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 Windows 10







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**SHOW PHOTOS  
ON YOUR TV** p40

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**PLAY YOUR  
PC MUSIC IN  
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Better latte than never – p49

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# SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD **NEVER** INSTALL

Replace these rip-off tools and pointless  
programs with superior software **p50**



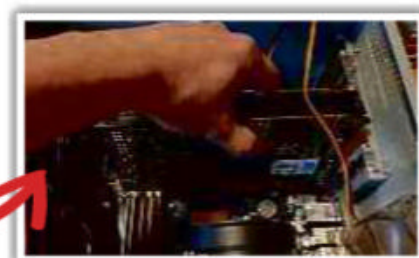
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**Computeractive**  
Printed in the UK

Were he alive today, William Avery ‘Devil Bill’ Rockefeller Sr would be flogging software that promised to fix problems your computer doesn’t have. This notorious 19th-century conman peddled ‘Rock Oil’ across the US as a cancer cure. In reality, it was a mix of laxative and petroleum.

None of the programs in our Cover Feature leave such a bad taste in the mouth (metaphorically and literally), but plenty make claims they can’t back up, such as promising to perform tasks for free before clobbering you

with a hefty fee. We also expose software that spies on you, smuggles junk on to your system, and offers expensive tools that are actually a free part of Windows.

Someone whose word you can always trust is Robert Irvine, formerly editor of our sister title *Web User*, which sadly closed at the end of 2020. He replaces me as the voice of our Easy When You Know How column on page 74. I hope you enjoy his grapples with technology.

**Daniel Booth**  
[editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk)



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Size of the new five-star  
Raspberry Pi 400 - [p24](#)



**£1,500**

Price of a reader’s Microsoft  
Surface Pro laptop whose  
screen broke after just  
three days - [p14](#)

**71.8Mbps**

New average  
speed for UK  
broadband - [p9](#)

## 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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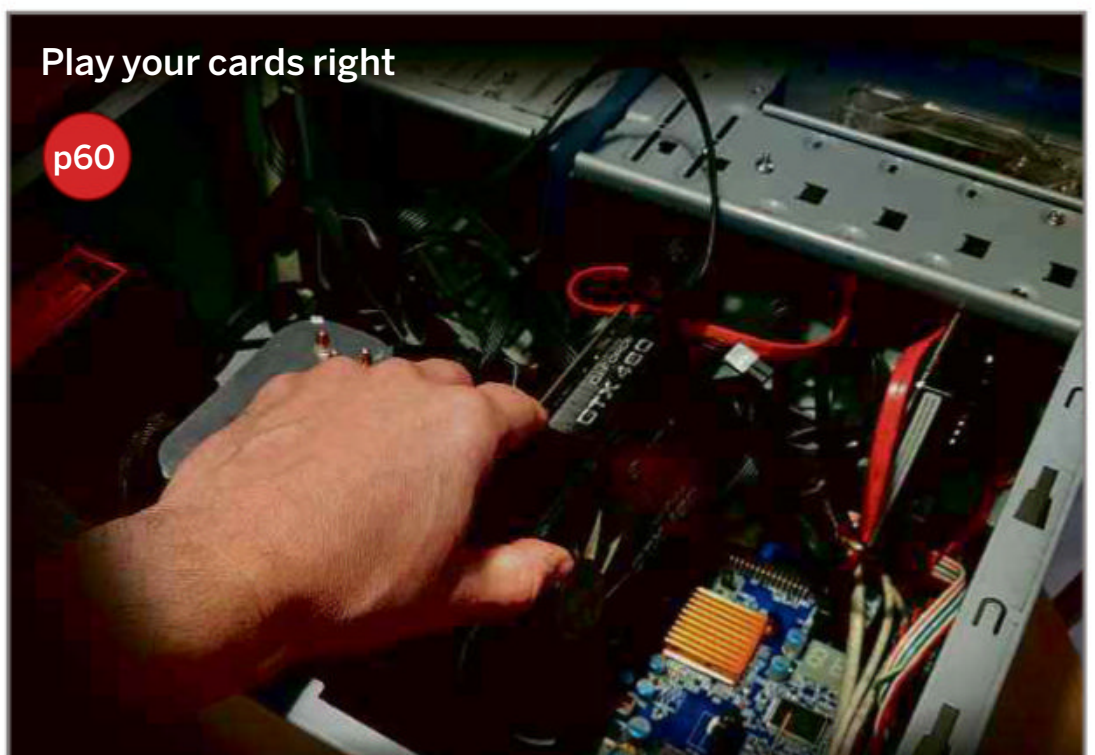


# SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD NEVER INSTALL

COVER  
FEATURE  
P50

Replace rip-off tools and pointless programs with superior software

### Play your cards right





# Windows 10X 'coming to computers by June'

**M**icrosoft looks set to release Windows 10X, a new lightweight version of the current operating system (OS), in the first half of 2021, according to reports circulating online.

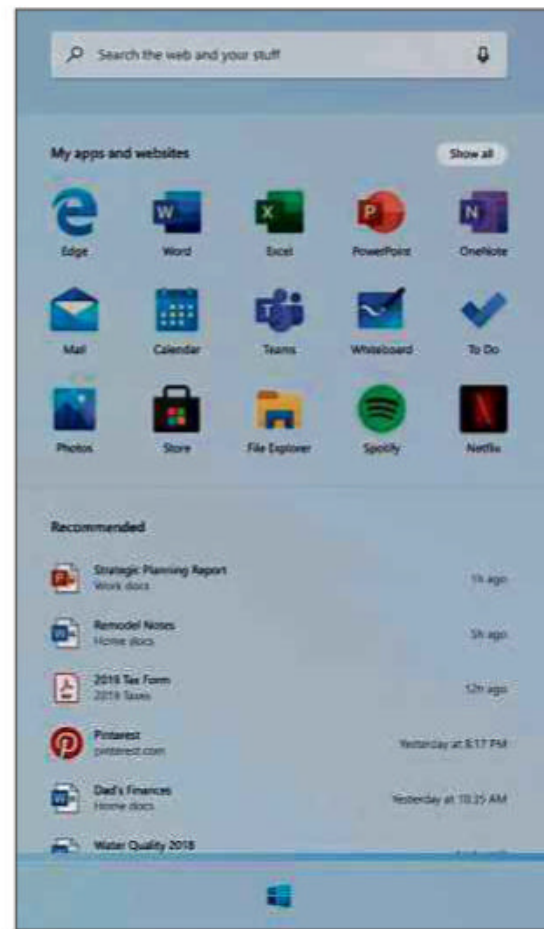
Sources in the company said it had finished building the first version of Windows 10X and was ready to release it to

computer manufacturers so they could install it on their devices. It's thought these could go on sale as early as June.

The idea behind Windows 10X is to produce a streamlined version of the main OS, with fewer tools, a simpler design and a new-look Start menu (see screenshot) without the 'Live' tiles that show updated information in real time. It also has a redesigned Action Centre with new volume, power and battery controls.

The company announced the system in October 2019, initially saying it would be built for foldable devices with two screens, such as its own Surface Neo, which is believed to be going on sale this year.

However, in May 2020 Microsoft said Windows 10X will arrive first on single-screen devices, such as conventional laptops and PCs. This decision was prompted by people using their Windows computers more during the coronavirus



a stripped-back operating system that doesn't contain Windows-style settings and features on a desktop. Instead, it's intended to be used as a gateway to online tools like Google Drive, which you can access through the Chrome browser.

One of the advantages of Chromebooks is that they boot faster than Windows laptops because Chrome OS takes less time to load. Windows 10X contains more tools than Chrome OS, so devices running it will probably boot more slowly than

Chromebooks. lockdown, making Microsoft realise how much people value their traditional devices.

## A rival to Chromebooks

Long term, Microsoft hopes that devices running Windows 10X will entice people away from Google's Chromebooks, which run Chrome OS. This is

Chromebooks.

But Microsoft will be keen to market Windows 10X computers as fast-booting machines. It said last year that the system would be separated from **drivers** and desktop apps, meaning you'd be able to install updates much more quickly – potentially in under 90 seconds.

You can try an early version of Windows 10X by installing the Microsoft Emulator app from the Microsoft Store ([www.snipca.com/35469](http://www.snipca.com/35469)). However, you'll need to be running Windows 10 Pro with an Intel processor and have 15GB of spare storage space.

• For more instructions, read 'Easy When You Know How' in Issue 585, page 74.

## WHAT WE THINK

Microsoft has been promising a slimmer, faster-booting version of Windows 10 for years, so pardon us for raising a sceptical eyebrow at these latest reports. Even if it does arrive by the summer, we think Microsoft has a tough sell on its hands. Chromebook fans love online tools, so won't want a half-baked version of Windows, while the millions of people who use Windows do so because of its wide range of settings and features. We're not sure why either group would want to compromise.

## UNINSTALL SNIPPING TOOL AS 'SNIP & SKETCH' TAKES OVER

You'll soon be able to uninstall Windows 10's Snipping Tool, as Microsoft encourages people to use 'Snip & Sketch' instead.

Introduced in Windows Vista, the Snipping Tool offers a fast and simple way to take screenshots, though Microsoft said in 2018 that it

will eventually replace the tool with 'Snip & Sketch', which has more advanced options.

It's been reminding users with messages that pop up when you launch Snipping Tool, and has now made the tool optional in the latest preview version of Windows 10 (Build

21277), available to Windows Insiders, meaning it can be uninstalled.

It signals that Microsoft might be preparing users for the removal of Snipping Tool. To try 'Snip & Sketch' press **PrtScr** on your keyboard, or press **Windows key+Shift+S**.



**You'll like this...**

Currys PC World is honouring cancelled Black Friday purchases ([www.snipca.com/36975](http://www.snipca.com/36975))



**but not this...**

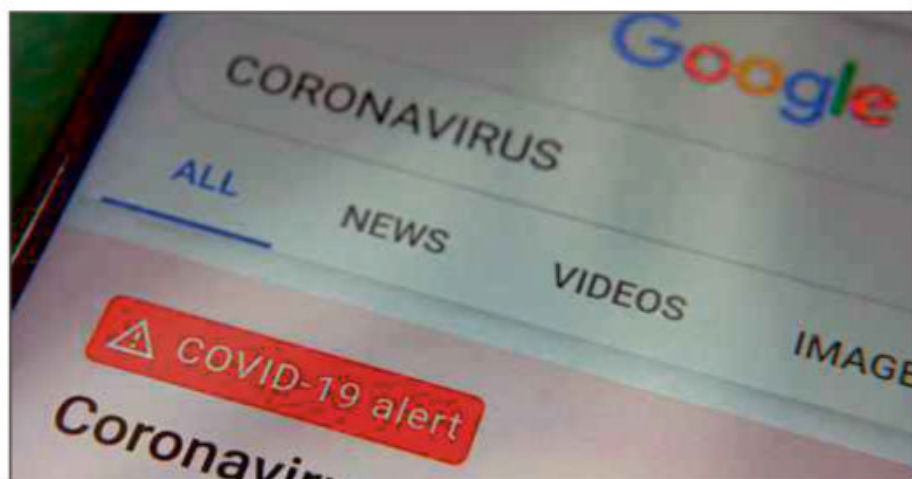
Hackers targeted information relating to the coronavirus vaccine ([www.snipca.com/36955](http://www.snipca.com/36955))



# Coronavirus dominated Google searches throughout 2020

The coronavirus pandemic dominated Google searches during 2020, according to its annual 'Year in Search' report, which measures search terms that had the biggest spike compared with the previous 12 months.

Globally, 'coronavirus' was the most searched term, as it was in the UK. Indeed, the spread of the disease prompted such a worldwide



desire for information that Google's report contains a top 10 just for related searches.

In the UK, these included 'coronavirus symptoms', 'coronavirus update' and 'Eat Out to Help Out'. All three terms also made the UK's overall search top 10 (see table), alongside the US election, world leaders and famous people who died.

The pandemic also featured prominently in the top 'How to' searches of 2020, with 'How to wear a face mask?' and 'How to make hand sanitizer?' at numbers one

and two. Questions on making bread and cutting your own hair were also in the top 10, as people sought advice on surviving lockdown.

TV presenter Phillip Schofield was the most searched-for celebrity, with interest peaking in February when he announced he was gay. *Love Island* topped the TV list, while the Oscar-winning World War 1 film *1917* was the most searched-for film.

Visit [www.snipca.com/36953](http://www.snipca.com/36953) for the full UK results, and [www.snipca.com/36952](http://www.snipca.com/36952) for the global list.

## UK'S TOP 10 SEARCHES IN 2020

- 1 Coronavirus
- 2 US election
- 3 Caroline Flack
- 4 Coronavirus symptoms
- 5 Coronavirus update
- 6 Premier League
- 7 Boris Johnson
- 8 Eat Out to Help Out
- 9 Kobe Bryant
- 10 Kim Jong-un (pictured)



## BT to keep landline-only prices cheap for five more years

BT has proposed a further five years of cheaper prices for customers who pay for a landline only, without also receiving broadband or a TV service.

In April 2018, it cut its monthly line rental for landline-only customers by £7 – from £18.99 a month to £11.99. It also capped any subsequent increases to line rental and call charges to the CPI rate of inflation, which was 0.9 per cent in October.

These measures followed Ofcom's claim that landline-only customers had been "getting poor value for money compared to those who buy bundles of landline,

broadband and/or pay-TV services".

BT's monopoly in the landline-only market allowed it to raise prices, even though it had become cheaper to provide the service.

The company has now offered to keep the price of £11.99 for five years after the original commitment ends in March 2021. This proposal will need to be approved by regulator Ofcom, which will run a consultation until 21 January.

It seems highly likely Ofcom will accept BT's proposal, having said that it offers "sufficient protections" for

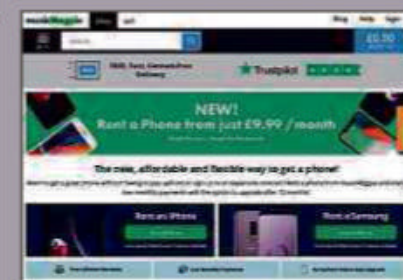


landline-only customers.

There are 1.2 million landline-only customers in the UK, making up around five per cent of residents. Around three quarters of these are signed up to BT.

Ofcom says that these "voice-only" customers "tend to be older, from lower socio-economic grades, not working, and more financially vulnerable".

## IN BRIEF



### RENT PHONES ON MUSICMAGPIE

MusicMagpie has launched a phone-rental service, letting you upgrade to a new device every 12 months rather than the standard 24. Priced at £9.99 a month, it currently includes more than 10 unlocked Apple and Android (mostly Samsung) phones. The site said it will add more devices soon. For more details visit [www.musicmagpie.co.uk/store/rental](http://www.musicmagpie.co.uk/store/rental) (pictured above).

### ADOBE TO BLOCK ALL FLASH CONTENT

Adobe released the final update for its Flash plug-in on 8 December, and has announced it will block all Flash content from 12 January. Writing online ([www.snipca.com/36951](http://www.snipca.com/36951)), it said it was proud of the role Flash played in "evolving web content" across the web. Read Issue 594 (page 62) for instructions on avoiding Flash online and uninstalling it from your computer.

## TOMORROW'S WORLD



Zoom is working on ways to make video meetings feel more realistic. The company's boss, Eric Yuan, said it's experimenting with AI to replicate 'physical' experiences such as virtual handshakes and the smell of coffee. May we also suggest audible groans when a PowerPoint presentation begins.





## IN BRIEF

**VIRGIN MEDIA TV 360 NOW AVAILABLE**

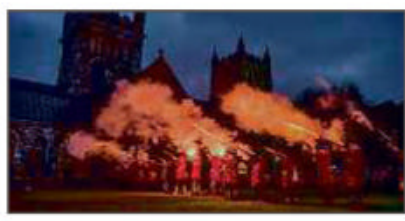
Virgin Media has started providing its new TV 360 set-top box to new customers and anyone already subscribing to the company's £89-a-month Ultimate Oomph package, which combines TV, broadband and mobile. It lets you search and play programmes with your voice, while the Startover feature lets you rewind live shows to the beginning. It also has a Mini box that streams video around your home. Read more on Virgin's site: [www.snipca.com/36937](http://www.snipca.com/36937).

**LISTEN TO BBC SOUNDS ON AMAZON FIRE**

You can now listen to the BBC Sounds app on Amazon Fire TV devices, including sticks and smart TVs. The app, which provides access to podcasts, music and radio shows, was already available on Now TV, Roku, Freesat, LG, Freeview Play and Google TV. To find the app, search for it through the menu.

**THE WORLD'S GONE MAD!**

Facebook disabled the accounts of some members of the Wimbome Militia (pictured) presumably because its name sounds like the kind of far-right militias on the rise in the US. But it's actually a Dorset historical reenactment group that attends events like the Christmas lights being switched on. Facebook has apologised and reinstated the accounts.



## Use your eyes to 'speak' phrases with new Google app

**G**oogle has launched a phone app that helps people with speech and movement impairment use their eyes to communicate.

Called 'Look to Speak', it tracks the user's eye movements to let them select words and phrases, which the app then speaks aloud.

The user is shown in which direction to move their eyes – so it's left to say 'hello' and 'thank you', and right to say 'yes' and 'no' (see screenshot). Looking up 'snoozes' the app.

Richard Cave, a leading speech and language therapist who worked on the app with Google, said eye-gaze software can "open up new possibilities – especially for people around the world who might now have access to this technology for the very first time".



Writing in Google's blog ([www.snipca.com/36939](http://www.snipca.com/36939)), he said his favourite feature in the app is the ability for users to personalise the words spoken aloud, so they can 'talk' in the kind of phrases that feel familiar to them.

He added that the settings can be adjusted to match the

movements of a user's eye, and that all data is private and never leaves the phone.

However, he also said that 'Look to Speak' isn't a replacement for more advanced "heavy duty" eye-tracking equipment. Instead, it's intended for "important short messages", and because it's designed for phones it can go where bigger equipment can't, such as "outdoors, in transit, in the shower and in urgent situations".

In the blog you can watch a video of how artist Sarah Ezekiel, who was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in 2000, uses the app to communicate.

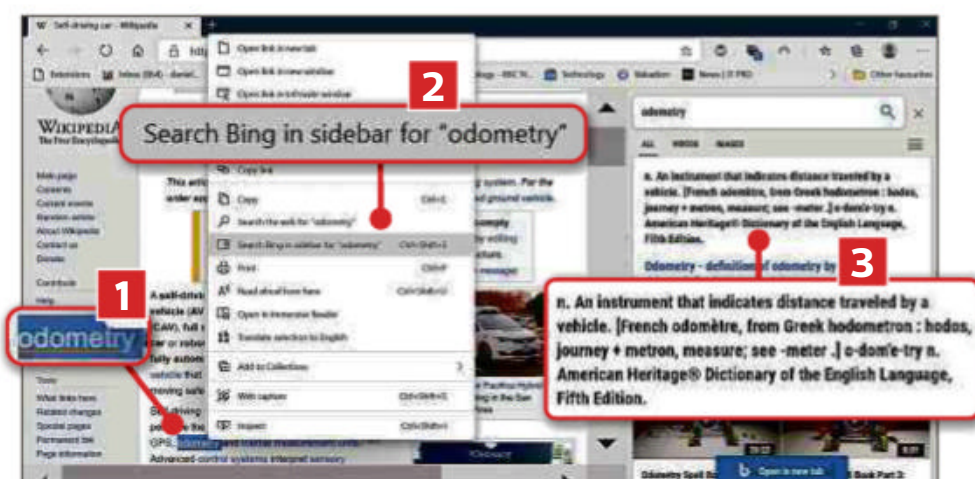
You can download the app from the Google Play Store at [www.snipca.com/36942](http://www.snipca.com/36942). It's available for phones running Android 9.0 and later.

## Right-click for search results in Edge's sidebar

**Y**ou can now search for more information about words when browsing the web in Edge by right-clicking and looking in the sidebar that appears. It means you don't have to leave the web page you're on to find information.

The tool, which has been in preview versions of Edge for several months, is now available for everyone to use.

To use it, highlight a word while browsing in Edge (we chose 'odometry' – **1** in our screenshot, then right-click it and select 'Search Bing in sidebar for...' **2**). You'll see a sidebar appear on the right,



with the search term at the top and a definition below **3**. There are also links to videos and images.

If you can't see the feature when you right-click, check your version of Edge is up to date. Click the three horizontal dots at the top right of Edge, then Settings at the bottom.

On the next page, scroll down the menu on the left and click About Microsoft Edge to automatically check for updates.

Edge will update you to a new version if there's one available. To use the sidebar search you need to be running Edge 87.0.664.55, or a later version.



# Windows updates to come earlier in 'Experience Packs'

Microsoft is testing a new system for adding tools to Windows 10 outside of its usual twice-yearly Feature updates.

It has introduced Windows Feature Experience Packs, which can be built into the monthly updates for the operating system. This means you could get new tools every month, rather than having to wait for the spring or autumn Feature updates.

In a blog post ([www.snipca.com/36929](http://www.snipca.com/36929)), Microsoft's Brandon LeBlanc said the packs will include updates for features that are "now developed independently" of Windows 10. This means they can be updated quicker because the rest of the operating system doesn't need to be updated at the same time.

The following features are all updated separately from Windows, and so could receive new tools as part of



Experience Packs: Start menu, Snipping Tool (soon to be replaced by 'Snip & Sketch'), Windows Subsystem for Linux (see page 49), Notepad and Paint.

LeBlanc announced the first two tools to come as part of a Windows Feature Experience Pack. Using 'Snip & Sketch', you can now take a screenshot of your screen and paste it into a folder of your choice in File Explorer. You can open the 'Snip & Sketch' pressing PrtScr on your keyboard, or using the shortcut Windows key+Shift+S.

The other new tool is a split-keyboard mode when using a touchscreen keyboard in portrait orientation.

For now, Experience Packs are available only to Windows Insiders, though if successful they'll probably be released to everyone later in 2021. Insiders can check which Experience Pack they have installed by opening Settings (press Windows key+I), clicking System, then scrolling to the bottom and clicking About. The pack will be listed under 'Windows specifications' (see screenshot).

## Stream less TV to save the Earth, scientists say

Scientists have urged viewers to stop streaming TV in high definition (HD) because it's bad for the environment.

In a report on tackling climate change, the Royal Society estimated that streaming in HD generates eight times more carbon emissions than standard definition (SD).

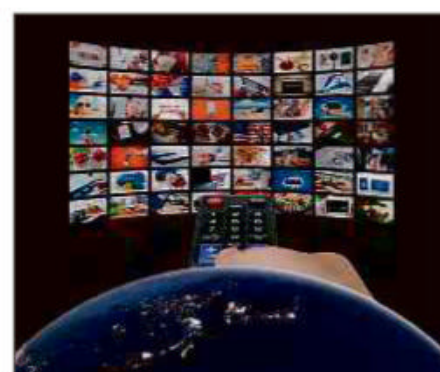
It claimed that globally digital technology contributes around 1.4 to 5.9 per cent to global emissions.

The report's authors want tech companies to set the default video to standard. They also recommended

several changes users can make to reduce emissions, such as switching from ultra high-definition (UHD) to HD on a smartphone. You'll barely notice the difference in quality, they claim.

The Royal Society also suggests switching off the video on sites like YouTube if you're only listening to content in the background, rather than watching.

Not all scientists agree on how bad streaming is for the planet, but earlier this year analysts at the International Energy Agency estimated that watching a 30-minute Netflix show was equivalent to



driving 200 metres in a car.

However, other experts called for some perspective. Corinne Le Quéré, professor of climate change science at the University of East Anglia, told the BBC: "To be honest, digital tech is a small fraction of your emissions compared with, say, flying even once a year – but every bit of CO2 saving is significant".

Will you stream less to help the environment? Let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)

### IN BRIEF

#### AVERAGE BROADBAND SPEED RISES TO 72MBPS

The UK's average broadband speed has risen from 64Mbps to 71.8Mbps, Ofcom has said. It published the result in the second of its twice-yearly broadband updates for 2020, calculating the speeds by testing the routers in a few thousand homes that represent the whole nation. The tests took place in May 2020, but weren't published until December.

#### CHROME SAFE ON WINDOWS 7 UNTIL 2022

Google will keep Chrome working on Windows 7 computers until 2022 – more than six months later than planned. In January 2020, Google said it would continue supporting Windows 7 until at least July 2021, but has extended that to 15 January 2022 to help companies, organisations and individuals cope with the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

#### WATCH NATIONAL THEATRE PLAYS ONLINE

The National Theatre has launched a subscription service broadcasting plays online. Called 'National Theatre at Home' ([www.snipca.com/36911](http://www.snipca.com/36911), pictured), it costs £9.98 a month or £99.98 a year. You can also pay between £5.99 and £7.99 to watch single plays. It follows the success of streaming 16 plays during the first lockdown, which attracted 15 million views.





# Question of the Fortnight

## Should Netflix and Amazon broadcast news in the UK?

Streaming services might join the BBC as public-service broadcasters

**H**ow we watch TV has changed emphatically in the past 18 years. Back in 2003, Netflix still posted DVDs to you in returnable envelopes, Amazon's plans for world domination had yet to include making programmes, and YouTube was two years away from being born. It was also the last time the broadcasting laws in the UK were updated.

We now live in a different world. TV streaming, already hugely popular before the pandemic, became a lifeline for many people during lockdown. Ofcom's research shows that during April last year the average time spent streaming TV doubled to 71 minutes a day. It estimates that during the first lockdown 12 million people signed up to a new streaming service.

**“TV has witnessed a blizzard of change, with audiences turning to online services with bigger budgets”**

Ofcom has been grappling with what all this means for the future of UK public-service broadcasters BBC, ITV, Channel 4, STV, S4C and Channel 5. Its conclusion is that they're unlikely to have a long-term future unless broadcasting laws and regulations are “overhauled”. They also need to introduce more digital services to compete with the streaming giants of Netflix and Amazon Prime Video.

Ofcom's findings come in its ‘Small Screen: Big Debate’



report, which looked at how public-service broadcasting (PSB) could be strengthened and maintained “for the next decade and beyond”. Its most controversial suggestion is to invite other services such as Netflix and Amazon to

become public broadcasters, which would mean they'd have to follow the same rules as the BBC, ITV and others on subjects such as providing daily news (regional and national) and adhering to the watershed.

Ofcom thinks such significant changes are needed because “audiences are increasingly turning away from the traditional PSB channels”. It points out that in 2019 only 67 per cent of viewing among all adults was on one of the

traditional channels (this number falls to 38 per cent of people aged 16 to 34). One in four viewers of streaming services say they can imagine watching no broadcast TV at all by 2025. This puts public-service broadcasting at a “critical juncture”.

However, viewers still value PSB content because it provides content “that they are unlikely to find elsewhere”, such “original UK children's, education and religious programming, made specifically for the UK”. Its research found that in particular viewers want to protect regional news.

But the regulator warned that such content is at risk unless a new funding model can be established. Dame Melanie Dawes, head of Ofcom, said that “television has witnessed a blizzard of change and innovation, with audiences turning to online services with bigger budgets”.

She added: “So there's an urgent need to reform the

### THE FACTS

- Regulator Ofcom has suggested that streaming services such as Netflix could become public-service broadcasters alongside the BBC
- Only 67 per cent of all viewing is done on traditional channels, like BBC and ITV
- The law governing broadcasting hasn't been updated since 2003

rules, and build a stronger system of public-service media that can flourish in the digital age”.

Ofcom says that tax relief and access to public funds could be used to encourage streaming services to make the switch. But some say the amounts are too small to attract Netflix and co. The financial chasm between the streaming services and their traditional cousins is vast. In 2020 Netflix's programme budget was £15 billion. Combined, the UK's PSBs spent just around £3 billion. Netflix has 13 million subscribers in the UK, but 200 million worldwide.

The regulator will now consult on its findings before reporting to the Government, which plans its own review of public-service broadcasting later in the year. If it agrees with Ofcom, it may not be long until Huw Edwards, Cathy Newman or Tom Bradby pop up on your favourite streaming service.



# Protect **your tech**

Scams and threats to avoid, plus new security tools

**WATCH OUT FOR...**

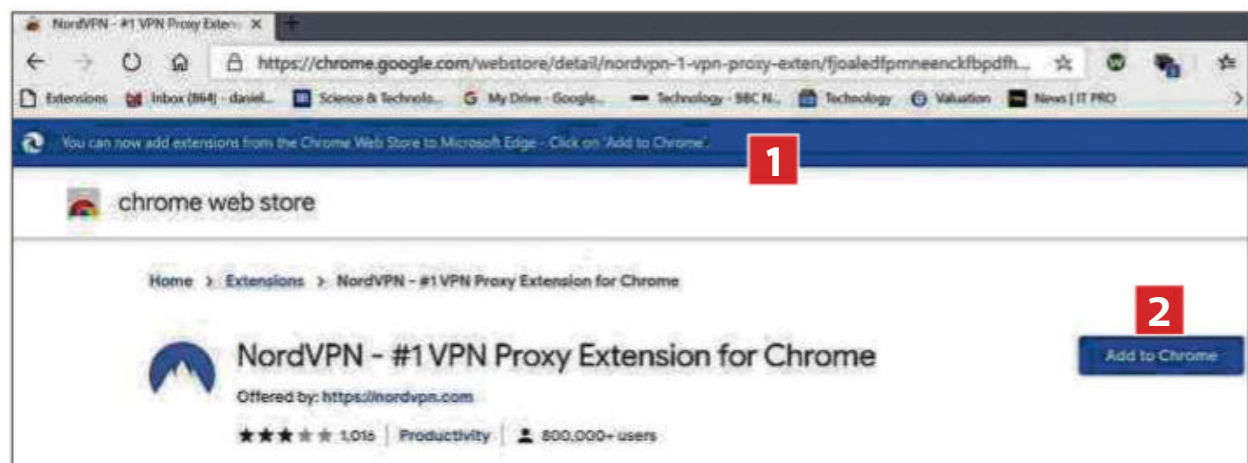
## Fake VPN extensions for Edge

### What's the threat?

Hackers are creating fake Edge extensions for several of the world's most popular **VPNs**. In the past month Microsoft has removed extensions that claimed to be VPNs from NordVPN, Windscribe, AdGuard and TunnelBear. Once installed, these VPNs were showing users suspicious adverts, and redirecting their Google searches to a dubious site called OKSearch.

### How can you stay safe?

Fake extensions are nothing new, but until now they've been a bigger problem on Google's Chrome Web Store, which has been the world's most popular browser for over a decade. But where users go, scammers always follow. So as Edge continues to gain ground on Chrome after its relaunch last January, expect more malicious extensions to appear on its store (<https://microsoftedge.microsoft.com>).



Scammers chose VPNs for two reasons: one, because they're some of the most popular extensions, and two, because many of the leading VPN developers have yet to release official Edge extensions. This created a gap for them to exploit.

However, because both browsers run on the same **source code**, you can often install the Chrome version of an extension to run on Edge. To do this, open Edge, then type <https://chrome.google.com/webstore> into the browser

bar. You'll see this message in the blue banner at the top: "You can now add extensions from the Chrome Web Store to Microsoft Edge – Click on 'Add to Chrome'" (1 in our screenshot).

Now, in the top-left search bar, type the name of the extension you're looking for (we chose NordVPN) and select one of the results that appear. Next, click that extension in the centre of the page, then 'Add to Chrome' 2. Finally, click 'Add extension' in the box that appears.

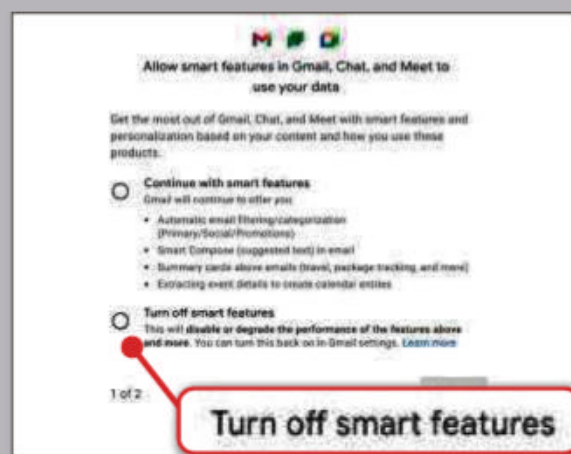
## New tools

Gmail's smart features settings

In the past few years Gmail has got 'smarter' by guessing what you're about to type into an email (this is called 'Smart Compose'), and suggesting a short response at the bottom that you can click to reply ('Smart Reply'). These tools can save you time, but to work they need to know what you're typing, and what's in the email you've been sent.

Nobody at Google actually reads your emails, so the privacy risk is slight. But you don't have to be paranoid to worry about how much data you share with Google every day.

The company now makes it easier to turn off these 'smart' tools, as explained on its blog ([www.snipca.com/36839](http://www.snipca.com/36839)). You'll see a message appear within Gmail, giving you two options – choose the bottom one to



disable the smart features (see screenshot). You'll also see another box asking whether you want Gmail to connect with Google Maps and Google Assistant. Again, to disable this select the bottom option.

Google says these messages will start to appear soon, so keep an eye out for them if they've not popped up already.

## ScamWatch

Readers warn readers



### Two Lloyds scams in 24 hours

I'm a Lloyds customer and received two scam texts within 24 hours. One message said: "Lloyds Alert: A new recipient has been made on your account". That didn't make sense to me – how could a new recipient be made on my account? It said I should "review your recent payees at review-mytransaction.com". I ignored and deleted the message, only to receive another one a day later saying I had "scheduled a payment of £53.00" for a particular time and date. It said if I didn't recognise it I should visit a site called <http://lloydsreviewuk.com>. I deleted that also.

Ian Morecambe



Warn your fellow readers about scams at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



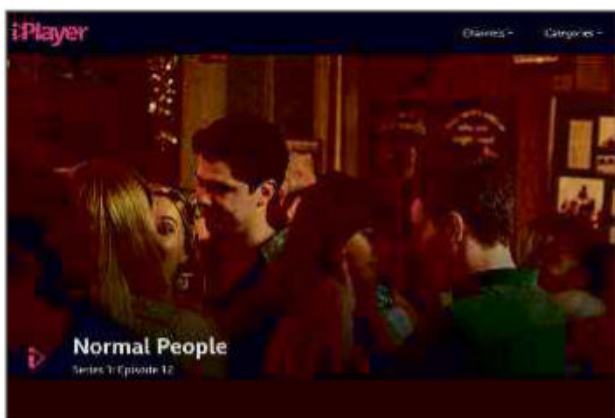
# Letters

Tell us what's on your mind

## Why young folk watch less BBC, but like it more

✉ As one of the “young” people mentioned in your article about the BBC losing the youth audience (News, Issue 595, page 9), I'd like to explain why my generation watches fewer BBC shows, but maybe like the BBC more than the older generation.

I've just turned 20, so I've never known a time without the internet, nor without a seemingly endless supply of content. The idea of turning on the BBC to see what it may be showing at that specific time is alien to me. Instead, I find out about shows that I'm likely to enjoy (through word of mouth mostly), and then watch those shows on demand on the iPlayer.



I read recently that the iPlayer had its most popular year ever in 2020. Its most-watched show was *Normal People* (pictured above). Also in the top 10 were *Killing Eve*, *The Nest*, *Life*, *I May Destroy You* and *This Country*. I've watched all those on the iPlayer, but I can't recall any other programmes I saw on the BBC this year. This is probably why I love the BBC's content more than, say, my Dad does, even though he watches more of it because he has it on in the background all the time.

Incidentally, the only programmes in the top 10 he had heard of were *Masterchef* and *Silent Witness*. That explains the generational split: I watch less, enjoy more; he watches more, enjoys less.

Josh Stapleton

✉ Forget about young people abandoning the BBC. The most important part of your article was the bit about the corporation spending £238m in the past year providing online content, a rise in two years of £48m – or 25 per cent. I find that staggering.

Apart from iPlayer and a News site, I can't think of anything the BBC should be doing online, so how on earth does it get through so much money?

David Julian

## No regrets after giving up Google

✉ I'd like to second the views of Chris O'Connor and Barry Grigg in Issue 595 when they call for more alternatives to Google's services. I fully realise that it may be impossible to abandon Google entirely, because its tentacles have squirmed so deeply into our daily lives. But the only Google-owned service I use now is YouTube. In the past few years I've switched from Gmail, Google Maps and its search engine to more private alternatives. I've not regretted it once.

So *Computeractive*, find me a decent replacement for YouTube and my life will be free completely of Google.

Tony Warner

**CA SAYS** Tony was just one of many readers who emailed to support Chris and Barry's call for more advice on avoiding Google, so we're happy to oblige. We'll reveal the best alternatives in our next issue – out Wednesday 13 January – including a YouTube substitute.

## Royal Mail should keep Saturday post

✉ You made all the right points in Issue 595's 'Question of the Fortnight' ('Will online shopping kill the Saturday post?'), particularly when you ask how people who never shop online will feel.

I fall into that category. Unlike many of my neighbours, I like to support my local high street. I don't expect any medals for doing that, and I realise online shopping will only ever get more popular, but I do resent losing a service like the Saturday post that I've known for all my 78 years.

I appreciate that the Royal Mail now makes more money through parcels than letters, but it shouldn't be all about profit. It should go back to being a community-driven service with posties who look out for their neighbourhood. The prospect of Royal Mail just become another courier service with vans whizzing everywhere is very disheartening.

Judith Cairns

## Ditch PCs? No! We need to re-use them

✉ I enjoy reading *Computeractive*, but you are mainly concerned with promoting the latest technology and not at all with what happens to it when we throw it away. Your illustration on the cover of Issue 594 ('Ditch Your PC in

## 2020 was a year of 'update meltdowns' and 'chatastrophes'

✉ After reading that 'mute' and 'unmute' are among the words of the year (News, Issue 595, page 8), can I suggest some of my own, based on the kind of year I've had?

First, there's 'update meltdown', which I suffer every time Microsoft tries to install a new version of Windows on my machine. This leads to 'mouse rage', as I furiously click the same download links over and over, despite knowing it makes no difference.

I've also endured plenty of

'Can you hear me?'

'chatastrophes' when countless Zoom and Skype calls have cut out just in the middle of a crucial sentence. I probably said 'Can you hear me?' more times during April and May

than in the whole of my 69 years up to that point.

Finally, at the height of lockdown, I invented the game of 'courier spotting' with my wife, as we counted how many vans dropped off items to people in our street. The record was 13 on one April day. Yes, we were that bored!

Neil Roebuck



2021') of a wheelie bin bulging with electronic items suggests you haven't thought about this.

Thanks to years of planned obsolescence, we are globally drowning in mountains of electronic waste, some 25 million tonnes of it being TVs, computers and phones. Surely we have a duty to try and stop contributing to this shocking problem? Wasting the Earth's resources contributes to the huge problems relating to climate change, so we must think more responsibly about when to replace computers and how.

Christine Wilson



**CA SAYS** Christine's right that Britain throws away too much electronic waste every year, and some scientists now think that streaming in HD is a serious problem also (see page 9). But we'd like to think *Computeractive* does

its bit to encourage people to reuse their unwanted kit. Issue 576's Cover Feature (pictured), published in March last year, explained how you could turn your old computer into a range of devices, including a NAS drive, a home security camera and a TV-streaming server. If you missed that issue, you'll be able to read it on our 2020 Back Issue CD, which will be on sale soon.

Likewise, in 2019 we had features on re-using old USB sticks (Issue 550); routers, printers and laptops (Issue 554); and phones and tablets (Issue 560). You can read all three features on our 2019 Back Issue CD (available to buy on Amazon at [www.snipca.com/33711](https://www.snipca.com/33711)).

We'll continue to offer advice on finding new uses for old tech. Please let us know which devices you'd like us to cover.

### Use Three's 4G, not BT, for faster speeds

I read with interest the Star Letter from Graham Dodd in Issue 594 ('BT should provide 4G for the same price as fibre'). Having been in a similar (or even worse) situation to Graham a year ago, I feel compelled to write to offer an alternative solution to Graham.

I live in a rural area of Fife and was getting around 1.5Mbps download through a copper wire with our house being at the very end of the line. My solution was to

## STAR LETTER

### I'm PC-savvy, but I still fell for scammer's trap

Scammers seem to be getting clever. Or am I falling further behind? Having warned others, I fell into a scammer's trap. My experience may help others.

I was concentrating on a new task when I received a phone call from someone who insisted that a fault in my Windows software was allowing illegal activity by others. At first I thought that it was like all the other scams, but a very persuasive argument led me to follow a few instructions to see a Notepad entry that suggested he was Mr Peter Robertson of Microsoft and a further screen showed me a schedule of 6,632 'events' when my Windows registration had been used. The next shocking screen came after he told me to right-double-click any line on the schedule which led into a rather vulgar porn site.

My common sense should have told me that none of this was logical, but my attention was diverted by his instructions. He then held my concentration by breaking the phone connection and messaging to ask if my phone was OK. He promised to put



everything right by supplying a new "registration key" for a £9 "service charge".

The interruptions to the phone call became ever more frequent as he tried to keep my attention while I sought guarantees that he would return control of my PC to me. He promised that it would be done if I did nothing for 30 minutes, but instead I switched everything off.

The outcome is a PC that I can't access, though I've not lost any money. I thought I was computer-savvy after using them for 45 years, but I realise that the scammer was feeding me screens from his own PC to shock me and hold my attention until he had complete control of my computer.

Robert Vickery

The **Star Letter** writer wins a **Computeractive** mug!



take the 4G option, but through Three, not BT. The benefit was cost and speed. Three were doing an unlimited package of broadband, voice and text calls. At this point my only interest was broadband and Three were doing a two-year deal for £20 per month with the first six months half price. Previously I'd been paying £27 per month for landline and broadband.

I have since got rid of our landline and taken the same SIM-only contract for both my phone and my wife's. This now gives me broadband almost anywhere and is working out slightly cheaper than what I was paying for landline, broadband and two mobile SIM contracts.

The only additional cost I've incurred was the purchase of a more powerful router for the home that had sufficient capacity to accommodate additional tech found in homes today (and the ability to

take a SIM card). 4G for the right price could be the solution for many of us living in rural areas (and poorly connected towns).

Bob Abercrombie

### Never buy mains-powered goods on the web

The article about laptop batteries exploding (News, Issue 594, page 8) should be a warning never to buy mains-powered items on the web. I buy only from high-street stores because it gives me an immediate legal comeback. It's better than buying online from a firm that may well be outside the UK. The item may cost more, but at least I have peace of mind. As a retired electronics engineer working on aircraft, my motto is safety first, last and always.

John C Kent





We stand up for your legal rights

## Who's responsible for a misold USB stick?

**Q** In July I bought a GoGroopie ([www.gogroopie.com](http://www.gogroopie.com)) voucher for a 1TB USB drive from Impress Gadgets ([www.impressgadgets.co.uk](http://www.impressgadgets.co.uk), based in Dewsbury). The voucher cost £14.99 and postage from Impress Gadgets was £3.99. When the drive arrived the actual capacity was only 32GB. I've contacted both GoGroopie and Impress Gadgets, but am being ignored. Can you help?

Arthur Gray

**A** We've also contacted both companies to find out what's happened. It may be that Arthur was simply sent the wrong stick, in which case it should be easy to resolve. However, it would become more complicated if the stick was faulty, or has been wrongly described. Whatever the truth, he's entitled to a swift refund.

Initially, Arthur's contract was with GoGroopie because he paid it directly for a voucher to redeem goods or services. If a voucher is refused or can't be used for some reason, then the company selling it must give you a full refund.

As with other goods bought online, you have 14 days to reject a voucher, as

allowed under the Consumer Contract Regulations (CCR).

Once you've redeemed the voucher, the contract and legal responsibility shifts to the seller of the goods or services you're buying from (Impress Gadgets in Arthur's case). After you've received the goods, another 14-day cooling-off period applies, during which you can reject the purchase and ask for a refund.

Now that Arthur has received the USB stick, he should deal with Impress Gadgets. However, he shouldn't reject it under the CCR. Instead, he should cite the Consumer Rights Act, which covers goods that are "not as described". Hopefully, Impress Gadgets will realise its mistake and send Arthur a 1TB stick or refund him in full.

CASE ONGOING



LEAD CASE

## Is this Facebook ad a scam?

**Q** I placed an order for an electric cleaning brush from Ultradil, a company advertising on Facebook. I paid £29 for it by credit card on 5 October, but despite contacting the company it appears to have vanished from Facebook. Can you confirm if this is a scam?

Bill Martin

**A** We're not sure. The Facebook pages displaying the advert are no longer active, so we can't see it. However, when Bill contacted us, Ultradil still had a further 16 days in which to make delivery. As we mention in the PhotoBox case opposite, delivery isn't considered late until 30 days have passed.

Bill isn't covered by Section 75 of the Consumer Credit Act because the purchase was under £100, but he should still contact his bank because it can check whether the company is genuine.

If you suspect a Facebook advert is a scam, click the three dots in the top-right corner of the ad and select 'Report ad', followed by 'Misleading or scam ad', then 'Send a detailed scam report'.

You can also report dodgy adverts to Action Fraud ([www.actionfraud.police.uk](http://www.actionfraud.police.uk)) and Citizens Advice ([www.snipca.com/36688](http://www.snipca.com/36688)).

CASE CLOSED

### CASE UPDATE

## Microsoft refunds reader after three months of misery



When will companies realise that after a failed repair or replacement they must offer a full refund? This has been law since October 2015, but five years later firms are still putting customers through unnecessary despair.

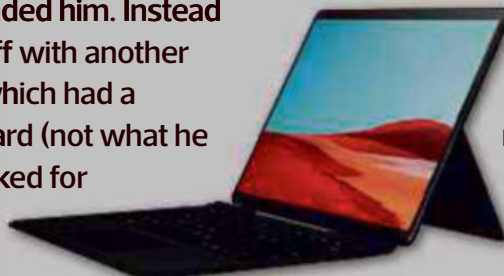
Microsoft is the latest guilty company. As we reported in Issue 594, it replaced reader Michael O'Donnell's £1,500 Surface Pro laptop after the screen cracked within three days of purchase. Microsoft was allowed

to do this. Starting 30 days after purchase, companies can offer one repair or one replacement only, though not one of each.

But when Michael found that the replacement was also faulty, Microsoft should've refunded him. Instead it fobbed him off with another replacement, which had a German keyboard (not what he wanted). He asked for a refund, only for Microsoft

to demand proof of purchase. Mike supplied this, but Microsoft still wasn't satisfied, and refused to refund him.

We were astounded that Microsoft's customer service team was putting Mike through this, so we rang them and pointed out how badly they were treating him. They agreed and finally refunded him, putting an end to three months of misery. A company with Microsoft's vast resources should've known better.





Contact us so we can investigate your case

✉ **Email:** [consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:consumeractive@computeractive.co.uk)  
Please include your name, phone number and address.

## My golden wedding photobook was late – what are my rights?

**Q** I used PhotoBox ([www.photobox.co.uk](http://www.photobox.co.uk)) to create for my parents a photobook to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary. I paid an extra £5.99 for one-day express delivery, on top of £4.99 for the normal postage cost, totalling £11.98.

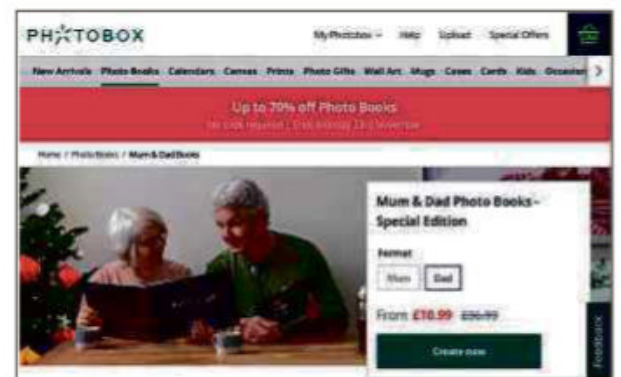
However, the book actually took six days to arrive, missing my parents' party, much to my annoyance.

What rights do I have?

Darren Braithwaite

**A** Sellers normally have 30 days to deliver goods, but if you've paid for faster delivery then they must honour this. When the book didn't arrive in time, Darren could've cancelled the order and demanded a full refund.

However, he knew his parents would treasure the photobook, and so wanted to keep it. This meant he was only entitled to a refund of the £5.99 express-delivery cost, but PhotoBox actually refunded him this amount *plus* the £4.99 for standard



postage. While Darren was upset the book didn't arrive in time, he was impressed by PhotoBox's customer service. It replied to his email within 20 minutes and agreed to a refund. He could've also claimed for loss of enjoyment of the goods, though this is hard to prove.

**CASE CLOSED**

## Is Kaspersky to blame for dongle not working?

**Q** Ever since I downloaded Kaspersky's security software, I've been unable to get online using my Three Wi-Fi dongle. It seems this software is incompatible with my dongle. Can I get a refund?

David Sherwood

**A** Since first emailing us, David got back in touch to say that he discovered the problem was that

his previous security software hadn't been fully uninstalled, and that it was nothing to do with Kaspersky. But we're including his case because it allows us to remind readers that you do have rights if software you buy doesn't work.

Under the Consumer Rights Act any software you download must be of "satisfactory quality", "fit for purpose" and "as described". This third stipulation means you can get a refund if the software was wrongly described as being compatible with a device. How much money you can get back depends on how



**kaspersky**


long you've owned the content and what the actual problem is.

David apologised for wasting our time, but he needn't have worried. We want to reassure him and other readers that we're happy to investigate any case, even if it turns out that you made a mistake or the law isn't on your side. You'll only find this out by asking, after all. There's no such thing as a stupid question when the law is concerned. Big business and expensive lawyers bank on your ignorance, so we're here to stand up for your rights.

**CASE CLOSED**

### CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

## Stone me – revamped laptops are great

 In response to your feature on refurbished laptops (Issue 589, page 62), I'd like to recommend Stone Refurb ([www.stonerefurb.co.uk](http://www.stonerefurb.co.uk)), which is based in Stafford. Soon after the start of the first lockdown I was in need of some cheap laptops for myself and my son, who's studying at sixth-form college. Stone Refurb came up trumps with two reconditioned laptops, both with Windows 10 Home and six-month warranties.

They have webcams, fingerprint readers and all the bells and whistles of new laptops at a cost of under £300 for both.

They were delivered by courier within 48 hours and were in protective boxes with a quick set-up leaflet.

I can understand that some people want to place their trust in brand-new tech, but for some that's not an option due to cost. Companies like Stone Refurb fill the void and give a very good service.

Dion Singleton

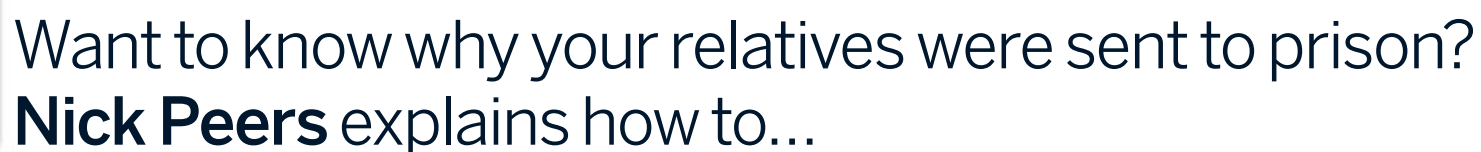


✉ Has a company impressed you with its customer service? Please let us know:  
[editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk)

**Contact**  
Stone Refurb

• **Email** [support@stonegroup.co.uk](mailto:support@stonegroup.co.uk)  
• **Phone** 01785 786 783





Reader Justin Eastham asked if we could help track down information about his great-great-grandfather Hansell Pilcher, who he discovered was serving time at Pentonville Prison during the 1911 census. Justin wanted to know how he could find out what crime Hansell committed.

There are two main online resources for finding criminal ancestors. The earliest, covering 1791 to 1892, is the Criminal Registers for England and Wales, comprising record sets HO26 and HO27 from The National Archives. You can access it through Ancestry ([www.snipca.com/36731](http://www.snipca.com/36731)).

The screenshot shows the 'Search Builder' interface. At the top, there's a search bar with the text 'Pilcher' entered. Below the search bar, there's a section titled 'Sarah Pilcher' with a red box around it. Below this, there's a list of results. The first result is 'Sarah Pilcher' with a red box around it. The second result is 'Sarah Pilcher' with a red box around it. Red lines connect the search bar to the first result, and the first result to the second result.

to 1935, and can be accessed through Find My Past ([www.snipca.com/36732](http://www.snipca.com/36732)). More recent records are locked away. Unfortunately, when we searched this record set, we drew a complete blank – not just for Hansell but for many of his fellow inmates too.

We examined the CRIM9 record sets more closely and discovered that two years – 1908 and 1910 – haven’t been digitised. This suggests Hansell was convicted in one of those two years, but to confirm Justin will need to visit the National Archives’ reading rooms in Kew when coronavirus restrictions have been lifted. Justin should request access to the CRIM 9/54 (1908) and CRIM 9/56 (1910) record sets.

We also tried several other online resources offering free access to criminal records for London-based ancestors, starting with Digital Panopticon ([www.digitalpanopticon.org/Records](http://www.digitalpanopticon.org/Records)). We tried searching via its Search Builder ([www.digitalpanopticon.org/search](http://www.digitalpanopticon.org/search), see screenshot left) but while many Pilchers appeared in the results, there was again no sign of Hansell.

We were also unable to find a trace of him among the Old Bailey's records ([www.oldbaileyonline.org](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org)), in local newspapers (see Issue 594 for a guide), or



at the London Metropolitan Archives  
(<https://search.lma.gov.uk>).

In the absence of any further avenues to explore, we decided to fill in some of the other gaps in Hansell's life. Justin had already found out that he was born on the Isle of Wight in 1843 and married in 1867, then shortly after moved to London to work as a Customs House Officer. He still held this post in the 1901 Census, by which time his wife had died.

In the 1902 electoral register his rented dwelling is described as “three rooms, top floor, unfurnished”. One year on, however, and he’d vanished from the electoral roll. He doesn’t appear again until the 1911 census (see screenshot above) after which we tracked down his death in 1915 in West Ham. Had he finished his sentence, or did he die in hospital? Ordering his death certificate from the GRO (<https://gro.gov.uk>) should help.

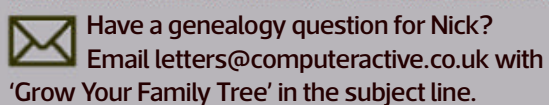
# Your **Genealogy** Problems Solved

**Can you tell me if it's possible to view more than six generations when viewing my tree in Family Tree Maker (FTM) 2019?**

**John Skippings**

Unfortunately, no – you’re limited to six generations when using the top-down Family View option, but there is a workaround: generate an Extended Family Chart from the Publish section,

then use the Chart Options panel on the right to tweak its look and feel. From here you can double-click a person on the chart to view and edit their information. For more help and advice, visit [www.snipca.com/36734](http://www.snipca.com/36734) to download the free FTM 2019 Companion Guide as a PDF.





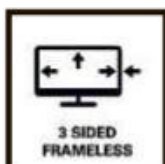
AOC



Q34E2A

# High resolution and bold colours

with a wider view  
& greater productivity



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# Best Free Software

Will Stapley recommends new programs that won't cost you anything



## SYSTEM TOOL

### WizFile 3

[www.snipca.com/36847](http://www.snipca.com/36847)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

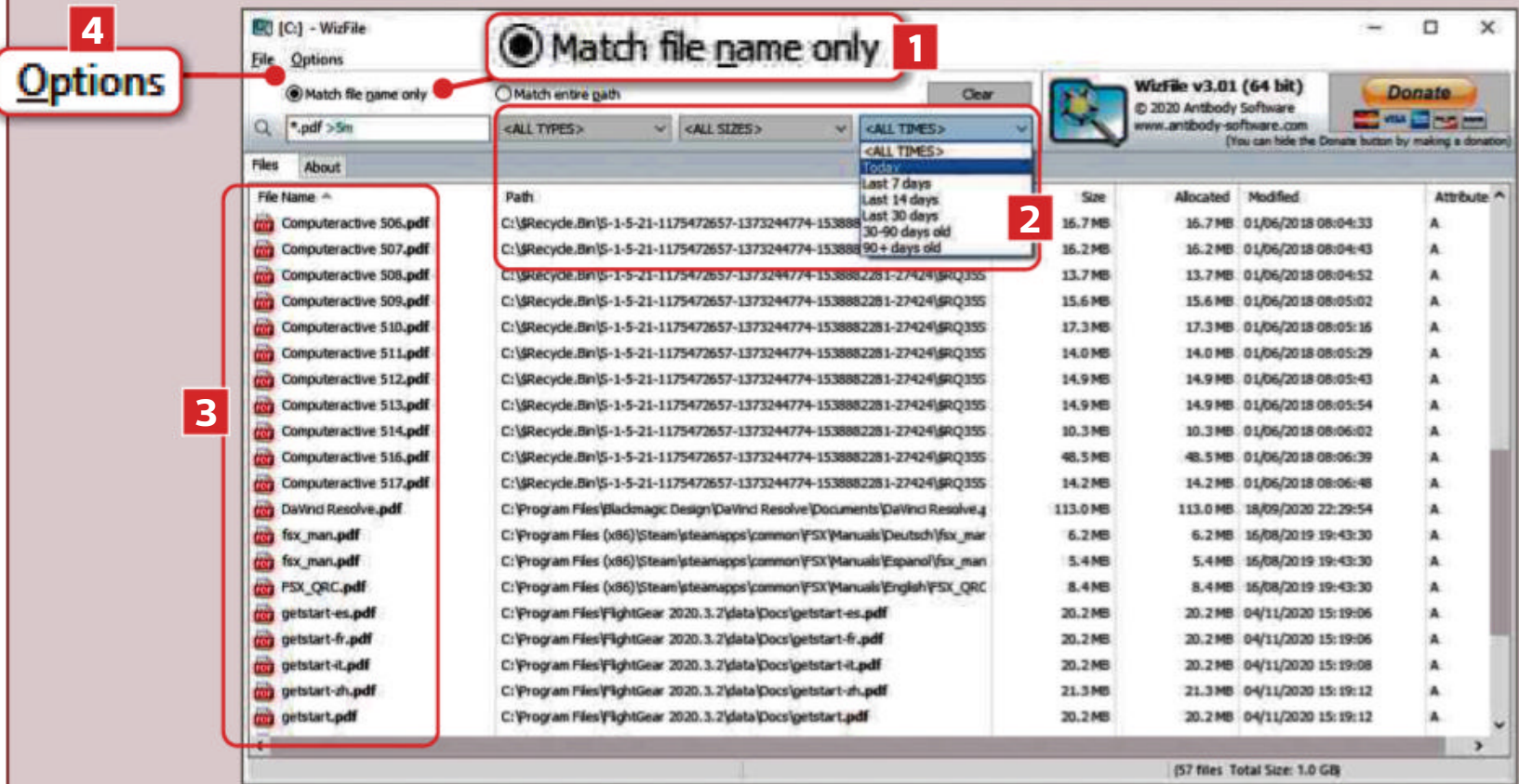
If you want something faster and more accurate than Windows' search tool, try WizFile (from the developers of the excellent WizTree tool, [www.snipca.com/36848](http://www.snipca.com/36848)). Instead of indexing files, as Windows' tool does, it uses what's called the Master File Table (MFT) – a hidden database on your hard drive that contains details of all files, including their names, sizes and more. While this means it can't search *inside* files (such as for specific words in a document), it does mean searches are near instantaneous, with WizFile updating the results as you type.

If you've used Everything ([www.snipca.com/36845](http://www.snipca.com/36845)), you'll instantly see the similarities. However, while Everything keeps things fairly basic, WizFile offers a few more options. Using the buttons just above the search box, you can choose to search only file names or folder names, and this version adds two new filters, letting you sort the results by size and date. It's frustrating that WizFile doesn't let you add your own criteria to these dropdown menus, but it does at least

now support text-based filters. Search for `*.jpg >1m <5m`, for example, and WizFile will find all JPEG images between 1MB and 5MB. You can also now use an exclamation mark to indicate files you're *not* interested in, so `computer !*.pdf` would find all files containing the word computer, but omit PDFs.

Other new features include integration with File Explorer (right-click a file or folder, select WizFile and the tool will open at that location) and a new dark mode. The latter is activated when you set Windows to dark mode (press Windows key+I, then go to Settings, Personalisation, followed by Colours to turn this on).

Additionally, when you minimise WizFile, it now moves to your system tray by default. You can re-open it by double-clicking the system-tray icon or pressing Ctrl+Windows key+W (sadly there's no way to customise this slightly awkward shortcut).



**1** If you only want to search file names, select 'Match filename only'. To also search folder names, select 'Match entire path'.

**2** Use these dropdown menus to filter your searches by file type (audio, video, image and so on), file size and when they were created.

**3** Your search results appear here as you type. You can open or run a file by double-clicking it. To open the file's folder in File Explorer, right-click it and select Explore Folder.

**4** Open the Options menu to change settings such as the type of information displayed in your results pane and whether WizFile should minimise to the system tray.





## SYSTEM TOOL

### PowerToys 0.27

[www.snipca.com/36870](http://www.snipca.com/36870)

**What you need:** Windows 10 (64bit)

Microsoft's open-source PowerToys suite of tools continues to improve – to download the latest version, go to the link above, scroll down and click 'PowerToysSetup-0.27.0-x64.exe'. This latest release enhances the FancyZones tool, which lets you organise your desktop by dragging windows into preset zones. FancyZones now supports multiple monitors, letting you create different zones on each. To use it, open PowerToys, select FancyZones, then 'Launch layout editor'. You'll then see all your monitors at the top of the layout screen (see screenshot). Select the one you want, then create your zones as normal. For more on how to use FancyZones and all other PowerToys tools, see our Cover Feature in Issue 591 (p50).



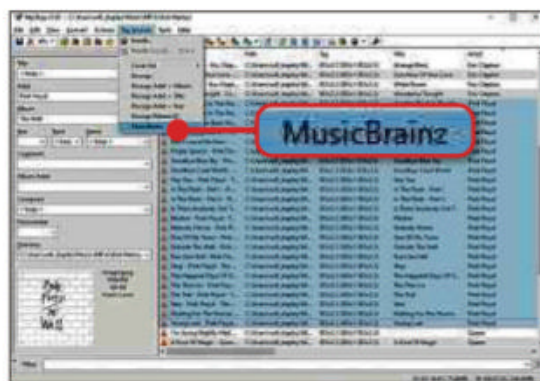
## AUDIO TOOL

### Mp3tag 3.04

[www.snipca.com/36877](http://www.snipca.com/36877)

**What you need:** Windows 7, 8.1 or 10

Like photos, MP3 files include lots of **metadata** – album and artist name, genre, cover art and so on. Mp3tag (click the 'Mp3tagv304asetup.exe' link to download it) lets you view and change this metadata in bulk, allowing you to better organise your collection. Version 3.04 adds support for MusicBrainz, a huge library of free metadata. To use it, select the MP3s you want to find metadata for, open the Tag Sources menu, then select MusicBrainz (see screenshot above). The metadata on the selected tracks will now update accordingly.



This version also improves performance. When we tested it by changing the date tag on a folder of just over 1,000 MP3s, it took 42 seconds, 14 seconds faster than in the previous version. If you've got a large library containing many thousands of MP3s, this could make a big difference.

## WHAT SHOULD I DOWNLOAD?

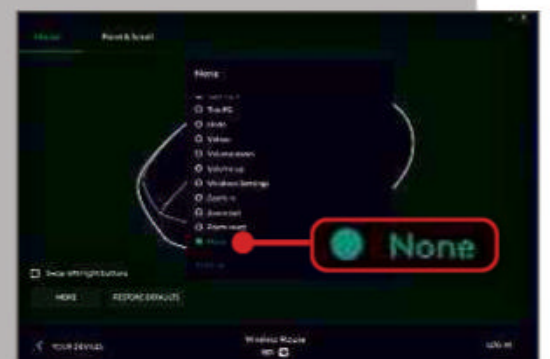
We tell you what software & apps to use

### What can I use to disable my scroll-wheel button?

**Q** I frequently press the scroll wheel by accident when using my Logitech mouse, activating the automatic scroll feature and shooting me from one end of the document to the other. Is there a tool that can disable this button?

Jack Lawes

**A** You don't say which Logitech mouse you have, but if it's relatively recent (bought within the last couple of years) it should be compatible with Logitech's Options tool, which lets you adjust how the buttons work. To download it, go to [www.snipca.com/36890](http://www.snipca.com/36890) (you'll find the full compatibility list at the bottom of the web page). Once installed, run the program and select your mouse from the main menu. You'll now see a picture of your mouse. Click the circle on the scroll wheel, then scroll down the list of options and select None (see screenshot right). Your middle mouse button will now be disabled. If ever you want to restore the button to its original function, click the Restore Defaults button.



If your mouse isn't supported by Logitech Options (and for anyone who has a mouse from a different manufacturer), there is another option: X-Mouse Button Control ([www.snipca.com/36886](http://www.snipca.com/36886) – click the 'Latest version' link). Although not as well designed as the Logitech tool, X-Mouse Button Control works with all mice. Run the program, then right-click its icon (a white mouse) in the system tray and select Setup. Locate the Middle Button option (this will flash if you press your mouse's scroll button), click the dropdown box and select Disable. Alternatively, you may prefer to simply put a delay on this button, meaning it will work only if you hold it down for a set amount of time. To do this, select Button Held from the dropdown box, then choose how long the button should be held for and what action it will result in (you can set up to three actions to run depending on how long you hold the button down for). To save your changes, click Apply, then Close.



Do you need our advice on what software to use? Just email us at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



HOW I USE...



# Shotcut and Audacity

**Will Stapley** reveals why sometimes two tools are better than one when he's editing videos

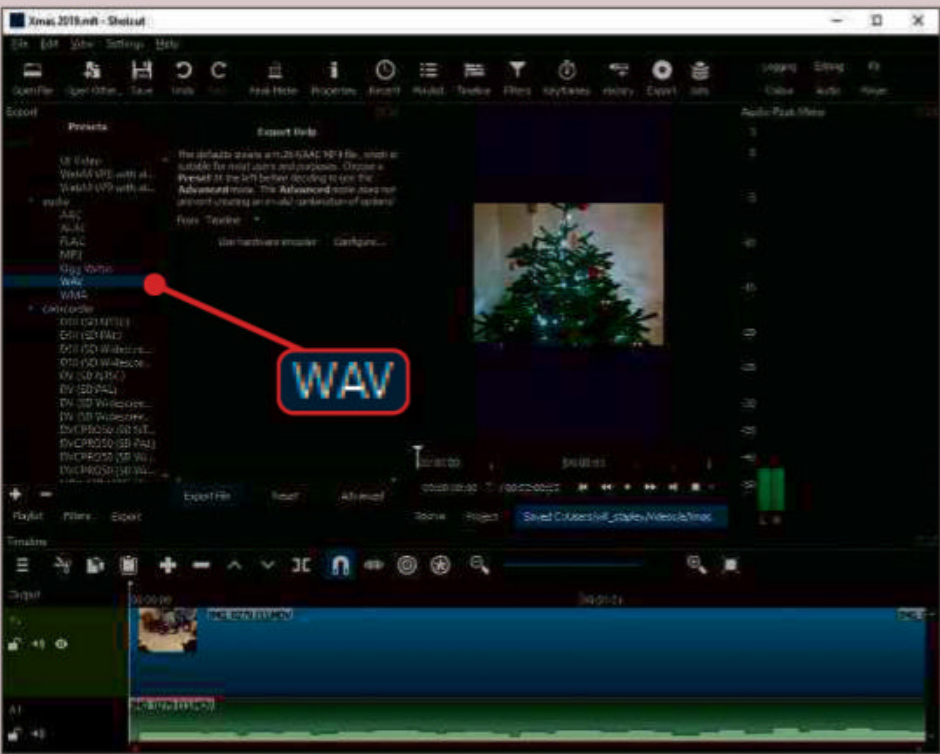
All-in-one home appliances are enticing, but they rarely work as well as a dedicated device. Take my washer/dryer. It does a great job of cleaning clothes, but it's absolutely hopeless at drying them (and when it broke down earlier this year, the engineer pointed his finger squarely at the drying element).

It's often the same with software. I love using Shotcut ([www.snipca.com/36840](http://www.snipca.com/36840)) for quick video-editing tasks, but its audio-tweaking capabilities pale in comparison with those of specialised tools such as Audacity ([www.snipca.com/36841](http://www.snipca.com/36841)).

So after discovering my recording of one of my kid's old school Nativity plays was blighted by the noise of a nearby air-conditioning unit trying to take centre stage, I used Shotcut and Audacity to fix it.

First, I imported the video into Shotcut by dragging it from File Explorer on to the Shotcut timeline. I then right-clicked the video on the timeline and selected Detach Audio – this separates the audio from the video and places it in a new audio track. Because that pesky air conditioner had run through the entire performance, I needed to edit the whole audio track. If I only need to edit a specific section I navigate to that section on the timeline, right-click and select Split At Playhead.

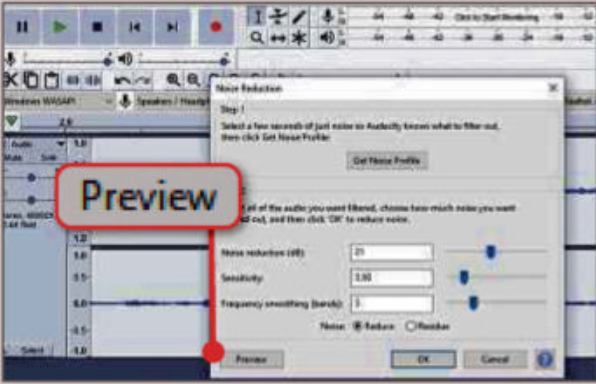
To save the audio as a separate file, I pressed Ctrl+E to open the Export pane, scrolled down to the Audio section and selected WAV (see



When exporting audio from Shotcut, use a lossless format such as WAV

screenshot above). The WAV format produces files far larger than the more popular MP3, but it's also **lossless**, meaning my audio won't lose quality during the editing process.

Now it was time to use Audacity. I dragged my exported audio file into Audacity and – using my mouse –



Audacity lets you try different noise-reduction settings, then quickly preview their effect

selected a small section of the audio where only the fan was audible. I then opened the Effects menu, selected 'Noise Reduction...' and clicked Get Noise Profile – this lets Audacity work out what noise needs removing.

Next, I selected the entire track (by pressing Ctrl+A), then ran the Noise Reduction effect again, this time adjusting the three sliders and clicking Preview (see screenshot left) until I got the best result. Removing background noise always adversely affects the rest of the audio to some extent, so it's a case of achieving the right balance.

Once I was happy with the result, I saved the file in Audacity by clicking File, Export, then 'Export as WAV'. I then returned to Shotcut and deleted the original audio track by right-clicking it then selecting Remove. All that remained was to insert my new and improved audio by dragging it from File Explorer into the (now empty) audio track.

So while the pandemic might have put this year's Nativity plays on hold, I can now enjoy one from years gone by.

WHAT I'D LIKE TO SEE IN SHOTCUT

Separating audio tracks in Shotcut and exporting them to Audacity isn't difficult, but it would still be useful if Shotcut had a simple 'Edit audio in Audacity' tool that

handles the export process for me. Both Shotcut and Audacity are **open source**, so a feature that links the two isn't beyond the realms of possibility.



# Named & Shamed

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



## WARNING: JUNK AHEAD

### Junk offender: MyCleanPC

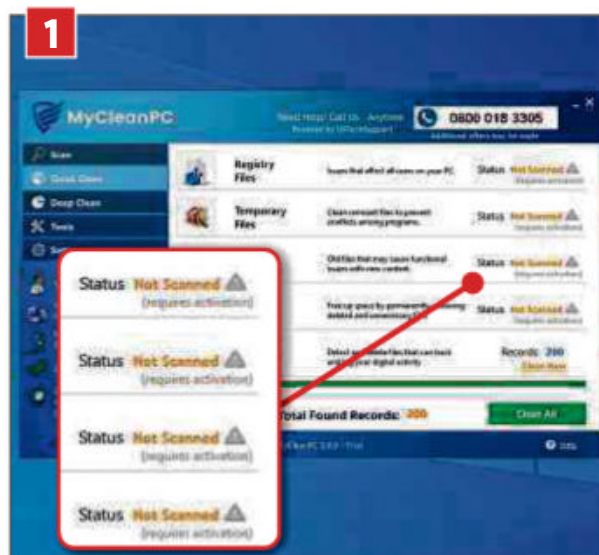


New Year is often the time for a fresh start. But if you're thinking of treating your PC to a tidy-up in 2021, then let me give you a word of warning – don't let MyCleanPC ([www.mycleanpc.com](http://www.mycleanpc.com)) anywhere near it.

It's easy enough to stumble upon. It appears on the first page of Google's results when you search for 'clean my pc'. The entry is not a 'sponsored' link or an advert, which could give you the impression that it's more genuine than others.

Click through to the site and you'll be offered a free tool to "diagnose and clean up" your computer "in minutes". The tool's homepage is plastered with reassuring customer ratings, along with a stream of unerringly positive user testimonials.

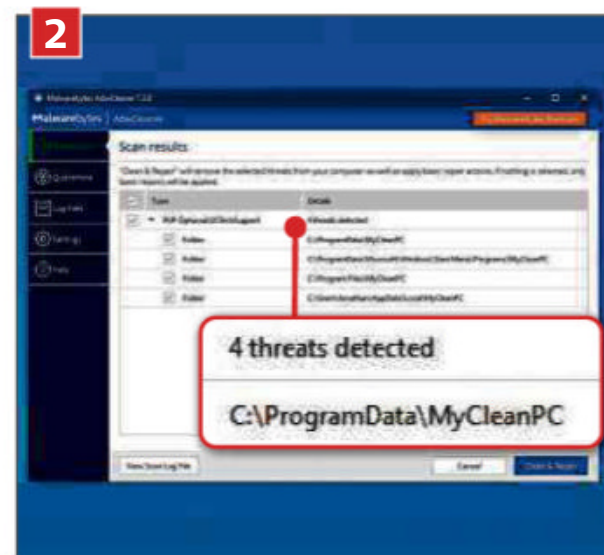
However, when you install MyCleanPC's 'free' tool, you'll quickly find yourself locked out of all but one of



You'll have to pay to see the results of these scans...

its Quick Clean scans unless you pay \$20 (£15) – see screenshot 1. Even the single scan you're allowed to carry out demands payment in order to clean the "issues" it finds.

MyCleanPC also sets itself to launch at startup without your consent and runs permanently in the background – basically dragging your PC's performance down further and spamming you with



...though you shouldn't bother unless you also want to remove these four PUPs from your PC

pop-up offers and alerts. Running Malwarebytes AdwCleaner reveals that MyCleanPC placed four PUPs on my system. Looking more closely, all four PUPs relate to components of MyCleanPC itself (see screenshot 2).

Many of the programs I name and shame try to install junk on your computer. But in the case of MyCleanPC, the program is the junk.

### WHAT ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT?

# BBC

#### WHAT THEY SAY

Dave Morris & Josh Tumath, BBC Online  
[www.snipca.com/36756](http://www.snipca.com/36756)

"We've been building things in isolation for years at the BBC, it's sometimes hard for teams to think outside of their silo and horizontally about what the business needs in a component library. The design system, and the Presentation Layer Team are now influencing teams to think more horizontal."

#### WHAT THEY MEAN

BBC staff should be lying down on the job.

### JONATHAN'S VILLAIN OF THE FORTNIGHT

## Ashley Crispin

In the wake of the pandemic, many companies are struggling to keep their staff, let alone increase their employees' pay. But try telling that to IT worker Ashley Crispin. The 23-year-old from Basildon in Essex was so convinced he deserved a raise that he quit his job at a high-profile banking firm when his boss refused his request for more money.

He then took further revenge on his ex-employer by carrying out a campaign of disruption – hacking into the company's computer network, nobbling vital systems,



changing passwords and generally causing chaos for the firm's 60 staff.

At one point, he even hacked into his ex-manager's webcam.

The disgruntled Crispin then deleted network logs to try to cover his traces, but it seems he may have overvalued his IT skills after all because the police were able to track him down and arrest him. His performance has since been rewarded with a suspended eight-month prison sentence, a three-month curfew and an £800 fine.



**LAPTOP** | From **£549** from Microsoft [www.snipca.com/36834](http://www.snipca.com/36834)

## Microsoft Surface Laptop Go

### Surface tension

We're used to the sleekest, slimmest laptops costing more money than less showy models, but Microsoft has pulled off a clever trick with the Surface Laptop Go. It's taken the smart, wedge-shaped design of the Surface Laptop 3 (see our review, Issue 570), which starts at around £999, and replaced the aluminium case with a tough plastic alternative. There are three configurations of this Surface Laptop Go to choose from, starting at £549.

“A decent laptop, but the cheapest model will struggle with more demanding tasks”

All three models use the same quad-core Intel Core i5-1035G1 processor. The £549 model backs it up with 4GB of RAM and 64GB of eMMC storage. Opt for the more expensive options and the memory is increased to a more usable 8GB. The £699 model comes with a faster 128GB SSD, while the £899 version bumps that up to a 256GB SSD.

Unfortunately, this configuration pares the cheapest model back a bit too far, with the bare minimum of memory you need to run Windows 10 and hardly enough room left on the drive to install anything other than Windows. It could still work as a Windows version of a Chromebook, if you were planning to run mostly web-based apps and save



everything online, but it's not ideal as an everyday laptop. The 8GB versions, however, perform far better and we tested the 256GB version for this review.

In our tests it performed better than similarly slim laptops. It was faster than Microsoft's Surface Go 2 tablet and the Surface Laptop 3, even out-pacing the Apple MacBook Air (see Issue 587). However, if you don't mind switching brands for a chunkier model, the Honor MagicBook 14 (see Issue 580) is much better at running Windows and only costs £549.

The 12.4in screen is bigger than it sounds thanks to its aspect ratio. It has a squarer 3:2 shape, instead of the more common widescreen ratio of 16:9. If you're going to watch films on it, you'll be left with black letterboxing at the top and bottom of the screen but the added height is great for vertically oriented programs, such as browsing web pages or writing documents. It's a decent quality screen, too, with our tests measuring its coverage of sRGB at 91.6 per cent. Its speakers are a touch on the tinny side but it can produce a surprisingly meaty volume.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Quad-core Intel Core i5 1035G1 processor • 4GB or 8GB memory • 64GB eMMC, 128GB SSD or 256GB SSD • USB-C port • USB-A port • 3.5mm headphone jack • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Windows 10 S • 15.7x278x206mm (HxWxD) • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36834](http://www.snipca.com/36834)

The battery life is decent, lasting almost 7 hours 30 minutes in our video-playback test. Larger laptops with bigger batteries will inevitably last longer, and both the Surface Laptop 3 and MacBook Air can squeeze out another hour of charge. However, there should be enough power in here to keep you going between charges.

The keyboards and trackpads of smaller laptops can sometimes feel cramped but this model is fine in this area, with the screen's added height leaving room for a larger trackpad and decent-sized keys.

It also has a sensible selection of ports, with standard USB, USB-C and a 3.5mm headphone jack on the left. A separate charging port with an easy-to-use magnetic connection is located on the right.

**VERDICT** A compact laptop with a decent screen, but the £549 model is crying out for more memory and storage

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Honor MagicBook 14 £549 Better at running Windows but the screen isn't as good





**LAPTOP** | £1,299 from Apple [www.snipca.com/36844](http://www.snipca.com/36844)

# Apple MacBook Pro 13 (2020)

## Taking the M1 fast lane

Apple stopped building its own processors into its computers back in 2006, with that year's MacBook Pro 15 being the first Apple machine to be powered by an Intel processor. Since then it's been Intel all the way, with Apple developing chips only for its iPhone and iPad ranges.

However, this is all changing and the final Intel-powered laptop is the MacBook Air (2020) (see our review, Issue 587, [www.snipca.com/35660](http://www.snipca.com/35660)). Starting with this new 13in MacBook Pro and – rather confusingly – yet another new MacBook Air, Apple's computers will come with the company's new processor, the M1. It sounds like a small detail but, as you find out when you start using this stunning new laptop, it's a giant leap forward in capability.

“Good looks, an outstanding screen and quicker than ever”

So how fast is it? We tested a model with 8GB of memory and a 256GB SSD, which at £1,299 is the most affordable laptop in the new MacBook Pro range. We ran our usual suite of benchmark tests and the only laptop we've ever tested that came close to this level of speed was another MacBook – the 2019 MacBook Pro 16, which costs an eye-watering £3,899. Compared with Windows laptops we've tested, the new MacBook Pro 13's results are around twice as good, in terms of its processor and graphics capability.

But there's a huge downside to the M1 – a loss of compatibility. By using Intel processors, the old Macs were able to run Windows 10, either installed or



as a **virtual machine**. You can't do that anymore. Apple has rewritten its macOS operating system to make the most of its new processor, as well its own apps, such as its free office suite, music software GarageBand and video editor iMovie, which all work incredibly well.

We found it compatible with most other macOS software we tested but there are no guarantees that your favourite programs will work, so it's best to check before you take the plunge. On a happier note, however, it works with iPad apps, so you can now run those directly from your laptop.

In terms of looks, you'll struggle to spot a difference between this and other recent MacBook Pros – and that's no bad thing. The case is a fabulous, solid chunk of aluminium, housing Apple's recently improved Magic Keyboard – complete with the dynamic Touch Bar (pictured below left) – and the brilliant touchpad that has been a MacBook stalwart for some time now. Even the ports and sockets are in the same places, with a pair of USB-C ports on the left and a 3.5mm headphone jack on the right.

The screen is also as brilliant as ever. This IPS panel has a resolution of 2560x1600 pixels and its colour representation is outstanding, producing 97.9 per cent of the sRGB colour palette with an impressive Delta E rating of 0.93.

### SPECIFICATIONS

Eight-core Apple M1 processor • 8GB memory • 256GB SSD • 13.3in 2,560x1,600 pixels screen • 720p webcam • 802.11ax Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5 • 2 x USB-C Thunderbolt 3 ports • macOS Big Sur • 15.6x304x212mm (HxWxD) • 1.4kg • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36837](http://www.snipca.com/36837)

### HOW WE TEST

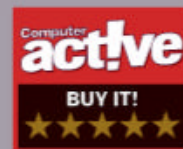
Computeractive is owned by Dennis Publishing, which employs a team of specialist technical reviewers. You'll often read references to our benchmark testing, which is a method of assessing products using the same criteria. For example, we test the speed of every PC and the battery life of every phone and tablet in exactly the same way. This makes our reviews authoritative, rigorous and accurate.

Dennis Publishing also owns the magazines *PC Pro* and the websites Expert Reviews ([www.expertreviews.co.uk](http://www.expertreviews.co.uk)) and IT Pro ([www.itpro.com](http://www.itpro.com)). This means we can test thousands of products before choosing the most relevant for *Computeractive*.

### FAIR AND IMPARTIAL

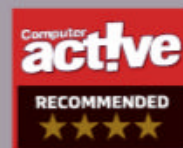
Our writers follow strict guidelines to ensure the reviews are fair and impartial. The manufacturer has no involvement in our tests.

### 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 Recommended 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.

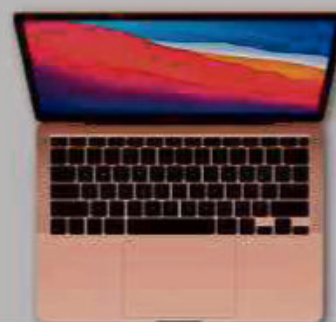
**VERDICT** Apple's new M1 processor provides this silver machine with a huge power boost, leaving rivals in the dust



### ALTERNATIVE Apple MacBook

Air £999

Launched at the same time, also uses the M1 chip and zips along nicely





**MINI PC** | £67 from The Pi Hut [www.snipca.com/36859](http://www.snipca.com/36859)

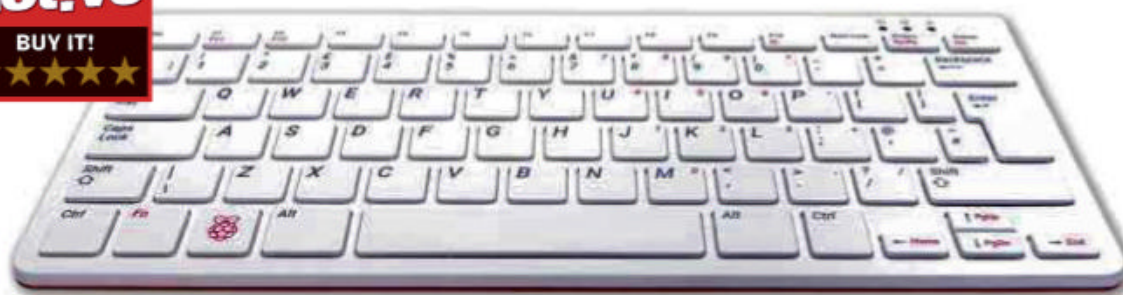
## Raspberry Pi 400

### Pi and microchips

For many of us, home computing started with devices that had a computer built into a keyboard, which you plugged into a TV. We have fond memories of the ZX Spectrum, the Commodore 64 and the BBC Model B, to name but a few, so there's something deeply nostalgic about the new Raspberry Pi 400. It takes the famous, diminutive bare-bones PC and surrounds it in a retro keyboard case, like a modern-day version of the Acorn Electron (see [www.snipca.com/36849](http://www.snipca.com/36849)).

“Not as easy to carry as a laptop but it's the most portable desktop PC we've ever seen”

There are two options available: the unit alone, which sells for £67; or a kit that also comes with mouse, pre-installed memory card, cables and the updated Beginner's Guide manual for £94. Clad in cheap and cheerful red and white plastic, the keyboard (pictured above) looks just like the official keyboard that Raspberry launched last year. While that model had a few USB ports on the back, so you could hook it up to a Pi, this latest version has the Pi built-in. The ports you'd normally find have been transported to the back of the keyboard, including twin **microHDMI** ports (supporting **4K** resolution at 60fps), two USB 3.0 ports, one USB 2.0 port (pictured below) and the 40-pin GPIO port (below right), which lets you use your Pi to control all kinds of affordable add-ons, including this robotic arm ([www.snipca.com/36862](http://www.snipca.com/36862)).



It hasn't lost any of its portability. Yes, it's a larger package than a basic Pi, at 23x286x122mm and 384g, but having a keyboard and computer in one is a real boon. Add a mouse and power supply, plug it into a monitor or TV with an **HDMI** cable, and you're away. It's not as easy to carry as a laptop but it's the most portable desktop PC we've ever seen.

Sadly, the keyboard is underwhelming. Its small size leaves it feeling more cramped than a full-sized laptop keyboard, so it's more reminiscent of a ZX Spectrum than a Commodore 64 or BBC Micro.

The heart of this device is a top-end Raspberry Pi 4 (see our review, Issue 559), with a quad-core Arm processor and 4GB of memory. You can't just take this out of the keyboard case, though. It comes as a sealed unit, the ports are separate and there are vents, **heatsinks** and other heat-management components built in. This has let the Raspberry Pi engineers **overclock** the Pi 4 to 1.8GHz, higher than the 1.5GHz **clock speed** of the basic model. they claim this allows it to perform 20 per cent better than a standard Pi 4.

Running our **benchmark** tests on it produced a rather staggering score of 27 points. The same test on the original Pi 4 produced a result of 13.9 and a very hot Pi, whereas the heat management of the Pi 400 lets it run at a more stable temperature, even with the overclock. For reference, that benchmark score of 27 is

two points higher than Microsoft's Surface Go 2 could manage.

The Pi 400 runs the company's own Raspberry Pi OS (pre-installed on the **microSD card** if you buy the complete kit), and while it's capable and reasonably well-rounded, it still runs into the kind of compatibility problems with peripherals that you won't suffer in Windows. It remains an operating system for computer enthusiasts, not everyday users.

The Raspberry Pi has come a long way since it was launched in 2012 and this latest version is the closest it's come to offering an experience that's akin to unwrapping a Commodore 64 on your birthday and spending the rest of the day hogging the family TV. It's still not quite powerful enough to run Windows 10 and replace a basic PC, but it's surely only a matter of time.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

Quad-core 1.8GHz Broadcom BCM2711 processor  
• 4GB memory • 2x micro HDMI ports • 1 x USB 2.0 port • 2x USB 3.0 ports • Gigabit Ethernet port  
• 40-pin GPIO port • microSD slot • Raspberry Pi OS • 23x286x122mm (HxWxD) • 384g • One-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36842](http://www.snipca.com/36842)

**VERDICT** The most accessible Raspberry Pi to date is also the most powerful, and it remains the absolute bargain it's always been

★★★★★

**ALTERNATIVE** Raspberry Pi 4 Model B (4GB) £54 Shave a few pounds off the price by getting a 4GB Pi 4 Model B without the keyboard case





**PHONE** | £329 from OnePlus [www.snipca.com/36855](http://www.snipca.com/36855)

# OnePlus Nord N10 5G

North star

OnePlus started out selling affordable Android smartphones but over time drifted to more expensive models to compete with the best Samsung and Apple devices. Its new Nord range is an attempt to return to affordable devices, starting with the £379 Nord (see our review, Issue 587, [www.snipca.com/35716](http://www.snipca.com/35716)) and now continuing with the Nord N10, which shaves £50 off that model.

Like its big brother, the N10 is ready for 5G mobile networks and has a smooth-scrolling 90Hz screen with a resolution of 2400x1080 pixels. The N10 is a little bulkier, with a larger bezel at the bottom of the screen (to accommodate the 3.5mm headphone socket, which the first Nord lacked), but realistically you'd need to get a ruler out to spot the difference.

The big changes in this configuration require a close inspection of its specifications. Most significantly, the phone's processor has been downgraded to a Qualcomm Snapdragon 690, down from a 765, and the memory has been reduced from 8GB to 6GB.

This inevitably affects performance. In our tests there was little difference in the general-performance test scores but the N10 dropped right off when we pushed its graphics capability, so you wouldn't want to rely on this to run the latest games. Its battery life also fell a few hours shorter in our video-playback test, lasting 7 hours 35 minutes.

OnePlus has also downgraded the original Nord's AMOLED screen for an IPS panel. If you know your screens you'll be rolling your eyes at this, because AMOLED models offer perfect contrast and are excellent at reproducing colour. However, we were pleasantly surprised by the IPS screen in the N10, which reproduced 97.5 per cent of sRGB colours with a Delta E score of 1.5. In short, this is

## SPECIFICATIONS

6.49in 2400x1080-pixel screen • 64 and 8-megapixel rear cameras • 16-megapixel front camera • 128GB flash storage • 802.11ac Wi-Fi • Bluetooth 5.1 • 5G ready • OxygenOS (Android 10) • 163x75x8.95mm • 190g • Two-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36869](http://www.snipca.com/36869)



a very good IPS screen.

The camera configuration has also changed, with a bit of give and take over whether it's an up or downgrade. The main camera resolution has increased from 48 to 64 megapixels, though features like HDR are better supported in its default (and usually perfectly acceptable) 16-megapixel mode. However, it's now unbranded, where the original Nord wore its Sony lens with pride.

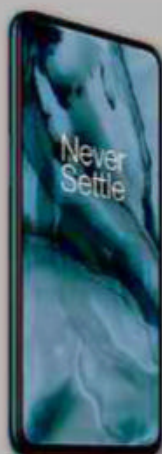
It has the same additional 8-megapixel ultra-wide camera and 2-megapixel macro camera, but the depth-sensing lens has dropped from five to two megapixels. For selfie fans, the front camera has been reduced from 32 to 16 megapixels, again losing the Sony branding. Test shots came out fine – better on the main camera than the peripheral ones – but we wouldn't buy this smartphone for its camera alone.

**VERDICT** The N10 costs less than the original Nord and is a decent phone, but it has a few too many compromises to make it great

★★★★★

## ALTERNATIVE

OnePlus Nord £379  
The original Nord is £50 more expensive but has a faster processor and better screen



## CHOOSE THE RIGHT SPECS

### Screen resolution



#### What does it do?

A screen's resolution is the number of pixels it has. It's stated as the number of columns of pixels times the number of rows. For example, screens with 4K resolution have 3840x2160 pixels.

#### How does it work?

Pixels are arranged in a grid on the screen. The device you're using controls the colour and brightness of each individual pixel, and does this several times per second, depending on the screen's refresh rate. This way you get an image built up on screen and the constant changing provides the impression of animation. This grid of pixels is configured and controlled in a standard way, so PCs can be plugged into any monitor (as long as it has the right connections) and can display some kind of image, whatever the resolution.

#### What are the specs?

The lowest resolution you're likely to encounter nowadays is HD (1280x720 pixels). This might be used on budget smartphones and very old TVs and monitors. A more common standard now is Full HD or at least 1920x1080 pixels. This has proved very popular on TVs but is being superseded on larger screens by 4K (3840x2160 pixels). Which one you should choose depends on the size of your screen. You don't need 4K resolution on a smartphone because your eyes aren't good enough to discern the difference when the pixels are that small – the Samsung Galaxy S20 (pictured) comes close with 3200x1400 pixels. However, 4K is worth exploring if you're looking for a monitor screen that's 27in or larger.



#### Can I change it later?

You can upgrade a PC's monitor to get a higher resolution but you can't do it on a laptop, phone or tablet. Once you've chosen your resolution on a device with a built-in screen, you're stuck with it.



PC MONITOR | £126 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36858](http://www.snipca.com/36858)

## Iiyama ProLite XUB2493HSU-B1

Screen star



If you want a new PC monitor but you have less than £150 to spend, you'll have to make a compromise. A clear picture with decent colour representation are the key ingredients you're likely to insist upon, but what would you be willing to forfeit to get it?

You have to look quite hard to find the corners that have been cut to bring this 24in monitor in at £126. It has a good range of inputs, including **VGA**, **DisplayPort** and **HDMI**, and two **USB 2.0** ports, mounted on the side for easy access. The slim bezel around the edge of the screen is minimal, giving it a sharp and stylish look.

We were particularly impressed with the stand. The screen can be rotated 90 degrees, so you can work on tall things such as documents and portrait photos with less wasted space. Its height can be adjusted by 130mm, which is impressive when you consider that most monitors of this price have static stands with very limited movement.

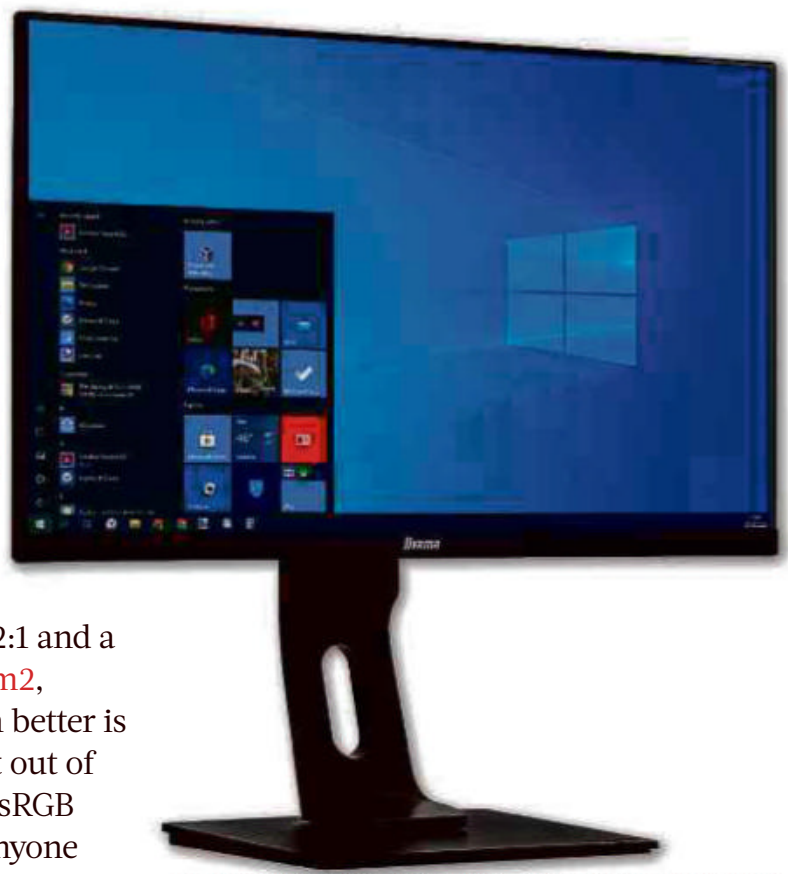
In our tests the **IPS** screen covered 93.6 per

cent of colours in the **sRGB** standard, with an outstanding **Delta E** rating of 0.81. We measured a **contrast ratio** of 1192:1 and a maximum brightness of 278**cd/m2**, which are both impressive. Even better is that we got these results straight out of the box, using the screen's own **sRGB** colour setting. This is ideal for anyone looking for a stress-free setup.

This, as it turns out, is a boon because the one area where the monitor falls down is its control panel. Its buttons are inconveniently located behind the screen

and there's no on-screen guide to explain what each one does. The lowest button of this group is the off switch, so it's far too easy to power down the screen when you're trying to do something else, such as adjust the brightness.

Hopefully, however, with its brilliant default settings, you'll barely need to touch those buttons. With that in mind, the fiddly controls are a more sensible compromise to make than lowering the quality of the screen or the stand.



### SPECIFICATIONS

23.8in IPS LCD • 1920x1080-pixel resolution • HDMI, DisplayPort and VGA inputs • 2W stereo speakers • 2x USB 2 ports • 441x614x197mm (HxWxD) • 7.2kg • Three-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36858](http://www.snipca.com/36858)

**VERDICT** A great-value Full HD screen with impressive colours and an adjustable stand, only let down by its fiddly menu

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE BenQ GL2780

**£150** A larger, 27in monitor that doesn't cost much more, but uses a **TN** panel with limited viewing angles



### WHAT SHOULD I BUY?

We solve your buying dilemmas

## Which ink should I use for my Xerox printer?

**Q** I use a fabulous Xerox 6515 laser printer to organise church events and some cartridges now need replacing. Xerox-branded cartridges are very expensive and as treasurer I know money is short. Should I buy non-Xerox versions and, if so, which ones? Remanufactured or completely new ones? Also, I can't find any comparison reviews to help me buying brand X rather than brand Z. Any help would be welcome.

Ray Ekins

**A** Xerox claims that its own cartridges maintain the best print quality, but you can judge that for yourself. Xerox costs are high but come in three capacities: Standard, High and Extra High. The standard cyan cartridge, for example, costs £71 and prints 1,000 pages (7p per page). However, while the Extra High capacity option costs £135, it's more cost efficient and prints 4,300 pages (3p per page). We found these Amazon prices on Xerox's own price-comparison site ([www.snipca.com/36876](http://www.snipca.com/36876)).

However, compatible cartridges are even better value. We'd recommend Stinkyink ([www.snipca.com/36878](http://www.snipca.com/36878)), which sells a pack of all four colours with a similar capacity to Xerox's mid-range high-capacity cartridges (pictured) for £150, whereas Xerox charges £457, saving you an astonishing £307. Stinkyink guarantees compatibility so you've really got very little to lose.



Do you need advice on what you should buy? Email us at [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)





£499.99

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ASUS PRIME B450M-A

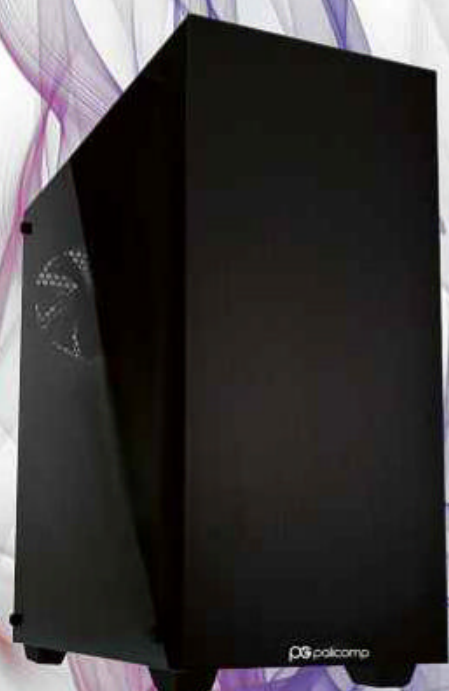
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AMD RX 560 2GB

GAMEMAX Expedition

MICROSOFT Windows 10 or 10 Pro



£599.99

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## AMD NAVIGATOR (RYZ8)

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# Reviews

**WIRELESS EARPHONES** | £70 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36894](http://www.snipca.com/36894)

## Creative Outlier Air V2

Ear we go again

Apple may have started the trend for wireless earphones, but there are plenty of alternatives around. The Outlier Air V2 models from Creative are its second generation of earbuds (see our review of the first, Issue 553) and they are designed to near perfection.

Like Apple's AirPods, these come in their own charging case, which is good for a couple of full charges, and which is itself charged from a standard **USB-C** cable. They also come with three sizes of ear attachment to ensure a snug fit.

The V2 are very similar in design to the original Outlier Air. The earbud housings are drum-shaped with the sections that rest against your ear curved to fit the contours of your ears. They also weigh a fair bit less at 6g per bud.

The biggest change is the addition of touch controls, which replace physical

buttons. The actions assigned to the touch controls depend on which of the three modes you're using: Playback, Pause or Call.

The other improvements are to battery life and microphone quality. The buds now last up to 12 hours on a single charge (up from 10). Taking the charging case into account, the V2 delivers up to 34 hours of audio playback, four hours more than the original Outlier Air.

The V2 uses the same 5.6mm **graphene drivers** as the original and it's hard to find fault with how they sound given their price tag. They sound energetic and crisp, and there's plenty of bass underpinning pleasingly sharp mid-ranges and trebles. No one aspect of the audio frequency range dominates, resulting in a balance that lends itself well to pretty much every musical genre.



### SPECIFICATIONS

In-ear headphones • 5.6mm graphene-coated driver • Bluetooth 5 • IPX5 weather-proofing • Microphone • Charging case with USB-C port • Two-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36894](http://www.snipca.com/36894)

**VERDICT** The original Outlier Air earbuds were already excellent and Creative has improved them while maintaining the exceptional value for money

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE Tronsmart

Spunky Beat £30 The name may have got lost in translation, but these are very capable wireless earbuds for half the price



**HEADPHONES** | £80 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36897](http://www.snipca.com/36897)

## AfterShokz OpenMove

Close to the bone

Bone-conduction headphones don't sit in your ear but rest in front of it, delivering sound to your inner ear by vibrating your cheekbones – in the same way you can hear crunching noises when you eat biscuits. They've become increasingly popular among fitness enthusiasts because they leave your ear canals clear, so you're much more aware of your surroundings during exercise. This makes them a much safer option when jogging, cycling or just walking the dog. The trade-off, however, is that noisy environments can drown out what you're trying to listen to.

These OpenMove headphones are the latest basic model from AfterShokz, a

### SPECIFICATIONS

Bone-conduction headphones • Bluetooth 5 • IP55 weather-proofing • Microphone • USB-C charging • Two-year warranty [www.snipca.com/36897](http://www.snipca.com/36897)

well-known brand in this line of technology. The headset connects with Bluetooth 5.0 and can be used to make phone calls as well as listen to music. They're charged via USB-C and last for around six hours between charges. This is more than enough for an exercise session but might not last you a whole day away from home. It's much shorter than the battery life you get from some regular in-ear headphones nowadays, including the Creative Outlier Air V2 earbuds reviewed above.

The sound quality is also no match for regular in-ear headphones of a similar price. There's plenty of detail in the mid-range and treble frequencies, which makes them very well suited to listening to spoken-word content, but their lack of bass will disappoint music lovers.



**VERDICT** These headphones are the perfect introduction to bone-conduction tech, but they fall short of the quality we expect from in-ear models

★★★★★

### ALTERNATIVE AfterShokz Aeropex

£120 More expensive than the OpenMove, but with a better battery life and improved waterproofing





**TV-STREAMING DEVICE** | £99 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36904](http://www.snipca.com/36904)

## Roku Streambar

We will Roku



In Issue 593's Cover Feature we looked at several devices you can use to bring video-streaming services to your TV screen. We touched on the Roku Streambar but we thought it was worth bringing you an extended review of this innovative two-in-one device. It combines a Roku TV-streaming device – so you can access Netflix, BBC iPlayer and more – with a sound-boosting soundbar designed to enhance your TV's audio capabilities.

“Aimed at people looking to upgrade both streaming and sound quality at the same time”

This is aimed at people looking to upgrade both streaming and sound quality at the same time so, if you already have a decent streaming device or audio setup attached to your TV then this isn't for you. If you're shopping around for both, however, it's an attractive option.

The streaming element of the device is top notch, with the same specification as Roku's current top-end streamer, the Streaming Stick+ (see our review, Issue 581). It supports 4K resolution at 60fps, so to get the most out of it you'll need a 4K TV, subscription to a video service that supports it (such as Amazon Prime Video,

### SPECIFICATIONS

ARC and Dolby Audio sound enhancement • 4K (3840x2160 pixels) resolution at 60fps • HDR10 • HDMI 2.0a port • Bluetooth 5.0 • Wi-Fi 802.11ac • 356x107x70mm • 1.1kg • Two-year warranty  
[www.snipca.com/36751](http://www.snipca.com/36751)

Netflix or Disney+) and a reasonable Wi-Fi connection.

Streaming from the device is simple thanks to Roku's intuitive, app-based operating system. You download an app for each service you require and use Roku's remote control to choose between them from the grid on the home screen. Roku has the widest range of British catchup services, including iPlayer, All 4, Demand 5 and ITV Hub, as well as all the popular subscription services.

The soundbar itself sounds great. Although it only has stereo speakers, it uses four of them to direct sound around the room, and some clever software to separate elements like speech from music and background noise. It can produce plenty of volume if you want to rattle the walls, and offers a significant improvement in sound quality over the speakers built into most TVs. The bass is good for the size of the unit but it isn't as powerful as a soundbar that comes with a separate subwoofer.

You can also connect to the soundbar using Bluetooth, if you want to use the speaker to play music from your phone or tablet without having to switch on the TV.

**VERDICT** An excellent all-in-one upgrade for that enhances your TV's streaming capability and sound quality



**ALTERNATIVE** Anker Nebula Fire TV £160 A similar but more expensive option if you prefer Amazon's Fire TV interface



### DO I REALLY NEED...

## Modular wireless chargers?



### What is it?

These wireless chargers ([www.snipca.com/36887](http://www.snipca.com/36887), pictured), made by Dutch firm Lens, let you build a customised raft of pads you can simply drop your gadgets on to when they need recharging. Its modular approach means you can choose the exact units you need for maximum tidiness.

### What does it do?

Wireless charging lets you reduce the clutter and inconvenience of cables. However, if each gadget needs its own wireless charging point, the object is soon defeated. These interlocking modules could be the answer.

### What's the catch?

Price. The 65W Dual Wireless Charger Main Station costs €99 (around £88) and is big enough for two phones only. You can add another four modules to it, including pads and stands for phones. These add-ons cost between €40 (£36) and €70 (£62) each.

### So can I do without it?

Yes, unless you want to spend almost as much on your chargers as you spent on your gadgets.

### NEXT ISSUE

## On Sale Weds 13 Jan

### HP EliteBook 845 G7

Find out how fast this AMD-powered laptop is



### D-Link DIR-X1860

Upgrade your wireless network to Wi-Fi 6

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## Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

### LAPTOP

**Honor MagicBook 14**  
**£550** from [www.snipca.com/34688](http://www.snipca.com/34688)  
**Tested** Issue 580



Using an AMD Ryzen 3500U processor, this lightweight metal laptop beat Microsoft's Surface Laptop 3 with Intel's i7-1065G7 in our tests. The 14in Full HD screen lacks colour accuracy but looks decent. For the money, it's a great buy.

**ALTERNATIVE Dell XPS 13** New Intel CPUs and a taller screen make this a more powerful, all-round slim notebook, although prices now start at a steep £1,629 from [www.snipca.com/36642](http://www.snipca.com/36642)

### DESKTOP PC

**Palicomp Intel Mercury**  
**£600** from [www.snipca.com/34223](http://www.snipca.com/34223)  
**Tested** Issue 576



If you don't need advanced gaming, your money's well spent here on a six-core Intel i5-9600K processor overclocked to 5GHz. 16GB of memory and a full terabyte of fast SSD storage round off a powerful PC with good expansion potential.

**ALTERNATIVE Chillblast Photo Zen** Fast Ryzen 7 CPU plus adequate GPU makes a superb work PC. £1,500 from [www.snipca.com/35840](http://www.snipca.com/35840)

### APPLE IPAD

**Apple iPad 10.2in**  
**£329** from [www.snipca.com/36178](http://www.snipca.com/36178)  
**Tested** Issue 566



The basic iPad is great value, especially now it's been updated with a powerful A12 processor and iPadOS 14. It includes Scribble handwriting recognition with the £89 Apple Pencil. Storage isn't expandable; consider 128GB at £429.

**ALTERNATIVE iPad Mini** With an even better, but smaller, screen than the 10.2in iPad, the Mini also supports the Pencil and has 64GB of storage. £399 from [www.snipca.com/33050](http://www.snipca.com/33050)

### ANDROID TABLET

PRICE  
DROP

**Samsung Galaxy Tab S6 Lite**  
**£299** from [www.snipca.com/35795](http://www.snipca.com/35795)  
**Tested** Issue 582



Competing with Apple's cheapest 10.2in iPad, this slim aluminium tablet comes with an S Pen stylus and a generous 64GB of storage at a reasonable price. It's less powerful, but a great buy if you prefer Android.

**ALTERNATIVE Amazon Fire HD 8** Now with USB-C and 32GB of storage, this plastic-cased tablet is more limited, with no stylus option, but good for the money. £90 from [www.snipca.com/35336](http://www.snipca.com/35336)

### APPLE IPHONE

**Apple iPhone 12**  
**£799** from [www.snipca.com/36582](http://www.snipca.com/36582)  
**Tested** Issue 595



The latest iPhone has a modest increase in already exceptional processing power plus even better photos and videos from the front and twin rear cameras. It comes in a redesigned case with aluminium frame and even tougher glass. Consider paying the £50 extra for 128GB of storage.

**ALTERNATIVE iPhone SE** With a single camera and smaller screen but the same powerful A13 processor and 64GB storage as the iPhone 11, it's great value. £399 from [www.snipca.com/34773](http://www.snipca.com/34773)

### ANDROID PHONE

**Realme X50 5G**  
**£259** from [www.snipca.com/36037](http://www.snipca.com/36037)  
**Tested** issue 590



Amazing value for a big 5G phone with three rear cameras (including ultra-wide and macro), a pretty quick Snapdragon 765G processor and a decent IPS screen. There's a fingerprint reader, but no wireless charging or waterproofing.

**ALTERNATIVE Google Pixel 5** Cheaper than previous Pixels, this has great cameras, wireless charging and a superb screen. Battery life is 23 hours. £599 from [www.snipca.com/36586](http://www.snipca.com/36586)





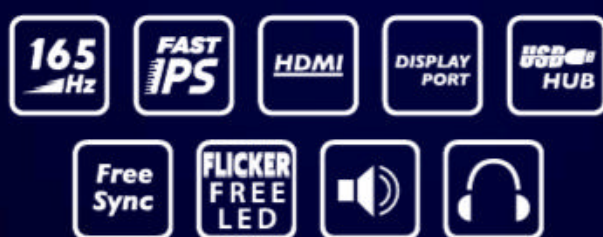
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# Buy It

Our pick of products that have won the **Buy It** award

## EBOOK READER

**Amazon Kindle (2019)**

**£70** from [www.snipca.com/31621](http://www.snipca.com/31621)

**Tested** Issue 555



Now with built-in light and audiobook support, this budget model is fine for most users, though limited by its 4GB of storage. The Paperwhite (£120) is even sharper, waterproof, and has bigger storage options as well as a cellular data option (£100 extra).

### ALTERNATIVE Kobo Clara HD

Not waterproof, but has more lighting options to avoid blue light. £110 from [www.snipca.com/32586](http://www.snipca.com/32586)

## SECURITY SOFTWARE

**Kaspersky Internet Security 2021**

**£14.99** from [www.snipca.com/21532](http://www.snipca.com/21532)

**Tested** Issue 564



Kaspersky Internet Security has won our past nine antivirus tests and the 2020 version is now 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, two-device licence for just £26.99.

### ALTERNATIVE Norton 360 Deluxe

Almost as good as Kaspersky, but blocks more legitimate software. £15 from [www.snipca.com/32069](http://www.snipca.com/32069)

## PHOTO EDITING

**Serif Affinity Photo**

**£49** from [www.snipca.com/23739](http://www.snipca.com/23739)

**Tested** Issue 498



Designed for both full-time professional image retouchers and the rest of us keen amateurs, this is a beautifully designed and comprehensive program for both Windows and Mac users, although so far it performs better on Macs.

### ALTERNATIVE Xara Photo & Graphic Designer

For all-round design and drawing plus photo filters, this affordable app has a lot to offer. £42 from [www.snipca.com/26514](http://www.snipca.com/26514)

## PC MONITOR

**BenQ GL2780**

**£150** from [www.snipca.com/34834](http://www.snipca.com/34834)

**Tested** Issue 581



This budget 27in screen offers accurate sRGB colour with good contrast, plus auto brightness and low blue light modes. Speakers are built in. Using TN LCD rather than IPS, it needs to be viewed straight on, but works well for games too.

### ALTERNATIVE Philips Brilliance

**241B7QPIEB** With a great picture, stylish design and speakers, this 24in Full HD IPS is an excellent smaller screen. £180 from [www.snipca.com/34869](http://www.snipca.com/34869)

## ROUTER

**D-Link DIR-1960**

**£100** from [www.snipca.com/32849](http://www.snipca.com/32849)

**Tested** Issue 564



Giving us download and upload speeds of 460Mbps and 375Mbps respectively, this is phenomenal value. Even two floors away we got 329Mbps and 284Mbps. It has four Ethernet ports for wired devices and a USB 3.0 socket to share storage via your network.

### ALTERNATIVE Synology RT2600ac

Comprehensive sharing features, controls and plenty of add-on apps complement excellent long-range performance. £208 from [www.snipca.com/30710](http://www.snipca.com/30710)

## PRINTER

**Epson Expression Premium XP-6105**

**£119** from [www.snipca.com/36630](http://www.snipca.com/36630)

**Tested** Issue 554



With many leading all-purpose printers having sold out during lockdown, this white version of the XP-6100 wireless six-ink printer/scanner/copier is a good choice for photos first and text second. It's easy to use and speeds aren't bad, but ink costs can work out high.

### ALTERNATIVE Epson EcoTank ET-2711

This inkjet printer/scanner/copier isn't cheap but will save you a lot on ink (1p for two colour pages). Photo quality isn't the best, but scans are good. £180 from [www.snipca.com/36183](http://www.snipca.com/36183)



## COMPETITION

# Win 1 of 2 Toshiba P300 6TB hard drives

Toshiba's 3.5in P300 is a versatile drive ideal for a range of computers – all-in-one PCs, desktop PCs, gaming computers – as well as external enclosures.

The dual-stage actuator in the 2TB to 6TB models improves positional accuracy, negating the vibrations

# TOSHIBA

caused by the head-track being aligned. This design makes for more precise and faster read and write speeds, giving you instant access to your data.

It also has an internal shock sensor, ensuring no data is lost. In addition, ramp-loading technology means that when your hard drive or desktop PC are being transported, the drive slider does not make contact with the disk and risk it wearing out or data loss.



To enter this competition, email your address to [cacomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:cacomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'Toshiba' in the subject line by midnight Tuesday 12 January.

You can buy **P300 Toshiba hard drives** from Amazon ([www.snipca.com/35229](http://www.snipca.com/35229)), with prices ranging from £34.99 (1TB) to £156 (6TB). For more information on Toshiba's storage products visit [www.toshiba-storage.com](http://www.toshiba-storage.com).

## MESH ROUTER

**BT Whole Home Wi-Fi**  
**£200** from [www.snipca.com/26990](http://www.snipca.com/26990)  
**Tested** Issue 496



BT's set of three discs, managed from an Apple or Android app, connects to your broadband and spreads high-speed Wi-Fi all around the house. Reception is far better than a single router, and the price is lower than any rival.

**ALTERNATIVE Zyxel Multy X**  
These two pillow-shaped boxes are powerful enough for most homes and provide four Ethernet ports apiece. £255 from [www.snipca.com/27309](http://www.snipca.com/27309)

## SOLID-STATE DRIVE

**Samsung 970 Evo Plus**  
**500GB**  
**£93** from [www.snipca.com/31265](http://www.snipca.com/31265)  
**Tested** Issue 552



Although its price has fluctuated since we tested it at £99, this is a very fast (over 3GB per second) M.2 SSD unfazed by tests that make others slow to a crawl. Also consider the Adata XPG SX8200 Pro if you find it a bit cheaper.

**ALTERNATIVE Crucial MX500 500GB**  
As fast as an SSD can get in the traditional 2.5in SATA format, this is a great-value upgrade. £52 from [www.snipca.com/30188](http://www.snipca.com/30188)

## WEB DESIGN

**Xara Web Designer**  
**Premium**  
**£56** from [www.snipca.com/34150](http://www.snipca.com/34150)  
**Tested** Issue 453



This visual program makes creating sites more like laying out a document than writing HTML code, and sites can be responsive, meaning they look good on big and small screens. A cheaper, basic version is also available for £35.

**ALTERNATIVE Incomedia WebSite X5 v13 Evolution** It may feel basic, but this program outputs efficient HTML code and responsive pages. £39 from [www.snipca.com/31179](http://www.snipca.com/31179)



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# Workshops & Tips

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

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**38** Annotate screenshots using Edge

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**42** Readers' Tips

**PLUS**

**44** Phone & Tablet Tips

**46** Make Windows Better

**47** Make Office Better

**48** In the Club: Stream a presentation

## HOW TO... Play music from your PC in your car

by Nik Rawlinson

**What you need:** USB stick, audio cable or adapter, depending on your choice  
**Time required:** An hour

Just about any piece of music ever recorded is available on your computer. With a wide choice of streaming providers and the ability to make digital versions of your CDs, records and tapes, it's easy to build a library of a size that would have been

unimaginable just a decade ago. If you haven't yet digitised your vinyl and tapes, read the How To we published in Issue 554.

In many cases, though, you'll have to leave it all at home when you jump into the car – unless you've saved it online

and listen via a smartphone app compatible with Apple CarPlay or Android Auto. But what if your car doesn't support either of these? Fortunately, there are other options, and we'll outline four of them here. As long as you have a radio, as a bare minimum, and your music is stored on your phone or a USB stick, you can enjoy the widest possible range of audio entertainment on the go.

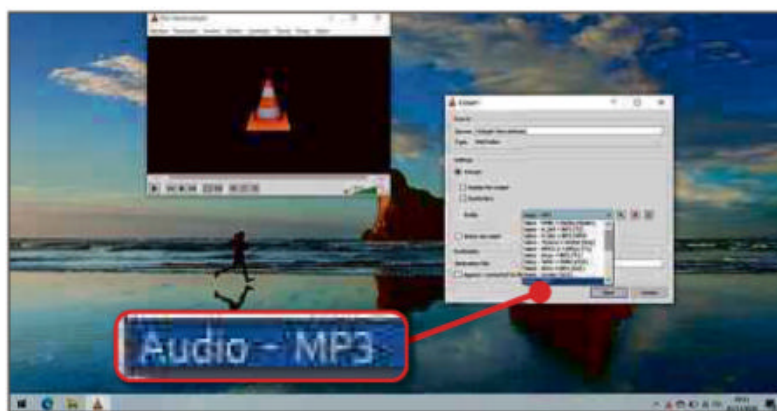


**1**

### Put your music on a USB stick

This is the simplest option, but it depends on having a car with a USB port, which not all do. Even if your car does have a port, it may be used only for charging. This is often the case where the car has several such ports, only one of which will be wired to the radio. Check the manual or ask your dealer to identify the port for you if you're not sure which one to use.

The manual will also tell you which music and data formats your radio can access. Getting this right is key to successfully playing back your music. Start by identifying the data format, which will determine the **file system** you need to use on the stick, then plug the stick into your PC, right-click it in the Explorer sidebar and click 'Format...' in



Select 'Audio - MP3' from the menu then Start to convert your files using VLC

the menu. Select the appropriate format from the 'File system' menu.

If you don't know which format to use, or your manual doesn't tell you, try **FAT32**. Give the stick a name in the 'Volume label' box – this will identify the stick every time you reconnect it to your PC – then click Start. When it's finished, close the Format box.

You now need to think about your

music format. Again, we'd recommend sticking with the most widely accepted option: MP3. However, your manual will list the file types with which your car is compatible, and should include special arrangements for organising by album or artist. These are essential if you want to be able to search for specific tracks using the radio's buttons.

If you've saved your music using a format that your car radio can't read, you can usually convert it using the media player on your PC. Alternatively, use the free VLC media player, which you can download from [www.videolan.org](http://www.videolan.org).

Once you've installed and opened it, press Ctrl+R, then click Add and select the music you want to work with. Click 'Convert/Save', then select 'Audio - MP3' from the menu to the right of Profile (see screenshot left). Click 'Start' to begin the conversion, then transfer the results to your stick.



When you want to play your music, plug the USB stick in your car and select the USB option from your radio's list of sources. Use the on-device controls to navigate the music on your stick.

2

### Use a Bluetooth adapter

If you've loaded your music on to your phone, or you want to stream from the internet, a Bluetooth receiver that connects to phono or 3.5mm jacks in your car is a more convenient option. You'll not need to think about audio formats or file systems, but you will need the appropriate wired connection in your vehicle which, as with the USB port, isn't always available. Again, check your manual. You can pick up an adapter, like this Mpow Bluetooth 5.0 Receiver, for £12.99: [www.snipca.com/36740](http://www.snipca.com/36740).

If you have a port, you'll need an appropriate cable. Most ports built into the radio itself will be 3.5mm jacks, but wind back the clock a decade or so and cars commonly had a pair of phono sockets, which are separate from the radio but wired to it behind the scenes. Use these to connect your Bluetooth adapter.

Note that if you have phono sockets in your car but you're using an adapter with a jack, like the Mpow device mentioned above, you'll need a phono-to-jack cable, such as this one from AmazonBasics (pictured below), which costs £5.99: [www.snipca.com/36741](http://www.snipca.com/36741). If you need a lead with 3.5mm jacks on each end, this one costs £3.59 and is 1.5m long: [www.snipca.com/36742](http://www.snipca.com/36742).

Most adapters have a built-in battery that's charged via USB – to do this you'll need to bring it into the house. Once your adapter is charged, connect it to the port in your car, turn it on and put it into pairing mode.

The method for doing this varies depending on the adapter, but in most cases you'll press and hold the play button, which will start flashing. Now pair your phone. On an iPhone, open



You may need to buy a phono-to-jack cable, such as this one from AmazonBasics

## How I listen to music while driving

I've used all of these methods over the years. In my campervan, I use an FM transmitter; in my car, I use a Bluetooth adapter with a phono cable and, in the car I sold recently I used a tape adapter. I only ever get to use a USB socket

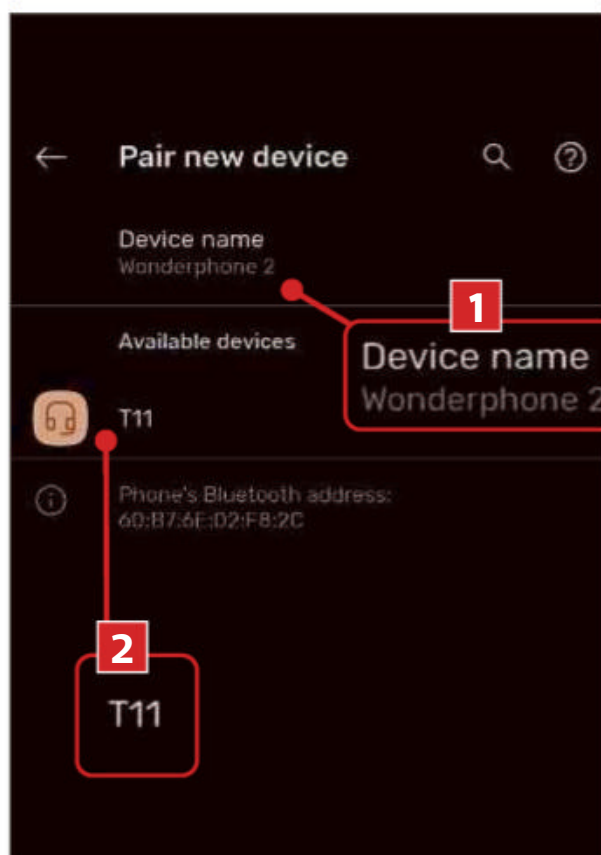


when I'm in somebody else's car. It would be easier to replace my radio with something more up to date, but what's the point when these inexpensive workarounds are so effective?

Nik Rawlinson



How do you listen to music in your car?  
Please let us know: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



Your phone will search for any available Bluetooth devices that are within range

Settings and tap Bluetooth, then scroll to the bottom of the screen and tap the name of the adapter when it appears. On Android, open Settings and tap 'Connected devices', followed by 'Pair new device'. Your phone (ours is called Wonderphone 1 in our screenshot above) will start to search for nearby Bluetooth devices (T11 2) in pairing mode. When your adapter appears, tap its name to start the connection.

Select 'aux' or auxiliary on your radio's



If your car has a 3.5mm jack or phono sockets, you can connect a Bluetooth receiver and use the radio's auxiliary source to play your music

## CONNECT DIRECTLY USING BLUETOOTH

Of course, if your car radio has Bluetooth built in, you can use this instead of an adapter in just the same way. Switch to your radio's settings screen and use the option to pair a new device, then follow the instructions in Tip 2 to launch the pairing option on your phone. However, there's an additional step: both the phone and the radio will display a code on their screens. If the codes match, tap the Pair option on each device to establish the connection. You'll only need to do that once. Now switch back to the car radio screen and select Bluetooth from the list of sources. Select the media you want to listen to on your phone.

sources menu (as we've done in the photo below left), then switch to the preferred media player on your phone (which includes third-party apps like Audible ([www.audible.co.uk](http://www.audible.co.uk)) for audiobooks and Pocket Casts ([www.pocketcasts.com](http://www.pocketcasts.com)) for podcasts. Play whichever media you like and it will stream to your radio.

3

### Broadcast on FM

Low-powered FM transmitters broadcast a very short-range signal, which won't extend far beyond your vehicle. As such, they shouldn't interfere with licenced broadcast stations or radios used by the emergency services. They can be set to broadcast on a range of frequencies, letting you select one that's not currently occupied by an existing station so that it doesn't overlap with your own broadcast. Once connected to your phone or MP3 player, you can use it to transmit music on your selected



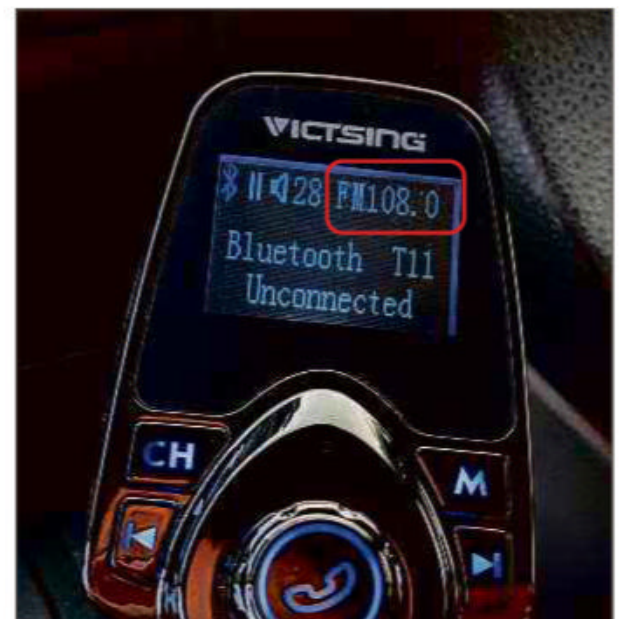
### COPY MUSIC TO A MEDIA CARD

Many cars have a media-card slot, either as part of the radio itself or in a discreet location (commonly in the glove box). If your car has one, make sure it's for playing back music. Some are instead used to store the map for your satnav if it doesn't have its own **3G/4G** connection to the internet.

Just as you did with your USB stick, you need to wipe the card by connecting it to

your computer, right-clicking it in the File Explorer sidebar and selecting the appropriate format from the 'File system' menu.

You can then copy your music to it in MP3 or another compatible format before ejecting it from the computer and using it in your car. Select 'SD' or similar from the Sources menu on your car's music system to listen to it.



We've tuned this FM transmitter to broadcast to the car radio on 108FM

frequency, which you can tune to using your in-car radio.

Again, these have the benefit of working with any media format that your phone can handle, and there's no need to think about which file system to use either. Better yet, as with the Bluetooth option explained above, track selection is handled on the phone itself, so you'll be working with an interface you'll already find familiar.

You can pick up a transmitter like this VicTsing model for £13.59 ([www.snipca.com/36744](http://www.snipca.com/36744), pictured in our car below). It has two USB ports – highlighted in our photo – one of which can be used to charge a device from your vehicle battery, while the other is used for audio from USB sticks, effectively adding the USB socket that's missing from many older cars.

You can easily select any frequency on the FM dial, so you're not restricted

to a small number of pre-set stations, and it also has Bluetooth built in. This latter point is a significant draw because it means you can use it as a Bluetooth-to-FM converter by connecting your phone to the transmitter by Bluetooth, then tuning into the transmitter using your radio on the FM band.

On the opposite side of the transmitter, there's a 3.5mm jack through which you can connect to your phone's headphone socket, if it has one, and a reader for memory cards of 32GB or less. There's no denying that this is the most flexible option of all.

Setting it up is easy. Start by plugging the adapter into your car's cigarette lighter socket, from which it draws its power, then use the dial to select a frequency that isn't currently in use in your area. Tune your radio to the same frequency. Now open the Bluetooth menu on your phone (you'll find it in Settings

on your iPhone, and in 'Connected devices' on Android). Tap the name of the device on your iPhone or tap 'Pair new device' on Android, followed by the device name once it's been detected. Alternatively, connect your phone to the transmitter using its 3.5mm jack.

You can now play music in the usual manner on your phone and it will be broadcast to your radio. If you drive into an area where an existing station already occupies your selected frequency, re-tune both your adapter and the radio to an empty spot on the waveband – it's 108FM in our photo above.

#### 4

#### Use a tape adapter

Finally, perhaps the lowest-tech option of all: a tape adapter. A few years ago we would have recommended this above anything else, because almost every car had a built-in tape deck and every phone had a headphone jack. However, you'll need to be driving something at least 12 or more years old to have a tape deck, and, increasingly, phones now come without headphone sockets. If you do have both of these available to you, though, a tape adapter may be just what you need.

It works by replacing the moving tape inside the cassette with a magnetic block that recreates the soundwave that would otherwise be stored on the tape itself. When you slot the adapter into your cassette deck, the block aligns with the playback head in the radio to read the signal and send it to your speakers.

The only downside is that you may hear the drive cogs spinning inside the cassette when they have nothing to move, but you soon stop noticing this.



Some FM transmitters, like this VicTsing model, have USB ports for memory sticks and charging devices



# Workshop1

## Take screenshots using Edge's new Web Capture tool

**What you need:** Windows 8.1 or 10

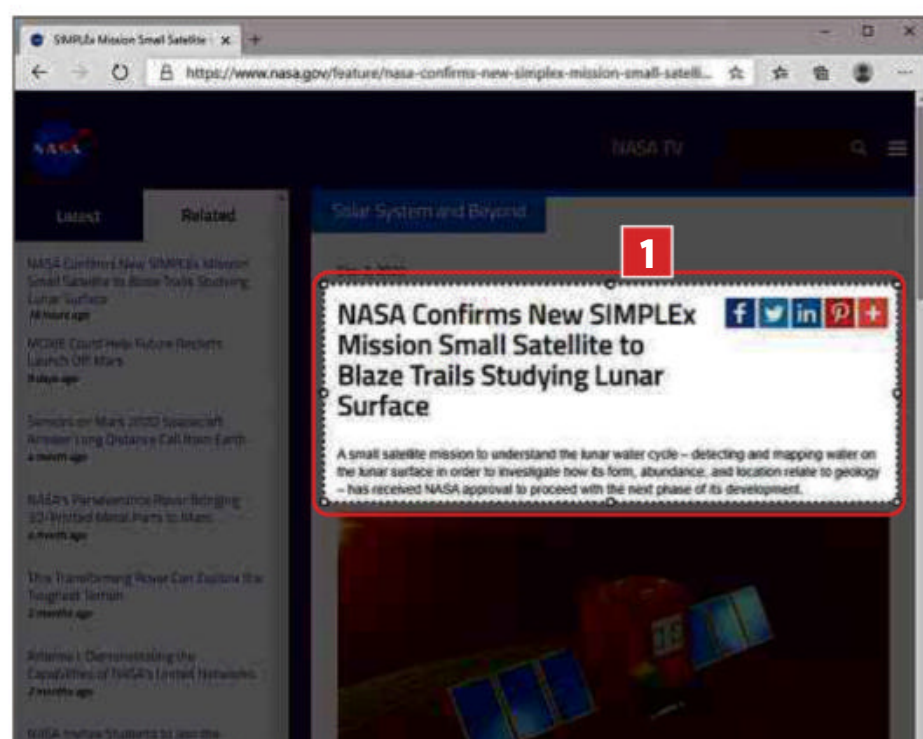
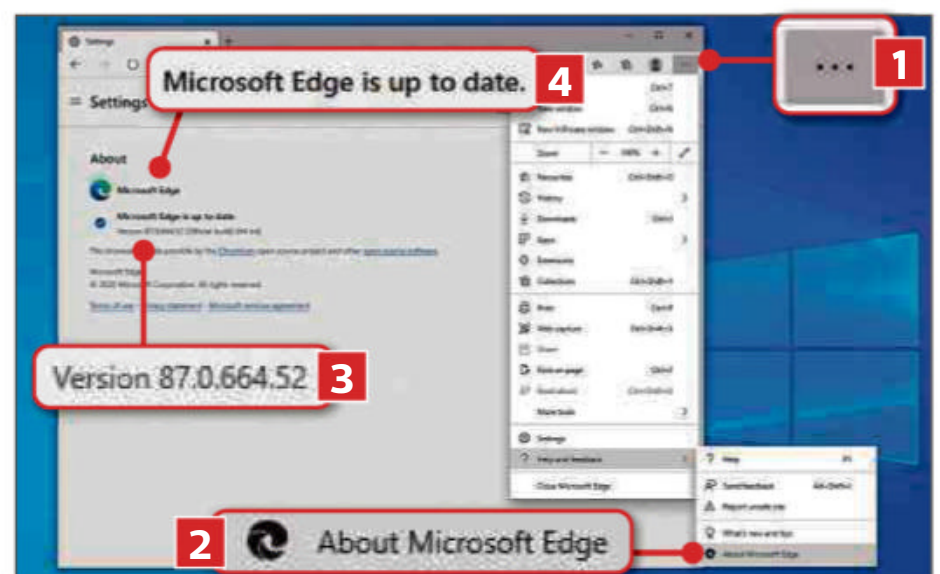
**Time taken:** 15 minutes

Edge 87, which Microsoft released in November, has a new 'Web capture' tool that lets you quickly take screenshots of web pages, then annotate and share them within the browser. In this Workshop, we'll

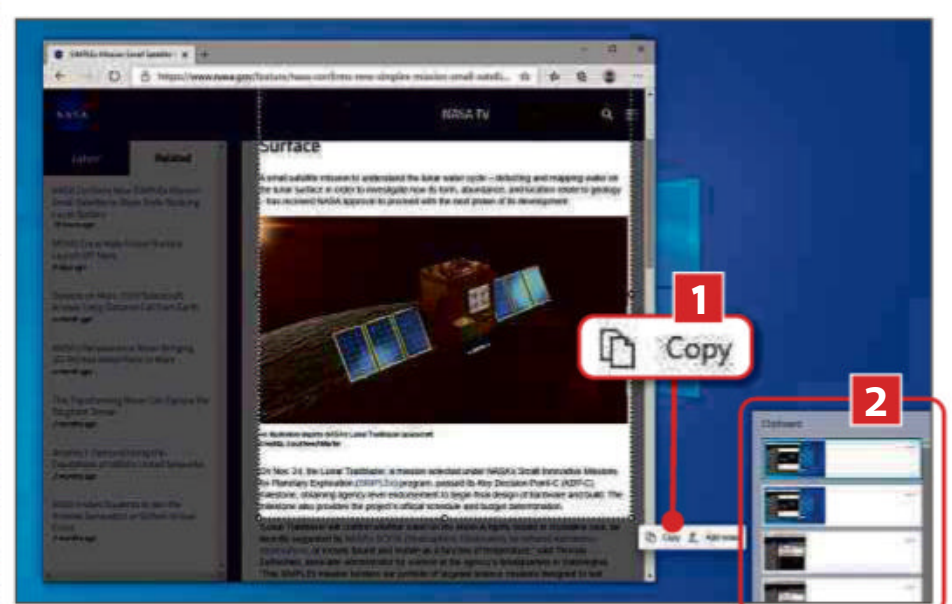
explain how to check that you have the latest version of Edge, then show you how to make the most of the tool. You'll also discover how to install a preview release of Edge and try its new full-page screenshot option.



**STEP 1** To use the new screenshot tool, you'll need the latest version of Edge. To check, open Edge then click the menu button (three dots **1**), 'Help and feedback', then About Microsoft Edge **2**. If you don't see these options, it's probably because you have the old version of Edge – Microsoft switched to a newer version based on Chromium in early 2020, which you can install from [www.snipca.com/36864](http://www.snipca.com/36864). As you can see, ours is 87.0.664.52 **3** and Edge tells us that it's up to date **4** (don't worry if yours has slightly different numbers after '87' – Microsoft regularly releases small updates for each release). If you're running 86 or earlier, Edge will start installing the update and prompt you to restart your browser.

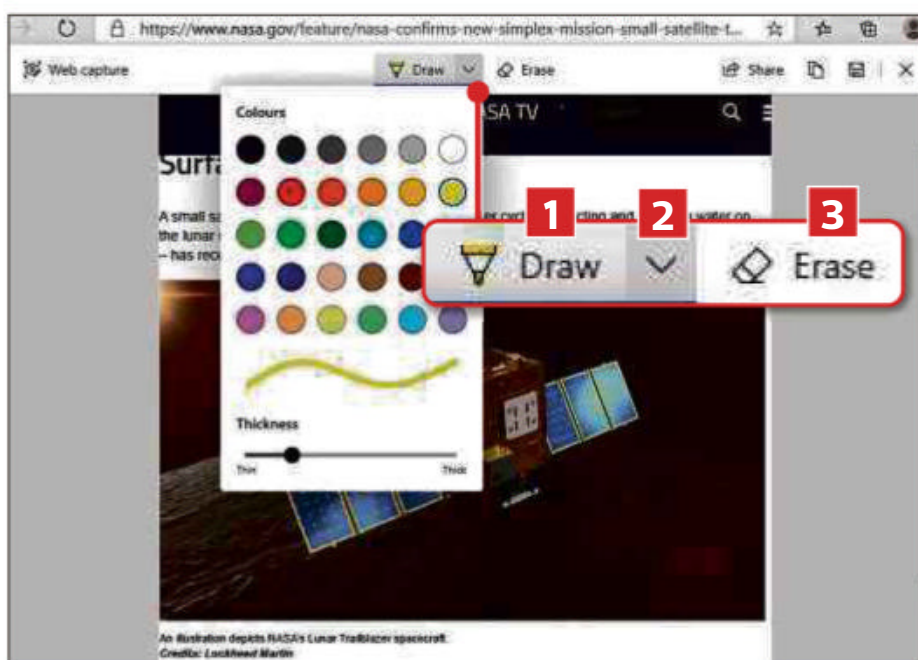


**STEP 2** To open the new screenshot tool, either click the menu button followed by 'Web capture', or use the Ctrl+Shift+S keyboard shortcut. When you do this, the web page will dim, indicating Edge is ready for you to take a screenshot. Create a box around the section you want to capture by clicking and dragging your mouse **1**. If the area you want to capture is larger than what's currently displayed, drag your mouse to the bottom of the window. As you do this, the page will start to scroll, allowing you to capture a bigger area.



**STEP 3** If you want to fine-tune the selected area, you can do so by clicking and dragging the eight circles around the edge of the box. When you're happy with it, you can copy your screenshot to the Windows clipboard by clicking the Copy button **1**. Once you've done this, you can paste the image into other applications, such as Word, Paint or an email. If you have Windows' clipboard history tool switched on (press Windows key+I, System, Clipboard and turn the 'Clipboard history' slide to On), you can take multiple screenshots, then browse them by pressing the Windows key+V **2**.

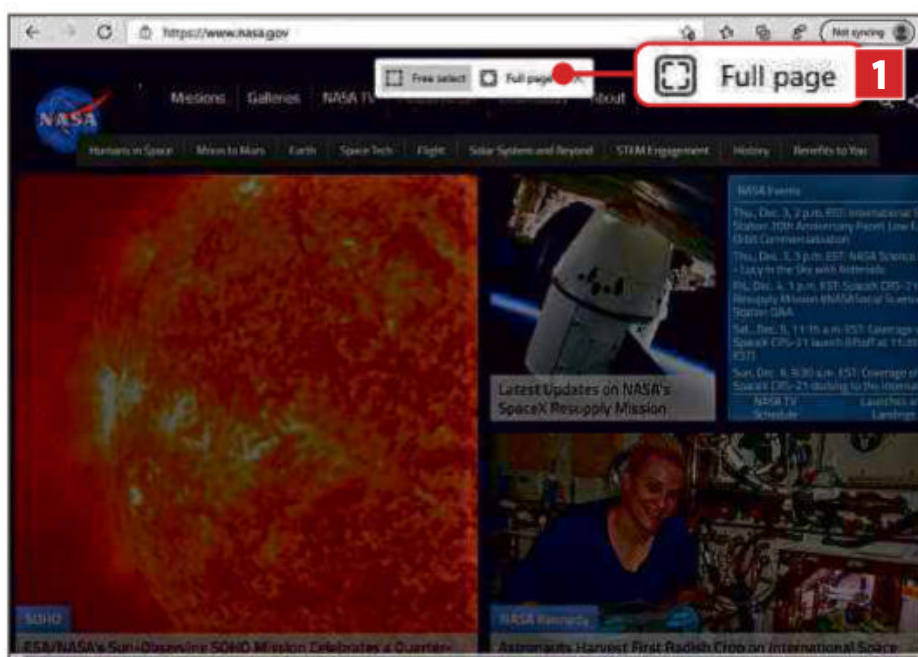
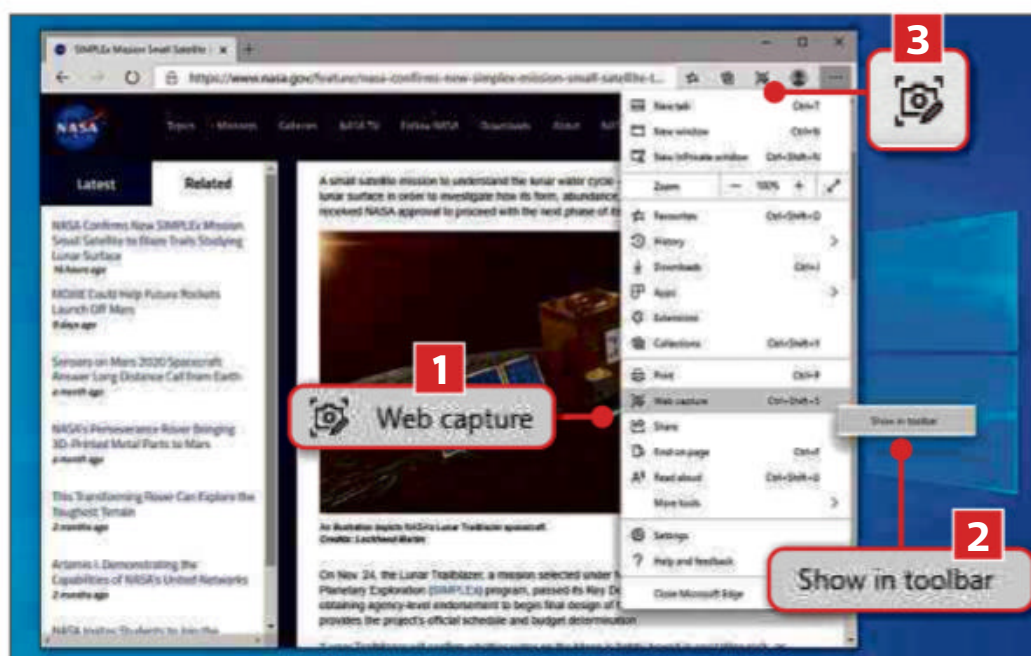




**STEP 4** Instead of copying the screenshot directly to your clipboard, you can click 'Add notes' after selecting your screenshot. A new window will now open, displaying your screenshot. If you want to highlight a specific area, click the Draw button at the top **1**, then annotate the screenshot. You can change the colour and thickness of the pen by clicking the down arrow next to Draw **2**. If you want to remove any annotations, select Erase **3**, then drag your mouse over them.

**STEP 5** As well as letting you annotate your screenshot, this window also provides options to share and save it. Click 'Share' **1** and you'll see options to export your screenshot to various Windows apps, such as Mail and OneNote **2**. Edge will also look for nearby wireless devices that it can share files with, such as other computers on your network. If you just want to save the screenshot as a file, click the disk icon **3** and the screenshot will appear as a download in your browser. Press Escape to return to the browser.

**STEP 6** If you enjoy using Edge's new screenshot tool, you can add a button for it to the browser's toolbar. To do this, click the menu button, then right-click 'Web capture' **1** and select 'Show in toolbar' **2**. You'll notice a new 'Web capture' icon appears in the top-right corner of the Edge window **3**. If you want to take a screenshot in future, you can simply click this button, then repeat the process as described in Step 2.



**STEP 7** Edge can also take screenshots of an entire web page (no matter how long it is), but for now it's only available on Edge Canary. This is a **beta** version that you can download from [www.snipca.com/36865](http://www.snipca.com/36865) and run alongside the main Edge version. Once installed, run the program (it will be listed in the Start menu as Microsoft Edge Canary), then use the Ctrl+Shift+S shortcut to open the screenshot tool. When you do this, you'll see two options appear at the top – click 'Full page' **1** and Edge will take a screenshot of the entire web page.



# Workshop 2

## Create an automatic photo slideshow on Chromecast

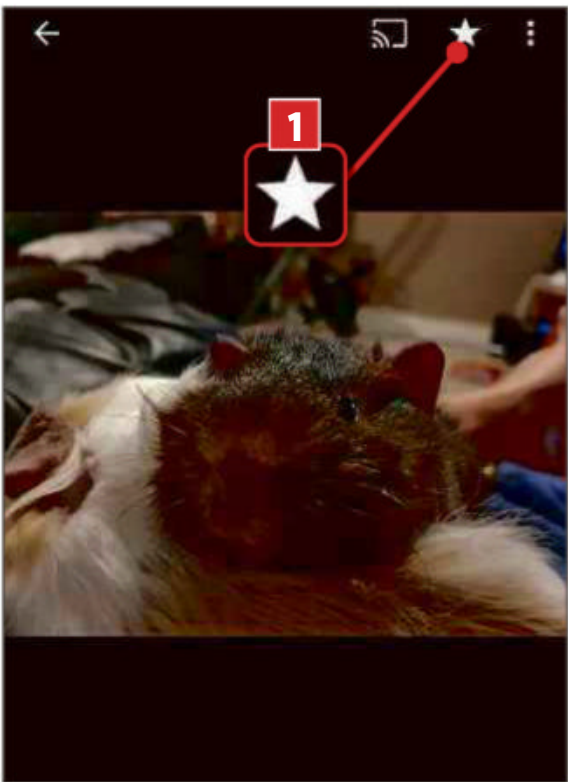
**What you need:** Chromecast; Google Photos; Android or iOS phone or tablet  
**Time required:** 20 minutes

If you have a Google Chromecast plugged into your TV, you can use it for much more than just streaming programmes and films. In this Workshop, we'll show you how to access its hidden Ambient mode, which lets you display a slideshow from your Google Photos library when

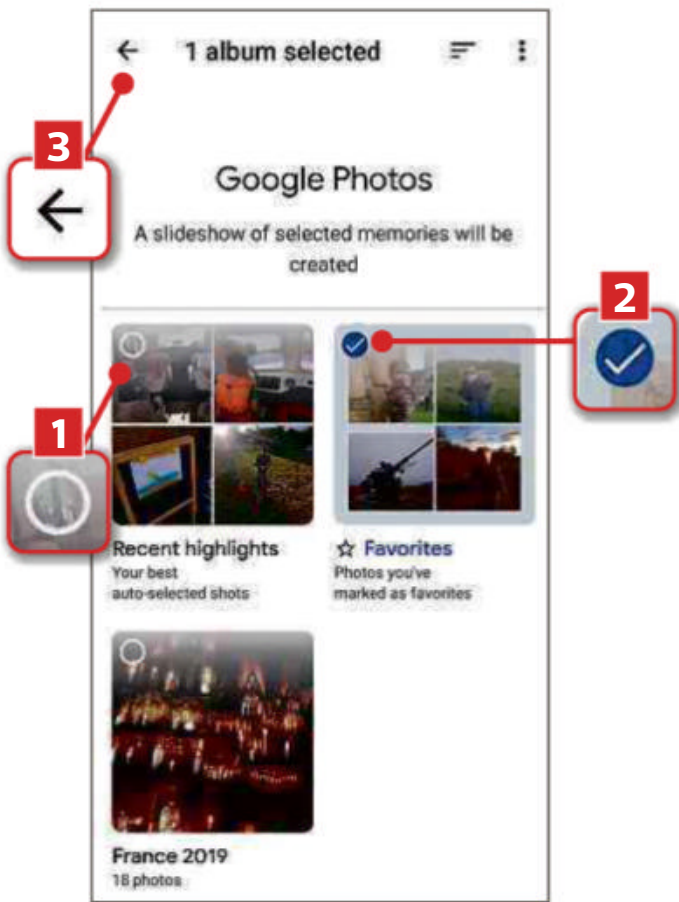
you're not **casting** anything. You don't even need the latest 'Chromecast with Google TV' version of the device (£30 from [www.snipca.com/36851](https://www.snipca.com/36851)) to use this feature – it works on all previous versions, including on the original Chromecast (released in 2013) we'll be using here.



**STEP 1** By default, when nothing is being casted Chromecast will display a series of photos from the 'Recent highlights' folder in your Google Photos library. In our experience, however, the photos in this folder can be over a year old. It's therefore a good idea to set a selection of photos as favourites, then tell Chromecast to use them only. In the Google Photos app on your phone (or on your PC at <https://photos.google.com>), browse your collection and tap or click the star icon **1** on each photo you want to set as a favourite.

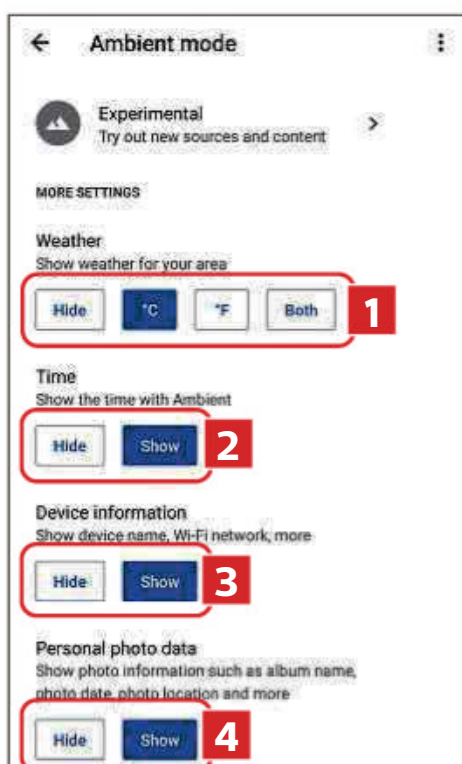


**STEP 2** If you've already set up your Chromecast device, skip to Step 3. If not, first download the Google Home app on your phone or tablet (Android [www.snipca.com/36852](https://www.snipca.com/36852); iOS [www.snipca.com/36853](https://www.snipca.com/36853)). Once it's installed, make sure your Chromecast is plugged into your TV and powered using the supplied USB cable, then tap the '+' button in the Google Home app, 'Set up device' **1** and follow the instructions to set up your Chromecast.

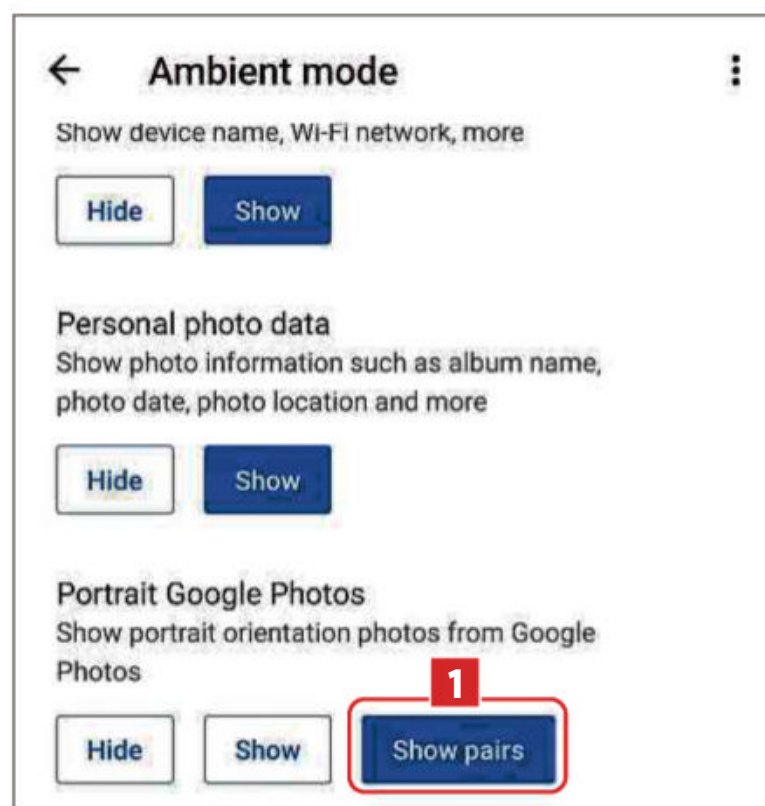


**STEP 3** In the home screen of the Google Home app, tap the icon representing your Chromecast device, followed by the cog icon (top right). In the 'Device settings' screen, tap 'Ambient mode', then Google Photos. If you're happy to let Google Photos decide which photos to display, leave the 'Recent highlights' option selected. However, if you set a selection of photos as favourites in Step 1, tap 'Recent highlights' (the blue tick will disappear, meaning it's no longer selected **1**), then tap Favorites to select it **2**. If you have favourite folders in your Google Photos account, you can also select these. When you've made your choices, tap the left arrow **3** to return to the previous screen.

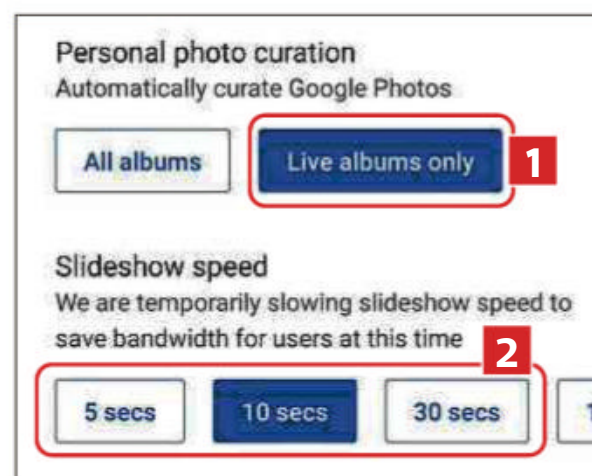




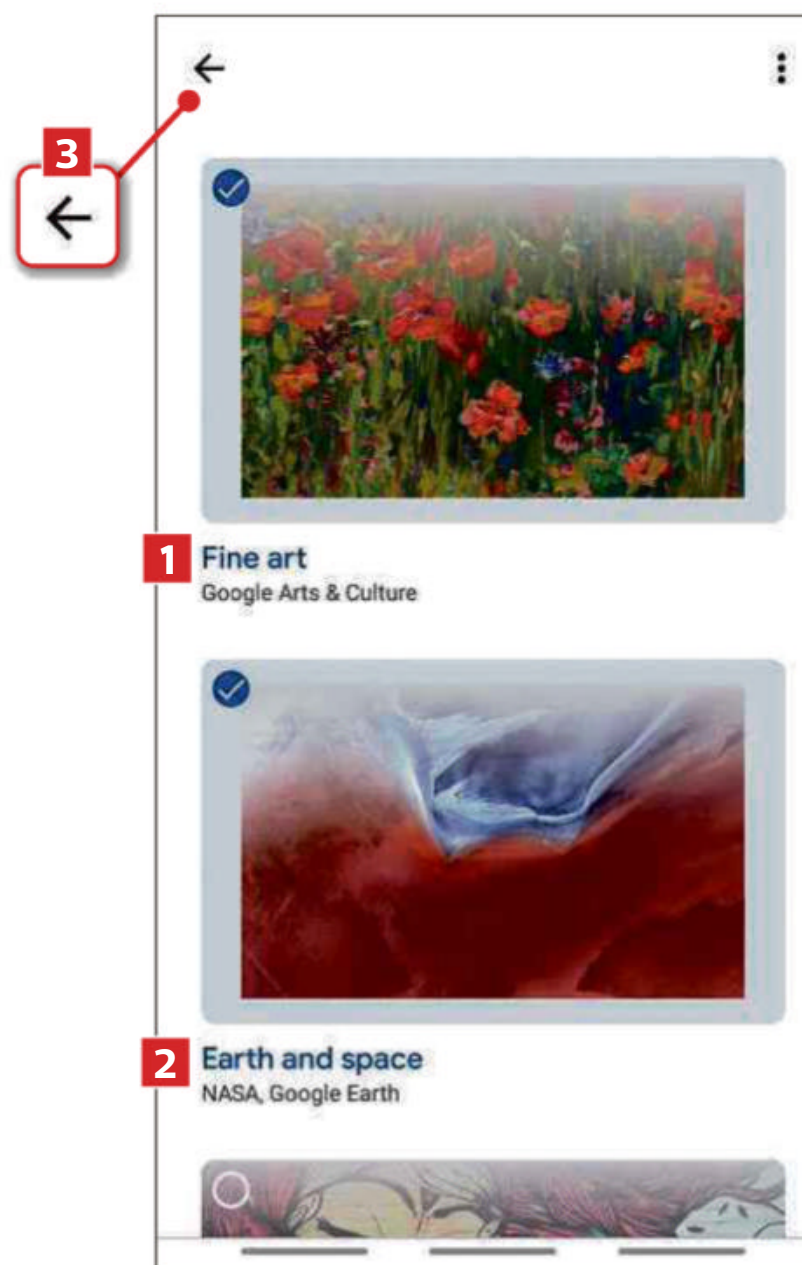
**STEP 4** Chromecast can display additional information alongside your photos. To choose what you want to show, scroll down the 'Ambient mode' screen to the 'More settings' section. Options include the current weather (in centigrade, Fahrenheit or both **1**) and time **2**, as well as information about your Chromecast device **3**. If you want to see details such as where photos were taken and at what time, tap Show below 'Personal photo data' **4**.



**STEP 5** You probably have a few portrait-oriented photos in your collection. On your landscape-oriented TV these will have large, unsightly borders either side of them. If you'd prefer to show only landscape photos, scroll down to the Portrait Google Photos section and tap Hide. Alternatively, you can tell Chromecast to display pairs of portrait photos side by side (thereby minimising the black borders). To do this, select the 'Show pairs' option **1**.



**STEP 6** If you have some substandard photos (blurry or poorly lit, for example) in your Google Photos library, Chromecast will attempt to filter them out so they're not displayed on your TV. Although you can't turn this filter off entirely, you can set it to apply only to Live albums (these are shared albums you can set up with friends and family - read more at [www.snipca.com/36850](http://www.snipca.com/36850)). To do this, change the 'Personal photo curation' option to 'Live albums only' **1**. Just below this, you can set the speed of your slideshow to between 5 seconds and 10 minutes **2**.



**STEP 7** If you'd rather not show your personal photos on your TV, you can choose to show generic photos instead. Swipe to the top of the 'Ambient mode' screen and tap 'Art gallery'. In the next screen you can select the type of photos (such as 'Fine art' **1** and 'Earth and space' **2**). Click the back button **3** when you've finished. Chromecast also has an Experimental option, which lets you show photos from your Facebook and Flickr accounts. The 'Experimental' name suggests it's a work in progress, but when we linked it to our Flickr account it showed photos flawlessly.



# Readers' Tips

## TIP OF THE FORTNIGHT

### Create hyperlinks in Word documents

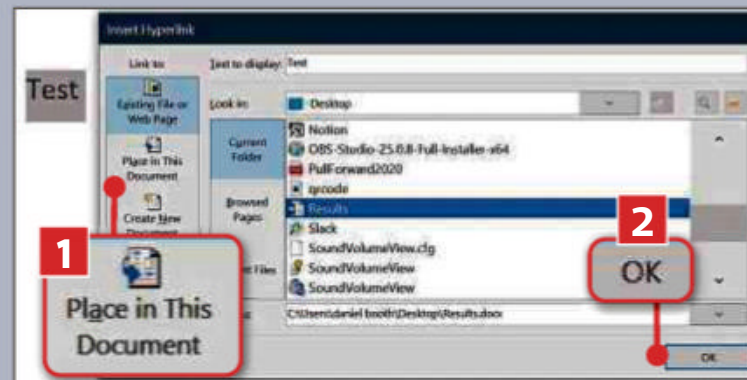
Since my children acquired their first computer in the early 1990s, I've been fascinated by the seemingly magical way technology achieves actions undreamt of by us mortals. **Hyperlinks** are a typical example.

In PowerPoint this is easy: create a shape, remove the border, colour it the same as the slide background and 'hyperlink' it to another slide in the same presentation, then move it to one of the corners in the slide. When presenting the slideshow, clicking the 'invisible' object in the corner of the slide changes it to the target slide.

I find links useful in documents such

as a directory of utility companies showing telephone numbers and contact details. This gives me their details at my fingertips.

Take a blank Microsoft Word document and type a word, for example **Test**. Right-click it and select **Links** or **Hyperlink** (depending on your version of Word). You may then need to click **Select Link**. A box will appear – scroll down this box and click the document you want to link to (1 in the screenshot). Next, click **OK** at the bottom right (2).



The word you're linking from will now be underlined and highlighted blue. Click it to go to the linked document (you may need to hold down **Ctrl** while doing this).

Patrick Wilmore

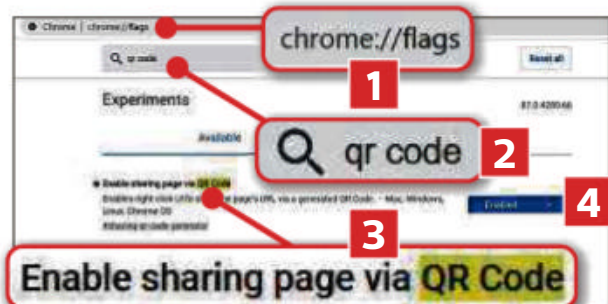


Patrick wins a copy of our 2019 Back Issue CD Buy it on Amazon [www.snipca.com/33711](http://www.snipca.com/33711)

## BROWSERS

### Open sites on your phone by scanning QR codes

✓ Google Chrome has a hidden feature that lets you scan a **QR code** on any web page to open it on a phone or tablet. It's not easy to find because it's currently an 'experimental' feature hidden away in the **Flags** page. In the address bar, type **chrome://flags** (1 in screenshot) and, in the search bar at the top, type **qr code** (2). Click the dropdown menu next to 'Enable sharing page via QR Code' (3) and choose



Enabled (4), making sure you relaunch Chrome afterwards.

Now, on any website, right-click a blank space and select 'Create QR code'. On your phone or tablet, use the camera app or a QR code app to scan the code and open the page in your web browser.

Ben Ward

## FILES

### Transfer photos from iPhone to PC using OneDrive

✓ As an iPhone user who often exports photos to a Windows PC, I was interested in your advice to David Newland on converting **HEIC** files (Issue 593, page 19). It's worth adding that iOS converts them automatically when you export photos to a non-iOS platform. I use OneDrive to transfer files to my PC (much easier than iTunes). Photos

uploaded from my iPhone 7 appear in OneDrive as both **HEIC** and **JPEG** files. The **HEIC** format can be useful if you import the files into an image editor that can handle it, such as Serif's Affinity Photo.

Peter Argyle

## EMAIL

### Block trackers using Trocker

✓ Encouraged by your very interesting article on how to stop emails spying on users (Cover Feature, Issue 592), I thought of installing your recommended extension **PixelBlock** ([www.snipca.com/36347](http://www.snipca.com/36347)). But then I came across one called **Trocker** (it stands for 'tracker blocker'), which I installed instead (from the Chrome Web Store [www.snipca.com/36684](http://www.snipca.com/36684)). When it's installed, you'll see a **T** icon with a red

## Why I stopped using...

### Met Office app

✓ A round of applause please for Hally Hardie. In Issue 592 (Letters) she explained why she no longer trusts forecasts from the Met Office. I also found them unreliable, so I uninstalled its app ([www.snipca.com/36797](http://www.snipca.com/36797)) from my iPad.



### And what I use instead...

I now use **Dark Sky** (pictured), which Apple bought earlier this year (see [www.snipca.com/36799](http://www.snipca.com/36799)). What makes it so good is the precision of its forecasts. You can move forward minute by minute to see how the weather changes, pinpointing specific locations. I've set it up to

send me alerts before it starts raining.

It costs £3.99 from the Apple App Store ([www.snipca.com/36798](http://www.snipca.com/36798)), but it's a one-off fee, not a rip-off subscription. If it does start requiring a subscription, I'll be looking for another weather app.

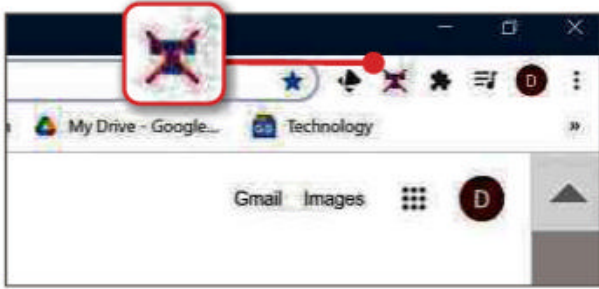
Howard Dempsey

✉ Tell us why you stopped using a website, app or program: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



## Handy hints and tips from your fellow readers

✉ Email us your tips: [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



cross in your browser bar (see screenshot above). The advantage of this extension is that it works not only in Gmail, but also in Yahoo Mail, which I use. And it works in Edge too. According to one user's review it works better than PixelBlock. Maybe – I can't comment.

Jerzy Zarach

### SECURITY

#### Store passwords using end-to-end encryption

✓ I read your Workshop in Issue 591 (page 40) on using KeePass in conjunction with Dropbox to sync passwords across multiple devices. For maximum security, I suggest using one of the online-storage services that provide end-to-end (E2E) encryption, meaning your data is encrypted in transit and on the server in such a way that only you (not the server operator) can decrypt the files.

I use Sync ([www.sync.com](http://www.sync.com)), based in Canada, which offers 5GB of free storage. An alternative is Mega ([www.mega.nz](http://www.mega.nz), see screenshot below), based in New Zealand, which offers 15GB for free. Using Dropbox, OneDrive or Google Drive doesn't seem much of an improvement on using a password manager like LastPass, which stores your passwords on its own servers. That makes people like me uneasy!

Anthony Sheppard



### Reader recommends...

#### Honor MagicBook Pro

£850 from Amazon [www.snipca.com/36122](http://www.snipca.com/36122)



✓ I've always thought £1,000 was too much to spend on a laptop, but I could never find one cheaper that ticked all my boxes. But then I read your review of Honor's MagicBook Pro (Issue 591, page 22) and was tempted – particularly by its large screen (16.1in).

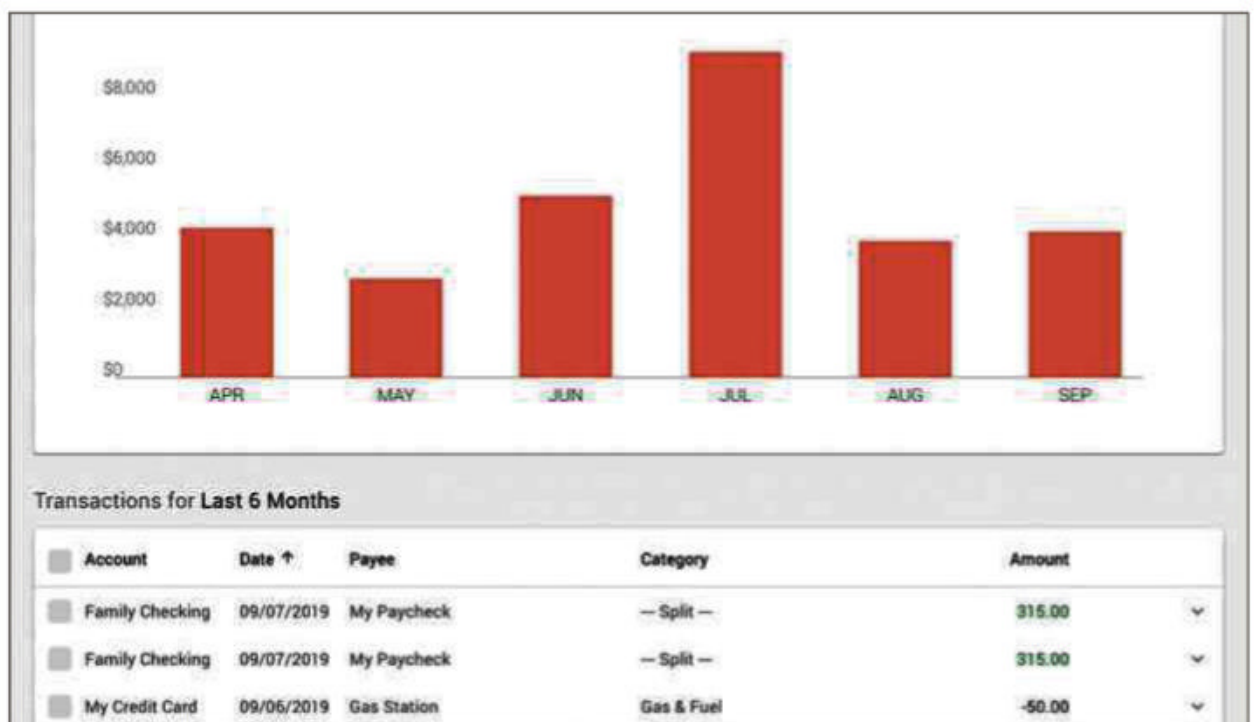
I've been using it for a month now, and it's easily the best machine I've ever had. All the test scores you mention in your review went over my head, so let's just say it's extremely fast.

It sometimes does things before I've had time to think about what I need to do next. Software, particularly image-editing tools, respond quickly.

I use its USB-C port all the time, and even got 10 hours battery life out of it recently, better than the 9 hours 15 minutes you managed.

David Chard

✉ Want to recommend hardware or software to fellow readers?  
Email [letters@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:letters@computeractive.co.uk)



### SOFTWARE

#### Use Quicken to manage your personal finances

✓ I read Issue 593's How To ('Export your financial data from Microsoft Money') with interest. Unfortunately, I don't use any of the programs you mention, such as HomeBank ([www.snipca.com/36352](http://www.snipca.com/36352)), though I've tried Microsoft Money along with others in the past.

I noticed you didn't mention Quicken ([www.quicken.com](http://www.quicken.com), see screenshot above), except in terms of its QIF files. About three years ago I decided to update my copy of Quicken to ensure my household finances are kept on track now and in the future. I phoned Quicken Inc directly (01 650 250 1900) and spoke to a pleasant man in customer services who said I could pay for a downloaded copy after he'd set up an account for me.

Yes, I know that it's set up to make

home accounting easier for people in the US, but I receive all the software updates and pay for it annually (from \$35.99 – £27 – a year: [www.quicken.com/compare](http://www.quicken.com/compare)). It looks very attractive, and you can configure it for whichever currency you want. It has helped me considerably to budget and maintain an even keel with our spending and saving.

Trevor Whitfield

### TV STREAMING

#### Get Sky Sports News on Now TV


✓ Just a couple of things I'd like to mention regarding the reviews of TV-streaming sticks in Issue 593. First, the BT Sport App ([www.bt.com/sport/app](http://www.bt.com/sport/app)) is now available on Amazon Fire TV. Second, if you're a Now TV Entertainment customer and you use a Now TV device, you get Sky Sports News as part of your package. It's a great added bonus.

Lee Marriott

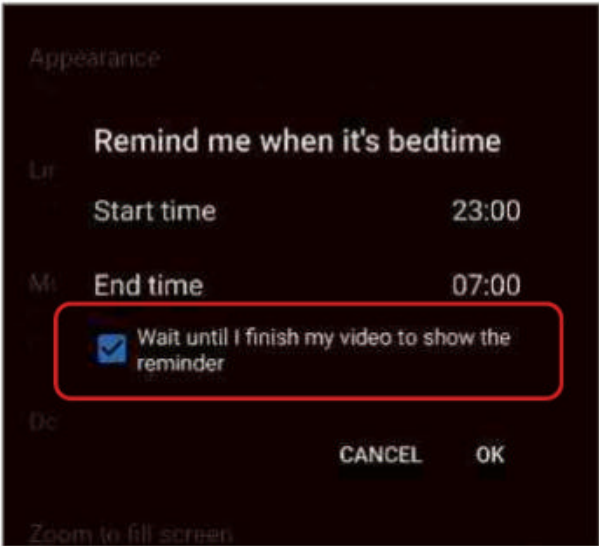


# Phone and Tablet Tips

## ANDROID & iOS Use YouTube's new controls

 Poking at tiny on-screen buttons is a sure-fire way to lose your concentration. That's not ideal when you're trying to focus on a video. So, Google has re-thought the controls in its YouTube app, which is a free download for iOS ([www.snipca.com/36773](http://www.snipca.com/36773)) and Android ([www.snipca.com/36774](http://www.snipca.com/36774)).

One of our favourite tricks, which was already built in, is skipping forwards or backwards 10 seconds by double-tapping the right or left halves of the playback window. This has now been supplemented by a swipe-up gesture, which switches to full-screen playback, and swipe-down to switch back to the small player window with comments and related videos below it. And, if you're wondering how much longer a video still has to run, rather than how far through it you've got, tap the **timestamp** and it will



start counting down to the end. Tapping it a second time returns to the original setting.


If you tend to get caught up in a YouTube loop of recommended videos, it's easy not to notice that several hours have passed and you should already have gone to bed. To help you get your beauty sleep, Google has introduced bedtime reminders.

To set one, launch the app and log into your Google Account, then tap Settings followed by General, and tap the slider next to 'Remind me when it's bedtime'. Set the times during which you should be in bed, and (optionally) untick the box next to 'Wait until I finish my video to show the reminder' (see screenshot left) if you want it to interrupt you, regardless of what's playing. You can 'snooze' a bedtime reminder when it pops up, in which case it will remind you again 10 minutes later.

Related to this is the option that appears immediately above the bedtime reminders switch, which is 'Remind me to take a break'. Once enabled you can set the interval at which YouTube will nudge you to go and do something else for a while. It might be just enough to stop you getting square (or more likely rectangular) eyes.



## ANDROID & iOS Save Google Maps for offline use

 If you're heading somewhere remote with patchy network coverage, or you're planning a post-lockdown trip abroad and don't want to use too much data while paying roaming charges, save any Google Maps you'll need before you leave home.

Search for the location you'll be travelling to, swipe up the card that overlays the bottom of the map, then tap Download.

You'll see a preview of the area you're about to save to your phone. If it's not exactly what you need, pinch in and out to enlarge or reduce it, then tap Download (see screenshot above). Your map will download in the background.

Once you've done this, even with no 4G signal you can continue finding your way – Google Maps will use the downloaded map when you stray into the area that it covers. When you're back online, it will update the downloaded map when new information becomes available so it's always relevant.

If you want to delete your map and recover the space it occupies on your phone, tap your account icon at the end of the search bar, then tap 'Offline maps'. Tap the vertical three dots to the right of the relevant map, then tap Delete on the menu that appears.

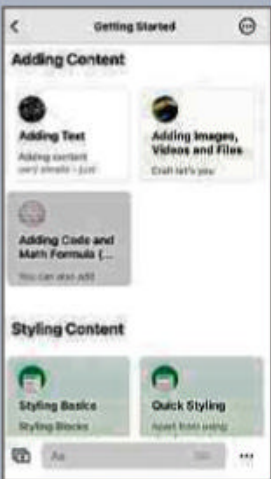
## BEST NEW APPS

### What you should install this fortnight

#### Craft Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36772](http://www.snipca.com/36772)

Craft is an eye-catching note-taking app that lets you embed notes within each other for more structured note-keeping that should help you keep track of related notes. You can export your jottings as a PDF, sync them between devices, and can even add images and videos – either as illustrations or simply so you know where to find them.



#### Mahjong Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36776](http://www.snipca.com/36776)

This attractive recreation of the classic Chinese tile-clearing game could be just what you need to find a bit of peace. Every puzzle is solvable, if you're careful. There are daily challenges, 22 board shapes to choose from and a selection of seven different tile styles. Although it's free, it costs £11.99 to remove the adverts. If this is a bit pricey for you, there are plenty of alternatives to choose from Apple's store.



#### Calculator Pro 59p

Android [www.snipca.com/36775](http://www.snipca.com/36775)

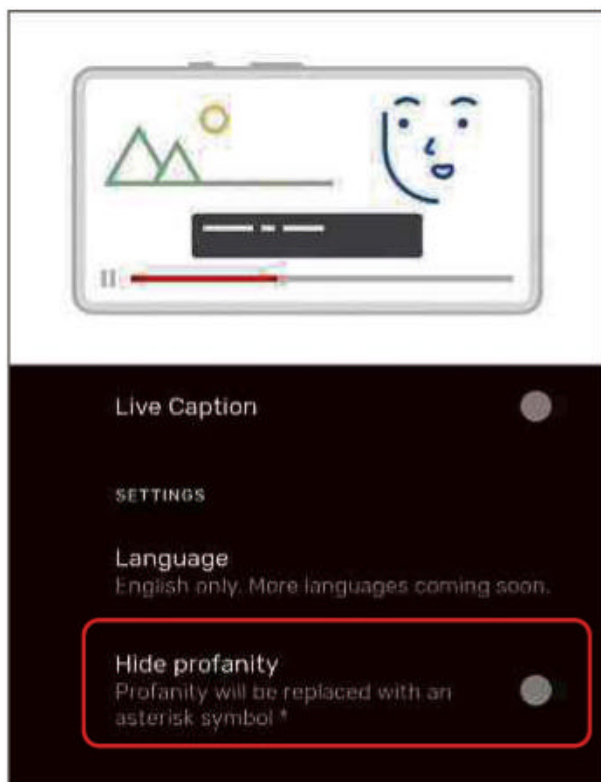
Go beyond the calculator app built into Android and get a host of additional features, like loan calculators. It also offers handy converters for currency, distance, temperature, energy, area, volume and so on. There are over 1,000 formulas you can use, with calculations updating as you work on them.




\*Contains in-app purchases



## Brilliant things to do on your device




### ANDROID Add live captions to videos

 Have you ever wanted to watch a video without disturbing anyone around you? Android 10 offers a handy built-in captioning option – although it isn't enabled on *all* Android phones. It works on all Google Pixel phones from the Pixel 2 onwards, as well as on several other models, but the only way to know whether your manufacturer has enabled it is to give it a go. If so, Android will automatically provide subtitles for whatever you're watching by transcribing the audio track, even if there aren't any subtitles built in. That way you can turn off the audio and carry on watching without losing track of what's going on.

To start with, play a video. Now, press the volume button, then tap the Live Caption button that – if you're in luck – appears below the on-screen volume controls. Your phone will now transcribe spoken content in videos and (on Pixel models) phone calls. Live captioning only works with English-language content, but you can change several options by opening Settings and tapping 'Sound and vibration' followed by Live Caption. Here, you can obscure swear words (see screenshot above) and add annotations for elements like applause and laughter.

### iOS Create PDFs without using an app

 There's a lesser-known way to create PDFs from directly within iOS. Open the document or web page you want to convert into a PDF, then tap the share button (a square with an up arrow).

Scroll down the list of options and tap Print. Now, rather than going through the rigmarole of selecting a printer, specifying how many copies you want and so on, long-press the preview of the printed page (see screenshot right). If you're working with a single-page document, the page will immediately be converted to a PDF, in which case, skip to the next paragraph. If you're working with a multi-page document, you'll



instead be given the option to select which pages are printed. Ignore this, and tap the preview again to convert the document to PDF.

Now tap the share button for a second time (this time it's at the top of the screen) and decide what you want to do with the PDF, including saving it to Files, emailing it or adding it to an online storage account like Dropbox (as long as you have the relevant app installed).

## BEST APPS FOR... Walkers

### MapMyWalk

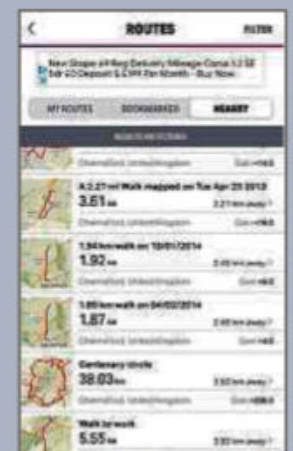
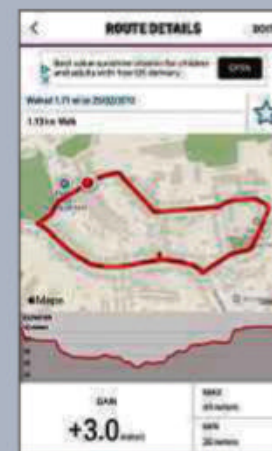
Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36779](http://www.snipca.com/36779)

Android [www.snipca.com/36780](http://www.snipca.com/36780)

If you're bored of your regular walks, this app could help. We found dozens of new circular and point-to-point walks in our local area (up to 40km in length). You can track your progress on screen while the app measures your pace rate, bookmark your favourites and create challenges if you need a target to work towards.

**Best For** Finding new walking routes



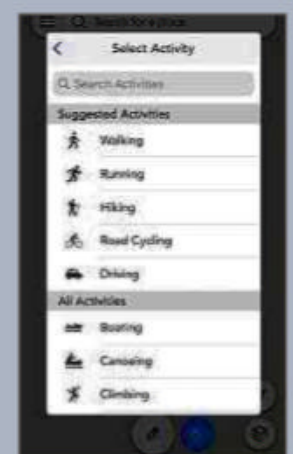
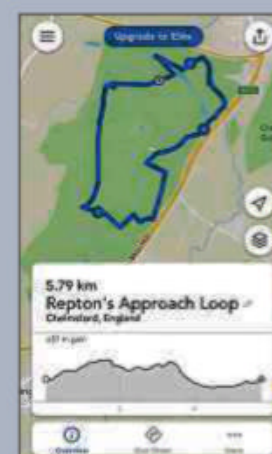
### Footpath Route Planner

Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36777](http://www.snipca.com/36777)

Trace a route with your finger and it will snap to roads and trails on this app's map. You can create routes for a variety of activities aside from walking, including running, cycling and even canoeing. You can follow the route on screen, but by upgrading (between £1.99 and £21.49) you can also export it or have turn-by-turn directions.

**Best For** Planning unfamiliar routes



### Walkmeter

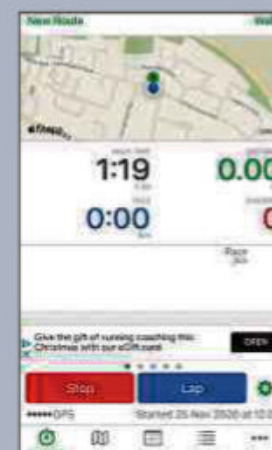
Free\*

iOS [www.snipca.com/36782](http://www.snipca.com/36782)

Android [www.snipca.com/36783](http://www.snipca.com/36783)

Track your walk, calories burned, distance covered and more, and use voice control (for an £8.99 upgrade) so you don't need to keep looking at your phone while you're exercising. You can also use it for a range of sports, including hiking, skiing and kayaking, and analyse your performance using stats, graphs and time records.

**Best For** Analysing your walks



\*Contains in-app purchases

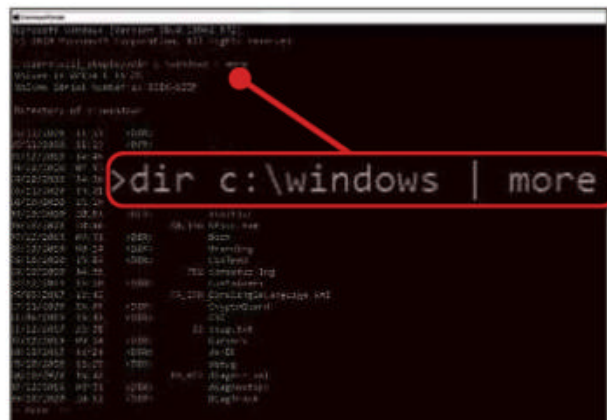


### WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

#### Slow down Command Prompt



If you use Command Prompt (click Start, type **cmd**, then press Enter) to show the contents of a large folder, you'll find it displays all the information at lightning speed, leaving you to scroll through a lot of data to check it all. If you want an easier way to view the results, try adding ' | more' to the end of whatever command you're using. So, if you want to view all files in your Windows folder, you need to type **dir c:\windows | more** (see screenshot below). You can produce the '|' character (known as a pipe) on most keyboards by holding down the Shift key and pressing the '\ ' key. When the Command Prompt output fills your screen, it'll pause and show '-- More --'. To display the next page, press the Space key, or to progress one line at a time press Enter repeatedly.

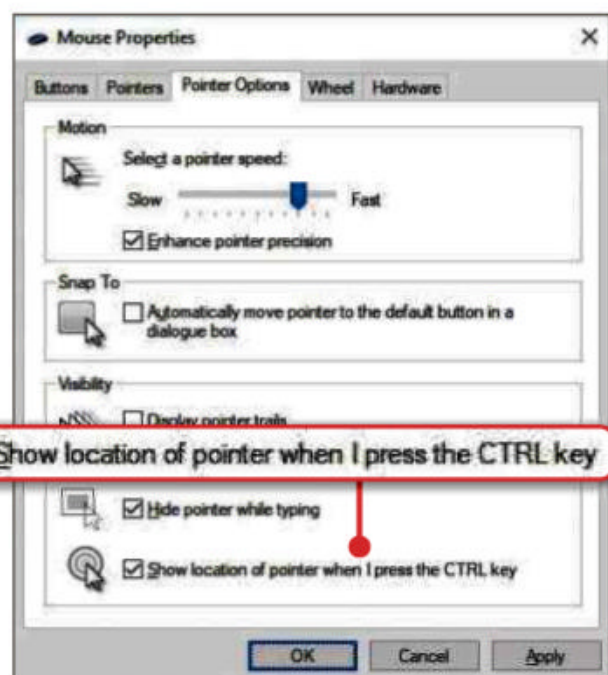


### WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

#### Locate your cursor quickly



If you have multiple monitors – or just a single, large monitor – locating your cursor may require you to frantically move your mouse around to make it more visible. There is an easier way. First, open Settings (press Windows



### WINDOWS 7, 8.1 & 10

## Stop Windows switching networks



In Issue 595's Cover Feature (see page 53) we explained how to stop Windows switching from your router's 5GHz network (usually the fastest) to its 2.4GHz network. You do this by clicking the Wi-Fi symbol in your system tray, selecting the 2.4GHz network, then unticking 'Connect automatically'.

Another way to do this is to tell Windows not to look for other networks while you're connected to your 5GHz band. To do this, first make sure you're connected to the network you want to stay on, then right-click the Wi-Fi symbol in the system tray, select 'Open Network & Internet Settings', then click 'Change adapter options'. In the window that opens, double-click your wireless adapter (this will have a signal-strength icon next to it, showing it's currently connected), then click Wireless Properties. Finally, remove the tick from the 'Look for other wireless networks while connected



to this network' option (see screenshot) then click OK, followed by Close.

As long as you're connected to that network, Windows will no longer search for other nearby networks to connect to. Bear in mind that although 2.4GHz networks are slower than 5GHz, they have greater range. So if you have a large house you may find Windows clings on to a slow 5GHz signal at the very edge of its range instead of switching to the stronger 2.4GHz network.

key+I), select Devices, then Mouse and click the 'Additional mouse options' link (depending on the size of your Settings window, this will either be on the left or at the bottom).

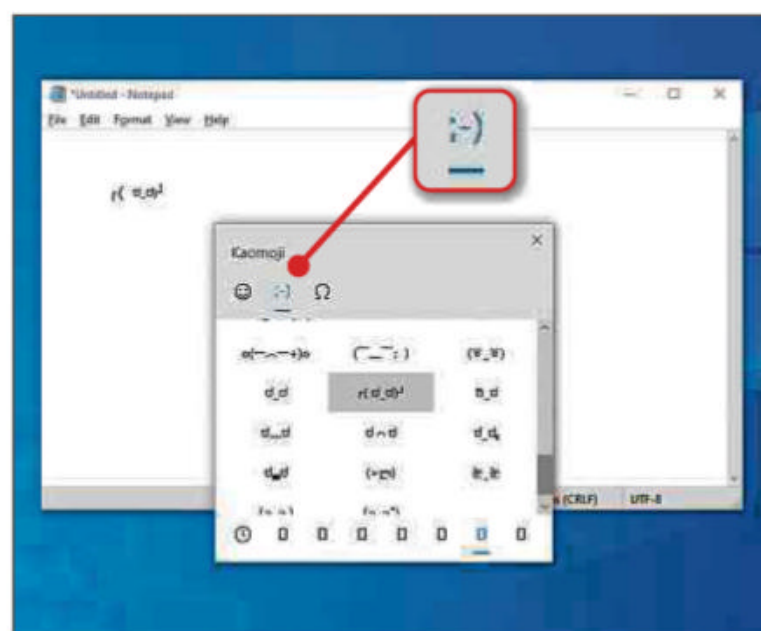
In the Mouse Properties window that appears, select the Pointer Options tab, then tick the box next to 'Show location of pointer...' (see screenshot left) and click OK. The next time you want to find your cursor, simply press the Ctrl key. The pointer will now be highlighted by a graphic similar to the opening credits of the classic BBC comedy *Ever Decreasing Circles* ([www.snipca.com/368290](http://www.snipca.com/368290)).

### WINDOWS 10

#### Use emojis in any app



No, we're not huge fans of emojis either, but they can be useful if you want to inject a bit of humour into an email. If you want to do this, but can't find the emoji option in the program




you're using, press the Windows key+. (full stop). A small window full of yellow grinning faces will appear – simply click the one you want and it'll appear.

Note that emoji graphics will work in most Windows 10 apps as well as your browser, but not in programs such as Office and Notepad. For these, you'll need to switch to the text-based emojis – or Kaomojis, as they're known – by selecting the middle tab at the top (see screenshot above).



MICROSOFT WORD & EXCEL

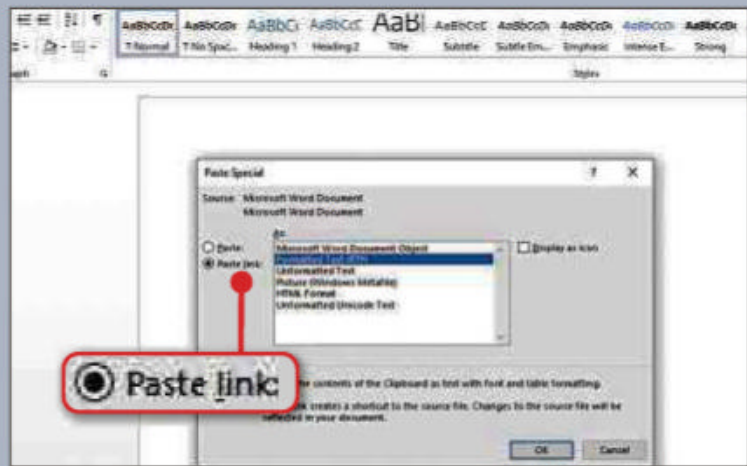
# Sync changes between documents

 Copying text from one document to another isn't difficult - you can press Ctrl+C (copy) then Ctrl+V (paste). But what if the text you've previously copied regularly changes (such as with a running total in a fundraising document)? If you don't like the idea of having to constantly re-paste the text to keep it up to date, you can instead paste the text as a link. If the text in the document changes, the linked text in the other document changes in tandem.

Open the document you want to copy text from, then highlight the text you want to copy and press Ctrl+C to

copy it. Next, open the document you want to paste the text into, but instead of pressing Ctrl+V select the Home tab in the toolbar, click the down arrow under the Paste button (this is usually at the far left of the toolbar) and select 'Paste Special...'. In the window that opens, select the 'Paste link' option on the left (see screenshot), choose 'Formatted Text (RTF)' in the As box, then click OK.


The text will now appear as normal. To test this, go back to the first document,



change the text you copied, then return to the second document. You'll notice the pasted text updates automatically (this can take a couple of seconds).

MICROSOFT EXCEL & LIBREOFFICE CALC

## Add or subtract days to/from dates in your spreadsheet

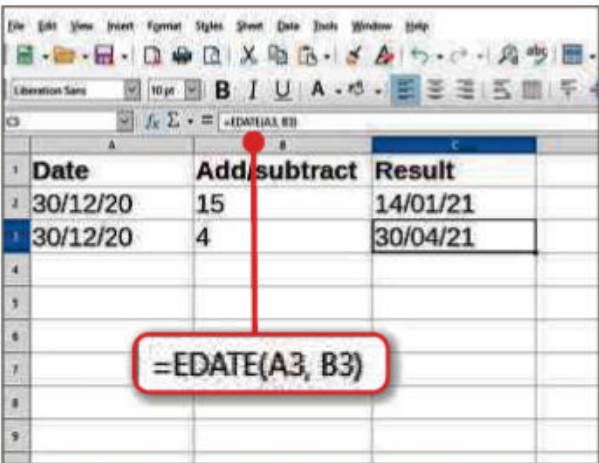
 If you want to add or subtract a certain number of days to/from a date in Excel or Calc, you can use a simple calculation function. In our example, we want to add 15 days to the date in cell A2 (30/12/2020), so we enter 15 in cell B2, then use the formula `=A2+B2` in C2, which gives the result 14/1/2021.

You can also quickly add or subtract entire months using the EDATE formula, as illustrated in row 3 below. We enter `=EDATE(A3, B3)` in cell C2 (as shown in the Formula bar in the screenshot below). This formula takes the date from A3 (30/12/2020) and adds to it the number of months in cell B3 (4), resulting in a date of 30/4/2021. If you want to subtract a certain number of months, use the minus symbol (so to remove four months from this date, we'd type `-4` in cell B3).

When using a formula to calculate a date, make sure you format that cell as a


date value (right-click, then select 'Format Cells...').

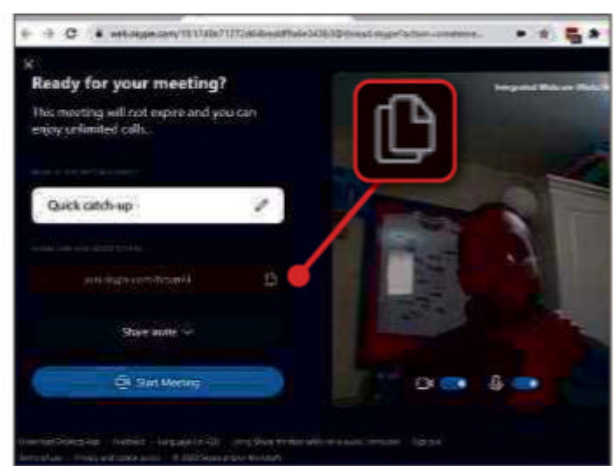
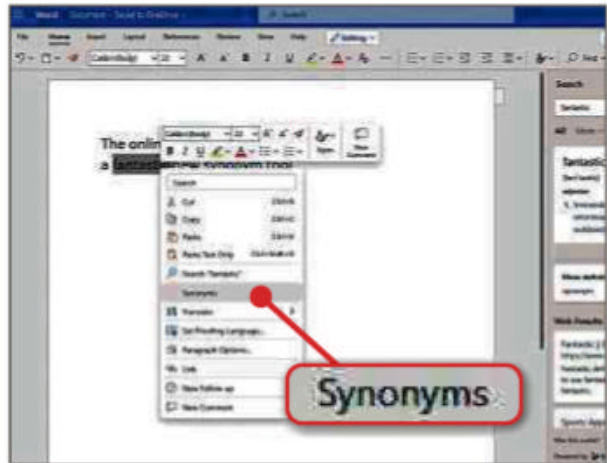
It's also worth pointing out that Excel only works with dates back to 1900. If you try to run calculations on dates earlier than this, Excel rather unhelpfully throws up a '#Value!' error message. There is a solution, though - simply switch to LibreOffice Calc, which has no such restrictions.



MICROSOFT WORD


## Find alternative words to use

 Microsoft continues to add new features to the online version of Word ([www.office.com](http://www.office.com) - as with Outlook.com, you need a Microsoft account to access it). The latest update adds a synonyms tool to help you find alternatives for certain words, much like that found in the offline version of Word. To use it, select the word, right-click it, then select Synonyms (see screenshot below). Alternative suggestions will then be shown in the pane on the right-hand side of the window.



OUTLOOK

## Launch Skype Meet Now directly from Outlook

 Skype's Meet Now tool lets you launch video calls with friends and family, without the need for them to have a Skype account (see Issue 595, page 48 for more details). Thanks to a recent update, you can now start Meet Now video calls from Outlook.com (Microsoft's web-based email tool).

To start a call, click the new 'Meet now' button on the toolbar at the top. A new tab will now open in your browser. You may also see a permission box asking whether you want Skype to use your microphone and camera - if so, click Allow.

A link for your meeting will be displayed in the 'Share link and invite others' box. Click the copy button (see screenshot above), then email the link to whoever you want to join the meeting. Note that if anyone you send the link to forwards it on to others, they too will be able to join your meeting.



# In The Club



Run a club or society? Here's how your tech can make it easier

## Stream a presentation using Chromecast

**M**any businesses use PowerPoint to create presentations for company strategy, marketing aims or finance projections. If you run a club, you can do something similar to explain to members what the club's future plans are or to present a photo slideshow. Here we show you how you can avoid spending money on Microsoft Office and wasting time trying to connect your laptop to the club's TV by instead using Google's Chromecast streaming device.

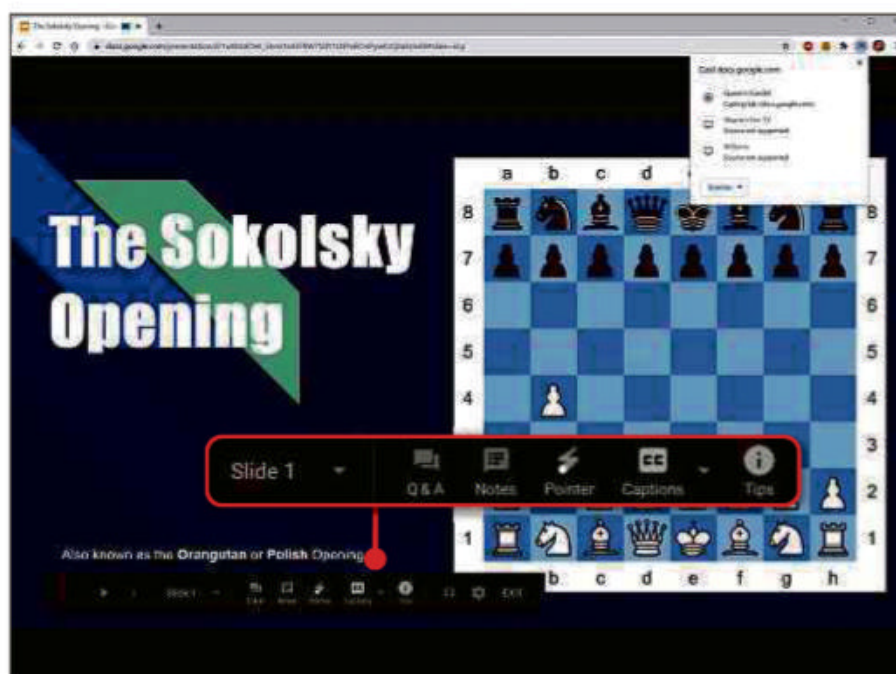
### Set up a Chromecast

Chromecast is a dongle that connects to your TV and displays anything you send – or **cast** – to it over Wi-Fi. The newest model, Chromecast with Google TV, costs £60 ([www.snipca.com/36435](http://www.snipca.com/36435)), but Google also sells an older model for £30 ([www.snipca.com/36434](http://www.snipca.com/36434)) that will work fine for your needs.

To set up your Chromecast, plug the power cable into it and insert the dongle into a spare **HDMI** port on your TV (as pictured below), and then switch to the relevant input source using the AV/Input button on your TV's remote control. Next, follow Google's instructions at [www.snipca.com/36802](http://www.snipca.com/36802). You'll be prompted to download the Google Home app on Android or iOS to complete the setup and will need to make sure Bluetooth is enabled on your phone.



Plug your Chromecast into any spare HDMI port on your TV



Once you've clicked the **Present** button you'll see a list of controls at the bottom

### Create your presentation using Google Slides

To make the presentation, we'll use Google Slides – Google's free online PowerPoint equivalent. Go to [www.snipca.com/36801](http://www.snipca.com/36801) and click the 'Blank' tile under 'Start a new presentation'. Alternatively, click the Template link on the right to see examples you can use.

If you've created presentations before, Slides should be familiar, but if not, it doesn't take too long to get to grips with. Each slide in your presentation will appear in a strip on the left. Adding new ones is simply a matter of clicking the small plus sign in the top-left corner.

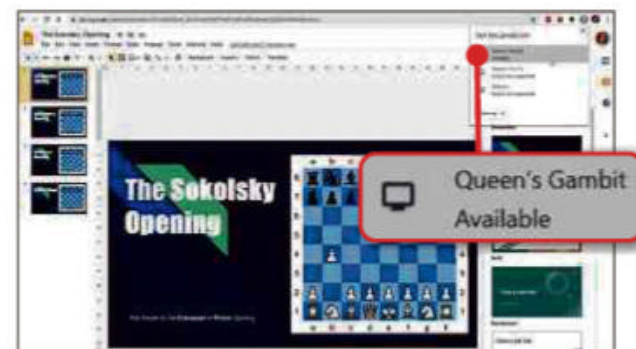
Click a slide to customise it. You'll see dummy text within the slide saying 'Click to add title' and 'Click to add subtitle'. Click either and you can then type your replacement text. Click and drag on the handles around the text box to resize or move it. At the top you'll see the usual formatting options that let you change the font, resize text, and bold or italicise it. Towards the left are buttons for adding new text boxes, images, shapes, lines and fills. To remove an unwanted box from a slide, click to select it and press delete on your keyboard.

It's easy to construct a series of slides in this way. The 'Themes' sidebar on the right lets you customise the look of your presentation. Click on a preset to apply it to the entire project.

### View your presentation on your TV

You can view your presentation on your computer by clicking the Present button at the top right. It will open full-screen and display controls at the bottom (see screenshot above). Click a slide to jump to the next one. You can exit full-screen mode by right-clicking and selecting Exit Full Screen, or by pressing Esc on your keyboard.

When you're ready to cast your slideshow, click the down arrow to the right of the Present button and select 'Present on another screen'. A box with a list of sources will open. You should see your Chromecast listed, as long as it's set up correctly and on the same Wi-Fi network (ours is called 'Queen's Gambit', see screenshot below). Click its name, and the slideshow will play on your TV. It will be displayed simultaneously on your PC screen, so you'll be able to control the presentation from where you are.



Select the name of your Chromecast to cast your presentation to your TV



# What's All the Fuss About...

## Project Latte

Microsoft wants Android to wake up and smell the coffee

### What is it?

Microsoft's plan to make Android apps run smoothly on Windows 10. It's a software subsystem that Android developers will be able to use to convert their apps so they work on computers as well as phones and tablets.

### What's a subsystem?

Also called a compatibility layer, it's a computing method for allowing one operating system to 'translate' programs that were written in a different coding language for another operating system. Windows already has a subsystem for Linux software.

### Really? When did that launch?

It was announced in 2016 and since June 2019 has been available to Windows Insiders. Called Windows Subsystem for Linux (WSL), it creates a virtual Linux kernel in Windows. You can run Linux tools by typing commands into PowerShell, which is Microsoft's long-term replacement for Command Prompt.

### Hold on – what's a kernel?

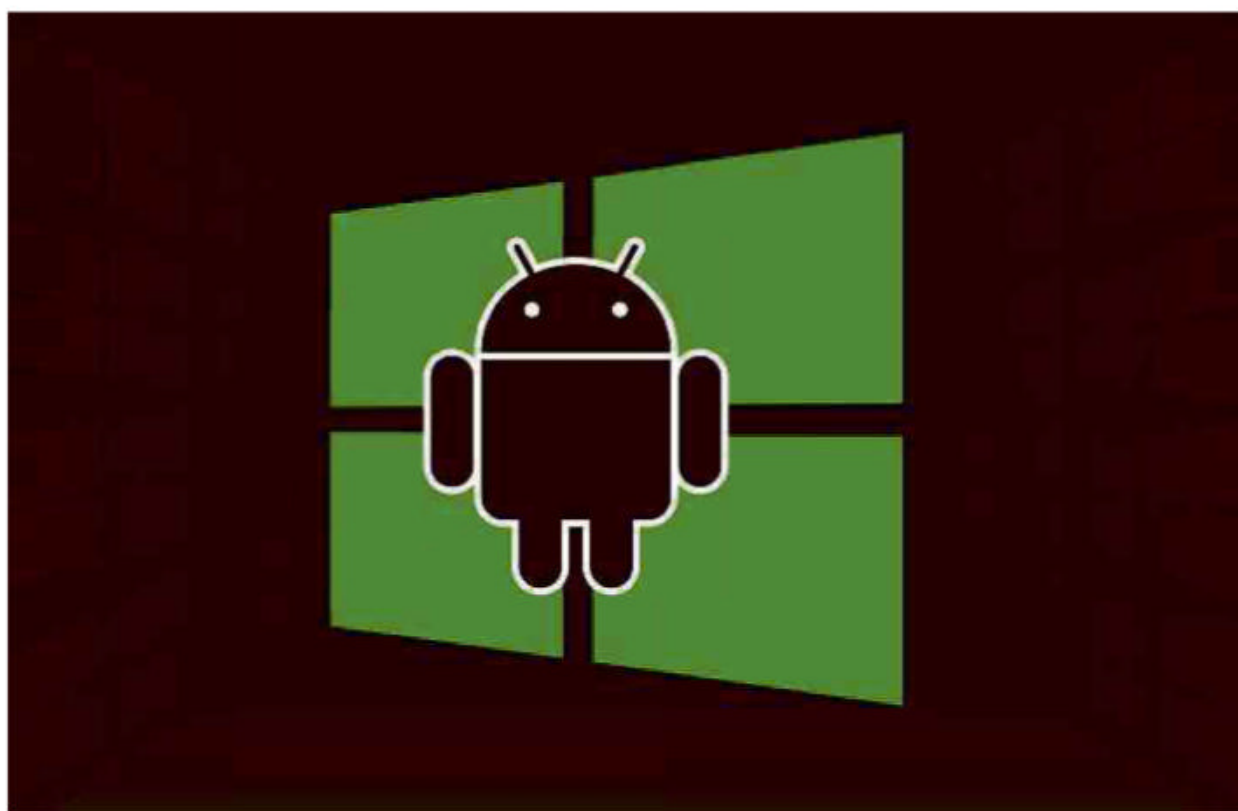
A program that sits at the heart of an operating system, controlling everything it does. It's one of the first programs to load when you boot your computer, and stays permanently in your memory so it can handle interactions between your software and hardware. Android itself is based on the Linux kernel.

### Where will the apps be available?

Through Microsoft's App Store ([www.snipca.com/36888](http://www.snipca.com/36888)). But it all depends on whether the company can persuade Android developers that converting their



You can access Android apps on your PC using Your Phone, but it's far from perfect



apps for Windows will be both reasonably easy and worth their effort. It failed previously with Windows Phone.

### What happened?

Back in 2011 it launched a tool for Android developers to build apps for the new Windows Phone system. Some developers responded, but most didn't. As a result, Windows Phone struggled to gain a following, and never challenged Android or Apple's iOS. Microsoft axed it in 2019. Then there was Project Astoria, another plan to help developers move Android apps to Windows 10 Mobile. Microsoft announced it in 2015, but cancelled it a year later.

### Could it succeed this time?

Possibly. Windows Phone had a fraction of Android's market share, so developers had little incentive to build apps for it. Windows 10 in contrast runs on over a billion computers worldwide. That's a lot of users developers would reach.

### Can't I already use Android apps on my PC?

Sort of. You're thinking of Microsoft's Your Phone app (available from Microsoft's Store at [www.snipca.com/36889](http://www.snipca.com/36889), pictured left). This lets you open Android

apps on your computer. But the apps aren't downloaded to your desktop. Rather, you 'mirror' your phone's screen on your PC, which makes the process unreliable and clunky. Also, it works only on a small range of Samsung devices (see which ones at [www.snipca.com/36355](http://www.snipca.com/36355)).

### But Project Latte will make things easier?

Yes, because you'll be downloading the apps to your computer then running them from there, just as you install apps now from the Microsoft Store. Big questions remain though: how many developers will use it? How well will apps designed for small phone screens work on bigger PC screens? Would Microsoft like to use the logo we created (above)? And where does the name come from?

### Ah yes, I was wondering about that...

Perhaps it's a nod to the latte's familiar combination of coffee and milk. Is Windows the coffee and Android the milk, exquisitely blended to make a frothy new computing experience? Or maybe it's Microsoft's way of acknowledging all the delays it's suffered getting Android apps on to Windows. Better latte than never, you see.



# SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD NEVER INSTALL



They promise the world, but not all programs have your best interests at heart. From rip-offs to security risks, **Jonathan Parkyn** names the tools you need to avoid

It's always tempting to pack your PC with software, whether it's tools you think you need, programs that claim to offer brilliant features, or software you feel obliged to install because they

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Stop paying for software that you can get for free in Windows
- Ditch expensive OCR tools for superior, free alternatives
- Install graphics drivers without the unwanted junk
- Avoid paid-for software that's available free elsewhere

came bundled with something you bought.

However, overloading your computer isn't a good idea. For a start, all that software can seriously eat into your storage space – unnecessarily so, if you never or rarely use them. Installed programs also often add processes that run in the background, sapping system resources and slowing your PC.

Then there are those deceitful tools that claim to be free, only to insist you have to pay to actually use them once they're installed. Some tools can even present a threat to your security, either because they're out of date and vulnerable to hackers, or because they come from dodgy software developers, intent on

harvesting your data or smuggling unwanted programs on to your computer without your consent.

Microsoft has done a pretty good job of sharpening Windows' toolkit over the years and you might be surprised to find just how many tasks your PC can carry out without the need for extra programs. And, when you do need to turn to a third-party option, there are so many brilliant, trustworthy free tools and mobile apps that we'll make sure you never need to splash out on rip-off software or dodgy programs ever again.

Over the next few pages, we'll show you precisely which programs you should steer clear of, why, and what to use instead.



## SOFTWARE THAT CLAIMS TO BE FREE - BUT ISN'T

With software, there really is such a thing as a free lunch. Search online and you'll find hundreds of genuinely brilliant, genuinely free tools for all kinds of tasks, from LibreOffice to Paint.NET and beyond. Sadly, you'll also come across tools that claim to be free but are, in fact, just keeping their real costs hidden – conning you into installing them before hitting you with a socking great bill. Others try to convince you that you need to pay for advanced features, when free tools are just as good. Then there are the rip-off merchants that try to palm off other people's free software as their own and make you pay for it.

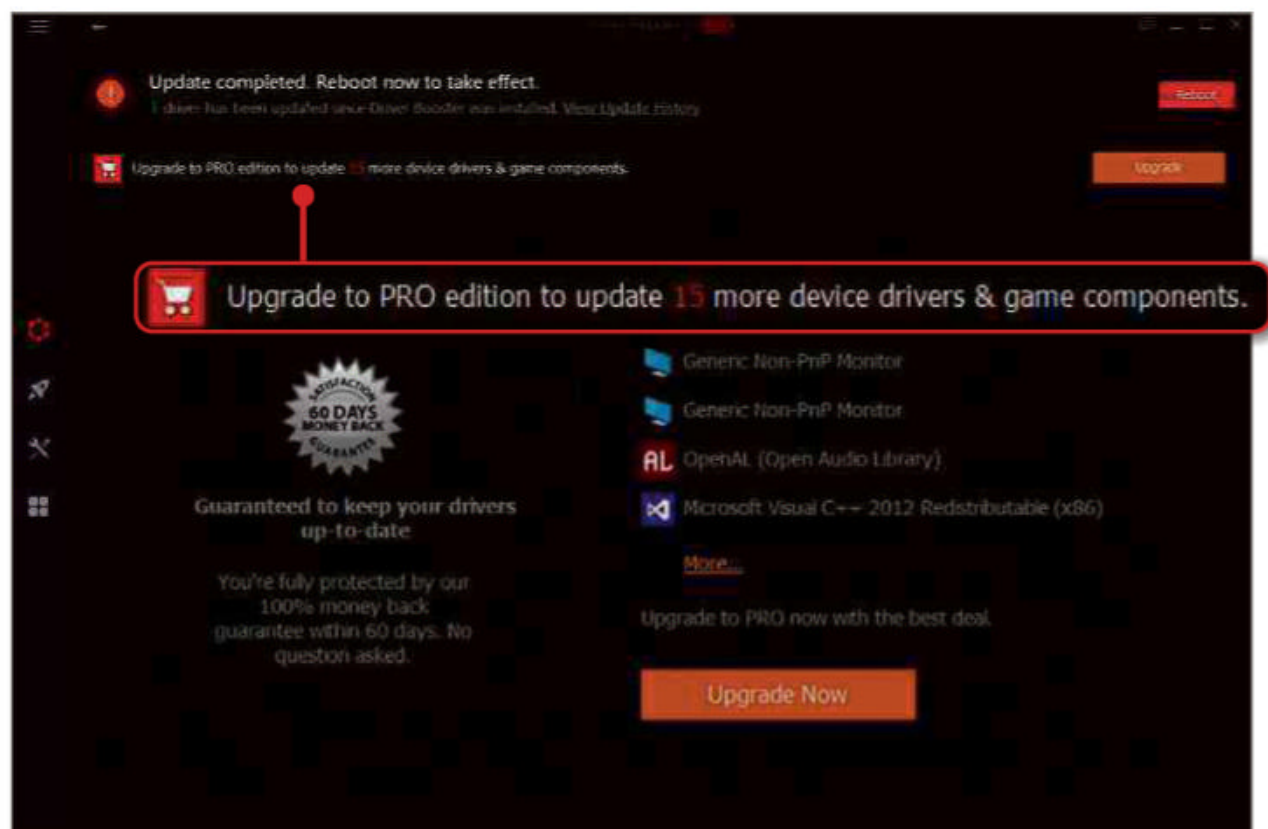
### Programs that claim to be free but aren't

Most fake freebies follow a familiar pattern. First, they lure you in with the promise of carrying out a task for free, then send you into a blind panic by uncovering problems you need to urgently fix, while simultaneously refusing to resolve anything until you cough up some money.

**Driver Booster** is a case in point. If you're looking for a tool to help you keep your hardware drivers up to date, IObit's Driver Booster will probably appear towards the top of your search results. Go to [www.snipca.com/36760](http://www.snipca.com/36760) and, sure enough, the tool claims to “update more than 3,500,000 device drivers and components for top PC performance”, while the huge Free Download button clearly suggests that the tool is free. Guess what? It isn't.

Once you've navigated your way through IObit's cunning installer, you'll be invited to run a scan to check for out-of-date drivers. Do that and, if you're lucky, Driver Booster may even offer to update a token driver or two for you. But at this point it will also present you with a message telling you to “Upgrade to PRO edition” (see screenshot above) to update all your remaining out-of-date device drivers the tool has identified, effectively holding you to ransom unless you pay (£57 a year).

The truth is that Windows 10 will apply most of the driver updates you need via Windows Update. This usually happens automatically and there's little need to mess around with drivers if all your hardware is behaving normally. If you're experiencing problems with a specific component, however, you can see if an



**Driver Booster does a good job of finding out-of-date drivers, but demands payment before updating them**

updated driver is available as an optional Windows update (this is a new feature in Windows).

To do this, open Settings (press the Windows key+I), go to 'Update & Security', Windows Update, then 'View optional updates'. Tick the ones you want to download, then click 'Download and install' (see screenshot below). Alternatively, go to the manufacturer's support pages to download and install the latest driver yourself.

Data-recovery tool **Recoverit** pulls a similar trick. If you've accidentally deleted some important files or discovered that your digital camera's memory card has somehow eaten all your holiday snaps, you may find yourself turning to



**The 'Optional updates' tool in Windows lets you install a wide range of drivers**

Recoverit, which is offered as a free download from [www.snipca.com/36761](http://www.snipca.com/36761).

Allow Recoverit to scan for your lost files and it may well locate them. The trouble is, locating them is about all it'll do – unless you pay, of course. Having tantalised you with the prospect of restoring your files, you'll find that clicking the Recover button throws up a prompt to buy the Pro (£45) or Ultimate (£53) versions, along with a stress-inducing message urging you to “recover as soon as possible to prevent the files from being overwritten”.

It may come from Piriform, developers of the popular CCleaner (which has been known to pull a few tricks of its own – see page 56), but we'd recommend **Recuva** ([www.ccleaner.com/recuva](http://www.ccleaner.com/recuva)) instead should you need to claw back lost data, not least because the free version is completely free, with no strings attached.

### Don't pay for software when free tools are just as good

Some brands try to cling on to past glories to convince people their software is still relevant. Take **WinZip**. Years ago, it was the best tool for compressing and decompressing files using the ZIP format, while the 'Win' bit of its name somehow made it feel like a semi-official Windows accessory. Now owned by Corel and on version 25, WinZip is still going strong. Its website ([www.winzip.com](http://www.winzip.com)) even suggests WinZip is “the world's #1 compression utility software”.



What it fails to tell you (until you've clicked the large Free Download button and installed it) is that the free version is limited to 21 days (see screenshot right). WinZip Standard costs £31 – and that's not a one-off fee, that's every year. What it also fails to mention is that Windows already has built-in support for the ZIP format. To open a ZIP file without any additional software, just right-click it and select Extract All. And to add some files or folders to a ZIP file yourself, right-click them, then click 'Send to' followed by 'Compressed (zipped) folder'.

It's true that Windows lacks extensive support for other archive formats (RAR, 7z, TAR and so on), but if you need to compress or extract these, there are several brilliant tools that, unlike WinZip, really are free. **PeaZip** (<https://peazip.github.io>) is our current favourite (see Issue 594, page 18 for more on PeaZip).

Some of the very best software is offered in both free and paid-for versions – security tools are a good example. And, if you really like the free version, it can be tempting to stump up for the premium version and unlock all its extra features. Doing so, however, won't always provide the type of benefits you might expect.

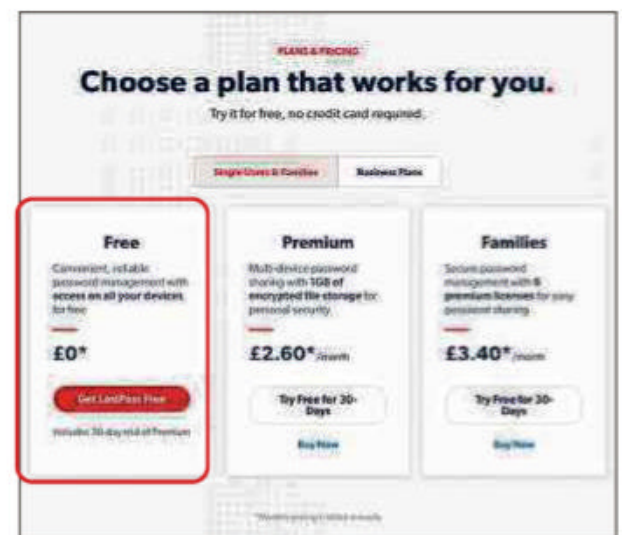
LastPass ([www.lastpass.com](http://www.lastpass.com)), for example, is a brilliant free way to manage your passwords. It used to be that certain key features (such as syncing your passwords across multiple devices and sharing them with trusted family members) required you to pay for a



Only once you've installed WinZip does it become clear that the program is a 21-day free trial

premium subscription (currently £2.60 per month).

What many don't realise is that LastPass recently added both of these tools to the Free version (see screenshot right), so there are no longer many convincing arguments for most people to pay for the premium version – unless you want to take advantage of features such as its 1GB of online storage (which you can easily get elsewhere) or Emergency Access tool (which lets you nominate someone to be able to access your account if you forget your password or become incapacitated).



The free version of LastPass now provides all you need from a password manager

## Programs that rip off free software, then resell it

There's an admirable and devoted community of software developers who put a lot of hard work into creating and maintaining free tools, such as **open-source** software. And, as it turns out, there's an equally devoted – but significantly less admirable – community that likes to rip everyone off by taking other people's free tools, rebranding them and selling them for their own personal profit.

A good example of this is **ProFlightSimulator** (<https://proflightsimulator.com>, see screenshot), which makes the bold claim of being "the most realistic flight simulator ever created". That's quite a boast considering the owners of the game didn't actually create it themselves. ProFlightSimulator is heavily based on another flight simulator called FlightGear ([www.flightgear.org](http://www.flightgear.org)).



[flightgear.org](http://flightgear.org) – see Issue 595, page 18).

In fact, it's worse than that – It's actually a superficially tweaked copy of an *outdated* version of FlightGear. The major difference, however, is that, while FlightGear itself is open-source and free, ProFlightSimulator's owners will charge you £73 for their knock-off version (that's more than Microsoft's latest Flight Simulator 2020 – [www.snipca.com/36806](http://www.snipca.com/36806)).

ProFlightSimulator isn't the only chancer in on the act. Several other companies have seen FlightGear as their flight path to a fast buck, including **VirtualPilot3D** ([www.virtualpilot3d.com](http://www.virtualpilot3d.com)), which *also* claims to be "the world's most realistic flight simulator" and costs up to a whopping £200 for the Premium Package.

This type of practice isn't actually illegal. With open-source software, the whole point is that anyone can download and use the **source code** however they want. Big, profit-making companies, such as Google and Microsoft frequently incorporate open-source code into their products. So, while ProFlightSimulator and co aren't technically breaking the law, their brazen attempt to rip off someone else's work to make money is unscrupulous and unethical.



## SOFTWARE OFFERING TOOLS YOU'LL NEVER NEED

From exaggerated claims to outright lies, software companies use all kinds of tricks to persuade you to install their tools. We wouldn't blame you for falling for them – after all, who wouldn't want a faster, more powerful computer? However, in most cases you simply don't need these so-called essential tools. Windows will often already do the job they offer to do, while others can actually slow your PC.

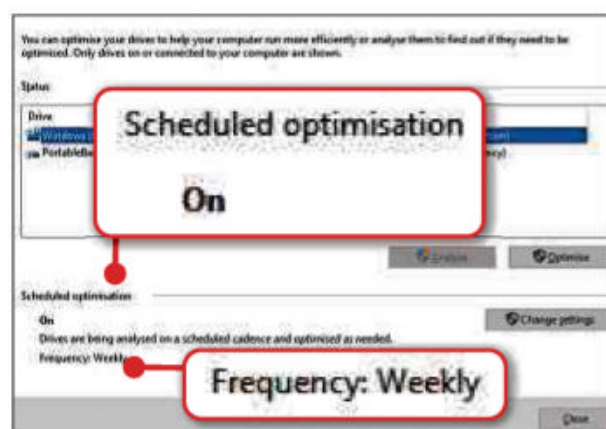
### Tools you don't need because Windows does it better

In the bad old days of computing, you needed to spend a fair chunk of time looking after your PC and maintaining the smooth running of Windows. One regular chore was making sure your hard drive was optimised by consolidating – or **defragmenting** – the data stored on it. And, while Windows has always included a tool for defragmenting drives, Disk Defragmenter never had much of a reputation for being fast or easy to use, which is why many people turned to simpler alternatives, such as Piriform's **Defraggler** ([www.snipca.com/36784](http://www.snipca.com/36784)).

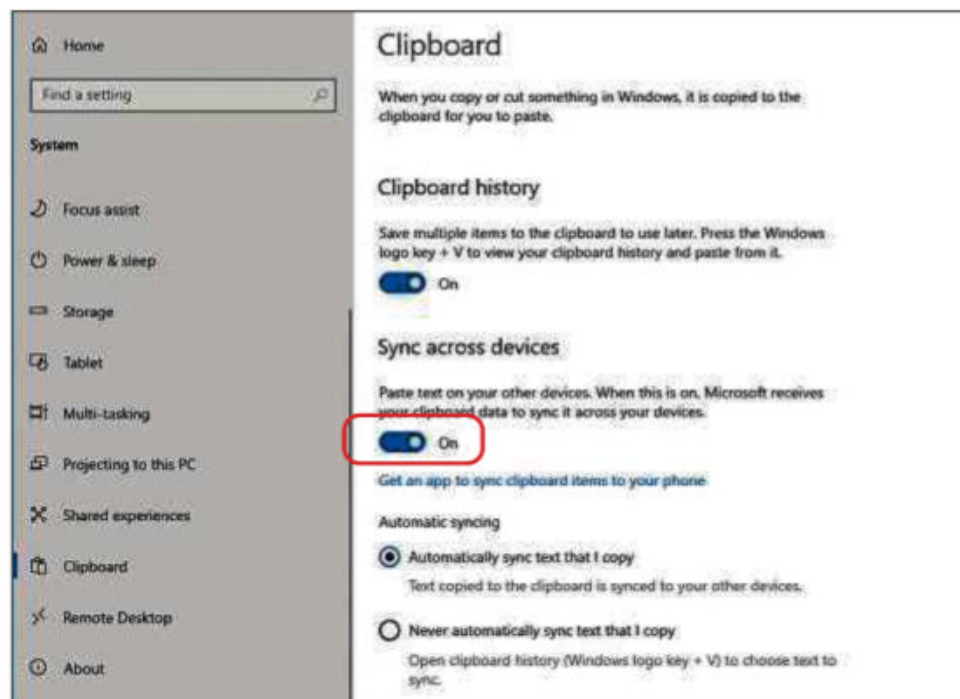
That has all changed, however. These days, Windows 10 defragments your hard drives in the background automatically, so you no longer even have to think about it (though that hasn't stopped Piriform peddling Defraggler).

If you want to check Windows has done this job, click Start, type **defrag**, then press Enter – you should see a window similar to the one in our screenshot below, with 'Scheduled optimisation' set to On (this means Windows is taking care of things for you).

Also be aware that solid-state drives (**SSDs**) aren't affected by fragmentation like older mechanical hard drives, and defragmenting an SSD effectively shortens its life. The good news is that Windows 10 will (once again, automatically) detect what type of drive



Windows optimises your hard drive on a weekly basis, so you don't have to



Windows' clipboard manager lets you sync your cut and copied text across all your PCs

you have and treat it accordingly. So, there's really no good reason to install Defraggler – or any other third-party defragmenting tool.

Windows hasn't only improved how it looks after your hardware – it also does a better job of tidying up after itself. You'll still find plenty of software offering help where it's not needed, though – none more so than registry-cleaning tools, such as **Auslogics Registry Cleaner Free** ([www.snipca.com/36785](http://www.snipca.com/36785)). As regular readers will know, we think such tools are a waste of time, not to mention potentially hazardous. You're very unlikely to notice any performance boost, and if the tool deletes a registry entry you need your PC will soon start playing up.

Not all of Windows' built-in clean-up tools are enabled by default. To make sure Windows regularly deletes **temporary files** and other junk, open Settings, then go to System, Storage and click the slider at the top to turn on Storage Sense. Click 'Configure Storage Sense or run it now' for more options, including running a clean-up on a more regular schedule (by default it runs weekly).

Windows' twice-yearly Feature updates bring with them a selection of new capabilities, some of which add functions that you previously needed a third-party tool for. The October 2018 Update, for example, added a brilliant clipboard manager, which lets you save multiple items to your clipboard, as well as share it between computers. This effectively removes the need for third-party clipboard managers, such as **1Clipboard** (<http://1clipboard.io>). Again, Windows leaves this feature disabled by default, so go to Settings, System, Clipboard and

turn on 'Clipboard history'. If you don't already use one to log into Windows, you'll be prompted to sign in with a Microsoft account before you can enable the 'Sync across devices' option (see screenshot above). Once it's all set up, anything you copy will appear in your clipboard manager, which you can open by pressing Windows key+V on any PC (you'll just need to be signed in with the same Microsoft account).

A recent update to the **beta** version of the Microsoft-owned SwiftKey app for Android devices ([www.snipca.com/36786](http://www.snipca.com/36786)) could soon pave the way for seamless copying and pasting between Windows and Android devices, too, potentially eliminating the need to install tools such as **Pigeon** ([www.snipca.com/36787](http://www.snipca.com/36787)).

### Bloated drivers you don't need

All hardware components and peripherals require drivers – small pieces of software that tell Windows what the devices are and how to use them. However, some hardware manufacturers see it as an opportunity to clutter your PC with additional tools that you have little or no use for.

Take graphics card manufacturer **Nvidia**. You don't have to be an avid gamer to find yourself overloaded with driver junk. Even the company's budget graphics cards, such as its £40 GT710, require the installation of a GeForce driver that weighs in at a massive 618MB (see screenshot on page 55).

Why is it so big? Because in addition to the driver, Nvidia's download comes with a raft of other software, much of which you're never likely to need, including a program called 3D Vision Photo Viewer



# READER OFFER!

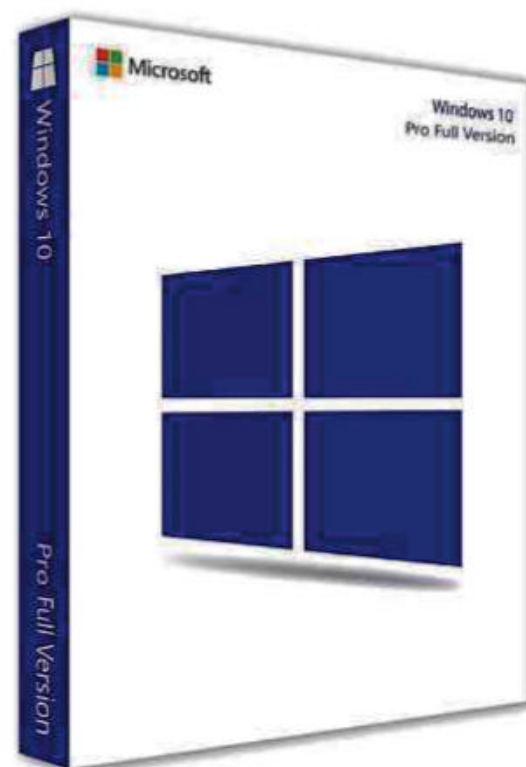


## Buy **Windows 10 Pro** for just **£39.99**

In this new Reader Offer, we're selling **Windows 10 Pro** for just £39.99 (1-PC, unlimited lifetime licence)!

That's just £10 more than Windows 10 Home, and is an 82% reduction on Microsoft's full price of £219.99.

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### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

We have a limited number of **Windows 10 Pro** codes for this offer, but we should have enough to satisfy the high demand we anticipate from readers



(alongside a preview pack of 3D content – more bloatware), a program called GeForce Experience (a screenshot and video-capture tool) and more. Not only does all this take up valuable hard-drive space, but it can also slow your PC because many of Nvidia's tools are designed to constantly run in the background.

There is a solution, though. A clever free tool called NVCleanstall ([www.snipca.com/36788](http://www.snipca.com/36788)) lets you slim down your Nvidia driver installation, by allowing you to select only the components you want to install. The tool will detect your graphics card automatically and selecting the Recommended option will deselect everything except the essential graphics and audio drivers (see screenshot below). NVCleanstall is, appropriately, a portable tool, so it won't add any unnecessary bloat itself.

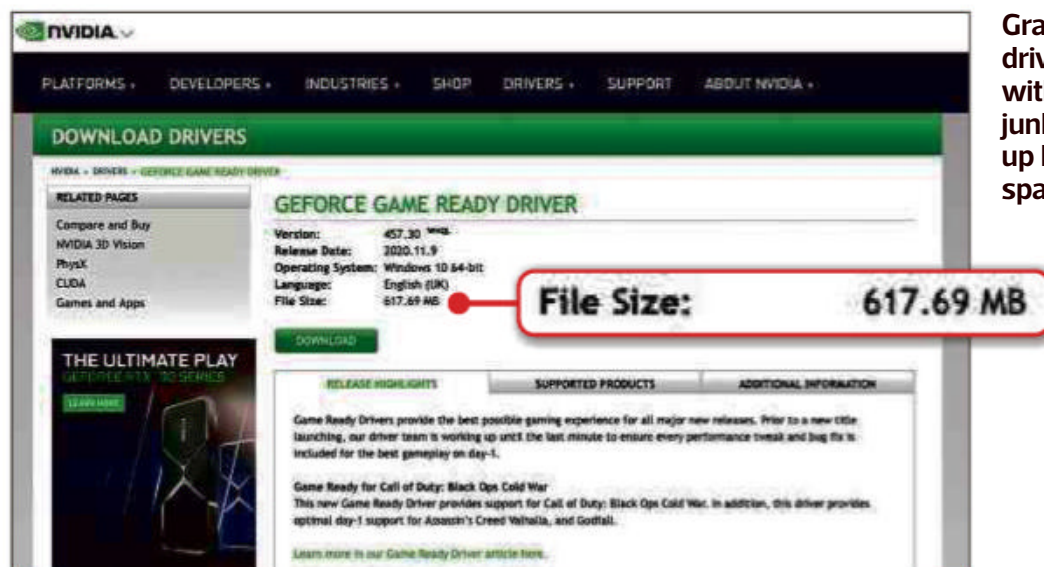
Also guilty of overloading users with bloatware are printer manufacturers. Buy a **Canon PIXMA TS3350 all-in-one**, for example, and you could easily end up installing half a dozen new programs in addition to the basic driver, including image-editing tools, such as Easy-PhotoPrint Editor and PosterArtist Lite, totalling almost 500MB. It's easy to assume all this is necessary, but there are better alternatives that won't take up nearly as much room, such as free programs like Paint.NET ([www.getpaint.net](http://www.getpaint.net)) or Gimp ([www.gimp.org](http://www.gimp.org)).

## Expensive tools you can replace with free mobile apps

Optical Character Recognition (OCR) is the posh name for being able to turn images into editable text. This is all but essential for anyone running their own home office, as it lets you convert receipts,



**NVCleanstall lets you install only those components your graphics card needs to work**



**Graphics card drivers often come with unnecessary junk that just takes up hard-drive space**

letters and other printed documents into digital files, and allows you to copy and paste chunks of text into other documents.

Until recently, you'd need a scanner and some OCR software to carry out tasks like these. OCR programs aren't cheap, either. **OmniPage**, an OCR veteran that has been around since the 1970s, costs £79 for the Standard edition ([www.snipca.com/36789](http://www.snipca.com/36789)), while **Easy Screen OCR** (<https://easyscreenocr.com>) costs £12 per month. The good news is that you don't need to buy dedicated OCR tools anymore. In fact, you don't even need a scanner. All you need is a phone or tablet with Google Photos installed.

Last year, Google updated its Photos app with the ability to search and copy text from pictures, putting the power of OCR in your pocket. You'll need to have the latest version of Google Photos installed (Android [www.snipca.com/36790](http://www.snipca.com/36790); iOS [www.snipca.com/36791](http://www.snipca.com/36791)).

To digitise a document, just take a photo of it with your device's camera – ensuring the document is evenly lit and as straight as possible – then open it in Google Photos. The app will automatically register that the image contains text and present you with a 'Copy text from image' option. Tap this, and you'll be able to select and copy the text as you would in any document (see screenshot above right).

From there, you can paste the text anywhere you need it – into another document, for example, or an email. This also works with screenshots. And, better still, if the text you've converted is in a foreign language, Google Photos will detect this and offer to translate it for you. If you'd prefer to do everything on your PC (rather than online), the free PDF24 tool includes an OCR tool (see page 19).

Another expensive PC tool you can happily avoid in favour of a free mobile app is **Netspot**. This Wi-Fi analyser tool



**Ditch expensive OCR software and use the free Google Photos app instead**

includes a heat-mapping feature that lets you identify weak areas of coverage in your home, but it costs £38 ([www.snipca.com/36792](http://www.snipca.com/36792)). If you are eager to create a heat map, we suggest using an Android app called WiFi Heatmap ([www.snipca.com/36793](http://www.snipca.com/36793)).

However, you're far better off using a free Command Prompt tool called iPerf ([www.snipca.com/36807](http://www.snipca.com/36807)), which provides much more accurate results. The only downside is that it takes a bit of getting used to (see Issue 595's Cover Feature, starting page 50, for a complete guide on how to use it).



## SOFTWARE THAT TRIES TO TRICK YOU

### Programs that gather your personal information

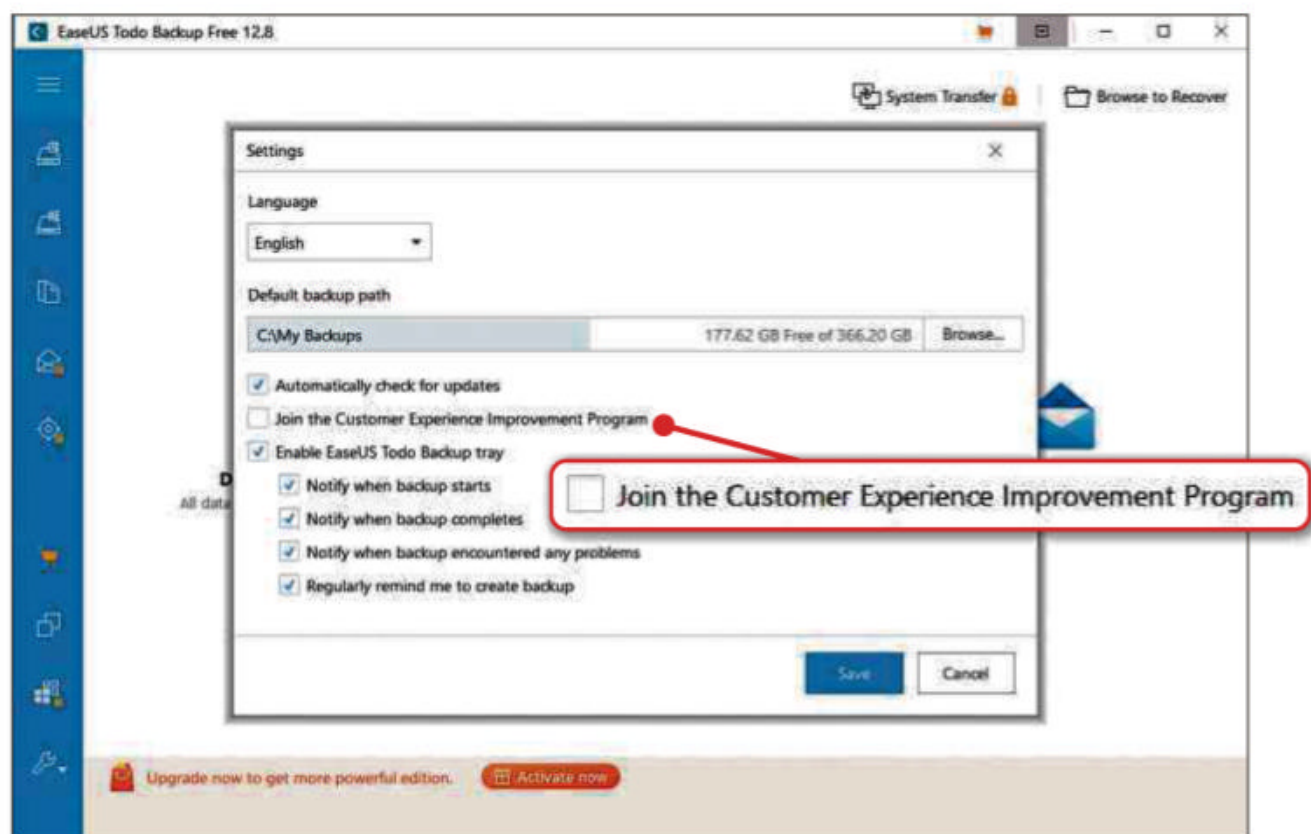
**EaseUS Todo Backup Free** ([www.snipca.com/36808](http://www.snipca.com/36808)) takes a somewhat nonchalant attitude to your privacy. This is clear from the moment you try to download it, whereupon you'll see an urgent demand for your email address. While EaseUS states "we value your privacy", a quick scan of the company's privacy policy ([www.snipca.com/36809](http://www.snipca.com/36809)) reveals that it will use this to "tailor marketing to your needs" – yes, that means spam.

And that's not all. If you install Todo Backup Free, you'll be automatically opted into EaseUS's data-collection programme, effectively allowing it to gather as much information about your system and program usage as it likes. You can opt out of this by accessing the program's well-hidden settings – click the small down arrow top right, then select Settings and untick 'Join the Customer Experience Improvement Program' (see screenshot above right). Then there's EaseUS's constant nagging to upgrade to one of its paid-for programs.

Alternatively, you could just avoid all of this hassle and opt for a less intrusive backup tool. If you have a USB hard drive, Windows can perform basic but perfectly adequate backups with its File History tool – go to Settings, 'Update & Security', Backup and select 'Add a drive' to set this up.

EaseUS isn't the only company that covets your data. MiniTool's **Partition Wizard Free** ([www.partitionwizard.com](http://www.partitionwizard.com)) promises to organise your drive's **partitions**, analyse its performance and generally optimise how it works – all for free. Except there's a hidden cost – your privacy. Run the installer and, unless you have your wits about you, it's easy to miss the pre-ticked box that signs you up for MiniTool's Customer Experience Improvement Program, which gathers information in much the same way as EaseUS does. Unlike with Todo, however, there's no way to opt out of this once the program has been installed.

As we mentioned earlier, you really don't need tools like this anyway. Windows is perfectly capable of optimising your hard drive, and its Disk Management tool (you'll find it by searching in the Start menu) lets you create and manage partitions.



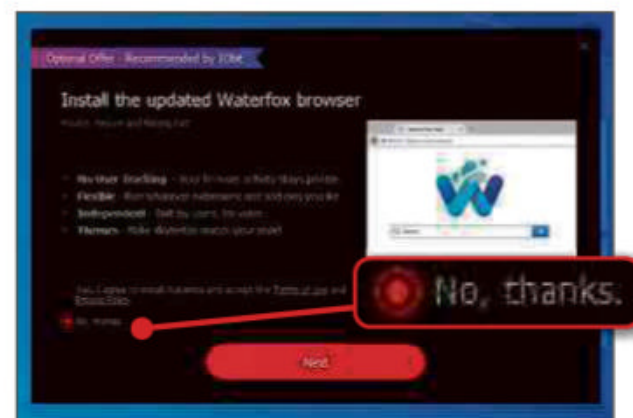
Untick this box to stop EaseUS Todo gathering information about your PC

### Software that installs unwanted tools

Another trick that cunning software developers like to pull is to install unwanted programs on your PC without your consent. We already called out IObit Driver Booster (on page 51) for spuriously marketing itself as free, but this serial offender also pushes several 'offers' of free trinkets during installation, including a 'private' web browser called Waterfox (see screenshot right), which just happens to be owned by global marketing company System1.

Meanwhile, if you need another reason to steer clear of MiniTool Partition Wizard Free (see above), how about the easy-to-miss pre-ticked option in its installer, which will foist system-backup software MiniTool Shadowmaker on to your PC. This dubious tactic has escalated in recent years, with software developers finding new ways to con you into installing tools you don't need.

Take **CCleaner** ([www.ccleaner.com](http://www.ccleaner.com)). The free version of the junk-cleaning tool is infamous – ironically – for shovelling junk on to users' PCs, and is still up to its old tricks, despite widespread criticism. During installation of the current version, you'll encounter a screen prompting you to install additional tools, including AVG antivirus software. The aim is to snare those who quickly click through program installers without paying attention. It's all too easy to inadvertently click Accept when the button is deliberately positioned on the right of the window,



Just say 'No, thanks' when Driver Booster tries to foist this browser on you during installation

exactly where the Next button is usually located on standard installer screens. CCleaner is such a persistent offender that Microsoft recently reclassified it as a potentially unwanted program (PUP, [www.snipca.com/36812](http://www.snipca.com/36812)).

Sadly, even some of our favourite tools have resorted to this kind of junk trafficking in recent years. FileZilla (<https://filezilla-project.org>), a once-brilliant free **FTP** program, recently started pushing pointless extras during installation. FileZilla does at least admit on its download page that its installer "may include bundled offers".

Nevertheless, we've stopped recommending FileZilla and now use Cyberduck to transfer files between web servers and our PCs. Cyberduck costs £20 if you opt for the Microsoft Store app version ([www.snipca.com/36835](http://www.snipca.com/36835)), though the standard version is free from <https://cyberduck.io/download> – and, crucially, it won't attempt to clog up your PC with rubbish.



## SOFTWARE THAT'S OUT OF DATE

### Tools that have gone out of fashion

Technology trends come and go, as do the programs associated with them. Not so long ago, optical drives were widespread and most people had some form of disc-burning software installed. Now, however, the need for burning discs is diminishing fast. That's partly because there are now easier, more practical ways to store data – online or on relatively cheap USB sticks and external drives.

Another reason is that discs are not terribly reliable. Over time they can develop what's known as disc rot, where the dye in the disc starts to deteriorate, ruining any data stored on it. Even if you still need to create the occasional disc, there's really no need to pay for an expensive burning suite like **Nero Platinum** (£40 from [www.snipca.com/36794](http://www.snipca.com/36794)) or **Roxio Creator** (£70 from [www.snipca.com/36795](http://www.snipca.com/36795)).

Instead, you should use Windows' drag-and-drop burning tool. Simply insert your blank disc, click it in File Explorer then select 'Like a USB flash drive' (see screenshot above right) – this lets you copy and delete files from the disc over time. Alternatively, select 'With a CD/DVD player' to carry out a one-time burn process that makes the disc compatible with non-Windows devices, such as DVD players. Next, drag the files directly on to the disc icon in File Explorer. If you want to burn an audio CD, open Windows Media Player, right-click the tracks you want to burn and select 'Add to', followed by 'Burn list', then click Burn (top right).

Another program that has fallen out of fashion is **Reader** ([www.snipca.com/36796](http://www.snipca.com/36796)). At one time, Reader (or Acrobat Reader, as it used to be called) was found on pretty much every PC. But, while the PDF format itself is still as popular as ever, the original program required to open and read PDFs is more or less obsolete.



If you want to copy multiple files to a CD or DVD over time, select this burning option in Windows

This is largely because the free version of Reader doesn't let you do much beyond reading and printing documents (despite its 169MB download size). Windows can now do this without the need to install anything because PDF support is built into Microsoft's Edge browser. Edge also now offers handy additional tools for annotating, highlighting and exporting PDFs. Simply open your PDF in Edge and a toolbar catering for all these tasks will appear.

Windows also includes a way to create your own PDFs from within any program – just print your document, photo or web page and select 'Save as PDF' from the Printer menu (see screenshot below).



Windows lets you create PDFs within most programs, including the Edge browser

### Old tools that pose a security risk

Installing certain old tools could put your PC, and the data stored on it, at risk. This year has seen Microsoft end support for both **Windows 7** and **Office 2010**.

If you still have the installation disc they came on, or the original installer file, there's nothing to stop you from installing old programs on your PC, but there's a good reason why you shouldn't: they are potentially unsafe. They won't receive regular security updates, which means hackers can exploit vulnerabilities and use them to install malware or remotely access your PC.

As we explained in Issue 594 (page 62), Adobe Flash is another ageing technology that's about to stop receiving updates. In fact, despite it receiving regular security patches, in recent years it's been the target of numerous zero-day attacks (in which a vulnerability is discovered and exploited by hackers before the developer is aware of it). As of 1 January 2021, Flash will no longer be supported nor available for download (if you already have it installed, Windows will soon remove it automatically). If you spot a site offering it for download, steer well clear because it's likely to be a dangerous fake. **ca**

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# Upgrade Your PC's Graphics Card

A new graphics card will make games run smoother and boost other programs, particularly tools for editing images and videos.

**Will Stapley** reveals how to choose the right card for your computer, and how to install it without problems

Regular readers will know that 2020 was the year I revived two ageing computers of mine (a desktop PC and a laptop) using faster hard drives and more memory (see Issue 582, page 62 and Issue 586, page 60). These previous upgrades were, in part, driven by the need to ensure my kids had workable computers for their home schooling during the first lockdown. This time round, I'm carrying out an upgrade for more recreational purposes – to allow them to play Minecraft (a relatively undemanding game, graphically speaking).

Although my old desktop PC can just about run the game, a few months ago a message popped up in Minecraft saying that it would no longer work with any graphics card that supports **DirectX** 10.1 and below, which excludes the AMD Radeon HD3850 card inside my PC. Here's how I chose and installed a suitable and incredibly cheap graphics card – but first I'll explain what you need to look for when choosing which card to buy.

## What does a graphics card do?

A graphics card's main purpose is to generate images, then pass them to your monitor (usually via an **HDMI** or **DVI** cable). It does this using what's known as a GPU (graphics processing unit).

Most laptops and low-cost PCs use integrated graphics – meaning the GPU is either on a chip attached directly to the

**motherboard** or integrated into the processor. If you can plug your monitor into a port next to your mouse, keyboard and USB ports, it's likely your PC has integrated graphics (I'll explain how to check this in a moment). More powerful PCs have a dedicated graphics card that sits in a slot on the motherboard. With their own GPU and memory, these are typically much faster than integrated graphics.

Although often associated with 3D games, modern graphics cards can give your processor a helping hand in other ways too. Whereas processors usually have between two and eight **cores**, graphics cards have hundreds. While not as powerful as the cores on your main processor, they're ideally suited to running lots of relatively quick calculations and can help to speed up video-editing tasks (such as applying effects or exporting your clips). Additionally, by delegating work to your graphics card, your processor will be free to concentrate on other tasks.

The program you're using will need to support GPU acceleration (sometimes called **hardware acceleration**). Although more common in professional tools like Adobe Photoshop, there are plenty of free programs that support this, including VLC ([www.videolan.org](http://www.videolan.org)), GIMP ([www.gimp.org](http://www.gimp.org)) and Paint.NET ([www.getpaint.net](http://www.getpaint.net)). Most programs will work with either of the two main graphics card brands (AMD and Nvidia), but some



CPU-Z tells you the make and model of your PC's current graphics card

won't. If you're upgrading your graphics card to improve performance when using a specific program, check its website to see what card it recommends.

If you're not sure which graphics card your PC is currently using, you can find out using CPU-Z (free from [www.snipca.com/36895](http://www.snipca.com/36895) – scroll down, click the purple Setup English button on the left, followed by Download Now). Run the tool, then select the Graphics tab and you'll see your graphics card listed in the Name field (see screenshot above).

## Choose the right graphics card

Graphics cards range from as little as £30 to well over £1,000. If you're not careful, you could end up with a card that makes



little difference, or spend a fortune on one that you'll never use to its full potential.

If you're primarily upgrading to play a specific game, make sure you check the game's website to find out its minimum system requirements. For example, Microsoft's Flight Simulator 2020 requires at least an AMD RX 570 (£189 from Scan, [www.snipca.com/36915](http://www.snipca.com/36915)). You'll also need to make sure the rest of your PC's components (processor, memory and so on) meets the game's minimum requirements.

Gaming aside, if your PC currently uses integrated graphics, even a cheap graphics card should boost video-editing speeds and other programs that support GPU acceleration. Look for a card that has at least 2GB of memory, because video-editing programs will require this when performing functions such as applying effects.

When shopping around, you'll find the same AMD and Nvidia graphics cards rebranded by various manufacturers (including Asus, Gigabyte and PNY). While the core components remain the same, these manufacturers will make alterations such as using their own **cooling system**, adding more memory or **overclocking** the card to make it run faster.

## Compare performance

You can spend an age trying to compare each card's specifications, but you can save yourself time and effort by reading online reviews (such as those on our sister site, Expert Reviews, [www.snipca.com/36917](http://www.snipca.com/36917)) and using performance-benchmark sites such as UserBenchmark (<https://gpu.userbenchmark.com>), which provides average scores based on tests run by thousands of people worldwide.

On UserBenchmark, search for your existing card, click the Compare box, then search for the card you're interested in buying and click Compare again. You'll now see which card is listed as the best performing (see screenshot below).



User Benchmarks helps you compare the performance of various graphics cards



Check how powerful your PSU is before you upgrade your graphics card

## Make sure the card fits

If your PC was built in the last 15 years or so, it will have one or more **PCIe** x16 slots on its motherboard, meaning it'll be compatible with even the latest graphics cards. Again, you can use CPU-Z to check this. Select the Mainboard tab, then check the Version in the Graphical Interface section. If this says PCI-Express, you're in luck. However, if you're attempting to upgrade a PC from the early 2000s, it might say AGP (similar to PCIe, but around four times slower). You can't use a PCI Express card in an AGP slot, and although you might find a second-hand AGP graphics card on eBay, most were discontinued many years ago and we're not aware of any that have Windows 10 drivers. Upgrading to a PCI Express graphics card would mean also buying a new motherboard and processor, so a new PC might be a better option.

You also need to make sure there's room in your PC's case to accommodate the card. Tower-style PCs usually have enough room for any card. If you have a smaller PC your choice may be restricted to those described as 'low-profile' cards. If in doubt, measure the space between your motherboard's PCIe slot at the top of your chassis, then check it against the graphics card's specifications.

Some cards are double- or even triple-width (usually to incorporate a large cooling fan). Although these still connect to a single PCIe slot, they'll block the slot next to them - so if your PC is already packed full of PCI Express cards, you may have to remove one to fit the graphics card in.

## Keep things cool

Like your processor, graphics cards generate a lot of heat - high-end ones can reach almost 90 degrees centigrade. Most cards use one or more fans to keep things cool - and these can get noisy. Check out the dB (decibel) rating of the graphics card you're thinking of buying (this should be listed on the manufacturer's



Some graphics cards - like MSI's Nvidia 1030 - are silent, due to metal fins that dissipate heat

site). They can vary from 30dB (similar to whispering) up to 60dB (an electric toothbrush). If a quiet PC is important to you, look for a graphics card with passive cooling. These use a bank of small fins to dissipate heat and don't generate any noise, but you'll only find them on relatively low-powered graphics cards, such as MSI's Nvidia 1030 (£70 from [www.snipca.com/36918](http://www.snipca.com/36918) - pictured above).

## Supply enough power

All components in your PC are powered by its **PSU** (power supply unit). Usually located near the top of a PC's tower case, this is the box that you plug the power cable into. If you're upgrading to a more powerful graphics card, you may find it needs to draw more power from the PSU than your previous card. It's therefore best to check the power requirements of your new graphics card before buying - this will either be listed as the power required by the graphics card itself, or the minimum PSU it needs.

Next, open your PC's case and look at the sticker on the power supply. The PSU pictured above left is rated at 500W (watts). Most processors draw around 50-100W, with the rest of the components (hard drive, USB ports and so on) combined usually requiring under 100W. This leaves around 300W spare, which is more than enough for most graphics cards. If you want to check the total power draw of your PC's components, try using the calculator at [www.snipca.com/36920](http://www.snipca.com/36920) (enter all your components, then click Calculate).

If your graphics card can't draw enough power from your PSU, your PC will crash regularly, or even refuse to start. The only solution is to upgrade your PSU. These are reasonably cheap (such as this £40 500W EVGA model from [www.snipca.com/36919](http://www.snipca.com/36919)), but keep in mind that other aspects of your PC may be similarly underperforming (the motherboard, memory and so on). If so, it might be worth considering buying a new PC instead.



# HOW I UPGRADED MY PC'S GRAPHICS CARD

That's the theory out of the way, now it's time for the practical. My PC is 13 years old, so its processor – an Intel Core 2 Duo E6750 – is bound to struggle with some of the more demanding modern games. But that didn't bother me. All I wanted was a graphics card that allowed Minecraft to run. A quick look on CeX (<https://uk.webuy.com>) showed numerous second-hand PCIe x16 cards for around a tenner. I re-ordered the list by price, then chose the cheapest that supported DirectX 11: a 10-year old Nvidia GeForce 460 for just £12.

## Results

As expected, once my new graphics card was in place, the warning message on my PC regarding Minecraft disappeared. However, I was also keen to find out if it improved other programs. First, I ran Microsoft Flight Simulator X – the one released in 2006, not the new 2020 version (my PC is far too weedy for that). The program lets you monitor frame rates (the more frames per second, the smoother the graphics) by pressing



Will's graphics card upgrade improved performance in Flight Simulator X

Shift+Z twice.

Using my old HD 3850 graphics card, I'd recorded frame rates of roughly 25–30fps (frames per second). With the 460 GTX, this increased to around 45–50fps (see screenshot above). While this isn't a massive difference, my PC coped much better when displaying complex scenery.

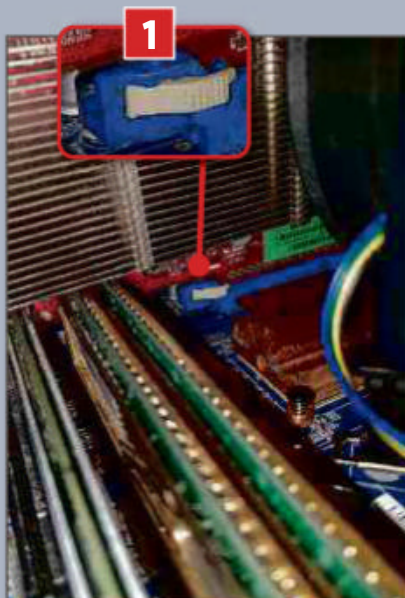
As mentioned earlier, graphics cards can also speed up video editing. However, two things tempered my expectations in this regard. My new graphics card was a

relatively modest upgrade, and I suspected my ancient processor would create a bottleneck. Sure enough, I didn't notice any improvements when exporting video in Shotcut ([www.snipca.com/36925](http://www.snipca.com/36925)) – both my old graphics card and my new one took one minute 30 seconds to export the same short clip.

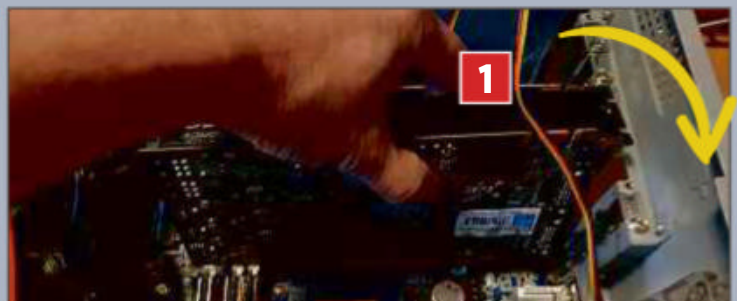
This may well change if I also upgraded if I upgraded my motherboard and processor – but that's another project for another time.

## WORKSHOP Install a new graphics card

**1** Turn your PC off at the mains, then remove its side panel. Locate your graphics card (it will have video-output ports on rear of the bracket), then unscrew it and remove the power cable. Gently wiggle the card until it comes away from the motherboard – you may have to push a small plastic button to release the card **1**.



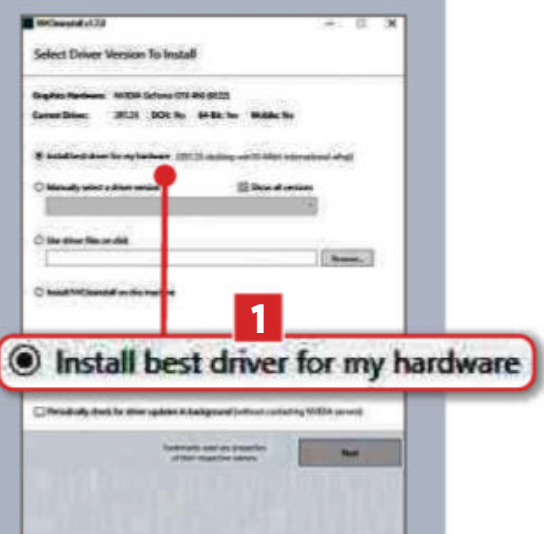
**2** Line up the connectors on your new graphics card with the socket on your motherboard **1**, then insert it – this usually works best if you insert it at a slight angle, before pushing both edges down. Make sure you don't trap any wires while doing this, and ensure the card is firmly in place before securing the bracket to your case with a screw.



**3** You now need to connect your graphics card to your PSU – typically using six-pin power cables. My GTX 460 has two six-pin power connectors, meaning it needs to be connected to my PC's PSU using two separate power cables **1**.



**4** Replace your PC's side panel, attach the monitor, then switch on your PC. You now need to install the card's **driver**. You can download the latest AMD drivers from ([www.snipca.com/36922](http://www.snipca.com/36922)) and Nvidia drivers from [www.snipca.com/36923](http://www.snipca.com/36923). As we mentioned in our Cover Feature (page 53), Nvidia's software installs unwanted extras, so I used NVCleaninstall ([www.snipca.com/36788](http://www.snipca.com/36788)) to only install the driver **1**.





# Your most popular programs of 2020

Discover which software your fellow readers loved during the past 12 months

**T**he pandemic changed how we all lived last year, but it didn't seem to disrupt the flow of new and updated software. As always, you were keen to master programs that let you bypass Windows restrictions, but your most downloaded software was actually a revamped Microsoft tool. The reason we know this is because our Snipca URL-shortening service tells us how many times a link has been clicked. It helps us know which programs you'd like to read more about in the future. Here are your top 10 from the past 12 months.

## 1 Edge [www.snipca.com/33864](http://www.snipca.com/33864)

Last January, when the world was just learning about a deadly new virus emerging from China, Microsoft relaunched its Edge browser. Built using Google's Chromium [source code](#), it's faster and more secure than its feeble predecessor. It also works with thousands more extensions. We liked it instantly, happy that at long last Chrome had a serious rival, and put it on the cover of Issue 580 (pictured above right). It's been a big hit with you too.

## 2 O&O ShutUp10 [www.snipca.com/35663](http://www.snipca.com/35663)

Lots of you want Windows 10 to, well, 'shut up' – or at least stop spying on you. In Issue 587 we explained how to use O&O's bluntly named software to disable settings that told Microsoft how you used your computer. The company insists it

needs this info to improve your "Windows experience", but many of you remain unconvinced. We'll keep an eye out throughout 2021 for any new privacy settings you'll need to change.

## 3 PowerToys [www.snipca.com/36202](http://www.snipca.com/36202)

They sound like something you'd find in B&Q, but PowerToys are actually Microsoft's collection of tools that add new features to Windows. Microsoft launched them back in 1995, ditched them 12 years later, then resurrected them in 2019. You emailed us to say you wanted to know more, so we put them on the cover in Issue 591. Microsoft plans to add new toys in 2021 – we'll let you know when they're ready to download.

## 4 Ultimate Windows Tweaker [www.snipca.com/34089](http://www.snipca.com/34089)

When you were not telling Windows to 'shut up' (in the politest possible way), you were tweaking its settings using this powerful program. We recommended its new version in Issue 574 (page 18), which let you turn off Bing search results in the Start menu. It remains such a popular tool that we'll explain it in more depth later this year. Watch this space.

## 5 InstalledAppView [www.snipca.com/34303](http://www.snipca.com/34303)

Another program that lets you do things Microsoft would rather you didn't. Made by the ever-reliable NirSoft, InstalledAppView shows the apps that come pre-installed on Windows and lets you easily remove them from your system. We praised it in Issue 576 (page 18), just as the country went into lockdown. We expect many unwanted apps were dumped during those first few weeks staying at home.

## 6 NVCleanstall [www.snipca.com/34194](http://www.snipca.com/34194)

In Issue 575's 'Named & Shamed' column (page 21) we learned that Jonathan Parkyn doesn't play the game *Zombie Army: Dead War 4*. But that didn't stop Nvidia installing a 530MB [driver](#) update to fix a bug in the game. Jonathan



removed it and other useless Nvidia updates using NVCleanstall, and urged you to do likewise. He's still recommending it, as you'll see on page 55 of our Cover Feature.

## 7 AOMEI Backupper Standard [www.snipca.com/33955](http://www.snipca.com/33955)

Backing up: we know we should do it, but it often feels like a chore. AOMEI's software makes it easy though. In Issue 574 (page 35) we explained how it can make a bootable clone of your hard drive, giving you a lifeline to your files if your computer dies suddenly. All you need is an external hard drive and a couple of hours to spare. You won't regret it.

## 8 Plex [www.snipca.com/36042](http://www.snipca.com/36042)

It's rare that we devote the cover to just one program, but Plex deserved it. The media server graced the front of Issue 590, as we claimed it's the "best ever way to stream TV, films and music". Many of you agreed, downloading it and sending lots of tips since. Next issue we'll explain how you can install it on a [NAS](#) drive.

## 9 Sordum Folder Painter [www.snipca.com/34927](http://www.snipca.com/34927)

The summer gave us plenty of long hot days to creosote the garden fence, but some of you preferred to paint Windows folders. Our Workshop in Issue 582 (page 40) showed how Folder Painter could change the standard yellow folder into different colours. Red for photos, perhaps, and blue for videos. You can also add new icons for each.

## 10 Quick Screen Recorder [www.snipca.com/35066](http://www.snipca.com/35066)

One of the best ways to illustrate a problem is to take a screen recording of it then email it to a helpful friend. This new program makes it easier than ever – it just takes a few clicks. It appeared in Issue 582's Best Free Software (page 19), and quickly became a reader favourite. Several readers have even emailed screen recordings to us to explain how their tips work. We'd love to receive more.

## 2019's TOP 10

- 1 CrystalDiskInfo
- 2 IObit DriverBooster
- 3 WinFi Lite
- 4 Get\_iPlayer
- 5 WiFi Analyzer
- 6 Magical Jelly Bean Keyfinder
- 7 Glasswire Firewall
- 8 AdwCleaner
- 9 Everything
- 10 LosslessCut



# Problems Solved

Our experts solve all your tech problems

## PROBLEM OF THE FORTNIGHT

### Can I clean up my right-click menus?

**Q** There are several items on my right-click menus that I don't want, and items I do need are out of sight. How can I remove items from this menu? Hoping you can help!

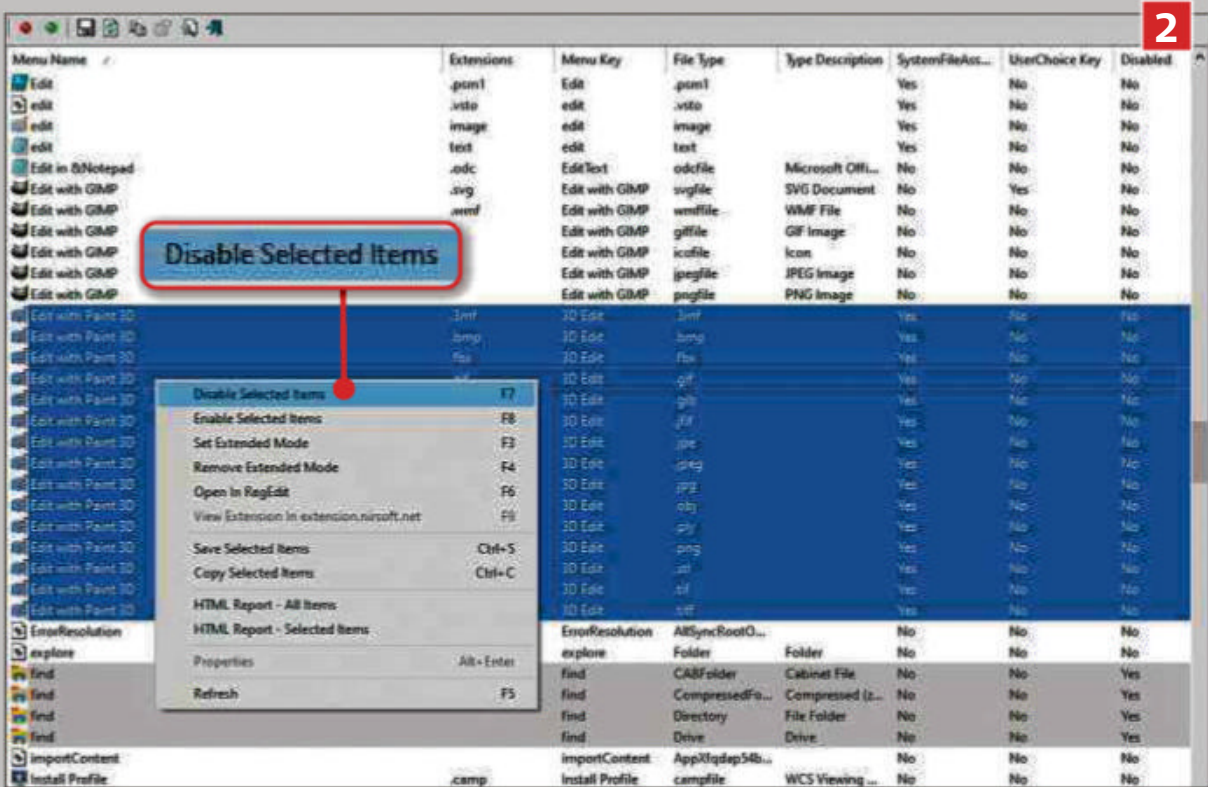
Dave Howell

**A** This is one of those everyday problems that's annoying, but for which there are two simple solutions, one or both of which may well work for you.

The first is to simply make use of the little up and down arrows at the top and bottom of your context (right-click) menus. You may not have noticed these but clicking one will scroll missing options into view.

The other easy answer is to uninstall any unwanted or redundant programs that might have added options to your context menus. For example, the screenshot you sent us contained multiple right-click options put in place by various non-Microsoft programs that you've installed on your PC. If you're no longer using these tools, then uninstalling them should also remove their entries in your context menus.

To do this, first click Start followed by the Settings cog, and then Apps. Next, on the right, scroll through the list of installed apps, then click to select



In ShellMenuView, select every entry for an unused tool and choose Disable Selected Items

one you want to remove before clicking Uninstall (see screenshot 1), and then confirm by clicking Uninstall again.

But note that we said that uninstalling unwanted apps 'should' remove right-click entries. Sadly, some uninstallations are cleaner than others – and it's not uncommon to be stuck with digital leftovers in your context menus.

When that happens, the only way Microsoft offers to clean up the mess is to delve deep in the Windows registry, where you're able to manually find and delete keys relating to particular items. However, this is very much not a job for novices. Indeed, so painful is this endeavour that it's one that gives even old-hands like ourselves the collywobbles.

This is in part because there are so many different types of context-menu entries – from 'global' items that always appear to contextual items that show

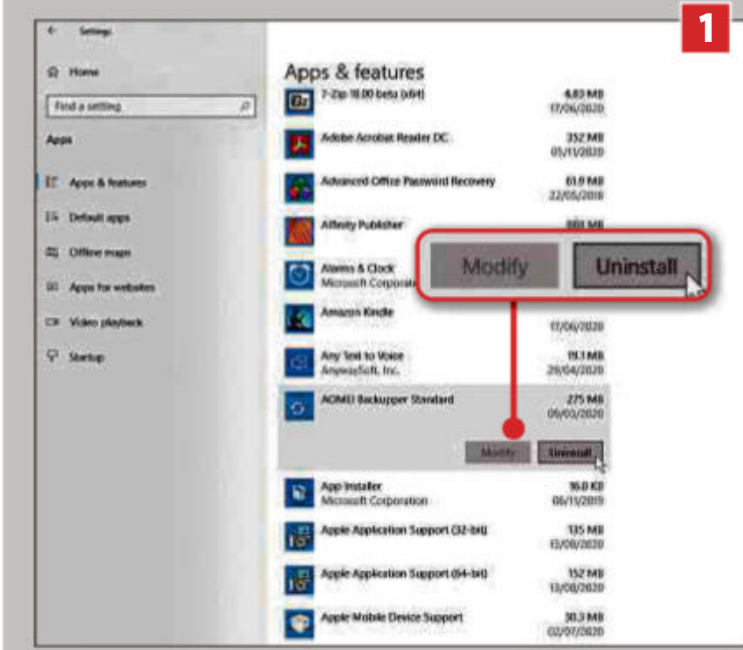
themselves only when you right-click a particular file type.

It's better, then, to turn to free software. Trusty old NirSoft has a pair of tools that can help – ShellMenuView ([www.snipca.com/36605](http://www.snipca.com/36605)) and ShellExView ([www.snipca.com/36606](http://www.snipca.com/36606)). There are two different tools because, as noted, there are many different types of context-menu entries.

We'd say most can be handled by ShellMenuView, so start with that – not least because it deals with the simplest-to-remove items.

It's likely to display hundreds of items, and initially this will feel overwhelming. However, if you focus on the labels in the Menu Name column and then the file types they relate to (under the Extensions column), things start to make sense.

For example, let's say you never use Paint 3D. Under 'Menu Name', click to select every 'Edit with Paint 3D' entry and then right-click the selection before choosing Disable Selected Items 2. Now, you'll no longer see the 'Edit with Paint 3D' option in your context menus.



In 'Apps & features' you can find and uninstall any apps you no longer need



## Why does Edge sign me out of Gmail?

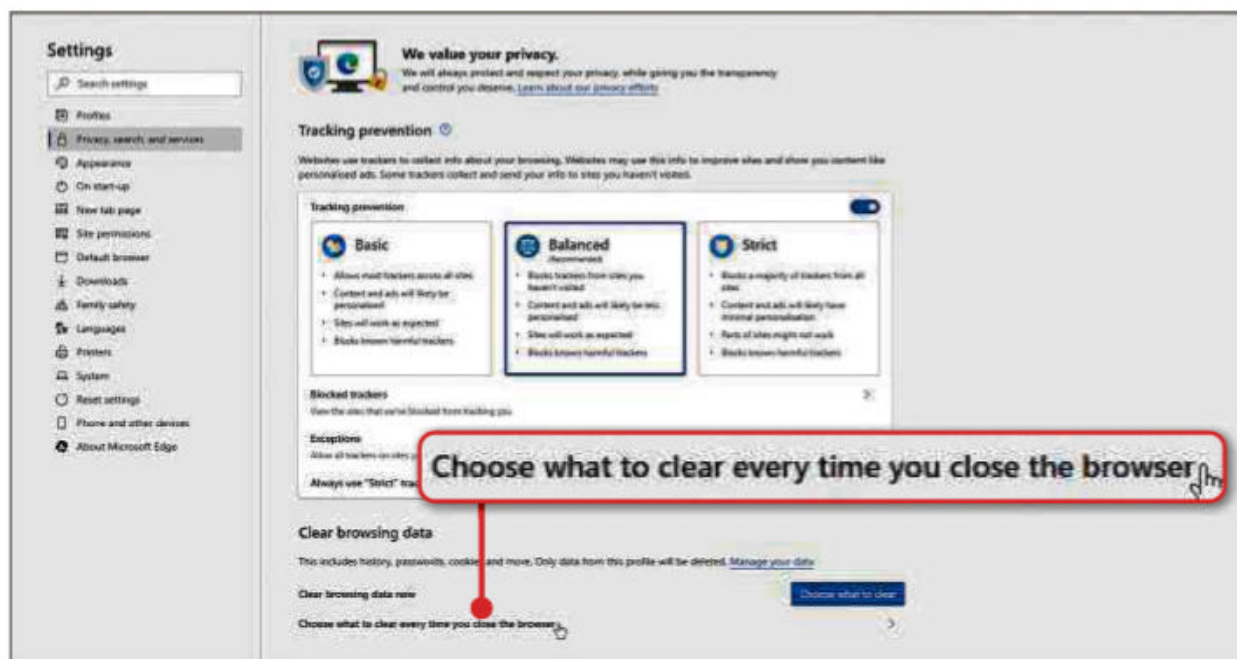
**Q** Following your advice I recently made Edge my default browser, but since then I've experienced two continual problems. One is that I have to keep entering my email address and password to open my Gmail. Second, a message appears to make Chrome my default. Can you help?

James Brown

**A** With regard to your first problem, either intentionally or unwittingly you have configured Edge to clear browsing data when you close it. That's a legitimate choice for the privacy-concerned, but it also has consequences – such as wiping the **cookies** that Gmail (and other services) use to log you in the next time.

So, you can either switch off this option or create an exception for Gmail. To start, open the Edge menu (click the three dots at the top right) and then choose Settings. Next, on the left, click 'Privacy, search, and services' and then, on the right, under 'Clear browsing data', click 'Choose what to clear every time you close the browser' (see screenshot above).

On the next screen, on the right, next to 'Cookies and other site data', clicking the switch to move it to its Off position will disable this hiccup for all affected



Under 'Clear browsing data' select 'Choose what to clear every time you close the browser'

sites. Alternatively, to create an exception, below the switch, to the right of the 'Do not clear' heading, click the Add button. Now type [www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com) (or another relevant service address) and click Add.

And your second annoyance? Well, the message you're seeing is displayed by Google and it'll appear at the company's behest whenever you use Edge to visit one of its services, such as Gmail or the main Google search page.

In a silly tit-for-tat move, Microsoft now sometimes does the same in reverse, when users of Google Chrome visit

Microsoft pages.

The trouble is that these are in effect adverts that the companies are choosing to display when you use their services – and there's no way to stop them. We think they're ridiculous and we're sure many millions of other users do too. As such, we imagine the two companies will eventually stop showing these marketing messages.

Until then, you'll either have to put up with them or vote with your fingers and stop using Google in Edge (or Microsoft services in Chrome).

## How do I recover a corrupt DVD?

**Q** I wonder if you can help? I have a DVD containing 50 or so small video files, merged together in two separate titles using a program called ConvertXtoDVD. Unfortunately, I didn't save the project.

Somehow the disc has become corrupted and neither my desktop computer nor DVD player can read its contents.

I've tried various rescue tools that I found online but with limited success. Some tools can rescue individual files but none can do all. Any help that you can give would be very much appreciated.

Iain McInroy

**A** Typically, when an optical disc such as a DVD becomes unreadable there's not a whole lot that can be done other than physical repair. This is a simple consequence of the usual root cause of the problem, which is scratches – visible or otherwise – that cause the laser that reads the data to momentarily lose its focus.

Sometimes a vigorous buff with a cloth is enough to remove whatever might be causing the laser's blind spot. But if this doesn't work then you'll need to turn to a grinding tool, like the SkipDr gadget (£35 [www.snipca.com/36589](http://www.snipca.com/36589)) that we've recommended on these pages a number of times over the years. It's really little more than a mechanical sander for DVDs,



The SkipDr tool smooths abrasions that cause a DVD to skip or freeze

methodically scrubbing off layers of plastic to allow the laser a clear shot at the data-storing substrate. However, its simplistic method is often effective – so it certainly gets the thumbs up from us.



## What's happened to Windows 10's colours?

**Q** A Windows 10 update has changed the background colours on my Start menu, resulting in many icons becoming almost invisible. In addition, the taskbar has lost its background colour and some tiles have acquired a new and different colour. How can I revert to the original background colours, please?

Mike W Katny

**A** It sounds like you've got the October 2020 Update (also known as 20H2). This has what Microsoft calls 'theme-aware tiles', which change colour to reflect whatever theme you're using. The 'Light' theme in particular can have the effect you describe.

To alter things, click Start followed by the Settings cog, and then Personalisation (see screenshot below) followed by Colours. Next, use the options in the right-hand pane to customise how things look. For example, under 'Choose your colour', click to open the menu, then choose Custom.

Next, under 'Choose your default Windows mode' choose Dark and under 'Choose your default app mode' select Light. For more options, including to set specific colours, scroll down a little further.



To customise Windows 10's colours, go to Settings then Personalisation

## Will 64bit Windows 10 help my laptop?

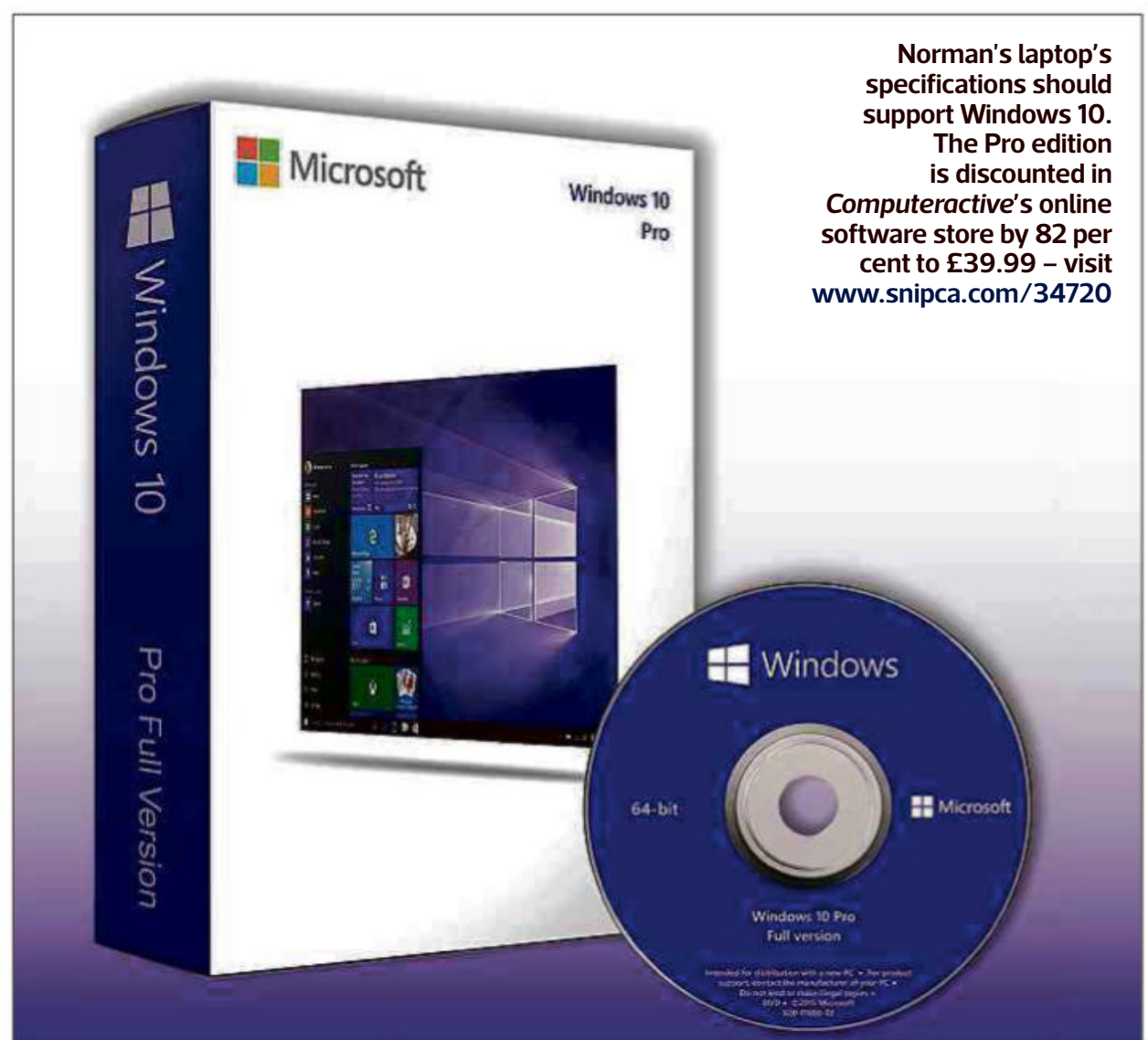
**Q** I'm tempted to upgrade my old Acer laptop to Windows 10. However, it seems **32bit** Windows 10 would restrict me to increasing the **RAM** to 4GB, from the current 2GB. I fear that, even with a new **SSD**, this might not deliver an acceptable performance increase. I'm considering moving to a **64bit** installation to allow more RAM. The laptop's specifications show the processor is an Intel Core 2 Duo T7500 running at 2.2**GHz** and the system type is '32-bit operating system, x64 based processor'. I believe this could support a 64bit Windows operating system but would it be a feasible and cost-effective upgrade or should I install an SSD and increase RAM to 4GB?

Norman Hinchliffe

**A** You didn't tell us the exact model of your Acer laptop. However, we can say that if the machine's documentation, or your own assessment, has led you to believe that the machine would support a 64bit edition of Windows 10 then you should be reasonably confident in proceeding.

Indeed, based on the specifications that you did supply, we also think the machine will run Windows 10 64bit.

It'll make the best use of the processor in your laptop and, as you note, will allow you to make use of more than 4GB of memory (assuming the machine itself supports that – and on that point we can't be certain).



**Q:** How do I delete all files and programs from my PC?

**A:** Issue 550, page 65 – find it on our 2019 Back Issue CD

Buy it from  
[www.snipca.com/33711](http://www.snipca.com/33711)



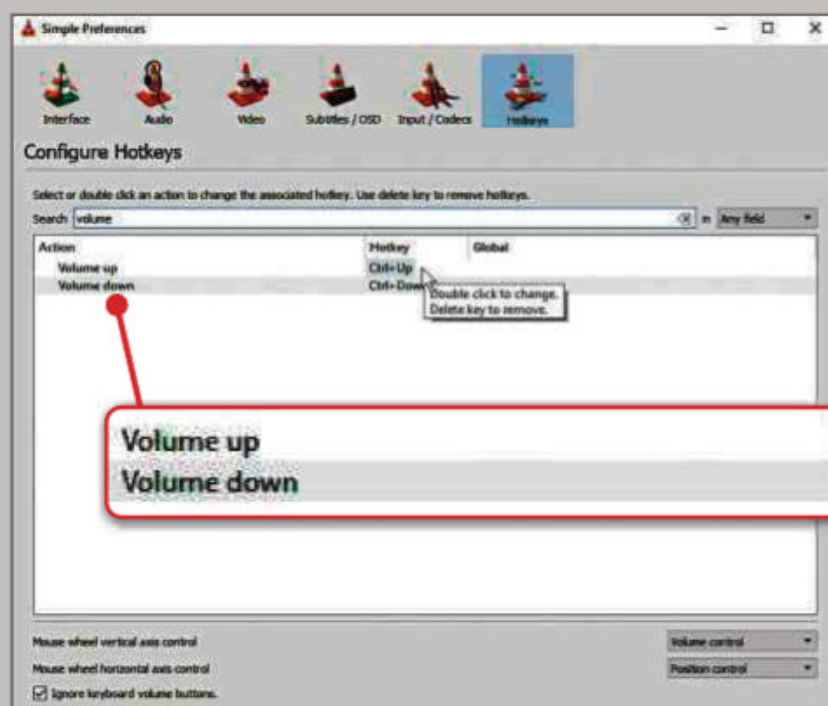


## Why can't I control VLC's volume?

**Q** I've installed version 3.0.11 of the excellent VLC media player ([www.snipca.com/36689](http://www.snipca.com/36689)). One point that seems to be omitted is the ability to control the volume using the keyboard's up and down arrows. This was a godsend when watching films for its simplicity in controlling the audio level. I am sure that if anyone knows how to fix this problem it's *Computeractive*.

Robert Stalker

**A** The default VLC keyboard shortcuts have not changed, meaning pressing and holding the Control (Ctrl) key while tapping either the up or down arrow keys should adjust the volume. In fact, the arrow keys on their own are sufficient to do the job unless you're using VLC to view a DVD (when these keys are reserved for menu navigation). You can also adjust the volume using the 8 and 2 keys on your keyboard's numeric pad, assuming it has one and that you have Number Lock (Num Lock) switched off.



Double-click and reset the entries for 'Volume up' and 'Volume down'

So, if none of these options are working then something is clearly wrong. VLC lets you customise shortcuts, so start by checking what's set. To start, open the Tools menu and choose Preferences. Next, at the top, click the Hotkeys icon and then, in the Search bar, type **volume**.

In the Action column are entries for 'Volume up' and 'Volume down' (see

screenshot above). These should be set to Ctrl+Up and Ctrl+Down, under the Hotkey column. It doesn't matter whether your entries do say this, as it's not working – so try setting them anew. Double-click 'Volume up' and, when prompted, press Ctrl+up arrow. Repeat for 'Volume down', obviously pressing Ctrl+down arrow as the shortcut.

## Where do I type a web address on an iPad?

**Q** I have an iPad and therefore I do not have a browser address bar. Wherever I type your snippet addresses I have almost nil or very mixed results. Any help would be much appreciated.

Ben Whitelaw

**A** The web browser on your iPad is called Safari. Apple removed the text labels from the icon 'dock' at the foot of your iPad home page, so you might not know which icon that is.

So, just in case that's how it is on your iPad home page, launch Safari by tapping the icon that depicts a blue compass on a white background (see screenshot).

Once in the browser, the address bar is at the top – just as it is in the Windows-based web browsers, such as Edge, Chrome and Firefox.

However, there are a couple of



Launch Safari by tapping the icon featuring a blue compass

circumstances when it'll disappear. The first is if you swipe to scroll down a website.

The second is if you intentionally or accidentally enter full-screen mode, by tapping the 'aA' symbol in the

address bar.

In either case, the solution is to tap right at the top, where the address bar should be. It'll appear – and that's where you type our snippet addresses (or any other web address).



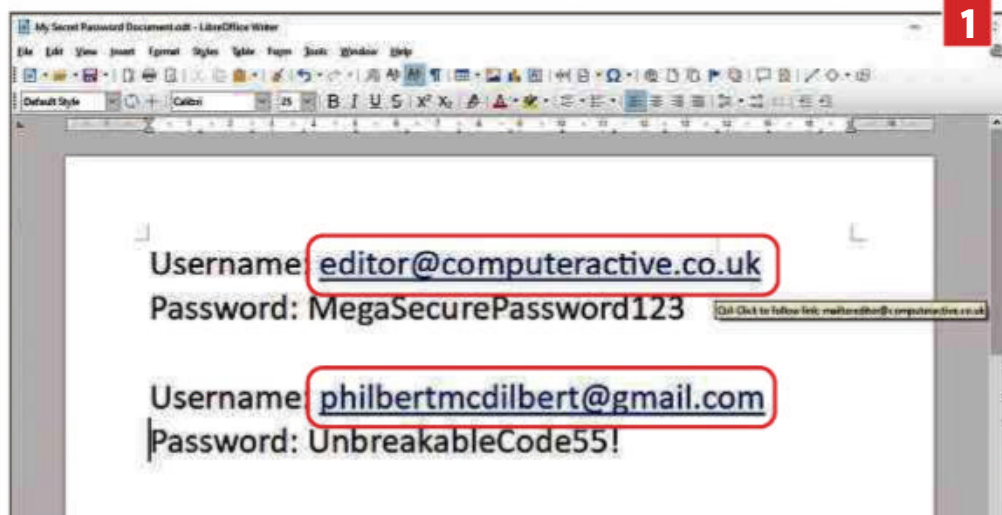
# Problems Solved

## Why can't I copy my logins?

**Q** I have an annoyance rather than a huge problem with LibreOffice Writer. I have a list of all my logins for the different websites and services I use online. This document is password-protected in itself, so is quite secure. I used to be able to highlight the information I needed and copy and paste it into the relevant boxes to sign in online.

However, now when I'm about to highlight the information I want I get a floating yellow box telling me to 'Ctrl-Click to follow link: mailto:', followed by whatever it is I want to copy and paste. I cannot then click and drag with the mouse to highlight what I need. I know I can use the command Control (Ctrl)+Shift and arrow keys to highlight words but this is a faff. I have the latest version of Windows 10, and latest version of Writer. I cannot find anything online to stop this happening

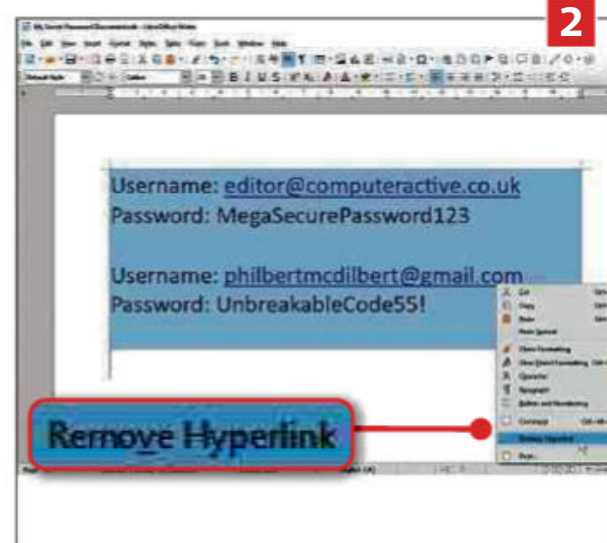
Paul Gann



In LibreOffice email addresses, the usernames are formatted as hyperlinks

**A** The answer to this is that whatever entries you're trying to select are formatted as **hyperlinks** (see screenshot 1). Given that you're trying to copy and paste logins, many of the usernames will no doubt be email addresses – so that's pretty much to be expected, because after typing one Writer will format it as a hyperlink when you press Enter.

The fix is simple. First, press Ctrl+A to select the whole document. Now right-click any hyperlinked entry and, from the pop-up menu, choose Remove Hyperlink 2.



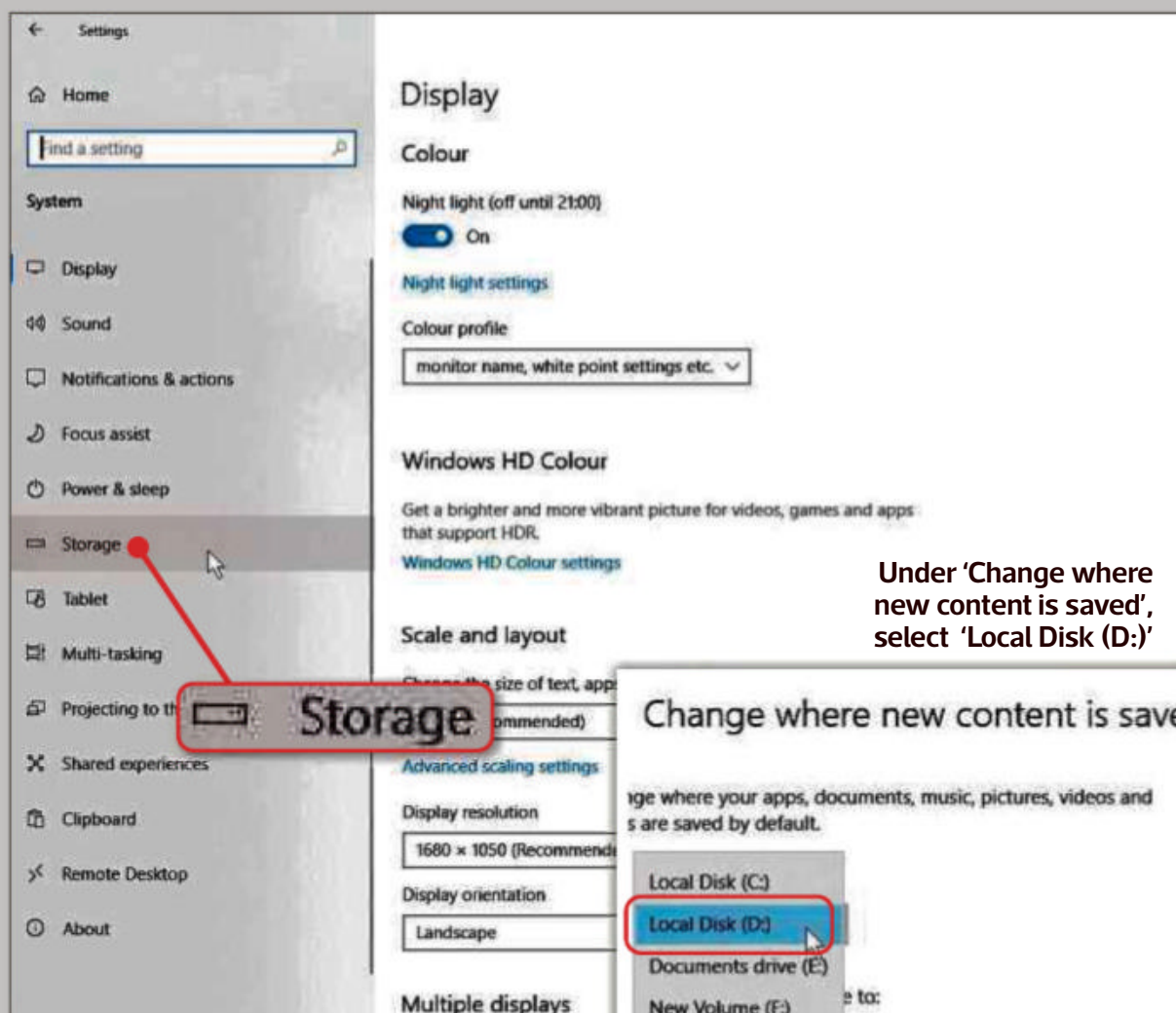
Remove hyperlinks by right-clicking them and selecting Remove Hyperlink

## Can I choose where to install Flight Simulator 2020?

**Q** I'm interested in Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020. My PC is around four years old. It has a small 128GB SSD as drive C, because SSDs were still expensive when I bought it. However, I also have a 2TB hard drive as drive D, which has plenty of space. Assuming that my PC meets the game's other requirements, would it be possible to install it on drive D?

John Johnstone

**A** Flight Simulator will install on to whatever is set as the default drive. That is usually drive C, but it's easy enough to change – and a good idea to do so if your SSD is nearing full. First, click the Start button followed by the Settings cog. Next, on the left, click Storage (see screenshot right) and then, on the right, under 'More storage settings', click 'Change where new content is saved'. Finally, under 'New apps will save to:', click to open the dropdown menu, then choose 'Local Disk (D:)' (see screenshot far right) and click Apply.



Under 'Change where new content is saved', select 'Local Disk (D:)'

To select the drive on which to install Flight Simulator, first select 'Storage'







## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN...

### Screen settings on my desktop PC and laptop?

**Q** I've purchased a Dell monitor that I have connected to both my Dell desktop PC and an older HP laptop, the latter via a little dongle. I can switch between the two machines by pressing a button on the monitor. So far, so good.

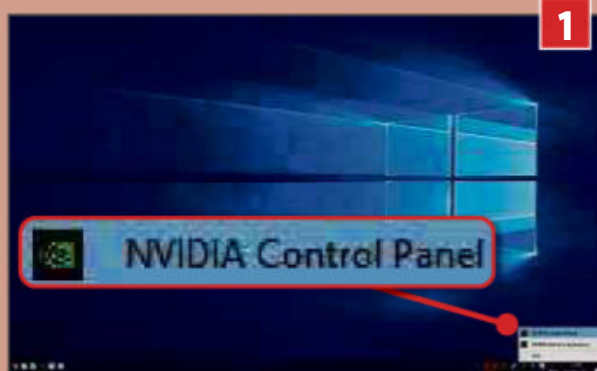
However, when I'm using the on-screen menu to explore the settings I've noticed that some options that are available when I'm using the laptop are greyed out when I switch to my PC. For example, on the laptop I can use the Positioning option to move around what's displayed on screen – but I can't do that on the desktop PC.

Why would this be, and what's the difference?

Kevin Brook

**A** We don't know which specific models you're using, but we're pretty sure that what's going on here is your desktop is connected to the monitor digitally (via a DVI socket), while the laptop gets its images via an old analogue (VGA) cable.

The upshot of such an arrangement,



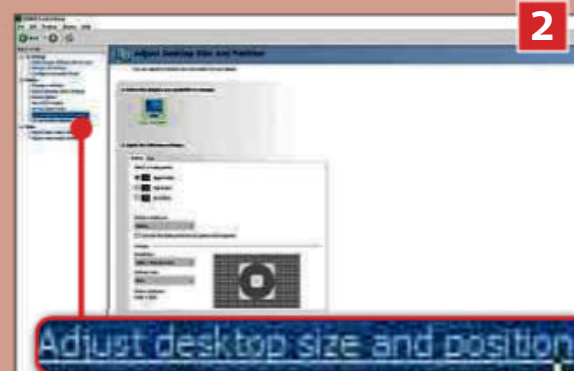
Look in the Nvidia Control Panel for options to manage the screen display

for the digital connection, is that some of the settings can be managed on the PC, while with an analogue connection the only option is to manage what's displayed is on the screen itself.

Of course, this is a bit of a double-edged sword because sometimes it is just quicker to control things via the physical buttons on the display – but that's just how it is in this situation.

To take control of the greyed-out options you'll need to fire up the control panel for your graphics card.

For Nvidia cards, for example, first right-click the little Nvidia icon in the notification area at the far right-hand



One of those options is to 'Adjust desktop size and position'

side of the taskbar and choose Nvidia Settings. Then, in the Nvidia Control Panel window (see screenshot 1), click to expand the Display section. Here, you should find access to controls for all the options that are greyed-out on your monitor's on-screen menu when it's using a digital connection.

To alter the position, for instance, in the left-hand pane click 'Adjust desktop size and position' 2 and then use the options in the right-hand pane to apply your tweaks.

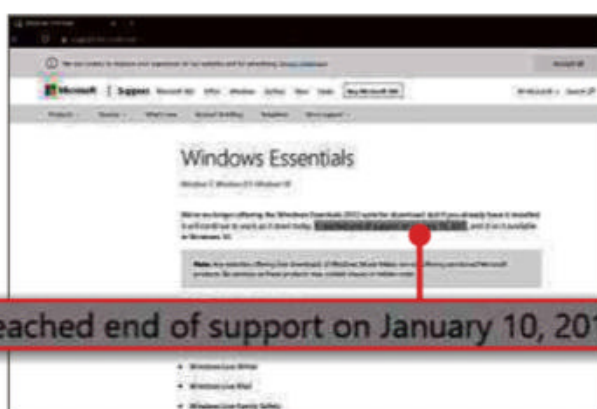
Want to know the difference between technical terms? Email [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)

## Why do I get spam in Windows Live Mail?

**Q** I have a problem with Windows Live Mail, which I've been using for years and in general has worked very well. In the past few weeks I've been getting a lot of spam, so under the Junk dropdown list I've been selecting 'Add sender's domain to blocked sender list'. However, this seems to have no effect whatsoever. I've tried various other things without success. Can you supply me with a fix that might solve the problem?

Stuart Hillier

**A** We're afraid not. You may or may not be aware that support for Windows Live Mail (WLM) ended in January 2017, so it's now four years beyond when Microsoft itself gave up on it. Of course, the software did not stop working overnight – and indeed will continue functioning in one way or another for years to come – but it will



Microsoft stopped supporting Windows Live Mail in 2017, so new flaws won't be fixed

become ever more risky to use it, and prone to problems. As such, there's likely no fixing this or any other new quirk that might occur from now on.

Whether or not this new hiccup has been caused by, say, a Windows 10 update is academic: Microsoft no longer supports WLM, so it won't ever be issuing fixes for any new flaws.

We appreciate that's not the answer

you wanted to hear, but it is the only answer we can offer.

However, we're publishing your query just in case any other WLM-using readers have experienced this particular glitch and have found a workaround.

We'll happily pass on any replies we receive.

## Next Issue

ONSALE  
Weds  
13 Jan

- Why won't 64bit Firefox load?
- How do I print a list of files?
- Why is my display sometimes blank?
- ...And many more

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## Reader Support

Having a problem with our recommended software or expert tips? Email [editor@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:editor@computeractive.co.uk) and we'll do our best to help

### Should I ditch my old hard drive?

**Q** Following your 'Reclaim & reuse your old hard drives' feature in Issue 591 (page 60), I decided to give it a go. I removed the drive from an old BT YouView set-top box, and put it into an enclosure I'd bought from Amazon. Following the instructions in your article, I connected it to my PC. Although the drive is displayed, I'm unable to access it – I keep seeing a message saying the drive is write-protected. I have tried two of these hard drives, with the same result. Is it possible to access and use these drives, or will I have to discard them?

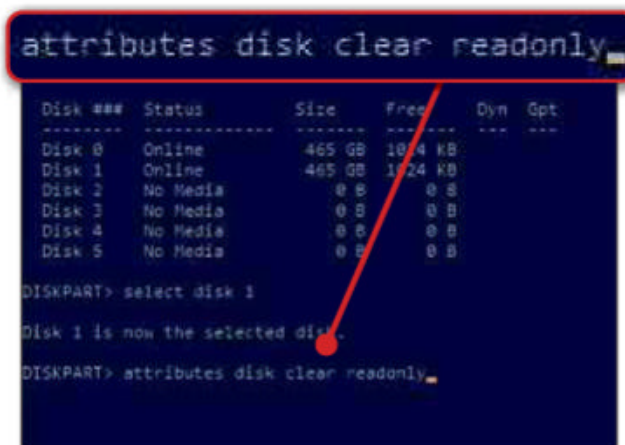
Mike Lavall

**A** It's certainly possible but, depending on the specific boxes and drive models, the process might be reasonably straightforward or quite a tough job.

If indeed a drive is merely write-protected, then it should be pretty easy – as you can use PowerShell to remove the block. First, connect the drive to your PC and then press Windows key+X to open the Quick Link menu and choose 'Windows PowerShell (Admin)'. At the prompt, type `diskpart` and press Enter. Next, type `list disk` (note the space between the two words) then press Enter. From the displayed list (and using the capacity figures listed under the Size column as your guide) make a note of the relevant drive number.

If you determine that your YouView box's drive number is 1, for example, then the next command for you to type is `select disk 1` before pressing Enter. If it's drive 2, then the command would be `select disk 2`, and so on. Finally, type `attributes disk clear readonly` (see screenshot above) and press Enter. If no error message is shown, you should be in a position to return to the instructions in our feature.

Otherwise, your drive has been 'locked' by the manufacturer and will require special tools and quite a bit more work



Type this at the end of the PowerShell command to remove write protection from your drive

before it lets you in. We don't have the space here to detail that convoluted process but there's an excellent step-by-step guide on the Instructables website, at [www.snipca.com/36618](http://www.snipca.com/36618).

### Why can't I format as FAT32 in PowerShell?

**Q** I was interested to read your answer to Roger Cutler's problem in Problems Solved, Issue 592 (page 68). I too have had the same problem with my in-car audio system not being able to read exFAT-formatted USB sticks. I tried to follow your instructions to format my drive but could not get it to work, receiving only error messages.

My USB drive was shown as D, so I substituted this for the X in the command you published. I tried this several times, even putting a space between FAT32 and D, but without success. Perhaps I am doing something wrong?

John Killoch

**A** You helpfully sent us a screenshot (see below) of your PowerShell window so we can confirm that, yes, you've got a couple of things wrong. First, you've



Type this full command when reformatting exFAT drives in PowerShell

missed off a vital part of the command – the word `format`. Then, at the end of the command, you've neglected to include a space. We know you said you also tried with a space but that's academic, because you'd missed off `format`. You also need a colon directly after the drive letter.

So, the specific command for you to type – in full, including all the spaces, as shown in the screenshot above – is `format /FS:FAT32 d:`. Once typed, press Enter. If you're still struggling, cut and paste the command from our Pastebin account, at [www.snipca.com/36619](http://www.snipca.com/36619).

### What's up with Google Lens?

**Q** Using my Samsung Galaxy S10 phone I've been trying to follow the 'Copy and translate text in your photos' Workshop, in Issue 592 (page 40). For this to work it appears one needs Google Lens installed, but try as I might it won't install from the Play Store. Google Photos is installed and up to date. Am I missing something?

Michael Finlay

**A** The problem here is Google's lack of clarity about which phones the Lens app is compatible with. Put simply, the company has never explained why Lens will work with some phones and not others. Indeed, it'll work with some older smartphones but not some newer ones, which seems like madness.

The situation is a mess but, sadly, it also explains why you can't download the app: for whatever reason, Google has deemed that it is currently not compatible with your S10 – so the Play Store will not offer you the option to download it.

That may change in the future, but we have no way of knowing if or when that might be.



# Jargon Buster

**32bit/64bit** A measure of how much data a PC can process at once. Most older computers are 32bit, more modern ones are 64bit.

**3G/4G/5G** Technologies that deliver faster mobile broadband.

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

**Adobe RGB** A wider colour space than sRGB, extending into richer cyans and greens.

**AMOLED** Active-Matrix Organic Light-Emitting Diode. An alternative technology to LCD for creating flat-panel displays. Most commonly used in smartphones, tablets and smartwatches.

**Aspect ratio** A measurement of the shape of a display.

**Benchmarking** Comparing software and products with an accepted standard.

**Beta** A version of software that's being tested. Beta versions are often released so problems can be ironed out.

**Cast** To send content from your PC to TV.

**cd/m<sup>2</sup>** Candela per square metre. Standard unit of brightness.

**Clock speed** The speed at which a computer processor can perform operations. Measured in Gigahertz (GHz).

**Contrast ratio** A measure of the difference between the darkest and lightest possible shades shown by a screen. Screens with higher contrast ratios are good for watching movies or playing games.

**Cookie** A small text file stored on your computer by a website. Used to store browsing preferences, website log-in details and so on.

**Core** Units on a processor that carry out program instructions.

**Defragment** To reorganise the data stored on a hard drive so files are stored in one piece and can be accessed quickly. Sometimes shortened to defrag.

**Delta E** A measurement that shows how the human eye perceives different colours.

**DirectX** A Microsoft technology required to run many games in Windows.

**DisplayPort** A new socket for connecting monitors.

**Driver** A file that tells Windows how to work with an external device.

**Dual boot** To set up a PC with two operating systems, so that one must be chosen each time it starts.

**DVI** Digital Visual Interface. A common type of display connector that can carry a digital signal.

**E2E** End-to-end encryption. Ensures that messages can be seen only by the sender and recipient.

**eMMC** Flash storage commonly found in cheap laptops and tablets. It's slower than a solid-state drive.

**Emoji** A small graphic that can be inserted into a text message or email.

**EXIF** Exchangeable Image File Format. A method for storing extra information, such as the date, time and camera model, inside digital photo files.

**exFAT** Extended File Allocation Table. Microsoft's file system for USB sticks and SD cards.

**Extension** A program that adds extra features to your browser.

**FAT32** An old system used for formatting hard drives, and still used for some portable drives.

**Firewall** A piece of software or hardware that prevents unauthorised access to a computer over a network, such as the internet.

**Fps** Frames per second, normally used to indicate gaming performance.

**FTP** File Transfer Protocol. A system for transferring files between computers. Often used when uploading websites.

**GHz** Gigahertz. A measure of how many instructions a chip can process per second. 1GHz is equal to 1,000MHz.

**Graphene driver** Components in earphones that vibrate very quickly, reducing the power needed to move the voice coil back and forth, creating better sound in theory.

**Hardware acceleration** Using a graphics card to radically improve video and games performance.

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

**HDR** High-dynamic range. A camera that takes more than one photo with different levels of colour and contrast. These images are then combined to create a better-quality image.

**Heatsink** A block of metal used to help dissipate the heat from a computer chip.

**HEIC** High-efficiency image container. Apple's new default image format for iOS.

**Hyperlink** A clickable link that takes you to a new document or website.

**IPS** A screen technology. Monitors that use it have wider viewing angles and better, more accurate-looking colours compared with monitors that do not use this technology.

**JPEG** Joint Photograph Experts Group. A common type of image file created by most digital cameras.

**Lossless** Music file formats that take up more space but provide higher sound quality.

**Macro lens** Lets you take sharp, detailed, close-up photos of small objects.

**Metadata** A set of data that gives information about a file.

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

**MicroSD card** A small type of memory card. Can be converted to SD size using an adapter.

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

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

**MU-MIMO** Multiple-user multiple-input multiple-output. Wi-Fi technology that increases the number of antennas that can be used.

**NAS** Network-attached storage. A hard drive attached to a network that can be shared with other PCs.

**NTFS** New Technology File System. A file system used by all recent versions of Windows.

**OCR** Optical character recognition. The process by which printed text is scanned and converted into documents that can be edited.

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

**Overclock** Make a processor work faster to boost performance at the cost of it getting hotter and requiring more power.

**Partition** A large hard drive can be split into two or more partitions or 'virtual' drives. Once partitioned, each section is treated by Windows as though it were a completely separate, smaller hard drive.

**PCIe** Peripheral Component Interconnect Express. A faster version of PCI – a slot on the motherboard for expansion cards, such as for sound and memory.

**Phishing** A form of internet fraud that tries to trick you into revealing personal details.

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

**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. Examples include unnecessary plug-ins, toolbars and browser hijackers.

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

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

**Raytracing** Provides realistic lighting in an image by recreating how light behaves.

**Refresh rate** Measured in Hertz (Hz), the number of times per second that the image on your monitor is redrawn. Slight changes in the image each time it is updated combine to give the illusion of movement.

**SIM** Subscriber Identity Module. The smart card used by all digital mobile phones. The SIM card carries the user’s identity and phone number for accessing the network.

**Source code** Program instructions written in a high-level language that are readable by people but not computers.

**Speaker driver** Cone-shaped part of the speaker that converts audio signals into sound waves.

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

**SSD** Solid-state drive. Storage that, unlike a hard drive, uses no moving parts. Faster but more expensive than conventional hard drives.

**SSID** Service Set Identifier. A name used to identify a wireless network.

**Subwoofer** A special type of speaker designed to reproduce deep bass sounds only. Even on a stereo system, only one subwoofer is required because human ears cannot detect the direction of bass frequencies.

**System image** A backup of your ‘system image’, which includes your operating system drivers, PC’s settings, programs and files.

**Temporary file** A file created by a browser to store website data. In the days of limited main memory, temporary files were the only way to store large amounts of interim data that the application was generating.

**Timestamp** The time which an event is recorded by a computer.

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

**USB 2.0/3.0/3.1** Faster successors to USB.

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

**VGA** Video Graphics Array. An older standard socket for connecting a monitor to a PC.

**Virtual machine** A software-based computer running inside another PC. Often used to emulate another operating system – for example, running Windows 7 as a virtual machine inside Windows 10.

**VPN** Virtual private network. Keeps all internet communication safe and private.





**Widget** A small program such as a calendar that runs on the Windows desktop.

**Write cycle** The life span of an SSD, based on how many times it can write and erase data.

**ZIP file** A file that contains compressed documents or files.

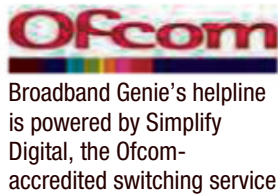
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# Easy when you **Know How**

Finding himself with extra time on his hands,  
**Robert Irvine** tries to...



## Set up a free WordPress blog

**H**i, I'm Robert Irvine. You may know me from such magazines as *Web User* and *Web User Back Issues Disc*. With that title now retired, *Computeractive* editor Daniel Booth has kindly asked me to step into his brogues and write this fortnightly column about trying tricky tech things.

“

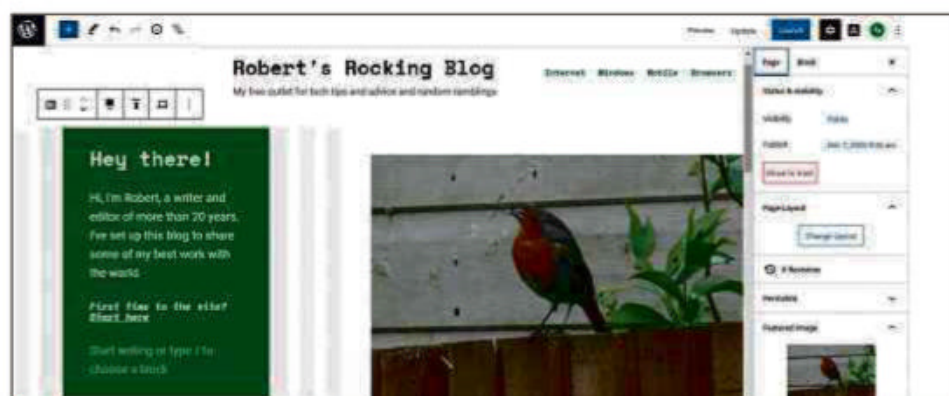
‘Good job, looks great!’, proclaimed WordPress, which seemed a slight exaggeration at this stage

”

As I can no longer use *Web User* as an outlet for my knowledge of Windows 10 privacy settings, Chrome extensions and 1980s TV game shows, I decided to set up my own blog. I did have a Blogger blog many years ago, but I stopped updating that after nobody visited.

Besides, if I've learned anything from the 'Build a Better Site' section of *Web User* (which we affectionately called BABS), it's that WordPress is now the best option for creating your own blog or website. But where to start?

I'd long been confused by the difference between WordPress.com and WordPress.org, likening them to the Judean People's Front and People's Front of Judea in Monty Python's *Life of Brian*. On visiting the two sites, I now realised that WordPress.com is aimed at beginners. It's completely free to use and gives you a '.wordpress.com' web address, but is



Robert's blog is up and rocking but needs a bit of work to make it look professional

restrictive in its customisation options. WordPress.org, on the other hand, provides “beautiful designs, powerful features and the freedom to build anything you want”, but you have to pay for your own domain name and hosting, and upload the WordPress software to your server.

Although I've attained a certain level of tech knowhow, I'm a notorious cheapskate, so I opted for the free WordPress.com. This also offers paid-for plans that include a custom domain, extra themes and more storage space from £3 per month, so I figured I could upgrade once I'd found my blogging feet.

Signing up with WordPress.com was simple, although it did try to tempt me with 'free' domain registration that required paying for a plan (see screenshot below). It also made the 'Start with a free site' link deliberately small, as if to shame me into coughing up.

After confirming my email address, I was straight into the My Home dashboard. This guided me through the first step, which was to give my blog a name (Robert's Rocking Blog!) and snappy tagline. “Good job, looks great!”, proclaimed WordPress,



You can get a 'free' custom domain if you pay for a WordPress plan

which seemed a slight exaggeration at this stage.

Back at My Home, the next step was to create a navigation menu and choose some sections to appear in it. This was straightforward and the preview of my blog updated as I added each item. As this currently consisted of placeholder text and a bland picture of some mountains, I clicked the Edit button and entered my own words. I then chose 'Featured image' in the Page panel on the right and uploaded a photo of a (rocking) robin (see screenshot above).

My concerns about limited customisation were allayed by the dozens of free themes available from the My Site menu. I chose a simple but stylish one called Exford (<https://wordpress.com/theme/exford>), which promised to “lend a sophisticated air to your website's content”, and clicked 'Activate this design' to apply it to my blog. And lo, it looked alright

With plenty of **widgets** to play around with via the Customise menu, including a calendar, social-media icons and a video player, WordPress.com offered more than enough choice for a beginner. I felt relieved that I hadn't chosen the more advanced WordPress.org. You need a paid-for plan to install any **plug-ins**, but for a basic blog (which mine undoubtedly is), these aren't essential.

All that remained was to add some content, then publish the blog by clicking 'Launch site'. You can track my progress at <https://robertsrockingblog.wordpress.com>.

Need help setting up your own blog? Let us know: [noproblem@computeractive.co.uk](mailto:noproblem@computeractive.co.uk)



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