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**BUY THIS NEW
WINDOWS 11 PC**

It's the first to get 5 stars!
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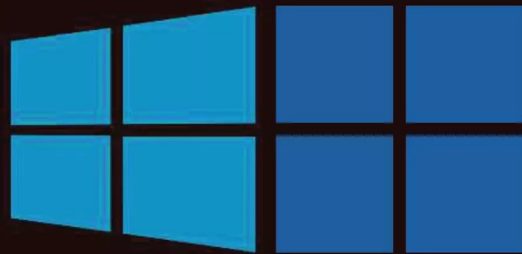
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Group Editor Daniel Booth
Deputy Editor Robert Irvine
Production Editor Graham Brown
Art Editor Katie Peat
Contributors Dinah Greek, David Ludlow, Jonathan Parkyn,
Nick Peers, Nik Rawlinson, Andy Shaw, Wayne Williams

ADVERTISING

Advertising Manager Alexandra Thomas
Deputy Advertising Manager Rebecca New

MARKETING AND CIRCULATION

Subscriptions Charline Kuehn
For subscription enquiries ring 0330 333 9493

PRODUCTION

Head of Production
Stephen Catherall
Senior Production Manager
Lawrence Brookes

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Non-executive chairman Richard Huntingford
Chief financial officer Penny Ladkin-Brand

Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

As well as being jolly, Christmas 'tis the season of tight print deadlines. They're especially brutal this year, so this is a three-week issue, giving you a bit more time to digest our tips and advice, along with the usual piles of mince pies and tins of Quality Street.

Our Cover Feature will keep you busy for much of that time. Robert Irvine has found the 20 best programs for digging deep into Windows (both 10 and 11) and changing the settings so the operating system works better for your specific needs.

Robert came up with enough tips that I

was briefly tempted to rewrite an old festive favourite: "On the first day of Christmas *Computeractive* showed me... how to add tabs to File Explorer". Probably best for all concerned that I dragged that idea into the recycle bin.

I'd like to thank you all for reading *Computeractive* through what's been another difficult year for many. Have a wonderful Christmas and I'll see you all again in Issue 622 – out on Wednesday 5 January.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk



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HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

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

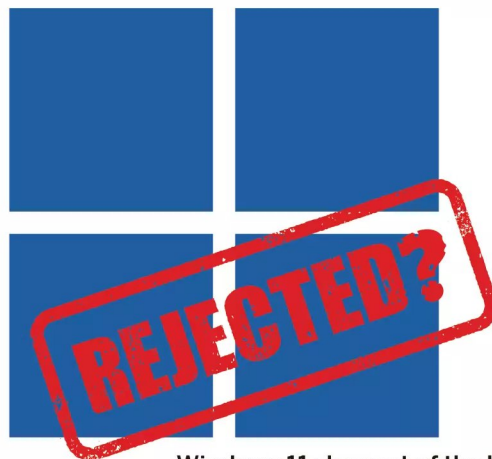
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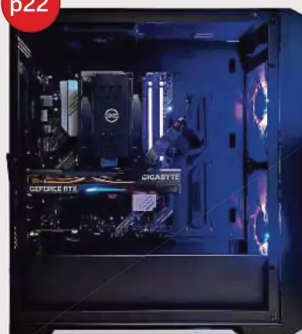


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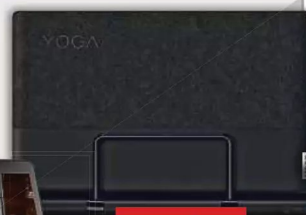


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Lenovo Yoga Tab 13

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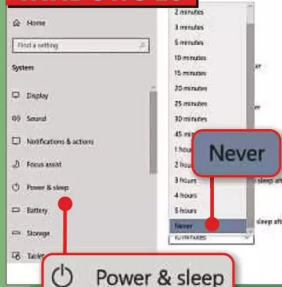
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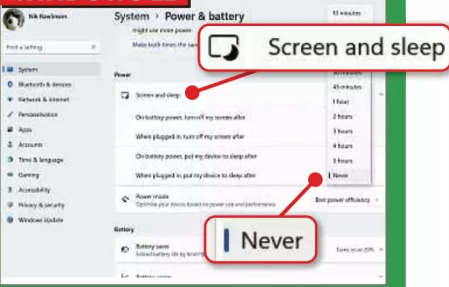
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WINDOWS 10



WINDOWS 11

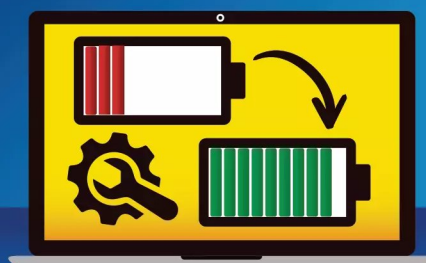


HACK WINDOWS IN 2022

Every **NEW** program you need to get your PC working exactly as you want

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Replace your old laptop battery



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Microsoft improves Start menu and taskbar in W11

Microsoft is giving you more options to alter the Start menu and taskbar in Windows 11 following criticism from users frustrated by how the tools have been changed from their Windows 10 versions.

Currently in Windows 11 the Start menu lets you show only

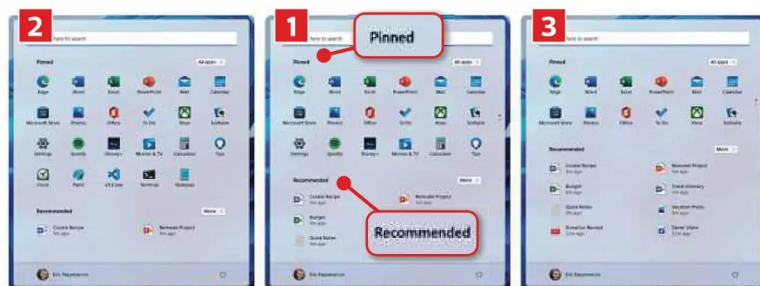
three rows of pinned apps, or three rows of recently opened documents. Microsoft extends these options in the preview version 22509

so that you can show more or fewer apps and documents by increasing the size of each area.

Microsoft illustrated the difference this makes in a blog post (www.snipca.com/40344) announcing version 22509. Our screenshot shows the default Start menu in the middle **1**, with three rows each of pinned apps and recently opened ('Recommended') documents.

In the Start menu on the left **2** this has been changed to four rows of pinned apps and one row of documents. In the right-hand menu **3**, it's two rows of pinned apps and four rows of documents.

Another change in version



22509 lets you add the clock and date to the taskbar when running Windows 11 across multiple monitors. At the moment, users wanting to do this have to install third-party software such as ElevenClock (free from www.snipca.com/40346).

More options moved to Settings app

The new version also continues Microsoft's long-term plan to replace the Control Panel with the Settings app. It has moved the advanced sharing options (such as 'Network discovery', 'File and printer sharing', and public folder sharing) to a new section in the Settings app

under Advanced Network Settings.

In addition, when you click some options for network and devices in the Control Panel you'll now be redirected to the corresponding pages in Settings.

Other changes let you sort apps from Z to A in the Installed Apps page in Settings, while Windows 11 will now remember if you turn on Bluetooth or Wi-Fi while in **airplane mode**. This means your preferences will stay the same the next time you turn on airplane mode.

To see these changes you need to be signed up to the Dev Channel in the Windows Insider Program (www.snipca.com/40348).

It's not known when they'll be added to the full version of Windows 11, though some will probably be part of forthcoming monthly updates to the system. Others may not appear until the first Feature update, scheduled for autumn 2022.

• Has Windows 11's release been a complete flop? Page 10

WHAT WE THINK

Microsoft appears to have been stung by criticism of Windows 11's Start menu and taskbar – two of the most vital parts of any operating system – and should be praised for acting swiftly. We'd have been less generous had Microsoft waited until well into 2022 before adding options that should have been included at launch. We'll send a copy of our Cover Feature to its developers so it knows what to change next. It should start by reinstating File Explorer's ribbon, and introducing tabs to switch between folders.

NEW-LOOK CONTROLS IN WINDOWS 11 PAINT

The redesigned Paint app in Windows 11 is getting some new-look options to match the style of the operating system. These included the Edit Color (pictured) and 'Resize and Skew' controls.

Microsoft has also fixed a bug so that when you click a colour while pressing down the Shift key it will be selected as your secondary colour.

However, many users said they were disappointed that the update didn't add a **dark**

mode and a centred canvas. It's been strongly rumoured that Microsoft is working to add both tools to the app. Read more on Microsoft's blog: www.snipca.com/40351.



You'll like this...

The 'laptop domino' world record has been broken (www.snipca.com/40342)



but not this...

Victims of 'friend in need' WhatsApp scam lose £50,000 (www.snipca.com/40343)

'Wellbeing' apps dominate Google's 2021 awards

Google has named a 'personal meditation coach' as the best Android app of 2021. Called Balance (pictured), it uses a library of thousands of audio files to create a "daily meditation that's perfect for you".

Similar 'wellbeing' tools dominate the awards, such as Moonly - one of the 'Best Hidden Gems' - which teaches you to "live by the moon rhythm, heal your soul, and harmonize your life".

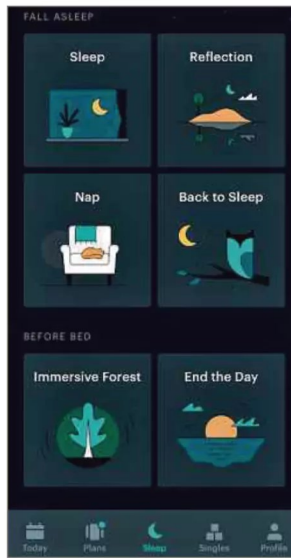
Laughscape, another Hidden Gem, is an app for relieving stress in which comedians take listeners on

"humorous journeys" in the hope that they can "laugh their way to relaxation".

The Everyday Essentials category celebrates more practical apps, including the plant-identification tool Blossom and the photo editor PhotoRoom.

The poster-design app Canva is named in the 'Best for Tablets' category, along with sketching tool Concepts and home-design app Houzz.

Read Google's blog (www.snipca.com/40330) to see all the winning apps, with links to them on the Google Play Store.



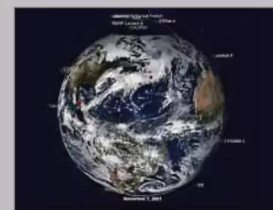
IN BRIEF

WINAMP TO RETURN FOR RADIO & PODCASTS

The owners of music-playing tool Winamp plan to relaunch it as a place for listening to radio stations and podcasts, and as a way for fans and artists to communicate. Radionomy, which bought Winamp in 2014, has redesigned the website (www.winamp.com), and is inviting people to test the beta version (www.snipca.com/40321). Winamp was one of the most popular music players in the early days of the internet, attracting 60 million users by 2001.

SEE MORE SATELLITE DATA FROM NASA

Nasa has updated its 'Eyes on the Earth' tool (pictured) to let you see data from natural events, such as wind speeds of tropical storms and the impact of wild fires. To use it, visit www.snipca.com/40324 and click one of the satellites for details. Read more on Nasa's site: www.snipca.com/40322.



VIDEO EDITOR TOP IPAD APP FOR 2021



Professional video-editing app LumaFusion (www.snipca.com/40335, pictured) has won Apple's 'iPad App of the Year' award for 2021. Apple said the app, which costs £25.99 with in-app purchases, makes "video editing faster, less intimidating, and more

portable for creators at every level". The kids game Toca Life World (www.snipca.com/40336) was named best iPhone app. Visit Apple's site for the winners in other categories, including for Macs and Apple Watch: www.snipca.com/40326.

Paint.NET to stop working in Windows 7

The next version of popular image-editing program Paint.NET won't work on Windows 7 or 8.1, nor on 32bit editions of Windows 10.

Windows 11 is available only in 64bit, so it's not affected by the move.

Its creator Rick Brewster explained his decision online (www.snipca.com/40327): "It has become significantly more difficult and time consuming to support these lately, not very many people are using them, and I can no longer justify the cost and



frustration of keeping support for these afloat".

The most recent version of Paint.NET is 4.3.3, which moves it to .NET6 - the latest version of Microsoft's open-source tool that lets developers build software for Windows. Brewster says

this will make Paint.NET start faster, and images will appear with more detail.

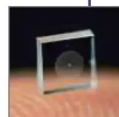
Version 4.3.3 also improves the controls for the program's dark mode, and fixes the Ctrl+B keyboard shortcut that was resetting the window rather than turning Zoom on and off.

Paint.NET is a free download from www.snipca.com/40329, though you can help to fund its development by paying for the Microsoft Store app version (£6.69 from www.snipca.com/40328).

TOMORROW'S WORLD



This camera is no bigger than a grain of salt, but can take photos as sharp as those with lenses that are 500,000 times larger. It's been built by researchers from Princeton University and Washington University in the US, and might be used by tiny robots to sense their surroundings, or doctors to see inside bodies. Read more at www.snipca.com/40317.



IN BRIEF

VODAFONE TO BUILD WIND-POWERED MASTS

Vodafone is building a range of phone masts powered entirely by wind power. Called 'Eco-Towers' (pictured), they'll work on 4G and 5G, and will be located in rural areas where there's a "major challenge and cost of connecting to the electricity grid" – including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Read more on Vodafone's site: www.snipca.com/40260.



1,000 TV SHOWS ON IPLAYER OVER XMAS

More than 1,000 'boxsets' will be available to watch on BBC iPlayer over Christmas. Each boxset is every series of a show – so all five series of *Peaky Blinders*, for example. Visit www.snipca.com/40265 for more details of the shows being added. The BBC has also announced that iPlayer is now available on the Sony PlayStation 5 – read more at www.snipca.com/40266.

THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!



This robot assistant is looking for a "kind and friendly" human face so it doesn't terrify people while working in hotels and shops. Its creators, Philadelphia company Promobot, will pay someone \$200,000 (about £150,000) for the right to use their face and voice across the world. Within days of the offer, more than 20,000 people had applied (see www.snipca.com/40261).



1.3m people leave broadband contract for cheaper deal

More than 1.3 million people have switched to a cheaper broadband deal after internet providers were forced to remind them their contracts were ending, Ofcom has said.

The regulator introduced new rules in February 2020 that require phone, broadband and pay-TV providers to warn customers when their current contract is ending, and how much they could save by signing up to a new deal.

The move was designed to help tackle the so-called "loyalty penalty" that sees customers who stick with a service paying more than new customers joining it.

Ofcom said that since the rules were implemented around two-thirds (62 per cent) of broadband customers near the end of their contract either signed up to a new deal with their existing provider, or switched to a new one when their deal ended. This is up from 47 per cent of



customers in 2019.

In total, the number of broadband customers deemed to be out of contract fell from 8.7 million in 2019 to 7.4 million, giving Ofcom the figure of 1.3 million customers assumed to be paying less. It calculates that on average, out-of-contract broadband customers pay £5.10 more each month than they need to.

Ofcom said that the reminders, sent by text, letter and email, are working because two-thirds of customers who were sent one recalled receiving it. Of those,

90 per cent found it helpful, while a fifth reported that it prompted them into action they wouldn't have taken otherwise.

However, some providers have a much greater proportion of out-of-contract customers than others. Virgin Media had the biggest proportion (52 per cent), way ahead of Sky (32 per cent), TalkTalk (29 per cent), BT (28 per cent) and EE (21 per cent).

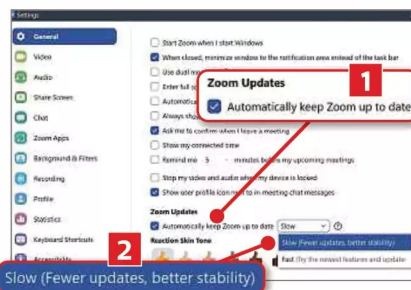
In many areas Virgin offers by far the fastest speed, making it less tempting for customers to switch.

Get automatic updates on free Zoom

You can now set the free version of Zoom to update automatically – an option that was previously available only in the paid-for edition of the video-chat tool.

It means you'll automatically receive security fixes and new features when they're released.

Zoom says that automatic updates should now be switched on, but you can check by clicking the top-right Settings cog, then General. The option to 'Automatically keep Zoom up



to date' should be ticked (1 in our screenshot). If not, simply tick the box.

You'll then be prompted to enter your login details to give Zoom permission to install automatic updates.

You can also set how often

you want Zoom to be updated. The 'Slow' option 2, selected by default, provides less frequent updates and focuses on keeping Zoom running smoothly. The 'Fast' option gives the latest features and updates as soon as they're

available.

Zoom said that critical security updates will be installed automatically, regardless of which option you choose.

Read more on Zoom's blog: www.snipca.com/40269.

Government bans 'easy-to-guess' default passwords

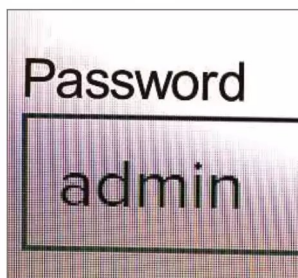
Manufacturers have been banned from selling devices that have easy-to-guess default passwords.

It means they'll no longer be able to set up devices with generic passwords such as 'admin'. Instead, all passwords that come with new devices will need to be "unique and not resettable to any universal factory setting".

The ban comes as part of the Government's Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Bill (PSTI, www.snipca.com/40284), which aims to improve the security of devices other than computers that connect to the internet.

Products covered include phones, tablets, smart TVs, fitness trackers, smart speakers, thermostats and "other internet-connectable devices".

The law also requires manufacturers to tell



customers when they buy a device how long it will receive security fixes, and to warn customers about any changes to this. Nearly 80 per cent of firms don't have such a system in place, the Government claims.

In addition, manufacturers must give a public point of contact for security researchers and others to report flaws they've discovered in products.

Ministers say that previously manufacturers weren't doing enough to protect consumers from the growing threat of

hackers targeting web-connected devices – often called the 'Internet of Things'.

The Government says that on average there are nine web-connected devices in each UK household, and people "overwhelmingly assume these products are secure" despite only one in five manufacturers having "appropriate security measures in place".

Research from Kaspersky showed that in the first half of 2021 there were 1.5 billion attempts worldwide to hack such devices, double the amount in 2020.

PCs and laptops are not part of the legislation because they are served "by a mature antivirus software market", and operating systems already "include security features which means they are not subject to the same threats and risks".

Film celebrates 70th birthday of world's first business computer

A film has been released to mark the 70th anniversary of LEO (Lyons Electronic Office, pictured), the world's first business computer.

It was made available on YouTube (www.snipca.com/40287) on 30 November, 70 years to the day that LEO ran its first program.

The computer, which had 5,000 valves, was built for the J Lyons teashop company, and was first used to calculate how much ingredients in bread and cakes would cost, before carrying out more administrative functions like processing paylips.

It took up 2,500 square feet of floor space at Lyons'

headquarters at Cadby Hall in Hammersmith, London. Versions of LEO were used right up until 1981, when the last Lyons teashop closed.

The 26-minute film was made by the LEO Computers Society (www.leo-computers.org.uk) and the Centre for Computing History (CCH, www.computinghistory.org.uk), with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

It tells the story of how two Lyons senior managers travelled to the US in 1947 to look at new business methods developed during World War 2.

They came back convinced by the potential of computers and contacted scientists at



Cambridge University who were building the 'Electronic delay storage automatic calculator' (EDSAC). Lyons later adapted EDSAC's design when building LEO.

Such pioneering work made Lyons "way ahead of the time", according to Chris Monk from the CCH. He says in the film: "They were an ambitious company but they knew that they had an army of people doing the clerical administration, and therefore automation was the answer".

IN BRIEF

2,000 PHONES ON SHOW IN WEB MUSEUM

More than 2,000 iconic mobile phones from 1984 to the present day are being celebrated in a new online museum (www.mobilephonemuseum.com). It's been created by Ben Wood and Matt Chatterley, who have spent over 20 years collecting the devices. They're split into collections, including Firsts – where the Orbitel 901 appears (pictured). In 1992, it became the first phone to receive a text message ('Merry Christmas').



3BN PEOPLE HAVE NEVER USED THE WEB

Around 2.9 billion people – 37 per cent of the world's population – have never used the internet, according to new research from the International Telecommunication Union, part of the United Nations. It says that 96 per cent of those live in developing countries. However, it also estimates that the number of those who have gone online rose from 4.1 billion in 2019 to 4.9 billion this year.

CREWE ROAD HAS UK'S SLOWEST BROADBAND

Wistaston Road in Crewe has the UK's slowest broadband speed, with an average of 0.24Mbps, according to new research from uSwitch. It's 3,567 times slower than Haul Fryn in Swansea, which uSwitch says has the highest average speed (882Mbps). The site based its results on over 276,000 speed tests in the 12 months from October 2020. Visit www.snipca.com/40286 for the top 10 fastest and slowest speeds.

Question of the Fortnight

Has Windows 11's release been a complete flop?

Few computers have installed it, though Microsoft may not mind

When Microsoft launched Windows 10 in 2015, it said it expected the operating system to be running on 1 billion devices by the summer of 2018. That always seemed wildly optimistic, and sure enough it wasn't until March 2020 that Windows 10 passed the billion milestone. That's now risen to 1.3 billion.

Microsoft has been careful not to make such reckless predictions about Windows 11, and with good reason if new upgrade figures are accurate. Research from IT analysts Lansweeper shows that by mid November - six weeks after Windows 11 was released - only 0.21 per cent of Windows computers were running it.

That figure requires some qualification. Lansweeper's analysis predominantly covers business computers, and most companies haven't had time to upgrade their machines from Windows 10 (assuming they plan to upgrade at all).

“More computers are currently running Windows XP and Vista than Windows 11”

Even so, it's a tiny proportion of computers. And the analysis was comprehensive, covering 10 million Windows machines. More worrying for Microsoft is that more computers are running Windows XP and Vista than Windows 11. Microsoft ended support

for XP in 2014, and Vista in 2017.

Microsoft shouldn't be surprised that businesses are shunning Windows 11. It was warned in October, when Lansweeper published a survey of 30 million business machines across 60,000 companies and organisations that found only 44 per cent

had processors powerful enough to run Windows 11.

But what about home users? Here, the news seems better for Microsoft. A report from advertising network AdDuplex (www.snipca.com/40310) shows that 8.9 per cent of computers were running Windows 11 in

November, growing from 5.3 per cent in October.

However its sample size was small - just 60,000 computers. And this was limited to machines running AdDuplex, which are likely to be owned by advanced users keen to try new operating systems - with many no doubt enrolled in the Windows Insider programme.

How concerned Microsoft will be is debatable. It must have known that imposing strict hardware restrictions would significantly limit uptake of Windows 11, particularly in the early days. Indeed, Microsoft has made this part of its rollout policy, staggering the release so it's not offered to computers that would have trouble running it.

This contrasts with the company's aggressive approach during the first years of Windows 10, when it was criticised for installing the system on computers without

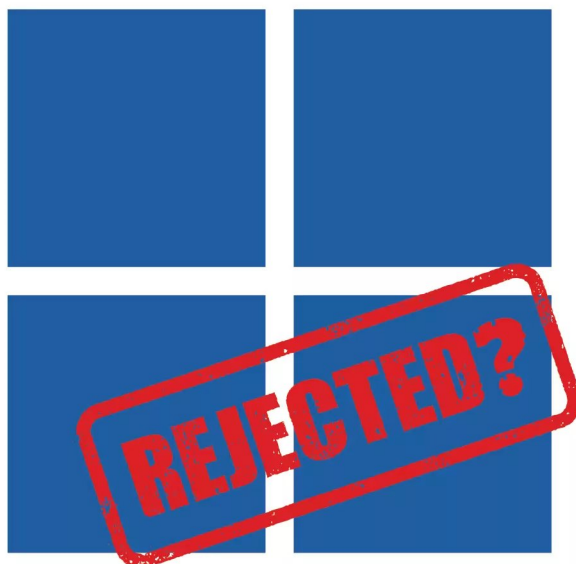
THE FACTS

- Analysis shows that just 0.21 per cent of business computers are running Windows 11
- Separate research indicates 8.9 per cent of home users have upgraded
- Around 1.3 billion computers currently run Windows 10, which Microsoft will support until October 2025

the user's permission. The backlash against Microsoft's 'Get Windows 10' (GWX) tool was so great that developers built programs to disable it.

Microsoft probably won't release figures about Windows 11's popularity until well into 2022. Until then we expect it to continue painting a rosy picture of the launch, such as the announcement in November that it was "advancing the pace of the rollout faster than originally announced" after positive feedback from early users.

For now it seems unlikely that Microsoft will relax its technical restrictions to allow computers that were previously rejected to install Windows 11. The company appears to be playing a longer game, hoping that those who can't upgrade their existing computer will have bought a new one before support for Windows 10 ends in October 2025. It doesn't take Nostradamus levels of foresight to see how that strategy could end in failure.



Protect your tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Joker malware in 'useful' Android apps

What's the threat?

The deadly Joker malware has been spotted in a group of Android phone and tablet apps, allowing them to steal login codes from your private messages, or sign you up to expensive services without your permission.

Tatyana Shishkova, an expert on Android malware at Kaspersky, found 13 apps containing Joker, and listed them on Twitter. To see them, visit her Twitter feed at www.snipca.com/40212 (you don't need a Twitter account) and scroll down, looking for tweets that have the hashtag #Joker.

All the apps appear to offer handy and legitimate tools, with professional-looking screenshots and reasonably well-written descriptions. A good example is Easy PDF Scanner (see screenshot), which has screenshots showing how it can be used to scan receipts and your driving licence. Functions provided by the other apps



are just as useful: they include a QR code scanner, a TV remote control and a volume booster.

How can you stay safe?

Google responded quickly to remove these apps, so you're in no danger of installing them. But if you've already installed them you should remove them without delay, and check whether you've been subscribed to anything without your permission. You should also consider changing your passwords.

Joker has been infecting phones and tablets since 2017. Google says it has removed 1,700 apps containing the malware, but clearly it needs to get better at preventing those apps sneaking through its security systems.

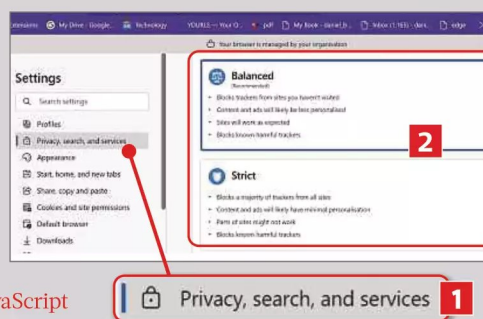
We expect Joker to return again, so to make sure it doesn't have the last laugh don't install any apps from the Google Play Store unless you're convinced they are legitimate. Better still, stick to apps we recommend.

You can be sure they're both useful and safe.

New tools | Edge's Super Duper Secure Mode

It may sound like it was built by an excitable toddler – or perhaps a sarcastic teenager – but Edge's Super Duper Secure Mode provides a serious boost to your browsing safety. Added in November to version 96.0.1054.29 of Edge, it disables the web tool Just-In-Time (JIT), which is used in JavaScript applications and is responsible for many security flaws online.

The mode has two options: Balanced and Strict. The former turns off JIT in sites you don't visit often (as judged by Edge); the latter disables it on all sites, but may stop some working properly. Microsoft recommends Balanced because it offers the best compromise between safety and convenience.



Open Edge, click the top-right menu button (three horizontal dots), then Settings. In the left-hand menu click 'Privacy, search and services' (1 in our screenshot), then select a mode on the right (2). To update Edge to the latest version, open Settings and click About Microsoft Edge at the bottom of the left-hand menu.

ScamWatch

Readers warn readers



'Advance fee' for lottery win

I read online recently a warning from Action Fraud that lottery scams are on the rise (www.snipca.com/40159). It reminded me of a text message I received a few months ago claiming to be from the People's Postcode Lottery (PPL). I do play this lottery, so it caught my eye. But I was suspicious when it asked me to pay an advance fee to access my winnings. I checked on PPL's site (www.snipca.com/40160), and it confirmed that it doesn't ask for money upfront to release your winnings. I also rang them to check (0808 109 8765). I hope other readers take heed.

Len Planter




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

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

Windows 11 killed my internet

 Given Windows 11's positive reviews, I thought I might as well install it on my six-month-old, relatively high-spec desktop PC. All seemed to go well for an hour or so, after which my PC declared that it had installed Windows 11. However, I noticed that the new Start menu doesn't allow grouping, but just throws items into a muddle – although you can at least sort them in lines. Then I found that Windows 11 won't allow you to display seconds on the clock. Then Excel reported that it couldn't find a valid installation code. Things were getting worse.


The killer was that I had no internet access! All my network adapters had disappeared – although Device Manager still reported them as working properly. Uninstalling and rebooting threw up a 'Code 56' device error – whatever that is. The 'sfc /scannow' command wouldn't run because apparently the Windows Module Installer was disabled. It was an easy fix, but it took some finding – and SFC reported no errors anyway.

I was in a catch-22 situation, because I couldn't access the internet to look for answers – so I broke out an old laptop (mercifully unable to run Windows 11). It seems that network adapters disappearing after installing Windows 11 is a common problem that has yet to be fixed. I tried various suggestions, but none had any effect on my computer.

After tearing out the few hairs I have left, and with my heart in my mouth, I opted for the (near) nuclear option of rolling back to Windows 10. This has never worked for me when I've really needed it in the past, so I was expecting to have to reinstall Windows, which would be another two days' work. Thankfully it worked, and I am now back where I started – running Windows 10.

Andrew Mumford


Texting killed the apostrophe years before Twitter

 I think the demise of the apostrophe began years before Twitter existed (News, Issue 620, page 9). I trace its decline to the early 2000s, when mobile texting suddenly exploded

in popularity. I remember being surprised that educated people with a decent grasp of grammar often abandoned these rules when texting.

One former English teacher told me that grammar has always changed over the years, so there was little point getting upset about mistakes made when texting. He said that what mattered more was being able to understand the message. Perhaps he's right, but it always jarred with me when I received a message that contained 'dонт' instead of 'don't', or 'I've' instead of 'I've'. To this day, I always punctuate my phone messages and emails correctly, though I sometimes wonder if the people who read them are really bothered.

Jim Biggs

 I'm not convinced that social media has led to people not using apostrophes. I worked as a secretary in a solicitor's office in the 1970s and 1980s and would read many handwritten letters from the public that misused the apostrophe. It was very rare to read a letter that used it correctly after a plural noun, and people would often get 'its' and 'it's' mixed up. Perhaps the difference these days is that fewer people are bothered about maintaining standards in grammar and are prepared to let it slide because writing online is now so widespread. In a century's time I'm sure the internet will have rendered more than just the apostrophe obsolete.

Alison Shaw

Companies still using Covid as an excuse for poor service


 I was interested to read in Issue 620 (page 7) that complaints to broadband companies declined when lockdown restrictions began to ease. This suggests that the public quickly moved on from staying indoors and started reclaiming their freedom.

I only wish I could say the same for companies. In my experience, many businesses are continuing to use Covid as an excuse for poor service. On plenty of occasions when calling a company, I've had to listen to an automated message saying it will take longer to answer my call because staff are working from home. This is unacceptable at a time when life has returned to normal.


We're seeing a return to poor customer service, after an improvement in recent years during which companies started to bring their call centres back home to the UK. Customers need to tell these companies that Covid is no longer a justification for lacklustre service.

Desmond Hawkings

Metaverse will cause people to confuse fact and fiction

 All this talk of the metaverse makes me wonder where it will all lead. There are already plenty of people in this world who have difficulty differentiating between fact and fiction, or reality and fantasy. For those people, becoming immersed in

What's the Issue...?

 I seem to recall a reader recommending a free Adobe tool for removing backgrounds from photos. Can you jog my memory?

Ian Aldridge


CA SAYS Yes, it was Adobe Spark (www.snipca.com/39436), recommended by Bill Ratcliffe in Issue 616 (page 41).

 To my disappointment, I can't upgrade my PC to Windows 11, so I'm stuck with Windows 10. When was your Cover Feature on making

Windows 10 last longer?

Ron Heath

CA SAYS That appeared in Issue 612, pages 50 to 57.

 I'm getting lots of error messages in VLC, just like a reader whose problem you solved recently. Which issue please?

Paul Stonehouse

CA SAYS We fixed John Cranny's VLC problems in Issue 613, page 64.

the metaverse of the future will only exacerbate this problem.

We're apparently seeing an unprecedented rise in mental health issues caused by the actions of people online. Meanwhile, tech companies seem to be taking little responsibility in doing anything to combat it. Aren't we asking for trouble by creating something that may have a much bigger (negative) impact in the future?

As an aside, the metaverse concept puts into context the popular misconception by those regularly using Zoom and similar tools who think they are attending 'virtual' meetings. In fact, they are merely taking part in a video call.

Ian Nicholson

We need two devices for 2FA

Given that the use of **two-factor authentication** (2FA), primarily through phone texts, has become so pervasive over the past year, I would like to raise a problem. In general, we're only able to register one device on which to receive verification codes for 2FA. This means if you lose your phone, it's almost impossible to access bank accounts and other important websites such as the NHS. This is a particular problem if you're away from home - as I often am - because any replacements (such as SIM cards) are sent to your home address for security reasons.

I propose that every company that uses 2FA should allow people to register more than one device for receiving verification codes. Some banks such as NatWest and Nationwide already let customers use card readers, which is acceptable in my view, but others such as Santander don't. Google sets an excellent example because it lets you provide alternative phone numbers and email addresses, but many other sites allow just one method.

Glyn Jones

One password cracked, another one set...

I think the password question set by Gareth Foster in Issue 620 is 'What's the capital city of Malaysia? Kuala Lumpur'. I used to work there back in the 1970s, so perhaps I had an advantage in decoding the clue. I like his idea of setting quiz questions as passwords because it naturally lends itself towards using capital letters and question marks. It's only fair then that I set another password

STAR LETTER

300Mbps? I can easily work from home on 24Mbps

I'd never dare accuse estate agents of exaggerating the benefits of fast broadband, but I don't understand why you need speeds as fast as 300Mbps to add value to a house ('Question of the Fortnight', Issue 620, page 10).

I appreciate that the lockdowns have forced many people to take their home broadband speeds more seriously, but many of us started working from home before the pandemic, when there was less emphasis on ultra-fast speeds.

I set up my home office in 2018 when my boss said I could work from home three days a week. I was worried my



24Mbps wouldn't be fast enough, but it has never let me down - even during video calls with up to 200 people, or when streaming high-resolution training courses through a VPN.

I once hosted a video conference while my husband was downstairs watching Netflix, and neither of us suffered any disruption to the connection. Perhaps I *would* need a faster package if I also had a teenager who wanted to

play games while I was working, but both my kids have grown up and left home.

It makes me wonder whether people are being duped into thinking they need 300Mbps. If you live alone and work from home, you can certainly get by on the national average of 50Mbps. I'm sure most couples would cope with this speed. Larger families might struggle, but only if they were all online at the same time.

I concede that I may just be lucky, so I'd like other readers who have upgraded to 300Mbps to let me know what I'm missing.

Katherine Newsome



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



to decode, in a similar vein: Wwt4thwoH8?AoC.

I don't know whether *Computeractive* has an endless supply of mugs, but perhaps you'd be able to send one to the first reader to identify it?

Barry Hilton

CA SAYS It's not endless, but we have plenty of mugs to keep password-

cracking readers refreshed. We'll send Barry a mug for deciphering Gareth's question, and send another to the first reader to answer his new challenge.

Clocking off

I had to laugh when reading about Robert Irvine's problem with his radio-controlled clock ('Easy When You Know How', Issue 619, page 74). We used to have exactly the same issue in a school where I worked. The clocks in most places would only receive the radio 'bleep' once or twice a day, and it wasn't long enough for them to obtain the correct time. We found that the radio signal worked perfectly in a particular part of the school, so twice a year that place would have lots of clocks stacked on top of each other for half a day!

Paul Doust



We stand up for your legal rights

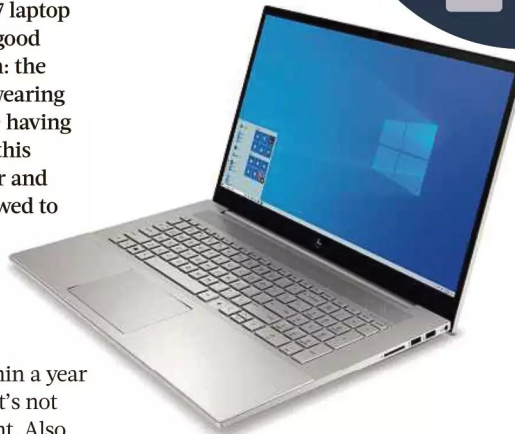
Can HP refuse to fix vanishing key letters?

Q I bought an HP Envy 17 laptop in July 2020, which is good except for one problem: the letters on the keyboard began wearing off within the first year. Despite having a three-year warranty, HP said this problem is considered 'fair wear and tear' and isn't covered. Is it allowed to ignore this problem?

Diane Cashell

A This is a tricky case. While we think letters shouldn't wear off within a year (it's hardly fair wear and tear), it's not easy to prove the fault is inherent. Also, although some cost for the warranty will have been factored into the price of the laptop, legally it's considered to have cost Diane nothing. So, unless she can prove otherwise, it's essentially a free warranty. This means HP is legally obliged only to stick to its warranty's terms and conditions. If this excludes letters coming off the keyboard, then so be it.

Diane would have been protected by the Consumer Rights Act (CRA) had she noticed the problem earlier. The CRA doesn't allow retailers to use 'fair wear and tear' as an excuse within the first six months of purchase.



LEAD CASE



However, even though it's over a year since Diane bought the laptop, we've advised her to contact HP again with a claim for inherently faulty goods. She can argue that there was a manufacturing defect – HP used poor-quality materials. The problem is that HP might ask her to prove she wasn't responsible (by using abrasive key cleaners, for example). We're not sure how she'd be able to prove this. In the meantime we'll ask HP to take another look at her case and consider a refund, replacement or repair, even if it's only a goodwill gesture.

CASE ONGOING

Does registering online extend a free warranty?

Q In your reply to Richard Sumser (Issue 618) about his warranty for a Russell Hobbs kettle, you said he wouldn't be entitled to extend it by a year. I recently bought a Russell Hobbs blender and an Oral-B electric toothbrush. I was offered an extra year's free cover if I registered the warranties online. Would this have helped him?

Anne Passmore

A We'll ask Russell Hobbs whether that would have helped, and it's certainly a useful tip. We assume manufacturers offer this incentive because they save time and money when customers register warranties themselves online, rather than by post or in store.

The next time you buy a warranty, ask the company whether there's any reward for registering it online. However you register it, manufacturers must stick to the terms and conditions outlined in the contract. They can't water them down just because you registered online. Manufacturers don't have to offer a warranty, but if they do they must stick to the terms and conditions in the contract – specifically what's covered and for how long.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE

OnePlus refunds in full after three failed replacements



Winsome Durrant has finally received a full refund of £420.47 from Chinese phone manufacturer OnePlus, but the company's reluctance to deal with the problem greatly concerns us.

As we explained in Issue 619, OnePlus sent Winsome three replacements for a faulty Nord 2 phone, none of which worked. It should have refunded her after the first replacement failed, as bound by UK law, but it persuaded her to accept another phone.

OnePlus then promised Winsome a refund, but promptly withdrew it. That's when we got involved, though we're sorry to say that our emails to the company's office, European CEO and UK regional manager went unanswered.

We then told Winsome what to write to OnePlus to explain her rights, clearly stating that she was entitled to a full refund because fewer than six months had passed since purchase, and that the company



was allowed only one attempt at replacing the phone. OnePlus then offered her a partial refund of £309, deducting £111 postage costs.

We advised Winsome to refuse this offer because she was due a *full* refund, including any delivery costs she may have paid. OnePlus finally agreed to this, and she has now received all her money, as well as an apology from customer service. We hope OnePlus now realises it must abide by UK laws.

Contact us so we can investigate your case

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

Do extended Xmas returns affect my rights?

Q I bought a Lenovo laptop online for my son's Christmas present, and it has an extended return period until 6 January 2022. If I use this, would I still be covered by the Consumer Contract Regulations (CCRs)?

Shelagh Docherty

A No, Shelagh wouldn't be covered by the CCRs, which give you 14 days to tell a retailer you're returning an unwanted item, and a further 14 days to post it. She would have waived these rights by agreeing to a

period stretching beyond these 28 days.

This also allows the retailer to set its own rules on how you return goods, such as not refunding the original postage costs – which under the CCRs it *would* have to pay. The retailer can also set stricter rules on how you're allowed to use a device before you return it. For example, it might specify that you're not allowed to open the box, or to test the item.



The CCRs apply only to goods bought online, so if you buy gifts in person check whether the store has an extended returns policy. The only time a retailer can legally offer a voucher instead of a refund is when you reject unwanted goods bought in store.

For peace of mind, Shelagh should ask the retailer whether it has attached any special conditions to its extended returns period – and get this in writing.

CASE CLOSED

Must I pay LG to fix blue tinge on my TV?

Q I bought an LG TV from Currys for £469.99 in February 2018. Since then, the on-screen picture has slowly deteriorated, becoming dimmer and developing an overall blue tinge. LG has admitted there's a problem. Is Currys responsible for fixing it, or do I have to pay LG to repair it?

Tom Tucker



A Currys, as the retailer, is responsible for helping Tom. He should claim the fault is inherent, although LG's view that there "appears there's an issue" with the screen is far from conclusive.

Tom's own research has helped his case. He's found that others have reported

the problem (www.snipca.com/40128), as well as YouTube videos suggesting fixes (www.snipca.com/40129, pictured).


What's more, LG has offered to fix the TV for £70 rather than the usual £399, which suggests it's aware there's a fundamental problem. If Tom accepted this offer, LG would become liable under the Consumer Rights Act if the repair failed.

Currys tells us it's investigating Tom's case. If it agrees that the TV is faulty, it may refund him, although it doesn't have to because more than six months have passed since purchase. However, it would have to repair or replace the TV.

CASE ONGOING

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

Wunda-ful help from smart-heating company

 I was a bit confused by my new smart-heating system, called WundaSmart

(www.wundasmart.co.uk). I had to put a smart valve on my radiator so I could control it through my phone app, but I couldn't work out how to do this. I phoned Wunda and spoke to someone who understood my predicament, and talked me through the process step by step.



He was patient, spoke in plain English, and also gave me a tip – that the Wunda app has several troubleshooting videos that might help me in future. But even if they don't assist me, I feel confident that getting through

to Wunda will be easy. I didn't have to wait for ages on the phone before speaking to someone. Nor did I have to press this button then that button, or try to recall obscure customer account numbers. That's always

been a demoralising experience when dealing with bigger companies.

Tim Walton

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

Contact:
WundaSmart

• Email techsupport@wundagroup.com
• Phone 01291 634140

Grow Your Family Tree



Search over a billion ancestors for free as **Nick Peers** explains how to...

Link your research to the world's biggest tree

When it comes to free online resources for family historians, FamilySearch leads the way. This Utah-based site hosts millions of records and photos, and offers access to the world's largest shared tree – over one billion individuals and counting – to help you track down your ancestors.

Better still, it has a **plug-in** that lets you link its resources to the software you use to build your tree. Here, we'll explain how to add this plug-in to Family Tree Maker (FTM), as well as to the free editions of RootsMagic and Legacy.

Link FTM to FamilySearch

You'll need a free FamilySearch account, so visit www.familysearch.org and click Create Account (or log in if you already have one). Next, open your family-history program and look for the option to link to FamilySearch – for example, FTM users should click the FamilySearch logo in the top-right corner of the screen and choose Log In.

Now try to 'match' the people in your tree with those in FamilySearch using its AutoMatch tool (this is powerful, though it can take a while if your tree is fairly large). This works differently depending on your program: FTM users should look for a blue square next to a person's entry when in Tree view – clicking this reveals



Compare the name from your tree with the person FamilySearch has found

a '1 FamilySearch hint found' link. You'll now see which person (if any) FamilySearch has found (it's Samuel Hiron **1** in our screenshot above). Check this with the person in your tree (it's William Hiron in ours **2**). Our example isn't a match, but if you have more luck you should click the Match button to confirm **3**. If there's information on FamilySearch you'd like to incorporate into your own tree, click the Merge button **4**.

Link with RootsMagic and Legacy

If you're a RootsMagic 8 or RootsMagic Essentials user, select Publish in the left-hand menu and click FamilySearch Central followed by 'Log in' to link your account. Once logged in, you'll see four options on the dashboard: 'Find matches',

'Share data', Import and AutoMatch.

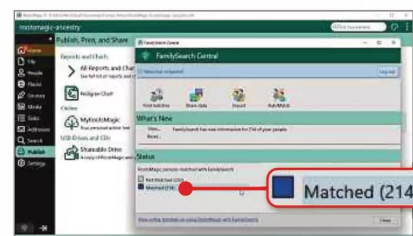
Click 'AutoMatch' for automatic matches, or Find Matches to go through individuals one by one. After it completes, click Done and wait while FamilySearch processes what it calls 'new information' for the people it has matched.

From here, click the Matched link under Status (see screenshot below) to

review the matches that have been made. If the match is incorrect, click UnMatch to remove it, then click Find Matches to continue looking.

You can also download data from FamilySearch to your own RootsMagic file. If you spot new or more detailed information in the right-hand pane, click the box next to the date and you'll see options to add it as a new event, replacing an existing event in your tree. Select the appropriate option then click OK.

If you use Legacy, click the FamilySearch button on the My Toolbar tab of the ribbon, then log in. Select a person in the left-hand panel, then click the Auto Match button above. If FamilySearch finds a match, click 'This person is the same as mine'. You'll then be able to download data from FamilySearch to your tree using the Share Data tab, which works in a similar way to RootsMagic's tool for downloading data.



After running AutoMatch in RootsMagic, click the Matched link to review its findings

Your Genealogy Problems Solved

How can I find out which parishes my ancestors lived in?

David Muloney

If your ancestor lived in England or Wales, use FamilySearch's parish boundary map from 1851 (www.familysearch.org/mapp), which you can search and browse like any other map. For Scottish parishes,

use a similar tool from the National Library of Scotland (www.snipca.com/40110), while the Irish Ancestors website (www.snipca.com/40123) covers both civil and Roman Catholic parishes in Ireland.

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

EaseUS Todo Backup Free 2022

www.snipca.com/40247

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

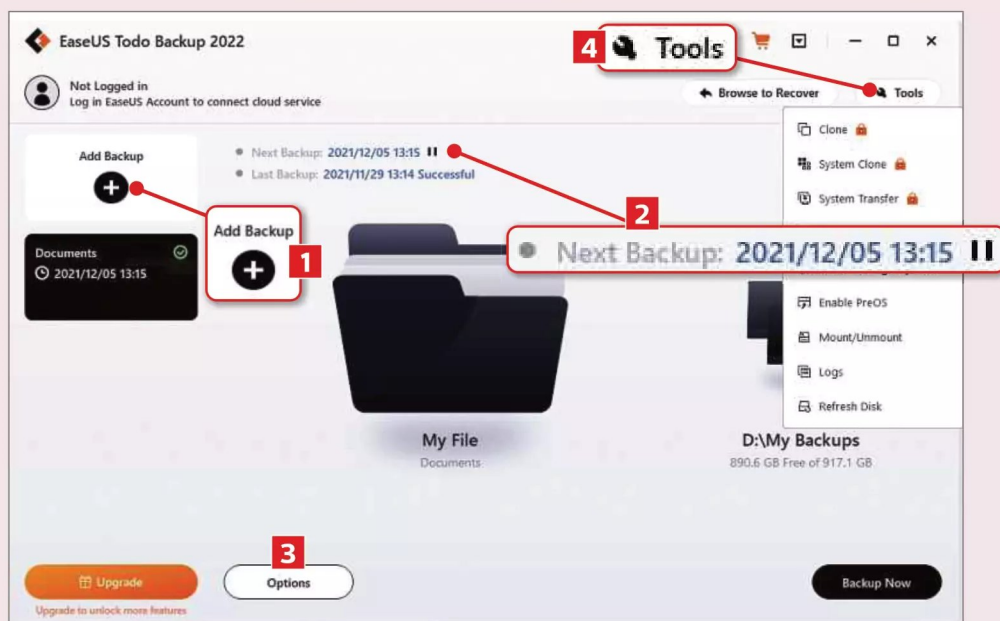
EaseUS Todo Backup Free is one of our favourite free tools for backing up your computer and this new version redesigns the interface to make it even easier to use. You can now create a backup simply by clicking the Create Backup button on the home screen and selecting the content you want to copy, be it files and folders, specific drives or your entire system. Choose where to save the backup – for example to a local hard drive, external drive or **NAS** – then click the Back Up Now button.

When you need to restore a saved backup, just click 'Browse to Recover'. It really is as straightforward as that, though there are extra options for compressing, splitting and encrypting your backups, and scheduling them to occur automatically at a time and frequency of your choice.

EaseUS has resisted the temptation to overload Todo Backup Free with unnecessary features, though several options – including email backup, **partition** cloning and

transferring your system to a new PC – are still restricted to its Home edition, which costs £29.99. Instead it focuses on improving performance, so that backing up and restoring are both much faster, and the software itself is quicker to load. The program has also been updated to work as well in Windows 11 as it does in 7, 8.1 and 10, and its refreshed interface better reflects the streamlined design of the new operating system.

In Issue 586 (page 21), we named and shamed Todo Backup Free as a Junk Offender for its excessive nags to upgrade to its paid-for version. We're pleased that EaseUS has removed these from the 2022 edition, other than an easily dismissible screen that compares the different versions. You still have to enter your email address to download the free program, but as this doesn't need to be verified, you can use a fake one (see our Firefox Relay Workshop on page 38).



1 Click the Add Backup button to select the items you want to back up. These can include files and folders, specific drives or your entire operating system.

2 Once you've created a backup manually, the program lets you schedule it to take place again at a time and frequency of your choice, and provides the Next Backup details here.

3 Click the Options button to configure your backups, including splitting them into smaller files, encrypting them with a password and applying compression to save space.

4 The Tools menu lets you access useful features such as creating an emergency disk, though padlocked options are limited to the paid-for Home edition.



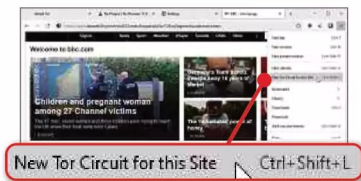
PRIVATE WEB BROWSER

Tor Browser 11.0.1

www.snipca.com/40230

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

Other than using a **VPN**, Tor Browser is the most private way to browse the web. It disguises your location by redirecting your internet connection through a series of 'relays', encrypts your data so nobody can see what you're doing and blocks all trackers automatically. The latest version features a more modern-looking interface and adds a new search engine called Blockchair (<https://blockchair.com>). This lets you search **blockchains** such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, which is useful if you dabble in **cryptocurrency** or **NFTs**. However, the most significant change in Tor Browser 11 is that it tightens security by dropping support for old 16-character '.onion' web addresses - hidden sites that can only be accessed through the Tor browser. Now you can visit only 'onion' sites that have updated their URLs, which include private versions of Facebook (www.snipca.com/40231) and BBC News (pictured, www.snipca.com/40232).



SECURITY TOOL

IObit Malware Fighter 9 Free

www.snipca.com/40227

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

IObit Malware Fighter detects and removes malicious software, and stops it installing in the first place. This new version claims to speed up scans by 50 per cent - its Smart Scan (see screenshot) checked our hard drive in less than five minutes. It's also better at identifying new threats, especially virus variants. Although some of its features are reserved for the £29.99 Pro edition - including the new Behavior Guard, which blocks malware based on 'behaviour analysis and prediction' - the Free version has several useful options. These include protection against modifications to your homepage, search engine and **DNS** server, and automatic blocking of suspicious web pages, downloads and background processes.

Malware Fighter 8 won't clash with Windows Security but, as with other IObit software, make sure you decline the bundled junk during installation, including the 'recommendations' in the bottom-left corner of the Install window.



WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software & apps to use

How can I copy my emails to an external drive?

Q I'm thinking of buying a new laptop and want to make sure I don't lose all the emails I've sent and received. I was wondering if there is any software I can use to save all my emails to an external drive? I managed to perform this very task some time ago but can't remember how I did it.

Iain Scott

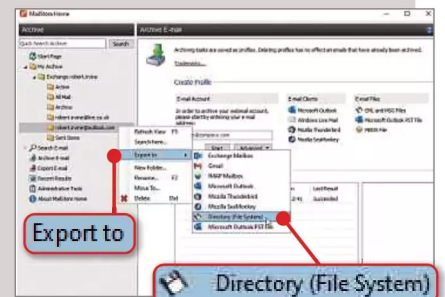
A The best software for backing up your emails is undoubtedly MailStore Home (www.snipca.com/40233). It's free for personal use and offers the option you need, which is to save your message archive to an external drive or USB stick.

Install the program and click the Archive E-mail option on the start screen to import messages from your account. Enter your email address, click Start, then enter your password

and click OK. MailStore Home should automatically detect which service or software you use, and create a profile for that account. If it doesn't, you can select a service from the list. Next, double-click your profile to archive your emails - this can take a while depending on how many messages you have.

Once the program has imported your emails, close the Progress View window and open the My Archive folder in the Archive list on the left. Right-click the folder you want to back up, or choose All Mail, and select 'Export to' then Directory (File System) - see screenshot. Choose 'EML Files' in the window that opens and click Next, then click Browse and select your external drive as the 'Target folder'. Click OK, then Next again and MailStore Home will back up your emails to the external drive.

When you want to restore your emails, open the backup folder on your external drive, then drag and drop the EML files into your email client.



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

HOW I USE...

IFTTT

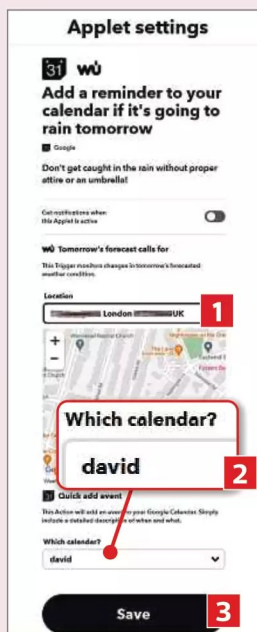


It may sound like the noise you make when stifling a sneeze, but this tool helps **David Ludlow** work, stay safe and dodge showers

I'm not a lazy person, but I don't like doing things manually that could be done automatically. For that reason, I'm a huge fan of the free IFTTT service (www.ifttt.com).

Standing for If This Then That, IFTTT is an automation tool that connects thousands of different programs and devices (the complete list is available at <https://ifttt.com/services>). The idea is that one service has a trigger (the 'If This' part) that causes an action (the 'then that' part) in a different service. For example, if you post a new picture on Facebook, *then that* image is saved to your Google Drive.

With thousands of services, and even more triggers and actions, IFTTT has millions of possible uses. Whenever I want to automate something, I check IFTTT to see if the service I need is supported. The easiest way to do this is to go to <https://ifttt.com/explore> and type in the search bar. For a supported service, I click it and select the Connect option, then log into the relevant account when prompted.



David has set up rain alerts via IFTTT and Google Calendar that remind him to grab his brolly before heading out

I then cheat a little. When you click a service, you'll see a list of pre-defined applets (rules that other people have created). Often I'll find the solution I need there, or just a new way of using a service.

I found a great one listed under Google Calendar called 'Add a reminder to your calendar if it's going to rain tomorrow'. I clicked this, filled in my address (1 in our screenshot left), and then picked which Google calendar I wanted the information to go into (2). Finally I clicked Save (3). Now, when it's forecast to rain, I get a calendar reminder, so I never go out without my brolly.

I've also created my own rules, including one that controls my heating system

(made by Drayton Wiser) via my alarm system (made by Abode). After linking the two accounts to IFTTT, I created a rule that puts the heating into 'Away' mode (ie, off or low) when the alarm is set. I clicked Create on the IFTTT website then selected Add next to If This. I then selected the Abode service, chose 'Mode changed', selected Away in the list and clicked 'Create trigger'. This creates the rule, 'If Mode changed' (1 in

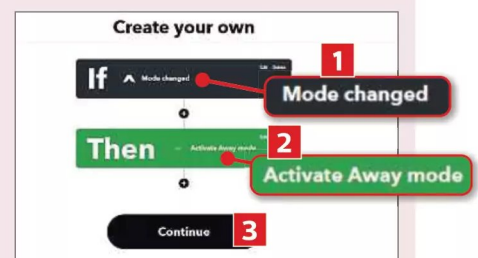
our screenshot below).

I then clicked Add (next to Then That), and selected Wiser as the service. Next, I chose 'Activate Away mode' and selected On from the dropdown menu. I clicked 'Create action', which gives me the rule 'Then Activate Away mode' (2). I then clicked Continue (3), followed by Finish. Now, every time I set my alarm, my heating goes into Away mode, and I save money.

I created the reverse rule, too, which turns the heating back on when the alarm is set to Standby mode.

As a freelance journalist, I also use IFTTT to keep track of jobs and deadlines. I combine it with the excellent Trello (www.trello.com – see page 48), so that each job I do is created as a card in Trello's 'To do' list, and contains the Title (name of job) and Description (fee). I created an IFTTT applet that starts when a card is moved to the Completed list in Trello.

My action is 'Add row to spreadsheet' in Google Sheets. I typed the name of the Sheet I wanted to add the information to. Every time I complete a job, my spreadsheet automatically grows and keeps track of how much I've earned, making those tedious tax returns much easier.



David's heating is turned off when he sets his alarm and leaves the house

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN IFTTT

I'd like the service to have the option to undo an action after a set period. For example, you could then have your

hall light turn on when someone presses the Ring doorbell, but turn off again automatically 30 seconds later.

Named & Shamed



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

SOFTWARE WARNING!

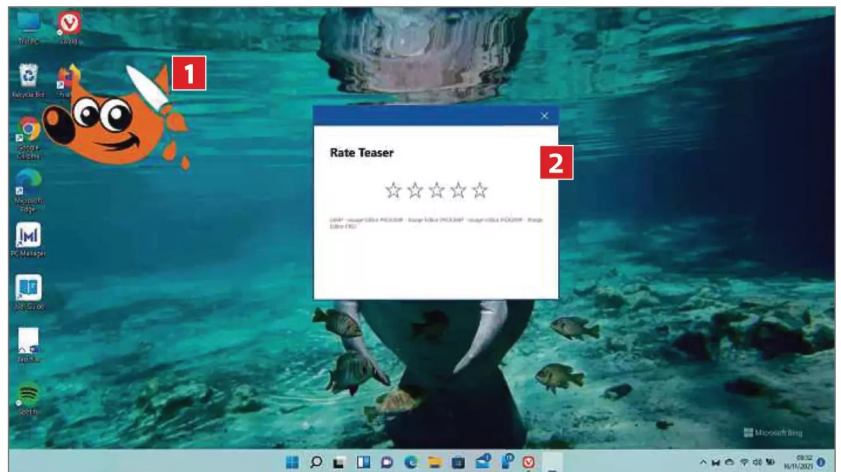
GIMP – Image Editor PRO

Before you all start emailing to ask why I'm laying into your favourite **open-source** image editor, look carefully. This isn't the official and brilliant GIMP, but a thinly veiled clone that's being sold in the Microsoft Store.



There's no reason to pay anyone for the pleasure of downloading GIMP. As we've mentioned many times before, it's free to download from www.gimp.org. However, if you search Microsoft's app store for the software, you're likely to stumble across GIMP – Image Editor Pro, yours for the 'bargain' price of £2.49 (a saving of £5.90 apparently!).

As far as I can tell, it's identical to the free version of GIMP. The only differences I've spotted in the paid-for GIMP are an annoying logo floating on my desktop when it first loads (1 in our screenshot) and a pop-up window asking me to rate the software (2 – two features that I think we can all agree don't quite justify the



For £2.49 you get an annoying logo and a pointless rating box

'Pro' label and the cost of a coffee.

The Microsoft Store lists the publisher as Yellow Elephant Productions (White Elephant might be more apt), and when you click its link you're whisked off to the site of another entity called Tidal Media Inc. I dropped them an email asking for the differences between their

pimped GIMP and the regular version. No breath is being held in anticipation of a reply.

Rip-offs are always a risk for open-source software, but you'd hope the vetting system of the newly revamped Microsoft Store would weed out these charlatans. Clearly not.

WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?



WHAT THEY SAY

Jeff McVeigh, Intel

www.snipca.com/40109

"High-performance computing (HPC) workloads are evolving rapidly. They are becoming more diverse and specialized, requiring a mix of heterogeneous architectures. While the x86 architecture continues to be the workhorse for scalar workloads, if we are to deliver orders-of magnitude performance gains and move beyond the exascale era, we must critically look at how HPC workloads are run within vector, matrix and spatial architectures."

WHAT THEY MEAN

HPC requires HPI (high-performance jargon) to make it sound exciting.

BARRY'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

Patrick McLoughlin



I don't think it's too controversial to say that being caught importing class A drugs makes you a bona fide villain. But the MDMA that Patrick McLoughlin was shipping in from the Netherlands makes him a proper wrong 'un.

A package destined for the 31-year-old McLoughlin included 70 green pills shaped to look like the WhatsApp logo (pictured). These so-called 'WhatsApp tablets' aren't only dangerous in themselves, but



raise all kinds of terrifying possibilities of kids stumbling across them and popping them in their mouths, believing them to be sweets.

Inspector Paul Ferguson of Nottinghamshire Police said it wasn't the first time he had seen drugs created to look like "culturally popular items". McLoughlin was sentenced to 12 months in prison, suspended for two years. He's a lucky man to have escaped an immediate custodial sentence.

PC | £1,250 from PC Specialist www.snipca.com/40103

PC Specialist Fusion Supreme

11 plus

We recently reviewed two new desktop PCs that come with Windows 11 installed – the Stormforce Onyx GTX 1650 (£699, see Issue 619, page 22) and the Chillblast Fusion Prime 11 (£1,000, see Issue 620, page 23). Both run Windows brilliantly, but they fell a little short in all-round performance, largely due to the relatively low-end **graphics cards** they used to keep the respective prices down.

“It blitzes through Windows tasks and handles games without reducing settings”

The Covid pandemic is still taking its toll on stocks of electronic components, and high-end graphics cards, in particular, are in short supply, with supply-chain problems hiking up prices and reducing availability. Thankfully, PC Specialist seems to have secured enough of the impressive RTX 3060 Ti graphics cards for its Fusion Supreme line.

The PC comes with Windows 11 installed and is slightly more expensive than the Onyx and Prime 11, but this is an impressive all-rounder that's capable of running Windows smoothly and

cranking up the detail in games like Microsoft Flight Simulator.

The Fusion Supreme uses the same Ryzen 5 5600X processor (matched with 16GB of RAM) as the Chillblast Fusion Prime 11. However, thanks to its graphics card, the Supreme performed much quicker in Windows 11. It blitzed the PCMark 10 **benchmark** test, recording a score of 7,787. In comparison, the Prime 11 scored 6,741, while the Onyx managed 5,512.

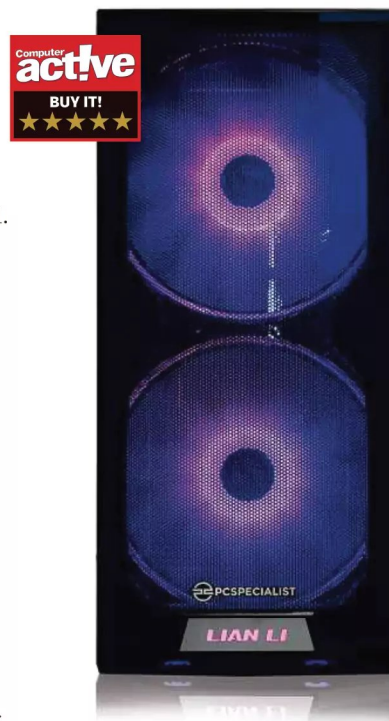
In our gaming tests, the RTX 3060 Ti graphics card also proved its worth, running the latest games with full graphic detail settings at **1080p** (1920x1080-pixel) resolution at very high **frame rates**.

Upping the resolution to **1440p** (2560x1440 pixels), we had to turn a number of settings down in more detailed games to keep the frame rates high, but it was perfectly achievable without compromising the visuals too much. It can't cope with **4K** (3840x2160 pixels) gaming, however, with frame rates in some games dropping below 20 frames per second in our tests.

The more powerful a PC is, the bigger and noisier it generally is. That's true of the Fusion Supreme. The Lian Li Lancool-215 chassis that PC Specialist has used to accommodate all these components is large and lit up like a Christmas tree, with two huge illuminated fans nestling behind its front meshed grille. Unlike the near-silent Fusion Prime 11, it gives off an audible but fairly inoffensive hum when you're doing everyday tasks. When pushed to its limits, more fans kick in. Gaming is, therefore, best carried out with headphones on.

SPECIFICATIONS

Six-core AMD Ryzen 5 5600X processor • 16GB memory • Nvidia GeForce RTX 3060 graphics • 1TB SSD • Wi-Fi 4 • 1x Gigabit Ethernet port • 1x HDMI port • 1x DisplayPort • 3x USB 3.0 ports • 3x USB 2.0 ports • Windows 11 Home • 482x215x462mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/40103



If you are willing to forgo the extra power offered by the Fusion Supreme, then the cheaper Onyx and Fusion Prime 11 models are perfectly good value for money. However, if you want a brilliant all-rounder that also copes well with more demanding games and programs, this is well worth the extra money.

VERDICT The best Windows 11 PC we've seen yet, this superb all-rounder powers through Windows tasks and more demanding games

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

HP ENVY TE01-1000na
£1,150 This offers more than double the storage with a traditional 2TB hard drive as well as an SSD



LAPTOP | £1,149 from Dell www.snipca.com/40112

Dell Inspiron 16 Plus

The bigger picture

While it can be quite an effort to lug into your office every day, a large-screen laptop can be ideal for home use. The Dell Inspiron 16 Plus comes in a range of configurations, but all come with a generous 16in screen. The model we've tested comes with an Intel Core i7-11800H processor, Nvidia GeForce RTX 3050 **graphics card**, 16GB of **RAM** and a 512GB **SSD**. It has Windows 10 Home installed, but can be upgraded to Windows 11 as soon as you boot it up.

“A sharp screen and fast Windows performance make up for so-so battery life”

There are a couple of alternative versions available in the same size that have Windows 11 preinstalled, if you prefer not to upgrade yourself. You can opt to increase the specification to a more powerful RTX 3060 graphics card and a 1TB SSD (for £1,349). Alternatively, you can reduce the specifications to a Core i5-11400H chip, with 8GB of RAM and no separate graphics hardware (£849).

In our **benchmark** tests, our i7-based review model could, for example, handle 40 Google Chrome tabs and five **1080p** YouTube videos without a problem,



scoring well above average for laptops in this price bracket when it comes to everyday Windows performance. On the graphics side, the RTX 3050 card coped well in our 1080p gaming tests, but it isn't really powerful enough to make the most of the laptop's full resolution (3072x1920 pixels).

The Inspiron 16 Plus features a decent selection of ports, which should be enough to satisfy most people's needs. On the left-hand edge you'll find the power socket, one **HDMI** port, one **USB 3.0** port and one **USB-C** port. Meanwhile, the right-hand features an **SD card** slot, another USB 3.0 port and a headphone jack.

The 16in screen's high pixel count help make everything look sharp. The screen itself has a 16:10 **aspect ratio**, which means you get black bars at the top and bottom when watching films or TV. In our tests, it lagged behind similar models in brightness levels and displaying a full range of colours.

The battery life is also a little disappointing, with the powerful processor and high-resolution screen taking its toll. In our tests it lasted 8 hours 11 minutes, which should at least get you through an average working day.

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Intel Core i7-11800H processor • 16GB RAM • NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3050 graphics card • 16in IPS 3072x1920-pixel screen • 512GB M.2 SSD • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.1 • 1x USB-C port • 2x USB 3.0 ports • 1x 3.5mm audio jack • 1x HDMI port • Windows 10 Home • 19x355x248mm (HxWxD) • 2kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/40112

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 big-screen laptop that performed well running Windows, but the screen's colour accuracy and battery life could be better



ALTERNATIVE

Acer Nitro 5
AN517-54 £1,200
This offers a huge 17.3in screen, but a smaller 256GB SSD



TABLET | £615 from Amazon www.snipca.com/40132

Lenovo Yoga Tab 13

Stands up for itself

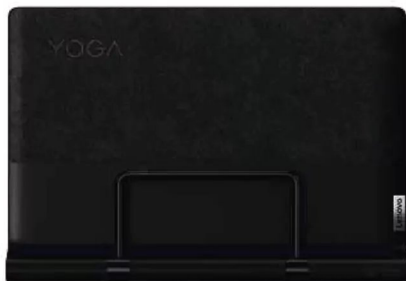
Tablets are incredibly convenient. With larger screens than smartphones, they're great for web browsing and keeping up with email, while being far less cumbersome than even the smallest laptop. The Lenovo Yoga Tab 13 has another feather in its cap – you can connect it to your PC or laptop and use it as a second screen.

It's a hefty tablet with a 13in screen, but it's still significantly cheaper than Apple's 12.9in iPad Pro, which costs £999. It will also cost you less than Samsung's 12.4in Galaxy Tab S7+ (£679), though that includes a stylus, which Lenovo sells separately (£42).

Big-screen tablet comes with integrated stand for use as a second PC monitor

The Yoga Tab 13's expansive screen has a resolution of 2160x1350 pixels, and everything certainly looked sharp and clear when we tested it. However, we found the maximum brightness level a tad low for our taste, and the **refresh rate** is a modest 60Hz. It can't match Samsung tablets and iPads in overall screen quality, but you're only likely to notice if you hold the devices side by side for comparison.

It's powered by a Snapdragon 870 processor – along with 8GB RAM and 128GB of storage – and performed well,



running Android 11 without any glitches or hold-ups. We tested office software and games on the tablet, and they generally ran very smoothly.

Its unique feature is its **MicroHDMI** port, which lets you plug it into a PC or laptop to use as a second monitor. This is a simple plug-and-play process – as soon as you connect your computer via the port, it will display whatever is being sent by the PC. It works well and is a great way to add a second screen to your PC or laptop as and when you need it.

The one downside is that it can drain the battery quite quickly. You can, of course, alleviate this by simultaneously connecting the power cable to the **USB-C** port, but as this is on the opposite edge of the tablet the whole setup can start looking a bit like Spaghetti Junction.

One reason the device works so well as a second monitor is its integrated kick stand. This is a metal bar (pictured below left) that folds out from the rear and lets you prop the tablet up without the need for a case or stand. You can even use it for hanging the tablet on a hook, if ever you

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 870 processor • 8GB RAM • 13in 2160x1350-pixel resolution screen • 128GB storage • 8-megapixel front camera • Wi-Fi 6 • Bluetooth 5.2 • MicroHDMI port • USB-C port • Android 11 • 6.2/24.9x293x2048mm (HxWxD) • 803g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/40132

need to attach it to a wall. The mechanism is firm and adjustable, so you can angle the tablet exactly as you like.

The stand does mean the the Yoga Tab 13 has an unusual shape. One long edge (the one that sits on the table when the stand is in use) is significantly thicker and heavier than the other. If you're used to a flat tablet this can make it awkward to hold. It also won't slip into a bag as comfortably, because while the slimmer edge is only 6.2mm, the stand edge is 24.9mm thick.

If you end up mostly using the tablet on its stand, this won't be much of a problem. However, if you intend to take it out and about, and use it on the move, you may come to regret it.

VERDICT A 13in tablet with a built-in stand that helps it to work as a second monitor for your PC, but makes hand-held use awkward

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Samsung Galaxy Tab S7+ £679

This has a gorgeous screen and comes with a stylus



PHONE | £499 from Fairphone www.snipca.com/40192

Fairphone 4

Won't cost the Earth

Most of us are happy to do our bit for the environment by sorting our waste into recycling bins and taking re-usable shopping bags to the supermarket, but would we choose our next smartphone on the basis of how eco-friendly it is? Fairphone is hoping we will and its latest model, the Fairphone 4, is its most persuasive argument yet.

The phone's eco-credentials are bolstered by using recyclable materials where possible, using fairly sourced and sustainable materials, and building its phones with a **modular** design that makes them easy to repair and should prolong its lifespan.

“Uses recyclable materials and is easy to repair, but is no better than rivals £200 cheaper”

Because it has replaceable components, – including battery and screen – it's a little chunkier than a standard smartphone, measuring 10.5mm thick and weighing 225g. However, it will still slip into your pocket with room to spare.

It has a 6.3in 60Hz **IPS** screen with a resolution of 2340x1080 pixels. A 'teardrop' notch at the top houses the front-facing camera. Contrast isn't as strong as you'd get from an **OLED** screen, but it's bright enough to use in broad daylight.

Inside it has a Snapdragon 750G processor, which managed a solidly mid-range performance in our **benchmark** test, getting a similar to the

SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 750G • 6GB or 8GB memory • 128GB or 256GB storage • 6.3in 60Hz 2340x1080-pixel IPS screen • 48-megapixel rear camera • 48-megapixel ultrawide camera • 25-megapixel front-facing camera • Wi-Fi 5 • Bluetooth 5.1 • Android 11 • 10.5x76x162mm (HxWxD) • 228g • Five-year warranty www.snipca.com/40192



Poco X3 NFC (£280) and the Redmi Note 9T (£250, reviewed in Issue 600). Clearly, both of these are significantly cheaper, but won't do as much for the planet or be as easy to mend. The £499 model pairs the processor with 6GB of **RAM** and 128GB of storage, though you can get an 8GB RAM/ 256GB storage option for £569.

The battery is only 3,905mAh, which is relatively small compared with rivals. However, it didn't seem to impact battery life too much. In our tests it easily lasted a day on a full charge, even with heavy use. Light users should find this creeps well into a second day on a single charge.

All of this makes for a slightly under-powered and under-performing smartphone for the price. Of course, some of the extra you pay goes into ensuring the company's support of fair pay to its employees and ecological production processes. Whether you're willing to accept these compromises and pay more for a lesser phone will probably come down to how much you're willing to support Fairphone 4's green ideals.

VERDICT This eco-friendly phone is easier to fix than most and should last longer, but it comes at a high price for what it offers

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Xiaomi Poco X3 NFC £280 Provides similar Android performance and a better screen for a lower price



CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

Pixel density



What does it do?

Pixel density is a measurement of how many pixels there are in a fixed amount of screen area. It's typically measured in pixels per inch (ppi).

How does it work?

To calculate the pixel density of a screen, you need to know how many pixels there are in an inch of screen, horizontally and vertically. Complications arise because, while the resolution of a screen is usually stated as the number of horizontal pixels times the number of vertical pixels, the overall size of a screen is usually measured across its diagonal. You can still work out the pixel density from these stats, if you can remember your Pythagoras from school. Alternatively, use the handy calculator at www.sven.de/dpi.

What are the specs?

Smartphone screens are now so good that it's getting hard to see individual pixels unless you look at a screen very closely. The iPhone 13 has a pixel density of 460ppi, while the new Google Pixel Pro 6 (pictured below) is 512ppi. PC monitors and TV sets don't require such high densities to appear clear and sharp, because we look at them from further away. 109ppi should be fine for a monitor, while TVs can go as low as 50ppi. In fact, if you buy a large **4K** TV, you'll

notice that it has a lower pixel density than a small 4K TV, simply because its 3840x2160 pixels are spread across a larger area.

Can I change it later?

No.



Reviews

SECURITY CAMERA | £140 from Amazon www.snipca.com/40169

Ezviz C8C

Eye in the sky

Installing an outdoor security camera is as much about deterring intruders as it is about catching them in the act, and this imposing security camera should go a long way to warding off any passing criminals looking for easy opportunities. It's a large spherical case with a camera inside, which can pan 352 degrees and tilt up and down 90 degrees to get a near-complete view of your property.

Setting up the camera is relatively straightforward but, unlike the Google Nest Cam (Battery) reviewed in Issue 616, it needs to be powered from the mains. This means either connecting it to an outdoor plug socket or cabling it through your wall to plug into an indoor socket. It also needs to be attached to a flat surface, so if you don't have a wooden post or



“Detail is very high – even, sadly, picking out the grey flecks in our hair”

fence to attach it to, you may have to drill holes in your wall to secure it in place.

Once it's in place with a power supply, you can link the camera to your network via Wi-Fi or an Ethernet cable. This lets the camera send you alerts when movement is detected. Footage can be stored locally on the device, using a **microSD card**, or uploaded to online storage if you'd like to access it remotely. This requires a subscription, which costs £2.50 a month for three days storage, £4.20 a month for seven days, or £9.99 for 30 days. You can also watch the camera view live from the app and control the direction of the camera.

In daylight, the **1080p** video is top

SPECIFICATIONS

1920x1080-pixel video resolution • 30 frames per second • 87-degree field of view • 352-degree pan • 90-degree tilt • Night vision • Wi-Fi 4 • Fast Ethernet • 157x149x158mm (HxDxW) • 510g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/40169



notch. During testing, the camera caught us walking up and down the drive and working in the front garden. Detail is very high – even, sadly, picking out the grey flecks in our hair. It loses quality as it gets darker, but there is a spotlight that illuminates up to 15 feet away, or you can switch to colour night vision for less detail but a longer reach.

VERDICT A security camera that's visible enough to deter intruders, and can store footage either on a memory card or online



ALTERNATIVE Google Nest Cam (Battery) £180 This outdoor camera has a rechargeable battery, so you don't need to worry about wiring



WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

Can you recommend a printer/scanner for a small space?

Q I'm looking for a printer/scanner, which can connect to Wi-Fi, but doesn't need to produce photo quality. The paper must be fed in at the bottom as it is in a small space. It must be cheap and have low running costs, as I am retired and will only use it on the odd occasion.

Can you recommend anything?

Peter Turner



A Printers are still in short supply, but we think we've managed to find you a suitable device: the HP Envy 6432e All-in-One (£100 from HP at www.snipca.com/40170, pictured). Paper is fed in at the bottom and it covers a fairly small area – its dimensions are 174x361x433mm (HxDxW).

We wouldn't recommend this printer to someone who *does* want to print photos, and it can print only 120 mono pages before its cartridges need replacing.

That's not great, but the good news is that it comes with a free nine-month subscription to HP's Instant Ink service (www.snipca.com/40171), which delivers replacement cartridges to your door automatically when your printer runs out.

Once the nine months are over, it costs 99p per month, which will cover 15 printed sheets, or £1.99 per month for 50 sheets.



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



Award-winning creative graphics software

From the smoothest, fastest photo editing and graphic design software to the most powerful publishing software, Affinity apps are pushing the boundaries of what's possible with creative technology.

Professional photo editing, publishing, graphic design and illustration at your fingertips. Available for Mac, Windows and iPad.

Experience Affinity software collection with a 10 day free trial: affinity.serif.com

No subscription.



Reviews

MOUSE | £27 from Amazon www.snipca.com/40149

Cooler Master MM720

Click and easy – no sweat!

If you're still using the cheap plastic mouse that came with your PC, it's well worth considering upgrading to something that's more customisable and comfortable to use. The Cooler Master MM720 is an affordable alternative that has a collection of design tweaks that are well worth investigating.

The first thing to note is the metal honeycomb case. This is cool to the touch, light to move around and lets air flow through under your hand. If you tend to suffer from sweaty palms, this could make mouse work much more comfortable.

The inside lights up to show this design

SPECIFICATIONS

PixArt PMW3389 mouse sensor • 7 levels of sensitivity (400–16,000dpi) • 400 inches per second tracking speed • 512KB internal memory • 1.8m Ultraweave cable • 37x105x77mm (HxDxW) • 49g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/40149

feature at its best, and you can choose any colour you like using the included software. This control panel also lets you set the function of each of the mouse's six buttons: the standard two on the top, a scroll wheel between them, two side buttons controlled with the thumb, and a switch on the bottom that's typically used to adjust the mouse's sensitivity.

We also like the shape. Unusually there's a space to the right of the main buttons for right-handed people to rest their ring finger. We found that this supports the whole hand better, stopping your fingers from trailing around on your mouse mat.

Considering its superior design, the glossy black version (£27) is very affordable, though the glossy white (£43), matt black (£48) and matt white (£40) will cost you more.



VERDICT An attractive mouse that's comfortable to hold and keeps sweaty palms nice and dry

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Microsoft Intellimouse
£30 For a more traditional look, this is a design classic that's perfect for Windows and comfortable to use



DIGITAL RADIO/BLUETOOTH SPEAKER | £99 from Amazon www.snipca.com/40150

Roberts Revival Petite

A wireless wireless

Radio addicts probably don't always want to open up their smartphone and stream to a nearby speaker every time they want to tune into their favourite station. However, having a radio that can connect to Bluetooth and stream internet stations and music services like Spotify is very handy.

The small, stylish Roberts Revival Petite covers all those bases. It's battery rather than mains powered, so easy to move around the house. It recharges via a **microUSB** port and runs for about 12 hours. It's about the width and height of a smartphone but much deeper and feels

heavy for its size.

The retro styling is lovely, looking like a miniature radio from yesteryear. Its mottled vinyl casing comes in a range of colours, while the small **OLED** screen brings it bang up to date.

We were also impressed with the quality of the audio, particularly given its size, with an impressive amount of bass. Our biggest complaint is that it doesn't go particularly loud, so it isn't ideal for playing music at a garden party, say, but for personal listening in the house it's very good.

Controlling the DAB radio is easy with the dial on the front of the device used to switch between channels. It also works well as a Bluetooth speaker – simply select Bluetooth from the sources menu and start streaming from your phone or

tablet. It can remember up to eight devices so you shouldn't have to keep setting the connection up when someone else wants to use it.



VERDICT A small attractive speaker, which can play DAB or FM radio, or anything else you can stream from a connected smartphone

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE

Pure Elan
Connect+ £77
This portable radio can play internet radio stations without connecting to a smartphone



SPECIFICATIONS

FM, DAB, DAB+ wavebands • Auxiliary input • USB 2.0 Micro B charging port • Bluetooth • 73x76x124mm (HxDxW) • 430g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/40150

STREAMING TV | £649 from Sky www.sky.com/glass

Sky Glass

Ditch the dish



For the past three decades, Sky has been beaming TV from satellites to customers' dishes. With the advent of fast broadband, streaming services started giving Sky a run for its money. Now the broadcaster has launched a new service delivered online.

Sky Glass is a very different proposition to Sky's regular service, and not just because it uses the internet. You'll still pay a monthly subscription, which starts at £26 per month, but you also need to buy a new 4K Sky Glass TV, because the service won't work with your existing set. Clearly this is aimed at people who want to upgrade to a 4K TV screen.

Three models of TV are available, with 43in, 55in and 65in screens. You can pay for your TV up front or in instalments alongside your Sky subscription. How much you pay each month depends on the size of the screen and the length of your contract. For example, you can buy the 43in screen for £649, or break it down into 24 or 48 monthly payments of as little as £13. The 55in TV costs £849, while the 65in model is £1,049.

In our tests the TV produced a bright picture with vibrant colours. HDR technology lets you boost the contrast on films and programmes that support it, while the 4K screen offers plenty of detail. The sound is also excellent, with a broad range and enough depth to make films and programmes sound amazing.

SPECIFICATIONS

4K • 3840x2160-pixel resolution • 43in, 55in or 65in
• Supports Dolby Vision, HDR10 and HLG formats
• 215W Dolby Atmos-compatible 3.1.2 speakers • 3xHDMI ports • 640x960x210mm (HxWxD) (43in model) • 19kg (43in model) • Two-year warranty www.sky.com/glass

“A high-quality 4K TV at a reasonable price, but subscription costs soon add up”

though the quality deteriorates a little at high volume.

A basic £26 subscription (Sky Ultimate TV) includes the usual Sky channels and also a Netflix subscription. Movie and sports channels cost extra, which can soon ramp up your monthly payments. The TV itself is reasonably priced but you could access many of these Sky services for less through a Now TV subscription.

Unlike the Sky Q service, Sky Glass won't let you record films and programmes. Previously broadcast shows are available on demand through Sky and other services such as Netflix, but there's no way to keep programmes for when they disappear from these services.

VERDICT A good-quality 4K TV at a reasonable price, but the monthly subscription costs start to look steep next to the likes of Netflix and even Sky's own Now TV

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE Philips 48OLED806 £999 This 48in TV has great picture quality and provides apps for all your favourite streaming services



DO I REALLY NEED...

Laptop-snooping detection?

What is it?

New privacy settings in a preview version of Chrome OS suggest Google may soon add “snooping protection” to Chromebooks, which will stop people peering over your shoulder to see what's on your screen. It uses the laptop's webcam and a Human Presence Sensor (HPS) – a special chip built into the computer that continuously monitors the view from your webcam. If it spots another face at your laptop, it will alert you, hide your notifications and possibly even switch off the screen.



What's the catch?

Google suggests only Chromebooks will support the feature for now, but we're sure it won't be long before Windows offers a similar technology.

So can I do without it?

Yes, but it could prove valuable if you regularly open sensitive documents or business spreadsheets while on the train or in the local coffee shop.

NEXT ISSUE

On Sale **Weds 5 Jan**



HP Pavilion Aero 13
An AMD-powered laptop that's great value for money

The best smart TVs for 2022

Latest models tested – from £379



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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 A13 processor and iPadOS 15. 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
£327 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



£499.99

IMPULSE

AMD IMPULSE (RYZ7)

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

ASUS PRIME B450M-A

CORSAIR 8GB DDR4 3000Mhz

INTEL 512GB M.2 nVME 660P

AMD RX 560 2GB

GAMEMAX Expedition

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro



£599.99

MERCURY

INTEL i5 MERCURY (COF9)

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

ASUS PRIME Z390-P

CORSAIR 16GB DDR4 3000Mhz

INTEL 1TB M.2 nVME 660P

INTEL UHD 630 Integrated Graphics

KOLINK Stronghold

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro



£1249.99

NAVIGATOR

AMD NAVIGATOR (RYZ8)

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

ASUS TUF X570-Plus Gaming

CORSAIR 16GB DDR4 3600Mhz - RGB

INTEL 512GB M.2 nVME 660P

SEAGATE 2TB Sata3 HDD

AMD 5700XT 8GB

CORSAIR iCUE 220T RGB White

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro

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

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



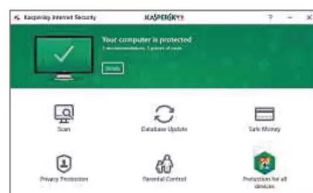
Now with built-in light and audiobook support, this budget model is fine for most users, though limited by its 4GB of storage. The Paperwhite (£120) is even sharper, waterproof, and has bigger storage options as well as a cellular data option (£100 extra).

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

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. £240 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. £180 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 a Eufy RoboVac X8

Eufy's RoboVac X8 uses artificial intelligence to generate floor maps of your home, so it knows exactly where it's cleaning, whichever floor it's on or room it's in. Use the app to create your own cleaning areas, as well as no-go zones.

It uses Path Laser Navigation to work out the most efficient cleaning route, without needing you to manually map it. You don't need to worry about obstacles – it can detect these and move around them.

Each of the two

turbines in the RoboVac X8 offers 2000Pa (pascal) of suction power, increasing overall airflow by 80 per cent. It does a great job cleaning up pet hair – sucking up 57.6 per cent more hair than a single-turbine robotic vacuum.

Dust is sucked in with such force that it tightly packs the dust box, decreasing the number of trips you need to take to empty it.

To enter this competition, answer the question at www.snipca.com/40195 and submit your details. It runs until midnight Tuesday 4 January. Good luck!



You can buy the **Eufy RoboVac X8** for £449.99 from Amazon (www.snipca.com/40196). For more information on Eufy's other products, including security cameras and video doorbells, visit <https://uk.eufylife.com> and follow @eufyofficial on Twitter.

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

£70 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 £140). 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.

£70 from www.snipca.com/36602

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SCAN ME

Workshops & Tips

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

35 Access your PC remotely from another PC

38 Protect your email address from spammers

40 Readers' Tips

42 Browser Tips: Capture screenshots in Chrome

PLUS

44 Phone & Tablet Tips

46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better

48 In The Club: Organise events using Trello

HOW TO...

Access your PC remotely from any other PC

by Nik Rawlinson

What you need: DWSservice software; Windows 10 or 11 **Time required:** One hour

There's no shortage of ways to make sure you can access your files everywhere, but your options will have restrictions if you stick to a free account. Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) starts you off with just 2GB of free storage, while a free Box account (www.box.com) limits you to files smaller than 250MB. This may be fine for documents, but what about movies and backups?

Mega (<https://mega.io>) doesn't limit file sizes and gives free users a very generous 20GB of storage, but it might restrict your data-transfer speed, depending on how busy the service is. One way to overcome these problems is to run your own online-storage service.

WD's My Cloud range of external hard drives connect to your home network

and are accessible over the web, so you can open your files from anywhere in the world. They're keenly priced, too. You can pick up a 3TB My Cloud drive for a little under £150 (www.snipca.com/40142), which strikes us as pretty good value for money.

But we're also fans of do-it-yourself tech, and making savings where we can. So, here we'll show you how to make not only your files but your entire computer accessible over the internet – for free. You can use your main computer or, if you have an old one lying around, reuse it for this specific task. If it's a desktop computer, you could even unplug the monitor, keyboard and mouse once it's up and running, and put it somewhere out of the way, such as under a desk.



All you need to do is install DWSservice, which is a powerful, free and reliable remote-access program. It's based in Estonia (one of the most digitally advanced countries in Europe), though all its instructions are in plain English.

1

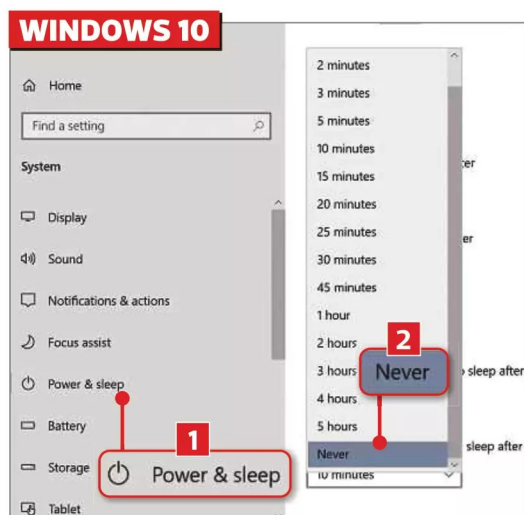
Keep your PC awake

Your computer probably goes to sleep if you don't use it for a while, both to save energy and help its components last longer. If you want to access it remotely, you'll need to disable this function. However, one of the most power-hungry components is the monitor, and you can set this to turn off after a certain period, just as long as the computer itself keeps running.

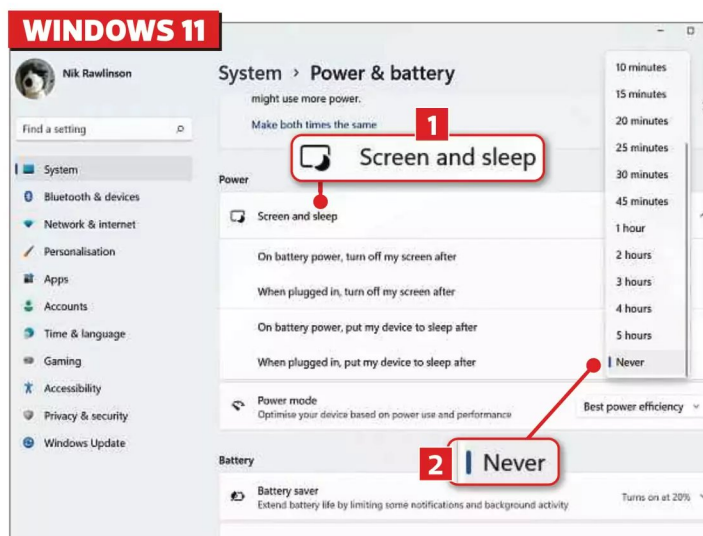
If you're using a laptop, make sure it's connected to mains power (the battery won't keep it running for more than a few hours). Now, for Windows 10 users on either a PC or laptop, press Windows key+I to open Settings, then System, followed by 'Power & sleep' on the left (1 in our screenshot at top left of page 36). Now, under Screen, set the display to turn off after a few minutes. Under Sleep, set the option for sleeping while on battery

power to Never (2 (laptops only).

In Windows 11's Settings, you need to click 'Power & battery' in the menu, then 'Screen and sleep' (1 in our screenshot top right of page 36). Use the options within this section to apply the same settings we just specified for Windows 10, allowing the screen to turn off after a few minutes, but setting the computer so it never goes to sleep when plugged in (2). You can now close Settings.



In Windows 10 select 'Power & sleep', then under 'On battery power, PC goes to sleep after' select Never



In Windows 11 'Power & battery', then 'Screen and sleep' followed by Never

2 Prepare for power cuts

Naturally, if your neighbourhood suffers a power cut, your computer will still turn off, unless you have an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). These devices have batteries that take over during a power cut. They're widely available – such as this two-socket Tecnoware model (pictured below), available for £59.99 from Amazon (www.snipca.com/40147) – but not all of them will keep your PC running. Some are designed to provide just enough power for their associated software to shut down your PC and connected devices safely, avoiding data loss. If a UPS is designed to keep your computer running, you still risk losing the connection if the power outage lasts longer than the battery inside the UPS.

However, depending on your computer, there may be a solution to this problem, too. Some computers can detect when they're connected to power, which means they can also detect when the supply returns after a power cut. You can set these PCs to switch on automatically in such circumstances, which would reinstate your remote access to your files.

Uninterruptible power supplies like this model keep your computer running during a power cut

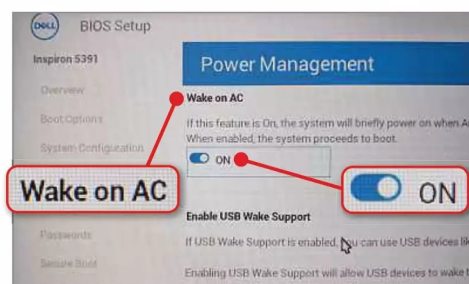


The steps to enable this feature – if your computer supports it – will vary depending on manufacturer and model. The first step is to enter the BIOS or UEFI, which is a core program built into the motherboard that tells it how to start up and access various components such as memory and the processor, even before Windows begins.

To access this program, reboot your computer and keep an eye on the screen for a message telling you how to enter the BIOS, UEFI or setup. Often, you'll need to press a function key (F2, F10, F12 and so on, although again this varies between manufacturers and models). If your PC doesn't display a shortcut while starting up, check the documentation.

Be very careful when making changes to the BIOS or UEFI, as an incorrect setting could prevent your PC from starting, or cause it to behave erratically.

Work your way through the menus until you find an option for AC Power Loss, 'Restore on AC', 'Wake on AC', or similar. It often appears in a section labelled Power Management or 'Advanced Configuration and Power Interface' (ACPI). Of the three laptops we checked, only one supported

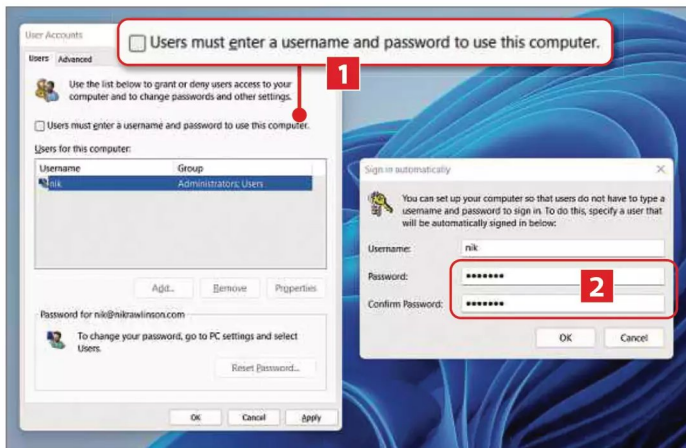


We activated 'Wake on AC' on our Dell laptop and it booted straight into Windows when connected to mains power

this feature – a Dell computer that had a 'Wake on AC' option in its Power Management section (see screenshot above). When we enabled this, then switched off the PC and reconnected it to a live mains connection (as would happen when the power returned after an outage) it spontaneously restarted.

You'll also need to set your computer to log you in automatically when it restarts. Note that if you do this, anyone who has physical access to your computer can use it just as you do – opening programs and files, reading emails, browsing the web and so on.

Press the Windows key, type netplwiz, then click the top option on the menu. When the window opens, untick the box beside 'Users must enter a username and password to use this computer' (1 in our screenshot above right). Windows will ask you to enter the password for your user account (twice, so you've confirmed it 2), which it can then use to log in automatically. When you've provided this, click OK, then OK again.



Save your account password in Windows so it automatically logs you in

4 Access your PC remotely

As long as your computer is turned on and connected to the internet, you should be able to access it from any device that has a web browser, including another Windows PC or even a tablet. Open the browser on the computer you're using to access your PC remotely and visit www.dwservice.net. Log in using the email address and password you provided during setup, then click Agents. You'll see your home computer listed on the dashboard, bearing the descriptive name you gave the 'agent'. Click this.

If you want to access your files remotely, tap 'Files and Folders', then navigate your folders as you would if you were using File Explorer while sitting in front of the computer. To send a file to your computer from the local device, navigate to the folder in which you want to save it, then click the icon showing a cloud with an arrow inside it pointing up. Select the file on your local device, then click Upload.

To retrieve a file from your remote PC, navigate to the folder in which it resides, then select it and click the icon of a cloud with an arrow pointing down on top of it.

DWSERVICE also lets you interact with your computer directly – not just the files and folders on its drive. Tap the grid of nine squares at the top of the page in your browser to return to the dashboard, then tap Screen. After a few seconds, your remote Windows screen will appear, and you can interact with it directly using the keyboard and mouse attached to the local computer – or by tapping if you're using a tablet. In the screenshot below, for example, we're remotely connecting to our Windows computer through the Safari browser on our iPad.

3 Install DWService

Now it's time to install the DWService software. Visit www.snipca.com/40124 and click Windows, then read through the warning about the software's ability to give remote access to your computer. If you're happy to proceed, click Download to download DWService. When it's finished downloading, launch the program.

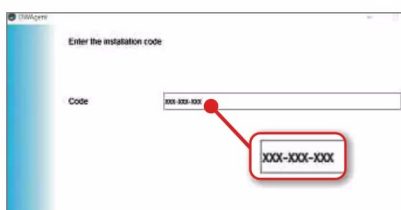
Check the terms and conditions, privacy policy and licence, and if you agree with them, select Install, then click Next. When Windows asks if you're happy for the software to make changes to your computer, click Yes. Work your way through the installation, selecting the default options and confirming that you want to install it in the default folder. When asked, 'How would you like to configure the agent?', click 'Enter the installation code'.

Now, without closing the installer, switch to your browser and click the 'Login/Sign-up' button at the top of the page from which you downloaded the software. Use the fields in the 'Sign up' box to provide your email address and a password, check the terms and conditions and privacy policy and, if you agree with them, click 'I'm not a robot' followed by 'Sign up'. You'll receive an activation code in an email

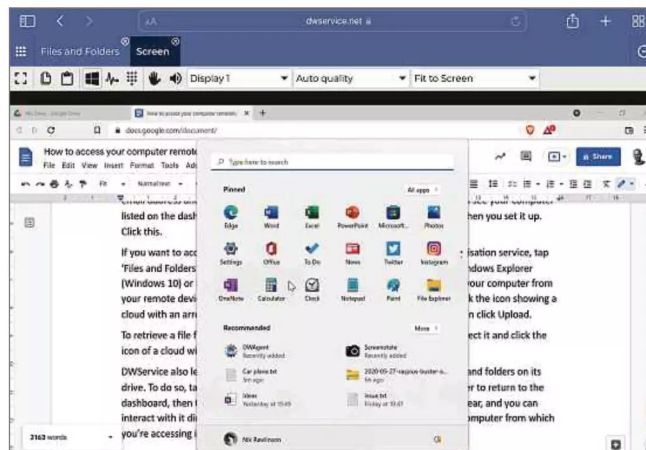
sent to the address you provided – paste this into the Code box on the following screen, then click Activate.

On the next screen, log into your new DWService account by entering the email address and password you just specified, then click Agents. Click the '+' at the top of the page and, in the Name box on the panel that opens, type a name for the computer on which you're installing the software. You can choose any name, so pick something you'll be able to identify easily later. Now click Confirm.

You'll see that a new 'agent' has appeared on the dashboard, bearing a nine-digit code. Copy this code, then switch back to the DWService installer and paste or type it into the Code box (see screenshot below left). Click 'Next', and when the message 'Installation has been completed' appears, click Close. The program window will disappear, but the software will continue to run in the background, listening out for incoming connections from remote computers.



Type your nine-digit code into the DWService installer



Here, we've accessed our Windows computer through the Safari browser on our iPad

Workshop1

Protect your email address from spammers

What you need: Firefox Relay

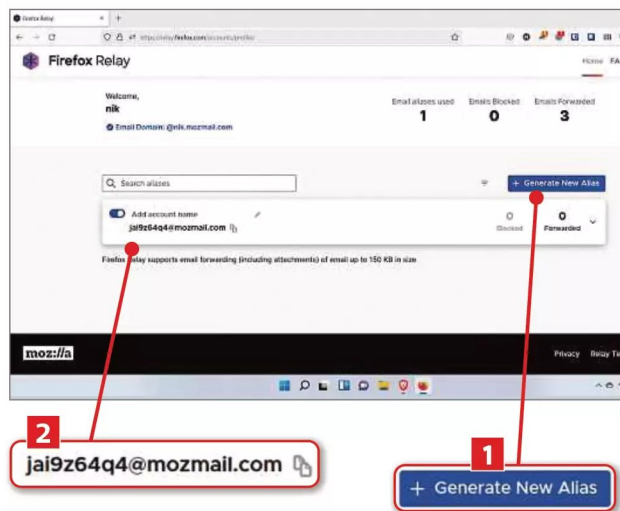
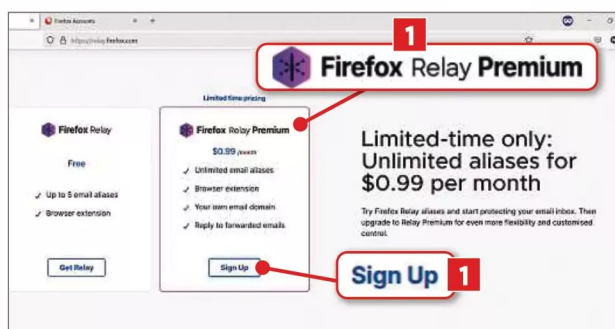
Time required: 30 minutes

If you feel uncomfortable giving your email address to an unknown online store, signing up to a mailing list or adding it to an online petition, you should consider using an alias. An email alias forwards any messages it receives to your inbox, but if they start to attract too much spam, you can terminate them, and the spam will disappear. Firefox

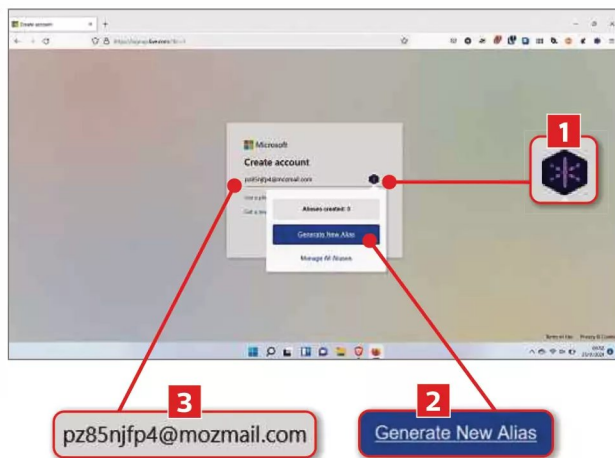
Relay lets you set up five aliases for free, but the service has just launched a premium tier, currently at \$0.99 (74p) a month, which removes the five-address limit and also lets you reply to forwarded emails. We'll mainly focus on the free service here, but the last two steps explore what else you can do if you're happy to subscribe.



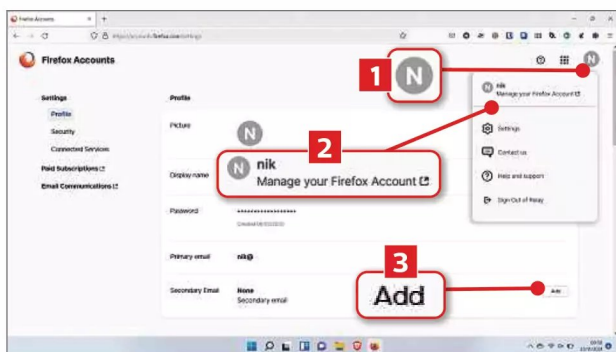
STEP 1 Launch your browser (it doesn't have to be Firefox) and visit <https://relay.firefox.com>, then click Sign Up, either at the top of the page if you only want to use the free service, or in the Firefox Relay Premium box **1** half way down the page if you want to use the features we'll cover in Steps 6 and 7. If you already have a Firefox account, log in on the next page. If not, simply enter the email address you want to protect and click Continue then, on the next screen, choose a password, enter your age and, if you agree with the Terms of Service and Privacy notice linked at the bottom of the box, click 'Create account'. You'll receive a confirmation code in your email. Copy and paste it into the verification box on the next screen, then click Verify.



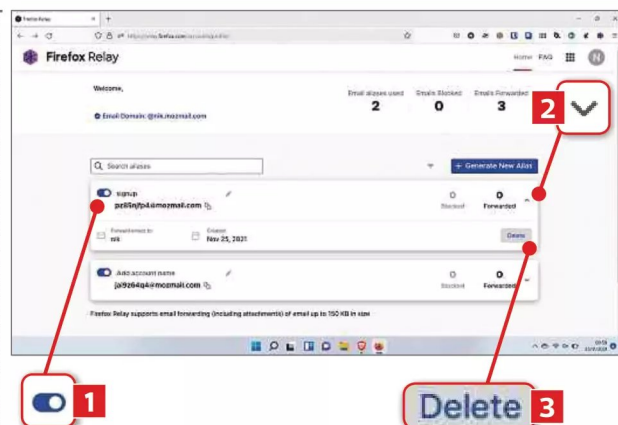
STEP 2 You now need to set up your first email alias. There are several ways you can do this, depending on your situation. If you're looking at the Firefox Relay dashboard, which you'll reach after first logging in, click '+ Generate New Alias' **1** and Relay will create a new alias by adding a random selection of characters to the front of @mozmail.com. Click the new address **2** to copy it to your clipboard – from here you can paste it into any field on the internet.



STEP 3 If you intend to generate multiple email aliases and Firefox is your default browser, we'd recommend installing the Relay extension, which lets you generate email aliases from any website, not just the Firefox Relay Dashboard. In Firefox go to www.snipca.com/40225, and click 'Add to Firefox' (you won't be able to do this using any other browser). Click 'Add' in the panel that drops down from the address bar. Once it's installed, visit any website displaying a form that asks for your email address and click the Firefox Relay icon in the address field **1** followed by Generate New Alias **2**. It will generate a random alias and enter it into the box for you **3**.

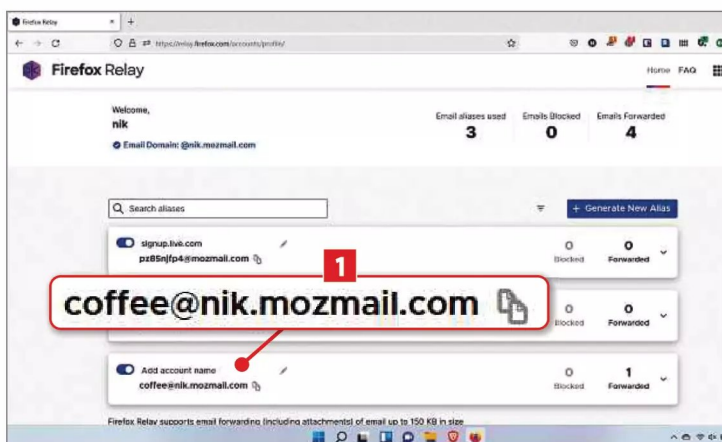
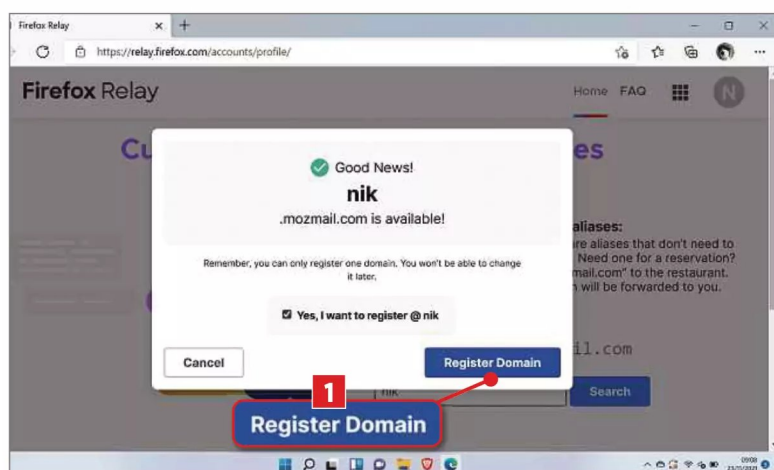


STEP 4 Messages are automatically forwarded to the address associated with your Firefox Relay account. If you want to change your actual email address, click your initial in the top-right corner of the Firefox Relay dashboard **1**, followed by 'Manage your Firefox Account' **2**. Click 'Add' **3** to the right of Secondary Email and provide the address you want to use. Firefox will send confirmation emails to both your existing and new addresses that you'll need to enter to confirm that you own them. When your new secondary address has been added, click the 'Make primary' button, and it will start receiving messages sent through Firefox Relay.



STEP 5 The free service lets you create up to five email aliases. If one of them starts attracting large amounts of spam, you can disable it from forwarding messages to your real inbox by switching off the slider **1** to the left of its entry on the dashboard. If you want to delete the address entirely, click the arrow to the right of the alias you want to remove **2**. Click Delete **3**, then click beside 'Yes, I want to delete this alias' when prompted, followed by Delete.

STEP 6 If you sign up for Relay Premium (you can upgrade via the banner on the Relay dashboard), you can create your own memorable domain. This is the part of your alias that appears immediately after the @. We've selected 'nik', so our domain will be '@nik.mozmail.com', and we can create anything we want before @. So, if we were adding our email address to a petition, we might use **petition@nik.mozmail.com**, and it would forward messages received at that address to our actual email address. We could use a separate address (**restaurant@nik.mozmail.com**, perhaps) when booking a table for dinner. Click 'Search' and Firefox Relay will check if your preferred domain is available. If it is, click Register Domain **1**.



STEP 7 You can create random addresses on the dashboard and with the extension, just as you can with the free service, but Relay Premium also lets you make up addresses on the spot. For example, if you're entering a competition to win a year's supply of lattes at your local cafe, give them **coffee@yourdomain.mozmail.com** (replacing 'yourdomain' with whatever appears after the @ in your custom domain). Even though you've not created that address yet, if anyone sends it a message, Firefox Relay will automatically add it to your dashboard **1** and forward the messages it receives to your *real* email address.

Readers' Tips

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Remove 'orphaned' files from Google Drive

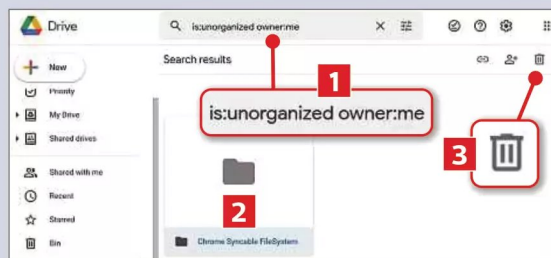
I was nearing the limit of my free Google Drive storage (15GB), and didn't want to pay for any more. I deleted some files, but still had more than 14GB left, so I tried an old trick of deleting 'orphaned' files. These are files that are still stored somewhere but not in the original parent folder. They don't serve any purpose, so it's safe to delete them. I got rid of 3.4GB!

Files can become orphaned when you create a file in a folder that belongs to someone else. That person then deletes the folder, but your file still

exists. To find these files, type **is:unorganized owner:me** into the Google Drive search bar **1** then press Enter.

Next, select a file **2** and either click the bin icon at the top right **3** to delete it, or drag it into a folder on the left to keep it. You can also right-click the file to see these options.

Simply putting the file in the bin won't reclaim space. You have to *empty* the bin



by clicking the icon at the bottom left, then 'Empty bin' followed by 'Delete forever'.

Brian English

Brian wins a copy of our 2020 Back Issue CD

Buy it on Amazon www.snipca.com/38164



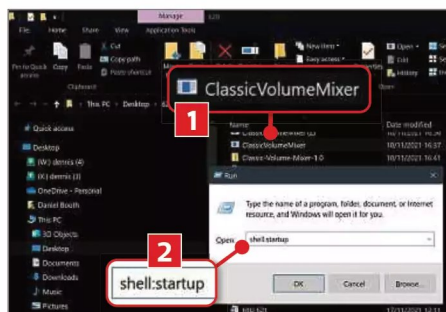
SOFTWARE

Make Classic Volume Mixer launch when you start Windows

✓ Thanks for recommending Classic Volume Mixer (CVM) in Issue 620 (page 46). I've upgraded to Windows 11 and I like it, but I also appreciate the ability to recreate aspects of Windows 10, such as the volume controls. One flaw in CVM is that by default it doesn't start automatically when you launch Windows 11, so you have to select it every time. I've overridden this so it *does* appear when you boot.

To do this, find the ClassicVolumeMixer.exe file (**1** in screenshot right) that you downloaded (from www.snipca.com

com40071), then right-click it and select Copy. Now press Windows key+R to open the Run box, then type **shell:startup** **2** and press Enter. Right-click in the new File Explorer window and select Paste to place CVM's file inside. Now Windows



10's volume controls will always appear when you start up Windows 11.

Colin Petts

APPS

Create public links for WhatsApp groups

✓ As an organiser for several local charities, I'm responsible for keeping our WhatsApp groups ticking over. Members come and go all the time, so rather than inviting each person individually, I create a link they can click to join. It's quite straightforward. Just click the group name at the top to bring up the Group Info page, then scroll down to 'Invite to Group via Link' (see screenshot above right). Tap this and

Why I stopped using...

Greenshot

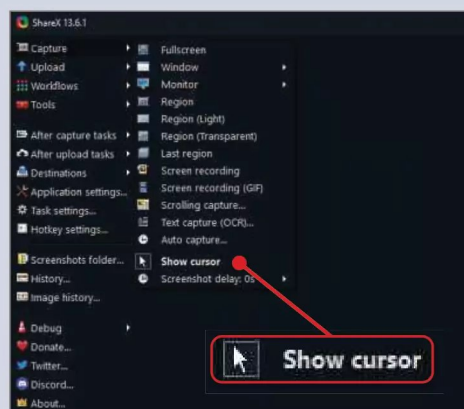
✓ My friend introduced me to a new phrase the other day: 'zombie apps'. These are tools that haven't been updated for ages. This prompted me to check my programs, and I noticed that Greenshot (<https://getgreenshot.org>) hasn't been updated since August 2017.

And what I use instead...

I have no complaints with Greenshot – it's still a good tool for taking screenshots – but four years is a long time between updates. I decided to

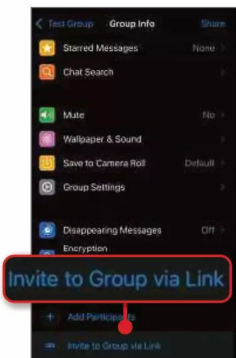
look for an alternative tool that hasn't been abandoned, and came across ShareX (<https://getsharex.com>).

Its latest release was in September, so I was happy with that. What really impressed me, however, is how many more features it has than Greenshot. It almost resembles an image editor, with options to blur, crop and highlight. You can also choose to show or hide the mouse cursor (see screenshot).



James Ravens

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



you're given four sharing options: share a link by email or message; copy a link to paste somewhere; create a link as a QR code; or reset the link – which means it becomes invalid. My preference is to copy the link and

send it by email, because it feels more private that way.

Joyce Blackwell

EMAIL

Buy a domain name and subscribe to email

✓ In Issue 617's Letters, Nigel Ogilvie asks whether he'll lose his Virgin email address if he switches to another broadband provider. The answer is probably yes. I was in this position with Virgin many years ago when I switched to BT. I knew I would have the same problem again if I later switched from BT, so to get around it I bought a .co.uk domain name from 1&1 (now called IONOS www.ionos.co.uk), which currently costs £12 per year. I then signed up for its basic email service, which gave me five email addresses for less than £10 per year.

The email service is web-based (like Gmail and others), but I can also access my messages using the Thunderbird email program on my PC and the BlueMail app (<https://bluemail.me>) on my phone. Yes, it was a hassle setting up and changing login details, but you only need to do it once. After that it doesn't matter who provides your broadband. Of course, if you don't want to pay you can use Gmail or another free email service.

Steve Guard

WEBSITE

Convert MP4 files to MP3

✓ I thought I should share one of my favourite secret websites: www.mp4tomp3pro.com. The name says it all.



Reader recommends...

Eizo FlexScan EV2360

£250 from www.snipca.com/39699

✓ It didn't win your 'PC monitors under £250' Group Test (Issue 618, pages 24-25), but the Eizo FlexScan EV2360 has proved to be an excellent monitor for me since I bought it last summer.

My needs were very specific – a smallish monitor (to fit into my poky third bedroom) but with enough pixels to make photo and video editing tolerable. It's only 22.5 inches across, so it doesn't dominate my desk, but it doesn't sacrifice resolution either. As you say in your review, it "packs in the pixels" with a resolution of 1920x1200. That's more than the Iiyama ProLite monitor (www.snipca.com/39701), which won your 'Buy It!' award – and that screen is over an inch bigger.

When I bought the monitor it cost



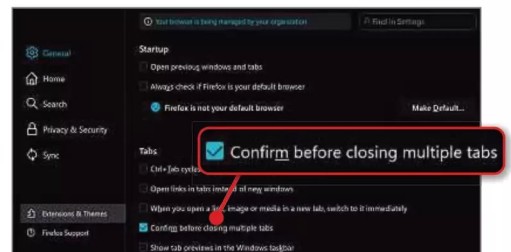
around £230. I now notice the price has increased to £249.88, which would almost have disqualified it from your Group Test. Still, even at that price it's good value.

Alex Morden

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

Just drag and drop an MP4 file into its central box (see screenshot below left) and it will strip out the video and convert it into an audio-only MP3 file. It's incredibly simple, requiring two clicks: one to convert the file and another to download it. I use it all the time to turn videos of concerts into music only.

Russell Statham



find this warning an irritation, but it's useful for me.

Jonathan Armstrong

BROWSERS

Get warned when closing multiple Firefox tabs

✓ I love Firefox 94, especially the new coloured themes (see Issue 619, page 43). But I've noticed that it no longer warns you automatically when you're about to close the browser with multiple tabs open. I'm a serial tab-opener, and I've been caught out a few times already when I've accidentally clicked the cross in the top-right, which closes Firefox.

I was sure this option must still exist, and I eventually found it in Settings. Click the top-right menu button (three horizontal lines), then Settings, and under the Tabs heading tick 'Confirm before closing multiple tabs' (see screenshot above right). You'll now see a warning telling you how many tabs you're about to close. I'm sure many people

EXTENSIONS

Master shortcuts when recording screen videos

✓ I've been getting to grips with Screencastify (www.screencastify.com) since you recommended it in Issue 619 (page 43). I agree it's a great screen-recording tool, and I find the keyboard shortcuts especially useful. I like to take full-screen videos, so the first shortcut I mastered was Alt+T, which hides the toolbar. Also handy is Alt+C, which adds a little red circle to your mouse clicks. You'll find more shortcuts if you right-click Screencastify's icon to the right of your browser bar, then choose Options and scroll down to the Keyboard Shortcuts section.

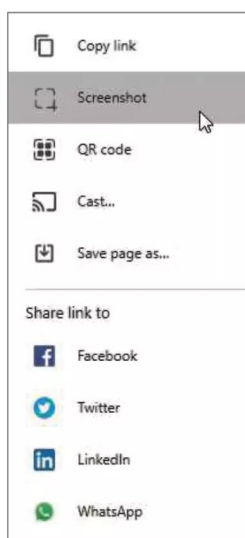
Keith Allison

Browser Tips

CHROME Capture screenshots without an extension

Until recently, if you wanted to take a screenshot of a web page in Chrome, you had to use an extension such as Nimbus Capture (www.snipca.com/40113). This made the browser feel rather old-fashioned compared with Edge and Vivaldi, which offer built-in screen-capture tools. Chrome 96, which was released last month, introduced the option to take screenshots without an extension, but – like many of the browser's most useful new features – it's currently tucked away on its Experiments page.

To activate the new Screenshot function, type `chrome:flags` into

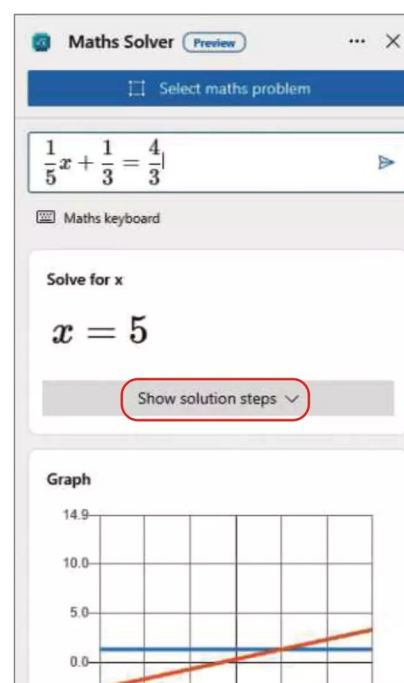


Chrome's address bar and press Enter. Search for the entry **Desktop Screenshots** and select Enabled in the dropdown menu next to it. Do the same for **Desktop Sharing Hub in Omnibox**, then relaunch the browser.

You'll now see a new 'Share this page' icon in the address bar – this looks like a right-pointing arrow in a box. When you want to take a screenshot of a web page, click this icon and choose Screenshot from the menu that opens (see screenshot left). Drag your mouse over the area you want to capture and the screenshot will be

copied to your clipboard. Click Download (see screenshot below left) in the preview that appears in Chrome's top-right corner to save the image to your Downloads folder in PNG format.

When the Screenshot feature is officially available in a future version of Chrome, it will let you edit your captured images directly in the browser. The tool will also appear in Chrome's new integrated Share menu – see our Workshop below to find out how to try this experiment.



since we left school, but a new feature in Edge could still prove useful if you encounter a tricky equation online – or if you need help with your maths homework. It's called Maths Solver (note the extra 's' for UK users), and you can access it by clicking Edge's three-dot menu button and choosing 'More tools', then Maths Solver.

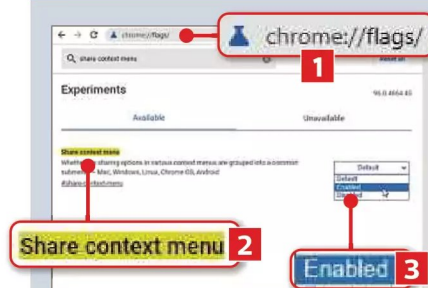
When you need to solve an equation or other maths problem on a web page or in an online document, open Maths Solver and click the 'Select maths problem' button. A box appears, which you then



EDGE Solve maths problems in Edge

Thankfully, most of us haven't needed to worry about algebra, trigonometry or advanced arithmetic

WORKSHOP Get all Chrome's sharing options in one menu



1 If you want to combine all Chrome's options for sharing web content into one menu, first open the Experiments page by typing `chrome:flags` into Chrome's address bar **1** and pressing Enter. Find the **Share context menu** **2** option and select Enabled in its dropdown menu **3**.



2 Relaunch the browser and right-click a web page. You'll see a new Share option in the context menu **1**. Move your cursor over this to open a side menu of further options, including 'Create QR code for this page', 'Send to your devices' and a selection of social-media sites **2**.



3 Choose 'Send to your devices' to share the web page with your phone or tablet. Select a device **1** to send it a link as a **push notification**. Tapping this will open the page in the Chrome mobile app – provided it's logged into the same Google account as your Chrome desktop browser.

BEST EXTENSION FOR...

Testing your internet speed

Speedtest by Ookla

Chrome

www.snipca.com/40114

When the web starts slowing down, it's useful to know if the problem is with your connection or the sites you're visiting. You can find out using Speedtest by Ookla, which you're probably familiar with through its popular website (www.speedtest.net) and mobile app. Click the extension's toolbar button, then click Go and it will test your download and upload speeds, and ping speed, and provide the results in megabits per second (Mbps) and milliseconds (ms). This will tell you if you're getting the connection speed you're paying your ISP for. Usefully, Speedtest

by Ookla also measures how long the site you're currently viewing takes to load, so you can see if it's particularly slow – look in the Web Speed section at the bottom of the extension window (see screenshot). It's worth running the speed test several times to get an average figure.

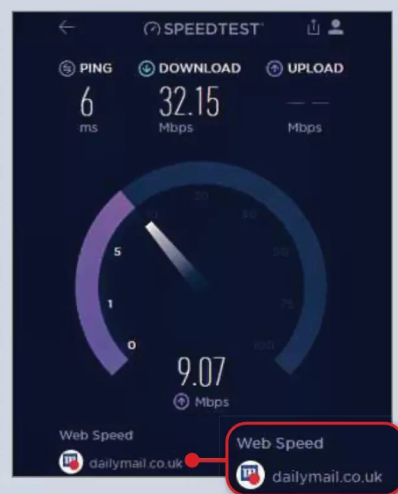
If you don't like that, try...

Internet Speed Tester

Firefox

www.snipca.com/40117

Ookla doesn't offer a Speedtest extension for Firefox, but this alternative is almost as good. It tests your upload and download speeds, and ping speed, as well as 'jitter' – a delay in sending data over your connection.



drag over the equation before clicking Solve. Alternatively, you can click 'Type maths problem' to enter the details manually using an on-screen keyboard.

Edge will display the solution in Maths Solver's sidebar, and you can see how it worked out the answer by clicking 'Show solution steps' (see screenshot above left). It also provides related videos to help you further your mathematical knowledge.

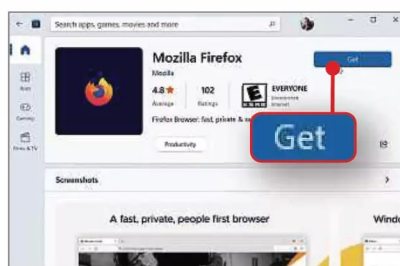
To add a button for this handy feature to the browser's toolbar, open Edge's menu and select Settings, then Appearance. Scroll down to 'Customise toolbar', then switch on 'Maths Solver button'.

FIREFOX

Install Firefox from the Microsoft Store

Back in Issue 617 (page 42), we revealed that the Microsoft Store is now allowing Windows users to install browsers other than Edge. Opera was the first such app, and now you can also download Firefox from the store – it was briefly available in October, but removed when Mozilla discovered some bugs in the app.

Unlike the Opera app, which is limited to Windows 11 users through the redesigned Microsoft Store, Firefox is available for both Windows 10 and 11. To find and install it, either search for **Firefox** in the Microsoft Store app or visit www.snipca.com/40108 in your browser, and click the Get button (see screenshot above right). The app has the same design



and features as the Firefox desktop program, but is easier to uninstall – just right-click its Start menu entry and choose Uninstall. It also means you won't have to use Edge to download the browser when setting up a new Windows PC. Sadly, Microsoft has overshadowed this greater freedom of choice over browser apps by making it harder to set anything but Edge as your default Windows 11 browser. We explain how to beat this restriction in our cover feature on page 50.

VIVALDI

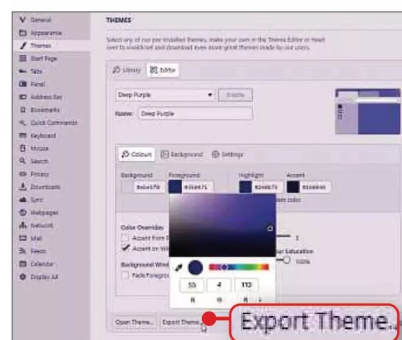
Customise and share your own themes

Vivaldi (<https://vivaldi.com>) has long been the customisable browser and its latest version, 5.0, gives you even more options for tailoring its appearance. You can now import themes designed by other Vivaldi users and export themes you've created yourself. To access these new features, click the Vivaldi menu button in the top-left corner of the browser and choose Settings (or press Ctrl+F12), then click Themes. Select a

theme you'd like to customise, then click New Theme to open the Editor. Here you can tweak the colours of the theme's background, foreground, menus, toolbars and buttons. If you want to apply a background image from your computer, you can choose whether to stretch it to fit the browser, centre it or use it as a repeating pattern. You can also adjust the size and transparency of Vivaldi's scrollbars and Tab Bar, and more.

Give your custom theme a name, then click the Export Theme button to save it as a ZIP file (see screenshot below). You can then share it with friends and family, who can import it into their Vivaldi browser by clicking the Open Theme button. Vivaldi also lets you install themes created by its community – simply click the 'Get more themes' link.

Vivaldi 5.0 also includes a new Translate Panel, which lets you type, highlight or copy and paste text from web pages to translate it into other languages.



Phone and Tablet Tips

ANDROID

Control your smart TV with your phone

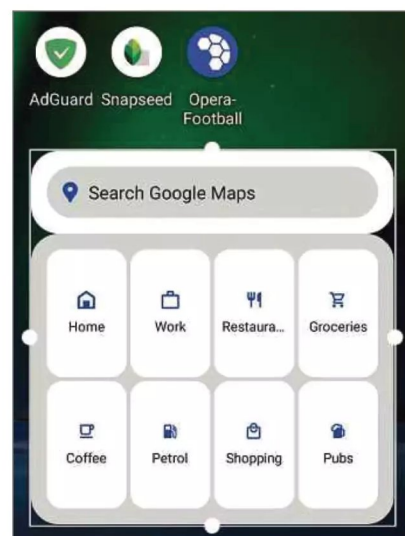
The latest update to Google's Home app for Android (www.snipca.com/40234) lets you use your phone or tablet to control your Android or Google smart TV – including Chromecast with Google TV. This is handy if you lose or break your physical remote, or if you already use the Google Home app to control other smart devices.

To activate the feature, select your smart TV on Google Home's home screen – it's usually called Living Room TV or similar – and tap 'Open remote' in the bottom-left corner. Type the pairing code that appears on your TV screen, then tap Pair to connect the devices.

Unlike virtual remotes for other brands of smart TV and streaming stick, the Google Home remote doesn't have a button-based directional pad (D-pad). Instead, you swipe to move a circle around your phone or tablet's screen to

navigate what's on your telly (see screenshot 1 below left). We found this rather fiddly, though the app includes home and power buttons, a keyboard for searching for content, and the option to use Google Assistant to control your TV with your voice.

In related news, you can now install apps from the Google Play Store directly from your mobile device to your Android or Google TV. Open the Play Store app on your phone or tablet, find a compatible app and either tap the arrow on the Install button (see screenshot 2 below left) or the one next to 'Available on more devices'. Select your TV or Chromecast, then press Install to add the app to that device. Sadly, this won't work for apps that are not available on Google TV, such as the Now TV app.



ANDROID

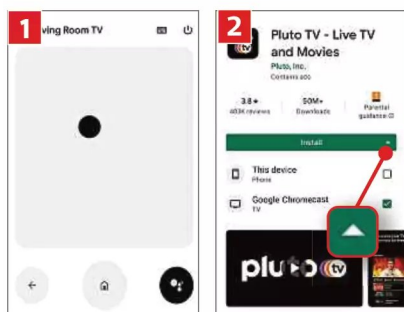
Add a Google Maps widget to your home screen

In Issue 619 (page 44), we wrote about Chrome's new **widgets** for Android, which let you access several of the browser's features from your phone or tablet's home screen. Now Google has created a new widget for Google Maps, so that when you want to find a location or get directions, you can start navigating directly from your home screen rather than having to open the Maps app first.

To get this widget, long-press an empty area of your home screen and choose Widgets, then swipe down to the Maps

section. Ignore the first three widgets (which are pretty useless) and select the one called 'Quick find'. Press and drag this to your screen and you'll see a grid of options including a 'Search Google Maps' box and buttons for your Home and Work locations (if you've saved them), local restaurants, petrol stations, shops and more (see screenshot above). These let you access the corresponding information and directions on Google Maps with a single tap. Press the widget again to resize its borders and display more or fewer buttons.

To delete the Maps widget, simply long-press it and drag it to the Remove option at the top of the screen.



BEST NEW APPS

What you should install this fortnight

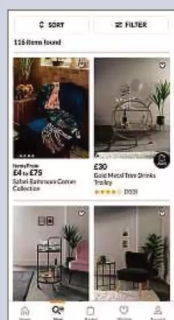
George at Asda

Free

Android www.snipca.com/40217

iOS www.snipca.com/40216

This redesigned app for Asda's clothing and homeware brand makes it easier to



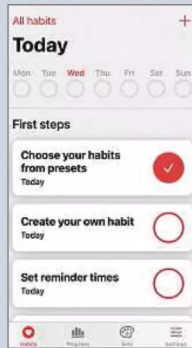
shop using your phone or tablet. Clear categories and smart filters help you find the perfect item with minimal fuss, plus you can search using your voice, share your basket with others and scan barcodes to check stock levels.

Habitses

Free

iOS www.snipca.com/40219

Despite its twee, Gollum-inspired name, Habitses is a fun way to improve your



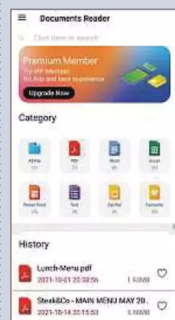
lifestyle in 2022. Set yourself goals such as 'take a walk', 'learn to cook a new dish' and 'learn five foreign words', and the app will help you stick to them using daily reminders, progress charts and cute cartoon creatures that encourage you.

Document Reader

Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40218

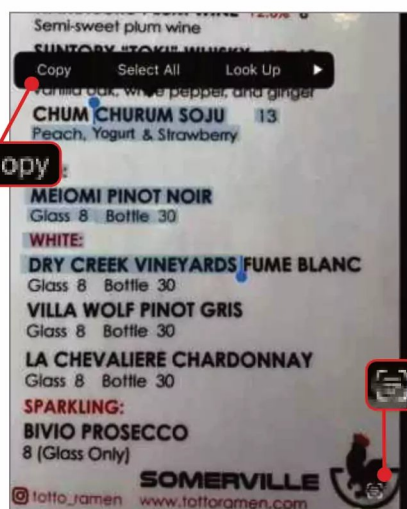
Although it's blighted by ads (the ad-free Premium version costs £5.99), Document Reader is a useful tool for managing



and viewing files in Word, Excel, PDF, ZIP and other formats, and is faster than uploading them to Google Drive. You can search, 'favourite' and share documents, and sort them by name, date or size.

*Contains in-app purchases

Brilliant things to do on your device



iOS Copy and paste text from photos

A handy new feature for iPhone and iPad lets you extract text from images and paste it into other apps. It's called Live Text and was introduced in the iOS and iPadOS 15.1 update, but only for devices that have an A12 Bionic chip or later (which includes most iPhones released since 2018 and newer iPads).

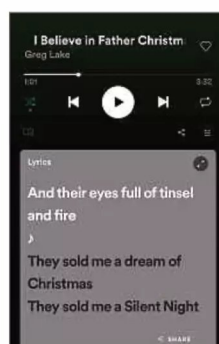
To use Live Text, either open the Camera app and take a photo of an item that contains text, such as a restaurant menu or magazine, or choose an image in the Photos app. Tap the Live Text icon that appears in the bottom-right corner of the picture (see screenshot above) and any detected text will be highlighted. Long-press the text you want to use and select Copy. You can then open another app such as Messages, Mail or Notes, and paste the extracted text there. Alternatively, choose Look Up to find out what a specific word means, or Translate (if available) to convert selected text into English from languages including Chinese, French, Italian, German and Spanish.

Live Text is similar to Google Lens on Android devices, but it doesn't yet offer as many features. If you can't see the option, go to Settings on your iPhone or iPad, select Camera and switch on Live Text.

ANDROID & iOS Sing along with Spotify's Lyrics feature

Spotify has added a new Lyrics feature to its Android and iOS app, just in time for impromptu karaoke

sessions at festive family gatherings. Users of both the free and Premium service can access the feature by swiping up while a song is playing, allowing you to sing along even when you don't know the words. The lyrics, provided by MusixMatch (www.musixmatch.com), are synced so the words are highlighted as they appear in the current track (see screenshot



left). Strangely, there doesn't seem to be a way to disable Lyrics, though we're sure the option will soon be requested by friends of caterwauling Spotify users.

Spotify has also tweaked its app to remove the Shuffle button from albums, reportedly at the request of British singer Adele. However, you can still shuffle songs from the Now Playing view by pressing the icon in the bottom-left corner.

BEST APPS FOR...

Walkie-talkie conversations

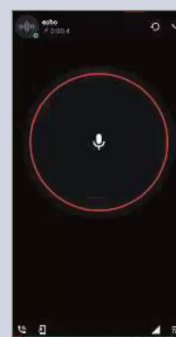
Zello PTT Walkie Talkie Free

Android www.snipca.com/40220

iOS www.snipca.com/40221

When you can't get a good mobile signal, Zello provides a quick and reliable way to talk to friends and family, as long as they also have the app. Press the big button to chat to your contacts over Wi-Fi or any available network. You can also record your conversations for posterity.

Best For Instant free chats with friends and family



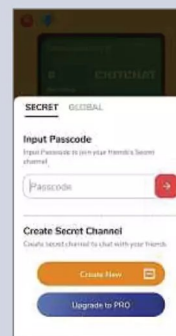
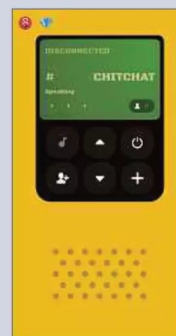
Walkie Talkie Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40222

iOS www.snipca.com/40223

With its colourful retro design, this app offers a fun way to communicate and meet new people. As well as talking to friends, you can browse, listen to and join its global chat channels using the arrow and power icons on the home screen. Walkie Talkie also lets you create secret channels for private chinwags.

Best For Talking to people all over the world

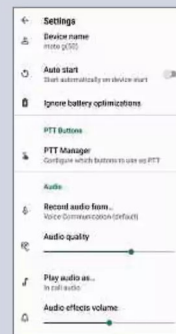


Intercom for Android Free*

Android www.snipca.com/40224

Unlike other walkie-talkie apps, Intercom works over Bluetooth, which means you can chat to people in areas with no internet coverage as long as they're within range. It also works over Wi-Fi. You don't need to register to use the app, and you can set it to detect your voice automatically, which is handy in an emergency.

Best For Chatting without an internet connection

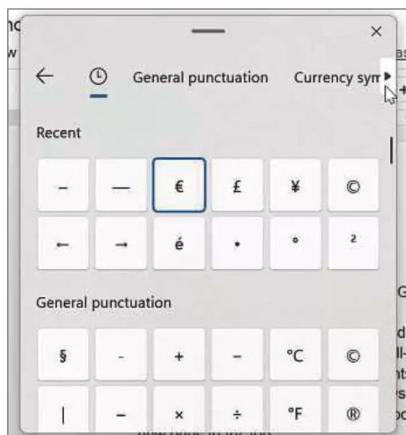


*Contains in-app purchases

WINDOWS 11

Add symbols using revamped clipboard manager

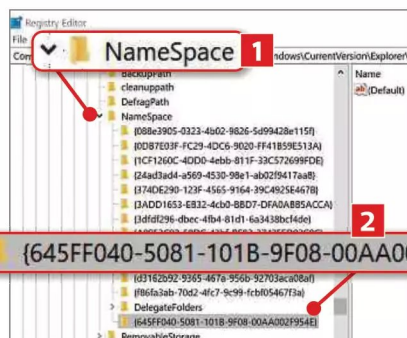
Windows 11's clipboard has added the ability to add symbols to your documents, giving you a wider range than using just your keyboard – including currency, mathematical and geometric characters. To do this, open a document and write text in it. Now press Windows key+V to open the clipboard manager and select the Symbols tab. Click the left and right arrows at the top to choose a symbol category, then select a symbol (see screenshot below) to insert it.



WINDOWS 10

Add Recycle Bin to This PC

You can add the Recycle Bin to the 'This PC' section in File Explorer with a simple registry tweak. Open the Registry Editor by pressing Windows key+R then typing **regedit**. Next, navigate to **HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\MyComputer\NameSpace** (you can copy this from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/40204 and paste it into File Explorer's address bar). Next, right-click NameSpace (1 in our screenshot below), then select New, Key and type



WINDOWS 10 & 11

Install new WhatsApp from Microsoft Store

You've been able to use WhatsApp on Windows computers for quite a while – download it from www.whatsapp.com/download – but it's nowhere near as good as its phone equivalent. It uses up a lot of your computer's resources, meaning it runs slowly if your machine is performing other intensive tasks. Also, when you close the chat window, it stops running, instead of just minimising to the system tray. This means you don't get notifications when messages arrive.

There's now a better alternative in the shape of a UWP (Universal Windows Platform) app, which are tools designed for multiple versions of Windows, as well as Xbox consoles. It's available from the Microsoft Store (www.snipca.com/40197), so will use fewer computer resources than a traditional program. Also, because it's a UWP app it will sync in the background, meaning notifications

To set up WhatsApp Beta on your computer

1. Open WhatsApp on your phone
2. Tap Menu (three dots) or Settings (gear icon) and select Linked
3. Join Multi-Device Beta
4. Tap Link a Device and point your phone to this screen to capture the code



appear even when it's not open. But its standout feature is multi-device support, so you can use it on up to four devices.

It's a great leap forward for using WhatsApp on computers, but there are a couple of caveats. First, it's still a **beta**, albeit a reliable one. Second, after installing it from the Store you'll need to link your phone to it by scanning a **QR code** (see screenshot). You may find at this point that you'll need to update WhatsApp on your phone to link it.

{645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-

00AA002F954E} 2 – copy and paste this from www.snipca.com/40205. Now open This PC within File Explorer and the Recycle Bin should be there.

WINDOWS 10

Download November 2021 Update as ISO file

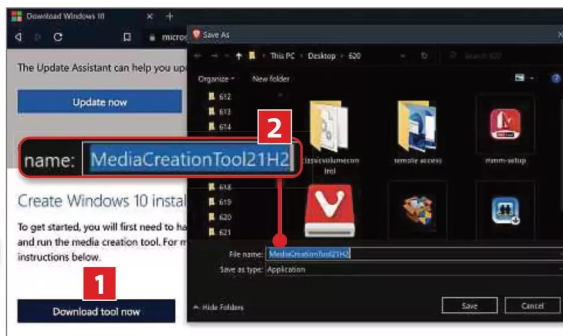
Now that Microsoft has released the November 2021 Update (version 21H2), you should consider creating an **ISO file** of it

for emergencies and **clean installs**.

Visit www.snipca.com/40199 then click 'Download tool now' (1 in our screenshot below) under the heading 'Create Windows 10 installation media', then save the MediaCreationTool21H2 file (2) on your computer. Once downloaded, double-click 'MediaCreationTool21H2.exe' and give it permission to run. Accept the licence agreement, then select 'Create installation media (USB flash drive, DVD, or ISO file) for another PC', and click Next.

Microsoft's Media Creation Tool will

now download (it could take some time). When that's done, select your language, edition and **architecture** (32bit or 64bit) – or use what's already selected if it's correct. Select 'ISO file' in the next box, then choose a save location. When completed, click Finish and your ISO file will be ready.



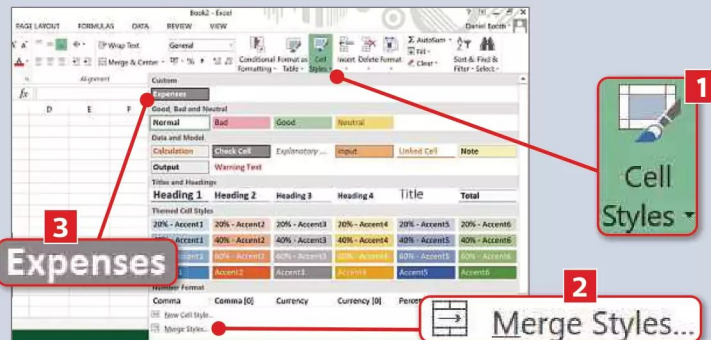
MICROSOFT EXCEL

Apply cell styles across other workbooks

One of Excel's best tools is Cell Styles, which lets you apply a set of formatting rules across a workbook of spreadsheets. You could, for example, apply a yellow 'fill', underlined headings or linked cells. Once saved, you can apply these across your entire workbook. It's also easy to share your chosen style with spreadsheets in another workbook.

First, open the workbook that's using the style you want to share. Click the Home tab, select Cell Styles, then New Cell Style at the bottom. Give this style a name, then click OK ('Expenses' in our example). Keep this first workbook open.

Next, open the workbook you want to add this style to. Click the Home tab



at the top, then the Cell Styles dropdown menu (1 in our screenshot) and select Merge Styles (2 at the bottom). A box will appear asking you which workbook you want to merge styles from. Select your first workbook, then click OK. Staying in

the second workbook, click Cell Styles again and you'll see your style at the top (Expenses 3) under Custom. Hover your cursor over it to see a preview of how it affects your spreadsheet. Simply click it to apply.

LIBREOFFICE IMPRESS & MICROSOFT POWERPOINT

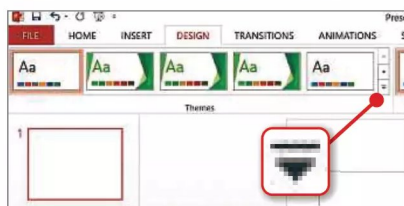
Change the aspect ratio of slides from 16:9 to 4:3



LibreOffice Impress and Microsoft PowerPoint use a default 16:9 aspect ratio for slides in presentations, to match the format of most modern screens. You can change this by creating themes with a 4:3 ratio, which is useful if you're using slides in this older format.

In Impress, click Slide at the top followed by Slide Properties, then select 'Screen 4:3' in the Paper Format dropdown menu and click OK. Next, click File at the top left, followed by Templates, then 'Save as Template'. Type a name in the box that appears, then select a category. Decide whether to tick the 'Set as default template' box, then click Save. This template will be ready to use next time you open Impress.

In PowerPoint, click the Design tab then Slide Size at the right and select 'Standard 4:3'. Now click the bottom right arrow in the Themes section (it has



a horizontal line above it – see screenshot below left), under the Design tab, and select Save Current Theme. Give it a name, and save it on your computer. Now click the bottom-right arrow again in Themes and you'll see the theme you just saved under the Custom heading.

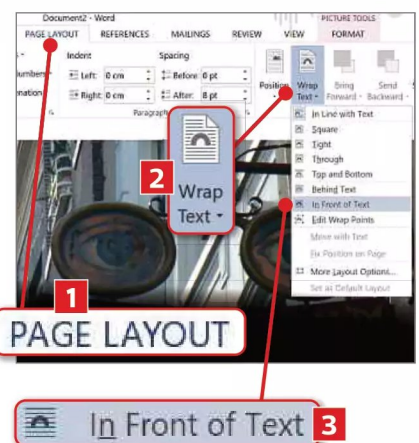
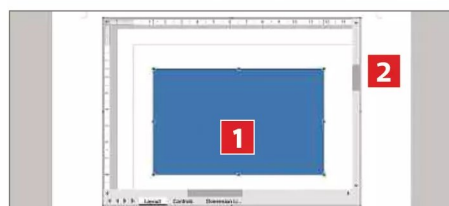
LIBREOFFICE DRAW

Insert pictures into LibreOffice Calc and Writer



One of the most useful features in Draw, LibreOffice's graphics editor, is the ability to open its tools in Calc and Writer, letting you draw objects that can be instantly added into your spreadsheet or document.

To do this, open Calc or Writer, then click Insert, Object, OLE Object, then select LibreOffice Drawing and click OK. This brings up Draw's toolbar, and a frame in which to create your drawing (a rectangle in our screenshot below 1). Once you've finished, click outside the frame but in the document or spreadsheet (2), and your object will be inserted into it.



MICROSOFT WORD

Move images in front of text

By default you can't drag and drop an image into a chunk of text in Word without the text rearranging itself around the image. To change this, add an image to a document then click to select it. Next, open the Page Layout tab at the top (1 in our screenshot above), then click the Wrap Text dropdown arrow (2) and select 'In Front of Text' (3). You'll now be able to place the image directly on to text without altering the text's layout. Note that in some versions of Word you'll need to select the image then right-click it to bring up the Wrap Text options.

In The Club



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

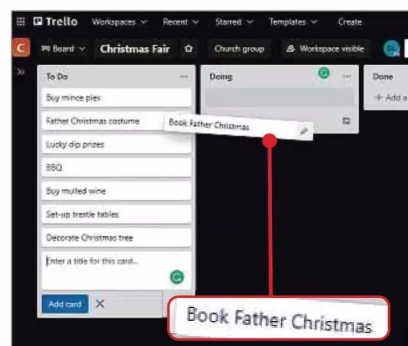
Organise events using Trello boards

When you have big events to organise, it can be difficult to sort out who's doing what and when. That's where Trello (www.trello.com) can help. Although it's technically a collaboration tool to help developers build software, it has a free version that's ideal for clubs. It's based on a workflow process called Kanban that became popular in Japan before spreading to offices around the world. The core idea is that you have 'cards' for individual tasks that you move between lists to show progress. Here we'll show you how Trello can help organise a Christmas Fair by assigning different jobs to volunteers.

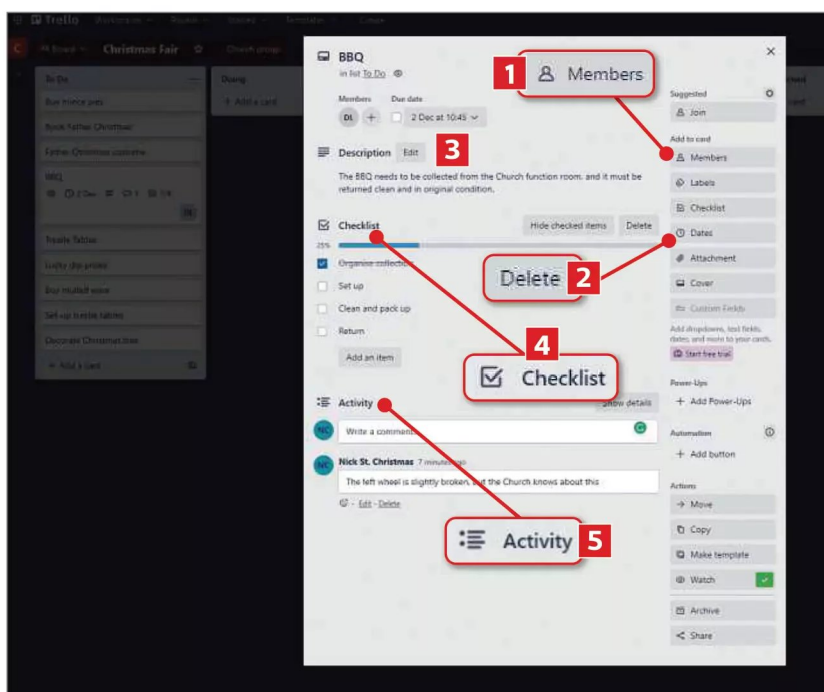
Create a Trello board

First you need to sign up for a free Trello account. When you do this, you'll be prompted to create your first Workspace, which is a collection of Trello boards. Give your Workspace a meaningful name, but skip the part where you're asked to invite people to collaborate – we'll cover that later.

Now it's time to create your first board. This should be centred around a single task – in our example, a Christmas Fair. To create a board, click 'Create your first board', then type a name for it and click 'Create board'. You'll now see the basic board layout containing three default lists (To Do, Doing, Done). Lists are designed to hold 'cards' (or tasks). By moving cards between lists, you can see what's going on and what still needs to be done. The



Click and hold a card ('Book Father Christmas') then drag it to a new list to record progress



Assign a task to volunteers, then give it a deadline and description

default lists suit most projects, but it's easy to change these by clicking the title and typing a new one. You can create extra lists by clicking 'Add another list'.

You can now fill out the list of tasks. Click 'Add a card' under a list, enter the name of the job (Book Father Christmas, for example) then press Enter. In our case, we've created a list of jobs under To Do. You can now see how Trello works: click and hold a card, then you can drag it from one list to another (we're moving 'Book Father Christmas' in our screenshot left).

Assign tasks to members

Trello lets you invite multiple users to collaborate on a board – simply click the Invite button and type their email addresses.

If they have a Trello account already, they'll automatically appear in the list; if not, they'll be sent an email asking them to sign up for a free account. In both cases, once a person that you've invited

logs into Trello, they'll be able to see your board and can take part in it, dragging cards between lists. In this way, people can tell everyone else exactly what they've done.

We'll now explain how to assign a task (called a 'Card') to a specific person. Click Members (1 in our screenshot above) to bring up a list of people you've invited to your board. A card can be given to multiple people, and they will be notified that they've got this job.

Next, set a deadline for the task by clicking Dates (2) and adding a date and time. We can then add some more detailed information. A description (3) lets you explain what needs to be done, while a checklist (4) splits a task into steps you can tick.

Anyone can also add a Comment (listed under Activity (5)), which is a great way to add information that might be useful later. All of this information is summarised on the card when you're in the Main view.

What's All the Fuss About...

Haptic gloves

This technology is so close you can almost touch it

What are they?

Mechanical gloves that can reproduce sensations such as grasping an object or running your hand along a surface. For years they've been touted as a companion to virtual-reality (VR) headsets, making the experience feel more lifelike. No device has yet matched the hype, but that could be about to change.

Why?

Facebook – or Meta, as it's now known – has unveiled its own prototype glove (pictured right). It has 15 ridged, inflatable motorised pads, known as actuators, that fit along the wearer's palm, the underside of their fingers and their fingertips. These inflate and stiffen to recreate the sensation of touching real objects.

What kind of sensations are we talking about?

Running your finger down a plate is one example.

Er – anything more exciting than that?

We're sure there will be in the future – particularly in the world of gaming – but it's still early days for the technology. The plate 'experience' comes from Michael Abrash, head of Meta's Reality Labs, which has spent the past seven years secretly working on the glove. He said: "I saw the plate, and I saw my finger on the plate, and I heard the sound – that kind of scraping sound across it – and I felt the vibration".



Thankfully, Meta predicts more interesting uses for haptic gloves, such as holding virtual puzzle pieces and "snapping" them into place, as well as typing on a virtual keyboard that shapes itself to fit your hands and the space available. You can watch other examples on the 'Tech@Facebook' site (www.snipca.com/40211), including a game of Jenga (pictured below left). It's all part of what Meta boss Mark Zuckerberg sees as the new era of the internet.

Let me guess – the metaverse?

You've got it. He regards haptic gloves as part of the virtual experience created by wearing an Oculus Quest headset (which Meta makes) and augmented reality glasses. In his vision of the future, haptic gloves will allow our avatars to 'shake' hands at the start of virtual meetings.

Aren't there already haptic gloves?

Yes, but those are specialised products for military, industrial or academic uses. Meta has the resources to mass-produce

gloves for everyday use. It predicts that haptic gloves will be the biggest change to how we interact with the "digital world" since the mouse. However, the current limitations of the technology have been illustrated by a different animal: the dog.

How so?

You can't yet pat a dog. Or rather, you can, but you won't feel the richness of its texture. To fix this, Meta will have to add thousands of actuators to the gloves. "It seems likely to me that if the haptic gloves work out, you'll be able to pet a dog, but it will be a virtual dog and it will be a slightly different experience," says Abrash. "But basically – emotionally, experientially – it will feel as real."

Will the gloves fit any size of hand?

That's another problem Meta will have to overcome. The gloves must fit perfectly against the wearer's skin, which could mean designing bespoke versions for each person. They'll also need to be more comfortable than the current prototypes, which are large, heavy and covered in wires. Until Meta can solve these problems, you'll just have to make do with patting *real* dogs.



If the haptic glove fits, why not play virtual Jenga?

HACK WINDOWS IN 2022



Whether you use Windows 10 or 11, there's always room for improvement. **Robert Irvine** picks the best new system-tweaking programs to get your PC working exactly the way you want

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Get a Windows 7-style Start menu in Windows 10 and 11
- Add tabs to File Explorer to switch between multiple folders
- Open web links in your preferred browser rather than Edge
- Upgrade the Run command tool with lots of extra features
- Stop background processes consuming system resources
- Search the registry faster and back it up in one click
- Customise Windows folders with different colours and icons

Windows 11 is neither a radical redesign of Windows 10 nor an incremental update. Yes, it looks different, but not in a way that's intimidating. The biggest changes involve familiar Windows tools being tweaked and moved around. Microsoft will claim these changes make the operating system easier to use, but you may not welcome all of these 'improvements', even if you like Windows 11's more modern appearance.

Thankfully, there are plenty of third-party programs that let you customise Windows so that it works the way you want – whether you've upgraded to Windows 11 and would prefer it to behave more like its predecessor, or you'd like to add useful

options to Windows 10.

In this feature, we reveal the best new and updated tools for customising both operating systems in 2022, so you can make your PC satisfy your needs rather than Microsoft's assumptions. We start with a round-up of tools (free and paid-for) that can replace your Start menu.

Note that because some of the programs we recommend will tweak your system settings and are created by independent developers, you may see a security warning from Microsoft Defender's SmartScreen. Fear not, we've thoroughly tested all the programs for malware and they're all completely safe to use, so just click 'More info', then 'Run anyway' to bypass the warning.



RESTORE THE CLASSIC START MENU

The Start menu is arguably the most important feature in Windows, but it's also the one that Microsoft likes to tamper with most. This infamously led to the company scrapping the traditional menu in Windows 8 in favour of a tile-based 'Start screen' – a decision it backtracked on in Windows 8.1. For many of us, the Start menu achieved perfection in Windows 7, and Windows 10's attempt to combine that version's list-based design with the 'Metro' tiles of Windows 8 has never quite satisfied.

Windows 11 presents an even bigger shock, by moving the Start button from its usual home in the bottom-left corner of your screen to near the centre of the taskbar, and replacing the menu with a grid of 'pinned' apps. Clicking the 'All apps' option in the top-right corner opens a more familiar Start menu list, but this still requires an extra click to access your programs.

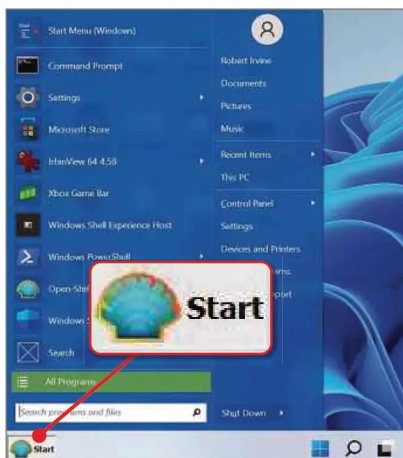
Thankfully, there are several third-party tools that let you replace the Start menu in Windows 10 and 11 with a 'classic' design. Here are our three favourite new and updated programs.

Open-Shell

Free from www.snipca.com/40131

Unlike similar tools that let you tweak your Start menu, Open-Shell is **open source** and free to use. Formerly called Classic Shell, it lacks some of the features of paid-for alternatives (see the next two programs), but is great for getting a traditional Start menu in Windows 10 and 11.

When you install Open-Shell in Windows 10, it will automatically change



Open-Shell restores a classic Windows 7-style Start menu to Windows 10 and 11

your Start menu to a classic, compact list, which gives you easy access to your programs, recent items, Windows settings, shutdown options and more. However, you don't need to stick with the default blue design: right-click the Start button and choose Settings to view Open-Shell's customisation options. These include a choice of **skins** (themes such as Metallic, Midnight and Windows Aero) and Start menu styles (including Windows 7 – see screenshot below left).

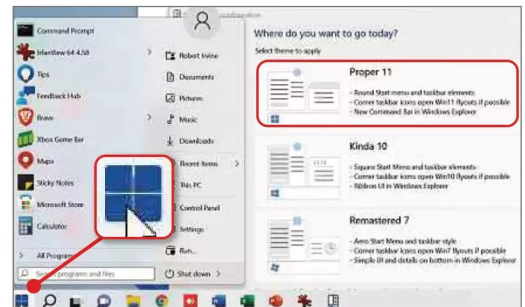
In Windows 11, Open-Shell doesn't replace the new Start option but lets you open a classic Start menu from its 'proper' place in the bottom-left corner of your desktop. To unlock this feature, click the Start Menu Style tab in the program's Settings, select 'Replace Start button' and choose your preferred button design. You can then launch your menu by clicking Open-Shell's Start button (as our screenshot shows) or pressing the Windows key, and just ignore Windows 11's Start icon.

StartAllBack

£4.99 from www.startallback.com

StartAllBack is more sophisticated than Open-Shell, and specifically designed to work with Windows 11 – its Windows 10 version is called StartIsBack (get it from www.startisback.com). Both of its editions require you to buy a £4.99 licence after a 30-day free trial, though you can upgrade from StartIsBack to StartAllBack for £1.50.

Unlike Open-Shell, the program replaces both the Windows 11 Start menu and the taskbar with classic designs, and moves taskbar icons to the left of your screen, so that the Start button appears in its usual position. Although StartAllBack



StartAllBack combines a traditional Start menu with Windows 11's fresh appearance

applies a Windows 7-style layout to your Start menu, including a search box, you can choose its 'Proper 11' theme (see screenshot above) to retain the rounded corners and colour scheme of the new operating system. We also like that you can customise the Start button to show the logo of your preferred Windows version (we've kept it as Windows 11 in our screenshot).

In Windows 10, StartIsBack provides an even closer recreation of the Windows 7 experience, so is worth a look if you still miss the old OS – and have a fiver to spare.

Start11

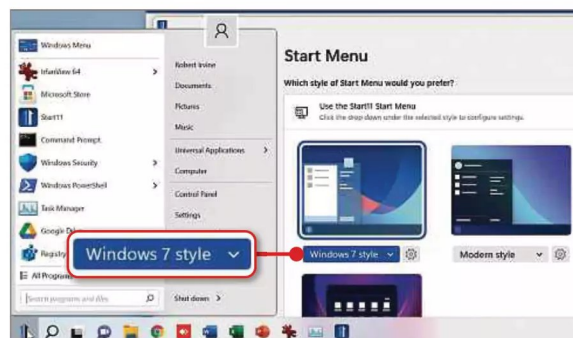
£5.99 from www.snipca.com/40134

Stardock's Start11 costs a quid more than StartAllBack, but has the advantage of working with both Windows 10 and 11 – you may be able to upgrade from the previous version (Start10) for a discounted price. It offers a 30-day free trial, but annoyingly you need to provide and verify your email address to activate this.

When you launch the program, you can choose between Windows 7, 10 and Modern Start menu styles, and compact and grid layouts. Our favourite is the Windows 7 theme (see screenshot below left), because it includes a search box in the menu. Start11 also lets you decide the size and position of the taskbar, and

whether its icons – including the Start button – are centred or aligned left. If you opt for the latter, you can use a custom design for the button, though strangely not the Windows logo.

Start11 lets you choose between Windows 7 and 10-style Start menus instead of 11



ADD TABS TO FILE EXPLORER

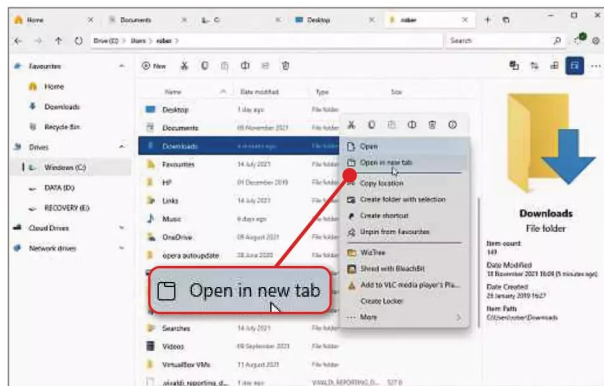
File Explorer, or Windows Explorer as it was once called, has been needlessly streamlined in Windows 11. By removing the ribbon toolbar, Microsoft was clearly trying to make File Explorer easier to use, but we think it's achieved the opposite effect, forcing you to hunt for options that were once just a click away. Worst of all, File Explorer still doesn't include tabs for switching between multiple folders – a long-awaited feature we assumed would finally arrive with Windows 11.

Happily, there are ways to get a better File Explorer in both Windows 10 and 11. Our favourite is a new app called **Files**, which you can download from the Microsoft Store (www.snipca.com/40139).

This excellent free tool provides tabbed browsing – just right-click a folder and choose 'Open in new tab' (see screenshot above right) – and a host of other useful features. These include a preview pane that provides much more information than File Explorer; a 'compact overlay'

view that works like a **picture-in-picture** mode; the ability to select multiple files without pressing Ctrl; a **dark mode**; and the option to open files and folders with a single click. You can set Files as your default file manager by clicking its Settings cog and choosing Experimental, then clicking 'Set Files as default file explorer'.

If you'd prefer to use tabs in the official File Explorer, install the free program **QTTTabBar** (www.snipca.com/40140). This lets you open File Explorer folders in new tabs by right-clicking them and choosing 'Open in New Tab', and it's just released a **beta** version that works with Windows 11.



Files is a brilliant alternative to File Explorer that includes tabbed browsing and more

To use tabbed browsing in Windows 10, you'll first need to click the View tab in File Explorer and select QTTTabBar from the Options dropdown menu. Windows 11 removes this menu, but you can turn on the feature by running the 'QTTTabBarEnabler.exe' file that's included in the beta download, then clicking Save.

TWEAK THE WINDOWS TASKBAR

The taskbar provides the bedrock of all versions of Windows, giving you instant access to your favourite programs, open windows, system tools and information. Because it's something you use every day, it's worth tweaking the taskbar to make it look and work exactly the way you want – regardless of Microsoft's restrictions and whether you're running Windows 10 or 11. StartIsBack/StartAllBack and Start 10/11 (see page 51) provide options for customising the taskbar, but there are other tools that focus exclusively on that task and won't cost you a thing.

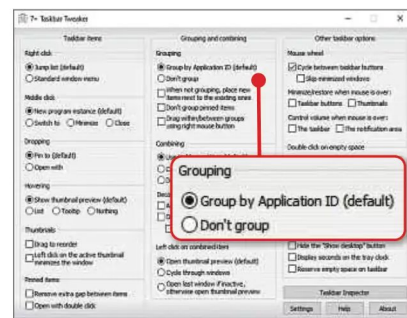
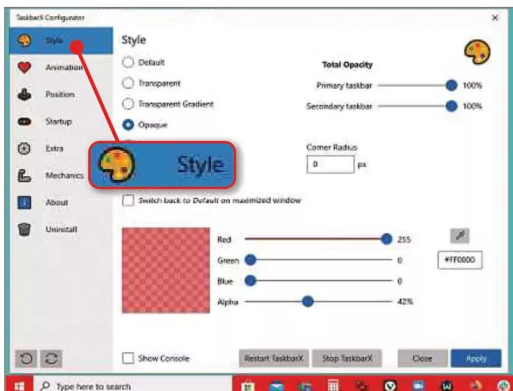
One of the best is **TaskbarX**, which lets

you change the style and colour of the taskbar, to make it transparent, bright red, pitch black or whatever suits your taste (see screenshot below left).

You can also alter the position of taskbar icons, either by nudging them left or right, or by centring them. This doesn't affect the Start button, which remains where it should be in the bottom-left corner of your screen – something Microsoft should have considered in Windows 11. The latest version of TaskbarX is free to download from www.snipca.com/40143 (we recommend the portable version) and as an app from the Microsoft Store, though this costs £1.19.

To use TaskbarX in Windows 11, you'll first need to get back the Windows 10 taskbar in the new operating system. You can do this using **Explorer Patcher** (www.snipca.com/40144), a free tool recommended by TaskbarX's developer. Download and run the setup file and it will instantly switch Windows 11's taskbar to its Windows 10

Use TaskbarX to change the colour and transparency of your taskbar



Get more control over how your taskbar buttons work using 7+ Taskbar Tweaker

layout. Uninstall the program to change back.

To customise the way the taskbar behaves, install the brilliant free program **7+ Taskbar Tweaker** (www.snipca.com/40145). This lets you configure how taskbar buttons are grouped (see screenshot above), what happens when you click or hover your cursor over them, and the information they display. You can also cycle through taskbar buttons using your mouse wheel and open specific tools such as Task Manager when you double-click an empty space on the bar. Again, the tool requires Explorer Patcher in Windows 11 to revert the taskbar to its Windows 10 form.

CHANGE YOUR WINDOWS BROWSER

The Chromium-based version of Microsoft Edge is a very good browser (especially compared with its predecessor Internet Explorer), but with so many other options to choose from – including Chrome, Firefox, Brave, Vivaldi and Opera – not everyone wants to use it. In Windows 10, it's relatively easy to change your default browser to something other than Edge. Simply go to Settings, choose Apps, click 'Default apps' and select your preferred browser in the 'Web browser' list. Alternatively, you can access that setting by clicking the 'Make default browser' button in the new browser.

Windows 11 makes switching to another browser much more difficult because it removes the 'Web browser' option from 'Default apps'. This means you need to manually set your desired browser as the default for all the different file and link types you want it to open, including **HTML**, **HTTPS** and PDF, by selecting 'Choose defaults by link type' and 'Choose defaults by file type' at the bottom of the 'Default apps' screen.

As we explained in our Browser Tips section in Issue 617 (page 42), Firefox and Brave quickly found workarounds for this problem, while a tool called EdgeDeflector (www.snipca.com/40189) lets you open Windows 11 search results and **widgets** in the browser of your choice. Annoyingly, Microsoft has now blocked these fixes and once you install the latest Windows 11 update (KB5007262), you'll be stuck with Edge as the default for opening web links.

Unless, that is, you install a new program called **MSEdgeRedirect** (www.snipca.com/40151), which has sprung up to replace EdgeDeflector and beat Microsoft's restriction. It works by redirecting commands in Edge processes to your default browser, so that search results and widget content are displayed there



MSEdgeRedirect opens links in your preferred browser rather than Edge in Windows 11

instead. Download the latest stable release and MSEdgeRedirect will run silently in the background to bypass Edge in Windows 11. It also stops the browser opening search results and Microsoft support pages in Windows 10. Right-click the tool's system-tray icon and choose Start With Windows (see screenshot), to save you having to enable it manually when you start your PC.

REPLACE THE RUN COMMAND TOOL

The Run command tool, which you access by pressing Windows key+R or right-clicking the Start button, has been around since Windows 95 and hasn't changed significantly since then. It lets you open programs, system tools, websites, files and folders, but it's very basic and slow, and there's a sense that Microsoft only keeps the tool in Windows for old time's sake.

In fact, the company now has a far superior version of Run, aimed at 'power users', which offers a lot more features and is much faster. It's called **PowerToys Run** and is available for Windows 10 and 11 through the fantastic free system-tool suite PowerToys.

To use this, download the latest version of PowerToys from www.snipca.com/40152 (choose the '.exe' file under the Assets heading), then open the program, click PowerToys Run and ensure that Enable PowerToys Run is switched on (see screenshot). Press Alt+Space to open the search box, which scans your computer and displays instant results for any search term you enter, as you type it.

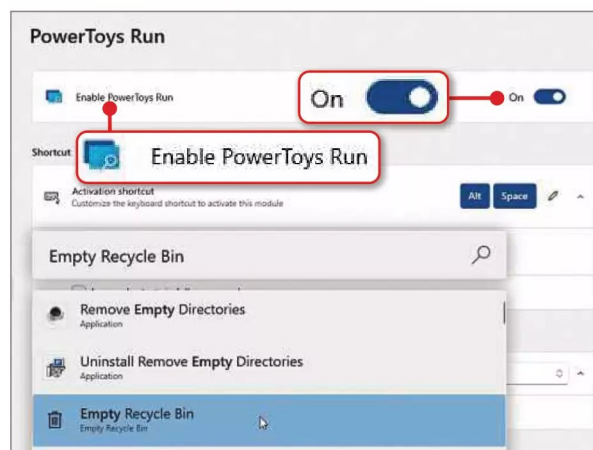
Following a recent update, it now recognises plain English – for example, you can start typing **System Configuration**,

rather than needing to know the 'msconfig' command (though that also works), as you do in the standard Run tool. PowerToys Run also offers the handy option to run programs as an administrator – simply click the first icon next to the search result.

Extra features can be unlocked by enabling specific **plug-ins** in PowerToys. These include Calculator – type **=** followed by a sum into the search box for an instant answer; and Unit Converter – type **&&** then a query such as '80kg in

stone'. You can also type commands to **shutdown**, **restart**, **lock** and **sign out** of your PC, and even **empty recycle bin** (see screenshot).

PowerToys Run's settings let you specify the maximum number of search results displayed and activate its dark mode. If you want it to fully replace the Windows Run tool, click the pencil icon next to 'Activation shortcut', press Windows key+R then click Save. Find out more about this superb free tool at www.snipca.com/40153.



PowerToys Run is a faster and superior alternative to the standard Windows Run tool, and recognises commands such as 'empty recycle bin'

READER OFFER!



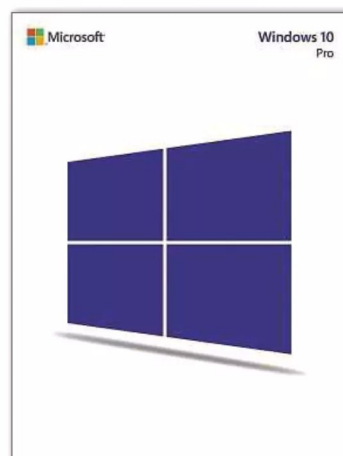
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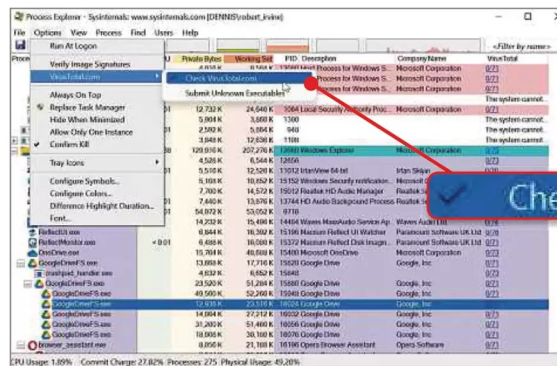


UPGRADE WINDOWS TASK MANAGER

Task Manager hasn't changed much in appearance between Windows 10 and 11, but Microsoft no longer lets you launch it by right-clicking the taskbar. Instead, you need to right-click the Start button and choose Task Manager, or press Ctrl+Shift+Esc. Windows 11 does introduce an interesting new Task Manager feature called 'Eco mode', which stops background processes hogging your PC's CPU, memory and power, but this hasn't yet been added to stable builds of the operating system.

In the meantime, you can get a similar feature from **Process Explorer**, Microsoft's alternative Task Manager for power users, which you can either download from www.snipca.com/40173 or as part of the Sysinternals Suite (www.snipca.com/40201 – see our feature in Issue 614, page 62). What the program lacks in looks (its interface is rather cramped and confusing, though it looks better in Windows 11, as our screenshot shows), it makes up for in useful options for managing and viewing detailed information about PC processes.

To use its 'Eco mode' equivalent, right-click an entry in its Process list and choose Suspend or select Idle or



Use Process Explorer as an advanced alternative to Task Manager and check for malicious processes

Background from its Set Priority menu. This will free up system resources from that process, which you can later restore by choosing Resume in the right-click menu or setting its priority to Normal.

Another handy feature you won't find in Task Manager is the ability to check if an unknown process is malicious using the malware-analysis service VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com).

Open Process Explorer's Options menu and in the VirusTotal.com submenu select Check VirusTotal.com (see screenshot). Click 'Yes' to agree to the terms of service and a new VirusTotal column will be added to Process Explorer.

This shows you how many antivirus programs classify the process as malicious and lets you click the underlined score for a summary of the results.

Process Explorer helpfully colour-codes processes so you can see which are essential system services, third-party tools and new items – click Options, then Configure Colors to learn what all the colours represent.

You can set the program as your default Windows task manager by clicking Options, then Replace Task Manager and choosing Yes to confirm. It will then open when you use one of the usual Task Manager shortcuts mentioned earlier.

REPLACE THE REGISTRY EDITOR

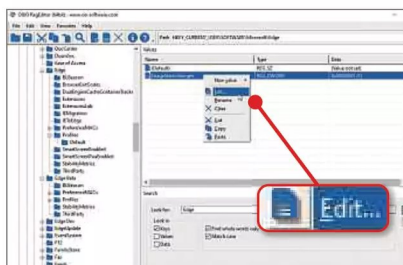
The Windows registry is a massive database of configuration settings for your hardware, software, operating system, preferences, profiles and more, and serves as your PC's nerve centre. We often recommend tweaking the registry to troubleshoot problems and unlock secret features, but what about the Registry Editor itself? This is Windows' own tool for making changes to the registry, which you access by typing **regedit** into the Windows search box. Apart from adding new **registry keys** and values and removing old ones, it barely

changes in appearance from one Windows version to another and has an interface that's so fiddly to use it might as well be labelled 'do not touch'.

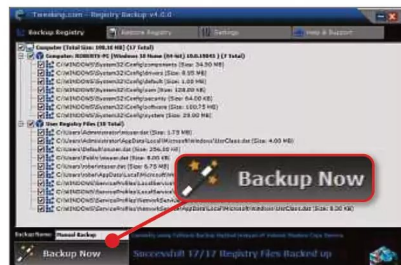
For a simpler and faster way to browse and edit the registry, install **O&O RegEditor** from www.snipca.com/40158. This free program offers the same 'tree branch' structure as the Windows Registry Editor but with a friendlier interface and extra features that make navigating the registry less intimidating. These include the ability to copy, paste, import and export registry keys; save frequently used keys as

'favourites' to make them easy to find; and a proper search tool that lets you explore, edit (see screenshot below far left) and delete results directly (unlike the clunky search box in the standard Registry Editor). O&O RegEditor is portable, so doesn't require installation, but you can set it as your default program for opening '.REG' files via its File menu. It works equally well in Windows 10 and 11, and on **32bit** and **64bit** systems.

Also useful is the free tool **Registry Backup** from Tweaking.com (www.snipca.com/40168), which lets you back up your entire registry before you make changes or in case it gets corrupted – an option Microsoft dropped in Windows 10 in favour of **system restore points**. Simply click the Backup Now button (see screenshot left) to save a copy of your registry (you can specify where you want to save this on the program's Settings tab), then click Restore and select that backup when required. Registry Backup can be run from a USB stick and works in **Safe Mode** in Windows 10 and 11.



O&O RegEditor offers an easier way to navigate, search and edit the Windows registry



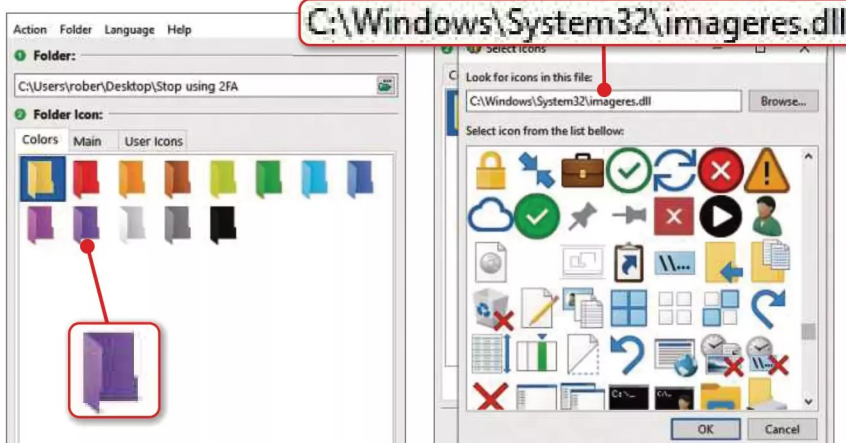
Windows no longer lets you back up the entire registry, so use Registry Backup instead

CUSTOMISE WINDOWS FOLDERS

Windows 11 has redesigned the appearance of folders and other icons but not radically so – they look flatter and have rounded corners rather than square ones. If you really want to hack the design of your folders in Windows 10 or 11, you need to install a third-party customisation tool.

Our favourite is **Folder Marker Free** (www.snipca.com/40175), which lets you change a folder's colour and icon in a few quick clicks. Simply click the Folder button at the top of the program window to choose a folder, then select a colour from the options on the Colors tab (see screenshot right) and click Apply.

Alternatively, click the Main tab to choose an icon that represents the contents of the folder, such as 'High priority', 'Half-done work' or 'Private files', or click the User Icons tab to apply a completely different icon design. This can either be from Windows' own icons collection (located at `C:\Windows\System32\imageres.dll` – see screenshot far right) or a custom icon you've created or downloaded from a site such as Icon Archive (<https://iconarchive.com>). You can also change a folder's appearance by



Folder Marker lets you change an icon's colour (left) and icon (right) in Windows 10 and 11

right-clicking it and selecting an option from the Mark Folder menu.

Folder Marker was recently updated to work with Windows 11, but its free version has limitations, such as a maximum of 12 colours and 10 custom designs, and no support for PNG or JPEG files for folder icons (they must be BMP or ICO). The Pro version (www.snipca.com/40177) costs \$34.95 (£26), after a 30-day free trial, and

offers all the folder-tweaking options you'll ever need.

If you'd prefer not to pay anything, **CustomFolder** (www.snipca.com/40178) is a good free alternative and similarly lets you customise folders with the colours and icons of your choice, with no restrictions. However, it's not as easy to use as Folder Marker. For more on CustomFolder see Issue 612, page 20.

RESTORE DESKTOP WIDGETS TO WINDOWS

When Microsoft announced the new Widgets feature in Windows 11 (www.snipca.com/40182), we imagined it was bringing back Windows 7's 'gadgets', which for security reasons were dropped from the operating system from Windows 8 onwards. These were little floating apps that you could move around your desktop to see the time, the weather, your CPU usage and other useful information.

Instead, Windows 11's widgets are all contained in a pop-up panel that you open from the taskbar or by pressing Windows+W, which is similar to opening a web page. Although the Widgets panel

can be customised to show the content of your choice, and appears above other windows so you don't need to minimise them to view it, the feature lacks the personality and flexibility of classic gadgets.

The good news is that you can revive Windows 7-style widgets using unofficial (but completely safe) free tools, which have been updated to work with Windows 11, as well as Windows 10.

The best is **8GadgetPack** (www.snipca.com/40183), which offers more than 60 widgets including a clock, calendar, currency converter, sticky notes and hard drive, network and power monitors (see screenshot left). Click the plus sign in the top-right corner of its side panel to browse and select the gadgets you want, then drag them to suitable positions on your desktop. You can then resize them, configure their content and design settings, and move (and remove) them as required.

The program also adds a Gadgets entry to your right-click menu, though in Windows 11 you need to click 'Show more options' to see this. To hide your widgets and get a clearer view of your desktop, right-click the sidebar (select the 7



Rainmeter offers a selection of widgets (called 'skins') and lets you install many more

Sidebar gadget if you can't see this) and choose 'Hide all gadgets'.

You can also bring back gadgets using the excellent free desktop-customisation tool **Rainmeter** (www.rainmeter.net). When you install the program, it provides you with a small selection of widgets, which it calls Illustro skins, including a clock, calendar, Google search box and system and network monitors. Right-click a Rainmeter widget and choose 'Manage skin' (see screenshot above) to see all available options. You can find more free skins, created by other Rainmeter users, in its community forums at www.snipca.com/40184.



Use 8GadgetPack to bring back Windows 7-style desktop widgets in Windows 10 and 11



TWEAK HIDDEN WINDOWS SETTINGS

Most of the programs we've recommended in this feature let you hack specific Windows tools, but it's also useful to install a system-wide tweaking program for 2022. This will let you customise how different elements of Windows look and work. Many of our favourite free system-tweaking tools have been updated to support Windows 11, and there are also quite a few new ones you can try.

Winaero Tweaker (www.snipca.com/40190), which was the subject of our Cover Feature in Issue 603 (page 50), has augmented its hundreds of tweaks for Windows 7, 8 and 10 with options for customising Windows 11. These include displaying the full context menu when you right-click a file or folder (see screenshot below); restoring the ribbon to File Explorer (see page 52 for more on this); disabling background apps from the Microsoft Store; and changing the size and location of the taskbar, as well as restoring its classic appearance.

If you're worried about Microsoft spying on you in Windows 10 or 11, **O&O ShutUp10++** (www.snipca.com/40191) is an essential download to protect your privacy, especially because the new operating system may undo tweaks you made in the old one.

O&O has expanded ShutUp10's extensive list of privacy settings with options for preventing tracking and spying in Windows 11. With Microsoft Store apps and the Edge browser now

Why Windows 11 will be faster in 2022

One of the most common complaints about Windows 11 is that revamped tools such as the Start menu and File Explorer are now slower and more resource-intensive than their 'classic' versions. In this feature, we've explained how you can tweak these and other elements to make them work more efficiently, but you'll be relieved to hear that Microsoft has acknowledged the problem and promised to fix it in 2022.

Responding to comments in a recent Reddit AMA (ask me anything) discussion (www.snipca.com/40213), which complained that the Windows 11 user interface is "not just slow, it's also GPU

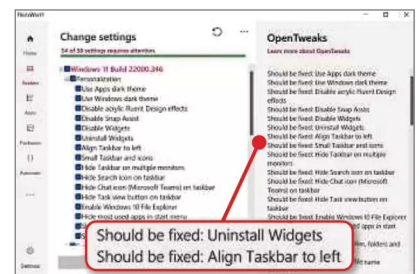
heavy", the Windows Developer team said that: "Performance will be an area of focus for us in 2022... there's multiple things we're collectively doing here to try and make sure we have a good perf [performance] story".

Although Microsoft has yet to confirm the details of these speed improvements, or when they'll be implemented, it has already fixed numerous bugs reported through the Feedback Hub for its Windows Insider Program (www.snipca.com/40214). So if you're finding Windows 11 sluggish, be assured the company is listening, and the new operating system will get faster in the coming year.

being pushed more aggressively, you should pay special attention to those sections that let you disable their access to your personal information and details of your activities (see screenshot below).

Of the new tweaking tools specifically designed for Windows 11, **ThisIsWin11** (www.snipca.com/40193) is the most impressive. Although its developer describes the program as "similar to PowerToys", it's really a way of accessing important options from the Windows 11 Settings app in one place, rather than spread across multiple screens.

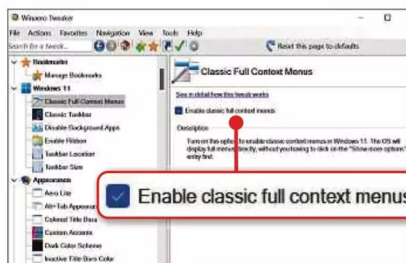
Download, extract and run ThisIsWin11



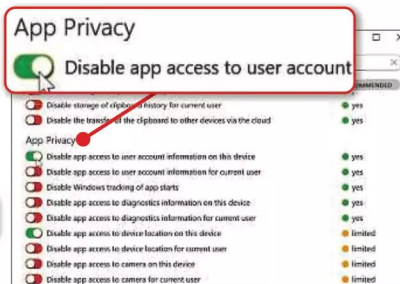
ThisIsWin11 suggests Windows 11 settings that you should tweak

from its GitHub page – click 'TIW11.zip' under Assets – and select System (you can skip the guided tour of Windows 11). Click the Check button for a list of settings you can enable or disable – the tool recommends what 'should be fixed' (see screenshot above). Options include uninstalling Widgets, repositioning the taskbar and restoring the old File Explorer. Click 'Fix issues' to apply them.

ThisIsWin11 also lets you remove unwanted apps installed by Microsoft – click its Apps tab to select and uninstall this bloatware. **ca**



Use Winaero Tweaker to show the full context menu when you right-click



O&O ShutUp10++ stops Microsoft Store apps accessing your personal information

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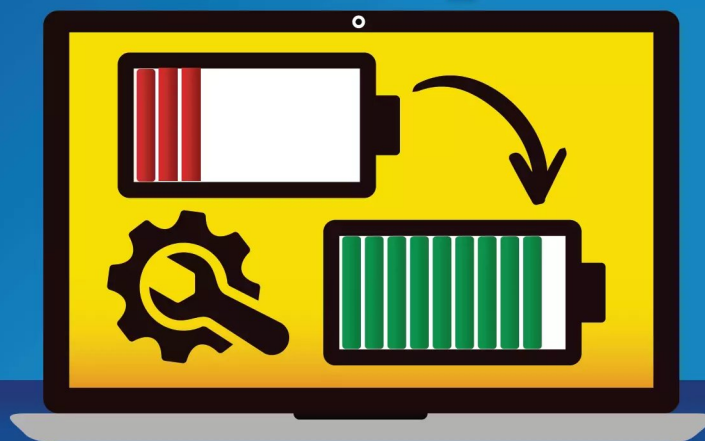
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Replace your old laptop battery

If your laptop isn't lasting as long as it should, it may be time to buy a new battery. **David Ludlow** explains what you need to check and how to fit a replacement



Check your battery health

Before doing anything else, you should make sure it really is your battery that's causing your power drain. It may instead be something like a process running in the background eating into your processor's resources.

Check this by generating a battery report in Command Prompt. Click Windows Start, type **cmd**, then select 'Run as administrator'. In the Command Prompt box type **powercfg /batteryreport /output "C:\battery-health.html"** (1) in our screenshot below – copy and paste this from our Pastebin account at www.snipca.com/40176, then press Enter. You should see the result 'Battery life report saved to file path C:\battery-health.html' (2).

If you see an 'unexpected error' message, you may need to update your operating system via Windows Update. If that doesn't work, type the following into Command Prompt to reset your power

Battery capacity history
Change capacity history of the system's batteries

PERIOD	FULL CHARGE CAPACITY	DESIGN CAPACITY
2019-07-31 - 2019-08-13	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-08-13 - 2019-08-19	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-08-19 - 2019-08-26	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-08-26 - 2019-09-09	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-09-09 - 2019-09-16	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-09-16 - 2019-09-23	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-09-23 - 2019-09-30	51,999 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-10-07 - 2019-10-14	50,054 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-10-14 - 2019-10-21	50,054 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-10-21 - 2019-10-28	50,054 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-10-28 - 2019-11-04	50,054 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-11-04 - 2019-11-11	48,248 mWh	51,999 mWh
2019-11-11 - 2019-11-18	47,000 mWh	51,999 mWh

The battery report shows your battery's original and current capacity

settings: **powercfg -restoredefaultschemes**. Reboot your computer, then try again.

To see your battery report, open File Explorer then click Local Disk (C:). Double-click 'battery-health.html' and it will open in your default browser. Scroll down to 'Battery capacity history', and you'll see a table with three headings: Period, Full Charge Capacity and Design

Capacity – the latter two are measured in mWh (megawatt per hour – see screenshot left).

Design Capacity is the total charge your battery is designed to take when your laptop is brand new. Full Charge Capacity is how much power the battery can currently handle. The records are in chronological order, with the oldest data at the top and the latest records toward the bottom.

You will probably see that the Full Charge Capacity figure decreases over time, which is perfectly normal. What's more important is the *rate* of decrease, and the amount it's currently at in relation to the Design Capacity. Once the Full Charge Capacity reduces to around 40 per cent of the Design Capacity, it's probably time to change your battery.

If your Full Charge Capacity hasn't dropped much, your short battery life is probably due to a resource-hungry setting or background process.

Check for screws on the back of your laptop

If you do need to replace your battery, you should check whether your laptop's batteries are easily accessed. You may see a thin, wide panel held down by a single screw that covers the battery compartment.

Alternatively, there may be a number of screws dotted around the entire rear, which will let you remove the entire cover (as pictured above right, which shows us unscrewing the back of our old

```
>powercfg /batteryreport /output "C:\battery-health.html"
Microsoft Windows [Version 10.0.19044.1348]
(c) Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

C:\WINDOWS\system32>powercfg /batteryreport /output "C:\battery-health.html"
Battery life report saved to file path C:\battery-health.html.

C:\WINDOWS\system32>
```

Battery life report saved to file path C:\battery-health.html

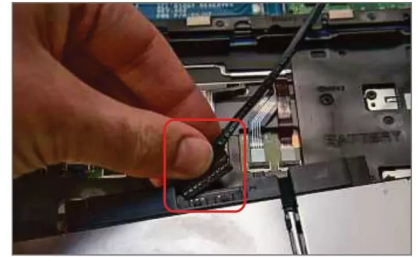
Generate a report on the health of your laptop battery using Command Prompt



Check for screws on the back of your laptop, as on our Dell Latitude 5490



Use a credit card to get leverage when gently lifting your battery



With most laptops you need to unplug the cable from the battery, not the motherboard

Dell Latitude 5490 laptop). The central screw pictured above is one of several around the case.

If you don't see any screws, it will be tricky to replace the battery yourself. Some laptops, particularly modern, lightweight, thin 'ultra-portable' models, are extremely hard to open. Contacting the manufacturer to arrange a repair may be your only choice.

Remove your old battery

Before buying your new battery, you need to remove your old battery to check the specifications printed on it. Bear in mind that opening the case will invalidate your laptop's warranty. However, if your laptop is so old that the battery is failing, the warranty has probably expired.

To remove your old battery, shut down your computer, then unplug the power adapter. Next, turn your laptop over and remove any screws that hold either the battery panel or rear cover in place. Make sure you take time to identify all the screws, because some are so small or recessed that they can be hard to find.

Once they're all out, gently pry open the panel or case. These are usually held in place by plastic clips, so gently feel for

these with a credit card or similar (don't use a metal screwdriver because you might damage the case or internal components). Carefully prise the clips apart until you have full access to your battery. Because your battery is still live you mustn't touch any other components.

The steps for removing your battery will vary from one model to the next. Some batteries lift out straight away, but others – such as the one in our Dell laptop – require you to remove a screw first. Gently prise the battery out. You'll probably need to lift it at an angle because batteries often have retaining clips to hold them in place. Again, use a credit card to help provide the necessary leverage (as pictured above).

When the battery is free from its clips, carefully look for the power cable that attaches it to the motherboard. With most laptops, you need to unplug the cable from the battery – as we've done in the photo above right – rather than the motherboard.

Buy and fit a new battery

Check the details printed on the battery. You need to make a note of the capacity, which will probably be in watt-hours (Wh) – 68Wh on our old battery (1 in our

Where you can buy laptop batteries

Dell www.snipca.com/40179

HP www.snipca.com/40180

Lenovo www.snipca.com/40181

Acer <https://laptopbattery.co.uk>

Asus <https://laptopbattery.co.uk>

Other laptops

<https://laptopbattery.co.uk>

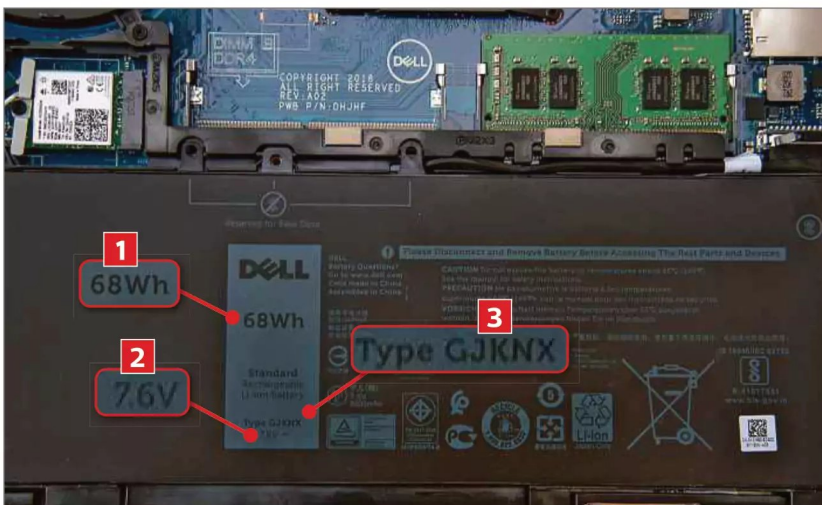
photo below left) – though you may also see it in milliamp-hours (mAh). Also make a note of the voltage (ours is 7.6V 2) and the model number: 'Type GJKNX' 3 on our battery.

With these details to hand, try to find a match on your manufacturer's site (see links in the box above). Make sure you search for your laptop's precise model and/or battery model. Be aware that Acer and Asus don't sell batteries directly, so we've suggested Laptopbattery.co.uk (<https://laptopbattery.co.uk>), which in our experience is very reliable and provides excellent customer service.

When searching you may see several options – batteries come in different capacities and are intended for different generations of laptop models. For example, we found the exact battery we needed on Dell's site (for £96.40 from www.snipca.com/40194), but on Laptopbattery.co.uk we came across a 42Wh and a 68Wh version. Only the latter is correct for our specific laptop.

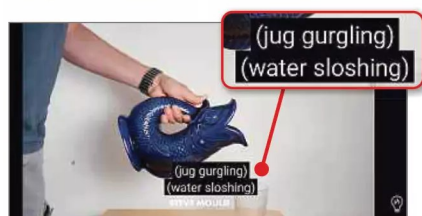
With the battery out, reverse the instructions to insert the new one. In our Dell laptop, the battery power cable runs along a channel and has to be clipped into place. Now screw the battery back in its position (if necessary), making sure that it's lying flat. Finally, reattach the rear cover or battery panel.

Now you can plug your laptop back in to start charging it and – once topped up – a single charge should last as long as when you first bought it. **ca**



Make a note of your battery's specifications before looking for a replacement

When someone says 'subtitles', they usually lump together genuine subtitles and what they ought to call closed captions. The distinction is subtle, but worth making. Subtitles are translations – from French to English, say – for those who can hear but can't understand the content. Closed captions, on the other hand, transcribe all spoken content in the original language, identify who's saying what, and describe important noises, like gunshots, revving cars or water sloshing (see screenshot below). If you're hard of hearing, closed captions are more often what you need and, in this feature, that's what we'll focus on.



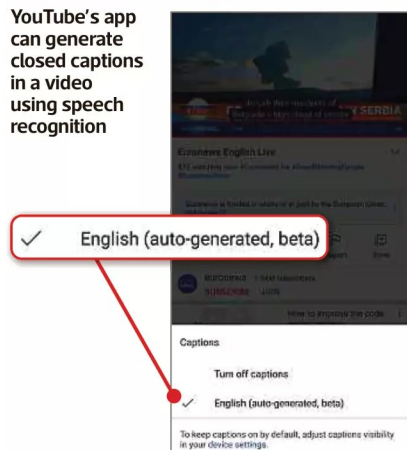
Closed captions include sound descriptions as well as a transcript of what's being said

If you have a hearing impairment, you'll understand the value of closed captions – and so will your family, as it means you can all enjoy the same shows without having to turn up the volume to uncomfortable and potentially harmful levels. And, while not all videos have integrated captions, there are several resources online that can help you add a caption track to your favourite films and TV shows. Here, we'll show you how.

Turn on YouTube's hidden closed captions

Start by checking whether the video you're watching has captions already – or, if not, whether they can be generated as

YouTube's app can generate closed captions in a video using speech recognition



Add closed captions to videos

You can add captions to online and downloaded videos to help you understand what's happening on screen. **Nik Rawlinson** reveals the tools you need

you watch. If you're watching YouTube in your browser, look for 'CC' at the bottom right of the playback controls. Clicking this will turn on closed captions that have been supplied by the video creator. If they've uploaded captions in a range of languages, click the cog to open the settings menu, followed by Subtitles/CC, then select your preferred language.

If you're using the YouTube app on your phone or tablet, tap the video-playback window, followed by the CC button that appears at the top of the screen. To switch between different languages, tap the three dots to the right of the CC button, followed by Captions, then choose the language you want.

If the video creator didn't upload their own closed captions but the audio track is clear and in one of 13 supported languages, you may be able to use speech recognition to generate closed captions by choosing 'English (auto-generated)' from the language settings (see screenshot left).

With some videos, you can use the same technology to translate foreign-language videos in real time – but only if you're watching them in a browser. Make sure closed captions are enabled, then click the cog, followed by Subtitles/CC,

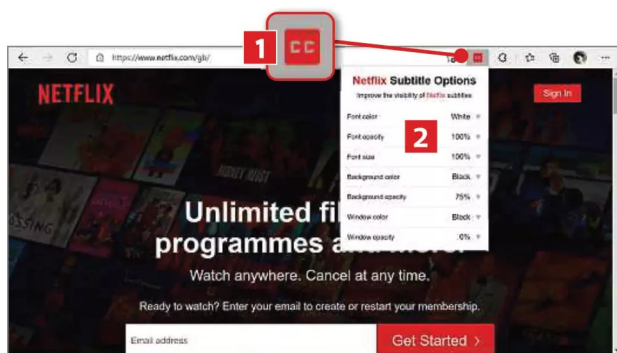
then 'Auto-translate'. Choose 'English' as the language you want to translate into.

Change the design of closed captions

While subtitles are generally an embedded part of a video, effectively burnt into the picture, closed captions can be enabled and disabled, which means, with some services, you can change how they look.

For example, if you use captions when watching Netflix in your browser, you can use the Netflix Subtitle Options extension to make them easier to read. Use any Chromium browser (Chrome, Edge, Brave, Vivaldi) to visit www.snipca.com/40202 and click the blue 'Add to' button, followed by 'Add extension'. Now click the Netflix Subtitle Options icon in your browser bar – a red box with CC inside (1) in our screenshot above right) – if you can't see it, click the jigsaw piece first to open the Extensions menu. Use the dropdown menus (2) to change the text size and colour, the background colour, and the opacity of the caption window.

You can make similar changes to the closed-caption style when watching YouTube in your browser. Enable closed



Install the Netflix Subtitle Options extension to make captions easier to read

captions by pressing 'cc', then click the cog, followed by Subtitles/CC. Click 'Options' at the top of the panel that appears, then use the menus to tailor the font, size, colour and opacity as required.

Add captions with Substital

If the video you want to watch doesn't have its own closed captions, but you're using a mainstream service like Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, YouTube, Vimeo or DailyMotion, check out Substital – an extension that's available for both Firefox and Chromium browsers. It promises to add closed captions to all online videos by searching web libraries, rather than expecting you to download and import your own.

Visit www.snipca.com/40208 and click the blue Get button, followed by 'Add to' at the top of the following page. When it's finished installing, navigate to the video you want to watch with closed captions. Start the video playing, then click the Substital logo to the right of your browser's address bar (1 in our screenshot above

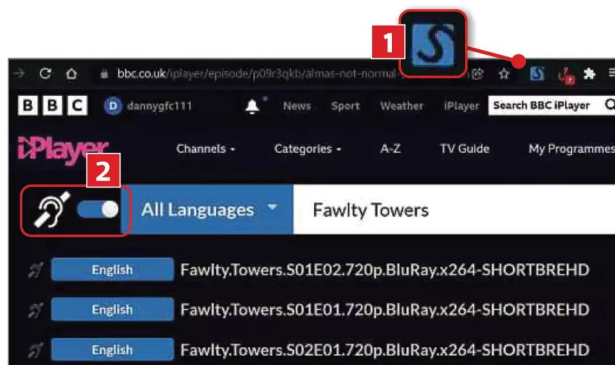
right) – see our note about the jigsaw-piece icon earlier. Substital will detect which programme you're watching and search for matching subtitles in public libraries.

Click the slider in the top-left corner (2 if you want to limit the results to closed captions tailored to the hard of hearing, which will include descriptions of important sounds, as well as spoken words. Click the language track you want to use, making sure you select the right language and episode if there are several to choose from.

Download closed captions from public catalogues

If Substital can't find closed captions for the video you're watching, or you're using another tool, you should try looking in one of several public catalogues.

Start with TVsubtitles (www.tvsubtitles.net), which has almost 300,000 closed-caption files for more than 67,500 TV episodes – from 'Allo 'Allo and Blackadder to Yes Minister and Zorro



You can ask Substital to search only for hard-of-hearing closed captions

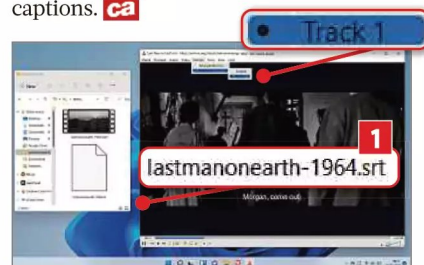
– with more in English than any other language. If you can't find what you want, try Subscene (<https://subscene.com>) instead, which covers music videos as well as film and TV.

Open Subtitles (www.opensubtitles.com) has recently had a redesign, and is one of the best-looking sites of its type, not only providing closed captions but also ratings. You'll need to install the Open Subtitles extension or sign up for a €10 (around £8.40) annual membership to download captions, but if you want to try before you buy, or don't want to support the service, check out its free sister site at www.opensubtitles.org.

Use downloaded captions in VLC

When you've downloaded a closed caption file, unzip it if it's been compressed, and copy the .srt file to the folder that contains your video. Make sure the two have exactly the same name (before the dot and file extension). In our screenshot below, we've renamed our closed-caption file 'lastmanonearth-1964.srt' (1 to match the file name of the video.

Launch VLC (a free download from www.videolan.org), then press Ctrl+O and select the video file you want to play. Now click Subtitle on the menu bar, and hover your cursor over Sub Track. Because you gave the subtitle file the same name as your video, VLC will automatically associate the two, so click Track 1 (2 and it will open the .srt file and use it as the basis of your closed captions. ca



VLC automatically detects closed captions in files with names that match the associated video

Add your own captions to a YouTube video

To add closed captions to a video you've uploaded to YouTube, open a new blank Notepad document and type the words spoken by each person. Every time there's a change of speaker, add their name, preceded by >>. And, when you want to describe sounds, put them in square brackets, as follows:

>> Bob: Welcome to our video, in which we'll be showing you how to bake a fruit cake.

[Sounds of kitchen implements]

>> Alice: It's surprisingly easy. Why don't you run through the ingredients, Bob?

>> Bob: Thanks, Alice. I will.

Save the file as plain text, then open your browser at <https://studio.youtube.com>, and sign in with your Google

account. Click 'Subtitles' in the left-hand menu, then select the video you'd like to add a closed-captions file to. Select the language you'll be using, then click Confirm. Next click Add, directly below Subtitles.

Click 'Upload file' and, in the box that appears, select 'Without timing' then click Continue. Select the plain-text document containing your transcript and click Choose. Finally, click Publish.

YouTube will take a few minutes to automatically detect when the different people in your video start and stop speaking, so that when it's played back with the closed captions turned on the words on screen should sync with the sounds coming out of your speakers.

Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

How do I back up and restore Thunderbird?

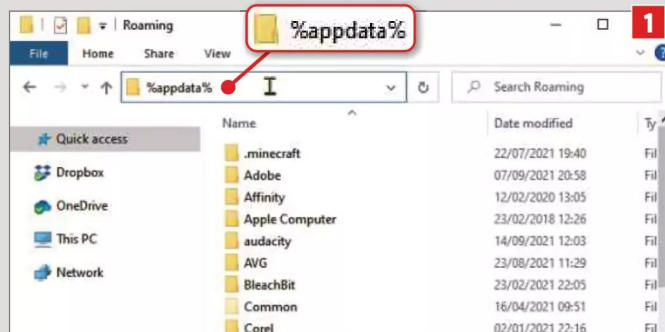
Q I've been using the Thunderbird email client for a while now, after abandoning Eudora because it had become very unreliable. I'm not sure about the best way to back up Thunderbird, so that should I need to reinstall Windows 10 I can get it working again as before. I have seven email accounts using it. It was easy to restore Eudora – I simply have to make copies of three folders and copy them back after installing a fresh copy of Eudora. From what I've read, you can't do this with Thunderbird. Precise instructions would be appreciated!

Norman Melrose

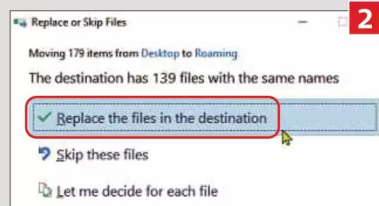
A Actually, unless you've previously chosen to use a folder location other than the default set up by Thunderbird, this is relatively straightforward. But don't worry if you have done that – we'll explain what to do in both eventualities.

First, to back up you need to launch File Explorer and navigate to the folder Thunderbird uses to store your profile(s) and data files. Assuming Windows is installed on drive C this will be stored within the **C:\Users\YourUserName\AppData\Roaming** folder. To reach this, press Windows key+E to launch File Explorer then, in the address bar at the top, type **%appdata%** (see screenshot 1) and press Enter. Now scroll through the list of folders to find Thunderbird.

You need to copy this folder in its entirety, typically to a USB stick but just as easily these days to an online storage account like OneDrive or Dropbox. To do this, either hold down Control (Ctrl) while left clicking and dragging and dropping the folder to your desired backup destination, or right-click it and choose Copy before right-clicking in the destination and choosing Paste.



Type this in File Explorer to access your Thunderbird folder



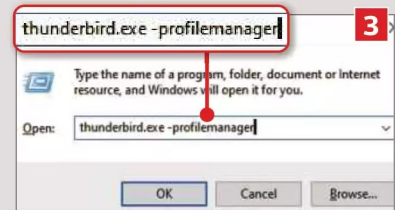
Click this option in the 'Replace or Skip Files' box on your new PC

Next, on your new PC, install Thunderbird, declining the option to set it up for the first time with new email accounts. Next, repeat the **%appdata%** step above to open the Roaming folder on your new computer then right-click on any blank area in the right-hand pane of File Explorer and click Paste. When the 'Replace or Skip Files' box appears, click the 'Replace the files in the destination' option (see screenshot 2).

That should be that, but if you originally set up Thunderbird with folder locations other than the default – or this doesn't work for some reason – then you'll need to manually direct Thunderbird to the relevant folder.

To do this, first close Thunderbird. Next, press Windows key+R to open the Run box and type **thunderbird.exe -profilemanager** (see screenshot 3) and press Enter. This launches the Thunderbird Profile Manager.

Now click Create Profile and, when in



Type this into the Run box to open Thunderbird's Profile Manager

the box that appears, click Next. You can type a name for this new profile if you want, or just leave it as the default. Next, click Choose Folder and then navigate to the relevant profile folder – typically a random bunch of numbers and letters ending in '.default', within the **C:\Users\YourUserName\AppData\Roaming\Thunderbird\Profiles** folder (see screenshot 4). Click 'Select Folder'. Finally, back in the Profile Manager, select the new profile then tick the 'Use the selected profile without asking at startup' box and click Start Thunderbird.



Any new Thunderbird profile you create will be given a random folder name

Why can't I find my Amazon Prime Video downloads?

Q I've made good use of Amazon and Amazon Prime over the various lockdowns. Now that our situation seems to be easing and we might even be allowed to go on holiday, I'd like to download Prime videos in the Windows app to watch offline. I can indeed use the app in Windows 10 and download films, but how do I watch them later? I can't open the app without a Wi-Fi connection, so what's the point of the download? Even with the app open I can't find where the downloads are to be found. YouTube helpfully says to go to the Prime Video downloads folder, but I have not been able to locate this. Can you help please?

Brian Ward

A We don't know what the problem is here. We've installed and used the Amazon Prime app on multiple Windows 10 computers without ever experiencing what you describe. You didn't say if the app displays an error message when it fails to launch? If so, we'd suggest contacting Amazon

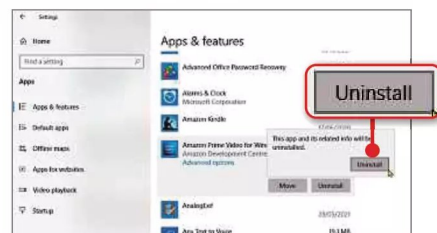


Click the Downloads tab in the left-hand pane to view your downloaded films and TV shows

directly to ask if it's able to interpret the alert: it might be a bug that affects only a few users.

But we're also confused about why you'd need to go looking for the Prime Videos download folder? It won't exist until you've downloaded some videos, and any files that might be in there will be encrypted and of no use to you because they can be played only in the Prime Video app.

Instead, you need to click the Downloads tab (see screenshot above). If you can't see this then it's even more strange, because it's an integral part of the app that's displayed whether or not there are



Try uninstalling and re-installing the Amazon Prime Video app to restore the Downloads tab

downloads to be viewed.

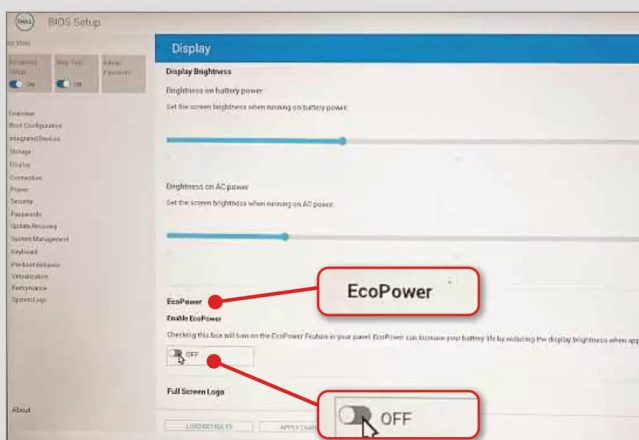
Feel free to get back in touch with more details but, in the meantime, the only thing we can suggest is uninstalling the app and reinstalling it afresh – because perhaps something went wrong during the initial download and installation.

To do this, click the Start button, Settings, then Apps followed by 'Apps & features'. Next, find 'Amazon Prime Video for Windows' in the list, click to select it then click Uninstall twice (see screenshot above). With that done, open the Microsoft Store to download it anew (or visit www.snipca.com/40032 and click the Get button).

Why does scrolling dim my screen?

Q I've recently bought a new Dell laptop. I'm happy with it except for one weird problem that I'm not even sure is a problem. I've noticed that when I'm scrolling through a website the screen's brightness levels vary, becoming dimmer or brighter depending on what's on the screen. At first I wondered if this was a fault, but then I realised it seems to be some kind of 'levelling' effect, so that white areas don't appear too bright in contrast to darker areas. These constant changes really annoy me. I've tried adjusting the brightness levels using the keys on the keyboard and the options in Windows 11, but nothing seems to stop this. Any ideas?

Mark Foulger



Switch off EcoPower (or similar setting) to stop your screen's brightness levels changing when scrolling

A Yes, this is down to a BIOS option that is enabled by default. Its name varies, but on Dell laptops it's usually called Dynamic Brightness Control or EcoPower.

To access the BIOS you need to press a key immediately after switching on your laptop. On Dell machines this is typically F2, but it could also be Delete (Del). Once

in the BIOS, use the cursor (arrow) keys or mouse control to navigate to the Video or Display section then look for one of the aforementioned options, or something similar. Use the Enter key or mouse click to switch the relevant slider to its Off position (see screenshot), then press Escape (Esc) to exit the BIOS and choose Yes to save your changes.

Can I copy program discs to USB sticks?

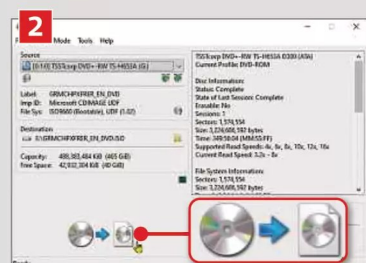
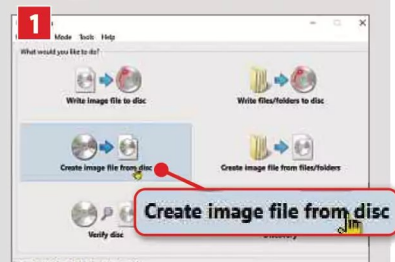
Q With the demise of the CD/DVD players on new PCs, is it possible to copy and paste programs from their original disc on to a USB stick? I suspect this won't be straightforward.

Chris Witts

A Actually, this is usually both possible and very easy. There are numerous tools that can do it but, for speed and simplicity, we'd suggest ImgBurn – a free download from www.imgburn.com.

Open ImgBurn, pop your CD or DVD disc in the drive then click 'Create image file from disc' (see screenshot 1). Then, in the Source dropdown menu, choose the relevant drive/disc and use the folder-icon button below to choose a destination (a USB stick in your case). Then, just click the big button below, with a disc and arrow and another disc (see screenshot 2), to start the copying.

The result will be an ISO file, with a '.iso' extension. These can be opened (or 'mounted') in any recent version of Windows just by double-clicking it.



Create an ISO file of your disc (1) then copy this to your USB stick (2)

What's the best formula for recording my standing orders?

Q I've made a spreadsheet of my standing orders. I want £10 to be added to specific cells only on the fifth day of each month. I have a list of dates for the months ahead in one column and I'd like £10 to appear in the adjacent column, but only when the date becomes today's date. I cannot figure out what formula I need to make this happen. Could you help? I use Excel as part of Microsoft 365.



David Purser

A You need to combine two Excel functions here – IF and TODAY. The IF function lets you set up a logical test and then perform an action as

a result. In English, that test-and-result combination would read something like this: "If X is true then do Y, if not do Z".

In this case, X is whether the date in your first column's cell is today's date or still in the future. If it's true that it's still in

the future (Y) you want to insert a zero, but if it's today's date (or earlier) then £10 should be inserted.

With all that spelt out, our magic formula will hopefully make sense. Incidentally, it assumes that your year-ahead dates are in column A, with the first in cell A2 (to allow for headings at the top in row 1). So, in B2 (or whichever cell/column you want the result), type `=IF(A2>TODAY(),0,10)` (see screenshot below) and press Enter.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Date	Standing order amount					
2	05 September 2021	=IF(A2>TODAY(),0,10)					
3	05 October 2021	£10.00					
4	05 November 2021	£10.00					
5	05 December 2021	£0.00					
6	05 January 2022	£0.00					
7	05 February 2022	£0.00					
8	05 March 2022	£0.00					
9	05 April 2022	£0.00					
10	05 May 2022	£0.00					
11	05 June 2022	£0.00					
12	05 July 2022	£0.00					
13	05 August 2022	£0.00					
14	05 September 2022	£0.00					
15							
16							

Type this formula to add £10 to an adjacent cell once the date in question has been reached

Q: Can I speed up my laptop?
A: Issue 593, page 65 – find it on our 2020 Back Issue CD

Buy it from
www.snipca.com/38164



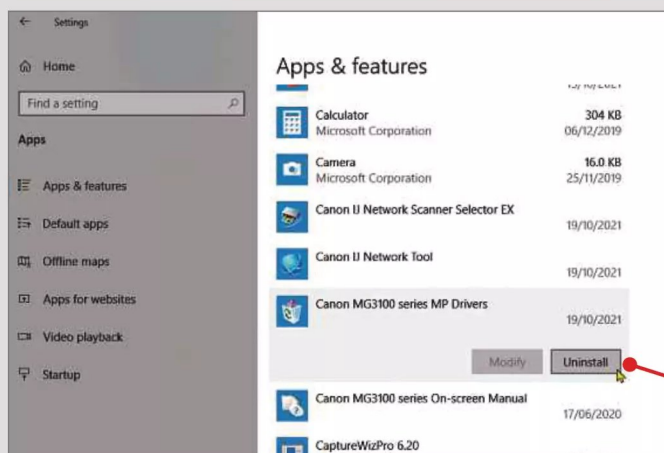
What is this start-up error message from Canon?

Q Whenever Windows boots I receive an error message that I believe is associated with Canon, relating to a missing DLL file. It does not, as far as I can tell, cause a problem other than the nuisance of having to click it away each time I open Windows. My problem is how to get rid of it. I can't find any information about the causes in the Start menu or anywhere else. I've had a Canon TS8150 printer connected for about three years without any problems, until now.

Roger Girling

A You sent us a screenshot of the error and, yes, it does seem to relate to Canon. Specifically, it appears to be a recurrent problem with the **drivers** for certain Canon printers – of which yours is one.

We're afraid we don't have any magic bullet for this, but one solution that has worked for others is to first uninstall the existing driver, then download the latest ones before installing them afresh. We can understand that you



Uninstall your Canon printer's driver then reinstall it afresh to remove any error messages

might be reticent to do that given the printer and everything else works but there are no secret tricks to fix this otherwise.

So, if you want to try this, the first thing to do is uninstall the current driver. Click the Start button followed by the Settings cog, then Apps followed by 'Apps & features'. Next, scroll through the list to find the entry for the current driver

installation, then click it. Next, click Uninstall (see screenshot) then confirm this by clicking Uninstall again, and restarting your PC.

Now you'll need to get hold of the latest version of the driver for your Canon TS8150 (from www.snipca.com/40034). Finally, double-click the downloaded file, following the prompts to reinstall the drivers.

Why can't I install security software on my Fire tablet?

Q I've subscribed to *Computeractive* for several years and find it very interesting. I've also taken advantage of the Norton 360 Premium 10-device offer (£24.99) from the Computeractive Store (<https://store.computeractive.co.uk>). So far, I've installed it on only three devices, but I'm finding it impossible to get it on to my Amazon Fire tablet. Norton opens the Google Play Store in order to install 360 Premium, but shows no device selected. I have tried to install Google Play Store on the tablet, but it won't open. Is it me or is the problem with Amazon?

Colin Izzard

A It's not just you but the simple fact that Norton 360 Premium does not support Amazon Fire tablets. They run a modified version of Android, called Fire OS. While this has



Download ESET Mobile Security & Antivirus to protect your Amazon Fire tablet

many elements in common with Android, it's also different in many ways – and this renders it incompatible with many standard Android apps.

Developers can of course make changes to their products to make them work with Fire OS, but not all do. Unfortunately, Norton is one of them. So, while Norton 360 Premium is a good tool for PCs and other Android mobile devices, it will not work with Amazon Fire tablets.

That might change in the future, but in

the meantime if you want additional protection on your Fire tablet, you'll need a different app. One of the most popular options is ESET Mobile Security & Antivirus, which is a free download from www.snipca.com/40035 (see screenshot above).

Problems Solved

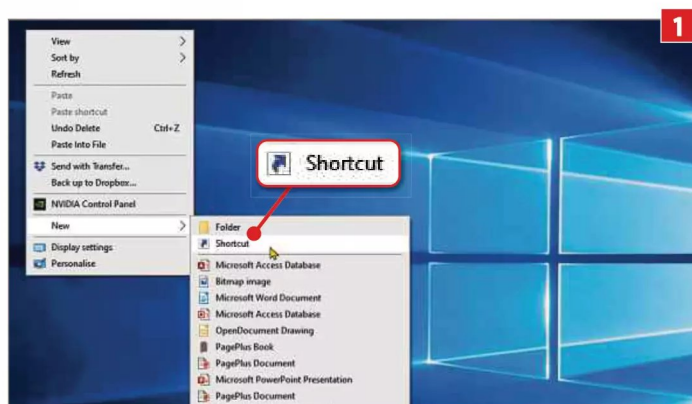
Can I make my desktop shortcut even shorter?

Q I have a Windows desktop shortcut that takes me to Windows Defender. In total, it still takes me five clicks to access it and start a full system virus scan. Is it possible to reduce this to, say, a couple of clicks?

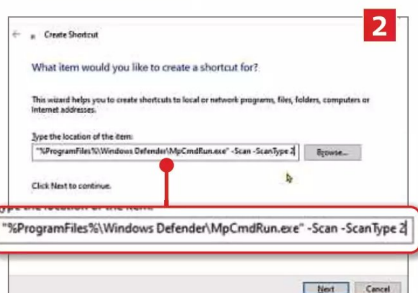
John Lindley

A Technically, Windows Defender is now Windows Security – but even Microsoft sometimes struggles to remember that. We mention that because it will become evident in a moment, when we reveal the command that will reduce the required clicks to one (well, one double-click).

You already know how to create a desktop shortcut but, for the benefit of other readers, first right-click any blank space of the Windows desktop then hover over New before choosing Shortcut (see screenshot 1). Next, in the 'Type the location of the item' box, type `"%ProgramFiles%\Windows Defender\MpCmdRun.exe" -Scan -ScanType 2` (or copy it from our Pastebin page at www.snipca.com/40036) before clicking Next 2. Now type a name for the shortcut before clicking Finish 3.



Right-click your desktop, point to New, then click Shortcut...



Type or paste this in the 'Type location...' field...



...and finally name your new shortcut

Now type a name for the shortcut before clicking Finish 3.

You'll now have a new shortcut on your Windows desktop. Double-click it and a

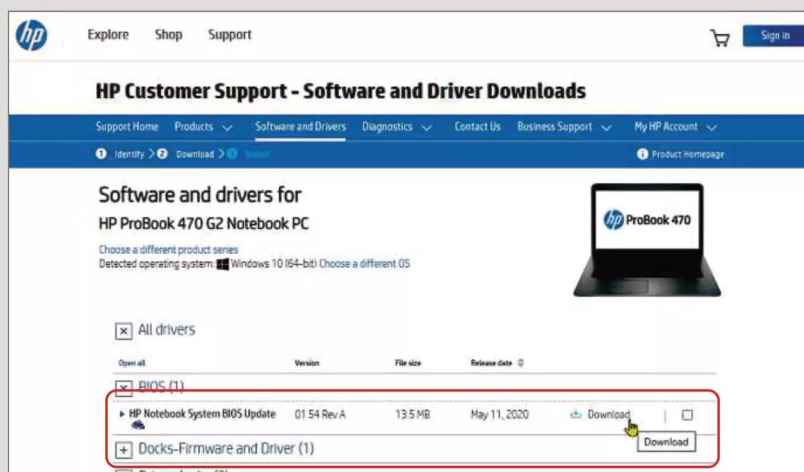
Command Window will open and directly run the full Windows Security scan. It's not quite as pretty as the Windows Security interface, but it does the job and reduces the five clicks to one.

Why is my PC waking up every time I try to charge it?

Q I thought that it'd help keep my HP ProBook 470 G2 laptop's battery in good condition to top it up an hour each night, rather than having it charging all the time. However, when I try to do this, the laptop just switches on. So, instead of just charging the battery, it's running as normal throughout – with the battery being drained rather than charging. Any ideas?

Alexander Collins

A Some laptops have a 'Wake on AC' option in the BIOS that could explain this behaviour. However, so far as we can tell, your model does not have this feature – so what's happening is something of a mystery. Are you using the 'Shut down' option from the Start menu, rather than Sleep or Hibernate? If not, we'd suggest trying that, because the mere



Download HP's latest update to stop your laptop waking every time you want to charge it

act of plugging in may be causing mouse or keyboard movement that could trigger the laptop to wake from these not-really-off states. Alternatively, it could be a BIOS

bug that's causing this. Download and apply the latest BIOS update from HP's website at www.snipca.com/40031 (see screenshot).



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

Email and webmail?

Q I'm not very good with computers. A couple of years ago I employed a local technician to set me up with an iPad. I use this for email and web browsing, and the odd puzzle game.

I recently broke the screen and, while it still works, I want to replace it. The local technician is no longer in business, so I'm wondering if you can explain how to transfer my email system to a new iPad? I recall him saying that the Gmail address he made for me was webmail, but that the iPad syncs to it using the Mail app. That obviously works, and has done for years, but I don't really understand how it all links up. What's the difference between Mail, Gmail, email and webmail? He did give me all the passwords and so on.

Derek Stern

A Let's start with Gmail, which is the name of an email service provided by Google.

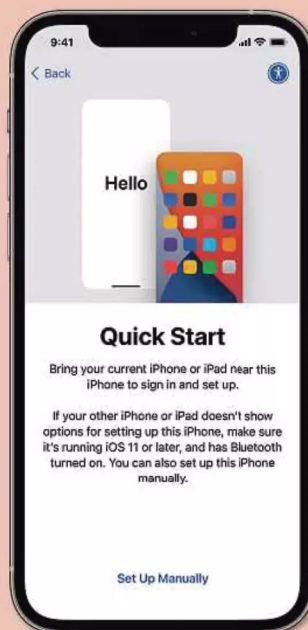
It can be accessed in a variety of ways, including via a web browser. So, from

Simply follow the Quick Start prompts to transfer your email to a new iPhone or iPad

that perspective, Gmail is webmail: an email service that is accessed and managed via the web.

However, Gmail can also be accessed and managed like a more traditional email service, meaning it can be synced outside a web browser and used with email tools that aren't made by Google. The Apple Mail app is one such tool. As is the Windows Mail app that's part of Windows 10 and 11, as well as the popular Outlook program – both made by Microsoft, of course.


So, those are the differences and relationships between Gmail, Mail, email



and webmail. As for your question about transferring your setup, the good news is that an iPad (and indeed an iPhone) makes this very easy. Switch on your new iPad/iPhone next to your old device and the Quick Start tool will automatically begin (see screenshot).

There's very little to do, other than enter your Apple username and password and then point your old device's camera at the screen of the new one – and just follow the prompts. You'll find Apple's

full instructions at www.snipca.com/40037.

 Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Can I stop Windows Update permanently?

Q I have an old PC that's stuck on Windows 10 (version 1909). It did upgrade to version 2004, but this kept causing **blue-screen-of-death** crashes, so I had to wind back to 1909 – which I know is no longer supported. This PC is used for accounts and day-to-day banking, so it is crucial. Windows keeps trying to force the update on me and I have to keep disabling Windows Update via the Services app. This stops it but Windows keeps restarting it. Very frustrating! Can you please help?

Martyn Cashman

A There's quite a lot going on here, but few concrete details – such as the make, model and age of your PC, and the name of the crucial software that it's running. To an extent, it doesn't matter because it sounds like the computer's just too old to successfully run newer versions of Windows 10 or 11.



Switch off Windows Update in Windows 10 Update Manager to stop getting update nags

We doubt Microsoft will ever now fix whatever might be causing your problems.

We get the impression you know this but want to stop Windows Update so you can carry on with version 1909. That can be achieved with registry hacks or – perhaps more easily and safely – using a free tool such as Windows 10 Update Manager (www.snipca.com/40038). Just select the Windows Update tab and turn the Windows Update slider off (see screenshot).

But this isn't a long-term solution, because it means your ageing PC will

only ever become less safe to use. Good security software that itself receives updates will probably keep things protected for a year or two. However, we don't recommend running banking tools on a PC that no longer receives Windows updates – so it might be time to accept that your software needs a newer PC.

Next Issue

ON SALE
Weds
5 Jan

- Can I go back to Windows 7?
- Does partitioning really wipe everything?
- How do I print four photos on one page?
- ...And many more

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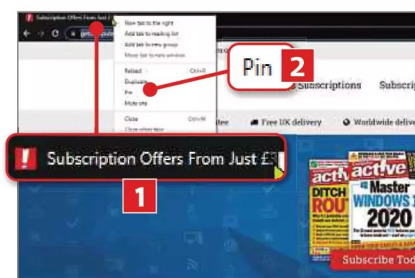
How can I pin browser tabs?

Q I'm a bit behind with reading your magazine, therefore I've only recently caught up with your reply to Steven Henderson in Issue 611's Problems Solved (page 65) – where he asked how to pin tabs in his web browser. I followed your instructions but I do not see the option to pin tabs. What am I doing wrong?

Heather Jackson

A We've changed your name at your request. Thanks to the screenshot that you helpfully included in your email we can see instantly what you're doing wrong. You're right-clicking the URL bar that contains the website address. In fact, it's the website tab that you need to right-click (1 in our screenshot below), not its address in the URL bar. We did say this in our reply to Steven but it was a detail that's easy to overlook or misunderstand.

That's all there is to it: visit a website as normal and then simply right-click its tab to see the Pin (Chrome) 2 or 'Pin tab' (Edge) option.

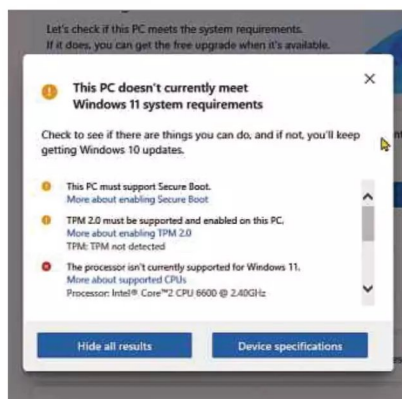


Right-click the website's browser tab, not the URL bar, to access the option to pin tabs

Why was my registry value already edited?

Q I followed the 'Beat Microsoft's restrictions to install Windows 11' Workshop in Issue 618 (page 38) and was particularly pleased to read, in Step 4, that the registry hack "works if you have an unsupported processor".

I edited the registry and to my surprise



Run Microsoft's PC Health Check app to discover whether your computer can run Windows 11

I found the 'AllowUpgradesWithUnsupportedTPMOrCPU' value was already in my registry. Unfortunately, having followed the instructions I still received the message that Windows 11 wouldn't run on my computer. Have I misunderstood the instructions in your Workshop or am I doing something wrong?

David Clowes

A We've actually had quite a few readers write to tell us that this value already existed in their registries. Indeed, since writing that Workshop we've found the same on some of our test PCs. As such, we think it's simply a case that Microsoft has updated Windows 10 to include this registry value – perhaps because it has a longer-term plan to water down its original requirement.

That aside, we don't know what specific message you received but there are many other factors besides the CPU and TPM that can affect a PC's ability to run Windows 11. If you haven't already, download and run Microsoft's PC Health Check app, from www.snipca.com/40050. It will give you a full rundown of what it believes is lacking from your PC (see screenshot above).

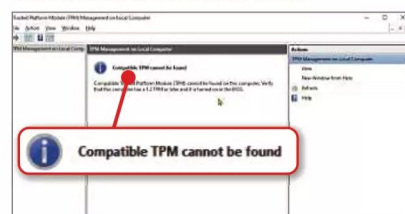
Why didn't your TPM registry hack work for me?

Q My eight-year-old PC runs Windows 10 Pro, and I get the message saying it can't run Windows 11. Therefore I tried Issue 618's 'Beat Microsoft's restrictions to install Windows 11' Workshop. At Step 7, instead of showing me the 'What needs your attention' window I got a warning that my system doesn't support Windows 11, saying it needed both TPM 2.0 and Secure Boot. I applied the registry hack in Step 4 so why is it saying I still need TPM 2.0?

Stuart Hillier

A We don't know your PC make or model but, given its age, there's no guarantee it'll have even TPM 1.2. The registry hack will make Windows 11 ignore the lack of TPM 2.0 and press ahead with TPM 1.2, but it won't overlook a complete absence of TPM – because TPM 1.2 is the bare minimum. Now, the message does indeed say you need TPM 2.0 but that's just the standard warning. With the hack applied it probably means it's not detecting even TPM 1.2.

What result did you get following Step 2? As a reminder for other readers, this is where we said to press Windows key+R to open a Run box, type `tpm.msc` then press Enter. We did say that a 'Compatible TPM cannot be found' message (see screenshot below) doesn't necessarily mean a PC lacks TPM but, equally, it can mean that. If in Step 3 you couldn't find and enable a TPM chip, then we're afraid that's game over: a PC will not run Windows 11 unless it has TPM.



Use Windows' Run box to check whether you have a compatible TPM for Windows 11

Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

1440p High-definition video of 2560x1440 pixels.

32bit / 64bit A measure of how much data a PC can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit, more modern ones are 64bit.

3G/4G/5G Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

4K Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

Airplane mode Phones and tablets in this mode disable all radio communication (GSM, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, etc) so they are safe to use on aircraft.

Architecture A set of rules and language that govern how hardware and software work.

Aspect ratio A measurement of the shape of a display. Traditional computer screens are 4:3. Widescreen displays are 16:9 or 16:10.

Augmented reality Lets you view the real world on a screen and add elements from the digital world.

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.

Blockchain A digital database recording transactions of data, such as payments of cryptocurrency.

Blue screen of death Technically called a 'Stop error', this is shown when your PC crashes.

BMP Bitmap. A type of image file.

Brute-force attack A method of breaking encryption by simply guessing all possible passwords until the right one is found

Clean install An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

Client A program that acts as an interface between PC and server.

CSV Comma Separated Value. A standard file format, used for storing tabulated information, that can be opened by most spreadsheet applications.

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.

Delta E A measurement that shows how the human eye perceives different colours.

DLL Dynamic Link Library. DLL resources can be used by one or more Windows programs at the same time.

DNS Domain Name System. A technology that associates computers with their addresses on the internet.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

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.

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.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

HDR High-dynamic range. A camera that takes more than one photo with different levels of colour and contrast. These images are then combined to create a better-quality image.

Hotspot A public area covered by a Wi-Fi network that allows you to access the internet, either free or for a fee.

HTML Hypertext Markup Language. The language used to write most web pages.

HTTPS Hyper Text Transfer Protocol Secure. The secure version of HTTP, the technology that sends data between your browser and the web.

Hz Hertz. Measures the frequency something happens: 1Hz equals once a second.

ICO file An image file format for PC icons in Windows that can be scaled appropriately.

IPS A screen technology. Monitors that use it have wider viewing angles and better, more accurate-looking colours than monitors that do not use this technology.

ISO file A type of image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD.

JavaScript Older programming language developers use to make web pages interactive.

JPEG Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras. Some image quality is lost with each save.

LAN Local-area network. A computer network in one place, such as a home or office.

LED Light-emitting diode. An electronic device that emits light. Used on almost all electronic devices, and to provide the backlight for some LCDs.

MAC address Media Access Control. A unique code that identifies any router. A laptop PC might have one MAC for its wired network socket and another for wireless.

mAh Milliamp hours. A unit that measures (electric) power over time. The higher the mAh, the longer a battery will last.

Micro HDMI An HDMI connector measuring 6.4x2.8mm. Micro HDMI cables can be used to connect Raspberry Pi PCs and GoPro cameras to larger screens.

MicroSD card A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

MicroUSB A miniature version of USB, often found on smartphones, tablets and portable hard drives.

Mini HDMI An HDMI connector measuring 10.42x2.42 mm. Mini HDMI ports are often used by digital cameras, as well as some tablets and laptops.

Modular Used to describe a device or PC that uses detachable and replaceable parts.

NAS Network-attached storage. A hard drive attached to a network that can be shared with other PCs.

NFT Non-fungible token. A way of recording who owns a digital asset, such as an artwork or a meme.

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.

Picture-in-picture Shows video in a small moveable screen while you browse the web or watch TV.

Ping speed How quickly your device gets a response after sending a request for information through the internet. Typically used to calculate how quickly online games respond to your actions. Measured in milliseconds (ms).

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to software or to your web browser.

PNG Portable Network Graphics. A format for images that shrinks file sizes using compression but without discarding any data.

Push notification A message from an app that appears on a phone or tablet, even when you're not using the app.

QHD Quad High Definition.

QR code Quick Response code. A barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR-reading devices.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the PC is switched on. Its capacity is measured in megabytes (MB): the more memory your PC has, the more things it can process simultaneously and the faster it will seem. Any information in RAM will be lost when power is switched off.

Refresh rate Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn. Slight changes in the image each time it is updated combine to give the illusion of movement. For a steady image, the higher the refresh rate, the less flicker you will see.

Registry key The Windows registry equivalent of a folder.

Safe Mode A way of starting Windows so that various programs and peripherals are prevented from working. This is useful to help diagnose the cause of problems if a computer is behaving oddly.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Skin A different, purely cosmetic appearance for a program.

SSD Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date and time to which Windows can revert if a problem occurs.

Timestamp The time which an event is recorded by a computer.

TPM Trusted Platform Module. A chip that allows your hardware to perform security-related tasks.

Two-factor authentication A system that uses two different means to identify the user. For example, a code sent to your phone in addition to a password.

UEFI Unified Extensible Firmware Interface. A modern replacement for the BIOS, designed to get a PC into a state where it can launch an operating system.

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.

VESA Video Electronics Standards Association. A standard mount for attaching monitors on to stands, walls and PCs.

Virtual machine A software-based computer running inside another computer. Often used to emulate another operating system – for example, running Windows 7 as a virtual machine inside Windows 10.

VPN Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.





Widget A small program such as a calendar that runs on the Windows desktop.

WPA Wi-Fi Protected Access. A secure form of protection for wireless networks.

ZIP file A file that contains compressed documents or files.

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Run Android apps in Windows 11

As the end of the year approaches, I find myself reflecting on all the things I did and didn't achieve in 2021. I started a new job (this one, in fact), had three Covid jabs without getting infected in the intervals between them, and bought a new washing machine when my old one couldn't be bothered to spin any more. On the downside, my long-awaited trip to America was postponed again, my exercise regime quickly lapsed into idleness and I never got to use Android apps in Windows 11, even though Microsoft promised in June that the feature was coming "later this year" (go to www.snipca.com/40102 and scroll down about two-thirds of the page).

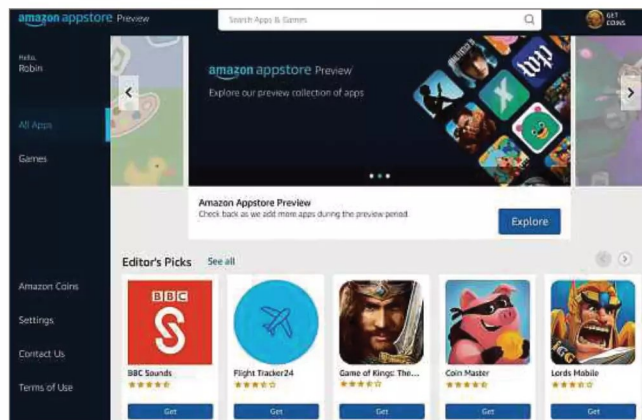
“

Microsoft's pesky system requirements were a running a theme of 2021

”

Determined to address at least one of these failings before the clock struck midnight on 31 December, I resolved to get Android apps running in Windows 11, by hook or by crook. I discovered that, as a Windows Insider on the Beta channel (which sounds exclusive, but is easy to sign up for at www.snipca.com/40104), the feature was actually already available to me, provided my system met certain 'requirements' – Microsoft and its pesky requirements being a running theme of 2021.

First, my Windows 11 PC needed to have 8GB of memory and an Intel, Ryzen or Qualcomm processor. To check this, I went to Settings, then System and clicked



After jumping through several hoops, Robert finally managed to access the Amazon Appstore in Windows 11

About. In the 'Device specifications' section, I confirmed that my laptop has an Intel i7 processor and 16GB of RAM, so that was that box ticked. Next, I needed to ensure my system had 'hardware virtualisation' enabled, which is required to run Android in a virtual machine. To do this, I clicked the Start button in Windows 11, searched for 'Turn Windows features on or off' and clicked that entry. In the window that opened, I selected Virtual Machine Platform, clicked OK to install the feature and restarted my laptop.

I then hit a major obstacle: Android apps in Windows 11 are installed from the Amazon Appstore, but that app is currently available only to Windows Insiders in the US. This meant searching for it in the Microsoft Store yielded no results. After cursing Microsoft for its American bias, I figured I could beat this unfair restriction by changing my laptop's region to US. I went to Settings, clicked 'Time & language' and selected 'Language & region', then chose United States in the 'Country or region' dropdown menu. This did the trick, because Amazon Appstore now appeared in the Microsoft Store, and I successfully downloaded the app. It also installed a tool called Windows Subsystem for Android, which is how the desktop and mobile platforms are magically united.

Sadly, because I'm sure you're getting

as impatient reading this as I was doing it, I now hit another snag. The Amazon Appstore app wouldn't accept my usual Amazon login, and told me that the service wasn't available in my country. To bypass this block, I tried running my favourite free VPN, Windscribe (www.snipca.com/40107), with a US server selected, then registered for a new Amazon account under a different name and email address. Despite having to use my UK mobile number for two-factor authentication purposes, this workaround worked and I finally gained access to the Amazon Appstore in Windows 11.

Here I was offered just 48 Android apps and games, including Yahoo Mail, Flight Tracker24, Kindle for Android, My Talking Tom and BBC Sounds (see screenshot above) – the latter seemed a bit of a cheek considering British licence payers can't officially use the store yet. Installing the apps was as simple as clicking Get, then Download and Open, after which they appeared in new app windows.

Was it worth all that hassle when most of these apps are already available in the Microsoft Store? I reckon not, but hopefully there'll be more choice and less faff when Android apps officially come to Windows 11 in early 2022.

 Need help with running Android apps in Windows 11?
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