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Issue 387

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WebUser

30 Dec 2015 - 12 Jan 2016 / Best software / New apps / HapPi New Year

**UNINSTALL
HARMFUL
WINDOWS
UPDATES**

The tool Microsoft
doesn't want you to use
p54

WHAT YOU MUST NOT DOWNLOAD IN 2016

only
£2



The 12 worst programs – and what to use instead p38

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PLUS

**KILL THE WINDOWS 10
UPGRADE ALERT**

& Other pointless PC messages

**Rubbish Tech That
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Don't get caught using it p74

**MONITOR WHAT
OTHER PEOPLE
DO ON YOUR PC**



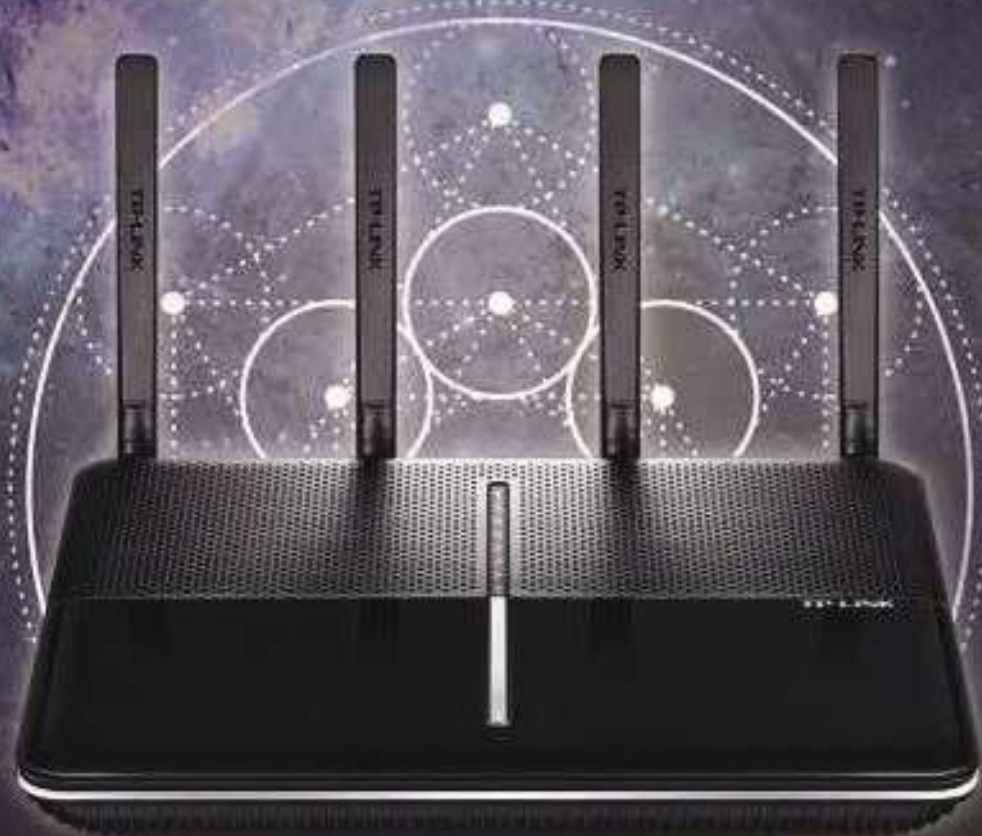
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Don't download these duds

As we wring out the soggy old year and ring in the shiny new one, let us anticipate all the delights that 2016 may bring. A big-screen version of *Dad's Army*! A 6% rise in property prices! Donald Trump in the White House! Actually, none of those things are particularly appealing, and nor is the ragbag of rubbish that we've rounded up on page 38.

Yes, after last issue's recommendations for software that you *should* download, this time round we're highlighting programs and apps that you *shouldn't* download, either because they're pointless, bundled with junk

or there are much better options available. You may not agree with all our choices, but if we all agreed on everything, the world would be a very dull place indeed.

Our columnist Barry Collins certainly doesn't pull any punches on page 74 in his prediction for five tech things that will bite the dust in 2016. But it's not all doom and gloom and, on a cheerier note, I'd like to wish you all a Happy New Year!

Robert Irvine
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
[#webuser](#)



ISSUE 387

30 DEC 2015 - 12 JAN 2016

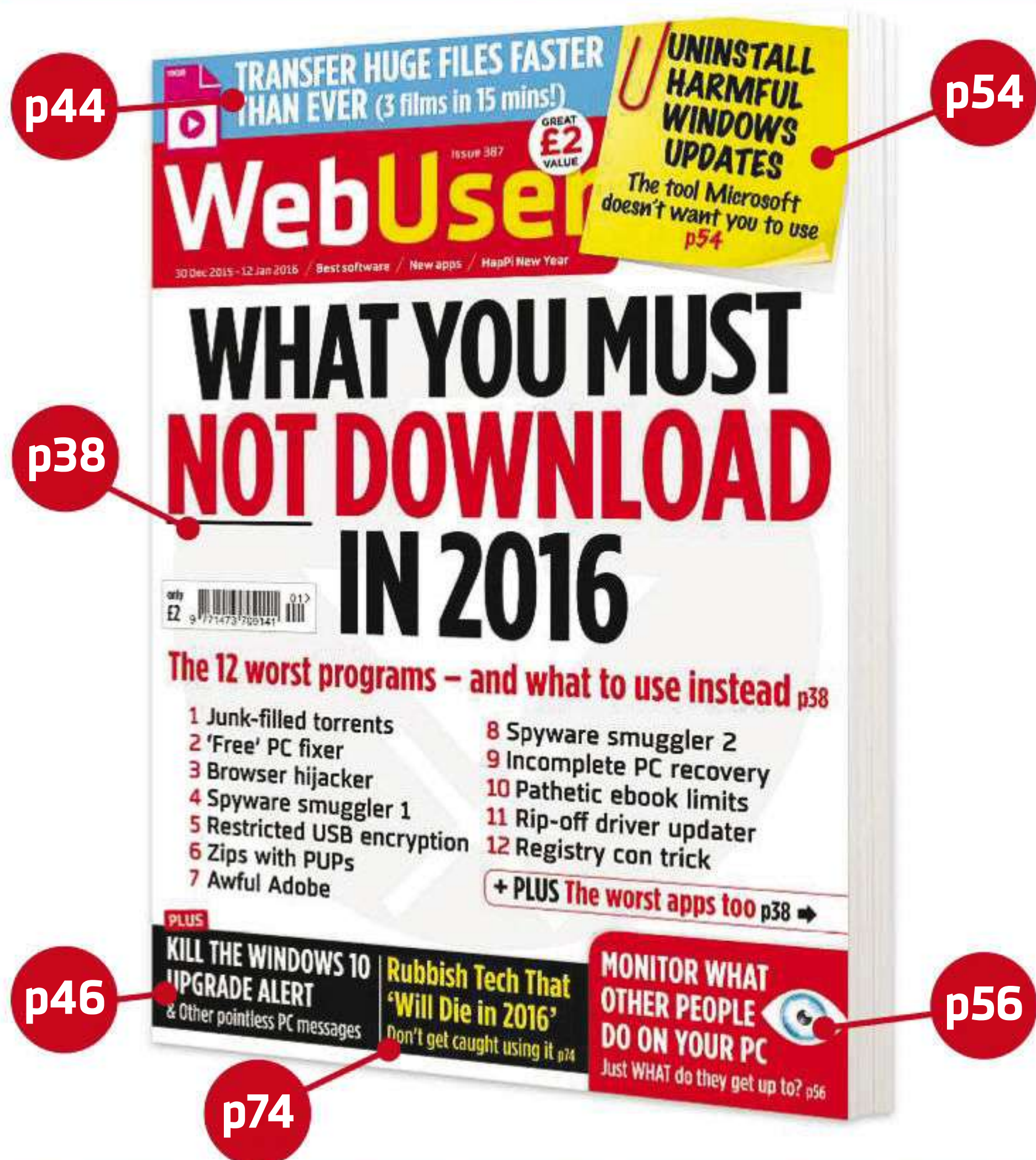
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abc Average sales, Jan-Dec 2014, 29,057 copies per issue

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What's New Online

See what the world searched for online in 2015

At the end of every year, the web giants try to hog the headlines by showing us how people used their service during the past 12 months. This year's efforts are a mixed bag. Facebook's 2015 review (yearinreview.fb.com/2015) is a rather pompous attempt to prove that the site is a place to discuss major world events, and not just to share photos of babies in fancy dress. YouTube's top 'trending' list is more fun (bit.ly/tube387), featuring US chat shows, pranks and music videos. Music – if you can call it that – plays a big part in Twitter's 2015 round-up (2015.twitter.com), with One Direction dominating the hashtags and retweets. More discerning music fans will prefer Spotify's 'Year in music' (yearinmusic.spotify.com).

That just leaves Google, the daddy of them all. Its 'Year in Search' tells us



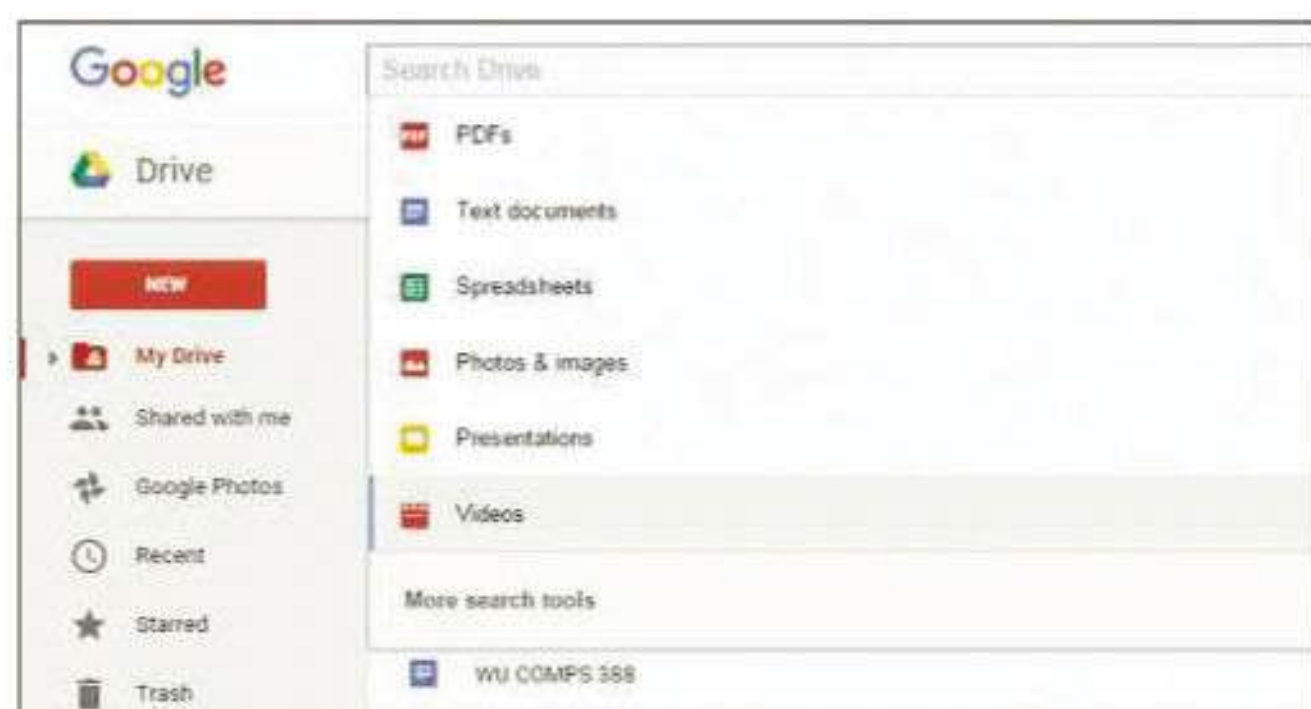
that in 2015 people wanted to know more about *Star Wars*, the Paris attacks and Queen Elizabeth II becoming our longest-reigning monarch. In the UK, two Jeremys headed the list for politicians and male celebrities (Corbyn and Clarkson), while Cilla Black was the

most searched-for person overall. As in previous years (also available to view), it's fascinating to see which questions were popular. This year Google broadens it to include 'what', 'why', 'when' and 'who' queries. www.google.com/2015

Search by file type in Google Drive

drive.google.com

Start typing in the Google Drive search box – on the web and in the app – and you'll now see the option to look for a particular file type: PDF, text document, spreadsheets, photos and images, presentations, and videos. It's part of an update that adds advanced functions such as searching for words a file contains. There's more information on the Google Drive blog (bit.ly/driveblog387), though you'll have to put up with the extremely naff headline 'Because it's gotta be super easy to find your files'. Google has 'gotta' be less embarrassing next time.



Explore the best web maps of 2015

bit.ly/maps387

What do the following subjects have in common: the migration patterns of birds; the amount of plastic debris floating in the ocean; taxi trips in New York; and the growth of Amsterdam? They were all illustrated in maps that rank among 2015's top 100, according to Google Maps Mania, one of our favourite blogs on any subject, let alone maps.

It has been gathering the web's best maps since 2005, initially focusing only on those made using the Google Maps code, before eventually including maps built by any type of platform. This 'best of' list for 2015 perfectly captures the blog's appeal, which lies in discovering more about historical, political, social and environmental affairs that you would never have otherwise thought about. If you're interested in the different types of mapping platforms, click the tabs at the top to categorise the maps.



We highlight 10 of the most amazing and amusing things you can do on the web this fortnight

Test your broadband speed without Flash

beta.speedtest.net

2016 could be the year that Flash is finally killed off (see page 10). Many sites have already moved to HTML5, including Speedtest, which has launched a Flash-free beta. It works in the same way as before – just click 'Begin Test' to



see your current speed. Scroll to the bottom and you'll see how many tests the site has performed worldwide.

5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

[@hedgehogociety](https://twitter.com/hedgehogociety)

Updates from the British Hedgehog Preservation Society on the plight of Britain's Tiggy-Winkles

[@CES](https://twitter.com/CES)

Follow the tech news and launches at the 2016 CES show in Las Vegas, which starts on 6 January

[@MrTeller](https://twitter.com/MrTeller)

One half of the Penn & Teller magic duo, thankfully chattier on Twitter than in real life

[@Way_Things_Work](https://twitter.com/Way_Things_Work)

Photos and videos of optical illusions that will boggle your brain

[@NeowinSoftware](https://twitter.com/NeowinSoftware)

Links to updates for all types of software, from browsers to security

Never miss YouTube's trending videos

www.youtube.com/trending

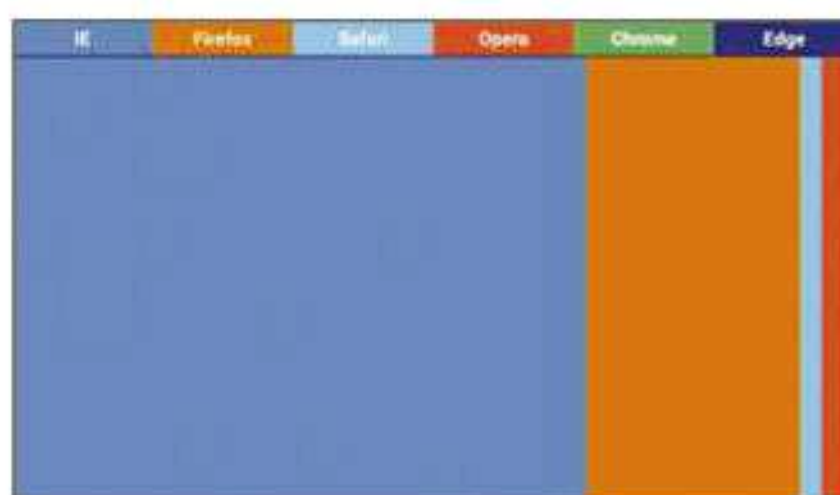
For a site that's built its success on videos going 'viral', it's surprising YouTube has taken so long to add a Trending section. Click the new tab and you'll see videos that, YouTube says, "people watch, share, and talk about each and every day". Which videos you see will depend partly on your location (UK-weighted videos for UK-based viewers, for example), but the selection won't be influenced by what you've previously watched on the site. Read more on YouTube's blog: bit.ly/tube387.



Watch Chrome devour IE

bit.ly/browser387

The large blue section on the left of this screengrab represents Internet Explorer's market share in July 2008, one month before Google launched Chrome. It's the start of a brilliant YouTube video that shows how, over the past seven years, Chrome has devoured IE's market share, and leapfrogged Safari, Opera and Firefox, to become the world's favourite browser. Each browser is represented by a different colour, with Chrome's green dominating by the end of 2015. Look out for IE's temporary fightbacks in 2013 and 2014.



+ Add reminders to Google Calendar

bit.ly/gmailblog387

Google has added reminders to its Calendar app for Android and iOS. Unlike normal calendar entries, which come and go, reminders will stick around until you complete a task or attend an event. There's more information on the Gmail blog.

Watch Sky Go TV on Amazon tablets

bit.ly/sky387

The Sky Go app is finally available for Amazon tablets. Sky subscribers will be able to watch up to 70 channels live and more than 1,000 films on demand.

Upload 100,000 songs to Apple Music

www.apple.com/uk/music

Apple has increased the limit on its music-streaming service from 25,000 tracks to 100,000, twice what Google Play offers. The new limit also applies to iTunes Match.

Walk around Machu Picchu in Street View

bit.ly/machu387

If you don't fancy the four-day trek along the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, here's a virtual shortcut courtesy of Google. You may not get to experience the sunrise over the famous 15th-century citadel, but you'll still enjoy



some of the world's most spectacular views. Start your journey from Google's Lat-Long blog by clicking the link above.

Need to Know

10 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR 2016

It's going to be another interesting year for the internet. Here are the questions we're asking about the next 12 months in tech

1 Will ad blockers kill the web's revenue?

Long answer: Ad blockers aren't new – you've long been able to install a browser extension such as Adblock Plus to filter advertisements on your desktop or laptop screen. However, 2015 marked the first time that such tools were allowed on iPhones, with apps such as Purify and 1Blocker leading pundits to suggest that the internet will soon need a new funding model. So far, that panic hasn't been borne out: although more people are using ad blockers, the system hasn't fallen apart.

That could change next year. Mobile operators such as EE and O2 have



admitted that they are considering a system that blocks ads at the network level, which would be able to filter advertisements from apps as well. However, such network-level blockers

would also be opt-in, and, despite the irritation many of us feel towards online advertising, only a fifth of web users actually bother to do anything about it. So this move might merely

act as a welcome warning to advertisers, reminding them to rein in the most excessive and annoying marketing tactics such as auto-playing videos.

Short answer: No, but do expect changes in online and app advertising.

2 Will companies ever get better at protecting us from hackers?

Long answer: Don't laugh and say "when pigs fly". The recent hacks against big firms such as TalkTalk – by teenagers, no less – don't fill us with much confidence, but it's only a matter of time before a company is hit by a big fine or goes out of business because of its poor security. Hopefully, businesses will learn from TalkTalk's mistakes rather than wait for a similar incident to affect them and their customers.

That might be pushed along by new EU rules, which require key businesses to maintain a certain level of security and to report major hacks – so-called 'data-breach notification'. Perhaps putting protection into law is the only way to make companies take proper action to keep us safe. That said, it's impossible to be completely secure. TalkTalk was hacked via a basic, well known flaw, but even if that were patched, there's no system that is totally bug-free. We're hoping for fewer big hacks, but they'll never disappear completely.

Short answer: Don't hold your breath, but the threat of legal action might improve security.

TalkTalk



3 Will delivery of online shopping go high-tech?

Long answer: Tired of coming through your front door to find "While you were out" slips from missed deliveries? Many companies are working on solutions, from high-flying drones to robots that trundle from the pick-up depot to your front door without needing much human help.

Amazon, Google and delivery firms are all working on drones that will drop small packages to your door, while startup Starship Technologies has said it hopes to bring its delivery robot to the UK in 2016. We look forward to the inevitable YouTube videos of the robot being "disrupted", maltreated and whatever else pranksters come up with.

Robotics aside, Amazon and its rivals are working on less high-tech ways to offer more personalised delivery services, testing out one-hour deliveries to help us get our online shopping when it's most convenient.

Short answer: Forget robots, but delivery should get better in 2016.

What we think of this fortnight's top tech news stories and rumours, and how they affect you

4 Will the Investigatory Powers Bill become law?

Long answer: This bill needs to pass: the government must sort out the laws regarding digital surveillance and how to authorise snooping. By the end of 2016 or beginning of 2017, these laws will be in place.

The only question is how much of the draft bill, unveiled in November by Home Secretary Theresa May, will be in the final version. So far, the committee investigating the bill has already heard evidence from a host of experts across the industry, with ISPs in particular complaining about the amount of data the government wants them to collect and how much this will cost. Others have criticised the judicial oversight, saying it's not enough to keep the authorities in check, and questioned the controls in place to ensure police use their new hacking powers responsibly.

It's impossible to say what will come out of the bill before it's passed next year, but expect to hear much more about this in 2016.

Short answer: The bill will inevitably pass, but what it contains remains to be seen.



6 Will Windows 10 become the most popular OS?

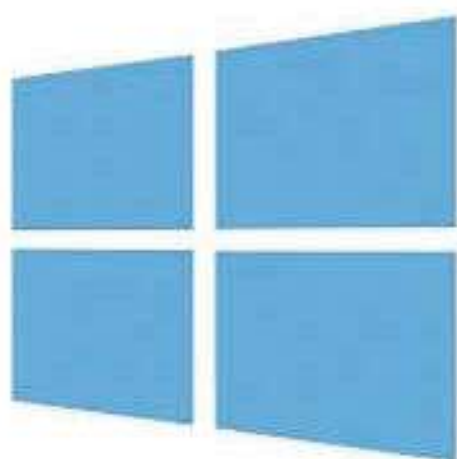
Long answer: Windows 10 had a steady start; at the time of going to press, it was the third most used operating system after Windows 7 and 8.1, according to data from StatCounter (www.statcounter.com).

Although the new OS is catching up to Windows 8.1 - and has overtaken OS X and Windows XP - Windows 7 retains 49% of the market share versus Windows 10's mere 10%.

That said, Windows 10 should pull in more users in 2016. All new PCs running Microsoft's OS are being sold with the latest version, and the free upgrade from Windows 7 or 8.1 ends 29 July, both of which should lead to a bump in the numbers of people adopting the new OS.

None of that means Windows 10 is a success, but it's safe to say that at this point it's not a failure. Many people simply don't see a reason to upgrade from Windows 7, which says more about the older OS than it does about Windows 10, and others will have been burned by Windows 8. We expect Windows 10 will continue to slowly accumulate users, especially as Microsoft releases new features, but some users may hang on until their Windows 7 PCs fall apart.

Short answer: It's growing, but it's still a long way behind Windows 7.



5 Will encryption be banned?

Long answer: After the attacks in Paris, politicians in the UK, US and on the continent once again called to be able to access all digital messaging, demanding that Silicon Valley tech firms insert so-called backdoors into otherwise encrypted systems to give access if needed. This is all despite the fact that the Paris gunmen and bombers didn't use encryption to protect their messages and were, for the most part, already on government watch lists.

The government can't ban encryption outright, because it's a necessary protection for online banking and shopping, but it could demand backdoors in messaging systems. A version of that is even included in the IP Bill, though it doesn't specifically call for an encryption ban, instead saying companies may face an order to supply data and must be technically able to do so.

Weakening encryption is a long-running demand from governments, and one that's been made for more than a decade. It's true that it's easier to use encryption than it used to be, and that encrypted messaging systems make it easier for criminals and terrorists to stay secure, just as it does the rest of us. But any firm that pokes holes in its own systems at the demand of governments will leave its legitimate users at risk from criminals and, as soon as it's noticed by journalists, security researchers or anyone else, it will be headline news. Hopefully the authorities find a better way to get the information they need, but in the meantime you can expect this debate to continue.

Short answer: Hopefully not, but the government has wanted this for a long time.



7 Will VR and AR finally take off?

Long answer: There have been constant reports about virtual reality and augmented reality over the past few years, led by companies such as Oculus Rift and Magic Leap. However, few of us will have experienced such technologies.

That will likely change in 2016. VR is becoming cheaper and easier to use, with companies releasing smartphone-based models and developers making more gaming and entertainment content that actually uses the new technologies. On the AR front, Magic Leap is expected to unveil what it's working on in the new year. If you've tried

VR and AR tech already, you may not have been impressed, but this is the year such technologies will mature and move into the mainstream. Keep an eye on both as it promises to make for some intriguing gaming and entertainment experiences.

Short answer: We reckon 2016 is finally the year for VR and AR.





8 Will the EU remove geographical restrictions?

Long answer: Isn't it annoying when you travel abroad and can't access Netflix or BBC iPlayer? The European Commission agrees and, alongside other proposals, wants to knock down such digital geo-fences.

As we explained in our cover feature in Issue 385 (bit.ly/webuser385), the

move is part of the EU's aim to create a single digital market, with plans to roll out the new regulations by 2017, if they're approved. When the EU pushes such consumer-friendly ideas, it usually doesn't get much friction from

companies – it managed to cut roaming prices, after all, so making sure you can use streaming services you pay for in the UK while abroad in France doesn't seem much of a challenge. It's safe to expect digital firms to start offering the ability before the law passes, as mobile operators did with roaming prices.

Short answer: Yes, thankfully, and we should soon expect to see streaming services working across borders.



9 Is Flash finally dead?

Long answer: Flash is the web technology that just won't die, but we predict that 2016 will be the year when it finally kicks the bucket. The multimedia content player has fallen by the wayside on mobile platforms and, with the advent of HTML5, has been surpassed on desktop and laptop browsers, too.

That's good news for us, because security researchers and hackers continue to find vulnerabilities in the software. Flash ads and content also cause web pages to load slowly and drain the batteries of our mobile devices.

Now, even Flash's creator, Adobe, is ready to pull the plug on the plug-in, issuing an announcement encouraging "content creators to build with new web standards" instead of Flash. It's now down to developers to heed that call, and with so many better options, we expect they will.

Short answer:

Ding dong, it's finally dead.



10 Will Mozilla survive without Google cash?

Long answer: Firefox-creator Mozilla

used to get hundreds of millions of dollars in funding from Google, but that's now dried up. Its attempts to pull in cash by showing sponsored tiles on the browser screen have failed, and it's already abandoned its Firefox OS for mobiles. The open-source developer isn't pessimistic, saying it has grand plans for next year, and we eagerly await to see what those might be. It's unlikely that Mozilla will face complete closure, as it has other funders and hasn't yet resorted to begging for donations as Wikipedia does each year. We're not sure what Mozilla's future is, but we're hoping it's a bright one.

Short answer: Yes, we hope so. We still have a lot of time for Firefox.



● See Barry's column on page 74 to find out his tech predictions for 2016.



FIRST LOOK

Windows 10 Mobile

bit.ly/mobile387

Following months of user feedback, Windows 10 Mobile is finally available in its finished, official guise and it is arguably an even bigger deal than Windows 10 on the Desktop, thanks to the introduction of Universal apps, which run the same code on phones and PCs. This is something that's never been attempted before in the mobile space, and it could eventually turn the smartphone world on its head.

At first glance, you'd be forgiven for wondering what all the fuss is about. Windows 10 Mobile's lockscreen and homescreen look much the same as they did in Windows Phone 8.1, and that's a good thing. After all, Windows Phone's biggest strength has always

been its vertically scrolling, data-rich Live Tiles. However, it doesn't take much digging before the changes begin to emerge. For example, there's an Expand button in the Action Center notifications menu that shows all 16 of Windows 10's available shortcuts (instead of the usual four toggle buttons). There have also been a few tweaks made to the look of the homescreen: background wallpapers now fill the entire display and there are some new tile sizes to play around with.

There's so much to discuss about the new mobile operating system, that we can't possibly cover it all in a First Look review. Overall, however, we like the



simplicity of Windows 10 Mobile's interface, and Microsoft's achievement in extending the look and feel across both Desktop and mobile is a remarkable feat of design. The important question is whether the changes will be sufficiently exciting to encourage Android fans to make the switch.

Sadly, we think the answer is a resounding "No" – Windows 10 Mobile still lags far behind and has too little of the market share to oust its rivals anytime soon. However, for Windows Phone 8.1 fans everywhere there's just enough here to encourage you to hang on for one more generation.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Will teens be banned from using social media?

European regulators could soon prevent anyone under the age of 16 from using social media without parental consent. The changes were proposed as a last-minute amendment to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a draft directive that's currently being debated by EU lawmakers.

The amendment states that companies should only handle the personal information of those under 16 with the consent of "the holder of parental responsibility over the child". Effectively, this would require explicit permission from a parent or guardian before teenagers signed up for any social-media or internet service.

This proposal has raised strenuous objections from tech companies and from child-protection groups, and organisations including the UK's Family Online Safety Institute (www.fosi.org) have penned an open letter to Brussels.

This stated that "moving the requirement for parental consent from age 13 to age 16 would deprive young people of educational and social opportunities in a number of ways, yet would provide no more (and likely even less) protection". It also suggests that the changes will simply force children to lie about their age, rather than going to



their parents for permission. This, the letter said, "would make it far more difficult for online services to offer children age-appropriate guidance and tools to ensure a safe and privacy-protective experience online".

LIKELIHOOD RATING



Considering the number of under-13s who already use sites such as Facebook and Twitter, this proposal seems pointless and unworkable. We're all for opening a debate about what children should and shouldn't be able to see online, but by the age of 14 they're unlikely to listen to anyone – least of all EU legislators!



WEBOMETER



WE LIKE...



3D video games boost memory

Playing 3D games such as Super Mario 3D World boosts your memory by 12% over two weeks, according to researchers at the Journal of Neuroscience.



Twitter introduces Moments

Twitter's new Moments feature, which groups together important tweets about news and events, is designed to make the social network easier to use for new and casual users.



WE DON'T LIKE...



Self-driving cars 'must have driver'

Draft proposals from regulators in California insist that all self-driving cars must be operated by a fully licensed and specially trained driver, which means Google's self-driving car (which has neither a steering wheel or pedals) will not be available to consumers for the foreseeable future.



Smart toys could be hacked for spying

Following our lead news story last issue, British intelligence agencies could hack internet-connected children's toys in order to spy on suspects, according to Anthony Walker of techUK.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Kurv Guitar

bit.ly/kurv387 | From £120

Want to learn how to play the guitar, without the fuss of fiddling with strings? Then Kurv is a revolutionary 'stringless' digital guitar that helps you master the instrument using touch, motion and gestures. It consists of a soft pad that fits the shape of your hand and detects the pressure of your fingertips, allowing fine control and subtle manipulation of sound. You can play chords, strum the invisible strings and move up and down the virtual fretboard in time to more than 60 songs on the Kurv app. The team hopes to raise £33,050 by 23 January.





Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

SECURITY ALERT! | What's been bothering us this fortnight

Mobile banking apps at risk

McAfee Labs has revealed the biggest threats to security this year and into the next, claiming that mobile banking apps and macro and fileless malware are most prevalent. The company released the information in its November 2015 Threats Report, which covers the third quarter of 2015. The vice president of Intel Security's McAfee Labs said in a blog post: "The third quarter provides examples of old threats repackaged with social engineering, new fileless malware replacing rootkits, mobile app coding blunders, and the exploit of the weakest link in any ecosystem: you the user". Researchers at the lab explored mobile threats, saying poor practice from mobile app developers, such as disregarding back-end guidance from service providers, means user data is exposed to



services in the cloud. Mobile banking apps are particularly vulnerable, which is very worrying given the sensitive data such apps generate.

bit.ly/banking387

Ashley Madison users receive blackmail threats

Ashley Madison users have reportedly received blackmail threats in the post. According to IT security expert Graham Cluley, readers of his blog have received letters in the post demanding as much as \$4,000 to prevent their details on the hacked website being exposed to others. Cluley said, in this case, it was very likely that the blackmailers were "trying their luck, hoping that a small percentage of those targeted will pay up." Cluley added that he couldn't see what the blackmailers have to gain from going



through with their threats. "Because, if they tell people close to you then they are ruining any chances

that you will ever pay up. Think of it from their point of view. It's a dumb business model."

bit.ly/ashley387

Moonfruit websites taken offline after attack

Web host Moonfruit took thousands of business and personal websites offline after it was threatened by a cyber-attack, according to the BBC. On 10 December, the company said it had been affected by a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack - where a company's servers are bombarded with traffic so they don't have the capacity to serve genuine users - and that it was making its customers' websites unavailable for "up to 12 hours" to make infrastructure changes. In an email to its customers, Moonfruit later apologised for giving "short notice" that their websites would be offline.



bit.ly/moonfruit387

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Catalin Cosoi, Chief Security Strategist at Bitdefender (www.bitdefender.co.uk)



Bitdefender

Q What are the biggest security threats facing web users in 2016?

Jake Wyatt, Twitter

A The increase in arrests and takedowns in 2015 will drive cybercriminals

away from developing new strains of malware and instead toward ways of making money specific to aggressive adware. This means there will be looser boundaries between malware and adware.

Mobile malware will become more sophisticated. Malware used to target Windows is now becoming increasingly common on Android. So, while rootkits are now less common in Windows, they are likely to become standard on Android and iOS, because both platforms are becoming increasingly complex and popular.

New mobile malware that

works like a worm or a large mobile botnet is also likely to hit next year. These attacks might be driven by social engineering or by the exploitation of major vulnerabilities on unpatched platforms.

As the Internet of Things (IoT) becomes more popular, IoT devices will become more appealing to cybercriminals. The short development cycle of these devices and limits on

“ Rootkits are likely become standard on Android and iOS in 2016 ”

processing and battery power leave large holes in their security, and many IoT devices will be vulnerable to attacks in 2016.

Ransomware will spread beyond Windows and Android. Linux ransomware will become more refined and exploit known vulnerabilities in the operating system.

At Bitdefender, we advise users to regularly update their anti-virus software to fend off malware, adware and other threats. The speed of detection and response to this type of targeted attack is crucial for users to remain secure.

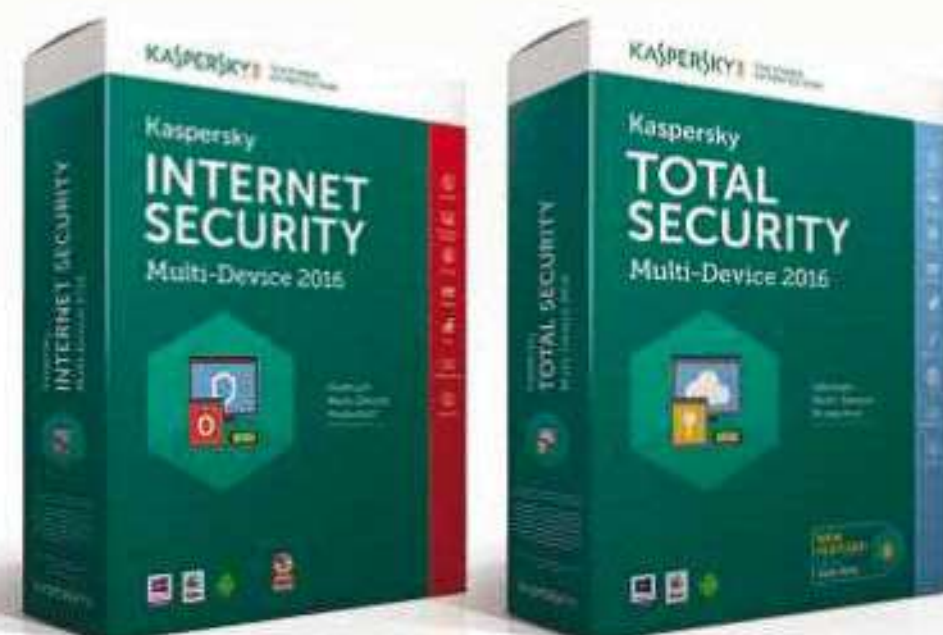


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WebUser

GET IT WHILE STOCKS LAST!

2014 BACK ISSUES DISC

The 2014 Back Issues Disc contains all 27 issues from last year, plus 6 free issues from January-March 2015!

- ★★★★★ Perfect, all the old mags in a simple-to-find order Peter Brown
- ★★★★★ Great stuff, now I can clear my stack of old mags without loss of info Colinz
- ★★★★★ Lots of interesting articles and tips Bill Daniels 1973
- ★★★★★ Easy to navigate around and clears so much shelf space JK

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*at time of press

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

TRANSPORT

Stagecoach

www.stagecoachbus.com

Negotiating bus routes can be confusing, but Stagecoach has put a host of useful journey planner tools on its revamped site, which should ensure a smoother trip for passengers. For starters, you can now save favourite routes and personalise your timetables. There are also maps that show nearby bus stops, networks and zones. Many older features remain – from the timetable finder to service updates and the ability to buy tickets online – but they are now simpler to use. Start and end points of a journey can be reversed with a single click and you can also get detailed information about your local area. It's all evidence of a site that's putting its customers first.

Our rating

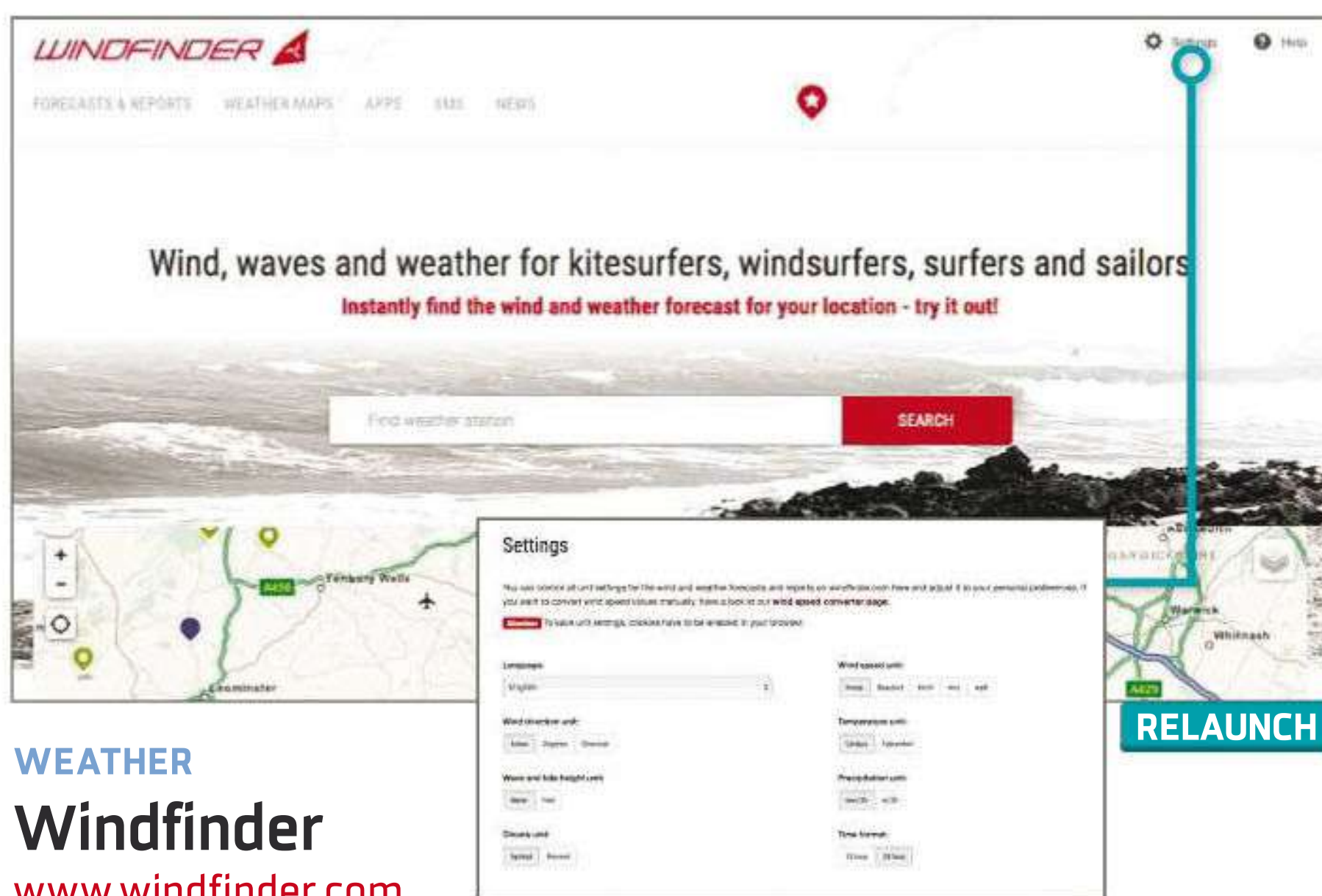
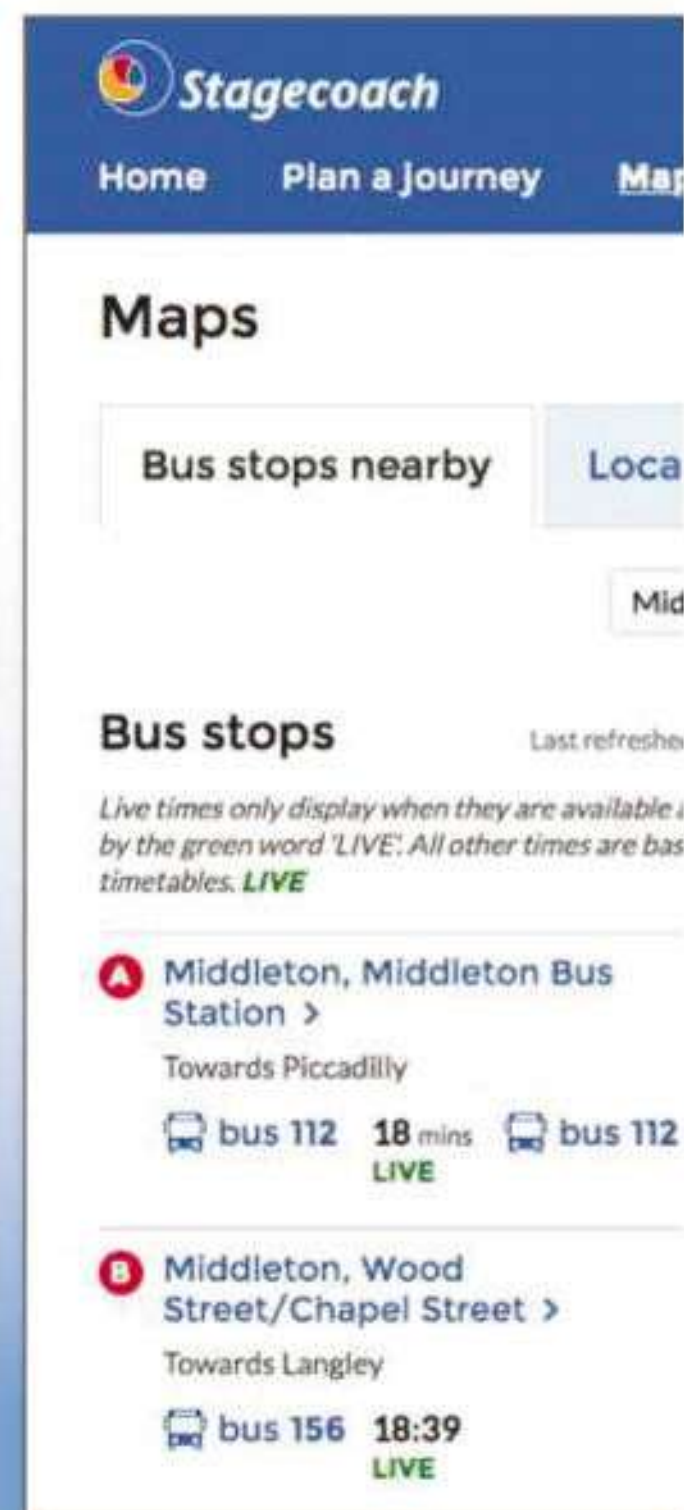
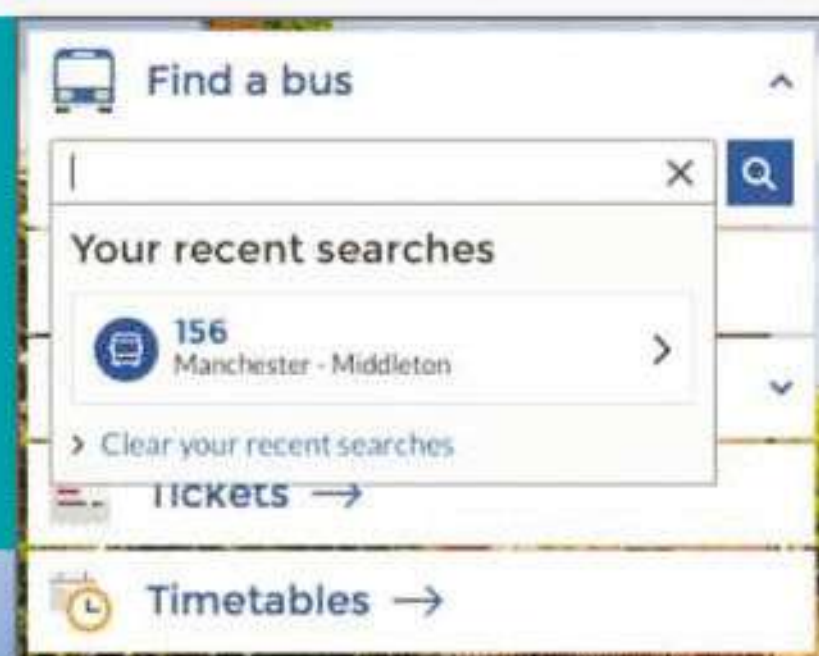


RELAUNCH



LOCAL
Select a location to see a photograph of the nearest city or landmark

ROUTES
Enter a bus number to discover when the next one is due and where it stops



WEATHER

Windfinder

www.windfinder.com

The UK is frequently battered by strong winds but for specific information about where to find them, the redesigned Windfinder site will blow you away. It's well suited to smartphone and tablet touchscreens, and lets you search for a nearby wind station or click a map strewn with clickable hotspots to find forecasts telling of severe weather warnings and the wind speed. We like the colour-coded breakdowns that detail wave direction and height over the course of a day, and the comprehensive settings page which can, for instance, let you select your preferred wind speed, temperature and direction units. It's a must for windsurfers and kite-flyers!

Our rating



RELAUNCH



SHOPPING

Little Bathtime Company

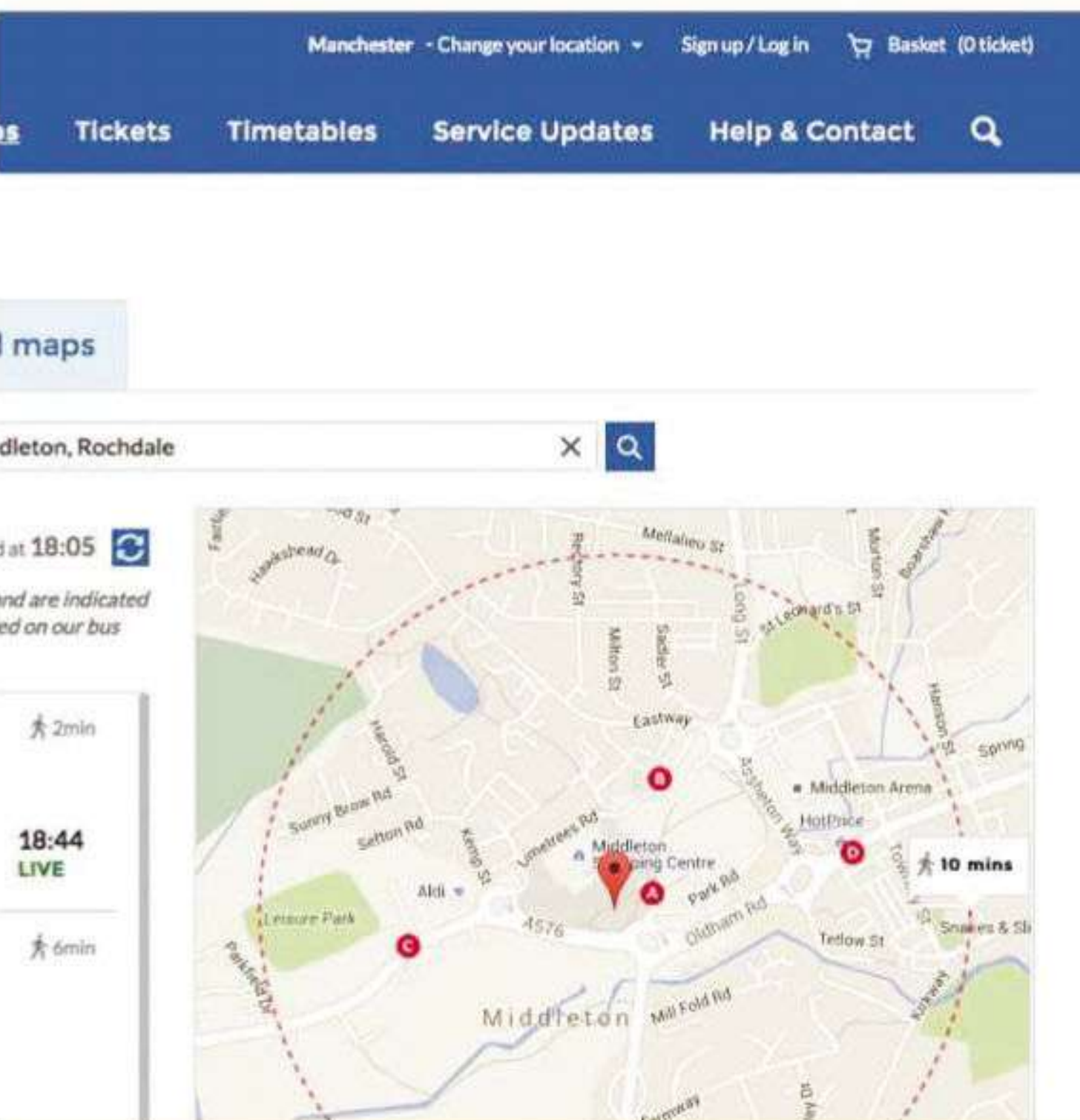
www.littlebathtimecompany.co.uk

There's been a boom in the number of natural and organic products formulated for sensitive skin, and Little Bathtime Company's select range of shampoo, bubble baths and body washes is aimed specifically at children. The enticing, brightly coloured website makes browsing and buying items child's play and goes to great lengths to explain the ingredients it uses, the company's delivery policy and the motivation of its founder – a former teacher and mum-of-three. We like the blog, though it would benefit from a more personal touch.

Our rating

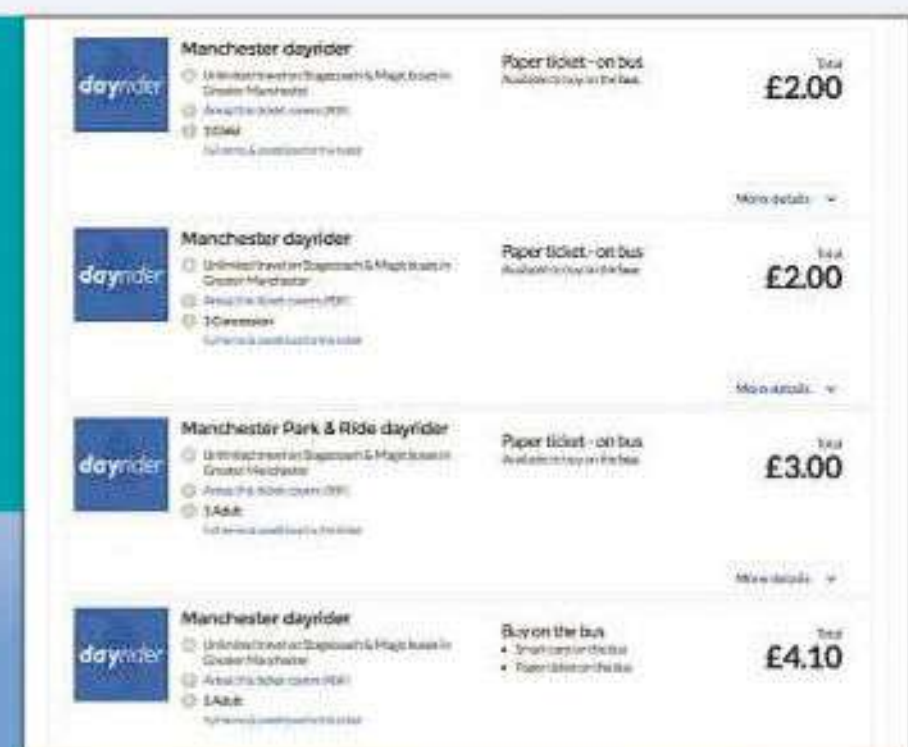


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



JOURNEYS
Input where you're going from and to, stating when you're leaving or arriving

TICKETS
There are detailed breakdowns of each available ticket and how you can buy one

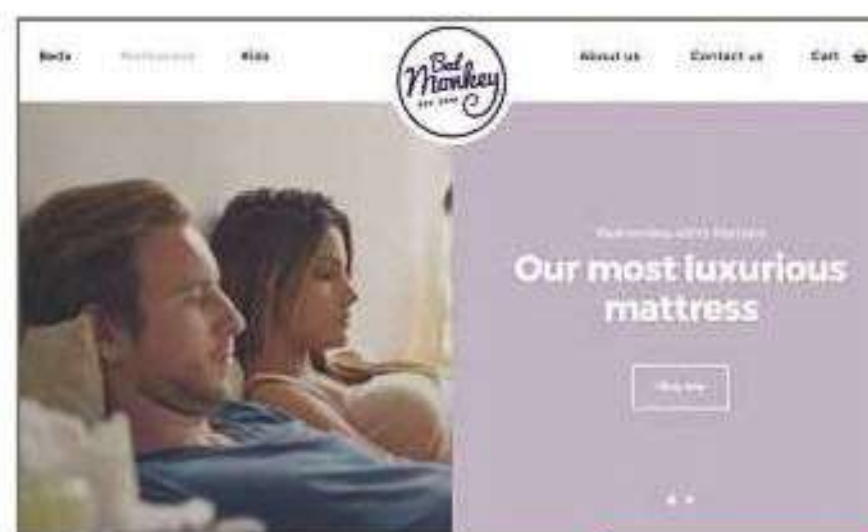


NEW

SCIENCE
Verily
verily.com

Verily is Alphabet's new name for the Google Life Sciences division, which looks at developing healthy technologies such as molecular-level wearables and smart contact lenses. Such activity should lend itself well to a dynamic, interactive website packed with diagrams and explanatory tidbits, but Verily mainly offers chunks of rather dull text and some uninspiring images on a single, scrolling page that does little to showcase the division's work. Its saving grace is a beautifully inspiring welcome video and numerous links to interesting stories posted about Verily elsewhere online.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

RETAIL
Bedmonkey
www.bedmonkey.com

The bed manufacturer Bedmonkey has woken up to the 21st Century with this bold and confident website that's both brand-aware and consumer-friendly. There are two shopping options – beds and mattresses – and a new Kids range is said to be swinging by soon. Each section features a series of large, professionally-shot images, together with an indication of prices. The product pages have options for size, colour and firmness that can be selected before adding to the cart, and there's also just enough explanatory text to read without making you yawn.

Our rating



NEW

DATING
Mouse Mingle
www.mousemingle.com

Created by a former engineer at Disneyland in California, this niche but friendly dating site hopes to create a few fairytale romances. Aimed at Disney devotees, the matchmaking process asks you to state your nearest theme park, the type of pass you hold, your favourite Disney character and your Star Wars nerd level. You can then use a cursor in the shape of a cartoon mouse's hand to scour profiles and wink, bookmark or send a message (the latter needs an upgraded account). Most of the users are from the US at the moment but, as the *Frozen* song says: love is an open door.

Our rating





RELAUNCH

FOOD

Scottish Shellfish

www.scottishshellfish.co.uk

The Scottish Shellfish Marketing Group has attempted to flex its “mussels” (sorry, couldn’t resist) with a refreshed site that now has greater appeal for consumers. Alongside a handful of recipes provided by Allrecipes, the site showcases the people who farm the shellfish from the sheltered sea lochs of the west coast of Scotland. There’s an excellent shareable infographic that emphasises sustainability and shows how mussels and oysters get from sea to plate. But with the produce only explained in a few lines and irregular news and blog updates, there may not be enough to keep reeling people in.

Our rating



NEW

CYCLING

Kinesis UK

www.kinesisbikes.co.uk

Kinesis UK has been selling aluminium and carbon-fibre bicycle frames, forks and components for just under 20 years, and seems to have fostered a good relationship with its customer base. The site’s homepage section is dedicated to images of Kinesis bikes that have been shared on social media and engages with visitors via an informative blog. The relaunch has coincided with the unveiling of five new bikes, and the site provides plenty of images, lots of spec info and collections of reviews allowing for an informed buying decision. It can feel a bit overwhelming, but it’s an absorbing browse if you know what you’re after.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

CULTURE

EUNIC UK

europe.org.uk

It may be a reflection of the times in which we live, but we find this portal for European culture in the UK even less welcoming than before its relaunch. The corporate, po-faced appearance eschews any sense of flair though, on the positive side, it is now much easier to discover events. Each entry on the homepage clearly displays a venue and dates, while the links to art, design, film, lifestyle, literature, talks, theatre, dance and music call up calendars that place the various events into a chronological order. The dates can be exported to your own calendar and we also enjoyed reading about EUNIC’s upcoming projects.

Our rating



NEW

TOURISM

Locate Isle of Man

www.locate.im

Locate.im has been created to promote the benefits of working and living on the Isle of Man. Its design gives a nod to Pinterest, mixing soundbites, social-media links and gorgeous images with comprehensive guides to finding places to live, along with details about the local schools, jobs, travel links and its favourable tax rates. There are some surprises – images of dogs and not a manx cat in sight – but it’s a packed hub with page upon page of things to read, all mixed up to give a true sense of variety. It also works well as a travel guide and a resource for people interested in finding out about all corners of Britain and its surrounding isles.

Our rating



NEW

GAMING

Crowd Cartel

early.crowdcartel.co.uk/access

It’s perhaps too early to get a real handle on the inner workings of Crowd Cartel, a collaborative buying platform aimed at gamers. The site is still in its beta form with some pages yet to be written, and it’s seeking sign-ups with the promise of providing an access URL. The idea is that products will be offered to gamers at a discounted price as long as a specific number of people form a cartel and show a willingness to buy. A bit of nosying around the web shows that those signing up to a cartel pay a non-refundable deposit of 10% which is handed to sellers if they drop out. Again, it’s early days, but there are some promising signs.

Our rating

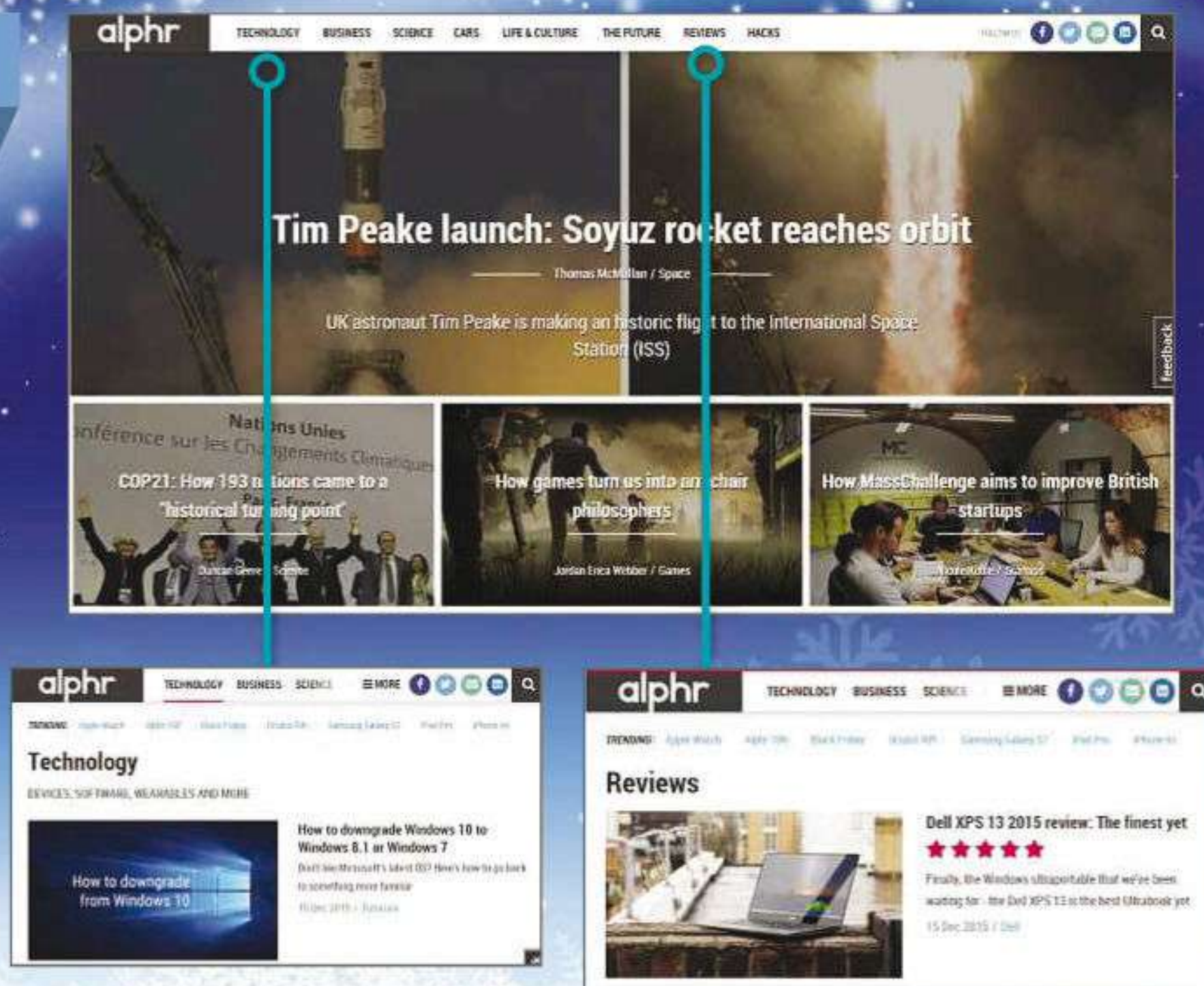


Site of the year

Alphr

www.alphr.com

Yes, we are slightly biased because it's our sister website, but no-one can deny that Alphr has gone from strength to strength since it launched in June. Offering an incisive, opinionated take on technology news, it's quickly become an essential bookmark for anyone who wants to go beyond the spin to find out what's happening in the world now and 20 years in the future. From hardware and car reviews to quirky articles with titles such as: 'Is this profound or are you just not that smart?', Alphr makes a refreshing change from traditional technology websites and we can't wait to see how it develops in 2016.



+ OUR PICK OF THE BEST WEBSITES OF 2014

Natural History Museum

www.nhm.ac.uk

The London home of dinosaurs, animals and wildlife photography now has a lavish website to match its venue, which lets you search more than 2.5 million of the museum's 80 million specimens. You can also get all the information you need to plan a visit.



NASA

www.nasa.gov

Previously a sprawling mess, we found NASA's relaunched site to be a "stellar improvement", with better organised content, a streamlined design that ditches all the irrelevant clutter and lots more stunning photos and videos of space.



Official Charts

www.officialcharts.com

We loved the vibrant relaunch of this database for the music charts. As well as finding out who's currently topping the hit parade, you can explore singles and albums charts dating back to 1952, browse the chart histories of your favourite artists and much more.



Citizens Advice

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Radically redesigned to make it much easier to browse, the online home of the CAB impressed us by putting tons of useful information at our fingertips, including what other users are searching for, and creating a friendly community feel.



All4

www.all4.com

Channel 4's revamped hub offers a smart, speedy means of watching programmes and films from across the broadcaster's six channels, both live and on-demand. It's a shame about the surfeit of ads but, on the plus side, all the content is free to watch.



The Week

www.theweek.co.uk

The Week's website underwent an amazing transformation to deliver its masses of constantly updated content in a much cleaner, easier-to-read format. Stories now have more room to breathe and the site makes better use of images and videos.



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

WordPress 4.4 Clifford launched

A new version of WordPress has been launched but you'll need to install it from your Dashboard, even if you have automatic updates switched on. Last issue, (bit.ly/webuser386) we looked at the new Twenty Sixteen default theme, but there are other new tools to explore. From now on, all images will be responsive, so they'll shrink and expand to fit the layout and screen you're viewing them on. There's also a new embedding tool, which lets you make more attractive card-like links to other websites, including other WordPress sites.

Names.co.uk offers new webmail

Web host Names.co.uk has revamped its webmail, with a new



mobile-friendly service you can use to check your mail when you're away from your computer. It's free for all Names.co.uk customers who have email attached to their account. The old service will carry on until 20 January, but you can change now by selecting the option at webmail.names.co.uk.

Deal of the Fortnight

Tsohost has sales for various domain names, including '.me', '.news', '.pro' and '.st'. Find out more at bit.ly/tso387.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Dr Andy Williams, author
and SEO expert
(ezseonews.com)



Q What's the single best thing I can do to improve my site's ranking?

Fred Richards, via email

A Backlinks are still very important for rankings. Unfortunately, Google doesn't approve of webmasters building links to their own websites, so you need to try to attract links from elsewhere. With that in mind, the best (and safest) thing you can do is to create the type of content that your visitors absolutely love and want to share with their friends. I call it "share-bait". Happy visitors will stay on your site for longer, and share-bait will attract social links and traffic, and possibly links from major players in your niche who want to enhance their own sites by sharing your stuff with their audience.



MINI WORKSHOP | Use images to help boost your position in search engines

Paint.net: www.getpaint.net |  10 mins |  Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10

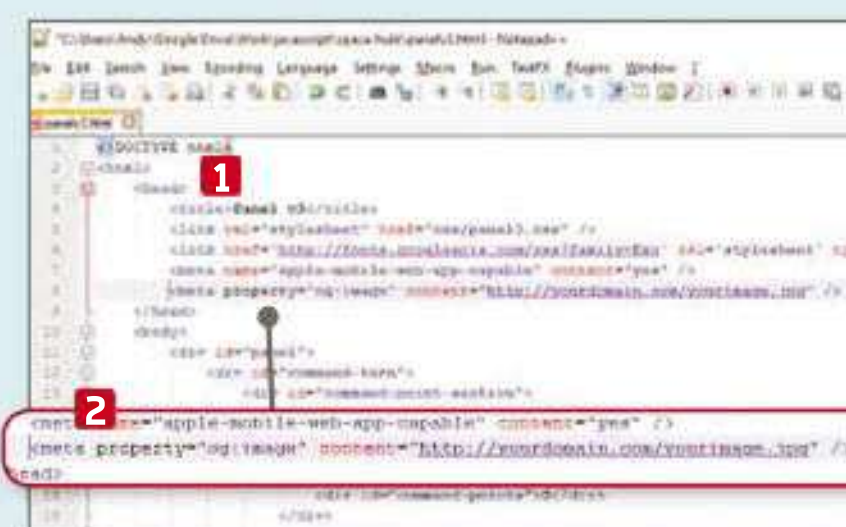
The images you use on your website can help improve your position in search results but there are a few tricks to getting this right. Here, we look at how to configure your images to get the best results



1 Make sure your images are the correct size for your site, both in resolution and file size. Paint.net can be used to resize images. **1** When you save them, you should compress the file. Get the file size as small as possible **2** using the slider **3** while keeping the image quality looking good in the preview pane.



2 When you insert the picture into your site, edit the image's tag to include alt="a description of the image" as a separate parameter. **1** Some tools let you fill this in when you upload the image. Don't repeat it in the title="" tag; alt is the one used for tool tips and audio descriptions, and is assumed to be more reliable.



3 Getting your pages shared will get them noticed. To force Facebook to use a particular image from your site by default, put this code into your site's <head> section: **1** <meta property="og:image" content="http://yourdomain.com/yourimage.jpg" />. **2** The 'og' stands for OpenGraph (see ogp.me for more information).



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Product Test

We test and compare the latest products



Devolo Home Control Starter Pack

Devolo has developed a range of home-control devices designed to interact with each other. **Andy Shaw** tests them out

When people imagine the home of the future, it usually includes inter-connected household gadgets that can be operated remotely. We've seen Wi-Fi lights and smart plugs before, along with a number of devices from niche companies such as Nest thermostats and smoke detectors. Now, Devolo has launched an impressive collection of home-automation devices and accessories under the umbrella of its new Home Control range.

To get you going, there's the Starter Pack. It consists of a main control unit (called the Central Unit, which also happens to be a HomePlug); a Door/Window Contact to

alert you when a door or window is open or closed; and a Smart Metering Plug that lets you control the power going to a single wall-powered device, such as a table lamp.

Setup

Setting up the Central Unit is simple – you just connect it to your router using the supplied Ethernet cable or, if you already have HomePlugs, you can simply plug it into the wall and pair it with your existing network. The Central Unit is best positioned in the

middle of your house. It uses Z-Wave technology (www.z-wave.com), which is a inter-operable standard that many manufacturers are using, so Devolo's devices should also be compatible with those from other companies. It's a wireless system that creates a mesh network, so while you need to be within 30 feet of the devices you want it to connect to, each separate unit should bridge and strengthen the network.

Once the Central Unit is connected, you can add a

new device by logging into your account at My Devolo (www.mydevolo.com). The site's web interface helps you set up your device and then control it. You can create rules for individual devices; link devices together, so one reacts to the changing status of another; and create groups and 'scenes' of devices, so you can trigger a simultaneous set of actions (such as flicking a switch to turn off several things or set a series of events that you only want to happen when you're going out).

We started by adding the Smart Metering Plug to a table lamp. It's relatively easy to set up as a timer switch – you simply choose an on and an off time. The Door/

“ Once you've exhausted the limits of the Starter Kit, you can add more devices ”

MORE DEVICES

Devol already has an impressive range of home-automation devices available. As well as the devices in the Starter Pack, you can currently buy:



Motion Sensor
£49.99



Smoke Detector
£49.99



Wall Switch
£39.99



Key-Fob Switch
£34.99



Room Thermostat
£79.99



Radiator Thermostat
£59.99

PRODUCT INFO

Devol Home Control Starter Pack

www.devol.com/uk
Price: £179.99

SPECIFICATIONS

- Starter pack contains Door/Window Contact, Central Unit and Smart Metering Plug
- Z-Wave compatible
- Central Unit also a powerline adapter with 1 x Ethernet port
- Uses web interface
- App available for iOS and Android
- Six other devices available in range

FOR

- ✓ Take control of your home, even when you're not there
- ✓ Find out what's happening while you're out
- ✓ High-quality devices with extra features

AGAINST

- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ Lots of trigger devices but only Smart Plug and Radiator Thermostats available to control other household objects

Window Contact comes in two parts and uses a magnetic field between the two elements to detect whether the door or window it's attached to is open or closed. You can either stick it to your door using the supplied double-sided tape, or take the back off and screw it in.

One drawback is that the website recommends you set up the system using a screen no smaller than 13 inches, so you may end up having to run between your PC and the devices while configuring them. It would have been more practical to let you use a tablet or phone, which can be carried with you.

Although the web interface is generally impressive, it quickly gets complex. Some of the drag-and-drop tools didn't work in Chrome or Firefox on our Windows 10 PC, and we had to revert to Safari on an iPad, where the

interface worked more consistently.

It's a more sophisticated system than the likes of IFTTT (www.ifttt.com) because it can include 'and' and 'or' controls, allowing an unrivalled level of programming options. However, it could do with more alerting choices – currently you can only message your own email address or push to a mobile device for free, and you can't add extra information to your messages. You can send texts but you have to pay for them.

Extra devices

Once you've exhausted the limits of the Starter Kit, you can add more devices. Devolo has a good range at launch (see the box, above) with more in the pipeline, and hasn't skimped on the features; many of the gadgets have extra functions that you can also use as triggers. For

example, the door and motion sensors also measure temperature and brightness, so you can use triggers on one device (such as detecting light levels using the Door Contact) to trigger another (turning on a light using the Smart Plug). Likewise, the Smart Plug can be controlled by the amount of watts it's using, so while you can operate it to a schedule, it can

also monitor energy usage.

However, it's not cheap to equip your home with all this fancy gadgetry. A smoke alarm that can send an email alert could be handy, as is the option of remotely controlling a light or two, but having all this linked to radiators and switches is a lot of effort and you'll need to think about whether it's worth the money.

OUR VERDICT



Devol's launch range of Home Control products is impressive, and includes devices for all sorts of different tasks. They're not cheap but the high quality of the individual components is promising.

The web interface is ambitious but we found it wasn't completely compatible with all

FEATURES	★★★★☆
PERFORMANCE	★★★★☆
EASE OF USE	★★★★☆
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★☆

browsers, including some key ones. However, we aren't convinced that Home Control is persuasive enough to become an essential part of our homes.

Google Pixel C

Want a laptop and a tablet? **Tom Morgan** looks at Google's latest hybrid device, which combines both in one unit



Google has always delegated the manufacture of its Nexus tablets to other companies, but this has changed with the Pixel C. Borrowing the name from the company's premium Chromebook Pixel, it's the first Google device to be designed and built entirely in-house and is a seriously good-looking tablet.

With an all-metal frame free of distracting logos and an unusual aspect ratio that's proportionally the same as an A4 piece of paper, the Pixel C is sleek yet understated. It's 7mm thick and weighs 520g, so it's not the slimmest or lightest device around, but the square edges leave plenty of room for the speaker grilles, USB C port, and power and volume buttons.

Keyboard and screen

The tablet is attractive enough as it is, but it comes into its

own when paired with the optional Bluetooth keyboard. Finished in the same metal as the tablet, the keyboard has a satisfyingly simple magnetic docking hinge that locks the Pixel C in place. It can be adjusted to any angle up to 90 degrees and is sturdy enough not to collapse when you tap the touchscreen.

Its 10.2in, 2,560 x 1,800 pixels-resolution screen is gorgeous. The aspect ratio

provides more room than an iPad when using it in portrait mode and the pixel density of 308ppi ensures you can't see individual pixels, so images and text look impressively sharp.

But however beautiful the Pixel C looks, Android isn't particularly well suited to landscape mode. Google has moved the Back and Home onscreen buttons to the bottom-left

corner of the screen and the Recents button to the bottom right, which

makes them easier to reach when holding the tablet in either orientation. But apps such as Instagram and Vine force the tablet into portrait mode, even when docked with the keyboard, and others such as Twitter don't expand to fill the screen. There's also no split screen or multi-tasking mode, which you get in the current Surface and iPad models.

Performance

The Pixel C's results in our Geekbench 3 performance benchmark tests (bit.ly/pixel387)

made it one of the fastest 10in tablets we've seen, only falling behind Sony's Xperia Z4 and Apple's iPads. It performed even better in our GFXBench GL Manhattan graphics tests (gfxbench.com), outperforming almost every Android tablet we've ever tested and even outpacing the iPad Pro.

Despite all this power, the Pixel C has excellent battery life, playing a looping video for 14 hours 33 minutes with the screen brightness set to 170cd/m². That makes it one of the longest-lasting Android tablets available today, and it provides a good four hours more use in one charge than most iPads, too.

PRODUCT INFO

Google Pixel C

bit.ly/pixel387

Price: £399 (plus £119 for keyboard)

SPECIFICATIONS

- Octa-core 1.9GHz Tegra X1 processor
- 3GB of memory
- 10.2in, 2,560 x 1,800 pixels-resolution screen
- 2-megapixels front camera
- 8-megapixels rear camera
- 32GB or 64GB storage
- 802.11ac Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth 4.0
- Android 6.0.1
- 242 x 179 x 7mm
- 520g

FOR

- ✓ Gorgeous screen
- ✓ Excellent performance

AGAINST

- ✗ Expensive
- ✗ No multitasking

OUR VERDICT



The Pixel C is a powerful, long-lasting and beautifully built tablet, with an equally well-designed keyboard dock. For occasional typing, single-task working and multimedia playback, it's an excellent device. But it's expensive, at £399 plus £119 for the keyboard.

You get excellent and

FEATURES	★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
EASE OF USE	★★★★★
VALUE FOR MONEY	★★★★★

unadulterated Android performance, but the lack of multi-window support leaves the laptop element falling a little short.



Web User's Best Buys

Web User and its sister titles test over 2,500 products every year

HARDWARE

BUDGET TABLET

Apple iPad Mini 2

£219 from www.apple.com/uk

Date tested: November 2015

The iPad Mini 2 has a superb, slim-but-solid design and a good-quality screen. Its performance keeps up with the latest tablets, and the battery life is also impressive.



KEY SPECS

7.9in screen ■ 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution ■ 1.3GHz Apple A7 processor ■ 16GB storage ■ 5-megapixel rear camera, 1.2-megapixel front camera ■ 802.11n dual-band Wi-Fi ■ iOS 9 ■ 200 x 135 x 7.5mm ■ 331g

WINDOWS 10 LAPTOP

Asus EeeBook X205TA

£201 from www.tesco.com

Date tested: October 2015



The Asus EeeBook X205TA is a netbook-style laptop with a great build quality and battery life. The price is terrific, too, but you might find it a bit small and cramped because it's been squeezed into such a tiny case.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3735F processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 32GB eMMC storage ■ 11.6in non-touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 2 x USB 2 ports ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 286 x 193 x 18mm ■ 980g ■ One-year collect and return

WINDOWS 10 PC

Chillblast Fusion Centurion

£699 from www.chillblast.com

Date tested: September 2015

The Chillblast Fusion Centurion provides the latest, most powerful components for a reasonable price. It was the fastest PC we tested and can be easily upgraded.



KEY SPECS

Quad-core 3.5GHz i5-6600K processor ■ 8GB of memory ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 120GB SSD ■ 1 x USB 3.1, 1 x USB 3 Type-C, 3 x USB 4, 4 x USB 2 ■ Gigabit Ethernet ■ 465 x 430 x 192mm ■ Three-years collect-and-return warranty inc 2-years parts

SMARTWATCH

LG Watch Urbane

£224 from www.amazon.co.uk

Date tested: November 2015



The LG Watch Urbane looks good, is simple to operate and has a great screen (if you stay out of direct sunlight). It doesn't have the full range of fitness tools, but it's ideal as a smartphone companion. It won't pair with an iPhone, though.

KEY SPECS

Android Wear 5.1 ■ Gorilla Glass 3 ■ 1.3in circular display ■ 320 x 320 pixels resolution ■ 512MB memory ■ 4GB storage ■ Bluetooth ■ 52 x 46 x 11mm ■ 67g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

MULTI-DEVICE CHARGER

Griffin PowerDock 5

£79.95 from www.johnlewis.com

Date tested: September 2015

Griffin's PowerDock 5 lets you charge a whole household's worth of mobile devices at one time, supplying plenty of power across all five of its USB ports. It doesn't matter whether you've got five tablets or five phones, they'll all sit nicely in this dock, although you'll need to make sure that the cables don't get tangled.



KEY SPECS

Supports five USB devices ■ 2.1A output on each port ■ 200 x 130 x 80mm ■ 340g

WI-FI EXTENDER

Netgear Nighthawk AC1900 Extender

£130 from www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk

Date tested: July 2015

The Netgear Nighthawk is pricey, but it's also fast, powerful and built to last. Its advanced tools will be compatible with future Wi-Fi standards and it provides excellent performance.



KEY SPECS

AC1900 Wi-Fi ■ Dual-band ■ 5 x Gigabit Ethernet ports ■ USB 3 ■ WPA and WPA2 security ■ DLNA server ■ 252 x 174 x 31mm ■ Two-year return-to-base warranty

All prices correct at time of review



NETWORK CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£150 from www.homemonitor.me

Date tested: June 2015

Although the HomeMonitor HD isn't the cheapest camera, it'll save you money in the long run if you want to save captured motion-detected footage online. It offers a unique online-storage option and supports a wide range of devices.



KEY SPECS

Apps for Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Roku ■ 1/4in CMOS sensor ■ Viewing angle: horizontal 80°, vertical 45°, diagonal 87° ■ 1,280 x 720 pixels resolution ■ 15fps frame rate ■ Ethernet and 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 85 x 85 x 30mm ■ 1150g

MULTIROOM SPEAKER

Sonos Play:1

£169 from www.currys.co.uk

Date tested: March 2015

The Sonos Play:1 offers impressive audio quality and comes with excellent software and great apps that provide seamless integration with music services. If you want a speaker to use as a starting point for a home entertainment system, the Play:1 comes highly recommended.



KEY SPECS

2 x speakers ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi, 1 x 10/100 Ethernet ■ Android and iOS apps ■ Compatible with UPnP and SMB servers ■ AAC, FLAC, MP3, OGG and WAV ■ 161 x 12 x 12mm ■ 1.8kg ■ One year return-to-base warranty

SSD

Samsung 850 Pro 256GB

£136.03 from www.kikatek.com

Date tested: February 2015

The Samsung 850 Pro is crammed with new technology that makes it faster and more durable than its competitors. You could buy a similarly sized SSD for much less, but in our tests the cheaper models weren't as fast and they don't come with the 850 Pro's generous 10-year warranty.



KEY SPECS

256GB (also available in 128GB, 512GB & 1TB) ■ 53p per GB ■ SATA III interface ■ 2.5in drive case ■ 10-year warranty ■ 100 x 70 x 7mm ■ 66g

WIRELESS ROUTER

D-Link DIR-868L

£65.97 from www.dabs.com

Date tested: December 2014

If you're willing to switch your wireless devices to the 5GHz network, the D-Link DIR-868L offers fast and reliable performance at a great price. It's simple to set up and provides a handy wizard to guide you through the process.



KEY SPECS

Dual-band 2.4GHz and 5GHz ■ 802.11b/g/n ■ 1,300Mbps theoretical maximum speed ■ 6 x internal antennas ■ 4 x 10/100/1000Mbps Ethernet ports ■ WPA and WPA2 encryption ■ 1 x USB 3 port ■ 217 x 123 x 102mm ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

KEYBOARD

Cherry MX-Board 3.0

£55 from www.kikatek.com

Date tested:

November 2014

The Cherry MX-Board 3.0 is a hard-wearing mechanical keyboard that's a pleasure to type on. It's quiet for a mechanical model but still makes more noise than a standard keyboard. It doesn't have a lot of features, but it's ideal if you're looking for a standard, good-quality keyboard.



KEY SPECS

104 keys ■ 1 x USB port ■ 1.8m detachable cable ■ 2 non-slip surfaces ■ 2 rubber caps for adjustable feet ■ 44.6 x 15.8 x 2.8cm ■ 0.83kg ■ Win-Key lock

NAS DRIVE

Asustor AS-202TE

£199.66 from

www.scan.co.uk

Date tested: September 2014

This NAS drive put in an excellent performance in our tests, transferring files over our network faster than any of the other devices we tested. It has an impressive range of tools, including an HDMI output for streaming to TV.



KEY SPECS

EXT4 file system ■ SATA3 hard drive ■ 2 x 3.5in bays ■ 1 x 10/100/1,000 Ethernet ■ 2 x USB 2 ports, 2 x USB 3 ports ■ 1 x HDMI (1.4a) ■ 1 x 3.5mm mini-jack ■ 230 x 164 x 108mm ■ 1.87kg ■ Two-year return-to-base warranty

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

WEB DESIGN

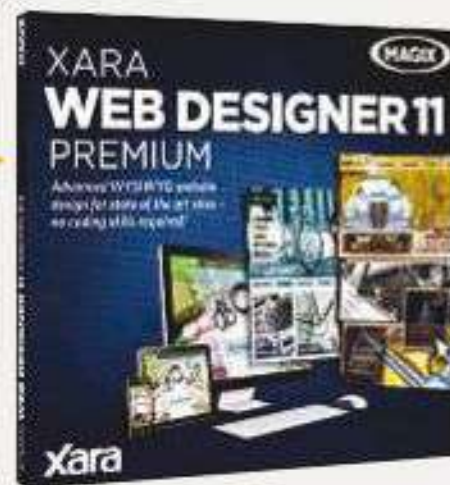
Xara Web Designer 11 Premium

£69.99 from www.xara.com
Date tested: November 2015

Xara Web Designer 11 is a great tool for anyone who wants a good-looking website without having to use HTML or CSS code. The interface is easy to use and the software includes all the tools you need to create flexible sites that change depending on the size of the screen.

KEY FEATURES

90+ templates ■ WYSIWYG design ■ Create responsive websites ■ Embed codes ■ Add HTML ■ Online editing ■ FTP uploader ■ Hosting (requires registration) ■ Browser preview (Chrome, Firefox, IE, Opera)



INTERNET SECURITY

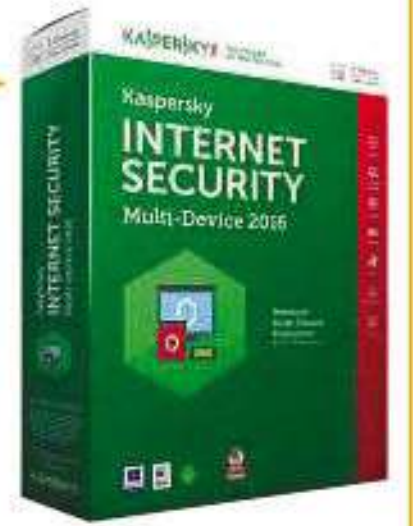
Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from bit.ly/kaspoffer2016
Date tested: June 2015

Kaspersky Internet Security performed near-perfectly throughout our tests last year, with only one unwanted program slipping through. Our sister title *Computeractive* is selling it at the reader-offer price of £19.99 (full price £39.99). Click the link above.

KEY FEATURES

Anti-virus and firewall tools ■ Protects online shopping and banking ■ Identity and privacy tools ■ Dangerous-website alerts ■ Advanced parental control ■ Licences for one, three and five PCs; for one or two years, or pay monthly ■ Multi-Device version ■ Compatible with Windows 10



BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

Free from bit.ly/syncback366
Date tested: March 2015

SyncBackFree is very capable software that gives you plenty of control over how it can be used. If you know what you need from your backups and you're prepared to spend some time configuring the options, SyncBackFree has everything you need.

KEY FEATURES

Synchronise: Copy files in both directions ■ Restore back-up files easily ■ Email logs ■ Schedule backups ■ Simple and Advanced mode ■ Runs on Windows 8, 7, Vista, and XP ■ Extensive Help documentation and support

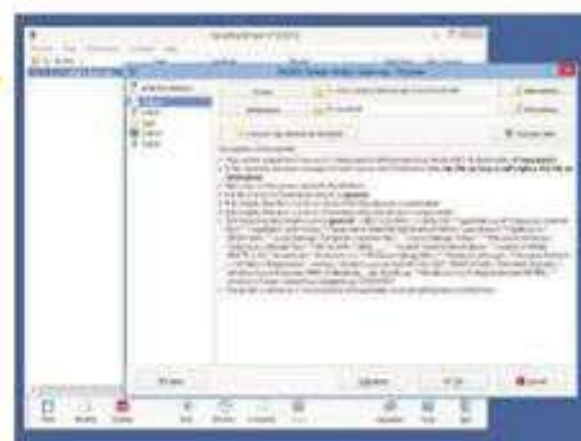


PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

£81.08 from www.adobe.com/uk
Date tested: December 2014

With its tidy interface and pop-out trays, Adobe Photoshop Elements provides everything an amateur photographer needs and helps you quickly find the right editing tools.

KEY FEATURES

Compatible with Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8+ (32- and 64-bit) ■ Bundled photo organiser ■ Content-aware edits ■ Guided edits ■ People-beautifier tools ■ RAW support



VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Elements 13

£81.08 from www.adobe.com/uk
Date tested: December 2014

Premiere Elements 13's superb interface makes its many features neat but accessible. You won't find better video-editing software for the price.

KEY FEATURES

Automatic editing ■ Export to multiple video formats ■ Burn to DVD and Blu-ray ■ Image stabiliser ■ Stop-motion capture ■ Motion tracking ■ Musical scores and sound effects ■ Upload to YouTube and Vimeo



ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

From free from drive.google.com
Date tested: August 2014

Google Drive is easy to use and has lots of free storage. The Windows software integrates with Explorer, so saving and syncing files is like keeping them in any other PC folder.

KEY FEATURES

15GB free storage ■ Web-based office software ■ Works with Windows XP, Vista, 7 and 8+ ■ Chrome browser add-on ■ Android and iOS apps ■ 100GB extra storage for £1.19 per month; 1TB for £5.97 per month; 10TB for £59.51 per month



Best Free Software

APP PLAYER

BlueStacks 2

www.bluestacks.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 or Mac OS X

File size: 284MB

The brilliant Android emulator BlueStacks lets you run Android apps directly on your PC or Mac. No more squinting at a game on your phone – now you can play all your favourite titles on a large screen and enjoy much better sound.

The program includes a camera app, browser, Instagram, Facebook, Google Photos, Android settings and much more. Adding a new app is just a matter of opening the Store and installing the item you want from there.

The old version of the software worked well enough, but it's now been significantly redesigned and the new BlueStacks 2 improves things massively by introducing true multitasking. Now, when you open an app, it appears in a tab at the top of the screen. You can open multiple apps and settings, and easily switch between them. So you can play a game in one tab, for example, while streaming videos in another and chatting to friends in a third.

The main screen in BlueStacks gives you the choice of discovering popular



apps being used by people near you or viewing more than 10 billion apps from across the world. Select this second option to see a map of apps being played in real time.

The new left-hand sidebar provides easy access to popular features,

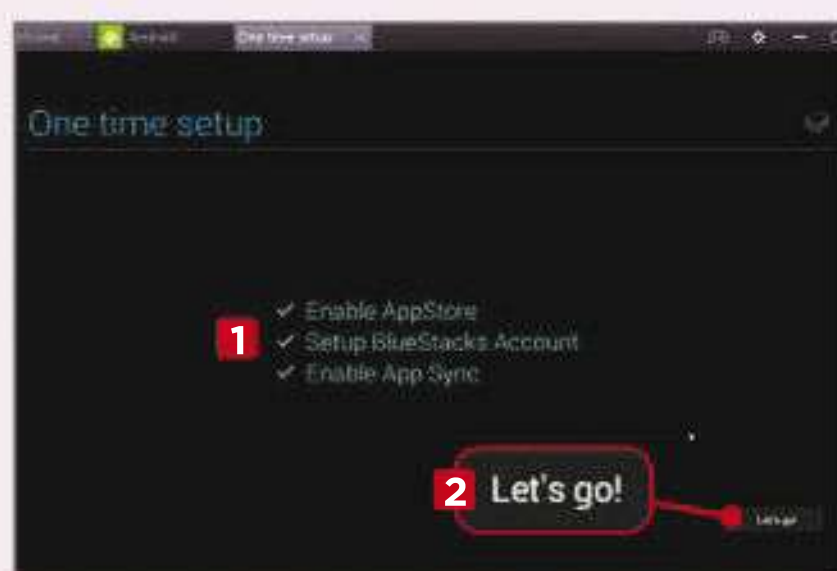
including setting your location, loading an APK (Android Application Package) file and resizing apps on your Desktop.

The new build of BlueStacks also doubles the amount of storage space on offer to 32GB

(16GB on internal storage and 16GB on an SD card). The only catch is that the free version may occasionally download sponsored apps automatically, so be warned – you can pay the annual subscription of \$24 (£16) to prevent this from happening.



MINI WORKSHOP | Run Android apps on your PC using BlueStacks 2



1 When you install the program, a one-time setup screen opens. Follow the wizard to activate the AppStore, set up a BlueStacks Account and enable App Sync. **1** If you sign in using an existing Google account, expect to receive several warning messages from Google regarding unrecognised activity. Click 'Let's go!' **2** when you're done.



2 The Google Play Store will open in a new tab. You can install the offered Angry Birds 2 game by clicking the Install button. **1** Scroll down to view and install similar apps, or apps that have been added by other users. If you want to install a particular app or game, click the Search button **2** and type in its name.



3 Click the Android tab **1** to browse and install trending apps, top apps, cards & casino, social & communication apps, audio & video and more. You can also launch any recently played apps. **2** Any app you open will appear in a new tab. **3** If you have several open, you can easily move between them.

This fortnight's top new software downloads to help you make the most of your PC, and they're all FREE



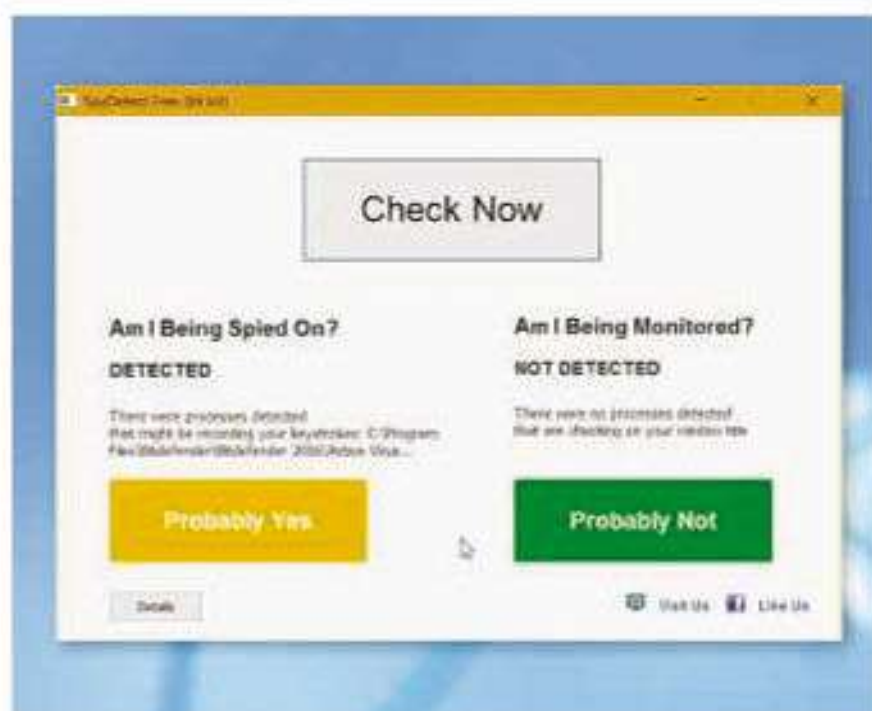
WINDOWS THEME PACK

Windows 10 Transformation Pack 6

bit.ly/win10transform387

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ **File size:** 138MB

If you haven't yet upgraded to Windows 10 (perhaps you think it's still too buggy to use as your daily operating system) but you like the look of the new OS, try installing this theme pack. It will make your existing version of Windows look and behave just like Windows 10, but without spying on you. The latest version adds some new wallpapers, makes changes to File Explorer and fixes various bugs.



PRIVACY TOOL

SpyDetect Free

bit.ly/spydetect387

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 1.2MB

This tool provides the answer to two simple questions – “Am I being spied on?” and “Am I being monitored?”. The first is answered immediately, while the other takes 60 seconds to produce a response. The program detects processes that might be recording your keystrokes, such as keyloggers, or spying on your online activities. There are separate 32- and 64-bit versions available to download.



ANTI-MALWARE TOOL

RogueKiller 11

bit.ly/roguekill387

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 23.9MB

RogueKiller helps you identify possible malware on your PC, including worms and rootkits. It checks running processes and the Registry, and can fix hijacks, overcome boot problems and identify suspicious entries in the Windows HOSTS file. The latest free version improves threat detection and removal, and fixes various problems, although you need a degree of technical knowledge to understand its findings.

New Windows Apps

Hear it first!

bit.ly/hearit387

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 9.6MB

If you're studying a foreign language, you can use this app to hear the pronunciation of any words and save them as MP3s. It offers 11 languages including Chinese, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.



Torrent Pinup

bit.ly/pinup387

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 11.2MB

You can use this basic BitTorrent client to download torrent files. It's lacking in advanced features and settings, but is very easy to master. The only irritant is that you'll be asked to rate the app.



Moodflow

bit.ly/moodflow387

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 19.5MB

Moodflow plays songs that complement your mood. Select how you're feeling from a list and the app will play matching tunes. You can skip songs, tag them and add them to your favourites.

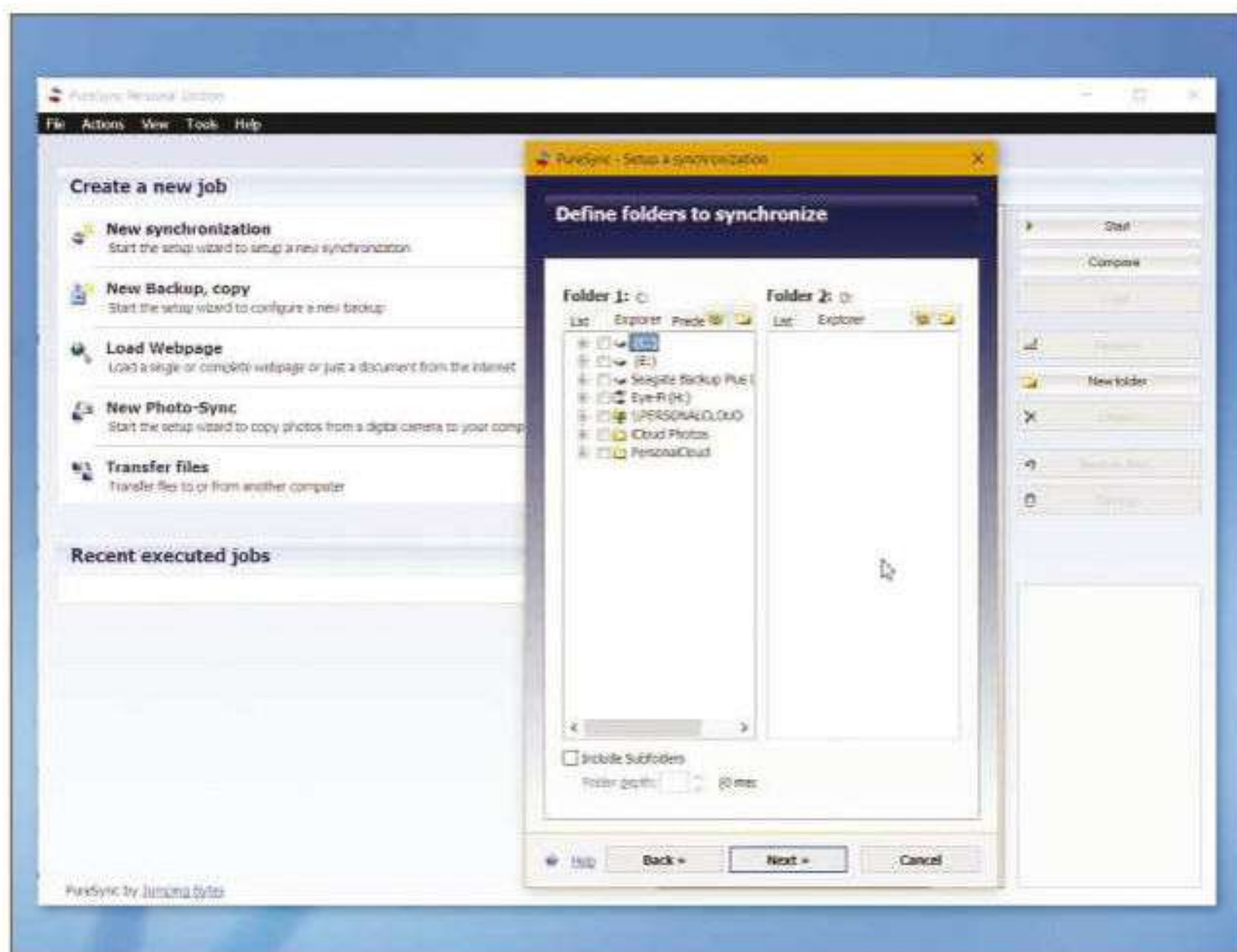
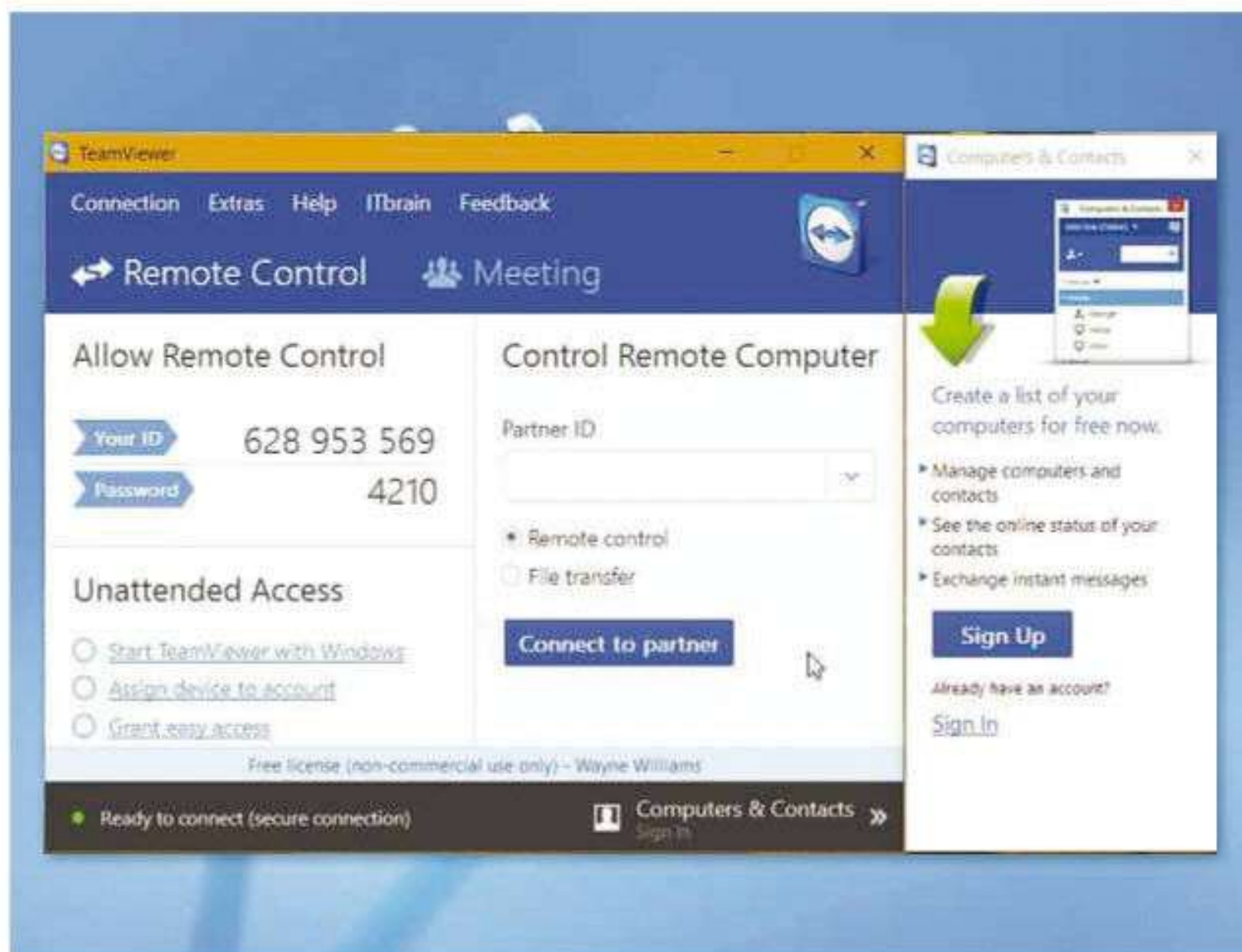




TeamViewer 11

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 9.2MB

The remote-control session interface has been redesigned to make it easier to use, and you can now remotely control unattended Android devices. The updated software is fully compatible with Windows 10, too.



PureSync 4

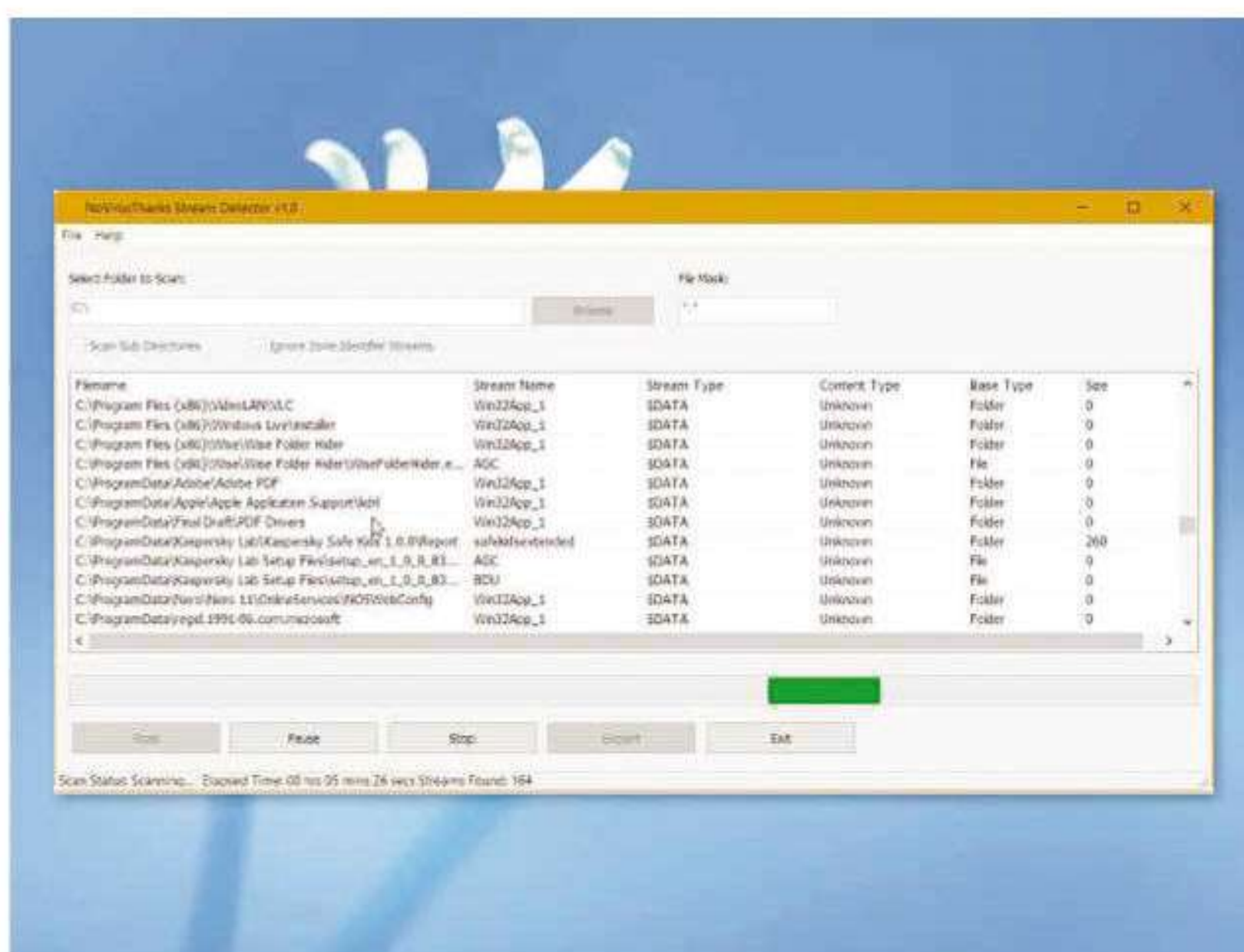
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 10.2MB

The latest version of PureSync adds an option to download web pages (a single page or an entire site) and fixes a previous problem with displaying on high-resolution screens. It can back up predefined folders for iPhone, iPad and iPod, too.

NoVirusThanks Stream Detector

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 1.3MB

Right-clicking a stream in ADS will let you search Google to find out what it relates to, and perform various actions. Most streams are harmless but, if you're not sure what a stream is for, it's best to leave it alone.





GAME Orchids to Dusk

bit.ly/orchids387

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10, Mac OS X, or Linux

File size: 46.7MB

In this short exploration game, you play an astronaut stranded on an alien planet. There are interesting oases dotted around the desert landscape but, with only a few minutes' worth of oxygen to keep you alive, you won't have time to visit many. There is a clever multi-player element to the game for you to figure out.

Don't install...

Daphne

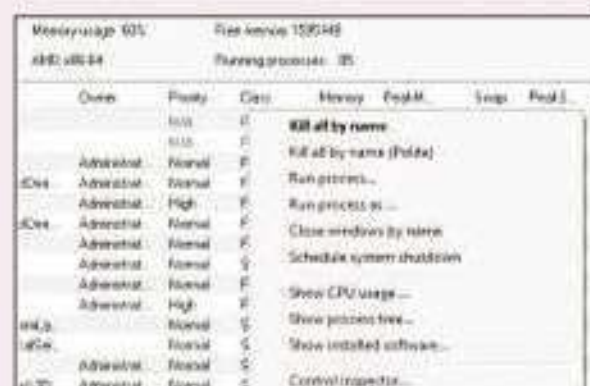
www.drk.com.ar/daphne.php

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

File size: 6.4MB

Daphne isn't a useless task manager, but it's pretty dated and basic, offering little more than the built-in Windows tool. Aside from its odd name and the clumsy English on its website, the most interesting thing about Daphne is the choice it offers between 'killing' a troublesome program and killing it 'politely', when you right-click its process.



...Install this instead

Process Explorer

bit.ly/process387

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 1.07MB

Process Explorer can tell you exactly which programs and processes are running on your PC, and provides much greater detail than the built-in Windows Task Manager. It can be used to identify and close any misbehaving programs and, if you're not sure what a running item is, you can double-click it to find out more. You can also sort the list of entries to make it easier to identify resource-hogging applications.

Process Explorer is also integrated with the online virus checker VirusTotal. Right-click an item to run it through more than 50 anti-malware engines for signs of infection.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



SYSTEM CLEANER WinUtilities Free 12.1

hi.ylcomputing.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 6.1MB

WinUtilities is an all-in-one system-cleaning suite offering a large collection of powerful tools. The latest version improves compatibility with Microsoft OneDrive on Windows 10; fixes an XML encoding bug on 64-bit Windows 7; and updates the program database.



SYSTEM TOOL Speccy 1.29

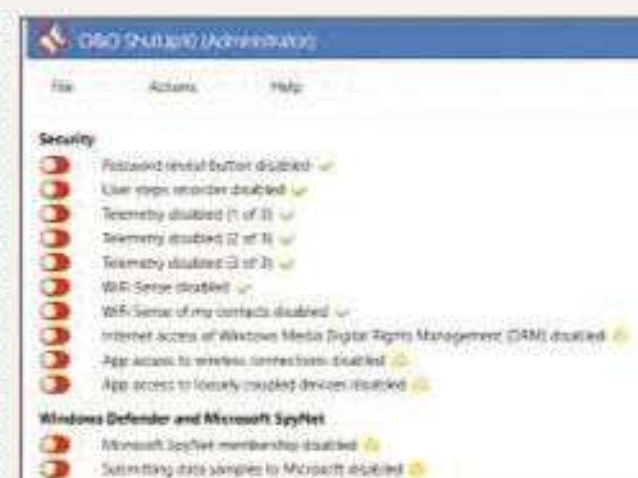
www.piriform.com/speccy

Min requirements: Windows

XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 4.9MB

This new release of the excellent system-information tool fixes a controversial problem that caused Windows 10 to automatically uninstall it. The updated Speccy also gains support for the latest Intel Skylake and Broadwell processors, and updates its hardware-detection algorithm.



PRIVACY TOOL O&O ShutUp10 v1.2.1353

bit.ly/shutup10-387

Min requirements: Windows

XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 198KB

The portable O&O ShutUp10 makes all Windows 10's privacy settings available on a single screen so you can easily tweak them. This update removes Skype from the app's settings, fixes several minor issues and allows settings be correctly exported in user mode.



DISC-AUTHORING SOFTWARE BurnAware Free 8.7

www.burnaware.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 7.6MB

BurnAware Free can write to all types of optical disc, including Blu-ray, and make and burn image files. The new version lets you select read speed in the Copy and Recovery tools; improves the date and time setting; and enhances disc reading and copying. ■

GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST subscribe to Web User at subscribe.webuser.co.uk

Best New Browser Tools



CHROME

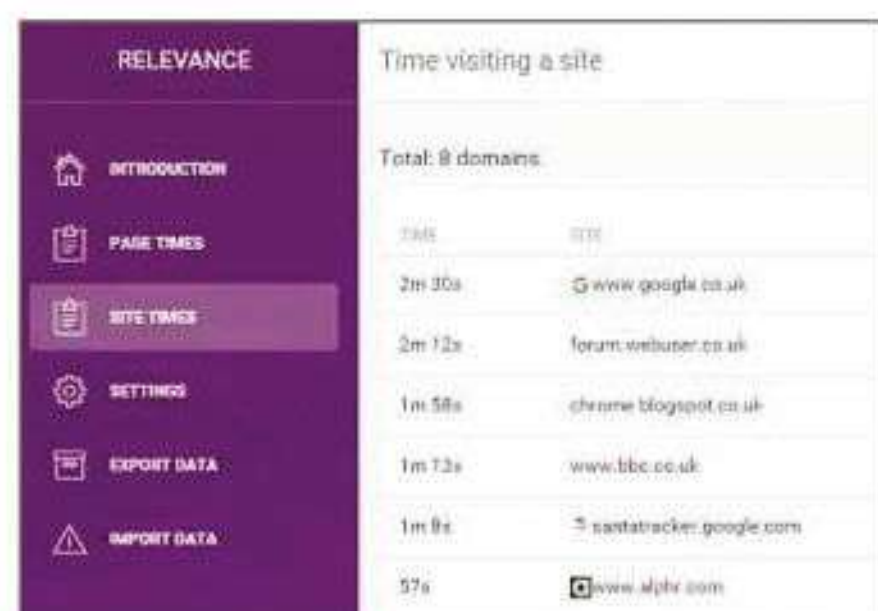
View Shutterstock photos on new tabs

Following our excitement last issue over Delight (bit.ly/delight386), which displays time-lapse videos on your New Tab page, we've now discovered a more traditional but no less attractive extension called Shutterstock Tab (bit.ly/shutter387). This shows you stunning images from the stock-photo site Shutterstock (www.shutterstock.com) every time you open a new tab, along with the time and date, a five-day weather forecast and shortcuts to your most visited websites. We particularly like the way the extension greets you with a cheery 'Good morning!' and 'Good evening!', and lets you click through to Shutterstock to learn more about a photo and buy a high-resolution version. You can show or hide elements, and switch from a 24-hour to 12-hour clock through the add-on's settings, and search Shutterstock (which we use for many illustrations in this magazine) for more images.



Rearrange tabs based on what you read most

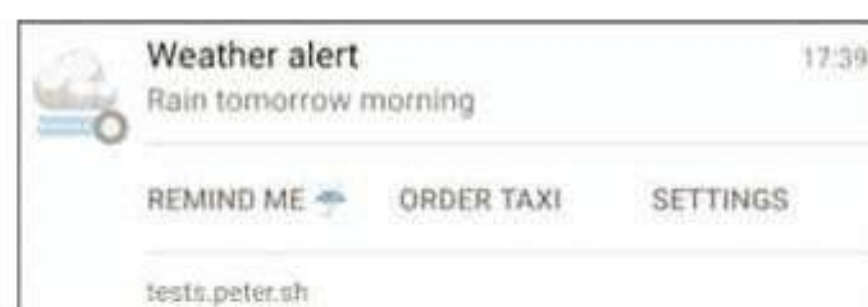
Having lots of tabs open can mean you end up clicking lots of irrelevant pages to return to the one you're interested in. Save yourself time and finger strain by installing Relevance - Smart Tab Organizer (bit.ly/relev387), which arranges your tabs according to how long you've spent viewing that page, and others on the same domain. When you click its toolbar button, your most-read (and, therefore, most important tabs) are moved to the left-hand side of your browser, while those that you've barely glanced at are shunted to the right. As you open tabs, the add-on learns what's important to you, so that pages from your favourite websites always appear first. You can also see a list of the pages and sites you've spent most time looking at, and when you last visited them.



If you're worried by the idea of a third party knowing what you've been looking at and for how long, be reassured that all the data gathered by Relevance is stored locally in your browser.

Use custom notifications in Chrome

Ever since Chrome 42 was released in April, websites have been able (with your permission) to display 'push notifications' on your Desktop. These work in the same way as on your phone or tablet, delivering alerts from sites including Facebook, eBay and Pinterest no matter where you are on the web.



This feature has been enhanced in the latest version of the browser - Chrome 48 - so that web developers can customise the notifications with useful, related options. For example, if you receive a weather alert for rain tomorrow, you can click a button to order a taxi or create a Calendar reminder to take an umbrella. According to Google's Chromium Blog (bit.ly/chromium387), the idea is to let users "build deeper relationships with the

sites they love". If you decide you'd rather not pursue the affair, simply turn off the notifications.

Block spoilers for the new Star Wars film

Say, did you like that bit in *The Force Awakens* when... No, we're not going to ruin the new Star Wars movie for you, but plenty of people will, which is why it's worth installing the Star Wars Spoiler Blocker (bit.ly/starwars387) until you've seen the film. This add-on automatically blocks and conceals a page if it detects discussion about *The Force Awakens* - which currently means about half the web! If the temptation to know what happens to Han, Chewie and the rest of the characters grows too much, just click Proceed Anyway to skip the warning and be suitably spoiled.



This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera and more

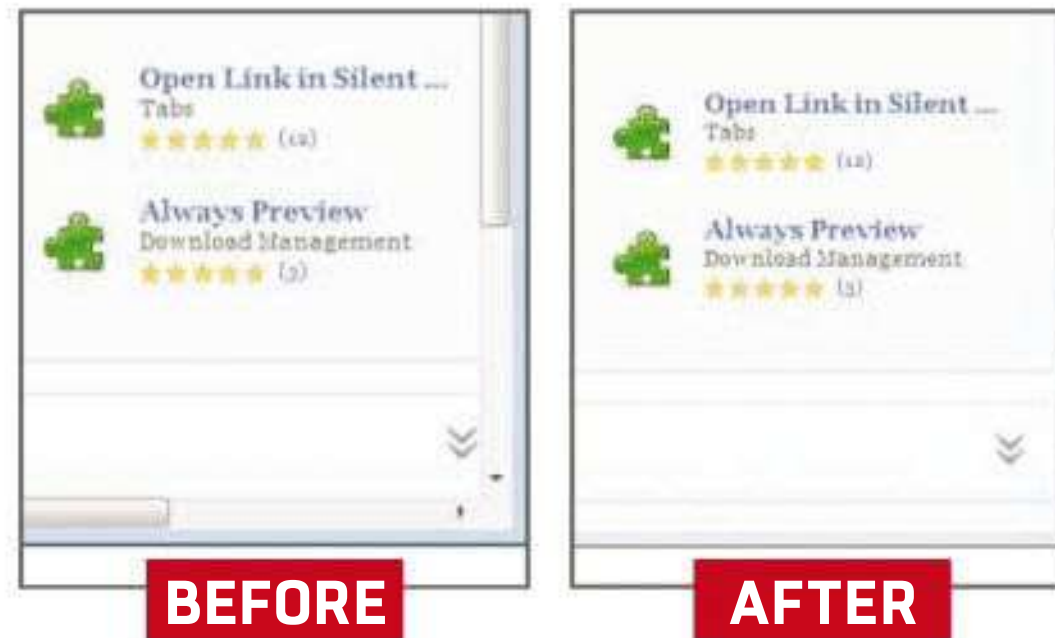


FIREFOX

Hide scroll bars until you need them

Scroll bars are essential for navigating the web but they also obscure the sides and bottom of the page. To maximise your screen space, install Scroll Bar Show/Hide (bit.ly/scroll387), which makes vertical and horizontal scroll bars disappear until you need them. When you want to scroll up or down the page, just

move your mouse cursor to the side of your browser and the bars instantly reappear. You can even make scroll bars within a web page vanish by pressing Ctrl+Shift+F1. The add-on works very smoothly and, after a while, you'll wonder why you ever put up with scroll bars blocking your view!



Turn Tracking Protection on and off

Firefox 42 introduced a welcome new feature called Tracking Protection, which prevents websites from leaking your browsing activity to other companies. The trouble is that if you want to use the feature outside of Private Browsing mode, you need to go into 'about:config', agree to be careful with dragons (or something) and change the value for 'privacy.trackingprotection.enabled' to 'true', which is frankly a hassle we can do without. Fortunately, there is a simple solution in the form of Enable Tracking Protection (bit.ly/tracking387), which activates the feature automatically so you don't have to fiddle around with 'about:config'. When you visit a site containing trackers, you'll see a shield icon in your address bar to show that Firefox has blocked tracking attempts. If you find that Tracking Protection stops some websites loading properly, click the shield icon and choose to 'Disable protection for this site'.



Measure how long you spend online

If you're worried that you spend too much time browsing the web – we do, but we get paid for it! – you need an add-on called Mind the Time (bit.ly/mind387). It places a sand-timer ticker on your toolbar that tells you how long you've been viewing the current site or – if you prefer – how many minutes you've spent online today (even if you've closed and reopened your browser). You can have the



add-on pause the timer after a minute of inactivity, so it doesn't count when you're not browsing, and display reminders when you've been on the web for a specific length of time. Mind the Time also provides a summary of your online activity for the past 70 days, including weekly and monthly breakdowns. No times or websites are logged for private browsing windows, and the data is deleted automatically after 10 weeks. It's eye-opening stuff for internet addicts.

OTHER BROWSERS

Find out which WordPress version a site uses

Millions of websites have been designed using WordPress but, because it's such a versatile tool, this may not be apparent. Unless, that is, you install the new Opera add-on Check WordPress Version (bit.ly/wordpress387), which not only confirms

when a site is powered by WordPress, but reveals the exact version it's running. This is interesting

for any budding web designers who come across an attractive website and want to replicate it. Just click the WordPress icon on your toolbar to view the version – we've discovered that Web User forum member Jedi uses WordPress 4.3.1 on his excellent site Mount Everest The British Story (www.everest1953.co.uk).



Silence noisy tabs in Vivaldi

Considering how long it took Chrome and Firefox to introduce the option to mute tabs with a single click, we're delighted that our favourite new browser Vivaldi (vivaldi.com) already lets you do this – and it's only at version 1.0.340.7. As with other browsers, when you want to silence a noisy tab, simply click the speaker icon to cut the sound, then click it again to bring it back. The latest Vivaldi update also adds support for Netflix, which the browser previously had some trouble streaming.



Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

PHOTOS

Storehouse

bit.ly/storehouse387

Min requirements: iOS 8

Size: 26.6MB

If you're wondering what to do with the hundreds of photos you've taken over the festive period, look no further.

Storehouse lets you turn your snaps into beautiful collages and albums that can be easily shared with your friends and family.

You need to set up an account before you can use the app, but it's totally free and the simple, user-friendly interface makes creating and sharing your own 'story' very easy.

First, you're invited to select the images you want to use from your camera roll (or Instagram, Dropbox and Flickr). The app then imports your images and automatically arranges them on the page. You can shuffle this layout by shaking your iPad, but Storehouse also gives you the option to design it manually by dragging and dropping the photos to new positions

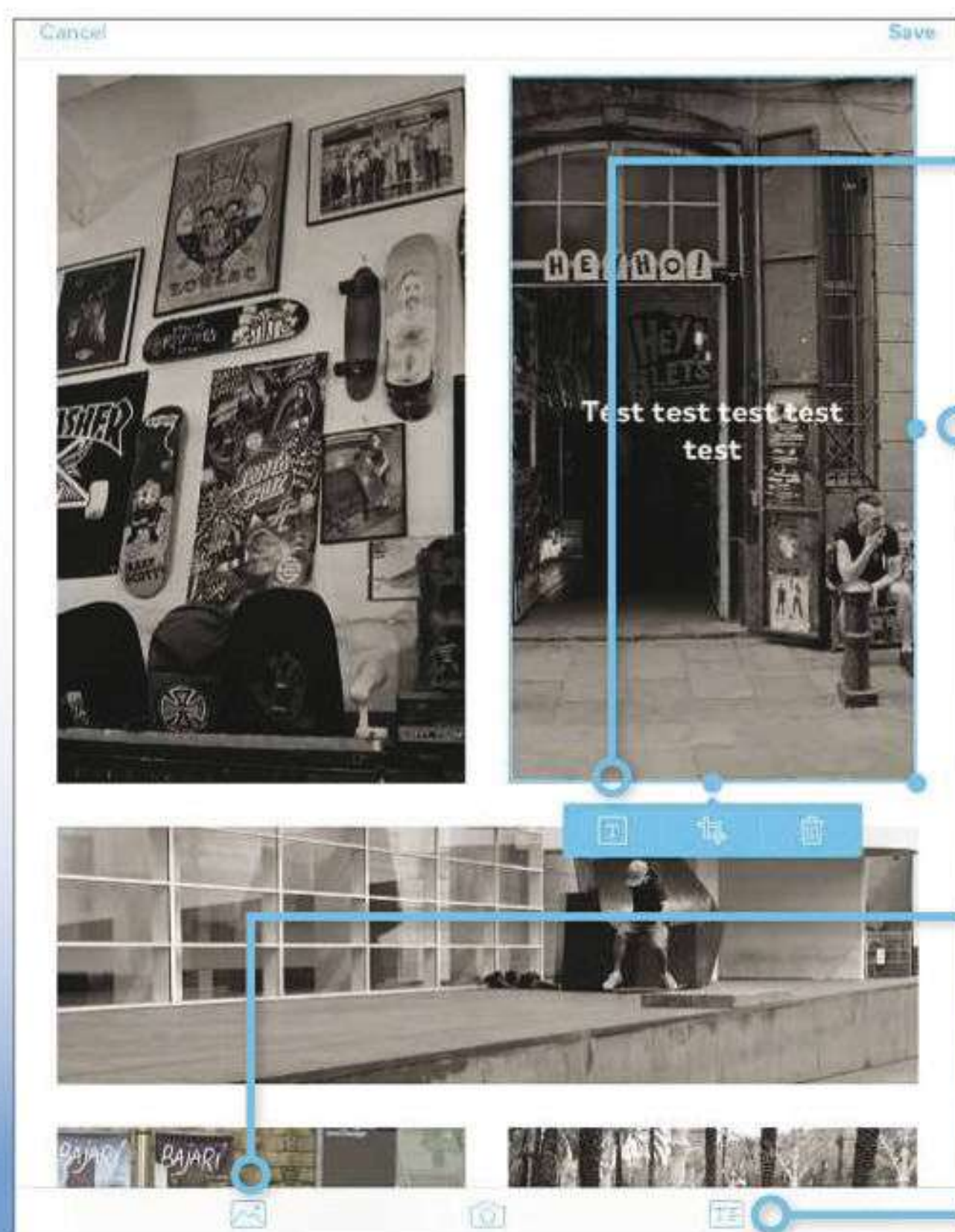
UPDATED

and resizing or cropping them using its intuitive touch controls. You can add and remove images as you please and input titles and text overlays, too.

Once you're happy, tapping Save brings up the app's share options, which include copying a web link, or sending it via message, email or social media. Your friends and family can open your story in any browser using the link, but the photos remain private until you share it. We particularly liked Storehouse's Spaces feature, which allows you and your friends who also use the app to share stories privately with one another.



Our rating



OVERLAY

Add an overlay caption to your image

RESIZE

Change the size and shape of a thumbnail using its handles

CAMERA ROLL

Add photos from your camera roll, albums or Flickr

TEXT

Add a text box using Normal, Header or Quote formatting

This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android, iOS and Windows phones and tablets, and smart TVs

FOOD & DRINK

Ginventory

bit.ly/gininventory387

Min requirements:

iOS 8

Size: 3.6MB

Ginventory helps you serve the perfect gin and tonic by suggesting the best tonics and garnishes to use with more than 1,100 gins. The app is very straightforward to use: simply search for the gin, tonic or garnish you'd like to use and it lists the best ingredients to accompany it. We love its simplicity, but Ginventory could be improved by supplementary information about the gins (including a description and details such as alcohol content) and images of the bottles or their labels. A list of G&Ts that can be made with the most readily available ingredients would also be useful.



Our rating



SOCIAL

LinkedIn

bit.ly/linkedinapp387

Min requirements:

Android (varies with device), iOS 8

Size: Varies with device

LinkedIn has given its iOS and Android apps a major facelift. All the key features from previous versions can now be found via the five tabs labelled Home, Me, Messaging, My Network and Search. The Home screen contains all the important news and information shared by your connections (and gives you full control over which posts you see), while Messaging replaces the email-style conversations of old with a simpler, lightweight interface. Early reviews from users indicate that there are a few teething issues with the new interface, so we hope these are resolved quickly!



Our rating



EDUCATION

Arts & Culture

bit.ly/artsculture387

Min requirements:

Android 4.4

Size: 52k

Google's new Arts & Culture app lets you explore artworks and artefacts from more than 850 museums and archives around the world. When you first launch the app, you can use its Art, History and Wonders sections to browse a range of subjects including artists, mediums, historical figures, events and places. There's so much on offer, however, that you'll easily feel overwhelmed. We really like the app's Zoom Views feature, which lets you view objects in extraordinary detail, and Museum Views, which offers virtual tours of hundreds of museums, heritage sites and landmarks.



Our rating



SOCIAL

Yahoo Messenger

bit.ly/yahoo387

Min requirements:

Android 4.1, iOS 8

Size: Varies with device

Yahoo has introduced a new version of its messaging app, Yahoo Messenger, to rival the likes of Google Hangouts, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Once installed, the app takes only a few moments to set up and uses both your Yahoo email address and mobile number so that people can contact you without any fuss. You can start individual and group chats with Yahoo Messenger and it also lets you send animated GIFs and high-resolution images. Its standout feature, however, is the option to un-send messages or photos whenever you like. You can also 'Like' messages and photos as if you're using a social network and the service can be accessed from the web by visiting messenger.yahoo.com. Unfortunately, it lacks the option to make voice calls and there's no support for sending video files.



Our rating



GET THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Our new updated Android MagBook is packed with 148 pages of apps, workshops and advice to unlock the full potential of your tablet and phone.



Discover how to:

- Master new tools in Lollipop and Marshmallow
- Stop apps leaking your personal data
- Record anything on your phone and tablet
- Prevent updates from wrecking your device
- Remove hidden junk so it never comes back
- Switch from iOS without losing data

Order it now from Amazon at

bit.ly/defguidetoandroid



KEYBOARD

Swiftkey Symbols

bit.ly/symbols387

Min requirements: Android 4.4

Size: Varies with device

Swiftkey Symbols is an 'assistive communication' app that's designed to help individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (and other disabilities that affect communication) interact with their carers. Like the original Swiftkey app, Symbols uses previous behaviour to predict the symbols you're most likely to use next, which makes communication easier and faster. The app also offers audio playback, so you can hear your sentences read aloud. Symbols are sorted into categories including 'Sentence builders', Feelings, People, Day & Time and Places, and for each one you can tap 'Add new' to create new symbols from your own images. It's still in beta but could become a groundbreaking communication tool.



Our rating



AD BLOCKER

Focus by Firefox

bit.ly/focus387

Min requirements: iOS 9

Size: 2.9MB

Focus by Firefox is a new content blocker that, rather oddly, is built for the default iOS browser, Safari. The app claims to improve the privacy and performance of your mobile browsing by blocking trackers. To enable it, you have to open Settings, Safari and Content Blockers, then flick the appropriate switch. From Focus, you can then choose the combination of ad, analytics, and social trackers (all enabled by default) that you'd like to block. There's also an option to disable other content trackers (with the caveat that this can break some videos and web pages). The app's only 'performance' option, blocking web fonts, must be activated manually.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

PRODUCTIVITY

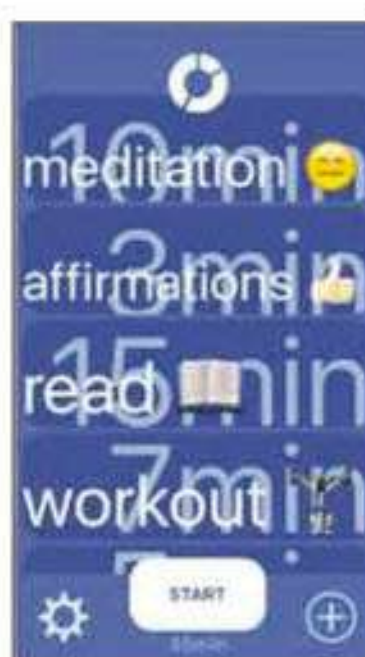
Morning Rituals

bit.ly/morning387

Min requirements: iOS 9

Size: 4.9MB **Price:** £2.29

Morning Rituals aims to make your mornings as productive and focused as possible by helping you build a working routine and track your daily habits. Once you've paid the one-off fee of £2.29, it's free to use.



PRODUCTIVITY

Pintasking

bit.ly/pintasking387

Min requirements: Android 4.1

Size: 3.1 MB

Price: Free (with in-app purchases)

Pintasking helps you to multitask by letting you access your favourite apps and documents from any screen. It's free to download but if you want to pin more than two items, you have to pay £2.99 to unlock the Pro version.



EMAIL

Unibox

bit.ly/uniboxemail387

Min requirements: iOS 8

Size: 29.2MB **Price:** Free (with in-app purchases)



This excellent email client tidies up your inbox by organising all your correspondence by person. It's free to download but you'll need to pay for the Pro version (£3.99) if you want to unlock multiple email accounts and custom signatures.

TOOL

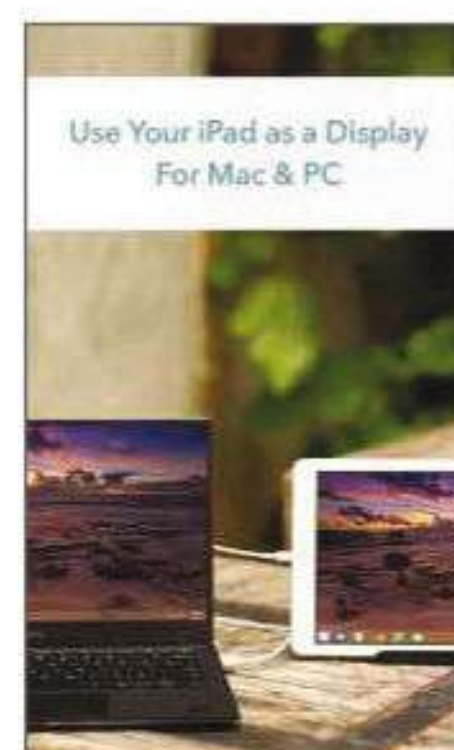
Duet Display

bit.ly/duet387

Min requirements: iOS 8

Size: 8.1MB **Price:** £7.99 (limited period 40% discount)

It's not cheap, but this handy app turns your iPad into a extra display for your Mac or PC. It was recently updated to add support for the iPad Pro.



WEATHER

Dark Sky

bit.ly/darksky387

Min requirements: iOS 7

Size: 10.9MB

Price: £2.99

Dark Sky uses your precise GPS location to offer accurate minute-by-minute weather forecasts for the next hour, so that you know whether you need to take a jacket when you walk the dog or pop out for lunch.



Morning Rituals



Pintasking



Unibox



Duet Display



Dark Sky





Best New TV Apps

TV

BBC iPlayer for Apple TV

bit.ly/appletv387**Min requirements:** Apple TV**Size:** N/A

Many users have complained about the absence of BBC iPlayer on Apple TV – after all, it’s long been available on every other streaming platform. Thankfully, this glaring omission has now been rectified so telly addicts who got the set-top box for Christmas won’t miss out on all their favourite BBC shows. The Apple TV version of iPlayer has a smart, simple interface that makes it easy to browse catch-up content by title, popularity and genre. You can also tune into BBC channels live (provided you have a TV licence, of course), and watch programmes made exclusively for the iPlayer. The app is free to download, if it isn’t already installed on your Apple TV.



FILM & TV

Google Play Movies & TV

bit.ly/playandroid387bit.ly/playios387**Min requirements:** Android (varies with device), iOS 7**Size:** 18.8MB

If you were disappointed by the films and TV shows screened on telly over the festive season, you can make up for it now with the updated Google Play Movies & TV app. This adds several useful new features to make streaming from your phone or tablet to your TV even easier. On Android, the app adds support for the latest version of the mobile operating system, Marshmallow, and easier setup for Roku devices. You can also now ‘binge-watch’ TV series, as you can on Netflix, without needing to select the episodes individually. On iOS, the app adds support for Apple TV using its AirPlay system, as well as content recommendations based on what you’ve watched previously, and HD streaming.

TV

Freesat

bit.ly/freesatandroid387bit.ly/freesatios387**Min requirements:** Android 4.0.3, iOS 8**Size:** 35.6MB

This update to the Freesat app doesn’t reinvent the wheel, but it fixes many of the bugs that users have been complaining about. There have also been improvements to the app’s ability to turn your phone or tablet into a remote control for your Freesat box (it lets you instantly pause, play, skip and rewind programmes, and change channel) and navigation of the Freetime TV guide. Indeed, your Freesat ID has now been renamed your Freetime ID, to provide more consistency, and you can launch on-demand programmes directly on your big screen. The app also lets you manage your recordings wherever you are; search for specific shows; and browse seven days of TV listings for more than 200 TV and radio channels.

 Don't install...

Blue Light Filter

bit.ly/bluelight387

This app claims to stop you straining your eyes when you’re using your phone or tablet late at night, but it doesn’t actually do anything



useful or practical. Instead it merely explains the potential damage caused by blue light from mobile devices and how you can avoid it, even recommending other apps that may help. Since you can already find this information online, there’s really no need to install this app.

...Install this instead

Twilight

bit.ly/twilight387**Min requirements:** Android (varies with device)**Size:** Varies with device

Using your phone or tablet late at night can make it difficult to nod off when you finally put it down because exposure to the blue light of the screen upsets your natural sleep-wake cycle. One way to prevent this from happening is to install Twilight, which makes your device adapt to the time of day by reducing the amount of blue light it emits and protecting your eyes with a soft and pleasant red filter. The light intensity is adjusted according to your local sunset and sunrise times, which means you can happily read your screen in bed without it keeping you awake afterwards. ■





FAQ

Everything you need to know about the most interesting new technology trends and events

Our guide to Li-Fi

Lightbulbs delivering internet access 100 times faster than Wi-Fi sounds like science fiction but, as **David Crookes** explains, Li-Fi is about to become a reality



What is it?

Li-Fi is short for Light Fidelity and is a way of transmitting data at high speed using the visible light spectrum rather than radio waves. The bi-directional technology is built to work with LED lightbulbs, which means it's very easy to set up and the potential reach is huge.

How does it work?

Li-Fi requires two components: a semiconductor light source – that is, an LED – fitted with a small chip that allows it to process signals; and a device with a photodiode that can receive light signals. The LED bulb is connected to an Ethernet-wired ceiling device and its light intensity is then modulated to make it brighter. This beams out the necessary



Professor Harald Haas came up with the idea of transmitting data using lightbulbs

data stream that can be picked up by the light receivers on various devices so they can translate the signal into internet bandwidth.



Li-Fi works by beaming data from LED bulbs to devices equipped with light receivers

Whoa – slow down, egghead! Who on Earth thought this up?

The technology – not to mention the word itself – is the brainchild of Harald Haas, Professor of Mobile Communications at the University of Edinburgh. He brought the idea to light (pardon the pun) in a TED Talk in 2011, but he has

since set up a company called PureLiFi, which researches and promotes the concept. You can view his talk on YouTube at bit.ly/harald387.

What are the benefits of Li-Fi?

Using light allows current Li-Fi technology to be 100 times faster than Wi-Fi. Indeed, the speeds are around a gigabit per second, which is pretty astonishing, especially given that Li-Fi doesn't clash with radio signals. Researchers are working on speeding up the semiconductors further for even faster Li-Fi connections. As it stands, lab tests at the University of Oxford have achieved bi-directional speeds of 224Gbps, which is more than twice the speed of fibre-optic networks. Wi-Fi can 'only' reach 600Mbps.

But doesn't fibre optic also use light?

Yes it does, clever clogs, and it allows for broadband speeds that far surpass standard copper-wire connections. But fibre optic is a wired connection whereas Li-Fi is wireless – and no other wireless connection is currently as fast. It beats Wi-Fi because the visible light spectrum is 10,000 times larger than that of the radio spectrum so Li-Fi effectively becomes a very wide virtual pipe through which data can travel. Coming at a time when the traditional radio-wave spectrum is becoming overcrowded, using light will free up resources.

Using lightbulbs for internet will free up increasingly crowded radio spectrums



Will I see the flashing lights?

No, the speed is so great that the change is imperceptible to the human eye. Although Li-Fi LEDs will flicker billions of times per second – as opposed to the 20,000 times per second of standard LEDs – the light will appear static. It means there are two benefits: speedy wireless internet and the ability to light up a room. It's certainly a tidy solution.

What if I don't want the light turned on?

Well, gloomy guts, the LEDs can be dimmed to the point where you wouldn't notice any light being emitted, while still allowing for continued data transfer that will let you connect your phone, tablet, computer and other devices to the internet. However, experts say that the lower light level may make for a slower connection.

Where can the technology be used?

As we've said, because there is no interference with radio signals, you'll be able to safely use Li-Fi on an aeroplane. It can also be used underwater and there has been some testing of this by the US Navy to see how effective it would be in communication with submarines. A company called Velmenni in Tallinn, Estonia, has recently been testing Li-Fi in an office, which is the first real-world test to have been carried out.



Estonian company Velmenni is the first to test Li-Fi in an office environment

Are there any limitations?

Indeed there are. The light, as you'd expect, cannot penetrate walls, which means that every room needs to have its own lightbulb if you want to wander around without losing connection. Also, direct sunlight interferes with a long-range Li-Fi signal, which makes it difficult to use outdoors.

Is Li-Fi secure, though?

Very much so and far more than Wi-Fi because the receiver has to be close to the transmitter bulb. Someone with a laptop sitting outside your home – or even in the next room – won't be able to intercept your Li-Fi signal. In that sense, it



PureLiFi has worked on two products to test the capabilities of Li-Fi technology

is quite unlike Wi-Fi, which can easily be intercepted by other people. No wonder intelligence agencies are interested.

What devices are available?

PureLiFi has worked on a couple of products. The first, the Li-1st, was designed to be a testing device. It has a ceiling unit connected to a standard LED bulb and a desktop unit that connects to a laptop via USB. PureLiFi says it was "created to provide a platform for pilot projects".

The second product, the Li-Flame, is described as the next-generation device with a 10Mbps downlink and a 10Mbps uplink over three metres. It, too, consists of separate ceiling and desktop units and was demonstrated at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona at the start of 2015.

When can I use it?

According to Deepak Solanki, the CEO of Velmenni, consumer Li-Fi should be available in three to four years. In London, in September 2015, Professor Haus demonstrated sending a video from a standard, off-the-shelf LED lamp to a

solar cell connected to a laptop (bit.ly/demo387). Rather than use photodiodes as a receiver, Professor Haus believes using standard, off-the-shelf solar cells and solar panels could receive data at 50 Mbps and speed LiFi to market. He also showed that it could receive data outdoors, even in foggy conditions.

Is Li-Fi set to be lucrative?

Professor Haus is hoping it will boost Scotland's economy. PureLiFi recently attracted £1.5m in funding from a group of investors led by London & Scottish Investment Partners, and it is currently worth £14m. The market could be worth as much as \$9bn (around £6bn) by 2018.

Will it replace Wi-Fi?

It will be a while before it takes over from Wi-Fi, and it may never happen. Professor Haas says Li-Fi is intended to complement Wi-Fi, 4G and 3G rather than replace it, so it certainly won't be the end of radio-wave data transmission. Even so, Prof Haas says that the more Li-Fi LEDs there are, the less need there will be for radio masts – the number of radio cellular base stations stands at 1.4 million.

Professor Haas wants to light up our lives with high-speed internet



HOW LI-FI CAN BE USED

Sport and entertainment

A new sports and entertainment complex is set to be opened by the Golden State Warriors basketball team in 2018. A deal with PureLiFi will see Li-Fi street lamps outside the arena transmitting data to people walking beneath them. A test is planned for the arena's media room.



Cars

There is a possibility that cars fitted with LED headlamps and tail lights will be able to exchange data with each other using the visible light spectrum. Li-Fi could also be fitted in traffic lights for better traffic management.

Security

Since light is contained within rooms and fewer users can access a Li-Fi access point than a Wi-Fi hotspot, it's suggested that Li-Fi is perfect for use in meeting rooms and situations where confidential information is handled, such as hospitals.



WHAT YOU MUST NOT DOWNLOAD IN 2016

**COVER
FEATURE**

Just because something is free, doesn't mean it's any good. **Wayne Williams** names and shames 26 duff downloads that you can happily live without, and recommends alternatives that work

Last issue, we picked 10 free programs that we recommend you download and use in 2016 to give your PC a new lease of life. This issue, we look at the flipside of the coin by choosing software, apps and games that it's wiser to avoid, even if you've downloaded them before. This

could be because the download is now bundled with junk or it compromises your privacy, or because you can perform the task better using something else. Either that, or the program is simply rubbish and utterly pointless, despite bold claims to the contrary.

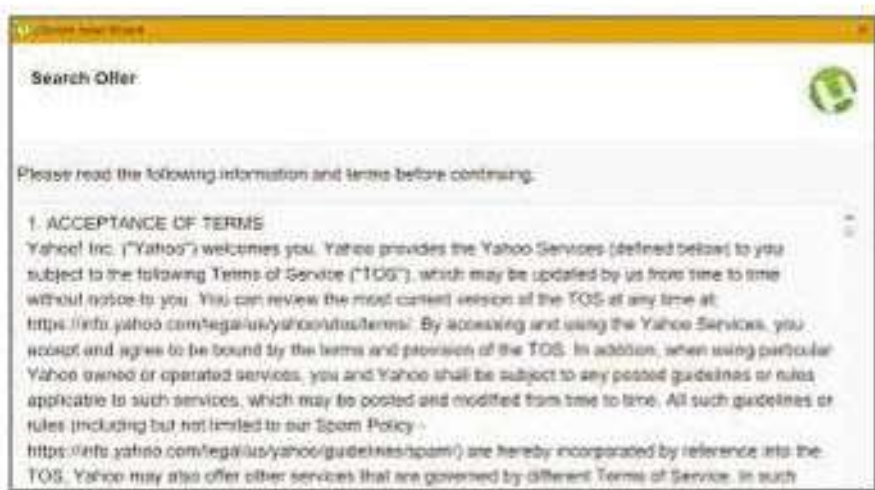
Among our shameful selection are

free programs that find problems with your PC but won't actually fix them; recovery tools that deliberately limit what they can rescue; software that charges you a fortune for the most basic of features; and a ridiculous app that encourages you to smash your phone by tossing it as high into the air as possible!

Shoddy Software

BITTORRENT CLIENT

1 uTorrent
utorrent.com



What's wrong with it?

uTorrent is a popular BitTorrent client, and for good reason – it's an excellent program with all the features needed for downloading (and uploading) torrents. However, to finance the software, the creators now bundle it with annoying adverts and crapware – including, at one point, an insidious Bitcoin miner called Epic Scale. One of the potential ways in which uTorrent's publishers is looking to make money in the future is by replacing the free version with a paid-for professional edition, which means you'll be paying to download files that don't even belong to uTorrent.

What to use instead:
Tixati

www.tixati.com

As recommended in last issue's cover feature, Tixati offers all the features found in uTorrent along with many other useful tools.

SYSTEM TOOL

2 PC Matic
www.pcpitstop.com



What's wrong with it?

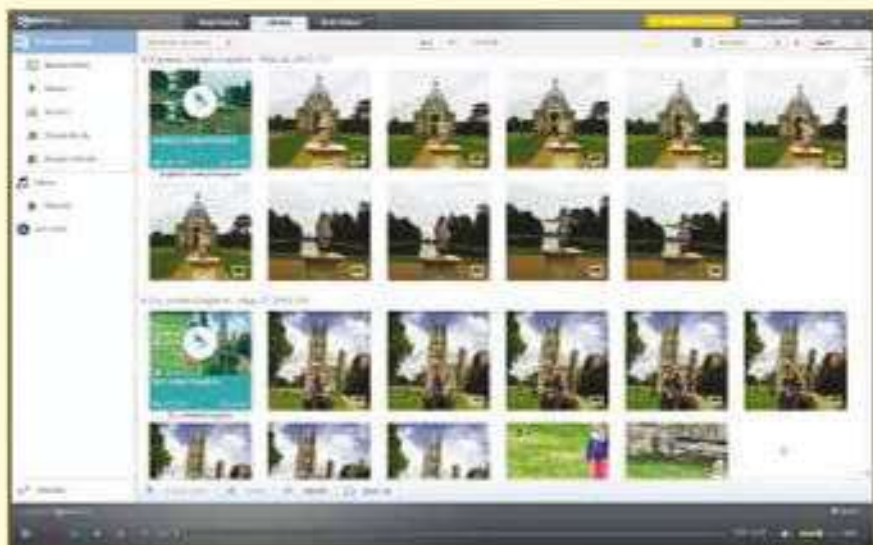
Like other, similar tools, PC Matic scans your computer looking for problems and leftover junk files, then presents you with its findings. It's very thorough and even tests the performance of your processor, graphics and memory. However, you have to upgrade to the paid-for Pro edition to fix any problems, so there's no way of knowing – without handing over money – how good it is.

MEDIA MANAGER

3 RealTimes
uk.real.com

What's wrong with it?

Formerly known as RealPlayer Cloud, this product is designed to turn photos and videos into "stories" – automatically created animated montages – and back up photos and videos online. There are also free apps for Android, iOS, Mac, Roku and Chromecast. Files are automatically formatted for viewing on any device.



That's the good stuff, but the bad news is that RealTimes only gives you a paltry 2GB of cloud storage space for free. Even worse, the program installs junk on your system and makes unwanted changes to your browser unless you click the tiny Options link during the installation process to reject them.

What to use instead:
Google Photos

photos.google.com

Google Photos offers unlimited storage for your photos and videos, and has an easy-to-use interface that works well across all platforms.

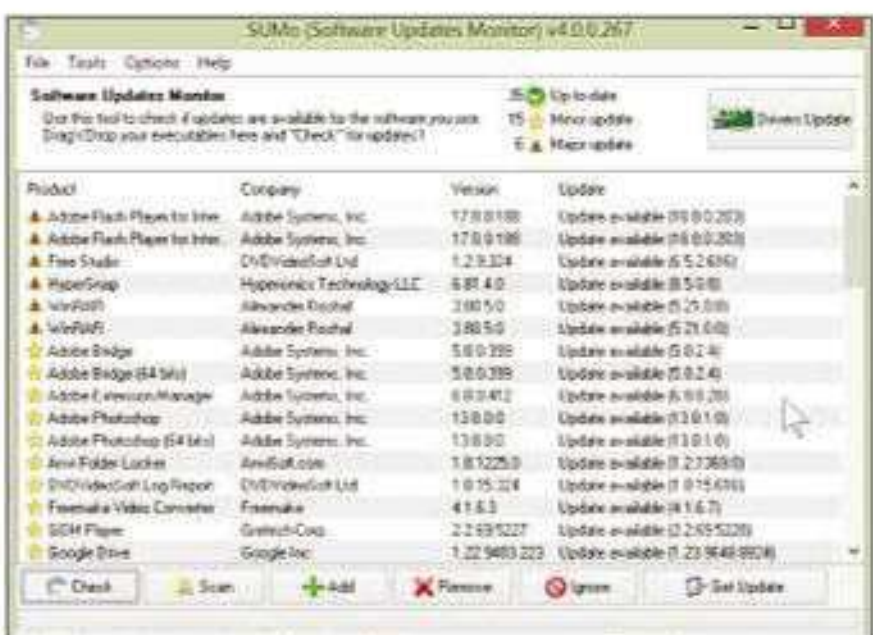
What to use instead:
Advanced SystemCare 9

www.iobit.com

The latest version of the ever-improving system-cleaning suite, which was our lead program in last issue's Best Free Software.

PROGRAM UPDATER

4 SUMo
www.kcssoftwares.com



What's wrong with it?

SUMo (Software Update Monitor) checks that you're running the latest versions of your favourite free programs (including portable software), and lets you update older or outdated applications. Sadly, the standard installer comes bundled with unwanted extras, including the nasty RelevantKnowledge spyware. You can decline this during installation, and even avoid it entirely if you download the Lite version, but you may not realise that this is an option.

What to use instead:
Secunia Personal Software Inspector (PSI)

bit.ly/psi387

Secunia PSI has been around for ages and it's still the best option for keeping all your favourite software up to date.

SECURITY TOOL

5 USB Safeguard
www.usbsafeguard.com



What's wrong with it?

USB flash drives are great for carrying personal files but their small size means they are easily lost. USB Safeguard password protects your data using AES 256-bit encryption so, if the drive gets lost or stolen, your files are secure. However, it needs to format your drive before it can work and, worst of all, the free edition is limited to drives of 2GB capacity, which isn't much use as few people have drives that small these days.

What to use instead:
DiskCryptor

diskcryptor.net

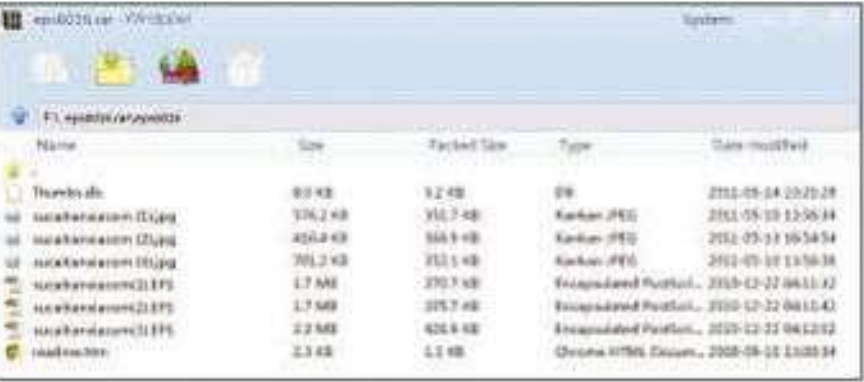
This powerful free program lets you encrypt entire hard drives or individual partitions, with no annoying restrictions.

FILE ARCHIVER

6

WinZipper

winzipper.soft112.com



What’s wrong with it?
While the name makes it sound like WinZip, this program has nothing to do with that well known (and trustworthy) compression app. Both the free and trial versions come bundled with potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) and it might also change your browser’s homepage. WinZipper comes bundled with other software, which could end up installed on your system without your knowledge.

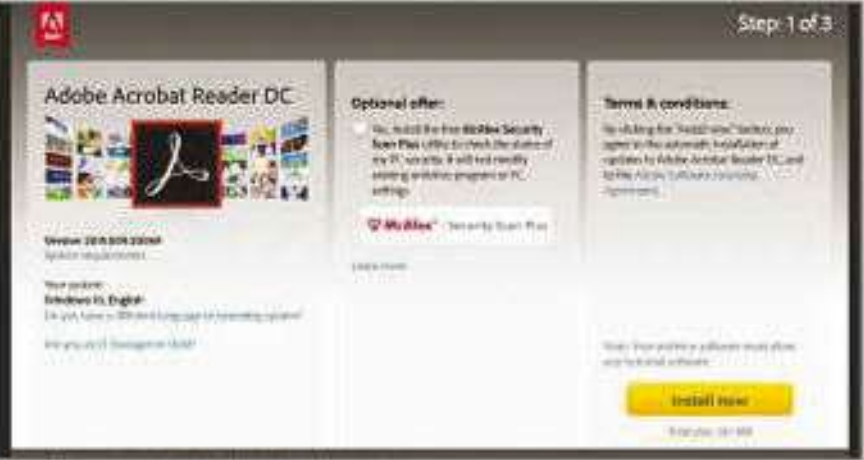
What to use instead:
7-Zip
www.7-zip.org
Clean of junk and free to use, 7-Zip is brilliant at shrinking files and provides 256-bit AES encryption to protect them.

PDF TOOL

7

Adobe Reader

bit.ly/adobereader387



What’s wrong with it?
PDF (Portable Document Format) was originally created by Adobe. You’d think

that the company’s own PDF Reader is the best tool for viewing such files but, in reality, you’ll want to avoid it like the plague. The software is slow, buggy and bloated (a whopping 78MB), and the installation page tries to slip you the McAfee Security Scan Plus tool, which you really don’t want.

What to use instead:
Sumatra PDF
www.sumatrapdfreader.org
As well as displaying PDF files, this impressive and lightweight free reader can also handle ebooks and comics.

DATA RESCUE

9

EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard Free 9

bit.ly/datarecovery387



What’s wrong with it?
If a file is deleted by accident, there’s a good chance you can recover it because only the reference to it is actually removed; the data itself remains on the drive – temporarily at least. EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard Free can rescue deleted content on hard drives, USB sticks, memory cards, digital cameras, mobile phones and other storage media. It works well enough, and we’ve recommended it in the past, but it limits you to rescuing 1GB of data in the free edition, which may not be enough for your needs. You also need to decline unwanted offers during installation.

What to use instead:
Recuva
www.piriform.com/recuva
Piriform’s brilliant free tool is our favourite choice for recovering lost data, and is one of the few programs of its kind that actually works.

EBOOK READER

10

Icecream Ebook Reader 2

icecreamapps.com



What’s wrong with it?
We’ve often recommended some of Icecream Apps’ excellent free software, but while Ebook Reader 2 is a decent program that lets you organise and read ebooks in all the major formats (including EPUB, MOBI, FB2 and PDF), the free version limits you to just 10 books. It stopped us adding or reading new books before we reached even that paltry allowance, claiming we’d hit our 10-book limit – even though we hadn’t.

What to use instead:
Calibre
calibre-ebook.com
Unsurpassable as the best software for browsing, organising and editing ebooks, it’s available on Windows, Mac and Linux.

DRIVER UPDATER

11

DriverUpdate

driverupdate.net



What’s wrong with it?
Missing, broken and outdated drivers on your PC can cause all sorts of system problems, but manually updating everything can be tricky. DriverUpdate scans your computer for problem drivers and lists them for you. Unfortunately, to update or replace the drivers, you have to pay \$29.97 (£19.90) for a year’s worth of automated updates. SlimDrivers, which is also offered on the site, requires you to update drivers manually, which isn’t much better.

SYSTEM TOOL

8

ChrisPC Win Experience Index

www.chris-pc.com

What’s wrong with it?
Windows Experience Index (WEI) is a benchmarking tool found in Windows 7. It provides a base-score rating for the various components in your system, along with sub-scores for your PC’s processor, memory, graphics, gaming graphics and primary hard drive. WEI was dropped from Windows 8 and Windows 10, but this program brings it back, which would be great except the installer comes bundled with RelevantKnowledge – that horrible, junk-ridden piece of spyware.

What to use instead:
Winaero WEI Tool
bit.ly/wei387
If you miss WEI, this free tool is a better, safer option that won’t cause more trouble than it’s worth.



What to use instead: IObit Driver Booster

bit.ly/driverbooster387

The latest version of this free tool recognises more than 200,000 drivers and lets you update them with one click.

SYSTEM TOOL

12 Auslogics Registry Defrag

www.auslogics.com

What's wrong with it?

This program claims it defragments and



compacts your Windows Registry to take up less memory and keep your system stable. The truth is that there's no benefit to defragging your Registry

because it won't have any impact on the speed with which the data is read. On top of this, Registry Defrag sneakily tries to install Auslogics Boostspeed and other junk, while changing your browser search engine, homepage and new tab page.

What to use instead: CCleaner

www.piriform.com/ccleaner

Still the best option for cleaning and speeding up your PC, CCleaner also has a built-in Registry cleaner that actually has a positive effect.

Awful Apps

APP FINDER

13 AppComparison

bit.ly/appcompare387



What's wrong with it?

Windows Phones running Microsoft's operating system have far fewer apps than Android and iPhone devices. In a misguided attempt to prove

that the 'app gap' isn't as wide as people think, Microsoft created this app for Android. Run it on your phone and it will match the Android apps on your device with equivalent ones from the Windows Store. Unfortunately, instead of reassuring potential phone switchers, it achieves the opposite effect by showing just how many official apps Windows Phone is missing, and recommending shoddy third-party alternatives in their place. Ouch.

What to use instead: Um... stick with Android!

See Barry's column on page 74 for his views on the future of Windows Phone.

MEDIA PLAYER

14 Windows DVD Player

bit.ly/dvdplayer387



What's wrong with it?

Microsoft dropped Windows Media Center from Windows 10 and, in its

PRIVACY TOOL

15 Whisper

whisper.sh

What's wrong with it?

This app for iOS and Android lets you post short anonymous messages, including personal confessions. Except they're not really anonymous. An investigation by the Guardian (bit.ly/whisper387) discovered that the app was tracking its users' location, including some who "have specifically asked not to be followed". The company also shared information with the US Department of Defense.

What to use instead: Tor Messenger Beta

bit.ly/torchat387

If your online conversations require total secrecy, the new Tor Messenger will conceal your messages from nosy parkers.



place, released this optional DVD Player. The app is free if you're running Windows 7 Ultimate, Professional, Home Premium or Windows 8.1 with Media Centre, but costs £11.59 for everyone else. It's not just overpriced, it's also very basic (it only plays DVDs, not Blu-rays) and, according to the reviews, it often doesn't work at all.

What to use instead: VLC Media Player

www.videolan.org

We've long been fans of VLC and it's still the best choice for playing movies, both as a program and as a Windows 10 app.

STREAMING APP

16 BBC Store

bit.ly/bbcstore387

What's wrong with it?

The official Windows 10 app for the BBC Store lets you stream and download programmes for watching at home or on the go. It works well and does a good



enough job but, bizarrely, there's no actual access to the Store so you need to go through the circuitous route of visiting the website (store.bbc.com), signing up,

buying the programmes you want there, then accessing them through this app.

What to use instead

Just use the BBC Store website!

FAKE ORGANISER

17 I Am Important

bit.ly/iamimportant387

What's wrong with it?

This iOS app lets you pretend to be more important than you actually are.



It's a fake diary and organiser that lets you add made-up events to your calendar and fake contacts (all "highly important and highly paid business people", naturally) to your address book. You can then share your impressive credentials on Facebook. Although the app is free, in-app purchases let you upgrade your prestige. 'Medium Important' costs £2.29, while 'Head of State/CEO' is £7.99. You'd have to be pretty vain or gullible to waste your money on this!



What to use instead: LinkedIn

bit.ly/linkedin387

Instead of faking it, get some genuine business contacts by using the iOS app for the professional social network.

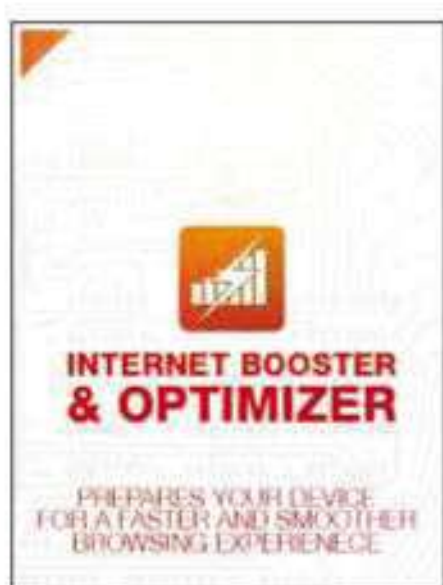
TWEAKING APP

18 Internet Booster & Optimizer

bit.ly/netboost387

What's wrong with it?

This app claims to enhance your internet browsing experience. How? According to the details, "We automatize a series of commands and optimizations that will put your browser in the top of priority on your Android System making sure you get the most out of your ISP Internet speed and device resources for a smooth browsing experience". Although some reviews claim that the app does as intended, we found that it's main function is to display adverts.



What to use instead:

Use your device's settings to disable any apps that are using the internet unnecessarily in the background.

SHOPPING APP

20 eBay App

bit.ly/eBay387

What's wrong with it?

The official iPad app for eBay has

HAND WARMER

19 Heater

bit.ly/heater387

What's wrong with it?

This app forces your Android phone's processor to work super-hard, which in turn generates a lot of heat that you can use to warm your hands. Unfortunately, it also drains the battery in next to no time (which is actually a selling point, according to the developers), and because heat is the enemy of delicate electrical components, there's also the danger of the app burning out your phone.

What to use instead:

A pocket hand warmer or – more traditionally – a pair of gloves.



generated nothing but complaints from users who say the app hides content behind unwanted and irrelevant goods, and fails to provide useful information for sellers. "Poorly conceived and exceptionally buggy," is how one user described it, and that seems to be the consensus. The complaints continue to pile up and eBay seems to be making the app worse with each revision.

What to use instead:

The eBay website (www.ebay.co.uk).

CHARGING APP

21 Shake to Charge Battery

bit.ly/shakecharge387

What's wrong with it?

This is a "prank" Android app that is designed to fool people into thinking it's possible to charge your phone simply by shaking it. It works by setting itself as live wallpaper and displays a battery recharge image that increases as the phone is shaken. Why you'd want to fool someone in this way, we're not sure, unless you're



an utter rotter. Hopefully, the victim of this feeble lark has a good grip on their phone because the joke may fall flat if it's accidentally thrown across the room.

What to use instead:

Your phone charger. Much safer and it will actually work.

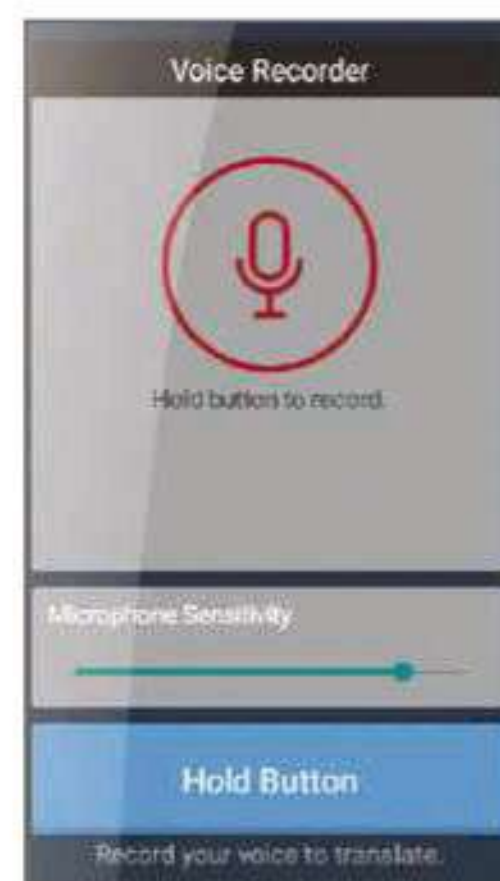
ANIMAL TRANSLATOR

22 Human-To-Dog Translator

bit.ly/dogchat387

What's wrong with it?

Do you wish you could, like Doctor Doolittle, speak to the animals? Well, good news! This Android app will instantly translate your voice into dog-speak (barking) and get your faithful friend's attention immediately. According to the blurb, "Human-to-Dog Translator [will] carefully analyse your voice and translate what you want to say to your dog". Except, of course, it won't. It's a prank app, although it's not labelled as such, and no doubt some people will be fooled by the premise.



What to use instead:

Well, there is a dog-to-English translation device in development called No More Woof (www.nomorewoof.com), but it's launch date has yet to be confirmed.

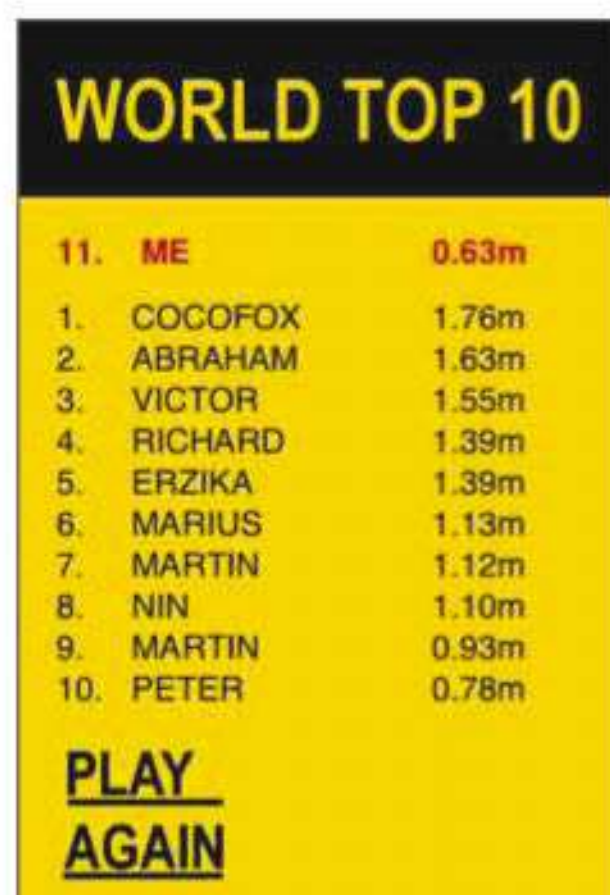
Ghastly Games

THROWING GAME

23 S.M.T.H
bit.ly/smith387

What's wrong with it?

If you hate your phone, then this is the app for you. S.M.T.H stands for Send Me To Heaven, and is described by the creators as a "sport game", although



that really is taking a crowbar to the definition. The aim of the "game" is to throw your phone into the air as high as you can. The app

registers the height of the throw, then uploads the results to the web. Can you beat the other players? Or will you just drop your phone and break it? The latter, probably, so we really wouldn't advise using it on your new Moto X or Samsung Galaxy S6.

What to use instead:

Chuck a tennis ball in the air, if you're that bored or that desperate to improve your catching prowess.

PREGNANCY SIMULATOR

24 Happy Pregnancy
bit.ly/happypregnancy387

What's wrong with it?

Queen Elsa, of Disney's *Frozen* fame, is pregnant and about to give birth to a

PEE SIMULATOR

25 Awesome Pee Challenge
bit.ly/pee387

What's wrong with it?

The aim (pun intended) of this game is to urinate in "interesting" locations, such as a flowerpot, cup or drain. The app will measure how accurate you are. It is, of course, incredibly infantile and gets boring very quickly, too. We've only included it in this feature for a bet. If you install it, we lose – so move along, nothing to see here!

What to use instead:

Absolutely any other game on Google Play. Seriously.



baby boy. You need to prepare the Snow Queen's maternity bag, then help her give birth and check the baby. You won't be surprised to hear that this isn't an official Disney game. Oddly, Google Play has plenty of other, similar games on offer (just search for 'pregnant princess').

What to use instead: Frozen Free Fall

bit.ly/frozenfreefall387

This official Disney game is much better quality than the numerous knock-offs, and it's also free (although ad-supported).

BOTTLE CAP SIMULATOR

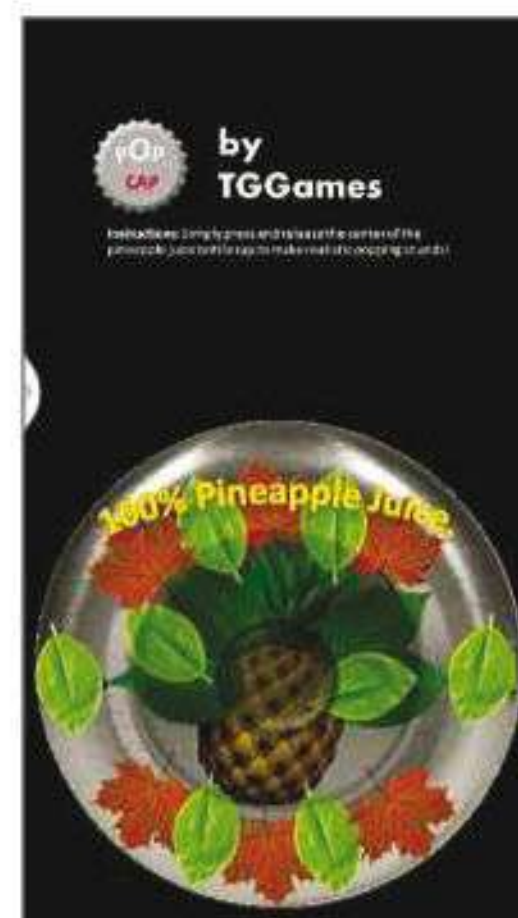
26 PopCap
bit.ly/popcap387

What's wrong with it?

There's definitely something satisfying about pressing and releasing the centre of a juice bottle cap in order to make a popping sound, but that's only true of a real bottle cap. On an Android phone, the simulation quickly gets tedious and there's nothing else to do in this app. Apparently, between 5,000 and 10,000 have downloaded it to date, the wallies!

What to use instead:

Real bubble wrap. It's not exactly hard to come by!



NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 13 January 2016

YOUR PC WILL BE HACKED!

Unless you fix the hidden security flaws that we reveal in our shocking exposé



PLUS...

BEST iOS BROWSERS

Which app should you use instead of Safari?

USE THE WEB OFFLINE

Access your favourite sites on your Desktop

WHO'S SPYING ON YOU?

Find out who's tracking your online activities

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Best file-transfer services

Pushbullet is a popular tool for transferring files between devices but changes to the free version have left users unimpressed. **Edward Munn** compares it to other services that transfer files wirelessly, even when your devices are in different locations



SendAnywhere | **Free** | send-anywhere.com | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

WebUser
GOLD
AWARD

What we liked:

SendAnywhere offers the best combination of features, performance and simplicity of all the file-transfer services we tested. You don't have to set up an account to use it: just choose the file you want to send from your PC or smartphone, then use the 6-digit key generated by SendAnywhere within the next 10 minutes to receive the file.

Like our Silver Award winner Inifinit, SendAnywhere is available on lots of operating systems including Windows, OS X, Android and iOS, and transfers files directly using peer-to-peer technology rather than uploading the file to online storage, even when the sending and receiving devices aren't on the same network. There are no limits on the size or number of transfers you can make – they're all free and the transfer speeds are blisteringly fast.

The app interface works like a file manager, letting you browse all the files on your device by category, including photo, text, audio, app and video, which makes it perfect for use on a smartphone.

As well as offering purpose-built applications for PCs and mobile devices,

SendAnywhere lets you send and receive files up to 1GB in size directly from your web browser. This is especially useful when you need to transfer a file to a computer for which you don't have permission to install software, but also means you can quickly

send large files to people by asking them to visit send-anywhere.com and enter the appropriate code.

If you want to transfer files to more than one device or person, SendAnywhere offers a handy feature that keeps your files on its servers for 24-hours for added flexibility. By simply setting up an account, the app also lets you send files directly between your own devices without needing to enter a code each time.

How it can be improved:

We found almost no fault with SendAnywhere, but it's set to be



improved nonetheless with the release of version 3.0. The new service will introduce a redesigned interface along with new tools including auto-resume and full transfer history.

OUR VERDICT

We gave SendAnywhere the full five stars in every category, making it the clear winner of our Gold Award. Whether you want to transfer files between your own devices or to your friends, there's no better option available.

Infini | **From free** | infini.io | ★★★★★☆

FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

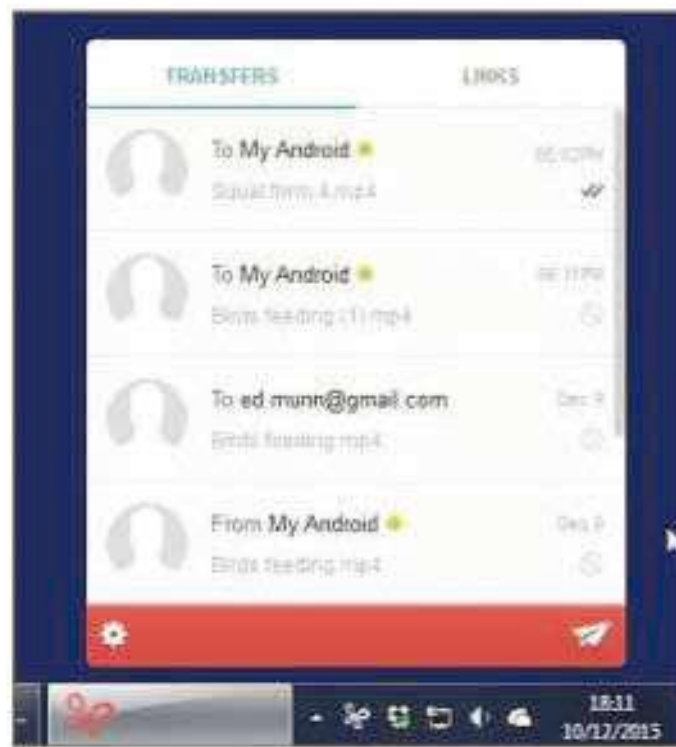
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★



What we liked:

Infini is an innovative file-transfer service that's compatible with a wide range of devices including Windows, Mac, Linux, iOS and Android. Its peer-to-peer technology offers speeds up to 30 times faster than cloud services such as Dropbox and Google Drive, meaning that a 2GB HD movie can be transferred in as little as 13 minutes, as opposed to the 3 hours it would take via the cloud. Infini lets you transfer such files even when both devices are on different networks, although it's obviously quicker when they're on the same one.

You can send files directly to friends who have Infini accounts or enter a recipient's email address to make the file available for them to download from Infini's servers for up to seven days. For free accounts, Infini has a file-transfer



limit of 10GB, which is more than enough for most users, and there's no limit on the number of transfers you make. If you want to save your files to Infini's servers for a longer period of time, its handy Link function provides 1GB of free storage.

How it can be improved:

Infini's Windows software couldn't match the blistering transfer speeds of SendAnywhere's web widget. Our Gold Award winner also has no file-transfer limit and we prefer its Android app.

OUR VERDICT

Infini offers a brilliant range of features, but it doesn't match SendAnywhere's performance and usability.

AirDroid | **From free** | www.airdroid.com | ★★★★★☆

FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★

EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

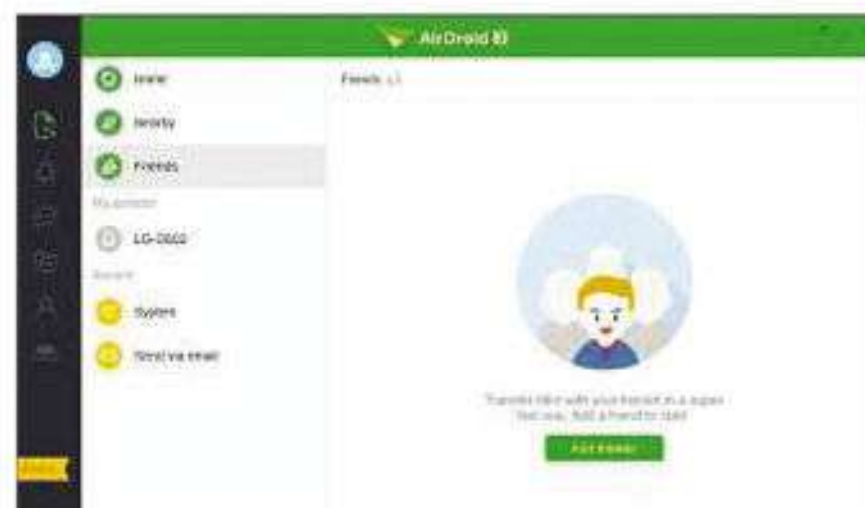


What we liked:

Like Pushbullet, AirDroid connects your Android phone and PC (or Mac) so you can read notifications, send and receive text messages and even answer phone calls from the larger screen. It also supports file transfers between your devices but, unlike Pushbullet, there's no limit on the size or number of transfers you can make when both devices are connected to the same network.

If you want to make transfers via the internet, free accounts are limited to 200MB a month (with a maximum file size of 30MB each), or you can unlock unlimited remote transfers (of up to 1GB each) by subscribing to its Premium plan at a cost of \$20 (around £13) a year. Sending files to friends is supported both locally and remotely, providing they too have an AirDroid account.

AirDroid for Windows is the best way to use the service, but it's also available by visiting web.airdroid.com.



How it can be improved:

Although it represents much better value than Pushbullet, AirDroid's remote file transfers are still quite pricey compared to our Gold and Silver Award winners. Unlike Pushbullet, there's also no iOS app.

OUR VERDICT

If you're not sure whether to use Pushbullet or AirDroid, we think the latter offers better value for money. But for quick, easy file transfers to anywhere, you're better off with one of our other award winners.

BEST OF THE REST

Pushbullet | **From free**

www.pushbullet.com

Pushbullet connects your PC and smartphone so you can transfer files, see notifications, and send and receive text messages.

Unfortunately, the free version of the app limits you to sending files of

25MB and you can only send a total of 2GB

before you have to start clearing out your 'push' history. Upgrading to Pushbullet Pro unlocks an impressive 100GB of storage and 1GB file transfers, but it costs \$39.99 (around £26) a year.



Portal by Pushbullet | **Free**

portal.pushbullet.com

Pushbullet's mobile app Portal offers one of the

quickest and easiest ways of transferring

large files via your Wi-Fi network.

To connect your PC and smartphone, you just scan a QR code at portal.pushbullet.com. You can then begin transferring files by dragging and dropping them on the web page. However, it can only be used to move files from PC to smartphone and not vice versa.



WiFi File Transfer Pro | **88p**

bit.ly/wifi387

WiFi File Transfer Pro is an Android app that lets you move files between your PC and smartphone using a web-based file manager, but you have to be on the same network. Its design is a bit naff but it's very quick and easy to set up, and you only need to make a one-off payment of 88p. In fact, there's even



a free version of the app (bit.ly/wififree387) that works in exactly the same way but limits you to uploading files no bigger than 5MB to your PC, while transfers in the opposite direction are unlimited.

Stop your PC and phone *pestering* you

Don't let constant notifications drive you to distraction. **Robert Irvine** reveals how to manage alerts so you only receive the important ones



Disable the Windows 10 upgrade notification

You've probably decided by now whether or not you want to upgrade to Windows 10 – you've had five months, after all! – so the continuing nags to do so are nothing but a nuisance. To banish the 'Get Windows 10' message from your taskbar, download the free tool GWX Control Panel (bit.ly/gwx387), which permanently removes the notification in Windows 7 and 8+, and prevents it from reappearing via Windows Update. Simply run the program, click "Disable 'Get Windows 10' App (permanently remove icon)" and 'Disable Operating System Upgrades in Windows Update', then restart your PC to get rid of the icon forever (you can easily re-enable it if you change your mind).

GWX Control Panel won't work if you



If don't want to upgrade to Windows 10, you can hide the notification

requested the Windows 10 upgrade and are now seeing a message that says 'Your upgrade is ready'. To get rid of this, you'll need to delete the installation files and remove the updates that are forcing the upgrade on you. Run Disk Cleanup and select the option 'Clean up system files'. Tick the box marked 'Temporary Windows installation files', click OK and confirm the deletion.

Once this is complete, go into the Control Panel, choose 'Uninstall a program' and click 'View installed updates' in the left-hand menu. Look for the following updates, select them and click Uninstall: KB2952664 (on Windows 7), KB2976978 (on Windows 8.1) and KB3035583 (on both operating systems).

Restart your PC, go into Windows Update and disable the aforementioned updates by right-clicking them and choosing 'Hide update'. This will prevent them from downloading again.

Reduce system notifications in Windows 7

One of the main reasons Vista proved so unpopular was that it bombarded you with trivial security alerts, even when you turned off the User Account Control feature that produced them. Happily,

Microsoft learnt its lesson in Windows 7, but you may still see more notifications than is strictly necessary, such as reminders to back up, prompts to install updates and warnings that there are problems on your PC.

Although it's unwise to ignore serious alerts about your security, you can disable other messages without putting your system at risk. To do so, open the Control Panel, click 'System and Security', Action Center and choose 'Change Action Center settings' in the left-hand menu. Deselect any options for which you don't want to see notifications and click OK.

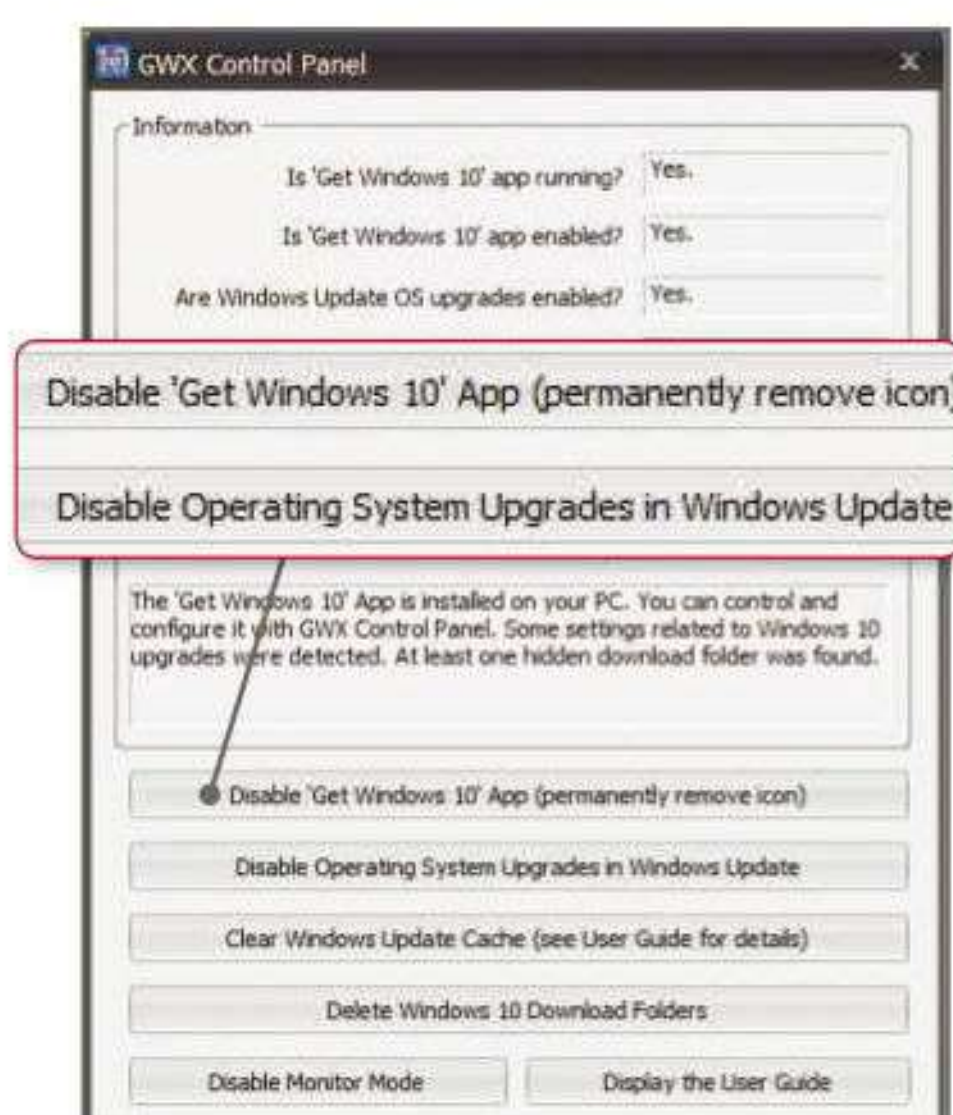
You can also reduce the number of security alerts by clicking 'Change User Account Control settings' and moving the slider down, but this isn't recommended if you want to protect your system from unauthorised changes.



You can reduce the number of Windows notifications through the Action Center

Manage notifications in Windows 8+

The introduction of apps in Windows 8 brought a host of new notifications, telling you everything from when you receive a new email to

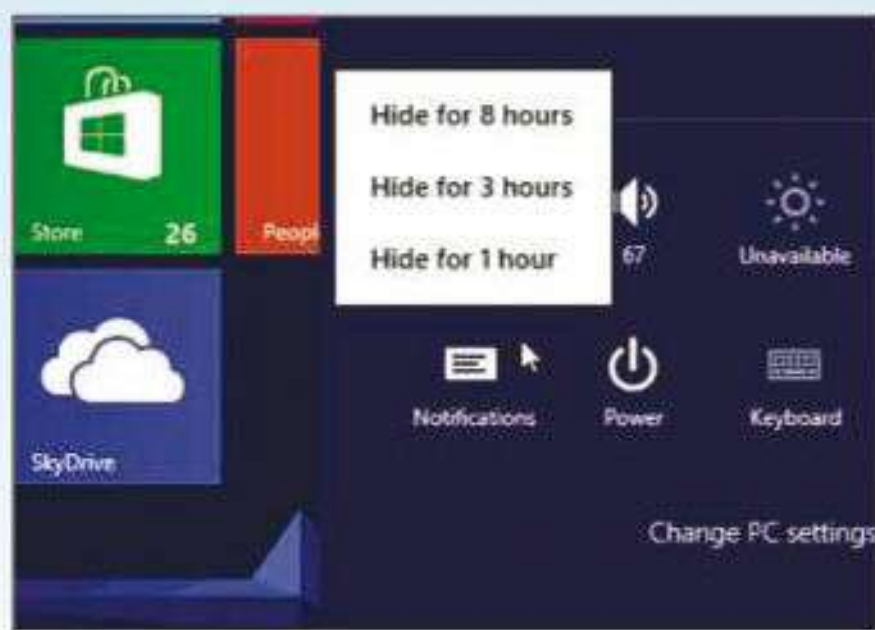


Run GWX Control Panel to remove the Windows 10 upgrade notification

the latest weather forecast. These alerts appear on your Desktop, Lock screen and in 'live tiles', so there's effectively no escape. To disable app notifications, press the Windows key+C to open the Charms bar, then select Settings, 'PC settings' and Notifications. Here, you can either turn off all app notifications or just alerts from specific apps.

If you only require a short break from notifications while you get on with something important, you can suspend them temporarily. Open Settings from the Charms bar, click Notifications and choose to hide them for between one and eight hours.

To turn off Lock-screen notifications, go to Settings, 'PC settings', Personalize, click 'Lock screen' and disable any apps that you don't want running in the background and displaying messages while you're not using your PC. Finally, you can switch off updates from Start-screen tiles by right-clicking them and choosing 'Turn live tile off'.



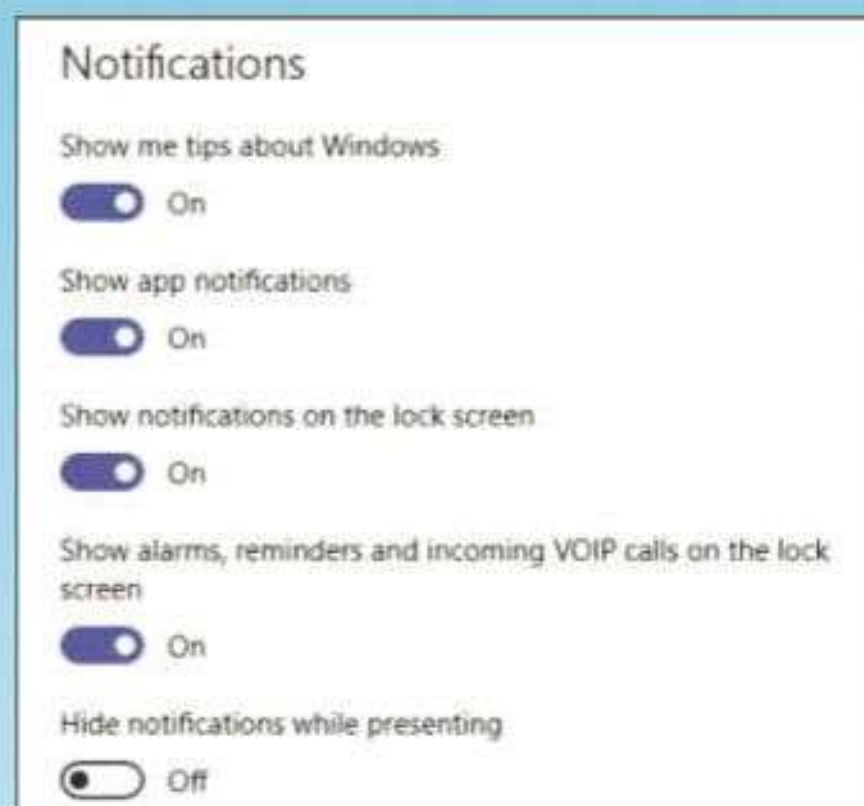
Get some peace in Windows 8+ by temporarily turning off app notifications

Control all your notifications in Windows 10

Windows 10 offers a redesigned Action Center that makes managing your notifications much easier than in its predecessor. Click the speech-bubble icon on the taskbar to open the Action Center, then click 'All settings',

System and 'Notifications & actions'. In the 'Quick actions' section, you can decide which notifications appear on your taskbar and, below this, you can choose which types of message to display, such as tips about Windows, app notifications and Lock-screen

notifications. You can also turn off notifications from specific apps and system tools, and set up 'quiet hours' when you won't be bothered by alerts. Usefully, the Action Center also stores



Windows 10's Action Center lets you manage all your notifications in one place

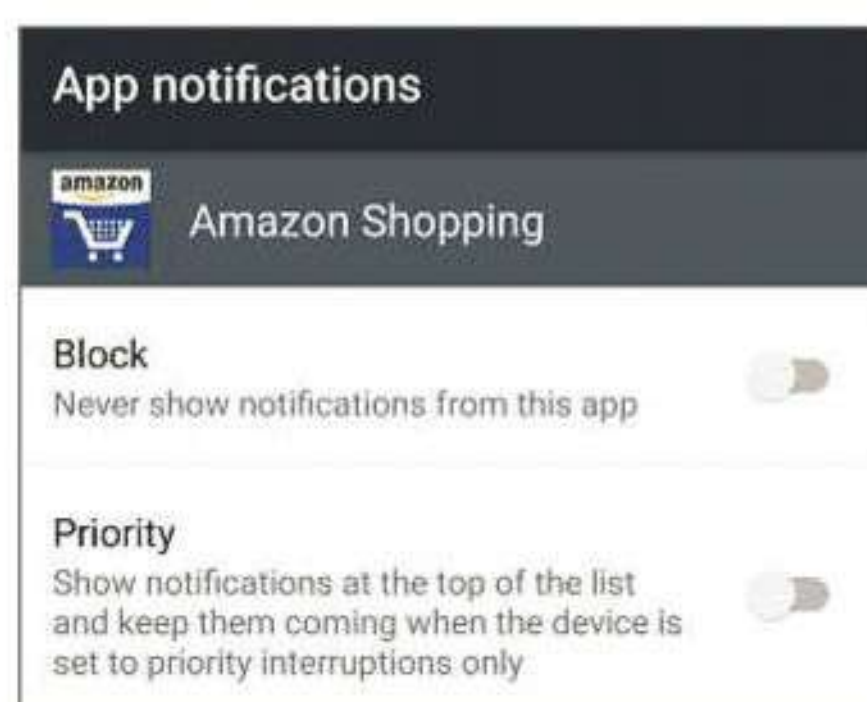
all your notifications, so you can review them later if you missed them when they first appeared. It's one of our favourite new features in Windows 10 and it's a shame that it wasn't introduced earlier.

Get fewer notifications on your phone and tablet

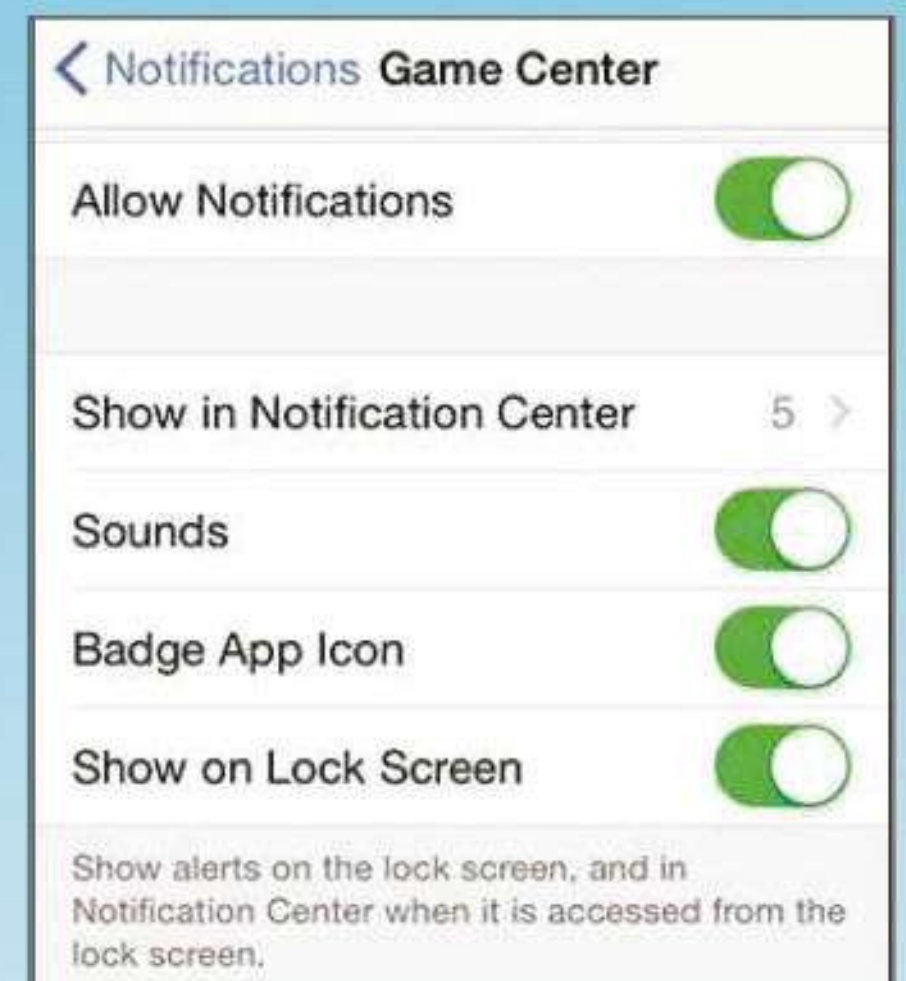
We're usually happy to be told that we've received a new text message or been sent a Facebook friend request, but there are other times when notifications only serve to annoy you. Do you really need to know that so-and-so is "attending an event near you later"? Or see a BBC 'breaking news' alert about Iain Duncan Smith being a berk? Probably not, but the more apps you install, the more of these spammy notifications you'll receive.

Fortunately, it's very easy to turn off messages from specific apps if they're overwhelming you. If you're using Android Lollipop (version 5.0 or later), go to Settings, 'Sound & notification' and choose 'App notifications'. Select a bothersome app, locate the slider next to 'Block. Never show notifications from this app' and move it across. If you have an older version of Android, such as Jelly Bean or Kit Kat, you can turn off unwanted alerts by going to Settings, Apps, choosing an app and deselecting 'Show notifications'.

On an iPhone or iPad, launch the



You can block notifications from specific apps on your Android phone or tablet



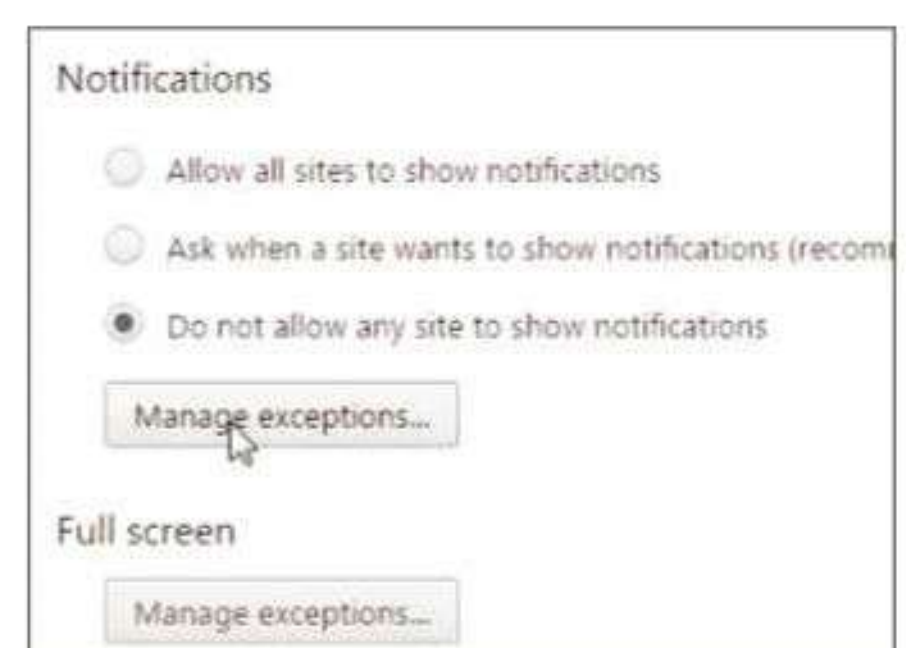
In iOS, you can make app notifications less annoying or turn them off altogether

Settings app, tap Notifications and scroll down to an app that's been annoying you. Tap it and switch the Allow Notifications option to Off. Alternatively, you can leave notifications turned on, but change the method by which they are delivered, such as making a sound, displaying a badge icon or appearing on your Lock Screen.

Turn off website notifications in Chrome

As we explain in Best New Browser Tools on page 30, many websites now use Chrome's push-notifications feature to display alerts on your Desktop. These can prove useful – for example, letting you know that an order has been dispatched or a document updated – but they can also be irritating, especially because they appear even if your browser is closed.

By default, Chrome asks whether you want to allow a site, extension or app to send you notifications, but you may have since changed your mind and now want them to stop. To turn them off, click the Menu button, choose Settings and click 'Show advanced settings', then 'Content settings'. In the Notifications section, select 'Do not allow any site to show notifications', then click 'Manage exceptions' to allow specific sites to continue alerting you. ■



Stop websites and extensions interrupting you by turning off notifications in Chrome

Best new beta tools to try today

Get ahead of the crowd by trying the exciting new tools of tomorrow – today. **Robert Irvine** picks five of the most promising new beta programs and apps



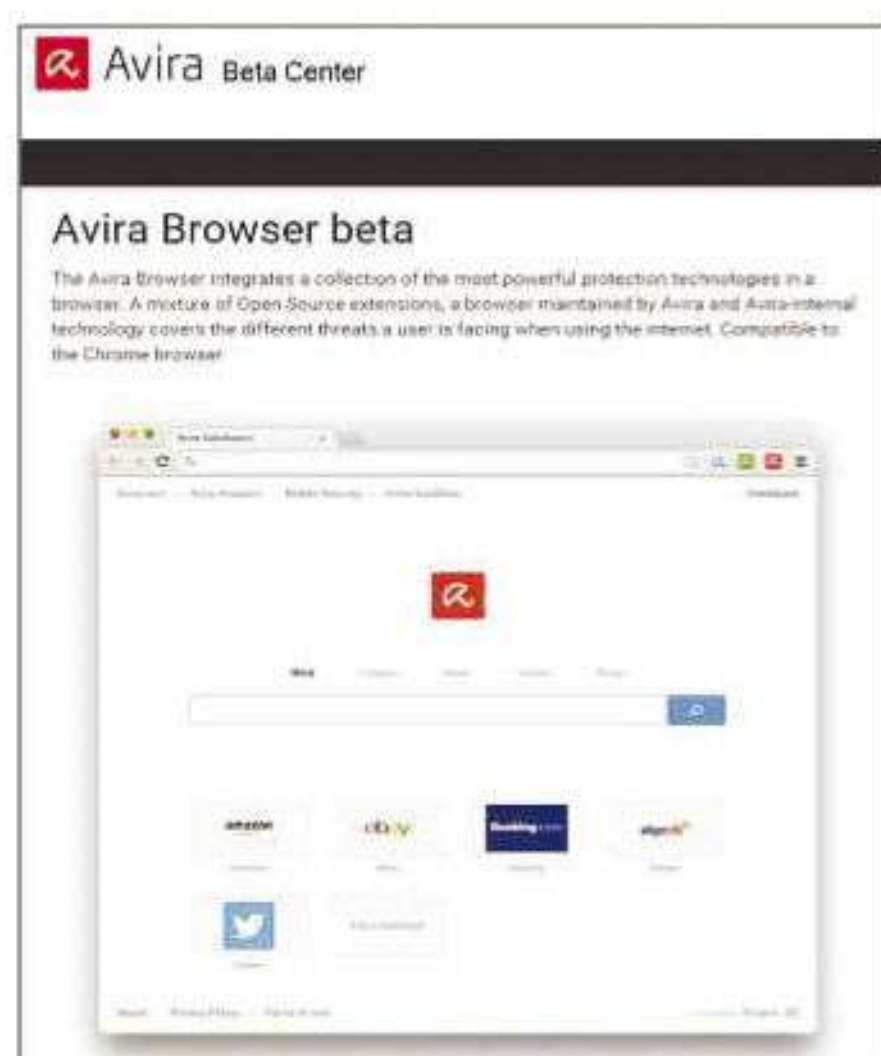
Avira Scout

bit.ly/avira387

What is it?

Whether it's through vulnerable plug-ins such as Flash, unsecured Wi-Fi or 'drive-by' malware in web pages (downloads that install without your knowledge when you visit certain websites), our browsers are susceptible to all manner of online threats. Security company Avira, which is best known for its free anti-virus software, is addressing this problem with its own secure browser, which "integrates a collection of the most powerful protection technologies".

Avira Scout (the name was chosen from suggestions submitted by Avira users) is based on the same Chromium code as Chrome and offers a cloud-based anti-malware scanner, a safe-search function, Avira Browser Safety, which blocks infected websites, and the brilliant tracker blocker Privacy Badger.



Why should I try it?

Although you can install security extensions for Chrome and Firefox, these can slow down the browsers and consume excess memory. Avira Scout's built-in tools won't place such a strain on your system resources, and will protect you from the moment you launch the browser.

Why should I wait?

To try Avira Scout, you need to join the Avira Beta Center, complete a 'non-disclosure agreement' and then apply for the beta, which may be more hoops than you're willing to jump through!

BBC HTML5 Player

www.bbc.co.uk/html5

What is it?

Since it launched on Christmas Day 2007, BBC iPlayer has used Adobe's Flash Player to play TV and radio shows but the Beeb has now decided to ditch the outdated and notoriously unsafe plug-in in favour of HTML5. In a blog post (bit.ly/iplayer387), it said that "we're now confident we can achieve the playback quality you'd expect from the BBC without using a third-party plug-in", and that the new HTML5 Player will eventually become the default option on all devices.

You can opt into (and out of) the beta of the HTML5 Player at the link above. This will set a cookie in your browser that diverts you from the Flash player when you visit www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer. On an Android device, you'll need to install the new iPlayer beta app via bit.ly/iplayerapp387, although this is currently limited to the first 1,000 users who opted in.

Why should I try it?

Flash has long been beset by security and performance problems, and you'll notice a big improvement in the iPlayer's playback speed by switching to HTML5, especially on Android devices (it's been used by iOS for some time). Also, with Firefox now blocking Flash, you don't want to risk missing out on your favourite shows.

Why should I wait?

Some older programmes on iPlayer might not play in the HTML5 player. If this happens, you need to switch back to the non-beta version. The BBC says that the Flash player will continue to be available on the Desktop version "for at least the next few years".



SwiftKey Neural

bit.ly/neural387

What is it?

SwiftKey is one of the most popular keyboard apps for Android and iOS, and this experimental spin-off aims to make typing on a touchscreen even easier using "artificial neural networks". No, we didn't know what that meant either, but apparently it's a technology that mimics the structure and operation of the

human brain to predict what you're going to write so it can make more relevant suggestions.

Why should I try it?

If your phone's auto-correct function is often more of a hindrance than a help, SwiftKey Neural offers a more intelligent approach that saves you a lot of typing and corrects your mistakes. Whereas most keyboard apps (including the standard SwiftKey) guess what you're going to type based on the previous two words in the sentence, Neural looks

back further to ascertain the context of your message and suggest related words. For example, if you text someone to say that you're on the train,

the app might predict that your next sentence will be 'Meet me at the station'.

Why should I wait?

SwiftKey Neural is currently in alpha, which means its performance is far from perfect, especially because "the use of neural networks is computationally challenging". Also, it currently only works with US English – so you'll need to put up with 'humor', 'realize' and 'theater' – and is limited to devices running Android 4.4 or later.

Reddit for Android

bit.ly/reddit387

What is it?

Reddit has been around for 10 years, so it's remarkable that this is its first official mobile app other than one that focused solely on its AMA (Ask Me Anything) chats. It's presently a closed beta that



BEWARE THE RISKS OF BETAS

Beta software is generally pretty stable and you should be able to use it without any problems, but be aware that it won't be as smooth and reliable as the finished release. There are still likely to be bugs, and some features may not be fully realised. Also, the code may not be optimised so the program might be quite slow.

Not all betas are equal, either – for some software developers, a beta will be very close to the finished article, while for others, it might be much closer to an alpha (the first phase of its development). There's no reason

to be afraid of using beta software, but you shouldn't fully trust it either, so you should avoid making a beta program or app your default tool for a particular task.

If your PC or phone starts crashing or behaving strangely after you've installed a beta application, uninstall the program or app in question and wait for a stable release to become available.



you need to apply to join after completing a short questionnaire regarding your Reddit username and habits. This caution may be a result of controversy over the site's failure to ban communities (sub-reddits) devoted to offensive and explicit material. Only a few thousand users were accepted for the initial round of testing, which closed on 18 December, although it's likely that the next stage will be open within the next month or so. We were still waiting to hear back about our application at the time of going to press, so we can't say much about the actual app!

Why should I try it?

Reddit is renowned for its rather dated design and, although there's a mobile version of the website (which is itself still in beta), it's not much fun to browse on a phone or tablet. The app should make it easier to find and read sub-reddits of interest, while avoiding the less salubrious content.

Why should I wait?

Well, as we explain above, you may not have a choice if Reddit doesn't open the beta to additional testers. There's also no confirmation of an iOS version, although there is an unofficial Reddit app called Alien Blue (alienblue.org).

WordsEye

www.wordseye.com

What is it?

Aspiring artists with negligible skills will love this amazing site, which lets you create works of art by typing rather than drawing. It turns the words you type or select into surreal three-dimensional images, which you can play around with to move objects into specific positions; adjust their size, colour and texture; and try different backgrounds and effects. You can also



add a title, captions and other elements, and share them in WordsEye's gallery.

Why should I try it?

We've never seen anything like WordsEye before, so if you want to try the latest web sensation before everyone else gets a chance, it's definitely worth signing up for an invitation to join the beta. Ours only took a few hours to come through and, in next to no time, we were conjuring up bizarre dreamscapes full of random animals, vehicles and furniture.

Why should I wait?

WordsEye is still in development so it's not yet smooth enough to generate perfect pictures instantly. We also found that some objects we wanted to include in our images weren't available in its database, although this is likely to improve as the community grows.



Broadband Deals

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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1		EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£1 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	CHEAPEST £12.00
2		Plusnet: Broadband	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00
3		TalkTalk: Broadband	£7.50 (HALF PRICE for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£45.00
4		Sky: Broadband	£10.00 (per month)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£120.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

*First-year cost does not include line rental. Cost is calculated at monthly price x12 with all introductory offers subtracted. Additional charges incurred outside of free inclusive calls not included in first-year cost.

** Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 16 December 2015.

Ofcom

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In the next issue of our sister title Computeractive...

**SNEAK
PREVIEW!**

Computer
active

- **WINDOWS 10 – ALL THE SETTINGS YOU MUST CHANGE** – Don't stick with Microsoft's dodgy defaults!
- Fix all your Android 6.0 problems
- Send massive files without having them blocked
- **PLUS:** tips and fixes for Task Manager, Skype and McAfee

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Take a Screen Break

How well do you remember 2015? Find out by taking our Quiz of the Year, and win a *Web User* back issues CD or mug for your trouble. Good luck!

2 0 1 5

1 Which program was unveiled in January 2015 under the codename Project Spartan?

2 What was the name of the adware that was pre-installed on Lenovo computers?

Lenovo

3 Which company bought the O2 mobile network in March for a reported £10.25bn?

4 What's the name of Channel 4's new TV-streaming service, which launched in April?



5 Which company was accused of listening to television viewers through its smart TVs?

6 What did the All England Tennis Club ban at Wimbledon because of their "nuisance value"?



7 How many people downloaded Windows 10 in its first month: 50 million, 75 million or 120 million?

8 How much does the most expensive Apple Watch – the 18-Carat Gold Edition model – cost in the UK?



9 How quickly can you get a package delivered if you sign up for Amazon Prime Now?

10 What did Mozilla start blocking by default in Firefox, describing it as "vulnerable" and "unsafe"?



11 What did Google change its name to, following a company restructure in August?

12 And finally, TalkTalk had a terrible year for security breaches. How many major hacks did it suffer in 2015?

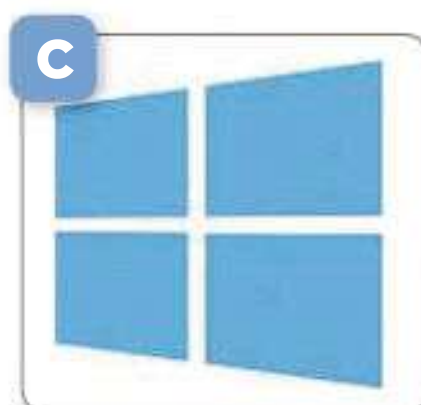
TalkTalk

HOW TO ENTER

Please email your answers to webuser@dennis.co.uk with '2015 quiz' in the title. The randomly chosen winner will receive a *Web User* 2014 Back Issues CD and *Web User* mug. Two runners-up will get *Web User* mugs.



CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE 2015 LOGOS PICTURED BELOW?



COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 3 KitSound Hive 2 Bluetooth speakers

The second version of KitSound's Hive boasts increased power and a clearer sound. Its design is sturdy enough to survive bumps, and it plays music continuously for 12 hours. We're giving away the Hive in purple, but it also comes in pink, white, blue and black. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'hive' in the subject line. For more information visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow [@KitSoundUK](https://twitter.com/KitSoundUK) on Twitter.



WORTH
£60
EACH

WIN 1 OF 4 Mophie Powerstation plus 3X external battery

Mophie's Powerstation plus 3X makes charging your smartphone, tablet and wearable products easier than ever. It provides enough power to recharge most smartphones up to three times and comes with a Lightning or Micro USB processor – we're giving away four of the Lightning version. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'powerstation' in the subject line. For more info visit uk.mophie.com and follow [@mophie_UK](https://twitter.com/mophie_UK) on Twitter.



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Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Get Marshmallow features on an old Android device with MM Launcher | bit.ly/launch387

Android 6.0 Marshmallow is currently only available on a few devices, but you can still enjoy some of its tools on an older phone or tablet

Marshmallow is Google's latest mobile operating system. It introduces a new apps menu that's very different to previous versions, and includes an app search bar and the option to save favourites.

Marshmallow isn't yet available on all Android devices – Google's own Nexus

products are still the best place to get it – but even if you own a different device, you can still enjoy some of these new features by installing MM Launcher. This is a launcher app designed to mimic the design of Marshmallow. It's very easy to set up and use, and doesn't require you to root your Android device.



1 Once you've installed the launcher, run it by tapping the AlphaDroids icon. You'll see some new icons and options. Tap the 'Launcher setting' button on the home screen to open the Settings page. To get the look and feel of the latest Android incarnation, tap the Marshmallow Drawer option. **1**



2 You can change the number of items in the drawer (in portrait and landscape modes) **1** and choose a drawer style (Horizontal, Vertical, 'Vertical with category' or List). **2** Make sure 'Enable A-Z on right side' **3** is selected. Choose an effect **4** and select Normal or Fast under Marshmallow Drawer Look.



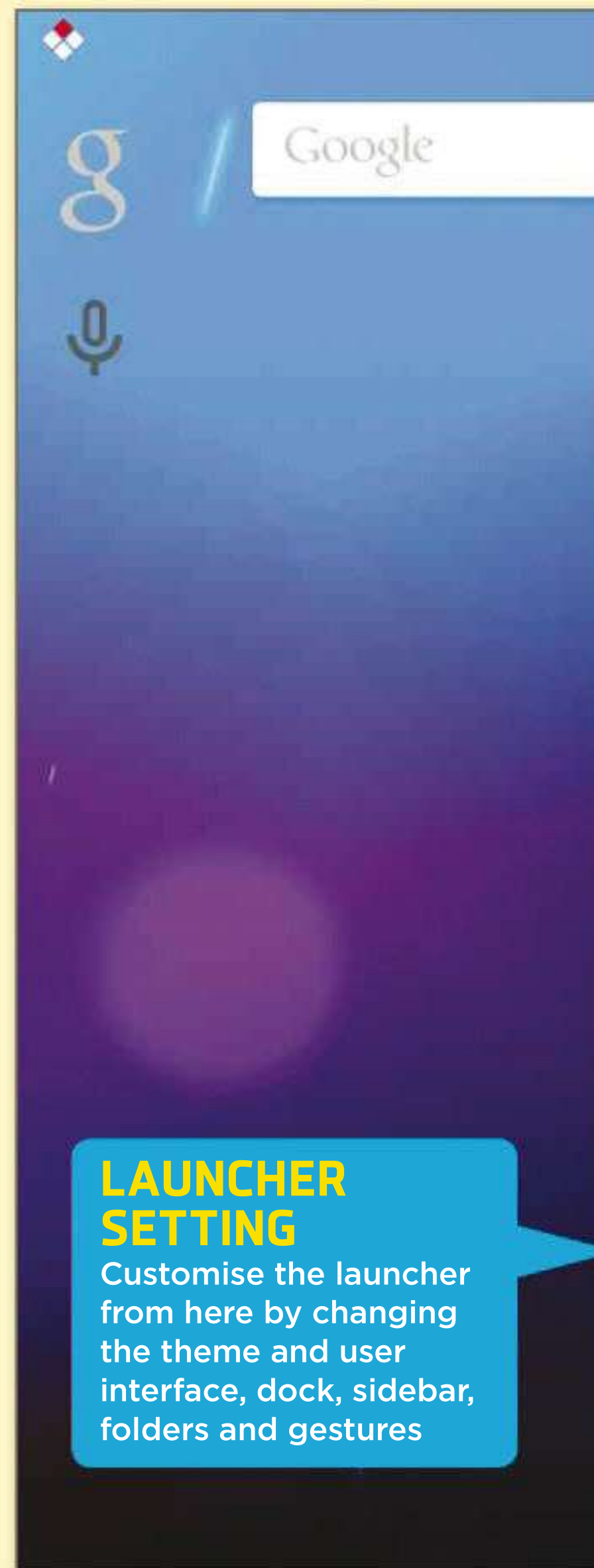
3 Open the drawer on the right-hand side. Tap the Apps icon to open a page showing all your installed apps. **1** In Horizontal style, you flick left and right between the pages. Tapping a letter in the strip on the right **2** will display all the apps that start with that letter. Tap the three-dot icon **3** to access the settings.

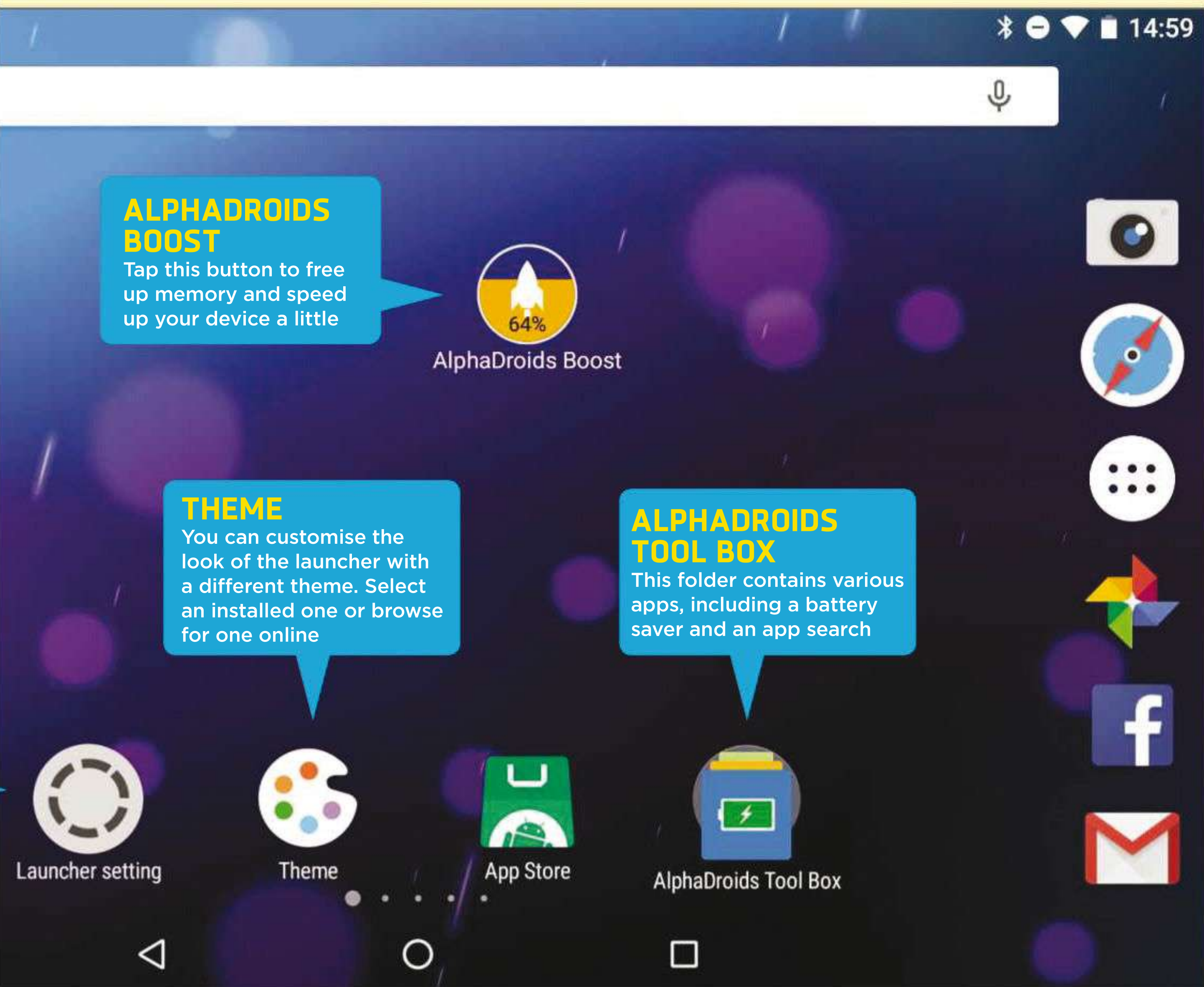


4 There is another tray you can slide in from the left-hand side that provides easy access to important settings, such as Wi-Fi, sound and brightness, **1** along with apps such as phone, flashlight, clock and calculator. **2** It also provides access to recently opened apps **3** and lets you add favourites. **4**



5 Swipe up from the centre of the home screen to reveal yet another menu. From here, you can change the wallpaper **1** and open the 'Launcher setting', **2** the Sys Setting **3** and AlphaDroids Prime. **4** This last one is the paid-for Pro version of MM Launcher, which costs £2.99.





6 To change your wallpaper, widgets and settings, go to the home screen, then tap and hold. You can scroll through the screens **1** and set any one as the default by tapping the Home icon. **2** Tap Wallpaper **3** to choose a new background or tap Widgets **4** to add extra features.



7 You can organise your home screens by creating folders for all your apps. Press down on any app to select it, then drag and drop it on top of another app to create a folder. You can then drag other apps into the folder. Tap the folder to view it. **1**



8 Tap 'Unnamed Folder' **1** to enter a title for your new collection. Tap the folder's three-dot icon **2** to access its settings menu. **3** Sort rearranges the folder's contents alphabetically. The other two options – Add and 'Make cover' – are only available in the paid-for Pro version.



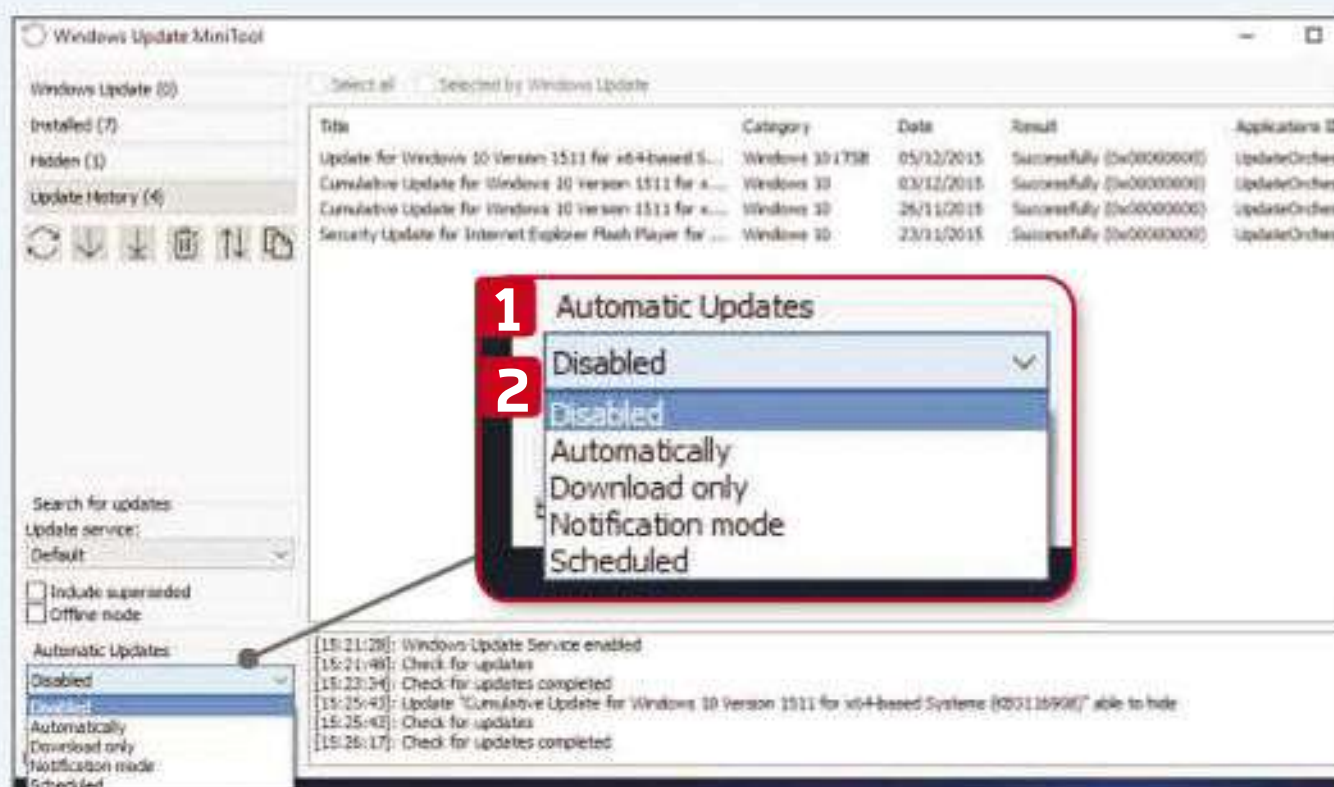
Get more control over Windows updates

Windows Update MiniTool: bit.ly/mini387 | ⌚ 20 mins | 🖥️ XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10

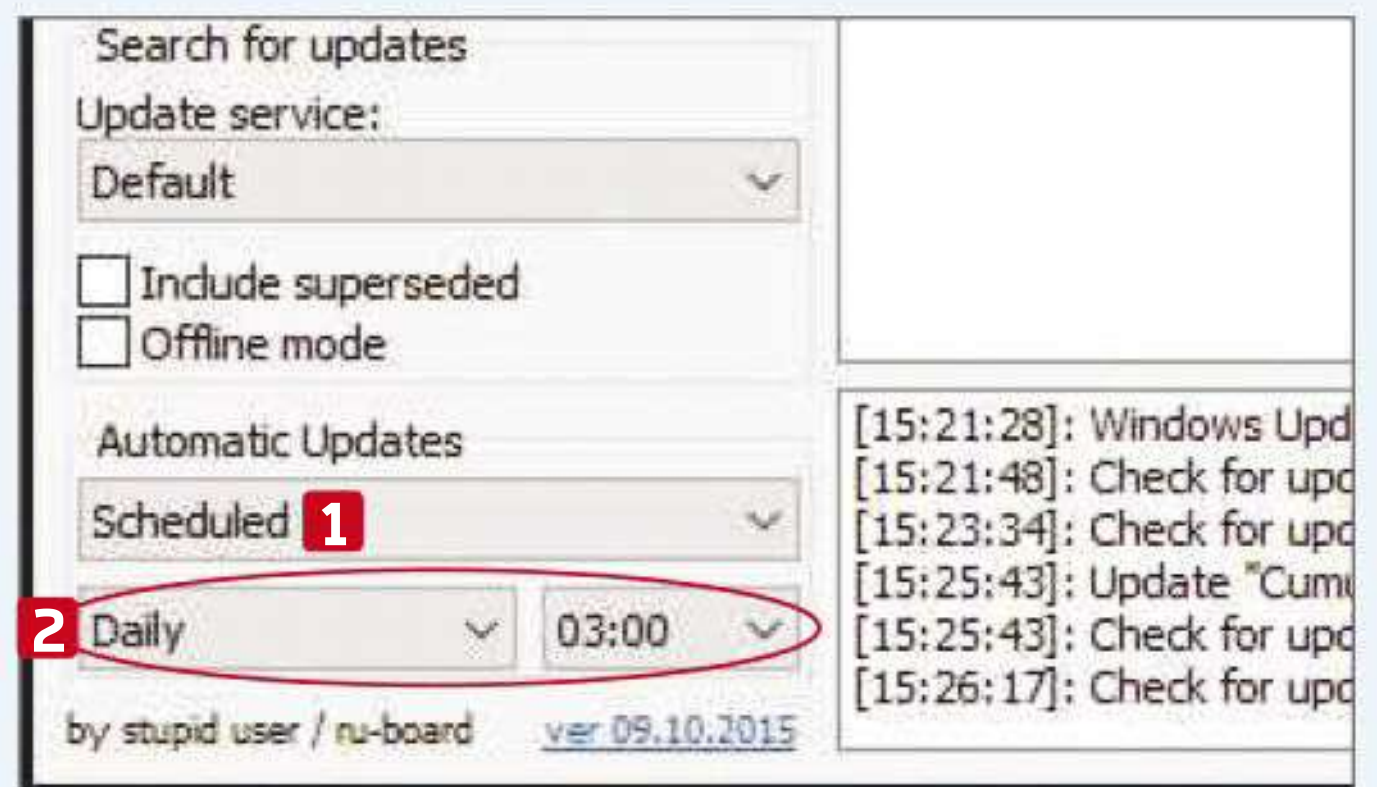
Windows Update's ability to automatically make changes to your PC was introduced in Windows Me back in 2000, and it's been both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, Microsoft updating your operating system without you having to do it manually can help plug security vulnerabilities, as well as add new features; on the other hand, some updates have caused problems, proving incompatible with certain hardware configurations, or just not working the way they were intended.

With Windows 10, Microsoft's update tool is back in the spotlight because the latest version doesn't allow you any control over your updates. This means you can't uninstall updates that don't appear to be working or force your PC to ignore updates you don't want.

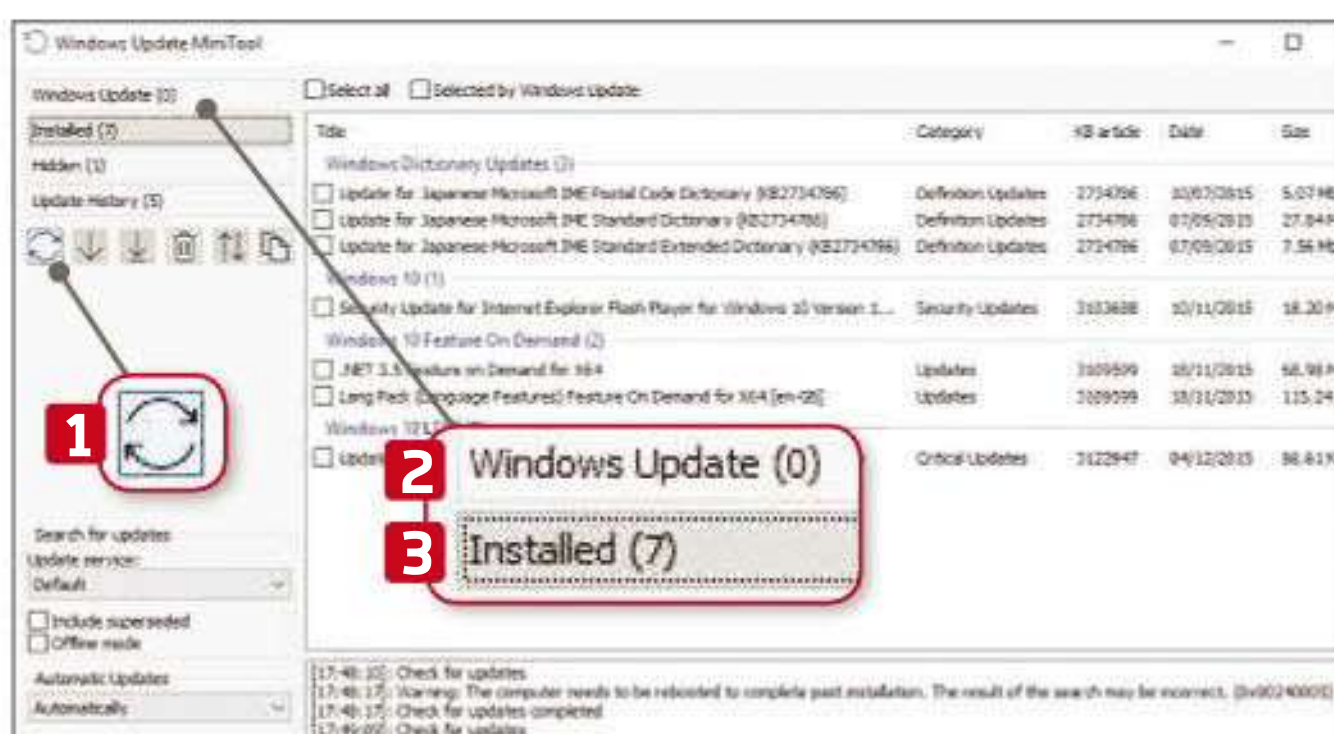
Windows Update MiniTool restores your control over Windows Update, so you can decide which updates are downloaded to your PC and whether or not you want to install them. It also works on previous versions of Windows as well as Windows 10.



1 Under Automatic Updates, **1** you can choose how Windows Update will behave. Use the drop-down box to select from the various options. Disabled **2** stops Windows Update from operating normally, so you'll have to manually search for and download any updates you want to use.



2 Automatically runs Windows Update as normal, 'Download only' doesn't install updates and 'Notification mode' installs updates but tells you when it's happening. Scheduled **1** brings up day and time options **2** so you can regularly run the update process at a time of your choosing.



3 Click the 'Check for updates' button **1** to make the software search Microsoft's updates server. Any new updates you haven't installed yet will appear in Windows Update. **2** Updates you already have are listed in Installed. **3**



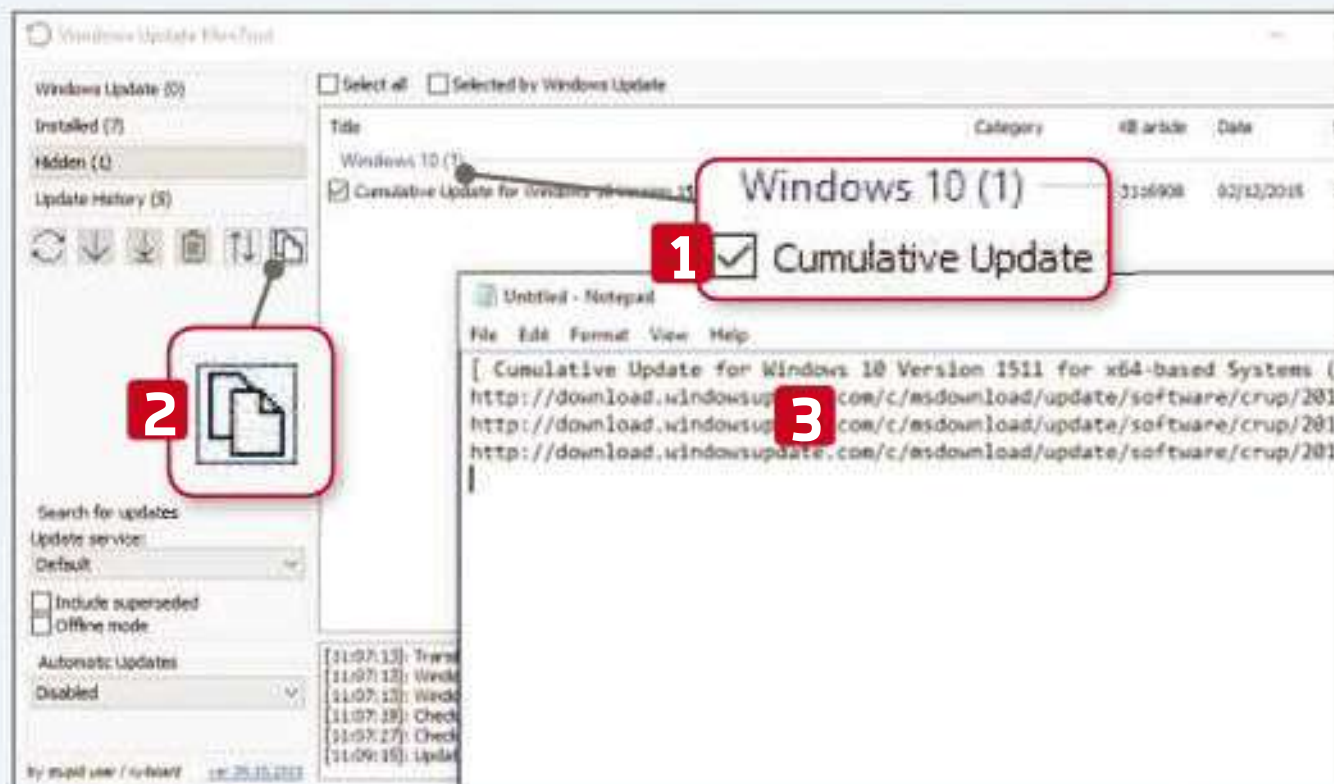
4 Click an update. **1** If an 'Update Support URL' link appears, **2** you can click it to go straight to the official Microsoft support site. **3** This will provide you with more information about the update so you can decide whether you need it or not.



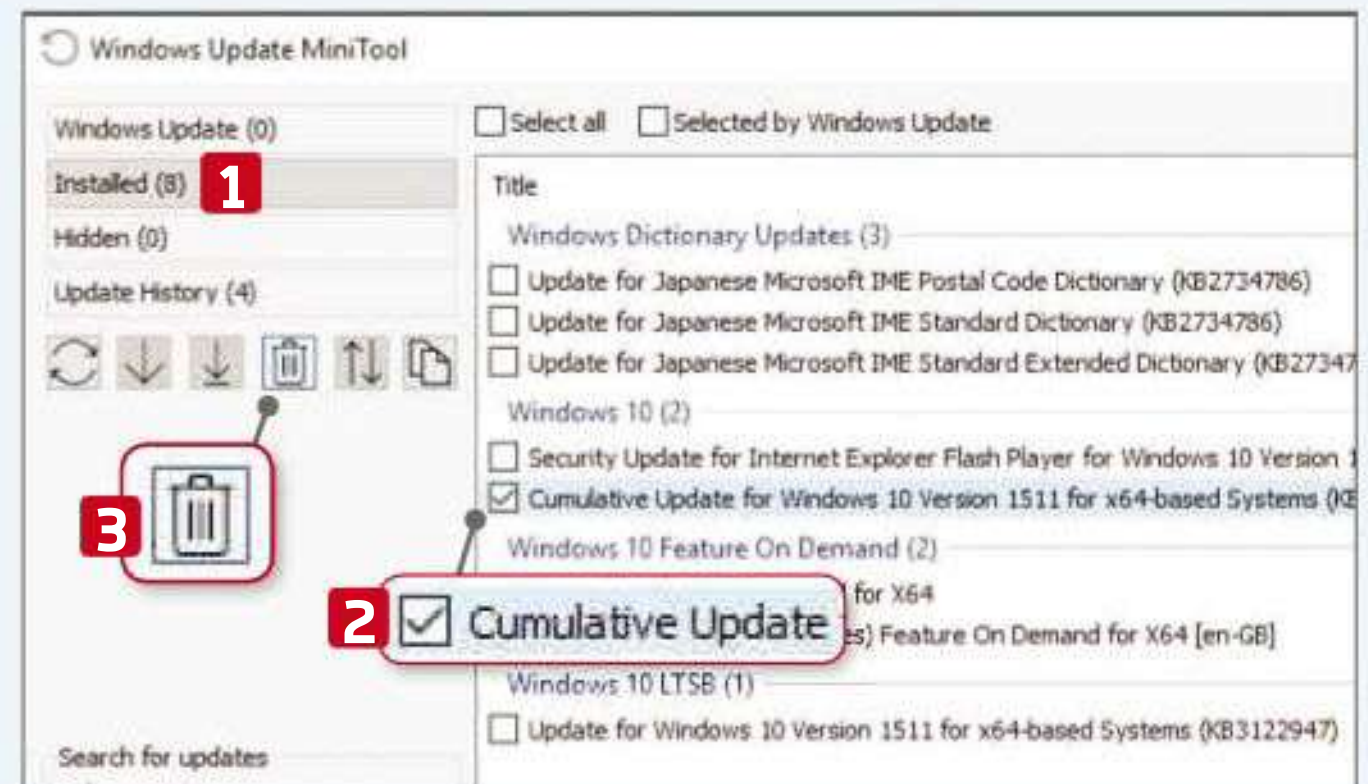
EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

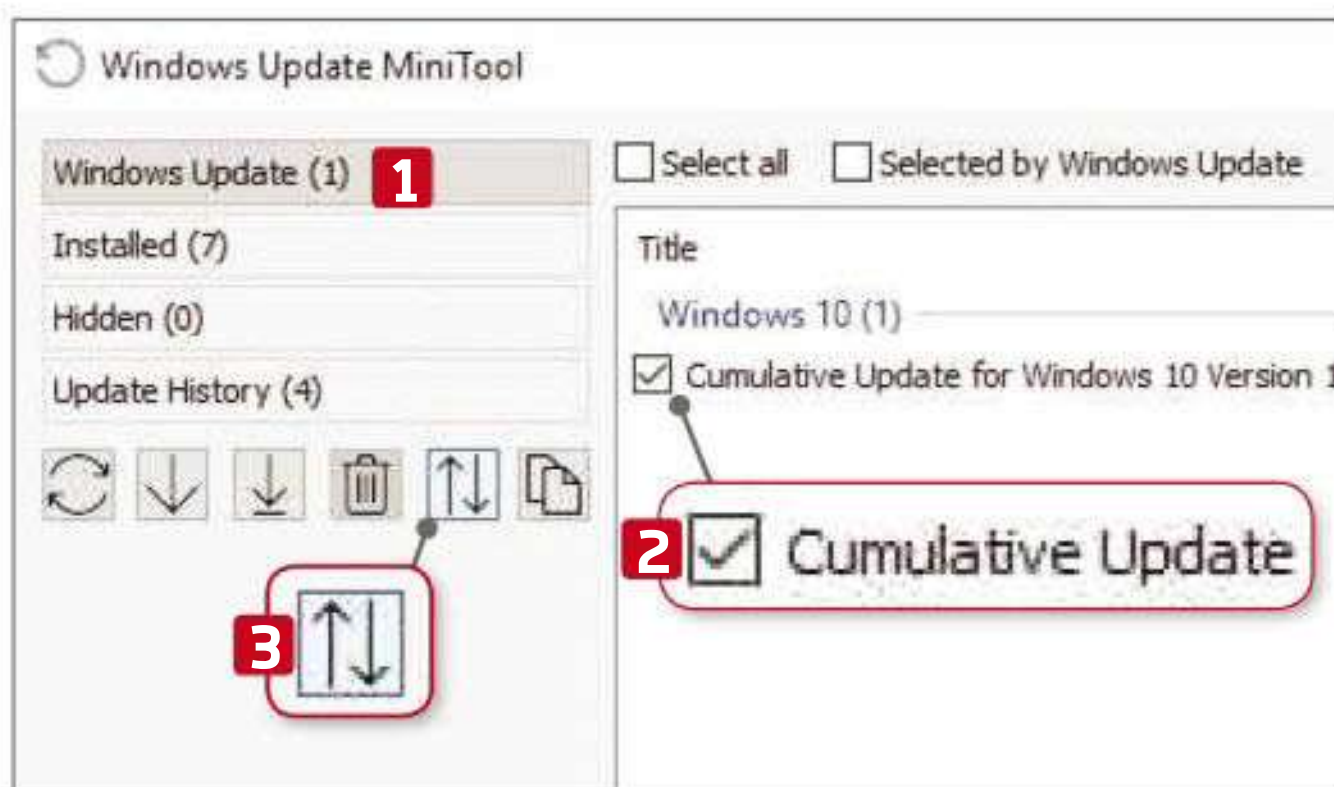
When you switch the Automatic Updates to Disabled, the software makes a change to the Windows Registry. You can remove the Registry change by setting the software back to Automatically and clicking 'Check for updates'. In a worst-case scenario, remove it yourself by going to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows\WindowsUpdate and deleting the AU folder.



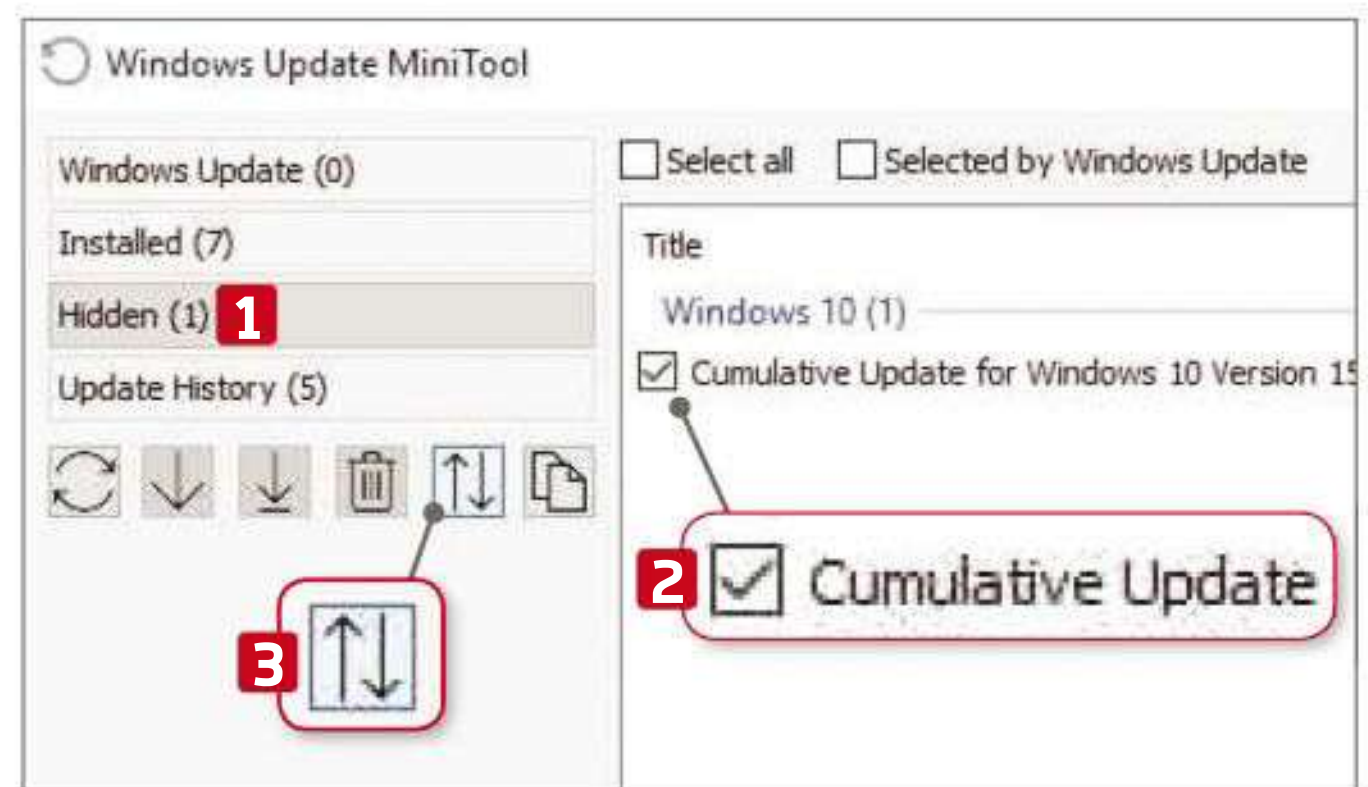
5 To get the download links for individual updates, select an update in any of the tabs, tick the box next to it **1** and click the Copy button. **2** The information is sent to the clipboard. Paste it into Notepad **3** to see it.



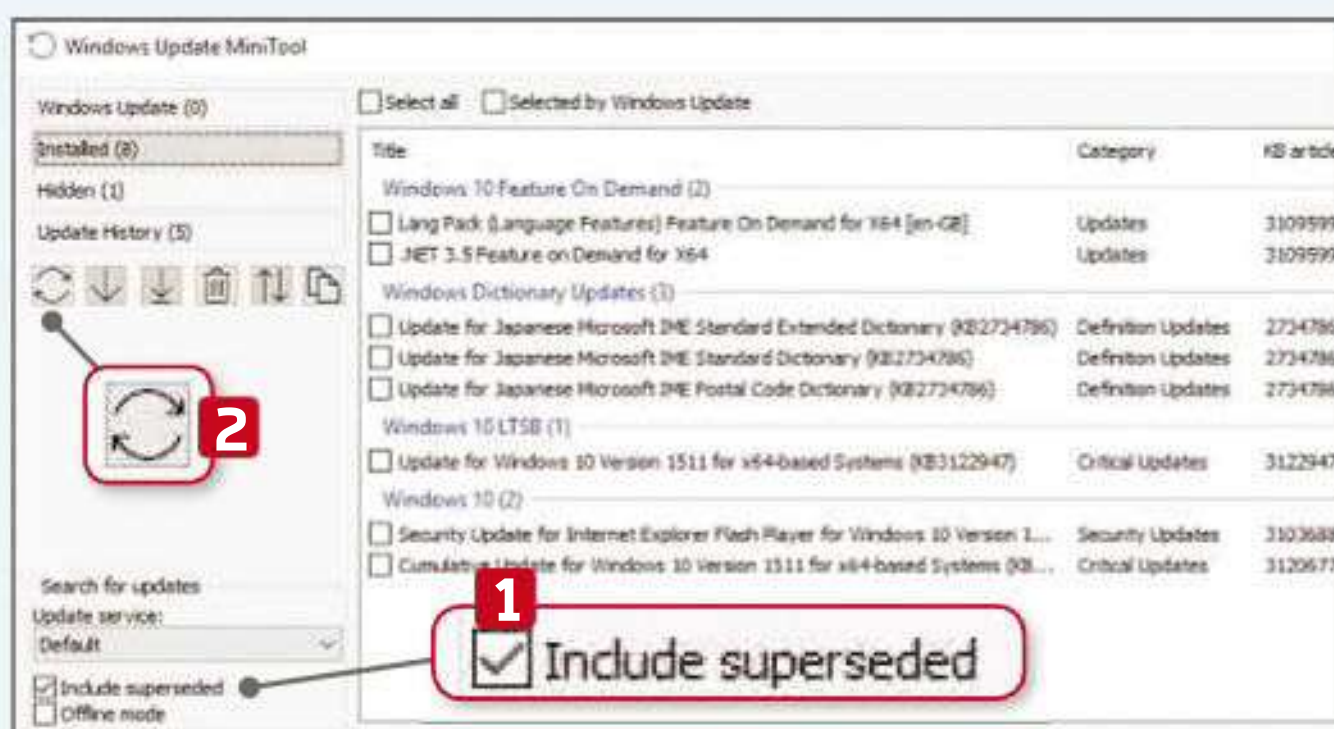
6 If your PC has started misbehaving and you suspect a particular update is responsible, you can remove it. Click the Installed tab, **1** tick the box next to the problematic update, **2** then click the Uninstall icon. **3**



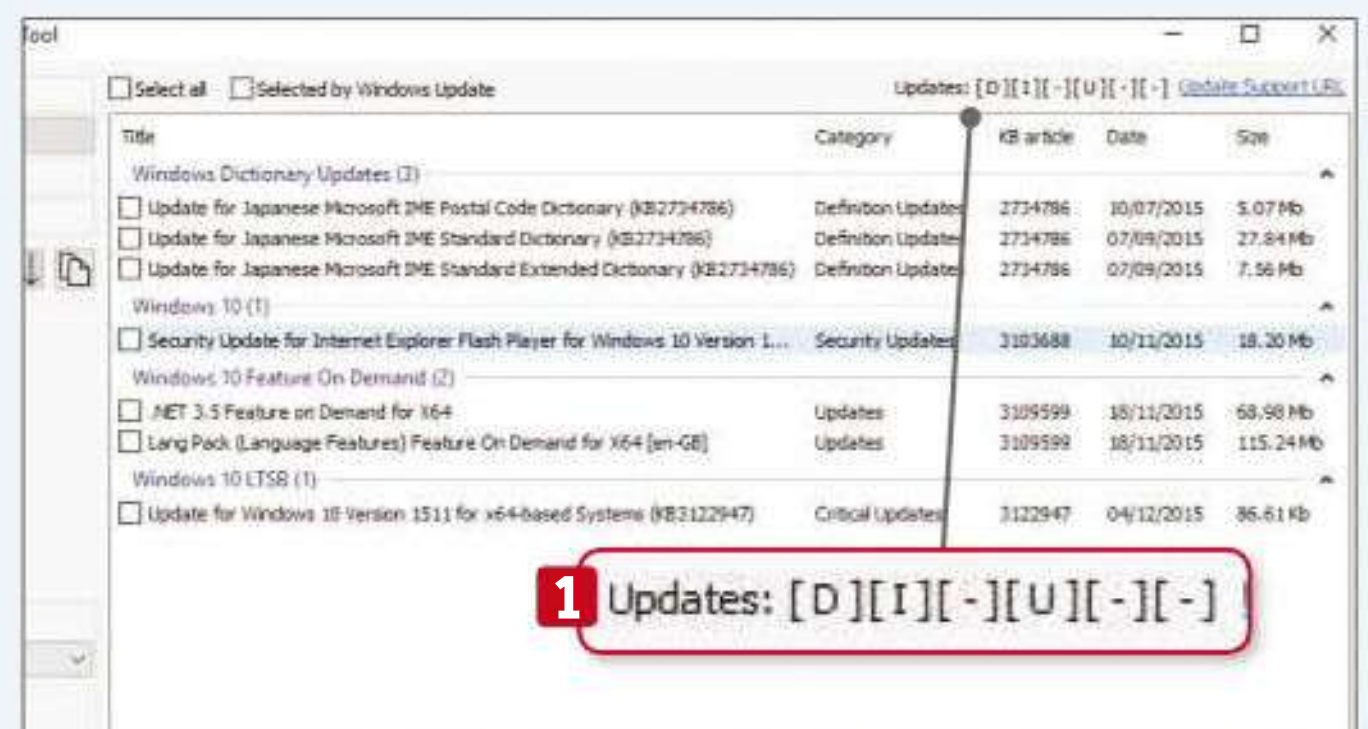
7 The software will attempt to uninstall the update and ask you to restart your computer. The update is moved back into the Windows Update folder. **1** If this has solved your problem, hide the update so it doesn't reinstall. Tick the box next to it **2** and click the Hide icon. **3**



8 A 'hidden' update is only hidden from Windows; you can still find it in the Hidden tab. **1** To reintroduce it later, select this tab, tick the box next to the update **2** and click the Hide icon again **3** to send it back to Windows Update.



9 If you've removed an update, it's worth looking further back to see if there's an older update that it superseded, which you could reinstall in its place. Put a tick in the box next to 'Include superseded' **1** and click the 'Check for updates' button. **2**



10 Highlight an update to see coded information about it. **1** From left to right, the brackets fill with the letters relevant to the update you've selected: D means Downloaded; I is Installed; M is Mandatory; U is Uninstallable; H is Hidden; and B is Beta.



Workshop 3

Track what's been happening on your PC

Do you know what people get up to on your PC when you're not around? If you want to find out, Apps Tracker works quietly in the background, recording information about what

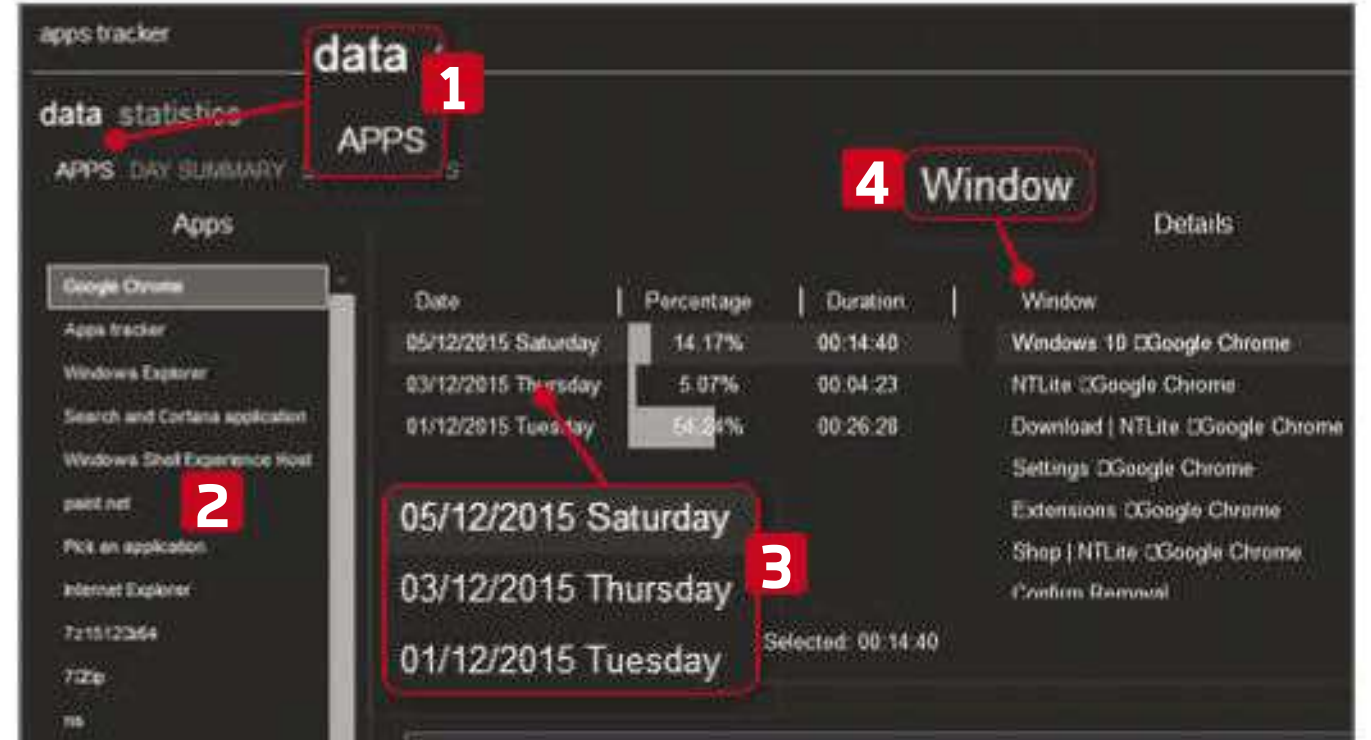
software is used (and for how long), along with the names of any documents and web pages opened. It'll even take regular, secret screenshots that you can review later.



Apps Tracker: www.theappstracker.com | 10 mins | Vista, 7, 8, 10



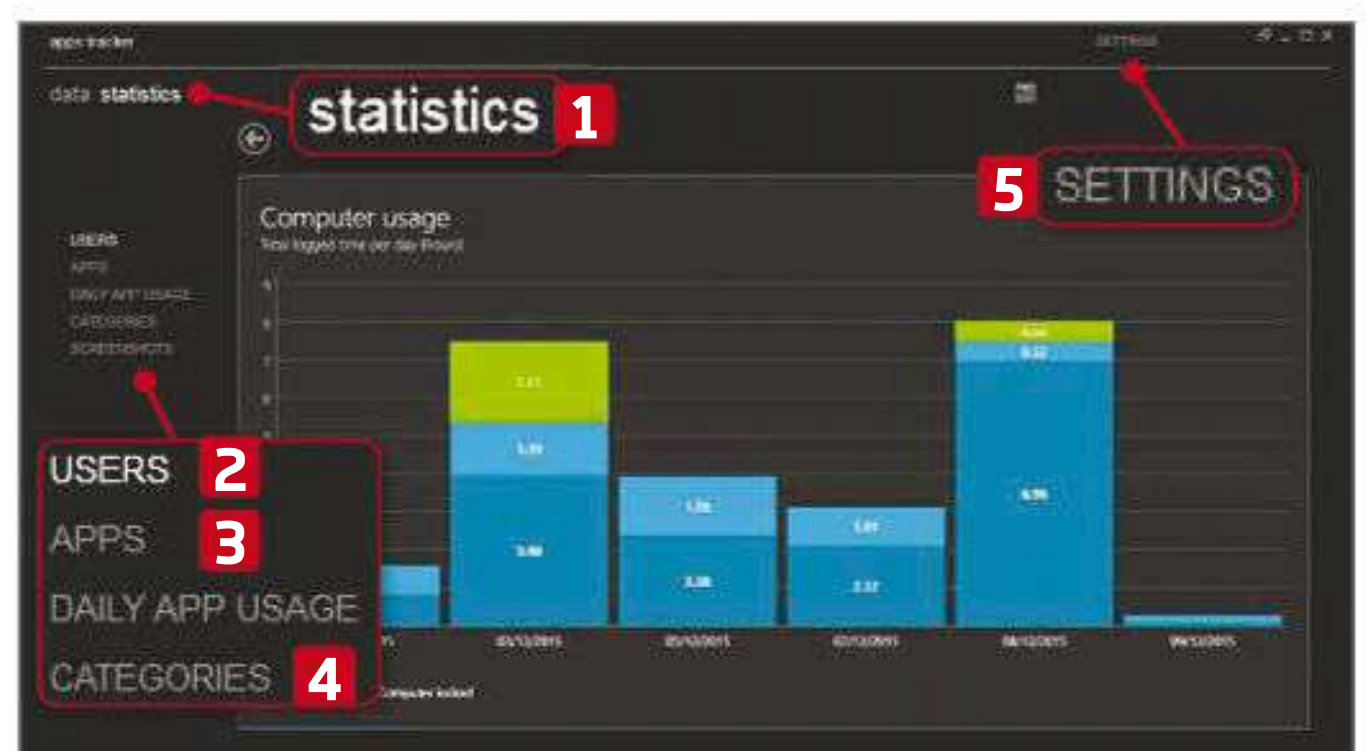
1 There are a few settings worth tweaking before you start. Click Settings, **1** then General, **2** then tick the box next to 'Run apps tracker on Windows startup'. **3** On the Tracking tab, **4** choose how long to keep logs for. On the Screenshots tab, **5** select how often you want to take screenshots.



2 Click 'data', then Apps. **1** Select a program from the list **2** to view it. The most used software is at the top. You can select a day **3** or highlight several to see cumulative stats. The Window column **4** tells you the window's heading, which can show you the name of the file or website being used.



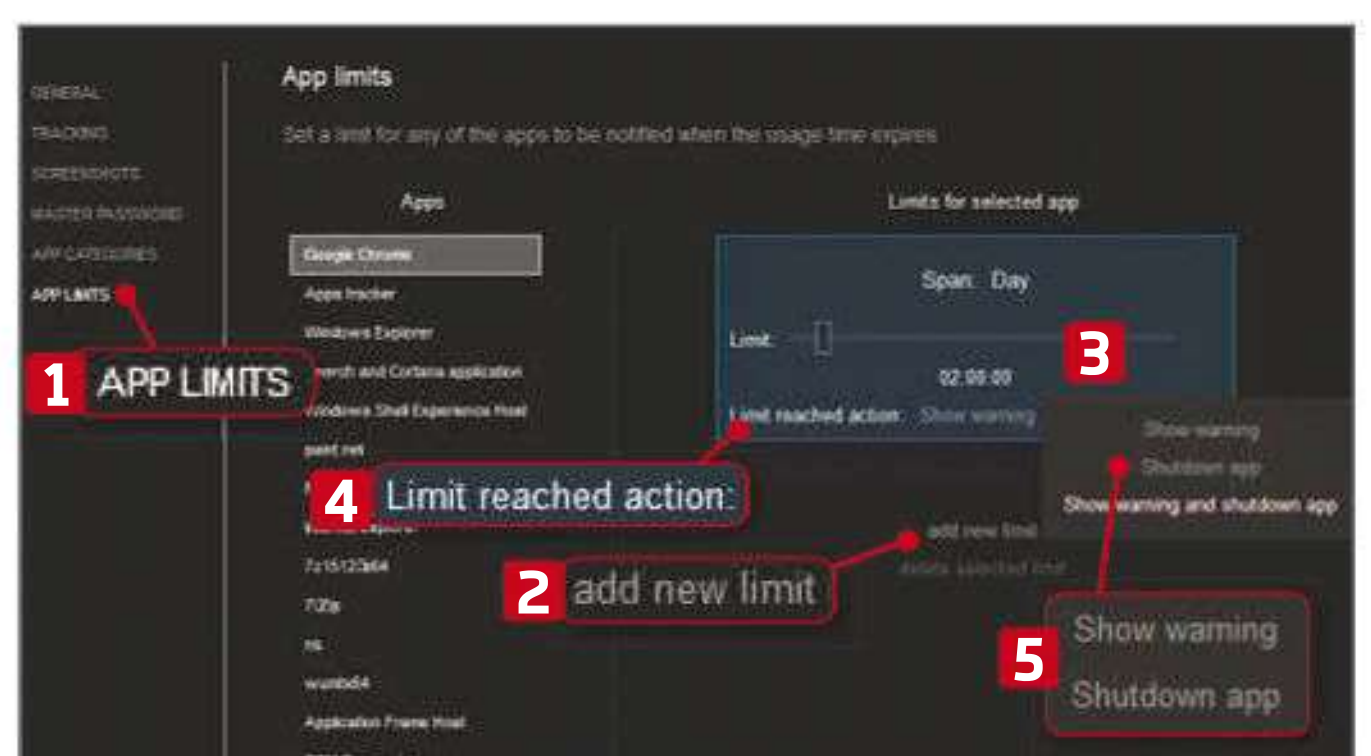
3 Click Screenshots. **1** All the screenshots taken are shown in date order, though you can also rearrange them by the name of the software **2** or the title of the window. **3** Click the screenshot you want to view, then click the thumbnail **4** to see it in detail. **5**



4 Click 'statistics' **1** to see your tracking data displayed as a graph. This makes it easier to see at-a-glance how much time your users have spent on your PC **2** and what they use most. **3** Categories **4** helps you group software together, but you need to configure it in the Settings. **5**



5 If you want to stop tracking because you're doing something private, click the box next to 'Tracking in progress'. **1** If you don't want other people to be able to do this, click Settings, **2** Master Password **3** and type and confirm your chosen word. **4** Click Save Changes. **5**



6 You can limit the time someone can spend using a particular program. In Settings, click App Limits, **1** choose a program and click 'add new limit'. **2** Use the slider **3** to set the time allowed and click 'Limit reached action' **4** to select what will happen when the limit is reached. **5**

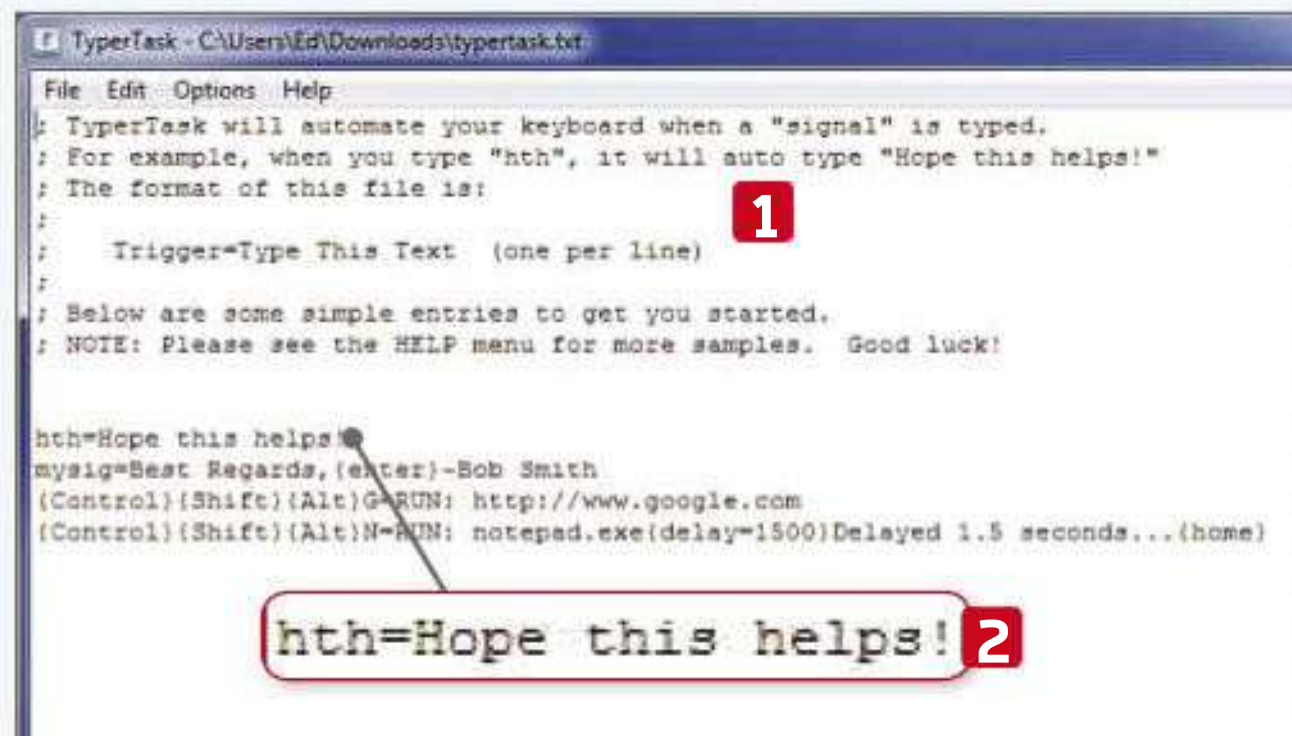


Create your own keyboard shortcuts

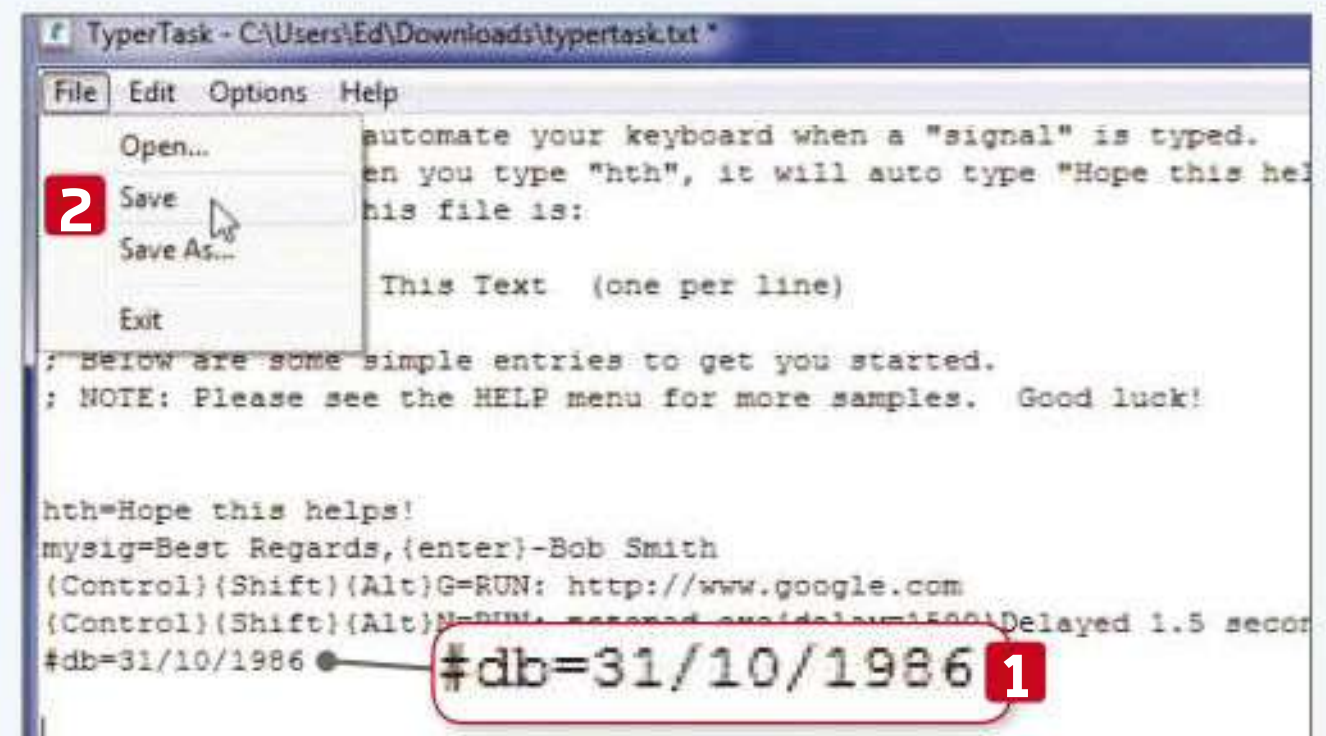
TyperTask is a free, portable application that automatically types text when you enter your own custom text-based 'signals'. These personalised keyboard shortcuts not only help you to input frequently

typed phrases more quickly but can also be used to perform more complex tasks such as loading websites, running applications and even replacing mouse clicks.

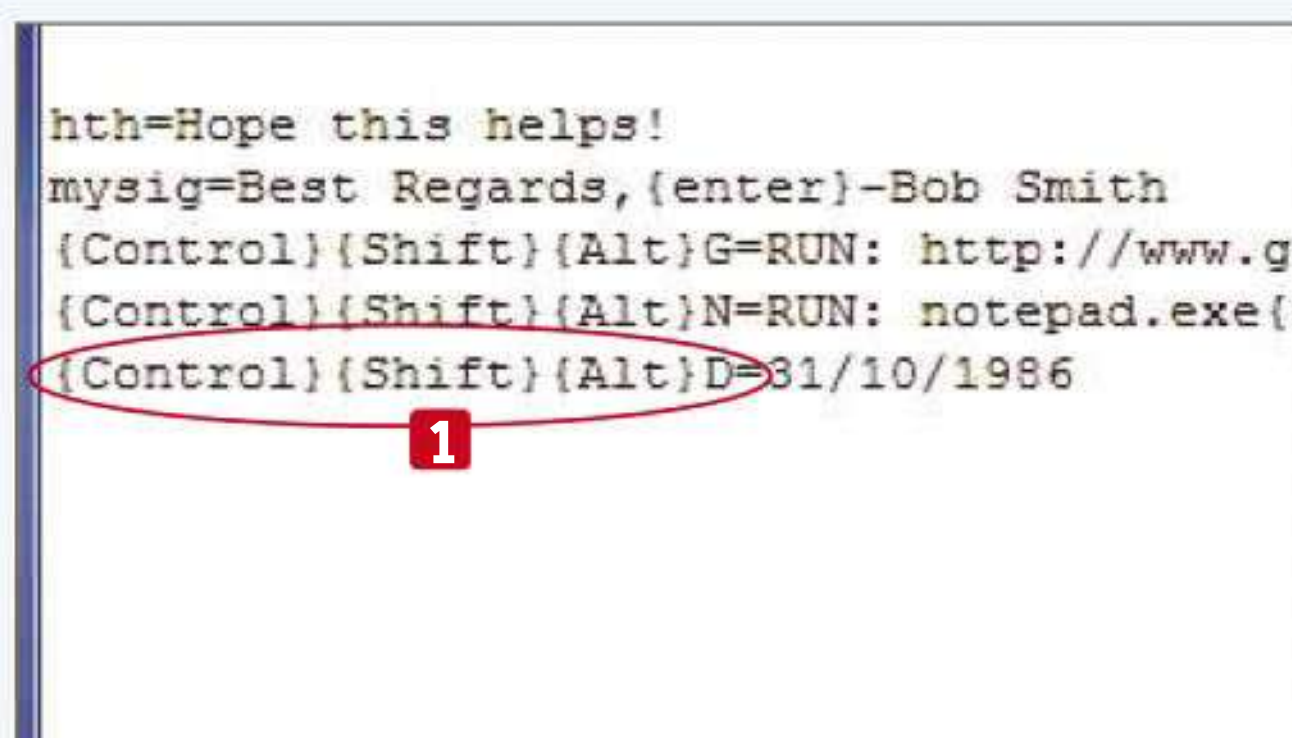
TyperTask: www.vtaskstudio.com | 🕒 10 mins | 🖥️ XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10



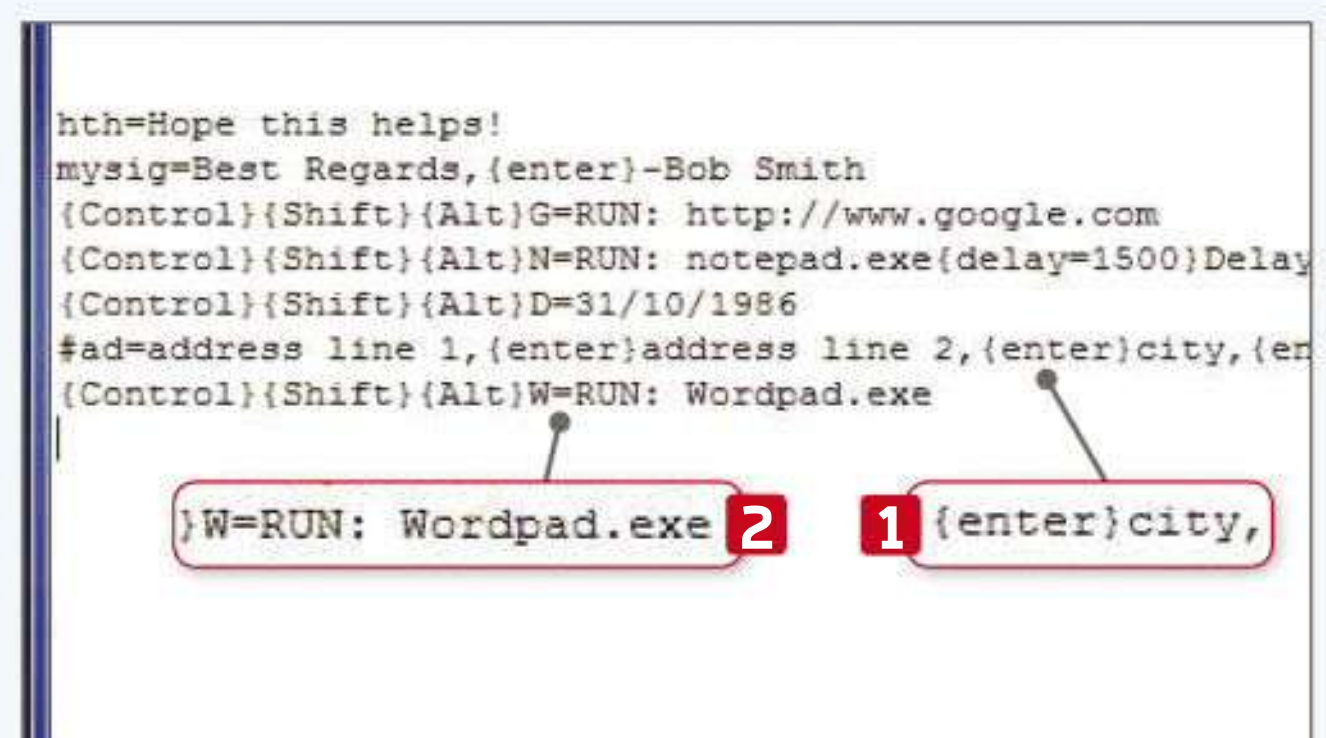
1 Download and run TyperTask. A text file appears, which explains how the application works and lets you set up your own shortcuts. **1** Some example shortcuts are set up already, such as one that lets you type 'Hope this helps!' by simply entering hth. **2**



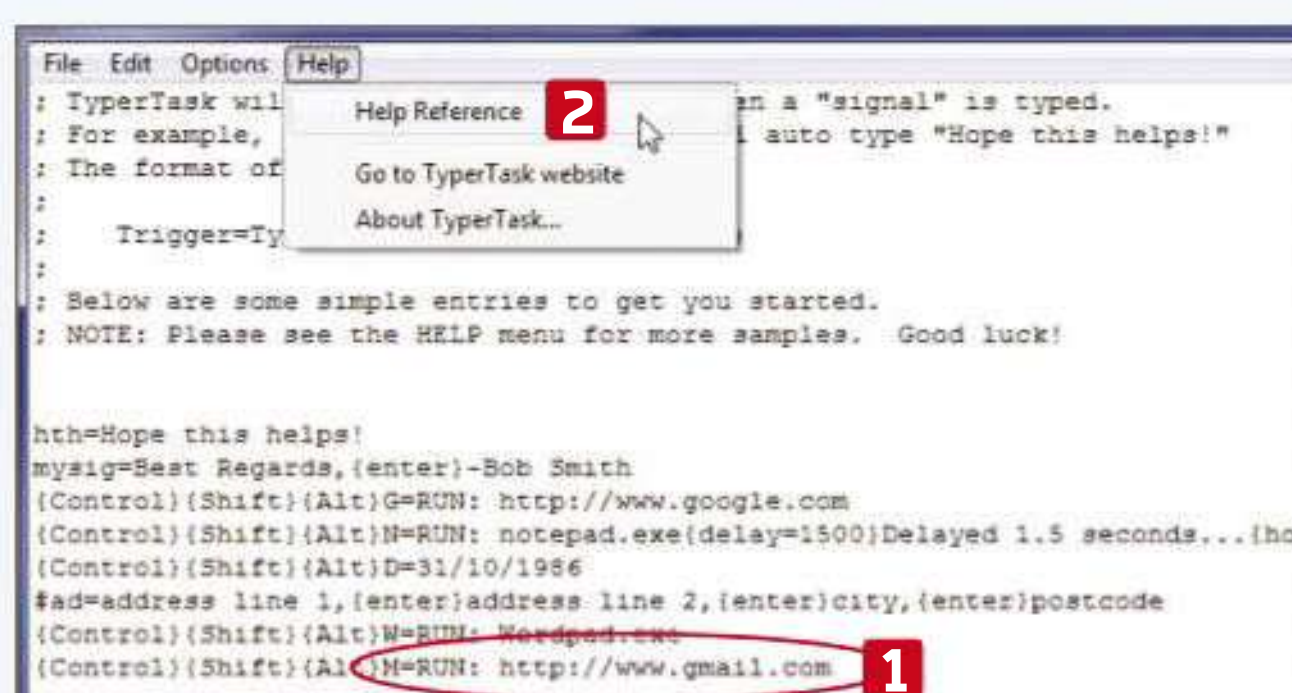
2 To create a shortcut, type on a new line the signal (trigger) you want to use, followed by an equals sign (with no spaces) and the text that you want TyperTask to replace it with. For example, #db=31/10/1986. **1** Click Save **2** in the File menu to update the program's settings.



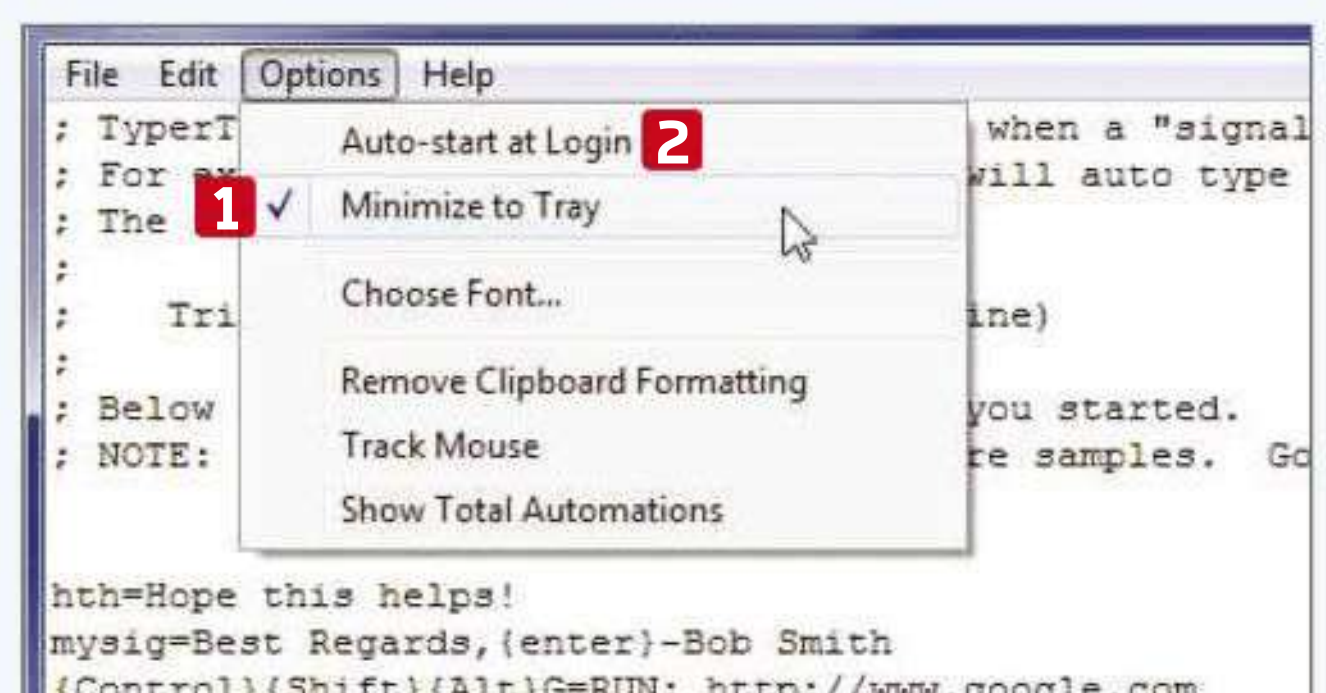
3 Make sure that the signal you use is a unique trigger that won't conflict with normal typing. The easiest way to do this is to use a special character such as # in your signal, but you can also use unique key combinations such as Ctrl+Shift+Alt+D. **1**



4 You can also add formatting in your text: for example, adding {enter} creates a line break. **1** To make a TyperTask shortcut launch an application, type RUN: followed by a space and the full name of the executable file you want to launch. **2**



5 Web pages can be launched in the same way, by entering the full URL of the page you want to load. **1** For a full list of key codes and more information about the advanced actions you can perform using TyperTask, click Help Reference **2** in the Help menu.



6 By default, TyperTask is set to 'Minimize to Tray'. To disable this, click Options and untick the appropriate setting. **1** You can also set the program to 'Auto-start at Login' **2** from this menu.

Weekend Project

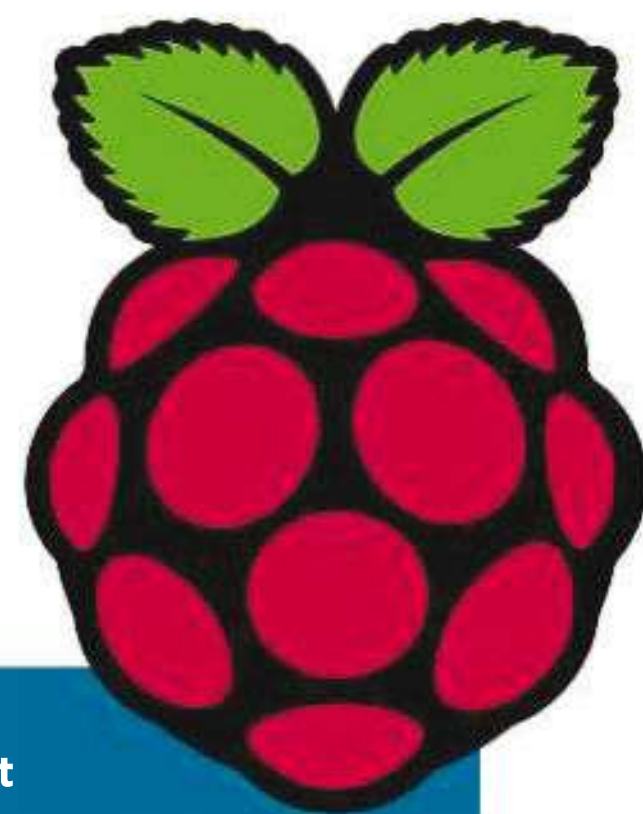
Get to grips with some serious PC DIY to boost your computer's performance



How to...

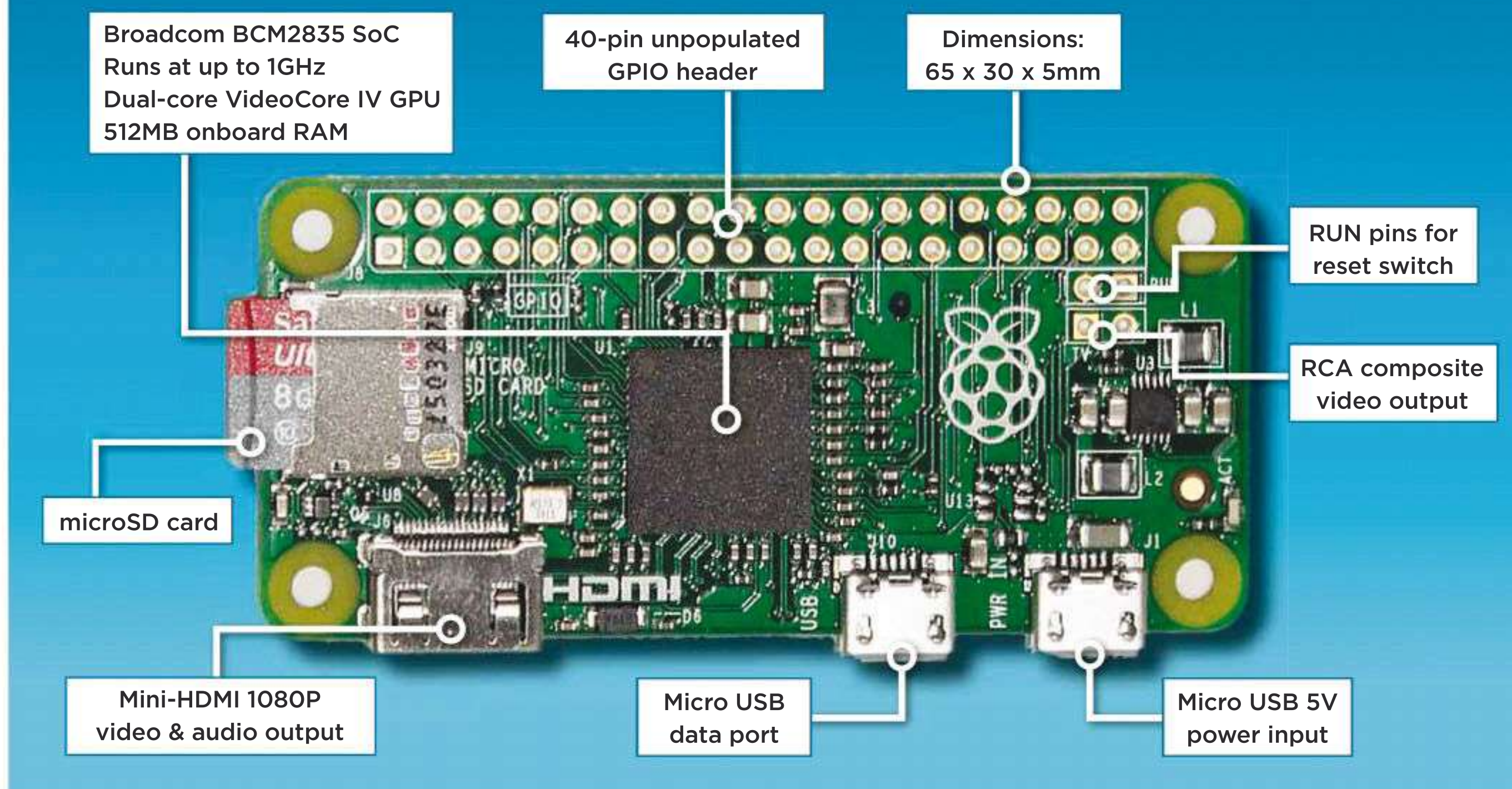
Get started with Raspberry Pi Zero

Wayne Williams checks out the latest Pi, which costs less than a fiver but is just as versatile as its predecessors



Priced at a mere £35, the Raspberry Pi 2 Model B represents great value for money. The uncased, credit-card sized computer is powerful enough to run the likes of Minecraft and can be used for all sorts of projects, from emulating an arcade machine to powering a weather station. If you've always fancied owning

a Pi, but weren't sure if you'd get enough from it to justify the (albeit modest) outlay, the good news is there's now an even cheaper option available, which can do much the same as its bigger brother, but costs just £4. Yes, that's not a mistake, you can now pick up a fully programmable computer for the price of a pint.



What is the Raspberry Pi Zero?

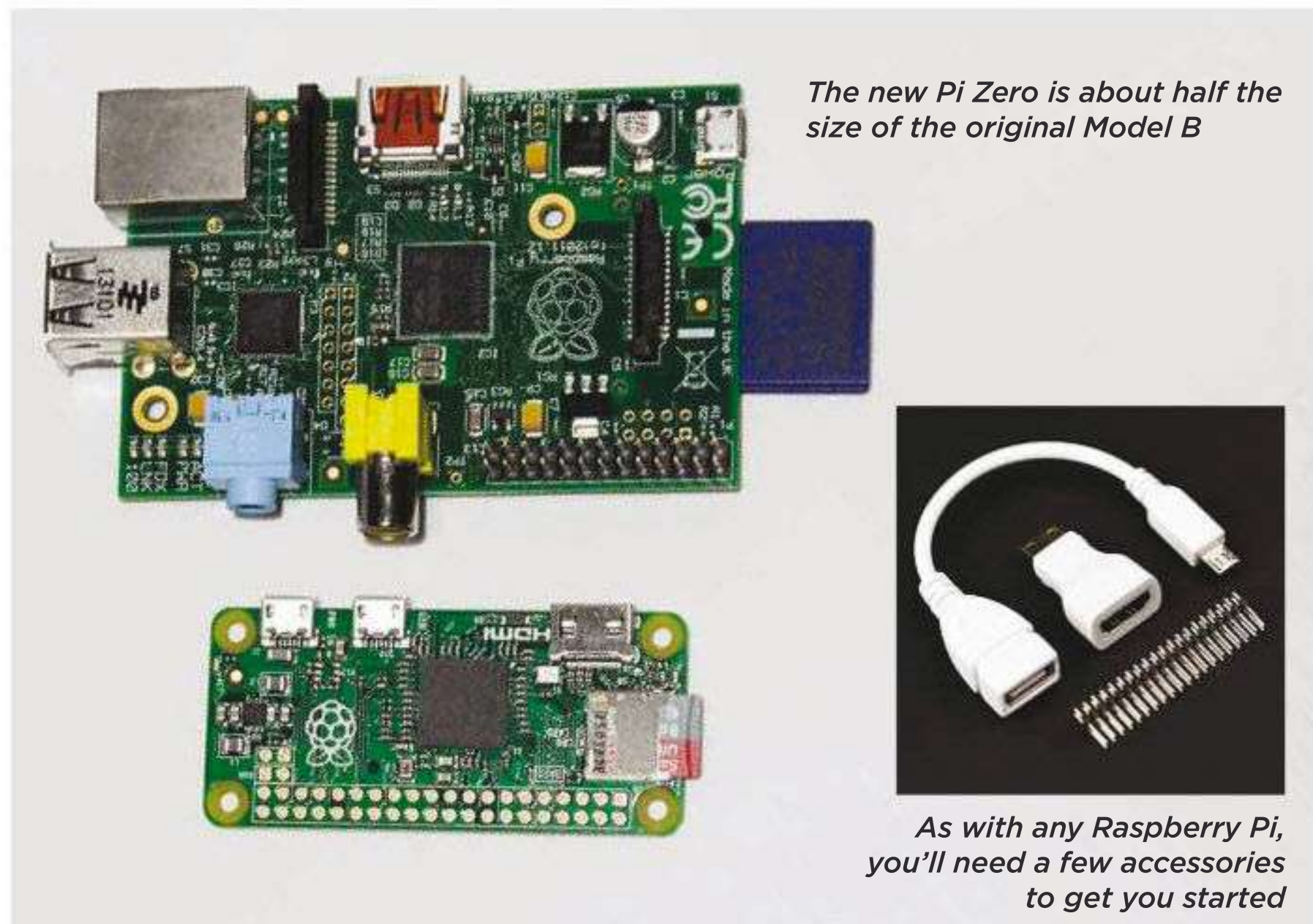
The Pi Zero is a bare-bones device that measures just 65 x 30 x 5mm (half the size of a Model A Raspberry Pi). It runs the Raspbian operating system along with all the popular applications including Scratch, Minecraft and Sonic Pi. You can see the full specification of the device as it comes in the box, top-right, on the opposite page.

Where to buy the Pi Zero

Shopping for a Pi Zero isn't as easy as buying a regular Raspberry Pi because its remarkable £4 price tag has meant that the new computer sold out its first batch in just under 24 hours. The device was also given away free on the cover of MagPi, the official Raspberry Pi magazine, which also sold out quickly. However, more stocks of the Pi Zero

are expected at the time of writing, so don't go paying over the odds for one on eBay. You should soon be able to buy one from element14 (bit.ly/ele387), The Pi Hut (bit.ly/pihut387) or Pimoroni (pimoroni.com/zero).

There are also various Pi Zero bundles available that include the device itself plus a range of extras, such as rubber feet (to protect the board), cables, GPIO



RASPBERRY PI ZERO SPECIFICATIONS

- Single-core Broadcom BCM2835 1GHz ARM11 processor (overclocked to be 40% faster than the original Raspberry Pi)
- 512MB of memory
- microSD card slot
- Mini-HDMI socket for 1080p 60fps video output
- Micro USB OTG (On-The-Go) sockets for data and power
- Unpopulated* 40-pin GPIO (General-Purpose Input/Output) header for use with HAT (Hardware Attached on Top) and pHAT (proto-HAT) add-on boards.
- Unpopulated* composite video header

* 'Unpopulated' means there are holes present, ready for the pins to be added later, should you choose to

header pins and more.

You should also factor in the cost of delivery. However, because the device is so light, you can expect this to be as little as £2.50.

What you'll need

In addition to the Raspberry Pi Zero, you will need the following extras to get it set up and working:

- Screen – either a TV or a computer monitor
- Mini-HDMI cable, or full-sized HDMI cable with a Mini-HDMI adapter – to connect the Pi to the display
- Micro USB-to-USB adapter (to allow the use of standard-sized USB devices). We recommend the Inateck HB3001G OTG Hub with Card Reader (bit.ly/

[inateck387](http://bit.ly/inateck387)), which we featured in last issue's USB OTG project. This has three USB 2.0 ports and costs around £10 from Amazon

- USB keyboard and mouse
- Ethernet cable and a RJ45-to-USB converter, or a Wi-Fi USB dongle, to connect the Pi to your network and the internet
- microSD card for the operating system. This will need to be at least 8GB
- Micro USB cable or power supply to power the device

The chances are that you'll already be in possession of a few of these cables and peripherals, but you can buy any of the items you're missing from the same place you bought your Pi Zero or from most computer-accessory retailers. The

Swag Store (swag.raspberrypi.org) sells a Raspberry Pi Zero Adaptor Kit for £4, which includes a mini HDMI-to-HDMI adapter; micro-B USB-to-USB A female cable; and a 2x20 0.1in male GPIO header.

You can also invest in a protective case for your new device, but the Pi Zero is so small you could just as easily make your own out of Lego – or even cardboard!

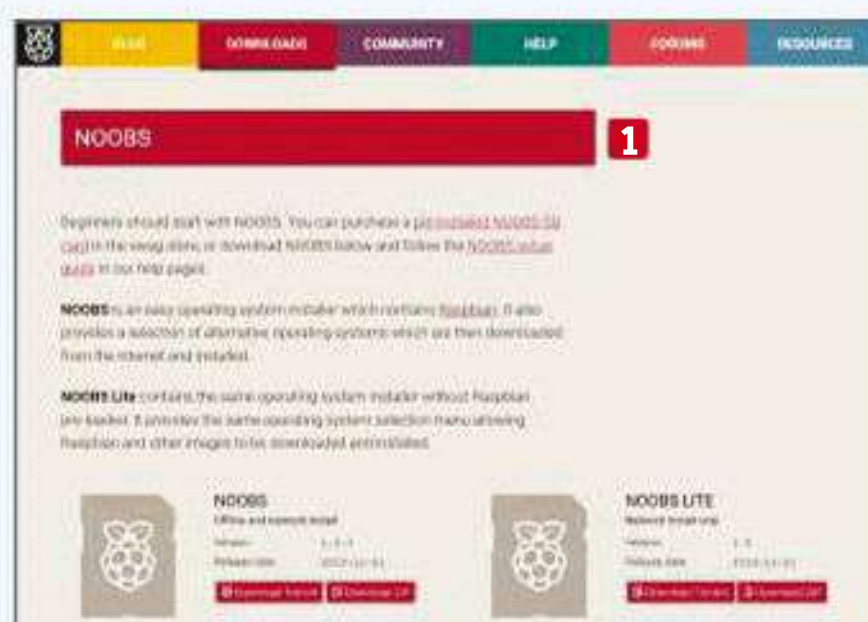
Once you've got your Pi Zero and everything else you need to get started, you can follow our Mini Workshop, below, for guidance on connecting it up. Our Mini Workshop on page 61 shows you how to get started with the Pi Zero's operating system.



MINI WORKSHOP | Get Raspberry Pi Zero up and running



1 Start by connecting the required hardware to your Pi Zero. This includes plugging the device into a TV or monitor using a Mini-HDMI cable or adapter; **1** adding a Micro USB power supply; and connecting a USB OTG hub for the keyboard and mouse. **2** Before powering it up, you'll need to add an operating system.



2 There are a few operating systems available but you want Raspbian. The easiest option is to use NOOBS (New Out Of the Box Software). Download it from bit.ly/noobs387 **1** and unzip the contents to a folder on your PC. Connect a microSD card to your computer (using an adapter if necessary), then drag the contents from the folder to the card.



3 Insert the microSD card into your Pi and plug in the power. NOOBS will load. Select Raspbian in the menu **1** and click Install. **2** It will take a while for all the content to be copied over, so be patient. Once the installation has finished, your Pi Zero will boot to the Raspbian Desktop and you can start using it.

WebUser Bookstore

NEW!

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID



If you use an Android tablet or phone, our new 148-page book will tell you how to get the most out of your device. It explains everything you need to know about the latest versions of Android (Lollipop and Marshmallow), so you'll feel confident that you won't get left behind. We also reveal the best apps for everything you'll ever want to do, and expose the dodgy apps that make your device slow and drain the battery. And as hackers continue to switch from PCs to phones and tablets, we'll show you how to stay safe.

**BUY IT NOW FROM
AMAZON**

at bit.ly/defguidetoandroid

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

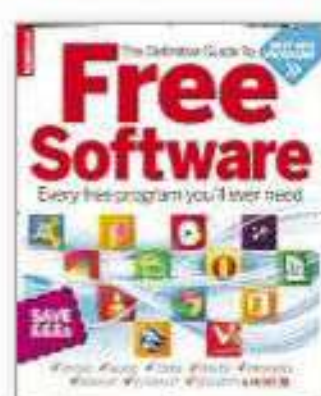
This 148-page book is the only guide you need to Microsoft's fantastic new operating system. You'll learn how to master all the new tools and software, and how to upgrade without losing anything. It has been updated to include fixes for problems that have appeared since Windows 10 launched.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

Free software can be a worry. Is it as good as a paid-for package? Will it sneak junk on to your PC? Does it nag you to update to a premium version? In our new 148-page book *The Definitive Guide to Free Software*, we recommend only the best free programs that deliver high-quality features and no nasty surprises.



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at bit.ly/guidetosoftware

RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS

The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking the world by storm. It's ideal for children of all ages to experiment with, play games and learn valuable skills. We've updated this 148-page book for 2015 to include instructions on mastering the new Pi models (A+ and B+).



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at bit.ly/rasbook



Rachel Rayns



What can you do with the Raspberry Pi Zero?

The Pi Zero isn't as powerful as the Raspberry Pi 2, but it's faster than the original A, B and B+ models, which means it should be capable of performing most of the tasks you can run on a full-blown Pi. There are lots of projects you can use it for, such as housing it in an original Xbox controller and using it as emulator (bit.ly/pixbox387); turning it into a "Match-Bot" robot inside a match box (bit.ly/matchbot387); and using it to power a wearable glove with flashing LEDs (twitter.com/RachelRayns). We looked at using the Raspberry Pi in a smart doorbell back in Web User 383 (bit.ly/webuser383) and the Pi Zero, which is

roughly the same size as a lot of regular doorbells, would be perfect for this, too. If you're planning on using the Pi for projects, you may need to add a HAT but that's a very cheap add-on.

The device's small size means it can be used in projects where a regular Pi would be too large, and its low price means you'll be able to take risks that you perhaps wouldn't with a £35 Pi 2.

The Raspberry Pi Foundation sells a 7in touchscreen display for £48 which you could use with the Pi Zero to build a really low-cost tablet or infotainment system (at the time of writing, the Pi Zero wasn't listed as one of the models compatible with the screen, but there's no obvious reason why it won't be). ■

Terence Eden



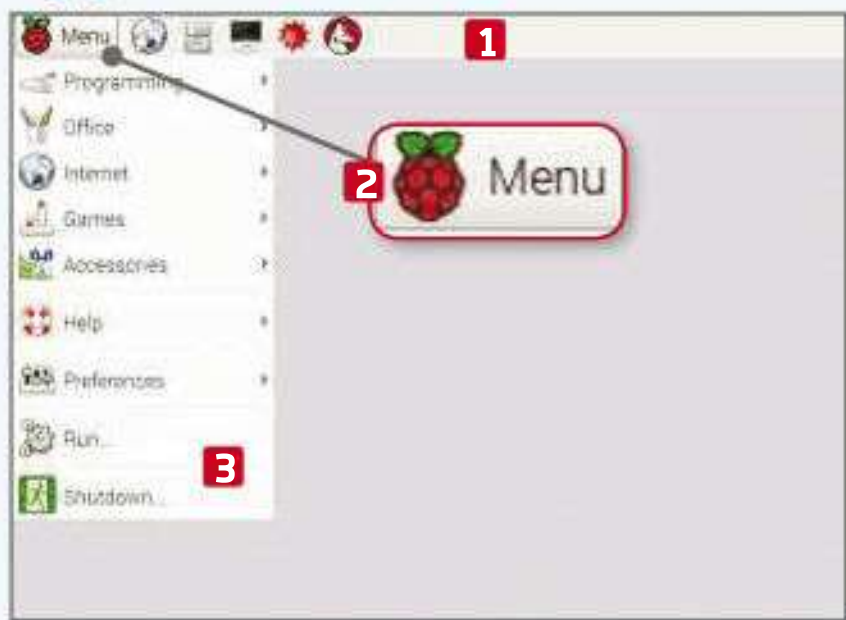
RASPBIAN SOFTWARE

The Raspbian OS comes with a range of programs:

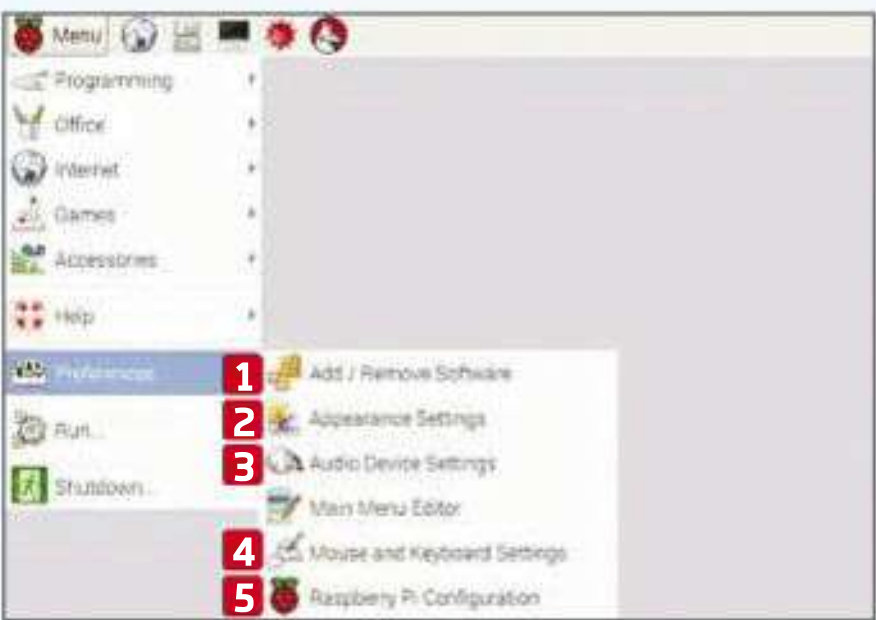
- **Epiphany** Web browser
- **Claws Mail** Email software
- **LibreOffice** Office suite
- **Scratch** Basic programming tool
- **Sonic Pi** More advanced programming tool
- **Wolfram Language** Programming language
- **Mathematica** Computational programming tool
- **Python 2 & 3 (IDLE)** Python programming language
- **Python Games** Collection of games
- **Minecraft Pi** Pi version of the popular game



MINI WORKSHOP | Getting started in Raspbian



1 Raspbian is based on Debian Linux, which you may not be familiar with but don't worry – it's easy enough to master. There's a taskbar at the top of the screen, **1** which shows open windows, and a Pi button, **2** which works like the Start button in Windows. Click this to access all the installed software and settings. **3**



2 The Preferences menu lets you add and remove software **1** and adjust the appearance of the Desktop, **2** including its colour, wallpaper, and the position and size of the menu bar. You can also access the audio settings, **3** and configure your mouse and keyboard. **4** Raspberry Pi Configuration **5** lets you customise the Pi Zero's behaviour.



3 The Raspberry Pi Configuration window lets you tweak System settings, **1** such as changing the password and choosing whether to boot into the Desktop or command line interface. You can enable and disable add-ons such as the camera module in the Interfaces tab **2** and overclock the Pi Zero under Performance. **3**

NEXT ISSUE

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Web User's Top Tips

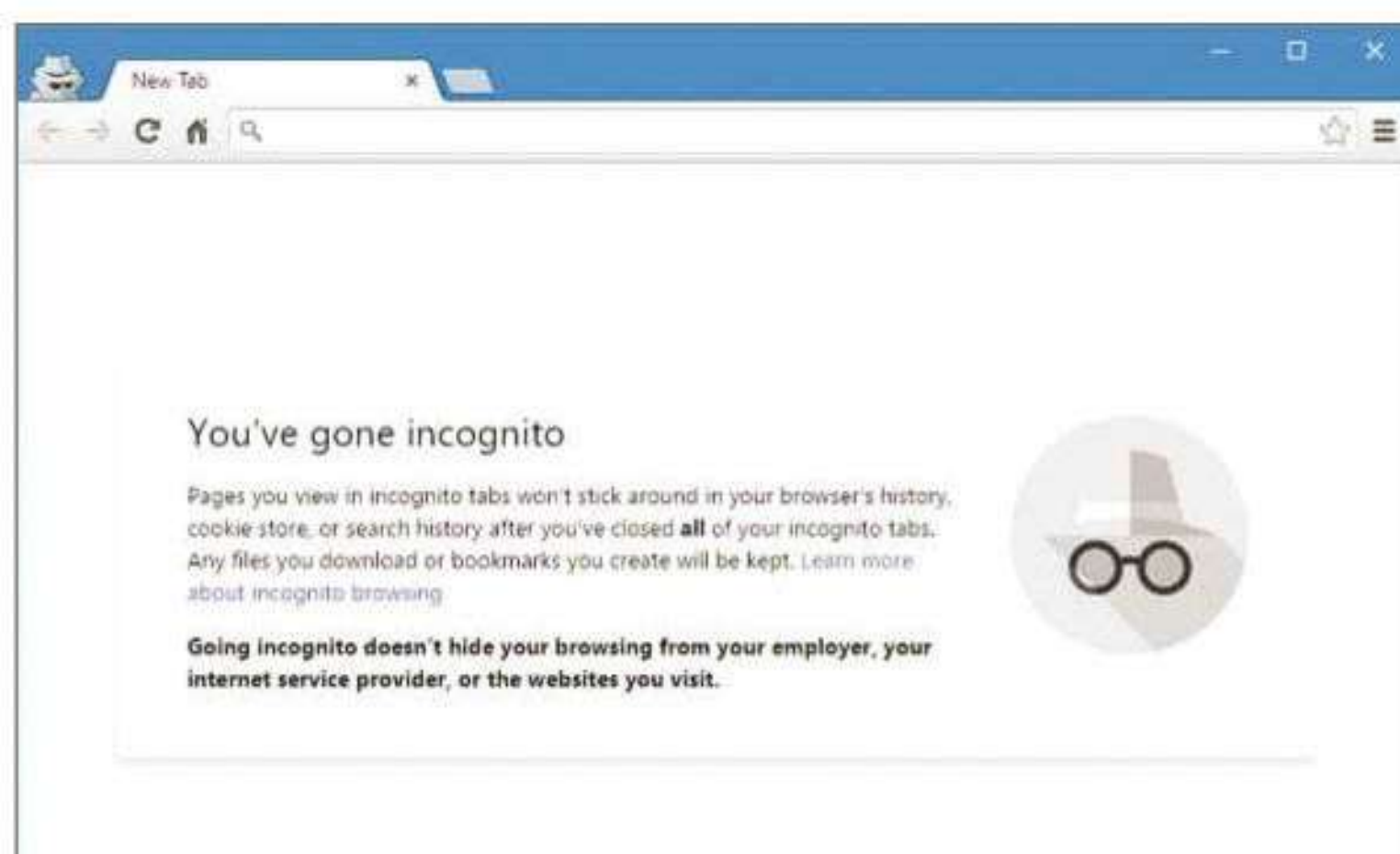
Our experts show how to clean up your web browser and get it running like new

TOP TIPS FOR OPTIMISING YOUR BROWSER

Does your browser need cleaning?

Browsers can become bloated and slow over time, but they can also be plagued with a whole variety of other problems including unwanted toolbars in Internet Explorer; faulty add-ons and extensions in Firefox and Chrome; adverts popping up on the screen; searches redirected to the wrong search engine; adverts opening in new tabs; and generally poor performance.

Open an incognito or private browsing window from your browser's menu. If this solves any of your browser's problems, it's likely that you have unwanted extras installed and the browser would benefit from a clean-up. Incognito/private mode disables many add-ons and extensions, and is a good way to avoid accumulating the junk that fills browsers.



Incognito mode offers better browsing performance than standard mode

Chrome quick fixes

 There are two quick fixes for Chrome that can save time and effort. They won't cure all ills, but they're worth trying. The Chrome Cleanup Tool (bit.ly/chrcle387) removes unwanted adverts and incompatible software and tools that can cause problems with the browser.

Alternatively, go to the menu, choose Settings, click 'Show advanced settings', and click the 'Reset settings' button at the bottom for a quick fix.

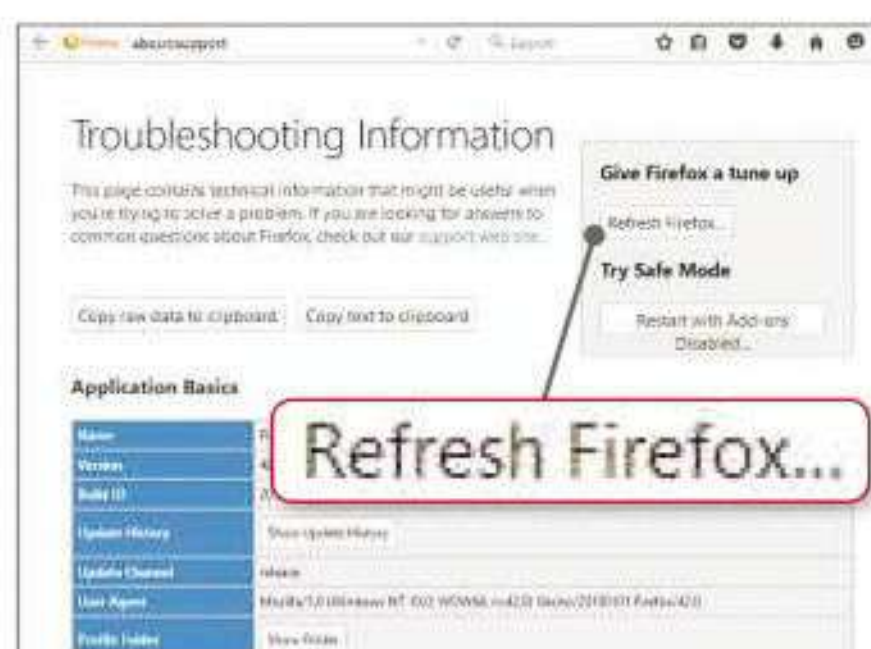
Internet Explorer quick fixes

 Open the Control Panel and select Internet Options. Select the Advanced tab and click Reset, followed by 'Restore advanced settings'. Select the Security tab and

click 'Default level', then select the General tab and click 'Use default'. Click Tabs, then click 'Restore defaults'.

Firefox quick fixes

 Open Firefox and press the Alt key to show the main menu. Go to Help, Troubleshooting Information and click the Refresh Firefox button for a quick reset of the browser's settings and tools.



To reset everything in Firefox, click Refresh Firefox on its about:support page

Uninstall adware

Some software is designed to modify your browser and redirect searches, new tabs, the home page and more, which can be very irritating. To stop this,

go to 'Programs and Features' in the Control Panel and look for suspicious items. Anything labelled as a toolbar, search helper, search protect or something similar is suspect.

Examine each of the items in the programs list for anything you don't recognise. There are too many bad programs around for us to provide a list here, but to give one example, look for Conduit Engine or 'Search protected by Conduit'.

'Programs and Features' isn't the whole solution to cleaning up the browser but it's a good place to start.

Solve problems with Edge

 Unfortunately, there are no quick fixes for Edge, the new browser in Windows 10. It can freeze and become unresponsive, and sometimes a particular advertising page keeps appearing. To fix these problems, close the browser if you can; otherwise, right-click the taskbar and select Task Manager. Find Microsoft Edge on the Processes tab, then right-click it and select 'End task'.

Click the three-dot icon in the toolbar to open Edge's menu and go

If you see words that look like they've been typed in a typewriter, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.



to Settings. If the browser is unresponsive, try opening a new tab by clicking the plus-sign button, then select the tab and try opening the menu and clicking Settings. Under 'Open with', select 'A specific page or pages' and choose Bing from the list below. Set 'Open new tabs with' to 'A blank page'.

Under 'Clear browsing data' click 'Choose what to clear'. Select everything except passwords, then click 'Show more', select 'Pop-up exceptions' and click Clear. Back in the Settings, under 'Advanced settings', click 'View advanced settings'. Turn on 'Block pop-ups' and look further down the list, under 'Search in the address bar with', to see whether it says Bing. If not, click the Change button and select it.

Close Edge, open Explorer, click View and tick 'Hidden items'. Then go to:

C:\Users\YourName\AppData\Local\ Packages\Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_ xxxxxx\AC\MicrosoftEdge\User\ Default\Recovery\Active

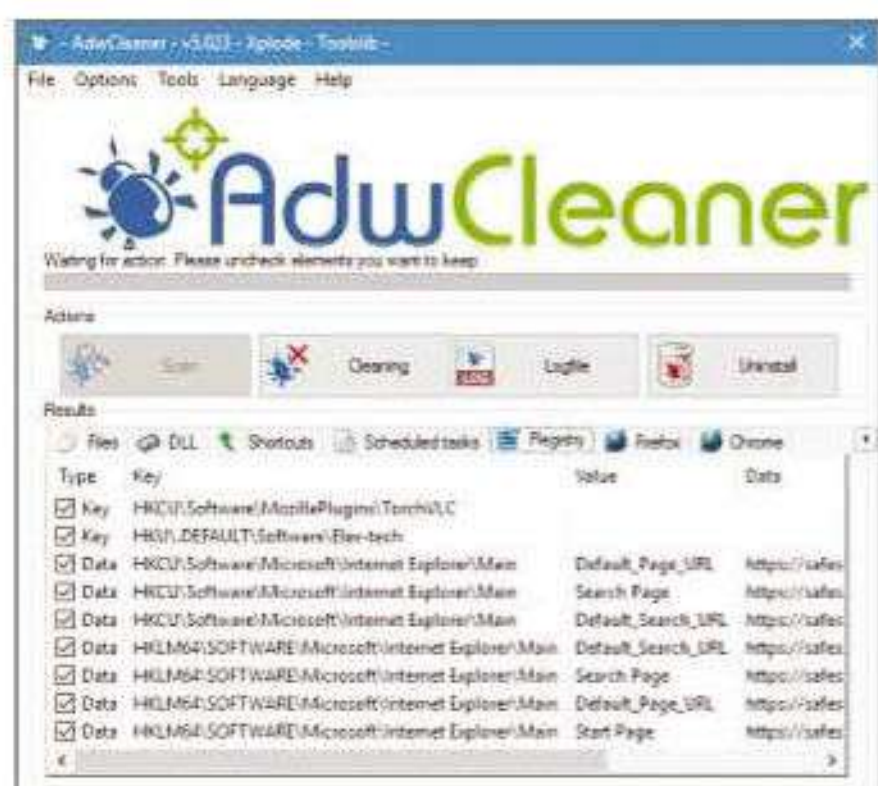
Delete any files you find in this folder.

Use a clean-up tool

AdwCleaner (bit.ly/adwc387) is a free tool designed to clean up browsers. It can remove many different types of adware from your computer and doesn't need to be installed, so you can just run it and click the Scan button. After the scan is complete, check each of the tabs and clear the tick against anything you want to keep. Then click the Cleaning button.

Avast Browser Cleanup (bit.ly/avastbc387) is another useful tool for getting rid of unwanted junk, malware and adware in your browser. It removes bad add-ons, resets the search engine, cleans up junk and is compatible with Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome.

Browser Cleaner (www.browsercleaner.com) is another free tool for clearing out the junk from browsers. It removes toolbars, resets the home page and restores the default search engine.



Use the free tool AdwCleaner to remove toolbars and adware from browsers

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Clean up Internet Explorer



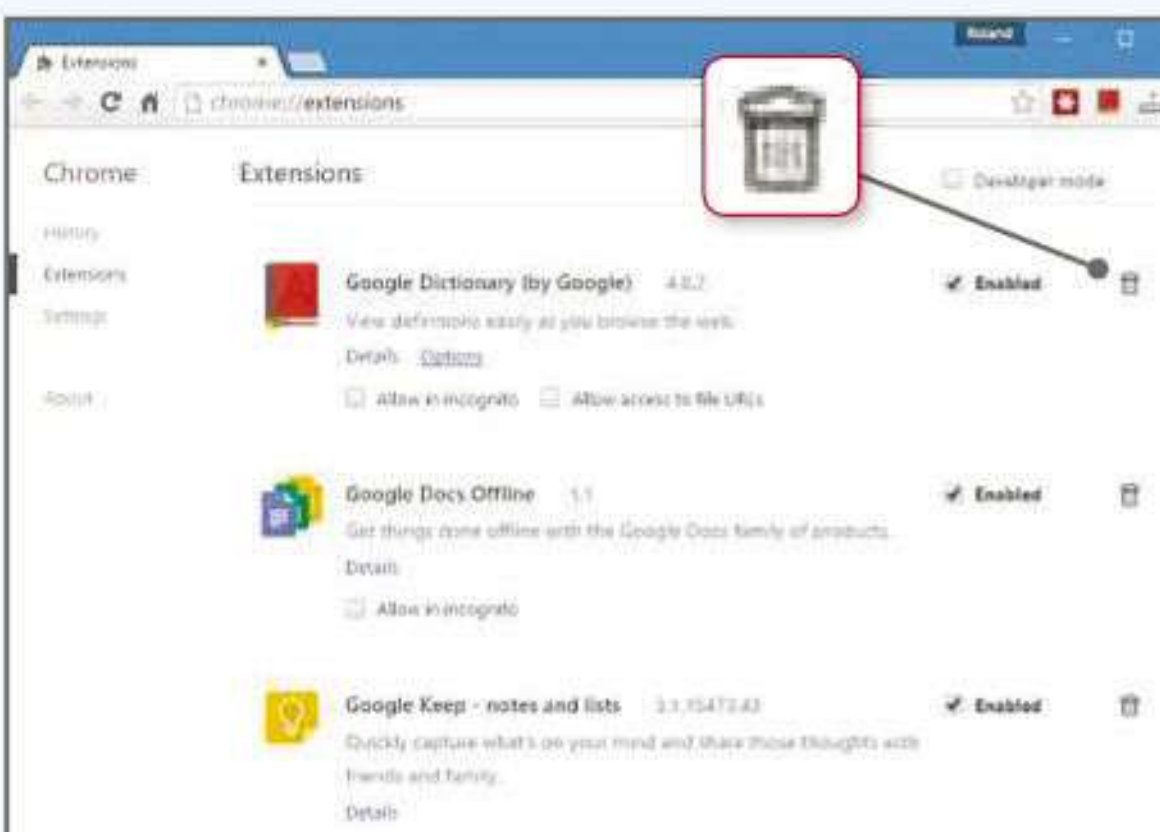
Sometimes, the best way to restore your browser to full health is to manually clean it up. Open Internet Options in the Control Panel and select the General tab. Replace whatever you find in the 'Home page' box with your favourite startup page – for example, www.google.co.uk. Click the Tabs button on the General tab, find 'When a new tab is opened, open' and select 'A blank page'. Click the OK buttons to close the windows.

Open Internet Explorer, click the gear icon and select Manage Add-ons. Select Search Providers on the left. If there are several, select the one you want to use on the right, then click 'Set as default'. Select each of the other search engines in the list and click Remove. Select 'Toolbars and Extensions' on the left, select 'All add-ons' from the Show menu below, then look through the list of items on the right for anything you suspect might be adware or malware. The name or publisher columns are often a giveaway. Select any unwanted items and click the Disable button.

Clean up Chrome



Chrome is the top browser choice for lots of people, but it can become big, bloated and slow, and needs to be slimmed down to restore it to peak performance. Click the menu button and select 'More tools', then Extensions. All Chrome's add-ons are optional and the fewer you have, the better the browser's performance. Click the bin icon next to any extensions you don't need to delete them.



Can you live without Chrome extensions? You can improve performance by deleting them all

Go to Settings and, below 'On start-up', select 'Open a specific page or set of pages'. Click the 'Set pages' link. The best start-up page for Chrome is Google, so hover your mouse over anything else and click the cross to delete it. Return to Settings and, under Search, select Google for the search engine.

Click 'Show advanced settings' and, in the Privacy section, click the 'Content settings' button. Under Pop-ups, select 'Do not allow any site to show pop-ups'. Click the 'Manage exceptions' button and delete them all. Return to the Privacy section and click the 'Clear browsing data' button. Tick browsing and download history, cached images and files, then clear the browsing data.

Clean up Firefox



Click the menu button, then click Add-ons. Click Extensions to see a list of everything that has been added to the browser. Click the Disable and Remove buttons next to any items you don't want. None are necessary.

Select Plugins on the left. A clean browser may have several plugins, so you need to look for anything that is obviously malware or adware. Click the button on the right of any you don't want and select Never activate.

Close the Add-ons tab, go to the menu and select Options. Click General and, next to 'When Firefox starts', select 'Show my home page'. In the Home Page box, enter a URL, such as www.google.co.uk. Select the Search tab and, under Default Search Engine, choose the one you want, such as Google or Bing. You'll see a

list of search engines that have been installed and any you don't use can be selected and removed.

Select Content on the left and tick 'Block popup windows'. Click Exceptions and remove them all to stop pop-ups. Select Security on the left and tick all the options in the General section. These settings keep you shielded from the worst of the internet.

Ask the Expert

Roland Waddilove, computer programmer and PC journalist since 1981, answers all your technical questions. Email us for help at webuser@dennis.co.uk



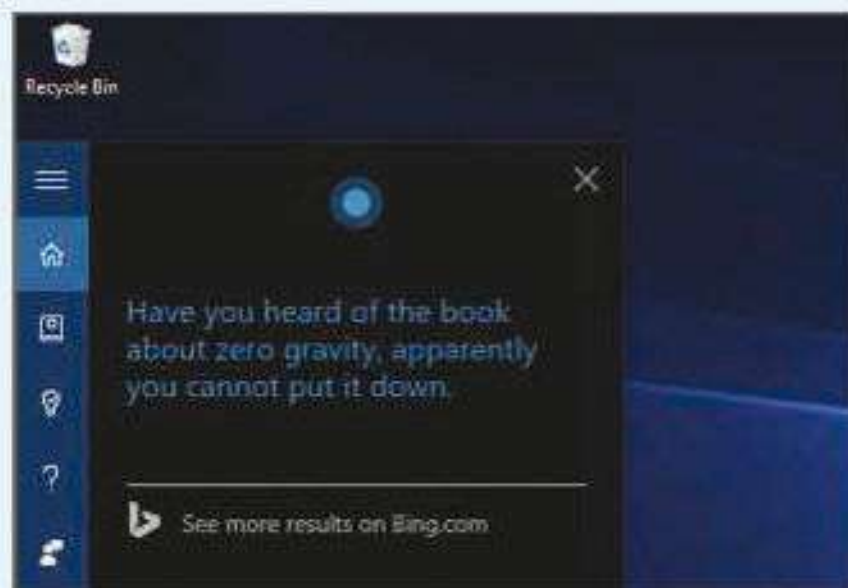
WINDOWS 10

Get Cortana working

Q I've been trying to get Cortana to work. I get as far as entering my current Windows password but it tells me that it's wrong. I have tried with my Microsoft account's password, but that doesn't work, either.

Bob, via email

A Some features in Windows 10 only work if you log in using a Microsoft account – the email address and password you use to log into the OneDrive (onedrive.live.com) and Outlook.com websites. With the first release of Windows, Cortana required this login, but the rules have been relaxed with the recent Fall Update. You still get more from it if you sign in with your Microsoft account, though.



Cortana can tell jokes and sing songs, as well as help you organise your life

To convert a local account to a Microsoft one, open the Start menu and go to Settings, Accounts, 'Your email and accounts'. There is an option there to switch account types. Click 'Sign in with a Microsoft account instead' and follow the instructions. Restart Windows and sign in. Cortana should then work.

across to the 'On SD card' tab, where you will see a list of apps that can be moved. Select the app and tap 'Move to SD card'.

To transfer media files to an SD card, go to Settings and select Storage, 'Transfer data to SD card'. Select the file types you want to transfer and tap the Transfer button.

WINDOWS 10

How to access Safe Mode

Q The paragraph headed 'Windows 10 is stuck in a reboot loop' on page 43 of Issue 384 (bit.ly/webuser384) suggests using the F8 key to access Safe Mode. However, this doesn't work if the 'fast boot' option has been enabled. If a Windows disc is not available to boot from, how do you get to Safe Mode and a command prompt?

Gerry, via email

A Fast start up, for those that don't know, is enabled by opening the Control Panel, then selecting Control Panel, Power Options, 'Choose what the power buttons do' and 'Change settings that are currently unavailable'. It lets the computer start more quickly, but this is not the reason why you can't press F8 to enter Safe Mode. Modern computers are much faster than they used to be and they start more quickly. Windows is also designed to start faster and your PC no longer waits for you to press a key – it just blasts past and starts as quickly as it can. A PC with an SSD is even faster.

Newer PCs will automatically go to the 'boot options' menu if Windows fails to start several times in succession, so you should power off and restart your computer a few times. If it gets as far as the login screen, you're OK. This appears very early in the boot process and, even if Windows is faulty, you can often get this far.

Click the power button in the corner of the screen, hold down Shift and click Restart. This restarts the computer and displays the boot options screen. You can also do this from the Desktop by clicking Start, Power and clicking

GENERAL PC

Permission problems

Q Sometimes, after saving a Word Document, I can't reopen it. To get around this, I have to right-click, select Properties, go to the Security tab, click the Edit button, then the Add button, type au, then set permissions. How do I solve this bug?

Adrian Bonnington, via email

A A folder's permissions determine what can and cannot be done to the files it contains. Any file copied, moved or saved to a folder has its permissions automatically set and it sounds like your



Set the permissions of a folder to control its behaviour

problem is being caused by incorrect settings.

Right-click the folder in an Explorer window and select Properties. On the General tab, make sure the Read-only

box is cleared and click Apply. Select the Security tab, then your account and, in the Permissions list, make sure everything is ticked under the Allow column. If any aren't, click the Edit button and set them to Allow.

ANDROID

Using extra storage on an SD card

Q I recently bought an 8in Sony Z3 tablet and an SD card to use with it. Unfortunately, I find I can't transfer my apps, music or photos to it. Any ideas how I can get this to work?

David Coulthard, via email

A An SD card is removable storage and if you move certain apps to it and insert it into another tablet or phone, then problems can occur. For this reason, many apps can't be moved to SD cards, although a few can. Other apps can't be moved themselves, but can use SD cards for data storage, such as pictures, music and videos, which can otherwise take up a lot of space.

To transfer files to an SD card, go to the Settings app and tap Apps. Swipe



Restart while holding down the Shift key.

When the boot options screen appears, click Troubleshoot, 'Advanced options', Start-up Settings, Restart, then choose Safe Mode.

WINDOWS 10

Showing the 'most used' apps

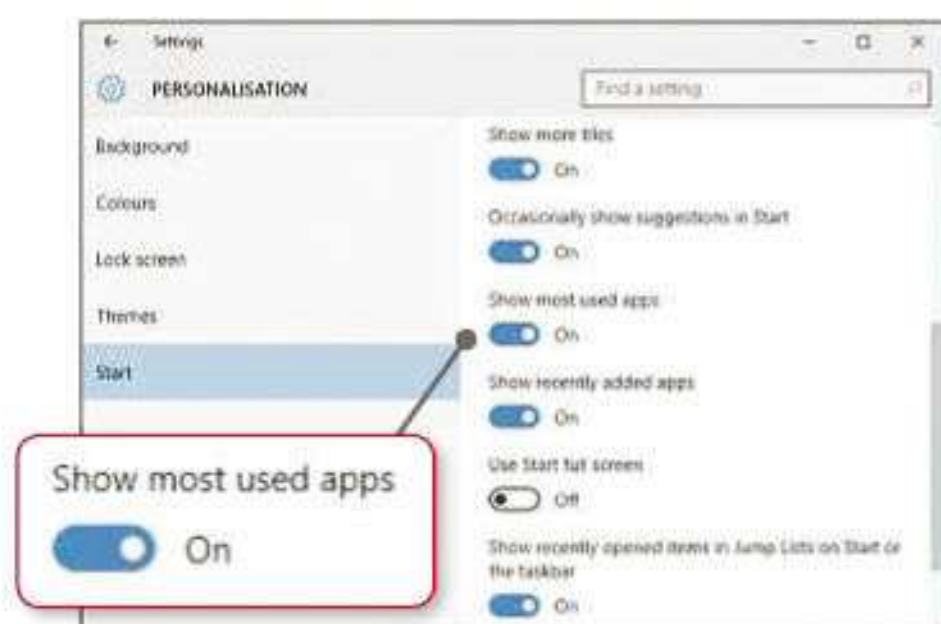
Q I updated to Windows 10 from 7 and like the improved speed, but the Start menu is playing up and the 'most used' and 'recently added' apps have disappeared. In the Personalisation, Start section of Settings, the 'most used' and 'recently added' toggles are on but the only one that seems to work is 'suggestions' (which is the one I don't want). Having the toggles on or off doesn't seem to make any difference, there's just a gaping hole where the icons and titles ought to be. Where have they gone? I have a laptop with a new version of Windows 10 (64-bit Pro), which seems OK, and the Start menu otherwise behaves perfectly.

Peter S, via email

A Some people have reported the same problem and then found it was suddenly fixed. This suggests that a Windows update has resolved the issue, so try pressing Windows+i to open Settings, click 'Update & security', select Windows Update and click the 'Check for updates' button.

Any program or app that is pinned to the Start menu won't appear in the 'most used' list. Could it be that the apps you use the most are already pinned? Also, the Start menu can hold a lot of tiles and yours might be stuck at the bottom. Scroll down and drag any you find to the top, or right-click them and unpin them from Start. They won't come up on the 'most used' list straight away, but they'll eventually appear.

Right-click an item when it appears on the list and select More from the menu. There's an option 'Don't show in this list' and some of your most used programs may have this set, which would also



Use the options in Settings to show or hide your most used apps

explain why it might be empty. To reset the list, press Windows+i and, in Settings, select Personalisation, then Start. Turn off 'Show most used apps', close Settings and restart Windows. Return to Settings and turn it back on.

BROWSERS

Browsing is being redirected by Rover

Q I am consistently getting redirected to rover.ebay.com while browsing online. How do I stop this happening?

Ken Wright, via email

A If a web browser is being redirected, then an add-on, toolbar or extension is the cause. Cleaning up the browser will cure the problem. However, each browser is different and you will have to clean them up separately. Doing this manually is a tedious process, but there are shortcuts that might work and are worth trying.

As luck would have it, this issue's Top Tips topic is about cleaning up your browser. You'll find the answer to your problem on page 64.

EMAIL

Fix the Mail app's syncing problem

Q My wife and I have each purchased a new laptop since the launch of Windows 10, which was pre-installed on both PCs. We both used the Mail app successfully for a while, but it has now stopped syncing for no apparent reason. What could be causing this and is there a way of uninstalling the app and reinstalling it to get it going again?

Ian Fitz-Hugh, via email

A Open the Mail app, right-click your account on the left and select Account settings. Click the link below 'Change mailbox sync settings' and you'll see several settings that can be configured. At the top, under 'Download new content', you'll find a list of options ranging from every 15 minutes to daily, plus one that says 'based on my usage'. Try every 15 minutes and see if it makes a difference. There is a list of options below 'Download email from' and this should be set to 'the last month'. Find Sync options at the bottom of the list and make sure it is set to On.

There are many sync options in Settings. Open the app and type sync into the search box. None of them will mention Mail, but turn them all on anyway and see if it helps. In Settings, go to Privacy, Email and make sure 'Mail and Calendar' are switched on. If everything is set correctly and Mail still isn't syncing, Windows can be refreshed without losing any of your files. This will reset everything, not just Mail, but there is no easy way to uninstall and reinstall the built in apps so it's your best option. Open Settings and click 'Update & security', then Recovery. On the right, you'll find 'Reset this PC'.



Your account settings in Mail determine how frequently Mail syncs

SECURITY

Uninstalling AVG

Q I have just had my laptop returned after it broke down and AVG security has been installed on it. I think this is now causing problems, such as slowing things down and taking time to boot up and shut down, not to mention freezing sometimes. I have tried several times to uninstall it using Windows, IObit (bit.ly/iobit387) and Revo (bit.ly/revo387) uninstallers, but each time I get the message "Driver Installation Failed, error code 0xC0070643".

How do I get rid of it? I am using Windows 7.

Dave Tansley, via email



AVG Remover makes it easy to clean up if you want to get rid of AVG's products

A This error has been around for years and it isn't clear what causes it. However, there are fixes. Use the AVG Reset Access tool (bit.ly/reset387), then try uninstalling it again. If that doesn't work, use the AVG Remover tool (bit.ly/remove387).



This fortnight Roland has been exploring the latest Windows 10 update (after doing a complete backup)

Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. To get help or offer it to others, visit forum.webuser.co.uk



TOP TIP

Mug
winner



WINDOWS 10

Fix Windows' dodgy audio drivers

I recently tried to fix audio problems on a friend's Windows 10 PC. Most of the standard programs on the computer produced sound, but apps from the Windows Store did not. We eventually got it working by updating everything we could think of, including Windows, drivers, software and so on. We updated so much that it is impossible to say which update solved the fault. Judging by the forum posts we found, there are lots of other people having similar problems.

Microsoft has an audio troubleshooter (bit.ly/audio387) that



If you're having sound problems, try Microsoft's audio troubleshooter tool

can identify and fix sound problems. Click the Run Troubleshooter link at the side and then click 'try the audio troubleshooter'. Afterwards, double-click the file in the Downloads folder.

Jamie Jefferson, via email

lighting and exposure of photos is Levels in the Adjustments menu. It has two parts – Input and Output – and five sliders. I've no idea what they represent, but you click and drag them. The photo is updated as you go, so you can see the effect of changes as you make them. Different photos need different adjustments, so experiment with the sliders and use the preview to see results.

The Auto button applies the settings that the program thinks will work best, which is a good place to start. Usually, a few minor tweaks to the Auto setting will make your photo perfect. There is a Reset button to undo everything if you change your mind.

Don't forget to use 'Save as' rather than Save. You should always keep a copy of your original unedited photos.

Ben Poste, via email



Make exposure adjustments to photos using the sliders in the Levels window

BROWSERS

Load your favourite websites when you open Chrome

I only recently realised that Chrome can be set to load a selection of your favourite websites every time you open the browser. Simply load a website that you often visit, right-click its tab and select 'Pin tab'. The tab moves to the far-left and is represented by a favicon (instead of the usual favicon and title) to save space. If you use a webmail service such as Gmail, this is a great way of

SHOPPING

Contact Amazon using live chat

When I recently bought something from Amazon during a flash sale, I accidentally chose paid-for delivery. Although the mistake was largely down to my own haste, I felt aggrieved that the site had selected Standard Delivery (which costs £4.75) by default when a free option also existed. Furthermore, the delivery price I selected was only listed in small print above the order total, and nowhere near where you select the delivery option. I decided I would contact Amazon to explain my gripe and was pleased to discover that there's now a web chat option (in addition to email or phone).

To contact Amazon's customer service via web chat, click Help at the bottom of the page, select Need More Help, then choose Contact Us. Tick the box next to the order you want to query, then select an option from the drop-down menu that best describes your issue and choose Chat.

The customer-service assistant I chatted with was extremely helpful and refunded my delivery charge as a goodwill gesture, even though the order had already been despatched using the faster option. I thought I'd share this story with *Web User* readers in case you ever need a quick, easy way of getting in touch with Amazon's customer service.

Tom Harris, via email



Amazon's Chat option lets you contact customer services from your web browser

PHOTOS

Improve the lighting in your snaps

Winter is a great time to go through all the photos you took in the summer and improve them using a photo editor. I recommend Paint.NET (www.getpaint.net), partly because it's free but also because it's excellent.

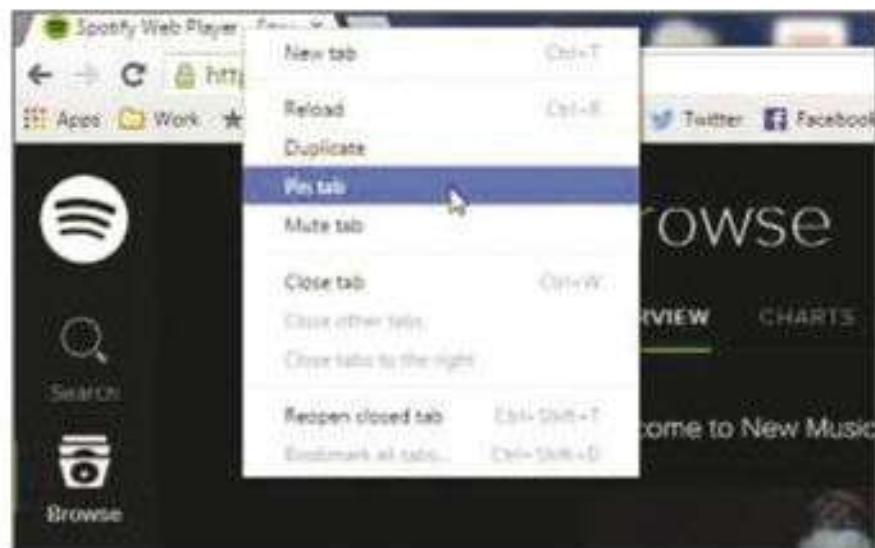
One of the best tools for fixing the



loading the site automatically every time you open your browser and saves you having to open it via your bookmarks.

It's worth noting that Chrome remembers the last page you visited on the pinned tab, so if you load another website into it, that's what will load the next time you use the browser. You can change your mind about pinning a tab at any time by right-clicking it again and selecting 'Unpin tab'.

Tim, via email



Right-click a tab and select 'Pin tab' to have it open in your next session

SOCIAL

Force Facebook videos to play in HD

Facebook is one of the most popular places to watch videos and it lets you configure the playback resolution. You can set them to always show HD quality (for videos that were uploaded in that format), or you can set them to SD, which reduces internet usage and might make them smoother and quicker to start on a slow internet connection.

On the Facebook page, click the arrow at the far right to open the menu. Select Settings, then Videos in the menu on the left and you'll see an option for the video quality. There is a choice of three settings: Default, HD and SD. Choose whichever setting you prefer.

Gary Kent, via email

WEBSITES

Compare phone specs online

If you're thinking about buying a new phone, you've probably read countless reviews about the device you've got your eye on. However, it's sometimes handy to see a phone's entire specification alongside those of its closest competitors.

The GSMArena website (www.gsmarena.com) has a Phone Finder on its homepage which you can use to find the phone you're interested in. The site displays all the crucial stats about the device's display, camera and memory, as well as battery life and performance.

Click the Compare button below the device's image and GSMArena lets you enter the names of up to two more devices, so you can compare them side by side with your chosen device. Of



GSMArena lets you compare the specifications of different smartphones

course, specifications aren't everything, but if you're struggling to decide between two devices, this website can make the comparison clearer.

Richard Westbourne, via email

APPS

Get reminders at specific locations

Last week, when I wrote a note on my phone using Google Keep and selected the 'Remind me' button, the alarm defaulted to 9am the following morning. By selecting the appropriate buttons, you can change this to a date and time of your choice. However, if you tap the clock icon, there's also an option to set a 'Location reminder'.

This feature was a complete revelation



You can set location-based reminders in Google Keep

to me. Now, if I need to remember to pick something up when I next visit my parents' house, for example, I can set a location reminder that's triggered as soon as I'm at their address, and not one moment before or after. This is much easier than trying to guess the best time for a reminder to appear, and also means I'm more likely to see it.

Adam Biggins, via email

ANDROID

Back up WhatsApp to Google Drive

After I last updated WhatsApp, a pop-up appeared notifying me that I could back up my conversations to Google Drive. I was really pleased about this, because it automatically saves not only my messages but also all the pictures and videos (if I select this option) that I've been sent by friends and family.

Previously, if you wanted to back up your messages, you had to manually make a copy of the WhatsApp folder and put it somewhere else for safe keeping, which was both time consuming and impractical. If you haven't activated automatic backups, you can do so by opening WhatsApp's Settings, tapping

'Chats and calls' and selecting 'Chat backup'. Once activated, you can select the frequency of back ups and whether they run via 'Wi-Fi only' or 'Wi-Fi and cellular'. I also use Google Photos to back up all the photos I take, so now that WhatsApp also offers automatic back up, I won't lose too much if my phone is lost or broken.

Ed Wright, via email

INTERNET

Find free Microsoft apps online

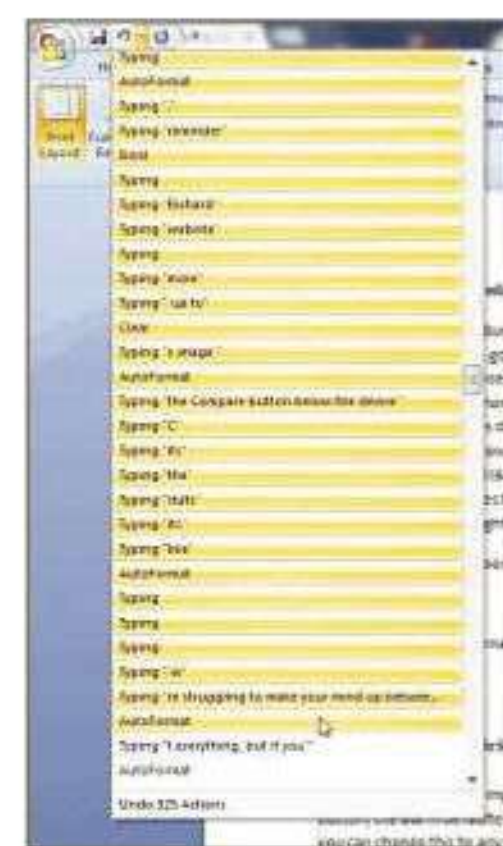
If you visit onedrive.live.com in a browser, you'll see a button in the top-left corner of the page that displays a collection of tiles. The number is increasing. It started with Word, Excel, PowerPoint and a few others, but there are now 14 tiles. It is getting more like the Start screen every day. Tasks is a recent addition (well, I've only just noticed it) that lets you add tasks and to-do items. You just tick the boxes when you've completed them.

H O'Brien, via email

SOFTWARE

Undo hundreds of changes in Word

I was surprised by how far back Microsoft Word's Undo tool lets you step. When I clicked the drop-down menu next to the Undo Typing button, I was staggered to find that it would let me scroll back through as many as 650 actions (every single change I'd made that day). I had assumed I could only



The latest versions of Word let you undo hundreds of actions

step back through the last 20 or so actions.

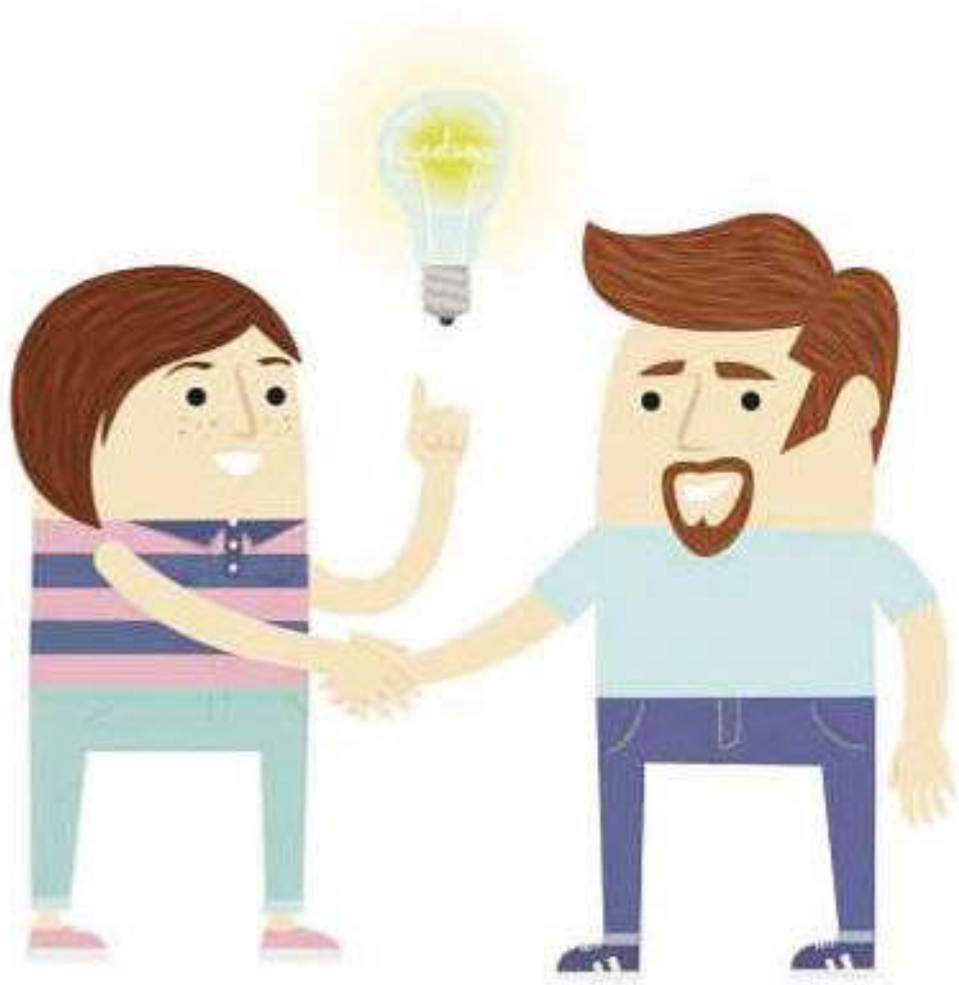
Needless to say, this is a really handy feature if you've deleted a paragraph from your writing at the start of the day and you decide much later on that you'd like to reinstate it.

Before I ever

step back this far, I tend to make a copy of my text as it currently appears or, at the very least, save the file so that there's no risk of me losing the most up-to-date version. Unlike some programs, Word still lets you use the Undo button even if you've already saved your document.

Bear in mind, however, that once you close the document or exit the program, you won't be able to undo your actions.

Ian Robinson, via email



Readers' Helpdesk

Our pick of the best solutions posted on our reader forums. Visit forum.webuser.co.uk – it's friendly and free!

MOBILE

How much data allowance will I need?

Q I have a Samsung Galaxy S4 Mini (bit.ly/samsung387) and I'm thinking of switching from pay-as-you-go to a monthly SIM-only contract. I'm with O2 (www.o2.co.uk) and there are lots of deals on their website, but I'd like some advice on how much data I'm likely to need.

sjw, Web User Forums

A Before you change to an O2 contract, have you considered Three's 321 pay-as-you-go price plan (www.three.co.uk)? It charges 3p per minute, 2p per text and 1p per MB of data. The network offers by far the lowest pay-as-you-go rates of any service



Android's 'Data usage' shows how much data you use every month

provider in the UK and, because you only pay for what you use, it could still work out cheaper than taking out a SIM-only deal. To do this, your Samsung device will have to be unlocked (you can do this after 12 months with O2 for a one-off fee of £15).

In terms of data usage, there's a handy chart at Ken's Tech Tips (bit.ly/data387) that provides a rough idea of what 500MB equates to in web pages, emails or songs. You can also open your Samsung device's 'Data usage' option in Settings to see how much data you've used each month.

Jedi and welshgasman, Web User Forums

NETWORKING

How can I improve my router's range?

Q My router, supplied by TalkTalk (sales.talktalk.co.uk), works fine as long as

WEB DESIGN

How should I set up my website's newsletter sign-up?

Q When you sign up for a newsletter on a website, do you prefer to use a form that appears on all pages or would you rather click a link that takes you to a form on a new page?

Jedi, Web User Forums

A You should consider how you want to deliver your newsletter before you put up the form, because this will influence your decision. If you use a newsletter publishing service, your subscribers will have to register with them, which will probably entail leaving your site. If you're running the newsletter yourself, then it doesn't

my laptop or tablet is in the same room. However, my desktop PC is in my garage, which is on the other side of a thick, brick wall that blocks much of the signal from the router. I've looked at using a HomePlug to extend the signal, but apparently these must be plugged directly into the mains socket and do not work when used with an extension lead. TalkTalk has refused to send me a new router, so can anyone suggest how else I might solve the problem?

madmardle, Web User Forums

A There's nothing to stop you buying a different router (TalkTalk just won't offer technical support for it). Or you can try one of the Wi-Fi extenders reviewed in Issue 376 (bit.ly/webuser376).

Alternatively, you could run an Ethernet cable (I would recommend a Cat5e or Cat6 cable) to the garage. These can be up to 100m long and will always be faster and more stable than Wi-Fi. Something as mundane and inexpensive as a



MailChimp makes it easy to manage a newsletter for your website

really matter which option you choose.

Having dabbled with email newsletters in the past, I'd recommend using a service such as MailChimp (mailchimp.com), which lets you send newsletters to 2,000 subscribers for free. MailChimp also lets you build custom forms that can either be hosted on their website or embedded on yours, so you can choose either option.

TheTechGuy, Web User Forums

USB extension lead for the USB dongle might even help you position yours for a better signal.

calimanco, Cantrel and Helmut, Web User Forums

Web User says: Despite what you've read about HomePlugs not working when plugged into extension leads, this is a recommendation from the manufacturers based on the quality of wiring in some extension cables and is about speed rather than safety. So although you're better off plugging into a wall socket where possible, a HomePlug in an extension lead may still be faster than Wi-Fi. We've had no problems when we've tested HomePlugs in this way.

Furthermore, some HomePlugs have a pass-through power socket, so you don't have to sacrifice a wall socket, and you can safely plug your extension lead into that. This type of HomePlug tends to cost a little more than those without.

Devol's dLAN 1200+ models have pass-through sockets



Star Email

Mug
winner



Microsoft is lying by denying that it's spying

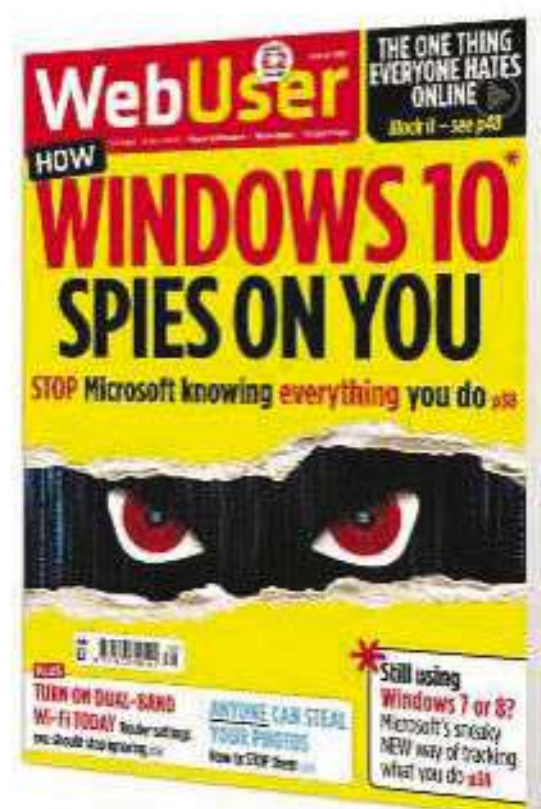
As far back as August, I started noticing large amounts of data being collated and transmitted to Microsoft from my Windows 8.1 Desktop. We all know now that Microsoft installed its hidden and invasive spyware on our machines via updates for our operating systems. This allowed it to record our voice conversations, operate our webcams without us knowing and change all our privacy settings back to their defaults.

Shortly afterwards, it downloaded, without permission, its upgrade file of Windows 10. Yes, we can remove some of these updates, but Microsoft's spyware and upgrade file are rooted deep within the operating system and continue to reap and transmit personal data. Additionally, it also slows down

our computers.

My solution for this is for Microsoft to remove its spyware and Windows 10 files from all Windows 7 and 8.1 computers immediately. The company can easily do this, in the same way in which it installed them in the first place. I have nothing to hide about my computer usage, but I strongly object to my privacy being invaded.

One month ago, I asked my MP to make enquiries regarding this matter and she received a response from Microsoft's UK CEO. It seems that Microsoft claims



that it did not download Windows 10 onto computers without permission nor install hidden spyware through the Windows 8.1 updates. Indeed, it goes as far to say that Windows 7 and 8.1 users needed to change their settings to permit Microsoft to collect their data. This, as we all know, is factually incorrect. If Microsoft's letter is to be believed, then it directly contradicts statements made

by senior Microsoft executives, tech experts and tech journalists alike. I believe that Microsoft's letter is a smokescreen and I intend to press my MP to pursue this matter.

Peter White, via email

Windows 10 PCs are no longer available

As my wife had recently expressed an interest in learning how to use a computer, I looked for the Windows 10 laptop that was recommended in your Best Buys section as being available from PC World. It did not appear for sale on their website, so we travelled to our nearest PC World store where we were informed that that model was not available and had been replaced with a new one costing £229! We didn't buy anything in the end, because quite frankly we were quite disappointed with the so-called customer service from this particular store. I realise this is not your problem, but maybe you should look again at keeping your Best Buys section a little more focused!

I also thought I might upgrade my own desktop computer so I attempted to find the Windows 10 PC you recommended from PC Specialist. Guess what: this item was also shown as no longer being available!

I understand the problems you have with deadlines, but does your research not cover how long these alleged 'deals' are going to be available for?

KC Stevenson, via email

Web User says: Thank you for pointing out that the Windows 10 laptop and PC are no longer available from the stores that we recommended in Issue 385, and our apologies for this oversight.

Unfortunately, computers tend to come and go faster than any other hardware and, at the time of going to press, we were unaware that these two products had been discontinued by the relevant sites. We have updated the Best Buys section for this issue to address this,

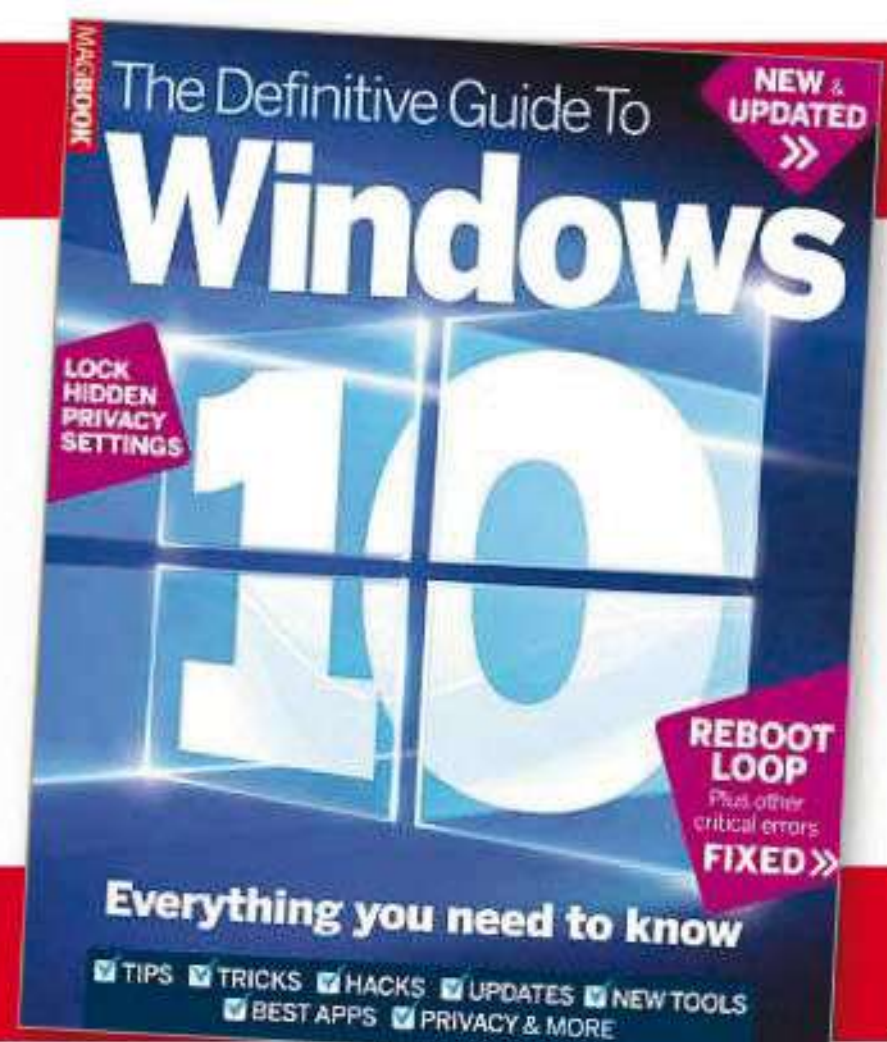
providing an alternative source for the Asus EeeBook X205T laptop and replacing the unavailable Windows 10 PC with the runner-up from our Group Test in Issue 380. Thanks again for bringing these errors to our attention.



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The
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Windows 10

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www.twitter.com/webusermagazine and forum.webuser.co.uk

Does Windows 10 smell of fish?

Hear hear, kingfisher171 in Issue 383 ('Stop shoving Windows 10 down our throats'). Is it good? Is it rubbish? Does it spy on you? Is it forcing you to upgrade? Is it fast? Is it evil? Does it smell of fish? It's all we've heard about for the last six months!

All these questions and more are ones that I really don't give a jot about - except perhaps the one about the fish. At the end of the day, do people really care about which version of Windows they're using, as long as it works okay for them, and it isn't Vista? So come on, *Web User*, vive la difference in 2016!

Streaky Pete, via email

Why are people still using Windows XP?



So Google has announced that Chrome will no longer be supported on Windows XP and Vista from next year (Need to Know, Issue 385). Well, boo hoo! If anyone is stupid enough to still be using XP, then they deserve to be infected by malware when they go on the internet. I mean, they've had ages now to upgrade to a safer operating system and must have realised that they can't go on using the same old software forever. I'm only surprised that it's taken Google so long to ditch Chrome on XP, after Microsoft itself pulled the plug.

As far as I can see, if you're not Chinese or working for a crappy company that won't upgrade your computer, then you really have no excuse for using Windows XP. Sort it out!

Chris Dodd, via email

Switching off devices helps save the planet

I was bemused to read the letter from Stan, the man from County Down, in Issue 385, in which he decried saving the planet by switching off devices when they're not in use. He doesn't seem to like polar bears, but it's not just about them; the interconnectedness of the world is a scientific concept that's not just for hippies - I shouldn't need to explain that to readers of *Web User*.

The damage we are doing to the Earth



undermines our very existence through direct and indirect consequences, and the fortunes of the denizens of the natural world, polar bears included, warn us of the way things are going.

Yes, we are part of nature, and the workings of humans are a subset that we term artificial. Our capacity for construction and destruction is magnified to a degree that makes our efforts have a disproportionate impact. Our intelligence allows us to understand the consequence of our actions, which means the present wave of extinction we hear about (however soon that may be) is the first with a moral dimension. The morality applies not just to our stewardship of the planet, but to our fellow humans for whom environmental degradation is a catastrophe.

I shall continue switching on devices only as I need. Resources are limited and become more expensive as they diminish, which is another symptom of the problem!

Anthony J Gouldwell, via email

Would we be better off without the net?

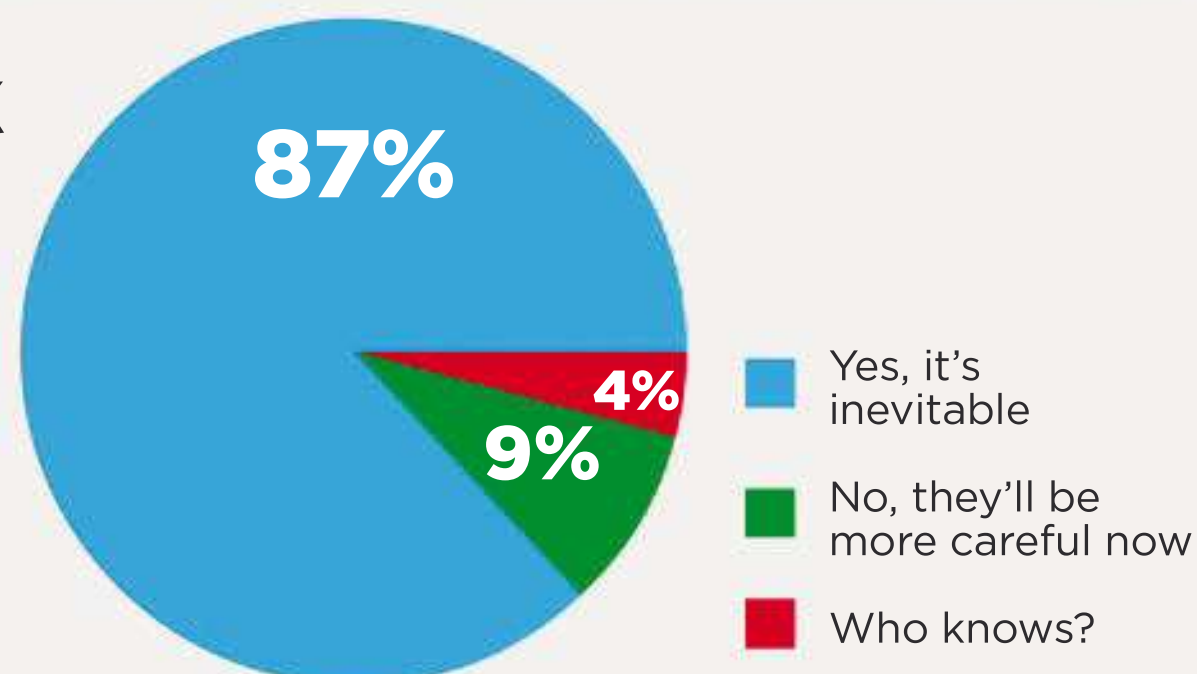
What are our most worrying thoughts at this time? That we can't connect to Wi-Fi? That our friends and family can't see what a wonderful time we had last night from the pictures we upload? That we can't watch the latest trailers for films coming out? Or that the internet is being used to end our way of life?



Your Shout

On Webuser.co.uk this fortnight we asked...

Do you think more big companies will be hacked in 2016?



NEXT FORTNIGHT Would you order a delivery by drone?
Vote online at www.webuser.co.uk

As we all know, the internet is a free blank page where anyone can place what they like, even stuff we don't want to look at. But we also know that it is now being used to incite criminal acts such as murder, shootings, bombings and human trafficking, and still the governments of this world cannot control the flow of information. So, with this in mind, if the internet was closed down, would our lives improve?

Look at all the things that people used to do - talk to their neighbours, go out more, enjoy speaking to people face to face. Businesses employed more people. Such a life is possible without the net. The speed at which we can send information is the same speed that people use to spread war, mayhem and violence on the street. We have placed a noose around our necks for the sake of pleasure and now we are hanging by it.

Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes



The BBC should treat licence payers more fairly

I was thrilled when the BBC announced that it was showing *The Last Kingdom* because I have long been a fan of the books by Bernard Cornwell. Having watched the first episode, I decided that I should like to archive the series, and looked on a torrent site. The day after episode one was shown in the UK, I found episodes 1, 2 and 3, all of which



have apparently already been shown on BBC America. The series isn't yet finished in the UK, but I've now seen it all.

I have forked out for the licence fee for decades and feel seriously let down that the BBC is letting US viewers watch programmes I've paid for before I get to see them. Media companies need to get their acts together. As long as they treat customers in this way, their content will be pirated and I for one will not feel guilty about it.

Mike Palmer, via email

Tablets cost too much these days

In your Inbox section in Issue 385, Shaun Smith asks why Google has bricked his Nexus 7. Well, the same thing happened to me when I installed Android Lollipop and I think the only answer is that Google wants you to upgrade to its newer tablet, the Nexus 9. Fair enough, you might think, until you find out that the Nexus 9 costs an astonishing £319 – much more than the Nexus 7 did.

With Tesco abandoning the Hudl, it seems that we are now being forced to pay more for tablets. This is a crying shame because one of the best things about tablets (except for iPads) was that they were more affordable than laptops and phones. Now it seems they're

somewhere in the middle, unless you go for a no-name brand or an Amazon Kindle Fire. No thanks to that one – it's just designed to make you spend more on Amazon!

However, you can still get some good deals on nearly-new and refurbished tablets on eBay, so I would recommend that Mr Smith looks there.

Liam Townsend, via email



What you say...

Goodbye to 2015. . .

WHICH DID YOU USE MOST IN 2015 – PC, LAPTOP, PHONE OR TABLET?

My phone, because the kids hog everything else!

Ray Burns @ray_burns_

Mostly my PC, because I'm with Virgin and like watching football and movies.

Dave Pickering

First, my MacBook to get work done. Second my iPad, for entertainment. Third, my iPhone - mainly for notifications and quick email replies.

James McGinnis

Laptop for work, but I like my tablet for reading in bed. Naughty, I know!

John Young

WHO'S YOUR BIGGEST WEB VILLAIN OF 2015?

AVG because it's a great company gone bad, selling our details.

Ethel Ethel @EthelEthel

The hackers who broke into the customer records of Carphone Warehouse and TalkTalk.

Martin Phillp

Theresa May because of her plans to collect everyone's internet history.

Martin James

Google wants to take over everything we do online. It's a pity it doesn't stick to its 'Don't be evil' slogan.

Madeline

Microsoft for using devious methods to push people to install Windows 10, then collecting private data.

Mikec1

Hello to 2016. . .

IF YOU COULD MAGICALLY CHANGE ONE THING ONLINE IN 2016, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Remove the need for VPNs to access geographically locked content.

Dave McAlister @dpmcalister

An end to clickbait and sites that insist on breaking things up into dozens of pages that can easily fit on one.

Dave Harper

Identify and locate all the terrorists online.

John Wright

Prevent the internet's misuse by spammers, trolls and scammers. They all spoil what should be a safe thing.

Dave Thow

Make the web detect the age of the user and render it safe for their consumption.

Jason Dowson

Make Pushbullet free and make sure Dropbox does not discontinue Mailbox.

Jack @imthegoldmaster

WHAT NEW DEVICE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET IN 2016?

I wish I could afford an iMac. I love the screen and image quality, but I hate the cost!

Roger Whitcomb @milairpix

A fast 4in Android phone, maybe HTC.

Chris Armstrong

I'm not quite ready for a new Chromebook, but Google's Pixel C looks awesome.

Peter Fitzsimmons

It's a bit old now but a PS4. Or a decent Bluetooth speaker. Or both.

Ady Colclough

I'll be using my existing gadgets and won't be purchasing any new ones in 2016.

Bruce Lauderdale @BruceLauderdale

! Page 404



Barry Collins lists five things that won't be here when we sing *Auld Lang Syne* next year

Five things that won't survive 2016

At this time of year, it is the right of every card-carrying journalist to make ill-informed predictions that will in roughly 365 days' time make him look an utter clown. Never one to bypass an opportunity for ridicule, here's my list of five tech-related entities that won't be around by the end of 2016.

1 Windows on phones

The only things that are currently keeping Windows alive on mobile devices are Microsoft's billions and its sheer belligerence. Windows has a declining 2.6% share of the mobile market – which, for comparison, is only slightly greater than the share of people using Linux on Desktop PCs, or the percentage of people who think Des O'Connor should be the next Prime Minister. Consequently, it would be more profitable for developers to set light to £50 notes than to develop apps for Windows mobiles, and the advent of Windows 10 on mobiles won't make a jot of difference. Microsoft's mobile misadventures have already cost the company untold billions. In 2016, Redmond will finally get the (text) message.

2 Amazon Echo

Not yet on sale over here, and likely never to be, Amazon Echo is the plaything of 'look at me' idiots who never got over the fact that Knight Rider isn't real. Like Siri in solitary



“ Amazon Echo is the plaything of 'look at me' idiots who never got over the fact that Knight Rider isn't real ”

confinement, the Amazon Echo is a cylindrical digital assistant for the home, which performs pointless tasks for gluttonous morons too lazy to even reach for their phone. “What's on my calendar today?” “What's the weather going to be like tomorrow?” “How do you spell gullible?” Call me back when I can tell it to make me a bacon sandwich.

3 Yahoo!

Remember back in the days before Google, when you performed a search for “Bob Carolgees” and got taken to a site about songs sung at Christmas? Yes, Yahoo

has always been pitiful, yet it's somehow managed to limp on for 20 years, now with its search powered by Bing – the site everyone visits when Google is broken. Yahoo still has a third-rate

webmail system and is doing its damndest to ruin the only decent site it ever had – the Flickr photo-sharing service. Investors are reportedly considering scrapping Yahoo for parts. Good! And good riddance!

4 Beats 1

If a DJ appears on Beats 1 and there's no one around to hear it, does he make a sound? This is the kind of philosophical question the disc spinners at Apple's 24-hour radio station must be asking themselves. They could threaten to blow up the White House live on air and still not get a tap on

the shoulder from the FBI. Apple Music is a buggy, poorly designed mess that has failed to win over millions of Spotify users, as was the plan. Still, the poor DJs would probably get stagefright if people actually tuned in.

5 The last shred of competition in the mobile market

BT's about to suck up EE, Three and O2 are forming a civil partnership, and so we're down to three major networks: 'BEE TEE', O5 (Three plus O2, geddit?) and Vodafone. Mobile-phone spectrum auctions will go from raising tens of billions for the taxpayer to spare change down the back of the sofa (because there's nobody left to bid against), and now these companies each have a nice chunky share of the market, you can expect your bills to slowly start creeping upwards, too. Excellent work, regulators!

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