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From the Editor

I'm not entirely sure what chaff is*, but I know that one of *Computeractive's* most important duties is to separate the wheat from it. Countless apps, programs and websites launch every week, and they can't *all* be worth using. In fact, most aren't. They're pure chaff.

Jane Hoskyn discovered that when researching this issue's Cover Feature (page 50). She tested numerous new phone and tablet apps – all free – under strict orders to recommend only the very, very best. In the end just 25 made the cut. They're all wheat.

My favourite is Readfeed, which I've used to catalogue the boxes of books cluttering up my



house. Please let me know which apps you like, and whether we've unfairly omitted any.

I'm happy to say that you can now pre-order our 2016 Back Issue CD on Amazon. Just visit www.snipca.com/23209.

Daniel Booth

editor@computeractive.co.uk

*Thanks to Wikipedia, I now do: www.snipca.com/23161



THIS ISSUE IN NUMBERS

90%

Proportion of NHS trusts still using Windows XP – p11

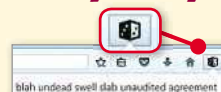


31 million

Number of nuisance calls BT recorded in one week – p8

221,073,919,720,733,357,899,776

Password combinations in Passphrase Generator – p16



HOW TO USE SNIPCA URLS

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

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Brilliant NEW APPS

**COVER
FEATURE
P50**

**The best 25 handpicked apps from the thousands
that launch every month**

Icons: WhatsApp, OneDrive, Owl, BBC earth, Mail, Cards, Book, Person, Clock, FAST



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Computer
active
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★★★★★

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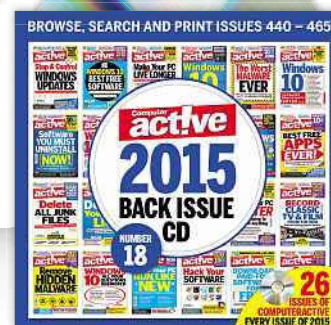
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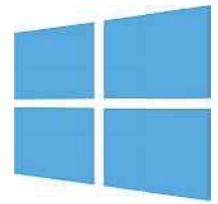
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W10 to lock your PC when you move away from it



The next major update to Windows 10 may add a security feature that locks your screen when you move away from your computer. The option, seemingly called Dynamic Lock, has been spotted in a recent Preview Build of the operating system, available to people signed up to Microsoft's Insider Program (<https://insider.windows.com>).

Dynamic Lock is expected to arrive in the Creators Update, a major overhaul of Windows 10 due in April. But reports vary on how it will work. Some experts had thought it would use Windows Hello, Microsoft's **biometric** security system that logs you in by recognising your face via a webcam and checking your fingerprint on a device that reads them. Once you've set it up, you no longer need a password to log in.

But others on the Insider Program have been able to use Bluetooth to lock their screen. They 'paired' their phones



with Windows 10, which recognised when the device moved out of range. The logic here is that if Windows 10 can't pick up Bluetooth, then the phone, along with its owner, must have moved away from the computer.

Microsoft revealed the Bluetooth option in December during a conference for hardware makers, calling the feature 'Proximity Lock'. It said: "With 'Proximity Lock', your computer simply figures out if you're there or not, and automatically locks itself in your absence, such as with Bluetooth".

However, Bluetooth isn't mentioned in the instructions under the Dynamic Lock option in the Preview Build: 'Allow Windows to detect when you're away and automatically lock the device' (see screenshot). It's not clear how soon after leaving your PC the screen locks, but it seems likely that it won't do so immediately in case it happens too often.

To see the Dynamic Lock option in the Insider Preview go to Settings, Accounts, then click 'Sign-in options'. You can turn the slider on, but it doesn't seem to do anything

COMMENT

For Dynamic Lock to be effective, it needs to work flawlessly with Windows Hello. It must lock your screen after a period of time that you can set, and unlock it the second you return. Even the smallest delay will make users wonder why Dynamic Lock is preferable to the Windows key+L shortcut. Of course, you won't even have this choice if your computer can't work with Windows Hello. Visit Microsoft's site to check whether your machine is compatible: www.snipca.com/23218.

yet. In the meantime you can lock your screen in Windows by pressing Windows key+L.

Microsoft has also launched a Privacy Dashboard for Windows 10. We'll explain which settings you should turn on and off in our next issue – out Weds 15 February.

NEW EBOOK STORE IN WINDOWS 10

You'll soon be able to buy ebooks from the Windows Store, then read them in Edge. Currently, you can buy apps, films, games and music from the Store, but not ebooks.

The website MSPowerUser (<https://mspoweruser.com>) was shown a sneak preview of a new section for ebooks (see screenshot), which is expected to be part of the Creators Update. You'll be able to add

bookmarks to any ebook, and read them on any PC, phone or tablet running Windows 10. There's no indication yet how wide the range of books will be.

However, the My People tool, which adds your contacts to your taskbar, won't be ready in time for the Creators Update. Although not yet confirmed, it's now likely to arrive in a major update in the autumn.



You'll like this...

Google Maps may soon show you parking information (www.snipca.com/23213)



... but not this

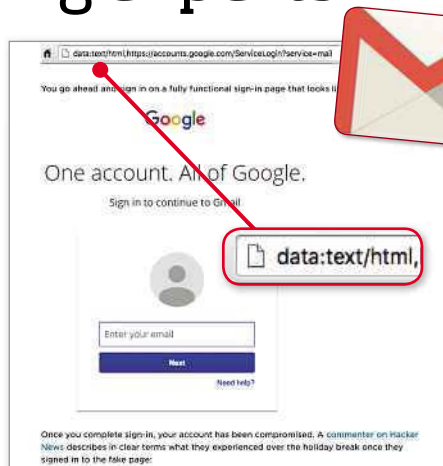
Apple has increased its app prices by 25 per cent (www.snipca.com/23212)

New Gmail scam so devious it's even tricking experts

A new "highly effective" Gmail scam has been spotted that's so sophisticated it's fooling even security experts. The hoax email contains an attachment which, when clicked, takes you to what looks like a genuine Gmail login page. Reinforcing this is the URL bar at the top, which shows 'https://accounts.google.com'. Signing in gives the scammers full access to your account.

What makes the scam so convincing is that the email looks like it's been intentionally sent by one of your Gmail contacts. The subject line is likely to be something you've discussed with that person by email, and the attachment is a related photo or document.

But in reality your contact's Gmail account will have been hacked in order to send the highly personalised email.



The scam was discovered by Mark Maunder, boss of Wordfence, which makes a security **plug-in** for the website-creation tool WordPress. He said that it was having a "wide impact even on experienced technical users".

To spot the scam, you need to look closely at the URL bar. In genuine Gmail messages there should be nothing before 'accounts.google.com' except 'https://'

and a padlock icon (both in green).

In the scam 'data:text/html' precedes 'accounts.google.com' (see screenshot).

Aaron Stein from Google Communications told Maunder the company was aware of the problem, and will "strengthen our defences against it".

Following questions from Maunder, he hinted that Google would be adding a symbol to illustrate when an email URL is unsafe.

He said: "I can't speak to things that aren't out yet, but please watch this space. Should have more to share soon".

Stein recommended that for extra security Gmail users should turn on **two-factor verification** (www.google.com/landing/2step).

Cybercrime hits 5.6m cases in a year

The shocking scale of cybercrime, including online fraud, has been revealed in a new crime report.

For the first time cybercrime has been included in the annual Crime Survey of England and Wales (CSEW), available on the Office of National Statistics' website (www.snipca.com/23159).

It found that in the year to September 2016 there were 3.6 million incidents of fraud, and two million cases of computer misuse, most of which involved hacking computers to steal information, or attacking online services with malware.



In total there were 11.8 million criminal offences, including 695 murders.

The figures show how threats facing the public have changed since the crime survey began 35 years ago. John Flatley (pictured), head of crime statistics at the ONS said: "In the past burglary and theft of



vehicles were the high-volume crimes driving trends but their numbers have fallen substantially since then. When the CSEW started, fraud was not considered a significant threat and the internet had yet to be invented".

The survey is based on interviews with the public, rather than figures from the police. This is so it can find out about crimes that don't get reported to the police, which is estimated to be about 40 per cent of offences.

 Have you been a victim of cybercrime? Please let us know at: letters@computeractive.co.uk

IN BRIEF

MPs EXAMINE UK'S CYBER DEFENCES

A committee of MPs and lords is to investigate how businesses, the Government and UK infrastructure can be protected from cyber-attacks. The inquiry, conducted by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, is part of the Government's five-year review of cybersecurity, which is costing £1.9 billion.

EE FINED FOR OVERCHARGING

Ofcom has fined EE £2.7m for overcharging tens of thousands of customers on two occasions. The watchdog said that the network charged users who called its 150 customer services number while **roaming** in Europe £1.20, rather than 19p. It also continued to charge for calls and texts to 150 for two months after it became free. EE says most customers have been refunded. It couldn't identify 6,900 customers who are due money back, so donated £62,000 to charity in lieu of this sum.

Tomorrow's world

As crystal balls go, we'd trust IBM's more than Russell Grant's. The tech giant has just published its '5-in-5' report for 2017, predicting the "five innovations that will help change our lives within five years". These include how artificial intelligence will be used to detect mental illness and develop "superhero vision". Read them all at www.snipca.com/23149.

IN BRIEF

TEST NEW OFFICE TOOLS ON YOUR IPAD

Microsoft has launched an Office Insider program for iPhone and iPad, letting owners preview new versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote. Microsoft said that due to "limited capacity" it will allow people to join the program "on a first come first served basis, to enthusiastic Office fans". Read more and apply to join at www.snipca.com/23036.

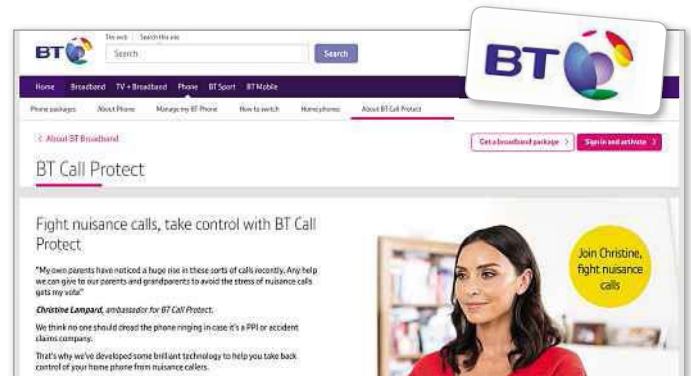
ILLEGAL DOWNLOADERS SENT WARNINGS

Internet service providers (ISPs) have started sending "educational" letters to customers thought to have illegally downloaded content such as films and music. BT, Virgin Media, TalkTalk and Sky say that copyright holders have given them the IP addresses of people suspected of piracy. The ISPs can then match the IP addresses with postal addresses. The letters recommend legitimate download sites.

BT launches 'breakthrough' service to block nuisance calls

BT has "declared war" on nuisance phone calls by launching a free junk-voicemail service for its customers. The company claims that BT Call Protect uses "breakthrough" technology to analyse vast amounts of live data in order to identify companies that make "enormous numbers of calls" – which are then added to a BT blacklist.

BT says that Call Protect "proactively" diverts calls before they even reach you, unlike current services that require you to block them. This will mean that rogue companies will no longer be able to avoid detection by constantly changing their



numbers. If any calls do come through, you'll be able to add their numbers to your own blacklist.

You'll also be able to divert specific categories of calls, such as those from abroad, or from withheld numbers. By far the most common type of nuisance call is from legal

companies trying to persuade you to make an accident claim. BT recorded 12 million of these in a single week before Christmas, from a total of 31 million nuisance calls. Computer scams made up over 2.5 million calls.

Minister for Digital and Culture, Matt Hancock, welcomed the new service, branding nuisance callers "a terrible blight on society".

To sign up to the service visit www.bt.com/callprotect or ring 0800 389 1572. Customers who already use the BT 1571 and Call Minder services will be automatically moved to Call Protect by March.

NUISANCE CALLS: THE STATS

4 Average number of calls people receive per week

4.35pm Most common time to receive a call

80 secs Length of the average call

20% Proportion of people who find nuisance calls "very stressful"

Home robot tackles loneliness among elderly

A new device has been unveiled that aims to help elderly people combat loneliness and stay active.

Israeli company Intuition Robotics says that it's an "emotionally intelligent robotic companion" that will help older people "overcome the complexity of the digital world".

It will suggest a range of online activities, such as chatting by video, playing games and listening to audiobooks. It will also recommend things to do offline, like taking medication

on time, and going for a walk after a long period watching television.

Unlike other home-assistant devices, such as the Amazon Echo, the ElliQ actually moves towards the user, its head bobbing up and down to make it appear 'friendly' (watch it in action at www.intuitionrobotics.com/elliq).

The device lights up if it detects the user is there, and turns to face its tablet screen so you can watch videos 'together'. A prototype of the ElliQ is currently on display at the Design Museum in



London, before being launched in February in San Francisco.

If trials prove successful Intuition Robotics is likely to launch the ElliQ in the UK. With more than 1 million pensioners saying they always or often feel lonely, the device may prove popular.

Does ElliQ sound useful or patronising? Let us know: letters@computeractive.co.uk

The world's gone mad!

Lifelong criminal James Leslie Kelly is suing US telecoms giant Verizon for \$72m for letting him steal another person's identity. In 2015, he walked into a Verizon store in Florida and used one of its computers to buy products in someone else's name. He claims that by not catching him, Verizon was negligent and violated his rights. Thankfully, the court plans to dismiss his case, proving that there's still some sanity left in the world.

NHS patients make hundreds of pounds selling drugs on eBay

Patients are selling prescription medications on eBay and costing the NHS thousands of pounds. A BBC investigation has uncovered a vibrant black market on the auction site. The reporter, Jonathan Gibson, bought a box of the arthritis drug Enbrel – which costs the NHS £10,000 a year – for just £250.

He also bought four boxes of the erectile-dysfunction jab Caverject for £24, a drug that costs the NHS £500 a year. The Enbrel seller told Gibson he was prescribed the drug every four weeks and sold any that were unused. He later apologised, saying he wouldn't sell any more.

The patient selling Caverject said he "can't use them anymore" and so sells them to "three or four" regular customers. His wife admitted that they knew it was wrong, but claimed they hadn't made much money.

Selling drugs through an



unauthorised source is illegal under the Medicines Act of 1968. It states that prescription medication can be handed out only by a GP, hospital doctor, specialist nurse or pharmacist. A spokesman for the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) said that selling drugs on eBay "poses unquestionable risks to the patient".

eBay confirmed it had removed some listings selling medicine, adding that it "works

closely" with the MHRA to stop drugs being sold.

NHS Protect, which tackles crime across the service, couldn't give an estimate of how many drugs are sold on eBay, but Gibson said: "Given the ease with which I was able to find and purchase prescriptions from patients, the anecdotal evidence points to it being widespread".

Read eBay's policy on selling medicine at www.snipca.com/23127.

Squirrels 'worse hackers than humans'

Squirrels are a bigger risk to national infrastructure than hackers, a security researcher has claimed.

Since 2013 ex-hacker Cris Thomas has monitored the number of power cuts caused by animals. He told a US security conference that

squirrels, birds, rats and snakes have been responsible for more than 1,700 incidents, affecting nearly 5 million people. Squirrels topped the list with 879 'attacks' (see box).

He posted the attacks on a map as part of his Cyber Squirrel 1 project (<http://cybersquirrel1.com>), which aims to challenge what he

calls "the ludicrousness of cyber-war claims by people at high levels in government and industry". He says the damage done by human hackers is tiny compared with the havoc caused by wildlife.

Besides power cuts, mostly caused by cables being brought down, the research discovered that a jellyfish had shut down a Swedish nuclear plant in 2013 by clogging pipes.

Thomas collected data from news reports and alerts online. He said that the number of incidents worldwide will be much larger because he gathered information written in English only.

You can watch his presentation on YouTube at www.snipca.com/23126.



ANIMAL HACKERS

Squirrels	879
Birds	434
Snakes	83
Raccoons	72
Rats	36
Martens	22
Frogs	3



IN BRIEF

SKY LINE-RENTAL PRICES TO RISE

Sky has admitted that its line-rental prices will rise from 1 March, but hasn't confirmed by how much. The company's broadband customers currently pay £17.40 per month to rent a phone line. Details of the rise, Sky's first line-rental increase since late 2015, were spotted in the small print of a newspaper advert. Sky will write to customers to confirm the increase, giving them 30 days to cancel without incurring any exit fees.

ADOBE FORCE-FEEDS BROWSER TOOL

Adobe has angered thousands of users by installing a Chrome browser plug-in as part of a security update for Acrobat Reader. The plug-in, which lets you convert web pages to PDF, is activated when you agree to grant Chrome certain permissions – including allowing the browser to "read and change all your data on websites you visit". But you don't actually need to accept these, nor enable the plug-in, to receive the security fix.

WINDOWS 7 'CAN'T KEEP COMPANIES SAFE'

Windows 7 can no longer be relied on to keep companies safe, Microsoft's German division has warned. Despite being supported until 2020, the operating system "fails to meet the needs of modern technology and the high standards of security required by IT departments". Markus Nitschke, head of Windows at Microsoft Deutschland, said that companies not planning to upgrade from Windows 7 within three years face "enormous dangers".

Named & Shamed

Jane Hoskyn puts the boot into tech villains, jargon-spouting companies and software stuffed with junk

WARNING: JUNK AHEAD

Junk offender: Vuze

After 15 years writing about software, I finally installed my first BitTorrent client, Vuze (www.vuze.com) – and it welcomed me by trying to sneak a Yahoo search PUP and a fake security tool on to my PC.

Perhaps it serves me right for meddling with BitTorrent. It's used by video pirates to share copyrighted films, software and music for free, after all. My intentions were ethical, honest. I wanted to share enormous videos files from my PC to my laptop, and Vuze looked like a great way to do that.

The installer for the new free version of Vuze – 'The Most Powerful BitTorrent Software on Earth', according to itself – began by downloading Java to my PC without asking. You know Java. That plug-in with more holes than an industrial fishing net. Java is supposedly

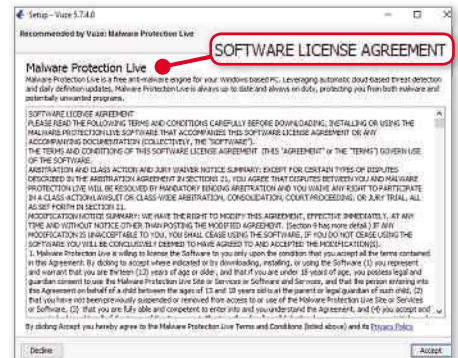


being retired, but no one's told Vuze.

I ticked the tiny 'Customize' box and was offered a few innocuous shortcuts, and then some pre-ticked components – Message Sync, iTunes Integration (yawn) – but nothing juicy. When I clicked Next a couple more times the fun really began.

'Free Search Offer by Spigot' said the page heading, in tiny letters that I could read from a whole inch away. 'Yahoo! Inc ("Yahoo") welcomes you.' Oh dear. There followed a page of cramped legalese that a casual observer might mistake for the licence agreement. Click Accept, and you'll immediately find your browser devoured by a Yahoo hijacker.

I clicked Decline (phew!) – and then came an 'offer' for 'Malware Protection Live, Recommended by Vuze'. This time the tiny lettering was headed 'SOFTWARE LICENSE AGREEMENT' (see screenshot) – and came with an Accept button.



Malware Protection Live sounds useful and is anything but

Malware Protection Live sounds like an important tool that's part of Vuze. It's not – it's another PUP. This fake security tool slows your PC dramatically, doesn't block malware and takes several steps to remove (www.snipca.com/23168). I managed to get through the Vuze installer without acquiring either of these PUPs, but only because I knew to keep clicking Decline. And I ended up using a USB stick to transfer my files anyway.

What are they talking about?

What they say

Microsoft (www.snipca.com/23165)

"A mobile computing device (where the) flexible hinge structure... supports a continuous viewing area of the display device that extends across the plurality of housings."

What they mean

A device with a hinge. Microsoft's patent application is thought to describe the new Transformer phone, which can unfold to become a tablet. LG and

Samsung are said to be launching similar devices this year, too.



Jane's villain of the fortnight

iTunes gift-card scammers

iTunes gift cards saved Christmas for confused aunties like me. These can be used to buy any apps, music and games from Apple, so they're great presents for kids whose tastes are impossible to fathom. But thieves love iTunes cards, too – and they've devised a cruel way of stealing them.

The conmen ring up pensioners, pretending to be from HMRC. They claim their victims owe a tax bill, then demand payment in iTunes vouchers and threaten arrest if they don't pay.

Now, have you ever had to pay a tax bill in iTunes gift cards? Me neither. But we all get irrational when we're scared about a bill. So the scam works. Recently, an elderly woman in Hull

took a taxi to the shops to buy £500 in iTunes gift cards

for her cold caller (www.snipca.com/23204), while a 72-year-old Manchester woman coughed up £1,300 of vouchers. Last summer an 84-year-old Stockport man was told to buy vouchers worth £5,000 (www.snipca.com/23205).

The police and Apple are aware of this scam but haven't found the crooks. Apple has posted a security warning (www.snipca.com/23207).



 **Want to nominate a villain of the fortnight?**
Email us at editor@computeractive.co.uk

Question of the Fortnight

Why is the NHS still using Windows XP?

Three years after Microsoft ended support, 90 per cent of trusts are still running the operating system

Security experts have said that the UK's hospitals are "very fat, juicy targets" for hackers because they still run Windows XP computers.

The danger was driven home on Friday 13 January when Barts Health Trust, the UK's largest NHS trust, was attacked by what was first thought to be a **ransomware** hack. By Monday the trust said that a **Trojan** had breached its security, forcing it to take computers offline.

Barts, which runs four hospitals in London, said that no patient data was stolen and no patient appointments were cancelled.

But the attack underlines the risks in continuing to use Windows XP, which remains widespread throughout the NHS. A Freedom of Information (FoI) request in October 2016, to which 42 of the 63 trusts responded, found that 90 per



with a more secure operating system. An FoI request made in July 2014 – three months after Microsoft ended support for XP – found that while all NHS trusts were reliant on XP, 74 per cent were planning to upgrade fully by March 2015.

So what's gone wrong since? Some experts say it comes down to money. Jon

the NHS a "poorly defended target". He said that "spending on the NHS has dropped in real terms since the recession" and therefore it's unsurprising that trusts prioritise medical needs over IT security. Until this changes, he said, hospitals will "increasingly fall victim" to hacking.

Underinvestment isn't the only factor, though. Some hospitals need to keep using XP because their equipment is incompatible with later versions. In cases like these experts recommend that PCs run XP in a **virtual environment**, preventing malware from spreading to other computers.

They also say that NHS staff should be better trained to spot scam emails that could trigger ransomware, which has rapidly become one of the biggest threats facing large organisations. Recent figures show that one in three NHS trusts have been attacked

THE FACTS

- Barts Health Trust – the UK's largest – was targeted and infected by a Trojan, though no patient data was stolen
- One in three NHS trusts have at some time been targeted by ransomware hacks, forcing hospitals to cancel a number of appointments
- Microsoft ended support for XP in 2014, though many large organisations still rely on it

by hackers trying to lock PC files. One trust, Imperial College Healthcare, has been a victim 19 times in the past 12 months.

None of the trusts paid the ransom, but the effects on patients can be devastating. An attack on the Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust in October forced operations to be cancelled for four days.

The security community say these attacks are warnings that can't be ignored. David Gibson from security company Varonis said that Barts "should be thanking" the hackers for exposing the holes in their defences. But as the NHS struggles with its worst winter for decades, the more pressing issue for trusts is to ease the strain on accident and emergency. Upgrading from an old operating system won't seem as important as keeping operations on schedule.

“Upgrading Windows XP won't seem as important as keeping operations on schedule”

cent were running XP, albeit on a small number of computers in some cases.

A third of trusts said that they will move on from XP in 2017, but worryingly most of the rest said that they had no immediate plans to upgrade.

And yet the trusts had previously been confident that they would swiftly replace XP

Cook, sales director at software company Citrix (which made the FoI requests) said that with "prolonged austerity" the NHS is "under even more pressure to do more with less". He called for hospitals to upgrade from XP as "a matter of urgency".

Jamie Moles from malware-detection firm Lastline called

Letters

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www.twitter.com/computeractive

Dating sites tempt you with 'fake freebies'

 After reading Issue 492's Final Straw about 'fake freebies' (right), I think Ken Rigsby should have mentioned dating websites. Most of these sites entice you to register and create a profile for free. You have to divulge your personal details and spend loads of time filling out questionnaires and uploading photos. Then once you verify your email address you become a member – or so you think. In most cases, only when you try to send a message do you discover that you have to pay for a premium membership to proceed.

I don't expect such a service to be completely free as they need to make money like any other business. I object to the underhand way most of them appear to go about it.

Dale Butler

Stuck in the 20th century without web access

 Mike Gosling (Letters, Issue 492) is quite right – the internet is not essential. In the past, central heating, washing machines and freezers were not available, but few people would want to be without them today. My five-year-old great-grandson has just got his own tablet, which is necessary for school work. I believe that many schools are now setting homework on the internet, which pupils complete and teachers mark. It is this generation who will grow up taking the internet for granted like switching on the light.

Of course it is possible to live without the internet, but as more and more services go online, how long will it be before all other means of contact will be withdrawn. Rather than remain stuck in the 20th century, why not enjoy what today has to offer?

John Revell

I just want 'reasonable' speeds, not 'superfast'

 I am certainly one of the 1.4 million who – according to Ofcom's report (News, Issue 492) – can't get speeds of 10Mbps. I live about one



mile from the exchange and on TalkTalk receive between 3.5 and 4.2Mbps. On occasions it has fallen to between 0.7 and 1Mbps, although TalkTalk recently emailed to say that they were "starting work to try and make your broadband even better". More than two weeks later I've yet to see a difference.

I have declined to pay the extra for fibre broadband as I cannot be certain that the speed will increase to the level they forecast. Anyway, I've no pressing need for a faster download speed – just a consistent, reasonable speed. It is interesting that my son receives around 17Mbps from BT in his village in Dorset. I didn't think Weston-super-Mare, where I live, is exactly in the middle of nowhere.

Keith Staddon

Zen and the art of excellent broadband

 For 16 years I was an AOL customer and I initially paid a fair price for line rental and broadband. However, as soon as TalkTalk took over AOL the line speed and reliability varied between virtually non-existent to 2Mbps (the maximum TalkTalk said I



£20 View-Master VR headset is a bargain

 I was interested to read Richard Godden's letter in Issue 491 regarding virtual-reality (VR) headsets. I also had a View-Master as a child and thought it was wonderful. He may be interested to know that View-Master has a VR headset available for around £20

Peter White

Upgrade and smell the coffee

 I have proved that you can teach an old dog new tricks! Way back in time, I was the chap who would not have a computer, internet, Vista, Windows 7 etc. Until Christmas, I had a laptop running Windows 8.1, which I was more than happy with because it ran Family Tree Maker. I kept reading

reports about all the things that must be corrected in Windows 10 to prevent this and that occurring, which convinced me that I didn't want it.

Then, a mug of coffee was knocked over my machine, rendering it incapable of doing anything. So I now have a splendid new laptop with Windows 10 already installed, and with a friend's help it has been tweaked to suit my needs. It is brilliant, and runs Family Tree Maker without a problem. What was I getting so steamed up about?

Barry C Holdstock



(www.view-master.com, pictured), which can use apps made for Google Cardboard, as well as their own apps.



I bought one to try out VR and was so impressed with the quality and clarity that I decided to upgrade to the Samsung Gear VR (www.snipca.com/23108), because I have a Samsung Galaxy S6 phone. What an absolute let-down that was! After paying almost £100 for the Gear VR, I decided to try it using some of the same apps I'd used for the View-Master, only to find that the "screen door" effect was much worse. Imagine looking out of your window through thick net curtains and you'll get a basic idea of how bad the Gear VR headset is.

I trawled the web thinking that somehow I'd purchased a faulty Gear VR, only to find that it's actually a common complaint among users. When four of my grandkids visited over Christmas, I let them try both headsets, and they all had the same opinion that the View-Master was a much clearer and better VR experience.

I will keep the Samsung VR in case they manage to improve things in the future, but it will take a lot of improving to equal the visual clarity of the cheap View-Master.

Pete Goldie

Drivers and phones: confiscate both!

✉ On the subject of using a mobile phone while driving, surely one big deterrent would be to give the police the power of removing both phone and car. The thought of losing one's phone would hopefully deter a lot of drivers, and even more if their car was impounded as well. Think of the inconvenience – stranded, with no car and no mobile!

Sheila Powell



STAR LETTER

Parents, not Government, should protect children online

✉ I don't want to downplay the dangers that children face online, but we really shouldn't need an ombudsman to protect their rights, as suggested by the Children's Commissioner for England (News, Issue 493, page 9). Instead of the Government taking action, parents need to adopt more responsibility for the wellbeing of their children. But sadly we seem to live in an age where parents let their kids do what they like, then blame somebody else when things go wrong.

Parenting isn't easy. I've raised three children, often through difficult times personally. They're all in their late teens and early 20s now, and I was very strict about regulating their internet access. Fortunately, when they were much younger they didn't have to worry about the plague of social media and the cyberbullying that springs from it, but they could still have stumbled upon nasty sexual images with a mistyped search. That's why I insisted on the strictest parental controls available, and taught myself how to use them. I always made sure that I stayed one step ahead of their technical expertise (and I still am, I suspect!).

The report from the Commissioner



said that half of eight- to 11-year-olds couldn't understand Instagram's terms. But what are they doing on Instagram in the first place? At that age they should be playing in the garden, running through woods, getting dirty and grazing their knees. Their lives should be carefree, not overshadowed by anxiety caused by social media.

Perhaps the problem is that parents themselves love social media so much that they think it's cruel to deprive their children of it. But it's far worse to make children depressed and paranoid by the pressures of being online all the time. I love the internet, and wouldn't be without it now, but I'm thankful that I grew up in an age before it.

Lorraine Hardman



The Star Letter writer wins a Computeractive mug!

Windows 10 failure cost me £55

✉ Having read the news story in Issue 492 'Microsoft rushes out fix for catastrophic Windows 10 update', I thought I'd share my experience with you. On New Year's Eve I turned on my PC and put in my password, only to be told it was incorrect. Knowing the password *was* correct, I repeatedly tried to turn on my PC, but without success.

Repeated reboots failed to work, so I turned it off and on 3 January rang an engineer, who tried to set up a new account using a second computer, but was still unable to gain access. None of the fixes I found on the web worked.

Having told the engineer I'd backed up everything, he said his only option was to

uninstall Windows 10 and everything else on the PC and replace them with 'clean' copies. I now have my computer back in good working order, but I've removed the password from the Start screen just in case and I'm £55 poorer for the experience.

Brian Romans

What's popular on Google? Find out using Google!

✉ I couldn't help but notice the irony of Ben Tynan's letter in Issue 493 ("What's popular on Google? Search me!"). The answer to his ignorance on the subjects was staring him in the face: Google the terms. Learning is a continuous process. Use the tools available to find answers. Don't moan in ignorant ire.

Michael Weaver

Consumeractive

Can I cancel a renewed subscription?



Q I don't need Dropbox Pro anymore, but I forgot to cancel the automatic annual subscription. On 7 January it took £80 from my PayPal account for 2017. I know I can cancel a new subscription within 14 days for a full refund, but does this apply to ongoing services?

Elli Morse

A Yes, Elli can cancel, because under the Consumer Contract Regulations (CCR) renewed and new subscriptions are treated the same, giving you a 14-day period to cancel. You don't need to give a reason, and if you've paid a deposit or – like Elli – upfront for the full year, this must be refunded to you. There are exceptions though. If during the 14 days you've used the service you've subscribed to, such as by visiting a gym, you will have to pay for this usage.

Happily, Elli emailed us within the 14-day period. We explained her rights, and she then made a claim for a refund through Dropbox, citing the CCR. She has since emailed us to say that Dropbox has promised her a full refund. Dropbox gives advice on cancelling its Pro account, and downgrading to the free Basic version, at www.snipca.com/23043.



Can John Lewis force me to have a third repair?

John Lewis

Q I bought a Samsung UE40JU7000 TV from John Lewis for £840 on 24 November 2015. It worked well until October 2016 when it began switching itself off. John Lewis arranged for it to be repaired under Samsung's warranty, but when it was returned it was still faulty. It was picked up for another repair, but in January 2017 the same fault reappeared plus a few more. John Lewis says that I have to put up with another repair, this time under its own warranty. Is this right?

John Robertson

A No it's not. Because John bought the TV after October 2015, his rights fall under the Consumer Rights Act (CRA), which gives a retailer one chance only to repair a product. If a first repair fails to fix the problem, or leads to new ones, you are entitled to a full refund within six months of purchase. After six months the retailer can choose to replace the item, or offer a partial refund based on how long you've used it.

What makes John's case interesting is John Lewis' interpretation of his rights under warranty. The retailer told



him that because Samsung's repairs had failed, it was going to try to fix the TV under its own five-year warranty. If John doesn't invoke his rights under statutory law (namely, the CRA), then John Lewis is right to stick with its warranty. This is because warranties don't need to abide by the 'one repair only' rule.

Therefore you should always make it clear to a retailer when you want to back up your case using statutory law. This is particularly important when your rights are strongest, which is during the first six months after purchase because in this period you don't have to prove an item is inherently faulty.



My returned phone is missing – who's to blame?

Q I bought a Samsung Galaxy S7 Edge from eGlobal Central (www.eglobalcentral.co.uk) for £472 by credit card. After three weeks it started freezing randomly, so I sent it back to the retailer using Royal Mail tracked mail as requested. Royal Mail said the phone was signed for, but eGlobal Central says it hasn't arrived. Can you help?

Dennis Coleiro

A Soon after emailing us Dennis got back in touch to say that eGlobal Central had found the

phone, and it will now be repaired or replaced. But we're including his case because an increasing number of readers are contacting us about items that have gone missing in the post. Such incidences will only become more common with the growth of online shopping.

In Dennis's case, he could have sued eGlobal Central if Royal Mail had proved that the phone had been delivered. If



Royal Mail had been unable to prove this, Dennis should have made a claim against the company, using the £500 postal insurance he paid for. EGlobal Central would be required to back Dennis up with his claim. He could also have

claimed the money back through the bank that issued his credit card under Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act.





We stand up for your legal rights

✉ Contact us so we can investigate your case

Email: consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk

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

Please include both your phone number and address.

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

Can Argos force me to pay for a new charger?

Q Last Christmas my wife and I bought our granddaughter a Lenovo tablet from an Argos store. Within a few days the charger became faulty, but when we took it back the sales assistant said it wasn't covered under warranty so we'd have to buy a new one costing £7.99. Can Argos do this?

Brian Emery

A No it can't. Once again a major retailer has failed to teach its staff the basics of consumer law. Sales assistants often seem flummoxed by the legal differences between warranties and rights laid out in consumer law (called statutory rights). If previous emails from readers are anything to go by, staff at PC World are also often guilty of this.

The sales assistant may have been correct to say that the charger wasn't covered by the warranty, but that was irrelevant because under the Consumer Rights Act (CRA) Brian can demand a refund within 30 days of purchase for an inherently faulty product.

Argos may say that only the charger is faulty, not the tablet, but again this is irrelevant because a tablet that can't be charged isn't fit for purpose. Whatever the retailer says next, Brian is entitled to a full refund, or a

replacement. We've asked Argos's head office to pass on this information to Brian's local store.

Although the 30-day deadline for rejecting goods bought as Christmas presents has passed, you may still have a case. If you returned an item during this time but – like Brian – were given

incorrect information, you could

argue that you are still entitled to a full refund. Retailers can't force you to put up with a repair because their staff don't know the law.



CASE UPDATE



Happy Harry gets a full refund from Currys

It's always pleasing when a *Computeractive* reader gets a larger refund

than they were entitled to. Harry

James, whose case we

reported in Issue 492,

has received the full

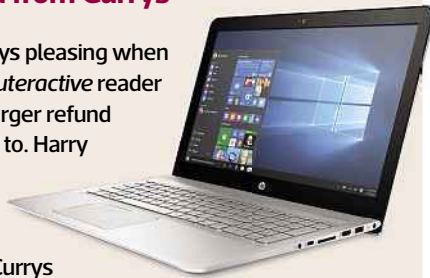
£699.99 refund from Currys

for a faulty HP Envy laptop. However,

because he'd owned it for more than six months, Currys could have deducted some money from the refund.

After buying the laptop in December 2015, he had to return it to the retailer twice for repair. Following the first failed repair Harry could have demanded a refund under the Consumer Rights Act (CRA), but instead chose to pursue his case using his warranty (this is becoming something of a theme in this issue's *Consumeractive*). Currys was legally entitled to suggest that Harry send the laptop for a third repair, but we didn't think it was the right way to deal with a customer who'd had little use out of an expensive item.

We're glad that Currys agreed with us. The retailer even apologised to Harry – even though strictly speaking it had been following the letter of the law because Harry was using the warranties, not the CRA. The refund means Harry can spend the money on a new laptop, which he needs for his university studies. We hope it turns out to be more reliable.



THIS WILL COME IN USEFUL

Free version vs paid-for comparison tables

Adobe Acrobat

www.snipca.com/23040

Google Drive

www.snipca.com/23042

Avast

www.avast.com/en-gb/index

iCloud

www.snipca.com/23060

CCleaner

www.piriform.com/ccleaner

iObit Uninstaller

www.snipca.com/23061

Dashlane

www.dashlane.com/premium

Lightworks

www.lwks.com/compareversions

Dropbox

www.snipca.com/23039

Malwarebytes

www.malwarebytes.com/trial

Evernote

<https://evernote.com/pricing>

OneDrive

www.snipca.com/23041

Flickr

www.flickr.com/pro

TunnelBear

www.tunnelbear.com/pricing



Protect Your Tech

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

WATCH OUT FOR...

Hidden autofill boxes online

What's the threat?

Finnish web developer Viljami Kuosmanen unearthed flaws in Google's browser Chrome and the LastPass **plug-in** that allow scammers to steal your personal information by hiding 'autofill' fields on a website. These are the boxes that get automatically filled with your address and phone number, for example, when you type your name in the first box.

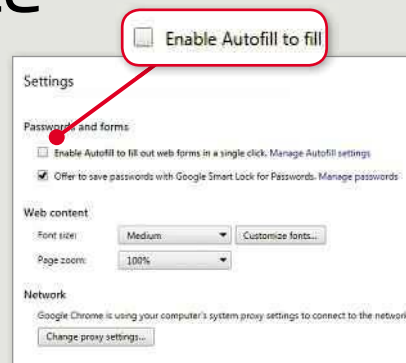
The 'autofill' option is useful because it speeds up form-filling. But Kuosmanen discovered that hackers could conceal boxes to steal more personal details beyond those you think you're submitting. He created a website to illustrate the point. Visit www.snipca.com/23025 and you'll see two boxes, for your name and email address. In the 'Name' box type the

first letter of your name. If you have autofill switched on in your browser you'll see the option to fill in the rest of your details automatically. Click that option, and the 'Email' box will be filled with your email address.

That seems harmless enough, but there are actually six more boxes that you can't see, each containing a piece of personal data, including your postal address and phone number. Click Submit to see the worrying truth. Kuosmanen shows the scam in action at www.snipca.com/23026.

What should you do?

You can turn off the autofill option in Chrome. Click the top-right menu button (three vertical dots), then Settings. At the bottom of the next page click 'Show advanced settings...', scroll down to the



'Passwords and forms' heading, then untick 'Enable Autofill to fill out web forms in a single click' (see screenshot). Google has more advice at www.snipca.com/23030.

You could switch to Firefox, which doesn't have an autofill option, although one is planned. LastPass hadn't commented on the flaw at the time of writing.

New tools

Passphrase Generator

www.snipca.com/23032

One reason it's difficult to come up with good passwords is because the human brain finds it very hard to be random. Software, on the other hand, has no such limitations. Passphrase Generator, for example, is a Firefox **extension** that plucks six words from a list of 7,776 (see them all, from 'abacus' to 'zoom', at www.snipca.com/23033).

The list has been compiled by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), the long-standing campaigners for

digital privacy. It recommends rolling five dice then matching the numbers to the words (following the instructions at www.eff.org/dice), but in effect Passphrase Generator does this for you.

Once you've installed the extension via the link above, click the dice icon that appears in your browser bar to see the six-word passphrase, selected from a mind-boggling 221,073,919,720,733,357,899,776 combinations. We got 'blah undead swell slab unaudited agreement'

(see screenshot), which – just in case any hackers are reading *Computeractive* – we'll never use. You can never be too careful.



ScamWatch
READERS WARN READERS

Fake Amazon purchase

I received an email apparently from Amazon.co.uk that read: "Dear Customer, Your ID was just used to purchase 'FIRE TV PRINT HD89.97 £' from the store on a computer or device that had not previously been associated with that ID". It advised me to click a link if I hadn't made the purchase. When I did this, I saw a red warning screen telling me the link wasn't safe. I then re-read the email and spotted the mistakes: the price was typed without a space after 'HD', followed by the '£' symbol. Amazon confirmed it was a scam. There's more info at www.snipca.com/23021.

David Aldred



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

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Best Free Software

Jane Hoskyn recommends new programs that won't cost you anything

SYSTEM TOOL

Task Manager DeLuxe (TMX) 2.4.1

www.snipca.com/23000

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



Get a much closer look at all your PC's running processes using this fast, lightweight program that doesn't even need to be installed.

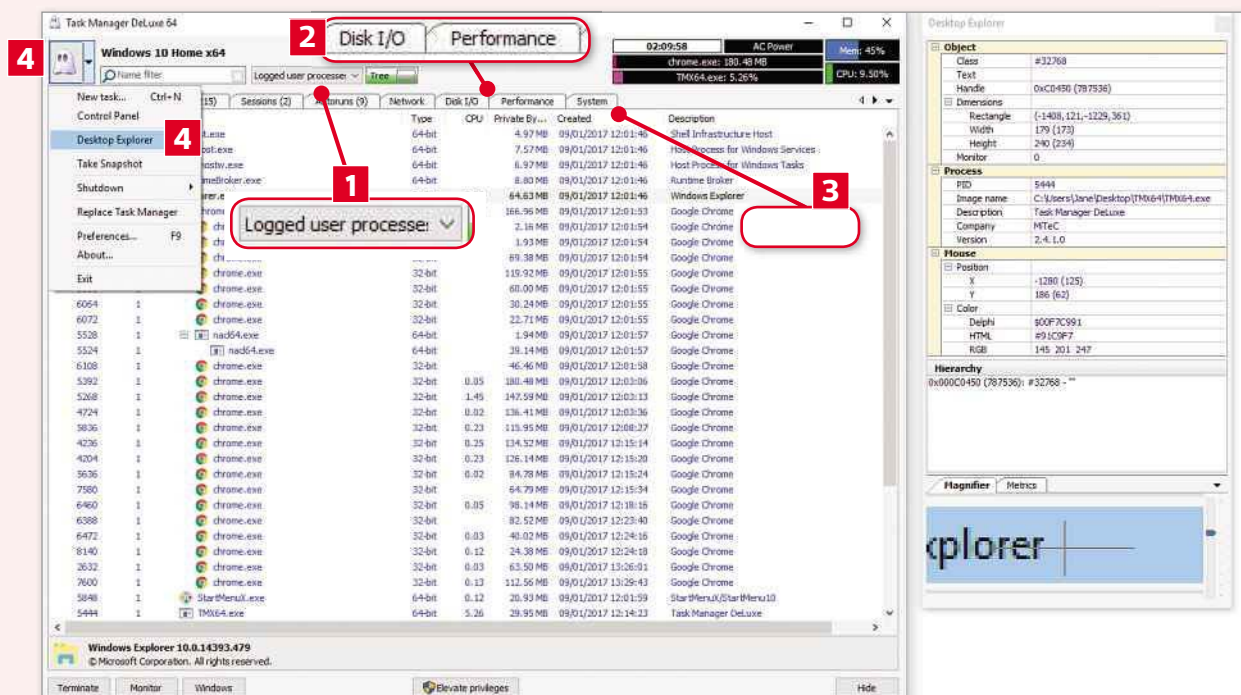
Task Manager DeLuxe, also known as TMX, is a powerful alternative to the built-in Windows Task Manager. If you're a regular reader you'll know there are already good Task Manager alternatives such as Process Explorer (www.snipca.com/23017) and Process Hacker (<http://processhacker.sourceforge.net>) – but TMX is more than a match for them. It offers a wider range of real-time detail about your PC and operating system, and makes the information much easier to navigate.

Unlike similar programs, TMX has a search box and also uses browser-style tabs to divide your PC's statistics into categories. The default Processes tab uses a 'tree' view so you can see which processes were triggered by which programs.

Right-click an item to kill it, monitor it, control its startup behaviour and more. Other tabs display Windows services, startup (Autorun) processes and your internet connection (Network).

Version 2.4.1 is a big update, adding real-time statistics about your **CPU** and other components, plus an 'I/O' ('input/output') tab where you can track the activity of peripherals such as an external hard drive and even your keyboard. A new Desktop Explorer feature reveals the properties of items under your cursor, and you can now set TMX as your default task manager.

TMX is portable, so you can run it from a USB stick to check older PCs and laptops. To get it, click the Download button for your version of Windows (**32bit** or **64bit**). Save the **ZIP** file, extract its contents and then click the program file ('TMX64.exe') to run it.

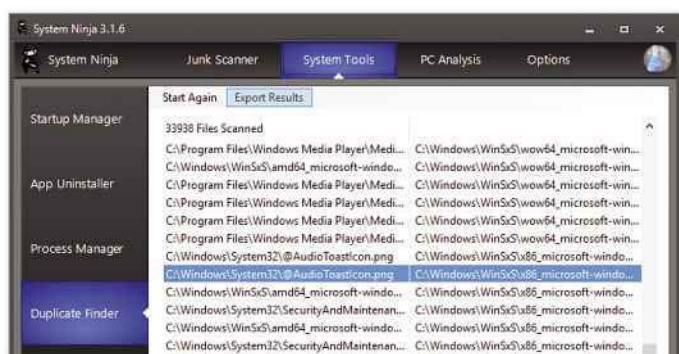


1 Task Manager Deluxe (TMX) opens by default on the Processes tab. Right-click any item to stop it (Terminate), watch it (Monitor) and manage preferences (PE Viewer).

2 The new Disk I/O tab displays real-time graphs of activity by your peripheral devices and hard drive. The new Performance tab reveals CPU and memory activity.

3 The System tab displays activity and specifications of your PC and its components, operating system and even antivirus. Right-click an item to copy it to your clipboard.

4 Click the arrow next to the ghost icon, then click Desktop Explorer. This opens a separate window where you can see information about items you move your cursor over.



PC CLEANER

System Ninja 3.1.6

www.snipca.com/23018

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

Find and remove duplicated photos and other files from your PC, using the new Duplicate Finder tool in this CCleaner rival. Well, we say CCleaner rival. They're more like friends. System Ninja's creator also makes CCEnhancer (www.snipca.com/23019), a free extension for CCleaner. System Ninja and CCleaner clean your PC in different ways, however, so it makes sense to install both.

CCleaner focuses on removing lots of junk automatically, but System Ninja lets you choose what to remove. Its new Duplicate Finder feature lists duplicates (and originals) and then lets you select files for deleting with one click. Similarly, the Junk Scanner feature lets you decide which files to delete, rather than 'optimising' your hard drive automatically.

The free version of System Ninja needs to be installed, but it doesn't take up much space (8.20MB) and there's no junk in the installer.

DESKTOP TOOL

LaunchBar Commander 1.149

www.snipca.com/23020

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

At first sight, LaunchBar Commander looks like the world's smallest program window. But once you start opening and configuring its dropdown menus, it becomes a customisable one-click gateway to all your most-used programs, folders, settings and tasks. It's like a personalised cross between the Control Panel and Start menu. This useful little program has finally been updated with full Windows 10 support. The new version also adds new icons and options to change the design.

To get it, click 'Download v1.149.01' and then run the installer. To get a portable version for running on XP or Vista, click 'portable zip'. Both versions open with a Welcome window; click Dismiss to launch the program. For detailed help and tips, click 'Online Help/History' on the website.



WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

We tell you what software to use

What should we use to publish our magazine?

Q My husband and I are the editors of our local chapel magazine – an A5 booklet of around 24 pages.

Currently, we use Microsoft Office Publisher 2007, but we understand it won't be supported for much longer, and we're about to buy a new PC anyway. At over £100, Publisher 2016 is rather expensive. Is there a free program we can use instead?

Andrea K Marlow

A Here's your chance to try a couple of programs that we think do a better job than Microsoft Office Publisher – and they're both free.

First, have a look at Serif PagePlus (www.snipca.com/23141). Its drag-and-drop layout tools are very easy to use, and it's ideal for creating booklets and small posters. However, you may find its templates a little too limiting for your magazine.

For more professional results, try open-source desktop-publishing suite Scribus (www.scribus.net, see screenshot). It's specially designed for magazine production, and in fact the 'Made with Scribus' page on its website currently features a testimonial from a church social organisation similar to your own. Scribus is also useful for producing printed and virtual artwork, including animations.

To get the latest stable version of Scribus (1.4.6), go to its SourceForge page (www.snipca.com/23142) and click 'Download scribus-1.4.6-windows.exe'. It's harder to learn than Publisher or PagePlus, but its tools rival the likes of Adobe InDesign and QuarkXPress – both of which would set you back hundreds of pounds to buy. For more info visit the Scribus wiki site: <https://wiki.scribus.net>.



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Reviews

New products tested by our experts

PC | £679 from PC Specialist www.snipca.com/22318

PC Specialist Enigma K1

Everything for a bit less



Laptops can sell themselves on all sorts of factors; how slim, light and stylish it is may matter to you as much as what's inside it. But when it comes to a desktop tower PC, you probably just want the fastest PC you can get for your money. Recent months have seen significant new processors from Intel and the big graphics card makers AMD and Nvidia. That means you get more power for your Brexit-stricken pound. To prove the point, here's PC Specialist's Enigma K1, which pairs Intel's new Kaby Lake CPU and Nvidia's GTX GPU to create a machine for under £700 that's ready for graphics and games as well as everyday Windows 10 tasks.

“For a PC at this price, the Enigma K1's notably fast with generous memory”

Intel's contribution is the 3GHz i5-7400, while the graphics card is Nvidia's GeForce GTX 1050. It's about the most potent combination you're likely to see in this price bracket, and PC Specialist hasn't skimped on the components that surround them either – even if they all come installed in rather an ordinary-looking mid-sized tower case. A few sharp angles and stripes probably won't be enough to persuade you to plonk this chunky chassis on top of your desk rather than hiding it underneath.

What's inside is more interesting. Windows 10 Home comes installed on a 240GB Kingston SSD for speed, and there's also a 1TB hard drive to give you room for everything

else. A large 16GB of memory is installed as standard, twice the norm, which will help with multi-tasking and more advanced software. The SSD has fast DDR4 memory too, which for a PC at this price is a notably generous specification.

A few corners have had to be cut, but they're sensibly chosen. For instance, there's no optical drive fitted as standard, but if you need a DVD burner, PC Specialist will add it in for just £15. You get eight USB ports to play with, two of which are handily mounted on the front, but the Asus micro-ATX motherboard provides limited room for internal upgrades. A pair of PCI-Express 1x slots are free, but the graphics card already fills the single PCIe 16x slot, and the memory modules fill both of the slots provided. The 350W power supply gives you a little bit of wriggle room for a more power-hungry graphics card in the future.

Upgrading may be a distant concern, though, because we had absolutely no complaints about this PC's performance. The fast central processor and SSD ensured programs loaded and ran quickly, and the GTX 1050, despite coming from the bottom of Nvidia's new range, kept up its end of the bargain by running the latest 3D games smoothly at Full HD resolution with the detail settings turned up. Only the most demanding titles required some tweaking.

Power efficiency is impressive, too. The Core i5-7400 and GeForce GTX 1050 are both around 10–15 per cent quicker than their previous generations, yet much more power efficient. That means the Enigma K1 only uses 27 watts while sitting booted up but idle,



occasionally flickering above 120 watts while running the latest games. A further benefit is that, because the processor and graphics card produce so little heat, the various cooling fans never waver from a steady background whirr.

The Enigma K1's appeal is clear. If you are on a budget but want a good processor and a GPU that can cope with photo and video-editing apps as well as handling some gaming, it's an excellent choice.

SPECIFICATIONS

3.0GHz Intel i5-7400 quad-core processor • 16GB memory • Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050 graphics card • 240GB SSD • 1TB hard drive • 3x USB 3.0 • 5x USB 2.0 • Gigabit Ethernet • HDMI port • DisplayPort • DVI port • Windows 10 Home • 415x192x418mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/22318

VERDICT: Not many frills and limited upgrade potential, but for the money you get a fast PC and plenty of storage



ALTERNATIVE: Chillblast Fusion Sentinel £750 A faster graphics card justifies the higher price of this desktop, tested last issue



LAPTOP | £225 from Amazon www.snipca.com/23029

Asus C202SA Chromebook

A little battler

Generally speaking, we're wary of laptops that are too cheap. When you see one for under £250, it might seem like you're getting a bargain. But these days you can run up that sort of bill just filling a trolley in Sainsburys – or even Lidl, if you get tempted by all the power tools they've got on offer in those big baskets in the middle. Even so, it might still be a false economy: Windows 10 and modern software need a lot of processing power to run smoothly, and if you skimp too much you'll end up with a system that constantly keeps you guessing whether it's crashed or just needs another couple of minutes to scroll to the end of your Word document.

“It's cheap, portable, largely damage-proof and sufficiently fast to run web apps”

One answer is to spend a little more. Another is to skip Windows and use a Chromebook which, instead of a conventional operating system, relies on what's basically a glorified web browser to handle all your tasks. You can run programs – of a sort – and in some cases even install them on the Chromebook rather than always needing to be on the internet. But essentially the idea is that



everything lives online (or 'in the cloud') and all the real work is done at the other end of the connection, on a server somewhere that belongs to Google (which makes the Chrome OS software) or whoever's **web app** you're using.

We've tested a number of Chromebooks, including Asus' C201 (see our review, Issue 466), which is not entirely unlike the C202SA. The difference is that this one is aimed at schoolchildren and students, with an extra-strong hinge that opens all the way to flat (the better to see the teacher over your laptop), an anti-glare screen, spill-proof keyboard and rubbery bumpers all around. It's not guaranteed to survive if dropped, but is designed to be repairable. All of this is sensible, of course, for any user, not just those in education.

Although it's a very small machine, the keyboard is surprisingly usable, with keys that travel further than most, and the 1366x768-pixel screen is crisp and bright. Intel's Celeron processor won't win any speed awards, but since Chrome doesn't require it to do very much it's good enough, especially if you pay a few pounds extra for the model we tested, which has 4GB of memory rather than the minimum 2GB. The battery should last you around eight hours. Prices fluctuate, so shop around and you should find it for not much more than £200.

SPECIFICATIONS

Intel Celeron N3060 dual-core processor • 4GB memory • 16GB flash storage • 11.6in 1366x768-pixel screen • Webcam • SD card slot • 2x USB 3.0 ports • 1x HDMI port • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.0 • Chrome OS • 22.5x294x200mm (HxWxD) • 1.2kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/23031



HOW WE TEST

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

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

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

OUR AWARDS



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



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

PRICES

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

VERDICT: It's not a do-it-all PC, but this sturdy little travelling companion is a good choice if Chrome suits your purposes



ALTERNATIVE: Asus C201 Chromebook £150 It's less powerful, but if you want to keep costs right down this model (cheapest in Argos) is still an option



Reviews

PC MONITOR | £337 from Ballicom www.snipca.com/23119

NEC MultiSync EA245Wmi

A healthier option

Is your monitor killing you? Before you jump up and call the police, no, it probably isn't *actually* killing you. But it's probably not doing you any good. Most of us don't have our workspaces set up according to ergonomic advice. The screen may be higher or lower than ideal, and often the lack of adjustment in the monitor stand makes it hard to do anything about that. If you are concerned, you can find a quick visual guide to a healthy working position at www.snipca.com/23120, and more detail on display adjustment at www.snipca.com/23121.

Even when it's set up correctly, using a large PC monitor for long periods exposes you to a lot of artificial light (called blue light), and research in the last few years suggests this may be affecting our body clocks and preventing a good night's sleep.

“No reflections, excellent picture and fully adjustable”

It's easy to ignore all these claims, unless of course you're in charge of a large organisation with lots of people sitting at monitors every day – any one of whom might sue you if they think their monitor is making them unwell. NEC has designed the MultiSync EA245Wmi with corporate buyers in mind, but its features should also interest those of us buying purely for ourselves.

The 24in panel is incredibly slim, yet sturdy, and the simple base provides 100mm of height adjustment as well as tilt and the ability to swivel 90 degrees into portrait mode, a boon if you spend time reading long documents. Even left in landscape mode, the 1920x1200-pixel resolution gives you a



bit of extra height on top of the usual Full HD. The matt finish on the front glass ensures that no reflections obscure your view of the excellent picture quality, which covered an impressive 98.4 per cent of the sRGB colour range in our tests, with decent contrast and sufficiently high levels of brightness.

Talking of brightness, you can set the screen to adjust itself according to the light in the room. NEC's Low Blue Light Plus feature can also cut out frequencies thought to be bad for your eyes. There's a full set of ports on the back, including a DisplayPort pass-through to connect a second screen, and a three-port USB hub, as well as small stereo speakers if you don't need anything more powerful. It's pricey, but it's hard to fault this fully equipped and adjustable monitor.

SPECIFICATIONS

24in IPS LCD • 1920x1200-pixel resolution • 1x HDMI port • 1x DVI port • 1x DisplayPort input • 1x DisplayPort output • 1x VGA port • 2x 1W speakers • 398x532x205mm (HxWxD) • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/23122

VERDICT: It's a lot pricier than a basic 24in screen, but the image quality, adjustable height and extra features make it worth considering

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Asus VC239H £122 No height adjustment, but this 23.6in Full HD panel has slim bezels and picture quality is pretty good



Do I really need a... NAS drive?

What does it do?

Stores files and makes them available over your network to all your PCs. A network-attached storage (NAS) box looks like an external hard drive, but it's really a little PC in its own right, running software that handles the networking and may offer extra features, like playing back videos or handling your Apple iTunes library. You can also make backups to a NAS drive. You connect it to your broadband router using an Ethernet cable. Makers include Western Digital (www.snipca.com/23193, above), Synology (www.snipca.com/23191, below) and Seagate (www.snipca.com/23190).



Why would I want it?

Files on a NAS are equally accessible from all the computers on a network. Some also come with apps to make them appear on mobile devices, or directly over the internet, sometimes called a 'personal cloud'. If you keep all your family photos on a NAS, for example, you can view them anywhere.

What's the catch?

NAS boxes often have a lot of features but clunky software. Problems like how to maintain a media library where different users can add and delete files without conflicts or duplication haven't been wholly resolved. Accessing a NAS over even the fastest Ethernet connection (Gigabit) is slower than using an external hard drive via USB 3.0.



So can I do without it?

Many routers have a USB port to which you can connect a plain external hard drive, which would give you some storage accessible from PCs on your home network. But if a smarter central file server or media hub appeals, it's worth looking into what a NAS can offer.

LAPTOP | £1,099 from Amazon www.snipca.com/23023

Asus ZenBook 3

A powerful, light laptop

Asus makes a bewildering variety of neat aluminium laptops under complicated model numbers, so calling this just '3' means it's meant to be something special. To emphasise the point, it comes with gold trim all the way round the lid (see image below). This makes the navy blue model as shiny and smart as an admiral's uniform. We're not so sure about this trim on the silver-grey option, where it may just look as if it's gone a bit rusty at the edges. It's certainly different, and overall the ZenBook 3 feels as expensively built as you'd expect when you spend over a grand on a laptop.

“It's very portable, but still packs a processing punch for multi-tasking and creative apps”

But why would you? Well, it's one of the slimmest and lightest machines we've ever seen. And yet inside – rather than the low-power mobile Intel M-series processors used by the likes of Apple's MacBook – there's room for a proper i5 processor to handle all your Windows 10 programs smoothly. This is a brand new Intel Kaby Lake chip, and although the performance increase over last year's Skylake isn't huge, this laptop is very much a substitute for a desktop PC rather than just a sufficient second machine. Multi-tasking and creative software won't make it grind to a halt. You can even play basic 3D games without any problems.



A few years ago we'd have marvelled at Full HD (1920x1080-pixel) resolution on a mere 12.5in screen. It's much sharper than the 1366x768 found on some budget laptops, but visibly coarser than the likes of Apple's latest MacBook, even though it's just as bright. Covering 85 per cent of the sRGB colour range, it's not ideal for photo editing but looks fine for most purposes.

We found the keyboard spacious for such a compact machine, and the keys moved enough for accurate typing. The multi-touch trackpad responded well to gestures as well as cursor movements, and a fingerprint reader is incorporated at the top right if you prefer to secure your system that way. All of this felt a little flimsier than we'd have liked, though, with some flex when pressed.

One feature the ZenBook 3 does lack compared with most Windows 10 rivals is ports. There's just one USB Type-C. This means you'd need adapters for standard USB accessories or wired networking. You'd also have to unplug your mouse while charging or when using an external monitor, unless it had a built-in hub. Bluetooth 4.2 is provided, though, so a wireless mouse would make more sense, assuming you need one at all.

Talking of charging, battery life is less than we see on many modern lighter laptops, giving up six hours 52 minutes into our video-playback test. More battery life is always better, but we weren't too disappointed with this. It's enough to get you through most sessions away from the mains, as long as you can

live with plugging in when you reach work or return home. Compared with the three or four hours we used to accept, it's still quite practical.

Does it justify the price? If you just need a lightweight laptop, you can get a good one for a third as much. Even if you want high-end performance, Asus's own ZenBook UX310UA (which we haven't tested yet) offers an even faster i7 processor for just £800 (www.snipca.com/23028). But it's 50 per cent heavier, and unlikely to match the battery life. The ZenBook 3's nearest rival is probably HP's Spectre 13, now discounted to around £1,000 with an older but almost as capable i5 (as well as its own brand of gold trim). The screen has slightly better colour accuracy, but battery life is 40 minutes less.

SPECIFICATIONS

2.5GHz Intel Core i5-7200U dual-core processor
• 8GB memory • 512GB flash storage • 12.5in 1920x1080-pixel screen • Webcam • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.2 • USB Type-C port • Windows 10 Home • 11.9x296x191mm (HxWxD) • 0.95kg • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/23027

VERDICT: It's expensive and not quite perfect, but this super-slim laptop packs power and usability into a very sleek format



ALTERNATIVE: HP Spectre 13
£1,000 Even skinnier, though not quite as light, this stylish 13in comes with an i5 processor and is beautifully made



Reviews

USB STICK | £39 from iStorage www.snipca.com/23034

iStorage Datashur USB 2 Flash Drive

Make sure your files travel safely

When you need to transfer files between computers or just keep a copy somewhere safe, a USB stick is the obvious solution. The problem is they are very easy to lose, and whoever finds it can plug one into any PC and read your data. Most of us deal with files that we'd like to keep from prying eyes, whether they contain credit-card details or company accounts. That's where an encrypted drive comes in very useful.

Windows 10 includes a feature called BitLocker that lets you encrypt a connected USB stick. Unfortunately, you only get BitLocker with the more expensive Professional edition, which most of us don't have. Encryption software is available from other developers, such as BestCrypt (\$99 – about £81 – from www.snipca.com/23035), and there are a few free alternatives, but these can make the whole process quite complicated. And the



“If you need security with simplicity this could be the USB stick for you”

more complicated things are, the less likely you are to use encryption. And if you do use it, you may have trouble decrypting your files.

This USB drive simplifies matters by providing built-in encryption. Rather than unlocking it using software, you use a physical keypad built into the drive. Enter your code and the data is readable on any computer – just like a standard USB stick. It works with Windows PCs, Chromebooks, Macs, Linux, and Android devices – basically anything with a USB port. You can set it to automatically lock or erase itself if too many attempts are

made using the wrong code. You can also give trusted users a separate code to read files but not erase them.

Once you set a PIN, which must be seven to 15 digits, anything saved on the drive is encrypted. As soon as you eject the drive, it's unreadable until you enter the PIN again (before inserting it into a USB port). And that's really all there is to it. In our tests, with a **USB 3.0** port, our PC read data from the drive at up to 169Mbit/s and wrote at up to 107Mbit/s, falling to 27 or 25Mbit/s respectively with small files. That's reasonably fast for a USB stick.

The Datashur Flash Drive is certainly more expensive than a plain USB stick, from £39 for 4GB to £99 for 32GB, but worth it if you need simple and effective protection. It's water- and dust-resistant. For an extra £5, you can have text and/or graphics engraved on the drive, telling people where to return it if it's lost.

HOW DRIVE ENCRYPTION WORKS

The Datashur drive uses AES 256-bit encryption, which – at least until the next breakthrough in computer science – is effectively unbreakable. Because you never type the PIN on your PC, it can't be intercepted by malware. That only leaves the possibility of human error, such as the product's designers

messing up or you leaving the PIN on a sticky note. iStorage is a widely renowned UK supplier of hardware encryption, so you're probably the only weak link here.

The keypad isn't a physical combination lock, just an input device for the drive's internal software. It's powered by an internal battery which recharges while the drive is plugged into a USB port. If it runs down, the drive won't unlock, but plugging it into a PC will get it working again.



SPECIFICATIONS

Flash memory drive with built-in keypad • AES 256-bit hardware encryption • USB 2.0 plug (use with USB 3.0 port for best performance) • Rechargeable battery • 10.5x80x20mm (HxWxD) • 25g • Three-year warranty www.snipca.com/23034

VERDICT: It's very safe and easy to use, but only worth buying if the files you want to encrypt are extremely sensitive



ALTERNATIVE: Integral Crypto 8GB USB Flash Drive £20 Lots of drives such as this have built-in encryption, but rely on PC software to unlock



GRAPHICS CARD | £115 from Amazon www.snipca.com/23196

Gigabyte Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050

More speed for less money

Launched towards the end of 2015, Nvidia's new graphics processor technology, Pascal, powers a range of new cards including the extremely powerful GeForce GTX 1080 (£632 from Amazon www.snipca.com/23194). The 1050 is the cheapest option, at just over £100.

You could spend less on a graphics card, but this is the point at which it's going to make a significant difference to your PC's ability to run 3D games as well as accelerating tasks like rendering video effects in programs that support it.

The 1050 has fewer stream processors (the chips that do the work) than AMD's new card, the RX 460 (below), but runs at higher **clock speeds**. To be honest,

SPECIFICATIONS

2GB two-slot PCI-E 3.0 graphics card • 172mm • Supports Direct3D 12_1, OpenGL 4.5, OpenCL 1.2 • Up to three monitors • DisplayPort • DVI-D • HDMI • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/23197

none of that means much, because they're designed differently. The only way to see which is fastest in practice is to try them. So we did. In our tests, the GTX 1050 was 14 per cent faster overall running games at Full HD resolution, and up to 26 per cent in older titles.

For non-gaming graphics purposes, you'll only benefit if you run programs that specifically use the **GPU** (check their system requirements on the maker's web page). Nvidia currently has wider support than AMD, although the balance tends to swing between them over time.

The 1050 is also clearly superior to older Nvidia budget cards, including the similarly priced 750 Ti. If you want even more performance, there's a



1050 Ti, which has twice the on-board memory, at 4GB. You'll need this to play 3D games at **4K** resolution on the latest monitors, but many will still struggle.

VERDICT: This is a great new budget graphics card. Spending less might be a false economy, and most of us won't need to spend more



GRAPHICS CARD | £90 from Ebuyer www.snipca.com/23201

PowerColor Red Dragon AMD Radeon RX 460 2GB

A step up for AMD

Nvidia's rival AMD has also updated its technology, and its Polaris **architecture** more than doubles the number of stream processors in the RX 460 compared with the earlier R7 250. Microsoft's Direct3D 12 is now supported, ready for the latest 3D games, and in our tests the RX 460 was capable of playably smooth frame rates at Full HD resolution (1920x1080 pixels) with high-detail settings.

If 30 frames per second (fps) feels a bit choppy by today's high standards, you can either turn down the graphics

SPECIFICATIONS

2GB two-slot PCI-E 3.0 graphics card • 212mm • Supports DirectX 12_1, OpenGL 4.5, OpenCL 2.0 • Up to five monitors • DVI-D • HDMI • VGA • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/23198

options in your game or drop to 720p to get comfortably up beyond 60fps. Older games managed this even with everything turned up to the maximum, so overall this is a decent choice for everyday gamers. It significantly outperformed cards that cost under £100, so you're getting your money's worth. It wasn't as fast, however, as the similarly priced Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050 (see above).

As with the 1050, there's also a 4GB version of the RX 460, which is only really worth the extra 40-odd quid if you have a specific need for the extra memory. It's worth mentioning that the next model up, the RX 470, was dramatically superior in our tests. It's



worth the money (£170 from www.snipca.com/23199) for more ambitious users, but requires a 6-pin power connector from your PC's **PSU** and draws up to 120 watts. And if you start to look in this price range, you might be tempted over the £200 barrier by an even faster RX 480 or GTX 1060.

VERDICT: It's not as fast as Nvidia's GTX 1050, but then it's a few pounds cheaper, so the choice is yours; both are decent graphics cards



ACTION CAMERA | £249 from www.snipca.com/23128

GoPro Hero5 Session

Compact, camera, action!

GoPro is the big name in action cameras, and if you fancy attaching a little digital camcorder to yourself or an activity accessory of your choice, the Hero5 Session is an obvious option. The previous version of this camera (see our review, Issue 475) was a smaller, lighter option, which ditched the screen on GoPro's full-sized Hero models, along with the need for a separate plastic case by making it waterproof. Then it went one better by being substantially cheaper too.

“This tiny, wearable camera captures great footage on the move”

This 38mm (1.5in) cube is still very dinky, but not quite so cheap, although it's £100 less than the current Hero5. What you gain is **4K** recording, which gives you ultra-sharp video at a regular 30 frames per second (fps). Drop down to Full HD (1920x1080 pixels) and you get up to 90fps (or 3x slow motion); or to 720p HD, 120fps. Makers of consumer video gear often gloss over the bit rate (how much data is stored per second), but this has been increased from

25Mbit/s to 60, which means less compression and cleaner footage.

Noise (the digital equivalent of grainy film) still shows up in low light, and colours look somewhat flat and underexposed, but generally we found our videos pretty impressive, with smooth results from the built-in stabilisation. You can also take still pictures, but they're not as good as a decent phone camera, and with no screen built in you have to frame your shots by connecting the GoPro capture app on your phone or tablet. For action-video purposes you won't really miss the screen.

The app is very good, with a new voice-control feature for hands-free operation, and there's also a tiny **LCD** status screen on top of the Session so you can check what it's doing. The rechargeable battery

SPECIFICATIONS

Up to 4K video • 10-megapixel photos • Mono audio • MicroSD card slot • USB Type-C port • 38x38x36mm (HxWxD) plus mount • 73g • iOS and Android apps available • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/23129



will only last you a couple of hours at the most, and can't be exchanged, although you could take a battery pack and the supplied **USB Type-C** cable out with you. You'll need a **microSD** card to record to (from around £10 for 32GB).

VERDICT: If you don't feel the need for 4K and slow motion, buy the old one, but this is reasonable value for a decent and versatile action camera



ALTERNATIVE: GoPro Hero Session £149 This earlier model (originally the Hero4 Session) is still a great buy, shooting Full HD at up to 60fps



WHAT SHOULD I BUY? We solve your buying dilemmas

What can I use to view stereo photos?

Q Being of a certain age and limited budget, my main means of communication is a basic pay-as-you-go mobile phone. But I'm a photographer and currently experiment with stereo imaging using two cameras. Google produces a cardboard stereo viewer for phones, and I wondered if there was an Android tablet the same size as a phone, which I could use with this to enable my stereo results to be viewed?

Terry Buchanan

A When it comes down to it, Terry, we're all of a certain age and limited budget. Google's Cardboard (pictured) is intended for 3D virtual-reality content, which works differently from stereoscopic images. But the MPO Viewer for Cardboard app lets you view stereo pairs in the **MPO** file format. You'd also need an app to convert your images to MPO, such as StereoPhoto Maker (www.snipca.com/23167).

That leaves the question of the mobile device to provide the screen. Unlike an



iPhone, an Android phone can be set up and used without a **SIM** card, so almost any model should suit your purposes. If you can't find a second-hand one going cheap, ageing but decent models like the Moto E (2nd gen) – see our review, Issue 446 – cost under £100 new.

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

WI-FI EXTENDER | £50 from Maplin www.snipca.com/23070

TP-Link RE450

Extend your wireless range

Wi-Fi is one of the most magical technologies we use. Set up your home broadband router, type the password into your favourite PC or tablet, and, hey presto! from now on, whenever you're at home, it's on the internet. Unless it isn't, because you've wandered into the kitchen, the back bedroom or the shed and the Wi-Fi signal doesn't quite reach there.

One solution, short of casting spells, is a pair of powerline plugs, which route the data through your existing mains electrics. This sounds more like complete madness than magic, but it does work. Sometimes not very well, and sometimes brilliantly, depending on... well, sadly you'd have to be a wizard to know exactly what. Try D-Link's AV2 1000 HD Gigabit Starter Kit (£22 from Amazon www.snipca.com/22376) if you just need a wired Ethernet socket for a PC, or Devolo's dLAN 1200+ WiFi ac kit (£134 from Amazon www.snipca.com/22375) if you want top speeds and the ability to connect wireless devices.

“Fast and reliable, it extends your Wi-Fi to areas your router cannot reach”

But there are also ways to stretch your Wi-Fi further simply by using more Wi-Fi. A range extender such as this TP-Link model, also known as a repeater, sits anywhere that's near enough your Wi-Fi router to get reception, then passes the signal along from its own antennas to other devices, which can thus be further away. You can pay a lot of money for fancy extenders, but in our tests the TP-Link RE450 did the job more than adequately.

In fact, installed in a hallway to pass the signal from the router in the front room to locations at various distances around the house, it was faster than most other extenders we tried, despite being one of the cheapest. That's the kind of result we like. Things slowed down when we used



older mobile devices, which could only connect on the 2.4GHz waveband, at longer distances, but it still kept the connection alive. If you position it too far from your router, the ring of blue light on the front lets you know by turning red.

Like other repeaters, the RE450 can be configured for various purposes, such as connecting 5GHz Wi-Fi devices to a 2.4GHz-only network, or turning a wired Ethernet connection into a Wi-Fi access point. It's not the most flexible networking gadget around – there's only one Ethernet port, for example. But the fact it can do more than one thing makes it more likely to keep paying for itself in the future, rather than sitting idle because you upgraded to a more powerful router, moved to a smaller house, or decided it was too cold to work in the shed.

Complementing this versatility is the RE450's smart-looking case, which is much slimmer than its rivals. With a built-in mains plug, it looks similar to a powerline adapter, albeit flatter. Having to restrict yourself to wall sockets isn't

ideal for something that you may need to position carefully for the best reception, but it shouldn't really be a problem, and it makes the whole thing easy to plug in and forget. Our only gripe is that it's wide enough to stop you plugging anything into an adjacent socket. Some sort of pivoting arrangement might be the only way to perfect this design. The three aerials fold up when not in use, making it easy to pop in a bag if you need to.

If you want an extender specifically to connect older devices at distances of several dozen yards, this might not be the best option. But as an all-round repeater it's effective, has no serious flaws and is excellent value for money.

VERDICT: Why pay more when this does what you need? Apart from it hogging a double mains socket, we've no complaints

★★★★★

ALTERNATIVE: Devolo WiFi Repeater £45 Even more compact, this repeater is dinky and affordable but not as fast or reliable



SPECIFICATIONS

Dual-band 802.11ac/a/b/g/n Wi-Fi repeater • 1x Gigabit Ethernet port (cable included) • 3x adjustable aerials • 163x77x67mm (HxWxD) • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/23069

Reviews

WIRELESS SPEAKER | £165 from Amazon www.snipca.com/23139

Audio Pro Addon T3

Looks retro, sounds modern

When you look for a speaker today you have a choice of generic plastic models that could be mistaken for any kind of appliance. Not so with the Addon T3, which actually does look like in keeping with the exterior minimalism, it doesn't offer any fancy features like multi-unit operation, higher-quality aptX audio, or streaming directly from the internet via Wi-Fi. It's simply a Bluetooth speaker for your phone, tablet or laptop, or anything with an analogue output that you can connect to the 3.5mm jack.



But it sounds excellent, in just the old-fashioned way you'd expect. It's not especially detailed at the high end, and occasionally a little boomy, but with the kind of rich sound you used to get from a big wooden-cased FM set. The real leather strap on top isn't just for show: this is a portable speaker, with a built-in rechargeable battery that'll last from 12 to 30 hours, depending on how loud you play it. There's also a USB port to charge your phone from.

The Addon T3 costs £165 in a range of colours, although the pink one is currently discounted to £150, presumably because nobody's buying it. That seems a shame – it's rather a nice pink. The other colours are also classy, although the green one arguably tips over the edge from utility chic to World War II memorabilia. You could get more features for the price, but this is one of those unfussy products that feels 'just right'.



SPECIFICATIONS

2x 20mm driver • 1x 90mm woofer • Bluetooth (requires phone or tablet supporting Bluetooth A2DP) • 3.5mm analogue stereo input • 1x USB power output • 115x215x135mm (HxWxD) • 2kg • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/23140

VERDICT: Bigger than a brick but smaller than a shoebox, this is a solid portable speaker that'll last much longer than your phone



ALTERNATIVE: Bose SoundLink Mini £150 This quality portable speaker also sounds very good, but looks dull and generic



PHONE | £600 from Carphone Warehouse www.snipca.com/23136

Huawei Mate 9

A whole lot of smartphone for a whole lot of money

Part of the job of writing about tech is going to product launches. Sometimes that means getting a bus to an office to see a dull PowerPoint presentation. Other times, you get a plane to a German auditorium where a thousand journalists watch a CEO drive on to the stage in a Porsche surrounded by dancers and fireworks. After all this hoopla, you might think the product would be a let-down.

But no! Not only did Huawei entertain us, they made a good phone. Exclusive to Three in the UK (but available elsewhere SIM-free), the Mate 9 – which runs

Android 7 (Nougat) has just about the biggest screen we've ever seen sold as a phone rather than a tablet, but because there's very little bezel, it's still quite manageable. The Full HD resolution isn't exceptionally sharp, but the screen looks wonderful, with excellent colour, contrast and brightness. On the back is a twin Leica camera that does depth-of-field effects, mimicking results from a DSLR (with mixed results), and can also take real black-and-white photos.

Performance is on a par with Samsung's Galaxy S7, and Huawei says its software is tweaked to prevent things slowing down as the phone ages, although obviously we couldn't test that. The battery lasted us 13 hours 17 minutes of video playback, which is shorter than a lot of current phones, though results will vary depending on what you do with it.

It all comes in a neat and slim case that feels very expensive. At £600, it is – but with high specifications and 64GB of storage, it's actually quite good value.



VERDICT: You can get a decent phone for a lot less money, but this stylish phone may attract some Galaxy converts



ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy S7 £480 It's smaller and not as impressive-looking, but this waterproof phone costs less if you shop around



SPECIFICATIONS

5.9in 1920x1080-pixel screen • 12-megapixel and 20-megapixel rear cameras • 8-megapixel front camera • 64GB flash storage • MicroSD card slot • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 4.2 • 3G/4G • 157x79x7.9mm (HxWxD) • 190g • One-year warranty www.snipca.com/23137

PRINTER | £251 from Printerland www.snipca.com/23162

Ricoh SP c250SF

Colour laser doesn't shade it

The last Ricoh colour laser printer we tested, the C250DN (see our review, Issue 474), distinguished itself by being very cheap. This one doesn't, but it's actually very reasonably priced for a multi-function printer (MFP). The scanner on top has a 35-sheet automatic document feeder, and you get **Ethernet**, USB and Wi-Fi connections as well as fax (assuming you have a telephone socket handy).

This is a business-level colour laser printer, designed to churn out large numbers of sheets quickly on a regular basis. Support for the **PostScript 3** and **PCL 6** printer languages, along with a generous 256MB of internal memory, means it should cope easily with any printing job.

We were generally impressed with the print quality. On standard copier paper, text and graphics looked crisp and solid, and colour photos, which we'd expect to come out better on an inkjet printer, also looked quite acceptable. Scanned images received on our PC were well-balanced and clear.

“Impressive print quality, but slow and costly to run”

So much for the good news. Ricoh says you'll get your first print in 14 seconds, but in fact, once the machine entered the power-saving mode that kicks in after one minute's inactivity, we never managed to get it running in less than 20 seconds, which felt like quite a wait. A 20-page black text document took a total of one minute 40 seconds – around 12 pages per minute (ppm), nowhere near Ricoh's quoted 20. Another test did hit 17ppm. Speed isn't everything, but you're

SPECIFICATIONS

2400x600dpi maximum print resolution • Duplex • USB 2 • Ethernet • 802.11n Wi-Fi • 1200x1200dpi maximum scan resolution • 35-sheet ADF • 493x420x460mm (HxWxD) • 29kg • Two-year warranty www.snipca.com/23163



only likely to choose a laser printer over an inkjet (with its lower price and finer photo reproduction) if you want to print in some volume. Scanning was fairly slow, taking more than three minutes for an A4 page at a sharp 300 dots per inch (dpi), while 10 greyscale photocopies took 53 seconds and came out too dark – though using the lightest setting fixed that.

The supplied toner cartridges are rated for 1,000 pages (bear in mind that these estimates are always optimistic). However, once they run out, official refills cost roughly the same as the printer itself for a full set, working out at about 3p per black-and-white page or over 15p for colour. That's more expensive than average, unless you take a chance on unofficial cartridges, which can be found for a lot less. To print wirelessly from phones and tablets you'll need Ricoh's own app (www.snipca.com/23164), but you can't send scans from the printer to your phone or tablet.

VERDICT: Colour laser printers only make sense if you print a lot of colour pages, and this one doesn't get enough right to impress us

★★★★☆

ALTERNATIVE: Canon i-Sensys MF724Cdw £294 Print speeds are similar, but scanning is faster and bigger cartridges give lower running costs



The Computeractive Wishlist



Products we would like to see

No.12: ONE PORT THAT DOES IT ALL

When Steve Jobs unveiled the iMac in 1998, the most controversial features were the ones it didn't have: the chunky connections found on the back of other PCs. Parallel and serial ports were huge heavy-duty multi-pin sockets, with clips and screws to hold the plugs in. The iMac dumped them in favour of USB, a single compact connector that promised to work with a full range of new peripherals – just as soon as anyone started making them.

The gamble paid off, and USB did become the norm. Now we have the Type-C version (pictured), with a truly tiny plug that's always the right way round. It can even support **DisplayPort** monitors and **Thunderbolt** peripherals as well as **USB 3.1**. The problem is that word 'can'. A Type-C port may offer some features but not others. And peripherals still come with a variety of connections still in common use but now often omitted from laptops with a note in the small print that a £25 Type-C adapter will do the job.

We're so close – but the PC industry really needs to get this fully standardised.



NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
Weds
15 Feb

PC Specialist

Ultrabook IV

Brand new Kaby Lake processor in a Windows 10 laptop



Lenovo Ideacentre AIO 510S

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Our pick of products that have won the Buy It award

LAPTOP

Asus ZenBook UX305CA
£650 from www.snipca.com/22321
Tested: Issue 475



This metal-cased 'ultrabook' looks much more expensive than it is. There's no touchscreen or 36-degree hinge, just great quality all round and an ultra-sharp display. The M3 processor is adequate for most tasks, though not gaming.

ALTERNATIVE Dell Inspiron 15 5000

If you need a full-size Windows 10 laptop with a DVD drive and a desktop PC-level i5 processor, this is a solid choice. £540 from www.snipca.com/21650

DESKTOP PC

Palicomp AMD Avenger
£500 from www.snipca.com/20927
Tested: Issue 479



AMD's Athlon X4 880K processor gives this PC solid performance with money left for GTX 960 graphics and a very fast 128GB SSD as well as a 1TB hard drive. It's not the quietest or most expandable PC, but excellent value.

ALTERNATIVE: Dell Inspiron 24 5000

If you prefer your desktop PC in one neat box, this Intel i5 system has all the essentials at a reasonable price. £815 from www.snipca.com/21651

APPLE IPAD

Apple iPad Air 2
£390 from www.snipca.com/21664
Tested: Issue 437



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

ALTERNATIVE: iPad Mini 2 Slower

than the iPad Mini 4, with no fingerprint recognition and a less vivid screen, but an iPad at this price is great value. £239 from www.snipca.com/20436

ANDROID TABLET

Samsung Galaxy S2 9.7
£450 from www.snipca.com/21678
Tested: Issue 462



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

ALTERNATIVE: Huawei MediaPad M3

8.0 Rivalling Samsung's Galaxy Tab S2, this compact tablet has a slightly larger screen and a fingerprint reader. It's highly capable except when playing advanced 3D games. £320 from www.snipca.com/21926

APPLE IPHONE

Apple iPhone SE
£364 from www.snipca.com/21683
Tested: Issue 474



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

ALTERNATIVE: iPhone 6s

A bigger screen, better camera and 3D Touch justify the price, but as with the SE the 64GB model (£619) is the best choice. £499 from www.snipca.com/20441

ANDROID PHONE

Motorola Moto G4
£158 from www.snipca.com/21685
Tested: Issue 479



With an attractive 5.5in screen, an excellent 13-megapixel camera and decent performance, the G4 is the best budget option. £150 from www.snipca.com/21685

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung Galaxy S7

Restoring the microSD slot to allow extra storage makes this an even better top-end phone than the S6, with a fantastic screen and camera and incredible 18-hour battery life. £460 from www.snipca.com/21684

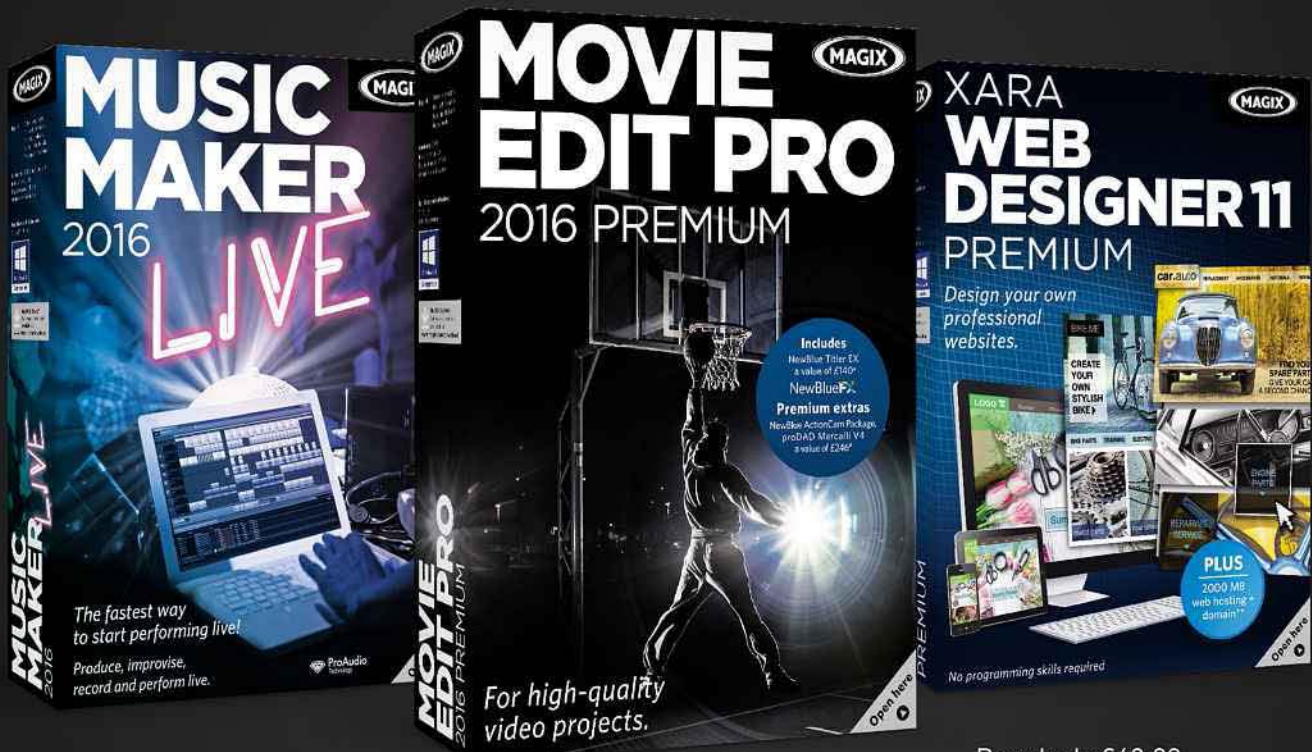
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EBOOK READER

Amazon Kindle (2016)
£57 from www.snipca.com/21901
Tested: Issue 483



Amazon's basic ebook reader is now good enough to be our first choice. It's plasticky, but slim and lightweight, with a decent 4GB storage and good battery life. Consider the £110 Paperwhite if you want backlighting or (for £60 extra) 3G.

ALTERNATIVE Kobo Aura One

Competing with Amazon's Kindle Oasis, this premium model from Kobo has a large 7.8in screen and is comfortable to read. £190 from www.snipca.com/22031

SECURITY SOFTWARE

Kaspersky Internet Security 2017
£19.95 from www.snipca.com/21532
Tested: Issue 493



Kaspersky Internet Security 2017 has won our past eight antivirus tests. Compatible with Windows 10, the 2017 edition is available at an exclusive reader discount on our Software Store. Go to the link above for a one-year, one-device licence or buy a two-year, three-device licence for just £34.99.

ALTERNATIVE: Avast Free Antivirus

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

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 6
£99 from www.snipca.com/21904
Tested: Issue 453



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

ALTERNATIVE: Xara Photo & Graphic Designer 365

For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £49 from www.snipca.com/19280

PC MONITOR

AOC Q2778VQE
£256 from www.snipca.com/21902
Tested: Issue 468



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

ALTERNATIVE: Dell UltraSharp U2414H

This 1920x1080, 24in screen has a stand that can switch to portrait mode. Colour accuracy is excellent. £199 from www.snipca.com/21908

ROUTER

Synology RT1900ac
£147 from www.snipca.com/21903
Tested: Issue 474



If you're looking to upgrade an outdated router, there are lots of dual-band 802.11ac models to choose from. This one suits most broadband connections that don't require an ADSL modem and has plenty of options, such as sharing a connected printer or storage.

ALTERNATIVE TP-Link Archer C9

Not quite as fast, but this or the D9 (with ADSL modem built in) is a simple and capable router with a stylish design. £85 from www.snipca.com/21909

NAS

Synology DiskStation DS215j
£179 from www.snipca.com/21906
Tested: Issue 449



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

ALTERNATIVE: Synology DS414j

A four-drive NAS that's generally fast and easy to set up and use. £268 from www.snipca.com/22846

HOMEPLUGS

Devolo dLAN 1200 Triple+ Starter Kit

£100 from www.snipca.com/21690

Tested: Issue 444



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

ALTERNATIVE: D-Link PowerLine AV2 1000HD Gigabit Starter Kit Fast (speeds of up to 1000Mbps), much cheaper and very easy to set up, but the lack of a passthrough socket is frustrating. £22 from www.snipca.com/21691

WEB-DESIGN

Xara Web Designer Premium 365

£56 from www.snipca.com/16955

Tested: Issue 453



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

ALTERNATIVE: Incomedia WebSite X5 v12 Evolution It may feel a little basic, but this straightforward program outputs efficient HTML code and responsive pages. £50 from www.snipca.com/19440

COMPETITION

Win 1 of 3 GigaGate WiFi Bridge from devolo



Home-networking specialist devolo has launched GigaGate, a new high-speed Wi-Fi bridge that transmits a gigabit internet signal from a router to a secondary location. With a transmission capacity of up to 2Gbps, it creates a precise connection that delivers fast internet to key locations in your home. The prize here is the GigaGate Starter Kit, comprising the Base and the Satellite. Email your address to cacomp@dennis.co.uk with 'bridge' in the subject line by midnight 14 February.

You can buy the Starter Kit, priced £219.99, from devolo's website: www.snipca.com/23093. For information follow @devoloUK on Twitter, and watch devolo's YouTube channel: www.snipca.com/23094.

MULTIFUNCTION PRINTER

Canon Pixma MG5750

£75 from www.snipca.com/21693

Tested: Issue 470



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

ALTERNATIVE: Brother MFC-J5320DW For more business-type tasks, this all-in-one has automatic paper feed for the scanner and the ability to print occasional A3 pages. £115 from www.snipca.com/21694

SOLID-STATE DRIVE

Crucial BX100 1TB

£583 from www.snipca.com/21695

Tested: Issue 445



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

ALTERNATIVE: Samsung 850 Pro 256GB An even faster SSD, but it's much more expensive per gigabyte. £123 from www.snipca.com/21696

SECURITY CAMERA

Y-cam Day/Night

£125 from www.snipca.com/22987

Tested: Issue 483



Smaller and simpler than rivals, this all-in-one 720p HD Wi-Fi camera is triggered by motion. Play back or watch live remotely from your iOS or Android phone or tablet. A week's cloud storage is free, upgradable to 30 days for £3.99 per month.

ALTERNATIVE: Netgear Arlo Batteries, which last months, make these cameras (the price is for two) very practical. Cloud storage beyond a week costs extra. £240 from www.snipca.com/21653

Computeractive 2015 Back Issue CD

Over 100 people have given our 2015 Back Issue CD a five-star review on Amazon. Visit www.snipca.com/21619 to read them, and buy the CD yourself.

Here's what some of your fellow Computeractive readers have said:

This exceeded my expectations. You tend to forget the amount of information there is in each issue. Simply wonderful.

Keith Hollobone ★★★★★

Have been using these for some years. Great space-savers as well as a convenient method of storage and accessing data.

Maureen Jenner ★★★★★

Excellent product. I have purchased all of the 2015 printed editions. I can now use the disc as a reference source, in a compact, easily retrieved form. Wouldn't be without it.

David Nelson ★★★★★

Invaluable space saver. I have every issue of this CD back to Computeractive's first appearance 18 years ago and many Windows systems back, and they all still produce the information asked for.

Margaret Little ★★★★★



An absolute bargain at the price. These 26 issues contain a wealth of information for all computer users and have already solved some problems I was having. I copied the files to the hard disc of my PC so I could browse them at leisure without inserting the CD.

Carl Hughes ★★★★★

Lived up to expectations and as a new purchaser of the magazine it gave me access to previous editions.

Mr N Tinlin ★★★★★

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Workshops & Tips

Edited by Sherwin Coelho

PULL OUT
& KEEP
Issue 494

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

35 Remove duplicate files for free
38 Convert phone and tablet videos

40 Back up your emails to disc or USB stick
42 Track your loved ones on a map

PLUS

43 Readers' Tips
44 Phone & Tablet Tips
46 Make Windows Better

47 Make Office Better
48 Secret Tips For...
PrivaZer

Remove duplicate files for free

What you need: AllDup; Any Windows version (XP to 10)

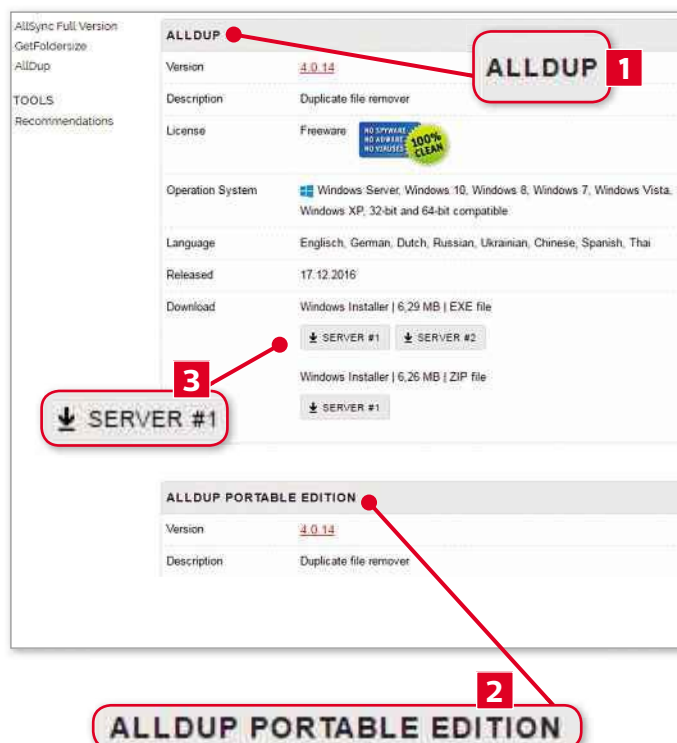
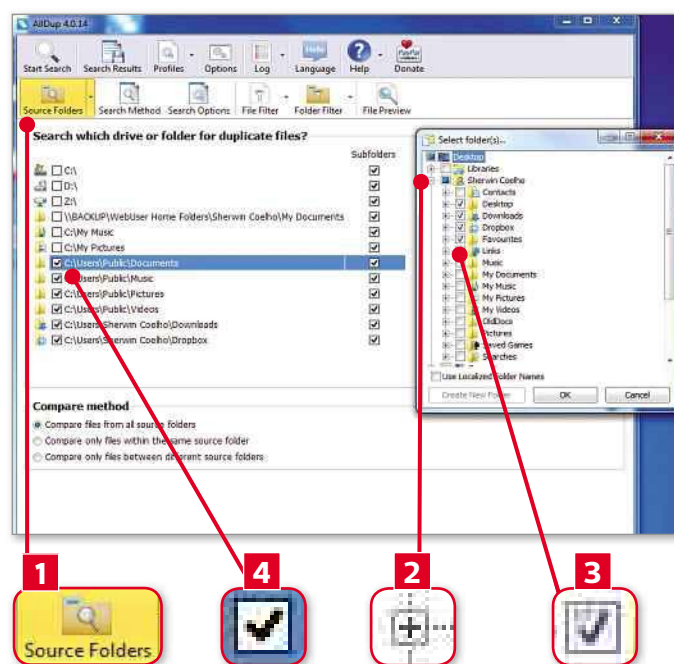
Time required: 40 minutes

We've covered several programs that find and delete duplicate files on your PC, but none are as comprehensive as the free program AllDup. Its new version lets you identify photos that are similar (even if one is rotated or cropped)

and remove any you don't want in one fell swoop. The program's many and varied options can seem overwhelming at first glance, so we'll take you through the process of removing duplicate files and recovering valuable storage space.

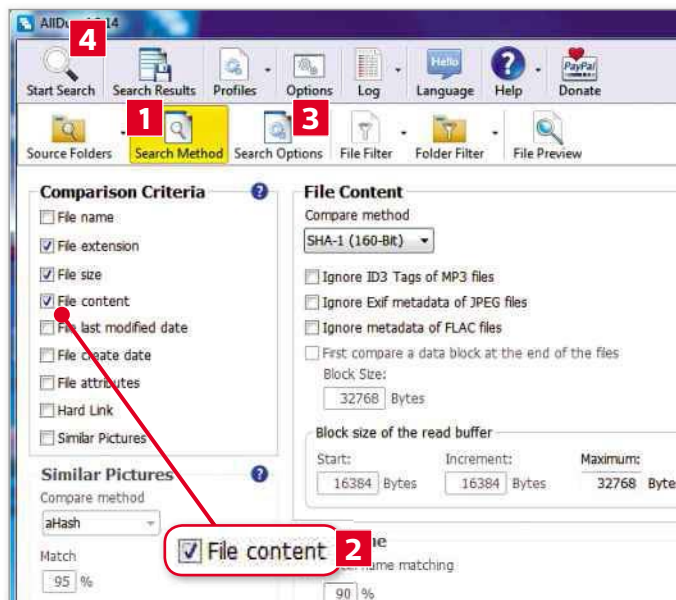


STEP 1 Go to www.snipca.com/23038 to see options to download AllDup's installable **1** or portable version **2**. We want to install, so click Server #1 **3** to download the setup file. Open it, click Run, OK, Next, tick 'I accept the agreement', then keep clicking Next until you need to click Install. After it's installed, tick Start AllDup, then click Finish to launch the program. You'll see a list of your PC's drives and User folders. We'll first show you how to find duplicate setup files.

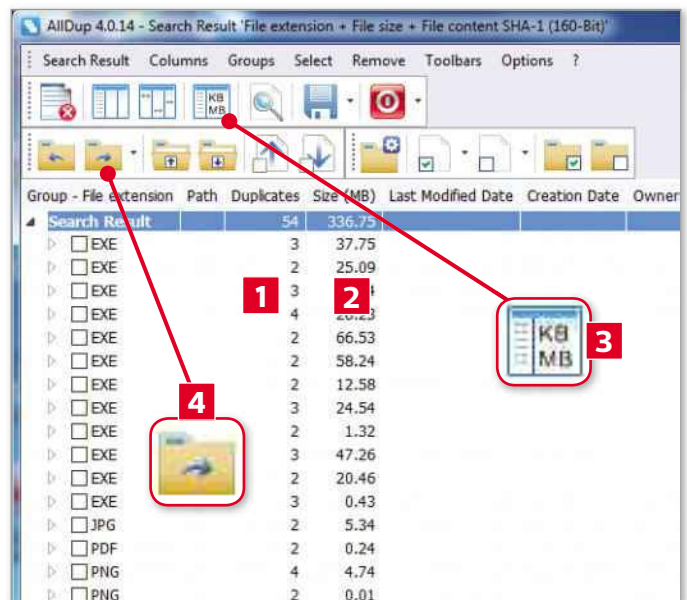


STEP 2 It's a good idea to restrict your search to PC folders likely to contain duplicates, such as your Downloads folder and folders for cloud-storage programs. To add a folder to AllDup's list, click the Source Folders dropdown menu **1** and click 'Add folder'. Now use the dropdown menus **2** to navigate to the folder(s) you want to add, tick them **3**, then click OK. Next, tick to select the locations on your PC **4** you want to scan for duplicates.

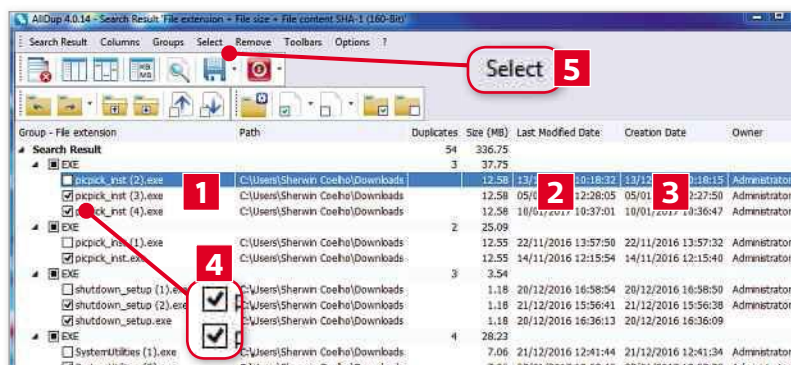
Workshops



STEP 3 Next, click the Search Method tab **1**. 'File name' is ticked by default. This means that if there are two similar files with a different name, the program will ignore them. For a more thorough analysis, therefore, untick this box, then tick 'File extension', 'File size' and 'File content' **2**. Next, click the Search Options tab **3**. By default, the program doesn't look for duplicate compressed files, so tick ZIP and RAR at the bottom to turn this on. Finally, click Start Search **4** to begin your scan.

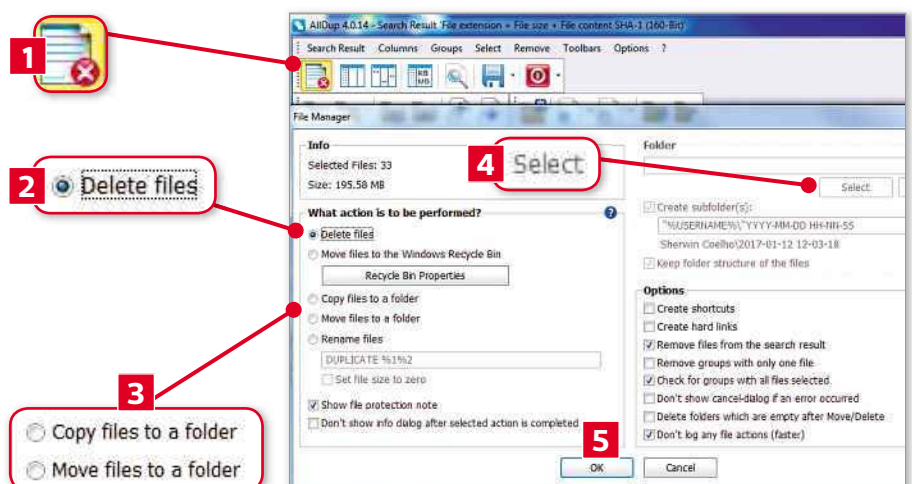


STEP 4 You'll see a window showing the scan's progress. When this has finished AllDup lists the search results in columns, including the number of duplicates found for each file **1** and their total file size **2**. By default, the Size column is set to KB. To change this to MB, click the 'Change file format' button **3** and select 'Show file size in megabytes (MB)'. Next, click the 'Expand all groups' button **4** to expand all the search results and see each duplicate file.

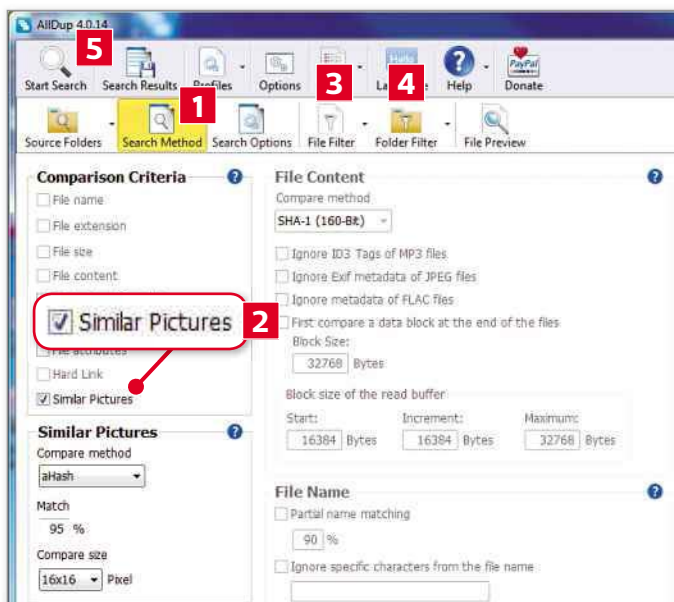


STEP 5 Double-click any file in the list to open its folder **1**. You'll also see when you last accessed that file **2** and when it was created **3**. You can tick to delete the files you don't want **4**. Alternatively, you can use the various selection options to make this easier. To do this, click Select **5**, then choose one of the options – such as 'Select only the first file' (in each dropdown menu), 'Select all files except the first file' or 'Select all files except the newest file'.

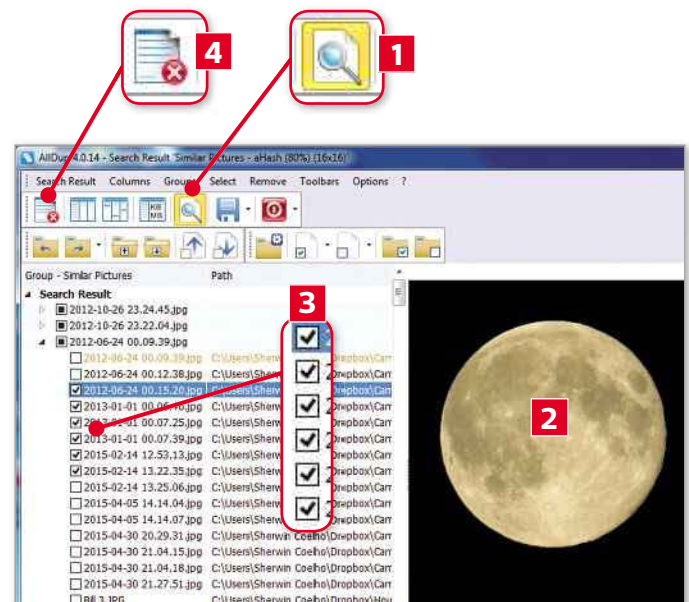
STEP 6 Next, click the File Manager button **1** to choose what you want to do with the selected duplicate files. The default selection is delete **2**, but you can choose to move them to the Recycle Bin, or move or copy them to another folder on your PC **3**. If you decide to move or copy them, then click Select **4** and choose which folder you want. Click OK **5** to run your chosen action, then click Yes to confirm this. After that's done, click OK to see the list of files remaining after deletion.



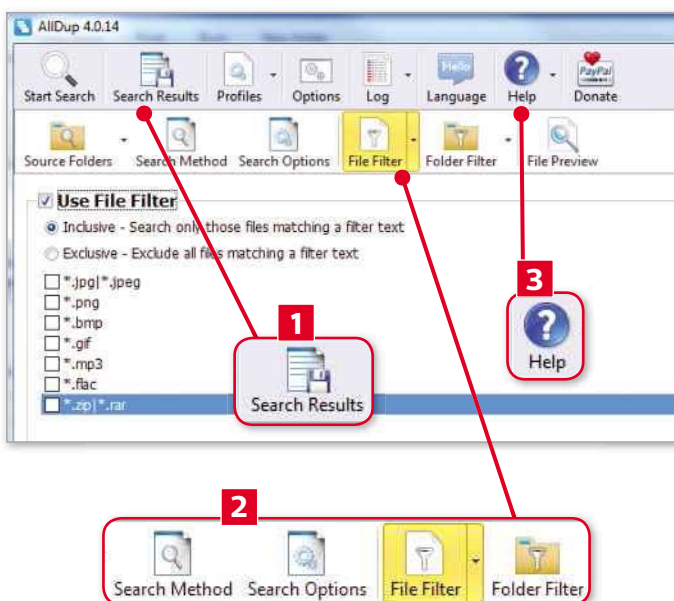
Remove duplicate files for free



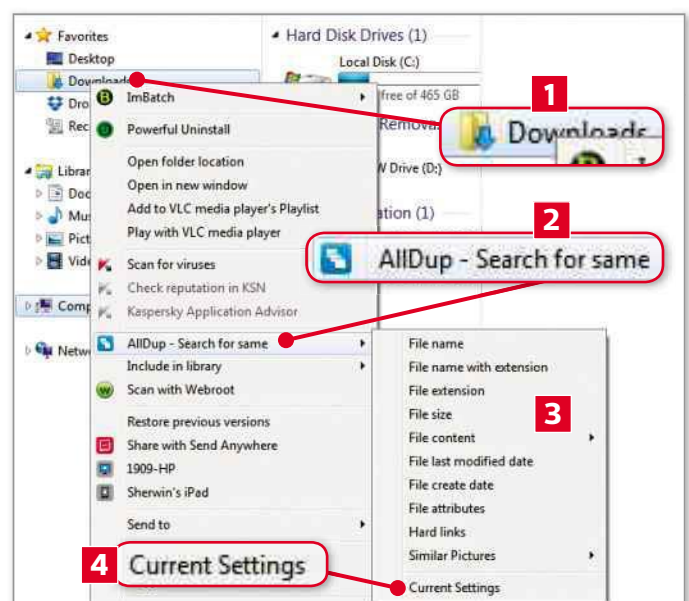
STEP 7 We'll now show you how to scan and remove duplicate and similar photos on your PC. On AllDup's main screen, click the Source Folders tab and select the folders containing your photos. Next, click the Search Method tab **1** and tick Similar Pictures **2**. Next, click the File Filter tab **3** and untick Use File Filter at the top, then click the Folder Filter tab **4** and untick Use Folder Filter. Finally, click the Start Search button **5** to begin searching.



STEP 8 After the scan, click the Size column header to sort your duplicate photos by size. Next, click the Preview button **1** to bring up the preview pane **2**. AllDup tends to identify 'similar' photos (including all screenshots, all photos with filters, etc.) as duplicates. Therefore, it's a good idea to preview each photo, then tick the ones you don't want **3**. After doing that, click the File Manager button **4** and select what you want to do with the ticked items (see Step 6). If you're unsure whether to delete or keep certain files, you can save your search result to act on it later.



STEP 9 To save your search, click the dropdown menu beside the floppy-disc icon on the Search Results screen, click 'Save as', name the file, choose where to save it on your PC, then click Save. You can load these results at any time by clicking the Search Results button **1** on AllDup's main screen. If you feel the program is not detecting your duplicate files, then double-check the boxes you've ticked in the Search Method, Search Options, File Filter and Folder Filter tabs **2**. Click the Help button **3** if you need to refer to AllDup's user manual.



STEP 10 Click the Options tab on AllDup's main screen, then tick the first and third boxes: 'Add AllDup to the Windows Explorer Context menu' and 'Automatically check for updates once a day'. The first box lets you quickly search for duplicates in any folder on your PC without first opening the program. To do this, simply right-click the folder you want to search **1**, move your cursor to 'AllDup - Search for same' **2**, then select one of the file criteria **3**. Current Settings **4** applies the last setting you used. ●

Convert phone and tablet videos

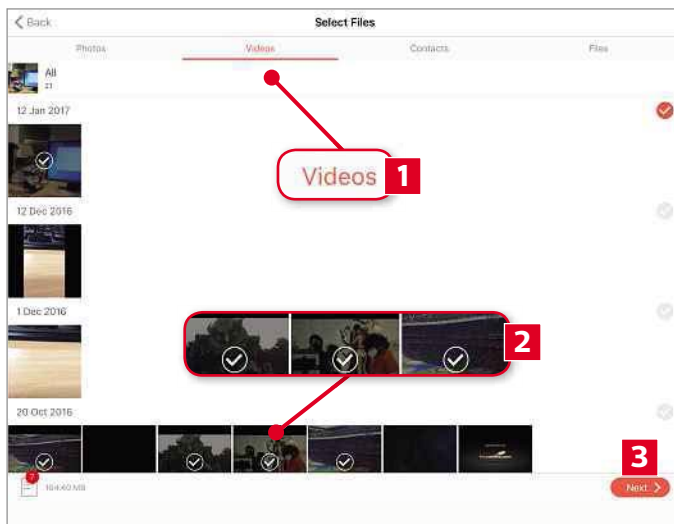
What you need: HandBrake; Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 10; Android or iOS device
Time required: 20 minutes

After 13 long years, our favourite free video-conversion program HandBrake is out of **beta** (see News, Issue 493, page 9). As well as an easier-to-use interface, it now has more presets that let you quickly

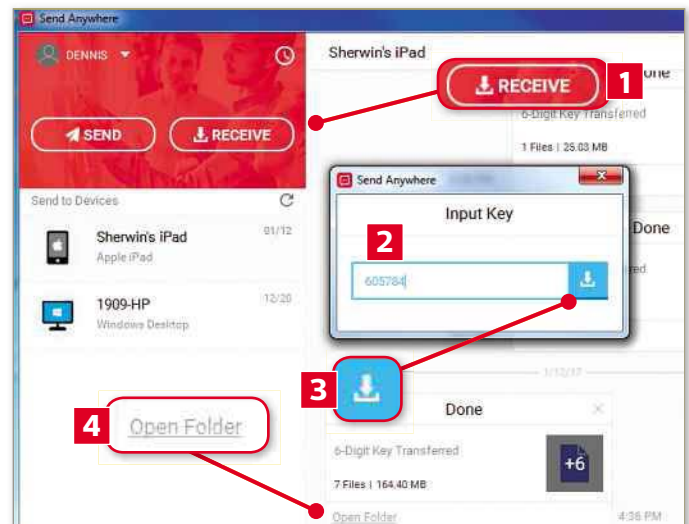
convert any video file from one format to another. We'll show you how to transfer and convert videos on your phone and tablet to play on your PC. Also, how to convert videos on your PC to play on your mobile device.



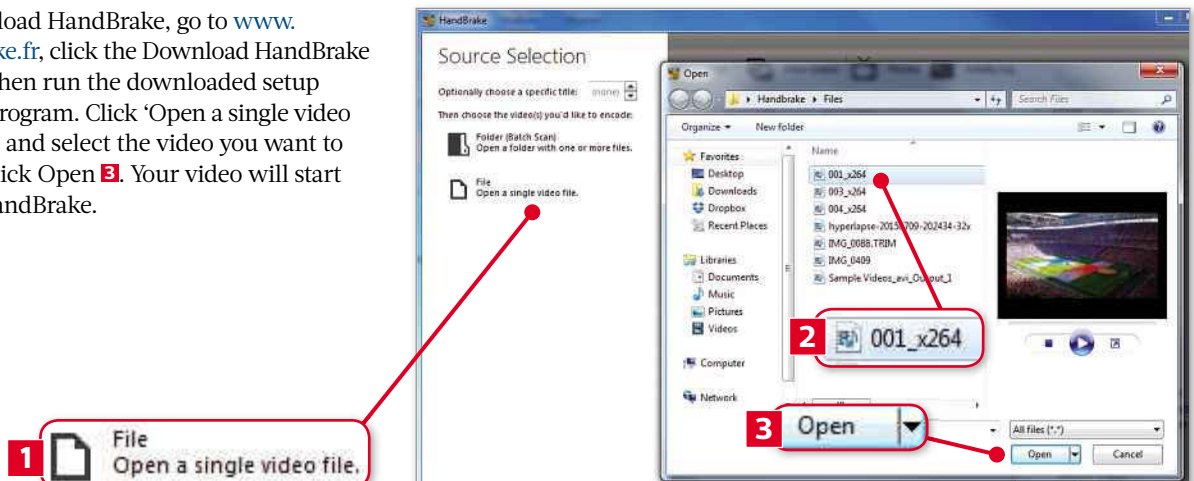
STEP 1 There are several ways to transfer videos from your phone or tablet to your PC, including via online storage services, such as Google Drive, Dropbox and OneDrive. An easier way is to use the free file-transfer service Send Anywhere. Install its app on your mobile device (Android www.snipca.com/23057; iOS www.snipca.com/23058). Open the app, tap the Videos tab **1**, tick to select the videos you want to send **2**, then tap Next **3**. You'll see a six-digit key on your screen.



STEP 2 Now download and install the Send Anywhere program (www.send-anywhere.com), click Receive **1**, type in the six-digit key **2**, then click the Download button **3**. The videos will start downloading to your device. While they're downloading, create a new folder on your PC for these files. When they finish downloading, click the Open Folder link **4**, then copy and paste the videos from this folder to the one you created.

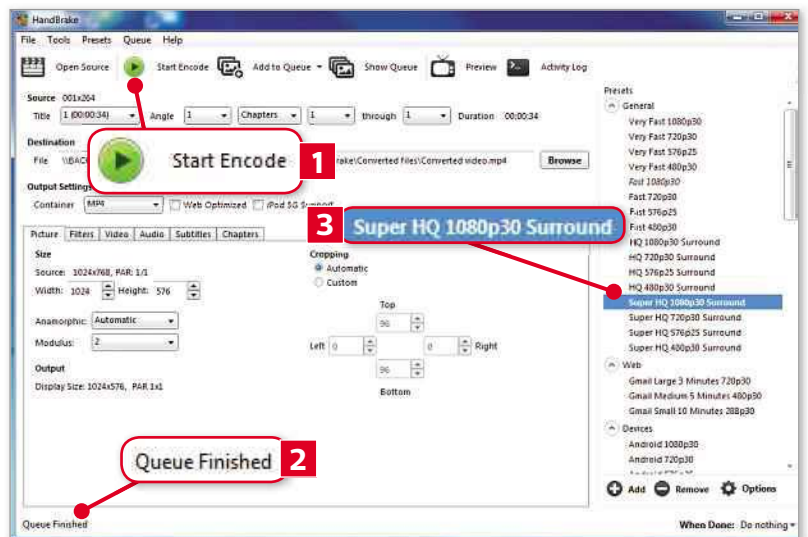


STEP 3 To download HandBrake, go to www.handbrake.fr, click the Download HandBrake button, then run the downloaded setup file to install the program. Click 'Open a single video file' **1**, navigate to and select the video you want to convert **2**, then click Open **3**. Your video will start importing into HandBrake.



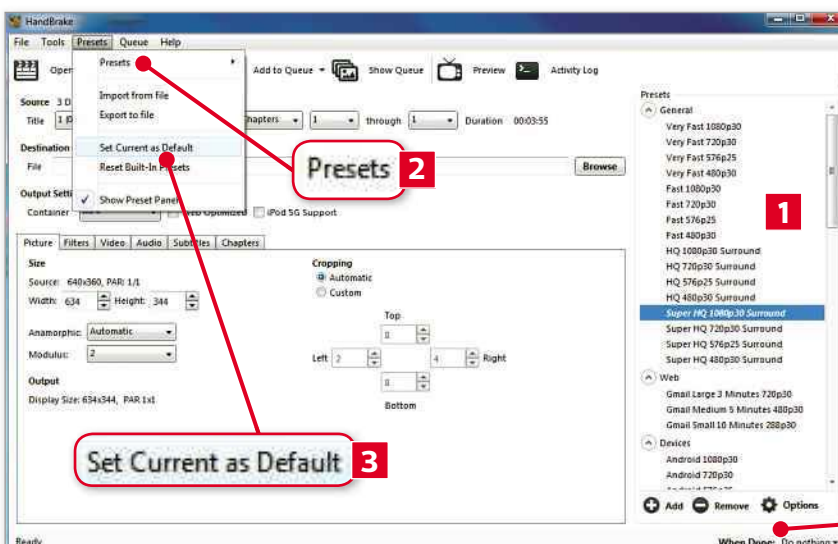


STEP 4 On the right, you'll see video-file presets arranged in categories (General, Web, Devices, and so on). Select 'HQ 1080p30 Surround' **1** – one of the best formats to play files on any PC. Next, click Browse **2**, choose the save location for your converted video file, name it, then click Save. Click Preview **3** to see your video with a timeline slider. Drag the slider **4** to check the quality of your video from start to finish. Click Live Preview **5** to see how your converted video will look (it may take a few minutes to render and start playing).



STEP 5 When you're happy, click Start Encode **1** to begin converting your video. You'll see the conversion progress at the bottom left, with the estimated time remaining. When it's completed, this will change to Queue Finished **2**. Go to the save location you set in Step 4 and check that the video plays properly. You can also try converting your files to 'Super HQ 1080p30 Surround' **3**. This video format results in larger files, but with superior picture and audio quality.

STEP 6 HandBrake also lets you convert videos on your PC to a format you can watch on your phone and tablet. To do that, click Open Source **1**, 'Open a single file' and import your PC video into HandBrake (see Step 3). Select 'Android 1080p30' **2** to convert it for Android, or 'Chromecast 1080p30 Surround' **3** if you cast videos to your TV. Scroll down to the Legacy section at the bottom to see options to convert videos for iPhone and iPad. Follow Steps 4 and 5 to save, rename and convert your video. After that's done, you can use Send Anywhere to transfer these converted files to your phone or tablet.



STEP 7 If you tend to use one specific video preset regularly, it's worth changing HandBrake's default setting to this. To do that, select the video preset you want **1**, then click Presets **2**, click 'Set Current as Default' **3**, then click OK. From now on, HandBrake will always open with these settings. If your video conversions tend to take a long time, click the When Done dropdown menu **4** and change it from 'Do nothing' to Quit HandBrake, Shutdown or Log Off. ●

Back up your emails to disc or USB stick

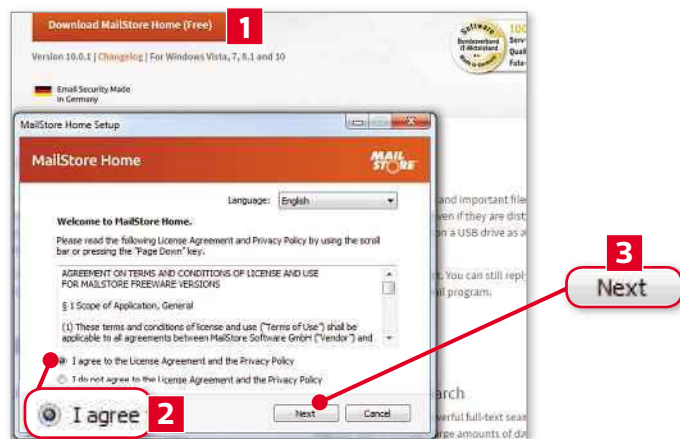
What you need: MailStore Home; Windows Vista, 7, 8 or 10; Blank CD or USB stick
Time required: 25 minutes

MailStore Home is a free program that lets you **archive** emails from all your accounts (Gmail, Outlook and so on). You can use its search filters to quickly find emails within any of these accounts.

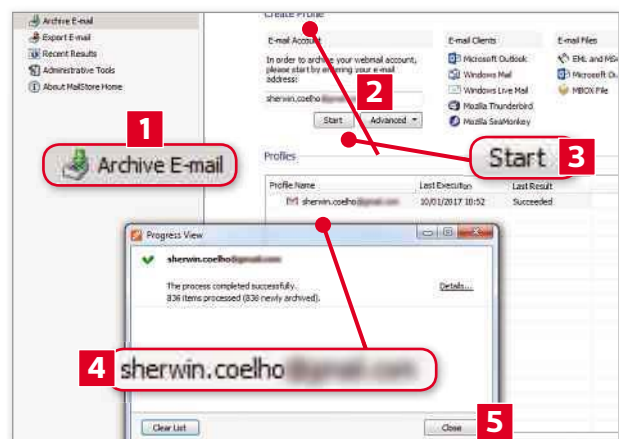
The program also lets you export all your emails to any folder on your PC. After doing this, you can back up your emails to a CD or USB stick so that you can access them from any PC at your convenience.



STEP 1 To install the program, go to www.snipca.com/23022 and click Download MailStore Home (Free) **1**. Open the downloaded setup file, select 'I agree to the License Agreement...' **2**, click Next **3**, Install, then Finish to complete setup and launch the program. Finally, click Finish again to automatically update the program to the latest version. You'll see a screen with three sections. The process of archiving emails varies depending on the email account you use. We'll first show you how to archive your Gmail and Yahoo Mail accounts.

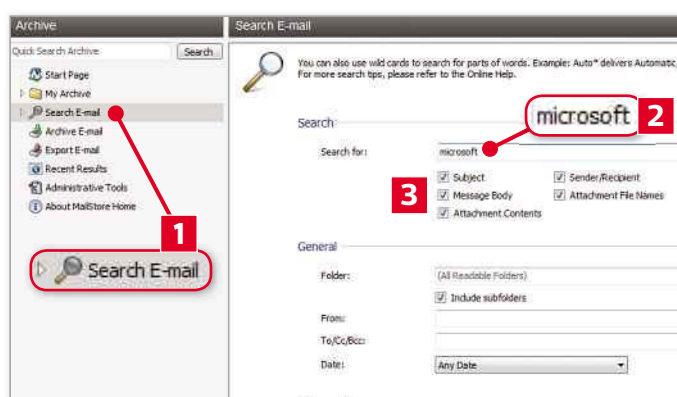


STEP 2 Click Archive E-mail **1**, type your email address in the field **2**, then click Start **3**. You'll now be prompted to log into that email account in a web browser. After doing that, click Allow to let MailStore Home archive your emails, then return to the program. You'll see your email account listed under profiles (click the Start button again if you don't see this). Double-click the profile **4** to begin archiving all emails in that account (the process can take a while). Click Close **5** when it's done. Repeat this step to archive emails stored in your Yahoo Mail account.



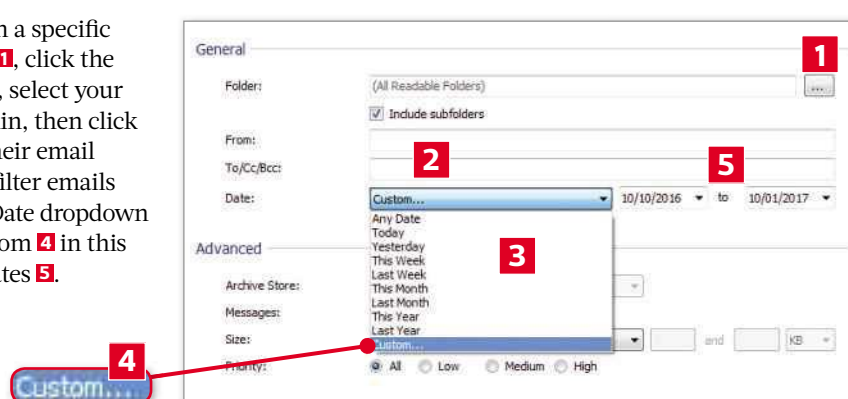
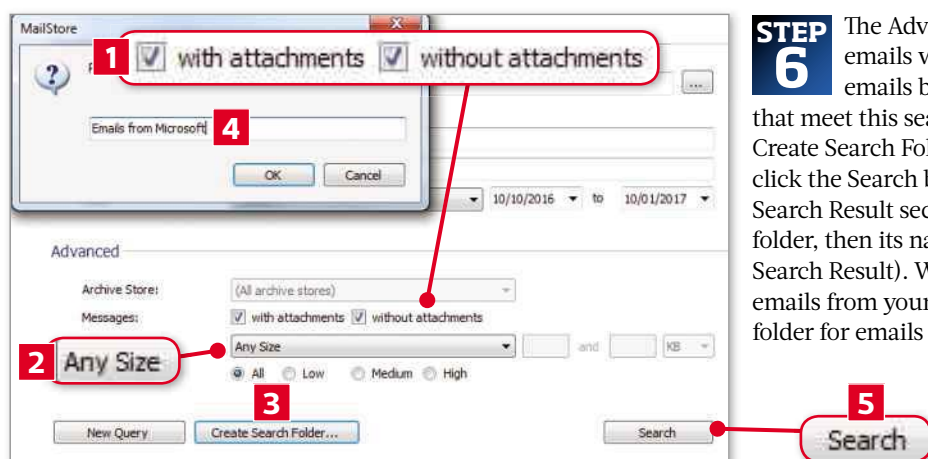
STEP 3 If you can't access your account, you may need to change your email server settings – follow the instructions at www.snipca.com/23024 to do this. To archive emails stored in your Microsoft Outlook, Windows Mail and Windows Live Mail accounts, click Archive E-mail **1** and select the relevant provider **2**. By default, it'll archive your entire account, but you can choose to only archive emails within a certain period of time **3**. Click Finish **4**, OK, then double-click the profile that appears in the list. Now enter your login details to begin archiving your emails and wait until this process finishes. Repeat Steps 2 and/or 3 to archive emails from all your accounts.





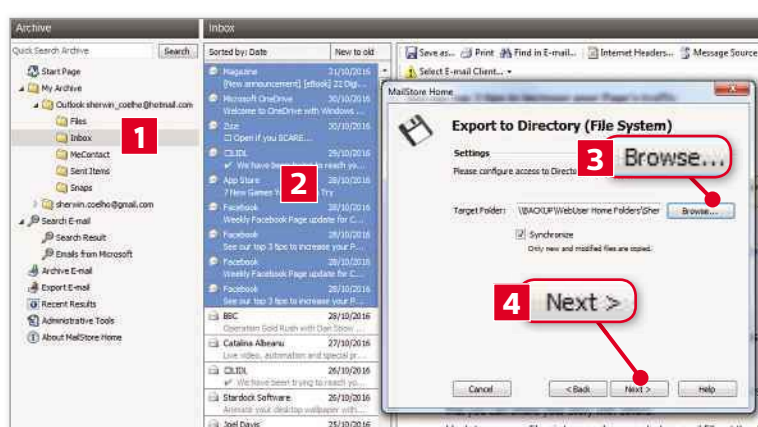
STEP 4 After doing this, it's easy to search for emails within all your archived accounts using MailStore Home's various search parameters. Click Search E-mail **1**. Now type your search term in the 'Search for' field **2**. You can use the tickboxes **3** to filter your search results by subject, sender, message body and so on. By default, the program searches for emails within all your accounts (including any sub-folders), but the program has filters to narrow your search.

STEP 5 For example, if you want to search within a specific folder, click the three dots beside Folder **1**, click the dropdown menu beside MailStore Home, select your account, select the folder you want to search within, then click OK. To filter emails by sender or recipient, type their email addresses in the respective fields **2**. You can also filter emails according to when you received them – click the Date dropdown menu and select one of the options **3**. Select Custom **4** in this dropdown menu to set a range of start and end dates **5**.



STEP 6 The Advanced section at the bottom lets you select emails with or without attachments **1** and filter emails by size **2**. If you want to put all the emails that meet this search criteria into a specific folder, click Create Search Folder **3**, name it **4**, then click OK. Finally, click the Search button **5**. You'll see your results in the Search Result section on the left. If you created a search folder, then its name will appear on the left (instead of Search Result). We'll now show you how to back up all the emails from your account to a CD/USB. First create a new folder for emails you want to back up.

STEP 7 Click to select the first email folder **1** you want to back up. Press Ctrl+A to select all the emails in that folder. Right-click any selected email **2**, move your cursor to Export To, and select Directory (File System). Click Next, then click the Browse button **3**, navigate to the folder you created on your PC and click OK. Now click Next **4**. You'll see a message saying these emails have been exported to your directory (PC folder). Repeat this step to export the contents of other email folders. Finally, insert your CD/USB stick into your PC. Follow the prompts on the AutoPlay pop-up window that appears to burn/move the folder to the CD/USB stick. You can now access these backed-up emails on any PC using its default email program. ●



Track your loved ones on a map

What you need: Android phone; Trusted Contacts app

Time required: 10 minutes

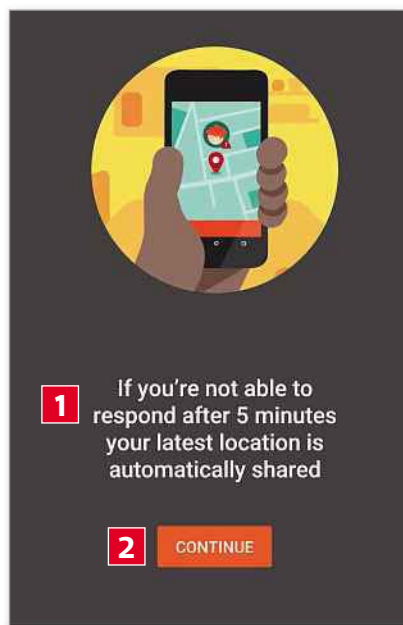
Trusted Contacts is new phone-only app by Google that can help if you're ever in danger or in an emergency. After adding your close family members and friends, the app lets you share your location with these 'trusted contacts', or request

to see where they are. If there's no response to a request within five minutes, the recipient's location is automatically sent to the person who requested it. The app works only on Android phones, but Google are working on an iPhone version.



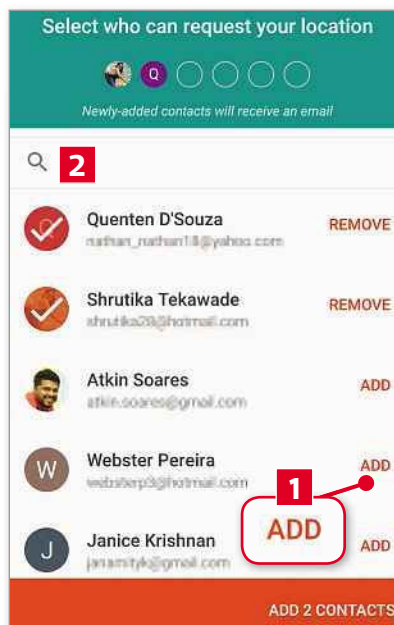
STEP 1 Install the Android phone app from www.snipca.com/23138. Open the app, tap Sign In, then log in using the Google account you use on your phone.

You'll now see a series of screens that describe the app's

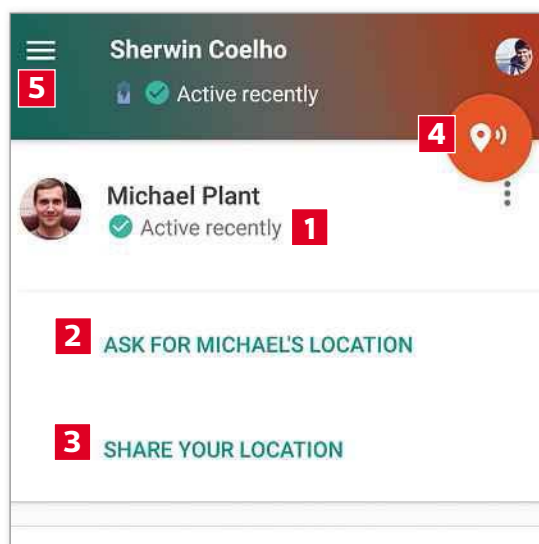


features (share your location, let others see your location, and display your location if you don't respond within five minutes of a location-sharing request **1**). Tap Continue **2** on each screen. Finally, tap Turn On to enable location sharing, tap Continue, then Allow. You'll now see a list of all the contacts on your device.

STEP 2 Tap Add **1** beside the contacts you want to share your location with. If you don't see a contact, type their name in the search bar **2**, then tap Add. To invite people who are not in your contacts list, type their email



address in the search bar then tap Invite. Finally, tap Add X Contacts **3**, then tap Invite. The contacts you've added will receive an email with a link to install the app, after which they'll need to accept all the app permissions, then accept your invite to start sharing locations. Now whenever you open the app, you'll see the people you added.



STEP 3 If they've turned on location sharing, you'll see whether they've recently been active **1**. Tap the contact to see two options. Tap Ask For X's Location **2**, then tap Request. They'll see a notification to share their location or decline. If they share, you'll see their location on the map. Tap the map to see their exact location address and get directions to it. Similarly, if you tap Share Your Location **3**, they'll see your location on their device. The pin-shaped icon **4** is useful in an emergency because it gives you the option to share your location with all the contacts you've added or multiple contacts in one go. Tap the menu button **5** to add more contacts.

NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE
Weds
15 Feb

- Upgrade to W10 for free using Microsoft's loophole
- Design your own posters and flyers
- Record your screen using keyboard shortcuts
- Make our Snipca URLs easier to use

Subscribe to Computeractive at
getcomputeractive.co.uk

TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

See how websites looked in the past

Last year I came across the brilliant website Wayback Machine (www.snipca.com/23135), which shows you what websites looked like on specific dates in the past. So I could easily see, for example, what the BBC website looked like when it launched in 1996.

Type the website's URL into the search field, press Enter, select a year in the timeline at the top, then click any date with a blue dot (see screenshot) to see what the site looked like on that date. Once the website loads, you can click to read stories (as long as they're still archived). This all

works fine unless you're not sure of the website name.

For example, I started a blog in 2001, which I abandoned after my children were born, but I couldn't remember its precise name. Thankfully, Wayback Machine has a new **beta** website that lets you carry out keyword searches to find websites. To use this, click the blue 'Please try out Beta Wayback Machine' button on the site's homepage.

I was fascinated (and only slightly embarrassed) to read what my 35-year-old self was writing back then.

Steve Tyson



Steve wins a copy of our A-Z Jargon Buster book

Buy it on Amazon www.snipca.com/21616

WINDOWS

Get Windows to remind you to change your password

✓ We often have family visiting from overseas for prolonged periods and several family members will often use my PC during this time. When a friend told me about a way to make Windows remind you to change your PC's password at regular intervals, I was eager to learn how.

You first need to open your PC's Group Policy Editor. Press Ctrl+R to open the Run box, type **gpedit.msc**, then press Enter. Now navigate through the following path by clicking the dropdown menus on the left: **Computer Configuration/Windows Settings/Security Settings/Account Policies/Password Policy**. Here, you'll see an entry called 'Maximum password age' (see screenshot below), which should be set to 0. Double-click this, enter the number of days you want between reminders to change your password, click Apply, then OK. After that time elapses, you'll be prompted to

change your Windows password when you next log into your PC.

Barry Cresswell

CHROME

Specify the destination folder for each downloaded file

✓ By default, Chrome saves all files you download to the Downloads folder on your PC. While this is fine for setup files, I prefer downloading photos and videos to other folders. Turns out there's an easy way to make Chrome prompt you to specify which folder you want to save downloads to before the process starts.

To do this, click the three dots at Chrome's top right, Settings, then the 'Show advanced settings' link at the bottom. Next, scroll to the Downloads section, and tick 'Ask where to save each file before downloading'. From now on, whenever you download something, you'll see a File Explorer window with the option to rename the file and save it to any folder you want.

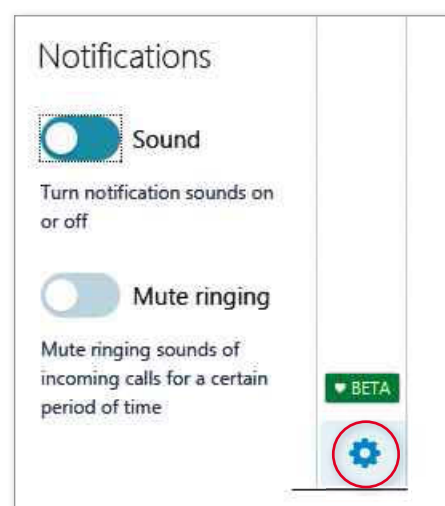
Caroline Elms



SKYPE

Disable Skype's web notifications

✓ A few years ago I considered Skype more or less indispensable for messaging and video calling my family. After trying out a few other services, like



WhatsApp Messenger and Apple's FaceTime, I decided to stop using Skype. Just before I uninstalled the Skype app from my PC and phone, Microsoft added my Skype profile to the Outlook.com and OneDrive websites, meaning the first things I saw when I logged into those sites were my Skype notifications (mostly for spam messages).

If you try to sign out of Skype, you'll also sign out of those sites - because all three services use the same Microsoft account. Thankfully, there's now a way to turn off Skype notifications on both these websites. Click the chat-bubble icon at the top right to open your Skype panel, click the Settings icon (see screenshot), then turn off both sliders in the Notifications section.

Ian Bourne

Phone and Tablet Tips

Brilliant things to do on your device

iOS

Recover storage space



If you constantly see the Storage Almost Full notification on your iPhone or iPad, there are a few ways to delete redundant files and recover storage space. Videos and photos are the biggest memory hogs. Your best option is to install Google Photos (www.snipca.com/23185), then save all your photos and videos there.

After doing that, delete those files on your device. To do this, open the Photos app, tap Select at the top right, tap Select beside all the dates, tap the bin icon, then tap Delete X Items. Your files won't be deleted immediately. Instead, they will be saved to the app's Recently Deleted folder, from where they can be recovered if necessary (within 30 days). To permanently delete these files (and thereby recover storage space), tap Albums at the bottom, Recently Deleted, Select at the top right, then tap Delete All.

If you use WhatsApp Messenger, it's

worth deleting any photos and videos you no longer want. Open the app, tap the group/person name at the top, then tap 'Media, Links and Docs'. Back up any items you want and delete the rest.

Finally, you should uninstall any space-hogging apps. To do that, open Settings, General, Storage, then tap Manage Storage. You'll see a list of apps with those that take up the most space at the top (see screenshot below left). Tap any app you don't want, then Delete App.

ANDROID

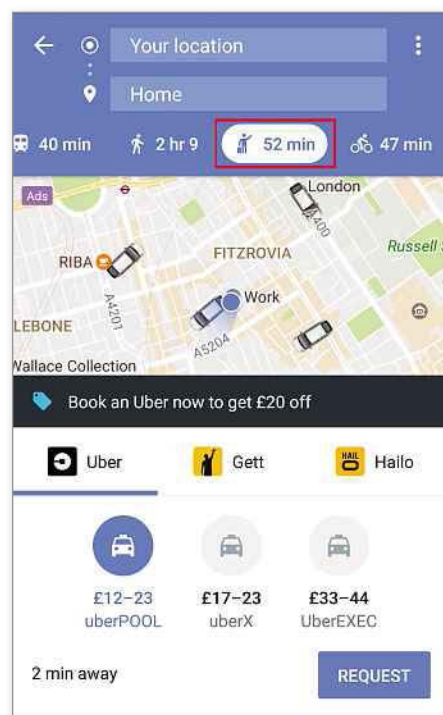
Book a taxi using Google Maps



Google Maps is the best app if you need to find directions for your car journey. However, there are times when taking a cab is more convenient. Google recently made a deal with three UK taxi services – Uber, Gett and Hailo – so you can now check how many cabs from all three services are near you. You can also get an estimated fare and make a booking – all from within Google Maps.

First, install the apps (Uber www.snipca.com/23187; Gett www.snipca.com/23188; Hailo www.snipca.com/23189) and create an account using the Gmail ID you use on your phone.

Now open Google Maps, tap the arrow icon at the bottom right, then enter your destination in the box at the top. Previously, there were only four sections here, covering car journeys, public transport, walking



and cycling – each with journey time estimates. You'll now see a fifth section for cabs (see screenshot above).

Tap it to see the three cab services as tabs below. Select one to see its estimated fare. On the map, you'll see how many of the company's vehicles are near your location. Tap Request, then log into your account for that cab service (you only need to do this the first time) to book your taxi. You'll now see an estimate of how long it will take for the driver to reach you.



Best New Apps

What you should install this fortnight

Picky

Free

iOS: www.snipca.com/23170

Modifying the sharpness, brightness, contrast and tone of each photo in your collection can take ages. Instead use



Picky, which autocorrects and fixes your photo with one tap. It lets you compare your edited version with the original, and select the best from duplicates.

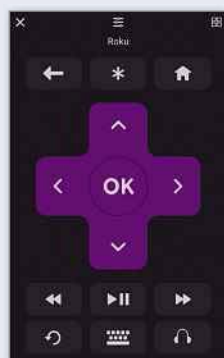
Roku

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/23171

iOS: www.snipca.com/23172

Roku (www.snipca.com/23186) is a great way to stream video to your TV. Its app



has recently been redesigned with a new What's On tab – a list of popular movies and programmes you can buy, rent or stream for free. The app also contains a new remote-control interface to replace the physical one.

Inkitt

Free

Android: www.snipca.com/23173

iOS: www.snipca.com/23174

This app has thousands of free novels from new and aspiring authors across



a wide range of genres. The app features recommendations and star ratings to help you make your choice. You can change your reading theme and even download books to read offline.

WINDOWS PHONE

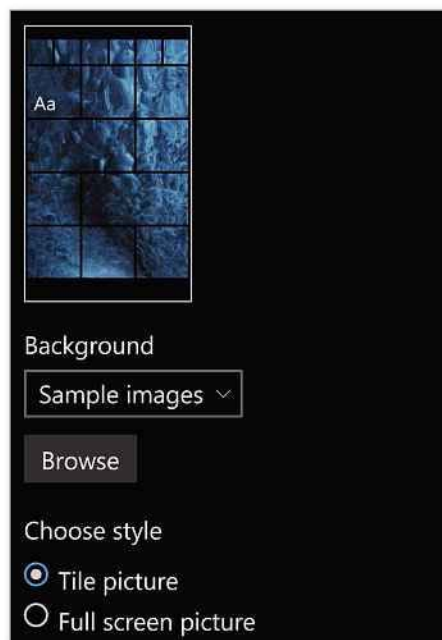
Change how your home screen looks



It's nice to freshen up your home screen once in a while.

One way to do this is swipe down from the top of your screen, tap 'All settings', Personalisation, then tap Start. Next, tap the Background dropdown menu (see screenshot below) to change your home screen's backdrop. If you want to check out other stock images, select 'Sample images' in the dropdown menu, tap the Browse button, then select the image you want.

Similarly, you can use a photo from your phone by tapping the Background dropdown menu, selecting 'My pictures', tapping Browse, then selecting the photo you want. The 'Choose style' section provides two options. If you want your image to be used on all your home screen's app tiles, select 'Tile picture'. If you just want your image in the background with the app tiles above it, then select 'Full screen picture'.



ANDROID

Use Google's new offline search tool



Google has updated its default app with a new feature that lets you run a search when you're offline, then see your search result as soon as you're back online. To use it, enter your search term when you're offline. The first time you do this, you'll see a message saying your search results will be available when you're back online – tap OK. As soon as you regain a network

connection, you'll see a notification saying your search result is available. Tap to open it within Google.

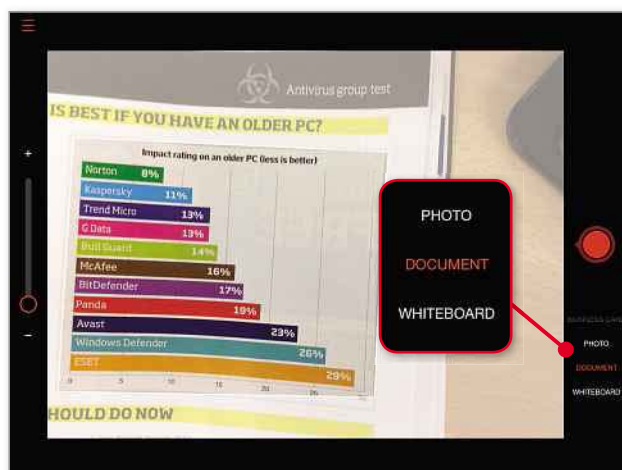
iOS

Scan documents on your iPad



Microsoft has updated its scanning app

Office Lens to work on iPads. Install and open the app (www.snipca.com/23169). You'll see a zoom slider on the left and options to scan a business card, photo, document or anything written on a whiteboard (see screenshot above). Tap the shutter icon to take your photo, then tap Done at the top



right. You'll see the option to save your file as a photo, PDF or email attachment. You can also save it to any Microsoft app you have installed, including OneDrive, OneNote and Word.

Games With Kids

What to play together on your phone and tablet

AGES 0-5

123 Awesome Park*

Free www.snipca.com/23175 (Android)

£2.29 www.snipca.com/23176 (iOS)

This game will teach your toddler how to count from one to 20. The activities include selecting the correct number, dragging and dropping the correct number of items and tracing the number's outline. They receive a prize at the end of each completed task.



AGES 6-10

Bounce Classic HD

Free www.snipca.com/23177 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/23178 (iOS)

Nokia phone users will remember this game in which you had to avoid bursting a ball as you progress through 11 levels, dodging sharp obstacles including pins while jumping through hoops. The game can be played in offline mode.



AGES 11-16

NASA Science Investigations

Free www.snipca.com/23179 (Android)

Free www.snipca.com/23180 (iOS)

In Nasa's new app, you play the role of an astronaut on board the International Space Station. After acclimatising to zero gravity, you need to find fellow astronaut Naomi who will teach you how to grow plants in space.



*Contains in-app purchases

WINDOWS 7

Use hidden wallpapers and themes



It's fairly straightforward to set an image as your wallpaper background. Simply right-click the image, then click 'Set as desktop background'. Alternatively, you can use themes which automatically change your wallpaper at intervals. To do this, right-click anywhere on your desktop, click Personalise, then select the Windows theme you want.

Windows 7 has five hidden country-specific wallpapers and themes. To access them, open the Start menu, type **C:\Windows\Globalization\MCT** into the search bar at the bottom, then press Enter. You'll see five folders (MCT-AU, MCT-CA, MCT-GB, MCT-US and MCT-ZA, which represent Australia, Canada, Great Britain, United States and South Africa). Each of these contain subfolders. In the sub-folder with the country's full name you'll find iconic national images, which you can right-click to set as your desktop background. Click the Theme subfolder to have all the images (from that country) as your background (changing at intervals).

WINDOWS 10

Display useful information on your lock screen



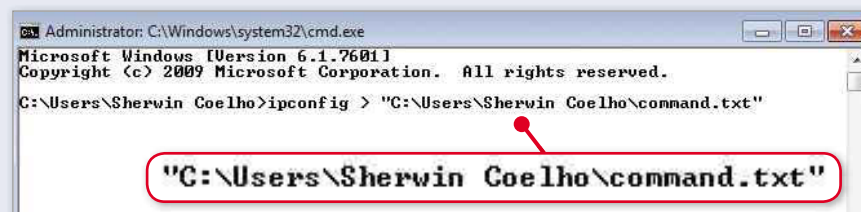
There's an easy way to display useful information – such as weather forecasts, or email and Skype notifications – on your lock screen. Open the Start menu, click Settings, Personalisation, then click 'Lock screen' on the left. You can use a photo as the background image on your lock screen by clicking the Background dropdown menu, selecting Picture, then navigating to the photo on your PC.

The sections below let you display info on the lock screen from certain Windows apps. For example, click the '+' tile below 'Choose an app to show detailed status', then select Weather (see screenshot below). You'll now see the current



WINDOWS 7, 8, 10

Save Command Prompt info to a file



Command Prompt has a useful feature that lets you save a command as a text file on your PC. We'll show you how to do this using the 'ipconfig' command (which displays your PC's IP address). This is useful if you need to save information about your PC for future reference or email details of your PC as an attachment.

To open Command Prompt, open the Start menu, type **cmd** and press Enter. Next, type the following command **ipconfig > "C:\Users\[your username]\command.txt"** (see screenshot), then press Enter.

Here, 'ipconfig' represents the command we're running. The (>)

symbol tells Command Prompt that we want to save this information as a file on our PC. The section within the quote marks has two functions: C:\Users\[your username] is the location where we want to save the file – you can expand this path to navigate to a specific folder; command.txt represents the file name (command) and the file format (text) we want to save it as.

Using (and adapting) this simple formula, you can save any command to any location on your PC as a notepad or Word file (by changing the text format from .txt to .doc). Open the PC location you specified to see the file with your Command Prompt information.

temperature, forecast and the expected temperature range for that day on your lock screen. You can also add apps to the 'Choose apps to show quick status' (see screenshot). For example, select the Mail and Skype apps here and you'll see any unread email or Skype notifications.

WINDOWS 10

Customise Narrator's settings



All Windows PCs have a useful Narrator tool, which uses an automated voice to describe any item you click on screen. This can be very useful for people with impaired vision. In Windows 7, there is only one Narrator voice, with options to change the speed, volume and pitch. In Windows 10 there are several more customisation options.

Open Settings in your Start menu, click 'Ease of Access', then Narrator. Turn on the first two sliders to start using the feature. The 'Choose a voice' dropdown menu lets you select from five voice options (one male and four female profiles). You can also change the narration speed and pitch using the relevant sliders, and switch intonation



pauses on or off (see screenshot above). The 'Sounds you hear' section at the bottom has sliders that let you choose which actions on your PC you want narrating.

OFFICE

Use less common symbols and create your own short forms

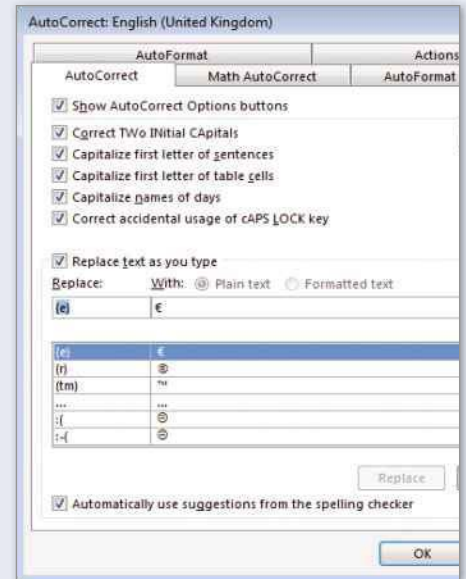
 This is one of those rare tips that work across all Office desktop programs. It will come in handy if you often need to insert less common symbols (such as the copyright mark, euro symbol or trademark) and involves typing a sequence of keys. In all programs (except Outlook) click File at the top left, Options at the bottom, Proofing on the left, then click the AutoCorrect Options button. In Outlook, click File, Options, Mail on the left, the Editor Options button, then click the AutoCorrect Options button.

Ensure that 'Replace text as you type' is ticked at the bottom. You'll now see a list of the key sequences you need to type to insert these symbols (see screenshot). Select any option in the

list, then change the default key sequence to whatever you want by typing it in the Replace field.

You can also add more key sequences to this list. It can be useful to include words you tend to misspell and to replace longer words or phrases with shorter versions.

To do that, first ensure the Replace and With fields are empty. Enter the short form of a word or term you use often (for example, 'CA') in the Replace field, then enter its full version (for example, Computeractive, or 'Computeractive magazine') in the With field. Finally, click Add, then OK. From now on, whenever you type the short version, Office will automatically change this to the longer version.

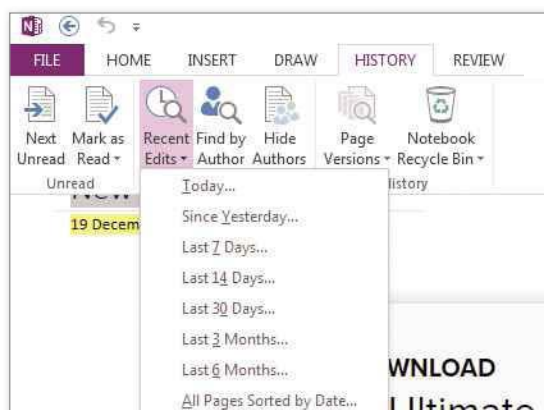


ONENOTE

See what notes you were making years ago

 Unlike other Office programs, OneNote logs every change you make, letting you see edits made a number of years ago. To use this feature, click the History tab, then the Recent Edits dropdown menu to see a list of time period options (ranging from Today to Last 6 Months – see screenshot below). Click 'All Pages Sorted by Date' to see changes made more than six months ago.

Clicking any option displays a panel on the right with a list of all your changes arranged by date (recent changes appear at the top). Click any change to jump to the relevant OneNote page, section or notebook. If you keep to-do lists, for example, you can go down memory lane to see what you were doing back then.



SWAY

Bring the title of your presentation to life

 One of the new features in Microsoft's online presentation tool Sway lets you liven up your project by adding short animated images (GIFs) or videos to your title. To do this, go to www.sway.com, click 'Sign in' at the top right, log in with your Microsoft account, then click Create New. When your new presentation opens, click the Background button to the left of 'Title of your Sway'.

A panel will slide in from the left. In the search field type a subject, followed by the type of media file you want (for example, 'birthday gif' or 'wedding video'). Videos are distinguished by a small play icon at the bottom. Drag and drop the GIF or video into the Background button to add it to your presentation. Click this to see how your new title looks.

WORD

Reorder text quickly

 There are several ways to rearrange text in your document. One handy method lets you add a formatting style to section

bottom. Drag and drop the GIF/video add it to your sway. Click this to see **Word**
Reorder text sections quickly
There are different ways to reorder document. One method is to add a any text sections. To do this, select Home tab, click the View tab, then pane on the left, you can now drag reposition them.
An easier way to rearrange your text View tab, then click Outline in the V see small circular dots wherever you document. To rearrange your text,

headings. To do this, highlight your headings, select a style from the Home tab, click the View tab, then tick Navigation Pane. Using the pane on the left, you can now drag and drop headings to reposition sections of text.

An easier way to rearrange text is to use Outline View. Click the View tab, then Outline in the Views section at the top left. You'll see small dots wherever you've pressed Enter in your document (see screenshot above). To rearrange your text, simply click the dot next to the start of a section, then drag it up or down to wherever you want it to appear. Click Close Outline View at the top when you've finished reordering your text.



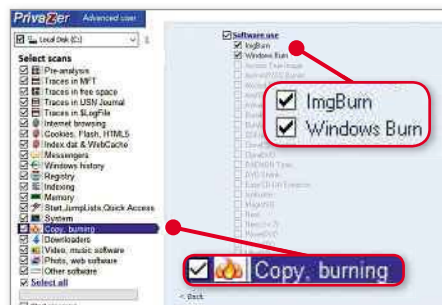
PrivaZer

Access advanced scanning options, manage cookie removal and delete any folder or file permanently

Access even more scanning options

PrivaZer is a system-cleaning tool that has much in common with our favourite junk-removal software CCleaner. We covered some of its core tools in a recent Workshop (Issue 477, page 35), but it has other useful features that we didn't have room to cover. For example, PrivaZer's Advanced mode offers extra scanning options to give you more control over each scan. To see these, Click 'Basic user' at the top right in the main menu (it will change to 'Advanced user'), then click 'Scan in-depth' in the dropdown menu, select Computer and click OK. Every type of scan offered by PrivaZer will be listed on the left.

As an example we'll use 'Copy, burning', which removes the temporary files generated when you burn CDs. To see (and change) which programs are scanned by this option, click 'Copy, burning' to highlight it then click Options. You'll see a list of various CD-burning programs and those installed on your PC will be marked by a tick box (see screenshot above right). Untick any box to stop PrivaZer scanning that particular program. This can be useful if



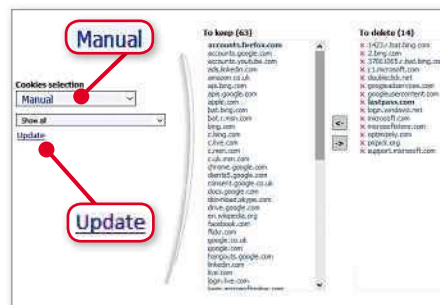
'Advanced user' mode lets you decide which programs are scanned by PrivaZer

you use a program regularly and want to make sure that PrivaZer doesn't interfere with the way it's set up by removing any **temporary files** associated with it.

Choose which website cookies to keep

One of the ways PrivaZer tries to keep your PC running smoothly is by removing **cookies** that websites leave behind on your PC. While it's certainly worth keeping cookies to a minimum, it's actually a good idea to keep those from your favourite websites so they can load faster.

To determine which cookies PrivaZer leaves on your PC during a scan select



Use the 'Manual cookies' selection screen to choose the cookies you want PrivaZer to keep

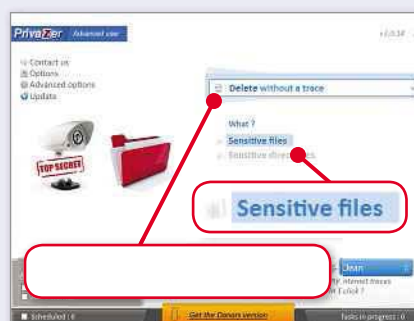
'Scan in-depth' on PrivaZer's main screen, then highlight Computer and click OK. On the next screen, click 'To keep' (next to the Cookies tick box). Then choose Manual from the 'Cookies selection' dropdown menu (see screenshot above). You'll now be able to move cookies from the 'To keep' column to the 'To delete' column and vice versa.

As a rule of thumb you should move cookies from the websites you visit the most to the 'To keep' section and move the rest to 'To delete'. Once you're happy with your selections, click Update (below the 'Cookies selection' dropdown menu), then click the Back button twice. All subsequent PrivaZer scans will leave the cookies you have chosen to keep.

Delete files and folders permanently

PrivaZer can permanently delete files and folders on your PC so that they are irretrievable. This can provide peace of mind when you delete files containing personal information, such as banking transactions.

To access this tool, select 'Delete without a trace' in the dropdown menu in the main menu, then click 'Sensitive files' (see screenshot) and click OK. Highlight the folders or files you want to delete and click Open. A pop-up window will appear. Click 'See advanced options' and choose any of the '3 passes' options in the dropdown menu ('3 passes' means the files will be deleted and the resulting free space filled and overwritten three



times to ensure that data recovery is impossible). Click Start and you'll see a green progress bar that will let you know when the process has completed. Click 'See' for a report detailing all the files that were removed, and any that were missed.

Remove the PrivaZer option from the right-click menu

Try right-clicking your Recycle Bin, for example, and you'll see a PrivaZer logo next to a command to 'Empty without a trace'. This is because PrivaZer embeds itself into your Windows' right-click (context) menu. But if, like us, your right-click menu is already packed, you can turn this option off (and then back on if you choose).

To do this, in the main screen click 'Advanced options' (at the top left) and then the General tab. You'll see four tick boxes under the 'Installation of contextual menus (right-click menu)' section. To remove the right-click options, untick each box and click OK. You can restore any removed options by ticking these boxes whenever you want.

Mixed reality

If the real world is too drab, sprinkle it with virtual dust

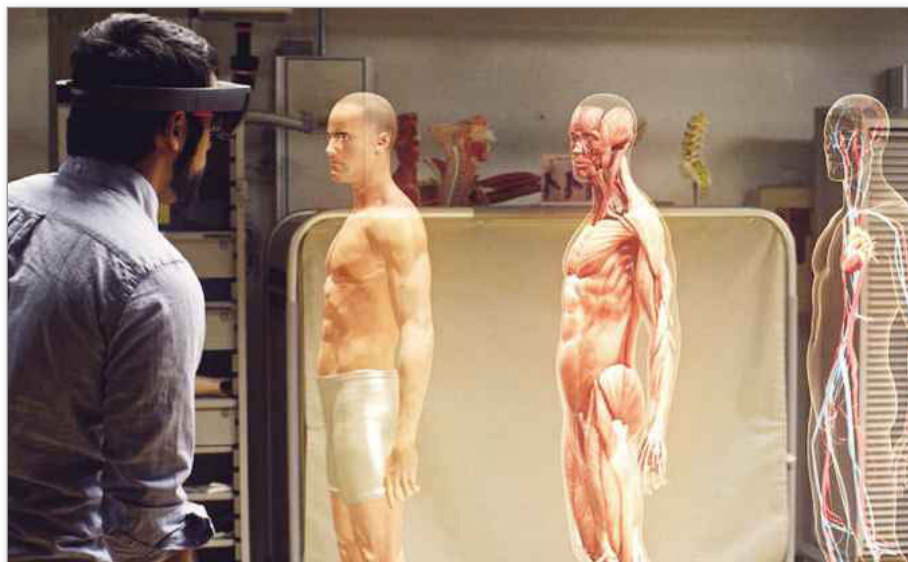
What is it?

A new way of looking at the world through a headset, formed by blending augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR). The tech industry thinks we're crying out for a new type of reality in which nothing bad happens. Sinks never block. Tyres never puncture. Shoelaces never snap. We can forget these everyday annoyances by swapping a disappointing 'real' reality for an exciting 'fake' reality.

What makes it different to AR and VR?

To answer that, let's first explain the difference between AR and VR. In AR, digital elements are placed on top of the real world, providing entertainment or information. So, for example, as you move your phone around to capture different places on your screen, images related to the place will appear. You may see reviews for a restaurant, or the opening times for a museum. It's a surprisingly old idea. L Frank Baum called it a "character marker" in his 1901 book *The Master Key*, which he wrote a year after *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.

VR is a newer concept, first appearing in Stanley G Weinbaum's 1935 science-fiction short story *Pygmalion's Spectacles*. It generates realistic images and sounds to create a digital environment that feels authentic to the person experiencing it. By wearing a VR headset the user gets a first-person view of the virtual world, and is unable to see



anything in the real world.

In short, AR is about enriching ('augmenting') reality, while VR is about immersing you into a completely artificial ('virtual') reality.

So how does mixed reality combine the two?

By placing complex VR images on an AR environment. In effect, it's a radically improved version of AR, which currently is mostly used to display simple information in words. The images on screen are much more lifelike, and appear in context with actual objects. In mixed reality you might see a virtual cat sitting on your real sofa, or a hologram of a relative standing in your living room.

image); designers can see objects on tables; and gamers can blast alien spaceships. Unlike in VR, at no point do you feel totally divorced from the real world.

Can I buy the HoloLens?

If you have £2,719 to spare, yes. Just grab your credit card and visit Microsoft's site: www.snipca.com/23086.

Hmm. Is there anything cheaper?

Yes, about £2,689 cheaper. For \$30 (£25) you can pre-order the ZapBox cardboard headset from [crowdfunding site Kickstarter](http://www.snipca.com/23087) (www.snipca.com/23087). Fit a phone inside the ZapBox and you can play crazy golf in your home (see image left), as well as explore Mars and draw in 3D. But before you buy one, you may want to wait for Apple's headset.

Won't that be expensive too?

Probably. All we have are rumours, which suggest that Apple is working with Carl Zeiss, the German lens manufacturer, to make a pair of mixed-reality glasses. If this is true, they may be ready in time to work with the iPhone 8, expected to arrive in September. But they won't be cheap, and that's the harsh reality, mixed or otherwise.



Buy the ZapBox for £25 and you can play crazy golf in your home

Can I see it in action?

Yes. Visit Microsoft's YouTube channel (www.snipca.com/23071) to see how its HoloLens headset can be used. Medical students can examine and rotate virtual bodies in their office (see main

Brilliant NEW APPS

With thousands of apps launched every week, how do you choose what to download? Jane Hoskyn reveals
25 new apps you'll love – and they're all free



Pity the overworked app maker last September. As summer gave way to autumn, Android 7 (Nougat), Apple's iOS 10, Google's Pixel phone and the iPhone 7 were all released within days of each other, heralding a

WHAT YOU'LL LEARN

- The best new apps from Google and Microsoft
- How to send self-destructing text messages that can't be hacked
- Why you don't need an expensive photo scanner, fitness tracker or dashcam
- The video-calling app that's better than Skype

busy period for app developers. Technology that once seemed science fiction – artificial intelligence (AI), voice control and **biometrics** – became a fact of life in Android and iOS. Keen to ride the wave of these advances, app makers spent the next few months busting a gut to get new apps and updates rolled out.

In November 2016 alone, more than 65,000 new apps were added to the Google Play store. But this really was a case of quantity over quality. Of the countless apps released since September, we'd suggest that a mere fraction are actually worth downloading. Therefore, so that you don't have to, we've tried all the best free apps from the last few months to select the 25 must-haves from the mediocrities and the over-hyped.

Here, you'll find apps that transform your photos, guide you through walking tours of town and country, film your car journeys, boost your slow home network, help you learn a foreign language and more besides.

Over the next few pages we'll reveal our favourites (plus one we hate). Because we know how frustrating it is to hear all about a great new app, only to find that it doesn't work on your operating system, we're only recommending apps that work on both Android and iOS.

And because the best things in life aren't always new, we'll remind you of those essential apps that have been around a while but still enrich our daily lives.

THE 25 BEST FREE NEW APPS

Books

READFEED

Android & iOS: www.readfeed.com



Create a digital library of your book collection and discover your next favourite read, using this wonderful new tool aimed at bookworms. There's a built-in barcode scanner for easily logging your books, though you can enter details manually if you prefer. Either way, you can then add comments and photos (such as scans of favourite pages) and share reviews with other readers. You'll soon be able to read ebooks in the app, too.



Television

ATTENBOROUGH'S STORY OF LIFE

Android & iOS:

www.bbc.com/earth/storyoflife



Trust Auntie Beeb to make everything OK just as the bleak midwinter began to bite. First came the TV series *Planet Earth II*, followed in November by this magnificent video library of David Attenborough's work.

The app itself isn't huge – under 50MB – but it contains more than 1,000 clips from Sir David's nature programmes, going back decades. There are some great new exclusive videos and behind-the-scenes snippets. Clips last a few minutes each and are all free to watch (choose to do so via Wi-Fi so your mobile-data bill doesn't take a bruising). You can browse by subject matter, search for your favourite clips and even organise them into collections for sharing with friends and family.



Voice assistant

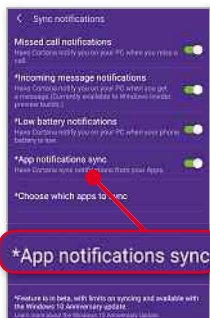
CORTANA

Android: www.snipca.com/23045

iOS: www.snipca.com/23046



It's fair to say that Microsoft's voice-controlled 'personal assistant' has so far failed to garner much acclaim. But when Cortana arrived on Android and iOS in December, it seemed instantly at home. Talking to your PC and laptop can make you feel like a ninny, but talking to your phone – well, that's what phones are for. As well as being a virtual ear, Cortana tells you the news and weather, and syncs reminders and notifications between your phone and PC once you've activated it in your settings (see screenshot above).



the photo while it scans. We found this rather fiddly at first, but it's still a lot less hassle than using a flatbed scanner. There are no photo-editing tools in the app, but it integrates with the newly updated Google Photos (<https://photos.google.com> – see screenshot above) for editing and free online storage. See Issue 491, page 40 for our PhotoScan Workshop.



Collection includes five games (Klondike, Spider, FreeCell, TriPeaks and Pyramid) plus Daily Challenges and statistics. It's fantastic, but it's also rather cluttered with adverts, unless you cough up 89p per month for the 'premium' version.



Driving

NEXAR

Android & iOS: www.getnexas.com



Save more than £100 on a dashcam – and potentially save thousands on dubious insurance claims against you. Use this free new app to record the road while you drive (pictured below). Nexar uses AI technology to log the direction, acceleration and speed of vehicles in view, saving data that could be invaluable in a claim or in court.

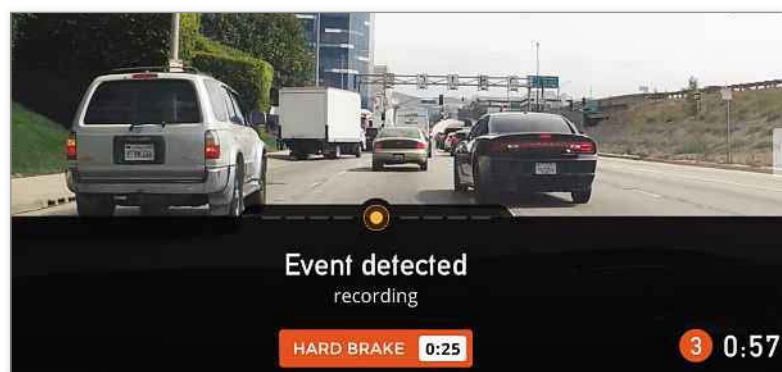


Photo scanner

GOOGLE PHOTOSCAN

Android & iOS:

www.google.com/photos/scan



PhotoScan is just one of several new Google apps we'll mention in this feature – and it's a real treat for anyone with a loft full of old photos. It turns your device's camera into an incredibly efficient photo scanner. To reduce glare from photo prints, you slowly move your phone or tablet over

Puzzles

MICROSOFT SOLITAIRE COLLECTION

Android: www.snipca.com/23047

iOS: www.snipca.com/23048



After 26 years built into Windows, Solitaire has finally made it on to Android and iOS. Like the PC version, Microsoft Solitaire

Driving AUTOBUD

Android & iOS: <http://theautobud.com>



AutoBud is like a fitness tracker for your car. It automatically records statistics such as miles travelled, altitude at various stages of your journey (see screenshot right), average speed, petrol usage and even G-force. It then creates maps and graphs of your journeys. Like Solitaire, it contains adverts that you can pay to remove (£2.49 in this case), but all features are free.



News NEWS PRO

Android & iOS: <http://newspro.microsoft.com>



Ever wished you could customise the news? This app from Microsoft doesn't quite let you choose tomorrow's headlines, but it does help you filter out the stuff that doesn't interest you. Select 'interests' – say, technology and UK elections – to prioritise them in your feed of articles and videos from journalistic sources

around the world.

Great idea, but there's a very strong US bias, even after you've spent a while configuring your feed. For more home-grown news, we recommend two other free apps



for Android and iOS: BBC News (www.snipca.com/23079) and *The Telegraph* (www.snipca.com/23081). Both have been updated with great customisation features in the last couple of months.

Languages DUOLINGO

Android & iOS: www.duolingo.com



Duolingo isn't new, but in January it added an addictive new multi-player (or multi-learner) feature that kept us up half the night learning Spanish. Duolingo Clubs pits you against a friend – or your entire family if you choose – as you progress through bite-sized interactive lessons in any one of dozens of languages on offer. Who's top of your Mandarin-learning leaderboard? Did your nephew just overtake your Russian score over breakfast? It's very motivating.

You can pay to skip ahead a few lessons, but lessons are free if you do them in the right order, and there are no hidden charges.



Tech education CODEMURAI

Android: www.snipca.com/23074
iOS: www.snipca.com/23075



Like Duolingo, new app Codemurai uses cleverly designed tutorials and quizzes to help you learn a language. This time, though, the language is computer code.



Tools MICROSOFT FLOW

Android & iOS: <https://flow.microsoft.com>



Another new app from Microsoft, Flow lets you set automatic links ('workflows') between tools and services – chiefly Microsoft tools and services. 'Save my email attachments to a SharePoint document library' (www.snipca.com/23082) is a typical workflow template. You can customise templates to work with dozens of supported services, such as Gmail, Facebook and YouTube. If you've used IFTTT (<https://ifttt.com>) you'll understand how Flow works.



Start by choosing a topic (web development, games, iOS apps, Android apps), and then progress through lessons. All lessons are free, but you can pay to skip them.

Camera HYPOCAM

Android & iOS: www.hypocam.co



New camera apps are launched every week, but Hypocam really stood out from the recent crowd.



To paraphrase Henry Ford, it lets you shoot in any colour as long as it's black (and white). You can adjust exposure and try filters while shooting – with dramatic results.

IS PEEPLE THE WORST APP EVER?

Ever wished there were an app where an ex-partner or your boss could secretly rate your personal attributes, then share them with the world? Of course not, which is why we're horrified that iOS app Peeples (www.snipca.com/23123) still exists.

This 'reputation application' was released last spring and then re-launched in October as an opt-in service. You can now only be reviewed after registering. If you sign up out of curiosity (it's free, after

all), others can rate your Professional, Personal and Dating qualities, write a review about you, then share it.

A few of Peeples's 244 user reviews insist it's a "social experiment", but the consensus is "sickening and disheartening" and "horrible and disastrous".

Peeples is very unlikely to be banned as it's not breaking any laws. But we wouldn't shed tears to see it disappear.

Navigation RUNGO

Android & iOS: www.rungoapp.com

Get a voice-guided tour of any UK town or rural rambling route, then save your route and statistics. All routes and features are free if you're online. RunGo also covers thousands of cities worldwide, but it's not free to use abroad unless you have unlimited **roaming** data. Routes cost from 56p to download for using offline.



Messaging tool SIGNAL PRIVATE MESSENGER

Android: www.snipca.com/23050

iOS: www.snipca.com/23051

If you're nervous about sending text messages from your phone after reading about alleged vulnerabilities in WhatsApp (www.snipca.com/23076) and Facebook Messenger (www.snipca.com/23077), give Signal a look. This app is the most secure messaging tool currently available.

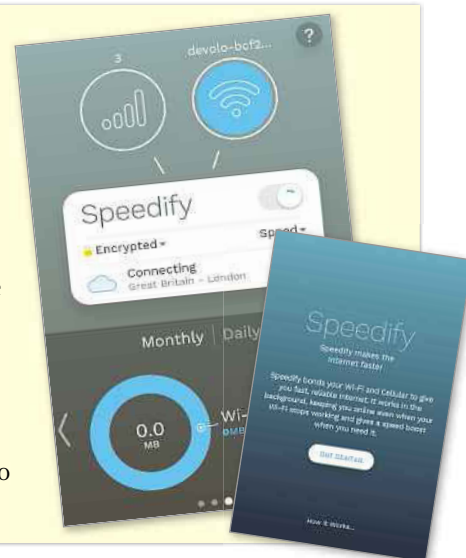
Signal relaunched in November with new features including free encrypted phone calls, an in-app camera with video support, a version for Chrome (www.snipca.com/23078) and – our favourite new feature – self-destructing



Internet SPEEDIFY

Android & iOS: <http://speedify.com>

Your home Wi-Fi is probably not strong enough to let you stream an online video in the garden shed. Free new app Speedify tackles this problem by combining all available connections – mobile data as well as Wi-Fi – to give you the fastest, most reliable internet possible. To avoid going over your provider's allowance, set a data limit (tap the blue Wi-Fi logo, see screenshot) – 500MB per week should be more than enough for most people. Tap the white box then disable 'Connect at Startup' to prevent Speedify running all the time.



messages. Set messages to disappear from your and your recipient's device a certain number of seconds, minutes or days after you send them, and they'll be gone for good. Nothing is stored on a server.

Travel GOOGLE TRIPS

Android & iOS: <https://google.com/trips>

Google attempted to brighten up last November with a new app to help us plan a holiday. Sign in using your Google account, and Trips will automatically extract flight information, hotel bookings and other travel details from your Gmail messages. Then it delivers a personal itinerary including annotated maps, recommended



places to see and eat, and a useful 'Need to Know' section about the local currency and what to do in an emergency. Download the whole lot before you leave, and then access it offline to spare you costly roaming charges.

Personal finance 1TAP RECEIPTS

Android & iOS: <http://1tapreceipts.com>

If you have to fill in a tax return every year, this new app could save you time and hassle. It

automatically extracts relevant data from photos you take of your receipts, then adds it securely to your HMRC form. The app is free and you get 5GB storage included. The 1Tap Prime service (£44.99 per year) has business extras such as 50GB online storage.



Security TRUECALLER

Android & iOS: www.truecaller.com

With new figures showing that a complaint about nuisance calls is lodged every five minutes (www.snipca.com/23083), services like Truecaller are more vital than ever. The app automatically blocks certain numbers – such as PPI callers – and warns you if an incoming call is from a dubious number. Some users have expressed concerns about Truecaller storing their contacts list. But we think that's an acceptable price to pay for combatting nuisance calls.

Truecaller has just had a big update to make its Caller ID feature available offline, so you get spam warnings even without an internet connection.

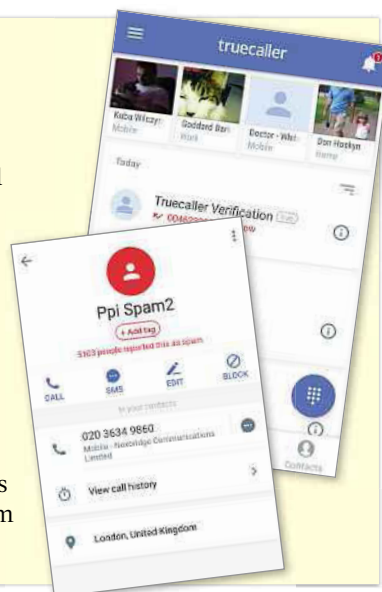


Photo editor ADOBE PHOTOSHOP FIX

Android & iOS: www.snipca.com/23072

New to Android after a year on iOS, Photoshop Fix is yet another free app from digital photography powerhouse Adobe. It's designed for small corrections – removing a spot, brightening a corner – but it's powerful enough for full image adjustments, and borrows tools from the PC version of Photoshop, such as Liquify and Warp.



Computeractive Bookstore



THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE'S HIDDEN TOOLS

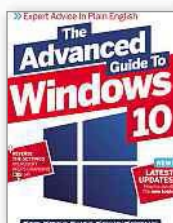
In the new and updated **Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools**, the experts at *Computeractive* lift the lid on Google's most popular services to reveal more than 390 ways to make them even more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. These include clever new add-ons for Chrome, smart hacks for YouTube, and the best things you can do in Google Maps, Drive, Gmail and more. It's an essential guide to unlocking the hundreds of secret settings, options and tools that Google offers. You'll learn tips and tricks that you can use every day online.

**BUY IT NOW FROM
AMAZON**

at www.snipca.com/22784

THE ADVANCED GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

This 196-page guide is packed with expert advice in plain English, to help you unlock every hidden tool. You'll learn how to customise Windows 10 so it works how you want it to, and how to reverse settings that Microsoft keeps changing. It's also the ideal troubleshooting guide, with fixes for every problem.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON

at www.snipca.com/21617

THE A-Z JARGON BUSTER BOOK

This A-Z guide contains over 900 definitions of computing and tech jargon, helping you take back control of your PC. It tells you in plain English what so-called 'experts' say in gobbledygook. Keep it next to your computer and you'll never again be bamboozled, befuddled or bemused by technical twaddle.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON

at www.snipca.com/21616

PLUS COMPUTERACTIVE 2015 BACK ISSUE CD

This easy-to-use CD-ROM contains all 26 issues of 2015, giving you one-click access to thousands of tips, workshops, reviews, free programs, superb apps and problems solved. It has a searchable index, which makes it easy for you to find what you want to read.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON

at www.snipca.com/21619

Charity MY OXFAM

Android & iOS: www.snipca.com/23062



Donate to the projects you really care about and then see where your money is going, using this free new tool from Oxfam. The app was launched in January as a more thoughtful way of raising funds than by bombarding people with junk mail. You can use it to track money you've raised, shop at Oxfam online and discover ways to get involved.



Video calls GOOGLE DUO

Android & iOS: <https://duo.google.com>



Google's best new app of 2016 is the video-calling service we always wished Skype would become. You don't even have to create an account. All you need is the other person's mobile-phone number (they will need to have Duo installed as well). Calls are free and encrypted. Duo's simplicity is its greatest feature, but there are clever extras as well. For example, if someone phones



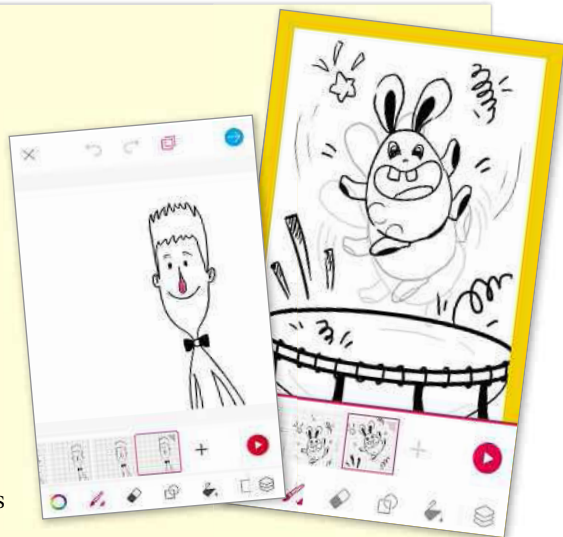
Animation PICSART ANIMATOR

Android: www.snipca.com/23084

iOS: www.snipca.com/23085



Indulge your inner Disney by creating animated cartoons using the latest release from the PicsArt family of apps (<https://picsart.com>). Don't be put off by the pink-haired teenagers on the website – this app is a fabulous animation tool for all ages and abilities. Draw a series of cartoons with your fingertip (much easier on a tablet than a tiny phone screen), then use layers and frame-duplication tools to turn your doodles into high quality animations that you can save as video files or GIFs. You can even record a voiceover, so brush up your Donald Duck impression.



you, you can see a video preview of them before you decide to answer – a bit like a spyhole in your front door (see screenshot left). You can also switch from front (default) to rear camera to let your caller look at your living room instead of your face while you chat.

Internet FAST SPEED TEST

Android: www.snipca.com/23065
iOS: www.snipca.com/23066



Check whether your Wi-Fi or mobile connection is fast enough to stream



film and TV using this free tool from Netflix. You don't have to be a Netflix subscriber to use it – simply launch it for an instant reading of your phone or tablet's connection. It's all free, and there's no Netflix content or adverts, unless you count the tiny logo.

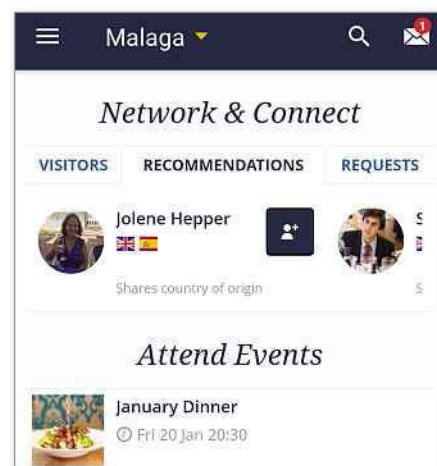
Social INTERNATIONS

Android: www.snipca.com/23063
iOS: www.snipca.com/23064



InterNations (www.internations.org) is a social network for expats, with 2.3 million members spanning 390 cities from Abu Dhabi to Zurich, and it's finally launched its own app. Use it to find and chat with expats nearby, discover events in your area and join groups based on your hobbies and interest.

Be aware that you don't have to pay for the app's 'Albatross' membership, which costs £4.95 a month. This provides extras including InterNations' magazine.



Documents DROPBOX PAPER

Android: www.snipca.com/23067
iOS: www.snipca.com/23068



Create, share and collaborate on documents with friends and family using this new app from Dropbox. You can start from scratch or use notes, photos and other files you've already stored online. And what's more, everything you create is saved automatically to your Dropbox account. The Android version is still in beta, but the iOS app is a stable release.



NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

Natural disasters

DISASTER PREDICTION APP

Android £2.89 & iOS £2.29:

<http://spaceweathernews.com>



Is your holiday home about to be felled by an earthquake? Find out in the nick of time, using this mildly terrifying new app from Space Weather News, which has spent years forecasting earthquakes by tracking correlations with solar activity. Get risk alerts, track 'space weather' activity and share your own observations.



Simulator

SPACE SIMULATOR

Android & iOS £3.99:

www.space-simulator.com



Re-live the events of July 1969 as you land a lunar module on the Moon and then make it back to Earth. There are more than 50 real-life space missions to tackle in this superb

Word game

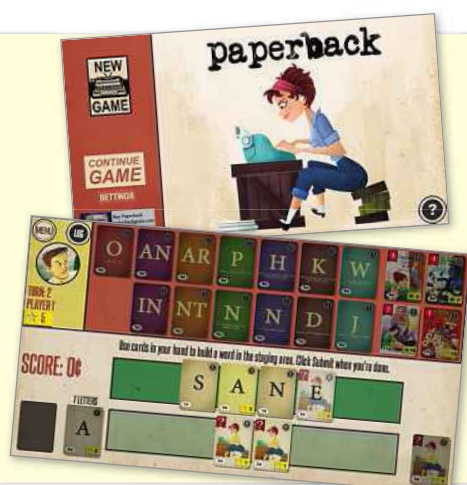
PAPERBACK

Android £3.59: www.snipca.com/23089

iOS £2.99: www.snipca.com/23090



In this Scrabble-type game you're an author battling to finish your pulp-fiction novel by completing word puzzles. Paperback started life a couple of years ago as a board game (www.snipca.com/23099), and arrived on phones and tablets last autumn. An online multi-player mode is in the works.



new app, whose features include cockpit controls, original audio footage and Apollo computer emulators. You can customise the interface to suit you, and configure the landing to be harder or easier.

Photo scanner

PHOTOMYNE ALBUM SCANNER

Android free: www.snipca.com/23092

iOS £1.49: www.snipca.com/23091



If you've got entire photo albums to digitise, save time by using Photomyne to scan multiple photos at once. It automatically crops them into separate frames then enhances their colour, and is well worth a few quid. Wait - did we say a few quid? When Photomyne launched in November, it cost

10 FREE APPS YOU'LL ALWAYS NEED

As great as we think our top 25 free new apps are now, we can't promise you'll be using them all a year from now. Here are 10 apps that you'll use for years to come...

1 ADBLOCK BROWSER

Android & iOS: <https://adblockbrowser.org>



Browse faster, more securely and with less screen clutter, using this mobile browser.

2 PUSHBULLET

Android & iOS: www.pushbullet.com/apps



Send whatever you want - photo, document, text message, web link, enormous video file - to friends, your PC and your other devices.

3 PIXLR

Android & iOS: <https://pixlr.com/mobile>



This camera, photo editor and collage maker in one is the best all-round photographic app of them all.

4 WATTPAD

Android & iOS: www.wattpad.com



Delve into Wattpad's library of 40 million free ebooks - then use the app to host your own novel.

5 MAPS.ME

Android & iOS: <https://maps.me>



Navigate your way around the world using thousands of detailed maps, all free to download for offline use and kept up to date.

6 LUMOSITY BRAIN TRAINING

Android: www.snipca.com/23114

iOS: www.snipca.com/23115



Free puzzles and games to exercise your grey matter and keep your memory sharp.

7 GARDEN TAGS

Android & iOS: www.gardentags.com



Share your gardening tips with the green-fingered Garden Tags community and find out how other people's gardens grow.

8 VIVAVIDEO

Android & iOS: www.vivavideo.tv



Shoot, edit and share your videos. Includes subtitles and dubbing and photo slideshows.

9 POCKET

Android & iOS: <https://getpocket.com>



Save unlimited news stories, articles and videos for reading and watching when you're offline.

10 WEATHER UNDERGROUND

Android & iOS:

www.wunderground.com/download



Crowdsourced weather from around the world, right down to your street (see screenshot right). Includes forecasts and interactive maps in a customisable interface.



69p for Android and £3.99 for iOS. Then both versions were £3.99. Then they went free, hooray! Then the iOS app went back up to £1.49 but the Android app stayed free. It's like trying to track the stock market. Grab it before it goes up again.



Podcasts

POCKET CASTS

Android £2.49 & iOS £2.99:

www.shiftyjelly.com/pocketcasts



Browse more than 300,000 podcasts and manage your podcast library using this

popular app, newly redesigned for Android and iOS. You can now sync your library between platforms and the web; control playback without touching your device; set a sleep timer and stream episodes to your TV using Chromecast.



Game

MINI METRO

Android £4.29: www.snipca.com/23102

iOS £3.99: www.snipca.com/23103



Underground rail networks are marvels of modern design, and now you can give it a go. Design a metro grid for 11 real cities, then maintain it while the city changes and grows.



APPS ON SALE FOR SILLY MONEY

Most apps tend to hover around the £3-£4 mark. That's because this price is the sweet spot (neither too much, nor too little) that makes us more likely to put hand in pocket. But there are 'luxury' Android and iOS apps out there that require you to have much deeper pockets.

CYBERTUNER

iOS-only £749.99:

www.snipca.com/23150



You could probably buy a piano and pay for a professional piano-tuner for the price of this app. It claims to be the 'gold standard tuning software tool', but the fact it's not even been rated in the App Store suggests that no one's buying it.

BURTON'S LEGAL THESAURUS

£30.03 Android:

www.snipca.com/23156

iOS £39.99: www.snipca.com/23155



Here's one that might actually be worth the asking price.

Burton's Legal Thesaurus is the app-based version of the popular legal lexicon. This version has recently been updated with 1,000 new terms (including 'Whistleblower'), while its search tool should help anyone looking to decode the complexities of legal language.

TOUCHCHAT HD

iOS-only £109.99:

www.snipca.com/23157



Created as an aid to help individuals who have difficulty using their voice (whether through disability or injury), TouchChat certainly has its heart in the right place. It lets users select vocabulary to cover all kinds of situations and messages are played through a voice-synthesiser.

RETIRE-SURE (PRO)

Android-only £99.06:

www.snipca.com/23154



We'd argue that spending close to £100 on an app isn't the way to start planning for your retirement,

but that's exactly what makers of this accountancy app hope you'll do. It is designed to help manage your finances, but we'd advise against putting even the slimmest degree of faith in it.

THE MOST EXPENSIVE APP

Android £300: www.snipca.com/23151



The price of this app is no joke, but its existence on the Google Play store certainly is. For £300 it will display a jewel on your phone's homescreen – and that's it. Only those for whom money is no object might be interested, but you'd have to ask why even those affluent few would bother.

Music KORG KAossilator

Android £15.49:

www.snipca.com/23100

iOS £14.99:

www.snipca.com/23101



Fifteen quid for an app? This official app from synthesiser-maker Korg is still £1,000 cheaper than that music keyboard you



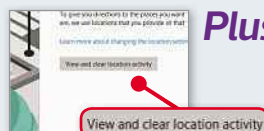
always wanted, and somewhat easier to use. Compose music by moving your finger across your touchscreen or tapping it, using

150 sounds covering umpteen music styles, then use the built-in loop sequencer to perfect and remix your creations. Finally, share your work as an audio file. [ca](http://www.creative.com)

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• Tweak your monitor's settings for a better screen

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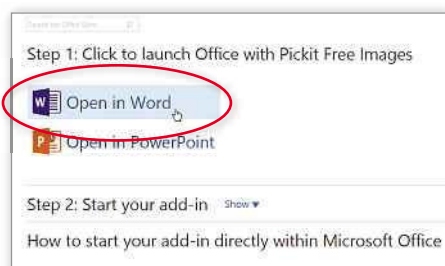
Are you getting the most from your office suite? Mike Plant explains how to find and install brilliant extras that will revolutionise Microsoft Office and LibreOffice

Adding useful features (also known as add-ons) to web browsers – such as ad blockers, search bars and password managers – has changed the way we use the internet. But, despite the likes of Microsoft Office and LibreOffice offering their own extra tools, few of us do likewise with our office software. Here, we'll reveal where you can find these handy extras (which Microsoft in their wisdom calls add-ins) for your office software. We'll also explain how to install (and remove) add-ins, and tell you about those we simply can't do without.

Microsoft Office add-ins

The first step is to visit Office's online store (www.snipca.com/23124). Some add-ins cost money but those we recommend here are free. Use the Product and Category options on the left to target the available add-ins for specific Office software (such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint etc) or browse them by function. Alternatively, use the URLs we provide in this feature to access our favourite add-ins directly.

Once you click an add-in you'll be

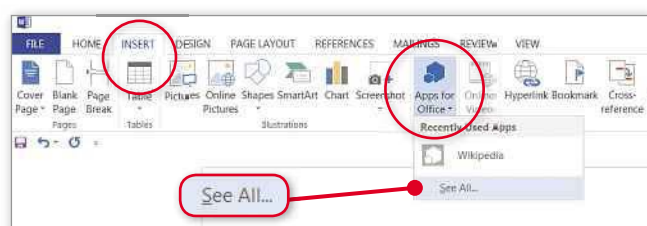


Select which Microsoft Office program you want to use the add-in with

taken to its web page where you'll see information on what it does. It's worth paying attention to the Details section here because this tells you which versions of Office the add-in is compatible with. Also check out the 'Customer reviews' section towards the bottom of the page to see if other users found the add-in useful.

To install an add-in, click the green Add button, then choose a Microsoft (MS) product from the list. For example, click the 'Open in Word' option (see screenshot below left). A pop-up window will appear prompting you to confirm you want to open the file – click Yes and the relevant program (Word in our example) will open. Click the Enable Editing button in the yellow bar at the top, and click the 'Trust this app' button in the column that appears on the right. You will be prompted to sign into your MS account in Office if you aren't already logged in (if you don't have a MS account, you can sign up for one here: signup.live.com).

Most add-ins are compatible with Office 2013 and newer, but if you have Office 2013 and some add-ins won't install it could be because you haven't updated Office 2013 to Service Pack 1. Go to www.snipca.com/23160 and click the Download button. Once the download has completed, double-click the file and follow the instructions. Once installed you will be prompted to reboot your PC, so make sure you save any documents.



See your installed Office add-ins using the 'Apps for Office' button

Once your PC reboots, open Office and the add-ins will now work.

Manage and remove Office add-ins

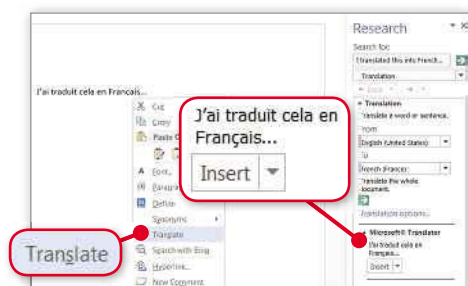
To view the add-ins you've installed, open an Office program and click Insert, then the 'Apps for Office' button and See All (see screenshot above). Double-click an add-in to open its side-panel in the Office program of your choice.

To remove an add-in you no longer need, click 'Apps for Office', See All, then Manage My Apps (at the top right). This opens Microsoft's Office Store in your browser (you might be prompted to sign into your Microsoft account at this point). To remove an add-in, click Hide next to its listing. Now return to Office, click the 'Apps for Office' button, then See All, and you'll notice the add-in has disappeared – if it hasn't, click Refresh at the top right. To restore an add-in you've removed, click Manage My Apps, then Hidden (at the top right) followed by Retrieve to the right of the app in the list.

Our favourite MS Office add-ins

Microsoft Translator
www.snipca.com/23105

You can convert a single word or an entire



Microsoft Translator adds a translation service directly into Word

novel from one language to another with this brilliant add-in. Highlight the relevant word or passage of text, right-click it and click Translate. A panel will appear to the right of your document. Choose the original language using the From dropdown menu (this will often be detected automatically) and then choose the language you want to translate it into using the To dropdown menu. You'll see a preview of the translation at the bottom of the side panel (see screenshot above). Click Insert (below the preview text) to replace the original text with the translation. Alternatively, click the arrow to the right of Insert and choose Copy to copy the translation to your clipboard.

Symbols and Characters

www.snipca.com/23110

Say goodbye to Office's cumbersome Symbols tool and use this nifty little add-in instead. Its best feature lets you search for specific punctuation marks (such as the copyright symbol). It also handily groups similar symbols together, so you can browse all available mathematical marks or currency symbols, for example.

USE MICROSOFT'S ADD-INS ...EVEN IF YOU DON'T OWN OFFICE

If you're interested in using any of the Microsoft Office add-ins we've covered, but you don't own Office, then try Office Online (www.office.com), which is a free online-only version of Office available to anyone with a Microsoft account. Just go to the website, sign in and click any of the Office programs listed. Then open a document and click Insert, then Office Add-ins. Scroll through them and click Add next to any you're interested in. Even if you have Office, you may still find this option useful if an add-in isn't compatible with your particular version.

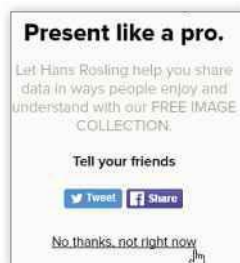
Wikipedia

www.snipca.com/23113

Wikipedia has become the online fact-checker of choice for many of us, so it's handy to have instant access to it when working on an Office document. The Wikipedia add-in lets you search for and insert entire entries from the online encyclopedia without moving away from your document.

Pickit Free Images

www.snipca.com/23125



Dismiss Pickit's annoying advert and start browsing its images

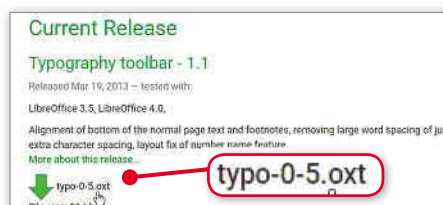
(see screenshot left). Once you've done that, enter a search term in the search bar to find an image, or scroll through the Collections, which include everything from cityscapes to religion.

Pickit puts thousands of free images at your fingertips – even if it does make you click 'No thanks, not right now' to dismiss the annoying advert that launches with the add-in

Add and remove LibreOffice extensions

LibreOffice (www.libreoffice.org) has its own selection of add-ins (which it calls extensions). To browse these, click Tools, Extension Manager, then 'Get more extensions online'. This opens LibreOffice's extensions website. Click Extensions at the top of the page to search for one or browse by category.

To add an extension to LibreOffice, click it to open its webpage and scroll down until you see the Current Release section. Click the download link (usually next to a large green arrow – see screenshot below) to download it to your PC. Go back to the Extension Manager in LibreOffice and click the Add button, then locate the file you've just downloaded (it will be in your Downloads folder by default) and double-click it. Choose whether to install it 'For all users' or 'Only for me'. The extension will now



Click the link in the Current Release section to download a LibreOffice extension

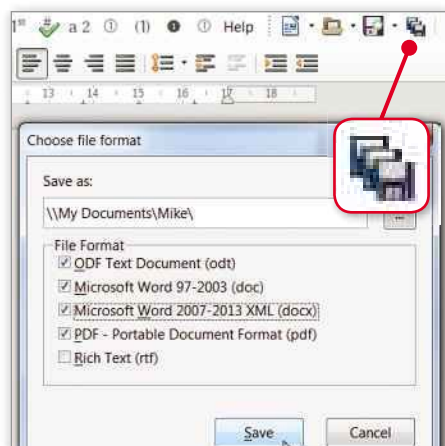
install, though you may have to close and re-open LibreOffice to see it. To delete an extension click Tools, then Extension Manager, right-click the relevant extension in the list, then click Delete.

Essential LibreOffice extensions

MultiFormatSave

www.snipca.com/23107

LibreOffice users will know how annoying it can be to email a document to a friend, only for them to tell you Microsoft Word can't open it. MultiFormatSave fixes this by letting you save a LibreOffice document so that it's compatible with practically any word processor or PDF viewer. Just click the extension's icon (see screenshot below), choose the formats you want and click Save.



Save LibreOffice documents in multiple formats using MultiFormatSave

AltSearch

www.snipca.com/23118

Click the green binoculars icon (or click Tools, Add-Ons and Alternative Searching) to open this advanced search-and-replace tool. It searches even deeper than LibreOffice's default tool and will find and replace words in footnotes, endnotes, tables and text frames.

Pepito Cleaner

www.snipca.com/23144

Getting someone to proof-read your document isn't always easy, but with Pepito Cleaner you can have your work scanned for errors. Don't confuse this with a spell-checker however. Instead Pepito looks for inconsistencies in the document's layout, such as double spaces and missing full stops. Installing it is slightly different than normal as the download isn't on LibreOffice's site. Instead use the URL above and click the PepitoCleaner.oxl link (in blue) at the top of the page. To scan a document, click Tools, Add-Ons, then Pepito Cleaner. **ca**

Replace Windows Essentials tools



If you use Windows Live Mail, Photo Gallery or Movie Maker it's time to stop now. Jonathan Parkyn explains why, and which free tools to use instead

Perhaps you installed it for its brilliant email program, Windows Live Mail (WLM). Maybe you liked the simplicity of its video-editing tool, Movie Maker, or used Photo Gallery to organise your digital snaps. Whatever your reasons, Windows Essentials 2012 and all its tools were effectively killed off on 10 Jan 2017, when Microsoft officially terminated support for the once-popular free software suite.

Not only is Windows Essentials no longer available to download from its web page (www.snipca.com/23166), but it's also potentially unsafe to carry on using the suite's applications if you have them installed. Because the tools will no longer receive security updates from Microsoft, they could quickly become vulnerable to hackers and malware. Microsoft admits that using Windows Essentials programs now represents an "increased security risk".

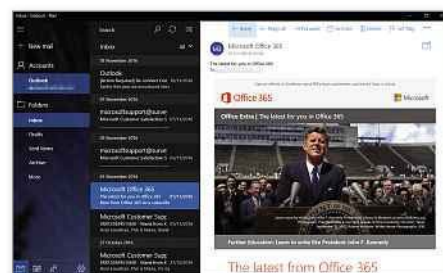
The safest way forward, then, is to stop

using Windows Essentials tools altogether and switch to alternatives as soon as possible. Leave them installed for now, because you may want to export data to your new programs before removing the old ones. When you're ready, you can quickly uninstall the entire suite by clicking 'Uninstall a program' in the Control Panel, then selecting Windows Essentials 2012 and clicking Uninstall/Change. Click 'Remove one or more Windows Essentials programs' (see screenshot below), tick all the boxes, then click Uninstall. Now read on to find out which free tools you can use instead.

WINDOWS LIVE MAIL

1 Best for simplicity

If you don't mind not using an installed email program, you could switch to webmail instead. Gmail (mail.google.com) and Outlook.com/Hotmail (outlook.live.com) users are already familiar with this approach. In fact most other providers, including BT and



Windows 10's Mail app is straightforward to use once you get the hang of it

TalkTalk, also let you log into your email account via a web browser. The beauty of this is that you don't need to install and acquaint yourself with a whole new program. It also adds a level of safety, because malicious attachments aren't downloaded to your PC until you actively choose to do that.

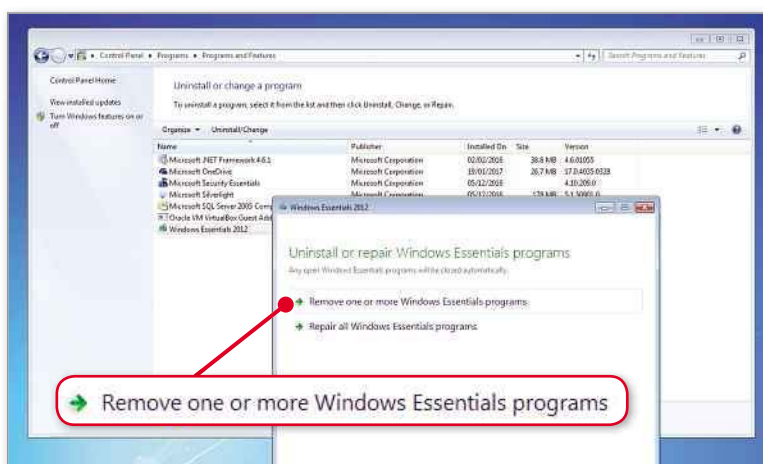
2 Best for Windows 10

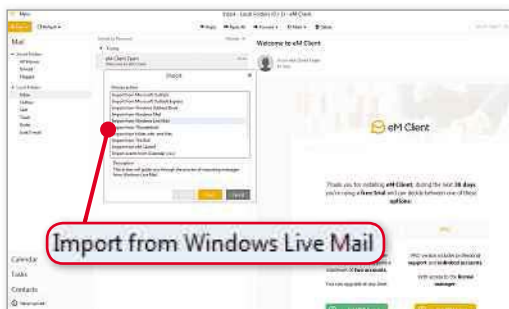
Windows 10 users can opt for the Mail app that comes built into their operating system (OS). Mail works with virtually all types of email accounts, not just Outlook.com. It's easy to use but, because it's designed as an app (rather than a traditional desktop program), it can feel a little unfamiliar at first. It's closely integrated with Windows 10's Calendar and People (contacts) apps, but lacks some of WLM's more advanced features, such as customisable views and panes, and built-in support for **RSS feeds**.

3 Best for features

Our current preferred alternative to WLM is eM Client (www.emclient.com) – a free desktop email program that has many similar features, such as

Remove all Windows Essentials programs in one go via 'Uninstall a program' in the Control Panel





eM Client comes with a handy tool for importing data from Windows Live Mail

customisable views and panes. It supports virtually all types of email account – POP, IMAP and webmail, including Outlook.com and Gmail – and has fully integrated Contacts and Calendar tools. It can even automatically import data from WLM (click Menu, File, Import, 'Import from Windows Live Mail', see screenshot above), making for a relatively smooth transition.

PHOTO GALLERY

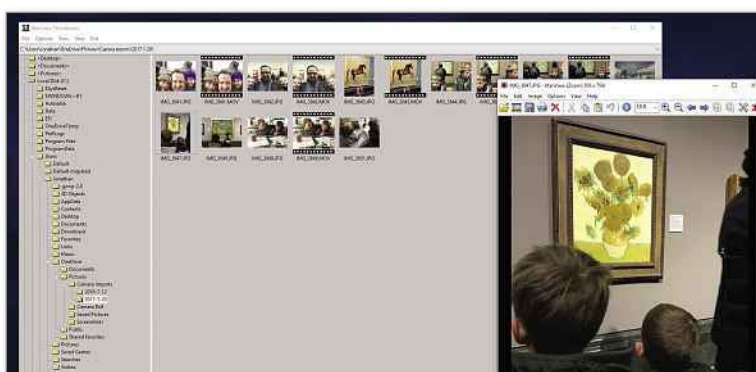
1 Best for simplicity

Google Photos is an easy-to-use online tool for organising, viewing, editing and sharing your photos. You'll need an internet connection to upload and edit files, but your original photos stay on your PC, so you'll never lose access to them. You can opt to sync all photos from your phone, tablet or PC (using Google's free desktop uploader, www.snipca.com/23181), making it a safe, simple way to back up your photos, too. If photography is your passion, we suggest saving photos at their original resolution, because the alternative ('High quality') setting creates compressed versions of your photos, which can reduce image detail. Bear in mind, selecting this option will limit your free storage to 15GB, while you can store unlimited high-quality versions.

2 Best for Windows 10

Windows 10's built-in apps come in for a lot of criticism, but if you're looking for a simple tool to organise, view and

Organise your photos in IrfanView Thumbnails and edit them in IrfanView itself



improve your photos, you could do a lot worse than the Photos app. It can import photos (and videos) whenever your phone or camera is connected, create albums and slideshows, upload to OneDrive and enhance or adjust images – either automatically or under your guiding hand.

3 Best for features

If you're not keen on using online options, or if you want more tools at your disposal, then IrfanView (www.irfanview.com) is probably your best bet. It comprises two components – IrfanView Thumbnails, where you browse and organise your photos, and IrfanView itself, where you edit and convert your images. It supports virtually all image file types and provides a massive range of features, including batch file conversion, a slideshow maker and more. The latest version adds even more editing tools and features, including extra options for batch-processing files, as well as new filters and effects.

MOVIE MAKER

1 Best for simplicity

For simple cuts and enhancements, you can use the free – albeit basic – video-editing tools provided by YouTube (www.youtube.com/editor). You get a simple drag-and-drop timeline, a few transitions and titles, and the option to add a soundtrack. As with other online tools, you'll need an internet connection (a reasonably fast one for uploading video files). You'll also need a Google or YouTube account and you may have to put up with adverts. On the plus side, the tools are easy to use and you can share your finished video by sending an email link.

2 Best for DVD makers

VSDC Free Video Editor (www.snipca.com/23202) is a free program that looks and works in a way that should be familiar to most Movie Maker users.

OTHER ESSENTIALS

As well as the three main programs we've covered here, Windows Essentials 2012 came with a number of other tools, including Windows Live Writer – a blogging program. These days most bloggers use online tool Wordpress (<https://wordpress.com>), which is free and easy to use. But there's also an open-source version of Windows Live Writer called Open Live Writer (www.snipca.com/23206) that's worth considering.

Essentials' other tools – Windows Messenger, OneDrive and Family Safety – are all more or less obsolete. Messenger was superseded by Skype (www.skype.com) long ago, while OneDrive and Family Safety have both been incorporated into Windows 8.1 and 10.



VSDC Video Editor provides simple drag-and-drop editing for Movie Maker veterans

Basically, you drag and drop clips into a sequence and apply transitions between them to build your video, then refine your trims and enhancements once everything is in place. You can export to a number of formats, including DVD and mobile, even in the free version. You'll see nag screens prompting you to pay for the 'premium' version, but you can bypass these by clicking Continue.

3 Best for features

If you've always felt that Movie Maker was holding you back, then you could go for Lightworks – get the 32bit or 64bit version (depending on your PC type) from www.snipca.com/23203. Lightworks is used to edit proper Hollywood movies (Martin Scorsese's *Silence* being among the most recent) and can be somewhat daunting, though plenty of tutorials are provided on the website. The free version is fully functional, though video output is restricted to MPEG-4 (so no 4K). It also lacks some of the (£250) Pro version's extended features, such as support for professional video-editing hardware. **ca**

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Problems Solved

PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

Why can't I install iTunes?

Q A while ago I had iTunes installed on my Windows 7 PC. It worked fine, but I uninstalled it because I started using Spotify instead. However, I received a new iPhone 7 for Christmas, and the present included a subscription to Apple Music. I want to reinstall iTunes on my PC so I can use Apple Music on that as well as on my smartphone, but every time I try to do this, I receive an error message about halfway through the process that says there's a problem with the 'installer package'. I really don't understand what the problem is because, as I said, this PC used to run iTunes without any trouble. I've downloaded a fresh version of the installer several times, and tried both the 32bit and 64bit editions. Do you know what's going on? Can you help me get iTunes up and running again?

Barry Cook

A Yes, we can help. The PC version of iTunes can be very particular about how it's installed and, just as importantly, how it's uninstalled. If something goes wrong, or you perform the required steps in the wrong order, the result is the problem you're experiencing now.

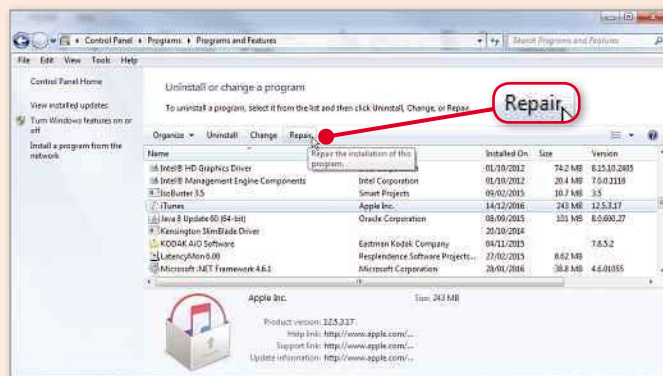
The solution is to methodically uninstall not only iTunes but also everything Apple refers to as a 'related program'. Unfortunately, the error message doesn't tell you this, let alone give you any clues as to which 'related programs' you need to uninstall. What's more, you need to uninstall these unnamed programs in a particular order, which again is hardly something

you're likely to know or be able to work out for yourself.

So, here's what you need to do in Windows 7. First, click Start followed by Control Panel and then, under the Programs category heading, click 'Uninstall a program'. Now click the Name heading to sort the program list alphabetically, and check that iTunes definitely isn't there. If it is, click to select it, then click Uninstall/Change and then click Repair (see screenshot) and follow the prompts. Now try to reinstall iTunes. If this doesn't work, click Uninstall/Change again and follow the prompts to remove iTunes from your system.

If iTunes isn't there – or you've successfully removed it – you need to follow the same procedure to remove each of the following Apple utilities in turn: Apple Software Update, Apple Mobile Device Support, Bonjour, 'Apple Application Support (32-bit)' and finally 'Apple Application Support (64-bit)'. You may find that some of these are not installed on your system, or you may have all of them (including both the 32bit and 64bit versions of Apple Application Support). Whichever elements you find on your PC, you need to remove. Once you've done that, restart your PC.

Finally, download iTunes again just to make sure you've got the latest version. You should now be able to install the program without problems.

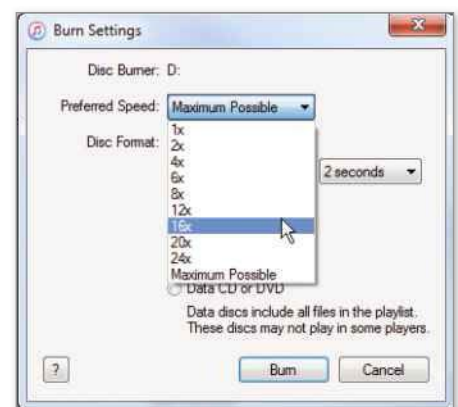


Before reinstalling iTunes, you must eradicate any trace of the old one

Why won't my audio CDs play?

Q I sometimes broadcast a programme on local radio, for which I provide my own music – usually from CDs I own. Sometimes I buy a track from iTunes and use the program's option to burn the tracks to an audio CD. This used to work well, but recently I've been unable to play these CDs on the studio's sound system, even though they play perfectly well on my CD player at home. I think there must be something wrong with my settings. Can you tell me what I'm doing wrong?

Sheelagh Wurr



Burning audio CDs at a slower speed can improve their compatibility with CD players

A The process of burning and playing back audio CDs is full of idiosyncrasies, and any number of factors can affect the results. As this is a new problem, we wonder if you've recently bought a new stock of recordable CDs (CD-Rs)? If so, it's possible that the new discs are the cause: PC drives are engineered to contend with all sorts of disc types, so they tend to be more versatile than an audio CD player.

Similarly, the quality of a disc's substrate – the metal layer under the plastic to which your PC 'burns' the data – can vary greatly. Cheaper discs may use thinner substrates that some domestic players can struggle to read.

The image you provided shows that you're burning discs at maximum speed, but for better compatibility, try a slower speed: just open the Preferred Speed dropdown menu and choose a lower number (see screenshot).

Our experts solve all your tech problems

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

Why does my smart TV show this message?

Q I bought myself one of those giant, curved smart TVs from Samsung. It's certainly a step up from the decades-old CRT set I'd kept in service with the addition of a Freeview box, but I'm experiencing this really strange, intermittent problem. Every now and then the screen goes red and displays a message saying something to the effect that the set is unable to show programmes in my area. I can usually clear the message by changing channel or by switching off and waiting for a few minutes, but sooner or later the same message reappears – and it happens several times a week. I never had this problem with my previous setup, so I assume it has something to do with the new TV. Can you clear up this mystery?

Scott Brown

A This problem isn't caused by your new TV set, although ironically you're seeing it now only because you've got a new telly. The message is actually from the BBC,



Not all regional BBC programmes are broadcast in HD, which is why you may see this message occasionally

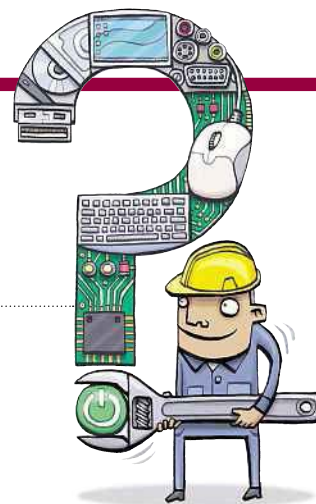
and it does actually explain the problem (see screenshot), though we accept that its appearance and wording can be confusing unless you understand a little about what's going on behind the scenes.

Every now and then – during news bulletins, for example – BBC channels switch to a regional broadcast. You live in Norfolk, so after the main *Six O'Clock News*, BBC One switches to a regional broadcast of a news programme called *Look East*. However, this is not broadcast in high definition (HD), so BBC One HD

message is telling you.

Switching channels appears to 'fix' this problem simply because you're flipping away from the regional broadcast. Equally, waiting for a while 'fixes' it because, when the regional broadcast ends, the national HD broadcasting resumes on BBC One HD.

You won't have experienced this problem with your old setup because you were using an SD Freeview box on an SD TV, so you were never tuned into the BBC One HD national channel.



Why can't I access the BIOS?

Q I have a desktop PC with a monitor that connects via either a VGA or an HDMI cable. When I use a VGA connection, everything works properly, so when I boot my PC I see the Dell logo and, eventually, the Windows login screen. However, when I use HDMI the screen remains blank until the Windows login screen. Using Shift and Restart reveals the Windows 'Advanced options' menu, but if I select any option other than Continue (to Windows 10) or 'Turn off your PC', the screen goes blank and stays blank. The other options work if I use a VGA cable, so I can access the UEFI BIOS. Any clues?

Chris Marshall

A We think your motherboard's BIOS is set to output to the monitor using its onboard



Open the BIOS to change which graphics card your PC uses to output the display on startup

graphics hardware initially, which it does through the VGA cable. Then, when Windows 10 launches, the PC's graphics card takes over using HDMI.

To fix this, you need to change a setting in the BIOS so that the graphics card's outputs are enabled immediately. First, start your PC using the VGA connection and enter the BIOS. Look

through the settings for an option called something like 'Initial Display' or 'Init Display', and change this from 'Onboard' (or similar) to 'PCI Slot', 'PCIe', 'Ext Graphics' or similar (see screenshot). Press Escape (Esc) to exit, opting to save the changes. You should now be able to use the HDMI connection from the start.

Problems Solved

Why do my Start menu labels disappear?

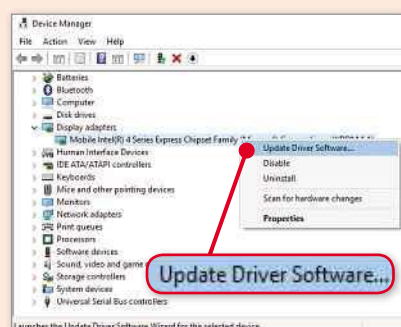
Q My Windows 10 computer is fine when it first starts up, but after a while the labels on items in the Start menu disappear. No text appears when I type into the search box, either, although Edge still opens and Bing shows the results. If I restart my PC, the labels reappear but only for a while. Do you have any idea what might be causing this? I think I have the latest Windows 10 updates.

Brian Carver

A This is almost certainly a problem with the graphics card driver. Have you checked that this is up to date?

Press Windows key+R, type `devmgmt.msc` and press Enter. Click to expand the 'Display adapters' category, then right-click the entry for your graphics card, choose Update Driver Software and click 'Search automatically for updated driver software' (see screenshot). Finally, follow the prompts to download and install the new driver.

If the problem persists – or there's no new driver to install – the cause is probably a program that starts with Windows. Right-click a blank area of the taskbar and choose Task Manager. Select the Start-up tab, right-click an item, choose Disable and restart your PC. Repeat the process until the problem ceases: the program responsible will be the one you disable last. Either leave the program disabled or try to update it.



Update your graphics card driver to solve problems with disappearing Start labels

Can I transfer data from my old PDA?

Q Inspired by your 'Whatever happened to?' series, I dusted off my HP Jornada 710 PDA. This old device was a huge help for reviewing assignments, and I could transfer data easily over an infrared connection. I know that infrared connections are dead and gone, but is there any way I can transfer data to my Windows laptop? And would I be able to get an adapter to charge the battery, because I've lost the original?

Christopher Morley

A It's technically possible to add an infrared adapter to a modern PC, but for a variety of reasons it would be tricky to get the Jornada's ancient operating system to communicate with a modern Windows PC.

A much easier solution would be to use the device's built-in CompactFlash slot to copy data to a compatible card (around £10 on Amazon), then insert the card into a reader on your PC. If your computer



An all-in-one card reader makes it easy to copy data from old devices

doesn't have a compatible slot for this old standard, buy a USB card reader for your laptop (around £6 from Amazon – www.snipca.com/22977, for example). Then, you can use File Explorer (or Windows Explorer) to drag and drop files from the CompactFlash card to your PC.

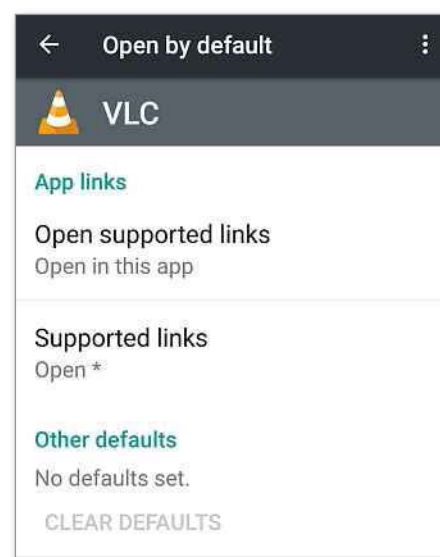
As for the charger, a bit of research tells us that HP's product code for the type you need is F1279B. A quick search on Amazon turned one up for £39.99 (www.snipca.com/22978), but we imagine you'd find a second-hand one much cheaper through eBay.

How do I change my Android video app?

Q I was trying the VLC video app on my Android smartphone. It's not bad but it has a few bugs and I don't really want to keep using it. However, at some point I accidentally tapped the option to set VLC as my phone's default video player. I obviously regret this because I don't want to use VLC all the time, but I can't find anything in VLC's settings to let me go back. Can you tell me how to do it?

Len Cleary

A The option you need isn't in VLC's own settings but rather in the Android Settings app, so launch that, then tap Apps followed by VLC. Now scroll down to find 'Open by default' and tap that. Here, you can either



Open the Android Settings app to tell VLC which types of file to open by default

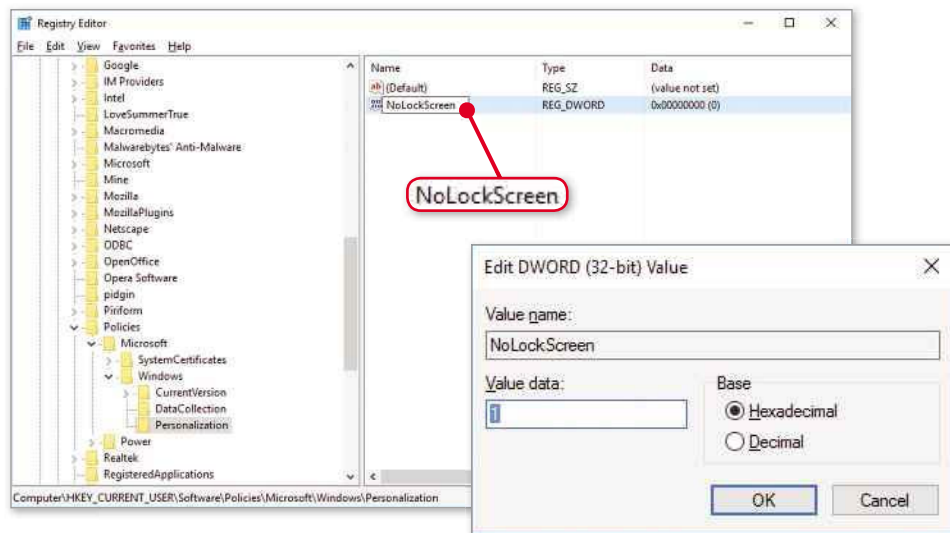
click Clear Defaults followed by Yes, which wipes all VLC's defaults, or tap the links above to decide what types of file it will open (see screenshot).

Can I disable Windows 10's lock screen?

Q In Problems Solved (Issue 492) you explained to Mike Bowthorpe how to change the photos that Windows 10 displays in the background on its lock screen. I'd like to go a step further and disable it completely. Is this possible?

Alan Hunter

A Yes, although the method you use depends on which version of Windows 10 you run. If you have Windows 10 Pro, you can do this easily through the Group Policy Editor. Press Windows key+R, type `gpedit.msc` and press Enter. In the Group Policy Editor window, double-click to expand Computer Configuration followed by Administrative Templates and then Control Panel. Now select Personalization and, in the right-hand pane, double-click 'Do not display the lock screen' then select the Disabled button and click OK.



To disable lock screen pictures in Windows 10 Home, you need to create a new Registry key

Now restart your PC, and the lock screen photo should be no more.

If you use Windows 10 Home, you'll need to hack the registry, so back it up first. Press Windows key+R, type `regedit` and press Enter. Use the left-hand pane to navigate to `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows`. Then, in the right-hand pane, right-click and select New, then click Key.

Now right-click the new key and rename it Personalization.

Next, in the left-hand pane, select Personalization and, in the right-hand pane, right-click and choose New followed by 'DWORD (32-bit Value)'. Name this value NoLockScreen (see large screenshot). Double-click NoLockScreen, set the 'Value data' field to 1 and click OK (see small screenshot). Restart your PC.

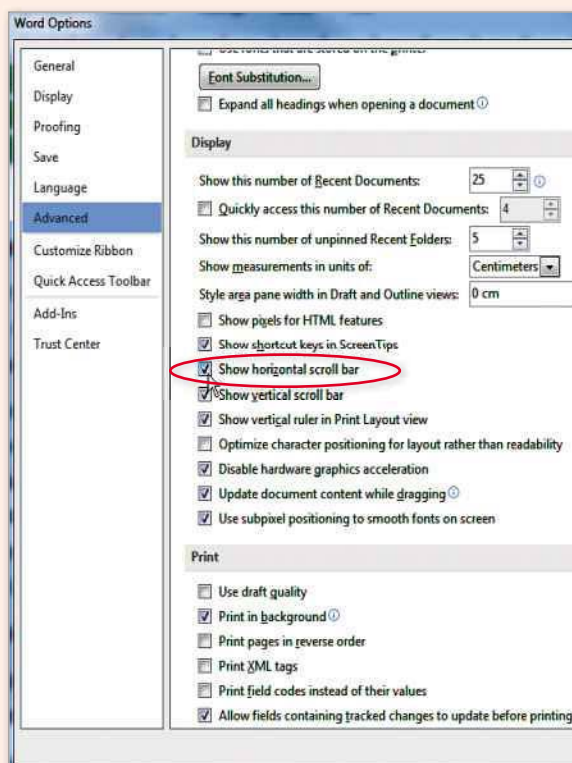
Where is Word's horizontal scroll bar?

Q I was recently asked to edit a Word document that had been designed with a landscape layout, so the pages were wider than they were tall. This soon proved to be a problem because my laptop's screen, at just 11in, is pretty small, which meant some of the document disappeared off the right-hand side of the display. I looked for a scroll bar at the bottom of the document, like the one that appears down the right-hand side in Word – but there wasn't one. The only way I could view the missing part of the document was to use Word's Zoom option to shrink everything, but this made the text too small for me to read comfortably. Should there be a scroll bar at the bottom of documents in Word? Excel documents have one. I use Office 2013 with Windows 7.

Mike Fletcher

A Word 2013's horizontal scroll bar isn't enabled by default. To make it appear, first click File followed by Options, and then Advanced. Scroll down to the Display section and place a tick in the 'Show horizontal scroll bar' box.

As your laptop has such a small screen, however, you may prefer to use a mouse or touchpad gesture to scroll horizontally, reducing screen clutter. Many laptop touchpads support multitouch input, so you can use two or more fingers together to execute special gestures. To scroll, place two fingers on the touchpad – with a slight gap between your fingertips – and simply move your fingers left and right (or up and down). If you use a mouse, you can usually achieve the same effect by clicking the middle button or scroll wheel button, and moving the mouse to scroll.



Word's horizontal scroll bar isn't visible by default. You need to activate it in the program's Advanced Options

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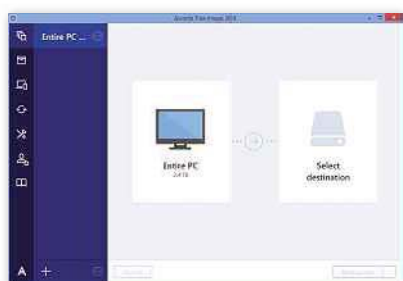
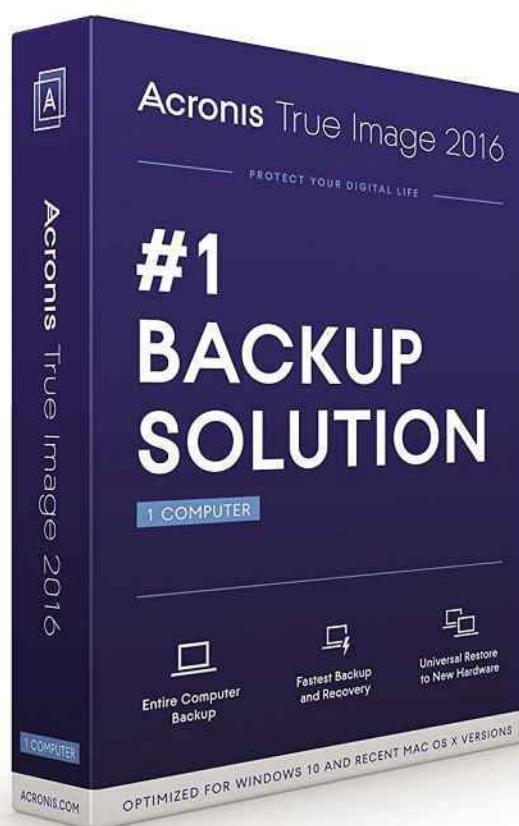
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Whatever happened to... Teletext?

Q I have an older TV, which I use with a Freeview tuner. I sometimes linger my finger over the remote's Teletext button, but pressing it just reveals a blank screen now. I know the digital switchover was to blame but I wonder why Teletext didn't make the jump.

Lynn Burnett

A The correct generic name of the technology is 'teletext', with a lowercase t, or 'videotext' – although few people ever called it that. Teletext with an uppercase T was, confusingly, both the brand name of the teletext service broadcast by ITV from 1993 onwards, and the name of the company that produced it. Before 1993, ITV's teletext service was called Oracle. The BBC's teletext service was called Ceefax. There were others, but those were the most memorable.

Teletext used digital information that was broadcast as part of analogue TV



Teletext vanished with analogue TV, but the BBC's Red Button offers interactive features

signals. This data was embedded in lines of broadcast information that weren't intended for display. It arrived during what was known as the vertical blanking interval, or VBI, in old-fashioned CRT TVs, which is when the electron beam moved from the bottom of the display back to the top.

LCD TVs don't require a VBI, but many were able to receive and use analogue's

embedded teletext data. However, when the Government switched off analogue TV signals in 2012, the traditional VBI data went with it – and thus teletext disappeared.

There are modern equivalents, though they're neither as simple nor as ubiquitous as teletext. The BBC, for example, has what it calls Red Button and Red Button+, which are basically interactive TV services. On any BBC channel, just press the red button on your remote – then see what happens.

In very specific circumstances it's still possible to receive traditional teletext pages. Irish broadcaster RTE still broadcasts analogue teletext, for instance. So, if you receive that channel through a Sky box, for example, and connect to a teletext-capable TV using an analogue cable such as SCART, pressing the Text button on your remote will do the job.

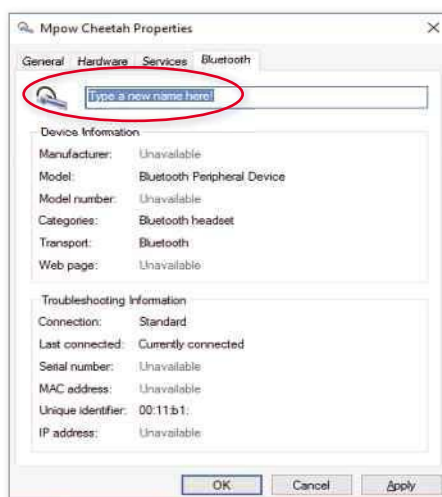
 Want to know what happened to your favourite program, website or technology? Email noproblem@computeractive.co.uk

Can I rename my Bluetooth devices?

Q I have some inexpensive Bluetooth headphones and speakers, both of which I bought from eBay. They work well, but when I try to connect them to my various devices, they both appear with the same name ('X1'). I don't have any trouble connecting either to my devices, but I'm

never sure which is which until I press the play button. As I use a Windows 7 PC and two Android devices (phone and tablet), this setup is confusing and frustrating. I don't understand how my PC, tablet and smartphone can tell the difference, because I can't! Is there any way to change the names of these Bluetooth devices?

Michael Farmer



Rename your Bluetooth devices in Windows to avoid confusion when trying to connect

A Every Bluetooth gadget has a unique code, which is how your connecting devices identify them – and not the 'friendly' name that the user sees. Among other things, this code contains information on the Bluetooth device's manufacturer, its name and what it is (such as speakers or headphones). Your PC and Android devices are able to distinguish between the speakers and headphones because each has a unique ID, even though they have the same manufacturer and device name.

In many cases, you can change the name that's displayed for your device,

which should solve your problem. First, switch on and connect one of your Bluetooth devices. Then, in Windows 7, launch Control Panel and click 'Hardware and Sound' followed by 'Devices and Printers'. Right-click the Bluetooth device, select the Bluetooth tab, type a new name into the field at the top (see screenshot), then click OK. Power off the first device then repeat with the second.

On your Android devices, tap Settings followed by Bluetooth, then tap the cog icon next to the relevant Bluetooth device. Type a new name then tap OK – then repeat for the second device.

NEXT ISSUE

**ON SALE
Weds
15 Feb**

- How do I get rid of Slimware Utilities?
- Why won't my Windows 7 PC search for anything?
- How do I remove iPhone data? ...And many more

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How can I make a program load at startup?

Q Recently (Issue 489, page 56) you recommended ScreenWings. It ran fine and I could switch it off and on, but could you advise me how to set it up to run at startup, which stops hackers taking screenshots of your PC?

Ian Watkins

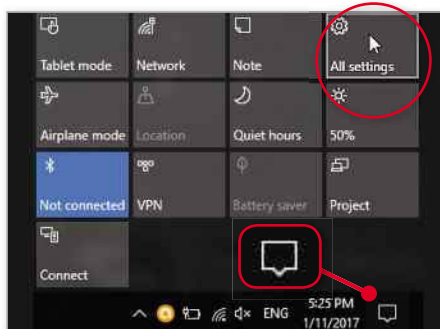
A You can use Windows' Startup folder to make any program load when your PC boots. To open the Startup folder, press Windows key+R to open the Run box, type `shell:startup` then press Enter. Next, copy the desktop shortcut of the program (ScreenWings in your case) into the Startup folder by right-clicking the program's shortcut, selecting Copy, right-clicking within the Startup folder and selecting Paste. To reverse the effect, delete the shortcut from the Startup folder.

Where has Start Menu X put the Settings app?

Q I tried the Start Menu X Workshop (Issue 492, page 35) and it works fine, except for one thing. When you go to Settings you only see the ordinary settings rather than the ones you really want to check – camera, location, updates etc. Where will I find those?

Martin Fletcher

A You're right, Start Menu X does change the Settings shortcut in the Start menu so that it opens the Control



You can access the Windows 10 Settings app via the Action Center

Panel instead. Thankfully, you can still access the Windows 10 Settings app. Press the Windows key+I keys, or right-click the Start button then click Settings. Alternatively, click the Notifications icon (speech bubble at the bottom-right of the desktop) to open the Action Center, then click 'All settings' (see screenshot below left).

Why is Edge refusing to open?

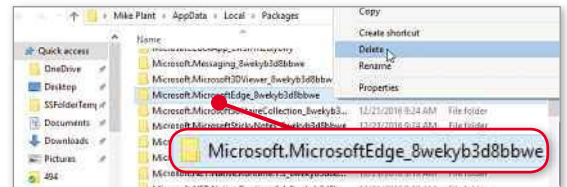
Q After using 'about:flags' in the Edge browser (Issue 490, page 55), the browser refuses to load. Instead it tells me 'Your PC ran into a problem and needs to restart'. Edge is unuseable. Help!

Graham Hall

A Unfortunately, it sounds like Edge's 'about:flags' feature isn't compatible with your PC and has corrupted the browser. To fix this uninstall and reinstall Edge. Before you do, we suggest you create a Windows 10 restore point. Click Start and type `restore`, then press Enter. When the System Properties box opens click Create then follow the instructions. If Create is greyed out, click Configure, 'Turn on system protection', Apply, then OK.

To uninstall Edge, press the Windows key+R to open the Run box and type the following: `C:\Users\%username%\AppData\Local\Packages\`, then press Enter (or copy and paste from www.pastebin.com/XESZYnvM). Right-click the 'Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe' folder in the list, then click Delete (see screenshot above). Click Yes if you see messages about certain files being too large to be deleted, or click Skip when they say files can't be deleted. Once the folder has been deleted restart your PC.

When your PC reboots right-click the Start menu and click Windows PowerShell (Admin). Type the following command: `Get-AppXPackage -AllUsers -Name Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge | Foreach {Add-AppxPackage -DisableDevelopment`



To fix Edge you must delete this folder, then reinstall the browser using PowerShell

`Mode -Register "$($_.InstallLocation)\AppXManifest.xml" -Verbose}` (paste it from www.pastebin.com/nBfz7DZK).

Press the Enter key and wait for the process to complete – you'll see a message that starts 'Verbose: Operation completed...'. Restart your computer and you'll find Edge is back to its old self.

Why won't Chrome stream to my Chromecast?

Q I followed your Chromecast Secret Tips page (Issue 493, page 48), but try as I might I can't get the Chrome browser on my laptop to display on my TV screen. Is my Virgin router not up to it or am I missing something?

Andrea Britton

A The problem is probably your Virgin router. Virgin Media Super Hub routers broadcast both 2G and 5G Wi-Fi bands (2G covers a larger distance, while 5G is faster but only works at short distances). You should try connecting your Chromecast to the 2G band and then do likewise with your laptop.

Open the Google Home app on your laptop, tap the Devices icon at the top right, then tap your Chromecast. Once the Chromecast pairs, tap Wi-Fi, then Wi-Fi again, and choose the 2G version of your home Wi-Fi network from the list (the password is the same for 2G and 5G), then tap OK. Now return to your laptop and click the Wi-Fi icon in the notification area of the taskbar (bottom right). Select the 2G option of your Wi-Fi network (it will say 2G in its name), click Connect then enter your password. Chrome should now appear your TV.



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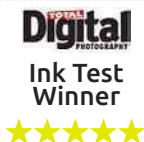
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No.26 Polar Bear Inks
Originals:
No.26 Set of 4 **£35.99**
No.26 Black 6.2ml **£9.99**
No.26 Colours 4.5ml each **£8.99**
No.26XL Set of 4 **£63.99**
No.26XL Black 12.1ml **£16.99**
No.26XL Colours 9.7ml each **£15.99**
Compatibles:
No.26 Set of 4 **£14.99**
No.26 Black 10ml **£3.99**
No.26 Colours 7ml each **£3.99**

T0481-T0486 Seahorse Inks
Originals:
Set of 6 **£89.99**
Colours 13ml each **£18.99**
Compatibles:
Set of 6 **£19.99**
Colours 13ml each **£3.99**

T0541-T0549 Frog Inks
Originals:
Set of 8 **£112.99**
Colours 13ml each **£14.99**
Compatibles:
Set of 8 **£27.99**
Colours 13ml each **£3.99**

T0591-T0599 Lily Inks
Originals:
Set of 8 **£102.99**
Colours 13ml each **£12.99**
Compatibles:
Set of 8 **£27.99**
Colours 13ml each **£3.99**

More Epson inks >>>

Photo Papers

We carry a massive range of papers (sheets & rolls) at competitive prices. Below are some examples of the selection we stock.

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6x4 50 sheets **£50 FREE** **£3.99**
Photo Satin 200gsm:
6x4 100 sheets **£100 FREE** **£9.99**
A4 20 sheets **£6.99**
Photo Glossy 200gsm:
6x4 100 sheets **£100 FREE** **£9.99**
A4 20 sheets **£6.99**
Premium Pearl 270gsm:
6x4 50 sheets **£50 FREE** **£6.99**
A4 50 sheets **£16.99**
Premium Gloss 270gsm:
6x4 50 sheets **£6.99**
A3 25 sheets **£15.99**
A3+ 25 sheets **£19.99**
Smooth Pearl 310gsm:
6x4 100 sheets **£17.99**
7x5 100 sheets **£21.99**
A4 25 sheets **£16.99**
A4 100 sheets **£47.99**
A4 250 sheets **£99.99**
A3 25 sheets **£31.99**
A3+ 25 sheets **£43.99**
Smooth Gloss 310gsm:
6x4 100 sheets **£17.99**
7x5 100 sheets **£21.99**
A4 25 sheets **£16.99**
A4 100 sheets **£47.99**
A4 250 sheets **£99.99**
A3 25 sheets **£31.99**
A3+ 25 sheets **£43.99**
Heavy Duo Matt 310gsm:
A4 50 sheets **£18.99**

Canon

PP-201 Plus Glossy II 275gsm:
6x4 50 sheets **£9.99**
7x5 20 sheets **£11.99**
A4 20 sheets **£11.99**
A4 20 sheets **£27.99**
A3+ 20 sheets **£36.99**
SG-201 Semi-Gloss 260gsm:
6x4 50 sheets **£10.99**
A4 20 sheets **£11.99**
A3 20 sheets **£27.99**
A3+ 20 sheets **£44.99**

More Ink Cartridges...

EPSON

T0711-T0714 Cheetah Inks
Originals:
Set of 4 **£42.99**
Black 7.4ml **£10.99**
Colours 5.5ml each **£10.99**
Compatibles:
Set of 4 **£14.99**
Black 7.4ml **£3.99**
Colours 5.5ml each **£3.99**

T0791-T0796 Owl Inks
Originals:
Set of 6 **£88.99**
Colours 11.1ml each **£14.99**
Compatibles:
Set of 6 **£19.99**
Colours 11.1ml each **£3.99**

T0801-T0806 Hummingbird Inks
Originals:
Set of 6 **£67.99**
Colours 7.4ml each **£11.49**
Compatibles:
Set of 6 **£19.99**
Colours 7.4ml each **£3.99**

T0871-T0879 Flamingo Inks
Originals:
Set of 8 **£76.99**
Colours 11.4ml each **£9.99**
Compatibles:
Set of 8 **£27.99**
Colours 11.4ml each **£3.99**

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Originals:
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No.300 Colour 4ml **£14.99**
No.301 Black 3ml **£10.99**
No.301 Colour 3ml **£13.49**
No.302 Black 3.5ml **£10.99**
No.302 Colour 4ml **£12.99**
No.350 Black 4.5ml **£14.99**
No.351 Colour 3.5ml **£17.99**
No.363 Black 6ml **£17.99**
No.363 C/M/Y/PC/PM each **£11.49**
No.363 SET OF 6 **£49.99**
No.364 Black 6ml **£8.99**
No.364 PB/C/M/Y 3ml each **£7.99**
No.364 SET OF 4 **£26.99**
No.364XL Black 14ml **£15.99**
No.364XL PB/C/M/Y 6ml each **£15.99**
No.364XL SET OF 4 **£59.99**
No.920XL SET OF 4 **£51.99**
No.932XL SET OF 4 **£50.99**
No.950XL SET OF 4 **£79.99**
Compatibles:
No.15 Black 46ml **£3.99**
No.21 Black 10ml **£6.99**
No.22 Colour 21ml **£11.99**
No.45 Black 45ml **£6.99**
No.56 Black 24ml **£6.99**
No.57 Colour 24ml **£11.99**
No.62XL Black 12ml **£14.99**
No.62XL Colour 12ml **£15.99**
No.78 Colour 36ml **£8.99**
No.110 Colour 12ml **£9.99**
No.300XL Black 18ml **£12.99**
No.300XL Colour 18ml **£13.99**
No.301XL Black 15ml **£12.99**
No.301XL Colour 18ml **£13.99**
No.337 Black 21ml **£9.99**
No.338 Black 21ml **£10.99**
No.339 Black 34ml **£11.99**
No.343 Colour 21ml **£11.99**
No.344 Colour 21ml **£12.99**
No.350XL Black 30ml **£13.99**
No.351XL Colour 20ml **£15.99**
No.363 SET OF 6 **£19.99**
No.364 Black 10ml **£3.79**
No.364 Colours 5ml each **£3.29**
No.364 SET OF 4 **£12.99**
No.364XL Black 18ml **£4.99**
No.364XL Colours 11ml each **£4.29**
No.364XL SET OF 4 **£16.99**

Compatibles:
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No.21 Black 10ml **£6.99**
No.22 Colour 21ml **£11.99**
No.45 Black 45ml **£6.99**
No.56 Black 24ml **£6.99**
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No.337 Black 21ml **£9.99**
No.338 Black 21ml **£10.99**
No.339 Black 34ml **£11.99**
No.343 Colour 21ml **£11.99**
No.344 Colour 21ml **£12.99**
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No.351XL Colour 20ml **£15.99**
No.363 SET OF 6 **£19.99**
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Albums & Frames

We now stock a comprehensive range of frames, mounts, albums and accessories. The full range can be viewed on our website, with detailed close-up images of each product to help you choose the perfect way to display your printed photographs. Below is just a tiny sample of what we offer:



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Over a dozen designs in stock.

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Frisco Frames
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Frisco 7x5 seven colours **£2.29**
Frisco 8x6 seven colours **£2.79**
Frisco 9x6 seven colours **£3.49**
Frisco 10x8 seven colours **£3.79**
Frisco 12x8 seven colours **£4.59**
Frisco A4 seven colours **£3.99**
Frisco A3 seven colours **£8.99**

Wood Bevel, Glass Front:
Emilia 6x4 two colours **£4.99**
Emilia 7x5 two colours **£5.99**
Emilia 8x6 two colours **£6.99**
Emilia 10x8 two colours **£7.99**
Emilia 12x8 two colours **£8.99**
Rio 6x4 four colours **£5.99**
Rio 7x5 four colours **£6.99**
Rio 8x6 four colours **£7.99**
Rio 10x8 four colours **£8.99**
Rio 12x8 four colours **£9.99**

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16GB **£6.99**
32GB **£11.99**
64GB **£21.99**
SanDisk Extreme 600X (90MB/s)
16GB **£9.99**
32GB **£14.99**
64GB **£27.99**

Compact Flash

SanDisk Ultra 333X (50MB/s)
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16GB **£15.99**
32GB **£24.99**
SanDisk Extreme 800X (120MB/s)
16GB **£26.99**
32GB **£32.99**
64GB **£47.99**
128GB **£94.99**

MicroSDHC & SDXC

SanDisk Ultra 320X (48MB/s)
16GB **£6.99**
32GB **£12.99**
64GB **£24.99**

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Delkin USB2 Card Reader **£9.99**
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Delkin CF Card (x4) Case **£6.99**

Many more in stock!

Batteries

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LP-E12 for Canon **£12.99**
EN-EL3e for Nikon **£14.99**
NB-2L/LH for Canon **£9.99**
NB-6L for Canon **£9.99**
NB-10L for Canon **£12.99**
NP95 for Fuji **£9.99**
NPW126 for Fuji **£12.99**
EN-EL3e for Nikon **£14.99**
EN-EL15 for Nikon **£24.99**
BLN-1 for Olympus **£24.99**
BLC12 for Panasonic **£23.99**
FW50 for Sony **£24.99**
BA-1 for Sony **£14.99**
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AAA 1100mAh (4) **£3.99**

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52mm UV / Haze **£4.99**
55mm UV / Haze **£5.99**
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62mm UV / Haze **£7.99**
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ND4 Grad Filter **£13.99**

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2		EE: Broadband	£28.50 (£19.50 for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited *	£234.00
3		TalkTalk: Broadband	£25.50 (£20.00 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£240.00
4		Virgin: Broadband	£45.00 (£29.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited *	£348.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details
* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

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In the next issue of our sister title Web User...

- **WATCH ANYTHING ON KODI**
The best add-ons, boxes and hacks for the revolutionary TV-streaming service
- **STOP LEAKING YOUR PHONE NUMBER**
Make sure websites can't steal your personal data
- **DON'T PAY FOR FASTER BROADBAND**
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32bit A measure of how much information a computer can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit.

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

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

aptX A codec that's used to compress audio so it can be transmitted over Bluetooth with minimal loss in quality.

Architecture A set of rules and language that govern how hardware and software work.

Archive To save emails so they are easy to search and find.

Beta A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

Biometric Using unique personal characteristics, such as fingerprints, for identification.

BIOS Basic Input-Output System. Essential software built into every PC that connects the vital components. It's visible for a few seconds when the PC starts.

Cast To send content from your PC to TV.

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

Clock speed The speed at which a computer processor can perform operations. Measured in Gigahertz (GHz).

Cookie A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

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

Crowdfunding A process by which a company gets the financing to launch a new product from prospective customers online.

Crowdsourcing Obtaining ideas, information or money from a large group of people, usually online, rather than from more traditional sources.

CRT Cathode-ray tube. The technology used in older, non-flat-screen televisions and PC monitors.

DDR4 The newest, fastest commonly used type of computer memory.

Depth of field The distance between the closest and farthest objects that appear acceptably sharp.

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

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

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

Ethernet A standard used for almost all wired computer networks.

Extension A program that adds extra features to your browser.

Gesture Finger movements (such as pinching to zoom) on a laptop's trackpad or a touchscreen that perform action on screen.

GHz Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a processor can process per second. 1GHz is equal to 1,000MHz.

GIF Graphics Interchange Format. Static images that are combined to make them move in sequence.

GPU Graphics Processor Unit. A chip designed to create 3D graphics, but which can also be used for other computing tasks.

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

Greyscale The range of grey shades from white to black, used on both black-and-white and monochrome printouts.

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

IMAP Internet Message Access Protocol. A technology for email that lets the user manage messages stored on a remote server.

IP address Internet protocol address. A unique set of numbers used to identify computers and websites on the internet.

LCD Liquid crystal display. The technology used to create almost all flatscreen monitors.

Mbit/s Megabits per second. A measure of data-transfer speed.

MicroSD A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

MPEG-4 A standard for compressing digital content that maintains very high quality.

MPO Multi picture object file. Contains two JPEG images side by side that can be viewed as a single 3D image.

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

PCIe Peripheral Component Interconnect Express. A faster version of PCI – a slot on the motherboard for expansion cards, such as for sound and memory.

PCL Printer command language. Programming language that tells a printer what to print.

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

POP Post Office Protocol. A system for remotely accessing email from an ISP.

Postscript 3 Adobe's programming language for creating computer graphics.

PSU Power supply unit. The box that supplies power to the rest of your computer.

PUP Potentially unwanted program. A program that may not be desired, despite the user consenting to it being downloaded.

Ransomware Malware run by hackers who lock files on a PC and demand a payment to release them.

Roaming charge Fee incurred for using your phone to receive data through overseas mobile networks.

RSS Really Simple Syndication. A format for automatically distributing news headlines and other content from the web.

SCART A standard connector for video and audio signals.

SIM Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones.

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

Temporary file A file created by a browser to store website data.

Thunderbolt A very fast port for connecting external storage to a computer. Can be used to connect monitors, a network and more.

Trojan A malicious computer program that's disguised as a different, harmless program.

Two-factor verification A system that uses two different means to identify the user.

USB 3.0/3.1 Faster versions of the USB standard used to connect devices to a computer.

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

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

Virtual environment An operating system that runs within another. Allows old systems to be used safely.

Web apps Programs that aren't stored on your computer, but on a web server instead.

The Final Straw



KEN RIGSBY is
Computeractive's Mr Angry

This issue Ken Rigsby wants animals, children and snow, not...

Obnoxious web adverts

I do worry about how quickly time goes. Why, it seems only yesterday that I was curled up on the sofa in front of my faux log fire, and tuning in to watch the first airing of the John Lewis Christmas advert. You know the one! Something sad unfolded, and that made me feel similarly melancholy. But then it ended with a happy twist, which left me with a nice warm feeling inside. It had animals, and children, and snow – and it didn't really feel like an advert at all.

“

Ever visited a site only to have a screen-blocking panel slide into view when you start to read?

”

Hold on. Wasn't that the previous year's advert? Or perhaps I'm thinking of some rival store's festive commercial? Waitrose, perhaps? Maybe Marks & Spencer? Then again, did I fall asleep and dream one of next year's? Or all of them, because they're all basically the same, aren't they?

It doesn't matter, because my point is that there are now TV adverts that many

of us actually look forward to watching. The big retailers' small-screen seasonal showcases might be formulaic but the one thing they're not, generally, is obnoxious. Every element, from the predictable scripts and cute characters to the wintry scenes and schmaltzy music, is expertly woven to create an inviting whole that draws us in. So professionally produced are these efforts that it's easy to forget that they're actually trying to sell us stuff. Millions of us actively enjoy these commercials masquerading as mini-movies.

But if only the online-advertising industry would take note. Have you ever visited a website only to have a giant screen-blocking panel slide into view the moment you start to read? Because that's the latest wheeze in digital marketing: commercials that materialise as part of the web page's underlying code, thus defeating many popular ad-blockers. You'll see what I mean in the screenshot I took on the fundraising website JustGiving, which urged me to 'share' my page on Facebook (see below left).

This behaviour is obnoxious because it's designed to subvert the efforts of those of us who'd rather not be bothered by annoying adverts. In fact, the example in my screenshot was counter-productive because its sudden appearance almost put me off making a donation to charity.

Now, I'm not oblivious to commercial reality. In different ways, adverts are as necessary to many websites as they are to John Lewis or to the very magazine that you're reading. I also accept that many traditional online adverts are easily ignored. Banner ads? Scroll down and they're gone! Those tall 'skyscraper' ones on the left or right? Zoom in a bit and – alakazam! – they disappear off the page.



Or, as mentioned, they're simply zapped by an ad-blocker.

That's why some online ad agencies are now employing in-your-face technologies that ensure their clients' adverts will definitely get... in your face. But just because we're forced to view doesn't mean these commercials are effective. If Sky or Virgin stopped TV subscribers from fast-forwarding through advert breaks there'd be uproar – or plenty of cancelled subscriptions, at least.

TV advertisers have long understood this problem, giving birth to the concept of must-see advertising: commercials so keenly anticipated that us punters will sit down at a scheduled time to watch the first airing. And we'll then spend the next few days discussing the production with family, friends and work colleagues.

I don't expect or want every online advert to be a three-minute epic featuring adorable animals, children and snow. But I'd love to see ads that treated our browsing with respect, rather than trying to disrupt it. John Lewis's slogan may be 'never knowingly undersold'. By contrast web adverts are 'never knowingly understated'.

✉ Which adverts annoy you?
Let us know at letters@computeractive.co.uk



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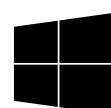
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