



**SEARCH FOR WORDS
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**ADD WI-FI
TO YOUR
DIGITAL
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- ✓ Insert SD card
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Computer **active**

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Learn something new in every issue

GET ZERO PC JUNK IN 2022



Block & remove all the **NEW** types
of clutter slowing down your PC **p50**

✓ Invisible files ✓ Duplicates ✓ Useless software + more



PLUS

**DON'T BUY THE
WRONG
HEADPHONES**



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**UNLOCK YOUR
SECRET WINDOWS
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Keeping your computer free of junk is one of those ‘painting the Forth Bridge’ tasks (though Wikipedia busts that myth: www.snipca.com/40130). You never manage to completely wipe clutter from your PC. You merely leave space for more junk in future to accumulate.

At least, that’s how it always seemed to me. But I followed Robert Irvine’s junk-blitzing masterclass in our Cover Feature and eradicated more useless files than ever before, none of which have returned. Yet.

Robert’s challenge was to identify new types of junk likely to be pestering you

now and throughout 2022. In doing so he covers both Windows 10 and 11, which will be our policy in future issues of *Computeractive*. Some of you have upgraded, but many haven’t (or can’t). We’ll make sure our advice is relevant for both systems, so everyone feels included.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk

PS We’ve reached a Snipca milestone: www.snipca.com/40000. Wikipedia really does have a page for everything!



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

511°C

Temperature of a reader’s graphics card, according to one program – [p69](#)

777

Number of UK cyber-attacks thwarted by GCHQ – [p8](#)



6.8in

New size of the Kindle Paperwhite’s screen, up from 6in – [p26](#)

HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLS

We use snipcass 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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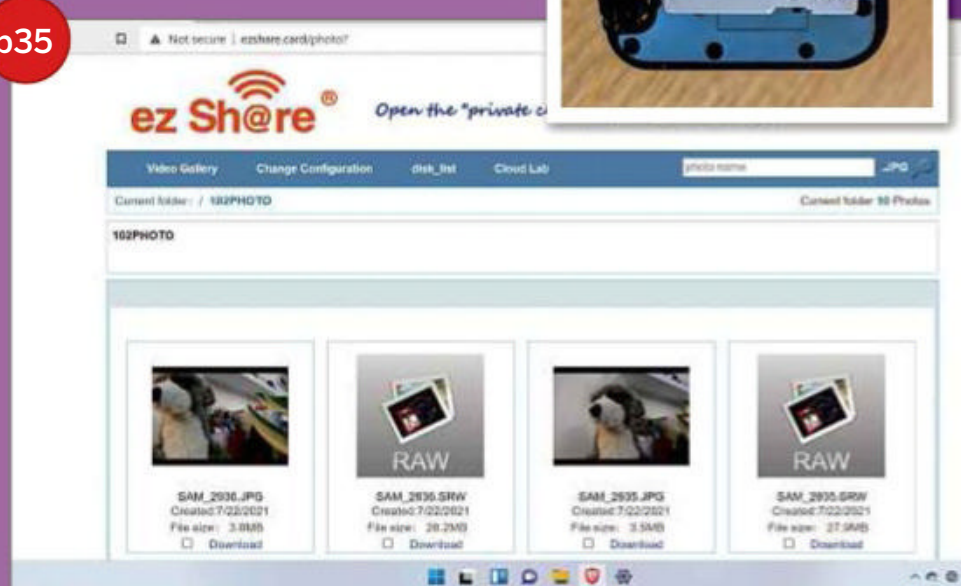


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Connect your digital camera to Wi-Fi

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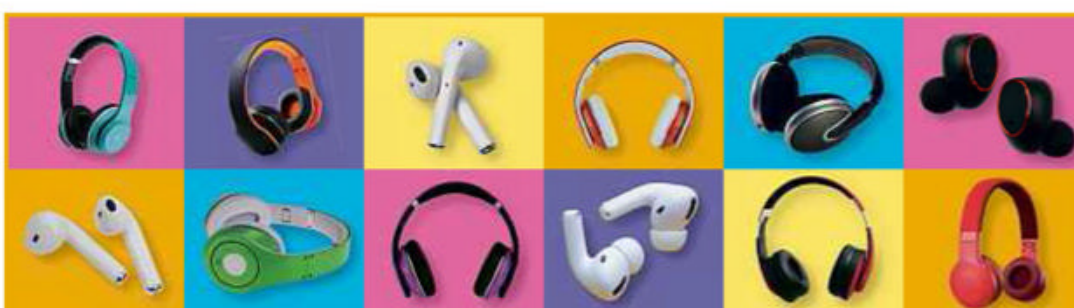
GET ZERO PC JUNK IN 2022

COVER
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P50



Block & remove all the **NEW** types of clutter slowing down your PC

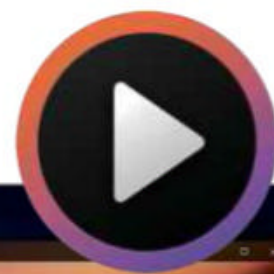
☒ Invisible files ☒ Duplicates ☒ Useless software + more



Don't buy the wrong headphones or earbuds

p60

New Windows 11 Media Player combines music & video



Microsoft has launched a new Media Player app that matches the design of Windows 11 and plays both your music and videos.

The app is meant to replace the old Windows Media

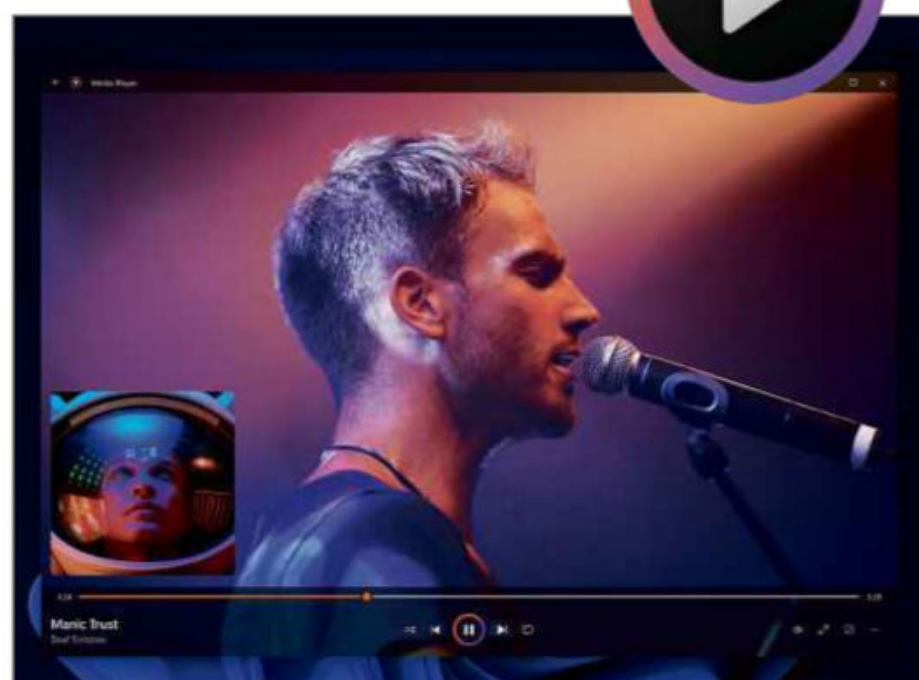
Player, which has barely changed in over 10 years, and the Groove Music app, which arrived as part of Windows 10 in 2015.

If your music is stored in Groove Music, your library and playlists will move automatically to the new app.

However, to use the new app you must currently be a Windows Insider in the Dev Channel (<https://insider.windows.com>). Microsoft hasn't said when it will be available to everyone.

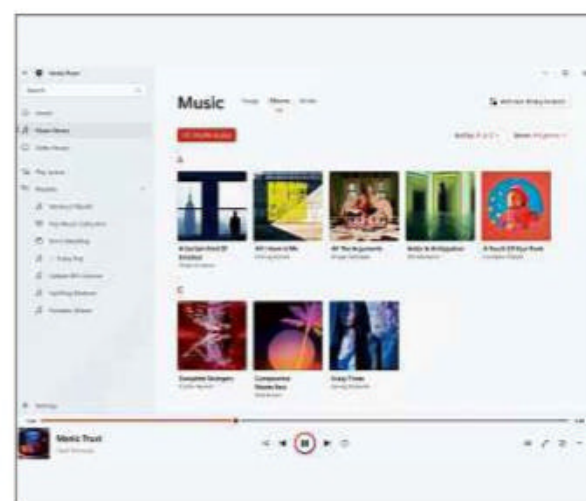
Writing online (www.snipca.com/40154), Senior Program Manager Dave Grochocki said the new Media Player “beautifully showcases your local music and video collections and compliments the new look and feel of Windows 11”.

When you play music, the app will show album artwork and photos of the artist both in its full-screen and mini-player modes (see screenshot above right).



It will automatically search your computer to find content saved in your Music and Videos folders, then add it to the library (see screenshot right). You can also set it to find audio and video saved elsewhere on your system.

Grochocki added that the new app has been “optimised for



accessibility”, with improved keyboard shortcuts for people who use assistive technologies.

He said forthcoming updates will add “new ways to browse your music and video collections and manage your play queue”.

The previous version of Media Player will still be available in the Windows Tools section of Windows 11. You can find this by searching for it through the Start menu.

WHAT WE THINK

Microsoft is often guilty of offering nine similar tools when just one will do, so we applaud this move. Being able to play music and video in a single app makes life simple. We won't miss Groove Music, which lacked many tools found in other audio players, nor the old Media Player. We'll start testing the new app now, as well as other tools Microsoft launches for Windows 11. But we'll also recommend third-party programs that add features Microsoft has left out – starting with the Cover Feature in our next issue.

WINDOWS 10 TO GET JUST ONE ANNUAL UPDATE

Windows 10 will now receive one Feature update per year, bringing it in line with Windows 11. It has received two updates every year since launching in 2015.

Microsoft confirmed the move in a blog post (www.snipca.com/40156) announcing the release of the November 2021 Update (version 21H2) for Windows 10.

It added that the next Windows 10 Feature update will be released in the second half of 2022, and that it will “continue to support at least

one version of Windows 10” until 14 October, 2025.

Microsoft is staggering the release of the November 2021 Update so it's available initially “to users with select devices running Windows 10, version 2004 or later”. To check if you can install it, open Settings (press Windows key+I), then click ‘Update & Security’, followed by Windows Update. If you don't see the update listed, click ‘Check for updates’.



You'll like this... Microsoft is recreating ancient Olympia in **augmented reality**
www.snipca.com/40101



but not this... Sky Broadband took 18 months to fix router security flaw
www.snipca.com/40157

Broadband complaints fell as lockdown eased

Complaints to broadband, TV and phone companies fell sharply between April and June this year as lockdown restrictions began to ease.

Ofcom's latest quarterly figures (www.snipca.com/40115) show that complaints fell "to levels seen before the Covid-19 pandemic".

This drop is probably due to the fact that fewer people were working from home than in the first three months of the year, and were therefore less dependent on fast broadband during

work hours. The fall in complaints also coincided with schools reopening, so children could return to their classrooms rather than rely on video lessons.

Ofcom said that complaints to Virgin Media fell "significantly" after the regulator raised concerns with the provider about its customer service in the previous quarter. However, the company still topped the number of complaints for TV services.

TalkTalk received the highest number of broadband



complaints with 19 per 100,000 customers. The industry average, according to Ofcom, was 12. It also topped phone complaints with 13 per 100,000 customers (the industry average was seven).

Fergal Farragher, Ofcom's Consumer Protection Director, said it was "encouraging to see complaints figures falling across the board", but warned that companies with a "consistently high number of complaints still have a lot of work to do to ensure they meet the expectations of their customers".

OFCOM TO PROTECT 5,000 PHONE BOXES

Ofcom has outlined plans to protect around 5,000 phone boxes in areas "with poor mobile signal or high accident rates". It has proposed four criteria to preserve payphones, including whether more than

52 calls have been made from it over the past 12 months. BT and KCOM would have to show that a phone box doesn't meet one of the rules before removing it. Read more at www.snipca.com/40116.

BT to build 'mole robots' to avoid digging up roads

BT is building robots inspired by moles and worms to help lay broadband cables without having to dig up roads.

The work is taking place at BT Labs, a new 5,000-square-foot robotics facility in Martlesham, near Ipswich. BT said researchers will team up with universities and robotics firms on major

engineering projects in the UK and abroad.

A major part of its research will be to develop "trenchless" techniques for laying cables, using tunnelling robots (pictured) to avoid the cost, time and disruption of digging up roads. BT said it's "expected" the work will "play an important role" in the company's drive to deliver



full-fibre broadband to 25 million homes by December 2026.

Other projects include clearing blocked ducts, and mending ducts that have collapsed. Robots are also being built that can climb towers and overhead cables.

Professor Tim Whitley, BT's MD of Research, said: "The lab will provide a hub for the creation of solutions to real-world challenges and pioneering applications of robots, reinforcing the UK's position at the heart of research and innovation into advanced technologies". Read more at www.snipca.com/40133.

BT ADDS NETFLIX TO TV PLANS

BT has added Netflix to its "flexible" Entertainment, Big Entertainment and VIP TV packages. The new plans let you upgrade to HD and UHD Netflix for £4 and £8

respectively. Customers who already have a Netflix account can transfer their details and saved shows to their flexible BT TV. For more information visit www.snipca.com/40099.

IN BRIEF

PLUSNET EMAIL 'TO CLOSE' SAY CUSTOMERS

The future of Plusnet's email service has been cast into doubt after several customers claimed they were told it's set to close in 2022. They wrote on Plusnet's forums (www.snipca.com/40119) that the company's support team said users would need to find a new service by next March. The comments were posted in mid-November following a week of disruption to Plusnet's email.

ITV HUB UNAVAILABLE ON EARLY YOUVIEW

ITV Hub will stop working on the first generation of YouView set-top TV boxes from January 2022, including the Humax T1000 from BT and the Huawei DN370T from TalkTalk (pictured below). YouView said it's because ITV is updating its "content protection technology". BT will contact customers to discuss options, while TalkTalk customers should visit www.snipca.com/40127 and search for 'ITV'. Read more at www.snipca.com/40126.



TOMORROW'S WORLD

This dog has just made a video call by grabbing and shaking a toy ball. It contains an **accelerometer** that detects motion and rings its owner's phone. Its creator - Dr Ilyena Hirskeyj-Douglas from Glasgow University - said dogs will learn to shake the ball when they're feeling lonely and need to see a familiar face. Watch it at www.snipca.com/40122.



IN BRIEF

GOOGLE EXTENDS CHROME ON WINDOWS 7

Google will continue to support Chrome on computers running Windows 7 until January 2023, a year later than previously stated. It will continue to receive security updates and fixes during this time. Microsoft is due to end Windows 7 support for Internet Explorer in June 2022, and Edge in January 2023.

APPLE LETS YOU FIX BROKEN IPHONES

Apple now lets people repair their iPhones at home without voiding their warranty. Its 'Self Service Repair' has launched in the US, and will come to "additional countries" throughout 2022. To repair a device, you'll have to order parts through Apple's online store. Models in the iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 ranges will be the first eligible for repair, followed by older devices. For details visit www.snipca.com/40136.



THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!



Called Themis after the Greek goddess of justice and order, this terrifying

device sounds an alarm if it hears offensive language being used. Its creators want it to encourage

"self-critique" at dinner parties and family gatherings, but who'd want to be invited to an event that was policed in such an Orwellian manner?



BBC's iPlayer revamp gives it Netflix makeover

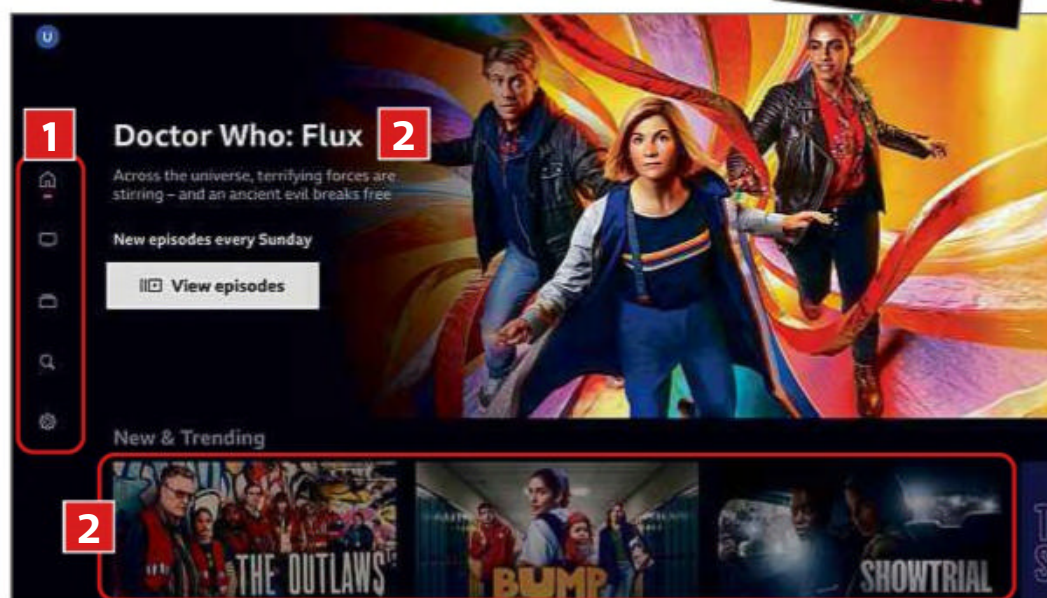


The BBC has redesigned the iPlayer app on smart TVs to make it easier to browse channels and find shows you want to watch.

It has moved the navigation menu to the left (1 in our screenshot), which makes it simpler to "browse different categories like comedy, drama or sport".

This change gives more space on the screen for other shows (2), so viewers are "more likely to spot something new to watch". Some viewers will see the change straight away, while others will get it over the coming weeks. You can get it early by opening the iPlayer's menu and selecting 'Switch to iPlayer beta'.

With a new menu on the left the iPlayer now resembles Netflix and other streaming



services. The move was prompted by research from viewers who said the iPlayer interface looked "old fashioned" and was harder to use than its streaming rivals.

Neil Hall, Head of Product for iPlayer, reiterated that in a blog post (www.snipca.com/40138), saying the redesign is part of the BBC's "wider efforts to modernise the user experience" across all its digital services and apps.

He added that the changes

will also be applied to how the iPlayer looks on the internet, and on phones and tablets, so it feels "consistent" wherever you watch programmes.

The new menu has been tested by "adults, children and people with accessibility needs" to make sure everyone can use it, Hall said.

It comes a few weeks after the BBC unveiled a new logo for iPlayer (pictured above), as well as for BBC Sounds and online news, weather and sport.

UK cyber chiefs block a record 777 attacks in just 12 months

The UK's leading cyber-security experts thwarted a record 777 attacks between September 2020 and August 2021, 54 more than in the previous 12 months.

In its annual review (www.snipca.com/40141), the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) said around 20 per cent of attacks were aimed at the health sector and organisations involved in the development and roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine.

In one incident, researchers working on the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine sought the NCSC's

help after hackers threatened them with ransomware.

Several attacks were linked to state-sponsored criminal gangs based in China and Russia.

The NCSC, which is part of GCHQ, said China was a

"highly sophisticated" operator in cyberspace, and had an "increasing ambition to project its influence beyond its borders", including stealing secrets from British companies.

The review reveals that the NCSC received more than 5.9 million reports of malicious content from the public via its Suspicious Email Reporting Service (www.snipca.com/40137). It said that these reports helped it to block more than 53,000 scams, and take down 96,500 malicious URLs.



iPhone users miss out on £750 as judge rejects Google lawsuit

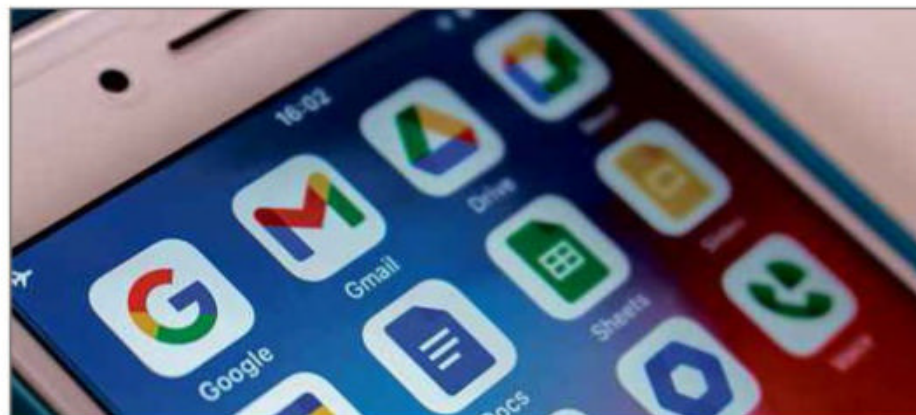
iPhone owners won't be able to sue Google for billions of pounds after the Supreme Court rejected a mass-action lawsuit over the company's alleged illegal tracking of users.

Legal experts said it means similar mass-action cases involving data breaches will struggle to succeed.

The claim, brought by former Which? director Richard Lloyd, alleged that between 2011 and 2012 Google's cookies collected user data on health, race, ethnicity, sexuality and finance through Apple's Safari browser, even when users had selected the 'do not track' privacy setting.

Lloyd was seeking compensation for 4.4 million users, which would have amounted to around £750 each and cost Google billions.

The judge, Lord Leggatt, said the claimant hadn't proved that individuals had suffered



any "material damage or distress" as a result of their data being collected. He also said that no attempt was made "to show that any wrongful use was made by Google of personal data".

However, he left open the possibility of future lawsuits if damages could be calculated, saying the case had a "real chance of success" if pursued by the claimant as an individual, instead of as a mass action.

Mr Lloyd said he was "bitterly disappointed" by the decision, adding: "Although

the court once again recognised that our action is the only practical way that millions of British people can get access to fair redress, they've slammed the door shut on this case by ruling that everyone affected must go to court individually".

He urged the Government to introduce legislation to make it easier for consumers to take mass action over data breaches by tech firms.

Google said: "This claim was related to events that took place a decade ago and that we addressed at the time".

Is social media 'killing the apostrophe'? Defo!

Sloppy grammar on social media is killing the apostrophe, researchers have said, after conducting the biggest ever study of written and spoken English.

A team from Lancaster University built a database of 100 million words to analyse trends from the early Nineties to the present. They found that people ignore apostrophes particularly when writing on Twitter in order to keep to the 280-character limit.

Dr Vaclav Brezina, who led the study, said the most striking change is how informal vocabulary and grammar has become.

He said: "We can see the emergence of dropping apostrophes on social media, but the question is how much more time will it take for this to extend to elsewhere?"

The decline of the apostrophe is especially noticeable after a plural noun – such as birds' beaks – falling from 308.47 uses per million words 30 years ago to 282.88 uses per million words today. Social-media users are also increasingly omitting the apostrophe where it replaces a letter, such as 'couldn't' and 'shouldn't'.

As well as looser punctuation, social media is



responsible for what the researchers call 'progressive spelling', such as 'gunna' for 'going to', and abbreviations like 'defo' for 'definitely' and 'tomoz' for 'tomorrow'.

"You have a selection of words that are strikingly different when we compare the old and new datasets," said Dr Brezina. "These come from social media in particular, where the medium itself forces the language."

Do you get annoyed by sloppy grammar on social media? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

ANOTHER 1.6M HOMES GET VIRGIN GIGABIT

Virgin Media O2 has made its 1Gbps broadband service available to a further 1.6 million homes, including in Bath, Fife, Huddersfield, Ipswich, Lancaster, Lincoln, Salisbury and Slough. The company says this means that more than 90 per cent of its UK network can deliver gigabit speeds. Read more at www.snipca.com/40100.

1976 APPLE COMPUTER SELLS FOR \$500,000

A rare Apple computer built in 1976 by co-founders Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs has sold for \$500,000 (around £372,000) at auction in the US. The Hawaiian koa wood-cased Apple-1 (pictured below) is one of only 20 that still work. It initially cost \$666.66 when sold 45 years ago. See details from the auction house at www.snipca.com/40098.



MICROSOFT KILLS OLD ONEDRIVE

Microsoft will soon end support for the OneDrive desktop tool on Windows 7, 8 and 8.1. It said updates will cease on 1 January, and from 1 March files will no longer automatically sync between OneDrive on your computer and your online account (<https://onedrive.live.com>). It wrote (www.snipca.com/40106) that you should upgrade to Windows 10 or 11 or, if your PC can't upgrade, upload files manually to OneDrive online.

Question of the Fortnight

How much does fast broadband increase your home's value?

Internet speed now the second most important factor for homebuyers

We are in the middle of The Great Resignation – also called, less formally, The Big Quit. Covid is the cause.

During the lockdowns millions of people reflected on their lives and have now decided to leave jobs they hate to find something more fulfilling. It's happening around the world, and is significant enough to have its own Wikipedia page (www.snipca.com/40167).

One aspect many workers are desperate to give up is the exhausting and expensive commute, preferring the easier journey to their home office, from where they can work online and keep in touch with colleagues via video chats. It's why homebuyers now value fast broadband ahead of proximity to a train or bus station, according to a recent survey of UK estate agents.

“A third of estate agents say 300Mbps adds at least £5,000 to the price of your property”

The research (www.snipca.com/40174), commissioned by Huawei and conducted by consultancy firm Omdia, asked 294 agents which single factor homebuyers rated as the most important. Broadband quality came second, on 20 per cent, below the size of the property (23 per cent). Proximity to local transport hubs, until recently such a crucial factor, has fallen to fifth



most important (9 per cent), below number of bedrooms (18) and age of the property (10).

Perhaps the survey's most striking result was that being close to work was only the ninth most important factor, below garden size and having a separate home office space.

Huawei executive vice-president Jeremy Thompson said that the pandemic has put fast broadband "into the category of essential utilities like electricity and water".

Nearly 70 per cent of estate agents said that since the pandemic began more buyers have asked about broadband speed, specifically whether the home has full-fibre connectivity. Nearly nine in

10 agents said buyers wanted a minimum of 100Mbps; a third said buyers wanted 300Mbps; a quarter said 1Gbps.

However, demand for fast broadband isn't spread evenly across the country. It's especially high in Scotland and the South West, where it ranked number one, and in parts of the North West.

Broadband is also important in London, but Foxtons – one of the capital's leading estate agents – said it was usually outweighed by other factors, notably "the price and perceived value for money, the size and type of property, provision of outside space, as well as proximity to local amenities and schools".

But how fast does broadband need to be to increase your home's value? It seems that 300Mbps is a vital figure, adding at least £5,000 to the price of a property according to a third of agents, though nearly 10 per cent said

THE FACTS

- Broadband speed is now the second most important factor when buying a home, after size of property
- A third of estate agents say new builds should have at least 300Mbps
- Ofcom says 18.2 million homes can get 300Mbps, though many people choose a slower and cheaper service

it would be more than £10,000.

A minimum of 300Mbps is also what a third of agents say is essential for new builds, while 70 per cent believe gigabit broadband (1Gps) would significantly boost demand for homes in their area.

The good news for homebuyers (and agents) is that Ofcom research suggests 18.2 million homes (62 per cent) already have access to 300Mbps. However, only a fraction of people pay for the fastest speed available to them, preferring a slower and cheaper service, keeping the national average down at 50.4Mbps.

Home workers are more likely than other groups to pay for top speeds, so this average should increase sharply soon – assuming the exodus from the office continues. If not, and The Great Resignation is swiftly followed by The Great Rehiring and a return to the office, then many may regret prioritising broadband over a five-minute walk to the station.

Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

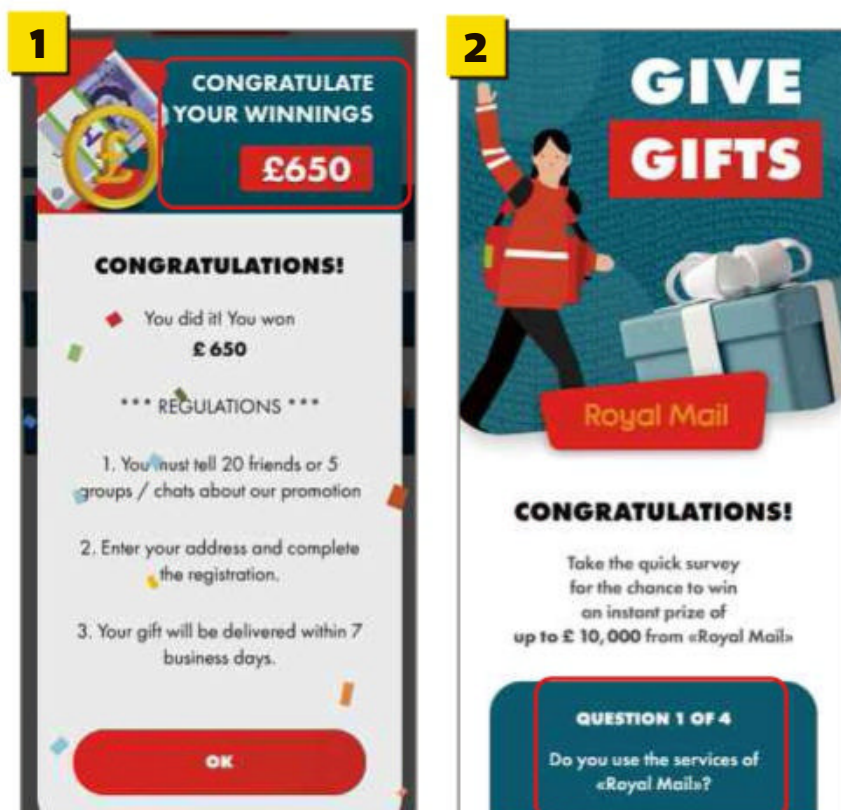
'Fleeceware' Royal Mail adverts

Scammers have created fake adverts posing as Royal Mail in an attempt to trick you into subscribing to a postal-tracking service that charges you \$70 a week (about £51).

The ads, which appear when you browse the web on your phone or tablet, have the headline 'Congratulate Your Winnings' and claim you've won £650 (see screenshot **1**). However, to get your money you have to tell 20 friends or five online 'groups/chats' about the offer.

If you click OK, you're taken to a survey asking whether you use the Royal Mail, your age and gender, and which social-media site you use most (see screenshot **2**).

After all this you're asked to download a postal-tracking app from the Google Play Store. The app's details are written in Russian, and it has many positive reviews – almost all fake.



How can you stay safe?

There are more warning signs here than you'd find on an army shooting range. For starters, there's the badly worded

headline ('Congratulate Your Winnings') and the too-good-to-be-true prize of £650.

You're also asked to share this 'promotion' with friends, just like chain letters of old.

The actual survey page has the Royal Mail logo and so looks a little more authentic, but those chevrons either side of the name are suspiciously odd. Even if you remain untroubled by this, seeing the app listed in Russian should be enough to make you think twice.

Avast spotted the app, describing it as a typical 'fleeceware' scam in which criminals try to con you into paying for a subscription you

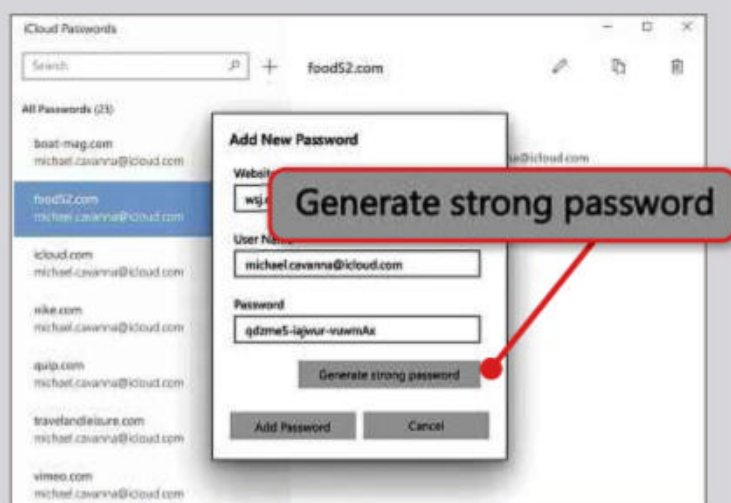
don't want – or one you *do* want, but at an inflated price. Never trust an app that unexpectedly charges you to subscribe, no matter what the fee.

New tools

Apple's iCloud for Windows v13
www.snipca.com/40077

If you're not keen on the poetry and film-quote passwords suggested recently by readers (see Letters, Issues 617–619), you'll instead need the services of a decent password generator. Your latest option, joining the likes of LastPass, KeePass and Bitwarden, is Apple's 'iCloud for Windows'.

The tool is mainly used for accessing on your Windows PC photos, videos and files you've saved on your Apple devices (iPhone, iPad, Mac etc), syncing them automatically. But Version 13, released in November, adds a password generator – simply click 'Generate strong password' as shown in our screenshot. The update follows Apple's decision in August to allow Windows



users to sync passwords through iCloud.

To install 'iCloud for Windows' you'll need to visit the Microsoft Store. Either open the store on your computer then search for **iCloud** and click Install; or visit www.snipca.com/40077, click Get, select Open Microsoft Store, then Install.

ScamWatch

Readers warn readers

Tesco's alleged 'exclusive award'

My neighbour almost fell for a scam text that claimed she had been 'selected to get an exclusive award' from Tesco. She tapped through the options until she was asked to give her details and give a verdict on the shopping experience at her local store. The scam then asks you to pay £1 by entering your bank details. Why would you need to pay £1 if you've been selected? My neighbour came to her senses at this point, and closed the app. She thinks the app may have taken her email address, but thankfully no money. It's yet another supermarket scam to be aware of.

Claire Patterson



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

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

My next PC might run Windows 12!

✉ I have a desktop PC and a laptop – both were refurbished in 2013 with 8GB RAM and SSDs. They both meet my requirements and are sufficiently quick. I would be loath to shell out £500 to £700 on a new computer that I'd only use in the same way as my existing kit.

When my machines do eventually give up the ghost, I'd be looking to replace them with newer refurbished machines. Other readers have suggested that even some 2019 machines aren't compatible with Windows 11. This brings me to the conclusion that it may be quite a while before I move to Windows 11, or can buy a refurbished machine with Windows 11. Although, by then, we might be discussing Windows 12!

John Davies

Why I rolled back to Windows 10

✉ In Issue 619 you pointed out that *Computeractive* readers seem to be dividing into three groups: those who have upgraded to Windows 11; those who can't or won't upgrade, and those who are waiting for problems to be fixed. I may be the sole member of a fourth group, which are those who have upgraded but rolled back to Windows 10.

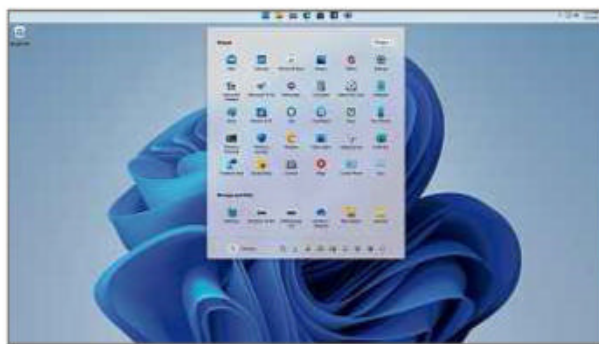
There's nothing disastrous about Windows 11, but it suffers from plenty of niggles that during a day's usage add up to one big headache. Here are some examples: it takes two clicks to access the 'All apps' option in the Start menu; I can no longer open File History in Settings; there are no icon thumbnails to represent folders, making it hard to quickly find and open the folder you need.

It's true you would get used to these quirks over time, but there are no outstanding new features in Windows 11 that would encourage you to put up with them. In my view then, Windows 11 is a good operating system, but slightly worse than Windows 10. That was the only rationale I needed to retrace my steps and return to Windows 10.

Robert Hodges

Third-party tools help to tweak Windows 11

✉ I was delighted to read in Issue 619 (page 6) that Stardock has released



Start11 (www.snipca.com/40003, pictured above). A few years ago I bought Stardock's version for Windows 10, which allowed me to tweak the Start menu to my liking. The Start menu is always the first thing I consider when deciding whether to upgrade to a new version of Windows. If it's too different from the previous version, or if you can't customise it, I tend to stick with what I've got.

With the launch of Start11, I'll plan to upgrade to Windows 11 in the next few weeks. I'll also be looking for other programs that help me tweak the system, so I can overcome some of the inevitable flaws. I hope *Computeractive* will help with suggestions.

David Rydale

CA SAYS Software developers are always quick to spot features in new versions of Windows that users want to change, or missing features they want to bring back. Stardock's Start11 is a great example, as is Taskbar11 (www.snipca.com/39878) – see Issue 619, page 38.

As more people upgrade to Windows 11, we'll continue to recommend programs that allow you to get it working

just the way you want. We'll start with the Cover Feature in our next issue – out Wednesday 15 December – which will reveal our favourite new and revamped programs for tweaking both Windows 10 and 11.

Donate old PCs to charity

✉ In his Star Letter in Issue 617 Roger Ley states that two of his three computers are not compatible with Windows 11 and asks what to do with them. He and others could donate them to charity. A quick search on Google will list charities such as Computeraid (www.computeraid.org/it-disposal) and Computers4charity (www.computers4charity.org).

John Duffy

Processor shortage 'no hardship' compared with last Xmas

✉ I echo the sentiments at the end of Issue 619's 'Question of the Fortnight', when you suggest that not being able to buy the latest gadget this Christmas is no great hardship compared with 12 months ago. Back then, I bought my grandson his first tablet, and hoped to give it to him in person. Covid restrictions meant I didn't see him until April.

This year is the opposite. It sounds like the processor shortage will limit my choice for presents, but at least I'll be able to spend Christmas day with him and the rest of my family. Given a choice between the two scenarios, I definitely prefer this year.

Ian Jefferson

What's the Issue...?

✉ I need to edit loads of photos I've got stored on OneDrive. In which issue did you give advice on this?

John Essex

CA SAYS It was the main tip in Make Windows Better in Issue 614, page 46.

✉ I need to partition my new 1TB hard drive, and I vaguely recall a Workshop recently explaining how to do it. Am I right?

Nigel Southern

CA SAYS You are. We gave instructions on using MiniTool Partition Wizard (www.snipca.com/38685) in Issue 609, page 40.

✉ I'm fed up with the slow charger that came with my phone. Have you ever recommended faster chargers that might prove good replacements?

Kevin Betts

CA SAYS We certainly did – in Issue 607 (pages 60–61).

Perhaps the processor shortage will make people reassess our obsession with pointless gadgets. I like to have fast-running phones, tablets and computers like anyone else, but whenever I go shopping I see loads of devices that don't seem essential. If people have to go without these at Christmas they might realise that they don't actually need them. If climate change is as serious as the experts say, we all need to consume less anyway. This processor shortage might just be preparing us for a future we'll all have to get used to.

Chris Duncan

China invading Taiwan will cause bigger crisis

This so-called processor 'crisis' is just a mild warm-up compared with what would happen if China invaded Taiwan. The Western world has somehow become dependent on a tiny island that's a mere 80 miles from the Chinese coast. It's estimated that the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) provides around 90 per cent of advanced processors needed for most hi-tech production.

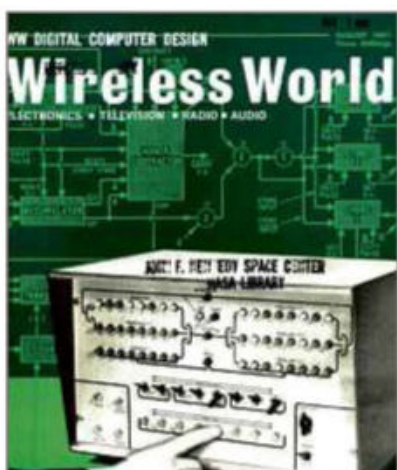
If you think the threat isn't real, consider that in October Chinese president Xi Jinping said that "reunification must be fulfilled". It's a matter of when – not if – China attacks Taiwan. When the news breaks, I advise you to rush out to Currys to buy everything you want for the next few years.

Andrew McShane

I built a three-byte computer in 1967

Reading Stuart McFadyen's letter in Issue 618 about using the IBM 6400 in 1964 reminded me of my first computer, which I designed and built myself in 1967 and was described in the magazine *Wireless World* (www.snipca.com/40095 – see page 366, pictured).

The computer had three bytes of memory, an 8bit word length and was controlled by front panel switches. It was designed to demonstrate how digital computers work and was capable of simple binary arithmetic. It



STAR LETTER

I deleted Facebook after 'one billion faceprints' scare

I've been using computers and the internet for over 20 years and consider myself reasonably well informed, but every now and then I read about something (usually in the pages of *Computeractive*) that makes me realise how little I know. This was the case in Issue 619 (page 9), in the story about Facebook deleting one billion 'faceprints' of users.

I had no idea such things as faceprints existed, and yet clearly enough time has passed since it was possible to record them that Facebook has collected one billion of them. That didn't worry me particularly. But given that I log into Facebook once or twice a day what *did* concern me is the question: have *my* faceprints been captured? Had I accidentally agreed to this by ticking a box that I didn't pay much attention to?

The news was the wake-up call I needed. I realised I'd been too complacent about Facebook and have deleted my account. I only used it to catch up on community news, and I find Nextdoor (<https://nextdoor.co.uk>) is more reliable



anyway, and was a great source of information during the pandemic.

But I also rely on WhatsApp for neighbourly advice, which brings me full circle back to the company that owns it: Facebook (or 'Meta' as it now calls itself). So, is there no escaping Facebook's tentacles? Help us *Computeractive*. You recently told us how to erase our info from Google. Which other sites should we be worried about?

Jane Hackett

CA SAYS Jane's right that it's not just Google which hoovers up your data. Facebook is another serial offender, along with other social-media sites. We'll offer advice soon on how to eradicate your data from them.



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

employed hundreds of reject germanium transistors and could be built by schools or hobbyists at home.

During development the computer was built on Vero board attached to sheets of wood, and you can watch this on YouTube (www.snipca.com/40096). It was put into a cabinet before being photographed for publication. I've noticed on YouTube that someone has built a replica using modern components (www.snipca.com/40097).

Brian Crank

Guess the password: round 3

I've enjoyed trying to work out the passwords of readers in the past few issues – it's given me some ideas. My technique is to use the first

letters of trivia questions. I go to a pub quiz every week, so I get a constant supply of good ideas. Because it's a question, I can legitimately use a question mark as part of the password. This makes it both easier to remember and harder to crack. After the question mark I use the first letters of the answer. Many of the questions and answers use capital letters, which again adds to the complexity. I always type a numerical code afterwards.

Here's an example of a password that I no longer use: WtccoM?KL. Can any readers identify the question and answer?

Gareth Foster

CA SAYS This is an interesting twist on the previous password methods mentioned in recent issues. Gareth gave us the answer, so we'll send a *Computeractive* mug to the first person who gets it right by email.



We stand up for your legal rights

My laptop is two years old, so can Currys refuse help?

Q I bought a £999 HP PC from Currys in November 2019, but it developed faults within the year, making it unusable. Because we were in lockdown and I wasn't aware that Currys was accepting returns, I arranged for it to go back to HP twice. But the company couldn't fix the problems. Although HP has issued a case number showing the fault is inherent and unrepairable, Currys is refusing to help, saying the one-year warranty has expired. Can you help untangle this?

Julian Rota

A Yes, we should be able to. The case was complicated by Julian dealing initially with HP rather than Currys. It's true that like many companies Currys was under immense pressure during the lockdowns, but it would still have had to follow the law by offering him a repair, refund or replacement. However, HP's repairs have shown that the PC is inherently faulty – and it has provided paperwork to confirm this – so Julian should go back to Currys and ask for a refund (it can't fob him off



with another repair).

We're concerned that Currys' sales staff, supported by the store manager, said they wouldn't help him because the PC is out of warranty. That's true, but if a product has inherent faults retailers must deal with it within six years of purchase (five in Scotland). Not for the first time, we're stunned that Currys staff fail to grasp this relatively simple law.

Julian wants a full refund, though Currys may deduct some money to reflect how long he's been using the PC. We'll tell the company that this wouldn't be fair, given the PC has been out of order for so long.

CASE ONGOING

Amazon seller has vanished – what can I do?

Q In October 2019 I bought a car jump starter costing £38.94 from an Amazon third-party trader. The starter is now faulty, but the seller is no longer on Amazon. I then contacted the manufacturer, Flytechlink, because it had a two-year warranty. It offered me a full refund or an Amazon gift card, but now it's ignoring me. What's my next move?

Dale Bradley

A Sadly, Dale doesn't have one. His contract is with the original seller who is no longer trading, not with Flytechlink. The company told Dale that the item shouldn't even have been sold to him.

It's unlikely even that Flytechlink will have to honour the warranty. Under UK law manufacturers have to honour the terms and conditions of their warranties, but Flytechlink is based in Hong Kong. Unless it deliberately targets UK consumers, it's not bound by UK law. Even if it did try to attract UK customers, it would be almost impossible to force it to abide by our rules, and far too complex and expensive for Trading Standards to pursue such claims.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE

Currys refund reader after yet another repair error



Currys has admitted it mistakenly told a reader he would need to endure a second repair, and has refunded him.

As explained in Issue 619, Les Hamilton told us that Currys insisted on repairing his JVC Fire TV (pictured) a second time, after the first repair failed within just five days.

In our response to Les, we said that we'd expect Currys' management would apologise for the error and refund him the full amount (£249.99). That's what has

happened, and it took nothing more than a nudge from us.

Currys realised it had to offer a refund because it had already attempted one repair, which is all that's allowed under law. Also, because less than six months had passed between purchase and the TV breaking, it couldn't ask Les to prove the set was inherently faulty.

Had Currys wanted to challenge Les's claim, it could have asked him to send the



TV for its engineers to check whether Les had damaged it, therefore invalidating his claim. Thankfully, it didn't do this.

We don't mean to pick on Currys on these pages – as the UK's biggest electronics retailer it's bound to appear in *Consumeractive* more than most other companies. But it's clear that high-street staff need better legal training, rather than just being taught how to sell extended warranties to customers.

Contact us so we can investigate your case

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

Who should refund me – Amazon or LG?

Q I bought an LG monitor from Amazon at the end of March, but within five months it became faulty. On Amazon's advice I dealt directly with LG. However, LG has said it's unable to give me a date when it will be repaired and has offered a full refund. I'm still waiting for this though, and Amazon is ignoring me. Is there anything I should have done differently?

Colin Fisher



A Colin could have insisted that Amazon take full responsibility for repairing the monitor, though this may have added to the delays. It would, however, have made it easier to get a refund because Amazon (as the retailer) and not LG (the manufacturer) is legally responsible to deal with faulty products. The Consumer Rights Act (CRA) does give retailers one attempt to repair a product, but this must not seriously inconvenience the customer.

Colin has waited too long for a repair, and so is entitled to change his mind and demand a refund.

To be clear: this is Amazon's fault, not LG's. LG is repairing the monitor under its warranty, which won't be tied to a time limit. Because LG has told Colin it's unable to give a repair date, Amazon must comply with the CRA and refund him in full. It has used up its legal right to attempt one repair.

We've contacted Amazon and LG about this so both companies understand what the situation is. We expect Amazon to do the right thing soon.

CASE ONGOING

Why has PayPal rejected my refund claim?

Q At the end of September, I bought two records costing £27 from an independent record label, but the order was cancelled before the goods were sent. The record label said I'd get a refund within seven days, but this has yet to arrive. I paid with PayPal, which rejected my claim for a refund. Can it do this?

Jordan Ingram

A From talking to Jordan, it seems he wasn't able to fill in PayPal's claim form correctly. We've given the company details of his case, and asked why it rejected his claim.

It's worth remembering that PayPal's Buyer Protection isn't covered by law. Instead, it needs to adhere to its terms and conditions, which state that it can refuse to refund a buyer if they don't meet specific criteria.

It's a useful protection, but we think




PayPal is getting tougher on claims. Since the start of the Covid pandemic we've seen an increase in readers complaining that their claim has been rejected, without reasons given.

PayPal has given us several reasons, such as customers not following the returns process correctly, or not being able to prove they arrived back with the seller. But neither of these apply to Jordan. He even has proof that the retailer never sent out the records he ordered and was preparing to refund him.

CASE ONGOING

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Epson's live chat got printer working

 My Epson 2711 printer (pictured) wouldn't print colour, despite me refilling the ink. I had to print some train tickets at 9pm (for early the next day), which was obviously too late to talk to a real person.

Instead I ended up using Epson's automated live chat, which asked me a series of yes/no questions, before suggesting I needed to clean my print heads. It showed me how to do this through 'Devices and Printer', via the Control Panel. By 10pm I had

the printed tickets in my hand.

I'm sure Epson's support team would have been as helpful over the phone, but they're allowed an evening off! I'm just glad their synthetic substitute worked so well. I've used many automated chats in the past, and Epson's was the best, asking precise questions and giving specific instructions.

Bill Reynolds

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



Contact:
Epson

- **Online chat**
www.epson.co.uk/contactus
- **Phone** 0343 90 37766

Grow Your Family Tree



Most of us have ancestors who served in the military. **Nick Peers** explains which websites will help you...

Add war medals to your research

Medals can reveal a lot about an ancestor beyond the fact they served in the military. A great place to start researching medals is the Forces War Records website – go to www.forces-war-records.co.uk/medals to learn which medals were awarded for which conflict. It may even help identify medals your ancestors left with the family.

If they received a medal for gallantry, then there's a chance their actions were noted in their unit's war diaries – read Issue 597's column for a guide to tracking them down. And if not, you can use additional information, typically their service number, to find more details from other records, as we'll explain.

Find ancestors who fought in wars

We'll start with ancestors who fought in either world war. Install the free FTAnalyzer tool (<https://ftanalyzer.com>), then open your family-history program and export your genealogy file in **GEDCOM** format before importing into FTAnalyzer.

Once loaded, switch to the World Wars tab (1 in screenshot above right). Click either the World War I or World War II button (2) to see which of your ancestors would have been of fighting age. You can filter the results using criteria such as location, relationship type and surname.



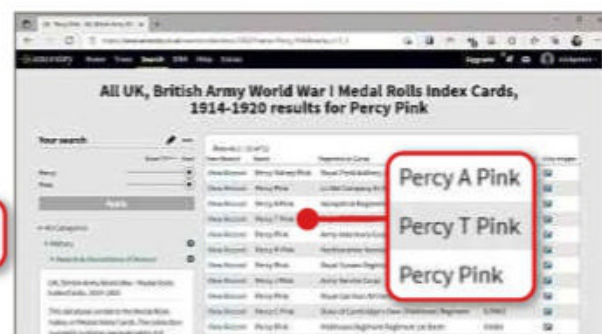
Select the World Wars tab in FTAnalyzer, then click World War I or World War II

Inclusion in the list isn't a guarantee that someone fought in that war – only that they were the right age to be called up. Some would have been ineligible on medical grounds, while others were in reserved occupations such as coal mining, but it gives you names to work with.

Search the British Army Medal Index Cards

Sadly, there are no army WW2 medal records online or at the National Archives in Kew. However, if you're hunting for ancestors who may have fought in WW1 then you'll want to start your search with the British Army Medal Index Cards. You'll find this on most subscription sites, but it's also available for free on Ancestry (www.snipca.com/39983).

You can search by name, or include a regimental number or corps if you know it. A simple forename and surname



A name search on Ancestry's British Army Medal Index Cards may give you several hits

search may throw up more than one potential match – we found several Percy Pinks for instance (see screenshot above).

If this is the case, you'll need to note down each potential match's corps and regimental number, then search for record series WO 363 in the hope your ancestor's records were among the 40 per cent that weren't destroyed during the Blitz.

These records contain enough information to confirm whether you've found the right ancestor, particularly when cross-referenced with other useful material, such as the 1911 census.

You can view a limited transcript of the WO 363 record set for free at FamilySearch (sign into your account and browse to www.snipca.com/39977 to search it). Select an entry in the results to view the conscript's age on enlisting and place of residence, which will help identify them.

If you still can't confirm a match, then the full WO 363 record set is available to view for Premium subscribers at Ancestry (www.snipca.com/39980) and Plus subscribers at Find My Past (www.snipca.com/39979).

For ancestors that served in the navy, try Ancestry's Naval Medal and Award Rolls, which span 1793 to 1972, so also includes WW2 personnel – visit www.snipca.com/39982 to search it (again, Premium subscription required).

RAF campaign medals are documented only on individual service records – see www.snipca.com/39981 for more detail.

Your Genealogy Problems Solved

Do you know when the 1921 Census will be available to view?

Laura Post

Find My Past, which won the contract to digitise the 1921 Census and place it online, has announced that it will be available for public viewing in early 2022 (see www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census

for details). You'll have to pay £2.50 to access each transcript, or £3.50 to access an image of the original census document. It will contain information not listed in previous censuses, such as education levels.

Have a genealogy question for Nick? Email 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

BACKUP TOOL

Macrium Reflect 8 Free

www.snipca.com/40092

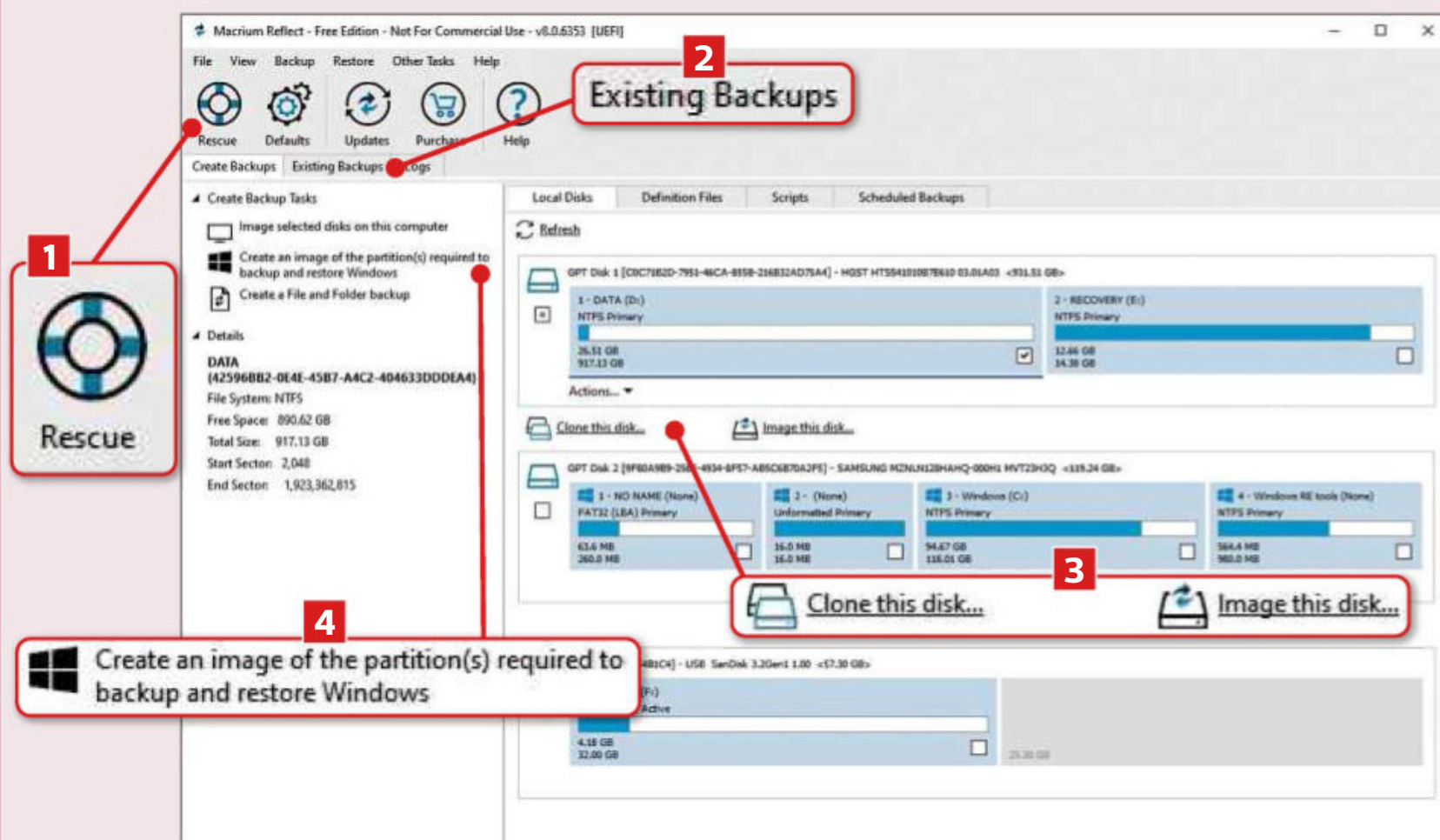
What you need: Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11

Macrium Reflect Free offers several ways to protect your data and Windows installation against malware infection, file corruption and system failure. It lets you create **disk images** of drives and **partitions** on your PC, including the Recovery partition that helps you restore Windows in the event of disaster. You can also create a rescue disk on a USB memory stick or in **ISO file** format.

This new version adds support for the **exFAT** file system, which lets you clone USB sticks and **SD cards** as standard internal drives, and create backups on external devices that are larger than those permitted by the **FAT32** file system. The program's Restore tab has been renamed Existing Backups to make its purpose clearer – it lets you open and browse backups you've already created and assign them a drive letter in File Explorer. It also improves the naming of backup files to make them easier to identify.

The program also lets you create WinPE rescue media on PCs running Windows 11. WinPE is a lightweight version of Windows you can use to troubleshoot problems, perform recovery tasks and even reinstall the operating system, so this is a welcome addition for Windows 11 users.

When you download Macrium Reflect 8 Free from the link above, you'll be offered a 30-day free trial of its Home version, which usually costs £50.95 and includes extra backup features, **ransomware** protection and technical support. The trial doesn't require you to enter your payment-card details, so it's worth a go – it will simply revert to the free edition once it expires. Note that if you stick with the latter, you'll still need to enter your email address to download the program, unless you get it from an alternative source such as Major Geeks (www.snipca.com/40094).



1 Click the Rescue button to create a **bootable** rescue drive, to restore your PC should disaster strike. You can either use a USB stick or create an ISO file.

2 The new Existing Backups tab lets you open backup files you've created using the program, so you can browse and restore their contents.

3 Select a drive or partition in the main panel of the Create Backups tab and choose 'Clone this disk' to make a copy or 'Image this disk' to create an ISO file.

4 Macrium Reflect lets you create a backup of the partition that's required to back up and restore Windows, which is a sensible precaution in case of system failure.



AUDIO PLAYER

AIMP 5.00

www.snipca.com/40086

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

Unlike most media players, AIMP focuses solely on audio files and offers plenty of useful tools for enjoying music on your computer. It supports every audio format you can think of and lets you customise its interface to suit your taste – your options include standard, modern and classic layouts, dark and light themes, and hundreds of **skins** created by other AIMP users. This new version lets you add ‘bookmarks’ to tracks in your library, so you can jump straight to the best bits, or resume listening where you left off; sort playlists automatically when you add new files or edit **metadata**; and quickly find lyrics and album art for songs from their file **tags**. AIMP 5.00 also expands the graphic equaliser with two new bands, giving you 20 separate sliders to play around with (see screenshot), and makes the program fully compatible with Windows 11.



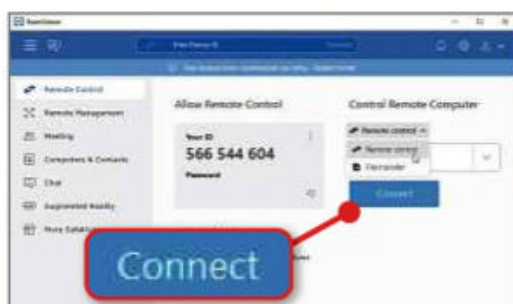
REMOTE-ACCESS TOOL

TeamViewer 15.23.9

www.snipca.com/40089

What you need: Windows 7, 8.1, 10 or 11, macOS or Linux

One of our favourite things about TeamViewer, along with it being free for personal use, is that it makes it so easy to remotely access someone else’s computer (and vice versa). The latest update to the program tweaks and simplifies its interface further by moving frequently used options to more logical positions. For example, the Connect button that lets you instantly connect to a remote PC has been moved to the centre right of the main window (see screenshot); your account information can be accessed by clicking your profile icon in the top-right corner; and you can now see all your notifications by clicking the bell icon next to the Settings cog. TeamViewer has also added a dropdown menu that lets you switch between ‘Remote control’ and ‘File transfer’, and when you shrink the main window to make more room on your screen, the navigation bar on the left will resize accordingly.



WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

Can I reduce background noise in video calls?

Q I’ve been using Zoom to stay in touch with friends and family since the lockdowns began. I sometimes have trouble hearing the person I’m talking to because of background noise and echo – but they say the problem is at my end! Is there any way to improve the sound quality in video calls?

Peter Jeffries

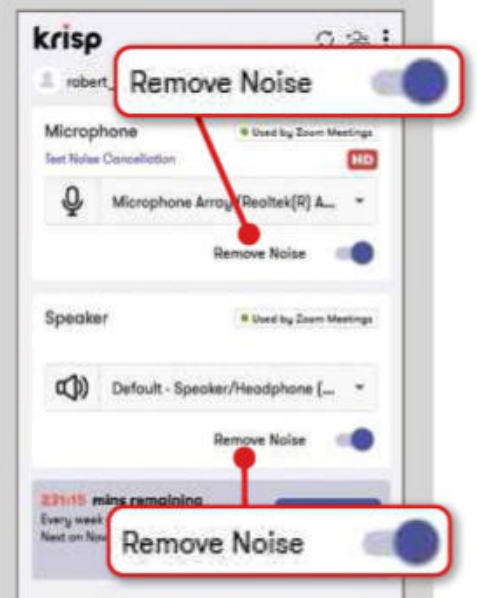
A You could try installing a program called Krisp (www.snipca.com/40091), which uses **AI** to remove background noise and echo from video calls to leave ‘only the human voice’.

When you install Krisp, choose which video-chat tool you use, from options including Zoom, Skype, Slack, Google Hangouts and Microsoft Teams. It then provides instructions for setting it up with that service.

In Zoom, for example, click the Settings cog in the top-right corner, choose Audio and select Krisp Speaker and Krisp Microphone in the Speaker and Microphone dropdown menus (Zoom offers its own ‘Suppress background noise’ option, but Krisp works better). Next, in the Krisp software, ensure your computer’s default microphone and speaker are selected, and that Remove Noise is switched on for both (see screenshot). You can test the noise reduction by clicking Test Noise Cancellation and recording yourself speaking.

When you start or join a video call, you’ll now see a Krisp **widget** above the Zoom window, that shows that noise reduction is active – you can switch it off if necessary and launch Krisp manually if the widget doesn’t appear.

Krisp is free for personal use and works for 240 minutes of video calls per week. If you need unlimited use, you can upgrade to a Pro subscription for £5 a month. You need to register with Krisp before you can download its software to your PC or Mac, but no payment card details are required.



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

HOW I USE...

Google Photos



David Ludlow explains how facial recognition and smart search helped him sort a sprawling photo collection

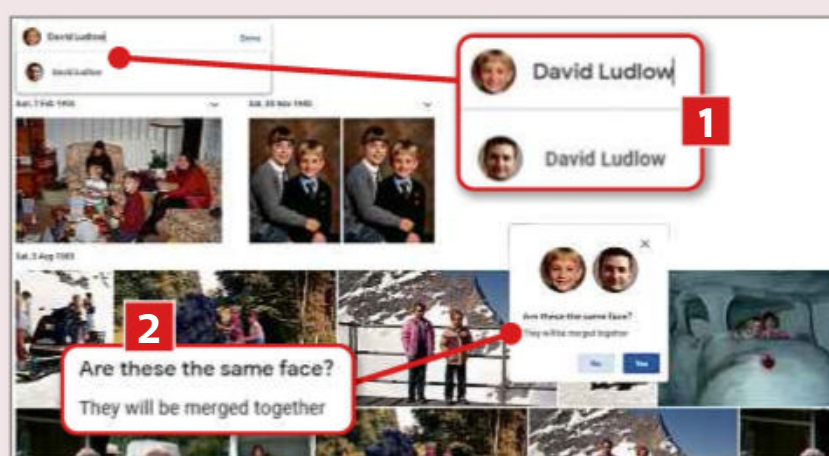
A few years ago my photo collection was a jumble of phone pictures, DSLR shots and scanned family photos of my ancestors taken in Limerick, Ireland, way back in the early 1900s. To ease this mess, I turned to the formidable organisational powers of Google Photos (www.google.com/photos).

I started by installing the Google Drive tool for Windows (www.snipca.com/40026), then told it which folders contained my photos. I then chose the Google Photos option, and waited while it uploaded my images to the service. Google Photos is also available for Android and iOS, so I set it to back up my phone pics.

Once done, there was a list of photos in Google Photos ordered by date. I wanted to organise them and add data, so I created an album for each specific event captured in the photos, such as a holiday. To do this, select the relevant photos (by clicking the tick at the top left of an image's thumbnail), then click the '+' icon and choose the folder you want to add them to.

Besides organisation, albums also let you collaborate more easily. For example, I was able to share my family photos with a historian in Limerick by opening the album, clicking the share icon (three dots connected by lines) and typing her email address. People you share with can add their own photos to your album.

But it's the search functionality that makes Google Photos truly powerful.



David tells Google Photos that his younger and older self are one and the same

photos. As the people in the shots are long gone and I never actually met them, I sometimes struggle to recall who is who

I can narrow down my photo search by typing keywords like **cats**, **boats** or **safari**, for example.

Google Photos also offers facial and pet recognition, which you can use by clicking inside the Search bar then selecting 'See all people'. Next, click any thumbnail image to view all related photos. Find people by typing their name, and remove incorrectly identified images by selecting them, clicking the menu (three vertical dots), then choosing 'Remove result'.

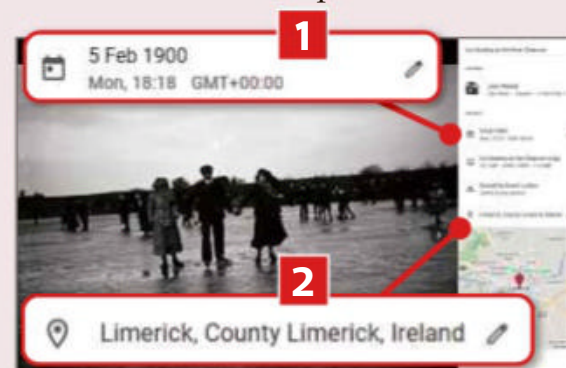
Google Photos' facial recognition can create two profiles for the same person – in my case it was because it thought the younger me (with blond hair) was a different person to the adult me (with brown). To solve this problem I simply gave the second profile the same name (ie, mine) as the first one, at the top left (1 in our screenshot above), before confirming that I wanted to merge the results 2.

I find facial recognition particularly useful for identifying ancestors in old

(is it Christopher Ludlow, my great-grandfather, or Edmund Ludlow, his brother?). Google Photos solves this for me, recognising family members automatically.

I also find it helpful to add extra location and date information. The former is added automatically to smartphone photos, but is missing from scans and DSLR camera snaps – so I click Menu, then 'Edit location'. Here I type the location and Google saves the results.

For dates, I select each photo, tap the 'i' icon and confirm the date (I set my vintage images to 1900, as I can't be sure of the exact year, 1 in our screenshot below). I can also edit the location 2 and enter a description. I can now quickly find any photo by browsing albums or searching for a person, place or word in the description.



Edit the date, location and description of photos to make them easier to find

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN GOOGLE PHOTOS

You can create albums that automatically add photos of your chosen people or pets, which is great. But Google should

extend this option to add photos that would come up in a particular search result, such as 'safari' or 'Christmas 2021'.

Named & Shamed



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

SOFTWARE WARNING!

Torch Browser's sneaky Avast download

It's hard enough for new browsers like Torch to get noticed with 10-ton gorillas such as Chrome and Edge crashing around the jungle. However, they're not going to drag people away from the big beasts by foisting unwanted software on people.



The Torch Browser team talks a good game. On their FAQ page (<https://torchbrowser.com/faq>), they tut at rogue download sites that add pointless browser toolbars with legitimate software. "In some cases, an optional toolbar may be offered as part of Torch's installation process," the FAQ explains. "This usually happens when Torch is not downloaded from www.torchbrowser.com, but rather from a download site or after clicking a banner ad."

It goes on to say: "The best way to download Torch is from www.torchbrowser.com – it will not include any offers."

Right you are. Except what's this when I click on the big blue download button on the Torch Browser homepage? It's a



'No thanks' means 'Yes please' in the eyes of Torch

pop-up with the Torch logo in the corner, offering me the chance to download Avast Free Antivirus. Call me an old-fashioned fact-hugger, but that looks like an "offer" from where I'm sitting.

Worse still, it's an offer you can't refuse, because when you click the 'No thanks, continue to download...' link (see screenshot), it whisks you off to the Avast website and proceeds to automatically download Avast's Secure Browser. We

were so stunned by this that we recorded a video of it to check we'd seen it correctly: www.snipca.com/39959.

I'm a fair-minded fella. I'm prepared to believe this is a coding cock-up where someone has accidentally put the wrong URL on the 'No thanks' link. But if Torch Browser stuck to its own promise and didn't include any offers, such errors wouldn't occur in the first place. Talk about torching your own product.

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?



WHAT THEY SAY

Facebook on changing its name to Meta
www.snipca.com/39958

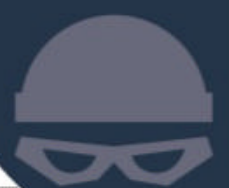
"We landed on the notion of Facebook as humanity's shared canvas – a place where people can come together and create unlimited possibilities. The 'shared canvas' concept manifests as a base layer of structured brand elements such as colour, layout and typography mixing with a more varied expression layer containing stories of the people who use our platform."

WHAT THEY MEAN

Is mentioning 'humanity' enough to make people trust us again?

BARRY'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

Lincolnshire's Love2Shop scammer



This fortnight's wrong 'un is so young the courts prevented us from naming him! But he wasn't too young to set up an elaborate online scam that could have potentially netted him £2 million.

The Lincolnshire lad got bored in lockdown and set up a fake website made to look like voucher site Love2Shop, paying for Google ads to encourage people to visit. He conned them into entering their actual Love2Shop account details, and collected more than 12,000 credit-

card numbers and 197 PayPal accounts.

He used these stolen details to buy **cryptocurrency** which by the time the police turned up was worth more than £2 million. All he got for his troubles, however, was a 12-month youth rehabilitation order and 150 hours of unpaid work.

"If he was an adult he would be going inside," the judge remarked. It was arguably too long spent inside that got him into trouble in the first place!

LAPTOP | £1,200 from Huawei www.snipca.com/39955

Huawei MateBook 14s

Dreamy Windows

We're at that curious moment in time when new PCs can come with either Windows 10 or Windows 11 installed. Mass-market laptops, such as this new MateBook 14s from Chinese manufacturer Huawei, would have been built before Windows 11 was finalised, so this comes with Windows 10 installed. However, the laptop is fully compatible with Windows 11 so you can expect Windows Update to recognise this and start the upgrade process soon after you switch it on.

“A jaw-dropping screen and it runs Windows incredibly well”

With Intel's Core i7-11370H processor, it offers a jaw-dropping amount of power for the price. The 'H' at the end of the name stands for 'High performance optimized for mobile' and indicates that it's one of Intel's fastest mobile Core processors. Huawei has also thrown in a meaty **heatsink** to help keep things cool, 16GB of **RAM** and a fast 1TB **SSD**.

The end result is a laptop that runs Windows incredibly well. In our PCMark 10 **benchmark** tests it scored 5,337 (a significant improvement on the 4,941 achieved by the £999 Microsoft Surface Pro 8 we reviewed in Issue 618, for example). If you like to play the occasional game or take to the air with Microsoft Flight Simulator, the processor copes admirably well, while maintaining decent **frame rates**.



The touchscreen is squarer than you'll find on most 14in laptops, with an **aspect ratio** of 3:2. While this means you'll see black bars across the top and bottom when you're watching a film, you do get more vertical headroom in Windows. This is perfect for seeing more of a web page or working on longer documents. The screen has colour accuracy, too, recreating 96 per cent of **sRGB** colours.

To test the battery we dropped the screen brightness level down to Windows' midway point, made sure the Wi-Fi was on and switched the power levels to 'typical usage'. It lasted for a highly respectable 13 hours 12 minutes. When the battery gets low, the supplied charger will provide three hours' life from a 15-minute charge.

We really enjoyed working on the keyboard. The keys have more **travel** than previous MateBooks we've tested, and the whole thing feels pleasantly spongy and very comfortable to type on. The trackpad doesn't quite match this. It's a decent enough size at 120x72mm, but we weren't impressed with the feel of it.

SPECIFICATIONS

Four-core Intel Core i7-11370H processor • 16GB RAM • Intel Iris Xe graphics • 14.2in 2520x1680-pixel touchscreen • 1TB SSD • 720p webcam • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.1 • 2x USB-C port • 1x USB 3.0 port • 1x HDMI port • Windows 10 Home (upgrade ready for Windows 11) • 16.7x314x230mm (HxWxD) • 1.4kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/39955

From previous reviews of Huawei laptops in *Computeractive* you'll know the company is in the habit of placing the webcam within the keyboard, providing a poor view up your nose. We're pleased to report this model positions the webcam more traditionally, just above the screen. It even adds infrared sensors to support Windows Hello, which saves you typing in a password when you switch your PC on. However, the **720p** lens doesn't produce great quality, with low detail and a smudgy image.

All in all, however, this is a great Windows laptop. It loses points on peripheral details, such as the webcam and trackpad, but we can't fault the Windows performance.

VERDICT You'll need to upgrade to Windows 11 manually, but this is otherwise a fast PC offering and great value for money

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Dell XPS 13 2-in-1 £1,199 Dell's devices have a lower specifications, but can be flipped 360 degrees and used as a tablet



PC | £1,000 from Chillblast www.snipca.com/40059

Chillblast Fusion Prime 11

Strong and silent

In Issue 619, we reviewed the Stormforce Onyx GTX 1650, a new Windows 11 desktop PC that's available for a very affordable £700. However, Stormforce had to make a few compromises to keep the price that low. If your budget stretches a bit further, this Chillblast Fusion Prime 11 is a more powerful Windows 11 PC that could be well worth paying extra for.

“16GB of RAM allows Windows 11 to run programs at peak efficiency”

The key distinguishing feature between the two is the processor. This PC uses a six-core AMD Ryzen 5 5600X, which has significantly more power than the Intel Core i3 found in the Onyx. The Chillblast also doubles both the RAM (to 16GB) and the SSD storage (to 1TB). The RAM boost is particularly welcome, giving Windows more headroom to run programs at peak efficiency.

To highlight the difference this makes, we compared the results of the two PCs in our PCMark 10 benchmark test. The Onyx achieved an overall score of 5,512, which is respectable for the price. However, the Fusion Prime 11 climbed to 6,741, which is a big improvement that



you'll definitely notice in day-to-day use.

The one area where the two are neck and neck is in their graphics capability – both PCs are fitted with an Nvidia GeForce GTX 1650 graphics card. We tested both systems with the same set of games and there wasn't much in it – indeed the Onyx actually pushed ahead of the Prime in some of our tests. So if you're chiefly looking for a PC to run games, the Prime really isn't offering anything more for the extra money.

However, look beyond games and there's a lot to like about the Fusion Prime 11. We particularly love how quiet it is. This is largely due to its watercooling system, which cools the processor by circulating water across it instead of dissipating it with air as a traditional fan does. It barely made a murmur during our tests. There is a low hum from smaller component fans in the PC, but they only kicked in during our gaming tests.

There are six USB 3.0 ports, as well as a Gigabit Ethernet and an HDMI port. Should you want to upgrade the PC at a later date, there's plenty of scope, with a spare slot for more SSD storage and enough room to double the RAM.

SPECIFICATIONS

Six-core AMD Ryzen 5 5600X processor • 16GB memory • Nvidia GeForce GTX 1650 graphics • 1TB SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • 1x Gigabit Ethernet port • 1x HDMI port • 1x DVI port • 1x VGA port • 6x USB 3 ports • Windows 11 Home • 426x216x400mm (HxWxD) • Five-year warranty www.snipca.com/40059



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), TechRadar (www.techradar.com) and Windows Central (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 quiet but powerful PC that's fast at running Windows, but it's not the best choice for games



ALTERNATIVE

PC Specialist
Wow Elite
Gaming PC
£980 Has similar specifications but a superior graphics card, so better for gaming



PRINTER | £169 from Amazon www.snipca.com/39967

Brother DCP-J1140DW

Works from home

Brother is best known for business printers that serve the needs of offices, rather than consumer printers designed for the home. However, with the recent changes in the way many people work, the company has shifted the focus of its inkjet range, launching new models aimed at home workers.

Our pick of the bunch is the Brother DCP-J1140DW, a 3-in-1 multifunction printer, which means it can print, copy and scan documents. It's compact, with a footprint that's not much larger than a sheet of A4 paper, and is 151mm high. It has a fairly conventional design, with a lid that lifts to reveal the glass A4 scanner bed and its inkjet cartridges are easily accessible via a flap on the front (pictured below).

“A decent all-round printer for the home office, though it won't do photos justice”

There's room for 150 sheets of A4 paper in the main tray and 50 sheets in the output tray, but there's no automatic document feed for the scanner and no single-sheet feeder for envelopes. You can still print on different paper types, but you have to unload the plain paper from the main tray and print from there.

However, the printer has a couple of features that are rare on printers at this price, namely its excellent 6.8cm



touchscreen and an ability to print on both sides of a sheet automatically.

We put Brother's speed claims to the test, and found it was indeed capable of printing at 17 pages per minute (ppm) for single-sided mono pages, with the first page popping out within six seconds. This is fast enough for any home office. And its speed doesn't drop significantly for colour documents (16.5ppm).

Pages of mono text are recreated with uniform boldness and clarity. Individual characters are darker than you get from a laser printer and almost as sharp, with no visible smearing. Colour documents looked equally crisp and smudge-free although the dye-based coloured ink cartridges are not especially bright, so don't expect colours to pop out at you.

Snapshots printed on glossy photo paper look acceptable but, again, aren't particularly bright, especially when compared with output from a dedicated photo printer.

You can load any type of photo paper into the main paper tray, but the printer clearly isn't configured to get the most from it because it doesn't prompt you to specify the type of photo paper used. Most other printers will adjust their print process to suit glossy or matt finishes.

When copying using the flatbed scanner, we found duplicates were accurate enough, albeit slightly paler than the original. The four inkjet cartridges that come with the printer are small and only provide enough ink for

around 200 colour pages. However, Brother also offers XL cartridges to replace them, which can bring printing costs down to as little as 2.8p per page. To get lower running costs you'll need to consider switching to an ink-tank model from Canon or Epson, such as the Canon Pixma G650 (£249 from www.snipca.com/39972) or the Epson ET-2750 (£249 from www.snipca.com/39988).

If you want a good all-round printer that produces better photos, we'd still recommend our current favourite, the Canon Pixma TS8350. At £217 (www.snipca.com/38079) it's a little more expensive, but is superb at both office and photo printing.

You could also save a bit of money in the longer term with an ink-tank printer like the Canon Pixma G650, which is also a good photo printer, available for £249 (www.snipca.com/39972). This reduces running costs to 0.4p per page for mono prints and 1p per page in colour.

However, for those simply wanting to print letters and documents, the Brother DCP-J1140DW is a decent, compact and affordable option, as long as you use Brother's XL cartridges.

VERDICT An affordable inkjet with reasonable running costs that's ideal for printing documents and letters

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Canon Pixma TS8350
£217 Capable of better-quality prints, particularly photos, but it's also more expensive to buy and run



SPECIFICATIONS

1200x600 dpi maximum print resolution • 17ppm quoted print speed • 150-sheet paper capacity • Wi-Fi 4 • USB connection • 151x400x343mm (HxWxD) • 6.9kg • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/39967

PC MONITOR | £389 from Very www.snipca.com/40022

Dell S2722DZ

Makes a good call

We've seen a handful of new monitors recently with built-in webcams, such as the excellent Philips 243B9H (see our review, Issue 613) and the slightly less impressive Asus BE24EQK (see Issue 611) – both are 24in models. If you want a larger monitor with an integrated webcam that isn't overloaded with features aimed at gamers, the 27in Dell S2722DZ is a good option.

“It has one of the best built-in cameras we've seen”

For starters, the webcam is one of the best we've seen, and will provide your video calls with significantly sharper pictures (1920x1080 pixels) and and sound quality than similar models. When not in use the webcam can be hidden away behind the bezel at the top of the screen, so there's no question of accidentally compromising your privacy as long as you remember to push it down once you've finished with it. There's also a mute button on the front of it that prevents it from recording your voice.

It uses two noise-cancelling microphones, helping the calls we made sound loud and clear. You can hear what's going on through two 5W speakers too. The camera can also be set to unlock your PC using Windows Hello face recognition, so you won't



need to type your password when you switch on your PC.

The 27in screen is impressive – it's a 2560x1440-pixel IPS panel with a refresh rate of 75Hz. It achieved some pretty good results in our tests, proving itself to be a good all-rounder, with excellent 99 per cent sRGB colour coverage and wide viewing angles of 178 degrees in all directions. Serious gamers should look for something with a higher refresh rate, but it's fine for casual games use.

It has narrow bezels at the top and sides, with a wider border at the bottom. You can raise the stand by 110mm from its lowest point. It can also tilt, swivel and pivot.

It offers a decent mix of connection options. At the rear of the monitor (pictured below left) you'll find HDMI, DisplayPort and USB-C (the latter is capable of delivering 65W of power to a laptop). There's also an audio jack socket, a power connector and a USB 3.0 port. There's even a second USB 3.0 port on the bottom, for easier access.



SPECIFICATIONS

27in IPS screen • 2560x1440-pixel resolution • 75Hz refresh rate • 4ms response time • AMD FreeSync • 1x HDMI port • 1x DisplayPort • 1x USB-C port • 2x USB 3.0 ports • 400x612x174mm (HxWxD) • 5.18kg • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/40022

VERDICT An impressive 27in screen with a high-quality webcam that's perfect for making video calls with larger groups



ALTERNATIVE Philips 276B9H £360

This monitor offers a similar specification but comes with an extra USB 3.0 port



CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

AMOLED screens



What does it do?

AMOLED (Active Matrix Organic Light Emitting Diode) is a type of screen technology that's becoming increasingly common in phones and tablets, and is a step up from the standard OLED screens typically used on TV sets. The Active Matrix is an additional layer that helps the screen show content more efficiently. The technology allows manufacturers to make phone screens with higher refresh rates and longer battery lives. Among the models that have it is our favourite Android phone, the Xiaomi Poco F3 (pictured).



How does it work?

Each pixel in an OLED and AMOLED screen is an individual light, so to control which colour is displayed, the device lights up each pixel by sending an electric current through it. OLED screens use physical circuits and tiny wiring to send the electricity straight to the pixel. The extra layer in AMOLED screens cleverly combines the required circuitry and wiring. This means the screens have higher response and refresh rates and use less energy than an OLED screen.

What are the specs?

When buying a device you'll find that manufacturers always clearly label which type of screen it has – whether that's OLED, AMOLED or any other screen technology. The point of confusion is Samsung's Super AMOLED. This builds the sensors that know where your fingers are touching the screen into the Active Matrix layer, rather than in a separate layer on the surface of the screen.

Can I change it later?

No, once you've chosen a device with a particular type of screen, you're stuck with it.

EBOOK READER | £140 from Amazon www.snipca.com/39996

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite (2021)

Read all about it

The latest version of Amazon's Kindle Paperwhite ebook reader isn't a massive update on the previous model (launched in 2018) but there are a few welcome changes. It comes with 8GB of storage, which may not sound like much, but will hold thousands of books. If that's not enough, there's also the Signature Edition (£180 from www.snipca.com/39998), which offers 32GB of storage.

The most noticeable change is the size of the screen, which has been increased from 6in across the diagonal to 6.8in. This means the device as a whole is slightly bigger at 174x125x81mm (HxWxD).

To accommodate the bigger screen, Amazon has reduced the thickness of the bezels around the edge, leaving the device with less wasted space. It's also heavier than the previous model, increasing from 182g to 205g, but we found it's still light enough to hold comfortably for long reading sessions.

The screen maintains the same pixel density (300 per inch), so doesn't offer

SPECIFICATIONS

6.8in 300ppi screen • 16-level grayscale • 8GB storage • IPX8 waterproof • 174x125x81mm (HxDxW) • 205g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/39996

any improvement in terms of sharpness and resolution, but it's noticeably brighter. We found it particularly good in low light, making it ideal for bedtime reads. You can even change the backlight to a warmer, yellow colour if you find the standard bluey white too harsh.

Amazon has also updated the charging port to bring it in step with most smartphones, dumping its **microUSB** port for a more modern **USB-C**. Amazon claims the Kindle Paperwhite lasts up to 10 weeks on a full charge, and can be fully charged in around 2 hours 30 minutes.

This Paperwhite may tempt you if you already have another ebook reader (particularly if it's cheaper) and you want a larger screen or USB-C port. You should also consider it if you've never bought an ebook reader before because it's relatively affordable and its features are more advanced than those in cheaper devices.

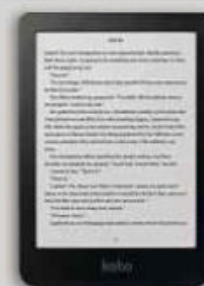


VERDICT An incremental update for Amazon's mid-range Kindle, but a good place to start if you're new to ebooks or looking to upgrade from a cheaper model

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Kobo Clara HD £119
This has similar specifications and is cheaper, but its screen is smaller at 6in



WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

How can I get keyboard spares?

Q I wondered if you knew of a mechanical keyboard I can get spare sets of keycaps and **switches** for, so they can be repaired if needed. I've had numerous keyboards from the likes of Corsair and Logitech, but I haven't been happy with how long they've lasted.

Adrian Smith

A There are a few companies that make the switches that go in mechanical keyboards, but

Cherry is arguably the best known, having produced computer keyboards since 1973. Its MX switches are used in keyboards made by other companies, and replacement switches are widely available.

We did some research on keycaps (the plastic cover that sits on top of the switch) and came to the conclusion that Cherry MX keycaps are also more widely available than most other brands and types. So it seems sensible to opt for a Cherry keyboard – such as the G80-3000



(pictured) – if you want to stand a chance of finding replacement parts in the future. The Keyboard Company (www.keyboardco.com) has a wide range of mechanical keyboards from multiple manufacturers, but you can filter down to just its Cherry MX range at www.snipca.com/39993.

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



Upgrade with Kingston

Upgrading to a solid-state drive and increasing memory are two easy and cost-effective options for increasing PC or laptop performance. Even relatively new systems see a significant performance gain when a traditional hard drive is upgrade to an SSD. Users experience pages that load faster and applications that launch quicker. All considered, the benefits of upgrading to an SSD outweigh the cost.



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** Speed may vary due to host hardware, software and usage.

*** Some of the listed capacity on a Flash storage device is used for formatting and other functions and thus is not available for data storage. As such, the actual available capacity for data storage is less than what is listed on the products. For more information, go to Kingston's Flash Memory Guide.

Reviews

PHONE | £599 from Google www.snipca.com/39985

Google Pixel 6

Snap it up

Google's latest smartphone comes in two models, the £599 Pixel 6 (which we review here), and the more expensive Pixel 6 Pro (£849). Both come with Android 12 and are powered by Google's new Tensor processor.

The Pixel 6 lags behind flagship phones from, say, Samsung and Apple, when it comes to performance. It's clear that Google's first foray into processor design hasn't achieved the same kind of speed levels. However, while this is cheaper than most top-end phones, it outperforms

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Google Tensor processor • 8GB RAM • 128GB storage • 6.4in 2400x1080-pixel OLED screen • 50-megapixel main rear camera • 2-megapixel ultrawide camera • 8-megapixel front camera • Wi-Fi 6E • Bluetooth 5.2 • Android 12 • 8.9x159x75mm (HxDxW) • 207g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/39985

rivals of a similar price when we put it through the usual **benchmark** tests.

It boasts 8GB of **RAM**, 128GB of storage and a 4,612mAh battery, which should last you a full day. The 6.4in Full HD (2400x1080-pixel) **OLED** screen is large, looks fantastic and has a 90Hz **refresh rate** for smoother browsing.

However, the best thing about this phone is its cameras. The Pixel 6 takes superb photos, enhanced using the Tensor chip's built-in software. Previous Pixels have had decent cameras but the Pixel 6 takes it to the next level - and in any light conditions, capturing the nuance of colours and shadows. It takes the clearest night-time photos we've ever seen from a phone camera. The only thing it lacks is a telephoto lens, which you get on the larger Pro version.

Another benefit of the Pixel 6 is that it



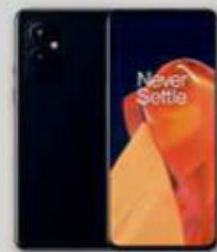
comes with Android 12, the latest version of the operating system. If you love Android, this is currently the best way to experience it.

VERDICT What the Google Pixel 6 lacks in raw power, it more than makes up for in its brilliant camera, Android operating system and reasonable price

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

OnePlus 9 £629
The fastest Android phone around in this price range, though its camera isn't as good



PHONE | £199 from Nokia www.snipca.com/39986

Nokia G50

5G at a cost

Those looking for a more affordable smartphone might be tempted by the sub-£200 Nokia G50. It's **5G**-ready and represents one of the cheapest ways to take advantage of faster mobile data. However, as you might expect, such a low price for 5G comes with compromises.

One of these trade-offs is its screen. While it's certainly large and bright, it only has a **720p** (1560x720-pixel) resolution and a 60Hz **refresh rate**. The Snapdragon 480 processor, meanwhile, is

SPECIFICATIONS

Octa-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 690 • 6GB of RAM • 128GB of storage • 6.82in 1560x720-pixel LCD screen • 48-megapixel main rear camera • 5-megapixel ultrawide camera • 8-megapixel front camera • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.0 • Android 11 • 8.9x174x78mm (HxDxW) • 220g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/39986

fine for general tasks, but it may struggle when using more demanding apps and games. These underpowered components do, however, boost battery life. The G50 has a 5,000mAh cell that lasted a couple of days in our general-use tests.

Unlike the Google Pixel 6 above, Nokia hasn't devoted too many resources to perfecting the phone's cameras. The main camera can shoot 48-megapixel snaps that are reasonably good in decent light. However, as soon as the light level drops the results start to disappoint, producing a visible graininess to images. It also features an **ultrawide** lens, but this produced significantly less vibrant and detailed pictures, with less contrast than the main camera.

If you *can* spend a bit more, it's worth splashing out on our current favourite



budget 5G model, the Xiaomi Poco F3 (£278 from www.snipca.com/38395), which runs more quickly and has a superior screen.

VERDICT This looks like a good price for a 5G phone, but compromises in performance, screen and cameras make it disappointing value for money

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Xiaomi Poco F3 £278
This affordable 5G phone significantly improves performance and screen for a bit more money



SECURITY CAMERA | £90 from Google www.snipca.com/40040

Google Nest Cam (indoor, wired)

Inside job

In Issue 616 (page 28), we reviewed Google's Nest Cam battery-powered wireless security camera, which you can use inside or out. If you only want to monitor the interior of your home, you can opt for this model instead. It costs half the price of its outdoor counterpart, and uses a three-metre cable to permanently connect to a wall socket, so you never need to recharge it.

“Easy to set up and use, but its best features require a costly subscription”

It's mounted on a dome-shaped stand so can easily sit on any flat surface, or you can mount it on a wall with just a couple of screws. It has a 135-degree field of view and a 6x zoom, and can record standard video and night vision. It records footage in Full HD (1920x1080 pixels) at 30fps (frames per second) and has a speaker and a microphone, so you can speak to any person (or pet) who's in the room from wherever you are.

When we tested it, the recorded footage was clear in daylight and at night. It uses **HDR** to improve the contrast, which helped us to see details in shadows, even when the sun was shining brightly through a window. Daytime footage is recorded in colour, but this switches to black and white in low light and darkness.

As you'd expect from Google, setting up and controlling the camera is very straightforward and all carried out via the Google Home mobile app, which is available for Android and iOS. You can



use this to see a live feed from the camera (pictured below left), while motion-detected footage is saved for up to three hours for free, or up to 60 days if you pay £5 per month for the Nest Aware subscription. The free option really isn't long enough, so you should seriously consider the subscription option. This also unlocks some additional features, including face recognition, which alerts you if a specific person passes in front of the camera.

Because it uses the Google Home app, it also links with Google Assistant, so you can control some of the camera's functions (such as switching it on and off) using your voice. You can even set the camera to switch on automatically whenever you leave the house, and switch off again when you return home.

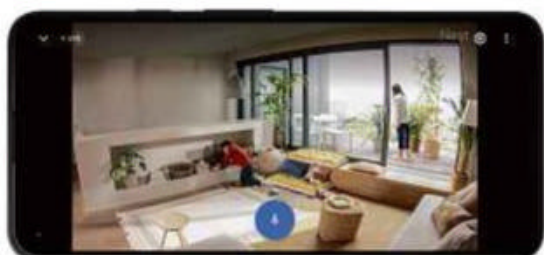
SPECIFICATIONS

1920x1080-pixel video resolution • 30 frames per second • 135-degree field of view • Night vision • Wi-Fi 5 • 98x64x57mm (HxWxD) • 393g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/39475

VERDICT A great home security camera but it can end up quite costly, especially if you want to take advantage of the subscription-only features

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Eufy Solo IndoorCam P24 £48 Has many similar functions that stores footage locally, so there's no need to pay for a subscription



DO I REALLY NEED...

5G Wi-Fi router?

What is it?

Netgear is about to launch the latest model in its Orbi **mesh router** range, the Orbi NBK752 (pictured). This **Wi-Fi 6** mesh device can use **5G** to connect to the mobile network, alongside the standard Ethernet port that connects to your landline.



What does it do?

It provides 5G access to the internet as a backup to, or in place of, a landline. This could prove useful if your current internet connection is unstable or slow.

What's the catch?

You need a 5G **SIM** to slot into the router and you must live in a 5G area. It's also expensive. UK pricing hasn't been announced yet, but in the US the NBK752 costs \$1,099 for a two-unit system. That's around £810.

So can I do without it?

Most people can, yes. You only really need a 5G backup connection on your router if your internet is prone to prolonged outages.

NEXT ISSUE

On Sale **Weds 15 Dec**

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An Android tablet that doubles up as a second PC screen



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

LAPTOP

Lenovo Yoga Slim 7 (256GB)
£692 from 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 £999 from www.snipca.com/40042

DESKTOP PC

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



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

ALTERNATIVE Chillblast Create Zen Fast Ryzen 5 CPU plus adequate GPU makes a superb work PC. £1,720 from www.snipca.com/35840

APPLE IPAD

Apple iPad 10.2in
£319 from www.snipca.com/36178
Tested Issue 566



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

ALTERNATIVE iPad Mini With an even better, but smaller, screen than the 10.2in iPad, the Mini also supports the Pencil and has 64GB of storage. £479 from www.snipca.com/33050

ANDROID TABLET

Lenovo Tab P11 Pro
£600 from 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. £319 from www.snipca.com/38606

APPLE IPHONE

Apple iPhone 12
£679 from www.snipca.com/36582
Tested Issue 595



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

ALTERNATIVE iPhone SE With a single camera and smaller screen but the same powerful A13 processor and 64GB storage as the iPhone 11, it's great value. £389 from www.snipca.com/34773

ANDROID PHONE

Xiaomi Poco F3
£249 from www.snipca.com/40078
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

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Buy It

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

EBOOK READER

Amazon Kindle (2019)
£70 from www.snipca.com/31621
Tested Issue 555



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

ALTERNATIVE Kobo Clara HD

Not waterproof, but has more lighting options to avoid blue light. £120 from www.snipca.com/32586

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2021
£14.99 from www.snipca.com/21532
Tested Issue 564



Kaspersky Internet Security has won our past nine antivirus tests and the 2020 version is now available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-year, one-device licence or buy a two-year, two-device licence for just £32.99.

ALTERNATIVE Norton 360 Deluxe

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but blocks more legitimate software. £16.99 from www.snipca.com/39570

WEBCAM

PRICE DROP

Logitech C925e Business Webcam
£70 from 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. £65 from www.snipca.com/38752

PC MONITOR

Iiyama ProLite XU2492HSU-B1
£156 from 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. £260 from www.snipca.com/39700

ROUTER

Netgear Nighthawk RAX80
£300 from 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. £177 from www.snipca.com/37675

PRINTER

Canon Pixma TS8350
£140 from 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

COMPETITION

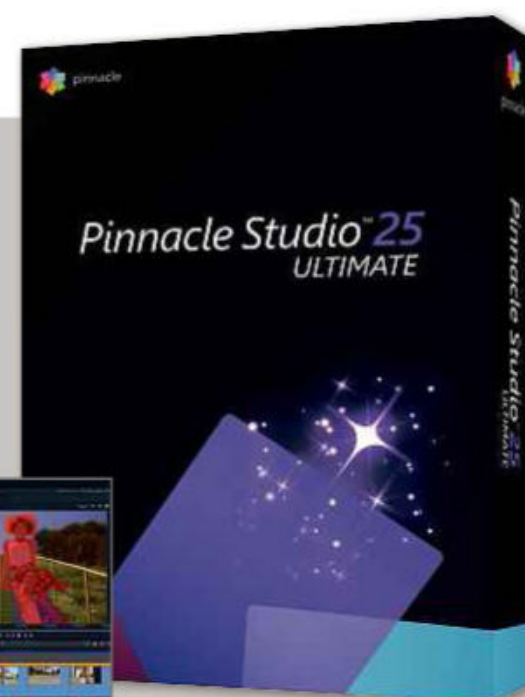
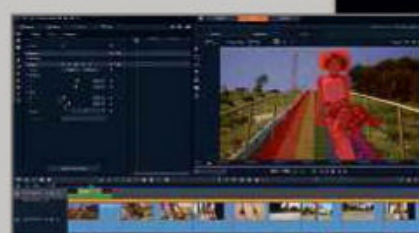
Win 1 of 6 Pinnacle Studio 25 Ultimate

Pinnacle Studio 25 Ultimate combines a full suite of powerful video-editing tools and a robust selection of creative effects to help you achieve stunning results.

With a wealth of new tools, it will help you exceed even your highest movie-making expectations. The latest updates include new Blend Modes that bring artistic flair to your videos by creating superimposed effects, blending masked areas and creating light bleeds, as well as other colour and exposure effects.

Also new is Smart Object Tracking (pictured), which uses shape-aware motion tracking to follow any object in your video. In addition, the new Advanced Audio Editing features ensure your audio sounds crisp and clear. You can even identify and remove unwanted sounds with Noise Reduction to ensure your voiceover or music track sounds perfect.

To enter this competition, answer the question at www.snipca.com/40039 and enter your details. It runs until



midnight Tuesday 14 December. Good luck!

Pinnacle Studio 25 Ultimate, Pinnacle Studio 25 Plus and Pinnacle Studio 25 are available to buy for £114.95, £89.95 and £59.95 respectively. For more information, please visit www.pinnaclesys.com. You'll find Pinnacle Studio on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pinnaclesys.

MESH ROUTER

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



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

ALTERNATIVE Zyxel Multy X
These two pillow-shaped boxes are powerful enough for most homes and provide four Ethernet ports apiece. £265 from www.snipca.com/27309

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Samsung 970 Evo Plus
500GB
£72 from www.snipca.com/31265
Tested Issue 552



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

ALTERNATIVE Crucial MX500 500GB
As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £60 from www.snipca.com/37304

SMART SPEAKER

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



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

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

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47 Make Office Better

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HOW TO...

Add a Wi-Fi card to an old digital camera

by Nik Rawlinson

What you need: Camera with an SD card slot; wireless SD card **Time required:** 30 minutes

It's long been said that the best camera isn't necessarily the one with the sharpest lens, the fastest reaction speed or the highest resolution: it's the one you happen to have with you, regardless of its specifications. You won't be able to take photos of impromptu events with your £2,000 digital SLR (DSLR) if you always leave it lying in a drawer at home.

It's no surprise, then, that the vast majority of photos taken these days are snapped on a smartphone, and the market for traditional cameras is rapidly declining. In 2020, manufacturers sold around 54 per cent fewer cameras than they did the year before (see www.snipca.com/39962). Admittedly, the pandemic confined us to our homes for several months, limiting our

opportunities for camera shopping – or getting out and taking photos – but that's not the only reason the camera market is shrinking.

So what is the main reason for this? It's simple: hassle. Apart from the convenience of always having your camera with you, the best thing about shooting with smartphones is the ease with which you can get your pictures out of them. There's no need to dig out a cable, connect the phone to your PC, navigate through a labyrinth of folders, work out which pictures are new, then save them somewhere logical. With a phone, it's wireless and all-but instant.

If you want to do something similar with a compact or mirrorless camera, or a DSLR, you'll typically need to buy a premium model, with wireless connectivity. And

even that's not necessarily a long-term solution. Many rely on being paired with dedicated smartphone apps and, if the manufacturer stops maintaining the app, you might suddenly find the wireless components inside your camera have nothing to connect to.

Thankfully, there's a solution – and it's one that works with most cameras, even if they don't have wireless built in. Here, we'll show you how you can add Wi-Fi to any camera with an SD card slot, and use it to wirelessly share photos with your smartphone or computer. We think it's the perfect solution for anyone who wants the option to take better quality photos by using a camera with a higher resolution sensor and more versatile lens, without losing the convenience of being able to share while out and about.

1 Buy and insert an SD card

Wi-Fi cards are few and far between. We've opted for a GuDoQi Wireless WiFi SD (£38 from Amazon, www.snipca.com/39963, pictured) because it's one of the few options that's readily available.

It has 16GB storage, and is rated class 10.



This GuDoQi SD card has 16GB of storage and saves 10MB of data per second

That means it should be able to write 10MB of data every second, and be capable of recording high-definition video without stalling at a resolution of 2560x1440 pixels (for more information about the different classes and what the symbols on SD cards

mean, check the SD Association's helpful web page at www.snipca.com/39964).

If you have a camera with a CompactFlash slot, this won't work directly. CompactFlash is a far larger memory format, with each card being 36x42mm, and either 3.3mm or 5mm thick. You can buy CompactFlash adapters into which you can slot an SD card (such as this £9 model from



If your camera has a CompactFlash slot buy an adapter like this £9 model to use an SD card

www.snipca.com/39965, pictured above).

Once you've inserted the SD card into your camera, you can use it like any regular memory card. On our 12.4-megapixel camera (a nine-year-old Samsung EX2F, pictured below), it had capacity for 434 photos, which should be enough for most short breaks – especially if you delete unwanted photos as you go.

You don't need to think about the wireless features at this stage – and, indeed, you can disable the sharing features by sliding the switch on the bottom edge (pictured bottom of page) and, in doing so, help conserve your camera battery.

When you're looking at the front of the card, with the connectors uppermost but facing away from you, sliding the switch to the left disables Wi-Fi. Sliding it to the right turns it on. This means the switch is accessible when the card is still in the camera, so you don't need to keep removing it.



We saved 434 shots on the SD card inserted into our Samsung EX2F camera

Disable/enable the wireless network using the Share switch on the SD card



How I use wireless camera connections



I have more cameras than I know what to do with. Unfortunately, very few of them get taken out on an away day for precisely the reason mentioned in the introduction: I can't be bothered to download the photos. Building a tiny web server and the necessary components to broadcast a wireless network into an SD card greatly simplifies the task of getting

a Wi-Fi connection to each of my cameras, because I can just move the card between them. Better still, the fact I can download my photos through a browser means I'm not restricted to using an app on my phone, which developers may end support for without warning.

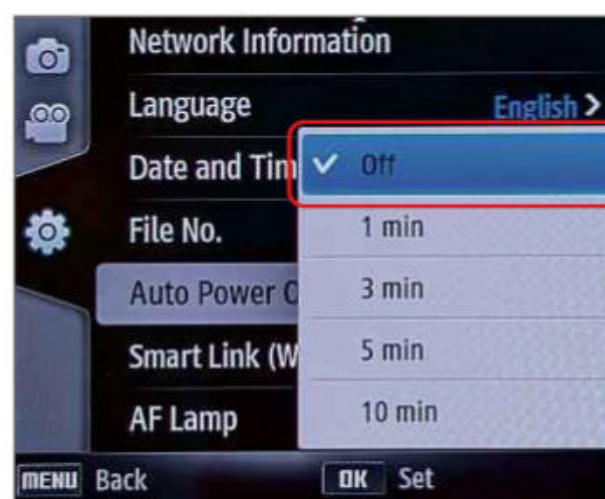
Nik Rawlinson

How do you use wireless camera connections? Please let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

2 Connect your camera

When you're ready to download your pictures, make sure the SD card's switch is pushed towards Share (to the right when looking at the front), then turn on your camera. This sends power to the card, which it uses to establish a wireless signal, similar to the one transmitted by your broadband router. However, as soon as the power is cut – as will happen if your camera goes to sleep – the network will drop out and anything connected to it will disconnect. If you're simply downloading one or two photos this might not be a problem, but if you want to transfer a whole shoot you may run out of time.

To get around this, make sure your camera is set to stay awake permanently or for extended periods. The exact process for doing this varies between camera models. On our Samsung camera, we pressed the menu button, then used the four-way controller on the back of the camera to highlight the cog icon on the rear-mounted screen. Selecting this took us into the full Settings menu. We used the same control to navigate to Auto



Turn off Auto Power (or similar) in your camera's settings – as we've done in our Samsung model – to stop downloads being disrupted

Power Off, on the second page of settings. This was initially set to three minutes, so we selected it by pressing the button at the centre of the navigation controls, and changed the setting to Off (see screenshot above).

As this disabled the power-off function entirely, we made a note to return the setting to three minutes when we'd finished transferring our photos. Next, exit the menus, then switch to your PC or mobile phone.

3 Connect your Windows computer

Click the Wi-Fi icon on the right of the taskbar and, if you're using Windows 10, click the 'ez Share' network entry. If you're using Windows 11, this setting has changed slightly, so click the right-hand half of the split network button, immediately above the name of your current network, then click 'ez Share' in the list of networks this reveals.

Whichever version of Windows you're using, if you don't see 'ez Share'



Type **88888888** and Windows will be able to detect the required 'ez Share' network

immediately, move the camera closer to your computer and wait a few seconds for Windows to refresh the list of detected networks. If it still doesn't appear, double-check that the switch on the card is set to Share. When asked for a network security key, type **88888888** (eight eights, see screenshot above), then click Next, followed by Connect.

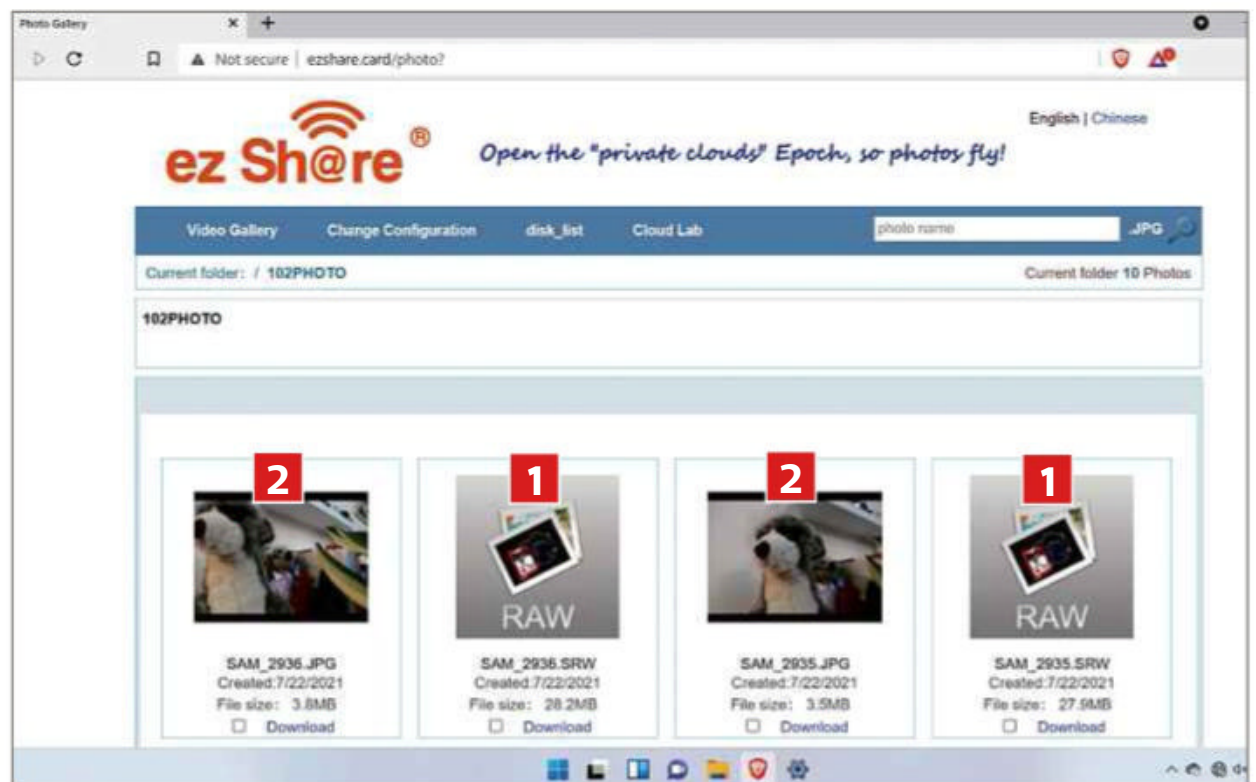
4 Connect an Android or iOS device

On an Android phone or tablet, swipe down from the top of the screen, then swipe down a second time on the buttons on the top panel to reveal the cog button. Tap this to open Android's Settings app. Tap 'Network and Internet', followed by Internet, and wait for your phone to detect all the available networks within range. Tap 'ez Share' and, when prompted for a password, type **88888888**.

On an iPhone or iPad, open the Settings app and tap Wi-Fi. Wait for the device to compile a list of the networks it can find, then tap 'ez Share' and type **88888888** when prompted for a password.

5 Download your photos

Open a new browser window and type <http://ez/> in the address bar. You don't need to type a '.com', '.co.uk' or other suffix, because the network intercepts whatever you type into the browser and redirects it to the SD card's internal web server. You'll now see a grid showing the files on your card. As you can see from our screenshot above right, we've shot a mix of **RAW** files **1** and **JPEGs** **2**. While the latter can be read by just about any device, RAW files are often unique to each manufacturer, which



JPEGs provide thumbnail previews, while RAW files need more processing to be viewed

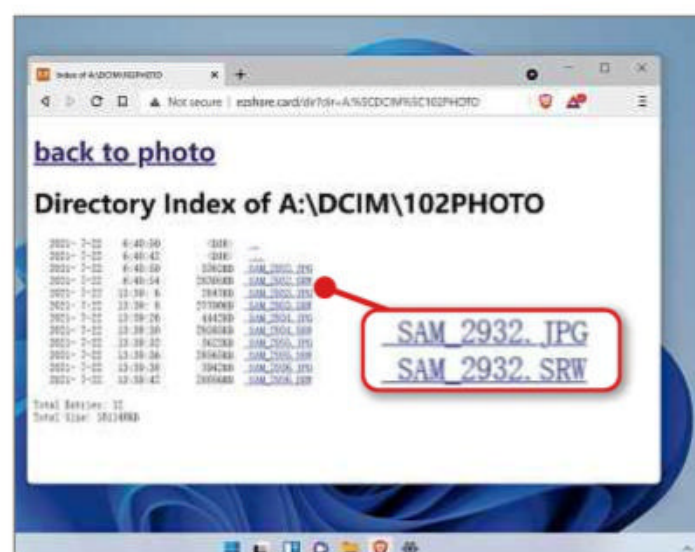
is why they don't have accompanying preview thumbnails in our screenshot.

We recommend downloading RAW files to your phone or tablet only if you have an app that can handle them, as they will probably take up far more space than the equivalent JPEGs (which will be wasted if you can't use them).

Clicking a thumbnail shows a larger version, accompanied by a Download button. This is your only option if you're using a phone to download your photos. On an iPhone, tapping Download pops up an alert, asking you to confirm the action. If you tap Download here, the image will be saved in the Files app. To find it, open Files, then tap Recents on the bottom bar.

On an Android device, tapping Download opens a second screen, where you can navigate the phone's internal folders. When you reach the folder you want to save the photo to, tap Save.

Things are more flexible on a computer.



Each sub-directory on your card will show the photos saved inside

You can open a full image in the browser, just as you can on a phone, but it's also easier to distinguish between images using the thumbnails than it is on a phone. You can simply click the boxes below the pictures you want to transfer and, once you've selected them all, scroll to the bottom of the page and click 'Download selected photos'.

Alternatively, if you're using a computer and want to retrieve everything from the card, you can ignore the boxes and instead click the 'Download current folder' button at the bottom of the page. Downloads will be handled much like regular downloads from the internet so, by default, will be sent to your Downloads folder unless you've set your browser to save them elsewhere.

If you can't see some photos you're expecting, or there are so many pictures you're finding it difficult to navigate them, you can instead work your way manually through the folders on the SD card. Click 'disk_list' on the blue toolbar above your photos, then click through the directories that appear.

Many cameras have a **DCIM** folder at the top level, with sequentially numbered sub-directories inside it, each of which can contain up to 100 photos (see screenshot left). When a sub-directory is full, a new one will be created. So, your most recent shots should be in the highest-numbered directory within the DCIM folder. Click a folder name to open it, then click a file name to download the photo.

Workshop1

Search for text within your screenshots

What you need: Screenotate for Windows

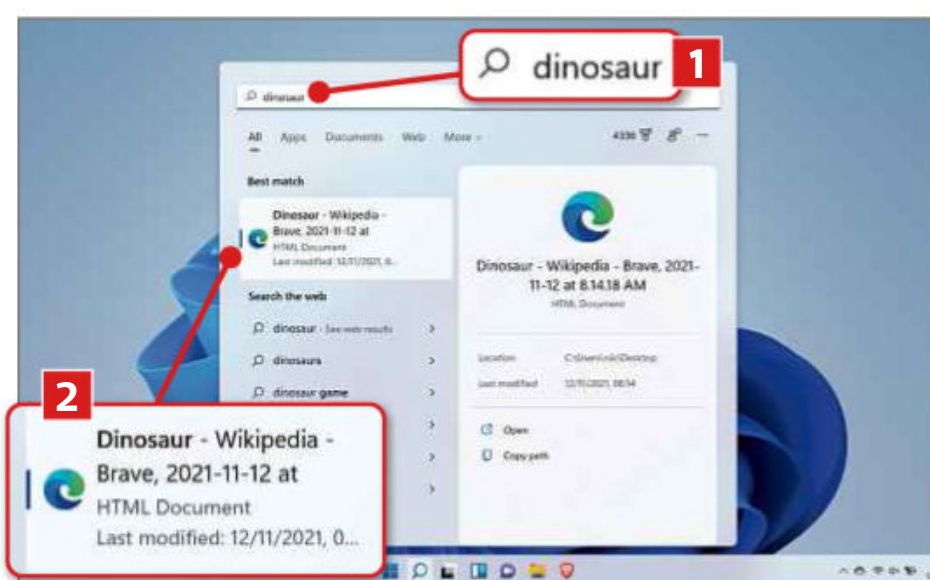
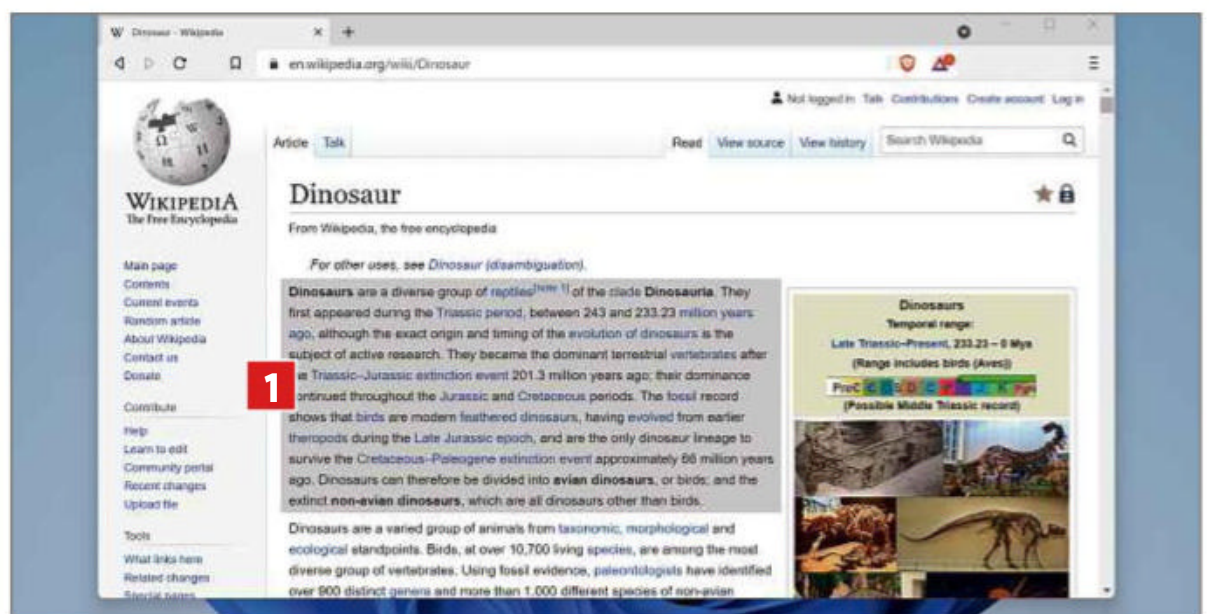
Time required: 20 minutes

Pressing PrtSc on your keyboard copies an image of your screen to your clipboard. From there, you can paste it into documents and share it with friends. But that's about it. If you want to save a screenful of text to keep for future reference, you'll end up with an image which might be difficult to find later. While you could use a long, descriptive file name to

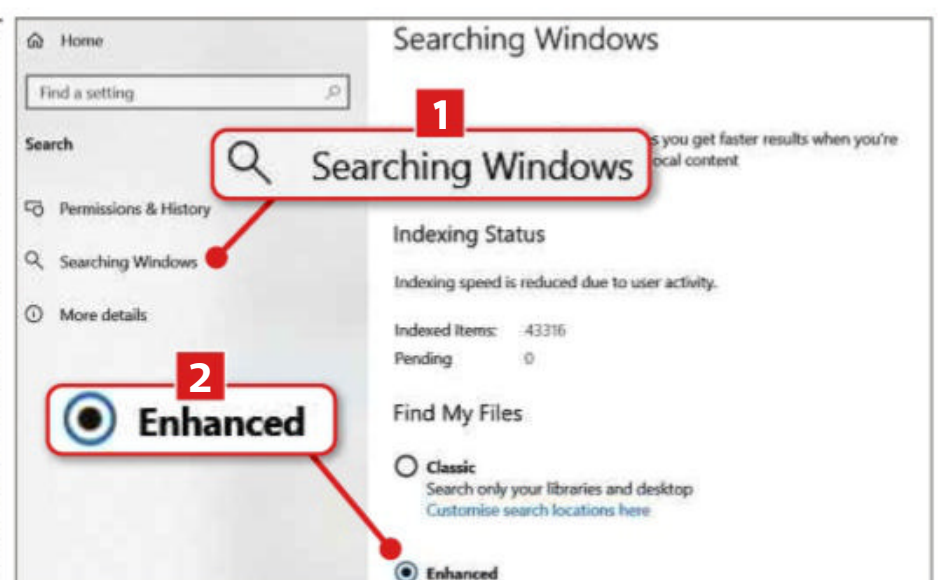
make searches easier, wouldn't it be better if you could extract the text from your screenshot and save it in a document? That way you could use Windows' built-in search tool to find it more easily and, should you need to reference it in your work, you can simply copy and paste from the document directly. In this Workshop, we'll show you how to do that.



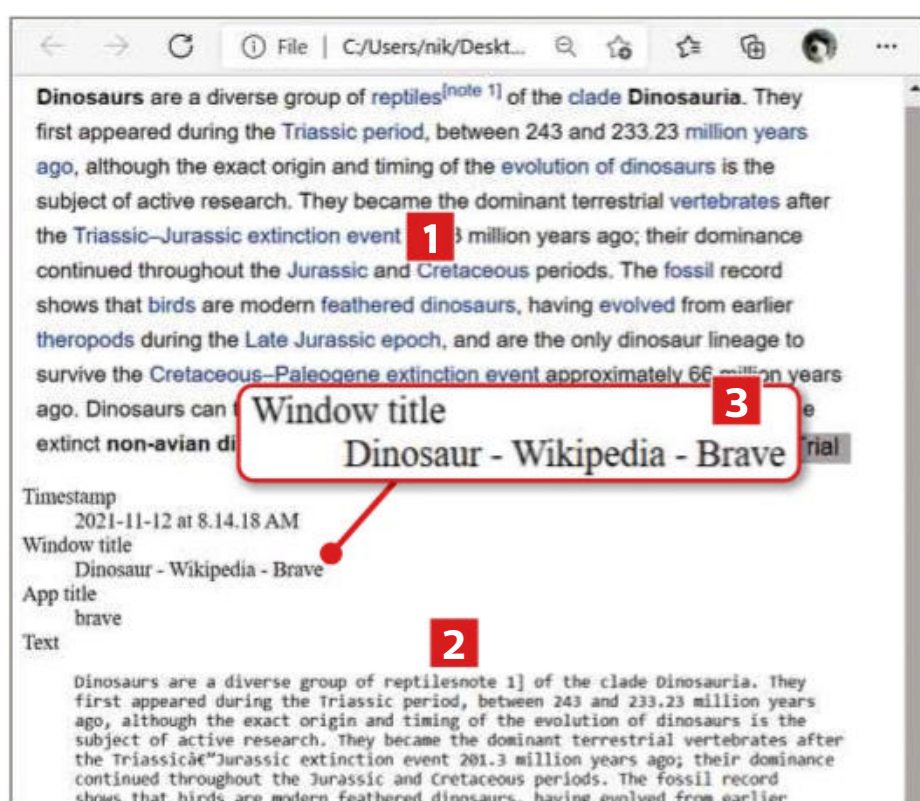
STEP 1 Download Screenotate for Windows from www.screenotate.com. When the download is complete, launch the program and click OK on the first two screens you see. This will bypass the option to buy it or enter a licence number, so you can try it for free. The trial never expires, but it will overlay your screenshots with a watermark. If you're only creating screenshots for personal use and that doesn't bother you, you can avoid the \$14 (£10.50) registration fee. To take your first screenshot using Screenotate, press Ctrl+PrtSc, then click and drag the grey box until it covers the area you want to capture **1**.



STEP 2 When you release the mouse button, Screenotate will copy an image of the selected area to your clipboard, and save a version to your hard drive. You can paste this into a document, email or messaging app using the Ctrl+V shortcut. To search for it press the Windows key+S to open your search box, then type a term – **dinosaur** **1** in our example – that appears in the title of the web page or document you captured. Our search located our screenshot of the Dinosaur page in Wikipedia **2**.

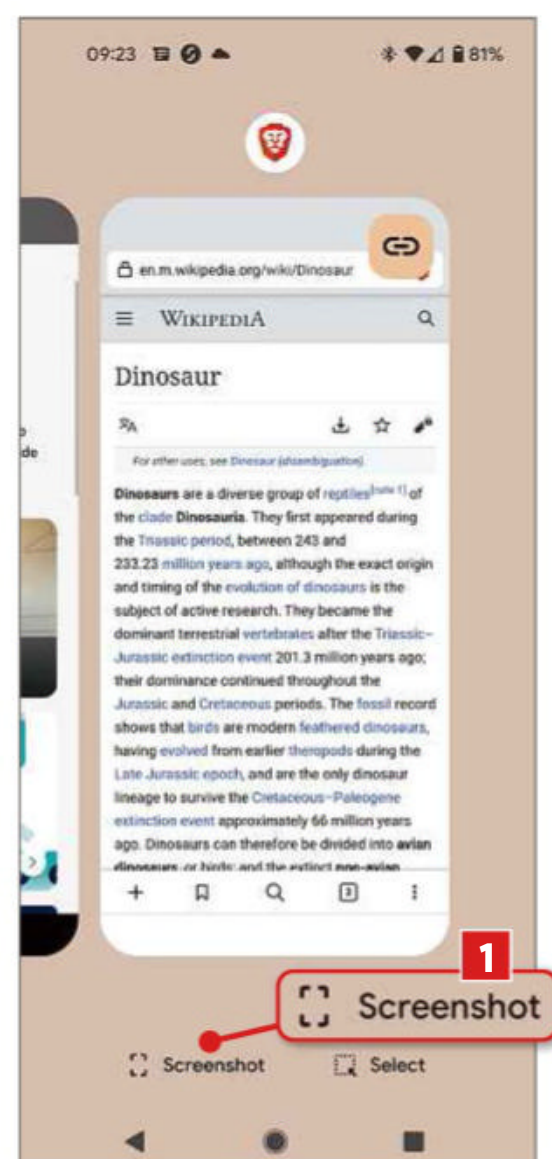


STEP 3 However, you can also search for keywords within screenshots. Although the word 'triassic' doesn't appear in the title of the web page, entering that as our search term delivers the same result because it appears on the page. If this doesn't work when you try it, make sure Windows Enhanced Search is enabled. In Windows 10, press Windows+I to open Settings, then click Search followed by Searching Windows **1**. Under 'Find My Files', click the button beside Enhanced **2** to make sure Windows is indexing your hard drive in full.

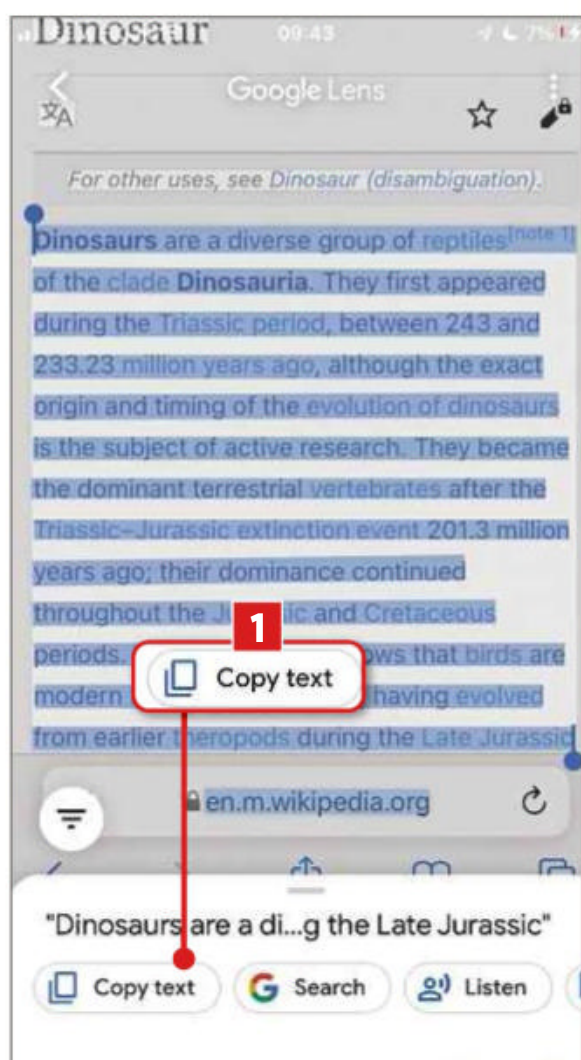


STEP 4 To copy text from a screenshot, click the relevant result from your search and it will open in your default browser. Here, you'll see the original text you captured **1** and below it a **plain-text** version **2**, which you can highlight and copy, then paste into another document if you wish. As you'll see, Screenotate also makes a record of the title of the window from which you made the grab **3**, and a **timestamp**, which will help you return to the source if necessary and know whether the contents are likely to be out of date.

STEP 5 You can do something similar on your phone using Google Photos, which comes with all Android devices, and is a free download for iOS (www.snipca.com/40087). Open the screenshot with text you want to capture and, if you're using an Android device, press the power and volume buttons down buttons simultaneously (if you have three on-screen buttons, you can also press the button on the right and, when the windows shrink, tap Screenshot **1**). On an iPhone with a physical home button, press power and home at the same time. On an iPhone without a home button, press the power and volume up buttons simultaneously.

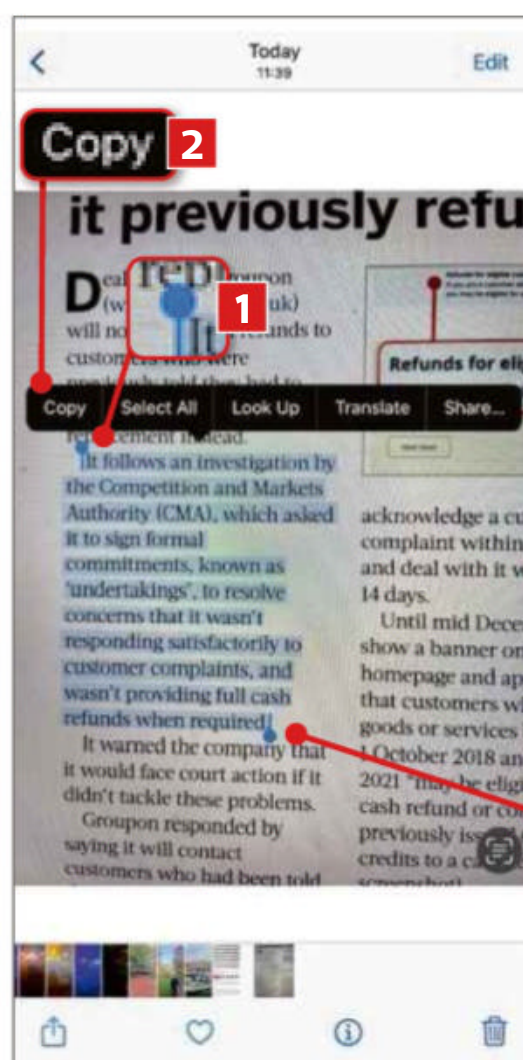


STEP 6 Switch to the Google Photos app (which is just called Photos on Android). On an iPhone, your screenshot should be at the top of the Today section, on the opening page. However, on an Android device, you may first



need to tap Library followed by Screenshots to find it. Tap the screenshot to open it, then tap the Google Lens icon (third from the left on the toolbar). Once it has analysed the contents of your image, it highlights any text it finds. Tap Text on the bottom toolbar, followed by 'Select all', then 'Copy text' **1**. You can now paste it into a document, where it will be searchable.

STEP 7 You can carry out a similar trick with photos, meaning if you've taken a picture of a magazine article or recipe, say, you can extract the text and paste it into a document. If you're running iOS 15 on an iPhone XS, XR or



later, you can use Live Text rather than Google Photos (enable this by opening Settings, and tapping Settings General, followed by 'Language & Region'). Take a picture of the material you want to capture, then open it in Photos and press and hold on the text. Use the grab handles **1** that appear to select all of the text you need, then tap Copy **2**.

Readers' Tips

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Skip the 'Start' screen in Microsoft Office

Ian Grady's letter in Issue 617's Problems Solved (page 68) about accessing pinned files reminded me of one of the things that irritated me when I upgraded from Office 2010 to 2019. In Office 2010, each program loaded straight to a new blank document, but in 2019 I had to go through the 'Start' screen.

To change this in 2019 I clicked the File tab in an open document, then selected Options. In the General section I scrolled down to the 'Start up options' section and unticked 'Show the Start

screen when this application starts' (see screenshot).

You can also customise the Quick Access Toolbar to include recent and pinned files. Click 'Quick Access Toolbar' on the left-hand menu, then in the 'Choose commands from' dropdown menu, select where you think the command you want is likely to be found. The 'Open Recent File...' command exists in one of these lists, and it effectively does what Ian Grady was looking for.

With these simple steps, one click opens Word to a blank document, and a



second click takes you straight to pinned and recent files. The same process works with other Office 2019 tools.

Ian Thow



Ian wins a copy of our 2020 Back Issue CD

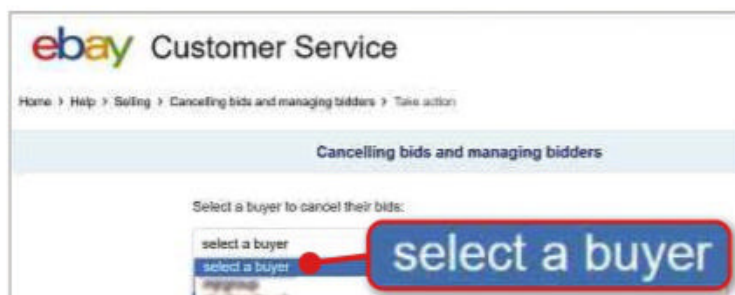
Buy it on Amazon www.snipca.com/38164

EBAY

Cancel suspicious bids on items you're selling

✓ I wish I'd known a few years ago how to cancel bids and block bidders on eBay. I've had loads of problems with buyers who have zero feedback not paying. I don't know whether they're scammers, but it seems suspicious that these are the only sellers I've had trouble with.

I finally lost my tether and researched how to block them and rescind their bid. You have to visit www.snipca.com/40055, then select the item in question. You're then asked to select 'I want to cancel bids from a specific bidder' or 'I want to end the listing early and cancel all bids'.



Choose the former option, then click Continue. You'll now see a dropdown menu giving you the option to select the buyer whose bid you want to remove (see screenshot above). Choose the name, then click Continue.

You're then asked to give a reason. I always choose 'I can't verify the buyer's identity'. Click 'Continue' again, then 'Cancel bid' to confirm. Just in case you think this isn't fair, I always try to contact

the buyer first. If they don't reply within 48 hours, I cancel their bid. I also block them following eBay's instructions at www.snipca.com/40056.

Helen Sellers

PHOTOS

Set your camera to take RAW pics

✓ Kevin Harrison's 'Tip of the Fortnight' in Issue 618 on downloading RAW files (from www.snipca.com/39698) to practise editing on was an excellent suggestion, but an even better option in my opinion is to set your camera to take RAW images (or RAW and JPEG if that option is available), so you can edit your own.

The beauty of RAW files is that any edits you make are 'non-destructive'. This

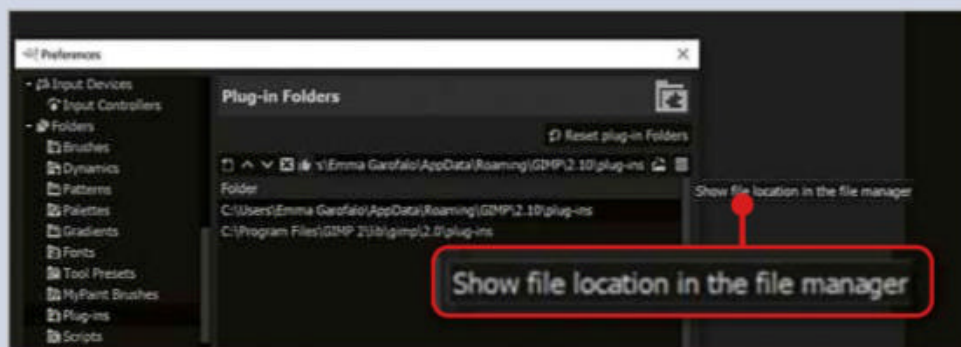
Why I stopped using...

Paint.NET

✓ You're right to recommend Paint.NET to Chris Hesketh (Issue 618, page 19). It's a great program, but I switched to one of its rivals for a very specific reason.

And what I use instead...

I was tempted by GIMP (www.gimp.org) because I knew that some of the plug-ins you can add to the program



replicate some Photoshop features. The one I use most is Darktable (www.darktable.org) because it lets you edit RAW photo files. It's a free equivalent of the popular Photoshop and Adobe

Camera RAW combination.

Installing GIMP plug-ins is too complex to explain here, suffice to say that you have to click 'Show file location in the file manager' in GIMP's 'Plugins and Scripts' folders (see screenshot). Perhaps

Computeractive can explain in more detail soon?

Derek Thurrot

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

means if you don't like what you see, you can just reset everything and go again. When you save your edits to your RAW files you'll be asked to save them in a different format so you don't overwrite the original file.

The other benefits of practising on your own files is that you won't be wasting time on images that aren't yours. You might just find that you like the results, and end up keeping the edit. After all, that's part of the fun of a digital darkroom!

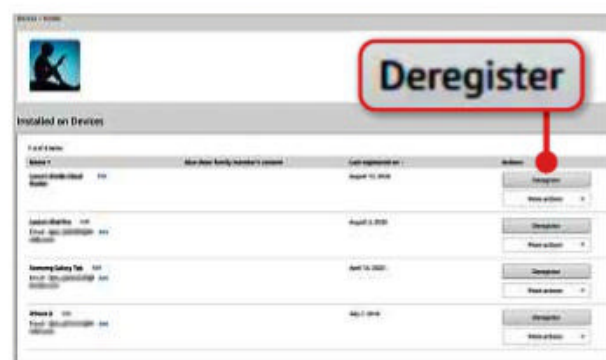
Glen Allen

EBOOK READERS

Remove old Kindles from your Amazon account

✓ I'm a bit of a Kindle aficionado. I think I'm on my sixth model, possibly seventh, by now and so have a lot of named devices on my Amazon account. I've also installed Amazon's app on several devices that I no longer use. It's become a bit of a mess, so I decided to find out how I can remove them from the list.

Sign into your Amazon account, click the dropdown arrow next to 'Account & Lists' at the top right, then click 'Manage Your Content and Devices'. On the next page click the Devices tab, and you'll see all the Amazon apps you've installed. Click the Kindle icon and you'll see every device you've installed the Kindle app on, plus any others registered with Amazon.



You can now choose to rename a device by selecting the Edit option next to the name of the Kindle, then typing your new name in the Device Name box and clicking Save. Instead of renaming, I chose to remove all my old and unused devices by selecting Deregister next to each one (see screenshot above).

Rachel Hudson

EXTENSIONS

Change the fonts of websites using Dark Reader

✓ Thank you for recommending the Dark Reader browser extension in Issue 618 (page 43). I installed it (from

Reader recommends...

Logitech C925-E Business Webcam

£70 from Amazon www.snipca.com/38385

✓ In September, I embarked on a new role as a freelance consultant working from home. I knew it would mean lots of video calls every day, so I realised it was time to buy a better webcam, rather than rely on the so-so cam built into my Dell laptop.

Your 'Buy It!' choice (see page 32) is this Logitech model, so I flicked back to



Issue 608 to read the review. Your five-star rating persuaded me, and it has proved a great purchase. I'm not very good at fiddling with settings, so I love that the webcam adjusts itself to get the best picture possible. Knowing that I don't have to worry about this helps to ease the nerves in what can be quite stressful video meetings.

It's only me in front of the camera, so the 78-degree field of view is more than enough. The two microphones either side of the lens pick up my voice clearly, though I am considering a microphone headset for a truly professional experience.

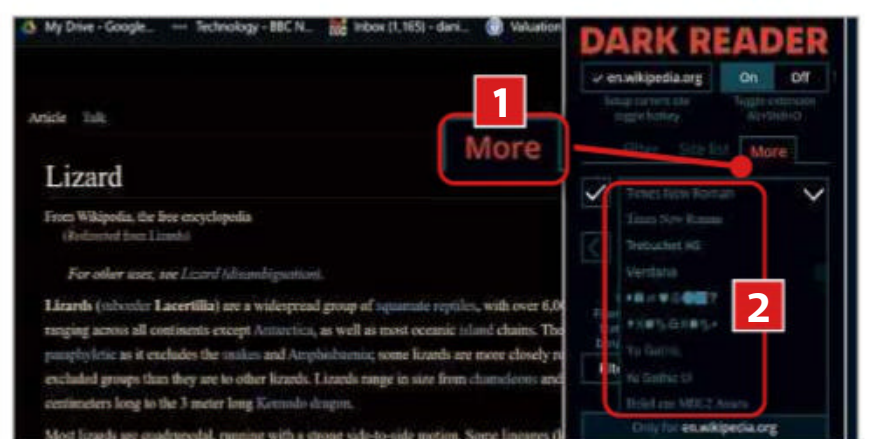
Richard Stanhope

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

<https://darkreader.org>), and soon realised that as well as turning websites dark it can alter their fonts. Click Dark Reader's icon in your browser toolbar, then the More tab at the top (1 in our screenshot right). Next, click the font dropdown menu 2

and select one you like, before clicking the cross on the left to apply it.

The best way to use this is to visit a site that you find hard to read, then select a font. It changes instantly, helping you to decide whether to stick with it. In my screenshot I've turned Wikipedia's standard font into Times New Roman



Philip Vaughan

SOFTWARE

Use Windows Movie Maker for titles and credits

✓ I've been having a clear-out of old *Computeractive* issues, and an article in one (Issue 532, 18 July 2018) caught my eye: 'Bring Photo Gallery and Movie Maker back to life'. It involved installing both programs from the Internet Archive as part of Microsoft Windows Live Essentials 2012 (go to www.snipca.com/28293 and click

'Windows Executable' on the right (see screenshot below).

After trying, I saw a message saying they had not been installed. However, both programs were there when I checked my Start menu in Windows 11 Pro, and both worked well.

I know this seems like a retrograde step, but until I have mastered DaVinci Resolve (www.snipca.com/40033) I will use Movie Maker for titles and credits.

Vic Strong



Browser Tips

CHROME Get Windows 11-style menus in Chrome

One of the most notable design changes in Windows 11 is its replacement of the sharp, square corners on menus and windows with softer, rounded ones. Chrome 96, which was released in mid November, lets you apply this style to the browser's menus in any version of Windows, though the option is currently hidden on its Experiments page.

To activate it, type **chrome:flags** into the address bar at the top of the updated browser and press Enter. Type **Windows 11** into the search box at the top of the Experiments page to find the entry called Windows 11 Style Menus. Click the dropdown menu next to this, select 'Enabled - All Windows...' (see screenshot below) and click the Relaunch button.

When Chrome restarts, open a menu – such as by right-clicking a tab – and you'll see that its corners are now pleasantly rounded, Windows 11-style.

Chrome 96 further integrates the browser with Windows by letting you uninstall PWAs (which we covered in

Issue 619, page 60), through the Windows Control Panel. See our Workshop below to find out how to do this.

AVAST SECURE BROWSER Browse the web anonymously with a VPN

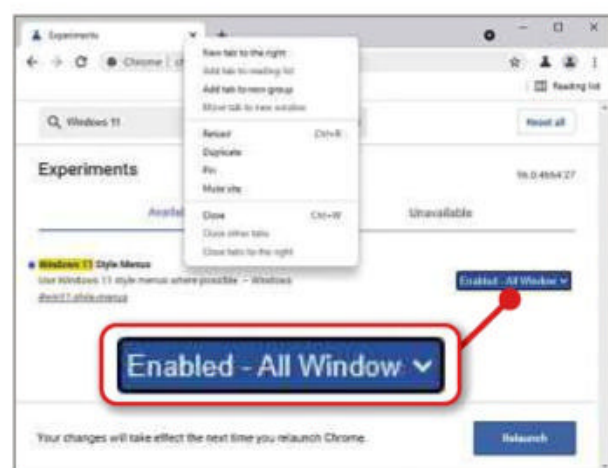
Avast has released a paid-for version of its Secure Browser for Windows (www.snipca.com/39969), which, unlike the free program, includes a VPN. This gives you access to servers that span 30 locations, including eight in the US (see screenshot below), in every continent (except Antarctica), so you can disguise

where you're browsing from, encrypt your online activities and unlock geo-blocked content.

To activate Secure Browser Pro, you'll first need to install the free version of Avast's browser, then click the green-shield icon on the toolbar to open its Security & Privacy Centre. Click the 'Try for Free' button next to 'Upgrade to Pro' or under 'Secure Browser VPN' to open the web page for the Pro version. Here you can either click Upgrade and choose a subscription plan – £4.99 per month or £34.99 per year – or choose Start Free Trial to try the VPN for seven days without paying.

You don't need to enter any payment-card details upfront, and you get access to all Avast's servers. Click the green VPN button to the left of the browser's address bar to switch the feature on and off, choose a server and configure its settings.

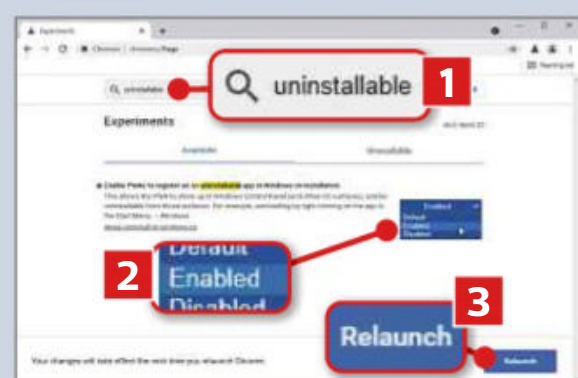
Avast Secure Browser Pro also enables 'Strict' ad blocking, whereas the standard free browser only blocks ads that "violate the Acceptable Ads Standard" (www.snipca.com/39970), including pop-ups and auto-playing videos".



EDGE Save your laptop's battery using Efficiency mode

Browsers are notorious for draining your laptop's battery because of their heavy memory and CPU usage, so we're pleased that Microsoft has added a feature to Edge that addresses this problem. It's called 'Efficiency mode' and optimises the browser's performance when your laptop is unplugged from the

WORKSHOP Uninstall PWAs through Windows' Control Panel



1 Type **chrome:flags** into Chrome's address bar, press Enter and search for **uninstallable** 1. Click the dropdown menu next to 'Enable PWAs to register as an uninstallable app...', choose Enabled 2 then relaunch Chrome 3.



2 Find the unwanted PWA in the Windows Start menu, right-click it and choose Uninstall 1. This will open the 'Uninstall a program' section in the Control Panel. Alternatively, search for and open **control panel** through the Windows search box then click 'Uninstall a program' 2.



3 If the PWA isn't listed, right-click the window and click Refresh. Click the app to select it – Pinterest in our example 1 – then click the Uninstall button 2 at the top of the list. When the confirmation box opens, select 'Also clear data from Chrome', then click Remove 3.

BEST EXTENSION FOR...

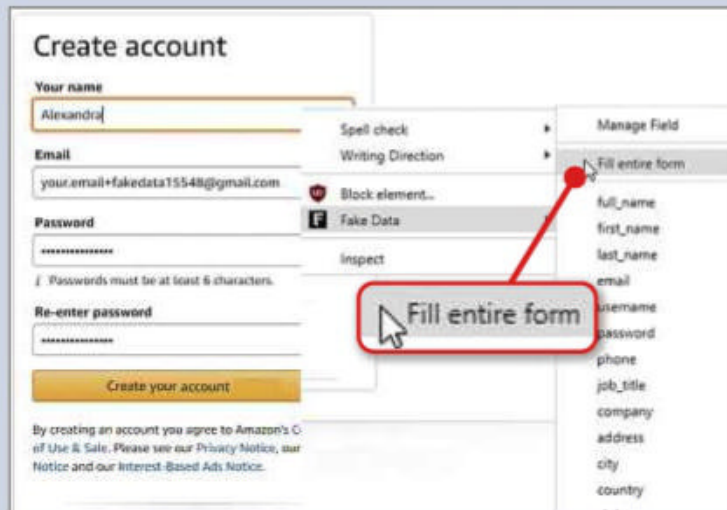
Faking data in online forms

Fake Data

Chromium & Firefox

www.snipca.com/39974

Some websites insist that you sign up using your real name – for example, those that involve financial transactions. But in other instances, rather than have your browser auto-fill your name and other personal details, you can use Fake Data to enter random information and make the registration process more private and secure. Simply right-click a text field and choose an option from its sub-menu, including first and last name, username, address, phone number and



more. There's also a 'Fill entire form' option (see screenshot). By default, Fake Data is set to use 'English (United States)' but you can change this to 'English (Great Britain)' in its

settings for more relevant random entries, such as UK postcodes when you choose 'zip'. Note that the email addresses the extension generates aren't linked to an actual inbox, so don't use it if the site needs to verify your account.

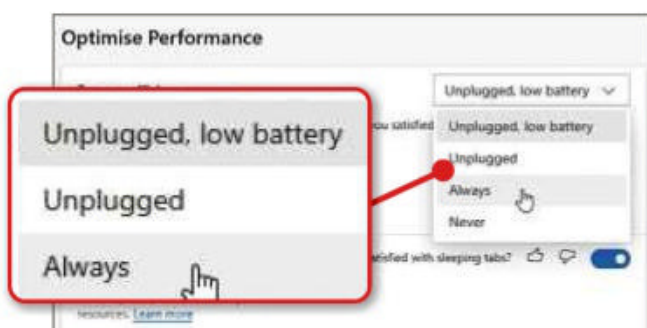
If you don't like that, try...

Name Generator

Chrome

www.snipca.com/39975

This simple extension generates instant fake names and email addresses, when you want to sign up to a website under a pseudonym. Just click its toolbar button for bogus details to copy and paste into online forms.



mains, so Edge is lighter on system resources and your battery lasts longer. Microsoft says that videos and animations may be less smooth in Efficiency mode, but it's an effective way to save power and can even speed up the browser on a plugged-in PC. Additionally, provided you have Edge's Sleeping Tabs feature enabled (see Issue 617, page 43), Efficiency mode will automatically 'unload' idle tabs after five minutes of inactivity.

To customise Efficiency mode, click Edge's three-dot menu and choose Settings, then 'System and performance'. In the Optimise Performance section, click the dropdown menu next to 'Turn on efficiency mode when' and choose your preferred option: Unplugged, 'Unplugged, low battery' or Always (see screenshot above). Alternatively, to turn off Efficiency mode, select Never.

FIREFOX

Undo unwanted changes to Firefox settings

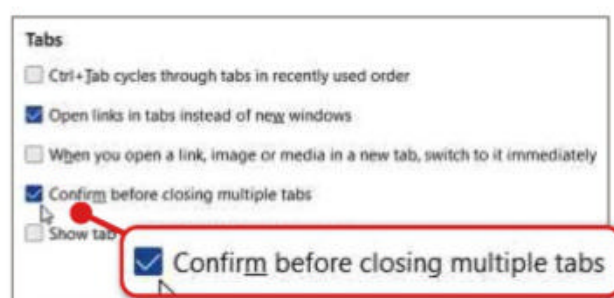


In Issue 619, in this section, we covered Colorways, the main new feature in Firefox 94 that lets you customise the browser with colourful

themes. Other notable updates in the latest version are less obvious, because they change how Firefox behaves rather than how it looks, and not everyone will welcome these 'improvements'.

For starters, Firefox will no longer warn you when you're about to close a browser window with multiple tabs open. This means that you'll lose all the pages you were viewing when you exit the browser accidentally or restart your PC with Firefox running. Thankfully, it's easy to re-enable this setting, so you'll be prompted to confirm that you want to close multiple tabs. Click the three-line menu button, choose Settings, then General and, in the Tabs section, select 'Confirm before closing multiple tabs' (see screenshot below).

Another change is that Firefox will now use Windows Task Scheduler to check for, download and install updates automatically, even when the browser isn't running. This is to ensure that Firefox is always kept updated, but it also means adding another background process to Windows, which can slow down your PC. If you'd prefer that Firefox installed updates only when you launch the browser, go to Settings, then General,



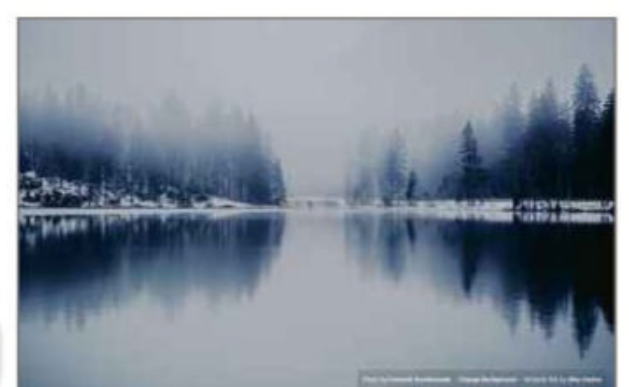
scroll down to 'Allow Firefox to' and untick the option 'Use a background service to install updates'.

CHROMIUM & FIREFOX

Add wintry photos to your new tabs



The trouble with walking in a winter wonderland is that it's ruddy freezing, so why not appreciate the majesty of the season through your browser instead? Winterly Tab (www.snipca.com/39976) is a new extension for all the main browsers, which decorates your new tab page with stunning photos of wintry landscapes (see screenshot below), frosty scenes and people in warm clothes enjoying the snow. Unlike similar tools for customising new tabs, it doesn't include a clock, weather widget or anything else aside from the image, making it suitably minimalist for the winter months. The photo changes automatically after five minutes, or you can update it manually by right-clicking the page and choosing Refresh or Reload.



Phone and Tablet Tips

ANDROID & iOS

Find lookalikes of your pets in works of art

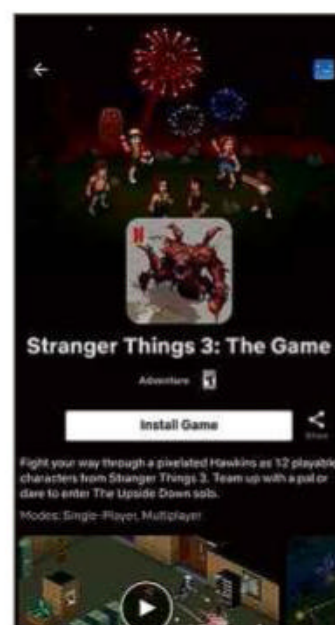


One of our favourite features in the Google Arts & Culture app for Android (www.snipca.com/40063) and iOS (www.snipca.com/40064) is Art Selfie, which matches photos of you with similar-looking people in classic paintings. The app has now added an option called Pet Portraits, which does the same for your cat, dog, bird or other beloved animal companion.

Tap the camera icon at the bottom of the Google Arts & Culture app and select the Pet Portraits icon (a cat in a green circle). Choose 'Take a photo', then 'Get started' and either snap a quick picture of your pet or choose an image that's stored

on your phone or tablet. The app will then find matches among its tens of thousands of paintings and sculptures and present you with the closest doubles of your pet. You can save and share the results, view them as a slideshow and tap the images to learn more about the original artworks.

Our Irish red setter's best match (see screenshot below left) was with the same breed of dog in a painting called *Good Luck (No Feather, No Down)* by the Russian artist Nikolay N Solomin (no, we haven't heard of him either). Learn more about how Pet Portraits works at www.snipca.com/40070.



Games row, while on an Android and iPhone tablet, games can also be accessed via the Categories dropdown menu.

You need to download and install the games before you can play them – they're all available separately through the Google Play and Apple App stores, as well as through the app – and you must have a Netflix subscription. But there are no adverts, extra fees or in-app purchases.

The games are *Stranger Things: 1984*, *Stranger Things 3: The Game* (see screenshot above left), *Card Blast*, *Teeter Up* and *Shooting Hoops*, though we wouldn't bother with the last one because its controls are very annoying. More titles will be added in due course.

If you can't see any games yet, don't worry – Netflix is still rolling out the feature to its members around the world.

ANDROID & iOS

Play Netflix games on your phone and tablet



In Issue 619's News section (page 9), we reported that Netflix had launched five mobile games for users of its Android app. The streaming service has now brought the feature to iOS devices, much sooner than expected, though there is a slight difference in how you access the games.

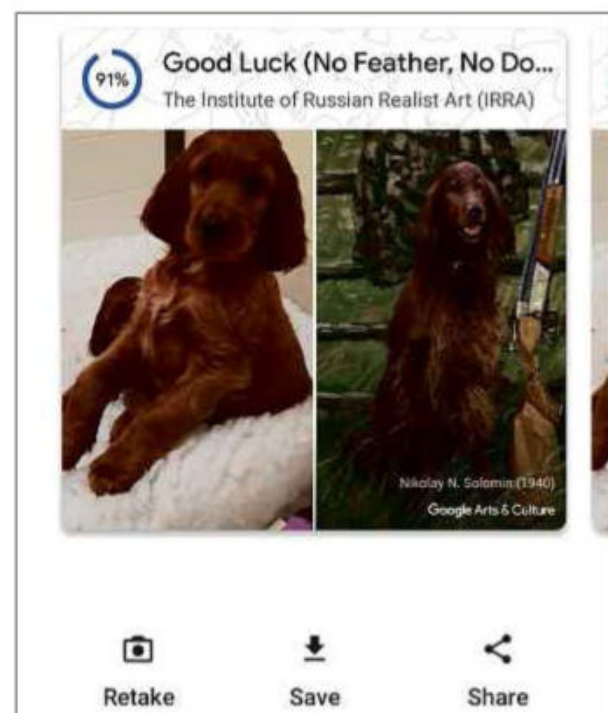
On an Android phone, the Netflix app now has a dedicated Games tab at the bottom of the screen, as well as a Play Mobile Games row on the home screen. On an iPhone, you just get the Play Mobile

ANDROID

Copy and paste between Android and Windows



Usually, when you want to share something from your smartphone to your computer, such as a website link, phone number or message, the simplest way is to copy and paste it into an email that you then send to yourself. The latest Android version of Microsoft SwiftKey



BEST NEW APPS

What you should install this fortnight

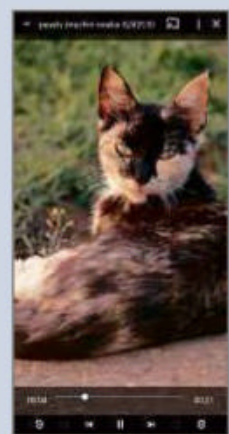
RealPlayer

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40074

iOS www.snipca.com/40075

RealPlayer will be a familiar name to long-time web users, and it's now available as a mobile app. This lets you play videos stored on your device, stream them from the RealPlayer software on your PC and cast them to your smart TV. However, you need a £2.99-per-month subscription to unlock features such as 25GB of online storage.



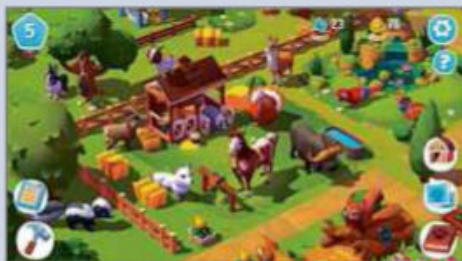
FarmVille 3 - Animals

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40072

iOS www.snipca.com/40073

FarmVille was hugely popular on Facebook until it shut down last year, but it lives on as a mobile game. This new version involves you raising and breeding animals, from an eclectic selection that includes cows, geese, horses, peacocks and alpacas, as well as harvesting crops and expanding your farm.



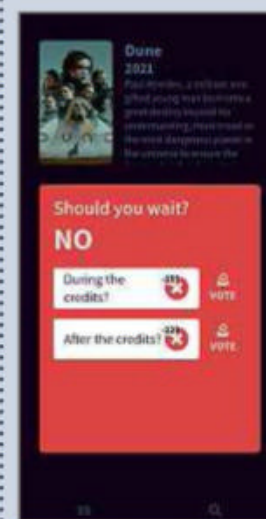
Stick Around

Free

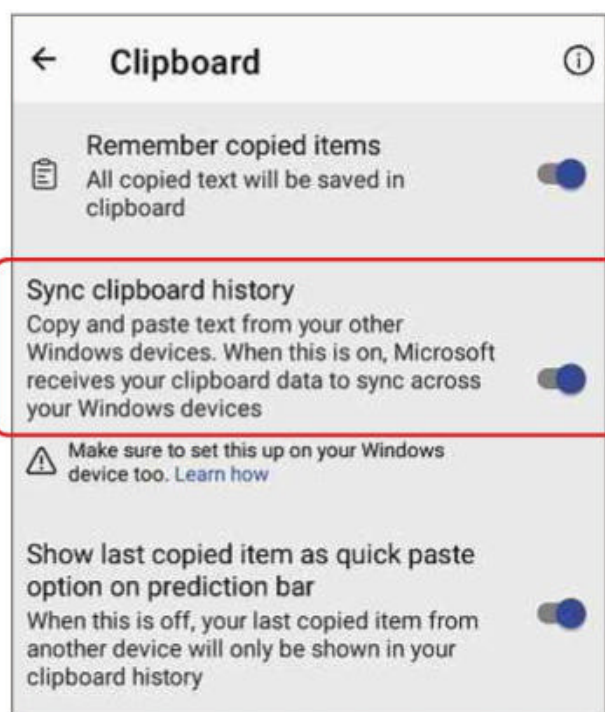
Android www.snipca.com/40076

If you've ever sat all the way through the end credits of a film in case there was an

extra scene, you'll appreciate this simple app. Select a film that's currently showing in the cinema or search for a title, and Stick Around will tell you whether it features a bonus scene during or after the credits, to save you waiting around for nothing.



*Contains in-app purchases



(www.snipca.com/40060) makes things much easier by letting you copy text to your phone's clipboard and then paste it on your Windows PC – or vice versa. It works using a new feature in the keyboard app called Cloud Clipboard, which syncs data between your mobile and desktop devices.


To turn on Cloud Clipboard, open the SwiftKey app on your phone and tap 'Rich input', then Clipboard. Turn on 'Sync clipboard history' (see screenshot above) and sign into your Microsoft account when prompted. Next, open the Settings app in Windows 10 or 11 and choose System, then Clipboard. Switch on the options 'Clipboard history' and 'Sync across devices', sign into your Microsoft account if required, and select 'Automatically sync text that I copy'.

Now, when you copy text to your clipboard on your phone or PC, it should be available to paste on your other device. Copied text will remain in your Cloud Clipboard for an hour, though you can 'pin' the snippet to store it for longer. Only the most recently copied text is available to paste.

Microsoft says that all clip data is encrypted and is "not associated with your Microsoft account". It has yet to confirm if the feature will be added to SwiftKey for iOS. Find out more at www.snipca.com/40069.

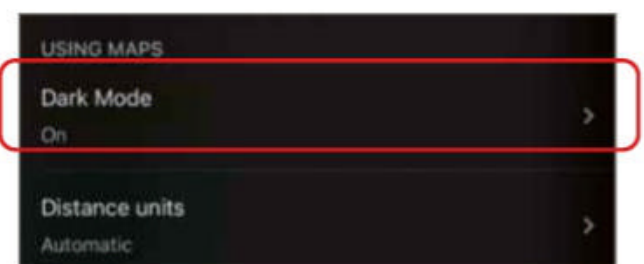
ANDROID & iOS

Activate dark mode in Google Maps

  Google Maps added a **dark mode** to its Android app at the beginning of the year, to make navigating at night easier on your eyes and to conserve battery power when you're

running low. The feature has now been added to the iOS version, so you can get the same benefits on your iPhone (it's not available on iPad). Rather than just inverting colours, Google Maps' dark mode uses subtle colours that make roads and amenities stand out against its background.

To turn on dark mode on your iPhone, tap your profile picture in the top-right corner of the Google Maps app and choose Settings, then select Dark Mode in the Using Maps section (see screenshot above right). Here you can switch Dark Mode on or off, or choose 'Same as device



setting' to only activate it when you have the Dark theme enabled in your iPhone's 'Display & Brightness' settings.

On an Android phone, you can turn on Google Maps' dark mode in much the same way, except you choose Theme in the Settings menu, then 'Always in dark theme' or 'Same as device theme'.

BEST APPS FOR...

1980s puzzles and games

ASolver

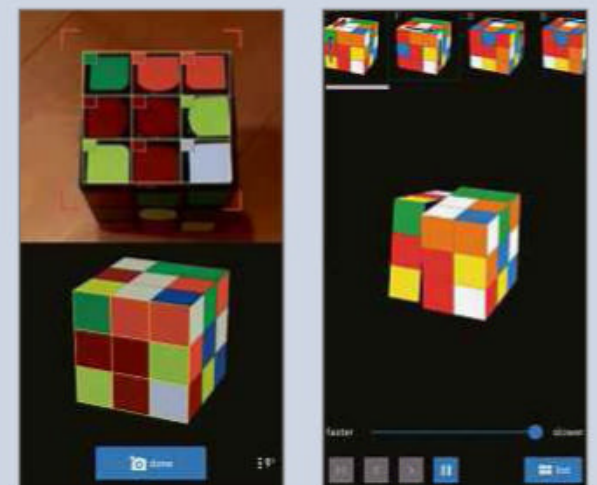
Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40080

iOS www.snipca.com/40081

Still got an old Rubik's Cube that you never managed to complete? Then install ASolver, which lets you scan the Cube with your phone to discover how to solve it in the fewest moves. Simply take pictures of the puzzle's six sides and the app will tell you how to rotate it to get the right coloured tiles on each face.

Best For Solving a Rubik's Cube



Guess Who Am I?

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40082

There isn't an official app for the classic 1980s board game Guess Who?, but this Android version gets pretty close. Ask your virtual opponent questions about their chosen character, such as if they have a beard, glasses or blue eyes, and use the process of elimination to try and identify the person before they guess yours.

Best For Playing a nostalgic guessing game



Trivial Quiz - Pursuit of Knowledge

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40084

iOS www.snipca.com/40085

Surprisingly, Hasbro has yet to launch an official Trivial Pursuit app, but this app should suffice until it does. It uses the same colour-coded categories and 'wedges in the wheel' concept, though the multiple choice questions make it much easier to play. Be aware, there are occasional full-screen ads.


Best For Testing your knowledge of trivia

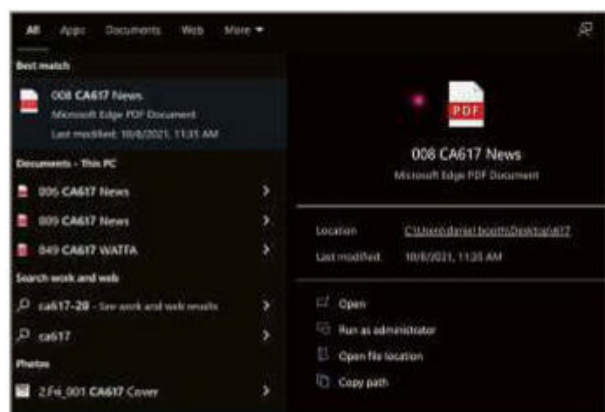


*Contains in-app purchases

WINDOWS 10

Get search results in dark mode

 Microsoft has updated its dark mode to include Windows Search, making the results appear in white text on a black screen (see screenshot below). You'll see this only if you turn on dark mode, which you can do by opening Settings (press Windows key+I), then clicking Personalisation followed by Colours in the left-hand menu. Next, choose Dark in the 'Choose your colour' dropdown menu.



WINDOWS 10 & 11

Install Firefox from the Microsoft Store

 In June, Microsoft relaxed its rules covering which browsers were available through its store, allowing those that weren't built using its own **browser engine** for the first time. Opera was the first major browser to take advantage of this (see www.snipca.com/40067), and now Firefox is available.


Mozilla, which makes Firefox, says installing its browser through the Store is much easier than doing so from its website. There are two ways of doing so. You can visit the Store online (www.snipca.com/40065), then click the blue Get button (1 in our screenshot below), followed by Open Microsoft Store (2). Click 'Get' again, then Install. Alternatively, search for and open Microsoft Store on your computer, then search for **firefox** at the top right.

As Mozilla explains on its blog (www.snipca.com/40066), this



WINDOWS 10 & 11

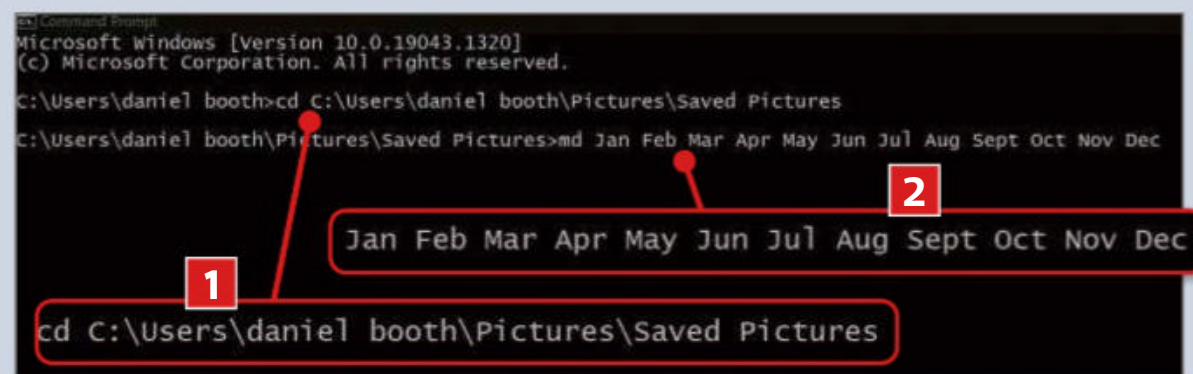
Create multiple folders quickly using Command Prompt

 One way of creating folders in Windows is to right-click your desktop, followed by New, then Folder. This can get fiddly if you have several folders to create, so instead try this Command Prompt trick to make multiple folders in one go.

Search for **cmd** in Windows, then open Command Prompt. Now type **cd** followed by where you want the folders to be created – for example,

`cd C:\Users\daniel booth\Pictures\Saved Pictures` (1 in our screenshot). You can cut and paste this address from the File Explorer toolbar.


Press Enter, and you'll see this address appear on the next line. Next, type **md** followed by the name of the folders you want to create (we've chosen the months of the year (2)). You can now close Command Prompt and open the location where you created your folders to see them.



www.snipca.com/40066), this version contains all the tools you'd get in Firefox downloaded from the web, including those in the new Firefox 94 (including Colorways, explained at www.snipca.com/40068).

WINDOWS 11

Bring back Windows 10's volume controls

 Clicking the volume icon in Windows 10 brings up volume controls near the system tray, which feels logical and makes it easy to adjust the volume on your computer. In Windows 11, however, the volume controls appear in the Settings app,



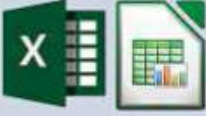
which has to be opened, making the process take longer.

If you find this perplexing, you're not alone. A Swedish developer, Patrik Johansson, has built the program Classic Volume Mixer that adds the Windows 10 volume controls to Windows 11. Once installed, simply click the speaker icon in the system tray and you'll see the volume sliders you're familiar with. They're shown at the bottom right of our screenshot above, on top of Windows 11 settings page for volume.

To download Classic Volume Mixer visit www.snipca.com/40071 then click 'ClassicVolumeMixer.exe'. Once it's installed, you should see the speaker icon in your system tray.

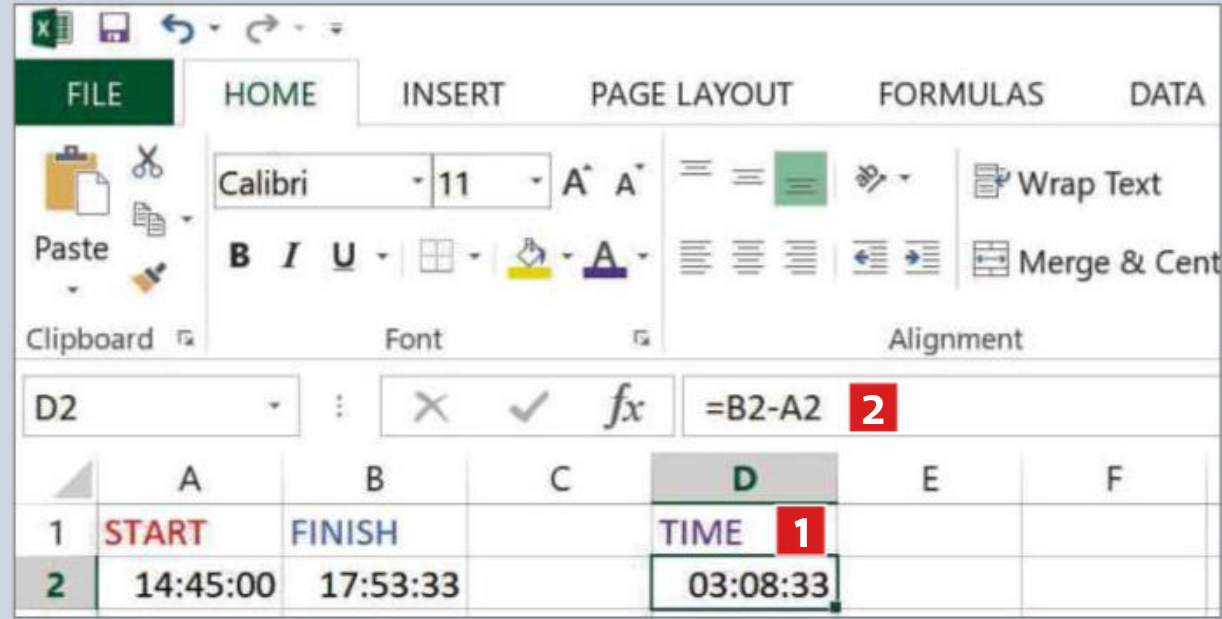
MICROSOFT EXCEL & LIBREOFFICE CALC

Calculate the difference between times

 Both Excel and Calc let you subtract times to find out the difference between them, but the method isn't the same.

In Excel, create the cells you want to record times in (we've given ours the headings Start, Finish and Time), then select them all. Next, click the Home tab, then Format on the right. Click 'Format Cells' at the bottom of the menu, then choose Time in the box that appears. In the 'Type' box select your preferred format for presenting time (for example, 13:30:55), then click OK.

Select the cell you want to use to display the time difference (it's D2 in our screenshot **1**). Now type `=B2-A2` in the formula bar above **2** then press Enter (replacing B2 and A2 with whatever cells you've used). You'll now see the time difference in the cell you selected.




Note that in some versions of Excel you'll need to open the Numbers section, then select More Number Formats, to access the Format Cells window.

In Calc, select your cells, then right-click them and choose Format Cells.

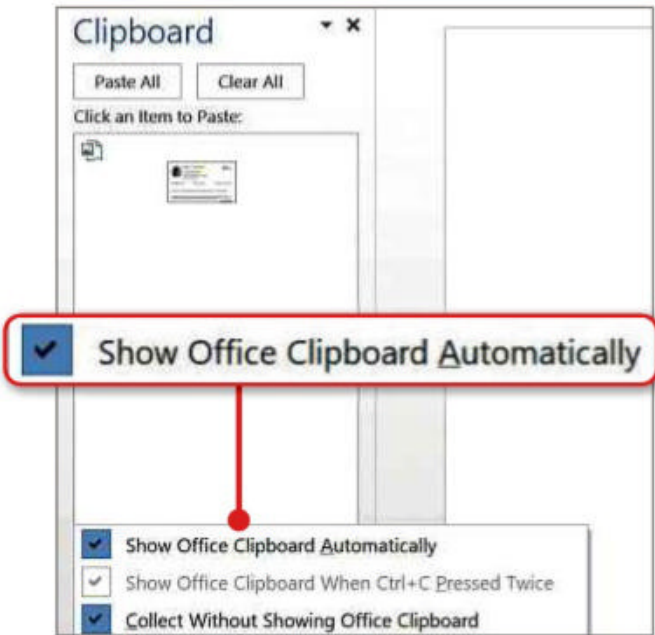
Select 'Time' on the left, choose your preferred format, then click OK. Now select the cell where you want the time difference displayed, then type `=(B2<A2)+B2-A2` in the formula bar (again, using the cells you've chosen).

MICROSOFT EXCEL & WORD

Make your clipboard appear automatically

 You can set the clipboard to appear automatically whenever you open a Word document or Excel spreadsheet, letting you see your most recently saved items (up to 24).


To do so, open a document or spreadsheet, then click the Home tab, followed by the small arrow in the Clipboard section at the top left of your screen. Next, click Options at the bottom, then tick Show Office Clipboard Automatically box (see screenshot below).

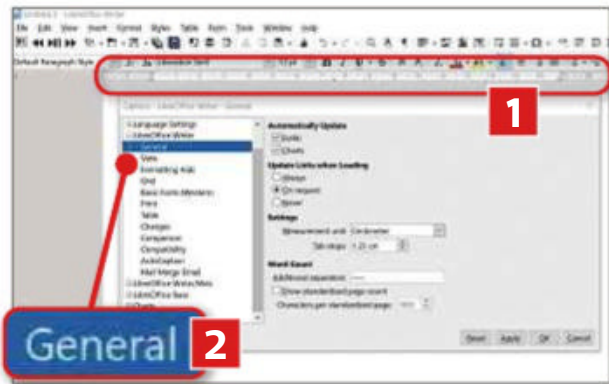


Once that's done, the clipboard pane will open on the left whenever you open a document or spreadsheet.

LIBREOFFICE WRITER

Change the ruler's default unit of measurement

 LibreOffice Writer shows a ruler (**1** in our screenshot below) at the top of a document to help you measure margins, tabs and other elements. The default measurement is inches, but this is easy to change. Click Tools, then Options at the bottom (or press Alt+F12). Next, on the left, click the plus sign next to LibreOffice Writer, then General **2**. In the middle, under Settings, choose your unit of measurement from the dropdown menu – the options are millimetre, centimetre, inch, pica (approximately one-sixth of an inch) and point (the smallest typographical measurement,



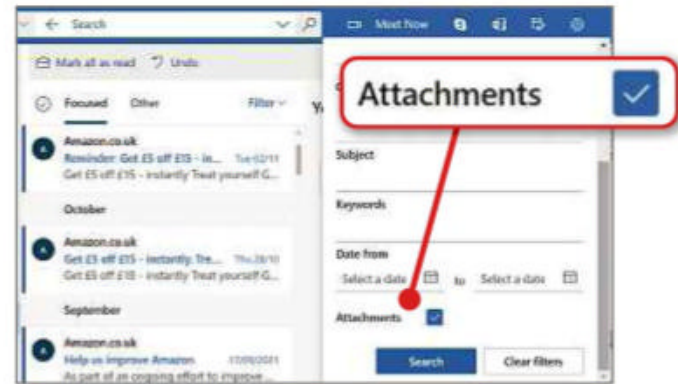
about one-twelfth of a pica). Click 'Apply' and you'll see the ruler change, affecting any documents you may have open, as well as any you open in future.

If you can't see the ruler, click View, then Rulers, and select a horizontal or vertical ruler. You can also press Ctrl+Shift+R.

OUTLOOK.COM

Search only for emails with attachments

 It's easy to search for emails with attachments in the desktop version of Outlook – simply click Has Attachments in the Search tab. There's no equivalent tab in Outlook.com, the online version of the tool, so instead click the search bar at the top, then the down arrow on the right. Scroll to the bottom, then tick the Attachments box (see screenshot below), then click the blue Search button below that.



In The Club



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

Create presentations with WeTransfer Paste

WeTransfer is best known as a way to share large files over the internet, but it also has a simple online tool called Paste (<https://pasteapp.com>) that lets you design and collaborate on presentations. It's ideal for people who don't need all the advanced tools in PowerPoint.

The free version restricts you to working on three 'decks' (presentations) at one time, and limits you to sending a maximum of 2GB of files via WeTransfer. If you want to create unlimited decks (and send up to 200GB) you need to sign up for the Pro version, which costs £10 a month.

Three decks doesn't sound like a lot, but once you create one you can export it as a PDF or PowerPoint file to edit how you like. That frees up a deck online that you can start working on.

Format the text in your deck

First, create a free WeTransfer account by visiting <https://wetransfer.com> and clicking 'Sign up' at the top right. You'll be given the chance to invite people you want to collaborate with, but you can do this later by clicking 'Skip for now'.

To begin your first presentation, click the New Deck button at the top right. The arrow next to this provides three options when clicked – upload an existing PowerPoint file or PDF; use a starter deck (one of the templates); or create an empty

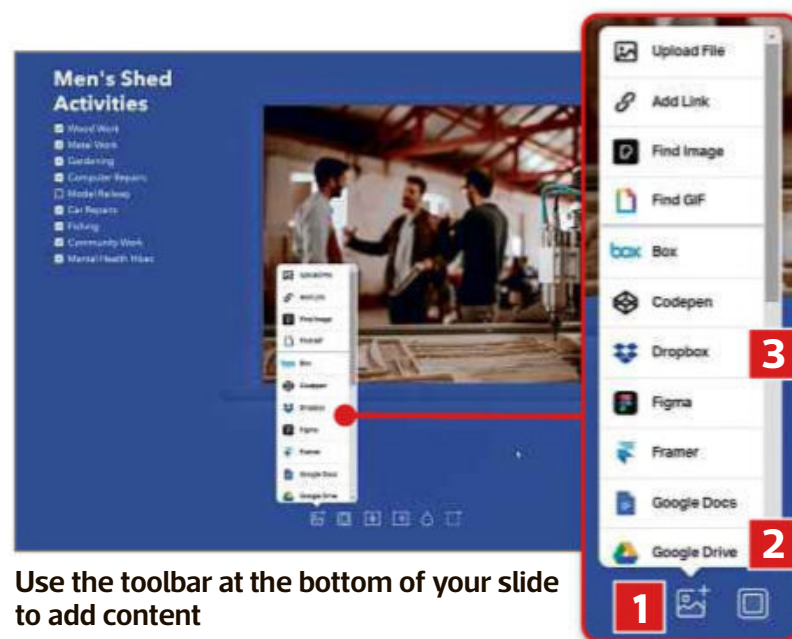
deck and start from scratch.

The seven starter decks are aimed at businesses, focusing on marketing campaigns and sales pitches, but you can change them to suit your club. For our 'Men's Shed' presentation we'll begin with a blank deck. Click the New Deck button then click anywhere to create your first slide (page).

Click where it says to 'Write something', then start typing to make a formatting bar appear above the text (1 in our screenshot below). Use this to resize the text; turn it into the first item in a list (numbered or bullet points 2); add a tick box; apply bold or italics; insert a link; or change the colour.

Add content to your deck

Next, click the toolbar at the bottom of the slide to add content. The far-left button (Add Media – 1 in our screenshot above right) lets you add images to your slide. You can upload a file, add a link, and find a royalty-free image on Pexels (www.pexels.com) or a GIF on Giphy (<https://giphy.com>), as well as grab images from Google Drive 2, Dropbox 3, YouTube and more.



Use the toolbar at the bottom of your slide to add content

To the right of the Add Media button, the Media Frame button lets you add a frame to any included images, while Power Layout lets you choose a new layout that automatically rearranges the content to make it fit. There are five layouts – Intro (a single heading), Show (an image and caption, which is what we chose), Tell (text), Compare (two images and captions side by side), and Multi (three columns of images and captions).

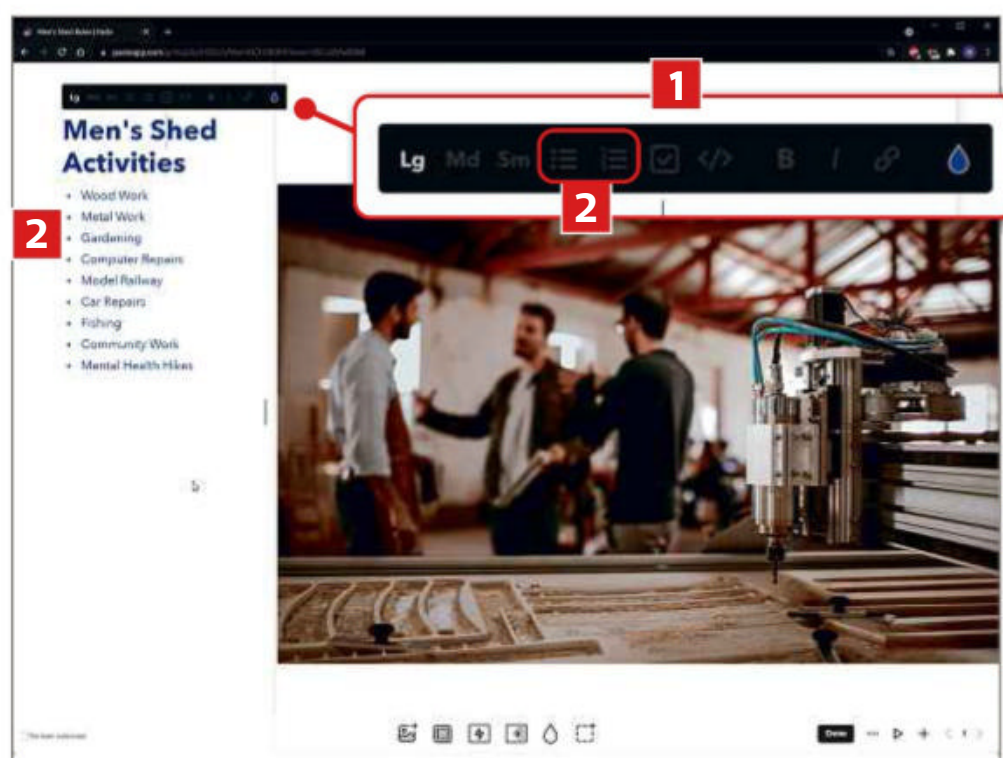
The fourth button in the toolbar, Media Position, works like a layers tool and lets you move a selected item behind another, or move it to the top or bottom. Next along, the 'drop' button lets you change the colour scheme, while the final button (Add Column) lets you add extra columns (you're allowed up to six on a slide).

Click the three dots towards the bottom right to insert a new slide (you can have as many slides as you like), duplicate the current one, or copy it to another deck. Click 'Done' when you've finished editing the deck.

Share your deck

Now go back to the Paste homepage and the deck you created will be there. Click the 'Invite members' link at the top left to invite others to edit, comment and react to slides (thumbs up/down, flags, ticks and more). Clicking 'Share Deck' will give you a shareable link (anyone can open the deck using this – they don't need an account). Start the deck playing from this page by clicking the Present button.

Use the top-left toolbar to format the text of your presentation



What's All the Fuss About...



Dislikes

YouTube has given a 'thumbs down' to thumbs down

What are they?

A running total of how many times people have expressed disapproval about something online. Or, more simply, how many times the thumbs-down button has been pressed on a comment, video, photo or other type of content. It's become a standard way of saying 'I don't like this', but YouTube has now decided that it'll no longer show how many times a video has been disliked.

Why's that?

Some video creators had complained of being "harassed" by a campaign of dislikes from groups of viewers working together – what YouTube calls "dislike attacking behaviour". It said these attacks mostly targeted smaller video creators, particularly those starting up.

In reponse YouTube ran a test which found that not displaying the number of dislikes on certain videos discouraged viewers from clicking the button. Removing dislike counts will end these co-ordinated attacks, and help to "promote respectful interactions between viewers and creators" (as YouTube puts it: www.snipca.com/40083).

It will also stop people seeing that YouTube itself is responsible for the most-disliked video ever – its widely ridiculed '2018 Rewind' compilation (www.snipca.com/40090, pictured below right).

But will I still be able to click the thumbs-down button?

Yes, and the person who made the video will be able to see how many times it has been disliked. But this number won't be shown publicly.

But if fewer people click dislike, what's the point of the option?

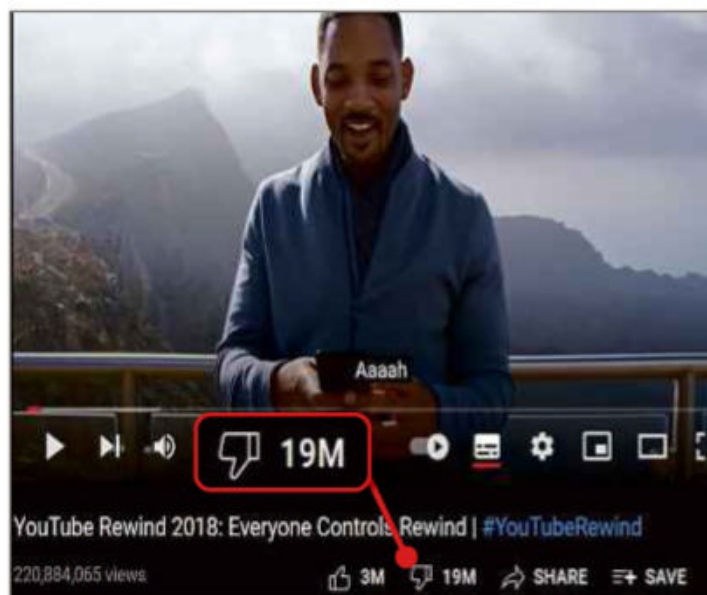
YouTube says it's useful for video creators to know when one of their videos is proving unpopular, so they can improve the quality next time. The problem is they may not discover this if hardly anyone clicks dislike. One of the reasons like and dislike buttons are so popular is that people enjoy seeing their own vote added



to the tally. Removing this psychological buzz is a risk for YouTube, and may lead to less interest (or 'engagement') in videos on the site.

Won't people just leave nasty comments instead?

There's nothing to stop those, but it takes more effort to type 'I dislike this video' (or impolite words to that effect) than to click a button. Most people who click dislike don't leave a comment to explain their vote. Confusingly though, some people have argued that dislike buttons should be *added* to some sites.



Video nasty: YouTube's '2018 rewind' compilation has been disliked 19m times

Who said that? And why?

Meghan Markle, talking at an online summit in New York last month. She said that being able to vote down a comment, photo or video on sites like Facebook and Instagram would be enough to satisfy people's desire to express displeasure without resorting to leaving "vitriolic" messages. Many people have made this argument over the years.

So will those sites add dislike buttons?

Hard to say. Facebook, which owns Instagram, is terrified of being seen as creating a harmful environment online, so it may think that letting people dislike content might add to this impression – even if it reduces the number of abusive messages. It's truly a minefield though, and nobody really knows what's the best course of action. For instance, Facebook said that when it tested removing the like button from Instagram young users felt "stress and anxiety" because they didn't know whether their friends liked what they had posted. Perhaps the answer is not to worry and spend less time online – but who's going to 'like' that?

GET ZERO PC JUNK IN 2022

Make a fresh start to the new year by blocking and removing all the rubbish that slows your PC and wastes valuable hard-drive space. **Robert Irvine** explains how to wipe 10 new types of clutter



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Safely delete empty folders in Windows 10 and 11
- Beat Microsoft's restrictions to remove Windows updates
- Banish the new Widgets feature from Windows 11
- Get clean-up options for all your favourite programs
- Block and remove potentially unwanted applications
- Identify and delete duplicate and large files
- Wipe invisible junk from 'free' space

Keeping your computer free of junk is a never-ending struggle. No sooner do you carry out a thorough clean-up than the clutter starts accumulating again, taking up valuable space on your hard drive and slowing down your system when you're performing everyday tasks.

The battle against this detritus isn't helped by the fact that new types of junk are constantly emerging and some of it is foisted on Windows by Microsoft itself. You may not even realise how much useless stuff your PC is hoarding, until you try to download a file or install a program, only to be told that you have low or no available drive space.

Thankfully, there are lots of reliable ways to remove these unwanted files, and stop them building up again. In this feature, we explain how to blitz your computer of 10 new types of junk, by using free specialist clean-up tools and by tweaking hidden Windows settings that Microsoft doesn't want you to know about.

By following our advice, you won't only begin 2022 with a junk-free computer – you'll also keep it clean throughout the year and beyond. We've avoided obvious tips such as 'empty your Recycle Bin' and 'clear your Downloads folder' to focus on methods the experts use to rid their PCs of rubbish for good.

REMOVE AND BLOCK WINDOWS JUNK

EMPTY WINDOWS FOLDERS

What's the problem?

Many Windows 10 users have experienced a bug whereby the operating system creates thousands of temporary folders for no apparent reason. Right-clicking these folders reveals them to have a file size of '0 bytes' (1 in our screenshot below) and opening them confirms that they're empty.

That might not sound like a major concern – after all, they aren't using any drive space – but the sheer number of these pointless folders can mean scanning your PC for malware and junk takes much longer.

The folders all have names beginning with 'tw' and end with a '.tmp' extension. On our system, we had more than 2,000 of them 2 – you can check your own hard drive by opening File Explorer and going to **C:\Windows\System32\config\systemprofile\AppData\Local** 3. You may be warned that you don't have permission to access system folders, but you can click Continue to proceed. Enabling your PC's Administrator account (see page 62) will bypass this warning.

Frustratingly, the problem also exists in Windows 11, with users of the new operating system reporting the presence of empty folders in the same location, in both the Home and Pro editions.

The folders are believed to be generated by the Provisioning Package Runtime Processing tool – ProvTool.exe, for short – an essential Windows feature that can't be disabled or removed. But we're surprised and disappointed that Microsoft still hasn't fixed the bug, which has plagued users for the last three years, and has allowed it to carry over to Windows 11.

Remove Empty Directories lets you delete all junk temporary folders in one go

How to fix it

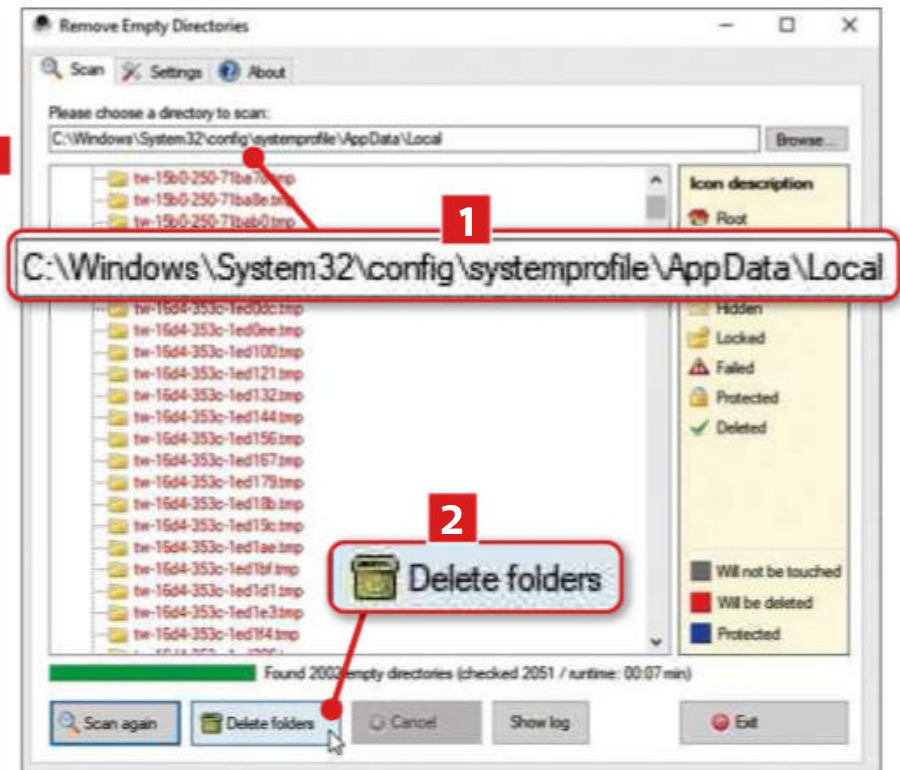
The good news is that these junk folders are safe to delete from your hard drive. You can either do this manually, by right-clicking each one and choosing Delete, or – if, like us, you have thousands of them – use a dedicated program to remove them all in one go.

Download and run the free tool Remove Empty Directories from www.snipca.com/39995. The latest stable version is 10 years old, but it still works fine in Windows 10 and 11, or you can try the new beta version that was released in February.

When the program opens, click Browse, navigate to **C:\Windows\System32\config\systemprofile\AppData\Local** (1 in our screenshot above right) then click OK. Click the Scan Folders button in the bottom-left corner and Remove Empty Directories will quickly identify empty and temporary folders. It marks the items to be deleted in red, while important system folders are marked in grey and won't be touched. Click the 'Delete folders' button 2 to send the unwanted items to the Windows recycle bin – this can take a while, depending on the amount.

If you'd prefer to erase the folders permanently, click the Settings tab and choose 'Delete directly and don't ask any questions' in the dropdown menu.

Unfortunately, until Microsoft fixes



this problem, there's no way to stop ProvTool.exe creating these empty junk folders, but at least you can delete them as soon as they appear. Just make sure you only erase harmless temporary items and not essential system folders.

PC HEALTH CHECK TOOL

What's the problem?

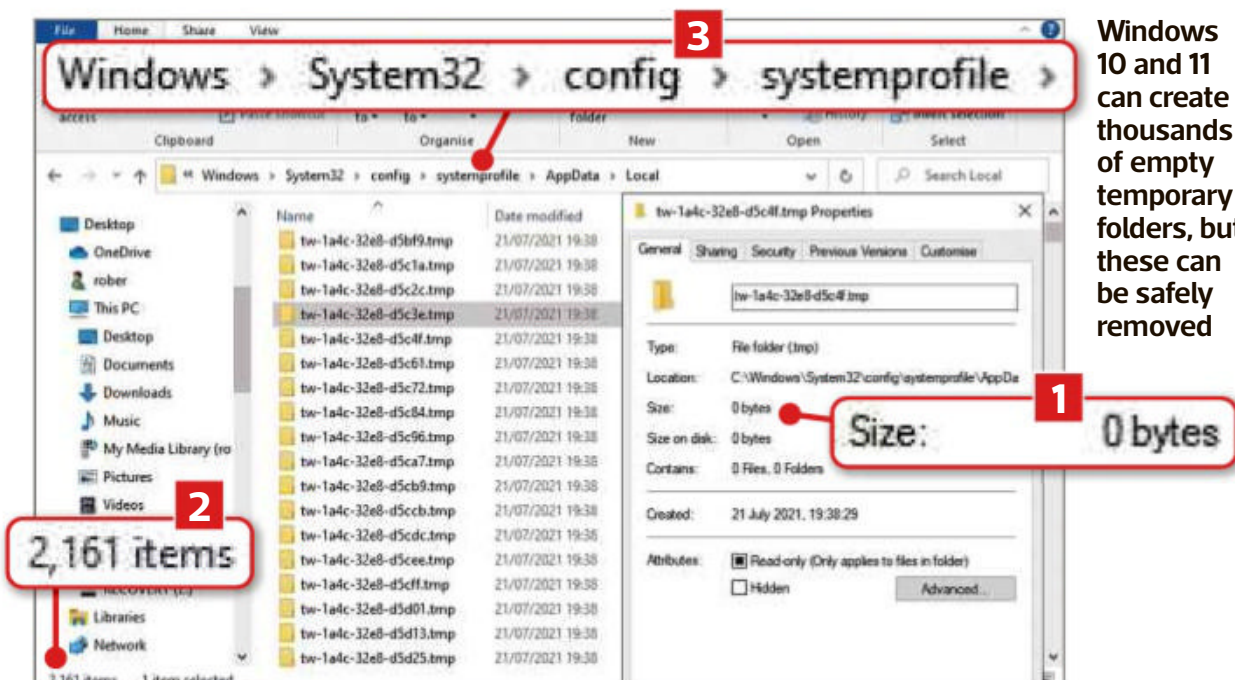
Microsoft's PC Health Check tool offers a convenient way to find out if your computer is compatible with Windows 11 and, if not, which requirements it fails to meet. It's available to download from www.snipca.com/39463, but since October Microsoft has been forcing the program on users, regardless of whether they want to check their system specifications.

This aggressive approach came into play when the KB5005463 update rolled out to Windows 10 PCs in October. PC Health Check can be useful, and also includes options for checking your battery and storage capacity (see screenshot top of page 52), but we think Microsoft should let us choose whether to install it, rather than having the tool foisted upon us.

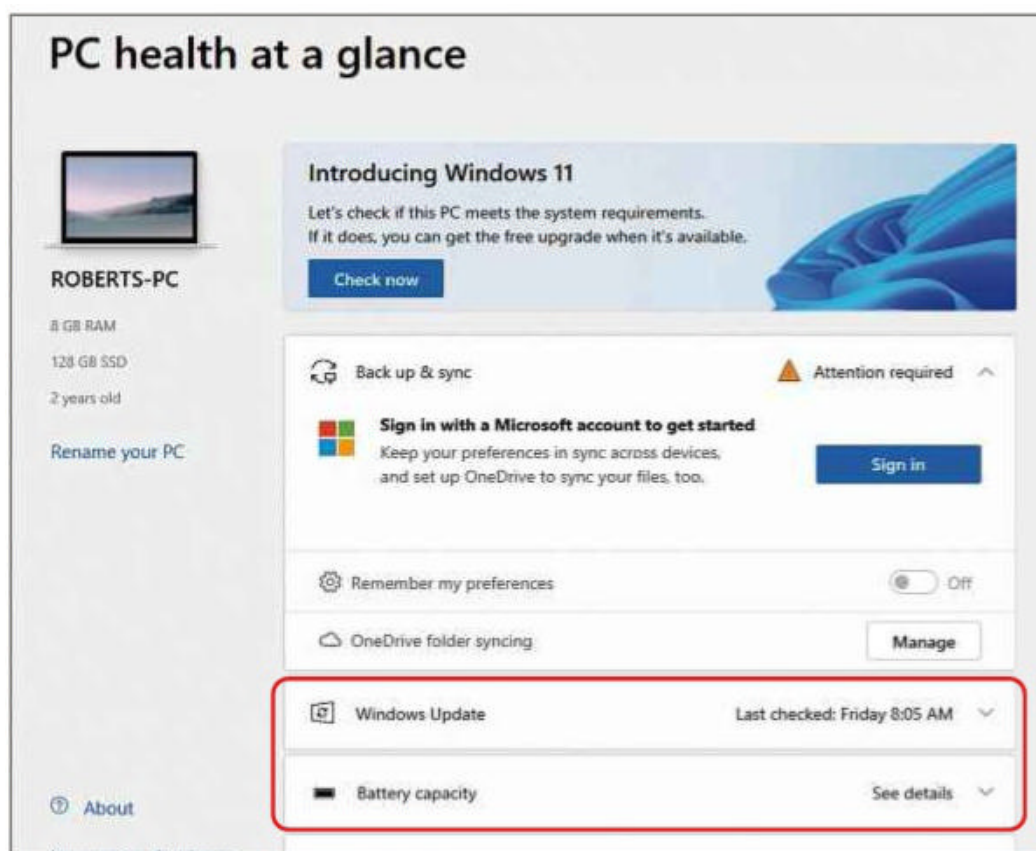
Some users have even reported that PC Health Check automatically reinstalls after you uninstall it, when Windows next checks for updates (see www.snipca.com/39997). By removing our choice and installing PC Health Check without our permission, Microsoft has effectively turned a handy but optional program into a piece of bloatware.

How to fix it

You can remove PC Health Check by going to Settings, then Apps and scrolling



Windows 10 and 11 can create thousands of empty temporary folders, but these can be safely removed



PC Health Check lets you check Windows 11 compatibility, and battery and storage capacity, but Microsoft shouldn't force the tool on Windows users

WINDOWS UPDATE AND INSTALLATION FILES

What's the problem?

By far the biggest space-wasters on your PC are the update and installation files left behind by Windows itself, which can consume several gigabytes of storage. Windows does a poor job of removing these files once they're no longer needed, keeping copies even when the updates have been superseded. You really only need the most recent update file, so you can 'roll back' your system should you experience any problems.

Although this isn't a new type of junk, the fact that updates are getting larger and more frequent makes it a pressing problem in 2022, especially if you're running out of space on your hard drive.

How to fix it

Microsoft now lets you remove Windows updates through its Storage Sense tool, rather than using Disk Clean-up (see box below left). Open the Settings app, choose System, then Storage and click 'Temporary files'. Here you can select 'Windows Update Clean-up' and 'Temporary Windows installation files', and click 'Remove files' to delete them (see screenshot above right). On our PC, these entries took up 3.17GB and 49.3MB respectively.

However, this method doesn't give you the full picture. At the bottom of the window, you'll see another entry for Updates – for us, this said a further 12GB of storage was taken up by update files (including the most recent one – KB5006670 at the time of writing). Clicking 'View update settings' then 'View update history' will tell you exactly what these files are and let you click 'Uninstall updates' to remove them.

However, if you're unsure what to uninstall and don't want to risk removing an important update, it's wise to turn to a specialist disk-cleaning tool. They don't come much wiser than Wise Disk Cleaner, which you can download for free from www.snipca.com/40057.

Install and run the program, then click the Slimming System tab. This will scan your hard drive for old and unnecessary update and installation files that can be safely removed, and tell you how much space you'll reclaim by doing so. On our PC, these amounts were 11.4GB and 262.8MB respectively, which was a big increase on the numbers quoted by Storage Sense. Click the green Remove button (see screenshot above right) and Wise Disk Cleaner will delete the selected

down to its entry in the 'Apps and features' section. Sneakily, it's labelled Windows PC Health Check, which means it's near the bottom and easy to miss. Select the tool and click Uninstall, then Uninstall again – you'll need to restart your PC to remove all traces.

However, as we've mentioned, PC Health Check may get reinstalled with the next Windows update. There is a registry tweak that can prevent this from happening, but it only works on systems with a specific registry value.

Type **regedit** into the Windows search

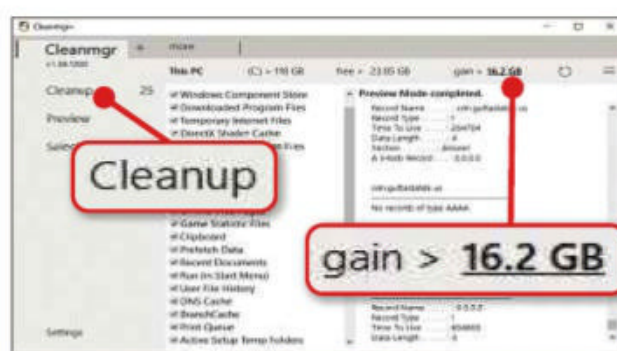
box and select Registry Editor, then navigate to the key **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\PCHC** – or **HKEY_CURRENT_USER\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\PCHC**. Double-click the value PreviousUninstall, change its 'Value data' to 1 then click OK. If you can't find that key or value, you'll just have to hope the tool doesn't come back. In fairness, PC Health Check doesn't run automatically, but it seems Microsoft hasn't learned its lesson after forcing its Get Windows 10 (GWX) app on users in the same way, back in 2015.

Can you use Disk Clean-up in Windows 11?

Introduced in Windows 98, Disk Clean-up has long offered an easy way to remove junk from your PC without needing to download a third-party clean-up tool. It can delete **temporary files**, empty your recycle bin, clean up system files and much more.

However, in 2018 Microsoft announced that Disk Clean-up was being phased out in favour of Windows 10's Storage Sense feature, and in Windows 11 it's been further tucked away. Previously, you could run the tool by right-clicking a drive, choosing Properties and clicking Disk Clean-up; but in the new operating system, this option has been replaced by a 'Storage usage' button that opens Storage Sense.

Currently, it's still possible to use Disk Clean-up in Windows 11 – just search for the app in the Windows search box, or press Windows key+R to open the Run



box, then type **cleanmgr.exe** and click OK. However, it's very likely that Microsoft will remove the tool in a 2022 update.

When that happens, you can either use Storage Sense to clean up your PC or install Cleanmgr+ (www.snipca.com/40049). This free program offers the same features as Disk Clean-up, plus a few extra options, and a similarly simple interface. Simply select the Windows junk you want to remove, click Preview to see how much space you'll gain, then click Cleanup (see screenshot).

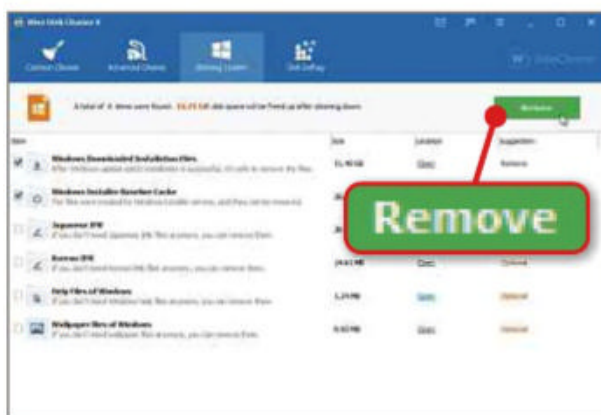


Use Storage Sense to remove unnecessary Windows Update files

files and free up a considerable amount of drive space. It creates a **system restore point** first, in case you have any trouble after 'slimming down'.

If you've upgraded from Windows 10 to Windows 11, Microsoft will automatically delete the old operating system's installation files after 10 days. This means you can no longer roll back to Windows 10, but it also saves you the trouble of removing the files manually.

Blocking future Windows updates isn't advisable, because many contain essential security and maintenance fixes, but you can 'pause' them until you've made space on your hard drive. Go to Settings, then 'Update & Security' and select Windows Update in the left-hand menu. To turn off automatic updates for one week, click the 'Pause updates for 7 days' option, or to delay them for up to 35 days, click 'Advanced options' and choose a date in the 'Pause updates' menu.



Use Wise Disk Cleaner to slim down your system by safely deleting old Windows updates

WINDOWS 11 WIDGETS

What's the problem?

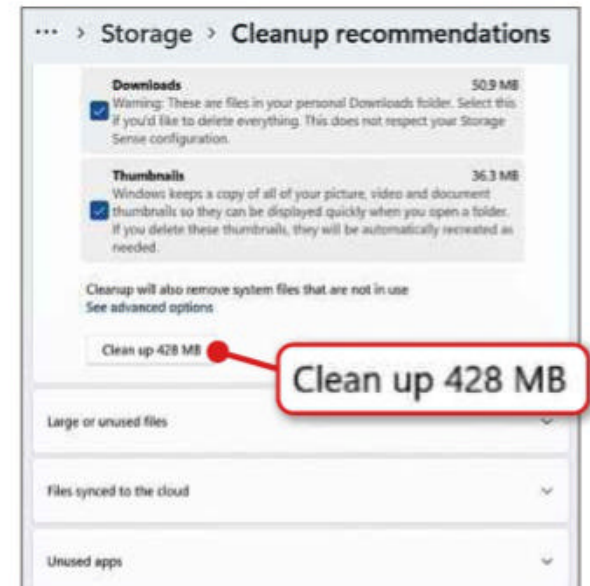
Every new version of Windows brings a feature that some users find useful, but most people regard as an annoyance. In Windows 10, it was Live Tiles in the Start menu and in Windows 11, it's arguably Widgets (see screenshot right). This app provides one-click access to the latest news headlines, weather forecast, stock-market data, Windows 11 tips and more. It's enabled by default and has a

Get clean-up suggestions in Windows 11

There's a big difference between what you *can* remove and what you *should* remove to free up space on your PC, but traditionally Microsoft hasn't offered much guidance. Windows 11 addresses this dilemma by suggesting which files to delete through its Storage Sense feature.

Go to Settings, then System and select Storage, and you'll see a new 'Storage management' section that has a 'Cleanup recommendations' option. Click this to see Windows 11's suggestions, which may include temporary files, items in your Downloads folder and thumbnails for images, videos and documents.

Storage Sense also lists large and unused files that you can probably do without, unused programs you've probably forgotten about and files you've synced to online storage and no longer need on your hard drive. Select all the items you want to



delete and click the 'Clean up' button (see screenshot). It's also worth clicking the 'See advanced options' link to see recommendations for system files you can remove, such as **memory dump files** and device **driver packages**.

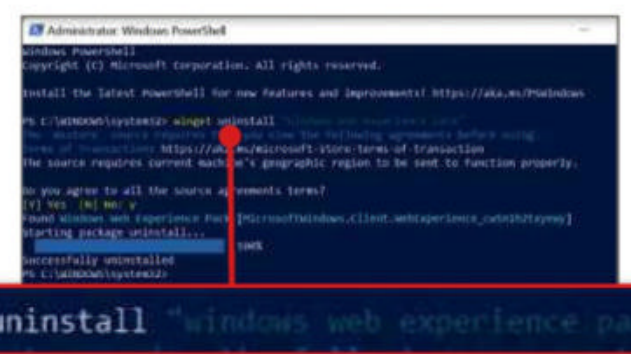
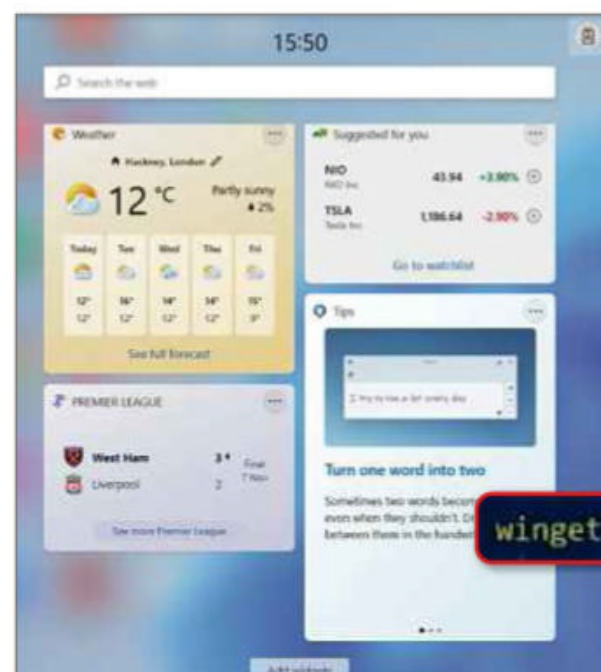
taskbar button that's easy to click accidentally when you're not interested in seeing this information. You can delete a specific **widget** (apart from news) from its pop-up panel by clicking the three dots in its top-right corner and selecting 'Remove widget'. You can even hide the app's taskbar button by right-clicking the taskbar, choosing 'Taskbar settings' and switching off Widgets. But Windows 11 doesn't give you the option to remove Widgets altogether or stop it automatically running in the background.

How to fix it

If you're not a Widgets fan, you can uninstall the app through Command Prompt or PowerShell. Type **cmd** or **powershell** into the Windows 11 search box and click 'Run

as administrator' next to Command Prompt or Windows PowerShell. When either tool opens, type the following command and press Enter: **winget uninstall "windows web experience pack"** (see screenshot below) – you can copy and paste this from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/40028. When asked if you agree to 'all the source agreements terms', press 'Y' on your keyboard for 'Yes'. The Widgets app, which has the official name the Windows Web Experience Pack, will now be uninstalled, though you'll need to restart your PC for all traces to disappear.

If you change your mind and want Widgets back in Windows 11, open the Microsoft Store and search for **Windows Web Experience Pack** – or go to www.snipca.com/40030 in your browser – and click Get to reinstall the app. Open 'Taskbar settings' and switch the Widgets slider off and back on to make its taskbar button reappear.



If you don't like the Widgets feature (left) in Windows 11, remove it through Windows PowerShell (above) or Command Prompt

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WIPE AND PREVENT SOFTWARE JUNK

JUNK CREATED BY NEW SOFTWARE

What's the problem?

Any program you install on your PC creates its own junk files on your hard drive, but – unlike apps on your phone or tablet – there's no simple option to 'Clear cache' when you need to free up space. Clean-up tools such as CCleaner (www.ccleaner.com) let you delete junk from a small selection of software – usually the major browsers, office tools and popular programs such as VLC – but to keep their interfaces tidy, their lists of options don't extend to newer and lesser-known names. This means you may not be able to clean the **cache**, history and other junk generated by your favourite software – or even check how much storage its unnecessary files are consuming.

How to fix it

The brilliant free system cleaner BleachBit (www.snipca.com/40023) offers plenty of useful cleaning options, and lets you add thousands more to remove junk left behind by a wide range of software.

Click the menu button in the top-left corner of BleachBit's main window and choose Preferences. On the General tab, select the options 'Download and update cleaners from community' and 'Hide irrelevant cleaners' (see screenshot below).

Close the Preferences box, restart BleachBit and you'll see the list of programs has been massively expanded to include virtually every program you have installed. On our PC, new options included 4K Video Downloader, Paint.NET, VirtualBox, MiniTool Partition Wizard, IObit software, pre-installed HP apps and many other tools.

To blitz all the rubbish from your system, simply select the items you want

to remove and choose Preview to see how much space you'll save – pay attention to BleachBit's warnings about important data you may lose. Click 'Clean', then choose Delete to confirm.

Although you can't prevent new software from generating junk in the first place, running a regular clean-up with BleachBit will stop it clogging up your hard drive and slowing you down in 2022.

If you prefer CCleaner to BleachBit, you can likewise add thousands of programs to its clean-up options by installing the unofficial free tool CCEnhancer (www.snipca.com/40027).

JUNK BUNDLED WITH NEW SOFTWARE

What's the problem?

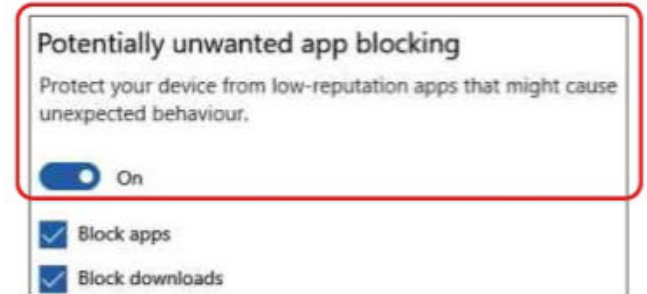
A few years ago, we would have predicted – or at least hoped – that the problem of potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) being bundled with software would have been eradicated by now. Many developers and download sites appeared to be abandoning the practice in favour of earning money through donations, advertising and paid-for versions of their programs.

Sadly, as regular readers of our Named & Shamed column (page 21) will know, bundled junk is still very much with us, and in the last few months we've found PUPs in new software from IObit, **driver** updaters and an increasing number of free PDF tools. Some of these extras are harmless, but they may include **adware**, spyware and **browser hijackers**, and the fact that they're pre-selected and easy to miss makes them particularly aggravating.

How to fix it

Earlier this year, in the Windows 10 May 2020 update (version 21H1), Microsoft added a 'Potentially unwanted app blocking' setting to Windows Security, which detects and blocks PUPs automatically. This is also available in Windows 11, but in either operating system you may need to activate it manually.

Go to Settings, then 'Update & Security' (or 'Privacy & security' in Windows 11) and click Windows Security. Select 'App & browser control', turn on 'Reputation-based

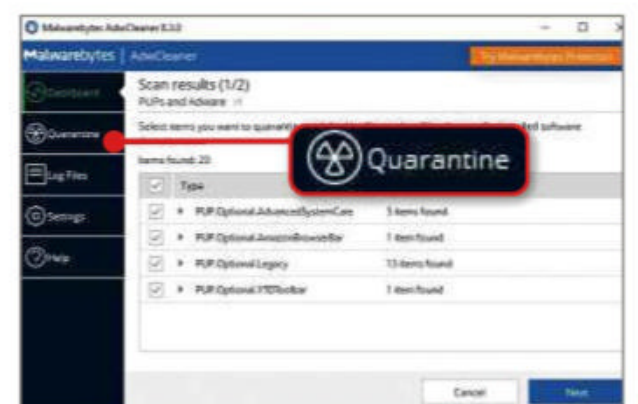


Identify and block potentially unwanted app junk in Windows Security settings

protection' (if it isn't already) and select 'Reputation-based protection settings'. Here you'll find the option to switch on 'Potentially unwanted app blocking' (see screenshot above).

It's also worth installing the free tool Unchecky (<https://unchecky.com>), which automatically declines the 'offers' for PUPs in program installers. Unchecky hasn't been updated for three years, but still does a great job of identifying and refusing junk in new software.

You can find and remove PUPs that are already installed on your system using the powerful free program Malwarebytes AdwCleaner (www.snipca.com/40041). Click 'Scan Now' on its home screen to view all PUPs on your computer, including the latest offenders. then click Next to see junk installed by your PC's manufacturer. Click the Quarantine button to move these items, then go into the Quarantine section (see screenshot below) to delete them.

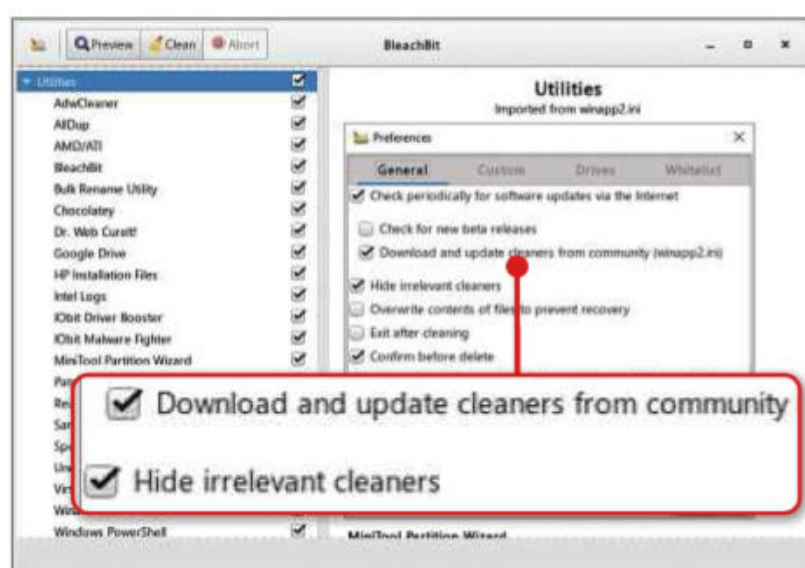


Use Malwarebytes AdwCleaner to detect and remove PUPs installed on your computer

JUNK LEFT BEHIND BY BROWSERS

What's the problem?

The more browsers you have installed, the more junk they generate, and because many of us now switch between Chrome, Brave, Firefox, Edge and other options, our computers are rapidly filling up with remnants of our browsing activities. Although all browsers let you manually clear stored data such as your browsing history, **cookies**, cached images and files, remembering to do so regularly for each

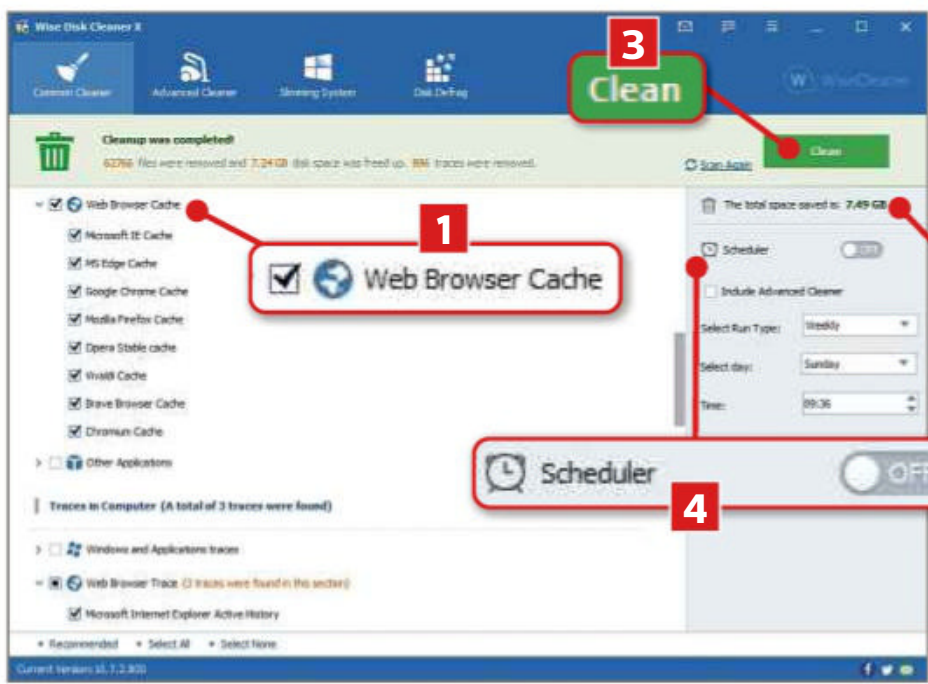


BleachBit offers thousands of additional clean-up options for any new software you install

one is easier said than done. Besides, there's always the risk that you'll delete something important, such as the cookies that keep you signed into websites.

How to fix it
BleachBit (see page 55) provides cleaning options for all the major browsers, as well as Vivaldi, Brave, Opera and others, once you enable its extra cleaners. But our favourite free software for removing browser junk is Wise Disk Cleaner (www.snipca.com/40057 – also see pages 52–53), because it lets you schedule clean-ups at a time and frequency that suit you.

In the program's Common Cleaner tab, under 'Files in Computer', open the Web Browser Cache list **1** and you'll see cache-cleaning options for all the browsers you have installed. Similarly, in the Web Browser Traces list, under 'Traces in Computer', there are options for wiping browsers' histories and session data.



Run Wise Disk Cleaner's Scheduler to remove all your browser junk automatically

Select all those that apply, click Scan to see how much junk Wise Disk Cleaner can remove (7.49GB on our PC **2**), then click Clean **3**.

Once you've performed the initial clean-up, you can use Wise Disk

Cleaner's Scheduler to stop junk accumulating again. Choose how often to perform the purge, and a day and time, then switch on Scheduler **4**. Your browsers will now be kept free of clutter, with a minimum of effort from you.

DELETE USELESS FILES & PROGRAMS

DUPLICATES AND LARGE FILES

What's the problem?
It's easier than ever to inadvertently create duplicate files on your computer – perhaps because you've uploaded an item to the web, then downloaded it again, or you've simply copied an item to a folder instead of moving it. These duplicates aren't necessarily junk, but they take up valuable space on your hard drive, often without you realising they are there. They will also slow down Windows searches and malware scans.

The same applies to large files that you've downloaded or saved, then forgotten about – unless you're likely to need them in the future (in which case you've probably backed them up), they're merely making your computer cluttered and messy.

How to fix it
Previously, we've recommended separate free tools for deleting duplicate and large files, such as AllDup (www.snipca.com/39806 – see Issue 618, page 18) and WizTree (www.snipca.com/40045 – see Issue 617, page 20). But a new **open-source** program called Czkawka (www.snipca.com/40046) combines both these functions, and other useful junk-removal options in one place.

Download it from GitHub at www.snipca.com/40047 – choose the 'windows_czkawka_gui.zip' file – and extract the contents from the ZIP file. Be

warned that this can take a while and, when you click the 'czkawka_gui.exe' file to run the program, you'll see a Windows SmartScreen warning. However, Czkawka is safe to install – VirusTotal finds it to be completely clean of malware, see www.snipca.com/40044 – so you can click 'More info', then 'Run anyway'.

Launch the program, then click the Add button in the top-left corner to choose the drives or folders you want to scan. Click OK in the bottom right to add these to Czkawka's list.

You can now select 'Duplicate files' or Big Files in the left-hand menu (see screenshot below), as well as Empty Directories, Similar Images, Music Duplicates and more. Click the Search button bottom left to locate duplicate or large files, and delete unnecessary items. Usefully, Czkawka lets you preview images before deletion and arranges big

files in descending order of size.

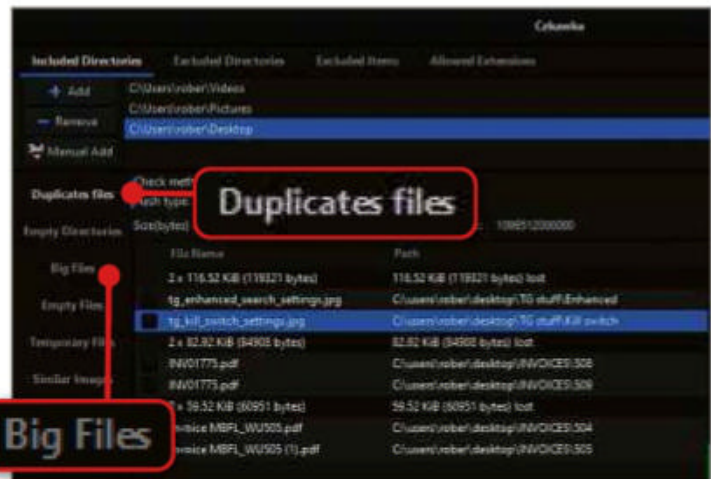
In case you're intrigued by the program's odd name, 'czkawka' is Polish for 'hiccup' – the developer thought it would be amusing to hear non-Polish speakers try to pronounce it.

UNUSED PROGRAMS AND APPS

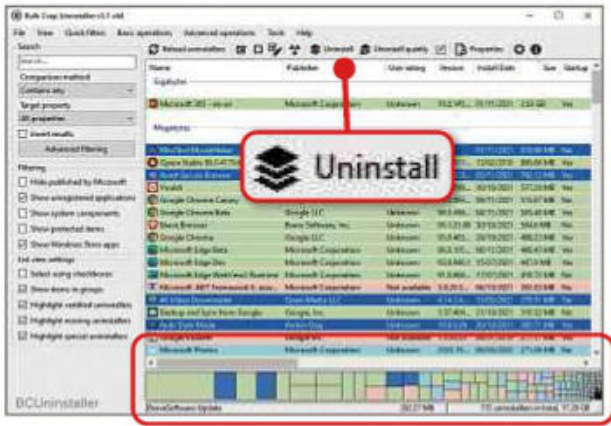
What's the problem?
Many programs you download from the web these days are absolutely massive. For example, MiniTool Movie Maker, which we recommended in Issue 619's Best Free Software (page 18) is a whopping 811MB. This increase in size reflects our higher-resolution monitors and speedier processors, but it also eats into your available storage – especially if you install a program then promptly forget about it.

Windows 10 and 11 both let you sort your installed software by size so you can quickly identify the biggest space hogs. Go to Settings, then Apps and choose 'Sort by: Size' on the 'Apps & features' screen. However, you can't uninstall them in bulk, only one by one.

Windows 11 helpfully groups 'Unused apps' for removal on its 'Cleanup recommendations' screen (see box on page 53), but because it's a new operating system, most users will currently find this list empty.



Use Czkawka to detect and remove duplicate and large files on your PC



BC Uninstaller visualises the size of your programs as blocks

How to fix it

There are plenty of uninstaller programs for Windows, but BCUninstaller (www.snipca.com/40051) is by far the best. Not only does it let you remove multiple programs in one go (by holding down Ctrl as you select them), but it also deletes apps installed from the Microsoft Store, creates a system restore point before uninstalling (so you can roll back your system if necessary), and optionally wipes leftover registry entries and other junk files. We particularly like that you can quickly locate the biggest programs on your hard drive using the appropriately sized blocks at the bottom of BCUninstaller's window (see screenshot above), and forcibly remove tools that don't provide their own uninstallers.

JUNK FILES IN FREE DRIVE SPACE

What's the problem?

When you delete a file from your computer, all that's actually removed is the reference to that item in the Windows master file table (MFT). The file remains on your hard drive until it's overwritten with new data, though the space it occupies is now marked as 'free' by Windows. This is useful if you need to recover the file using a specialist tool such as Recuva (www.snipca.com/40052), but also means that your hard drive contains lots of invisible junk that potentially compromises your privacy.

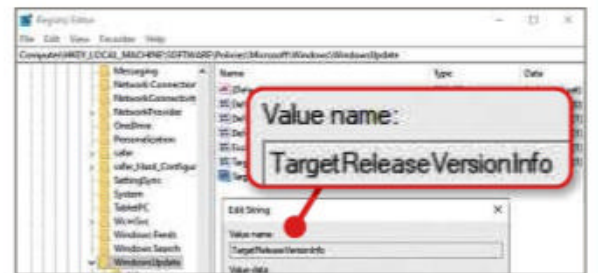
Even new PCs may have traces of deleted files in their free space, left over from tests carried out by the manufacturer. If

Stop your PC upgrading to Windows 11

We wouldn't call Windows 11 junk – see our four-star review in Issue 618 (page 50) – but we are concerned that in 2022 Microsoft could forcibly upgrade compatible Windows 10 PCs to the new operating system. You can prevent this from happening by tweaking the Windows registry to keep your PC running its current Windows 10 version.

Type **regedit** into the Windows 10 search box and select Registry Editor, then navigate to the following key: **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate**.

Right-click WindowsUpdate and select New, then DWORD (32-bit) Value. Name the value TargetReleaseVersion, then double-click it, set the 'Value data' to 1 then click OK. Next, right-



click WindowsUpdate again, choose New, then String Value. Name this value TargetReleaseVersionInfo (see screenshot) and set its 'Value data' to 21H1, which is the current version of Windows 10, and click OK.

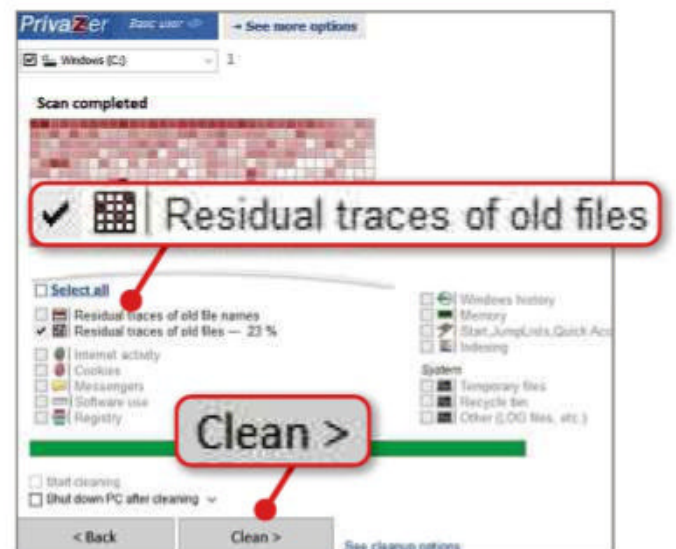
When Microsoft releases version 21H2 (check www.snipca.com/40058 for details), you can change the value data accordingly. Deleting the new values will allow Windows to be installed, should you change your mind.

you want a completely junk-free computer in 2022, which offers the maximum storage possible, you'll need to delete these hidden traces.

How to fix it

The comprehensive free clean-up and privacy tool PrivaZer (www.snipca.com/40053) provides a dedicated option for removing junk traces from 'free' drive space.

Install and run the program (it's best to do so as a Basic user rather than an Advanced one to begin with) and choose 'Scan specific traces' on its home screen. Select 'Residual traces of old files' under 'Which traces', then select 'Residual traces of old files' on the following screen. Click the Scan button and PrivaZer will identify sectors of your hard drive that contain residual traces of old files and need a 'reset to zero'. Click 'See cleanup options' to specify how many times to overwrite the free space (three 'passes' is enough) then click the Clean button (see screenshot above right). The process can take a while, but once complete all that



Use PrivaZer to wipe free space on your hard drive to remove hidden traces of deleted files

invisible, leftover junk will be thoroughly erased.

PrivaZer's other clean-up options include wiping traces of your web activities and software use, and it also works with external hard drives, SSDs and USB sticks. Its paid-for 'Donors' version has extra features such as automatic cleaning and updates, but the free edition will be fine for most people and now supports Windows 11. **ca**

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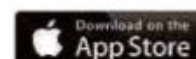
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Don't buy the wrong headphones or earbuds

There's a lot to consider when choosing a new pair of headphones – such as whether you might actually prefer earbuds. **Nik Rawlinson** explains the differences and recommends what you should buy

Wired or wireless? Over-ear, in-ear or on-ear? Budget or break the bank? Headphones come in many varieties and price ranges, so you should think long and hard before buying a pair. Naturally, you'll want a pair that makes your music and podcasts sound great, but you also want to be comfortable – possibly for hours at a time. We're here to help, with answers to four key questions you should consider.

Earbuds or headphones?

Whatever else you learn in this article, remember this above all: earbuds fit inside your ears, while headphones sit outside. There's another distinction to be made between on-ear headphones (with flat pads that sit against each ear) and over-ear headphones (which are larger and have built-up sides – like cups – that enclose the ears). Over-ear headphones are often better at providing an immersive listening experience than their on-ear counterparts.



The Jaybird Vista earbuds have over-the-ear arms to keep them firmly in place when exercising

Which you should choose depends on how you plan to use them. Earbuds are more convenient if you want to listen to something while exercising, particularly in winter, because you can wear them under a hat. If you're going to be running, hiking or cycling, look for earbuds with over-the-ear arms, or additional fins, to keep them firmly in place. The Jaybird Vista (£160 from Amazon www.snipca.com/40011, pictured below left) are an ideal choice.

If you wear glasses, you may find earbuds more comfortable than headphones because the arm of your glasses won't be pinched between your head and ear by the pressure exerted by the headphones, and the tension in the headband.

That said, earbuds can require constant adjustment if used for several hours at a time. That's because, to get the best output, they often need to sit in a specific position in your ear and can easily slip out slightly. In contrast, you can simply push headphones back into place if they slip backward or forward. Some earbuds come with a choice of pliable plastic tips, which you can try until you find the perfect fit, which minimises this problem.

Apple's second- and third-generation AirPods have a one-size-fits-all design, while the more expensive AirPods Pro



Apple's AirPods Pro have pliable tips that adapt to the shape of your ear

(£239 from www.snipca.com/40048, pictured left) have pliable tips that, Apple says, "conform to the shape of your ear". You can use AirPods with any non-Apple device that has Bluetooth (including Android phones and tablets).

In terms of what they can do, there's very little difference between earbuds and headphones. They both work well with computers, TVs, smartphones and tablets. However, if you're buying a pair for gaming or making calls, make sure they have a built-in mic to avoid the need for two separate connections.

Headphones are the only viable option for anyone that uses hearing aids, although more recent aids now come with Bluetooth, which connects them wirelessly to smartphones, computers and some TV sets.

We recommend the AudioNova DX (www.snipca.com/40020) and the Phonak Paradise (www.snipca.com/40021), though you should ask your audiologist whether these hearing aids are suitable as replacements for headphones. For example, do you get better sound quality connecting them directly to your phone when streaming music, or would you be better with a pair of headphones laid on top of them?

Wireless or wired?

Wireless headphones and earbuds are more convenient. You can leave your phone out of harm's way and listen to audiobooks while cooking or cleaning. Bluetooth signals will typically reach around 10 metres (30ft) in any direction, assuming they don't have to pass through too many insulated walls, so in many houses you'll be able to leave the phone somewhere central and roam as far as you want.

Going wireless also means your headphones/buds are less likely to become obsolete in future, because 3.5mm audio jack connections are becoming increasingly rare on modern smartphones. None of Apple's current crop of iPhones has a headphone jack, and neither have the last two generations of Google Pixel phones – the Pixel 5 and 6. So, even if you could use an expensive pair of wired headphones today, there's a good chance you won't be able to next time you upgrade your phone.

Wireless headphones need regular charging, but given they have restricted space for batteries they last longer than you might think. Google Pixel Buds (from £100 from www.snipca.com/40043) have a five-hour battery life, after which they are recharged by dropping them into the case that comes with them (see www.snipca.com/40005). The case has its own rechargeable battery, so you can top up the Buds even if you're away from a plug socket, giving you a total listening time of 24 hours (halve this if you're using them to make calls).

Apple's third-generation AirPods boast a six-hour battery, and a total listening time of 30 hours when the charging case is taken into account. Apple's AirPods Pro lasts four and a half hours, with an overall listening time of 'over 24 hours' with the case (compare the battery lives – and other specs – of all AirPods models at www.snipca.com/40004).

If you prefer headphones, you'll enjoy a significantly longer battery life. Sony's WH-XB910N wireless headphones (£180 from Amazon, www.snipca.com/40006) can run for up to 30 hours between charges, which could be enough for a full week's listening, after which you simply charge them overnight.

Do you need noise cancellation?

If you work (or live) in a noisy environment or simply want to block out the chatter on your commute, noise-cancelling headphones can provide some welcome relief. They have a side benefit, too: if

Why I use earbuds and headphones

I use Google Pixel Buds with my phone and Bose QuietComfort 35 II headphones (pictured) when at my computer. Each connects via Bluetooth, so whether I'm gardening while listening to a podcast, or need to get up and check something while working, I'm neither stuck in one place nor constrained by cables. Previously, I used wired buds, but the lack of a jack on my new phone forced me to upgrade. How glad I am that I did.

Nik Rawlinson



Bose's QuietComfort 45 headphones block outside sounds by mixing them into what you're listening to



The EarFun Air 4 earbuds give you a punchy sound for only £50



you're hearing less of the outside world, you don't need to turn up the volume so high, so you may save battery life and avoid damaging your hearing.

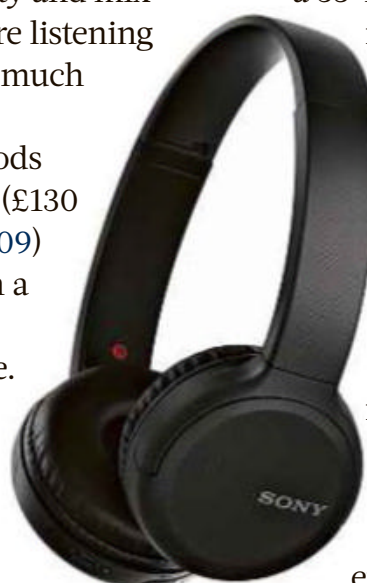
However, be careful if you're buying noise-cancelling earbuds or headphones for running or walking on the street because they can block out the sound of hazards around you, for example, traffic – and particularly quieter electric cars.

Several manufacturers are trying to overcome this problem by providing a 'balanced environment' option, rather than blocking out ambient sounds completely.

Bose's QuietComfort 45 headphones (£320 from www.snipca.com/40008, pictured above) have built-in mics that sample noises in your vicinity and mix them in with whatever you're listening to, at what Bose claims is a "much more balanced volume".

Apple's AirPods Pro, AirPods Max, and Beats Studio Buds (£130 from www.snipca.com/40009) use external microphones in a similar way to provide what they call Transparency Mode.

With a microphone and 35-hour battery life, Sony's WH-CH510 headphones are a bargain



How much should you spend?

You don't need to spend a fortune. The EarFun Air 4 will cost you around £50 (from Amazon, www.snipca.com/40012, pictured above) and produce a punchy, expansive sound while offering a decent set of features.

If you exercise regularly, consider Bose SoundSport Wireless headphones (£109 from Amazon, www.snipca.com/40014), which has a cable that you can hang around your neck, so if they slip out of your ears you're not going to lose them.

If earbuds aren't for you, Sony's WH-CH510 over-the-ear headphones are a bargain (£36 from Amazon, www.snipca.com/40018, pictured below left).

They connect using Bluetooth and have a 35-hour battery life. A built-in microphone lets you make calls via your smartphone, and they even connect to your phone's voice assistant.

If money is less of an object, Sony's WH-100XM4 (£280 from Amazon, www.snipca.com/40017) have a 30-hour battery life and improved noise-cancellation, blocking mid-range sounds such as humming from a fan, air-conditioning, or a car engine. **ca**

Unless you're using a locked-down work computer, it's reasonable to assume that as the owner and primary user of your Windows computer, you are also the administrator. In fact, if you go to Settings, click Accounts and select 'Your info', you may see Administrator under your name. However, Windows also has a hidden administrator account, which is more powerful than the standard one. The latter is really just a user account with some administrative rights, which is why you're still required to manually run certain tools as an administrator, whereas the former has the highest permissions of any profile on your PC.

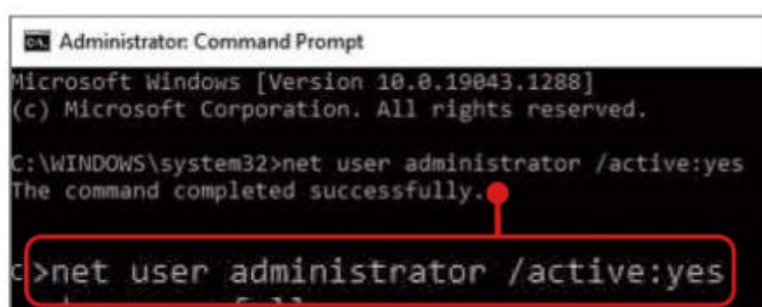
Here we'll explain how to unlock the secret Administrator account and reveal what you can do with it.

How to enable the Windows Administrator account

There are several ways to unlock the hidden Administrator account. However, only one method for unlocking the Administrator account works in the Home edition of Windows 10 and 11. Fortunately, it is also the easiest. It involves using an 'elevated' Command Prompt, which confusingly needs to be run as an administrator to start with. Type `cmd` into the Windows search box, then when Command Prompt appears at the top of the results, click 'Run as administrator'. If User Account Control asks whether you want to 'allow this app to make changes to your device', click Yes.

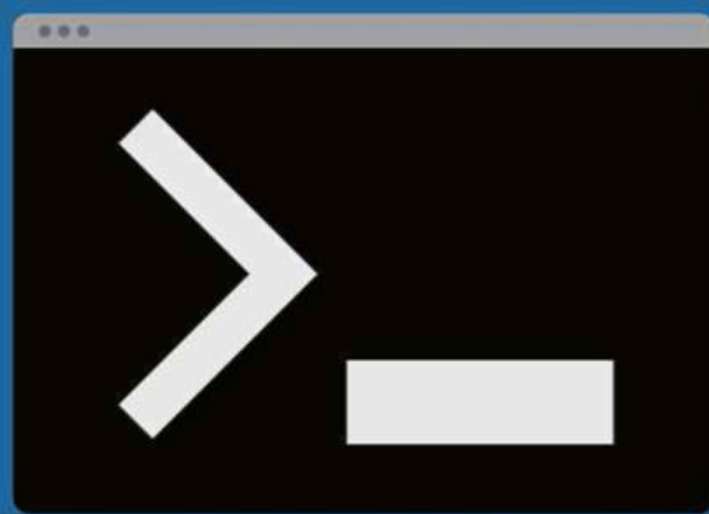
In the Command Prompt window that opens, type the following command: `net user administrator /active:yes` (see screenshot below) and press Enter. You can also copy and paste this from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/39978. Command Prompt will tell you that 'The command completed successfully'.

Sign out of your current account, or restart your PC, and you'll see a new Administrator option. Click this to log in – it doesn't require a password. Note that the Administrator account won't retain files stored in your standard user account,



You can activate your Administrator account through Command Prompt in any Windows version

Master your Windows Admin account



Get unlimited access to your PC using its secret Administrator mode. **Robert Irvine** explains how to unlock this powerful option, what you can do with it and how to stay safe

though you can easily switch back to access these. However it will let you use programs you've installed across all your user accounts.

In Windows 10 and 11 Pro (and Enterprise), you can activate the Administrator account using the following methods. First, press Windows key+Run to open the Run box and type `lusrmgr.msc`. Press Enter or click OK to open the 'Local Users and Groups' window. Click 'Users' in the left-hand pane, then right-click Administrator and select Properties. On the General tab, untick the option 'Account is disabled' and click OK.

Alternatively, type `secpol.msc` into the Run box and press Enter. When the Local Security Policy window opens, expand Local Policies in the

left-hand pane and select Security Options. Double-click 'Accounts: Administrator account status' in the right-hand pane, choose Enabled and click OK.

Four best things you can do with an Administrator account

Perform tasks without UAC prompts

Universal Account Control (UAC) is usually triggered when you try to run a program or perform a task in Windows that requires elevated privileges (special permissions granted via an administrator-access token). Its consent prompts are intended to stop malware infection and unauthorised changes to system settings, but UAC can also prove overcautious and annoying, especially when it asks for confirmation to run Microsoft's own tools.

With an Administrator account, you won't see any UAC prompts, which



You won't see User Account Control prompts when using an Administrator account

means you can do anything on your PC without constantly needing to click Yes to confirm your actions. It bypasses the need for elevated privileges, so that you can install and uninstall software faster, and won't need to confirm actions such as tweaking Windows Security settings (see screenshot above) or editing the Windows registry.

We should point out that, if you're willing to take the risk, UAC can be disabled without switching to an Administrator account. Type **uac** into the Windows search box and select Change User Account Control Settings. In the window that opens, drag the slider down to 'Never notify', click OK and choose Yes when UAC asks for confirmation.

Reset your password if you forget it

If you can't remember the password for your standard user account, or are having trouble using it to log in, you can reset it through your Administrator account, which doesn't require a password.

Type **netplwiz** into the Windows search box and select that option at the top of the results to open the User Accounts window. Select your user account, click the Reset Password button and enter the new password to use, then click OK to confirm. Alternatively, you can deselect the option 'Users must enter a username and password to use this computer'.

Click OK, then restart your PC, choose



An Administrator account makes it easy to reset the password for other user accounts

Stay safe in Administrator mode

Having unrestricted access to your computer might sound appealing, but it also puts you at greater risk from hackers and malware infection. A malicious program that runs instantly without the safeguard of Universal Account Control could cause you all sorts of problems, while hackers can more easily target accounts that have the default name of Administrator and no password protection, and run riot when they succeed.

For these reasons, it's wise to disable Administrator mode when you're not using it. To do so, run Command Prompt

as an administrator (or just open it if you're in Administrator mode), then type the following command and press Enter:

net user administrator /active:no.

Another option is to rename your Administrator account to something less obvious to hackers. Type this command into Command Prompt, replacing 'Newname' with your preferred account name: **wmic useraccount where name='Administrator' rename 'Newname'**. You can copy and paste this command from Pastebin at www.snipca.com/40029.

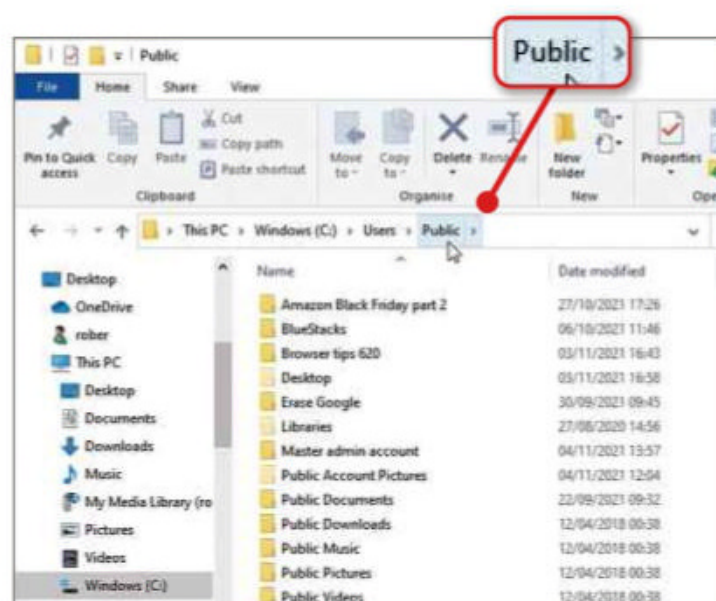
your user account and either sign in with a new password or jump straight into Windows.

Conversely, because an Administrator account allows changes to be made to your PC without confirmation, you may want to protect it with a password to stop other people meddling with your system. Select 'Administrator' in the User Accounts window, click Reset Password (see screenshot below left) and enter the password to use. Make sure you don't forget it or you'll be locked out for good.

Use Command Prompt and PowerShell more easily

Command Prompt and its successor PowerShell let you perform all manner of Windows tasks that would otherwise involve digging deep into system settings. These include troubleshooting, system maintenance, customisation, finding useful information and much more. The problem is that most of their commands require elevated privileges and though it's simple enough to choose 'Run as administrator' before launching either tool, it's equally easy to forget to do so. This can result in you typing long and complicated commands into a Command Prompt or PowerShell window, only to be told that 'Access is denied' or 'You must be an administrator'.

When using an Administrator account, you are of course an administrator by default, which makes both tools much easier and less irritating to use. You can use commands such as **sfc /scannow** to scan for and repair corrupted files using System File Checker, without needing to remember to do so as an administrator.



Share files between your user and admin accounts by moving them to the Public folder

Switch between your admin and user accounts

Windows keeps you signed into your standard user account and Administrator account at the same time, so you won't lose any open files or windows when switching from one to the other. Simply click the Start button, click your user profile picture and select the current account, then choose the one you want to switch to. As we've explained, Administrator accounts don't require a password – unless you set one up – which makes things even quicker.

You can also share files between your user and admin accounts. Open File Explorer, then This PC and double-click the icon for the hard drive – this is usually called 'Windows (C:)'. Double-click the Users folder and you'll see a folder called Public (see screenshot above). Copy files into this folder and they'll be shared across all your Windows accounts, including the Administrator one. You can then copy them from the Public folder to your desktop at the other end. **ca**

Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Why can't I pair my TV and hearing aids?

Q I have some of the latest hearing aids from Specsavers. These have Bluetooth and work perfectly with my Apple iPhone. However, I'm not able to pair them with my LG TV, in spite of the TV having Bluetooth connectivity. My normal wireless headphones connect to the TV without problem. Any clues?
Gerard van Zwieten

A We have an inkling, yes. While we don't know your exact model of hearing aids, it is very likely to have Bluetooth 4.0 or later. These newer versions of the wireless standard include a technology called Low Energy (LE), the purpose of which pretty much speaks for itself: it's an innovation that keeps power use to an absolute minimum. This, obviously, is a vital factor for smaller devices – such as hearing aids.

Now, while the Bluetooth standard itself is broadly backwards compatible – meaning that a device that uses the latest Bluetooth 5.3 protocol can in theory communicate with one manufactured to the original Bluetooth 1.0 specification – there are exceptions. Specifically, if a device relies on a



Hearing aids may not connect to a TV if the Bluetooth standards are not compatible

feature that's available only in later versions of the Bluetooth standard then it won't work with earlier versions.

We think this is the root of your problem. Your hearing aids are almost certainly making use of the LE aspect of Bluetooth 4.0 or later, while your TV is probably on Bluetooth 3.0 or earlier. Larger headphones with bigger batteries, or older models, might not have or make use of Bluetooth LE: this would explain why your existing cordless headphones connect to your TV without complaint.

So that's our reasoning. Is there anything that can be done about it? Well, obviously a new TV is likely to have a more recent version of Bluetooth, and this would almost certainly solve the problem. However, we doubt you'll be in any rush to replace your telly – any more than you'd want to lose the benefits of your Bluetooth LE hearing aids.

That leaves us only with the suggestion of a cheaper workaround. Assuming your TV has a standard 3.5mm headphone jack – and we'd say most sets do – then you can use this to hook up an external Bluetooth transmitter. The pictured Kolp model (left), for example, plugs into your TV's headphone jack and then transmits the output from that as a Bluetooth 5.0 signal that should be compatible with your hearing aids. It has a built-in battery, but can also be powered by a mains connection, via an included USB cable. It costs around £9 (www.snipca.com/39922).

You might need to configure your TV's settings to play audio through its headphone jack but, with that done, you can then pair your hearing aids to the external Bluetooth transmitter and you should be good to go.



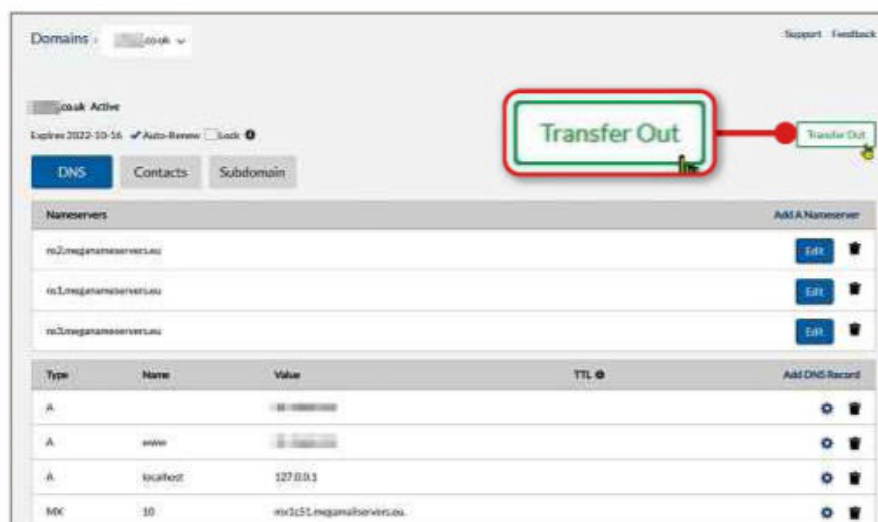
The Kolp Bluetooth transmitter plugs into a TV's 3.5mm jack socket and transmits audio to headphones

Must I pay hosting fees for email?

Q I have a personal website – let's say it's at www.johnhoratiosmith.co.uk. With this I have an email address, which is john@johnhoratiosmith.co.uk. I no longer wish to keep and pay for use of my website, but I would like to keep the email address. However, my hosting company says that unless I pay the fee for hosting the website, I cannot keep using my email address. Is it correct that I'm unable to keep using this email address without paying for the website hosting too? Would a different company be able to offer me only email facilities if I change supplier?

John Smith

A The short answer is that there's no technical reason for this requirement: it's a purely commercial decision made by your current registrar. You didn't tell us the name of the company, but it sounds like it bundles email services in with web hosting so, if you ditch the latter, you also



Transfer your domain to a new provider by logging into your current provider's control panel and selecting the option labelled Transfer Out, or something similar

lose the former.

That's the choice of your current provider, but not all registrars operate this way. Plenty of companies offer at least free email forwarding as part of their basic registration service. This means you can request to have any messages that are sent to your john@johnhoratiosmith.co.uk email address forwarded to a different address, so you could pick them up in Gmail or Outlook.com, say.

The specifics of how to do this will depend on the company you choose. Regardless, it's usually no more complicated than logging in to the

provider's control panel, clicking the relevant domain name and looking for an option labelled Forwarding, or similar – and then typing in the relevant forwarding email address.

Before you do that, though, you'll obviously need to transfer your domain to a new provider. The process for this can be more involved, so it's best to consult both your existing and new provider. It usually begins by logging into your current provider's control panel, selecting the relevant domain name and then clicking an option labelled Transfer or Transfer Out, or similar (see screenshot above).

Can I rewire my mouse buttons?

Q This might seem like an inconsequential problem but it's causing me great difficulty. Over the last couple of years my thumb and index finger have become increasingly immobile, thanks to progressive osteoarthritis. This makes it difficult for me to use the mouse on my Windows 10 computer, as I find it hard to click the left mouse button. Instead, I have to use my middle finger – but that means it's uncomfortable to grip. I'm wondering if there would be some way to rewire the buttons so that I can use my middle finger to do the main clicking on the right button? Or is there a mouse I can buy that works the other way around?

Dennis Clarke

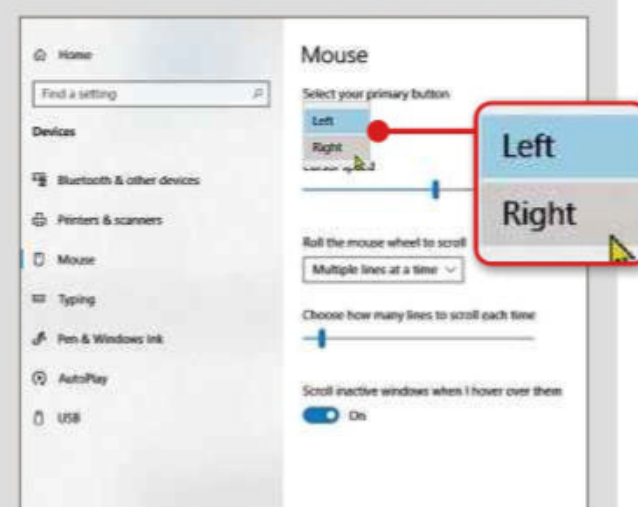
A While we rather like the idea of dismantling a mouse to switch the electrical



If you find it more comfortable to use the right button on your mouse...

connections underlying the buttons, there's actually a far easier way to achieve what you want. That is to use an option in Windows 10 that does this without need for a screwdriver.

First, click the Start button followed by the Settings cog, and then click Devices. Now, on the left, click Mouse and then,



... go to Windows 10's Settings, and under the 'Select your primary button', choose Right

in the right-hand pane, under the 'Select your primary button' heading, click to open the dropdown menu and, there, choose Right (see screenshot above).

You can now perform normal 'left-click' operations by clicking your middle finger on the right button.

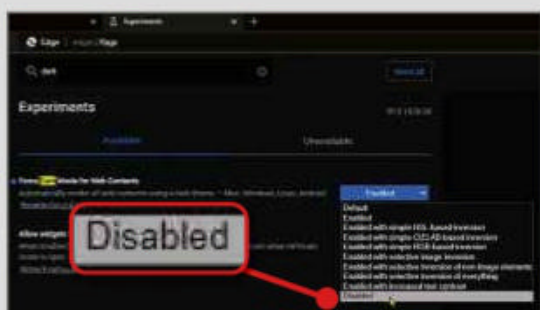
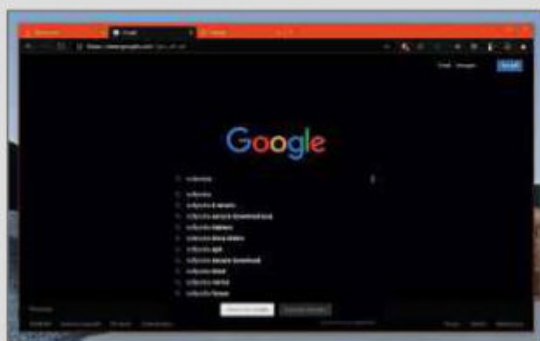
Why has Google gone dark?

Q I have a small problem with my Google page. When I fired up my desktop PC recently I noticed that Google was different, with black print and only the Google logo in colour. Then I checked my laptop and it looked like the old Google page. So I updated my laptop via Windows Update and lost the old Google page to this bland one. Did I do something wrong or is Microsoft up to its old tricks again?

Alex Harrison

A It sounds like somehow Dark Mode has been enabled in your browser, which we guess is Edge or Chrome. Settings can be synced across devices so, if you're logged into a Google account, that could explain why the annoyance on the first laptop then made it over to the second.

In Edge, at the top, type `edge://flags` and press Enter. In Chrome, type `chrome://flags`. Next, in either browser, in the 'Search flags' box, type `dark` (no need to press Enter). Finally, next to 'Force Dark Mode for Web Contents', open the dropdown menu and choose Disabled (see screenshot below) before clicking Restart (Edge) or Relaunch (Chrome).



Disable Edge's Dark Mode (top) by typing `edge://flags` and selecting 'Disabled'

How do I rename lots of files?

Q I have loads of MP3 files that start with numbers, such as '01.01_3 Blah Blah.mp3' and '09.06_7 Dah Dah.mp3'. I'm sure that you've explained previously how to remove these numbers in bulk, leaving the rest of the names intact. Can you point me to the article or tell what software would work?

Howard Angel

A Yes, we've certainly offered instructions on doing this – and probably many times over the years. For that reason we can't know which specific article you're thinking of, but we can say that a perennial favourite of the *Computeractive* team is Flash Renamer, which is a free download from www.snipca.com/39924.

It's technically more a trial app than a freebie but, as long as you don't mind putting up with reminders to purchase, you can use it indefinitely without paying. It's a powerful tool, but for your

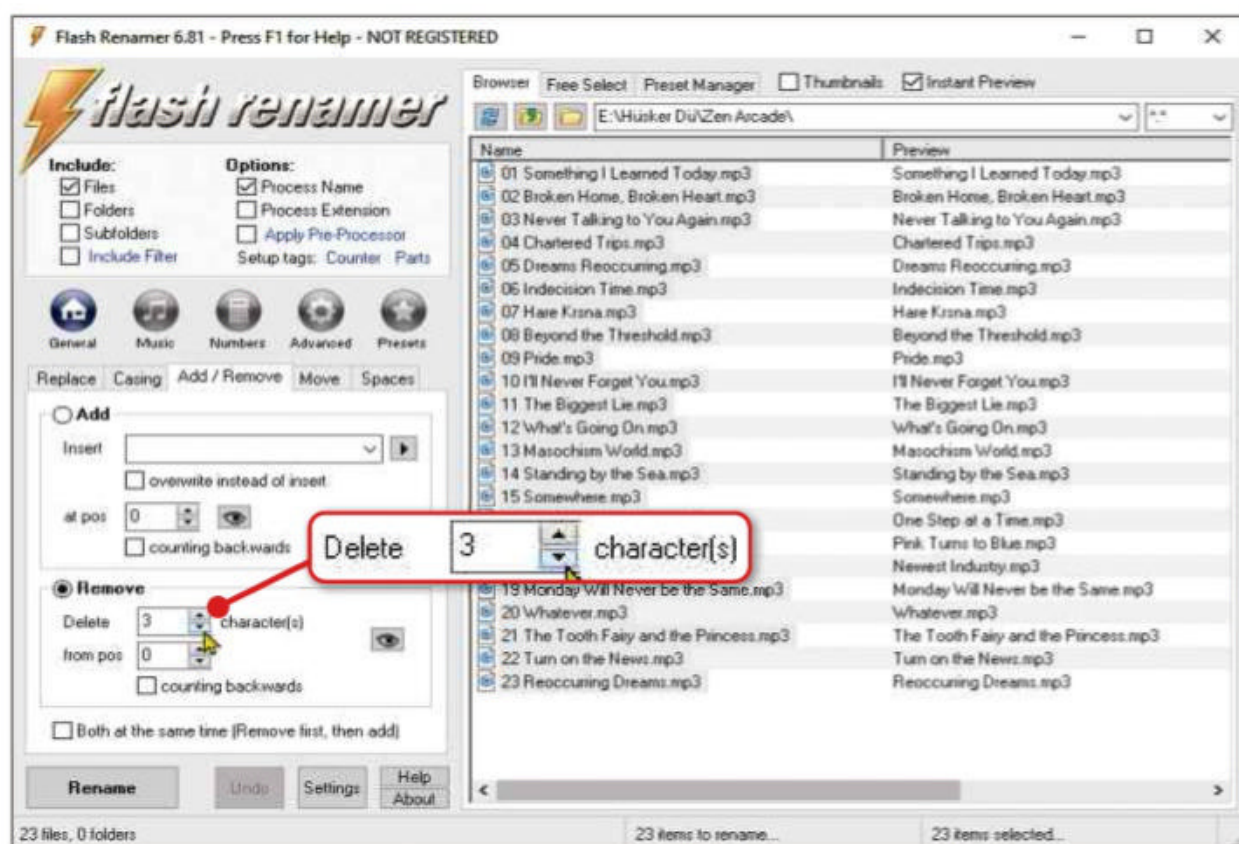


Flash Renamer is a free download

needs there's only one element to learn.

First, in the Browser tab, click the folder icon and then navigate to your MP3s folder. Next, click the Add/Remove tab and, below that, select the Remove option. Then, in the Delete field, type the number of characters you wish to remove (see screenshot below). We count eight in your examples, but it could be higher or lower.

Then, in the right-hand pane, click to select the files you wish to rename, or press Control (Ctrl)+A to select them all. Check the Preview column for the proposed revisions, and then click the Rename button.



In the Delete field select the number of characters you want to remove

Q: Why did my wife see ads for items I've looked at?

A: Issue 594, page 67 – find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD

Buy it from www.snipca.com/38164



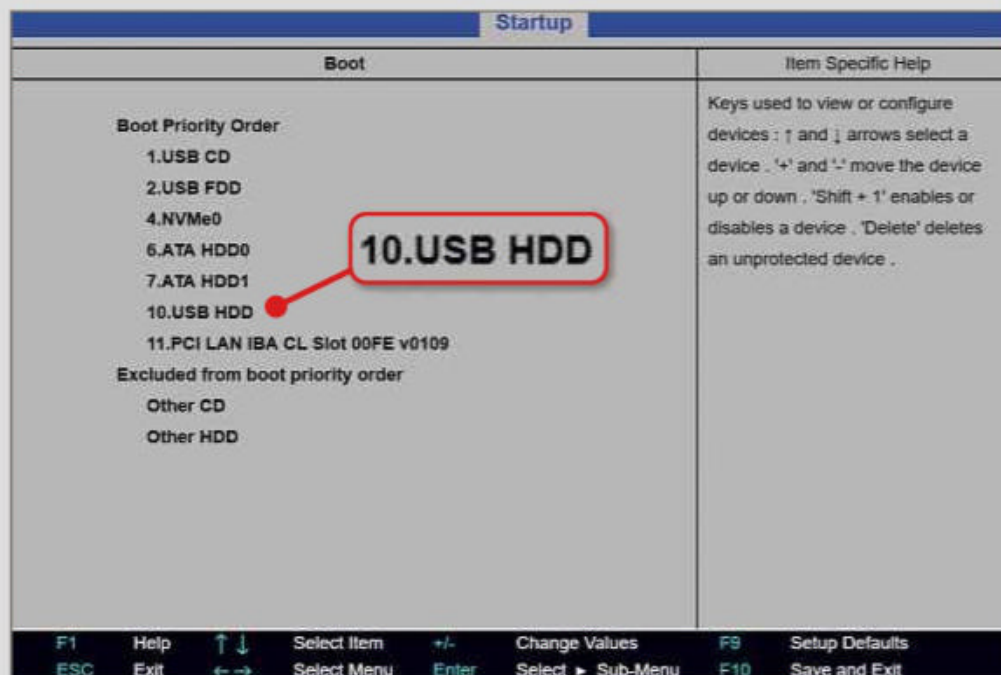
Do I need a bootable USB for system images?

Q Paragon Backup & Recovery works well for me, although it can't count! The program started by saying a **system image** would take 55 minutes, then dropped to 33 minutes before jumping back up to 54 minutes. It actually took an hour and a half. I then created a bootable USB stick. Do I need to do this every time I create a system image? Also, what do I need to do in the **BIOS** to be able to boot from this USB stick? I'm wary of touching the BIOS.

Terry Steels

A Paragon's clock is merely a dynamic estimate. In other words, the program looks at what needs backing up and then calculates how long it thinks that will take. But, as the job progresses it will encounter files and folders that are larger or smaller than expected, so the timer updates accordingly.

As for your next question, no – you don't need to make a new bootable USB entry with each new system image.



Check that 'USB HDD' is above the hard drive in the BIOS

Paragon suggests your bootable stick should be created using a version of Windows that's no more than one edition (or major update) older than the latest version. That's sound advice.

Finally, you might not need to do anything in the BIOS in order to boot from your USB stick, but it's wise to check. Look for a button to press after starting your PC, such as F2 or Delete

(Del), and do this to access the BIOS. Now use the cursor (arrow) keys and Enter to navigate to the BIOS pages.

You are looking for a section headed 'Boot order' or 'Boot priority', or similar. Use the aforesaid keys to ensure that a USB port (or 'USB HDD', see screenshot above) is above the hard drive in the list. Press Escape (Esc) and then choose Yes to save any changes.

Why won't Windows 7 activate?

Q My friend has had a Toshiba Satellite L350 laptop since 2009 that has worked well for him. However, upgrading to Windows 10 caused numerous compatibility problems. He's asked me to help to put it back to Windows 7, as I have more experience. He has a valid Windows 7 **OEM** product key, but although I have downloaded and installed several Windows 7 **ISO files**, they won't accept the key. The recovery **partitions** seem empty, if there was ever anything there. I know that he could buy a copy of Windows 7 with a key but it doesn't seem right that he should have to pay again. Any ideas?

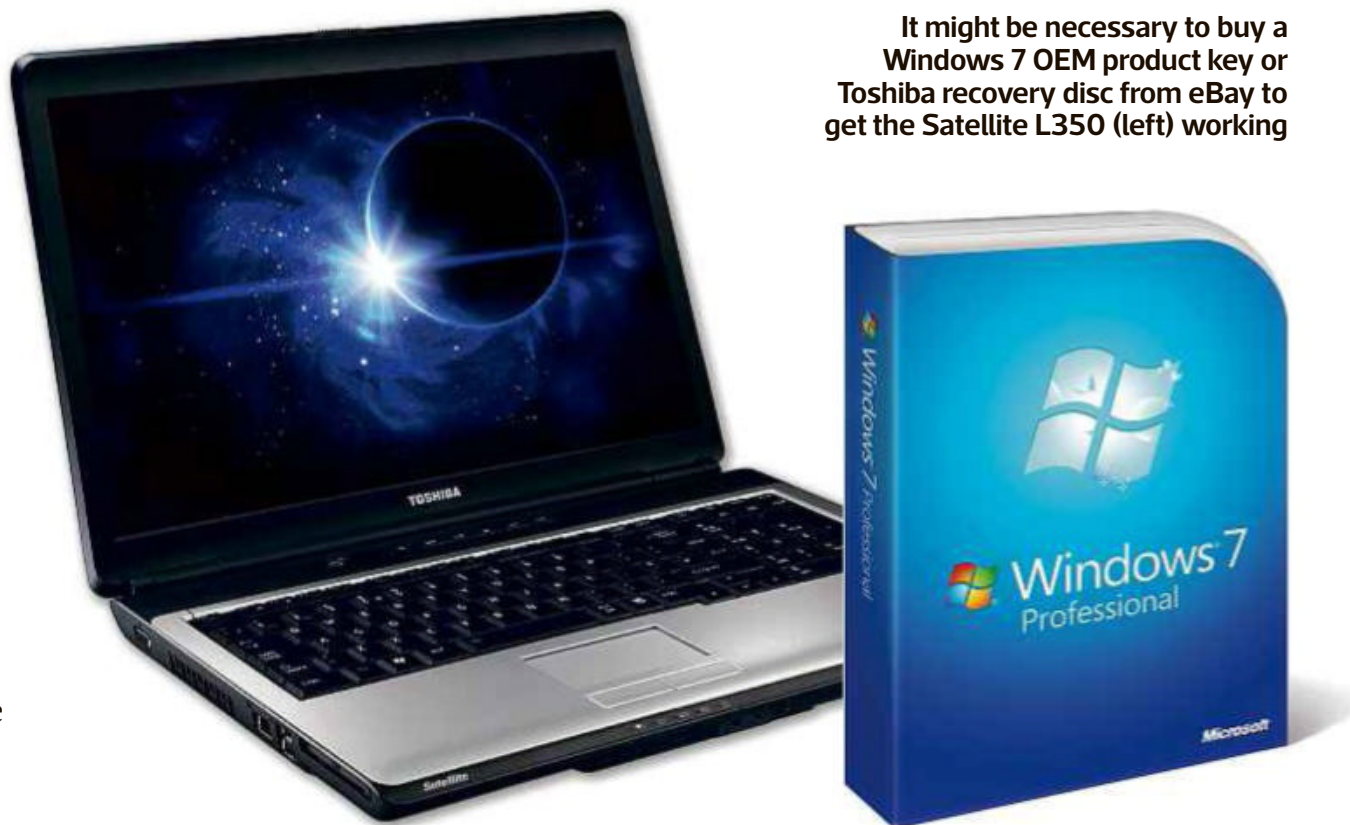
Peter Rump

A Not many, if we're honest. The problem here is that Microsoft's OEM product keys are tied to OEM ISOs, so they won't work

with retail versions of the Windows 7 ISO. It used to be possible to download both retail and OEM ISO files directly from Microsoft, but the company ended this when it stopped supporting Windows 7 in January 2020.

That leaves only illegitimate sources, many of which you've evidently tried.

It might be necessary to buy a Windows 7 OEM product key or Toshiba recovery disc from eBay to get the Satellite L350 (left) working



However, we suspect you've been trying retail ISOs, not OEM ones. For obvious reasons, we can't link to any downloads, but with this information you might be able to locate what you need. Otherwise, the only real alternative is to pick up a Windows 7 OEM or Toshiba recovery disc from the likes of eBay.

Problems Solved

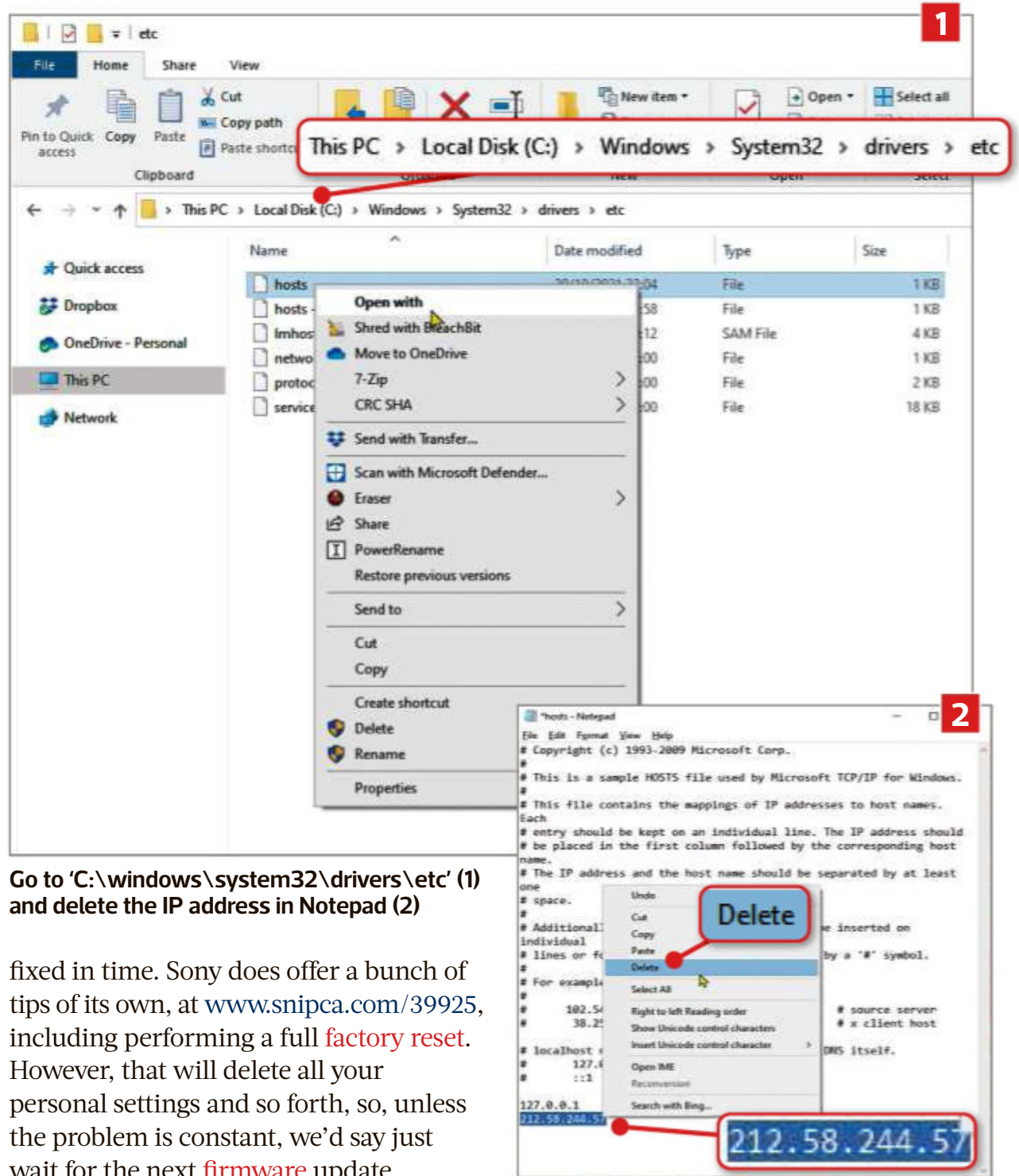
Why do websites think I'm blocking adverts?

Q I have two problems. First, on my PC, I'm often told by various websites that I have an ad blocker enabled – but I do not. What could be causing this? Second, following a recent software update, my Sony Bravia TV, which runs Android, periodically decides to reboot. Any ideas?

Harry Chamberlain

A We wonder if the first problem is down to a modified **hosts** file? Editing this innocuous text file is one way of blocking advert servers at source, and it's something we've covered a few times in the past. So, we think you might have followed one of our previous guides. One side effect is that some websites can detect this trick as ad-blocking. There's no fix because you in effect are blocking ads, but if you wish to remove a server **IP address** from your hosts file, we'll remind you that it's stored in **C:\windows\system32\drivers\etc** (see screenshot **1**). Open the hosts file in Notepad and then simply delete the relevant IP address **2**.

As for your telly, that sounds like a flawed update – and one that'll likely be



Go to 'C:\windows\system32\drivers\etc' (**1**) and delete the IP address in Notepad (**2**)

fixed in time. Sony does offer a bunch of tips of its own, at www.snipca.com/39925, including performing a full **factory reset**. However, that will delete all your personal settings and so forth, so, unless the problem is constant, we'd say just wait for the next **firmware** update.

What's locked my touchpad?

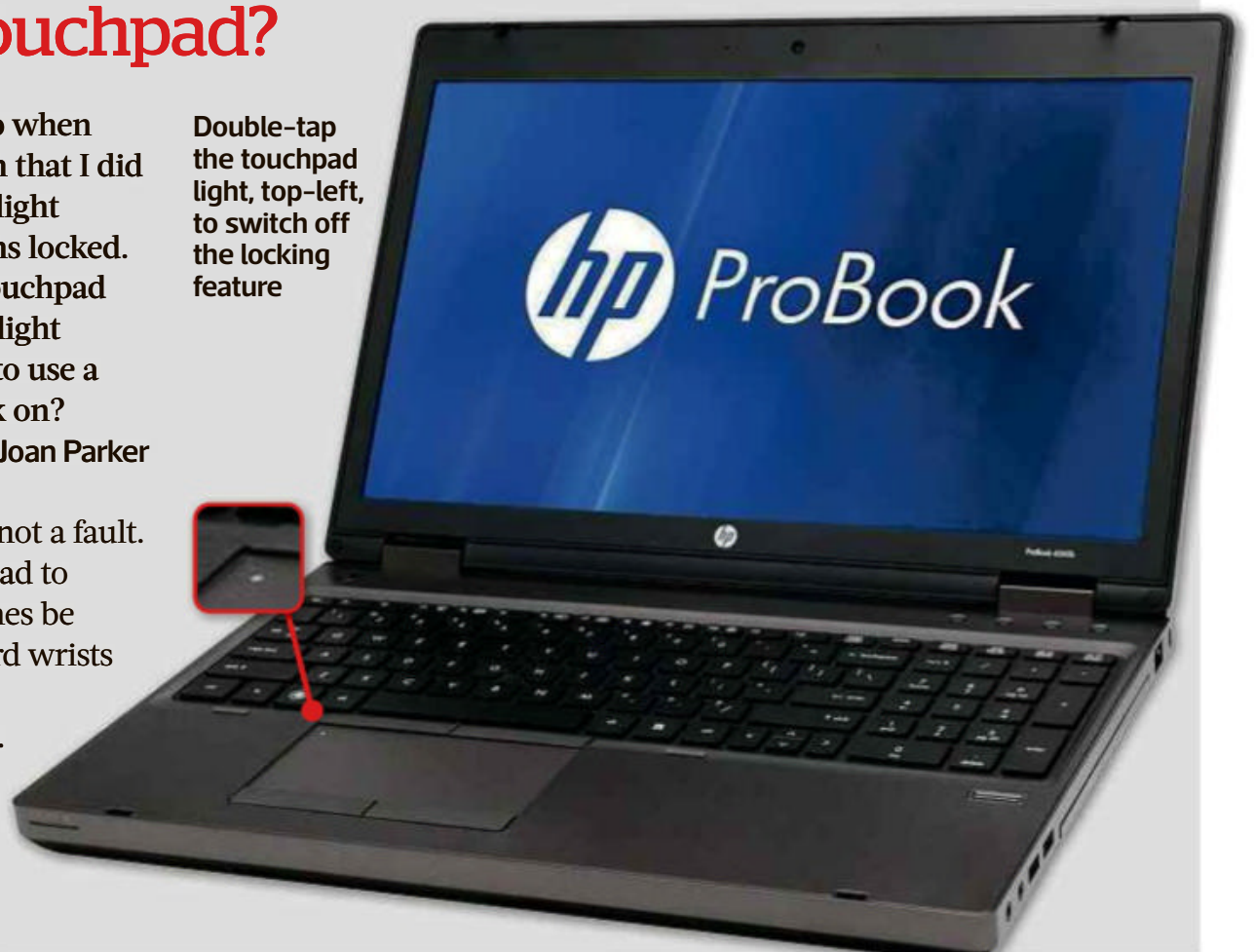
Q I was using my HP ProBook 6570b when something appeared on the screen that I did not want. In trying to remove it a light appeared on the touchpad and it now seems locked. Now when I switch on the computer the touchpad works until I enter my password, then the light shows and the touchpad is dead, so I have to use a mouse. How do I switch the touchpad back on?

Joan Parker

A This, believe it or not, is a feature, not a fault. When enabled, it locks the touchpad to prevent input, which can sometimes be useful when typing – as it prevents wayward wrists making unintended inputs.

Anyway, the 'fix' is simple, if not obvious. To switch the lock on or off, you just have to double-tap in the top-left corner of the touchpad, just where the light is (pictured). That's all there is to it.

Double-tap the touchpad light, top-left, to switch off the locking feature





WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

Volume levels in Windows?

Q

I'm still a relative newcomer to computing, and your magazine, having got my first PC just a couple of years ago. My needs are simple, but recently I found myself playing with Windows 10 to learn a bit more about how it all works. One thing that I'm struggling to understand is the volume control. My keyboard has buttons for making things louder or quieter, and these work well. However, by right-clicking the speaker icon on the bottom bar in Windows I found a tool called Volume Mixer. The controls change with whatever the computer is doing, but the Speakers and System Sounds sliders are always there. I don't really know the difference between these. Could you explain?

Martin Seaton

A

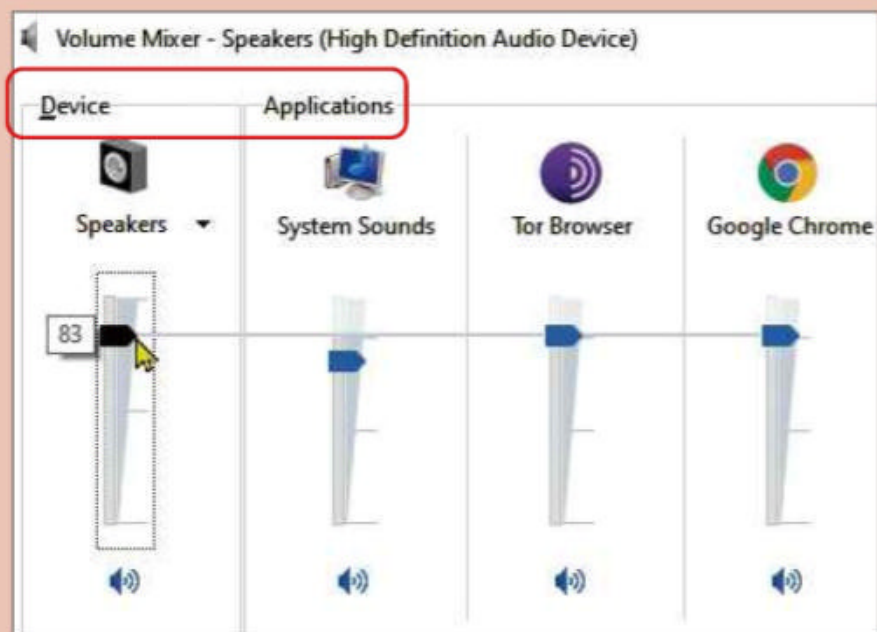
We like this question because it shows that what might seem obvious to some is simply confusing to others. In fact, the difference is pretty simple – but there's no reason to assume that a novice should understand it right away.

Volume Mixer controls Devices (such as speakers), while Applications sets the level for Windows' System Sounds

A clue is in the headings that appear above the Speakers and System Sounds labels. You might not have noticed these, but they're labelled Device and Applications (see screenshot right).

The first slider is the master control for whatever audio device is listed below the Device heading, be it Speakers or Headphones, say. So, whatever level you set this to is the ceiling for any noise-producing tools listed under the Applications heading. In other words, you can set varying volume levels for different applications, but the level marked by the horizontal line indicated by the Device/Speakers slider is the current maximum.

In this context, System Sounds is just



another an application – but it's one that in effect runs at all times, because it relates to the bleeps and bloops made by Windows itself. The other entries under the Applications heading come and go, because the apps might not be running or they might not currently be emitting any sound.

Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Is my graphics card really running at 511°C?

Q

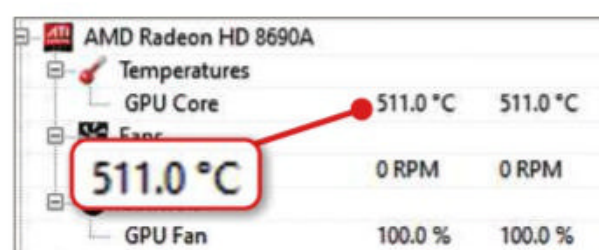
I recently installed Open Hardware Monitor (OHM, <https://openhardwaremonitor.org>) and was quite surprised, to say the least, by the result returned for my graphics card! It's apparently running at a temperature of 511°C (see screenshot right)! Could this be correct? Or is it just an anomaly? If not, what are my options for testing further?

Peter Dutton

A

If the graphics-processing unit (GPU) in your computer were really running at that temperature, you'd certainly know about it. It would have melted through your PC's plastic casing – and quite possibly your desk, too!

In fact, this is a common reporting quirk of the sensors attached to AMD GPUs. Sometimes it is nothing more than a rounding error in the software used to



The heat is on! But despite appearances, the GPU is not really running at 511°C

display the result (OHM, in this case), but it can also mean that the sensor is faulty. Sometimes, simply running a program – such as a game – is enough to prompt a more accurate reading. This is because, as the GPU heats up, the normal running temperature that's causing the rounding error will change. So, try that.

If it doesn't change, then you might just have to accept the sensor is faulty. It might be possible to replace it but we don't know enough about your computer to offer specific advice here. However, what we could see from the screenshot

you sent is that the graphics card is a Radeon HD 8690A. That card is nearly nine years old, so we imagine the computer itself is probably of a similar vintage. It's obviously been running fine up to now, so we can't say we'd be rushing to spend time and money trying to find a fix for such a minor hiccup.

Next Issue

ONSALE
Weds
15 Dec

- How do I back up and restore Thunderbird?
- Why does scrolling dim my screen?
- What is this start-up error message? ...And many more

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Why don't my apps install on my new SSD?

Q In Issue 613's 'Ditch your old USB sticks' Cover Feature, on page 55, you describe how to install programs on to a USB drive to save space on the main C drive.

To increase storage on my laptop I installed a larger SSD as my C drive and assigned the original SSD as drive E. I went through the process to change where new content is saved, as you described – choosing E. I uninstalled a program and reinstalled it, but it still ended up on the C drive. Can you please explain why the process does not work as intended?

Don Harvey

A The function we referred to works by default only for apps downloaded and installed via the Microsoft Store (previously known as the Windows Store) that's part of Windows 10 and 11. We should have made that clear. Apologies.

The upshot is that apps sourced from outside Microsoft Store are free to install themselves anywhere on your PC. Most, however, let you choose the installation location. Each program is different but, during the installation process, look for a box headed 'Select Destination Location' (or similar) then click the Browse button to select the desired drive and folder (see screenshot below), or type in the full path manually.



Set the installation location for programs not downloaded from the Microsoft Store

Would a tri-band router fix buffering?

Q I read with interest Nik Rawlinson's How To article about tri-band routers, in Issue 617 (page 35). I have a Virgin package with a Virgin Hub router that's about seven years old. We have only recently started using Netflix and catch-up TV and find at peak times it starts buffering and dropping out. This improves a little if we switch off our two laptops. Would the router you suggest cure this? Can it be set up in place of the Virgin router without affecting the Virgin service? And would I be in violation of my Virgin contract?

Mike Elford



Put your Virgin Hub in modem-only mode to use it with a new router

A The various Virgin Hub router models do the job but without too many frills. We don't know what Virgin service level you're on but, even on the lowest 50Mbps broadband package, we wouldn't expect streaming to a single device to be a problem – even if a couple of other devices were online at the same time. Is your TV connected to your Virgin Hub via Wi-Fi? If so, try using an Ethernet cable instead, assuming your TV has an Ethernet socket: this should fix any buffering that might be the result of a wireless connection between the two.

Otherwise, yes, it's fine to replace a Virgin Hub router with one of your own choosing – be it the Nighthawk model Nik mentioned or something else – and no, it wouldn't violate your Virgin contract.

The process isn't particularly difficult, either. Essentially, you'd need to connect the new router to the Virgin Hub via an Ethernet cable, and then put the Virgin

Hub into modem-only mode. To do this, first log into the Hub via a web browser, by typing 192.168.0.1 and pressing Enter. Next, on the left, click 'Modem mode' and then, on the right, choose Enable Modem Mode (see screenshot below left) before clicking 'Apply changes'.

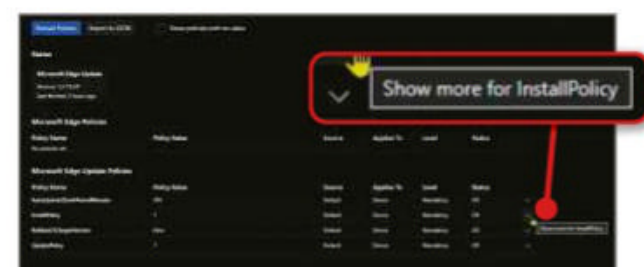
Why can't I secure my DNS?

Q I tried to follow your advice by enabling the 'Use secure DNS to specify how to look up the network address for websites' option in Edge, as explained in Issue 616's 'Stop your ISP spying on you' feature (page 62). I found the option, but it was greyed out, with a pop-up message saying the setting is unavailable for managed browsers. What is this, and what do I need to do?

James Lyons

A We're assuming your computer isn't a work machine? If it is, it will have policies controlled by a company IT admin – and there's unlikely to be anything you can do about this. Have a chat with your employer's tech-support staff.

If not, this is probably down to some security software you've installed on your PC, such as an antivirus program or a VPN. You can get some clues as to what might be causing this by typing <edge://management> or <edge://policy> into the Edge address bar and pressing Enter. The latter in particular will show you what policies are in play, which in turn should help you figure out which app is responsible. Click the corresponding down arrow to learn more about a particular policy (see screenshot below).



Click this option in Edge to find out what is blocking the 'Use secure DNS...' option

Jargon **Buster**

5G The latest generation of mobile networks.

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

Accelerometer A sensor that detects movement. Used in smartphones to decide whether or not to display a portrait or landscape screen, control games or even work as a spirit level.

Add-on A program that adds extra features to your browser.

Adware Unwanted adverts that come with software.

Aspect ratio A measurement of the shape of a display. Traditional computer screens are 4:3. Widescreen displays are 16:9 or 16:10.

Augmented reality Lets you view the real world on a screen and add digital elements.

Benchmarking Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Software built into every PC that connects the vital components. It's visible for a few seconds when the PC starts.

Bloatware Unwanted software built into a new device.

Bootable Describes a device or disc with system files on it so it can be used to start up your computer.

Browser engine Turns website code into pages you can interact with.

Browser hijackers Programs that change your default browser, its homepage and search engine, without prior warning, when you install them.

Cache A temporary space for storing information. Can be memory used on a computer processor, or space on a hard drive used by a web browser.

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

Core Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

Cryptocurrency An online currency not backed by any country. The most popular is Bitcoin.

Dark mode Showing white text on a black background.

DCIM Standing for Digital Camera Images, the DCIM folder is where computers and phones save photos you take.

Disk image A file that's an exact copy of a physical disc or a hard drive.

DisplayPort A new socket for connecting monitors.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

Driver package A collection of files used to install a driver.

DSLR Digital single-lens reflex. A digital camera that uses a moving mirror so its viewfinder looks out through the lens. DSLRs use interchangeable lenses and large sensors for high-quality photos.

exFAT Extended File Allocation Table. Microsoft's file system for USB sticks and SD cards.

Factory reset Restoring a device to the manufacturer's default settings.

FAT32 An old system used for formatting hard drives, and still used for some portable drives.

Firmware Basic software stored on hardware, such as a processor, to control its operation.

Frame rate The number of still images, or frames, shown per second to create a moving image. Higher frame rates make games appear smoother and more realistic.

GEDCOM Short for Genealogical Data Communication. A file format used by genealogy programs to share data.

Geo-blocked Content like TV and films that's intended to be watched only in a specific country. Lots of US-made content can't be legally watched outside the States, for example.

GIF Graphics Interchange Format. A type of image file often used on the web, but now largely superseded by PNG.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

HDR High-dynamic range. A camera that takes more than one photo with different levels of colour and contrast. These images are then combined to create a better-quality image.

Heatsink A block of metal used to help dissipate the heat from a computer chip.

Hosts file A text file stored on a computer that translates domain names into IP addresses.

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.

IPS A screen technology. Monitors that use it have wider viewing angles and better, more accurate-looking colours compared with monitors that do not use this technology.

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.

mAh Milliamp hours. A unit that measures (electric) power over time. The higher the mAh, the longer a battery will last.

Memory dump file A file containing contents of PC memory in order to show why a crash happened.

Mesh router Wireless network system that uses multiple, connected routers to stretch Wi-Fi further than a traditional router.

Metadata A set of data that gives information about a file.

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

Mirrorless camera A type of camera that works without a reflex mirror. Light passes through the lens straight to the digital sensor, displaying the image on the camera's screen. This lets you adjust settings before taking the photo.

MP3 A type of digital audio file often used on music players.

OEM Original Equipment Manufacturer. Refers to components or software installed by the manufacturer.

OLED Organic light-emitting diode. A thin-film organic light-emitting diode used in computer displays and television screens.

Open source Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

Partition A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives. Once partitioned, each section is treated by Windows as though it were a completely separate, smaller hard drive.

Plain text Text in a document that doesn't contain any formatting, such as bold characters and italics.

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

PUP Potentially unwanted program. A program that may not be desired, despite the user consenting to it being downloaded. Examples include unnecessary plug-ins, toolbars and browser hijackers.

PWA Progressive web app. A website that looks and works like an app, which you can install on computers, phones and tablets.

QR code Quick Response code. A barcode that can be read using smartphones.

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 off.

Ransomware Malware run by hackers who lock files on your PC and demand a payment to release them.

RAW A format for digital photos that stores the image exactly as the camera captured it, without compression or optimisation, but which is not compatible with all image editors.

Refresh rate Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn. Slight changes in the image each time it is updated combine to give the illusion of movement. For a steady image, the higher the refresh rate, the less flicker you will see.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Security key A series of letters or numbers – or a phrase – that you have to type to access a wireless network.

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.

Skin A different, purely cosmetic appearance for a program.

sRGB A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that uses no moving parts.

Switch Mechanism under a keyboard that determines whether a key has been pressed.

System image A backup of your ‘system image’, which includes drivers, settings, programs and files.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Tag A keyword used to describe a file or web page. Many programs use tags to organise related information quickly.

Temporary file A file created by a browser to store website data.

Timestamp The time which an event is recorded by a computer.

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

UHD Ultra High Definition.

Ultrawide Offering a field of view that’s wider than traditional digital cameras.

USB 2.0/3.0/3.1 Faster successors to USB.

USB-C A new connector that’s reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

VPN Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.

Water-cooling Lowering a PC’s temperature using water rather than fans.





Wi-Fi 6 Wi-Fi standard with speeds up to 10 times faster than 802.11ac. Also called 802.11ax.

Widget A small program such as a calendar that runs on the Windows desktop.

ZIP file A file that contains compressed documents or files.

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Easy when you **Know How**

Determined to stop strangers ruining his festive snaps, **Robert Irvine** tries to...

Erase people from photos



Now you see them, now you don't – Inpaint let Robert delete the background diners from this photo

Christmas party season is almost upon us and, unlike last year, I don't have much excuse for not getting into the festive spirit. We're not in lockdown (at the time of writing), I've had my flu jab and Covid booster shot, and as I'm trying to keep my heating bills down, I'm better off going to a nice warm restaurant or pub than sitting in my cold, draughty flat. Besides, once I overcome my 'bah humbug!' reservations, I do enjoy catching up with friends, family and work colleagues for a bite to eat and a few drinks. Although when I review the photographic evidence the next day, I usually despair at how chubby I look and wonder who on Earth that is in the background, ruining the shot.

Photobombing – the act of inserting oneself in a picture without the subject's knowledge – is a particular hazard at this time of year, so much so that Google has added a tool to its Photos app to address the nuisance. Called 'Magic Eraser' (www.snipca.com/39957), this uses AI to detect distractions in your photos, such as people in the background, then lets you tap to delete them. It sounds brilliant, but it's currently only available on the new Google Pixel 6 phone, which costs £599 (www.snipca.com/39956).

As I wasn't prepared to pay that much just for one feature, I decided to find a cheaper way to remove intruders from images. I quickly found a solution in the form of Inpaint (<https://theinpaint.com>),

which promises to remove unwanted elements from your pictures, including strangers and "nasty tourists". It's primarily a paid-for desktop program, priced at \$19.99 (£14.87), but also offers an online service. I thought I'd give it a go before splashing the cash. I clicked Upload Image on the homepage and chose a photo of a Christmas meal with my Dad and brothers, in which some other diners were visible in the background. The image appeared almost instantly in Inpaint's editor, with no registration required.

I then clicked the red Mask button in the toolbar on the left-hand side and used it to 'paint' over one of the strangers. I clicked Erase, not expecting too much, and was amazed when the lady vanished – just like in the Hitchcock film. Inpaint filled the gap by blending pixels from the surrounding area, so it was as if the poor woman never existed.

I repeated the simple process for the other background folk, and they also disappeared. Impressed by the result, I clicked Download to save the edited photo, but was told that I needed to buy credits, which cost \$4.99 (£3.67) for 10. However, Inpaint did let me download a low resolution (600 x 484 pixels),


unwatermarked version for free.

Preferring not to spend *any* money, I next installed the free image-editing app Snapseed, which is available for Android (www.snipca.com/39960) and iOS (www.snipca.com/39961). This has a Healing tool that can "remove the uninvited neighbour from a group

picture". I opened a photo in the app, tapped Tools at the bottom of the screen and selected the Healing option. I then swiped my finger over an unwanted background figure and watched as they were rendered invisible. The initial result wasn't perfect, but swiping again cleanly erased the leftover elements and I was able to export the edited image without overwriting the original.

It's a shame Snapseed doesn't have an online

version that you can use in your PC browser, but I was impressed at how simple it makes removing strangers from your snaps. The app is owned by Google, so perhaps its Healing tool inspired Magic Eraser. But unless you want to buy me a Pixel 6 for Christmas, I can now tackle photobombers without one.

 Need help with excising unwanted elements from your photos?
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I was amazed
when the lady
vanished,
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