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/eh

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Remove, Repair & Recover for free

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- ✓ Convert & open corrupt files
- ✓ Delete out-of-date drivers
- ✓ Uninstall software you can't find



PLUS

SWITCH BROADBAND NOW!

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- Send emails from the future
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You can always fall back on your Rs

t's been a long time since I left school, but presumably the three Rs - reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic - are still the cornerstones of a basic education and haven't been usurped by texting, tweeting and twerking. In our multimedia era, we can always use a few more Rs to help us get by, and our cover feature on page 38 highlights three of the best: remove, repair and recover. Together, this alliterative trio can solve virtually any PC problem, whether you're troubled by a program that won't uninstall, a corrupt file you can't open or a photo you've accidentally deleted.

Coincidentally, there are some other useful Rs elsewhere in this issue, including a Weekend Project about rooting your Android phone, expert advice about rebooting your PC, a Workshop that explains how to ramp up security on your router and a really rocking review of the revamped Roku 2 streaming device. That's probably enough Rs to keep you busy for the moment!

Robert (except for that one) Irvine robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk #webuser



ISSUE 375 15 - 28 JULY 2015 ON THE COVER Remove, Repair & Recover for free The three Rs that fix any PC problem - Your Complete Guide page 38 ✓ Remove all duplicate files ✓ Repair any version of Windows ✓ Recover deleted photos ✓ Restore PC partitions ✓ Update unsafe plug-ins ✓ Convert & open corrupt files ✓ Delete out-of-date drivers PROBLEMS Uninstall software you can't find SWITCH Why Windows 10 Send emails from the future BROADBAND Clone your hard drive for free won't be ready NOW! What Microsoft hasn't told you Google Photos v Flickr Your new rights nac More bandwidth for free Kill background PC junk p46 Average sales, Jan-Dec 2014, 29,057 copies per issue

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The three Rs that solve all your everyday **PC problems**

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What's New Online

Explore new images in Google Earth

ere at Web User we still remember that 'wow' moment when we used Google Earth for the first time. Minutes after it launched on 29 June 2005, we did what everyone else has done since then, and zoomed in to see our homes.

To celebrate Google Earth's first decade, Google has added a layer called Voyager (Desktop version of the software only), which shows you the "newest and most interesting

imagery" across the globe. As you can see in the main screengrab, types of image are represented by glowing icons of different colours and shapes. Click them to see Street View

highlights, cities shown in 3D and updated satellite photos (there's more information on Google's Official

Blog: bit.ly/blog375).



Voyager also shows new images in Earth View, which is a library of the most spectacular

landscapes you can see in Google Earth (such as Iraq's Hammar Marshes, above, which look like a giant raspberry-ripple ice cream). As part of

the 10th birthday celebrations, Google has expanded the collection to 1,500 images. See them at earthview.withgoogle.com, or by adding a Chrome extension (bit.ly/ chrome375), which shows you a new image every time you open a tab.

Click the link below to download Google Earth.

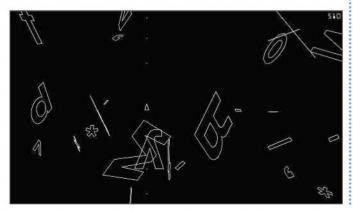
bit.ly/earth375

Play typography version of classic Asteroids game

bit.ly/typo375

If your first reaction when watching the asteroids video on page 7 is to want to zap them to smithereens, you'll love this take on the classic arcade game. In Typoroids, instead of blasting asteroids, you fire at floating letters and punctuation marks, with each hit shattering them into smaller characters.

You get to pick your level when you start, from one to 10. We recommend starting at about 7, which is tough enough to be challenging, but not so hard that you'll use up your three lives in seconds.



Go rock climbing in Street View

bit.ly/yosemite375

Here's your chance for some armchair rockclimbing. Google has launched its first "vertical" Street View collection, capturing views

of El Capitan, Yosemite National Park's famous rock wall. They gave cameras to climbers Lynn Hill (pictured), Alex Honnold and Tommy Caldwell, who took photos during their 3,000-foot ascent. Hill was the perfect person for the task: in 1993 she became the first person to free-climb El Capitan.

Click the link above to start your climb. It takes you to Google's Lat-Long blog, where you'll find shortcuts to some of the best images, a timelapse video of the climb



and more information on how it was carried out. For more spectacular views, click bit.ly/etna375 to explore Mount Etna, which was added to Street View in June. You can see one of the craters pictured left.

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

Use new emoji in Gmail

bit.ly/gmail375

If you like emoji, you'll be making a smiley face at the news that Google has added to Gmail the blob-like range currently available on Android and Hangouts. It's part of a Gmail update that also includes hundreds of new themes featuring high-resolution photos and tools to edit them. Read more on Gmail's blog.



Play classical music using your PC keyboard

touchpianist.com

Touch Pianist turns your PC keyboard into a grand piano, letting you play famous works by hitting any key. There are no notes to worry about - you just need to follow the melody and get the timing right. Learn how it works by playing the tutorial (Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata), then click the menu for more choices, including pieces by Bach, Mozart, Chopin and Debussy. It's a Chrome Experiment, so it works best in Google's browser. There's also a free app for Android and iOS.

Find videos on worldwide

bit.ly/tube375

waste time on the web involve searching websites as though they were 'lucky dips', hopping randomly Map Explorer works. Just click places on a map of the world to see videos uploaded from that location (you can adjust the search radius at the top-right). We clicked Luton, and found footage of a 5-a-side match not that interesting. Then we toured Australia, Brazil and Japan and found plenty to entertain us - especially, for some reason, in Melbourne.



YouTube map

Some of the most enjoyable ways to between content. That's how YouTube

See every asteroid spinning through space

bit.ly/video375

This YouTube video brilliantly answers the question it poses in the title: "If you could see all the asteroids, what would the sky look like?". Made by astronomer Scott Manley, it's a 360-degree video, which means you can control the viewing angles using your mouse or via the controls in the top-left corner of the screen.



TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@thisisfoxx

Updates from Chris Foxx, who has joined BBC News as tech reporter

@rafredarrows

Spectacular photos of the Red Arrows in action, plus information on forthcoming shows

@NASAhistory

'On this day' facts from the history of NASA, including planet discoveries and rocket launches

@Derpey

The corniest, most pun-packed jokes and photos online

@googlephotos

Tips on editing and sharing your snaps from the official site of Google's new Photos service

Search your family tree for criminal records

bit.ly/crime375

Findmypast members can now search three million crime records, dated between 1779 to 1935. They show mugshots, crimes committed and where prisoners served time.

Save photos directly in **Dropbox folders**

bit.ly/dropbox375

Using the new 'plus' button in the redesigned Dropbox for Android app, you can save photos directly to a folder. Click the link above to see new features, and download the app from Google Play at bit.ly/play375. Read our full review on page 32.

Get retro Spotify playlists

spotify-tasterewind.com

Pick three of your favourite artists on Spotify's Taste Rewind site, and it will suggest playlists of old tracks, from the Sixties to the Noughties, that you may like. The results are accurate, if a little obvious.

Need to Know

Reserved Windows 10? You might not get it on launch day

What happened?

Microsoft revealed that, contrary to previous reports, not everyone will get the free upgrade to Windows 10 as soon as the new operating system is released on 29 July.

The software giant has been nagging users of Windows 7 and 8 to "reserve" their free upgrade to Windows 10 via a pop-up message, with millions signing up a month before the release. Now, Microsoft has revealed how those

"reservations" will work, and when users will get their free copy of the new OS.

Before Windows 10 reaches our desktop and laptop PCs, the final version will be sent to device manufacturers and then to retailers, so there's a fair chance the release edition of Windows 10 is already in their hands.

Then, on 29 July, the new OS will start rolling out to the rest of us. However, it will be delivered digitally in waves, so you may not get it on the very first day. Microsoft has said that 'Windows Insiders' (those testing the beta and preview versions of the new OS) will get the full upgrade on the first day. If you're a business user, you won't get Windows 10 until 1 August at the earliest.

When it's your turn to get the upgrade, Microsoft will check that your system will "have a great experience" with Windows 10 before you download it to your computer. If your hardware



The official Windows 10 release date is 29 July, but you might need to wait longer



has any incompatibility issues with the new OS, Microsoft will suggest possible solutions.

How will it affect you?

Even if you've "reserved" a copy of Windows 10, you may not get it on 29 July – in fact, you almost certainly won't unless you've signed up for the Windows Insider programme. For most users, that's not much of a hardship: Microsoft is offering the update free of charge for anyone on Windows 7 or 8, and rolling it out to millions of people, so it makes sense to stagger the release rather than slowing the whole internet.

Microsoft is also making the effort to check your PC for compatibility before letting you upgrade. For example, if you use an app on your computer that won't work with Windows 10, you'll be warned before installing the update. Then, you'll either be able to install

Windows 10 anyway or be directed to an updated, compatible version of the app. Theoretically, this means you don't need to worry that your existing apps will stop working after the update because you'll be warned before any problems hit.

That's a major change from previous versions of Windows, which often stopped drivers and apps working for weeks while developers rushed to catch up. This should make updating smoother for Windows users - assuming it all works as planned.

There are other benefits to not being in the first wave of updates. Microsoft said it would work on compatibility during the staged rollout, so any issues reported during the first round of updates should hopefully be fixed by the time Windows 10 lands on your PC. See Barry's column on page 74 to read

his doubts about Windows 10 being ready for release.

What do we think?

There's really no reason to rush to upgrade to a new OS, and savvy users may want to wait for the first bug fixes, as there will invariably be things that go wrong with the initial release version. It's a smart move by Microsoft to make sure the first version goes to tech experts who will know how to deal with any issues that crop up and be able to report them capably to the company so they can be fixed. That should mean people who aren't software experts will experience fewer problems when they do eventually get the update.

It's also smart of Microsoft to address app compatibility before letting users install the new OS. Some apps may still not work with Windows 10, but it's better to find this out before you install it, so you can make an informed decision about whether to install the OS now or wait for an upgraded app that works with it.

All of this bodes well for a warm welcome for Windows 10 from Microsoft's many millions of users – something that didn't happen with Windows 8. However, we'll be taking a closer look at why Windows 10 might not be perfect in the next issue of *Web User*, on sale 29 July.

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

Get your Amazon deliveries in an hour

What happened?

Can't wait until tomorrow for your Amazon delivery? You can now get it to your door within 60 minutes, but only if you live in selected parts of London and pay a £7 fee for one-hour delivery. You'll also have to be a member of Amazon Prime, the retailer's monthly subscription service that offers free next-day deliveries on some products and access to its streaming video for £79.

Amazon Prime Now only covers selected products, which are held in its East London storage centre, with deliveries made by its own in-house courier firm.

How will it affect you?

If you don't want to fork out the extra cash for a 60-minute shop, Prime Now also provides free deliveries within two hours, seven days a week, which could be very useful when you need items urgently. However, only everyday essentials are available to buy through the service – for both one- and two-hour

slots – including batteries, cereal, toilet paper and soap. You'll also need to order at least £20's worth of products, and Amazon is encouraging customers to tip the driver.

Amazon has also launched a Prime Now app for Android and iOS, which lets you see which items are available for fast delivery.

What do we think?

This is a clever move from Amazon, because having to wait for deliveries is the main downside to online shopping. But given its restrictions, most customers won't currently be able to use the service. Once Prime Now expands, it will fit well with Amazon's Dash system, which lets you install branded, web-connected buttons in your home. Run out of a key product, and you could get it delivered today. We'd still rather run to the corner shop if we run out of toilet paper than pay £7 plus tip, but some shoppers will appreciate the convenience.



Mobile broadband overtakes fixed-line



What happened?

The average mobile broadband speed is now faster than fixed-line broadband for many users in the UK, according to statistics from networking firm Akamai. Its research found that average mobile broadband speeds in the UK are 20.4Mbps versus 11.6Mbps for fixed line. The data suggests that for some Brits, it may be better to use their mobile phone's connection than fixed-line broadband, now that the 4G rollout has boosted speeds in the former, leaving the latter in the dust. According to Akamai, the UK is ranked top in Europe for mobile broadband, but 21st for standard fixed-line.

How will it affect you?

If you're struggling on slow home broadband, a mobile connection may be a better option. But before you make the switch, there's much to consider. First, find out what mobile broadband speed you can actually achieve – the areas with the slowest mobile speeds are often those that get the slowest home broadband, too, while big

cities get fast speeds on both. Secondly, mobile broadband connections normally have tight data caps, so your internet use will be limited and streaming services such as Spotify and BBC iPlayer will quickly chew through your monthly allowance.

However, if you can't get a fast, reliable fixed connection, it's worth seeing whether mobile broadband can help, even if you only use it to supplement your standard line

What do we think?

This research highlights the success of the 4G rollout. which has significantly boosted mobile broadband speeds in the UK. However it also shines a light on the struggles many Brits still have with fixed-line broadband connections. That should improve as BT's part-public-funded infrastructure upgrades continue apace, but many are being left behind on lines with less than 2Mbps - especially in rural areas.

See our FAQ on page 36 for information about switching your broadband provider

EU to scrap roaming charges in 2017

What happened?

The European Union announced that it will be abolishing roaming charges across all its member states. This means that from June 2017, you won't pay a penny extra to make calls, send texts or use the internet while you're visiting an FU country.

The change will be brought in slowly, with an initial price drop in April of next year that will cap prices at 5 cents per minute for calls, 2 cents per text message and 5 cents per megabyte of data. So you'll be able to call and text largely without worrying about charges, although you'll still get a hefty €50 bill if you use up 1GB of data on your monthly plan while overseas.

These limits only apply inside the EU, but many mobile networks offer deals in different countries that end up being much cheaper. Three, for example, lets you use your phone abroad, at no extra cost, in 18 destinations including Spain, New Zealand and the US.

How will it affect you?

Because the new rules don't come into effect until summer 2017, this year you'll continue to roam under the current EU-enforced price limits, which are still pretty steep. However, there are a few simple tips you can follow to avoid getting stung by roaming costs if you don't choose to take advantage of your



own provider's roaming deals. The obvious one is to turn off mobile data roaming to stop sneaky apps using up your data and costing you a fortune while you're abroad. You can do this on Android by going to Settings, 'Mobile data', 'Data roaming'. In iOS, it's in Settings, Mobile, 'Data roaming'.

What do we think?

We think this change is long overdue. We've all experienced having to switch off our phones, or at least the data connection on them, when we go

abroad. By removing roaming charges, we'll be able to carry on as we do at home, which will make finding your hotel, that perfect restaurant or a hard-to-locate chateau much easier.

At present, 37 per cent of British holidaymakers turn off their phones completely when they head abroad, and a further 36 per cent turn off data roaming, only allowing themselves to text and make calls. The new tariffs are a welcome liberation, but it's a shame we still need to wait two years for the changes to fully come into effect.

FIRST LOOK

Intel Compute Stick bit.ly/intel375

The Intel Compute Stick takes advantage of the small size and low power requirements of Intel's Atom processors to offer a pocket PC that's not much bigger than a Wi-Fi dongle. Despite its tiny size, the Compute Stick manages to squeeze in 2GB of RAM and 32GB storage, and can be plugged directly into the HDMI port on your monitor or TV. The stick comes with Windows 8.1 or Ubuntu installed, but has only one USB port and is powered by a microUSB socket (which requires a 2A power source to boot).

Unfortunately, the limitations of such a small PC are obvious as soon as you set it up. The single USB



port means that plugging in a keyboard and mouse at the same will require a wireless model with a single receiver. Even then, you'll have no room to plug in a card reader or USB drive, which can make transferring files tricky.

Another shortcoming is the Compute Stick's poor wireless connection. It's an 802.11n chipset and only supports the 2.4GHz band, so we saw shockingly slow download speeds of 0.1Mbps when

we tested the stick about 10m from our router.

Using a separate Wi-Fi dongle is an option, but you'll need a powered USB hub if you want to use other USB devices alongside it. The Compute Stick handled tasks such as

browsing the web and playing full-HD video fairly well, but things ground to a halt when we tried opening a new web page in another tab while the current one was still rendering.

All these problems left us wondering what tasks the Compute Stick could practically be used for. At £130, it isn't even a good Chromecast substitute because Google's streaming stick costs far less and has many more features.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Will Facebook launch its own streaming service?

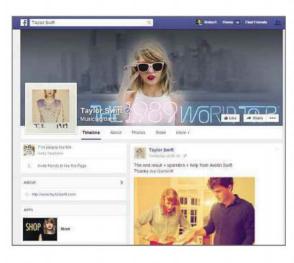
Facebook is reportedly talking to record labels with a view to potentially launching its own musicstreaming service. The social network is one of the few major tech companies without such a service, but that could be about to change and put Facebook in direct competition with Apple and Spotify.

Apple recently launched its Music service, which in some ways encroaches on Facebook's territory by including a Connect facility

that lets you follow and receive updates from favourite artists. Apple's previous attempt to bring social networking to music, Ping, was an unmitigated disaster, and it may be that Facebook believes it can do a better job of connecting artists to fans, given that many major artists already have significant Facebook followings.

Integrating music streaming into Facebook would also increase the amount of time that users spend on the social network, thereby boosting the company's potential to sell advertising. However, Facebook would have a hard time persuading artists and labels to let its users stream unlimited music for free.

Apple has already won favour by offering the labels a greater share of the revenue from its Music subscriptions.



once its three-month free trial has ended. The company was forced into a making public U-turn after US songstress Taylor Swift protested against Apple's initial decision not to pay royalties during Music's threemonth trial.

......

LIKELIHOOD RATING JJJJ/

Facebook never misses a trick when it comes to making money from its 800 million users, and it may be tempted to start streaming music following the massive success it's enjoyed with video content. We expect an announcement very soon.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

T.brush

bit.ly/tbrush375 | From £55

Modestly described as the "damn coolest electric toothbrush in the world," the T.brush brings a touch of class to your gnashers. It's available in seven "fashionable" styles with names such as Neon, Retro and Adventurer, and has a custom-designed battery that lasts for up to 70 per cent longer than comparable brushes and charges in a third of the time. Supplied with a USB travel charger that can be used all over the world, the T.brush uses oscillate-and-rotate technology in five brushing modes to remove plaque. Funding closes on 8 August with more than £35,000 raised so far.



WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Gmail introduces Undo Send feature

Google has formally introduced its Undo Send feature, which was previously only available from its experimental 'Labs' settings. When enabled, an 'Undo' button appears for up to 30 seconds, which lets you prevent the message from reaching its destination.

Microsoft gives away free Minecraft app

As a further incentive to upgrade to its latest operating system,

Microsoft has announced that it will be releasing a Minecraft app for Windows 10. The app will be



free to all current owners of the PC version of the game.

WE DON'T LIKE...

Google Photos labels black people 'gorillas'

Google's chief social architect Yonatan Zunger has apologised profusely for a bug in the company's Photos app that resulted in it labelling a user and his black friend as 'gorillas'. After unsuccessful attempts to fix the flaw, the tag was removed altogether.

UK population suffering on popularion 'digital amnesia'

A recent study by Kaspersky Lab found that the UK population is suffering from 'digital amnesia' because of its overreliance on smartphones and Google to provide information. The company found that around a third of 'connected' adults couldn't recall their partner's phone number.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Android ransomware on the rise

Bitdefender has found that approximately 32 per cent of all reported malware in the UK during the month of May was Android ransomware, and the security company believes that this figure will continue to grow. Bitdefender warns that new Android ransomware can completely block the keys on your phone or tablet, leaving you with only the options to reboot or shut down. Although no encryption of local files actually occurs, the displayed messages try to scare you into paying the ransom.

The ransomware can only be removed by booting devices in Safe Mode and uninstalling it from there; otherwise it will come back each time your phone or tablet is rebooted normally. Bitdefender advises

Android users to only download applications from Google Play and not to pay the ransom, which would further fuel cybercriminal activity.

bitdefender.co.uk

Samsung 'disables Windows Update'

Samsung has been accused

of disabling Windows Update on some of its laptops, potentially leaving customers exposed to unpatched security flaws. The company is reportedly shutting down Windows Update in favour of its own update tool, called SW Update, which is included with selected models of Samsung laptop. This means that users could potentially miss out on operating system updates and other security patches from Microsoft, which could leave their machines

blocking Windows Update, insisting that the inclusion of SW Update is merely an optional feature.

bit.ly/samsung375

Cybercriminals exploit flaw in Flash

We realise the above headline is something vou've read time and time again, but on this occasion a security hole was found in an update to Flash almost as soon as it was released. Adobe admitted that the bug, which could allow for the remote execution of malicious code, was already "being actively exploited in the wild via limited, targeted attacks". Once discovered, the company quickly issued a patch for the flaw, and advises all Flash users to update the plug-in on their machines, especially those running Internet Explorer on Windows 7 and Firefox on Windows XP. bit.ly/flash375

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

spokesperson for Samsung has denied

.....

exposed to malware threats. A

that the company is intentionally

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Simon **Edwards** of Dennis Technology Labs (www .dennistechnologylabs .com)



For a very minimal cost, you can create a separate secure network that will not only keep your own

computers safe from your friends and their potentially infected devices, but will also reduce the risk of automated router attacks. For as little as £10, you can buy a wireless broadband router that will provide a number of internal Ethernet ports and a wireless connection for your private devices, as well as a firewall.

Plug your new router's WAN port into any free Ethernet port on your existing router. This will be an internal port that you would normally use for a PC, for example. You can find instructions for network setup at bit.ly/router375.

You now have two networks, both with Wi-Fi

connections: friends can connect to the original 'outer' network while you use the new 'inner' network. Everyone can access the internet, but your friends' devices cannot connect back to your computers because there is a firewall in the way.



Ethan Whitehouse, Twitter

Performance and privacy. A good VPN service is expensive to run, and if customers don't pay for it with money, they end up paying for it in other

ways. For example, earlier this year it was found that the Hola VPN used its customers' own bandwidth to create its network. Users were essentially participating in a large peer-to-peer network, providing VPN services to each other. Hola was also accused of selling some of this bandwidth to thirdparties. One alleged result is that users were unknowingly providing bandwidth for a denial-ofservice attack. If a free VPN service can operate well without any income or other resources from users, then you might want to ask how this is possible.



Experience a high-performance IPS all-rounder in Style.

This Style line model comes in a super-slim design with clever detachable stand and elegant black and silver finish. Boasting a high-grade 58.4 cm (23") IPS panel, two HDMI and one D-Sub connectoras well asintegrated speakers, the I2367FM is your ultimate choice for entertainment, office applications and even image editing. The LED-backlit Full HD monitor delivers a highcontrast of 1000:1, a fast pixel response time of 5 ms and a luminosity of 250 cd/m². AOC equips this energy-efficient monitor with intelligent software to further minimise power consumption. Experience all advantages of AOC's sophisticated display technology with this classy IPS all-rounder.











Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

RELAUNCH

The Week

www.theweek.co.uk

With its constant updates and masses of content, The Week's website was becoming rather crowded, but this relaunch strikes the perfect balance between style and substance. Cleaner pages, fewer boxes and a more imageled approach give the stories room to breathe, while subtle design touches such as centring the masthead and using the magazine's brilliant illustrations give the site a friendlier, more modern look. Trending topics save a lot of space at the top of each page, and section headings are clearer, too. It's also now easier to dip in and out of articles, rather than feeling bombarded by the content.

Our rating



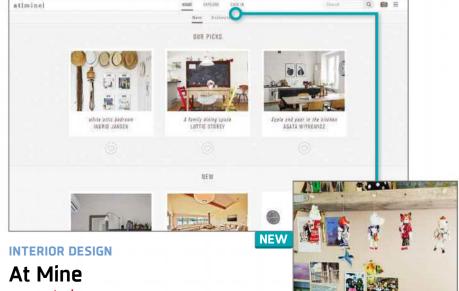
Google's Undo Send: five people it would have saved

TECHNOLOGY The Week's spin on the tech that's got the web talking



ONE-MINUTE READ Read concise summaries of all the day's biggest stories





www.atmine.com

There's nothing more fascinating than nosing around someone else's gaff, and At Mine provides a window into homes all over the world. Don't expect to see dirty dishes and dusty shelves, though, because the site is essentially a showcase for amateur interior design where enthusiasts share their handiwork. You can browse by room or search by keyword to lose yourself in beautifully presented images of immaculate interiors. Aside from brief captions, text is kept to a minimum, and you can click tagged items in photos to add them to your wish list. At Mine has just come out of private beta, during which time it's amassed lots of devoted users keen to show off their impeccable taste.

Our rating





GADGETS

Envirofone Shop

shop.envirofone.com

Phone-recycling service Envirofone has launched this attractive, cheaper-thaneBay online store to sell on some of the handsets it receives. You can buy second-hand iPhones, iPads and Android, BlackBerry and Windows Phone devices, with free, next-day delivery and no contract to worry about. As you'd expect, newer Apple products are still quite dear - for example, £280 for an iPad Air - but there are also lots of great bargains, including a Nexus 4 for £65. Envirofone promises that all phones are "good as new" and will provide a refund if you report a problem within 14 days.

Our rating



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





SUBSCRIBE Get your first six issues free when you subscribe to The Week





PHOTOS

PA Images

www.paimages.co.uk

The Press Association's amazing archive of more than 20 million photos is used by news outlets all over the world, and this relaunched site opens it to everyone. The only categories are News, Showbiz and Sport, which means you'll need a clear idea of what you're searching for, but there are handy collections based on the latest headlines - if you want snaps of Prince George being cute, you're spoilt for choice. The cost of photos depends on what you want to use them for, such as for a book, website or product; you can calculate the price and buy online without needing a PA account.

Our rating





TECHNOLOGY

BT 7th Network bit.ly/bt375

BT has its fingers in lots of pies and this site shows it's got an eye on the future, too. 7th Network is an online space where BT and guest experts can share ideas and insights about innovations in communications technology. That might sound dull and corporate, but topics such as ultra-fast broadband affect all our lives, and there are interesting interviews with top BT bods. The site has only just launched so there's not much content yet, but we welcome BT's openness. You can learn about the other six networks at the Science Museum's Information Age gallery (bit.ly/info375).

Our rating





PHONES

Android -Which Phone

bit.ly/android375

If you're not sure which Android phone to buy, you can get Google itself to recommend a handset that matches your needs. Select what you'll be using your phone for, such as photos, browsing and messaging; answer follow-up questions such as "what's important for your phone's camera?"; and click Show Me Phones for suggestions. Annoyingly, the site only covers devices on US mobile networks, but most of the handsets are available over here, and we love the site's fun versions of the Android logo, which include a doctor and a punk.

Our rating





Best New Websites



SHOPPING

Control / Control | Contro

EBOOKS

BEAR BEAR COLOR TO THE COLOR OF THE COLOR OF

GIFTS

mySupermarket Shops

shops.mysupermarket.co.uk

This spin-off from the supermarketcomparison site snubs the big chains to let you buy your groceries from local, independent merchants. Browse departments such as Bakery, Fruit & Vegetables and Household, or search for specific items to add to your basket. Alternatively, you can browse the virtual shelves of individual retailers and stock up on anything that takes your fancy. It's a great way for small shops to fight back against supermarkets, and for customers to purchase quality products they won't find elsewhere. Ordering couldn't be easier, but note that delivery costs £4.99 unless you spend £50 or more.

Our rating



eReaderIQ UK

new.uk.ereaderiq.com

We've recommended eReaderIQ in virtually every ebook feature we've run in the last few years, and now it's been redesigned to make it even better. The site still works in the same way, listing the latest Kindle book price drops, freebies and titles for less than £1, but the new layout is bigger, bolder and easier to browse. We particularly like the more prominent Adult Content filter that helps you avoid dreadful 'erotic romances'; the useful new option to sort books by largest discount; and the instant access to eReaderIQ's brilliant price-tracking tools. For Kindle owners, this is the essential bookmark.

Our rating



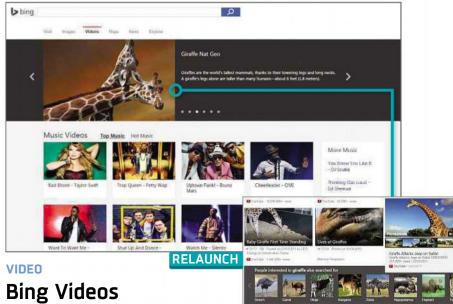
Bear & Bear

bearandbear.com

Bear & Bear sells an interesting assortment of home, travel and tech products (but no bears, sadly). Its radically revamped design, complete with a new logo and larger photos, does a fine job of showcasing its unique wares and making them ultra-easy to browse. Best sellers when we visited included a glass kettle teapot, a bull-head bicycle rack and a collapsible dog bowl, and there were dozens of discounts on bags and wallets. The handy new Quick View tool shows you essential info and lets you add products to your basket without having to open their pages. Delivery is free on all orders of over £50.

Our rating





www.bing.com/videos

Bing's video site has always been overshadowed by YouTube, but this fantastic revamp makes it a much stronger rival. You can now see previews of search results when you hover your mouse over them, as well as useful information such as the view count, upload date and name of the uploader. Bing Videos scours for content on lots of different sites, including YouTube, Vimeo and Myspace, and is especially adept at finding music videos. It helpfully provides links to lyrics, other tracks by the same artist and related searches, and makes it easy to filter results by length, date and quality. With its tidy, speedy design, it's definitely worth a look.

Our rating





SHOPPING

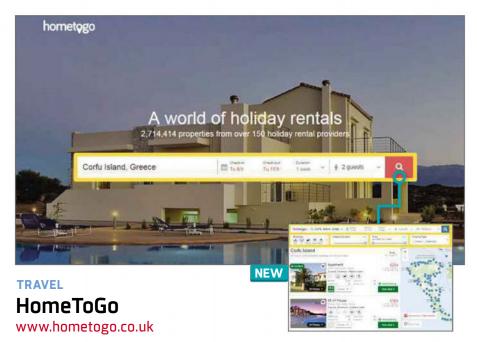
Shop a Lidl Smarter

shopalidIsmarter.co.uk

As part of its ubiquitous #LidlSurprises campaign, the budget supermarket has launched this site to convince you that its own-brand products are better than big names. For example, in its "biggest ever blind test", 74 per cent of testers preferred Lidl's Knightsbridge breakfast tea (99p) to Twining's (£2); while 83 per cent would rather eat Monster Munch clones Monster Claws than the real thing. You can browse the full results on this scrappy, self-congratulatory site, which could save you money on your weekly shop, but makes you wonder why Lidl still doesn't sell online (and why 49 per cent of people don't like its ice cream?).

Our rating





Following a successful launch in Germany last year, HomeToGo - which claims to be the largest search engine for holiday rentals worldwide - has made a splash in the UK. Enter your desired destination and dates to search more than 2.7 million properties from over 150 rental companies. You can browse familiar names such as Booking.com and lesser-known providers to find great deals - including private homes - that could save you hundreds of pounds. We love the clear, colourful results page that pinpoints properties on a map and lets you filter them by criteria such as amenities (balcony, pool, washing machine and so on), distance to water and price. Bookings are made through the relevant partner sites, but HomeToGo is a great first port of call.

Our rating



TRAVEL

Cheapflights

www.cheapflights.co.uk

Now in its 15th year, Cheapflights is looking fresher and friendlier than ever, thanks to a marvellous, mobile-friendly makeover that ditches the excess baggage of the old site. When you search for a flight, you can now sort the results by quickest, cheapest or 'smart value' (the best balance of the two), as well as by airport, number of stops and departure time. We like that you can 'pin' specific flights to a shortlist at the top of the page, and select an outbound flight to view available return options, rather than browsing endless combinations The clean design helps you focus on essential info and all prices include extra fees.

Our rating





ALSO NEW

CYCLING

British Cycling

www.britishcycling.org.uk

With one eye on mobile devices (and the other on the road, of course), the relaunched British Cycling site is now smarter, speedier and simpler to use. Navigation is much improved and the excellent Events Finder has details of rides, races and training sessions in your area, letting you bookmark them for later and enter online.

AVIATION

Royal Aeronautic Society **Heritage Collections**

aerosocietyheritage.com

Aviation enthusiasts will love this site, which lets you browse treasures from the RAeS archives online. These include drawings of gliders and photos of flying machines from the 19th Century, and the original notebooks of aeronautics pioneer Sir George Cayley. We particularly like the magnifier tool that lets you explore items in detail.

EDUCATION

Term Dates

www.termdates.co.uk

This simple but useful resource tells you the term and holiday dates for primary and secondary schools for the next two years. Either search for a specific school or browse by region to view a complete list of dates, which you can print with a single click. The site can alert you if dates change, and suggests family days out in your area.

SOCIAL

Your Grumble

www.yourgrumble.com

Air your grievances among like-minded spleen-venters at this new online community, which has forums for everything from unreliable builders to friends who let you down. Run by a team of 'wise guys' called the Grumbles, the site picks a star grumble every fortnight and even has a joke corner. Our main grumble, though, is that the design is appalling.

Dodge the pterodactyl when you go offline

mentioned Chrome's offline dinosaur game in our Easter Eggs feature in Issue 367 (bit.ly/



webuser367) and

now Google has made it even trickier. As before, when you try to access a web page without an internet connection, you'll see a dinosaur above the 'Unable to connect' message. Click this to start the game, and press the up or Space keys to dodge the obstacles as before, but watch out for the newly added pterodactyl. This appears when your score passes 500, and if you touch it your dino will be instantly extinct.

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Craft is a new rival for WordPress

Craft (buildwithcraft.com) is a new CMS (Content Management System) that could be ideal for confident web builders who don't like the blog-like structure that WordPress imposes. It doesn't come with WordPress's vast range of themes and plug-ins, but if you're happy to build your own HTML and CSS for it to work on, it will provide a much more flexible CMS. Craft Personal is free but limited by the number of static pages you can have. If you want to try it out, you can play around with the demo site at demo. buildwithcraft.com

Stay ahead with Google **Trends**

Catching the crest of an internet trend is a great way to get visitors flocking to your site. Google Trends (www.google.co.uk/

trends) can help by giving you clues to the kinds of things people are looking for when they search for the topics you cover on your site. The site has been updated recently, with lots more niche topics covered in greater

Type the subject of your site into the search box at the top and you'll get back valuable information with guidance on the kinds of things that can create spikes in search traffic. You can also refine your search by country, date, category and popular types of search (web, image, news, shopping or YouTube).

Deal of the Fortnight

One.com (www.one.com) is offering a year of web hosting for free. The deal includes a free domain-name registration and normally costs £1.38 per month.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Nick Akam, CTO, Free Virtual Servers



(www.freevirtualservers.com)

I forwarded a domain registered with one host to a site hosted on another, but Facebook says my links are unsafe. Can I fix this?

.....

James McGinnis, via Facebook

First of all, you should make sure there's no malware on either domain, because this may be what's

causing the problem - a security scanner such as sitecheck.sucuri.net can help you with this. Also check that the domain isn't blacklisted using uribl.com. Lastly, make sure you're using a straight 301 redirect (see bit .ly/redirect375 for more information) to ensure there are no complications. If all of that fails, try contacting Facebook and enquire as to why the domains are listed as unsafe. Facebook's engineers should be able to look into it for you.

MINI WORKSHOP | Ask your site's visitors to help with your hosting costs PayPal: www.paypal.com | (1) 10 mins | Requires PayPal account

If don't want adverts on your site, but can't afford to run it at a loss, you could ask visitors to contribute to the running costs via a PayPal Donate button. It's simple to set up and easy for your visitors to use



Select the Summary tab 11 and scroll down to Selling Tools. Click the 'Seller preferences' link to open the My Profile page. Under 'Selling online', find 'PayPal buttons' 2 and click Update 3 on the same line as 'Manage my Paypal buttons'. From the My Saved Buttons page, find the Related Items section and click the 'Create new button' link.



Use the 'Choose a button type' menu to select Donations. 🗓 Click 'Customise text or appearance' 2 to change how the button looks. Check the currency and choose whether to fix a donation amount. 4 Further down the page, click to use your primary email address (presuming you don't have a PayPal merchant account ID).



Choose to save your button and check whether you want any of the 'Customise advanced features'. Finally, click Create Button. Click the Select Code button 11 to highlight it, then press Ctrl+C to copy it. Paste it into your website at an appropriate spot in the HTML code. WordPress users can add it to their sidebar as a text widget.



DO MORE, FASTER

Archer C9 1.9GBPS AC ROUTER IDEAL FOR WORK AND PLAY

FEATURES:



TARGETED Wi-Fi

Beamforming targets the signal to your wireless devices for the ultimate connection



SIMPLE NETWORK MANAGEMENT

The Tether App controls network settings and permissions from mobile devices



EASY USB SHARING

USB 2.0 and USB 3.0 ports to easily share files, printers and storage



NETWORK EXPANSION

4x Gigabit LAN ports 1x Gigabit WAN port for super-fast wired connections







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uk.tp-link.com info@tp-link.com



We test and compare the latest products

Roku 2 (2015 update)

Andy Shaw tests Roku's new mid-range TV-streaming box, which has been updated to make it as powerful as Roku's top model



he latest member of Roku's family of streaming devices is an upgrade to an old favourite - the Roku 2 - which is intended to replace the previous version. It has a new case, which makes it look more like the Roku 3; updated hardware to provide significantly faster performance; and a redesigned remote control. There have also been some updates to the Roku software to tie in with the launch of this device, though existing Roku devices will also get the software as a free update.

Set up and cables

The Roku 2 doesn't come with an HDMI cable, so you'll have to supply your own, but other than that, setting it up is relatively straightforward.

Once it's connected to your TV, power socket and network (either by Wi-Fi or Ethernet, though again you'll need to supply your own cable for the latter option), you just follow

a few on-screen steps and the Roku is ready to go. When we set it up, it failed to recognise that we had a 1080p HD screen, because it defaults to 720p, but this was easily adjusted in the settings.

The set-up process includes making you sign up for a free Roku account, which will try to push a few (free) channels on you, but you can skip these

Roku has the best range of streaming options, including all the catch-up players from the main terrestrial channels

if you'd prefer and choose your own from the menu.

Choice of channels

What makes Roku devices so special is the choice of channels they offer. The new Roku 2 claims to have 1,400 channels and, while this is in itself already impressive, it's the core essentials that most people are interested in. Roku has arguably the best range of basic options on any streaming device because it includes all the catch-up players from the main terrestrial channels (BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, All 4 and Demand 5); a good

smattering of movie-ondemand services (Sky Store, Google Play and Sainsbury's); Netflix for those who prefer a subscription service; and free internet video essentials including YouTube and Vevo. There are some notable omissions, such as Amazon's Prime Instant Video and Tesco's Blinkbox, but you could easily fill these gaps with alternative services from Netflix and Sky Store.

Of the hundreds of other channels available on the Roku 2, many are free, though flicking through the options we found little of interest that you can't find elsewhere. A few big-name YouTube channels, such as Good Mythical Morning, have Roku channels, but they're no different to their YouTube counterparts and it's generally easier to find content through the main website.

Some of the channels charge a small fee to access their videos but since there's no way of previewing what you're going to get, and there's already such a good collection of more traditional streaming options available, we can't imagine spending much time or money on them.

Performance and remote

The hardware updates in the new Roku 2 have made it run as smoothly as the Roku 3, so navigating the apps and moving around the interface is now slick and free of glitches. Once you've enjoyed its fast and responsive performance, going back to a Streaming Stick feels awkward and slow.

Like most remote controls, the Roku 2's uses infrared, so you have to point it at the main device to make it work. This is slightly disappointing because the remotes provided with the Roku 3 and Streaming Stick are directionfree and, as Roku veterans, we missed the freedom of operating a remote control without needing a line of sight to the main device.

The new Roku 2 remote has four channel buttons for Netflix, YouTube, Google Play



and Rdio (which might have been more useful as an iPlayer button, but never mind).

You can also use the Roku as a casting device so, for example, YouTube or Netflix videos you're playing on an Android or iOS device can be sent to the Roku instead. If you're connected to Wi-Fi, you can also use the Roku app to cast anything from your device to the screen. You can also set this up with Ethernetconnected devices, as long as everything's connected to the same network, but it's much easier to use Wi-Fi.

There are plenty of options if you want to play content from other devices through your TV: the Roku Media Player app lets you access videos, music and photos stored on a USB device through the Roku's USB port; and there are a handful of apps available for NAS (Network Attached Storage) drives from the likes of Seagate and Synology. You

can even can set up a Plex Media Server on a PC and stream from that.

Extra tools and value for money

Roku's software update has added a number of new tools, including a search tool that looks for content such as movies and TV programmes across lots of services, and shows you where they can be watched. However, it only works with Netflix in the UK, and isn't pulling information from other services, so it's not up to scratch yet. Hopefully the other services will be included soon, because it would be great to have a unified search across apps to help you find the best prices for movie rentals. You can also 'follow' forthcoming movie releases to receive alerts when they become available on one of the services you're subscribed to.

For £69.99 we think the Roku 2 is good value for money. It's more expensive than streaming sticks from the likes of Amazon and Google. and its flaws stopped us giving it five stars in this review, but we like that it has more UK catch-up options than those other devices and comes with a great range of additional streaming services. We especially like the choice of movie and TV-streaming options, which let you shop around for the best prices when you're looking for specific movies or TV shows.

PRODUCT INFO

Roku 2

www.roku.com/uk Price: £69.99

SPECIFICATIONS

- 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi
- Fast Ethernet
- 720p or 1080p via HDMI
- USB port compatible with MP4 (H.264), MKV (H.264), AAC, MP3, JPG. PNG
- 89 x 89 x 25mm
- **= 142g**

FOR

- ✓ Catch-up channels from main UK
- ✓ Good selection of movie rental and purchase services
- ✓ Works with Netflix and YouTube

AGAINST

X Doesn't have Roku 3's brilliant direction-free remote

EVEN CHEAPER

Roku Streaming Stick, £49.99 www.roku.com/uk



BRILLIANT REMOTE

Roku 3, £99.99 www.roku.com/uk



OUR VERDICT

The Roku 2 makes a great addition to your TV set-up. It provides almost all the core essentials you'd want from a streaming service, including the top terrestrial catch-up services; Netflix and other subscriptions services; and an excellent range of pay-as-you-go movie rentals. It's faster and more responsive than the Roku Streaming Stick, but cheaper than the Roku

3. which it matches on



.....

.....

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

almost every level bar the superior remote control. If you're not bothered about the direction-free remote and can do without the remote-mounted headphone socket, it's got most of the Roku 3's benefits for £30 less.

Sony Catalyst Production Suite

Andy Shaw looks at a video-editing suite that lets you transform your high-definition footage into a professional-looking film

ony's Catalyst software sits somewhere between Windows Movie Maker (which is surprisingly good for a free program), and the kind of software you would find in a professional TV-editing suite. It's pricier than the basic tools for home-movie makers but not so costly that only a professional video editor would be willing to pay for it.

While it looks very similar to standard video-editing software, with a large preview window, a timeline for dropping clips into and a media browser for selecting the shots you want to use, there's very little clutter. It has a bare minimum of toolbars and menus, which means the interface looks fantastic and is surprisingly easy to use. It's designed for a touchscreen, but is just as enjoyable to operate with a mouse.

Prepare and Edit

The Suite comes in two parts: Catalyst Prepare and Catalyst Edit. The Prepare tool is used to get your video ready for the editing process and it works in much the same way as an image editor. It lets you perform basic fixes, such as rotating footage that's the wrong way up, and use sophisticated tools for adjusting colour and other effects to make each shot look exactly as you want it.

Once you've carried out all your tweaks in the Prepare tool, you can move on to Catalyst Edit. This is where you arrange your prepared footage into a finished video and render it into your chosen size and file format.

The Edit tool provides some excellent intuitive touches for creating professional-looking videos with as little fuss as possible. If you drag a video next to another in the timeline, for example, you'll get a simple cut. Drag the edge of one over the edge of another and they'll automatically cross-fade between the two, while the rest of the clips will shuffle up to fill any gaps. And if you want to fade out, just

select the Fade tool and start dragging back from the end of the clip. There's also a title editor that lets you drop in text, which you can manipulate in the same way as the clips.

This is an intuitive, elegant system, that doesn't overload you with endless pages of transition options and special effects. However, if your idea of classy editing is to make one scene move to the next using a shower of exploding pixels or a set of double doors opening, this isn't the product

The software can accept and produce videos up to 4K (3.840 X 2,160 pixels), so it's a good companion program for an ultra high-definition camera, although you could argue that, for the price, it should still offer all the tools you find in cheaper products. We think that the clean and uncluttered interface makes the editing process a joy, but not everyone will want to pay this much for a program that doesn't provide every tool and effect that's out there.

PRODUCT INFO

Sony Catalyst Suite

www.sonycreativesoftware.com Price: £259.99

WHAT YOU NEED

- Windows 7 (64-bit) or later
- Mac OS X 10.9 or later
- NVIDIA, AMD/ATI or Intel GPU supporting OpenGL 2.1, OpenCL 1.1 or better with 512MB video memory (2 GB for 4K) or a CPU with SSE 4.2 or later
- 2 GHz processor (multicore or multiprocessor CPU recommended for HD: 8 cores recommended for 4K)
- 4GB of memory (8GB recommended, 16GB recommended for 4K)
- 500MB hard-drive space

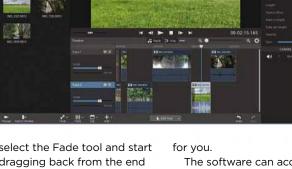
FOR

✓ Fantastic interface cuts clutter for more efficient editing

AGAINST

X Expensive

Cutting the clutter has left it short on extra features



OUR VERDICT

Sony Catalyst lets you make professional-looking videos without having to get to grips with every possible tool in an unwieldy and cluttered interface. Between its Prepare and Edit tools, you have all you need to assemble goodlooking videos from your footage. Don't expect the wealth of transitions and templates you see in

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

cheaper software, though -Catalyst is sparse on fancy effects. This adds to its air of sophistication but may leave you wondering what you're paying all that extra money for.

₩eb User's Best Buys

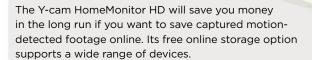
Web User and its sister titles test over 2,500 products every year

HARDWARE

NETWORK CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

£150 from www.homemonitor.me Date tested: June 2015



KEY SPECS

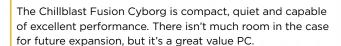
Apps for Android, iOS, Windows Phone, Roku ■ 1/4in CMOS sensor ■ Viewing angle: horizontal 80°, vertical 45°, diagonal 87° = 1,280 x 720 pixels resolution = 15fps frame rate = Ethernet and 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 85 x 85 x 30mm ■ 1150g

BUDGET PC

Chillblast Fusion Cyborg

£600 with monitor, £500 without from www.chillblast.com

Date tested: May 2015



KEY SPECS

Quad-core 3.2GHz Intel Core i5-4460 ■ 8GB of memory ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 21.5in monitor ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ 3 x USB 3 ports, 5 x USB 2 ports ■ Windows 7 or 8.1 ■ 427 x 364 x 189 mm ■ Three years return-to-base warranty

BUDGET LAPTOP

HP Stream 11

£179.99 from store.hp.com/ukstore Date tested: April 2015

The HP Stream 11 offers excellent performance and a respectable battery life. It's a sleek, attractive laptop, available in blue or magenta, with a good screen that offers wide viewing angles.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core 2.16GHz Intel Celeron N2840 processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 11.6in non-touchscreen ■ 32GB flash drive ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ Single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 300 x 206 x 20mm ■ 1.29kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

MULTIROOM SPEAKER

Sonos Play:1

£167 from www.currys.co.uk Date tested: March 2015

The Sonos Play:1 offers impressive audio quality and comes with excellent software and great apps that provide seamless integration with music services. It's the ideal speaker to use as a starting point for a home entertainment system.

KEY SPECS

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

SSD

Samsung 850 Pro 256GB

£136.03 from www.kikatek.com Date tested: February 2015



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

KEY SPECS

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

TABLET

Google Nexus 9

£319 from play.google.com Date tested: February 2015



The Nexus 9 is our favourite Android tablet. It has a fantastic screen, even better than the iPad Air 2's, and superb battery life, lasting over 15 hours in our tests. It's cheaper than the latest iPad and comes in 16GB and 32GB capacities.

KEY SPECS

8.9in screen ■ 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution ■ Dual-core 2.3GHz 64-bit Nvidia Tegra K1 Denver processor ■ 16/32GB storage ■ 4G option costs £60 extra (32GB models only) ■ Android 5.0 ■ 228 x 154 x 8mm ■ 425g

🔙 Web User's Best Buys

WINDOWS 8.1 LAPTOP

Asus Transformer Book Flip TP300LA

£449.95 from

www.johnlewis.com

Date tested:

January 2015

This touchscreen laptop folds over into a chunky tablet. It's well built, did well in our performance tests and has a fantastic battery



KEY SPECS

life.

Dual-core 1.9GHz Intel Core i3-4030U processor ■ 4GB of memory ■ 13.3in touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 500GB hard drive ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 326 x 232 x 22mm ■ 1.75kg ■ One-year collect-and-return warranty

you through the process.

£65.97 from www.dabs.com Date tested: December 2014 If you're willing to switch your wireless devices to the 5GHz network, the D-Link DIR-868L offers fast and reliable performance at a

KEY SPECS

Dual-band 2.4GHz and 5GHz ■ 802.11b/g/n ■ 1,300Mbps theoretical maximum speed ■ Six internal antennas ■ 4 x 10/100/1000Mbps

great price. It's simple to set up and

provides a handy wizard to guide

WIRELESS ROUTER

D-Link DIR-868L

Ethernet ports ■ WPA and WPA2 encryption ■ 1 x USB 3 port ■ 217 x 123 x 102mm ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

DESKTOP PC

Chillblast Fusion Obelisk

£699.98 from www.chillblast.com

Date tested:

November 2014



This great all-round desktop PC achieved a good overall performance in both our Windows and gaming tests. It runs quietly, has a good-quality monitor and is packed with great components, including a fast SSD and a generous hard drive.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 4.2GHz Intel Core i5-4690K processor (overclocked) ■ 8GB of memory ■ 5 x USB3, 5 x USB2 ports ■ Gigabit Ethernet ■ 120GB SSD ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ Windows 8.1 ■ 465 x 430 x 192mm

KEYBOARD

Cherry MX-Board 3.0

£55 from www.kikatek.com Date tested:

November 2014

The Cherry MX-Board 3.0 is a hard-wearing mechanical keyboard that's a pleasure to type on. It's quiet for a mechanical

model but still makes more noise than a standard keyboard. It doesn't have a lot of features, but it's ideal if you're looking for a standard, good-quality keyboard.

KEY SPECS

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

NAS DRIVE

Asustor AS-202TE

£199.66 from www.scan.co.uk

Date tested: September 2014

This NAS drive put in an excellent performance in our tests, transferring files over our network faster than any of the



other devices we tested. It has an impressive range of tools, including an HDMI output for streaming to TV.

KEY SPECS

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

WQHD MONITOR

AOC q2770Pqu

£367.96 from www.dabs.com

Date tested: August 2014



The AOC q2770Pqu has an exceptional, high-quality screen and is very reasonably priced. Its settings are preconfigured, so you don't need to tweak them to improve the display, and it has all the ports you'll

KEY SPECS

ever need.

27in widescreen ■ 2,560 x 1,440 pixels resolution ■ Portrait mode ■ Adjustable stand ■ 2 x 2W speakers ■ DisplayPort, DVI, HDMI, VGA, 2 x USB 3.0 and 2 x USB 2.0 ports ■ 642 x 428 x 245mm ■ 8kg ■ Three-year return-to-base warranty

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

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

SyncBackFree is very capable software that gives you plenty of control over how it can be used. If you know what you



need from your backups and you're prepared to spend some time configuring the options, SyncBackFree has everything you need.

KEY FEATURES

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

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

£81.08 from

www.adobe.com/uk

Date tested: December 2014

With its tidy interface and pop-out trays, Adobe Photoshop Elements provides



everything an amateur photographer needs and helps you quickly find the right editing tools.

KEY FEATURES

Compatible with Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8+ (32- and 64-bit)

- Bundled photo organiser Content-aware edits
- Guided edits People-beautifier tools RAW support

ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

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

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



KEY FEATURES

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

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

£17.99 from bit.ly/kaspoffer Date tested: January 2015

Kaspersky Internet Security performed near-perfectly throughout our tests last year, with only one unwanted program slipping through. Our sister title Computeractive is selling it at the reader-

offer price of £17.99 (full price £39.99). Click the link above.



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

VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Elements 13

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

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



KEY FEATURES

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

ONLINE SITE BUILDER

Weebly

From free from www.weebly.com Date tested: May 2014

Weebly's drag-and-drop interface makes it extremely easy to use. Its templates are a little restrictive, but there are still plenty of options to choose from and the



results look great. It also has free Android and iOS apps.

KEY FEATURES

115 templates = Unlimited storage = SEO tools = Meta tags = Password protection ■ E-commerce tools ■ Ad-free Starter edition ■ Android and iOS apps ■ RSS ■ Site stats

1

Best Free Software

DISK-CLONING TOOL

Macrium Reflect Free 6

bit.ly/macrium375

Min requirements: Windows XP/

Vista/7/8+

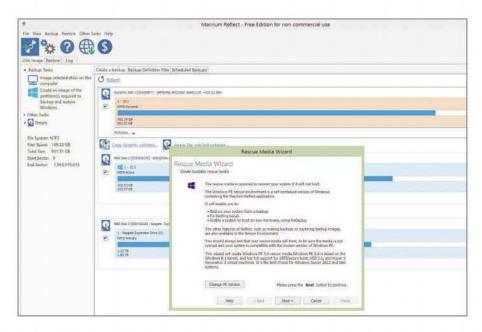
File size: 13.6MB (installer only)

Most of us know that we should regularly back up important personal files on our PCs, just in case disaster strikes. But if you want to be absolutely certain that you'll be safe in the event of a catastrophic hardware malfunction or malware infection, it's worth making a copy of your entire hard drive.

Macrium Reflect Free offers diskimaging and cloning tools, and can be used to create a bootable rescue disc. The software is simple to use and lets you reorder and resize partitions, while its collection of management tools allows you to schedule, compress and browse backups.

The big new feature in version 6 of Macrium Reflect is support for Differential Images, which delivers faster backups and reduces storage requirements by only including files that have changed since the last full backup.

Another new addition to the program is Auto Verification, which checks disk



images immediately after you create them, to make sure that there aren't any problems. This means you don't have to worry about discovering that a disk image is corrupt at the point when you need to use it.

Many people don't bother to back up their systems because of the time and effort involved. The addition of new backup templates to Macrium Reflect addresses this by letting you create scheduled backups rather than having to perform them manually.

Improvements have also been made to the Windows PE rescue environment, which is used to restore backups from CDs and DVDs. You can now add a boot menu to the environment, and any drivers required for disk or network access are automatically copied over.

When you run the Macrium Reflect installer, you'll be given the option to download the Windows PE component. Be warned, however, that this file is around a 500MB in size so you'll need to be patient because it might take a while.

Ö

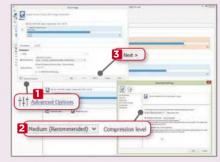
MINI WORKSHOP | Create an image of your hard drive using Macrium Reflect Free



Launch Macrium Reflect Free and choose the drive you want to save a copy of. You have the option of cloning a drive or imaging it. The former creates an exact copy on a different drive, while the latter saves the information required to completely restore a drive (or individual partitions) if you run into problems.

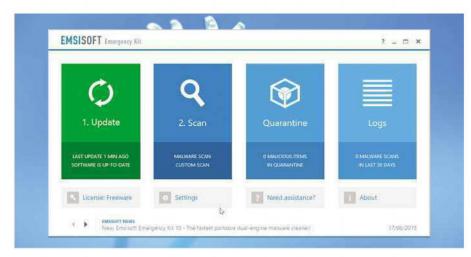


Select 'Image this disk'. Bear in mind that the program will copy the drive (or partition) exactly how it is at that moment. You'll need to update the image regularly. The source will be selected automatically, 1 but you'll need to choose a destination. This can be a folder on another drive 2 or you can save the image to a CD or DVD.



There are advanced options available 1 that let you configure the compression level, 2 set a maximum file size, verify the image, and more. Click Next. 1 If you're backing up to CD or DVD, you'll be prompted to insert a blank disc. Choose a backup plan template, then add or edit a schedule and click Finish to begin the image creation.

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



ANTI-MALWARE TOOL

Emsisoft Emergency Kit 10

emsi.at/eek10

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+ File size: 151MB

If you suspect that your PC is infected with malware, even though your existing anti-virus software says otherwise, Emsisoft Emergency Kit can provide a second opinion. The anti-malware program has a dual-engine scanner (Emsisoft and Bitdefender) and offers a choice of scans – Quick, Malware and Custom. The updated version is much faster – scans typically take under a minute to complete – and it can optionally find and remove PUPs (potentially unwanted programs), too.



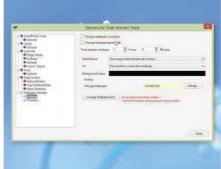
BROWSER CLEANER

Auslogics Browser Care 3

www.auslogics.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+ File size: 7.5MB

This program makes it easy to remove unwanted browser junk. All your browsers are displayed in tabs so you can see at a glance their current homepages, search engines, toolbars and add-ons. You can select items you don't want and disable or delete them. Version 3 gives you greater control over the actions you can take, and lets you restore the default browser settings with a single click.



SCREEN TOOL

Dual Monitor Tools 2

bit.ly/dualmon375

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+ File size: 204KB

Managing two or more screens is easy enough in Windows, but this tiny program provides useful additional options, including the ability to launch your favourite applications on a particular screen. You can now have a different image appear on each display, or a single wide photo that spans both screens. In this new version, several separate tools have been integrated into a single one.

New Windows 8 Apps

123D Catch

bit.ly/123Dcatch375

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10, touchscreen, camera

File size: 43.4MB

Autodesk's 123D Catch lets you create 3D models of any object from a series of photos taken at different angles. It's been designed to work with touchscreens, so it doesn't support keyboard and mouse.



Inside Out Thought Bubbles

bit.ly/thoughtbubbles375

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 62.8MB

This version of the classic game Puzzle Bobble (Bust-a-Move) is themed around the latest Disney Pixar movie, *Inside Out*. The aim is to shoot and match memory bubbles.



Super Mario Touch

bit.ly/mario375

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 913KB

Super Mario Touch is an unofficial Mario game, so there's a risk that Microsoft might eventually remove it from the store. It works with both touch and keyboard-and-mouse systems, and includes a level editor.



Best Free Software

IMAGE ANNOTATOR

iPhotoDraw 2

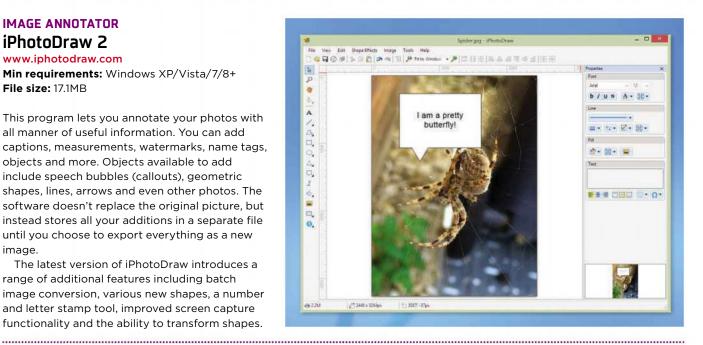
www.iphotodraw.com

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

File size: 17.1MB

This program lets you annotate your photos with all manner of useful information. You can add captions, measurements, watermarks, name tags, objects and more. Objects available to add include speech bubbles (callouts), geometric shapes, lines, arrows and even other photos. The software doesn't replace the original picture, but instead stores all your additions in a separate file until you choose to export everything as a new image.

The latest version of iPhotoDraw introduces a range of additional features including batch image conversion, various new shapes, a number and letter stamp tool, improved screen capture functionality and the ability to transform shapes.



Wise Force Deleter W WiseCleane

FILE REMOVER

Wise Force Deleter

bit.ly/forcedel375

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

File size: 1.3MB

Windows occasionally locks files, which prevents them from being deleted. There's usually a good reason for this - most often because they're open or being used by another program on your system. Rebooting your PC might be enough to unlock the file, but not always, which is where Wise Force Deleter comes in handy. This free tool terminates all the processes that are using a file, and removes any unnecessary file-access restrictions. You can drag and drop problem files onto the interface or select them via the right-click context menu. Just click the Unlock & Delete button and they'll be removed. However, you should only forcedelete items if you're sure it's safe to do so.

SYSTEM TOOL

GetFoldersize 3

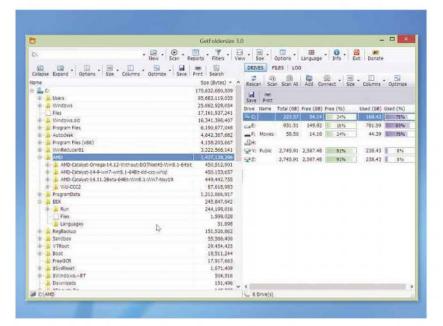
www.getfoldersize.com

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

File size: 2.7MB

If you've ever wondered where all that precious free space on your hard drive has disappeared to, GetFoldersize can tell you. Choose a drive to scan and the program will present you with a list of folders in size order - from largest to smallest. You can expand a folder to explore its contents, or delete it to reclaim the space it's using. You can also delete individual files.

The latest version of GetFoldersize has an improved interface (although it's still pretty cluttered) and scans significantly faster than before. You can now also generate lots of different reports about the contents of your hard drive, which could come in handy for future reference.



Don't install...

YouWave youwave.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/8+

File size: 210MB

Back in 2012, this program for running Android apps might have seemed cutting-edge, but better options have come along and it now looks dated and clunky. YouWave lacks many essential features offered by rival tools and you can only try it for free for 10 days before you need to pay £12.70. It's also terrible for hogging resources.



...Install this instead

BlueStacks

www.bluestacks.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/8+ or Mac

OS X

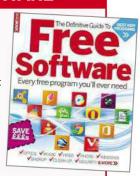
File size: 13.6MB

If you want to play Android games such as Candy Crush Saga and Temple Run on a large screen, install the fantastic BlueStacks emulator. This free program lets you run mobile games and other apps in Android's APK format on your computer. Once installed, you can search Google Play for games to download, browse the charts of popular titles and open them in BlueStacks on your Desktop. The software is very easy to use and lets you sync apps with your phone. It also has a full-screen mode for maximum fun.



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- Tweak your browser to unlock hidden features
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UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



SYSTEM TOOL

Advanced SystemCare 8.3

www.iobit.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

File size: 45.5MB

The latest release of IObit's system-tweaking tool adds privacy-sweep support for Microsoft Edge (Windows 10's new browser) and updates the built-in uninstaller for a more stable and thorough clean. The software has had lots of other minor tweaks, too.



REGISTRY CLEANER

Wise Registry Cleaner Free 8.62

www.wisecleaner.com

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

File size: 2.5MB

This program can find and fix problems with the Windows Registry and offers both on-demand and scheduled scans. It can defrag the Registry and tune up your system, and the new release is now able to automatically skip the User Account Control feature in Windows.



SYSTEM TOOL

Glary Utilities 5.28

www.glarysoft.com

Min requirements: Windows

XP/Vista/7/8+

File size: 14.5MB

Glary Utilities is a collection of tools for fixing problems, optimising Windows and protecting your privacy. The new version improves the Registry cleaner's performance and overcomes reported problems with the software updater. There are also some minor interface tweaks and bug fixes.



SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.07

www.piriform.com/

ccleaner

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

File size: 6.3MB

The latest version of the popular system-cleaning tool lets you manage Firefox Web Apps and clean Adobe Reader DC. It also improves support for cleaning in Windows 10, which is good timing for the launch of the new OS at the end of the month.

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Best New Browser Tools



CHROME

Send, track and recall encrypted emails

We've all fired off an email that we've quickly regretted, perhaps because its content was incorrect, its tone could

be misconstrued or it was addressed to the wrong person. Criptext Mail (bit.ly/criptext375) helps you avoid such blunders in Gmail by letting you track the messages you send and recall them at any time, even after they've been read by the recipient. You can also encrypt your emails and set messages to self-destruct after a specific time. Criptext is



very easy to use; once activated, you simply click the Send Securely button at the bottom of the Compose window to encrypt a message. You can then click the Email Activity button above your Gmail Inbox to see if the email has been opened, and click Recall to grab it back from the recipient. Criptext is still in beta, so it isn't perfect, but it seems to work well.



Censor big brand names on the web

Does seeing the word Coke make you cranky? Or perhaps you're tired of reading about Apple every time you open your browser? If so, you'll like the new Chrome extension Brandacted (bit.ly/brandacted375), which 'redacts' (censors) more than 200 brand names when they appear on web pages. The aim is to combat the growing trend of sponsored content (adverts disguised as articles), but it also helps you avoid multiple mentions of companies you don't like. Sadly, Brandacted's selection is quite US-biased, which means controversial British and Irish brands such as Ryanair, UKIP and Marmite get through, but big names including Starbucks, Nike and McDonald's are replaced by coloured blocks.



View animated GIFs on your New Tab page

We love a good New Tab page extension and Giphy Tabs for Chrome (bit.ly/giphy375) is one of the most entertaining we've seen. It displays a selection of animated GIFs from Giphy TV (giphy.com/giphytv) every time you



open a new tab, which is much more fun than a boring set of most-visited websites. You can click a GIF to open it

on the Giphy website where you can save and share it. In one sequence alone, we saw two cats cuddling, Miley Cyrus twerking at a lorry and a clip from *The Big Bang Theory*. Admittedly, the GIFs look even shoddier than usual when stretched to browser size, but they change every few seconds so you'll never get bored.

Hack Facebook to make it cleaner and faster

Facebook might be the second most popular website in the world, but it's cramped and messy design is hardly the most attractive. To give the social network a much-needed makeover, install Facebook Flat (bit .ly/facebook375), which applies a smarter, flatter theme to the social network to make it much easier on the eye. Changes include a darker, higher-contrast colour scheme; a streamlined left-hand menu that focuses on essential options such as friends, messages, photos and likes; and a layout that is generally cleaner and faster. We also like that profile photos are now displayed in circles rather than squares, although it's a shame there's so much empty space on the left-hand side of the page.





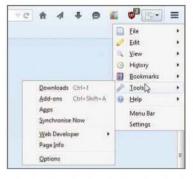
This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera and more



FIREFOX

Access every menu from a single toolbar button

One advantage Chrome has over Firefox is that all its options are accessible through a single button rather than being spread over several menus. A new add-on called All Menus Button (bit.ly/allmenus375) fixes this problem by combining all the menus from Firefox's Menu bar, including File, Edit, Bookmarks, Tools and Help, into a single menu, which you can open by clicking its toolbar button. If you don't need every menu option in one place, go into the add-on's Settings to decide what to include and what to leave out. You can also



decide whether or not to show icons next to each option in the menu, and drag and drop the toolbar button to a more convenient position.

Bypass the paywalls on néws sites

Many newspapers, including the Financial Times, The Sun and The Wall Street Journal, put some or all of their online content behind a paywall to persuade their readers to subscribe. If you only read the occasional article, paying a subscription fee seems rather excessive, so you may prefer to install Paywall Pass (bit.ly/paywall375). This sneaky add-on allows you to get around the paywalls on some news sites by fooling them into thinking you're accessing an article through a search engine rather than directly. Simply click its toolbar button to bypass the paywall. We should emphasise that Paywall Pass doesn't always work, but we managed to trick a few notable news sources, including the WSJ!



Go back to the tab you started from

Do you ever open a link in a new tab, only to accidentally close the originating tab so you can't return to the page you started from? It's hardly the end of the world, but it can be frustrating, which is

why Tab Origin (bit.ly/origin375) is such a good idea. It remembers the web address from which you opened the new tab, and lets you reopen it using a keyboard shortcut. By default, this is Ctrl+Shift+U, but you can change it to something else in the add-on's Options. Of course, you can quickly reopen any tab by pressing Ctrl+Shift+T, but Tab Origin works even if you open and close several other tabs.

Change website fonts and colours

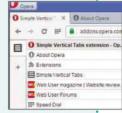
Some sites seem to make their content deliberately difficult to read by using garish or mismatched colours, and needlessly quirky fonts. You can fix these visual aberrations by installing Page Colors & Fonts Buttons (bit.ly/page375), which lets you toggle the colours and fonts used by the page you're currently viewing to make it easier to read. Simply click either or both of the toolbar buttons - one for colours and the other for fonts - to apply the changes.



OTHER BROWSERS

Display your Opera tabs in a sidebar As we mentioned in this section last issue, Opera has just added support for sidebar extensions, which open on the left-hand side of the browser. One of the most useful new sidebar add-ons is Simple

Vertical Tabs (bit.ly/ vertical375), which - as vou've probably quessed - displays your tabs vertically in



Opera's sidebar to make them easier to access. They remain along the top of the browser, too, effectively giving you the best of both worlds, and the sidebar also offers options to pin tabs, view your history and 'tear off' a tab into a new window.



Pale Moon moves further from Firefox

Although Pale Moon (www .palemoon.org) was originally based on Firefox, it has recently broken free from those roots to become a popular browser in its own right. In the latest development, Pale Moon 26 has ditched the Gecko layout and rendering engine it's used up until now in favour of its own platform, called Goanna (another type of lizard, in case you were wondering). This will prevent compatibility problems on some sites, although it also means that not all Firefox add-ons will now work in Pale Moon. See this forum thread for more info: bit.ly/palemoon375.





Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

PHOTOS

Picioy

bit.ly/picjoy375

Min requirements: iOS 8.0

Size: 72.8MB



Back in the good old days, we'd take photos, pay to have them developed, look through them and keep the best ones in an album for future enjoyment. Now we tend to snap away indiscriminately, building up a vast number of images on our phones and tablets that we seldom have time to look at, never mind organise.

Picjoy makes things easier by automatically managing your pictures for you. It pulls together useful information about each image, which it then turns into keyword tags. The idea is that similar photos will be grouped together so you don't spend

NEW

ages scrolling through your Camera Roll to locate individual shots.

If you have hundreds of photos, cataloguing them takes a fairly long time, and you'll need to give PicJoy access to your Camera Roll. This caused us some concern, but the developer promises that the images are deleted from its servers once they've been processed.

In return, you get some very useful features. Stories, for instance, lets you write background info about your images and it's easy to share photos

with your contacts. For speedy organisation, Picjoy is an excellent tool; hopefully an Android version will be launched soon.





Our rating

UPDATED

CLOUD STORAGE

Dropbox

bit.ly/dropboxapp375

Min requirements: Android 4.0.3, iOS 7, Windows Phone 8

Size: 37MB

The Dropbox app for Android used to be a bit clunky but it's now transformed into something rather swish. It

appears to have taken its design cues from Google, offering a cleaner, more userfriendly interface that works much better on your phone or tablet. The most obvious

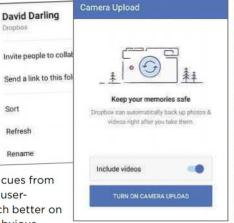
addition is a 'plus' button that lets you instantly add new folders and documents, as well as photos taken directly from your camera. Rather than saving images to your device, Dropbox uploads them to specific folders, including shared ones, which makes them accessible from anywhere and also saves space on your device.

Refresh

The main functions have also been improved, with the icons for searching, sharing, moving, renaming and 'favouriting' now handily placed along the top of the app. This welcome update makes for a faster, slicker experience all round.

(E)

TE



PETS

Dog Walk

bit.ly/dogwalk375

Min requirements: iOS 7

Size: 23.4MB

Whether you take your four-legged friend for a walk or your pooch is the one that takes you, this smart app will let you track the route, distance and duration of each stroll. It keeps a detailed, mapped log of your walks, so you can



instantly see when you've both been a little lazy or particularly energetic. As well as letting you take photos of your walks and share them with others, the app has a somewhat bizarre "pee and poo" feature that allows you to place markers on a map whenever your pet takes a toilet break, so you know when and where to expect it in future. We think a calorie counter

Our rating



Our rating

may have been more useful.



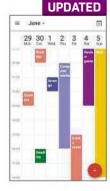
This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android, iOS and Windows phones and tablets, and smart TVs

CALENDAR

Google Calendar bit.ly/calendar375 Min requirements:

iOS 7 Size: 61MB

Newly updated for iOS following improvements to the Android version, Google Calendar



now offers Apple users a much needed seven-day view. It fits neatly across the screen, even in portrait mode, and marks each event with coloured blocks for perfect at-a-glance planning. The app also lets you view week numbers and works closely with Google Drive. You can insert documents and spreadsheets, and attach pictures and PDFs to your events. With interactive notifications that can be emailed to

guests - complete with maps, if you want them - Google's organisation tool is almost perfect.



Our rating



INTERNET

Virgin Media WiFi Buddy

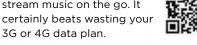
bit.ly/virgin375

Min requirements: Android 2.3.3, iOS 8.1

Size: 8.2MB

If you're a Virgin Media customer, this app allows you to find and connect to free Wi-Fi

hotspots across the UK. The app has been around for Android for a while and the iOS version works in the same. simple way, letting you type a street name, town or postcode to instantly locate the nearest of its 22,000 connections. You don't have to keep logging into the hotspots, and Virgin doesn't restrict what you can do on them, providing suggestions for you to watch videos and stream music on the go. It certainly beats wasting your



Our rating



ROUND UP | Quick bites

Ello bit.ly/ello375 Min

NEW

requirements: iOS8

Size: 20MB

Hello Ello? Is anybody there? This social

network was launched to great fanfare as the

.....

Facebook slayer, but it appears to have lost its mojo. This fine mobile app is an attempt to recapture it.





Groupon

bit.ly/groupon375

Min requirements: iOS 7.0, Android (varies with

device). Windows Phone 7.5

Size: 68.9MB

Many Apple apps are being updated to take advantage of the Apple Watch. Groupon is one of the latest, and now sends alerts of the latest deals direct to

.....





NEWS

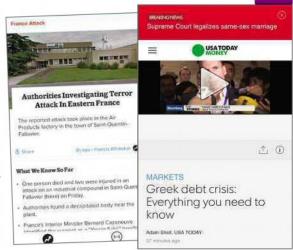
BuzzFeed News

bit.ly/buzzfeed375

Min requirements: iOS 8

Size: 12.8MB

BuzzFeed has gained a reputation for carrying trivial 'clickbait' articles and failing to tap into the serious side of journalism. But that's not entirely fair because the site frequently covers 'hard' news stories: indeed, the former senior editor of The Guardian, Janine Gibson, became BuzzFeed's UK editor-in-chief in June. The



BuzzFeed News app leans towards this weightier content, serving up a daily diet of news that matters, albeit with a US slant. It's a bit of a sprawling affair, combining breaking news with headlines, background information, bullet points and videos of the latest events, but it's also comprehensive, pulling in its own content as well as curated articles from respected sources. As you'd expect, you can share any articles you like, specify your interests to see more relevant content and get push notifications when items are added to the app.



Our rating



PlayTube bit.ly/ playtube375

Min requirements:

your wrist.

iOS 6.0 **Size:** 11.8MB

PlayTube is essentially a YouTube search engine with a musical slant.

You can create playlists, view your history and use the media player to listen to thousands of songs for free.





Best Free Apps

GAME

Sonic Runners

sonicrunners .sega-net.com

Min requirements: Android 2.3.3, iOS 8

Size: 82.8MB



Everyone's favourite blue hedgehog is back in a new side-scrolling endless runner that harks back to the days of the Sega Mega Drive. Although it starts with a fair bit of faffing - loading data, asking for your name and date of birth, and making you swipe through dull conversational text - when the action finally begins, it is fast and furious. As Sonic dashes along, you need to collect rings and avoid the bad guys, unlocking more characters the further you progress. Each of these has its own special powers, which varies the gameplay a little. Sonic Runners is free to play, but some in-game items can optionally be purchased.

Our rating



APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

PHOTOS

Adobe Photoshop Mix

bit.ly/adobe375

Min requirements: iOS 7

Size: 99.1MB

Adobe is still the biggest name in image manipulation, so its new offering will be keenly anticipated by amateur and professional photographers. Photoshop Mix lets you combine images to make interesting panoramas and collages without destroying the originals. It comes with lots of presets that let you manipulate part or all of an

image, and share the results on social media. But it's the app's advanced features that make it stand out. It connects to the Adobe Creative Cloud so you can save images as a multiple-layer Photoshop file. Likewise, Photoshop files can be loaded and

edited on the go.

Our rating





OFFICE

Microsoft Word

bit.ly/word375

Min requirements: Android 4.4, iOS 7.1, Windows Phone 8 Size: 326MB Price: Free (with in-app purchases

from 63p)

Microsoft has finally launched Word on

Android, along with Excel and PowerPoint. It lets you open, view and

edit documents on the move, though to get full use out of the app, you need to subscribe to the Office 365 service.



PHOTOS

BitTorrent Shoot

bit.ly/bittorrent375

Min requirements: iOS 8.0, Android 4.0, Windows Phone 8.1 Size: 19.2MB **Price:** Free (with £1.49 in-app purchase) File-size restrictions make sharing large photos a hassle, but this app uses peer-topeer technology to break down the images into smaller, more manageable



SPACE

You Know Moon Phase?

chunks before you send them.

bit.ly/moon375

Min requirements: Android 2.3, iOS 7.0



Size: 48MB Price: £2.30

Next time you gaze up at the night sky, use this app to discover more about the galaxy. Its 3D simulations and wealth of facts are aimed at kids, but they're just as interesting to adults.

TRAVEL

Cities Talking

bit.ly/cities375

Min requirements: Android 3.0, iOS

6.1 Size: 4.8MB

Price: Free (with £4.99 in-app

purchases)

Billed as the world's first set of audio mobile guides, Cities Talking provides tours around 28 cities including London, which has Christopher Biggins as your guide. Tours cost £4.99 each and the app uses your phone's GPS, so it won't gobble up your data as you take in the sights.

REMINDERS

Pester Me

bit.ly/pester375

Min requirements: iOS 8.2 Size: 500KB Price: £2.29

Linking with your Apple Watch, this reminder app will, as its name suggests, pester you until you've completed the task at hand. It works both on and offline, and you choose the frequency of the prompts, so you only have yourself to blame.



Microsoft Word

You Know Moon Phase?



Pester Me



BitTorrent Shoot









Best New TV Apps

PHOTO & VIDEO

OneDrive for Android

bit.ly/onedrive375

Min requirements: Varies with device

Size: Varies with device



Microsoft has yet to launch its own Chromecast rival, although it's rumoured to be working on one called Miracast Dongle (bit.ly/ miracast375). In the meantime, the company has kindly added

support for Google's streaming stick to its OneDrive app for Android. This allows you to 'cast' to your television any photos or videos you upload to the online storage service, so you can enjoy them on the big screen. Just open the OneDrive app on your phone or tablet and tap the Chromecast icon to stream content to your telly. Other useful features in the app include Camera Backup, which automatically uploads any photos or videos you capture on your mobile device to your OneDrive account, and the ability to share albums with friends.

ITV Player

bit.ly/itv375

Min requirements: Android (varies with device), iOS 7, Windows Phone 8 (not updated)

Size: Varies with device

Poor old ITV Player app, with its three-star average rating and pithy reviews such as "Hate it" and "Can't get Emmerdale". Will ITV ever get it right? This update at least suggests things are moving in the right direction, by adding full support for devices running Jelly Bean (yes Jelly Bean, the version of Android that Google released three vears ago). There's also a welcome new option that automatically pauses the programme you're watching on your phone when you receive an incoming call, while the updated iOS app no longer forces you to sit through the same ad break after the app has



crashed. ITV also says that several bugs have been 'caught", making an amusing reference to I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!.

Demand 5 for Android

bit.ly/demand5375

Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 6.1 (not updated), Windows Phone 8 (not undated)

Size: 9.6MB



Channel 5 has paid even less attention to its mobile apps than ITV: this latest update to the Android version is the first since December (the iOS app remains untouched). The redesigned interface is a big improvement, making it easier to browse and watch catch-up shows such as Big Brother and Australian soap operas, as well as programmes from the Channel 5 archives. Sadly, there's no support for Chromecast, although you can now get audio descriptions and subtitles to help you decipher the accents on Neighbours. There are long and frequent ad breaks, but at least you can now stream shows over your mobile connection as well as Wi-Fi.

X Don't install...

Wi-Fi Signal Strength

bit.ly/wifi375

There are lots of apps that let you measure the strength of your Wi-Fi signal, but despite the suspicious proliferation of five-star reviews on Google Play, this is one of the poorest we've



tried. It simply displays a percentage figure without telling you any other useful information. There's no hotspot map or details of speeds, so you have to keep walking about until the percentage increases, although the annoying ads are likely to make you give up before then.

...Install this instead

OpenSignal WiFi Map

bit.ly/opensignal375

Min requirements: Android (varies with

device), iOS 7

Size: Varies with device

OpenSignal WiFi Map is one of the best and safest apps for finding Wi-Fi hotspots and measuring their speed. It uses a compass and a map to point you in the direction of where your wireless or mobile signal is strongest (and, therefore, fastest). The built-in speed tester usefully rates your current connection for activities such as web browsing, watching videos and VoIP calls, as well

as detecting your download and upload speeds. OpenSignal works equally well whether you're using your home network and want to know the best place to sit; or accessing free public hotspots and don't want to waste time wandering around.







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



Moving from one broadband provider to another has long been an arduous task. Happily, the process has just become a lot easier, as **David Crookes** explains

What's happened?

On 20 June, the UK's communications regulator, Ofcom (www.ofcom.org.uk), introduced new measures that allow broadband and landline customers to switch providers in a faster and more straightforward manner. Rather than jump through hoops to cancel one contract and begin another, you now only need to contact one company, who will make all the arrangements for you.

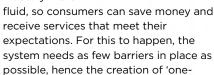


Why have things changed?

Ofcom's research found that the process of changing an internet and phone provider was too confusing and too time consuming. It also found that some suppliers have been offering a poor service, which left users saddled with a slow broadband connection they couldn't get out of unless they paid a cancellation

fee. Ofcom wants to make the industry more

touch' switching.



What are the new measures?

To move from one provider to another, you now only need to contact the company you are moving to. The new provider is then responsible for handling the entire switching process. It will send out new equipment, make the necessary amendments to your telecommunications line and start your new contract on a given date. Ofcom says this streamlines the switching process. The changes affect both broadband and landline services that use BT's Openreach network (or KCOM in Hull).

Will I need to call my existing provider?

No. This is the beauty of the new system. In most cases (and we'll come to the

exceptions in a moment), you won't even need to speak to your old provider. This is a great improvement over the old method which, in theory, required two calls to your existing ISP: one requesting a Migration Authorisation Code (MAC) and another a couple of weeks later to cancel the contract once the new one had begun. In practice, it often entailed making more calls, and Ofcom's research found that the process of migrating services was significantly more difficult for customers to follow when an existing provider had to be contacted.

Why was the old process such a hassle?

One of the biggest headaches was the risk of delays. The Ofcom MAC Code Regulation 2007 explicitly states that internet providers have to issue a MAC code within five working days of request, regardless of any dispute, but polls showed that as many as a third of customers were waiting longer. Reports of people begging, pleading and even threatening ISPs to get them to hand over their MAC were regarded by Ofcom as unacceptable. Thankfully, those days

But what about the MAC?

You don't need to worry about it now. Although the MAC (which consisted of a long set of letters and numbers) contained special identifiers about your telecom line and phone exchange, your new ISP can now sort out all those details with your old provider without you getting involved.

So how was I able to switch in May without a MAC?

Ofcom introduced its changes on 20 June, but not all broadband switching prior to that date required a MAC. A growing number of companies including Sky and TalkTalk - are "fully unbundled", which means they have added their own equipment to BT's copper lines to give them exclusive use of the connection. As a result, they have long been able to offer a "gainingprovider led" switching service, which means they have been able to take complete control of the full migration process. Ofcom's new system is based on that same gaining-provider led approach.



Will this make the process cheaper?

Yes. MACs had to be used within 30 days, after which you'd have to ask for another, and ISPs were within their rights to charge for subsequent requests. The new system will also cut down on numerous, lengthy phone calls. However, there could be some hidden costs. Some people looking to switch may get a surprise bill because they are still within a contract period. It's important to read through your existing contract to ensure you've passed the minimum period, otherwise there is a risk of being hit by early cancellation charges.

Are there exceptions to 'onetouch' switching?

Yes. If the services you are moving between use different physical infrastructures then, as well as contacting the new provider, you need to call your existing ISP and let them know you are switching and cancelling. That's because Ofcom's changes do not apply to

switches to and from ISPs that offer cable, fixed wireless, satellite or fibre broadband. This means that when moving from a cable network such as Virgin Media to one that uses BT copper cables, there will be more chasing around. There are some benefits to this, though: you can choose when one service ends and the other begins. And because the infrastructures differ, you could even overlap the contracts to ensure that you're not left without internet access.



Could I be switched without my permission?

Sadly, that is possible. The fact that people are not directly cancelling their existing ISP contracts could lead to an increase in 'slamming' - the practice of being switched without your knowledge or consent. Adrian Kennard, the director of broadband provider Andrews & Arnold



(aa.net.uk) has already expressed concern about this. As a result, his company is offering migration protection that automatically rejects companies seeking to switch customers without their permission. Additionally, ISPs must keep a record of migration requests, including phone recordings, which should iron out most problems.

Will we see a rise in broadband switching?

Generally, people up to now have felt that switching could be a major hassle, so most of us will feel more confident about making a move with the new rules in place. In the past, the process of getting a MAC could often be frustrating, and customers could be vulnerable to bullying by pushy salespeople attempting to get leavers to stay. There was also the worry that there may be a gap of a few days without broadband provision. By putting the responsibility on the new provider, the process should be smoother.

SWITCH YOUR BROADBAND

Here are the steps you need to follow to switch your broadband and phone provider under Ofcom's new guidelines.

- · Contact the ISP you wish to switch to and let them know you want to sign up to a new contract.
- Give the new provider your telephone number and postcode. This will be used for validation purposes and to let your existing ISP know that you are switching.
- You should now receive a 'Notification of Transfer' letter, either through the post or by email.
- · Read the letter carefully. It will list whether you are only switching your broadband or whether you are also transferring other communications services. It will also include an estimated migration date.
- · You'll receive another letter, this time from your existing provider. This will detail any penalties for leaving such as exit fees and whether any equipment needs returning.
- If you change your mind, you have 10 working days to let the new ISP know that you wish to remain with your existing provider. After 10 days, the switching process goes ahead.

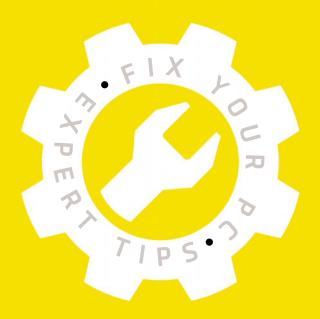




Remove, Repair & Recover Forfree

COVER

Don't waste time and money calling technical support lines. **Wayne Williams** reveals how the three Rs can help you solve most everyday PC problems



our PC can fall victim to all manner of problems, from lost data and corrupt files, to malware infections and malfunctioning hardware. But if you're well-versed in the three computing Rs – removal, repair and recovery – you should be able to solve the majority of tech troubles with a minimum of fuss.

In this feature, we look at some of the most common PC problems and reveal the best tricks and free tools for solving them, as suggested by those essential three Rs. Over the following six pages, we explain how to remove duplicate files, locked files, browser add-ons, unwanted security software and much more besides. We'll show you how to repair problems with system files, hijacked browser homepages and unresponsive hardware, and get non-booting Windows partitions working again. We also explain how to recover any files you've accidentally deleted, fix corrupt digital photos and find missing program licence keys. And that's just for starters!

Remove

Too many duplicate files

If you copy rather than move photos, MP3s, documents and other files from one folder to another, it's easy to end up with lots of duplicates taking up valuable space on your hard drive. Fortunately, there are plenty of tools you can use to delete these doubles, although some sneakily offer to find duplicates for free, but then charge you to remove them.

One of the best options is to use CCleaner's built-in Duplicate Finder (www.piriform.com/ccleaner), which you'll find in its Tools section. This lets you search for files of the same name, size, content and date modified, and easily remove unwanted copies. See our Mini Workshop below for a guide to using CCleaner's Duplicate Finder.

If you need something a little more advanced, try Duplicate & Same Files Searcher (bit.ly/duplicate375). Instead of merely deleting any duplicates, this fast and accurate program offers to replace them with links to the original file, which frees up space on your hard drive but lets you access the file from any location that contained a duplicate.



Browser beset by junk add-ons

Even if you don't install many, or even any, toolbars and add-ons in your browser, you can still end up with ones you don't want that have been installed by other programs. Although it's usually guite easy to manually remove this junk through your browser's settings, an even better option is to use Auslogics Browser Care (www.auslogics.com). This lets you manage add-ons in all your browsers, including Chrome, Firefox and Internet Explorer, from one central location, so you can quickly get rid of any elements you don't want.



Can't remove security software

Security software may keep you safe from malware and other threats, but it's often hard to remove cleanly when you want to switch to a different program. Most security firms provide special uninstallers to ensure their products are removed properly and don't cause any problems. ESET has a comprehensive list of uninstallers for all the major



anti-virus programs at bit.ly/ESET375, including AVG, Avast, Bitdefender, McAfee, Norton, Panda and Kaspersky. On the same page, you'll find ESET's own AV Remover tool, which should help you clean your PC of most security programs (and you're not obliged to install ESET software afterwards!).

Locked files won't budge

Few things are more frustrating than trying to delete a file that's been locked by Windows for no discernible reason. If rebooting your PC doesn't unlock it, try using the free tool NoVirusThanks File Governor (bit.ly/filegov375). This lets you release locked files and folders from Windows' grip with a single click, so you can delete, move or modify them.



Too many unwanted programs

If you like to try lots of different programs, such as those we recommend each issue in Best Free Software, you



MINI WORKSHOP | Find and remove duplicates using CCleaner



It's easy to end up with a hard drive cluttered with multiple copies of the same files. Fortunately, CCleaner can help you track down the duplicates. Click Tools, 11 then Duplicate Finder. 2 This can match files by name, size, modified date, and content, B but the last option slows the scan speed down significantly.



The Ignore settings 💶 narrow down which files CCleaner looks at. The defaults, which skip system and hidden files, as well as ones below a certain size, can be left alone. Choose the drives or folders 2 you want to include or exclude. 3 Click Add 4 to include a new drive/folder, or file type. Click Search 5 to begin.



The scan process may take a while to complete, but you can stop it at any time. The results show the name, path, size and creation date. 11 You can export this list as a text file. 2 Select any unwanted duplicates, B and click Delete Selected. 4 Right-click an item and select 'Open containing folder' to view it.



probably have a hard drive filled with applications you keep meaning to remove but haven't got around to yet. Using the 'Uninstall a program' option in the Control Panel takes ages because it can only remove one item at a time. Instead, you should download the charmingly named Bulk Crap Uninstaller (klocmansoftware.weebly.com), which can remove several programs in one go and clear leftover junk at the same time.

Old graphics drivers causing problems

When you upgrade your graphics card, it should install and use its own set of drivers, but any drivers left over from a previous card can cause freezes and crashes. Display Driver Uninstaller (www.wagnardmobile.com/DDU) solves this problem by removing old drivers

and preventing them from being reinstalled through automatic updates.



Clear out empty folders

Often, when you uninstall programs, various items get left behind, including empty folders. These don't take up



- they're empty, after all - but there's still no reason to leave them cluttering up your hard drive. **Empty** Folder

much space

Finder (translucency.us/Downloads. shtml) is a tiny portable tool that scans your hard drive looking for empty (and nearly empty) folders. Just select a path, the total number of files or the size and click Go. Be careful not to remove any 'empty' system folders or you could run into serious problems.

Uninstall unwanted Windows 8+

Microsoft's tiled operating system comes with a lot of pre-installed apps that you probably never use. To stop them taking up your screen space and making your other apps harder to find, you can use an unofficial free tool called Windows 8 App Remover (bit.ly/ appremove375) to remove them and free up space. Select your version of Windows 8+, click Online and click List Apps to choose the apps you want to



Repair

Hijacked browser homepage and search engine

Unwanted changes to your browser can be caused by a malware infection or by a devious add-on that either modified your set-up without you realising, or you didn't know you were installing because it came bundled with other software. Scan your PC for malware using a tool such as Malwarebytes Anti-Malware (www.malwarebytes.org), and uninstall any suspicious programs and add-ons.

Chrome users can remove any junk from that browser using Google's own Software Removal Tool (www.google .com/chrome/srt).



Fix Windows problems

Microsoft's brilliant Windows Repair (bit.ly/winrepair375) can fix many common woes that can befall the operating system, including Registry errors, file-permission issues, damaged system files and problems with various windows components. The software has

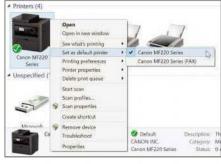


a simple wizard-based interface that helps prepare your system for repairs, including options to back up the Registry, perform a proper power reset and create a restore point.

Printer not responding

If a document fails to print, you should first make sure all the printer cables are connected properly (assuming it's not a wireless printer!) and, if they are, try a different USB port on your PC. You could also try rebooting.

If none of this works, go to the Printers section of the Control Panel and make sure your printer is set as the default; some programs - PDF printers, for example - can hijack the default for themselves. Right-click the printer and select the printer properties to make



sure everything is as it should be and that the correct port is selected. Finally, double-click the printer icon in the System Tray to open the print queue. Cancel any existing jobs, and try printing again.

Videos play without sound

If you've checked that your speakers are correctly plugged in and working, and you can get sound when playing other files - music tracks, for example - it's likely the problem is related to the codecs on your system. Codecs are



Remove, repair and recover



remove. Happily, this problem is less common in Windows 8.1, which doesn't add shortcuts to the Start screen unless you give your permission.

Not sure which programs to uninstall

It's usually easier to remove a program through the Windows Control Panel or using a supplied uninstaller, rather than deleting it manually, but sometimes it isn't clear exactly what an entry relates to and if it's safe to remove. The excellent free tool Should I Remove It (www.shouldiremoveit.com) lists all the programs installed on your computer and helps you decide which ones to purge. Each item is rated out of five and colour-coded with a removal percentage



relating to its desirability – any items in red should definitely be uninstalled.

Select 'What is it?' to view more information about the software, including details of every file it installs on your system, its "exhibited behaviours", how many people have it installed and how long for. If the summary sounds suspicious, just click Uninstall to remove the program.

Thumbnails that clutter up your hard drive

Windows creates thumbnails for all recognised image files on your drives, including those stored on USB memory sticks. These thumbnails are useful for displaying the contents of folders as



icons, but they take up a lot of space and can even be a privacy risk, because they show images you may have deleted. Thumbs Remover (bit.ly/thumbs375) removes the hidden thumbs.db cache from any drive or folder, to reclaim space and protect your privacy.

Identify the biggest space hogs

The trick to freeing up as much hard-drive space as possible is to identify the largest programs and files on your PC. WinDirStat (windirstat.info), which won our Gold Award in Issue 373 (bit.ly/webuser373), lets you quickly find and remove the biggest space hogs on your PC. CCleaner (www.piriform.com) also offers a Disk Analyzer that's less sophisticated but simpler to use.



used to encode and decode the digital data stream and without the right one installed, Windows won't be able to play the file. Install the free K-Lite Codec Pack from www.codecguide.com to repair your codec problem in a jiffy. There are four versions available – Basic, Standard, Full and Mega.

Browser keeps crashing

Browser crashes are sometimes the fault of the browser itself, but are more likely to be caused by add-ons and plug-ins. Qualys BrowserCheck (browsercheck .qualys.com) makes sure you're running the latest version of the browser – whether it's Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, Opera or Safari – and that all your plug-ins are up to date. Click the Fix It button next to scan results marked as 'insecure version' or 'update available' to install the required updates.

You can update extensions in Chrome by typing chrome://settings into the address bar. Press Enter and click



Extensions. Click 'Developer mode' at the top, and then click 'Update extensions now'.

Windows goes to sleep at inappropriate times

Although you can tweak the Power and Sleep settings to stop Windows powering down, hibernating, going to sleep and restarting, it can be difficult to get things set up exactly how you want, and you'll have to do it all over again if you want to make a simple change. Don't Sleep (bit.ly/dontsleep375) is a tiny 60KB tool that makes it easy to temporarily manage all of those settings. You can even set a timer to prevent Windows going to sleep or powering down at inappropriate times.



Windows won't boot up

Windows comes with its own built-in recovery tools that can often get your PC booting again, but if the problem was caused by a malware infection, you can use Norton Bootable Recovery Tool (bit.ly/nortonbrt375) to boot your system into a safe environment and clean up the threat.

If the problem is caused by a missing or deleted system partition, you can try to restore it with a bootable partition-recovery tool, such as the MiniTool Partition Wizard Bootable CD (bit.ly/minitool375).

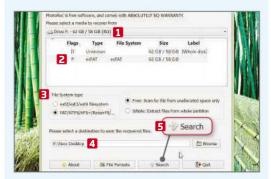
See our Top Tips on page 64 for more advice about booting your PC.

Restore damaged file extensions

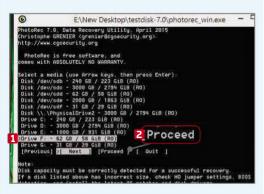
Malware infection can prevent certain application types - such as EXE, MSI, BAT and VBS - from opening. File Extension Fixer (www.carifred.com/exefixer) can repair these extensions and run any application, even if the EXE extension has been deleted from your system. Make sure the malware has been fully removed before you do this.



MINI WORKSHOP Recover deleted photos with



There are two versions of PhotoRec you can use to recover your files. The easiest is QPhotoRec, because this offers a graphical interface. Choose the location to search in the drop-down box. 1 Select the drive or partition to target 2 and the file system type. **B** Set a save destination **4** and click Search. 5



PhotoRec itself is a command line tool. It's not as pretty, but it does offer more advanced functionality, and it's very easy to use, so don't let the looks put you off. Select the drive to search 11 using the up/down arrow keys, and then use the right key to select Proceed. 2 Press Enter.



Select the drive or partition to scan. 1
Options 2 lets you choose whether to keep corrupted files, activate Expert mode, and reduce memory usage. Choose which type of files to look for under File Opt. B By default it scans for a vast selection, most of which won't be relevant. Select Search 4 to begin looking for files.

Recover

Accidentally deleted photos

A free service such as Google Photos (photos.google.com, see our review on page 44) lets you back up all your photos online, but if you fail to do this, and accidentally delete images from your hard drive or memory card, don't panic. There are lots of free recovery tools available, of which the best are Recuva (www.piriform.com/recuva) and PhotoRec (bit.ly/photorec375). Just be careful not to save the recovered files to the same drive they were originally stored on because you might accidentally overwrite other deleted files. See our Mini Workshop, left, to find out how to recover files using PhotoRec.



Precious photos are corrupted

If you only have one copy of an image, and it won't display correctly, you can try repairing it using JPEG Repair Shop (bit.ly/ jpegrepair375). It can't fix every type of problem, but can help to overcome image displacement and incorrect colouration.

If the memory card your photos are stored on becomes corrupted, it's worth running the Windows' Chkdsk function. Press Windows+R, type cmd and press Enter to open the Command Prompt. Type CHKDSK /F followed by the letter of the memory card's drive, for example E:, and press Enter. Windows will then verify the files and folders stored on the card, and correct any problems it finds.

Word files won't open

It can be a nightmare if a document you've been working on suddenly becomes corrupted, and all you can view is a blank screen or a load of gobbledygook. Fortunately, Office provides built-in document recovery options. Go to File, Open and select the damaged file. Click





Remove, repair and recover



the arrow next to the Open button and select 'Open and Repair' from the options. If that doesn't work, try extracting the text. Go to File, Open and click the down arrow next to the All Files button. Scroll down and select 'Recover Text from Any File'. Discard any corrupted text in the recovered document.

If neither option works, try Corrupt DOCX Salvager (bit.ly/docx375).

Damaged ZIP files

If an archive file becomes corrupted, try the WinRAR (www.rarlab.com) built-in repair function, which can fix RAR files, Zipped archives and 7z files. Select the problem file and go to Tools, 'Repair archive'. Select a destination to save the repaired version to, and choose to 'Treat the corrupt archive as ZIP'. WinRAR isn't free, but you can use the free trial to recover your files. Alternatively, try DiskInternals ZIP Repair (bit.ly/ziprepair375).



Documents folder has disappeared from Desktop

If your Documents folder is no longer visible on the Desktop, it's very easy to get it back. Open Explorer and navigate to the Documents folder in

C:\Users\[user name]

NEXT ISSUE

Right-click the folder, and select Send To, Desktop (Create Shortcut). You can

create shortcuts to any other folders or libraries in exactly the same way.

Missing DVD drive

If your DVD drive appears to have vanished from Explorer, try turning off your PC, unplugging the cables from the drive, then plugging them back in again. Make sure all cables (including ones on



the motherboard) are firmly connected, then reboot. If that doesn't work, Rizone DVD Drive Repair (www .rizonesoft.com) can often restore a missing drive. Just click the Repair DVD Drive button and reboot.

Missing program serial numbers and licence keys

Commercial programs, including Windows, usually require you to enter a licence key. If you've lost this, you can use LicenseCrawler (www.klinzmann .name) to scan your system looking for serial codes for Windows, other installed Microsoft products and third-party software. The list of serial numbers and licence keys can be saved to a file in an encrypted or unencrypted text format.

FOUR OTHER USEFUL Rs TO KNOW

Restart

There's a recurring IT Crowd gag in which the solution to any tech problem is to "turn it off and on again", but it isn't as silly as it sounds. If your PC is running slowly, or freezing, then restarting it may be all that's required to get things working properly again.

Reinstall

If a program won't uninstall cleanly, or it's misbehaving in other ways, reinstalling it will often fix the problem. You can also reinstall Windows XP and Windows 7 over the top of themselves to fix all manner of accumulated problems.

Refresh

Windows 8+ lets you refresh your PC without affecting your files. This is similar to reinstalling older versions

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of Windows. Go to 'Update and Recovery', select Recovery and click 'Get started' in the Refresh section. You will need to reinstall your software afterwards.

Reset

Resetting your PC to its factory defaults is the ultimate way to fix



performance problems. Windows 8+ has a useful feature that lets you permanently remove everything (all your software and personal files) and reinstall Windows. You'll obviously need to have backed up everything of importance in advance. This option can be found in the same location as Refresh.

What Microsoft isn't telling you and why you should wait to upgrade

on sale Wednesday 29 July 2015

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Best free online photo services

There are plenty of free online services that you can use to store and share your precious photos forever. **Rob Beattie** sorts out the best from the rest



Google Photos | photos.google.com | ★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

What we liked:

WebUser GOLD AWARD Google gives you unlimited storage for your photos, as long as they're no bigger than 16 megapixels (that's larger than the images produced

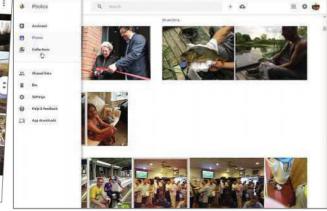
by most good point-andshoot digital cameras). This both matches and exceeds the two other award-winners in this test.

Setting up Google Photos on a mobile device is gloriously simple – especially for existing Google users – and there's a pleasing pizzazz about the app's interface with its spinning intro icon and ultra-fast swiping. It's much better than Flickr's app and even threads together similar photos to make animations, and stitches side-by-side photos to create panoramas, without you lifting a finger.

As we'd expect from Google, the behind-the-scenes synchronisation is impressive. Along with its iOS and Android apps, there's a simple Desktop Uploader for your PC that lets you select photos and videos to upload, and can include images from attached cameras and memory cards. Once you've made your selection, Google Photos will get on with the job in the background.

The web interface is less fussy than Flickr's and, by default, organises photos





by date. The search tools are, as you'd expect, very good, and use various criteria including filenames, EXIF data (to identify places) and some work-inprogress 'machine learning' designed to let you find photos in a more intuitive way (by typing 'blue' to find photos of the sea and sky, for example). There are some basic editing tools, including Instagram-style filters, along with cropping and vignetting, and you can share your photos on Facebook, Twitter and Google+, or via a simple weblink.

How it can be improved:

Google could make it clearer on the website that photos over 16 megapixels will eat into your existing Google Drive storage - you can specify 'High quality only' but this is turned off by default. It's also a shame that you can only create and edit movies and stories on a mobile device and not on a desktop PC, and that the existing social-media sharing features are unsophisticated.

OUR VERDICT

Google continues its inexorable advance to manage life, the universe and, now, your photo collection. The PC software lags behind that of the apps, but its unlimited storage and powerful search put it streets ahead of the competition.

Best online photo storage

Flickr | www.flickr.com | ★★★★☆

FEATURES ★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★☆

What we liked:

Flickr's generous 1TB of storage has a few limitations - no photo over 200MB and no video bigger than 1GB - but they shouldn't trouble the

average user. Although, on paper, it doesn't match Google's unlimited offering, few people will ever use a whole terabyte of space, and you can store video, which ThisLife doesn't allow in its free version.

Flickr is the only one of our top three services that has photo-storage pedigree (670 million photos were uploaded to it last year), and it has some brilliant pictures you can browse. Its Flickr Groups are a great way to find communities of photographers who are enthusiastic about specific subjects.

Flickr's excellent and intuitive search tool is currently more sophisticated even than Google's. We love the way you can refine a search using the colour palette that runs across the top of the results pages. Social sharing includes Tumblr and Pinterest, which Google Photos ignores.



How it can be improved:

Despite a recent revamp, Flickr is cluttered and old-fashioned. The iOS and Android mobile apps are improving but they still aren't as innovative as Google Photos' apps.

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OUR VERDICT

For general use, Flickr can't match Google Photos for storage space, user experience and sheer amount of fun. But if you're serious about photography, its well-established community has lots to offer.

BEST OF THE REST

OneDrive

onedrive.live.com

OneDrive's free online photo storage of 30GB is more generous than Dropbox's, but its photo library is an addition to its online storage rather a service in its own right. The

interface works well and mobile support includes Windows Phone, along with Android



and iOS. We really like the automatic Tags feature, which is surprisingly smart.

Carousel by Dropbox

www.dropbox.com

Like Dropbox's other services, Carousel is great to use, but the free version only provides 16GB of

storage. Its mobile apps are slick, with rock-solid syncing, but sharing via mobile creates



'conversations' that can't be edited or deleted, and leave a permanent record. It works especially well if you've already bought into Dropbox's paid-for service.

Shoebox

www.shoeboxapp.com

We like the simplicity of Shoebox. It's free, unlimited, and available on Windows PCs. Macs. Android and iOS devices. Photos are encrypted and private, and can be browsed using a complete timeline, by month

or year. Search is clever (you can find photos that were taken with a particular camera.



for example) and you can select photos quickly and easily to share via email or social media. The main drawback is having to entrust your photos to a company that you've probably never heard of.

ThisLife | www.thislife.com | ★★★★☆

FEATURES ★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★☆

WARD

What we liked:

Like Google Photos, ThisLife offers unlimited free photo storage and excellent support for Android and iOS devices. The dedicated PC uploader

sits in the notification area of the taskbar and will happily work away in the background, adding and syncing new photos as you save them to the hard drive.

It's the only service we've reviewed here that imports photos quickly and easily from other services, including Facebook, Instagram, Flickr and Picasa. Photos can be tagged individually or in groups with a location- or topic-style tag; there's a world map for geo-tagged images; and you can create 'Stories' (really just montage-style collections with very few customisation features) and share them via Facebook or email.

ThisLife's team also owns Shutterfly (you can use the same login for both services) but the former is less geared towards selling photo-based products such as prints, cards and books.



How it could be improved:

You can't upload videos on the free plan, and the uploader won't let you add more than one custom folder at a time. We also found that the browser-based app was glitchy.

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OUR VERDICT

ThisLife's unlimited storage is available on a wide range of mobile devices, but some of its web features seem a bit underpowered or don't work properly yet. Definitely one to watch, though.

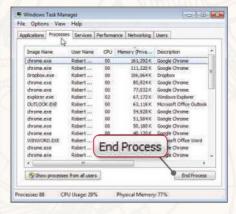
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Stop background proce

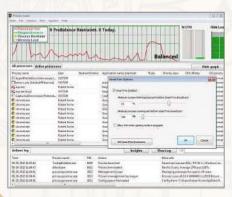
Sometimes the biggest drains on your system resources are things you don't even realise are running. **Robert Irvine** explains how to detect and disable the hidden hogs

Identify and kill the worst memory hogs

The simplest way to find out what's happening in the background on your PC is through the Windows Task Manager. To launch this built-in tool, either right-click the taskbar and select Start Task Manager or press Ctrl+Shift+Esc on your keyboard. Click the Processes tab for an overview of everything that's running on your system, then click the Memory column to sort entries according to the amount of memory they're using. To stop a specific resource hog, click its name in the list (the Description column tells you which program is responsible, so you don't close anything important), then click the End Process button.



Although Task Manager is a useful tool, especially the more advanced version in Windows 8+, you can save yourself the hassle of terminating troublesome processes manually by installing the excellent Process Lasso (bitsum.com). The latest version of this



free system tool offers a useful feature called SmartTrim, which automatically releases memory from programs that don't require it. You can decide when SmartTrim should terminate processes by specifying a minimum level for processor use in Options, 'SmartTrim settings'.

Equally useful is Process Piglet (bit.ly/piglet375), which monitors the memory usage of running processes and alerts



you if something suddenly starts consuming too much RAM (called "pigging out"). You

can then forcibly restart or terminate the resource hog. If you find you are seeing too many alerts, you can add certain processes to an exclusion list.

Prevent services from running on start-up

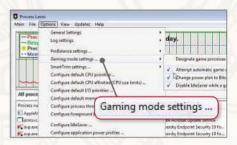
The System Configuration tool is the obvious place to disable programs from running on startup – just press Windows key+R, type msconfig, then press Enter and click the Startup tab. If you want more control over which services run alongside Windows, many of which do so without your knowledge, download Easy Services Optimizer (bit.ly/easy375). This brilliant free tool is much simpler to use than Microsoft's own Autoruns and usefully offers three settings – Safe, Tweaked and Extreme – so you don't accidentally disable



services you might later need. There's also a Default button that instantly restores your PC's settings if anything goes wrong. You can quickly review all services that are currently running; terminate them by clicking the 'Stop selected service' button; and change their start-up type by choosing 'Edit selected service'. The latter option explains what the service does, and lets you select automatic, manual or disabled startup, as required.

Don't let anything disrupt your gaming

When you're focusing on blasting zombies or constructing fantasy worlds, the last thing you need is your PC slowing you down or disrupting what you're doing. Fortunately, you can prevent interruptions, freezes and crashes by switching your system to gaming mode, which shuts down unnecessary background processes to squeeze more power from your processor. Windows doesn't yet offer its own gaming mode, but lots of other programs do, including Process Lasso (see our first tip). Just go to Main, 'Gaming mode enabled', then Options, 'Gaming mode settings' to activate the feature, which automatically detects when you start playing a game and adjusts memory usage accordingly.



Even better is Game Fire from Smart PC Utilities (bit.ly/gamefire375), which turns your PC into a gaming machine by optimising your processor and memory for maximum performance. This includes disabling unnecessary programs and services; defragging system memory to free up resources; and suspending non-urgent scheduled tasks (such as security updates) so they

sses *slowing* you down

don't disturb your game. You can use the Game Advisor tool to perform specific tweaks based on Game Fire's recommendations, for example to



disable network throttling, and set up a Gaming Profile to always apply the same settinas and end the same

processes when you click the button to switch to Gaming Mode.

Turn off or restrict search indexing

The Search Indexing tool in Windows catalogues all your files and folders so you can find them more quickly, but it also uses valuable system resources. You can speed up your PC by disabling indexing, although obviously this will make searches slower and less thorough. Press the Windows key+R,



type services.msc and press Enter. When the Services box opens, scroll down to the entry for Windows Search, right-click it and choose Properties. On the General tab, click the drop-down 'Startup type' menu and choose Disabled. Click OK and restart your PC to confirm the change.

Alternatively, if you'd rather not completely disable Windows search indexing, you can simply reduce the number of files that are indexed. Go into



the Control Panel, search for Indexing **Options** and click Advanced button. Click the File Types tab and deselect

any entries that you're sure you'll never need to find (you can select them again in future if you need to). For example, there's not much point in indexing XML files unless you're a web designer. You can also tell Windows to only index the properties of files (names, sizes, dates and other attributes) and not their contents, though this means you can't search your documents and emails for specific words and phrases.

Stop idle browser tabs wasting memory

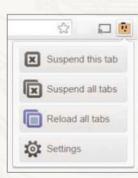
Chrome and Firefox tabs continue to use resources in the background, even when you're not viewing them, so if you have lots of tabs open, your browser's memory usage will go through the roof. One solution is to install OneTab (www. one-tab.com), an ingenious add-on for Chrome and Firefox that claims to reduce memory use by up to 95 per cent. It does so by converting all your



tabs into a list on a single tab, which frees up RAM and makes tabs easier to

manage. You can then click to reopen pages individually or restore them all in

Another good option is rather grandly named The Great Suspender (bit.ly/ suspend375). It reduces Chrome's memory usage by letting you 'suspend'



idle tabs to release resources for the benefit of other programs and processes. The add-on retains tab titles so you can reload them with a

single click, and also lets you suspend tabs automatically after a set time, while always keeping essential ones active. Suspend Tab (bit.ly/suspendtab375) does a similar job in Firefox.

5 OF THE WORST RESOURCE HOGS

CHROME



Google's browser opens a new

'process' for each open tab and active extension, which places a big strain on system memory.

DROPBOX



The more files you store in Dropbox,

the more memory it consumes, so it's worth exiting the service until you need it.

ITUNES



Although Apple's media software

isn't as bloated as it used to be, it's still a massive memory hog, even when you're not playing anything.

AVG



It's essential to keep your antivirus

software running at all times, but AVG is often cited as using more resources than it should.

ADBLOCK PLUS



The popular ad blocker has become notorious

for its excess memory usage, especially in Firefox, and is currently working on

What are the biggest resource hogs on your system? Let us know at webuser@dennis.co.uk

SEND MESSAGES FROM THE FUTURE

You don't need to be near your PC or phone to contact someone over the web. Jonathan Parkyn reveals how to schedule messages to be sent at a more convenient time

Delay delivery of emails until

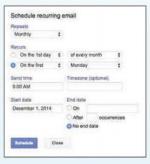
There are all kinds of situations where you might want to write an email but not send it straight away. Perhaps it's a relative's birthday in a couple of days' time but you don't trust yourself to remember on the day; or you might want to send an email to a work colleague at a specific time to make yourself look industrious. With the right tools, you can type a message whenever you want and specify exactly when you'd like it sent. Precisely how you do this depends on the email service or program you use.

Gmail has a couple of good options and our favourite is Boomerang (bit.ly/ boomerang375). This is an excellent



Chrome extension and Android app that lets you schedule messages in Gmail, track them once they're sent, set up reminders and request read receipts. You just compose your email as normal, click the Send Later button and select when you want the message to be sent. You can schedule 10 messages per month for free, and subscribe to Boomerang for \$4.99 (£3.18) a month if you need to send more.

We also like Right Inbox (bit.ly/ rightinbox375), which doesn't impose any monthly limit and offers the option to send 'recurring' emails at the same



time every day, week or month. which is useful for newsletters.

If you use Mozilla Thunderbird as your main email

service, you should install the free extension Send Later (bit.ly/ sendlater375), which lets you specify a time and date using its Send Later command. In Microsoft Outlook, you can click the Options tab in an email, then look for Delay Delivery under More Options. Click Message Options and, under 'Delivery options', select the 'Do not deliver before' box, then click your desired delivery date and time.

Send emails to yourself in the future

Not only can you schedule emails to be sent in the future, but you can also set a date and time to receive them. Scheduling an email to yourself to arrive on a specific date can remind you about something important. FutureMe (bit.ly/ futureme375) is a free service that lets you send a message to your future self on any date up until 2065. You'll need to verify your email and make sure the



Private option is selected but, other than that, it's very simple.

My Future Self (bit.ly/futureself375) is a similar tool, albeit with a more creative twist. The idea is to build a private online iournal that acts like a time capsule, delivering messages to you in the future. It's free, but still in beta, and you need to sign up for an invitation code and agree to let the service email you questions from time to time (although you can opt out if this sounds intrusive).

Schedule text messages to be sent next week

It isn't just emails you can send from the future - texts can travel though time, too. Android users can download the refreshingly straightforward Text Later app (free from bit.ly/textlater375). Tap



Schedule SMS, add your recipients, type your message, then choose a time and date, and

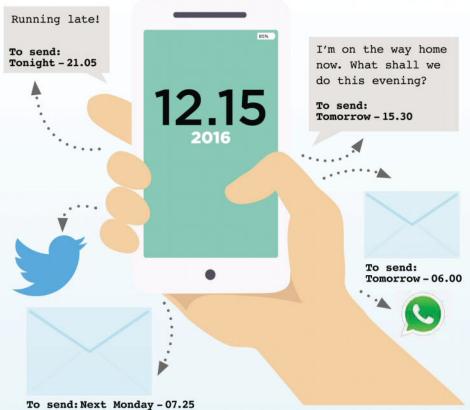
tap Send. SMS Scheduler (free from bit .ly/smsscheduler375) is similar but adds the ability to set a frequency for recurring texts.

If you're using an iPhone, free options for scheduling SMS messages are rather thin on the ground, though you can use free apps such as FutureText (bit.ly/ futuretext375) to set yourself a reminder to send a message at a specific time. If you're prepared to pay, you could opt for the advanced app Later (bit.ly/later375), but it requires a rather hefty subscription fee (£3.99 per month) to schedule your texts.

Schedule mobile messages for 25 years from now

Incubate is a clever app that lets you send texts, voice messages, pictures and

Send messages from the future





even video messages to recipients at a predesignated moment in the future - anything up to 25 years from the present. As with My Future Self, there's a time-capsule

element to this service. You could send messages to your children from a particular moment in time, for example, or embarrass your future self with a message from a messy night out. The app is free (though currently only available for iOS at bit.ly/incubate375). Simply create your message in Incubate and set a 'hatch' date for it to be sent. For added comedy value, check out Incubate's amusing Mad Maxinspired promotional video at vimeo .com/117568590.

Post to Facebook while you're on holiday

Facebook has a built-in tool that lets you schedule when a post is published. This is handy if you want your post to appear at a particular time of day for maximum impact. But there's a catch it will only work with posts you make on a public page you've created, such as a fan or community page, or a page promoting your business. On your page, type your post as normal, then click the



down arrow next to the Publish button and Select Schedule Post. Choose

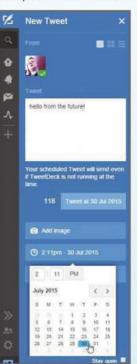
your date and time, then click Schedule.

With personal posts on your own timeline, you can click the clock icon and select a date, but this will only let you backdate a post, not schedule it for the future. If you're looking to schedule personal Facebook posts, we'd recommend using a free third-party tool, such as Hootsuite (bit.ly/ hootandroid375 for Android, bit.ly/ hootios375 for iOS). Install the app or sign up at hootsuite.com, and connect

your Facebook account. The AutoSchedule function works differently depending on the type of device you're using but in Android, tap the Scheduled tab, write your post, then tap the calendar icon, set a date and time, and tap Schedule.

Tweet when you're away from Twitter

As with Facebook, Twitter's built-in scheduling tools are only available for professional use, so people using Twitter Ads get a Scheduling tab in their Compose Tweet window. For personal



use, you need a third-party tool. Hootsuite (see previous tip) works with Twitter as well as Facebook and LinkedIn. If you're a dedicated Twitter user. vou may already be using a third-party Twitter client, many of which offer their own scheduling options. TweetDeck, for example.

offers built-in scheduling. Sign in with your Twitter account at bit.ly/ tweetdeck375. Click the New Tweet button, type your tweet, then click the Schedule Tweet button and select your preferred time and date.

SEND MESSAGES FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE

It may sound macabre, but messages can sometimes outlive the people who send them. It's entirely possible that this may happen by accident, in the event that your untimely demise occurs at some point between setting up a scheduled message and it being delivered. But there are also services



expressly designed to let you send posthumous messages. One of Incubate's biggest selling points is its ability to deliver messages from deceased relatives. There's also Dead Social (deadsocial.org), which lets you create secret 'goodbye' messages that are delivered after you're gone; and LivesOn (liveson.org), an artificial intelligence that can be trained to carry on tweeting as you, long after the real you has passed away.



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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Broadband	£5.00 (12 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	○○ unlimited	£30.00
2	c) plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00
3	E	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£2.95 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	unlimited	£35.40
4	sky	Sky: Broadband & Calls	£7.50 (12 months HALF PRICE)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	○○ unlimited	£45.00
5	Virgin (media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£17.50 (12 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	50Mbps max speed	unlimited	£105.00
6	plusnet	Plusnet: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£14.99 (£5 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	onlimited	£119.94
7	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Fibre Broadband	£15.00 (£10 for 12 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	○○ unlimited	£120.00
8	E	EE: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£19.95 (£9.95 for 6 months)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	○ unlimited	£179.40
9	sky	Sky: Fibre Broadband & Calls	£20.00 (6 months HALF PRICE)	18 months	38Mbps max speed	○○ unlimited	£180.00
10	media	Virgin: Broadband & Calls	£30.00 (£20 for 12 months)	18 months	152Mbps max speed	wnlimited	£240.00

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Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

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

** Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 1 July 2015.



Broadband Genie's helpline is powered by Simplify Digital, the Ofcom-accredited switching service



Take a Screen Break

Technology moves so quickly that it's easy to forget big stories from only a few years ago. This issue we're asking you to think back to 2009



The biggest software release of 2009 was undoubtedly Windows 7 in



October. Which of these was *not* a codename for the new operating system: Vienna, Hotdog or Blackcomb?

What was the name of Google's short-lived real-time messaging platform, which launched in May 2009 and closed in 2010?

Which company provoked online outrage by delisting several books with homosexual themes, to make its search results more "family friendly"?

Apple released Mac OS X version 10.6 in August 2009. Which big cat's name was it better known as?

5 Which pop star's sudden death made him the most tweeted-about person of 2009?

The mostwatched YouTube video of 2009 was Susan Boyle's first performance on

Britain's Got Talent. What was the name of the song she sang?

Where had seven-year-old 'David' just been in the second most-viewed YouTube video of the year?

What's the name of Google's Cloud-based operating system, which was released in November 2009?

By April 2009, more than one million apps had been downloaded



from Apple's App Store. What was the most popular paid-for app (pictured) at that point?

Microsoft unveiled its Google-rivalling search engine on 1 June 2009, which is still around today. What is its name?

Amazon's second-■ generation Kindle was its best-selling gadget of 2009. Who wrote its best-selling ebook, The Lost Symbol?



What was Three Wolf Moon, sales of which soared 2,300 per cent after joke reviews were posted on

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE POPULAR GAMES FROM 2009?





WORTH

£88.99



Get the answers online at www.webuser.co.uk/quiz375

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 2

TP-LINK AV-1200 Powerline Starter Kit PA8030PKit

TP-LINK's three-port AV-1200 Starter Kit, which received a five-star review in Issue 374, offers the fastest HomePlugs currently available at a very good price. They come with three Gigabit ports, maximising your upload and download speeds for smoother 4K and TV gaming. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis .co.uk with '1200' in the subject line. For more info, visit uk.tp-link.com and follow @TPLINK on Twitter.

WIN 1 OF 3

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

The Y-cam HomeMonitor HD has won our two most recent home-security camera Group Tests (the latest was in Issue 373). You can save your captured footage online for free - a service that other cameras often charge for. It records in 720p resolution, and has

night-vision to a distance of 15 metres. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'y-cam' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.homemonitor .me and follow @YcamHomeMonitor on Twitter.





Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Create your own invites, flyers and more with Canva | canva.com

A lot of design software is complicated to use and requires some artistic ability. Canva is a free online design tool that anyone can master. Here's what you need to know

f you want to create a party invite or a poster, it's easy enough to use Word or LibreOffice for the task. Dedicated DTP (desktop-publishing) applications, such as the excellent Scribus (www.scribus.net), do a better job, but using an advanced design program for very simple tasks can be overkill. Canva is a

free online design tool that lets you put together your own professional creations in a matter of minutes, and provides lots of help if you're just getting started.

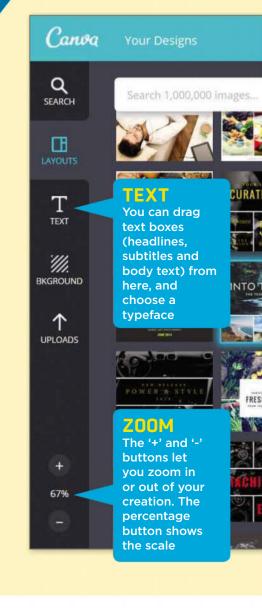
You need to set up an account to use Canva, though you can sign in using your Facebook or Google credentials, or with an email address and password.



Once you've watched the tutorial video and tried the optional beginner's challenge, you can begin work on a creation of your own. The Your Designs page 1 has a selection of templates. 2 Click More to see others. 3 If you want to start with a blank canvas, just enter your required document dimensions. 4



We'll create a party invite using the designs in the Events section (found by clicking More). Select a template to open the designer in a new window. You'll be presented with a variety of layouts. Some are free; others you have to pay for. Find a free one you like and drag it to the centre of the window.





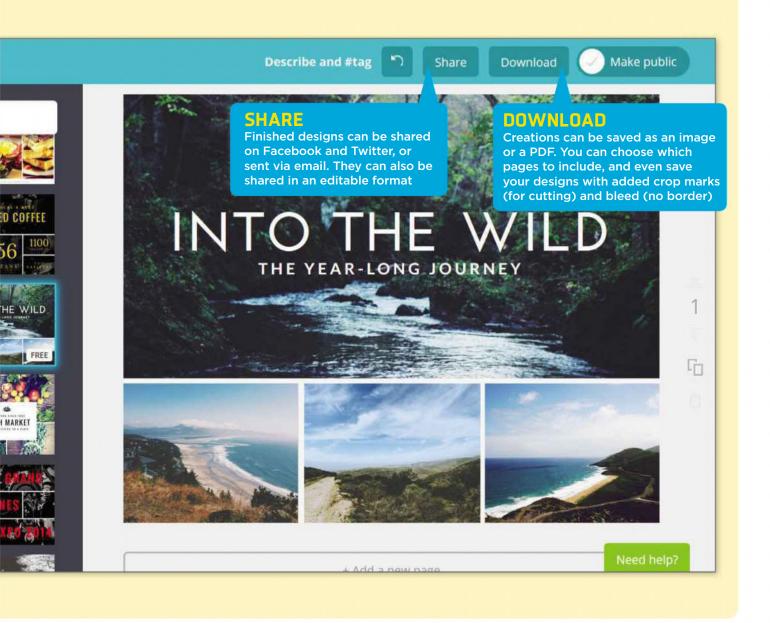
To customise the design, just click an element, such as the text, for example. You can change the typeface, size and colour, or delete it. 1 To change the words, click inside the box and start typing. Hover your mouse over the box to resize or move it. 2



Click the various elements and change them as required. You can alter everything, including – in this example – the colour and size of the balloons and background circles. You can copy 1 elements for pasting elsewhere and move items forward or back 2 (place them on top of or behind other items).



To turn the yellow balloon solid (it was transparent in Step 4), click the down arrow 1 for options to add a hyperlink 2 and adjust the item's transparency. 3 Select the latter to reveal a slider, which can be used to make the balloon a solid colour. Click the top arrow at any time to undo your changes. 4





You can also create a new design from scratch. To add a background, click Bkground 11 and pick a colour or image. 2 As with the layouts, some are free but the more interesting ones will cost you \$1 (around 63p). If you'd rather upload and use an image of your own, click Uploads. 4



Click 'Upload your own images', 🗓 drag and drop a picture from Explorer or import images from Facebook 2 by connecting your account. Drag the image to the canvas and click Filter. 3 You can apply an effect and adjust the brightness and contrast. 4 There are additional tools under Advanced Options. 5



Canva has more than a million images you can use. Click inside the search box 1 and you can browse the graphics by category. 2 Alternatively, type a word, press the Enter key and the results will appear below. 3 Click an image to add it to your canvas or drag it across. Many of the best images aren't free.



Improve the security of your LastPass account

LastPass: lastpass.com | (4) 20 mins | Any browser

n the past, we've recommended LastPass (lastpass.com) as our favourite password manager, and praised it for being a safe and secure place to keep your passwords. At some point over the last few weeks, however, its servers were hacked – a situation that usually means compromised passwords and a whole host of potential troubles for an online service's users.

To LastPass's credit, the hack on its servers hasn't presented this problem because, most importantly, the hackers didn't get any master passwords. The only information extracted from the company was its customers' email addresses, and LastPass has since added extra security to block attempts to access a user's account from an unknown computer. LastPass has also helped contain the situation by being completely transparent about the hack, so we have lots of information we can use to make sure the exposed data doesn't cause our readers who use LastPass any further problems.





LastPass has introduced a new security measure to stop hackers. If you log in from an unrecognised computer, you'll be blocked 1 and LastPass will send a verification email to your account's registered email address. Click the link in the email to confirm that you're accessing the service legitimately.



The recent hack stole email addresses, so you should be on the lookout for phishing attacks. Beware of unsolicited emails that appear to come from LastPass. The logo and content can look convincing, but ignore emails that include links to other websites or ask for your master password.



To help filter out potential attacks, change the email address associated with your account. Sign into LastPass and click Account Settings. 1 Select the General tab 2 and type a new email address into the Account Email box. 3 You can send a test email 4 to make sure everything works.



You can also set up a second, security email address to only be used for important communications, such as when you want to change your security settings. On the General tab, click Show Advanced Settings, 1 scroll down to the Security Email box 2 and type in the second email address.





EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

The free version of LastPass offers five 'multifactor' protection options: Toopher and Duo are good for Android or iOS, and Duo also works via text message; Transakt (our favourite) launches simple Accept/Reject buttons on your phone; Google Authenticator needs to be set up to work with your Google account; and Grid (for Android) relies on a coded grid you print and keep on your person.



Also in this section: if you aren't travelling abroad, tick the Country Restriction box 1 and choose United Kingdom.
2 You can add a country if you go on holiday. Auto-Logoff Other Devices 3 makes sure you're no longer logged in elsewhere if you've moved over to another browser or device.



Although master passwords weren't compromised in the hack, you may want to change yours if you're worried it isn't strong enough. Click Account Settings, then Change Master Password. Password Reset opens in a new tab. Fill in the form and try to fill up the strength indicator.



Turning on multifactor login will double your security by using your password plus another factor. From Account Settings, click the Multifactor Options tab. There are five free options to choose from. Click the '?' icon 1 (and refer to our expert tip) to find out more about each one.



When you've made your choice, click the Pencil icon 1 to open the settings and change Enabled to Yes. 2 There may be more options depending on your chosen tool - Grid lets you 'View and print' the grid and save it as a CSV file in case you lose your print-out. 3 Click the Update button. 4



Once you've set up a Multifactor Option, you can add Trusted Devices. When you first log in, under the Multifactor Authentification section where you type the information shown on your phone, you should see an option to 'Trust this computer'. 1 Tick it to add it to your Trusted Devices.



LastPass lets you store hundreds of unique passwords but you may have some really important logins you want to keep separate. Click the Never URLs tab, then the Add button. Choose the Type of exclusion and type the URL. Click Add to add it to the list of exclusions.



Get more mobile bandwidth for free

sing your Android device on the web uses up bandwidth (the amount of data your contract lets you use per month) which, if you're on a low-cost contract, could already be quite limited. The Opera Max data-management app

runs in the background, compressing files before they're sent to your phone, which Opera claims can increase your bandwidth by up to 50 per cent.



Opera Max: bit.ly/opera375 | 🕒 10 mins | 👘 Android

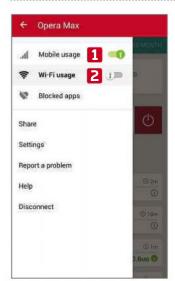




The main screen shows what's been happening with your data today or over the past month. 11 To turn on the service, flick the switch in the top-right corner. 2 The information bar **B** gives an overview of what's been used and saved, and can be swiped to show further details. The list of apps 4 displays how much data has been used and saved in each app.



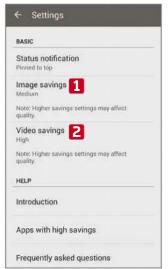
The Today tab presents your apps in a timeline based on when they were last used, but you can get a better overview on the This Month tab. Tap the lower menu button **1** and choose how you want your apps arranged - by usage, savings or name. 2 You can also choose to see all your apps, even those you haven't used. 윌



Tap the menu button to open the side menu. Here, you can adjust which types of connection use the service so, for instance, you could have it switched on for mobile 1 and off for Wi-Fi. 2 Tap 'Mobile usage' or 'Wi-Fi usage' to select the home screen for that option.

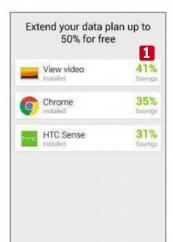


The Opera Max app can block other apps from accessing the internet while they're using mobile data, Wi-Fi or both. Click the menu button and choose 'Blocked apps'. Scroll down the list on the left, find the app you want to block and drag it to the column on the right. 11 To block an app completely, carry out the procedure on both the Mobile and Wi-Fi tabs. 2



......

If you find that the quality of images and video is too low, you can turn down the amount of compression, which will increase the visual quality of what you see. Open the side menu and tap 'Image savings' 11 or 'Video savings'. 2 You can choose to turn the savings down to Medium or Low, or switch the compression off completely.



Also from the Settings menu, tap 'Apps with high savings'. This will scan your device for apps that are installed on your device that Opera Max is particularly good at compressing. 11 You'll have to make a mental note of them, though. Although they look like buttons, you can't tap them to launch the apps.



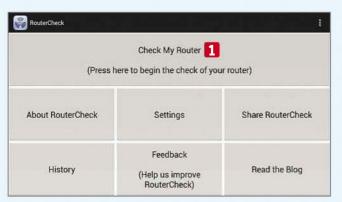
Find and fix gaps in your network security

e all use secure passwords to stop our neighbours joining our Wi-Fi networks, but your router may still be susceptible to further security risks, such as generic admin passwords and insecure ports left open by the

manufacturer. RouterCheck is a handy free Android app that can help you check for common security risks that you might have missed when you set up your router.



RouterCheck: bit.ly/rc375 | 🕒 20 mins | Android



Network "NETGEAR00" -- Home
Router Information

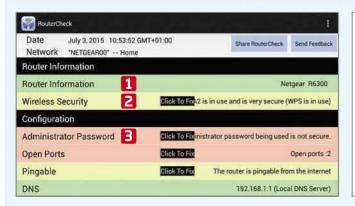
Router Informati
Wireless Securit RouterCheck is analyzing your router's security.

Configuration

Administrator Pe
Open Ports
Pingable
DNS

Connect to the network you want to test. If you have a dual-band router, you might want to check both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks, but you'll need to do them one at a time. Install and run the app. From the main screen, tap the Check My Router button. 1

Choose a location from the list and confirm that you're allowed to run the tests that check the network. The app will run through a series of tests that take about a minute to perform.





The next page shows all the results of the checks, using colour coding to denote the severity of any problems: green for all's well; yellow for caution; and red for urgent. You can tap any of them to get more info, even the green ones that don't need any further actions.

Check the Wireless Security result. Even with a strong password, a router could be vulnerable if WPS is left on. WPS is handy when you set up many devices, but it's sensible to turn it off and use your password on a daily basis. Log into your router and find the WPS option to turn it off.





Routers often leave ports open, so you can access their features if you're away from your network. Many also let you use USB ports as network storage. If you get a warning and don't use these tools, look in the router's settings for Remote Management 1 and make sure it's turned off. 2

It's often assumed that the Admin Password is only accessed if you're on the same network, but router settings can be accessed through WPS and open ports, so it's worth changing the default. You do this from the console 1 - just don't forget the new password.

Weekend Project

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





Revive an old Android device by rooting it

Wayne Williams shows you how to root an old Android device to update old software and access new apps

ndroid is a very customisable operating system, but there are still limits to what you can do with it. 'Rooting' your device will give you greater control over it and let you make all sorts of major changes, including replacing the operating system. It also lets you install and run root-only apps from Google Play store, providing access to all sorts of powerful tools that aren't otherwise allowed. Rooting an Android device isn't difficult, but it's not without its risks. For that reason, if you're a first-time rooter, you might want to consider trying it out on an old, unused Android device before you proceed to rooting your current one.



What is rooting?

Rooting essentially means freeing your device from the restrictions placed on it by Google, your device's manufacturer and your mobile network. Android is based on Linux, and rooting it gives you privileged administrator access over the operating system, just as you can gain root access in a computer-based Linux operating system such as Ubuntu.

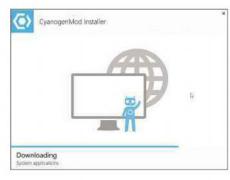
Once the device is rooted, you become

a 'superuser', and can do pretty much whatever you like with it.

Pros and cons

The pros of rooting easily outweigh the cons, but that's not to say that it's right for everyone, so don't jump in without thinking it through – after all, there is a risk that your device could become irreparably damaged. But let's look at the positives first.

- Get the latest Android: Once your device is rooted, you can choose which version of Android to run, without having to wait for your manufacturer or network to release an update for your old device. You are now in control of when your device is updated.
- Remove manufacturer's junk: You'll be able to remove all the junk and bloatware installed on your device by the maker and network. There will doubtless be



Installing a new operating system on an Android device isn't as hard as you think

pre-installed apps on your device that you never use, and rooting it will let you remove them, freeing up space and boosting performance.

• Lots of new apps: You can install powerful apps and unique tools that aren't available to other Android users, such as apps that can extend your device's

battery life.

• Custom OS: Custom operating systems, called ROMs, offer extra tools and faster updates to the newest versions of Android, The best known is CvanogenMod (www

.cyanogenmod

.org) and we

install this in

look at how to



Clear the manufacturer clutter from your phone and install the latest updates by rooting your Android device

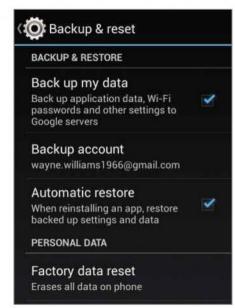
our Mini Workshop, below. To find out how to use some of its features, take a look at our Mini Workshop on page 61.

Now let's consider the downsides.

- · Breaks your warranty: Rooting your device will void its warranty, but if you're rooting an older device that you don't use any more, it's not a problem because the warranty will have run out, anyway.
- · Bricking your device: If you mess things up, you run the risk of 'bricking' your device, which essentially means that you won't be able to use it and you won't be able to fix it, either (it will be as much use as a house brick). Most problems can be reversed but there's still a risk.
- Some apps won't work: A growing number of apps check to see if a device has been rooted and won't run if it has. Banking apps in particular won't work on rooted devices for security reasons. There are ways around this, though, by using tools such as RootCloak (bit.ly/ rootcloak375) that can get those apps to run by fooling them into thinking that your phone hasn't been rooted.

Before you root

The first thing you need to do before rooting your device is back it up. Rooting removes everything on it and you don't want to lose your personal data. Google automatically backs up data such as Wi-Fi networks and passwords, device settings, apps installed through Google Play, settings for those apps, and more. Go to Settings, 'Backup & reset' and make sure 'Back up my data' and 'Automatic restore' are ticked. Go back to Settings and tap Google Account. Select your account and choose what you want to back up. This includes app data, the



Don't forget to back up your device before you start rooting it

calendar, your contacts, Chrome, Gmail and so on.

You can manually back up your photos, videos and music by connecting your phone to your PC and copying everything over. Your device manufacturer may have included a backup tool on your phone or it may offer an app you can install. There are also plenty of other backup apps available to install from Google Play that you could consider using.

Once you've backed up everything, put your phone on charge. You need at least 50-per-cent battery life (preferably more) before starting the root process.

How to root Android

The method you use will vary depending on the make and model of your device,

MINI WORKSHOP | Install CyanogenMod on your Android phone

First, you need to make sure your device is set to install apps in APK format. Go to Settings, Security and enable



the Unknown Sources option. Launch your phone's web browser and go to get.cm. Tap the Download button [1] and OneClick.apk will download to your device.

Pull down the notifications from the top of the screen, and tap the downloaded app. Tap Install, then tap Open. Once the app opens, tap Begin. 💶 Read the warning, and, if you're



happy to proceed, tap 'I agree'. Follow the setup instructions. You'll be asked to modify a couple of settings on your device. Next, you need to connect your device to a computer via USB.



Run the CyanogenMod Windows Installer (www.cyanogenmod.org) on your PC. You need to temporarily disable your anti-virus software while using it. The program will detect the companion app and download the new OS and apps. Click Install. [1] When it's done, your phone will reboot and you can start using CyanogenMod.

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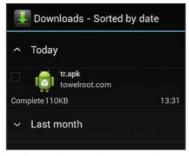
at bit.ly/defandroid



Allow apps from Unknown Sources if you want to root your Android device

though the process usually starts with unlocking or skipping the bootloader. This, as the name suggests, loads when you boot up, ahead of anything else that's installed on your device. It checks the authenticity of your software, which means it will interfere with your attempts to root your device. Some manufacturers show you how to unlock bootloaders on their websites. If you can't find this information, or you're not certain, you can try the XDA Developers Forum (bit.ly/ xdadevelopers375) for help and advice for your specific device.

There are various ways to root your



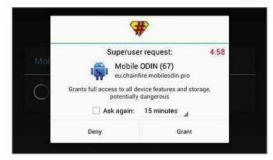
Download and run Towelroot to

help you root your device phone but the easiest is to use a tool such as Towelroot (towelroot.com) or Kingo (www.kingoapp.com). To use Towelroot, go to the website on your device and tap the lambda (λ) symbol to save the app in APK format. Go to Settings, Security, and allow apps from Unknown Sources. You can then install the saved app. With Kingo, you need to download Android Root for Windows from the website. Connect your phone

There's no guarantee that either rooting method will work on your device, so check the site information before you begin. There's a list of supported devices for Kingo at bit.ly/kingo375.

via USB, run the program and follow the

Once your phone is rooted, download Root Checker (bit.ly/rootchk375) from Google Play to make sure everything is as it should be. You should also install SuperSU (bit.ly/su375), which provides a selection of advanced management tools and lets you control what can gain access



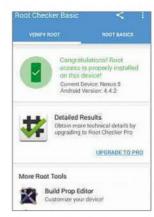
SuperSU lets you access some extra tools that aren't normally accessible on Android

to root. It can also temporarily or

device, should you decide you want to go back to how things were. If this all sounds too complicated or you're worried about damaging your device, you can just install

permanently

unroot your



You can find out if your rooting has succeeded with the help of Root Checker

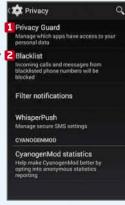
CyanogenMod (www.cyanogenmod.org). You used to have to root your phone before installing it, but that's not the case with the latest version, which will unlock the bootloader for you. It's by far the easiest solution.



MINI WORKSHOP | Explore useful CyanogenMod features

instructions.

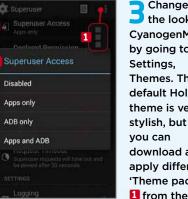
plenty to discover in CyanogenMod, which is like the regular version of Android with additional tools. Start by going to Settings, Privacy. **Privacy Guard**



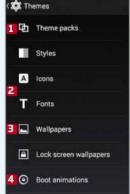
lets you manage which apps have access to your personal data. You can enable it by default for newly installed apps. Block phonecalls and messages from nuisance numbers by adding them to the Blacklist. 2

The Superuser section in Settings lets you manage root permissions for individual apps or the entire device, which gives you a greater degree of security. Tap the three

vertical dots [] and select Settings to display the menu. Tap Superuser Access 2 to make your root access selection. [] This is 'Apps only' by default.



Change the look of CyanogenMod by going to Settings, Themes, The default Holo theme is very stylish, but you can download and apply different 'Theme packs'



CyanogenMod Themes Showcase or Google Play Store. You can also change the icons and fonts, 2 wallpapers, **3** and even the boot animations. 4

NEXT ISSUE

How To... Rip, record and stream DVDs

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Web User's Top Tips

Our experts explore tweaks and tricks for shutting down, booting up and restarting Windows

TOP TIPS FOR BOOTING AND REBOOTING

Set an action for your PC's power button

he power button on your PC doesn't physically connect or disconnect the mains power, and you can program it to carry out a particular action – shutdown, sleep or hibernate – when it's pressed.

Open the Control Panel and select 'Large icons' or 'Small icons' from the 'View by' drop-down menu. Click the 'Choose what the power button does' link or, if you have a laptop that also has a sleep button, it might be 'Choose what the power buttons do'. This presents options that let you set the power button to perform different jobs.

If you have a laptop, you can set it to do different things depending on whether you're running on the battery or plugged into the mains. Click the setting and choose from 'Do nothing', Sleep, Hibernate, and 'Shut down'. Laptop owners can also choose from these four actions when the lid is closed.



You can set the power button to shut down your computer quickly

Quick keyboard shortcut

The key combination Alt+F4 will close any application that's currently selected, such as Word or Notepad. When there are no applications or windows open, or the Desktop is selected, Alt+F4 displays a window called Shut Down Windows.



Click the Desktop and press Alt+F4 to access the shutdown and restart options

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

Click the list under 'What do you want the computer to do?' and select 'Switch user', 'Sign out', Sleep, 'Shut down' or Restart.

Shutdown with the mouse

In Windows 7 and earlier, you would shut down your computer by clicking Start, then 'Shut down'. A small arrow to the right provided options to 'Log off', Lock, Restart, and Sleep. In Windows 8, these options were removed and shutting down your PC meant moving the mouse to the right of the screen to show the Charms bar, then clicking



Windows 8.1 brought back the power button after its removal in version 8.0

Settings, Power, and then Sleep, Hibernate, 'Shut down' or Restart.

In Windows 8.1 you'll find a Power Options button in the top-right corner of the Start screen. Click it and select Sleep, Hibernate, 'Shut down' or Restart. You can also right-click the Start button in the taskbar on the Desktop and select 'Sign out', Sleep, Hibernate, 'Shut down' or Restart.

Reboot in Safe Mode

Safe Mode is a useful Windows tool that's used for diagnosing and troubleshooting. If a program on your computer is causing problems, you'll want to deal with it before it launches and booting into Safe Mode limits what's loaded on your PC to the bare minimum. Getting into Safe Mode is easy if you're running Windows 7 or earlier – just switch on or restart your PC and press F8 a few times before the Windows loading screen appears, then select Safe Mode from the Startup menu.

In Windows 8, you need to switch

on or restart Windows, then tap a key at the lock screen to get to the login screen. Hold down Shift, click the power button and select Restart. Alternatively, once Windows is running, press Windows+R, type msconfig and press Enter to open the System Configuration menu. Then, on the Boot tab, select 'Safe boot'.

When Windows restarts, click Troubleshoot, 'Advanced options' and Startup Settings. Eventually, a screen will appear in which Safe Mode can be selected as an option.



Select the type of boot you want to run from System Configuration's Boot tab

Schedule shutdowns

You can schedule shutdown, sleep and reboots on your computer, which is handy if you're downloading something that's taking a long time or playing music in bed and want to switch off your PC after you fall asleep.

Open the Start menu or Start screen and type schedule tasks. Click the result to open the Task Scheduler. From the menu, select Action, then Create Basic Task. Give it a name - for example 'Shutdown' - then click Next. When asked when you want it to start, select Daily. You can now set the time. Keep clicking Next and when you're asked for the action, select 'Start a program'.

For the Program/Script, type: shutdown.exe -s /t 00 /f Click Finish and the computer will shut down at your chosen time. The task can be selected, and deleted or modified if you change your mind.

Boot from another device

Windows rescue CDs, Linux DVDs, USB hard drives and flash memory can all be bootable, but it's not always obvious how you boot from them. Your PC may automatically detect a CD/DVD and display a message asking if you want to boot from it. Some computers have a special key (usually a function key, such as F9, F10 or F12) that lets you select the boot device from various options, such as the internal hard drive, a USB flash memory stick, USB drive or DVD/CD. Press it a second or two after switching on, and before Windows starts to load.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Shutdown commands

Use Windows+R to open the Run box, type cmd and press Enter. When the command-prompt window opens, type shutdown and press Enter. Don't worry, this won't shut down your computer - it just displays information about the command (see screen grab, below). At the top, you'll find the command-line parameters that control what the shutdown command does. You type shutdown and follow it with a parameter, such as /s, /r and so on.

Some parameters are more useful than others: shutdown /s just shuts down Windows and powers off. To shut down and restart Windows, use shutdown /r. To put the computer into Hibernate Mode, use shutdown /h. This saves the computer's current state to the hard drive and then powers off. The next time you switch on your PC, it will start up exactly as you left it with the same programs, windows and documents open.

All these commands shut down the computer immediately, but you can also make it shut down later. For example, shutdown /s /t 120 will make your PC shut down in 120 seconds (two minutes). Values from 0 to 315,360,000 are acceptable, so you can set the PC to shut down any time between now and in 10 years' time!

Create shortcuts

It's not practical to type a command prompt every time you want to shut down your PC, but now that we understand the shutdown command, we can use it to create a Desktop shortcut. Right-click an empty space on the Desktop and select New,



Create a Desktop shortcut to reboot. power off or hibernate your computer

Shortcut. When prompted for the location, type shutdown /s /t 0. Click next, use Shutdown for the name and finish. If you want the shortcut to restart or hibernate, type shutdown /r t 0 and name it Restart, or shutdown /h /t 0 and name it Hibernate. You can now double-click your new Desktop shortcut to reboot Windows or enter hibernate mode.

To give the Desktop shortcut an appropriate icon, right-click it and select Properties. On the Shortcut tab, click Change icon, then click through the pop-up message and, in the next window, select the red power-button icon. Open Explorer and drag the shortcut to the Documents folder to remove it from the Desktop, then drag and drop it to the taskbar. You now have a taskbar button that shuts down, reboots Windows or hibernates, depending on the command you used for the shortcut.

Boot to the BIOS

The BIOS settings are used for hardware configuration, and are accessed by pressing the appropriate function key (usually F2, F9 or F10) just after switching on your PC.



Type shutdown at the Command Prompt to see a list of the function's parameters

Ask the Expert

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



HARDWARE

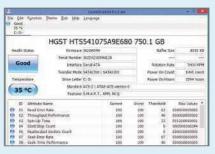
What to do if your hard drive is dying

I've recently started seeing warnings that there are bad sectors on my PC's hard drive and that I should repair or replace it. What should I do? Will reformatting the drive fix the problem?

M Baker, via email

The messages are probably coming from a disk-monitoring tool. Modern drives have something called SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology), which monitors the drive's health and tracks errors. Some software tools can read this information and identify problems before they become too serious. A good example is CrystalDiskInfo, which you can download free from bit.ly/crys375.

The messages are probably correct, which means the drive is developing problems. Formatting it will solve any errors in the file system, which is the indexing system that keeps track of where files are stored on it. However, formatting won't repair bad sectors; at best they will only be excluded



Use CrystalDiskInfo to view SMART info and other drive health information

from use by the filing system. If the number of bad sectors is growing, it's likely the drive will fail soon, so you should back up its contents as best you can and replace it.

A simple backup method is to copy the Documents, Music, Pictures and Video folders to a USB drive using Explorer. Windows can be replaced and so can software you've installed, but your personal files cannot, so make sure you've got a copy of anything that's important.

Even better, you could back up the entire hard drive to an external drive using a tool such as AOMEI Backupper (www.backup-utility.com). Then, if your hard drive fails, you can replace it and use a boot CD or USB flash drive to restore your files from the backup drive.

automatic download through Windows Update, something you can still do yourself manually should you choose to ignore the icon.

Is it worth upgrading? That's up to you. Windows 10 has some great new tools that most people should find useful, but new operating systems tend to require more memory, processing power and hard-drive space, which is worth bearing in mind when considering whether to upgrade.

HARDWARE

Fix a webcam that's stopped working

I have an HP Pavilion dv6 laptop with a built-in HP TrueVision HD webcam. The webcam worked fine when I got the laptop but has now stopped functioning, and all my attempts to fix it have been in vain. Please tell me there is an easy solution because I am no computer buff.

Muir Mackenzie, via email

This could be a simple software problem or it could be that the hardware is not being detected. Press Windows+R, type devmgmt.msc and press Enter to launch the Device Manager. Look for 'Imaging devices', expand the category and see if the HP TrueVision HD webcam is listed. If not, close any programs that are running and shut down the computer. Remove the power cord and battery, then hold down the power button for 10 seconds. Replace the battery, plug in the power cord and switch on the laptop.

When you get back to the Desktop, open Device Manager again in the same way and hopefully the webcam will now be listed. If not, go to the Action menu and select 'Scan for hardware changes'. When the camera appears, right-click it and select Update Driver Software.

Even if the webcam is detected, the Cyberlink YouCam software needs to be installed for it to work. This could have been uninstalled for some reason or corrupted, causing the webcam to stop functioning. HP lists around 35 different Pavilion dv6 laptops on its site, so we cannot give the exact URL to download

GENERAL PC

Explaining the Windows 10 icon

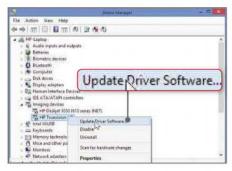
On starting Windows 7, I've noticed a new icon in the notification area offering me a free upgrade to Windows 10. Is this a genuine offer? Is it worth upgrading to Windows 10 anyway?

Mel Hardy, via email

Yes, this is a genuine offer from Microsoft, but beware of similar offers appearing in emails or pop-up messages on websites, because these are likely to be scams aimed at tricking you into installing adware, spyware or viruses. On clicking the authentic taskbar icon, you will be asked to enter your email address, and this will 'reserve' your free upgrade to the full version of Windows 10 Home when it is released on 29 July. This doesn't mean you have to install the new OS immediately - it simply sets up an



Reserving your copy of Windows 10 tells Windows Update you want to download it



Right-click items in Device Manager to check that their drivers are up to date

the software from. Go to bit.ly/hp375 and enter your exact model, pull up its page, go to the software-multimedia section, click the download link and install the software.

HARDWARE

Recovering photos from a **USB** drive

I recently plugged in a USB flash drive containing a collection of photos I hadn't accessed for a few months. Some of the folders, which previously had photos in them, now cannot be read and appear to be empty. Single files, however, seem to be OK. I tried using Recuva (bit.ly/recuva375) and it says the items are overwritten and unrecoverable. There is still plenty of free space on the drive, and I haven't added any new files since I last used it. Could Recuva be wrong and, if so, can the images be recovered by other means?

Roger Keene, via email

Your files and folders could have been corrupted when the drive was last removed from your PC. If you haven't already done so, try ticking the Enable Deep Scan option at the end of Recuva's wizard for configuring the file scan and see if that makes a difference. Other good recovery tools include Wise Data Recovery (bit.ly/wise375), R-Undelete (www.r-undelete.com) and Puran File Recovery (bit.ly/puran375).

All forms of file storage can fail, so it's best to store backups of important files on a different storage medium to the originals, such as on an internal or external hard drive, USB flash drive, NAS or using an online storage service like Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive.

GENERAL PC

Laptop turns off when lid is closed

I have just replaced my Windows 7 laptop with a new one running Windows 8.1. On the old laptop, closing the lid would sent it into a sort of

standby mode that would start up almost straight away with everything exactly how I'd left it when I opened the lid again. However, when I close the lid on the new laptop, it completely switches off and I have to wait for it to boot. None of my programs or documents reappear and the work I've done on them is lost.

Liam Jones, via email

The solution could be as simple as tweaking the laptop's power-plan settings. Open the Control Panel and select Power Options. Whatever plan is currently selected, click 'Change plan



Set actions for when the power button is pressed or the laptop lid is closed

settings'. On the next screen click 'Change advanced power settings' and a new window will open. Scroll down and expand 'Power buttons and lid'.

There are four settings to choose from: 'Do nothing', Sleep, Hibernate, and Shut down. Sleep and Hibernate both save the PC's current state, including open documents and windows, but Sleep keeps the PC switched on in a low power state where Hibernate turns it off. and so restores everything quicker.

GENERAL PC

Get back the Windows 10 upgrade

I recently had to perform a factory reset on my Windows 7 laptop and now the Windows 10 upgrade icon in the notification area seems to have disappeared. How do I get it back again? Ann Walsh, via email

Windows 7 and 8 only display this icon if all the latest updates, bug fixes and patches are installed. After the factory reset, you are back with a fresh Windows 7 installation, so you'll need to bring it up to date again. Go to Windows Update in the Control Panel and check for updates. Install them, reboot and check again. If you repeat this until there are no more updates, the Windows 10 icon should reappear.

SOFTWARE

Downgrading from Office

I have an Office 2013 subscription, but want to switch to LibreOffice (www.libreoffice.org) instead. I have 1TB of space on OneDrive as part of my subscription. What happens to my files if I cancel? I'm running Windows 8.1.

Paul Evans, via email

When you cancel your Office subscription, your 1TB of OneDrive space will reduce to the 15GB you get with a free account. You can incrementally add to this via tweaks such as setting up automatic photo backups from a mobile phone.

If you reach your storage limit, not only are you prevented from adding anything further, but many OneDrive functions will stop working, including the ability to create new files, upload files or even copy them.

To keep OneDrive working, you



LibreOffice is a free alternative to Microsoft's paid-for office software

should reduce your space usage to below this limit. Download the files or folders and save them on your PC, or open the OneDrive folder in Explorer and move the files out.

LibreOffice is a good office suite but it can run into problems with some Microsoft Office files - simple ones may be read perfectly, but complex ones not. An alternative is to use Office web apps such as Word, Excel. PowerPoint and OneNote in a browser at onedrive.com. They are not as powerful as the offline versions, but may be sufficient for your needs.



This fortnight Roland has been recovering from a hacked account by strengthening and encrypting his passwords

Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. To get help or offer it to others,

visit forum.webuser.co.uk

TOP TIP

ANDROID

Reclaim mobile storage from music

I recently had a problem with my Android phone. It had completely run out of space and I couldn't take any more photos or install any apps. After digging around in the apps and settings, I discovered that Google Play Music, which I use to stream music on my phone, had a huge cache consisting of hundreds of megabytes of music. Clearing it recovered lots of memory



Clear the Google Play Music cache to reclaim space on your phone

and my phone is now working again.

To check this on your phone, open Play Music, go to the menu and tap Settings. Scroll down to the Clear Cache option and use this to free up space. You can also turn off automatic caching.

Mark Hastings, via email



GENERAL PC

Hide the Windows 10 icon

Every Windows 7 and 8 computer that is capable of running Windows 10 will have had an icon added to the notification area of the taskbar. Whether you click and reserve a copy of Windows 10 or not, it will stay there. You can get rid of it, though. Click the little triangle at the right side of the taskbar that shows the panel of notification icons, then click Customise. Find GWX (Get Windows X), click the button and select either 'Only show notifications' or 'Hide icon and notifications'. The first is the best and it moves the icon from the taskbar to the pop-up tray, but you will still be notified when Windows 10 is available.

Harry Mitchell, via email



Hide the Windows 10 Upgrade icon once you've used it to reserve your copy

WEBSITES

Test your typing speed

It had been years since I'd taken a typing test and then a friend told me about TypeRacer (play.typeracer.com). I find the website much more fun than traditional typing software because it pits you against online opponents to see who can type the fastest. For each 'race', a random passage appears on screen and, as you type, your speed is displayed alongside a coloured car that shows your progress compared to others. There's no need to set up an account to take part but, if you do, you can keep track of your

SOCIAL

Tweet more than 140 characters

Twitter's 140-character limit is annoying when you have more to say. One trick I use is to post a long message on Google+ and then go to Twitter and post a short message with a link to the more comprehensive Google+ post. This can be done very easily but it isn't immediately obvious how.

In the top-right corner of every Google+ post is a little down arrow that looks like a 'v'. Click it and a menu drops down. Select 'Link to post' and the URL is shown. Copy it with Ctrl+C and paste it to your Twitter post with Ctrl+V.

Gerry Potter, via email

BROWSERS

Give a site's search box a keyword in Firefox

There is a useful feature in Firefox that not many people know about, which lets you instantly search for content within your favourite websites. Go to a website and find the search box on its homepage. Right-click inside this search box and select 'Add a Keyword for this search' from the menu. Enter a keyword for the

website, preferably something based on its name. For example, 'wiki' for www .wikipedia.org or 'bbc' for www.bbc.co.uk and so on.

No matter which website you are currently viewing in your browser, you can use the keyword to instantly search the other site. So, for example, if you are visiting the BBC website but want to look up something on Wikipedia, you can type wiki (or whatever keyword you set for Wikipedia) into the address box. followed by the search term. This cuts out the extra step of having to first go to a site's homepage and enter your search term in its search box to find content.

Derek Keating, via email



Right-click the search box on a web page and save it as a keyword



TypeRacer lets you challenge your friends to a typing race

data including your total number of races and wins, average typing speed and all-time fastest speed.

If you get bored of challenging strangers, the site also lets you race your friends by sharing a URL that can be copied straight into a browser. I'm not sure how much it's improved my typing, but it's good fun and interesting to see your typing speed and accuracy.

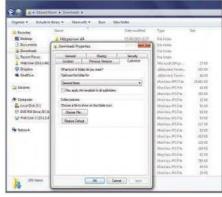
Bob, via email

GENERAL PC

Fix slow-loading Downloads folder

Recently, whenever I opened the Downloads folder on my PC, it took what felt like an eternity to load. Most of the content was visible straight away, but a blue progress bar appeared at the top of the window, suggesting that something was still loading. In fact, if I accessed the Downloads folder by clicking Chrome's option to 'Show in folder', it would take some 30 seconds before the file would appear highlighted. I had no idea what was causing this problem and even though the folder had a lot of files in it, there didn't seem enough of a reason for the PC to be struggling so much.

I've since come across a handy tip online that fixes the problem with only a couple of clicks. Apparently, the root of the problem is that the Downloads folder is categorised as a Pictures folder. meaning the PC has to generate



Optimise the Downloads folder for General Items to make it open faster

thumbnails for each of the files, even those that aren't pictures. To change this, you can click Organize, Properties and Customize and select General Items from the drop-down menu before clicking Apply and OK. I'm not sure why it has such a big impact, but it definitely makes my Download folder load faster. From time to time, I find the settings revert to the default but if this happens, you can just follow the steps again.

Tony Elvin, via email

SOFTWARE

Recover software licence codes

I bought a second-hand laptop from a friend a few years ago which had Office 2010 installed, but as far as I could tell Office wasn't included on any of the recovery disks that he gave me. When the laptop started to slow down a few months ago. I was left with a bit of a dilemma, because I wanted to restore it to its factory state but I didn't want to risk losing Office and have to pay for it

I searched Google for a way of identifying the licence keys for software already installed on your computer and came across the Magical Jelly Bean KeyFinder (bit.ly/bean375). It's free to download and, within seconds, it returns the licence keys for any premium applications you have installed on your PC. As promised, it found the licence key for my copy of Office 2010. I typed it into the Office 2010 download page on the Microsoft site (bit.ly/office375) before reinstalling Windows to check that it would work, and it did.

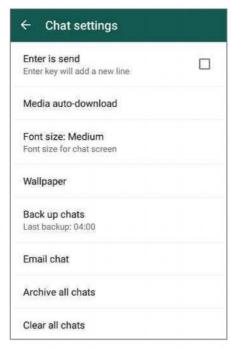
Phil Bowes, via email



Magical Jelly Bean Keyfinder finds licence keys for software installed on your PC

Move WhatsApp chats to a new Android device

I recently bought a new Android phone and wanted to move all my WhatsApp conversations across to the new device so I didn't lose any important information. Fortunately, there's a fairly straightforward way of doing this. First, you need to make sure that you've backed up your WhatsApp conversations to your device. To do this, tap the



WhatsApp lets you back up your chats and copy them to another Android device

three-dot menu icon, select Settings and then 'Chat settings'. Under 'Backup chats', you'll see when your conversations were last backed up, but you can tap the button at any time to create an up-to-the-moment image.

Once you've done that, you'll need to locate the backup file, which requires an Android file manager such as Tomi File Manager (bit.ly/tomi375), if you don't already have one. On your phone's storage, look for a folder called WhatsApp and copy it to your PC or upload it to a cloud service such as Dropbox. This file contains all the photos and videos you've sent and received using the app, so it can be very large.

Next, copy the WhatsApp folder from your PC to your new device before opening WhatsApp. When you open the messenger for the first time, it will invite you to restore all your WhatsApp chats with a single tap.

Rupert Thompson, via email

BROWSERS

Paste and go in Internet **Explorer**

Most browsers show a 'Paste and go' or 'Paste and search' option when you rightclick the address bar, so that you can load a web page you've copied from somewhere else with a single click. This option doesn't exist in Internet Explorer but you can achieve the same thing by copying the web address you want to visit and then pressing Ctrl+Shift+L. It'll load in the tab you have open. If you copy text instead of a URL, it'll search for those keywords in Bing.

Madeline, Web User Forums



Readers' Helpdesk

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

PHONES

Are 087 and 080 numbers free from a landline?

I'm confused about whether I can call 080 and 087 numbers for free from my landline. Can anyone help me?

Joe_London, Web User Forums

A If you're ever unsure about call charges, have a look at the government website on the subject (www.gov.uk/call-charges). Note that your phone provider might also offer free calls to some numbers as part of your package, so it's a good idea to check with them, too. However, to answer your question, both 0800 and 0808 numbers are freephone numbers from landlines, while anything starting with 087 is a business-rate number that currently costs up to 15p per minute from your home phone.

If you don't want to use a business-rate number, you can try looking on the SayNoToO870 website (www .saynotoO870.com) to find a geographical or free alternative. It's worth pointing out, however, that from 1 July 2015, the law has been changed to make the pricing clearer on business-rate lines. The costs for numbers starting 084, 087, 09 and 118 are now split into access charge (which goes to your phone company) and a service charge (which profits the organisation using the number and



Check the latest call charges at the Gov.uk website

EMAII

How can I stop Outlook.com suggesting email addresses?

I've added my friend's new email address to my contacts list in Outlook.com, but whenever I type the first few letters of his name to send him an email, his old address comes up as a suggestion. How do I delete his old email address?

Jedi, Web User Forums

Advanced privacy settings | Sebox > Options > Advanced privacy settings |

Auto-complete suggestions |

As you add people to a message, we'll suggest possible matches. You can choose which suggestions appropriate appropriate people in my contact lat |

Doubt on processors |

Give suggestions for anyone I've communicated with |

Only suggest people in my contact list |

Only suggest people in my contact list |

By default, Outlook.com suggests the email addresses of anyone you've communicated with in the past

A If the old email address is still in your contacts list, click the nine-square menu button, select People and find the unwanted entry. Select it and click Delete.

It's possible, however, that Outlook is suggesting the email address even if you've never manually saved it. If this is the case, click the Cog icon, then select Options and look for the Customising Outlook.com heading. From here, choose 'Advanced privacy settings'. Under 'Auto-complete suggestions' tick 'Only suggest people in my contact list'. After you click Save, any email addresses you've previously sent mail to will only be suggested if you've also added them to your contacts list.

Moonshine, Web User Forums

should be clearly advertised wherever you see the number). From the same date, both 0800 and 0808 numbers are free to call from mobiles, too.

Tornado and IanO10, Web User Forums

HARDWARE

Should I switch off my router while I'm on holiday?

I shall soon be going on holiday and I'm not sure whether I should switch off my router while I am away or if it's better to leave it connected.

The Badger, Web User Forums

I've seen a few cases where people have switched off their router while they're on holiday, only to come home and find that it no longer works. They had a hell of job to get it working

again, if at all. However, I suppose we don't hear of those who had no problems at all. If you leave your fridge and freezer on when you go away, then there's no reason not to leave your router on, too. You'd have to leave it on if you have a home-security camera or want to record a program on your Sky+ box, so I can't see why it would be a problem.

Cantrel, Web User Forums



Unplugging your ISP's router while you go on holiday may cause performance issues when you get back









Star Email

We need more protection from identity theft

up these folks?

description of the

Even in their

he sale of my parents' bungalow and the need for a solicitor has made me think about data and identity theft, and how I can protect my identity.

Before the solicitor can act on behalf of me and my siblings, he wants the following information: full name, address, telephone number, email address, bank details, date of birth and National Insurance number

On reading the solicitor's privacy policy and terms and conditions, they say they will send "marketing material", and my identity may be held at other solicitors' offices that are part of the same group. Papers will be kept for 12 years and, as part of the identity check, personal information will be disclosed to third parties, but it doesn't say who these third parties might be.

Relying on protection from the Data Protection Act of 1998 could be a waste of time, especially when such acts are couched in terms of "consider data encryption" and "consider additional protection when emailing".

My main fear, given the above, is that my identity may have been copied to several computer systems and I have no way of knowing who I should contact to find out whether the data is accurate or will be kept longer than necessary. Can you see the Information Commissioner's Office having enough staff to chase

data-protection principle, they say: "The more databases that are set up and the more information that is exchanged, the greater the risk that the information will be lost, corrupted or misused". Neither do I want to have to spend £100 per year to check my credit report just to see whether I

have become a victim of identity theft or fraud. I'm quite happy to provide most of the data requested by my solicitor, but I don't see why I should have to share my date of birth and National Insurance number.

Galen White, via email

Robot overlords could unite the human race

> Regarding your FAQ about robot helpers in Issue 373 of Web User

(bit.ly/webuser373), Stephen Hawking and Bill Gates are right in thinking that computers and other artificial intelligence will eventually look upon humans as inferior, just as we humans look down on animals and insects. We need computers, and we control them, yet they are capable of much more.

But if robots did take over, it might even pull humankind together. Humans could relinquish money, religion, wars and all the other things that have stopped us

being friendly to one other. I believe that Professor Hawking has also thought of this, and is trying to save us from becoming slaves to artificial intelligence.

Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes

We must not let the machines enslave us

In your FAQ in Issue 373, you ask: "Will robots take over the world?". Judging by the number of people I see glued to their

mobile phones as they walk down the street, completely oblivious to anyone around them, I would say that the machines are already making significant inroads toward world domination!

Perhaps we are being naïve in presuming that artificial intelligence capable of destroying the human race will be similar to HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey: a sentient, emotionless computer that eventually

turns against its human controllers.

In actual fact, the robots' rise to power is more likely to harness the hypnotic effect that we currently see being exerted by phones, tablets, games consoles and so on, and we won't realise that we're being enslaved by the machines until it's too late.

So I implore your readers: switch off your electronic devices for at least two hours every day (and I don't just mean while you're sleeping). If we continue to let technology rule our every waking hour, then the doomsday scenario predicted by many scientists could soon come to pass.

Maurice Holden, via email

Thanks for helping me make my first movie

I've started filming videos of pub bands and wanted to put them on YouTube, but needed to tidy them up a bit first. I decided to download the latest version of Windows Movie Maker, because people had recommended this as the best 'free' movie-editing software. A day later, I received Issue 371 of Web User and read the 'Software and Apps You Should Never Download' article. I was interested to read that, in your opinion, I should avoid Movie Maker and download VSDC Editor (bit.ly/vsdceditor371) instead. I did this and, after messing around with various effects and titles, I had a video suitable for YouTube.

It's no blockbuster, but for my first ever attempt at editing and using software





You can let us know your views and opinions via:

webuser@dennis.co.uk, www.facebook.com/webusermagazine, www.twitter.com/webusermagazine and forum.webuser.co.uk

that was hitherto unknown to me, I'm pleased with the result. I'll be experimenting more with other movies, so thanks for the recommendation.

Rob1955, Web User Forums

Watch out for non-genuine versions of Windows

Beware of a potential problem when you buy computers from eBay and Amazon. Around six months ago, I bought a Dell desktop PC that was supposed to have Windows 7 Professional installed on it. After using the computer for about four months, I suddenly started getting error messages stating that I was using a non-genuine version of Windows.

I've now found that all Windows Updates have stopped and I can't back up files from the PC using Windows



backup and recovery tools. When I tried to download a new backup program, a message appeared saying that the download had failed because I was using non-genuine Windows software. The message also stated that I needed to contact server support to obtain a new key to reactivate Windows, which would cost me £119.99.

So beware and check when buying computers from dealers such as these to make sure the version of Windows installed on them is genuine. My main complaint is that this was not my fault, so why should I have to pay for the licence key?

SE Biggs, via email

Request for a Web User back-issues CD

I've been a fan of *Web User* almost since day one. I'd like to suggest that *Web User* produce a CD containing 12 months of back issues. My reason for this is twofold: firstly, to stop my wife moaning about the amount of space that issues of *Web User* take up and secondly to assist my memory. I sometimes remember

seeing an article in the magazine, but because there is no search engine for paper issues, it can take an awfully long time to find the relevant copy.

Graham Brealey, Hunstanton

Web User says: that's a great idea, Graham, and one that we're working on at the moment - see the advert below!

We've got a lot to learn about self-driving cars

It's all very well for Barry Collins to say Google's self-driving cars are safer than manually driven ones, but has he actually sat in one while speeding up the M1? No, I don't believe he has, so how can he categorically state that these vehicles are totally safe to drive (or to not drive, as the case may be)?

There is still so little we know about self-driving cars that Google and other companies haven't yet told us. For example, how do they accelerate? Do you need to say: "OK Google, go faster"? And how do they brake if another vehicle

WebUser

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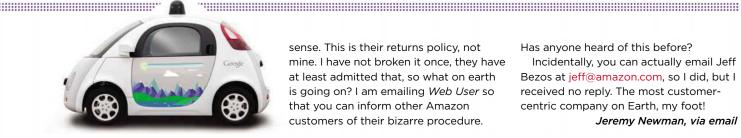
More details next issue, on sale 29 July











sense. This is their returns policy, not mine. I have not broken it once, they have at least admitted that, so what on earth is going on? I am emailing Web User so that you can inform other Amazon customers of their bizarre procedure.

Has anyone heard of this before?

Incidentally, you can actually email Jeff Bezos at jeff@amazon.com, so I did, but I received no reply. The most customercentric company on Earth, my foot!

Jeremy Newman, via email

or a pedestrian comes out of nowhere? Can you override them if they go wrong, such as swerving to drive you off a cliff?

What I'm really saying is that I want to have a spin in one to find out all this stuff, but I don't think Google is testing them in this country yet. I hope Web User will let us know when we can sign up for a free test drive!

Calum Pinger, via email

Amazon's returns policy makes no sense

I've been buying items from Amazon since 2004 and have always followed their returns policy to the letter. They offer a 30-day returns policy on most items and, if an item is faulty, they are happy to replace or refund. I also have my statuary rights under the Sale of Goods Act.

I have spent a fortune with Amazon and have kept many of the items I bought. However, about a month ago, they emailed me to say that they were not happy with the activity on my account. They were concerned about the returns and refunds I have asked for. My account is apparently safe at present, but they want to know if there is any way they can improve my buying experience





with them. This left me confused because any items

I returned were faulty, not as described or simply not as I expected them to be. You may ask how many items I have returned and how many refunds I received, but that would be irrelevant because nowhere in Amazon's terms and conditions does it say that you can only return so many items a year or receive a certain amount of refunds.

I have emailed them time and again, only to receive the same answer: "Your account is safe and active at present, please advise us if you require any help with ordering in future". It makes no

What you say...

OULD YOU SWITCH TO VIRGIN MEDIA IF ITS NEW 152Mbps SERVICE WAS **AVAILABLE ON YOUR STREET?**

I'd switch to it at any speed if we could get it here. BT is always going down.

Lucv @lucvirv

Nope. Quite happy with my existing broadband speed and ISP, Freeola (freeola.com). I can live quite comfortably with 37Mbps!

Paul Fald @bridge_53

No - I've got Virgin at 100Mbps, and that's fast enough for me. The price goes up exponentially if you ask for the highest speed.

Si Mellor

Oh, yes, without a doubt! They were supposed to lay cable throughout my town in April, but we're still waiting.

James McGinnis

Yes, if the price was right.

Ian Phipps

They can't even offer basic broadband on my street, let alone 152Mbps.

.....

Joanne Evans

O YOU ALWAYS CHANGE YOUR PASSWORD FOR WEB **SERVICES WHEN THERE'S BEEN** A SECURITY BREACH?

Yes. I now have to use a password manager to open another password manager which then opens LastPass. Okay, I'm exaggerating but it's a strong master password.

Paul Chapman

Yes, I changed mine. It's now so secure even I don't know what it is!

Gill Hodson

Yes, my passwords are usually a case of open Notepad, close eyes, mash 10-14 keys. Then open eyes, write down the password and put it somewhere safe, and close Notepad unsaved.

Ian John Nee

O YOU THINK WINDOWS 10 WILL BE BETTER THAN WINDOWS 8?

......

Couldn't be much worse in my book. Or could it? Windows 7 is the daddy. Kisz @Kiszcat

Anything is better than Windows 8! Colin Wallace

Don't know. Still using Windows Vista! Does the job for me, so why upgrade? Roger Whitcomb @milairpix

Hope so, otherwise I won't upgrade from amazing Windows 7 to crummy Windows 10. I will read the reviews and take it from there.

Jack @imthegoldmaster

It can't be any worse. Windows 7 is probably the most stable OS ever - no awful tiles interface. But I'm looking forward to 10.

Stu @stu_e_hughes

I'd like to think so, although Microsoft clearly don't learn from past attempts to upgrade a perfectly good OS. Look at Windows Me and Vista.

Ady Colclough @Adycolclough

It's only two weeks until Microsoft's new OS arrives. Barry Collins isn't confident

Is Windows 10 ready? Steady? No!

y daughter is 10 years old, going on 16. She wants to hang out in town with her mates, stay at home while we go to the supermarket and not have us peering over her shoulder every time she goes online. Every week brings a new test of how far she can be trusted and whether she's mature enough to handle these responsibilities. But so far, she's risen to the challenge.

I wish I could say the same about Windows 10. Operating systems are like kids: you have to work out whether you can trust them to behave before you let them loose on your main PC. For the past six months, I've been running the Insider Preview versions of Windows 10 on a test computer, and just a few weeks before launch, I wouldn't trust it to run a Casio calculator, let alone a PC I rely on for work.

As it stands, Windows 10 is fundamentally broken. After Windows 8

went down about as well as if Nigel Farage joined One Direction, Microsoft has been desperately fiddling with Windows 10, trying to find a design that works. We've had several major redesigns of the Start menu, for instance, which have got progressively more clunky with each incarnation.

ff Windows 8 went

down about as well as

if Nigel Farage joined

One Direction

This nervous twiddling and tweaking has led Microsoft to take its eye off the one thing that matters most: stability. Windows 10 is horribly flaky. Six

months before Microsoft released Windows 8 – which was a pretty major overhaul of the operating system itself – it was stable enough to run on my day-to-day work PC. It still had a few rough edges and incomplete features, but it was solid.

Windows 10, on the other hand, is

wobblier than a Weeble on a spin dryer. The update before last completely pole-axed my test PC, forcing me to wipe it completely clean and reinstall Windows 10 from scratch. Even now, apps still routinely crash, Wi-Fi randomly drops out and a bewildering error message appears every time you

try to reboot the PC.

As for the new features, the Edge browser – which replaces Internet Explorer – is so basic it doesn't even have a password manager yet; the Cortana voice

assistant understands my spoken commands perfectly, but when I ask a basic question like, "will it rain tonight?" it delivers a blank response (rather like my 10-year-old, now I think about it); and the latest stab at the Start menu takes three button presses just to shut the ruddy PC down, and scrolls both horizontally and vertically, which makes me feel seasick.

It is, of course, possible that Microsoft will cancel all leave and iron out the dozens of serious bugs that still litter Windows 10 before the end-of-July launch. But the stakes here are enormous. By making Windows 10 a free upgrade for Windows 7 and 8 users, the take-up rate is going to go through the roof compared to previous Windows releases, where you had to pay upwards of £80 for the privilege. If Microsoft screws up millions of people's PCs, it could genuinely be a mistake that it never recovers from.

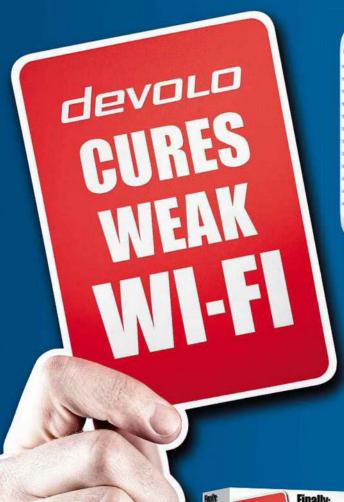
Normally I'm first in the queue for a new piece of software. This time, I'm happy to let you push in.

We'll be taking a closer look at why you should wait to upgrade to Windows 10 in our next issue.





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