THE ONE THING EVERYONE HATES ONLINE

Block it – see p48

HOW

WINDOWS 10*

SPIES ON YOU

STOP Microsoft knowing everything you do p38

only £2

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*

Still using Windows 7 or 8? Microsoft's sneaky NEW way of tracking what you do **p38**

PLUS

TURN ON DUAL-BAND Wi-Fi TODAY Router settings you should stop ignoring **p58**

ANYONE CAN STEAL YOUR PHOTOS How to STOP them **p56**

THE INTERNET OF EVERYTHING

presents

the last queue

We're building the Internet of Everything for business. With UCS Server solutions providing data centre performance everywhere, mobile applications and analytics keep queues short and customers happy. Let's confine queueing to yesterday.

See how at cisco.co.uk/thelastqueue

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TOMORROW starts here.

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processors

(intel)
inside™
XEON®

You'd be a mug to neglect privacy

There's a thin line between the benefits of 'personalisation' and the total invasion of your privacy. It's a line that Windows 10 doesn't so much tread carefully as dance along in a Stetson hat and spurred boots, shouting "Yee-haw!". Yes, it's useful for your PC to "get to know you", so it can tailor its behaviour to your needs, but if that involves giving Microsoft *carte blanche* to harvest your data and watch everything you do, it stops being handy and becomes rather creepy. In this issue's cover feature (page 38), we reveal exactly how you're being spied on by Windows 10 (and 7 and 8, for that matter) and how you can stop it.
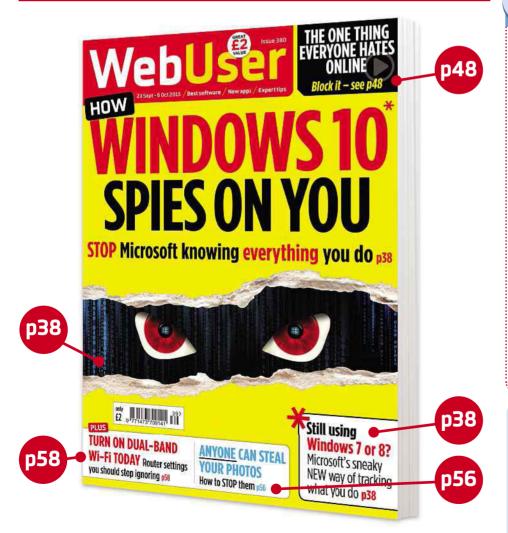
On a lighter note, I'm delighted to announce the return of *Web User* mugs as prizes for your best tips and emails. These have been completely redesigned and now sport one of our very own Mini Workshops on how to make a cuppa. So drop us a line and a mug could be yours!

Robert Irvine
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
#webuser

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2 How to activate the secret secure-password generator in Chrome　**page 30**

3 How to block adverts on your phone using the new Adblock Browser　**page 32**

4 How to transfer your files and settings from an old PC to a new one　**page 54**

5 How to make the Windows 10 upgrade icon appear in your System Tray　**page 69**

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FREE Screwdriver Set

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Turn to page 62 for special subs offers

HOW

WINDOWS 10 SPIES ON YOU

Follow our 12 dos and don'ts to preserve your privacy in the new OS

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Looking for a new Windows 10 PC? **p20**

Free photo-editing apps for your mobile device **p44**

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TRANSFER COMPLETE

Add a watermark to your shared photos **p56**
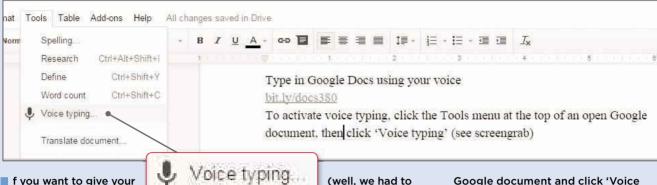
Type with your voice in Google Docs

If you want to give your fingers a rest while using Google Docs, try telling it what to type instead by activating its new voice-typing function. It worked extremely well in our brief test, recognising all the common words we spoke, as well as more obscure ones including 'coelacanth', 'octogenarian' and 'disestablishmentarianism'. It had no problem with names, and understood 'Lord Voldemort', 'Mr Snuffleupagus' and 'Obi Wan Kenobi'. It even added asterisks to swear words (well, we had to try!).

Punctuation commands posed no problem, either: you just say 'comma', 'full stop', 'question mark' and 'hyphen' for the symbols to appear. If you're typing a long document, you can use the handy commands 'new line' and 'new paragraph', which work perfectly. The program understands 40 languages but, for the moment, only works when using Docs in Chrome.

To enable voice typing, click the Tools menu at the top of an open Google document and click 'Voice typing' (see screen grab). You can then just click the microphone icon and start talking.

For more instructions and troubleshooting advice, click the link below to go to Google's 'Docs editors Help' section. You can also read the official Docs Blog (bit.ly/voice380) for information about the other new tools that Google has added, most of which are aimed at students and teachers.
bit.ly/docseditor380

Make your own *Doctor Who* game

bbc.co.uk/doctorwho
The BBC has launched the Doctor Who Game Maker, which lets you create games using characters and monsters from the show. It's part of the Beeb's new season of Make It Digital content, aimed at inspiring the next generation of web developers, although Time Lords of all ages will have fun pitting the Doctor against the Daleks. Another new highlight is an iPlayer archive of TV programmes from the Eighties telling the story of the BBC Micro computer. You'll find all the details at www.bbc.co.uk/makeitdigital.

See the true size of countries

thetruesize.com
This clever map reveals how distorted the familiar map of the world is. It lets you drag the outline of a country across the famous 'Mercator projection' of the world, which exaggerates the size of countries near the poles, while diminishing those near the equator (see Wikipedia for details: bit.ly/mercator380).

Move a country and it will grow or shrink to represent its real size – the UK fits rather neatly within Alaska, the largest US state, as well as inside Sudan, Iran, Argentina and Algeria. The most startling change is what happens to Greenland, which starts off as big as Africa, but shrinks to the size of India. Indeed, Greenland can squeeze inside China, Australia and Brazil. It's an eye-opening illustration of just how hard it is to recreate Earth on a flat surface.

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

See Pluto up close

bit.ly/pluto380

Despite being downgraded to a 'dwarf' planet, Pluto is proving to be more fascinating than anyone previously thought. NASA's new batch of photos, taken by its New Horizons craft in July, appear to show dunes, mountainous regions and nitrogen ice flows. Scientists says it exhibits a "bewildering variety of surface features".

Walk with giant Galapagos tortoises

bit.ly/tort380

After first visiting the Galapagos Islands in 2013, Google's Street View team has returned to the archipelago to take more photos of the native giant tortoises. Start your tour from Google's Lat-Long blog, which has links to the best images, including this tortoise enjoying the view over the Alcedo Volcano. The 2013 gallery shows other Galapagos residents, including blue-footed boobies, iguanas and sea lions. You can also see inside the Charles Darwin Research Station.

Get a cat's-eye view of Japan

bit.ly/cats380

Given how popular cats are on the internet, it's surprising that there's not been a feline equivalent of Street View until now. Responding to this demand is this site from the Hiroshima tourist board, which shows a shopping district in Onomichi City from a cat's perspective. Why Onomichi? Well, it's famous for its street cats - around 150,000 of them, apparently. You'll bump into some as you journey through the streets.

Make sure your volume is turned up so you can hear the street sounds and occasional meow.

Find out if a robot could take your job

bit.ly/robots380

New research by Oxford University and Deloitte suggests that 35 per cent of current jobs in the UK are at high risk of computerisation over the next 20 years. Discover if you could be replaced by a robot by selecting your job at the BBC News link above. It's apparently "quite unlikely" that journalists will be usurped by automatons, so we're alright Jack!

5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@AppStoreGames
New account from Apple that recommends games from the App Store

@officialmcafee
The peculiar world according to antivirus founder (and unlikely presidential hopeful) John McAfee

@itvpresscentre
News on forthcoming ITV shows and links to clips on the ITV website

@Waterstones
Ideas on what to read next, plus information on book-signing events

@TheWookieeRoars
Star Wars chat from Peter Mayhew, soon to reprise his role as Chewbacca

Get book reviews on Kindle

bit.ly/reads380

Amazon has added book recommendations from Goodreads (www.goodreads.com) to its Kindles and Fire tablets. You can see book reviews written by your friends and share passages of books you're reading.

Trim and share GoPro videos

bit.ly/gopro380

You can now extract 5-, 15- and 30-second clips from GoPro videos and share them online. 'Trim and Share' works on GoPro cameras, and the iOS and Android apps, and doesn't affect the original video, which stays intact.

Shoot Periscope videos in landscape

bit.ly/periblog380

At last, Periscope lets you record and broadcast videos in landscape, in both iOS and Android. Read Periscope's blog for more new features.

I am a...
Rather search by typing? Back to job search
Journalist, newspaper or periodical editor
Find out my automation risk >

Need to Know

Apple fails to excite with new iPhones and iPad Pro

What happened?

It's September, so Apple had another glitzy launch event for its update to the iPhone, and also unveiled Apple TV and the iPad Pro.

The iPhone 6S and iPhone 6S Plus both have updated specs – including faster chips and improved cameras – but the most eye-catching new feature is 3D Touch. Similar to the Force Touch feature in the latest MacBook's trackpad, 3D Touch understands the pressure in your finger taps, letting you press lightly to "peek" at an email or photo, or press harder to "pop" it open. Doing so opens a wider range of gestures, which can be used as shortcuts from the Home Screen, such as taking a selfie with a single press.

The other notable improvements involve the camera. Live Photos lets you take images that display motion – giving you 'living' snapshots like the pictures in the *Harry Potter* series. Additionally, the front-facing camera now uses the display as a Retina Flash, which gives you three times more brightness to light your "selfies".

The iPhones, which include only 16GB of built-in storage, are available from 25 September, costing from £539 for the 6S and £619 for the 6S Plus. Apple also quietly removed the cheaper and more colourful iPhone 5C from sale.

Although Apple didn't update the regular iPad, the iPad Mini has been updated to version 4, and the company also unveiled the super-sized iPad Pro.

The new device is more of a laptop without a keyboard than a tablet, with as much processing power as most laptops, a 12.9in display and its own stylus, called the Pencil. Like Microsoft's Surface tablet, one of the accessories is a cover that acts as a keyboard. The big tablet will be available in November, although UK prices haven't yet been revealed.

Finally, the new version of Apple TV offers support for Siri voice controls and an updated remote control that's touch sensitive, and includes a microphone and motion sensors for multiplayer games. It will be available next month, with UK pricing announced then.

How will it affect you?

We're rather disappointed to say that it won't – unless you're a devoted Apple fan. The new 3D Touch feature in the iPhones is certainly slick, but for most of us it's not worth shelling out for the upgrade. The iPad Pro is perhaps more interesting but, powerful as it may be, it's an expensive, niche device. Artists will love the Pencil tool, and other professionals will appreciate having a powerful device in a lightweight format, but the average consumer isn't likely to want a 12.9in tablet to lug around. Thankfully, the iPad Mini has been updated too, for those who want a tablet they can actually afford.

The voice controls in Siri could prove more appealing, because controlling smart TVs via a remote is clunky. The new remote will help turn Apple TV into more of a gaming console similar to the Nintendo Wii, which is a welcome add-on, but since most TVs have smart functions built-in these days, Apple is clearly only including such features to make its hardware worth the investment.

If you are keen on any of the devices, don't bother waiting in line at stores – they're all available to preorder well before their release, so you can be the first to get them without having to queue.

What do we think?

Yawn. Apple's hardware is certainly lovely, but the new features on the iPhone highlight how mature the format is now. No-one really needs 3D Touch, as clever as it may be. We'd prefer Apple to spend more time and effort beefing up its battery life, but perhaps it's saving that for the iPhone 7.

We're also dismayed to see the disappearance of the iPhone 5C. The cheap and colourful version of the iPhone may not have been the top seller that CEO Tim Cook would have liked, but it's a shame not to offer a more affordable edition, and to do away with it so quietly. Anyone who's bought a 5C hoping to upgrade next year to an equally lower-cost edition will have to choose between moving up to the more expensive models or switching to Android and losing the apps they've already paid for.

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

Amazon ditches phone for £30 tablet

What happened?
Budget tablets could reach a new low price point as Amazon is reportedly working on a Kindle Fire device that will cost just £30. The 6in device is expected to go on sale in the US before Christmas.

The rumour comes at an intriguing time, because Amazon has just stopped selling its Fire smartphone, following reportedly stagnant sales. That device, like the Fire tablets, ran a modified version of Android locked to Amazon's store. That suggests the Fire OS (as it's called) is more suitable for tablets than phones, especially as its messaging and email apps compared badly with those of its rivals.

The new 'phablet' is thought to be about half an inch larger than the failed Fire phone, so Amazon may be reusing the smartphone design in the tablet market, where it's had more success.

How will it affect you?
If you were one of the few who bought a Fire phone, we feel for you. Not only are you lumbered with a less-than-spectacular handset, but now you'll have to switch to another Android device, iOS or Windows Phone when it's time to upgrade.

If you like the idea of a smaller Kindle Fire tablet, you're in luck, but be warned that Amazon usually launches hardware in the US long before bringing it to the UK. That means the cheap phablet may not be available here this year, so don't hold your breath.

What do we think?
Making a popular phone isn't easy, and Amazon's learned that the hard way. We think the company should to stick to what it's best at, namely Kindle e-readers and tablets that can be used to watch TV shows, read magazines and books, and play games – all of which can be bought from Amazon. Smartphones are a different beast – we'll settle for the excellent Kindle app on our Android phone, and leave the hardware to the manufacturing experts.

Google stops ad blockers skipping YouTube ads

What happened?
Google's Chrome browser has long supported extensions that let you prevent advertisements from loading. This suggested that Google doesn't mind ad blockers across the web, but it

definitely seems to dislike them on its own sites, and is now taking an aggressive approach to dissuading users from blocking ads on YouTube.

Many users report that video ads that show before clips on YouTube are no longer being blocked by their ad-blocking tools. Additionally, YouTube usually lets you skip longer ads once you've watched the first few seconds, but with an ad blocker running, that 'Skip' option disappears, leaving you sitting through commercials that can last for several minutes.

One ad-blocking tool, Adblock Plus, suggested the move wasn't a nefarious hit against such extensions, but merely a bug. Coincidentally, Adblock Plus is currently celebrating the fact that Google has allowed its new Adblock Browser in the Play store – see our review on page 32.

How will it affect you?
If you can't see the 'Skip' option on video ads on YouTube, you may need to turn off your ad blocker. With most of these tools, you can deactivate them for a single site rather than the whole web, so ads may display on YouTube but not elsewhere. If it is indeed merely a bug, make sure you update your extensions and hopefully the missing 'Skip' option will return.

What do we think?
Here's hoping this is merely a bug, but we have a feeling that a war against ad blockers is looming. Online advertising has become so irritating that more and more people are blocking ads, but that makes it even harder for websites to make money online. Indeed, it's worth noting that YouTube still isn't profitable for Google. Websites need to find a better way to earn income, or make ads that are more appealing and less intrusive, or the entire business model of the web is at risk.

Windows 10 downloads even if you opt out

What happened?

Microsoft confirmed that it is downloading Windows 10 to users' PCs, even if they have not chosen to upgrade to the new operating system. The company says this is to "help upgradable devices get ready for Windows 10 by downloading the files they'll need if they decide to upgrade".

Tech-news site The Inquirer reports that the updates are being pushed to computers via Windows Update and can result in as much as 6GB of installation files being downloaded to a hidden folder without the user's knowledge (bit.ly/inquirer380). These downloads not only consume hard-drive space, but also eat into monthly data caps and bandwidth.

Windows 10 has been criticised for its use of enforced automatic updates, some of which have caused problems on users' PCs, including the notorious 'reboot loop' error. However, the upgrade to the new operating system itself was supposed to be optional for Windows 7 and 8.1 users, who could ignore the offer if they wanted to stay on their current OS.

How will it affect you?

If you've decided to stick with Windows 7 or 8.1, then it's likely you have good reason for doing so. For example, you may be worried that your hardware

The Windows 10 upgrade is meant to be optional, but Microsoft downloads it anyway

can't cope with the demands of the new OS or you may want to wait until all the early problems with Windows 10 have been ironed out. In any case, it's worth checking your hard drive to see if Microsoft has downloaded Windows 10 files in the background without you knowing. Look for a folder named '$Windows.~BT' or similar – you may need to enable the 'Show hidden files and folders' option to see it.

What do we think?

We think Microsoft needs to learn what 'optional upgrade' means, because force-feeding users an operating system they don't want (either now or ever) is a clear breach of trust. It may think it's saving users time by getting their PCs ready for Windows 10, but with the OS set to remain free until the end of July 2016, we fail to understand the rush. Could Microsoft's pushiness have anything with its desire for Windows 10 to attain 100 million users as soon as possible?

FIRST LOOK

Samsung Galaxy Tab S2
bit.ly/samsung380

The Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 might not be as large as the new 12.2in iPad Pro (see story on page 8), but its 9.7in screen should be large enough for most people and, at £319, it's sure to be a lot cheaper than Apple's device.

The tablet's square-ish 4:3 aspect ratio perhaps makes it more suited to reading and browsing the web than watching films, but its slim (5.6mm) and lightweight (389g) build means it's very comfortable to hold. The Tab S2 uses AMOLED technology, and, like all displays of this type, it has excellent contrast because it can display absolute blacks. Test images leapt out from the screen thanks to their vibrant colours, although on closer inspection we noticed a yellow

tint – a common complaint about AMOLED displays.

The Galaxy Tab S2's processor has no less than eight cores: four for resource-hungry tasks and four to save battery when running programs that don't require so much power. Indeed, it ran for an impressive 12 hours 9 minutes in our continuous video-playback test.

Android 5 runs beautifully smoothly, with none of the lag spotted on Samsung tablets in the past.

There are also some neat touches, such as Samsung's own multitasking system. If you press the Recent options, certain apps have an extra icon that lets you 'snap' them to the screen and resize them. This doesn't work with all apps, but it means you can look at email at the same time as a map or a web page, for example.

This is undoubtedly an impressive tablet. It's slim, light and has an excellent screen. However, it sits in an odd position in the tablet market. It's the same price as the iPad Air 2, which performs better but has a worse battery life, and costs more than the Google Nexus 9, which is less attractive but has stronger performance.

❓ WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Netflix going to introduce offline viewing?

Although Amazon has just added the ability to download films and TV shows to its Prime Video service (see page 35), it seems unlikely that streaming rival Netflix is about to follow suit. The company has reaffirmed its opposition to customers watching content offline, because it says they simply couldn't handle the choice.

Neil Hunt, Netflix's chief product officer, admitted to tech blog Gizmodo that offline viewing is a much requested feature, but he remains adamant that Netflix will remain streaming-only. "I still don't think it's a very compelling proposition," he said. "I think it's something that lots of people ask for. We'll see if it's something lots of people will use. Undoubtedly, it adds considerable complexity to your life with Amazon Prime – you have to remember that you want to download this thing. It's not going to be instant, you have to have the right storage on your device, you have to manage it, and I'm just not sure people are actually that compelled to do that, and that it's worth providing that level of complexity."

Netflix and Amazon are currently locked in a battle to create exclusive programming to attract subscribers.

Netflix has won critical acclaim for several of its exclusive series, including *Orange Is The New Black* and *House of Cards*, while Amazon recently signed up former *Top Gear* stars Jeremy Clarkson, James May and Richard Hammond.

LIKELIHOOD RATING
✓✓✓✓✓

Often, the more a spokesperson denies something, the more likely it is to happen, but Netflix seems adamant that its service will remain streaming-only. However, Mr Hunt's attitude that viewers wouldn't be able to cope with the extra choice of downloading is rather insulting – we cope with it when using BBC iPlayer, after all.

Ⓚ What's new on Kickstarter
Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Batband
bit.ly/batband380 | From $95 (£62)

Headphones are great for listening to music on the move, but the cables get tangled and you can't hear what's going on around you. Batband solves these problems by providing an ear-free listening experience that transmits sound waves directly into the bones of your skull. That may sound like an instrument of torture, but by emitting music to your "private" inner ear, Batband frees up your "social" ear and is described as being incredibly comfortable and perfectly suited to a busy lifestyle. It's already surpassed its $150,000 target, with funding closing 28 October.

⬆ WEBOMETER ⬇

WE LIKE...

⬆ **Google pays tribute to the Queen**
Google celebrated Queen Elizabeth II becoming Britain's longest-reigning monarch by turning the Google Maps Pegman into 'PegMa'am'. Just search for Buckingham Palace, London and the icon will transform in the bottom-right corner.

⬆ **Three eliminates mobile blackspots**
Three has launched 4G Super-Voice, which allows mobile signals to travel much further into buildings and rural areas, removing many current UK 'blackspots'. Customers will be able to make calls, send texts and get online in places that previously had no signal.

WE DON'T LIKE...

⬇ **Minecraft meet-up disappoints fans**
An unofficial gathering of more than 4,100 Minecraft fans in Peterborough was described as "awful" and "a complete waste of day". The first UK MineVention suffered from long queues and poor facilities, but organisers have yet to comment on issuing refunds.

⬇ **Bosses vet job applicants on Facebook**
Nine out of ten employers say they always check social media before hiring applicants, according to research by recruitment company Jobvite. More than half the bosses surveyed said they've reconsidered hiring someone based on their Facebook or Twitter profile.
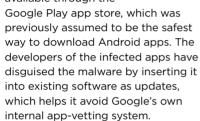
Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Google Play malware could be costly

Internet security company Bitdefender (www.bitdefender.co.uk) has uncovered malware in Android apps that are available through the Google Play app store, which was previously assumed to be the safest way to download Android apps. The developers of the infected apps have disguised the malware by inserting it into existing software as updates, which helps it avoid Google's own internal app-vetting system.

The malware subscribes users to premium-rate services that can send out monthly premium text messages at a cost to the user of up to 50¢ (around 32p), some of which goes to the malware's developer. If you get stuck with a number of compromised apps, you could end up spending a lot of money, and if you don't check your bills, you might not notice it happening. The Trojan software, called Android.Trojan.MKero.A, signs up for the premium services using Antigate.com, which uses real people to identify the text in CAPTCHA images, so the premium services assume they've been approved by the device's owner. The Trojan has been around since 2014 but has only just made the transition to Google Play from third-party stores.

Bitdefender has informed Google of the infected apps so it can remove them from the store, but with the developers already managing to circumnavigate Google's security checks, Android users should be extra cautious. Bitdefender claims that the only way to ensure that you don't have this and future malware cropping up on your Android device is to install security software. Bitdefender's Mobile Security is available from the Google Play store for £9.95 per year.
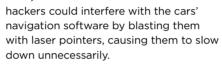bit.ly/bitdef380

Self-driving cars hacked with laser pointers

Following last issue's news of a threat to vehicular security (see Security Alert, Issue 379), a new hacking problem has emerged, though this time it involves the driverless cars being tested by the likes of Google. Research from security software firm Security Innovation (www.securityinnovation.com) has shown that hackers could interfere with the cars' navigation software by blasting them with laser pointers, causing them to slow down unnecessarily.

The cars use a system called Lidar, which shines laser beams off surrounding objects to build a constantly updating 3D map of nearby obstacles. By using a simple computer (such as a Raspberry Pi) to pulse the pointer at the same rate as the Lidar, it would be possible to trick the car into seeing ghost obstacles that aren't there, forcing a driverless car to perform an emergency stop or rendering it completely stationary.
bit.ly/laser380

WhatsApp web app compromised

Security firm Check Point (www.checkpoint.com) has found a security leak in WhatsApp Web (web.whatsapp.com). This web version of the popular phone-chat app can be used on a PC's browser, but malicious hackers could exploit it by sending users a simple file such as a vCard disguised as contact information that installs ransomware on their PC.

WhatsApp has since fixed the problem but only in versions of the tool after 0.1.4481. If you use it, check you've got a more up-to-date version or just make sure you're using the latest one.
bit.ly/check380

Security Helpdesk

Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Richard Cassidy, technical director at Alert Logic (www.alertlogic.com)

ALERTLOGIC
Security. Compliance. Cloud.

Q **How worried should we be about the reported security hole in WhatsApp [see story, above]?**
Ryan Marks, via email

A Hackers often attempt to exploit popular messaging services. Given the open-trust model that WhatsApp is built on, which includes freely sharing files, images, videos and profile information, it's an app that presents a great deal of opportunity for attackers to trick users into opening a seemingly legitimate or interesting file that could lead to an exploit of the host device.

Users of any instant-messaging app need to stick to online best practices to reduce the risk of being compromised. Always be vigilant when receiving any type of file from an unknown source and question the sender if you're unsure. Even if a file seems to come from someone you know, put it into context on the basis of your normal communication with that person – would they have any need to send you a file? If not, never be afraid to delete the message or check its validity.

✚ Email us your security questions at webuser@dennis.co.uk

☆ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

TRAVEL RELAUNCH

Virgin Trains
www.virgintrains.co.uk

The redesigned Virgin Trains website not only looks great, with bright colours, clear navigation and large images, but has some useful new features, too. It now uses Google to power its journey planner, giving a wide range of travel options door to door, rather than just station to station. We particularly like the new seat picker, which lets you choose exactly where you want to sit. Other new features includes station maps, departure boards and 360-degree photo tours of stations, so you can see where to eat, shop and spend a penny (well, 50p these days). It's everything a modern transport website should be.

Our rating ★★★★★
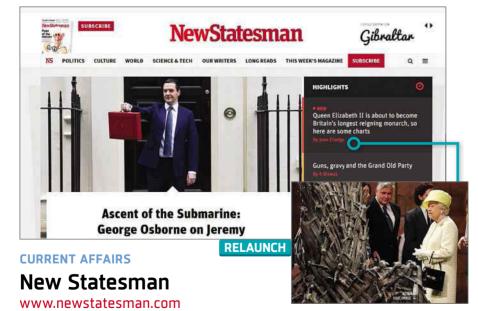
DEPARTURE BOARDS
Keep track of which trains are leaving on time and which are delayed on the live departure boards

JOURNEY PLANNER
Made with help from Google, this journey planner guides you from your front door to the train, and then on to your destination

---

CURRENT AFFAIRS

New Statesman
www.newstatesman.com

Ascent of the Submarine: George Osborne on Jeremy

RELAUNCH

The weekly political magazine has been given a fresh look to better meet the needs of mobile users. Navigation is now tucked into a single drop-down menu for a cleaner homepage, and articles are quicker to load. There's a dedicated section for long reads for when you have the time, and a page detailing what's in the latest issue of the magazine. The new fonts are easier to read, especially on mobile devices. Illustrations and images are concealed behind headlines to let you get right to the story; just click "show image" to get a better view. It's a much needed refresh for the *New Statesman* – if only it were as easy to upgrade the politicians it covers!

Our rating ★★★★★

ONLINE SAFETY NEW
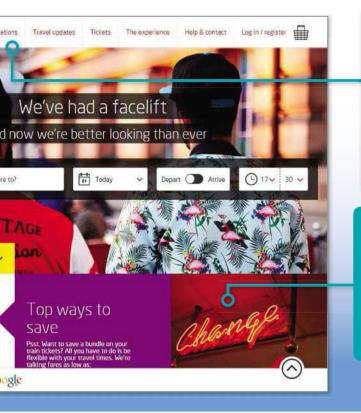
Parent Info
parentinfo.org

Keeping children safe online is no easy task, but Parent Info aims to help adults get to grips with the challenges facing young 'uns. This includes everything from a dictionary of online teen speak – in case you were wondering what 'yolo' and 'cba' mean – to advice on talking to kids about mental health, tips on staying safe while playing Minecraft and interviews with tech leaders. The site is produced by CEOP, the child-protection arm of the National Crime Agency, and Parent Zone, a parental-support charity. Schools can embed a feed of latest articles on their websites to spread the word.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Reviews by Nicole Kobie and Robert Irvine

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

STATIONS & DESTINATIONS
Get a bird's eye view of the station to know exactly where to buy tickets, get a coffee and more

STREET VIEW
Google's had its Street View cameras inside Britain's train stations, so you know what to expect before you get there

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RELAUNCH

TRAVEL

Opodo
www.opodo.co.uk

Frequent flyers will be familiar with Opodo and this much needed refresh offers even more to like. Aside from updated fonts and a slicker design, the site looks much the same, but the search box on the homepage has extra options, including how many stopovers you're willing to tolerate, what class you want to fly in and your payment method, so you can avoid the extra fees charged by some airlines. The top bar on the results page gives you a quick glance at potential flights, and you can rank the options by price or duration. It's a quick way to find the most suitable flight.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

LIFESTYLE

Joe
www.joe.co.uk

First started in Ireland, Joe.co.uk has landed in Britain to entertain us with its witty take on today's top trends. The men's lifestyle site offers stories in an irreverent tone on topics including technology and fitness, as well as entertainment gossip, viral videos and more serious news – plus a lot of articles about football. So, if you're a football fan who wants to know the latest on Syria, laugh at silly videos and see the new James Bond trailer, this is one to bookmark. There are photos of Hollywood hunks and sportsmen for the ladies, but the site is mainly pitched at blokes.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

HEALTH

Find-a-Physio
www.find-a-physio.co.uk

If your joints are aching or your knees are knackered, and you don't know where to turn, Find-a-Physio could help. As its name suggests, this site finds you a physiotherapist in your area, searching both NHS and private clinics and displaying the results as a list and on a map. There's also a handy Your Injury section that explains the different types of pain that require physiotherapy and provides basic treatment advice. It's early days for the site, so results aren't massively comprehensive at the moment – only 20 in the whole of London – but physios are encouraged to sign up.

Our rating ★★★☆☆ ➡

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

⭐ Best New Websites

RELAUNCH

SERVICES
iPostParcels
www.ipostparcels.com

This low-cost courier company has streamlined its website to make it easier to use. The more modern design lets you arrange collection and delivery in a jiffy; get an instant quote depending on the size of your item – prices start at a very reasonable £2.39 inc VAT; and track your parcel online. We like the site's friendly feel, which includes helpful (and very positive) customer reviews and a regularly updated blog, and that iPostParcels offers a dedicated eBay service that you can link to your account on the marketplace for your convenience. It's definitely worth bookmarking for your future delivery needs.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

SPORT
Footyphone
www.footyphone.co.uk

Football fans who simply want the latest news about their team rather than photos, videos and other data-gobbling content will like this site, which is meant to be browsed on your phone when you're at the match, on the way there or heading home. Simply select a team from the drop-down menu to view news from sources including BBC News, Talk Sport and local papers; official Twitter feeds and related hashtags; and blogs, fan sites and forums. Footyphone won't win any prizes for design, but its no-frills approach makes it super-speedy, which is what you want on a mobile. Hopefully, it will expand to include more leagues.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NEW

WILDLIFE
Scottish Wildcat Action
www.scottishwildcataction.org

Seldom seen and much misunderstood, the Scottish wildcat is one of the most endangered creatures in the world, and this website is part of a wider plan to conserve the cute but cantankerous feline. There's an appeal for volunteers to report sightings of the cats in the wild, particularly in six priority 'safe' areas, and the site provides helpful information about distinguishing them from domestic moggies that have gone feral. You can also learn the best times and places to spot a wildcat, why they're at risk and what you can do to help. It's an impressively informative resource that's complemented by some amazing photos.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

SHOPPING
Poundland
www.poundland.co.uk

The all-conquering high-street discount store has finally started selling online, so savvy shoppers can now bag bargains from their PCs and mobile devices. The site offers more than 2,000 products for a pound each and, unlike its rivals, there's no minimum order value, although there are plenty of case deals if you want to buy in bulk. Delivery costs £4 and takes 3-5 days, and you can return items you're unhappy with to your local store if you're desperate to recoup that quid. Clean and easy to browse, Poundland also has a useful feature called Shuffle that suggests random products and shows off its variety of stock. The supermarkets must be fuming!

Our rating ★★★★★

NEW
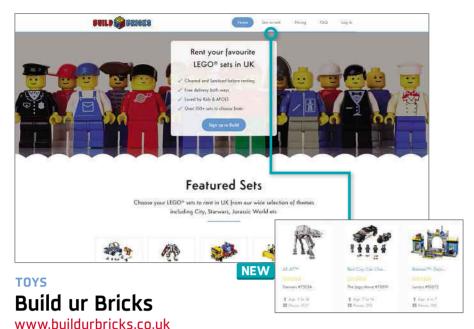
ACTIVITIES
My Kids Day Out
www.mykidsdayout.co.uk

Parents and grandparents looking for ways to keep children entertained will find plenty of ideas and inspiration at this site – provided they live in the North West of England. The beta version of My Kids Day Out is limited to that area, but plans to expand to other regions in due course. We love the colourful design, speedy search tool and ability to filter results by criteria such as museums, sightseeing and water activities (but not by price, sadly). Most importantly, the suggestions are varied and detailed, although it's a shame the entries use generic category photos rather than pictures of the actual attractions.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NEW

TOYS

Build ur Bricks

www.buildurbricks.co.uk

Lego is more popular than ever, but it's expensive and the bricks often end up in one disorganised bucket once the sets have been built. Build ur Bricks lets you save money by renting rather than buying – you can only borrow one or two sets at a time, but there are more than 150 sets available which you can rent for as long as you want. Framed in a smart, simple design, the site lets you browse by age range and theme, with options including Star Wars, Marvel Super Heroes and Minecraft, as well as old favourites such as Technic and City. Monthly subscriptions aren't cheap, ranging from £9.99 (for easy sets) to £24.99 (for difficult ones), but delivery is free, you can cancel your membership at any time and you needn't brick it if you lose a piece!

Our rating	★★★★☆

NEW

MOTORING

DoNotPay

www.donotpay.co.uk

We love the idea behind DoNotPay, which helps motorists fight unfair parking tickets. It's very straightforward to use – just sign up, click 'Appeal a Ticket' and choose from one of 12 reasons to object to your fine, such as 'The parking bay was too small' and 'Problems with the signage' (which cleverly attaches a Street View image to back you up). Enter the details of the 'offence', and the site generates an appeal letter that you can print and send to the council. The site looks a bit scrappy, and we spotted a few typographical errors, but it saves you time and effort, and could even – hopefully – get your ticket quashed.

Our rating	★★★☆☆

✚ ALSO NEW

HEALTH

Bloodwise
bloodwise.org.uk
★★★★★

"There are 137 types of blood cancer. We're here to beat every single one", proclaims this excellent site. Bloodwise uses a bold, colourful design to deliver its message, complete with prominent options to join the charity (formerly called Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research) and raise the issue with your MP, and testimonies from fundraisers, researchers and patients.

ACCESSIBILITY

Open Britain
www.openbritain.net
★★★★☆

This site from charity Tourism for All UK highlights accessible places for people with disabilities. You can search its extensive database of hotels, caravans, shops, restaurants and more, by criteria including parking facilities, ramps to entrances and meals for special dietary requirements. There's also lots of other useful info at this content-packed site.

CHARITY

The Honeypot Children's Charity
www.honeypot.org.uk
★★★★☆

There's a lot of buzz about this site for the charity that aims to help every child enjoy their childhood. With a lively design that works well on any device, it does a great job of telling you about the charity's work, how to get involved and how to ask for support for a vulnerable child. It also makes effective use of social elements.

SPORT

Parkour UK
www.parkouruk.org
★★★☆☆

If you enjoy running and jumping up walls and buildings, you'll love the National Governing Body for Parkour and Freerunning's stylish new website. The image-led design is undoubtedly striking and ably conveys the skill and excitement of the extreme sport, but it's a shame the handy links to Parkour news, courses and videos are so small.

WEBSITE SECRETS
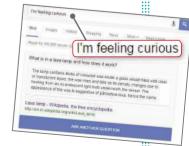
Get interesting facts from Google

Google has added a new feature to stave off boredom during your tea break. Type or speak 'I'm feeling curious' into the search bar, or type 'fun facts', to receive an endless stream of interesting titbits. Once you've digested your first fact, click the Ask Another Question button for more random trivia. We had a few goes and got the answers to interesting questions such as: 'What is a lava lamp and how does it work?', 'Who was the first man to walk in space?' and 'Why is a lemon so sour?'. Give it a whirl – you might learn something! ◼

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

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Bring Google Fonts into WordPress

There's a new tool in WordPress that lets you use a selection of Google's fonts, even if your theme doesn't have them available as options. Click the Appearance menu's Customize option, then click Fonts.

You can experiment with different fonts for the headings and body copy, which are previewed live on the right. If you like the changes, click Save & Publish. To see what the different fonts look like, type their names into the Filter box at www.google .com/fonts.

Site Builder on Planet Hippo

If you're looking for an easy way to build a website, Planet Hippo (www.planethippo.co.uk) has just launched its new Site Builder software, which promises to create a professional-looking site in 10 minutes. The new service costs from £4.79 per month.

The software runs in your browser, and uses a simple drag-and-drop interface. Sites created using the service are optimised for both mobile and larger screens, and dynamically choose an appropriate layout for the user's screen resolution.

Deal of the Fortnight

Heart Internet (www.heartinternet.uk) is running a 'buy one, get one free' deal on 'uk' domains, so if you buy a '.co.uk', 'org.uk', 'me.uk' or '.uk' domain for £3.49 per year, you'll get a second one for free.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Nick Leech,
digital director, 123-reg
(www.123-reg.co.uk)

Q Is it better to use a large photo on a web page, or a small photo you click to make larger?
Colin, Web User Forums

A Large photos are more pleasing to visitors because they don't require extra clicks but, if they're too big, it impacts page loading speed. Suitable image size also depends on the device used: larger images work for desktop computers but, for mobile users, click-to-view is faster.

It also matters where the images are placed. For a top-priority page, create images as thumbnails; if it's an infographic, have a smaller version that expands when clicked. Whatever the size of the images, you should reduce the file size using Photoshop or a free compression service to make them smaller without affecting their quality.

MINI WORKSHOP | Use Mozilla Thimble to see your site as you build it
Mozilla Thimble: thimble.mozilla.org | 🕐 10 mins | Any browser

This useful split-screen web-building tool from Mozilla lets you create or edit a site using HTML, CSS and JavaScript, and shows a preview of how the site will look as you code. Here's how to get started

1 If you're not yet confident with HTML, CSS and JavaScript, scroll down to the 'Remix this Project' buttons and have a play. Otherwise, click 'Start a project from scratch'. A basic HTML and CSS site will load showing the Files list, **1** the Editor with the HTML file loaded **2** and the preview. **3** Make it full screen by pressing F11.

2 Click the pencil icon **1** to give the project a name and save it. Click inside the Editor and start adding to the HTML. The software will help you with indentation. **2** Type <, to begin entering HTML. A list of options pops up **3** that you can select from or keep typing. Handy shortcuts and colour formatting also appear automatically.

3 Click '+' **1** to add new files to the project. You can start new HTML, CSS or JavaScript files from scratch, **2** or upload other files to include in your web page, such as images. **3** You can right-click and Delete files later, if you no longer need them. To get more help, click Tutorial **4** to load a special page that includes more helpful information.

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

WebUser

2014 Back Issues Disc

Reduce your stacks of old magazines to one shiny disc, with all your favourite content at your fingertips!

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

SEARCHABLE INDEX ✓

CREATE YOUR OWN ARCHIVE ✓

EASY TO USE ✓

ON SALE NOW!

Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Windows 10 PCs

Michael Passingham tests four powerful but affordable PCs designed to run the latest version of Windows

Although Microsoft is giving away Windows 10 free to Windows 7 and 8 users, you'll still get the best from the new operating system by running it on a brand new PC that's been built for the purpose using the latest components. In this Group Test, we've reviewed four of the first PCs to come with Windows 10 pre-installed.

The prices we've quoted are for the base station only, without any extras such as a monitor, keyboard or mouse, because you probably have those already. However, if you need these peripherals, they can easily be added to your order or purchased separately.

HOW WE TESTED

We put the PCs through their paces using both Windows and gaming benchmark tests. The Windows tests compare the PCs' performance when running image- and video-editing software, and during general multi-tasking, giving an overall score that shows how good they are at these general Windows tasks.

The gaming test ran the BioShock Infinity demo on each PC, using its Very High settings at a Full HD resolution. The more frames per second (fps) a PC can display while running this challenging demo, the better it will perform running the latest games.

PC Specialist Evora | **£559** | www.pcspecialist.co.uk

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

PC Specialist's Evora proves that you don't need to spend thousands of pounds to get a great PC. It comes in a cheap-looking case but its components should keep home users perfectly happy. It's a shame that it doesn't have a front-facing USB 3 port, though – if you want to connect high-speed peripherals, you'll need to reach around the back of the unit.

The Evora's quad-core Intel Core i5-4460 is the least powerful processor of the four PCs reviewed in this Group Test, with a base frequency of 3.2GHz, which steps up to 3.4GHz when it's being put under pressure. But in practice, you'll hardly notice the difference unless you're working on huge batches of photos or long, high-resolution videos. However, this did have an impact on its overall benchmark score which, despite Windows and other applications still whizzing along, was the lowest of the group.

The PC's gaming performance, on the other hand, more than made up for any Windows shortcomings. The Evora's graphics are controlled by a 2GB AMD Radeon R7 370 – the same card found in the more expensive Wired2Fire VX-Zelos. In BioShock Infinite's built-in benchmark, it averaged a strong 80fps on Very High settings at a 1,920 x 1,080-pixel resolution. This machine will easily tackle the latest games on Medium settings.

You only get 8GB of memory but it comes as a single stick, so you can add a second module to the spare slot in the motherboard. Windows 10 comes installed on a 120GB Kingston SSD, while a 1TB Seagate hard drive should provide enough space for your personal files.

This is the cheapest PC in this group, costing just £559. You'll need to spend more if you haven't got a spare monitor and peripherals, but if you just want to swap your existing box, this is the perfect Windows 10 upgrade.

WebUser GOLD AWARD

VERDICT
★★★★☆

If you're looking for a workaday PC rather than an all-out powerhouse, the PC Specialist Evora is a great option. Its Windows performance is put into the shade by the other PCs we tested, but that's no great shock given that it's significantly cheaper. What's more surprising is its joint top position in the gaming test, which gives it lots of potential as an all-round family PC.

Chillblast Fusion Centurion | £650 |
www.chillblast.com

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

This is the first PC we've seen that uses Intel's new Skylake processor – a 3.5GHz Intel Core i5-6600K, overclocked to 4.34GHz. This helped it get the best score in our Windows benchmarks (an overall benchmark rating of 137). Its Zalman Z3 chassis has fans at the front, top and rear to keep everything cool.

The Asus Z170-K motherboard is also bang up to date, complete with USB 3 Type-C ports making it easy to hook up fast peripherals. Windows 10 runs off its compact 120GB Samsung SSD, while your personal files can be kept on the 1TB Seagate hard drive.

It's not all super-fast and new, though. The 1GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 750 graphics card is low-end but still managed 56fps in the BioShock Infinite benchmark at High settings in Full HD. You also only get 8GB of memory and it's the only PC in this group that doesn't have an optical drive.

VERDICT ★★★★☆
The Chillblast Fusion Centurian provides the latest, most powerful components for a reasonable price. It was the fastest PC we tested and can be easily upgraded later if its graphics and memory don't live up to your requirements.

Wired2Fire VX-Zelos | £650 |
www.wired2fire.co.uk

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

Wired2Fire's VX-Zelos comes in an understated Fractal Core 1100 case, with one USB 3 port on the front and two on the rear. It also has five USB 2 ports. The huge Raijintek cooler, which sits on the quad-core Intel Core i5, means it can sustain a turbo boost for longer, and this raised its benchmark performance score above that of the Mesh Elite Pro.

Its gaming performance was impressive, thanks to the 16GB of memory and 2GB AMD Radeon R7 370 graphics card, and it ran BioShock Infinite at Full HD with Very High settings at a phenomenal 80fps, which was joint best in this group. Windows 10 comes on a 500GB Crucial BX100 SSD, but there's no mechanical hard drive, so you'll need to expand the storage capacity if you've got a lot of files. This will involve juggling the position of the existing SSD because of the PC's small case.

VERDICT ★★★★☆
The VX-Zelos is a capable PC that lagged behind the Chillblast's Windows performance, but matched the PC Specialist for gaming. It's a bit more expensive than the Evora but comes with more memory and a larger SSD.

Mesh Elite Pro | £599 |
www.meshcomputers.com

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

The Mesh Elite Pro comes in a Corsair Carbide Spec-01 case, which has impressive-looking red LEDs that light up the front fan. Peer through the plastic window on the side, however, and you'll see a standard Intel processor heatsink resting on a Haswell 3.5GHz Intel Core i5-4690. This can provide fast speed in bursts but the basic cooling provision means it can't sustain it for long periods. However, while its overall benchmark score of 98 put the Elite Pro third overall, it's still fast enough for most home users, and came only a few points behind the more expensive Wired2Fire PC.
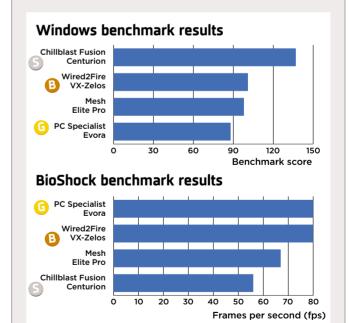
Although it's the second cheapest of the PCs we tested, its 8GB of memory is installed in one of three memory slots, so there's plenty of room for expansion. It has a 120GB Kingston SSD for Windows and key programs, and a 1TB Seagate hard drive for everything else.

VERDICT ★★★★☆
The Mesh Elite Pro is a decent all-rounder: it offers commendable performance, without scrimping on graphics power, at a good price. However, its promise doesn't live up to its attention-grabbing case.

TEST-RESULTS CHARTS

Windows benchmark results

	Benchmark score
(S) Chillblast Fusion Centurion	
(B) Wired2Fire VX-Zelos	
Mesh Elite Pro	
(G) PC Specialist Evora	

0   30   60   90   120   150
Benchmark score

BioShock benchmark results

	Frames per second (fps)
(G) PC Specialist Evora	
(B) Wired2Fire VX-Zelos	
Mesh Elite Pro	
(S) Chillblast Fusion Centurion	

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80
Frames per second (fps)

+ Discuss this review at forum.webuser.co.uk

	PC Specialist Evora	Chillblast Fusion Centurion	Mesh Elite Pro	Wired2Fire VX-Zelos
WEBSITE	www.pcspecialist.co.uk	www.chillblast.com	www.meshcomputers.com	www.wired2fire.co.uk
PRICE	£559	£650	£599	£650
PROCESSOR	Quad-core 3.2GHz Intel Core i5-4460	Quad-core 3.5GHz Intel Core i5-6600K (overclocked to 4.34GHz)	Quad-core 3.5GHz Intel Core i5-4690	Quad-core 3.3GHz Intel Core i5-4590
SUPPLIED MEMORY	8GB	8GB	8GB	16GB
MEMORY TYPE	DDR3	DDR4	DDR3	DDR3
USB PORTS	2 x USB 3, 6 x USB 2	1 x USB 3.1, 1 x USB 3 Type-C, 3 x USB 3, 4 x USB 2	3 x USB 3, 5 x USB 2	3 x USB 3, 5 x USB 2
NETWORKING	Gigabit Ethernet	Gigabit Ethernet	Gigabit Ethernet	Gigabit Ethernet
STORAGE	120GB SATA SSD, 1TB 7,2000rpm SATA hard drive	120GB M.2 SSD, 1TB 7,200rpm SATA hard drive	120GB SATA SSD, 1TB 7,2000rpm SATA hard drive	500GB SATA SSD
OPTICAL DRIVE TYPE	DVD-RW	None	DVD-RW	DVD-RW
GRAPHICS CARD	2GB AMD Radeon R7 370	1GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 750	1GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 750 Ti	2GB AMD Radeon R7 370
GRAPHICS/VIDEO PORTS	DisplayPort, DVI, HDMI	DisplayPort, DVI, HDMI	DisplayPort, DVI, HDMI	DisplayPort, DVI, HDMI
DIMENSIONS (CASE)	477 x 450 x 190mm	465 x 430 x 192mm	447 x 428 x 200mm	410 x 358 x 175mm
WARRANTY	3-years return-to- base including 1-year parts	3-years collect-and-return including 2-years parts	Lifetime return-to-base including 2-years parts and 1-year collect-and-return	3-years return-to-base including 2-years parts

OUR VERDICT

This small group of PCs included an interesting variation of options, providing different balances of performance and features.

The low price of the Gold Award-winning PC Specialist Evora caught our eye. It wasn't the best of the four at running Windows but it made up for its lower benchmark scores with top-ranking games performance. All in all, it's a great all-rounder that knocks nearly £100 off the two priciest models.

If Windows performance is your main consideration, we'd recommend the Chillblast Fusion Centurion, winner of our Silver Award. Equipped with the latest processor and a built-in motherboard, it was the fastest PC we tested and can easily be upgraded if you find its graphics card and memory are lacking.

Our Bronze Award goes to the Wired2Fire VX-Zelos. It matched the Evora for gaming speed, but is more expensive, and was outdone by the Chillblast in our Windows tests. However, it comes with the most memory (16GB) and a massive 500GB SSD, should you want to give all your software a speed boost.

Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

WINODWS 10 PC

PC Specialist Evora

NEW!

£559 from **www.pcspecialist.co.uk**
Date tested: September 2015

This is more of a workaday PC than an all-out powerhouse, but it's cheaper than other Windows 10 PCs and its impressive gaming performance gives it lots of potential as an all-round family computer.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 3.2GHz Intel Core i5-4460 processor ▪ 8GB of memory ▪ 1TB hard drive ▪ 120GB SSD ▪ 2 x USB 3, 6 x USB 2 ports ▪ Gigabit Ethernet ▪ 477 x 450 x 190mm ▪ Three-years return-to-base warranty including one-year parts

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 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

Web User's Best Buys

TABLET

Google Nexus 9

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

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

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

WINDOWS 8.1 LAPTOP

Asus Transformer Book Flip TP300LA

£449.95 from **www.johnlewis.com**
Date tested: January 2015

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

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

WIRELESS ROUTER

D-Link DIR-868L

£65.97 from **www.dabs.com**
Date tested: December 2014

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

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

DESKTOP PC

Chillblast Fusion Obelisk

£699.98 from **www.chillblast.com**
Date tested: November 2014

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

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

KEYBOARD

Cherry MX-Board 3.0

£55 from **www.kikatek.com**
Date tested: November 2014

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

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

NAS DRIVE

Asustor AS-202TE

£199.66 from **www.scan.co.uk**
Date tested: September 2014

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

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

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

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

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

KEY FEATURES

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

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2015

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

Kaspersky Internet Security performed near-perfectly throughout our tests last year, with only one unwanted program slipping through. Our sister title *Computeractive* is selling it at the reader-offer price of £17.99 (full price £39.99). Click the link above.

KEY FEATURES

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

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

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

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

KEY FEATURES

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

VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Elements 13

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

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

KEY FEATURES

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

ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

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

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

KEY FEATURES

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

ONLINE SITE BUILDER

Weebly

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

Weebly's drag-and-drop interface makes it extremely easy to use. Its templates are a little restrictive, but there are still plenty of options to choose from and the results look great. It also has free Android and iOS apps.

KEY FEATURES

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

Best Free Software

AVI Trimmer+ 5

bit.ly/avitrim380
Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 34.4MB

As you can tell from its name, this free program lets you trim AVI video files. However, there's much more to it than that, and you aren't limited to just the AVI format either. The latest version of the software also lets you work with (deep breath) DV, MKV, MP4, MOV, WEBM, FLV, ASF, WMV, MP1, MP2, MP3 and WAV files.

Trimming a video is just a matter of loading it and then using the sliders to set the start and end points. It offers enhanced support for key-frame-precise editing, so you can be sure of only cutting out or keeping the exact parts you want. You can move from frame to frame, or key frame to key frame, as well as jump forward and backward through your video in increments of two minutes or 1/20th of the movie.

The timeline at the bottom of the interface is now scalable, which makes it easier to select the parts of a video you want, and you can save multiple fragments at the same time. There's an audio wave displayed underneath your video clip, which you can use to ensure your trims occur at the right moments, and a mute button that lets you insert silence into selected parts.

The updated version of AVI Trimmer can cut a video into sections of equal size or duration, which is useful for uploading and sharing. Other new features include a redesigned interface, a timeline calculator, hotkeys, snapshots and the ability to preview subtitles.

Sadly, certain flagged features, such as the 'join manager' that lets you link multiple clips together, aren't available in this free program. You can get them the same company's Video Splitter tool, which costs £19.18.

MINI WORKSHOP | Edit your videos using AVI Trimmer+ 5

1 Launch AVI Trimmer and open your video to play it in the preview window. **1** The timeline below **2** shows thumbnails from the clip, and there's an audio wave underneath that. **3** To remove surplus moments from the video, use the sliders **4** at the bottom to select the start and end points.

2 The controls **1** let you jump to an exact frame in the video, while the slider **2** shows the current point in the timeline. If you want to trim content from within the video, use the Add Marker button **3** to set new points, and the thumbs up/down **4** buttons to choose whether to keep or remove a fragment.

3 To insert silence into your video, select the part you want to mute and click the speaker icon. **1** When you've made all of your selections, click the Start button **2** and the fragments will be saved. Name them and choose a save location. There's no conversion involved, so the process will be very quick.

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

MEDIA PLAYER
KMPlayer 4
www.kmplayer.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 738KB (installer)

KMPlayer is one of the better free media players around. It automatically handles most audio and video types, and supports 3D, 4K and UHD playback, and subtitles. It comes with a selection of effects; is able to capture audio and video; and is highly configurable. The latest version loads much faster than previous editions, while the main splitter has been upgraded, and it's now compatible with Intel RealSense.

Be sure to decline the bundled junk during installation.

RESCUE DISC
AOMEI PE Builder Free
www.aomeitech.com
Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10
File size: 75.9MB

When your PC fails to boot, it can be a nightmare trying to get things working again. This program lets you create a bootable environment that can be run directly from a CD/DVD or USB flash drive if need be, which will hopefully fix the problem. It comes with the Windows Desktop and Explorer, and AOMEI's own Backupper and Partition Assistant. You can even add your own portable tools and drivers.

SYSTEM TOOL
Laplink PCmover Express for Windows 8.1/10
pcmover10.laplink.com
Min requirements: Windows 8.1/10
File size: 4.7MB (installer)

The trickiest part of switching to a new PC running Windows 8.1 or 10 is copying over your files and settings. Laplink PCmover Express simplifies the process while still giving you full contol over what is copied across. The free version can't transfer applications, and can only copy settings from the currently logged-in account. See our Workshop on page 54 to find out how to use it.

New Windows 8 Apps

Cosmo Run
bit.ly/cosmo380
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 39.4MB
This fun arcade game involves you guiding a beam of energy through an ever-changing game world. Just tap Space to change direction.

Duolingo
bit.ly/duolingo380
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 24.4MB
This free language-learning app helps you master French, Spanish, German, Italian, Dutch and Danish. It's now Windows 10-compatible, and has added Esperanto and Norwegian to its list of languages.

Newsmator
bit.ly/newsmator380
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 71.1MB
This simple feed reader pulls in news from more than 150 supported sources. You can also add custom newsfeeds yourself from the web, view an article history and bookmark content.

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⬇ Best Free Software
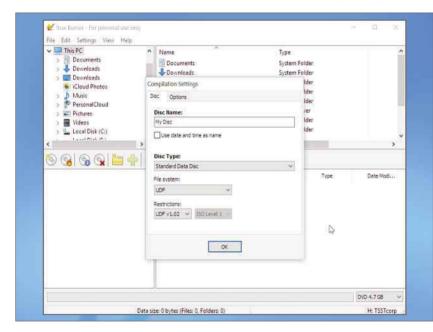
SYSTEM TOOL
Ultimate Windows Tweaker 4
bit.ly/ultimatewin380
Min requirements: Windows 10
File size: 549KB

Ultimate Windows Tweaker was already available for Windows Vista/7 users (version 2) and Windows 8/8.1 users (version 3), and now version 4 is out for – you guessed it – Windows 10. The tiny portable tool offers more than 200 useful tweaks for Microsoft's new operating system, which are sorted into clear categories such as Customisation, User Accounts, Performance, 'Security and Privacy', Internet Explorer, Context Menu and Additional. Hover your mouse over a tweak to see what it does, then select one and click Apply to switch it on. There's also a System Information page that shows data about your PC, and lets you test its performance.

DISC BURNER
True Burner 3
www.glorylogic.com
Min requirements: Windows XP Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 2.4MB

There's certainly no shortage of free disc-authoring software to choose from, but if you're after a simple tool that can perform all the essential disc-burning tasks, including writing Blu-rays and DVDs, then True Burner may be the program for you. It couldn't be easier to use: launch the software, choose the type of disc you want to create and, optionally, the file system, and you're good to go. You can also adjust the write speed and various other settings first, if desired. This third release of True Burner adds support for Windows 10 and introduces a graphical bar to show used space. It also adds advanced options for creating bootable discs.

TASK MANAGER
System Explorer 7
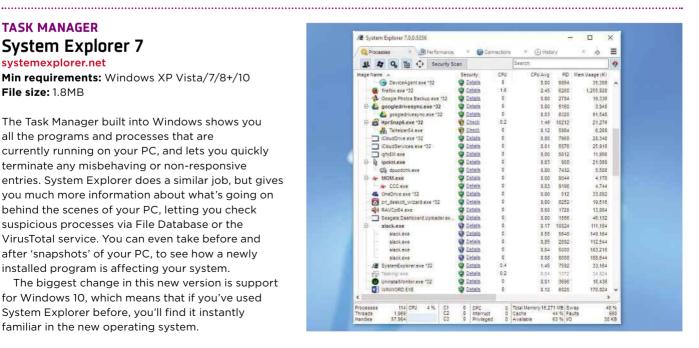systemexplorer.net
Min requirements: Windows XP Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 1.8MB

The Task Manager built into Windows shows you all the programs and processes that are currently running on your PC, and lets you quickly terminate any misbehaving or non-responsive entries. System Explorer does a similar job, but gives you much more information about what's going on behind the scenes of your PC, letting you check suspicious processes via File Database or the VirusTotal service. You can even take before and after 'snapshots' of your PC, to see how a newly installed program is affecting your system.

The biggest change in this new version is support for Windows 10, which means that if you've used System Explorer before, you'll find it instantly familiar in the new operating system.

✗ Don't install...

ProShow Gold
www.photodex.com/proshow
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 44.71MB

Unless you plan to screen your holiday snaps at the Cannes Film Festival, ProShow Gold will be too advanced for your needs. Yes, it has a built-in music library, animated effects, voiceover recording and burning tools, but it also costs an eye-watering $69.95 (£45.50) and the free trial only lasts for 15 days.

...Install this instead ✓

IceCream Slideshow Maker
icecreamapps.com
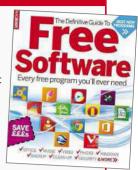**Min requirements:** Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 38.7MB

We love tools from IceCream almost as much as we love ice cream, and its Slideshow Maker is particularly slick and simple to use. This attractive program lets you turn your photos into a full HD multimedia slideshow, complete with transitions and an MP3 soundtrack. Just drag some photos to the program window or select a folder of images, then reorder the pictures as desired. Set how long you want each image to display, choose a transition and add audio, then preview the results. Save the slideshow as a video to share on YouTube or elsewhere.

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- Tweak your browser to unlock hidden features
- Record free music and video from any website

Order The Definitive Guide to Free Software now from bit.ly/guidetosoftware

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↻ UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs

SYSTEM CLEANER
CCleaner 5.09
www.piriform.com/ccleaner
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 6.4MB

Piriform's system-cleaning tool has been downloaded more than a billion times. The latest version greatly improves cleaning in Windows 10 – specifically the Edge browser and the Registry. It also makes performance and usability changes to the interface.

SYSTEM TOOL
Send To Toys 2.71
www.gabrieleponti.com
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 2.3MB

Send To Toys hadn't been updated in years, but this useful time-saving Explorer extension finally gets a new version. The tool, which adds options to the right-click context menu, is now Windows 10-compatible and has an improved installer. Various bugs have been fixed in the update, too.

DISC RIPPER
MakeMKV 1.9.5
www.makemkv.com
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 7.8MB

MakeMV is a handy tool for converting your DVDs and Blu-rays into MKV video files. The latest release adds support for the digital-rights management system AACS (Advanced Access Content System) v56; improves compatibility with broken video streams; and makes minor tweaks throughout.

PDF TOOLKIT
PDF Shaper 3.6
www.glorylogic.com
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 8.1MB

This versatile collection of tools lets you merge, split, and encrypt or decrypt PDF files; extract text and images; and even convert pictures to PDF format. It now has improved Windows 10 support, better performance and can run tools directly from the command line. ∎

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Best New Browser Tools
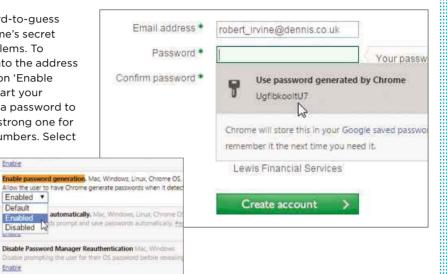
Let Chrome create strong passwords for you

The only thing trickier than thinking of a hard-to-guess password is remembering it later, but Chrome's secret password generator solves both these problems. To activate the feature, type `chrome:flags` into the address bar, press Enter and scroll down to the option 'Enable password generation'. Click Enable and restart your browser. The next time you need to choose a password to register with a site, Chrome will generate a strong one for you, using the required mix of letters and numbers. Select this to save it and Chrome will enter the password automatically next time you log into the site. You can check what the password is by going to Settings, 'Show advanced settings', 'Manage passwords' and clicking Show next to the site's name. For this reason, it's best not to use the generator if you share your computer with someone else.

Search Google, YouTube and Wikipedia in one go

Life's too short to search three different sites every time you need to find information online, which is where Napoleon (bit.ly/napoleon380), named after the famously short Emperor, comes in handy. Highlight a word, name or phrase on a web page, right-click the selected text and choose 'Search [search term] on Napoleon'. The add-on will run your query through Google, YouTube and Wikipedia, and display the results in a separate window. You can click Previous and Next to move through the Google results; click a YouTube video to start watching it; and click 'Read more' to view the full Wikipedia article. Napoleon is a clever little tool that could significantly slash your search time and saves you opening multiple tabs to get the answers you need. Incidentally, we're aware that many historians now dispute that Boney deserves being classed as a shorty, so there's no need to write in!

Find someone's work email address via Gmail

If you need to contact someone at a company, but don't know their exact email address, Name2Email (bit.ly/name380) might be able to find it for you. Open a Compose window in Gmail and type the person's name into the 'To:' field followed by their corporate domain, for example '@dennis.co.uk'. Name2Email will then list the most common variations of work email addresses. Just hover your mouse over each option and, when you see a pop-up containing the person's name and possibly a photo, you'll know you've found the correct address. You can then add it to your contacts and fire off your message. We had mixed results with the add-on, which failed to suggest any addresses containing underscores, but it's certainly worth a try when Google fails to yield results.

Remove annoying overlays from web pages

Chrome does a good job of blocking pop-up adverts, but you're still likely to see plenty of obstructive overlays on your travels across the web. These are often used by sites to promote surveys, newsletters and subscription deals, and they can be just as annoying as ads. Overlay Blocker (bit.ly/overlay380) provides a simple solution to this problem by letting you remove overlays either by clicking its toolbar button, right-clicking the obstruction and choosing Remove Overlay or pressing the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Shift+K. It's essentially a faster way of closing an overlay than finding and clicking the 'X' in its corner, but it won't let you do anything naughty such as circumvent paywalls.

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

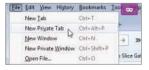## FIREFOX

Edit and save any photo from the web

Forget downloading a resource-hogging image editor to perfect the photos you share online, and install the amazing new Polarr Plug-in for Firefox (bit.ly/polarr380) instead. This lets you import images from your hard drive and cloud services including Dropbox, Facebook and Flickr; enhance them by fine-tuning their colour, contrast and exposure; crop and rotate pictures; and apply all manner of attractive filters and effects. Usefully, Polarr displays your edit history so you can review and undo any changes, while a histogram updates in real time as you perform your tweaks. You don't even need to use your own photos – just hover your mouse over a web image and click the Polarr icon to edit and save it, although you should obviously bear in mind copyright restrictions.

Open web pages in private tabs in one click

Firefox's Private Browsing mode is a great way to visit websites without any details being stored, but it requires opening a separate browser window. You can make things easier for those clandestine browsing sessions by installing Private Tab (bit.ly/private380), which lets you open private pages rather than windows. Just click the File menu in Firefox and select New Private Tab, or use the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Alt+P. Alternatively, you can right-click a link on page and choose 'Open Link in New Private Tab'. The add-on even lets you create private bookmarks that only open in private tabs by prefixing the URL with 'private:' when you save a site, for example private:http://forum.webuser.co.uk.

Control noisy background tabs

Mozilla is currently testing audio indicators in the Nightly (developers') version of Firefox, which show you which tabs are emitting sound and let you silence them with a single click – a feature that's long been available in Chrome. Until the indicators arrive in the stable version of the browser, you can use Noise Control (bit.ly/noise380), which displays a speaker icon on all tabs that are playing HTML5 audio or video. Click the icon to mute the tab and click it again to restore the sound.

Switch to the secure versions of sites

You may be familiar with the Electronic Frontier Foundation's HTTPS Everywhere tool for Firefox, Chrome, Opera and Android (bit.ly/https380), which encrypts your connection with thousands of websites by forcing them to use their secure 'HTTPS' versions. What you may not know is that the add-on recently fell prey to Mozilla's new rules concerning unsigned add-ons, which we covered in these pages last issue. This would have prevented HTTPS Everywhere from being installed in future versions of Firefox. Happily, the problem has now been resolved and the add-on has been updated with the required signature, so you can continue to use it with the browser.

OTHER BROWSERS

Use Firefox add-ons in Pale Moon

Recent changes to Firefox have made many disgruntled users switch to Pale Moon (www.palemoon.org), which is based on the same code but is much faster and offers different features (retaining some that were removed from Mozilla's browser, while skipping newer additions). However, not all Firefox add-ons work in Pale Moon due its compatibility check, which is where Disable Add-on Compatibility Checks (bit.ly/disable380) proves invaluable. Install this in Pale Moon and it changes the 'extensions.checkCompatibility' preference to 'false', so you are free to install virtually any add-on you want.

Disable Flash content in Edge

Chrome and Firefox now both block at least some Flash content on web pages by default, but this doesn't apply if you're using Microsoft's new Edge browser in Windows 10. Fortunately, it's very easy to configure Edge's settings to stop Flash posing a security risk or annoying you with loud adverts. Open Edge and tap or click the 'three dots' icon in the top-right corner of the browser, then tap or click Settings. Select 'View advanced settings' and switch the Use Adobe Flash Player option to Off. You can also block pop-ups here.

Best Free Apps

BROWSER

NEW

Adblock Browser

bit.ly/adblock380

Min requirements: Android 2.3, iOS 8.0
Size: 38MB

Having been in beta since May, Adblock Browser (from the team behind Adblock Plus) is now officially available for Android and iOS. Much like the Adblock Plus browser add-on, the app helps you enjoy a fast, efficient browsing experience by filtering annoying adverts on the web. As well as making pages load slower on your mobile device, it's claimed that ads can eat up half your data allowance and use 20 per cent of your battery life. By blocking annoying pop-ups and banners, Adblock Browser can also improve your privacy and reduce your risk of malware infection. It's much easier to set up than the rather fiddly Adblock Plus app for Android, which was banned from Google Play in March 2013.

Of course, it's important that websites can still generate revenue from adverts, so Adblock Browser allows non-intrusive ads by default and lets you easily 'whitelist' your favourite websites. If you're extra cautious about what you see in your browser, it's possible to block all adverts and there are even options for disabling tracking, malware domains and social-media buttons.

We tested the Android version of the app, which is based on the mobile version of Firefox and lets you take advantage of all the best features of Mozilla's browser including Private Tabs and Reader View.

See our Mini Workshop on the right to find out how to use Adblock Browser.

Our rating ★★★★★

MINI WORKSHOP
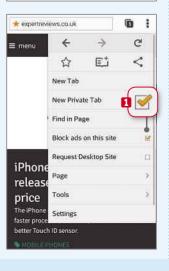### Block ads using Adblock Browser

1 Launch Adblock Browser, tap the three-dot menu button and choose Settings. Tap 'Ad blocking' and 'More blocking options' to disable tracking, malware domains and social media buttons. **1** Select 'Add other filter list' **2** to manually add a filter list.

2 Filter lists for websites that use other languages can be added from the 'Ad blocking' menu on the previous screen. **1** Tap Acceptable Ads **2** and untick 'Allow some non-intrusive advertising' if you want Adblock Browser to block all adverts.

3 Remember that blocking adverts deprives websites of their revenue streams. Visit a website, tap the menu button and untick 'Block ads on this site' **1** to whitelist it and allow all adverts to appear. If you decide you want to block ads again, load the site and tick this box.

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

SECURITY

VirusTotal Uplink

UPDATED

bit.ly/
virustotaluplink380
Min requirements:
Android 4.1
Size: 1.4MB

Google's VirusTotal app hasn't been updated since 2012, which means some of its functionality is quite limited. For example, it lets you scan installed apps but not any other files stored on your phone or tablet. VirusTotal Uplink fixes this problem by letting you scan all kinds of files for viruses, Trojans, worms and other malware. The app gives you access to all the major virus scanners and it even works with files you've stored in the cloud in Google Drive and Dropbox. We particularly like the ability to scan files from within other apps by long-pressing and choosing 'Scan with VirusTotal'.

Our rating	★★★★☆

LOCATION SHARING

Line Here

NEW

bit.ly/linehere380
Min requirements:
Android 4.1
Size: 4.7MB

This brilliant new location-sharing app makes it easier to see where your friends and family are in real time. Whether you've lost someone at a crowded event or you're waiting for a guest to arrive for dinner, there are numerous situations where being able to see one another's location at a glance can minimise angst and make everyone's lives easier. Unlike similar apps, Line Here is available on both iOS and Android, and it alerts you when someone arrives at or leaves specific locations, so you don't need to keep checking the app. Naturally, you can choose who you share your position with, setting a time limit anywhere between one and 24 hours, and the app also lets you set up sharing rooms, to which you can invite multiple friends.

Our rating	★★★★★

COMMUNICATION

Skype

UPDATED

bit.ly/skype380
Min requirements:
Android (varies with device), iOS 7
Size: Varies with device

Microsoft's new version of Skype (6.0) for Android and iOS makes the service smarter and simpler. The Android app's look is influenced by Lollipop's Material Design and features a floating button for quickly making calls, starting a chat and sending video messages. The search function has also been improved, making it easier to find important conversations and contacts. Skype for iPhone and Skype for iPad have also received major redesigns that focus on improving navigation, making it easier than ever to switch between call and chat screens while you talk.
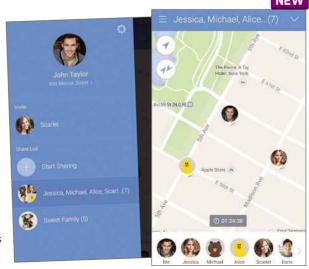
Our rating	★★★★☆

ROUND UP | Quick bites

eBay

bit.ly/
ebayapp380
Min requirements:
Android (varies with device), iOS 7
Size: Varies with device

Our prime 'website you should stop using' (see last issue) has updated its apps for both iOS and Android. The new version, eBay 4.0, introduces a simpler, more user-friendly design that's more consistent between the two platforms.

Google Street View

bit.ly/
googlestreetview380
Min requirements:
Android (varies with device), iOS 7
Size: Varies with device

Street View was already available via Google Maps on Android devices, and Google has now introduced it as a standalone app for both iOS and Android, so you can explore the world on your phone or tablet.

Win 10 Launcher

bit.ly/windows380
Min requirements:
Android 4.0
Size: 4.7MB

If you fancy making your Android device look and feel like a Windows Phone, why not try this Window 10-inspired launcher? It's not developed by Microsoft (see Arrow Launcher, last issue), but the positive user reviews suggest it's got some potential.

Best Free Apps

SPORT
NEW

ITV Rugby World Cup 2015
bit.ly/itvrugbyworldcup380
Min requirements: Android 4.0, iOS 6
Size: Varies with device

With the World Cup in full swing, this app is a must-have for any Rugby Union fan. It provides access to video highlights from every game along with the latest news, fixtures, results and standings. There's also a fun game called Kick It, in which you swipe your finger to slot the ball between the uprights, while factoring in the strength and direction of the wind. During matches, you can play the live mode of Kick It, where you take your kicks from the same position as the goal kicker and see if you can match their performance. The Android version has been optimised for Samsung and HTC devices, but it should work also on other phones.

Our rating ★★★★☆

TRAVEL
UPDATED

Drivemode
bit.ly/drivemode380
Min requirements: Android 4.0.3
Size: 7.7MB

You should never use your phone while driving, but it's inevitable that some people will. Drivemode's 'no look' interface makes this a bit safer because you will at least keep your eyes on the road. The app uses a combination of voice narration, bright colours and large animation to make it easier to perform certain actions, such as changing your destination in Google Maps or accepting a call, by using only broad swipes and taps. Indeed, if you keep your phone in a car mount, Drivemode lets you control your device using only your peripheral vision, so you're not putting your own and other people's lives at risk.

Our rating ★★★★☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

FINANCE
MoneyWiz 2
moneywizapp.com
Min requirements: Android 4, iOS 7
Size: 11MB (Android), 51.7MB (iOS)
Price: £2.29 (Android), £3.99 (iOS)
The new version of the popular personal-finance tool makes it even easier to manage your money. You can view all your accounts in one place, track bills, manage your budget and check how much cash you've got left till payday!

CUSTOMISATION
Evolve Wallpapers
bit.ly/evolve380
Min requirements: Android 4.2
Size: 3.1MB **Price:** £1.09
If you're bored of your phone or tablet's pre-installed background, you can use this updated app to add a touch of class to your screen. It offers more than 90 high-quality wallpapers that match Google's Material Design.

GAME
Lara Croft Go
bit.ly/lara380
Min requirements: Android 4.1
Size: 343MB **Price:** £3.99
The *Tomb Raider* protagonist is back in a more cerebral puzzle adventure. Help Lara explore the ruins of an ancient civilisation, overcome dangerous obstacles and collect ancient relics in this challenging and superbly designed game.

TOOL
WhiteSmoke Writing Assistant
www.whitesmoke.com
Min requirements: Android 2.3, iOS 5.1.1
Size: 16MB (Android), 33.6MB (iOS)
Price: Free (with in-app purchases)
If you often make spelling and grammatical mistakes in your text messages and emails, you needs [sic] WhiteSmoke, which suggests corrections as you type to help improve your writing style. It's free, but a subscription costs from £7.99 a year.

ASTRONOMY
Gravity Sim 3D
bit.ly/gravity380
Min requirements:
Android 2.1
Size: 40MB **Price:** £1.79
Is that a universe in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me? That's what people will be asking if you install this astronomical app, which lets you rearrange the cosmos using a variety of stars, planets, moons and satellites, and destroy entire solar systems.

| MoneyWiz 2 | Evolve Wallpapers | Lara Croft Go | WhiteSmoke Writing Assistant | Gravity Sim 3D |

Best New TV Apps

TV & FILM
Amazon Video
bit.ly/amazon380
Min requirements: Android 4, iOS 7
Size: 19.4MB

Streaming video may be quick and convenient, but it's not much use when you lose your connection, which is why offline viewing is so useful. Three cheers, then, to Amazon for doing what Netflix refuses to do and letting its Prime members download films and TV shows to watch offline. This option was already available on the Kindle Fire, but you can now download to Android and iOS devices, too, although you'll need to get the Android app via Amazon rather than Google Play. Licensing restrictions mean some content can only be streamed, but offline series include *24*, *Downton Abbey* and *Vikings*.

TV & FILM
Netflix
www.netflix.com
Min requirements: Humax set-top box
Size: N/A

If you own a Humax set-top box, you've probably given up hope of Netflix ever being added to your selection of video-on-demand options. But you can now celebrate because, finally, the world's favourite streaming service is coming to Humax boxes, including YouView and Freesat models. This means you'll be able to switch between live broadcasts and millions of hours of TV shows and films at the touch of a button, including original series such as *Orange Is The New Black*, *House of Cards* and its latest release *Narcos*. Many Humax devices will also feature a dedicated Netflix remote-control button and a quick-launch option that lets you start Netflix instantly. The app will be rolled out over the next few months.

TV
Freesat for Android
bit.ly/freesat380
Min requirements: Android 4.0.3
Size: 16MB

The Freesat app for Android has received some bad reviews in the past for its lack of features and tendency to crash, but this splendid update should silence the naysayers. It offers lots of useful new options, including the ability to access your Freetime recordings on your phone or tablet, and watch them via the app in remote-control mode. You can now receive reminders when favourite programmes are about to start, while the ingenious Clash Management feature alerts you if there's a schedule clash when you try to record remotely. The updated app is a lot more stable and ensures you'll always have something to watch on the move. No wonder the latest reviews are more positive!

✗ Don't install...   ...Install this instead ✓

Max Measure
bit.ly/maxmeasure380

It's handy to have a measuring app on your phone, so you can get dimensions for both near and distant objects. Sadly, Max Measure makes even this simple task bafflingly complex and is unlikely to prove much use when you're in an emergency that requires you to whip out your device to gauge the number of inches. As one reviewer puts it on Google Play: "Sucks! It doesn't even let me measure anything".

Multi Measures
bit.ly/multi380
Min requirements: Android 3
Size: 34MB

Lots of apps describe themselves as 'Swiss army knives', but Multi Measures actually lives up to the claim. It's packed with useful measurement tools that save you installing at least 10 separate apps, yet it's free (although you can pay to remove ads) and very easy to use. We usually try to avoid reviews that just list included features, but we'll make an exception for Multi Measure, which has a sound meter, spirit level, stopwatch, ruler, protractor, seismometer (in case of earthquakes), teslameter (to measure magnetic field), metronome (to keep you in time) and even a plumb bob. What more could you possibly need? ■

Our guide to

YouTube GAMING

If you don't want to play a game yourself, you can watch someone else show you how it's done. **David Crookes** finds out how YouTube has tapped into the growing trend for live gaming streams

What is it?

YouTube Gaming (gaming.youtube.com) is a new spin-off from Google's popular video service that's aimed specifically at gamers. Available through your browser and via Android and iOS apps, it lets gamers produce live streams of their gameplay for other people to watch. YouTube says the site will "bring the gaming community closer together", but it will also allow the company to better target the lucrative video-game audience with adverts.

YouTube Gaming makes it easy to find and watch live gaming streams

What are people watching?

YouTube Gaming offers hundreds of thousands of recorded gaming clips and live streams. Viewers can watch individuals play live virtual football matches and mammoth 'e-sport tournaments', among other streams. There are also 'speed runs', in which players attempt to get from the start of the game to the end in the fastest possible time; reviews of the latest titles; and detailed walkthroughs that explain how to complete a game. It's a varied bag, to be sure.

Does it look like the 'standard' YouTube site?

No, YouTube Gaming has been given a distinct look of its own with a black background and options running down the side: to the left are the games that are currently trending, along with the most popular titles; to the right are links to various channels, with a search facility across the top. The YouTube Gaming logo is depicted, rather arbitrarily, as a pixellated heart (see main image) with no mention of YouTube in sight.

How does it work?

Gamers who want to stream videos sign up to the Go Live service and download encoding software that lets them capture themselves playing a game; or, in the case of a tournament, everyone who is competing. Viewers can then search for specific streams or click through to

Retro titles such as Super Mario Bros rub shoulders with the latest blockbusters

featured games from the homepage to plunge straight into the action.

What sort of games can be viewed?

Although the emphasis appears to be on the most up-to-date blockbuster games including Call of Duty, FIFA and Until Dawn, there are videos spanning every gaming generation. Many titles have their own page and there are currently more than 25,000 of them, ranging from the 1984 vintage favourite Manic Miner and the various celebrated incarnations of Super Mario Bros, to the classic PlayStation game Ridge Racer and the rebooted Prince of Persia series. The games without official pages are listed in the search results. There's certainly no shortage of things to watch.

What do the pages offer?

The pages are broken down into various categories depending on the content available. The page for Manic Miner, for example, lets you discover more about the game while letting you see the most popular videos of the game in action. Just click the Live tab to see users playing the game in real time.

Can viewers subscribe to channels?

Yes, game publishers and YouTube creators can set up channels just as on the main YouTube site, which viewers can subscribe to and get alerts for when a live stream begins. If you're not sure what

Live streams can be commented on, and you can chat to other viewers

Twitch was the first to offer live streaming games and has over 100 million viewers

YouTube Gaming members have been mocked as socially inadequate geeks

to watch, the service makes recommendations based on the channels, games and videos you like.
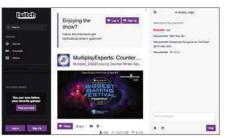
Am I able to comment on live streams?

Yes. To the right of a live stream, you'll find a Chat tab, but be warned that the more popular streams attract random musings and muttering: some people comment on the games, others on the style of the presenter, while some are either abusive or get involved in their own little conversations. If you find this tiresome, you can always click the Details tab to find out more about the current stream or Suggested to see related videos.

What if I miss a live stream?

YouTube Gaming automatically converts live streams into a YouTube video so, if you miss a stream, you should be able to view it as a recorded video later.

What's the quality like?

It's excellent. YouTube Gaming uses HTML5 video, so the full-screen streams can be broadcast at 1080p resolution and at 60 frames per second. There is also a DVR feature that lets viewers pause and rewind up to four hours of a live video stream, and fast-forward to catch up with live broadcasts.

Are the broadcasts popular?

Live viewing figures for videos on YouTube Gaming can often be in single figures but a good number attract tens of thousands and more. As the service becomes established, we expect these figures to rise.

Who wants to watch other people playing games?

Live streaming has become a very popular form of entertainment, particularly among hardcore gamers in their teens to late 20s. Figures show the worldwide e-sports market is enjoyed by 134 million viewers, and more than half of the top 100 channels on YouTube are gaming-related, with viewings of games up 75 per cent on last year. In 2011, a video-streaming service called Twitch (www.twitch.tv) was set up to cater for gamers, which now has more than 100 million unique monthly viewers watching more than 1.5 million broadcasters.

So why didn't YouTube just buy Twitch?

It tried. YouTube offered a rumoured $1bn (about £650m) for Twitch, but lost out to Amazon which paid $970m (about £635m) for it in September 2014. YouTube Gaming, which launched last month, hopes to entice Twitch users away from the service to its own site.

Will it kill off Twitch?

We're sure YouTube Gaming would be delighted to see its rival disappear, but Twitch isn't going down without a fight; it currently has 44 per cent of the streaming traffic in the United States. Twitch is reminding broadcasters who signed its monetisation contracts that they cannot use a rival service or upload clips of their streams to YouTube, but we may see some poaching between the two. There are some major gaming celebrities who attract big followings and make lots of money from their pursuits, so getting them on exclusive deals will help to make one service more attractive than the other.

Isn't it all a bit geeky?

American TV host Jimmy Kimmel thinks so. On his show, *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, he poked fun at YouTube Gaming and aired a sketch that showed gamers watching other gamers watching players play. Kimmel's joke was, inevitably, shared on YouTube where it incurred the wrath of gamers who said he was out of touch. Gamers derive a lot of pleasure and information from watching others play. Not only do they get to see top players displaying their skills, they can learn new strategies and tactics to get a feel for games they may want to buy, and discover how to beat difficult sections.
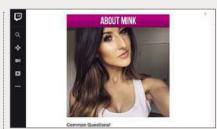
THE STARS OF GAMING

PewDiePie
Swedish comedian Felix Kjellberg, who goes by the pseudonym PewDiePie, has built a strong following on YouTube with 38,951,171 subscribers. He made more than $7m (£4.6m) last year – who's laughing now, Jimmy?

Trump
Not Donald, but Jeffrey Shih, a professional video-game player, who streams Hearthstone: Heroes of Warcraft on Twitch for seven hours each day. It has become his full time job and he has 592,217 YouTube subscribers.

Minks
Australian Chelsea Sandy is a 23-year-old entertainer with 235,862 followers on Twitch. She has been playing competitive games of Call of Duty for four years, as well as streaming a host of other games.

WINDOWS 10
SPIES ON YOU

COVER FEATURE

Microsoft's new operating system collects all sorts of personal data about you, including what you type and say. **Wayne Williams** reveals exactly what info Windows 10 is gathering and how to stop it snooping

Ask anyone what their biggest concern is about Windows 10 – whether they've upgraded yet or not – and it's likely to be privacy. Most of the negative press the new OS has received has been about Microsoft's increasingly intrusive methods of collecting, storing and sharing information about you, and recent stories suggest the company's tracking tools may go even deeper than at first thought. Indeed, the Ars Technica blog (**bit.ly/ars380**) recently found that Windows 10 continues to report back to Microsoft even when you tell it not to.

In this feature, we expose the privacy scandal at the heart of Windows 10, and explain how you can prevent Microsoft from spying on you. Over the following six pages, we suggest 12 things you must and mustn't do to dramatically reduce the amount of information Microsoft collects about you, from using free tools to tighten your privacy settings, to disabling features that watch and listen to you. Sadly, it's not just Windows 10 that spies on you, either – Microsoft recently pushed snooping updates to Windows 7 and 8+, so we explain how to remove those as well.

THE 12 THINGS YOU MUST AND MUSTN'T DO TO STAY PRIVATE IN WINDOWS 10

✗ DON'T use Express Settings when you install Windows 10

During the slow and – in several cases – problematic upgrade to Windows 10, it can be tempting to choose the Express Settings option so you can get up and running as quickly as possible. However, by accepting these default settings, you're allowing Windows 10 to send speech, typing, contacts, calendar and location data, as well as advertising ID information, directly to Microsoft. Rather sneakily, the screen neglects to mention that with one click you're essentially handing over your personal info for as long as you use the operating system, for the company to do what it wants with, but instead suggests that it wants the data to help "personalize your experience".

To protect your privacy, make sure you select the Custom install option instead and then choose which features to allow. Don't worry if you already chose Express Settings, though, because most of the sharing features can be turned off by going to Settings, Privacy, General.

See our Mini Workshop on page 40 to learn more about Windows 10's built-in privacy settings.

Don't choose Express Settings if you don't want to share your personal data

✔ DO use free programs to tighten your privacy

There are lots of privacy settings scattered throughout Windows 10, almost as if Microsoft deliberately wants to confuse users and prevent them from taking total control of their data. Although the most important settings can be found in the logical location of Settings, Privacy, there are plenty of others tucked away elsewhere.

Ashampoo AntiSpy brings all Windows 10's privacy settings in one place

Trying to find them all isn't easy, especially if you're not even sure what you're looking for. Fortunately, several third-party developers have created their own free privacy-tightening tools for Windows 10, which put all of the settings on one or two screens. This allows you to make whatever changes you deem necessary with the minimum of effort, and is much less perplexing than trying to dig out all the privacy settings yourself.
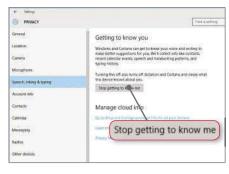
Some of the better tools to consider include Ashampoo AntiSpy for Windows 10 (bit.ly/antispy380), O&O ShutUp10 (bit.ly/shutup380), Windows 10 Privacy Fixer (bit.ly/privfix380) and Spybot Anti-Beacon for Windows 10 (bit.ly/antibeacon380). DoNotSpy 10 (bit.ly/donotspy380) is also worth a look, and has been recommended by many tech websites, but it comes bundled with unwanted extras, so you should take extra care when installing the program.

It's worth pointing out that disabling certain settings in Windows 10 may reduce or remove certain functionality from the operating system, so make sure you know what something does before deactivating it.

See our Mini Workshop on page 41 to find out how to use O&O ShutUp.
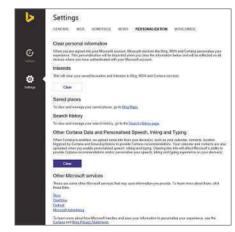
✗ DON'T let Windows 10 and Cortana get to know you

In order to make better, more personalised suggestions, Windows 10

Tell Cortana you're very flattered but you don't want her getting to know you

and Cortana collect all sorts of usage information about your activities and personality, including your contacts, calendar events, speech- and hand-writing patterns and even your typing history. By doing this, Cortana should get better at understanding you and your needs, so 'she' can respond more quickly and accurately to commands. Although it's easy to see why Cortana collects all of this data, it's still a very creepy feature – like having someone sat behind you on the bus noting down everything you say and do.

If you'd rather reduce this level of personalisation in Windows 10, go to Start, Settings, Privacy, click the option 'Speech, inking and typing', then click the 'Stop getting to know me' button. This will clear what Cortana and Windows know about you, and also turn off the personal assistant and dictation functions. You can also clear data from Cortana, as well as info about your speech, inking and typing, on the web through Bing (bit.ly/bing380). Sign in with your Microsoft account and click the Clear button under the 'Other Cortana data...' option.

You can clear your Cortana and Windows 10 data through Bing

DO stop Windows 10 tracking your location

Location settings in Windows 10 allow apps such as Maps (which is actually rather good) to correctly pinpoint your current position. While that's definitely handy, especially if you're using the operating system on a laptop while travelling, you might not want or need Windows 10 to record all your location details. Indeed, if you only use the OS on a desktop system that never goes anywhere, the feature is slightly redundant anyway, and simply a means for Microsoft to know exactly where you are – more precisely than by using your IP address.

To change what Windows 10 is recording about your whereabouts, go to Settings, Privacy, Location. You can turn off location services here, and also clear your location history. Scroll down and you'll be able to set which installed apps have permission to see your location, which is useful if you don't mind Maps knowing where you are, but don't see the reason for any other apps to access that information.
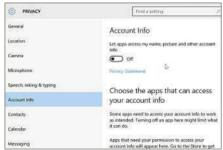
Clear your location history to stop Microsoft knowing where you've been

DON'T share your account info with apps

Windows 10 shares your account information with third-party apps that you've installed from the Windows Store. By default, these apps will be able to access your name, picture and other account details, presumably as a means of personalisation so they can greet you and show your photo when you're interacting with other users, such as when challenging them to games. This info-sharing might be harmless enough, but if you're not comfortable with the idea, you should turn off this needless intrusion of your privacy. Go to Settings, Privacy, 'Account info' and slide the 'Account info' switch to Off. However, some apps might require account access to work properly. If this is the case, you can choose to allow just these ones.

Don't let Windows 10 apps access your account info unless they need to

DO disable features that watch and listen to you

Certain apps – including those installed by default and third-party ones from the Windows Store – can access your camera and microphone, which potentially allows them to spy on you. Most apps have a good reason for needing camera or microphone access – for example, the Windows Voice Recorder wouldn't be able to record your voice without you granting it permission to use the microphone. However, other apps don't need this access and could even be exploited by hackers (although there haven't been any reported cases yet).

You can choose which apps to grant camera access to under Settings, Privacy. Click Camera and choose which apps can access your webcam (if you have one). You can disable the feature entirely if you want to stay in total control. Click Microphone and repeat the process there.

You can decide which apps (if any) have access to your microphone

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⚙ MINI WORKSHOP | Explore Windows 10's built-in privacy controls

1 The most important privacy options in Windows 10 are found under Settings, Privacy. The controls are sorted into simple categories down the left-hand side. **1** If you're looking for one feature in particular, you can search for it. **2** The General section lets you disable targeted ads **3** and stop Microsoft receiving information on how you type and write. **4**
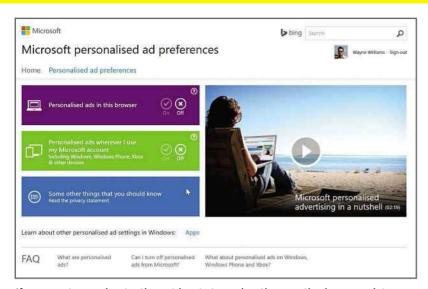
2 You can stop Microsoft from 'Getting to know you' under 'Speech, inking and typing'. **1** Control which apps have access to your address book under Contacts. **2** Radios **3** is where you can turn Bluetooth access off. Windows 10 syncs with other devices running the OS. Manage settings for this under Other Devices. **4**

3 Some apps will be able to read and send text or MMS messages. This is only really a feature of use (and concern) on mobile devices, so you'll want to turn it off on desktop or laptop systems. Go to Messaging **1** and flick the switch to Off. **2** Manage which apps run continually under 'Background apps'. **3**
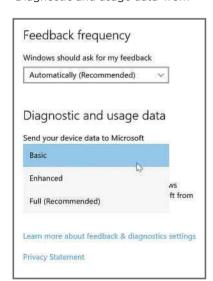
If you must see adverts, then at least stop advertisers gathering your data

✗ DON'T send Microsoft personally identifiable data

Windows 10 collects performance and usage information that helps Microsoft identify and troubleshoot problems. If Windows 10 crashes, it can be helpful for the software giant to know about it. This way, Microsoft may be able to isolate the problem and fix it for you and other users. However, by default, Windows 10 sends back quite a lot of information to Microsoft, and that could potentially include personally identifiable data, including parts of a document you were working on when a crash occurred. You can't stop diagnostic and usage data being collected entirely, but you can limit what information is sent to Microsoft. Go to Settings, Privacy and click 'Feedback & diagnostics'. Change 'Diagnostic and usage data' from

Full (Recommended) to Basic.

Note that making this change will trigger a strange message in Privacy Settings that says 'Some settings are managed by your organisation' – presumably, this is for work PCs because it makes no sense on a home computer. Going back to 'Full (Recommended)' will remove this notice.
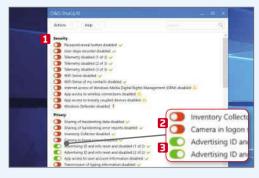
✔ DO opt out of personalised ads

Advertisers like to know as much about you as possible so that they can better target you with their messages. The theory is that if you see something that appeals to your interests, you'll be more likely to click it than something that has zero relevance to you. If you'd rather advertisers didn't build up a personalised profile like this (and really, who does want that?), you can turn the behaviour off in Windows 10. Go to Settings, Privacy, General, and flick the slider next to 'Let apps use my advertising ID for experiences across apps (turning this off will reset your ID)' to Off.

Next, open your web browser and go to bit.ly/optout380. Set both 'Personalised ads in this browser' and 'Personalised ads wherever I use my Microsoft account' to Off.

✗ DON'T feel obliged to use Microsoft tools

If you want to reduce the amount of information Microsoft collects

Control the information that's sent to Microsoft about your PC usage

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⚙ MINI WORKSHOP
Tighten your privacy using O&O ShutUp10

1 O&O ShutUp10 doesn't require installation and offers more privacy controls than other, similar tools. Options are sorted into categories on the left **1** – Security, Privacy, Cortana (Personal Assistant), Location Services, User Behaviour, Windows Update and Miscellaneous. Red controls **2** are off (and potentially a privacy risk), and green controls **3** are on.

2 You can filter which controls are displayed by using the search box. **1** Click a tweak to find out exactly what it does. **2** You should probably avoid disabling something if you don't understand it. Click the switch next to a control to turn it on or off. Controls with a tick next to them **3** are recommended to set.

3 The software will offer to create a system restore point before making any changes. The Actions button **1** lets you apply 'all recommended settings', 'all recommended and limited recommended settings' or 'all settings', **2** although applying this last option is not a good idea. You can undo all changes in case of problems. **3**

➔

ARE WINDOWS 10 PRIVACY WORRIES OVERBLOWN?

Wayne Williams says that on Microsoft's privacy overview page (bit.ly/ windowsprivacy380), the software giant states categorically that "Microsoft is committed to your privacy". Does that seem like a statement you can trust? For some people the answer will be 'yes', for others it will be 'no'. The truth is that Microsoft is probably as "committed to your privacy" as Google is, although the search giant has way more data about you.

The main problem for Microsoft is that we're used to Google collecting our personal information – searches, contacts, comments and so on – and we're used to other services, such as Facebook, doing the same. But for the most part, we're not used to Windows passing on information in this way.

So why is Windows 10 capturing so much personal data? According to Microsoft, the main reason is so it can provide a "more personal computing experience". Cortana is central to this

idea, and obviously the more it knows about you, the more useful it will be. Some features, including Cortana, need to be enabled before they can collect and use data, but a lot of other privacy settings are turned on by default. If you're worried by this, you can disable most of them using the advice in this feature. Also, Windows 10 is tied to the cloud like no previous Microsoft operating system has ever been, which explains in part why it operates in the way it does.

If you trust Google and Facebook with highly personal information, then you will probably also accept Microsoft collecting data about you, especially as for the most part this information will be less personal than

Overview: Windows 10 and privacy

your Google searches and Facebook posts. Certainly, the data collection in Windows 10 is no more onerous than the data collection that goes on in Android and iOS.

That said, Windows 10 does collect *a lot* of information, and you really should try to lock down your privacy as much as you can. After all, the privacy controls are there to be used, so use them!

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about you in Windows 10, you'll probably want to limit which of the built-in apps you use. Microsoft Edge has the potential to be a great browser, but for now it's rather limited, so switch to an alternative such as Firefox or Chrome. If you decide to stay with Edge, make sure you change the default search engine from Microsoft's Bing to Google, or something else. To do this, go to the search site you want to use, such as www.google.co.uk, and click the three-dots icon in the top-right corner of Edge. Select Settings and click 'View advanced settings'. Scroll down

to 'Search in the address bar with', click 'Bing' (www.bing.com) and select 'Add new'. Google, or any other choice of search engine, should appear in the list. Select it and click 'Add as default'.

Cortana is powered by Bing, but if you set Chrome as your default web browser and install the free Chrometana extension (bit.ly/chrometana380), you can have her use Google, Yahoo or DuckDuckGo instead (all your Bing searches will be redirected, not just Cortana ones).

Finally, if you prefer to use a different

cloud-storage service, you can remove OneDrive from Windows 10. The process is a little complicated, but it only takes a few minutes to do. Right-click the Start button and select 'Command Prompt (Admin)'. Terminate any running OneDrive processes by typing: `taskkill /f /im OneDrive.exe`. Press Enter. If you're using the 32-bit version of Windows 10, type: `%SystemRoot%\System32\ OneDriveSetup.exe /uninstall`. If you're using the 64-bit edition, type: `%SystemRoot%\SysWOW64\ OneDriveSetup.exe /uninstall`. You won't see a confirmation message, but the app should be removed. If you want OneDrive back, you can reinstall it by going to
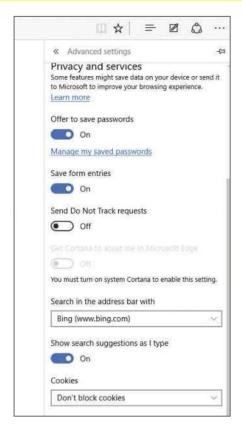
   `%SystemRoot%\SysWOW64\`

in File Explorer and running the OneDriveSetup.exe.

Chrometana lets you use Cortana on your own terms, not Microsoft's

✔ **DO manage your privacy settings in Edge**

We've shown you above how to change the search engine in Microsoft Edge, but there are plenty of other privacy-related features to change in the new browser. You only need to adjust these if you intend to use Edge

You can prevent Edge from sharing your browsing history with Microsoft

– don't worry about them if you plan to use Firefox or Chrome as your default browser. To make the changes, click the three-dots icon in the top-right corner and go to Settings, View Advanced Settings. From here, you can choose whether the browser should save passwords and form entries (you'll probably want to allow this).

Other options you can disable include 'Get Cortana to assist me in Microsoft Edge', 'Show search suggestions as I type' and 'Use page prediction to speed up browsing, improve reading and make my overall experience better'. The last two options send browsing-history data to Microsoft, so you may wish to set those to Off.

✗ DON'T feel locked into your Windows 10 account

Windows 10 has lots of ties to the cloud, but if you don't want to be forced into using OneDrive because you have privacy concerns, and would prefer the new operating system to work in much the same that Windows 7 does, you can switch to using a local account. It's easy to do, and you can always switch back should you change your mind. You will, naturally, lose access to features that require a Microsoft account, including the Windows Store, but if you don't use apps, you probably won't miss it.

To switch to a local account, click Start and open Settings. Click Accounts and go to 'Your Account'. Click the 'Sign in with a local account instead' link and follow the steps to uncouple the PC from your Microsoft account.

Switch to a local account to stop Windows 10 sharing your data in the cloud

✔ DO remove snooping updates from Windows 7 and 8

You might think that if you're not using Windows 10, and have stuck with an older version of the operating system,

Stop Windows 7 and 8 spying you by uninstalling some of the latest updates

that you don't have to worry about the privacy concerns we've highlighted in this feature, but sadly it's no longer only the new operating system that spies on you. Microsoft recently issued some sneaky updates for Windows 7 and 8+ that report back on your activities online and on your PC. While some of the spying updates are marked as optional, others are listed as recommended, so they will have been automatically installed if Windows Update is set to do so.

If you have already installed the updates on your system, you can remove and block them easily enough. Go to Start, Control Panel, Programs, 'Uninstall [or change] a program'. Click 'View installed updates' on the left. Use the search box to locate the following updates: KB3068708, KB3022345, KB3075249 and KB3080149. Right-click each one and select Uninstall.

When that's done, go to 'System and security' in the Control Panel and select 'Windows Update', 'Check for updates'. Click the 'Recommended updates link' and find the KB3068708 and KB3022345 updates. Right-click each one in turn and select 'Hide update'. Next, open 'Optional updates' and hide KB3075249 and KB3080149.

You can find out more about what these worrying updates actually do at bit.ly/ghacks380. ∎

NEXT ISSUE on sale **Wednesday 7 October 2015**

How Google will change your life

We look at how the search giant is spreading beyond the web to improve every aspect of our lives, and reveal how you can try its new innovations today
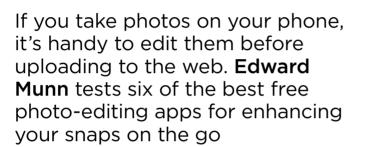
PLUS...

✚ **PRIVACY TOOLS TESTED**
Best browser add-ons to block web trackers and other threats

✚ **CHARGE DEVICES FASTER**
We test docking stations that boost all your gadgets at once

✚ **REDUCE YOUR BANDWIDTH**
Use less data on your phone without compromising quality

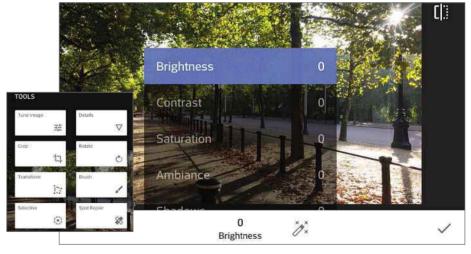**SUBSCRIBE TO WEB USER AT SUBSCRIBE.WEBUSER.CO.UK**

Best free photo-editing apps

If you take photos on your phone, it's handy to edit them before uploading to the web. **Edward Munn** tests six of the best free photo-editing apps for enhancing your snaps on the go

Snapseed | bit.ly/snapseed380 | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★   PERFORMANCE ★★★★★   EASE OF USE ★★★★☆

WebUser GOLD AWARD

What we liked:

Snapseed's powerful tools, simple, ad-free interface and intuitive controls make it perfect for all your mobile photo-editing needs. It couldn't be easier to use: open an image, tap 'Tune Image', swipe your finger up and down to select between brightness, contrast or saturation (among other options), then drag left or right to adjust each setting. If even that sounds like too much work, there's an auto-enhance button that instantly selects the best settings for your image. We like the app's use of simple swipe-based gestures, because they keep confusing menus and buttons to a minimum while letting your image occupy the maximum screen space.

As well as simple tools for cropping, straightening and rotating, Snapseed has a range of more advanced features that let you make precise changes to your photos. We particularly liked Selective, which recognises the contours of your image to help you make subtle tweaks to specific areas. Other features include Brush, which lets you change the exposure, temperature and saturation of highlighted areas, and Spot Repair, which erases imperfections. In all cases you can compare the adjusted image to its previous state before confirming your changes, to check that your adjustments have had the desired effect.

Snapseed also has some of the best filters of all the apps we tested and each offers a number of refinements to help you achieve the look you want. Perhaps our favourite of all Snapseed's features, however, is the icon alongside the Save button that lets you see your full history of changes, and edit or delete each step independently of the others.

How it can be improved:

There's not much to criticise about Snapseed, but it does lack a red-eye removal tool and it took a while to master its more advanced tools.

OUR VERDICT

Snapseed is the perfect app for quick, everyday photo edits. Its intuitive gesture-based controls ensure impressive functionality and performance in a simple, user-friendly interface.

PhotoDirector | bit.ly/photodirector380 | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★   PERFORMANCE ★★★★★   EASE OF USE ★★★★☆

WebUser SILVER AWARD

What we liked:
PhotoDirector is an excellent app for everyday photo-editing tasks. Once you've chosen the image you want to change, you'll find the main editing tools grouped neatly along the bottom of the screen. The Basic Edit button lets you crop, straighten, rotate, or flip your image, while Adjust provides tools for changing the white balance, exposure, contrast, saturation and more. Like Snapseed, there's a tool that lets you auto-enhance many of these settings with a single button press, along with the option to compare your shot to its previous state before confirming changes.

Other impressive features include the Saturation tool, which lets you pick specific colours to enhance, and Curve, which lets you change the levels of red, green and blue by dragging points on a graph. If you want to edit portraits,

PhotoDirector provides useful tools for red-eye and blemish removal. We loved the range of filters on offer, and its overlay effects were better than any other app we tested. We also found it very straightforward to use thanks to the instructions that appear whenever you open a new tool.

How it can be improved:
Although it has undo and redo buttons, there's no way to review your full edit history, as you can in Snapseed. If your device has a small screen, you might also find the app's interface fiddly compared to our Gold Award winner.

OUR VERDICT
PhotoDirector didn't miss out on our Gold Award by much. It's easy to use and packed with features, but Snapseed pipped it to the top spot thanks to its edit history function.

Pixlr | bit.ly/pixlr380 | ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★☆   PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆   EASE OF USE ★★★☆☆

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

What we liked:
Pixlr is a feature-packed photo-editing app that also has a built-in camera app and a collage creator. After choosing an image you'd like to edit, you can find all the main editing tools in its Adjustment menu. These include the usual tools to crop or rotate your image, and shortcuts for tweaking vibrancy, colour, contrast and brightness. If you're in a hurry, you can use the Auto Fix and Auto Contrast buttons instead to make quick fixes with a single tap. Like our Gold- and Silver-award winners, Pixlr lets you compare your image to its previous state before applying changes, and you can still change your mind after that using the Undo and Redo buttons.

Our favourite feature in Pixlr is Double Exposure, which lets you blend a second photo into your image using a range of effects. We also liked Splash, with which you can highlight and change specific colours without affecting the others. Aside from the Adjustment menu, Pixlr also has options

for adding filters, overlays, borders and text to your images.

How it can be improved:
Most of Pixlr's key features are cluttered into one complex and chaotic menu, and unlike Snapseed and PhotoDirector, you have to put up with pop-up ads.

OUR VERDICT
Pixlr's Double Exposure and Splash tools are great if you're looking to do something creative or unusual, but for normal tweaks and adjustments, you're better off with one of the other award winners.

BEST OF THE REST

Aviary
bit.ly/aviary380
This Adobe-owned app offers all the tools you need from a mobile photo-editor, whether you want to crop and rotate your image or add a filter, frame or overlay to it. It's very easy to use, but the layout of its menu is somewhat illogical. Also, to fully unlock many of the functions, you'll need to set up an Adobe account and download the necessary add-ons.

VSCO Cam
bit.ly/vsco380
VSCO Cam is a social network for photographers, letting you follow other creative types and share your own images with the world. You don't need to set up an account to use its editing tools; simply add an image to your library and tap the Edit button to use its range of brilliant filters. Swipe up and tap the spanner icon and you'll see further tools for adjusting exposure, contrast, saturation, temperature, highlights, shadows and tint.

PicsArt Social Photo Editor
bit.ly/picsart380
PicsArt is a powerful image-editor that doubles up as a social network for photographers. It has a good range of features, but we found its interface disjointed and confusing, and it has the most obtrusive advertising of all the apps we tested. If you're patient enough to master it, the app's clone tool is its most impressive feature.

Get for FREE what other people pay for

Forget rubbish freebies that you'd never dream of paying for – it's time to grab something of value for nothing. **Robert Irvine** reveals how to get the best no-catch deals

Install paid-for Android apps for free

Lots of so-called free apps have hidden costs, such as features that you have to pay to unlock and intrusive adverts that gobble up your data allowance and battery power, which is why we thoroughly approve of the 'actually free' apps and games offered by Amazon Underground (www.amazon.co.uk/underground). These are paid-for apps that the online giant is giving away for free, with no catches; by which we mean no time limits, no in-app purchases and no ads. They aren't obscure or rubbish apps, either. At the time of writing, the 'actually free' selection includes the brilliant Goat Simulator (which costs £3.29 on Google Play), the full version of 3D body-exploring app Visual Anatomy (usual price £1.58) and the award-winning fitness app Easy Weight Loss (formerly £4.99). Underground appears to have replaced Amazon's previous 'App of the Day' giveaway, with the bonus that hundreds of free apps are now available indefinitely.

Amazon can offer these paid-for apps for free because it now pays developers for how much their apps are used rather than passing costs on to customers. The only catch is that the Underground update to Amazon's shopping app isn't available through the Google Play store, but directly from Amazon's Underground page. We featured a Mini Workshop explaining how to use Underground in our last issue, and any apps you download will run on your Android device in the usual manner.

Get free tickets to rugby matches

If you enjoy watching rugby on telly, but you've never attended a match, you can currently apply for free tickets from the Aviva Premiership Rugby First Timers campaign (bit.ly/rugby380) and save yourself at least a tenner. Simply visit the link above, select a fixture from the drop-down menu (all matches will be played at the home-club stadium except where indicated) and enter your details, including which team you support. Tickets are available for all 12 clubs in the Aviva Premiership during the first seven rounds of games, which run from 16 October to 27 December. You'll be notified one week before the match if your application has been successful, with more than 2,000 free tickets available for each game.

Although the Aviva First Timers scheme is obviously aimed at new supporters, and the company passes your information to your local club, it seems that the aim of the scheme is to replenish empty stands, so we're sure there'll be no major objection if you're not a genuine rugby virgin!

Watch the latest films for free

We've recommended ShowFilmFirst (www.showfilmfirst.com) before, but recently the service that gives you free cinema tickets for preview screenings has become even better. Previously, the movies on offer tended to be rather obscure but, in the last few months, the site has let users watch films including *A Walk in the Woods*, based on the best-selling Bill Bryson book and starring Robert Redford as the author, and Ridley Scott's *The Martian*, weeks ahead of their official releases and for nothing except the price of snacks. To enjoy a free night at the flicks, just register your details and wait for ShowFilmFirst to send you codes for new films. Enter a code on the website to see if free tickets are still available – they're offered on a first come, first serve basis, so get in quick – and print them out. ShowFilmFirst also now offers discounts on theatre tickets at showfilmfirst.entstix.com.

Download free comics for your tablet

Comic fans who want something new to read, but are short of a few bob, are currently spoilt for choice when it comes to high-quality online freebies. Notably, to celebrate breaking the

FREE

Don't pay for mobile internet access

We've been stung by 'free internet' offers before, for example from Ovivo and Samba, which both gave you free mobile data in return for watching adverts but were suddenly closed down in March and April 2014, respectively. However, we have higher hopes for FreedomPop (www.freedompop.com), which has been popular in the US for the last four years and promises that "Free is really Free, no gimmicks or games".

FreedomPop works by offering basic talk, text and data free of charge, but letting you pay if you decide you need more. Reports suggest the free deal will comprise 200 minutes of calls, 200 texts and 200MB of data each month via the FreedomPop app and SIM card, which doesn't sound like much, but should suffice for 'light' users.

FreedomPop has teamed up with Three and another, as yet unnamed, company in the UK and was supposed to launch this summer, but had yet to arrive at the time of going to press. Enter your postcode and email address on the website to check if FreedomPop will be available in your area and to sign up for a beta invite. ◼

50,000 'likes' threshold on Facebook, *2000 AD* has released a free 128-page PDF comic (bit .ly/2000ad380) to thank fans for their "zarjaz [excellent] support". This rounds up classic Judge Dredd stories from the past 38 years of "the greatest comic in the galaxy", which each have a number-themed title. You can either read the *2000 AD* comic in your browser, print it out or download the whole thing to read offline on your PC, tablet or e-reader.

Meanwhile, Doctor Who fans (or Whovians, if you must) can download a free Kindle ebook from bit.ly/ doctor380. Issued for Free Comic Book Day 2015, and currently selling for as much as £13 in hard copy on eBay, it features "three stunning, all-new short stories" starring the last three Doctors (separately, for now). You don't need a Kindle e-reader to be able to enjoy the comic because the free Kindle app is available for all Desktop and mobile platforms. Search Amazon for FCBD to discover lots more free Kindle comics, including *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Avengers* and *Transformers* titles.

DOWNLOAD FREE MUSIC FROM GOOGLE PLAY

Save money on these audio delights by getting them for free from Google Play. You'll need to enter valid card details if you don't have a Google Wallet account

1

Survivor
Eye of the Tiger
bit.ly/survivor380
The chart-topping 1982 theme from *Rocky III* is still rising up to the challenge of its rivals.

2

Kings of Leon
Sex on Fire
bit.ly/kings380
This track has spent more than 120 weeks in the UK singles chart, and you can now get it for free!

3

Play:
Classical Tenors
bit.ly/tenors380
Enjoy Pavarotti, Carreras and, er, *Britain's Got Talent's* Paul Potts for nothing.

4

Foo Fighters
The Pretender
bit.ly/fighters380
This 2007 single is being offered as a freebie to promote the band's Greatest Hits.

5

Play:
Blues Pioneers
bit.ly/blues380
A 10-track compilation of blues classics from pioneers such as Barbecue Bob.

Stop auto-playing content on web pages

Videos and ads that play as soon as you load a web page are not just annoying, but can also be offensive and pose a security risk. **Robert Irvine** explains how to block them

Block auto-playing content in your browser

The most effective way to prevent video, audio and adverts from playing automatically is to turn off the option in your browser, rather than on individual sites. Here are instructions for disabling auto-playing media in the most popular browsers.

CHROME

Click the menu icon in the top-right corner, select Settings and click the 'Show advanced settings' link. Next, scroll down to the Privacy section, click the 'Content settings' button and scroll down to the Plug-ins section. To stop media playing auromatically, select the option 'Let me choose when to run plug-in content', then click Finished.
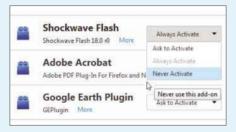
Alternatively, you can click 'Manage individual plug-ins' to disable Adobe Flash. When you encounter blocked content that you want to see, just right-click it and choose 'Run this plug-in'.

FIREFOX

Firefox recently began blocking Flash by default because the latest version was being "actively exploited by publicly known vulnerabilities" by hackers, but Mozilla reversed its decision after Adobe updated the plug-in. If you'd still prefer to make Flash, and other Firefox plug-ins, click-to-play rather than auto-play, it's simple to do so. Go to Tools, Add-ons and click the Plug-ins option on the left. Click the drop-down menu next to every plug-in you want to block and choose either 'Ask to Activate' or Never Activate.

Alternatively, if you want to block all click-to-play content in one go, type `about:config` into the address bar, press Enter and click past the warning. Search for the entry 'plugins.click_to_play' and double-click it to set its value to 'false'.

INTERNET EXPLORER

In Internet Explorer, you'll need to disable individual plug-ins, namely Flash. Go to Tools, 'Manage add-ons', 'Toolbars and Extensions', then select Shockwave Flash Object and click Disable. To block Flash in Microsoft's new Edge browser, see our tip on page 31.
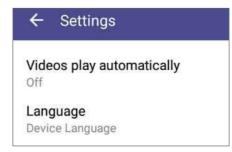
Disable auto-playing videos on Facebook

As we reported in our Need to Know section last month, Facebook is one of the worst sites for auto-playing videos and it shows no sign of changing its policy. Fortunately, you can easily turn them off if they offend or annoy you. On the Facebook website, click the down arrow in the top-right corner, choose Settings and click Videos at the bottom of the left-hand column. Click the drop-down menu next to the Auto-play Videos option and select Off.

In the Facebook app for Android, click the three-line Settings menu, then scroll down to App Settings in the Help & Settings section and set 'Videos play automatically' to Off.

In the iOS app, go to Settings, Account Settings and find the relevant section in 'Videos and Photos'.

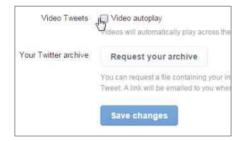### Pause auto-playing videos on Twitter

Twitter only introduced automatically playing videos in June, announcing them – rather grandly – as a "streamlined consumption experience for all native videos, GIFs and Vines" (bit.ly/twitter380). However, although 'brands' may be pleased at the increase in exposure for their marketing campaigns, many normal users hate auto-play, especially when browsing Twitter on mobile devices where they gobble up data and slow you down.

To tweak your Twitter preferences so that videos need to be clicked or tapped

Stop Auto-playing Videos

find a handy 'Stop Autoplay' setting that works a treat. You can choose to keep auto-playing when you're watching videos in a playlist.

For Firefox, you can use FlashStopper (bit.ly/flashblock380) to pause all Flash and HTML5 videos on sites including YouTube, Dailymotion and Facebook.

NETFLIX Prevent Netflix from playing the next episode

Netflix has a feature called Post-Play that automatically plays the next episode of a show when you finish watching the current one. Most of the time, this is a great way to 'binge watch' a series because you don't need to keep returning to the main menu to manually select the following episode. But in other circumstances, Post-Play is more of a hindrance than a help – perhaps you're deliberately viewing a show out of sequence, or you've got an early start the next day and simply must go to bed!

To turn off the feature on the Netflix website, click your name in the top-right corner, select Your Account and click 'Playback settings'. Under Preferences, deselect the option 'Play next episode automatically' and click Save. This setting will also be applied to your Netflix mobile and smart TV apps. ∎

before they play, go to Settings, Account on the website and scroll down to the Content section. Untick the 'Video autoplay' option next to Video Tweets and click 'Save changes'.

In the mobile app, go to Settings, General, 'Video autoplay' and select 'Never play videos automatically'.

You Tube Stop YouTube playing videos automatically

YouTube now has two types of auto-playing videos – those that begin as soon as you load a YouTube page, which is fine because you probably want to watch them there and then; and those that play automatically once you've finished viewing the current video. The latter is annoying, not to mention presumptuous, because you probably have better things to do then sit around watching 'suggested' videos all day. Luckily, it's a doddle to turn off; just click the Autoplay slider above the 'Up next' list on the right to remove the tick. You can always turn it back on again when you have time for a video binge.

If you want to prevent all YouTube videos from starting until you click 'play', there are several add-ons you can use. For Chrome, avoid the Stop Autoplay for YouTube add-on (bit.ly/autoplay380) because although it sounds promising, it doesn't actually work! Instead, you should install the brilliant Magic Actions for YouTube (bit.ly/magic380). This feature-packed extension gives you total control over your YouTube viewing experience and, if you scroll down its Options list, you'll

STOP ANIMATED GIFS PLAYING AUTOMATICALLY

There's no escape online from animated GIFs, those low-quality loops of a few frames of video that show animals being adorable, celebrities reacting to things in slow motion and other random silliness. But not everyone finds them amusing – in fact, they can be rather irritating.

If you prefer to browse the web without being distracted and slowed down by animated GIFs, you can install Gif Jam for Chrome (bit.ly/gifjam380), which stops them playing automatically and shows only the first frame of the image sequence. If you decide you want a burst of hilarity, you can turn off the add-on by clicking its toolbar button. It's especially useful on Twitter, Tumblr and Buzzfeed, where animated GIFs are now sadly unavoidable.

For Firefox, there's Toggle Animated GIFs (bit.ly/toggle380), which includes a handy 'Pause GIFs by default' option.

Broadband Deals

Take a Screen Break

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

WEB USER WORD SEARCH

Can you find the following mobile apps in the grid on the right? The words may appear vertically, horizontally and diagonally, and forwards and backwards

DROPBOX
GUMTREE
INSTAGRAM
MESSENGER
NETFLIX
SKYPE
SNAPCHAT
SOUNDCLOUD
SPOTIFY
WHATSAPP

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

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE SONG TITLES FROM THE EMOJI?

Get the answers online at www.webuser.co.uk/quiz380

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 2
Y-cam HomeMonitor HD

WORTH £149.99 EACH

Y-cam's new HomeMonitor HD gives you peace of mind when you're away from home. Easy to set up, it lets you see and hear what's happening indoors at home on your smartphone or tablet, or on any PC that's online. You can watch live or view footage from the past seven days. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'y-cam' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.y-cam.com and follow @ycamsolutions on Twitter.

WIN 1 OF 4
Corel PaintShop Pro X8 Ultimate

WORTH £79.99 EACH

Corel's new software PaintShop Pro X8 Ultimate is the complete toolkit for photographers. New features include AfterShot 2, which quickly converts and adjusts RAW photos, and on1 Perfect Effects 9.5, which has hundreds of built-in presets to give you complete control. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Corel' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.paintshoppro.com and follow @corelsoftware on Twitter.
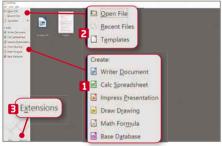

Use the new tools in LibreOffice 5

www.libreoffice.org

The Document Foundation's free office suite has been updated with an improved interface and a wealth of new tools. Here's how to use it

Microsoft Office (products.office .com) is a fantastic suite but it's expensive. The Home and Student edition costs £110, and you can only use it on one PC, while Office 365 Home (which Microsoft would prefer you to go for) costs £80 a year, on a rolling subscription. LibreOffice 5, on the other hand, is entirely free and offers all the features you are likely to need. It's built

from the same code as the popular OpenOffice suite and includes six applications – Writer (word processor), Calc (spreadsheet), Draw (for diagrams and flow charts), Impress (presentation and slideshow creator), Base (database) and Math (a mathematical-equations editor). The excellent free suite has recently been updated with several major changes and improvements.

TOOLBARS
The Standard, Formatting and contextual toolbars have been updated to make it easier to find frequently used commands

WORD COUNT
This shows you how many words and characters are in a document. Click to open the Word Count box

1 LibreOffice's applications are launched through the Start menu or by opening the main LibreOffice menu and choosing the program you want from the sidebar. **1** You can also open a file, browse recent files and explore the available templates. **2** Extensions **3** lets you add extra tools to the software.
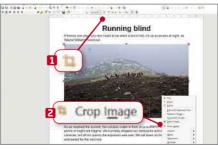
2 Writer, which is the word processor, is the main component in LibreOffice. It has a menu with toolbars above **1** and a properties sidebar **2** on the right-hand side. One of the new additions in the latest version of the suite is a Styles section **3** that lets you quickly change the appearance of selected text.
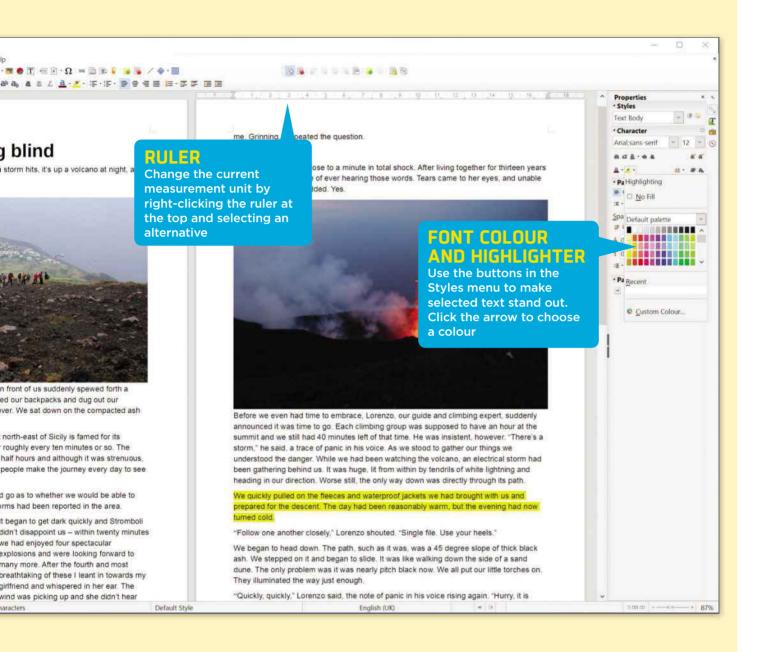
3 Another new feature that's been added to Writer and other modules is support for dragging and dropping images into your documents. Just drag a photo to where you want it to appear. **1** You can resize it by dragging the handles. **2** You can also make changes using the Graphic options **3** in the sidebar.

4 You can now crop your pictures from within the software, without loading a separate image editor. Either click the crop tool in the toolbar **1** or right-click and select Crop Image from the context menu. **2** As with resizing, pull the handles to select the area you want. It will be cropped immediately.

5 You can add emoji and other special characters to documents using the new AutoCorrect extension. Surround the standard emoji shortcodes or other keywords with colons – type `:phone:` for example, to display a picture of a phone. Go to Format, AutoCorrect, AutoCorrect Options to see the available codes. **1**

RULER
Change the current measurement unit by right-clicking the ruler at the top and selecting an alternative

FONT COLOUR AND HIGHLIGHTER
Use the buttons in the Styles menu to make selected text stand out. Click the arrow to choose a colour

g blind
a storm hits, it's up a volcano at night, a

me. Grinning, ...peated the question.

...ose to a minute in total shock. After living together for thirteen years ...e of ever hearing those words. Tears came to her eyes, and unable ...ded. Yes.

n front of us suddenly spewed forth a
...ed our backpacks and dug out our
...ver. We sat down on the compacted ash

north-east of Sicily is famed for its
...r roughly every ten minutes or so. The
...half hours and although it was strenuous,
...people make the journey every day to see

...d go as to whether we would be able to
...orms had been reported in the area.

...t began to get dark quickly and Stromboli
...didn't disappoint us – within twenty minutes
...we had enjoyed four spectacular
...explosions and were looking forward to
...many more. After the fourth and most
...breathtaking of these I leant in towards my
...girlfriend and whispered in her ear. The
...wind was picking up and she didn't hear

Before we even had time to embrace, Lorenzo, our guide and climbing expert, suddenly announced it was time to go. Each climbing group was supposed to have an hour at the summit and we still had 40 minutes left of that time. He was insistent, however. "There's a storm," he said, a trace of panic in his voice. As we stood to gather our things we understood the danger. While we had been watching the volcano, an electrical storm had been gathering behind us. It was huge, lit from within by tendrils of white lightning and heading in our direction. Worse still, the only way down was directly through its path.

We quickly pulled on the fleeces and waterproof jackets we had brought with us and prepared for the descent. The day had been reasonably warm, but the evening had now turned cold.

"Follow one another closely," Lorenzo shouted. "Single file. Use your heels."

We began to head down. The path, such as it was, was a 45 degree slope of thick black ash. We stepped on it and began to slide. It was like walking down the side of a sand dune. The only problem was it was nearly pitch black now. We all put our little torches on. They illuminated the way just enough.

"Quickly, quickly," Lorenzo said, the note of panic in his voice rising again. "Hurry, it is
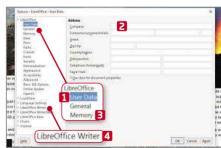
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6 Go to File, New to create any kind of document, including spreadsheets and presentations. Select one to open it in a separate window. LibreOffice Calc offers all the usual spreadsheet tools, including a Chart Wizard **1** you can access from the Insert menu. You can choose a chart type **2** and make it 3D. **3**

7 The toolbars in Impress have been reordered to make them easier to use. Just add a heading and some text. **1** You can drag and drop images on to the page. **2** Each slide is shown on the left. **3** Use the Layouts selection **4** to choose a type of design. Additional options are available in the bar on the far right. **5**

8 LibreOffice can be customised via the Tools, Options menu. User Data **1** lets you fill in personal info. **2** Memory **3** lets you manage the number of undo steps that are saved and specify how much memory the program should set aside for graphics. Customise the word processor under LibreOffice Writer. **4**

Workshop 2

Transfer all your files to a new PC

Laplink PCmover Express: bit.ly/mover380 | ⏱ **60 mins** | 🪟 **XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10**

If you're upgrading to Windows 10 from Windows 7 or 8+, you only need to back up your files before you start installing your new operating system. However, if you're buying a new computer, such as the ones we've reviewed in our Windows 10 PC group test on page 20, you'll need to transfer your important files and folders from your old PC to the new one.

To make the job easier, Microsoft has teamed up with Laplink (www.laplink.com) to offer its PCmover Express software, which normally costs £19.95, as a free download from bit.ly/mover380. This software is designed to move your files from one PC to another, and you can use it freely until 31 August 2016. If you run into problems, free transfer assistance is available by ringing 0800 092 7694.

Once you've downloaded the software, install it on both the old PC and the new one, and connect both to the same network, either using Wi-Fi or Ethernet.

1 Make sure both your PCs are on the same network then launch PCmover Express on the old computer. Click 'PC to PC Transfer', then click Next to move on. Let the software know that you're starting with the old computer by clicking the Old button, **1** then click Next. **2**

2 Select 'WiFi or Wired Network', **1** then click the Next button. **2** If you aren't able to get the PCs on the same network, you can connect them using a dedicated Ethernet or USB cable, but you'll have to buy it from Laplink. **3**

3 Now switch to the new PC. Start as with Step 1 but select the 'Windows 8.1 or later' button **1** instead of the Old button. Click Next. **2** You'll be asked for your name and email address. Select 'WiFi or Wired Network' again and click Next to continue.

4 Locate your old PC on your network. Click the Browse button **1** then select the PC **2** and click OK. **3** If your old PC isn't visible, check that it's displaying the message 'In Progress – Network Transfer' and click Re-scan **4**. Once you've selected it, click Next. **5**

5 PCmover Express will analyse the old computer, which can take a few minutes. You can then configure the transfer by clicking the four categories on screen and selecting the settings you want. Make sure to take particular note of anything marked with an exclamation triangle. **1**
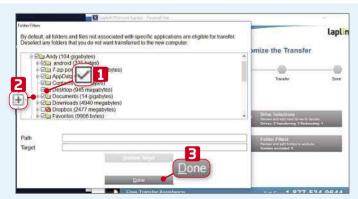

6 Click the User Account Selections button to view the Windows user accounts recently used on the old PC **1** and see whether they'll transfer directly or need to be created. **2** If user accounts are missing, select Show All Users. **3** To stop an account from being transferred, click Edit User. **4**

7 Click Drive Selections to choose the drives to transfer. **1** Any new folders required will be created based on the previous drive structure. If you want to change the defaults, so drives are ignored or saved to different places, click the Edit Drive button **2** and alter the settings. **3**

8 Click File Filters **1** to stop particular types of files coming through. Tick the boxes **2** to block temporary and back-up files, or click the Add button **3** to set up your own filters. Here you can use wildcards to select file types, **4** and choose a new target folder **5** to transfer them to.

9 Click Folder Filters to control which specific folders are transferred. Tick the boxes **1** to transfer the whole folder, or click the plus symbols **2** to open the contents and select individual sub-folders. Click Done, **3** then click Next and the software will set up the transfer. Press Next again to run it.

10 How long the transfer will take will depend on how much data you're moving and how fast your network is, but expect it to take around an hour. **1** Watch out for the pop-under additional software screen (see Expert Tip above) and restart your PC once everything has transferred.

Stop people stealing your photos

If you share a photo online, anyone can copy it and pass it off as their own – we regularly hear of people finding their images on other websites and even in print. A good way to discourage this is to add a watermark, which is free and easy to do using Easy Watermark Studio Lite. You can download the software from bit.ly/water380 without needing to provide your email address.

Easy Watermark Studio Lite: bit.ly/wm380 | 🕐 **20 mins** | 🪟 **XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10**

1 Click the 'Add image' **1** or 'Add folder' **2** buttons to find the images you want to use with the program, then use the Browse For Folder window to select them. **3** The software can watermark batches of images but the free version will only work with a maximum of 30 at a time.

2 Make sure the 'watermark text' tab **1** is selected and type into the box **2** the text you want to appear on top of the image. It will appear over the image as you type. **3** Use the copyright button **4** to add the symbol to your text, and control the opacity using the slider. **5**

3 Click the 'font settings and color' tab **1** to change the font and reduce the size of the text. **2** You can also change the colour. **3** Click the 'Gradient color' box **4** to add a gradient to the text and choose the colours from the squares on either end of the colour scale. **5**

4 The 'text position, rotation' tab **1** lets you move the text using the arrow buttons, **2** and tilt it with the dial or by entering the degrees. **3** Use the Horizontal and Vertical sliders **4** to fine-tune the position, or drag and drop the text with your mouse. You can also tile or randomise its position. **5**

5 Click the 'text effects' tab **1** to adjust the drop-shadow **2** and outer-glow **3** effects. You can adjust the size and colour of either. To remove any existing effects from your photo, click the cross in the top-left corner of either section. **4**

6 Click your other open pictures and you'll see the same watermark on all of them. **1** Click the 'Output settings' tab **2** to choose the location and format for saved files. **3** You can also resize them. **4** Click the Start button to create the new images. **5**
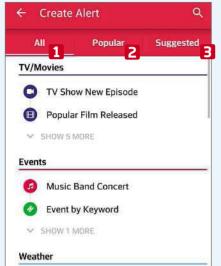
Never miss an important update again

Hooks lets you create custom notifications for almost anything. Whether you want updates about the lottery, football results or software vulnerabilities, this handy app will take care of it for you. Hooks can even alert you about tweets and Instagram posts containing specific tags and keywords. In this Workshop, we show you how to get to grips with the Android version of the app.
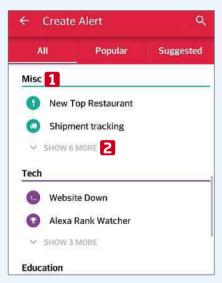
Hooks: bit.ly/hooks380 | 🕐 **5 mins** | 🤖 **Android 4.1+,** 🍎 **iOS 7.0+**
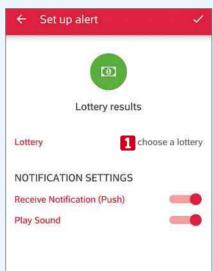
1 Install Hooks, then tap the '+' icon to create a new notification. You can set up your own custom notifications using the All tab **1** or browse a range of presets using the Popular **2** and Suggested **3** pages.
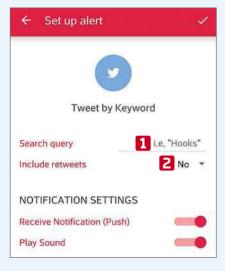
2 To set up an alert that notifies you when new films are added to Netflix, tap 'Show 5 More' under TV/Movies and select 'Netflix Movies'. You must choose one or more genres, **1** and you can narrow the results further by specifying keywords **2** and a minimum score on the Rotten Tomatoes guide. **3**
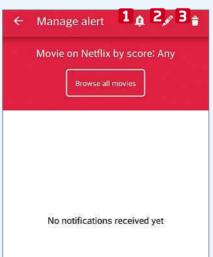
3 Choose whether you want to receive push notifications and whether they should be accompanied by a sound, then tap the tick to continue. If you want alerts containing the lottery results, scroll down to Misc **1** and expand its menu. **2**

4 Tap 'Lottery results', then select 'choose a lottery' **1** to pick the appropriate lottery from the drop-down menu. The Tech menu has an option to set Software Vulnerability alerts. Tap it and enter a keyword, such as Heartbleed, to receive instant updates about specific bugs.

5 If you want to receive notifications when a tweet is posted about a particular subject, tap 'Tweet by Keyword' from the Social menu, then enter a 'Search query'. **1** By default, retweets are not included. **2** Return to the home screen to review the alerts you've set up.

6 Recent notifications are shown at the bottom of the home screen. You can tap an entry to see its linked content or tap the alert name to open the 'Manage alert' page. From here, you can silence, **1** edit **2** or delete **3** the alert using the appropriate buttons.

How to... # Speed up Wi-Fi with your router's dual-band tools

Need more speed? **Wayne Williams** explains how to get the best out of your router's two wireless-networking options

Most modern routers are dual-band, which means they have the ability to create Wi-Fi networks using both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz wireless bands. The difference between a single- and a dual-band router is a bit like the difference between a single-track road and a dual carriageway: if one lane is snarled up with traffic, you can switch to the second lane to avoid slowing down. With routers, the 2.4GHz band can get congested by older wireless devices, cordless phones, microwave ovens and so on. The 5GHz band is less prone to over-crowding and interference, and there's a lot more room available. A dual-band router can noticeably improve your Wi-Fi speeds, but you need to make sure you're using each band to its greatest potential.

What is dual-band?
Wi-Fi equipment makes use of the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) 802.11 standards. 802.11n (also called Wireless N) was introduced in 2009, and offers five times the performance and up to twice the range of 802.11g, the standard it was designed to replace. It was also the first standard to operate on both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands. 802.11ac, or Wireless AC, became

available in 2013, and improves on Wireless N by adding wider channels and a stronger signal strength, which delivers better and more reliable coverage.

Previously, most wireless devices, such as laptops and games consoles, only used the 2.4GHz band, but as the popularity of 802.11n dual-band routers increased, more devices began operating on the 5GHz band. A study earlier in the year by ABI Research found that 68 per

cent of all Wi-Fi devices manufactured in 2015 now include the 5GHz band.

Know your router
There are two types of dual-band router available – selectable and simultaneous. With the former – such as the standard Virgin Media Super Hub, for example – you can choose to have all your equipment use either the 2.4GHz or the 5GHz band. If you only have modern

Left to right, and in ascending order of price: D-Link DIR-868L, Netgear AC1200 and Linksys Max-Stream EA8500.

802.11n or 802.11ac devices, you can select the 5GHz band and enjoy faster speeds, but if you have older devices on your network, you'll need to stick with the 2.4GHz band across the board.

Simultaneous dual-band lets you have both 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands running at the same time, so you can connect older equipment to the 2.4GHz band and use the less-congested 5GHz band for newer devices. The 5GHz band is particularly well suited to streaming video.

Upgrade your router

If your existing router doesn't offer simultaneous dual-band, you should consider replacing it with one that does, especially if you have lots of devices (computers, tablets, phones, games consoles and set-top boxes) connected to your network.

If you own 802.11ac-compatible hardware, you should get a dual-band 802.11ac router, which will still work with older 802.11n products. If that's not the case, and you aren't likely to upgrade

your devices in the near future, a dual-band 802.11n router will suffice and should be cheaper.

Some recommendations to consider include our current Best Buy, the excellent value-for-money D-Link DIR-868L (£65.97, bit.ly/dlink380); the high-spec but much more expensive Linksys Max-Stream EA8500 Router (£229.99, bit.ly/linksys380); and the Netgear AC1200 Smart WiFi Router (bit.ly/netgear380), which is available for around £80.

Virgin Media customers who would prefer a simultaneous dual-band router can request a Super Hub 2ac. This is usually only offered to customers who are on the highest broadband package (up to 152Mbps) but it is possible to persuade the company to send you one if you're on a lesser package. You'll need to pay £20 postage and install it yourself.

Which bands to use for which devices

Older devices, such as those that use the

older and slower 802.11g standard, need to connect to the 2.4GHz band, so focus on those first. These are the devices that cause bottlenecks on your network, so if you find that your 2.4GHz network is noticeably slow, try seeing if it improves without these devices connected. If this is the case, you should consider whether it's worth upgrading, replacing or ditching these older devices.

Next, think about what you use each of your other devices for. If you only use a mobile phone for emailing, browsing and social networking, then it only needs to connect to the 2.4GHz band. Don't enter the details of the 5GHz network, even if your device can see it, otherwise it might leap on to the 5GHz network of its own accord, which defeats the object.

If you use your tablet for watching streaming video, or you own streaming devices such as the Amazon Fire TV Stick or Google Chromecast, you should connect them to the 5GHz band, as long as they're close enough to your router to get a decent signal. Games consoles, and PCs you use for watching video and

Most modern devices can use either 2.4GHz or 5GHz networks

⚙ MINI WORKSHOP | Change your router's security settings

1 The process of configuring each band's security will depend on your router. In this Workshop, we're using a Virgin Media Super Hub 2ac, but the method will be broadly similar on most makes and models. Log into your router's configuration page and go to Wi-Fi Settings. You should see a section for Security Settings. **1**
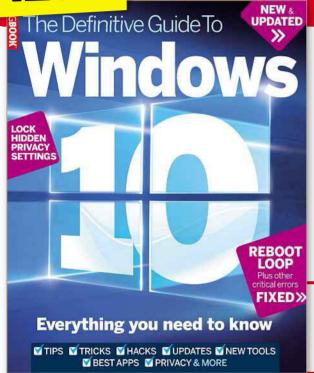
2 From here, you can enable or disable either band **1** (this is only advisable if you only have a few devices and they all connect to the same band). Use the drop-down box to change the security mode for the 2.4GHz **2** and 5GHz **3** bands. If you don't know what methods your connected devices use, the defaults should be fine.

3 You can change the SSID **1** and security key **2** for each band. If you do, you'll need to reconnect all your wireless devices using the new details. You can also switch the channel that each band operates on, **3** although 'Auto' is usually fine. You can also generate a new WPS PIN here. **4**

For best performance, the Netgear Nighthawk extender can really boost your Wi-Fi

The Asus extender provides great value for money

online gaming, should also be connected to the 5GHz band.

802.11ac compatible devices should be connected to the 5GHz band of an 802.11ac router to get the best from them. To do this, simply connect to the router's 5GHz network – it should automatically do the work of sorting out whether it can communicate with your devices at its fastest speeds.

Boost your Wi-Fi

If your router's wireless signal isn't capable of reaching all the rooms in your house, you can boost its reach with a range extender. Rather than just buying one of the many standard options, you could invest in our current Best Buy, Netgear's Nighthawk AC1900 Extender (£130, bit.ly/netg380), which is pricey but worth the money if you can afford it. For

something a little cheaper, the ASUS RP-AC52 Dual-Band Wireless-AC750 Range Extender is great value, and is currently available for £61 from Ebuyer (bit.ly/asus380).

Manage your security settings

You can use different security modes for each of the two bands. Older equipment that doesn't support the latest encryption standards can connect to the 2.4GHz band using WPA Auto, for example, while newer devices can connect to the 5GHz band using WPA2-PSK [AES]. You can also change the SSID and passphrase or security key for each of the bands, and manage the channels that the different bands operate on. See our Mini Workshop on page 59 for guidance on tweaking your router's settings.

If you use a separate security key for each of your networks, you can control what (and who) has access to each one. This means you can save bandwidth and allocate it to the devices that really need it.
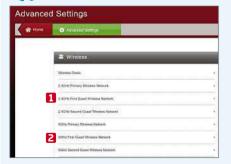
Create guest accounts

Guest network access provides a secure way for friends and visitors to securely connect to your home Wi-Fi without being able to access your entire network. The process will vary depending on your router, but you should be able to set up guest networks on either or both bands, and may even be able to create more than one network on each. If you want to keep the fastest bandwidth to yourself, you should only offer your guests access to the 2.4GHz network.

You can change the SSID and security type on each network. You could also disable security on a guest network, but this is rarely – if ever – a good idea. See our Mini Workshop, below, for help with setting up a guest network.

Many routers let you set up guest networks, so you can control which band visitors use

---

MINI WORKSHOP | Set up and manage guest accounts

1 To set up a guest account on the Super Hub 2ac, you need to go back to the main login screen and click the Advanced Settings button. Under Wireless, you'll see options to create two guest wireless networks for both the 2.4GHz **1** and 5GHz **2** bands. Select the first guest network option for any band.

2 Tick the box to start the guest wireless network **1** and enter an SSID. **2** You can choose whether to broadcast it (so people can see it) or not. **3** Choose the Security mode to use, **4** then set the passphrase **5** your visitors need to enter to connect to the network.

3 If you want to further restrict the guest accounts, you can enable MAC filtering. All Wi-Fi devices have a unique identifier called a MAC (media access control) address. When MAC filtering is on, you'll be able to choose which devices can access the network. Tick the Deny option **1** and add approved devices below. **2**

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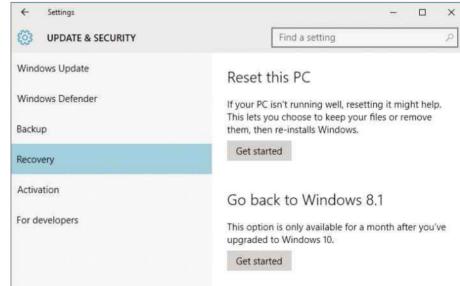
Web User's Top Tips

Got a problem with Windows? Our experts take a look at the recovery options, particularly for Windows 10

TOP TIPS FOR USING WINDOWS RECOVERY OPTIONS

Uninstall Windows 10 if you don't like it

Windows 10 is available as a free download but, having taken the plunge to upgrade, you may decide you don't like it and want to return to Windows 7 or 8. Thankfully, this is possible because Windows 10 saves your previous OS on your hard drive for a month. However, after this time you may not be able to uninstall Windows 10, so you should decide whether you want to keep it or not as soon as possible.

To uninstall Windows 10, go to the Start menu and select Settings, then 'Update & security'. Select Recovery in the left-hand panel and, on the right, find 'Go back to Windows X' (where X is your previous version). Click the 'Get started' button below and follow the instructions.

You have a month after installing Windows 10 to revert to your previous OS

Use System Restore

If Windows isn't working properly, System Restore might be able to solve the problem. This is worth trying before attempting other, more drastic recovery options. Windows regularly saves key system settings to your hard drive as restore points, and System Restore lets you return to one of these previous configurations. It puts many settings back as they were and you can choose a restore point from when the computer was working properly.

In Windows 8.1, press Windows+S; in Windows 10 click in the search box. Type `system restore` and click
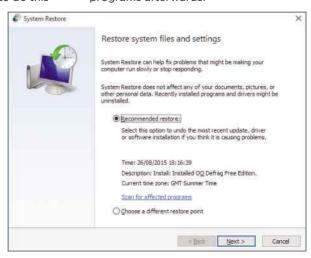
'Create a restore point' in the search results. Make sure protection for Windows (C:) is turned on, which means that restore points are being created automatically. The Create button lets you save an extra unscheduled restore point and you might want to do this before installing software or making other changes to Windows, so you can easily reverse them if you suffer from any problems.

To restore Windows, click the System Restore button. Windows 10 suggests a restore point to use and explains why, which is helpful, but all versions of Windows show a list of restore points and you can just select the one you want.

Before committing to a restore point, select it and click 'Scan for affected programs'. This

checks to see which programs, if any, will be affected by reverting to this earlier version of Windows settings. You won't be able to do anything about these changes, but at least you are warned and can reinstall the programs afterwards.

System Restore can be used to undo system changes in all versions of Windows

> **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.**

Windows recovery options

The simplest way to fix problems in Windows is to reinstall the operating system. This isn't always necessary, and it's a drastic step, but it's an easy solution because you don't have to search the web for solutions and apply complicated fixes. It has become so common for people to opt to reinstall Windows that Microsoft added it as a built-in tool in Windows 8, and this continues to be an option in 8.1 and 10. The menu options have changed from version to version, but they all work in the same way.

In Windows 10, go to Start, Settings, and select 'Update & security'. Select Recovery on the left and, under 'Reset this PC', click 'Get started'. Three options are displayed; the first, 'Keep my files', removes apps and settings, but keeps your documents, photos, videos and music files. Try this option first and see if it solves whatever problems you are experiencing.

The 'Remove everything' option is like a complete reset of Windows 10, where everything is cleared out, including apps you have installed and any files such as documents, music, photos and videos. This option can solve more troublesome problems but you must copy any files you want to keep to an external hard drive or save them online in OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox or similar.

The third option is 'Restore factory settings', which removes everything and restores the original version of Windows that came with the PC. This might downgrade your PC to an old version of Windows without the most recent updates or software, so it should be used only as a last resort after all other options have been tried. Copy any files you want to keep to an external drive or store them online before starting.

Windows 8 and 8.1 have similar features. In 8.1, go to the Charms bar on the right (press Windows+C) and select Settings, then 'Change PC settings'. Select 'Update and recovery' followed by Recovery. There are options to 'Refresh your PC without affecting your files' and 'Remove everything and reinstall Windows'. These are like the first two options in Windows 10.

Reset the computer using one of these three options, but only as a last resort

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL
More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Create your own recovery media

Recovery media, such as CDs and DVDs, are often supplied with a new computer. Alternatively, there may be a recovery partition on the hard drive. Both contain a copy of the PC as it was when it was first switched on. It is best to avoid using these unless there is no other option because they will take the PC too far back; for example, if you are using Windows 10, the recovery media might contain Windows 8 or 7, and it would require a large number of updates and upgrades to get your PC back to its Windows 10 setup.

To avoid this, you should create your own recovery media that contains a recent snapshot of the PC from when it is working properly. Backup software such as EaseUS Todo Backup Free (www.easus.com) can do this, and all you need is an external hard drive. Plug in the drive, run Todo Backup and click System Backup or Disk/Partition Backup. System Backup just copies drive C: containing Windows, whereas the Disk/Partition Backup tool copies the whole drive, even if there are other partitions. It is the slower of the two, but is more thorough.

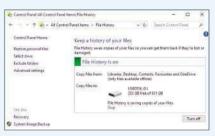*Create a system backup and recovery media with EaseUS Todo Backup Free*

The default settings are fine and, after selecting the external hard drive as the destination and starting the backup, the program can be minimised and left to do its job. Once that's done, you should create recovery media. This can be a CD or DVD, or a USB flash memory stick. Click the Tools icon and select Create Emergency Disk. There are several options and the best is 'Create WinPE emergency disk' and USB. Insert a memory stick with a capacity of at least 1GB.

The recovery disc or memory stick can be used to start the computer. You might need to press a function key, such as F9, to see a startup menu from which you can then select the memory stick. The restore software will then run automatically so you can restore the PC.

Other recovery options

File History is a feature in Windows 8 and 10 that automatically backs up changes to libraries (documents, videos, photos and music), the Desktop, contacts, favourites and OneDrive. Again, you'll need an external hard drive. Open the Control Panel and click File History. Click Select Drive on the left and choose the drive. All your files are backed up to a folder called FileHistory. Just use Explorer to open it and recover lost or damaged files.

Turn on File History and keep copies of files on an external hard drive

Freeze your PC in time

ToolWiz Time Freeze (www.toolwiz .com) is an interesting free tool that, when run, freezes the current state of the computer. You can make changes to files, modify system settings and even install software, but none of it will affect the computer, which is running in a sort of virtual mode when Time Freeze is active. Restart the computer and all the changes made will be undone, putting the system back the way it was when Time Freeze was started.

Use Time Freeze to immunise your PC from any changes – even good ones!

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

Cortana not working

Q I have upgraded both my laptop and my wife's to Windows 10 from Windows 7. Both appear to be working fine with the new operating system – except for Cortana, which works on my computer, but not on my wife's. It says the region is not supported. Obviously, we are both in the same region – in fact, we're in the same house! So what's wrong?
Simon Easterby, via email

A There are many regional settings, such as language, currency, keyboard and so on, and if just one is wrong, then Cortana may not work, so you should check them all. Click Start, Settings, 'Time & language', and set 'Time zone' to '(UTC) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London'. Turn on 'Set time automatically' and 'Adjust for daylight saving time automatically'.

Select 'Region & language' on the left and set the country or region to United Kingdom. If the language is not set to English (United Kingdom), click the 'Additional date, time & regional settings' link below.

Cortana may not work if just one of many regional settings is wrong

In the next window, click 'Add a language' and 'Add a language' again. Follow the prompts to select and set UK English. If there is more than one language installed, move UK English to the top of the list with the 'Move up' button. Return to Settings, 'Time & language' and select Speech. Set it to English (United Kingdom). Go to Settings, Privacy, Location and turn on Location, then restart the computer. It takes a few minutes to start Cortana after a reboot, so give it some time before you try it again.

If it still doesn't work, you could try changing all the language and region settings to US English and rebooting. Then change them all back to UK English and reboot again. This has worked for some people.

EMAIL
Cannot send group emails

Q The club I belong to needs to send weekly emails to its members. I volunteered for this task but it's proving to be more difficult than I thought. I have a list of everyone's email addresses which I thought I could copy and paste into the To or Cc box in Outlook.com.

Benchmark Email lets you send emails to hundreds of people at a time

However, this didn't work and I get messages telling me to verify my account or that there is a message limit. There aren't that many email messages – it's not like I'm sending hundreds – so how many can I send at a time?
Scott Brotherton, via email

A Outlook.com places a daily limit on the number of emails that can be sent, but the number depends on several factors. If you recently signed up for an account, you will have a low limit, which may be as little as 10. This is to prevent spammers joining the service to send junk messages. For a long-time member who has verified their account, the limit is around 300, but the To and Cc fields also have a limit of 100 recipients.

The limits can change and unusual activity, such as suddenly sending out a lot more email messages than normal, can trigger a reduction. This is because it most often happens when an account is hijacked by a spammer.

It's best to use a dedicated mailing service, rather than Outlook.com, for large email lists. There are several to choose from, such as Benchmark Email (www.benchmarkemail.com), which lets you create email newsletters and send them to up to 2,000 people for free.

Another advantage of a mailing service is that they handle signups and removals, so people can easily join or leave your email list without you having to manage the process.

Missing DVD player

Q I recently upgraded my five-year-old Toshiba Satellite Laptop L650-18M to Windows 10 from 7, but I now can't use the DVD player because it's not listed in Device Manager. Can you advise me how to use the DVD/CD Player?
Bryce McWhirter, via email

A Is the hardware not recognised or is the problem that you just can't play DVDs? Windows 10 doesn't come with a DVD player, which could be the cause, but upgrades from some versions of Windows 7 and 8 are eligible for a free DVD-player app, which can be downloaded through Windows Update. Go to Start, Settings, 'Update & security', Windows Update and click 'Check for updates'. Reboot after installing any updates and check again until there are no more. If you still cannot play DVDs, then try using other software, such as VLC media player (free from www.videolan.org).

If the drive itself is not recognised, click the search box in the taskbar, type `Device Manager` and click it in the results. Faulty hardware has a yellow triangle next to it and if the DVD drive is visible, right-click it and select Uninstall. Restart the computer and Windows should detect the hardware and automatically install the driver for it.

If the drive isn't visible in Device

Manager, go to the View menu and select 'Show hidden devices'. If you can see it, uninstall it and reboot. If it still can't be seen, right-click the computer at the top of the device list and select 'Scan for hardware changes'.

GENERAL PC
Stop Windows 10 downloading

Q I run Windows 8.1 and was invited to register for the Windows 10 upgrade, but I didn't realise that I would not be able to remove it. While searching for solutions, I found a site that advised me to remove updates KB2976978 and KB3035583 from the installed updates, but this still didn't stop Windows 10 from downloading when I installed the current updates.

How do I get rid of this pesky program that does not suit my needs? Some of my software will not run in Windows 10. I like my PC as it is, although I was happier with Windows 7.
Colin Harrison, via email

A You are right about removing KB3035583, but the next time Windows Update runs, it will re-install it because it's missing, and this then triggers the Windows 10 download again. You must tell Windows not to re-install KB3035583. Open Windows Update in the Control Panel and click 'View update history' in the left panel. Click Installed Updates and then find KB3035583 in the list of updates. Click it and uninstall it. Now you can right-click KB3035583 and select 'Hide this update' so it will not be installed again.

GENERAL PC
Misbehaving taskbar

Q My taskbar sometimes gets stuck. I've set it to automatically hide when it's not being used, but sometimes when I move my mouse to the bottom of the screen, it doesn't appear. Other times, it appears but then won't hide, and overlaps the bottom part of whatever window is showing. Is there a fix for this?
M Birkett, via email

A The taskbar can act like it has a mind of its own, appearing when it's not wanted and refusing to appear when it is. This behaviour is usually triggered by an application. When the taskbar appears on top of windows on the Desktop, it means an application is requesting your attention. Click the icon for the application in the taskbar or click them all if you are not sure which one to

click. When the taskbar is hidden and refuses to appear, it's being controlled by a window. Minimising all the windows on the Desktop should have the taskbar working normally again.

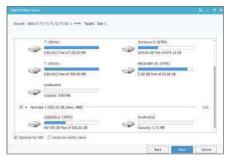### HARDWARE
Upgrade to an SSD

Q My computer is really slow and I think it would be a lot faster if I installed an SSD. The hard drive looks easy to reach, so swapping it out for another should not be too difficult. How do I transfer Windows and all my files?
Rob Peacock, via email

A There are a couple of ways to do this. If you've already made a complete system backup to a USB drive, you could simply replace the hard drive with the SSD, boot from the recovery CD or USB memory stick, and restore it. This is what you would do if the drive failed.

If you don't have a full system image backup, you can connect the SSD to the PC, clone the internal drive, then swap the hard drive and SSD. Some backup programs support both methods.

A drive enclosure, which is an empty box into which a hard drive can be installed, or a USB-to-SATA adapter (search Google or eBay for purchasing options) can be used to temporarily connect the new SSD to the computer.

Use ToDo Backup to clone a drive and tick the Optimize SSD option

Open an Explorer window, right-click This PC or Computer, and select Manage. Select Disk Management under Storage and you should see the SSD in the list of drives. Right-click the drive and, if there is an Initialize option, use it. This prepares a drive for first use.

Download a copy of EaseUS ToDo Backup Free (www.easeus.com) and run it. Select the clone option, set the source drive as the hard drive and the SSD as the destination. Tick 'Optimize for SSD' but do not tick 'Sector by sector'. Begin the clone operation. Shut down the computer and replace the hard drive with the SSD. The computer can now boot from it. And if you want to put the old drive to good use, you can put it in the drive enclosure and use it as an external drive – just use the Disk Management tool to format it.

EMAIL
Get rid of spam

Q My Outlook.com email inbox has been getting a lot of spam recently and there are dozens of junk messages trying to sell me watches. A lot end up in the Junk folder, but some also appear in my inbox. How can I stop these messages? I don't want a watch, especially a fake one!
Alan Forbes, via email

A Unwanted emails can often be avoided by creating a rule along the lines of: if it contains this, then do that. So you could set it to delete emails in which the subject contains the word 'watches', or have them moved to the Junk folder. But you

have to be careful to use a word or phrase that does not appear in normal email messages or they will also be deleted or moved.

In the Outlook.com website, click the gear icon in the top-right corner and select 'Manage rules'. Click the New button to create a rule. In the first box, select 'Subject contains' and, in the second box, enter words or phrases in quotes with OR between them: `"luxury watches" OR "Rolex Watch"`. Add more phrases with OR between, or more rules like this. Where it says 'Do the following', select Delete or 'Move to' and choose a folder.

Creating a few rules like this will reduce the number of junk messages in your inbox.

Create rules in Outlook.com to filter unwanted email messages as they arrive

This fortnight Roland has been experimenting with cloud backup

Your Top Tips

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

TOP TIP

BROWSERS

Change Firefox permissions

To find out what actions a website can perform when you visit it using Firefox, type `about:permissions` into the address box. You'll see a list of websites in the left-hand panel with a search box at the top. On the right is a list of things the websites can do, such as store passwords, share your location and use the camera or microphone. You can use the controls to change the permissions for a site, to allow or block cookies, allow or block popup windows, and more.

It's a great feature, but it would take ages to use it for every website you visit. You might want to customise

Use Firefox's tool to customise the permissions for your favourite websites

your favourites, though.

Bob Murphy, via email

BROWSERS
Manage Chrome tasks

When running Chrome and browsing the web, hold down Shift and press Esc. The Chrome Task Manager window appears and shows you how much memory is being used by each of the tabs and extensions. Another keyboard shortcut I found involves the mouse wheel. Rotating it makes the web page scroll up and down, but if you hold down the Shift key, it scrolls left and right.

Dave Morris, via email

WINDOWS 10
Remove see-through Windows

I'm not a fan of transparency effects in Windows and I'm thankful that this has been toned down since the days of Vista.

The colours and transparency effects can be modified in Windows 10

Windows 10 still has a semi-transparent Start menu, taskbar and action centre, but they can be switched off in the settings. If you prefer solid backgrounds, right-click the Desktop and select Personalise. Select Colours on the left and you'll see a switch at the bottom to turn off the transparency effect on Start, taskbar and action centre.

Richard Levey, via email

SOFTWARE
Explore 3D maps in Windows 10

Since upgrading to Windows 10 from 7, I have found a lot of new and interesting things in Microsoft's new operating system. For example, the Maps app is fascinating and lets you view 3D images of landmarks and cities from around the world. Open Maps and click the bottom icon in the list on the left to see a collection of photo thumbnails of 3D cities. Click one to display it in the main window.

You can zoom in and out using the mouse wheel and move left, right, in and out by dragging while holding down the left mouse button. Hold down the right mouse button while pushing the mouse

up or down to change the elevation of your view, and press the right mouse button while moving left or right to spin around the scene. It is a very impressive little app for Windows 10.

James Nolan, via email

Explore 3D landmarks and cities in the Windows 10 Maps app

GENERAL PC
Get the Windows 10 upgrade icon

I decided to reset my Surface tablet to factory settings before attempting to install Windows 10, but after upgrading to Windows 8.1 and performing all the available Windows updates, the Windows 10 upgrade icon failed to appear on the taskbar. I checked the Microsoft troubleshooting page for this problem and all the solutions involved installing updates that were already on my tablet. Update 3035583 was the main update referred to, so I tried uninstalling it by opening 'view installed updates' from 'Programs and Features' in the Control

Modify the the Registry so you can upgrade to Windows 10

Panel. After uninstalling, I clicked 'Check for updates' in Windows Update, then I reinstalled update 3035583 and, hey presto, the icon appeared.

I wanted to install Windows 10 straight away, but the next problem I encountered was that Windows told me it would notify me when the update was available. If you want to perform the upgrade immediately, you can make a small tweak to the Registry that makes it possible. Press Windows+R, type `regedit` and press Enter. Navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\WindowsUpdate\OSUpgrade

Create a new DWORD (32-bit) Value with the name 'AllowOSUpgrade', then double-click it to change its 'Value data' to '1'. Once you've done this, open Windows Update and you should see the option to 'Get Started' with the Windows 10 update.

Ed Wright, via email

GENERAL PC
Set the sound output for one speaker

If, like me, you suffer from loss of hearing in one of your ears, you might find it helpful to adjust the audio output to your speakers and headphones. Open the Control Panel and click Sound, Speakers and Properties. Click the Levels tab, select Balance and, by using the left and right sliders, you can balance the audio output to suit your hearing.

Doublell, Web User Forums

If your hearing is different in each ear, you can adjust your PC's stereo settings

EMAIL
Check if your email account has been hacked

I may be telling *Web User* readers about a site they're already familiar with, but as a tech novice I was intrigued to discover that there's a site that tells you whether your email accounts have ever been compromised. Haveibeenpwned.com is free to use and informs you of any data breaches your account details have been associated with. Some webmail companies and retailers can be very coy about admitting that their security has been breached, so this is a handy site to know about.

If your details have ever been

Check if your email account details have ever been compromised

compromised, make sure you change your password so that criminals can't access your account.

silv.surfer and Cantrel, Web User Forums

BROWSERS
Restore crashed Chrome extensions

When I turned on my laptop the other morning, several boxes popped up informing me that my Chrome extensions had crashed. I was given the option to click to correct the problem, but the notifications disappeared so quickly that I missed them.

When I opened Chrome, I noticed that a number of my add-ons were missing. To resolve the problem, I clicked the menu, Settings and then Extensions before selecting each item to enable it again. I have no idea why they crashed, but at least it was easy to resolve.

FratPark, Web User Forums

WINDOWS 10
Download Windows 10 themes

Windows 10 has some excellent themes available to download. To use one, right-click the Desktop, select Personalise, then click Themes. Click 'Theme settings', then 'Get more themes online.' Choose a theme from the list and click 'Download' to save it, then open it to install it. Once it's installed, you can activate your theme by selecting it from 'My themes'.

You'll notice that most of the themes use more than one image. When you want to change the background image, simply right-click the Desktop and choose 'Next desktop background'.

Anthony McNee, via email

You can personalise Windows 10 by downloading its free themes

HARDWARE
The ongoing router saga

I would like to reply to a tip in your latest issue with some information I gleaned from ISPs in the past. In issue 378, Peter Northrop questions the advice of leaving your router on all the time and dismisses it as erroneous. In reality, this advice is actually sound.

There is a reason your ISP tells you not to turn off your router unless you are having problems. When an ISP's automated systems detect consistent drops in your connection (for example, because you switch the router off before going to bed every night), they automatically place you in a kind of 'training mode'. This essentially lowers the speed of your connection for a period, gradually bringing it back up over time. This period differs with each ISP (TalkTalk's 'training mode', for example, can stretch to as long as two weeks), so you should leave your router on whenever possible. Remember, those automated systems don't recognise the difference between your connection having a problem or you simply turning off the router.
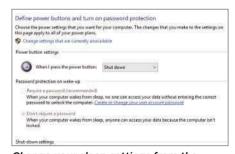
Chris McDonnell, via email

SECURITY
Lock your PC after sleeping

I bought a new laptop and was surprised to find that when I woke it from Sleep mode, such as by opening the lid, it immediately displayed the Desktop. Anyone could access it! This is clearly a security problem, but it's easily fixed.

To lock it with a password when it wakes from sleep, go to the Control Panel and click Power Options. Click 'Require a password on wake-up' and tick 'Require a password'.

Mike Doyle, via email

Change your sleep settings from the Control Panel's Power Options

WINDOWS 10
Turn off adverts in the Start menu

To turn off ads in Windows 10's Start menu tiles, right-click the offending tile and click 'turn live tile off'. You can get rid of all advertising in the Start menu by repeating the instructions for all the tiles.

Shawn, via email

Readers' Helpdesk

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

Why won't Windows 10 recognise my new hard drive?

Q After one of my three hard drives recently packed in, I've tried replacing it with a SATA III drive, which doesn't seem to be recognised by Windows 10. The drive is shown in Speccy (bit.ly/speccy380) and even appears in Device Manager, but for whatever reason it just doesn't show when I click This PC. Can you suggest how I might fix this problem?

Tommo42, Web User Forums

A Have you created and formatted a partition on the drive? Go to Disk Management and follow the instructions on the Microsoft website (bit.ly/format380) to create and format a new partition. The listed process is for Windows 7 but it should be applicable to Windows 10, too.

izzit, Web User Forums

If you can't see a hard drive in Windows, check its status in Disk Management

WINDOWS 10
Why can't I find a Windows 10 defragging tool?

Q I am trying out Windows 10 and have been looking for its disk defragmenter, so that I can deactivate it and use other software instead. I read somewhere that in order to find it, one has to click Start and type `defrag` into the search box, but when I do this nothing happens. In fact, nothing that I type into the search box seems to produce any results. Is Windows 10 broken already? How can I sort this out?

Chris, Web User Forums

IOS
What's the difference between Camera Roll and My Photo Stream?

Q Can someone tell me why I ended up with Camera Roll and My Photo Stream on my iPad? I don't really want to have both, because it means I've got two copies of every photo. Is it possible to get rid of one of them?

smudger879n, Web User Forums

A There's a short article on Norton's Your Security Resource blog (bit.ly/ios380) that explains the difference. Basically, Camera Roll shows the pictures that are physically on your device, while My Photo Stream shows images that are stored in your iCloud account. Unless you turn it off, Photostream is used to wirelessly sync any photographs you take between all your Apple devices. By doing so, it backs up any images you haven't yet copied to your computer by keeping a copy in the cloud.

With regards to saving space, My Photo Stream has a limited capacity for photos (I believe it's around 1,000) and after 30 days they are removed. The duplicate 'copy' on your phone isn't an actual copy, just a pointer, so it

My Photo Stream stores your recent photos in the cloud and syncs them

shouldn't take up much space at all. Any images that were synced from other devices should be compressed versions. If you're sure you want to turn it off, you can do so by opening Settings, iCloud, then Photos, and turning off My Photo Stream.
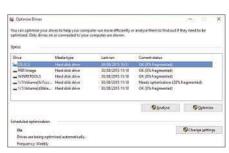
Eltheza, Web User Forums

A To get Search working, right-click the Taskbar, choose Task Manager and scroll down to Search. Right-click it and opt to End Task. The tool should restart on its own, so give it a moment and try it again.

Entering `defrag` into the white search box and clicking 'Defrag and Optimise Drives' opens a window where you can click 'Change Settings to turn off Optimisation'. Before turning it off, you'll see a notice showing the frequency with which Windows 10 is optimising the drives. I have not used an alternative defrag program yet and my drives are showing as 0% fragmented, so the OS appears to be doing a good job.

I would advise that you forget about installing a different defragger and let Windows 10 get on with it. Some folk go a bit over the top by constantly defragging, but it's not actually that good for your machine and hasn't been necessary since Windows 7.

rogerman40 and tornado, Web User Forums

Windows 10 automatically optimises your hard drives

Star Email

Windows 10: the good, the bad and the money

I have been using Windows 10 for a few weeks now, and overall I am finding it to be okay. It is certainly faster than Windows 7, which I was using previously, but as with any new operating system you need to get used to the changes.

To date, I have found only one very irritating change, which so far I have not been able to get around. This problem – or as Microsoft would probably put it "design feature" – is that it is not possible to have more than 15 favourite websites on the bookmarks bar in the Edge browser. This is clearly a retrograde step on Microsoft's part and is a very good reason to revert to Firefox. After all, the main reason for having a bookmarks facility is to remove the need to type in the addresses of frequently used sites. I asked Microsoft's tech support team about this problem and they confirmed the limitation to me.

On a different note, there has been much discussion regarding how "free" Windows 10 really is and how Microsoft is going to get money back in its coffers. I can't remember any of the pundits stating what I regard as the fairly obvious solution, namely an annual or monthly subscription to cover updates. After all, Microsoft has said that Windows 10 will only remain as a free download for one year. This payment method is already being used for Office and it must be tempting for Microsoft to use it for Windows. By the time a year is up, millions of computers will be running Windows 10, and although there would be a massive uproar, the majority of users will simply 'bite the bullet' either because they have no option or because it's too much trouble to switch to another OS.

Bob Oliver, via email

Peeved at being pestered by petitions

I'm pretty active on social media. Recently, a Facebook friend urged me to sign an online petition. It was a campaign that was close to my heart, so I dutifully clicked the link and carried out the instructions. I felt pleased, knowing I'd done my bit to help.

However, in the weeks that followed, my inbox became flooded with messages from the people behind the online petition. Every day, they hassled me to sign petition after petition. Most of these fresh campaigns weren't connected in any way to my original interest.

Eventually, I became so fed up of it that I unsubscribed from the campaign.

Online petitions are a great way to raise awareness of a social issue and they enable us all to take action. Yet by just signing once, why should we constantly be pestered to sign petitions we are simply not interested in?

Sharon Boothroyd, via email

Office 365 compensates for the Windows 10 swindle

I agree and disagree with your 'The Great Windows 10 Swindle' feature in Issue 378 (bit.ly/webuser378). I agree with 90 per cent of it including the ludicrous charge of £11 for a basic DVD player when VLC is free and the fact that Microsoft has gone down the route of trying to charge for games such as Solitaire if you want to remove the ads.

The bit I disagree with is the use of Office 365. Over the past few years, I've always had an 'iffy' version of Office and each time it was installed there was a mountain of updates to do and it all felt a bit wrong (I've grown more of a conscience as I've got older). When I found you could subscribe to Office 365 for £5 a month and get the latest versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and so on (including online versions), I was delighted. Even more so because I can access the same programs on my iPad and iPhone, and my files are stored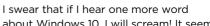 in the cloud so I can access them from anywhere. So to me it appears that Microsoft is trying to claw back the revenue it's missed out on through Windows 10 upgrades being free, but I think the Office 365 subscription is good value for what you get.

Simon, via email

Please stop harping on about Windows 10

I swear that if I hear one more word about Windows 10, I will scream! It seems

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

to be on every tech website and magazine cover at the moment, as if there's nothing else happening that's worth mentioning. Yes, we know that Microsoft has launched Windows 10, we know that it's a free upgrade with a few minor catches, and we know that most people think it's pretty good. So there's no need to keep telling us the same old stuff.

Lots of us PC users are perfectly happy on our current operating systems and we're starting to feel as if we've been forgotten. Why no features about Windows 7? It's still the most popular OS in the world, and as far as I know it has a few years left in it yet. Some people I know are still using XP, which makes them – what – four operating systems out of date now? Why pressure people to feel they have to upgrade by constantly harping on about the pros and cons of Windows 10 when they're free to make up their own minds and upgrade in their own time (if at all)?

So please, next time you think about squeezing yet more Windows 10 content into your pages, spare a thought for us who don't give a jot about the darn thing!

Caitlin Doherty, via email

Concerned by Amazon's cookies policy

I use only three of the sites mentioned in the 'Stop Using These Websites' feature in Issue 379 (bit.ly/webuser379) Yahoo

(not very often), Adobe (because you can get updates to Flash, Shockwave and Adobe Reader) and Amazon (frequently).

Concerning Amazon, I followed the instructions given in the article to turn off my browsing history. On the relevant page, it said: "Because your selection is managed through HTTP cookies, if you delete these cookies [to clear your browsing history] or use a different browser, you will have to make this same selection again."

Maybe this doesn't matter if you only ever use one browser and don't delete cookies, but I use two or three browsers regularly and I *do* delete cookies. Also I have three PCs, so do I have to change this setting over and over again in various browsers on various PCs? If so, then this is disgraceful, and there I was looking forward to receiving a lot fewer rubbish emails from Amazon!

Madeline, Web User Forums

I can't stop using websites I don't use!

Regarding the 'Stop Using These Websites' feature, I have never ever used Tumblr. I do not use TripAdvisor. I've never liked Yahoo and stopped using it years ago. I only use Download.com if I have to; I much prefer Major Geeks which you mentioned in the article. I use no media sites. I am stuck with Google, but I have turned off what I can, especially on my phones. I have Adobe Air which you

do not actually mention by name. I use Amazon a lot, but have always turned off my browsing history and suggestions. It is one thing that drives me wild.

I have not used eBay in 12 years and only twice in total, and had a PayPal account only for about four months. Both companies are spurious, if not plain dishonest. If I know this, then your expert readers should know it as well. Some people bleat too much when they should have taken action years ago, but the sheep must have Tw*tter and Crapbook and Bebo the clown.
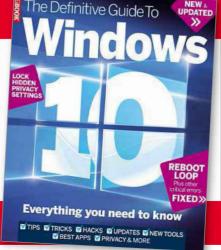
Martin Fletcher, Thorpe Hesley

Always read website privacy policies

In Issue 379, you pay a lot of attention to web companies with suspect privacy policies such as Amazon. It surprises me how many people don't even know that the sites they use even have privacy policies, let alone actually read the things. And yet they express shock and horror when they discover that the likes of Facebook (which should have been in your Top 10 worst sites, in my opinion, because it's full of idiots) are collecting their data and passing it to third parties.

To its credit, Facebook says upfront in its privacy policy that: "We collect the content and other information you provide when you use our services" and also that: "We share information we have about you within the family of companies that are part of Facebook". So it isn't exactly concealing it's business practices – it's just that nobody bothers to read the information provided!

I've found a good site about this topic called Terms of Service; Didn't Read (tosdr.org), which breaks down the privacy policies of lots of popular web services to make them easier to digest. I'd recommend that everyone reads it to find out exactly what their favourite sites are doing with their data – Google comes out of it looking particularly bad!

Harry "Phlegmatic" Fleming, via email

Why is the Best Buys section always the same?

I can't believe that you put the same Web User's Best Buys section in each issue. I bought another week's copy of the magazine because I found the recommendations useful, only to find that you put the same content in each issue, page for page. What a con!

Mark Sailes, Facebook

Web User **says:** The Best Buys section is updated every time we have a new Group Test in the magazine, which means at least every other issue. Our recommendations serve as a buyer's guide to the best hardware and software available in a particular category. This means the section doesn't need to be updated in every issue because the best device and program don't change that often. However, we will also update the section if a product is discontinued or if we have a head-to-head standalone review in that issue. We hope that explains how Best Buys works.

What you say...

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND WINDOWS 10 TO ANYONE USING WINDOWS 8?

Yes, it's like going from a tractor to a Porsche!

Richard Dowd @Richard_Dowd

Definitely. Windows 10 is lighter and better.

Anees Bakrain

I would recommend they stay away from Windows 10 unless they like getting spied on.

Adrian C Symonds

Yes. There's a bit of Windows 8 in Windows 10, but it's as easy to use as previous incarnations.

DLee @dlee1

I recommend it to anyone whether they were using Windows 7, 8 or 8.1. Windows 10 is by far the fastest, smoothest and most intuitive operating system ever.

Ethel Ethel @EthelEthel

No not yet. Too many things don't work in Windows 10.

Dave Blackburn @davewn7

No, unless you like solving problems. I've had to do a full reset with W10 and it still has problems.

taxineil2 @taxineil55

EBAY TURNED 20 IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. IS IT STILL A GOOD PLACE FOR BARGAINS?

No. It's full of traders selling stuff in Classified or 'Buy It Now'. Very few auctions, it seems. Turned into Gumtree, almost.

Phil Davis

You can never discount eBay. Once in a while you pick up an absolute bargain, though sometimes something you sell goes for 99p, so it's swings and roundabouts!

Chris Armstrong

You can find them, but you have to work at it.

Edward Taylor

Not really. I find most things cheaper on other sites, including Amazon.

Shaun Vaughan

DO YOU LIKE GOOGLE'S NEW LOGO?

It's not sitting well with my (grumpy old man) eyes. Feels like something aimed for the under-fives.

Peter Fitzsimmons

It has less detail, but is more eye catching. Very reminiscent of fridge-magnet letters.

Matt McCallion

My initial thought is that it's babyish.

James @jameseonline

I feel it needs "for ages 3-7" as a strapline.

Martin Brindley @martinbrindley

SHOULD SCHOOLS BAN SMARTPHONES?

Yes, but they should also be banned from the dining table.

Richard Bond

My son's school allows them before and after school (to allow for checking in with parents), but not during. Fair compromise.

Dave McAlister @dpmcalister

They should be kept in school bags. I was surprised when my first-year son was encouraged to take a photo of his homework rather than write it down.

Alan McClean

Absolutely. They are there to learn and it creates phone competition.

Ian Phipps

⚠ Page 404

Barry Collins becomes Google's lowest paid employee, earning a pittance for his expertise

My worthless year working for Google

Forget the stories about Amazon warehouse workers labouring 68-hour shifts for minimum wage; I've just spent the past year working for Google for £10.28. Not £10.28 per hour, but £10.28 in total.

Admittedly, the hours have been pretty light. Sometimes I start work at 11.15am and I'm done by 11.16am. Often, I'm not needed for days or even weeks at a time. And even when the job is nose-to-the-grindstone, the work isn't exactly taxing.

I've earned my pittance by answering simple, often random, questions via an app called Google Opinion Rewards (bit.ly/opinion380). This is market research for the mobile generation. Instead of sending a bloke to stand outside WH Smith with a clipboard, Google Opinion Rewards fires questions at you via your Android phone or tablet, sending you a notification each time there's a new survey to fill out.

The surveys are pretty short and sharp. Most are only three or four questions long, and some go no further than a single question. At the end of each survey, Google drops a few coins in your piggybank for your troubles. The most I've ever been paid for a survey is 60p; the least I've ever received is a demeaning 6p. There are kids stitching Nike trainers together in Indonesian factories who are reading this on their tea break and tutting.

What type of questions have I been asked to answer for my Google shilling? All sorts. But given that Google knows practically every site and search term

I've entered for the past five years, it doesn't seem to know me very well at all.
• "Do you have any investment in copper commodities?" (Erm, I've got a jar full of two-pence pieces?)
• "Have you attended a polo competition in the last 30 days?" (You appear to have confused me with the Duke of Westminster)
• "Have you participated in an Ultramarathon in the last two weeks?" (Well, I ran for a bus the Tuesday before last)

In other ways, however, Google's question setters know *exactly* what I've been up to. Some questions warn that you will be asked "questions about your shopping behaviour based on your recent location history". Then Google clearly cross-references its tracking data against my answers. For example,

> ❝ There are kids stitching Nike trainers together in Indonesian factories who are reading this and tutting ❞

I'm routinely asked: "When was the last time, if ever, you visited Tesco in person?" and am given a selection of dates to choose from, presumably to check if I'm telling porkies. If I get that question "right", I'm asked about my experience of shopping in the store, and earn a further reward for answering more questions. Sometimes enough to buy a tin of beans. Well, a dented tin of beans from the clearance aisle.

I genuinely have no idea what to make of Google Opinion Rewards. Part of me thinks it's a harmless way to earn pocket money while I'm waiting for the kettle to boil; part of me thinks it's Big Brother paying the proles a grain of corn to check they're not lying.

Yet, here's the saddest part. Google makes its payments in the form of credit for the Play Store. In the year since I've been taking these surveys, I've only found one app worth paying for. My opinion, I'm afraid, literally counts for nothing.
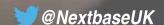
Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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