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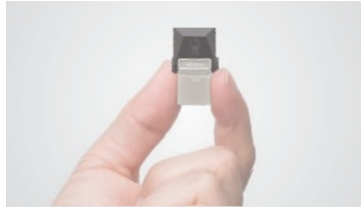

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Welcome

From the Editor

Old is gold does not always apply to technology. Or does it? In our Cover Story, We show you how to give a new lease of life to your PC or other devices, using easy-to-implement hacks. And the best part? You don't spend a penny to optimise what you thought was merely your unproductive comfort zone. Make good the use of your PCs and printers that you no longer use as often, or don't feel the need to upgrade.

As for the other product reviews that we offer in this issue, I would like to make a special mention for the new BlackBerry Passport. Combining unusual design with unmatched productivity, its impressive features makes it the best BB ever! Don't believe us? Read on and find out for yourself.

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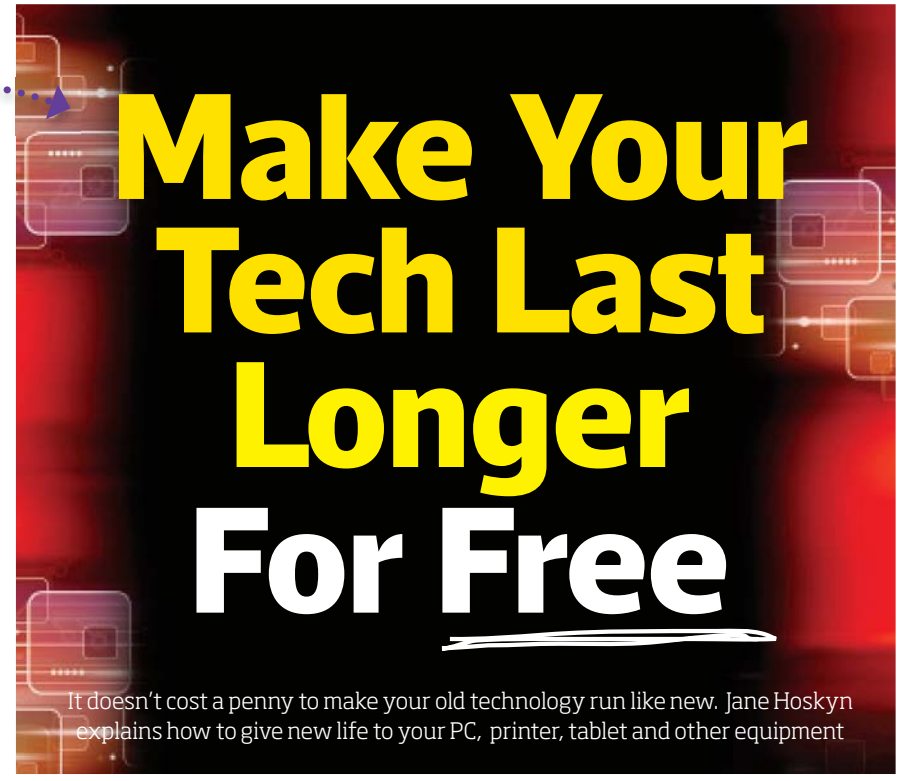

Make Your Tech Last Longer For Free

It doesn't cost a penny to make your old technology run like new. Jane Hoskyn explains how to give new life to your PC, printer, tablet and other equipment

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Microsoft should 'shoot XP' dead

So Microsoft prolongs XP's death throes and leaves millions of PC users wondering what they should do next. Well, I can provide the answer – switch to Windows 8. You may spend a day or two getting used to it, but soon you'll wonder why you were so reluctant to make the leap. Sadly, Microsoft has buckled at the first opportunity to prove that it really has consigned XP to the scrapheap. It's an operating system that needs to be put to death – swiftly. But instead of a bullet to the back of the head, it's death by a thousand cuts. Come on Microsoft - don't be timid. Get your gun out and shoot XP dead.

Nidhi Dighe

I have no sympathy for the dinosaurs still using XP, especially the government of this country. As you say in your article they've had plenty of time and ample warning to get up to speed with Windows 8. I'm nearing 70 years of age and I've upgraded at every opportunity, either by buying a new computer, or upgrading the operating system. So come on, look to future! Use it or lose it, that's what I the say. I thank you!

Jayesh Kumar

I believe Microsoft has made a terrible mistake by fixing the XP flaw for Internet Explorer. For months, it's been telling us to upgrade because XP will no longer be safe. I took heed of this, and upgraded to Windows 8 last November.

It took me a while to get used to, but I don't regret upgrading. However, it would have been nice to have continued using XP for a few more years. I feel a bit betrayed, like someone who's been following the rules, only to be told that they never really applied anyway. Microsoft has cried wolf once, so I'm beginning to wonder whether we can trust anything else it says?

Akshay Joshi

STAR LETTER

Tech ageism in retail stores

As a 73-year-old, I often encounter the tech ageism. Over the past few years I've been patronised in my local library, my doctor's surgery and in the school playground collecting my grandchildren. Once you reach a certain age, people assume you're incapable of understanding technology, so they talk to you in a condescending way – mouthing words in an exaggerated style, talking v-e-r-y-s-l-o-w-l-y.

I've put up with people explaining to me what apps are, how to use a touchscreen and why emailing my life savings to a bankrupt Nigerian prince is a bad idea. Somehow, I doubt people in their twenties face the same scrutiny.

I take revenge by going into a large format retail store (which I don't wish to name), where the staff initially treat you like you don't know how to turn a kettle on, let alone work a PC or tablet. After acting dumb for a few minutes and taking their condescension on the chin, I floor the assistants by asking a technical question that I know they won't be able to answer. I allow myself a smile as I watch them flounder.

You often hear that older people struggle to understand new technology. Actually, I think the truth is that they don't see the point in a lot of new technology. Not using Facebook or Instagram (or whatever today's fad may be) doesn't mean we can't grasp how they work. We understand what they are, and how to use them, but decide there's more to life than posting photos of what's happening in your daily life.

I have no doubt that your average teenager knows how to use Instagram, but do they know how to write complex Excel formulas? Do they know how to dual-boot their PC with Linux and Windows? Do they know how to partition a PC's hard drive? Being able to perform these boring but useful tasks is the true sign of being tech savvy.

Abhijeet Sheth

My tablet frees me from my PC

You asked whether owning a tablet has made readers more likely to go online. I'm not sure I spend more time online now that I own a Nexus 7, but I'm definitely a more confident user of technology. Before, I didn't know my apps from my elbow. But the Nexus is so easy to use I now take it everywhere, using apps offline when there's no free Wi-Fi and online (using the excellent Maxthon browser www.maxthon.com) when there is. The biggest change in my behaviour is just the freedom to engage with technology wherever I am. I no longer need to be tied to Desktop on my Windows PC.

Nikhil More

Last month's winner: Hariprasad Rao

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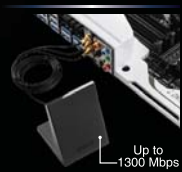

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News

Round up of the top stories of the month

Microsoft launches new Lumia devices

The recently unveiled Lumia 830 and Lumia 730 dual SIM smartphones running the latest Windows Phone 8.1 operating system have been launched by Microsoft Devices in India, with an aim to bring imaging technology to more affordable price levels. The company also announced the sales start of the much awaited Lumia 930 in India, plus the Lumia Denim update, which brings extra features and enhancements to existing Lumia smartphones.

Lumia 830–the new flagship at an accessible price: Lumia 830 captures high–quality images and videos–day or night–with a 10–megapixel PureView camera with ZEISS optics, rich recording and the thinnest optical image stabilisation system to date on a Lumia, at 8.5 mm thin and 150 gm. It delivers the best of Microsoft with pre-loaded Microsoft Office Mobile; the latest version of Windows Phone 8.1 with Lumia Denim; and OneDrive with 15 GB of free storage Available in India from October, 2014, for ₹28,799, it comes in a range of colours including bright orange, white and black.

Lumia 730 Dual SIM–built for Skype and selfies: With a wide-angle, front-facing camera; an attractive price tag, and slim, compact style, the Lumia 730 Dual SIM is ideal for Skype calls and selfies.

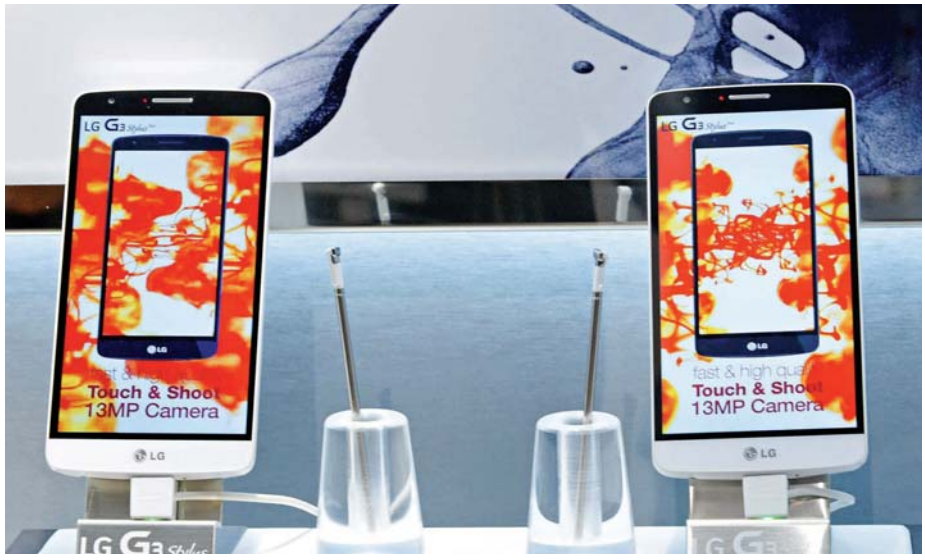
The 5-megapixel camera allows users share more of the world around them and bring more family and friends into a call. With Dual SIM 3G support, the Lumia 730 provides outstanding personalisation brought by Windows Phone 8.1.

The phone will be available in India starting October, 2014, in green, orange, white and dark grey at a best buy price of ₹15,299.

Lumia 930–the beautifully crafted phone: Nokia Lumia 930 has a 20MP PureView camera with ZEISS optics and advanced Rich Recording, ensuring a flawless video and imaging experience with Living Images and optical image stabilisation. A Powerful 2.2GHz Snapdragon quad-core processor delivers more from content like apps, games, the Internet and integrated Microsoft services like OneDrive and Microsoft Office. With an aluminium frame, metallic accents, and a curved polycarbonate back with vibrant colour choices, The Lumia 930 will be available for ₹38,649 in bright orange, black and white colours.

All three devices will come with an additional 1 Terabyte of cloud storage on OneDrive, free for the first six months. Combining the latest Windows Phone 8.1 update with exclusive experiences for Lumia smartphones. the new Lumia Denim update will be available on both Lumia 830 and Lumia 730 at sales start, while it will roll out as an over-the-air update to all the other Lumia smartphones in Q4, 2014.

LG G3 Stylus debuts in India



Finally bringing the premium Stylus experience to Indian consumers, LG launched the much-awaited LG G3 Stylus Smartphone in India. The Stylus version of the G3 is a pen-enabled smartphone that inherits the core DNA of the acclaimed LG G3. With its large display, stylus pen and LG's proprietary camera, the new phone is a smartly-priced package that retains LG's premium user experience (UX) without a premium price. The proprietary RubberdiumTM stylus pen that slides inside the G3 Stylus feels comfortable in the hand, and complements the phone's 5.5-inch large IPS display. Jotting and sketching are easier and more precise when paired with LG's QuickMemo+ which lets users take notes or draw directly on images or maps. And the stylus is compatible with a number of third-party handwriting and drawing apps. The G3 Stylus boasts the same Floating Arc design with gradually tapered edges, thin bezels and metallic skin back cover first introduced on the LG G3. This smartphone is equipped with LG's proven 13MP shooter that carries over the G3's key camera features such as Touch & Shoot, Gesture Shot and Front Camera Light. Additional UX features that have become standard offerings across LG's newest smartphones include Dual Window, Smart Keyboard and Knock CodeTM. Optimised for various 3G markets' wireless networks, the G3 Stylus will be offered in dual SIM with NFC capability in three colors, viz, black, white and gold, and is priced at an MRP of ₹21,500.

ASUS introduces STRIX line of gaming peripherals

ASUS recently introduced a whole new breed of gaming peripherals and accessories under the Strix banner. Going beyond graphics cards, the new line of stylish peripherals includes the Strix Pro and Strix DSP gaming headsets, Strix Tactic Pro mechanical keyboard, Strix Glide gaming mouse pads and the Strix Claw optical gaming mouse. Taken from the ancient Roman and Greek word for owl, the Strix line of products imbibes three main characteristics– tactical mind, high adaptivity and keeping everything under control. The brand's team of design engineers have painstakingly crafted the Strix line of gaming peripherals with a simple objective–to create the best, stylish and feature-rich gaming gear. The line of gaming peripherals will initially be available on a back-to-back order basis, and is priced from ₹3,570 onwards.

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XOLO launches Q2100 with fingerprint sensor

Taking smartphone access and security a notch higher, XOLO, the premium smart devices brand, recently announced the launch of Q2100 with a fingerprint sensor, to safeguard personal data.
Located on the top back of the device, the built-in sensor allows users to unlock the screen and quickly access the device with the swipe of the finger.
The fingerprint sensor in the Q2100 is integrated with LastPass, the password manager app to help users access all their accounts securely with a swipe of their finger. Additionally, the device comes pre-loaded with Peel Smart Remote app that revolutionises the role of a universal smart remote. Equipped with IR Blaster, the app lets users browse what's on TV or search for shows that they would like to watch later. Apart from being a remote control for the TV and set top box, the Peel Smart Remote app can also control the functionality of your DVR, DVD player, air conditioner, and other home entertainment devices and appliances.
XOLO Q2100 offers a big screen experience with 5.5" HD IPS display and DTS surround sound technology. With this phone, users have access to vivid themes and lock screens. Featuring a quad-core 1.3 GHz CPU, loaded with LPDDR3 RAM which is twice as powerful as the old LPDDR2 RAM, Q2100 enables faster multitasking and quicker app launches.
With Exmor R™ camera sensor, an 8 MP rear camera and a 2 MP front camera, XOLO Q2100 delivers superior quality images, even in low-light conditions.
The 5P Lens with f/2.0 aperture enables sharper images and real life pictures.
A dual SIM device, XOLO Q2100 runs on Andorid 4.4 KitKat OS and the phone is protected with CORNING® Gorilla® Glass 3. Packed with the large 2800mAh battery, XOLO Q2100 ensures a big screen experience for longer.
Available only for ₹13,499 at all authorised retail counters and modern trade outlets.

TP-LINK Introduces 10400mAH portable Power Bank TL-PB10400

TP-LINK has introduced a portable power bank TL-PB10400 in India. The power bank boasts a classy design and comes with a powerful capacity of 10400mAh that ensures the smartphone to charge about 3to5 times.
The power bank also comes with dual USB ports with 5V/2A and 5V/1A allows for charging two devices simultaneously and even supports charging a tablet and a smartphone at the same time.
The TL-PB10400 features multiple protections to avoid short circuit, over-voltage, over-current, over-charge, over-discharge, and over-heating and even comes with flashlight.
The power bank supports smart devices like iPhones, iPads, Android smartphones/tablets and other 5V input USB-charged devices.

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iBall launches Slide D20 Tablet

iBall, a brand known for its innovative technology products announces yet another addition to its highly successful Terrific Performance series of Tablet Pcs–iBall Slide 3G 6095–D20. The latest 6.95" HD Display D20 keeps the design smooth and clutter-free, trailed by its lightweight and slim design with a narrow frame, making it one of the most comfortable tablets to hold. With a slew of astounding features that offer seamless and enhanced user experience, the device wears a leather–like texture back cover that perfectly fits in the palm of the hands giving it a comfortable grip. Motorised by 1.3 GHz dual core processor, iBall Slide D20 allows users to play, browse, and download apps simultaneously without any lags. A stunning 6.95–inch HD display gives an immersive viewing experience with vibrant colours and its 1GB RAM ensures grander performance. Running on the Android KitKat 4.4 version, it has excellent data storage containing built-in 8GB storage along with a Micro SD slot, which is expandable up to 32GB. The dual SIM tablet with 3G safeguards effortless and seamless connectivity and is equipped with a built-in phone receiver that lets users make and reject calls. Its 2MP rear camera with LED flash lets users capture precious moments and enjoy virtual connectivity while the VGA front camera allows for video chatting. Other connectivity options include Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, Hotspot, USB tethering and USB Internet.
The iBall Slide D20 is attractively priced at an MRP of ₹7,999.

Sony brings premium headphones with Extra Bass to India

Sony India announced the launch of a strikingly stylish Extra Bass Bluetooth headphone NFC wireless MDR-XB950BT, designed in line with the brand's commitment of best quality sound. Apart from providing superior acoustic characteristics, the product offers an optimum fit that is a crucial element for a comfortable listening experience when using headphones. Perfect for those who enjoy listening to music with extra bass with a frequency response upto 28,000Hz. MDR–XB950BT is a 40mm dynamic driver unit that delivers high quality powerful sound. Its Electro Bass Booster instantly accentuates lows to club-like levels. With charging time of four hours, the headphone delivers foot tapping music for upto 20 hours at a go.
What's more, its NFC offers a one-touch connection with smartphones and also features a built-in microphone to allow users to take calls and chat hands-free while on the move. In addition to the high music quality, MDR–XB950BT sports a slim, swivel folding style allowing for convenient storage while the pressure-relieving earpad fitting ensures extended comfort for long commutes. Available at ₹12,290, the MDR-XB950BT comes with a free premium leather carrying case for a limited period.

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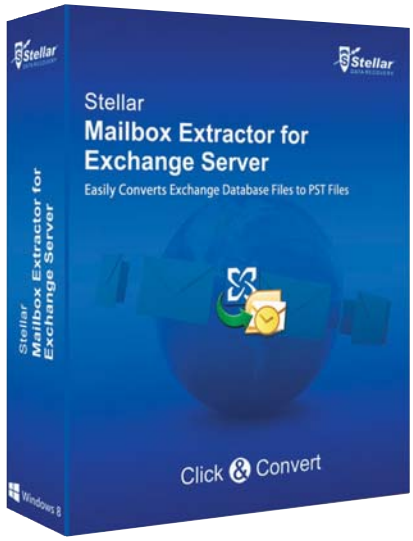
Stellar Mailbox Extractor for Exchange Server now available

Stellar Data Recovery, global leaders in providing email migration utilities, launched version 3 of their efficient tool 'Stellar Mailbox Extractor for Exchange Server'. This is an advanced tool that extracts mailboxes from MS Exchange Database and converts them to a directly importable PST file. Designed uniquely to convert both online and offline Exchange database files for a seamless conversion process, this new version can convert multiple EDB files simultaneously to make the process faster and more efficient. This secure and efficient tool is compatible with the latest MS Exchange Server 2013, and lets the user search for particular mails from the converted file, preview Emails, Contacts, Calendar, Notes, Sent items, Attachments, etc. It works well with Windows 8, 7 and Vista, and has an option to save converted data in PST, MSG, EML, HTML, RTF and PDF formats. Like most other tools from Stellar, this tool is available as a free download from: http://www.stellarinfo.com/email-tools/mailbox-extractor.php. The free version allows you to preview all the converted user mailbox items as individual PSTs. For saving these converted PST files, you can purchase the product's lifetime license at a competitive price of $399 (₹24,168) from: http://www.stellarinfo.com/email-tools/mailbox-extractor/buy-now.php.



Apple Introduces 27-inch iMac with Retina 5K Display

Apple unveiled the 27–inch iMac with Retina 5K display, featuring the world's highest resolution display with 14.7 million pixels.

At this amazing resolution, text appears sharper than ever, videos are unbelievably lifelike, and you can see new levels of detail in your photos. With the latest quad-core processors, high–performance graphics, Fusion Drive and Thunderbolt 2, iMac with Retina 5K display is the most powerful iMac ever made–it's the ultimate display combined with the ultimate all-in-one. The iMac with Retina 5K display delivers an amazingly immersive user experience. With a resolution of 5120 x 2880, iMac with Retina 5K display has four times more pixels than the standard 27–inch iMac and 67 per cent more pixels than a 4K display.

Text looks as sharp as it does on a printed page, and you can see more of your high-resolution photos with pixel-for-pixel detail. In apps like Final Cut Pro X, you can view 4K video at full size while still leaving plenty of room for your assets and editing tools.

The display on the new 27-inch iMac has been engineered for performance, power efficiency and stunning visual quality.

It comes with a 3.5 GHz quad-core Intel Core i5 processor with Turbo Boost speeds up to 3.9 GHz, and for the first time can be configured with a 4 GHz quad-core Intel Core i7 processor with Turbo Boost speeds up to 4.4 GHz. Every new iMac also comes with AMD Radeon R9 M290X graphics 8GB of memory and a 1TB Fusion Drive.

The iMac with Retina 5K Display starts from ₹179,900.

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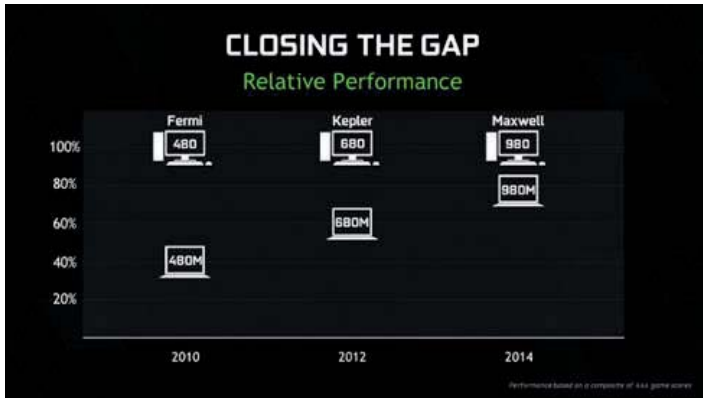
NVIDIA unveils Maxwell architecture for notebooks

NVIDIA recently unleashed an onslaught named Maxwell on the gaming world by launching the new graphics architecture during GAME24, an unprecedented 24-hour celebration of gaming. And it blew away gamers across the globe. The company held onto one big secret–which they recently revealed–the introduction of the GeForce GTX 970M and GeForce GTX 980M notebook GPUs. Maxwell, the company's 10th-generation GPU architecture, is undeniably the world's most advanced. It solves some of the most complex lighting and graphics challenges in visual computing. And it does so with twice the energy efficiency of the previous generation.



It's a combination that will pay huge dividends in notebooks. Just like the generations preceding it, GeForce GTX 980M is the world's fastest notebook GPU, a title NVIDIA has held for a long time. But how fast is it? Maxwell doubles performance compared with the first Kepler notebook GPUs on "video card killers" like Battlefield 4 and Metro: Last Light.

They are pushing the playable resolution to 2500×1400+ at ultra settings. But most notebooks don't have a native resolution that high, and this is where NVIDIA gives you more than just killer frame rates.

L337 Gaming Z97I-DRONE unveiled

Over 27 years of experience, motherboard leading manufacturer ECS proudly announced that its high-end gaming motherboard series, L337 Gaming, launched the latest Z97I-DRONE to its lineup. With the rise of the Mini ITX gaming market demand, L337 Gaming Z97I-DRONE is a wonderful choice for users from every perspective.

L337 (pronounce as LEET) is derived from ELITE. The L337 alphabet is a specialised form of symbolic writing, and the term is used as an adjective to describe formidable prowess or accomplishment, especially in the fields of online gaming.

L337 Gaming was created to dedicate efforts in developing products focused on gamers, and Z97I-DRONE is the latest member of L337 Gaming Motherboard. Equipped with Z97 Express Chipset, the Mini ITX form factor Z97I-DRONE provides 2 Dual Channel DDR3 3000+ (OC) Memory up to 16GB, 1 PCI-Express x 16 Gen. 3 Slot, and 1 M.2 Slot for Wi-Fi/Bluetooth device. In addition to enhancing the gaming experience, the "Low-to-Full USB Speed" technology designed for gamers, deliveris an optimised 8-time faster keyboard and mouse report rate from 125Hz to 1000Hz. Besides, the Z97I-DRONE introduces Intel® I218V Gigabit LAN to provide the outstanding fast LAN networking for gaming and avoid latency. In order to fulfill the higher standard ITX motherboard requested from users, L337 Gaming Z97I–DRONE equips the new Hybrid Power technology to strengthen the outstanding performance and deliver remarkable stability.

Ultra-affordable Nokia 130 comes to India

Microsoft Devices has launched the Nokia 130, the latest addition to the group's 'first phone' range. Nokia 130 boasts of a built-in video player, music player with up to 46 hours of playback on a single charge and everyday essentials including outstanding battery life, a flashlight, FM radio and USB charging, at a price of ₹1,649. It is ideal for first time mobile phone buyers or those seeking a reliable backup phone to complement their existing smartphone. Featuring a 1.8" colour display, durable design and a standby time of up to 36 days, the Nokia 130 is built to last. With the ability to store up to 6,000 songs on a 32GB SD card, users can stay entertained for longer. Besides, sharing digital content with friends and family is made easy with the Bluetooth–enabled SLAM application and USB connectivity. Available in red, black and white, the dual SIM phone can become your best rock-solid backup.

New ZOTAC ZBOX M1521 now with double performance

ZOTAC International, a global innovator and manufacturer of graphics cards and mini PCs, has injected the palm-sized ZBOX nano XS chassis with a double dose of performance to upgrade from a 4th Generation Intel Core i3 processor. The device will now deliver a dual-core punch and expansive connectivity in an extra small size for an excellent mini-PC experience. The ZBOX MI521 nano XS series is now equipped with an efficient Intel Core i3 4030U dual-core processor with Intel HD Graphics 4400, that enables dual display capabilities with standard HDMI and mini–DisplayPort outputs for maximum work productivity.

A suite of Intel technologies including Clear Video HD, InTru 3D and Quick Sync Video transforms the ZBOX MI521 nano XS series into the perfect HTPC for high quality HD video playback, including CPU-intensive Hi10P formats. Bluetooth 4.0 and 802.11ac Wi-Fi technologies round out the ZBOX MI521 nano XS series features to provide compatibility with popular input devices and high-speed network connectivity to wireless home networks.

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GIGABYTE enters Indian graphics card market

Gigabyte, world's leading premium hardware brand, has launched the full range of NVIDIA GeForce graphics cards in India with exclusive distribution partner, Ingram Micro.
Combined with technical expertise, innovative products, and superb customer service, Gigabyte is now bringing its top-notch quality products to the market, and providing Indian users the ultimate graphics experience. Speaking about this partnership, Mayank Sharma, country manager of Graphic Card Business Unit at Gigabyte, said, "For a rapidly growing emerging market like India, the extensive expertise of Ingram Micro will be a fast access for us to enter effectively into the market, and increase our presence in the country. We believe we will achieve great results together."
To ensure customer service is responded in a timely manner, Gigabyte collaborates with India's leading integrated IT services provider, Accel Frontline Ltd.
All graphics cards have a three-year carry-in warranty provided by the nearest Gigabyte Authorized Service Center. For more details, please go to www.gigabyte.in.

Apple Updates Mac mini

Apple updated Mac mini with the latest technologies and a new lower starting price, making Apple's most affordable Mac an even better value. Mac mini now features fourth generation Intel Core processors, integrated graphics that are up to 90 per cent faster, 802.11ac Wi-Fi and Thunderbolt 2 and is still the world's most energy efficient desktop. The new Mac mini delivers new levels of graphics performance, expandability and connectivity. New integrated Intel HD Graphics 5000 and Intel Iris Graphics deliver up to 90 per cent faster graphics performance than the previous generation. Mac mini is still the world's most energy efficient desktop, exceeding Energy Star 6.1 requirements by seven times the standard and consuming as few as 6 watts of power at idle. Every new Mac comes with Mac OS X Yosemite, a powerful new version of OS X, redesigned and refined with a fresh, modern look, powerful new apps and amazing new Continuity features that make working across your Mac and iOS devices more fluid than ever.
Mac mini comes in three standard models starting at ₹36,990.

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Cougar launches 600M gaming mouse

Cougar announced the release of the new 600M gaming mouse, the brand's second after the acclaimed award-winning 700M. This mouse has been specially designed to suit gamers with a claw grip, but palm and fingertip grip users will find it very comfortable too. The 600M has been designed with the clear objective of offering gamers a mouse that can provide state-of-the-art technology and an aesthetically pleasing design. Its premium components (OMRON switches, ADNS-9800 Sensor, quality soft-touch surface) guarantee a flawless performance during gameplay, and its 32–bit ARM processor and 512KB on-board storage provide virtually instantaneous responses and the possibility–without depending on any computer or external device–of keeping up to three full configuration profiles stored on board. The stylish mouse has has a floating key with a big LED backlight that can display up to 16.8 million colours. It is packed with a broad range of features like eight fully configurable buttons including a 45^0 sniper button, designed to be pressed without affecting the mouse's movements.

Motorola, Google unveil the Nexus 6

After much speculation, Google has officially announced the Nexus 6. , Motorola has worked with Google's Android team to bring a bigger and a better phone, featuring Android 5.0 Lollipop. It has more screen, more speed and more power.

The Nexus 6 features a six-inch Quad HD display that is great for watching, reading and playing. Some of the other features include a 3220 mAh long-lasting battery with Motorola Turbo Charger that gives a quick burst of power when needed.

Additionally, the phone has a 13 megapixel camera with Optical Image Stabilization, HDR and 4K video recording support.

Rounding up the hardware sheet is Snapdragon 805 2.7GHz quad-core processor, Wi-Fi 802.11ac, Bluetooth 4.1, LTE support and up to 64GB internal memory

The Nexus 6 is now on pre-order in the US through the Google Play Store with no word on the availability for the Indian market.

Lifesize Cloud now available in India through Redington

Redington (India) Limited, a leading end-to-end supply chain provider in the IT and lifestyle products sector, recently announced that it will offer Lifesize Cloud in India. A division of Logitech, Lifesize recently announced the availability of Lifesize Cloud solution. Targeted at businesses, it is the perfect blend of software, hardware, service and UX that provides a connected experience to smartphone, tablet and PC users.
Since they launched the cloud-based video-conferencing solution in India a couple of months ago, the demand for their differentiated offering–which gives people a connected experience across devices and conference rooms–has skyrocketed. "Understandably, there is a real need for video communication that is simple to use and encourages natural conversation, whether instantly or scheduled. The strong initial interest for Lifesize Cloud made the decision to extend this solution to our global base an easy one," said Gagan Verma, regional director, India and SAARC region of Lifesize.

With this solution, end-to-end cloud video conferencing is made simpler by connecting to the brand's award–winning room video systems and mobile apps. "With Lifesize Cloud, our partners can address their customers' demands for intuitive scaleable video conferencing that can seamlessly connect people with the conference room and with each other," added Anand Chakravarthy, head-Strategic Business Unit of Redington. Supporting up to 25 video participants per call, annual subscription plans start at $25 (₹1,534) for one user per month.

ASRock launches H91M-PLUS Motherboard

ASRock has launched a new entry level mATX sized board named H91M-PLUS. The motherboard bundles a year's subscription of ASRock Cloud – Orbweb ME Professional, worth ₹3,067
This personal Cloud service allows users to always stay connected and remotely control their PC anywhere, anytime. Edit files, browse photos or do whatever you normally do on your personal computer with a tablet, smart phone or other devices.
Users can also avail an additional one month upgrade by entering "ASR2014B" promotional code at the registration page.

ASRock H91M-PLUS is an all solid capacitor motherboard built around Intel's H81 chipset and supports 4th generation LGA 1150 CPUs. Besides the basic PCIe x16 and x1 slots, there are also two SATA3 ports and two SATA2 ports, plus eight USB 2.0 and another two USB 3.0 ports for probably more than reasonable expandability. Other hardware specifications include D-Sub + DVI combo for multiple graphics output, Realtek gigabit LAN and additional ELNA audio capacitors for better audio experience. Furthermore, classic ASRock features also make the cut on H91M-PLUS like Crashless BIOS, Dehumidifier that prevents dampness from damaging your beloved system.

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Apple Introduces iPad Air

Apple introduced iPad Air 2, the thinnest and most powerful iPad ever. Now just 6.1 mm thin and weighing less than a pound, iPad Air 2 features an improved Retina display for enhanced contrast and richer, more vibrant colours, and better cameras for taking stunning photos and videos. Available in gold, silver and space grey, the new iPad Air 2 and iPad mini 3 offer Touch ID so users can unlock their iPad with just the touch of a finger and make purchases easily and securely within apps.

Engineered for unmatched portability and ease of use, iPad Air 2 offers a beautiful, precision unibody enclosure of anodised aluminium for durability and a solid feel.

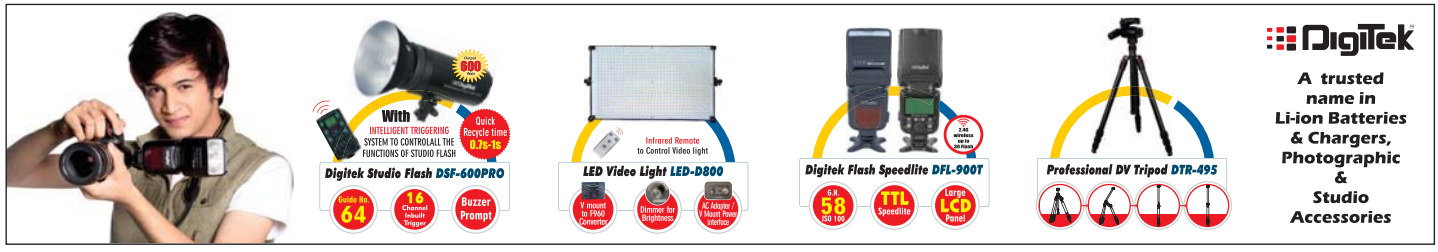
A custom-designed anti-reflective coating reduces glare by 56 percent for a clearer display in the office, the classroom or outdoors.

iPad Air 2 is powered by the new Apple-designed A8X chip, which delivers a 40 per cent improvement in CPU performance and 2.5 times the graphics performance of iPad Air, and still delivers the up to 10-hour battery life. iPad Air 2 also includes the M8 motion coprocessor that gathers motion data from the accelerometer, gyroscope, compass and an all-new barometer which senses air pressure to provide relative elevation.

Innovations to the iSight and FaceTime HD cameras in iPad Air 2 enable better photos and videos, with an 8MP sensor and advanced optics in the iSight camera to help capture rich, detailed images and add new features including panoramic in Photos, time–lapse video, slo-mo and 1080p HD video. The FaceTime HD camera now captures over 80 per cent more light than iPad Air's camera, and features burst mode as well as HDR stills and video. With thousands of powerful apps that take advantage of iPad's amazing cameras and large Retina display viewfinder, iPad becomes a tool that can scan and annotate documents, help study the sky above and provide athletic performance analysis–all with just a tap.

The new iPads come with iOS 8.1 including Continuity features across iOS 8 and OS X Yosemite that enable all your Apple products to work together seamlessly. Handoff lets you start an activity on one device and pass it to another, and when your iPhone is on the same Wi-Fi network, you can make and receive phone calls right from your iPad.

Starting at ₹17,900, the variants are now being offered at more affordable prices.



CD Contents

November 2014

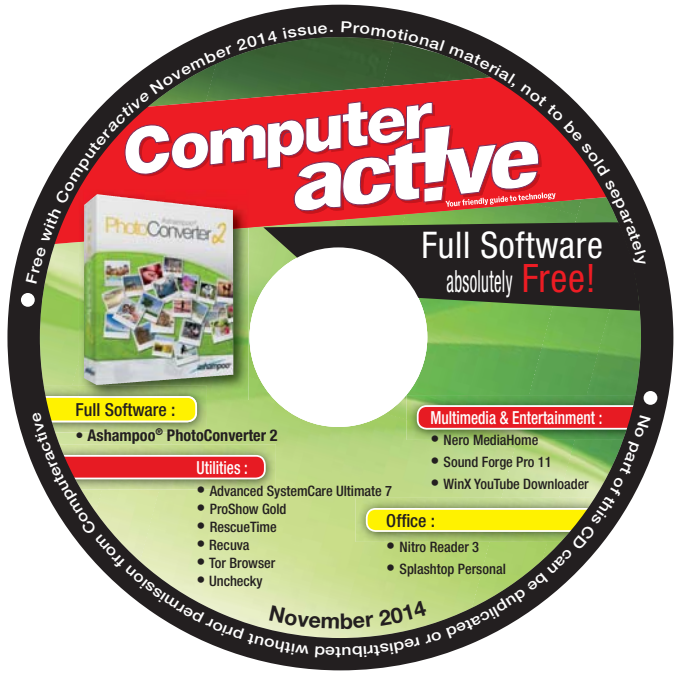
From the Editor

Dear Readers,

This month we bundle Ashampoo's Photo Converter 2 that is touted to be the one stop shop for all your photo processing needs. The CD also includes Splashtop Personal that allows users to stream their PC to any other PC or even a mobile device. You'll also find that open-source software which brings protection when you surf the internet, and Unchecky, RescueTime and Recuva to improve your productivity.

EDITOR

PS:-Please reach us on ca@nextgenpublishing.net with your suggestions. Some of the software provided on this disc requires a product key from the publisher.



Full Software :

- **ASHAMPOO® PHOTO CONVERTER 2**

Utilities :

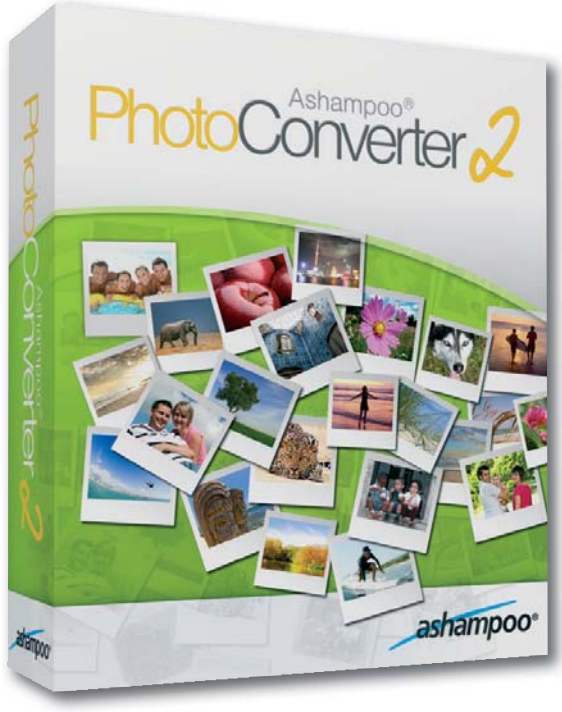
- **Advanced SystemCare Ultimate 7**
- **ProShow Gold**
- **RescueTime**
- **Recuva**
- **Tor Browser**
- **Unchecky**

Multimedia & Entertainment :

- **Nero MediaHome**
- **Sound Forge Pro 11**
- **WinX YouTube Downloader**

Office :

- **Nitro Reader 3**
- **Splashtop Personal**



Best Free Software

PC CLEANER

Wise Care 365

www.wisecleaner.com/wisecare365.html

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8

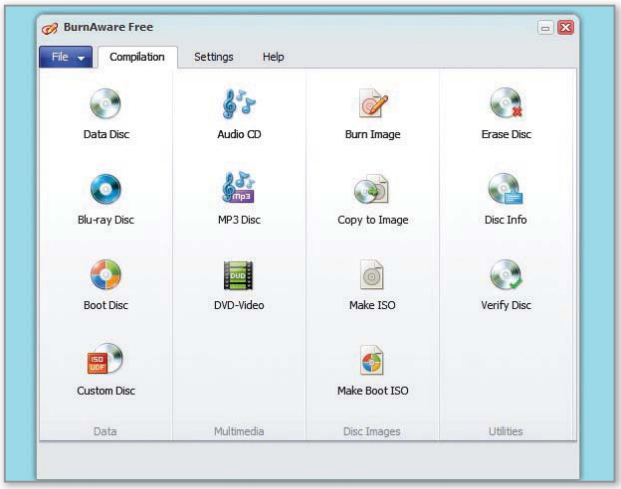
Remove hidden junk, back up all your files and disable annoying processes with this simple but very powerful free program. Its dashboard contains five tabs: PC Checkup, which scans your computer for junk files, crash logs and other digital leftovers; System Cleaner, where you can view and delete unnecessary Registry clutter; System Tuneup, where you can disable settings that slow down your computer; Privacy Protector, which scans for security risks; and Wise Utilities, where you can download extra tools including a Program Uninstaller and Folder Hider. PC Checkup and ystem Tuneup are probably the two sections you'll use most. The PC Checkup scan is quick but thorough. It lists your PC's 'useless files' (mostly program files), lets you delete the junk and gives your PC a Health Index score. System Tuneup lets you disable annoying Windows processes such as error messages. To remove the privacy risks found in Privacy Protector, you need to upgrade to the paid version (£23.98 for three PCs), but let's not quibble – the free version of Wise Care 365 is a superb program that combines elements of long-standing favourites such as CCleaner and Glary Utilities and could become your next essential tool.

1 The PC Checkup tab opens by default. Click Check Up Now to scan for obsolete Windows files, invalid shortcuts and other PC junk. The scan takes a couple of minutes.

2 Click Clean to remove "useless files" from your PC. Your PC Health Index score will increase immediately. Move on to the other tabs to boost your score even further.

3 The System Cleaner tab reveals which programs and files are clogging up your computer's Registry. You must back up your system before running System Cleaner.

4 The System Tuneup tab reveals which settings are slowing down your PC. Untick any settings that you want to keep. Click Optimize to clear all the rest.



DVD-COPYING TOOL

BurnAware 7.0

www.burnaware.com

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8

Back up all your documents, photos and files to DVD or CD to make sure that you never lose them, even if your PC is wiped. BurnAware simplifies the process of creating bootable data DVDs, ISO files and disc images for backing up your entire PC or some of your data or software. You can also create high-quality video DVDs and audio CDs for saving and sharing your home videos and favourite music. Make sure you un-tick the 'Use AVG Security Toolbar' option in the installation wizard.

FILE-ENCRYPTION TOOL

Quick Crypt

www.valkovatech.net

What you need: Windows Vista, 7 or 8

Encrypt a file for maximum security with this tiny, portable tool. Select or drag any file (up to 20MB in size) onto the Quick Crypt box, choose a password, type a password hint just in case you forget the password, and click Encrypt File. From that moment on, no-one or nothing (including the Quick Crypt servers) can view or open the file without the password. You can also set an expiry date, after which neither you nor anyone will be able to view the file. You can keep it on a USB stick or in your cloud service and run it from there on any PC.

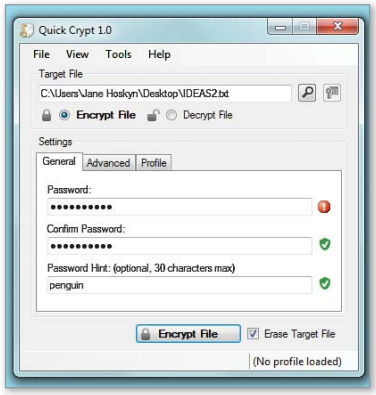


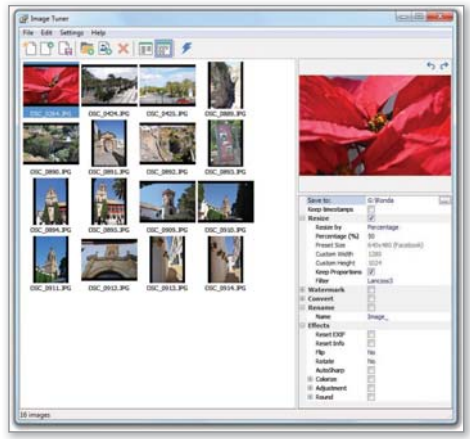
IMAGE EDITOR

Image Tuner 4.7

www.glorylogic.com/image-tuner

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7 or 8

Edit multiple photos at once with this fast, easy-to-use tool. Select a batch or folder of photos and apply the same action to them all, such as renaming them in a sequence, converting them from one or more file formats to another (lots are supported, including RAW camera formats) and resizing them to your chosen dimensions or to fit a template. You can also sharpen, crop, rotate and even add a customised logo to your photos, and export a list of them for safe-keeping.



WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

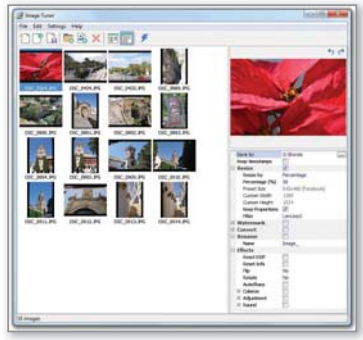
What's the best stand-in for Microsoft Publisher?

Q **I use Kingsoft Office Free as my main office software, now that Microsoft Office 2003 is no longer supported. The one thing Kingsoft lacks is an equivalent to MS Office Publisher. What free software should I use to replace Publisher?**

Parikshit Jain

A You can still get Publisher with Office 365 (http://office.microsoft.com), but only if you buy an expensive business subscription – and there are free programs that do the job better anyway.

Serif PagePlus (www.snipca.com/12197) is very easy to use, and ideal for creating greetings cards and posters.



For more professional results, try the new version of Scribus (www.scribus.net). Scribus is harder to learn than Publisher or PagePlus, but its tools rival the likes of Adobe InDesign or QuarkXPress.

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

Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Adobe Flash flaws

What happened?

Adobe released fixes for a flaw in Flash that hackers could use to gain access to your computer.

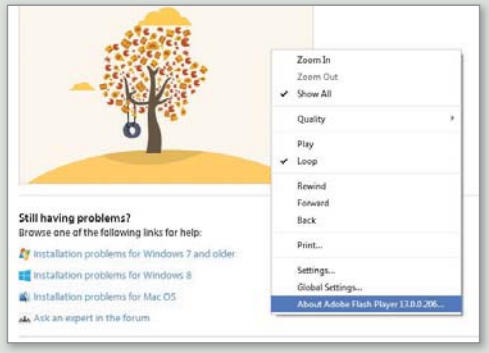
The company didn't release many details about the flaw, but it seems that it allowed criminals to perform a remote code execution. You could have been infected simply by watching a Flash file in your browser. For Windows, Adobe labelled the updates 'Priority 1', its highest level, and warned that they are 'critical' (read how the company rates the severity of security flaws at www.snipca.com/12019). For Linux the update is set at 'Priority 3', the lowest level. These updates should be installed "at your discretion".

Some security experts suspect that criminals would have been able to exploit the flaw before Adobe fixed it. Writing on Sophos's Naked Security blog (http://nakedsecurity.sophos.com), Paul Ducklin said that Adobe "may have known about this bug for some time" through a process called responsible disclosure. Ducklin says this is "where a security company finds a hole itself, or has the hole reported by someone who doesn't go public right away, and then fixes it within a reasonable period, deferring public discussion of the details of the bug until a patch is out".

What should I do?

First, find out which version of Flash you use at www.adobe.com/software/flash/about, or by right-clicking content running in Flash Player and selecting 'About Adobe (or Macromedia) Flash Player' (see screenshot). Next, read Adobe's Security Bulletin (www.snipca.com/12017) to see which versions of Flash are vulnerable. If you use any of these, check whether you need to get the patch immediately from the Adobe Download Center (www.adobe.com/support/flashplayer/downloads.html), or if you should have received the update automatically.

This flaw has nothing to do with the Flash vulnerability that leaves Internet Explorer open to attack .



New tools

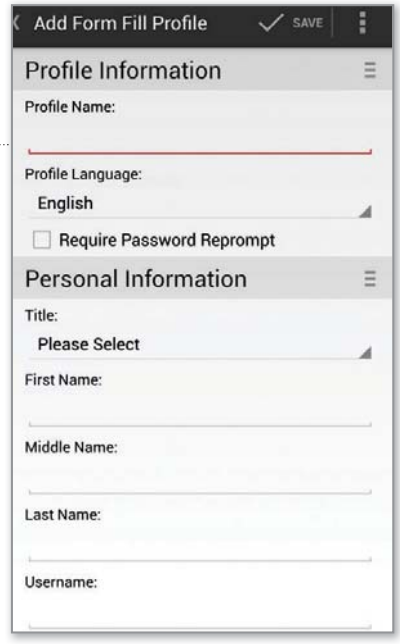
LastPass Android app

www.snipca.com/12005

When we named LastPass our favourite password-management program in the last issue, we had one minor gripe – that its app didn't automatically fill in passwords if you used Chrome to search the web on your device.

Happily, LastPass has updated the app so it does just that, although only for devices running Android 4.3 (the third version of Jelly Bean). The app also now automatically fills in log-in details for apps you use on your device, as long as it runs Android 4.1 (the first version of Jelly Bean).

The app is part of LastPass's Premium service (https://lastpass.com/go-premium), which costs $12 a year (around Rs.720/- a bargain in our opinion). You can try it for free for 14 days. Read LastPass's blog for more information: www.snipca.com/12007.



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Konica Minolta Inc., Tokyo, Japan.

SMARTPHONE

Apple iPhone 6 Plus

Apple finally makes a big-screen phone and it's a winner

Computer active BUY IT! ★★★★★

While other companies have been releasing bigger and bigger smartphones, Apple had steadfastly refused to follow suit, but the company has now given in – and in a very big way. The iPhone 6 Plus is easily one of the biggest phablets we've ever seen, with its screen measuring 5.5". Although there are phablets with even bigger screens, the Plus is larger because it has to make room for its fingerprint reader and other sensors. It's so big, the iPhone 5s can fit inside the boundaries of the screen with room to spare.

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM

The Plus has a thin aluminium build with curved edges. Some users have reported that it can easily be bent out of shape, such as when sitting down with the phone in your pocket. We found that our review phone survived everyday use without so much as a scratch or dent, all without a case.

The screen has a resolution of 1920x1080 pixels and it's easily one of the best smartphone screens we've seen. It's dazzlingly bright with exceptional colour accuracy, so photos and high-definition videos look great, while text is very sharp. You can adjust the resolution settings to show either as much text as possible, or to show less text but at a bigger size – useful if you have imperfect eyesight.

Some built-in apps have been updated to make use of the higher resolution. For example, when used in horizontal orientation Mail shows your inbox alongside your currently selected email, while Safari shows a Desktop-style tab bar and all your bookmarks alongside your current web page.

The screen's height and width makes one-handed use very difficult, but Apple has made some modifications to iOS 8 to make it a little less unwieldy. For example, double-tapping the Home button shifts the contents of the screen downwards, making controls at the top of the screen easier to reach, although controls on the far side of the screen still require stretching your thumb across, which is awkward. There's no getting around the fact that the Plus is much more uncomfortable to use single-handed–especially if you have small hands–than previous iPhones.

The increased dimensions necessitated by the big screen have been put to good use, though. There's now room for a massive battery which lasted an incredibly lengthy 40 hours when used for a mixture of web browsing on 3G and Wi-Fi, photography, GPS and making calls. When playing videos on a loop, it lasted just under 13 hours. This is one of the longest battery times we've seen.

There's also now room to include optical stabilisation in the camera which helps reduce blurriness in low-light photos. It also helps smooth out any juddering when filming, such as when you're walking or attempting to keep track of fast-moving subjects such as excitable children and pets.

The camera is better than ever in other ways too. Details were sharp, even in low light, and noise was kept to a minimum, while colours

were captured faithfully. It was surprisingly fast at focusing, so it took far fewer out-of-focus shots and videos than other smartphone cameras we've tested. The slow-motion video recording introduced in the 5s is now better, capturing smoother, more detailed results. It's a little gimmicky, but lots of fun. Obviously, the Plus's camera still can't match a good CSC or DSLR, but it's excellent for a smartphone.

Like the 5s, the 6 Plus has a dedicated chip, called the M8, for tracking motion data, so it can act as a basic fitness tracker. It has a built-in barometer, so it can keep track of how many flights of stairs you've climbed or how far up you've cycled or jogged.

In our tests, it was generally accurate, although it sometimes missed a flight of stairs or two.

Like the iPhone 5s, the 6 Plus has a fingerprint scanner which you can use instead of a passcode to unlock your phone. Thanks to iOS 8, apps can now use the fingerprint scanner too. For example, you can set Evernote and 1Password to require your fingerprint before launching, which provides an extra layer of security. Performance – whether in apps, 3D games or web apps – was very fast thanks to the 1.4GHz A8 dual-core processor – better than any other phone we've tested. Its table-topping performance is all the more impressive given that the Plus only has 1GB of memory - Android phones with similar performance tend to have two or three times as much. Call quality hasn't been forgotten. When connected to O2's network in central London, voices sounded very clear, while the background ruckus of a nearby building site was effectively filtered.

iOS 8

Last year's iOS 7 dramatically changed the way the iPhone's operating system looked, but it worked much as it did before. iOS 8 (also available free for older iPhones dating back to the 4s), on the other hand, introduces many new features that change the way the iPhone works.

There's a lot more Android-style flexibility for starters. Apple's keyboard is better than before with more accurate autocorrect predictions, but you can replace it with a host of alternative keyboards from the App Store if you want. You can now also add widgets to the notifications drawer.

Apps can now have what Apple calls extensions, so the features of one app are now available within another. For example, you can now access your files stored on online storage services, such as Dropbox and OneDrive, directly from within other apps. You can also edit your photos in Apple's Photos app using the tools from third-party image editors. Apps have to explicitly support extensions, with some popular apps already updated. Households with multiple iOS devices will appreciate the Family Sharing feature.

This lets up to six people share an Apple account, in addition to their own, so they don't have to buy the same apps, music, videos and ebooks from Apple's stores more than once. There's no need to worry about the kids racking up huge bills downloading games and movies, though, as the 'Ask To Buy' setting means any attempted purchases have to be approved by you from your device first. Not all apps work with Family Sharing, though, as each app developer has to permit this.

Handoff is a clever feature that allows you to start a task on the 6 Plus and complete it on another iOS device (as long as it has Bluetooth LE). For example, you can start reading a really long web page or typing an email on the train, and then finish it on your iPad with its bigger screen when you get home. Handoff-capable apps appear as small icons on the lock screen and app switcher of the second iOS device - tapping them opens the app and lets you pick up immediately from where you left off on the 6 Plus. It's a surprisingly useful feature.

You can also act upon notifications, such as replying to a text message or ticking off a reminder on your to-do list, without leaving your current app. There are many more new features in iOS 8 which we don't have room to cover here.

The huge size and high cost of the iPhone 6 Plus won't suit everybody, but if you want a big-screened phone then it is the best available. Its high-quality screen, fast performance, lengthy battery life and refined operating system make it a joy to use.

VERDICT: Expensive, but this is an exceptional phablet in almost every way

★★★★★

INFO: http://apple.com/in

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive's reviewers follow strict guidelines to ensure the opinions expressed in the magazine are fair, accurate and independent. Every product or service we review is thoroughly examined and tested by experts.

The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests and is never told the result of a review prior to publication. Please note that our reviews grade products, not customer service. We welcome feedback on our reviews – send us an email to ca@nextgenpublishing.net

OUR STAR RATINGS

We provide a clear verdict for every product we review. Each verdict is accompanied by a star rating. Here's what those stars mean:

An excellent purchase	★★★★★
A good purchase	★★★★☆
OK by us	★★★☆☆
Below average quality	★★☆☆☆
Very poor quality	★☆☆☆☆

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PRICES

The prices we print are the suggested retail prices set by the manufacturer. Products can often be found much cheaper on the internet or in shops.

TECHNICAL TERMS AND JARGON

While we try to keep our reviews free from technical language or jargon, it is sometimes unavoidable. See the Jargon Buster column for concise explanations of highlighted words.

SMARTPHONE

BlackBerry Passport

Unusual design with focus on productivity

Given the number of smartphones we've seen this year, BlackBerry has not made its presence felt so far. But, the brand brought out the Z3 recently for consumers to get a taste of the BlackBerry 10 OS, and the company is trying to lure the extreme end with the BlackBerry Passport.

The first thing you'll notice about the BlackBerry Passport is the design. It does not look like your average smartphone because its design has been inspired by a real passport. According to smartphone brand, a passport is the ultimate expression of mobility, and BlackBerry Passport aims to bring it in its latest offering.

Though the device is wider than a regular smartphone, we found the phone to be comfortable to use, albeit with the use of both hands to type. The front is covered by a huge screen with a physical keyboard beneath it and a metal frame on the sides for durability. The back also has a matte finish that enables a good grip to the device.

BlackBerry Passport has a square 4.5-inch display with a resolution of 1440x1440 pixels and an aspect ratio of 1:1. The phone's resolution and aspect ratio makes it easier to load the content without having to scroll up or down, and zoom or change the display orientation.

There has been a concern about watching videos on the Passport due to the aspect ratio, but the default video app allows users to watch the content in 1:1, full screen and even in the original aspect ratio. As for the quality, the display is clear and vivid, with good brightness and a comfortable viewing angle.

However, we feel the phone's biggest highlight is the keyboard. Sure, BlackBerry's physical keyboards are one of the best, the brand has further improvised by transforming it to full touch. The whole keyboard area works as a trackpad that can be used to scroll the web pages so as to not hinder the reading experience. You can even flick or slide the words. The flicking works similar to that function in previous BlackBerry 10 OS devices. BlackBerry has also improved its BlackBerry Hub, and comes equipped with other goodies like BBM, BlackBerry Blend and BlackBerry Protect.

What's more, the Passport has an amazing voice calling quality, thanks to its BlackBerry Natural Sound Technology. Powering the phone is Qualcomm's Snapdragon 801 2.2GHz quad-core processor with 3GB RAM and since BlackBerry 10 OS is highly resource-efficient, it's a breeze to use the device. Passport feels blazingly fast along with the gestures working flawlessly. The OS also supports installing of Android apps and the deal with Amazon to integrate the Appstore makes it even sweeter. Users can side-load apps or directly purchase and install the apps from a regular app store.

The Passport features a 3450mAh battery that gives about 14 hours of talk time with moderate use, and sports 32GB internal memory and a microSD card slot for further expansion. The 13 megapixel camera with Optical Image Stabilization (OIS) takes some good quality pictures and features back illumination for better low light images. The Passport can shoot videos in Full HD 1080p resolution, which we feel is a waste of the powerful hardware that can easily support up to 4K video recording.

The Passport has been created with professionals and globe-trotting businessmen in mind, and though the unusual design will keep many from trying out the device, Passport can prove handy with its physical keyboard and long battery life.

BlackBerry Passport is priced at ₹49,990.

VERDICT: A good phone with excellent keyboard, battery life

★★★½☆

INFO: http://blackberry.com

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GRAPHICS CARD

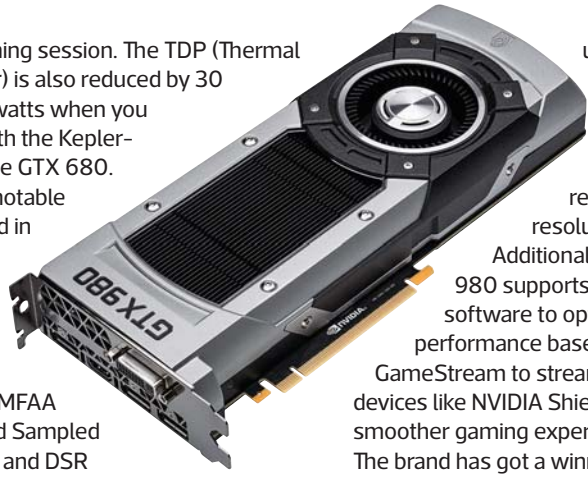
NVIDIA GeForce GTX 980

NVIDIA'S powerful GPU based on Maxwell architecture

Companies generally opt to launch a high-end product to showcase its new technology. However, in case of NVIDIA, they shifted to it's 10th-gen graphics architecture—Maxwell by launching an entry-level model. The company is now catering to the other extreme end of the spectrum as well with the introduction of GeForce GTX 980.

The GPU is top-of-the-line card from NVIDIA and greatly improves on performance from its previous generation, Kepler while bringing a few new things to the table. Despite the fact that a component like graphics card sits in the PC case, NVIDIA hasn't compromised on the design. The card is 10.5-inches long, similar to previous NVIDIA GTX cards and has an illuminated branding at the side that looks pretty cool if you've a see-through PC case.

The biggest improvement NVIDIA claims is the performance-to-power ratio. The brand has re-balanced the design of the Maxwell architecture so that the card fully uses CUDA cores more often that helps in saving power while improving performance. The card consumes about 80 watts of power while idle and about 300 watts during a graphic intensive gaming session. The TDP (Thermal Design Power) is also reduced by 30 watts to 165 watts when you compare it with the Kepler-based GeForce GTX 680.



Some of the notable features found in the GeForce GTX 980 are VXGI (Voxel Global Illumination), MFAA (Multi-Framed Sampled Anti-Aliasing) and DSR (Direct Super Resolution). VXGI greatly improves the complex lighting in the games giving it a more realistic effect. The MFAA gives a further performance boost by sampling patterns across pixels both within an individual frame and between multiple frames. This results in an improved image quality that is said to be 4 times better than the conventional anti-aliasing technique. DSR on the other hand helps to render games at high-resolution, say 4K, and scale down to user's 1080p Full HD monitor that gives better looking images than you'd see on an image rendered in Full HD resolution.

Additionally, the GeForce GTX 980 supports GeForce Experience software to optimise the game performance based on the hardware, GameStream to stream PC games on devices like NVIDIA Shield and G-Sync for smoother gaming experience.

The brand has got a winner in its hands with the GeForce GTX 980 that delivers on the performance front as well as power efficiency. The card sells for ₹46,000 in India.

VERDICT: Powerful graphics card with low power consumption

★★★½☆

INFO: http://nvidia.in

MOTHERBOARD

ECS Deluxe Z97-PK

ECS' latest motherboard with overclocking support

Overclocking a PC can significantly increase the performance of the computer but it requires a little knowledge unless you want to 'fry' the chip. ECS with its latest Deluxe Z97-PK motherboard wants to make overclocking a piece of cake. Moreover, make it highly affordable for PC enthusiasts who are a little tight on the budget.

The new motherboard is designed for Intel's 20th anniversary Pentium processors and though it is compatible with a variety of Intel processors, the motherboard has been created with G3258 in mind.

The motherboard has a feature called One Key OC that can be used to overclock the G3258 dual-core CPU to up to 4.7GHz. Surprisingly, there's no physical button to overclock the CPU but can be done from the BIOS menu by selecting the presets.

Furthermore, the Z97-PK features 4 RAM slots supporting up to 32GB, HDMI 1.4a, support for 4K display and EZ-Charger

support that charges USB devices quickly.

The Z97-PK is a budget board and if you're planning to build a budget PC with the liberty to overclock, the Z97-PK could prove handy.

VERDICT: Z97-PK gives the overclocking benefit at a pocket-friendly price

★★★★☆

INFO: http://ecs.com.tw

SMARTPHONE

Apple iPhone 6

Smaller-sized sibling of the new iPhone family

Apple's general rule of thumb with respect to iPhone was to launch a single iPhone every year and bank on users to adopt the platform with older devices at a reduced price. Things however, changed since last year with the introduction of two iPhones - iPhone 5c and iPhone 5s. While iPhone 5c was essentially a colourful variant of the iPhone 5, iPhone 5s was the true successor that carried the iPhone legacy.

This year, as a change in strategy and serious competition from other manufacturers, Apple introduced two iPhones this year. We take an in-depth look at Apple's iPhone 6 after being fairly impressed with the iPhone 6 Plus (see pg 36).

The iPhone 6 is the 'smaller' of the two iPhones Apple announced and to be honest, we're not sure if we'll categorise the iPhone 6 as small. Although it's considerably smaller in size compared to the iPhone 6 Plus, the iPhone 6 easily towers over existing iPhones. Just like previous iPhones, the iPhone 6 is beautifully designed with glass on the front and coloured matte finish on the back. The iPhone 6 weighs just 129 grams and Apple even managed to slim it down to just 6.9mm, 0.2mm thinner than the iPhone 6 Plus. The thinness also makes the camera at the back to protrude slightly, which we fear could scratch the glass protecting the camera lens over time.

The display size on the iPhone 6 is 4.7-inches and not only Apple bumped the size of the screen but also increased the display resolution. The iPhone 6 now comes with Retina HD Display supporting 1334x750 pixels and a pixel density of 326ppi, keeping the pixel density same as previous Retina Display-equipped iPhones. The brightness level of the iPhone 6 is same as previous iPhones but has an improved contrast ratio of 1400:1. The display of the iPhone 6 is amazing with great colour reproduction and good viewing angles. The text and images also look sharp and crisp.

One thing about Apple is that they don't go heavy with the hardware in the marketing material and iPhone 6 is no different.

The only official thing we know about its processing capabilities is the new Apple A8 that supports 64-bit processing and is presumed to have 1GB of RAM, according a recent teardown by iFixit (http://goo.gl/Avxh7M). Despite the hardware that could be termed as 'mediocre' if it were an Android device, the iPhone 6 works exceptionally well. Apple has done a lot of work to optimise the iOS 8 and feels butter smooth on the device. The games work pretty good as well and with Metal - Apple's new technology for games - the games can deliver complex visual effects with detailed graphics.

The battery life is okay and in our tests, the iPhone 6 gave us around 12 hours of battery life.

iOS 8 also introduced couple of iPhone 6-family centric features like Display Zoom that magnifies the OS for better readability and Reachability that brings the top bar of the screen to the center with two taps on the Home button. Speaking of the Home button, the iPhone 6 also comes with a fingerprint sensor aka Touch ID hidden beneath the Home button. Touch ID allows users to unlock the phone with just their finger or even purchase content from the iTunes App Store.

Using the camera is a treat on the iPhone 6. It has an 8 megapixel sensor at the back with backside illumination (BSI) that helps with the low-light photos. The colours are good with low-level noise and has a really easy to use user interface. The camera can record Full HD videos in 30 or 60 fps and even Slo-mo videos in 120 or 240 fps. The front-facing FaceTime camera sports a 1.2 megapixel sensor with 720p HD video recording support

All said and done, we feel that although iPhone 6 supercedes the iPhone 5s, it's not the true successor. iPhone 6 is more like the compact version of the iPhone 6 Plus with a shorter battery life and reduced number of pixels. However, the thing that works in favour of the iPhone 6 is its more manageable and if you're upgrading from an existing iPhone, the size feels right in the hands.

The iPhone 6 starts from ₹ 52,500 in India through Rashi Peripherals and other retailers.

VERDICT: Good performance and size but lacks some of the goodness found in the iPhone 6 Plus

★★★★½

INFO: http://apple.com/in

TABLET

Samsung Galaxy Tab S 10.5

A quality 10-inch Android tablet let down by some niggling flaws

Back in September 2014 issue we reviewed the Galaxy Tab S 8.4, a superb Android tablet with a screen so good that it even surpassed the outstanding screen of the iPad Mini 2, which is already great, in quality.

The 10-inch counterpart of the Tab S has now arrived and while it's obviously similar to the smaller Tab S, it has a few unique flaws of its own that prevent it from beating the 10-inch iPad Air.

The Tab S 10.5 looks almost identical to its smaller relative. It has a soft-touch surface on its rear and what appears to be a metal rim, but is actually plastic. The white version looks a little tacky, but the 'bronze titanium' variant, which is really just grey with a gold trim, looks surprisingly stylish.

The Tab S 10.5 may not be all-metal like the iPad Air, but it feels almost as sturdy and it's just as light at 465g. Despite its exceptionally slender built, it still has room for a microSD card slot. Disappointingly, though, it doesn't have a micro USB 3.0 port like the Galaxy Note 3 phablet. This would greatly reduce the amount of time needed for copying lots of files from your computer.

The Tab S 10.5 does have a few design flaws, though. The two unsightly holes on the back of the tablet are used for attaching Samsung's optional cases, which double as screen covers, but these can easily come off when jostled in a bag.

The tablet has very thin borders on the left- and right-hand sides when held horizontally, which makes it tricky to get a firm, comfortable grip. This isn't a problem if you hold the tablet in portrait orientation where the borders are thicker, but here it's far too easy to accidentally press the touch-sensitive back and 'recent apps' buttons on one side, or the power button on the other, which is very annoying.

The 10.5-inch screen has a huge resolution of 2560x1440 pixels so text is very sharp. The screen uses AMOLED technology so it's dazzlingly bright, but thankfully doesn't have any of the sharpness or colour—accuracy problems of older AMOLED screens.

Like the Tab S 8.4, the 10.5 excelled in our app tests, but sometimes struggled when it came to responsiveness. The touchscreen occasionally lagged behind our finger movements when we scrolled through multimedia websites and web apps. We had no complaints about battery life - it lasted an impressive 14 hours and 20 minutes when playing videos on a loop.

Samsung has added its own TouchWiz interface on top of Android 4.4 KitKat. Although it's less cluttered than previous versions, we still don't like it. There are calendar and news widgets that you can't remove, but you can of course ignore them. The bar running along the bottom of the homescreen for holding your most frequently used apps has been removed, as has the option to have multiple user accounts. There is at least a substitute for the latter in the form of Kid's Mode—a child-oriented alternative interface that also prevents little ones from tampering with your apps and data.

TouchWiz isn't all bad. You can adjust a wide variety of settings such as screen rotation from the Notifications drawer with just a few taps. You can also run a small selection of apps simultaneously side by side and there's a handy file—manager app for copying files back and forth between the tablet and online storage services such as Dropbox. More unusual is SideSync, a pair of apps that let you control your tablet using your computer's keyboard and mouse.

The Galaxy Tab S 10.5 is one of the best 10-inch Android tablets. This only makes its flaws – from its ungainly physical design, to its questionable software—all the more irritating. Still, if you can live with these drawbacks it's a good-value tablet.

VERDICT: Lightweight with excellent battery life, but let down by some design flaws

★★★★☆

INFO: http://samsung.com/in

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SMARTPHONE

Sony Xperia Z3 Compact

Small but powerful

There seems to be an increase in display size with every flagship smartphone coming in the market. However, there's a considerable demand for phones having a display under 5-inches. Sony seems to realise it, which is why they've come up with a more powerful Xperia Z3 Compact, months after they released the Z1 Compact.

Unlike the mini variants from the competition, Sony's 'compact' phones are powerful as the flagship device but with a smaller display size. Speaking of display, the Z3 Compact features a 4.6-inch 1280x720 pixel display, which may feel a few pixels less considering how the smartphones are going Full HD but the IPS display is good enough to make text and images look sharp. The display offers good viewing angles and brightness as well.

This device hails from the Z3 family and it's understandable that Sony has hardly changed the design of the Xperia Z3 Compact from the Xperia Z3. The phone is covered with tempered glass on both the sides with rounded corners on all the sides to absorb impacts in case of a fall. Adding to the phone's durability is Ingress Protection (IP) support and is certified with IP65/68 rating for protection against water (1.5m deep for up to 30 minutes) and dust (provided all ports and covers are tightly sealed). Overall, the design has undergone a subtle change from the Z2/Z1 Compact but then again, why change it if the current design is accepted by the users?

The Xperia Z3 Compact sports Qualcomm's Snapdragon 801 2.5GHz quad-core processor, which is the same as Xperia Z3 and 2GB RAM. Needless to say, the phone blazes through regular usage and even does a commendable job during processing and graphic intensive tasks. The battery on the Xperia Z3 Compact is non-removable 2600mAh and manages to give about 16 hours of run time on a regular workday with calls, internet surfing, music and few minutes of videos.

The phone runs Android 4.4.4, the good thing about Sony's user interface is that it is close to stock Android. The customisations don't feel obtrusive, unlike some of the other skins implemented by other Android manufacturers.

The Xperia Z3 Compact is equipped with 1.2/3" Exmor RS sensor that is touted to be one of the biggest sensors found on a smartphone and can shoot pictures in up to 20.3 megapixel resolution. The camera boots up with Superior Auto as the default camera mode but can be changed to manual and even fun camera modes like AR Fun, Face in. The phone can shoot videos in up to 4K resolution but requires a specific camera mode to be selected.

As for the quality, we felt the camera took some great shots in good light but faced lot of noise in low-light conditions shot with Superior Auto. But overall, the Xperia Z3 Compact has a potent camera that along with the right conditions, can produce a great shot.

One other noteworthy feature Xperia Z3 Compact possesses is the PS4 Remote Play. The phone allows you to play the PS4 game onto the phone along with the DualShock controller if you're on the same wireless network.

Xperia Z3 Compact is a great little device in the world of larger-sized droids. It's powerful enough to take on the competition and feels just right in the hands with its small size. The Xperia Z3 Compact is priced at around ₹42,000.

VERDICT: Xperia Z3 Compact packs all the power in a smaller chassis

★★★★☆

INFO: http://sonymobile.com

MONITOR

BenQ EW2440L

Monitor with MHL support for smartphones

There are many ways for a smartphone user to project the content from their phone to a bigger screen like a monitor or a TV and one way to do it is MHL. Short for Mobile High-Definition Link, MHL is fast, quick and stutter free, unlike any other wireless solution. BenQ is taking these advantages and packing it in a 24-inch monitor but is it enough to lure smartphone users? Let's find out. The EW2440L has a clean design with thin bezel around the display and touch sensitive controls on the front bottom side of the monitor with a D-Sub and 2 HDMI ports at the back. One of the HDMI ports is MHL-enabled and BenQ even gives an MHL cable that can be used to connect the device. Using the MHL feature is plug-and-play. Just insert the micro USB end into the smartphone and the HDMI end into the monitor. The monitor instantly detects the device and shows all the content on the big screen. The monitor is compatible with a wide variety of smartphones but it's a safe bet to check the compatible list of smartphones on the BenQ website.

Picture quality-wise, EW2440L offers a decent viewing experience.

It has a contrast ratio of 3000:1 with decent brightness and 178 degree viewing angle. The monitor features BenQ's Cinema Mode that automatically processes and fine tunes video contents for a cinematic experience. The monitor also improves the online video watching experience by simulating high-resolution images by boosting the pixel density of the original video source. The monitor also supports full HD 1920x1080 resolution and comes with flicker-free backlight that eliminates flickering at all brightness levels and reduces eye fatigue. The EW2440L goes for a price of around ₹12,000 and seems to offer good value for money if you're looking for budget monitor along with the ability to connect to your smartphone.

VERDICT: Decently priced monitor with support for MHL functionality

★★★½☆

INFO: http://benq.co.in

SMARTPHONE

LG B3 Beat

Compact size with flagship features

The product cycle for companies is straightforward these days. Launch a flagship device and then follow up with smaller and a cheaper device but integrate some of the features from the flagship. Samsung, Sony have been doing this for quite a while and now LG is following the suit with the G3 Beat.

The G3 Beat is very much identical in design with the G3 and we wouldn't be surprised if you'd mistake the G3 Beat for its more powerful sibling.

The G3 Beat is slightly smaller than the G3, but features a similar colour finish, a second mic and infrared at the top; microUSB port, 3.5mm headphone jack and primary mic at the bottom side.

The camera, volume and power buttons are at the back and frankly, these are the only common hardware features between the G3 and the G3 Beat.

It has a 5-inch display supporting a resolution of 1280x720 pixels reaching a pixel density of 294ppi. Considering the original G3 having a QHD display, we would have loved a Full HD display on the G3 Beat but truth be told, 720p screen is not bad either. The screen is sharp with good colours and a decent viewing angle.

The phone runs LG's heavily customised UI on top of Android 4.4.2 and the phone performs satisfactory well with its Snapdragon 400 1.2GHz quad-core processor and 1GB RAM under the hood. Understandably, the phone isn't as fast as the G3, but it can handle most games and apps though it takes couple of seconds to load for a large game. The G3 Beat has a 2540mAh battery and with moderate use, the phone runs for about 12-13 hours, enough to go about on a regular work day.

Another advantage of the G3 Beat is that it supports Indian 4G LTE bands, which is a pretty good move on LG's part to not keep the technology exclusive to flagship devices.

LG has also packed in some UX elements from the G3 to the G3 Beat. For instance, the phone has the same Knock Code feature that can unlock the device, Smart Keyboard that offers reliable word recognition and laser autofocus system.

The camera interface takes a second to start on the phone, but focuses really quick, thanks to the laser autofocus system. The interface is simple to use with minimal customisations ranging from turning on HDR on/off, shoot panoramic images, turn flash on/off, change the resolution. As far as quality goes, we found the 8 megapixel sensor a bit underwhelming. The camera takes good pictures in bright daylight but washes the colour in indoor or low-light scenarios. The front-facing snapper is 1.3 megapixels.

The G3 Beat comes with 8GB internal memory, giving about half of the remaining memory to the user for apps and multimedia content. It also features a microSD card slot that supports expansion to up to 64GB.

G3 Beat is a mini version of the LG G3 and caters to the crowd who want a premium looking handset at a fraction of the price. To make it cheaper, companies have to make some compromises and in the case of G3 Beat, the compromise is on the camera front. If that's something you can live with, G3 Beat offers a good value for money at a price tag of around ₹17,500 (at the time of this review).

VERDICT: A mid-range performer with looks borrowed from its flagship sibling

★★★½☆

INFO: http://lg.com/in

SOLID STATE DRIVE

Kingston HyperX Fury SSD

Entry level SSD with promise of performance

SSDs or Solid State Drives offer an obvious advantage over regular HDDs but one thing that has led to the slow adoption is the price. Kingston is one of the manufacturers that is constantly trying to bring affordable SSD solutions and it's latest attempt is the HyperX Fury.

The HyperX Fury SSD comes in capacities of 120GB and 240GB and since its target market is entry-level consumers, Kingston packs in bare minimum with the sales package, which includes the 7mm SSD, a spacer and a sticker! The spacer makes the SSD fit perfectly in notebooks that support 9.5mm drives. Setting up the drive is easy but one thing to note is that there is no cloning software bundled with the drive, so you'll need a basic sense of know-how to migrate data from your existing drive to the newer one.

We tested the 240GB variant of the SSD that supports SATA 3.0 interface and is equipped with SandForce controller. In our tests, the HyperX Fury managed to achieve a read speed of 455MB/s while the write speed was around 300MB/s, which is pretty decent considering the price at which Kingston sells.

The Kingston HyperX Fury SSD is a neat little drive and if you're looking for an SSD that offers performance at an affordable cost, the drive serves the purpose well.

VERDICT: An affordable SSD with good performance

★★★½☆

INFO: http://kingston.com

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

Corel VideoStudio X7 Ultimate

Hardly the ultimate in video-editing software

There's a widely held perception that editing video is hard work. That's probably why so many home videos on YouTube consist of a single, unedited clip. A few minutes' work with video-editing software can make a big difference, though, if only to join a couple of clips together and trim the dross. The challenge for Corel is to convince people that its VideoStudio software isn't hard to use. As such, this update is less about new features and more about making the existing ones friendlier and faster.

Video editing doesn't get much easier than the new FastFlick software that comes bundled with the main VideoStudio program. Pick one of the 15 supplied templates, import some video or photo files, customise the captions with your own words and upload the finished video to social-networking sites. There's slightly more control available for those who want it, such as the ability to change the text style or musical accompaniment.

We've seen this kind of instant-results editing before. While this is one of the better examples, it's still pretty limited. You can't choose which bits of a clip to include, or which ones have captions. Overall, the results feel pretty random. The templates are reasonably attractive, but we soon grew tired of the limited selection. We'd much rather have a video-editing program that makes it easy to arrange clips and add music and effects yourself. That way, you can make the project your own and gradually progress from beginner to advanced user.

The interface of the main VideoStudio program looks easy to use at first glance, but this is deceptive. With so many features built up over the years, it can be tricky to locate the ones you need. For example, to import video clips, you might think to try the large Capture tab at the top, but in fact you need to click the Edit tab, then click the Media panel and then click the folder icon that resides there. Arranging clips is easier,

with a choice of storyboard- or timeline-style views. However, both views can get very cluttered and fiddly as projects build up with videos, photos and text overlays. Such complex projects also cause the program to become slow to respond to your commands. Adding effects is easy enough, but it's not at all obvious how to adjust or remove them.

This latest version comes in two editions – Pro and Ultimate. The only thing that separates the two is that the latter includes various additional effects and animation tools. Some of these are capable of producing very impressive results, but their complexity sits awkwardly with the the main program which is supposed to be aimed at beginners.

Other new features in version X7 bring similarly mixed blessings. The export options have been tidied up, but it's only a cosmetic makeover as it's still far too easy to end up with botched videos that won't play properly. Projects now play back more smoothly than before when running on 64bit versions of Windows. However, this still depends on which file format your camera records in. It handled videos in AVCHD format well, but struggled with QuickTime and MP4 files.

It's not all bad, of course. There are lots of fun things you can do in VideoStudio, including stop-motion animations, text that follows people around the screen and the ability to record everything that happens on your screen as a video file. Ultimately, though, the core editing tools aren't as polished as in Adobe Premiere Elements 12 or Sony Movie Studio Platinum 13.

VERDICT: Lots of features, but ease of use is inconsistent

★★★☆☆

INFO: www.snipca.com/12135

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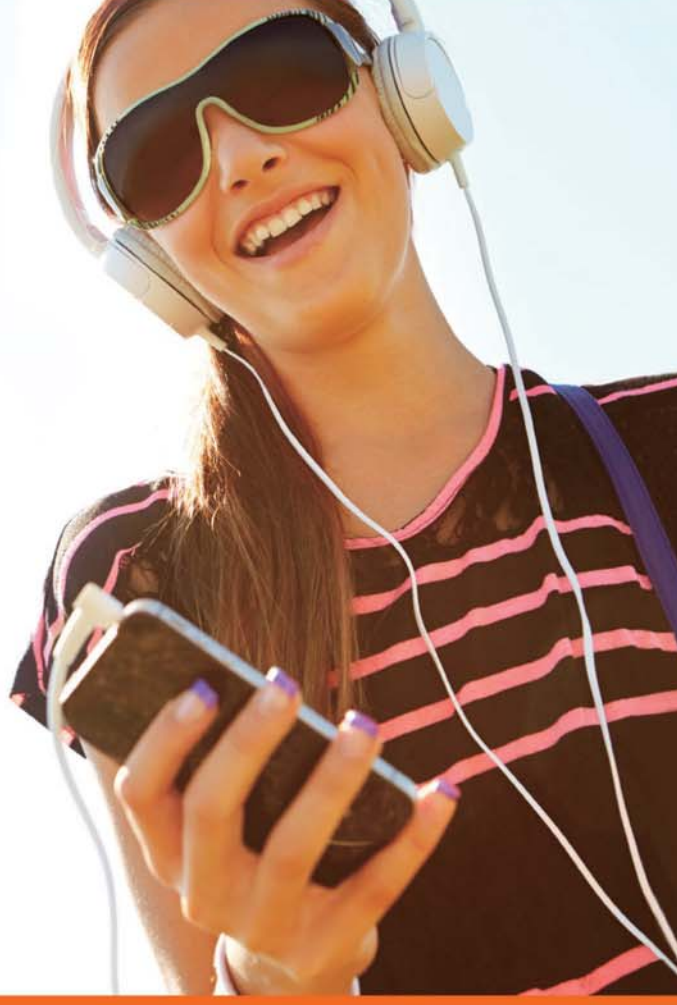

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Make Your Tech Last Longer For Free

It doesn't cost a penny to make your old technology run like new. Jane Hoskyn explains how to give new life to your PC, printer, tablet and other equipment

We love new technology, but we also love the technology we've already got. Our favourite tech will always be the stuff we've grown used to. Giving up the laptop that contains years' worth of photos, videos, documents and software, or even changing your keyboard, is a practical headache and an emotional wrench. They may just be boxes of wires, but they feel like friends. You also paid good money for them. The fridge you bought 10 years ago still works perfectly, so you might have expected your expensive PC to do the same. But within a couple of years it's a sluggish, crash-prone mess. That doesn't mean that you need a new computer, or even new components. Earlier we have showed you how to extend your PC's life with new components such as solid-state drives (SSDs) and fast, new processors, but some of the easiest and most effective ways to restore your PC's youthful vigour won't cost you a penny. The same applies to your tablet and even your printer. Many of our suggestions for particular types of equipment work for others, too – for example you can't underestimate the anti-ageing power of a good clean. We'll also reveal what not to do if you want your tech to last. We may not be able to make your PC or printer outlive your fridge, but these tips and tools will add years to their lifespan.

KEY POINTS

- Add years to your computer's life for free
- Make your laptop or tablet battery last much longer
- Stop running out of printer ink
- Keep using your favourite keyboard forever
- Find out what's killing your tech

MAKE YOUR PC LAST LONGER

Deep-clean your computer

If you've had your PC for more than a year, it's probably filthy inside. PCs, like other equipment (and even human bodies), get clogged up over the years with fatty dirt. This internal gunk may be something you'd rather not think about, or perhaps it never occurred to you that physical dirt might slow down your PC in the same way as digital junk, but it's one of the main factors that ages your computer and your other tech.

Dust and grease insulates your PC's components and stops the air circulating around them, which makes them very hot. Researchers have found that this heat kills

Boost your PC's lifespan and performance by keeping its internal components clean

computers much faster than an over-worked processor (see box, right). Cleaning your computer doesn't require IT expert skills, just patience, a steady hand and a tolerance for dust (or a dust mask). Make sure your PC is switched off and unplugged from the mains. Remove its side panel, take out the fans and clean them with a damp cloth. Some PCs have removable filters rather than fans, and they're easier to clean.

Don't touch any other components. Use a can of compressed air to blast all the dust off the circuit boards and internal panels. Air isn't quite free, but you can buy canisters from Amazon for less than ₹100 (www.snipca.com/12144). Use a lighter touch when blowing the CPU and graphics card. Don't blow the compressed air for too long or too close, because force will damage the components. Also use compressed air to blow dust from USB ports and other sockets. Be careful not to blow dust inside the power supply. Finally, vacuum the bottom tray gently to suck up the dust.

If you don't smoke or have pets, you should clean your computer twice a year. If you do smoke or own pets, clean it three or four times a year. Between cleans, keep a compressed air canister handy to blow dust and dirt out through your computer's vents and help avoid building up junk in the first place.

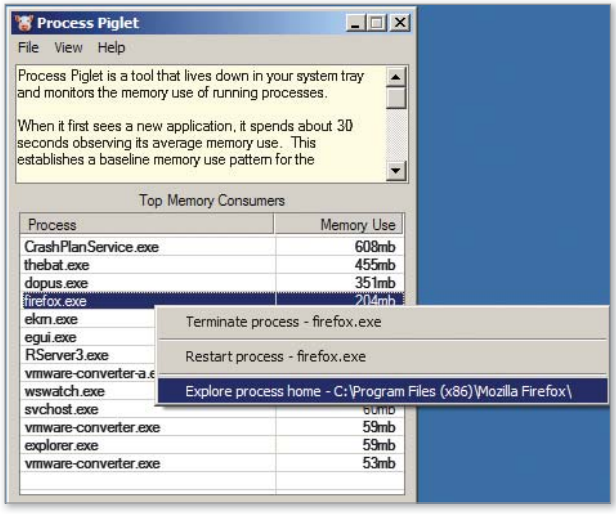
Disable software that ages your PC

If your computer is getting slower and slower, don't assume that you have to spend money on a new hard drive or upgraded processor. You may simply need to stop running certain software at the same time, or prevent Windows running processes automatically at startup or in the background.

Task Manager provides very basic information about what's running on your computer. For a better insight, download a couple of free Microsoft tools: Autoruns (www.snipca.com/12127) and the newly updated Process Explorer (www.snipca.com/12128). Select the Everything tab in Autoruns to see which programs and processes start up automatically when you open Windows. If there's anything you don't recognise, right-click and choose Search Online to find out more about it, and disable it if you don't need it. Process Explorer shows all your currently running processes and how much RAM they're using. Like Autoruns, it lets you investigate and disable processes that you don't need. If you don't understand what a process does, leave it alone.

If your PC is prone to crashing or switching to 'the blue screen of death' (www.snipca.com/12129), don't just let it continue and hope for the best – find out what's going on in there. WhoCrashed (www.snipca.com/12126) is a free tool that analyses your crashes and reveals what caused it. As well as generating a list of suspects, it gives you a plain-English report that is much more informative than Windows' own complicated crash logs.

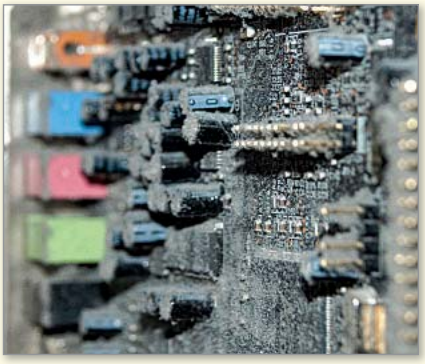
To find out which programs and processes will cause crashes before they even happen, install the tiny free program Process Piglet (www.snipca.com/12131).



WILL SUMMER KILL YOUR COMPUTER?

Heat can be lethal to your computer's hard drive. Researchers for technology maker Intel found that an increase in hard-drive temperature of five degrees Celsius had the same effect on a computer's reliability as a switch from 10 per cent to 100 per cent processor workload. Each one degree drop in hard-drive temperature resulted in a 10 per cent increase in hard-drive lifespan (www.snipca.com/12118).

You can check your PC's core temperature and other specs with the free system-information tool HWMonitor (www.snipca.com/12121). To keep the temperature down and the hard drive healthy, clean all the dust out of your PC and keep it well-ventilated and out of direct sunlight. Use a desk fan to keep the temperature down in summer if necessary. If summer gets very hot this year and you don't mind spending a few extra pounds to keep your laptop's core temperature down, buy a USB-powered laptop stand with a fan in the base. You can get them for around ₹100 from Amazon (www.snipca.com/12123).



Dust insulates and overheats your PC's components

Process Piglet runs in the background without using much memory and looks for spikes in memory usage. Then you can disable, restart or uninstall the culprit to get your computer running more reliably.

Make your PC run like new with a system restore

In earlier issues, we showed you how to remove junk files, folders and software from your computer using free software such as CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner). Also try the excellent free new program Wise Care 365 (www.wisecleaner. com, see page 16). Using system-cleaning tools like this will really help to improve your computer's performance and prolong its useful life.

But to really make your computer run like new, do a system restore. It's not a task to be undertaken lightly, because it completely wipes your computer's hard drive of software, settings and files. You must back up your operating system first, including the restore points created by Windows to preserve your data in case it ever has to be wiped (or is accidentally wiped). Keep the backed up data on a DVD so that you can restore some or all of it onto your computer one it's wiped. The DVD will also be useful insurance if your PC is ever wiped accidentally. Paragon Backup & Recovery Free (www.snipca.com/12125) is a great free program that guides you through the backup and restore process. It ensures that you don't lose any valuable data, and makes it easy to bring software and settings back to life on your newly wiped computer.

Once you've backed up all your data, wipe your computer by pressing F8 repeatedly when you're booting up. Click 'Repair your Computer' in the menu that opens, then click HDD Recovery (you may need to scroll down for this). Wipe and restore your system every three or four years to keep it running smoothly for longer. In our next issue we'll reveal the best new ways to back up all your data and make sure all your files are safe if you have to restore or upgrade your operating system.

Make your laptop's battery last much longer

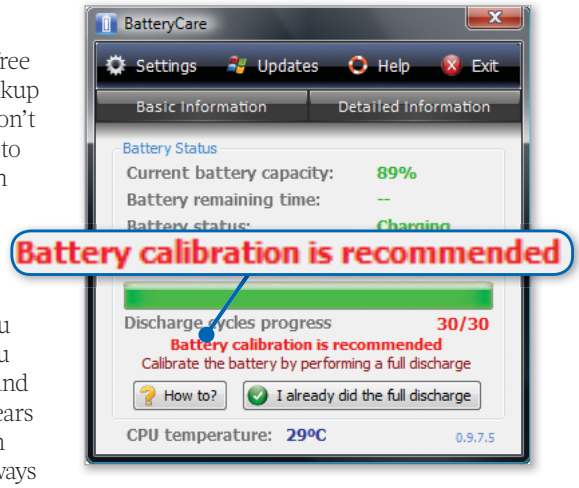
Your laptop battery's lifespan largely depends on how you treat it. You shouldn't let it run down too much, but you shouldn't charge it too much either – the key is to find the right balance.

First, try never to let the battery drain completely. It may be annoying to get a pop-up telling you to plug in your laptop when its power is down to around 10 per cent, depending on the model and operating system (OS), but the message appears for a very good reason. Letting the battery drain pushes it to work harder and can cut its lifespan dramatically. So obey the pop-up, or, even better, don't let your battery run down far enough for the message to appear.

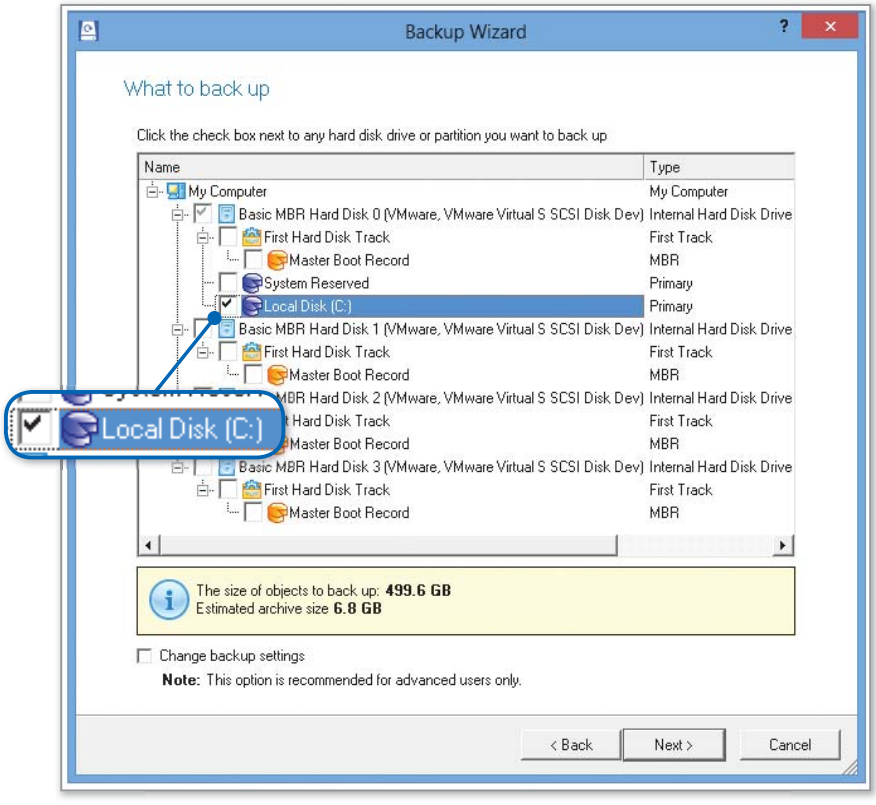
Plugging it in when it reaches around 20 per cent is good practice. However, don't leave it plugged in all the time. A laptop is designed to be portable. Keeping it plugged in can make it overheat, and heat is the enemy of computer components. Also don't keep it plugged in when it's switched off.

Even the best-cared-for battery loses capacity over time, and eventually you'll need to calibrate it. Calibration resets the battery's built-in meter so that you get a more accurate power level reading in Windows. Inaccurate readings can lead you to run the battery down without realising it. So if your Desktop battery icon says 40 per cent but your laptop shuts down automatically without warning, it probably needs to be calibrated. Calibration is a simple process that doesn't require any extra software. Start by turning off your screensaver and other power management settings that put the computer to sleep. Charge it to 100 per cent, then let it drain completely so that it shuts down, then charge it back to 100 per cent. Also look through your programs to see if your laptop manufacturer has included a calibration tool with your built-in software.

To check your battery's actual charge level, status and other specs at any time, run the excellent free tool BatteryCare (http://batterycare.net). It will also let you know if your battery needs calibrating and how many times it has been completely drained.



Find out when your battery needs re-calibrating with free tool BatteryCare



Choose a drive to back up with Paragon Backup & Recovery before restoring your system

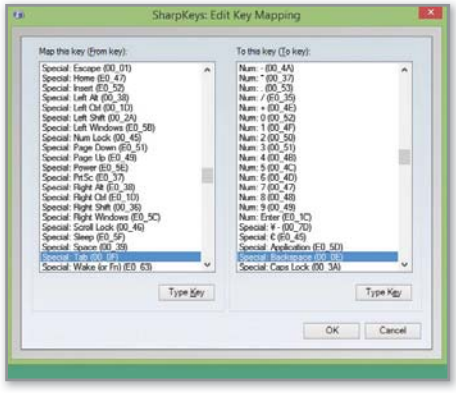
MAKE YOUR PC PERIPHERALS LAST LONGER

Free your keyboard keys

Scientists often quote the statistic about the average keyboard containing more harmful bacteria than a toilet seat. Well, of course it does. You clean your toilet seat regularly (we hope) and don't paw it for hours on end with food-covered fingers (again, we hope). Spurious research aside, grubby keyboards are not helpful. If one or more of your keys gets stuck or comes off, it cuts a line of communication to your Desktop, especially if it's a modifier key such as Shift, Ctrl or Enter. Rather than chuck out your keyboard (tricky if it's on a laptop), search online for its model to see if you can take the keys off. Most keyboards, including those on laptops, let you remove the keys and clean underneath them.

Remap your keyboard

No amount of cleaning will make your keyboard usable if you've switched to a new computer or OS with a different keyboard configuration. To update the function of your existing keys, use remapping software such as SharpKeys (http://sharpkeys.codeplex.com), which works in Windows 7 and 8. It's a free open-source program that lets you change the job a key does and assign mouse clicks to any key. Note that remapping involves editing your PC's Registry, so you should create a system restore point before you run SharpKeys. On the upside, it lets you switch off Caps Lock.



Remap your old keyboard to match the way you use your new computer

Restore your PC's ability to see colours correctly with the colour management module in Calibrize

Calibrate your display

Have you ever looked at the same photo on your laptop, PC screen and tablet and noticed that the colours look completely different? This is because displays grow a bit colour-blind over time, losing their ability to "see" colours correctly. It's a frustrating problem if you're trying to scan or edit photos for your digital archive. You spend ages trying to get the colours looking just right, but they look very different to your friends and family online or when you print them.

The solution is to re-calibrate your display. As with re-calibrating your laptop battery, it's all about restoring a device's ability to measure a value correctly – in this case, measuring colour rather than power level.

Calibrize (www.calibrize.com) is an excellent free program that breaks down the process into simple steps and lets you adjust your display's colours in a 'colour management module' (CMM) so that you know you're seeing colours as they really are.

Save your mouse with hands-free clicking

You spend hours grasping your mouse and prodding it with your strongest finger, so don't be too surprised if it wears out. Prevent 'death by click' (and give your wrist a break, too) with free new program Mouse Auto Clicker (www.snipca.com/12193), which automates your clicks and scrolls. It also lets you set up hotkeys to remap mouse tasks to your keyboard – very handy if your mouse buttons have stopped working.

MAKE YOUR PRINTER AND SCANNER LAST LONGER

Make your printer last years

We've put men on the Moon and computers into phones, but we can't seem to make an inkjet printer that lasts. Printers have an easy job – put ink on paper – but they're notoriously short-lived and accident-prone, partly because internal gunk is an even bigger problem with printers than it is with PCs.

Over time (months rather than years), ink mixes with dust and grease to create a treacle-like substance that clogs the print heads and coats your printer's electrical and mechanical components. This stops it communicating properly with your PC, makes it jam more often and stops it printing cleanly.

First, use the built-in self-cleaning tool to unclog the print heads. On most printers, you do this by pressing one or more buttons on the front panel. Look at your printer's user manual for details (see box, opposite). Run the self-cleaner every couple of weeks to keep your printer running smoothly and to prevent an unmanageable build-up of ink and dust. If the print heads are on the cartridges, remove the cartridges and clean them with window cleaner sprayed onto on a piece of kitchen towel or lint-free cloth. Remove the cartridge tray and clean it with window cleaner on kitchen towel, and wipe the ribbon (usually white). Remove the rear tray and clean the paper rollers. Don't spray window cleaner directly into your printer or onto its component parts, and don't use general household cleaner because it may leave a sticky residue.

To maintain your printer, keep it as dust-free as possible. Never use a damp cloth because it'll turn the build-up of dust and ink into a muddy clump that's much harder to remove. Instead, use

Clean your cartridges, ribbon and rollers to keep your printer running smoothly

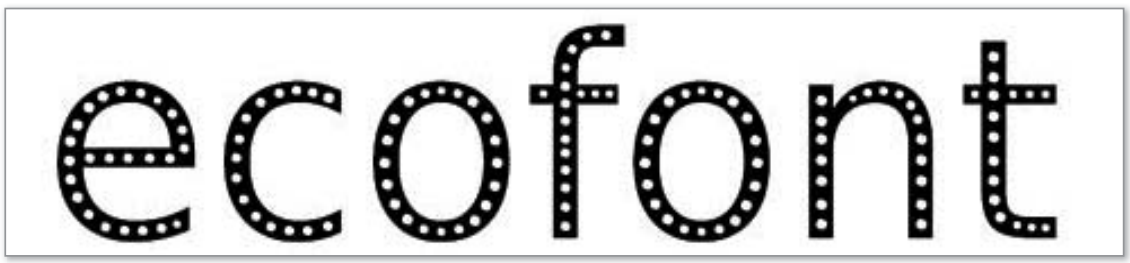
compressed air and a dry electrostatic cloth ("magic duster"). Electrostatic cloth isn't quite the ultimate answer to dusting that its manufacturers claim, but it comes into its own when you're cleaning technical equipment. Find out more about this useful material on the Amy Cleaning blog (www.snipca.com/12146).

Make your printer ink last longer

Printing in colour obviously uses up your colour ink faster than printing in black and white, but did you know that printing in black and white uses up your black ink faster than printing in greyscale? In your printer preferences, select greyscale and draft mode to print with the lowest amount of ink possible. You can then switch back to black and white or colour if you're printing out photos or important documents.

For even better ink savings, download a new font called Ecofont (www.ecofont.com). Each letter is dotted with tiny holes so that it uses half the ink of traditional solid fonts. On the downside, Ecofont costs money ($24.95, about £15) – but there's a free trial version (www.snipca.com/12153).

Here's a quick trick if you run out of ink just before finishing a job, and your printer won't let you print even in greyscale and draft. Remove the nearly empty cartridge, put some clear Sellotape over the copper or gold contact points and put the cartridge back. This should fool your PC and printer into using every last drop of ink from the cartridge and let you finish printing. If that doesn't work, use your colour ink. There's no reason why you can't print unimportant home documents in magenta or cyan rather than black.



Type your documents in Ecofont to save on ink

READ THE MANUAL

The user manual that's still sitting in its plastic wrapper in your printer's original box deserves a closer look. Give it a thorough read and get to know your printer's settings, so that when things go wrong you know exactly what to do. You can find free PDFs of user manuals for thousands of printers, scanners and other equipment at Manuals Online (www.manualsonline.com). The site also has a Community section where you can find technical help from other users, and offer your own ideas.

You can download printer manuals for free at Manuals Online

Make new your scanner scan like

If you've been using your flatbed scanner happily for months and you suddenly start getting thin, coloured (usually green) lines across your scanned images, it's not a software or hardware fault: it's probably just a bit of dirt. Dust shows up on images and, in the long term, gets stuck in the frame of the glass and causes these digital lines across your scans. You should keep the glass clean to allow the light to pass across it without being interrupted by bits of grit. First use a dry electrostatic cloth to remove surface dust. Use window cleaner or rub alcohol on a lint-free cloth to remove fingerprints and smudges.

Never spray liquid onto the glass itself, and don't use a kitchen towels because it may leave little fibres behind. If you get a particularly stubborn smudge, try removing it with white vinegar diluted with water (about half and half). This is kinder to your scanner glass in the long run than rubbing too hard. The same advice applies to cleaning your computer display.

SIX WAYS YOU'RE ACCIDENTALLY KILLING YOUR TECH

If you're doing any of these things with your equipment and devices, stop now or they won't last much longer.

1 NOT CHOOSING CUSTOM INSTALL

Free software developers have to make a living, so they often include adverts and sponsored crapware with your download. This stuff clogs your system and slowly drives you and your PC round the twist. Pay attention when installing, choose Custom Install if available, and un-tick any boxes that offer unwanted extras.

2 SWITCHING OFF YOUR ROUTER EVERY NIGHT

After everything we've said about not leaving chargers plugged in or letting your tech overheat, we're now giving you the opposite advice. Modern routers aren't designed to be switched off overnight. They re-set every time you switch them on, which costs more energy and reduces their lifespan and reliability.

3 CARRYING AROUND YOUR EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE

Standard external hard drives are very fragile. If you really need to carry lots of digital files around, use a USB stick or invest in a portable SSD. These are more expensive, but they're built to withstand knocks and bumps.

4 INSTALLING POWERFUL COMPONENTS ON AN OLD PC

A new graphics card won't turn your old computer into a new multimedia PC. In fact it may push it to the limit of its power supply. Components are like cables – too much power will kill an old machine.

5 ROOTING YOUR TABLET OR PHONE

Many apps in Google's Play Store and Apple's App Store only work if you root (Android) or jailbreak (iPad/iPhone) your device to let the app gain access to its inner workings. Stay well away. It can make the OS unstable and voids your warranty.

6 REPLACING YOUR PRINTER AGAIN

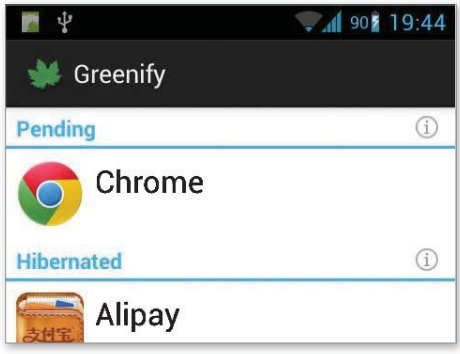
You may be tempted to ditch your dirt-infested inkjet for a new one (Amazon has scores of highly rated all-in-one printers for less than £60: www.snipca.com/12141), but this leaves a trail of obsolete drivers and printer software on your computer. In effect, every new printer ages your computer even faster.

MAKE YOUR PHONE OR TABLET LAST LONGER

Treat your device like a little PC

We're happy to bet that you spend less time clearing out junk files and apps from your tablet or smartphone than you do from your PC. But these devices are essentially small computers, with an operating system (Android, iOS or Windows Phone), drive and processor, and they will last longer if you keep the OS updated and the drive free of junk.

Also like your PC, your device's processor will work better for longer if you avoid running too many apps at the same time. Watchdog Task Manager Lite (www.snipca.com/12149) reveals which apps are hogging memory on your Android and lets you close or uninstall them. The options for iOS are more limited, but SYS Activity Manager (www.snipca.com/12159) lets you see how hard your processor is working. Check which iPad or iPhone apps are running by double-pressing the home button, and swipe an app upwards to close it.



Greenify puts running apps into hibernate mode to save your processor and battery

You can also extend your device's life by cleaning it, particularly its ports. The headphone port can get congested, especially if you keep it in your bag or pocket, leading to syncing problems and headphones "not working". Use compressed air to clear out the sockets, and keep your device in a protective sleeve.

Make your tablet's battery last for days

Your tablet or phone contains a modern Lithium-ion battery which, like your laptop battery, ages much faster if you let it run down completely before recharging it. Experts recommend doing "shallow discharges", which means letting it run down to 50-70 per cent before plugging it in. Never to let your battery go below 20 per cent. Also, don't leave it plugged in all the time or the battery will overheat. Free Android app Greenify (www.snipca.com/12148) puts running apps into hibernate mode to stop them wearing down the processor and battery. For your iPad or iPhone, newly updated Battery Doctor (www.snipca.com/12176) monitors battery health and ensures that you're getting accurate readings. ca

Free antivirus that still supports Windows XP

Microsoft no longer protects you in Windows XP, but there's plenty of free software that does. outlines the best antivirus tools for XP

Don't be fooled by Microsoft's recent U-turn on patching Windows XP. The surprise security fix for Internet Explorer 8 (the last IE version that works with XP) doesn't mean that XP is now safe after all, or that the end of support for XP on 8 April was a big lie to get us all to upgrade to Windows 8. The IE8 patch on 1 May was a one-off, and it's very unlikely there will be any more.

Microsoft will continue to update XP's built-in software, including Microsoft Security Essentials (www.snipca.com/12095) and Windows Defender, and it still updates its virus definitions in XP. But that just won't cut it. These tools score far below many free alternatives in antivirus tests, so it's dangerous to rely on them. One recent Windows Defender update even caused thousands of XP computers to crash at startup. As a result, Microsoft's Technet forums were flooded with angry posts from XP users (read them at www.snipca.com/12088).

To stay safe in Windows XP, you need to build a solid wall of third-party security

WHAT ABOUT THE XP ANTIVIRUS YOU PAID FOR?

If you've already paid for a premium antivirus product in XP, you probably won't have to pay again. Kaspersky says that all currently installed versions of its Internet Security 2014 suite will continue to work on XP (www.snipca.com/12097), as will its next two versions.

Symantec, maker of Norton Internet Security, has committed to support Windows XP "for the foreseeable future" (www.snipca.com/12098) and ESET's premium products will work on XP up to the end of April 2017 (www.snipca.com/12099). McAfee (www.mcafee.com) will also update its existing antivirus for XP for as long as it's technically feasible, with no extra charges for updates. If you've paid for a different antivirus suite on your XP PC, check your manufacturer's website for support details.

Check your antivirus manufacturer's website for details of extended XP support

tools that do the job Microsoft no longer does. **Antivirus** companies are busy releasing and updating programs to meet demand from the XP users that Microsoft has abandoned, so you have plenty to choose from.

Keep viruses off your XP PC

The best antivirus products that keep you safe in XP come at a price. Premium suites Kaspersky Internet Security 2014 (www.kaspersky.co.uk), Norton Internet Security (uk.norton.com) and ESET Smart Security 7 (www.eset.co.uk) achieved the best results in the latest Home Antivirus Protection test by our security team at Dennis Technology Labs.

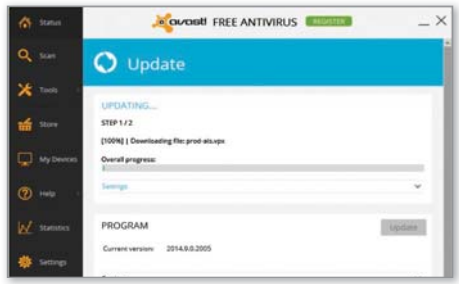
But right behind them were two completely free products: Avast Free Antivirus (www.avast.com) and AVG AntiVirus Free 2014 (http://free.avg.com). Avast Free Antivirus is easy to use and very powerful, with various scan levels that range from very fast to very thorough. Its database of **virus definitions** is updated constantly to give you ongoing protection, even against zero-day vulnerabilities like the one Microsoft eventually patched on 1 May. Avast has pledged to support XP for at least another two years, which is great news to the 27 per cent of Avast users who still use XP and don't plan to change.

AVG AntiVirus Free is less powerful than Avast, but it also uses up much less **processing** power, so it's ideal if your computer is a bit old or slow. AVG says it has "no plans to stop supporting XP users" and that XP will receive virus definitions "for the forseeable future", which our Technology Labs team defines as 2016 or later. Read AVG's statement at www.snipca.com/12109.

Try out all these programs to see which suits your needs best, but only keep one on your computer. If you have two antivirus programs running at the same time they will **conflict**, effectively identifying each other as viruses and stopping either program from working properly. Having two antivirus programs is as bad as having no antivirus at all.

Find and remove malware

The outstanding anti-malware program Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free (www.malwarebytes.org) is designed to run alongside your antivirus, and won't conflict with it. The new version of Malwarebytes includes "guaranteed lifetime support" for XP. Malwarebytes told *Computeractive*: "We will continue to support XP for as long as it's technically possible. That goes for our free version as well as premium. Twenty per cent of our users still run XP, and they shouldn't have to pay to get protected."



Avast will continue to support Windows XP for at least two more years

Each time you open Malwarebytes it updates its database, so it won't overlook any recent malware or PUPs (Potentially Unwanted Programs), such as adware that slow down your computer and could be used by hackers to break into your PC.

Select 'Perform full scan' the first time, then use the default 'quick scan' every week or two to keep your computer clean. It's a portable program, so you can run it from the EXE file on a USB stick to check for unwanted nasties on a friend or family member's computer.

Block threats in Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome

Web Of Trust (www.mywot.com/download) is a free add-on for IE, Firefox and Chrome that uses a traffic-lights system to warn you about **phishing** links, malicious sites and other traps. A green icon indicates that a link has excellent safety reports; amber is 'unsatisfactory' and red means 'poor'. Red links are blocked by default, but you can still click them if you really want to. Web Of Trust is browser-based and constantly updated, so it'll always work in XP.

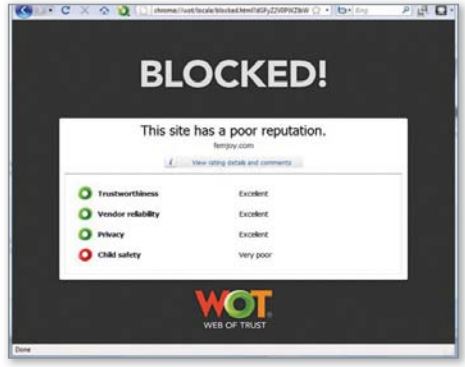
A **firewall** is another essential weapon against threats from the web. Comodo Firewall Free (www.snipca.com/12101) works alongside your antivirus and anti-malware programs and acts like a shield to protect you against threats like malware and zero-day attacks. Its current version still works in XP.

Note that if you're using Internet Explorer in XP you should be extra vigilant. IE's popularity makes it a prime target for hackers, says Simon Edwards, who runs our antivirus tests in the Dennis Technology Labs, so it may be time to switch to Firefox or Chrome. You can transfer your IE Favourites with the free add-on Xmarks (www.snipca.com/12103). ca

DOES THIS MEAN YOU CAN USE XP FOREVER?

You can carry on using XP until your computer bites the dust. Antivirus companies like to warn users to upgrade from XP, stressing that "new security technologies may not be Windows XP-compatible" (Kaspersky Labs' security expert David Emm), but that's partly because they have products to sell.

Be aware of the risks, but don't be bullied into shelling out for new premium products or upgrading your paid-for antivirus if it still works. If you find your ideal combination from the tools and services we've recommended, keep them up to date, follow the safety tips outlined in the final part of our Windows XP Survival Guide (Issue 420), and take extra care when browsing the minefield of the web, you can use XP reasonably safely for years to come.



Web Of Trust blocks dodgy links to stop them infecting your XP computer

Free apps that **measure everything**

Need to know the width of a worktop or the decibel level of your neighbour's dog? rounds up the best free phone and tablet apps for measuring everything

Measure lengths and distances

There are a number of apps that use your device's camera and GPS to calculate short measurements, like the length of a screw, or longer distances, such as a trip abroad or even the size of areas of anything up to hundreds of square miles.

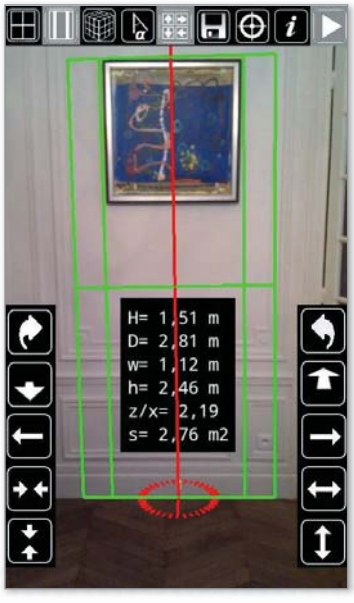
Smart Ruler (www.snipca.com/11968) is a simple Android app that reproduces a ruler that can measure objects smaller than the size of your device's screen. Smart Measure for Android (www.snipca.com/12047) uses your device's camera to measure the distance and height of objects, from people and tables to buildings and garden sheds.

For longer distances, the Distance and area measurement Android app (www.snipca.com/12048) uses your GPS to – exactly as its name suggests – calculate distances and areas. Simply turn the app on at the start of your journey and turn it off at the end to see the distance and area you've covered. Meanwhile, Distance Measure (www.snipca.com/12049) for iOS tells you the exact distance between any two points on the world map and also lets you measure areas, but it does require an internet connection to work.

Use Distance Measure to calculate the distance between two points on a map

Ensure objects and surfaces are straight

Spirit levels and plumb-bobs are essential tools for avoiding wonky lines when you're doing DIY. 'Plumb-bob DIY vertical measure' (www.snipca.com/12018) is a useful and comprehensive Android tool that lets you check the vertical and horizontal alignment of a surface, calculate its dimensions and take photos of it that you can work with later. The app offers several different plumb-bob shapes to measure volume, angles to the vertical and whether an item is centred.



Get everything straight with the Plumb-bob DIY vertical measure app

The 'Clinometer + slope finder + bubble level' app for iOS (www.snipca.com/12020) is a three-in-one tool. It automatically switches between the clinometer (for calculating angles) and spirit-level functions depending on whether you hold your device vertically or horizontally. It can read values out loud, convert across five systems of measurement and calculate angles relative to other objects.Bubble Level (www.snipca.com/12026) is a simple Android app that measures angles and inclines with no frills.

Plan your home's layout

Floorplan apps are a great help if you're carrying out a building project or need to know whether a piece of furniture will fit into a certain space. Floor Plan Creator (www.snipca.com/12029) is an Android app that lets you create a professional-level floorplan, complete with dedicated symbols for representing furnishings, windows, doors and other common items around the house.

MagicPlan (www.snipca.com/12036) is a professional-looking iOS app that lets you create a floorplan by taking photos of your room. It even talks you through the process. The app then converts your photos into an accurate floorplan drawing,

Use your iPad to create inch-perfect floorplans with MagicPlan

including furniture, doors and windows, with measurements included. You can then add your own notes to the floorplan, such as DIY ideas or decorators' quotes.

Get your bearings

Whether you're going for a hike, climbing a mountain or want to know if a window is south-facing, there's an app that can help. Smart Compass (www.snipca.com/12037) is an Android app that's as easy to use as a traditional compass. Using your device's magnetic sensors it constantly points to the North Magnetic pole and lets you send your GPS coordinates by text message or email.

My Altitude (www.snipca.com/12039) is an iOS app that uses GPS to give you information about your current location. This data includes your altitude, barometric pressure, and even the temperature required for water to boil where you are.

If you own a Windows Phone 8 device, Altimeter Pro (www.snipca.com/12082), will tell you how high you are above sea level. Compass Advance (www.snipca.com/12081), also for Windows Phone devices, is a free compass app that has the added benefit of a 'track-back locator', letting you set your current location for the compass to point back to.

The Smart Protractor app for Android (www.snipca.com/12040) has one mode for measuring the angles of small objects you put on your screen, and another for measuring slopes.

Monitor sound levels

There are a few surprisingly good apps if you want to make sure your TV is not too loud for your neighbours, or if you want to show them that they're the ones making too much noise. Noise Sniffer (www.snipca.com/12041) for Android is one of the more accurate apps for measuring decibels (dB) and uses your device's microphone for measuring noise levels. There's a guide at the bottom of the screen that explains noise levels and categorises how loud a particular dB level is.

Convert and calculate your measurements

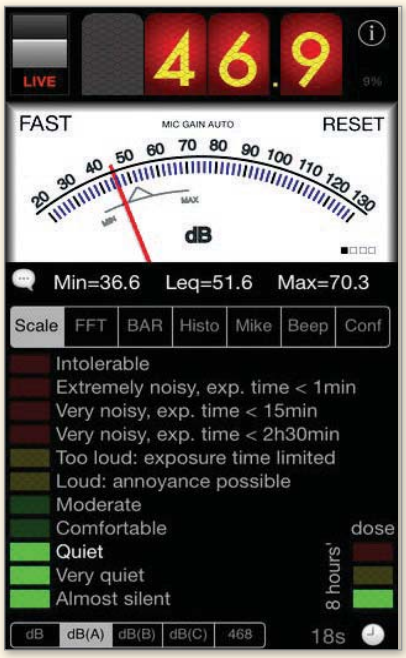
Once you've measured everything you need with your device, you might want to convert those measurements into units that are more useful to you. The Android app ConvertPad (www.snipca.com/12027) has a unit converter, calculator and more. It lets you convert every type of unit – including imperial to metric (and vice versa), Celsius to Fahrenheit, and even men's shoe sizes across European, US and UK standards. ConvertPad has unit comparison tables that list all the unit types in a particular category to help you better understand what they all mean and how they're calculated. You can organise your most commonly used units into favourite categories and units.

Convert values across different measurement systems with ConvertPad

Handyman Calculator (www.snipca.com/12028) is an Android tool that helps you convert measurements used in DIY projects. It features calculators that work out paint requirements, tank capacities, an amount of tiles and many other things. The app features a full scientific calculator and a Time Tracking Tool, which lets you monitor how much time you're spending on your DIY projects. You can save every calculation you make to the app's built-in notepad. ca

A NOISE METER WORTH PAYING FOR

The SPLnFFT Noise Meter app for iOS (www.snipca.com/12042) costs £2.49 and we feel it's a price worth paying. Health and safety site Safety Awakenings (www.snipca.com/12086) tested it along with 30 others against a noise-level meter and found that its readings were by far the most accurate. SPLnFFT also measures sound pitch in hertz, which is useful for measuring the high-pitch whistling of malfunctioning devices like PC hard drives and power supplies. You can record the faulty sound in hertz, and use the information when contacting your manufacturer.



SPLnFFT is the most accurate app for measuring noise levels

What's All The Fuss About...

Android L

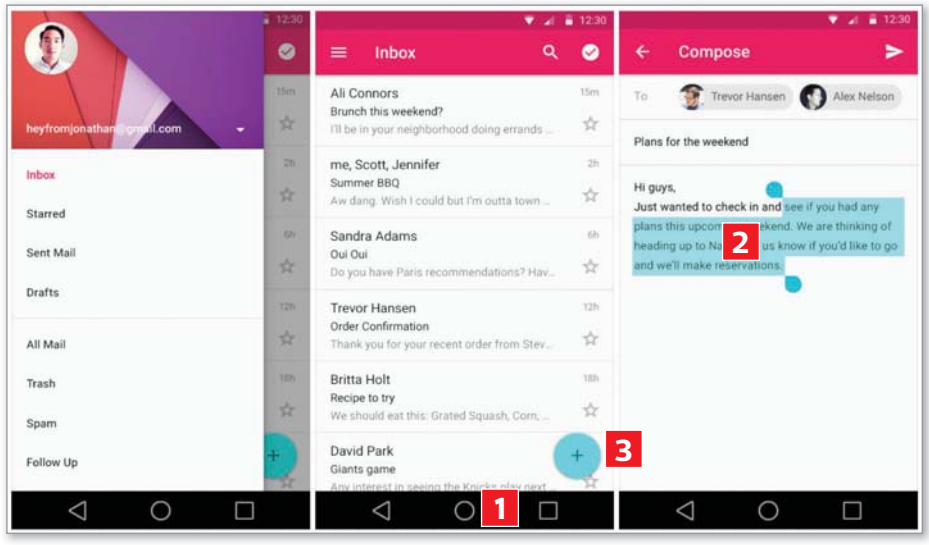
Will Android L be lovely or lacklustre? Here's what you need to know

What is it?

The biggest update to Android since 4.0 (called Ice Cream Sandwich), which launched in October, 2011. In fact, it's probably the most substantial Android update so far because it has 5,000 new features. Of course, most of these improvements will only be noticed by the most tech-savvy people. But what matters is that Android L looks like it'll be more than just a huge pile of small tweaks. Some of the features look very impressive.

Which ones?

The built-in battery tool called Project Volta, for example. Google says it will boost your phone's battery life – claiming it'll increase it by as much as 90 minutes on the Nexus 5 phone. Results will no doubt vary for different phones. Cleverly, Android L will know when you're using your device at home, so you won't need to unlock your device every time you use it there. The lock activates automatically when you leave the house with your device. Also new is the ability to temporarily turn off notifications by switching on the 'Do not disturb' feature. It will also look different. Google says Android L "uses a design metaphor inspired by paper and ink that provides a reassuring sense of tactility".



What does that mean?

It's Google's rather laboured way of saying that it has added 'depth' to the interface, so apps that are open can be viewed in a 'stacked' format, similar to webpages in Chrome for Android. New 'shadows' on elements – such as widgets, apps and notifications – will indicate what you can move and tap. Notifications will now appear as neat, swipeable cards like those on Google Now (www.google.co.uk/landing/now). To get a preview of what this "material design" looks like, visit the Android Developer website (www.snipca.com/12636).

Does all this mean I'll need to re-learn how to use my phone?

No because Google's design changes aren't so extensive that they'll confuse people already familiar with Android. We think they'll make your phone easier to use in the long run. The screenshot above, displaying the Gmail app for Android L, shows you what's changed. The menu buttons along the bottom 1 are more minimalist; the colours are brighter overall, such as on highlighted text 2, though you can change them; and there is a moveable bubble 3 that you tap to quickly write emails.

When will it appear on my phone?

Depends what type of phone you have. If you bought a mid- to high-range phone or tablet in the past 12 months, such as the HTC One, Galaxy S4, LG G2, Nexus 5, or Nexus 7, then you should be using Android L by the end of 2014. The only company so far to suggest a timeline for the Android L update is HTC, which said it will arrive on the One M8 and One M7 between October and December. HTC's older high-end phones, such as the One X (which is two years old), won't be getting Android L. Samsung's two-year-old Galaxy S3, however, recently got the KitKat update (Android 4.4), so it may become eligible for an Android L upgrade because it's such a popular phone.

What does the 'L' stand for?

Google hasn't said yet. All previous versions of Android have been named after confectionery (Jelly Bean and KitKat being the previous two), so some experts think 'Lollipop' is a good bet. Call us nostalgic, but wouldn't Lemon Bon Bon be better?

OUR NEW GUIDE TO ANDROID

Inside this 148-page MagBook you'll find all the free apps, expert tips and easy-to-follow workshops you need to get the most out of your phone or tablet. Written in plain English, The Definitive Guide to Android also shows you how to protect your device from damage, theft and malware.

BUY IT FROM AMAZON AT www.snipca.com/12476

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Workshops

21 pages of easy-to-follow workshops

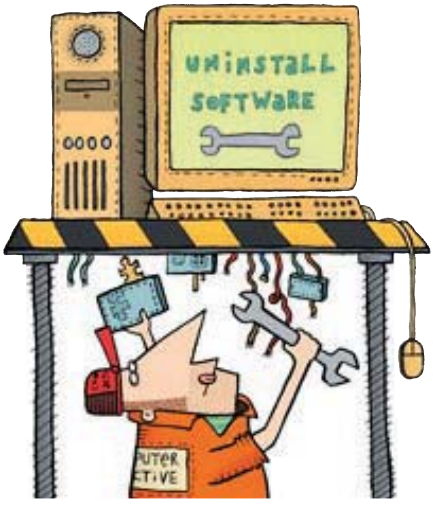
58 Hack your PC for extra space
61 Stream photos to your TV
63 Design professional- looking leaflets for free
65 Catalogue your household possessions
66 Block new threats attacking Windows XP
69 Create your own Windows Start menu
71 Access your home PC from anywhere
73 Make amazing movies on your iPad
74 Organise emails better
76 Manage your outlook
77 Recover deleted photos for free

PLUS

80 Readers' Tips
81 Tablet & Phone Tips
83 Make Windows Better
84 Make Office Better
85 Secret Tips For... Mozilla Thunderbird

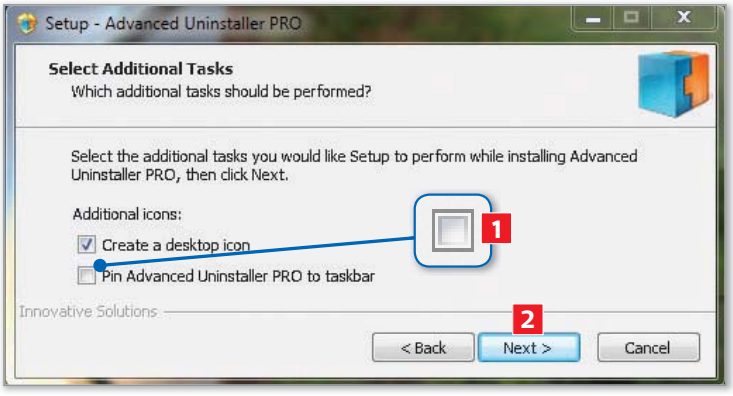
Hack your PC for extra space

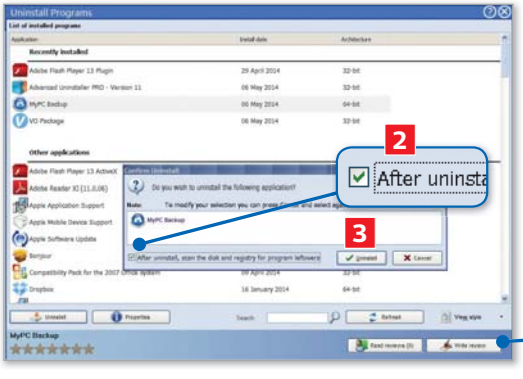
What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 40 minutes



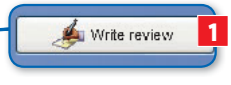
Advanced Uninstaller Pro is a free program that not only uninstalls programs that you no longer want but also wipes out all traces of them, including their Registry files. You can delete fonts you don't use and compress a drive on your PC to create more storage space. It also lets you add and remove items from your Control Panel, view online reports of any changes you've made, and schedule automatic scans. It can also speed up your browsers by erasing your temporary internet files.

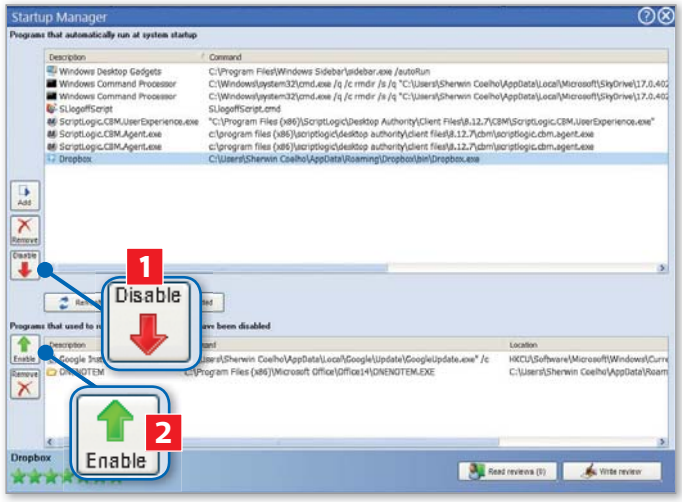
STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/12087 and click the green Download Now (not Free Download) button. Double-click the setup file that downloads to your PC, click Next Step, Accept (twice), then Install Now to start the installation. Click Next (three times), untick the second box 1 (unless you want to pin the program to your taskbar) and then click Next 2 to open it. Click General Tools and then Uninstall Programs to see a list of the programs on your PC. Click a program that you want to uninstall. You could start with VO Package and MyPCBackup, which automatically download with Advanced Uninstaller Pro.



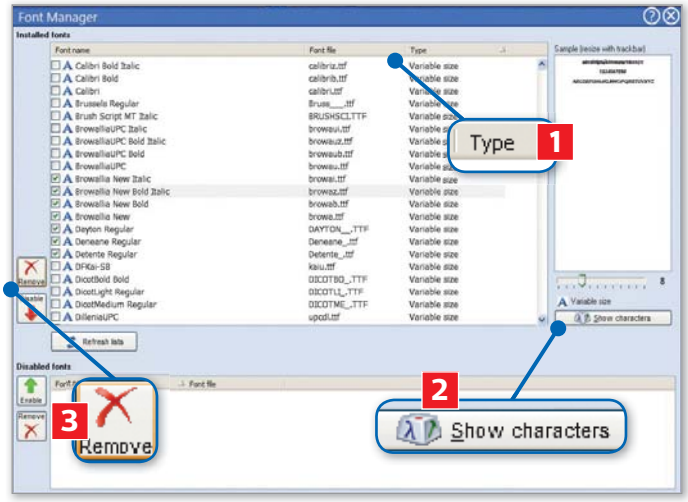


STEP 2 To help you decide whether to uninstall it, click 'Read reviews' to view what other people have said or 'Write review' 1 to review and rate it yourself. To uninstall the program, click Uninstall. Tick the box in the pop-up window 2 to also delete any traces of the program – such as its Registry files, then click Uninstall 3 again. After uninstalling the program, click Next to scan for any traces. If leftover items are found, they'll be listed.
Tick them and click Next to delete them. Close the window by clicking the top-right Close sign to return to the General Tools screen.

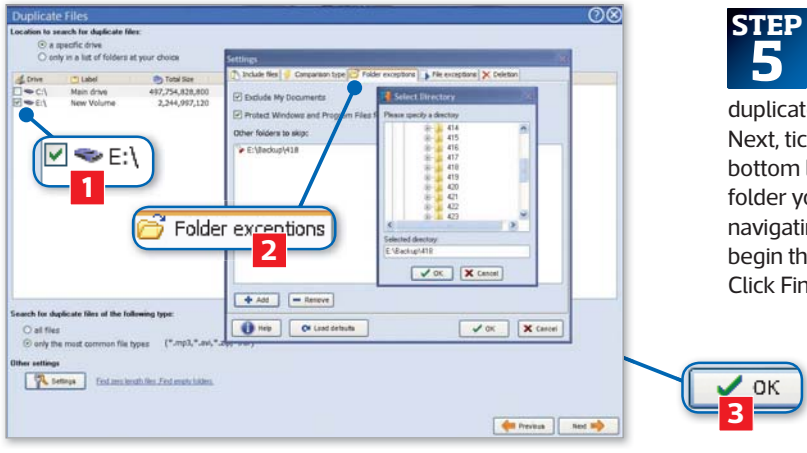




STEP 3 One handy feature of Advanced Uninstaller Pro is the ability to monitor and create a record of any program you install, including a log of any additional folders and Registry files installed along with it. To activate this, in the General Tools window click the Monitored Installations tile, then 'Start Installation monitor', and OK. Close the window. To reduce your computer's boot time it's a good idea to restrict the number of programs that launch when you start up your PC. To do this, click the Startup Manager tile, click a program you want to disable from startup, then Disable 1. If you later want to restore the item to startup, click it in the Disabled pane and then click Enable 2. Close the window.

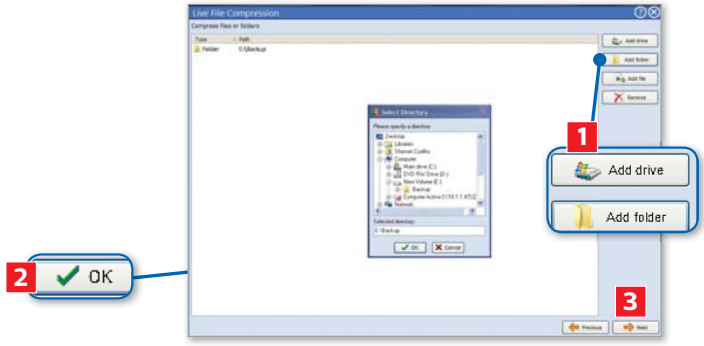


STEP 4 You'll probably have thousands of fonts installed on your PC taking up valuable space. To delete the ones you never use, click the Font Manager tile, Type 1, scroll down to the variable size fonts (these are the only ones you can delete), and tick those you want to delete. Click 'Show characters' 2 to view individual fonts and confirm their removal. Next, click Remove 3 and then Yes to uninstall. Close the window to return to the General Tools screen. To add or remove items in your Control Panel, click Control Panel Manager. You'll see a list of enabled and disabled items. Click icons in both lists, then click Enable or Disable to move them from one list to the other. These changes will take place after you've rebooted.

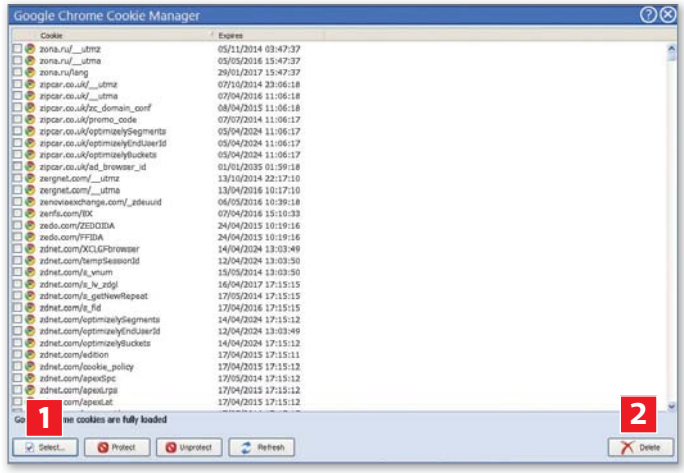


STEP 5 Click the back button in the top-left corner of the General Tools screen and then click 'Files and Registry Tools'. In this window, you can delete duplicate files on your system. To do so, click Duplicate Files, Next, tick the drive you want to scan 1, click Settings in the bottom left, then the 'Folder exceptions' tab 2. Next, add any folder you want excluded from the scan by clicking Add, navigating to it, clicking it and then clicking OK 3. Click Next to begin the scan. Tick the duplicate files and then click Delete. Click Finish when you're done.

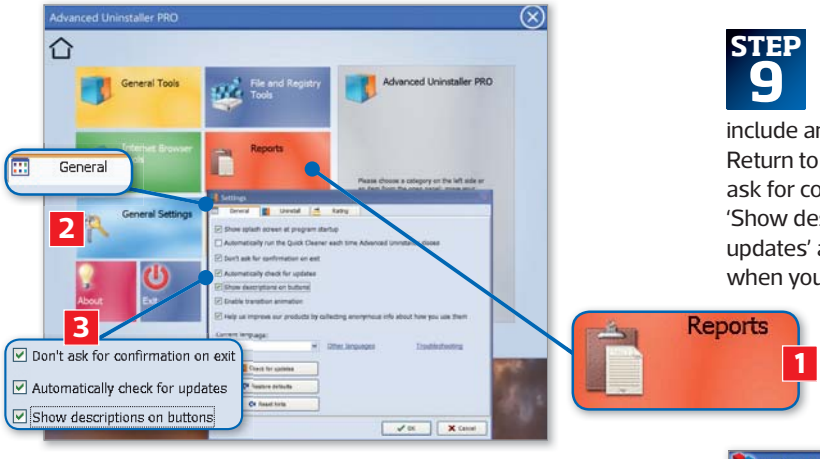
STEP 6 Advanced Uninstaller lets you compress large folders (or drives) to free up space. Click Live File Compression, Next twice, Add folder (or 'Add drive') 1, navigate to the folder or drive you want to compress, click it and then click OK 2 to add it. Click Next 3 to compress the folder or drive. You'll see a live folder-compression report that shows you the amount of space freed on your PC. Click Finish after you're done to return to the 'Files and Registry Tools' screen.



STEP 7 Registry Cleaner scans your Registry, fixes broken files and deletes any corrupted ones. Click Registry Cleaner 1 and then click Next twice to begin scanning your registry. Items that need to be repaired or deleted will be shown with a tick. Click Repair, OK, then Finish. Advanced Uninstaller also lets you optimise your Registry so that programs can access it quicker, thereby improving your PC's overall performance. Click Registry Optimizer 2 and then Next (twice). When you see the Registry-optimisation results, click Finish to restart your PC with the changes you've made.



STEP 8 You can make Internet Explorer, Chrome and Firefox faster by deleting your history, cookies and temporary files. Click Internet Browser Tools. You'll see a list of your browsers with four options for each – Browsing History, Cookie Manager, Add-ons and Temporary Files. Browsing History and Cookie Manager work in the same way. Click the options you want, click the Select button 1, 'Select all' and then click Delete 2. Click Temporary Files and then click Next (three times) to delete all your temporary files and see how much space you've recovered on your system. Click Finish.



STEP 9 To view the changes you've made to any of your program settings, click Reports 1, then click one of the available options. The report will open in a webpage and include any program you've installed or changes you've made. Return to Advanced Uninstaller, click General Settings 2. Tick 'Don't ask for confirmation on exit', 'Automatically check for updates' and 'Show descriptions on buttons' 3. You can also click the 'Check for updates' and 'Restore defaults' buttons if you want to. Click OK when you're done.

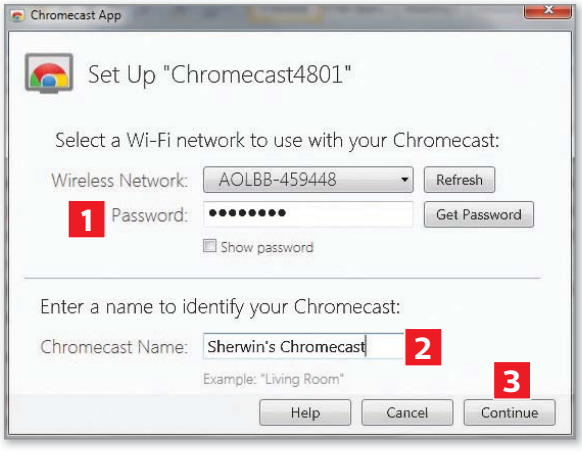
STEP 10 Click Daily Health Check, Settings on the top-right and then 'Change settings' to schedule a daily scan of your PC's system. Click the hours, minutes and AM/PM dropdown menus 1 to set a time, then click 'Save settings' 2. Click the bottom-left 'Re-scan now' link to run a quick PC scan. Any problems will be highlighted in red. Click 'Fix all issues', then Continue. The space recovered after fixing your PC's problems will be highlighted below. Click Done to exit the program. ●

Stream photos to your TV

What you need: Chromecast, TV with HDMI port, PC, Android device
Time required: 30 minutes

Using Google's new streaming device Chromecast (£30 from www.snipca.com/12154) is the most efficient way to wirelessly stream (or 'cast') media from your PC and Android device to your TV. Making use of the free Photowall for Chromecast extension on Chrome, we'll demonstrate how to cast images from your PC and Android device to your TV. First, we'll explain how to set up Chromecast, then how to cast videos from YouTube and Netflix, as well as tracks from Google Play Music.

STEP 1 Connect the included power cable to the back end 1 of your Chromecast. With your TV switched off, plug your Chromecast into your TV's HDMI port 2. Connect the USB end of the power cable to a USB port on your TV 3. If your TV doesn't have a USB port, connect the USB port of the Chromecast to the adapter provided and plug that into a power socket. Switch on your TV and change your input to HDMI to see the 'Set me up' screen. Go to your PC and open the Chrome browser (download from www.snipca.com/12155), then go to www.chromecast.com/setup to begin setting up your Chromecast.



STEP 2 Click the Download button, double-click the Chromecast Installer setup file that downloads to your PC and then click Run. Click Chromecast App in the window that opens, click Accept to establish a connection with your Chromecast, then Continue. A four-digit code will appear simultaneously on your TV and PC. Click 'That's my code' on your PC, enter your Wi-Fi password 1, give your Chromecast a name 2 and then click Continue 3. Once it's connected, you'll see a message on your TV: 'Ready to cast'. On your PC, click Get Cast Extension, 'Add Extension' in the browser and then Add to confirm this.

STEP 3 Before streaming our images, we'll test the Chromecast. Go to www.youtube.com in Chrome on your PC and play any video. Beside the 'Full screen' icon at the bottom of your video, you'll see a 'Play on TV' icon 1. Click it, then click the name you gave your Chromecast in Step 2 2. After a connection is established, your video will be muted on your PC and start playing on your TV. You can now control the volume of the video via your TV. To play the video on your PC again, click the 'Play on TV' icon once more and select 'This computer' 3.

STEP 4 To begin streaming montages of your images (or 'photowall') from your PC to your TV, go to www.snipca.com/12156, click the Free button beside 'Photowall for Chromecast' and click Add. Next, click 'Photowall for Chromecast' under Apps, then Launch App. Click 'Start a Photowall', then Okay. Next, click 'Cast to Chrome' then the name of your Chromecast at the top right. Click Sign In, log in with your Google ID, click Continue, then Accept. Name your photowall then click Next. Click Manage Your Photowall to begin adding images. Click 'Choose a Pic' 1, navigate to an image, click it 2, and then click Open 3.

STEP 5 Drag the handles to crop the picture, then click the right-pointing arrow. If you want, click Doodle 1, then click a colour on the right and scribble something across your image. Use the Eraser button to remove your mistakes. Click Captions, drag the caption box 2 to position it, type a caption, and select a colour. Tap Done 3 when you've finished. Repeat these steps to add other images, and they'll appear on the photowall your TV as tiles.

STEP 6 To add images from your Android device, open the Chrome app, type g.co/photowall in the browser bar and enter the five-digit code at the left of your TV screen when prompted. Tap the Play button, then Okay. Tap Add A Pic, Camera, the Shutter button to click a picture, then tap the tick symbol to add the photo you've taken. Tap Crop and 'Tweak your Photo' if you want to crop and add doodles and captions to it (see Step 5). Tap the right-pointing arrow beside it to progress to the next screen. Tap 'Send to Photowall' to add the finished image to the photowall on your TV (see image right).

STEP 7 We'll now explore what else Chromecast can do on your Android device. To cast a Netflix video to your TV, open the Netflix app (www.snipca.com/12198), tap a video to play it, tap the video again to display the video options, tap the Chromecast icon 1 and then tap the name of your Chromecast 2 to begin casting the Netflix video to your TV. Repeat this process using the relevant apps to play YouTube videos and tracks you purchased on Google Play Music. To stop casting, tap the Chromecast icon on the app its playing in, then tap Disconnect. You can also use Chromecast in the same way on your iOS device using Chromecast's free iOS app (www.snipca.com/12166).

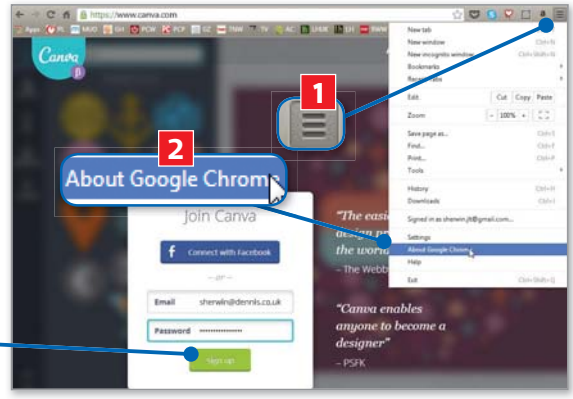
Design professional-looking leaflets for free

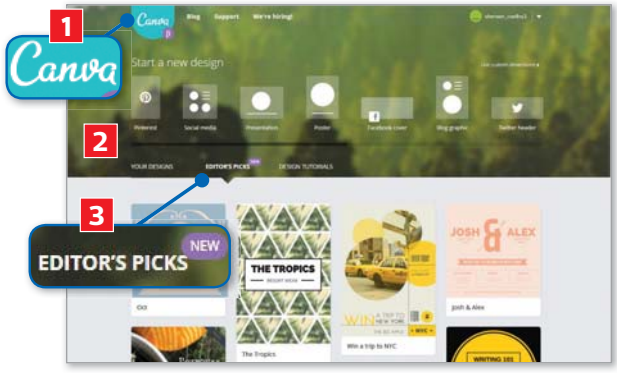
What you need: Firefox or Chrome **Time required:** 30 minutes

Canva is a new website that lets you create and design high-quality leaflets, posters, business cards and party invitations, even if you have no design expertise or experience with graphics-editing software.

You can create these from scratch or customise the site's templates with your own images and free backgrounds. We'll show you how to create a leaflet using Canva's full range of tools. Make sure you have your own images stored in a folder on your PC's Desktop.

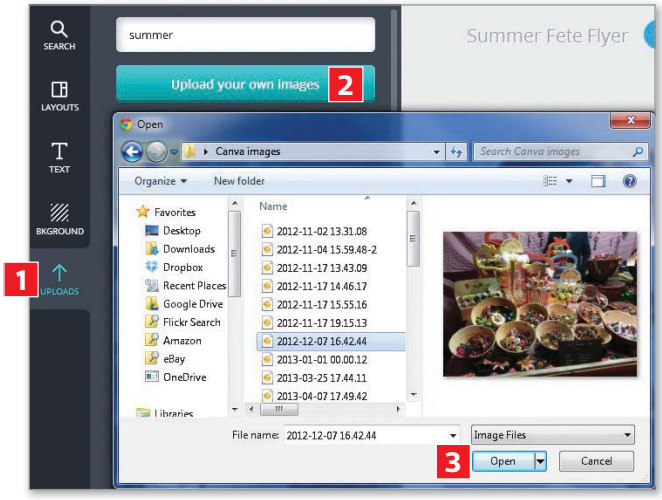
STEP 1 Make sure you're running the latest versions of Firefox (29) from www.snipca.com/12105 or Chrome (34) from www.snipca.com/12106 because Canva won't work in previous versions, or in Internet Explorer. To update Chrome, click the three horizontal lines 1, then About Google Chrome 2. To update Firefox, click the top-left orange Firefox dropdown menu, go to Help and then click About Firefox. Go to www.canva.com, enter your email address and a password and click the green 'Sign up' 3 button. The next time you visit this website, click 'Log in' at the top-right, enter your login details and then click 'Log in'.



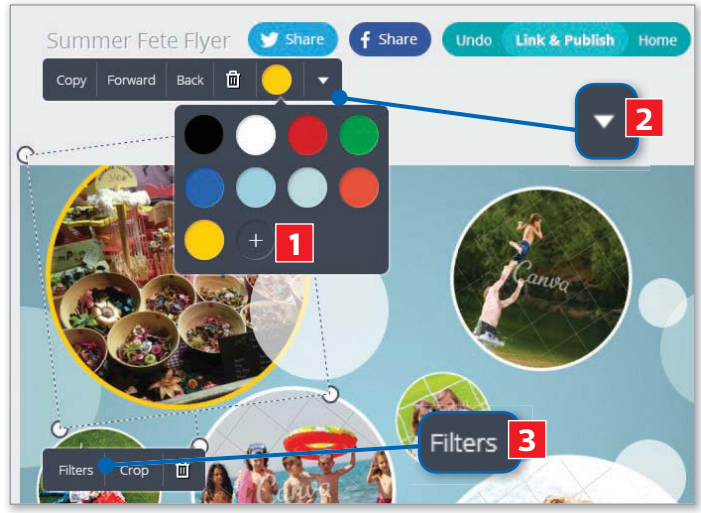


STEP 2 Click the Canva icon 1 to skip the introductory YouTube video tutorial and go to your page. You'll see a row of project options along the top. Click and drag the slider 2 to the right to see more options. To customise one of Canva's layouts, click Editor's Picks 3 to bring up a selection. Click a layout you want to use, then click the Remix button below it. A new browser tab will open containing a choice of layouts on the left-hand side based on the one you selected. Each layout comprises customisable elements, such as background, text boxes and other images.

STEP 3 Select a layout that you want. We'll replace the layout's images with our own and free ones within Canva. First, highlight the title at the top 1 and give your layout a name. To find free images, click Search, type a search term in the box (for example, summer) and add the images you want by dragging and dropping them into your layout (making sure you only drag images marked 'Free' 2). Click Background 3 and follow the same procedure. Changes you make are saved automatically in Canva, but you can press Ctrl+Z to undo any changes.



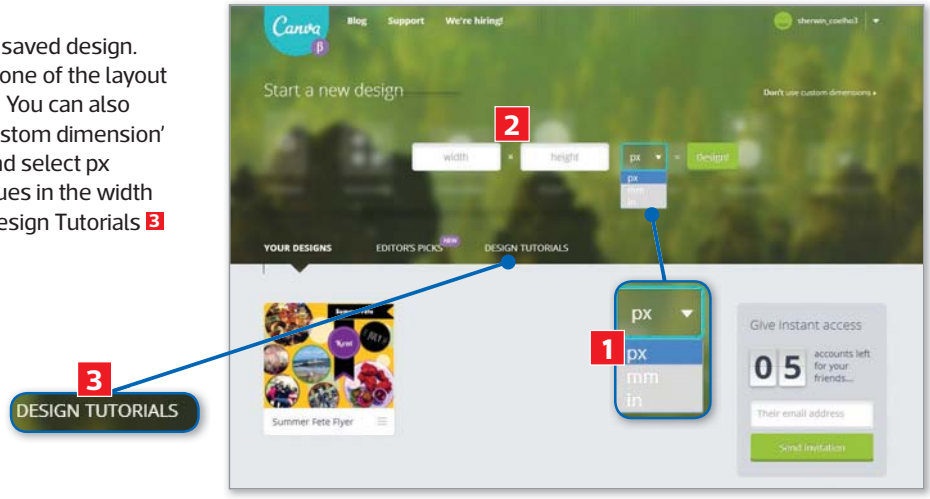
STEP 4 To use your own images, click Uploads 1, 'Upload your own images' 2, navigate to the folder on your Desktop where you stored your images, click the image file you want, then click Open 3. Next, click this image in the Uploads section and drag it over the copyrighted image you want it to replace in your layout. To re-position any element (image, text box, graphics) of your layout, just click and drag it elsewhere. Click an element, then click Copy to duplicate it, or click Forward or Back to position it in front of or behind other elements on your layout. Click the Bin icon to delete an element.



STEP 5 If your element has a border, you can change its colour. To do this, click the colour option, then select a colour or click the '+' symbol 1 and click anywhere on the circular colour pallette for a more precise colour tone. Click the dropdown menu 2, then Transparency and move the slider to adjust the element's transparency. Click Filters 3, then click an effect to add it to your image. If you want to re-position an image in the frame, double-click it, drag to position it, and then click the tick mark to lock its position. Click outside the layout to confirm any changes you make.

STEP 6 Next, type whatever you want in the layout's default text boxes (we typed Summer Fête). Next, click the font-type and font-size dropdown menus 1 and customise these. Alternatively, click Text 2 on the left and drag and drop the text graphic style you want to use (all are free) onto your template. When you're happy, click Link & Publish 3 at the top, then click PDF. A PDF of your finished design will download to your PC, ready to print.

STEP 7 Click Home at the top-right to see your saved design. To create a new one from scratch, click one of the layout options above and begin customising it. You can also create layouts in set sizes. To do this, click 'Use custom dimension' at the top-right, click the px dropdown menu 1 and select px (pixels), mm (millimetres) or in (inches), enter values in the width and height boxes 2 and then click Design. Click Design Tutorials 3 to see tips on how to create better designs.

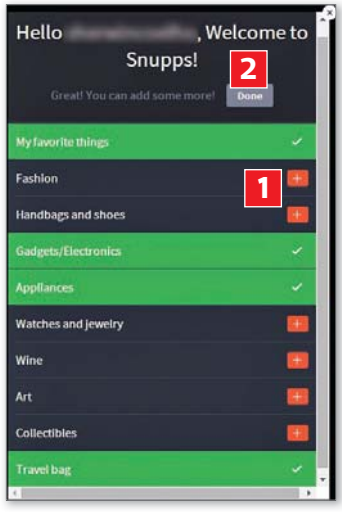


Catalogue your household possessions

What you need: PC, iPhone or iPad **Time required:** 20 minutes

Snupps is a website and free iOS app that helps you catalogue your household possessions, creating an inventory of your home's contents and making it easy should you have to make a claim to your insurance company for lost or stolen items. Snupps lets you save photos of an item with detailed information, such as its purchase date, estimated value and warranty number. Ensure you have images of all the items you want to catalogue stored on your PC.

STEP 1 Go to www.snupps.com on your PC, click Join Now, enter your email address, username and password, then click 'Register with Email'. Click '+' 1 beside those default categories (which Snupps calls 'shelves') you want to add and then click Done 2. If you want to create your own shelf, click the top-right '+' symbol, Create Shelf, give your shelf a title and then click Done. While cataloguing items, it's best to put each item in its own shelf. Click My Stuff, then '+' on the shelf you want add an item to. Drag and drop the image of it onto the shelf.



STEP 2 Next, click and drag the handles 1 to crop your image, click the rotate icon 2 to flip it or the rubbish-bin icon to delete it. Click 'Crop & Save' 3 when you're done. Give your image a title and a description, scroll down and add other detailed information about it, such as its purchase price, purchase date, brand, estimated value, warranty number and warranty-expiry date. Tap Create at the top-right when you're done. To edit or remove items from a shelf – or delete the shelf itself, click it, click the Organize gear dropdown menu above it and select what you want to do.

STEP 3 To add images from your iOS device to your shelves, download the Snupps app from www.snipca.com/12085, tap 'Log in' at the bottom, enter your login details, and tap 'Log in with Email or Username'. Tap the '+' symbol on a shelf, then the Gallery icon 1 to add an image from your device. Tap the flip icon 2 to switch to the front camera, the slider 3 to zoom in on the item and the orange shutter button to take your picture. Tap 'Use image' in the bottom-right corner, add detailed information about the item (see Step 2) and then tap Save at the top-right corner.

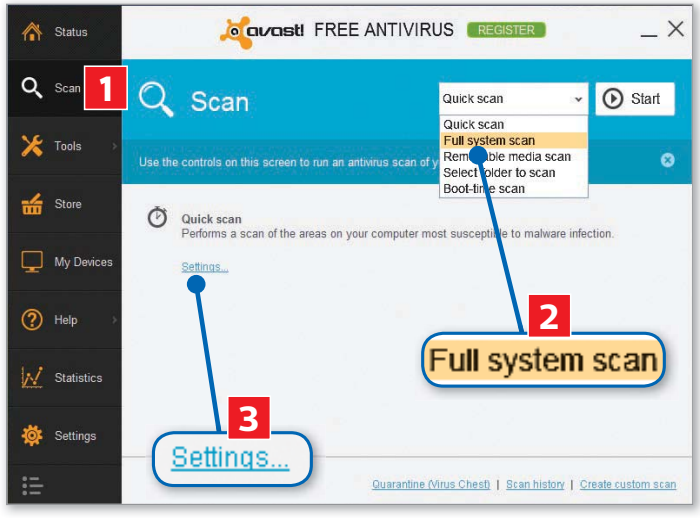
Block new threats attacking Windows XP

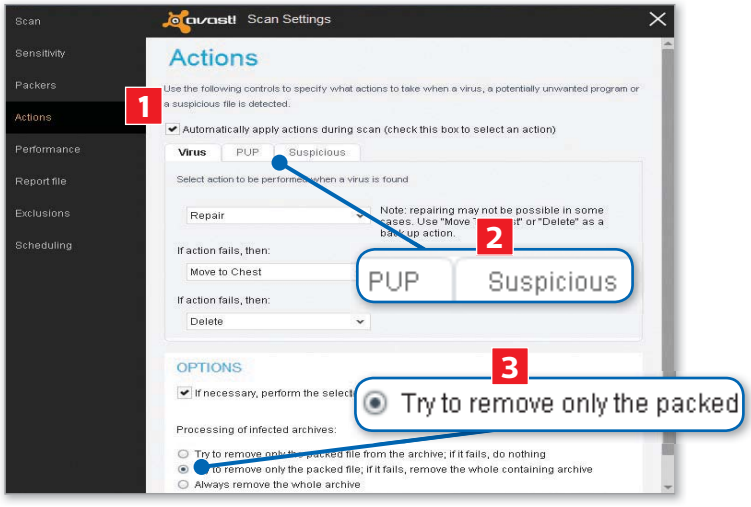
What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1; Avast Free Antivirus
Time required: 40 mins

In April, Microsoft stopped issuing updates for Windows XP. However, Avast Free Antivirus (the best free antivirus in our group test – see page 58) will still block most threats attacking your PC, whichever version of Windows you use. We'll show you how to master Avast's free tools to eliminate viruses and fix your infected PC.

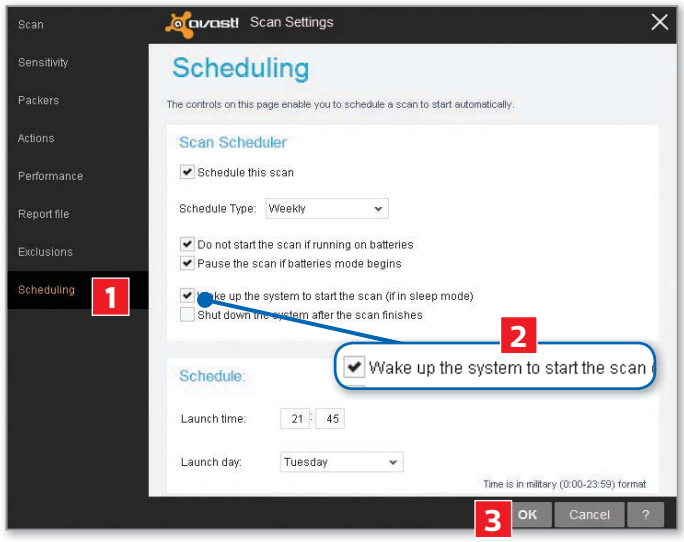
If you're using Internet Explorer (IE) in XP switch to Chrome or Firefox, because Microsoft won't let XP users update IE beyond IE8, leaving it vulnerable to online threats.

STEP 1 To begin downloading Avast Free Antivirus, go to www.snipca.com/12238 in Chrome and click the green Download Now button. Double-click the setup file that downloads to your browser and then click Run. Click 'Regular installation', then Continue to begin installation. You'll see a preview of its new features along with an installation-progress bar. Before scanning, we'll tweak Avast's default scan settings to achieve the best results. Click the Scan section 1, the scan dropdown menu, 'Full system scan' 2 and then click Settings 3. Tick 'Scan all files' below File Types.

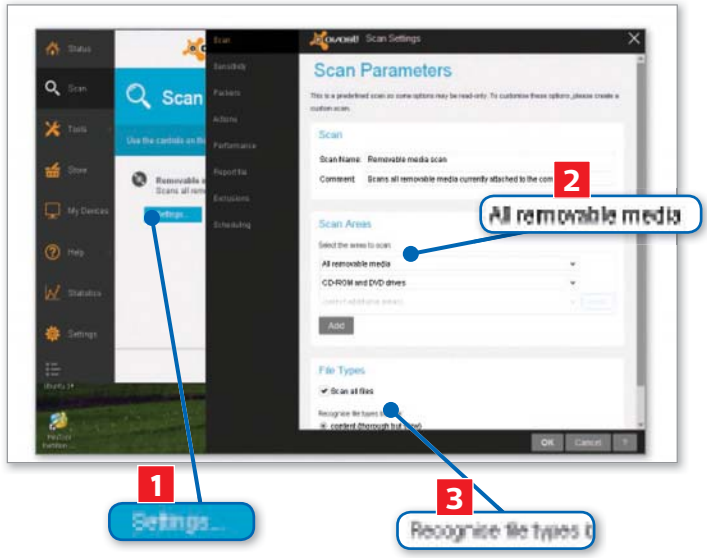




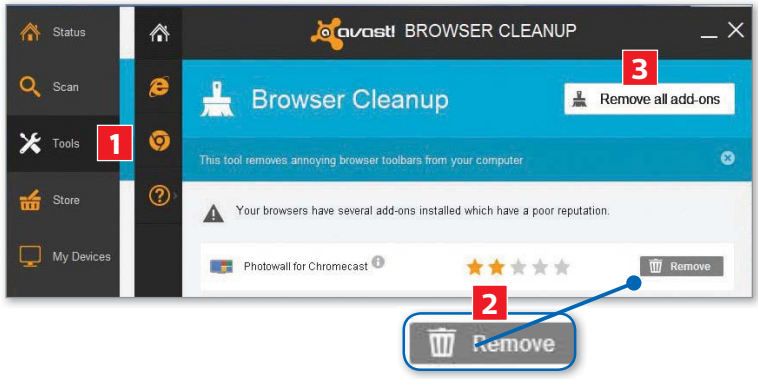
STEP 2 A packer – a type of file that smuggles malware into your system – can damage your PC or leak personal information to hackers. To prevent this, click Packers on the left and tick 'All packers'. To re-set what you do with problematic files after a scan, click Actions and tick the box below it 1. Click the first dropdown menu and select Repair. In the second dropdown menu, click 'Move to Chest'. In the third dropdown menu, click Delete. Avast will now try to repair infected files before deleting them. Do the same thing in the PUP and Suspicious 2 tabs. Select the middle box 3 to remove infected archives.



STEP 3 Scheduling a weekly scan will ensure your XP computer is regularly monitored for new threats and viruses. Click Scheduling 1, tick 'Schedule this scan', click the Type dropdown menu, Weekly, then tick the third box 2, which will guarantee your PC is scanned even if it's in Sleep mode. Give your scan a launch time by entering values in the hours (24-hour format) and minutes boxes, click the 'Launch day' dropdown menu and select a day of the week for your scan. Once you're done, click OK 3 and then Start to begin your full system scan according to your new settings. After the scan, click Repair to fix corrupt items if necessary.

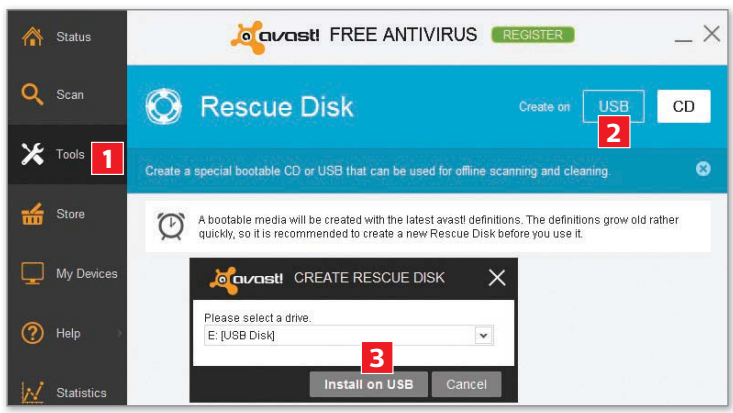


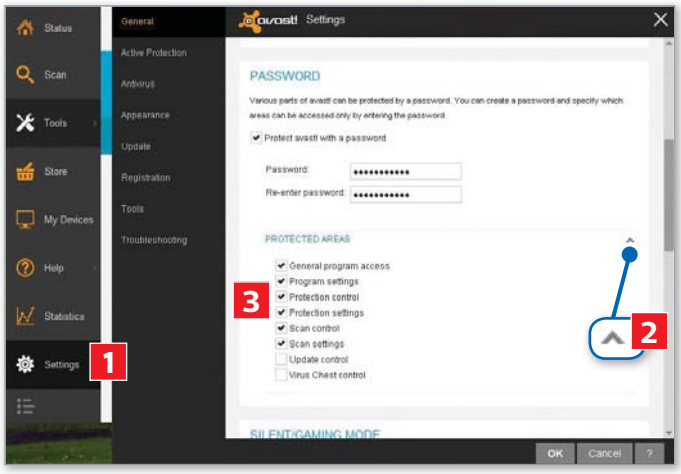
STEP 4 Devices such as USB sticks, external hard drives or DVDs can corrupt your PC if they are infected and you connect them to your PC. Avast lets you scan these individually after you plug them into your PC. To do this, click Scan, the dropdown menu, 'Removable media scan' and then Settings 1. Click the Scan Areas dropdown menu and select 'All removable media' 2. This will scan any drives connected to your USB ports. Click the second dropdown menu and click 'CD-ROM and DVD drives' if you want to scan those drives as well. Tick 'Scan all files' 3, OK and then Start to begin the scan.



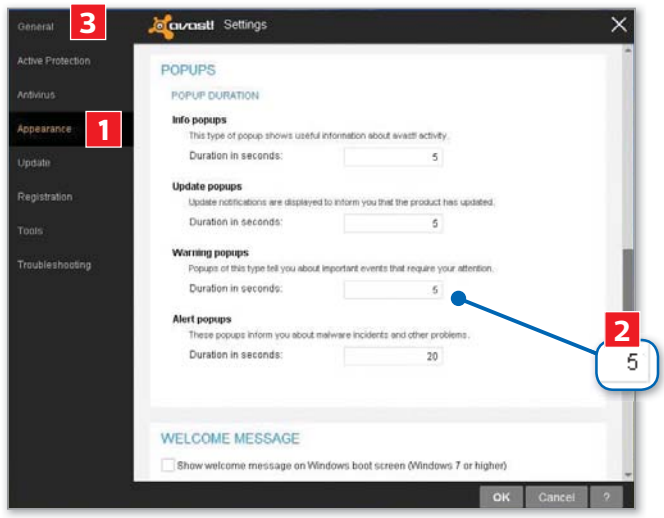
STEP 5 Avast also lets you automatically update software that's out of date and clean up your browser by removing add-ons that slow it down. To update your software, move your cursor over Tools 1, click Software Updater, then Refresh. You'll see a list of all the programs on your PC and an Update button beside any that require updating. Click these buttons. Next, move your cursor over Tools, click Browser Cleanup, then Start Browser Cleanup. If you have an add-on that's slowing your browser, Avast will recommend you uninstall it. Click Remove 2 if you want to remove the add-on or 'Remove all add-ons' 3 to remove all of them.

STEP 6 If your PC is infected with a virus or malware, you can create a rescue disk on a USB stick to scan and fix it from the boot menu. To do this, plug an empty USB stick into your PC, move your cursor over Tools 1, click Rescue Disk, USB 2, select your USB stick by clicking the dropdown menu and then 'Install on USB' 3. Click Yes to begin the process, and OK after it's finished. Restart your PC. As it restarts, you'll see a screen telling you which key to press to boot into your BIOS. Press it. In your Boot Menu, change your 'Boot option' from Hard Drive to Removable Media. When your PC starts, follow Avast's instructions to scan and fix it.

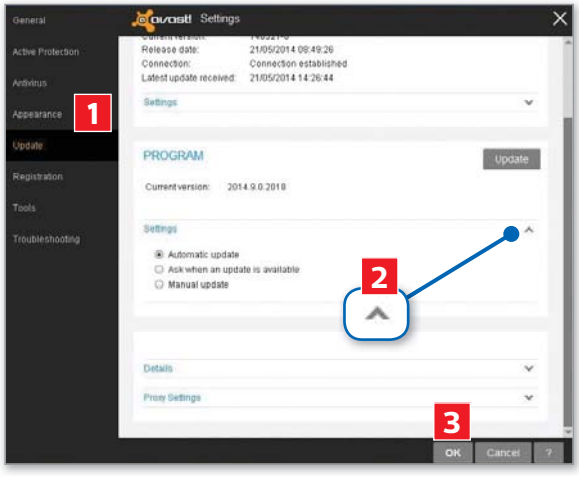




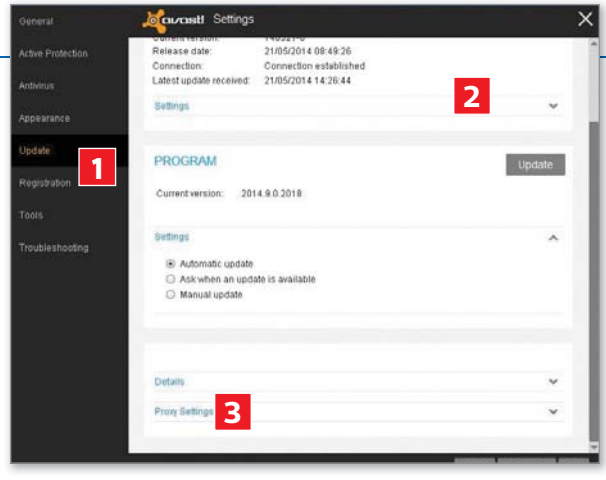
STEP 7 There are many ways you can customise Avast, such as password-protecting its sections (which it calls 'areas'), turning off its pop-ups and sounds, and making sure it's up to date. To use password-protection, click Settings 1, scroll down, tick 'Protect Avast with a password', enter and re-enter a password, click the Protected Areas dropdown menu 2 and select what you want to protect by ticking the relevant boxes 3. The next time you try to access these areas, you'll need to enter your password.



STEP 8 Avast's countless pop-ups are very irritating. Thankfully, you can change the duration of these pop-ups and even turn them off altogether. To reduce their duration, click Appearance 1, then scroll down and change all the pop-up times from 20 seconds to 5 seconds 2. This is long enough to view them in case you need to take action without them being an annoying distraction. To turn them off completely, click General 3, scroll down and tick the Silent/Gaming Mode box.



STEP 9 There are some changes we recommend you make to Avast. The software makes a sound every time it detects a suspicious item, which can be annoying. To turn sounds off, click Appearance 1, untick Enable Sounds to disable all sounds or click the 'Sound settings' dropdown menu and untick only those you don't want. You can choose to display your scan results immediately (skipping Avast's summary screen) – just scroll down and tick the box beside Scan Results. Another change you should make is to set Avast to automatically update. Do this by clicking Update on the left, then clicking the dropdown menu beside Settings 2 in the Program section and selecting 'Automatic update'. Finally, click OK 3 to activate all your changes.



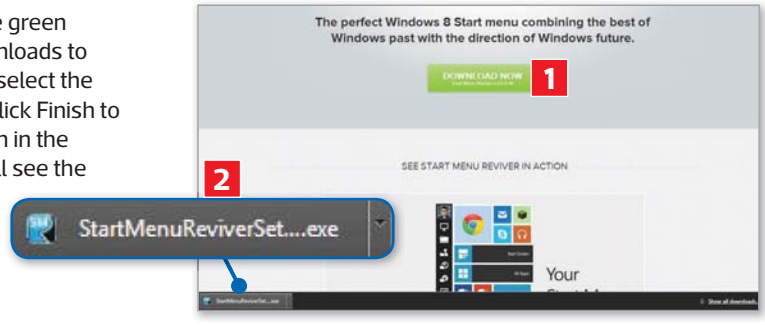
STEP 10 To use Avast after 30 days you'll need to register the software. This is free, and just involves creating an account with a password. Click the bottom-left Settings, Registration 1, 'Register now' 2 and Select 3. Enter your first name, last name, email address and then click 'Register with email address'. Now click the small 'Stay with basic protection' link (if you click 'Try Internet Security for FREE' you'll be asked for a payment following a 20-day trial). Click OK in the bottom-right. You'll receive an email from Avast. Click the link in that email to verify your account. Type and re-type a password, click 'Set password', Continue, then close your browser. To log in to your Avast account, go to www.avast.com and click Account at the top right.

Create your own Windows Start menu

What you need: Windows 7, 8 or 8.1 **Time required:** 20 minutes

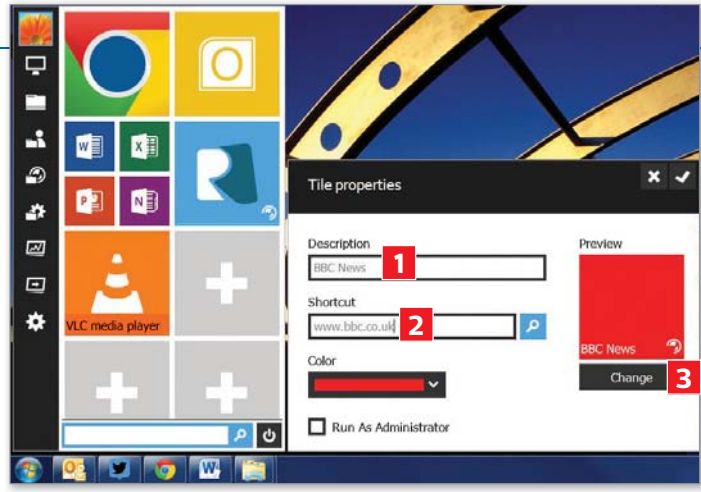
Start Menu Reviver – a free program which lets you restore the Start menu in Windows 8 and customise it in Windows 7 – now features an attractive new tile-based interface, supports more tiles and lets you add and customise up to 64 tiles that you can access by scrolling. Unlike the Windows Start menu, you can add any folder, location or website to this menu and tweak its settings to quickly find anything on your PC.

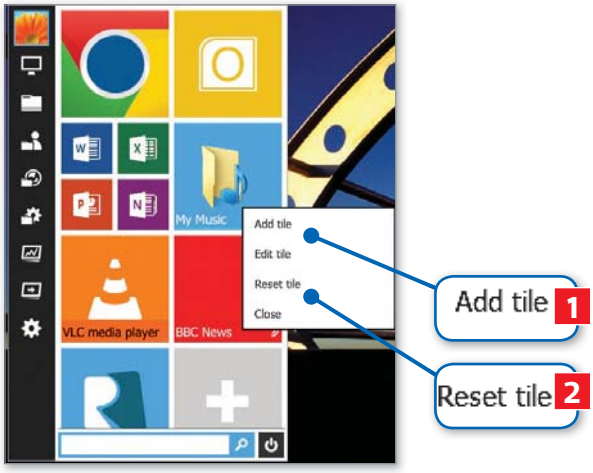
STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/12256, scroll down and click the green Download Now button 1. Click the setup file 2 that downloads to your PC, then OK to set English as your language. Next, select the T&C agreement, click Next again, then Install. Once it's installed, click Finish to launch Start Menu Reviver. A quick tutorial of its features will begin in the bottom-left corner. After it finishes, click the Start button and you'll see the new menu layout with option icons on the left and large tiles. Move your cursor to the outer right-hand edge of the Start menu to see more quick-access folders on your PC.



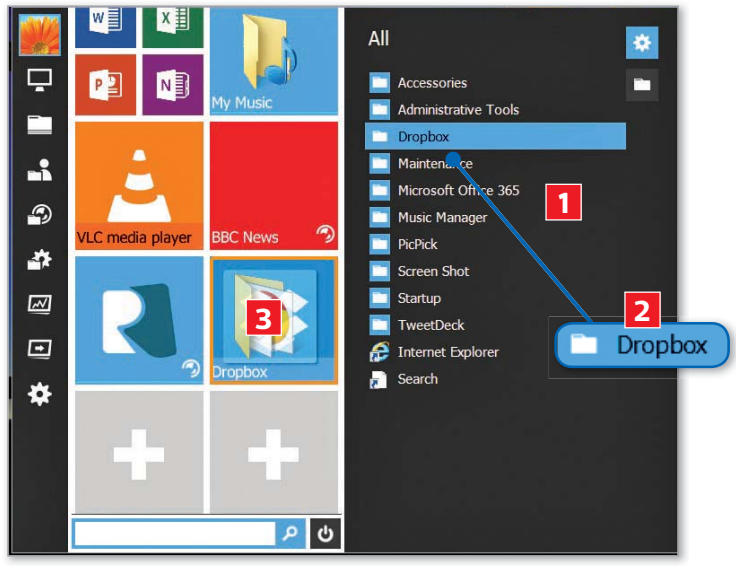
STEP 2 To add a program to your Start menu (for example, VLC media player), right-click any of the grey tiles 1 and then click 'Add tile' to see the 'Tile properties' window. Name your tile in the Description field, click the Search icon 2, navigate to the VLC media player shortcut on your Desktop, click it and then click Open. Next, click the Color dropdown menu and select the tile colour you want, click Change below the Preview field, then From Library. You'll see a library of icons for the most common PC programs. Scroll down, click VLC Media Player and then click Open to add the VLC icon. Click the top-right tick 3 to add that tile to your start menu.

STEP 3 Adding a website, such as BBC News, to this menu is an almost identical process. Right-click one of the grey tiles and then click 'Add tile'. Type the title of your tile (BBC News) in the Description field 1. In the Shortcut field type the website address (www.bbc.co.uk/news) 2. Click the Color dropdown menu and select a tile colour. Click Change 3, then either click Browse to use images from your PC or From Library to choose from pre-saved images (which include logos for Google, YouTube, Yahoo and Netflix). Click the top-right tick to add the tile to your menu. Click this tile to access the BBC News site.



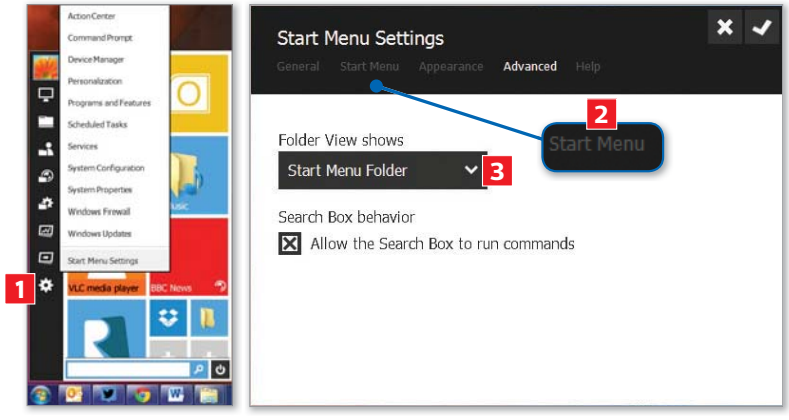


STEP 4 You can also add folders and settings menus (such as Control Panel) as tiles. For example, to add the My Music folder as a tile, open it, click the location bar at the top and press Ctrl+C to copy its address. To add the tile, right-click a grey tile, click 'Add tile' and in the Shortcut field press Ctrl+V to paste the shortcut. Fill the 'Tile properties' window' as you did in the previous steps. To move a tile, simply drag it over another tile and the two will swap positions. If you right-click an existing tile then click 'Add tile' 1 a new blank tile will appear next to it in the same column. Click 'Edit tile' to edit the tile's properties or 'Reset tile' 2 to replace it with a new blank tile.



STEP 5 Even if you use up the visible space on your tile interface, you can still add more tiles – as many as you want in fact. Move your cursor just outside the Start menu's right edge to bring up quick-access options 1. Drag and drop options from this section 2 onto the main tile interface 3 to create tiles for them. As you do this, more grey tiles will appear at the bottom of the interface. Now after clicking the Start button, you'll need to scroll down to see the new tiles you've added.

STEP 6 Start Menu Reviver has an excellent search function. Click the Start button and type a search term 1. Search results will appear at the side. To create a tile for a specific search result, drag and drop it on your main tile interface. If you want to run a more targetted search for items (for example, Recent Files), click the Folder icon at the top right of your search results. Next, click the Programs dropdown menu 2 and select another option (such as Recent Items). You'll see all the files you opened most recently. Click the Settings icon 3 and then click one of the Sort filters to display these items how you want.



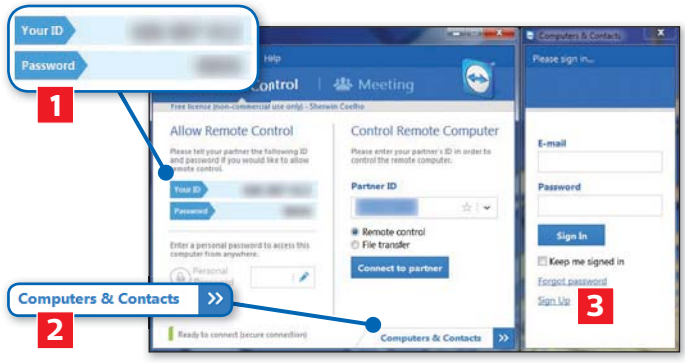
STEP 7 To further customise Start Menu Reviver, click your Start Button, the Settings icon 1 and then Start Menu Settings. Click Start Menu 2, the 'Start Menu size' dropdown menu and click Large if you want a bigger Start menu. Next, click Appearance, click the dropdown menus and change the different colour themes to whatever you want. Click Advanced, click the 'Folder View shows' dropdown menu 3 and select what you want to see when you click the Folder icon from Step 6. Click the top-right tick mark to save your changes.

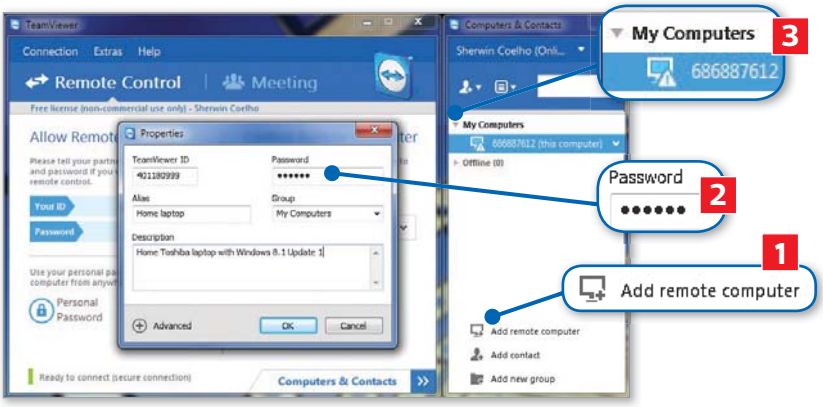
Access all your home PCs from anywhere

What you need: TeamViewer, Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1
Time required: 40 minutes

The latest version of TeamViewer lets you remotely access multiple PCs in separate tabs from the same window. You can use this to access more than one PC from your home or from a friend's house. The connection is easy to set up and you can transfer files between these PCs in seconds. It also lets you find out system data of the computers you're controlling, take screenshots and video recordings and lock and reboot them.

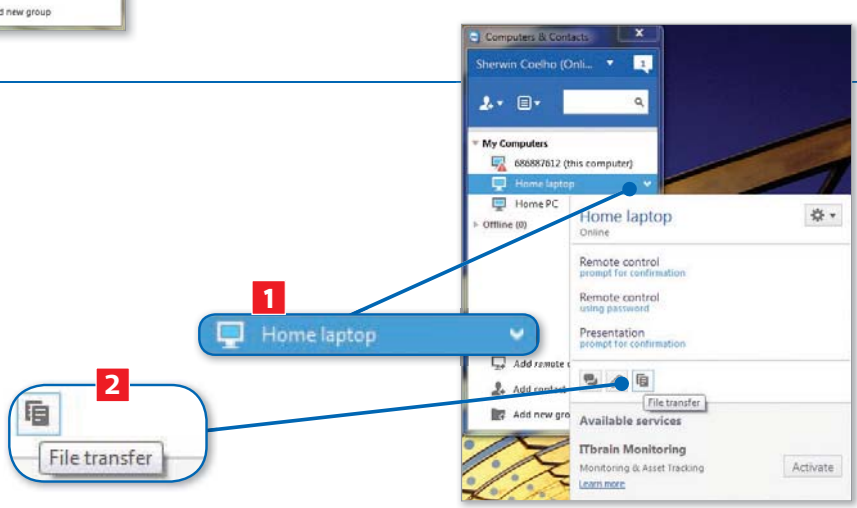
STEP 1 On the PC that you want to connect from, go to www.snipca.com/12360 and click the green Download button. Click the setup file and then click Run. Select 'Personal/Non-commercial use', click 'Accept – finish' and Yes to begin installation. You'll see a TeamViewer window featuring Your ID and Password 1. Click Computers & Contacts 2 to bring up that section. If you already have a TeamViewer account, enter your email address and password and click Sign In, otherwise click Sign Up 3, enter your name, email address, password (twice), click Next and then Finish. Your PC will show up under My Computers in the section on the right.

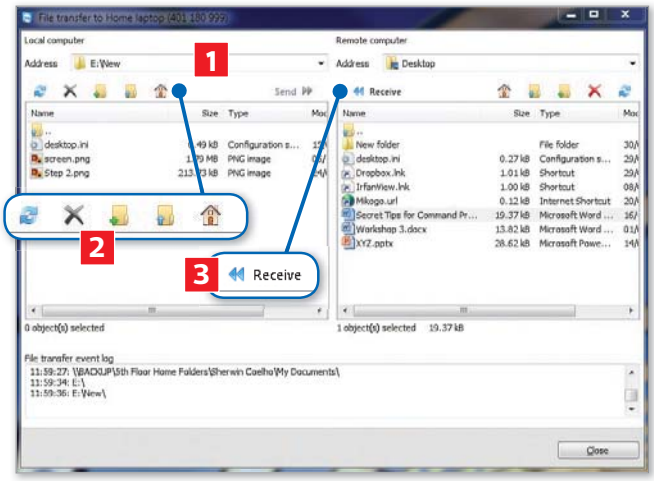




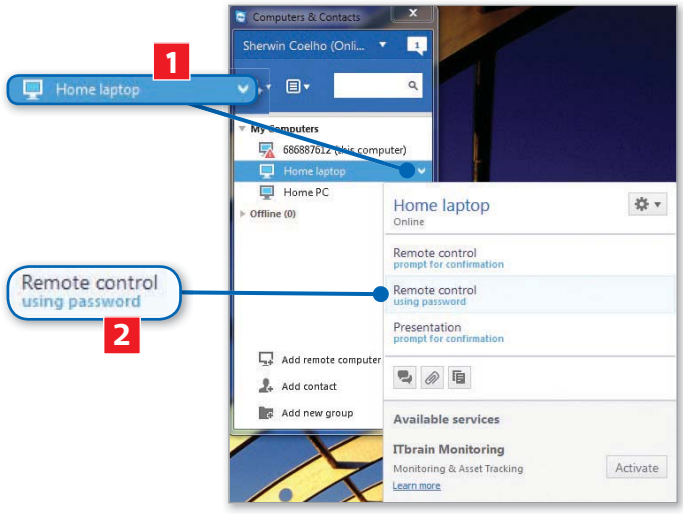
STEP 2 Repeat Step 1 on the PCs that you want to remotely connect to until you see your ID and Password. Enter your email address and password in the Computers & Contacts section and then click Sign In. On the PC you want to connect from, click 'Add remote computer' 1, enter the TeamViewer ID of the first PC that you want to connect to, its Password (which will appear on its screen) 2, give it an Alias (such as Home laptop), Description (if you want) and then click OK. That PC will now appear under My Computers 3. Click 'Add remote computer' and repeat this step for the other PCs to add them to the list.

STEP 3 A new feature of TeamViewer lets you transfer files to and from PCs you've added without remotely controlling them. We'll show you how to receive a file from a remotely connected PC, but you can also do this the other way around. To do this, click the dropdown menu beside the PC you want to receive files from 1 and then click the 'File transfer' icon 2. On the File Transfer window, the left side represents your PC and the right side is the remote computer.

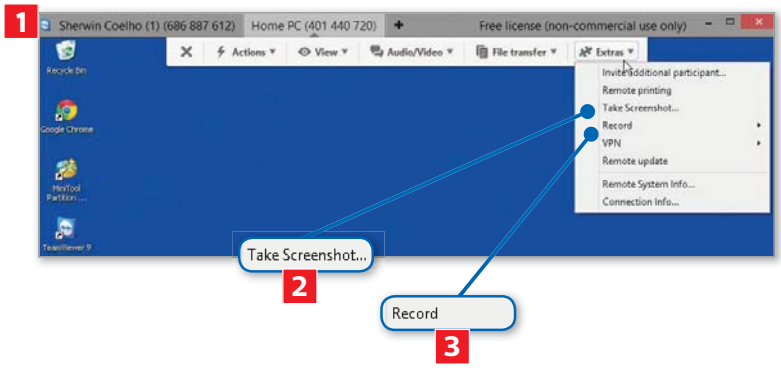




STEP 4 Use the Address dropdown menus 1 to navigate between folders and drives on the PCs. The right section should be the location on your remote PC where the file you want to receive is located. The left section should be the location on your PC that you want the file saved to. The icons at the top 2 stand for Refresh, Delete, Create a New Folder, navigate to the folder above and return to Desktop. Once you've navigated to the file you want to transfer, click it on the right and then click Receive 3 to transfer it from the remote computer to yours. To transfer files the other way around (from your PC to the remote PC), click the file from the left and then click Send.

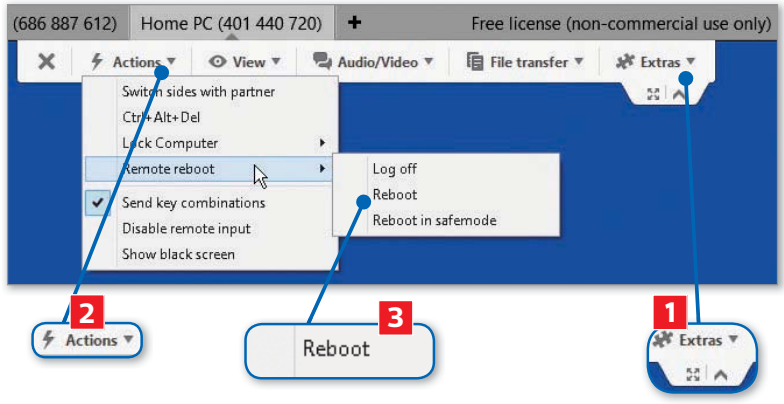


STEP 5 To remotely access and control multiple PCs in separate tabs from the same window, close the File Transfer window, click the dropdown menu beside the PC that you want to connect to 1 and then click 'Remote control – using password' 2. Because you already entered the password in Step 2, a new window will open featuring the PC and you can control it as if you were in front of it. You can even launch programs and open websites from it. To connect to the second laptop from this window, click the '+' sign at the top, click the dropdown menu beside the second PC and click 'Remote control – using password'. You'll see the second Desktop in a new tab, which you can control in the same way.



STEP 6 To close one of the remote control sessions, click its tab at the top and then click the 'X' beside it 1. If you want to take a screenshot of the PC you're remotely controlling, click the Extras dropdown menu, Take Screenshot 2, 'Save as', navigate to a location on your PC where you want to save it and then click Save. You can also save a video recording of what you do on this remote PC. To begin recording, click the Extras dropdown menu, move your mouse over Record 3 and then click Start. Once you've finished recording, click the dropdown menu again, move your mouse over Record and then click Stop. Next, navigate to the folder where you want to save the video file of the recording and then click Save.

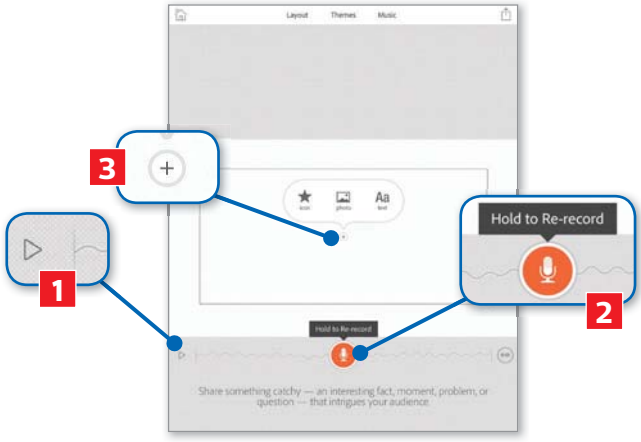
STEP 7 To find out the system information of the PC you're controlling, click the Extras dropdown menu 1 and then click Remote System Info. As well as the file-transfer method in Step 4, you can drag files from the PC you're remotely controlling and drop them in your PC (or vice versa). Click Close on the Event logs that appear when you perform these actions. To remotely lock or reboot the PC, click the Actions dropdown menu 2 move your mouse to Lock Computer and select Lock Computer or move your mouse to 'Remote reboot' and click Reboot 3. ●



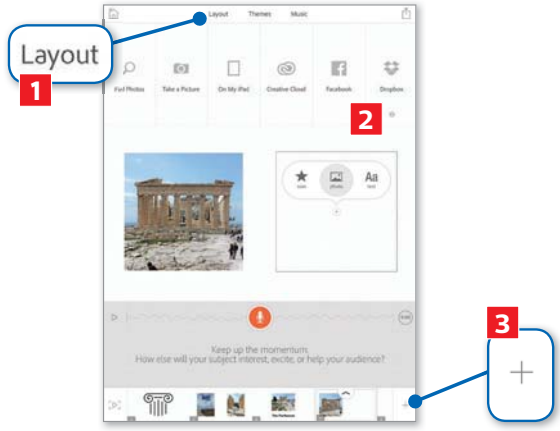
Make amazing movies on your iPad

What you need: iPad (iOS 7 or later), Adobe Voice **Time required:** 20 minutes

Adobe Voice (www.snipca.com/12302) is a brilliant, new free app that lets you create animated videos using photos, icons, music, themes and even your own voice. You can add photos from your iPad or Dropbox or use the app's many free images and icons. We'll show you how to create pages on the timeline and seamlessly blend them to create your movie. You'll also learn how to add free themes and background music to give it the perfect finishing touch.



STEP 1 Open the app, tap 'Create a New Story', give your story a title and tap Next. Swipe across the Structures options (Video, Invitation, Lesson) and tap Pick This One to make your choice. Next, tap OK to allow microphone access, then Get Started. Tap and hold the orange microphone icon and speak to record a voiceover. Click Play 1 to hear what you've recorded or tap and hold the microphone again to re-record 2. Tap '+' 3 to bring up three options: 'icon' offers you a list of free simple illustrations you can insert, 'photo' lets you take, add or upload a photo, and 'text' will let you type.



STEP 2 Tap Layout 1 and select how you want your page to look (for example, you can combine two elements such as photo and text). Tap '+' to add any of the three options. Tap 'photo', then Facebook or Dropbox 2 to add images from those accounts. Tap an image you've added with two fingers and move it to reposition it or pinch to zoom. Record short voiceovers for each page. Tap '+' 3 to add pages and repeat this step to create more. Tap a page on the timeline below and then tap it again to get options to duplicate or delete it.

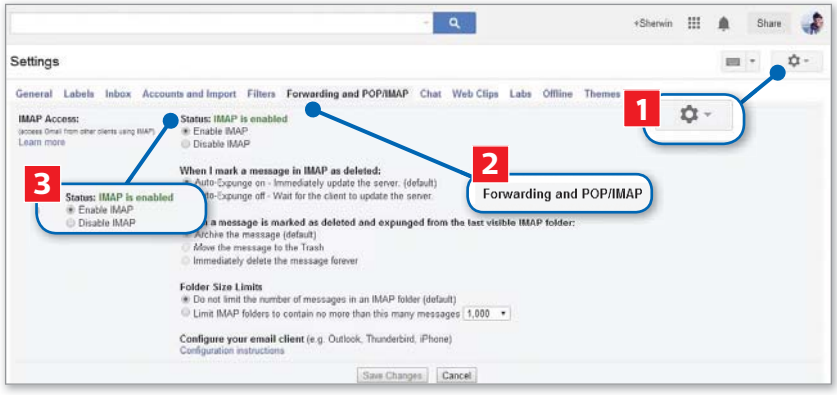
STEP 3 Tap, hold and drag a page on your timeline 1 to reposition it in your video. Tap Themes 2 for a choice of design options and Music to add a backing track (to add a track from your iPad, tap Music and then Choose From My iPad). Adjust the music slider to control the volume of your track. Tap Play 3 to preview your video, then tap Keep Editing to make further changes or Share to share it with other people (you'll be asked to create a free account – do so). Tap Public to let other Adobe Voice users see your video or Private if it's for your eyes only.

Organise emails better on your tablet

What you need: Android device **Time required:** 30 minutes

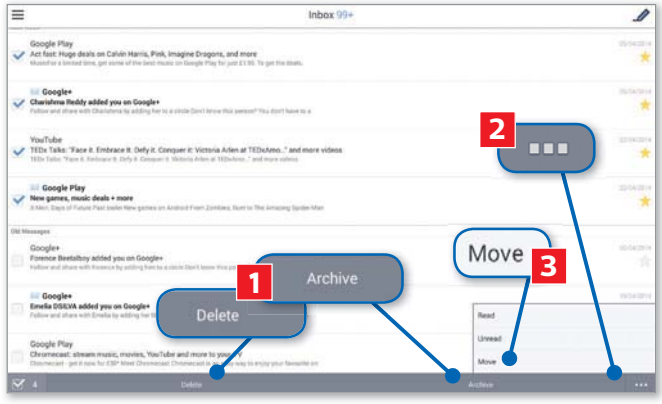
SolMail is the only Android email app you'll ever need because it lets you add, manage and organise all your accounts from one simple interface. You can quickly archive, delete or move emails to folders and customise notifications. This free app also lets you personalise your email signature, send an email from any of the addresses you add and attach voice notes and video recordings to your emails. It's available for both phone and tablet.

STEP 1 If you want to add your Gmail account, you first need to enable IMAP in Gmail. Other accounts (such as Hotmail or Yahoo) don't require you to do this. Enabling IMAP in Gmail lets you receive and manage your Gmail messages through other apps. To do this, sign into your Gmail account on your PC, click the gear icon 1, Settings and then 'Forwarding and POP/IMAP' 2. Select Enable IMAP 3 and then click the Save changes button below. Install and open the SolMail app (www.snipca.com/12074) on your tablet, complete the app walkthrough, tap Start, enter your Gmail login details and tap Next. In the Account Settings page, tap the Sync Interval dropdown menu and change it to '10 minutes' from the default, then tap Done. Your messages will start downloading.

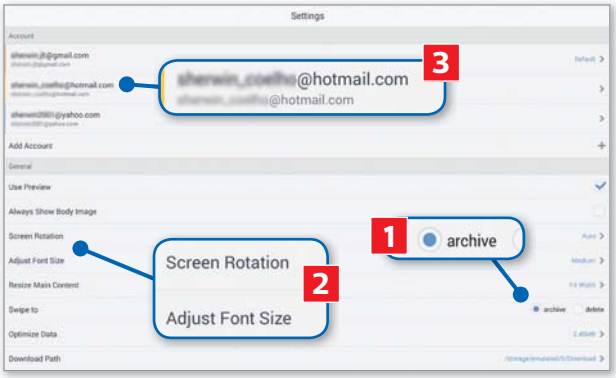


STEP 2 To add another account (such as Hotmail), click the top-left menu icon (three lines) then the bottom-right '+' icon. You don't need to enable IMAP for Microsoft or Yahoo accounts. Enter your email address and password, change the Sync Interval as you did in the previous step if you want to and then tap Done. If your emails don't load automatically, tap the Refresh icon below. To switch between accounts, tap the top-left menu icon, the dropdown menu 1 below the current email address and select an account 2 that you want to see.

Tap Add Account 3 if you want to add another email account.



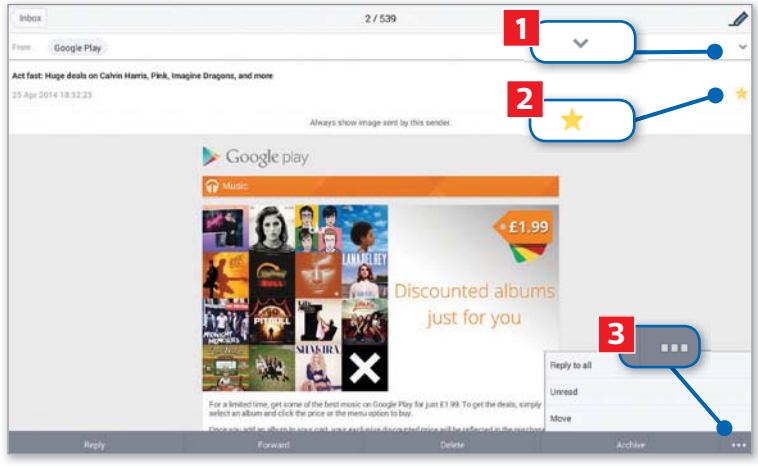
STEP 3 Tap the right edge of your screen to see your inbox. Tick the boxes to the left of your emails to select them. You can now Delete or Archive them in bulk by tapping the option below 1 or tapping the three dots to mark your ticked emails as Read or Unread 2. To move them to folders, tap Move 3 and select the folder you want to move them to. Once you move an item into a folder, you'll get a small notification below. Click 'Cancel move' if you have second thoughts about moving it. Tap the star to the right of an email to mark it as Important. To quickly see all your Important emails, tap the Filter icon and then Important. Tap the other options if you want to filter emails by those categories.

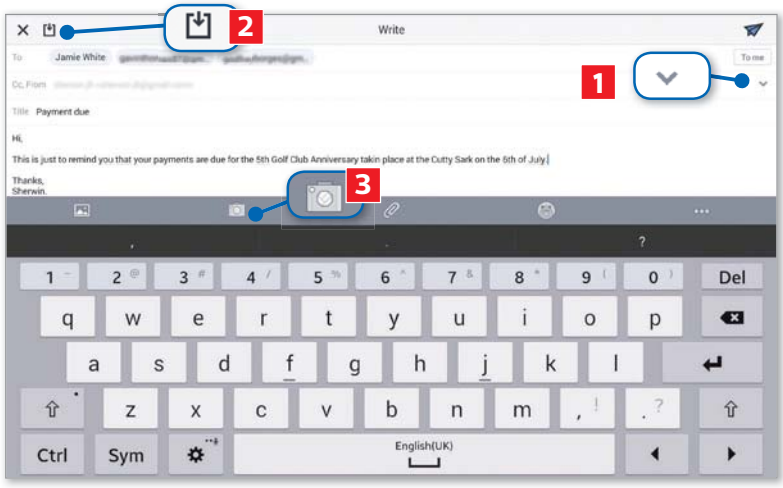


STEP 4 By default when you swipe across an email from left to right, it will get deleted, but you can choose to archive it this way instead. To do this, tap the top-left menu icon, then the bottom-left Settings icon and select 'archive' 1 in the 'Swipe to' column. From here you can also set a Screen Rotation you want and increase or decrease the font size. Tap those options 2 and select what you want. The first account you added (in our case, Gmail) will be your default account, but you can change this. Tap the account you want to change to the default option (in our case Hotmail) 3 and then tap 'Register This Account as Default'.

STEP 5 From this screen you can make further changes to your individual accounts. Tap General Settings 1 and change your Account Description and its reference colour if you want to. By default any email you send from this account will be signed 'Sent with SolMailapp'. To customise this, tap Use Signature 2, type a signature into the Use Customized Phrases box and then tap Save at the top-right. You can also change your sync interval from here. To block email notifications between certain hours in a day, tap Advanced Notification Settings 3, tick the box beside it, tap the From and To time boxes and choose between which times you don't want to receive notifications.

STEP 6 Tap the Back button twice and then tap the right side to see your emails. Tap to open an email. By default images are not displayed in emails so click 'Display images' on the top to display them. Tap 'Always show images by this sender' if you trust the sender not to send you spam. Tap the dropdown menu 1 to see all the marked recipients and the Star icon 2 to mark the email as Important. To Reply, Forward or Delete the email, tap those options below. If you want to mark the email as Unread or move it to a folder, tap the three dots 3 and select that option. Tap the top-left Inbox button to return to it.





STEP 7 To compose an email, tap the top-right pen icon. Tap the top-right '+' icon to add recipients, tap My Address Book, tick the contacts you want to add and then tap Done. Do the same with the CC and BCC fields if you want to. If you want to send the email from another address, tap the dropdown menu beside the From field 1, tap Change and select the address you want. Tap the Drafts icon 2 to save your email as a Draft. You can add an image from your device, take a picture 3, add an attachment or add stickers by tapping those options below and selecting the items from your device. If you want to record and attach a video or voice recording, tap the three dots in the bottom-right and select that option. Tap the top-right envelope icon to send your email.

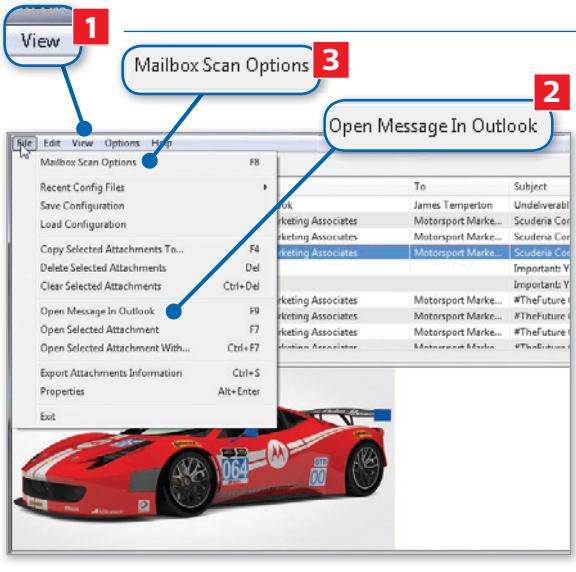
Manage your Outlook attachments

What you need: Windows XP, Vista or 7; Outlook 2007 or 2010 **Time required:** 15 minutes

OutlookAttachView is a free program that scans all your Outlook emails and displays the attachments in them. You can filter these by category or date, delete attachments to free up space on your PC, and copy them to another folder. It also lets you open the emails containing the attachments you select, and open and edit the attachment using any supported program on your PC.

STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/11935, scroll down toward the bottom of the page to the links above the language table. If you're using a 64 bit PC and Outlook 2010, click the second link, otherwise click 'Download OutlookAttachView'. To find out if your Windows PC is 64 bit, click the Start button 1, right-click Computer, click Properties and check your 'System type'. Click the zip file that downloads to your PC, double-click the unzipped OutlookAttachView file, then click Run twice. You'll see two windows – OutlookAttachView 2 and Mailbox Scan Options. Click OK 3 in the Mailbox Scan Options window to load your Outlook attachments in the OutlookAttachView window. A live counter in the bottom-left corner of OutlookAttachView shows the progress as the list populates.

STEP 2 Once the list of attachments has finished loading, under Filename 1 you'll see the name of each attachment and its file type (image, document, notepad, PDF, etc). Click the categories listed along the top (Filename, From, To, etc) to filter your searches in alphabetical or numerical order. To copy attachments to your Desktop, for example, keep the the Ctrl key pressed and click the attachments you want to copy, then click the Copy icon 2, Browse, Desktop, OK and OK again 3. To delete attachments from your PC, select them, click Delete (beside Copy), and then Yes on the confirmation message. Doing this will also delete the attachment in Outlook.



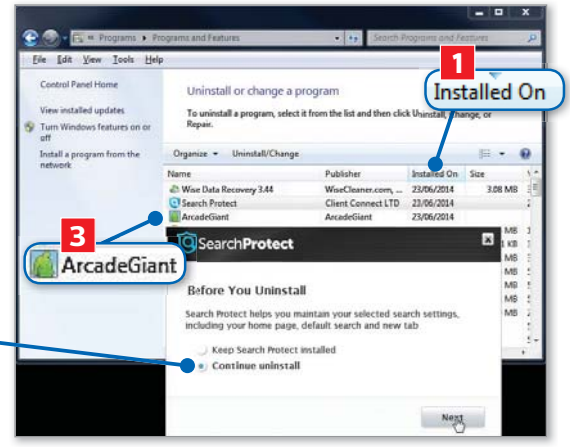
STEP 3 To customise OutlookAttachView interface, click View 1, then any of the first four options. Image Preview, for example, shows your attachment in a pane below the list (in this case, a photo of a racing car). To see the email which accompanied an attachment, click the attachment, File, then Open Message In Outlook 2. To open an attachment in a specific program, click the attachment, then File, Open Selected Attachment With, and select a program. If you only want to see attachments received between specific dates, click File, Mailbox Scan Options 3, tick the first box, click the From and To dropdown menus, set the dates you want, and click OK.

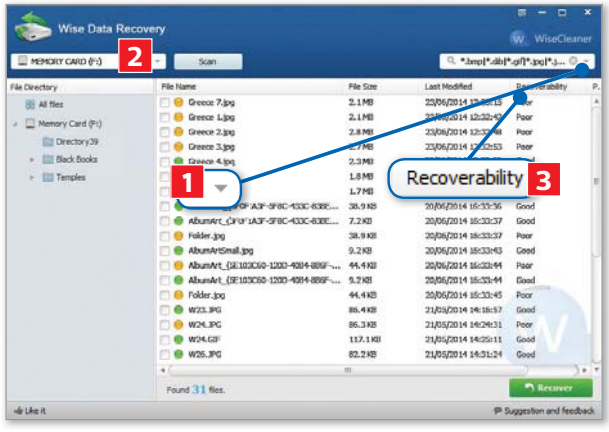
Recover deleted photos for free

What you need: Wise Data Recovery; Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 or 8.1
Time required: 20 minutes

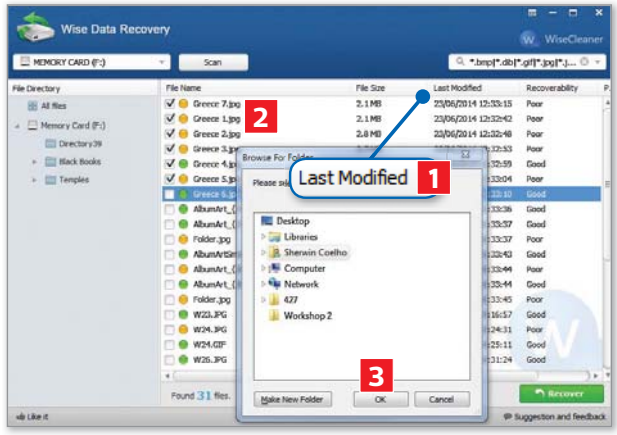
The latest version of Wise Data Recovery lets you search for multiple file types (such as JPG and PNG) at the same time. You can scan drives, partitions and external drives for photos you've deleted, and filter your search results by date. It also recovers deleted audio, video, documents, compressed files and emails. It's much quicker than other file-recovery programs such as Recuva, making it the best free software for restoring items you've loved and lost.

STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/12554 and click the green Download Now button. Click the setup file that downloads to your PC and follow the instructions. Wise Registry Cleaner installs two unnecessary programs, Search Protect and Arcade Giant, during installation, but these can be easily uninstalled. Click the Start button, Control Panel and then Installed On 1 to see your most recently installed items. Double-click Search Protect, select 'Continue uninstall' 2, click Next, tick the 'Revert to my original search settings' box and then click Uninstall. Once that's done, double-click ArcadeGiant 3, click Yes (twice) and then click OK.

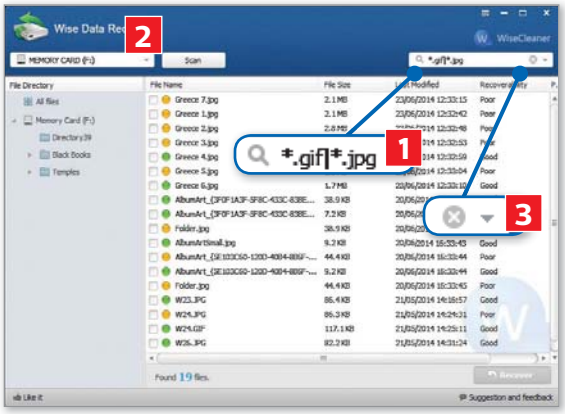




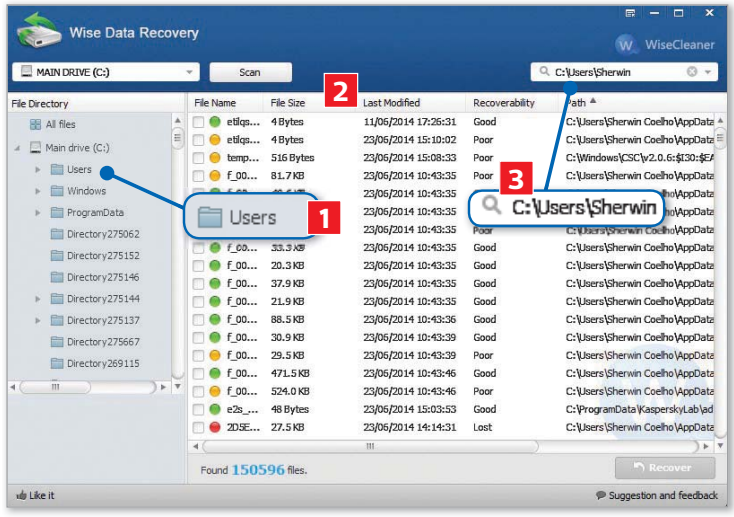
STEP 2 Open Wise Data Recovery. To recover your deleted photos, click the category dropdown menu 1 then Images. Next, click the drive dropdown menu 2, select the drive from where you deleted the photos (in our case, a camera memory card inserted into a card reader) and then click Scan. You'll see a list of all the image files you've previously deleted from that drive. The Recoverability column 3 indicates the likelihood of recovering each file. Unless it displays Very Poor or Lost, there's a good chance files (even those displayed as Poor) can be recovered.



STEP 3 Because Wise Data Recovery doesn't let you preview files, identifying them will be easier if you'd named the photos before they were deleted. If you didn't do this, you should click Last Modified 1 to see the list of photos you deleted most recently. Tick the ones you want to restore 2, click the green Recover button at the bottom right, select where you want these photos to be saved on your PC and then click OK 3. Click OK again after you see a message saying 'Data Recovery has finished' to open the folder in which you saved your recovered photos.

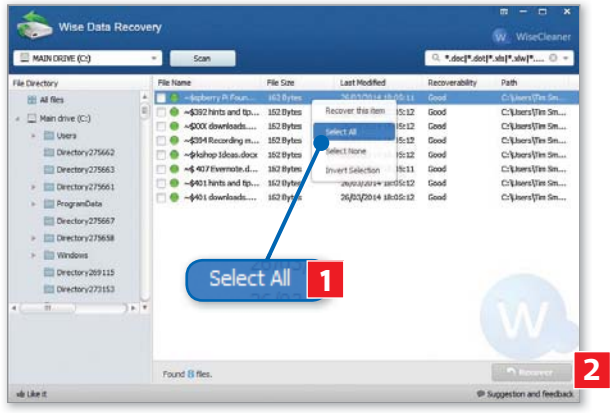


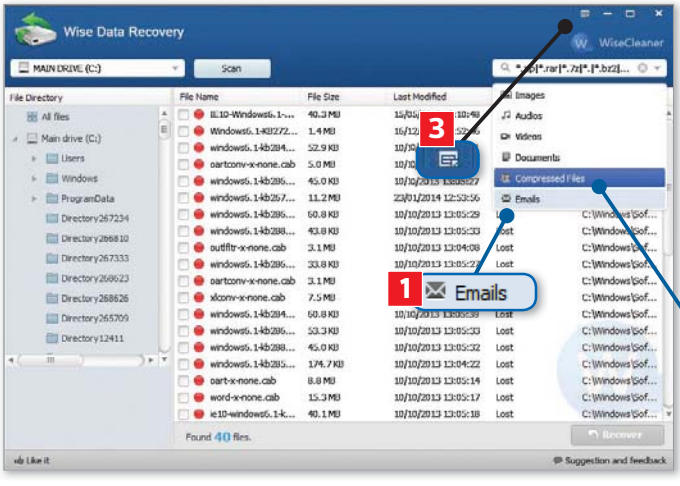
STEP 4 Wise Data Recovery also lets you filter your search results by file type. So, for example, if you only want to search for JPG images, click the search bar, press Delete and then type *.jpg. To search for two image formats simultaneously, separate each with a | 1. If you want to change the location of your scan, click the drive dropdown menu 2, select another drive/partition on your PC and click Scan. Click the X in the category dropdown menu 3 to see the scan's results across all file categories (Documents, Audio, Video, etc).



STEP 5 You can also filter your search results by folders and other specific locations. Ensure the search box is empty, select a drive from the drive dropdown menu and then click Scan to see a list of folders in that drive. Double-click a folder 1 to see results from only that folder or 'All files' at the top to see a list of all files on that drive. To sort your scanned items by File Name, File Size, Recoverability and Path, click the relevant header 2. To display all results from a specific location on your PC, type that location in the search box 3 and then press Enter.

STEP 6 You can also use the search box to filter your result by file names (for example, bills or letters). To filter and recover multiple files from the same category in one go, click the category dropdown menu and then click one of the options (for example, Documents). Right-click any file, click Select All 1, Recover 2, navigate to a location where you want to save these files, click OK to begin the recovery, then OK again when the process has finished.





STEP 7 To search for deleted emails, click the category dropdown menu and then click Emails 1. Email search results will only display if the default email folder on your PC is on your C drive. To search for deleted compressed files, click Compressed Files 2 after clicking the dropdown menu. Click the Menu icon 3 and then click 'Check for Updates' to turn on automatic updates. Click Online Help to visit a web page providing technical support.

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TIP OF THE MONTH

Turn YouTube into an online TV

I love watching TED Talks – which are informative talks by experts in the world of technology, entertainment and design – on YouTube, but I hate having to create playlists of the best videos.

One of my friends told me about a new website (www.pluto.tv) that has arranged and categorised YouTube videos into themed channels which it streams live. You can change the channels via an interface that resembles your digital TV guide. Pluto TV's Education channel streams the best TED Talks videos, while the Lifestyle channel has handy videos on DIY and cooking.

Once **you've signed up**, click Create New Account and then Start Watching. Click the up arrow to the right of All Channels then select a channel (these include Education, Lifestyle and Art & Culture). Next, click the up arrow to the left of the channel name to see the various sections within that channel (for example, Nature and Science in the Education channel). The small red marker on the timeline indicates the current time. Click any of the programs below to start watching. In the video window, click the Fullscreen icon to play your video in full screen.

If you want to be notified about a programme that starts later, then click it in the episode guide, click Notify Me, set a notice period (such as 5, 10 or 15 minutes before it's streamed) and then click Set Notification.

Raj Mehndi

MICROSOFT OFFICE

Install a great new font you can use in Office

As a printing professional, I'm always on the lookout for new fonts I can use to produce my cards and brochures, and recently discovered the new free fonts Comic Neue and Comic Angular. To add these to your Office programs, go to www.comicneue.com, scroll to the bottom and click the floral Download symbol (see below). Once you've downloaded the zipped folder to your PC, right-click it, click Extract All, then Extract. When the extracted folder has opened, click the 'comic-neue-1.1' folder, then the Type section at the top so you can categorise your fonts by type. Next, go to the 'TrueType font file' section and click the first font in that section, press the Shift key on your keyboard and click the last TrueType font file. Now right-click inside this selection and click Install. When you open a Word document and click the font dropdown menu at the top, Comic Neue and Comic Angular will now appear as font options you can use.

Mahesh Sagar

WINDOWS 8.1

Make it easier to use the Modern tile interface

I just read that Windows 8.1 has issued an important update, which makes it easier to use the Modern tile interface for those who prefer working with a mouse and keyboard. These include subtle changes like booting directly to the Desktop if you use a PC, placing power and search icons on the top right of the Modern tile interface and making your Taskbar appear on both your Desktop and your tile screen when you move your mouse to the bottom.

To check if you already have this Windows 8.1 update, look for power and search icons at the top-right of your Modern tile interface. If you don't see them, here's how you can install the Windows 8.1 update manually. On your Modern tile screen, type action center, then click Action Center. In the bottom left of the Action Center window, click Windows Update. If you see a notification saying 'Important updates are available', click it. If not, click 'Check for Updates' in the top left. Now click the 'Install updates' button. Once the download is complete, click 'Restart now' to make your changes take effect.

Atul Shinde

PRIVACY

Keep all your searches private

I've been reading in *Computeractive* how big companies track everything we do online, including our searches. I've decided to switch to a new search engine – www.startpage.com – that fetches results from Google's search engines without disclosing any of my personal information to Google. I've also made this my default search engine for Internet Explorer and Firefox. In Internet Explorer, go to www.snipca.com/11858, click the second link (Start Page HTTPS link), then click 'Add to Internet Explorer', tick the 'Make this my default search provider box' and click Add. Open the same link in Firefox and click the green Install button, which keeps your searches more private than the blue button, then tick the 'Make this the current search engine' box and then click Add.

Mayuresh Katre

Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

iOS

Quickly erase what you type and type in upper case

There's an easy way to undo what you've typed on your iOS device without long-pressing the backspace key. Just shake your device until you see an Undo Typing pop-up. Tap Undo to erase everything you just typed or Cancel if you want to continue typing.

There's also an easy way to type text in upper case without tapping Shift and then tapping each letter consecutively. To do this, double-tap the shift key quickly and you'll see a line under the shift key arrow. Now everything you type will appear in upper case. Tap the Shift key again to type normally.

iOS

Change the focus of your image and take a series of images

When you open your Camera app, you'll briefly see a big yellow square in the centre of your screen. This is the default focal point of your image. If you want to focus on an area other than the centre, tap that part of your viewer screen (for example, the top left). The yellow square will appear in the top-left corner of the screen and everything in this area will now be displayed in finer detail than the rest of your image. To take a photo, tap the circular shutter button.

If you want to take a series of photos, keep the shutter button pressed. Your device will capture successive images until you release the button. This is useful if, for example, you're photographing fast-moving objects or you want to capture a lot of images and choose the best one later.

If you find it difficult to hold your device perfectly still and tap the shutter button try pressing the volume buttons on your device to click a photo. Likewise, you can press the volume buttons on the earphones that came with your iOS device to take pictures.

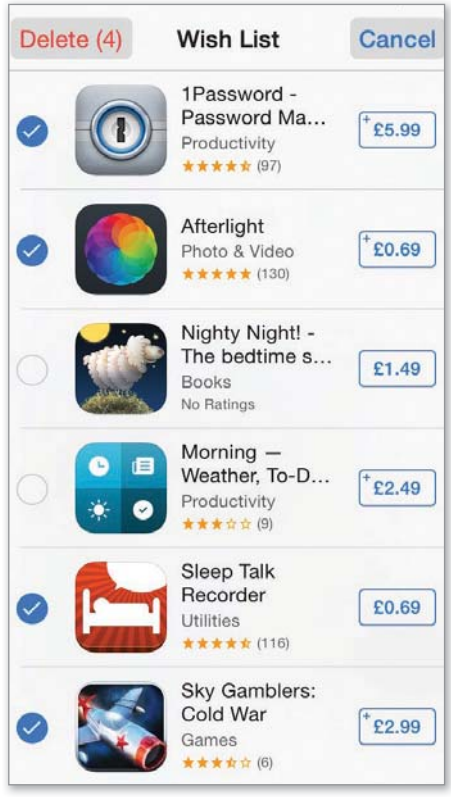
ANDROID & iOS

Create, edit and monitor your app wishlist

Both Android and iOS let you create and edit your app wishlists. App wishlists are useful if you're interested in an app but can't afford it at the moment or you want to keep an eye on an app to see if its price drops.

To add an app to your wishlist on Android, tap the Play Store, go to any section, open the app you want to add to your wishlist and then tap the Bookmark icon at the top right. If you want to see apps you've added to your wishlist, tap the three lines at the top left of the Play Store and then tap 'My wishlist'. If there's a price reduction, you'll see the new price in blue, alongside its old one in grey. Tap the three dots below the app, then tap Buy, Install or 'Remove from wishlist' depending on what you want to do.

On iOS you can only add paid-for apps to your wishlist. Tap the App Store, open a paid-for app you want to add to your wishlist, tap the Share icon (box with an arrow) in the top right and then tap 'Add to Wish List'. To see apps in your wishlist, tap the three lines in the top right of the App Store.



Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

Morning
₹249
iOS: http://goo.gl/qghl13

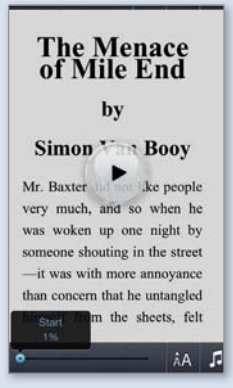
This is the first app you should open when you wake up because it tells you the weather, displays the top news stories and gives you a summary of your share prices. It also syncs with your Calendar app to display meeting reminders and gives you live traffic info.

SignEasy
Free
Android: http://goo.gl/q11w2
iOS: http://goo.gl/bLqNCu

SignEasy is the simplest and secure app for businesses and individuals to sign and fill documents from mobile devices. Consumers and businesses can use SignEasy's eSignature app to expedite business turnaround times, close more deals and reduce paperwork.

Booktrack
Free
Android: http://goo.gl/66a21P
iOS: http://goo.gl/MBtfSR

Booktrack brings your ebooks to life by adding movie-like soundtracks to them. You can read thousands of classic and contemporary ebooks, poems and short stories for free. You can also preview paid-for titles before you buy them.



To edit your wishlist, tap Edit in the top left, tap the circles to the left of the apps that you want to delete from your wishlist, tap Delete in the top left and then tap Done in the top right.

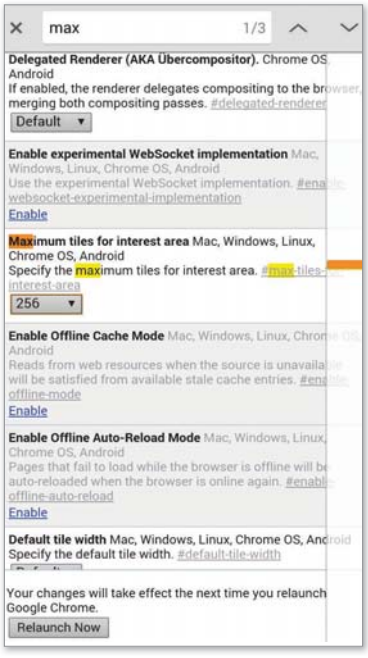
ANDROID

Make Google Chrome work faster

The Android version of Google Chrome includes hidden experimental settings that you can activate to make it faster and monitor its speed. Open Chrome, type chrome://flags in the browser bar and then tap Enter. This opens Chrome's experimental features webpage. Tap the menu button and then 'Find in page'. Type fps in the browser bar and tap the Enable link below 'FPS counter'. This turns on a graphic indicator at the top right of your browser which shows you the speed at which webpages are loading.

Next, to make the webpages load faster, type max-tiles in your browser bar, click the dropdown menu under 'Maximum tiles for interest area' and change it from Default to 256 (see screenshot below).

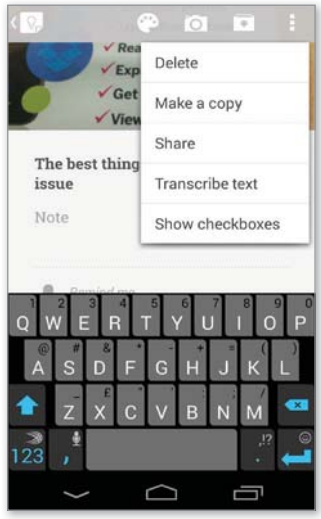
When you've finished, tap the Relaunch Now button at the bottom. When Chrome relaunches you'll notice pages load much faster and you'll see the FPS Counter at the top right providing stats on how fast each webpage is loading. You can use this to monitor Chrome's speed so that you know when you may need to empty your browser's cache to speed up the browser. If you want to undo these changes, type chrome://flags in your browser, tap Enter and then tap the 'Reset all to default' button.



ANDROID

Use text from images in your notes

Google Keep (www.snipca.com/11877) now lets you extract text from pictures (for example, an image of a handwritten note or a magazine page) and add it to your notes. To extract text from an image, open Google Keep, tap the Camera icon in the top right and then tap 'Take photo'. Tap the shutter to take an image and then tap the tick to select it.



It will now appear in your note. Tap where you want to insert your text, tap the three dots on the top right of your device's screen and then tap 'Transcribe text'. The text from the image that you've captured will automatically be placed where you've positioned your cursor.

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Sago Mini Monster

₹.199 www.snipca.com/11903 (iOS)

This is a great app to help unleash your kid's creativity. They're presented with different creatures that they need to colour and care for by brushing their teeth and feeding them. Teach your kids how to use the colours and encourage them by taking a picture of their

AGES 6-10

Four In A Line

Free www.snipca.com/11904 (Android)

This Connect 4-style game will keep you and your kids entertained for hours. Choose a colour and drop discs into a grid. The aim of the game is to create vertical, horizontal or diagonal lines of four discs, while stopping the other player from doing so. It's perfect for when you're travelling.

AGES 11-16

Wordsmith

Free www.snipca.com/11886 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/11887 (iOS)

Wordsmith is a Scrabble-like game for the entire family. Create words from the seven random letters you get and place them on Double Letter, Double Word and Triple Letter tiles to rack up the points. You can play Wordsmith with up to four players.

WINDOWS VISTA, 7

Add locations to the Send To menu

When you right-click any file on your PC, you'll see a Send To option. Moving your mouse over this option reveals a default list of locations that you can send files to. This includes 'Desktop (create shortcut)', 'Compressed (zipped) Folder' and Mail Recipient. But did you know that you can add more locations to this Send To menu? To do this, press the Windows button on your keyboard and then click Computer. Click the Computer bar at the top, type %APPDATA%\Microsoft\Windows\SendTo and then press Enter. You'll see a list of items in your Send To folder here. To add another option to this folder, drag its shortcut from your PC and drop it into the Send To folder. For example, if you want to add Google Drive as a Send To location on your PC, drag the Google Drive shortcut icon from your Desktop and drop it in the Send To folder. Now, every time you right-click an item and go to the Send To menu, you'll see Google Drive as an option.

WINDOWS XP

Add the Hibernate option to your PC

When you close the lid of your Windows XP laptop or put it to sleep, power will continue to drain from your laptop. However, you can enable Hibernation mode in both instances. This will save whatever programs you've been working on, while also conserving power.

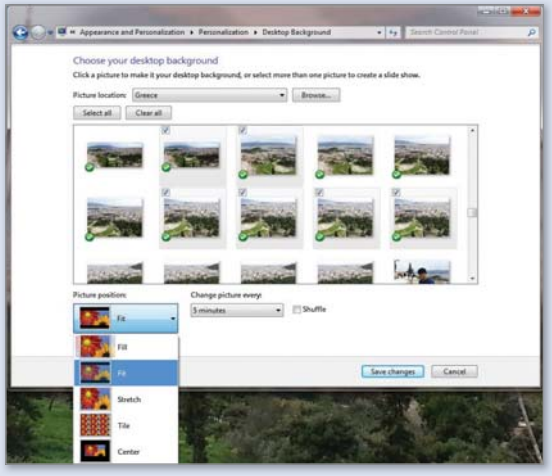
Click the Start button, then Control Panel, 'Performance and Maintenance', then Power Options. Click the Hibernate tab, tick the 'Enable hibernation' box and then click Apply. Now click the Advanced tab. Click the 'When I close the lid of my portable computer' dropdown menu and select Hibernate. Next, click the third dropdown menu – 'When I press the sleep button on my computer' – and select Hibernate again. Click Apply and then click OK. This will help you conserve power on your Windows XP laptop.

WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

Create your own Desktop slideshow

Windows 7, 8 and 8.1 let you create a Desktop slideshow using images on your PC. To begin creating a personalised Desktop slideshow, right-click any blank space on your Desktop, click Personalize and then Desktop Background in the bottom-left corner. You'll now see a selection of default Windows Desktop backgrounds. Click 'Clear all' to deselect these images. To add images from your own photo library, click the 'Picture location' dropdown menu at the top, change it from Windows Desktop Backgrounds to Pictures Library or Top Rated Photos.

If you want to add images from your hard drive, click Browse, navigate to the folder where you keep your images and then click OK. By default, all the images in that folder will be ticked for selection. Click 'Clear all' and individually select the images you want to appear in your slideshow by ticking the box in the top-left corner of each one. To quickly see how an image will look as your Desktop background, right-click it and click Preview.



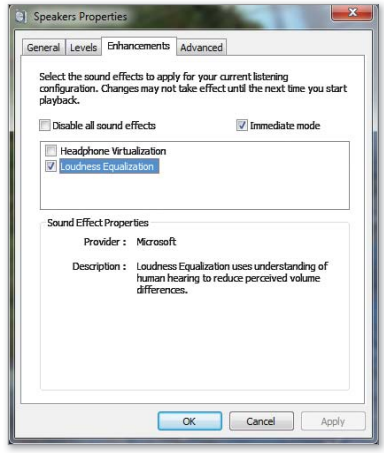
Click the 'Picture position' dropdown menu and select how you want to lay out your picture (Tile, Fill, Fit, Stretch, etc) in the slideshow. Click the 'Change picture every' dropdown menu and select at what interval your picture should change. Tick the Shuffle box if you want your pictures to change in random order. Click 'Save changes' to see your background Desktop slideshow.

WINDOWS 7, 8, 8.1

Control volume fluctuations on your PC

You may have noticed that some audio or video files play much louder than others on your PC. Fortunately, Windows has a built-in tool that equalises the volume output of files on your PC, so that they all play at approximately the same level. To enable this (in Windows 7 press the Start button), type manage audio devices, then click Manage Audio Devices from the options. Next, click Speakers, then the Properties button. Click the Enhancements tab, then tick the Loudness Equalization (or Enable Loudness Equalization) box.

Depending on which PC you have, you may see additional options at this stage (such as Headphone Virtualization, Bass Management, Room Correction and so on) that you can also tick. Next, click the Advanced tab, click the Sound Format dropdown menu and choose the highest quality '24 bit, 96000 Hz (Studio Quality)'. Click Test to try out your new settings. If you're happy, click the Apply button in the bottom-right corner.

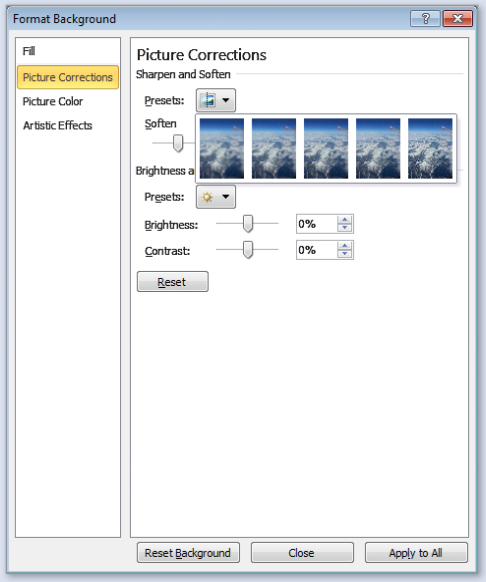


POWERPOINT

Create a template using your own images

Did you know that you can personalise your slideshows by creating a template using your own images? To add your image as background to a slideshow template, click the Design tab, (then click the Background Styles dropdown menu in the top-right in PowerPoint 2007 and 2010), then click Format Background. Next, select 'Picture or Text fill', click the File button, navigate to the image you want to use as your slideshow background, click it and then click Insert.

You can increase your image's transparency by moving the Transparency slider below. Click Picture Corrections in the left-hand pane (in PowerPoint 2013, click the third option from the left at the top).



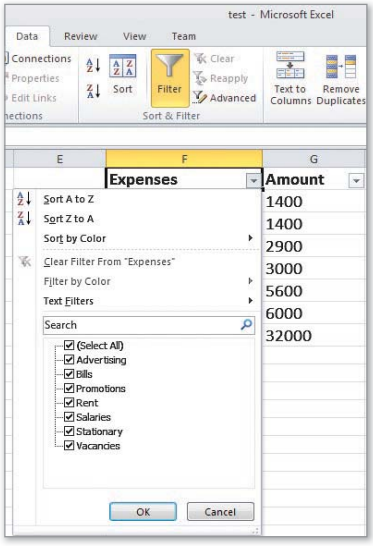
Now click the 'Brightness and Contrast' Presets dropdown menu and select an effect or adjust it manually by moving the sliders.

There are other options in PowerPoint 2010 and 2013. Click the 'Sharpen and Soften' Presets dropdown menu and select a preset effect or adjust it yourself by moving the slider below it. Click the Reset button to undo any changes you make. Next, click the Picture Color option in the left-hand pane (or dropdown menu in 2013), and adjust Color Saturation, Color Tone and Recolor by clicking the relevant dropdown menus and choosing presets or moving sliders. Once you've finished, click the 'Apply to All' button in the bottom right. This will ensure every new slide you add will use this template.

EXCEL

Organise your spreadsheet data using filters

All versions of Excel have Filters which help you organise your spreadsheet data. This is ideal for sorting data in two rows containing specific categories and numbers (for example, company expenses). To do this, click the top cell in the row, click the Data tab, then click Filter in the Sort & Filter section. Click the dropdown menu next to the cell, then click 'Sort A to Z' (or 'Sort Z to A') to organise your data in alphabetical (or reverse alphabetical) order. If your row features numbers, the dropdown menu will contain 'Sort Smallest to Largest' or 'Sort Largest to Smallest'. You can also temporarily hide specific data on your spreadsheet. To do this, click the dropdown menu again, untick the boxes of the elements you want to hide and then click OK. To see all the data in your spreadsheet again, click the dropdown menu, click the Select All box and then click OK.



ONENOTE

Personalise your notes

OneNote 2010 and 2013 let you customise the pages and sections of your notes, using different colours and line formats. To do this, click the View tab, then the Page Color dropdown menu in the Page Setup section and select a colour for your page. Next, click the Rule Lines dropdown menu and select a Rule Line or a Grid Line for your note. To change the colour of your Rule Line, move your mouse over the Rule Line Color dropdown menu and select a colour. If you want all future notes you create to automatically open with rule lines, click 'Create new pages with rule lines'.

WORD

Compare two versions of a document

Word lets you compare two documents and highlight the differences between them. This is handy if you've given someone a copy to edit and you want to see the changes they've made to it. To do this, save both (original and revised) documents to the same location, giving each a different file name. Open both files, click File, then click Save As in the right column, select the same file location and then click Save.

To compare the documents, open one of the Word documents, click the Review tab, the Compare dropdown menu, then click Compare. Click the folder icon next to 'Original document', navigate to the original document and then click Open. Repeat the process for 'Revised document'. Click the Arrows below if you want to swap the documents (Revised to Original). Click OK. A split screen will then open with your original and revised documents to the right, the changes listed on the left, and the text with changes highlighted in the centre in red. Press Ctrl+S to save the document with changes highlighted.

Mozilla Thunderbird

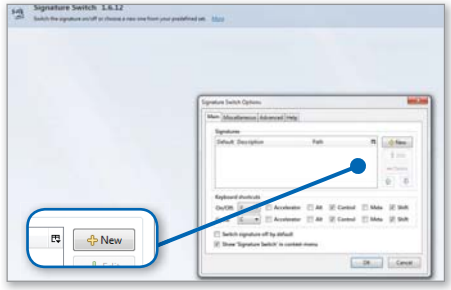
Mark emails you've dealt with, create signatures and import Gmail contacts

Mark emails when you've responded to them

If you don't always reply to emails straight away they can easily be forgotten and, by default, Thunderbird doesn't indicate whether or not you've replied to an email. Toggle Replied is a tool that adds markers to an email that you've replied to or forwarded. Click settings (three horizontal lines in the top-right corner), then Add-ons. In the tab that opens, type togglereplied in the search bar and press Enter. Click Install next to the ToggleReplied add-on entry, then restart your browser when prompted. From now on, you'll see a purple arrow next to those emails you've replied to and a yellow arrow next to those emails you've forwarded.

Use different signatures when sending emails

You can create a number of personalised signatures to sign off the emails you send. Click Write as you would when writing an email, then type your desired signature into the body of the email. Click the arrow next to Save, then click File. Give it a memorable name, then click Save. You can create as many signatures as you want this way. Next, click settings, Add-ons, type signature switch in the search bar, then press Enter. Click Install next to Signature Switch, then restart Thunderbird when prompted. Go to Add-ons again, then click Extensions in the left-hand pane. Click Options next to Signature Switch then New. Click the folder icon next to the path text box, then find your saved signature and click Open. From now on, when you're writing an email, right-click anywhere in the email window, click Signature Switch, and choose the signature you want to use.



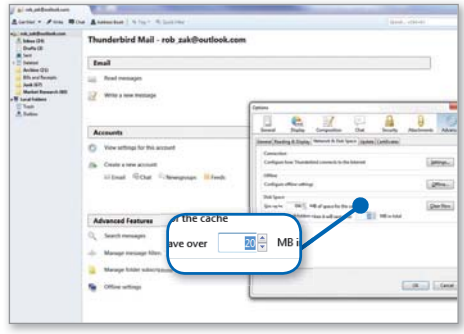
Use the Signature Switch add-on to select different signatures for your emails

Import all your contacts from Gmail

To import your Gmail contacts, go to Contacts in your Gmail account, click More (above your contacts list), then click Export from the dropdown. Make sure 'All contacts' and 'vCard format' are selected, then click Export. If the file doesn't download automatically to your default download folder, give it a name and click Save. In Thunderbird, click settings (three horizontal lines in the top-right corner), select Tools, then click Import. In the new dialogue box, click Address Books, Next, 'vCard files', Next, then browse to the file you exported from Gmail and click Finish.

Speed up Thunderbird, use less drive space

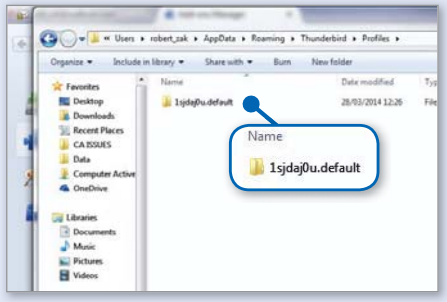
Thunderbird automatically compacts your email folders, which can help the program to perform faster. You can schedule this process to run on a more regular basis to further boost performance. Click settings (three horizontal lines), Options, then Options again. In the new dialogue box, click Advanced, then the Network & Disk Space tab. Tick the 'Compact all folders when it will save over' box, then reduce the number in the box to 10MB. This will ensure deleted messages are disposed of more regularly. Your inbox will run more smoothly, and drive space will be saved as a result.



Set Thunderbird to compact your emails more regularly for a boost in performance

Move your Thunderbird profile to Windows 7

If you plan to upgrade from Windows XP to Windows 7, then you'll want to take your Thunderbird profile with you. First, navigate to your XP Thunderbird profile folder (default path name: *C:\Documents and Settings\<your user name>\Application Data\Thunderbird\Profiles\<your profile name>).* The profile folder name will be random numbers and letters followed by the suffix '.default'. Right-click the folder, click Copy, navigate to your USB stick (or other external storage), right-click your storage drive and click Paste. In Windows 7 (with Thunderbird installed), insert your external drive, browse to your XP Thunderbird profile folder, right-click it and click Copy. Navigate to the folder containing your Windows 7 Thunderbird profile *(C:\Users \<your user name>\AppData\Roaming\Thunderbird\Profiles)*, then delete the '.default' folder if there is one. Right-click an empty space in the Profiles folder, then click Paste.



Transfer your Thunderbird profile from XP to Windows 7 using an external drive

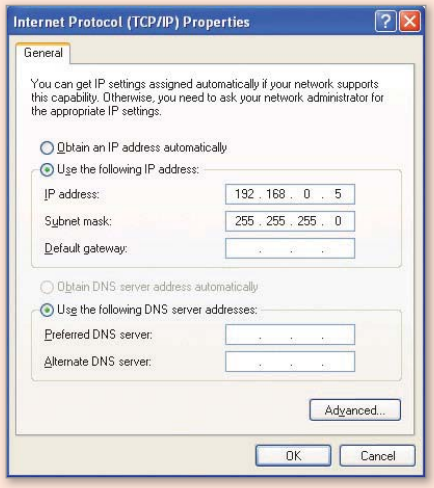
Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Can I keep my XP computer on my local network?

Q I have three computers. My main desktop PC runs Windows 8.1, my laptop runs Vista, but my old desktop runs XP. The XP machine is only used to run some old programs that won't work with Windows 8.1. I no longer access the internet from the XP computer, but I do want to keep it connected to my home network. Is this safe? Can internet-borne malware make it onto my XP PC if I'm not using the web browser? My other PCs are protected with good security software but, as I won't be able to keep an antivirus program updated on the XP machine, I accept that I will have to be careful when plugging in USB sticks.

David Lawes



Ensure your network-connected XP PC is safe from malware via your Control Panel

A If your Windows XP computer remains connected to the internet, there's the possibility that it will become infected by malware, even if you never knowingly use internet-dependent tools such as a web browser. Keeping good security software installed on your XP computer and ensuring that this is kept up to date reduces the chances but, as Microsoft will no longer fix newly discovered flaws in the operating system, XP will become increasingly unsafe as time goes on.

As you don't want to disconnect your XP computer from your network, we assume you'd like to continue to access shared network resources such as a printer. Windows XP could in theory still pick up an infection from a shared drive, say, but by far the bigger risk would be allowing it to continue having a permanent connection to the outside world. So, to minimise risk you should prevent the XP PC from accessing the internet.

To do this, click Start followed by Control Panel then click 'Network and Internet Connections' followed by Network Connections. Now double-click the Local Area Connection icon (there should be only one, unless your PC has more than one network adapter installed) and then, on the General tab of the Local Area Connection Status dialogue box, click the Properties button. On this second dialogue box, again select the General tab, then click to highlight the 'Internet Protocol (TCP/IP)' entry and click the Properties button.

Select the General tab for the third time, then select the 'Use the following IP address' radio button. In the 'IP address' box, type the IP address you'd like your XP computer to use on the local network, such as 192.168.0.5 (if it's your fifth device, say) – check the router's administration page to see the IP range used for local devices. In the 'Subnet mask' box, type your local network's subnet mask. Again, you might need to visit your router's administration page to look this up, but it's almost always 255.255.255.0. Leave the 'Default gateway' box empty.

Now select the 'Use the following DNS server address' radio button, leave the 'Preferred DNS server' and 'Alternative DNS server' boxes blank and click OK. Click OK twice more and that's it.

Why can't I use a screen recorder in Firefox?

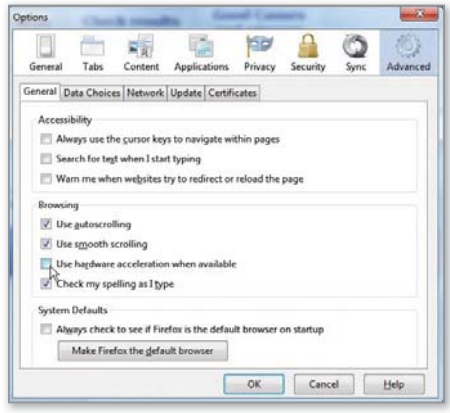
Q I'm trying to create a training video for my club. I have tried various free screen recorders to capture my on-screen actions, all of which seem to work just fine – until I try to record in Firefox. When I do this, all I get is a black screen. What am I doing wrong?

Dave Morris

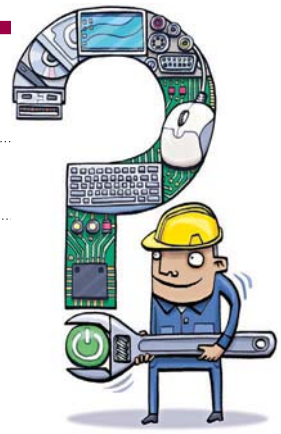
A This type of problem is usually caused by the use of hardware-acceleration technology, whereby programs – or Windows itself – offload some processing requirements onto the graphics card. This can speed up performance, but can cause confusion for screen-capture applications.

Hardware acceleration can be disabled in a variety of places, so you'll have try a few methods. Start with Firefox, as that's the program that's causing you trouble. Click the orange Firefox button at the top left then point to Options then click the second Options entry. Click Advanced then remove the tick from 'Use hardware acceleration when available'. If that doesn't work, right-click the Windows Desktop, choose 'Screen resolution', then click 'Advanced settings'. Choose the Troubleshoot tab, click 'Change settings' then move the 'Hardware acceleration' slider to None.

If it still fails, then look for a similar option in your screen-capture tool – and disable that also.



To avoid screen-recording problems in Firefox disable the hardware acceleration setting



Email us your problem and we'll try to help: noproblem@nextgenpublishing.net

Why can't I install apps on my Android tablet?

Q **I have a Maxtouuch tablet, which runs the Android operating system. I set up a Google Play account in order to download some free apps, but when I try, all I get is an error message with the code 'RPC:S-7:AEC-0'. Any suggestions?**

Melvyn Ingram

A There are a few possibilities. First, check that you are running the latest version of Android available for your tablet. From the Home Screen tap Settings then scroll down to find and tap 'About tablet'. Now tap 'System updates' followed by the 'Check now' button. If an update is found, follow the displayed prompts to download and install the update. This screen also tells you which version of Android your tablet runs – make a mental note of this.

If that doesn't fix the problem – or your tablet is already running the latest available version of Android – then try clearing the Play Store cache: this will remove any corrupt data that might be causing the problem. Tap Settings, followed by Apps (or Applications on older versions of Android), then find and tap the Google Play Store entry. Now tap the 'Clear cache' button and try downloading an app.

Clear the Play Store cache to avoid problems on your tablet

If the problem persists, then we'd suggest deleting your Google account details from your tablet and setting them up afresh. From Settings, first tap Google in the Accounts section. Now tap your account name, then tap the menu button (three stacked dots) at the top right and choose 'Remove account'.

Restart your tablet and then re-add your Google account by tapping Settings, followed by Account, then Google followed by Log In – then just follow the prompts to supply your Google account credentials.

If none of these ideas work, then it could simply be that the latest available version of Android for your tablet is incompatible with the apps that you're trying to download. Many newer apps require at least version 4.0 of the operating system. If your tablet isn't able to update itself to at least this version, then you're basically out of luck. Though it's generally possible to root tablets in order to install unsupported (ie later) editions of Android, you may struggle to find reliable instructions for your specific model because it isn't a well-known brand.

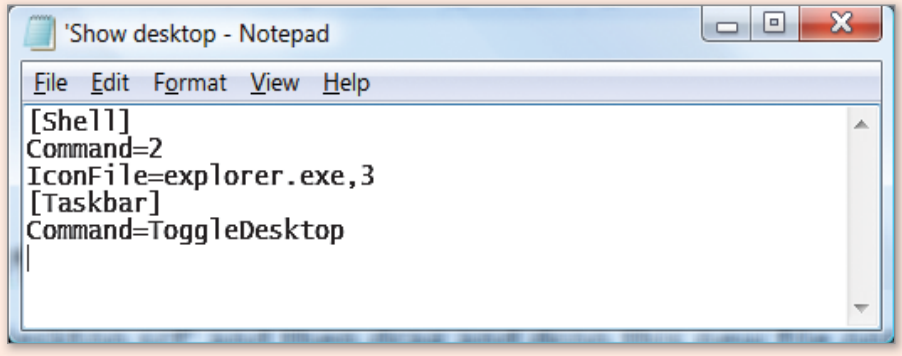
Where's my Show Desktop button gone?

Q **I've owned and loved my Windows 7 PC for several years. A long while ago I followed one of your workshops to make the Taskbar look more like Windows XP's. It worked a treat, but recently something has happened that has made it annoying to use. Basically, I've lost the little button at the bottom left of the screen that used to take me to the Windows Desktop. I have no idea how or why this disappeared, but I really miss it. Where has it gone and how do I get it back?**

John Duffy

A This button is called Show Desktop button. Windows 7 actually has its own version of this at the far right of the Taskbar – a vertical bar. Hover the mouse pointer over this to 'peek' at the Desktop or click it to go there.

However, we know you're talking about a different button located in the Windows XP-style Quick Launch area that we explained how to create in a workshop published all the way back in Issue 318. You've probably accidentally deleted the button. To get it back, launch Notepad and type in the following five lines of code:



Restore the Show Desktop button in Windows 7 by typing this code into Notepad

```
[Shell]
Command=2
IconFile=explorer.exe,3
[Taskbar]
Command=ToggleDesktop
```

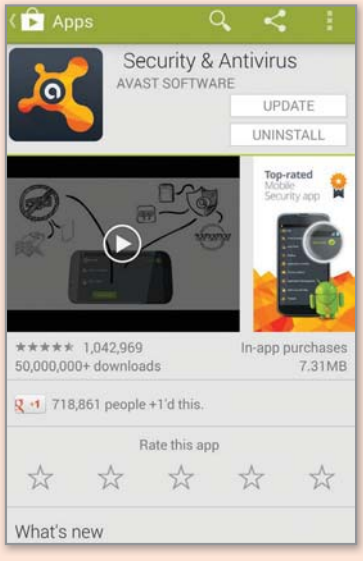
Save the file as 'Show desktop.scf' and then drag and drop this new file onto the Quick Launch area of your Windows XP-style Taskbar and your Show Desktop button is resurrected. Readers can follow this trick to put the same button on their standard Windows 7 Taskbar.

Why can't I install Avast antivirus on my Android tablet?

Q I have recently purchased an Android tablet. To protect it, I tried to download a free Avast antivirus app. It seemed to download OK and it ends up in the Download folder. However, then when I tap on it, the tablet displays a message saying that it's can't open the file. What am I doing wrong?

Wendy Morgan

A We suspect that you're trying to download Avast using your tablet's web browser rather than Google's Play Store. If you used your web browser to search for 'Avast', then it's possible you found a version for which your tablet happily downloaded the installation file – but it might not actually be the Android version. So, when you attempt to launch that file, Android has no idea what to do with it. To fix this, find and tap the Play Store icon to launch Google's official app store. Now search for 'Avast'. Tap this followed by the Install button, tap in your Google credentials if requested and then simply wait for the app to download.



Get the correct version of apps for your Android tablet via Google's Play Store

Why can't I launch Live Photo Gallery in Windows 8.1?

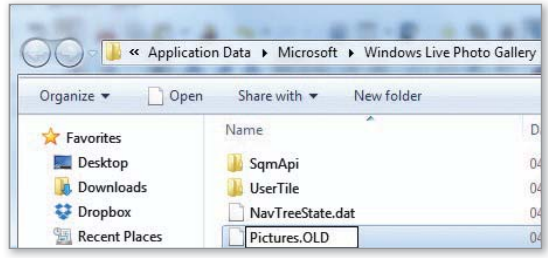
Q I'm running an HP G6 laptop that, when I originally bought it, had Windows 8 installed. I returned it to PC World to have a virus problem fixed and, while there, it was updated to to 8.1. Since then, I've been unable to open and use Windows Live Photo Gallery. When I try, I get a dialogue box with an error code. Any idea why this is happening and how to fix it?

Bob Gamble

A This is a known problem that occurs when Live Photo Gallery's picture database becomes corrupted. Ordinarily, it would be hard to pinpoint a cause for this, but an upgrade to Windows 8.1 is the likely perpetrator. All sorts of files get rejigged when the operating system gets updated, so it probably happened then. You shouldn't blame PC World for this, as it is Microsoft that created the Windows 8.1 update process. To fix it, you'll need to recreate Live Photo Gallery's image index.

First, close Live Photo Gallery. Now launch Windows Explorer (Windows key+E) then type %userprofile%\Local Settings\Application Data\Microsoft\Windows Live Photo Gallery into the bar at the top and press Enter. Right-click the 'Pictures.pd5' file and rename it – Pictures.OLD will do the trick.

Now relaunch Live Photo Gallery and it will spend some time rebuilding its index, which will result in the creation of a new Pictures.pd5 file – and that should fix your problem.



Get Live Photo Gallery back after an upgrade to Windows 8.1 by recreating the program's image index

Will Norton work with Windows 8.1?

Q I am considering buying a Windows 8.1 computer. I have been told that my Norton Internet Security package will work on Windows 8, but not 8.1. I have reviewed many of the top internet security tools and none of them mention compatibility with Windows 8.1 computers. Can you tell me how I am supposed to be able to protect a new computer with Windows 8.1 installed?

David Hurley

A You didn't tell us which version of Norton Internet Security you're running, but the 2013 version does have compatibility problems with Windows 8.1. This is not unexpected as Windows 8.1 is still relatively new and some programs need updates to be completely compatible. We're certain that future editions of Norton will be compatible.

In the meantime, or if you simply fancy a switch, then Avast Free Antivirus 2014 is compatible with Windows 8.1 – and, of course, has the benefit of being free. Download it from www.snipca.com/11817. Just be sure to follow the links for the free version and don't click any of the adverts masquerading as fake download buttons.

Norton Internet Security 2013 still has compatibility problems with Windows 8.1, but this will be resolved in future versions

How do I change the Office 2013 ribbon labels?

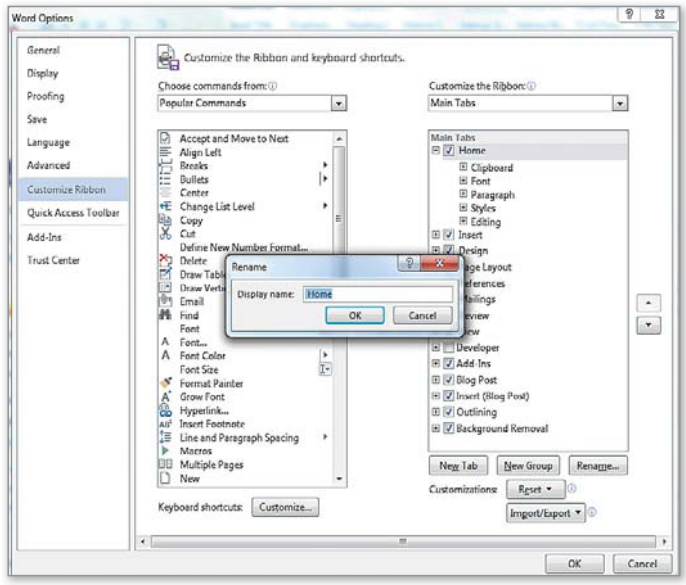
Q I noticed that in some of your screenshots in the Problems Solved pages that the ribbon labels in Word 2013 are not all capitalised (they begin with a capital letter but the rest of the letters are lower case, as in older versions of Word). I recently bought a new PC that had Office 2013 preinstalled and I'd like to do the same. I find the all-capitalized labels really ugly. How did you do it?

Debajyot Challeyee

A Well spotted! We did it by renaming the labels and adding a space before or after the name. If you try to rename the labels without this space then Word will simply revert to capitalising them.

To perform this trick, click File followed by Options and then the Customize Ribbon option. In the 'Customize the Ribbon' dropdown menu on the right-hand side, choose Main Tabs. Now click to highlight the first tab name – Home. Click the Rename button below and then retype Home with a space at either the beginning or the end (it doesn't matter which), then click OK. Repeat for the remaining tab labels.

Note that if you want to rename sub tabs (which might appear when you change editing modes, for example), then choose Tool Tabs from the 'Customize the Ribbon' dropdown menu. If you want to change any of the ribbon's category labels, click the '+' icon alongside a main label to expand the view, and then edit as above.

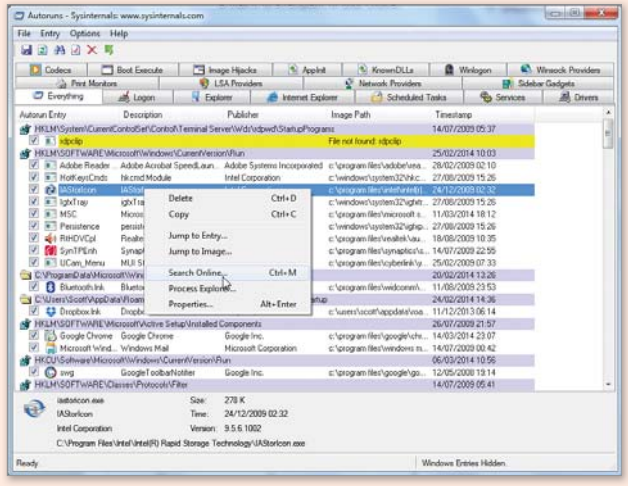


Reformat your Ribbon labels in Word 2013 using the Customize Ribbon option in the File menu

How do I speed up my laptop?

Q One of my laptops seems to have 100% CPU utilization most of the time. At best, the processor utilization hovers between 85 and 100 per cent. As a result, everything I do is very sluggish. The laptop has an Intel Celeron M processor running at 1.46GHz, with 2GB of memory. Is there any way I can reduce the CPU utilisation to speed up the laptop? Will upgrading the processor help? If so, which processor should I choose?

Murli Menon



Use the Autoruns tool to unearth CPU-hogging processes

A You can probably forget upgrading your laptop's processor. While it might be theoretically possible on a few laptop models, in most cases the idea is either impractical or impossible. In the first instance, check with your laptop's manufacturer – but prepare to be disappointed.

Upgrading the memory is usually easy. Use a free tool such as Crucial System Scanner (www.snipca.com/11805) to work out what modules your laptop needs, and its maximum capacity.

However, we doubt that either the processor or memory is to blame here. It's much more likely that some rogue program or poorly designed background process is eating up all this processing time. We're assuming you've already performed a scan for malware using your security software, so we'll focus on background processes. Task Manager is useful for investigating these, at least at surface level, but we suspect you've already done that – which is how you know about the CPU's non-stop number-crunching. For a deeper insight we'd suggest trying two free Microsoft tools – Autoruns (www.snipca.com/11806) and Process Explorer (www.snipca.com/11807). In Autoruns, select the Everything tab to investigate what's starting with Windows. If there's anything you don't recognise, right-click and choose Search Online for more information. Then right-click again and choose Process Explorer to see what processes or Windows services it uses. Eventually, you'll find the one that's responsible for the CPU hogging, so disable or uninstall the relevant program.

Is a router password absolutely necessary?

Q I'm not that computer literate but hope you can help me understand why I need a password on my router? I've been told that not having one would enable someone outside my house to gain access to the internet via my router. I can see that this is a concern for those with capped broadband, but I have an unlimited package and antivirus software on my PC, so is my computer not safe? If I connect to a public hotspot like this, am I jeopardising my own security? How can I stay secure on one?

John Martindale

Protect your phone from unsafe Hotspots by switching off your Wi-Fi setting

A Strong router and Wi-Fi passwords are very important, unless you trust all passers-by to ignore your unsecured network. Of course, most people are trustworthy but it would take only one unethical passerby or neighbour to create havoc. Once someone is connected to your network they might be able to view the contents of your computer's hard drive or download illegal materials from the web, all on your account – and we're sure you don't want either of those things to happen.

Public Wi-Fi hotspots are not safe to use – it's really that simple.

If you do use them, never, ever use banking websites or any service where you need to provide a password.

In fact, consider them useful for casual web browsing only.

If you have a smartphone or tablet, use your own account's 3G data connection instead, as this is private and secure.

Disable your device's Wi-Fi connection to be on the safe side on an iPhone, for example, tap Settings followed by Wi-Fi and slide the Wi-Fi switch to the zero ('0') position.

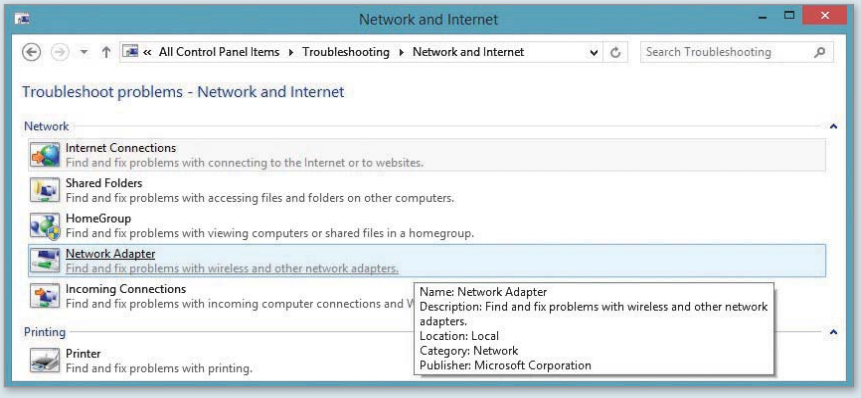
READER TO THE RESCUE

Answer readers' problems at forums.computeractive.co.uk

Why won't my Windows 8.1 notebook connect to Wi-Fi?

Q I have an HP notebook PC that came with Windows 7 installed. My router is a Virgin Media Super Hub and my notebook connected without problems until I upgraded to Windows 8.1. I have updated all drivers, cleaned the Registry and tried everything, including trying to rename the RASPPPoE file, which Windows would not allow me to do. The notebook connects if I use an Ethernet cable but this isn't much use as the router is upstairs with my main PC and I bought the notebook to use downstairs! Any ideas?

Vaibhav P., Computeractive Forum



Troubleshoot problems with your network adapter via your Control Panel

A You could connect the Ethernet cable to a Powerline network adapter, which would let you use your notebook anywhere there's a mains-power socket. Try switching the notebook's internet off then on to see if it picks it up, or switch the router off for a minute and then switch it back on.

Devi, Computeractive Forum

A What Windows 8.1 drivers did you use? The manufacturer's own driver is usually OK as long as the notebook is 'standard'. Launch Control Panel, click Network and Sharing Center, Troubleshoot Problems, then Network Adapter. Here, there are various options to try – automatic repairs, run as administrator and so on. Choose one then click Next and select your Wi-Fi adapter.

Hemant, Computeractive Forum

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CA_NOVEMBER 2014

Fast Fixes

Stop crashes, open locked workbooks and fix saving and editing problems

Excel

Your new version of Excel keeps crashing

If you recently upgraded to a newer version of Excel and you find it's crashing a lot, it may be because your system is clogged with junk data from previous versions. You'll find some websites advising you to delete contents from Excel's hidden program folders (such as AppData\Roaming), but we don't think this is a good idea. Tinkering with system files can make programs run worse rather than better. Instead, run a system-cleaning tool like the free CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner) to get rid of Excel's old junk files. It deletes the files you don't need and helps identify the ones you should keep.

Excel won't let you save a document

If you try to save a document but you see the error message 'your changes could not be saved because of a sharing violation', it's because Windows hasn't unlocked the file after saving it.

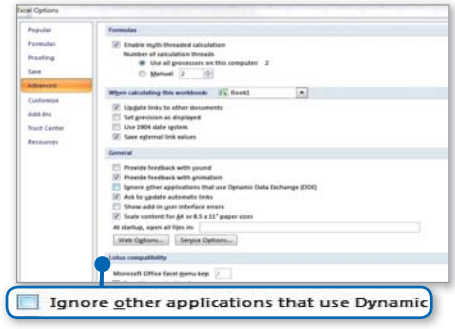
Microsoft has released a hotfix for this problem, but you'll need to request it. Go to www.snipca.com/11868, click Hotfix Download Available, and tick the box under Select. Enter your email address, type the captcha and click 'Request hotfix'. In the email that arrives from 'hotfix@microsoft.com', click the download link and open the ZIP file. The folder contains the hotfix installer and instructions.

Request a Microsoft hotfix to solve the 'sharing violation' error message in Excel

Excel won't let you open a workbook

If you try to open a workbook and you see the error message 'There was a problem sending the command to the program,' it's because Excel has been set to ignore Windows Explorer. So when you try to open an Excel workbook, Excel ignores you.

To fix this, you need to change the 'ignore' setting. In Excel 2010 or 2013, click File, Options, Advanced, General and find



Stop Excel ignoring you by unticking 'Ignore other applications that use Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE)'

the box that says 'Ignore other applications that use Dynamic Data Exchange (DDE)'. Untick it and click OK. In Excel 2007, click the Microsoft Office button, Excel Options, Advanced, General and find the box as before.

Someone else's document won't open on your PC

If you can't open an Excel document that someone sent you, your Office suite may have become corrupted. Office has a Repair tool that lets you scan for corrupt or lost files and components and replace them with working ones. To run the tool, go to the Control Panel, click 'Programs and Features', scroll down the list until you find your version of Office, right-click it and click Change. Click Repair or Online Repair in the dialogue box that opens. Restart Excel and try to open the file again. Alternatively, try opening the file in another program, or online. The office tool Zoho Docs has a free online Excel document viewer that supports MS Excel Workbooks and CSV files.

You can't edit when the Windows Explorer preview pane is open

If Excel won't let you edit a document when the Windows Explorer preview pane is open, it's because Windows thinks you have two versions of the same file open at the same time. To disable the preview pane, open Windows Explorer, click Organize in the top-left corner, select Layout and uncheck 'Preview pane'.

Alternatively, open a blank Excel document, then open the document you want to edit. You won't be able to edit the blank document, but other Excel files that you open will work as they should.

Excel 2013 crashes when you scroll

The problem of Excel 2013 crashing whenever you try to scroll has never been properly addressed by Microsoft, but there is a workaround. Go to Control Panel, then click 'Advanced system settings' in the left-hand pane. In the new dialogue box, click the Advanced tab, click Settings under the Performance option, then untick the box next to 'Animate controls and elements inside windows'. Click OK. If this doesn't work, also untick the boxes next to 'Animate windows when minimizing and maximizing', 'Fade out menu items after clicking' and 'Show shadows under mouse pointer', then click OK.

Disable the preview pane to stop Windows thinking you have the same file open twice

Jargon Buster

32bit A measure of how much information a computer can process at once.

64bit A technology that processes information in larger chunks.

802.11n A standard for wireless networks that allows for higher transfer speeds.

Add-on A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications.

Adware Software that displays adverts.

Automatic document feeder (ADF) A device that feeds sheets of paper into a photocopier or scanner, one by one.

BitTorrent A technology for downloading files.

Cache A temporary space for storing information.

.csv Comma separated value. A file format that can be opened by most spreadsheet applications.

Dedicated graphics card A graphics card (or chip) that has its own dedicated memory.

.doc The file extension of a document created in Microsoft Word 2003 or earlier.

.docx Word document file extension.

Driver A file that tells Windows how to work with a peripheral device.

DVI Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector.

Enclosure A case that lets you use an internal hard drive as either an external hard drive or as a NAS.

Feedback The tactile response that the keys on a keyboard give when they've been pressed.

FTTP Fibre To The Premises. A fibre optic-based way of delivering very fast broadband.

GHz Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second.

Gigabit Ethernet A very fast networking standard that can transfer data at up to 1,000Mbps.

HDMI High-definition media interface. A type of connection that transmits high-definition video and audio signals.

Hotfixes Software files that fix problems with an existing program.

Integrated graphics card A device that has a card for processing graphics data built on to its motherboard.

IP address Internet Protocol Address. A unique set of numbers, separated by full stops, used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

ISO An image file that contains all the data from a CD or DVD disc.

Java A programming language used to create some software and internet tools.

JavaSscript A simplified version of the Java programming language used on many websites.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display.

Live CD A CD or DVD pre-loaded with a complete operating system.

MB/s Megabytes per second.

Micro HDMI A miniature version of HDMI often found on smartphones and tables.

Mini DisplayPort A type of port for connecting a monitor, TV or projector to a computer.

Motherboard The main circuit board inside every PC into which all other parts connect.

NAS Network-attached storage. A hard drive attached to a network that can be shared by other computers.

Near-field communication (NFC) A technology that allows two devices to communicate by being touched together.

OCR Optical character recognition. Software that converts a picture of text into editable text.

Overclock The process of making a CPU work faster to improve performance at the cost of it running hotter and requiring more power.

Partition disk Splitting a large hard drive into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives.

PCI Peripheral Component Interconnect. A high-performance expansion slot for desktop PCs.

Plug-in A small program that adds extra features to your web browser or to other applications.

.pptx The default file format for Microsoft PowerPoint since version 2007.

Processor The processor – or central processing unit – is the brain of a computer.

Quad core A PC that has four processors on a single chip.

RAID A system for storing data efficiently and automatically backing up PC hard disks, but it can be more trouble than it's worth.

RAM Random-access memory. The computer's working area, used for data storage while the computer is switched on.

Registry A file integrated into Windows that stores information on all hardware and software installed on your PC.

Resolution The amount of detail shown in an image, whether on screen or printed.

.rtf Rich Text Format. A file format used to transfer files between word-processing programs.

SATA Serial ATA. An interface for connecting modern hard drives and optical discs to a computer.

SD card Secure Digital card. A popular type of memory card.

Sensor The part of the camera that captures each image. Analogous to a piece of film on a film camera.

Server A PC on a network, such as the internet, that distributes information to other PCs.

Speech recognition A way for a computer to recognise what you're saying and take dictation or obey your spoken commands.

Spyware Software installed (usually surreptitiously) to monitor and report back on a PC's use.

Solid-state drive (SSD) Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts.

Touchpad A touch-sensitive pad which acts as an alternative to a mouse on laptops.

Travel The distance the keys of a keyboard have to be pressed before the keystroke is recognised.

.txt A basic file format that contains nothing but text

UPnP Universal Plug and Play. A standard for sharing media between PCs and network devices.

USB Universal Serial Bus. A standard that allows quick and easy connection of external peripherals to your computer.

USB2 Faster successor to USB that's used by devices such as external hard drives.

USB3 A faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

VGA Video Graphics Array. A standard socket for connecting a monitor to a computer.

VESA Video Electronics Standards Association. A standard mount for attaching monitors onto walls.

Video cards A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

Web apps Programs that are stored on a web server and run through your web browser.

WPS Wi-Fi Protected Setup. An easy way to make a wireless connection between a device and your router by pressing the WPS button on both.

.xlsx The default file format for Microsoft Excel since version 2007.

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The Final Straw

In this issue Stuart Andrews is driven to despair by...

Password confusion

STUART ANDREWS is *Computeractive*'s Mr Angry
@SATAndrews

You might have thought that I'd know better, but I was caught out by the latest big security breach. Hackers getting hold of my eBay password wasn't a problem. The problem was that I'd committed one of online security's cardinal sins. I'd used the same password across a range of sites and services, which meant having to change them all. From the account I use to log into Windows, to the accounts I hold with several well-known stores, I'd used the same password for each and every one.

I know. I've already asked myself 'what did you expect?' while banging my head against a wall. But as I went from site to site changing passwords, then spent the next week struggling to log in, I started to understand the how and why. In line with

current security best practice, most of the sites and services I use recommend intricate passwords involving long words, baroque combinations of uppercase and lowercase letters, arcane symbols and substituted numerals. Some of them even make this nonsense mandatory. Sadly, the more ornate the password, the less chance I have of remembering what on Earth it is.

Cue days of frustration. I wanted to read a book on my smartphone while I was waiting in my car, but the Kindle app wanted the new password, and I just couldn't seem to get it right. Later I wanted to watch a film online, but I couldn't remember that one either. Did I use a hyphen, an underscore or an ampersand? Who knows? I couldn't even boot into Windows 8, which kindly locked me out of my PC and then my account. To get it unlocked I needed to go to the website with a browser. Erm, Microsoft, you've just locked me out of that!

OK. I know I could go back and reset passwords, but with each change I just get more confused. That's the problem with strong passwords: they can make the hacker's life much harder, but they also have the same effect on us. Remembering them might not have been a problem for the youthful me with a steel-trap mind, but the current model struggles to remember where he put his glasses, let alone a string of 16 characters, containing symbols, capitals and numbers.

What really winds me up, though, is the attitude of those that let it happen. I'm furious at myself for being so stupid, and at the hackers for causing this whole mess. Yet it seems to me that every time a company has one of these disasters, it's their own security that's to blame. They force us to use complex passwords that look like *Countdown* conundrums from a distant planet, yet they can't keep their own systems properly secured. In eBay's case, it seems that hackers managed to get hold of employee log-in credentials, then eBay twiddled thumbs for months while it tried to work out what was grabbed.

> "That's the problem with strong passwords: they can make the hacker's life much harder, but they also have the same effect on us"

This needs to stop. I know I was to blame for my own lax security, but there wouldn't have been an issue had eBay not been even more lax with theirs. More and more of these big corporations are putting the onus on us, meaning longer passwords, more authentication, codes being sent to your mobile phone and more. Yet each effort seems to make no difference to the hackers, while making things tougher and less convenient for the rest of us. Perhaps if they could keep things locked down tight at their end, we could all relax a bit more.

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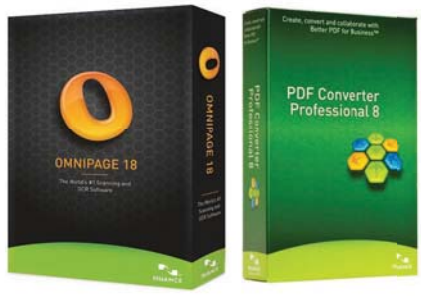

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Quiz # 41

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1) Which one of the smartphone series from Samsung takes advantage of the S Pen?

a) Galaxy S ❑
b) Galaxy Gear ❑
c) Galaxy Note ❑

2) Google's latest service to revolutionise the email is known as?

a) Inbox by Gmail ❑
b) Gmail ❑
c) Outlook ❑

3) Which feature does the iPhone 6 Plus have but is absent from the iPhone 6?

a) Optical Image Stabilization (OIS) ❑
b) FaceTime Support ❑
c) Touch ID ❑

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Winner!
Quiz # 40
Santosh More, Nagpur, (Digitek Handy Scanner)
Kranti B Kumar, Amravati, (Envie Speedster)

The decision of the judges will be final and binding and no queries shall be entertained. The employees of IMS Mercantiles and Next Gen Publishing cannot participate in this contest. Participants can also send their entries by fax or photocopies at the Next Gen mailing address listed on colophon page. Winners will be decided by Lucky draw.

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