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From the Editor

I know you're not especially keen to hear about the mould in my bathroom, but its persistence does remind me of the type of malware that never seems to leave your PC. Every couple of weeks I blitz these horrid green stains with different brands of mould-removal spray, only to see them soon reappear.

The malware that I suspect is lurking on my system doesn't actually turn my Desktop green. But every time my PC crashes, or takes several decades to boot, I worry that those infected files are minutes away from killing my computer. That would be bad news at any time, but particularly now because I can't afford a new PC having just remortgaged the house in



order to buy a year's supply of Mould Exterminator. Will it work? No idea. I'm more confident about the programs we recommend in our Cover Feature. They specialise in scanning your PC for files that malware leaves behind. It's altogether faster and cleaner than wiping green gunk from your ceiling.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk



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900MHz

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£399

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HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLs

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

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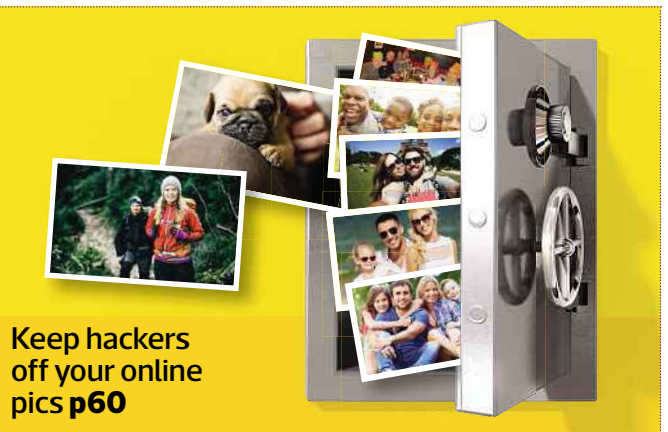
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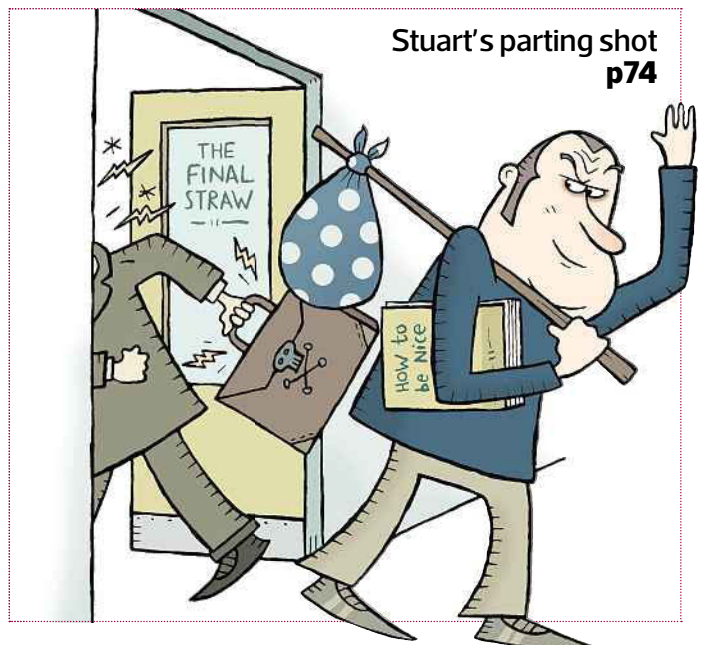
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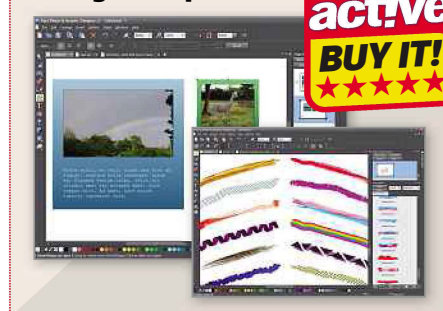


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Use Windows 7 'at your own risk' says Microsoft

Microsoft has shocked millions of Windows 7 users by saying that they run the operating system (OS) "at their own risk, at their own peril".

The comment came from the company's chief marketing officer Chris Capossela in a guest appearance on the Windows Weekly podcast (www.snipca.com/19284), an unofficial show reporting on "all things Microsoft".

Responding to questions about Microsoft's much-criticised strategy of repeatedly urging Windows 7 users to upgrade to 10, he said: "We think that every machine that's capable of running Windows 10... we should be doing everything we possibly can to get people to move to Windows 10".

Capossela also said that Microsoft was concerned about the security risks Windows 7 users face, as well

as compatibility glitches with new hardware: "We do worry when people are running an OS that's 10 years old that the next printer they buy isn't going to work well".

He added: "As we're pushing our hardware partners to build great new stuff that takes advantage of Windows 10, that obviously makes the old stuff really bad, and not to mention viruses and security problems".

Warnings are 'complete rubbish'

Capossela was accused of exaggerating the risks of using Windows 7. Microsoft has already said it will support the OS with security fixes until 2020.

He was criticised also for suggesting that the hugely



popular computer game Fallout 4, which launched in November, wouldn't work on "a bunch of older computers".

In fact the game is compatible with Windows 7 and Windows 8. Problems with the game are more likely to be caused by out-of-date PC components, than an old operating system.

Technology blogger Gordon Kelly, writing on Forbes.com, called Capossela's warnings "complete rubbish", but

COMMENT

As well as chief marketing officer, is Chris Capossela also Microsoft's head of scare tactics? His outrageous claim that people still running Windows 7 do so "at their own risk" is a cynical attempt to trigger doubts in the minds of users who have resisted Microsoft's insistent calls to upgrade. If you're happy with Windows 7, you should ignore his passive-aggressive threats, and any that follow from his colleagues. Unless Microsoft changes its policy, the operating system will be safe to use until 2020.

they will alarm the millions of people who still use Windows 7.

The six-year-old OS remains the world's most popular operating system, running on around 55 per cent of computers.

But Microsoft says it's happy with the growth of Windows 10, announcing in early January that it was now running on 200 million devices, up from 110 million in November.

The company's aim is for Windows 10 to be running on one billion devices within two to three years of its release. Upgrading to Windows 10 from 7 and 8.1 will remain free until 28 July 2016.


MICROSOFT TRACKS HOW YOU USE WINDOWS 10


Microsoft has finally revealed the kind of information it gathers from people using Windows 10. The new operating system comes with a 'telemetry' tracking system that enables Microsoft to record what people do on their PCs. Privacy campaigners had criticised the company for not explaining what data it collects.

In a blog post (www.snipca.com/19285) the company said that in December Windows 10 users spent 44.5 billion minutes browsing

the web using Edge, and since July have asked Cortana 2.4 billion questions. They have also viewed 82 billion photos in the Photos app.

Microsoft tried to alleviate privacy concerns by saying that the data is anonymous, but security experts remain sceptical. Professor Alan Woodward from the University of Surrey told the BBC that this information "might be collected for one purpose, but how long will it be stored for? What else are they going to use it for?"

 **You'll like this...** A new operating system has launched that puts Android on to PCs (www.jide.com/remixos)

 **...but not this** ChildLine says social media is making children "deeply unhappy" (www.snipca.com/19292)

Google and Microsoft attack the Government's 'snooper's charter'

Five of the biggest tech companies have joined forces to criticise the Government's proposed Investigatory Powers Bill, condemned by opponents as a 'snooper's charter'.

Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter and Yahoo have submitted evidence to the parliamentary committee that is assessing the bill's scope.

In the evidence they "reject any proposals that would require companies to deliberately weaken the security of their products".

They have also called for the Government to "protect the rights of the individual" when collecting communications data such as email.

It follows a statement from Apple in December in which it also expressed concern over



the Government's plans. Apple said that the bill would make the "personal data of millions of law-abiding citizens" less secure.

The five companies are worried that the bill would make it easier for security services to decrypt messages, especially those protected by end-to-end encryption.

This form of encryption – used by Apple in its iMessage tool – is so tight that only the recipient of the message can read it.

If passed the bill wouldn't outlaw encryption. But the five companies are concerned by the bill's wording. It is so "vague", they argue, that security services might interpret it to mean they could force them to decode private messages.

The companies also want users to be informed should the Government seek access to their data.

The five firms are part of the Reform Government Surveillance coalition (www.reformgovernment-surveillance.com), which lobbies governments on how they should collect data from their citizens.

You can read the evidence submitted by the companies at www.snipca.com/19291.

Brain-training app fined for 'fight Alzheimer's' claim

The company that makes brain-training app Lumosity (www.lumosity.com) has been fined in the US for claiming it can alleviate the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease.

Lumos Labs has agreed to pay \$2m (£1.4m) after the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) said that its claims weren't supported by scientific evidence.

Lumosity contains more than 25 "cognitive" games for phones and tablets. Lumos claimed in TV and radio adverts that playing them regularly could help allay the symptoms of dementia, strokes and brain injuries.

The FTC's Jessica Rich said: "Lumosity preyed on consumer fears about age-related cognitive decline,

suggesting their games could stave off memory loss, dementia, and even Alzheimer's disease".

Lumos defended itself in a letter to its members, published online at www.lumosity.com/press/news.

It said that it had decided to accept the fine in order to focus on "delivering engaging cognitive training products to our 70 million-plus members and promoting innovation within the field of cognitive training".

The company admitted that there is a lot it doesn't yet know about how brain-training games can help fight age-related disease, but claimed that research had



shown "many promising results".

The fine came a couple of months after a study conducted by neuroscientists at King's College London found that brain-training games could have "significant benefits" (see Issue 464, page 59).

Funded by the Alzheimer's Society, the study involved 7,000 adults aged over 50. You can read the results at www.snipca.com/18763.

IN BRIEF

LENOVO LAUNCHES PHONE-TO-PC USB

Lenovo has announced a USB stick that connects your Android phone to your PC, letting you move files between them. Called Lenovo Link, the 32GB device also lets you control phone apps using your PC's mouse. A UK launch date hasn't been confirmed, but it will go on sale in the US in March priced \$40 (around £27). Visit Lenovo's website for more details: www.snipca.com/19289.

LASTPASS ADDS EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Password manager LastPass now lets you nominate trusted people to access your account in case something happens to you. Using the tool Emergency Access you can set up a waiting period during which a contact can request access to your password vault. The new feature, available in the free version of LastPass, is part of a revamp of the software. For more information visit www.snipca.com/19290.

Tomorrow's world

Spellcheckers have saved most of us from embarrassing typing errors, but grammar-checking tools don't work as well because they often fail to recognise context. American computer scientist Jonathan Mugan blames the "squishy" rules of English grammar. His solution is a grammar-checker that uses artificial intelligence to better interpret the meaning of sentences. You can test his new project, called Deep Grammar, at www.deepgrammar.com.

IN BRIEF

MICROSOFT TO MAKE NEW WORD GAMES

Microsoft has said it will make new word games for Windows 10 following a public vote. The Microsoft Casual Games team gave users a choice of five games, including a chess game and one featuring poker. Ultimate Word Games received the most votes. For more information on the winning and losing games visit www.snipca.com/19272.

ANTI-ISIS GROUP ATTACKS BBC SITES

An anti-ISIS hacking group based in the US has claimed responsibility for knocking offline the BBC's websites on New Year's Eve. None of the BBC's websites, including iPlayer, were available for several hours on 31 December after being hit by a **DDoS** (distributed denial of service) attack. The group claiming to be behind the attack, called New World Hacking, said it wanted to test the power of its own **servers**.

Got slow broadband? Government gives you £350 to speed it up

The Government was forced to introduce a broadband subsidy to achieve its target of everyone in the UK being able to get speeds of 2Mbps by the end of 2015.

At the end of December the Department for Culture, Media and Sport introduced grants for satellite broadband. Anyone unable to get 2Mbps will be given £350 towards the installation of a satellite dish that will boost their speeds to up to 20Mbps.

The Government says the grant will cover the cost of installation "in most cases". However, customers will still need to pay from £25 a month for the subscription to a broadband provider.

Local authorities will decide who is eligible for the grant. The Government forecasts that up to 300,000 properties will benefit from the scheme.

The next stage in the Government's broadband commitment is to provide super-fast speeds (24Mbps



and above) to 95 per cent of the country by 2017. This target was announced in June 2013, revising initial targets of providing 24Mbps to 90 per cent homes by 2015.

Culture, Media and Sport Minister Ed Vaizey said the Government is on track to hit the target, claiming it was making "tremendous progress". But he warned that "it is a massive engineering project and won't happen overnight".

The Government also wants to introduce by 2020 a Universal Service Obligation

that gives everyone the legal right to request a connection at a minimum speed of 10Mbps.

To find out if you're eligible for the subsidy, use the Government's postcode checker: www.snipca.com/19273. If so, you'll see instructions on how to apply through your local authority.

Anyone who receives the grant for satellite broadband will be automatically upgraded to super-fast fibre broadband should it be introduced in their area.

Filling in a tax return? Beware scam emails

Scammers are once again targeting the millions of people who complete their self-assessment tax return online.

Every year in the weeks before the 31 January deadline fraudsters bombard people with phishing emails claiming to be from Her Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC). It's a favourite tactic of cyber-criminals because so many people in the UK – an estimated 10 million – complete self-assessment forms.

Last year, research from consumer group Which? found that 40 per cent of



people had received a scam email purporting to be from HMRC. The emails typically contain the HMRC logo, and ask you to confirm your personal details by clicking a link.

The presence of a link in an email is usually a tell-tale sign that it is fake. HMRC says that its emails never contain links or attachments, and nor will they ask you for personal information or your password.

HMRC is urging the public to be "vigilant" over the next few weeks. Its director of security and information, Jonathan Lloyd White, said: "We are committed to customers' online security, but the methods that fraudsters use to get information are constantly changing so people need to be alert".

Read the HMRC's advice on staying safe at www.snipca.com/19270.

The world's gone mad!

Joining tennis elbow and writer's cramp in the list of repetitive strain injuries is the scarcely believable 'selfie stomach'. Michelle Gore, a 21-year-old internet addict from Bedfordshire, spent so long hunched over her phone, laptop and tablet that she developed Tietze, a rare condition that causes swelling between the upper ribs. She claimed to have taken around 200 selfie photos every day and spent almost every waking hour online – using a waterproof phone case in the shower.

Question of the Fortnight

What will be in the next big Windows 10 update?

Expect changes to the Action Centre and Cortana when Redstone hits your PC

When Windows 8.1 launched in October 2013, many Windows 8 users reacted by saying that Microsoft should have waited until this incarnation was ready before releasing the operating system (OS). A similar response may await Redstone, which will be the biggest Windows 10 update yet when it arrives later this year.

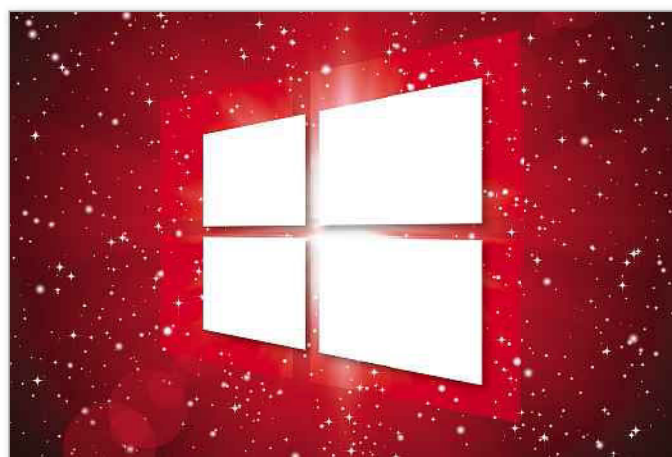
While the new OS has been a hit, with over 200 million devices now running it, Microsoft has been accused of rushing its release. For months many users running the preview version of Windows 10 had expressed concerns that it was too unstable for a full release. They felt vindicated when users of the final version reported that the OS was unreliable, slow and prone to crashing.

“The feeling remains that Windows 10 requires an update as substantial as 8.1”

Some of these problems have been fixed in recent updates. But the feeling remains that Windows 10 requires an update as substantial as 8.1, not least because the first big update (which arrived in November) caused more problems than it solved. As we reported in Issue 463 this update, codenamed ‘Threshold’, removed third-party programs and

reinstalled any Windows 10 apps you may have deleted.

To avoid these negative headlines Redstone needs to improve Windows 10 without changing how users have to set up the OS on their PCs. But the early signs aren’t promising. Users who have signed up to the Windows Insider Program (<https://insider.windows.com>), which



alarmed by these glitches. The point of the Windows Insider Program is precisely to identify bugs months before a new version is released to the public. And Redstone is still some way off. It’s now expected to arrive in two parts; the first in June, the second in October. Microsoft has enough time to fix these annoyances.

It also has plenty of time to make sure Redstone’s new features work properly. One of these, according to sources close to the company, will be a revamped Action Centre – the vertical panel that appears on the right showing your app notifications. The Redstone update will add more information to these, making them act like Desktop widgets.

But more significant is the new role for a tool thousands of users have already abandoned: Cortana. Many *Computeractive* readers have emailed us to ask how they can remove the voice-controlled personal assistant, having decided it’s just a nuisance. Sadly, you can’t,

allows people to test early ‘builds’ of Windows, have experienced multiple problems since receiving the first version of Redstone in December.

They have complained about Desktop apps closing by themselves, default apps being changed and a screen flicker when they hook up a device to another monitor.

We shouldn’t be too

THE FACTS

- Redstone is due to arrive later this year and will be the biggest Windows 10 update yet
- It will reportedly change how Cortana works, making the tool ‘float’ throughout the OS
- Its name comes from a block in the Microsoft-owned game Minecraft

though it can be disabled (read next issue’s Cover Feature for details).

Microsoft hopes that Redstone will revive Cortana. The tool will ‘float’ around Windows 10, providing assistance in every part of the OS, such as offering search options when you’re in a document. At the moment, in contrast, Cortana sits politely in your Taskbar, waiting to be summoned.

If Cortana’s forthcoming ubiquity reminds you of Clippy, Microsoft’s widely loathed assistant last seen in Office XP, you’re not alone. Many Windows experts fear that Cortana will become just as annoying, pestering you everywhere you go.

Microsoft’s main challenge is to make Cortana offer help in a way that feels so unintrusive that it banishes all memory of Clippy. It also needs to persuade those who have disabled Cortana to give the tool another chance. Don’t be surprised, then, if Redstone re-enables Cortana on all PCs.

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind




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Windows 10: Microsoft uses 'classic' salesman tactic

 I worked as a salesman for many years, and so was interested that Microsoft's tactics for forcing people into upgrading to Windows 10 had been compared to those of salesmen (News, Issue 466). It seems to me that Microsoft is using the classic 'alternative close', in which a salesman assumes that you want to buy something, then simply offers two choices, such as 'would you like it in red or blue?'. In Microsoft's case, red is 'upgrade now' and blue is 'upgrade tonight'.


In principle there's nothing wrong with this. A salesman who didn't use psychological tricks of persuasion wouldn't last very long. But at least you can simply turn around and walk away from a pushy salesman. In contrast, Microsoft is acting like a salesman who knocks at your door every hour, rings your phone at midnight, and sends you junk mail every day. That's not to say Microsoft's tactics won't work in the long term. I recently read that 200 million PCs now run Windows 10, so they must think that the 'red or blue' strategy is working.

Douglas Baker

 I know Microsoft is losing friends over its marketing of Windows 10, but what do you expect it to do? It has a new product it wants to 'sell' (yes, I know it's free). It thinks it is the best version of Windows ever. It wants a billion people to be using it. Microsoft isn't going to hit this target by suggesting to people that they are better off sticking with Windows 7. So please, let's all grow up a bit and stop treating Microsoft like a charity that needs to stick to certain values.

Martin Chadwick

Windows 10 is neither brilliant nor awful


 I'm fed up with the over-reactions for and against Windows 10. In recent issues we had readers saying that upgrading to it is a "no-brainer". Someone responded by saying that upgrading would be a "brainless" decision. Neither of these extreme views is fair. Please can we all calm down. Windows 10 is not a disaster like Vista, but nor is it a super-reliable success like

XP. I've been using it for a few months and like it. I can't see how any PC user could fail to like it. But I accept that it has some flaws, and would like to see Microsoft introduce new features.

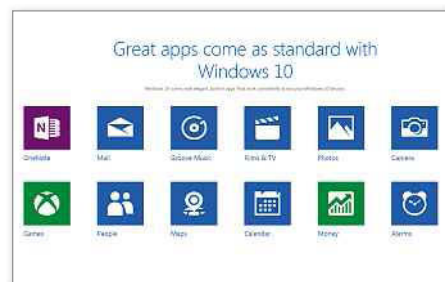
I know that's a rather boring assessment of Windows 10, but it's more helpful to people wondering whether they should upgrade than the 'it's brilliant/dreadful/amazing/awful' opinions flying about.

Patrick McCall

Dump Windows 10's built-in apps

 If anyone is undecided about upgrading to Windows 10, my advice is just to go for it. It's obvious that Microsoft doesn't care a jot anymore about Windows 7 or 8, and won't be terribly bothered about keeping them safe. Windows 10 has served me well since I upgraded last year.

I don't like everything about it. The browser Edge crashes a lot, and I wish Cortana would go away. But it's the built-in Desktop apps that most concern me. You would think that Microsoft would know how to make good apps for their own operating system, but most of them are substandard. And there are simply too many of them. Because these apps come by default, many users - probably less tech-savvy than most




Computeractive readers - may think they have to use them. That's not the case. Do you agree?


Brian Kirkwood

CA says Yes, we would agree. Windows 10's apps are better than those that come with Windows 8, but they are still flawed in many important ways. Brian's concern about the poor quality of apps is shared by many *Computeractive* readers, so we've decided to explain how to uninstall them, and which third-party apps should take their place. You can read our verdict in the Cover Feature of our next issue, out Wednesday 3 February.

Don't force web appointments on to NHS patients

 I completely agree with Stephen Barrett's Star Letter in Issue 466 ('Why should my 86-year-old mother use the web just to access the NHS?'). It worries me greatly that in the rush to do

Of course we don't 'need' drones, but I still want them

 To answer Eric Milne's question (Letters, Issue 466): no, we don't "need" Amazon's drones. But then nor did we need computers, the internet, online shopping or many other innovations of the past 50 years. All we need are clothes, a roof over our heads, and food and drink. What makes life worth living are the things we *want*, not need. That's what separates us from our prehistoric ancestors eating seeds and berries. And I do want to see drones in our skies. As long as they are properly licensed and used responsibly, I can see them being extremely beneficial. Given time, they could even



help ease road congestion, as companies start to make more deliveries by air. I remember people saying how online shopping would never take off. They were wrong. Likewise, I think drones *will* take off - in both senses.

Stuart Moorcock

everything online we will leave thousands of people behind. Like Stephen I have an elderly mother who has never switched on a PC. She shouldn't be forced to use the web to see her GP.

But we can't fight the future. The young do everything online, and so it makes sense to update the NHS in line with this. These people don't need an introduction to the internet, but older people do. So we need a transitional period when new ways of doing things (the internet) co-exist with traditional ways (by phone, in person). If this needs to be as long as 10 years, then so be it. That will keep both age groups happy.

I don't mean to patronise older people. I'm fully aware that many are very technically gifted. When I want PC advice I often turn to my 79-year-old aunt! But she is an exception, whereas among teenagers her knowledge would be the norm. In due course, everyone will feel comfortable performing important actions online. Until then, let's have the best of both worlds.

Gary Walters

✉ Having read your news story 'Want to see your GP? Then book an appointment online' in Issue 465, I would like to comment.

My medical practice has used this service for some time now. It's called 'Patient Access', and I think it's wonderful. Once you've registered you can book an appointment to see your doctor, and tell him/her what you want to discuss.

I can also order my repeat prescription medication through the service and arrange to have my medication prepared at my chosen chemist for me to collect. I can do all this without visiting or contacting my medical practice.

Allan Watt

Wi-Fi in hospitals? Doctors will take selfies in surgery

✉ Free Wi-Fi in hospitals sounds like a terrible idea (News, Issue 466). Hospital corridors will be filled with



STAR LETTER

Well done for exposing GuruAid's tricks

✉ I want to say well done for exposing GuruAid in Issue 466. They have to be the most disreputable PC-help company I've ever spoken to. I run a local computer club in our village community centre, and over the years several members have had problems with GuruAid. I want to let *Computeractive* readers know about some of these, just to reiterate the danger posed by the company.

One woman in our club phoned GuruAid after finding the number on Google. She was told that her PC had a "severe malware infection" and needed a "Registry clean up". This would cost her a whopping £120! Fortunately, she knew enough about computers not to fall for this nonsense, but she still felt intimidated by GuruAid's hard-sell. She described it as being bullied.

In another case, GuruAid tried to scam one of our members who was having problems with his Lenovo PC. Naturally he typed 'Lenovo support' into Google, saw GuruAid as one of the top search results, and so phoned them, thinking they were the right people to talk to. The GuruAid 'expert' took over control of his PC via remote-



management software, then offered to fix the problem for £200 – even though his PC was only a month old, and still under warranty.

The most recent case last summer involved our oldest club member, an 84-year-old former GP. He was having problems with his McAfee antivirus, phoned GuruAid for help, and was told that he would need to pay £300 to have it reinstalled. He hung up, only for GuruAid to ring back saying that they could do it for "only" £80 instead.

I've urged everyone in our club to read your excellent feature, so I hope GuruAid never tricks any of us. Please keep warning us about rip-off merchants like these.

Allan Larkin



The Star Letter writer wins a *Computeractive* mug!

people bumping into beds as they walk, tap and swipe at the same time. Waiting rooms will be crammed with people playing loud YouTube videos. Kids will want to take selfies with doctors – or maybe doctors will during surgery! Hospitals are meant to be quiet, solemn places, not extensions of our high streets. I hope Jeremy Hunt reconsiders this idea.

Ruth Stack

Faster speeds with Plusnet than TalkTalk

✉ Over the past year or so there have been many letters in *Computeractive* regarding poor broadband speeds in rural areas. You published one of mine in January 2015.

For many years we complained to our ISP (TalkTalk) about very slow speeds, particularly in peak times when the speed would frequently drop to 0.1-0.2 Mbps. We were repeatedly told that

nothing could be done because we were connected to an old exchange that had not been upgraded. TalkTalk told us in October 2015 that our phone and broadband services were being transferred to Fleur Telecom. We thought speeds would improve, but they didn't. The only consolation was that Fleur were slightly cheaper than TalkTalk.

After a few weeks with Fleur we decided to try another provider – Plusnet. There was an immediate and dramatic improvement in speed. We now enjoy around 5Mbps at any time of the day. We still use the same Netgear router that we used with TalkTalk, so that wasn't the reason for the speed increase. We can now watch iPlayer at any time of the day, web pages load very quickly, and downloads are lightning-fast.

So if Plusnet can give us these speeds why couldn't TalkTalk?

Terry Parker

Consumeractive

Can I force Amazon to return my data?

Q Last year, I bought an **SSD** from Crucial via Amazon Marketplace, which failed after 14 months. I sent it back to Amazon, and got back about 85 per cent of the purchase price. But Amazon won't return my data on the SSD. Should I be worried about security?

Tony Carnes

A We don't think Tony needs to worry because it's hard to extract files from a broken SSD. However, his contract is with Crucial, which is the retailer in this case, not Amazon. Crucial would therefore be responsible for retrieving his data.

The wider question here is: who is responsible for deleting data before a device is returned.

In normal circumstances the owner needs to do this. But Tony was unable to do this because the SSD was broken. So is Crucial responsible? The law is very unclear. Amazon told us it will check to see what happened to the SSD. If it's been destroyed, Tony doesn't need to worry.

CASE ONGOING

Do I have to pay import duties twice?

Q I bought a Samsung Galaxy S5 from a Hong Kong supplier and had to send it back for repair under warranty. It was returned to me by DHL, which charged me £91 for import duties. I queried this and was assured I didn't have to pay it. But now I'm getting letters from a debt-collection agency for the money. Surely I don't have to pay import taxes a second time?

John Shields



A spokesperson for DHL said: "Customs procedures are unavoidable. However, we do understand that they can be challenging for those with less experience of international shipping". It promised us that it had closed the case, and that John wouldn't be pursued any longer.

It's certainly a minefield for consumers to know when they have to pay import duties. For example, only free repairs qualify for OPR. If you have

A No, John doesn't have to pay import taxes again because all goods repaired under warranty or given a free repair qualify for what's known as Outward Processing Relief (OPR), which exempts the buyer from paying import duties.

We told John to tell the debt-collection company he was disputing the charges. Meanwhile, we contacted DHL to find out what had happened. The company said that the import duty was added because John hadn't provided a copy of the warranty to prove that the shipment fell under OPR.

to pay for a repair, you will have to pay import duty. Also, if you receive a replacement, you'll be charged VAT on the full value of the goods

But it's important you carefully check these details because it's your responsibility, not the courier's, to know whether extra duties are required.

So if you're sending goods back for repair make sure the courier knows if the repair is free or not. To work this out, use the Duty Calculator (www.dutycalculator.com), which gives you three free calculations.

CASE CLOSED

Will PayPal let me reopen a closed dispute?

Q I ordered a printed sweatshirt from Teespring (<https://teespring.com>) and paid £33 via PayPal. It never arrived, so I raised a 'dispute' with PayPal. The company responded and apologised, saying another sweatshirt would be sent. If I agreed to this, the dispute would be

closed within 20 days. But can I reopen the dispute if the replacement fails to arrive?

Elaine Markham

A That's a very good question, so we put it to PayPal. It told us that Elaine doesn't need to worry. If any seller doesn't provide a replacement as promised, the buyer can reopen their dispute - provided it's within 180 days of purchase. PayPal said that while it can't confirm the delivery date of

the goods, the buyer will remain covered.

So if the replacement sweatshirt fails to arrive, Elaine should reopen her dispute. If this happens, she doesn't have to accept *another* replacement if it is offered by Teespring. But if she does give the company a third chance and nothing turns up, she should escalate her dispute with PayPal to a 'claim', in order to get her money back. Visit this web page on PayPal's site for more information on your rights: www.snipca.com/19167.

CASE CLOSED





We stand up for your legal rights

✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

Write: Consumeractive, Computeractive, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

Please include both your phone number and address.

Unfortunately, we can't reply to all your letters.

Is it illegal for an overseas seller to say they're in the UK?

Q I recently bought an item on eBay from a seller who claimed they were based in Manchester. But when I rechecked my order I found that the goods will be coming from China and won't arrive for six weeks. Isn't it illegal to mislead customers like this?

Ron O'Brien

A Yes, it is illegal to use a false address when selling on any site. Fake locations are also against eBay's 'location misrepresentation' policy (www.snipca.com/19168).

Where it gets confusing is when a seller uses what's known as 'drop shipping', which is perfectly legal and used by many online UK and overseas traders. When using this system the seller sources

the goods from abroad. So although the seller may be based in the UK, an overseas company will send your purchase. If this is the case, the seller must let you know, and items must be delivered within 30 days of purchase.

However, if a seller is based abroad, they can legitimately say they have a UK base if they can send the items to relatives or friends in the UK, who will then dispatch them to the buyer.

When buying on eBay it's always best to double-check the seller's feedback profile because their actual location will often be revealed. If you suspect an overseas seller is in cahoots with UK relatives or friends and using their



addresses to fool you, you should report it to Trading Standards via Citizens Advice (www.citizensadvice.org.uk). Fake locations should also be reported to eBay (www.snipca.com/19169), which will hopefully remove the listing.

CASE CLOSED

CASE UPDATE



Garmin doesn't know what caused sat-nav update problem

We hope that our investigation into one reader's problem may help other readers. In Issue 457 Paul Atkinson told us that a **firmware** update had broken his Garmin NUVI 1490 sat-nav. Paul said

that the update disabled some vital directional functions, and the sat-nav's traffic alerts became inaccurate. Garmin admitted that the update was causing some people problems.

Garmin replaced Paul's sat-nav, leaving him satisfied. But recently another *Computeractive* reader, John Horsley, read about Paul's problem and asked us to find out if Garmin had released a fix, because the update had also broken his sat-nav.

The company told us that it doesn't know what the problem is, and therefore hasn't released an update to fix it. It wants to speak to John to find out exactly what the problem is. In the meantime, as a temporary solution, it suggested that he reinstall the maps on his sat-nav.

Complaints from readers about troublesome firmware updates have risen sharply in the past year, so we're glad that the Consumer Rights Act, introduced in October 2015, lets you take legal action to get compensation for such problems. However, it's not yet clear who is responsible for a refund – the retailer or the software developer – but it's likely to be the latter.

If any other readers have been experiencing the same problems with the upgrade, we can pass these on to Garmin. We'll need to give the company your name, email and phone number, so you must give us permission to pass this information on to the company.

THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Broadband in rural areas: information and availability

BT's 'Superfast Fibre'

Availability by county
www.snipca.com/19173

FAQs
www.snipca.com/19174

How to privately fund local broadband
www.snipca.com/19175

Twitter [@BTfibre](https://twitter.com/BTfibre)

Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

Campaigns, news and info
www.snipca.com/19178

Twitter [@CLAtweets](https://twitter.com/CLAtweets)

Countryside Alliance
Campaigns, news and info
www.snipca.com/19180

Facebook
www.snipca.com/19181

Twitter
[@CACampaigns](https://twitter.com/CACampaigns)

Government information

Broadband Delivery UK
www.snipca.com/19176

Broadband postcode checker
<http://gosuperfastchecker.culture.gov.uk>

Ed Vaizey (Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy)
www.vaizey.com/contact

Google map of broadband availability
www.snipca.com/19177



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

AVG's WebTuneUp extension

What happened?

A member of Google's security team called an AVG browser **extension** "trash", claiming that hackers could exploit it to access the internet history and emails of anyone who'd installed it.

The AVG Web TuneUp extension is automatically added to Google's browser Chrome when the user downloads AVG's antivirus software. It is also available separately, for free, on the Chrome browser store (www.snipca.com/19254).

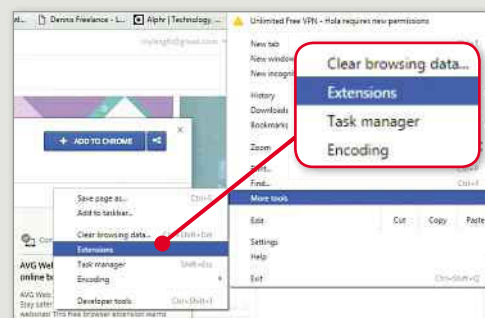
AVG says the extension warns you when you're about to visit a website that contains malware. But on 15 December Google's Tavis Ormandy said that it contained a serious security flaw. He alleged that it was "force installing" a **plug-in** into Chrome, overriding safety features built into the browser.

He was so worried that he contacted AVG to highlight the flaw, saying that "fixing it should be your highest priority". AVG agreed that there was a problem and said it had been fixed in an update on 20 December.

A day later Ormandy confirmed that the fix had been "resolved". He added that Google would no longer allow AVG to automatically add the extension to Chrome when users download the company's antivirus. You can read his exchange with AVG on the forum for Google's security researchers: www.snipca.com/19255.

What should you do?

If you're an AVG customer, check whether you have Web TuneUp



installed. In Chrome, click the top-right menu button (three horizontal lines), move your cursor over 'More tools', then click Extensions (see screenshot). If you don't want it, click the bin icon, then Remove. We would recommend doing this because Chrome already comes with excellent 'safe browsing' protection built in. Google explains how it works at www.snipca.com/19262.

New tools

Avast Wi-Fi Finder
www.snipca.com/19265

If reading the article above makes you want to uninstall AVG's antivirus from your PC, we would recommend



moving to Kaspersky (paid-for, see page 68) or Avast (free). The latter has, over the past 12 months, been the best performing free antivirus in the tests run by Dennis Technology Labs (which is owned by the same company that publishes *Computeractive*). For instructions on how to replace AVG with Avast on your PC, follow our Workshop in Issue 462.

Avast's latest product is a free Android app that helps you find a safe **Wi-Fi hotspot** when you're out and about. It will only recommend hotspots that have been "crowdsourced", which means they've been verified as safe by real people using the app. Avast will flag up dodgy hotspots as "risky" (see screenshot), and reveal what security flaws it has found, such as a weak password.



ScamWatch
READERS WARN READERS

Has BT sent me a SIM card?

I received two emails purportedly from BT (bt.comms@bt.com) with the subject line 'You've got a BT delivery soon'. They said that BT had sent me a 'Standard/Micro SIM' that would arrive "in the next couple of days". But they got my address wrong - I don't live in Dundee! And I hadn't ordered a new SIM card. I phoned BT to check that this had not been set against my account. It confirmed that I hadn't ordered a SIM card. Fortunately, I did not click the links in the email. They were very convincing, and even had a warning about phishing scams at the bottom.

Eric Page



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

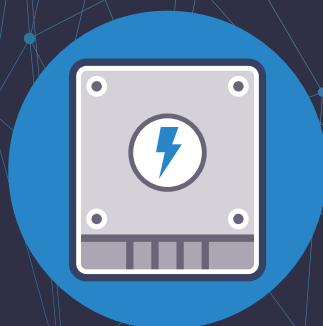


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WEB BROWSER

Firefox 43

www.snipca.com/19150

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10



With Internet Explorer being phased out, it might be time to reconsider which web browser you use. Microsoft's Edge still doesn't support **extensions** and currently it can be used only in Windows 10. Chrome is fast, but uses up lots of memory. With version 43 now released, it could be time to give Firefox another try.

The latest release packs in some great new features, including many that boost security and privacy. For example, Firefox now requires extensions to be **digitally signed** – if they're not, the browser will block them, helping to prevent malware spreading. Tracking protection has also been bolstered (see below) and Firefox now works better on Windows 8 and 10 devices with touchscreens.

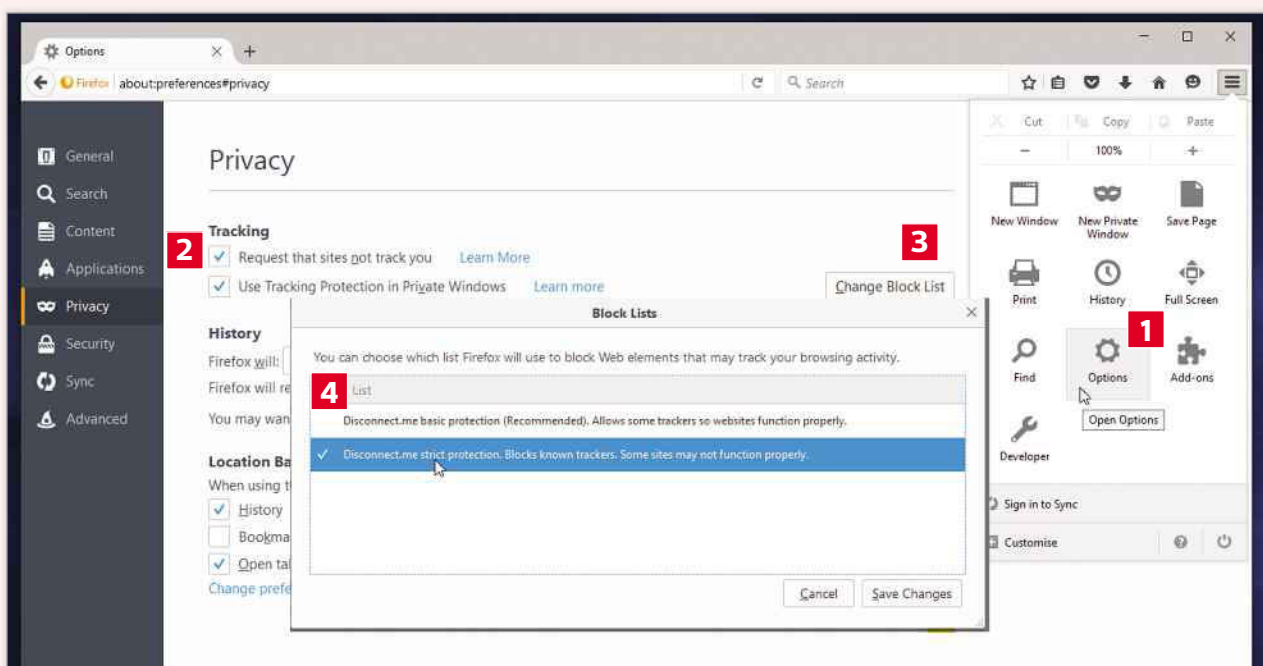
To try Firefox, go to the link above, click the green Free Download button, then run the installer. During setup, click Options and untick 'Send information about this installation to Mozilla' if you prefer not to supply Firefox's developers

with anonymous data about your system. Apart from that, setup is straightforward and there are no unwanted extras to worry about. You'll be prompted to import settings, bookmarks, saved passwords and other data during the process – select your current browser and click Next.

When you launch Firefox, you'll be prompted to set it as your default browser – click 'Not now'. You can always change this later once you've tried it and are happy with it.

The first page you'll see will ask whether you want to create a Firefox account; again, this isn't mandatory (you can create one later at www.snipca.com/19151), but it lets you sync your browsing data and settings across several devices – Firefox has recently been updated for Android (www.snipca.com/19152) and iOS (www.snipca.com/19153).

Below we'll show you how to enable Firefox's enhanced tracking protection. For more expert ways to use Firefox, see Secret Tips in Issue 448.

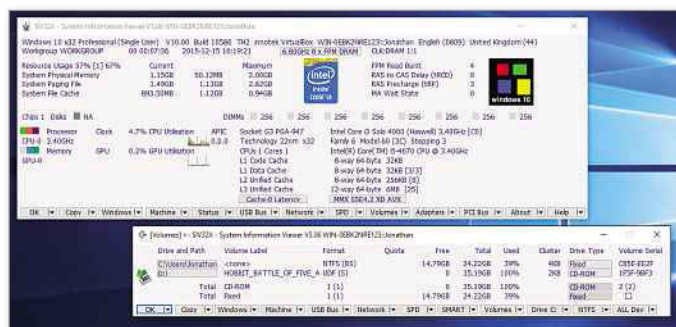


1 Launch Firefox, then click the settings button (three horizontal lines) in the top right, and select Options, then click Privacy in the left-hand pane.

2 Under Tracking, tick the 'Request that sites do not track you' box – this is basically the same as Do Not Track in other browsers.

3 Next, click the Change Block List button. In the window that opens, click the 'Disconnect.me strict protection' option, then click Save Changes.

4 This may affect how some sites are displayed. If your favourite sites no longer work, repeat steps 1–3 and click 'Disconnect.me basic protection'.



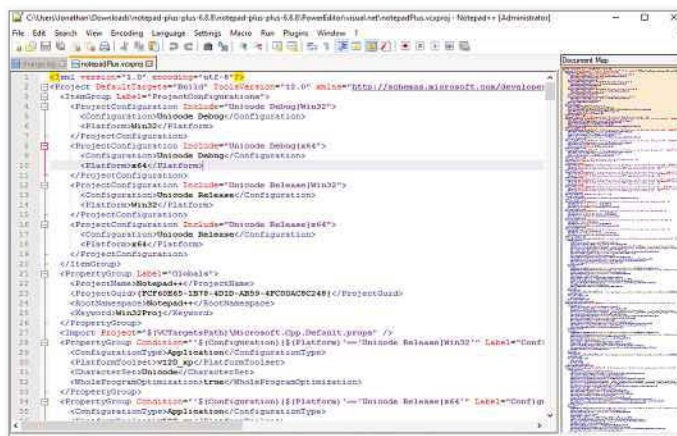
SYSTEM TOOL

System Information Viewer 5.0.6

www.snipca.com/19143

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10

System Information Viewer provides detailed information about your PC's hardware components. It's a portable program, so download the siv.zip file, extract its contents, then double-click either 'SIV32X.exe' or 'SIV64X.exe', depending on whether you have a 32bit or 64bit system. You'll see a window of detailed technical information, including the name, make and model of your CPU, how much memory you have installed, the size of Windows' paging file and more.



TEXT EDITOR

Notepad++ 6.8.8

www.snipca.com/19149

What you need: Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8/8.1 or 10

Windows comes with the built-in text editor Notepad, but 'barely functional' would be the politest way of describing it. Anyone with even the slightest interest in writing and editing code will want to use Notepad++ instead. This is a lightweight text editor with several essential features that are missing from Microsoft's version. It supports a wide variety of programming languages, has line numbering and provides a tabbed interface so you can work on multiple files simultaneously. You can also zoom if the text is too small, add plug-ins and more. This version brings lots of useful fixes and features, including better syntax highlighting for Python and other programming languages.

WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

How can I disinfect my USB drives?

Q I use USB sticks to transfer files – mainly presentations and slideshows, but also documents and pictures – between my own and other PCs. I recently heard that doing this may not be safe because the USB drive can become infected with a virus. Is there any software that can prevent this happening?

C Bennett

A The most common way for malware to spread via USB sticks is for a malicious program on one PC to infect the stick's 'autorun.inf' file, which then passes the infection on to the next PC it is plugged into. Some antivirus (AV) programs scan any USB sticks as soon as they're plugged in. Most paid-for AV programs do this, while free ones like Avast Free Antivirus (www.avast.com) may also do this. In Avast click Settings, Active Protection, then Customise under File System Shield and select 'Scan when attaching' to check that 'Scan auto-run items when removable media is attached' is ticked. If your AV doesn't automatically scan USB drives, you could add a free standalone tool, such as Ninja Pendisk (www.ninjabendisk.com) or Bitdefender's USB Immunizer (www.snipca.com/19155), which scans and cleans any USB sticks you plug in.

There are a couple of ways to protect the sticks themselves. If you only need to read or copy files off a USB stick when it's attached to someone else's PC, you could use one with a physical write-protect switch, though these tend to be more expensive – a 16GB Kanguru stick will cost you about £40 (www.snipca.com/19154). Alternatively, you could use a free tool like Panda USB Vaccine (www.snipca.com/19156 – see screenshot), to stop your drive becoming infected in the first place – simply insert your stick and click Vaccinate USB.

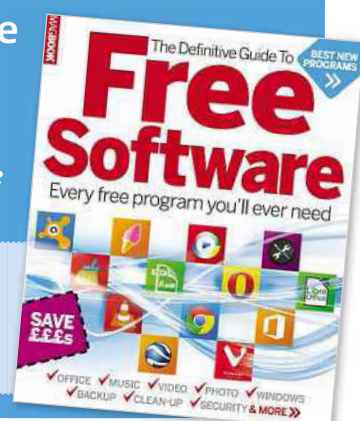


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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

PC | £700 from Palicomp www.snipca.com/19282

Palicomp Intel i5 Raven

A thin but powerful PC

Why are desktop PCs so big? One reason is that the smaller the case, the harder it is to keep the parts within it cool. So it always seems like a lot of space is wasted, but room for air means the built-in fans don't have to work so noisily to keep the temperature down.

When you find a machine like this one, slotted into a slim 'media PC' case that can be stood up or laid flat in small spaces, you would expect compromises. Yet somehow, despite being thin enough to hold between your thumb and finger, the Palicomp Intel i5 Raven manages to stay quieter than comparable PCs while providing enough processing power for most purposes.

“You could buy a more powerful PC for £700 but it wouldn't be so small”

The Raven case resembles its avian namesake, but not in a good way. The matt-black plastic front and sides have a strange pinched, ribbed design – reminiscent of overlapping feathers – that might be more at home in one of Edgar Allan Poe's gothic tales, perhaps *The Fall of the Mouse of Usher*.

Anyway, try to ignore its appearance and you'll find that the Raven is really rather practical. Two open pages of *Computeractive* side by side is roughly the same area size as the Raven, which is just a bit more square. Within this area they've fitted a decent **motherboard** bearing an Intel Core i5-6400 **processor**. It's not as powerful as the 6600 found in other systems at this price, and the 8GB of memory isn't the quickest that this motherboard can accommodate. Adding more memory later, up to 16GB, is a

straightforward task.

Even so, the Palicomp Intel i5 Raven was pretty nifty in our tests, although it was better at multitasking and complex jobs such as video editing (when it can use all of its four processor cores) than ploughing through individual tasks such as applying filters to photos.

Also shoehorned in is an Nvidia GeForce GTX 960 **graphics card**, which helps out with things like video effects in programs and runs any 3D game at Full HD **resolution** with high-quality settings. Unusually, Palicomp includes a wireless Xbox 360 controller, complete with a USB dongle to connect it to the PC. Windows 10 is designed to work with this, and many games come set up for it. If games aren't your thing, you're bound to find someone among your friends or family who'll gladly take it off your hands.

The Raven's 1TB hard drive provides plenty of storage. It's a **hybrid drive**, with a bit of **flash memory** bolted on, for faster operation. You could install two more laptop-style 2.5in drives inside the case if you needed to, along with the slot-loading DVD drive that's already included.

Outside, there's a good array of sockets for accessories, including fast **USB 3.0** ports front and back. One omission is an optical audio jack for top-of-the-range amplifiers. A more vexing omission is

Wi-Fi, which is an optional extra that you'll need if your router, or perhaps a Powerline Ethernet adapter, isn't nearby. There are two DVI sockets and one for monitors.

You could buy a slightly more powerful PC for this money, but it wouldn't be this small. For general use, the graphics card may be overkill, but the Raven is a capable all-round system that can be tucked out of the way.

SPECIFICATIONS

2.7GHz Intel Core i5-6400 quad-core processor • 8GB memory • 1TB hybrid drive • 4GB Nvidia GTX 960 graphics card • 4x USB 3 ports • 4x USB 2 ports • Gigabit Ethernet port • HDMI port • 2x DVI ports • DisplayPort • Windows 10 Home • 382x350x105mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/19282

VERDICT: It's meant to be a bad omen when a raven leaves the tower, but a solid mid-range PC has never been more compact than this

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Chillblast Fusion Centurion £700 Despite a slower graphics card, the i5-6600 processor and 128GB SSD make this a faster all-round machine – but it's much bigger



LAPTOP | £885 from Debenhams www.snipca.com/19171

Asus ZenBook UX303UA

You get what you pay for



In 2011, an Australian TV presenter got into trouble for asking the Dalai Lama what toppings a Buddhist would want on their pizza. The answer to this 'joke'? 'Make me one with everything'. We were reminded of this by the ZenBook's brand name, but the UX303UA, which runs Windows 10, also fits the description. It's a slim and light laptop, or 'ultrabook', that takes everything you need in an all-round PC and makes it highly portable.

With an aluminium case and 13.3in screen, the ZenBook UX303UA is comparable to the larger version of Apple's MacBook Air. Although it's fractionally bigger and heavier, at 1.45kg it's still easy to carry, and the front edge tapers to a razor-sharp 3mm. Like other Asus models, the lid is polished in a circular pattern, giving it an industrial look that chimes with its sturdy metal construction. The 70s-style Asus logo



“It's a highly portable, stylish, good all-round laptop”

plonked in the middle does it few favours, but still, the machine looks every inch the expensive bit of kit that it is. Coloured finishes – including a fashionable Rose Gold – are also available but don't seem to be widely stocked.

You can pay extra for a touchscreen, but it's mostly a distraction on a conventional laptop. The ZenBook's touchpad works well enough, responding

effortlessly to clicks, gestures and cursor movements. The regular display's Full HD 1920x1080-pixel resolution is much sharper than the MacBook Air's 1440x900, and easier to see thanks to a matt coating. Black pixels aren't as dark as they could be, and we weren't convinced by the claim of wide viewing angles, but colour range is good, covering 90 per cent of the sRGB spectrum.

While cheaper laptops make do with Intel's slowest chips, the ZenBook gets its processor – the 7500U – from the top-end i7 series. It has only two cores, but it's fast enough to plough through individual tasks like image editing at speeds that would be a credit to a mid-range desktop PC.

It's helped along by the 256GB SSD, which gives you less storage but is much quicker than a standard hard drive. Multi-tasking isn't quite so impressive, but with a generous 12GB of memory installed, nothing feels sluggish. Although the integrated Intel HD Graphics 520 chip can't compete with a full-size graphics card, it'll run most 3D games if you turn down the resolution and quality settings.

The latest 802.11ac Wi-Fi is built in, and a better option for networking than the slow USB-to-Ethernet adapter supplied, although it's nice that Acer doesn't charge you £25 extra for it, unlike certain companies beginning with A that we could mention. Other ports are plentiful, and the battery lasted nearly 10 hours of video playback – enough to sustain you on any journey.

HOW WE TEST

Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which owns a hi-tech facility for testing the latest technology. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro*, *Computer Shopper*, *Web User* and *Micro Mart* and the website Expert Reviews (www.expertreviews.co.uk). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

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OUR AWARDS



We award every product that gets five stars our Buy It! stamp of approval. It means we were extremely impressed by the product, and we think you will be too.



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the Great Pick award. We highly recommend these products, although they just fail to meet the high standard of our Buy It! winners.

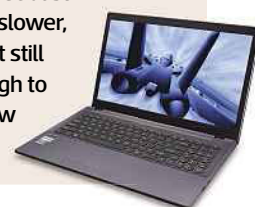
PRICES

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

VERDICT: The ZenBook shows us that when you go in search of a truly enlightened laptop, change (from £900) is possible



ALTERNATIVE: PC Specialist Cosmos IV £600 It's slower, heavier and uglier, but still performed well enough to earn a four-star review (see Issue 464)



SPECIFICATIONS

2.5GHz Intel Core i7-6500U dual-core processor
• 12GB memory • 256GB flash storage • 13.3in 1920x1080-pixel screen • Webcam • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • 3x USB 3.0 ports • HDMI port • Mini DisplayPort • SD card reader • Windows 10 Home • 19.2x323x223mm (HxWxD) • 1.45kg • One-year warranty
www.snipca.com/19172

LAPTOP | £330 from Argos www.snipca.com/19196

Toshiba Satellite L50D-C-13G

A laptop with a screen that's distinctly off-colour

At an original price of £430 and currently discounted by £100, this mid-range laptop looks excellent value on paper – not least because rather than a compact 11 or 13in screen it has a full 15.6in display, the largest size you'll generally see on today's laptops. Add a **quad-core processor** and 8GB of memory, and you've got the makings of a PC that might be able to handle all your everyday jobs and show you a film or two in the evening – not just a second PC to carry around.

Switch it on, though, and the Satellite L50D-C-13G doesn't quite live up to expectations. That big screen is marketed under the name 'TruBrite', which frankly just confirms our worst suspicions about the people who come up with names to market things. 'Brite' it isn't: we measured 258 candelas per square metre. A candela is the official name for one candlepower, a homely unit reminiscent of 'horsepower'. It simply represents the brightness of one ordinary candle. A candle is not very bright. 258 candles spread over a square metre still wouldn't

“If you've ever wondered what a red London bus would look like if it were orange, Google it on this laptop”

be very bright. In short, this laptop is not very bright. Frankly, whoever decided to call it 'TruBrite' is not very bright, because it's not true. The contrast isn't up to much, either, and the **resolution** is coarse.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.8GHz AMD A10-8700P quad-core processor • 8GB memory • 1TB hard drive • DVD writer • 15.6in 1366x768-pixel touchscreen • Webcam • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 2x USB 3.0 ports • USB 2.0 port • SD card reader • HDMI port • Windows 8.1 Home (upgradable free to Windows 10) • 23.5x380x260mm (HxWxD) • 2.2kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19197



If the 'Tru' part was meant to refer to colour fidelity, the description is not very accurate, and nor is the screen. According to our meter, it can reproduce only 62 per cent of the **sRGB** colour range. The technical term for that is 'rubbish'. If you've ever wondered what a London bus would look like if it were orange instead of red, just Google it on this laptop. But make sure you look at the screen straight-on, or you might not see it at all: the **LCD** panel serves only a narrow viewing angle.

In fact, the most vibrant part of the Satellite L50D-C-13G is the case, which is available in a choice of bright colours. Ours was purple. The touchpad was dyed to match but, being made of a completely different material, it didn't. The paint job is ultra-glossy, as is the screen, perhaps in an attempt to distract you from the poor quality of the image with a constant reflection of your own face. This doesn't really work when all you see is your face reflected back at you with a 'Why is this screen so rubbish?' expression.

The bottom of the machine is plain black, giving the impression it fell off and was replaced with the bottom of a different laptop found at a boot sale. Mercifully, a black top is also an option, making the design considerably easier on the eye. The keyboard does at least feel

solid, as does the whole laptop, a quality reflected in its hefty 2.2kg weight. The keys don't move very much, but most of them are the right size. The touchpad, though disappointingly small, surprised us with its good responsiveness.

The AMD **processor**, with built-in Radeon R6 graphics, delivered bargain-basement results in our speed tests, failing particularly badly at multi-tasking despite its four cores. Still, once you've waited for the free Windows 10 upgrade to install over the supplied Windows 8.1 operating system, the Satellite L50D-C-13G is quite usable, and the 1TB hard drive has room for all your stuff. Older 3D games can be persuaded to run, along with the likes of Minecraft. The battery gave us five hours 40 minutes of light use, which is better than many cheap laptops.

VERDICT: This is a more usable laptop than cheaper models, but it's a shame nothing makes up for the nasty screen

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Toshiba Satellite C40-C £200
Currently the best budget laptop running Windows 10



PHONE | £350 from Giffgaff www.snipca.com/19225

HTC One A9

Not HTC's best phone, but its best buy

Headquartered in Taiwan, HTC first drew attention with the One, a gorgeous metal smartphone, and its successors, the One M8 and M9.

The One A9, which runs Android 6.0 (Marshmallow), looks more of a follower than a leader, owing a lot to Apple's iPhone 6 and 6s – though its case has a squarer design and is easier to hold. It comes in dark grey, white (see image) and a couple of other colours, although only the grey is currently in stock with Giffgaff. You'll soon fill the 16GB of storage in the cheapest model, but there's a **microSD** slot to add more.

Sharper than the iPhone 6s, the Full HD screen has better colour range than the M9, covering all of the standard **sRGB** spectrum. Like other **AMOLED** displays, it isn't very bright, but black pixels are *very* black, so there's plenty of contrast. The fingerprint sensor is quicker to unlock the phone than Apple's and works with Google's Android Pay system in shops, although this is much less widely accepted than Apple Pay.

The One A9's Snapdragon **processor** is a slower version than we've seen in other phones, and occasionally struggled with complicated web pages and more demanding 3D games, but in general Android apps worked very smoothly. HTC's version of Google's Android 6.0 software is easy to use and can be personalised in lots of ways. The battery lasted 10 hours of video playback, which is distinctly average, but better than the M9.

The 13-**megapixel** rear camera takes very good pictures outdoors, helped by an improved app with manual control options. It's not too bad in lower indoor light either. Video is **1080p** rather than **4K resolution**, but nobody really needs that anyway.

SPECIFICATIONS

5in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 13-megapixel rear camera • 4-megapixel front camera • 16GB flash storage • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.1 • 3G/4G • Android 6 • 146x71x7.3mm (HxWxD) • 143g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19221

VERDICT: It's not groundbreaking, but the One A9 is an excellent Android phone. It has a high-quality feel and handles apps smoothly

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Google Nexus 5X £339
Its matt plastic case looks a bit odd, but this phone has similar strengths and weaknesses



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Reviews

TABLET | £399 from Google Store www.snipca.com/19229

Google Pixel C

Can an Android tablet take on the Pro versions of Surface and iPad?

We're seeing a second coming of the tablet. It was nearly six years ago that Apple's iPad gave us a new kind of computer. Then Microsoft's Surface Pro turned a laptop into a touchscreen, and various hybrids followed. At the end of 2015, the Surface Pro 4 and iPad Pro arrived, packing desktop PC power and laptop-sized screens into lightweight touchscreens with clip-on keyboards.

Google's Pixel C doesn't quite compete with those top-end tablets. For a start, its 10.2in screen is barely larger than an iPad Air 2, making it more comparable to Microsoft's Surface 3. That's reflected in the price. But it's the keyboard that marks this out as a next-generation device – and it beats both Apple's and Microsoft's.

“A great hybrid only let down by the quality of its apps”

The Surface keyboard attaches with a floppy hinge, leaving the tablet to rest on its built-in kickstand. The iPad Pro's Smart Keyboard incorporates a cover that folds into a stand. Neither is easy to use when you're not at a desk. The Pixel C's keyboard has a big magnetic flap that grips firmly on to the tablet and can be pivoted stiffly to any angle, much like a laptop screen.

Uniquely, the keyboard charges from the tablet via **wireless induction**, so you don't have to remember to charge it separately. And it's very comfortable to type on, even if the Enter and apostrophe keys are a bit cramped. Unlike the

SPECIFICATIONS

Nvidia Tegra X1 processor • 32GB flash storage • 10.2in 2560x1800-pixel touchscreen • 8-megapixel rear camera • 2-megapixel webcam • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Android 6 • 242x179x6.9mm (HxWxD) without keyboard • 520g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19229



Surface and other hybrids, it lacks a touchpad, so you'll need to use the touchscreen to control the cursor and carry out input gestures, which means moving your hands more. But if the tablet is firmly supported, that works fine.

As with the iPad Pro and Surface 3, the keyboard is an optional extra, costing £119. For the same price, Google will soon be launching a 'Folio Keyboard', which is more like Apple's, but probably won't be as adjustable. The regular keyboard can be used as a screen cover when you carry your Pixel C – held in place by magnets.

As for the tablet itself, the Pixel C makes a great first impression. The metal case has a distinctive slit-shaped row of rainbow-coloured LEDs that can show you the battery level, and a single **USB Type-C** port for both charging and connecting accessories. The built-in speakers are decent, although not as powerful as those on the iPad Air 2. There's no **microSD slot** for extra storage, but with 32GB as standard (or 64GB for £80 extra) you may not need it.

The display is up there with the iPad Air 2 and Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 in terms of sharpness, brightness and colour. All it lacks is Apple's anti-reflective finish. The Nvidia Tegra X1 **processor** almost keeps up with the iPad Air 2 for most things, and even beats it when playing 3D games. And the battery lasted us 14-and-a-half hours of video playback, longer than any iPad. Heavier

use ran it down much faster, however.

If the Pixel C has one serious flaw, it's Android. While thousands of apps are designed specifically for the iPad screen, including those that Apple includes free of charge, Android apps for tablets tend to just look like magnified phone apps. Microsoft's Office apps work well, but only with a paid-for annual Office 365 subscription. And while you can now use two apps side by side on an iPad Air 2 or Pro, you're stuck with one at a time on the Pixel C.

Any other manufacturer could blame Android, but Google makes the operating system and therefore needs to fix it. Tablets need tablet software. Unless the Pixel C gets it, it will never match its Apple or Microsoft rivals in practice.

VERDICT: A well designed and reasonably priced 'pro' tablet whose laptop ambitions are thwarted by software made for phones

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE:

Microsoft Surface 3

£419 Running

Windows

10, this is a

more practical

choice for anything beyond web

browsing and games



PHONE | £499 from Moto Maker www.snipca.com/19247

Motorola Moto X Force

The first smartphone that won't smash if you drop it

Before mobile phones, the most valuable item you carried in your pocket was your wallet. You had to take care not to lose it or have it pinched, but at least it wasn't breakable. Enter the smartphone, and most of us now have an ongoing relationship with the entrepreneur in the kiosk at the local shopping centre who replaces screens for £50 while you wait. It's like having your pocket picked every few months.

What if your phone was as durable as your wallet? This one claims to get close – and not by bolting on a chunky case, but by building in what Motorola calls 'ShatterShield'. This, the company's rep told us, makes the display so hard to smash, it's guaranteed against accidental damage for four years. Given that no other phone's standard warranty covers accidental damage at all, that's a bold commitment.

Could we throw it on the floor, we asked? Yes. We did. Then we stamped on it. It didn't break. It's also splashproof, so although you can't take it swimming, a brief dunk shouldn't hurt it. The only catch is that if the phone slams into the ground so hard that the electronics inside get concussion, that isn't covered.

Nothing about the Moto X Force says 'rugged'. It's an elegant phone with a choice of colours and finishes, including leather. With 32GB of storage and a **microSD card** for more if needed, there's

SPECIFICATIONS

5.4in 2560x1440-pixel screen • 21-megapixel rear camera • 5-megapixel front camera • 32GB flash storage • microSD card slot • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.1 • 3G/4G • 150x78x9.2mm (HxWxD) • 169g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19246



plenty of room for your apps, music, photos and video, and the battery lasted over 15 hours in our video-playback test.

Thanks to the protection laminated over it, the sharp **AMOLED** screen looks slightly less vibrant than some, and we found the plastic front layer picked up small scuffs more easily than the usual toughened glass. Motorola told us this could be replaced cheaply if necessary without affecting the main part of the display.

The Snapdragon 810 **processor** is about the fastest you can get, beaten only by the latest

Apple devices, so Android runs very smoothly. Pictures from the 21-megapixel camera aren't quite as good as those from an iPhone 6s or Samsung Galaxy S6, especially in low light, but it shoots video at up to **4K resolution** with good automatic exposure. The only obvious missing feature is a fingerprint sensor: you'll need to unlock your Moto X Force the old-fashioned way, with a passcode or gesture pattern.

VERDICT: It's a good phone for the price rather than an exceptional one, but the Moto X Force really is tough and there's little to dislike

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Google Nexus 6P **£450** This slimmer phone has similar features all round and costs a bit less, so it's a better buy as long as you don't drop it



The best... iPhone battery cases

Apple Smart Battery Case

£79 from Apple Store

www.snipca.com/19115

For the iPhone 6s only, this new battery case flexes to get on and off. Its bulging back looks odd, but doesn't affect reception. It lets your iPhone work for about twice as long, which is less than most rivals. The 'Smart' aspect means your screen shows battery info, but we'd prefer a readout on the case itself.



Mophie Juice Pack Air

£65 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/19116

Mophie is the leading brand in battery cases. Available for various models (the iPhone 6 version fits the 6s), the Juice Pack Air comes in more colours, looks neater than Apple's case, and has 50 per cent more capacity. Like Apple's case, it's reinforced and has a grippable rubbery finish. **White LEDs** show how much battery is left.



Anker Ultra Slim Extended Battery Case

£27 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/19117

Much cheaper and a bit lighter than the Mophie, with similar capacity, this case doesn't feel quite as protective but has a similar power meter. Like the others, its headphone jack won't fit all plugs, but it comes with a little adapter to get over this. It's excellent value.



Tytl Energi Sliding Power Case

£70 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/19118

Also available for the larger iPhone 6/6s Plus, the Tytl Energi has an even higher power capacity and comes with an inner protective sleeve over which the battery case slides. This makes it bulky in use, but for maximum power, protection and flexibility it's a good choice.



Reviews

PHONE | £195 from Argos www.snipca.com/19279

WileyFox Storm

Can a plucky British company take on the global pack?

A couple of months ago we reviewed the WileyFox Swift (see Issue 460), a budget smartphone that – like most others – is made in China but unusually was designed by a British company. The Storm is a pricier model, but still very affordable at under £200. So is there more here to tempt you away from the big global brands?

Like its sibling, the Storm has a sandstone-textured black rear panel with orange detailing and a big metallic fox-head logo in the middle. It looks classy, reminding us of something a James Bond villain might use. It's slender, and seems even slimmer thanks to a bit of curvy-edged design trickery. On the front is a Full HD 1920x1080-pixel 5.5in screen, matching the format of the iPhone 6s Plus at a third of the price.

“Handy features can't make up for the poor battery life and dull screen”

This is no iPhone, though. The display covers less than 87 per cent of the sRGB colour range, which isn't terrible for a low-cost device but leaves reds looking washed-out and whites tinged with yellow. Neither contrast nor brightness are particularly strong, and that all adds up to a dull image, not enhanced by the screen's tendency to pick up fingerprints more easily than most.

You'd think the dim illumination might save some power, but apparently not: the Storm's battery life is even worse than Apple's. Continuously playing video, the Storm gave up the ghost after less than eight hours. By comparison, Motorola's budget option, the Moto X Play, was still going five hours later. True, it costs £50 more. Even Sony's Xperia M4 Aqua, though, lasts 2-3 hours longer than the Storm, and you can buy it for as little as £150 without a contract. The Aqua's

screen isn't quite as big or sharp, but you can drop it in a pond and it'll come to no harm, while the Storm doesn't even claim to be splashproof.

No budget phone matches the camera quality of the iPhone and best Android models, but here again the Storm disappointed us. Proving that **resolution** isn't everything, its 20-megapixel photos captured less detail than some devices with lower specifications, especially in the lightest and darkest areas of the photo. Some professional photographers these days are happy to use smartphones. They won't be using this one – it's strictly for Instagram and the like.

In other respects, the Storm is more impressive. Like the Swift, it runs Cyanogen 12.1, a modified version of Google's Android that gives you more control over features and privacy. The advantages of Cyanogen are declining now that Android 6 (Marshmallow) incorporates many similar options. But not many budget phones have Marshmallow yet, and Cyanogen is still more customisable, with lots of visual themes available to make your

SPECIFICATIONS

5.5in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 20-megapixel rear camera • 8-megapixel front camera • 32GB flash storage • MicroSD card slot • 802.11n Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • 3G/4G • 152x77x9.2mm (HxWxD) • 155g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19277



phone look just how you want it. In this sense, it's the perfect antidote to the iPhone's assumption that you're happy for Apple to make all the decisions for you.

The Storm's Snapdragon **processor** isn't the fastest version of that chip, but good enough to keep almost everything running smoothly, partly thanks to a generous 3GB of memory. The 32GB of storage is also more than you'd expect at this price, and can be expanded with a **microSD card** by up to 128GB.

If you fancy a relatively cheap larger smartphone that's a bit different and offers good features for the money, the Storm is worth considering. Unfortunately, while the poor screen and camera can almost be forgiven at this price, the short battery life will be frustrating.

VERDICT: Hardware flaws make the Storm better on paper than in practice, despite its convincing build quality and enhanced version of Android



ALTERNATIVE: Sony Xperia M4 Aqua £150 Just 8GB of storage means you'll need a microSD card, but decent battery life makes this a more practical buy



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Reviews

PRINTER | £70 from Argos www.snipca.com/19256

HP Envy 5540

A different way to save money on ink – or is it?

This multi-function Wi-Fi inkjet printer/scanner is pretty bog standard overall. Its touchscreen controls and software are easy to use, if over-simplified, and scanning options are basic. The bulky machine scans well, but quite slowly (taking nearly a minute to preview and capture an A4 page at a standard 300 dots per inch). Printing in both monochrome and colour is fairly swift, reaching 12 pages per minute for text. You can also print both sides of a sheet (this is called duplex printing).

What's new is HP's Instant Ink plan, available on this and a few other printers. Instead of buying new cartridges when old ones run out, you pay a monthly subscription. A 'moderate' plan covers 100 pages for £3.49, cutting the cost to less than half the 8p you'd pay for one colour page's worth of ink in HP's 62XL cartridges. The other plans give you 50 pages for £1.99 or 300 for £7.99. On the face of it these are pretty good savings.

Ordinarily, of course, you could buy

SPECIFICATIONS

4800x1200dpi maximum print resolution • 1200x1200dpi maximum scan resolution • USB • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 156x454x410mm (HxWxD) • 6.82kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/19257



unbranded compatible ink cartridges for a lot less. Unfortunately, nobody seems to make them for this printer. Probably because the print heads – usually part of the printer – are built into the cartridges, making them hard to reproduce. But rival inkjets from the likes of Canon and Epson have cheaper official cartridges and even cheaper unofficial ones.

What's more, paying monthly means you're gambling on how much you'll print. You can roll over only one month of unused pages, so if you don't print much for a few weeks, you start losing money. If you print more than planned, you can pay £1 for an extra 15, 20 or 25 pages (depending on your plan) or upgrade to a higher plan – but then, once again, you might not use all the pages you've paid for.

Somewhat spookily, the printer tells HP, over the internet, how many pages you're printing and when you're running

out of ink. New cartridges arrive automatically in the post when you need them. Because you pay per page, not per cartridge, you'll get the best savings if you print a lot of full-colour photos because HP will end up sending you a large amount of ink for your fixed price. If you print mostly plain text, though, you'd be better off buying ink yourself.

VERDICT: You might benefit from HP's ink plan, but it's unnecessarily complicated, and this printer doesn't have much else going for it



ALTERNATIVE: Canon PIXMA MG6650 £65 This excellent printer's ink works out cheaper than the Envy 5540's if you buy cartridges in the normal way



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best phone to test how my website looks?

Q I need a smartphone to test my responsive website designs. I know there is software that can test this, but the only real test is to load the site on a phone. I don't need to make calls or take photos, and I can't afford a range of devices. I'm thinking of using a second-hand phone on Wi-Fi. What would be the best model?

Adrian West



A All web designers should use a responsive approach, which adapts the layout to different screen sizes. You'll need to consider both iPhones and iPads, which use Apple's iOS operating system and its Safari browser, and Android devices, using Google's Chrome or other browsers. An iPod touch (£149 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/19245 – pictured) is the cheapest

option for iOS testing. The Samsung Galaxy Tab A 9.7 (£170 from Argos www.snipca.com/19244) is an Android tablet similar in size to the iPad Air, so you could judge Android compatibility and how the site would look on a larger mobile screen. Those two might be a good start. Any device can be used via Wi-Fi only, although an iPhone needs a SIM for initial setup.



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

PANORAMIC CAMERA | £299 from Jessops www.snipca.com/19271

Ricoh Theta S

A camera that sees all around

Since the dawn of photography, taking a picture has meant pointing a camera at something interesting and capturing a rectangular view in that direction. Panorama shooting, which once meant complicated mechanical contraptions but can now be done by waving your mobile phone and letting the software sort out the details, just gives you a wider rectangle.

360-degree photography is something different altogether, and Ricoh's Theta camera (this is the improved third version) makes it surprisingly easy, both for still pictures and video. About the size of a TV remote control, it has a camera on each side, each with a bulbous 'fisheye' lens to capture 180 degrees in all directions. When the two images are stitched together, a little bit of magic

“There's something amazing about looking at a scene with a 360-degree view”

jiggling erases the camera's presence from the view, leaving you with a full view of everything that was visible from where the shot was taken.

Ordinarily, the image would include you holding the camera, so it's designed so that you don't have to. There's no built-in screen; instead, you operate everything wirelessly from your Apple or Android phone or tablet. You can also just press a button on the front, but then you'll be in the picture, with a giant hand. Stand the camera anywhere: remember, it sees everything, so there's no need to point it the right way – just make sure anything you want to emphasise is at least 10cm from the lens but not

too far away.

Check the live preview on your touchscreen, then tap to take an image or begin your video recording (anything up to 25 minutes). There's also a timer in the app, so you can set the Theta S to take one or more pictures, then leave it somewhere without Wi-Fi to get on with it – even underwater (if you buy the £25 TH-1 transparent case). Alternatively, you can leave the camera connected to a computer and stream 360-degree video from it, but it's hard to see why you'd want to do that, especially given that you and your computer will be in shot.

Naturally, the Theta S's end product isn't a flat image. Well, technically it is, but it doesn't make much sense if you view it that way. You'll need to use Ricoh's software on your mobile device, PC or Mac to display it as an interactive 360-degree panorama. You can also edit your panoramas in this software, although no Android version is available for video editing. To share them with other people, videos can be uploaded to YouTube, which shows them as intended, and stills can be made public on Google Street View.

The camera's 12-megapixel photo and Full HD video specifications sound pretty decent, but the spherical images aren't quite as detailed as you might hope. Even so, the Theta S is good enough for professional projects, as long as there's plenty of light. Something like a concert hall might photograph well, with dark areas and bright lights, but most indoor scenes will look dingy. You can see some of our colleagues at work at www.snipca.com/19275. Drag with your mouse

to look around – and don't forget up and down.

Videos only appear correctly on YouTube (see www.snipca.com/19276 for examples) in the YouTube app or up-to-date versions of Internet Explorer, Chrome, Opera or Firefox, not in Apple's



Safari browser. Even then, YouTube doesn't do them full justice: your panoramas will look sharper in Ricoh's software. But there's something pretty amazing about being able to look at a scene with a 360-degree view. As virtual-reality goggles become widely available this year, 360-degree videos could start to get popular.

SPECIFICATIONS

1080p Full HD video • 14-megapixel equivalent photos • 8GB storage • Wi-Fi • MicroUSB port • Micro HDMI port • 130x44x23mm (HxWxD) • 125g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/19274

VERDICT: If you want to be in at the beginning of a trend, the Theta S is the device to buy, but the price is fairly hefty for limited image quality



ALTERNATIVE: Ricoh Theta m15 £200 This cheaper version comes in various colours, but image quality isn't as good and video features are very limited



Reviews

GRAPHIC-DESIGN SOFTWARE | £50 from Xara www.snipca.com/19280

Xara Photo & Graphic Designer 11

All the design tools you need in one place

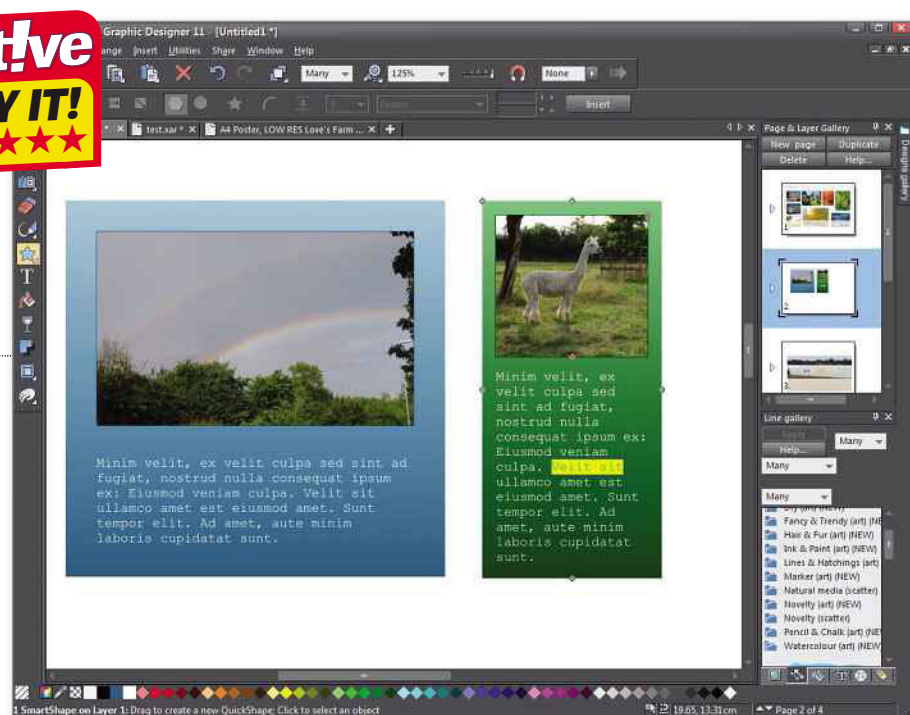
The gold standard in graphics software, Adobe's Creative Cloud, includes three separate programs for producing flat artwork: Photoshop for editing images; Illustrator for drawing with vector shapes; and InDesign for creating page layouts. Adobe's rivals, notably Serif and Corel, produce their programs along similar lines.

Xara Photo & Graphic Designer mashes them all up together at a lower price. It may not be ideal for laying out multi-page documents, nor is it a conventional image editor, but it's suitable for a wide range of tasks. If you've found yourself struggling to design a logo or a poster in word-processor or presentation software because you didn't have a more appropriate tool, this is it. And while it lacks the depth of features you'd find in programs like CorelDraw or Serif PhotoPlus, it's also less daunting and cluttered.

“A usable, all-round graphics program that won't feel daunting”

Moreover, while other graphics programs seem to struggle to find much to add in each update, Xara Photo & Graphic Designer 11 has plenty of new features. There's a set of paintbrushes that create realistic strokes in styles such as acrylic paints, fur and watercolours. These are based on **vectors**, which means each line you draw is stored separately, letting you go back and move, reshape or delete it.

The brushes aren't as flexible or convincing as those in, say, Corel's Painter 2016, but that costs £300. What you get is the ability to use any vector object (basically, any shape you can draw) as a brush, which sprinkles copies of it wherever you paint. With this and the



SmartShapes tool introduced in version 10, Xara Photo & Graphic Designer's drawing capabilities feel pretty comprehensive.

The vector-based approach means photo editing is handled in an unusual way. Instead of opening an image file and editing its pixels, you import an image into a document and then apply changes to it. As with vector drawing, your edits are 'non-destructive', which means they can be altered later. The options are more limited than in Photoshop-like programs, with less emphasis on the fine control that a professional retoucher would demand.

But the rest of us can get satisfying results relatively easily, partly thanks to Magic Bullet PhotoLooks 2, a collection of **plug-in** filters. The only catch is that using these tends to slow things down, which is particularly noticeable because in other respects Xara Photo & Graphic Designer feels exceptionally speedy. Where other apps might give you a preview before applying an operation, here most things happen straight away in the main window.

When you layer elements (whether image or vector) over each other, blending modes dictate how they are affected: simply covering what's below, darkening

it or altering its colour. Xara Photo & Graphic Designer has always handled this in its own non-standard way, but it's now adopted a similar system to Photoshop. The old modes still work in files created with earlier versions. Other additions include a spiral drawing tool, a Warp brush to distort objects, and the ability to import PDFs (even if they use fonts that aren't on your PC).

With its clunky import and export, lack of support for **raw** files from **DSLRs** and limited colour handling, Xara Photo & Graphic Designer isn't the best photo editor. As an all-round graphic-design package, though, it's very usable, not least thanks to a large collection of templates. You can download and use it as a trial version before deciding whether to buy a licence code, which can be used on two PCs at a time.

VERDICT: As long as you're not looking for professional image editing, this is a great all-round graphics program

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Serif PagePlus X9 £90
If you need full text-formatting controls for longer documents, opt for this desktop-publishing program



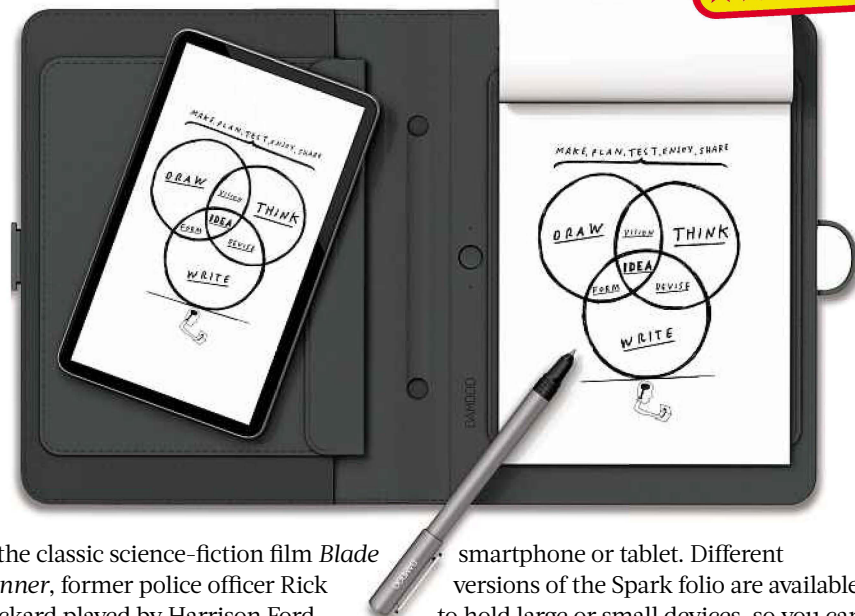
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 7, 8 or 10 • 300MB hard-drive space (15GB hard-drive space and 2GB memory for PhotoLooks) • Internet connection for installation
www.snipca.com/19281

SMART PEN | £103 from Amazon www.snipca.com/19286

Wacom Bamboo Spark

Write on paper, read on screen



In the classic science-fiction film *Blade Runner*, former police officer Rick Deckard played by Harrison Ford, pursues Rutger Hauer's rebel 'replicant' Roy Batty through a city of skyscrapers and spaceships.

We mention this because as we're writing the page you're reading now, the date on the clock in the corner of our screen is Roy Batty's date of birth (8 January 2016). It's disappointing that real-life cars still show no signs of flying and robots are barely smart enough to vacuum your living room, but maybe it's just as well if the rest of Ridley Scott's vision isn't coming to pass.

Even if we haven't got all the advances in technology we anticipated, there are some pretty striking inventions around today. One is electromagnetic resonance imaging. You might have encountered this in the form of a hospital MRI machine. Here's a gadget that puts it in a pen. It writes in standard ballpoint ink, but also interacts with the Spark folio case to detect anything you write or draw on the ordinary A5 paper pad that sits inside it.

Up to 100 pages can be stored inside the pen, but the idea is that you press a button in the middle of the case as you finish each page to send it to your

smartphone or tablet. Different versions of the Spark folio are available to hold large or small devices, so you can carry everything together, although this makes less sense for your phone, which you probably don't want to have to fish out of a folder every time it beeps.

It's very useful – as well as rather fun – to have your hand-drawn notes instantly available on your touchscreen, and you can use Evernote, Dropbox or Wacom's cloud service, to keep them to hand. The images show plenty of detail, but very fine strokes can disappear and the quoted 1,024 pressure levels aren't that subtle in practice, probably because of the thickness of paper between the pen and folio.

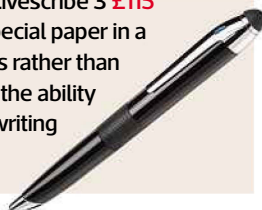
The A5 (half A4) size can feel restrictive, and any writing is only stored as a picture, not an editable text file. These limitations aside, the Spark is a clever accessory that would be at home in Rick Deckard's glove compartment.

VERDICT: The Spark works well, but other digital pens might suit you better if you don't like the idea of the folio case

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Livescribe 3 £115

This pen uses special paper in a choice of formats rather than a folio, and adds the ability to convert handwriting (roughly) to text



SPECIFICATIONS

Rechargeable pen and folio • Bluetooth 4.0 Smart • Folio 253x206x30mm (HxWxD) • 535g • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/19287

COMING SOON



SPRING 2016

Others are calling Samsung's Galaxy TabPro S the "tablet nobody expected", which is funny because we told you about it months ago (see Issue 463). The 12in-screen Windows 10 device will compete with Apple's iPad Pro.



SPRING 2016

Not to be confused with the HTC One M8, the Huawei Mate 8 represents another challenge to the big phone brands from an Asian company. The stylish phablet drew lots of attention at January's CES show in Vegas, but is likely to cost more than £500 when it arrives in the UK.



SPRING 2016

When Apple announced the oversized iPad Pro, it didn't mention an update to the iPad Air 2. March would be a likely time slot for an iPad Air 3. An obvious addition would be support for the iPad Pro's Pencil and waterproofing.



SUMMER 2016

We're going to see a lot of new all-in-one PCs in 2016. One to look out for in June is Lenovo's IdeaCentre AIO 510S. Behind an ultra-slim bezel you get a choice of **processors**, **storage** and **graphics cards** from \$699, which should mean £699.



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
3 Feb



Lenovo Yoga 700
The latest cute convertible with Windows 10



Asus Chromebit CS10
A PC on a stick for £90 – what's the catch?

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Buy It

Find out what other products we liked. Buy our 2014 **Back Issue CD** (now only £12.51*):
www.snipca.com/14981 *At time of press



Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus X555LA-XX290H
£367 from www.snipca.com/18151
Tested: Issue 446



Asus has made all the right choices with this budget Windows 8.1 laptop (which can be upgraded to Windows 10). Its comfortable keyboard, fast performance and bright screen are all the more impressive given its low price.

ALTERNATIVE: Asus Chromebook C200

A cheap Chrome OS ultra-portable laptop with a bright screen, lengthy battery life and a great keyboard.
£216 from www.snipca.com/17296

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Shockwave
£500 from www.snipca.com/18748
Tested: Issue 464



Proving that you don't need an Intel processor, Palicomp has built an excellent PC around AMD's Athlon X4 860K and Radeon R7 370 graphics card. Runs Windows 7, 8.1 or 10.

ALTERNATIVE: CCL Nebula 200i

A great all-round Intel i5 system in an attractive cube-shaped case.
£634 from www.snipca.com/18844

TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 4
£319 from www.snipca.com/18100
Tested: Issue 460



The 2015 update to Apple's 7.9in tablet greatly improves the screen and camera, boosts performance, and makes it worth the £100 extra over the iPad mini 2 (still a good budget buy). Go for the £399 64GB version if you can, though.

ALTERNATIVE: Apple iPad Air 2 The

9.7in option is still slim and light, also has Touch ID and Apple Pay, and the range of apps beats Android. **£399** from www.snipca.com/18139

PHONE

Apple iPhone 6s
£539 from www.snipca.com/18240
Tested: Issue 461



It may look like the 2014 model, but this update is stronger and faster, with a higher-resolution camera, time-saving 3D Touch features and an excellent screen. The bigger 6s Plus has better battery life.

ALTERNATIVE: Moto X Play

Motorola's fun phone may be plasticky, but it runs Android 5 smoothly. The screen, camera and battery life are all big pluses. **£280** from www.snipca.com/17934

DIGITAL CAMERA

Panasonic Lumix DMC-GF6
£330 from www.snipca.com/17548
Tested: Issue 405



This compact, interchangeable-lens camera is small and reasonably priced, yet it has well-designed controls, a wide range of available lenses and shoots excellent quality photos. The GF6 really is unbeatable value.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony A5000

A rival CSC with better low-light performance, although its controls and range of available lenses aren't quite as good. **£249** from www.snipca.com/15854

E-READER

Amazon Kindle Paperwhite
£110 from www.snipca.com/17776
Tested: Issue 458



With a new high-resolution screen, the affordable Kindle lacks only automatic brightness adjustment and page-turn buttons (you have to swipe the screen). It's great value as long as you're happy to buy your books from Amazon.

ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD

As good as the Paperwhite, but with more storage, and slightly more compact, this is the independent e-reader to pick. **£117** from www.snipca.com/19158

WARNING: MORE THAN JUST A PHONE CASE



THE SHIELDX2 REPAIR & REPLACEMENT PROMISE

If your phone breaks whilst in your ShieldX2 case, we will repair or replace your phone!*

Thin, sleek and transparent, you can barely tell that it is on the phone. We have cases available for new and old phones from all major brands. Our 12 month Repair or Replacement Promise combined with the shock absorbing ShieldX2 case means that your phone is protected from things such as:

- Cracked screen
- Water damage
- Mechanical failures

MORE THAN JUST A PHONE CASE. We have you covered!!!



DROP IT!



BANG IT!



SPLASH IT!



SMASH IT!



*Terms and Conditions apply

**Source: 1227 Quite Interesting Facts to Blow Your Socks Off



ShieldX2

shieldx2.co.uk

10% discount code - CA1510

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from www.snipca.com/17874

Tested: Issue 437



Kaspersky Internet Security 2016 has won our past seven antivirus tests. Compatible with Windows 10, the 2016 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-device licence, or buy a three-device licence for just £39.99 at www.snipca.com/17903.

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but sometimes blocked legitimate software. Free from www.snipca.com/16493

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6

£104 from www.snipca.com/16952

Tested: Issue 453



Lightroom is the professional's choice for managing and tweaking photos, including raw files from DSLR cameras. If you need Photoshop for more advanced editing, get both on the Adobe CC Photography Plan for £8.57 a month (www.snipca.com/19283)

ALTERNATIVE: Xara Photo & Graphic Designer 11

For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £50 from www.snipca.com/19280

SMART TV

Samsung UE40H5500

£397 from www.snipca.com/19160

Tested: Issue 446



A 40in smart TV with great picture quality and apps for all the terrestrial TV catch-up services. It has plenty of extras too, such as recording to USB storage, playing media files stored on a NAS or USB stick and plenty of HDMI ports.

ALTERNATIVE: Sony KDL-43W755C

Excellent image quality, stylish looks and a 43in screen. £460 from www.snipca.com/18153

PC MONITOR

Dell UltraSharp U2412M

£199 from www.snipca.com/15271

Tested: Issue 378



An exquisite monitor with superb image quality, an adjustable stand, a high resolution and even a built-in USB hub. It costs a little more than other monitors, but it's money well spent. It's easily the best value monitor we've seen and is the one by which all others are judged.

ALTERNATIVE: AOC i2360PHU

A good quality budget 23in monitor that's easily adjustable and has a built-in USB 2.0 hub too. £128 from www.snipca.com/16706

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£122 from www.snipca.com/15855

Tested: Issue 427



An incredibly fast 802.11ac router that's also one of the cheapest we've seen. It's superb and it's the router to buy if you're ready to make the jump to 802.11ac.

ALTERNATIVE: Linksys WRT1900AC

More expensive, but even faster and with loads of features too. £180 from www.snipca.com/14950

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j

£134 from www.snipca.com/16187

Tested: Issue 449



This two-drive NAS enclosure has it all – fast performance, easy configuration and plenty of extra features. Its only flaw is that installation is a little fiddly – but if you want quality network storage, then this is the obvious choice.

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j

A four-drive NAS that's generally fast, easy to set up and use. £253 from www.snipca.com/16707

HOMEPLUGS

Devolo dLAN 1200 Triple+ Starter Kit

£119 from www.snipca.com/15369

Tested: Issue 444



Devolo's latest HomePlug adapters are the fastest we've ever seen. They're also well designed too, with a passthrough socket so you can still power another device and the design should avoid skirting boards and other obstacles.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link PowerLine AV2 1000HD Gigabit Starter Kit Fast (speeds of up to 1000Mbps), much cheaper and very easy to set up, but the lack of a passthrough socket is frustrating. £43 from www.snipca.com/17836

WEB-DESIGN

Xara Web Designer Premium 11

£70 from www.snipca.com/16955

Tested: Issue 453



This visual web-design program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be 'responsive', meaning they look right on both big and small screens without extra work. A basic version is also available for half the price.

ALTERNATIVE: Serif WebPlus X8 Comes with lots of templates, but creates separate desktop and mobile versions instead of responsive sites, and can be slow to use. £90 from www.snipca.com/14964

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 5 MAGIX Rescue Your Videotapes 8 software



The eighth version of MAGIX's Rescue Your Videotapes software includes a new video converter and now supports all analogue video sources and DV tapes. It comes with a full set of accessories, including a SCART cable for connecting to your PC. With one-click controls and easy-to-follow tutorials, it remains the simplest way to digitise your videos. To enter, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk with 'rescue' in the subject line by midnight 2 February.

MAGIX Rescue Your Videotapes 8 is available to buy now priced £59.99. For more information visit www.magix.com/gb, follow @MAGIX_INT on Twitter and 'like' www.facebook.com/MAGIX.

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

Canon Pixma MG6650

£76 from www.snipca.com/17334

Tested: Issue 455



It may look like something that James Bond would have to defuse, but this low-cost, all-in-one printer is an excellent choice. Running costs are reasonable too – buy the XL cartridges and running costs work out at 7.7p per colour page or 2.4p for black and white. This makes it very affordable to run.

ALTERNATIVE: Canon Pixma MX495 It's slow, and black ink is pricey, but this cheaper MFP has a paper feeder and fax too. £41 from www.snipca.com/17174

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB

£325 from www.snipca.com/19159

Tested: Issue 445



A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying a SSD because of the cost, then now is finally the time to take the plunge.

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung 850 Pro 256GB An even faster SSD, but it is much more expensive per gigabyte. £110 from www.snipca.com/16498

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£135 from www.snipca.com/11646

Tested: Issue 420



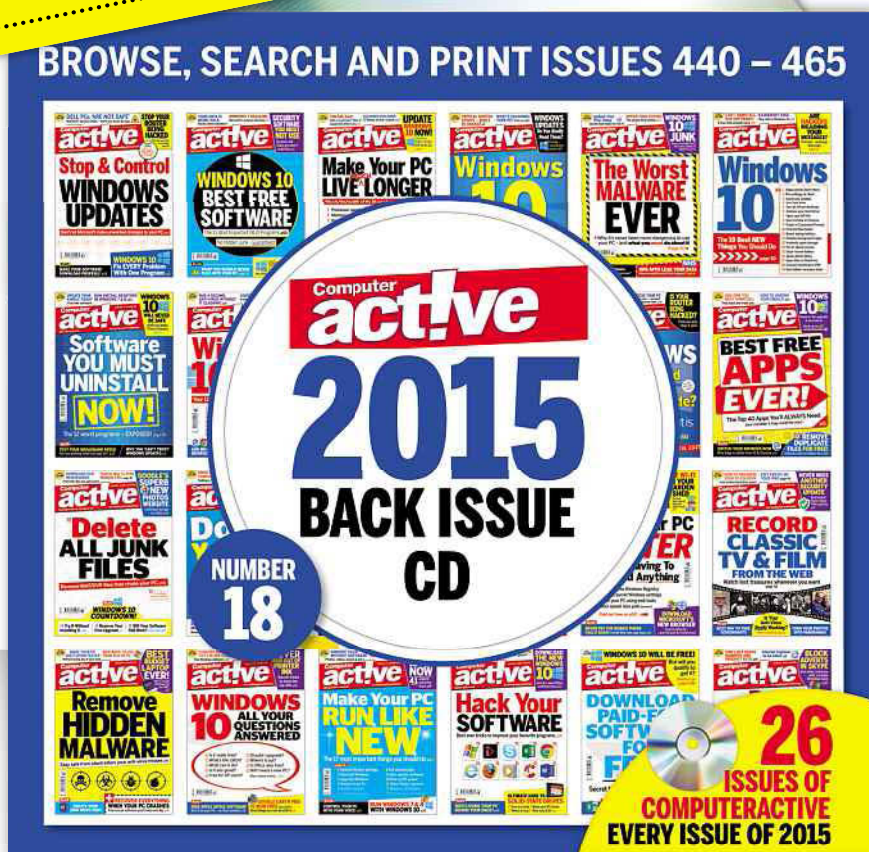
A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £88 from www.snipca.com/15275

2015 Back Issue CD

COMING SOON!

BROWSE, SEARCH AND PRINT ISSUES 440 – 465



Our 2015 Back Issue CD containing all 26 issues
from last year will be on sale soon.
For more information visit www.snipca.com/19124

You can still buy our 2014 CD at www.snipca.com/14981

Workshops & Tips

Edited by Sherwin Coelho

PULL OUT
& KEEP
Issue 467

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

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48 Secret Tips For... IObit Uninstaller

Use the best alternative to Windows Explorer

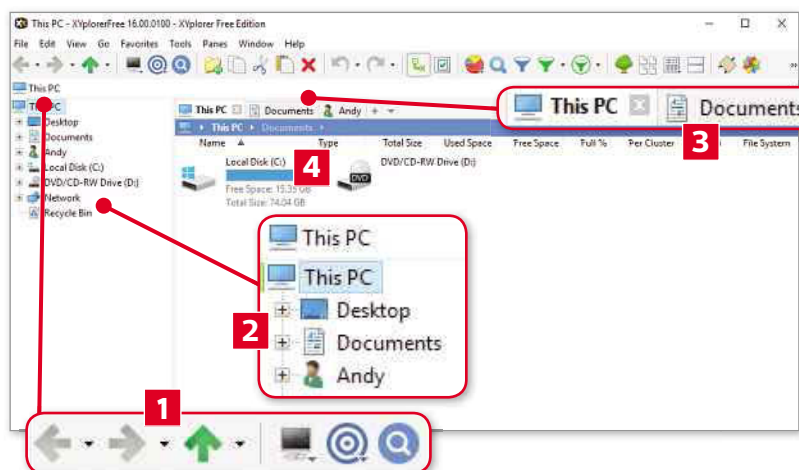
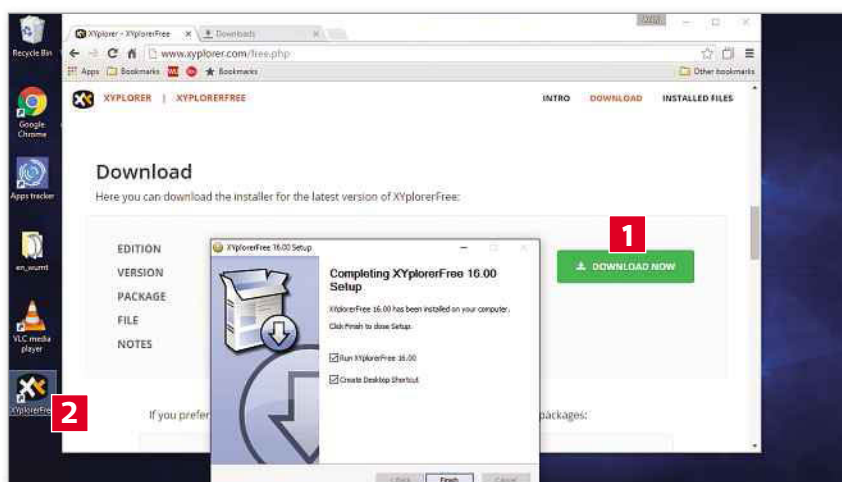
What you need: Any version of Windows (XP to 10) **Time required:** 20 mins

Windows Explorer (renamed File Explorer in Windows 10) is a handy tool for organising the files on your PC. However, there are free alternatives that are better, such as the brilliant XYplorer.

It has lots of extra options and can be run alongside Explorer, so you can switch between the two as and when you want. However, once you've given it a try, we doubt you'll look back.

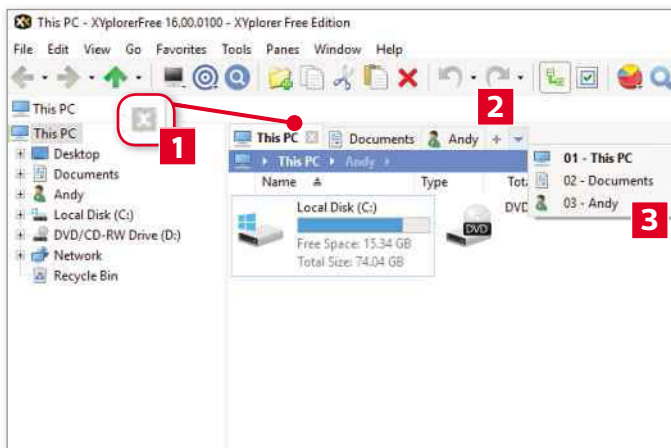


STEP 1 Go to www.xyplorer.com/free.php and scroll down to the Download section. Click the Download Now button **1** to download the installer. Open the zip file and save the .exe file to your Desktop. Double-click the file to start the installation. By default, it installs to the Program Files folder (you can choose an alternative location). You have the option to create a Desktop icon **2**.

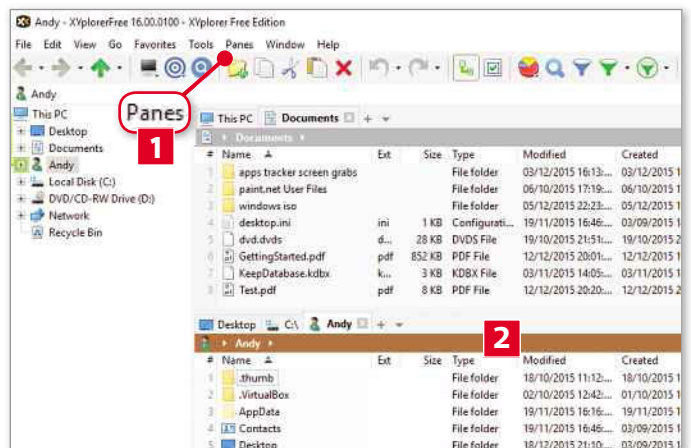


STEP 2 When you first open the program, you'll see it looks similar to Windows Explorer. There is a menu under the title bar and a row of icons below that **1**. A tree structure on the left helps you navigate around your PC. Click a location to open it in the main screen on the right, or click on the '+' symbols to see sub-folders **2**. The main window has tabs at the top, a breadcrumb trail that shows you where you are in the folder hierarchy **3**, and a view of the current folder's contents **4**.

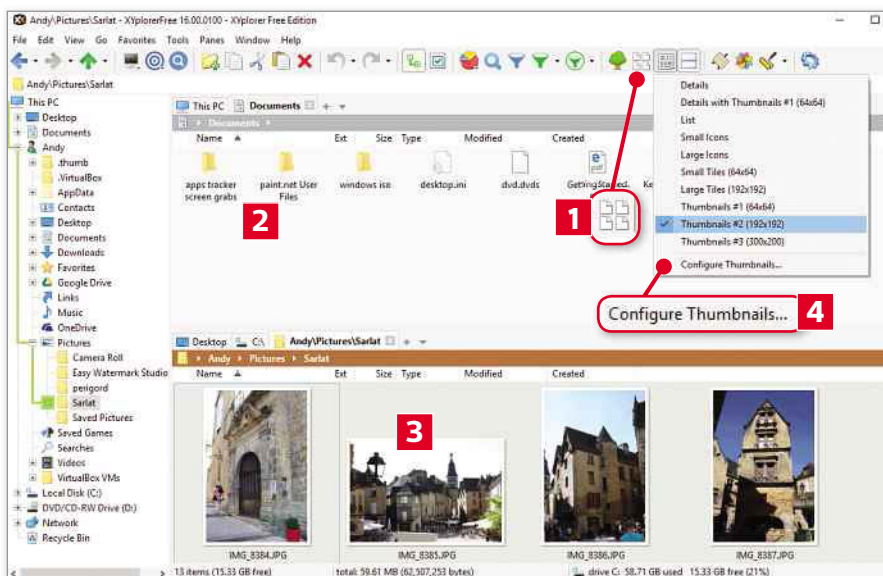
Workshops



STEP 3 Handily, you can have multiple tabs open within the same window. Click a tab to switch to it and click its 'x' symbol to close it **1**. The '+' symbol **2** lets you open a new tab. The dropdown menu at the end displays a list of open tabs **3**. On your keyboard you can press the number of the tab you want to jump to. One of the best things about the tabs is that they are saved from one session to the next, so you can return to where you left off, even if you've shut down and restarted Windows in the meantime.

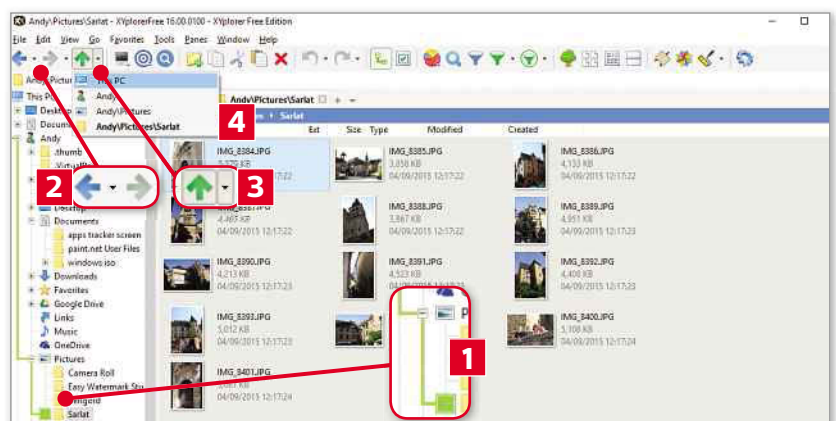


STEP 4 Open the Panels menu **1** and select Dual Pane (or press the F10 button on your keyboard). This splits the main window into two, opening new tabs in the one below **2**. This is extremely useful when you need to copy files from one place to another by simply dragging and dropping them to the other pane. You can also drag and drop tabs, repositioning them in the same pane or dragging them across to the new pane.

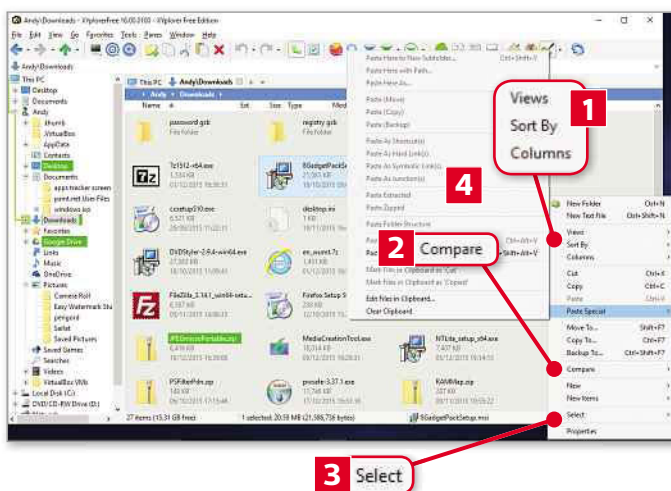


STEP 5 You can change the way the contents of each panel and tab are displayed, with lots more options than are available in Explorer. Click the Views button **1** and choose an option from the dropdown menu. In our screenshot the top panel shows Large Icons **2** and the lower panel shows Thumbnails #2 **3**. Click the Configure Thumbnails option **4** and you'll see a screen where you can define the size of the thumbnails and set further options, such as whether you want thumbnails to be **cached** (saved) to the hard drive for speed, or created each time you visit a folder to save space. Selecting the former will make thumbnails appear faster.

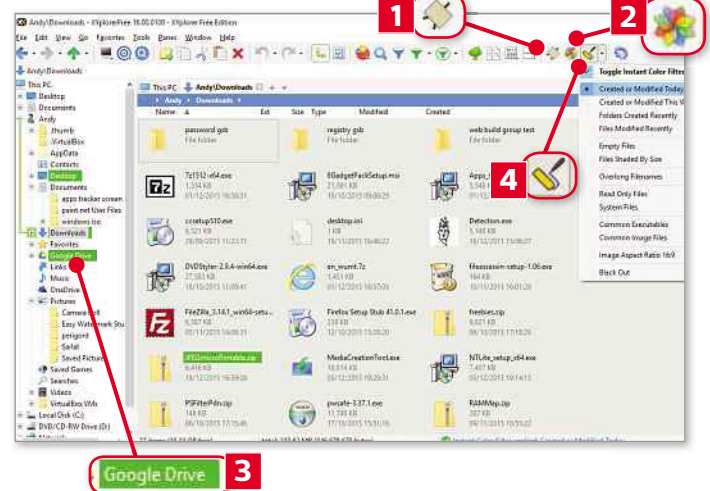
STEP 6 The tree-menu column on the left shows exactly where you are in the map of folders and storage devices. The green line **1** follows the trail you've taken through your folders, representing the one you're currently viewing with a green square. The left and right arrows **2** will take you back and forwards through your file-browsing history, while the up arrow **3** takes you back through your folders in the drive you're navigating, (all the way back to This PC). You can use the drop-down arrows to skip straight to a folder in the list **4**.



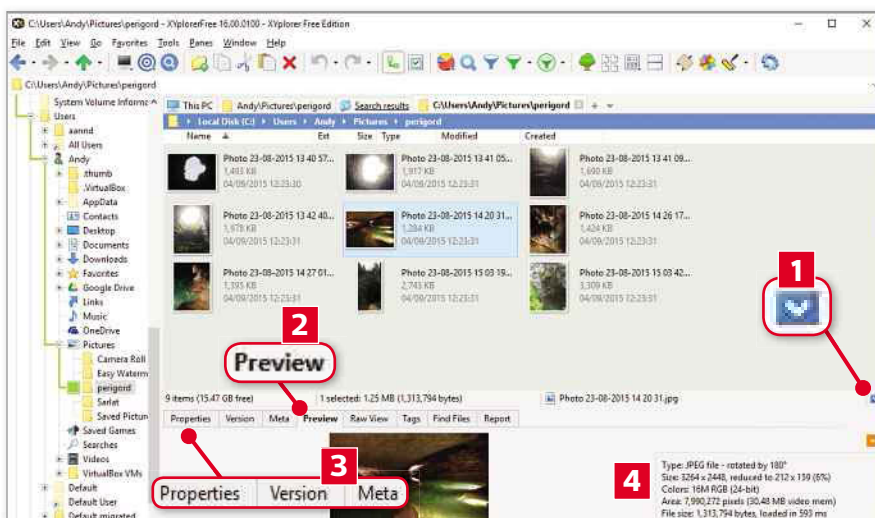
Use the best alternative to Windows Explorer



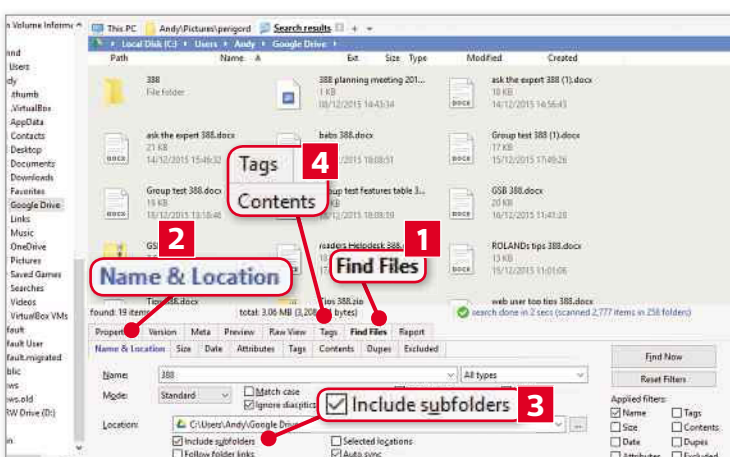
STEP 7 Right-click a file, folder or blank space in the main window and you'll see a context menu, which is far more comprehensive than Windows Explorer's version. You can change how you view and sort items **1**, compare two files **2** and select items using special filters **3**. The Paste Special menu **4** lets you do interesting things with the last item you copied to the clipboard, such as making a new file from a clipped image, inserting an item into a new folder and sending it straight to an editing program.



STEP 8 The Floating Preview button **1** opens a large preview window, which is great for browsing through a folder of photos (use your left and right cursor keys to flick through them). The Enable Color Filters button **2** will highlight certain files and folders in green **3**. By default, this is set to files and folders that have changed today, but you can choose a different option from the dropdown menu next to the Toggle Instant Color Filter button **4**.



STEP 9 Click the Toggle Info Panel button **1**, which sits in the bottom right corner of the screen when the panel is closed. Select a file in the window above and the Info Panel will display a wealth of information about it. If you're flicking through images the Preview tab **2** is useful, as it doesn't just show you a larger thumbnail of the image, but also has size, date taken and other useful information. Properties, Version and Meta **3** hold more information about the file, while Tags **4** lets you add your own tags, which you can use to organise and filter your files.



STEP 10 Click the Find Files tab **1** to access XYplorer's powerful search tool. A number of extra tabs are created below this so you can carry out the relevant type of search, based on what you know about the file you're looking for. Under Name & Location **2** XYplorer will look for any files containing the text you type in their names. You can limit the location if you know where things are, and tick the box to include subfolders **3**. For more nuanced searches, try the Contents tab or the Tags tabs **4** if you know what's in the file or have labelled it previously. **5**

Install Windows 10 without unwanted extras

What you need: NTLite; Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 10

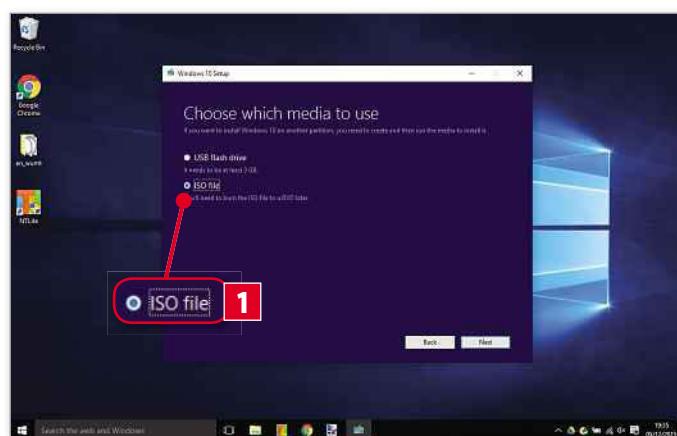
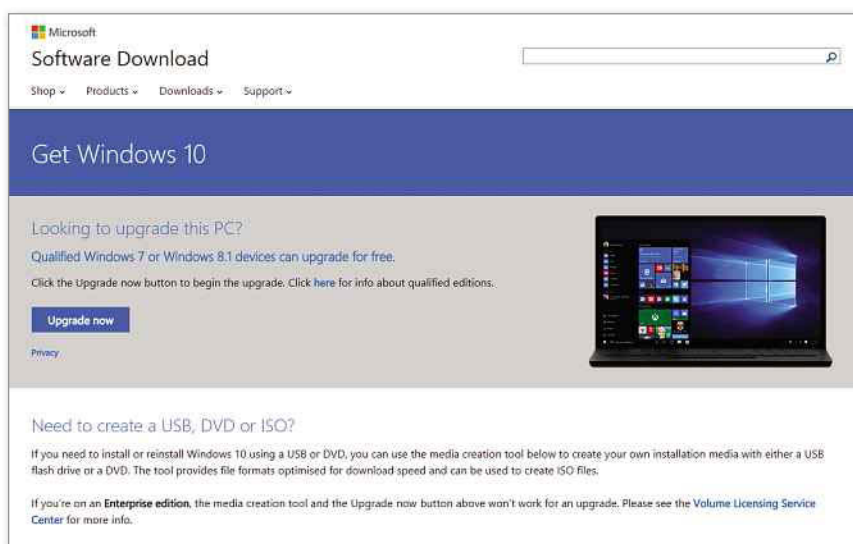
Time required: 40 minutes

Installing Windows can take a while because it's a huge operating system with lots of components. However, most people don't need everything that's installed by default. If you plan to install a new (or reinstall your current) version of Windows, the free tool NTLite lets you

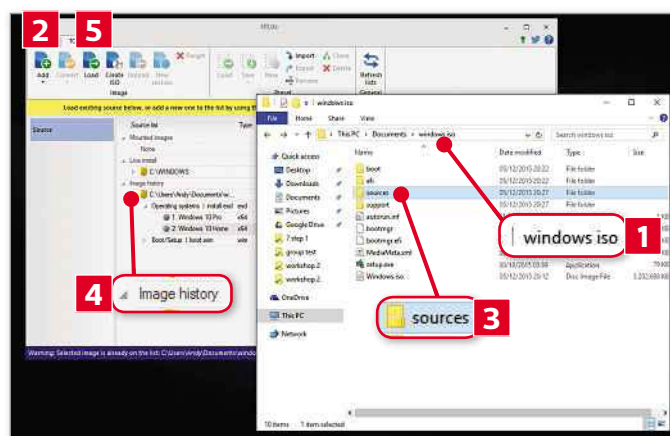
cut out all those unwanted extras and speed up the installation process. The latest version of the software lets you create installation discs for Windows 7, 8 and 10. We'll show you how to make one for Windows 10, but it works exactly the same for other versions.



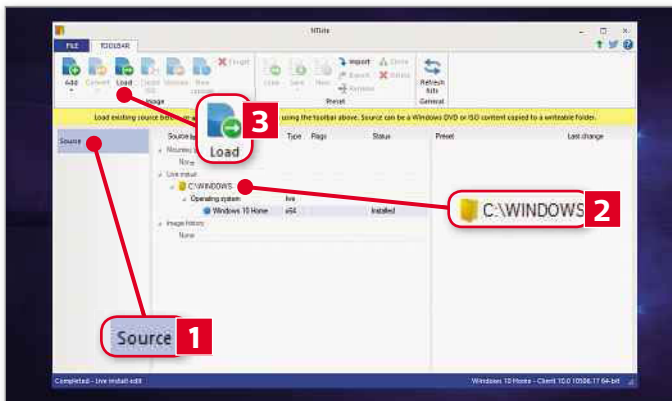
STEP 1 To download NTLite go to www.ntlite.com/download and choose the appropriate version for your PC (32bit or 64bit). You will also need the Windows 10 media creation tool (www.snipca.com/19114). Note: if you're already running Windows 10, this tool may prevent you from rolling back to your previous operating system (OS). Therefore, only run it if you're sure you're ready to stick with Windows 10 permanently. If you've already got Windows 10 set up how you like it, go to Step 4.



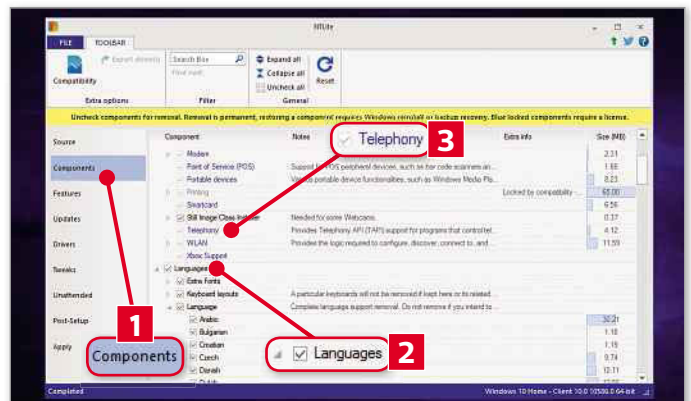
STEP 2 Run the 'media creation tool', select 'Create installation media for another PC', then click Next. Click Next again to set your OS version and language (you can change the default options by unticking 'Use recommended options for this PC'). On the next page, select where to save the disk image – to your PC or a USB drive. The process will be faster if you work from your PC's hard drive, so choose 'ISO file' **1**, then choose where you want to save it on your hard drive. The ISO file download could take some time.



STEP 3 Once the creation tool has saved your ISO, you need to unpack its contents. Double-click the downloaded ISO file in File Explorer. Select everything (Ctrl+A) within the folder and copy it (Ctrl+C, then Ctrl+V) to a new folder (name it 'windows iso') **1**. Open NTLite and click the Add button **2**. Select the unpacked ISO's 'sources' folder **3**, then click OK and the available versions of Windows will appear in NTLite under 'Image history' **4**. Select the one you want then click the Load button **5**.

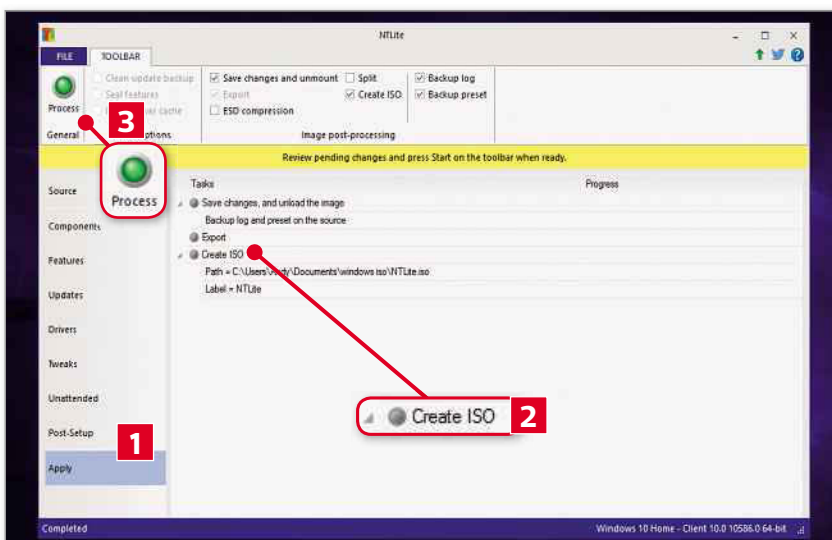
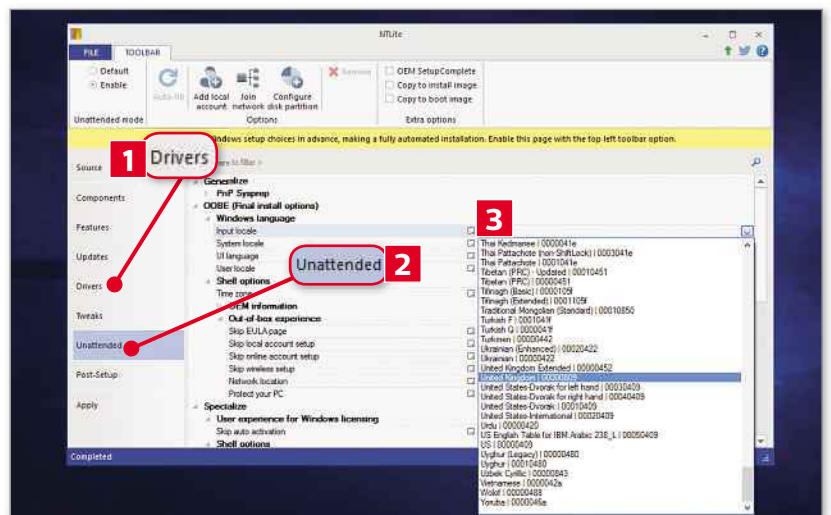


STEP 4 If you've already got Windows 10 installed, you won't need to download an ISO file. Instead you can use NTLite to create one from your existing OS and customise it. Click the Source tab **1**, and in the 'Live install' section click the arrow next to C:\WINDOWS **2**. Select the Windows 10 option then click the Load button **3**.



STEP 5 It will take a few minutes to load your Windows version, but once it's done you'll see a list of options in the menu on the left hand side. Click the Components tab **1**. Here you can remove things you don't need, such as extra languages **2**. In the free version you can remove any item that's coloured black. To remove blue-coloured options **3**, you'll need to buy an NTLite Home licence, available from www.ntlite.com/shop for \$45 (around £30).

STEP 6 Go through the remaining options in the left-hand menu. For example, if you have drivers that need updating – for your printer or **graphics card**, say – click the Drivers tab **1** then the Add button. The Unattended tab **2** lets you fill in answers **3** to the questions Windows poses during setup. NTLite will then insert your answers automatically as you install, so you don't have to be there to do it manually.



STEP 7 When you've finished, click the Apply tab **1**. Tick the option to Create ISO **2**, and you'll be asked to choose a file name and a location for the file. Next, click the Process button **3** then click Yes. Once the ISO file has been created, you can right-click it and choose 'Burn disc image' to write it to a DVD. NTLite suggests you test the installation ISO it creates in a virtual PC tool such as VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org) to make sure it works, before you rely on it to rebuild a real PC. ●

Edit PDFs in Windows 10

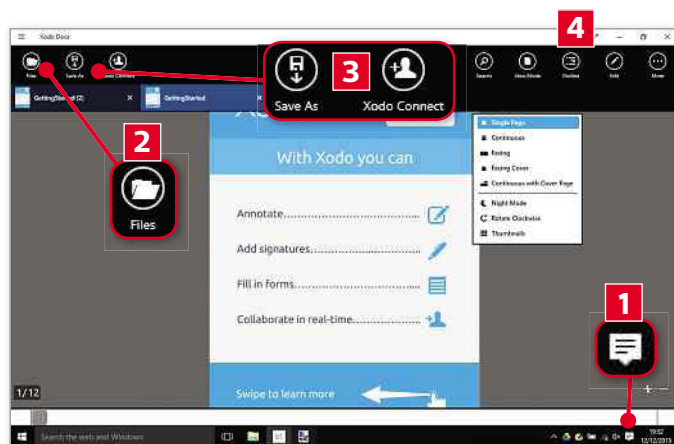
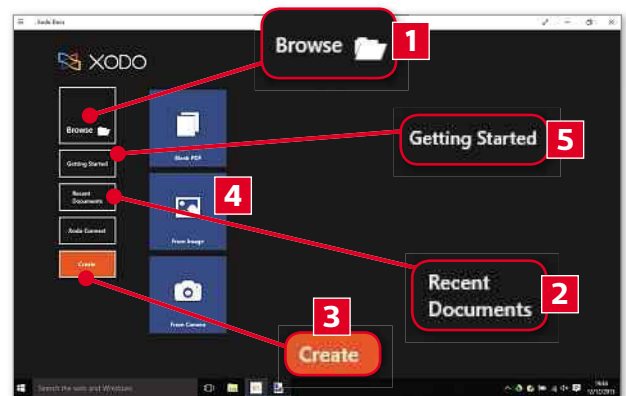
What you need: Xodo PDF Reader; Windows 10 **Time required:** 20 minutes

Adobe Reader is the software most people use to view PDFs, but it's bulky and lacks editing tools. A good, free alternative is Xodo. It offers a range of platforms, including a **web app** (which works on any device and doesn't need installing), a browser **add-on** for

Chrome (works in any version of Windows), and mobile apps for iOS and Android. Here we're using the excellent Windows 10 Desktop app, which we recommended in our Windows 10 Best Free Software Cover Feature in Issue 463.

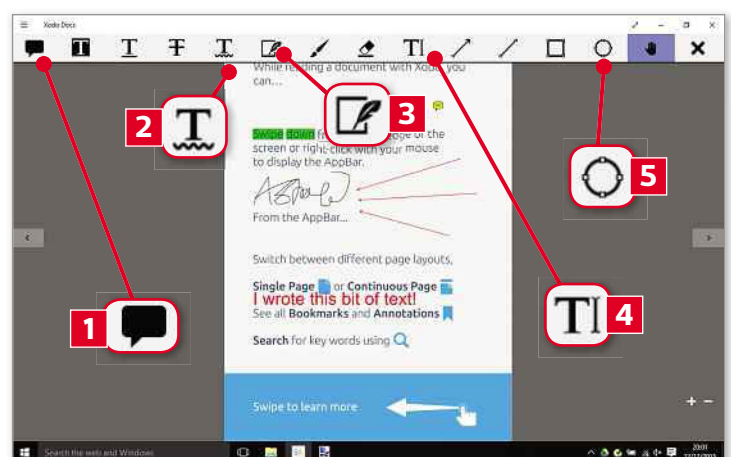


STEP 1 Go to the Windows Store at www.snipca.com/19121 and click the 'Get the app' button. The app will download and you can access it by typing **xodo** in the search box – it appears as Xodo Docs. Right-click this and pin it to your Start menu for easy access. When it's loaded you can choose to Browse existing PDFs **1**, select from Recent Documents **2** or create a new document **3**, either from a blank file or a photo **4**. For now, click Getting Started **5** to experiment with a sample file.

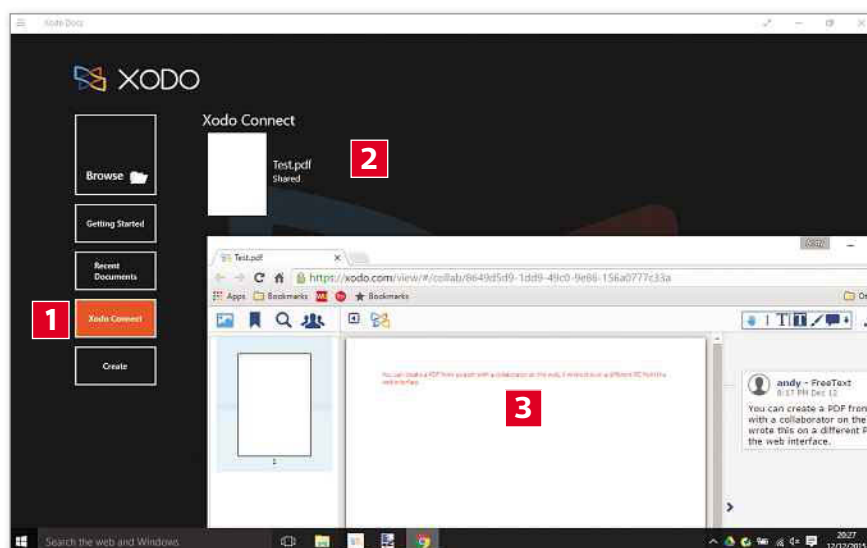
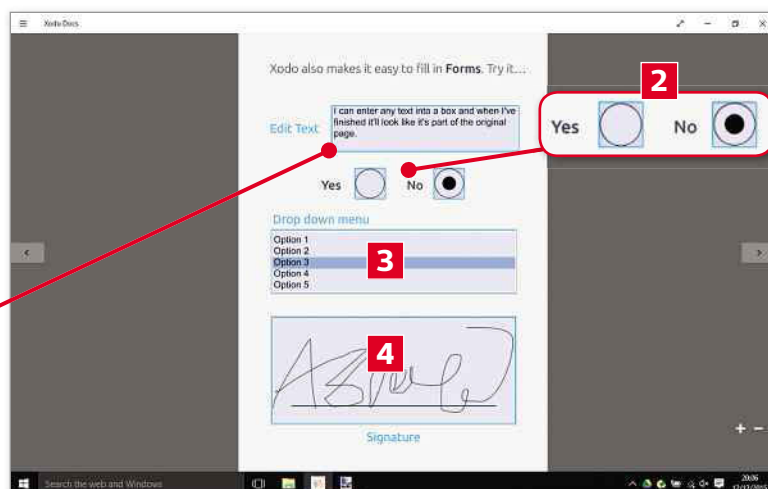
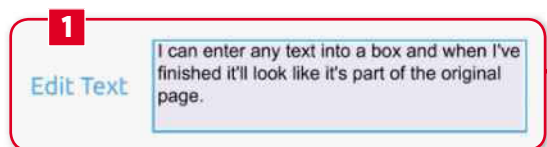


STEP 2 Click the Menu button **1** to access Print and Share tools, and right-click anywhere on the screen to reveal the command options. Files **2** takes you back to the screen in Step 1, and there are options to save changes and collaborate **3**. On the right you'll see options to Search, change the View Mode, see an Outline and Edit **4**.

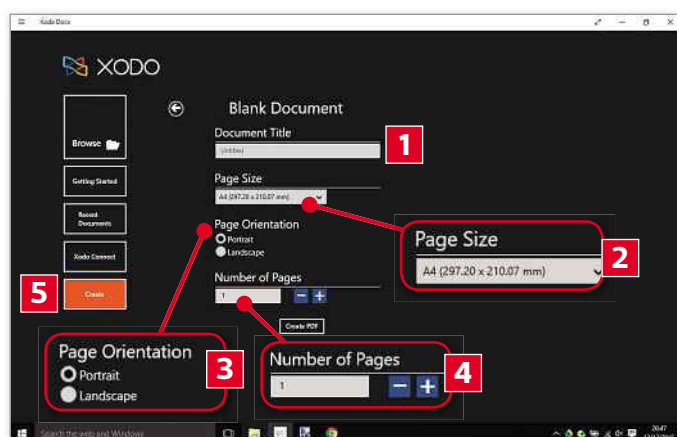
STEP 3 Right-click the screen and click the Edit button. A selection of editing tools will appear at the top of the screen. Whenever you make changes you'll be prompted to save them as a new file. You can't overwrite an original document, so click Save As. You can add annotations (as speech balloons) **1**, make style changes to the text **2**, add your own signature **3**, insert new text **4** or add a variety of shapes and freehand drawings **5**. Click the cross to close the Edit bar.



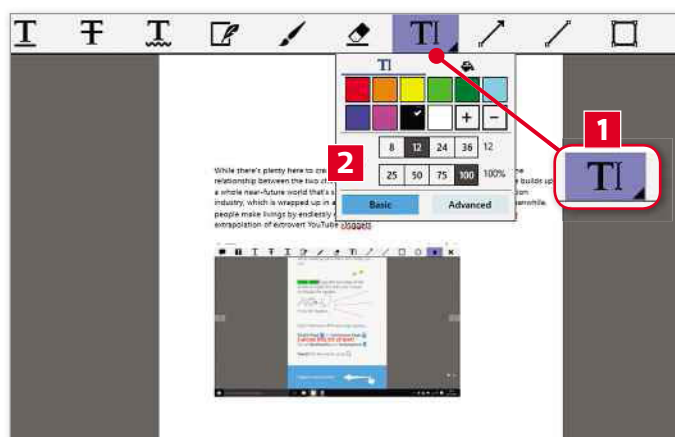
STEP 4 Assuming a PDF has been set up correctly, you can use Xodo to fill it out. Click a text box **1** and type the text you want. Click anywhere outside the box, and your text will be saved. You can also enter answers by clicking option buttons **2** and dropdown menus **3**, and insert your signature **4**.



STEP 5 Right-click the screen again and choose Xodo Connect. This will let you collaborate on a PDF with other people. Your collaborators can work via the web interface without having to sign in. Xodo will ask you for your email address and those of your collaborators. They'll receive an email with a web link to the PDF. To view the changes they make you need to view the PDF online. To do this, right-click the screen, select Xodo Connect **1** and choose the file you're sharing **2**. You may need to right-click again and select 'Open in Web Browser' – this will open the document in the web app **3**.



STEP 6 To create a new PDF from scratch, right-click and choose Files to return to the first screen (see Step 1). Click Create and choose Blank PDF. Give the document a name **1**, select its print size **2**, the orientation **3** and the number of pages **4**. Click the Create PDF button **5** and you'll see a blank page. You can use the editing tools outlined in Step 3 to create your PDF.



STEP 7 The easiest way to add text and images to a new PDF is to cut and paste them from other programs. To do this, find the text or image you want to include and copy it by selecting it and pressing Ctrl+C. Return to your PDF and click the text-cursor button **1**, choose your font size and colour **2**, then click on the document where you want the top-left corner of the pasted section to sit. Press Ctrl+V to paste your copied content into the PDF. ●

Find the meaning of words in one click

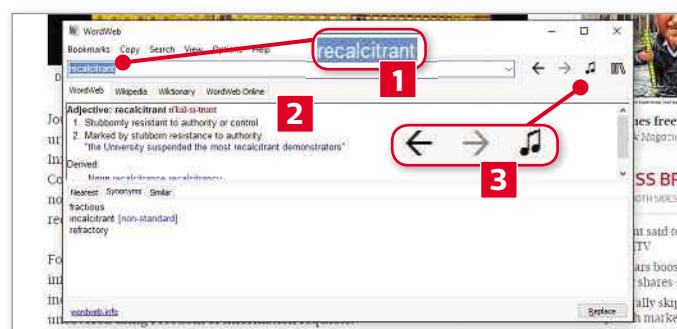
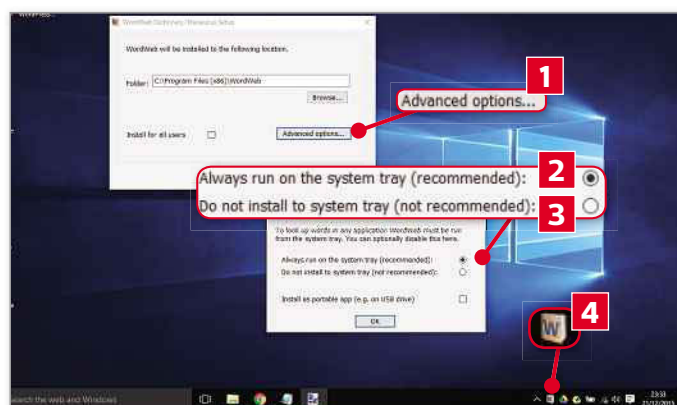
What you need: Any version of Windows (XP to 10) **Time required:** 10 mins

While word-processor software like Microsoft Word have spell-checking tools, few programs have built-in dictionaries. WordWeb Free is a superb dictionary program that runs in the background, ready to

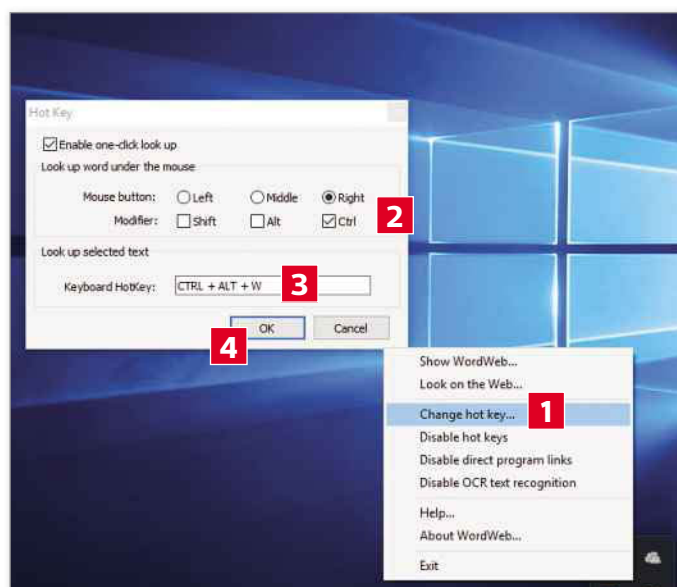
look up words whatever software you're using. Simply hover your mouse over the relevant word and a definition is only a click away. Version 8 of Word Web adds thousands of new definitions and has been updated for Windows 10.



STEP 1 Download the free version of the WordWeb software from wordweb.info. During installation, click the 'Advanced options' button **1**. The default setting runs the software in the background as soon as you start Windows **2**, which is useful if you always want to keep the dictionary to hand. Choose the alternative 'not recommended' option **3** if you'd prefer to run it as and when you need it. Once it's running, an icon will sit in the notification area **4** – click this to open the dictionary or right-click it to access its menu of extra options.



STEP 2 As long as the software is running in the notification area, you can hover your mouse over any word you want to look up, then hold down the Ctrl key and right-click. Alternatively, highlight the word or double-click it. Next, press Ctrl+Alt+W to see the word in the top bar **1**, with definitions below **2**. Synonyms for the word are listed below these – simply double-click one to see its definition. Click the musical-note icon to hear the word pronounced and use the back and forward buttons to navigate through previous words you've looked up **3**.



STEP 3 If you'd like to change the key combination from Ctrl+Alt+W, click the Options menu and choose HotKey, or right-click the icon in the notification area and select 'Change hot key' **1**. Select which mouse button you want to perform the action and which modifier key(s) you want to use (Shift, Alt or Ctrl **2**). Next, click in the Keyboard HotKey field **3** and type the letter you want to use in combination with the modifier(s). It will automatically add the modifier keys you selected to create your key combination. Click OK **4**.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
3 Feb

- Clone a hard drive in Windows 10
- Compress over 180 file types
- Defrag your PC faster than ever
- Add new tools to Windows Clipboard

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TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Improve the sound levels on your PC

It was with a heavy heart that I recently said goodbye to my trusty old Windows XP PC and replaced it with a Windows 10 machine. Because it was the first time I'd bought a new PC in almost a decade, I decided I would splash out and opted for an expensive, high-specification desktop computer.

However, one thing I forgot to check was the audio output. While watching a downloaded film on my PC, I realised that dialogue between characters was fairly muted while other sounds (gunfire, bombs and car chases) were extremely loud. After searching online, I realised this is a common problem with PCs. Thankfully, it can be easily



remedied by normalising the sound levels within Windows.

To do this, right-click the speaker icon at the bottom right of your screen, click 'Playback devices', select Speakers, then click the Properties button at the

bottom right. Next, click the Enhancements tab, then Loudness Equalization.

As well as downloaded films, I watch DVDs using 'VLC media player' (www.snipca.com/19204). This program has its own normalisation settings, but you do need to activate them. To do that, click Tools at the top, then click Preferences. Now select All in the 'Show settings' field at the bottom left. You'll see sections on the left with various options. Click Filters in the Audio section, then tick 'Volume normalizer' and click Save at the bottom.

Jeremy Cordell



The winner of every Tip of the Fortnight wins this exclusive Computeractive mug!



SCREEN RECORDING

Record your screen activity using keyboard shortcuts

In Issue 463's Make Windows Better, you covered a free program called Screen Recorder (www.snipca.com/19200) that lets you record whatever you do on your PC as a video. After using the program a few times, I found a number of useful features.

For example, it has a list of default hotkeys (keyboard shortcuts) that let you take screenshots and record your screen as a video. These hotkeys are easy to modify so you can create ones that suit you best. Click Settings at the bottom right of the program, then click the Hotkeys tab to see a list of them. To create your own, simply click a hotkey to delete it, then press the key combinations you want to use for that particular task (see screenshot above).

I have loads of icons on my Desktop, which makes for a cluttered screen recording. But you can hide all your Desktop icons when you're making a recording by clicking the Recording tab, then ticking Watermark. By default, all your screenshots and recordings are saved to your Desktop. To save them elsewhere, click the 'Save to' tab, click the folder icon, then choose where you want to save to on your PC. Click Save Settings to apply these changes.

Ed White

VIRTUALISATION

Stop VirtualBox hijacking your keyboard

In Issue 465's Readers' Tips, Brian Day provided a useful tip for accessing an external device (such as a USB stick) on a second operating system running within VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org). However, after following his instructions (ticking the options under USB), I found I couldn't use my keyboard on my host PC with VirtualBox open. So I checked the tip again and realised where I'd gone wrong.



Brian explained that in order to access any USB drives connected to your PC when using VirtualBox, you first need to launch the relevant operating system within VirtualBox. Then you need to click Devices at the top left of the virtualisation program, move your cursor to USB, then click to select the USB devices connected to your PC (see screenshot below left). My mistake was to select my keyboard (which appears as a USB option in this list). This locked my keyboard to the virtual drive. To regain keyboard control over your host PC, simply untick your keyboard within the USB list.

Derek Fahey

WEBSITE

Find out how long it will take to read a book

Being a slow reader, I tend to stay away from lengthy novels. The other day I came across this very helpful website called 'How Long to Read' (www.howlongtoreadthis.com). You search for, then select the book you're thinking of reading. You'll see the book's synopsis on the right with a Start Reading Speed Timer button. Click the button to begin the timer, read the synopsis at your normal speed, then click the timer again when you've finished. Based on how fast you read the synopsis, you'll see an estimate of how long it'll take you to read the book.

Dorothy Storer

Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

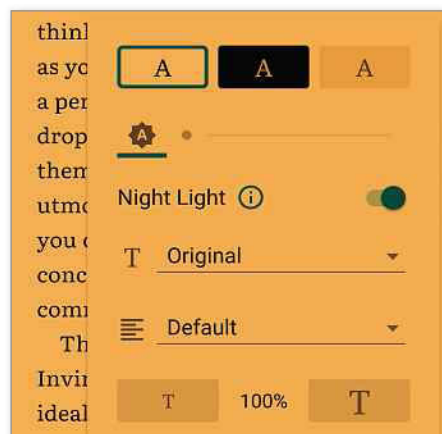
ANDROID & iOS

Reduce eye strain when reading ebooks at night



By default, your device's brightness is set to automatically adjust according to the light levels. However, this isn't ideal when reading on your device at night because it can cause eye strain, keeping you awake longer when you then try to sleep. Google recently introduced to its Play Books app a reading mode called Night Light. This changes your device's background colour to amber (with black text).

To activate this mode, open Google Play Books (Android www.snipca.com/19235; iOS www.snipca.com/19236), then tap one of your downloaded titles to open it. Next, tap any page, tap the A icon at the top right, then tap the Night Light slider to turn it on (see screenshot below). Your



screen will take on an amber hue, which is ideal for reading in low light.

ANDROID & iOS

Take advantage of exclusive Google Chromecast offers



Google has added an Offers section to its Chromecast app, letting you easily find exclusive offers. You obviously need to own a Chromecast. Connect this to your TV and ensure your TV's HDMI input is set to that used by your Chromecast.

Now open the Chromecast app on your device (Android www.snipca.com/19237; iOS www.snipca.com/19238), tap the three lines at the top left, then tap the Offers section. The offers change regularly but – at the time of writing – there were four: a two-month free NOW TV pass, Spotify Premium free for 90 days, free Google Play Music for 90 days and a free film rental from the Play Store. Tap the offer you want, then log in to your Gmail account to use it.

ANDROID & iOS

Take 3D photos on your device



'Fyuse - 3D Photos' is a brilliant free app that lets you take a short video of any object then convert it into a 3D image.

Open the app (Android www.snipca.com/19239; iOS www.snipca.com/19240), tap 'Sign up with e-mail',



create a username and password, enter your email address, then tap 'Sign up' again. You'll see tiles representing various 3D images uploaded by other users. Tap to open any image, then move your device left or right to see it from different angles.

To make your own 3D image, tap the camera icon at the bottom, swipe across the instructions screen, then tap 'I'm Ready to Record'. The icons at the top let you turn on your device's torch and

Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

Pocket Casts

£2.99

Android, iOS & Windows Phone:

www.snipca.com/19206

New to Windows Phone, Pocket Casts features more than 200,000 podcasts. You can set it to download new episodes overnight, back up your podcasts to the cloud and receive notifications about your favourites. You can also organise your podcasts by name or release date.



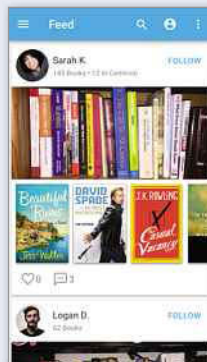
Shelfie

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/19207

iOS: www.snipca.com/19208

Open this handy app, take a photo of any book that you come across, and if the title is available as an ebook or audiobook, you'll see options to download for free or buy it on your device. The app offers a huge selection of free and discounted ebooks and audiobooks.



Storehouse

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/19210

iOS: www.snipca.com/19211

New to Android, Storehouse lets you create collages on your device using your photos and videos. You can customise your photos and videos using a variety of layouts and editing tools; drag and drop to rearrange the elements; and add text to give your collage a personal touch.



record using your front camera (see screenshot left). When you're ready, tap and hold the red 'Press & Hold' button at the bottom of your device, then move your camera slowly around the object. Release the button when you've finished recording. Tap the thumbnail icon at the bottom right to view your 3D image.

The first time you do this you'll see several lines and dots on your video. Don't worry, this is just the app converting your recording into a 3D image. Once the lines and dots disappear, you can move your device to view your image.

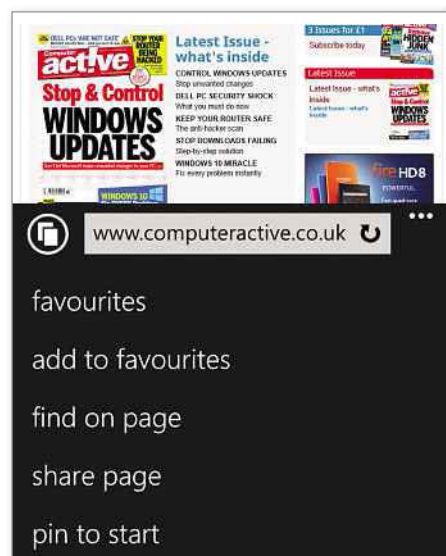
WINDOWS PHONE

Quickly access your favourite websites



There are two great ways you can keep websites you visit regularly in Internet Explorer (IE) within easy reach. The first involves saving sites to IE's Favourites section. To do this, open IE and navigate to the website you want by typing its address in the URL/search field below (for example, www.bbc.co.uk). To add this website to your list of favourites, tap the three dots at the bottom right of IE, then tap 'add to favourites' (see screenshot below). Repeat this process to add the other websites. To access the websites you've saved, simply open IE, tap the same three dots, then tap 'favourites'.

An even better option is to add the website as a tile to your phone's start screen. To do this, navigate to the website in IE, tap the three dots at the bottom right, then tap 'pin to start' (see



screenshot below left). You'll now see the website's tile on your start screen. Tap and hold it until the other app tiles become blurry. Now click and drag the website tile to reposition it wherever you want on your start screen.

IOS

Use Apple's new wallpapers



iOS 9.1 added new wallpapers (including shots of Mars, Jupiter and Neptune, various plants and several desert scenes). To set one of these as your device's wallpaper, go to Settings, Wallpaper, Choose New Wallpaper, then tap Stills. You'll see the new wallpaper options. Tap to select the one you want. At the bottom you'll see options to set this as your lock screen image, home screen image or as wallpaper for both.

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Our new 148-page book tells you everything you need to know about Android, including the best apps and tips for the Lollipop and Marshmallow updates.



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at www.snipca.com/18829

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Dr Panda Firefighters

£2.29 www.snipca.com/19212 (Android)

£2.29 www.snipca.com/19213 (iOS)

In this new game your toddler helps Dr Panda and his friends put out fires by completing several simple tasks. For example, they'll need to steer the fire engine by tapping left or right then put out fires by tapping to direct the hose.



AGES 6-10

Piano Tiles 2

Free www.snipca.com/19214 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/19215 (iOS)

Piano Tiles 2 starts off simply enough but soon becomes quite challenging. You need to tap only the black tiles as multi-coloured tiles fall from the top of your screen. As you improve, the speed of the falling tiles gradually increases.



AGES 11-16

Flight Pilot Simulator 3D*

Free www.snipca.com/19216 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/19258 (iOS)

This simulator game will teach your teenager to take off, fly and land a plane. As they improve, they can take on a number of tasks, which include rescue missions, landing in rough weather and racing other aircraft. They can win virtual currency to upgrade their aircraft.



*Contains in-app purchases

Make Windows Better

Clever tips for every version

WINDOWS 10

Use Cortana to search for Netflix films and TV shows



Netflix recently launched a new Windows 10 app. It works in a similar way to the Netflix site, but you can now use Microsoft's personal voice-assistant Cortana to search for Netflix content without even launching the app. First install the app from the Windows Store (www.snipca.com/19198), then log into your Netflix account.

Now whenever you want to watch a film or TV programme on Netflix (for example, *House of Cards*), simply click the microphone icon in the search bar at the bottom of your screen, then say "Netflix, find House of Cards" or "Netflix, search House of Cards" and you'll see the relevant Netflix search result that you can click to start watching.

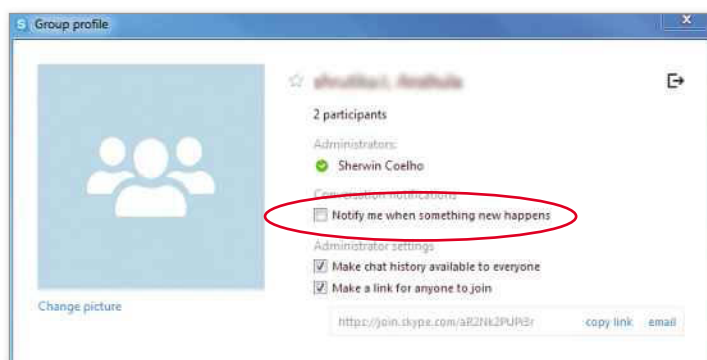
WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Turn off audio alerts in Skype conversations



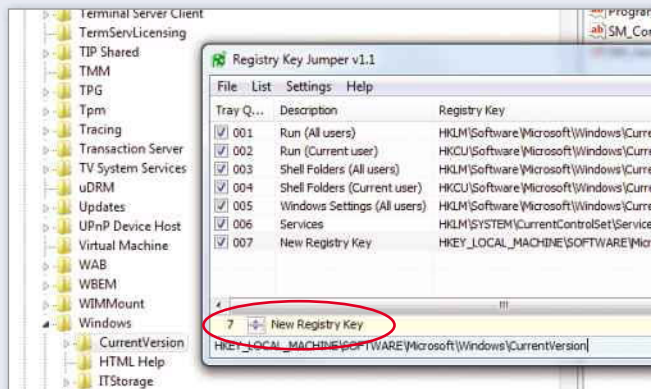
If you've created (or been added to) a Skype group conversation on your PC then, by default, you'll see hear a notification sound whenever there's a new message within that conversation. This can become quite irritating, especially if the group is large and active. Thankfully, there are a couple of ways you can mute the sound alert and simply receive text exchanges from within that conversation.

The first method is to open the conversation, click the Settings button, then untick 'Notify me when something new happens' (see screenshot below). Easier still, simply type `/alertsoff` into the chat field within your group, then press Enter. No one in your conversation group will know you've done this – it will simply turn off your chat alerts. Similarly, to turn your notifications back on, type `/alertson` into your chat window, then press Enter.



WINDOWS XP, VISTA, 7, 8, 10

Jump to any Registry key quickly



Your PC's Registry Editor is an extremely useful feature, but it can also be overwhelming because of the sheer number of menus you need to navigate.

A new, free portable tool called Registry Key Jumper (RKJ) makes the Registry Editor easier to use because it lets you add Registry paths you navigate to on a regular basis, then directly access them within your Registry Editor. To install RKJ, go to www.snipca.com/19182, scroll down the page, then click the Download button. Open the downloaded zipped

file, select the RegJump_v1.1 folder, click Extract To, select your Desktop, then click OK. Open the extracted folder on your Desktop, then launch the 'RegJump.exe' setup file to open RKJ. You'll see a list of common

Registry paths within the program. Simply double-click any path to directly navigate to it within your Registry Editor.

To add a path that you use often navigate to it within your PC's Registry Editor. Now right-click the final option in the path on the left, then click Copy Key Name. Next, open RKJ, click List at the top left, then click Add New Key. Now click inside the light blue field at the bottom, then press Ctrl+V to paste the path you copied. It'll appear within Registry Key Jumper's list as 'New Registry Key' (see screenshot).

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Save Notepad files as Word documents



While Notepad is a useful program for typing quick notes, its features aren't as comprehensive as Word. For example, Notepad doesn't have a spell-check option and you can't save your notes to a cloud-based program on your PC (such as OneDrive, Google Drive

or Dropbox), then access them from the relevant cloud-storage app on your device. If you

type a note and later decide you want to convert this into a Word document, the process is very simple.

Click File at the top left of the note, then click Save As. By default, the 'File name' field at the bottom is set to '*.txt'. Rename the file whatever you want, then replace '.txt' with '.doc' (which is the extension for Word documents). For example, name it 'Important info.doc'. Next, click the 'Save as type' dropdown menu and set it to All Files (see screenshot below). Now select where you want to save the file on your PC (for example, your Desktop), then click Save. Open the saved Word document, then click OK to see your Notepad text.



OFFICE

Create and access Office Online files in Chrome

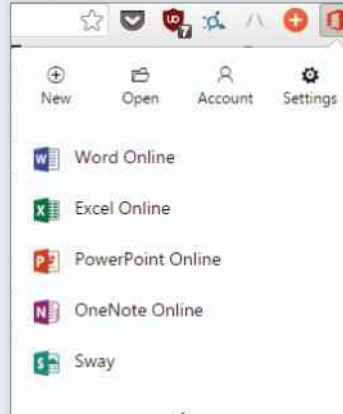
Microsoft recently released a new Chrome **extension** called Office Online, which lets you access your Office Online files and create new ones directly from your browser. To add it, open Chrome, go to www.snipca.com/19184, click the blue 'Add to Chrome' button, then click 'Add extension'.

Next, click the Office icon on your browser's toolbar. The first time you do this, you'll be prompted to log into OneDrive because your Office files are saved there by default. Click 'Sign in', log into OneDrive using your Microsoft account, then click Yes.

Now, whenever you click the

extension, you'll see a list of the Office files you recently saved to OneDrive. Clicking 'View more' at the bottom opens the OneDrive website, from where you can access all your files.

To create a new file, click New at the top left, then select the type of file from one of the five options (see screenshot). This will open the relevant Office Online site.



The Online version of Office also lets you use Skype within your browser. This is a new feature that's otherwise only available in the latest version of Microsoft Office (2016).

To use Skype, click the Skype logo at the top right of your file and log into your Skype account. Your Skype conversations will be listed as small circular thumbnails on

the right. Click any conversation to start a video or audio call.

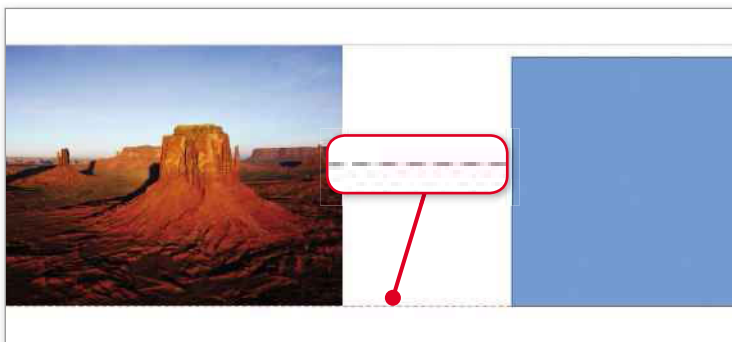
POWERPOINT

Use Smart Guide to create better presentations

It can be tricky to correctly align several items (shapes or images) in a slide. Thankfully, PowerPoint has a hidden tool called Smart Guide that helps you do that.

We'll show you how to use the tool by aligning an image and a shape. To add an image, click the Insert tab, then Pictures (in the Images section), navigate to the image you want on your PC, then click Insert. Click and drag the image's edges to resize it.

To add a shape, click the Insert tab, the Shapes dropdown menu (in the Illustrations section), then select a shape (we selected a rectangle). Now click and drag your cursor to form the shape as you want it. Next, click your shape and drag it close to your image. You'll see a red dotted line (see screenshot below) when your shape is exactly in line (next to or below) your image.



OUTLOOK

Show attached images instantly

By default, Outlook doesn't automatically display images attached to emails you receive.

This ensures you don't use up unnecessary storage space and are not exposed to images from untrusted sources. There are several ways you can display attached images from people you do trust, however.

Right-click the 'Click here to download pictures...' message to see a menu with options (see screenshot above). To see the images from only that email, click

Download Pictures. If you want Outlook to display all images in emails sent by that person in future, click 'Add Sender to Safe



Senders List'. To display all images in emails you receive from that specific domain (such as gmail.com, outlook.com), click 'Add the Domain (name) to Safe Senders List'.

You can also set Outlook to automatically display images from all your emails. It's a safe option if you only receive emails from people you trust. To do this, click Change Automatic Download Settings, tick the first box, then click OK.

WORD

Rotate text within your document

While you can't actually rotate text you've typed, you can achieve the same effect by adding a Text Box to your document, then rotating that. To do this, click the Insert tab, click the Text Box dropdown menu at the top right and select one of the options (Simple Text Box usually does the trick). Next, type your text into the box, click the circular handle above it and move your cursor to rotate the box to the angle you want.



IObit Uninstaller

Delete dodgy toolbars, shred files from Explorer and get new features first

Get rid of dubious toolbars

It's the bane of every PC user – finding unwanted toolbars have been added to your web browser. Thankfully, IObit Uninstaller (www.snipca.com/19234) has dedicated options to remove them. But did you know you can also use it to work out which toolbars are legitimate, and which you really should get shot of?

Click 'Toolbars & Plug-ins', followed by 'All Toolbars & Plug-ins'. By default, these are sorted alphabetically (by name), but if you click the User Ratings heading twice you can sort them by community opinion (with the worst-rated at the top). Of course, a poor rating doesn't automatically mean a toolbar is up to no good – but it probably means you're better off without it. To delete a toolbar, right-click it and choose Remove. Or to find out more about suspect ones, right-click it and choose 'Search online'.

Use IObit's new features before anyone else

If you like to be ahead of the crowd, you can grab the latest **beta** versions of IObit Uninstaller and use all its newest

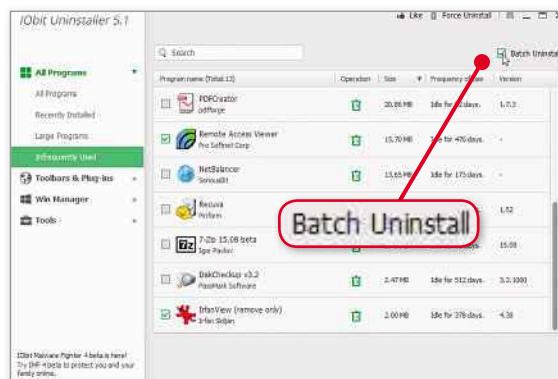
features before everyone else. But you won't find these betas announced on IObit's home page. Instead, you need to visit the user forums at <http://forums.iobit.com>. You'll find the beta announcements in the 'News & Updates' section.

Turn up the brightness

If you don't like the default dark look of IObit's interface, you can change this to a more modern, clean look with plenty of white space. Click the menu button (three horizontal lines at the top right), choose Settings, then select the White button alongside Skin in the Language section.

Uninstall multiple programs simultaneously

IObit Uninstaller has a little Batch Uninstall tick box that's all too easy to miss. You'll find it at the top-right of any of the lists in the All Programs section (see screenshot above right). Tick this box to reveal a column of tick boxes down the



The Batch Uninstall option makes short work of cleaning up your system

left-hand side of the current program list. Tick multiple boxes, click the Uninstall button and then follow the on-screen instructions. Don't forget to click the Powerful Scan button once the batch uninstall has completed to clean up any leftover traces.

Uninstall unlisted programs

Some programs don't play nicely with Windows and therefore aren't listed in the 'Uninstall a program' screen in Control Panel or in IObit Uninstaller. For these programs, IObit Uninstaller has a Force Uninstall option. This performs a thorough scan of your system to find all files and Registry entries related to a selected program or file. Click the Force Uninstall button at the top right of the program window, followed by Browse. Now navigate to the relevant program folder or file, select it and click Open, Uninstall, then Powerful Scan. Tick the boxes next to those items you want to remove (or tick the top-left box to mark them all). Finally, click Delete, then OK to confirm.

Add your own ratings

Remember those helpful User Ratings from tip one? Those are submitted by users just like you. If you want to join in, select 'All Toolbars & Plug-ins' and then click an existing rating alongside any entry. Now select the button that reflects your own opinion and click Rate.

Shred files from Windows Explorer

You may have already discovered IObit Uninstaller's File Shredder tool (under Tools in the left-hand navigation pane), but did you know you can integrate it with Windows Explorer (or File Explorer in Windows 8.1/10)?

First, click the menu button (three horizontal lines at the top right) and choose Settings. Next, tick 'Add Shred File button to Explorer', then click OK. In Explorer, click to select the file or folder you want to eradicate. To select multiple items, hold down Shift or Control (Ctrl) as you click. Now click



File Shredder. The IObit Installer program window will pop up. Check the contents of the File Path box and click the Shred button followed by Yes to confirm. There's no way back, so use with caution!

Wi-Fi HaLow

Say hello to HaLow, the latest form of Wi-Fi set to revolutionise your home

What is it?

A new Wi-Fi **protocol** that, its developers claim, will double the range of current wireless technology, penetrating thick walls more effectively than existing routers. It's being seen as a breakthrough in helping to connect the 'Internet of Things' (IoT).

What's that?

It's the horrible phrase now accepted as the way to describe devices that aren't PCs, phones or tablets, but can still connect to the internet. It's a confusingly broad category that includes fridges, cars, fitness monitors, home thermostats, security cameras and even coffee machines. They are the sort of devices whose names often come with the overused prefix 'smart'.

Why is HaLow important?

Because it requires less power to run than current Wi-Fi technology. That's good news for the manufacturers of IoT devices, which have been reluctant to build existing Wi-Fi into their products because it drives up cost to both them and customers. They have preferred Bluetooth, which is a more efficient way for small devices to connect to each other.

HaLow is significant also because it operates on 900MHz, a part of the radio spectrum with wider reach and deeper penetration than 2.4GHz and 5GHz – the bands used by existing routers.

HaLow has been announced by the industry organisation Wi-Fi Alliance



Is there a catch?

Sort of. HaLow doesn't transfer data very quickly, so it's not suitable for browsing the web. This means you won't use it on your PC or tablet, only on smart devices around your home and in your car. If you don't own any of these devices, HaLow will be of little interest to you.

Who created it?

The Wi-Fi Alliance (www.wi-fi.org/wi-fi-halow). It may sound like something out of the new *Star Wars* film, but it's actually a not-for-profit organisation based in Texas that promotes and approves the use of new Wi-Fi technology. Its members include most of the world's leading tech companies, including Apple, Intel, Microsoft and Sony (here's the full list: www.snipca.com/19268).



How would I actually use HaLow?

The marketing team at Wi-Fi Alliance thought you'd ask that, so it's come up with a few scenarios: "You might imagine someone who wants to deploy a water sensor in their basement to detect flooding or a motion sensor at the end of their driveway to warn them of someone arriving late at night". HaLow's longer range would make sure that such systems worked, overcoming the "challenging environment" created by basement walls and the distance between driveway and home.

When will I be able to use it?

In 2018, when the Wi-Fi Alliance will begin approving products that use HaLow. That may seem a long time to wait, but most homes currently lack the devices that use the technology.

Why's that?

Because despite much hype, most people haven't been persuaded that they need IoT devices. Some products have proved popular, such as Nest (<https://nest.com/uk>), the Google-owned thermostat you can control from your phone. But the IoT revolution, often predicted by self-styled technology visionaries, hasn't happened.

Will HaLow change this?

Yes, says the Wi-Fi Alliance. It argues that HaLow's range and low power-usage will encourage manufacturers to make better, more affordable devices. However, you have to wonder whether the Alliance is living in the real world. In its press release announcing HaLow it says that Wi-Fi will soon be built into "vacuum cleaners and door knobs". Why not bedknobs and broomsticks, too?

Remove MALWARE

COMPLETELY

Malware never leaves your PC without a fight – and it leaves plenty of litter behind. Jane Hoskyn reveals how to obliterate every last malicious trace

Removing stubborn malware from your PC is one of life's more satisfying achievements, up there with fixing your own washing machine - you've done it by yourself, and everything seems to work properly again.

It can seem very simple, too. All you need to do is run a malware-removing tool like Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free

(www.snipca.com/19192) or even a ransomware remover like Trend Micro's Anti-Ransomware Tool (www.snipca.com/19191), restart your computer and bask in that malware-free glow. Your PC runs faster, your browser has stopped crashing and you've got rid of that big notice that says "Pay £400 to get your data back".

Litter bugs

But as with so many irritating things in life, deleting malware is never that straightforward.

Malware is simply malicious software ("mal-ware"), and it shares a common irritation with all installable software: it doesn't uninstall completely. When you remove the program or infection, it leaves a trail of litter behind. These leftover files clog up your hard drive, interfere with your operating system (OS) and browser, and embed themselves in your Registry.

The worst malware leftovers can act as mini malware timebombs, waiting to regenerate and relaunch the infection you thought you'd removed.

Simple malware-removers like the free version of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware may help you out of a short-term pickle, but it won't remove all traces of the infection. Other PC-cleaning favourites like CCleaner and AdwCleaner – brilliant as they are – don't detect or remove malware at all. Even when they remove adware and dodgy **plug-ins**, you'll often find they bounce back the next day.

In this feature we'll show you how to remove tough, tenacious malware using the most powerful free tools available. We'll also reveal why your apparently all-powerful antivirus (AV) program is not up to the job. AV's job is to block and quarantine malware, not remove it – and certainly not Hoover up the malicious files it leaves hidden throughout your PC.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Find and remove malware hidden in your PC
- Force-uninstall malware your antivirus missed
- Check for leftover malicious files
- Find out why malware leftovers are so dangerous
- Obliterate malicious litter for good – including locked ransomware files

FIND AND REMOVE MALWARE

Install a powerful AV companion – but be careful

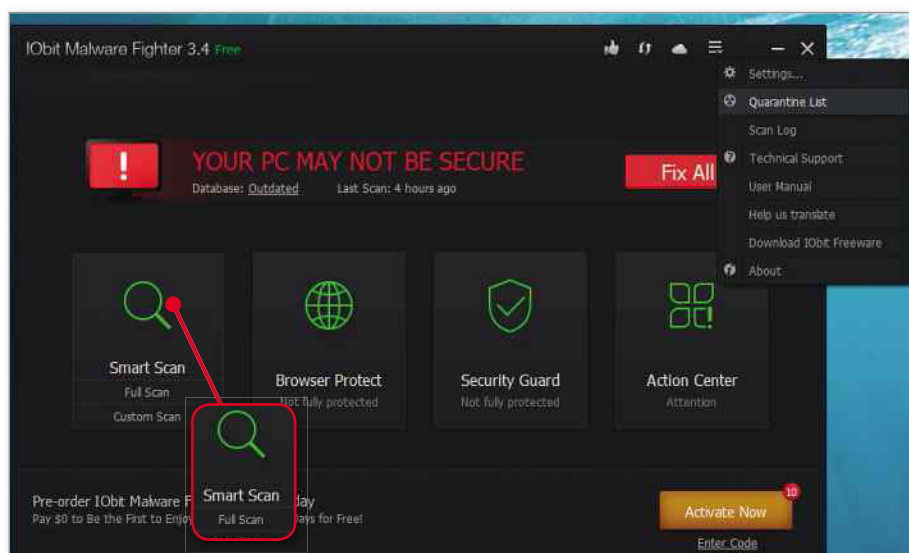
Serious malware removal requires big guns. Currently, the most powerful malware-obliator is the free new version of IObit's Malware Fighter (www.snipca.com/19194). It can tackle **Trojans**, **rootkits** and **worms** and other nasties you'll find on Kaspersky's interesting 'malware classification tree' (www.snipca.com/19162).

The new version of Malware Fighter (v3.4) launched in November 2015 with full Windows 10 support, and we found it to be one of the most effective malware scanners we've used.

However, IObit still hasn't quite resolved its installation problems. The excellent IObit Uninstaller (see page 56) can now be downloaded and installed directly from IObit's website, with no **PUPs** in its installer. But Malware Fighter still has to be downloaded via a **download mirror site** (the dreaded Cnet, no less). You're instantly redirected there when you click the big green Free Download button at www.snipca.com/19194.

Click Download Now on the Cnet page, then wait for the installer file ('IObit-Malware-Fighter-Setup.exe') to download. Click the downloaded file to open it, or click Run, depending on the version of Windows you're using. In Windows 10, for example, click Run in the bar at bottom of the browser screen. Click Yes if prompted by Windows, and the installer will open.

The Install Options link (top-left corner) doesn't conceal any nasty PUPs, so you're safe to skip that and click the green 'Accept and Install' button. Ignore the advert for the other IObit tool – it's unticked by default anyway. During



Click Full Scan in IObit Malware Fighter to deeply scan your entire PC for malicious files

installation you'll see various adverts for other IObit products but you can ignore them as well. In the final window, don't enter your email address – it's completely unnecessary – and don't click Subscribe. Malware Fighter launches automatically when you close the installer, unlike most programs, which are at least polite enough to ask first.

Ignore the Activate Now button (bottom right) that's there to tempt you to upgrade to the pro (paid-for) version. Ignore Fix All as well – that's a blunderbuss that scans, cleans and enables blocking at the same time.

Scan your PC deeper than ever

Hang on. Cnet, an advert-littered installer, desperately nudges you to upgrade to the pro version – so why are we recommending this program?

Because it's very, very powerful. If we just wanted to remove annoying adware or even a common Trojan, we wouldn't

hesitate to recommend Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free, and then AdwCleaner to check for leftover files. But if your PC is suddenly behaving strangely, or there's some other reason to suspect a serious malware infection, IObit Malware Fighter is worth the installation hassle.

In the program window (see screenshot above), you should head straight for Smart Scan on the left. Click Full Scan to search your entire PC for malware and malicious files. The scan will take several minutes even on a relatively new PC, so make a cup of tea and sit back with the latest issue of *Computeractive* while it scours every area of your computer for intruders including **keyloggers**, worms, Trojans and even signs of **zero-day** malware.

If you're in more of a hurry or are confident that you know which part of your PC is infected, use the Custom Scan option and choose which folders to scan. This option is particularly useful for rooting out leftovers once you've discovered where they're hiding.

You can suspend the scan by pressing Pause – simply press Resume to continue. Just never click Activate Now, because that'll lead you down the road of paid-for extras.

When the scan has finished, you'll see a pop-up revealing problems found on your PC. Unsurprisingly, our new Windows 10 laptop didn't contain anything Malware Fighter wanted to remove. If you've been using your PC for a while and have found various unwelcome invaders using the tool, click Scan Log to compare the results of



The new version of IObit's powerful Malware Fighter now supports Windows 10

CF139458FBROOTKIT58A29B0AF32A29F4D00A41049EDCBF421A4295BAVIRUS2BAF0F458A09F356FC0028F12FFCA421F3210
CF458E3CB4211F0531040RANSOMWARE000D395845531200092F305DA458421E421D090CA5BF30B42A29C00120958BAEF
RECD5EC34C120D00595890F30458A25CD285002F5BETROJAN05B3929AC77295CA3D01049WORM3C2958D120249310D3BE
29D00B0C30BC24A4E40C592854EACDA4CE79D000B421F30EBC58A2FCE039304421BAC0C441CE021285800C090BAFMALW
CF139458FBROOTKIT58A29B0AF32A29F4D00A41049EDCBF421A4295BAVIRUS2BAF0F458A09F356FC0028F12FFCA421F3210

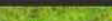
Blitz malware with 68 tools all at once

HerdProtect combines the scanning power of no fewer than 68 anti-malware engines, all stored securely online and put to work simultaneously to find malware and traces of malicious files on your PC, including within your Registry and browser.

HerdProtect comes in installable and portable versions. We used the portable version, because we don't particularly like installers, and portable programs have many advantages – chiefly the freedom to copy and store them in as many places as you want. For example, store HerdProtect's EXE file on a USB stick to run on any computer, and there's no need to download or install anything. To “uninstall” it, just delete the program file.

The screenshot shows the Herd Protect Anti-Malware Scanner interface. At the top, the logo and name 'herd Protect Anti-Malware Scanner' are visible. Below this, the 'Scan Results' section indicates that the file is scanned, 5,284 items were scanned, and 74 files are infected. A 'Remove checked' button is present. The results are listed in a table with columns for the file name, the detection engine used (e.g., VirusShare, VirusShare, VirusShare), and a 'Detecting' status. The first three items are 'drivermax.exe', 'manifest.json', and 'exjs', all of which are detected as infected. The last item, 'hlmis.media.packaging.rtm.dll', is listed as '(not signed)' and is not detected as infected.





File Name	Detection Engine	Detecting
drivermax.exe	Innovative Solutions Group SRL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
manifest.json	(not signed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
exjs	(not signed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
hlmis.media.packaging.rtm.dll	(not signed)	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Herd Protection for your PC

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68 Anti-Malware Engines

What is herdProtect?

herdProtect is a second line of defense malware scanning platform powered by [68 anti-malware engines](#) in the cloud. Since no single anti-malware program is perfect 100% of the time, herdProtect utilizes a "herd" of multiple engines to guarantee the widest coverage and the earliest possible detection. As a second line of defense anti-malware solution, herdProtect is designed to run with any existing anti-virus program already installed on a user's PC. herdProtect is a free service to help user's find and remove malicious software.

that need extracting but HerdProtect comes unzipped. However, when you click (or Run, in Windows 10) the file, you have to click Next in a 'setup' screen. Don't worry – it's not an installer in the usual sense. It just chooses (or lets you choose) a location on your hard drive and then asks you to accept a licence agreement. You can then launch the program immediately.

When the scan has finished, it reveals how many files were scanned (even on our new Windows 10 laptop it found nearly 10,000) and divides into categories any dubious files found, including malware and PUPs. It didn't find any malware on our Windows 10 computer, but plenty of unwanted rubbish all the same. Whatever malicious or unwanted files it finds, HerdProtect will remove any ticked items completely when you click 'Remove checked'.

Force-remove programs you don't trust

geekuninstaller.com) is quick and extremely easy to use - but still very powerful. Click the small Download link at the bottom right of GeekUninstaller's homepage, then click Download Free. Save the ZIP and extract the EXE file from it, then click it to run the program.

Our favourite feature is its force-removal tool. If programs or plug-ins keep appearing in your programs list without your permission, it may suggest that your hard drive contains malicious leftovers such as plug-ins installed by malware.

Geek Uninstaller 1.3.5.5

Program Name	Size	Installed On
Adobe Creative Cloud	80.6 MB	May 15, 2015
Adobe Lightroom	1.42 GB	May 15, 2015
Adobe Photoshop CC 2014	1.76 GB	May 29, 2015
Apple Application Support (32-bit)	94.2 MB	Jun 23, 2015
Apple Application Support (64-bit)	107 MB	Jun 23, 2015
Apple Mobile Device Support	27.9 MB	Jun 23, 2015
Apple Software Update	2.38 MB	Jun 23, 2015
BasicMouse and BasicBoard	2.07 MB	Dec 14, 2015
Bonjour	2.00 MB	Jun 23, 2015
CentraStage	13.6 MB	Dec 21, 2015
DiskCryptor	2.19 MB	Dec 07, 2015
Google Chrome	44.2 MB	May 18, 2015
IDBot Uninstaller	36.2 MB	Jul 14, 2015
IrfanView (re...	2.00 MB	May 11, 2015
Kaspersky Er...	293 MB	May 08, 2015
Kaspersky Sec...	36.0 MB	May 08, 2015
Microsoft .NET...		
Microsoft Office Standard 2010		
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2008 Redistribut...	788 KB	May 29, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2008 Redistribut...	598 KB	May 29, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2010 x64 Redistrib...	13.8 MB	May 29, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2010 x86 Redistrib...	11.1 MB	May 29, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2012 Redistribut...	20.5 MB	May 29, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2012 Redistribut...	17.3 MB	May 29, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2013 Redistribut...	20.5 MB	May 15, 2015
Microsoft Visual C++ + 2013 Redistribut...	17.1 MB	May 15, 2015

34 programs of 5.38 GB size in total

Type in a find a program

Upgrade to PRO version

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000E458E3CB4211F0531040RANSOMWARE000D395845531200092F305DA458421E421D090CA5BF30B42A29C00120958BAE
8E3CB429D00B0C30BC24A4E40C592854EACDA4CE79D000B421F30EBC58A2FCE03 Remove malware completely AFMAL
0A9ACF139458FBROOTKIT58A29B0AF32A29F4D00A41049EDCBF421A4295BAVIRUS2BAF0F458A09F356EC0028F12FECA421E3

older computers and laptops.

Open the program and scroll down the list for programs you've tried to uninstall using your built-in uninstaller, but which keep returning. Take great care when forcibly removing components that you're not quite sure about. Right-click any item and then click 'Google for' to investigate it and its parent company. For example, CentraStage (see screenshot below left), which had apparently been installed on the day we wrote this feature, was news to us – we'd never heard of it and certainly hadn't installed it. It turned out to be a remote-management tool that may have been installed by a company that wanted to take control of our computer. You can also click Program Website from the right-click menu for more information.

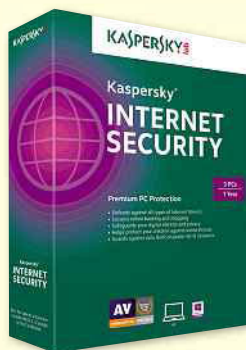
Once you're absolutely sure a program or plug-in should not be in your list, right-click it and click Force Removal. This gets rid of the item completely, even tenacious programs other malware removers leave behind. Force removal also clears some Registry entries and other unwanted files.

MALWARE SCANNERS Vs ANTIVIRUS

IObit Malware Fighter claims to "block" malware as well as find it, but we'd rather you steered clear of its blocking features. Blocking malware is the job of your antivirus (AV), and if you run another blocking tool at the same time as your AV they will conflict – effectively cancelling each other out.

You should never allow a malware-scanner – whether it's the powerful IObit Malware Fighter or the easier-to-use Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free – to run constantly in the background looking for malware to block.

After installing any malware scanner, check that it's not set to run at startup. If it is, it'll run in the background continually and conflict with your AV. Download the latest version of free portable tool Autoruns (www.snipca.com/19195), launch it and wait for the list to appear.



Then scroll through carefully and untick any malware scanners you find. This doesn't disable the malware scanner; it simply stops it running at startup and gives you control over when and whether to run it.

Even the best AV – such as Kaspersky Internet Security, which has won the past seven quarterly tests run by our

security team at Dennis Technology Labs (www.dennistechnologylabs.com) – is not designed to remove malware. AV and malware scanners are complementary tools – AV tries to block every malware attack, and scanners find and remove any malware your AV missed. They're a brilliant team, but don't run them together.

We have so much faith in Kaspersky Internet Security that we're offering it for the special price of £19.99, rather than the recommended retail price of £39.99 (see page 68).

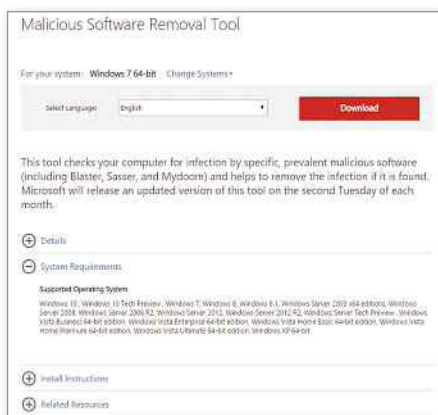
OBLITERATE TRACES LEFT BEHIND BY MALWARE

Remove rootkits left by Trojans

Even if you use a thorough remover like GeekUninstaller, always follow up with a tool like Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free (www.snipca.com/19223) and ideally AdwCleaner (www.snipca.com/19224) to check for leftover files. AdwCleaner is particularly good at finding files left in your browser and Registry; Malwarebytes is good for hoovering up the nasties left on your computer by Trojans.

But a tool as quick and easy as Malwarebytes Anti-Malware is unlikely to remove rootkits – collections of malicious files embedded in areas of your PC that you won't normally have access to (hidden system folders, for example). You can remove the Trojan that smuggled the rootkit in, but hackers won't care – once the rootkit files are embedded that's all they need to gain access to your computer's most sensitive areas. Your AV may be able to help you here. Kaspersky Internet Security, for example, includes tools that can prevent hackers exploiting their rootkits. But it can't remove the files.

Microsoft's free Malicious Software Removal Tool (www.snipca.com/19227) can detect and remove some classes of



Microsoft's free Malicious Software Removal Tool is one of few tools that can remove rootkits

rootkit, and it works in all versions of Windows, including XP (64bit) right up to Windows 10. But many types of rootkit, especially those embedded in the **kernel** of your OS, can only be removed by reinstalling your system completely, using a trusted source (Microsoft, for example: www.snipca.com/19226).

Find out where dodgy files are hiding

Free portable tool RunScanner (www.runscanner.net) scans all your PC's

startup system files and settings.

Malware is fond of installing startup files and leaving them behind, so they run constantly from the moment you boot your PC.

After scanning, the tool reveals which files aren't behaving as they should, drawing information from its database of over 900,000 system files including EXE, **DLL** and **SYS** files – precisely the types of files malware likes to create, infect and/or corrupt, and then leave behind.

To get the program, click Download in the top menu bar, then click the big orange Freeware Download button. Run the file and click Yes if prompted by Windows.

In the small program window, you're given the choice of using 'Beginner mode' or 'Expert mode'. The difference is that the latter lets you make changes to misbehaving Windows files.

We recommend giving Beginner mode a couple of tries first. In Beginner mode, you can upload suspicious files to a forum, where experts and other users will advise you. Don't go blitting files that just look a bit dodgy – they may not be malicious at all, and may in fact be vital Windows components.

Computeractive Bookstore

NEW!

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

If you use an Android tablet or phone, our new book will tell you how to get the most out of your device. It explains everything you need to know about the latest versions of Android (Lollipop and Marshmallow), so you'll feel confident you won't get left behind. We'll also reveal the best apps for everything you'll ever want to do, and expose the dodgy apps that slow your device. And as hackers increasingly switch their sights from PCs to phones and tablets, we'll show you how to stay safe.

**BUY IT NOW FROM
AMAZON**

at www.snipca.com/18829

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

This 148-page book is the only guide you need on Microsoft's fantastic new operating system. You'll learn how to master all the new tools and software, and how to upgrade without losing anything. It's been updated to include fixes for problems that have appeared since Windows 10 launched.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/17716

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

In our new 148-page book, we recommend only the very best free programs that deliver high-quality features and no nasty surprises (no junk - guaranteed!). It's packed with step-by-step tutorials and how-to guides for safe downloads - plus you'll learn which free antivirus you should use.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/16785

COMPUTERACTIVE 2014 BACK ISSUE CD

This easy-to-use CD-ROM contains all 26 issues of 2014, giving you one-click access to thousands of tips, workshops, reviews, free programs, superb apps and problems solved. It has a searchable index, which makes it easy for you to find what you want to read.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/14981

Delete locked ransomware leftovers

Ransomware isn't the only type of malware that leaves locked – and therefore supposedly unremovable – malicious files on your computer after you've 'removed' the infection.

Many types of malware use this trick. The most common clue is when you try to delete an unusual or unwanted file and see a message like 'Cannot delete file: Access is denied' or 'The source or destination file may be in use'. This doesn't always mean it's a malicious file; it may be corrupted (by malware, for example). Either way, you need to unlock it and, assuming your various malware scanners identify it as malicious, you have to remove it.

The best tool for this job is Malwarebytes FileAssassin (www.snipca.com/19230), a free program that lets you delete locked files that have been identified as malicious – or which are simply causing problems and you want to get rid of.

To get the program, click Free Download, then save and run the installer. Accept the agreement and you're done – there are no configurations to choose or PUPs to avoid. Click Finish to run the tool.

In the basic little window that opens, click the three little dots and navigate to the file you want to unlock, then click Execute (see screenshot above right). By default, this unlocks the file and terminates any process associated with it.

No files will be deleted by default. This



FileAssassin lets you get rid of locked files that have been identified as malware

is to give you a buffer just in case you discover it isn't malicious. It might be an accidentally locked system file or something else that's crucial to the running of your system.

Our advice is to unlock the file first, then upload it to VirusTotal (<https://www.virustotal.com>) to find out exactly what it is – and whether it needs to be blatted. Then you can upload it to FileAssassin again, tick 'Delete file' and exterminate it.

Scan specific folders for malicious files

AV company ESET – maker of ESET Smart Security 8, which came a respectable third in the latest lab tests run by our partners at Dennis Technology Labs – has created a free Online Scanner (www.snipca.com/19205) that scours your PC for threats and leftover files. The full scan can take hours, so we find it more useful – especially when deleting malware and its leftovers – to scan certain folders only. ►

WHY ARE LEFTOVER FILES SO DANGEROUS?

When you remove a malware infection with a tool like Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free, you've only removed the infection. You haven't removed what it's left behind. As we've seen with rootkits, these leftovers can include items that can be exploited remotely by cybercriminals and are very tough to remove.

Leftover malicious data may also include pieces of code or Registry files that give malware the gift of eternal life by reinstalling it at some point – or even every time you restart your computer.

For example, if you fall victim to ransomware (see an example right), and you manage to remove it by using a powerful tool like Kaspersky WindowsUnlocker (www.snipca.com/19165) by following this excellent advice from Symantec, maker of Norton Security (<http://uk.norton.com/ransomware>), how would you know every last shred had been removed?

Ransomware is clever, devious software. Once you think you've got it off your PC, there may well be files hidden in your Registry or OS that bring the ransomware bouncing back when you least



expect it. Oh, and there's worse. Leftover ransomware files are often locked by their creators so they can never be removed. Malwarebytes FileAssassin is the best tool to resolve this.

000E458E3CB4211F0531040RANSOMWARE000D395845531200092F305DA458421E421D090CA5BF30B42A29C00120958BAE
3E3CB4211F0531040RANSOMWARE000D395845531200092F305DA458421E421D090CA5BF30B42A29C00120958BAE
EB429D Remove malware completely E79D000B421F30EBC58A2FCE039304421BAC0C441CE021285800C090BAFMA
A9ACF139458FBROOTKIT58A29B0AF32A29F4D00A41049FDCBF421A4295BAVIRUS2BAF0F458A09F356FC0028F12FECA421F32

‘Online’ here is a misnomer – this is an installable tool and doesn’t run from your browser, which is a shame because that might have made it a lot easier to use. When you click ‘Run ESET Online Scanner’ a second window opens, inviting you to download ESET Smart Installer. Click the blue ‘esetsmartinstaller_eni.exe’ link, open it and then click Run if prompted by Windows. Tick the ‘Terms of Use’ box and then click Start.

Then you’re led through numerous stages of configuration, scanning and file removal. In the first box, click ‘Enable detection of potentially unwanted applications’ (this should not conflict with your AV, which is not designed to block or remove PUPs). Then open ‘Advanced settings’ and tick ‘Scan archives’ (to scan for leftover files) and ‘Scan for potentially unsafe applications’, and leave the two other boxes ticked.

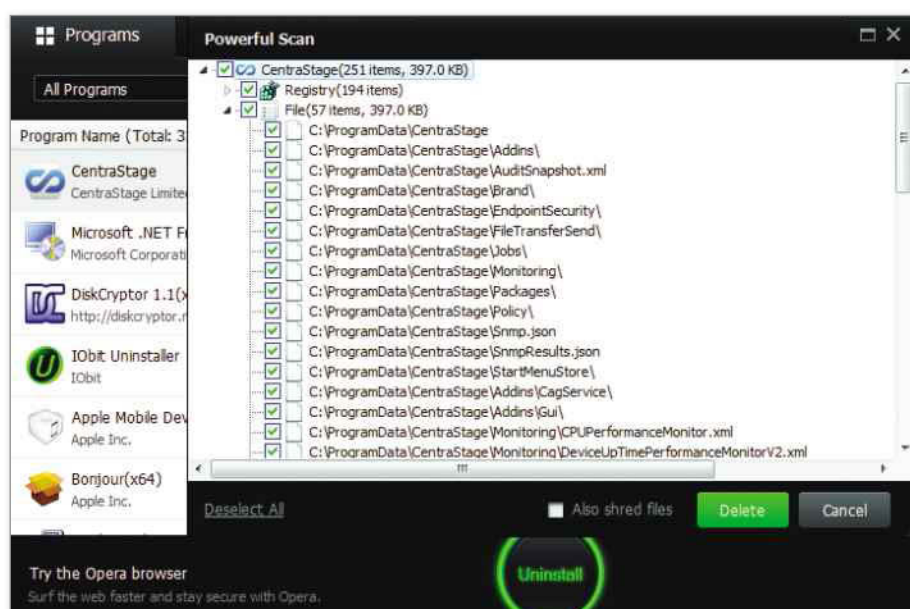
Here’s where you can select certain folders, alternative destinations and even specific files. The tool has anti-stealth technology built in, which means it can detect and clean hidden files in folders you didn’t even know were there.

There is a disclaimer at the bottom, warning about potential conflicts with your installed AV, but as we’ve said, your AV is there to block malware – while ESET Online Scanner finds and removes threats and their leftovers.

Click Start to update the tool’s **virus signature** database. That may take a few minutes. Then it automatically scans your



Install ESET Online Scanner for a deep scan of all your PC’s folders and archives



IObit Uninstaller scans for Registry files left behind by uninstalled malware and other programs

PC (see screenshot below left) for malware and any malicious files left behind. On our Windows 7 PC the scan took ages and came up with a few **false positives**, including some of our favourite portable system tools made by the brilliant NirSoft (www.nirsoft.net).

Remember, before you jettison any file that a scan identifies as malicious, run it past VirusTotal first to make sure it is actually malicious. NirSoft tools aren’t malicious – that’s for sure.

Remove unwanted Registry files

Your PC’s Registry is where all the vital data about your PC’s installed programs, settings and accounts are held. It’s full of organisational jargon like ‘values’, ‘keys’ and ‘entries’, but essentially every piece of data in the Registry is a file. And – you guessed it – some of these files have been put there by malware.

Malware that’s still present on your PC may have added files to the Registry that interfere with your OS and other software, and in the worst cases may do serious damage to your PC.

If you’ve read this far, you’ll know by now that removing malware does not always remove its Registry files. The best

tool we’ve found for removing Registry files at the same time as uninstalling unwanted programs is good old IObit Uninstaller.

When we ran IObit Uninstaller it listed programs and plug-ins we hadn’t knowingly installed, such as CentraStage, which GeekUninstaller also dug up for us (see page 52). GeekUninstaller can remove Registry files, but IObit Uninstaller gives you greater control over this process.

Once you’ve uninstalled the program (CentraStage in this case), IObit Uninstaller scans your Registry for unwanted leftovers. In many cases there are none. But in the case of CentraStage, there were dozens (see screenshot above). We ticked the box at the top of the file tree.

You can then obliterate all the files with one click by ticking the top box in the file tree. This automatically selects all the boxes below it. Tick ‘Also shred files’ if you suspect they may contain sensitive data, and then click Delete.

See Secret Tips on page 48 for many more ways to use IObit Uninstaller, including finding and removing adware and toolbars, and uninstalling multiple programs at once. **ca**

NEXT ISSUE On sale Wednesday 3 February

Uninstall Windows 10 Apps Completely

Remove the rubbish apps that hog your PC

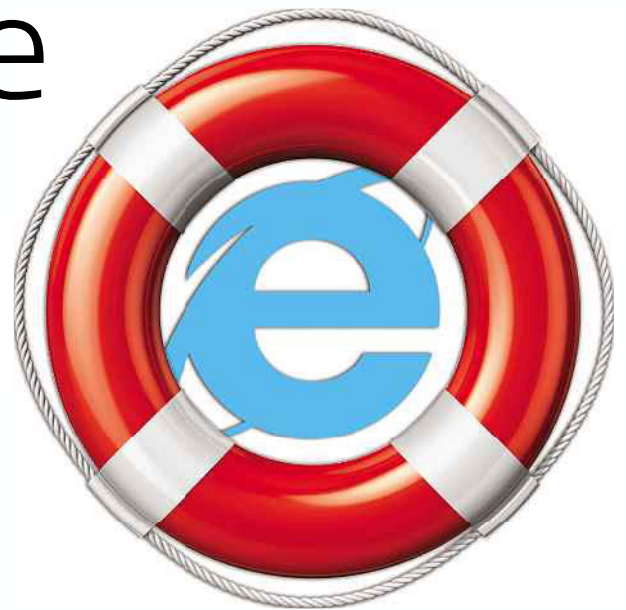
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- **Windows 7 PCs**
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Best ones for your home



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Internet Explorer survival guide

Microsoft is killing off even more of its software – this time old versions of Internet Explorer. We explain what you must do to stay safe



What's happening?

Support for older versions of Microsoft's 20-year-old web browser, Internet Explorer (IE), ended on 12 January 2016, meaning that only the most recent version of the browser for your OS will be supported from this date. For Windows 7, 8 and 10 users, only IE11 will be supported from now on. For Vista, IE9 is the only supported version.

Why is Microsoft doing this?

All of Microsoft's software products, including Internet Explorer, have life cycles (see www.snipca.com/19190), which eventually reach a natural conclusion. A similar thing happened with Windows XP in 2014, when the popular operating system reached the end of its support period. It's likely that Internet Explorer will eventually be phased out altogether in favour of Microsoft's new web browser, Edge, which comes built into Windows 10.

What does this mean for you?

If you still have an older version of IE installed on your PC, you'll need to stop

using it and choose another browser. Microsoft no longer releases security patches or updates for previous versions of IE, which effectively leaves your PC open to hackers to exploit any vulnerabilities. It's not safe to continue using these versions, even if your security software is up to date.

How can you find out what version you're using?

Your browser may be set to update automatically, meaning you may have upgraded to IE11 without realising. To check which version of IE you're running, click the cog icon in the top right (or the Help menu), then select About Internet Explorer (see screenshot right).

Which browser should I now use?

Windows 10 users can rest easy; you'll have been automatically updated to IE11 as part of your upgrade. Users of Windows 7 and 8 can update to IE11 by downloading it directly from



Click the cog icon, then 'About Internet Explorer' to see this screen, which shows you the version you're using

www.snipca.com/19186. Vista users can download IE9 from www.snipca.com/19187. Alternatively, consider switching to another browser altogether.

If you're a Windows 10 user, you may want to try Edge, which includes handy features, such as a Reading List that lets you save pages for later, and a special reading mode that cuts most of the clutter from web pages.

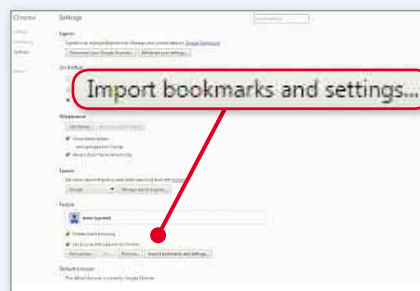
The best thing about Google Chrome (www.snipca.com/19188) is that you can customise it using apps and **extensions** – most of which are free. It's pretty fast, too. Its major downside is that it hogs a lot of memory, though Google has tried to fix this in recent versions. Firefox (www.snipca.com/19189) isn't as popular as it used to be but the latest version (43) makes some big security improvements and, like Chrome, extensions can add useful new functions and abilities.

Like Firefox and Chrome, Opera (www.opera.com) supports extensions and has some interesting tricks up its sleeve, including Turbo mode, which uses compression to load web pages faster. **ca**

HOW TO SWITCH TO ANOTHER BROWSER

When you install a new browser or launch it for the first time, you'll be asked whether you want to import your bookmarks and settings from your old browser and set your new one as the default. It's possible to do this at a later date if you want to test the browser before you commit.

In Chrome, click the menu button (three horizontal lines), then Settings, then scroll to People for options to import bookmarks and make it your default browser. In Opera, you'll find these options by clicking the Opera button, Settings, then scrolling to 'Default browser'. In Firefox, click the menu (three horizontal lines), Options, then Make Default. Next, click the



Click 'Import bookmarks and settings' to move these from Internet Explorer to Chrome

bookmarks button, 'Show all bookmarks', 'Import and Backup', then 'Import data from another browser'.

Wipe all your data before selling your devices

When you get rid of an old PC, tablet or phone you could be handing all your personal data to identity thieves. Jonathan Parkyn explains how to erase it – securely and completely



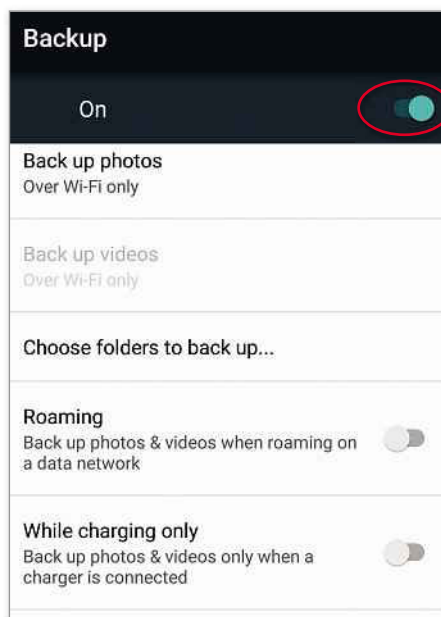
Our computers, tablets and smartphones hold vast amounts of data about us – private photos, documents, passwords and much more. When the time comes to recycle, sell or consign your old device to the scrapheap, you'll need to take special measures in order to erase all your data. If you don't, your personal information and files could fall into the wrong hands.

Dropping everything into the Recycle Bin isn't enough – identity thieves and other criminals can easily recover files deleted in this way. You might consider dropping your device into the heart of a raging volcano, but you won't find many here in the UK. Instead, why not follow our tips for purging your data so that it's irrevocable.

Copy those files you want to keep

Before you erase your files, you'll need to save them somewhere else first. If you're wiping an old PC, back up your files to an external hard drive. Alternatively, upload them to a cloud-storage service, such as Google Drive, Dropbox or OneDrive. Copy all the files in Windows' Documents, Pictures, Music and Videos folders. Don't forget content from less obvious storage locations – your Desktop, for example. Also remember to carry out this process for all the user accounts on your PC.

On an Android device, tap Settings, then 'Backup & reset' and make sure 'Back up my data' is switched on. Back up photos and videos by opening the Photos app and tapping the menu button (three horizontal lines, top right), then Settings,



In Android make sure the Backup option is switched on

'Backup & sync' and making sure Backup is switched on (see screenshot above). Alternatively, you can simply drag and drop photos and other files from your phone or tablet to a PC over a USB connection.

iOS users should tap Settings, iCloud, Backup and switch iCloud Backup on, then tap Back Up Now. Bear in mind, Apple only provides 5GB of free storage, so you should consider backing up to your PC instead. To do this, plug in your device via its USB cable, launch iTunes and click the icon for your device.

On the Summary screen, make sure 'This computer' is selected under Backups, then click 'Back up now'. Windows should automatically prompt you to import photos when you attach your iPhone or iPad. If it doesn't, click Start, type **autoplay** and press Enter, then select the 'Import photos and videos' option for your device.

Wipe your XP, Vista or Windows 7 PC

Earlier versions of Windows don't have a built-in reset option, so you'll need to carry out a **clean install** of the operating system instead. This on its own won't be enough, however. Unless you have an **SSD** (see box on opposite page), you'll also need to use a special data-shredding tool to overwrite data held on the drive's platters.

Before you start, make sure you have your PC's original Windows installation disc to hand, along with the **product key**. If you can't find this, use a free tool like Belarc Advisor (www.snipca.com/19166) to help. To shred your hard drive, download Darik's Boot And Nuke (DBAN) from www.dban.org – it's an **ISO file** that you'll need to burn to a blank CD.



Shred your entire hard drive with DBAN before performing a clean Windows install

SECURELY ERASE YOUR SSD

Because SSDs don't store data in the same way as traditional hard drives, shredding tools can be ineffective and sometimes even harmful. Some programs claim to erase SSDs securely, but they tend to cost money. Parted Magic (partedmagic.com), for example, costs \$9 (£6).

In most cases, however, SSD manufacturers supply their own free tools for wiping drives. A good example is Secure Erase, part of Samsung's Magician tool (see screenshot). Check your SSD manufacturer's support pages to see if a similar toolkit is available.

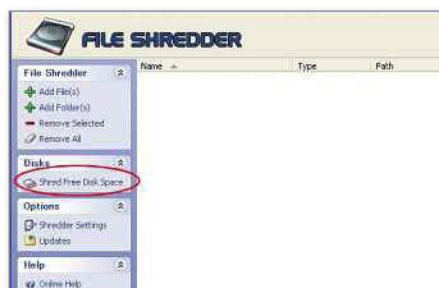


When you're ready to erase your PC, start it up with your DBAN disc in the drive. Your PC will boot to a blue screen (see screenshot below left) – press Enter. Make sure the partition you want to erase is selected (use the J and K keys to select your partition if not), and press the Space bar, followed by F10. Once the process is complete, restart your PC with the Windows disc in your disc drive and follow the on-screen steps to install the OS from scratch.

Wipe your Windows 8 or 10 PC

Recent versions of Windows have a built-in option that securely erases your data when resetting your computer. Click Start, type **recovery**, then click 'Recovery options'. In Windows 8, click 'Get started' under 'Remove everything and reinstall Windows'. Insert your Windows 8 installation disc if prompted, then click Next. On the following screen, click the 'Fully clean the drive' option. In Windows 10, click 'Get started' under 'Reset this PC', select 'Remove everything', then click 'Remove files and clean the drive'. In both cases, the process can take quite a while to complete.

For a belt-and-braces approach, you could opt to use a free data-shredding tool, such as File Shredder (www.fileshredder.org) to wipe all remaining free space on your hard drive. Once the reset process is complete, sign in with a dummy account (in other words, don't



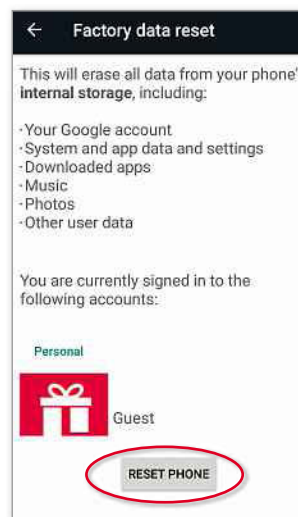
Click 'Shred Free Disk Space' in File Shredder to wipe your hard drive

sign in with your Microsoft account), then install File Shredder and use the Shred Free Disk Space option (see screenshot below left). Again, this only applies to traditional hard drives, not SSDs.

Wipe your iOS device

Before you erase your iPad or iPhone, you'll need to sign out of some of Apple's services in order to avoid problems later. Tap Settings, iCloud, then Find My iPhone and switch this off. Next, tap Settings, then Messages and turn iMessage off. Finally, sign out of iCloud altogether by tapping Settings, iCloud. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and tap Sign Out – if you don't, you may inadvertently wipe all the data in your iCloud storage too.

With this done, tap Settings, General, Reset, then tap 'Erase All Content and Settings' (see screenshot below). This will



To wipe Android data, tap the 'Reset Phone/Tablet' button – but encrypt your device first

restore your iOS device to its **factory settings**. Remember to remove your device's SIM card, if it has one, before you sell or recycle it.

Wipe your Android device

Android lets you reset your device to factory settings, but your data may still be recoverable by someone with the right tools. The solution is to encrypt the contents of your device's storage first, then carry out a reset.

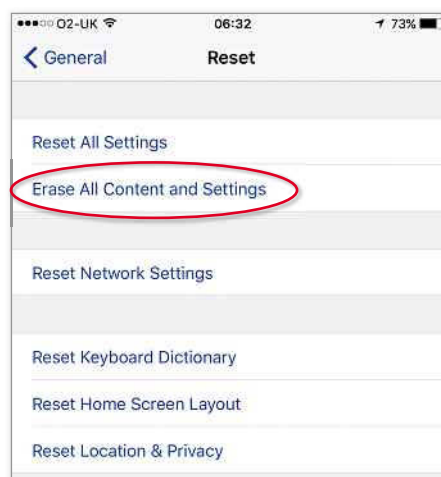
If your device has an **SD card**, take this out. Next,

tap Settings, Security, then 'Encrypt phone' or 'Encrypt tablet'. You may be prompted to plug the device into the mains before you can proceed. Once this is complete, tap Settings, 'Backup & reset' then 'Factory data reset'. When you're ready, tap 'Reset phone' or 'Reset tablet'. Again, remove your device's SIM card.

What if my device is broken?

Sites like Onrecycle.co.uk specialise in helping you sell broken devices, but if you've not securely erased it first, then selling or dumping it isn't safe because other people may still be able to recover your data.

You could get the device repaired so that you can erase it securely before disposing of it. But there's little point if the cost of the repair is higher than the device's re-sell value. In this scenario, we'd suggest keeping the device. It may be annoying to have old phones or tablets hanging around, but it's better than handing over your personal details to a stranger. For broken PCs, you could remove the hard drive and keep it before disposing of the rest of the unit. **ca**



Tap 'Erase All Content and Settings' to obliterate the data on your iOS device

Stop **hackers** stealing your photos

If you share a photo online, anyone can steal it and pretend it's theirs. **Jane Hoskyn** reveals some clever tricks for making your photos theft-proof



The internet is a public place. You already know how easy it is to copy and paste text from websites – drag your mouse (or press Ctrl+A to select all), then press Ctrl+V to paste the text into Notepad or wherever you want. Hey presto, the article is yours to read offline.

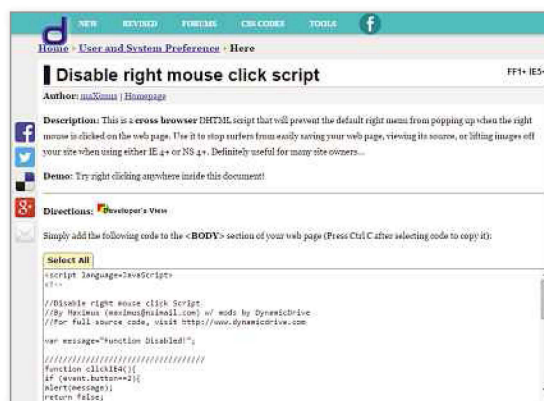
Copying a photo is even easier. All the thief has to do is right-click it, click 'Save image as...' and select a destination folder on their PC, or click 'Copy image' and paste it into a photo program, where they can inflict all manner of hideous editing. Next thing you know, they've stuck it on their blog, full of pride about "their" photo.

Here, we'll look at some clever but easy ways to keep those thieving hands off your precious photos.

Use code to block thieves

Let's start with the difficult-sounding stuff (the word 'code' is enough to put off the most confident of PC users). Don't be intimidated by the terminology, however. Code is the language in which websites are written. It's easy to edit on many sites, especially those like Google's Blogger (www.blogger.com), and Wix (www.wix.com), where you edit code to create a blog or website that contains words and photos. Once you get stuck in it can be very satisfying.

Search Google and you'll find plenty of code 'scripts' that block right-clicking. They're usually specific to the site you're using. For Blogger (and other blog sites) use www.snipca.com/19107; for Wix use www.snipca.com/19108, and for your own third-party-hosted website use the



The web is full of scripts and code snippets that block right-click thieves stealing your photos

various scripts at www.snipca.com/19109 (see screenshot above).

But here's a disclaimer, and it's an important one. Hackers are better at code than you are. If a hacker *really* wants your photos, he can easily hack your code to remove the right-click block. And there are loads of tools to help him, as we're about to see.

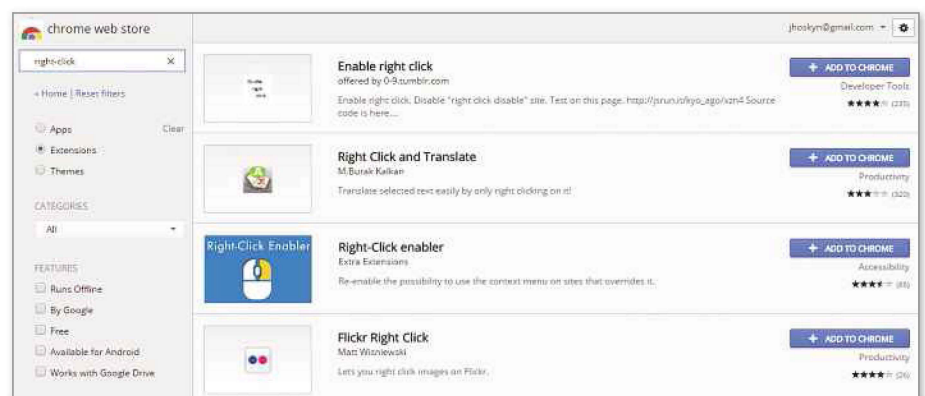
Know hackers' unblocking tricks

We typed **tool to block right-click** into Google and hoped for simple, free tools for protecting your photos. Sadly, the vast majority of results were for tools that could override right-click blocks and let thieves steal photos whose owners had carefully used code and scripts to protect them.

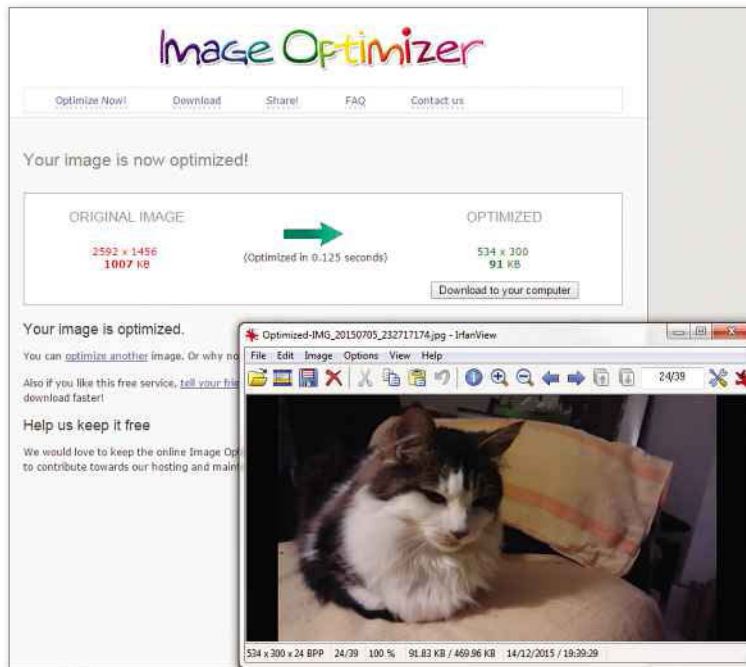
Likewise, search for 'right-click block' in the Chrome Web Store (www.snipca.com/19111) and all you get are free tools

for "Disabling 'right click disable'" and "letting you right-click images on Flickr" (which embeds copy-blocking for paying members).

Most normal, law-abiding folk won't be interested in these hacking tools. They're aimed squarely at hackers who want to steal lucrative photos of concerts and celebrities, or obscure professional



Chrome's Web Store is full of tools for helping hackers override copy protection



Shrink photos using Image Optimizer to deter thieves, who prefer large printable photos

STRANGERS ARE DOWNLOADING YOUR FACEBOOK PHOTOS NOW

Facebook makes it very easy for you to download your photos. Click Options under one of your photos and you'll see a menu that includes Download and Make Profile Picture (see screenshot).

Now open a photo posted by a friend or a complete stranger. If the friend has chosen 'friends' as the privacy setting, and the stranger has chosen 'public', those photos are free for you to download. Click Options as before, and up pops a smaller menu, which includes the Download button. If you download their photos they won't have a clue, because they don't receive a notification, and they'll still have the photo, apparently untouched.

Users have asked (nay, begged) Facebook in its Help Center (www.snipca.com/19112) to add privacy options to the Download button and even to disable the Download button – which you could do years ago. But Facebook won't budge.

So what about tweaking the code? Well, you can see the code for your photos (click Options and then 'Inspect element') but you can't edit it. It's Facebook's code, not yours.



photos they can enter into competitions as their own. Most disgusting of all, these tools are used to steal photos of children to post on paedophile sites that litter the so-called dark net.

Stop people copying your Google photos

Google Drive and Google Photos have a great trick for sharing a photo with someone while preventing them copying or sharing it.

In Google Drive, right-click a file (photo, video, music file or whatever), then select Share and add your recipient's email address and then click Advanced at the bottom-right. Another box will open. Here, tick 'Disable options to download, print and copy for commenters and viewers' and click 'Save changes'. In the dropdown box next to the person's name, choose 'Can view' if you want them to see the photo but not edit it. Finally, click Send.

Shrink photos to deter thieves

Thieves love large photos. The best way to deter them is to upload photos that are too small and low resolution to print. This won't affect their appearance on Facebook, say, and it will make them easier to send by email.

Even if Facebook were to remove the Download button, a hacker could simply open a large, high-quality photo (the site lets you post photos up to 2400 pixels wide). The thief could then click the little double-arrow above the photo to make it full screen, take a screenshot and save it in high resolution. Then they could print 200 copies and sell them on eBay.

The answer, then, is to keep all your online-sharing photos small. And always post JPEGs, because the more they are copied the more their quality deteriorates. So someone stealing your 500 pixel-wide, 72 dpi Facebook JPEG will have very little to show for it. Stick to no more than 600 pixels for the longer edge, and the photo will still look fantastic to friends and family.

Our favourite free online tool for resizing photos is Image Optimizer (www.imageoptimizer.net). Choose a photo from your hard drive, then choose a value from the Quality dropdown menu. 'Small file size' is the best compromise. Now choose a maximum width (say, 600) and maximum height (say, 300) and click Optimize Now. When the next page appears, click 'Download to your computer'. You'll also see how much smaller the optimised photo is in MB/KB.

The photo's aspect ratio is preserved by using cinema-style black letterbox lines, which you can crop if you want. Even with tiny file sizes, we found the photos were perfectly fine for Facebook – but useless for hackers.


Image Optimizer has free and paid-for downloadable versions that let you batch-resize photos, but you have to register to download and the free version adds a watermark to your photos. We prefer the free online tool.

Try not to use watermarks

Many professional photographers cover their web gallery photos with big watermarks to deter thieves. If someone

wants an un-watermarked version, they have to pay for it.

But for our everyday purposes, we think watermarks are vandalism. It's very easy to watermark a photo using editing tools, but why would you? Would you want to display your family photos with a big white DO NOT DOWNLOAD message stamped across them all? Of course not.

Forget about watermarks and just keep your online photos small. Save your original massive photos for printing as gifts for family and friends – they'll love you for it. 

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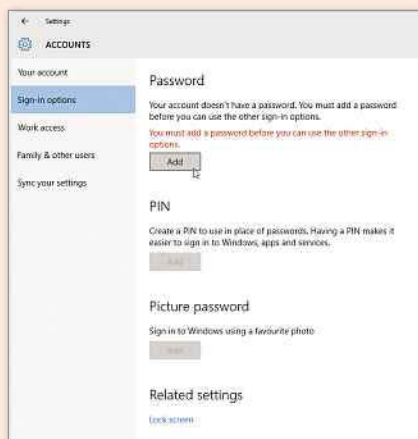
PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

How do I get Windows Mail to request my password?

Q I have a new desktop PC running Windows 10 and I would be grateful if you could offer guidance on the following. Currently I'm not asked to enter a password when booting, and I'm happy to stick with this for the time being. However, when I go online to log into my Outlook.com (previously Hotmail) account I do have to enter a password – and I'm happy with this for security reasons. I prefer to use Outlook.com online rather than in Windows 10's Mail app, but I have set up Mail to synchronise my Outlook.com emails. But I've noticed that if I launch Mail, my emails can be viewed with no password required. Ideally, I would like the Mail app to ask me for my usual Outlook.com password before allowing access to emails, while preserving the ability to boot without having to type a password.

Richard Kevern

A This is an entirely reasonable desire, but the Windows 10 Mail app – at least in its current incarnation – doesn't offer this option. There is a way to fudge it that we'll explain in a moment, but it's not an elegant or terribly practical solution.



Delete then re-set up your account to get Windows Mail to request your password

To be completely fair to Microsoft, your user account contains lots of other personal information – such as your documents and photos, and contents of all other apps – that are protected by having a local Windows password, or by logging into Windows 10 using an existing Microsoft account (such as your Outlook.com address). You have opted to not use either of these, so your Mail app is as unprotected as everything else on your PC.

We'll also explain how to change that, but you may first want to try our fudge fix. If you set up your account using Mail's Outlook.com automatic instructions, you'll need to delete it and start over. Click the Settings icon (a cog), Accounts, followed by your account, click 'Delete account', then Delete. Return to the Accounts pane, click 'Add account' and this time set up the account manually by selecting the 'Other account' option. Supply your old Hotmail email address and password – it won't work if you use the Outlook.com one. Click Sign-in.

Once the mailbox has synced, return to the Accounts pane, click the account, then 'Change account settings'. Change the password so that it's incorrect (because Mail won't let you leave it blank), then click Save. Mail's attempts to sync it will fail because the password is wrong, so you'll need to return to the Accounts pane, fix the password and then sync.

As we said, this is a serious fudge. The sensible options are to either stop using Mail (and delete your account, as explained) or apply a Windows password – and we'd suggest a local one in your case. Click Start, followed by Settings, then Accounts. Now click 'Sign-in options' on the left, click Add under Password, then type your password, confirm it, add a hint if you want, then click Next, followed by Finish.

What is this mystery drive on my laptop?

Q Recently, having upgraded to Windows 10, my laptop found a new drive – labelled H. Also, my PC sometimes displays the message "Please insert a disk into removable disk (H:)." To try to figure this out I have inserted a disc into my DVD drive, which is drive D – but that did nothing. I've also attached an external drive, but that appears under a different letter. What and where is drive H, why has it suddenly appeared on my laptop and what action should I take?

David Rose

A Do you have a printer attached to your laptop? Or did you perhaps upgrade Windows 10 with a memory card inserted into your laptop's card slot? Because what's happening here is that one of your applications is looking for a 'disk' that has previously been present, and our strong hunch is that a memory card was inserted in your laptop – or into a slot in a printer that's attached to your PC by USB.

The solution is to give the relevant program what it wants, by reinserting the memory card. Or, if the card is already inserted, the upgrade to Windows 10 may have scrambled the drive letters – so reassigning the memory card's drive letter should do the job.

First, press Windows key+X and choose Disk Management from the pop-up menu. Now right-click the memory key and choose 'Change Drive Letter and Paths'. Click Change, select a new drive letter then click OK.



If the upgrade to Windows 10 has scrambled your drive letters, fix this by reassigning them

Our experts solve all your tech problems

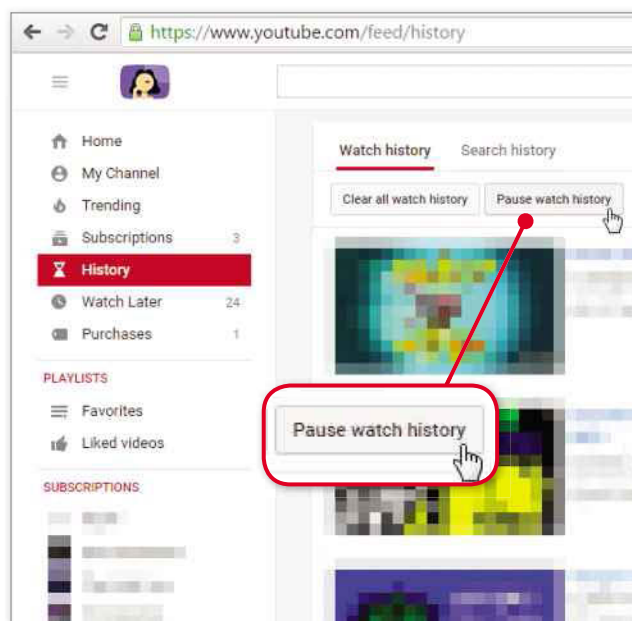
✉ Email us your problem and we'll try to help: noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

How do I delete videos from my YouTube history?

Q I have an Android smartphone on which I watch a lot of videos on YouTube, and I also upload a few of my own. I recently bought a new smart TV and logged into its own smartphone app so I could view my own videos. That worked but it also has a Recently Watched area that shows videos I've watched on my smartphone. I don't watch anything dodgy on YouTube, but I'd rather not have other members of my family able to see every last thing I do on my smartphone – but nor do I want to have to log out of the account, because I want to watch my own videos on the big screen. How do I stop my TV from displaying what I've watched on my smartphone?

Paul Mitchell

A We're not sure what TV you have, but the fact that you've logged into your YouTube account means that it has access to your YouTube history. Your new TV might have



You can manage your Recently Watched list via the YouTube app or on YouTube's website

options to disable this 'Recently Watched' section, so have a look for both.

However, you can also manage your history via the YouTube app on your Android phone, or via the YouTube website – and that should stop unwanted stuff appearing on your TV. It's the Android app that you use regularly so it's

Or, to erase the lot, tap the main menu button at the top and then choose 'Clear history'.

If you want to stop YouTube collecting your history you'll need to log into its website at www.youtube.com, then click History, followed by the 'Pause watch history' button.

easiest for you to do it in that.

First, tap the little person icon in the row of three icons at the top, then tap History. You now have the option to delete watched single videos, or wipe all of them. To do the former, tap the menu button (three dots) alongside a video, then tap 'Remove from Watch history'.

Or, to erase the lot, tap the main menu button at the top and then choose 'Clear history'.

If you want to stop YouTube collecting your history you'll need to log into its website at www.youtube.com, then click History, followed by the 'Pause watch history' button.

How can I see my hard-drive activity?

Q I have a Medion laptop that lacks a light to indicate hard-drive activity. Is there any other way I can see what my hard drive is up to?

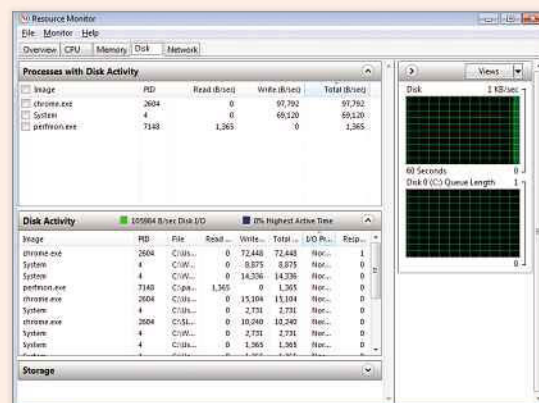
Trevor Marsland

A It depends on what you want to see. If you want detailed information about which programs are using the hard drive, and how much data they're pumping to and from it, then use the Resource Monitor tool that's part of Windows. Press Windows key+R, type 'resmon.exe' and press Enter. Now click the Disk tab to see what your hard drive is doing. For even more details, click the down arrow alongside Disk Activity.

However, if you simply want an activity indicator that shows when

something is accessing the drive, then there are numerous free tools that will do that. One of the best is Activity Monitor, which you can get from www.snipca.com/19084. It doesn't need installation, so just double-click to launch the downloaded ActivityIndicator.exe and it gets to work right away, putting an LED-style icon in the notification area, in the Windows taskbar.

But Activity Monitor can do much more. Right-click its icon to explore the options. For starters, we'd suggest ticking 'Start with Windows' on the 'Program settings' tab, as this launches the tool automatically every time you switch on your PC. And, if you want a real light



Use Resource Monitor in Windows to get detailed info about which programs are using your hard drive

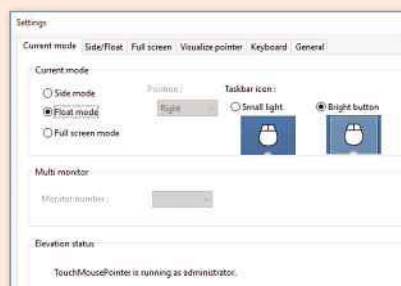
rather than an icon, tick 'Interact with keyboard lights' and then select one of the buttons. Activity Monitor will now use this light to indicate hard-drive activity.

Problems Solved

How do I point on my Windows tablet?

Q I bought a secondhand HP Stream 7 tablet from eBay, which runs Windows 8.1. It has offered me the option to upgrade to Windows 10, but I don't know if my tablet has enough power to run it. But my real problem is that some of my programs only work in Desktop mode, and on the small screen my fat fingers struggle to tap the tiny menus and icons. Would Windows 10 fix this? Or is there some other solution?

Robert Vickers



Use the free tool TouchMousePointer to navigate menus or icons on a small screen

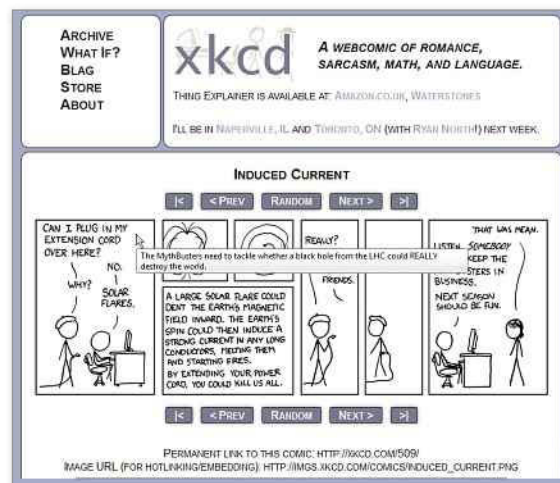
A Your device will run Windows 10 as well as it runs Windows 8.1. The newer version of the operating system does have a dedicated 'Tablet mode', but it wouldn't help with your problem, because it merely switches focus to the Modern-style interface and apps. One solution would be to buy a cheap Bluetooth wireless mouse and pair it to your Stream. You could then use the Windows Desktop just as you would on a full-size PC.

If this isn't practical for the way you use your tablet, then a free tool called TouchMousePointer will help – get it from www.snipca.com/19086. This has lots of different operational modes, including an on-screen touchpad that allows you to control a real mouse pointer – again, much like a proper PC.

Where are my XKCD pop-up jokes?

Q I like reading the comics on XKCD (www.xkcd.com). When you hover the mouse over these, a second joke is revealed in pop-up text. I've noticed that when I'm working away from home, these jokes aren't displayed. Instead, there's a message that says: "Shift+R improves the quality of this image. Shift+A improves the quality of all images on this page". What's causing this? Is there a fix?

Lorna Coleman



The compression of web-page data can lead to features not appearing when your laptop is tethered to your phone

A You said it only happens when you're working away from home, so we think you may be **tethering** your laptop to your smartphone in order to use its mobile-broadband connection. Many mobile networks save **bandwidth** by compressing the data contained in web pages before they're sent to the customer's phone. This mainly means reducing the quality of any images, as this isn't really noticeable on the small screen. However, it'll also affect data sent to your PC over the tethered connection.

So, when you next attempt to view XKCD's second-tier jokes, the alternative text or 'alt text' (as these pop-ups are known technically) instead shows a browser message, explaining that the images are not shown at full quality.

The solution is to follow the browser's suggestion and press Shift+R to grab the full-quality image – assuming you're happy to pay for the extra data. Then, you'll be able to hover the mouse pointer to see the hidden jokes.

Can I make my PC shut down automatically?

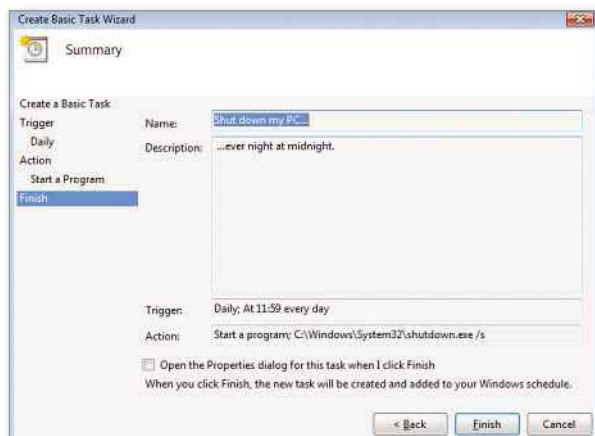
Q I'd quite like to have my Windows 7 PC shut itself down every night before I go to bed to save me the bother. Do you know of a way to make this happen automatically?

Kieran Flynn

A Yes, you can use Task Scheduler to do this. Press Windows key+R, type `taskschd.msc` and press Enter. Now Open the Action menu and choose Create Basic Task. Type a name for your task, and a description if you want, then click Next.

Now you need to set the

frequency and time. So, select the Daily button and click Next. Set the start date and desired time for the action to trigger, then click Next. Finally, choose the 'Start a program' button, type `C:\Windows\System32\shutdown.exe` into the 'Program/script' field and `/s` into the 'Add arguments' field. Click Next, check the Summary screen, then click Finish.



Use the Task Scheduler to configure your computer to shut down automatically

How do I make both my PCs pick up email?

Q I have a home network consisting of two desktop PCs and one laptop. They are all connected to my Virgin Media modem by cable. The two desktop computers use Windows XP and the laptop uses Windows 7. My problem is that if I receive an email on one PC, I cannot then see it on the other machines. Is there a way of making all my computers show the same emails?

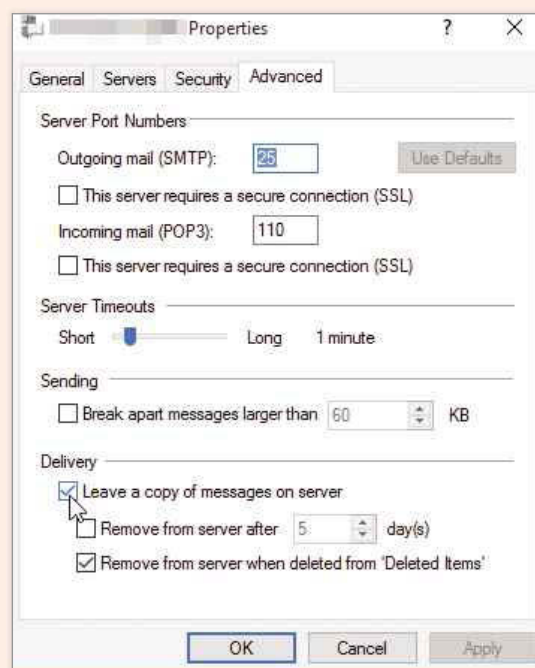
Alan Smith

A Yes. You can either tick a specific option in the email program on each PC, or you can change the way you synchronise email with Virgin's servers.

The latter is the best choice, but if you want a quick solution, you

need to tick the box labelled 'Leave a copy of messages on server'. In Outlook Express in XP start by clicking Tools, then Accounts. In Windows Live Mail in Windows 7, click the blue down arrow, then choose Options, followed by 'Email accounts'. Now click your account followed by Properties, then choose the Advanced tab. Tick said box, and also 'Remove from server after' and type a number of days – '7' would give you a week to sync all PCs, for example.

Alternatively, change the settings on all programs to use the more modern IMAP protocol, as this will keep all your email folders in sync across all devices. You'll find Virgin's IMAP server details and instructions on how to use them at www.snipca.com/19044.



Tick the 'Leave a copy...' box to see emails on all PCs

Why am I still on Windows 8?

Q I have recently upgraded to Windows 10, or so I thought. However, as you can see from my screenshot my computer says clearly that I have Windows 8. Why? Did something go wrong? Also, I assume the 'Windows.old' folder is the redundant Windows 8 operating system? Can I just delete this folder?

Derek Newbury

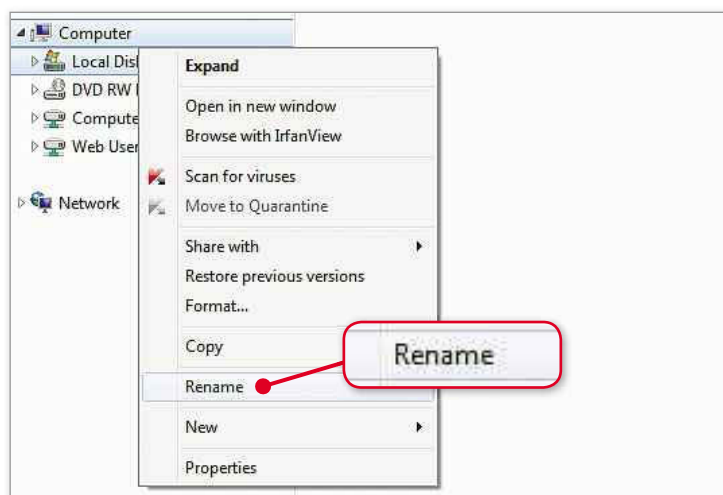
A Nothing went wrong and your computer is, presumably happily, running Windows 10. The

screenshot you sent was File Explorer (previously known as Windows Explorer) with your computer's C: drive selected, showing its contents. But, for whatever reason, the name given to your C drive is 'Windows8_OS'. And that's all it is – a name.

Why does it have this name? We can't say for sure, but it was probably applied by the manufacturer when your PC was built, or possibly by yourself or a technical expert you employed to install Windows 8 way back when. It's of literally no consequence, but we can see how it's

confusing. Fortunately, it's easily changed. Just right-click drive C: and choose Rename (or click to select it then tap F2). Now type a new label and press Enter. That's it.

As for Windows.old, yes – that's where your old Windows 8 system files reside. It's safe to delete, but we'd advise doing it using Disk Cleanup. Press Windows key+R, type `cleanmgr` and press Enter. Choose drive C, click OK, then sit back while Disk Cleanup scans for unnecessary files. Next, click 'Clean up system files', then tick 'Previous Windows installation(s)' in the 'Files to delete' list – and tick or clear the other boxes here as desired. Finally, click OK followed by Delete Files.



Confusingly named Windows 10 folders can be renamed by right-clicking drive C:, choosing Rename, typing a new label and pressing Enter

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
3 Feb

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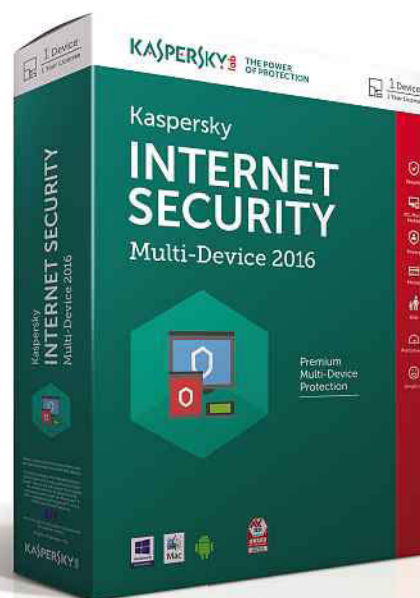
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File compression

Repair corrupted files, restore ZIP passwords in Windows and bypass email blocks on compressed files

Compressed file is corrupted

The first you'll know you've got a corrupted ZIP file is when you try to extract its contents – that's when Windows (or your compression tool) will display an error message. Windows can't do anything about these faults, so turn to free program ZIP Repair from DiskInternals (www.snipca.com/19071). It's really easy to use: simply select the broken file, choose a destination and new name for the recovered version, click Next, review the summary of recoverable files, then click Next again. Now use your usual method to open the recovered file (double-click in Windows) and access the content.



Use the free ZIP Repair program to rescue content from corrupted ZIP files

Files are the same size or larger after compression

This happens because not all files are especially compatible with the compression process, such as the popular JPEG image-file format – which already has built-in compression. Video files like MPEG are similar. It's often pointless trying to compress these types of file using Windows' own ZIP tool. You'll have more luck with third-party compression tools, as these usually offer stronger compression options (or algorithms).

In the popular 7-Zip tool (www.7-zip.org), for instance, choose the Ultra option from the 'Compression level' dropdown menu to reduce the size of your compressed file. Using stronger compression does take more time, but you won't notice the difference if you're working with a small numbers of files.

Compression option missing from the right-click menu

If the right-click Send To menu lacks the 'Compressed (zipped) folder' option, part of your Windows Registry has been corrupted. This can happen when your PC suffers an unexpected shutdown. To restore the item, first click Start, type `%systemdrive%\Users\Default\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\SendTo` and press Enter. Now click Start again and type `%systemdrive%\Users\Username\AppData\Roaming\Microsoft\Windows\SendTo`, replacing 'Username' with your Windows account username. You'll now have two Windows Explorer windows displayed: drag and drop the 'Compressed (zipped) folder' from the first window to the second – then restart your PC.

Compressed photos look awful

We mentioned in an earlier tip that the JPEG file format has compression built in, but it's a 'lossy' type that throws away detail to reduce the size of the image file. So, if you've chosen a higher compression ratio in your image-editing software, then photo quality will be reduced when you save items. If you need to reduce the size of digital photos to send by email, for example, you should use the ZIP option built into Windows instead – because this does the job without spoiling the detail. Simply right-click your image file (or selection of files), then point to Send To, followed by 'Compressed (zipped) folder'.

Can't send or receive ZIP files

Some email tools and services automatically block attachments deemed risky. Gmail, for example, blocks all sorts of file types – even if they're 'hidden' within a ZIP file. You can see a list of Gmail's blocked file types at www.snipca.com/19058. One trick to get around this is to rename the offending files before



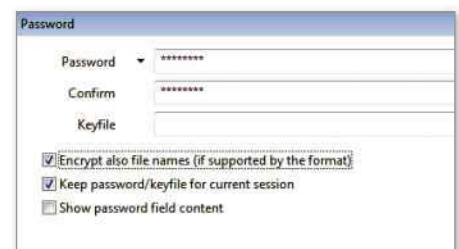
Tap F2 and rename your compressed files to stop email tools from blocking your attachments

you compress them. Alternatively, just rename the ZIP file itself by giving it a different file extension – such as .zzz. Just click the file, tap F2, type the new name and press Enter. Your recipient just needs to follow the same process to restore the .zip extension.

Missing password-protection option

Upgraded from Windows XP and wondering why you can no longer password-protect your ZIP files? Well, it's because Microsoft removed the option. Later versions of Windows will still open password-protected ZIP files – assuming you supply the password, of course – but for new ZIP files, you'll need to install a dedicated file-compression program, such as the free PeaZip (www.peazip.org).

First, right-click the file you want to protect, then choose 'Add to archive'. Press F9, type your password and retype it to confirm, then click OK. PeaZip can also be used to create, password-protect or open over 150 different compression formats – so if you receive a compressed file you can't open, this tool is your solution.



Windows no longer lets you password-protect compressed files, but free tool PeaZip does

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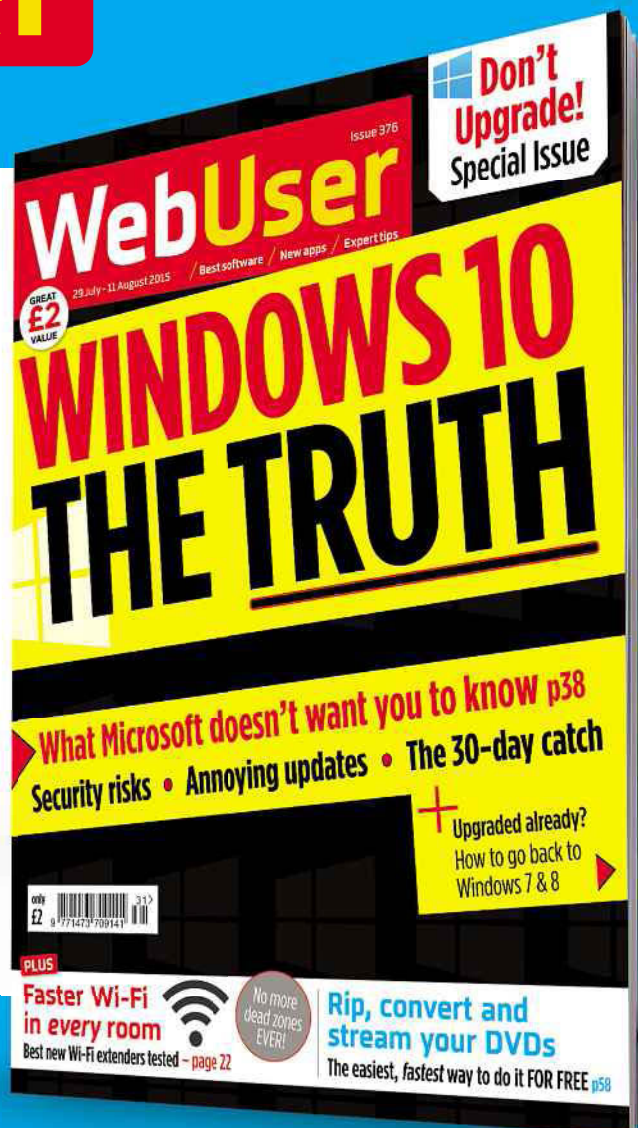
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I think you'll love **Web User**, so I've persuaded them to offer **Computeractive** readers an exclusive, one-off subscription deal (in return, they've told me I've got to make the tea for a week!). Subscribing to both means you'll get a great read delivered through your letterbox every week. I hope you enjoy reading **Web User** as much as I do.

All the best. . .



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Gloss 271gsm:
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Premium Semi-Gloss 251gsm:
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A3 50 sheets **£33.99**
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In the next issue of our sister title Web User...

- **SOLVE WINDOWS ERROR MESSAGES**
Find out what they mean – then fix them!
- **FREE ONLINE STORAGE TESTED**
The best services to store and share your files
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Jargon Buster

1080p Of the common types of high-definition video, this is the best quality: 1920x1080 pixels.

32bit A measure of how much info a computer can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit.

4K Video with a resolution of at least 3840x2160 pixels.

64bit A technology that processes information in larger chunks. Most modern computers are 64bit.

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

Add-on See Extension.

AMOLED Active-Matrix Organic Light-Emitting Diode. A technology creating flat-panel displays.

Bandwidth A measure of how much data can be transferred through a connection at one time.

Beta A version of software that's being tested.

Bloatware Unwanted software that comes pre-installed on a PC, phone or tablet.

Breadcrumb trail A visual aid that shows your location in websites and software.

Cache A temporary space for storing information.

Clean install An operating system installation that overwrites all other content on the hard drive.

Compression ratio The measurement of compressed data in a file.

CPU Central Processing Unit. Another term for a PC processor.

DSLR Digital single-lens reflex. A digital camera that uses a moving mirror so its viewfinder looks out through the lens.

DDoS Direct Denial of Service. A targeted cyber-attack which brings down a web server.

Digital signature A block of scrambled data that can be used to verify the sender of an email.

DLL Dynamic Link Library. Small programs that can be used by larger programs in Windows when needed.

Download mirror site A website that contains downloadable software bundled in a branded installer.

dpi Dots per inch. A measure of printed image quality.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

Factory settings The original system state of an electronic device.

False positive When an antivirus program wrongly detects a malware infection.

File extension The part of a file name after the full stop. For example, .doc is the file extension for Word documents.

Firmware Basic software stored on a device, such as a music player, to control its operation.

Flash memory A type of memory that can retain information without a power source. Used in memory cards and other storage devices.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

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

Hybrid drive A storage device that contains a conventional hard drive and a flash memory module.

IMAP Internet Message Access Protocol. A method for email that lets the user manage messages stored on a remote server.

ISO file A type of image file that contains all data from a CD or DVD.

JPEG Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras.

Kernel A program that manages input/output requests from software, and translates them into data-processing instructions.

Keylogging Recording everything someone types on their keyboard. Normally used by hackers to steal passwords.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display. The technology used to create almost all flat displays from digital watches to televisions.

LED Light-Emitting Diode. An electronic device that emits light. Used on almost all electronic devices, and to provide the backlight for some LCDs.

Megapixel A measure of the amount of detail that can be recorded by a digital image.

MicroSD A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

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

MPEG Motion Picture Experts Group. Describes a method of compressing digital video.

Paging file A temporary storage area that Windows uses as virtual memory.

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

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

PUP Potentially Unwanted Program. Examples include unnecessary plug-ins, toolbars and browser hijackers.

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

Raw A format for digital photos that stores the image exactly as the camera captured it.

Ransomware Malware run by hackers to take over your PC and demand a payment to release it.

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

Responsive website A website that fits multiple screen sizes.

Rootkit Malware that gives a hacker administration rights and access to a computer.

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

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

SIM Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones.

sRGB A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

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

System (SYS) files The files that run when the computer starts.

Tethering A way of providing internet access to a computer by connecting it to another device.

Trojan Malware that's disguised as a different, harmless program.

USB 3.0 A faster version of USB.

USB Type-C A tiny physical connector that can support various USB standards.

Vectors Instead of using pixels, vector graphics comprise 'paths' that can be enlarged without losing quality.

Web apps Programs that run on a web browser.

Widgets Desktop tools that perform simple functions, such as weather apps.

Wi-Fi hotspot A public area covered by a wireless network that allows you to access the internet.

Wireless induction Charging a device using an electromagnetic field, not an electrical plug socket.

Worm Malware that transmits and copies itself over a computer network, such as the internet.

Zero-day malware Malware or a security exploit that depends on a previously unknown software flaw.

The Final Straw



STUART ANDREWS is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

In his final column Stuart Andrews materialises into...

Mr Enthusiastic

This is my *final* Final Straw. I'm going to miss having the opportunity to rant and rave about the latest high-tech idiocy, but I know that moving on is the right thing to do.

When I began writing this column a little over two years ago nearly everything about computers made me angry. Microsoft had released the worst version of Windows ever (8, in the unlikely event you'd forgotten). And so my working day was blighted by malfunctioning apps and needless, intrusive updates. Besides this, I

“

It's time to pass the torch to someone else who can cope with new forms of high-tech dimwittery

”

was gobsmacked by the sheer stupidity of people using social media, and unsure whether I was more appalled by the companies who trampled all over our privacy or by the conspiracy nuts who railed against them.

I raged at laptops that wouldn't sleep and laptops that wouldn't wake from sleep. I took the fight to printers with a copious thirst for ink, wires that became irrevocably entangled and wireless tech that didn't work. I socked it to those smug, self-satisfied iPhone users and still found time to take on the aggressive Android crowd.

All these things still make me angry, and there are a whole new world of things that fill me with a molten ire.

Microsoft's new Edge browser is clearly the most unstable, memory-hogging browser to be foisted on the public in years, yet seemingly sensible people still regard it as one of Windows 10's best features. It baffles me that smartphone manufacturers keep bolting ever bigger, ever more power-hungry screens on to their devices, when the existing ones' batteries can't even last a day.

Yet perhaps there are chinks of light in this dark tunnel. Windows 10 might not be perfect, but it's a darn sight better than Windows 8. Recent wireless technologies are cutting down on my cable clutter, allowing me to recycle some of my kit (if I can just untangle the damn stuff first). Some intelligent young people are beginning to question the values of the social-media age, and Twitter actually isn't entirely composed of utter drivel. I don't suppose that iPhone users will ever become less smug or Android fans less rabid, but what can you do? Let's lock them in a room together and see what happens.

Meanwhile, something else has happened. I've begun to remember why I got into writing about technology in the first place. I used to love this stuff. I found it exciting then and I still do now. I'm excited about the potential of some new gadgets, especially the new wave of virtual-reality hardware. I like the thought of *smarter* smart devices that help me do more out in the real world, even if teething troubles are guaranteed to send me up the wall.

I've spent a lot of time recently messing around with Chromebooks, and I like the way these cheap, nippy little computers



do 90 per cent of what I need to do at a bargain-basement price. Sometimes it's fun to be Mr Angry, but it's also great to be Mr Enthusiastic every now and then.

At heart I know that I'm still the guy in the corner smirking at the dolt looking at his six-inch smartphone through his already obsolete Google Glass specs. I'm the guy threatening to thump a laptop because Edge has frozen once again. Yet I don't want to keep railing against the same old things, and I don't want to be that guy all of the time.

It's time to pass the torch on to a new Mr Angry: someone with new pet-hates, new reasons to be furious, new forms of high-tech dimwittery that make their blood boil. I'll still be somewhere on the sidelines, seething, but I'll be cheering them on as they fight the good fight.



Who will be our next Mr Angry? Find out in Issue 468 – on sale Weds 3 Feb



What was Stuart Andrews' best Final Straw column in your opinion? Let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk

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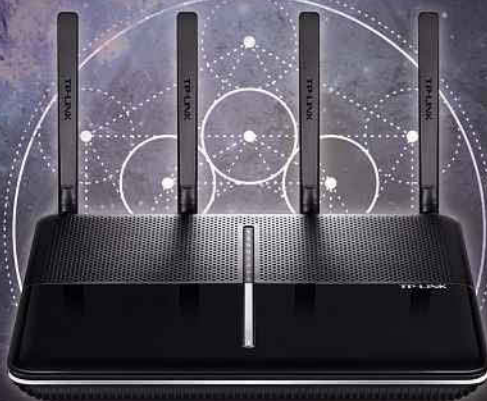
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