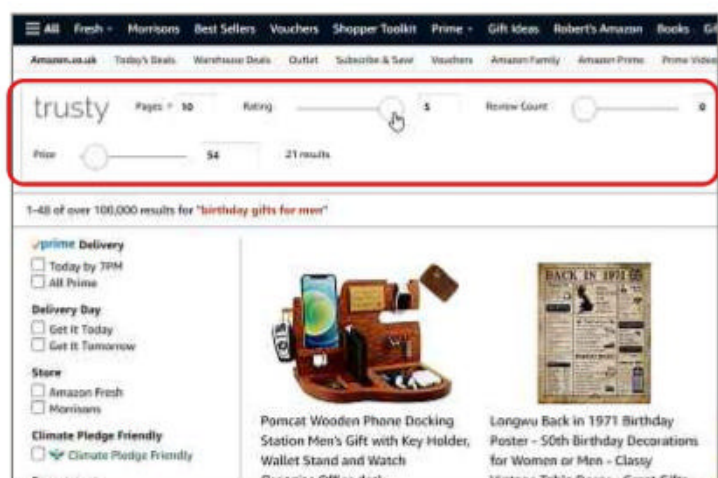
the extension not working properly (hence its low rating), but the developer recently fixed these problems and we found it now works perfectly.

## Shorten Amazon's long links

If you've ever copied a link to an Amazon product (in order to share a gift idea with someone, for example), you'll have noticed just how long they can be. Along with tracking information, the link also reveals the precise search terms you used to search for the product (potentially embarrassing if you specified a 'cheap gift', then send the link to the recipient!). The ClearURLs extension ([www.snipca.com/38384](http://www.snipca.com/38384)) lets you tidy up Amazon links in a flash. Copy the full link from your browser's address bar, then click the ClearURLs extension (a dustbin icon), followed by the icon of a screwdriver and spanner. Paste the link into the top section, click Clean URLs, and the cleaned version of the link will appear in the box below (see screenshot below).



Strip tracking information from your Amazon links by using the ClearURLs extension



Trusty Search Assistant lets you narrow down Amazon search results to your ideal products

## Earn Amazon vouchers in your spare time

Signing up for survey sites usually results in spam flooding your inbox and lots of time wasted answering dull questions for little reward. Run by the market-research company Ipsos, i-Say (<https://social.i-say.com>) is one of the better options and awards you points based on the length of the surveys you complete (usually about specific brands). The amount of points you get per survey varies, but is typically between 45 and 90 (each survey takes around 15 to 30 minutes to complete). Once you rack up 490 points, you can exchange them for a £5 Amazon voucher.

You could also apply to become

an Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) worker ([www.snipca.com/38360](http://www.snipca.com/38360)). Complete 'Human Intelligence Tasks' in your spare time, such as web searches and image identification, and receive payment in Amazon credit directly to your Prime account. Note that not all MTurk applications are approved.

As it did last year, Amazon is running a promotion that gives customers £10 of credit to spend on Prime Day, when they buy at least £10 worth of goods from a small UK business in the preceding fortnight. Discover eligible sellers through Amazon's Small Businesses section ([www.snipca.com/38361](http://www.snipca.com/38361)).

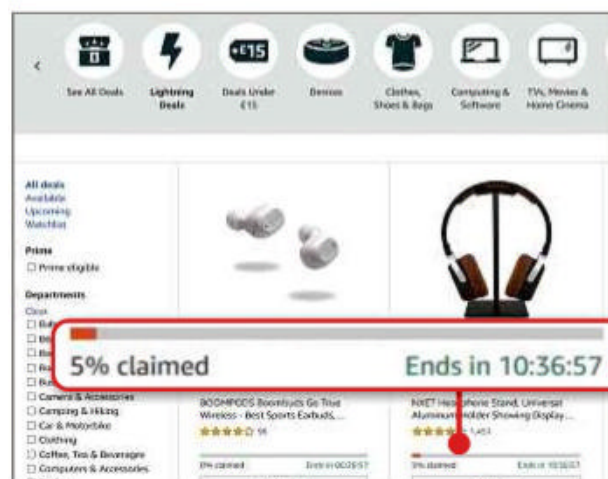


## GET READY FOR PRIME DAY

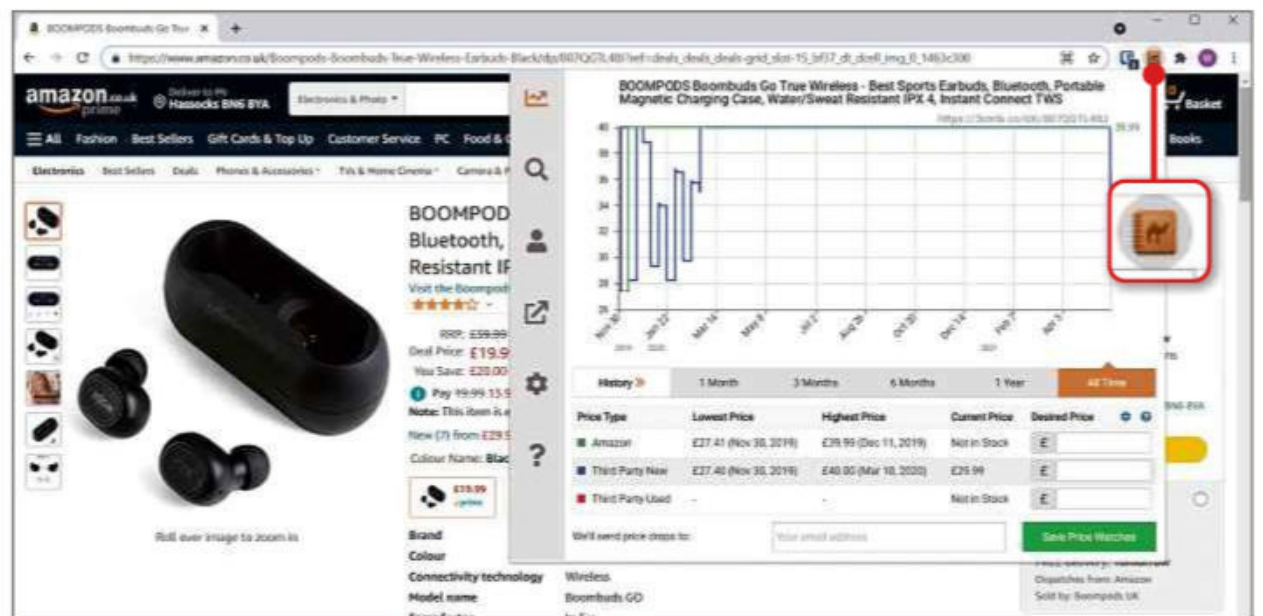
This year, Prime Day will take place on Monday 21 and Tuesday 22 June. Amazon typically uses this event to promote its own, ever-expanding range of smart speakers, tablets, Kindles and more, so we expect to see several of these included in the 48-hour window (see box below).

### Find short-lived 'Lightning' deals

Along with deals that span the entire event, keep an eye out for items marked as 'Lightning' deals. Unlike other Prime Day offers, these run for a limited period of time within the event's duration or until stock runs out – whichever comes first. In many cases, limited numbers of a product are available, so the deal may



Lightning deals typically offer attractive discounts, but they don't last long



Quickly check an item's price history by using the Camelizer extension

have expired by the time you've taken time to check reviews for an item and whether it's available cheaper elsewhere. To make sure you don't miss out, click 'Add to Basket' on any item you're interested in. This effectively reserves the item for 15 minutes, giving you enough time to carry out your due diligence.

To save time, we recommend you use CamelCamelCamel's browser extension Camelizer ([www.snipca.com/38356](http://www.snipca.com/38356)). While it won't provide the level of info you'll find on the CamelCamelCamel

website (such as when prices for each item were last checked), it's perfect for quickly reviewing an item's price history if you're in a hurry to secure that Lightning deal on Prime Day. Simply open the extension (see screenshot above) when viewing a product on Amazon to see a pop-up price-history graph.

Although the best Lightning deals tend to take place during the Prime Day event, you can also find them throughout the year by going to the Today's Deals section at [www.snipca.com/38390](http://www.snipca.com/38390), then selecting the circular 'Lightning deals' option at the top. Each item has a percentage bar showing how much of the deal has been claimed, and how long it has left to run (see screenshot above left).

## Get Prime Day deals early!

Amazon has already announced some Prime Day deals, ready to grab now. You can read its press release ([www.snipca.com/38498](http://www.snipca.com/38498)) for full details, but here are some highlights. Most deals are available only to Prime members. These include a free four-month subscription to **Amazon Music Unlimited** ([www.snipca.com/38516](http://www.snipca.com/38516)); three months of **Kindle Unlimited** ([www.snipca.com/38517](http://www.snipca.com/38517)) for no extra charge; and three months of **Audible** ([www.snipca.com/38518](http://www.snipca.com/38518)) for just 99p. Prime members can also get 50

per cent off films and TV on **Prime Video** ([www.snipca.com/38519](http://www.snipca.com/38519)), plus four months free at podcast service **Wondery+** (<https://wondery.com/plus>).

As for physical products, it has promised up to 50 per cent off its Echo smart speakers, potentially including the new Echo Show 8 ([www.snipca.com/38372](http://www.snipca.com/38372)), its Fire TV streaming sticks ([www.snipca.com/38522](http://www.snipca.com/38522)) and Ring smart doorbells ([www.snipca.com/38491](http://www.snipca.com/38491)). Our sister site Expert Reviews will be revealing more early deals as Prime Day approaches: [www.snipca.com/38502](http://www.snipca.com/38502).

### Spot fake reviews

Before you snap up a Prime Day bargain on the basis of its positive reviews, use the Fakespot extension ([www.snipca.com/38396](http://www.snipca.com/38396)) to ensure you're not being conned. Click the Analyze This Page option when viewing an Amazon product and it will scan the reviews and tell you if they can be trusted. Along with an overall reliability grade for the reviews, it also lists details of anomalies, such as reviews that use the same phrases (a common feature of fake reviews). **ca**

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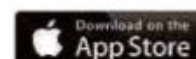
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# Master and create QR codes

As we adjust to life after lockdown, QR codes are becoming impossible to avoid. **Robert Irvine** explains the easiest ways to scan these square blocks and use the technology to your own advantage



**Q**R (Quick Response) codes are square grids of black and white pixels, which provide links to useful online information. Like traditional barcodes, each one contains unique data that can only be deciphered with a dedicated scanning tool.

Since they were launched in 1994, QR codes have appeared on product packaging, posters, event tickets and more, but the coronavirus pandemic has given them new purposes. Many businesses, including coffee shops, restaurants and hairdressers, now ask you to scan an NHS QR code for

test and trace reasons (see [www.snipca.com/38399](http://www.snipca.com/38399) to find out which venues must display these codes). You may also need to scan a code to view a venue's menu, access its website or download its mobile app to place your order. Here we explain the best ways to deal with these codes.

## HOW TO SCAN A QR CODE ON YOUR PHONE

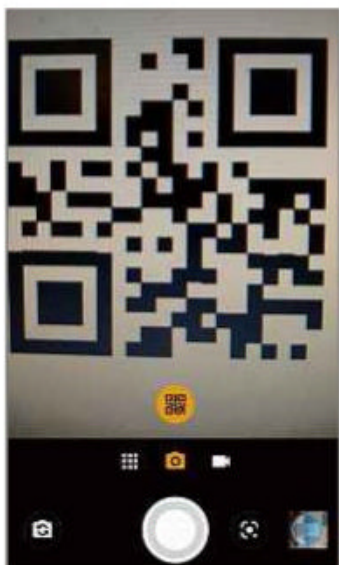
### Scan QR codes with your camera

Many smartphones and tablets let you scan QR codes using their camera apps, which saves you the bother of installing and opening a separate tool.

On an iPhone or iPad, open the Camera app and aim the lens at the QR code you want to scan. The app's integrated code reader will automatically detect the code and decipher its matrix of data – you don't need to press the shutter button to take a photo, but scanning may take a few seconds. Tap the notification that appears onscreen to open the web link that the code represents.

Similarly, if your Android phone or tablet is running Android 9 (Pie) or later, its camera app will

**You should be able to scan QR codes using the camera app (Android in this case) on your phone or tablet**



offer built-in QR code scanning using Google Lens (<https://lens.google>, as shown in our screenshot below), while Samsung devices use their own scanning technology. Again, just point your camera at the code to access the link it contains. If nothing happens, go into your camera app's settings and switch on Google Lens (or 'Scan QR codes' on a Samsung phone).

On an Android 8 (Oreo) device, you can scan QR codes with Google Lens via Google Assistant. Either long-press the Home button or say "Hey Google" to open Assistant, then tap the Google Lens icon.

As a general tip, try to hold your phone or tablet as still as possible and make sure the whole QR code is in the camera's viewfinder. Don't place it too close to the QR code – at least three inches away will produce the speediest scan, depending on the size of the code.

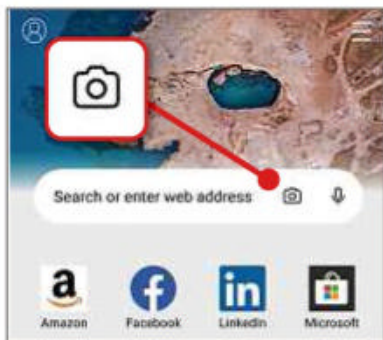
### Scan QR codes using a dedicated app

On older Android devices that run version 7 (Nougat) or earlier, you'll need to install a third-party app to scan QR codes. Even if you have a newer phone, you may prefer this method because some apps scan codes faster than your camera app. They also work over a greater distance and offer extra features such as sharing options and barcode recognition. Our favourite is 'QR Code & Barcode Scanner' ([www.snipca.com/38410](http://www.snipca.com/38410)), which – unlike many free readers – doesn't gather your personal data and is entirely free of ads.

Alternatively, you can use your mobile browser to scan and access the content of QR codes without opening your camera app. In Firefox for Android and iOS, tap the address bar and press Scan. In the Edge app, tap the camera icon in the search box (see screenshot above right) and choose Barcode (it works with both barcodes and QR codes). Strangely, Google offers QR-code scanning only in the iOS version of Chrome, not the



Scan QR codes in the Edge phone app by tapping the camera icon, followed by Barcode



Android browser. To use this, tap the address bar or search box, and press the QR code icon.

## Check in using the NHS Covid app

Currently, the most common reason for scanning a QR code is to check into a venue, so you'll be alerted if you've been near someone who's since tested positive for coronavirus. To do this, you'll need to install the NHS COVID-19 app ([www.covid19.nhs.uk](http://www.covid19.nhs.uk)) on a mobile device running Android 6 or iOS 13.5 and later.

Once you've set up the app and entered

the required data, just tap 'Check into a venue' on the app's home screen and scan the NHS QR code displayed by the venue – usually at the door, in a window or on a table – to anonymously share your contact details. You'll receive confirmation that you've successfully checked in.

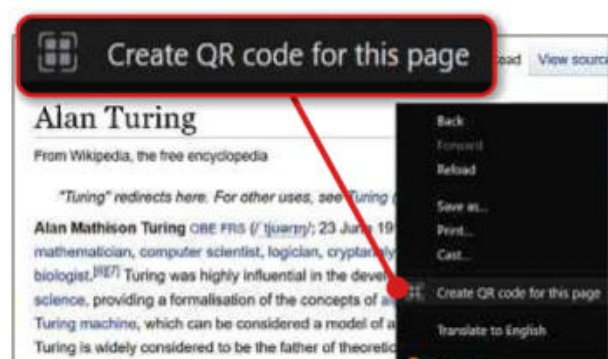
We've occasionally been told by staff that their NHS tracing system wasn't working, and were asked to scan an alternative QR code, or to sign in via old-fashioned pen and paper.

# 5 REASONS TO CREATE YOUR OWN QR CODES

## 1 Easily share web pages between devices

Rather than copying, pasting and emailing the URL of a web page you want to share with someone or browse on your mobile device, you can generate your own QR code for the link. Chrome now offers its own QR-code generator: simply right-click a page in the browser and select 'Create QR code for this page' (see screenshot below). The generated code can either be scanned with a phone's camera or downloaded as a PNG image. The process is slightly different in the Chrome mobile app: tap the three-dot menu in the top-right corner and choose Share, then 'QR code'.

Microsoft's Edge browser was recently updated to include the same feature, but to create QR codes in Firefox, you'll need a browser add-on such as Offline QR Code Generator ([www.snipca.com/38415](http://www.snipca.com/38415)).



Right-click a page in Chrome then select 'Create QR code for this page'

## 2 Share your Wi-Fi network with guests

When you want to grant a visitor access to your Wi-Fi, rather than jot down the password on a piece of paper, let them

scan a QR code to sign into your network.

On a phone or tablet running Android 10 or later, go to Settings, then 'Network & Internet', tap Wi-Fi and select your Wi-Fi network. Tap the Share button on the 'Network details' screen, and verify your identity to create the QR code.

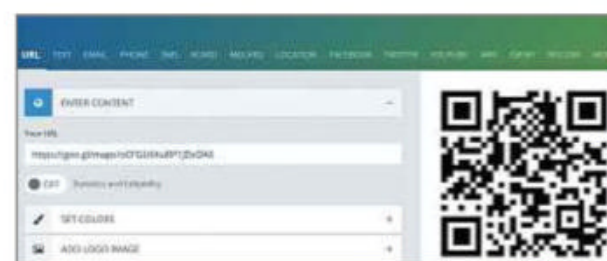
On older versions of Android, you can generate a QR code for your Wi-Fi using 'QR Code & Barcode Scanner' (see opposite page). Tap 'Generate' at the bottom of the screen, then select Wi-Fi and enter your network details.

To create a QR code for your Wi-Fi password on an iPhone or iPad, add the shortcut Share Wi-Fi ([www.snipca.com/38418](http://www.snipca.com/38418)) to your Shortcuts app. However, you'll first need to tweak iOS's security settings. Run any shortcut (it doesn't matter which) and go to Settings, Shortcuts then switch on Allow Untrusted Shortcuts (this is safe to do for Share Wi-Fi).

## 3 Use QR codes to start and join video chats

You can create and share QR codes for Skype video calls using a website called QR Stuff ([www.qrstuff.com](http://www.qrstuff.com)). Select the Skype option on the homepage, then enter your Skype username and choose Download QR Code to save the code as a scannable PNG file. For Zoom meetings, copy the invite link from the chat service, then use QR Stuff's Website URL option to generate a code.

WhatsApp assigns you a personal QR code that people can scan to add you as a chat contact (and vice versa). To access it, open Settings in the app and tap the QR



Scan this code and tell us who was born there

code icon in the top-right corner. To scan someone else's code, swipe left to activate the app's camera

## 4 Provide your contact details as a QR code

You can use a QR code to share your contact details in a concise and relatively private way, whether on a business card or affixed to your valuables (or pet's collar) in case you lose them. The free online tool QRCode Monkey ([www.qrcode-monkey.com](http://www.qrcode-monkey.com)) lets you create online 'vCards' that contain your personal info. Select 'vCard' at the top of the page, then enter the data you want to include and click the green Create QR Code button under the code. You can customise the colour and design of your code and download it in PNG, PDF or SVG format to print and share.

## 5 Share maps and directions using QR codes

QR codes offer a simple and accurate way to share and look up addresses. Just search for a place on Google Maps, then click the Share button. Copy the link provided into QRCode Monkey, then download, print or email the result, so it can be scanned with a phone. In the screenshot above we've turned the birthplace of an eminent Victorian into a code. We'll send a *Computeractive* mug to the first person to scan it then email us the person's name.

This trick also works for sharing Google Maps directions (such as from the train station to the relevant location) and Street View images (so people can see what the place looks like). **ca**

## WIN £50 AMAZON VOUCHERS

Did you notice the QR code on our cover? Scan it and you'll be able to enter our competition to win £50 to spend

on Amazon. You can also subscribe to *Computeractive* by QR code – turn to pages 58-59 to find out how.



# Watch TV in your caravan



When the great British summer takes a turn for the worse, a TV in your caravan or motorhome can be a lifesaver. **Will Stapley** reveals the kit you need to carry on watching in campsites

## Get Freeview in your caravan

The cheapest way to receive live TV broadcasts while caravanning is via Freeview, which is broadcast from digital, land-based transmitters across the UK. Along with a TV, you'll need a Freeview box and a suitable aerial. If you already have a Freeview box at home you could simply unplug it and take it with you. Otherwise, the cheapest option is the Manhattan T1 (£35 from [www.snipca.com/38433](http://www.snipca.com/38433), pictured above right). This no-frills box can receive all Freeview channels (including HD), but it can't record programmes. To watch *and* record, we recommend the T3-R, also from Manhattan (£169 from [www.snipca.com/38434](http://www.snipca.com/38434)), which has a 500GB hard drive – enough to store up to 300 hours of programmes.

## Find the nearest transmitter

Once you have your Freeview box, you'll need to connect it to a TV aerial – which one you opt for will depend on the strength of the signal from your campsite's nearest digital transmitter.

To find out, you can use the coverage checker on the Freeview website ([www.freeview.co.uk](http://www.freeview.co.uk) – scroll down to the 'Check Freeview at my home' section and ignore the house number box because just the postcode will do). We checked the idyllic Wallace Lane Farm campsite in Brocklebank, Cumbria, which is fairly remote, but the site indicates it's within



The £35 Manhattan T1 is a decent, no-frills Freeview receiver

an area of decent Freeview reception.

At the top of the results page, we can see the campsite receives Freeview signals from the Caldbeck transmitter. Once you know the name of the transmitter, you can pinpoint it using the interactive map on the UK Free TV site ([www.snipca.com/38446](http://www.snipca.com/38446)). Click the transmitter and you'll see a green shaded area, indicating coverage.

The map shows the Wallace Lane Farm campsite is under a mile from the



The Wallace Lane Farm campsite **1** is under one mile from the Caldbeck transmitter **2**

Caldbeck transmitter (see screenshot below left). If you are at the campsite and look towards the south east, you'll spot the 337-metre mast (the third-highest structure in the UK).

You should be able to make do with a portable indoor aerial at campsites this close to a transmitter. We've had good results with the 1byone Freeview TV Aerial (£17 from [www.snipca.com/38435](http://www.snipca.com/38435), pictured above right). This rectangular aerial is 230x210x10mm (HxWxD) and can be placed on a stand (included) or attached to one of your caravan's windows.

Stay at a campsite that's more than 10 miles from the nearest transmitter and you'll probably need something more powerful. Check in at Point Farm Campsite (on the Dale peninsular, apparently the sunniest place in Wales), for example, and you'll be 27 miles from the Preseli transmitter. The UK Free TV map shows the campsite is close to the outer limits of the transmitter's reach. In this scenario, we'd recommend attaching an aerial to the top of your caravan.

You have two choices here: directional or omnidirectional. Omnidirectional aerials (such as the Status 355 – £95 from [www.snipca.com/38437](http://www.snipca.com/38437)) are usually disc-shaped. Their key advantage is that they receive signals from all directions, so you don't need to point them at the nearest transmitter. This also means they pick up more interference and therefore struggle with weak Freeview signals.





The 1byone portable aerial is a cheap option for campsites in strong signal areas

Our advice is to spend a little more and get a directional aerial, such as the Status 570 made by Vision Plus (£138 from [www.snipca.com/38438](http://www.snipca.com/38438), pictured below). You'll need to angle it accordingly when you pitch up at a new site, but the integrated signal indicator makes this easy and by pointing the aerial towards the transmitter it will perform better than an omnidirectional model.

Bear in mind these aerials need to be mounted on your caravan. Both come with mounting kits, but you may want to get yours professionally installed at your



The Status 570 is directional, meaning you have to point it towards the nearest transmitter

## Do you need a second TV licence?

If you already have a TV licence for your home address, this will cover you when watching TV in a caravan (along with other 'moving vehicles', such as cars and boats).

However, if you have a static caravan that you use as a second home, you'll need to either get a second TV licence or complete a form confirming that you won't watch or record live TV (nor stream via the BBC iPlayer) at both your home address and the static caravan simultaneously. To

avoid getting a fine (up to £1,000), you need to complete the 'Non-simultaneous use declaration' form at [www.snipca.com/38445](http://www.snipca.com/38445).

Bear in mind that you won't be able to claim non-simultaneous use if anyone at your main address (such as a family member or friends) watches or records live TV while you're staying at your static caravan. In these situations, you'll need a TV licence for both your home and your static caravan.

local caravan service station (expect to pay around £100).

## Tune your box

Each transmitter broadcasts digital channels on different frequencies, so it's important to carry out a channel scan (essentially a retuning process) whenever you move campsite. How you do this depends on the make and model of your Freeview box, so you need to check the manual – on the Manhattan T1, you need to go to Settings, Tuning then select Retune.

## Switch to Freesat

Head to remote areas of the UK and you may struggle to get a Freeview reception no matter how powerful your aerial is. The Invernahavon Caravan Site in the heart of the Scottish Highlands is a prime example.


The Freeview coverage checker tells us the campsite isn't in a Freeview area and the UK Free TV map shows the nearest transmitter (Rosemarkie) is over 40 miles away. Streaming TV is likely to be difficult too. Although Ofcom's mobile coverage checker ([www.snipca.com/38439](http://www.snipca.com/38439)) says the campsite is in a 4G signal area, reviews of the campsite on websites like [www.ukcampsite.co.uk](http://www.ukcampsite.co.uk) suggest

otherwise. Additionally, Wi-Fi on the site is listed as being for 'limited usage only'.

To watch TV at the Invernahavon Caravan Site and other remote sites, you need to ditch Freeview for Freesat. As its name suggests, this uses satellites to broadcast TV signals – specifically the Astra group of satellites, which are in geostationary orbit (in other words, they appear to be fixed in the same position when viewed from Earth)) at 28.2 degrees

east. Unlike Freeview, these satellites provide coverage over the entire UK (and as far as northern France and Belgium). As long as you have a big enough dish, you won't have a problem with reception no matter which campsite you choose.

We recommend a dish with at least a 60cm diameter, such as the Satgear Beam60 (£86 from [www.snipca.com/38443](http://www.snipca.com/38443), pictured above). This will receive Freesat signals in campsites across the UK. Along with a small outdoor tripod, the Beam60 comes with a Satfinder device, which helps you point it towards the Astra satellites. If you plan to stay only in campsites in the southern half of the UK (where satellite signals are stronger) you can save space with a 40cm dish like the Satgear Beam40 (£79 from [www.snipca.com/38448](http://www.snipca.com/38448)).

You'll also need a Freesat receiver box. Once again, Manhattan provides the cheapest option, with its SX Freesat HD (£49 from [www.snipca.com/38440](http://www.snipca.com/38440)). For a recordable box, we recommend the Recordable 4K TV Box made by Freesat itself (the 500GB model costs £199 from [www.snipca.com/38441](http://www.snipca.com/38441)) – see Issue 604, page 35 for instructions on using it. 



The Satgear Beam60 receives Freesat signals across the UK

## Will a signal booster help?

If your TV signal occasionally breaks up, a device such as the One For All Signal Booster (£9.99 from [www.snipca.com/38444](http://www.snipca.com/38444), pictured) may help. Simply insert the cable from your aerial into the underside of the box, then attach the cable from your TV to the socket on the front (the booster box also needs to be plugged



into a mains socket). Booster boxes can't work miracles, however. If the campsite is in a weak-signal area, a booster will probably just amplify nearby interference, making the signal even worse. However, at under £10, it's worth having one to hand just in case it can make a difference.



# Problems Solved

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## PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

### Why do emails capitalise new lines?

**Q** I have a problem with my emails, as every message I write starts each new line with a capital letter – even though I type the letter in lowercase. I just cannot find how to stop it happening. I would be so grateful if you could help with this.

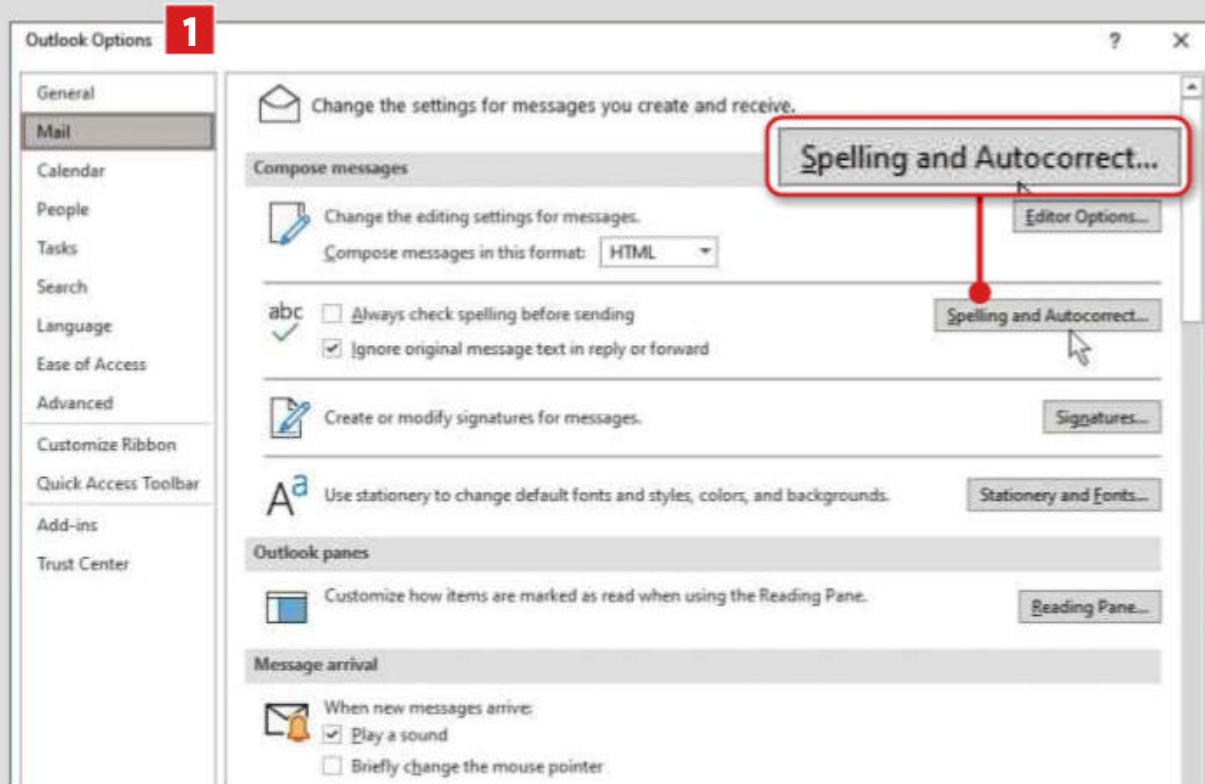
Malcolm Lawton

**A** We'll confess that this one took us a bit longer to figure out than it should've done. Then, suddenly, a light bulb came on above our heads – and we think we know both the cause and the solution. You didn't tell us which email tool you're using but we're sure it's Outlook, because this has a feature that would cause precisely this behaviour.

Indeed, for reasons that will become apparent, it's actually the program's default practice.

To find it, first click File followed by Options. Then, in the left-hand pane of the Outlook Options box that appears, click Mail and then, in the right-hand pane, click the 'Spelling and Autocorrect' button (see screenshot 1).

Next, still in the right-hand pane, under the 'AutoCorrect options' heading, click the AutoCorrect Options... button 2. Now click to select the AutoCorrect tab and, there, the box labelled 'Capitalize first letter of sentences' 3 is the cause of your



In 'Outlook Options' click the 'Spelling and Autocorrect' button

frustration – and we're confident that it'll currently be ticked.

If you click to clear this tick and click OK, your frustration will be removed. However, there's really no need to do so. Why? Well, we think you're in the habit of pressing Enter when you reach the right-hand border of Outlook's compose window before your current sentence is finished.

If, like some senior *Computeractive*

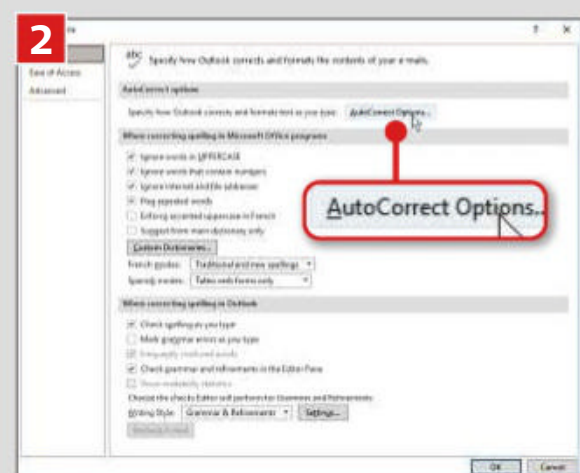
staff, you herald from the era of typewriters, we know that hitting Enter for a 'carriage return' is an old and thus hard habit to break.

However, there's actually no need to do this because if you just carry on typing the tail-end word will automatically be 'wrapped' to a new line – with no annoying capital letter applied by the aforementioned AutoCorrect option.

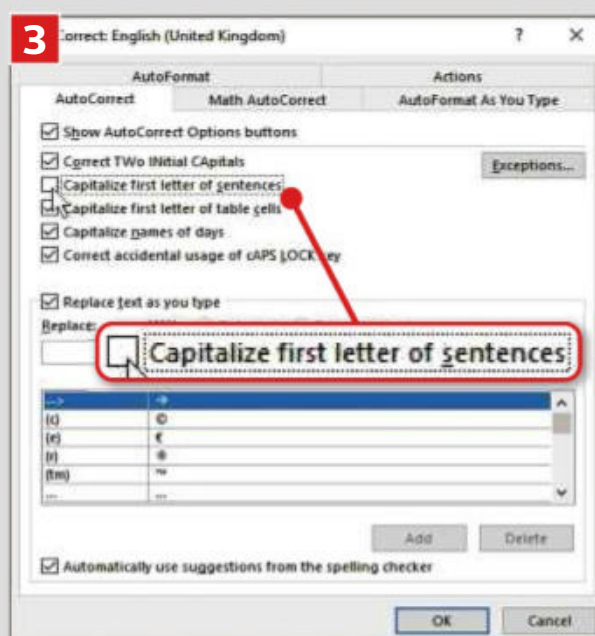
Alternatively, we suppose it could simply be that your Outlook compose window is so wide that it feels like a carriage return is sometimes required, if only to help the recipient – but that isn't necessary either.

In fact, at the recipient's end, their email tool or service will apply its own word-wrap formatting to ensure what you've written to them fits within the available space in their window.

So, if your compose window does feel too wide, the better solution really is to just make it smaller. To do this, first click the Restore Down button (the two overlaid squares, at the top right) and then click and drag the bottom-right of the window.



Under the 'AutoCorrect options' heading, click the 'AutoCorrect Options...' button



Click to remove the tick from the box labelled 'Capitalize first letter of sentences'



## Can I monitor hard-drive activity?

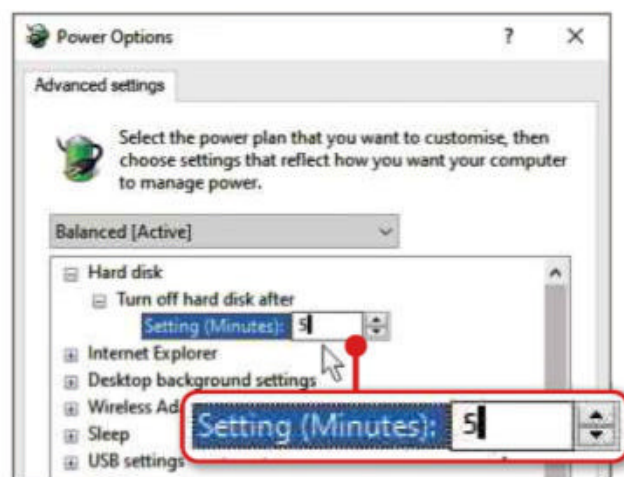
**Q** Do hard drives run continually, or only when they are being accessed? I can remember using a small program on an old Windows 95 machine that lit a small area when the drive was being used. Do you know if similar tools exist today?

Mick Fudger

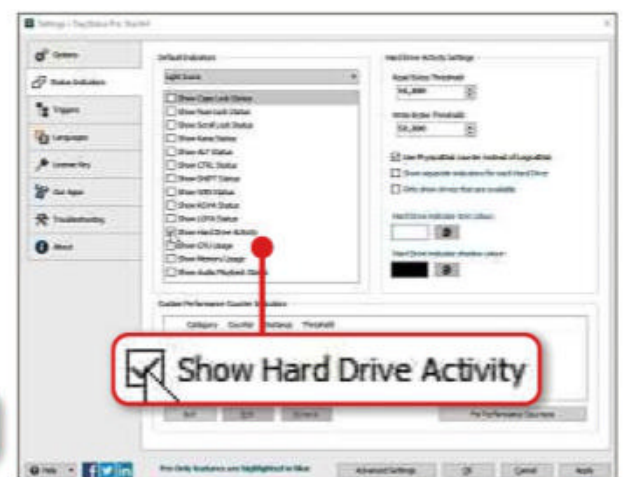
**A** In the most literal sense, hard drives do not run continually. Practically, though, a computer's main drive is in almost-constant use: every time you launch a program, open or close a file or even just visit a website, some information will almost certainly either be read from or written to the drive.

Now, there is a setting within Windows 10's Power Options to turn off a hard drive after so many minutes of inactivity. To find this option, first press Windows key+X and then click Power Options. Now click 'Power & sleep', followed by 'Additional power settings'.

Next, for the currently selected power plan, click 'Change plan settings' and then click 'Change advanced power



By 'Turn off hard disk after', select the minutes



In TrayStatus, tick 'Show Hard Drive Activity'

settings'. Then, under 'Advanced settings', click to expand the 'Hard disk' category followed by the 'Turn off hard disk after' category and then, in the Settings field, type a number in minutes (see screenshot above). However, note that while this works it won't save a whole lot of power, and too low a number could make your PC sluggish – as it takes a small amount of time for the hard drive to spin back up to speed when it's needed.

As for an activity indicator, a popular option is TrayStatus – which is a free download from [www.traystatus.com](http://www.traystatus.com). This puts a little icon in the notification area (sometimes called the System Tray), at the far right of the taskbar. Once installed, right-click this icon and then choose Settings.

TrayStatus is able to display loads of different indicators but, for your purposes, just click to tick Show Hard Drive Activity (see screenshot above), and remove ticks from everything else (unless you want to keep them).

Click OK and you'll now find a little hard drive icon in your notification area, with up and down arrows to indicate read and write operations.

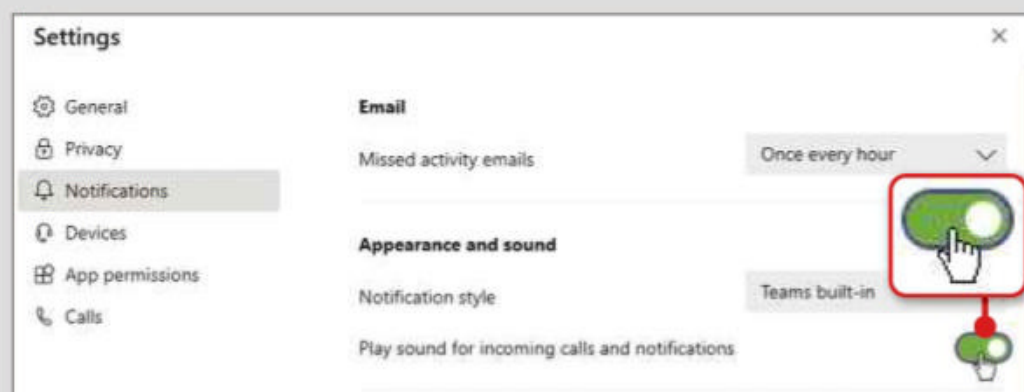
Finally, note that by default TrayStatus installs the paid-for Pro version on a 14-day trial. After this, it'll revert to the free version – but don't worry, as this includes the hard-drive indicator. If you want to switch to the free version right away, open TrayStatus Settings again and then click License Key followed by 'Change to Free Version'.

## How do I change sounds in Microsoft Teams?

**Q** I work for a local authority, mostly at home since the pandemic. My work laptop has Microsoft Teams. As I work with multiple different stakeholders I would like to change the sound it plays when a new chat starts, so I can tell without looking whether the message is from someone on my own team or from elsewhere. I've looked through the settings but can't find anything, and my IT department can't help. Is this possible? If so, how? The laptop runs Windows 10, incidentally.

Caroline Hall

**A** Remarkably, despite Teams having been around for some four years, there's still no way to change this basic setting. We imagine



The green switch to turn on 'Play sound for incoming calls and notifications' in Teams

that Microsoft will get around to adding options to tweak Teams' audio alerts, but experience tells us not to expect the company to be in a rush to do so.

For now, the only option relating to this in the Windows 10 version of Teams is the 'Play sound for incoming calls and notifications' switch (see screenshot), in the Notifications tab of the Settings pane – but we're sure you're aware of that.

Beyond this, all you can do is join other Teams users in asking Microsoft to prioritise the introduction of this feature. There are various requests for this on the Teams UserVoice community site maintained by Microsoft. The most popular currently is at [www.snipca.com/38220](https://www.snipca.com/38220), so go there and click the Vote button to add your weight to the demand.



## Why are my 'Recent files' disappearing?

**Q** The 'Recent files' list on my Windows 10 computer has started to clear itself every time I shut down the computer. It used to show all the files I had recently accessed unless I cleared them myself, but now they clear themselves. I wonder whether any recent update has caused this to happen. Can you help?

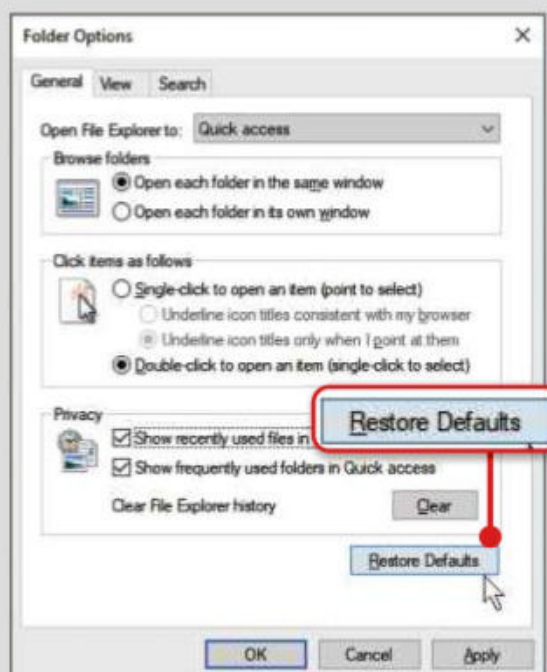
Alan Bewlex

**A** We're not sure what's going on here. While it's possible to disable the 'Recent files' area in File Explorer, we don't know of any option to clear it automatically. Perhaps you've recently installed a third-party app that's taken it upon itself to do this?



If not, restoring File Explorer's defaults might help. To do this, first click File

followed by 'Change folder and search options'. In the Folder Options menu, click to select the General tab and, near the bottom, click the Restore Defaults button (see screenshot below).



Select 'Restore Defaults' in the Folder Options menu

## Can I upgrade my PVR hard drive?

**Q** We're often recommended to upgrade our hard drive on a PC, usually to an SSD. Can the same be done with a Humax personal video recorder (PVR)? How can one obtain a copy of the operating system to install on to a new drive?

John Lindley

**A** Yes, but without knowing the precise model we can talk only in general terms. Note

that you'll lose all existing recordings and will invalidate your warranty, so proceed at your own risk.

With that in mind, there's no need to obtain an operating system, as this is stored within the electronics of your Humax PVR. First, remove the screws from the cover then, having earthed yourself, carefully open your box. Next, remove any retaining screws and connecting cables from the existing hard drive, and then fit the replacement. Normally, you'll be looking to increase capacity. Humax boxes are typically



If your PVR does not automatically format your new drive, go to Settings and Storage, then select Format Storage

supplied with a 500GB or 1TB SATA drive, that could be either 2.5in or 3.5in in physical size. The Humax PVR software supports drives of up to 2TB – so you can usually double or quadruple the storage.

While an SSD should work, we'd advise sticking to a hard drive: they're cheaper and the Humax software is designed to work with them. When you fit the new drive, your PVR should offer to format it. If not, from the Humax home page, choose Settings followed by System and then Storage (see screenshot above), and then choose Format Storage.



You can increase storage on a Humax PVR by fitting a new drive, but you will lose existing recordings and invalidate your warranty

**Q: Why has BBC News hijacked my iPad?**

**A: Issue 589, page 69 – find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD**

Buy it from  
[www.snipca.com/38164](http://www.snipca.com/38164)





# What's wrong with my new RAM?

**Q** I wanted to upgrade the **RAM** in my HP TouchSmart 600 PC to 8GB. I used the scan tool at Crucial's website (<https://uk.crucial.com>) and it recommended two 4GB **DDR3** 1600MHZ CL11 memory modules. I ordered these from Amazon but, after replacing the existing pair of 2GB modules with the new 4GB ones, my machine just displayed a black screen. I reseated the modules, making sure they were in place properly, but to no avail – so I returned them and got a refund. Is it worth trying a different make?

Jeff Barlow

**A** Your system certainly supports two 4GB DDR3 1600MHz CL11 modules, and it sounds like you did everything correctly. So, one obvious possibility is that the modules you ordered were simply faulty: they're sensitive bits of kit and even a little bit of static could fry them.

However, we have a different hunch, which is that buying from Amazon

Only one letter indicates the difference between Crucial's low- and high-density RAM modules. 'BJ' is for high-density modules



landed you with incompatible modules. When we searched for the RAM on Crucial's website we noticed the company suggested low-density modules. A low-density module has more individual RAM chips on each module, each with less memory than the high-density equivalent. With more chips, low-density modules cost more to produce, so manufacturers prefer to sell high-density modules. However, low-density modules offer better compatibility.

Now, any recent PC should be compatible with either type, but your computer is over a decade old so high-

density modules might cause it problems. Moreover, Crucial signifies the difference between the two by only a single letter in its product codes – meaning it's all too easy to buy high-density modules when you need low-density ones.

So, we think that by buying from Amazon you ended up with high-density modules (Crucial product code CT2KIT51264BF160BJ, see screenshot above), when what your system actually needs is the low-density version (product code CT2KIT51264BF160B).

## Does blocking senders result in more spam?

**Q** I've been getting emails, supposedly from security-software companies, saying that my subscription's expiring. I also get messages showing a Bitcoin balance. I've never had any of the named software packages, or any Bitcoins. At first I deleted these messages, but recently I have blocked the senders. However, they persist and if anything have increased. I wonder if they have a trigger that, if blocked, they automatically tweak their email address and thus still come through? Is there anything else I can do? I use Outlook.com via my iPhone.

John Jones

**A** It wouldn't be impossible for spammers to use 'bounce back' notifications sent by some email servers to modify their target lists, but that won't be the case here. That's



Clicking your email's block option is not that effective against spam

because Outlook.com's block function merely prevents future messages from the sender reaching your inbox, directing them instead straight to the Junk Email folder – but the sender is not alerted to this fact.

So, we're afraid this is just straightforward spam, and there's little more that can be done than you've been doing. Spammers use endless tricks to get through junk-email defences. Minor

variations to the 'From' address is a key technique, and one over which you have no control.

Eventually, this particular spam operation will move on. All you can do in the meantime, is keep hitting Delete or Block followed by OK.

However, for the reasons explained, clicking Block in Outlook.com (or any other email tool) isn't actually all that effective against spam.



# Problems **Solved**

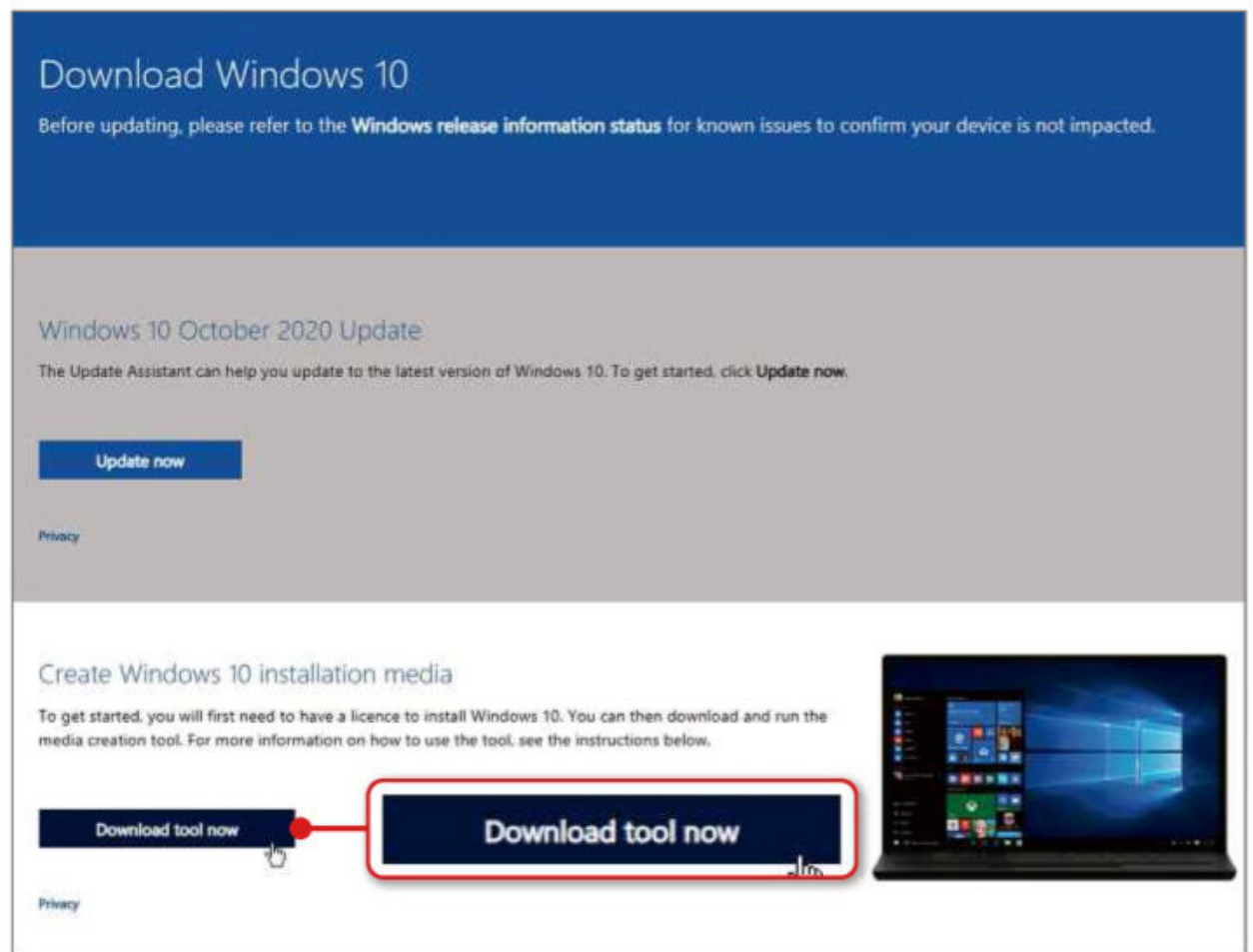
## How do I access all 8GB of memory?

**Q** I'm running Windows 10 Pro, version 20H2, on an old Dell Latitude E6410 – originally upgraded from Windows 7 Pro. The operating system reports as x86-based with an x64-based processor, and 8GB of RAM. However, only 3.24GB of this is usable. Will reinstalling Windows 10 in **64bit** mode allow full use of the RAM? If so, can it be done as a 'conversion', leaving all my files and programs in place? If I do have to reinstall all my existing x86 programs, will they operate on the new 64bit system? Thanks for a great, informative magazine.

Thomas Jones

**A** The **32bit** version of Windows 10 can access a maximum of just 4GB of memory, while the 64bit Pro editions can use up to 2TB. So, yes, switching to 64bit Windows 10 will allow your laptop to make use of its full memory contingent.

However, you cannot perform an 'in-place' upgrade from 32bit (x86) Windows 10 to the 64bit (x64) version. Instead, you must perform a 'clean' install, so everything will be wiped from your computer. There is no way around



Click the 'Download tool now' button to start the process of upgrading to 64bit Windows 10

this. You need to download Microsoft's media-creation tool, from [www.snipca.com/38224](http://www.snipca.com/38224) (click the 'Download tool now' button, see screenshot above).

We can offer no guarantee that all your

existing programs will work in 64bit Windows 10, but most will probably do so. However, you may need to download the 64bit editions of these tools from the relevant developers.

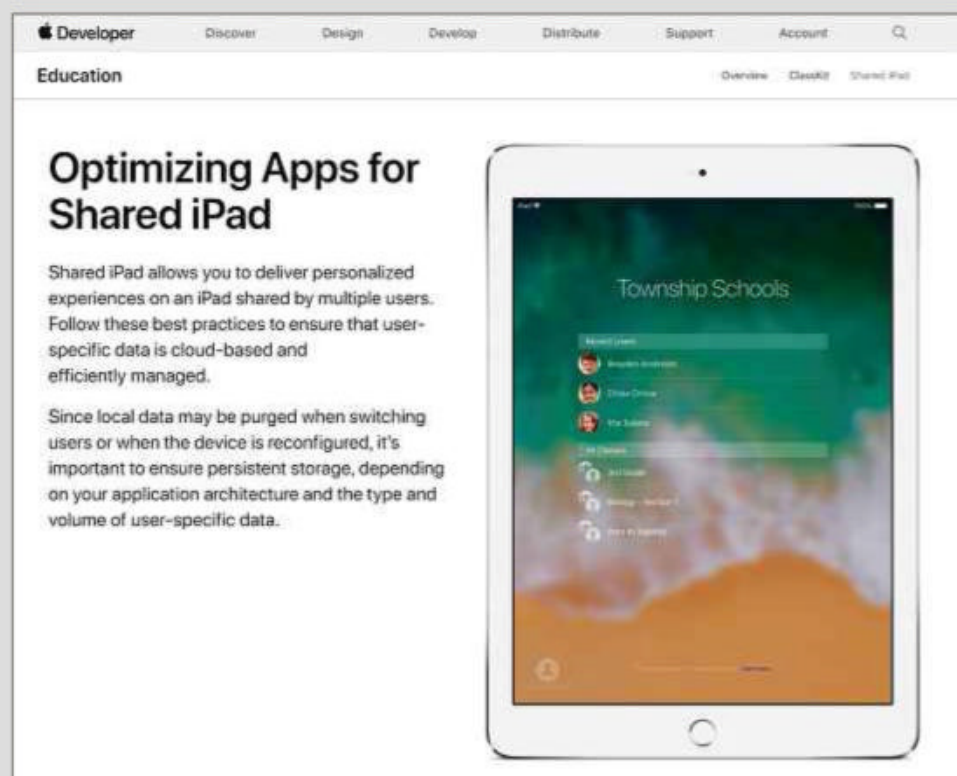
## How do I set up iPad user accounts?

**Q** I have been given an iPad Pro, which is my first Apple device. I cannot find a way to create a second user profile in the way that I can on my Android tablet and phone and this is an essential feature for me. I hope you can help.

Ethel Clarke

**A** We're afraid this isn't possible. Apple did not design and does not market the iPad as a multi-user device. Apple's consumer ethos is one device, one user – and that's that.

It's possible that the company will one day relent and enable the creation of additional user accounts on iPads, but we don't see it happening



Apple's Shared iPad feature does allow devices to be configured for more than one user, but this option is not available on iPads bought by general consumers

any time soon.

Now, we should probably point out that the company does offer a feature called Shared iPad, as part of its Mobile Device Management program for education and enterprise ([www.snipca.com/38228](http://www.snipca.com/38228)).

Devices set up through this can be configured for more than one user, but this functionality is not available on consumer products – only those purchased by businesses via Apple's enterprise division.





## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

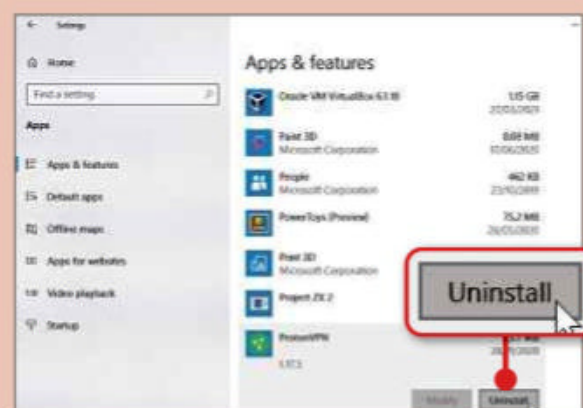
### Network connections?

**Q** My decade-old desktop PC doesn't have Wi-Fi and I wanted to move it to a room away from the router, so I bought a Wi-Fi adapter. Installing it led me for the first time in ages to look at the Network Connections dialogue box. There, I found numerous entries. Some I recognised, like the Wi-Fi dongle I'd just fitted and the machine's own Ethernet socket – but there were several more besides. I don't recall ever adding more connections, so why would there be more than just the two I'd expect? What are the differences between them all? Can I remove the ones I don't need?

Edward Chambers

**A** You helpfully sent us a screenshot of your Network Connections panel, which allowed us to determine that your mystery entries all relate to **VPN** and **virtualisation** products.

These are all products you're either using now or have installed in the past. Indeed, you said your PC is now pretty



The entry for Proton VPN (left), which can be uninstalled in Settings (right)

old so these could be long forgotten by yourself. However, for example, we can see an entry for the Proton VPN (see screenshot above): this is a VPN tool that we've mentioned numerous times over the years, and that helps to hide your online activities. It does this by directing your internet data through a virtual network connection – signified by the entry you see in Network Connections.

We can also see an entry for VirtualBox. This is another tool we've mentioned a lot in the magazine, and it's used for creating virtual PCs. This, too, creates a virtual network connection for itself, allowing any virtual PCs you might create to access

your PC's real networking connections.

As for removing entries, we certainly wouldn't advise trying to do that willy-nilly. Rather, you should uninstall the tools that created them. So, to remove the Proton VPN entry, for example, first click the Start button followed by the Settings cog and then Apps. Next, scroll down to find the Proton VPN entry, then click to select it before clicking Uninstall (see screenshot above) – and then confirm by clicking Uninstall again.

✉ Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)

## Should I install Windows 10 optional updates?

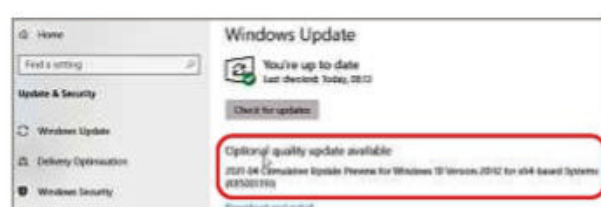
**Q** I've installed the latest update for Windows 10 and my PC is running sweetly. However, when I look under the 'Optional updates' headings it shows me a list of available drivers, I think for the motherboard. Should I install these, as it suggests they may help if I have a problem? I don't want to create a problem I don't have.

Phil Hughes

**A** This is a perennial dilemma. On the one hand, there are updates. On the other, they're optional and your computer is currently just fine.

As technology journalists, we install all updates as soon as they're available. However, that's not necessarily a sensible approach because, while we need to see what's new or different, the results aren't always ideal – but any problems are limited to our test PCs.

On our personal PCs, we here at



After Windows 10 updates, you may see a list of optional updates available

Computeractive tend to be more conservative with updates that we apply. Put simply, with optional updates we generally follow Microsoft's advice, which you cite in your question. That's to say, if we're experiencing problems with one of our own computers, then we'll look to install optional updates. Even so, in the first instance, we'll turn to Google to find out what problems a particular optional update addresses.

The screenshot you sent us (pictured) has a list of updates that do indeed seem to relate to your motherboard. We don't know what that motherboard is, or your

PC make and model. Regardless, unless you're experiencing immediate problems, we'd err on the side of caution and not install these.

If you do have hiccups, then use Google to research each one – so you're at least informed about what problems they claim to fix.

## Next Issue

ONSALE  
Weds  
30 Jun

- Why does eBay think I live elsewhere?
- How do I get old software?
- Can I boost my mobile signal?
- ...And many more

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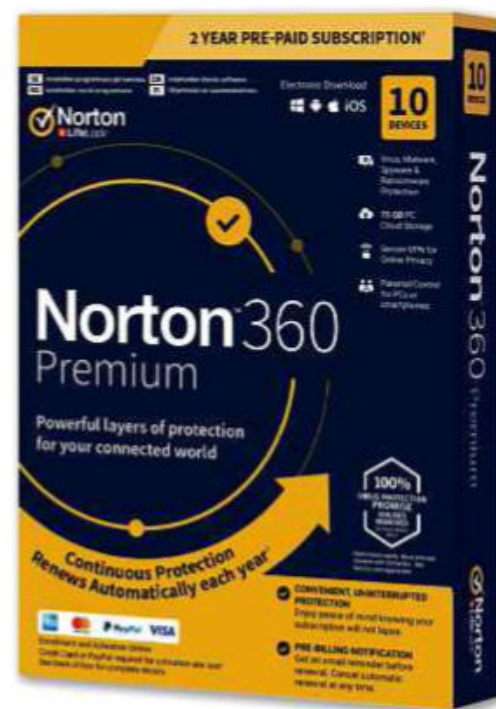
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# Reader Support

Having a problem with our recommended software or expert tips? Email [editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk) and we'll do our best to help

## Why won't PDF24 work for me?

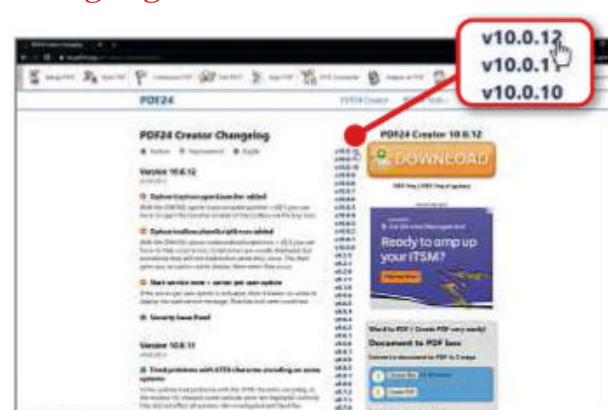
**Q** I installed PDF24, from [www.snipca.com/37711](http://www.snipca.com/37711), following Will Stapley's recommendation in Issue 603 (page 20). However, when I opened it, I found that it was impossible to choose or drop files for processing, which makes it useless. I even tried changing it to Windows 10's default program for PDF files but this did not help. I am using Windows 10 Pro (20H2) on a PC with plenty of memory and storage. I raised this in PDF24's help forum but have had no reply from the developer, though there was a reply from another user with the same problem.

Michael Clary

**A** We don't know what the problem is here and, despite trying, we can't replicate it. We've installed PDF24 on multiple computers over the years, and again recently, and have not hit this particular roadblock. Nonetheless, it seems you and at least one other user do have a real problem.

The program is updated regularly, as is Windows 10, so it's possible that an update to either has caused what we suspect is a rare glitch.

Sadly, the program's developer, Stefan Ziegler, doesn't seem so engaged in his own forum as perhaps he once was – but PDF24 does still receive his attention, as new versions are regularly issued. So, all we can suggest is to keep an eye on the [changelog](#) (see screenshot below) that he



The PDF24 changelog shows bugs found (and fixed), along with links to the latest versions

maintains at [www.snipca.com/38312](http://www.snipca.com/38312). Here, he details any bugs found (and fixed), along with links to the latest versions. Hopefully, he'll soon identify and squash this particular bug.

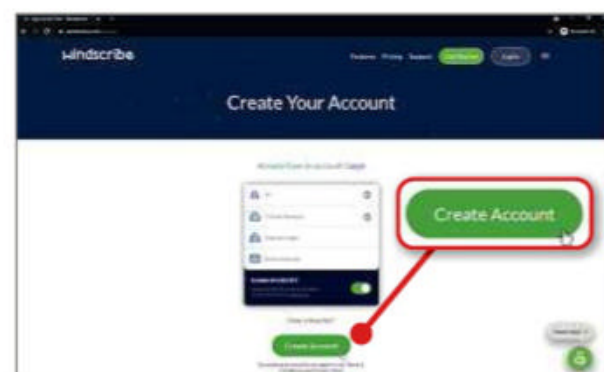
## Why can't I display Kindle book covers?

**Q** I was intrigued to read in Issue 605's News section (page 9) that I could display the cover of the book I was currently reading on my Kindle Paperwhite (10th generation) and followed the simple instructions to the letter – but to no avail. The 'Display Cover' option simply doesn't exist! On the page displayed under the Device Options tab, the only options are (from top to bottom) Device Info, Device Passcode, Device Time, Restart, Reset and Advanced Options. Any advice?

Mike Stevens

**A** Yes, if you read the information again you'll notice a small but vital detail, which is that this feature is available only on Kindle devices that were originally purchased using Amazon's 'Without Ads' option. The 'With Ads' Kindle is cheaper, but you have to put up with Amazon showing adverts on its front screen. This is the default purchase option (and the cheapest), so most people choose this.

If you want to use the Display Cover feature, you'll need to pay Amazon the extra to remove the 'offers', as it calls them. To do this, first visit your 'Amazon My Content and Devices' page, at [www.amazon.co.uk/mycd](http://www.amazon.co.uk/mycd). Next, click the Devices tab at the top followed by Kindle, and then the entry for your Paperwhite. Finally, in the Details section, under the Special Offers heading, click 'Remove offers' and then click 'End offers and pay the fee' (note that the exact fee will depend on how, when and where you bought the Kindle – but it's typically around £10).



The desktop version of Windscribe requires that you create an account

## How do I log into Windscribe?

**Q** Issue 601's 'How to download YouTube, iPlayer & Netflix' Cover Feature suggested using the Windscribe VPN tool, but I have to confess I don't understand it. I installed it, but when I click on the icon on my Windows desktop I don't see a Windscribe control panel. I just get taken to a login page for My Account, which takes me back to a login screen. I had the same result when I tried it on a different computer, running Firefox. Any ideas?

David Whitehead

**A** We didn't make it clear that, though genuinely free for up to 10GB a month, the desktop version of Windscribe does require an account. To set one up, first click the Get Started button in the little Windscribe pane. We know you can see this, as you sent us a screenshot of it. You will indeed be directed to the My Account page of the Windscribe website, and this is where we think you're coming unstuck.

Here, the login form is front and centre. As a result it's easy to miss that just above is a question – 'Don't have an account?'. To the right of this, you'll see a 'Create one' link: click this, then choose a username and password, then click Create Account (see screenshot above). You can now return to the little Windscribe login pane, click the Login link and then type the details of the account you've just created. You should now be up and running with the Windscribe VPN.



# Jargon Buster

**32bit/64bit** A measure of how much data a PC can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit, more modern ones are 64bit.

**3G/4G** Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

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

**5G** The newest generation of mobile networks.

**720p/1080p/1440p** Common types of high-definition video of 1280x720, 1920x1080 and 2560x1440 pixels respectively.

**802.11ax** Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called Wi-Fi 6.

**Active noise cancelling** Method for reducing unwanted sound by adding a second sound specifically designed to cancel the first.

**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 screen. Traditional computer screens are 4:3. Widescreen displays are 16:9 or 16:10.

**Augmented reality** Lets you superimpose digital objects and characters on the 'real' world as seen through a phone screen.

**Bandwidth** A measure of how much data can be transferred through a connection at one time.

**Benchmarking** Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

**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.

**Changelog** A record of changes made to software, such as fixes and new features.

**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.

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

**CSV** Comma Separated Value. A standard file format, used for storing tabulated information, that can be opened by most spreadsheet programs.

**DDR3** A type of computer memory, newer than DDR2 but older and slower than DDR4.

**Delta E** A measurement that shows how the human eye perceives different colours.

**DIMM** Dual Inline Memory Module. An older standard for computer memory modules.

**Driver** A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

**Dual-band** A Wi-Fi router that operates on two bands: 2.4 and 5GHz. Wireless networks working at 2.4GHz have longer range, but are more prone to interference. Wireless networks working at 5GHz have shorter range, but are less prone to interference and therefore tend to be faster than 2.4GHz networks.

**Emoji** A small graphic that can be inserted into a text message or email.

**Emulator** A program that makes one computer act like another, allowing it to run that computer's software.

**EXE** A program file designed to run in Windows. Has the file extension .exe.

**Flash memory** A type of memory that can retain information without a power source. Used in memory cards, USB sticks and other storage devices.

**Fps** Frames per second, normally used to indicate gaming performance.

**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.

**Gadget** A small program that runs on the Windows desktop.

**Graphics card** A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

**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.

**Hotspot** A public area covered by a Wi-Fi network that allows you to access the internet.

**IMAP** Internet Message Access Protocol. A method for email that lets the user manage messages stored on a remote server.

**IP address** Internet Protocol address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

**IPS** A screen technology. Monitors that use it have wider viewing angles and better, more accurate-looking colours compared with monitors that do not use this technology.

**JPEG** Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras. Some image quality is lost with each save.

**LED** Light-emitting diode. An electronic device that emits light. Used on almost all electronic devices, and to provide the backlight for some LCDs.

**Macro lens** Lets you take sharp, detailed, close-up photos of small objects.

**MicroSD card** A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

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

**Mini HDMI** Smaller version of the HDMI cable and connector to accommodate smaller devices.

**MP4** A type of digital movie file often used for portable players.

**MS-DOS** Microsoft Disk Operating System. The standard PC operating system before the dawn of Windows. Dos managed how files were stored on a PC. It was controlled through typed commands.

**NFC** Near-field communication. A technology that allows two devices to communicate by being touched together or placed near to each other. Can be used to pay for items in some shops using compatible mobile phones.

**NTFS** New Technology File System. A file system used by all recent versions of Windows.

**NVMe** Non-Volatile Memory Express. An interface that lets solid-state drives work faster.

**OCR** Optical character recognition. The process by which printed text is scanned and converted into documents that can be edited.

**Open source** Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

**Overclock** Make a processor work faster to boost performance at the cost of it getting hotter and requiring more power.

**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.

**PNG** Portable Network Graphics. A format for images that shrinks file sizes using compression but without discarding any data.



**POP** Post Office Protocol. A system for remotely accessing email from an ISP.

**PVR** Personal video recorder. Also known as DVR (digital video recorder). These set-top boxes let you pause and record digital TV.

**RAM** Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. Its capacity is measured in megabytes (MB): the more memory your PC has, the more things it can process simultaneously and the faster it will seem. Any data in RAM will be lost when the power is switched off.

**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. For a steady image, the higher the refresh rate, the less flicker you will see. A refresh rate over 85Hz is generally accepted as being flicker-free.

**Root directory** The top folder in any hierarchy.

**Response time** How fast a coloured pixel turns to white and back again.

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

**SSD** Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

**Subwoofer** A special type of speaker designed to reproduce deep bass sounds only. Even on a stereo system, only one subwoofer is required because human ears cannot detect the direction of bass frequencies.

**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.

**Timestamp** The time which an event is recorded by a computer.

**Temporary file** A file created by a browser to store website data.

**Thunderbolt** A very fast port for connecting external storage to a computer. Can be used to connect monitors, a network and more.

**Two-factor authentication** A system that uses two different means to identify the user. For example, a fingerprint in addition to a password.

**Ultrawide** Offering a field of view that's wider than traditional digital cameras.

**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.

**Vega 8** Radeon's built-in graphics card for laptops.

**VESA** Video Electronics Standards Association. A standard mount for attaching monitors on to stands, walls and PCs.

**Virtual camera** Lets you use your computer's resources during a video call instead of using a live webcam. It means you can show images, videos, and other sources during a video call.

**Virtualisation** Running a second 'virtual' operating system on a PC, leaving the main system unaffected.

**VPN** Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.





**Waveform** An image that represents an audio signal or recording.

**Wi-Fi 6** Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called 802.11ax.

**Wildcard** A character that can be substituted for one or more other characters in a web search.

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3		Sky: Superfast Talk and Line Rental	£28.00	18 months	59Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£336.00
4		Virgin Media: Big Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£33.00 (£56 after 18 months)	18 months	54Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£396.00

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# Easy when you **Know How**

Worried that his laptop may be struggling,  
**Robert Irvine** gets tough to...



## Stress-test his processor

Since I received my second Covid jab, I've been a lot less worried about my health and more preoccupied with the sort of mundane matters that troubled me before the pandemic. Is it safe to drink milk that I opened four days ago? Are people legally allowed to ride electric scooters on the pavement? And, most importantly, is my laptop still working OK or is it about to conk out and take all my non-backed-up files with it?

“

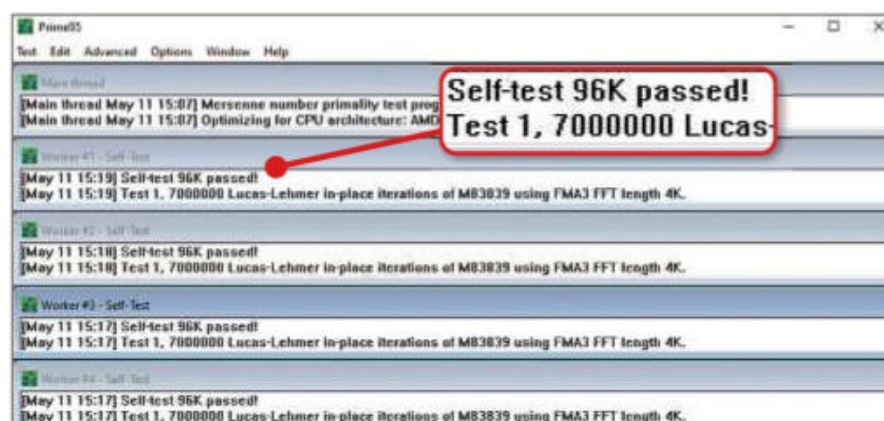
Stop, you're killing it!  
I panicked, before the  
fan settled down to a  
less alarming speed

”

I've had my trusty HP Pavilion for two-and-a-half years and it runs very smoothly, but my inner pessimist frequently reminds me that nothing lasts forever. With Windows software becoming increasingly resource-intensive, I fear that my system is only a crash away from going kaput.

To find out if my laptop is built to last, I decided to perform a CPU 'stress test'. This involves 'torturing' your computer by pushing the processor to its very limits, which may sound creepy and unnecessary – like a Netflix true-crime series – but is apparently a good way to determine long-term system stability.

Most online articles about stress testing recommended a free tool called Prime95 ([www.snipca.com/38239](http://www.snipca.com/38239)), which has – as its name suggests – been around since Windows 95, but was updated to version 30.6 earlier this year. I was intrigued to



Prime95 tests your processor by searching for large prime numbers

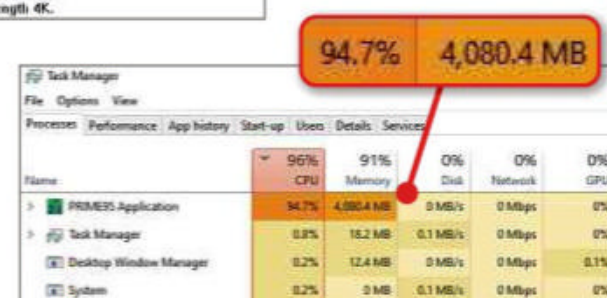
learn that Prime95 works by using your processor to search for large prime numbers (those divisible only by themselves and 1, as I remembered from GCSE Maths), specifically the 'Mersenne' variety (I've no idea what that means, because I didn't do A-Level).

I downloaded, extracted and ran the 64bit version of Prime95, and clicked the Just Stress Testing button when prompted. The other option was to 'Join GIMPS' – the Great Internet Mersenne Prime Search – but as this entailed committing my computer to the never-ending search for huge prime numbers (and is a rather silly acronym), I chose to pass on that.

Prime95 now invited me to 'Run a Torture Test' and specify the "number of torture tests to run". I'm sure there must be a nicer way of phrasing that, but I went with the flow, using the pre-entered figure of '8' (this is based on the number of processor cores). I then chose Blend to combine the program's CPU and RAM tests, and with some trepidation about the punishment I may be inflicting on my laptop, I clicked OK.

Almost immediately, Prime95 started its eight 'workers' and the tests began. As the program pushed my processor to full throttle in its hunt for those pesky prime numbers, my laptop spun its fan furiously to deal with the extra heat generated and sounded as if it might explode.

"Stop, you're killing it!" I panicked, before the fan settled down to a less alarming speed and noise level. Out of interest, I opened Task Manager and




Robert's poor laptop was pushed to using 95 per cent of its CPU

found that Prime95 was using nearly 95 per cent of my CPU power (see small screenshot above) and over 4GB of memory, which made even notorious resource hogs such as Google Chrome seem timid.

Unlike, for example, performing a virus scan, Prime95's tests continue until you manually stop them. The developers advise that you run it for "somewhere between 6 and 24 hours" to see if it encounters any errors that indicate problems with your PC.

This brought to mind the supercomputer Deep Thought in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which spent seven-and-a-half million years calculating the Answer to the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe and Everything. As another of my recent worries involves my electricity bill, once my laptop had survived an hour of stress testing without any errors, I clicked the Test menu, chose Stop and told Prime95 to 'Stop all workers'. I concluded that my machine was as robust and stable as ever, and apologised to it profusely for my tortuous lack of faith.

 Need help with giving your PC or laptop a health check? Let us know: [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)





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