

**WINDOWS 10
COSTS REVEALED**

What & when you'll have to pay

UNINSTALL SOFTWARE

Without nasty side effects **p58**

MICROSOFT'S SHOCK WARNING

**SWITCH
YOUR
EMAIL
NOW**



Or lose ALL your
messages
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Computer **active**

ISSUE 476 | 25 MAY – 7 JUNE 2016

Your friendly guide to technology

Bin there, done that **p48**

Speed Up Windows 10 TODAY!

p50

The 15 tricks you must learn – to do everything faster

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'HELP!

MY LAPTOP WAS STOLEN'

What to do before it happens to you **p60**

SRM 1.0



3G/4G
hotspot



Beamforming
technology



Downloads &
multimedia hub

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with our DS router app available on
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From the Editor

I moved into my house four years ago, but only in March this year did I discover a hidden alleyway that halves my walk to the station every morning. It means I can spend another five minutes savouring my Weetabix before being squashed like a butternut into a train carriage.

Such alleyways are hard to find in Windows 10, but you won't have to wait four years before locating them. Our resident Windows expert Jonathan Parkyn has found the 15 best tricks for using the operating system more efficiently. Editing his feature reminded me that while an operating system becomes easier the more you use it, this is mostly down to basic familiarity. It doesn't actually mean that



you're using it as quickly as you could.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk

PS: At the time of writing, we've had 99 reviews of our 2015 Back Issue CD on Amazon (agonisingly close to the century!). Thanks to everyone who has left comments - you can read them at www.snipca.com/19124.



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

1.6 million

Number of NHS medical records



Google has access to - **p7**

80%

Proportion of people confused by broadband ads - **p11**

1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000

Number of bytes in a zettabyte - **p49**

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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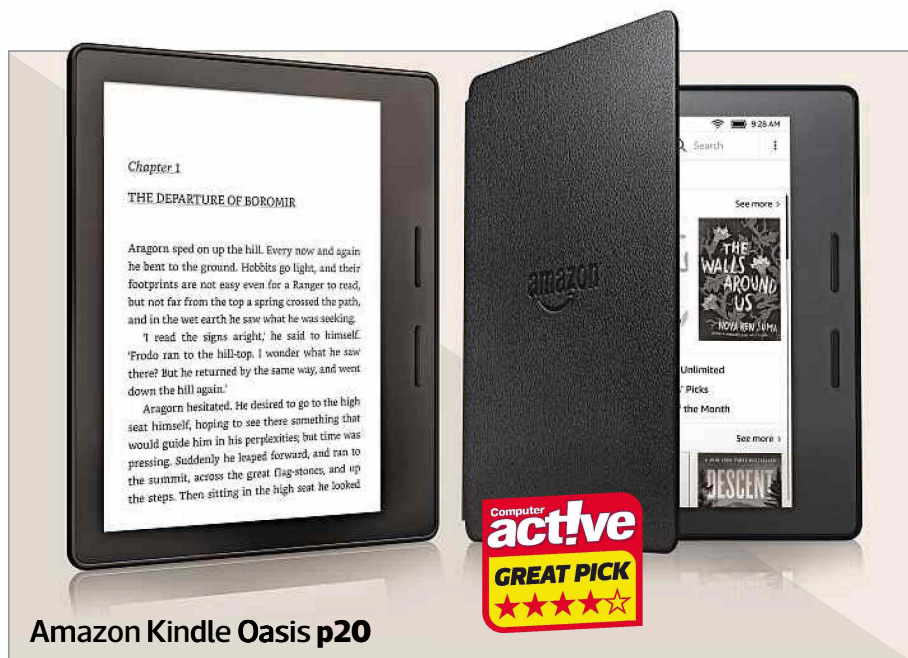
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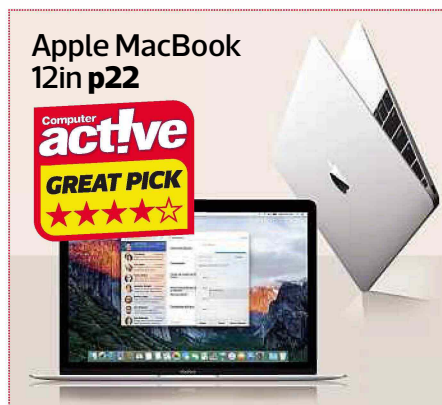
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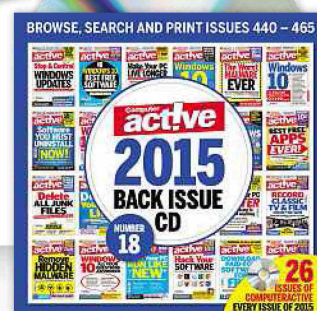
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**2015
BACK ISSUE CD**

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BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at www.snipca.com/19124

No extension to Windows 10 free upgrade

Microsoft has confirmed that you will have to pay to download Windows 10 after 29 July.

There had been speculation that the company would extend the 12-month 'free upgrade' offer for Windows 7 and 8 users, which began when the operating system (OS) launched last year.

But Microsoft attempted to quash such rumours by saying in a blog post (www.snipca.com/20596) that Windows 10 will cost \$119 (£99.99 in the UK) after 29 July. This is the same price it currently costs to upgrade from a Windows XP or Vista PC.

Even after this blog post Microsoft had given an indication that it may extend the deadline, telling Windows blogger Mary Jo Foley that the offer is "currently" slated to end on 29 July.



However, the company quickly changed this to a less ambiguous statement: "The free upgrade promotion is ending on July 29 and we encourage all of our customers to take advantage of it while it is still active".

Windows 10 will remain free after 29 July for people who use its "assistive" tools, which are built for people with disabilities. These include the Magnifier, which increases a portion of your screen (see

page 51); Narrator, which reads text aloud; and an on-screen keyboard you can control with your mouse.

In its Accessibility Blog (www.snipca.com/20598) Microsoft said that it is "committed" to keeping Windows 10 free for people who use these tools. No further details are available, though

Microsoft said users should "stay tuned" for more information.

Hooray – no more nagging

In a surprise announcement, Microsoft also said that on 29 July it will turn off the 'Get Windows 10' app that pesters users into upgrading to Windows 10. It means that people sticking with Windows 7 or 8 will no longer see messages urging them

COMMENT

So there's good news and bad news. We're happy that Microsoft will stop nagging people into upgrading – at times it felt like psychological bullying. But it's a shame that the company won't budge on the 29 July deadline. However, let's think about this for a moment: if Microsoft is secretly planning a surprise extension, to be announced perhaps in the middle of July, then until that date it must do everything to convince the public otherwise. Cynical marketing from Microsoft? Surely not!

to upgrade.

In a statement to the website WinBeta (www.winbeta.org), Microsoft said: "Details are still being finalised, but on July 29th the Get Windows 10 app that facilitates the easy upgrade to Windows 10 will be disabled and eventually removed from PCs worldwide. Just as it took time to ramp up and roll out the Get Windows 10 app, it will take time to ramp it down".

The move will be welcomed by the thousands of users, including many *Computeractive* readers, who felt they were being bombarded by Microsoft's upgrade 'nagging'.

MICROSOFT SEES SENSE OVER WI-FI TOOL

Microsoft is closing its controversial Wi-Fi Sense tool, which raised privacy concerns when it arrived as part of Windows 10 last year. It automatically connected you to any Wi-Fi network within range in order to "get you on the internet more quickly in more places". But it also shared your Wi-Fi password – albeit in an encrypted form – with your Outlook.com and Skype contacts, so you wouldn't need to keep giving it to people who shared your network.

The tool never proved popular, though, and many users were angered by the fact that it was turned on by default. Microsoft tried to calm privacy fears about Wi-Fi Sense in the tool's FAQ web page (www.snipca.com/20604), but has finally admitted defeat, saying that "low usage" of the feature made it "not worth further investment". Read Microsoft's announcement at www.snipca.com/20605 (scroll to the bottom).



You'll like this...

A new site helps you track down lost pension savings (www.snipca.com/20597)



... but not this

Two-thirds of UK companies suffered cyber-attacks in the past year (www.snipca.com/20603)

Faster Wi-Fi at home - but not for a few years

Ofcom has set out plans to increase Wi-Fi speeds to help households cope with increased demand for broadband.

The telecoms regulator wants to open up a new additional 'sub-band' band in the **5GHz** frequency, which is less congested than **2.4GHz**. Many new routers are **dual-band**, letting you connect to Wi-Fi on either band.

The proposals would lead to more data being transferred at faster download speeds. Households that use several devices simultaneously stand to benefit, particularly if they stream high-definition video, which requires a lot of data.

Ofcom said: "As broadband delivered to the home gets faster, people increasingly expect their Wi-Fi to provide several services at once - such as video streaming, video calls, gaming and remote working. This demand puts pressure on the airwaves - or



radio spectrum - which carry Wi-Fi signals".

Philip Marnick, group director of spectrum at Ofcom, said that one reason to create a sub-band is to "close the gap between advertised speeds and the wireless performance that people and businesses actually receive".

Adding a sub-band would increase the number of Wi-Fi channels from four to six. Although these extra channels are already being used in the US, Ofcom admitted that they won't be available in the UK

for a couple of years at least.

The regulator's research shows that nearly six million UK homes and offices suffer Wi-Fi that "may not be working as well as it could". This echoes a similar result from a survey conducted last year by mobile network testing company Global Wireless Solutions, which found that a quarter of people use mobile data at home because their Wi-Fi is so poor.

You can read Ofcom's proposals at www.snipca.com/20609.

NHS gives patient records to Google - but data watchdog will investigate

The NHS's controversial deal with Google to share 1.6 million patient records is to be investigated by the UK's data-protection watchdog. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) confirmed it will investigate after questions were raised as to whether the data would be encrypted once Google had it.

As part of the deal the Royal Free Hospital Trust will pass healthcare records on to DeepMind, an artificial-intelligence company owned by Google. The trust runs three hospitals in North London: Chase Farm, Barnet and Royal Free.

The contract between the



NHS and Google, uncovered by *New Scientist* magazine, states that there is no reason to make the data anonymous once it's been transferred to DeepMind, which will receive records going back over the past five years and continuing until 2017. It is using the data to develop an app that can identify when a patient is at risk of developing Acute

Kidney Injuries (AKI), which the NHS says is a factor in up to 20 per cent of emergency hospital admissions.

Privacy campaigners have questioned why DeepMind needs so many records, some of which relate to abortions, HIV diagnoses and drug overdoses. DeepMind says that it needs to analyse all 1.6 million records because there isn't a separate database of patients with AKI. It insisted the data will only ever be used for medical research, never in Google's services or products.



Would you trust Google with your medical records? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

BBC IPLAYER LOOPHOLE TO BE CLOSED

The Government has confirmed that it will close the loophole that lets people watch catch-up TV shows on the BBC iPlayer without paying the licence fee. Since the iPlayer launched in 2007, only people watching shows broadcast live have needed a TV licence. John Whittingdale, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, said the change will make the licence fee "fairer".

GOOGLE BANS PAYDAY ADVERTS ONLINE

Google has banned adverts from so-called payday lenders appearing in its search results, in an effort to protect its users from "deceptive or harmful financial products". It will no longer show offers for loans that ask for repayment within 60 days, or have an interest rate of 36 per cent or higher. Lisa McGreevy, president and CEO of the Online Lenders Alliance, said she was disappointed by the move.

Tomorrow's world

Turn the pages of *Computeractive* too roughly and they may rip. That's not a problem when swiping a tablet screen, although Google envisages a future where you'll be able to tear off sections, just like paper. In its patent for 'tearable displays' it uses an example of a 'lost dog' poster that has info at the bottom that can be ripped off (see it explained at www.snipca.com/20544).

IN BRIEF

RANSOMWARE 'GIVES MONEY TO KIDS CHARITY'

A new strain of **ransomware** says that it donates money paid by victims to a children's charity. The unlikely claim is made by CryptMix, which was discovered by the Danish security company Heimdal (www.snipca.com/20530), who called the tactic "psychological manipulation". CryptMix infects PCs by tricking you into clicking a link in a scam email, which takes you to a website containing malware.

SEARCH PANAMA PAPERS ON THE WEB

You can now search the Panama Papers online, after the database was posted online by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ). It contains the details of 214,000 companies that have offshore tax accounts, but no bank details, phone numbers and email addresses. The ICIJ said it put the info online "in the public interest". Search it at www.snipca.com/20536.

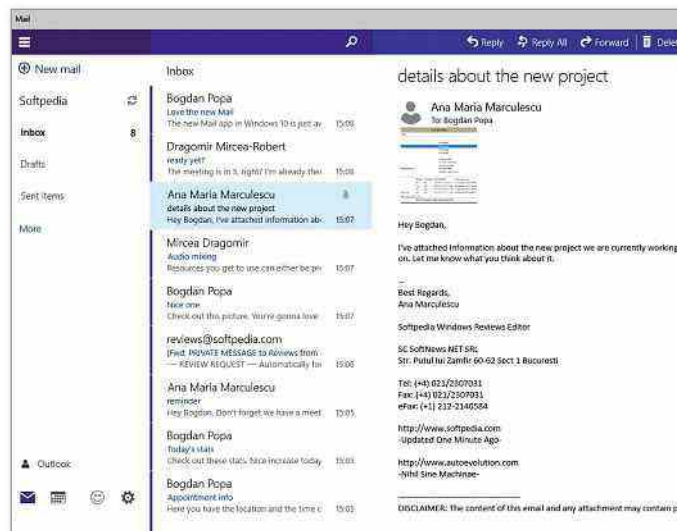
Use Windows Live Mail? Switch now or lose your emails

Microsoft has urged users of Windows Live Mail 2012 (WLM) to switch to Outlook.com after announcing that it will end support for the **email client** at the end of June.

The company sent an email to all users, warning them that after 30 June they won't be able to use WLM to read emails sent to any address that ends @outlook.com, @hotmail.com, @hotmail.co.uk, @live.com, or @msn.com. From that date users will also be unable to synchronise contacts and calendar entries.

Microsoft apologised for any inconvenience, and said that the change has been made "only after thoughtful consideration".

As it explains in a blog post (www.snipca.com/20549), Microsoft wants to move all users to a new email "infrastructure", which is incompatible with WLM. It says that users will enjoy "enhanced performance,



security and reliability".

If you have a Microsoft email address, your service will be upgraded at some point before 30 June.

Instead of switching to Outlook.com, WLM users could move to Microsoft's Mail app (www.snipca.com/20550, see screenshot), which was introduced in Windows 8, and works in Windows 10. It lets you read emails sent to your Yahoo and

Gmail accounts, as well as to Outlook.com and other Microsoft services.

WLM was launched in 2007 as a replacement for Windows Mail in Vista, and Outlook Express in XP. Its demise is a casualty of Microsoft's attempt to update all its email services so they're compatible with each other.

• We'll explain your choices in more detail in our next issue – out Wednesday 8 June.

£20m 'wasted' telling you to be safe online

The British public are largely unaware of websites that help them stay safe online, despite the Government spending £20m in 2014-15 on cyber-security campaigns.

Some of this money was spent to promote Safer Internet Day 2016, which was on 9 February, but a survey from YouGov and US security company CSID found that 84 per cent of British adults didn't notice it.

The same survey found that only 13 per cent of British adults had heard of GetSafeOnline.org (see screenshot), which is partly funded by the Government.



Fewer people – only six per cent – were aware of Cyber Streetwise (www.cyberstreetwise.com), which accounted for £4m of the budget. Both websites aim to provide independent, easy-to-understand advice on staying safe.

The Government's intention was to "drive engagement and awareness" among small businesses and individuals, but CSID said that its efforts so far have been "uncoordinated, ill-informed and utterly ineffective".

Citizens Advice was the most recognised organisation in the survey, being known by 88 per cent of people (95 per cent among the over-55s). CSID called this service "part of the UK social fabric" and suggested that it could replace the current crop of cyber-security websites.



Were you aware of Safer Internet Day 2016? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

The world's gone mad!

China has a habit of banning things it doesn't like on the web. The latest target of its internet police are "seductive" videos of women eating bananas, which are "harming social morality". Websites that stream videos live must now monitor them 24 hours a day to check for all "inappropriate and erotic" content, not just the indecent consumption of fruit. For example, stockings and suspenders are also forbidden, though we can't imagine bananas look good in them anyway.

'Arrogant' Govt says rural areas not entitled to fast broadband

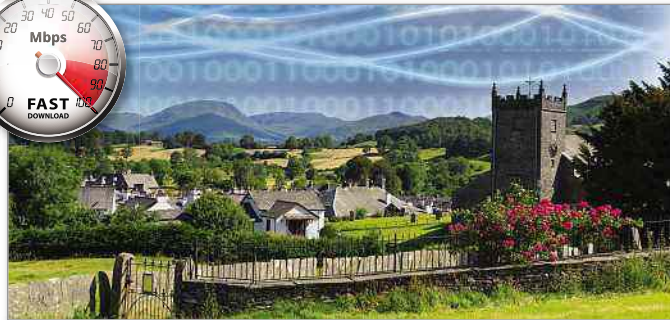
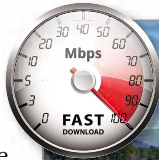
Countryside campaigners have reacted angrily to the Government's decision to stop rolling out super-fast broadband to the whole of the UK.

Instead of automatically providing speeds of 10Mbps to all rural areas – referred to by policymakers as the final five per cent of the country – the Government says that local communities must request it to prove they actually want it.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) outlined the plan in the Broadband Universal Service Obligation consultation document, saying that many people in remote areas don't want fast broadband.

It added that providing broadband to such areas without knowing whether there's demand for it would not "represent value for money".

The decision was greeted with fury and disbelief by many critics. Graham Long, who campaigns for better



broadband in rural Devon and Somerset, said that it was "sheer arrogance to assume those in rural areas don't use broadband".

Tim Bonner, chief executive of the Countryside Alliance, accused the Government of being biased towards towns and cities. He said that people living in remote areas shouldn't have to make "special requests" to receive fast broadband.

Others questioned how the request scheme would work. Dan Howdle, editor-in-chief at broadband-comparison site Cable.co.uk, said: "Will an entire village have to speak with a single voice to warrant

consideration?"

However, some analysts agreed with the Government's decision, pointing out that the take-up of fast broadband in many cities has been much lower than expected.

The Government first indicated that it wanted to make broadband a universal utility – like electricity and water – in November 2015. It hopes to deliver broadband of at least 10Mbps to 95 per cent of the UK by December 2017, leaving around 1 million premises off the pace.

A Government spokesman told the BBC that it was "absolute nonsense" to suggest it was abandoning rural areas.

IN BRIEF

PAY LESS FOR USING YOUR PHONE ABROAD

The EU has introduced tighter caps on roaming fees, which is what mobile networks charge you for using your phone abroad. For calls, charges will be limited to only four pence over and above domestic rates, down from a maximum of 15 pence. Sending texts is also cheaper (an extra two pence on domestic prices), and using data will also cost you less at four pence per MB. The EU will abolish roaming charges on 15 June, 2017.

BLOCK WEB ADVERTS IN MICROSOFT EDGE

Adblock Plus is now available as an extension for Microsoft's new browser Edge, letting you block adverts on the internet. It can be downloaded for free from the Windows Store (www.snipca.com/20525), although for the moment works only in the Insider preview of Windows 10 (<https://insider.windows.com>). It's expected to be added to the full version of Windows 10 as part of the Anniversary Update, which is due in the summer.

USE NEW VPN APP ON YOUR IPAD

The browser Opera has launched a free VPN (virtual private network) app for iPhones and iPads. Like all VPNs, it lets you disguise your location so you can access content online that's blocked in the UK. Many people use them to watch films and TV that are available only in the US. In April, Opera announced that it had built a VPN into the beta version of its browser. Read more about the app on Opera's blog: www.snipca.com/20523.

New British game to help identify early dementia symptoms

Researchers into dementia hope that a new phone and tablet game will help them develop tests to diagnose early signs of the disease.

One of the first things to be affected by people suffering dementia is the ability to navigate physical environments, but doctors can find it difficult to diagnose whether this is a symptom of the disease or simply old age.

In the game, called Sea Hero Quest (www.seaheroquest.com), players have to move around a 3D environment beneath the sea, looking for



aquatic monsters. Scientists will monitor how players do this, building up an anonymous database of 'normal' navigational skills. They will then compare the results with patients showing early signs of dementia.

The game is available for free for iOS and Android, and has been developed by the

charity Alzheimer's Research UK, together with analysts from University College London (UCL) and the University of East Anglia.

UCL's Dr Hugo Spiers told the BBC that he can test 200 people in one minute in the game, compared with 200 people a year otherwise. Hilary Evans, chief executive at Alzheimer's Research UK, said that this is "exactly the kind of innovation required to unlock the next breakthrough in dementia research".

The first batch of results is expected in November.

Named & Shamed

In a special edition of Named & Shamed, Jane Hoskyn battles a blizzard of pop-ups and confusing jargon from a certain antivirus giant

The great Avast pop-up saga



Pop-up offender: Avast

'To free or not to free? Avast is the question'. I asked this very question in Named & Shamed in Issue 472. Many of you had wondered the same thing. I've now found the answer, after tripping over a passing pop-up.

Avast Free Antivirus has spent several weeks battering my new Windows 10 PC with sales pitches for its paid-for version. The pop-ups went from annoying to plain scary, claiming my antivirus (AV) "expires in 3 days" and "recommending" that I cough up cash (see screenshot).

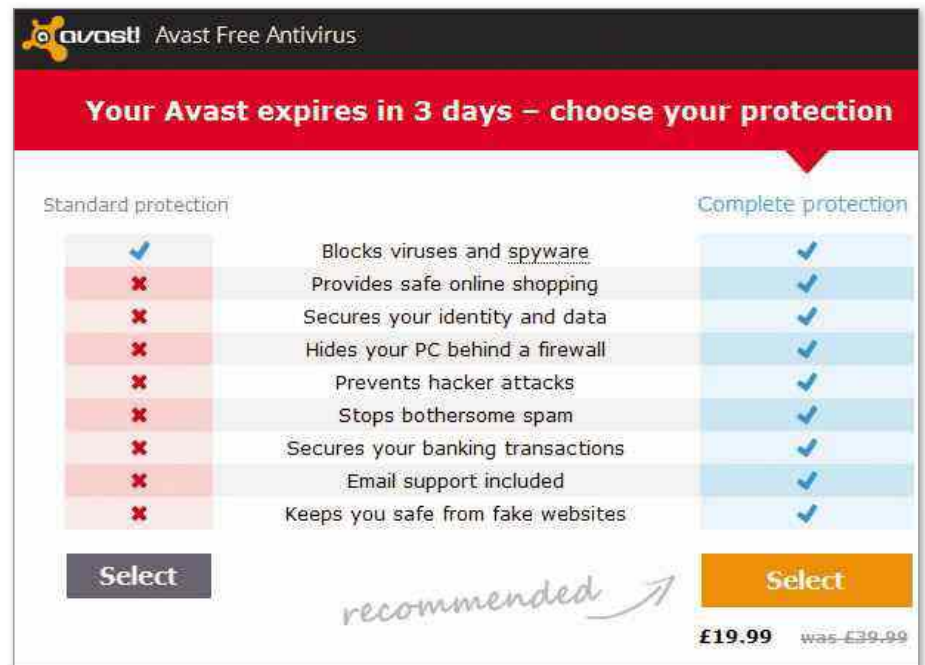
Avast strikes back

I'm not happy about that kind of pressure at all – and Avast wasn't happy that I said so. It emailed me to tell me that I must have installed a free trial of its paid-for version by mistake. I'm not a tech genius, but I'm not daft either. Doubting myself, I went back and checked to see exactly what I had installed – and it *was* Avast Free Antivirus.

“Avast's pop-ups went from annoying to plain scary, claiming it 'expires in 3 days'”

Marketing pop-ups are like the boy who cried wolf. After you get hit with a few shameless upgrade prompts, you learn to click them all into oblivion. The pop-up we've pictured here contained a slightly different message, but I just heard "WOLF!" and didn't even stop to ponder the semantics of 'Standard' and 'Complete'.

No doubt, some people will be intimidated into needlessly buying the upgrade. Others, including me, noticed that the free version of Avast (called



Glancing at this, you'd assume it's an upgrade-prompt after a paid-for trial – but it's not

'Standard') blocks malware ("viruses") and concluded that my PC was safe, because I had installed the free version. This pop-up, to all appearances, was intended for trial users. Even Avast's email to me said as much. Except it wasn't.

Registration, registration, registration

What I didn't realise when closing this pop-up is that I left myself wide open to malware. 'Standard protection' might be free, but you have to register for it to work properly. That scary word 'expire' actually referred to the registration deadline. This should be stated upfront, the moment you click Download – and it isn't. I had to trawl Avast's FAQ to find an explanation (www.snipca.com/20559). Nor was the need for registration explained in the installer, though I confess I didn't read the Terms & Conditions. But what *really* annoys me is the fact that this pop-up message fails to explain it.

So, not only have I had my laptop stolen by a burglar (see page 60), I've also failed to register Avast. Frankly, I'll be lucky if my identity isn't stolen by a teenager in a hoodie.

I should add, for anyone worried they've been left vulnerable, that Avast Free Antivirus and its many other processes (including pop-ups) continued to run. When I tried to test other security tools, they warned me I was already running Avast.

That aside, if you've installed Avast Free Antivirus, you *must* go to its registration page (www.snipca.com/20558) and get a one-year licence, then run a full scan. Next year, you must register again.

With a program as important as your antivirus, it pays to read the T&Cs. I assumed I'd installed a free product and trusted it to do its job as advertised, just like I trusted my boiler – until that time I was forced to get better acquainted with its user manual.

Question of the Fortnight

Is this the end of misleading broadband ads?

Tougher rules may finally lead to offers you can actually understand

Do you have a PhD in maths? No? Then you may struggle to understand the pricing structure of broadband contracts. Dan Howdle from broadband-comparison website Cable (www.cable.co.uk) says their complexity would “tax a maths professor, let alone a consumer who just wants to find the right deal”.

Many customers would agree. A survey in January conducted by Ofcom and the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) found that nearly 80 per cent of people shown a broadband advert couldn't work out how much they would be paying each month. At the time the organisations accused internet service providers (ISPs) of displaying prices that were “likely to confuse and mislead consumers”.

“These rules should make it easier for you to know *precisely* what you'll be paying every month”

For years, the Government, ASA and Ofcom have been calling for ISPs to make their adverts easier to understand, with limited success. But we should soon see some significant developments after the ASA announced that stronger rules will come into force on 31 October.

The ASA's recommendations comprise three key points: adverts must show *all* monthly costs as one amount, including rental for a landline (which currently is presented as a separate fee); there must be

“greater prominence” given to the length of contract and prices after the discount period ends; and ISPs must clearly state the upfront costs, such as installation fees.

Taken together, these rules should make it easier for you to know *precisely* what you'll be paying every month. It's

particularly welcoming that ISPs will no longer be able to hide the cost of line rental. At present, they're allowed to advertise a tempting monthly cost that doesn't include line rental, which then adds around £18 to your bill. You almost always need a landline to use broadband, so this cost is unavoidable, but ISPs often try to bury it.

To see what difference this will make, look at the screenshot (above) from TalkTalk's website. It gives the impression that you'll be

paying the eye-catching price of just £10 a month, but beneath, in small print, comes the bad news: the deal rises to £17.50 a month after a year, and it doesn't include £17.70 line rental. So eventually, instead of £10, you'll be paying £35.20 a month. To give TalkTalk credit, it was the first ISP to say that it will change its offers so line rental is included in the price. Other ISPs are expected to follow.

But will they abide by every new rule? There's nothing to stop ISPs continuing to publish misleading adverts, but from 31 October the ASA will have the power to ban them. If past practice is anything to go by, ISPs will continue to bend the rules. In 2012, new guidelines restricted how ISPs can use the word ‘unlimited’ to advertise broadband, but as recently as 2015 the ASA banned adverts from Virgin Media and Plusnet that breached these regulations.

However, one broadband expert thinks ISPs will play fair “for the most part”. Matt Powell, editor at Broadband

THE FACTS

- From October 31, ISPs must show all costs as one amount in their adverts, including line-rental fees
- This autumn, TalkTalk will merge customers' bills into one monthly charge, becoming the first ISP to scrap a separate line-rental fee
- Adverts are so confusing that nearly 80 per cent of people can't work out the total cost of a contract

Genie (www.broadbandgenie.co.uk), says that there will be “limited wiggle room to hide important details in the small print”. And because the prices of ISPs' similar packages don't vary that much, he expects companies to offer “additional value” such as free tablets or shopping vouchers.

So, finally, the customer may be winning the battle against deceptive adverts, with freebies thrown in. No maths qualifications are required to realise that adds up to a good result.

Letters

Tell us what's on your mind




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Facebook: www.facebook.com/computeractive



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Microsoft should charge for XP support

 Your news story in Issue 475 'All cash machines can be hacked – and XP is to blame' says that "over 100 million home computers still run XP", indicating the continued popularity of the OS. My view is that Microsoft is to blame and has acted irresponsibly by abandoning all these millions of home and commercial Windows XP users, who initially paid them good money to buy their product. Why should these users – who have been perfectly happy with XP – be expected to fork out yet more money just because Microsoft abandoned them on some arbitrary date?

The concept that Microsoft has forced users to accept is that their Windows products will only be supported for a fixed number of years, which makes them vulnerable to being hacked. As Microsoft wants to make more money out of us all, why don't they provide continued XP software updates and support for cash machines and private users for an annual fee?

John Hale

Make Windows 10 work like Windows 7

 I've been using Windows 10 since October 2015 on a new laptop and have since upgraded my old Windows 7 laptop as well. There's a lot of negative publicity about Windows 10, some of it justified, but most of it isn't. I really like the fast startup and hope that the next update does not mess about with that too much.

But what I don't like are the tiles on the Start menu, so I have deleted them all, and reverted to the Windows 7 system of desktop shortcuts. This was initially difficult to do because there seemed to be no way to right-click a program in the 'All apps' listing to 'send' a shortcut to the desktop, as in previous versions of Windows.

However, this is simply done – just click and drag the tile on to your desktop, and a shortcut is magically created. You can then delete the tile. By doing this for all the programs you want shortcuts for, you end up with conveniently sized shortcuts. Any other tiles left on the Start menu after doing this can be deleted at


will. So, I have a quick-starting Windows 10 machine, that looks like a Windows 7 machine. QED.

Roy Phillips

Landlines are 'more convenient' than smartphones

 I'm not sure what the obsession is with cancelling the landline. In Issue 475 the subject was raised twice: in News, and then by Ken Rigsby in The Final Straw. I can see why Ken and others call it a "tax", but the way that people dismiss the landline you'd think that nobody ever uses it these days. Well, I still do, and so do most of my friends. Needless to say, we're not teenagers texting every minute of every day, or taking daft selfies. We just find landlines a more convenient way of talking than mobile phones. Also, the call quality on mobiles is frankly rubbish. I bet millions of people would agree, though probably not many people aged under 30.

Ruth Mariner

 It seems as if everyone has a mobile phone and uses it instead of a landline phone. Why? I've got a mobile phone, which I bought in




December 2013 for £12.99, of which £10 was pay-as-you-go credit. I've only used about £7! I just can't see the need to pay the exorbitant price for what I assume is a 'smart' phone. I'm quite happy to make my calls from home. I have a tariff with Plusnet, which allows me to make calls any time of day. It's an extra fee but I don't think it costs anywhere near as much as I would have to pay per month to use a smartphone. I don't need a phone to access the internet or receive emails – that's what I have a computer for. I don't need a phone to take photos – I've got a camera. I recently received a call from someone who had the temerity to ask me to call him back on his mobile phone. I have to pay extra to do that!


It's interesting to see that 98 per cent of young people don't use a landline phone. It would be interesting to know who pays for their mobile phone – the 'Bank of Mum and Dad' perhaps?

Jack Luxon

BT must provide 'excellence' to its customers

 I have to correct Brian Hargrave for so valiantly defending BT in Issue 474's Letters page. His defence of the company is based on the fact that BT is now a commercial enterprise, and he

Making greeting cards? Use Serif CraftArtist

 When I read your reply to Shelia Woodhouse's letter about making greetings cards on her PC ('What Should I Download?', Issue 474, page 19) I thought your suggestion overlooked perhaps the best card-making software out there – Serif's

CraftArtist (www.serif.com/craftartist), which costs £25, though there is a free version called Craft Artist Compact (www.serif.com/digital-scrapbooking, pictured). The software is enhanced by an army of avid users who share ideas and how-to videos, so even a novice

can follow step-by-step instructions to create fantastic cards and scrapbook pages. I have also used the software to edit photos, and create posters and flyers. It is worth every penny.

Caroline Howell



likens it to Virgin Media and Sky. However, when BT was sold off it was on the understanding that it continued to provide a certain standard of service to all its customers – in the same way that Royal Mail has to deliver mail to remote areas like the Scottish islands, which is not at all profitable. Yet the Royal Mail does so exceedingly well in the circumstances.

Ron O'Brien

Record-breaking lines in Excel

✉ In Issue 474, David Brooker wanted to know what I needed 520,000 rows for in an Excel document. Well, it's a record of deaths and burials in Kent, and I have now reached 693,000 records, with another 700,000 to add. I have Office 2013 on a 64bit computer and have switched off auto calc and auto save. I tried contacting Microsoft about my problem (see Problems Solved, Issue 473, page 65), but received no answer. I have a top-of-the-range laptop with 16GB memory and an Intel i7 quad-core processor.

Robert B Sear

✉ Is 520,000 lines in Excel a lot? No way. As an aviation historian I have a copy of the USA aircraft register, which covers 322,653 aircraft. Each aircraft requires 11 lines, so that's a total of 3,549,183 lines, and I have deleted some that I don't need. Also, I have copies of registers from other countries that I could merge to produce an even bigger file, but for convenience I keep them separate.

Not sure if Excel can cope with this many lines, but I prefer to use database program PC-File instead. PC-File is limited only by the amount of storage you have. It runs happily in Windows 7 Ultimate and it's blindingly fast. I have not tried later versions of Windows as I have no use for them.

Ian J McGarrigle

✉ I have just finished creating a graph of trend data points. The data was exported from an SQL database into a .csv text file, which was 115MB. That file contained two sets of data points. Each data point was a temperature record taken every 30 seconds over a two-year period. The column count came in at around 2 million. As the limit is 520,000, I had to chop up the file into four and import it into Excel one at a time. Yes, it did take ages!

Jags Semi

STAR LETTER

Sticking with Windows XP, but ditching my iPad

✉ The letters in Issue 475 regarding Apple users pitying Windows users prompts me to turn the argument around.

Until recently I owned an iPad, which allowed me to check emails without powering up a desktop PC. However, Apple invited me to update to iOS 9.0 without warning of the consequences. Once my iPad updated I was unable to access any of its content unless I updated iTunes, but this required me to be running Internet Explorer 11, which could not be installed on my three XP Pro Service Pack 3 PCs.

I'm one of the few people happy with XP Pro and find Windows 10 a poor replacement in many respects, certainly for business users and serious PC users not enamoured of gimmicks. It lacks many of XP Pro's most useful features. Furthermore, the cost of upgrading would involve repurchasing external

components and software totalling over £3,000.

I never have a problem with security because I use only one of my three PCs for online transactions, and it's protected by the likes of Kaspersky. The only problem now with XP Pro is the annoying loss of Internet Explorer 8, because many websites now require a later version of the browser (though to some extent this can be overcome using Firefox).

But to return to Apple, while their expensive equipment is exquisitely designed, I find the company very greedy and controlling. Repairs are expensive and difficult to acquire without long waits. By contrast, local computer repair centres quickly and cost-effectively repair PCs as a matter of urgency. So, I gave my iPad to my granddaughter, and will never purchase another Apple product.

John Jefferis



The Star Letter writer wins a Computeractive mug!



eBay does look after sellers, too

✉ With reference to Patrick Hamilton's letter in which he said that eBay always sides with buyers (see Issue 474), that's not my experience.

A few years ago someone bought a second-hand bath from me. He picked it up in person, but after he got it home, he contacted me claiming that the measurement I'd given was an inch out and that he would have to re-tile his bathroom to make it fit – and that I would have to pay for the re-tiling!

I refused and he then said that I must take back the bath at my expense and refund him. He opened a complaint with eBay, and threatened me that if it did not find in his favour, he would take the case to the county court. eBay did find in my favour and I never heard from him again.

S Strauch

Well done EE for returning call centre to UK

✉ I'd like to applaud EE's decision to move its call centres back to the UK, as you reported in Issue 475 (News, page 9). Finally, these big companies are beginning to put customers first. BT recently said it would bring back its call centres, too, so the tide is turning.

In the past I've used services that required you to ring India to speak to someone. They were always perfectly pleasant, and tried to help, but it's not rocket science – a customer who speaks English as their first language will get better help from an assistant who also speaks English as their first language. You were often branded xenophobic, or worse, if you offered this opinion. But common sense has prevailed. In retrospect, it seems incredible that so many companies risked their reputation by outsourcing their call centres thousands of miles from the UK.

Oliver Whitlock

Consumeractive

Should I claim a refund from my friend?

Q Four years ago, I bought an Amica fridge-freezer from an appliance repair engineer, who has since become a friend. The fridge-freezer has developed a gas leak so I contacted Amica. It told me to contact the seller, but I don't want to involve my friend. Do I still have a claim against Amica for inherently faulty goods?

Nicos Michael

A There's no question of 'still' in this scenario – Nicos was *never* in a position to make a claim against Amica for inherently faulty goods under the Sale of Goods Act. The reason is simple: he never had a contract with the company because he didn't buy the fridge-freezer from it. Instead the contract was made with the person he says is now his friend.

Nicos's friend was acting as a sole trader when he sold the fridge-freezer, so is legally responsible for any refunds and repair. If Nicos wants to pursue the case, he would have to prove that the fault is inherent (not the result of wear and tear), which won't be easy to do after four years.



CASE CLOSED

Who's responsible for my warranty – Amazon, Asus or Freshtech?

Q I bought an Asus motherboard 18 months ago from Freshtech Solutions through Amazon Marketplace. The main reason for choosing the motherboard was the three-year warranty offered by Asus. Now the motherboard has stopped working, and no company involved will take responsibility. Both Amazon and Asus say Freshtech must help me, because it's the retailer in this case. But Freshtech won't help because it says it offers only a one-year warranty. Who is actually responsible?

Brian Robb

A Resolving this classic case of passing the buck depends on whether Asus or Freshtech offered the three-year warranty. We can definitely rule out Amazon. It was acting only as the middle-man in this transaction, as is the case with all items bought via its Marketplace.

In effect, warranties are a way for companies to promote the quality of their goods by guaranteeing a replacement if something goes wrong within a certain time. Although a warranty can't override statutory laws, such as the Sale of Goods Act (SOGA), they are legally binding. Whoever offers it must abide by it.

We've contacted Asus and Freshtech



to find out who is responsible. If the three-year warranty isn't valid, then Freshtech may be guilty of mis-selling the motherboard under the Unfair Trading Regulations.

However, Brian may have more success pursuing a refund under SOGA. Because six months have passed since purchase he would need to prove that the motherboard is inherently faulty – he can do this by paying for an inspection. SOGA says that retailers are responsible for inherently faulty goods, which means Freshtech here.

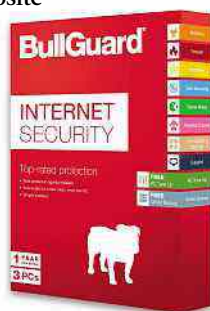
Should the inspection prove that the motherboard is faulty, Freshtech would need to refund Brian the cost of this, followed by a repair or replacement, or a refund for the original purchase. We think he has a good case because if the motherboard has a three-year warranty, how can Freshtech use 'fair wear and tear' as a defence after only 18 months?

CASE ONGOING

How do I get my BullGuard licence key?

Q I ordered BullGuard Internet Security via its website a few weeks ago, but although my bank statement shows the money's been taken, I've not received the download link or licence key. I've emailed BullGuard's support team, but had no response. Can you help?

Samuel I Nicholl



A Yes, we'll try. BullGuard told us it's not sure what has happened, and wants Samuel to provide more information about his order so it can investigate. However, we're puzzled because at the very least Samuel should have automatically received an email with the licence key once he'd paid for the software.

It's possible that BullGuard's emails have ended up in Samuel's

junk folder, so we've asked him to check. However, if no licence key was emailed to him, and Samuel no longer wants BullGuard's software, he is entitled to a refund. This is because BullGuard has breached its contract with Samuel by not supplying the product he paid for.

We'll let you know what's happening as soon as we hear back from BullGuard and Samuel.

CASE ONGOING



✉ 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.

We stand up for your legal rights

Can I get extra compensation for loss of broadband?

Q In January, our home broadband speed was very slow, which my internet service provider Plusnet confirmed. It was a problem with cables that Openreach was responsible for fixing. After five attempts, and one engineer not showing up, it's finally been fixed. Plusnet refunded me £16 for loss of service, but can I claim compensation for time off work, because I needed to be at home for each visit by the engineers?

Moishe Poolat

A We sympathise with Moishe because he's been seriously inconvenienced, but he'll find it difficult to make a case against either Plusnet or Openreach. For his claim to be successful Moishe would need to prove financial loss. He won't be able to claim

for the aggravation and annoyance of taking time off, no matter how many days he wasted.

Even if he wanted to make this claim because he runs a business from home, it's still unlikely to be considered because Moishe's contract with Plusnet is for domestic broadband. If it had been a business account, he may have been able to claim for compensation beyond the £16 for having lost potential revenue from being unable to trade.

He also has to consider which company to pursue. His contract is with Plusnet, which has already compensated him for loss of service. Openreach was responsible for repairing the cables. However, although it needed access to Moishe's home, this doesn't mean it formed a contract with him.



You can read Plusnet's terms and conditions at www.snipca.com/20468. For its refund policy, scroll down to section 13, titled Compensation. Plusnet says it will refund customers on a pro-rata basis for "an intermittent or continuous total loss of service", although it does give four exceptions, including when the failure is beyond its "reasonable" control.



CASE UPDATE



Dell uses up one-and-only chance to replace reader's laptop

Dell has provided us with the perfect example to highlight one of the most important changes in the new Consumer Rights Act (CRA), introduced last October. The new law gives companies only one chance to repair a faulty item. If that fails, they must refund the customer or replace the item.

In Issue 475, we told you about Denis Griffiths' problem with the keyboard on a Dell Inspiron laptop, which he bought in November 2015. He said that the printed letters on the keys had faded, a fault that Dell claimed wasn't covered by the warranty. But as with all products, this is irrelevant if the fault is inherent. And because fewer than six months had passed since purchase, it was up to Dell to prove that Denis had caused the fault through wear and tear. However, we find it hard to believe that, in normal usage, keyboard letters would start to fade so soon after purchase. It seemed to us that the keyboard was inherently faulty.

Since Denis' email to us Dell has sent a technician to his house to replace the keyboard. But that's not the end of the story. Denis is concerned that the new keyboard appears to have the same kind of faded printing on the keys, so he thinks the problem will recur. That's when the CRA comes into play. Dell won't be allowed to replace the keyboard again, and so will have to refund Denis.



THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Discontinued products

Acer

www.snipca.com/20389

Adobe software

www.snipca.com/20396

All printers

www.snipca.com/20392

Apple

www.snipca.com/20387

Brother printers

www.snipca.com/20393

Canon

www.snipca.com/20397

Epson

www.epson.co.uk/offers

HP printers

www.snipca.com/20390

Lenovo

www.snipca.com/20402

LG monitors

www.snipca.com/20401

LG TVs

www.snipca.com/20399

Microsoft software

www.snipca.com/20388

Netgear

www.snipca.com/20400

Philips

www.snipca.com/20398

Samsung tablets

www.snipca.com/20403

Sony Vaio

www.snipca.com/20391

Toshiba

www.toshiba.eu/discontinued-products

TOSHIBA



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Windows 'God Mode' malware

What's the threat?

A new type of malware, spotted by security experts at McAfee, that exploits the 'God Mode' in Windows. Officially called the Windows Master Control Panel shortcut, God Mode – which was introduced in Vista and has appeared in every version since – creates a desktop folder that provides access to just about every Windows setting.

To turn on God Mode, create a new folder on your desktop then type the following to name it: **GodMode**. {ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C} – or simply cut and paste it from our Pastebin page: www.snipca.com/20479. This will turn the folder into a blue monitor icon.

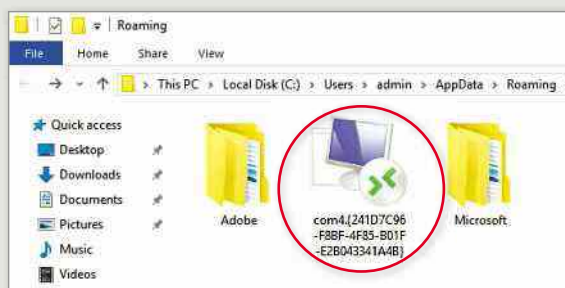
This trick of renaming folders to give them new powers is how this malware – called Dynamer – does its dirty work.

It worms its way into your PC's AppData directory (where your software stores info), placing itself in a folder with a similar name to God Mode. By default, AppData is hidden in Windows, making it the perfect location for malware to lurk unseen.

If you click the folder to open it, you go to an empty page within the Control Panel. This is a devious touch by the hackers because it means you can't remove the malware by deleting the folder.

What should you do?

First, check whether you've been infected by opening the AppData folder – type **%appdata%** into the Start menu then click the Roaming folder. Dynamer



appears as the icon circled in the screenshot above. If you see it, type **task manager** into Start, click 'View running processes with Task Manager', then look for the process named 'com4.{241D7C96-F8BF-4F85-B01F-E2B043341A4B}'. Right-click this, then click 'End process'. You can now remove Dynamer by typing into Command Prompt the code at www.snipca.com/20481.

New tools

Ransomware decryptor
www.snipca.com/20485

One of the reasons ransomware is such a serious threat is that there's rarely one single tool that unlocks your files. It's why some security experts say that the only way to get your files back is to pay the ransom, however improper that may feel. But before you pay up, first check whether a security company has released a decryption tool for the particular strain of ransomware that's

infected your PC.

The latest such tool, from Kaspersky, releases files from the grip of CryptXXX, which locks your files, gives them the '.crypt' extension, demands a \$500 ransom (see screenshot), and then for an unwanted encore steals your personal data. Fortunately, Kaspersky says that CryptXXX "turned out to be not that difficult to crack". As

a result, the company has been able to update its RannohDecryptor tool – built for the Rannoh ransomware – so it also protects against CryptXXX. Read advice on how to use it on Kaspersky's blog – just click the link above.



ScamWatch
READERS WARN READERS

Convincing scammer pretended to be from BT

Recently I received a call from someone purporting to be from BT. She convinced me by quoting our BT account number. She took over my PC and said she had fixed a problem, and then said that we were entitled to £200 compensation. She asked for our bank details, which I refused to give, having by this time smelt a rat. I told her we'd be happy to receive a cheque or have the money sent to our local hospice. I hung up. She rang back about 12 times. My husband and I are in our late eighties and can do without this type of hassle.

Joyce Kirk



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

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PORTABLE PROGRAMS

PortableApps Platform 14.0

<http://portableapps.com>

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

We love portable programs. Unlike installable programs, they run as soon as you click their **EXE** file – no setup wizard to worry about. Unlike web-based tools, you don't need a fast connection. In fact, portable programs don't need any internet connection at all – just insert a USB stick containing the program's EXE file, then click the file to run the program.

Open-source program PortableApps Platform is your portable programs mixtape. Choose from a range of portable programs, organise them into categories and select your favourites.

The Platform itself is an installable program, so you must install it using a fully supported version of Windows. However you can then run your portable programs in older versions of Windows.

Click Free Download, then 'Download 14.0', then save and run the junk-free installer. You can choose to install it on a portable device or even in an online storage service such as Google Drive or Dropbox, but we chose our PC ('Local').

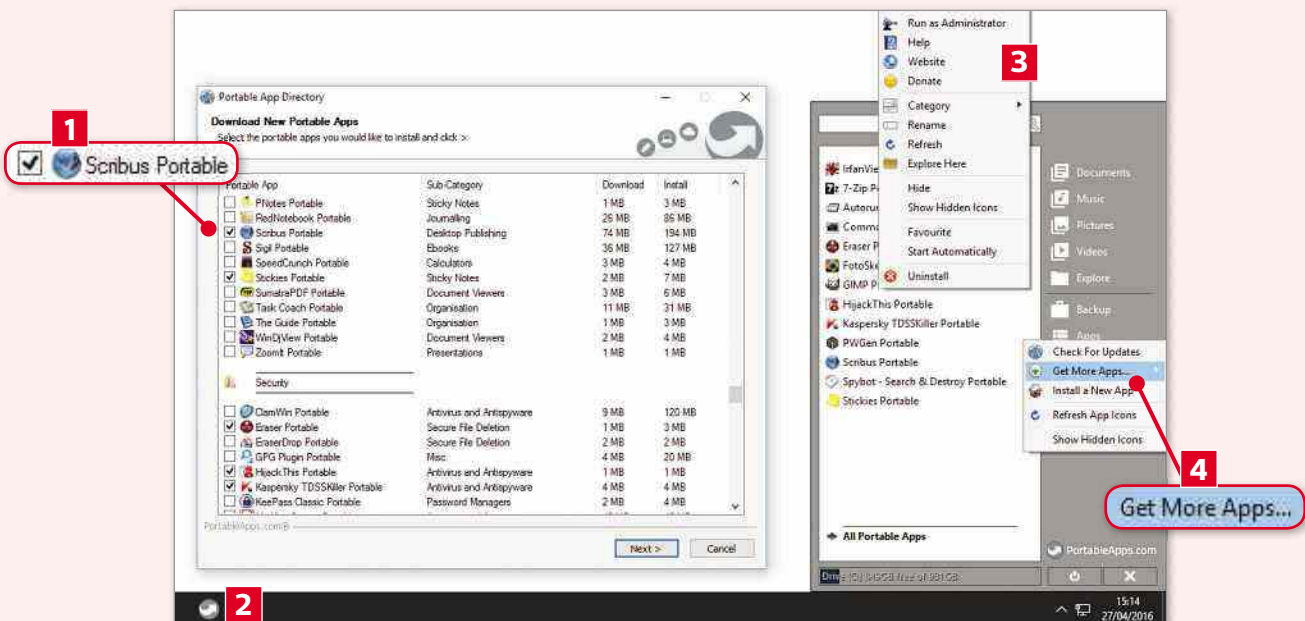
Straight away you can start filling your library with portable

programs, using the steps outlined below. Copy any program from your library to a USB stick for running on another PC, including XP and Vista PCs that are no longer safe for browsing.

The Platform stores and syncs your library of chosen portable programs securely online, with a backup and restore feature that can resurrect your library in case of a USB or PC disaster.

Version 14 adds hundreds of new portable programs, including **system tray** tools that you can set to quit automatically – something we wish our Windows system tray tools could do. It also introduces a **64bit** mode to speed things up on newer PCs, and the team has fixed a bug that prevented some programs from running in XP.

Note that like many sites, PortableApps uses 'apps' interchangeably with 'programs'. We've always found that misleading. These aren't apps in the phone, tablet and Windows Store sense, so don't be disappointed if you can't find anything here for your Android device.



1 Launch the program, browse the list then tick the portable programs you want to add to your library and click Next. The programs will then download to your library.

2 Once your programs have downloaded, click Finish. Then click the grey-and-white arrow icon on your taskbar, and your PortableApps Platform library will open.

3 Click a program in your list to run it instantly. Right-click a program for options, including 'Run as Administrator', Favourite, Category, Rename and Uninstall.

4 To find more programs for your library, click Apps on the right, then 'Get More Apps...'. You can then browse new programs or search by name or category.

CLIPBOARD TOOL

1Clipboard 0.1

<http://1clipboard.io>

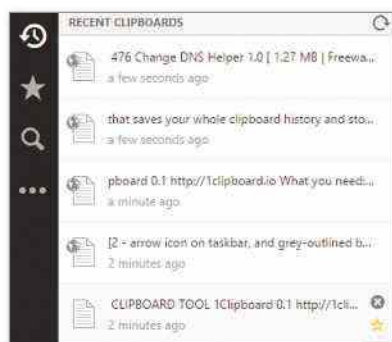
What you need: Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

The Windows Clipboard is the best and worst of tools. Cutting, copying and pasting is now second nature, but we're all guilty of cutting or copying again before pasting – a classic mishap of modern life. Your previous clipping is gone forever, lost to the dark world of overwritten content.

Depressing, eh? Here's something to cheer you up. 1Clipboard is a new tool that saves your whole clipboard history and stores it securely in Google Drive, so you can access it from any PC or device that supports your Google account. You can search your clipboard history, copy and paste any item from it and mark

items as favourites so you'll never lose them again. Sadly, we couldn't get the tool to store cut or copied photos, only text.

If you don't want your clippings saved online, skip signing up with your Google account. You can still track your clippings by clicking the paperclip icon in your system tray.



FILE MANAGER

OpenSaveFilesView 1.10

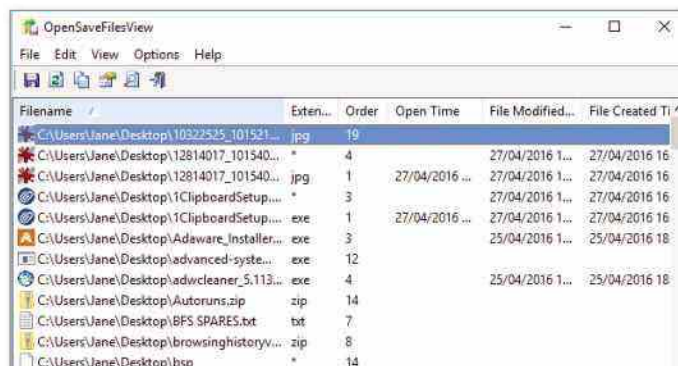
www.snipca.com/20428

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

Another *Computeractive* issue, another new tool from prolific producer of portable system tools, Nir Sofer. The latest treat from his NirSoft site displays a list of all the files you've opened in Windows, from documents, photos and videos right through to program installers and Windows tools.

You can then sort the list in various ways by clicking the appropriate column headings. For example, sort them by Filename, File Size (particularly useful for weeding out space-hogs and duplicates), Extension, File Created Time and so on.

To get the tool, scroll right down the page and click the Download link that matches your system. Open and extract the Zip file, then click 'OpenSaveFilesView.exe' to run the program.



WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

How can I translate between English and Spanish instantly?

Q We recently moved from the UK to Spain, and we love it here but our Spanish language skills are very basic. We're using Duolingo for learning, but it can't translate in real time when I need to speak to a doctor or understand a letter. Is there a laptop program (Windows 10) or Android app that can do this?

Liz Kendrick


A Best place to start is Google Translate (<https://translate.google.co.uk>), which automatically translates your typed English to Spanish (or French, Polish and dozens more). Open it in the browser on your laptop, tablet or phone, click English in the left row of buttons and Spanish in the right, then type.

Typing on Google Translate's free mobile app (Android www.snipca.com/20475; iOS www.snipca.com/20476) is more fiddly, but it may suit your needs when you're out and about. It can also do extra tricks such as translate a photo of a word.

We'd also recommend Microsoft's free new multi-purpose Android app Hub Keyboard (www.snipca.com/20474), which has Microsoft Translator built in so you can type in English and have your words translated automatically.

For software that translates on the hoof and includes dictionaries, text-to-speech and more, try Lingoes (www.snipca.com/20480). It supports Windows 8 and Windows 10. Click one of the blue Download links, then click the **download mirror** link ending 'UK' (see screenshot).

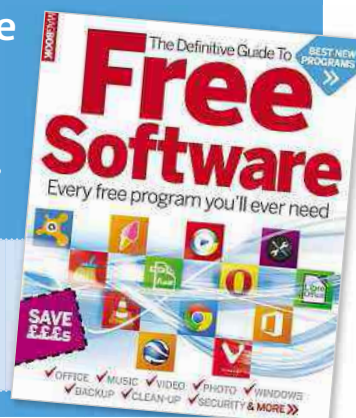


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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

E-READER | £270 from Amazon www.snipca.com/20483

Amazon Kindle Oasis

The best ebook reader yet

Two hundred and seventy pounds? For an ebook reader? We had to double-check to make sure we hadn't misread the info or been transported back to the 1980s. These days, Amazon itself sells a full-blown all-purpose colour tablet computer for 50 quid. Is it seriously expecting people to pay more than five times as much for a gadget that just shows text in black and white?

“Expensive, but probably worth it for avid readers”

Apparently so – and it's not as daft as it sounds. First of all, it's not really much more expensive than the £160 Kindle Voyage when you consider that it comes with a case – an almost essential accessory that costs extra with other e-readers.

The leather-fronted folio, available in brown, black or maroon (see image below), attaches with magnets, so you can easily leave it behind and nearly halve the weight, which is less than a tablet anyway. One USB cable charges both the Oasis and its case. Clip the case on and you get four times the battery life – over 24 hours. Amazon reckons this should last you 'months', although this might be optimistic if you're an avid reader.

The 6in screen is similar to the Voyage and the cheaper Kindle Paperwhite, with



a reasonably sharp 300dpi greyscale display that reflects light (like paper) rather than emitting it (like a tablet). That makes reading comfortable on the eyes, and if it gets dark you can turn on the built-in light, which uses plenty of LEDs to provide soft, even illumination. Because the screen sits flush with the front panel, rather than under a raised bezel, it feels even more like a page in a book, rather than on a device.

As with the Voyage and the Paperwhite, you can turn a page by swiping the screen, if you prefer that gesture. If not, Forward and Back buttons sit handily by your thumb, so you needn't move your hands at all. This is much better than the Paperwhite's buttonless design, and puts it on a par with the Voyage's fancy touch-sensitive system.

We mentioned when we tested the latest version of the Paperwhite (see our review, Issue 458) that Amazon was working on the look of the Kindle software. Text does now look neater, but the typesetting still doesn't match the quality of traditional books.

To be fair, a printed book gets typeset once by experts; your Kindle has to typeset each book itself, while you read, using the font and size of your choice. But the range of options remains very limited. Text looks better on rival readers such as Kobo's Glo (see our review, Issue 452).

That aside, the Oasis feels gratifyingly free of compromises, and if you read a lot, that might justify the relatively high

price. Calculating whether or not it's actually value for money is tricky. Some Kindle editions are cheaper than paperbacks, so you'd eventually make your £270 back reading them on the Oasis rather than ordering traditional books, but it would take quite a while.

On the other hand, a surprisingly large number of titles are actually cheaper to buy physically, at Amazon's discounts, than electronically. So you're paying Amazon extra for the hardware, then paying Amazon extra again. Something is amiss here: doing away with paper and printing and shifting books around the country must mean someone is saving money, but it doesn't seem to be the customer.

SPECIFICATIONS

6in E Ink touchscreen • 4GB memory • 802.11n Wi-Fi (3G optional) • Supports AZW, AZW3, MOBI, PRC, PDF formats • 143x122x8.5mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/20483

VERDICT: It's pricey, but with storage for more than 2,000 books and a great screen to read them on, the Oasis leaves little to be desired



ALTERNATIVE: Kobo Glo HD £110 More of a rival to the Kindle Paperwhite, this supports generic EPUB and EPUB3 books rather than Amazon's Kindle Store



LAPTOP-TABLET | £200 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/20522

Asus Transformer Book Flip TP200SA

Flexibility on a shoestring

Which £200 laptop should you buy? Sorry, that isn't easy to answer. It's like asking which sugar-free doughnut tastes best, or which low-cost airline gives you the biggest free checked-in luggage allowance. Whatever answer we give is bound to end in disappointment.

But manufacturers keep trying to create laptops that'll offer great Windows 10 performance for little cash. And this is the latest attempt by Asus in its Transformer series. The 'Flip' part of the name refers to a new hinge – a crucial component in machines like this with keyboards that fold all the way round to form a tablet, as long as your idea of a tablet is a plastic sandwich with a keyboard on the back.

“A surprisingly good Windows 10 hybrid – if you accept its limitations”

The hinge, one of the TP200SA's few metal parts, works pretty well, although the screen still bounced a bit when we were typing. Since the whole device can sit within an A4 sheet of paper, there's not much room for the keys, which are crammed together and less than full size, but they did at least move noticeably when hit. The touchpad worked quite smoothly, too.



The screen isn't particularly sharp and its colour reproduction, covering only 64 per cent of the sRGB range, is technically awful, but thanks to good brightness and contrast we found it quite acceptable in practice. It's a touchscreen that takes advantage of Windows 10's Tablet mode when the keyboard is folded up, and as such, well... it works adequately.

At 1.2kg, the TP200SA is easy to carry, and with a battery that lasted over nine hours of video playback in our tests, it'll keep going all day. If you run out of storage on the tiny 32GB of flash storage, you can add a microSD card, which is less cumbersome than the usual full-size SD. But don't plan to do anything more ambitious than keeping a couple of web browser windows open while you write an email, because the Intel Celeron processor, not very ably assisted by just 2GB of memory, won't keep up. At least the built-in 802.11ac Wi-Fi is fast.

If you're OK with its limitations, we have to admit this is a surprisingly good little PC for the money. We'd pick it in the same way we'd pick a Renault Twizy over a Reliant Robin: it looks nice and won't actually fall apart, but – like a Twizy – you'll still want something different if you're going further than the corner shop.

SPECIFICATIONS

1.6GHz Intel Celeron N3050 dual-core processor • 2GB memory • 32GB flash storage • 11.6in 1366x768-pixel screen • 0.3-megapixel webcam • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.1 • 1x USB 3.0 port • 1x USB 2.0 port • 1x USB Type-C port • Windows 10 Home • 18.5x297x201mm (HxWxD) • 1.2kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/20524

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 writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

OUR AWARDS



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



Every product that gets a four-star review is given the 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: Windows 10 is too cumbersome to make really great low-cost hybrids possible, but this is as near as you'll get at the moment



ALTERNATIVE: Acer Aspire Cloudbook 14 £199

This also has a Celeron processor and gives you a bigger screen, but the Wi-Fi is slower



Reviews

LAPTOP | £1,049 from Apple Store www.snipca.com/20515

Apple MacBook 12in (2016)

Could you be converted to Apple's laptop?

When we tested Apple's brand new MacBook last year, with its super-slim case and edge-to-edge keyboard, we praised its lightweight design and high-resolution screen, but we weren't so sure about its reliance on a single **USB Type-C** port for charging, wired networking, external displays and accessories. The same laptop now has more powerful processors inside and comes in a new colour (rose gold).

It can be awkward working with only one port, but now that USB Type-C is becoming more common in PCs, at least its format isn't such an anomaly. If you like to use a mouse, though, it's annoying (for most of us) that the port is on the left, but the MacBook's smooth trackpad will satisfy most users. The only other questionable hardware choice is the FaceTime webcam, which is far from HD resolution, though fine for its intended purpose.

“Expensive for a laptop, but it's quick, good for photo editing and looks the part”

At £1,049, the MacBook comes with an improved 1.1GHz M3 processor alongside 8GB of memory and 256GB of storage. Or you can have a 1.2GHz M5 processor and 512GB for £1,299. The best reason to choose the higher specification is the extra storage. We found the M3 processor 20 per cent faster than last year's MacBook across a variety of tests, and the M5 12.5 per cent faster again. Either is good enough for everyday tasks and photo editing, which benefits from the

SPECIFICATIONS

1.1GHz Intel M3 dual-core processor • 8GB memory • 256GB SSD • Intel Graphics 515 • 12in 2,304x1,440-pixel screen • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • FaceTime camera • USB Type-C port • OS X 10.11 El Capitan • 13.1x281x197mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/20510



colour-accurate 2304x1440-pixel screen.

Should you consider a MacBook, despite the price? Apple aficionados would argue that the software is simpler to use than Windows, and hassles you much less with security issues and updates. It comes with a very good set of office and creative apps free of charge. Macs are favoured by creative professionals and programmers, and the MacBook is undoubtedly the current laptop of choice for sitting in coffee shops doing exciting work for companies with silly names.

HP's new Spectre 13 Windows 10 laptop is even thinner, but starts at £1,149, and that's with an ordinary Full HD (1920x1080-pixel) screen. It has a more powerful Intel Core i5 processor, but its claimed 10-hour battery life can't match the MacBook, which lasted us more than that playing videos – an hour longer than the 2015 version, which went as long as 14 hours in lighter use.

Then again, you could buy a very nice Asus ZenBook UX305CA for half the money, with a slower M3 processor and only 128GB of storage, but a similarly sharp screen. It remains our favourite Windows 10 laptop.

VERDICT: You don't have to spend this much on a general-purpose laptop, but it's fast and has a good screen

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Asus ZenBook UX305CA £550 Its M3 processor is slower and storage is only 128GB, but this much cheaper, slim 13.3in laptop also has a high-resolution screen



The best... Portable power packs

AmazonBasics 3,000mAh Ultra Slim

£9 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/20576

Carrying a battery pack means not worrying about your phone or tablet running out of charge. This model will charge most phones from zero to 100 per cent. Its 1.0 amp output isn't enough for most tablets. A **MicroUSB** cable is built in to connect to most phones.



Poweradd Pilot 2GS

£10 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/20582

This sleek silver charger has standard USB ports to use with your devices' cables. One is 2.1A, which will work with tablets and may charge your phone faster, although it doesn't support the Quick Charge standard used by some devices. A 2A input makes charging the Pilot itself relatively quick. It's great value.



EasyAcc 20000mAh Rugged Power Bank

£34 from Amazon www.snipca.com/20581

With an **IP67** waterproof rating and built-in torch, this power pack is ideal for holidays. There's one 1.0A USB output and one 2.4A, but no Quick Charge. Its 20,000mAh battery will charge an iPhone 6s about eight times over.



RAVPower 20100mAh (Quick Charge 3.0)

£37 from Amazon

www.snipca.com/20584

This power pack supports the latest technologies, with Quick Charge 3.0 for fast charging and **USB Type-C** to work with low-power laptops such as Apple's MacBook 12in as well as mobile devices. All outputs are at least 2.4A, and you can charge one Quick Charge and one regular device at the same time.



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Reviews

SMARTPHONE | £500 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/20349

LG G5

The first upgradable smartphone

In the old days, computers were made up of a bunch of widgets slotted together. When a component failed or a better one came along, you could undo a screw or pop open a flap and do a quick swap. Desktop PCs are still like that, which is why they're not extinct, despite being unattractively bulky. But nowadays we carry more processing power in our pockets than we used to have on our desks, and one way engineers have achieved that miniaturisation is by abandoning 'modularity': the principle that parts should be independent of the whole.

“An innovation that did impress us was the inclusion of two separate cameras”

This latest phone from LG unexpectedly reverses that trend. Instead of a seamlessly sealed case that can only be opened with special tools and a degree of bravery, it has a bottom cap that slides off at the squeeze of a button. This reveals the yellow battery (see photo below), which you can replace easily enough to make it practical to carry a spare when you're out for the day, rather than a charging case or battery pack. More interestingly, the cap can be replaced with modules that add features to the phone.

Two of these are available from LG. The CAM Plus increases battery life (although, at over 11 hours of video playback in our tests, it's decent already) and adds physical controls for shutter speed, zoom and taking photos. The Hi-Fi Plus module, developed with the hi-fi company Bang & Olufsen, improves the quality of audio playback, for sharp-eared people who can hear the difference between



regular MP3s and high-quality sound files and are fed up with their phone making the latter sound like the former.

It's a lovely idea, but neither of these options feels like a must-have, and LG's two external accessories, a 360-degree camera and VR goggles, even less so. Considering that these are made specifically for this phone, we were surprised by how clunkily they fit on. The modules clip into place well enough, but it's obvious that your G5 has an extra blob stuck on the bottom. Along with the fussy protrusions at the top for the camera, flash and fingerprint sensor, this gives the whole thing the air of a Heath Robinson prototype rather than a polished product.

That's unfortunate, because LG so nearly got it right. Modular designs tend to be boxy and cluttered, but the G5 is as slim, sleek and light as this year's other top-end phones, with a neat aluminium body and a beautiful, bright, sharp display that covers 97 per cent of the sRGB colour range and shows the time and notifications even when switched off. Slightly smaller than an iPhone 6s Plus, it's definitely a large phone but not unwieldy, and its Snapdragon 820 processor runs apps and games as smoothly as rivals like the Samsung S7. LG's version of Google's Android 6 Marshmallow operating system has some annoyances, but no major problems.

An innovation that did impress us was the inclusion of two separate cameras on the back. The main 16-megapixel unit uses a fast f/1.8 lens and optical stabilisation to get great pictures even in tricky situations, and worked very well in our tests, although the Samsung Galaxy S7 was even better. The G5's secondary 8-megapixel camera has a 135-degree field of view, almost a 'fisheye' lens, which lets you capture wider landscapes or fit anything from a plate of food to a building into a shot when you can't stand far back from it. It's amazingly useful and makes even mundane subjects look dramatic.

SPECIFICATIONS

5.3in 2560x1440-pixel screen • 16-megapixel rear camera • 8-megapixel wide-angle camera • 8-megapixel front camera • 32GB flash storage • microSD card slot • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.2 • 3G/4G • 149x74x7.7mm (HxWxD) • 159g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/20350

VERDICT: The G5 is an excellent phone with plenty of advanced features, but the modular gimmick doesn't make it better than Samsung's S7

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Huawei P9 £450 The G5 has no direct rival, but this is a similarly sized, high-performance aluminium phone with a fancy twin camera



SPEAKER | £130 from Amazon www.snipca.com/20534

Ultimate Ears Boom 2

A Bluetooth speaker for your summer holiday



This tough wireless travel speaker (available in several colours) would be great on holiday. Knock it into a swimming pool and the **IPX7** waterproof rating means it should survive up to a metre deep for half an hour, although you won't be able to hear it so well.

On dry land, the Boom 2 sounds loud and clear. You wouldn't choose it for classical music, but there's plenty of bass and presence. It works with any Bluetooth **A2DP** device, including most phones, tablets and laptops, at a range of up to 33 metres. There's also a 3.5mm input jack. If you have an Apple or Android phone or tablet, you get extra features, like using two Boom 2s as a stereo pair and cueing up music from more than one device. You can also answer phone calls through the speaker.

Slightly smaller than a Pringles can, the Boom 2 will fit into most holders designed for bottles of water, which is handy when cycling or backpacking. There's also a loop you can use to dangle from a carabiner, which also conceals a tripod stand. A flat side panel provides giant plus and minus buttons to control the volume. You can also tap the top to pause or skip, but we found it easier to control the music from our phone.

Ultimate Ears reckons the rechargeable battery will last up to 15 hours. We got about 12, enough for most days out.

SPECIFICATIONS

2x 45mm drivers • Bluetooth (requires computer, phone or tablet supporting Bluetooth A2DP) • 3.5mm analogue stereo input • 180x67x67mm (HxWxD) • 0.55kg • Two-year warranty
www.snipca.com/20532

Considering that its audio quality isn't exceptional, you could get an indoor wireless speaker for less money, but if you want something flexible and ready for the outdoors, rain or shine, the Boom 2 offers the best combination of design, features and value in waterproof Bluetooth speakers.

VERDICT: Long battery life, decent sound, high maximum volume and proper waterproofing make this a good holiday choice

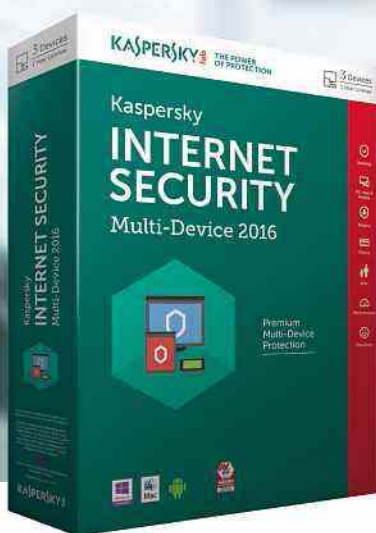
★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Braven BRV-1 £60 This smaller IPX7 Bluetooth speaker is now less than half its original price and sounds great



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WHSmith

Reviews

VIRTUAL-REALITY HEADSET | £690 from Currys www.snipca.com/20494

HTC Vive

A headset that takes you out of this world

2016 is *the* year of virtual reality (VR). That's been said before. In fact every year for the last few decades. But here's one of several new VR headsets you can actually buy, bringing an imaginary world convincingly to life around you.

“Costly, but great fun if you have the right space to use it”

First, though, you have to set it up. And this is when we began to wonder if it might be 2017 by the time we got finished. You need to install the Vive somewhere big and empty, with enough room to safely stumble about with a plastic clamp over your head. Its two motion sensors need to screw into your walls above head height. Ridiculously,



everything needs mains power cables, including the helmet, so it looks like a scene from a sci-fi film from the 1950s before you've even started.

Having said all that, it requires no specialist tech skills and the results really are quite impressive. Inside the bulky helmet are two 1200x1080-pixel **OLED** displays (one for each eye) with large **Fresnel lenses** to make the picture clearer than the Rift's (see Alternative below). There's enough room for glasses if you wear them. Bearing in mind that it has to fill your whole field of vision, the picture still isn't detailed enough to read small text easily, but it's enough to make what's around you feel real.

And that's the point. Thanks to a number of clever sensors, the Vive tracks your head movements precisely, so as you move, the 'world' stays still. It feels very different from anything else. Using the handheld controllers, we had great fun with the included apps, including the enjoyably silly Job Simulator, games like Selfie Tennis and the physically demanding Space Pirate Trainer.

We were surprised to find how many games and 'experiences' are already available for the Vive (see www.snipca.com/20497).



From what we've seen so far, it could be the best of this year's VR systems – but that's no guarantee of long-term success. So it would be a gamble to spend around £700 now, on top of the high-end PC you'll need to plug it into.

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows 7, 8 or 10 • Intel i5-4590 or higher processor • Nvidia GeForce GTX 970 or AMD Radeon R9 390 or better graphics card • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/20496

VERDICT: It's still early days for virtual reality, but this headset definitely brings alternative worlds a step closer



ALTERNATIVE: Oculus Rift £500 After a number of delays it's finally here, but the Rift's controllers don't rival the Vive



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What's the best laptop for my retirement?



Q I've used various computers in my work. Now retired, I want a laptop that's not too heavy or large, that I can use for email, Skype, online research, banking and so on. I'm most comfortable with Microsoft Word and Windows 8.1. My budget would be £200 to £250.

Josephine Stiernborg

A The Acer Chromebook R11 (£200 from Currys www.snipca.com/20551) would suit

your needs if you have a reliable internet connection, but you'd be limited to the Office Online version of Word, which lacks some advanced features.

The similarly sized Asus EeeBook X205TA (£180 from Amazon www.snipca.com/20552, pictured) runs Windows 8.1 and comes with a year's free Microsoft Office 365 subscription. The more flexible £200 Asus Transformer Flip Book TP200SA (see our review, page 21) has Windows 10, which feels similar to 8.1 and ensures continued security updates.

You might prefer to put up with a little more weight for the larger screen of the Acer Cloudbook 14 (£199 from Tesco www.snipca.com/20553), which also includes Office 365, or Toshiba's Satellite C40-C-10Q (£180 from John Lewis www.snipca.com/20554), which doesn't. All have a scant 32GB of storage, but **SD cards** can be added, from around £10 for 32GB.

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

PHONE | £450 from Huawei www.snipca.com/20537

Huawei P9

Are two cameras better than one? Yes



Remember when we all thought it was silly to put a camera in a phone? Now our phones all have two cameras, and apparently that's still not enough: this year's trend is three. The LG G5 (see our review, page 24) includes a separate wide-angle lens to give you a choice of framing, which is useful. Huawei has done something different: the P9's *two* cameras work together to take pictures with more dynamic range.

“High-quality cameras and screen set this phone apart”

In our tests, this gave us vibrant colours and good detail outdoors, showing lots of contrast without highlights getting blown out or shadows disappearing into **noise**. There's actually one colour camera and one monochrome. The latter focuses on capturing light, but you can also use this separately to take black-and-white photos. We got excellent results with that, too, as you'd expect from a component bearing the classic Leica camera brand – although we can't imagine Leica had much to do with the miniaturised electronic gubbins that makes all this possible.

The P9's software can also process the dual images to vary depth of field, so you can have objects at a certain distance in focus, while the rest of the scene is artfully blurred. That's normally only achievable using a full-size camera with a large-**aperture** lens. It's fairly obvious that the effect relies on some fakery, and

the software's 'Pro' mode tactfully omits this feature, instead giving you a full range of manual controls and the option to save **Raw** images rather than lower-quality JPEGs.

None of this makes the P9 a **DSLR**, or even the best phone camera. Samsung's Galaxy S7, for example, has a larger aperture and bigger pixels in its sensor, meaning it can capture more light more accurately, especially in dim conditions, where the P9 struggled a bit. The P9 also lacks **optical stabilisation**, which eliminates camera shake in phones that have it, such as the iPhone 6s Plus.

Before we forget: this is still a phone, not just a camera. And the P9 is a very nice phone indeed. Available in the UK in grey or silver, its aluminium case is undeniably iPhone-like but has a squared-off style of its own and feels beautifully made. The fingerprint sensor on the back unlocks the device quickly and can also answer calls, turn off alarms and bring up notifications. This makes the fairly large P9 easy to use one-handed.

The 5.2in screen has 1920x1080 pixels (Full HD), which isn't quite as sharp as some rivals but looked great to us, covering 99.2 per cent of the **sRGB** colour range with high brightness and good contrast. The battery lasted us a very respectable 11 hours 24 minutes of video playback in our tests, a huge improvement over Huawei's P8. The **USB Type-C** charging port is less fiddly than the old **MicroUSB**, and Type-C cables are more common now if you

happen to forget yours.

The P9 is also a computer, but in this role its results were more mixed. Huawei's **eight-core** Kirin processor kept up with Samsung's and Apple's top models in our multi-core processing tests, which reflect what's possible under ideal conditions. In reality, though, it didn't do so well in everyday tasks that couldn't make use of all the cores at once, and web pages didn't load especially quickly. Huawei's version of Android 6.0 (Marshmallow) is still odd, too. Graphics performance was way behind, although casual games shouldn't be a problem.

The P9, then, is not an unqualified success, but you wouldn't guess it cost less than other leading phones, and none of its flaws are fatal.

SPECIFICATIONS

5.2in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 2x 12-megapixel rear cameras • 5-megapixel front camera • 32GB flash storage • MicroSD card slot • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.2 • 3G/4G • 145x70x6.95mm (HxWxD) • 144g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/20537

VERDICT: With two excellent cameras and a great screen, the P9 adds up to a good phone at a fair price



ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy S7 **£549** With a faster processor and excellent single camera, this waterproof phone is better overall but pricier



PC MONITOR | £320 from Amazon www.snipca.com/20546

Iiyama G-Master GB2888UHSU Gold Phoenix

4K you can actually afford

This is a monitor aimed at gamers. *Computeractive* is not aimed at gamers. But don't tear up your magazine and stamp on it in a huff: there's a good reason why we decided to test the Gold Phoenix. For just over £300, it gives you a big 28in screen with a huge 3840x2160 pixels. '4K' panels don't get much cheaper, even at smaller sizes – and smaller sizes do less justice to all those dots.

“The screen is very sharp, but looked too blue in our tests”

So what's the catch? With the first affordable 4K screens, it was slow refresh rates: the picture would update only 30 times a second (30Hz), giving slightly jittery motion that was useless for games and subtly annoying for everything else. When we first turned on the Gold Phoenix, we had the same problem, but that was because it arrived set to **DisplayPort 1.1** mode, which is compatible with older PCs. We used the menus to select **DisplayPort 1.2** instead, enabling this monitor's maximum refresh rate of 60Hz.

Before splashing out on a 4K monitor, check that your PC has either **DisplayPort 1.2**, or **HDMI 2.0**, or two dual-link **DVI** outputs, otherwise you'll be limited to 30Hz. It's also worth noting that Windows 7 doesn't work properly with high-resolution displays; the necessary scaling options were only added in Windows 8.1 and Windows 10.

The Gold Phoenix works best of all with a PC that has one of the latest **AMD graphics cards**. These support a feature called

FreeSync that matches the monitor's refresh rate to whatever the graphics card can output at a given moment, eliminating the stutter that can result from the PC failing to keep up. It's particularly useful when trying to run games at the full 3840x2160 pixels, which asks a lot of your graphics card: our high-end system could only manage 45–50 frames per second in some games, but it looked very smooth. When we turned up the graphics quality settings, though, reducing the frame rate to 35–40fps, FreeSync couldn't quite fix the visible judder. Nvidia's equivalent system, G-Sync, works better, but G-Sync screens cost more. Anyway, you don't really care about that because you're probably not a gamer.

For Windows, we found the screen was very sharp, but only covered 87 per cent of the **sRGB** colour range – acceptable, but not great – and looked too blue. We fixed this by setting Green and Blue to 92 per cent in the menus and leaving Red at

100 per cent. You could do the same, but screens can vary, and without expensive testing equipment you wouldn't be able to check that those settings were right for yours.

Because the **LCD** panel is of the **TN** variety rather than the currently more popular **IPS**, you need to look at it straight on to avoid colours shifting. Fortunately, Iiyama's chunky plastic stand offers plenty of tilt and height adjustment, but it's not the best screen to double up as a TV for several people to watch at once.

So, should you buy the



Gold Phoenix? Even if you're tempted, we'd hold off, because other similar monitors are appearing, including AOC's U2879VF, which we haven't yet tested but is selling for as little as £275.

What's clear is that the high resolutions we've been seeing in smaller mobile screens are going to become more common on PCs. Now that Windows 10 is pretty good at making sensible use of the extra pixels, it's a welcome development – and not just for gamers.

SPECIFICATIONS

28in TN LCD • 3840x2160-pixel resolution • 1x DisplayPort • 3x HDMI ports • 1x VGA port • 2x USB 3 ports • 3W stereo speakers • 414x663x230mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty
www.snipca.com/20547

VERDICT: It's a shame the colour settings aren't better out of the box, but this monitor is good value for an extra-sharp screen

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Asus PB279Q £575

This 27in 4K monitor hit 100 per cent of sRGB without calibration, but note that 60Hz is only available over DisplayPort, not HDMI



ROUTER | £125 from PC World www.snipca.com/20555

TP-Link Archer VR900

A fast Wi-Fi router for ADSL lines

A couple of years ago, the prevailing Wi-Fi standard moved on from 802.11n to 802.11ac. It's theoretically faster, uses the less crowded 5GHz band, and has better range, so you should get decent reception over a wider area. Meanwhile, the ADSL broadband connections available over the phone lines to our homes moved up to VDSL, allowing internet service providers (ISPs) to run fast fibre-optic cables to the cabinet in the street and just use the copper wires for the last few yards.

The Archer VR900 is a wireless router that connects to any ADSL, ADSL2, ADSL2+, VDSL or VDSL2 internet socket and provides an 802.11ac network for your Wi-Fi computers, phones and tablets. You could use it to replace an old router or in preference to one supplied by an ISP such as BT, Sky or TalkTalk. Unlike the similar-looking Archer C9, it includes a modem that transmits and receives data over the phone line as well as the router itself, so you don't need another box. If you have a cable or fibre connection, the VR900 can connect to it, but the C9 would be a better choice.

The white case has LED lights to tell you what's happening, but they can be disabled if you find them distracting. As with other routers, you set up the VR900 using a web browser, and the settings screens are presented with a basic mode to avoid wading through details you don't need to tweak. The options aren't as



extensive or user-friendly as on some routers, but you can set up guest networks with bandwidth limits and apply parental controls to specific devices. You can also connect USB storage and a printer to share over the network.

Like other 802.11ac routers, the VR900 is designed to work with older 802.11n devices, but in our tests it communicated with them quite slowly, especially on the old 2.4GHz band, a problem the C9 didn't suffer. On 802.11ac it was very fast, especially via TP-Link's own T4UH adapter (£25 from www.snipca.com/20556), which you could use to upgrade any USB 3.0 PC to 802.11ac Wi-Fi.

Its performance with older devices is unsatisfactory, but as an affordable 802.11ac ADSL/VDSL modem router the VR900 is a good choice.

SPECIFICATIONS

Dual-band 802.11ac/a/b/g/n • 4x Gigabit Ethernet ports (one convertible for cable modem) • 1x USB 3.0 port • 1x USB 2.0 port • 181x245x90mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/20557

VERDICT: A compact and simple option if you want an all-in-one modem router and mainly use 802.11ac devices



ALTERNATIVE: TP-Link Archer C9 £110 Choose this if you already have a cable or fibre modem



COMING SOON



SUMMER 2016

As we predicted last issue, Nvidia has unveiled its next-generation graphics cards, the GeForce GTX 1070 and 1080. At around £300 and £450, they're more powerful than components currently selling for twice the price. Expect discounts on other cards after these go on sale.



SUMMER 2016

Google's Nexus 9 tablet offered a lot for the money but was clunkily made. Now that it has been discontinued, a new tablet seems likely. Rumours suggest a it may be a revamped Nexus 7 (pictured).



SUMMER 2016

Sony is freshening up its Xperia phone range this year with a new 'X' brand. Possibly the most exciting model will be the Xperia XA, a lower-cost device with a striking edge-to-edge screen. Supplied with Android 6.0, it has a microSD slot to expand its 16GB of storage.



2017

It's still little more than a rumour, but industry analysts are pretty sure Microsoft is working on a Surface Phone, likely to materialise next year. As the first completely new range of Windows phones, this would replace the Lumia brand (pictured), bought from Nokia.



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
8 June



Huawei MediaPad M2 10
Brand new iPad rival from £250



LG Stylus 2
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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus UX305

£550 from www.snipca.com/19439

Tested: Issue 447



13.3in is a practical size for a laptop, and this light but sturdy 'ultrabook' has a smart and slim design that does justice to its capable performance. Upgradeable to Windows 10, it's limited mainly by its 128GB SSD, which makes it work fast, but might leave you needing more space.

ALTERNATIVE Toshiba Satellite C40-C

This 14in Windows 10 laptop looks like it costs a lot more. It's not the most amazing PC, but it's fantastic for the price. £180 from www.snipca.com/20245

DESKTOP PC

Mesh Elite Essential Skylake CA

£499 from www.snipca.com/19822

Tested: Issue 471



This compact tower system spends your money wisely on an excellent Intel i5 Skylake processor for all-round performance. The 2TB hard drive gives you plenty of space for all your files, and fast 802.11ac Wi-Fi is built in.

ALTERNATIVE: Dell Inspiron 24 5000

If you prefer your desktop PC in one neat box, this Intel i5 system has all the essentials at a reasonable price. £650 from www.snipca.com/20205

APPLE IPAD

Apple iPad Air 2

£349 from www.snipca.com/20435

Tested: Issue 437



Getting old, but still wonderfully slim and powerful. Buy with 64GB (£429) and you'll never run out of space. The Pro models are great with Apple's keyboard and Pencil, but work out much more expensive.

ALTERNATIVE: iPad Mini 2 Slower

than the iPad Mini 4, with no fingerprint recognition and a less vivid screen, but an iPad at this price is great value. £219 from www.snipca.com/20436

ANDROID TABLET

Samsung Galaxy S2 9.7

£350 from www.snipca.com/20438

Tested: Issue 462



The Sony Xperia Z4 is too expensive and Google's cheaper Nexus 9 has been discontinued, leaving the 32GB S2 9.7 as the best mid-sized choice. It's a serious rival to the iPad Air 2, albeit slower.

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy S2 8.0

Samsung also has the best iPad Mini rival. It's not as fast as the iPad Mini 4, but has 32GB and a great screen. £280 from www.snipca.com/20437

APPLE IPHONE

Apple iPhone SE

£359 from www.snipca.com/20175

Tested: Issue 474



It may be Apple's 'budget' phone, but the smaller SE beats most others in the market with top-end processing power, a great screen and camera, fingerprint recognition and Apple Pay. You should consider paying £439 for the 64GB model, though.

ALTERNATIVE: iPhone 6s

A bigger screen, better camera and 3D Touch justify the price, but as with the SE the 64GB model (£619) is the best choice. £539 from www.snipca.com/20441

ANDROID PHONE

Samsung Galaxy S7

£570 from www.snipca.com/20086

Tested: Issue 473



Restoring the microSD slot to allow extra storage (something all Apple devices still lack) makes this an even more practical top-end phone than the S6, with a fantastic screen and camera and incredible 18-hour battery life.

ALTERNATIVE: Motorola Moto G

(3rd gen) Samsung's J5 is a strong contender, but the waterproof Moto G, now discounted, is our all-round favourite budget phone £130 from www.snipca.com/20434

AOC

AOC G2460PF

24" FreeSync Gaming Monitor

- 1920 x 1080 Full HD
- 144 Hz, 1 ms
- HDMI, DVI-D, DisplayPort, D-Sub
- Height Adjustable stand (130 mm)
- Also works with NVIDIA GPU as a 144 Hz, 1 ms response time gaming monitor.
- 3 year warranty



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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. £110 from www.snipca.com/19158

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£16.95 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 £19.95 at www.snipca.com/20247.

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

PC MONITOR

AOC Q2778VQE

£214 from www.snipca.com/19416

Tested: Issue 468



It comes with no extras, such as built-in speakers or a USB hub, but this 2560x1440 panel gives you a full 27in screen with excellent contrast and colour accuracy at a very reasonable price. It's a little laggy for gamers, but there's no ghosting on motion.

ALTERNATIVE: Dell UltraSharp U2414H This 1920x1080, 24in screen has a stand that can switch to portrait mode. Colour accuracy is excellent. £188 from www.snipca.com/18207

ROUTER

Trendnet TEW-812DRU

£96 from www.snipca.com/20594

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

£328 from www.snipca.com/20460

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 and easy to set up and use. £245 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 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: Incomedia WebSite X5 v12 Evolution It may feel a little basic, but this straightforward program outputs efficient HTML code and responsive pages. £38 from www.snipca.com/19440

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 3 Devolo dLAN 550 Wi-Fi Powerline starter kits

Devolo's new dLAN 550 Wi-Fi Powerline starter kit extends the range of your internet throughout your home. It uses your electrical wiring as extended cable, bringing the internet to any room at speeds of up to 500Mbps. The clever 'WiFi Move Technology' means that devices automatically switch to the dLAN adapter if it's providing a stronger signal than the router. To enter, email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk with 'devolo' in the subject line by midnight 7 June.



Devolo's dLAN 550 WiFi powerline adapter is available to buy now priced £99.99 from Amazon and Broadbandbuyer.co.uk. For more information on Devolo products visit www.devolo.co.uk and follow @devoloUK on Twitter.

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

Canon Pixma MG5750

£58 from www.snipca.com/20021

Tested: Issue 470



You don't get many frills, but this compact all-in-one printer/scanner includes all the essentials, like Wi-Fi and printing both sides of the paper (duplex), at a reasonable price. It's fairly quick, running costs are better than average, and the five-ink system ensures photos and black text both come out looking great.

ALTERNATIVE: Brother MFC-J5320DW For more business-type tasks, this all-in-one has automatic paper feed for the scanner and the ability to print occasional A3 pages. £80 from www.snipca.com/19674

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB

£290 from www.snipca.com/20459

Tested: Issue 445



A blindingly fast, high-capacity SSD at a lower price than ever before. If you've been put off buying an 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's much more expensive per gigabyte. £99 from www.snipca.com/20246

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£128 from www.snipca.com/11646

Tested: Issue 420

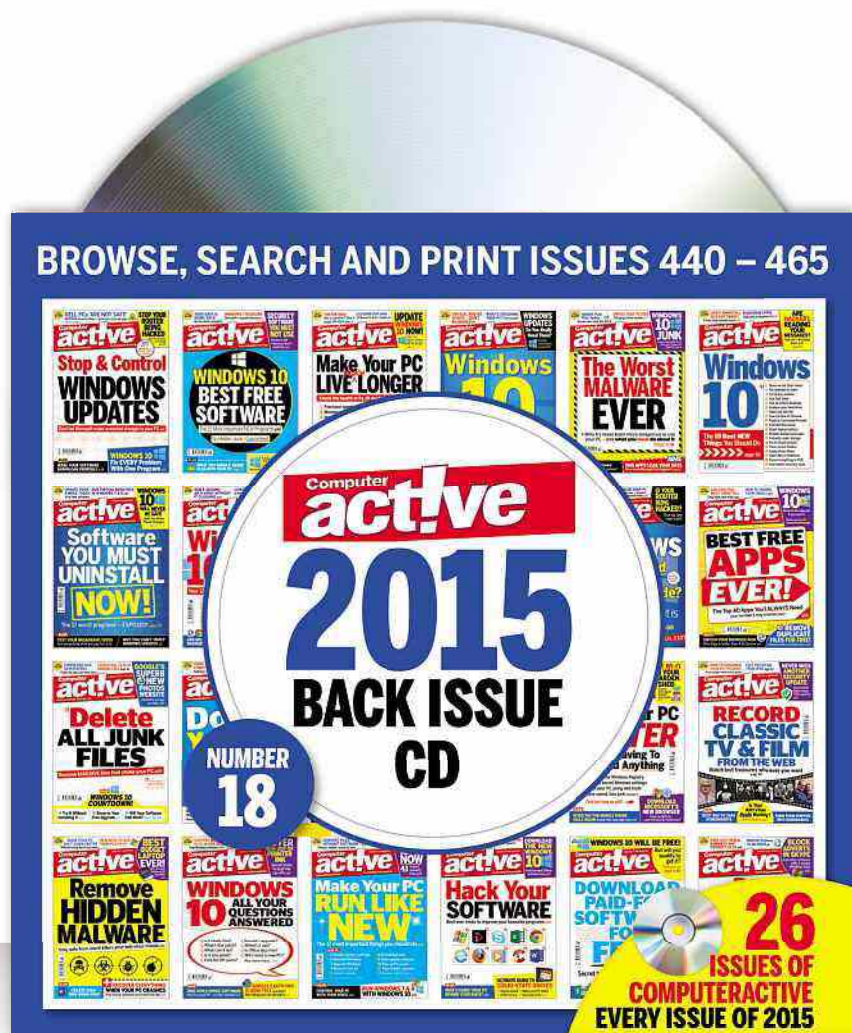


A home-security camera that's well priced and easy to set up. Plus, it has great picture quality, useful apps and there's no need to subscribe to any extra services. It's a worthy successor to the original HomeMonitor, our previous favourite security camera.

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link Wireless N Day & Night Camera A good-value security camera with excellent night vision. £76 from www.snipca.com/15275

Q: How do I upgrade to Windows 10 for free?

A: Page 56, Issue 456



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Workshops & Tips

Edited by Sherwin Coelho

PULL OUT
& KEEP
Issue 476

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

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42 Reopen programs with a keyboard shortcut

PLUS

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44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better

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48 Secret Tips For... Recycle Bin

Use the best alternative to Office 365

What you need: Open365; Any Windows PC; Android device
Time required: 45 minutes

Microsoft Office 365 lets you use the latest versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint via any web browser, as PC software or as mobile apps. Any changes you make are synced across all your devices and you get 1TB of OneDrive storage space thrown in. But these features will cost you £7.99 per month.

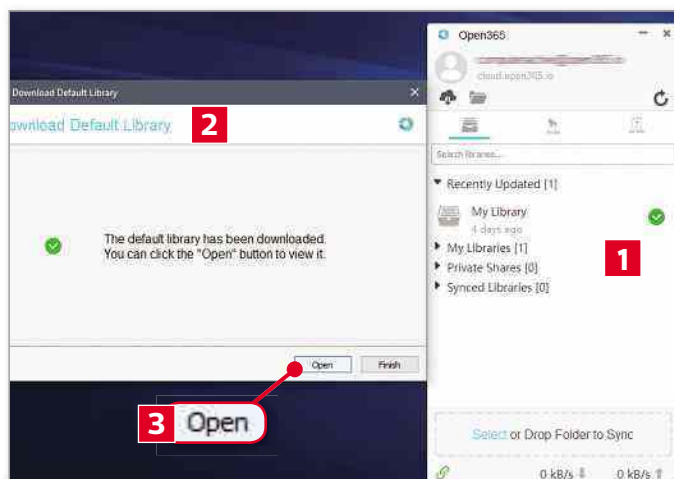
Open365 is a new, free Office 365 alternative that offers the same features as Microsoft's software. It's based on LibreOffice's suite of free equivalents to Office programs, and it even comes with a generous 20GB of storage space.



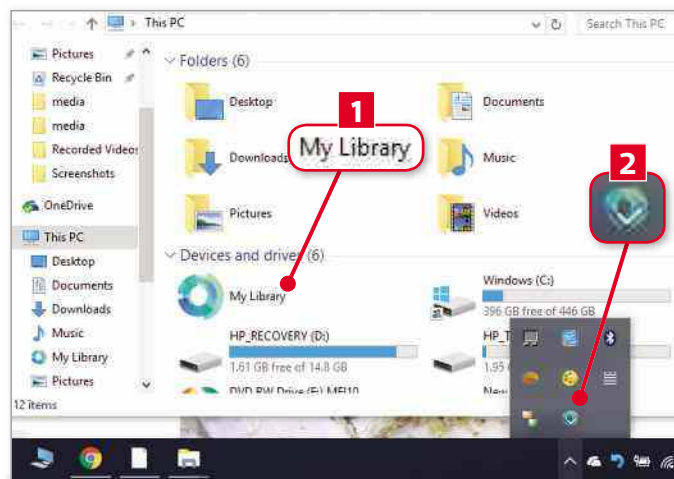
STEP 1 As with Office 365, Open365 is available as a program and a web-based service. The service is currently in **beta**, so you need to create an account to use it. To do that, go to www.open365.io, scroll to the bottom, enter your email address in the field provided, then click 'Sign up'. Type the username and password you want for your free Open365 account **1**. Next, enter your personal details **2**, select 'At home' from the dropdown menu **3**, tick the T&C box **4**, then click Register.

STEP 2 Click I'm Ready on the following screen. This directs you to the Open365 web login page (which we'll return to in Step 5). You'll notice the Open365 program downloading to your PC. Run the downloaded setup file and respond to any prompts. The program won't add a desktop icon, but it will appear in your Start menu, so drag the icon to your desktop to create a shortcut **1**, then open it. In the window that opens, click Next. Now type your Open365 login details (created in Step 1) **2**, then click Login **3**.

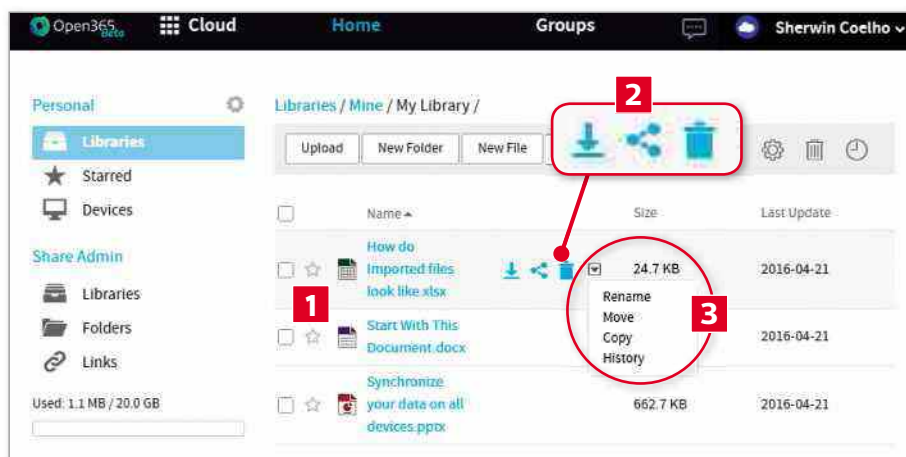
Workshops



STEP 3 You'll see a panel on the right **1** and a Download Default Library window **2**. Click Yes in the latter to start creating a virtual drive, then click Open **3**. This launches the Open365 My Library folder on your PC, which is the default location for all your Open365 files. You'll see three Word, Excel and PowerPoint files, which contain instructions on how to use the program. Download the free LibreOffice program from www.snipca.com/20543 to access the files if you don't have Microsoft Office.

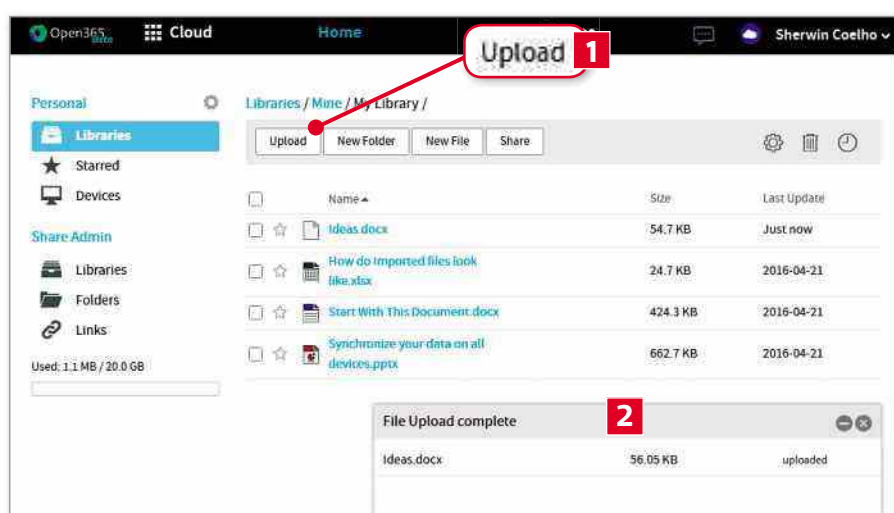


STEP 4 Open My Computer on your PC and you'll see the My Library location **1**. You'll also notice an Open365 cloud-storage icon in your PC's notification area **2**. As with other cloud-storage services, a tick indicates that all your files are already synced. Open365 lets you chat with other users while using its programs (similar to using Skype within Office 365). Open My Library, then open the document named Start With This Document and read the 'Other functionalities' section for information on how to use this chat feature.

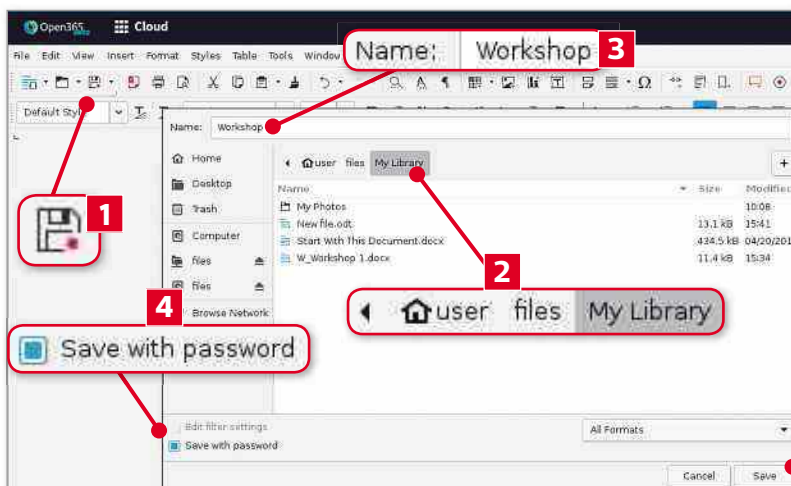
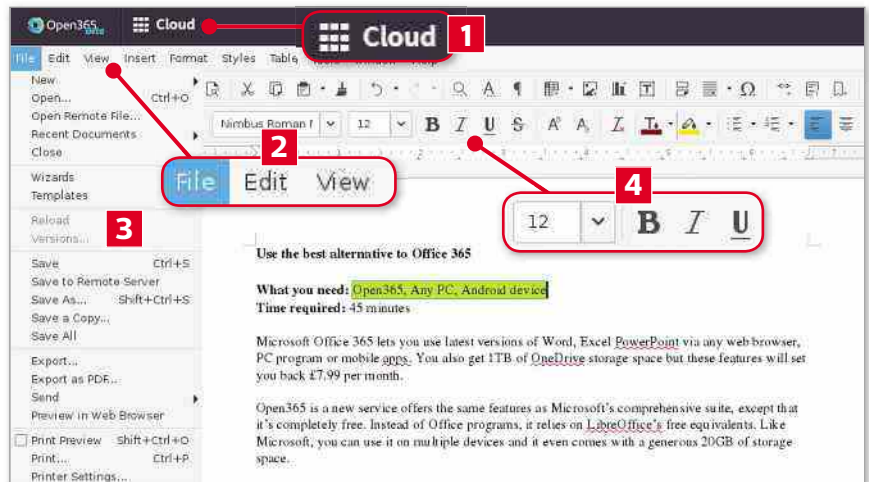


STEP 5 Return to your Open365 web login page (see Step 2) and log into your account to open the home page. Open the My Library folder to see the three introductory files **1**. These are in Writer, Calc and Impress format, which are Open365's online versions of Word, Excel and PowerPoint. Move your cursor over any file for options to download, share or delete **2**. Click the dropdown menu beside a file to see more options **3**.

STEP 6 By default, your Open365 account comes with 20GB of free storage space, where you can upload and sync files from your PC. To do that, click Upload **1**, navigate to the file(s) you want, then click Upload. You'll see a notification when that's done **2**. You'll get similar notifications when you delete a file or make changes to it.

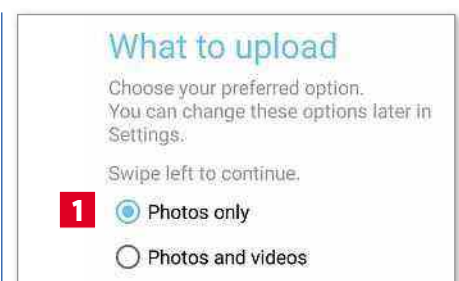
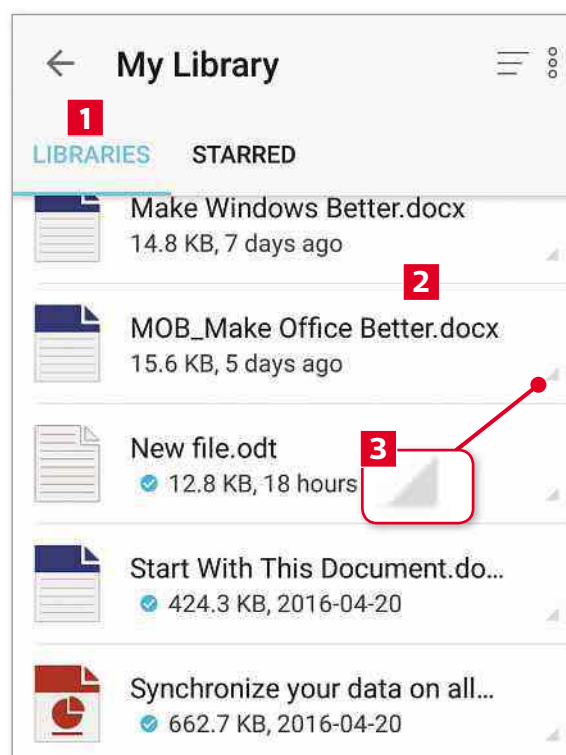


STEP 7 We'll now show you how to create a new Writer document. Click the Cloud button in your browser **1**, then click Writer (you create a spreadsheet or presentation by clicking Calc or Impress). This opens a new browser tab with a document editor that has similar features to Word's. You'll see various options at the top **2** that each have their own menus **3**. Writer also offers a range of text-formatting options **4**.



STEP 8 Unlike Office 365, Open365 doesn't automatically save files you create to your account, but this is easy to do. Click the floppy-disc icon **1**. In the window that opens, click the 'files' folder, then click 'My Library' **2**. Now rename the document **3**. To password-protect it (optional), select 'Save with password' **4**, then click Save **5**. If you choose to password-protect, you'll be prompted to type and confirm your password. Click OK when you've finished.

STEP 9 Open365 doesn't have an iOS app yet, but we'll show you how to use its free Android app (www.snipca.com/20545). Open it, click 'Add account', select 'cloud.open365.io', enter your Open365 login details, tap Login, then Allow. You'll now see two tabs. Tap Libraries **1**, then open My Library to see all your synced files **2**. Tap any file to open it using your default Google office apps (Docs, Sheets and Slides). Click the dropdown menu beside any file **3** to see options to rename, delete, copy, move or mark it with a star.



STEP 10 A great way to make use of Open365's 20GB free space is by turning on its Camera Upload feature. This will automatically save any photos you take on your device to Open365. To do that, tap the three dots at the top right of the app, then Settings. Next, tap the 'Turn on Camera Upload' slider. Next, swipe across a number of screens, selecting your preferences. So (in order) select 'Wi-Fi only', 'Photos only' **1**, 'Automatically guess camera albums', and My Library, then tap Confirm. Any photos you take on your device will now appear in a new My Photos folder within My Library. ●

Explain PC problems as annotated videos

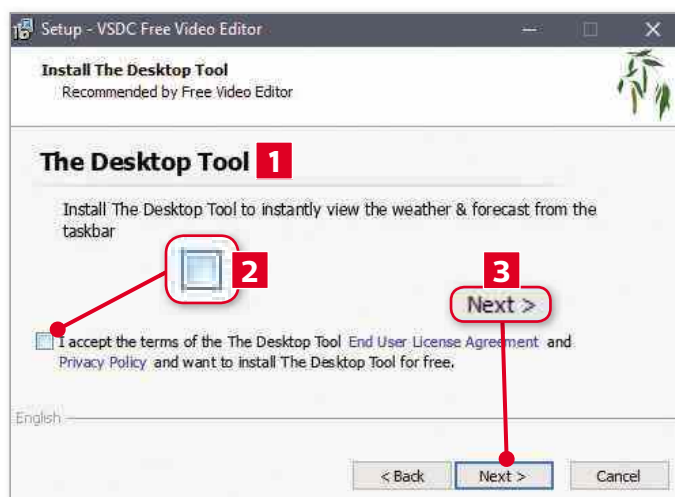
What you need: VSDC Free Video Editor; Any Windows version
Time required: 25 minutes

The best way to illustrate a PC problem in detail is to record what you do on screen as a video, then send this to someone who can help. There are only a handful of screen-recording programs, and most are paid-for or have limitations (the length of your

recording or prominent watermarks, for example). VSDC Free Video Editor is a free program with no such restrictions. It also lets you narrate your recording and add useful annotations to describe the problem in greater detail.



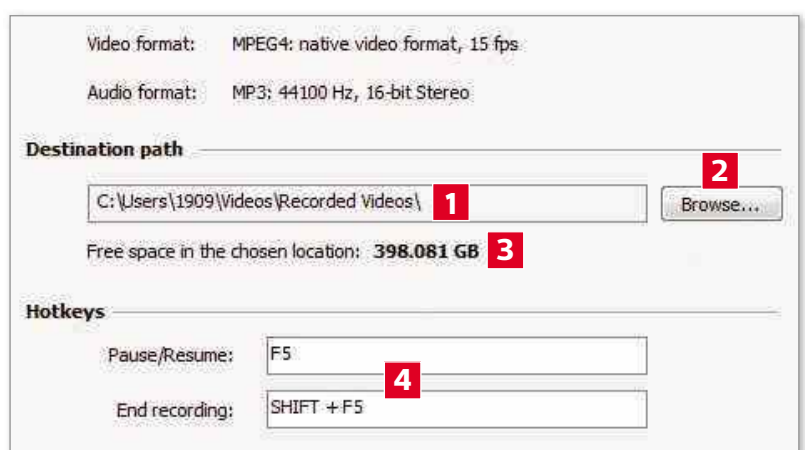
STEP 1 To download the program, go to www.snipca.com/20533 and click the Download Video Editor button. Click the downloaded setup file, then follow the setup prompts until you reach The Desktop Tool page **1**. Untick the terms box **2**, click Next **3**, select 'I do not accept', click Next, untick the box on the following page, click Next again, then Install to begin the process. The program needs the Microsoft C++ package to work, so it will install it on your PC if needed. When that's done, click Finish to launch the program.

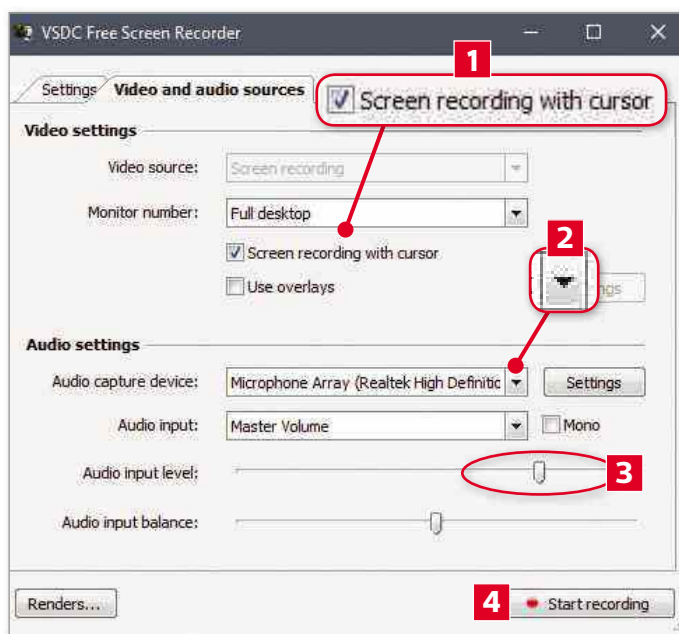


STEP 2 Click 'New project' **1**, then 'Screen capture' **2**. Leave the default name for now (we'll show you how to rename your video later). The default video settings are usually adequate, but you can change them using the dropdown menus **3** if you feel confident. Recorded videos are saved in the .AVI format, which can be played by any video player - including Windows Media Player, VLC, and Films & TV (Windows 10's default app). Click Finish **4**.

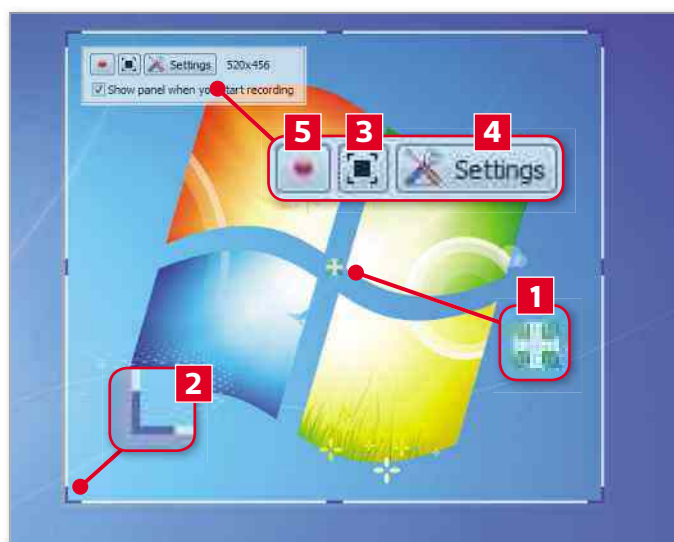


STEP 3 The program creates a folder called Recorded Videos **1** within your PC's Videos folder, where it saves all your videos. You can change this destination if you want by navigating to a different location via the Browse button **2**, but make sure any new destination you choose has enough storage space **3**. The program has default hotkeys to pause/resume and end your recording **4**. To change these, click inside the relevant field, then press the key (or key combinations) you want to use instead.

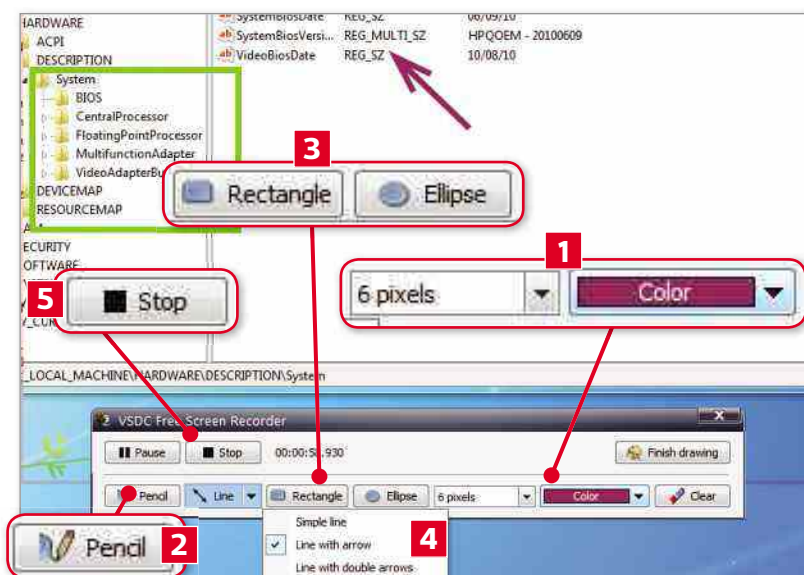




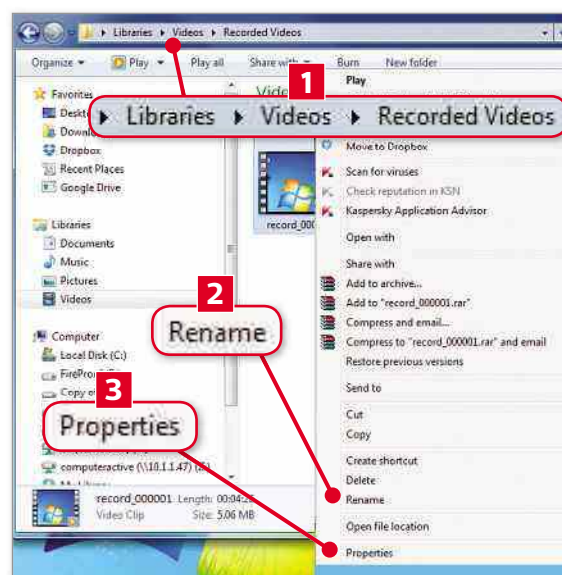
STEP 4 Next, click the 'Video and audio sources' tab. Here, you can choose to hide your cursor from the recording **1**. The program will select your built-in microphone. If your PC doesn't have one, connect an external one, then select it from the dropdown menu **2**. Adjust the volume of your narration **3**. Click 'Start recording' **4** when you're happy with the settings.



STEP 5 Your recording won't start immediately. Instead you'll see a border on your screen, which defines the area you want to record. Click and drag the middle button **1** to reposition the area. Drag any handles **2** to extend it. Click the full-screen icon **3** to record the entire screen. Click Settings **4** if you want to go back and tweak your recording settings (Steps 3 and 4). When you're ready to start recording, click the Record button **5**. Whatever you do on screen will be recorded and you'll see a small panel below your recording area. Use the keyboard shortcut (F5, or one you created) or the Pause button to pause/resume your recording.



STEP 6 Click the 'Start drawing' button at the bottom right to activate the annotation tools. Select your annotation colour and pen thickness using the dropdown menus **1**. Clicking Clear at the bottom right will undo any mistakes. The Pencil tool **2** lets you write/draw on screen. Rectangle and Ellipse **3** lets you click and drag to draw those shapes. The Line dropdown menu contains three other pointer options **4**. Click 'Finish drawing' (bottom right) when you've finished annotating, then Stop **5** when you want to finish recording.



STEP 7 Click OK when you see a message saying 'Recording is complete'. Now open the Videos folder on your PC, then the Recorded Videos folder **1** to access your video recording. To rename the file, right-click it, click Rename **2**, then type the name you want. To check your file size, right-click the video, then click Properties **3**. The file should be smaller than 10MB if you want to email it to someone who'll help you. If it's larger than 10MB, use a cloud-storage service (such as OneDrive, Google Drive or Dropbox) instead. ●

Make your Command Prompt easier to use

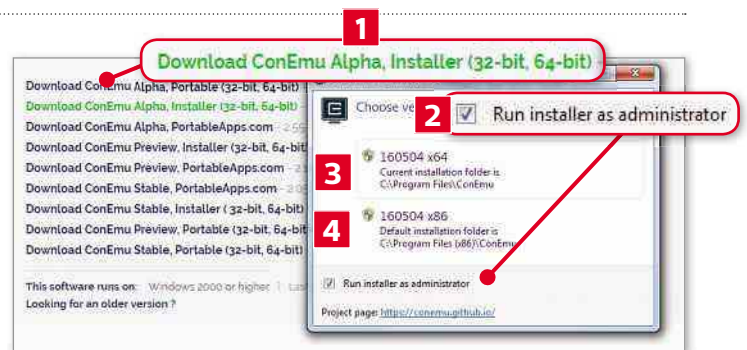
What you need: ConEmu; Windows (Any version) **Time required:** 25 minutes

Microsoft's Command Prompt tool hasn't changed much since Windows XP and is starting to look its age. Free program ConEmu (short for 'console emulator') is a superb, modern alternative with loads of handy features. Aside from

text-colour options, Chrome-style tabs and a great search feature, it lets you copy and paste text both to and from the program, making it much easier to use than Windows' default tool. We'll show you how to use ConEmu with simple PC commands.

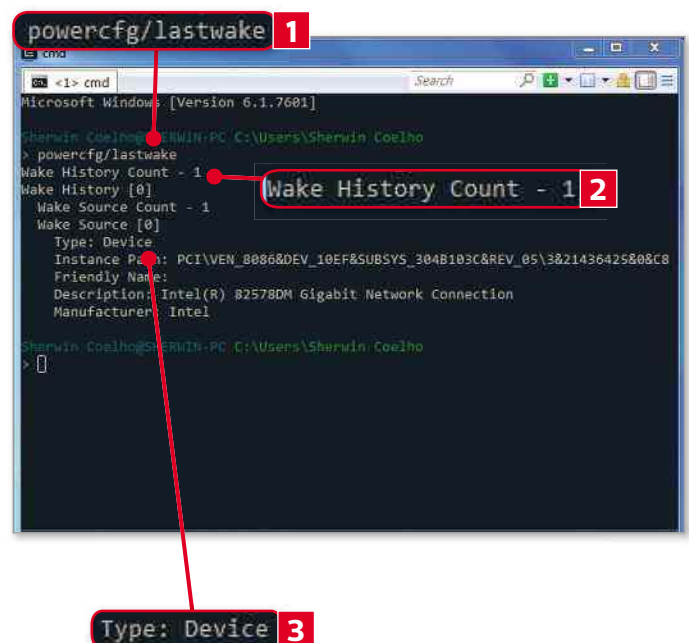
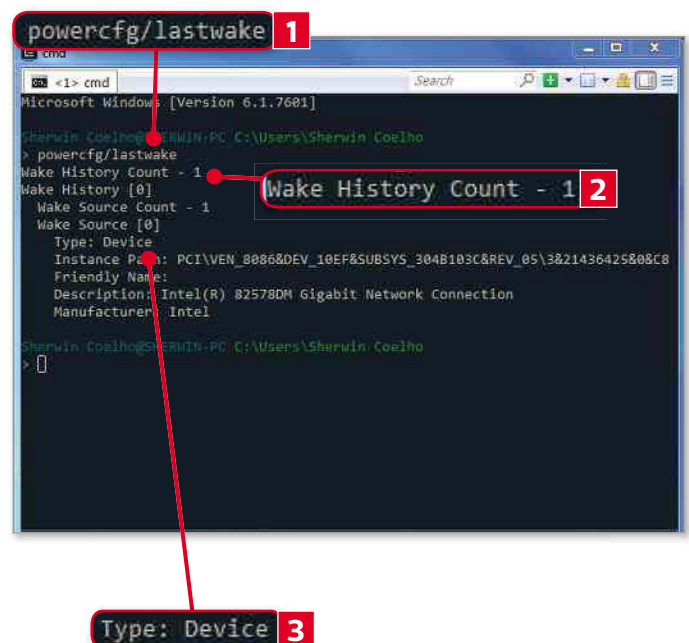


STEP 1 Before downloading ConEmu, you need to check your PC's version. Right-click Computer (on your desktop or in your Start menu), then click Properties. Now look under 'System type' in the System section to see whether you have a 32bit or 64bit system. To download ConEmu, go to www.snipca.com/20490 and click the latest Installer link **1**. Open the downloaded setup file and click Run. In the window that opens, tick the 'Run installer as administrator' box **2**. If you have a 64bit operating system (OS), select the first option **3**. If it's a 32bit OS, select the second **4**.



STEP 2 On the setup screen, click Yes, Next, tick to accept the terms, click Next (twice), then Install. When that's finished, click Finish. Click the desktop shortcut **1** to open the program. In the 'fast configuration' screen, tick 'Enable automatic updates' **2**, select Stable **3**, then click OK **4** to launch ConEmu.

STEP 3 In Windows 10, Microsoft added the ability to copy and paste text from other programs (such as Word) into the Command Prompt window. This feature isn't available in earlier Windows versions, but with ConEmu you can do this on any Windows version. To try it, type `powercfg /lastwake` into Word or Notepad. Now copy this text (Ctrl+C), paste it into ConEmu (Ctrl+V) **1**, then press Enter. This command tells you how many times (if at all) your PC has woken from sleep mode since you last switched it on **2** and what was responsible for waking your PC **3**.




```

cmd
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
C:\Users\Sherwin Coelho> ipconfig

Windows IP Configuration

Ethernet adapter Local Area Connection:

    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . : dennist.co.uk
    Link-local IPv6 Address . . . . . : fe80::1931:dc03:7078:1264%11
    IPv4 Address. . . . . : 10.185.0.62
    Subnet Mask . . . . . : 255.255.0.0
    Default Gateway . . . . . : 10.185.0.1
  
```

1 `ipconfig`

STEP 4 You can also copy text from ConEmu's window to your PC. This is especially useful if you want to find out your PC's IP address. Type `ipconfig` into ConEmu 1, then press Enter to run the command. Now copy your PC's IP Address field 2, then simply paste it into another program (such as Word or email).

```

cmd
Microsoft Windows [Version 6.1.7601]
C:\Users\Sherwin Coelho> driverquery

Module Name      Display Name      Driver Type      Link Date
-----
1394ohci         1394 OHCI Complia Kernel      20/11/2010 10:44:56
ACPI             Microsoft ACPI Driver Kernel      20/11/2010 09:19:16
AcpiPmi         ACPI Power Meter Drive Kernel      20/11/2010 09:30:42
adp94xx         adp94xx          Kernel        05/12/2008 23:54:42
adpahci         adpahci          Kernel        01/05/2007 18:30:09
adpu320         adpu320          Kernel        28/02/2007 00:04:15
AFD             Ancillary Function Dri Kernel      13/10/2015 17:41:01
agp440          Intel AGP Bus Filter Kernel      14/07/2009 00:38:43
  
```

2 `driverquery`

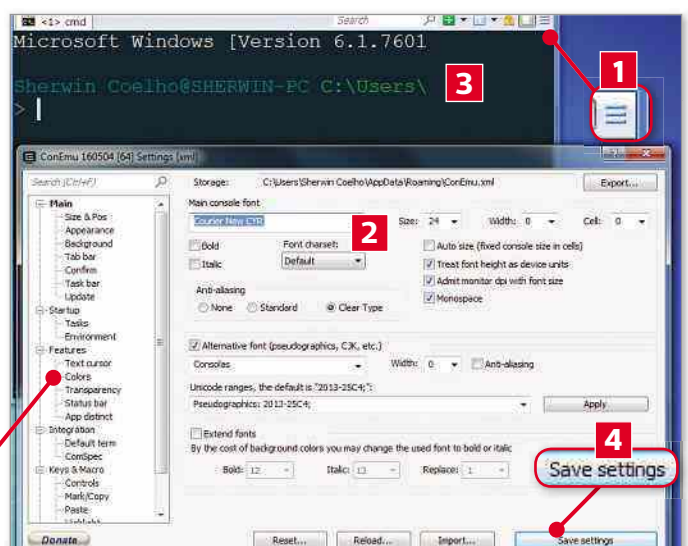
STEP 5 ConEmu also lets you run different commands in different tabs. This feature comes in very useful with a command called `driverquery`, which lists all the drivers on your PC, so you can easily compare them before and after updating. Type `driverquery` into ConEmu, then press Enter to see the list, arranged by date. Now update your drivers using a third-party program (such as Snail Driver). Return to ConEmu, click the '+' icon 1 to open a new tab, then type `driverquery` again 2 to see any new and updated drivers. Right-click any tab 3 to see options to close, rename or duplicate it.

```

cmd
SRFeature.exe 5392 Console 1 1,964 K
explorer.exe 4120 Console 1 3,832 K
explorer.exe 8120 Console 1 79,340 K
open365-applet.exe 5688 Console 1 12,832 K
ccnet.exe 8116 Console 1 860 K
conhost.exe 6824 Console 1 168 K
seaf-daemon.exe 7328 Console 1 6,364 K
conhost.exe 8744 Console 1 212 K
winvnc.exe 4116 Console 1 4,820 K
audiiodg.exe 6452 Services 0 16,628 K
OUTLOOK.EXE 4716 Console 1 146,096 K
chrome.exe 5620 Console 1 247,552 K
chrome.exe 5892 Console 1 7,660 K
chrome.exe 3420 Console 1 83,496 K
chrome.exe 4916 Console 1 87,560 K
chrome.exe 5092 Console 1 74,836 K
chrome.exe 4368 Console 1 29,400 K
  
```

STEP 6 Using ConEmu's search bar, you can search for items in your Command Prompt results. For example, type `tasklist` into ConEmu, then press Enter to display all the programs and services (including background ones) running on your PC 1. Now type the name of a program you suspect is running in the background into the search bar 2, then press Enter to locate it within the list 3. Keep pressing Enter to see other instances of that program.

STEP 7 There are many ways you can customise ConEmu's default settings. Click the settings menu (three lines) 1, then click Settings. Use the dropdown menus to change the default font type and size 2. You'll see any changes you make immediately in ConEmu's main window 3, but they won't be saved until you click 'Save settings' 4. To change ConEmu's text colour scheme, click Colors 5, click the Scheme dropdown menu at the top and choose from one of the 20-plus options. To revert to ConEmu's default settings, click Reset at the bottom, then click Yes.



Use a keyboard shortcut to reopen programs

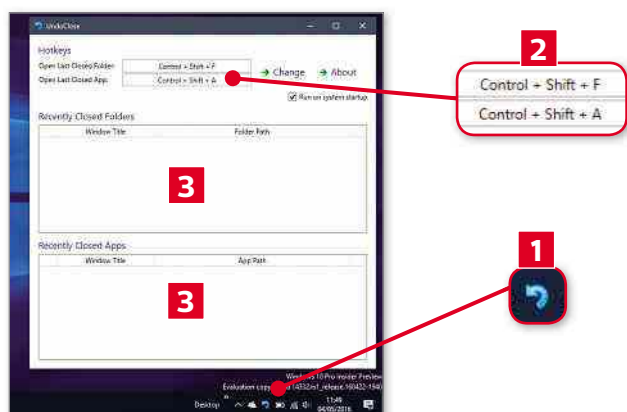
What you need: Windows 7, 8 or 10 **Time required:** 10 minutes

We've all done it – prematurely closed a particular folder or program on our PC only to realise that we hadn't quite finished with it. UndoClose is a free portable program that lets you reopen the

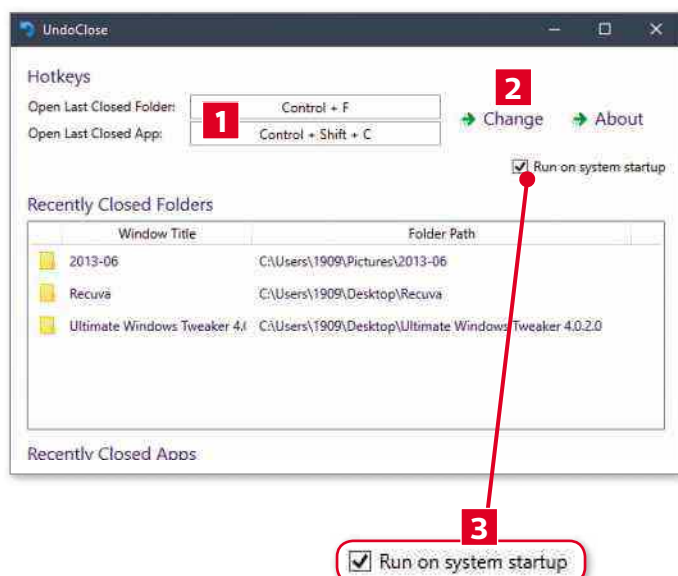
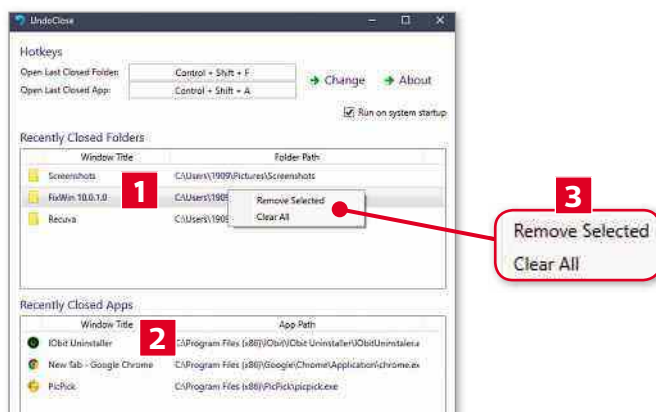
folder or program that you last closed using a keyboard shortcut. What's more, you can customise UndoClose's default shortcuts with your own. It also saves all the folders and programs that you've closed to a list for easy access.



STEP 1 To download the program, go to www.snipca.com/20477, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the Download UndoClose link. Open the downloaded zipped file, then click the UndoClose setup file. Some antivirus programs may warn you about it, but this is a **false positive** – the program is perfectly safe to install. Once that's done, you'll see the small UndoClose icon in your PC's notification area **1**. Click it to open the program – you'll see a window showing two default keyboard shortcuts **2** and two empty sections **3**.



STEP 2 As you use your PC, any folders you close will appear in the Recently Closed Folders section **1** and any programs you close will show up in the Recently Closed Apps section **2**. Click any of the items in these sections to reopen them. Bear in mind, Recently Closed Apps is something of a misnomer because UndoClose only registers *programs* that you close – not desktop apps (either built-in or from the Microsoft Store). Right-click any item in the list to see options to remove it or clear the whole list **3**.



STEP 3 To reopen the folder you last closed, press Ctrl+Shift+F. To reopen the last program you closed, press Ctrl+Shift+A. Pressing the same shortcut again re-opens items (folders or programs) you closed earlier. To change the default keyboard shortcut, click the relevant field and type your new shortcut **1** – avoiding Windows' default keyboard shortcuts (such as Ctrl+A or Ctrl+C), which won't work. Next, click Change **2** to confirm your choice, then tick 'Run on system startup' **3** (optional).

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
8 June

- Clean your PC deeper than ever
- Recover storage on your tablet
- Add new tools to your mouse
- Un-send emails to avoid disaster

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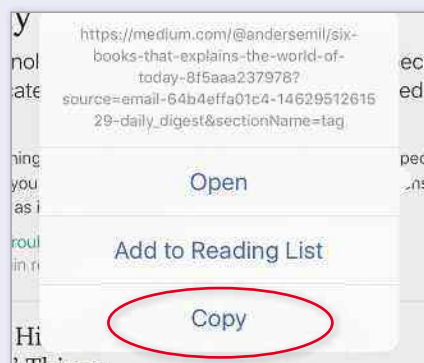
TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

Block adverts on an older iPad

Recently *Computeractive* featured two Workshops about blocking ads while browsing the web on your iPad or iPhone. The first Workshop involved a third-party browser app called Adblock Browser (Issue 472, page 42); while the second featured Kaspersky AdCleaner – an app that adds ad-blocking features to Safari (Issue 474, page 42).

I was particularly interested in the latter, but I couldn't install the Kaspersky app because I have a very old iPad. After some research, I figured out why. I also found out the best way to bypass Safari and block ads on my old device.

Basically, Safari is the default browser in iOS and (unlike Google on



Android) Apple doesn't let you change your defaults. I read that ad-blocking is new to Safari (introduced in iOS 9), so all the third-party apps that provide ad-blocking capabilities only work on the latest iPhones and iPads.

Even though I always use Adblock Browser (www.snipca.com/20047) when surfing the net, any links I tap in other apps (such as text-messaging or email) open in Safari by default – and therefore contain adverts. However, I've now figured out a way to open these links in Adblock instead.

Instead of tapping a link, long-press it until you see the menu of options. Next, tap Copy (see screenshot), open Adblock Browser, tap and hold the URL bar, tap Paste, then tap Go to open that link in Adblock Browser, where it will load without adverts. This seems to be the only way to avoid adverts – at least until Apple lets us set our own defaults.

Charles Bell



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

FILE RENAMING

Rename multiple files easily

You recently included a Workshop on Bulk Rename Utility (Issue 473, Page 38). While trying to find out more about it online, I stumbled upon another free batch-renaming program called Ron's Renamer, which is a great alternative. To download it, go to www.snipca.com/20599, click the Download Now button at the top and run the setup file.

When the program launches, click Open Location at the top left and point it to the folder containing the files you want to rename. You'll see two columns headed Current Name and New Name (these are identical until you change them). Click the Mark Mode dropdown menu at the top, select Manual, then tick the files you want to rename.

The program has 17 useful renaming options at the bottom left (see screenshot

below left). These let you add or remove spaces, text, numbers, dates and times, and so on. Within each option there are further customisations in the menu at the bottom right. When you're happy with your files' new names (in the New Name column), click Rename at the top right, then Proceed. The free version restricts you to 75 files at one go.

Colin Humphreys

EMAIL

Find any Gmail message in seconds

I use Gmail and often struggled to find specific emails I was looking for, until I learned a few, invaluable search tricks. I realised that typing a search term (such as 'bills', for example) into the search bar is pointless because it searches for that term in all your emails and can inundate you with results.

Instead, to search for a term from a specific individual, type **bills from:edf**, for example, to see emails containing the word 'bills' from 'EDF'.

There's also a small dropdown menu in the search bar that lets you find emails from specific people or containing

specific words. You can even sort emails received by date, or with attachments. This useful link (www.snipca.com/20600) has more Gmail search tricks.

Margaret Thorne

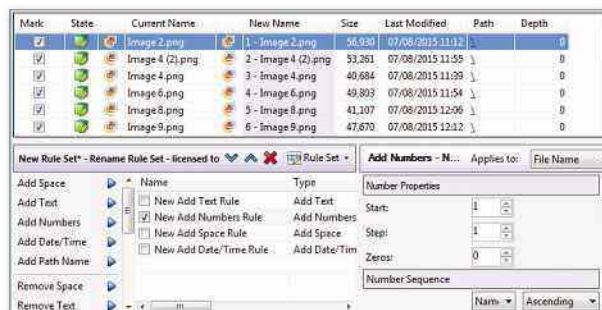
INSTANT MESSAGING

Use a better alternative to WhatsApp's new program

I use WhatsApp a lot, but find my phone's keyboard fiddly to type on, so I've been using a free program called Whatsie on my PC instead. I was eager to try the new WhatsApp Desktop program (www.snipca.com/20601), but having used it, I still feel Whatsie is better. To download it, go to www.snipca.com/20602, click the 'win32-setup.exe' link toward the bottom, then run the setup file.

When you launch the program, you'll see a QR code on your screen. Open WhatsApp on your mobile, tap the three dots at the top right, then WhatsApp Web. This launches your phone's camera. Point it at the QR code on your PC. From now on, your WhatsApp phone conversations will also appear in Whatsie on your PC. Unlike the new WhatsApp program, there's a Theme menu and an App menu that lets you choose to launch the program at startup.

Ted Chambers



Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

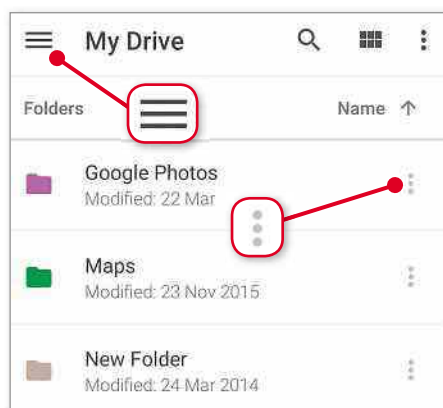
ANDROID & iOS

Change folder colours in Google Drive and edit files offline



Google Drive now lets you add colours to your folders to help you distinguish them better. Open the app (default on Android; iOS www.snipca.com/20563) to see all your folders. Tap the three dots beside the folder you want to add a colour to (see right of screenshot below), tap the 'Change colour' option at the bottom and choose from one of 20 colours.

A little-known feature of Google Drive is that it lets you make specific files (such as documents or presentations) available for 'offline use'. You can then access and edit these files even if you don't have a signal – for example, when you're on a flight. Any edits you make will sync with the original files in Google Drive as soon as you regain a network connection.



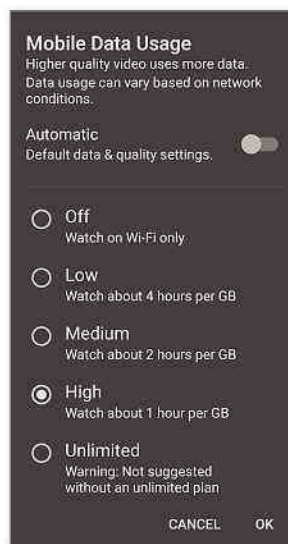
To make a file available for offline use, navigate to its location within Google Drive. Next, tap the three dots beside the file, then tap the 'Available offline' slider to turn it on. To access the file when you're offline, simply tap the three lines (see top left of screenshot), then tap Offline. Make your changes to the file, and when you're back online, you'll see these changes in your original file.

ANDROID & iOS

Limit how much mobile data Netflix uses



We'd never recommend watching Netflix on your phone or tablet while you're out and about because video-streaming devours a lot of mobile data. But if you are tempted, Netflix has introduced a new Mobile Data Usage feature to help you out. This gives you various video-quality options along with an estimation of how much mobile data each option will use (see screenshot above right). You can then select the option that's best for you based on your monthly data limit. To choose one of these options, open Netflix, tap the



three dots at the top left, scroll to the bottom, tap App Settings, then Mobile Data Usage. Select the option you want, then tap OK at the bottom.

ANDROID & iOS

Translate text on the go



Google has introduced two new features to its Translate app. The Android app (www.snipca.com/20583) lets you instantly translate text you copy from any app. Previously, if you'd received a text message or a phrase in a foreign language in WhatsApp or Skype, for example, you

had to copy the text, then paste it into the Google Translate app for an English-language translation.

With the latest app update, you simply copy any foreign-language text on your device and a Google Translate icon will pop up on your screen (see screenshot above right). Tap this for an instant English translation. Watch Google's video at www.snipca.com/20567 to see how the feature works.

The Google Translate iOS app (www.snipca.com/20564) now lets you download language packs to use offline, which is great when you're on holiday in more remote areas without Wi-Fi or a phone signal (Android already has this feature). Previously, these

Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

Arts & Culture

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/20568

iOS: www.snipca.com/20569

Google's app is a font of knowledge divided into three categories – Art, History



and Wonders. The first covers famous artists and their trademark styles. History reveals events that took place on today's date in the past. Wonders takes you on virtual tours of various world heritage sites.

Email – EasyDo Mail

Free

iPhone only: www.snipca.com/20570

Despite competing in a crowded market, this email app – which can be used with Gmail, Outlook and Yahoo – has some unique



features. It lets you unsubscribe from emails with one tap and postpones email notifications to a time that suits you. The app also notifies you of flight delays and gate changes.

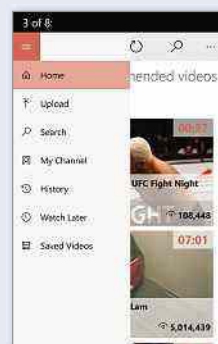
Awesome Tube

Free

Windows Phone:

www.snipca.com/20571

YouTube doesn't have an official app for Windows Phone, so use this instead. It lets



you watch videos, subscribe to your favourite channels and save clips to watch later. You can also listen to music videos when your screen is locked – a feature even the official Android and iOS app lacks.



language packs were over 100MB in size and therefore took up valuable storage space; Google has now shrunk these to around 25MB. To download them, open the Translate app, tap the language dropdown menu at the top, go to the language pack you want to download, then tap the small download icon beside it.

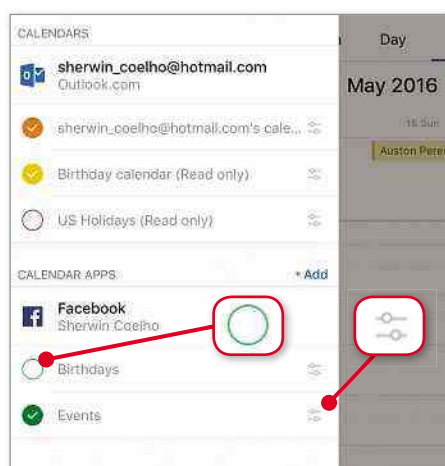
ANDROID & iOS

Import your Facebook calendar to Outlook



The latest version of Outlook (Android www.snipca.com/20565; iOS www.snipca.com/20566) lets you import your calendar events from Facebook, Wunderlist and Evernote. We'll show you how to import your Facebook events on an iOS device, but the process for importing other calendars is the same, even if you use an Android device.

Open Outlook, tap Calendar at the bottom, tap the three lines at the top left, then the 'Connect your favourite apps' option at the bottom. Now tap the '+' icon beside Facebook. Your default web



browser will open and you'll need to log into your Facebook account. After doing that, tap 'Continue as [your name]' at the bottom to grant Outlook access to your Facebook calendar details. When you return to the Outlook app, you'll now see a tick beside Facebook.

All your Facebook calendar categories (Events, Birthdays and so on) will be listed on the left. Tap the tick beside an event category to switch it on or off (see screenshot below left) and thereby remove the events in that category from your calendar.

To change the colour representing a particular event category in Outlook, tap the slider icon beside it, then choose the colour you want.

WINDOWS PHONES

Use a PIN code to unlock your device



Windows Phones use your Microsoft account password by default, but you can change this to a PIN code if you prefer. First, ensure your phone is updated to the latest version (Windows 10). See 'Phone and Tablet Tips' in Issue 473 for instructions on how to do this. After updating, scroll down from the top of your screen, tap All Settings, Personalisation, 'Lock screen', then scroll to the bottom and tap 'Sign-in options'. Now tap the Add button below PIN. You now need to enter your Microsoft password before typing and confirming your PIN code.

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

Ocean II – Stickers and Colors*

Free www.snipca.com/20572 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/20573 (iOS)

The four activities in Ocean II will keep your toddler busy for hours. There's a simple matching game, and 15 albums where they need to match stickers to the correct outline. There are also games involving colouring and playing tunes on a virtual keyboard.



AGES 6-10

Stack*

Free www.snipca.com/20574 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/20575 (iOS)

There are several 'stacking' games but none are as addictive (or as challenging) as Stack. The aim is simple: arrange blocks one on top of the other until you've built a mini-skyscraper. Whenever you fail to align a block precisely, part of it will be chipped off – thereby increasing the risk of collapse.



AGES 11-16

80 Days

£3 www.snipca.com/20577 (Android)

£3.99 www.snipca.com/20578 (iOS)

In this game (based on Jules Verne's classic novel *Around the World in 80 Days*), you play as Jean Passepartout, Phileas Fogg's loyal valet. Chart your route across a 3D globe and in each city, perform tasks to win money and progress along your journey back to London.



*Contains in-app purchases

Make Windows Better

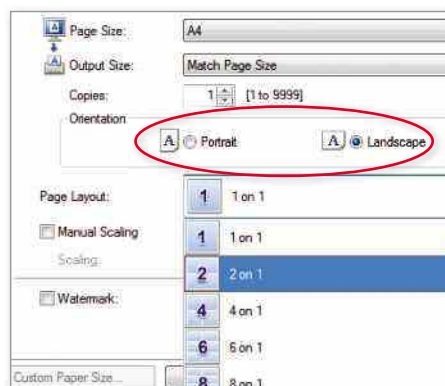
Clever tips for every version

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Print more than one page on a single sheet of paper



By default, your printer reproduces a single page on a separate sheet of paper. However, there's an easy way to print two or more pages on a single sheet. This can be quite handy if you're running low on paper and you want to print something that doesn't need to look great – say a copy of your bills or notes for a presentation.



To do this, open the document you want to print, then press Ctrl+P. Now click the Printer Properties link below the Printer dropdown menu at the top left. In the Properties window, the Page Layout dropdown menu will be set to '1 on 1' (meaning one page per sheet). To change this to, say, two pages per sheet, click the dropdown menu and set it to '2 on 1'. By default, the two pages are printed in portrait mode in two sections on the left and right respectively (text may be reformatted to fit). If you want less reformatting, it's probably better to print the pages in landscape mode. To do this, select the Landscape option at the top (see screenshot above). Finally, click OK, then Print.

WINDOWS 10

Make Windows 10 easier to use on a laptop-tablet hybrid



If you have a laptop-tablet hybrid, then there are two settings you should switch on to make your device easier to use in tablet mode. Open Settings, click System, then click 'Tablet mode'. Now click the slider at the top to turn it on. This makes your screen more responsive to touchscreen gestures.

Next, click the 'When this device automatically switches tablet mode on or off' dropdown menu and select 'Don't ask me and always switch' (see

WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Make your mouse easier to use

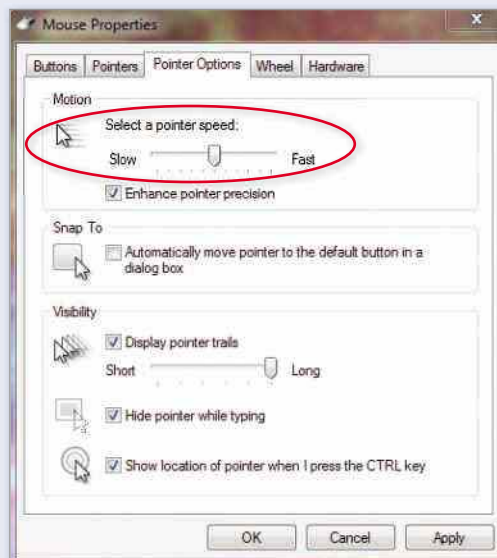


If you find that your mouse is too sensitive or that you often lose track of your cursor on screen, you should change its default settings to make it more suitable for your needs. To do that, open Control Panel, click the 'View by' dropdown menu at the top right, select 'Large icons', then click the Mouse option.

In the Mouse Properties window that opens, click the Pointer Options tab. If you find your mouse is too sensitive, then move the 'Select a pointer speed' slider at the top towards the Slow end (see screenshot).

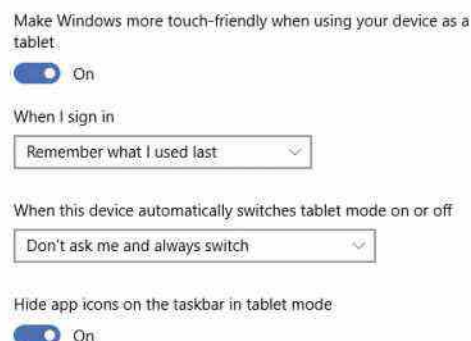
Now try using your mouse and adjust its sensitivity using the slider.

If your cursor zips about very quickly and you tend to lose track of it on screen, tick 'Display pointer trails'. Now, whenever you move it, you'll see the path of your cursor displayed. You



can change how big or small this is using the slider below. Tick the last box if you want to locate your cursor by pressing the Ctrl key (you'll see a zoomed-in effect on your cursor). Click Apply, then OK to confirm your changes.

Tablet mode



screenshot above). This prevents the annoying pop-up that prompts you to confirm you want to switch from PC to tablet mode.

WINDOWS 10

Find items on your PC faster



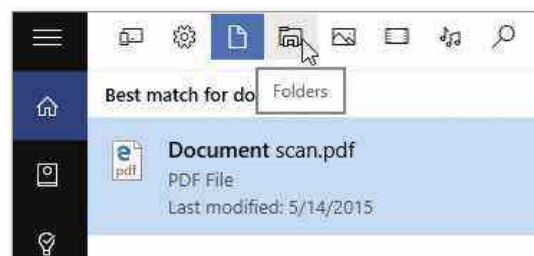
There are many ways to speed up the process of finding items on your PC.

Type your search term in the Windows 10 search field (bottom-

left corner) to see a list of search results. The icons at the top let you sort your results by seven categories – apps, settings, documents, folders, photos, videos and music (see screenshot below).

For more nuanced search results, click the 'My stuff' button at the bottom. Cortana will expand to give you a larger preview of your search results. Use the Sort dropdown menu to see the most recent or most relevant results. The Show dropdown menu lets you sort

your search results into the seven categories mentioned above. Read our Cover Feature for more ways to use Windows 10 faster (page 50).



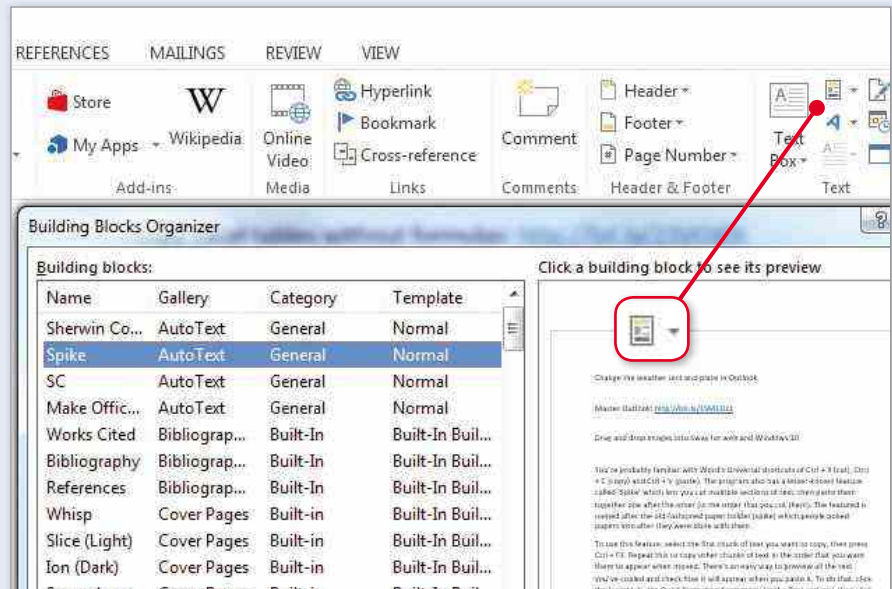
WORD

Move multiple sections of text in one go

Word has a little-known feature called 'Spike' (named after the old-style paper spike – used by people to skewer documents or forms they had finished working on). In Word, Spike lets you cut multiple sections of text, then paste them all at once in the order you cut them.

To use this feature, select the first section of text you want to cut, then press Ctrl+F3. Repeat to cut further sections of text in the order that you want them to appear when moved. You can then preview the text you've cut to check that you have everything in the correct order before you paste it. To do that, click the Insert tab, the Quick Parts dropdown menu (see screenshot), then click Building Blocks Organizer. In the window that appears, select Spike on the left to see a preview of your 'spiked' items.

There are two ways to paste this text.



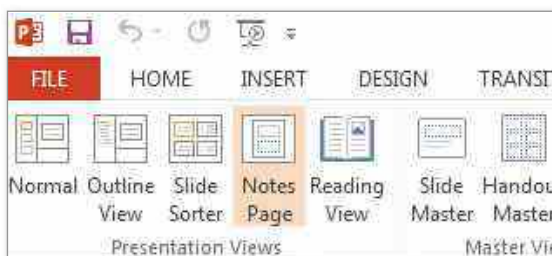
If you only need to paste it once, place your cursor where you want to paste it and press Ctrl+Shift+F3. If you want to paste it multiple times, type **spike**

where you want to paste your copied text, then press F3. Repeat the second method to paste your copied text again.

POWERPOINT

Print your notes before presenting

If you have a presentation to deliver, it's a good idea to prepare notes for each slide to help you out. At the bottom of each slide, you'll see a 'Click to add notes' field. Type any prompts or reminders that might help you here. To print these notes to use during your presentation, click the View tab in your presentation, then click Notes Page at the top left (see screenshot below). Your presentation will now appear as a document displaying each slide as small tiles on a separate page, with notes beneath each. If you need to make changes to your notes, you can do so at this stage. When you've finished with the edits, press Ctrl+P, then Print.



OUTLOOK

Change Outlook's default weather settings

Besides logging your upcoming events, the Calendar in Outlook (versions 2010, 2013 and 2016) also displays a handy weather forecast for the current and following days. Click Calendar at the bottom left of Outlook to see the forecast at the top right (see screenshot). By default, the temperatures are shown in Fahrenheit and the location is set to a city in the US, but it's easy to change this to Celsius and set your own location for the forecast.

Click File at the top left, Options at the bottom, then Calendar on the left. Now scroll to the bottom, select Celsius, then click OK. Return to the Calendar and you should now see the temperatures displayed in Celsius. To add your location, click the default location, then 'Add location'. Next, type the name of your city or town in the field that appears, press Enter and select the correct autosuggest option.



SWAY

Create a presentation that others can edit

Microsoft's online presentation tool, Sway, lets you send a link to your presentation so that others can edit it. Go to www.sway.com, click 'Sign in' (top right), then log in with your Microsoft account. Click the presentation you want to share, then the Authors button at the top right. If you don't see this option, your presentation is probably set to Private mode. If so, click the Share button, click the slider to enable sharing, then the Authors button. Now copy the link and send it (see screenshot below).





Recycle Bin

Restore deleted files, change the Recycle Bin size limit and pin it to the taskbar

Pin the Recycle Bin to the taskbar

Putting a shortcut for the Recycle Bin on the taskbar makes a lot of sense, as it enables you to restore files, or empty the Recycle Bin without minimising open windows or returning to the desktop. Rather unhelpfully the Recycle Bin doesn't have the handy 'Pin to taskbar' feature that other tools enjoy, but there is a way to do this nonetheless.

Right-click the taskbar and untick 'Lock the taskbar' to unlock it, then right-click it again and choose Toolbars then 'New toolbar'. When the 'Choose a folder' window opens, type `%appdata%\Microsoft\Internet Explorer\Quick Launch` into the address bar, then click Select Folder (see screenshot top right).

You will see that the Quick Launch menu has been added to your taskbar. Right-click it, then untick Show Text and 'Show title' in the menu. Right-click it again, then click View and choose 'Large icons'. Now drag the Recycle Bin shortcut from your desktop to the Quick Launch menu you've created. Remove any other icons the Quick Launch menu contains by right-clicking on them and choosing

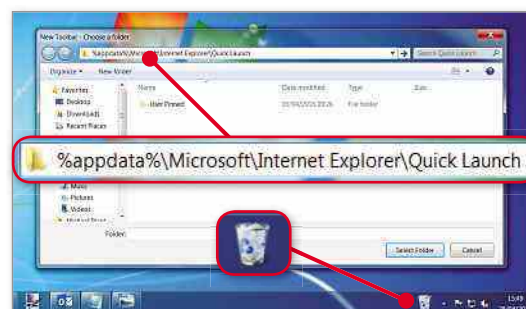
'Delete'. Once done you'll be left with just the Recycle Bin icon in your new Quick Launch menu (see bottom of screenshot right), which you can drag left or right to reposition. Once you're happy with its position, lock the taskbar again (right-click it and tick 'Lock the taskbar').

Bypass the Recycle Bin

You might prefer that some files, such as extremely large videos, don't linger in your Recycle Bin – especially if space is at a premium on your hard drive. If this is the case you can make deleted items bypass the Recycle Bin altogether by selecting the file or folder you want to remove and pressing Shift+Delete on your keyboard.

Change maximum Recycle Bin size

To prevent your Recycle Bin taking up too much hard-drive space as it fills up, you can reduce the amount it can use. Although you can see only one Recycle Bin icon on your desktop, there are actually a number of them on your PC –



Type this to create a Quick Launch toolbar to add the Recycle Bin to your taskbar

one deals with files you delete from the My Documents folder, for example, while another covers your C: drive in general.

Right-click the Recycle Bin icon on your desktop, then select Properties. You will see each Recycle Bin's location (see screenshot below). Select the Recycle Bins listed in turn and set a new 'Maximum size' in the 'Settings for selected location' section – try halving the size in the first instance. Once the Recycle Bin hits the new limit the files it has held for the longest will be deleted.



Set a storage limit to stop your Recycle Bin hogging hard-drive space

Recover files emptied from Recycle Bin

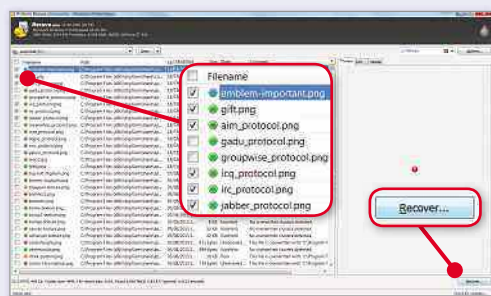
It's possible to salvage files emptied from Recycle Bin using the free recovery tool Recuva (www.snipca.com/20430).

Download, install and open it and you should see the Recuva Wizard. Click Next, and choose the type of file you want to recover (select All Files if

you're unsure). On the next screen select the location of the file when it was deleted (usually the Recycle Bin), click Next, tick the Enable Deep Scan box and click Start.

Recuva will scan your hard drive, which can take 2-3 hours. If the scan is successful you'll see a list of recoverable files (see screenshot left). To

restore a file, tick the box next to it then click the Recover button. Select a folder to save the file to (ideally on a hard drive other than the one that contained the recovered file), then click OK. Just be aware that factors such as a file's type and how long ago it was deleted can render it irretrievable.



Shred files instead of just deleting them

You can shred PC files so that even Recuva (see box left) won't be able to reassemble them, but you'll have to give your Recycle Bin a hand. Download and install Eraser (free from www.snipca.com/20429 – download begins automatically). Right-click the Recycle Bin, click Eraser, then Erase to shred everything in it. You can also right-click files to access the same Eraser option.

DNA storage

Microsoft's ambitious plan to save data for thousands of years

What is it?

A groundbreaking method of storing computing data on synthetic strands of DNA. Data that is normally stored as zeroes and ones on a hard drive is converted into genetic material – the G, A, T and C of DNA. It could solve one of the biggest problems facing us in the computing age.

Which is?

How to store the vast amounts of data that we produce. We are rapidly running out of space. By 2020 the 'digital universe' is expected to hit 44 trillion gigabytes, which far exceeds how much we can store on hard drives and servers. Many technology experts have commented on the paradox that although we now record more information than at any time in history, only a fraction of it will survive to be recovered by future generations.

And DNA storage is the answer?

It could be, yes. It would certainly be more efficient than building mega-servers the size of an aircraft hangar. What's crucial is that the 'data density' of DNA storage is far greater than any conventional system, which means that more can be stored on any given amount of space. For example, 1 billion terabytes of data can be stored on just one gram of DNA. This amount is called a zettabyte, which is 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes (that's 21 zeroes, to save you counting).

How much is that?

An awful lot. To put it into perspective, in 2009 it was estimated that the *entire* contents of the world wide web comprised half a zettabyte. It's the second largest single measurement of data – only a yottabyte is bigger (24 zeroes, and equal to 1,000 zettabytes).

And besides providing the necessary capacity, DNA may also solve another problem with saving data: it can last for much longer than servers, discs and hard drives.



How long?

Thousands of years, under the right conditions (cold, dry and dark). DNA can't be scratched, nor damaged through wear and tear. What's more, once the data is on the DNA, it doesn't need to be transferred to another storage device, thereby avoiding any corruption of files.

How is Microsoft involved?

In April, it announced that it will team up with the University of Washington and California biosciences company Twist Bioscience to produce 10 million strands of synthetic DNA. Doug Carmean of Microsoft Research said that the company was "still years away from a commercially viable product". But early tests have proved successful, with researchers recovering data from photos and videos without error. Microsoft says that techniques are "improving quite rapidly".

How does it actually work?

The key is to encode into the DNA data that's easy to find. In its tests Microsoft placed US postcodes (or ZIP codes as they are known) and street addresses into

DNA sequences. By 'reading' these, researchers can convert data back into its original form.

What will Microsoft store on the DNA?

There are no specific plans, but it's likely to be used to store information that doesn't require instant access. This is because retrieving the data means sequencing the DNA, which takes a long time. It won't be like opening a folder on your desktop.

So I won't use it save my holiday videos?

No. It'll probably be used by organisations as a digital library or museum, saving culturally important data for future generations. Announcing its work with Microsoft, Twist Bioscience said: "One day eons in the future, our legacy could be recovered and pored over like a woolly mammoth preserved in permafrost".

That potential was demonstrated in 2013 when British scientists saved all 154 of Shakespeare's sonnets on to DNA. It means that comparing loved ones to a summer's day will still be possible in the year 3016.

Speed Up Windows 10 TODAY!



One of the ways you can become a Windows 10 expert is to learn speedy shortcuts that make it easier to use the operating system.

Jonathan Parkyn explains the 15 best tweaks to get Microsoft's operating system working faster

Windows 10 is built for speed. It's a lean, streamlined operating system that starts up quickly and runs at a jaunty pace.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Uncover hidden ways to perform everyday tasks at lightning speed
- Optimise Windows 10's startup and overall performance
- Add shortcuts to the Start menu, taskbar and File Explorer
- Enable GodMode to access all your PC's settings in one place

Well that's the theory. In practice, chances are you've upgraded an older, slower PC, or you haven't got round to discovering Windows 10's brand new navigational shortcuts.

As in any version of Windows, you can improve its speed by uninstalling programs you don't use, disabling startup items you don't need and clearing out junk you never wanted in the first place. But Windows 10 also offers new settings and approaches to speed up familiar tasks. These will give you quicker access to your favourite files and programs, while drastically improving startup times, system performance and more besides.

Windows 10 doesn't always make these settings easy to find, meaning some serious digging is required to unlock the full potential of the operating system (OS). But don't worry – we've done the spadework for you.

So, whether you want to print photos quickly, access the most important settings in a flash, open programs faster, or speed up Windows 10 on an older PC, it's all explained here. Read on as we reveal 15 brilliant ways to speed up Microsoft's operating system, and give you before-and-after examples to show you what a difference each tip can make to Windows 10.



FIVE-MINUTE FIXES

1 Access your favourite files and folders

The slow way

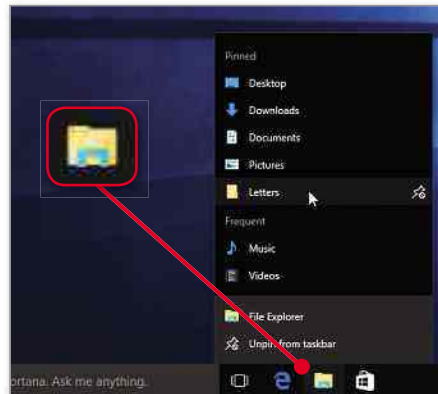
Most of us have specific folders on our computers that we return to time after time. Maybe it's a specific folder of cherished photos, or a sub-folder within your Documents folder where you store important letters. Either way, if you laboriously click Start, File Explorer, and then navigate to the relevant folder every time you want to access the files it contains, you're wasting valuable time.

The fast way

In previous versions of Windows, you had the option of creating shortcuts for your frequently used folders by dragging them to your desktop. You can do this in Windows 10, but doing so for multiple items will soon clutter up your desktop. Windows 10 offers a much neater system called 'Quick access', which is the default view in File Explorer.

Whenever you open an Explorer window 'Quick access' will automatically display shortcuts to any folders and files you've recently used. But you can customise it to display any folders you choose. Simply navigate to the relevant folder, right-click it and select 'Pin to Quick access'.

Better still, you can now bypass File Explorer altogether when opening your favourite folders. For example, if you've already pinned a folder called 'Letters' to 'Quick access', simply right-click the File Explorer icon on your taskbar and you'll see a shortcut to the folder listed in the Pinned section. Click this and you'll be taken straight there (see screenshot above right).



Right-click the File Explorer icon to access any folder you have pinned to 'Quick access'

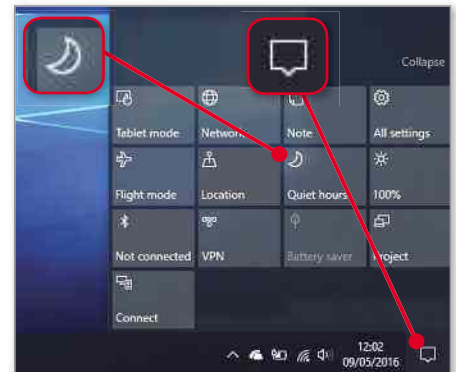
2 Disable notification sounds when you sleep

The slow way

Notifications are useful, but there are times – at night, for example – when you might not want to be disturbed. You could click Start, then click Settings, System, 'Notifications & actions', then switch off each individual option you require. Or you could use 'Quiet hours'.

The fast way

'Quiet hours' is a setting in Windows 10 that instantly silences all notifications between midnight and 6am. You can reach it via the 'Quick actions' panel at the bottom of the Action Centre. This is a collection of handy shortcuts that you access by clicking the speech-bubble icon to the right of your taskbar (see screenshot above right). You'll see only four 'Quick action' icons by default, so click Expand if you don't see the 'Quiet hours' icon. And if that isn't quick enough for you, simply right-click the speech-bubble icon and select 'Turn on quiet hours'.



Click the taskbar's speech-bubble icon to access 'Quiet hours', which silences message notifications while you sleep

You can customise the 'Quick actions' panel to include other tasks. For example, it might be handy to have two-click access to Tablet mode if you're using a touchscreen device, or to Flight mode if you regularly need to disable or enable all wireless connections. To choose which four 'Quick actions' you want shown when you open the Action Centre, click Start, Settings, System, 'Notifications & actions', then select your preferred options.

3 Instantly zoom in on hard-to-read text

The slow way

You'll need to click your way through Windows 10's Settings app to carry out many everyday tasks. For example, to switch on the Magnifier so you can zoom in on a piece of text, you'll need to click Start, Settings, Ease of Access, Magnifier, then click the switch to enable the tool. The Magnifier is something you'll probably only want switched on when you want to read small text, so wouldn't it be good if you could quickly switch it on and off without this rigmarole?

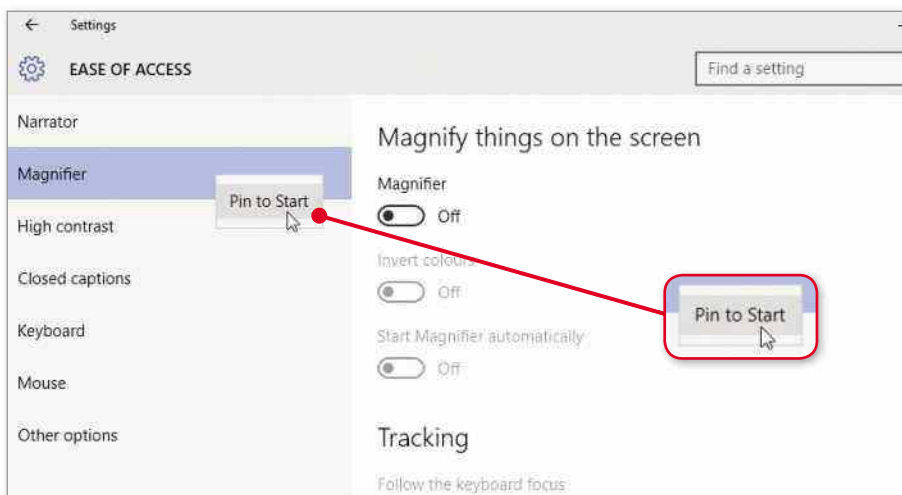
The fast way

Well, as it happens, Windows 10 lets you add any setting in the Settings app to the Start menu as a tile. To add the Magnifier to the Start menu, navigate to it in the Settings app (as described above), then right-click Magnifier in the left-hand column and select 'Pin to Start' (see screenshot left), then click Yes. The same method can be used to pin other settings.

4 Open programs faster every time

The slow way

Looking for a program that begins with



As with every setting, the Magnifier can be pinned to the Start menu with a right-click

the letter 'W'? Such as Word 2016, for example? Well, it'll be lurking at the bottom of your alphabetically arranged Apps list. Unless you've added a shortcut tile to your Start menu (see previous tip), you'll need to click Start, 'All apps', then scroll through a lengthy list of all your installed programs to get to the one you want.

The fast way

Windows 10's 'All apps' list offers a clever, albeit hidden, way to navigate to a specific program quickly. Click Start, 'All apps', then click the letter 'A'. The list of programs changes to a grid of letters (see screenshot right). Clicking the letter 'W', for example, will take you directly to all the programs whose name begins with that letter, including Word 2016. Greyed-out letters in the grid (such as 'B' in our screenshot right) mean there are no programs installed beginning with that letter. Click the clock icon at the top left to return to the 'All apps' list.

5 Launch Windows tools you use most often

The slow way

Device Manager, System Properties and Control Panel have always been among the most used tools in Windows. These and many other core functions and options are now accessible via the Settings app in Windows 10, which many people find easier to use. However, there are still crucial tasks that can only be

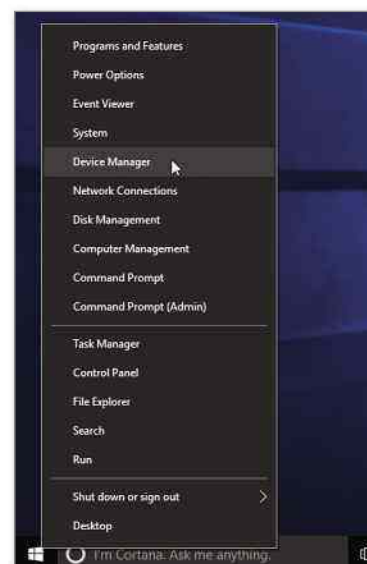


Find programs quickly by clicking the initial letter of the program's name in this alternative to the 'All apps' list

carried out using these older tools. For example, if you need to roll back to an earlier hardware driver or check whether a device is working you'll still need to rely on Device Manager. But to open it, you'll have to delve deep into the 'All apps' list, find Computer Management (under Windows Administrative Tools), then select Device Manager from the left-hand pane of the window that opens.

The fast way

Thankfully, there's a much quicker way to launch Device Manager and many of the other useful tools that Windows 10 tries to bury. Right-click the Start button to



Access this alternative Start menu by right-clicking the Start button and quickly open Device Manager, Control Panel and other useful features

reveal a handy hidden menu of shortcuts to important management tools, including Device Manager, Control Panel, System, Disk Management and the Command Prompt (see screenshot above).

6 Read important notifications before they disappear

The slow way

While most of this feature is concerned with speeding up tasks in Windows 10, some aspects would be more convenient and save you time if they were slowed down. Notifications, for example, flash up in the bottom-right of the taskbar, then disappear before you get a chance to

MONITOR YOUR PC'S PERFORMANCE

Do you suspect that something might be slowing your Windows 10 PC down? If so, there are tools built into the operating system that let you monitor and analyse

your PC's performance and help identify the causes of its sluggishness.

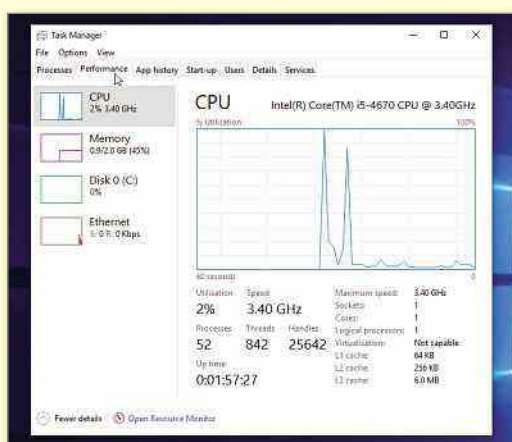
First, right-click the taskbar and select Task Manager. Click 'More details' at the

bottom of the window that opens, then click the Performance tab. Here you'll see a real-time graphical representation of your CPU, Memory, Disk (hard drive) and Wi-Fi or Ethernet (see screenshot).

Click the thumbnails on the left to see more details in the main section on the right. If any of these graphs indicate constant high levels of activity on your hard drive, it could mean that your PC is struggling to cope with a program or process

that's running. To find the culprit, click the Processes tab, then the column heading (CPU, Memory, Disk or Network) that corresponds to the graph showing excessive activity. For example, if the CPU graph on the Performance tab is showing high usage, click Processes, then click the CPU column until you see a small down-arrow next to the percentage figure. This will sort the list of processes so that those using the most processing power will be at the top.

Similarly, if Task Manager indicates that your memory is near to its limit, click the Memory column to find out which programs or tasks are hogging your RAM. To stop a resource-hungry program from running, right-click it and choose 'End task'.

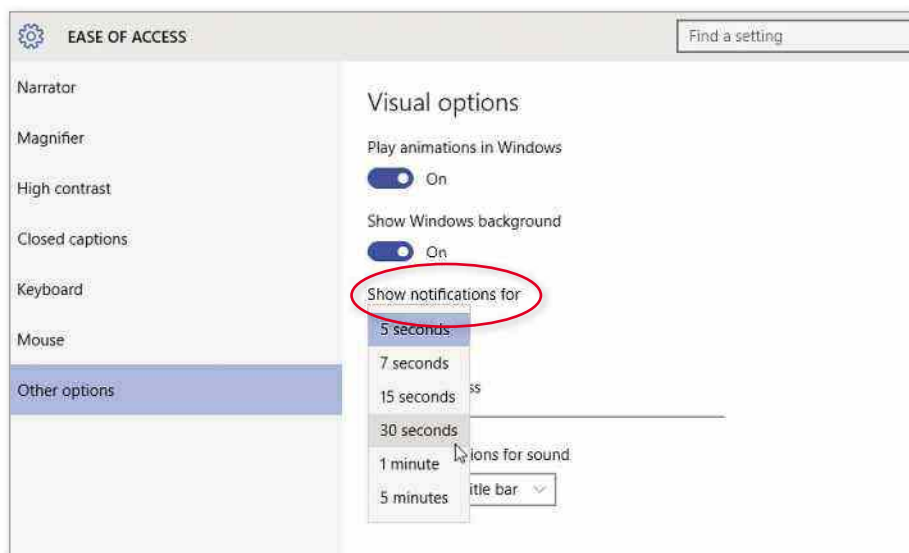




read them. Missing a notification can have serious consequences, particularly if it is alerting you to security problems or an urgent email. You can always visit the Action Centre to review your recent notifications after the event. But you wouldn't have to waste time doing this, if the notification stayed on-screen long enough for you to read it in the first place.

The fast way

A quick tweak to your Windows 10 settings will make this happen. Click Start, Settings, 'Ease of Access', then 'Other options'. Under 'Visual options' on the right, choose a longer period (anything up to a minute) from the 'Show notifications for' dropdown menu (see screenshot right).



Never miss a notification by making sure they remain on screen for a longer period of time using the 'Visual options' settings menu

7 Navigate between open windows

The slow way

If you tend to work with multiple programs, browsers and File Explorer windows all open at the same time, you can easily get bogged down in an endless loop of clicking taskbar icons and dragging windows around the screen to see the one you want.

The fast way

If you prefer using the Alt+Tab keyboard shortcut to cycle through taskbar thumbnails of all your open windows, you'll be pleased to hear you can still do this in Windows 10. But there's another, potentially quicker method too. To the left of your taskbar you'll see the Task View button (an icon with two overlapping rectangles). Click

this and your screen will fill up with larger thumbnails representing all your open programs (see screenshot right). Simply click the one you want to switch to it.

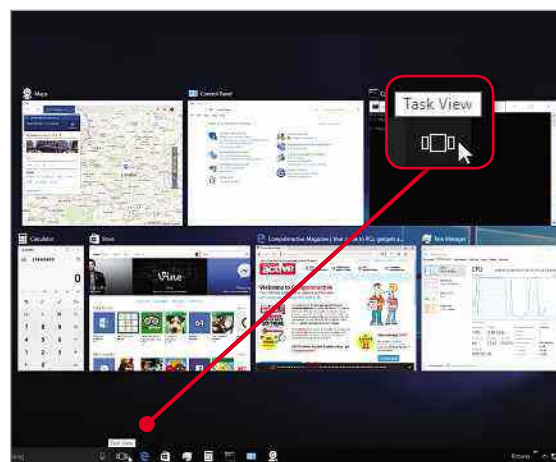
8 Start up your PC faster

The slow way

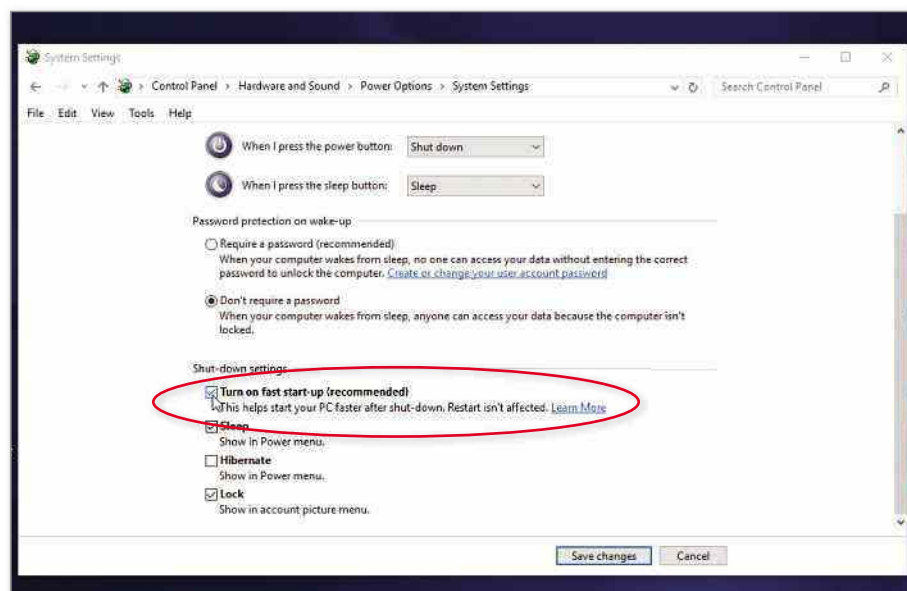
Windows 10 already starts up quicker than many of its predecessors, but if you stick with its default settings, you may be missing out on even shorter boot times.

The fast way

To enable Windows 10's 'fast start-up' option, click Start, type **power**, then click



Click Task View to see all your open programs as large thumbnails so you can quickly move between them



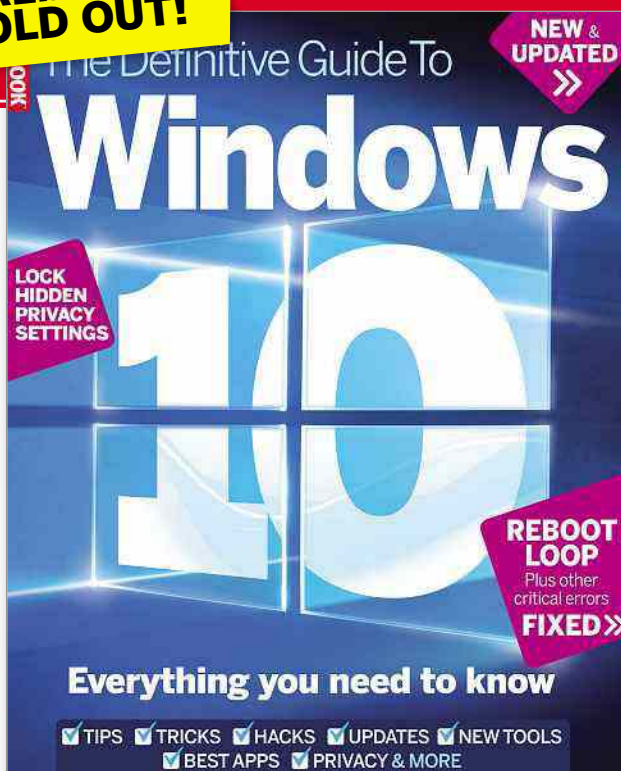
Tick the 'Turn on fast start-up (recommended)' box in 'Shut-down settings' to get your PC up and running more quickly

Power Options. In the window that opens, click 'Choose what the power buttons do', then 'Change settings that are currently unavailable'. Under 'Shut-down settings' check whether the 'Turn on fast start-up (recommended)' option is available. If so, make sure it's ticked (see screenshot left) and click 'Save changes'. If 'Turn on fast start-up (recommended)' is greyed-out, click 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' so you can access the tickbox.

To make Windows 10 load even faster you can also use hibernation mode in combination with 'fast start-up'. To put your computer into hibernation mode click Start, then the power button and choose Hibernate (rather than 'Shut down'). This will put your PC into a very low power-usage mode, the benefit of which is much faster load times the next time you switch on your computer.

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SPEED TWEAKS IN 20 MINUTES

9 Print photos and files faster

The slow way

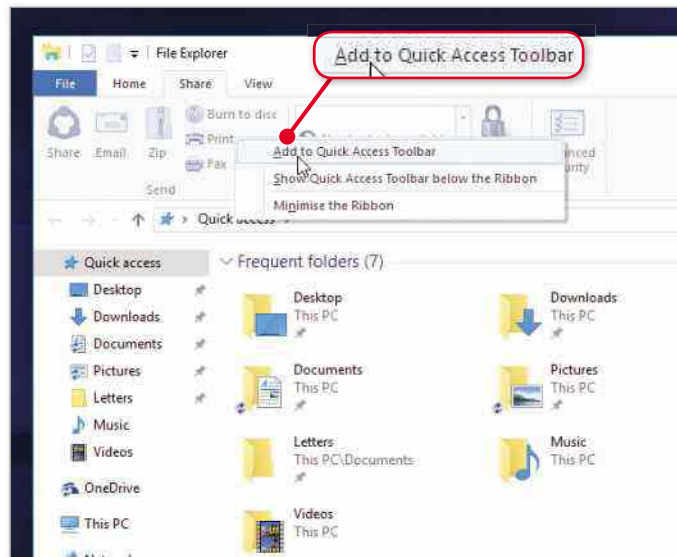
To print a photo or a document, the conventional method is to navigate to the file you want, open it in a dedicated program, click File, then Print. It's the logical way to do it, but it's also the most long-winded.

The fast way

Windows 10's File Explorer includes a tabbed ribbon toolbar at the top, which contains shortcuts for a number of useful tasks – including printing. So rather than opening the file you want to print, you could just locate it in File Explorer, then click the Share tab, followed by Print. But there is an even faster way.

File Explorer has a hidden toolbar called the Quick Access Toolbar. You'll find it, by default, just above the ribbon in the top-left corner of the File Explorer window. The Quick Access Toolbar only contains two shortcuts – Properties and 'New folder' – but you can add others, including Print. Click the Share tab, then right-click the Print command and select 'Add to Quick Access Toolbar' (see screenshot above right). You'll now see the Print icon in the top-left corner whenever you open a File Explorer window, letting you print a selected file or photo with a single click.

You can customise the Quick Access Toolbar further, according to your needs. For example, you may want to add the 'Burn to disc' or Email shortcuts. In fact, you can add any command in any ribbon tab to the Quick Access Toolbar. Click the down arrow to the right of the toolbar's icons to add even more icons (Undo, Redo, Delete and Rename) or select



Add the Print button to the Quick Access Toolbar to print any file or photo with a single click

'Show below the Ribbon' to give the toolbar more prominence.

10 Access all your important items from one place

The slow way

You can waste a lot of time tracking down Windows' hidden tools, files and settings. Thankfully, Windows 10 makes the process faster by letting you search for almost anything via the taskbar's search field. However, this still requires you to type the name of whatever you're looking for. A better solution would be to have a dedicated place for all your most frequently used folders, programs and settings so they are only ever a click away. Windows 10 can provide exactly that.

The fast way

With a little customising and re-organising, Windows 10's Start menu will provide super-fast access to just about everything you need.

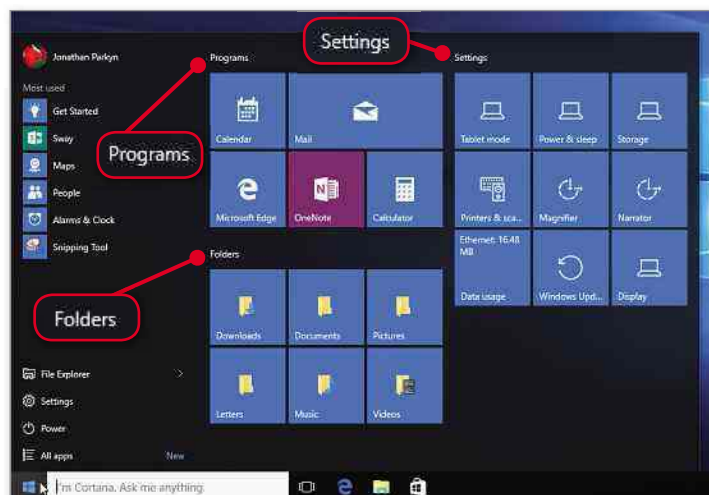
The first thing to do is unpin any tiles you don't use from the right-hand section of the Start menu. Simply, right-click each and select 'Unpin from Start'. Now, pin all the items you want. These can include folders, programs listed in the 'All apps' list, and individual settings from the Settings app. To add any of these to the Start menu, right-click the program, folder or setting and select 'Pin to Start'.

Next, click and drag the tiles to reposition them. It's a good idea to arrange tiles into groups. You can create a new group by clicking and dragging a tile to the bottom of the menu until you see a solid coloured strip appear above it. Release the tile and you'll see it sitting below the other groups. Click above the tile and type your chosen name for this new group. So, for example, you could create groups for your programs, folders and settings (see screenshot left) – all available simply by clicking Start. You can also extend the Start menu by clicking and dragging outwards from its top and right-hand edges.

11 Access all your photos from the taskbar

The slow way

Earlier, we explained how to pin folders to 'Quick access' for... well, quick access. And that's a great way to get to a specific folder in no time. But what if you want a fast way to access the files and sub-folders stored within a particular folder, such as your Pictures folder? Of course, you could open File Explorer and navigate to the folder you want. Or you could turn the folder into a toolbar and access its files directly from your taskbar. ►



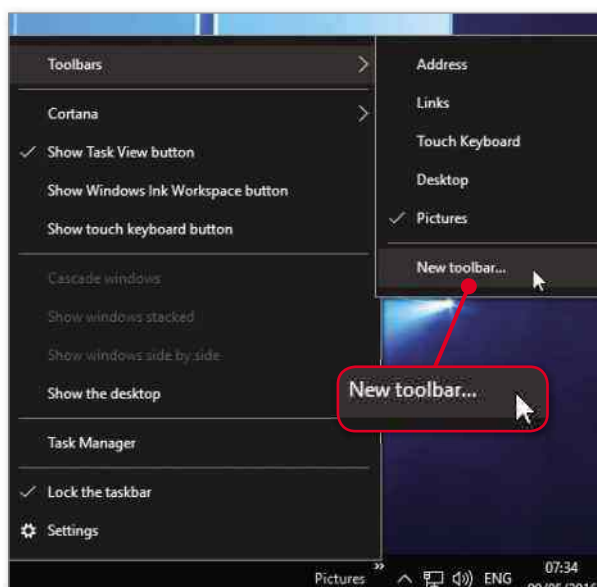
You can organise your Start menu tiles into handy groups, such as Programs, Settings and Folders

The fast way

Right-click a blank space on your taskbar and select Toolbars. Here, you'll see a small selection of default toolbars that you can add to the right-hand side of the taskbar to speed up certain activities.

For example, you can select Address here to add an address bar to the taskbar, which lets you access any web page directly from your desktop by typing its URL into the address bar and pressing return; the page will open in your default browser. The Links toolbar lets you navigate directly to a list of your bookmarked websites, but this currently only works with Microsoft's Edge browser.

There will be other toolbars listed here that you can enable, depending on your PC and the programs you have installed. Alternatively, click 'New toolbar' (see screenshot above right), then navigate to the folder you want (Pictures, for example), then highlight it and click 'Select folder'. The name of the folder will appear on the taskbar. Click the pair of arrows (>>) next to the folder's name for immediate access to any files or folders contained within it.



Access any folder from the taskbar by creating a new toolbar for it



Bypass Windows 10's sign-in screen by unticking 'Users must enter a username and password to use this computer' then confirming your Username and Password

12 Log into Windows without a password

The slow way

By default, you can't log into Windows 10 without typing your password first. In many situations, this is a security feature that should be left enabled – if you use a laptop, for example, or share your PC with others. But if you are the only person who has access to your PC, then the login process could be costing you unnecessary time. Still, you should only carry out this tweak if you are absolutely certain no one can take advantage.

The fast way

To skip the Windows login screen and move straight to the desktop, press Windows key+R to open the Run dialogue box, then type **netplwiz** into the box and press Enter. In the window that opens, click to highlight your user account, then untick the box next to 'Users must enter a user name and password to use this computer' and click Apply. A new window will open, asking you to confirm this action by typing your password twice (see screenshot above). Once you've done this, click OK.

IN-DEPTH HACKS FOR A FASTER PC

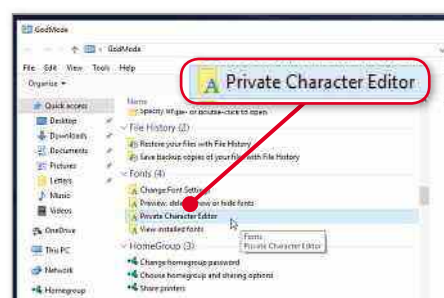
13 Find hidden settings by unlocking GodMode

The slow way

Windows 10's Settings app is much easier to navigate than Windows 7's Control Panel and easier to access than Windows 8's PC Settings. But if you're not sure what you're looking for or where the setting you want might be, then it can still be time-consuming to trawl through the various pages of settings to find the one you want. This isn't helped by the fact that some settings can only be found in the Control Panel, which can be a palaver to access. Luckily, there's a way to view all of Windows 10's configuration options in one place.

The fast way

GodMode is a hidden folder that makes a wide range of useful PC customisations available in one place. GodMode isn't new to Windows 10. In fact, it's available in



Use GodMode to find all kinds of hidden Windows 10 settings, such as Private Character Editor

Windows 7 and 8. But it's particularly useful in Windows 10, whose settings are spread across two different environments (Control Panel and the Settings app).

Enabling GodMode requires a hack, but it's a very simple one. Right-click anywhere on your desktop and select New, then Folder. The folder's name will be highlighted – rename it with the following command and press Enter

when you've finished typing:

GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}

A GodMode shortcut will appear, displaying a Control Panel-type icon. You don't have to call it GodMode – you can type whatever you like before the full stop, and this will become the shortcut's name.

Once you've created the shortcut, double-click it to view its contents. You'll find more than 220 settings listed, all of which are grouped by type – Fonts, Troubleshooting, User Accounts and so on – and you can use the top-right search box to look for settings by keyword. Now, if you ever find yourself trying to track down an obscure setting or tool, such as Windows' hidden program for creating custom characters for your fonts – the mysteriously named Private Character



Editor (see screenshot below left) – you know where to go.

GodMode recently came in for some bad press, when security firm McAfee revealed it had detected a new strain of malware that used GodMode-like techniques to make it difficult to detect or remove. But this doesn't mean enabling or using GodMode on your PC is dangerous. See Protect Your Tech on page 16 for more information.

14 Remove preinstalled junk

The slow way

Almost all new PCs these days come crammed with preinstalled junk software that you'll never use, and that's especially true for Windows 10 PCs. Not only will your PC have all those unwanted programs from your PC's manufacturer, but you'll also find a load of Windows 10 apps that Microsoft has added. Many of these do little more than sit there consuming space and system resources. Windows 10's junk doesn't just affect new PCs. Upgrade an older computer to the new OS and you'll be importing a large number of useless tools in the process.

You can ditch the manufacturer's junk fairly quickly using 'Uninstall a program' in the Control Panel, but removing

Microsoft's apps is a lengthy process that involves scrolling through the 'All apps' list, right-clicking any apps you don't want, then selecting Uninstall. Worse still, some won't even let you uninstall them.

The fast way

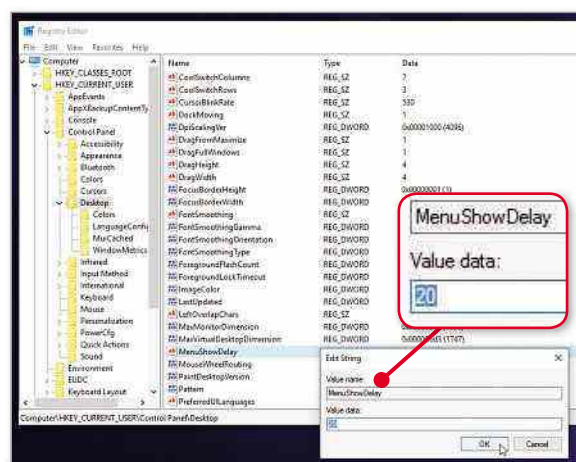
There's a **Powershell** command that lets you uninstall all of Windows 10's built-in apps in one go. And, while this is certainly fast, we don't recommend using it because it removes certain apps that are essential for Windows to function correctly, including the Windows Store. The procedure can also make it difficult to reinstall any apps you later realise you want back.

Instead, we'd recommend using a free tool called 10AppsManager (www.snipca.com/19259), which can safely remove many of Windows 10's more pointless apps (3D Builder, we're looking at you). Before you start, it's worth creating a **system restore point** so you can rewind your PC to this point in time in the unlikely event that installing apps causes problems in the future. Once you've done that, unzip and run the tool, then click a tile to remove its associated app (see screenshot left). You can also click Reinstall to see instructions on how to get back the apps you uninstall (though you can also use the system restore point you created earlier). For more advice about uninstalling Windows 10 apps, refer to our Cover Feature in Issue 468.

15 Speed up Windows 10 on an older PC

The slow way

Windows 10 should feel snappy and responsive. But, on some older or lower-powered PCs,



Navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop in the Registry and change the MenuShowDelay value from 400 to 20 to make menus open faster in Windows 10

the operating system may not run quite as speedily as you would hope.

The fast way

Fortunately, there are several ways you can put a spring back in Windows 10's step. First, try disabling animations by clicking Start, Settings, 'Ease of access', then 'Other options' and switching off the 'Play animations in Windows' option. Now click the Back arrow (in the top left of the Settings app window), and click Personalisation. Here, click Colours and switch off 'Make Start, taskbar and Action Centre transparent'. This will save valuable system resources.

Finally, there's a Registry hack that lets you reduce the time it takes for menus, such as the Start menu, to appear when you click – another way to make your system feel more responsive. Make sure you set a system restore point before you start, then click Start, type **regedit** and press Enter. In the Registry Editor, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop. In the right-hand pane, double-click MenuShowDelay, then change the number shown from 400 to something significantly lower – 20, for example (see screenshot above) – then click OK and restart your PC. **ca**



10AppsManager will remove Microsoft's preinstalled apps with just a few clicks

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ON SALE
8 June

Hidden side effects of removing software

Getting rid of unsafe programs from your PC can cause problems. Mike Plant reveals the pitfalls of removing unwanted software and how to avoid them



Warning: side effects may include headaches, sickness and drowsiness. We've all seen this kind of advice on medication packaging, yet we take our medicine nonetheless – in the hope that the benefits outweigh the risks.

It's a similar story when it comes to uninstalling certain PC programs. It's all too tempting to get rid of unsafe and unwanted software without a second thought, but the side effects can include compatibility problems, files you can't open, online videos you can't play, and incomprehensible error messages.

Here we explain just some of the drawbacks of removing potentially harmful programs and how to keep your PC running smoothly without them.

QuickTime

You may not have heard, but Apple has quietly withdrawn support for its QuickTime video player on Windows PCs (see 'Question of the Fortnight', Issue 474). This makes it a real security risk – so much so that the US government's Department of Homeland Security recently took the rare step of advising the public to uninstall it or risk being hacked (see www.snipca.com/20486).

That's sound advice, but the warning failed to explain that removing it could prevent your videos from opening the next time you try to watch one of them.



Take the US government's advice and uninstall QuickTime via your Control Panel

This is because QuickTime allows video files with Apple's .MOV extension to play on Windows PCs. Removing QuickTime deletes the **codec** that lets .MOV video files play on your computer.

The solution is to download our favourite video player VLC Media Player (www.snipca.com/20487). The versatile VLC can handle .MOV files – even after you remove QuickTime. To uninstall QuickTime, open Control Panel, click Programs, 'Programs and Features', then select QuickTime and click Uninstall (see screenshot above).

Silverlight

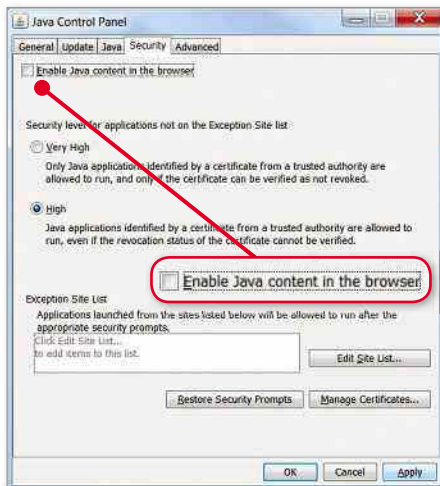
Microsoft's browser **plug-in** lets you play certain types of multimedia (video, audio, graphics) on websites. It was released in 2007 as a rival to Adobe Flash – both have since fallen on hard times (see Flash

section, on opposite page). Silverlight is no longer being developed by Microsoft, who will release only bug fixes and security patches from now on, and support for it is being abandoned by Chrome. Having it installed on your PC isn't dangerous – at least not yet – but it's an increasingly obsolete piece of software that's taking up space. Most websites use **HTML5** these days – a fact Microsoft acknowledged when it didn't include support for Silverlight in Edge, its default browser for Windows 10.

The best advice is to uninstall Silverlight, unless you watch Netflix, Amazon Prime or Sky Go on your PC. These video-streaming services still require Silverlight, although all three have announced plans to abandon it in favour of HTML5 in the next few years. Netflix subscribers who have Windows 8.1 or 10 PCs can already use the service without Silverlight by downloading the Netflix app from the Windows Store (www.snipca.com/20535).

Java

As regular *Computeractive* readers will know only too well, we really don't like Java, and this isn't the first time we've recommended you rid your PC of it. The programming language and computer platform was first launched in 1995 to improve the appearance of websites, but hackers quickly realised that Java could be exploited to hack into PCs.



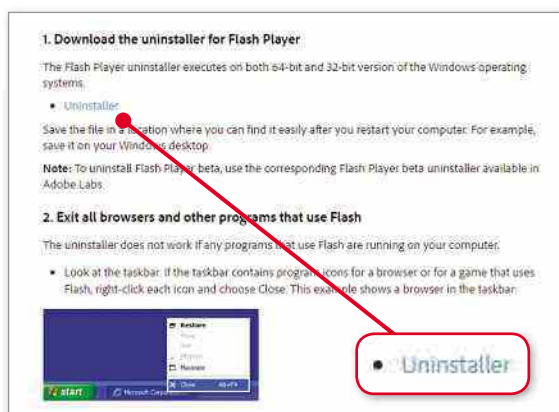
Find out the effects of removing Java from your system by disabling it first

The only people who might miss Java are those who have to remotely log into another computer – at their workplace, for example. Some setups rely on Java to create the connection between home and work computers. If this applies to you, we recommend you keep it up to date, because hackers are far more likely to exploit older versions of Java. For everyone else, we suggest you get shot of it. If you're not sure you have Java installed, you can check using this website: www.snipca.com/20489.

Before you go ahead with a full-on removal, try disabling it first, to make sure your PC still runs smoothly without it. Tap the Start button on your keyboard, type **configure Java** and press Enter. Then untick the box next to 'Enable Java content in the browser' in the Java Control Panel, then click Apply (see screenshot above).

Flash

Another perennial bugbear of ours. Like Java, Flash is a programming tool meant to make websites, well... flashier, but it too has become a massive target for



Download Adobe's Flash uninstaller and use it to wipe Flash from your PC

WHICH WEBSITES USE FLASH?

Flash is such bad news that many companies have ditched it in favour of the more secure HTML5 for their websites. However, this trend is bucked somewhat when it comes to some of the most popular websites. These big beasts have been slow to move with the times, meaning that deleting Flash could affect how some of your favourite sites perform on your PC.

The BBC, for example, still uses Flash on its iPlayer. Uninstalling Flash will mean the iPlayer will



no longer work on your PC. An HTML5 version of iPlayer does exist – you can opt in at www.bbc.co.uk/html5 – although it doesn't yet play live TV (unlike its Flash-based counterpart).

Facebook users still require Flash to play its videos and games, though we think the whole experience of using the site is enhanced by their absence anyway. Other sites, such as *The Daily Mail*, Sky News and MSN all use Flash to varying degrees, but primarily as a means to bombard you with adverts – one more reason to ditch it.

hackers keen to exploit its flaws and smuggle malware on to PCs via the internet.

Removing it will stop Flash-based websites, videos and games working on your PC (see box above for some of the most popular). However, Flash's damaged reputation for security has meant that websites are increasingly based on HTML5, so the impact of losing it is a lot less severe than it would have been a few years back.

To ditch Flash you need to download Adobe's uninstaller (www.snipca.com/20491), click the blue Uninstaller link at the top of the page – see screenshot below left). Once it has downloaded, close any open browsers and run the uninstaller. Once that's done, restart your PC and then use Adobe's Flash checker (<https://helpx.adobe.com/flash-player.html>). Click the yellow Check Now button to confirm its removal.

iTunes

With Apple removing support for QuickTime (see page 58) and the Safari browser for Windows before that, it could be time for Windows users to start abandoning other Apple software before it abandons you. iTunes is the most popular Apple program found on Windows PCs, and removing it will prevent your iPhone or iPad syncing the music on your PC. However, there are alternatives to iTunes.

MediaMonkey, for example, is a free program that you can use to manage, play and sync files across your PC, iPhone



Before you remove iTunes back up its library using SyncToy

and iPad. Download and install it from www.mediamonkey.com/trialpay – click the black Download Now button, rather than the paid-for Get MediaMonkey Gold Free option. Select the folder that contains your music when prompted, then connect your iPad or iPhone and enter its passcode to unlock it. MediaMonkey will then detect your device and you'll be able to sync music in the same way you could with iTunes.

As for removing iTunes, you can uninstall it as you would any Windows program (open Control Panel, click Programs, 'Programs and Features', select iTunes and click Uninstall). But, before you do that, it is worth backing up your iTunes library. Microsoft SyncToy (www.snipca.com/20495) comes in handy here. Install SyncToy, click Create New Folder Pair, Browse (under the Left Folder), then select your iTunes folder. Now click Browse under the Right Folder and select the drive or folder you want to back up to (see screenshot above). Click Next, then select Synchronise and click Next again. Name your folder pair and click Finish. Now click Run to begin the backup process. **ca**

'What I wish I'd done' before my laptop was stolen

Having your laptop stolen is an appalling experience, especially if you haven't prepared for the worst. After finding out the hard way, Jane Hoskyn explains how to limit the damage



A few weeks ago, someone walked into my house one Saturday morning while I dozed in bed, then walked out with my Windows 8.1 laptop and my wallet.

I did hear footsteps while half-asleep, but thought it must be my housemate getting ready for work. "Hey, is that you?" I shouted, peering downstairs. Silence. Nothing. So I resumed my doze and

assumed I'd been dreaming.

It took nearly two days to realise we'd been burgled. I couldn't find my wallet, but thought I might have left it in a shop somewhere. When I checked my bank account that evening I discovered that someone had tried to use my card for a contactless payment.

The next evening, my housemate and I sat down to watch BBC iPlayer via my

laptop, which I always kept plugged into the TV. But the laptop wasn't there. "Have you been using it?" asked my housemate. "No, have you?" I asked. That's when the awful, stomach-churning truth hit me. My wallet, the laptop... I hadn't dreamt those footsteps at all. We'd been burgled and I'd done nothing to deny the criminals access to my bank accounts, my online passwords – my life.

WHAT YOU MUST DO IMMEDIATELY

Cancel your bank card

I could tell from my online bank account that my card was in a thief's hands. Several contactless payments had been attempted within hours, and I'd never enabled contactless (thank goodness – and now I never will). I called the bank's helpline, and its fraud department refunded the transactions. If the same happens to you, check your bank's website for the best contact number (see screenshot right).

Later I realised that the thieves had continued spending my money via 'transfer' after the card had been cancelled. It's easy to see how criminals

can do this with just your laptop. They go to your account on any shopping site – Amazon or an online supermarket – and log in using your laptop's stored passwords and click through to find all your financial details. Small transactions are often not immediately monitored by banks, meaning thieves can still use a cancelled card – something I'm still taking up with my bank.

Delete your passwords

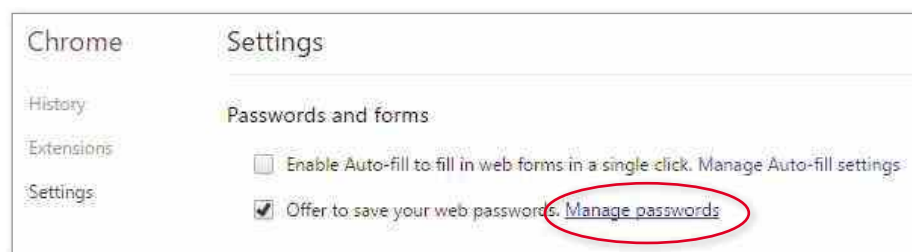
Next, use your desktop PC (or second laptop, if you have one) to cancel all your



Cancel your bank card immediately – even if you've only lost your laptop and not your card

passwords. Every single one. Go to your browser's settings and look for the password manager. For example, in Chrome, click 'Show advanced settings' in Settings and then click 'Manage passwords' (see screenshot below left). Delete each password by clicking the 'x' to its right. Next, wipe and uninstall any password manager (such as LastPass) that may be syncing your data with your stolen laptop. Don't set any new passwords yet, except a browser password, which you'll need to disable your browser's sync tools (see the next tip).

Deleting all your login data is an unpleasant and time-consuming process, but you *have* to do it. When you lose a



Click 'Manage passwords' in Chrome and delete every password you've saved

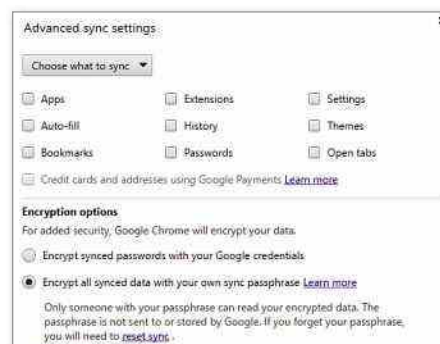
laptop, you stand to lose a lot more than an expensive device.

Disable browser sync

Services like Chrome Sync and Firefox Sync are great for keeping your bookmarks, stored passwords and extensions consistent across your PC and laptop. But they can be a nightmare if one of those computers is stolen, because any changes (such as passwords) you make to your remaining PC are instantly synced to the stolen computer.

After you've wiped all your passwords, disable browser syncing in your browser settings. To do this in Chrome, for example, click Settings, 'Advanced sync settings', select 'Choose what to sync' in the dropdown menu and untick everything (see screenshot right). Then select 'Encrypt all synced data with your own sync passphrase' and create a password

Only at this point should you start creating new logins and passwords, as well as changing your payment information on all your accounts.



In your browser's sync settings untick all the boxes, then select 'Encrypt all synced data...'

PREPARE FOR LAPTOP THEFT RIGHT NOW

Note your serial numbers

I would have increased my chances of getting my laptop back by knowing its serial number. But I never made a note of it. Because, as the kind woman at my insurance company said: "You don't expect to be burgled, do you?"

Take a photo of the numbers on the back of your laptop, PC peripherals and other devices. And don't stop there – also get close-ups of distinguishing features, such as scratches and marks.

Also take screenshots of your laptop's (and any other devices') identifying information (see screenshot right). For example, in Windows 10, go to the Control Panel, click 'System and Security' and then, under the heading System, click 'See the name of this computer'. Take a screenshot (click Print Screen and paste the grab into Paint or another design program) and email it to yourself, then print and file it.



A screenshot of your computer's system information may prove vital if it is lost or stolen

see where that device is and what it's being used for. Obviously it's a little late to install one of these programs on my laptop (we're firmly in "if only" territory now), but using one or more of these tools could help you to track a stolen laptop and even photograph the criminal using it.

First, if you have a Windows 10 laptop, you should enable Find My Device

(www.snipca.com/20469). Once this free built-in service is switched on, you can use your Microsoft account to find your Windows 10 device – even if it's only slipped down the back of the sofa.

Prey (<https://preyproject.com>) is our favourite tracking program. It supports Windows 7 and 8.1 as well as 10, and also has free apps for Android (www.snipca.com/20470) and iOS (www.snipca.com/20471). It's free for the first three devices you use it on.

Once you install Prey, it runs silently in the background, using as little battery life as possible (handy if your device is stolen). By logging in on another device you can launch Prey remotely on the laptop, tablet or phone that's gone missing. Not only will the program give details of where the lost device is, it'll even silently and secretly take a photo of who's using it. Along with the device's serial number, that photo is the most useful piece of evidence you can give to the police.

Back up all your data

Even the fanciest tracking software can't stop a thief from wiping your stolen laptop, phone or tablet. What's more, it's standard practice among second-hand stores to wipe devices fully before selling them – and that's a good thing, because it prevents data theft. But it does mean you can lose all your data by the time you find your stolen laptop.

I used my laptop for little more than watching TV online and testing the odd Windows 8.1 program, but most people's laptops are full of photos, documents, videos and other data that's of great practical and personal value. So buy an external hard drive and make regular full backups, ensuring you hide it away so that it won't be stolen at the same time as your laptop. **ca**

Install tracking software

Once installed on your laptop, tablet or other device, tracking software lets you

WHO YOU MUST CONTACT

THE POLICE

The police non-emergency number is 101, though it seemed constantly engaged when I tried it. You could persist until you get through, or alternatively, report the crime online (each constabulary has its own website). The police will then give you a crime-report number.

YOUR HOME INSURANCE COMPANY

The crime-report number obtained from the police is vital at this stage. My insurance company was very helpful, but unfortunately I wasn't able to make a claim because my laptop was partially used for work purposes. Hopefully, this won't be the case for you.

LOCAL SECOND-HAND SHOPS

These types of shop work closely with police, who check the shops' databases every morning for serial numbers of reported stolen goods. It doesn't hurt to ring yourself, though in my case staff confirmed they don't buy laptops without chargers.

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

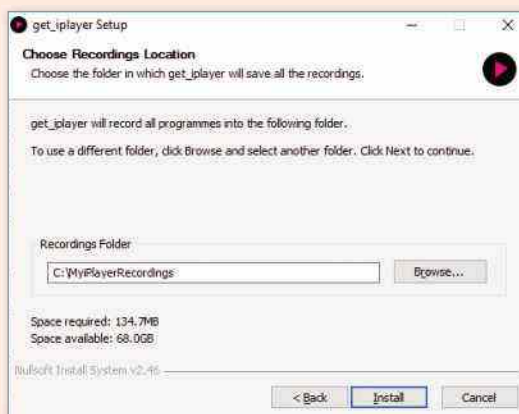
Can I extend iPlayer's 30-day limit?

Q I love BBC iPlayer, which I have installed on my Windows laptop. This has an **HDMI** output so that I can hook it up to my HD TV to watch programmes that way. I'm going away over summer for several weeks and I'd like to download a bunch of iPlayer shows to entertain me on the flight and in the evenings. However, as I'm sure you know iPlayer automatically wipes downloads after 30 days, and I'll be overseas for rather longer than that. Is there any way to get an extension of the BBC's 30-day limit? Could I do this on my Android tablet, too? I need easy instructions.

Gareth Cook

A No, but it is possible to download iPlayer shows outside of iPlayer. Surprisingly, these video files don't have digital-rights management (**DRM**) code attached to them, as this is applied by iPlayer itself. That means they'll never expire.

To do this you'll need to use a program called Get_iplayer, which is a free download from www.snipca.com/20294. During the installation make a note of the path in the Recording Folder box (or click Browse) to select one of your choosing, as you'll need to open this folder later to get the files on to your Android tablet.



Use Get_iplayer to download BBC programmes without DRM so shows aren't wiped after 30 days

Get_iplayer has an enormous number of features, but the fundamentals are pretty simple. The program itself actually runs in a Command Prompt window but, while this is the fastest way to use it, it's not for novices. However, a utility called Web PVR Manager is installed at the same time as get_iplayer, which you'll find in your Start menu. This uses your default web browser to display a grid-like interface and search tools that look a bit like the real BBC iPlayer.

Click in the Search box, type part or the whole of the programme name and then press Enter. Next, tick the box next to a programme's listing and then click the Record button. A new web tab will open where you'll see get_iplayer execute the scary-looking text commands you'd ordinarily have to type in the Command Prompt window. It's vital to keep this tab open until the download has finished, indicated by a progress bar made up of hash symbols.

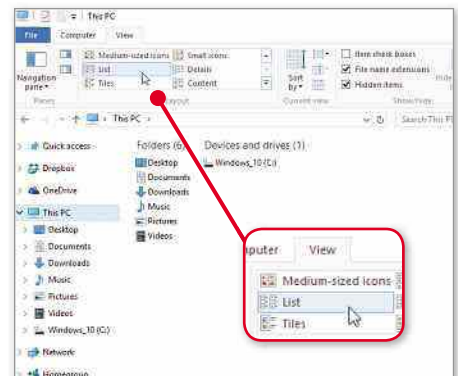
Next, press Windows key+E to launch File Explorer (or Windows Explorer), then navigate to the Recording Folder noted earlier. The recordings are stored in the popular **MPEG4** format and you've probably already got a video player on your laptop that'll handle these, so just double-click to play. If not, get VLC for Windows from www.videolan.org.

VLC is also available for Android, so will do the same job on your tablet – get it from Google's Play Store at www.snipca.com/20298. To get the videos on to your device, connect it to your PC via a USB cable and then launch File Explorer to drag and drop the required files. In the VLC app, tap the menu button (three horizontal lines), then tap Directories and tap to navigate to the folder containing your iPlayer shows. Finally, tap to play.

Where are Windows 10's file-sort options?

Q In Windows 7 there's a menu that lets you sort files in different ways. The options include List, Details, Tiles, Content and a few others besides. I cannot find the equivalent of this in Windows 10, and in particular the List item. I really want to make use of this to remove information I don't personally need to see, such as the file size, type and date. Do you know what I'm talking about? If so, where would I find this menu in Windows 10?

Mike Williams



Click List in the Layout category to change the way that files are displayed in Windows 10

A Yes, we know what you're talking about – it's the 'Change your view' button-cum-menu in Windows Explorer. Microsoft gave Windows Explorer an overhaul in Windows 8, as well as renaming it File Explorer. You can still launch this tool in the same way as Windows Explorer, which for many people means using the keyboard shortcut Windows key+E.

While File Explorer looks a bit different to its predecessor, all that's really changed is that it now has a Microsoft Office-style ribbon, instead of traditional menus. So, to find your missing options just click to select the View tab at the top – which you may not have even noticed, because of File Explorer's pale colour scheme. Now just click List in the Layout category. If you don't see it here, click the up and down arrows to the right to scroll through the options.

Our experts solve all your tech problems

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How do I change the Windows 10 wallpaper colour?

Q I want to change the colour of the Windows 10 desktop from blue to red, but retain the four square windows with light coming through. It seems that no one knows how to do this – not even the supposedly infinite wisdom of online forums. I can change the colour, but then I lose the windows. It's driving me nuts. Do you have any ideas?

Terry Brown

A We think you must mean the default Windows 10 wallpaper, which is a blue-shaded picture of the Windows logo. That's why no one has been able to give you an easy answer: this is literally a fixed image, stored in JPEG format. As such, there's no way in Windows to change the colour.

However, most modern image-editing tools make it pretty easy to mess around with colours – and that includes applying a colour-wash to a picture to give it an entirely different hue. The method is similar in most programs, but we'll explain how to do it in the popular Gimp tool, which is a free download from www.gimp.org.



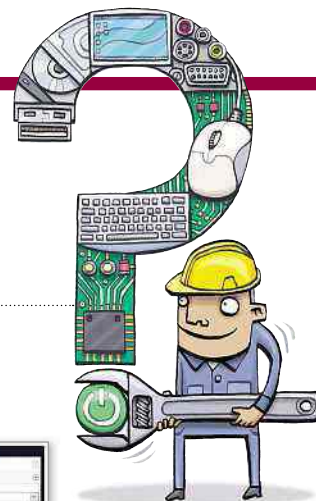
Launch Gimp, then press Control (Ctrl)+O to summon the Open Image box, then use this to navigate to **C:\Windows\Web\Wallpaper\Windows**, which is where you'll find the default Windows 10 wallpaper file. Specifically, you need to open **img0.jpg** – so click to select that then click Open.

Next, open Gimp's Color menu and select Colorify. Red is one of the default colours so you can just click to select it if it's the precise shade you want. If you desire a customised hue, click 'Custom color', then click in the palette pane to make your selection, then click OK. Make sure Preview is ticked and, if it looks good, click OK.

If you press Ctrl+S now, the image would be saved and the wallpaper

changed, but you'd overwrite the original (blue-shaded) version. To avoid this so you can later revert to blue, press Shift+Ctrl+E, type a new name for the file (such as 'img0-red.jpg'), then save on your computer.

Finally, click Start followed by Settings, then Personalisation, followed by Background. Under Background, choose Picture, then click Browse, navigate to **img0-red.jpg**, then click 'Choose picture'.



Use the image-editing tool Gimp to change the Windows 10 wallpaper from blue to red



How do I disable Narrator?

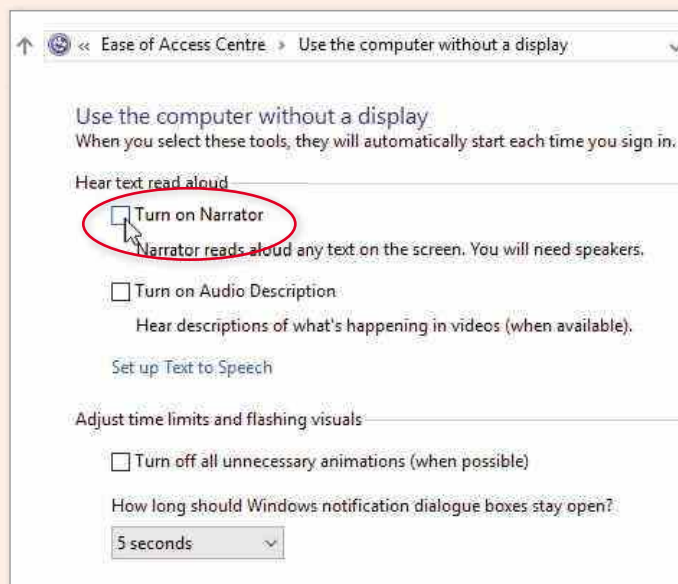
Q After seeing a tip in your magazine, I tried Windows Narrator. I didn't find it all that helpful, but I now don't know how to stop it launching every time I switch on my computer. Can you help?

Ernie Sampson

A We're not sure which version of Windows you have, but in 7 click Start, followed by Control Panel, then 'Ease of Access', followed by 'Ease of Access Centre'. Now click 'Use the computer without a display', then click to remove the tick from the 'Turn on Narrator' box.

In Windows 8/8.1, press Windows key+C, then click Settings. In Windows 10, click Start, then Settings. Now click 'Ease of Access', followed by Narrator, then click to slide the 'Start Narrator automatically' switch to Off.

Finally, a tip: you can enable or disable Narrator at any time by using the keyboard shortcut Windows key+Enter.



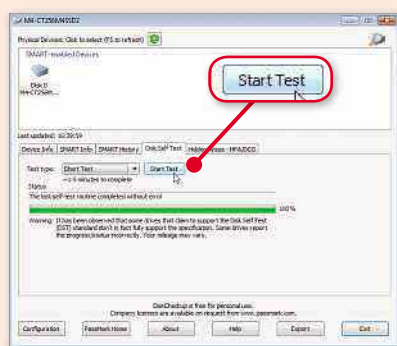
Untick the 'Turn on Narrator' box to disable the Windows Narrator tool

Problems Solved

Is my hard drive a goner?

Q I have an external hard drive that worked well until recently. Now, my computer won't recognise it. The drive's red light flashes. Solutions I've seen on the web seem complicated. Is it worth me trying to get someone to rescue my files? My PC runs Windows 7.

Joan Andrews



Use PassMark DiskCheckup to find out what's wrong with a faulty hard drive

A If you want the easy option, then you're sure to find a local PC technician with the skills to take a look, and possibly rescue your files. But there are a few simple things you can try yourself.

For starters, connect your drive to a different USB port, just to check all is well with the usual one. Next, try attaching it to a different computer.

Also, download the free PassMark DiskCheckup tool from www.snipca.com/20336. With your drive attached, launch DiskCheckup. If your external drive appears, click to select it, choose the Desk Self Test tab, then click Start Test. This won't fix problems, but it will offer you an insight into what might be wrong.

Finally, the hard drive itself could be fine, but the enclosure's circuitry may have developed a fault. You should be able to open it up in order to extract the hard drive. You can then install this in a new USB housing, or directly inside your PC. It's really not as hard as it sounds, but you'll need to buy a compatible enclosure, so get the technical info from the drive's label, then search on Amazon or somewhere similar for a suitable model.

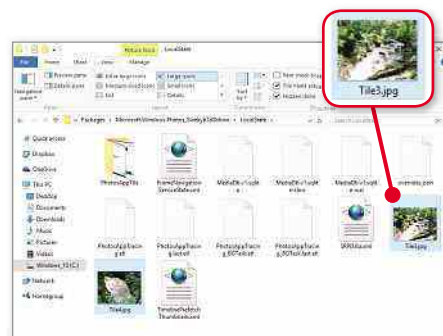
How do I clear the Windows 10 Photos tile cache?

Q Do you know how to clear photos from the Windows 10 Photos live tile? I don't mean simply disable it, but to stop it displaying images that I've already deleted. It must keep a store of them somewhere because old photos keep appearing. This was quite easy to do in Windows 8 – I'm sure there was a button or option to click. But I'm struggling to find it in Windows 10.

Robert Lincoln

A There is indeed an option in Windows 8/8.1. For the benefit of readers still using that operating system, right-click the taskbar, choose Properties, select the Start Menu tab, then click the Clear button – easy.

But while that option still existed in early versions of Windows 10, it has since disappeared. You'd have to ask Microsoft why that is, but until the company puts it back or creates a new method, you'll have to clear the Photos tile's **cache** manually. Press Windows key+E to launch File Explorer, then navigate to



Navigate to the Windows Photos folder and delete images to clear the Photos tile cache

C:\Users\[YourUserName]\AppData\Local\Packages\Microsoft.Windows.Photos[SomeRandomCharacters]\LocalState.

Now select the View tab and select 'Large icons' or 'Extra large icons' so you can see what you're able to delete. You're looking for files with names like Tile1.jpg, Tile2.jpg and so on, but you should be able to spot them easily from their thumbnail previews. Hold down Control (Ctrl), then click to select each of the offending images. Now just press Delete (Del).

Where's my Office Trust Center?

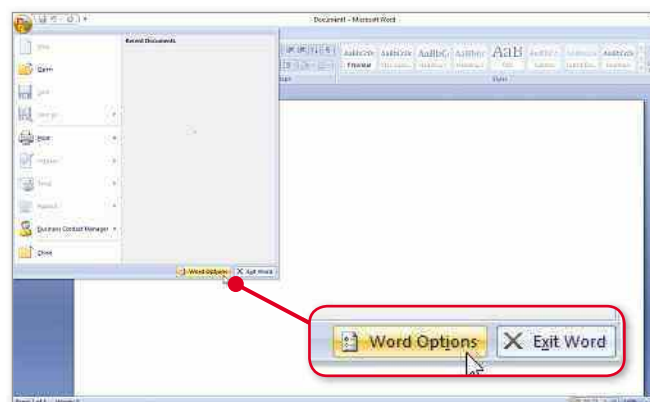
Q I tried to follow one of your tips about keeping my PC private, but I can't find the recommended Trust Center in my version of Office 2007 – and no amount of searching on my Windows 7 computer will find it. You said to click File, but there's no File option in any of my Office programs. Perhaps you are referring only to the latest Office suite, which I haven't got? Perhaps you should point that out in the magazine.

J Woods

A Our instructions are generally geared to more recent editions of programs, although we always strive to point out when we're giving instructions specifically for older versions – as we often do for Windows XP, for example.

Here the problem is that Office 2007's layout and menu structure is slightly different to later editions. The File menu isn't actually labelled File, but Trust Center does exist. To find it, click the

button at the very top left – the one that's round and decorated with the Office logo. Now click the Word Options button (or Excel Options and so on) at the bottom of this menu. Finally, click Trust Center.

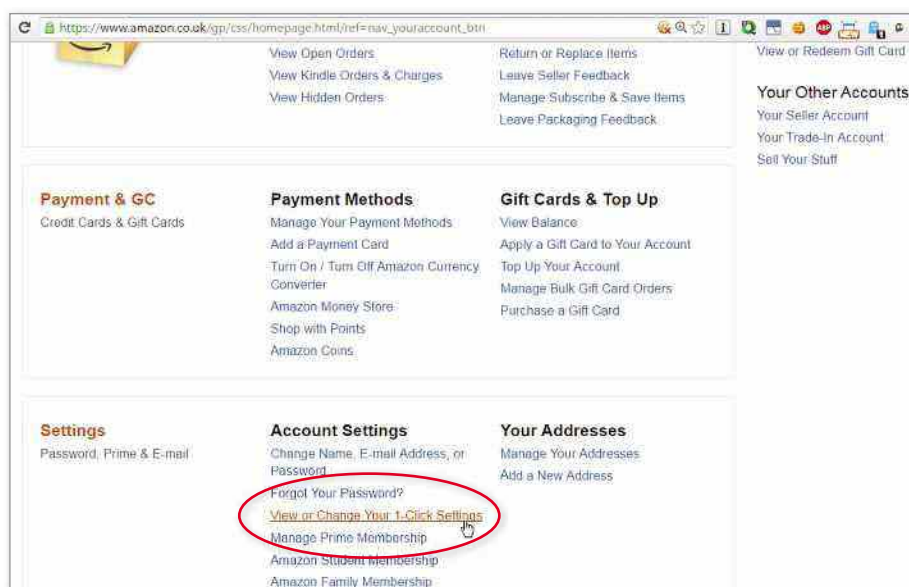


In Office 2007 click the Office logo, then the Word Options button to access the Trust Center

Why does my Kindle think my credit card has expired?

Q My original Kindle no longer lets me download books because it insists that my credit card expired in April 2014. It didn't. The Amazon website shows the correct expiry date. Indeed, I have bought other goods this month. As it seems impossible to communicate with a human being at Amazon, can I return the Kindle on the grounds that they sold me an item which subsequently they have rendered useless?

Ray Burgess



Change the credit card you use in the 1-Click option to get Amazon to accept payments

A The first-generation Kindle was released in 2007, which means your device is now nine years old. As such, all your consumer rights have expired. Whatever happens, you won't be able to return this device to Amazon – at least not for a refund or a replacement.

However, we doubt you'll want to return it even as a protest, because we think your problem relates to Amazon's

1-Click ordering system. Even if you've disabled this on your Amazon account for everything else, it remains the default for Kindle ebooks. As it's possible to set up a different credit card for the 1-Click feature, our strong hunch is that you have an old credit card stored against yours.

Log in to the Amazon website, click Your Account at the top and then click 'View or Change Your 1-Click Settings' under Settings. Under 'Payment method'

within the 'Default 1-click settings and payment method preferences' section, click Change. Click the 'Provide new payment method information' button, then update your details.

If this doesn't fix it, it's actually pretty simple to get a real Amazon human to call you – when you know how! Visit www.snipca.com/20309, fill in the form, select the Phone option, and then expect a call within a few moments.

Why won't my taskbar's auto-hide work?

Q I've ticked 'Auto-hide the taskbar' in the 'Taskbar and Start Menu Properties' box. It worked at first, but then stopped, so my taskbar is always visible. Microsoft helped me to sort it out, but the next day it refused to hide again. Do you have any idea what could be causing this? If so, how do I fix it?

Brian Seddon

A This is usually caused by a program not playing nicely with the taskbar's notification area. Basically, sloppy software coding means that a notification is triggered, but fails to actually display. However, the taskbar still slides into view, because it expects you'll want to access the notification area to deal with the alert. And it'll stay there until you deal with the notification – only you can't, because it's invisible.

To resolve this catch-22 situation



Find and switch off misbehaving programs to get taskbar's auto-hide to work properly

you'll need to identify the rogue program, and then suppress or change its notifications settings.

In the first instance, try right-clicking each notification area icon in turn. If

some icons are hidden, click the little arrow to see more. If or when the taskbar auto-hides, note the relevant application.

Then, in Windows 7, 8 or 8.1, launch Control Panel and click 'Appearance and Personalization', followed by 'Taskbar and Start Menu' (Windows 7) or 'Taskbar and Navigation' (8/8.1). Now click the Customize button under the 'Notification area' heading. Choose 'Only show notifications' alongside the relevant program, then click OK. In Windows 10 click Settings, followed by System, 'Notifications & actions', then 'Select which icons appear on the taskbar'. Slide 'Always

show all icons in the notification area' to Off, then use the individual On/Off switches to make the necessary changes. Now repeat for other misbehaving programs.

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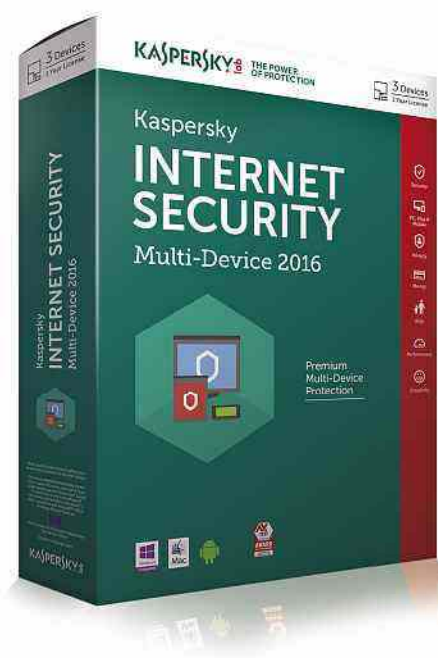
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Whatever happened to... laptop expansion cards?

Q Over a decade ago I had a Dell laptop that served me well. One of the things I liked about it was that it had a slot into which I could slide various accessories, like a dial-up modem card or a hard-drive card. I think there were other upgrades too, including **graphics cards**. What happened to these nifty slots, and why is there no similar way to upgrade laptops now?

Dennis Horsford

A You're talking about Personal Computer Memory Card International Association, or PCMCIA, slots – also known as PC Card or CardBus slots. They were invented in 1990 by the PCMCIA which, as its full name hints, was an organisation made up of well-known tech companies.

We say 'was' because the PCMCIA wound itself up in 2009, but not before it had attempted to update the PC Card idea, as ExpressCard. This 2003 revival



PCMCIA cards fell out of favour due to their bulky size and advances in computer technology

of the laptop-upgrade slot was both faster and available in different sizes and shapes – whereas PC Cards varied only in thickness. However, the PCMCIA's efforts didn't do much good because both the PC Card and ExpressCard format faced several fundamental problems.

First, the speed and convenience of the **USB 2.0** standard – which had arrived at

the turn of the millennium – proved very popular with consumers. A portable USB 2.0 hard drive, for example, was less elegant than a slot-in card, but could be easily switched between a laptop and a desktop PC.

Around the same time laptop manufacturers began incorporating SD Card slots into their machines, and these soon became the first choice for users needing a storage upgrade – not least because they also worked in digital cameras. We still use these cards today, of course, and many laptops can be upgraded in this way.

Finally, we'd say the relentless march of technology – where every year it becomes cheaper and easier to integrate more into ever-smaller devices – along with the increasing disposability of consumer goods made the idea of (relatively) bulky card upgrades look anachronistic.

✉ Want to know what happened to your favourite program, website or technology? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Why won't Windows 10 reboot after updates?

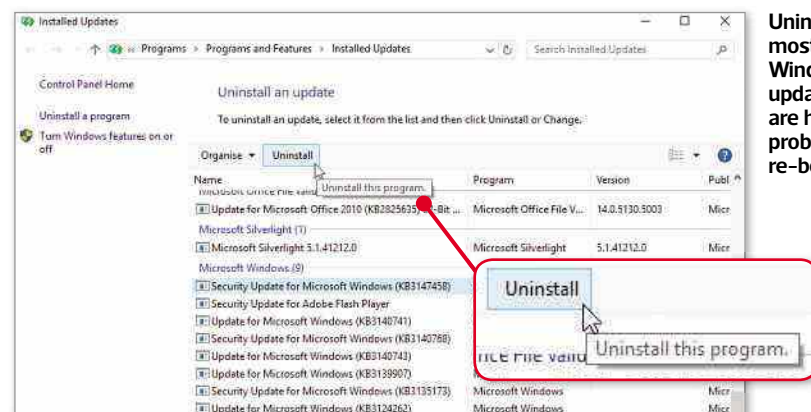
Q Can you tell me why my computer doesn't reboot after Windows 10 updates? I get a blue screen that says '100% complete', but also 'CRITICAL PROCESS DIED' – and then nothing else happens. I have to switch off and restart manually.

Chris Bothwick

A It's impossible for us to say for certain what might be causing this error but, because it happens every time Windows 10 tries to update itself, we'd guess it's related to one or more corrupted **system files**.

We'd suggest running the System File Checker tool, as this scans system files for problems and then repairs any problems it finds. Click Start, type **cmd** then right-click the cmd or Command Prompt entry and choose 'Run as administrator'. Now type **sfc /scannow** and press Enter. The process can take a while to complete, and you might need to restart your PC afterwards.

If this doesn't work, try uninstalling the most recent Windows updates, as a



Uninstall your most recent Windows updates if you are having problems re-booting

corrupted installation file might be the problem. Click Start, followed by Settings, and then 'Update & security', followed by Windows Update. Now click 'Advanced options', followed by 'View your update history' and then 'Uninstall updates'. Scroll through the list to reach the Windows section, then click to select the most recent. Now click Uninstall and follow the prompts.

Windows 10 will automatically download and reinstall the update when you restart.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
8 June

- How do I make websites print how they appear on screen?
 - How do I switch users in Windows 10?
 - How do I remove old devices from Amazon?
- ...And many more

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Connecting laptop to TV

Force your laptop to detect your TV, make the image fit and fix audio problems

Picture on TV is distorted

Because the resolution of laptop screens varies from those on high-definition TVs, whenever you connect one to the other the resulting picture on your TV can often look stretched or distorted. The edges of your Windows desktop may even be cut off altogether – a problem known as overscan.

To solve this you need to tweak your TV's settings, though exactly which setting will depend on the make and model of your TV. In short, you need to change your TV's screen's **aspect ratio** from 16:9 to Just Scan or Screen Fit mode (the name will vary).

To do this on a Samsung TV, for example, open the TV's menu using your remote control and choose Picture, Screen Adjustment, Picture Size then select Screen Fit. On an LG TV, open the menu and select Picture Mode, Aspect Ratio then choose Just Scan. This will enable the image from your laptop to fit proportionately on your TV screen.

No picture on TV

If you've connected your laptop to your TV but can't see your desktop on your TV screen, there are a few fixes you can try. The first thing you should do is, using your TV's remote control, cycle through all the available **HDMI** input channels (modern TVs can have as many as six). If you still don't see your desktop on any of them, the next step is to make sure your HDMI cable works. Plug your cable into another high-definition device, such as a Blu-ray player or Sky HD box and see if you get a picture.

If the cable works fine, the next step is to make the TV the default output display for your laptop. The easiest way to do this is to plug the laptop into the TV, switch the TV on, select the correct HDMI

input channel and then restart your laptop. As it starts up your laptop should detect your TV and change its display output to that automatically.

If this doesn't work, try pressing the Windows key+P while the TV is connected. This opens the Project menu, where you can set how the laptop handles multiple displays. Select Duplicate (see screenshot below) and after a few seconds the TV should replicate what is displayed on your laptop.

HDMI cable won't fit into laptop

If you can't find an HDMI socket, then you probably have an older laptop that was made before these sockets became standard. Alternatively, you may have a newer laptop with a micro HDMI or mini HDMI socket instead. Irritatingly, micro and mini HDMI connections require different types of cable, so it's worth checking which socket your laptop has before you buy a new cable.

To check this, type **system information** into the Start search box and make a note of the System Model (see screenshot above). Enter the manufacturer's name, model and 'spec' (for example, **Samsung 905S3G spec**) into an online search. One of the first suggestions should be your model's specifications page on the manufacturer's website. Here, look for an entry called I/O Ports and check whether micro or mini HDMI is listed.

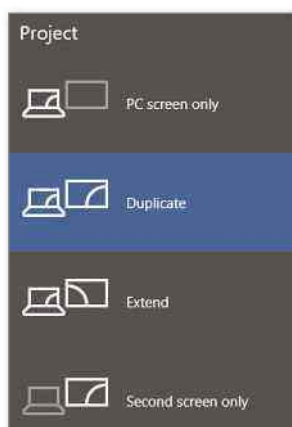
HDMI cables are relatively cheap – you can buy a micro HDMI from www.snipca.com/20500 or a mini HDMI from www.snipca.com/20498 for about £4 from Amazon.

Item	Value
OS Name	Microsoft Windows 10 Home
Version	10.0.10586 Build 10586
Other OS Description	Not Available
OS Manufacturer	Microsoft Corporation
System Name	
System Manufacturer	SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS CO., LTD.
System Model	905S3G/906S3G/915S3G/930S5G
System Type	x64-based PC
System SKU	SAMSUNG SENS Series
Processor	Quad-Core Processor (up to 1.4GHz), 1000 MHz, 4 Core(s), 4 Logical Process...
BIOS Version/Date	American Megatrends Inc. P13RBV.083.140805.FL, 05/08/2014
SM BIOS Version	2.7
Embedded Controller Version	253.255
BIOS Mode	UEFI
BaseBoard Manufacturer	SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS CO., LTD.

Check your laptop's System Model in System Information to check whether your laptop has a micro or mini HDMI port

No sound from your TV

If you can see the Windows desktop on your TV but aren't getting any sound, it's probably because your laptop isn't using the TV as its primary speaker. To fix this, right-click the Start menu, click Control Panel, 'Hardware and Sound' then Sound. You'll see a list of all available playback devices. In the Playback tab you should see an entry for Digital Audio (HDMI) or similar – see screenshot below. Right-click this, click Enable and then Apply so that your TV is used to output the laptop's audio.



Open Project settings and set the laptop's output to Duplicate to show your desktop on your TV screen



Right-click the Digital Audio (HDMI) option to set your TV as your laptop's main speaker

If you can't see the Digital Audio (HDMI) option, right-click anywhere within the Playback tab and tick Show Disabled Devices and Show Disconnected Devices. This forces your PC to display all disabled audio devices. You should now see Digital Audio (HDMI) listed.



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A3+ 20 sheets **£24.99**
Archival Matte 192gsm:
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A3 50 sheets **£33.99**
A3+ 50 sheets **£44.99**
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A4 20 sheets **£11.99**
A3 20 sheets **£27.99**
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A3 25 sheets **£22.99**
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A4 20 sheets **£14.99**
A3 20 sheets **£29.99**
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Archival Matte 192gsm:
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A3+ 50 sheets **£44.99**
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No.57 Colour 24ml **£12.99**
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No.110 Colour 12ml **£10.99**
No.300XL Black 18ml **£14.99**
No.300XL Colour 18ml **£16.99**
No.301XL Black 15ml **£14.99**
No.301XL Colour 18ml **£16.99**
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No.22 Colour 21ml **£11.99**
No.45 Black 45ml **£4.99**
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No.343 Colour 21ml **£12.99**
No.344 Colour 21ml **£14.99**
No.348 Photo 21ml **£12.99**
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Ransomware is worse than ever – how to keep your files safe
 - **GET LONGER FREE TRIALS**
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 - **USE YOUR PHONE CHEAPER ABROAD**
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Jargon Buster

2.4GHz Wireless networks working at this frequency have longer range, but are more prone to interference.

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

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

5GHz Wireless networks working at 5GHz have shorter range, but are less prone to interference.

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.

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

A2DP Advanced Audio Distribution Profile. A Bluetooth profile that allows for the wireless transmission of stereo audio from an A2DP source (phone or computer) to an A2DP receiver (Bluetooth headphones or stereo system).

ADSL Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line.

Aperture An opening that controls the amount of light entering a camera lens.

Aspect ratio A measurement of the shape of a display.

Beta A version of software that's being tested.

Cache A temporary space for storing information.

Codec Short for Compressor/Decompressor. A file that tells a PC how to record or play a media file.

.csv Comma Separated Value.

DisplayPort A new socket for connecting monitors that's still relatively rare.

Download mirror A website that contains the same downloadable software as others, bundled in its own installer.

dpi Dots per inch.

DRM Digital Rights Management.

DSLR Digital single-lens reflex.

Dual-band A router that operates on two bands: 2.4 and 5GHz.

DVI Digital Visual Interface.

Eight-core A PC that has eight processors.

Email client A computer program used to access and manage a user's email.

EPUB A file format used by many popular ebook readers

EXE A program file designed to run in Windows.

F/18 (F-stop) A measure of a camera's aperture.

False positive When an antivirus program wrongly detects a malware infection.

Flash storage A data-storage device that includes flash memory with an integrated USB interface.

Fresnel lenses A type of compact lens that allows the construction of lenses of large aperture and short focal length without the mass and volume of material that would be required by a lens of normal design.

Graphics card A component in a computer that produces the image shown on the monitor.

HDMI High-definition media interface.

HDMI 2.0 A much faster version of the current HDMI standard with a bandwidth of 18Gbps and support for 4K (or Ultra HD) video at 60 frames per second.

Hotkey A keyboard shortcut set up to perform a complex action.

HTML5 The latest version of the Hypertext Markup Language used to create most web pages.

IP address Internet Protocol Address. A unique set of numbers used to identify PCs and websites on the internet.

IPS In-Plane Switching. A screen technology for liquid crystal displays (LCDs).

IPX7 A device that can withstand exposure to water of up to one metre for up to 30 minutes.

IP67 A rating of IP67 means the product is both totally protected against dust and the effect of water immersion between 15cm and 1m.

LCD Liquid-Crystal Display. The technology used to create almost all flat displays.

LED Light-Emitting Diode. An electronic device that emits light.

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.

Micro USB A miniature version of USB, often found on smartphones, tablets and portable hard drives.

Modem A device that lets two PCs communicate via a phone line.

.MOV A type of video file that can be played using Apple's QuickTime software.

MPEG4 A standard for compressing digital content that maintains very high quality.

Noise Visible dust-like speckles that appear in some camera and TV images.

OLED Organic light-emitting diode. A thin-film organic light-emitting diode used in computer displays and television screens.

Open source Software that can be modified by anyone, rather than just by the employees of the company that created it.

Optical stabilisation A mechanism built into digital cameras that compensates for any shaking or vibrations that occur during shooting.

PCI Express A faster version of PCI, used by modern graphics cards.

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

Powershell A programming language used to automate system processes and create management tools on Windows PCs.

QR code Quick Response code. A two-dimensional barcode that can be read using smartphones and dedicated QR-reading devices.

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

Ransomware Malware run by hackers who lock files on your PC and demand payment for release.

Raw A format for digital photos that stores the image exactly as the camera captured it.

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

SQL Structured Query Language.

sRGB A standard RGB colour space for use on monitors, printers and the internet.

System files The files that run when the computer starts up.

System restore point The collection of system files stored by System Restore on a given date.

System Tray Located in the taskbar of the Windows desktop. Contains miniature icons for easy access to functions.

TN Twisted nematic. A common, cheap type of LCD.

USB 3.0 An even faster version of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

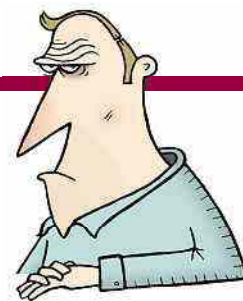
USB Type-C A new connector that's reversible, letting you plug it in upside down.

VDSL Very-high-bit-rate digital subscriber line. Broadband technology that provides data transmission faster than ADSL over short distances on copper wires.

VPN Virtual private network. A technology for keeping all internet communication safe and private.



The Final Straw



KEN RIGSBY is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

This issue Ken Rigsby wants everyone to stop...

Oversharing

Hey, listen up! I'm brilliant at my job. I'm also great at sport – a karate black belt (second dan), and an accomplished skydiver.

There's more. I'm married to that incredibly clever (and attractive) lady who adds up the numbers on *Countdown*, and we've enrolled our yet-to-be-conceived kids for places at Oxford and Cambridge (yes, *both* universities, because our children are bound to be twice as clever as *yours*). Oh, and I had chips for lunch, thrice-cooked for me personally by Heston Blumenthal. Frankly, my life is amazing and I damn well want you to know about it.

Okay, some or all of the above is a tad fanciful. But it brings me neatly on to virtual-reality headsets, those new-fangled techno-blindfolds like the Oculus Rift (www.oculus.com). They promise to immerse our senses as never before, transporting us to incredible worlds and impossible places.

Strap on a Rift and you might be whisked to some galaxy... far, far away, perhaps to explore new planets and play Scrabble with aliens. On another day, you might don your

“
Facebook's terrifying vision is that rather than sharing experiences with people in real life, we'll materialise in their homes in virtual reality
”

goggles for a dive down to the depths of the Mariana Trench, where you'll interact with sea creatures that no human has ever seen.

So much potential. So many possibilities. Which is why it's so perplexing that Facebook boss Mark

Zuckerberg thinks you'll want to wear your Rift to save you having to visit your friend's house for a chinwag.

Because that's apparently Zuckerberg's vision for Oculus, the expensive high-tech toy that he bought a couple of years ago for a mere \$2bn.

He believes that the Facebook generation's compulsion to boast about absolutely everything that happens in their daily lives will extend to virtual reality.

Terrifyingly, he thinks that instead of sharing experiences with people in real life, we'll

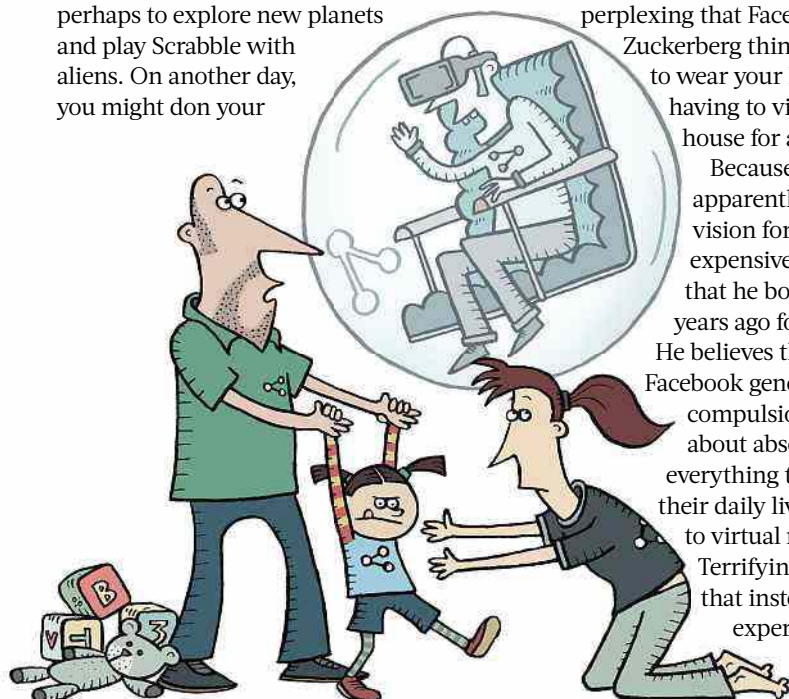
materialise in their living rooms in virtual reality. Not literally, obviously – but virtually. You'll sit on your sofa and tune in to watch your friend's new baby take its first steps. Or perhaps partake in a bit of virtual swinging at weekends.

It sounds ridiculous, but Zuckerberg didn't become rich by accident: he earned his fortune by creating a service that fed modern humanity's insatiable desire to share, well... *everything*.

Just a couple of years ago Chambers Dictionary chose 'overshare' as its word of the year, and the phenomenon has hardly diminished since then. Having a cheese sandwich for lunch? Quick, post a dozen photos to Instagram! Going through a messy divorce? Update your relationship status on Facebook! Think someone looked at you a bit funny as you passed them in the street? Share your anger on Twitter and don't stop ranting until the offender has been sentenced to life without parole, or at least ostracised from society!

Sure, you can switch off the social networks, but that won't save you from idiotic oversharing. That's because 67 per cent of newspaper and TV content is now drawn directly from stuff that happened yesterday on Facebook and Twitter (which, coincidentally, is exactly the same percentage of statistics that are made up on the spot).

So, for all its ridiculousness, I fear Mark Zuckerberg's prediction is bang on: the world's oversharing cretins are quick to embrace new technology. They crave the validation that comes with volunteering every last detail of their lives. And for the likes of Zuckerberg oversharing is a numbers game: the more people share stuff using his products, the more personal information his company knows about them, and the more money he can make from targeted advertising.



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