

**BUY THIS SUPERB  
PC MONITOR**  
It's our new favourite  
page 24



**USE TWO NUMBERS  
ON YOUR PHONE**  
Set up an eSIM – we show you how



**BLOCK ALL  
COOKIE  
POP-UPS**

You'll NEVER see  
them online again  
(hallelujah!) p60



# Computer **active**

ISSUE 618 | 3 – 16 NOVEMBER 2021

Learn something new in every issue

We've forgotten what's on page 74

# WINDOWS 11

## THE ULTIMATE REVIEW

 ☒ New tools! ☒ New design! ☒ More apps!  
Read our verdict (it may surprise you) p50



**PLUS**

**DON'T BUY THE  
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**BEAT MICROSOFT'S  
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Have you upgraded to Windows 11 yet? I don't blame you if you haven't. With Windows 10 running so smoothly (the equal of Windows 7 for many – me included), upgrading requires considerable thought. It's not as obvious a switch as from Vista to 7 (yes please!) or from 8 to 10 (do it now!).

What you need are detailed, informed reviews that scythe through Microsoft's hype and tell you precisely what you need to know. I've read plenty online in the past few weeks, but they all seem to skip the important details

that Nik Rawlinson highlights in this issue. His verdict: more positive than I was expecting, and less positive than Microsoft was hoping. Please tell me if it swayed your decision one way or the other.

By the way, don't forget that you can upgrade from Windows 10 to 11 for free. If you're still on Windows 7 or 8.1, you can buy Windows 10 for a generous discount through our Software Store. Turn to page 54 for details.

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



## THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

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**27ft**

Height of telegraph pole Openreach erected in a couple's garden without their permission - p21

**600**

How many minutes a month you can transcribe for free using the app Otter - p45

## HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

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



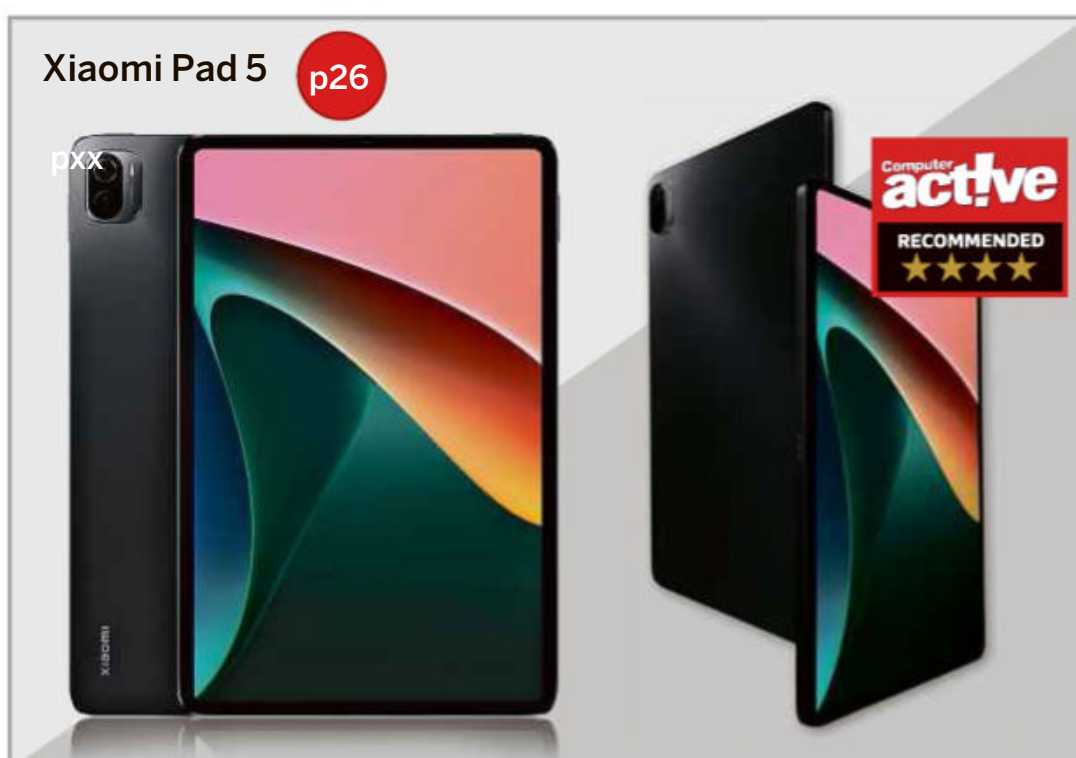
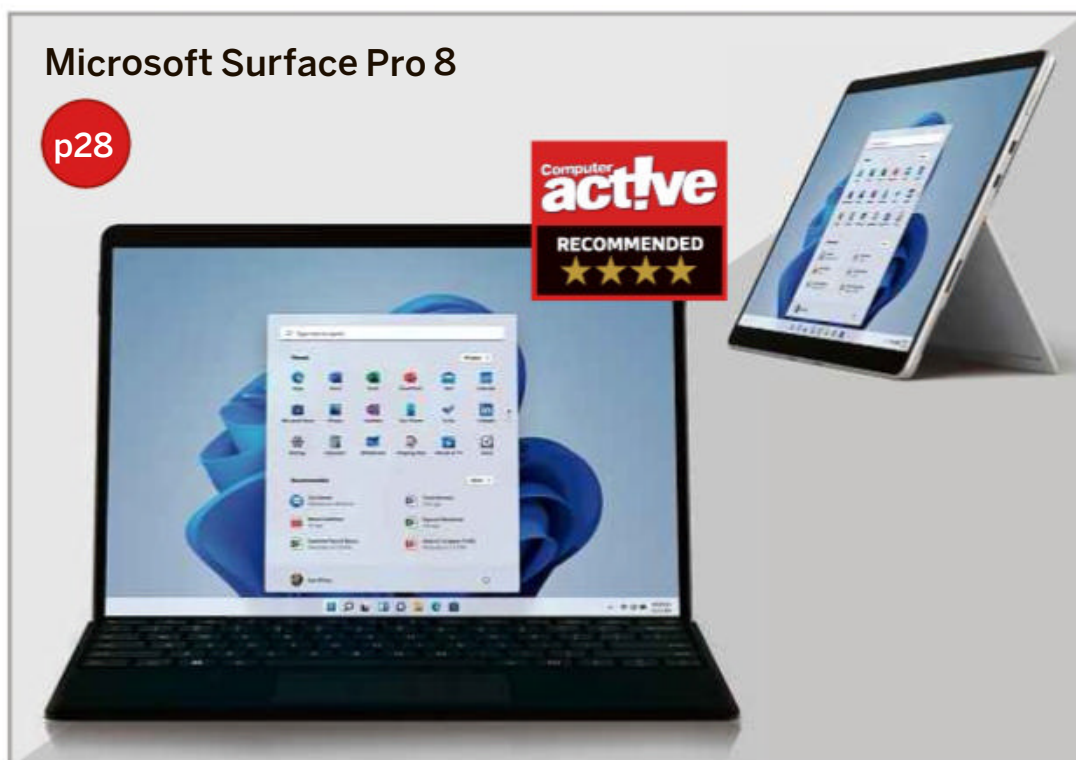
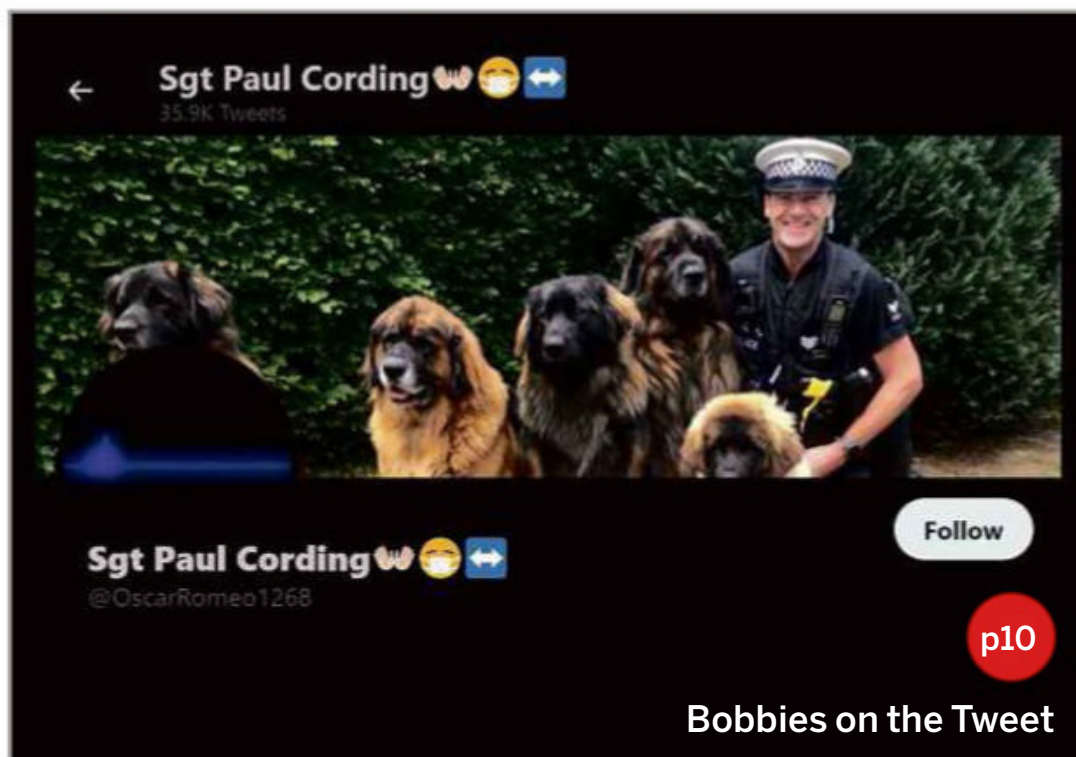
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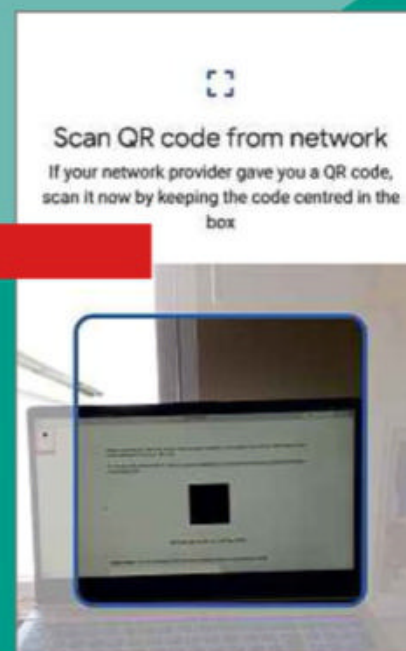


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### Two lines, one phone

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# WINDOWS 11 THE ULTIMATE REVIEW

COVER  
FEATURE  
P50



☒ New tools! ☒ New design! ☒ More apps!  
Read our verdict (it may surprise you)

### Put cookies back in their box

p60

# Block all cookie pop-ups



We use  
cookies

We use cookies to make  
your experience on this  
website better

ACCEPT

COOKIE POLICIES



# Backlash grows over changes to Windows 11 taskbar

**W**indows 11 users are calling for Microsoft to tweak the taskbar to allow them to 'ungroup' program icons, rather than always placing them together, as more people voice frustration about changes to

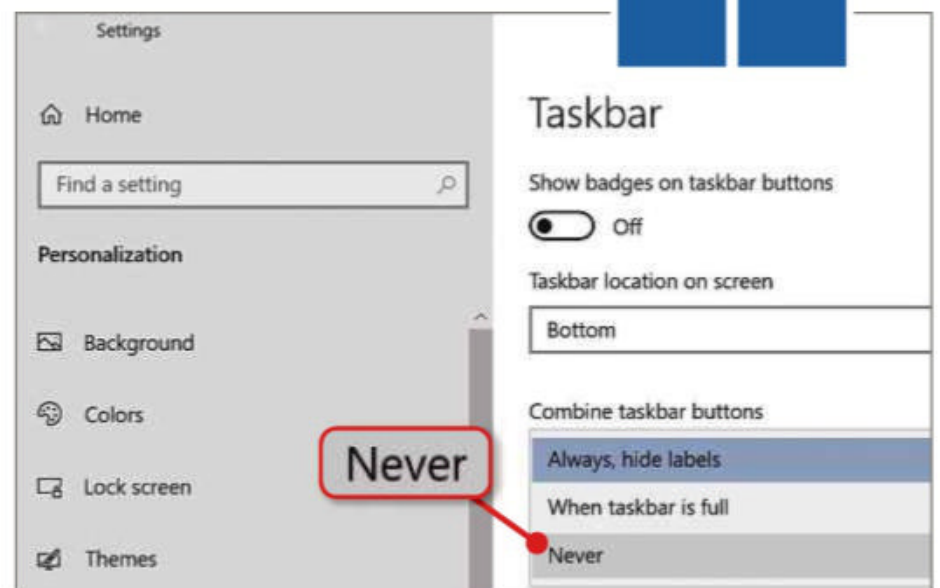
the tool.

A post on Windows 11's Feedback Hub, which has received over 11,000 positive votes, complains that combining icons makes it harder to work quickly and efficiently.

One frustrated user wrote: "Really hope this comes back. Windows 11 is far less productive given the number of apps and windows of the same apps I run across multiple displays".

Windows 10 also groups program icons, but it's seen as an annoyance by many users, and can be turned off. By default, it places together buttons that belong to the same program, in order to avoid filling up the taskbar. For example, multiple browser tabs open in Edge windows, are grouped in one icon.

You can disable the option by right-clicking the taskbar, selecting 'Taskbar settings', then scrolling down to the 'Combine taskbar buttons'



heading and clicking Never in the dropdown menu (see screenshot). Alternatively, you can choose to combine buttons only when your taskbar is full.

Microsoft hasn't responded to the comments, which suggests tweaking the taskbar is not a priority for the company.

Despite generally favourable reviews of Windows 11 – including in this issue (see our Cover Feature, page 50), the revamped taskbar is causing many problems. Users are

especially unhappy that you can't move it to the sides or the top, as you can in Windows 10. They're equally dismayed that you can no longer drag and drop files into icons, which is a handy way to open files in specific programs, or pin shortcuts to the taskbar.

Other changes mean you can't lock the taskbar, nor can you resize the icons or add the Quick Launch option. However, several programs have been released that bring these functions back.

## WHAT WE THINK

None of these taskbar complaints relate to actual faults with the tool. They aren't bugs that need fixing. Every change was intentional on Microsoft's part. It simply thinks you don't need to ungroup icons, or move the taskbar to the side. It makes us wonder whether the company truly understands how people use its operating system. These oversights leave gaps for developers to build programs that bring back missing taskbar options. We'll explain how to use the best free one in our next issue.

## New PowerToys tool reveals where your cursor is

**M**icrosoft has revealed a new PowerToys tool that helps you find where your mouse cursor is.

The tool, yet to be named, darkens the screen except for the area around your cursor, isolating it in a brighter circle (see screenshot).

It was demonstrated in a

video ([www.snipca.com/39860](http://www.snipca.com/39860)) on Twitter by Clint Rutkas, the lead developer of PowerToys. He said it would be helpful if you use multiple ultra-wide monitors that have a high resolution.

He added that the tool finds your cursor more effectively than the current option in Windows.

To use this, open Settings, then click Devices, followed by Mouse. Next, scroll down and click 'Additional mouse settings', then click the Pointer Options tab and tick the 'Show location...' box at the bottom.

The new tool will probably be added first to the **beta** version of PowerToys before



being made available in the full edition.



**You'll like this...**

Virgin Media has released its first Wi-Fi 6 router ([www.snipca.com/39850](http://www.snipca.com/39850))



**but not this...**

Nearly a quarter of Brits have received 'proof of vaccination' scams ([www.snipca.com/39861](http://www.snipca.com/39861))



# ‘Hey, Siri – get me Apple Music for half price!’

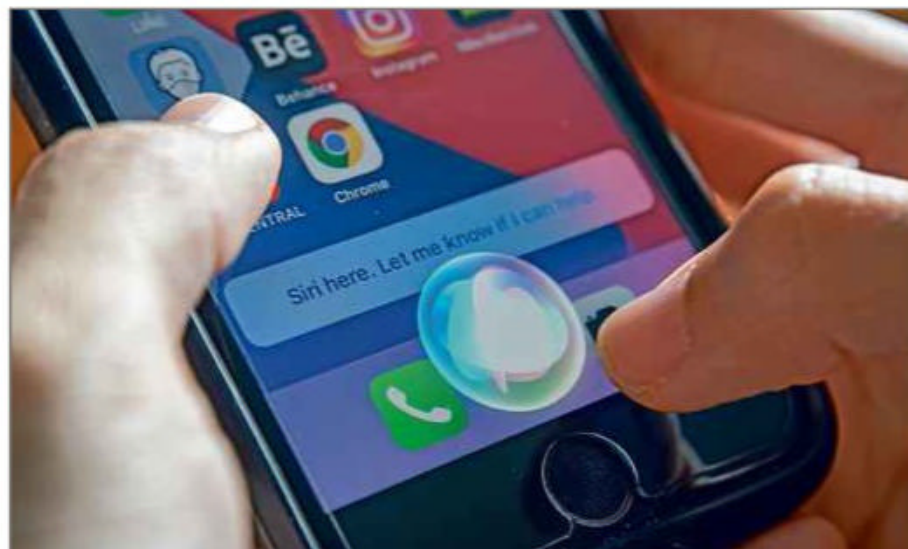


Apple has announced a cheaper version of its Apple Music iPhone app that works only if you search for songs using its voice-activated assistant Siri.

Called Apple Music Voice ([www.snipca.com/39851](http://www.snipca.com/39851)), it costs £4.99 a month, half the price of the Individual plan. To use it, you have to say “Hey, Siri” before naming the track you want to play. Apple says it gives you access to 90 million songs, and tens of thousands of playlists.

As examples, Apple says you could ask Siri to “play the dinner party playlist,” “play something chill,” or even “play more like this”. You can also ask it to play Apple Music Radio.

You can subscribe to Apple Music Voice by saying “Hey Siri, start my Apple Music Voice trial,” or by signing up through the Apple Music app. You can then play music



across all devices that work with Siri, including HomePod mini, AirPods, iPhone, and when using CarPlay.

Apple claims it “delivers an effortless music experience” and makes Apple Music “accessible to even more people around the world”. However, it’s more expensive than Amazon’s voice-activated equivalent (Amazon Music Unlimited), which costs £3.99 and lets you play music only by Alexa through

Echo smart speakers.

Spotify, its main music-streaming rival, has a free tier that includes adverts, while its Premium version costs £9.99 in the UK. Apple Music, however, has no free version.

Apple has also launched new AirPods ([www.apple.com/uk/airpods](http://www.apple.com/uk/airpods)) – its Bluetooth earbuds – which have **spatial audio** and play for six hours on a single charge, one hour longer than the previous version.

## New laws needed to keep UK radio on smart speakers

Amazon, Apple and Google should be forced to keep British radio stations on their smart speakers, according to a new report commissioned by the Government.

The ‘Digital Radio and Audio Review’ ([www.snipca.com/39852](http://www.snipca.com/39852)) found that a third of adults now have a smart speaker such as an Amazon Echo (pictured), Apple HomePod or Google Home, and they play a “central role” in many lives.

Research shows that 64 per cent of all audio listened to on a smart speaker is live radio, and yet there are no rules preventing manufacturers from removing or limiting access to UK radio stations.

The report, which had input from commercial radio groups and the BBC among other interested bodies, said stations should be “protected” on smart speakers to make sure listeners can still access their favourite content in the future.

“This will mean they can continue to reach loyal audiences as radio is increasingly listened to via tech platforms rather than traditional radio sets,” the report said.

Motoring groups also stressed the importance of keeping stations available on so-called ‘infotainment’ devices in cars.

In addition, the report recommended not switching



off the FM signal until at least 2030, ensuring the “elderly, vulnerable and people in remote communities” will still be able to access essential content, such as news bulletins.

Media Minister Julia Lopez said the Covid-19 lockdowns highlighted the importance of radio in bringing news and entertainment to those in need, and that regulation was needed to preserve this “treasured medium” as listening habits change.

### IN BRIEF

#### TESCO OPENS FIRST STORE WITHOUT CHECKOUT

Tesco has opened its first store without a checkout, letting customers pay automatically through its phone app (pictured). The branch, in High Holborn, London, has been fitted with cameras and weight sensors to establish which items a customer picks up. They are charged through the app when they leave the shop. Read more on Tesco’s site: [www.snipca.com/39839](http://www.snipca.com/39839).



#### 4K TV BOX COMING TO TALKTALK CUSTOMERS

TalkTalk looks set to offer its 4.2 million customers a new **4K** TV service, after teaming up with TV provider Netgem. The service, expected to launch next year, is likely to be a set-top box offering nearly 300 channels, and letting you record, pause and rewind programmes. Existing Netgem boxes let you watch catch-up TV from services like BBC iPlayer and ITV Hub.

### TOMORROW'S WORLD



This is Grace, a robot “nursing assistant” recently exhibited at an AI conference in California.



Its creators, Hong Kong firm Hanson Robotics, say it will provide companionship to elderly people, even being able to discuss the weather. Sounds clever, but won’t most patients prefer a *real* nurse that can say more than “Rather chilly today”? Watch it at [www.snipca.com/39847](http://www.snipca.com/39847).



## IN BRIEF

### BBC CHANGES iPLAYER LOGO IN REDESIGN



The BBC has changed the iPlayer logo (pictured) as part of a major redesign of its branding. It has also introduced new logos for the Sounds app, and for online weather, news and sport, as well as the TV idents for its channels. The change was promoted by research that found viewers regard the BBC as “old fashioned and out of date”. Read more at [www.snipca.com/39816](http://www.snipca.com/39816).

### RODENTS CHEW THROUGH BROADBAND CABLES

Openreach has fixed broadband cables that rodents chewed through in north Devon, cutting connections for nearly 2,000 homes and businesses. The company said that repairing the cables was made more difficult because the cables were full of silt and were filling with rain more quickly than engineers could drain them. Visit Openreach's site for photos of the damage: [www.snipca.com/39827](http://www.snipca.com/39827).

### THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!



Does this emoji mean you're praying for someone? Or is it a celebratory high-five? It's causing confusion and anguish online, particularly when the sender has a different interpretation to the recipient. Safer surely to ignore emojis altogether, and just use good old-fashioned words, like we all used to. Remember that?



## Royal Mint to extract gold from old phones

The Royal Mint plans to extract gold and precious metals from old smartphones and laptops using a method never before tried in the UK.

It has partnered with Canadian company Excir, whose technology recovers more than 99 per cent of the gold, silver and other highly valued metals found in electronic waste.

The Mint says Excir's



technology extracts precious metals from circuit boards “within seconds”. In tests, it has produced gold with a 99.9 per cent purity. The process will take place at the

mint's site in Llantrisant, Glamorgan.

Less than 20 per cent of ‘e-waste’ is currently recycled, meaning that about \$57 billion worth of gold, silver, copper, palladium, and other metals are discarded – though The Royal Mint estimates that the real figure of wasted metals is much higher.

The Mint's chief executive Anne Jessopp said working with Excir gave it “the opportunity to make a genuine impact on one of the world's greatest environmental challenges while helping to secure our future as a leader in high-quality, sustainable precious metals”.

### VODAFONE LAUNCHES RECYCLED SIM CARDS

From April next year Vodafone's UK customers will be able to use SIM cards made from recycled plastic. The company said the cards will save 1,280 tonnes of CO2 every year in the 12 countries they're being introduced. Its aim is to remove plastic cards entirely, which will be boosted by the growing popularity of



eSIMs (see page 35). Read more on Vodafone's site: [www.snipca.com/39820](http://www.snipca.com/39820).

## Million people followed scammers' instructions this summer

Almost a million people in the UK followed instructions given to them by scammers over the summer, leaving them open to having their money and personal details stolen.

The figures come from new Ofcom research, which found that nearly 45 million adults had been targeted by scam calls, emails and phone messages between June and September.

How scammers target people seems to depend on the age of the intended victim. Overall, text scams are most

common, with three quarters of 16 to 34-year-olds targeted, while 60 per cent of over-75s received a suspicious call to their landline.

More than four in 10 (44 per cent) who had received a suspicious text message said they get such scams at least once a week.

Just over half of people who received a scam text either deleted the message or blocked the number.

Ofcom urged people to report scam texts – and help to “flush out fraudsters” – by forwarding them to their



network using the number 7726. If you've received a scam call, Ofcom advises reporting it to Action Fraud (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), or to Police Scotland by calling 101.

You can also ring the new 159 service to check the legitimacy of emails and texts claiming to be from banks (see Issue 617, page 9).

• Hat-trick of supermarket scams – page 11



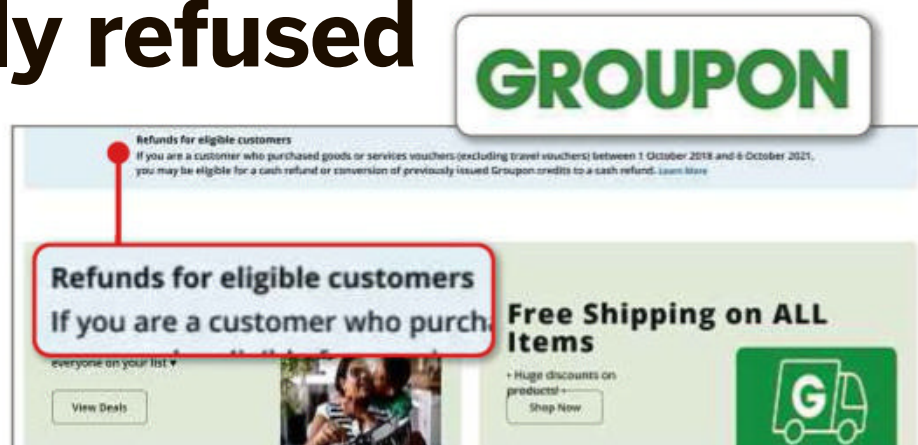
# Groupon will refund customers it previously refused

Deals website Groupon ([www.groupon.co.uk](http://www.groupon.co.uk)) will now offer cash refunds to customers who were previously told they had to accept a credit note or replacement instead.

It follows an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), which asked it to sign formal commitments, known as ‘undertakings’, to resolve concerns that it wasn’t responding satisfactorily to customer complaints, and wasn’t providing full cash refunds when required.

It warned the company that it would face court action if it didn’t tackle these problems.

Groupon responded by saying it will contact customers who had been told they weren’t entitled to a refund. In future, under its new policy, it will



acknowledge a customer’s complaint within 24 hours, and deal with it within 14 days.

Until mid December it will show a banner on its homepage and app confirming that customers who bought goods or services between 1 October 2018 and 6 October 2021 “may be eligible for a cash refund or conversion of previously issued Groupon credits to a cash refund” (see screenshot).

Clicking the banner takes you to a page ([www.snipca.com/39784](http://www.snipca.com/39784)) with more details.

The CMA also investigated concerns that Groupon wasn’t checking the accuracy of product descriptions, that items weren’t being delivered as quickly as advertised, and that they weren’t of a satisfactory quality.

Groupon has also agreed to create a new team to investigate deals when a certain number of customers complain about their purchase, and to carry out ‘mystery shopper’ exercises to check the quality of products and services.

## Access 300 Govt services via one app

You may soon be able to access more than 300 Government services, including claiming benefits and changing your driving licence, through a single app.

The Government plans to launch a Gov.uk app that it says will mean you’ll “no longer have to remember multiple usernames and passwords to access services such as free school meals and support for disabled family members”.

It said that currently there are 191 different ways for people to set up accounts on GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)), with 44 different methods for signing in. It wants to simplify the process to bring it in line with the private sector “where people expect to be able to log



into and access a variety of different services via their smartphone”.

The app, expected to launch in late 2022, will let users verify their identity using biometric features on their phones, such as facial recognition and fingerprint scanning. It will also notify users of changes in policy that affect them, such as to their

benefits, and send reminders such as when a driver’s licence is set to expire.

The plans were announced by Stephen Barclay, who in September replaced Michael Gove as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

He said: “Now more than ever, it is important that government responds to people’s heightened expectations about the services they use. During the pandemic, people have had to interact with public services in a variety of new ways, including the NHS app and the vaccine-booking service.”

### IN BRIEF

#### TV GOLD NOW ON FREESAT – JUST LIKE THAT!

Freesat viewers can now watch Tommy Cooper, Kenny Everett, Mike Yarwood and other stars of the past on the nostalgia channel That’s TV Gold ([www.thats.tv](http://www.thats.tv)), on channel 178. It’s been available to Freeview customers since July (channel 91), and Sky Q and Sky+ HD viewers (channel 187).



#### VIRGIN HITS 2.2GBPS FOR THIRD TIME

Virgin Media has run its third trial of 2.2Gbps broadband, double what it currently offers to the public, and 43 times the national average. Its latest tests, carried out in Birmingham and Edinburgh, follow trials in Manchester, Southampton and Thatcham in Berkshire. Virgin says the trials show it can hit higher speeds on existing cables.

#### PLAY SNAKE ON NOKIA'S NEW 6310 PHONE

Nokia has released a modern version of its iconic 6310 phone (pictured alongside original) to celebrate its 20th anniversary, complete with the classic game Snake. Priced £59.99 ([www.snipca.com/39790](http://www.snipca.com/39790)), it has a 2.8in screen, 16GB RAM, 8GB storage and a wireless FM radio, plus a battery “that can go weeks between charges”. We’ll review it soon.





# Question of the Fortnight

## Should the police use social media more?

Bobbies on the beat should also be online says commissioner



### THE FACTS

- A police commissioner has said the police should use social media more to fight misinformation about crime levels
- The National Police Chiefs' Council has told forces they should replace individual accounts with official ones
- It claimed the public doesn't like officers posting "overly personal content" online

**W**hen PC George Dixon gave his 'Goodnight all' message at the end of every episode, standing outside Dock Green station, he didn't have to wonder whether he should also put it on Twitter. But it's a dilemma that today's police officers face. Instead of saying a friendly "Ello, ello, ello", should they press 'Retweet, retweet, retweet'?

One police chief thinks so. Marc Jones ([www.marcjones.org.uk](http://www.marcjones.org.uk), pictured below), who in May was reelected as Police & Crime Commissioner for Lincolnshire, says officers should be more active on social media in order to fight misinformation online, and reassure the public by stating what's being done to tackle local crime. He added that this

**Police commissioner Marc Jones says officers should use social media to fight false information about crime**



**“Fear of crime is much higher disproportionately than the reality portrayed online”**

will help people “feel safe as well as be safe”.

In a briefing to reporters, Jones claimed that “fear of crime is much higher disproportionately than the reality” often portrayed online. He said the effect of this can be debilitating, citing the example of his 83-year-old mother: “If she dare not leave her home to go into the village shop, won't catch the bus to go into the centre of the city to do her shopping because she's scared, you have massively affected her quality of life”.

But despite being prolific on Twitter ([www.snipca.com/39858](http://www.snipca.com/39858)), he says that Facebook and Nextdoor (<https://nextdoor.co.uk>) can play a more significant role. He's surely right on this point. As Twitter descends more into abuse, echo chambers and

mob rule, moderate voices will increasingly turn to community pages on Facebook, or neighbourly advice on Nextdoor.

Jones, who is also the chairman of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), insists that getting police to use social media more wouldn't mean taking them off the beat. He has previously criticised police forces for telling officers to stop using social media, saying they're being replaced by “sterile corporate accounts”.

In April the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) issued guidance saying forces should cut back the number of personal accounts because some people might report crimes to these accounts – which aren't monitored 24 hours a day – rather than

through official channels. But Jones says this could be solved by adding a note to the accounts stating they're not monitored all day, every day.

North Yorkshire Police was one of the first forces to adopt the policy, combining some individual accounts into eight official ones. It was accused of a “massive PR failure”, though some popular accounts remain, including Sergeant Paul Cording's ([www.snipca.com/39859](http://www.snipca.com/39859), pictured above), which has over 14,000 followers.

Ultimately, the question is what kind of content should police post online. The NPCC claims the public doesn't like officers posting “overly personal content” – often clumsy attempts at humour – and there's much truth in that. Fighting misinformation – what Jones proposes – is a better use, but there's a big problem: many of those most fearful of crime aren't even online, let alone using Twitter. The police can't abandon vulnerable people in the rush to embrace social media.



# Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

## WATCH OUT FOR...

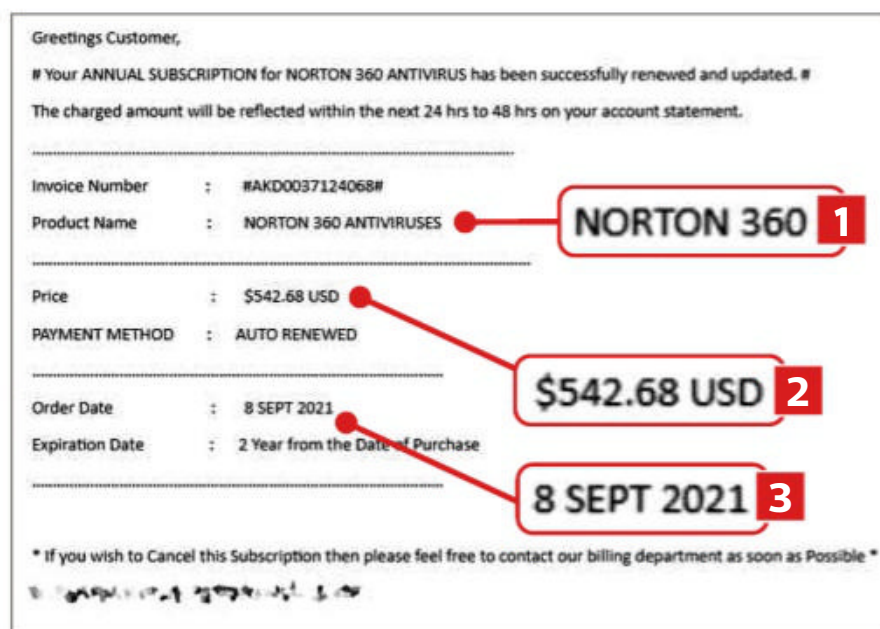
## Fake anti-virus email renewals

### What's the threat?

Scammers are attempting the old trick of trying to persuade people that they need to renew subscriptions to anti-virus programs they don't even use – or that their subscription has been automatically renewed.

The latest attack sends emails that impersonate leading anti-virus brands McAfee and Norton. The former has the heading 'ACCOUNT LIMITED', and begins: 'Your subscription has expired! Protect your digital life now.' It contains a red button with the words 'GET PROTECTED NOW'.

The Norton email is more subtle, coming in the form of a payment invoice claiming that your subscription has been automatically renewed. It lacks any official Norton branding, but does contain the product name (1 in screenshot), the amount (2, and the



order date (3). Scammers hope you'll be alarmed by this, and contact the 'billing department' using the details at the bottom of the email.

### How can you stay safe?

You'll always need anti-virus on your computers, so scammers will continue to

target you with emails like these. If you get one, check its legitimacy by phoning the company. You can reach McAfee on 0800 028 7581, and Norton on 020 7616 5600.

Scammers will impersonate other leading anti-virus firms too, so make a note of these numbers: Bitdefender (020 8819 2649), ESET (01202 405 405), Kaspersky (020 3549 3499), Webroot (0808 101 7260). You'll find Avast contact details at [www.avast.com/en-gb/contacts](http://www.avast.com/en-gb/contacts).

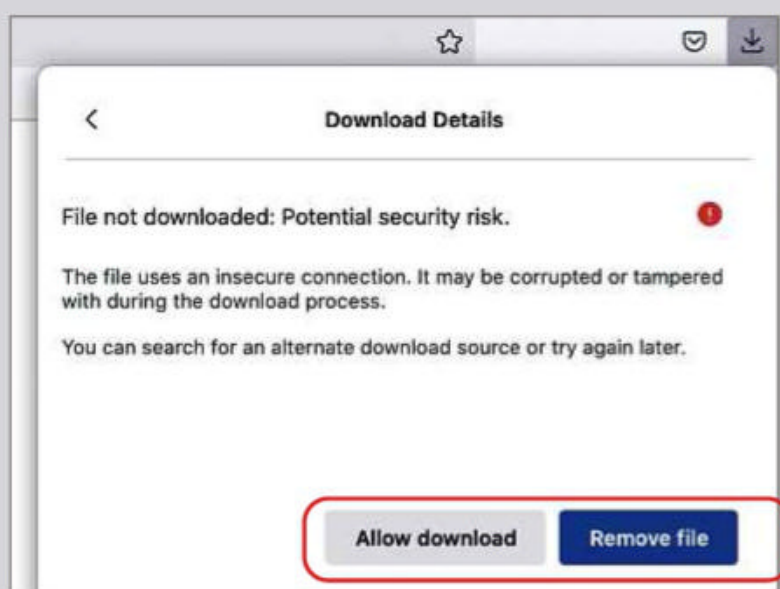
In addition, look out for signs that an email is a scam. For example, the Norton email is priced in dollars, and quotes an absurdly high figure for your renewal (\$542). The retail price for Norton 360 Premium (10 devices, two years) is £179.99, though you can buy it for £24.99 through our Software Store: [www.snipca.com/33247](http://www.snipca.com/33247).

## New tools | Firefox 93 blocks 'insecure' downloads

A site may use HTTPS encryption, but that doesn't mean everything you download from it will be similarly protected. Any file downloaded over an insecure HTTP connection is unencrypted, leaving it exposed in clear text, ready for a hacker to intercept, read and steal.

Mozilla hopes Firefox 93 will plug this security hole. If while on an HTTPS site you start downloading a file over HTTP, you'll see the warning that the file could be "corrupted or tampered with", giving you the option to allow the download, or remove the file (see screenshot).

This is explained in Mozilla's blog



([www.snipca.com/39777](http://www.snipca.com/39777)), where you can also read what else is new in Firefox 93. To find out which version you're on, click the top-right menu icon (three horizontal lines), then Help followed by About Firefox.

## ScamWatch

Readers warn readers



### Hat-trick of supermarket scams

I got a hat-trick of supermarket email scams within a week. They were all supposed 'gift cards' for Asda, Morrisons and Tesco customers, which you could win by clicking a link and filling out a survey. The cards weren't for a fortune – around £90. This relatively low prize might make more people believe them. A gift card in three figures might stretch credibility. Even so, I'd hope most people know that these surveys are now a common scam tactic. Maybe next week I'll get Waitrose and Sainsbury's emails and head towards a full house of supermarket scams.

Bob Geeson



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



# Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

## I've lost trust in Microsoft

✉ I know the concept of trust no longer seems to apply in modern commerce, but Microsoft did tell us – again and again and again – that Windows 10 would be the final version of the operating system. It was the key message behind the system, and how they persuaded so many people to upgrade from Windows 7: “upgrade for free and you'll never have to learn another system ever again”.

They must have known back then that they'd eventually need to release a Windows 11, but they pretended otherwise in order to come up with a cynical marketing hook that would grab headlines. I'm happy with Windows 10, but I now question every claim Microsoft makes. Eventually that erosion of trust will cost them many users.

Donald Porter

✉ Back in June 2017 I bought a Surface Pro laptop (Intel Core i7 processor, 512GB SSD, 16GB RAM, pictured right) from Microsoft. It was expensive at £2,149, but I thought I could justify the expense because Microsoft had told us in June 2015 that Windows 10 would be its last operating system. And anyway, because the Surface is a Microsoft device, I assumed it would remain compatible with any version of Windows for a considerable period of time.

How wrong I was. It appears that the processor in question is not supported in Windows 11. It surprises me that Microsoft, which makes both the computer and the system, cannot get the two working together.

I've been a keen supporter of Microsoft and Windows PCs since moving to them when Clive Sinclair stopped work on his QL computer. My faith in Microsoft has now been shattered.

David Spens

✉ Microsoft has scored enough own goals to lose the next 100 FA Cup finals. I'm talking about its hardware requirements which effectively send millions of computers to the scrapheap

(one green rule for them, another for the hard-pressed public?). Take my example. Back in 2015 I was able to install Windows 10 on three computers, two of which were 10 years old. By contrast, my newest PC, bought in 2019, can't run Windows 11. What's that about, Microsoft?

David Howes

## Shell's raising broadband prices? No surprise to me!

✉ It was no surprise to me to read in Issue 617 (page 8) that Shell Energy ([www.shellenergy.co.uk/broadband](http://www.shellenergy.co.uk/broadband)) has decided to raise broadband bills after contracts end, despite having said it would never do this. I always realised from day one that this was marketing humbug of the most transparent kind, and that within a couple of years they would backtrack. And now they have. So what should a happy customer do?

I've been with Shell for about a year, paying £21.99 a month for 38Mbps. Every time I've checked the speed it's always been at least 35Mbps, which is more consistent than any other provider I've had. I've not had a single day without a service. As I say, I'm a happy customer.

When my contract ends, early next year, my monthly bill will increase. Should I be incensed that Shell has gone against its word in doing this? Maybe I should be. But I take a more pragmatic



view, which is that Shell's promise of no increases was a cynical ploy to help it gain customers, and because of this it was able to compete with some of the bigger providers, and over the long term drive prices down. And remember, I never believed for a second that they'd never raise prices.

I'll simply look around for a cheaper deal. If I find one, I'll consider the reputation of the company offering it, and then decide whether to transfer my business. Shell would have lost my business: not because of its hypocrisy, but simply because it had been undercut by a rival. Such is the way of modern competition.

Frederick Taylor

## We need more competition between broadband networks

✉ I agree completely with Virgin Media when it argues that Openreach's decision to reduce wholesale prices for its network will harm competition ('Question of the Fortnight', Issue 617). The problem is simply a lack of choice. Having three main providers on Openreach's network (BT, TalkTalk and Sky) just isn't enough to increase competition and drive down prices. You might say, what about EE and Plusnet? Well, who owns them? BT!

The only way to get genuine competition is to increase the number of areas served by both Openreach and Virgin, or one of the other smaller

## What's the Issue...?

✉ I've been looking for a phone for under £100, and seem to recall you reviewing a Nokia device that cheap recently. Am I right?

Carole Flynn

**CA SAYS** Yes you are – it was the Nokia 1.4 in Issue 607, page 25. You can buy it from Amazon for £90 ([www.snipca.com/39741](http://www.snipca.com/39741)). But also turn to page 9 (of this issue) for news of the Nokia 6310.

✉ I'm not sure I'm getting the full allocation of Freeview channels. In which issue did you mention the site

that lists them?

Howard Graham

**CA SAYS** It was in Issue 611's feature on boosting your TV signal with an indoor aerial (pages 62–63). The site you want is [www.snipca.com/38929](http://www.snipca.com/38929).

✉ Didn't a reader recently explain how to combine MP3s using Command Prompt? I now need to do this.

Duncan Betts

**CA SAYS** Yes, it was John Lawrence in Issue 605, page 42.





providers that run their own networks. As it happens, I'm with one of those networks – called Gigaclear – who started to roll out services throughout Somerset earlier this year (they focus on rural areas). I moved house into one of their areas, and signed up to a 300Mbps contract for £24 a month. I doubt I'd have found such a good deal if I was restricted to the providers who use Openreach.

Oliver Downsend

### Do I keep email address if I leave Virgin?

✉ I was interested in your report about making it easier to switch between Virgin Media and an Openreach provider, or vice versa (Issue 617, page 7). A big obstacle for me leaving Virgin would be the Virgin-specific email addresses. I could convert them to Gmail, but I worry about forgetting my password with a business or site that I've registered with using my Virgin email.

There are more than a hundred services that I'd have to change passwords for, but what if I forget one? There's an embarrassing and ancient photo of me on Flickr that I can't delete because my login used a GeoCities email address from 2007 that I have long since forgotten. I suppose there is no proposal to oblige Virgin to keep my email addresses if I jumped to BT?

Nigel Ogilvie

### Working with the IBM 6400 in 1964

✉ Further to Mike Stranks' letter in Issue 617 ('1960s PC had only 4,000 words of 39bit memory'), he was fortunate to have 409 words to program. The IBM 6400 I worked with in 1964 was programmed by wiring a plugboard that provided 180 program steps, comprising a function, an inword and an outword. However, 180 program steps were often insufficient to complete the program, so they could be looped back by selectors to maximise their usage.

Testing your program and finding faults meant removing the plugboard and wading through your wiring to find where you had misplaced one. It was satisfying programming, in an age that has long been forgotten and unknown to many today. The arrival of COBOL made programming so much easier.

Stuart McFadyen



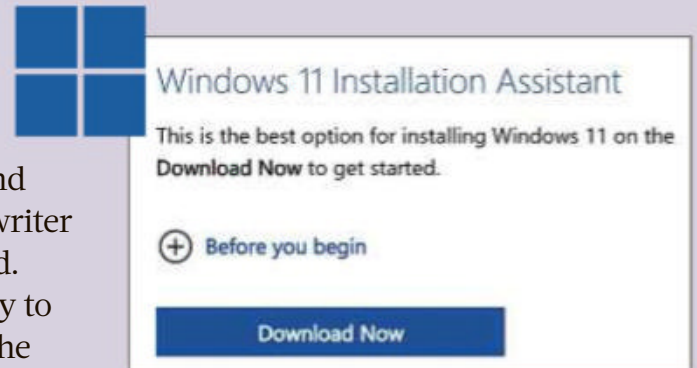
## STAR LETTER

### Upgrading to Windows 11 is easy – just do it!

✉ I read Issue 616's Cover Feature on whether you should upgrade to Windows 11, and couldn't help but think why the writer was making things so complicated. I'm disabled and found it very easy to upgrade to 11 – just by following the instructions from Microsoft and on one other site.

Windows Update (press Windows key+I then click 'Update & Security') will tell you if you can upgrade to Windows 11. If you can, it means you don't have to check anything else. If your computer doesn't meet the hardware requirements, there are instructions online you can follow to bypass these.

I downloaded Windows 11 using Microsoft's Installation Assistant ([www.snipca.com/39797](http://www.snipca.com/39797)), and continued to work normally as it did so. Within half an hour, and one restart later, Windows 11 was on my system, without any problems. Everything I had on Windows 10 was still there in the same places, including Classic Shell ([www.classicshell.net](http://www.classicshell.net)), which I had installed in Windows 10 because I



didn't like its Start menu.

I love Windows 11. It is the best, the easiest, the quickest version of Windows ever – and I never thought Windows 7 could be topped. My advice is, why wait? Install it now and enjoy it.

Kev T Brown

**CA SAYS** Kev's right that in our experience installing Windows 11 is fairly straightforward, and we've not suffered many bugs since upgrading. It's similar enough to Windows 10 to make it feel familiar, and our review (pages 50–57) is generally positive. But Microsoft's decision to impose such strict hardware requirements troubles us, and we share much of the dismay expressed by readers on the opposite page.



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

### Toatpwtsiabpb deciphered

✉ The poem that inspired Brian King's password (Letters, Issue 617) is Edward Lear's *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat* ('Toatpwtsiabpb' are the initial letters of the poem's first line). It just jumped out at me, though I have no idea where it came from because poetry isn't my thing at all. But I doubt mine is the first email you received.

Paul Denyer

**CA SAYS** Actually, Paul *was* the first reader to email us the answer (and wins a *Computeractive* mug), but he certainly wasn't the only one. We've had hundreds of emails all correctly identifying Edward Lear's surreal masterpiece. It even

inspired other readers to set their own password puzzles, as the next email shows.

### Passwords from movies? Quote a good idea...

✉ Using poem first lines is a good idea, but I use famous movie quotes, which I find easier to remember. I always add some special characters or numbers to increase the complexity. Here's one that I've now stopped using, so I feel safe sharing it: 'fmdidgad!5£/' (ignore the characters after the final 'd', though you could argue that the exclamation mark is an appropriate ending to the phrase). Can any readers guess it?

**CA SAYS** We found this password easier to identify than Brian King's poetic choice. What about you? A mug awaits the first reader to email us the answer.





We stand up for your legal rights

## Will my bank refund me if I'm scammed?

**Q** I've filled in a marketing survey on Facebook, promising a £100 gift card to use in Aldi, but a friend said it's probably bogus. I handed over personal details including my email and address, so I'm worried the scammers may access my bank account. Will my bank refund me if I lose money?

Sara Price

**A** Whether a bank returns your money when you've been scammed depends on its policy, and how responsible you were for falling for it. Financial scams are rising sharply, so refunding customers could get very expensive for banks. They can argue that the victim acted carelessly or with gross negligence, and therefore isn't entitled to get their money back.

However, the Financial Ombudsman Services (FOS, [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk)) sets the bar high for what counts as gross negligence. It may rule that keeping a note of your PIN in your purse or wallet would count, but it's unlikely to be as harsh on customers scammed online by fake surveys. It's

estimated that banks refund scam victims in about 98 per cent of cases. If you disagree with a bank's verdict, you can take your case to the FOS.

'Supermarket survey' scams are widespread at the moment (see ScamWatch, page 11). Never assume they are legitimate. If you're tempted, ask the supermarket whether they're genuine.

Thankfully, it seems Sara handed over no bank details, and there haven't been any suspicious transactions on her account (though she should double-check with her bank). However, handing over her email address means she'll probably receive more spam in future, including **phishing** emails, phone calls and texts. We've advised her to be vigilant in coming months.

CASE CLOSED

## What counts as a 'safe space' for delivery?

**Q** Who's liable if parcels go missing when left on my front step? Several times recently I've had parcels left this way, and in full view of passers-by. I've never designated it a 'safe place' and would expect a redelivery, but Amazon isn't answering my queries about this. Can you clarify?

John Howard

**A** Yes, we can. First, let's clarify that the safe delivery of goods rests entirely with the person or company responsible for sending them (*not* the courier responsible for delivering them). Therefore, if a courier leaves them in an unsafe place, then your complaint is with the retailer that booked the courier, not the courier itself.

The definition of an unsafe place is somewhere you didn't agree with the retailer before delivery. If you said behind the bins was safe, and the courier left it on your doorstep, then you have a legitimate complaint against the retailer. If you don't specify a safe place, then the courier can't leave it anywhere.

In either case, should the parcel go missing, the sender must replace it or give a full refund.

CASE CLOSED

### CASE UPDATE

## John Lewis refunds readers after *nine* repairs



John Lewis has finally admitted that it should never have attempted to repair Gary Cragg's HP laptop nine times (see Issue 616), and has now refunded him the £300 he paid for the device in January.

Gary didn't realise that under the Consumer Rights Act (CRA), John Lewis was allowed only to attempt one repair, and was then obliged

to offer him a replacement or a refund. Instead, he continued to push for repairs under the company's warranty. We find it hard to believe that no one at John Lewis ever advised him to use the CRA. Worse, it

misled him by saying that it could work only "within HP's warranty standards".

The time taken for the repeated repairs meant more than six months have passed since purchase. John Lewis

could therefore have deducted some money from its refund, though given the trouble Gary has had we think this would have been scandalous.

One lesson here is to remember that the CRA always supersedes warranties. Another lesson is that you shouldn't assume a retailer knows consumer law as well as you do.

We've spoken to countless staff who mistakenly thought warranties trumped the CRA. We'll continue our crusade to educate them.





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.

## My warranty has expired, so should I use CRA?

**Q** In March 2019 I bought a pair of Apple AirPods (second generation) from John Lewis. These came with a two-year warranty. The left earpiece started losing volume in March this year and it was fixed by John Lewis under its two-year warranty. The right earpiece now has the same problem, so because the John Lewis warranty has expired I asked Apple to fix it instead. It



won't help, so should I pursue John Lewis under the Consumer Rights Act (CRA) instead?

David Bernstein

**A** In a word, yes. Now that the warranties have expired, David has no choice but to use the CRA. This won't be easy though because more than six months have passed since purchase. It means he'll need to prove that the

problem has been caused by a fault that existed since he bought the AirPods, and not by fair wear and tear or accidental damage. To do this, he'll need to pay for an independent inspection. If it reveals an inherent fault, John Lewis would have to refund the cost of this inspection.

We looked online and David doesn't seem to be alone in having this problem (see [www.snipca.com/39746](http://www.snipca.com/39746)). He might be able to use this in a small claims court to indicate the AirPods are faulty, but he'd have to prove that his problem was the same as those discussed online by other customers.

**CASE CLOSED**

## Do I have to give VAT number to register warranty?

**Q** I bought a Russell Hobbs kettle from an eBay seller in January 2020, which had a one-year warranty. I then tried to register it with Russell Hobbs to get an extra year added. It asked for details of the sale, model, serial number and VAT number. Without this information it's refusing to register the warranty. Can it do this?

Richard Sumser

**A** It can certainly ask for details of when and where the kettle was sold, but we've never heard of a company also asking for VAT details in order to register a warranty. We'll ask Russell Hobbs why it needs this.

That said, even if Russell Hobbs had registered this warranty for Richard, it's unlikely he'd have been able to extend it by a year. It's rare for sellers to offer their own warranties, unless selling second-hand or




refurbished goods. What the seller included in the sale was probably the original warranty.

In any case, had the seller offered their own one-year warranty, it would have run simultaneously with the free cover provided by Russell Hobbs. Warranties begin when you buy an item. They don't run in a sequence, with one starting when another one ends. Therefore, had the kettle become faulty within 12 months of purchase in January 2020, Richard would've been covered by the warranty.

**CASE CLOSED**

### CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

## Kondor helped me return 'burn risk' earbuds

 I was rather alarmed to read online that KitSound's KS Funk 25 True Wireless Earbuds (pictured) were being recalled due to a 'burn risk'. When I read this, in July, I was out of the country and wanted to make sure I didn't miss any deadlines for returning them. I spoke to Kondor, which owns the KitSound brand, and they answered all the questions I had.



They explained the returns process clearly, not getting annoyed when my phone connection (in rural France) kept cutting out. They emailed me a link to more information on the problem ([www.snipca.com/39755](http://www.snipca.com/39755)) and also to explain how to register for a refund ([www.snipca.com/39756](http://www.snipca.com/39756)).

I'm sure Kondor's customer service team have been inundated with calls about this,

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

but they never came across as harried when they spoke to me. They were also apologetic about the hassle I had to go through to return the product.

Paul Garfield

**Contact  
Kondor**

• **Phone** 01425 284000  
• **Support** <https://kitsound.co.uk/contact>



# Grow Your Family Tree



Need a more advanced way to visualise your research?  
**Nick Peers** explains how to...

## Create a genogram chart

Sometimes a simple family chart doesn't tell the full story. More complex relationships involving marriages, divorces, adoptions and step-families are difficult to display using a traditional ancestor or descendant chart. The solution is to visualise these in a genogram. This is a chart that uses symbols and lines to represent information. Typically, males are listed in a square and females in a circle, while relationships are defined by colour-coded lines and dotted lines (Wikipedia explains more at [www.snipca.com/39651](http://www.snipca.com/39651)).

### Let FamilyEcho create a genogram

To quickly create a genogram using your existing tree, export it in **GEDCOM** format using your genealogy software – for example, in Family Tree Maker you'd select File, Export then choose GEDCOM under the 'Output format' dropdown menu. For a more detailed guide to exporting in GEDCOM, read Issue 561's column.

Once exported, open your browser and visit FamilyEcho ([www.familyecho.com](http://www.familyecho.com)). Click 'Import GEDCOM or FamilyScript...' bottom left, followed by Choose File. Select your GEDCOM file, then click Import.

Once the file has uploaded, select your name from the dropdown list to set

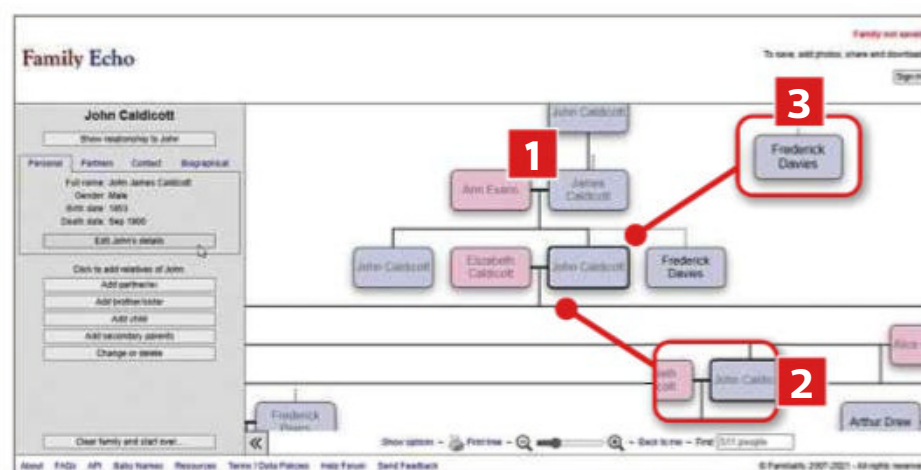
**FamilyEcho uses its own colour-coded system to define relationships and genders**

yourself as the 'root' person in the tree. Click 'Finish Import'. FamilyEcho's chart isn't a textbook example of a genogram – instead of differentiating gender by shape (square or sphere) and using dotted lines to indicate non-biological relationships, it uses colour coding – blue and pink for male and female (1 in our screenshot above) and black lines 2 for biological relationships, with grey lines 3 if children were adopted or fostered. One final thing: your tree isn't saved by default.

If you want to explore Family Echo further using your uploaded GEDCOM file, click the 'Sign in' button at the top of the window to register an account. It's completely free to use.

### Create a genogram from scratch

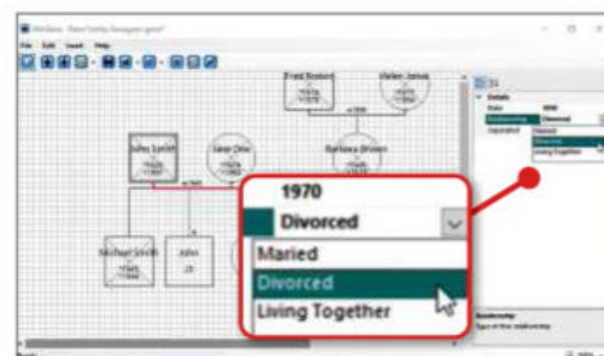
If you're looking to build a proper genogram, and you're happy to start from



scratch, download the free WinGeno ([www.wingeno.org](http://www.wingeno.org)). When you launch the program you'll see a grid-like view, and buttons below the menus that let you create individuals, link them by relationships, and add parents or children.

Start by clicking the male or female button to create your first person, then click anywhere on the grid. A new symbol will appear with a dummy name and age. Use the entry boxes on the right to input their name, age (or birth and death dates), then repeat for their partner.

Once you've added two people, click them both followed by the relationship button to link them as married, divorced or living together (see screenshot below). Once that's done, select both again, and use the pram button to add children, which you'll define as male/female, biological/adopted/fostered and (if applicable) define their twinned relationship.



Choose an option on the right in WinGeno and it will be added to the genogram on the left

## Your Genealogy Problems Solved

**I'd like to go through my tree and work out which birth and death dates are missing or inaccurate. Is there a simple tool I can use?**

John Davidson

If you can't find an option within your family-history program, then export your research in GEDCOM format and load the file into the free FTAnalyzer

(<https://ftanalyzer.com>) tool. Switch to the Errors/Fixes tab and select the Loose Births and Loose Deaths tabs in turn to see all people with inexact or missing details. You can export both lists to analyse them further in a text editor or spreadsheet.

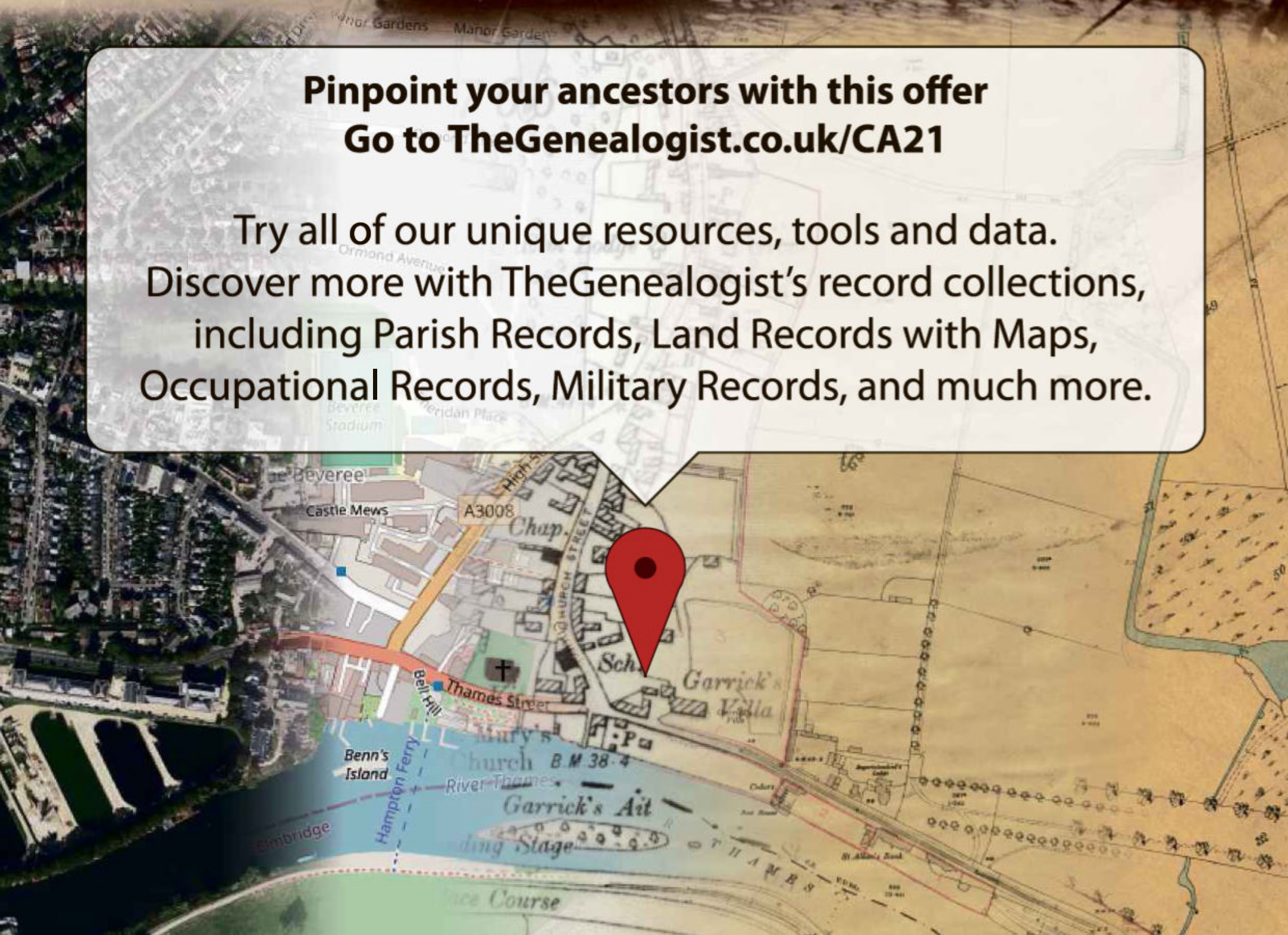
✉ Have a genealogy question for Nick?  
Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk) with 'Grow Your Family Tree' in the subject line.



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# Best Free Software

Robert Irvine recommends new programs that won't cost you a thing

## DUPLICATE FILE CLEANER

### AllDup 4.5

[www.snipca.com/39806](http://www.snipca.com/39806)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11



Duplicate files both make your hard drive look messy and take up valuable space. After all, how many copies of the same item do you need? AllDup provides an effective solution to this problem by finding duplicate files across all the drives on or connected to your PC, including USB sticks, and letting you delete all unwanted copies with a couple of clicks. Unlike similar tools, it's completely free and the latest version makes it more useful than ever.

Several of the new features in AllDup 4.5 use **checksums**, which identify duplicates based on the data they contain, rather than their file names, dates or sizes (though the program also covers those criteria).

When you perform a search for 'File content', 'Find similar pictures' or 'Find similar audio files' by choosing one of those options on AllDup's Search Method tab, you can now save the checksum that's created. This makes future searches much faster, because you can simply select the relevant checksum on the program's new Database tab,

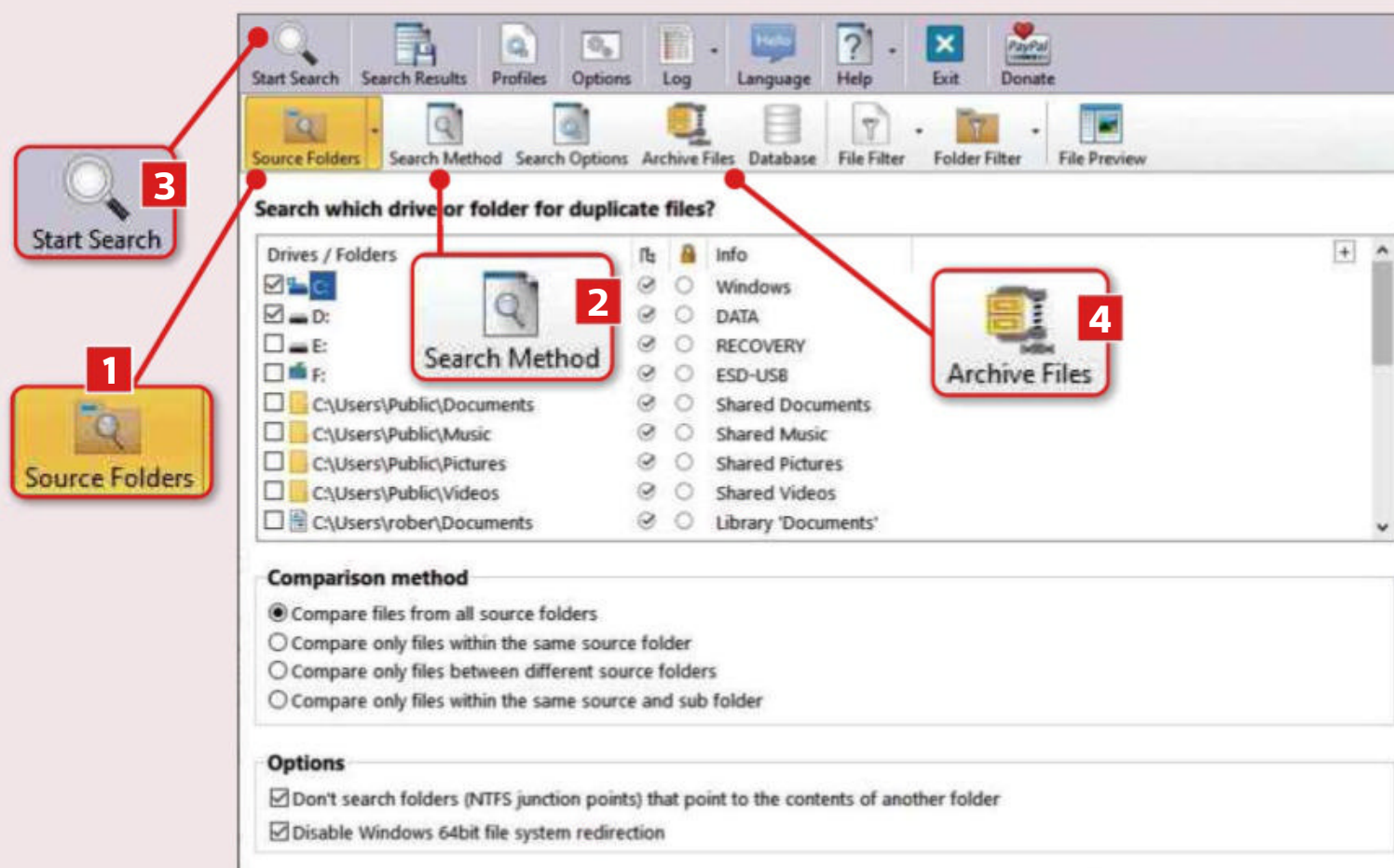
rather than searching from scratch.

Other improvements include a new Info column in the main window, which helps you quickly identify specific drives and folders, and a new option for scanning shared network drives by clicking the Source Folders button and selecting 'Add special folder'.

You can also now instruct AllDup to search all archive files in formats such as **ZIP**, **7Z**, **TAR**, **RAR** and **ISO**, by clicking the Archive Files button then right-clicking 'Scan the following archive types'.

With so many features, AllDup can seem confusing at first, but most of its options are self-explanatory. Helpfully, it lets you move duplicate files to the recycle bin if you're unsure about completely wiping them.

Be aware that version 4.5 drops support for Windows XP and Vista, but this is still available in the Portable Edition, which you can download from [www.snipca.com/39815](http://www.snipca.com/39815).



**1** Select the drives and folders you want to scan for duplicates in AllDup's Source Folders tab. Bear in mind entire drives take much longer to search.

**2** Click the Search Method tab to specify how you want AllDup to identify duplicate files, such as by name, size, last-modified date or content.

**3** Click 'Start Search' to scan the selected drive(s) or folder(s) for duplicates. AllDup will display its search results in a new window.

**4** The Archive Files tab lets you tell AllDup to search for duplicates in compressed formats such as ZIP, even if they're protected with passwords.





## IMAGING TOOL

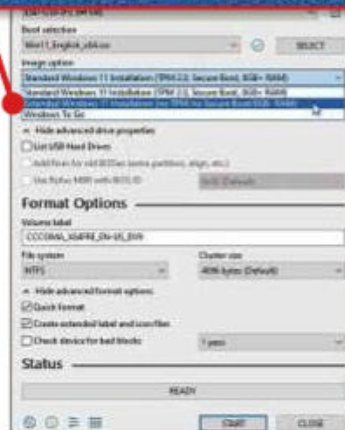
### Rufus 3.16

[www.snipca.com/39802](http://www.snipca.com/39802)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11

Rufus is a brilliant free tool for creating **bootable** USB drives from **ISO** image files, so you can easily install different operating systems. The latest update adds support for 'extended' installation of Windows 11, which lets you bypass the **TPM**, Secure Boot and memory requirements for the new operating system. We explain Microsoft's own TPM workaround on page 38, but Rufus provides a great alternative method. Download the Windows 11 ISO file from [www.snipca.com/39795](http://www.snipca.com/39795) and insert a USB stick of at least 8GB in your PC. Select the ISO in the program's 'Boot sector' menu, then in the 'Image option' menu, select 'Extended Windows 11 installation' (see screenshot). Click 'Start', format your USB stick if prompted, and Rufus will create a bootable version of Windows 11 that beats most of Microsoft's restrictions - you may still have trouble installing if your processor isn't supported.

Extended Windows 11 Installation



## PC CLEAN-UP TOOL

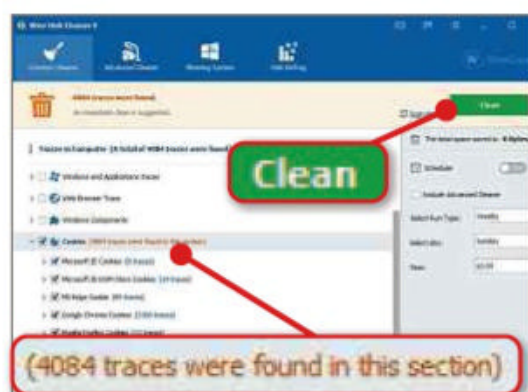
### Wise Disk Cleaner 10.7.1

[www.snipca.com/39803](http://www.snipca.com/39803)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11

Wise Disk Cleaner offers a reliable alternative to CCleaner for deleting junk files from your PC. We particularly like its Slimming System feature, which scans for and removes surplus files left behind by Windows, such as old updates - this can help you reclaim several gigabytes of space. The latest version improves its cleaning of the **cookies** installed by Chromium browsers, including Chrome, Edge, Opera, Vivaldi and Brave. Simply select the Cookies option on the Common Cleaner tab then click Scan to detect all traces of cookies in your installed browsers - more than 4,000 on our computer (see screenshot). Click 'Clean' to wipe all these cookies - Wise Disk Cleaner won't

delete any that are essential for websites to work properly (see our feature on page 60 for more about cookies). You can schedule the software to perform weekly or monthly clean-ups at a specific time.



## WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

### What can I use to touch up old photos?

**Q** I recently converted some old slides I found into digital format in order to preserve them. While the photo scanner I used has done a relatively decent job, some of the images have blemishes and odd spots of colour, probably because they are over 40 years old. Can you recommend a free program that can perform simple photo editing and retouching?

Chris Hesketh

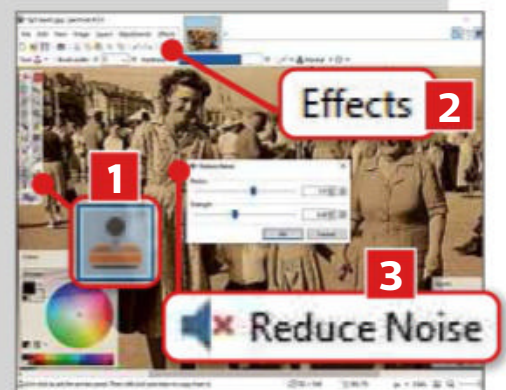
**A** Our favourite free program for editing and touching up photos is Paint.NET ([www.getpaint.net](http://www.getpaint.net)), which recently released a new version that's much faster to use (see Issue 617, page 19). It's packed with useful features, including several that will help you fix the problems with your converted slides.

For example, to remove blemishes and scratches from an old photo, you can use the program's Clone Stamp tool. Click this in the toolbar on the left-hand side of the program window - it's the third option from the bottom (1 in our screenshot) above

the 'T' icon for the Text tool - or activate it by pressing 'L' on your keyboard. Select an unblemished area of the photo by pressing Ctrl and left-clicking, then click and drag your cursor over the part you want to fix - to 'stamp' it. This copies the pixels from that area over the blemish, effectively erasing the flaw. See Paint.NET's help page for more advice about using Clone Stamp ([www.snipca.com/39810](http://www.snipca.com/39810)).

Another option, which is handy for touching up dusty old slides that you've digitised, is to reduce the **noise** in photos to stop them looking like they're covered in a grainy veil. Click the Effects menu (2 in Paint.NET) and choose Noise, then Reduce Noise (3). Adjust the Radius and Strength sliders to make your picture look less dusty and 'noisy'.

Other Paint.NET tools let you fix colour problems in old photos (click the Adjustments menu and choose Hue/Saturation), remove red-eye (go to Effects, and choose Photo then Red-eye Removal) and much more. It takes a little trial and error, but it's easy to undo your changes.



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...

# PowerShell

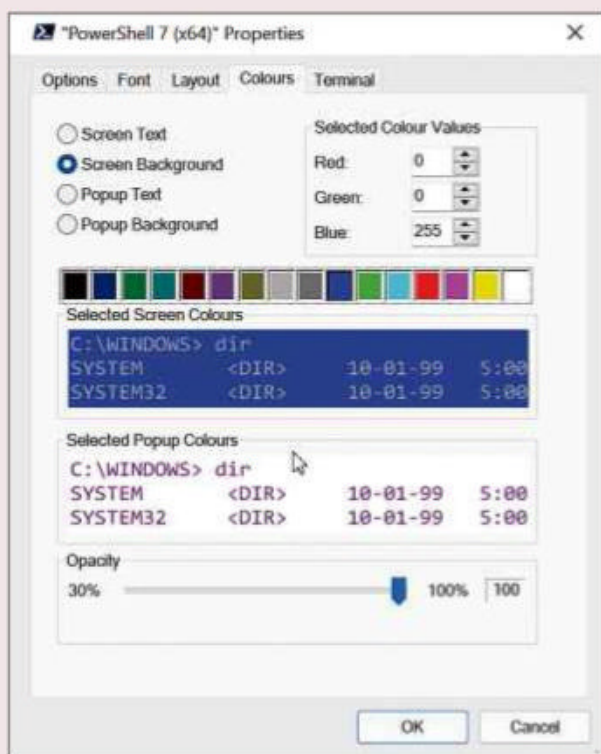


Command Prompt remains an old favourite, but **Wayne Williams** now prefers its successor. He explains how it lets him control Windows updates

Command Prompt has been a major part of Windows since the early days, but its usefulness has been dwindling over the years. Microsoft is now prioritising its successor PowerShell, which is a more powerful command-line interface. As well as being able to process simple Command Prompt instructions (like `winver` to show your current Windows version, and `ipconfig` to show your IP address), it can run special 'cmdlets' (PowerShell commands) that can be chained together to make complex **scripts**.

There are several versions of PowerShell. Version 5.1 comes with Windows 10, but I've upgraded to 7.1, which in time will become the new default. To upgrade PowerShell, visit [www.snipca.com/39728](http://www.snipca.com/39728), scroll to the 'Get PowerShell' heading, then click on the .msi link under Downloads (stable) next to 'Windows (x64)' if you have a 64bit system, or 'Windows (x86)' if it's 32bit. Install the downloaded file like a normal program. You can check at any time which version of the tool you're running by launching PowerShell, typing `$PSVersionTable.PSVersion` and hitting enter.

There are useful settings tucked away



Open PowerShell's hidden menu to change cursor size, font colour and more

type `Install-Module PSWindowsUpdate` and hit Enter. If asked whether you want to install 'NuGet provider', type `Y` and hit Enter. Type `Y` again and the module will install.

Windows updates have a knowledge-base number next to them. You can install any of these through PowerShell by typing `Get-WindowsUpdate -KBArticleID "KB0000000" -Install` (see screenshot below left – you can copy and paste this command from our Pastebin page at [www.snipca.com/39737](http://www.snipca.com/39737)). Then press Enter. Replace KB0000000 with Microsoft's knowledge-base number for the update.

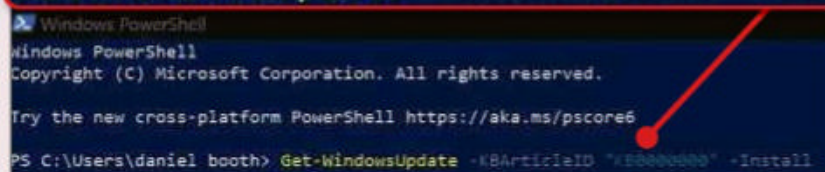
Before you install an update this way, check to see what it does on Microsoft's update page ([www.snipca.com/39732](http://www.snipca.com/39732)). Sometimes Microsoft makes optional security updates available ahead of their official release on 'Patch Tuesday' (the second Tuesday of every month, when it rolls out all available fixes). If I'm having a problem with my computer and I see on the update page that Microsoft has released an early fix for it, I install it using the above command.

If I hear about a problematic Windows update, I can prevent it installing by 'hiding' it. This command installs every update except the one(s) you've specified. Type `Install-WindowsUpdate -NotKBArticle "KB0000000" -AcceptAll` (copy and paste from [www.snipca.com/39772](http://www.snipca.com/39772)). Again, replace 'KB0000000' with the update you want to be ignored.

that you can access by right-clicking the top bar of the PowerShell window and selecting Properties. From here you can change the cursor size, turn editing functions on or off, change the font colour and more (see screenshot above).

I mostly use PowerShell to give me better control over Windows updates. To do likewise, you'll need to install the PSWindowsUpdate Module, which tells PowerShell about the available cmdlets for the task. Launch PowerShell (Admin),

```
Get-WindowsUpdate -KBArticleID "KB0000000" -Install
```



Type this command (replacing KB0000000 with a real KB number) to install an update through PowerShell

## WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN POWERSHELL

There are good options in the menu, but they're hard to access. Microsoft should tweak PowerShell so the menu is easy to open at the top of the window. Also,

right-clicking pastes the contents of the clipboard into the window (which is handy for repeating past cmdlets), but showing a context menu would be even more useful.



# Named & Shamed



**Barry Collins** puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software trying to trick you

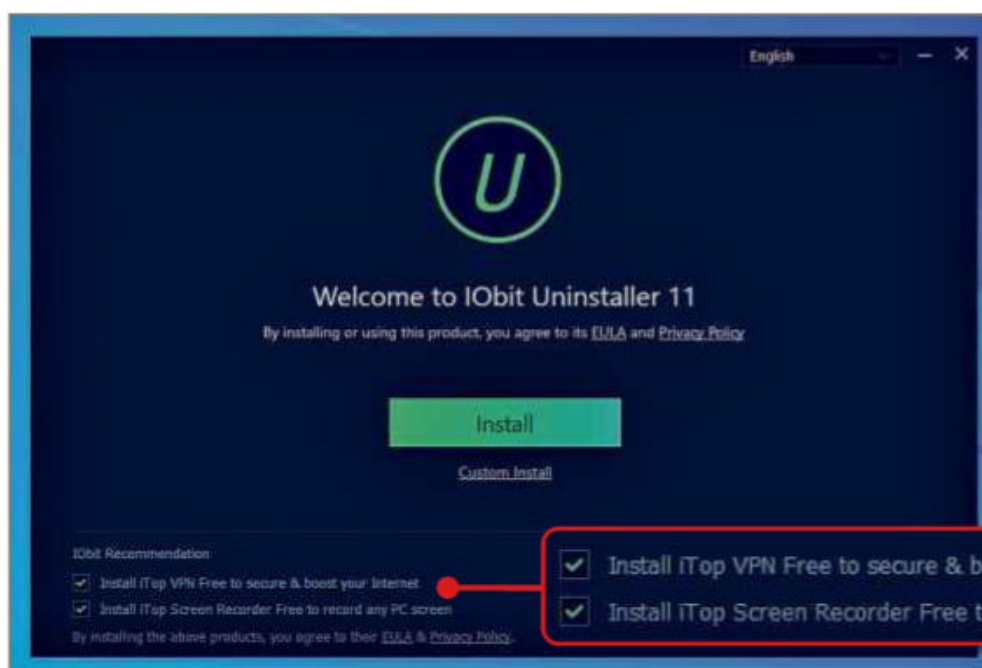
## SOFTWARE WARNING

### IObit Uninstaller's junk

**C**all me a grumbling pedant, but when a piece of software is billed as an 'uninstaller', I don't expect it to *install* unwanted software. It's a bit like getting a new Dyson out of the box and it spewing dust all over your carpet before it starts cleaning.

Enter the 'free' version of IObit Uninstaller, which doesn't miss a chance to drop a little something extra on your computer – a habit this column has seen before in IObit software. The installer for IObit Uninstaller 11 (as reader Brian Ady spotted) has two pre-ticked boxes (see screenshot) which will plonk iTop VPN Free and iTop Screen Recorder Free on your computer if you just hit the big green 'Install' button without looking.

The sales pitch doesn't end there. The next screen presented me with the Dashlane password manager as an "optional offer". And even when the installation had finished, up popped another screen offering a seven-day trial of Driver Booster.



iObit may uninstall junk, but it adds plenty of its own too

To be fair to IObit Uninstaller, it did get on with the job of uninstalling other software, even getting shot of leftover folders and registry entries that the Windows uninstaller would have left behind – which does explain why we recommended the program in Issue 614 (page 19).

But even after it had completed the

dirty work, it was throwing up further pop-ups offering me "pro" features at a price. Enough already!

I did have a wee chuckle to myself when I was rooting around the software's About page and stumbled across the instructions showing how to uninstall IObit Uninstaller itself. Let's hope it left nothing behind other than a bad taste.

### WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?



#### WHAT THEY SAY

**Huawei** [www.snipca.com/39687](http://www.snipca.com/39687)

"As the latest addition to the Huawei MateBook range... the MateBook 14s (pictured) inherits the existing MateBook DNA, combining aesthetic design, innovative features, and smart experience. Meanwhile, it breaks new ground with its ultra-slim design and all-round performance, such as cross-device collaboration that blends creativity into everyday life, delivering a brand-new, smart productivity experience."

#### WHAT THEY MEAN

You'll like this laptop, even if we can't explain what you'll use it for.

### BARRY'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

## Openreach

Imagine popping out for a bit and coming back to find that Openreach had installed a 27ft telegraph pole in your front garden. That's what faced Ian and Allison Brown from Clackmannanshire, when returning from visiting her terminally ill mother.

Mr Brown told the *Daily Record* ([www.snipca.com/39712](http://www.snipca.com/39712)) that they were horrified and angry, and knew nothing about it.



To be fair to Openreach, it seems there was once some confusion over whether the land was private property or owned by the council. On the

other hand, Openreach didn't even bother to write to the couple to tell them they were planning to erect a pole yards from their windows. They then took over eight weeks to respond to the couple's complaints. Openreach has since apologised and promised to relocate the pole.





**LAPTOP-TABLET** | From **£999** from Microsoft [www.snipca.com/39717](http://www.snipca.com/39717)

## Microsoft Surface Pro 8

### Double-paned Windows

Laptops and tablets can be expensive, making it hard to justify having one of each, particularly if you want a decent specification that will run all the software and apps you desire. Microsoft's latest Surface Pro 8 is one solution to the dilemma. It's a 13in tablet that runs Windows 11 (with no additional software) well enough to convert into a laptop if you add a keyboard.

“ Tablet that converts to a laptop and runs Windows 11 smoothly – but it's not cheap ”

The downside is that it's expensive, with the range starting at £999, and that's *without* the keyboard. To get Microsoft's matching Signature Pro keyboard cover, you'll need to spend an additional £159, or £259 to add the stylus. However, this being a Windows device, you could use any Bluetooth keyboard and mouse with it, or even plug one in if you have a **USB-C** hub – the Surface Pro 8 has two USB ports and a 3.5mm headphone jack.

Externally, the Surface Pro has a new design that looks bang up to date, with rounded corners and edges. It's comfortable to hold and has minimal bezels, making the 13in screen look larger than it is. The screen has a resolution of 2880x1920 pixels and a **refresh rate** that's capable of going up to 120**Hz**, which makes everything detailed, sharp and responsive. It's also 100-per-cent colour accurate to the **sRGB** standard.

The £999 model will get you an Intel Core i5 i5-1135G7 with 8GB of **RAM** and a 128GB **SSD**. We were sent a Core i7-1185G7 model to test, which comes with 16GB of RAM and 256GB of storage, and costs £1,499. Prices go up to £2,059 for an i7 with 16GB of RAM and 1TB SSD.



Apple's cheapest iPad Pro also costs £999. The problem Microsoft has is that Windows is more demanding than Apple's iPadOS, so the iPad runs much faster and smoother, even if you buy the more expensive Surface models with the i7 processors. However, you can't run your favourite Windows software on an iPad, which is a hefty compromise to have to make if you plan to use it as much as a laptop as you do a tablet.

Performance was decent on our test device, in line with what we'd expect from an Intel i7 laptop with the same components, though it's worth reiterating that we didn't test the basic model.

Battery life was OK for a Windows device, lasting six hours and 32 minutes in our video-playback test, but that's with the refresh rate turned down to 60Hz. iPad Pro battery life is almost twice as long.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Four-core Intel Core i5-1135G7 or Intel Core i7 1185G7 processors • 8GB or 16GB RAM • Intel Iris Xe graphics • 13in screen with 2880x1920 pixels • 128GB, 256GB, 512GB or 1TB SSD • 1080p webcam • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.1 • 2x USB-C ports • 1x 3.5mm headphone jack • Windows 11 • 9.3x287x208mm (HxWxD) • 891g • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/39717](http://www.snipca.com/39717)

Tablets are ideal for video calls and the combination of the webcam and microphone on the Surface Pro 8 is superb. All the test calls we made on the device came through perfectly clearly without any distortion or problems with focus. Also, the front-facing camera works with Windows Hello, so you can use it to log in. The camera on the back isn't brilliant for taking photos, but it's perfectly adequate for a quick snap when you don't have your phone handy.

**VERDICT** A tablet with a large screen that runs Windows 11 and can be used like a laptop, but it's as expensive as an iPad Pro

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Acer Spin 3 **£499**

Acer's cheaper but vastly less powerful laptop lets you flip the keyboard right back so you can also use it like a tablet





**LAPTOP** | £993 from Box [www.snipca.com/39724](http://www.snipca.com/39724)

## Dynabook Tecra A40-J-11J

Off colour

The Dynabook Tecra A40-J-11J is built around Intel's Core i7-1165G7 processor, which we've seen on a variety of laptops at around this price recently, including the Acer Swift 3, (see Issue 617). The Dynabook has a similar specification, including the same generous 16GB of **RAM**, though it has only a 512GB **SSD** instead of the Acer's 1TB drive.

“A poor screen, but good battery life and room to upgrade”

Performance-wise, the Dynabook lags behind the Acer Swift 3, with lower scores in our **benchmark** tests that assess how quickly a processor can run tasks. Both laptops use the processor's built-in Iris Xe graphics hardware, so neither model is recommended for gamers, though it can handle some casual gaming as long as you don't want maximum detail at high resolutions.

Where the Tecra disappoints most is in the quality of its screen. Its colour accuracy proved to be well below average in our tests. The biggest problem was a yellowish hue that we noticed when the screen was supposed to be white.

This is a shame, because there are plenty of areas in which Dynabook does well. For example, its battery life is good, running for over 10 hours in our video-playback test.

There's also plenty of scope for upgrading the laptop. Nine crosshead



screws are all that stand between you and the insides of the laptop, where you'll find a spare socket for additional RAM and access to the SSD, which means you can swap it for a larger model.

The edges of the laptop are packed with useful ports. Two **USB-C** ports sit on the left-hand side, both capable of power delivery and video output. You'll also find ports for **HDMI**, **USB 3.2** and a 3.5mm jack. On the right is an **Ethernet** socket, a second USB 3.2 port and a **microSD card** slot. There's also a slot for a **smart card**, which is more or less redundant for home users.

Overall, we think the Acer Swift 3 is a better buy, with its superior screen and performance. If you're willing to compromise on specifications, however, you can get the Core i7-1165G7 version of our favourite Lenovo Yoga Slim 7 laptop for £200 less (£799, [www.snipca.com/39577](http://www.snipca.com/39577)), which is an absolute steal.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Four-core Intel Core i7-1165G7 processor • 16GB of RAM • Intel Iris Xe graphics • 14in IPS 1920x1080-pixel resolution touchscreen • 512GB SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.2 • 2x USB-C ports • 2x USB-3 ports • 1x 3.5mm audio jack • 1x HDMI port • Gigabit Ethernet port • Windows 10 Home • 18.9x324x221mm (HxWxD) • 1.5kg • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/39724](http://www.snipca.com/39724)

### HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Future PLC, 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.

Future PLC also owns the magazines *Maximum PC*, *PC Pro* and *T3*, and the websites Laptop Mag ([www.laptopmag.com](http://www.laptopmag.com)), TechRadar ([www.techradar.com](http://www.techradar.com)) and Windows Central ([www.windowscentral.com](http://www.windowscentral.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 enough laptop for work, but it's let down by a poor screen



**ALTERNATIVE** Acer Swift 3 £999

This uses the same processor but squeezes more performance out of it, and has a better spec for a similar price



LEFT EDGE

RIGHT EDGE





## Best PC monitors for under £250

Stop squinting at your tiny, low-resolution screen – we've tested five PC monitors that come in a surprising range of sizes for less than £250

**M**onitor technology has come a long way in the past few years, and you can now get surprisingly good-value screens for £250 or less. Gone are the days when you'd have to compromise on the smallest, lowest-quality screens to get something this affordable. Now you can get an ultra-wide monitor that measures 34in across the diagonal. If you're looking for something more modest, we've also looked at options down to 22.5in, with a few sizes in between.

One thing to watch out for is the resolution of the screen. If a larger screen has a lower resolution, it means the pixels are bigger, and the pixel density (measured in pixels per inch or ppi) is lower. This means there are fewer pixels in each square inch of screen, so a screen with a lower pixel density won't look as sharp, particularly if you're looking very closely.

As usual, we've also performed our standard suite of tests on these monitors, so we can point out if any fall short of expectations when it comes



to brightness, contrast or their ability to reproduce colour accurately.

It's also worth checking the connections you have from your computer. All of the monitors here have **DisplayPort** and **HDMI** ports, but check the review for other options if you need them.

**£156** from Iiyama [www.snipca.com/39701](http://www.snipca.com/39701)

### Iiyama ProLite XU2492HSU-B1



This 23.8in screen is superb value for money. It has a resolution of 1920x1080 pixels and covers a respectable 88 per cent of the **sRGB** colour standard.

This isn't perfect, but will do the job for most users. It also has a pair of basic 2W speakers built-in.

You can connect your computer via HDMI, DisplayPort or **VGA**, and it has a USB hub to connect your

keyboard and mouse. The screen can be raised by up to 130mm.

One thing we really liked about it are its minimalist bezels. Given the price, you could get two of these and create a dual display system with barely any gap between the two.

**RATING**



**£247** from Amazon [www.snipca.com/39700](http://www.snipca.com/39700)

### AOC 27P2C



If you want a larger screen with more features than the Iiyama ProLite XU2492HSU-B1 offers, this 27in monitor has them all. What it doesn't have is any increase in the resolution of 1920x1080 pixels, which means the overall pixel density is lower (82ppi compared to 93ppi), but you'll only notice that if you're looking very closely or your eyesight is very good.

It comes with a **USB-C**

connection so you can easily hook it up to a modern laptop or desktop PC, and also has four standard USB ports for connecting key peripherals.

Colour reproduction is good, managing to recreate 89 per cent of sRGB colours in our tests. It's also bright and has good contrast.

**RATING**





£243 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/39703](http://www.snipca.com/39703)

## AOC Q34E2A

If you have a wide space to fill, this extra-wide 34in screen is extraordinary for the price.

The downside is the resolution, which is 2560x1080. This works out to 81ppi. That's about

the same as the 27in AOC 27P2C.

The screen itself is excellent, reproducing 92 per cent of the sRGB colour standard in our tests. The viewing angles are good, too, so you don't have to be sitting straight

in front of it to get a good view.

There are no luxuries, such as USB-C or a standard USB hub, but it has two HDMI ports and a single DisplayPort.



£233 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/39699](http://www.snipca.com/39699)

## Eizo FlexScan EV2360

The Eizo FlexScan EV2360 is the smallest screen we've reviewed, at only 22.5in across the diagonal, but it packs in the pixels with a resolution of 1920x1200 pixels (101ppi).

If your size requirements

aren't great or you're just short on space, this could be just the ticket.

The base can be tilted 35 degrees and height adjusted by 140mm.

The screen recreated 87 per cent of the sRGB colour

standard in our tests, which is good enough.

It has a simple USB hub you can use to connect your keyboard and mouse, and supports HDMI, DisplayPort and VGA.



£248 from Iiyama [www.snipca.com/39702](http://www.snipca.com/39702)

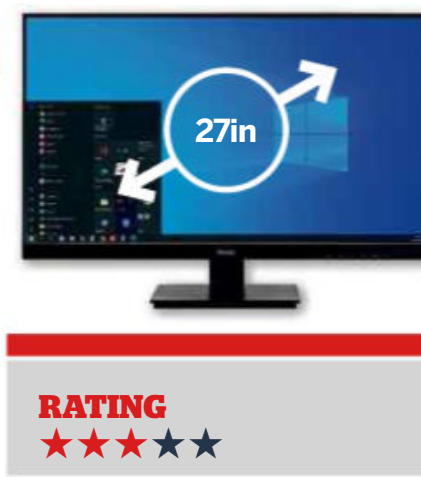
## Iiyama ProLite XU2792QSU-B1

If you want to max out the resolution available for £250, the Iiyama ProLite XU2792QSU-B1 packs in 2560x1440 pixels. It also displayed 97 per cent of sRGB colours in our tests,

which is the best result in this group, and it can be turned up bright, peaking at 367cd/m<sup>2</sup> in our tests.

So why isn't it top of the heap? Its main problem is that it isn't uniformly bright across

the entire screen. The variation was significant in our tests, dropping by more than 20 per cent in some places, which is enough to be noticeable when you're using it.



### WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

## Can I get an internet-free printer for under £100?

**Q** My friend is not connected to the internet and needs a new printer. She's tried an HP model, but had to send it back because it required an internet connection to set it up.

She wants a colour all-in-one device with a copier function, that can print on both sides of a sheet automatically, can print from a PC via USB and costs £100 or less. I also need to be able to set it up without connecting to the internet.

Alan Russell

**A** It seems to be the ability to print on both sides of a sheet of paper that pushes up the price of printers. This is because they use a mechanical process to flip the paper over, and a printer without those parts can be made more cheaply. However, based on your friend's needs, we think the Canon Pixma TS6350 ticks all the boxes. It should come with a setup CD, or you can download the [drivers](http://www.snipca.com/drivers) from [www.snipca.com](http://www.snipca.com).



[www.snipca.com/39711](http://www.snipca.com/39711) and save them to a USB memory drive for when you help install it.

The problem is finding it for under £100. Canon was selling it for £99.99 ([www.snipca.com/39710](http://www.snipca.com/39710)), but

now says it's out of stock. Argos has the cheapest price (£119.99 from [www.snipca.com/39749](http://www.snipca.com/39749)), but problems with supply chains make it hard to know how long it'll be available.



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



# Reviews

**TABLET** | £369 from Xiaomi [www.snipca.com/39762](http://www.snipca.com/39762)

## Xiaomi Pad 5

Looks great, lasts long

For a while, Android tablets were thin on the ground, with manufacturers seemingly unable to compete with the high quality threshold of Apple's cheapest iPads. However, recent launches from Samsung and Lenovo now offer serious competition (see our Buy It recommendations on page 30), and Chinese manufacturer Xiaomi has joined in with the Pad 5.

The tablet has an 11in LCD display with a resolution of 1600x2560 pixels. It has a 16:10 aspect ratio and a 120Hz refresh rate, making it great for watching movies and scrolling through apps and web pages. It's richly coloured, vibrant and bright enough for viewing in a well lit room.

“Fast, bright, with a good battery, but is slower than a basic iPad”

The tablet is fitted with an octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 860 processor, 6GB of RAM and 128GB of storage. Despite being a couple of years old, the Snapdragon 860 is powerful enough to blaze through multiple apps in split-screen mode without a hiccup. To put the system under pressure, we opened a number of apps and tabs in Chrome, which ran well without stuttering.

In our tests it blazed past affordable Android tablets such as the Samsung Galaxy Tab A7 (£219), but was slower than the basic iPad (£319). As you might expect, this means it falls well behind more expensive devices such as the iPad Air (£579) or the Samsung Galaxy

### SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 860 processor  
• 6GB RAM • 128GB storage • 11in 1600x2560-pixel 120Hz screen • 13-megapixel main rear camera  
• 8-megapixel front camera • MIUI for Pad OS • 6.85x255x166mm (HxDxW) • 511g • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/39762](http://www.snipca.com/39762)



Tab S7 Plus (£799).

Battery life is excellent. It has an 8,720mAh battery, which Xiaomi claims will run up to 10 hours of gaming, 16 hours of video playback, and five days of music playback. In our web browsing test, it lasted 14 hours and 11 minutes, more than an hour longer than the battery in both the standard iPad and the Galaxy Tab S7.

Xiaomi has tweaked Android to deliver a better user experience on a tablet. Called 'MIUI for Pad', it changes Android in a number of ways. The main difference is that you can long-press an app window to get additional options, including locking an app, splitting the screen to have two apps run side by side, and turning an app into a small floating window. With this you could take notes, scroll through the news in Chrome, and watch a bit of Netflix in a small window, all at the same time. It's easy to set up and works smoothly.

If you're interested in an Android tablet at an affordable price, it's a good option. However, the basic Apple iPad is cheaper (£319), faster and slicker.

**VERDICT** A great screen and a long-lasting battery make this a compelling Android alternative to a basic iPad, but it still lags behind in terms of performance

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Samsung Galaxy Tab S6 Lite £289 Samsung's alternative has a smaller screen and less storage space, but it's a little bit cheaper



### CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

#### High Dynamic Range (HDR)



##### What does it do?

High Dynamic Range (HDR) is a group of standards that control the contrast of images on TV screens – the difference between the brightest whites, the darkest blacks, and everything between. The higher the range, the more realistic images look.

##### How does it work?

HDR information is encoded into the program so that compatible TVs and streaming devices recreate the contrast settings that the film or programme maker intended. Depending on the HDR standard, this changes scene by scene or even as frequently as frame by frame.

##### What are the specs?

Confusingly, there are four active HDR standards: HDR10, HDR10+, HLG and Dolby Vision. HDR10 is the most common, and is compatible with Amazon, Netflix, Disney+, Apple and the Blu-ray Disc Association. It adapts the contrast scene by scene, and all new 4K TVs work with it.

Dolby Vision is an enhanced service, supported by Netflix and Disney+, and adapts the contrast frame by frame. It's better than HDR10, but only appears on more expensive TVs, except for LG models (such as the 55SM8050, pictured), which has added it across the range. Samsung's format, HDR10+, works frame by frame, and is mainly associated with Amazon Prime Video. HLG was developed by the BBC and Japanese broadcaster NHK. A few programmes use it (wildlife series, *Doctor Who* and some Sky Sports football this season). It may become popular with other broadcasters.



##### Can I change it later?

No, so make sure any TV or streaming stick you buy supports the standards used by your favourite streaming services and broadcasters.



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SCAN ME



# Reviews

**KEYBOARD** | £99 from Logitech [www.snipca.com/39750](http://www.snipca.com/39750)

## Logitech MX Keys Mini

### Types of travel

Logitech's MX Keys Mini is a portable keyboard designed for you to sling in your bag and carry around wherever you go. Then, if you need to do some work on your phone or tablet, you can whip it out and start typing. It's perfect for those times when typing on a full keyboard is a much quicker option than tapping on a virtual keyboard.

It's available in three colours (grey, pink or white) and two configurations (for PC or Mac users). It's pleasant to type on, with tactile keys. However, it's permanently tilted, making it higher at the back. Most people prefer this, but if you like a flat keyboard, you're out of luck.

It also doesn't have a number pad,

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Bluetooth Low Energy • 10m wireless range • USB-C port for recharging • 132x296x21mm (HxDxW) • 506g • Two-year warranty [www.snipca.com/39750](http://www.snipca.com/39750)

although this helps keep the size to a minimum.

The keyboard is Bluetooth only, but you can pair it with up to three devices. A switch at the top right lets you move between them. Its battery should last for 10 days on a full charge with the backlight on. Switch this off and Logitech says the battery could last five months.

It feels sturdy, with excellent build quality. In our tests, it withstood a week of travelling without any visible scratches or other signs of damage.

All in all, this makes it a great travelling companion if you prefer to use a physical keyboard and regularly find yourself working on devices that don't have them.



**VERDICT** A high-quality compact keyboard, ideal for carrying around and connecting to any device when you need to type more than a few words

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** iClever BK03 Mini Foldable BT £63 If the Logitech keyboard is too big for you to carry around, consider this foldable option



**FITNESS WATCH** | £155 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/39751](http://www.snipca.com/39751)

## Fitbit Charge 5

### Watch in colour

The Fitbit Charge 5 is an impressive fitness watch that combines the best features of Fitbit's other devices. It offers GPS for tracking runs and walks, contactless payments and sleep tracking – all in a simple interface that's easy to use, even if you've never owned a Fitbit before.

It's slim, with a colour AMOLED screen that's a huge upgrade from the mono screen on the previous model, the Charge 4. It's crisp and bright, with smooth scrolling and animations. The watch pairs with your phone and lets you know when

#### SPECIFICATIONS

1.04in 326ppi AMOLED touchscreen • 3-axis accelerometer • GPS • Optical heart-rate monitor • Red and infrared sensors for oxygen saturation (SpO2) monitoring • Bluetooth • Compatible with Android and iOS devices • 11x37x23mm (HxDxW) • 29g • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/39751](http://www.snipca.com/39751)

you've got messages or incoming calls, while still handling the Fitbit basics of counting your steps and letting you know if you've been sitting still too long.

On the downside, the Charge 5 has lost a few features, most notably a Spotify app for controlling what's playing. You can't do this directly on the Charge 5, so you'll have to reach for the Spotify app on your phone instead, which is a real hassle.

There are also new EDA (Electrodermal Activity – measuring stress) and ECG (Electrocardiogram – heart rate) monitors, but they require a subscription to Fitbit Premium, which costs £7.99 per month or £79.99 per year. Build quality has improved, with a stainless-steel case replacing the Charge 4's plastic shell, and it's available in black, white or grey.

Additional bands are sold separately,



including a perforated strap designed for improved breathability during sports – so it feels less sweaty.

**VERDICT** A great upgrade to the previous Fitbit Charge model, though you can no longer control Spotify playlists

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Fitbit Charge 4 £99 The previous model is still available for a lower price with many of the same features, though it doesn't have a colour screen





**INTERNET RADIO** | £179 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/39774](http://www.snipca.com/39774)

## Roberts Stream 94i

Turn on, tune in, no drop outs

The internet hasn't killed radio but it's certainly changed the way many people listen to it. However, despite mobile devices and smart speakers, some people still like to have a standalone radio they can keep in the kitchen, bedroom or on the sideboard. The Roberts Stream 94i brings all the benefits of internet radio to this kind of traditional device.

Naturally, the radio isn't only for streaming – you can still use it to tune in to FM or digital (DAB) stations. However, it also connects to your network, via Wi-Fi or its Ethernet port, and can stream all manner of stations accessible through the internet. If you have a premium Spotify account you can also use the radio's Spotify Connect app to grab tracks and playlists directly from the service's database of 30 million songs.

There are three ways to control the radio: through the buttons on the front, a supplied remote control, or using the UNDOK app, which is available for Android and iOS. The radio looks stylish, with a black front and either a black (pictured above right) or natural wood (below) surround. The handle is a flexible strap arch, which makes the radio easy to carry around. If you want to move it away from a wall socket, a battery is available for the device, but it costs an extra £45 from the Roberts website at [www.snipca.com/39775](http://www.snipca.com/39775).



It has plenty of ports, including USB for playing audio files and a 3.5mm input for connecting other music-playing devices, such as an old MP3 or tape player, and using the radio as a speaker. It also works as a network player, should you have digital tracks stored on a PC or NAS drive elsewhere in your house, and can stream via Bluetooth from a phone or tablet. There's both a line-out and headphone jack, so you can send audio to another set of speakers if you wish.

Sound quality is superb, with rich bass sounds belting out from the **subwoofer** housed at the rear of the device. It also handles high notes well, without any harshness, and spoken-word radio sounds warm and wonderful.

### SPECIFICATIONS

DAB, DAB+, FM and internet radio • FLAC, AAC, ALAC, MP3, WMA files supported • Bluetooth • Ethernet port • USB 2.0 port • 3.5mm auxilliary in port • 3.5mm line out port • 3.5mm headphone jack socket • 166x130x250mm (HxDxW) • 1.66kg • Two-year warranty [www.snipca.com/39774](http://www.snipca.com/39774)

**VERDICT** A comprehensive radio package, covering everything from FM to the internet, complete with great sound and good value for money

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Goodmans Heritage HP1WHT Portable Digital Radio £170  
Sound isn't as good but this comes with rechargeable battery so it needs no plug socket



## DO I REALLY NEED...

### An ebook reader with a pen

#### What is it?

Kobo has launched the Kobo Sage (pictured), a new 8in ebook reader that's compatible with the Kobo Stylus.



#### What does it do?

You can use the stylus to circle, underline and scribble notes in your ebooks. It also has a separate notebook function for making notes on a blank page, and can convert them into typed text.

#### What's the catch?

You don't actually get the pen with the £250 Sage, so you have to buy it separately for another £40.

#### So can I do without it?

You can add notes to books in a Kobo by highlighting the words you want to annotate and typing them in, so it's not an essential accessory. However, this is a cumbersome way to do it, and we love the idea scribbling notes in the margins of books, like we used to do with paperbacks.

## NEXT ISSUE

On Sale **Weds 17 Nov**



#### Nokia T20

An affordable 10.4in Android tablet for less than £200

#### 4K TV streamer head to head

Roku Streaming Stick 4K vs Amazon Fire TV Stick 4K Max



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

### LAPTOP

**Lenovo Yoga Slim 7 (256GB)**  
**£599** from [www.snipca.com/39635](http://www.snipca.com/39635)  
**Tested** Issue 601



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

**ALTERNATIVE Dell XPS 13** New Intel CPUs and a taller screen make this a more powerful, all-round slim laptop. Prices start at £1,149 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 Create Zen** Fast Ryzen 5 CPU plus adequate GPU makes a superb work PC. £1,720 from [www.snipca.com/35840](http://www.snipca.com/35840)

### APPLE IPAD

**Apple iPad 10.2in**  
**£319** 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. £479 from [www.snipca.com/33050](http://www.snipca.com/33050)

### ANDROID TABLET

**Lenovo Tab P11 Pro**  
**£600** from [www.snipca.com/38585](http://www.snipca.com/38585)  
**Tested** Issue 609



A fast tablet that comes with a magnetic stand and keyboard that means you can also use it as a laptop. It has an outstanding screen, 128GB storage and a 17-hour battery life, while its excellent dual mics make you sound clear in video chats.

**ALTERNATIVE Samsung Galaxy Tab S6 Lite** Slower than the Lenovo Tab P11 Pro, but the 64GB storage and decent 10.2in screen make it good value. £309 from [www.snipca.com/38606](http://www.snipca.com/38606)

### APPLE IPHONE

**Apple iPhone 12**  
**£679** 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. £389 from [www.snipca.com/34773](http://www.snipca.com/34773)

### ANDROID PHONE

**Xiaomi Poco F3**  
**£289** from [www.snipca.com/38395](http://www.snipca.com/38395)  
**Tested** Issue 608



This Chinese-made phone is phenomenal 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 OnePlus Nord 2 5G** Another Chinese phone, it's faster than most rivals at similar prices, has an excellent screen and a great camera. £399 from [www.snipca.com/39146](http://www.snipca.com/39146)



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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. £120 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. £16.99 from [www.snipca.com/39570](http://www.snipca.com/39570)

## WEBCAM

**Logitech C925e Business Webcam**  
**£79** from [www.snipca.com/38385](http://www.snipca.com/38385)  
**Tested:** Issue 608



Despite the name, this webcam is also great for home users. Its standout feature is automatically adjusting itself to keep your picture looking sharp. It offers a 78-degree field of view, which is fine for everyday video chats with one person in front of the camera.

### ALTERNATIVE Anker PowerConf C300

Good image quality, crisp audio and lots of features. £80 from [www.snipca.com/38752](http://www.snipca.com/38752)

## PC MONITOR

NEW ENTRY

**Iiyama ProLite XU2492HSU-B1**  
**£156** from [www.snipca.com/39701](http://www.snipca.com/39701)  
**Tested** Issue 618



This 23.8in screen is superb value, with a resolution of 1920x1080 pixels. Colour is good, covering 88 per cent of the sRGB colour range. Connect your computer via HDMI, DisplayPort or VGA, and there's a USB hub to connect your mouse and keyboard.

### ALTERNATIVE AOC 27P2C

This also has a 1920x1080 resolution but it's 27 inches, so pixel density is lower. But you'll only notice if you look really closely. £250 from [www.snipca.com/39700](http://www.snipca.com/39700)

## ROUTER

**Netgear Nighthawk RAX80**  
**£300** from [www.snipca.com/39013](http://www.snipca.com/39013)  
**Tested** Issue 603



This is the fastest Wi-Fi 6 router we've ever tested, transferring data at speeds of 520Mbps in the same and adjacent rooms of our test house. Also works with Wi-Fi 5, and comes with four spare Ethernet ports and two USB ports.

### ALTERNATIVE Asus RT-AX82U

Slower than the Nighthawk on Wi-Fi 6, but faster on Wi-Fi 5, so a better choice for older devices. Has four Gigabit Ethernet ports. £168 from [www.snipca.com/37675](http://www.snipca.com/37675)

## PRINTER

**Canon Pixma TS8350**  
**£140** from [www.snipca.com/39641](http://www.snipca.com/39641)  
**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 5 Eufy SoloCam E40 cameras



Winner of a 'Buy It!' award in Issue 615, Eufy's SoloCam E40 captures video in 2K resolution, so you can keep an eye on what's happening outside with greater clarity than ever before. It's completely free of wires – simply set it up and you're good to go.



The camera uses advanced artificial intelligence to reduce false alarms caused by passing animals or swaying tree branches. It will notify you only when it detects humans.

Perhaps best of all, you don't need to pay a monthly subscription fee to access your footage. It stores 8GB of footage, which is enough for two months. You can watch this whenever you like, without paying a penny more. It's also protected by military encryption and can't be intercepted.

To enter this competition, answer the question at [www.snipca.com/39754](http://www.snipca.com/39754) and submit your details. It runs until midnight Tuesday 16 November. Good luck!

You can buy the **Eufy SoloCam E40** for £119.99 from Amazon ([www.snipca.com/39381](http://www.snipca.com/39381)). For more information on Eufy products visit <https://uk.eufylife.com> and follow [@eufyofficial](https://twitter.com/eufyofficial) on Twitter.

### 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. £295 from [www.snipca.com/27309](http://www.snipca.com/27309)

### SOLID-STATE DRIVE

**Samsung** 970 Evo Plus  
500GB  
**£72** 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. £60 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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# Workshops & Tips

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

**35** Set up an eSIM to use two lines on your phone

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**PLUS**

**44** Phone & Tablet Tips

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**47** Make Office Better

**48** In The Club: Create flyers from your images

## HOW TO...

# Set up an eSIM to use two lines on your phone

by Nik Rawlinson

**What you need:** Recent mobile phone **Time required:** 30 minutes

**T**here are many reasons why you might need a second mobile line. A disposable number for forms and delivery drivers is one. Another would be separate lines for business and personal use. Or perhaps a pay-as-you-go (PAYG) SIM for calls, plus a cheap but generous contract with a rival provider for data alone, would best suit your lifestyle and the way you use your phone.

One solution is to use a phone with a dual-SIM slot, but these aren't common. A better solution is to use a dual-line phone, which comes with an eSIM. These are circuits that are built into the phone. They can't be removed, but they can be programmed to work just like a standard SIM. As far as the phone's concerned, there's no difference between them, as each authorises your connection, stores your number, and routes your calls, texts and data as appropriate. They're common in industrial environments for analysing data, and you'll also find them in cars, where they're used by sat-navs to download maps.

Vodafone, O2 and EE (but not yet Three) offer eSIM contracts as alternatives to traditional SIMs, and Apple has built eSIM chips into phones since releasing the iPhone XS in 2018. Some iPads also support eSIM, and Google's Pixel phones

have included the necessary parts since 2018's Pixel 3.

You'll find eSIM support in several Samsung phones and tablets, and in some other devices, including smart watches. In the new iPhone 13 Apple has doubled the number of eSIM chips to two, letting you host a pair of virtual numbers without using a physical SIM card.

Opting for eSIM rather than a SIM means your SIM slot will remain vacant. How you take advantage of this is up to you. You could use it for a local PAYG SIM the next time you're abroad to benefit from cheaper calls. Or you could run UK-based SIM and eSIM lines side by side from rival providers, to accommodate any of the scenarios outlined above.

But there's a caveat. Mobile phones bought on contract are often 'locked' so they work only on the network through which they were purchased. So, you'd be able to use only an eSIM from the same company as your existing physical SIM. If you want to install eSIMs from two different providers you'll need an unlocked phone, which has no such restrictions. Phones bought directly from the manufacturer are usually unlocked, and phones on which any initial contract has expired (including those bought

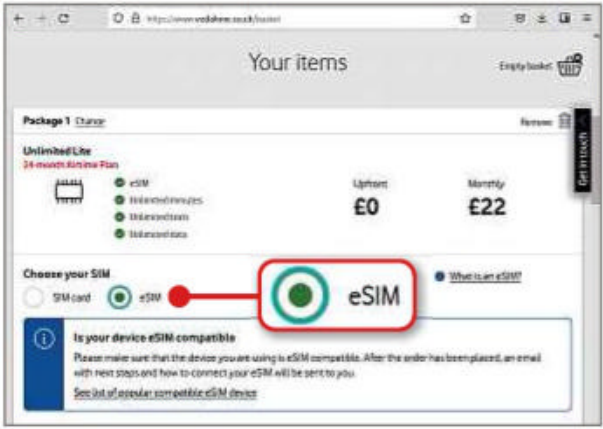


second hand) can usually be unlocked, either by the network itself, or by technicians in phone shops.

Here, we'll use a Vodafone eSIM and install it on an unlocked phone that already has a physical SIM installed, through which it connects to Smarty (<https://smarty.co.uk>). Smarty, like Giffgaff, Tesco Mobile and Virgin Mobile, is what's known as a mobile virtual network operator (MVNO), in this case giving access to the Three mobile network. Don't worry if you're using a mix of providers other than Vodafone and Smarty: the process will be the same. ➔



**1 Choose your eSIM**  
Not all packages are available as eSIM. PAYG is generally excluded, for example. If you have trouble finding specific eSIM deals online from your preferred provider, you should phone them or visit a store. To buy an eSIM from Vodafone, we navigated the regular SIM-only contracts on its website and added our preferred bundle to the basket. When we proceeded to the checkout, we then used the buttons on the item in our basket to switch from SIM (which was the default) to eSIM (see screenshot below).

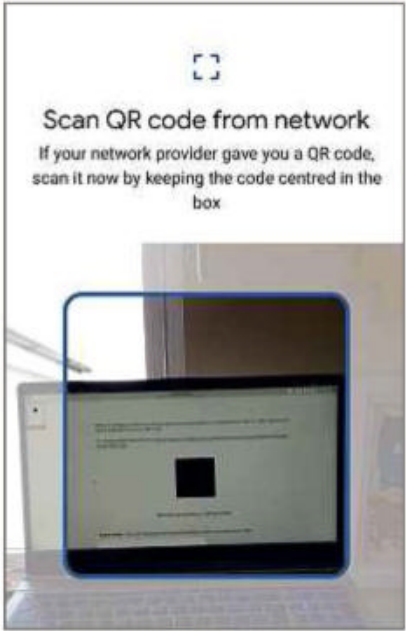


Add a plan to your basket then choose between a regular SIM and a virtual eSIM

You can choose any monthly contract for you eSIM plan, including 'Unlimited Max with Entertainment' deals that offer uncapped data, 5G and YouTube Premium, Spotify or Prime Video. However, as we were setting up a second line, rather than our main one, we chose a £6-per-month Vodafone Basics plan, with unlimited calls and texts, and up to 4GB of data per month on 4G.

Once we'd completed the checkout process, Vodafone sent the eSIM as a PDF attached to an email. This was password-protected, using our date of birth as the password. Whichever provider you've bought your eSIM through, open the

Your eSIM is delivered as a QR code – scan it to program the SIM chip in your phone



## How I use eSIM

I'm sure I'm not alone in not wanting to give out my personal number. Fortunately, that's easily bypassed by using an eSIM on contract as my primary line, and running it alongside a PAYG physical SIM in the same phone. I can give out the PAYG number wherever a phone contact is required. Should it start to attract spam calls, I can remove it, snip it in half and bin it, then spend 99p on a replacement, all the while keeping my primary number safe, and known only to friends and family.

Nik Rawlinson

Would you like to use an eSIM? Please let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)

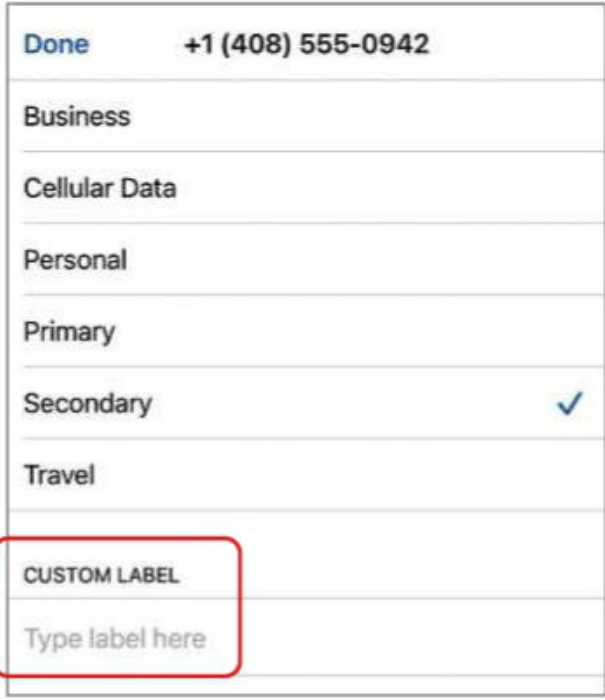
email and leave it displayed on your screen, with the QR code in view.

**2 Install an eSIM on your phone**  
We'll start with Android. First, make sure your phone is connected to Wi-Fi and has internet access. Open settings then tap 'Network and Internet', followed by the '+' beside 'Mobile network'. Tap 'Add a number using eSIM' at the bottom of the screen, and when asked if you want to use two SIMs, tap Yes. On the following screen, which is headed 'Download your SIM', tap Next, then use your phone's camera to scan the QR code on your computer screen (see screenshot below left).

Your phone will detect the appropriate network and ask if you'd like to use it. If the network is the right one, tap Activate. It will take a few minutes to enrol your phone using your new contract, after which you'll be asked which SIM you'd like to use for data. Tap either your existing physical SIM, or the new eSIM, followed by Done (see screenshot below).

The process is similar for iPhones. Make sure you're connected to Wi-Fi and

Select which network you want to use for data, then tap Done



Tap 'Custom Label' on your iPhone to give your lines meaningful names

have internet access. Open the camera app and point it at the QR code in the PDF on your computer. Your phone will notify you that it has detected a mobile data plan. Tap this, followed by Continue at the bottom of the screen. Tap 'Add Mobile Data Plan'. To enable your eSIM, open Settings and tap Mobile Data, followed by the name of your eSIM provider. Tap 'Turn On This Line'.

On the next screen, you can give your lines meaningful names to help you remember which number is which. Either select from the suggestions, or tap below Custom Label and type your preferred name (see screenshot above).

Tap Done, then select which line you'd like to use by default for calls and texts.

**3 Switch between your numbers**  
Now that you have two lines running side by side, you can switch between them and choose which should be used for specific purposes.



# Set up an eSIM to use two lines on your phone



In Android, tap which phone line you want to use when sending text messages

On Android, open Settings and tap ‘Network and Internet’, followed by one of your lines at the top of the screen (it makes no difference which you choose, but note that they’re the second and third lines, because your Wi-Fi network, which you *don’t* want to tap, is on line one).

Now tap ‘Calls preference’, followed by the line you’d like to use for calls. If you don’t want to set a default, tap ‘Ask every time’. Tap outside the box to dismiss it, then tap ‘SMS preference’ and, again, select a default line or ‘Ask every time’.

You can also choose between your SIMs when sending a text message by tapping the SIM icon at the right of the text box, then tapping the name of the phone line you want to use on the list that pops up. In our screenshot above we tapped Smarty **1**, which is confirmed below **2**.

You now need to specify which network you want to use for data. Go back to Settings, ‘Network and Internet’, then tap the network you want to use. Make sure the switch beside ‘Mobile data’ is on (so it’s blue). If it was previously off, your other network would have been set as your mobile data network, so you’ll be warned that you’re about to switch between them. If you’re happy with that, tap the Use button. If not, tap Cancel.

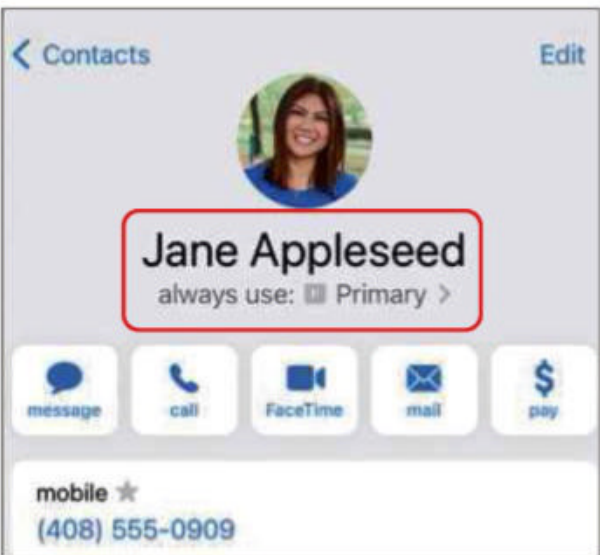
By default, your iPhone will make calls using the line you specified when



Choose a specific line when making a call on an iPhone by selecting ‘Primary’

setting up your eSIM, unless you tell it otherwise. To choose a specific line when making a call on an iPhone, open the Phone app and type the number of the person you want to call. Tap the line named at the top of the screen (it’s ‘Primary’ in our screenshot above), followed by the line you want to use.

If the person you’ll be calling is saved in your contacts, you can specify which line should always be used to call them. This way, you don’t have to switch manually, and there’s no risk of calling work contacts from your personal number (and vice versa). To set this up, open the Contacts app, then tap the contact in question. Tap ‘Preferred



You can tell your iPhone which line to use when calling specific contacts

Mobile Plan’, then the line from which you want to make calls and send texts by default. You’ll see this confirmed at the top of the screen, as shown below left. To specify which network to use for data on an iPhone, open Settings and tap Mobile Data followed by Mobile Data again. Tap the number you want to use.

## 4 Remove your eSIM

You can’t physically eject an eSIM, but you can delete it.

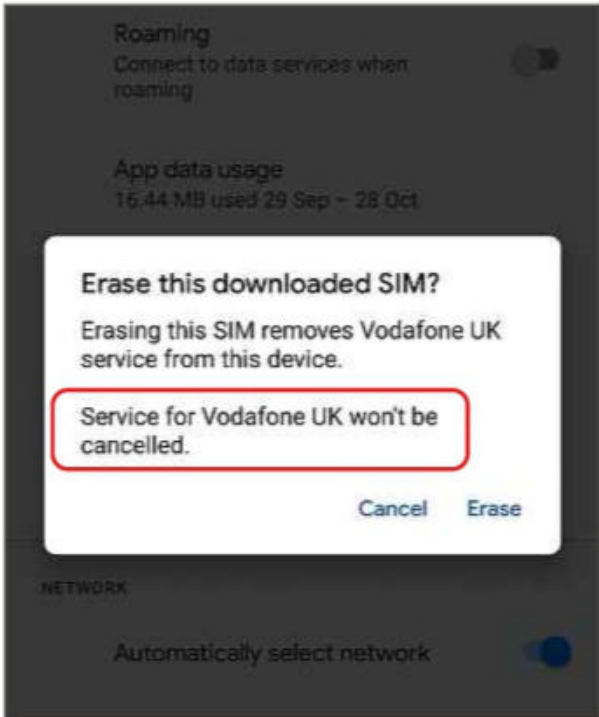
If you don’t do this before selling your phone, the new owner will be able to make calls, send texts and use data on your contract. Deleting your eSIM on one phone means you can install it on a different device when you upgrade, by scanning the original QR code.

To delete your eSIM on an Android device, open Settings, ‘Network and Internet’, then tap the name of your eSIM provider. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and tap Advanced to open the hidden menu.

Scroll to the bottom of this menu and tap Delete SIM. Your phone will ask if you’re sure, and remind you that erasing the SIM won’t cancel your contract (see screenshot below). Tap ‘Erase’ to delete it, or Cancel to go to the previous screen.

To delete your eSIM on an iPhone, open Settings and tap Mobile Data. Now tap the name of the line you want to remove, scroll down to the bottom of the screen and tap Remove Mobile Data Plan.

Again, this won’t cancel your agreement with your service provider so, if you’re out of contract and don’t want to renew, make sure you get in touch with them directly to close the account.



Tapping ‘Erase’ deletes your eSIM, but it doesn’t cancel your contract with the network.



# Workshop

## Beat Microsoft's restrictions to install Windows 11

**What you need:** Windows 10; Minimum 8GB USB stick

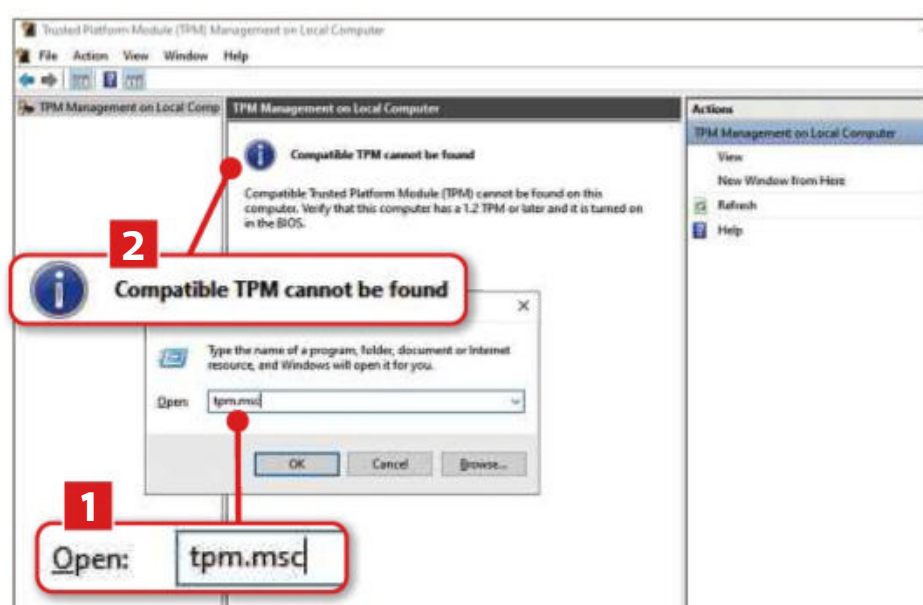
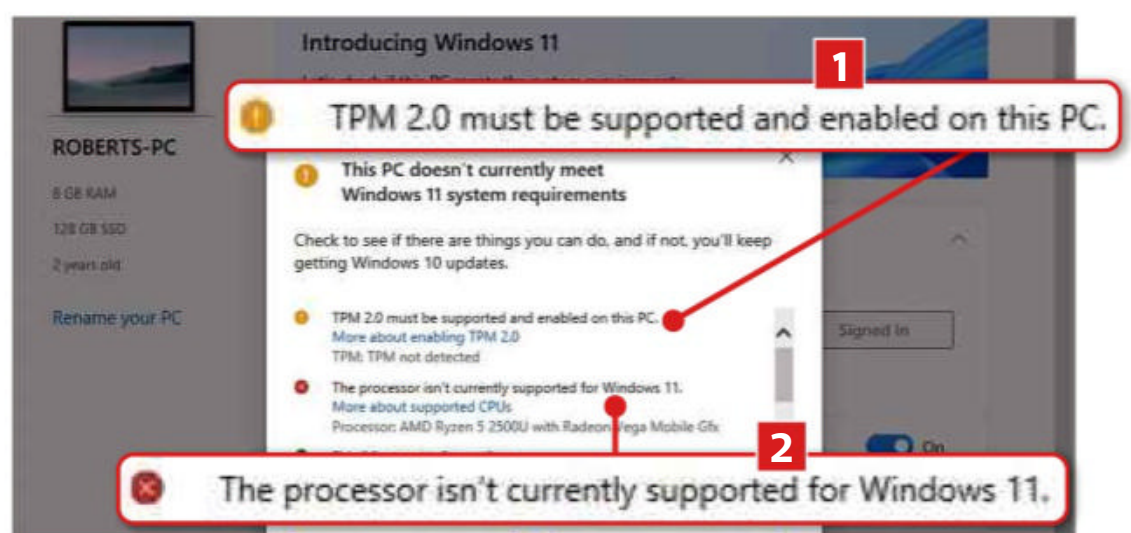
**Time required:** Two hours

The launch of Windows 11 has been overshadowed by controversy about its minimum system requirements. Initially, Microsoft said only PCs with **TPM 2.0** enabled could run Windows 11, and that certain processors wouldn't support it. But Microsoft has now suggested a workaround that lets you install Windows 11 on PCs with an older

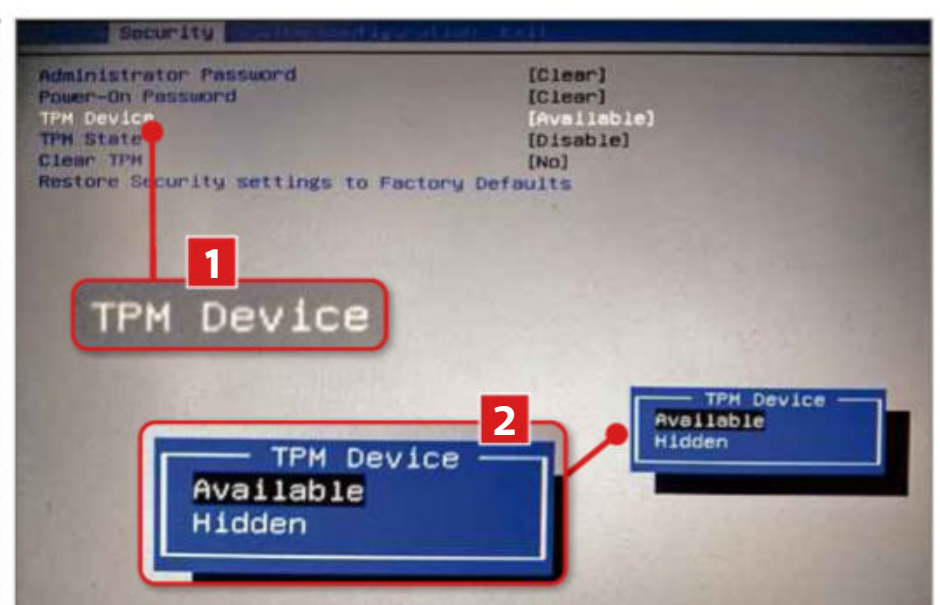
version of TPM and an unsupported processor. However, it also says that if you use this workaround and upgrade directly from Windows 10, you'll no longer receive Windows updates (including security fixes). But if you perform a **clean install**, all your current files and settings will be wiped – so make sure you back up everything important.



**STEP 1** Before you start tweaking settings to beat Microsoft's restrictions for installing Windows 11, you should check that you actually need to. Download and run Microsoft's PC Health Check App from [www.snipca.com/39463](http://www.snipca.com/39463) – scroll down to the bottom of the page for the link. When the tool opens, click the 'Check now' button in the 'Introducing Windows 11' section. This will tell you whether your PC is compatible with Windows 11 and, if not, which requirements it fails to meet. In our case, TPM 2.0 is not enabled **1** and our processor "isn't currently supported for Windows 11" **2**, which are the two most common compatibility problems.

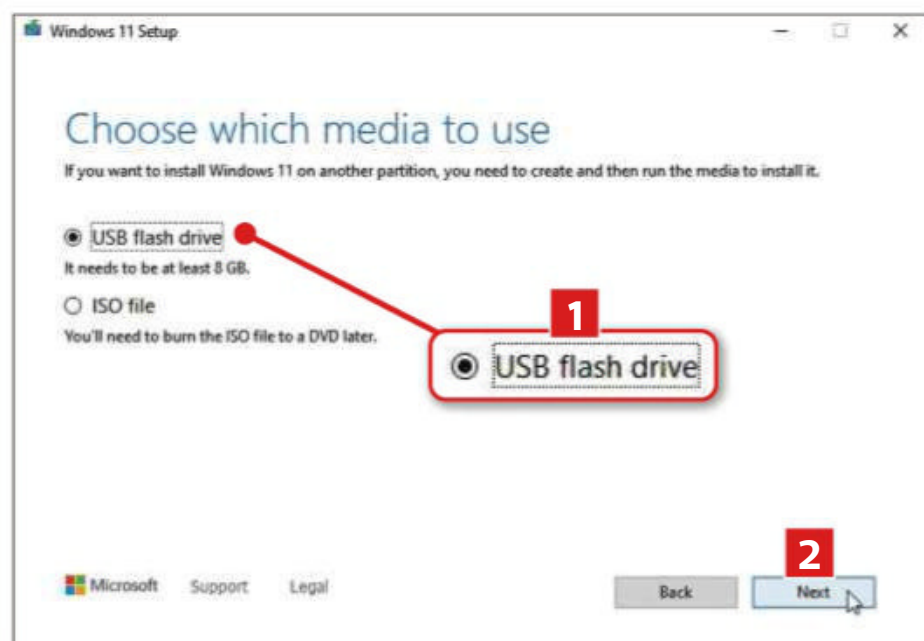
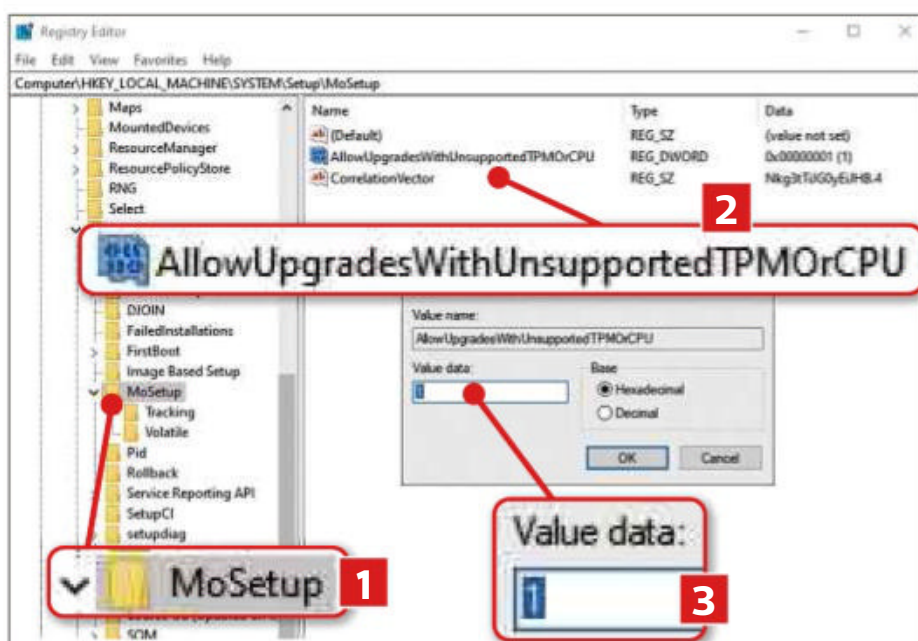


**STEP 2** TPM is the easiest problem to fix. Press the Windows key+R to open the Run box and type **tpm.msc** **1**, then press Enter. If you see a 'Compatible TPM cannot be found' message **2**, this doesn't necessarily mean your PC doesn't have a TPM, but that it may have one that's disabled. We'll explain how to enable it in the next step. If the message says that TPM is ready for use, check the Specification Version under TPM Manufacturer Information to confirm that it's 2.0. If the TPM version is 1.2, then the feature is enabled, but your PC doesn't meet the minimum Windows 11 requirement. Don't worry, however: we'll explain how to beat this restriction in Step 4.



**STEP 3** To enable TPM 2.0, you'll need to go into your PC's **UEFI** or **BIOS**. The quickest way to do this is to press F2 or F10 (depending on your PC's manufacturer) while restarting, but you can also access it through Windows. Go to Settings, 'Update & Security', Recovery and choose 'Restart now'. On the next screen, click Troubleshoot, 'Advanced options', UEFI Firmware Settings then click Restart. The location of the TPM setting varies between manufacturers, but look for a section in the UEFI or BIOS called Advanced, Security or Trusted Computing. Find the TPM entry **1** – this may also be called Security Device, PTT or fTPM – and change its setting to Enabled or Available **2**. Save the change and restart your PC.





**STEP 4** If your PC has only TPM 1.2, you can use Microsoft's suggested registry hack to install Windows 11 anyway. This trick also works if you have an unsupported processor. Type **regedit** into the Windows search box then select Registry Editor. When the Registry Editor opens, navigate to the key: **HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SYSTEM\Setup\MoSetup** **1**. Select this, then right-click in the right-hand pane and choose New, then DWORD (32-bit) Value. Rename the value **AllowUpgradesWithUnsupportedTPMOrCPU** **2** (copy and paste this from our Pastebin account: [www.snipca.com/39814](http://www.snipca.com/39814)), then right-click it, choose Modify and enter 1 in the 'Value data' box **3**. Press Enter or click OK to confirm, then close the Registry Editor and restart your PC.

**STEP 5** You'll now need to create a **bootable** version of Windows 11, because Microsoft will still detect your PC as being incompatible if you try to upgrade using its Installation Assistant or Windows Update. Go to Microsoft's Download Windows 11 page ([www.snipca.com/39795](http://www.snipca.com/39795)) and click the Download Now button under Create Windows 11 Installation Media to download the Media Creation Tool. Run the tool, accept the licence terms and select 'Use the recommended options for this PC'. On the 'Choose which media to use' screen, select 'USB flash drive' **1**, then insert a USB stick (minimum 8GB) and click Next **2**. Click Next again to download the Windows 11 installation files to your stick – this will take a while, but you can keep using your PC while you wait.

**STEP 6** Once the files have downloaded, the Media Creation Tool will create a bootable version of Windows 11. Click Finish **1** when you see the confirmation message that your USB flash drive is ready **2**. Next, open File Explorer, select This PC on the left and double-click your USB stick under 'Devices and drives'. Double-click the 'setup' file **3** and click Yes when prompted to 'allow this app to make changes to your device'. This will begin the Windows 11 installation process. When it reaches the 'Checking your PC' step, the registry tweak you made in Step 4 will tell Windows to ignore any compatibility problems. Windows will then check for and install updates.



**STEP 7** You should now see a screen saying that, although your PC doesn't meet the minimum requirements, you can upgrade to Windows 11 anyway at your own risk. The main drawback is that 'your PC will no longer be supported and won't be entitled to receive updates', although we won't be surprised if Microsoft soon changes its mind on this. Click 'Accept' **1** to continue, then click Install to upgrade to Windows 11. If you'd rather not run an unsupported PC, you can perform a clean install instead, which *will* receive updates but means losing all your files. Open Settings, 'Update & Security', then Recovery. Click 'Restart now' under 'Advanced start-up'. Click 'Use a device', select your USB stick to boot into the Windows 11 installation, then choose 'Custom: Install Windows only'.



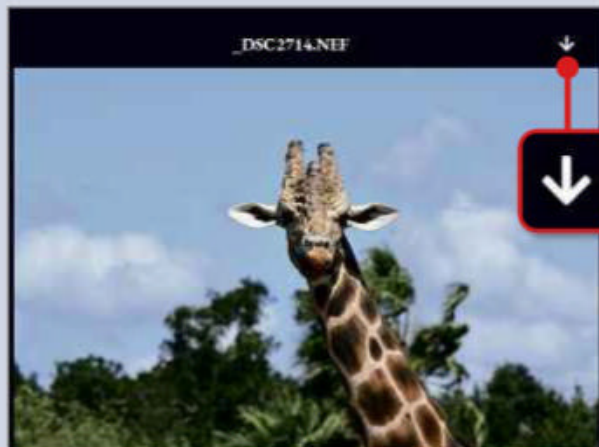
# Readers' Tips

## TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

### Get RAW files to practise editing photos

My lovely children bought me a £500 camera as a retirement present. It was probably my wife's idea – encouraging me to go outside and take photos! I want to do this new hobby justice, so I've found some **RAW** files online that you can download for free – these let me practise photo editing.

They're on a site called Signature Edits ([www.snipca.com/39698](http://www.snipca.com/39698)). I've not found a search tool (maybe another



reader can email about this), so I just scroll down until I find something I like then click the top-right Download arrow (see screenshot). You can then make changes using your preferred editing program. The photos on the site are a mixed bag. There are lots of attractive people posing in exotic places, but also some stunning landscape and wildlife shots too.

Kevin Harrison



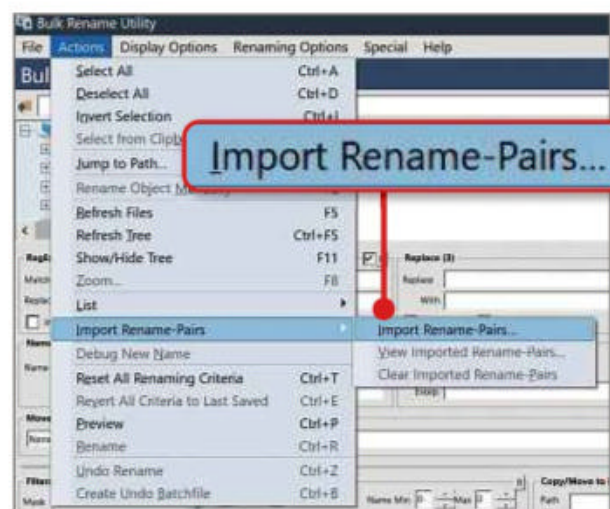
Kevin wins a copy of our 2020 Back Issue CD

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

## SOFTWARE

### Import and rename CSV files

✓ In addition to Alan Goodwin's letter (Issue 615, page 19), I'd like to add that Bulk Rename Utility ([www.bulkrenameutility.co.uk](http://www.bulkrenameutility.co.uk)) has a tool for importing set names for multiple files from a **CSV** file list. Look at the original file names in the left column separated by a comma, then add what you want the new file name to be: photo001.jpg, CornwallHoliday1.jpg and so on.



You need to click Actions at the top, then 'Import-Rename Pairs' (see screenshot below left) and select the CSV file. This should rename all your specified files.

When the Salvation Army's music department updated all the tune numbers in the latest index I used Bulk Rename Utility to renumber all my MP3 files. Very Handy.

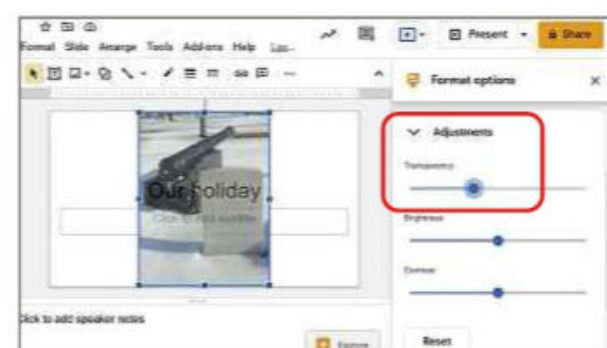
Morvyn Finch

## OFFICE

### Add transparency to your Google Slides

✓ I'm sure lots of readers use PowerPoint to create presentations, but I prefer Google Slides, which I've found easier to use – probably because there are fewer tools to master. If you have a Google account, you can start using it at <https://docs.google.com/presentation>. One feature I love is making images transparent, which makes text stand out more.

Tweaking this transparency takes just a few clicks. Once you've inserted an image,



click it to select it and a blue box will appear around it. Right-click the image and choose 'Format options', then Adjustments to see your transparency options – just move the slider (see screenshot above). Transparency is set to zero per cent by default, so you'll need to move it to the right until you're happy with the results.

Raymond Butts

## PRIVACY

### Disable your Google advertising profile

✓ Erasing myself from Google is something I've wanted to do for a

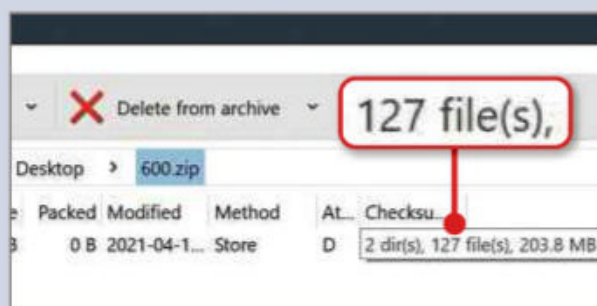
## Why I stopped using...

### WinZip

✓ In my old job I used to pay for WinZip and claim it back on expenses. I work in a different industry now, and have lost that little perk.

### And what I use instead...

I feared I wouldn't find anything as comprehensive as WinZip, but was pleasantly surprised by the features in **PeaZip** ([www.snipca.com/39550](http://www.snipca.com/39550)), in



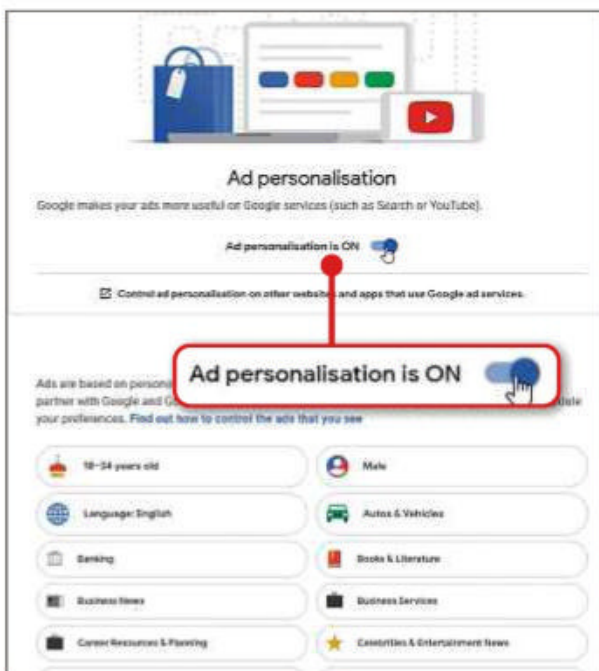
particular that it works with Linux as well as Windows (I have computers running both systems).

It's helpful that it can convert files zipped in WinRAR. I had some ancient files in this format that it managed to rescue. Each updated version seems to add exactly the kind of new tools I want, such as displaying how many items are stored in a folder (see screenshot).

Paul Ramsey

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





long time, so Issue 617's Cover Feature gave me the nudge to finally get on with it. One extra measure you didn't explain was how to eradicate your advertising profile. This stops Google targeting adverts based on what it knows about you. These ads don't just appear in search results – they also track you around the web.

Visit <https://myaccount.google.com> and click 'Data & privacy' on the left. Now scroll down to the 'Things that you've done and places where you've been' section and select 'Ad personalisation'. You'll see your advertising profile, which contains more detail than you may think: location, gender, parental status and age. It also shows what Google thinks your hobbies and interests are.

To unlink this information from your Google account, which will render it useless and stop personalised ads (you'll still see other ads), click the slider next to 'Ad personalisation is ON' (see screenshot above) and then click 'Turn off'.

Peter Skelton

✓ I don't want to go as far as removing myself completely from Google, but one tweak I did make was remove my photo from my profile. You mentioned this, but didn't explain the procedure, so allow me. Visit <https://myaccount.google.com> and click 'Personal info' on the left. Now click Photos in the 'Basic info' box, followed by Remove, then Remove again.

Phil Brewster

## BROWSERS

### Open Edge's 'Accessibility' page

✓ I've not seen this tip mentioned in *Computeractive*, so I thought I'd share it with you. There's a new page in

## Reader recommends...

### TP-Link RE505X

£50 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/38875](http://www.snipca.com/38875)

✓ Both my phone, laptop and router have Wi-Fi 6, so I've been keen to get extenders to take advantage of this around my home. I was struggling to find anything affordable, but then read your review of these units (Issue 611, page 24) and for 50 quid they seemed worth trying.

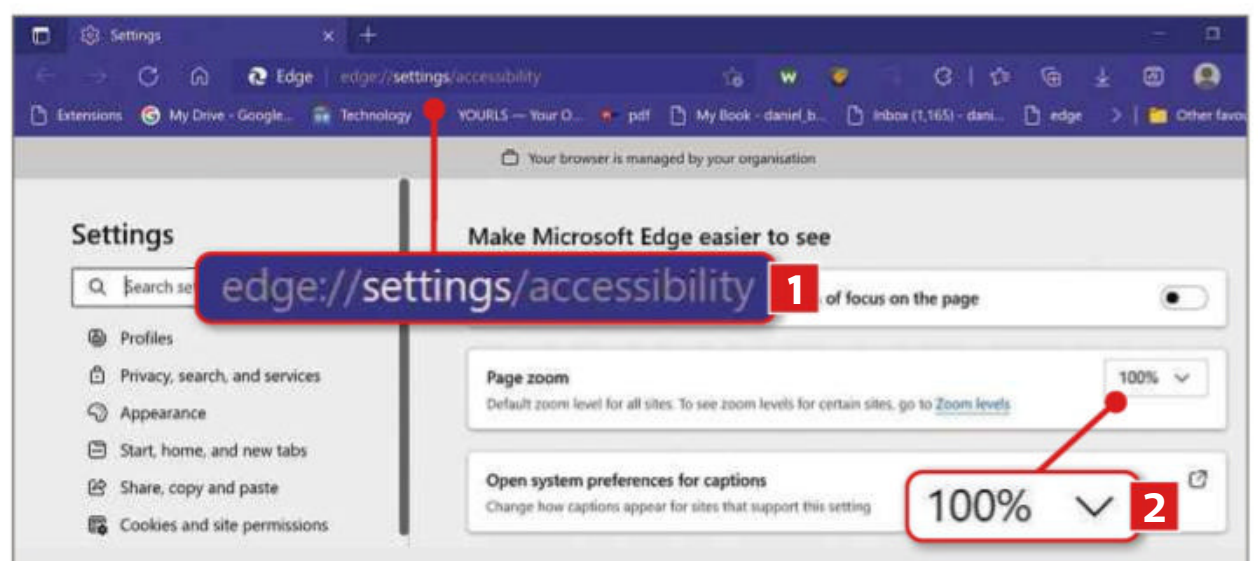
I was tempted by your point that the extenders can send signals to a "far-flung corner" of your home. My far-flung corner is in the loft, where I usually work on my laptop, and where the signal sometimes fades. I've had no such 'fades' since plugging in the RE505X in the loft. The difference was instant – I got the blessed blue light indicating a healthy signal.

Some of my older relatives are put off by extenders because they think setting

them up is a hassle, but TP-Link's Tether app does the job without much human input. Overall, the RE505X is cheap, painless and very fast.

Derek Flinders

✉ Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?  
Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



Edge's settings that shows all its accessibility tools. All you need to do is type <edge://settings/accessibility> into Edge's browser bar (1 in our screenshot above). It contains lots of features I use when browsing the web, such as setting a zoom level for web pages 2.

Marilyn Barker

open the email. It's called Copy ShortURL, and you can install it from [www.snipca.com/39694](http://www.snipca.com/39694). When I need to shorten a URL, I just click the icon in the browser bar (1 in our screenshot below), then click to copy it from the box that pops up 2. You can then paste it where you like.

Clive Malone

## BROWSERS

### Shorten URLs using Firefox extension

✓ I write a weekly club newsletter that can contain up to 50 URLs of web pages. Some of these are very long, so I use a URL-shortening extension in Firefox to make them look neater when people






# Browser Tips

## VIVALDI

### Capture and resize screenshots

 Version 4.3 of Vivaldi (<https://vivaldi.com>) adds a host of useful features that make the innovative browser even better. We were already big fans of its screenshot tool, which lets you capture the contents of web pages without needing to install an extension, and this has now been expanded with the option to resize your screenshots. Click the 'Capture this page' camera icon on Vivaldi's Status Bar (along the bottom of the browser window) and choose Selection, then click the page and drag the selection box over the area you want to capture. You can resize the borders of the box by dragging its edges or corners to get the perfect screenshot – previously, you needed to start a new capture if you didn't select the right area the first time. Choose whether to save the image in **PNG** or **JPEG** format (see screenshot below), or copy it to your clipboard to paste elsewhere, then click Capture.

Also new in Vivaldi 4.3 is support for **PWAs** (Progressive Web Apps), which let you 'install' compatible websites as desktop apps, so you can launch them outside of the browser in their



own windows. To find out how to use this feature (which is also available in Chrome), see our Workshop below.

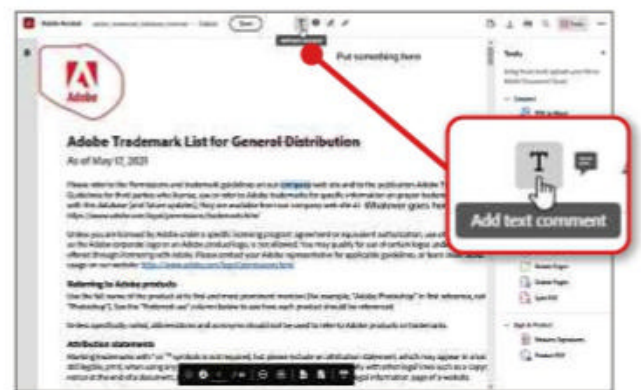
## CHROMIUM

### Edit and annotate PDFs with Adobe Acrobat



All browsers let you view and download PDF files, but if you want to make changes you need to use a separate tool – and hope it works properly. So we're delighted that Adobe, the company that invented PDFs, has updated its Acrobat extension for Chrome and other Chromium browsers ([www.snipca.com/39761](http://www.snipca.com/39761)) to let you edit PDFs without paying for a subscription. This means you can now fill in PDF forms such as contracts and job applications and 'mark up' the document with comments, highlights and other annotations, using the most trusted PDF tool in the business.


Once you've installed the Adobe Acrobat extension, you'll be prompted to set it as your browser's default PDF viewer – click the 'Set as default' button that appears when you next open a PDF from a web page (the extension doesn't work with PDFs stored on your computer). When a PDF opens in the extension's window, click the T icon in the toolbar at the top of the page, then double-click a text field in the document to enter your own words (you can't delete existing text). You can add comments; highlight, underline and strike through text; scribble over the document with the writing tool; and add sticky notes; and then save, share or print the result. Note



that the options in the Tools sidebar on the right-hand side – such as 'Convert PDF to Word', Delete Pages, and Protect PDF – send the file to Adobe's Document Cloud service and require a paid-for subscription after a seven-day free trial. See Adobe's blog at [www.snipca.com/39763](http://www.snipca.com/39763) for more information.

## CHROME

### Save and restore groups of tabs

 Chrome's Tab Groups feature offers a great way to organise your tabs when you have lots of web pages open. Right-click a tab, choose 'Add to tab group' and assign the group a name and colour. You can then add related tabs to the group, and minimise them all to a single tab until you need them. Annoyingly, these groups aren't saved when you close the browser, so you need to recompile them next time you open it, but a new, hidden option in Chrome 95 fixes this problem.

To activate this, type **chrome:flags** into the address bar of the updated browser and press Enter to load the Experiments page. Search for the entry **Tab Groups Save**, select Enabled in its dropdown menu and relaunch Chrome. Now, once you've created a tab group, you can right-

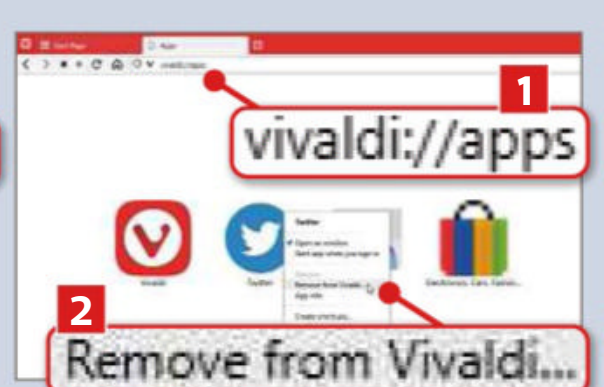
## WORKSHOP Turn a website into a PWA in Vivaldi



**1** Visit a website in Vivaldi that offers PWA functionality. Examples include Twitter, YouTube Music, Telegram and the Spotify Web Player. Right-click the site's tab and choose 'Install [site name]' **1**, then click Install in the box that opens **2**.



**2** The site will now be converted to an app and open in a new app window. On sites that can't be run as PWAs, right-click their tabs and select 'Create shortcut' **1**. Tick the box 'Open as window' **2** and click Create **3** to open them like an app.



**3** To uninstall an app, type **vivaldi://apps** **1** into the browser's address bar, press Enter, then right-click the app and select 'Remove from Vivaldi' **2**. Alternatively, click the three-dot menu in the top-right corner of the app and choose Uninstall.



## BEST EXTENSION FOR...

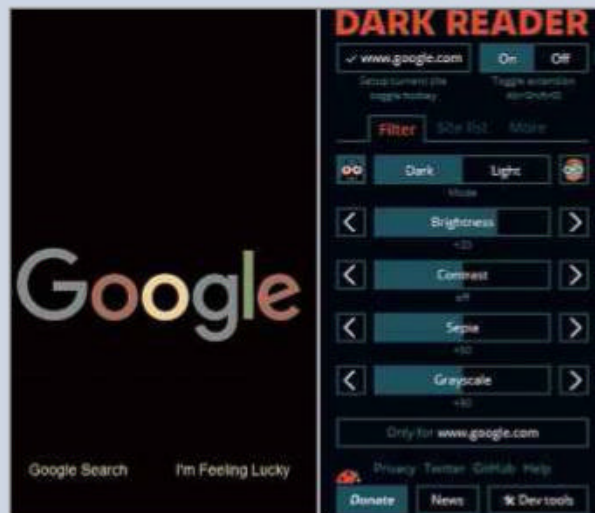
## Applying dark mode to websites

### Dark Reader

Chrome, Firefox, Edge & Safari

<https://darkreader.org>

The dark theme offered by browsers generally only changes their toolbars, menus and settings pages, which isn't much use for protecting your eyes at night. Dark Reader is a far superior option because it automatically applies its dark mode to every site you visit, inverting white backgrounds and bright colours to make content easier to read. It even works for notoriously eye-straining online tools such as Google Docs, Gmail and Google Maps, though in Chromium browsers it can't alter your New Tab page. We particu-



larly like that you can tweak Dark Reader's settings to suit your visual needs or match your current environment, by fine-tuning its

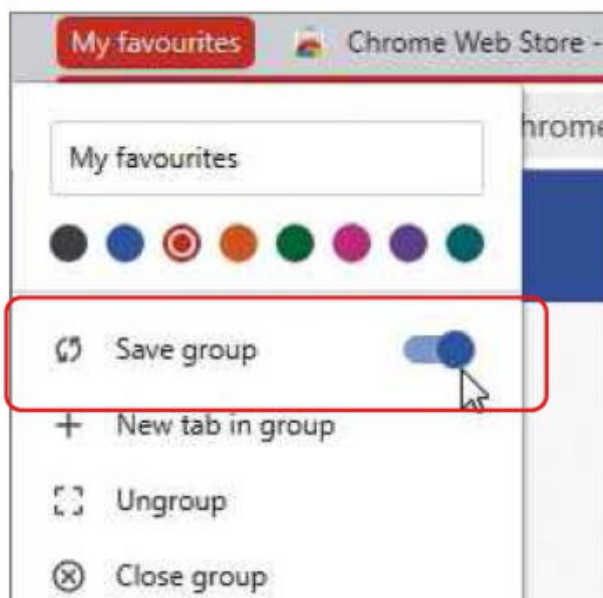
brightness, contrast and colour saturation. Certain websites can be **whitelisted** so that dark mode is never applied to them, or you can choose to use the extension only on the site you're currently viewing. Your eyes will thank you for installing it.

### If you don't like that, try Midnight Lizard

Chrome, Firefox & Edge

[www.snipca.com/39769](http://www.snipca.com/39769)

This add-on goes beyond offering a dark mode to let you change *all* the colours on a website to make it as easy to read as possible. You can either choose one of its colour schemes or create your own.



click its colour-coded tab (where the group name appears) and switch on the slider next to 'Save group' (see screenshot above).

Your tab group will now be saved to your Bookmarks bar, so you can easily restore and revisit all the pages in it next time you open the browser.

### FIREFOX

### Unload memory-hogging tabs automatically



In last issue's Browser Tips, we wrote about Edge's Sleeping Tabs feature, which saves memory on your PC by suspending background tabs after a specific period of inactivity. Mozilla has added a similar feature to Firefox 93, except this 'unloads' idle tabs based on how much **RAM** they're using rather than how long they've been inactive for. When Firefox detects that your system is running "critically low" on memory, it will automatically start suspending resource-hogging tabs in their least



recently used order, to prevent the browser – or your whole PC – from crashing. You can restore an unloaded tab by clicking it, and Firefox should retain your place on the page, along with any data you've entered.

If you want to stop the browser unloading tabs, type **about:config** into the address bar, press Enter and click 'Accept the Risk & Continue' under the warning message. Search for the entry **browser.tabs.unloadOnLowMemory** (see screenshot above) and either double-click it or click the Toggle icon to change its value to 'false'.

### BRAVE

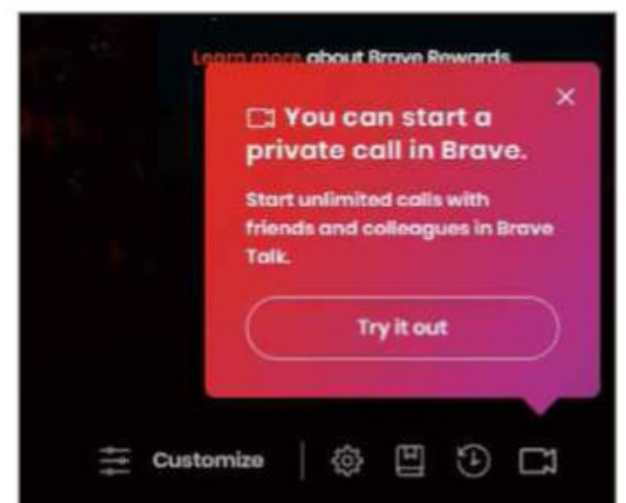
### Chat with friends and family privately



There's no shortage of video-chat tools to choose from these days, but do you really trust Zoom, Skype and Google Meet not to eavesdrop on your calls? If not, consider switching to Brave Talk, a new feature that's built into the privacy-focused browser Brave (<https://brave.com>). This promises a "private-by-design environment" with no extra

software needed and no tracking.

To start a call, either open a new tab in Brave and click the camera icon in the bottom-right corner (see screenshot below) or visit <https://talk.brave.com> in the browser and click 'Start 1:1 call'. This will create a meeting room that you can invite a friend, colleague or family member to join. They don't need to use Brave, but can chat from their usual browser. There's no limit on the length of video calls, but if you want to speak to more than one person at a time, you'll need to upgrade to the premium version of Brave Talk for \$7 (£5.13) a month.






# Phone and Tablet Tips

## ANDROID

### Subscribe to RSS feeds in Chrome for Android

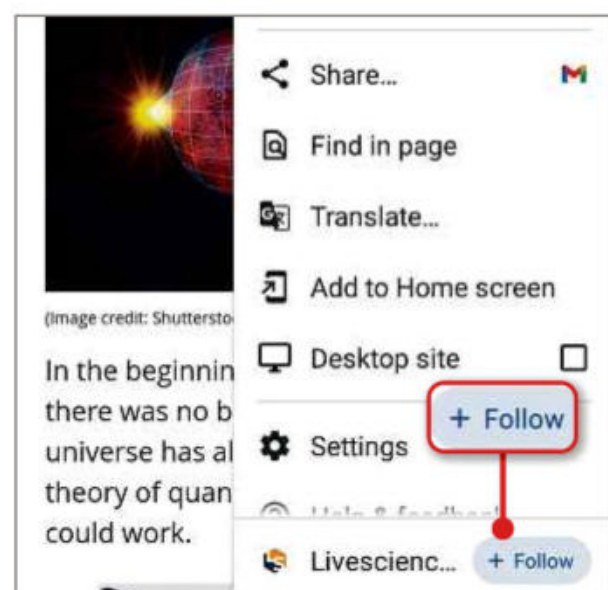
 RSS readers, which let you stay up to date with your favourite websites by receiving a ‘feed’ of their latest content, were once very popular, but were eventually superseded by social media. Google scrapped its much-loved Google Reader tool in 2013, but perhaps it’s realised the error of its ways, because it’s now revived RSS support in the Android version of its Chrome browser. This means you can subscribe to website feeds, just like in the old days, and explore new articles on Chrome’s New Tab page.

The RSS function is already available in the Chrome Android app, but only for some users. To check if you have it, tap the browser’s three-dot menu button when viewing a site and look for a

‘+Follow’ button at the bottom of the menu (see screenshot below left). Tap this to subscribe to the site’s feed. This will open a confirmation message saying that you’ll see new stories when you open a new tab. If you don’t see +Follow in the menu, you’ll need to enable the feed reader through Chrome’s Experiments page. Type **chrome://flags** into the browser’s address bar, press Enter and search for **web feed**. Tap the dropdown menu below this, select Enabled and relaunch Chrome. You should now see the button when you open the three-dot menu.


You can view content from your feed subscriptions by tapping Following on your New Tab page. To stop following a site, press the cog icon and choose Manage, then Following and deselect it in the list.

The RSS reader is reportedly “in progress” for Chrome for iOS, while a version for the desktop browser is “planned but a bit further out” (see Google’s tweet at [www.snipca.com/39771](http://www.snipca.com/39771)).



## ANDROID

### Edit the date and time of photos in Google Photos

 The Google Photos app for Android has long lacked the option to edit **metadata**, preventing you from changing the date and time that pictures were taken. In fact, this was the subject of our ‘Easy When You Know How’ column in Issue 611 (page 74). Google has now

updated the app to add this useful feature, bringing it in line with the iOS and web versions of Photos.


When you want to edit the date and time for a photo – either because the current information is incorrect or to conceal when the shot was really taken – swipe up on the image to show the details below and tap the pencil icon next to the date and time. This will open an ‘Edit date & time’ panel at the bottom of your screen. Tap the date and select a different one in the calendar that opens (see screenshot above), or enter a date manually, then press OK. Tap the time and use the clock to change the time that the photo was captured, then press OK.

You can also edit the date and time of videos. However, like us, you may find that you can’t edit metadata for pictures taken with your current phone’s camera – only images uploaded and shared from other devices.



## iOS

### Change the text size of specific apps in iOS 15

 Until iOS 15 and iPadOS 15 were released, if you wanted to increase the text size in apps on your iPhone or

## BEST NEW APPS

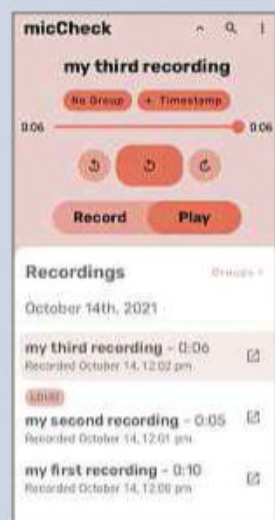
## What you should install this fortnight

### MicCheck

Free

Android [www.snipca.com/39776](http://www.snipca.com/39776)

MicCheck makes it easy to record audio on your Android phone or tablet, and keep your recordings organised. It lets you tag your audio files with descriptive keywords, group them into themed albums and add **timestamps** so that you can quickly jump to specific moments. You can also split recordings into clips.



### Disney Wonderful Worlds

Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/39782](http://www.snipca.com/39782)

iOS [www.snipca.com/39781](http://www.snipca.com/39781)

This fun game invites you to build your own Disney theme park by solving tile-matching puzzles to unlock tools, decorations and attractions, as well as Disney and Pixar characters. There are 300 levels to complete, which is more than enough to keep grandkids and big kids entertained.



### Project Activate

Free

Android [www.snipca.com/39778](http://www.snipca.com/39778)

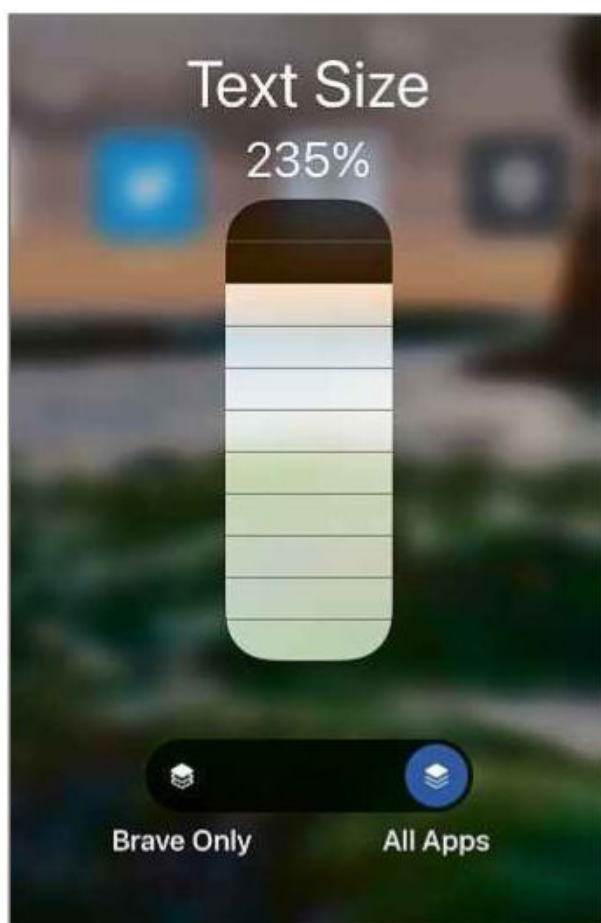
Google has created this app to help people who are unable to speak or use their hands to communicate through their phones. It translates facial gestures into speech, so – for example – smiling into your camera triggers the spoken phrase “thank you”. It’s a brilliant idea, but it currently recognises only six gestures.



\*Contains in-app purchases



## Brilliant things to do on your device



iPad, you needed to go to Settings, then Accessibility, select 'Display & Text Size' and tweak the Larger Text setting. The trouble with this method is that it applies the size to all apps on your device, which means some may have trouble fitting their content on your screen and are virtually shouting at you. The new operating systems offer the welcome ability to change the text size for individual apps, so you can, for example, make your emails larger, while keeping content in your browser smaller – or vice versa.

To set up this feature, open Settings, select Control Centre and tap the green plus sign next to Text Size to add it to the Included Controls. Open an app, swipe down from the top-right corner of your screen – or from the bottom on some iPhones – to open the Control Centre and you'll see a new Text Size option: a small 'A' next to a big one. You can now swipe the slider (see screenshot above) to increase or decrease the text size for the current app, and decide whether to apply the setting to only that app or to all apps.

### iPadOS

#### Create your own widgets for your iPad



One of the best new features in iPadOS 15 is support for extra large **widgets**, which lets you customise your home screen with chunky, colourful blocks showing content from your favourite apps. Default widgets include a clock, calendar and weather forecast, and

you can add more by pressing an empty area of your home screen, then tapping the plus sign in the top-left corner. Select a widget in the gallery, swipe through the different formats it offers and tap Add Widget to add it to your home screen.

For greater control over your iPad widgets, install the free app WidgetsSmith ([www.snipca.com/39773](http://www.snipca.com/39773)), which lets you personalise them to suit your taste. Choose a widget size, from small to extra large,



select the content you want it to display, then tweak its theme, colour and other elements (see screenshot, left).

To unlock all WidgetsSmith's options, you'll need a Premium subscription, which costs £1.99 a month, but there's enough in the free version to get you started. The app also works on iPhones, but you can have much bigger widgets on your iPad.

### BEST APPS FOR...

### Transcribing conversations

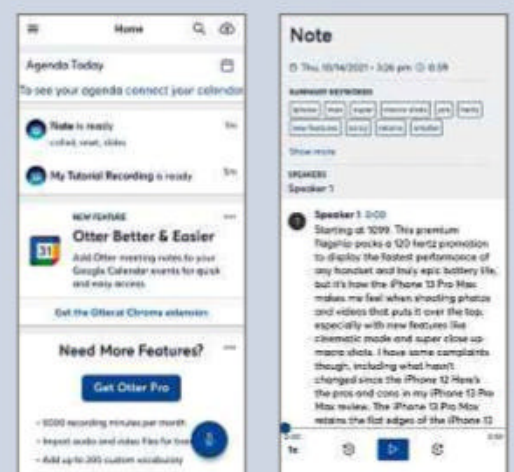
#### Otter Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/39786](http://www.snipca.com/39786)

iOS [www.snipca.com/39787](http://www.snipca.com/39787)

Otter records and transcribes the audio from meetings, so you don't need to worry about missing anything important – or even paying attention. It identifies summary keywords and integrates with your calendar to work automatically. The free version lets you transcribe 600 minutes a month, and record for up to 40 minutes at a time.

**Best For** Taking the minutes in meetings



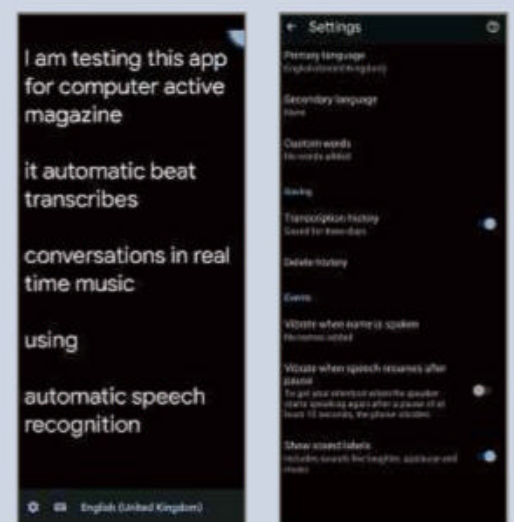
#### Live Transcribe Free

Free

Android [www.snipca.com/39785](http://www.snipca.com/39785)

This Google app transcribes conversations in real time using automatic speech recognition and lets you save them on your phone for three days. You can set it to vibrate your device when someone says your name or resumes speaking after a 10-second pause, and have it show labels for sounds such as laughter, applause and music.

**Best For** Android users who are hard of hearing



#### Rogervoice Free\*

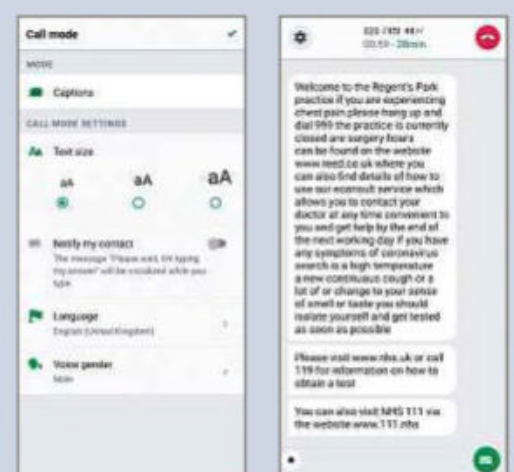
Free\*

Android [www.snipca.com/39788](http://www.snipca.com/39788)

iOS [www.snipca.com/39789](http://www.snipca.com/39789)

Rogervoice "subtitles" your phone calls and voice messages, providing a real-time transcript of what the other person is saying. You can either reply using your voice or by typing. The app is free for calls between Rogervoice users, but after your first 30 minutes you'll need a subscription to transcribe calls to and from other people.

**Best For** Transcribing phone calls if you're hard of hearing



\*Contains in-app purchases



### WINDOWS 10 & 11

#### Check historical weather data for your area



You can see historical weather data for your area in the Windows Weather app. Click Start, search for **weather** then click the app entry to launch it. Next, click the top-left menu icon, followed by Historical Weather. If you have location services switched on (Microsoft explains how at [www.snipca.com/39800](http://www.snipca.com/39800)), your local town or city will appear. Click the top-right search button to find more locations.

You can now view average and high and low temperatures (as well as average rainfall) for your area for each month, going back to the early 1990s. Switch between months of the year using the dropdown menu (1 in our screenshot below) or click a month in the chart (2).

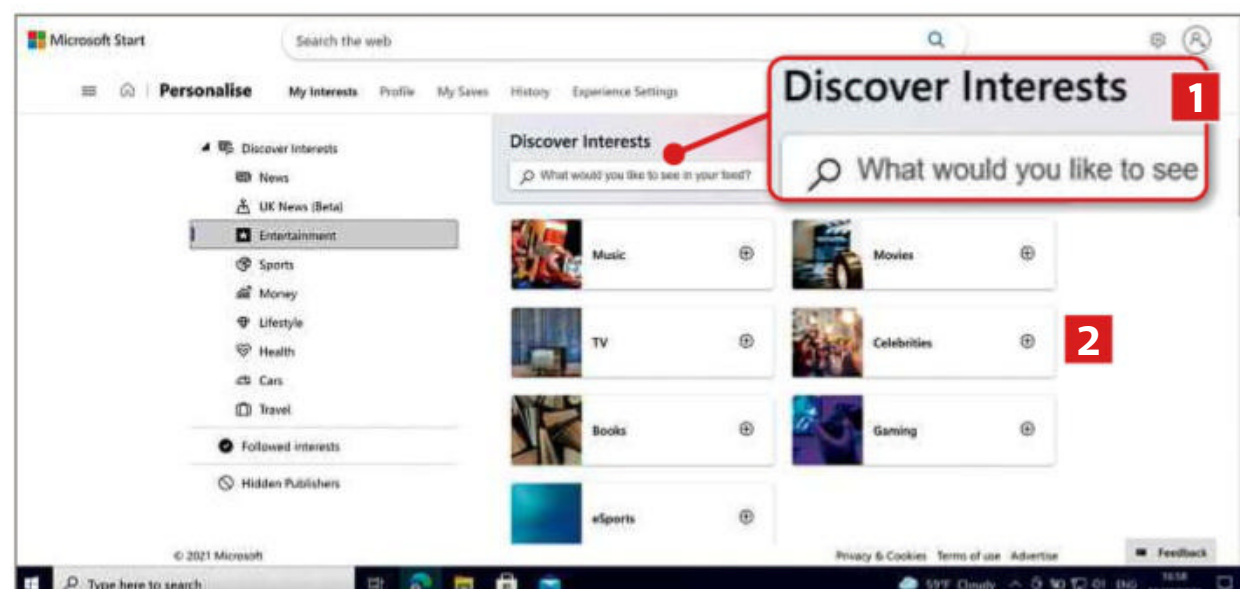


### WINDOWS 10 & 11

#### Personalise your 'News and Interests' feed

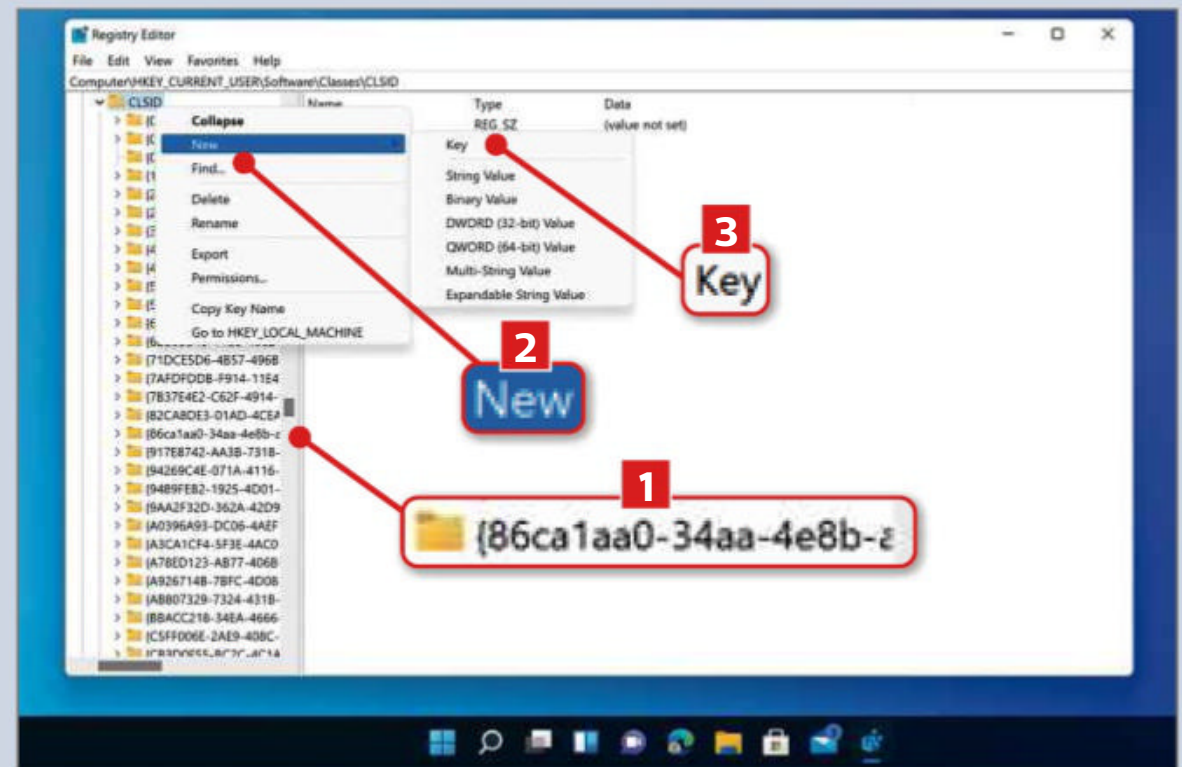


Microsoft has launched a site to make it easier to personalise what appears in your 'News and Interests' **widget** on your desktop. Visit [www.microsoftstart.com](http://www.microsoftstart.com) (this is not related to the Start menu), then sign in with your Microsoft account. Next, click Personalise in the top-right corner and search in the Discover Interests box (1 in our screenshot below) to find a topic, or choose one from the



### WINDOWS 11

#### Restore the Windows 10 right-click menu



Windows 11's new right-click menu is larger, but has fewer options. If you don't like this, you can tweak the registry to bring back the Windows 10 right-click menu.

Click Start, type **Run**, then click Open. In the Run box, type **regedit**, then OK. In the Registry Editor, navigate to the **Computer\HKEY\_CURRENT\_USER\Software\Classes\CLSID** key. Right-click the key, then click New followed by Key. Name the new

sub-key **{86ca1aa0-34aa-4e8b-a509-50c905bae2a2}** (1 in our screenshot – copy and paste this from [www.snipca.com/39799](http://www.snipca.com/39799)). Next, right-click it and click New (2), followed by Key (3). Name this new key **InprocServer32**. Select it, then double-click Default on the right. In the Edit String box, leave the 'Value data' box empty, then press OK. You have to do this for the change to take effect, even though you're not typing anything in the 'Value data' box.

boxes below (2). Your 'News and Interests' feed will update automatically.

### WINDOWS 10

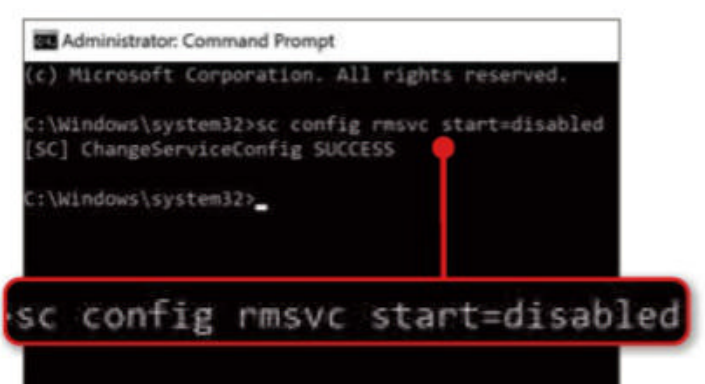
#### Disable airplane mode



When your laptop is in **airplane mode**, its wireless technology (Wi-Fi and Bluetooth) is switched

off, allowing you to use it safely on flights. If you're not likely to fly any time soon, you may want to disable this feature, especially if you keep switching it on accidentally.

You can do this in Command Prompt, so click Start, type **cmd**, then select 'Run as administrator' on the right. Next, type **sc config rmsvc start=disabled** (see screenshot below) and press Enter. Restart your PC for the change to take effect. To enable it again, type **sc config rmsvc start=auto** and press Enter.





POWERPOINT

Add video backgrounds to PowerPoint slides

Videos can always enhance a PowerPoint presentation, but to make it look even better you can use videos as slide backgrounds.

In PowerPoint 2010 and later, click Insert on the ribbon bar, then click Video. Depending on your PowerPoint version, select 'Video from file', 'Video on My PC' or This Device. If you're using a later version, you can also choose to search online for videos, or select from a collection of stock videos. Find the video you want to add, then click Insert.

Once you've added the video to a slide, resize it to fill the full slide area. Next, select the video, then click Playback at the top right. Make sure that the 'Loop until Stopped' box at the top is ticked. Right-click the video, then click 'Send to Back' (see screenshot) to place the video in the background.

MICROSOFT WORD

Add Excel formulas to tables in Word

Word lets you use Excel-style formulas and calculations in your documents. First, click Insert, then Table. In the dropdown menu, select a table of suitable size or choose a '1x1' table to create a single box.

Select the whole table, or one of the table's cells. Next, select the Layout tab, at the far right of the ribbon bar (not the Layout tab in the centre). Click 'Formula' in the Data section, then click Formula again.

In the Formula box that appears, type your formula or calculation (1 in our screenshot below), select a number format (for example, '0%' for percentages 2), then click OK. The formula or result will appear in the table. Select the result, then

click the Formula button again to make any further changes.

LIBREOFFICE

Open LibreOffice in Safe Mode

If LibreOffice isn't working properly or changes to settings aren't being applied, try opening it in **Safe Mode**. This bypasses your current settings profile, letting you reset LibreOffice to its default configuration.

To do this, launch it, then click Help at the top and select 'Restart in Safe Mode'. Confirm this when LibreOffice prompts you, and it will restart in Safe Mode. Now select an option heading on the left, such as 'Reset to factory settings' (1 in our screenshot below) – these are its default settings, before you made any changes. Next, tick one of the boxes below 2, then click 'Apply Changes and Restart' 3.

1

Number of backup copies to keep: 2

2

Percentage of unused space to allow in files

MICROSOFT ONENOTE

Cut storage space in OneNote to speed it up

You can reduce the amount of storage that OneNote uses for your notebooks, which in turn should make the tool faster. This requires you to reduce the amount of empty space in OneNote and limit the number of backups.

Open OneNote, then click File, Options. Click 'Save and Backup', then change the 'Number of backups to keep' value (1 in our screenshot above). Next, reduce the 'Percentage of unused space to allow in files without optimizing' value 2. The lower the value, the more empty space OneNote will remove automatically. Finally, click Optimize All Files Now below that to quickly optimize your files, then press OK.

1

Formula: =20/100

2

Number format: 0%

Safe Mode

1

Reset to factory settings

2

Reset settings and user interface

3

Apply Changes and Restart



# In The Club



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

## Create flyers from your own images

**W**hether you're promoting a club event or looking to bring in more members, you'll occasionally need to create posters and flyers. While you can do this by hand or use Microsoft Word, a design tool like Adobe Spark ([www.adobe.com/express](http://www.adobe.com/express)) will produce more professional results.

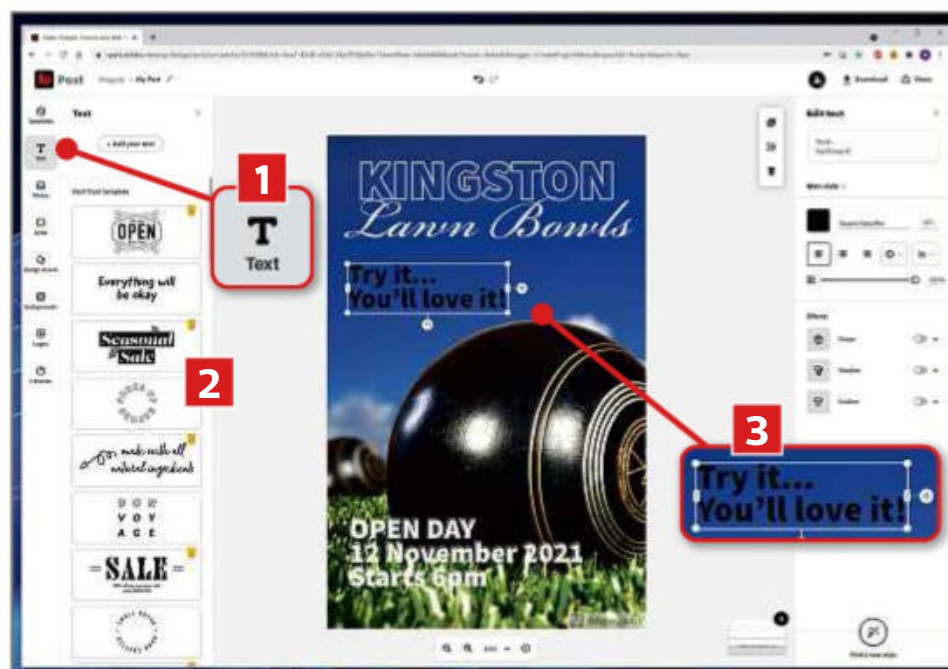
We showed you how to make posters using Spark's free templates back in Issue 583 (read this on our Back Issue CD, [www.snipca.com/38164](http://www.snipca.com/38164)), but here we'll dig deeper to explain how to make your own from scratch. Before we start, have a think about which photo or image you want to use, and make sure it's saved on your computer.

### Add images and text

Start by clicking the blue plus button (as you would when using a template), then selecting Flyer. Click 'Photos' in the bar on the left, then the 'Upload photo' button to find and select a photo from your hard drive. You'll see more options under the upload button that let you import photos from other sources, such as Dropbox, Google Photos and Google Drive. You can also click the 'Find free photos button' and search for copyright-free images on the web.

Select an image and it will be added to your flyer. Click it and an 'Edit image' bar will appear on the left. Click the 'Add to background' button to make the image fill the entire background. The slider lets you

### Change text, adjust its size and apply effects



adjust the opacity (reduce this to fade the image, making text stand out more clearly). You can also apply filters, enhancements (tweaking brightness, contrast, saturation and more) and blurs.

The bar on the left lets you add text, photos, icons, backgrounds, and design elements like frames and textures. To add words, click the Text button (1 in our screenshot below), then 'Add your text'. There are 12 free text designs you can add then customise (2 to access those with yellow bookmarks you'll need to subscribe for £10.10 a month or £101.15 a year, following a two-week free trial). Click the text box to change what it says (3). Below you can alter the text colour and select an alternative font type. You can drag items

around the page and resize them by dragging the handles.

### Make changes using Spark's layers

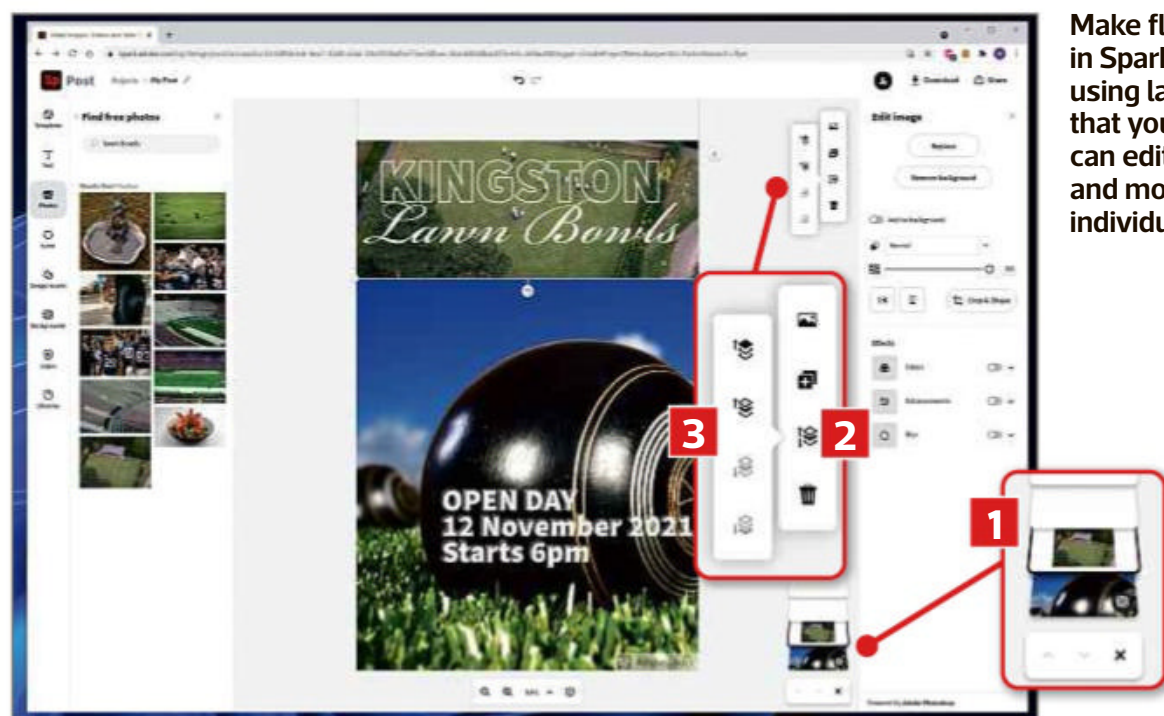
Creations in Spark are made up of layers (similar to those found in image editors) which are separate image items layered on top of each other. This lets you make changes to one layer without affecting another, and anything in the top layers will obscure content in the layers below – which lets you place one image on top of another, for example.

If you need to move a layer, drag it up or down in the layers stack (1 in our screenshot above), or click the 'Layer order' button (2 in the small floating bar to the right of your flyer and choose a position (3).

Having completed your flyer, click the Download button at the top right to save it as a PNG or JPEG, or as a PDF, then print it yourself, or using a print service like [www.instantprint.co.uk](http://www.instantprint.co.uk).

Click the Share button to the right of Download and you can save your creation to Google Drive, and make it available to other club members to edit. This button also lets you save your design as a template, but to actually use it as a template you'll need to subscribe. For this reason, creating a flyer in Spark is best suited to one-off events, rather than regular events that require a template.

Make flyers in Spark using layers that you can edit and move individually





# What's All the Fuss About...



## Wayforward Machine

Welcome to a nightmarish vision of what the web will be like in 2046

### What is it?

A new website that imagines what the internet might look like in 2046. It's not pretty.

### What's wrong with it?

Regulation. Censorship. Paywalls. Governmental interference. Massive pop-ups blocking you from visiting your favourite sites.

### Doesn't sound good. Is that what's going to happen?

Quite possibly – according to the Internet Archive anyway. You may know its Wayback Machine (<https://archive.org/web>), which captures old web pages for posterity (619 billion and counting). To celebrate its 25th anniversary the Internet Archive travelled *forward* 25 years to imagine a time when the internet has suffered so much regulation that it's become unusable. It's less a forecast, more a warning, akin to George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

### How can I see this dystopian future?

Visit <https://wayforward.archive.org> and type the URL of a popular site, such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) or [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk). You'll see various messages appear blocking the content, such as in our main image: 'This business no longer exists'. It says the site "was either no longer able to comply with, or found to be in breach of, the new regulations brought in by the 2029 monopolies commission".



### So the Internet Archive thinks there's too much regulation of the web?

Yes, and that any further interference would crush innovation and freedom, forcing sites to close. In particular, it's worried that the US will repeal Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which generally absolves sites from being responsible for content that people post. It classifies them as platforms *hosting* content, not publishers producing it. Critics of Section 230 say this gives sites an unfair advantage over newspapers and broadcasters, which are treated as publishers, and must adhere to libel laws, among others.

### Hang on – don't sites act as publishers already by censoring opinions?

Many will say yes. They teamed up to ban Donald Trump in his final days as President. Last year, Facebook removed content that suggested Covid-19 might have leaked from a lab in Wuhan, China (only lifting the ban in May this year). Recently, YouTube removed a video in which David Davis MP slammed vaccine passports (angering Big Brother Watch in the process: [www.snipca.com/39811](http://www.snipca.com/39811)), though has since reinstated it. Some legal experts say that sites can't have it both ways: acting like platforms to avoid regulation, but publishers in order to

have political and cultural influence.

### Don't we need *more* regulation to tackle abuse online?

That's a strong argument, given extra weight following the murder of Southend West MP David Amess. Home Secretary Priti Patel is considering removing the right of people to remain anonymous when posting comments on social media. But that brings us to another concern highlighted by Wayforward Machine: the creeping erosion of privacy. One of the site's pop-ups asks you for your **biometric** details (such as fingerprint and facial recognition). Another warning – pictured left – imagines you having to pay to enter the 'Content Truth Gateway' (very Orwellian), which provides access to the news. If you don't pay, you're limited to a free version that "contains non-factual information" (propaganda and lies, in other words).

### Why does the Internet Archive care?

Because its mission is to provide "universal access to all knowledge", and sees regulation as a threat to this. It wants the Wayforward Machine to be a "wake-up call" that motivates people to campaign for the free distribution of information, beyond the reach of governments. We'll report back in 25 years to see if it was successful, assuming we haven't been silenced by then.



Here's your choice in 2046: pay for the news, or get "non-factual information" for free



# WINDOWS

# 11

## THE ULTIMATE REVIEW

It's here, and it's free, but is it any good? **Nik Rawlinson** tests the new operating system and delivers his verdict – helping you to make your own decision

**W**indows 11 has arrived, in all its round-cornered glory. And, spoiler alert, we quite like it – though maybe not as much as Microsoft would like. Over the next few pages, we'll explain why it's made such a good impression, while guiding you

through each of its most significant changes.

You may be surprised that Windows 11 exists at all. When Microsoft's Jerry Nixon discussed its predecessor in 2015, his remark that "Windows 10 is the last version of Windows" (skip to the 15-

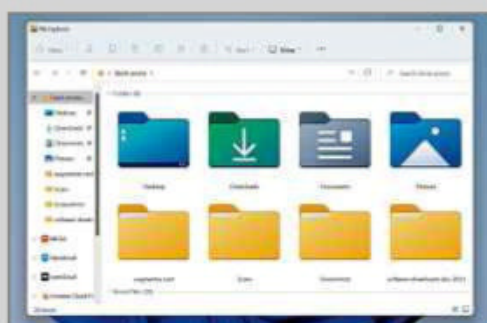
minute mark of this video [www.snipca.com/39807](http://www.snipca.com/39807)) caused quite a stir. At the time, Microsoft was redefining Windows, changing it from a product to a service, after which it would evolve through updates only.

So, the fact we now have Windows 11 hints at the importance of this release, and just how many components have been updated in one go. Behind the beautiful interface, you'll find beefed-up tools for organising your active windows, a panel of handy **widgets**, tablet-like **gestures**, and a brand new chat app for video calling and group messages.

Microsoft has done well to deliver something that is new while also being familiar, innovative while simultaneously logical – and ultimately deserving a version number of its own.

### Icons are simpler and less fussy

We'd defy you to find a single icon in Windows 11 that hasn't been made less fussy or otherwise simplified – and most are logical improvements on what they replace. Slightly more ambitious are the new icons for Library folders (Downloads, Documents, Pictures and so on, pictured), though even these apply the simpler, more confident aesthetic that is prevalent throughout Windows 11.





## WINDOWS 11's NEW DESIGN

However much smart code might lurk below the surface, the most obvious change in any operating system is the way it looks and feels. Its overall design affects every program you run, and often how you interact with it. There's a lot riding on Windows 11's new 'material' design, then, which may look radical but, when you dig deeper, is more of a smartening up and slimming down – bringing order to the slightly more cluttered areas of earlier versions of Windows.

Microsoft has used two digital 'materials' in the new design, called acrylic and mica. Acrylic, which is semi-transparent, is used for transient objects, like clickable menus that pop out from buttons, then disappear when they've done their job. Mica (in the real world this is a natural mineral that was superseded by the artificial Formica – popular in kitchen worktops – in the construction of electrical components) is opaque, but subtly shaded to match your desktop background. This is used for permanent working surfaces, like toolbar backgrounds. Mica is what Microsoft calls 'mode aware', which means it comes in both light and dark versions, and swaps between them as you switch between light and dark modes.

We've illustrated the difference between acrylic and mica in the screenshot top right. On top are Windows 11's widgets, which appear in acrylic (1). Through the semi-transparent background you can see the desktop, and File Explorer – which shows the solid mica style (2).

Then there's 'smoke'. This isn't a new material as such, but a tool used to dim underlying elements when Windows needs to grab your attention. It's always dark grey, whether you're using light or dark mode, and appears when important notifications pop up on screen, like warnings that you're about to make a significant change to your system.

Microsoft has more information on the design philosophy of acrylic, mica and smoke at [www.snipca.com/39768](http://www.snipca.com/39768).

### Interacting with Windows 11

In practice, you won't think about any of this as you're using Windows 11 (which is a sign of how well designed the system is). Smoke isn't a radical concept, and neither are transparent interface elements. The level of transparency has been carefully balanced, and the result

feels less glassy than Windows Vista, less showy than Windows XP, and less fiddly than Windows 7. It's also a slight improvement on Windows 10 ('slight' because Windows 10's

design didn't need much improving).

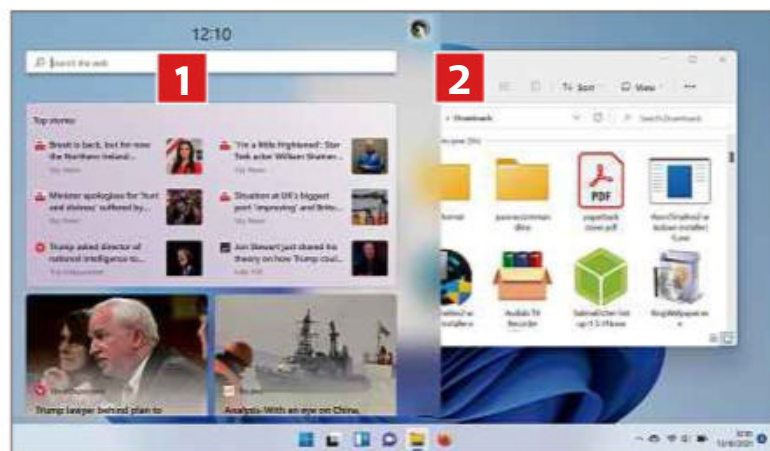
Transparent areas are light and muted, as though they've been frosted, so it's never difficult to spot their contents within their surroundings, and the elements they're overlying don't show through so much that they're hard to read.

The windows themselves have rounded corners, unless they're full screen, with subtle drop shadows to pull them up from the desktop and programs sitting behind. It's an attractive arrangement, but take a screenshot of the active window using the Snipping Tool and you'll simultaneously capture a few pixels of the background at each corner. You'll need to trim this in an image editor if you want your screenshots to look their best.

Some on-screen elements take up a lot of space on smaller displays. We're writing this review on a laptop with a 1920x1080 resolution which, while not **ultra HD**, is still decent. However, when setting the display to Windows' recommended zoom level (150 per cent), our taskbar and browser tabs feel like they're taking more than their fair share of pixels. It's fixable (we reduced the overall zoom and bumped up the text size to compensate), but options to tailor this would be welcome – as would an easy way to set your preferred direction of movement when using the mouse wheel. Doing this for the trackpad is easy: you just select from a dropdown menu. Doing the same for the mouse requires editing the registry.

### Revamped taskbar and centred Start menu

One of the first things you'll spot is the revamped taskbar. In moving the Start menu and icons to the centre (see screenshot above right), Microsoft is breaking with 25 years of tradition. It looks good, though, and makes sense in the age of tablets and touchscreen



Windows 11 uses semi-transparent acrylic 'material', and a more solid mica style



Windows 11's centred Start menu breaks 25 years of tradition, but it's a sensible move

laptops, where centred elements are less of a finger stretch from working areas. In our screenshot, you can see the following icons, left to right, on the taskbar: Start menu, Task View, Widgets, Chat, File Explorer, Firefox, and Word (1).

It works just as well on a traditional PC or laptop, too. Here it opens a revamped menu that does away with live tiles and demotes alphabetised programs in favour of pinned software – reminiscent of the icon-based menus on smartphones – and a section for recommended files and locations. These persist, even if you move the menu back to the left.

Pinned software (2) is an extension of the icons you can pin to the taskbar, giving you fast access to your most-used programs. It's supplemented by an 'All apps' button (3) that opens the full list of installed software, effectively delivering a three-tier system for organising software into essential (taskbar icons), important (pinned programs) and everything else ('All apps'). This should help you find what you need more quickly.

It's tempting to put too much in the pinned section (which you can do by right-clicking an icon and picking 'Pin to Start'), so a little discipline is required to get the most out of it. It's something you'll quickly get used to. Now that we have, we wouldn't go back.



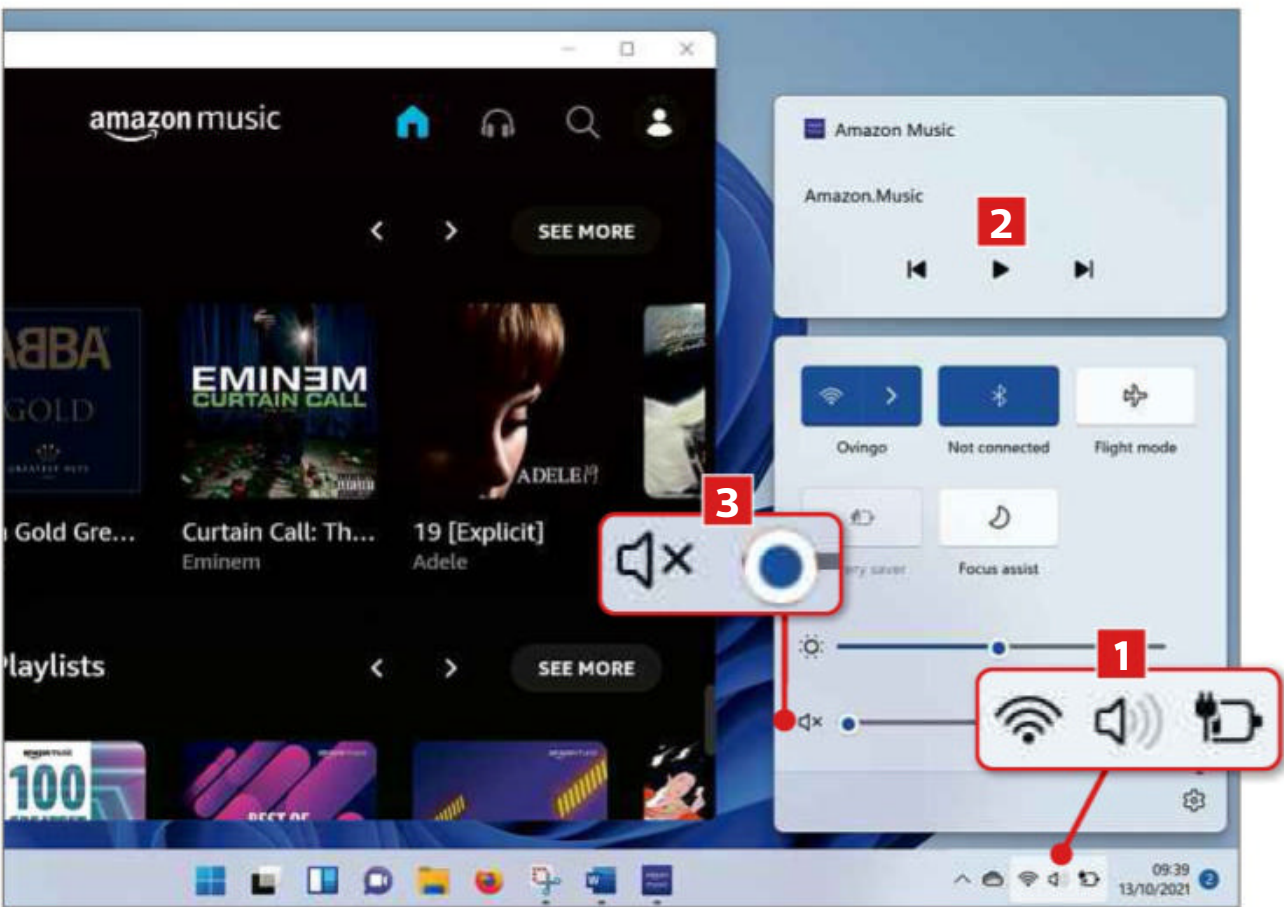
The ‘Recommended’ section, below your pinned programs, isn’t so flexible, as it self-configures based on the files and folders you’ve recently used. You can hide items, and a ‘More’ button opens a longer list, but there’s no way to permanently fix a particular file within the section, as you can with pinned programs. This is a missed opportunity, because being able to pin a file that’s buried several folders deep and get to it with a single click would be the perfect way to break the habit of saving on the desktop.

**File Explorer’s smaller right-click menus**

Tough choices must be made when designing something as extensive as an operating system, and although we think Microsoft has largely got it right, we’re less impressed by the File Explorer’s slimmed-down context (right-click) menus. Granted, these could get unwieldy in Windows 10 and earlier editions, because installed programs added their own options. But hiding non-core features behind a ‘Show more options’ link (1 in screenshot below) risks hiding options users click most often.

In Windows 10, our right-click menu gave us direct access to a range of options for sharing files and saving online (to the ‘cloud’). They’re still there – behind the additional link – but further away (however, turn to page 46 for a trick to revert to the Windows 10 menu).

Likewise, the File Explorer ribbon has disappeared, replaced by a simplified



Click the combined Wi-Fi, audio and battery icon to see buttons such as audio playback controls

toolbar (2 in screenshot below). This is more attractive than its predecessor, so it scores design points, but some tools work best when function trumps form, as should be the case here. At least, we think it should be possible to tweak either of these elements to suit your own requirements without having to edit the registry.

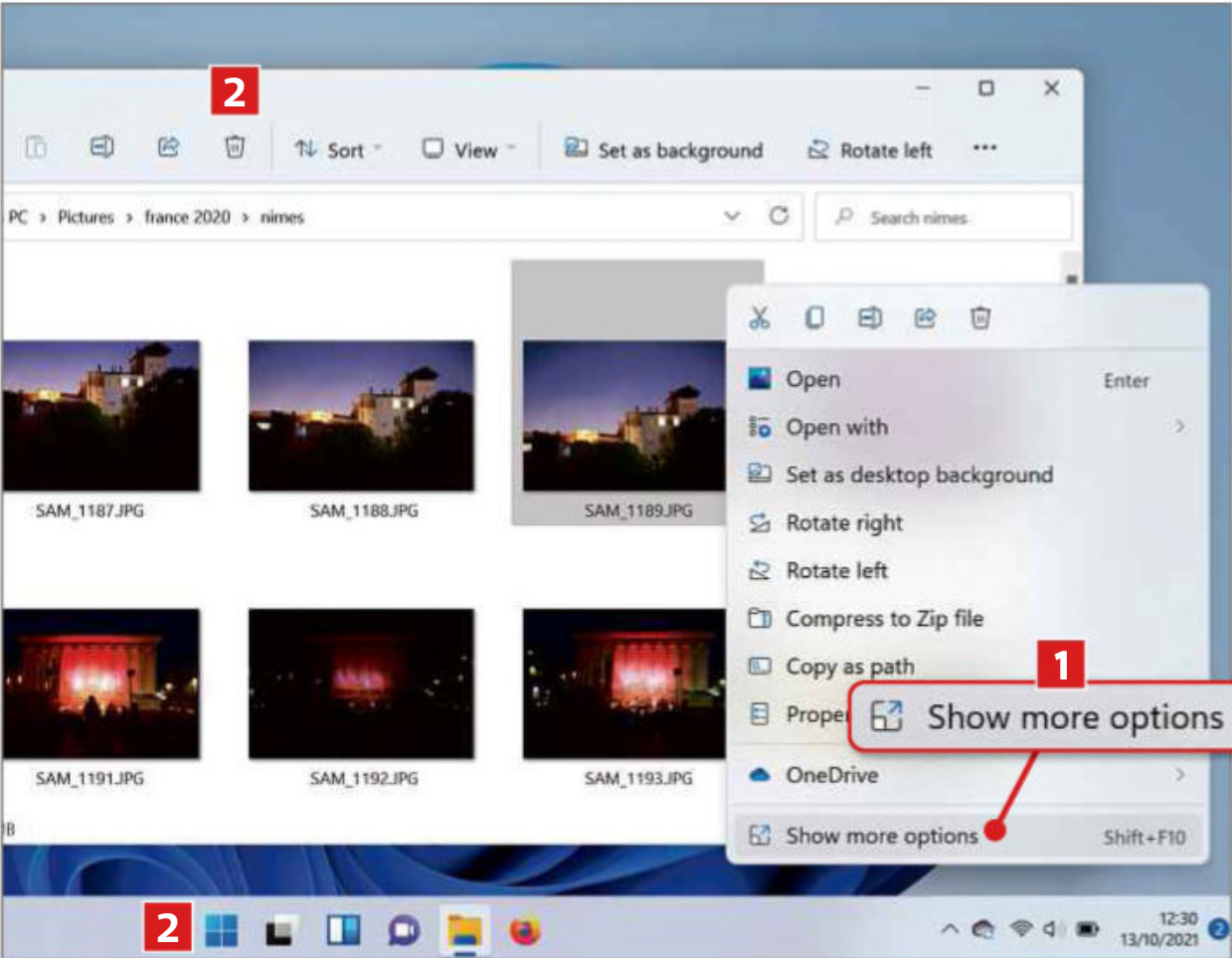
**Clearer separation between Action Centre and notifications**

There’s a clearer separation between Action Centre and notifications in

Windows 11. Clicking the clock opens your notifications, without showing the buttons for Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and so on that accompany them in Windows 10.

These buttons are in the refreshed Action Centre, which you access by clicking the combined Wi-Fi, audio and battery icons (1 in screenshot above). They continue to perform two functions: displaying their status and giving you access to settings when clicked. There’s also a quick link to the full Settings tool.

If you’re playing audio, Action Centre will show controls (play, pause, back and forward) in a floating panel (2 in screenshot above), which makes a lot of sense on two fronts: as well as putting them in the same place as the volume slider 3, it saves you hunting through buried windows until you find the one that contains the controls for a service or program, like Spotify or Audible.



‘Show more options’ hides a few useful features, while File Explorer’s ribbon has been removed

### Our verdict

Overall, Windows 11’s new look is a triumph. It’s different yet familiar, easy to get to grips with and – even allowing for the extra clicks required to perform some functions in File Explorer – it’s well thought out. Using Windows 11 is a pleasant experience, and it’s an attractive environment in which to spend extended periods.

★★★★★



## WINDOWS 11's NEW TOOLS

What is a tool, a program, or a design element? The distinctions are subtle, and not everyone will agree where they fall but, if we consider 'tools' to be components that help you get things done on your computer, all the below certainly qualify.

### Widgets are better than Live Tiles

Widgets are a welcome replacement for Windows 10's Live Tiles – those squares showing constantly updating information that many users found annoying. There's a Widgets icon to the right of the Task View button (1 in our screenshot right) that opens a panel on the left (you can hide this icon via Settings if you're not going to use it). This is genuinely useful, giving at-a-glance news headlines (2), weather forecasts (3), traffic updates (4), your calendar and more.

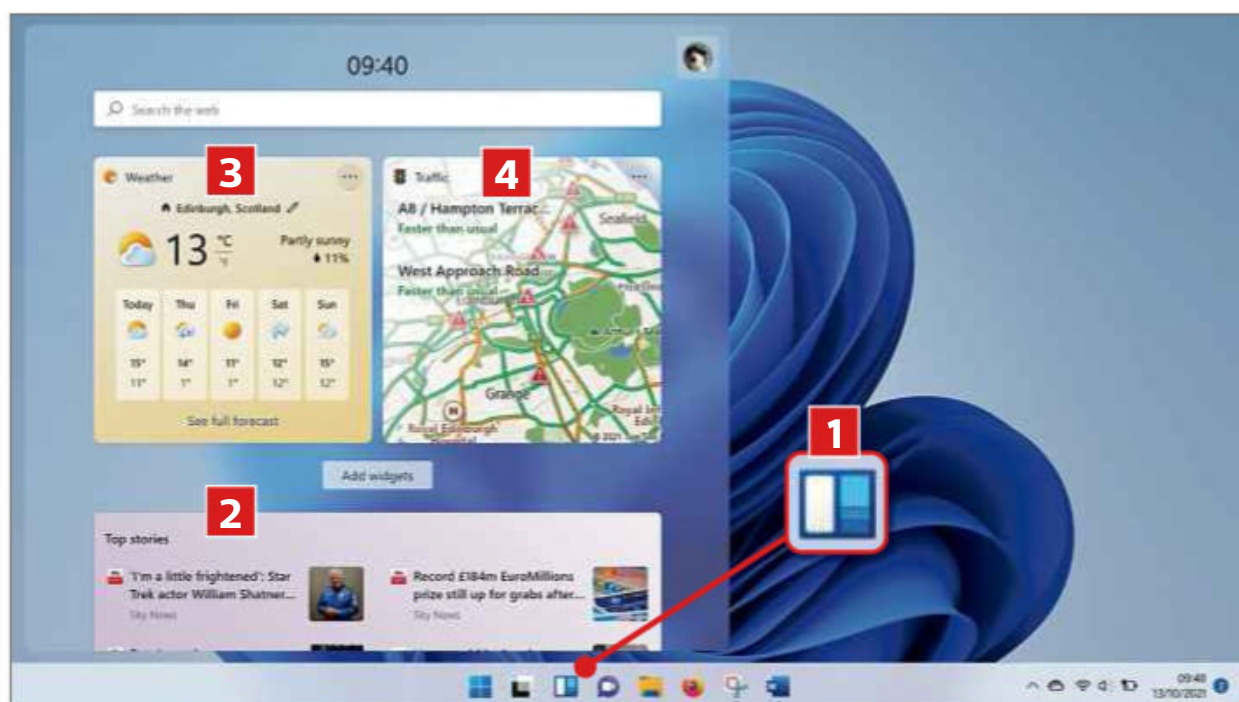
You can add and remove most components, aside from news – which is the one element we'd really like to get rid of, because it's easy to find yourself clicking and scrolling for minutes at a time! Why can't you get rid of news? We suspect because Microsoft wants to promote its Edge browser, which is the default in Windows 11. Every time you click a story, it opens in Edge, *even if* you've changed your default browser to another one.

Also, every time you use the Widget panel's Search bar, it opens the result in Edge, using Bing. It does this even if you've changed Edge's default search engine to Google and deleted Bing from the list of installed engines.

And if you click the weather widget for the full forecast it opens in... you've guessed it: Edge.

There's nothing necessarily wrong with this. Edge is a fine browser, and we use it alongside Firefox, Chrome, Brave and others, but if you've set a preference, Microsoft really should respect it across your whole setup. And changing the default browser should be a one-click operation, as it was in Windows 10.

Here, you need to individually specify your browser preference for each of the content types a browser can handle, including .htm, .html, .shtml, .svg, .xht, .xhtml, and so on. You'd be forgiven for thinking it wasn't worth the bother (which no doubt is what Microsoft wants you to think).



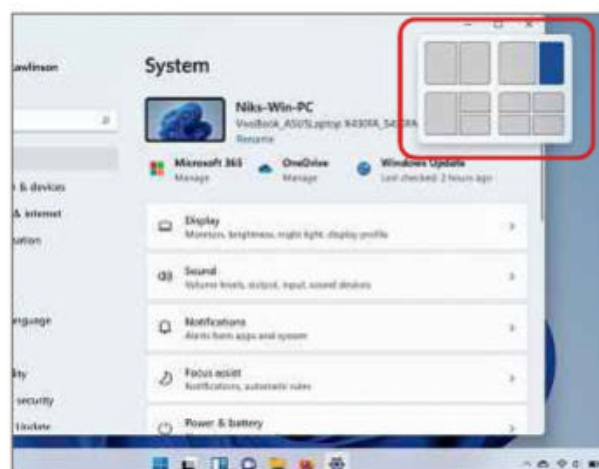
Click the Widgets button to see news headlines, weather forecasts, traffic updates and more

### More flexible Snap layouts

The excellent Snap Windows feature, introduced as Aero Snap in Windows 7, is even better in Windows 11. You can still drag programs to the screen edge, or press the Windows key and an arrow key, to have them snap into place and take up half of the screen – or use a Snap menu to quickly arrange multiple windows into more complex layouts.

Hover over a program window's maximise button, and the new Snap flyout panel should appear, showing a range of suggested arrangements – see screenshot below. (We say 'should' because while it worked perfectly with Edge, Chrome, Word and a host of other programs, it refused to appear when using Firefox.)

Click a box in your preferred arrangement, and the window will immediately conform to that shape, size and location. You can also access the Snap flyout by pressing Windows key+Z (which *did* work in Firefox), then use the cursor keys to move between the various zones to place your current window.



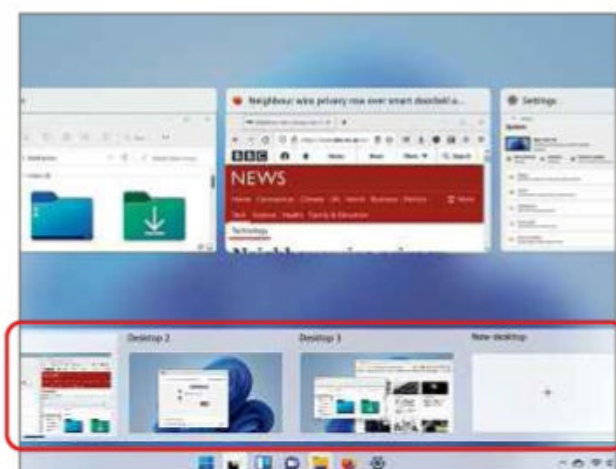
Hover over a program's maximise button and the new Snap panel should appear

This is great if you regularly work with several programs at the same time, particularly if you're combining information from two windows into a third and working on a large screen. It's even more powerful when combined with the revamped **virtual desktops** feature, which lets you set up different environments and move between them at will. Talking of which...

### Improved virtual desktops

Windows key+Ctrl+D creates and switches to a new desktop, which behaves much like a separate PC. You could keep different browsers open on each one, or the same open on several but displaying different pages. You might set up a desktop for work and another for play, and give each different wallpaper to help tell them apart.

While Alt+tab cycles through the open programs on your current desktop, Windows key+tab reveals a row of desktops at the bottom of your screen (see screenshot below), allowing you to click and switch between them (you can



Press Windows key+tab to see a row of desktops at the bottom of your screen

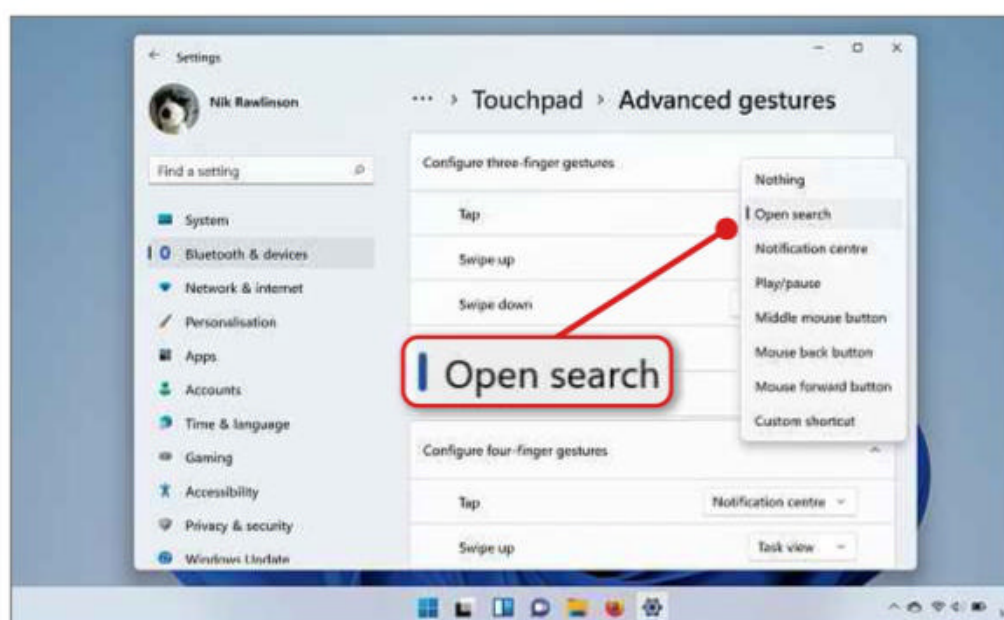


also add the Task View icon to the taskbar, then hover above it to pop up thumbnails of your live desktops).

Alternatively – and this is where things get clever – you can set a single window to appear on all desktops. That way you can switch between two working environments while still keeping an eye on video (such as a news bulletin or sport) in another box that will follow you wherever you go on screen.

### Wider range of trackpad gestures

Windows 11 supports a wider range of trackpad gestures, which should be welcome news to anyone who switches between a laptop and tablet. You can specify what various three- and four-finger gestures do, such that tapping with three fingers could open search (see screenshot above right), and doing the same with four could pause your music. You could set Task View to appear with a three-fingered slide to the top, and your browser to go back one page if you did the same with four. You don't have entirely free range when switching between default functions, though, as swipe and tap gestures aren't



You can specify what various three- and four-finger gestures do, such as open Windows search

interchangeable. There's no option for swiping down to pause your music, however many fingers you use, and neither three- nor four-fingered tapping can be set to create a desktop (but three- or four-fingered *swiping* can).

There is a workaround: the custom shortcut option. Select this and click record, then press whichever keyboard combination you want the associated gesture to trigger. It works well, but what we really want to be able to do is record a string of separate actions, like opening Excel, snapping it to the left, and opening

a specific folder of spreadsheets to the right, to be repeated when we perform our preferred gesture. This isn't without precedent, as watching, learning and mimicking is a common feature in software that lets you set **macros**.

### Delete files from your phone, but where are Android apps?

Your Phone, which acts as a bridge between Windows and Android phones, can now delete files from your device, share links to your mobile, and copy and paste between phone and computer. So, if

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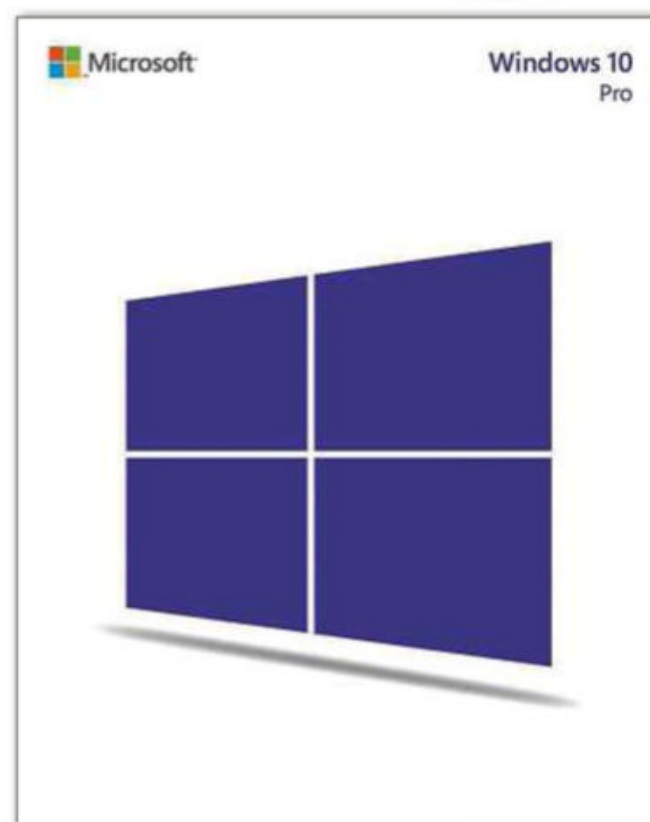


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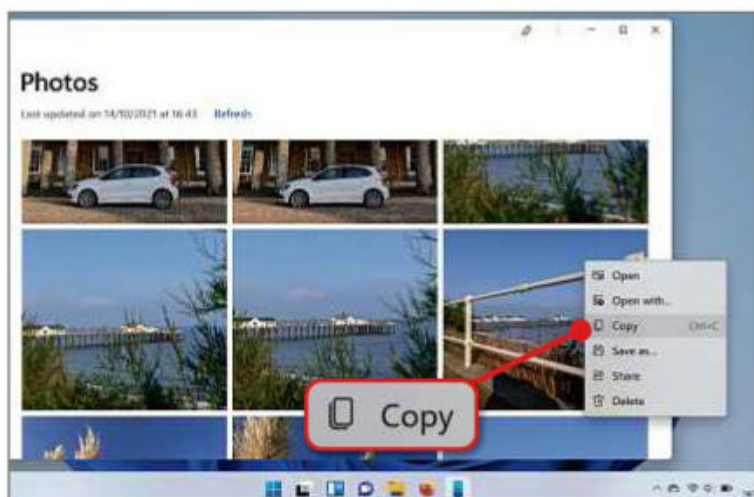
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Right-click a photo you've taken with your phone, then copy it and paste it in a document

you take a photo on your phone, you can right-click and copy it in Your Phone (see screenshot above), then switch to your document and paste it.

One of the most hyped features of Windows 11 – running Android apps without having to connect your phone – wasn't ready at launch, and isn't expected until next year. We'll reserve judgement until then, but our concern at this point is that you'll be able to install apps only from the Amazon Appstore, not the Google Play Store. There are two problems with this. One is that Amazon has far fewer apps than Google. And the

second is having to pay to install an app from the Amazon Appstore that you've already bought from the Google Play Store. Will Microsoft find a way of making sure you don't have to pay twice? Also, if you install an app from Amazon that you've already installed from Google, will it have access to the files and data that you currently rely on in the Google app? We'll hopefully be able to answer these questions some time in 2022.

## More apps from the Microsoft Store

This brings us neatly to the Microsoft Store. Again, it might look like a simple redesign from Windows 10, but there are some important changes under the bonnet. The first is a mechanism for software developers to opt out of Microsoft's payment system and, in the process, avoid paying a fee every time their tool is downloaded. The second is closely related: developers can now sell anything that Windows can run, including 32bit applications and so-called

progressive web apps (PWAs), which effectively run in a browser, even though they look like downloaded programs (read more about these on page 42). The Facebook and Twitter software available through the store are two examples of PWAs.

While these sound like benefits only developers would get excited about, they're good news for users too because they should increase the range of apps available through the store.

Long term, it's clear that Microsoft hopes the Store will evolve into a single, convenient location for purchases and – more importantly – updates.

## Our verdict

An intelligent selection of tools adds to the overall value of Windows 11. Snap flyouts and improved virtual desktops are the star turns. Widgets won't be to everyone's taste, but are better than Live Tiles. We'd like Widget links to open in our default browser, but there's nothing here that should put you off upgrading from Windows 10.

★★★★★

## SECURITY, ACCESSIBILITY & SUPPLEMENTARY TOOLS

### Security: TPM 2.0 blocks tampering

To keep you safe, Windows 11 places strict restrictions on which resources programs can access, and it won't install on a computer without an enabled TPM 2.0 (Trusted Platform Module) chip on the motherboard (though there's an official workaround – see page 38). This is effectively a computer within your computer that can't be tampered with by an outsider. TPM spends its time checking that no

unauthorised changes have been made to your hardware or software. There are arguments for and against this – see page 57.

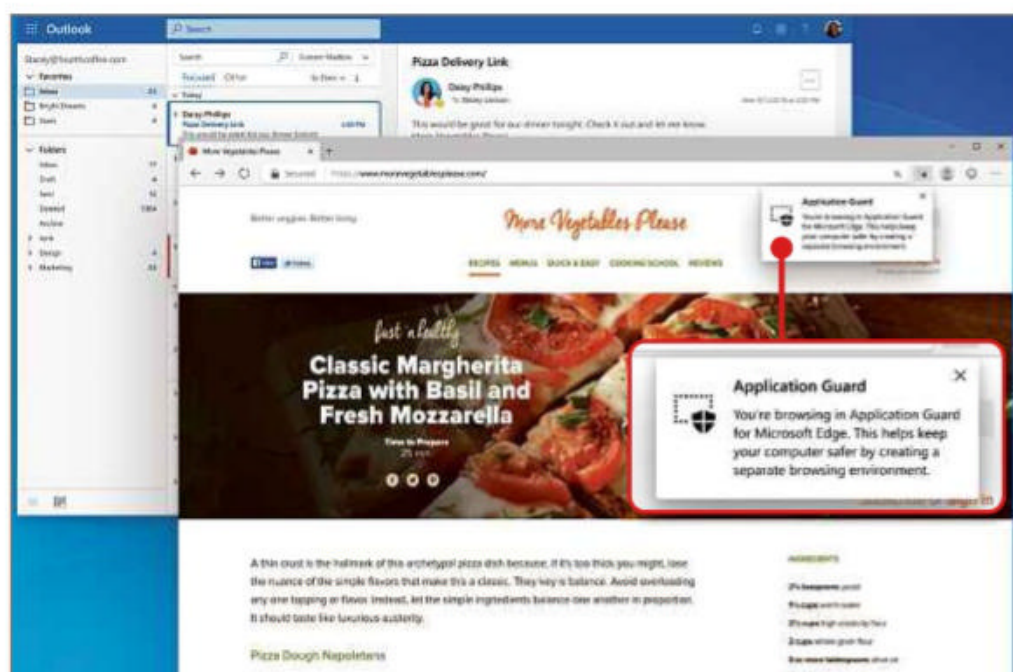
Behind the scenes, Windows 11 splits some essential functions and runs them in isolation. Doing so separates vital code from data used by programs, preventing them from interfering with your computer. It has also retained Application Guard from Windows 10 (see screenshot below). This isolates suspicious content in

Edge (dubious websites) and in Office (dodgy documents) to minimise the risk of being hacked.

Finally, Microsoft is promising only one major update to Windows 11 every year – half the number of Feature updates Windows 10 has had every year since launching in 2015.

As some of you know to your cost, many of these Feature updates have caused problems with Windows 10, so we're relieved Microsoft has decided to reduce their number. It doesn't make you less safe though because Microsoft will continue to release security updates every month.

Microsoft's Application Guard creates a safe browsing environment in Edge



## Our verdict

TPM 2.0 adds a vital layer of defence, though it does exclude many from upgrading. Many of Windows 11's other security features carry over from Windows 10. This is logical: every supported operating system – not just the latest – should be safe to use throughout its life.

★★★★★



**Accessibility: High-contrast themes and voice dictation**

Microsoft consulted users with accessibility requirements before starting work on Windows 11 in order to meet their needs. The result is four new high-contrast themes – Aquatic, Desert, Dusk and ‘Night sky’ (left to right in our screenshot right). If none quite hits the mark, you can tweak the settings to suit your tastes.

Windows 11 has more informative sounds too, which Microsoft developed to be less “aggressive”. It found that many hard-of-hearing users were muting their speakers because they found Windows 10’s default sounds off-putting and unhelpful.

Microsoft claims that voice dictation has improved, but this is difficult to verify. This is because voice recognition – on any platform, from smart speaker to automated phone line – varies depending on accent and background noise. It understands punctuation commands like ‘comma’, ‘full stop’ and ‘new paragraph’, and we were able to get some decent results using our laptop’s built-in mic. As our box right shows, the only error it made was not capitalising ‘windows’ (which is understandable, if a touch ironic). It was more accurate than the dictation tools in Google and Word.

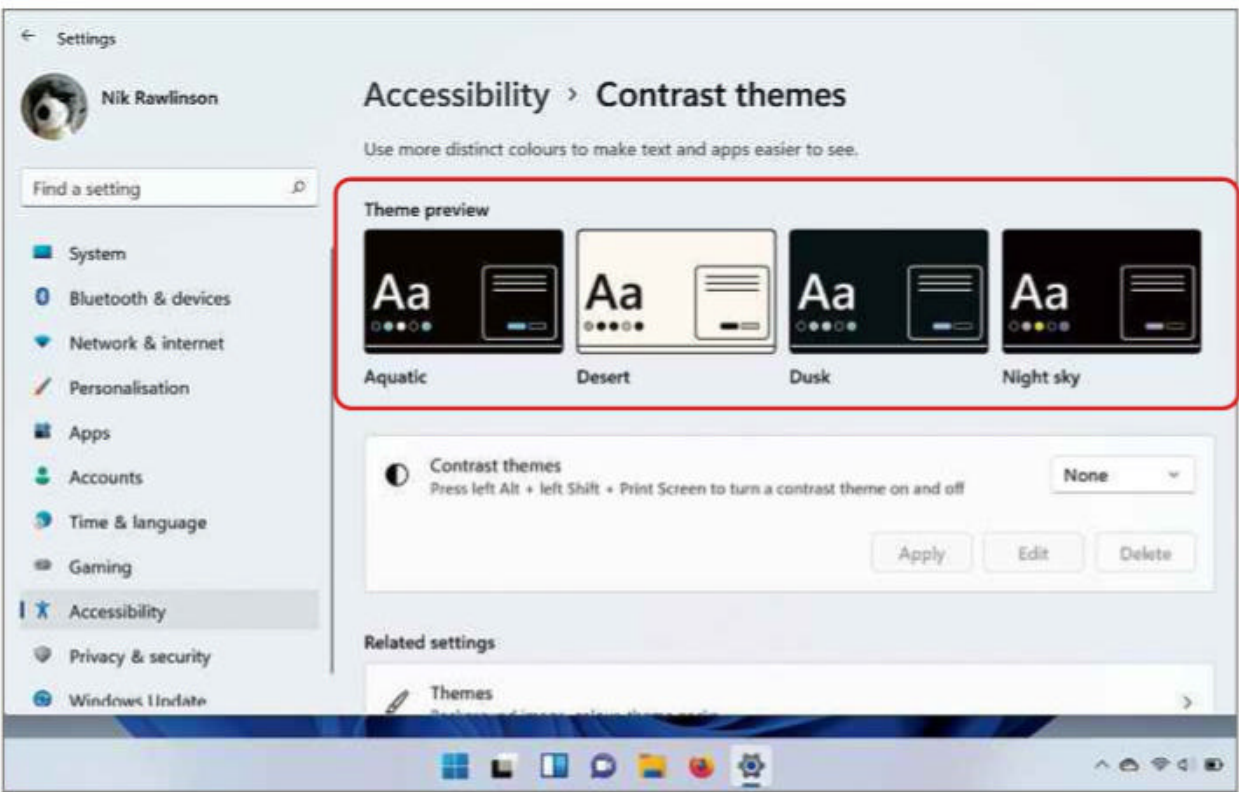
**Our verdict**

The high-contrast themes show that Microsoft has given accessibility the attention it deserves, and although everyone’s experience of voice typing will differ, we achieved good results.

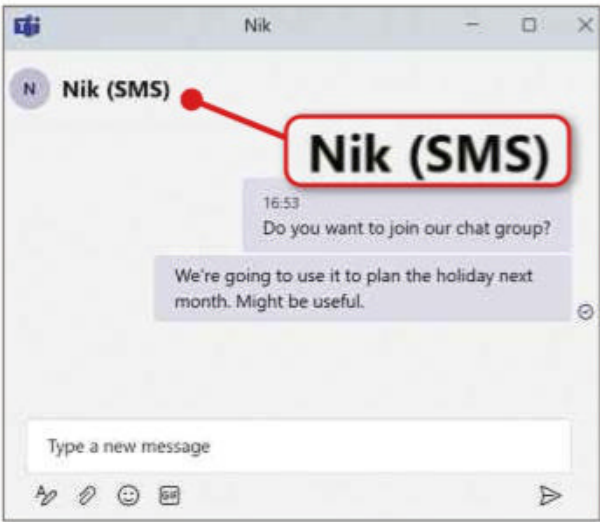
★★★★★

**Supplementary tools: Chat and Clock**  
Skype isn’t included in a **clean install** of Windows 11, but you’ll keep it if you upgrade from Windows 10. In its place is a new Chat app, which uses a Microsoft account and the same technology as Microsoft Teams for audio and video calls, as well as written messages with individuals or groups.

**Our overall verdict**  
A few weeks after upgrading to Windows 11, we wouldn’t want to go back. At first glance, it may not look like it does much more than Windows 10, but the enhancements are significant and it feels



Choose one of Windows 11 four new high-contrast themes to make it easier to see what you’re doing in the operating system



Send text messages from your phone to Windows 11’s Chat app

A group can include users who don’t use Chat – instead they can participate with text messages sent from phones (see screenshot above). However, once they’ve received 1,000 messages they’ll have to duck out or sign up for Teams to continue.

The Clock app has a new feature called Focus Sessions, which breaks down working sessions into shorter chunks, interspersed by breaks. Start by telling it how much time you have, and it’ll manage the breaks itself, based on your preference. You can choose between 15, 30, 45 and 60-minute work sessions, and five, 10 or 15-minute breaks.

like a workspace for 2021 and beyond. Most improvements are incremental, but that’s what we want from an operating system that’s a few weeks shy of its 36th birthday. Granted, it has some hefty system

**How good is Windows’ voice dictation?**

**What we spoke**  
“The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. This is a test of voice typing in Windows 11. None of these paragraphs has been corrected since being typed.”

**What Windows 11’s dictation tool wrote**  
The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog. This is a test of voice typing in windows 11. None of these paragraphs has been corrected since being typed.

**Our verdict**

Chat is a logical progression, but we hope it doesn’t signal the beginning of the end for Skype. Focus Sessions is a useful organisational tool, but not a deal-breaker.

★★★★★

requirements and won’t run on every computer, but if yours is compatible we’d urge you to consider upgrading today.

★★★★★



# IS MICROSOFT RIGHT TO IMPOSE HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS?

The most controversial aspect of Windows 11 is its requirement that – for security reasons – computers must have TPM 2.0 (Trusted Platform Module)

enabled on their motherboard.

Many readers are angry that it has left their computers permanently stuck on Windows 11, while others praise

Microsoft for prioritising security.

Here, two *Computeractive* writers on either side of the argument give their opinion.

## YES

Readers of a certain age will remember why debit cards have raised digits. They're not for the visually impaired, but because 'swiping' a card meant clipping it into a machine and sliding a roller across it to make a physical impression. Those machines are long gone, and we're all more secure as a result. The same is true of leaded fuel, which is now sold only by specialist outlets. Imagine how much dirtier our towns would be if we hadn't moved on simply because so many vehicles relied on it.



“It has all but guaranteed that newly built computers will be more secure”

Which brings me to Windows 11 running only on computers with TPM 2.0 processors, which ensure neither the PC nor its software has been tampered with. They've been a common feature in computers made in the past five years, even if the chip hasn't always been enabled.

Microsoft's decision has all but guaranteed that newly built computers will be more secure, benefitting not only their owners, but everyone else too. Think of all those online stores using computers to process your orders this Christmas, the couriers handling your details, and websites dropping cookies in your browser. Wouldn't you be happier knowing they were secured by the latest hardware and an operating system built to take advantage of it?

Time moves on, and cutting-edge technology eventually goes out of date. This might end up costing us money in the short term, but it's also the reason we're no longer navigating the web in text-based browsers, using dot-matrix printers, and getting online using dial-up.

There are many examples of progress through obsolescence. This is just the latest.

Nik Rawlinson

## NO

I get that Microsoft wants Windows to be a secure platform, and that requiring hardware like TPM 2.0 will help to achieve this. And I understand that it wants Windows 11 to be as stable as possible. And, yes, I admit that the move away from ancient 32bit architecture is long overdue.

But what I don't appreciate is Microsoft's poor pre-launch communication around Windows 11's requirements. Sending mixed messages about eligibility while spouting in-house jargon at us just isn't helpful.



“None of the two family PCs I bought last year work in Windows 11”

Worse is the way Microsoft's decision effectively renders great swathes of computers obsolete – even relatively recent machines. To give you a personal example, I bought two PCs for my family last year and neither of them meet Microsoft's requirements. It feels like a slap in the face.

Yes, Microsoft has provided an official workaround (see page 38) for installing Windows on computers that don't make the grade. But this feels like little more than a tacit admission that its requirements were mostly arbitrary in the first place.

I'm not naive enough to overlook the fact that Microsoft needs to make money. But even from a corporate point of view, the company may have shot itself in the foot. After all, it worked so hard to unify its user base under a single platform with Windows 10. But now, with so many people unable to upgrade, Microsoft will find itself having to juggle multiple versions of Windows again.

I'll be among the millions who won't be upgrading. Perhaps if Windows 11 was anything more than Windows 10 with rounded corners, I might be more keen on it.

Jonathan Parkyn

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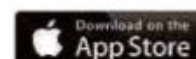
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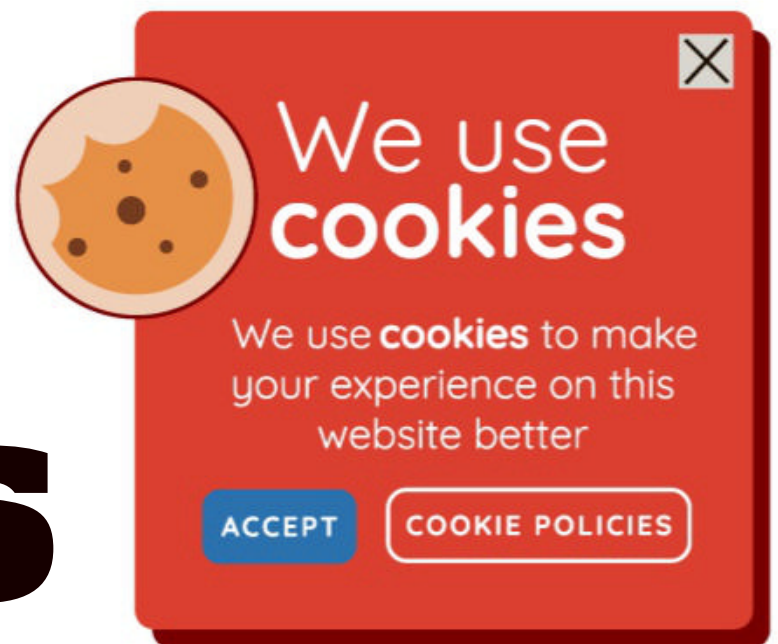
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# Block all cookie pop-ups



Are you tired of being asked to accept cookies on every website you visit? **Robert Irvine** reveals how to skip these annoying GDPR pop-ups without compromising your privacy

**C**ookie-consent pop-ups, which ask you to allow a website to install cookies on your computer, phone or tablet are the bane of our online lives. Introduced in 2011 as part of the European Union's ePrivacy Directive, these privacy notices were originally required only on websites that operated in the EU. But since GDPR rules came into effect three years ago, they appear on *all* sites that web users in the EU and UK access. As we reported in Issue 614 (page 7), the Government plans to replace "pointless" parts of GDPR with "light touch" rules, which should hopefully mean fewer cookie pop-ups.

Until then, any website you visit for the first time will nag you to click Accept to get past its cookie warning – or choose Reject or Manage, which confronts you with a list of confusing options. Here we explain how to bypass this nuisance.

## Block cookie pop-ups on your computer

The easiest way to skip annoying GDPR pop-ups on websites is to install a browser extension called I Don't Care About Cookies ([www.snipca.com/39716](http://www.snipca.com/39716)). Available for Chrome (and other Chromium browsers such as Brave and Vivaldi), Edge, Firefox, Opera and Pale Moon, this add-on hides cookie warnings on almost every site you visit – although some devious ones may slip through. It works automatically, with no settings to configure other than a 'whitelist' for sites

you want to allow to show cookie pop-ups, in case you have trouble accessing them otherwise.

To remove privacy pop-ups, I Don't Care About Cookies either accepts all cookies or only those the site needs to work properly, "depending on what's easier". However, it doesn't delete cookies – we'll explain how to do that later.

An alternative option is to block cookie pop-ups by enabling specific filter lists in your ad blocker. We explained how to do this using uBlock Origin ([www.snipca.com/38558](http://www.snipca.com/38558)) in our Workshop in Issue 609 (page 38). We used two filters: Fanboy's Annoyances and EasyList Cookie List. Other ad blockers, including Adblock (<https://getadblock.com>) and Adblock Plus (<https://adblockplus.org>), also offer those filters and let you add one for I Don't Care About Cookies – in Adblock, open the extension's Options, choose 'Filter lists' and select I Don't Care About Cookies under Other Filter Lists (see screenshot below).

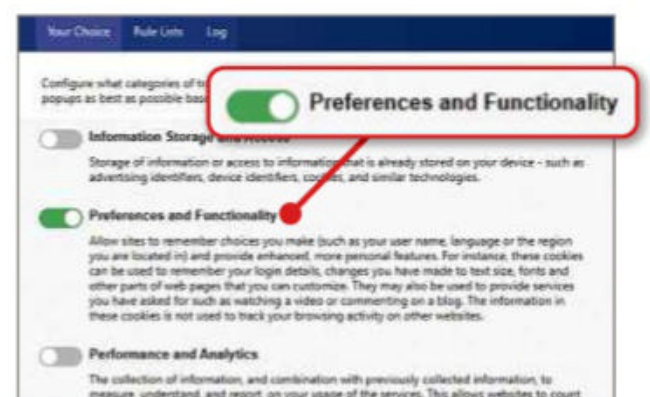


You can block cookie pop-ups through your ad blocker by enabling specific filter lists

## Reject or accept different cookies automatically

The problem with skipping GDPR warnings is that you're essentially waving cookies through to your browser without knowing what they do. For a more cautious and bespoke approach, install Consent-O-Matic in Chrome and other Chromium browsers ([www.snipca.com/39721](http://www.snipca.com/39721)), or Firefox ([www.snipca.com/39722](http://www.snipca.com/39722)). This extension handles privacy notices based on your preferences, rather than just blindly accepting all cookies. Click its toolbar button and choose More Add-on Settings to see a list of cookie categories. Select those you're prepared to allow, such as 'Preferences and Functionality' (see screenshot below), which permits sites to store data such as your login details, location and preferred text size. Alternatively, leave every option switched off to reject all cookies.

When you visit a website, Consent-O-Matic will apply your cookie preferences



Consent-O-Matic lets you choose which types of cookie you want to reject or accept



automatically, close the GDPR pop-up and display a notification to confirm that it's worked. The add-on uses a rule list based on the most common types of cookie notice and keeps a log of all the pop-ups it's dealt with.

**Block cookie pop-ups on your phone or tablet**

Cookie pop-ups are even more annoying on your phone or tablet, where they often fill your entire screen. If your mobile browser supports extensions, such as Firefox for Android ([www.snipca.com/39718](http://www.snipca.com/39718)), you can install an ad blocker and add a filter that blocks cookie warnings, as explained in our first tip (sadly, the Firefox app won't let you install the I Don't Care About Cookies add-on). Or you could switch to Opera's browser for Android or iOS ([www.snipca.com/39719](http://www.snipca.com/39719)), which offers a feature for blocking cookie notices. Tap the three-line menu button in the top-right corner of the Opera app, choose Settings and turn on the option Block Cookie Dialogs (see screenshot below). You can choose whether to 'Automatically Accept Cookie Dialogs', or reject them (which might prevent access to certain sites).

Another option for blocking cookie pop-ups on your iPhone or iPad is to install the content blocker AdGuard ([www.snipca.com/39720](http://www.snipca.com/39720)), which integrates with the Safari browser. Tap the Settings cog in the bottom-right corner of the AdGuard app and choose 'Safari protection', Filters, then tap Annoyances. Switch on Annoyances and select the filters 'I don't care about cookies', EasyList Cookie List and Fanboy's Annoyances (see screenshot above right). You can choose additional options to block other irritations, such as newsletter overlays.

You can install AdGuard on your Android phone or tablet, too, but it's trickier to set up because – like other ad blockers – it's banned from the Google Play Store and doesn't integrate with



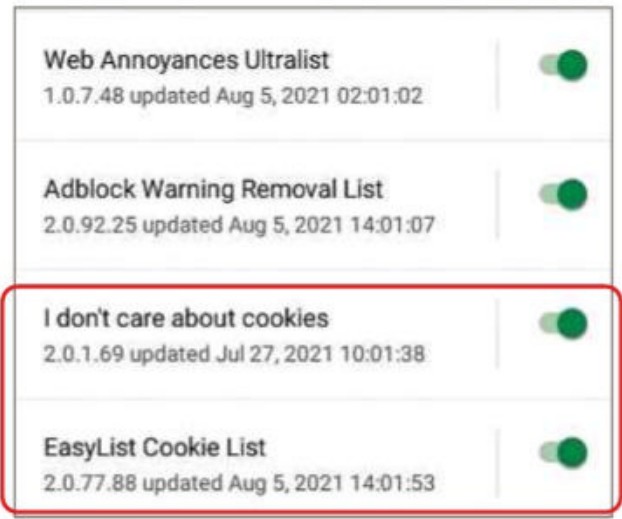
Opera's mobile browser offers the useful option to block cookie pop-ups on websites

**Don't get poisoned by bad cookies**

The cookies that websites leave behind aren't just a privacy concern – they're also a security hazard. Hackers use a technique called 'cookie poisoning' to modify cookies so they can steal sensitive information that's been stored about you. They can also forge cookies to impersonate you and log into your online accounts. Websites should prevent this by encrypting their cookies and securing them with a digital signature to

ensure they can share data only between you and the site.

Blocking cookie pop-ups doesn't increase your risk of being infected by a poisoned cookie, but it's important to check which cookies are installed and regularly delete unnecessary ones. Adhere to the advice about entering data only on **HTTPS** sites and keeping security software up to date, and you should avoid a nasty case of cookie poisoning.



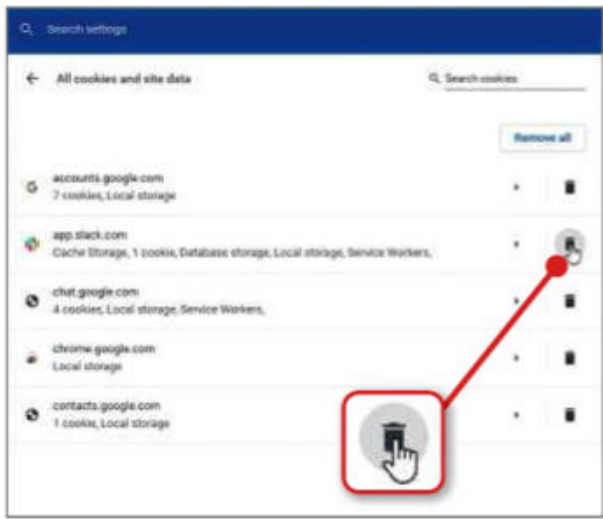
AdGuard's Annoyances filters block cookie pop-ups in your phone or tablet's browser

Chrome (or other browsers). Instead, it blocks ads and cookie pop-ups at a network level. Go to <https://adguard.com> in Chrome for Android and press Download, then tap OK when warned that this type of file can harm your device (it won't). Select 'Open', tap Settings in the warning about installing unknown apps and switch on 'Allow from this source' for Chrome. Return to the previous screen and choose Install.

Once you have installed AdGuard, open it and set it up – you'll need to let it create a local **VPN**, but you can close the prompt to upgrade to AdGuard Premium. Tap the menu button in the top-left corner and choose Settings, then Content Blocking and press Filters. Tap 'Annoyances', switch on that option and select the same filters as on iOS. Finally, follow the instructions to activate AdGuard's HTTPS Filtering – this is fiddly, but you only need to do it once, and it will ensure the app blocks all cookie pop-ups in your mobile browser.

**Block and delete cookies in your browser**

Some cookies are essential for websites to work properly, but others track you online, so you should set your browser to block them and delete any unwanted cookies that are already installed.



Chrome lets you delete unwanted cookies that have already been installed by websites

In Chrome, click the three-dot menu button and choose Settings, then 'Privacy and security'. Click 'Cookies and other site data', then select 'Block third-party cookies'. To delete cookies only from certain websites (so you're not signed out of your favourite sites, for example) click 'See all cookies and site data', then click the bin icon next to each site's name (see screenshot above). Alternatively, to wipe all cookies, click 'Clear browsing data' under 'Privacy and security', then the Advanced tab. Select 'Cookies and other site data', choose a time range from the drop-down menu and click 'Clear data'.

In Firefox, click the menu button and choose Settings, then 'Privacy & Security'. Select Standard or Strict under Enhanced Tracking Protection to block all unnecessary cookies. As with Chrome, you can either delete all existing cookies by clicking Clear Data in the 'Cookies and Site Data' section, or choose Manage Data to remove cookies for specific sites.

In Edge, click the menu button and choose Settings, then 'Cookies and site permissions'. Switch on 'Block third-party cookies', then click 'See all cookies and site data' to delete previously installed cookies. Brave (<https://brave.com>) is set to block tracking cookies by default. **ca**



# Don't Buy the Wrong Mouse

Ditch your current mouse for an alternative that's faster, smarter and more comfortable to use.

**Robert Irvine** explains how to choose the best mice for the right price



It's 40 years since the first computer mouse went on sale and it's still our primary means of interacting with our screens. While a basic mouse is generally all you need to point, click, scroll and drag and drop, switching to a superior model can make performing most PC tasks quicker, easier and more comfortable, and reduce your risk of injury. But with so many different devices available, it's difficult to know which model is best for you. Here we'll explain how to find the perfect mouse for your budget and computing needs.

## Should you buy a wired or wireless mouse?

The biggest advantage to a wireless mouse is that it gives you more freedom of movement than one that's tethered to your computer with a cable. You can point and click while several metres away from your monitor, even from the other side of the room, and don't have to worry about a cord getting in your way. Wireless



You can buy the Logitech M185 wireless mouse from Amazon for under a tenner

mice are also more portable than wired ones, and can be easily slipped into your bag or pocket – along with its USB receiver – to use away from home. With a Bluetooth mouse, such as the Microsoft KTF-00002 (£21.49 from [www.snipca.com/39753](http://www.snipca.com/39753)), you don't even need to plug in a USB receiver, because a Bluetooth-enabled PC will detect and connect to it without one.

On the downside, a wireless mouse needs charging, which either means buying batteries or choosing a rechargeable model. Because they connect to your PC via 2.4GHz Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, they're also susceptible to interference from nearby devices.

In recent years, the cost of wireless mice from manufacturers such as Logitech, Microsoft and Corsair has come down considerably, and they're no longer significantly slower than their corded cousins. You can buy a wireless mouse from Amazon for as little as £9.99, such as the Logitech M185 (pictured left, [www.snipca.com/39729](http://www.snipca.com/39729)). This works over 10 metres and offers a 12-month battery life.

Whether you opt for a wired or wireless mouse is down to your personal preference, but the difference in features, performance and price is no longer determined by a cable.

## What buttons do you need on your mouse?

Even the most basic PC mouse will have left and right buttons and a scroll wheel, but many models have extra buttons that you can customise to suit your needs. The



The 17 buttons on this Corsair gaming mouse are overkill for everyday computing tasks

most common of these are thumb buttons on the left-hand side of the mouse (if it's a standard right-handed model). These let you move back and forth between web pages in your browser. Usually referred to as Mouse Buttons 4 and 5, these can be 'remapped' using the manufacturer's software or a third-party tool such as X-Mouse Button Control ([www.snipca.com/39733](http://www.snipca.com/39733)) to perform different functions, such as copying and pasting, taking screenshots, closing the current window and launching specific programs.

Gaming mice come with even more configurable buttons, for tasks such as changing the DPI settings for more accurate control, equipping weapons in games, switching profiles and performing complex sets of commands. The Corsair Scimitar RGB Elite, for example, has 17 programmable buttons and costs £74.99 (pictured above, [www.snipca.com/39735](http://www.snipca.com/39735)).

Such mice are overkill and expensive for everyday use, and most people will cope fine with the standard buttons.



## Should you use a trackpad instead?

The trackpads – or touchpads – built into laptops save you needing to use a mouse at all, which is useful for working away from home, such as in a café or on a train. They free you from repetitive clicking and scrolling, and let your fingers move more flexibly within their rectangular areas.

However, this convenience comes at the expense of precision, as trackpads make it harder to position your pointer exactly

where you want, especially when dragging and dropping items or selecting text, and it's easier to send your cursor astray when you brush against them.

Also, the tapping and double-tapping gestures that replicate left and right clicks can prove as repetitive and sore on your fingers as clicking mouse buttons – if not more so.

For these reasons, we recommend



using a mouse rather than your laptop's trackpad or a standalone pad for your PC. But if you want a device that offers the benefits of both methods, the Microsoft ELG-00002 Arc (pictured) integrates a trackpad with a slender Bluetooth mouse, for £58.99 ([www.snipca.com/39752](http://www.snipca.com/39752)).

Incidentally, your mouse wheel has a hidden function – press it while hovering your cursor over a web link and it will open the page in a new browser tab.

## Should you buy an ergonomic mouse?

An ergonomic mouse lets you use your computer more comfortably and reduces your risk of developing repetitive strain injury (RSI) and carpal tunnel syndrome (CTS). Ergonomic mice come in many shapes and sizes, so you should choose one that fits both your hand and your computing needs.

A vertical mouse, such as the Anker AK-UBA (pictured below, £22.99 from [www.snipca.com/39742](http://www.snipca.com/39742)), is a great choice because it keeps your hand, elbow, wrist and arm in a natural position to prevent muscle strain, and pins and needles. Its design takes a little getting used to, but you'll find all its buttons within easy reach of your fingers and that you can grip it more firmly than a standard mouse. There are also ergonomic vertical mice for left-handed users, such as this £25.99 Aurttec model: [www.snipca.com/39745](http://www.snipca.com/39745).

If you prefer a traditional horizontal design, Microsoft's ergonomic mice have thumb rests that reduce muscle strain. These include the 222-00004 Bluetooth Ergonomic Mouse (£36.99 from [www.snipca.com/39744](http://www.snipca.com/39744)) and the more bulbous

The Logitech Ergo M575 combines a trackball with standard buttons for easy use



[www.snipca.com/39743](http://www.snipca.com/39743)) and the more bulbous Sculpt Ergonomic Mouse (£41.95 from [www.snipca.com/39744](http://www.snipca.com/39744)), which has a handy Windows button for opening the Start menu.

Some people find trackballs comfortable to use because they minimise unnatural wrist movements and you don't have to hold your mouse steady while clicking. However, they're not as precise as regular mice at controlling your cursor. Logitech's TrackMan Marble ([www.snipca.com/39747](http://www.snipca.com/39747)) is a popular and not too expensive (£26.99) option that will help you decide if a trackball is suitable for you. Or you can buy a mouse that combines standard buttons with a 'thumb trackball' on the side, to give you the best of both worlds, such as the Logitech Ergo M575 (pictured above, £44.99 from [www.snipca.com/39748](http://www.snipca.com/39748)).

## Do you need a mouse with high DPI?

One of the main specifications you'll see when looking at different mice is DPI, which stands for dots per inch. This tells you how far your mouse cursor will move for every inch that the mouse itself physically moves – the higher the DPI, the greater the mouse's sensitivity, which gives you smoother control of its pointer. DPI is an important factor for graphic designers, because it lets you make fast and precise tweaks, and for gamers who

### Mouse

Select your primary button

Left ▾

Cursor speed



Roll the mouse wheel to scroll

Multiple lines at a time ▾

Choose how many lines to scroll each time




You can adjust your mouse's cursor speed in Windows if it moves too quickly or slowly

need to perform actions as swiftly as possible, but for everyday PC use it's not something to be too concerned about.

In fact, a mouse with super-high DPI may prove too sensitive and more difficult to use, because your cursor will move too quickly across your screen. However, a mouse with very low DPI (less than 800) may feel slow and unresponsive, especially if you have a high-resolution monitor, because you'll need to move it a greater distance to direct the pointer to the desired on-screen element.

For the best balance between sensitivity and speed, look for a mouse with at least 1,000 DPI, such as the Logitech M185 (see page opposite). If you have a large, Full HD monitor, such as the BenQ GL 2780 ([www.snipca.com/34834](http://www.snipca.com/34834)), you may want to go as high as 3,200 DPI. You certainly don't need 16,000 DPI, which some gaming mice provide.

You can adjust your mouse's sensitivity in Windows if the cursor moves too quickly or slowly. Open the Settings app and click Devices, then Mouse and adjust the 'Cursor speed' using the slider (see screenshot above). 



A vertical mouse such as the Anker AK-UBA helps prevent muscle aches and pains



# Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

## PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

### What's this device on my network?

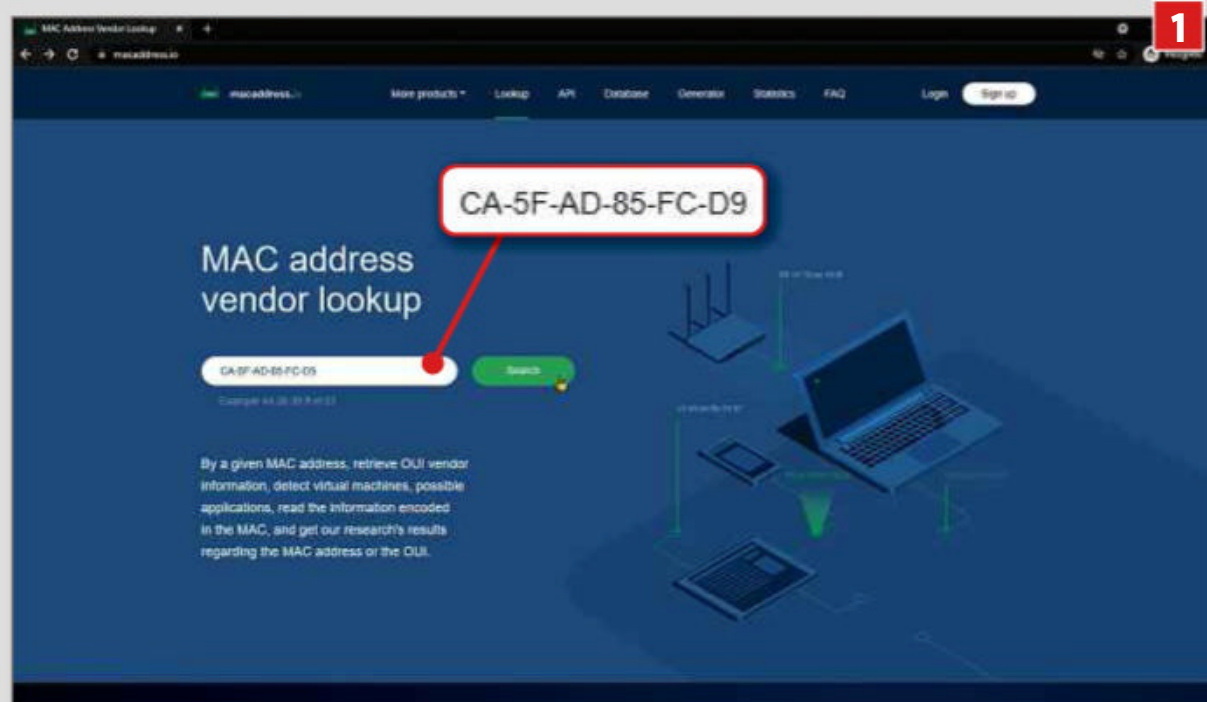
**Q** Periodically, I check if anyone is on my network apart from my own devices, using a program from NirSoft. Recently, I came across a device with the **IP address** 192.168.1.214. I recognise the first three parts of this, but I cannot find any device with 214. It apparently also has the code CA-5F-AD-85-FC-D9. This looks like a software serial number but on a search all I get is it might be a **security certificate**. Any ideas?

Martin Fletcher

**A** You didn't tell us which NirSoft program you used, but we think it's Wireless Network Watcher ([www.snipca.com/39645](http://www.snipca.com/39645)), as this shows all sorts of information about devices connected to your router – including both IP and **MAC addresses**.

IP addresses are those that begin with 192.168.1, and which you recognise. MAC is short for 'media access control', which describes a unique string of hexadecimal numbers assigned by manufacturers of networking devices. We mention this because the code you cite (CA-5F-AD-85-FC-D9) is a valid MAC address. You can look these up online, using a tool like [macaddress.io](https://macaddress.io) (see screenshot **1**) to find out who manufactured it. However, this one turns up a blank.

That's not necessarily suspicious, as some products can be manufactured on



Use [macaddress.io](https://macaddress.io) to look up the manufacturer of a device on you wireless network

a 'white label' basis, where the original maker sells on the product to a third-party vendor. But this fact doesn't help us – or you – identify the mystery device.

Now, we should offer some reassurance by saying that this is most likely some gadget that's easy to overlook or forget, like an old smart TV or digital photo frame, say. That might be enough to trigger a memory that helps you finger this interloper. But, if not, to be on the safe side we'd suggest denying the device network access. Then, if something in your home stops working, the mystery device will be identified.

You can do this via your router's web interface, using a feature known as MAC filtering. We don't know your

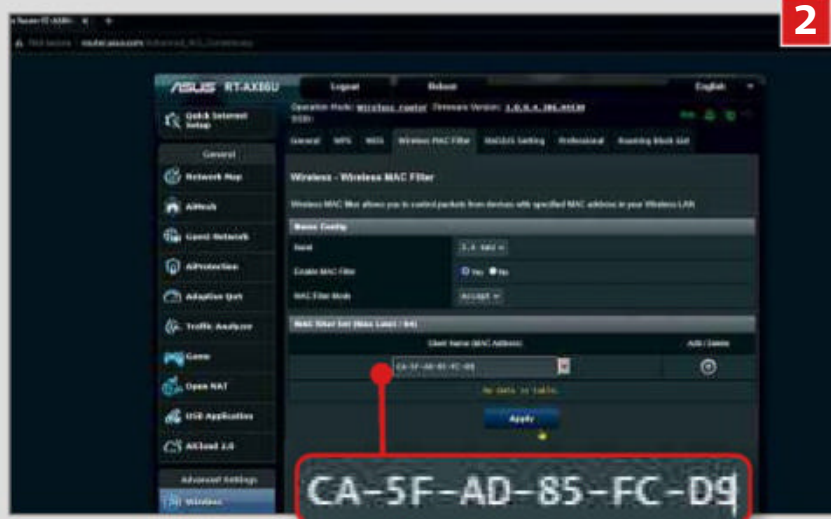
router make or model, but most have a tool along these lines and they're generally pretty simple to configure – it's really nothing more than an electronic blacklist.

So, first log in to your router's administration page. You can do this via your web browser, typically by typing 192.168.0.1 (or similar) into the address bar. Now look for an option labelled 'MAC Filtering' (or similar), perhaps in a section like Wi-Fi or WAN.

How to proceed next depends very much on the particular router and its software. However, the fundamental idea is to tell the router to block access to the device with the offending MAC address. So, first look for a switch or option to enable MAC filtering, and then add the CA-5F-AD-85-FC-D9 code to the filter (or 'block' or 'deny') list **2**. Individual filters might be described as 'rules', incidentally.

Once you click the Save or Apply (or similar) button, the device with that MAC code will have its internet connection cut. If you then figure out which device it is, it's easy enough to restore its line to the outside world by returning to the router admin page to delete the MAC filter just created.

You can 'filter' or deny an unidentified device's access to your network and thereby reveal its identity





## What's causing my typing to disappear?

**Q** I suffer with dyslexia and so when typing emails in Outlook, I frequently need to delete and re-spell words. Sometimes, I'm midway through an email when I realise half my typing has been deleted. On my HP 255 G7 laptop's keyboard the Delete (Del) button is next to a much-larger button labelled Ins. I have no idea what the Ins button does, but I wonder if it and my fat fingers might be the problem? Is there a simple fix?

Edmund Hobby

**A** In this context Ins is short for Insert and, yes, it is likely to be the cause of your problem. When pressed the Insert button activates overwrite mode in Outlook and many other programs. When it is switched on anything ahead of the text-entry cursor is overwritten, and thus replaced, by whatever is typed next. Some people find this useful, but for others it's a nuisance. Clearly, you're in the latter camp.



The two delete buttons – one on the top row and the other on the laptop's numeric keypad

There are a couple of solutions. First, it seems you're using the Del key that's embedded in your laptop's numeric pad, with numbers and functions activated by pressing the Number Lock (or NumLock) key. This Del key is indeed right next to the larger Ins key. However, the computer also has a second, distinct Del key, on the top row (pictured above). Perhaps you've never noticed it?

Regardless, if you use this there should be no risk of you hitting the Ins key.

However, we suppose you might instead then accidentally hit the Home key that sits to the right of this second Del key, which will send the text-entry cursor to the top of the email or document – perhaps resulting in a different frustration.

A better solution for you, then – for Outlook at least – would be to disable the overwrite function. To do this in Outlook, first click File followed by Options. Next, in the left-hand pane of the Outlook Options menu that appears, click Mail and then, in the right-hand pane, click the Editor Options button. Then, in the left-hand pane of the Editor Options box, click Advanced and, finally, in the right-hand pane, click to untick the 'Use the Insert key to control overwrite mode' box. Click OK twice and you're done.

## What does Windows 10 Pro have that Home doesn't?

**Q** Your Software Store often offers Windows 10 Pro at a discounted price (at [www.snipca.com/39559](http://www.snipca.com/39559)), and I myself have in fact taken advantage of this very good deal. However, I have no idea as to what extra features come with Pro and I have not seen this information published at any time in your magazine. Are you able to enlighten me please?

Paul Nuttall

**A** We did publish a feature on why you should upgrade to Windows 10 Pro in Issue 584, dated 15 July, 2020. You can read this on our Back Issue CD, which is available to buy on Amazon: [www.snipca.com/38164](http://www.snipca.com/38164).

Microsoft actually publishes its own exhaustive table comparing Pro and Home, at [www.snipca.com/39646](http://www.snipca.com/39646), so we'd suggest perusing that too.

One of the key benefits of Pro is the



BitLocker encryption is one of the main reasons for upgrading to Windows 10 Pro

BitLocker tool, which lets you encrypt your computer's hard drive, making it practically impossible for hackers to break in.

Another main benefit is that it lets you defer Windows updates for longer, so you can wait to see if they cause problems for others before deciding whether to

install them yourself.

Currently we're selling Windows 10 Pro for £69.99 – 68 per cent cheaper than the full price of £219.99. Buying this means you'll be able to upgrade to Windows 11 Pro for free, assuming your computer meets the required specifications.



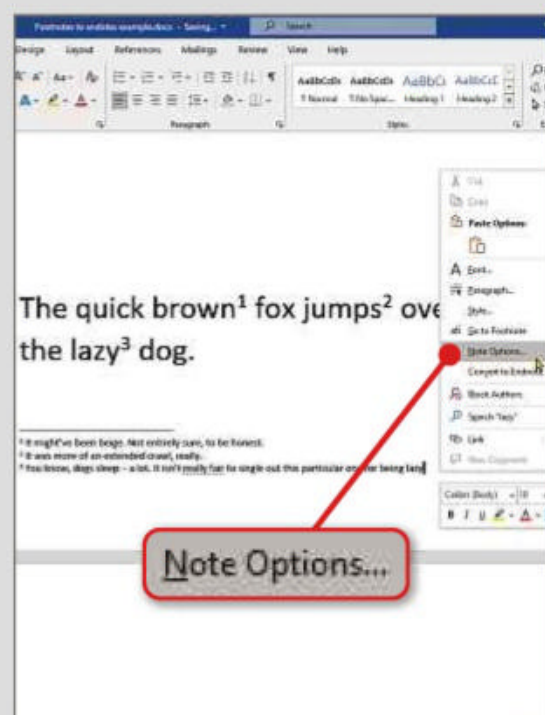
## Can I convert footnotes to endnotes?

**Q** I've spent months creating a long document in Word, detailing the life and times of myself and my wife (for the benefit of my children and grandchildren after we've gone). As part of this I've added lots of footnotes, but now that I come to look at the completed document I find they make a mess of some pages, as the odd page seems to be about a third footnotes! I'm wondering if there's any way to push all these footnotes to the last page, so that my family can just flip to the back if they want to know more. I made this document in Word 2016, incidentally.

Philip Mason

**A** Yes, you can do this – simply by converting the footnotes to endnotes. To do this, right-click in the footnote area at the bottom of the page and then choose Note Options (see screenshot below). Next, in the 'Footnote and Endnote' menu that appears, click the Convert button.

Finally, choose the 'Convert all footnotes to endnotes' option and then click OK.

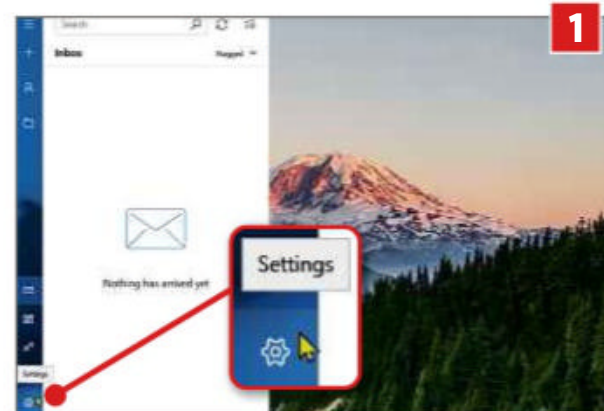


Go to 'Note Options...' to convert footnotes to endnotes

## How do I add Hotmail to Mail?

**Q** I'm trying to set up a secondary Hotmail email address on my new PC. Unfortunately, I forgot to make a note of the mail settings from my old computer before I reset it. I can't even remember whether I used Yahoo or Outlook when setting up. I've tried many settings without success and sought help online, but found this confusing. Can you explain in simple terms how to set up a Hotmail email in Windows 10 Mail?

G R Routledge



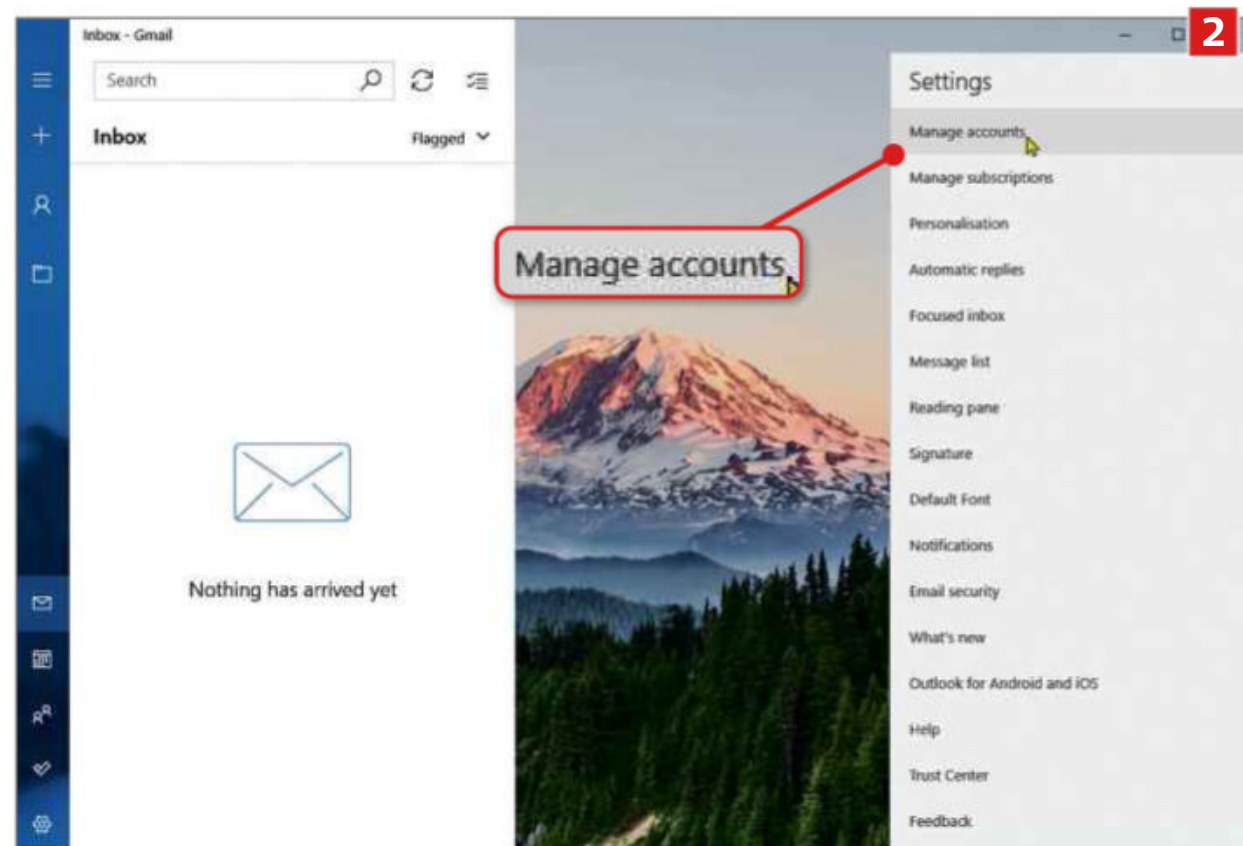
Click the Outlook.com Settings cog to start the process of adding your email account

**A** For clarity, a few years ago Microsoft renamed Hotmail as Outlook.com. However, it allowed existing users to continue using email addresses ending in hotmail.com (or hotmail.co.uk), so it's easy to keep thinking of the service as Hotmail.

We say this because, while adding Hotmail to Mail is simple, it is the Outlook.com option you need to use. So, in Mail, start by clicking the Settings cog (see screenshot 1) followed by 'Manage

accounts' 2, then 'Add account'. Then click Outlook.com and follow the prompts, supplying a username and password for your Hotmail email address.

However, we have a sneaking suspicion that you've already tried this and have, in fact, just forgotten your Hotmail (Outlook.com) password. If that's the case you'll need to visit Microsoft's password-recovery page, at <https://account.live.com/password/reset>, to see what methods are available to you.



Select 'Manage accounts' and then 'Add account'

**Q:** Can I make my old laptop work with Windows 10?

**A:** Issue 590, page 66 – find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD

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



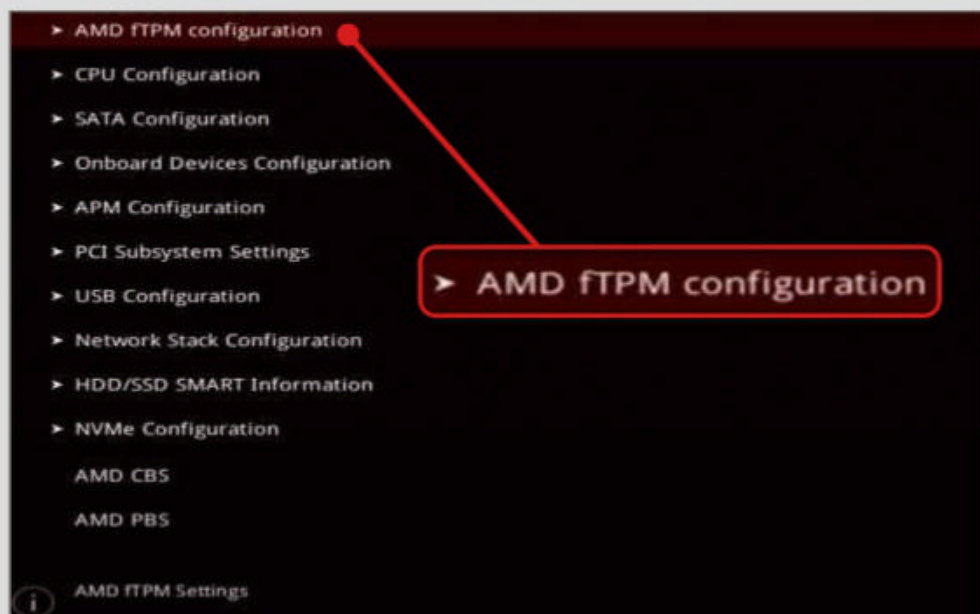


## Do I need to replace my motherboard for Windows 11?

**Q** I've become aware that my PC is not up to the specifications required to host the new Windows 11 operating system. I'm surprised that my PC, which is only 14 months old, already needs updating! The problem is that Windows 11 requires **Trusted Platform Module (TPM) 2.0**, which is a chip embedded on the motherboard. So, in order to run Windows 11, I'm going to have to change my motherboard. My computer has an AMD Ryzen 7 3800X processor, 32MB of **DDR4 3200MHz RAM** and an AMD Radeon RX 5700 XT graphics card, all attached to a ROG Crosshair VIII Hero motherboard. Can you recommend a replacement motherboard that has TPM 2.0 that will also be compatible with my other components?

Trevor Edwards

**A** We have some very good news: you won't be needing a new motherboard!  
It's true that your motherboard



Select 'AMD fTPM configuration' to enable 'firmware TPM'

lacks a TPM 2.0 module but that won't prevent you running Windows 11, as your computer's processor has what's known as 'firmware TPM' (or fTPM). It just needs to be enabled.

To do this you'll need to access the motherboard's **UEFI** (modern **BIOS**) by tapping F2 or Delete (Del) shortly after switching on the PC. Next, you need to switch the UEFI interface to what Asus calls Advanced mode.

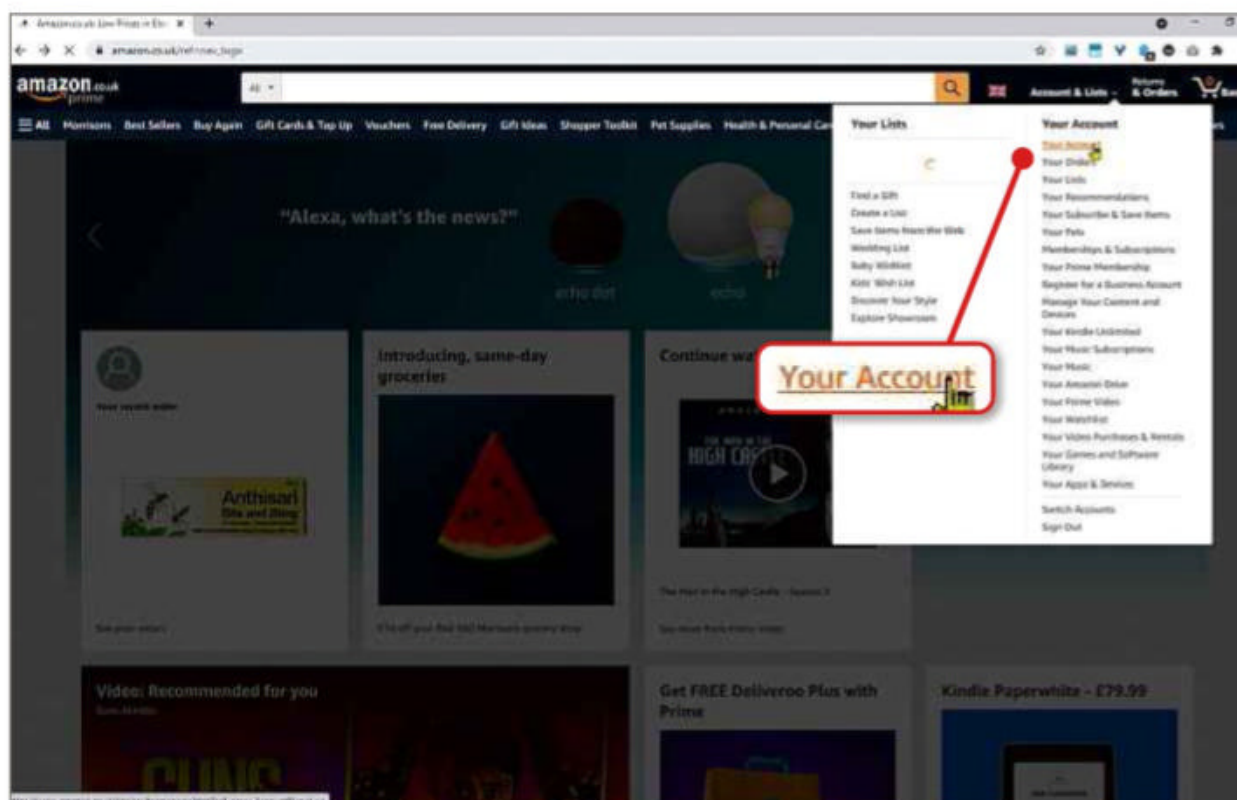
Do this by tapping F7 once. Then, using the cursor (arrow) keys for direction and Enter to make selections, select the Advanced tab and, there, choose the 'AMD fTPM configuration' option (see screenshot above). Next, change this option to the Firmware TPM setting. Finally, choose Exit or press Escape (Esc), being sure to choose Yes to save your changes. Your PC should now be all set for Windows 11.

## How do I identify Amazon charges?

**Q** Because of the pandemic I signed up for Amazon Prime. My wife and I have found this really useful – perhaps too much so, given the amount we now seem to spend with the company! However, I do find the whole order-tracking thing a bit confusing. In particular, I sometimes find it hard or even impossible to tally things I order with the entries on my credit card statement. I'm aware that this is because items from a single order are often sent at different times but charged as one transaction – but that doesn't make my accounting any easier! Do you know of any way of identifying which charged amounts relate to which specific order?

Derek Chambers

**A** We do! The trick here is to visit your Amazon Transactions page because this lists the amounts charged alongside the specific order numbers. From there, a click on the order



For a detailed account of your Amazon spending, select 'Your Account' and then 'Your Payments'

number will list all the items that relate to the charge.

However, for all its undoubted greatness as an online retailer, aspects of Amazon's website are a labyrinthine mess. This means that the existence of some features isn't always obvious, and

this is certainly one of them. So, first, click the 'Account & Lists' link, near the top right, followed by Your Account (see screenshot above). Next, click the 'Your payments' box. Finally, under the 'Your payments' heading, click the Transactions link – there you'll find what you need.



# Problems **Solved**

## Will a new laptop be compatible with my SD cards?

**Q** I'm considering buying the Lenovo Yoga Slim 7 laptop, recommended on Issue 615's Buy It page. However, I'm wondering if I can use my existing collection of **SD cards** with it, as it takes the mini version? Also, I have some mice and keyboards that I don't think are compatible with the more recent USB connectors. How would I connect these?

Ryland Morgan

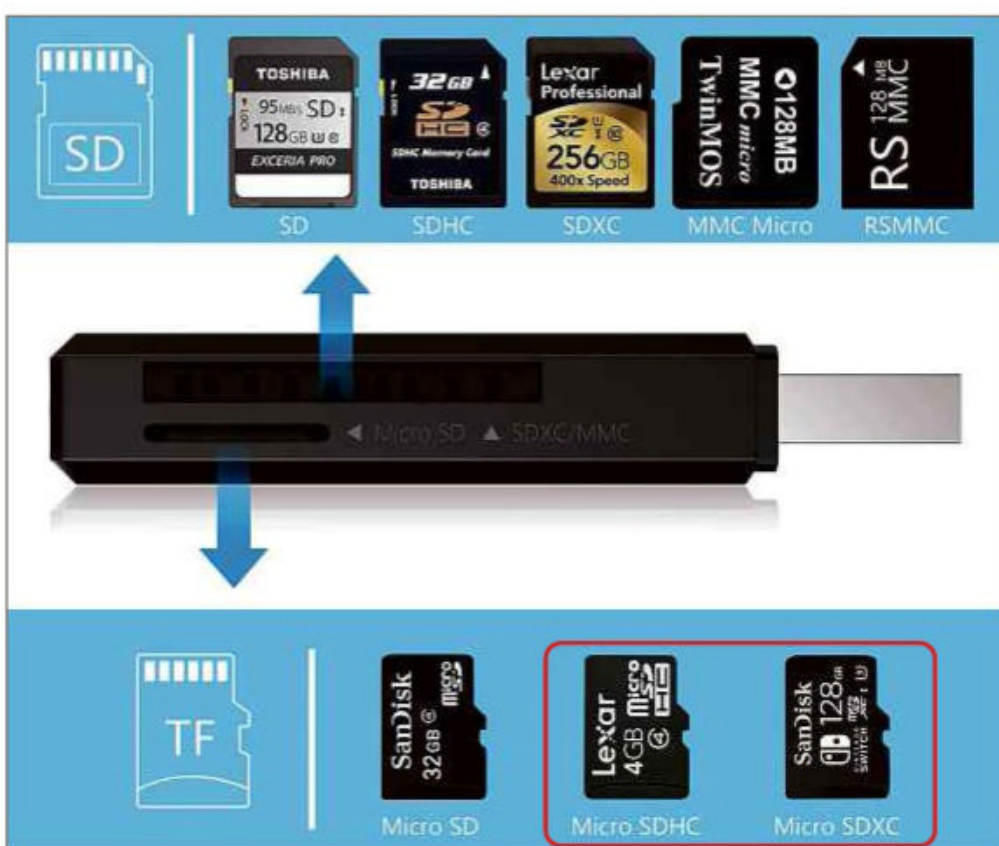


A multi-format memory card adapter, such as this Beikell model, is versatile



SD memory cards and microSDs are compatible with it...

**A** We'll start with the USB question, as that will help us answer your SD card concern.



... as are several other formats, including microSDHC and microSDXC

The Yoga Slim 7 model we featured has two newer Type-C (or **USB-C**), sockets. These will be physically incompatible with many existing USB devices but, increasingly, newer devices are likely to use this standard. However, it also has two **USB 3.0** ports that use the traditional, rectangular USB-Type A socket. These will be compatible with very many older USB devices, be they printers, keyboards, mice or pretty much anything else.

That brings us to the Slim 7's memory card slot, which is indeed microSD – so full-size SD cards simply will not fit. However, with four USB ports available, that's really not much of a problem.

You can buy multi-format memory card readers that'll plug into any one of the Type-A or Type-C ports, and allow you to make use of larger SD cards. The pictured Beikell model, for example, costs around £9 ([www.snipca.com/39642](http://www.snipca.com/39642), pictured above).

## Why does my wife get good vibrations?

**Q** I have an iPhone 6 and my wife an iPhone 8. They both operate very similarly, but I've noticed that when using my wife's handset I feel lots of tiny little buzzes. For example, when scrolling through lists on my wife's iPhone it delivers satisfying physical 'clicks' as I swipe.

My device does not do this. I've looked through the options, but I can't see what I might change to enable this feature on my iPhone. Can you help?

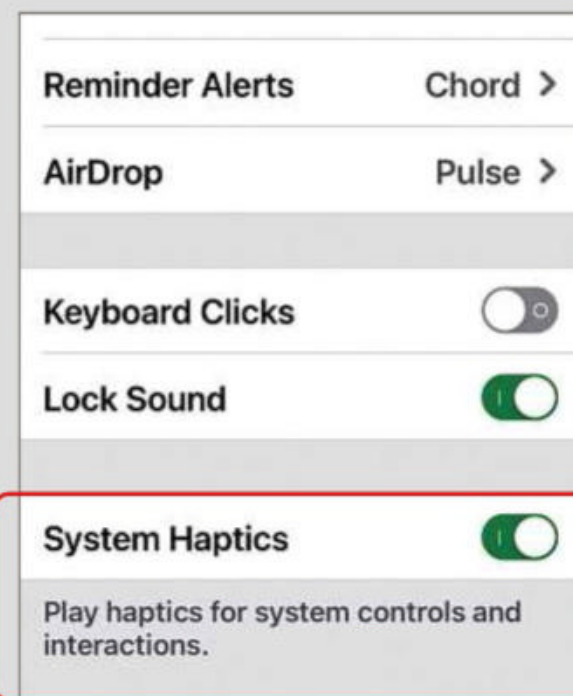
Roger Benham

While older iPhones have long offered vibrations for feedback, it was only from the iPhone 7 onwards that Apple started including a mechanism sensitive enough to generate trembles that could feel like little clicks. Apple calls this the Taptic Engine, and it just doesn't exist in your iPhone 6.

On your wife's iPhone 8, though, it can be switched on or off by launching Settings, tapping 'Sound & Haptics' and then flipping the slider alongside System Haptics (see screenshot right).

**A** We can tell you why your wife gets a buzz but you don't – and that's **haptics**.

The slider next to **System Haptics** launches the iPhone 8's vibrations







## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

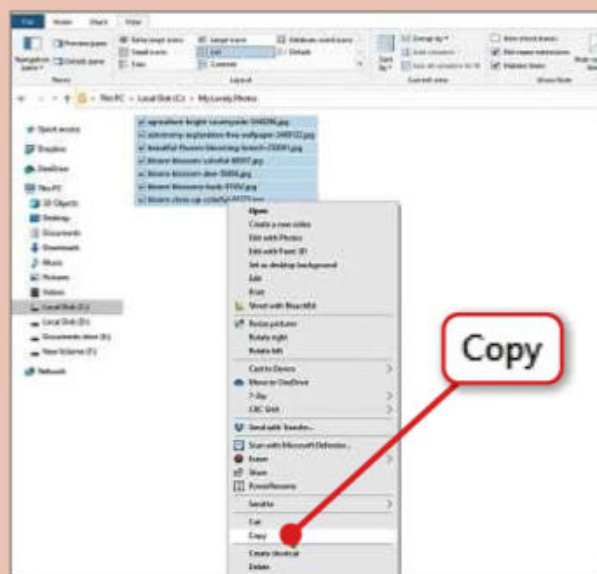
### Moving and copying files?

**Q** This might sound like an odd question, but I've often wondered why it seems to take longer for my PC to copy files than to move them – and sometimes by quite a lot. As an experiment just before sending this email I tried moving a folder containing some old videos. That took just a few moments. However, copying the same folder took several minutes. The computer was doing nothing else. Why is one operation so much slower than the other?

Jeremy Naughton

**A** Yes, there is a good reason for this. As we'll explain, this will increasingly be seen as a historical problem – but you've asked the question, so we're happy to answer.

In short, when you ask Windows to 'move' a file or folder, it actually does no such thing. Instead, it updates the very small bit of data it was using to index the file or folder. All the data actually stays in the same physical location on the drive. If it helps, think



When you tell Windows to copy files, it has to read and create a fresh version of all the data

of this process as changing the name plaque on your country cottage: your dwelling has a new name, but the physical building and all its contents are on the exact same plot of land.

But copying files is different. In this case, Windows has to **read** and then **write** a fresh version of all the data, somewhere else on the drive (see screenshot above). To extend our analogy, it's like building an exact replica of your cottage, brick by



The moving parts in a mechanical hard drive like this one make it far slower at copying data than an SSD

brick, somewhere else in the village.

Now, the reason this is going to become a largely historical problem is because more and more new computers have solid-state drives (**SSDs**), rather than traditional, mechanical hard drives (pictured above). The read/write speeds are orders of magnitude different. So, while a hard drive might take minutes to copy larger files, the lack of mechanical operations in an SSD means the same job is usually completed in moments.

Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)

## Why won't my mouse drag properly?

**Q** I think my PC is getting distracted. If I drag the mouse to select text in Word or from a website, or if I select cells in Excel, the selection process suddenly resets and it starts selecting from a new point. It's as if something else has taken the PC's focus and then returned it to the selection process. I suspected malware because it seems software-oriented rather than hardware. A Kaspersky full scan came up clean. I ran Malwarebytes, too, resulting in a clean bill of health. Any ideas?

Steve Murray

**A** We wonder why you don't suspect hardware? In fact, we think that's a strong contender.

This problem could be a dodgy **microswitch** under the mouse button, for instance. If its electrical contact is wearing out then the selection process might begin correctly but be interrupted



On this mouse-test website, press your finger on the mouse to see if it has a hardware fault

mid-drag. Windows would then interpret the mouse button having been released, even though your finger is still pressed down. Then, if the contact loss was only momentary, Windows would duly interpret that as a new press – resulting in exactly the symptoms you describe.

Visit this mouse-test website, at [www.snipca.com/39647](http://www.snipca.com/39647) (see screenshot above). Hold down the button: if the online graphic blinks when your finger is held down – even for a fraction of a second – then that would suggest a hardware fault.

It's unlikely to be easily repaired but basic, new mice are cheap.

If not – and if the mouse is wireless – then it could be interference. Try the transceiver in a different USB socket, or think what other electrical equipment might be nearby that could be causing this occasional glitch.

## Next Issue

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Weds  
17 Nov

- Can I set up world clocks?
- How do I delete an old email address?
- Why does my PC BIOS show every time?
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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 can't I change this Outlook option?

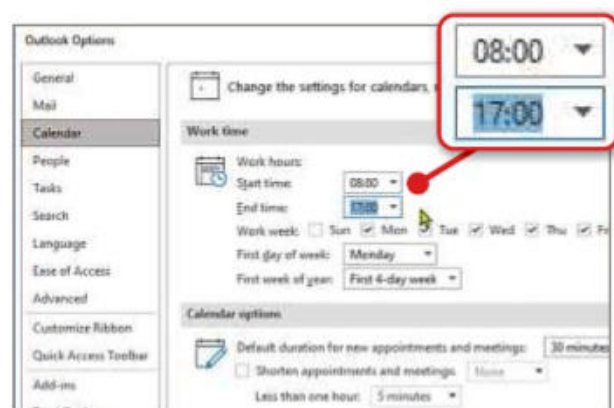
**Q** I was very interested your reply to Jane Marshall in Issue 615's Problems Solved section (page 69), where you explained that unticking 'CTRL+ENTER sends a message' in the Outlook Options box would disable this shortcut. However, when I did this and tried to click OK I saw a message that said: "The end date you entered occurs before the start date". When I then exited the Outlook Options box the 'CTRL+ENTER' box was ticked again. What's the problem?

Martin Wilkins

**A** The only setting in the Outlook Options box that causes this is actually on the Calendar tab in the 'Work time' section. Here, if the 'End time' clock is set to be earlier than the 'Start time' then you'll see the error message you describe, but only once you've clicked the OK button on the Outlook Options box.

All we can imagine, then, is that while trying to make the suggested change you somehow accidentally modified one of these two fields, thus creating an impossible schedule.

To fix it, just ensure that your 'Work hours', as defined by the 'Start time' and 'End time' fields are actually possible (see screenshot below), then you should be able to successfully apply the change to the 'CTRL+ENTER' box in the Mail tab.



To disable the 'CTRL+ENTER' shortcut in Outlook ensure the work hours you've set in Options are possible

### Where do I download OpenShot?

**Q** I wanted to try OpenShot Video Editor, as recommended in Issue 615's Best Free Software section. However, when I tried getting to it via the published URL ([www.snipca.com/39393](http://www.snipca.com/39393)), I couldn't find any way to download it. Could you explain?

Terry Pendrey

**A** The snippet address we published was for some extra files to enable a beta object-detection feature for OpenShot. However, to download OpenShot itself you need to visit [www.openshot.org](http://www.openshot.org) and then click the Download button there. We did publish this URL, at the top of our piece on OpenShot, but we know that many readers expect a snippet address – so your eyes were probably drawn to that link in the body copy.

### Where is 'Security on the left'?

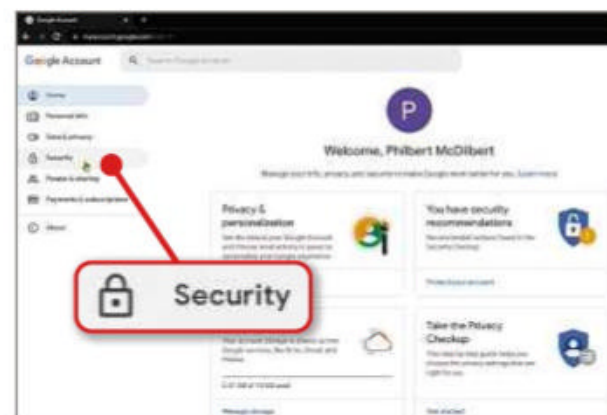
**Q** Great magazine – I always look forward to each new issue. However, I was confused by an instruction in Issue 614's Readers' Tips. Simon Woolwich tells us that, in order to disable Google's sign-in messages, we should click 'Security on the left'. Could you inform me where to find 'Security on the left', as I could not locate it?

Jim Mitchell

**A** Actually, what Simon intended his fellow readers to do was to click a tab called Security, which is on the left – not an option labelled 'Security on the left'.

We don't think this was particularly confusing but, then, we already knew what he was talking about. We do of course understand that some readers are less confident with technology guidance, so it perhaps would have been clearer if we'd added a comma after Security.

That's all there is to it: once you've logged in at [www.google.com/account](http://www.google.com/account) then, on the left (see screenshot above),



To disable Google's sign-in messages, click the Security tab on the left-hand side

click Security. Now just follow the remainder of Simon's tip.

### What's killing my kill switch?

**Q** Thanks for your article on creating a kill switch in Issue 615 (page 35) – what a great idea! Sadly, I could not get it to work. I use Wi-Fi and I was not sure what should replace the word 'Ethernet'. I typed `C:\Windows\System32\netsh.exe interface set interface name="Wi-Fi" admin = disabled` and `C:\Windows\System32\netsh.exe interface set interface name="Wi-Fi (NOWTV123456)" admin = disabled` but neither worked. Any thoughts where I am going wrong with the name of the Wi-Fi network?

Stephen Whitelaw

**A** Yes – we used 'Ethernet' purely as an example. With hindsight it may not have been the best choice, as what you actually need to put in the command is the specific, unique name of the network adapter or connection.

In your case, that connection is your Wi-Fi router name – and that's NOWTV123456. Note that we've changed the real name here just to protect your privacy, but you know the real label, as you included it in your example command. So, your full command – with the correct Wi-Fi network name – should be `C:\Windows\System32\netsh.exe interface set interface name="NOWTV123456" admin = disabled`.



# Jargon Buster

**2.4GHz** Wireless networks working at this frequency have longer range, but are more prone to interference.

**32bit/64bit** A measure of how much data a PC can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit, more modern ones are 64bit.

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

**5G** The latest generation of mobile networks.

**720p/1080p/1440p** Common types of high-definition video of 1280x720, 1920x1080 and 2560x1440 pixels respectively.

**Airplane mode** Phones and tablets in this mode disable all radio communication (GSM, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, etc) so they are safe to use on aircraft.

**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.

**Architecture** A set of rules and language that govern how hardware and software work.

**Aspect ratio** A measurement of the shape of a display. Traditional computer screens are 4:3. Widescreen displays are 16:9 or 16:10.

**Benchmarking** Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

**Beta** A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

**Biometric** Using measurable personal characteristics, such as fingerprints, for identification.

**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.

**Bootable** Describes a device or disc with system files on it so it can be used to start up your computer.

**cd/m<sup>2</sup>** Candela per square metre. Standard unit of brightness.

**Checksum** The result of a mathematical calculation made using a file. The checksum can be used to verify that a file's contents have not been tampered with.

**Clean install** An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

**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.

**DDR4** The newest, fastest commonly used type of computer memory.

**DisplayPort** A new socket for connecting monitors.

**dpi** Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality, or the size an object will be shown on screen.

**Driver** A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

**Emoji** A small graphic that can be inserted into a text message or email.

**eSIM** A non-removable SIM card that's built into a phone, making it easier to change network.

**Ethernet** A standard used for almost all wired computer networks.

**GEDCOM** Short for Genealogical Data Communication. A file format used by genealogy programs to share data.

**Gesture** Finger movements on a screen that perform an action, such as pinching to zoom.

**GHz** Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second. 1GHz is equal to 1,000MHz.

**Haptic feedback** A touchscreen or other controller can give the illusion of tactile feedback by triggering small, finely controlled vibrations in response to an action.

**HDMI** High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

**HTML** Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

**HTTPS** Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure. The secure version of HTTP, the technology that sends data between your browser and the web.

**Hz** Hertz. Measures the frequency something happens: 1Hz equals once a second.

**IP address** Internet Protocol address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

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

**JPEG** Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras. Some image quality is lost with each save.

**LCD** Liquid-crystal display. The technology used to create almost all flatscreen monitors.

**MAC address** Media Access Control. A unique code that identifies any router. A laptop PC might have one MAC for its wired network socket and another for wireless.

**Metadata** A set of data that gives information about a file.

**MHz** Megahertz. A measure of speed used for memory and some older processors

**MicroSD card** A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

**Microswitch** A small electrical component inside your mouse that allows it to perform clicking and scrolling functions. Most mice have three microswitches for the left and right buttons, and scroll wheel.

**NAS** Network-attached storage. A hard drive attached to a network that can be shared with other PCs.

**Noise** Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images. In photos, they are caused by the camera's own sensor. In TV images, they can be caused by the TV's processor or by a flaw in the broadcast signal itself.

**Overclock** Make a processor work faster to boost performance at the cost of it getting hotter and requiring more power.

**Phishing** A form of internet fraud that tries to trick you into revealing personal details.

**Plain text** Text in a document that doesn't contain any formatting, such as bold characters and italics.

**PNG** Portable Network Graphics. A format for images that shrinks file sizes using compression but without discarding any data.

**PWA** Progressive web app. A website that looks and works like an app, which can be opened on both desktop and mobile devices. PWAs don't need to be installed and are supported by Chrome, Safari and Edge

**QR code** Quick Response code. A barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR-reading devices.

**RAM** Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. Its capacity is measured in megabytes (MB): the more memory your PC has, the more things it can process simultaneously and the faster it will seem. Any information in RAM will be lost when the power is switched off.

**RAR** Roshal Archive. A format for storing compressed files.

**Read speed** How long it takes a hard drive to 'read' data, and respond to it.

**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.



**Safe Mode** A way of starting Windows so that various programs and peripherals are prevented from working. This is useful to help diagnose the cause of problems if a computer is behaving oddly.

**Script** A short program that is stored on a web server to control part of a website. For example, a script could check that a date you have entered is valid, or move words across the screen.

**SD card** Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

**Security certificate** A file used by banking and shopping websites to verify the identity of the company running the website. Issued and guaranteed by third-party security companies.

**SIM** Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones. The SIM card carries the user's identity and phone number for accessing the network.

**Smart card** A credit card with an embedded microchip for storing personal identification data.

**Spatial audio** A form of digital surround sound that allows the origin points of different sounds to envelop you from all directions. Spatial audio requires a supported device to immerse you in its 3D sound.

**sRGB** A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

**SSD** Solid-state drive. Storage that 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.

**Timestamp** The time which an event is recorded by a computer.

**TPM** Trusted Platform Module. A computer chip that allows your hardware to perform security-related tasks.

**Two-factor authentication** A system that uses two different means to identify the user. For example, a code sent to your phone in addition to a password.

**UEFI** Unified Extensible Firmware Interface. A modern replacement for the BIOS, designed to get a PC into a state where it can launch an operating system.

**Ultra HD** Ultra high definition. Resolution of 3840x2160.

**USB 2.0/3.0/3.1/3.2** Faster successors to USB.

**USB-C** A new connector that's reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

**VESA** Video Electronics Standards Association. A standard mount for attaching monitors on to stands walls and PCs

**VGA** Video Graphics Array. An older standard socket for connecting a monitor to a computer.

**Virtual desktop** System of multiple desktops you can switch between from your main desktop.

**VPN** Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.

**Whitelist** A list of allowed websites, email addresses and programs used by security software to ensure you only visit safe websites and download safe programs.

**Wi-Fi 6** Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called 802.11ax.





**Widget** A small program such as a calendar that runs on the Windows desktop.

**Write speed** How long it takes a hard drive to save data.

**ZIP file** A file that contains compressed documents or files.

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# Easy when you **Know How**

When his system starts misbehaving, **Robert Irvine** vaguely remembers to...



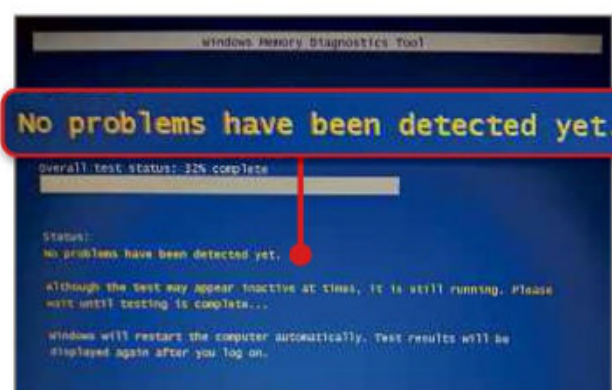
## Test his PC for bad memory

**L**ike most people, as I get older I find myself forgetting more things, and spending more time fretting about things I might have forgotten. Did I water the plants? Is it somebody's birthday? When is my column for *Computeractive* due? Whereas once I could answer at least half the questions correctly on *The Chase*, I'd now be roundly humiliated by Mark 'The Beast' Labbett and Anne 'The Governess' Hegerty.

Failing memory is no laughing matter, so I'll resist the urge to joke about losing my glasses and finding them on my head, and focus instead on my PC's recent misbehaviour. It's frequently been freezing and crashing while performing the simplest of everyday tasks, such as playing online videos, installing updates and opening dozens of tabs across three different browsers (okay, that one's probably my fault). All this pointed to a problem with its **RAM**. Naturally, you can't gauge a computer's memory by asking it the year of the Battle of Bannockburn or what colour tie Huw Edwards was wearing on *News at Ten*, so I decided to test it with a dedicated tool.

Windows 10 has its own feature for this purpose called Windows Memory Diagnostic – so does Windows 11, as I recall. To access it, I typed 'memory diagnostic' into the Windows search box, clicked the tool's name in the results and was immediately ordered to restart my PC to check for memory problems.

I did as instructed – after remembering to save my work – and was greeted by a blue screen that told me Windows was



Robert first tried the Windows Memory Diagnostic tool, but doubted its diagnosis



MemTest86 tests your PC thoroughly for bad memory but takes a long time to run

**You can't test a PC's memory by asking it the year of the Battle of Bannockburn**


conducting its memory check. I was reassured by the message that said "No problems have been detected yet" (see screenshot below left), but anxious that the line below stated: "Test results will be displayed after you log on". This was like the doctor saying: "You seem fine, but let's stick a swab up your nose and see what the lab says". After 15 minutes, my PC restarted and a taskbar notification told me that Windows Memory Diagnostic had not found any problems.

Unconvinced by this sketchy diagnosis, I sought a second opinion from a free tool called MemTest86 ([www.memtest86.com](http://www.memtest86.com)), which "tests the RAM in your computer for faults using a series of comprehensive algorithms". That sounded much more reliable, so I downloaded and ran the program.

MemTest86 starts from a USB stick, so I inserted one and followed its instructions to create and write a disk image.

Once this was done, I restarted my PC (again) and booted MemTest86 from the USB stick. I selected 'Use a device' in Windows 10's 'Advanced startup' options to do this. I then clicked Config on the startup screen, chose Start Test and waited while it ran through a series of intensive-looking tests. This took almost half an hour, with no errors detected, after which MemTest86 – presumably to be on the safe side – repeated the process three more times. Remembering that I had some shopping to do, I popped out for an hour and came back to find the blasted thing was still running (I suspect I should have chosen fewer 'passes' on the Config screen). I'd almost forgotten why I started it in the first place.

Eventually, the testing concluded and MemTest86 gave me a 'pass' (see screenshot above) and a summary of the results. It also let me save an **HTML** file to my USB stick with more details about its findings. So how many RAM errors did this agonisingly thorough tool find? None. Zero. Zilch. My PC's memory, it appears, isn't bad at all. In fact it's perfect. Perhaps, just like its owner, my computer is simply 'getting on a bit'.

 Need help with fixing memory problems on your PC?  
Let us know: [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)





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