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Issue 379

9 - 22 September 2015

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...the 10 worst websites exposed

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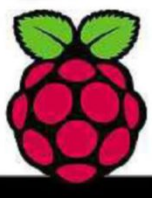

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Putting bad sites to rights

I have a feeling that this issue's cover feature, in which we name and shame our least favourite websites, will prove rather controversial. We're not just biting the hand that feeds, but veritably gnawing it off at the wrist, if that isn't too unpleasant an analogy.

Of course, when we say 'stop using these sites', we're not seriously expecting anyone to take us literally – you're free to visit any sites you like! But we hope you'll pay heed that many of the UK's most visited websites are seriously flawed for one reason or another, and can leave you vulnerable to dodgy privacy policies, lax security and abusive users. I'm sure you won't hesitate to let us know if you agree or disagree with us, as many of you have done regarding our Windows 10 coverage.

Speaking of which, I'm pleased to announce that our *Definitive Guide to Windows 10* is now available to buy from Amazon at bit.ly/guidetowindows10, and it's packed with useful tips and advice about the new operating system.

Robert Irvine
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
#webuser

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

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2 How to tweak Windows 10 privacy settings to protect your data **page 28**

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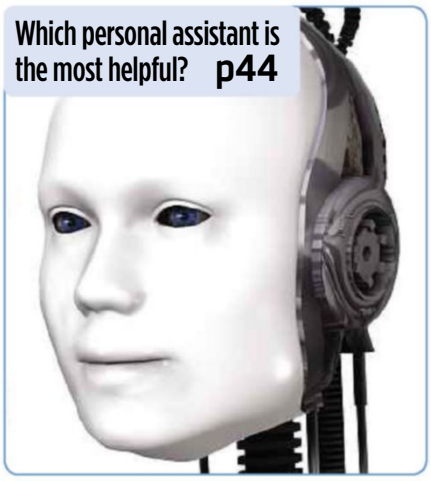

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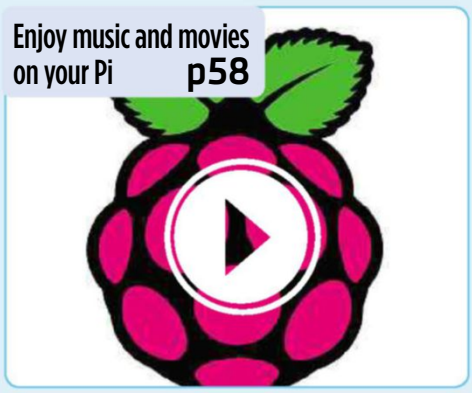

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What's New Online

Use iPlayer Live Restart on your TV

Live Restart – one of the iPlayer's best Desktop features – is now available on some smart TVs and set-top boxes, including YouView, Roku and Amazon Fire TV (see the full list at bit.ly/restart379). It lets you jump back to the start of a programme before it finishes broadcasting – just select 'Watch from Start' (see screen grab). The Beeb says it will be added to the phone and tablet apps next year.

It's one of three features the BBC has added to the iPlayer. Just as useful is 'cross-device resume', which means that if you're signed in, you can start watching a programme on one device and pick it up mid-episode on another. For now it's available on PCs, phones and tablets, with TV compatibility coming later. There's also a new section on the iPlayer called My Programmes (see screenshot above), which contains a 'Watching' list of episodes you've started viewing, the next in the series and programmes you've added to your Favourites.

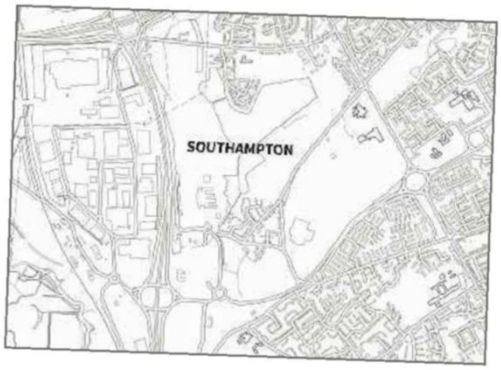
Click the link below to read more about the new features on the BBC's Internet Blog.
bit.ly/iplayer379

Explore Google Sheep View

www.googlesheepview.com
This beautiful photo, taken on Colonsay in the Inner Hebrides, is one of the most stunning locations in Google Sheep View. It's a blog run by two Amsterdam-based photographers who are celebrating the Chinese Year of the Sheep by asking people to send their favourite shots of our woolly friends in Street View. Click the Submit link at the top to send your own sheepish screen grab. Also click the Outtakes link for screengrabs that didn't make the cut, featuring sheep statues, stuffed sheep and the occasional goat.

Colour in Ordnance Survey maps

bit.ly/maps379
One of the most unexpected crazes this year has been for adult colouring-in books, which accounted for five of Amazon's 10 best-selling books at one point this summer. Colouring in swirly patterns is meant to help you fight the stress and anxiety of modern life. We're not sure if the same is true of colouring in maps, but you have to admire the Ordnance Survey for jumping on the bandwagon by making maps of London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Milton Keynes and Southampton available to download and print. If you like everything neat and tidy, you'll prefer the regimented layout of Milton Keynes. The mazy London map is more of a challenge.



If these maps get you hooked, buy the *Colouring Therapy Art Book* from Dennis Publishing, owners of *Web User* – just £5.99 from Amazon: bit.ly/therapy379.

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

Zoom into a never-ending animated garden

www.arkadia.xyz

Many Chrome Experiments have a hypnotic effect, but none we've ever seen is as mesmerising as Arkadia, an "infinitely zooming" painting of a psychedelic, fantasy landscape. You'll start zooming into the centre as soon as you arrive on the site, and you'll never stop unless you click away. There are instructions in the bottom-left to change colours, go full screen and speed up the zoom.

Revisit garish GeoCities websites

www.cameronsworld.net

If you've been reading *Web User* since we launched in 2001, you'll remember when many websites looked like this. It was the era of GeoCities, which hosted do-it-yourself sites years before anyone knew what a 'tweet' was. Berlin-based web designer Cameron Askin (@CameronAskin) has celebrated these "personalised corners of the internet" in a scrollable collage of moving images, gaudy graphics and tinny music. He calls it a "love letter to the internet of old". We call it 'beautifully ugly'.

Try the new Google Map Maker

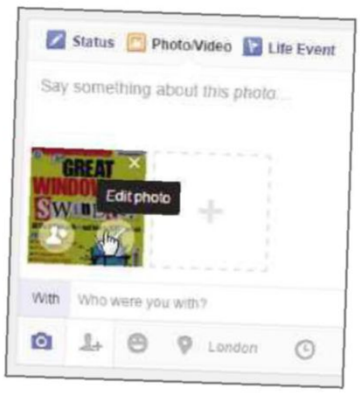
www.google.co.uk/mapmaker

Google has relaunched Map Maker, after suspending it in May following vandalism that included a prankster drawing the Android robot urinating on an Apple logo. To avoid a repeat, Google says Map Maker will now be moderated more closely. It has also temporarily stopped users editing 'polygons', shaded areas representing parks, mountains and other features. It was by abusing this feature that vandals created the infamous Android image. Google explains the changes at bit.ly/maker379.

Add filters to your Facebook photos

www.facebook.com

Earlier this year, Facebook added filters, emoji-style stickers and text to photos, but only if you uploaded them on your phone. You can now add these features to photos uploaded from your PC, too. When you add a photo, a paintbrush icon will appear on it. Click it and you'll be taken to a page where you can apply the effects.



5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@ProjectAra
Updates on Google's exciting project to create a 'modular' phone that you can build yourself

@majorgeeks
News on the latest software releases available on the download site

@BritComSociety
Anniversaries celebrating the best British comedies, past and present

@PamAyres
Pithy poems on current affairs from the veteran "versifier"

@rugbyworldcup
Enjoy the pre-tournament build-up and news before it starts at Twickenham on 18 September

Drag and drop URLs to Dropbox

bit.ly/drop379

You can now drag and drop URLs into Dropbox, letting you open websites on any device. It means you can take your bookmarks with you anywhere, rather than being tied to a specific browser on a PC.

Download a list of Windows 10 keyboard shortcuts

bit.ly/shortcuts379

Microsoft has created a document with 42 of the most useful keyboard shortcuts for Windows 10 (using the Windows key, not Ctrl or Alt). Download it from the link above.

Use Microsoft's new screengrab tool

bit.ly/snip379

Snip is a program for Windows 7, 8 and 10 that makes it much easier to take screen grabs, then add audio and annotations. It's still in beta, so it's not perfect, but it's easy to use. Follow @MSFTSnip for more info.

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Richard Cullen, Managing Director at bluebox
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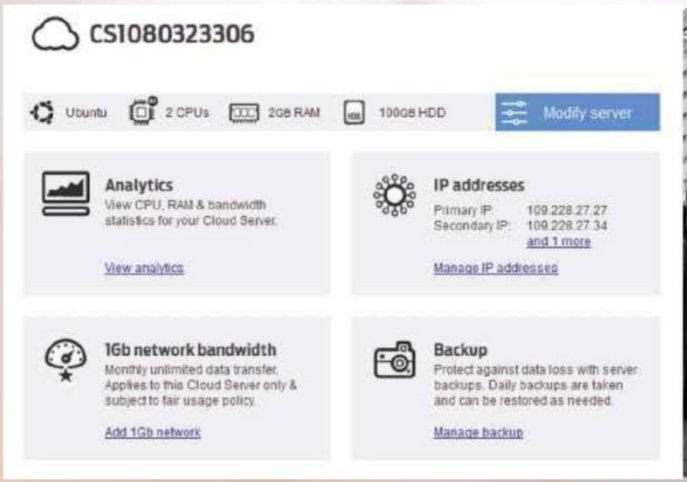

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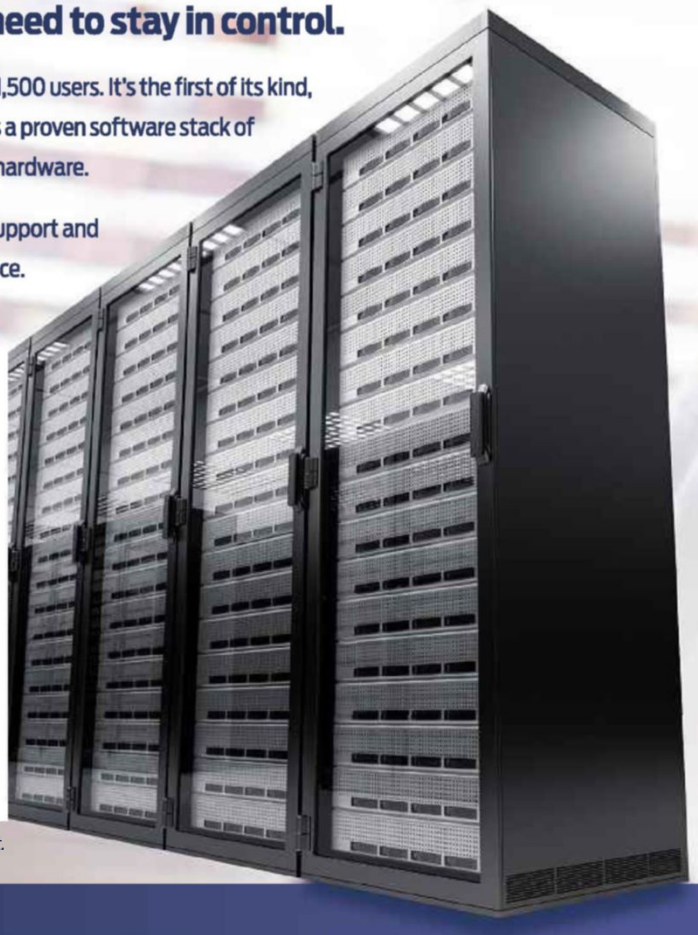

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Need to Know

Social networks told to abandon auto-playing videos

What happened?

After the on-camera murder of two US journalists, social-media sites have been told by users and MPs to reconsider embedding auto-playing videos.

Alison Parker and Adam Ward were filming a broadcast in Virginia when a gunman opened fire on the pair, killing both of them on air. The broadcast video of their horrific murders has been shared on Twitter, Facebook and other social networks, as was a video filmed by their killer that he posted online before he was identified and shot himself. Although Twitter and Facebook quickly removed the killer's accounts, the video was still shared widely during the few minutes that it was available. Such websites normally start videos automatically, so there was no warning of the horrific content about to follow.

Twitter only started playing videos automatically in June. Before this change, you needed to click videos to watch them. Facebook introduced auto-playing videos in 2013, telling investors earlier this year that autoplay had helped boost its video views from a billion a day to four billion.

But because videos now play automatically, Twitter and Facebook users saw the footage of the double murder as soon as they visited the sites. Users complained on both sites, saying that they were "forced" to watch the footage, though neither Facebook nor Twitter has announced plans to change its auto-play policy.

This isn't the first time such videos have attracted complaints. Earlier this year, execution videos from Islamic State were posted online, and both sites worked to remove such content. It's not clear why the murders of Parker and Ward were allowed to stay up; the sites took down the video posted by their murderer, but appear to have left content from news broadcasters.

How will it affect me?

If this kind of video is making the rounds, the best way to avoid seeing it is either to stay off social networks or to scroll through your news feed quickly, so the videos don't have time to start playing.

To turn off auto-playing videos on Twitter, so they have to be clicked before they play, go to Settings, Account, and deselect the 'Video autoplay' feature. To stop auto-playing videos in the Desktop version of Facebook, go to Settings, click Videos and switch the auto-play option to Off. On Android, click the triple-line menu button, go to App Settings, and deselect Video Auto-play. And on iOS devices, you can turn it off in Settings, Account Settings and finding the relevant section in 'Videos and Photos'.

You can turn off auto-playing videos in Facebook's settings

Facebook sometimes warns users about videos with graphic content, so it's baffling that it didn't do so in this case. If you see a video you find offensive, you can report it to the site's administrators.

What do we think?

Auto-playing videos are irritating for all kinds of reasons and they're especially annoying on mobile devices, because they drain your battery and use up your mobile data allocation. It's well worth turning off auto-play to avoid these problems, and to send a signal to Twitter, Facebook and other social sites that we'd prefer to agree to watch a video before it starts rolling.

That said, it's the people who share such videos that are primarily to blame, especially irresponsible news outlets. There's no justification for sharing such horrifying content on a social site, let alone having it play automatically. If a news broadcaster feels it's an important item, surely it can be hosted on their own website with a clear warning about what you're about to see, and placed it in the context of the wider story.

The purpose of a tweet or Facebook post showing someone's death is less clear. A cynic would suggest it's the shameless use of an appalling event to drive traffic to your websites. We agree that it seems to be capitalising on tragedy, and hope that social-media sites and news organisations reconsider how they treat this kind of material.

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

Spotify apologises after privacy uproar

What happened?

Many Spotify users responded with anger to its new privacy policy, forcing the streaming-music services's CEO Daniel Ek to apologise to customers. The offending pop-up appeared in the Spotify app, advising users of the policy update and telling them they had a month to agree or stop using the service: "If you don't agree with the terms of this privacy policy, then please don't use the service."

The updated terms included permission to "collect information", including your contacts, photos and location details such as your phone's GPS. However, Spotify later explained that it will ask first before accessing such data.

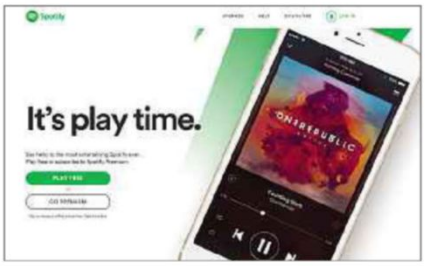
How will it affect you?

If you're a Spotify user, you have little choice regarding the new terms. As with most sites, you can either agree to the policy or stop using the service.

That said, Spotify has stressed that you'll be asked before it actually touches any of your data. For example, the new terms mean Spotify can use one of your own photos as a profile image. Naturally, you will choose which one to upload, so it won't be done without your permission.

What do we think?

Spotify could have done a better job of updating its terms and conditions. It's no wonder users get upset when they're given no choice about updates, and if Spotify wants us upload a profile photo,



it should have just said so. It's high time such policies were written in plain English so people can understand them.

Here's hoping other web services learn from Spotify's mistake and ditch the legalese to explain updates in simple terms.

See our cover feature on page 38 for more about companies with dodgy privacy policies.

Microsoft refuses to update Windows phones

What happened?

Microsoft is offering a free update to Windows 10 Mobile – but only for phones that have at least 8GB of internal storage. This means that if you own a Windows-powered phone with 4GB of internal storage, you won't get the upcoming Windows 10 Mobile software update. Instead, you'll be left behind on the older Windows 8.1 Mobile operating system.

It's not clear when the update will be released, but it will be available for most Nokia Lumia handsets free of charge, and include a new user interface and messaging centre, along with refreshed Office and Outlook apps.

How will it affect you?

If you have a Windows Mobile device with only 4GB of built-in storage, you won't be able to upgrade to Windows 10 Mobile. However, only a few devices are affected. From Microsoft's own line, the Nokia Lumia 530 is being left behind, while other affected handsets include the relatively obscure Kazam Thunder 450W, Celkon Win 400 and Yezz Billy 4. If you own one of these phones, you can't dodge the issue by installing a microSD card for more storage. Microsoft is requiring 8GB of internal storage, and any external storage doesn't count toward the total.

What do we think?

We find the news surprising because Microsoft is normally sensitive to backwards compatibility. For example, PCs that are several years old can usually run the newest operating system. However, in this instance, the company seems to be hamstrung by the tighter storage constraints on older devices.

It's hard to blame Microsoft, because most current phones come with more than 4GB of built-in storage, and it isn't the first company to impose a storage-related restriction. When iOS 8 launched last year, it caused controversy by requiring 5GB of free storage, even though the update files took up less than 1GB of space.

This issue highlights the problem with budget devices: although lower-cost, lower-spec handsets may function well, they become obsolete more quickly than higher-priced handsets. On the other hand, it's not as if memory is expensive: the difference between 4GB and 8GB in a handset is a matter of pounds, if not pennies. There's no reason even the cheapest smartphone shouldn't have a reasonable amount of storage these days.

FIRST LOOK

Huawei Honor 7

bit.ly/honor379

Huawei might not be a household name in the UK, but the Chinese firm is the largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer in the world and its latest smartphone has the potential to challenge the Moto G's position as king of the budget smartphones. Although it includes a 20-megapixel camera, a 5.2in 1080p screen and a fingerprint scanner, the Honor 7 costs only £250. That's a bit more expensive than the 2015 Moto G (£209, see our review on page 24), but with specifications more in line with flagship devices costing double the price, it's hard to complain.

In addition to its large, impressive screen, the device has 16GB of storage and 3GB of RAM as standard. Unfortunately, the performance of its octa-core HiSilicon Kirin 935 processor might be where the Honor 7 comes unstuck; when watching the device at the demo, we noticed a fair bit of juddering during basic screen transitions, and the Huawei P8, which uses a comparable processor and GPU combination, came up well short in graphics benchmarks when compared to top-end phones such as the HTC One (M9).

The design of the Honor 7 is not quite as sleek as the iPhone 6 or Samsung Galaxy S6, but its metallic finish looks good and it weighs only a little more, despite having a larger 3100mAh battery pack. The phone comes with Android Lollipop installed, but we were a little disappointed to see it so obscured by Huawei's Emotion UI launcher.

Although not to everyone's taste, the manufacturer's software still has some benefits – a handy feature that helps you find your phone by simply calling out "where are you?", for example, and the ability to charge a friend's phone from your device if you've bought the necessary cable.

It's hard to predict whether the Honor 7 can topple the Moto G from its top spot, but we like what we've seen of it so far and look forward to testing it more thoroughly.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Apple planning to launch another watch?

Apple was late to the party with its first smartwatch, and now that it's available to buy, rumours are already circulating about a possible successor. Longer battery life, a lower price and the option of a circular screen are high on most fans' wish lists, but with no word on when Apple plans to replace the original model with a second-generation watch, it's unclear how long we'll have to wait for it.

Apple typically refreshes its products on an annual cycle, so some people are predicting the launch of a second Apple watch for April 2016. Given that the original model has, at the time of writing, only been on sale for five months, it's unlikely that we'll see the refreshed version introduced at this month's iPhone 6S launch event. However, based on early rumours, Apple might instead choose to update its wearable devices on a longer cycle, potentially two years, in order to make significant advances over the old model and make the new version stand out against it.

Right now, the biggest rumour surrounding the Apple Watch 2 is whether it will be able to function without being connected to an iPhone. The current Watch is very limited when you aren't paired with your device. It also suffers from poor battery life, barely managing a day of use in some cases. Either Apple will find a way to squeeze a bigger battery onto your wrist, or it will focus on software tweaks to reduce power consumption and keep the same battery from the original Watch.

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

The Apple Watch hasn't exactly set the world alight, but it's a foregone conclusion that we'll see another model within the next couple of years. Sadly, there's unlikely to be a 'budget' version for those of us who can't afford to spend upwards of £300 on a watch.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Sensly

bit.ly/sensly379 | From £49

How polluted is the air in your home? Possibly more than you'd imagine, which is why we think Sensly is such a great idea. It's a portable pollution sensor that measures the air quality in your house, office or other environment, and sends the information to your phone. Sensly can detect a variety of dangerous gases and chemicals including carbon monoxide, formaldehyde and ammonia, so you can take the necessary precautions to protect your health. The creators are aiming to raise £10,000, with funding closing on 26 September.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Contactless spend limit increased

The transaction limit on contactless cards has been increased from £20 to £30, meaning you'll only need to enter your PIN number or sign for more expensive purchases.

Instagram embraces rectangular photos

For the first time, Instagram has made it possible to publish portrait and landscape photos and videos to the social network. Previously third-party apps were required if you didn't want to crop images to the square format.

WE DON'T LIKE...

Netflix drops thousands of titles

Thousands of movies will be dropped from Netflix in the US after the company decided not to renew a deal with distributor Epix. The company has shown its desire to focus on exclusive content.

Internet users still using weak passwords

One year on from the iCloud leaks, most web users are still failing to use unique passwords on every website, despite understanding the importance of good security habits.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Dating site hack leads to extortion attempts

Last month, details of more than 33 million members of adultery-dating website Ashley Madison were published on the web by hackers. Some users have since found themselves victims of extortion attempts, receiving emails from criminals threatening to pass their information onto their significant others unless they pay a Bitcoin fee equating to around £130.

Security company Sophos has warned that paying the blackmailers might not fix anything, because the data in question has already been leaked, meaning users would still be at risk of receiving further threatening emails from the same criminals (or others). In this sense, the threats are very different to those we've seen in ransomware cases, where paying the fee can result in the positive outcome of your encrypted data being unlocked, after which there would be no repeated risk of the same fee being demanded.

Even if a victim of the Ashley Madison hack pays up every time they're threatened, there's always a chance that their spouse could stumble across the data independently anyway. Furthermore, it's worth pointing out that the existence of an email address on the Ashley Madison database doesn't constitute proof of infidelity.

bit.ly/ashleymadison379

Pirate websites block Windows 10 users

In issue 378 (bit.ly/webuser378), we reported that Microsoft had updated the terms and conditions of its End User License Agreement (EULA), which meant that it could disable counterfeit software found on your PC, Windows Phone or Xbox. It wasn't clear whether Microsoft was mainly concerned about counterfeit games or if the update meant it could also disable cracked versions of Office or Adobe Photoshop, but the changes (as well as other privacy concerns relating to the OS) caused a wave of paranoia that resulted in some pirate websites blocking access to Windows 10 systems.

Security firm Sophos has pointed out that since the new terms refer explicitly to preventing you from "accessing the services" and "playing counterfeit games", the agreement most likely refers to services provided directly from Microsoft such as Xbox Live and Windows Games. For this reason, anyone with pirated software installed on their PC does not need to worry that their programs will disappear from their hard drives overnight.

bit.ly/pirate379

VW security flaw published

Three-year-old research that demonstrates the vulnerability of thousands of cars from manufacturers such as Audi, Citroën, Ferrari, Fiat, Honda, Skoda, Volkswagen and Volvo has been published, two years after VW secured an injunction against its publication. The research, from the University of Birmingham and Radboud University, identifies a weakness in the Megamos Crypto system that allows a car engine to start without its keyfob.

Researchers found that 'listening in' twice to signals between the chip in the fob and the car would give them what they needed to reverse-engineer the codes required to start the car.

A full list of affected car models is available at the link below.

bit.ly/vwfob379

Security Helpdesk

Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
David Emm, Principal Security Researcher at Kaspersky Lab (www.kaspersky.co.uk)

KASPERSKY lab

Q How do I prevent my son from accessing adult content on his Android smartphone?

Hayden Humphries, via email

A With children increasingly being exposed to the dangers of the internet, it's imperative that parents talk openly about the risks as soon as their children start interacting online – which may be younger than they think. This will ensure that the problem is addressed pre-emptively and means that both parents and children stay one step ahead of the cyberbullies and other online nasties.

There are in-built controls that can help you block adult content from your children's devices. Not only can you define the age rating of content that you wish to allow, but you can secure access to the Content Filtering settings using a PIN.

Over and above this, there are parental control apps that will filter content, for example Kaspersky Parental Control for Android (bit.ly/kaspersky379).

Subscribe to *Web User* to stay safe on Windows 10

Now is a great time to subscribe to *Web User*. Over the next few months we'll tell you everything you need to do to stay safe on Windows 10.

- **Every new security fix**
- **Latest threats from hackers**
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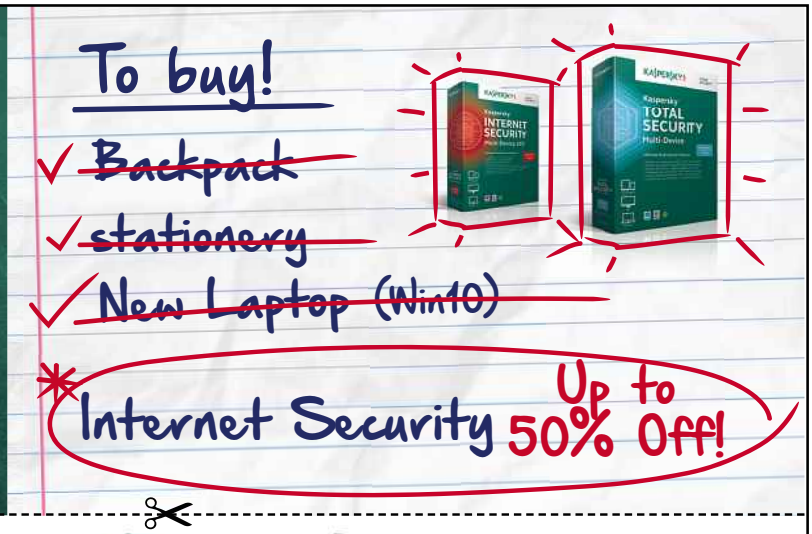
quoting offer code P1519P **Full subscription offer on page 63**

BACK TO SCHOOL

Protect your kid's laptop, tablet & phone from digital threats

Save up to 50% >



KASPERSKY lab THE POWER OF PROTECTION

Up to 50% off
Plus £5 OFF in Store

Offer only available at WHSmith High Street Stores.
Offer ends 1st October 2015.

WHSmith

*This offer is valid in WHSmith High Street stores. Offer excludes Outlet stores, Books by WHSmith at Selfridges, Harrods and Fenwicks stores, WHSmith 'Local', Online and Travel stores including those at airports, railway stations, motorway service stations, hospitals, garden centres and workplaces.This voucher cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional voucher or privilege card. Only one voucher can be redeemed per transactions and it must be surrendered on use. No cash alternative. Photocopies will not be accepted and the voucher is not transferable. Vouchers that have been forged, defaced or otherwise tampered with will not be valid for use. 50% OFF only applicable to product promoted at this discount within WHSmith High Street Stores at the time of purchase. Kaspersky Total Security RRP £59.99 and Kaspersky Internet Security Multi-Device RRP £49.99

0 000037 873202 >

Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

SHOPPING

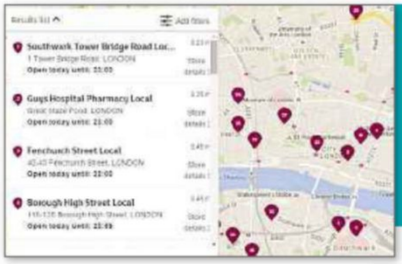
RELAUNCH

Sainsbury's

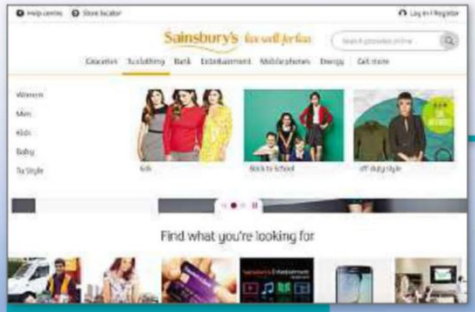
www.sainsburys.co.uk

Sainsbury's has revamped its website to better reflect and accommodate our changing shopping habits. The fresh homepage is now cleaner and more attractive, and displays perfectly, regardless of the device you're viewing it on. Most of the redesign is currently only skin deep (the Groceries section still looks the same), but departments including Tu clothing, Entertainment and Energy are now more easily accessible and the search engine lets you find your groceries in a jiffy. With a simple image carousel to highlight key offers and a small selection of featured links, it's certainly whetting our appetite for more.

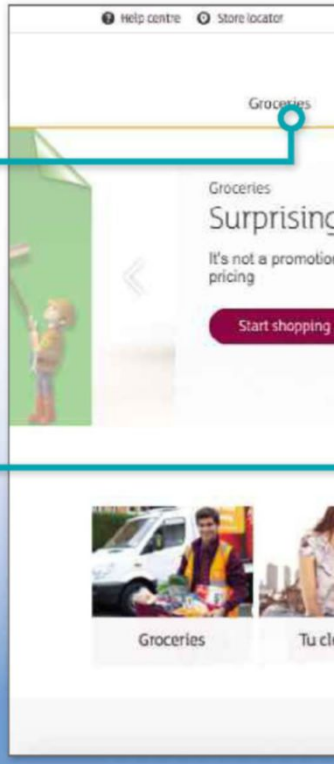
Our rating ★★★★★



STORE LOCATOR
Find your nearest Sainbury's and view opening times



TU CLOTHING
Shop for jeans, jackets and more from Sainsbury's own Tu clothing brand



RELAUNCH

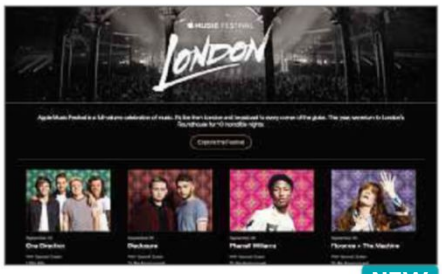
PEOPLE

The Royal British Legion

www.britishlegion.org.uk

This dramatic revamp of The Royal British Legion's tired old site is now much better equipped to illustrate the great work being carried out in support of the armed forces community. It's been redesigned to look the same across devices and benefits from a cleaner layout, though it appears that mobile has been given priority over desktop. As well as being more visually appealing, with colourful photographs to point visitors to the various sections, the best content has been brought to the forefront. There are lots of interesting snapshots of history, brought alive with quotes and photos, as well as up-to-date learning packs for children. It's an engrossing effort overall.

Our rating ★★★★☆



NEW

MUSIC

Apple Music Festival

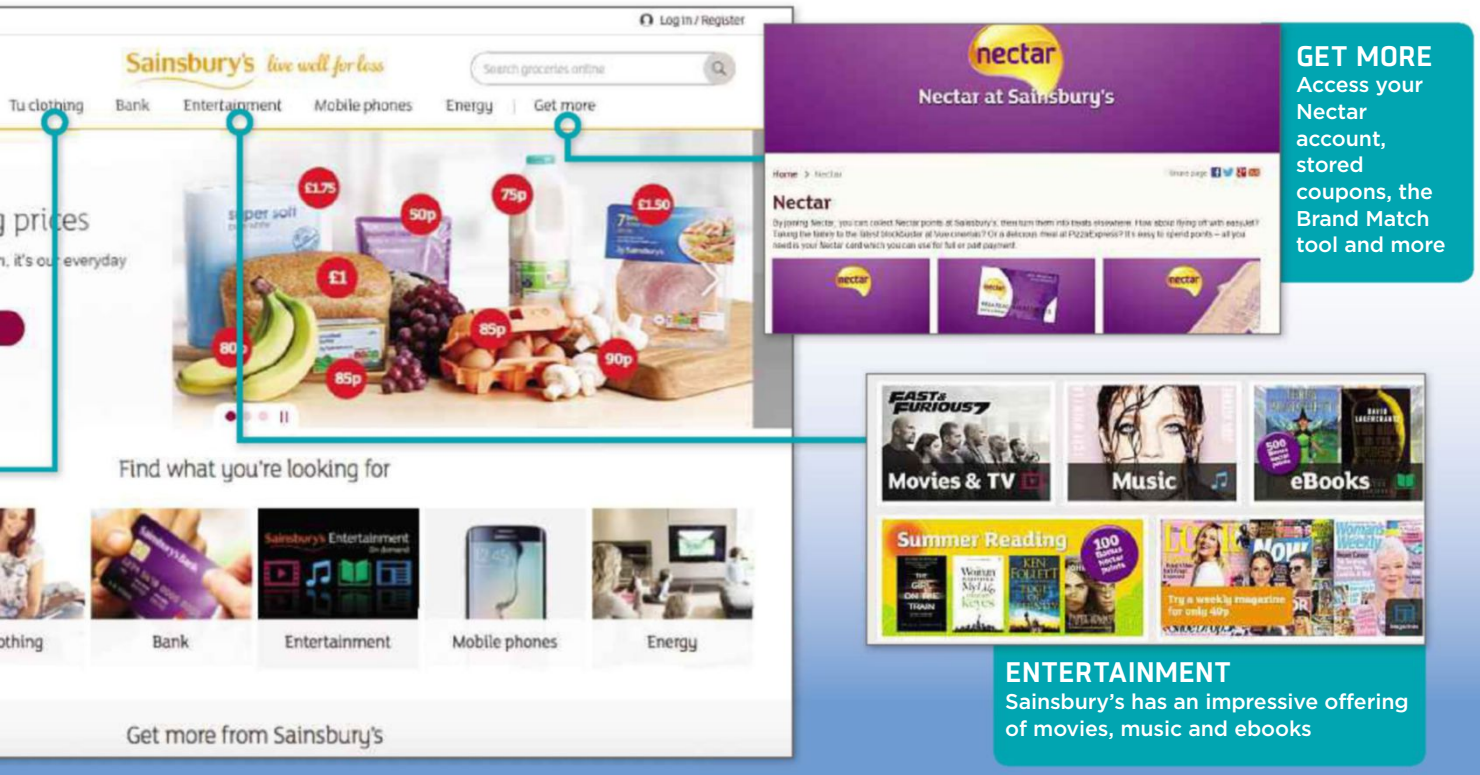
www.applemusicfestival.com

What used to be the iTunes Festival is now, thanks to the advent of the much trumpeted music-streaming service, the Apple Music Festival. To herald this new dawn is a fresh if rather sedate design, which informs visitors of the musicians playing at London's Roundhouse for 10 nights from 19 September. The site effectively acts as a cover page: if you click 'Explore the Festival', you are taken to iTunes. But the FAQ is useful, explaining how you can watch the free festival on an Apple device, computer or television (you will need Apple TV for this) and connect via social media.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

Reviews by David Crookes

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



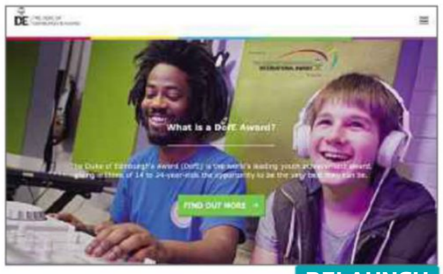
GAMBLING

The National Lottery

www.national-lottery.co.uk

When we first set eyes on the new National Lottery website, we double-checked the URL. For a site about the serious business of winning bundles of cash, we feel it's not really presenting itself in the best light. The designers have gone for a bold, colourful look that assaults your eyes and feels a bit childish, trivialising what is essentially still gambling. However, we like how the colours of the logos represent the different types of games – red for Lotto, yellow for EuroMillions, green for Instant Wins – and the minimalist approach makes it easier to find results and games.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



CHARITY

Duke of Edinburgh's Award

www.dofe.org

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is aimed at young people, giving them the chance to develop skills for life and work. Since most young people access the web on a phone and tablet, it makes sense that the site has been given a makeover with mobile devices in mind. With small bursts of text, bright colours and clear links, navigation is a breeze and there's plenty of information and news about how to get involved, make donations and be inspired. The Desktop version has rather too much empty space, which spoils the flow, but it certainly looks more modern.

Our rating ★★★★☆

MUSIC

Last.fm

www.last.fm

With this radical revamp, Last.fm has achieved the web equivalent of a teenager suddenly throwing away boyband records in favour of edgy new acts. Suffice to say, it hasn't gone down entirely well with all of its users, although there are many plus points. As well as letting you see and search your full listening history, there's a new playbar that lets you instantly play tracks, while Last.fm Live visualises the listening habits of the whole community. However, the transition has resulted in some functionality being temporarily suspended while data is migrated over.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

Tell us about your website via webuser@dennis.co.uk

NEW

TECHNOLOGY

IndieDevKit

www.indiedevkit.com

If you're a dab hand at programming and would like to design your own games, then this website is a very useful resource – if you don't mind forking out for expert advice. It's not much to look at but it contains a good number of guides to developing games, writing press releases, crowdfunding, marketing your game and more, ranging in price from $5 (£3.24) to $15 (£9.72). If you're only interested in how games are made, there is a fantastic free-to-browse news section that links to interesting blogs from major figures in the gaming industry and highlights intriguing studies. It's definitely worth bookmarking.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

RELAUNCH

CRAFT

British Crafters

www.britishcrafters.co.uk

For a website that aims to promote British crafters worldwide, we had a hard time initially figuring out what this site is actually offering. It seeks to advertise creators' wares and shops on social media by offering a range of paid-for packages but, while the website is well-designed and clearly signposts its sections, it feels a bit wordy – a more direct approach would work wonders. The website itself does not include links to companies but instead acts a way for people and companies to book slots. It's a great idea and it appears to be popular, and if you are a creator, it's certainly worth checking out.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NEW

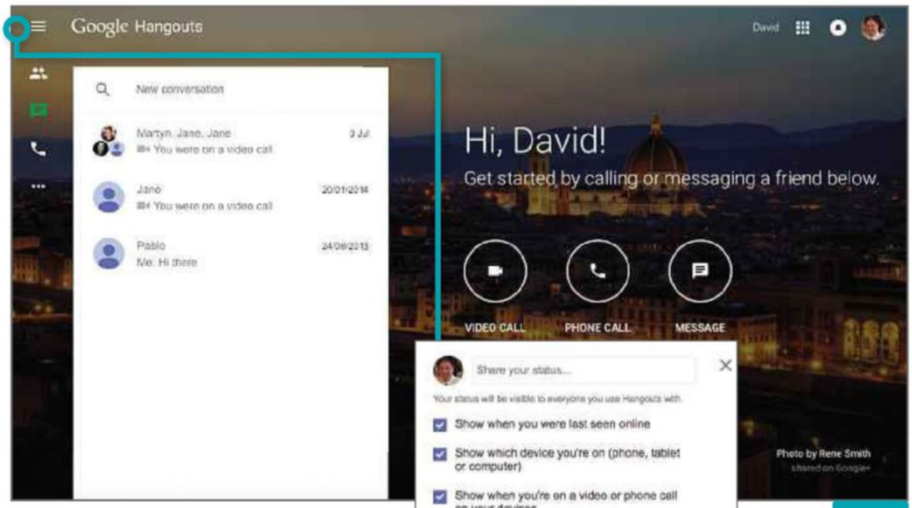
EMOJI

Emoji Mosaic

bit.ly/emoji379

This website turns your photos into fancy emoji mosaics. The homepage is nothing to write home about, with just a few lines of text inviting you to browse your hard drive for a photo, and the site takes a short while to process the images so you have to be patient. But the results are resoundingly impressive as the colours and contrast of the photos are replaced by thousands of emoji. We spent far too long playing around with various images and it would seem that those with a clear subject work best. When the image has been created, you can download it by right-clicking and selecting Save As. It's a bit pointless, but a lot of fun.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



NEW

SOCIAL

Google Hangouts

hangouts.google.com

Google has separated its popular Hangouts service from Google+ by creating a dedicated site that combines messaging, voice and video calls. It looks and works a treat, easing in newcomers with an engaging slideshow that explains its core functions, then displaying a minimalist interface that is both intuitive and attractive. Hangouts lets you strike up text conversations with up to 100 people and engage in verbal chats with up to 10. All the necessary options are just a mouse click away, so you can quickly view your archives and block people if necessary, and the privacy settings are easy to understand and let you tailor the service to suit your needs.

Our rating ★★★★★

RELAUNCH

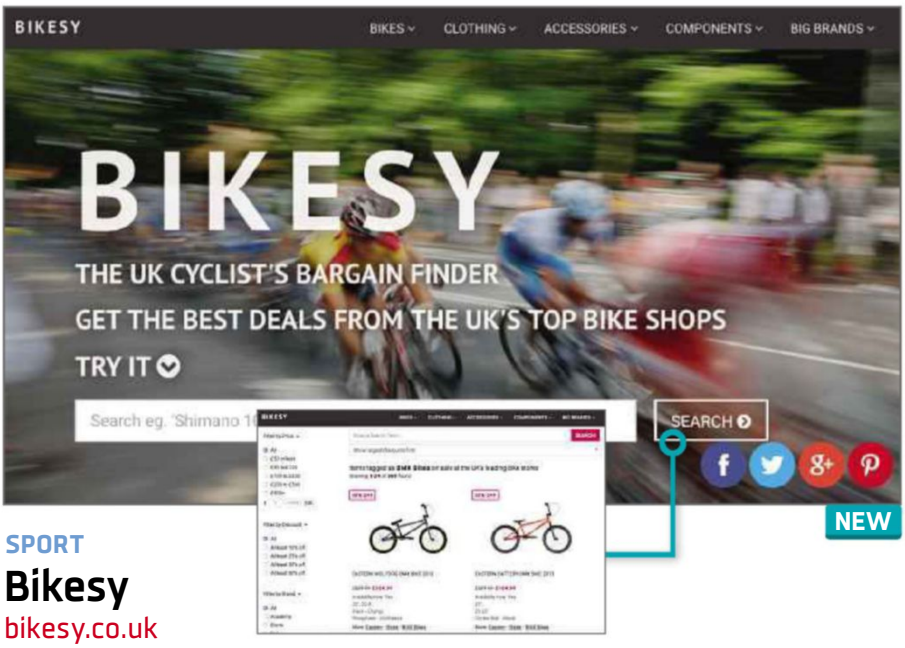
CAMPAIGN

Stonewall

www.stonewall.org.uk

The LGBT charity Stonewall has integrated its websites – Young Stonewall, Stonewall Cymru and Stonewall Scotland – into this smartly designed central hub. It's added a fresh section called Stonewall Says, which offers insightful views on issues of the day, and there are drop-down menus to make it easier to find key sections, each of which is packed with information and advice. The prominent search engine lets you input a town or postcode to find relevant local services, while Stonewall Stories provides personal accounts on how the organisation has a direct and positive impact on people.

Our rating ★★★★☆



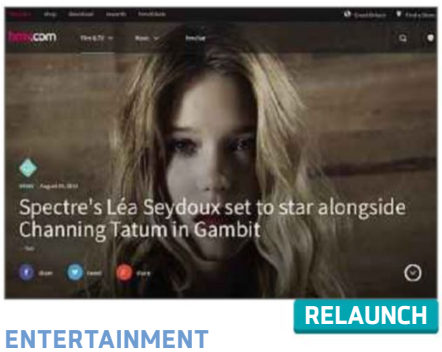
SPORT

Bikesy

bikesy.co.uk

Cycling can be an expensive hobby and it's often difficult to find specialist kit. Bikesy offers a helping hand by collating stock information about cycling products and their availability, and highlighting discounts and top deals. The site has enlisted some of the top cycling retailers in the UK and covers many major brands, from Adidas to Continental. Beyond the appealing homepage, Bikesy suffers from a rather unexciting design, but it works well and lets you search for specific items or browse for bikes, clothing, accessories and components via the dedicated categories. You can also filter by discount, price range and brand. There are no proper price comparisons, though; instead, the site just tells you the best deal and links you directly to a retailer.

Our rating ★★★★☆



ENTERTAINMENT

HMV

www.hmv.com

High-street music stores have suffered greatly over the past decade but HMV is hanging in there, albeit in a much reduced form. In order to attract visitors to its website, it now promotes itself as part-store, part-magazine, containing snappy, well-written articles about music and film in combination with exclusive interviews and videos. Each piece has a link to the latest album or movie release, making them easier to buy. There is also a ticket section for festivals, music and theatre. Check out the HMVlive section for details in-store signings, appearances and performances, and an abundance of videos showing past events.

Our rating ★★★★☆

ALSO NEW

CHARITY

The Honeypot Children's Charity

www.honeypot.org.uk

★★★★☆

The charity that offers respite breaks and outreach support to young carers and vulnerable children has relaunched its website, reorganising content into three clear sections that explain what it does, how to get involved and how to donate. The integrated feeds from Twitter, Facebook and its blog on the homepage keep the site feeling fresh.

FINANCE

Investment Week

www.investmentweek.co.uk

★★★★☆

If you like to keep an eye on the markets, but feel overwhelmed by the amount of information out there, this new site helps to cut through the jargon. By grouping content within specific subject categories, visitors can filter down to specific areas of interest. You can also save articles and explore the archive, which goes back 20 years.

EVENTS

Dismaland Bemusement Park

www.dismaland.co.uk/events

★★★☆☆

Created to promote street artist Banksy's controversial take on theme parks, this website seems like it hasn't been built to last – literally. A rush for tickets caused it to crash and it will probably be pulled once the park closes on 27 September. It's dark humour gives a good flavour of what to expect, although we can't imagine Disney being happy with the logo!

GAMES

Forest of Sheep

twistedtreegames.com

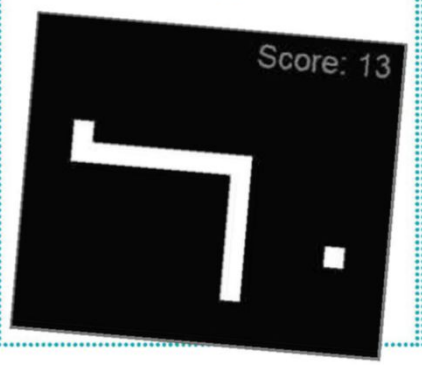
★★★☆☆

This site, promoting Twisted Tree Games' forthcoming title, includes an in-depth section with gorgeous animated artwork and a full-on explanation about how it will eventually play. There are some intriguing screenshots, but aside from joining the mailing list, there's very little to do.

WEBSITE SECRETS

Play Snake in Bing

Google isn't the only search engine that knows how to hide a classic game in its results. Visit Bing (www.bing.com), type 'snake game' into the search box and press Enter to bring up a game labelled 'Bing snake'. Click inside it to start, then use the arrow keys to control the snake, and feed it up to make it grow, just like in the classic Nokia game. This isn't the first game Microsoft has hidden in Bing – if you search for 'pong', you'll be able to play 'Bing pong'. ■



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Happy birthday, Joomla!

Joomla, one of the most popular open-source content management systems (CMS) after WordPress, is 10 years old. The community has been celebrating around the world and there is a website, spreadthejoomlalove.com, recounting its history and achievements. Go to the website's Learn Joomla section and you'll find three free videos of training courses. Joomla is a bit more complicated than WordPress, but offers more features to control and display content. Many web-hosting companies will install Joomla for free and you then just customise it and start posting.

Stop comment spam

If you have a WordPress site, you are probably familiar with comment spam, which is when people write comments purely to include links to a site where they sell junk goods. WP-SpamShield is a spam-blocking plugin that does not require a subscription. Install it, activate it and forget about it. Go to WordPress Plugins, click Add New and enter WP-SpamShield into the search box. Click Install and then Activate.

WP-SpamShield is a free plug-in that protects your WordPress site

Deal of the Fortnight

Check GoDaddy's latest offers (uk.godaddy.com/coupons.aspx), including a domain, website and email for £1 a month or a Basic account for £2.99, saving you 40 per cent.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Nick Akam, Chief Technical Officer, Free Virtual Servers (www.freevirtualservers.com)

Q If I want to build a dynamic website, should I use JavaScript or PHP? Which one is better?

Steve Daniels, via email

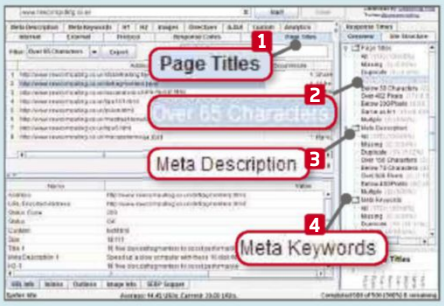
A JavaScript and PHP are two very different technologies, with diverse benefits and aims. PHP is used for dynamic sites that interact with databases and other data sources, and is executed on the server hosting the PHP files. JavaScript is run in the browser, allowing for more interactive web pages and a better user experience, improved form handling and so on. JavaScript is widely used in browser-based apps. However, the easy way to build a dynamic website is to use a WYSIWYG tool such as Weebly (www.weebly.com), which does the hard work for you.

MINI WORKSHOP | Analyse your website for problems using Screaming Frog

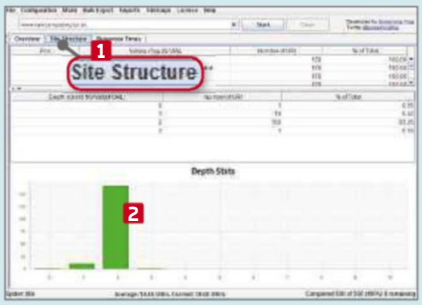
Screaming Frog: screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider | 10 mins | Any browser

Use this free tool to check your website for common errors such as page titles that are too long, too short or are duplicates. Find pages with missing meta descriptions, and analyse the site for speed and usability

1 Go to screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider and download the free software, then install it. It requires Java (if you do not have it, download it from java.com). When it has started, enter your website's address 1 and click the Start button. 2 Up to 500 URLs on your website are checked in this free version.



2 Now you can find problems. For example, select the Page Titles tab 1 and, in the panel on the right, select Over 65 Characters. 2 These page titles are too long for Google to list and you need to shorten them. Select other items in the panel, such as Meta Descriptions, 3 Meta Keywords 4 and so on.



3 Click the arrow to expand the right panel and select the Site Structure tab. 1 This shows how many clicks it takes to reach a page. 2 Users can be put off if a page requires too many clicks to reach the content. The best sites have most items just two clicks from the homepage.

Email us your website building questions at webuser@dennis.co.uk

WebUser

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Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Asus Chromebox M031U

Michael Passingham looks at a Chrome OS desktop computer that you can plug into a big screen

Chrome OS, Google's ultra-light browser-based operating system, is usually seen on budget laptop computers (Chromebooks). It's light on resources and uses the cloud for storage, so it's ideal for laptops, because it doesn't have to run multiple processes and use huge hard drives that make heavy demands on battery power. We've not seen many desktop-based Chrome machines (Chromeboxes) but, when you think about it, there's very little reason why Chrome OS shouldn't be as popular on desktop computers as it is on laptops.

The Asus Chromebox has been launched to fill this gap. There are several models available, including a rather over-specified £500+ Intel Core i7 version. The one we've tested is the more reasonably priced £208 model, powered by a 1.4GHz Intel Celeron 2955U processor.

It's a very compact mini PC, with a footprint that's a little smaller than a CD case. The dark metallic-blue top and black sides look classy and expensive, and its tiny size means it can fit practically anywhere: on a desk, on the back of a monitor (with a mount) or even among your other set-top boxes if you fancy a dedicated web-browsing PC for your TV.

Hardware and peripherals

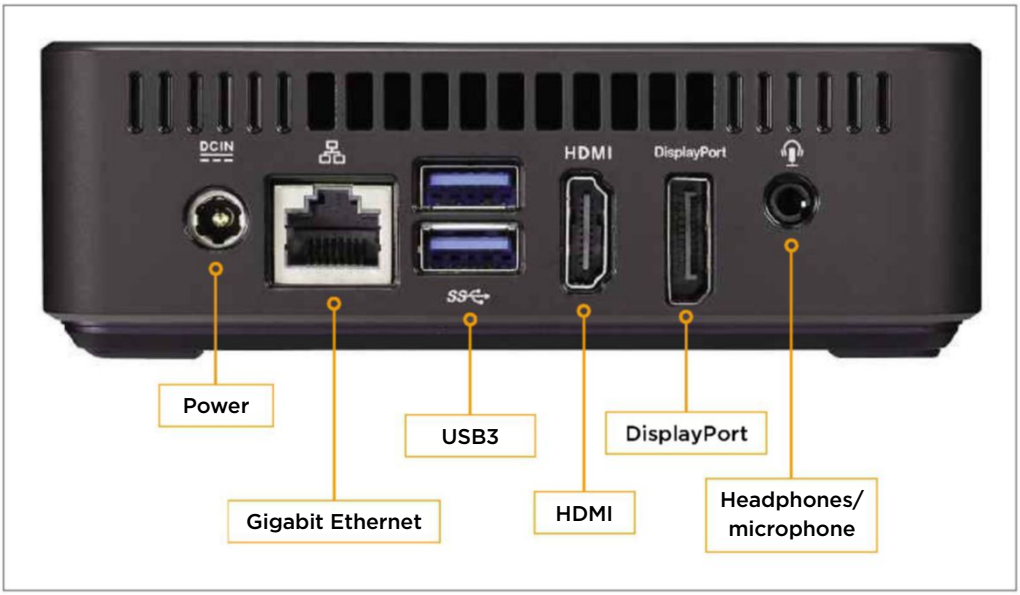
Given its small size, the Chromebox has a surprisingly good range of ports and connectors. You get full-size HDMI and DisplayPort connectors at the rear, along with two USB3 ports, a Gigabit Ethernet connector and a 3.5mm headset jack. There are two more easily accessible USB3 ports on the front of the device, as well as an SD/MMC card reader on the left-hand side. For wireless networking, there's built-in dual-band 802.11n Wi-Fi and Bluetooth 4 for peripherals.

Included in the price are a wireless keyboard and mouse, although the two peripherals require a USB dongle and don't take advantage of the Chromebox's Bluetooth connectivity. This means one of the four USB3 ports is permanently occupied, which seems like a bit of a waste. Still, the mouse, while very small, is reliable and comfortable to use. The keyboard feels a bit like a child's version and certainly won't suit quick typists. What's more, its unusual dimensions mean that some of the keys are not where you would expect them to be, which takes some getting used to. The keyboard also replaces the entire top row of F-keys with Chrome OS-specific alternatives, including window management, browser navigation, audio controls and, oddly for a desktop PC, brightness controls.

> "image-heavy web pages opened with surprising ease and streaming Full HD videos were free of lags and stutters"

Streaming and apps

The 1.4GHz clock-speed of the dual-core Intel Celeron 2955U processor is slow, but performance is assisted by the lightweight Chrome operating system. With very little going on in the background, the processor is free to put all its effort into the tasks you're performing in the foreground. During our tests, image-heavy web pages



PRODUCT INFO

Asus Chromebox M031U

Price: £165.82 (Buy from www.ballicom.co.uk)

SPECIFICATIONS

- Dual-core 1.4GHz Intel Celron 2955U processor
- Intel HD Graphics
- 4GB of memory
- 16GB SSD
- Gigabit Ethernet
- Dual-band 802.11n Wi-Fi
- DisplayPort, HDMI video ports
- 4 x USB3 ports
- MMC/SD memory card reader

FOR

✓ Great value Chrome OS PC for simple tasks and web surfing

✓ Connect to a monitor or TV

AGAINST

✗ You need to supply your own screen and local storage

opened with surprising ease and streaming Full HD videos were free of lags and stutters. This means you're getting much better value from the cheaper components than you'd get with the comparatively lethargic Windows system. Obviously, you can't run any Windows applications on your Chromebox, but there are plenty of web-based alternatives to consider. Google Photos is great for images, while online streaming services such as Spotify, Google Play Music, Netflix, YouTube and others should satisfy your entertainment needs. You can even play some very light games on the Chromebox, although you'll be limited to the relatively simple titles available in the Chrome Store.

If you're going to be storing files locally, you'll need an SD card because you only get 16GB of dedicated storage. However, using the Chromebox for large local files would be missing the point of Chrome OS, which is better suited to online content and web applications.

> "Given its small size, the Chromebox has a surprisingly good range of ports and connectors"

Chrome OS vs Windows

It's possible to use the Chromebox as you would a traditional desktop PC, although Chrome OS has undergone some recent changes that have had a detrimental effect on its interface. The once fairly simple app selection and search menu, which opened in the bottom-left corner of the screen, now opens dead-centre and can't be moved. There's also a Google search bar and large Google Now cards, which make accessing shortcuts for web apps more difficult. All this feels like an unnecessary complication to what was previously a much better design.

The Asus Chromebox is cheaper than its Windows-powered rivals but still offers good performance and specifications. There are limits with an operating system that's so reliant on web content, but since it's so easy to get a large amount of your computing done online, the sacrifices involved in switching to Chrome OS are nowhere near as severe as they once were. If your demands are modest and you're willing to start moving your work and personal life to the cloud, the Chromebox is a great way to do it.

POWERFUL ENOUGH FOR WINDOWS

HP Pavilion Mini, £349
bit.ly/hp379

MORE STORAGE SPACE

Acer Revo One, £230
bit.ly/acer379

OUR VERDICT ★★★★☆

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

If you want a compact PC that can access the web and keeps everything in the cloud, then a Chromebox is a brilliant alternative to a Windows PC. The low-powered processor keeps the price to a very affordable level, and it's still perfectly capable of running the Chrome operating system, so it's great for checking emails, working on Google Docs and surfing the web. What more do you need?

Motorola Moto G (3rd generation)

Jonathan Bray reviews Motorola's latest budget handset

Motorola has been blazing a trail in no-nonsense, great-value smartphones for some time now. The first Moto G was a revelation when it was released back in 2013, and updates since have been steady, building on the first, successful recipe.

In that respect, the third-generation Moto G changes very little: it's still cheap (£159, SIM-free), robust and well made, delivering exactly what you need in a phone without fussy and unwanted extras. However, the latest version sees plenty of improvements, with a nicer design and extra waterproofing, so you can now submerge it up to a metre deep for 30 minutes.

Inside, Motorola has upgraded the processor with a quad-core chip, the 1.4GHz Snapdragon 410, which made it between 32 and 54 per cent faster than the previous Moto G in the benchmark tests we put the phones through. However, it didn't do so well in our gaming benchmarks, which push phones' graphics to their limits, slowing down to four frames per second in some tests.

The screen is the same size and resolution as before at 5in and 720 x 1,280 pixels, but remains as impressive as it was on the previous model. It's also the first Moto G to have 4G, which is great, but it only uses single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi, which is disappointing.

Battery life is good, but not outstanding. In general use, the battery lasted a day with plenty of power to spare, and our benchmark tests backed this up. It doesn't match the best in the business, but is good for the price.

The Moto G's biggest boost is to the camera. The old 5-megapixel snapper has been upgraded to 13-megapixels and its pictures are crisp and colourful in good light, though it struggles a little in low light. It's also much quicker to respond than the old camera and it has a brilliant new way to get to it, by twisting the phone twice, which even works when the phone's in standby.

As for audio, the front-facing stereo speakers remain excellent – ideal if you use your phone as a satnav in a car without a Bluetooth-enabled stereo system. We had absolutely no issues with call quality during testing.

The new Moto G still runs a version of Android (5.1.1) unfettered by fussy in-house launchers, with a minimum of preloaded apps. The things that have been added are genuinely useful, like the camera gesture and another you can use to turn on the torch, just by putting the phone through a chopping-motion.

Moto Display has also been installed. This shows your notifications in circular bubbles on the standby screen – along with the clock – whenever you pick it up. You can then drag the lock icon up and over to the notification in question to launch straight into the source app, or down to unlock direct to the homescreen.

PRODUCT INFO

Motorola Moto G (2015)

www.motorola.co.uk

Price: £159 (SIM-free)

SPECIFICATIONS

- Quad-core 1.4GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 410 processor
- 5in 1,280x720 pixels screen
- 13 megapixels rear camera
- 8GB or 16GB of storage space (4GB or 12GB available)
- Android 5.1.1 operating system
- Single-band 802.11n Wi-Fi
- 3G and 4G
- 142 x 72 x 6.1mm
- 155g

FOR

✓ Fantastic value for money

✓ Almost as good as a far more expensive phone for a fraction of the price

AGAINST

✗ Not powerful enough for latest games

✗ Single-band Wi-Fi

OUR VERDICT

★★★★★

Motorola has nailed it again with the third-generation Motorola Moto G. Its camera is good, the upgraded components make it more responsive, and the extra software features make it feel more like a flagship phone than a sub-£200 budget device.

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

Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

WI-FI EXTENDER

Netgear Nighthawk AC1900 Extender

£130 from www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk
Date tested: July 2015

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

KEY SPECS

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

NETWORK CAMERA

Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

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

The Y-cam HomeMonitor HD will save you money in the long run if you want to save captured motion-detected footage online. Its free online storage option supports a wide range of devices.

KEY SPECS

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

BUDGET PC

Chillblast Fusion Cyborg

£600 with monitor, £500 without from www.chillblast.com
Date tested: May 2015

The Chillblast Fusion Cyborg is compact, quiet and capable of excellent performance. There isn't much room in the case for future expansion, but it's a great value PC.

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

£169 from www.currys.co.uk
Date tested: March 2015

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

KEY SPECS

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

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

All prices correct at time of review

Best Free Software

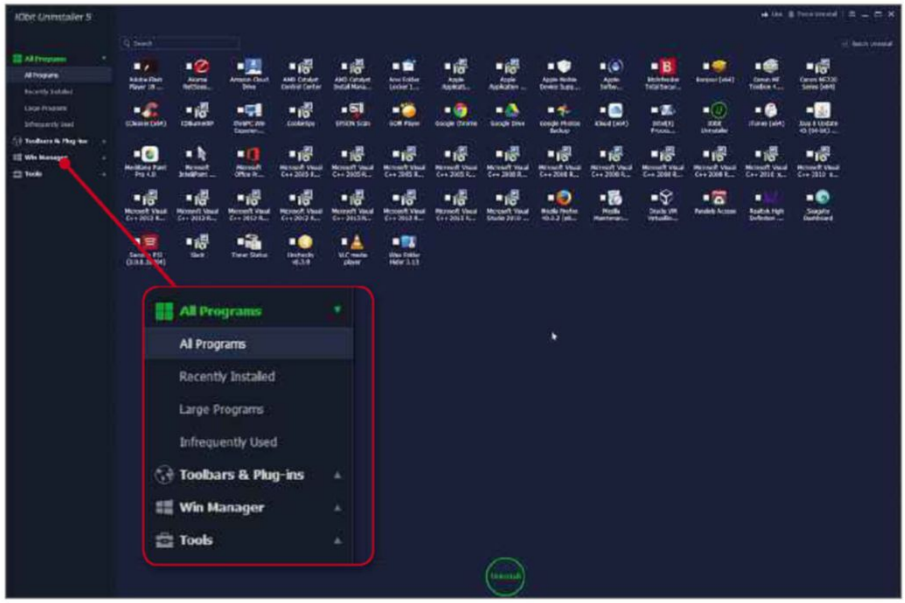
UNINSTALLER

IObit Uninstaller 5

bit.ly/uninst378
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 10.4MB

The built-in Windows uninstaller does a good job of removing software you no longer want, but IObit's free program is a much more powerful alternative. It can uninstall multiple items at once and completely remove all leftover traces from programs, including clearing out Registry entries and junk that other uninstallers leave behind.

The latest version of IObit Uninstaller gains a new user interface with a dark blue theme (you can switch to white if you prefer). The tabs that used to run along the top have been replaced by a sidebar on the left. It still works in the same way, though.



However, the changes to the program aren't just cosmetic, because Uninstaller 5 also gains some useful clean-up and maintenance features. A new Win Manager module lets you control which programs start alongside Windows, terminate misbehaving processes (and uninstall the related program), remove problematic Windows updates and also batch-uninstall any Windows 8+/10 apps you don't need.

The new Cleanup Residual tool finds and removes junk left behind by other uninstallers, including invalid shortcuts, old downloads and cached patches, while the new Uninstall History tool shows items you've removed in the past, and lets you clean up any leftovers.

The software's main uninstaller has been improved, too, making it much better at eliminating stubborn programs, such as anti-virus tools. It can also uninstall Chrome plug-ins that originated from outside the Chrome Web Store. Make sure you untick any unwanted extras during installation.

MINI WORKSHOP | Remove unwanted tools using IObit Uninstaller 5

1 IObit Uninstaller lets you view all the programs installed on your PC 1 or filter the list by Recently Installed, Large Programs or Infrequently Used. 2 You can uninstall single items, or batch-remove multiple programs by ticking those you no longer want. 3 Click the Uninstall button at the bottom. 4 The process will begin, and run automatically when possible.

2 When the programs have been uninstalled, the application will scan your system, looking for leftover files and Registry entries, and display them here. 1 Select the items you want to remove and click Delete. 2 If you don't want to clean anything, click 'Deselect all'. 3 You can choose to 'Shred files' 4 if you want to make them unrecoverable.

3 If you're running Windows 8+ or Windows 10, you can remove any installed apps by going to Win Manager 1 and clicking Windows Apps. 2 Select the items you don't require. 3 You can delete built-in Windows apps such as Sport and People, by clicking the Uninstall button 4 to remove them.

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

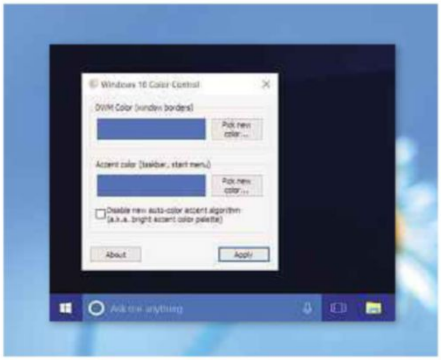
BROWSER CLEANER

AdwCleaner 5

bit.ly/adwcleaner379

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 1.5MB

AdwCleaner can remove toolbars, adware, potentially undesirable programs (PUPs) and hijackers from your browser. Just hit the Scan button and it will go to work. You can see what was found by clicking the tabs, which include Services, Folders, Files, Shortcuts, Registry, Firefox and Chrome. Click Cleaning to remove any junk. Version 5 has a new generic detections engine and a debug mode. The quarantine manager is now fully integrated and the program is compatible with Windows.



SYSTEM TOOL

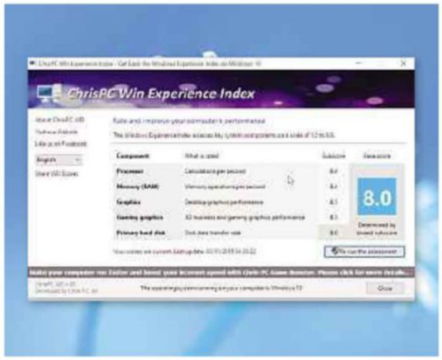
Windows 10 Color Control

rammichael.com

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 112KB

Windows 10 gives you basic control over the colours used in window borders, the taskbar and the Start menu, but this tiny application gives you an even greater selection of colour choices. It lets you apply the perfect hue and shades you want and doesn't require installation; just pick your colour and apply it. You can go back to the original palette by ticking the 'New auto-color accent algorithm' box.



SYSTEM TOOL

ChrisPC Win Experience Index 4

www.chris-pc.com

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 1.3MB

This is a basic benchmarking tool that checks the components in your system, including processor, memory, graphics and primary hard drive, and gives a score on their performance. Microsoft dropped WEI from Windows 8 and it's not in Windows 10 either, but this tool brings it back to show how your system rates. Be sure to decline the junk extra RelevantKnowledge during installation.

New Windows 8 Apps

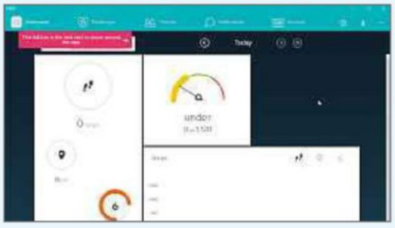
Fitbit

bit.ly/fitbit379

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 29.7MB

Updated for Windows 10, this app lets you track your fitness and is compatible with all Fitbit hardware. Features include updated live tiles, and Cortana and Notification Centre support.



Aerize Optimizer

bit.ly/aerize379

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 12.6MB

This is a memory-boosting app that claims to be able to clean device memory with a single click. You can set it to automatically overcome performance bottlenecks.

Wunderlist Beta

bit.ly/wunderlist379

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 31.84MB

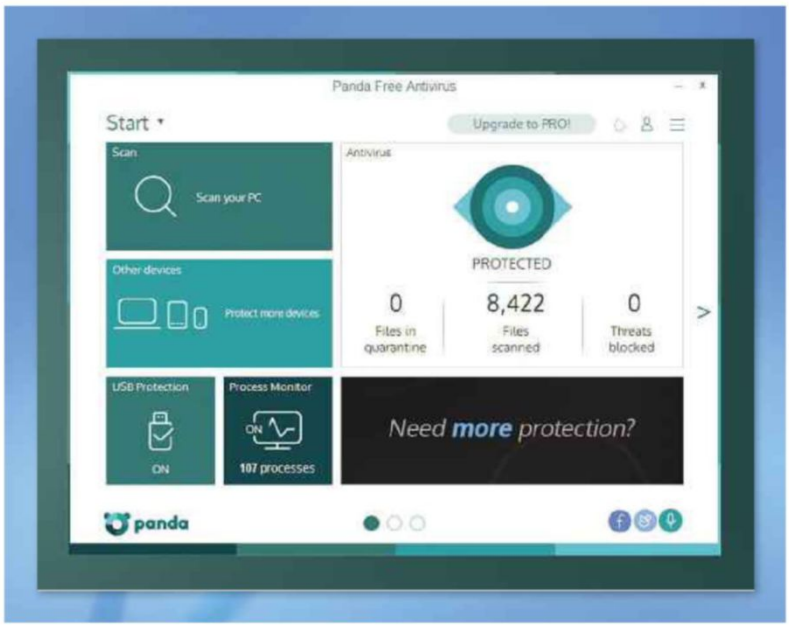
Designed specifically for Windows 10, this app lets you create and manage to-do lists. You can share lists, attach photos and files, set reminders and organise projects for home and work.

ANTI-VIRUS TOOL

Panda Free Antivirus 2016

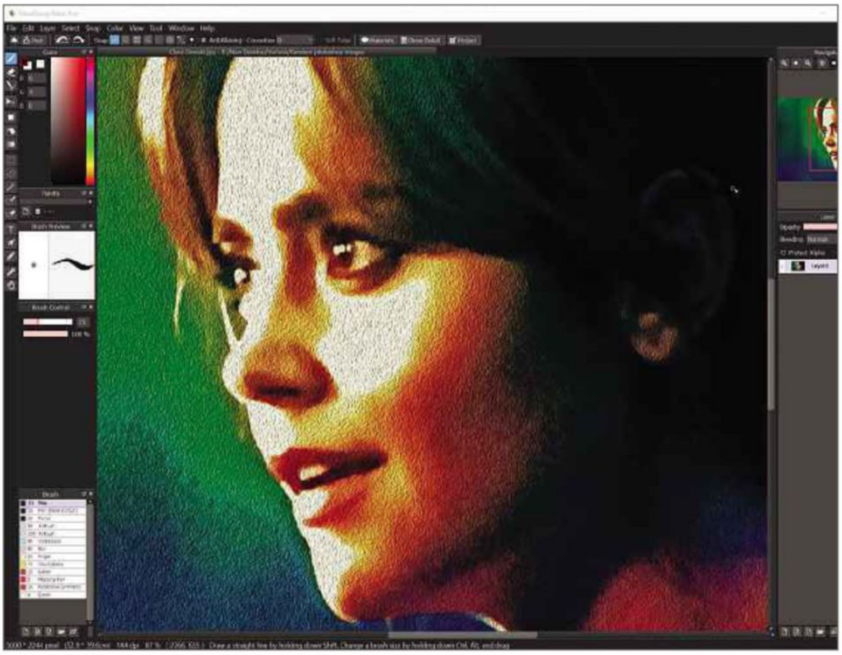
bit.ly/panda379

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 2MB



Panda Security's free anti-malware tool has been updated for 2016 and finally gains a new look, jettisoning the colourful Windows 8-inspired tiled design found in the last few editions. Panda Free Antivirus includes an on-demand scanner, process monitor, USB vaccine tool to protect you from malware on memory sticks, and a rescue kit. Under the bonnet, the software has a new anti-virus engine that offers improved performance and scans that it claims are up to 50 per cent faster than previous editions. There are new advanced configuration options available, too.

Make sure you reject the toolbar and untick all the unwanted changes (such as setting Yahoo as the default search engine) during installation.



PAINT TOOL

MediBang Paint Pro 4

medibangpaint.com/en

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 or Mac OS X **File size:** 25.8MB

Although it's primarily aimed at Manga and comic-book artists, you can use this painting and drawing program to create any type of art, with impressively professional-looking results. MediBang offers a good selection of brushes, from pens and pencils to watercolour and finger, and each one is highly customisable. You can change the width, minimum width, add a soft edge and alter the pressure sensitivity of brushes. It's packed with handy tools including layers, levels, magic wand and so on.

MediBang Paint Pro offers cloud storage, so you can save your work online and pick up from where you left off, and there are versions for Apple iPad and Android tablets.

PRIVACY TOOL

O&O ShutUp10

bit.ly/shutup10-379

Min requirements: Windows 10
File size: 106KB

Windows 10 has a lot of privacy settings that you can tweak to control how your data is used, stored and shared, but they're rather spread out and it isn't immediately obvious where to find them. If you're not sure what privacy settings there are, or where to look, the portable O&O ShutUp10 can help. Just unzip and run the tiny tool and it will present you with a list of nearly 50 privacy tweaks on a single screen. These are sorted into straightforward categories – Security, Privacy, Location Services, User Behaviour, Windows Update and Miscellaneous. Clicking a tweak will tell you what it does, and warn you of any potential problems that could occur if you action it. All the tweaks can be enabled or disabled with a single click.

Don't install...

Uniblue System Tweaker

www.uniblue.com

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

File size: 19.3MB

Uniblue System Tweaker is one of those programs that's useful but charges too much – in this case £19.95 – to perform tasks that other tools do for free. It lets you customise Windows in various ways to better suit your needs – by streamlining menus, adjusting settings and so on – but none of its features are special enough to warrant the cost.

...Install this instead

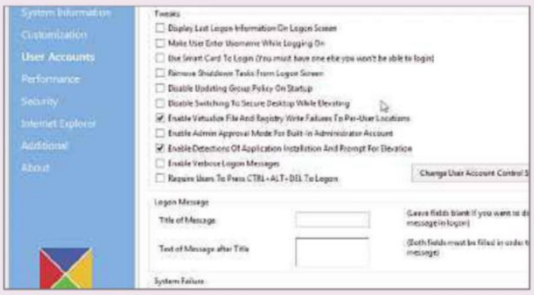
Ultimate Windows Tweaker

bit.ly/tweaker379

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

File size: 94.8KB

This install-free application offers more than 170 tweaks, and is available in separate versions for Windows Vista, 7, 8+ and 10 – the link above is for the latter, but you'll find links to the others at the bottom of the download page. Tweaks are sorted into categories including Customization, User Accounts, Performance, Security, Internet Explorer and Additional. To perform a tweak, just tick the box next to it. You can apply multiple tweaks at the same time, and create a restore point beforehand, in case something goes wrong. If you're not sure what an option does, hover your mouse over it to see an explanatory tooltip.



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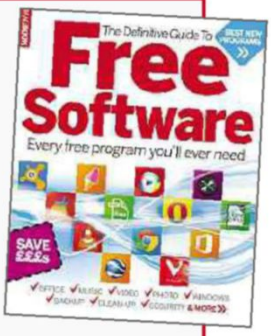

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- Tweak your browser to unlock hidden features
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UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs

IMAGE EDITOR

ImBatch 4.1.1

bit.ly/imbatch379

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

File size: 12.7MB

This program can make multiple changes to whole batches of photos, including renaming and resizing them, adding frames, filters and more. New additions to ImBatch include the ability to install a portable version, better handling of invalid inputs and numerous bug fixes.

MUSIC MANAGER

Apple iTunes 12.2.2

www.apple.com/uk/itunes

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

File size: 149MB

Apple's popular music player and organiser has been updated to add some improvements to its new music-streaming service Apple Music. Clicking the Beats 1 banner will show you what's on the radio station, or the future schedule. You can also view a list of the artists you're following.

DISC WRITER

Free AnyBurn 2.9

www.anyburn.com

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

File size: 1.1MB

The changes in the newest build of this free disc-authoring tool include the addition of support for Windows 10 and some minor bug fixes and enhancements. There are 32-bit, 64-bit and portable versions of the program available, which make burning CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays very easy.

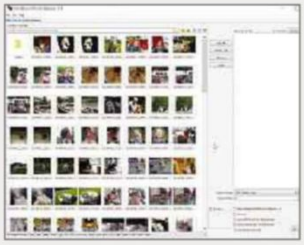

PHOTO RESIZER

Faststone Photo Resizer 3.5

www.faststone.org

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

File size: 1.6MB

As well as resizing photos, this program can convert them, rename them, and apply a wealth of effects. Changes to the new version include fixing a bug that stopped the program from displaying properties (Size, Type and Date Modified) in the file lists.

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Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

Download multiple images more easily

The standard way to download a photo from a web page is to right-click it, choose 'Save image as' and then select the desired folder, but this is a pain if you want to grab more than one image. Step forward (with a polite bow) the charmingly named I'm a Gentleman (bit.ly/gentle379) – a portmanteau of 'image' and 'gentleman' – which lets you download pictures instantly by holding down the Alt key and clicking them. Alternatively, you can drag an image to the side to save it (this can be disabled to prevent accidental downloads) or click the extension's toolbar button to grab every picture from the page. I'm a Gentleman couldn't be quicker or easier to use, and it lets you choose exactly where to save your images so you can retrieve them instantly. Hats off to this genial gent!

Reveal the hidden tags on YouTube videos

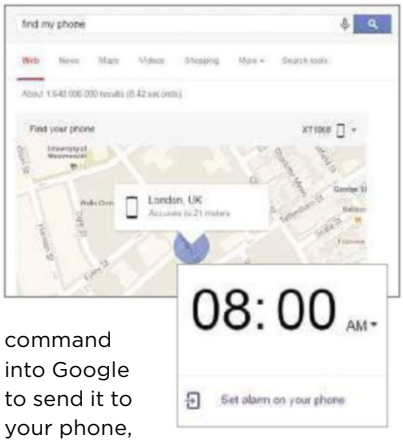
A few years ago, most videos posted on YouTube featured descriptive keyword tags, but these were quietly dropped in 2012 to stop users copying popular combinations to get more views for their own videos. You can still add tags to your uploads, but they no longer show on video pages – unless, that is, you install Tags for YouTube (bit.ly/tags379). This crafty Chrome (and Firefox) add-on reveals the hidden tags below YouTube videos – just click Show More to see them. You can then explore related content across the site by clicking a tag to find other videos with the same keyword.

Change all mentions of Alphabet to Google

If you don't approve of Google changing its name to Alphabet (see our FAQ on page 36), and are tired of seeing it everywhere you go online, a new Chrome extension called Alphabet to Google (bit.ly/alphabet379) can help. This automatically amends all instances of the name 'Alphabet' on web pages to 'Google', although unfortunately this also applies to the word 'alphabet' in the sense of 'a set of letters used in written language'. We can't imagine that Google – sorry, Alphabet – will be overly impressed with this blanket dismissal of its new business model, but the add-on was still in the Chrome Web Store at the time of writing.

Send commands from Chrome to your phone

Google is always finding new ways to sync your desktop and mobile devices, and the latest lets you perform several useful tasks on your phone directly from Chrome on your PC, via the personal assistant Google Now. All you need to do is type the relevant command into Google to send it to your phone, though you'll need to be logged into your Google account on both devices for this to work. For example, typing 'find my phone' will detect your handset and show you where it is on a map. Type 'send directions to my phone', then enter your start and end destinations, and Google Now will tell you how to get to your mobile device. You can even set mobile alarms and reminders from Chrome, by typing 'set an alarm' to activate the alarm in your phone's Clock app, or 'set a reminder' to receive reminders through Google Now. If you can't get the commands to work in www.google.co.uk, try www.google.com/ncr. Turn to page 45 to read our review of Google Now.



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

FIREFOX

View warnings for potentially unsafe add-ons

One of the most notable new features in Firefox 40, which was released last month, is protection against 'unsigned' add-ons, which can potentially – but not necessarily – pose a security risk. Unsigned means the extension hasn't passed Mozilla's review process and it often applies to add-ons hosted on websites outside the official Add-ons store. When you try to install an unsigned add-on, you'll now see a message in the top-right corner of your browser, advising caution and informing you that you "proceed at your own risk". If you're sure the extension is safe, you can bypass this warning by clicking Install; otherwise, you should click Cancel. However, from Firefox 41, you'll no longer be able to install unsigned add-ons, and from Firefox 42 they'll stop working altogether, so enjoy them while you can.

Unblock age-restricted videos on YouTube

Following the news that many online music videos will now carry age ratings (see last issue's Need to Know), you can expect your YouTube viewing to be interrupted more frequently by the requirement to sign in and confirm your age.

Although this doesn't take long, it's still annoying if you're over 18 and want to browse YouTube anonymously. YouTube Age Restriction Unblocker (bit.ly/unblock379) lets you click its toolbar button to watch a video without taking further action. It does so by redirecting you to a site called NSFW YouTube, which isn't as dodgy as it sounds!

Tweak Firefox to make it faster

SpeedTweaks (bit.ly/speed379), otherwise known as SpeedyFox, provides a handy list of settings for making Firefox faster, which saves you messing around in the baffling 'about:config' area. Go into its Options through the Add-ons Manager to access the tweaks, which cover tricks such as 'pipelining' (allowing for multiple connections to a server), enabling a new cache in the browser and disabling prefetching (which predicts the pages you're likely to visit and loads them in the background). Some tweaks won't make much difference, but it's worth trying them to see if you get a speed boost.

Save web pages to The Wayback Machine

Want to preserve a web page exactly as it looks now for future generations? Then install Save URL to Wayback Machine (bit.ly/wayback379), which makes it easy to submit a page to the Internet Archive's brilliant tool. Simply click the toolbar button or right-click and choose 'Save to Wayback Machine' to capture the page for posterity. It's a means of freezing online content to share with other people forever, and to ensure your own website or blog appears in the Wayback Machine's collection of 400 billion pages.

OTHER BROWSERS

Get the weather from Google

We're aware that Opera seems to have more weather add-ons than any other browser and Google Weather (bit.ly/weather379) is yet another, but it's a good one. Once it's installed, click the toolbar button to set your location (by default this is Mountain View, California), and you'll get a handy eight-day forecast complete with details of temperature, precipitation and wind speed, along with familiar Google icons for sun, rain and cloud. To view the weather in another location, just type it into the search box.

Try Edge in any version of Windows

Microsoft's new Edge browser is exclusive to Windows 10 but, if you're desperate to try the browser without upgrading, you can give it a whirl thanks to a new set of virtual machines released by the company. Just visit bit.ly/virtual379, select 'Microsoft Edge on Win10' from the drop-down menu and choose a virtual machine, for example VMWare or VirtualBox. Download and run the file and you'll be able to test Edge in a window within your current operating system without needing to upgrade to Windows 10. Note that the virtual machines expire after 90 days, so don't save too much information to your virtual Edge!

Tell us your favourite add-ons at www.facebook.com/webusermagazine

Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

APPS

UPDATED

Amazon Underground

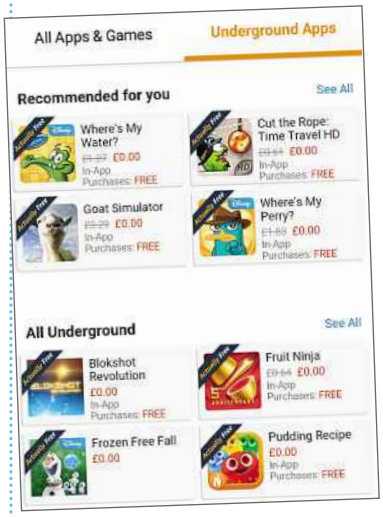
amazon.co.uk/underground

Min requirements: Android (varies with device)

Size: Varies with device

This exciting update to Amazon's Android app lets you download paid-for apps completely free of charge. Amazon Underground, as it is now known, lets you browse and buy the full range of Amazon products, but for the first time there are now hundreds of 'actually free' apps, which are not only free to download but also have none of the hidden costs often associated with free apps. Popular premium titles that have had their prices slashed to nothing include Goat Simulator, Angry Birds Slingshot, Fruit Ninja and OfficeSuite Pro 8 (which costs upwards of £7 when bought from the Google Play Store).

You may be wondering how such a spectacular deal is possible and the answer is that Amazon has reworked its business model so that app developers are paid a fee based on how much their apps are used. The company promises that it's not just a temporary promotion but a 'long-term program', and that you'll never be asked to pick up the charges. Whether you trust Amazon is up to you – see page 42 for our view of the company.



Not all apps have been made free, so make sure you only browse apps labelled with the 'Actually Free' banner. Since the app violates Google's terms and conditions, it's not available from the Play Store. See our Workshop, right, for instructions on how to install it.

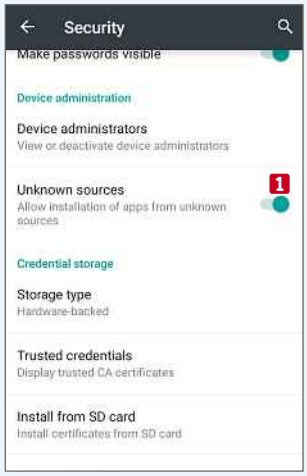
Our rating ★★★★★

MINI WORKSHOP

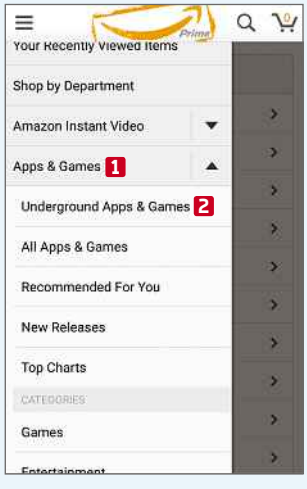
Install Amazon Underground on your Android device

1 Visit amazon.co.uk/underground, tap the 'X' 1 in the top-right corner to clear the customer message, then tap Download Amazon Underground. A new page loads and the Amazon Underground APK file starts downloading.

2 Open the Android Settings menu, tap Security and then check that 'Unknown sources' is turned on. 1 This allows you to install apps downloaded from outside the Google Play Store. Open your Downloads folder and run the Amazon_App.apk file.



3 Click Next, then Install to approve the app's permissions and install it. Tap Run, then log into the app. Select Apps & Games in the side menu, 1 then choose Underground Apps & Games 2 to browse 'actually free' apps.



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

SOCIAL

UPDATED

WhatsApp Messenger

bit.ly/whatsapp379

Min requirements: iOS 6, Android 2.1, Windows Phone 7.5

Size: 46MB

The iOS version of WhatsApp has received yet another update, introducing WhatsApp Web, which first appeared on Android. It syncs your messages with your Desktop browser, which makes typing messages much faster and less fiddly than on a small screen, and helps to preserve your battery life. The Android version of WhatsApp has also been updated this week, introducing a lower data-usage option for voice calls, custom notification settings for individual chats and new skin-tone variations for existing emoji.

Our rating ★★★★☆

MOVIE

UPDATED

JustWatch

bit.ly/justwatch379

Min requirements: Android 4.0, iOS 6

Size: Varies with device

JustWatch is a handy tool that helps you discover the cheapest ways to legally watch films and TV shows online. The app lets you search listings from Amazon Prime Instant Video, Netflix, iTunes, Google Play and many others, then shows the cheapest places to rent and buy the film, as well as highlighting any services that let you stream it as part of a wider subscription. We love Just Watch's New list, which lets you browse recently added titles across the services by genre, price and release date, and the handy tool that lets you see the best current discounts.

Our rating ★★★★★

MUSIC

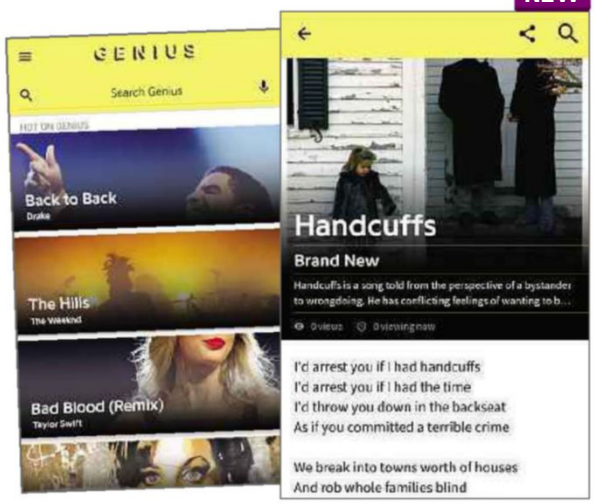
NEW

Genius

bit.ly/genius379

Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 8

Size: 4.1MB



Do you ever get a song lyric stuck in your head, but can't remember the song or artist they came from? Android's new Genius app lets you search lyrics from more than 1.7 million songs to quickly and easily find the answer. The lyrics are crowd-sourced by the Genius community and most listings include user annotations, which provide insight into the song's background and meaning. Generally, we found the app's search function worked very well; suggestions appeared immediately in a list as we typed – the more information we entered, the more refined the results became – and we had equal success searching for lyrics by obscure and well-known artists. Be sure, however, to only include words you're completely sure are correct, because the app isn't able to ignore or correct any of your search terms.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

ROUND UP | Quick bites

Opera Max

bit.ly/opera379

Min requirements: Android 4.0

Size: 5.3MB

Opera Max won 'App of the Fortnight' in issue 373 (bit.ly/webuser373). It offers data savings across a range of apps including Chrome, eBay and Instagram, and has recently been updated to work with YouTube and Netflix, too, which is great if you stream videos on the go.

Dreamify

bit.ly/dreamify379

Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 6

Size: 19MB

Inspired by Google's Deep Dream project, this new app morphs your photos into other-worldly compositions directly from your smartphone or tablet. Unlike Deep Dream, Dreamify also offers different settings and presets to give you more granular control over its output.

Hangouts

bit.ly/hangouts379

Min requirements: Android (varies with device)

Size: Varies with device

Google's messaging app has just received a major update, introducing a brand new Material Design interface. It also makes it easier to find your contacts.

SEARCH

UPDATED

Bing Search

bit.ly/bing379

Min requirements: Android 4.0
Size: 7.1MB

Bing Search for Android has been updated with a useful feature that enhances your enjoyment of any app you have open on your screen. Long-press the Home button or swipe up from the bottom of your home screen, and Bing Search opens its 'snapshots on tap', which analyse the page's content and displays useful related information and actions. This update is especially significant, because it offers functionality that will be introduced to Android Marshmallow later this year as Google Now on Tap. Since Bing Search is compatible with all devices running Android 4.0 onwards, it offers a good alternative to Google that will work on most phones and tablets.

Our rating ★★★★☆

GAMES

NEW

Fallout Shelter

bit.ly/fallout379

Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 7
Size: 141MB

This popular strategy game has been available on iOS for some time and now you can play it on Android, too. The aim is to create a brighter future for your virtual community by turning an underground excavation into a habitable vault. The possibilities within this framework are endless, and the game allows you to get to know your dwellers, playing an active role in their personal lives and finding them ideal jobs. You must kit them out with outfits and weapons, and provide training to develop their skills. To help your underground community develop, it's possible to set up a Radio Room to attract new dwellers, and you can even send members of your community above ground to explore the wasteland left behind.

Our rating ★★★★★

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

GAMES

Fantasy Premier League 2015/16

bit.ly/fantasyfootball379

Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 8.2
Size: 14MB **Price:** £1.49

If you're taking part in this season's Fantasy Premier League, this mobile app makes it much easier for you to manage your team on the go. Although it's not expensive, we somewhat resent that users are asked to buy a version of the app every season.

VIDEO

VHS Camcorder

bit.ly/vhscamcorder379

Min requirements: iOS 8
Size: iOS 8 **Price:** £2.99

Can you remember the videos you recorded with your old VHS camcorder? To recapture that same nostalgia, use this app to film video clips and apply a realistic aged-videotape effect.

TRAVEL

Travelmate

bit.ly/travel379

Min requirements: iOS 8
Size: 18.7MB **Price:** £2.29

TravelMate aims to make managing your finances on the road a little easier by letting you see all your expenses and incomings in one place. You can use the app to calculate your daily budget and invite friends to make splitting any group costs more straightforward.

REMOTE DESKTOP

Parallels Access

bit.ly/parallels379

Min requirements: Android 4.0.3, iOS 7.0
Size: 22MB **Price:** Free (with in-app purchases)

This brilliant app lets you remotely access your PC or Mac without needing to configure loads of settings. It's free to download but to use the service, you'll need to pay a subscription costing £13.99 a year.

VIDEO

Flow

bit.ly/flow379

Min requirements: iOS 7
Size: 49.9MB **Price:** £1.99

If you want to speed up or slow down videos you've recorded with your iPhone, Flow's powerful tools make it easy to do so. The app also lets you crop videos to a square format, so they're ready to share to Instagram.

Fantasy Premier League 2015/16 | VHS Camcorder | Travelmate | Parallels Access | Flow

Best New TV Apps

FILM

Curzon Home Cinema

bit.ly/virgin379

Min requirements: Virgin Media with TiVo

Size: N/A

Virgin Media customers with TiVo boxes can now watch films being shown at the flicks from the comfort of their sofas using the new Curzon Home Cinema app. This gives you instant access to selected independent movies on the day they're released in Curzon cinemas in the UK and Ireland, as well as classic and themed collections handpicked by Curzon's movie experts. These include the Oscar-winning *Still Alice*, *Manglehorn* starring Al Pacino and Andrew Haigh's acclaimed *45 Years*. Curzon uses a 'pay as you watch' system so there's no monthly subscription to pay, with new films costing £4 to watch and older films £2 each, with movies streamed in HD when available.

TV

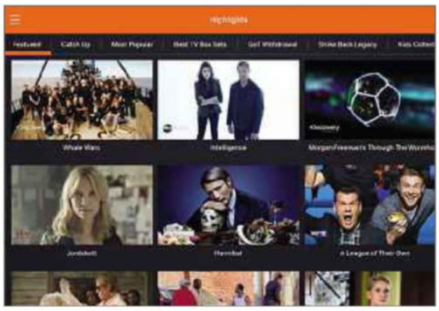
Now TV

www.nowtv.com

Min requirements: Android 4, iOS 6, Xbox One or 360, Chromecast, Roku, YouView, LG Smart TV, PC or Mac

Size: Varies with device

Although Now TV hasn't received a major update, other than to fix a few bugs in the iOS version, until 27 September it is offering new customers a Now TV Entertainment Pass for one month for just £1. This provides unlimited access to thousands of hours of catch-up TV, as well as live streaming of 13 pay TV channels including Sky 1, Sky Atlantic and Sky Arts. You can stream Now TV from your mobile device, or sign up from your smart TV or computer. Once the month is up, you'll automatically be charged the usual subscription fee of £6.99, so make sure you cancel the pass if you don't want to continue.



MUSIC

TalkTalk BopHeads

bopheads.talktalk.co.uk

Min requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 7

Size: 9.9MB

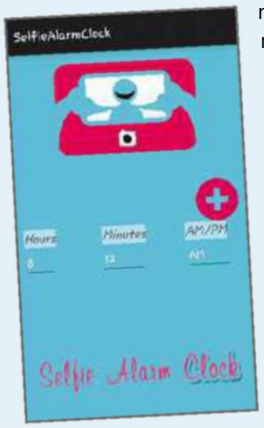
To celebrate the return of *The X Factor* to our screens, TalkTalk is giving you the chance to star in your own music video. Just install the BopHeads app, choose a video style and select a song from options including Little Mix's 'Black Magic' and Mark Morrison's 'Return of the Mack'. You can then record yourself lip-syncing to the track, with your head added to the singer's body, and share your video with the world. TalkTalk will be using the best efforts in its *X Factor* ad bumpers and you can already view dozens of videos on the website. BopHeads is great fun and the results look impressively professional, although it's a shame that there aren't more songs to choose from.

✗ Don't install...

Selfie Alarm Clock

bit.ly/selfie379

As if being woken by a blaring alarm wasn't bad enough, this app makes you take a 'selfie' to turn it off. That's right, you have to photograph yourself in all your bleary-eyed, messy-haired glory to make the damn thing stop bothering you – or, more likely, it will drive you to hurling your phone through the window in the hope that it gets crushed by a passing lorry. The app even charges you £1.88 to make your life miserable. Seriously, get lost!



...Install this instead ✓

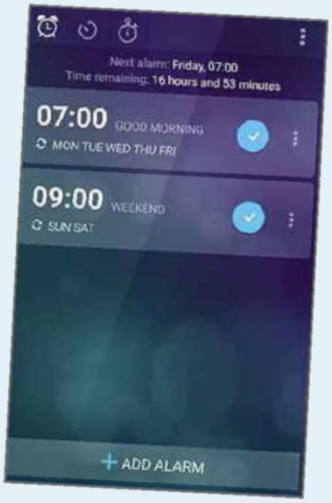
Alarm Clock Xtreme Free

bit.ly/alarm379

Min requirements: Android (varies with device)

Size: Varies with device

Forget the basic alarm clock feature on your Android phone and switch to this excellent app to make sure you never oversleep again. It's packed with useful tools including the welcome option to be woken gently to your favourite songs rather than jarred from your slumber by repeated bleeping. The music begins quietly and gradually increases in volume, and there's a large Snooze button to ensure you don't dismiss the alarm by accident. The app can even force you to solve a maths problem to disable the alarm, for those Monday mornings when you want to go back to sleep but know you shouldn't!



FAQ

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

Our guide to...

Alphabet

Google recently surprised the world by announcing that it has become a company called Alphabet. **David Crookes** explains why this isn't a late April Fool's joke

What is Alphabet?

Alphabet is the new name adopted by Google as an overarching brand for its vast and ever-growing range of products and services. It was announced in a blog post by Google co-founder Larry Page (bit.ly/page379) and it will replace Google Inc as the publicly-traded entity. All shares in Google will automatically convert to the same number of shares in Alphabet but, as Page says, the name may take some getting used to.

You bet. Why is it called that?

Page said the name Alphabet "means a collection of letters that represent language, one of humanity's most important innovations". He described it as "the core of how we index with Google search" and added, less clearly, "we also like that it means alpha-bet (Alpha is investment return above benchmark), which we strive for!". Whether Alphabet will have a tagline similar to Google's "Don't Be Evil" remains to be seen.

Will we be "alphabetting" the web, then?

Oh please. You're not suddenly going to refrain from "googling" (even though Google's lawyers actually attempted to stop such a term from becoming an eponym in 2003, fearing Google would become less of a brand in its own right). Google will remain the name of Alphabet's search engine business and we will still have Google Maps, Google Chrome and Google Mail (well, Gmail), among others. Google has been with us since September 1998 and its brand is too strong to abandon now.

Why change to Alphabet, then?

It's fair to say Google has its fingers in many pies and has long ceased to be a mere search company. Its Calico Labs department, for example, which launched in 2013, is conducting research into ageing by studying molecular biology, genetics, drug development and medicine. Then there's Life Sciences, which works on health and biotech projects, one of which includes a deal with the pharmaceutical giant Novartis to create a smart, glucose-measuring contact lens for people with diabetes.

Calico Labs is working to help us cheat the ageing process

So these teams will work independently?

They will. The idea is that each component of Google will form its own company, headed by its own CEO. This reduces damage to the 'brand' if a particular project proves unsuccessful. And if something amazing emerges from

Former Google CEO Larry Page announced Alphabet in a blog post

Sundar Pichai rose through the ranks to become CEO of Google

one of the teams that can be spun into a company of its own, this can happen more easily than before.

Where do Google products fit in?

Some of technology's most popular brands – Android, Search, Play, Chrome, Maps, Gmail and so on – are forming a new internet-focused Google division, headed by Sundar Pichai rather than Larry Page. This includes YouTube, which was previously a separate entity under the stewardship of CEO Susan Wojcicki, who Page singled out for special praise in his announcement.

Who is Sundar Pichai?

Pichai was the product chief at Google Inc until the announcement of Alphabet heralded his widely applauded promotion. He has been with the company since 2004 and was responsible for leading on some of the company's top products, including Chrome, Drive, Gmail and Maps. In March 2013, the Android division fell under Pichai's control. His elevation to the top position within the Google part of Alphabet is therefore no surprise, since he is one of the company's rising stars and has been given increasing levels of responsibility. But it also gives hope to other employees because by splitting the organisation into smaller chunks, Alphabet allows future stars to rise more easily.

So how will this affect me?

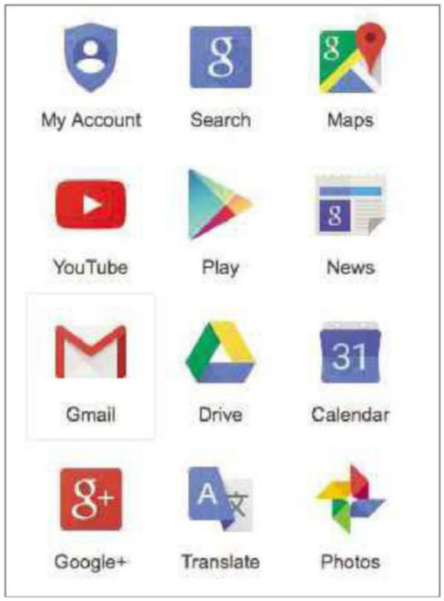
To be honest, it probably won't. The decision to rebrand the entire company as Alphabet is purely a business one and relates to a radical internal restructuring. But because Alphabet wants to shake things up – getting too comfortable is counter-productive to fostering ideas for future growth, it says – the new way forward should lead to more innovative products that will end up benefitting us all. We can expect to see many more so-called 'moonshots' being created as various divisions look to experiment, safe in the knowledge that they can do so independently of each other.

What on Earth are moonshots?

Moonshots are ambitious and groundbreaking projects that are created with no clear idea about their potential for making money. They are given the go-ahead without a full assessment of viability or risk and they simply have to address a problem with a radical solution using cutting-edge technology. Under the new system, one part of the Alphabet business could take a risk without affecting, for instance, the Google suite of products. This way, Alphabet can appease investors. Page says the restructure will improve the transparency and overview of what the company is doing.

Who will be running Alphabet?

Page will become Alphabet's CEO and Sergey Brin, Google's other co-founder, will be President. They will constitute the overseeing link with the other companies and will both benefit from the move because they will no longer be seen merely as the people overseeing a search-engine company that exists to sell adverts, but as the heads of an organisation that has the power to do immense good, as we've seen with Google's achievements in health. By handing the reigns of the company's flagship brands to Pichai, Page and Brin are free to work on products of the future.



The shake-up won't affect your favourite Google products

But what businesses will be formed?

Alphabet hasn't nailed down the specifics, but they will be diverse. In the last few years, Google has been testing driverless cars, drone delivery, broadband balloons, high-speed internet access, smart home products with its acquisition of thermostat maker Nest, and much more, and some of these projects could be merged. When the dust settles and the reorganisation is complete, Page says Alphabet will feel "cleaner and more accountable", benefitting too from transparency in reporting financial results.

Does Alphabet have a website promoting its businesses?

Yes, it has a rather basic effort at abc.xyz, which tells you very little about how the restructure will work. If you're wondering why Alphabet chose this rather creative URL, it's because BMW owns alphabet.com and uses it for the running of its fleet services company (we imagine it's been getting a lot of extra hits of late). Meanwhile, Twitter user Chris Andrikanich owns the @alphabet handle, and is expected to cash in for megabucks.

Alphabet's current website could do with a bit more content

UNCOVER THE HOOLI EASTER EGG

Buried deep within the announcement of Alphabet on its website abc.xyz is a cool, very well hidden link. By clicking the full stop in the middle of the eighth paragraph, visitors are taken to a brilliant, mocked-up website of the fictional company, Hooli (hooli.xyz).

For those who don't know, Hooli is the company which heavily features in the hilarious HBO comedy *Silicon Valley*, which is screened on Sky Atlantic in the UK (bit.ly/silicon379). It features a rather hapless character called Nelson Bighetti who, in the series, is lauded as a genius and rapidly promoted as part of an attempt to take control of an up-and-coming service called Pied Piper.

It's fair to say that the Easter Egg will be lost on a great many people but what is interesting is that hidden links are actually in violation of Google's Webmaster Guidelines (bit.ly/webmaster379). Hopefully, Sundar will give Larry a good ticking off!

STOP USING THESE WEBSITES

COVER FEATURE

What are the worst websites for dodgy privacy, hidden fees and unpleasant users? **Robert Irvine** names and shames 10 of the most notable offenders

The biggest names on the web are usually popular for good reason: they're often cheaper than their rivals, offer the most interesting content, or they simply do what they do better than anyone else does. But even the most successful websites – and sometimes especially those that have made it to the top – have a dark side, where they submit to the temptation to abuse their power or cynically exploit their users.

In this feature, we lift the lid on 10 of the top 200 most visited websites in the UK, as measured by traffic-analysis company Alexa (see the Top Sites in United Kingdom list at bit.ly/topsites379) to investigate some unsavoury practices. These include charging unreasonable fees, using privacy policies that compromise your data, exhibiting lax attitudes towards security and turning a blind eye to offensive comments under the guise of free speech.

If you feel that any of our choices are controversial, feel free to let us know, and tell us if you think we missed any sites that should have been included.

KEY TO SYMBOLS

- Hidden and unfair charges
- Dubious privacy policies
- Customer accounts hacked
- Unscrupulous and unpleasant users
- Questionable business practices
- Offensive and abusive content

tumblr.

tumblr.com

What's wrong with it?

Tumblr represents everything that's wrong with the web: it gives free rein to damaged and destructive people to post unpleasant content, with no regard for who might see it; user accounts are frequently hacked, both individually and in large-scale cyberattacks; and, despite being owned by Yahoo (see separate entry), which paid a ludicrous $1.1 billion for it in 2013, it's one of the laziest, low-rent social networks you'll ever come across.

In 2012, Tumblr promised to ban self-harm blogs that encourage such dangerous (sometimes fatal) actions as self-mutilation, suicide and anorexia, following widespread criticism in the media (bit.ly/tumblr379). And yet it's still easy to find 'tumblrs' with names such as Self-Harm Addiction, Suicidal Thoughts and Skinny Is As Skinny Does, all of which belong to (and are presumably read by) vulnerable and disturbed teenagers.

Tumblr has failed to keep its promise to ban self-harm blogs

What to use instead:

WordPress (wordpress.com) is still the best option for a simple but sophisticated blog, although it's had its fair share of hacks in recent years. Soup.io (soup.io) is closer to Tumblr's anything-goes spirit but be warned – some of its content is very *risqué*!

If you must use Tumblr:

You can help to clean up Tumblr by reporting unacceptable content. Click the three-dots icon below the post, choose 'Flag this post' and specify a reason why you object to it, such as "This violates Tumblr's community guidelines". You can also block the offending tumblr from following you.

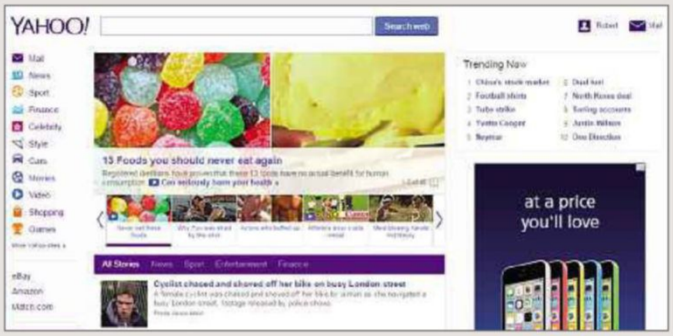
Improve Tumblr by reporting objectionable content

YAHOO!

www.yahoo.co.uk

What's wrong with it?

You may be under the impression that most people have already stopped using Yahoo, but it's notably still the fifth most popular site in the world and the eighth most visited in the UK. We're not sure why because – Flickr aside – Yahoo ceased to innovate long ago and only gets attention these days when something bad happens. For example, in January last year, a huge database containing Yahoo Mail usernames and passwords was hacked, forcing millions of users to reset their login details. This followed reports a few weeks before that Yahoo's advertising network had been compromised and was serving up malware-infected ads – or 'malvertisements' – which directed users to websites that tried to install malicious software.



The only innovative things to have occurred on Yahoo recently are security breaches

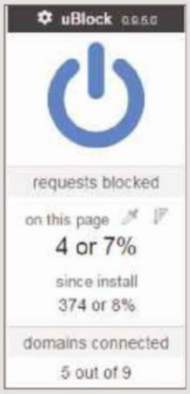
Shockingly, this happened *again* last month, when Yahoo suffered another 'malvertising' attack that exploited vulnerabilities in Flash to infect users' computers. These ads only needed to be viewed, not clicked, to spread an alarming combination of ransomware and ad-fraud malware that hijacked users' browsers. As Oscar Wilde may have quipped, to be hacked once may be regarded as a misfortune, but to have it happen time and time again looks like carelessness.

What to use instead:

It's boring but true that Google offers similar and mostly better alternatives to all Yahoo's main services, including search, webmail and photo-sharing. It also takes hacking more seriously than Yahoo appears to, offering researchers prize money if they successfully hack its products.

If you must use Yahoo:

Given Yahoo's tendency to fall prey to malvertising scams, we'd recommend using an ad blocker such as Adblock Plus or uBlock Origin when visiting its websites. Yahoo is worth $39bn, so don't feel too guilty about denting some of its ad revenues.



Ad blockers can protect you from 'malvertising'

tripadvisor

www.tripadvisor.co.uk

What's wrong with it?

Like communism, TripAdvisor's idealistic vision set out to put power in the hands of the masses rather than a *bourgeois* elite. Sadly, and also like communism, it's been tarnished by unscrupulous individuals with their own agendas and ruthless powermongers who turn a deaf ear to corruption, dishonesty and coercion among its members. Admittedly, that's a rather dramatic way to describe a hotel-and-restaurant review site, but TripAdvisor has long been plagued by fake reviews – self-promoting guff to bump up business and damning negativity to malign rivals – and petulant curmudgeons who delight in doling out one-star 'Terrible' reviews with no justification.

Yes, everyone has the right to complain about poor service and shoddy amenities when they've paid good money for a holiday or meal, but when criticism includes such 'constructive' comments as "the wallpaper was horribly dated", "the tea was too strong" and "this is a review based on a stay that did not happen", you can sympathise with the polite-but-exasperated tone of the management responses.

What to use instead:

TripExpert (www.tripexpert.com) collates professional hotel reviews from across the web and scores them out of 100. For consumer reviews, Yelp (www.yelp.co.uk) has a fairer community than TripAdvisor and recently merged with former rival Qype to make its service bigger and better.

TripAdvisor is plagued by fake reviews and unreasonable expectations

Yelp provides more balanced reviews of hotels and restaurants

If you must use TripAdvisor:

There are lots of honest, reliable reviewers on TripAdvisor – the trick is to spot the fakes and ignore them. Beware of over-enthusiastic raves and childish rants; check users' comments on other entries via their profiles; and give more weight to reviews that include specific details, such as what the person ate rather than a general complaint that "the food was awful".

download.cnet.com

What's wrong with it?

First off, we should point out that it's the parent site CNET rather than Download.com that appears in the UK's top 200 websites. However, since the two are interlinked, we think it qualifies for inclusion in this feature.

Described by tech-tips site How-To Geek as a "cavalcade of crapware", Download.com has become notorious for bundling some of the free software it offers with its own installer, which comes with various dubious extras. This is made worse by the tool actively trying to trick you into installing 'offers', such as browser hijackers, by using tiny text and confusing phrasing.

Download.com states on its Software Policies page that it doesn't accept software from developers that include "additional programs or third-party items that are not clearly disclosed in the product description, end-user license agreement, or installation screens". But it does little to abide by its own rules.

Furthermore, the site displays a ridiculous number of ads disguised as Download buttons. In fact, you could accurately call it Download.*con* because of its devious attempts to foist unwanted software onto your PC.

What to use instead:

MajorGeeks (www.majorgeeks.com) may not have updated its design for 13 years, but it's a great place to find all the latest downloads – and not just the most popular ones. Usefully, it labels software that comes with extras as 'bundleware', to forewarn you.

CNET Download.com gives you more software than you bargained for

If you must use Download.com:

As a rule, if the Download Now button for a program has Secure Download below it, you'll be fine, but if it's labelled Installer Enabled you should click the 'Direct download' link instead. We've also found that downloading programs in Chrome seems to bypass the installer.

www.reddit.com

What's wrong with it?

There's something rather quaint about Reddit's design, which hasn't been touched since 2005, and the fact that the self-proclaimed "front page of the internet" doesn't try to cash in on its 195 million users, other than through its ad-free Reddit Gold option. Delve into a few subreddits, however, and the site soon loses it charm as you uncover a hotbed of obnoxious and offensive views, unmoderated spam and obscene material. And that's just for starters.

Controversial subreddits (now closed, thankfully) have included 'r/fatpeoplehate', 'r/CoonTown' and 'r/beatingwomen'. Even William Shatner, who has in his time tackled Klingons, Tribbles and a gremlin on the wing of a jumbo jet, was shocked by Reddit's ethics when he joined the site in 2013, telling users: "I am appalled by some of the immature, horrifically racist, sexist, homophobic, ethnic, etc, posts that are just ignored here. Why are these accounts still active?" (bit.ly/shatner379).

Reddit's delightfully dated design masks a haven for trolls

Reddit staff have previously defended the site's unsavoury side by saying: "We stand for free speech. We will not ban legal content even if we find it odious or if we personally condemn it" (bit.ly/reddit379). However, negative coverage of the site earlier this year has apparently changed their minds and, last month, Reddit's co-founder and CEO Steve Huffman announced a new policy of 'quarantining' that requires users to opt in if they want to see the type of content that "violates a common sense of decency". The news was welcomed by some Reddit members, but others accused Huffman of making the site "worse for everyone else".

William Shatner berated Reddit for offensive and hateful posts

Flickr/Gage Skidmore

What to use instead:

Strangely enough, the term 'Reddit alternatives' recently 'trended' on Google, implying that many users have had enough. Our pick would be Hubski (hubski.com), a more thoughtful and mature take on Reddit, but with a similar cheap-and-cheerful design.

If you must use Reddit:

Despite the trolls and other losers, Reddit still has plenty of interesting and enlightening content. Search www.reddit.com/subreddits for a topic to find suitable subreddits, and then stick to those rather than straying into the less salubrious areas.

Hubski is a quieter and more thoughtful alternative to Reddit

www.adobe.com/uk

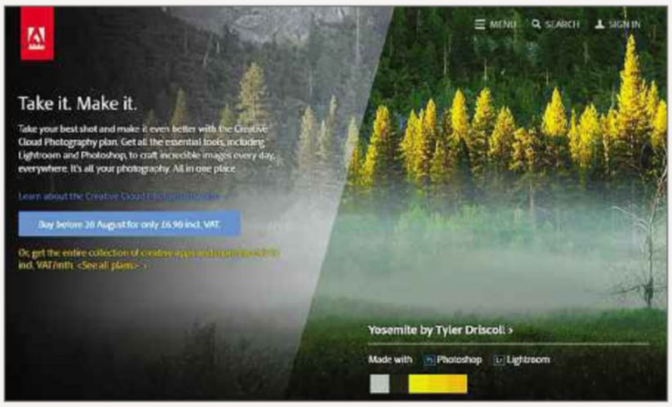
What's wrong with it?

Like Yahoo, Adobe seems to be a perennial target for hackers, whether it's the notoriously flaw-ridden Flash, the bloated Adobe Reader or its own website. In October 2013, a reported 38 million Adobe usernames and passwords were stolen by hackers, a figure that is significantly larger than the company's initial estimate of 2.9 million (which is still quite a lot). A month later, the number of affected accounts was revealed to be as many as 152 million, and a few weeks ago Adobe was forced to pay an undisclosed amount to settle customer claims regarding the breach.

Now, you may be thinking: well, that was nearly two years ago, surely it's fine to use the Adobe site now? But it still unapologetically offers Flash Player for download, without warning that you "use it at your own risk", and continues to bundle its outdated plug-in with the annoying McAfee Security Scan Plus. Many users have also complained about Adobe's subscription charges for its Creative Cloud service, which renew automatically after the first year – at a cost of at least £102.30 – and charge you 50 per cent of the annual subscription if you cancel after the first 14 days.

What to use instead:

Adobe prides itself on being reassuringly expensive, but unless you're a professional photographer or designer, you can get by with free image-editing software Paint.net (getpaint.net), which has a very lively and helpful online community.



Adobe keeps its hidden charges and security problems quiet

If you must use Adobe:

Once a hacker's target, always a hacker's target, so make sure you change your Adobe password regularly and don't use it across several sites. Also, read the small print before signing up for Creative Cloud.

BAD 'UNS BUBBLING UNDER

The sites that narrowly missed making our list

FACEBOOK
Harvests your personal data to sell to advertisers

MARKS & SPENCER
Interrupts your shopping with vacuous fashion tips

MAIL ONLINE
Transparent clickbait – yet still we keep clicking!

PINTEREST
Seriously, do you really have nothing better to do?

WEB USER
Just getting in there before somebody else does!

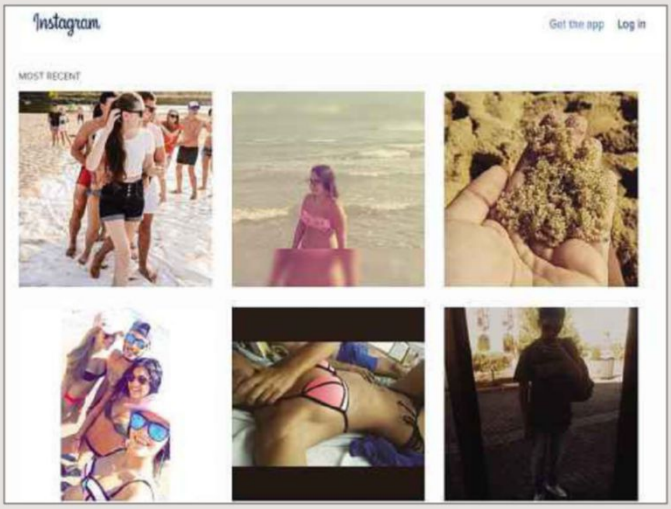
instagram.com

What's wrong with it?

Instagram is now the 26th most visited site in the UK, and it's not even a proper website – more a way for the perpetually vain to post endless selfies tweaked with 'trendy' effects. From the online evidence, it seems many Instagram users aren't particularly nice, either, posting spiteful comments about women's weight and looks; making death threats against celebrities, politicians and schoolchildren; and – in a story reported last month (bit.ly/baby379) – stealing pictures from a young mother to mock up adverts offering her baby for sale. Nice crowd!

Instagram itself has been criticised for a privacy policy that implied it had the right to sell users' photos without payment or notification. This has since been amended and it will now "only share your information as well as information from tools like cookies, log files, and device identifiers and location data, with third-party organisations". So that's alright, then.

Instagram accounts are also frequently hacked (a Google News search for 'Instagram hacked' brings up a staggering 2.9 million results) and the Facebook-owned company is said to be very slow to respond to such security breaches.



Instagram users never seem to realise their photos are rubbish

What to use instead:

If you want to share your photos without some troll calling you fat or ugly, Flickr (flickr.com) remains the best option. It has a friendly community and offers 1TB of free online storage.

If you must use Instagram:

To its credit, Instagram makes it easy to block spammers, trolls and other pests. Just tap their username to open their profile and choose Block User. You can also choose to make your photos private, and report offensive users, pictures and comments.

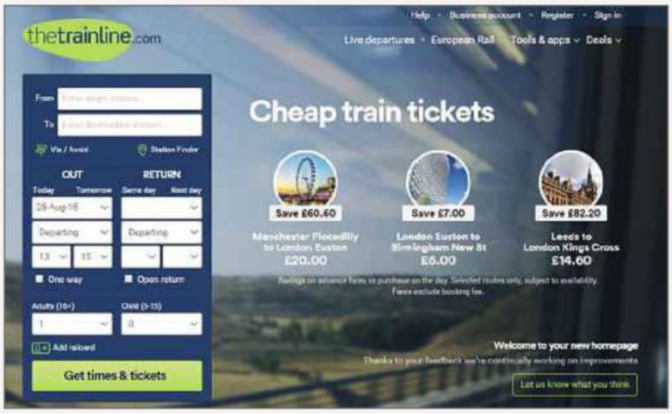
Flickr is the best place to share photos and get feedback

www.thetrainline.com

What's wrong with it?

Although Thetrainline saves you money on the escalating cost of rail travel by letting you buy tickets in advance, we feel it should be more upfront about its extra charges. It's only when you click the Fees link, which is minuscule and hidden in the bottom-left corner of the homepage, that you discover you'll need to pay from 25p to £1.50 on top of the price of your ticket, or £1 if you're using the mobile app. There's also a 2-per-cent transaction fee for paying by credit card (set at £1.50 for app bookings). Worst of all, if you need to change your ticket for any reason, you'll need to pay a £10 charge. While this may be "standard across the rail industry", the information doesn't need to be so tucked away. Also, there are no refunds available for advance tickets.

Another frequent complaint is the Thetrainline's poor customer service – just check its Facebook page for daily tales of woe, including difficulty in getting refunds; group bookings being split across different carriages; and "the worst call-centre staff I have dealt with".



Thetrainline should be open about its fees on its homepage

What to use instead:

Redspottedhanky.com (www.redspottedhanky.com)

We prefer Redspottedhanky .com's fast and friendly site

is quicker and easier to use than Thetrainline, and doesn't charge you a credit card fee (there's a flat-rate £1 booking fee). It also has a clear refunds policy, which it presents as an illustrated flow chart.

If you must use Thetrainline:

You can avoid some of the site's fees by paying for your tickets using your debit card or PayPal; collecting them from the station; and booking from the browser on your mobile device rather than Thetrainline's app.

www.amazon.co.uk

What's wrong with it?

The one-stop shop for everything from angle grinders to Ziploc bags has destroyed more small businesses than the *Luftwaffe* and the last recession combined. Once Amazon started branching out from books, many companies went bust because they couldn't compete with its low prices and huge range of stock – unless, of course, they were willing to play the game and sell their products through the online megastore. As many ebook authors have discovered, Amazon's view of what constitutes a 'fair cut' of profits can cancel out the benefits of having access to its enormous customer base.

It's well known that despite being worth around $250bn, Amazon managed to get away with paying minimal tax in the UK until May this year by funnelling its sales through Luxembourg. Its rather feeble excuse read: "E-commerce is a low-margin business and highly competitive, and Amazon continues to invest heavily around the world, which means our profits are low".

In March, Amazon was censured by the Advertising Standards Authority for misleading customers into signing up for its Prime service without making it clear that they'd be charged £79 after the first month, and it prompted further anger in May by doubling its threshold for free delivery to £20.

All these tactics – and we haven't even touched on the troubling allegations about its working conditions (see www.amazonanonymous.org for details) – suggest that, for all its choice, convenience and competitive pricing, Amazon is a bully. Its friendly veneer conceals a contempt for customers, retail "partners" and even its own workers, because ultimately all it cares about is money and how to gather data to make more cash – even to the extent of tracking you on other websites. True, a good business has to chase profits, but next time you receive an email containing exclusive "offers for you" or are enticed to "get yourself something" from your Wish List, see it for the cynical strong-arm tactic that it is.

Amazon blames low profits for hard-sell tactics and tax evasion

What to use instead:

Amazon now has so many departments that no other single store can compete with its variety and value. However, for books (which was Amazon's original focus, after all), you can install the Chrome extension Bookindy (bookindy.com), which lets you browse titles at Amazon and then buy from your local, independent bookstore, often for lower prices.

Bookindy lets you buy books on Amazon from local sellers

If you must use Amazon:

We don't honestly expect anyone to stop using Amazon – we use it ourselves, praise its new app on page 32 and would be delighted if you bought our new Back Issues CD and Windows 10 MagBook from the store! But we'd advise you to reduce the data it gathers about you by going to Your Account, Your Browsing History Settings and clicking 'Turn off browsing history'.

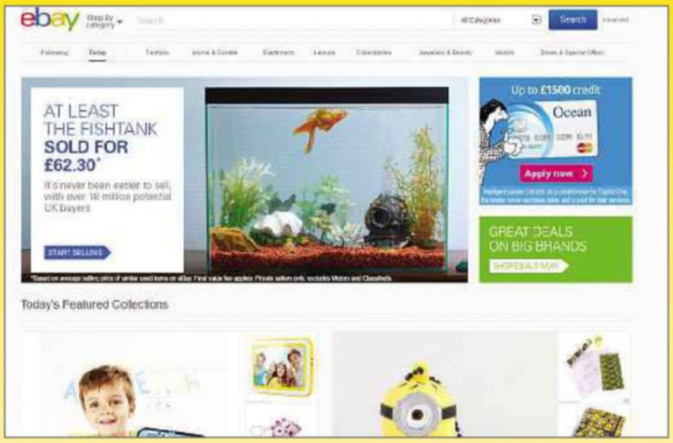
...AND OUR NUMBER ONE WEBSITE THAT YOU SHOULD STOP USING

www.ebay.co.uk

What's wrong with it?

In Andrew Williams' Star Email in the last issue of *Web User*, he observed that he couldn't remember the last time we ran a feature about eBay – and he's right. Aside from Barry's angry column in Issue 366 (bit.ly/webuser366), 'eBay should stop time-wasting bidders', our most recent eBay article was in January 2013. Either this means we've been unfairly neglecting the online marketplace or there simply isn't anything exciting to say about eBay anymore (clue: it's the latter).

Although eBay's familiarity can feel comforting, it ticks many of the boxes for what constitutes a 'site to avoid'. You probably remember the catastrophic security breaches suffered by the site last year: in May, a cyberattack resulted in 145 million usernames and passwords being compromised and eBay's slow response led to an investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO, www.ico.gov.uk). Four months later, hackers used hijacked eBay accounts, many with '100 per cent' feedback ratings, to post hundreds of fake listings for items including iPhones, televisions and clothes. Clicking these listings directed users to phishing sites where they were asked to log in and enter their bank details. The hacks exploited vulnerabilities involving the use of JavaScript and Flash in listings, but eBay stubbornly refused to block the plug-ins and instead blamed users for being careless with their passwords (bit.ly/ebay379).



eBay should treat its 18 million sellers with a little more respect

Compounding eBay's lax attitude towards security is its poor treatment of sellers in recent years, despite the fact that without them it would be just another online store. In its Spring Seller Update earlier this year, eBay reduced the number of free listings per month from 50 to 20 items, with the sweetener that if the item sells it will refund the insertion fee. It also altered the rules regarding eBay Stores to limit sellers to 150 free fixed-price (Buy It Now) listings rather than auctions. To occasional users, these might not sound like drastic changes, but to people who make their livelihood by selling high volumes of products through eBay, they're far from welcome. Added to this, eBay takes a 10-per-cent cut of every sale, while sellers cannot leave negative feedback for buyers, which means they have no defence against time-wasters who don't pay up on time, if at all.

The site also does a bad job of weeding out dodgy listings from fraudsters who take your money for items that don't exist and disappear before you've had time to lodge a complaint. True, eBay offers a Money Back Guarantee for such scams, but you only have 30 days from the estimated delivery date to request the refund.

eBay's Money Back Guarantee should be longer than 30 days

What to use instead:

Although it doesn't get much attention these days, eBid (uk.ebid.net) is still going strong – when we visited, we found that there had been 358,222 new listings in the last 24 hours. We like that new sellers can pay a one-off fee of £49.99 to get free, unlimited listings and five free eBid stores for life.

eBid offers unlimited free listings for a one-off payment

If you must use eBay:

One recent change we like is the Click & Collect option, which lets buyers collect packages from more than 650 Argos stores across the UK. This eliminates delivery costs for both parties and means you don't have to wait in for the postman or a courier. ■

NEXT ISSUE on sale Wednesday 23 September 2015

HOW WINDOWS 10 IS SPYING ON YOU

We reveal how Microsoft is invading your privacy, tracking your activities and harvesting your data – even if you're using Windows 7 or 8

PLUS...

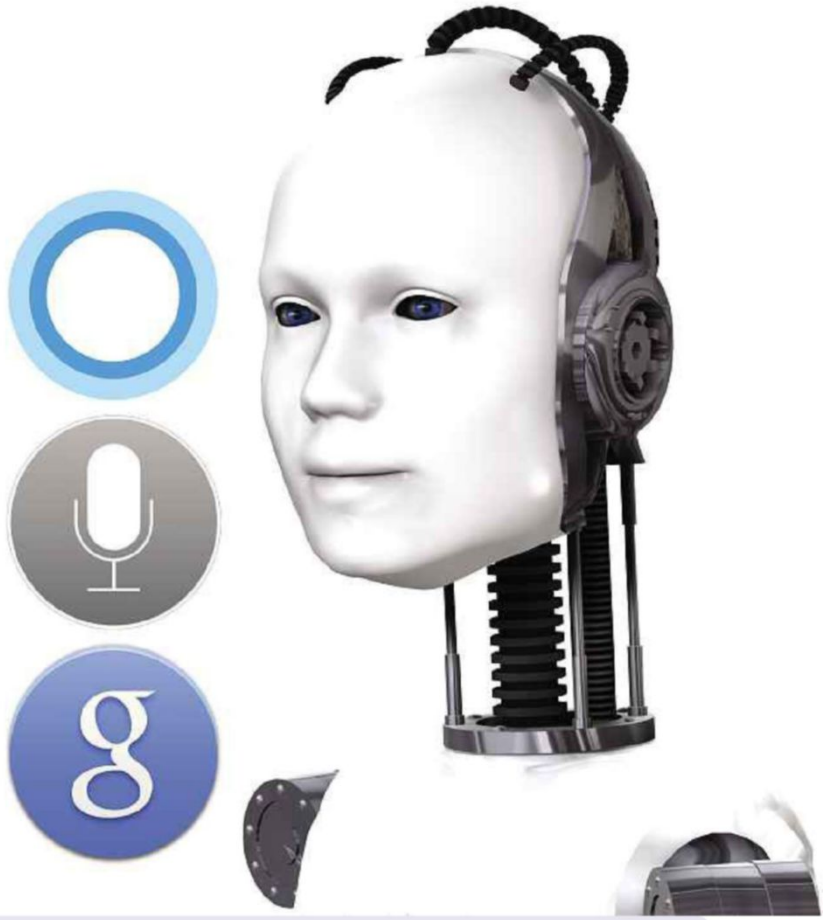
DON'T PAY FOR OFFICE
Unlock all the best features in the new LibreOffice

STOP AUTO-PLAY VIDEOS
Fix the web menace that's driving us all to distraction

EDIT MOBILE PHOTOS
Best free apps for perfecting pictures on your phone

SUBSCRIBE TO WEB USER AT SUBSCRIBE.WEBUSER.CO.UK

Best free voice assistants



Personal voice assistants help you manage your day, perform searches and much more, without using your hands. **Wayne Williams** puts the top six tools to the test

Cortana | bit.ly/cortana379 | ★★★★★

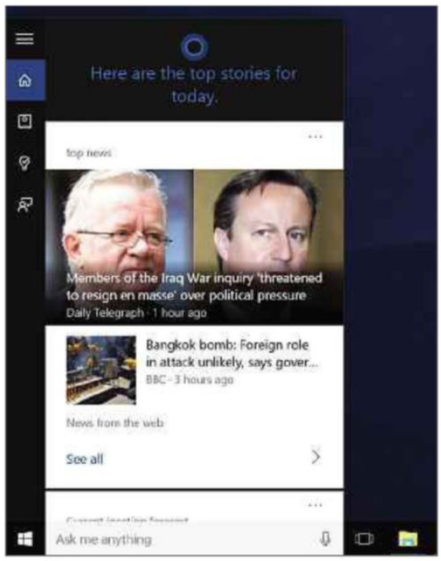
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

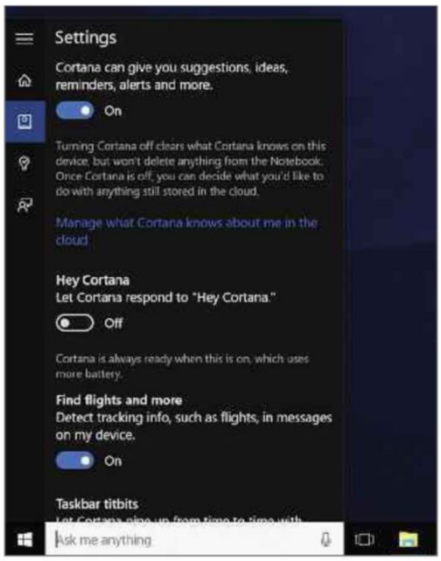
What we liked:

Friendlier than Siri and Google Now, Cortana is arguably the best reason to upgrade to Windows 10. You can summon her instantly in Microsoft's new operating system simply by clicking the search button on the taskbar, or by saying "Hey, Cortana", and then interact with her like a real person by asking her something or typing your request. When summoned, she'll provide a handy visual summary of the top news, the current weather and more.

We especially like that Cortana has her own notebook to which you can add details about yourself to make her abilities and advice more personal to you. She also has an excellent reminder feature that's very easy to use. Say something like, "Remind me to watch *EastEnders* at 7.30pm on Tuesday," to create an instant reminder. You can also set alarms in the same way.

Creating and sending emails is equally straightforward. Just say "Send email to [person's name]" and she'll guide you through the process. We especially liked being able to launch programs in Windows 10 simply by asking Cortana to "Open [program name]". She can even provide driving directions using the built-in Windows 10 maps, which is a brilliant touch.





Cortana had very few problems understanding us, and she definitely gets better at recognising your voice over time. There are some clever responses built into Cortana, too – she'll sing songs or tell jokes when asked.

How it can be improved:

Cortana is tied very closely to Bing, which means the web results she produces aren't as good as they would be using Google. We'd prefer it if she just used your browser's default search engine instead.

OUR VERDICT

Cortana is efficient, able to do a lot of things very well and has an amusing personality, which we really liked. Every task we set, she handled without fuss.

Siri | bit.ly/siri379 | ★★★★☆

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

WebUser SILVER AWARD

What we liked: Available on all iOS devices, Siri is the best known personal assistant and saves you a lot of tapping or swiping on your iPhone, iPad or Apple Watch. She can be easily summoned by holding down the Home button on your device or by saying "Hey, Siri" (you'll need to set up this option in Settings first), which gives the impression that she's always on hand to help, even though she lacks the personal approach of Cortana.

Setting up a reminder or an alarm, or creating an email, is very straightforward, and Siri can perform lots of other useful tasks including making calls, starting FaceTime chats, writing and sending messages, launching apps and adding events to your calendar. She's also a great travel companion, because she can give you directions, share your location and play songs on your device, and keeps quiet for the rest of the time!

How it can be improved: Although Siri is efficient, she lacks the fun personality of Cortana. Ask her to sing a song or tell a joke and she'll politely decline. Siri struggled to understand us on occasion, and we often experienced long delays before she responded to basic questions.

OUR VERDICT

We're fond of Siri but sometimes using her can be a frustrating experience. That said, she can handle a lot of tasks and relying on her soon becomes second nature.

Google Now | bit.ly/googlenow379 | ★★★★☆

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

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

What we liked: Available on Android and iOS, you can summon Google's voice assistant by tapping the microphone button or by saying, "OK, Google". This helpful virtual assistant can make phone calls, prepare and send messages, set reminders and alarms, and give you directions using Google Maps but, unlike Cortana and Siri, it doesn't express much personality while doing so.

The big bonus is that the backbone of the service is Google, so the answers it provides to questions and web searches are always fast, thorough and reliable. We also found Google Now's card-based system very useful because it lets you view all sorts of relevant information, and cards appear when you need them. Google Now handily integrates with sites and apps you have installed, without requiring you to connect them manually, although this does raise concerns about who your data is being shared with.

How it can be improved: There's something snappy about the voice used by Google. She comes across as rather irritable and not in the slightest bit friendly. We had problems sending emails, with one recipient not found despite being in our contacts, and you have to say "subject" if you want your message to have a heading.

OUR VERDICT

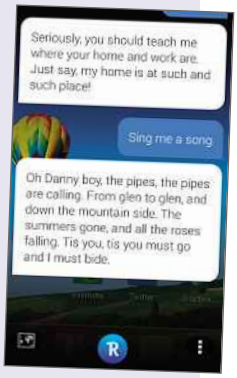
Google Now doesn't have the range of functions that Cortana and Siri have, and it could be a lot friendlier. But it uses Google's services, which makes up for some of its shortcomings.

BEST OF THE REST

Robin

bit.ly/robin379

This Android personal assistant is designed to be used when you're on the road and it can provide directions, answer questions, report the weather, give you the news, tell jokes and sing songs, and send messages or make calls. You can summon it by pressing a button, waving your hand over the phone, or by saying "Robin" or "OK, Robin".



Maluuba

bit.ly/maluuba379

This voice assistant for Android can answer all sorts of questions, including sports-related queries such as the latest football scores. It can provide directions, set reminders, alarms and timers, add events to your calendar, make calls, play songs and more, although some features are a bit limited. Like Cortana, Maluuba uses Bing to provide the answers to questions it doesn't know immediately.

ILA

bit.ly/ila379

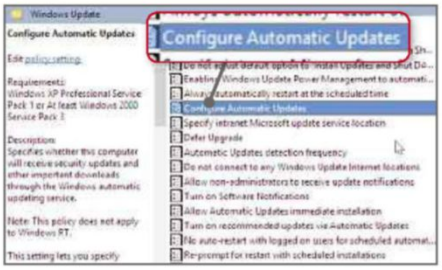
ILA (Intelligent Learning Assistant) is a Java-based voice assistant that works on Windows, Mac OS X and Linux. To use it, you just have to unzip the contents of the download to a folder and run the Install file. You can then use it to launch system commands, open programs and web pages, start and stop timers, create emails and more. You can also teach it additional commands.

Stop updates messing up your PC

Software updates are meant to fix problems, but sometimes they actually cause them. **Wayne Williams** explains how to only update what, when and how you want

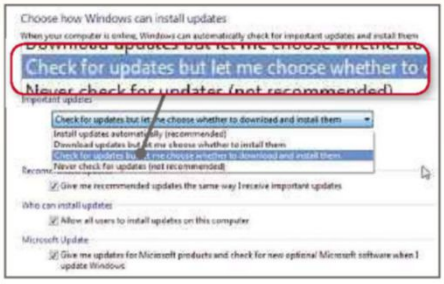
Control updates using the Group Policy Editor

The Group Policy Editor is a tool built into the Professional, Enterprise and Education editions of Windows, which can be used to configure automatic updates. To launch it, press Windows+R, type `gpedit.msc` into the Run box and press Enter. Go to Computer Configuration, Administrative Templates, Windows Components, Windows Update and double-click 'Configure automatic updates'. In the window that opens, select Enabled. Use the drop-down menu to change the setting from 'Auto download and notify for install' to 'Notify for download and notify for install'. Click Apply and OK to confirm the change and, from now on, you'll be able to decide whether or not to download updates.

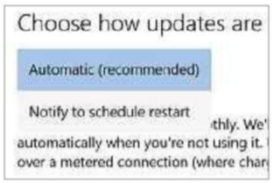


Stop Windows restarting after an update

If your PC is set to automatically download and install updates, Windows will restart your system automatically, which can be a real nuisance if you're in the middle of something. To stop this happening in Windows 7, open the Control Panel, click 'System and Security', and then click Windows Update. Click 'Change settings' on the left, then change the updates option to either 'Download updates but let me choose whether to install them' or 'Check for updates but let me choose whether to download and install them'.



In Windows 8+ and 10, go to Settings, 'Update & security' and, under Windows Update, click 'Advanced options'. Under 'Choose how updates are installed', change the setting from 'Automatic (recommended)' to 'Notify to schedule restart'.



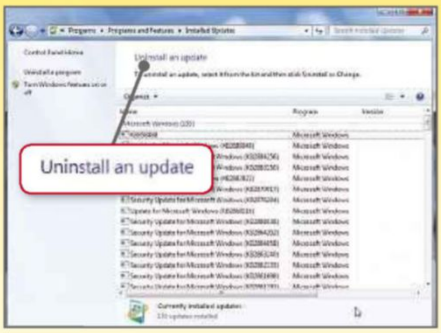
Uninstall old Windows updates

If you install an update and it starts to cause problems with your PC, you can uninstall it. Launch the Control Panel, go to Programs and click 'View installed updates' under 'Programs and Features'. From here, you can uninstall system updates, although you should only do

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T UPDATE?

Most updates that are pushed out by software companies are designed to improve performance, stability or security. If you don't update, then you may miss out on useful new features, fixes for problems and safety measures, and could leave yourself vulnerable to malware and hacks. In truth, the chances of you running into problems are small, although how small depends on whether you have any form of third-party security software installed, and whether you visit potentially dangerous sites, and download content from untrusted sources. Windows XP users who still haven't updated to a new operating system are obviously at far greater risk than most PC owners because they get no updates at all.

You should definitely install the latest security updates, but other less important ones can be deferred or avoided if you have a reason for doing so. For example, an update may change or remove a function that you use, or you may have heard that it will wreak havoc on your system, such as the recent Windows 10 'reboot loop'.

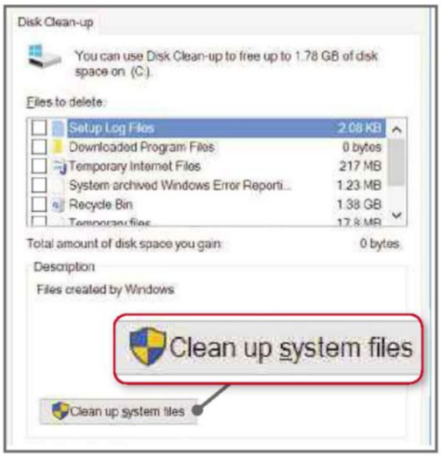


so if you are certain your PC will be better off without them. This works in all versions of Windows, including Windows 10. The new operating system also lets you remove updates for other Microsoft programs, such as Office.

Delete old updates to free up space

Some updates on your system are no longer required or have been superseded, so they can be safely removed to free up space. To remove them, you need to use the built-in Windows Update Clean-up feature, which is part of the Disk Cleanup tool in Windows 8+ and Windows 10, and was added to Windows 7 as an update (bit.ly/cleanup379).

To use it, click Start and search for `Disk Cleanup`. Launch this, select the drive to target and wait for the tool to calculate how much space it can save by removing junk files and emptying the Recycle Bin. Once this is done, click the 'Clean up system files' button and choose what to remove.



Manage automatic software updates

Update Freezer (www.updatefreezer.org) lets you temporarily freeze automatic updates from companies including Adobe (Flash), Oracle (Java), Google, Apple, Mozilla and Opera. You can choose which programs and plug-ins to disable simply by clicking the relevant options you want. Some updaters limit you to disabling or enabling them, while others let you choose a schedule or an update type (automatic, notify only, and so on).

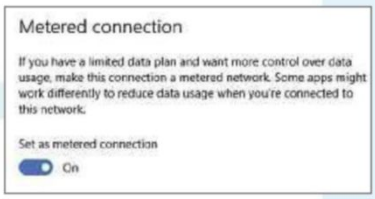
There are installer and portable versions of Update Freezer available.

CONTROL UPDATES IN WINDOWS 10

Defer updates in Windows 10 Pro

Updates in Microsoft's new operating system are installed whether you want them to be or not. However, if you're running Windows 10 Pro, you can defer them to stop them interrupting what you're doing and causing any problems. You will need to install the updates eventually, but at least it will be on a schedule that suits you. To delay updating, go to Settings, 'Update & security' and under Windows Update click 'Advanced options'. Tick the 'Defer upgrades' box to cut off the updates for "several months" (it's not yet clear exactly how many!).

Cheat updates in Windows 10 Home



Windows 10 Home users have limited options – there's no deferring, updates just get installed automatically. There is a way to cheat this limitation though, and that's to use the 'Metered connection' feature. This fools Windows 10 into thinking you're on a non-broadband connection (using a tethered mobile as a personal hotspot, for example) and delays downloading and installing updates.

To turn on this feature, click Start, type `Change Wi-Fi settings` and press enter. Click 'Advanced options' and toggle 'Metered connection' to On. Note that this trick only works if you're on a wireless network. If your PC is connected to your router via Ethernet, the option isn't available.

Show or hide updates in Windows 10

Although the majority of the updates that Microsoft issues are perfectly safe, some could cause problems with your PC. Microsoft has wisely created a troubleshooting tool that allows Windows 10 users to block troublesome updates. You can download it from bit.ly/hideupdates379. Hide unwanted updates and Windows won't install these until you say so. The tool can block most updates, but not all.

Update everything in one go

The excellent free program Secunia PSI (Personal Software Inspector) (bit.ly/psi379) ensures that all your installed programs and plug-ins are kept up to date, so you don't need to check them manually. Run the software, click the 'Scan now' button and you'll receive a score out of 100, along with a list of all the programs that are up to date or need updating.

During Secunia PSI's installation, you can choose if you want it to update programs automatically; download them but let you choose when to install the updates; or check for updates but leave it to you to decide when to download and install them. If you change your mind later, you can go into Settings and select another update option. ■

Lock devices WITHOUT a password

Forget passwords – literally. **Jonathan Parkyn** explains the new tools that let you lock and unlock your PC, tablet and phone using your face, finger, voice and even your heartbeat

Your finger

How does it work?

Newer iPhones and iPads come with a built-in sensor that scans your fingerprint to verify your identity before unlocking your device using Touch ID. Apple's not the only manufacturer to employ this technology – Samsung, HTC and Motorola are among some of the others that have added fingerprint recognition to their phones.

Windows has supported fingerprint recognition for many years. If your laptop has a fingerprint reader, you can set it up via the Windows Control Panel. You can add one to any PC yourself by connecting a USB fingerprint reader.

Some ultra-secure USB storage devices will only unlock their contents by scanning and matching your fingerprint. Imation's IronKey F200 – which also features military-grade encryption – is a good example, although it's not cheap. An 8GB drive currently sells for around £190 from bit.ly/ironkey379.

What are the benefits?

Your fingerprint is unique and, unless someone has *Mission: Impossible* levels of spy gear, it's currently more hack-proof than a password.

What are the downsides?

On the other hand (pun intended), you leave fingerprints everywhere you go – on pint glasses in the pub, door handles, light switches and so on. So, theoretically, it could be possible for hackers to lift a clean print, create a digital copy of it and find a way to use this to access your device. Meanwhile, dry skin, injuries, paint, dirt and other random factors can make it hard for sensors to obtain an accurate scan of your digits.

KeyLemon's software helps you to set up facial-recognition security in Windows

Your face

How does it work?

Android has built-in facial recognition that can be used to unlock your device, which is much improved in Lollipop. Tap Settings, Security and make sure Screen Lock is switched on – set up a PIN if you haven't already. Next, tap Smart Lock below (if this option isn't shown, tap 'Trust agents' and switch on Smart Lock). Tap 'Trusted face' and follow the instructions to record your face. If you wear glasses sometimes or occasionally sport a beard, you can head back to the 'Trusted face' setting again and tap 'Improve face matching' to record yourself with spectacles or facial hair. With this set up, all you need to do is look at your device to unlock it.

Microsoft has built facial recognition into Windows 10, too, with a feature called Windows Hello, though you need an Intel RealSense-compatible three-lens camera for your PC to use it. Alternatively, you could try the free tool KeyLemon (www.keylemon.com), which works with normal webcams.

What are the benefits?

In Lollipop, the facial Smart Lock is easy to set up and unlocks your phone almost instantly, so it's much more convenient than a password or even a fingerprint reader. And we love that

Imation's IronKey is a storage device that's protected by fingerprint identification

Windows Hello lets you log into your computer just by sitting in front of it.

What are the downsides?

Famously, Android's face lock has been hacked – simply by using a photo of the device owner's face. Even face locks that require you to prove you're human by blinking, such as KeyLemon, could theoretically be fooled by a video of you blinking. Microsoft's Windows Hello gets around this by using depth perception, so a 2D image won't work. Sadly, it's nigh-on impossible to get hold of the special camera required. Additionally, Microsoft's solution fails to take into account being hacked by a long-lost evil twin or clone!

Your voice

How does it work?

By default, the latest Google Nexus devices always have one ear open, waiting to spring into action at your spoken commands. But you don't need a Nexus 6 or 9 to unlock your Android device via your voice – a recent update means you can do it on any Lollipop device. Follow the instructions in the previous tip to switch on Smart Lock if it's not already available, then tap Settings, 'Language & input', 'Voice input'. Here, make sure Enhanced Google services is selected and tap the cog icon. Tap '"OK Google" detection' and make sure all three options are switched on. You may need to train the voice model and add US English to your voice input languages before you can switch on 'Trusted voice'.

VoicePass Password Manager (59p, bit.ly/voicepass379) is an Android app that goes one stage further by allowing you to log into sites and services – Facebook or your webmail, for example – by using spoken passwords.

VoicePass Password Manager lets you use a spoken password on your device

What are the benefits?

Asking your phone to unlock feels very natural, even if you have to say "OK Google" in order to do so – see our feature on page 44 for more about voice assistants.

What are the downsides?

Even Google admits that voice recognition isn't necessarily the safest way to lock your device. "Someone with a similar voice or a recording of your voice could unlock your device," a helpful pop-up message informs you when you activate the feature.

Your USB stick

How does it work?

Using a special tool, it's possible to convert a USB memory stick into a key that locks and unlocks your computer. As long as the USB drive is plugged in, you can access the PC; removing it again will instantly lock the computer. For Windows users, Predator Home Edition (bit.ly/predator379) costs around £6.50. Install the program and insert a USB flash drive (it doesn't matter what size) when prompted, then follow the remaining prompts to set up your key.

Predator Home Edition lets you turn a USB flash drive into a key to lock your computer

What are the benefits?

One USB drive can be used to unlock multiple PCs. And the same USB drive can still be used for storage.

What are the downsides?

If you don't have many USB ports to spare, it can be a pain to effectively lose the use of one of them. Also, since it's a physical item, your USB key could still get lost or stolen.

Your whistle or your pocket?

How does it work?

If you're an Android user, there are apps available on the Google Play store that are supposedly designed to unlock your device in unique ways. Whistle Screen (free, bit.ly/whistlescreen379) claims to unlock your screen when you whistle at it, while Gravity Screen (free, bit.ly/gravityscreen379) purports to lock your screen when you place your device in a pocket and unlock it again when you pick it up.

Whistle Screen claims to unlock your screen

What are the benefits?

None.

What are the downsides?

We tried both of these apps. Whistle Screen didn't work at all, while Gravity Screen worked sometimes. Neither app offers any security and Gravity Screen can't even be uninstalled in the normal way. We recommend exercising caution with these kinds of gimmicky apps.

UNLOCK DEVICE WITH EYES, EARS OR HEART

Fingerprint recognition has been around since at least the mid-19th Century, making it pretty primitive compared to some of the biometric techniques currently in development. Bodyprint (bit.ly/bodyprint379), for example, uses other unique physical attributes, such as the shape of your ear, to identify you and allow access to devices. Nymi Band (www.nymi.com), meanwhile, is a wearable technology that identifies you using the unique rhythm of your heartbeat. Meanwhile, Fujitsu recently demonstrated a prototype phone that could be unlocked using a built-in iris scanner, bringing that staple of futuristic spy movies one step closer.

Broadband Deals

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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
							CHEAPEST
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3	EE	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£1.00 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£12.00
4	plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00

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*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 26 August 2015.

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

SNEAK PREVIEW!

Computer active

- **SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD UNINSTALL NOW** – Remove the programs that will kill your PC
- Make Windows 10 safe and private – the settings you must disable
- Find out if your ISP is overcharging you
- Add virtual Desktops to Windows 7 and 8

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Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you unravel our software-themed word search and guess our film-title emoji?

WEB USER WORD SEARCH

Can you find the following popular programs in the grid on the right? Words may appear vertically, horizontally and diagonally, and backwards or forwards

AUDACITY
CCLEANER
CHROME
DEFRAGGLER
FIREFOX
ITUNES
LIBREOFFICE
PICASA
RECUVA
UNCHECKY

E W B T E X I C Z B H F
S Y P Q S J L F Y K S H
F O A U D A C I T Y S Y
A V U C E R H R I C P K
H P O V F Y R E F A I C
R L I B R E O F F I C E
V P T F A O M O E L A H
S R U Z G Q E X E N S C
E C N S G E S A E S A N
Q B E F L U N I L T E U
G O S E E E Y D Q Y Q B
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COMPETITIONS

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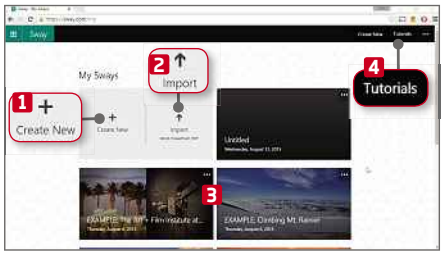
Create your own presentations using Sway | sway.com

Microsoft's new digital storytelling tool lets you create your own slideshows, websites, galleries and more. Here's how to use it

Microsoft introduced Sway in preview form 11 months ago. Since then, the newest member of the Office family has undergone some major improvements, and is now stable enough for everyone to enjoy.

Anyone with a Microsoft account can use Sway to create their own presentations. You can access Sway on the web or using the new Windows 10 app (bit.ly/sway379). There are also iOS and Android apps available, with a Windows Phone version on the way.

To complement Sway, Microsoft has also relaunched its Office website Docs.com (docs.com) to allow users to share their creations with other people. If you need further inspiration for what you can do with the new tool, it's worth checking out this content-packed site.

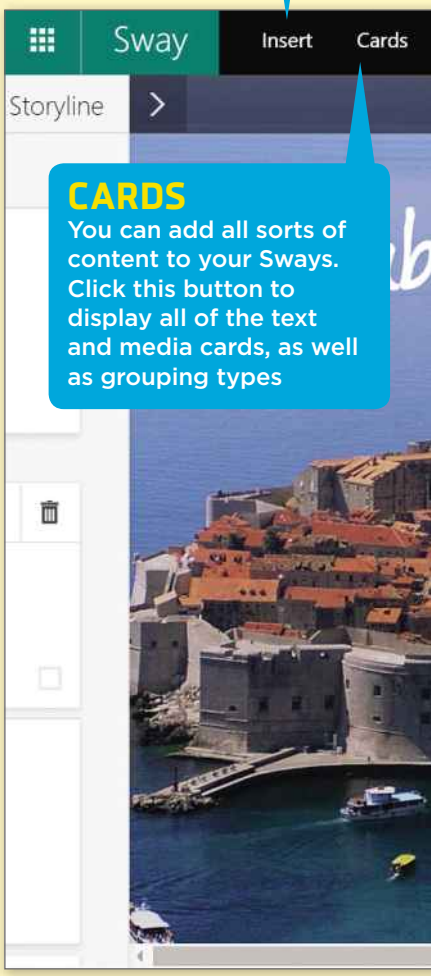


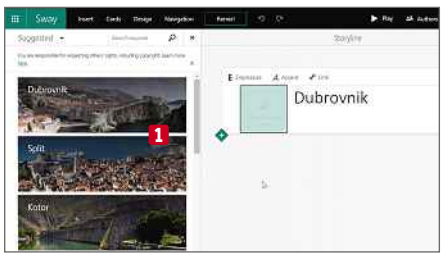
1 If you want to use Sway on the web, go to sway.com and sign in with your email address. Click Create New 1 to build a new story from scratch, or Import 2 to upload a Word document, PowerPoint presentation or PDF file. You can also view the examples on the page, 3 or watch a video by clicking Tutorials. 4

2 Choose to create a Sway and the editor will load. Click 'Title your Sway' 1 and give it a name. You can add a backdrop by clicking the Background tile. 2 The bar on the left 3 offers a selection of cards you can click to add content to your creation.

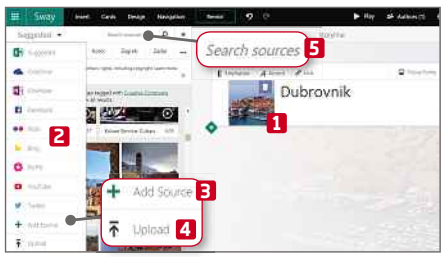
INSERT
When you want to add new content, just click Insert. Clicking again will close the menu

CARDS
You can add all sorts of content to your Sways. Click this button to display all of the text and media cards, as well as grouping types

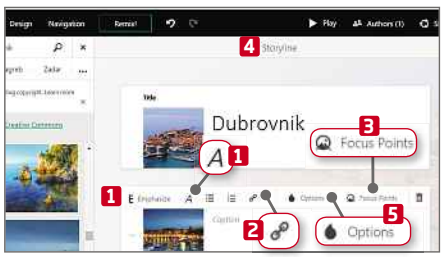




3 When you click the background tile, Sway will present you with some suggested content you can use 1 based on the title of your story. You can explore the offered choices by clicking one of them. As well as images, there will be web content and videos to add.



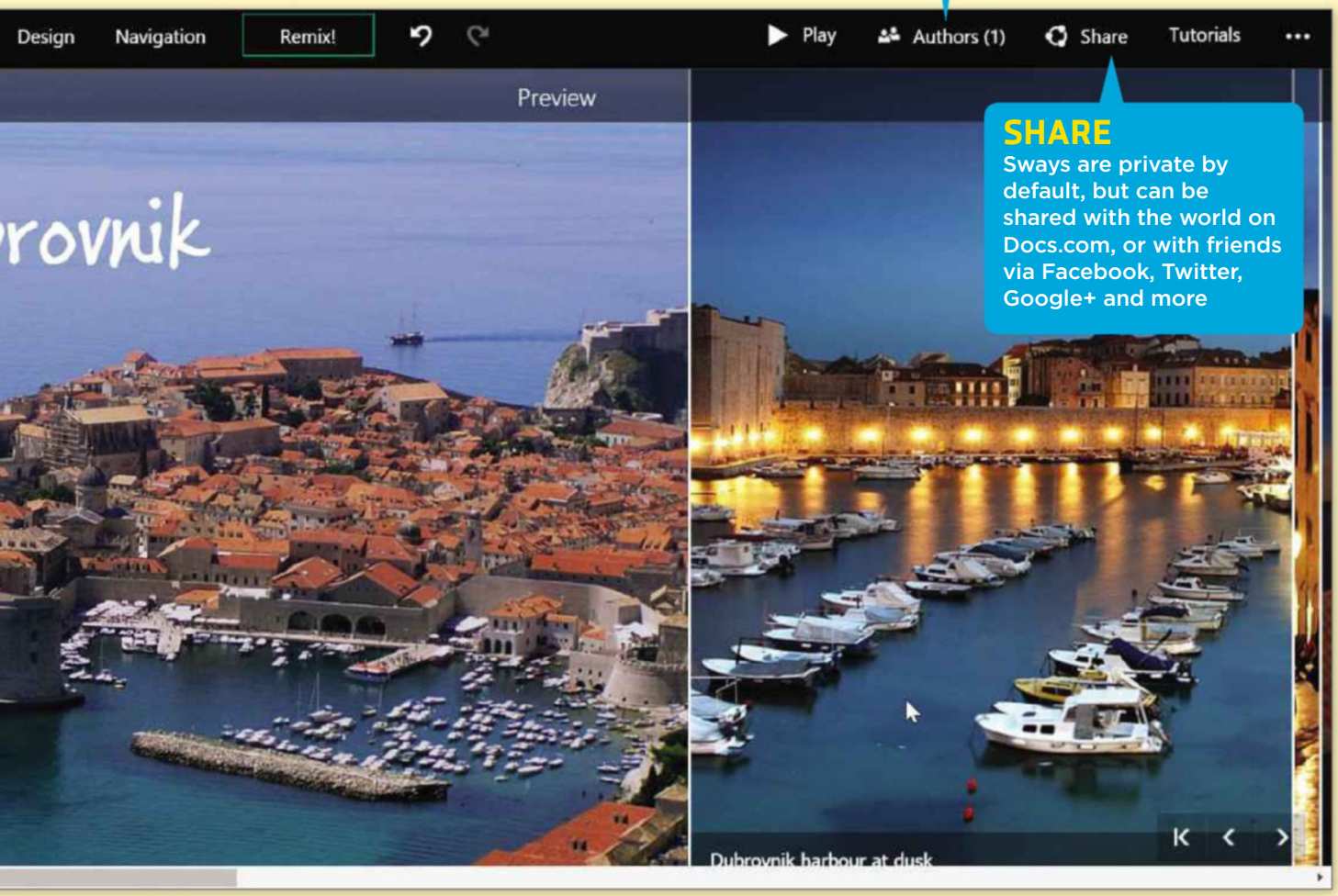
4 Drag an item to the box on the right to add it. 1 You can also get content from various other sources, 2 including OneDrive, OneNote, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube and Twitter. You can even add your own sources 3 and upload content to use. 4 To find something to add by name, use the 'Search sources' box. 5

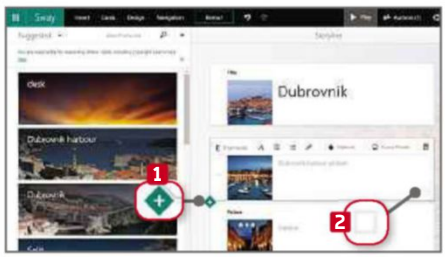


5 The title can be emphasised (made bold) or accented (italicised) 1 and you can also add a web link to it. 2 Focus Points 3 lets you tell Sway where the most important part of a picture is. You can drag additional items from the left onto the Storyline 4 and click Options 5 to format the content in different ways.

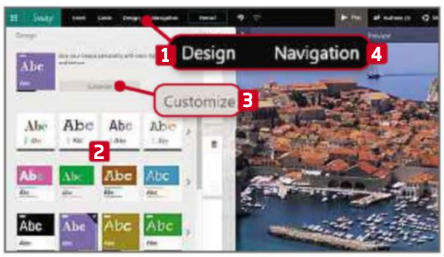
AUTHORS
Sway lets you collaborate with other people. Click here to get an edit link you can share with someone

SHARE
Sways are private by default, but can be shared with the world on Docs.com, or with friends via Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and more





6 Click the green plus symbol 1 and a bar of new card options will be displayed below. These let you add a heading, text, pictures, uploads and more. You can select multiple cards by clicking the small white box on the right-hand side. 2 This will allow you to group cards and apply style options.



7 The Design button 1 lets you change the colour, typography and texture. Just select one of the options 2 to apply it. You can customise further elements if you wish. 3 Navigation 4 lets you choose how you move around your Sway. This can scroll vertically or horizontally, or be optimised for presentation.

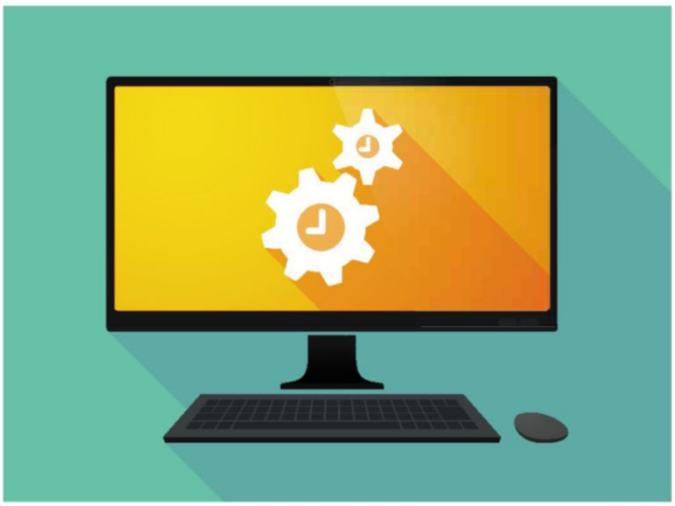
8 To see what your creation looks like, click Preview. 1 Clicking a title will let you edit it, while clicking a picture 2 will let you add a Focus Point. When you've added everything and finished editing, click the Play button to see the finished result. 3 Clicking Remix 4 will make some randomised changes to your Sway.

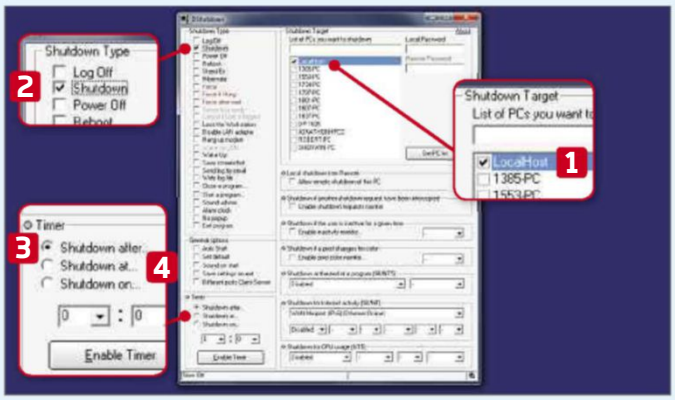
Automate everyday tasks on your PC

DShutdown: dimio.altervista.org/eng | 15 mins | Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

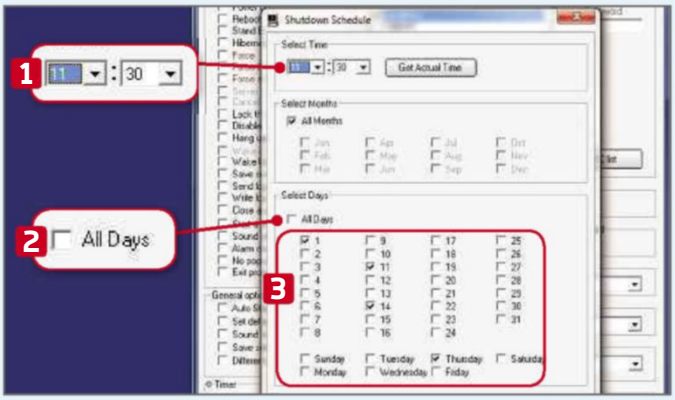
DShutdown is a lightweight and powerful tool that lets you set your PC to shut down automatically and schedule specific functions to occur at a time of your choice. Don't be put off by the interface's outmoded and complicated appearance; simply pick from its list of actions – such as locking your workstation, setting your PC to hibernate or opening a program – then choose the criteria to determine when this action occurs. The simplest way is using a countdown timer, but there are options to automate actions based on internet and processor activity (or inactivity).

Whether you want to disable your network card once a download completes or shut down your PC after an anti-virus scan has finished, DShutdown can make it happen with a minimum of fuss. In fact, you can even use DShutdown to take a screenshot when something changes on your screen. However, it takes a little getting used to, so in this Workshop we take you through DShutdown's most important functions.

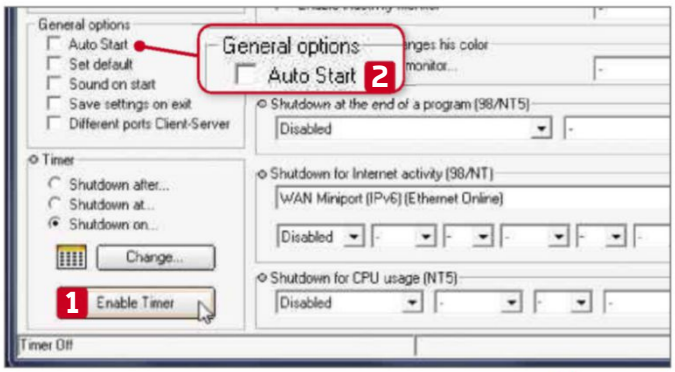




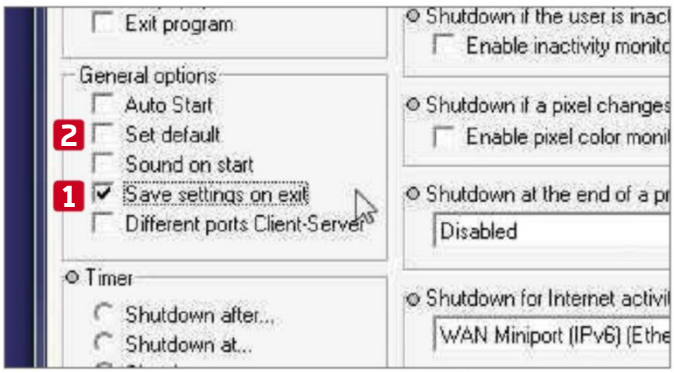
1 Download and run DShutdown. To schedule your PC to shut down, pick 'Local host' 1 as your Shutdown Target and tick Shutdown 2 in the Shutdown Type box. Timer lets you choose when your PC shuts down: 'Shutdown after' 3 uses a countdown timer, while 'Shutdown at' 4 lets you select a time.



2 'Shutdown on' lets you set a time for your shutdown, but also lets you specify future dates for when you want this to happen. Click Change to alter the schedule, choose a time, 1 then untick All Days 2 and choose the dates or days 3 when you want your PC to be automatically shut down.



3 After setting your schedule, click Enable Timer 1 to activate DShutdown. Once you've scheduled a shutdown, don't close the application – minimise it instead. If you've set multiple shutdown dates, tick Auto Start 2 so that DShutdown launches on startup and remembers your settings.

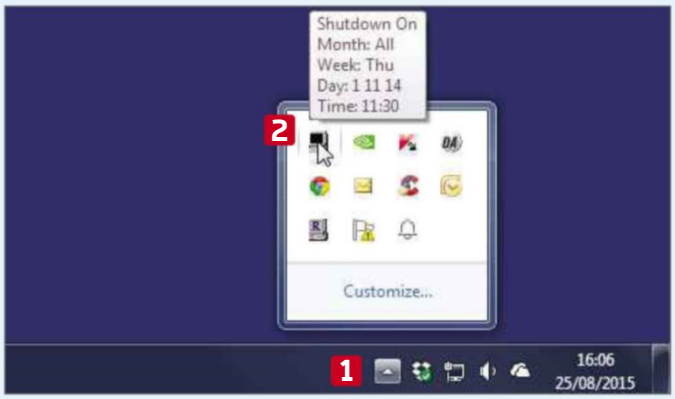


4 Alternatively, 'Save settings on exit' 1 remembers your settings but does not launch DShutdown on startup, so you'll need to remember to run it manually. Ticking 'Set default' 2 lets you set your current configuration as DShutdown's default setting.

EXPERT TIP

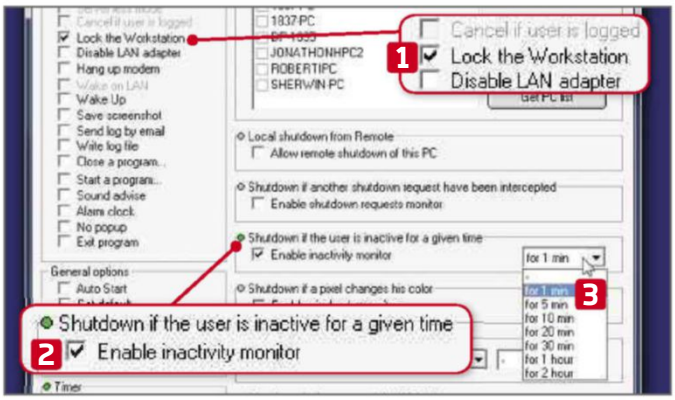
Edward Munn says

DShutdown has the option to wake up your PC from suspension, but we had difficulty getting this function to work, so please let us know if you have any luck with it. Although we've shown you how to open multiple instances of DShutdown, it's also worth experimenting with performing multiple actions by ticking more than one shutdown type.

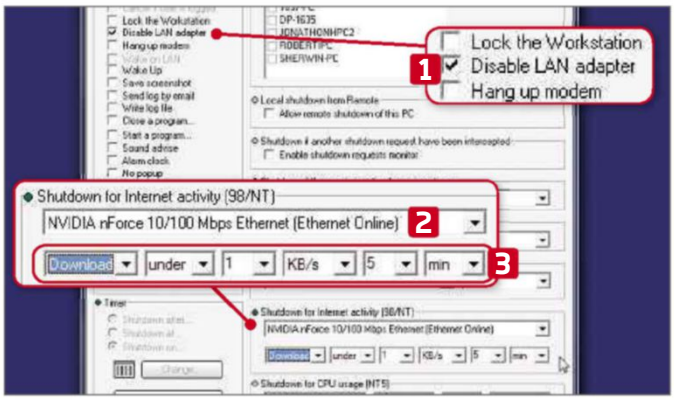


5 When minimised, DShutdown is hidden on your taskbar. 1 Hovering your cursor over its icon lets you see details of your scheduled Shutdown. 2 You can create a shortcut to the shutdown settings by right-clicking the icon and selecting 'Create Shortcut to Desktop with this Settings'.

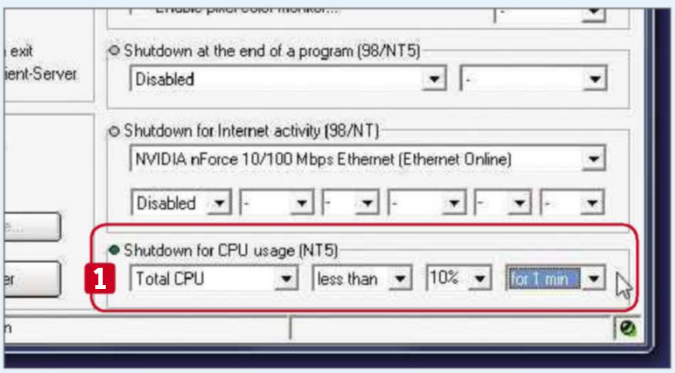
6 When it's open, right-click DShutdown's button in the taskbar and click DShutdown 1 to open another instance of the program, so you can create a new automated action. As well as shutting down your PC, you can use it to Log Off or Hibernate, among many other functions.



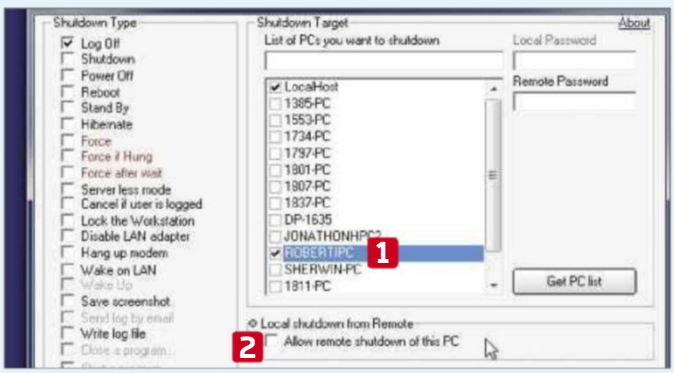
7 DShutdown has options that let you automate actions based on an event occurring. To set your PC to lock when you've been inactive for a certain time, disable the timer, tick 'Lock the Workstation' 1 and enable the inactivity monitor 2 before choosing a time limit from the menu. 3



8 To disable your network card when a download ends, tick 'Disable LAN adapter' 1 in the Shutdown Type menu and pick a network connection 2 from the menu 'Shutdown for Internet activity'. Use the menus 3 to set a download rate below which your network adapter will be disabled.



9 The 'Shutdown for CPU usage' option is handy if you want DShutdown to shut down your PC after a virus scan, for example. Choose Shutdown from the 'Shutdown Type' menu, then use the drop-down menus to choose the CPU conditions required for the action to be carried out. 1

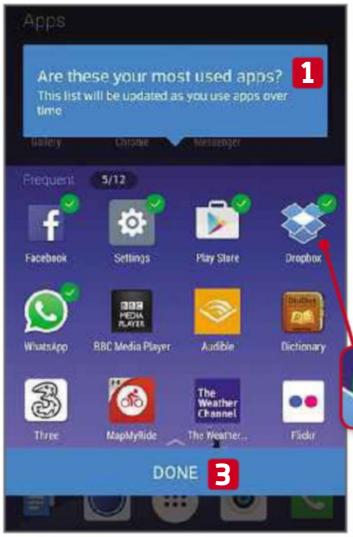


10 You can use DShutdown to remotely perform actions on another PC on your network by installing the app on both PCs and choosing the remote PC's name 1 from the 'Shutdown Target' list. Make sure that 'Allow remote shutdown of this PC' 2 is also ticked on the remote machine.

Make Android better using Arrow Launcher

It may seem odd that Microsoft has released an app for improving your Android experience, but Arrow Launcher does a great job of organising your device's home screen and offering quick access to everything you need. In this Workshop, we show you how to get to grips with this useful launcher. The app is still in beta, so visit the link below to install it and select the most recent release under All Versions.

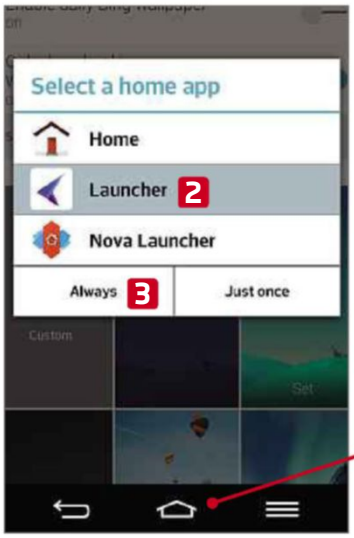
Arrow Launcher: bit.ly/arrow379 | **10 mins** | **Android**



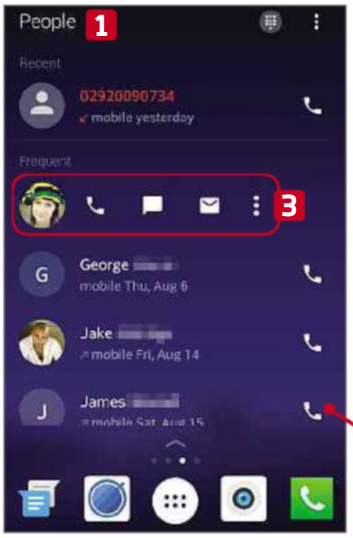
1 Once you've installed and opened Arrow Launcher, it asks you to select your most frequently used apps. 1 Tick the apps you use a lot, 2 then tap Done. 3 Don't worry if any of your favourites aren't on the list because it'll be updated automatically by the launcher.

2 Recently used apps are shown at the top of your Apps home screen. 1 Below this is the Frequent list 2 and, at the bottom, you'll see the dock, 3 which appears on all home screens. Swipe up from the bottom of the screen to maximise the dock.

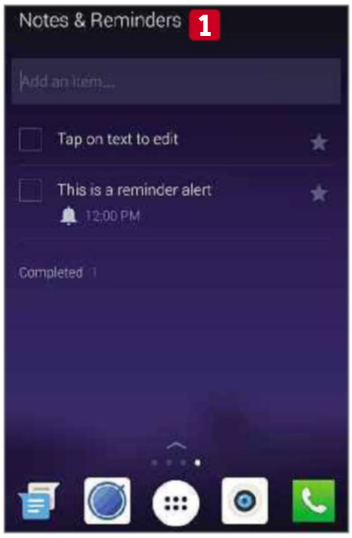
3 To delete an app's shortcut 1 from the dock, press and hold it and drag it to the top of your screen. You can add shortcuts by dragging and dropping apps from the Recent, Frequent or full apps lists. Tap wallpaper 2 and turn on 'Enable daily Bing wallpaper' if you want to receive daily wallpaper updates.



4 Tap your device's Home button 1 and Android will ask you to 'Select a home app'. Tap Launcher, 2 then Always 3 to set Arrow Launcher as the default. If you want to change this back, open Settings, tap 'Home screen' and 'Select Home' before choosing an alternative option.



5 From the Apps screen, swipe left to see the People home screen, 1 which shows recent and frequently contacted numbers. If you last contacted someone by calling them, a phone shortcut appears alongside their name. 2 Tap the contact's name for additional shortcuts that let you email, send them an SMS or open their full contact details. 3



6 Swiping left again takes you to the Notes & Reminders home screen. 1 To return to the Apps home screen, just tap the Home button at any time. If you want to use widgets, you can add them to the Widgets screen, which is accessed by swiping right from the Apps home screen.

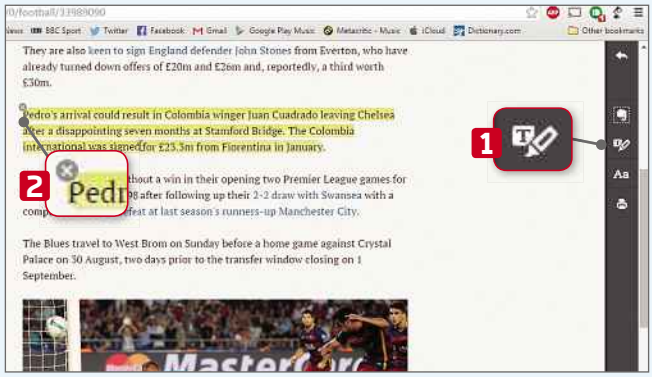
Remove clutter from web pages

Clearly cleans up web pages by removing ads, navigation bars and other annoyances. This helps to eliminate online distractions and saves you ink and paper when you print articles. The add-on also provides different themes that let you choose how text appears on the page. In this Workshop, we show you how to use Clearly in Chrome, although it's also available for Firefox and Opera.

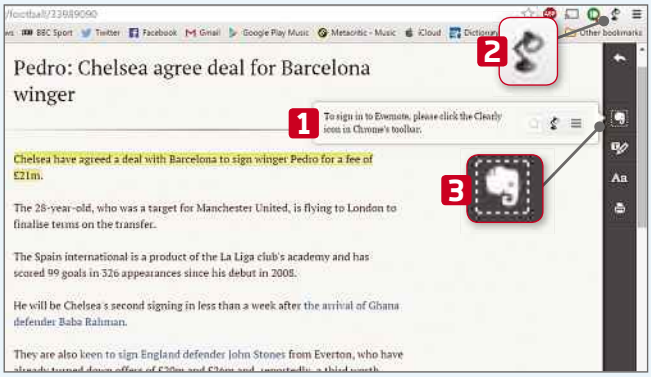
Clearly: bit.ly/clearly379 | **10 mins** | **Chrome** **Firefox** **Opera**

1 Install Clearly, then open a web page that you want to de-clutter. Click the add-on's lamp icon 1 next to the address bar to make a simplified version of the page load after you close the 'Welcome to Evernote Clearly' pop-up. 2

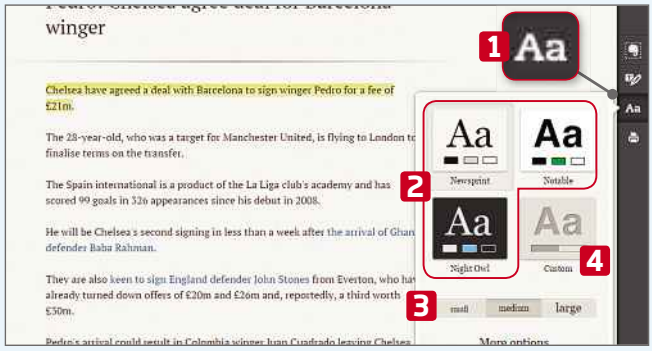
2 You'll notice that although the format of the page has changed, all the images 1 and links 2 from the original are preserved. To switch back to the normal version, press Esc or click the 'Hide the overlay' button. 3



3 To highlight specific passages, click the Highlight button 1 (or press Ctrl+Alt+H) and select the text using your cursor. You can remove the highlights by moving your cursor over a highlighted section and clicking the grey 'X'. 2



4 When you use the highlighter, you'll be prompted to sign into Evernote. 1 To log in or create an account, click the Clearly icon 2 again. Signing in lets you save articles, including highlights you've added, using the 'Clip to Evernote' button. 3



5 To change the way an article appears in Clearly, click the Show Themes button. 1 You can choose from the Newsprint, Notable and Night Owl themes, 2 and there are also options to display small, medium or large text. 3 Click Custom 4 to create your own custom theme.

6 To change your theme's font, click the appropriate text box, delete its contents and choose an alternative from the drop-down menu. 1 Clearly lets you customise a range of other elements, but you can reset the defaults at any time using the Reset Custom Theme button. 2

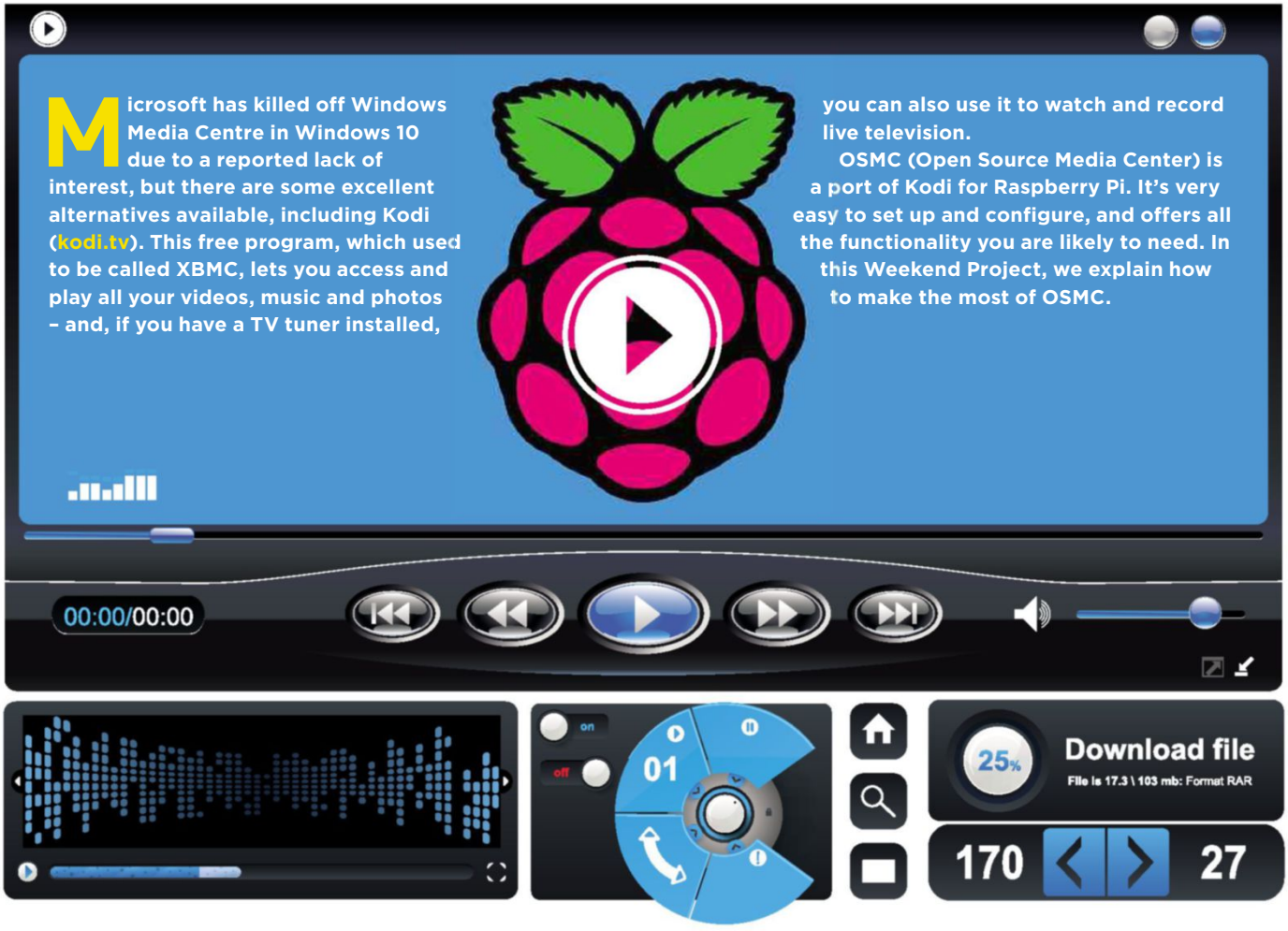
Weekend Project

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

How to...

Make a Raspberry Pi media centre

Forget Windows Media Centre – you can enjoy your music and movies on a Raspberry Pi. **Wayne Williams** explains how to get started



Microsoft has killed off Windows Media Centre in Windows 10 due to a reported lack of interest, but there are some excellent alternatives available, including Kodi (kodi.tv). This free program, which used to be called XBMC, lets you access and play all your videos, music and photos – and, if you have a TV tuner installed, you can also use it to watch and record live television.

OSMC (Open Source Media Center) is a port of Kodi for Raspberry Pi. It's very easy to set up and configure, and offers all the functionality you are likely to need. In this Weekend Project, we explain how to make the most of OSMC.

What you need

If you don't already have a Raspberry Pi (www.raspberrypi.org), it's obviously the first thing you'll need to buy. This low-cost credit-card-sized computer was originally created to encourage children to get back into programming, but it's become just as popular with adults. There are several types of Pi available: Model A and its newer A+ variant; Model B and the newer B+; and the most recent addition, the Raspberry Pi 2 Model B. Any Pi will be able to run OSMC, but if you don't already own one, then we'd recommend you go for the £30 Raspberry Pi 2 because it's faster and more powerful than its predecessors.

When you buy a Raspberry Pi, all you get is the device itself. Before you can start using it, you'll need to add the following extras:

- **A screen** – this can be either a TV or a computer monitor.
- **An HDMI/DVI cable** – so you can connect your Pi to the screen.
- **An RCA composite cable** – if you want to connect the device to an older TV that doesn't have HDMI or DVI sockets.
- **An Ethernet cable** – so you can connect the Pi to your network and the internet.
- **A Wi-Fi dongle** – if you prefer to go wireless.
- **A USB keyboard**

- **A USB mouse**
- **An SD card or Micro SD card** – depending on the model of Pi you own (Micro SD cards are used in the newer models).
- **A microUSB cable or power supply** – to power the device. You may have one you use for charging your phone. Make sure it's 5V, and avoid ones with long cables.
- **Headphones or speakers** – so you can get sound. Plug them into the Pi's built-in 3.5in audio socket. Sound over HDMI is also supported.
- **An external USB drive** – you'll want somewhere to store all your media (photos, videos and music), and an SD card may not offer enough storage. A USB flash drive will work but, again, it may not be large enough. Alternatively, you can choose to access media stored on devices on your network.

Connect other devices to your Pi to use it like a standard PC

You can buy some of these items directly from RS Components (bit.ly/RScomponents379), Farnell Element14 (bit.ly/farnell379) or ModMyPi (www.modmypi.com), and from most retailers of computer accessories. You'll probably already have a few of the required cables and peripherals at home that you can use.

You don't need a case for the Raspberry Pi but it may be worth considering one if you're going to set up the device as a permanent (or near-permanent) media centre. ModMyPi has a selection to choose from and The Raspberry Pi Foundation produces an official case for the Raspberry Pi 2, which you can buy from the Swag store for £6 (bit.ly/swag379).

The latest Raspberry Pi is faster and more powerful than its predecessors

Introducing OSMC

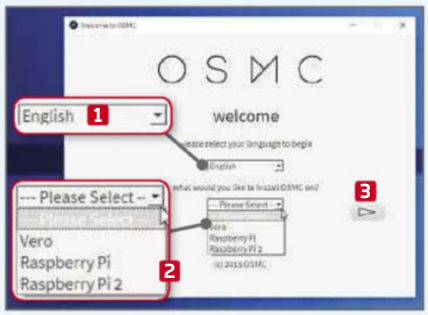
OSMC (osmc.tv) is very easy to install – see our Mini Workshop below for instructions – and if you've ever used a media centre before, you'll know exactly what to expect from the program. It lets you browse and play all your videos, and although there might be some initial buffering, the Raspberry Pi can handle playback beautifully, even when tackling very large video files. The media centre can play locally stored music tracks (on a connected drive or over your network) and will also let you tune into various online radio stations. Thanks to its Kodi heritage, OSMC supports add-ons, and there are options for Pandora Radio, Rdio, Apple iTunes Podcasts, Internet Archive and many more.

You can view your photos in OSMC and, again, there are various add-ons available to install if you require more features. Any content you access frequently can be added to Favourites, and the My OSMC menu lets you set things up exactly how you want them (this is different from the standard Settings menu). This section has icons for Services, Overclock (if you want to get more performance out of your Raspberry Pi), App Store (which offers extras, such as the Transmission Torrent Client), Network, Remotes, Pi Config (to make changes to the display, GPU and more), Log Uploader and Updates. By default, OSMC will look for new versions daily, but you can change the frequency and time.

OSMC lets you easily switch between films, TV shows, music and other media

OSMC comes with various

MINI WORKSHOP | Install OSMC on your Raspberry Pi



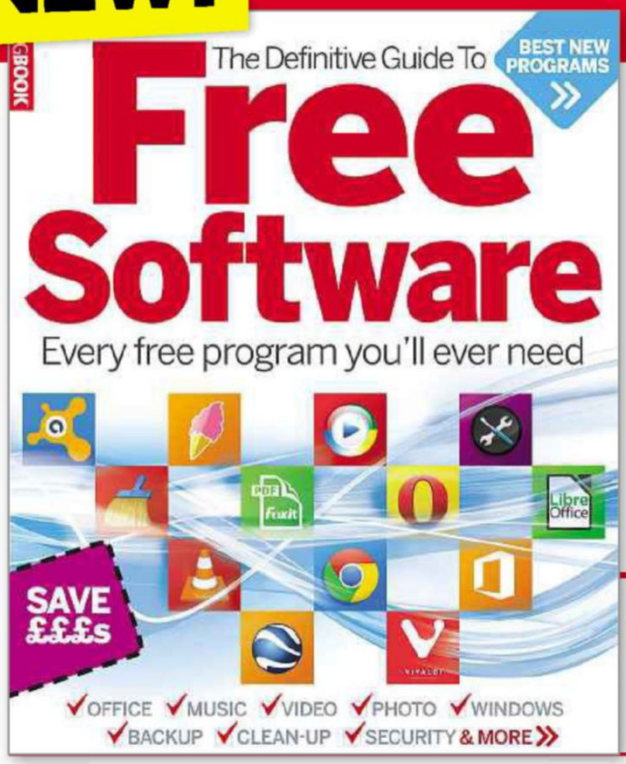
1 You can download OSMC directly from osmc.tv/download. Grab the version you need (Windows, Mac OS X or Linux) and run it. Choose the language you want 1 and the device you will be installing it on – Vero, Raspberry Pi or Raspberry Pi 2. 2 Once you've made your selection, click the arrow button on the right. 3

2 Select the version of the software you want (there will probably only be one choice) or a local build, then click the arrow to move on. You'll be asked where you want to install OSMC. Select 'On an SD card' 1 and click the arrow. Specify how OSMC will connect to web, so the installer will be able to download the full operating system.

3 Select the device on which you want to install OSMC. 1 If the card doesn't appear in the list, click Refresh. 2 Agree to the terms, and the software will download and install. When it's done, insert the SD card into your Raspberry Pi, connect the cables and boot it up to finish the installation. Be patient because it will take a while.

WebUser Bookstore

NEW!

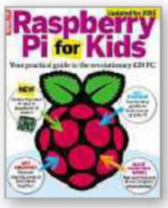


THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

Free software always sets off alarm bells. Will it be as good as paid-for packages? Will it try to sneak junk on to your PC? Will it constantly nag you to update to a premium version? In our new 148-page book *The Definitive Guide to Free Software*, we recommend only the very best free programs that deliver high-quality features and no nasty surprises (no junk – guaranteed!). It's packed with step-by-step tutorials and how-to guides for safe downloads – plus you'll learn which free anti-virus you should use. In short, it contains every free program you'll ever need.

BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at bit.ly/guidetosoftware

RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS



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

BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO GOOGLE HIDDEN TOOLS

In the 164-page *The Definitive Guide to Google Hidden Tools*, we lift the lid on Google's most popular tools with more than 430 ways to make them more efficient, useful and tailored to your needs. These include clever add-ons for Chrome, amazing free apps for Android and stunning sights in Google Maps.

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Inside this 148-page book you'll find all the free apps, expert tips and easy-to-follow Workshops you need to get the most out of your phone or tablet. You'll find buying advice, including reviews of the latest tablets and phones, and everything you need to know about taking your first steps with your new device.

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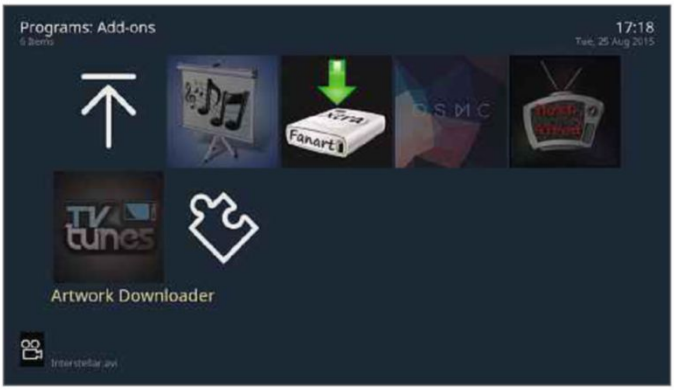
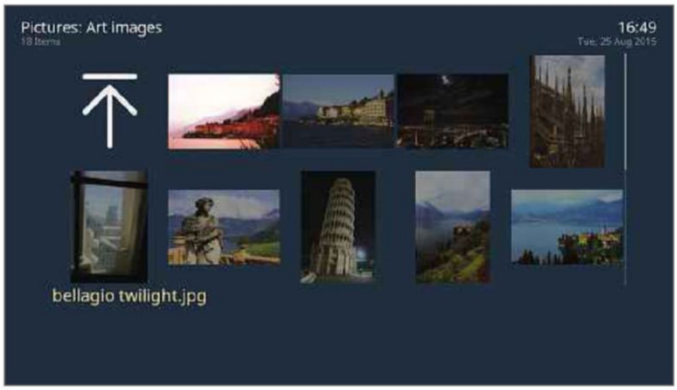


OSMC has lots of useful add-ons that give you extra features



Browse photos from your social accounts and those of your friends

program add-ons installed including Artwork Downloader, which can download screens for TV shows, movies and music videos. You can expand the media centre's capabilities further by installing extra add-ons. There's a very lengthy list of options, including Facebook Media, which lets you browse your photos and videos, and those of your friends, on the social network; and Mail, which lets you access your emails.

There are other features available in OSMC, most notably TV and Weather functions. TV requires you to install and enable a PVR add-on and, of course, you'll also need a TV tuner attached to your Pi. Setting this up takes time, but it's relatively easy. You can view forthcoming TV programmes in the EPG (Electronic Programme Guide), and record and play back programmes.

To get the Weather function to appear, you need to select a weather source. Although the BBC recently ended its partnership with the Met Office, it's still our favourite option. Once you've added it, you can view the latest forecast for your region in the Weather section from the home screen.

You can set up OSMC to work exactly the way you want it

OSMC can be controlled with a remote control, if you have a compatible one, or by using a keyboard and mouse. It's worth familiarising yourself with the various keyboard shortcuts the software uses because it's the easiest way to get around. There's a list of Kodi ones at kodi.wiki/view/Keyboard_controls.

Turning the Raspberry Pi on or off is simply a matter of connecting or disconnecting the power supply, but OSMC offers a Power menu that can exit the media centre, power off the system, reboot or make use of a custom shutdown timer, which is useful if you're the sort of person who tends to fall asleep while watching movies or listening to music at night.

See our Mini Workshop below to find out how to get started with OSMC.

MINI WORKSHOP | Get started with OSMC

1 When you first run OSMC, you'll need to set your language and agree to the terms and conditions. The interface is very straightforward, showing the date and time in the top-right corner, 1 and a list of all the options on the left-hand side. 2 Click Settings 3 to configure the software.

2 You can access your media in various ways. If you have a USB drive connected to your Raspberry Pi, you can browse its files and play its media by going to Settings, File Manager. Alternatively, you can access networked content on your PC by going to File Manager, Add Source, Browse. Select 'Windows network (SMB)'. 1

3 OSMC's default look is a bit bland, but you can spice it up in Settings, Appearance, Skin. 1 Download and install any themes you like the look of (the one we've chosen is Back Row). You can change the region from USA to UK under International. 2 Screensaver 3 lets you set what happens after a period of inactivity.

NEXT ISSUE **How To...** Use the new tools in VirtualBox 5

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Web User's Top Tips

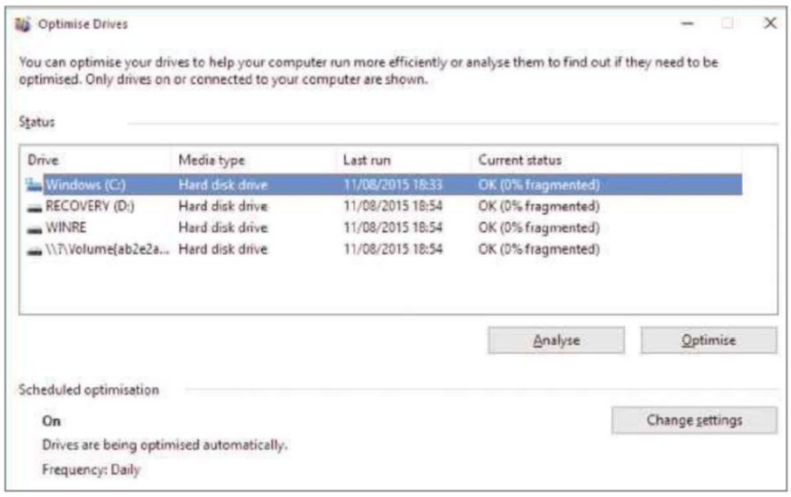
Our experts explain how to keep Windows 10 running smoothly and speedily after you upgrade to it

TOP TIPS FOR RUNNING WINDOWS 10

Defragment your hard drive

When you upgrade to Windows 10, thousands of files are installed, moved and deleted. This causes files to fragment, which can affect performance. Windows has a built-in disk defragmenter that runs to its own schedule, but you can give it a helping hand by launching it yourself or setting a different schedule.

Open an Explorer window and select This PC on the left. Right-click the drive and select Properties, then click Optimise on the Tools tab. Click the Optimise button to defragment the disk immediately or click the Change Settings button and set the frequency to Daily. It will then start when the computer is idle for a few minutes. Remember that disk defragmenting only improves the performance of traditional hard drives, not solid state ones.



Run the defragmenter to optimise the files on the drive

Check for problems

After writing and moving so many files on the hard drive, it's a good idea to check the structure. Minor problems occasionally occur and they can affect your PC's performance and reliability. Open an Explorer window and select This PC in the left panel. Right click the hard drive, select Properties and then the Tools tab. Click the Check button and then click 'Scan drive', even if it says that you do not need to. If problems are detected, then an option to fix them becomes available.

Update your software

Whenever a new version of Windows is released, developers update their software. Sometimes this is to fix bugs, but it might also be to change how a program operates, so it fits better with how the operating system works. For example, Windows Store apps now run in a window on the Desktop instead of full screen, which affects how you use the app. Software might be updated to take advantage of new features that were not in previous versions of Windows, too.

Go to an application's Help, About menu to find the company and website, then check if there is a newer version. Some applications have a menu option to check for updates, which is even easier to use.

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.

Update your drivers

Windows 10 may be running on your computer, but is it running as well as it could be? Hardware components such as the hard drive, graphics card, Wi-Fi, printer, webcam, motherboard and so on, all require drivers to work properly, and many manufacturers of these components have released updated drivers that work better in Windows 10 than the old ones, so you should make sure your drivers are up to date to ensure optimum performance.

If you're not sure what components are inside your computer, click the search box in the taskbar and type `system information`. Click it in the results and, in the window that opens, expand the Components section and select each item. The name can be found among the information. Go to the manufacturer's website and search for drivers. Drivers released just before or after the launch of Windows 10 should be downloaded and installed.

There are a couple of free tools that can find and install updated drivers, of

SlimDrivers can check if your hardware drivers need updating

which our favourites are SlimDrivers (www.slimwareutilities.com) and IObit Driver Booster (www.iobit.com). Use these to check for outdated drivers, but don't try to update them all at once. Update one driver, then check that the PC is running properly. You can then update another driver.

Don't use Windows Defender

Windows Defender provides protection from viruses, spyware and other malware. It is built into Windows, but in test after test it comes out worse than almost every other security program. A lot of free anti-virus software can provide more security and make your PC safer on the internet than Windows Defender. Take your pick from Avast (www.avast.com), AVG (www.avg.com), Avira (www.avira.com) and Panda (www.pandasecurity.com).

Windows Defender offers little protection and other programs are better

After installing one of these security programs, click the search box in the taskbar, type `Windows Defender` and click it in the results. Click the Settings button and select the option to disable the program.

Turn off fancy features

Windows 10 looks great, but fancy appearances can hog your PC's power. It can be made to run slightly faster by turning off unnecessary Windows features such as animations that launch when windows are opened and closed, moving icons on the taskbar, objects fading and sliding into view, and translucent items.

Have Windows operate for best performance to help it run faster

Click the search box and enter Performance. In the results, click 'Adjust the appearance and performance of Windows'. In the Performance Options window, you can manually select or deselect items in the list, or select either 'Adjust for best appearance' or 'Adjust for best performance'. It's your choice and you can either have Windows 10 look amazingly good or run terrifically fast.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Clean up your hard drive

An upgrade can leave behind junk and temporary files on your hard drive, and these can be cleaned to free up space. If the drive is nearly full then the extra space will improve the performance. Click in the taskbar's search box and type `disk cleanup`. Click 'Clear disk space by deleting unnecessary files' in the search results. Drive C: is selected by default, so click OK. After scanning the drive, a list of items will be displayed. Do not click OK.

Free up 30GB+ of drive space, but only if you never want to downgrade

Click 'Clean up system files' to scan the drive again. After a couple of minutes, a new window appears with an even longer list of items that can be cleaned. Still, do not click OK. Deselect all items with either Setup or Windows in the name, but select the rest. Now you can click the OK button to clean them.

Only if you are sure you will never want to return to the previous version of Windows should you select all the items in the list and delete them. Tens of gigabytes of drive space will be made free – a whopping 31.2GB on our PC. That could make a big difference to a drive that is short of space.

Defrag your PC on boot

Windows can defragment files on the hard drive, but only if they are not currently being used. The problem is that system files are always in use, so they are never defragmented. After upgrading to Windows 10, fragmented system files can slow down your computer a little. Some disk defragmenters get around this problem by offering boot time defragmentation, which runs before Windows launches. This is able to defragment system files, which results in better performance. IObit Smart Defrag (www.iobit.com) is one of the few free tools that can do this.

Open the program and, on the home screen, select the Boot Time Defrag option on the C: drive. Select the Boot Time Defrag tab and tick all the options. Click Configure, expand Automatic Service on the left and select Boot Time Defrag. Select 'Every 7 day first boot' in the Method list. It runs once a week and adds about 30 seconds to the computer's startup time.

Block bad updates

You have less control over Windows Update in Windows 10 than with previous versions, and the updates run automatically, so you can't choose what is installed. In rare circumstances, an update such as a driver might not be compatible with your PC. What can you do?

If a driver is causing problems, click the search box in the taskbar. Enter 'device manager' and click it in the results. Find the device, right click it and select Properties. On the Driver tab are two useful buttons: Roll Back Driver and Uninstall. Try rolling back and if that does not work, uninstall it.

Unfortunately, Windows Update will detect the old or missing driver and download the new, faulty one again. The solution is Microsoft's 'Show or hide updates' troubleshooter (bit.ly/updates379). Click the Next button on the first screen and then 'Hide updates' on the next to see a list of updates that are available. Tick the ones you don't want to install.

• See our feature on page 46 for more about preventing updates from messing up your PC.

Use the 'Show or hide updates' troubleshooter to choose which updates to install

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

SECURITY

Erasing a laptop before selling it

Q I want to sell my laptop, but I need to wipe the hard drive. What is the best free software for doing this?

Rob, via email

A There are several ways to erase a hard drive. If you have restore discs or a restore partition that came with your computer, you could do a full restore and reset everything to the factory settings. That will delete everything, but deleted files remain on a drive until overwritten, so you should use a tool to securely clear the free space. Secure Eraser (ascomp.net) is a good free option – select the drive you want to erase and choose one of the secure deletion methods.

Use Secure Eraser to remove all traces of files from your hard drive

If you don't have a restore facility, Windows stores almost everything in your folder at C:\Users\YourName. Go to User Accounts in the Control Panel or PC Settings and create a new user with admin status. Restart Windows and log in as the new user. Return to User Accounts and delete your old account. Use Secure Eraser or a similar tool to delete files or folders that remain, such as C:\Users\YourName. Finally, erase the free space.

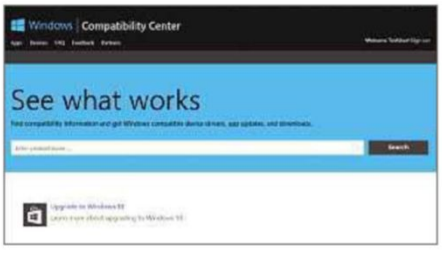
WINDOWS

Windows 10 driver compatibility

Q I have been offered an upgrade to Windows 10. Will I need a new driver for my Epson printer, a Stylus Photo P50?

George Brand, via email

A You can use Windows Compatibility Center (bit.ly/wincomp379) to find out which devices will work in Windows 10. A quick search of the site for your printer says that it will be compatible with the new operating system. This means that either the old driver will continue to be used or Windows 10 will automatically install an updated one.



Check if your computer and peripherals work in Windows 10 before upgrading

SOFTWARE

Mysterious error message

Q Every time I start my computer the following message appears: "Bios Notice. Access violation at address 004047DA in module 'BiosNotice.exe.' Read of address 00000000." What does this mean and what should I do about it?

Ruth Whitehouse, via email

A The BIOS is a special program that is built into your computer's motherboard. It can be updated, although few people ever bother. There is an automatic update tool on your computer that is running and checking for new versions. For some reason it is displaying an error message and one way to stop it is to uninstall it. Go to 'Programs and Features' in the Control Panel and look for a program named BIOS Autocheck, BiosNotice or something similar. Uninstall it and restart your PC.

HARDWARE

Device Manager problems

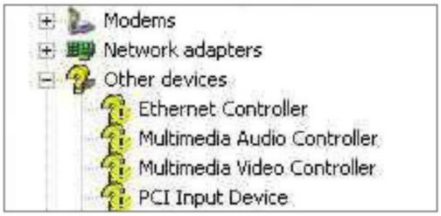
Q I downloaded Windows 10 64-bit on my Acer G3-605 and have two problems in Device Manager. I have two yellow question marks next to 'Simple communications controller' and 'MS bus controller'. Can you help with this?

Raymond Hinks, via email

A A yellow question-mark symbol in Device Manager indicates that a hardware component is either not recognised or not supported. It sounds like some motherboard drivers have gone missing, but they can be downloaded and installed to fix the problem.

Go to Acer's drivers website (bit.ly/acerdrivers379) and enter the model number, G3-605, into the Search by Product Model box. Click the Predator G3-605 link that appears to view the list of drivers. You probably don't need them all, but it is useful to download and save them in case you need them in the future.

If you select Windows 10 as the operating system, it lists two drivers. Install these first, reboot your PC and check Device Manager to see if the yellow indicators have gone. If they haven't, select Windows 8.1 and download and install the Intel drivers.



A yellow question mark in Device Manager indicates an unsupported component

SECURITY

Baffled by surplus Desktop icons

Q I downloaded Emsisoft Emergency Kit (bit.ly/emergencykit376), as instructed in your Workshop in Issue 376 of *Web User*. I now have three icons for the program on my Desktop – one named Start Emergency Kit scanner,

another named Start Emergency Kit and a third named Start CommandLine scanner. Is this correct? Do I really need all three?

Clive Tear, via email

A These three icons are for your convenience and none of them are necessary, so you can delete them. To run Emsisoft Emergency Kit, just open Explorer, go to the C:\EEK folder and double click the program. The Desktop icons just save a few mouse clicks.

Keep Emsisoft Emergency Kit on your PC and use it to remove malware

WINDOWS
Windows 10 runtime error

Q After installing Windows 10, I now get a Microsoft Visual C++ runtime error message every time I start the computer. It says that file C:\windows\system32\atibtmon.exe tried to terminate in an unusual way. I have checked my system and this file appears to be a driver for the ATI Mobility Radeon 4250 graphics and, when checked, was the latest version. It does not appear in the task manager list of running programs or services, so I cannot stop it. I had Microsoft support try to solve it, but after two hours they gave up. Do you know of any fix please?

Martin Bingle, via email

A This is definitely a driver problem, so updating the ATI graphics-card driver should solve the problem. It can be downloaded from support.amd.com. Install it over the top of the old one. If you are sure you have the latest version and still get the error message, update Microsoft Visual C++. There are several versions at bit.ly/visual379 and you should install VC++ 10, 11 and 12, unless the error message states the exact version with the error.

INTERNET
View only specific image files

Q I have a folder containing lots of different types of photos and videos, but Amazon Prime's cloud service only supports certain file types for using their unlimited photo storage. Is there any way I can use a program or only have Windows Explorer show certain file types? For example, to only show JPEG and PNG. I tried to arrange the folder's contents by file type, but everything is still jumbled up. I want to be able to just display images and not videos in that folder, so I can upload them. Is this possible?

Zack Jenkin, via email

A Click in the search box in the top-right corner of an Explorer window and type `*.jpg OR *.png` to display only JPEG and PNG images.

MOBILE
Android Gallery problems

Q If I go into the Gallery on my Android phone there is a bin to delete pictures, but as soon as I select an image, the bin disappears. How can I delete them?

Adrian Bonnington, via email

A The Android Gallery app can show photos from different locations, including the phone's memory, Dropbox, Facebook and Picasa Web Albums. Only photos stored on the phone can be deleted, so if you select a photo in Gallery that is actually stored on Facebook or Twitter, for example, you will not be able to delete it.

Set Android's Gallery to only display photos stored on your device

On the Albums screen in Gallery, tap the menu button, then deselect all the options except 'Content in device'. This will display only the photos stored on the phone, and you can then select and delete them in the usual way.

WEB BUILDING
Avoiding unwanted web charges

Q Last year, I used Webs (www.webs.com) to build a free website (www.disneydream167.co.uk). Now I see they want to charge me to continue using the service. I only need to access the site to alter the rental prices, which I do about once a year. Is there any alternative? I have my website hosted by uHost (www.uhost.com).

Alfredo Massarella, via email

A The message that pops up and blocks access to your website states that it has expired and you must renew your contract or contact support. If a firm decides to stop providing a free service or if a free trial period expires, there isn't anything you can do about it.

In the short term, it's probably best to sign up for a web-hosting deal from the service to get your site back online and gain access to your content. Longer term, you can look around for another option if you are unhappy with the price or the service. Make sure you have a backup of your website on your computer so you don't lose everything when your contract ends, which will make moving to another web host much easier.

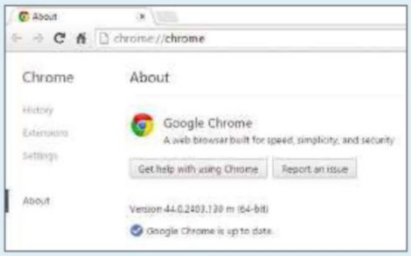
INTERNET
Flash update worry

Q Do you know why websites keep telling me to update Flash when I already have latest version installed?

Adrian Bonnington, via email

A There are two reasons why you might see that update message and the obvious one is that it really is out of date. Flash Player can be installed into Windows or bundled within the browser. To update Flash in Chrome, click the menu button and select About Google Chrome. It will then check for a new version.

Flash can also be installed in Windows so that Internet Explorer and other applications can access it.



Update Chrome to update Flash Player by going to the About menu.

The only place you should ever install Flash from is the Adobe website. Go to get.adobe.com/flashplayer.

The other reason why you might see an out-of-date message is because a website is trying to trick you into installing software. This may or may not be malware and you should never click any buttons or install anything.

This fortnight Roland has been backing up his phone before upgrading, but he can't decide which model to go for

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

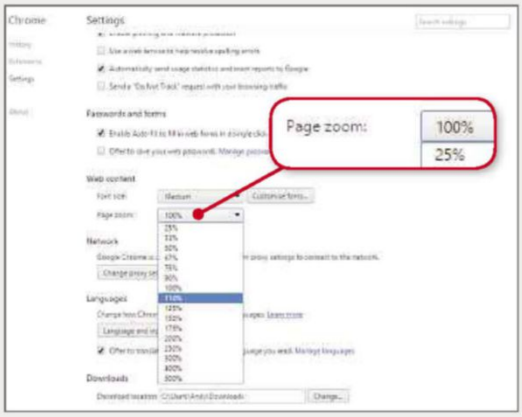
TOP TIP

£25 winner

BROWSERS

Increase the text size on web pages in Chrome

I have a high-resolution screen on my laptop, but my eyes aren't as good as they used to be. A simple change that might help others in the same situation is to choose a magnification setting. Go to Chrome's menu, then Settings, then click 'Show advanced settings'. Scroll down a bit to the Web Content settings. There are two options: one is to set the font size to large, and the other is to increase the magnification. I find the 110 per cent magnification setting makes pages that little bit more readable.



Chrome's Web Content settings can be used to zoom all web pages, not just the page you're on

There is a magnification setting in the main menu, but that is only for the current website or page, whereas the magnification setting in Settings is for all websites, which is better.

Paul Dobbs, via email

WINDOWS 10

Turn off Windows live tiles

I was not a fan of live tiles on the Start screen in Windows 8 and I had turned them all off. They are simply too distracting becuase they constantly refresh. After upgrading to Windows 10, I noticed that the Start screen is gone, but there are tiles on the Start menu and many of them are live with constant updates. Fortunately, I discovered that you can turn them off in the same way as before. If I see a tile update on the Start menu, I right-click it and select 'Turn live tile off'. It is less irritating.

In Windows 8 or 10, right-click tiles to turn off the constant live updates

Sam Bishop, via email

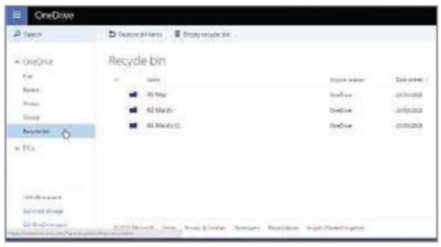
INTERNET

Recover deleted OneDrive files

If you use OneDrive on your PC to store files, they are synced in your OneDrive online storage. This means that if you delete a file from your hard drive, it will also be deleted from your online storage. That much is obvious, but what people may not realise is that there are two Recycle Bins. When a file is deleted on the hard drive, it is moved to the Recycle Bin on the drive, and then you can empty the Bin to properly delete it.

The file stored online is also deleted, but it is moved to the online Recycle Bin, which means that even when you think you have deleted a file, there is still a copy of it online. That could be useful or worrying, depending on your viewpoint. On the one hand, it means that you can go to the onedrive.com website in a browser, select the Recycle Bin and recover the file. It will then sync to your PC and you have got it back. On the other hand, files you thought you had deleted still exist somewhere!

James Cosgrave, via email



Files you delete from OneDrive are transferred to its Recycle Bin

BROWSERS

Correct broken links

Some URLs are very long and complicated, and including them in emails can mean they break into two or more lines. When you click these links, they don't work because only part of the URL is used – the part up to the line break. I have found a Firefox add-on that can fix the problem, called URL Link (bit.ly/link379). This lets you select text on a web page by clicking and dragging with the mouse; then, if you right-click it, there is an option to open the URL. Line breaks, spaces and other problems are fixed and the links work as they should. It's a useful feature if your webmail often breaks long URLs.

Andrew Baker, via email

GENERAL PC

Delete the manufacturer's recovery partition

I recently reinstalled Windows 7 on my laptop using the installation disc provided by Dell. After doing so, I realised it would have been much quicker and easier to use the PC's recovery partition, even if it had meant re-installing all the unwanted bloatware that came with the PC when it was new.

Surprisingly, I also discovered that this partition becomes completely redundant once you've used the Windows 7 disk provided by the manufacturer. Since the partition was taking up a substantial 14GB of hard drive, I set about working out how to delete it. First, I opened Disk Management but, although I could see the partition, it had no drive name and there were no options to change or delete it.

Following a quick Google search, I came across a blog that explained how I could delete it using a command-line tool called Diskpart. To open Diskpart, press Windows + R, type `diskpart` and press Enter. In the console, type `list disk` and press Enter to show a list of all the drives on your PC. To select the hard drive, type `select disk X` (where X is the number of the hard drive you want to change) and press Enter. You can then type `list partition` to see all its partitions.

On my hard drive, the partitions were named 1, 2 and 3 and, under the Type column, they were listed as OEM, Recovery and Primary, respectively. The Recovery partition was 14GB in size, so I knew that this was definitely the one I wanted to delete. To do so, all you have to do is type `select partition X` (where X is the partition number) and press Enter. Then type `delete partition override`, press Enter again and you're done!

Now you don't have a recovery partition, it's a good idea to create your own recovery media, because it will be quicker than using the installation disk and having to install all the Windows Updates again!

Ed Wright, via email

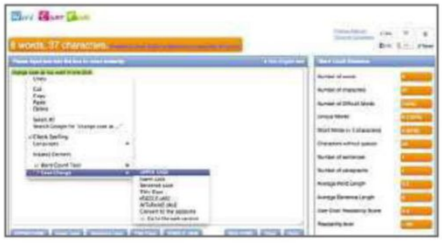
Disk Part is a Windows tool that lets you delete drive partitions in simple steps

BROWSERS

Correct letter-case errors

If you suddenly find that you've typed your last few words or sentences in the wrong case, there are a couple of handy add-ons for Firefox that let you fix this with only a couple of clicks instead of re-typing your entire message. I've tested Case Changer (bit.ly/casechanger379) and Case Change Tool (bit.ly/casechangetool379) and they both work well. All you have to do is highlight the text you want to convert, right-click it and select the appropriate option. You can choose from upper case, lower case, sentence case and title case, and the second tool even has a 'Convert to the opposite' option, which is handy if you left Caps Lock on and simply want to reverse everything you've typed.

Madeline, Web User Forums



Case Change Tool lets you reverse the case of letters you've typed

WINDOWS 10

A fix for brightness problems on Samsung laptops

I recently upgraded my Samsung R700 laptop from Windows 7 to Windows 10. Unfortunately, this crippled the display brightness, freezing it at a dark setting. Efforts to rectify this using Device Manager and Samsung's driver lists came to nothing. Someone suggested the correct driver would be installed if Windows 10 was clean installed, but that didn't work either.

The solution came from a Samsung download at bit.ly/easydisplay379. Look for Easy Display Manager WINDOWS 7(32BIT,64BIT), 20.06 MB, ZIP, MULTI LANGUAGE, VERSION : 3.2.2.2, click the link to download the software and then install it. I didn't have to alter any settings – it just reactivated the Fn key and all its functions.

Spiraleye, Web User Forums

GAMES

Play Solitaire in Windows 10

It appears that if you download Microsoft Solitaire Collection in Windows 10, you have to accept 30-second adverts between hands. However, if you use Chrome then a quick visit to the Chrome Web Store will give you a number of free Solitaire games, many of which can be played offline. To browse all offline games, visit chrome.google.com/webstore and scroll down to the 'No WiFi? No Problem' section, then click 'View all'.

The Chrome Web Store has a great range of free games that can be played offline

FratPark, Web User Forums

WINDOWS 10

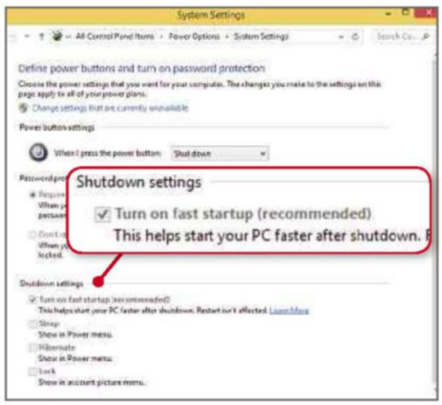
Fix startup problems

I installed Window 10 on my desktop PC and almost everything worked fine. However, I had a problem with the wireless adapter: when the PC booted up, it didn't recognise the adapter and I had to pull it out and push it back in for it to work. If I then restarted the PC, the adapter would be recognised.

I wondered why I got different results from shutting down my PC and restarting it. I discovered that if you restart, the PC will do a complete shutdown, which it needs after you've installed or updated software; but if you choose shut down, it rather confusingly doesn't fully shut down but instead saves a system info file, which it uses to perform a fast start-up.

To get your PC to fully shut down when you click this option, go into Control Panel, System and Security, Power Options and then 'Choose what the power buttons do'. Here, untick 'Turn on fast start-up' and then click 'Save changes'. This solved my adapter problem and may be worth trying for other startup-related problems people have in Windows 10.

Betty, Web User Forums



You can disable Windows 10's fast start-up if you have launch-related software issues

Readers' Helpdesk

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

SECURITY

Why is Kaspersky saying my Wi-Fi isn't secure?

Q I have an Asus K5130 Series Desktop, which is just over 12 months old. I recently upgraded it to Windows 10 Home and, since doing so, I have received some warning messages from Kaspersky Total Security 2015 stating that my Wi-Fi may not be safe. I connect to the internet via a Netgear WNR-2000 router plugged into a Virgin cable modem and I regularly scan the computer with Kaspersky and Malwarebytes, but have never had a message like this before. As the Netgear Router is now some years old, I was wondering if this could be the reason that I am getting these messages. Can anyone please advise if this is likely, or could it be some other reason?

Dottylass, Web User Forums

A I think this is a bit of overzealousness on Kaspersky's part. Since I upgraded all my PCs to the latest Kaspersky a few weeks ago, I've had the same message, yet my connection is just as secure as it ever has been.

I wouldn't worry about it too much. It could be worth checking to see if there are any firmware updates for your Netgear router – I can't see your router model on Security Affairs' list of routers affected by backdoor security problems (bit.ly/backdoor379), but even if it was there, I imagine there's been an update to fix the issue by now. Most Virgin Media cable customers now have a Superhub2, which is a modem and router all in one. Since you have one of the original cable modems, you could try to contact Virgin Media and ask if they'll upgrade it for free.

Virgin Media's Super Hub uses 5Ghz and 2.4Ghz frequencies simultaneously to provide the fastest internet speeds possible

TheTechGuy, Cantrel and ianrj, Web User Forums

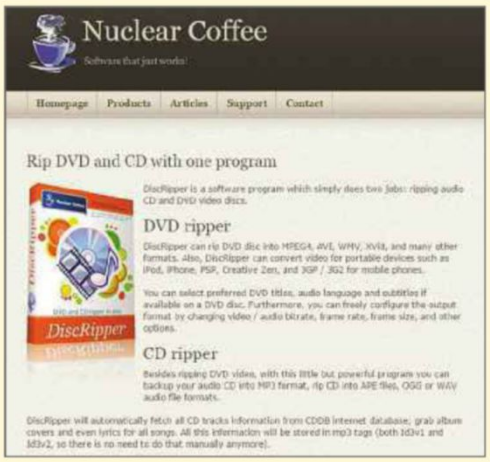
SOFTWARE

What free software can I use to rip CDs?

Q My laptop is running 64-bit Windows 8.1. Can someone please recommend some free software that rips CDs to MP3 format, so I can put them on my mobile phone?

Unfortunately, my first choice of media player won't run. I don't need any fancy editing or converting options, just a CD ripper that runs on Windows 8.1, please.

Oregon, Web User Forums



Disk Ripper is a simple program that lets you rip both CDs and DVDs

A Try DiskRipper (bit.ly/discripper379) – it's straightforward and isn't overcomplicated by too many bells and whistles. It's only drawback is that it's not especially fast.

If you want to look for something else, try browsing the lists at Major Geeks (bit.ly/ripping379) and Video Help (bit.ly/audio379). Both sites let you sort the results by user rating, so you should be able to find something good. Alternatively, you could try Windows Media Player, which should already be installed on your PC.

Stewart40 and Peru, Web User Forums

SOFTWARE

Is it safe to use CCleaner's Registry cleaner?

Q How safe is it to run CCleaner's Registry cleanup? It claims to have detected hundreds of issues with my PC, which I suppose should be fixed, but I don't want to dig myself into a hole I can't get out of.

billw, Web User Forums

A CCleaner's Registry cleaner only removes files it thinks are necessary to remove, but the advantage of cleaning out the Registry can be minimal unless you also compact it using a tool such as WinMend Registry Defragger (bit.ly/defrag379). Even then it's arguable whether you'll see any improvement in performance. CCleaner gives you the option to back up what it has removed, but I have in the past been unable to restore those items using its back up.

I don't think it's ever safe to run a Registry cleaner and even clearing out millions of unused entries won't make the slightest difference to how things run. The Registry is designed to be massive, so it's best just left alone because one messed up entry could completely ruin your system. CCleaner's file cleaner is excellent – used two or three times a year, it will help to keep things sweet – but the Registry cleaner is snake oil and, at best, a waste of time.

Cantrel and izzit, Web User Forums

Inbox

Star Email

£25 winner

Age ratings will only encourage kids to lie

When I was a school in the late Eighties, it was exciting stuff when someone got hold of an 18-rated video like *RoboCop* or *Re-Animator* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge*, and we'd all pack onto the sofa round that cool kid's house with bottles of pop and packs of crisps. Even if the film was rubbish, which with hindsight it usually was, you'd still feel proud that you'd defied your parents and the BBFC (not that we knew what that was then) by watching a movie that you were legally too young to see. So it is with some amusement and bemusement that I read in your news section in Issue 378 (bit.ly/webuser378) about music videos on YouTube being given "age-appropriate ratings". Yeah, like

that's gonna work!

Surely everyone knows that the more you forbid children to do something, the more they want to do it, and it's not exactly difficult for them to open a new Google account that their parents don't know about, which registers their age as being over 18. This means all they have to do when confronted by a restricted music video is log into this account to enjoy all the topless ladies, senseless violence and blood and gore that they want.

Speaking of which, why do today's pop stars feel the need to promote their music with such explicit imagery? Surely they know that it's mostly kids who will be watching their videos, and should tailor them accordingly? Now that streaming counts towards the pop charts, the more clicks they get on YouTube, the higher they'll rise up the hit parade, so why risk their work being restricted? Well, I suppose I've already given the answer – the more shocking you can be, the more attention you'll get! What a crazy, mixed up world we live in.

Harley Cross, via email

Angry Birds 2 makes me very angry

In Issue 378, you review Angry Birds 2 in your Best Free Apps section. I have to say I am really annoyed with this game. Well, actually not with the game itself, which is actually quite fun – I love the new spells and that some levels now have several stages to complete. They could easily just have done more of the same, but you can see that they've given it a bit of thought.

No, what infuriates me are the stupid in-app purchases, and the number of adverts and 'nags' you're bombarded with if you don't pay for them. It really interrupts gameplay and makes me want throw my phone across the room! When I first installed it, you got five free lives, but now you only get three and, if you don't buy gems to get the extra lives, you have to wait for ages for them to refill, or watch loud, long adverts.

Part of the fun of the original game was that if you failed at a level, you could instantly retry it and keep on trying until you succeeded. That's now been taken away, so you either wait or pay, which isn't much use if you're playing it to pass the time on a train journey. The options they had before were much better because you could either install the free, ad-supported version or pay to remove the ads and get uninterrupted gameplay. Why Rovio had to change it, I don't know; I guess they've just become as greedy as those evil pigs!

Michael Barrett, via email

Free apps could be used to spy on us

How many times are we being offered free apps and free downloads, but end up paying for them in the long run? Call me an old cynic but I was told that there is nothing free in this world, and very soon this or another government will catch onto the fact and we will be tempted with the ultimate offer: free iPads for all! Why would they do this? Well, can you imagine the amount of information and the level control that the government would obtain if it gave each person, including children, a free iPad?

We all know that the software in computers can switch on microphones and cameras when we turn them off, so this would be the Big Brother of this century. They'd be able to spy on families known to have criminal connections, suspected terrorists and even the innocent child on the corner who is playing a harmless game, which the iPad is listening to and watching.

So is this covert surveillance already happening via that free app that you just installed? They hook you in with freebies,

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

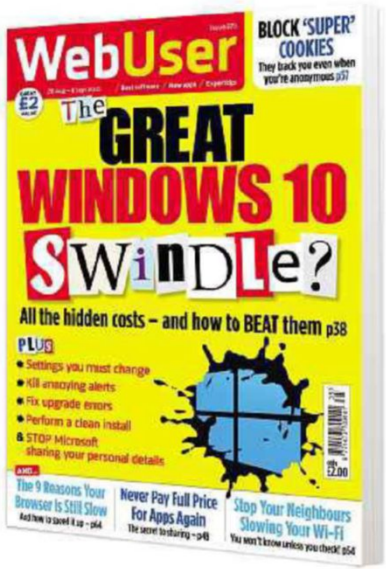
so the next time you are doing something shady, remember to put your iPad in the drawer first!

Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes

Don't turn Windows 10 into magazine clickbait

Your lead article in Issue 378, 'The Great Windows 10 Swindle', would have been excellent if it weren't for the very misleading headline. The paper equivalent of 'clickbait', it failed to deliver what it promised and implied that Windows 10 is a huge rip off.

The reality is that you highlight Solitaire because it has adverts – exactly as it does in Windows 8 – and then say in the article that the ads aren't obtrusive. You also point out that Windows Media Center is missing from Windows 10, but we knew that would be the case weeks ago.



Next, you focus on Office, firstly stating that there are free Word, Excel and PowerPoint apps available, which in my opinion are superior to the free Microsoft Word that used to come with Windows. But the fact is that the full Office software has never been free and Microsoft never indicated that it would be.

Having got that off my chest, I thank you for the very helpful information and advice given throughout the article, not only suggesting free alternatives but explaining the settings and giving solutions to the common problems.

Your magazine has always been excellent and doesn't need to resort to the 'clickbait' front page.

Ethel, Dudley

Watch out for OneDrive bug in Windows 10

Perhaps you could warn your readers what happens to your files when you sign into OneDrive in Windows 10. You may know about this already.

This is a OneDrive-specific bug that has system-wide implications because the security permissions affect sharing and potentially any files or programs that save to, are stored in, or are dependent on the users' personal files or folders. This includes all games, all Office programs, email programs, photos, browsers, personal settings and, of course, anything one would try to store in the affected folders.

I upgraded from Window 7 to Windows 10 and it changed all my files to 'Read only', so I couldn't do anything with them. It was so bad that it caused havoc with my business for a couple of days and was only sorted out when I reinstalled Windows 7, which put my files back to where they were.

I am going to leave Windows 10 well alone at the moment until the teething problems are sorted out. For your information, there is a work around fix for this problem at bit.ly/bug379.

Nick Vassie, Fareham

More Windows 10 upgrade woes

I have downloaded Windows 10 and regret it, and wish I had read your 'Windows 10: the Truth' article in Issue 376 (bit.ly/webuser376) first. It's done now and I have a Desktop that's not usable. Although I pressed the button to shut down my PC, it was still running the next morning so I had to switch it off at the mains. I booted it up and now I have a flashing Desktop screen.

I checked on the net and it appears that a lot of people are experiencing the same problem. Added to that, all the files are locked as 'Read only' and removing the tick from the box doesn't help because it just resets itself. What a mess!

I had no faults until I downloaded Windows 10. Why has Microsoft not looked at the internet and addressed all these problems? You were correct in your article 'Windows 10: the Truth', but even you could not have foreseen all the problems I have experienced.

Frank Morton, via email

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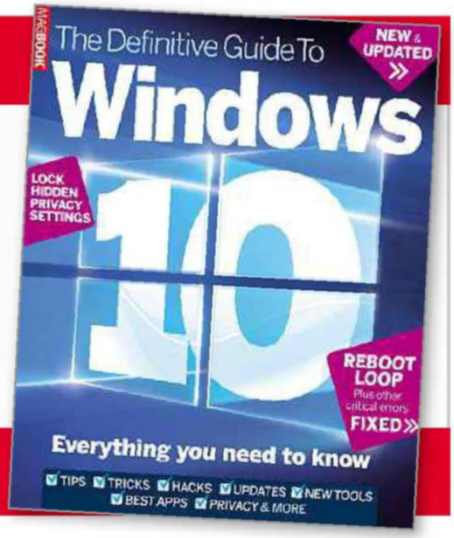

Windows 10 upgrade could exceed download limits

It's occurred to me that there are many people out there who have limited bandwidth and download caps due to limits set by their ISPs. Now, bear in mind that the Windows 10 upgrade can be anywhere from 10GB to 20GB, which is much higher than most download limits.

I have not read nor heard that any ISPs will be addressing this problem; however, there are going to be hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people who will not be able to upgrade to Windows 10 because of their data caps.

More pressure needs to be placed on ISPs during this upgrade period so

everybody has a fair chance at downloading the upgrade. I would be interested in *Web User* readers' opinion on this.

James Nix, Milton Keynes

Smart mirrors are a stupid idea

Whichever genius came up with the idea of 'smart mirrors' (FAQ, Issue 378) should be given a good slap, allowed a few seconds to compose themselves in their poxy mirror and then slapped again! Who really wants to be greeted first thing in the morning with the news that they look old and tired, that they've put on weight and that it's possible they've developed a terminal disease? Sounds great, doesn't it – I think I'll put one on my Christmas list!

Surely the bathroom should be the one place where you're not bothered by the constant flow of technology, but soothed by the more pleasant flow of warm water. I certainly don't want some smartypants mirror scanning my face with five (five!) cameras when I've just woken up, nor indeed at any other time of the day. If said mirror started telling me that I'm not brushing my teeth properly or that I could use a bit of moisturiser to freshen up my ageing skin, I think I'd forfeit the dreaded seven years of bad luck and smash it into pieces with a hammer. Bet it won't seem so smart after that!

Luke Bryan, via email

What you say...

IF YOU COULD TELL MICROSOFT ONE THING ABOUT WINDOWS 10, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Change it so it keeps all our software. I don't want to have to reinstall all the programs I use.

David Bongo *@chained*

Great job with Windows 10, but respond to public feedback quicker than you did for Windows 8.1. And give us the choice of when the onscreen keyboard appears when you touch the screen in Desktop view.

Chris Armstrong

Give instructions to edit the Start menu. It looks great but I can't figure it out.

James *@mrbancroft79*

That the Edge browser is really buggy and slow.

Jason 'Boz' Bowyer

Give me back my Windows Media Center! I'm making do with Fuugo (fuugo.tv) to watch TV through the TV card and VLC for everything else.

Ethel Ethel *@EthelEthel*

Put the Control Panel and settings in one place.

Iain James Lewis

I wish Cortana actually worked. I click the microphone, it opens, then closes. It is so annoying.

NotVali *@NotValiCS*

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE NEW ZX SPECTRUM GAMES CONSOLE (bit.ly/zx379)?

No, but I can see some computing anoraks and programmers from the Eighties buying it.

Martin Phillp

No, I've got better things to do with my money.

Shawn Adams

Yes, because I love the ZX Spectrum. But it's a shame they didn't improve the colour and sound, and update the games a bit first.

Barry Powell

I'm going to remember the games I played, rather than be disappointed by how the games are decades on. I got the old Atari out the other day - huge disappointment!

Paul *@abertawejack*

WILL YOU BUY TESCO'S £99 WINDOWS 10 TABLET (bit.ly/tesco379)?

Nah, because I have an awesome £65 10.1in Android tablet with a great battery life.

Wolf Simpson *@Dark_Wolf*

That's like Windows 10 with a free tablet. But does it crash?

The Mole UK *@The_Mole_UK*

That sounds like a good deal. I've got a Samsung 10in Android tablet, but it's too big to carry around, so I need something smaller.

Lorraine Thorpe

DO YOU HAVE SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS OF THE ASHLEY MADISON HACK?

Nope, I commend the people who hacked the database. Karma.

Lawand Omar

Yes, your secure info should never be allowed to be compromised.

Si Mellor

Ashley Madison users shouldn't have been doing what they were doing, but the hackers have committed criminal acts in pursuit of 'morality', causing mayhem, suicides and blackmail. I wonder how they feel now they have opened a digital Pandora's Box?

Ian Phipps

Page 404

Barry Collins wonders why his broadband package has gone up 60 per cent in a year

Suckered by sneaky subscription spikes

This time last year, I switched to BT fibre broadband at a cost of £23 per month (excluding line rental). One year on, and my bill has shot up to £36.65 per month, without me opting for a single upgrade. That's an increase of almost 60 per cent in just 12 months. What the hell's going on?!

Well, first there was the baited hook of the introductory price offer. I started off paying £20 per month for the broadband element, but that price went up to £26 after the first three months – which I was, of course, aware of when I signed up. But then BT decided to tighten the screw further, and put the price up to £27.65 per month in January.

BT had also dangled the carrot of a "free" BT Sport subscription when I joined, but this wasn't really free at all. First, you had to pay £3 extra per month if you wanted to watch the football in HD, which is almost mandatory given the appalling picture quality BT delivers on its standard service. And that went up to £4 this summer – an increase of 33 per cent.

But the real zinger came with the charges for BT Sport itself. Having just paid a Greek bailout to secure Champions League football for the coming season, BT needs to put the fizz back into its shareholders' bubbly, which means that 'free' BT Sport has gone up to £5 per month if you want to keep both channels, rather than downgrade to one. And the real sucker punch – the one that's infuriated so many BT customers – is that BT decided to apply this hike automatically. "Do nothing and your BT Sport Pack will cost £5 a month from 1 August 2015," read the small print in the email.

> "Having just paid a Greek bailout to secure Champions League football, BT needs to put the fizz back into its shareholders' bubbly"

When I pushed BT's press office on why customers weren't given the choice to upgrade to the paid-for package, the company made out it was doing us a favour. "Our research showed most customers wanted the Champions League added to their channels, so we gave them this option but with an easy choice to downgrade to the Lite package," a spokesperson said. "We did this to avoid a last-minute rush of customers upgrading and to ensure everyone got to enjoy the start of the season." BT's PR hub must have been working long into the night to come up with that one.

Even chocolate fireguard Ofcom got a little shirty with BT over the price rise, forcing the company to extend the period under which customers could cancel the sports channels and demand a refund. However, the regulator hasn't stopped BT applying such automatic price rises in the future, even though Ofcom's own advice to consumers bemoans "the small print" the company "relied upon to make changes to BT Sport and its price". An Ofcom spokesperson told me that it "has powers to take action against unfair terms, but ultimately only the courts can rule that a term is unfair".

These 'few quid here, few quid there' price rises must stop. When you're buying all these services in a bundle, as we increasingly are, little hikes can soon become overwhelming. Even without the introductory offer, I'm still paying 46 per cent more than I was a year ago, which is 460 times the rate of inflation. I don't need Robert Peston to tell me that's a rip-off, although I might get him to explain it – slowly – to Ofcom.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

Do you agree? Let us know at webuser@dennis.co.uk

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