Issue 382

Rescue your PC – the ONLY way to prevent disaster p56

WebUser

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21 October - 3 November 2015

/ **Best software** / **New apps** / **Expert tips**

Hack Your
Own PC!

The 27 best Windows Registry tweaks – see p38

✓ Stop Windows restarting your PC
✓ Get back old tools you loved
✓ Disable pointless & annoying alerts
✓ Change Microsoft's dodgy defaults
✓ Uninstall junk files *completely*

PLUS 22 more hacks... p38

only £2.00

PLUS

Switch On or Off?
The crucial decision that will stop your devices dying p48

Learn The Insider Tricks Hackers Use
And stop them infecting your PC

Block iPad & iPhone Ads
Unbanned by Apple – your must-use apps p44

Don't fear the Registry!

A lot of advice about using a PC falls under the banner of common sense; for example, don't take it in the bath with you, don't fashion it into an eccentric bonnet and never, ever start fiddling about with the Registry. Why? Because you'll mess up your PC forever, you silly person!

However, like a lot of received wisdom, this isn't quite true. Tweaking your Registry to change how Windows works needn't feel like playing Russian roulette with your PC. In fact, there are lots of benefits – provided you know what you're doing. In this issue's cover feature (page 38), we round up 27 of the best Registry hacks to customise, enhance and speed up Windows, without causing irreversible damage to your PC.
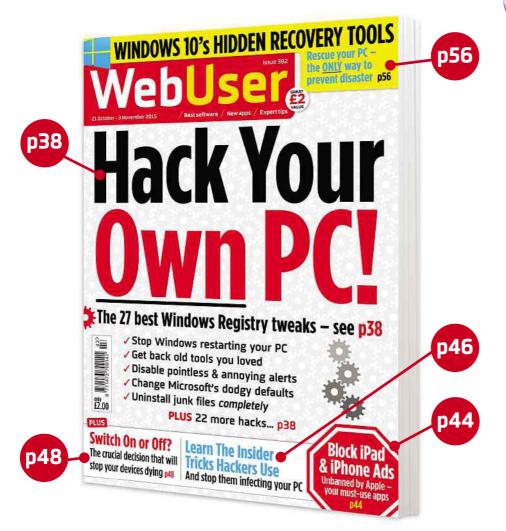
On the subject of Windows, I'd like to thank the thousands of readers who have bought our new book *The Definitive Guide to Windows 10*. It quickly sold out on Amazon, but has now been reprinted and is available from bit.ly/guidetowindows10 for its lowest price ever: just £8.51.

Robert Irvine
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
#webuser

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

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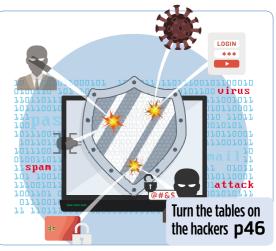
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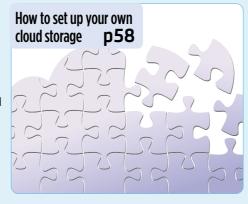
What's New Online

Journey through history on Wikipedia timeline

Spanning a mere 14 billion years, starting with the Big Bang, this is one of the most ambitious timelines we've ever seen. It is a 'histography' that condenses the 37,453,032 pages on Wikipedia (according to its own Statistics page: bit.ly/stats382) into an interactive chronology of everything important that has ever happened.

Each event is represented by a dot which opens into a photo when you hover your mouse over it. Click it and you see a link to the relevant Wikipedia page, plus videos and related events. To browse all this content, move the slider at the bottom of the page, or go straight to a historical era via the menu that pops up. There's also a list of categories on the right, including inventions, literature, natural history, empires and war.

It's all beautifully done. The dots fly across the screen as you move back and forth through time, and sound like ball bearings rattling against each other. New events will continue to be added in the future because the timeline has been set to automatically scan Wikipedia for new pages. Click the link below to start exploring, and also check out Wikipedia's list of its own timelines (bit.ly/timelines382, see screen grab, left).
histography.io

Read Harry Potter on Apple iBooks

www.apple.com/uk/ibooks
Like most things in the world of Harry Potter, books have fantastical properties that bring them to life. Some of this magic has been brought to the real world with the release of "enhanced" versions of all seven books. They feature interactive animations and annotations from JK Rowling, plus new covers and specially designed fonts. Just as magical, perhaps, is that for the first time they are now available digitally outside of JK Rowling's Pottermore website. Each book costs £6.99 on Apple iBooks and can be downloaded to iPhone, iPad, iPodTouch and Mac. See our review of the relaunched Pottermore website on page 16.

Control one million particles on your PC

bit.ly/particles382
The people behind Chrome Experiments love big numbers. In Issue 381, we reccomended one that places 300,000 bouncing bunnies on your PC (bit.ly/bunny381). In this issue, we can raise that number to seven figures with the 'Maximum One Million' experiment, which lets you control a million particles on your screen, making it resemble swirling interference on a TV.

Move your cursor and click the buttons at the bottom to create some superb effects. To hit the million-particle target, you have to open the control menu at the top right, then slide the 'numLevel' to 10. In the menu, you can also tweak the speed and size of the particles. You'll feel like God seconds after the Big Bang.

It's the work of Japanese web developer Yuichiroh Arai, who has created other mesmerising experiments comprising flashing triangles, rippling spheres and fluorescent tadpoles. See them all on his website: bit.ly/arai382.

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

Watch BBC iPlayer without Flash

www.bbc.co.uk/html5
The BBC has joined YouTube, Firefox, Apple and Amazon in the war against Flash. It has launched a beta version of the iPlayer that uses HTML5 to show video, replacing Adobe's beleaguered plugin. To use it, visit the web address above, then click 'Opt in to the HTML5 Player' at the top right.

Apple Maps gets more 3D flyovers

mapsconnect.apple.com
Apple Maps has one superb feature you won't find in Google's more popular rival: 3D flyovers of cities and landmarks. More locations have just been added, including Florence, Australia's Gold Coast and Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany (pictured, above). The website Apple Insider lists all the new locations at bit.ly/flyover382, while Apple's 'iOS 9 Feature Availability' page displays every flyover location (bit.ly/maps382). The UK is well represented, with London, Hull, Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham all included in the list.

Browse NASA's Moon missions photo archive

bit.ly/nasa382
The photo of Neil Armstrong below is one of around 13,000 images on the new Project Apollo Archive Flickr page, which captures NASA's Moon missions in remarkable detail. The team behind the project spent 11 years digitising the photos in high resolution, and the collection includes every photo ever taken on the Moon. Equally interesting are the photos of astronauts coping with cramped conditions as they journey to and from their lunar destination.

Watch 24 hours of flights worldwide

3d.luciad.com
Taking its data from the magnificent FlightRadar (www.flightradar24.com), the LuciadRIA Air Traffic Analysis map stunningly visualises every global flight that took place in the 24 hours between January 13 and 14, 2015. Use the 'filter' box at the bottom to zoom into airports and show flights of specific airlines.

5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@Vicky_McClure
Find out what the Nottingham-born actress does after *This Is England*

@RoyalNavy
Photos from air-sea rescue operations and on board the Navy's ships

@Wileyfox
Updates on the new British-designed phone, which runs the Android-based Cyanogen OS

@MeCookieMonster
Philosophical thoughts on the delights of cookies, straight from *Sesame Street*

@UKVolkswagen
Statements and information on the emissions scandal from VW UK

Use the Skype Translator
bit.ly/skype382
Skype's Translator tool has come out of beta, and now works in Windows 7, 8 and 10, translating your voice as you speak to and from English, Mandarin, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

Doodle on your Facebook photos
www.facebook.com/mobile
Facebook now lets you annotate photos you upload using its iOS and Android apps, an option previously available only on its Messenger app (en-gb.messenger.com). Click edit to start drawing, using the colour slider on the right.

Back up WhatsApp chats
www.whatsapp.com
If you use WhatsApp, you may now be able to set it to automatically back up your chats, photos and videos in Google Drive. The option is being gradually added to accounts "over the next few months".

EU court ends 'safe harbour' for US tech firms

What happened?

A European court ruled that a data-sharing agreement between the EU and US is invalid because of American mass surveillance. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has ended so-called 'Safe Harbour', a policy that allowed data on European citizens to be held in the US.

A legal challenge brought by Austrian law student Max Schrems against Facebook questioned whether European data was really secure in the US, particularly following Edward Snowden's revelations about mass surveillance by the NSA (National Security Agency).

The court agreed, meaning the 4,000 or so US firms that hold the data of EU citizens on American soil will no longer be able to do so. Either a new legal framework must be created to allow European data to be held in the US, or companies such as Facebook and Google will need to set up local data centres in Europe.

The move comes as the much criticised Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) has been signed by 12 countries. This secretive trade agreement has been both praised and slammed by everyone from activists to political leaders – including US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who

The end of Safe Harbour means US firms can no longer store our personal data in the US

questioned the need for the pact.

On the tech front, the TPP sets new rules about intellectual property and copyright, which includes provisions for rights holders to contact ISPs about piracy on their networks and have them pass on warnings to customers. They won't be able to get the identity of the pirate without a court order, which is how the process currently stands in the UK. Another provision bans member countries, which do not currently include the UK, from the very data-localisation laws that have been introduced in Europe following the end of Safe Harbour. This means that US tech firms, such as Google, will be able to store data from Japan or Chile (because both are TPP members) in America, but can only store European data on the continent.

It's harder to say what effect TPP will have on Europe online. In some ways, it will create a counterweight to the EU, but there's another deal in the works – called, confusingly, TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) – that aims to link the US and the EU. The digital side of this pact has delayed the agreement, because the EU is much stricter than the US about web regulations.

How will it affect you?

The end of Safe Harbour doesn't mean that Google and Facebook will suddenly stop working across Europe. It simply means they need to store data locally or get permission to hold it in the US. Exactly what will happen has yet to be decided but, either way, these problems shouldn't affect the service you receive. Smaller companies that operate on both sides of the Atlantic may find it more difficult to continue offering their services, but most will simply have to buy some space in a local data centre.

In the longer term, we may end up with a new Safe Harbour agreement; indeed, one has been in the works for two years now. This ruling might give European negotiators more leverage but, again, it's unlikely to be noticed by web users.

While services won't be affected, the end goal is to ensure that US spies don't automatically have access to our data because we use American services. Of course, this doesn't stop our own government snooping on our personal information and communications.

What do we think?

If nothing else, this is a sharp rebuke to American authorities, hopefully reminding them that they don't own the web or have the right to snoop on the citizens of other countries. It's also a positive sign that one person can influence how the web is run.

Most of us think we have little say in how the web works, but Max Schrems has proved this wrong. The Austrian law student has not only helped fell Safe Harbour, but previously pressured Facebook into behaving more carefully with our data. He's an inspiration to anyone who thinks the web can and should be a better place.

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

Mozilla drops plugins from Firefox

What happened?

Mozilla announced that it will soon stop supporting all plugins for its Firefox browser – except, somewhat surprisingly, Adobe's Flash. While that plugin is one of the most troublesome for security and stability, it's still one of the most widely used. Mozilla confirmed it will work with Adobe to boost the stability, performance and security of Flash.

In contrast, Mozilla said the features offered by other plugins – such as video, gaming support and advanced graphics – are now available via native web APIs, which means they no longer need plugins to work. For example, a website can embed videos so you can play them without needing to have a specific plugin installed. Mozilla added that plugins slow down browsers, cause crashes and pose a security risk. The upcoming 64-bit version of Firefox for Windows will launch without plugin support.

How will it affect you?

This move has been a long time coming, and Mozilla is following the lead set by Google and Microsoft with their Chrome and Edge browsers. Plugin support won't finish until the end of 2016, so there's still time for web publishers to update their sites. However, because websites evolve at different rates, you might find that a few older, smaller sites struggle to display certain types of content, such as streaming video, if it requires a specific plugin.

Support issues aside, the change you're most likely to notice is that your browser is working faster and crashing less frequently, leaving fewer potential holes open for hackers to gain access to your computer.

What do we think?

This is a wise move from Mozilla, and it's especially good to give web developers a year's notice, so they have time to update their sites to more modern ways of showing video and other interactive content. We look forward to our browsing being a bit smoother, faster and more secure. We can't think of any plugins we'll particularly miss.

Second Stagefright bug hits Android

What happened?

Google issued an emergency update for Android to fight back against Stagefright 2, another bug in its mobile operating system that could leave as many as a billion users vulnerable to security threats.

Earlier this year, Android was revealed to have a serious flaw – dubbed Stagefright – that meant hackers could infect phones with malware via text message, then spy on you using your microphone or camera. Up to a billion people who use Android 2.2 and above were potentially vulnerable, until the bug was patched by Google and handset manufacturers.

The new version of Stagefright affects all versions of Android, and the attacker doesn't even need your phone number to send you a text to exploit the security hole. With Stagefright 2, the flaw is in how Android processes video and audio files, such as MP3s and MP4s. This means that you could fall victim to an attack simply by visiting a website that runs an infected video or audio file.

How will it affect you?

Google is working on a security update, which should roll out to Nexus devices first. It's unclear how or when phones from other manufacturers will be patched, but Google managed to work with handset makers to patch the first Stagefright, so it should be able to find a way with the second version.

As always, think twice before clicking unknown links and keep your phone backed up to make sure your data is stored safely elsewhere, in case your phone is attacked.

What do we think?

Such flaws are alarming, but it's worth noting that just because a vulnerability theoretically affects a billion people, it doesn't mean that number of users is actively being attacked. Make sure you update your phone when a fix is made available, and exert the usual caution online – good security practice is necessary at all times, not just when a big flaw hits the headlines.

Windows 10 coming to phones in December

What happened?

Microsoft revealed that Windows 10 won't be coming to pre-existing Windows phones until December. According to a post on Facebook, the "broad availability of Windows 10 on other devices, including mobile phones, will begin rolling out in December".

If you don't want to wait until then, the quickest way to get Windows 10 on a smartphone is to buy one of Microsoft's new Lumia 950 or 950XL phones, both of which are set to launch during November. They have 5.2in and 5.7in screens respectively, and both offer 20-megapixel cameras, 3GB of RAM and 32GB of storage.

The Lumia phones will be the first devices to get the new Windows 10 Continuum feature, which lets your phone divide its processing power to run a Windows 10 Desktop on an external monitor. This means you can connect your phone to a dock with a keyboard, mouse and screen plugged in, and use it like a proper PC. However, this feature requires new processing hardware to work effectively, so not all phones upgrading to Windows 10 will be able to run it.

How will it affect you?

If you have a Windows 8.1 phone, you'll have to wait slightly longer than expected to get the free upgrade to the new mobile OS – and that's if your phone supports it at all. As we reported in Issue 379 (bit.ly/webuser379), the Windows 10 update requires at least 8GB of internal storage, which rules out lower-end Windows 8.1 handsets such as the Nokia Lumia 530.

When you do get the update, you'll be able to enjoy the redesigned Windows 10 interface, universal apps that work in both the Desktop and mobile versions of the OS and a redesigned action centre with more easily accessible settings.

If you just can't wait another six weeks or so for the upgrade, you'll be able to buy the Lumia 950 (for £450) or 950XL (for £550) sooner, though an exact UK release date had yet to be confirmed at the time of going to press.

What do we think?

With iOS 9 and Android 6 already available, Microsoft needs to get a move on with releasing Windows 10 for mobile. After all, the Desktop version has been available since the end of July.

Hopefully, the delay is down to Microsoft ironing out bugs in the software, although this hasn't affected the launch of the Lumia 950 and 950XL.

We're pleased that improvements to the OS make it easier to use the same tools on your phone and PC, something that wasn't implemented as well as it could have been in Windows 8.
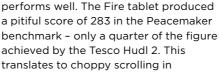
FIRST LOOK

Amazon Fire
bit.ly/fire382

At £49.99, the Amazon Fire is the lowest priced tablet we've ever seen from a major brand. Surprisingly, it doesn't look that cheap when you first get your hands on it; it's a bit chunky and heavy compared to other 7in tablets, but we prefer its matt-black finish to the glossy casing of the more expensive Amazon Fire HD 10.

The device also has a 1.3GHz quad-core processor under the hood but, sadly, that doesn't mean it

performs well. The Fire tablet produced a pitiful score of 283 in the Peacemaker benchmark – only a quarter of the figure achieved by the Tesco Hudl 2. This translates to choppy scrolling in Amazon's Silk web browser, particularly on media-heavy web pages. The Fire's single- and multi-core Geekbench results were also among the lowest of any device we've tested this year and even simple jobs such as opening apps or returning to the home screen often took several seconds.

The screen was never going to be brilliant on such a cheap device, so it was no surprise that the Fire scored poorly for both maximum brightness and colour coverage. It's remarkable, given the sub-£50 price tag, that the Fire tablet has front and rear cameras but, again, these were underwhelming, with the rear camera only capable of taking grainy, washed-out images with its 2-megapixel sensor.

Following the release of Android Lollipop, Amazon's Fire OS has improved a little, with a more familiar app-based grid on the home screen replacing the old carousel. But there's still no access to the Google Play store, so you'll have to do without Gmail, YouTube and Chrome, among many other apps.

Although Amazon deserves credit for producing such a low-cost tablet, we'd strongly encourage you to spend another £50 on the Tesco Hudl 2, which is better in almost every way.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is the iPhone 6S cheating users out of battery life?

It's been reported that Apple's powerful new iPhone 6 is leading a double life, where some users have more battery life than others. Apple has two manufacturers supplying the A9 chip at the heart of the iPhone 6S – Samsung and TSMC – and certain tests suggest that the chips behave very differently. Although they give similar power and performance, the TSMC A9 is said to offer around two hours more battery life than the Samsung chip.

Apple has sourced components from two different manufacturers before, but this is the first time there's been such a noticeable difference in battery performance. Interestingly, Apple admits there's a disparity between the chips but denies the extent of the discrepancy. In a statement released to tech news site Ars Technica (bit.ly/arstechnica382), Apple claimed that the two chips offer similar battery life – "within 2% to 3% of each other". It argued that the tests that found otherwise "are not representative of real-world usage, since they spend an unrealistic amount of time at the highest CPU performance state".

Even with a small 2% or 3% variation, however, Apple may have entered a grey area in retail law. What's to stop customers trading in their Samsung-equipped iPhone 6S for a TSMC one,

based on the benchmark figures? Worse still, prospective iPhone 6S buyers may decide not to buy the device at all if they know it contains the more power-hungry Samsung processor.

LIKELIHOOD RATING
✓✓✓✓✓

From bodies that bend to dodgy antennae, iPhones always come under close scrutiny from users, so Apple should have anticipated that the battery life discrepancy would be uncovered. But with the iPhone 6S experiencing record sales, we doubt that Apple particularly cares.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

⬆ **Twitter lets users upload videos from the web**
For the first time, Twitter users can now upload videos via the web as well as its mobile apps. The social network is also adding a GIF generator and will allow Periscope streams to play in your timeline.

⬆ **New emoji coming in 2016**
The Unicode Consortium in California has published a list of 67 emoji candidates, which include a rhino, a salad and a clown face, to be considered for addition to the current crop in June 2016.

WE DON'T LIKE...

⬇ **Facebook pays less tax than you do**
Facebook paid only £4,327 in corporation tax in 2014 – less than the amount paid on the average UK salary. In the same year, the company recorded a pre-tax loss of £28.5 million, but also paid its UK employees bonuses averaging £96,000 each.

⬇ **Police report increase in drone-related incidents**
Police figures have shown an enormous rise in drone-related incidents over the last year, with most complaints relating to unwanted surveillance or harassment.

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

Weigh-to-Fly
bit.ly/weigh382 | From £50

Arriving at the airport to find your suitcase exceeds the baggage allowance is one way to get any holiday off to a stressful start. Weigh-to-Fly helps you avoid this problem by calculating the exact weight of your luggage, without any heavy lifting required. Simply lock your case to its frame, start packing and use the free companion app to monitor the weight on your phone as you add and remove items. The frame doubles up as a clothes hanger and alerts you if you leave your luggage behind. The team is hoping to raise £50,000 by 11 November.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Ad blockers dropped by Apple

Following the introduction of iOS 9, users of Apple's mobile operating system have been able to stop adverts loading in Safari by using ad-blocking apps (we've reviewed the best ones on page 44). However, some of the apps that appeared in the wake of the update have since been removed from the iOS App Store by Apple due to security concerns. The ad blockers in question not only removed ads from Safari but also stopped them from appearing in apps such as Facebook and Pinterest by using a VPN to filter promotional content. One of these apps, Been Choice, has defended its behaviour, stating that only ad and tracker traffic was routed via its servers. However, the app's developers have also said they'll address Apple's concerns and release a revised version of Been Choice.
bit.ly/adblockers382

Microsoft web apps 'reveal user IDs'

Although Microsoft's web apps use a secure HTTPS connection when you log into your account, a numerical identifier of your account is shown in plain text in the host-name part of the URL, according to a Beijing-based blogger. This 16-character identifier, known as a CID, is visible to anyone who can monitor your DNS web traffic or who can see your web-traffic log. Indeed, it's there to see in any URL that you share from OneDrive. Although nobody can log into your account using your user ID alone, it can give someone access to information including your profile picture, real name and the date that you set up your account.
bit.ly/microsoft382

Android malware gives hackers root access

A new variety of malware that's currently spreading internationally gives hackers root access to Android devices, according to security researchers at FireEye. The adware, known as Kemoge, disguises itself as popular Android apps and is downloaded from third-party app stores when unsuspecting users click or tap links on websites and in in-app ads. Once opened, Kemoge collects a range of user information, including your IMEI number (which identifies your phone), and uploads it to a remote ad server. Your device is then bombarded with invasive ads and pop-ups. More worryingly, the app can also enable hackers to 'root' your phone, giving them full access to it and allowing them to make unauthorised changes to how it works.
bit.ly/kemoge382

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Steve Bell, Security Expert at BullGuard (www.bullguard.com)

Q Following the recent revelations about AVG's new privacy policy (bit.ly /avgprivacy382), why does security software need to track its users? Doesn't this make it as bad as the threats it's protecting against?
Ryan Andrews, via email

A Generally, security software collects information from users for one simple reason: to track malware and help to improve security. It reports on and identifies malware trends. This is enormously helpful in mapping trends, which in turn provides more information that security vendors can use as ammunition to protect their customers from the latest threats.

As for tracking, which means gathering information to sell to advertisers, many companies already do this. The dense pages of terms and conditions – the 'small print' you'll often see before installing software – are often extremely difficult to understand and shrouded in legal jargon. More often than not, they contain reference to some form of tracking.

Q Should iPhone and iPad users in the UK be worried about the hack that infected apps with malware in the Chinese iOS App Store?
Max Butler, Facebook

A This hack was significant in that it was one of only a few instances where the Apple app store has been successfully hacked.

The rogue program, named XcodeGhost, disguises itself as Apple's genuine Xcode software. It can trick developers who want to use Xcode into downloading the counterfeit version, and has been discovered in legitimate apps.

It was a clever hack in that it attempted to lure legitimate developers into using the rogue code. UK users needn't worry too much about this specific hack, but it does send out a general warning that the iOS App Store can be compromised and that other attackers may copy the approach.

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

WebUser

2014 BACK ISSUES DISC

Issues 335 – 361
All 27 issues of 2014
+ 6 FREE BONUS ISSUES! Jan-Mar 2015

2014 Back Issues Disc

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

Perfect, all the old mags in a simple-to-find order Peter Brown ★★★★★

Great stuff, now I can clear my stack of old mags without loss of info Colinz ★★★★★

Lots of interesting articles and tips Bill Daniels 1973 ★★★★★

Easy to navigate around and clears so much shelf space JK ★★★★

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⭐ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

LIFESTYLE   `NEW`

Coach
www.coachmag.co.uk

Instead of becoming a calorie-obsessed bore, make yourself happier and healthier with the help of this blokey site, where the emphasis isn't on tyrannical workouts but on having fun while getting fit. It combines articles from the new, free weekly magazine with exclusive web content to create a lively, knowledgeable source of inspiration and motivation. Coach covers topics as diverse as choosing running shoes, winning arm-wrestling matches and mixing the perfect margarita, with plenty of videos and interviews to support its expert advice. The site's smart, colourful design is complemented by its fun, friendly tone.

Our rating ★★★★★

Fitness

How to Win Every Single Arm Wrestling Match Ever
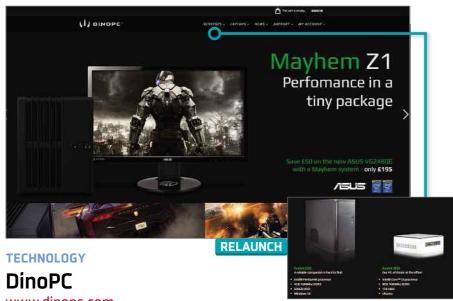
FITNESS
Get advice on topics ranging from exercise to arm wrestling

Entertainment

Mental Gymnastics: The Coach Magazine Pub Quiz #001
Test your grey matter with the magazine's brain-teasing pub quiz
7 Oct 2015 / ENTERTAINMENT / DO SOMETHING

10 Best Netflix Documentaries to Get Your Blood Pumping
Settle down with these must-see documentaries tonight and feel inspired to do something incredible
5 Oct 2015 / ENTERTAINMENT / DO SOMETHING

ENTERTAINMENT
Coach combines fun web articles with tips from the free magazine

COACH   FITNESS   HEALTH
HEALTH

19 YouTube Videos to M
You to Achieve Greatne

Know Your Nuts
7 Oct 2015 / HEALTH

Smart Casual: What Does It Really Mean?
6 Oct 2015 / STYLE

TRENDING: FITBRIT   DO

Mayhem Z1
Perfomance in a tiny package

Save £50 on the new ASUS VG248QE with a Mayhem system · only £195

`RELAUNCH`

TECHNOLOGY

DinoPC
www.dinopc.com

"Wow" was our first reaction to this revamped website for the custom PC store, which oozes class and is a massive improvement on the cramped old design. Huge photos of desktop and laptop computers dominate the layout, and DinoPC's new logo and slogan ("engineered for the extreme") do a fine job of promoting its wares. It's now much easier to browse the gaming and multimedia machines – with scary names such as Mayhem, Carnivore and Rage – and compare their specs, performance and price. There's also a section highlighting DinoPC's latest deals though, sadly, the Support area wasn't live when we visited. Still, it's a T rex of a site and very impressive.

Our rating ★★★★☆

`RELAUNCH`

FOOD
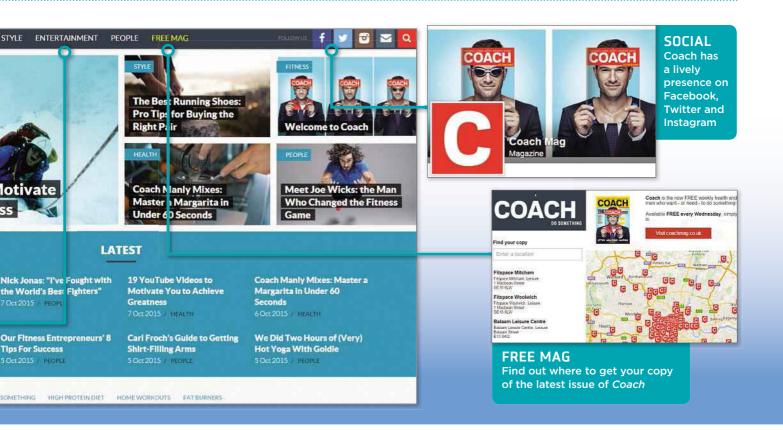
Great Bakes
www.greatbakes.co.uk

If the *Great British Bake Off* has whetted your appetite for home baking, but your own efforts are mostly burnt offerings, you can buy some delicious treats from this relaunched site. These include its flagship Stickyjacks – "an outrageous combination of sticky caramel, dark chocolate and buttery flapjack" – and four different types of chocolate brownie. All the cakes are sold in tins of 12 pieces, with free delivery within the UK. We like the site's personal approach and mouthwatering photos, but we're not sure why the online store section is separate from the product pages.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

Reviews by Robert Irvine

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

SOCIAL
Coach has a lively presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

FREE MAG
Find out where to get your copy of the latest issue of *Coach*

RELAUNCH

CURRENT AFFAIRS

The Spectator
new.spectator.co.uk

It may be the oldest continuously published magazine in the English language, but the *Spectator* now has a fresh, modern website that belies its 187 years. The pared-down design ditches superfluous categories and features such as the keyword cloud in favour of a cleaner look that seamlessly blends photos, illustrations and opinion, along with the inevitable arguments in the comments sections. We like the subtle but effective colour-coding throughout the site and, even if you don't agree with the politics, you have to admire the quality and quantity of free content.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

BOATING

Zizoo
www.zizoo.com

This useful site (named after the film *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*) lets you find and book sailing holidays in more than 30 countries worldwide. Select a destination and boat type – such as catamaran or motorboat – and Zizoo will return matching results complete with details of size, home port, cabins and price. Additional info covers aspects such as whether the boat needs a skipper, the deposit amount and the onboard equipment. Booking online couldn't be easier and you get a full refund if you cancel within five days. It's a simple and flexible route to life on the ocean waves.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

NEWS

Upvoted
upvoted.com

In Issue 379 (bit.ly/webuser379), we called Reddit "a hotbed of obnoxious and offensive views", but this spin-off hopes to redress such criticisms. Upvoted selects the best original articles, photos, videos and podcasts posted on "the front page of the internet", and presents them in a less scrappy manner, with extra research from the team. The big difference is that users can't comment on articles, so there should be no Reddit-style unpleasantness. Nor – despite the site's name – can they 'upvote' items to give them more prominence; but there will be lots of 'sponsored content'. Boo!

Our rating ★★★☆☆

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

⭐ Best New Websites

RELAUNCH

NEWS
The Independent
www.independent.co.uk

The revamped site for *The Independent* ticks all the right boxes for a modern news source: it's image-led rather than text-based, works perfectly on any device and has lots of space for ads and sponsored articles. Although it lacks the character of sister site i100 (i100.co.uk), the homepage is packed with content and beautifully organised to make it easy to browse. The fresh, attractive design is enhanced by well-chosen photos that only load as you reach them, to keep you scrolling smoothly. It's a shame category tags aren't colour-coded for at-a-glance reference, but otherwise this is a stylish way to dip into the day's news.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

PRIVACY
Apple Privacy
bit.ly/privacy382

Apple doesn't get as much stick as Google and Microsoft about privacy, but it still felt obliged to update the Privacy section of its website to explain what it does with your data – and why. The main page covers everything from encryption in Apple Pay and iCloud to the benefits of letting Siri and Apple Music get to know you and your tastes. Apple's assurances that it doesn't mine, sell or compromise your data are more convincing than Microsoft's, and its clarifications are welcome, if slightly defensive. There's also a useful section about managing your privacy settings and details of Apple's response to government data requests.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NEW

SPACE
Principia Mission
principia.org.uk

This site offers the opportunity to follow the first UK astronaut in space for more than 20 years on his journey to the International Space Station. Major Tim Peake will be embarking on the six-month Principia mission in December, and there's already lots to explore here, including details of the experiments he'll be conducting aboard the ISS. You can also watch Tim speaking to schoolchildren about the mission. A blog and social-media accounts will be charting his progress, so you'll be able to tweet him in space and view his videos on YouTube. It's a fascinating project that makes marvellous use of the web.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

BOOKS
Pottermore
www.pottermore.com

The official Harry Potter hub has been transformed from an online community of wannabe wizards into a cross between a Potter encyclopedia, news feed and Buzzfeed-style blog. The latter offers articles such as 'The 10 scariest Harry Potter villains', but it's missed a trick by not letting fans comment on them. The standard is high throughout, from the marvellous new design and seamless blend of content from the books and films, to the magic search facility, which conjures up instant results, and JK Rowling's exclusive writing contributions. However, we wish they'd hurry up and add the feature that tells you what your Patronus is – we need to know!

Our rating ★★★★☆

The 10 scariest Harry Potter villains

RELAUNCH
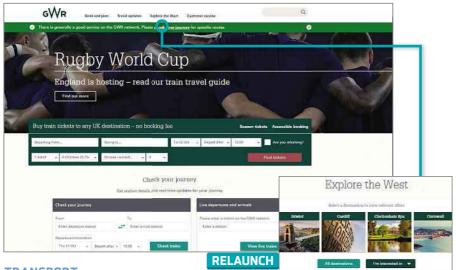
TRAVEL
Aer Lingus
new.aerlingus.com

The Irish airline that isn't Ryanair has overhauled its online hub to excellent effect. Much less cramped and garish, the smart new design is simple to navigate, with essential options such as Manage Trip and Check In prominently displayed above the flight-search box. Other info is now tucked away in swish drop-down menus rather than lumped at the bottom of the page. A handy new feature saves your searches for future reference, and you can quickly switch between deals on hotels, holidays and car hire. Also, unlike many revamps, the improvements have been applied throughout the site and not just to the homepage.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

TRANSPORT
Great Western Railway
www.gwr.com

It's goodbye (some would say good riddance) to First Great Western and hello to Great Western Railway (GWR), and the rebranded rail network has relaunched its website accordingly. The result is impressively slick and speedy, with a much-improved ticket-booking facility that provides an 'accessible booking' option to make the process even easier. You can check your journey and view live departures and arrivals directly from the homepage – there was a "generally good service" when we visited – and we like that customer-service links such as 'refunds and compensation' are now instantly accessible. With its smart design and passenger-led approach, the GWR site looks very promising – let's hope its trains prove as fast and reliable!

Our rating	★★★★★

NEW

FOOD
McDonald's Good to Know
www.mcdonalds.co.uk/good-to-know

Are Chicken McNuggets made from chicken? It might sound like a clucking stupid question but this site hopes to scotch the rumours that they actually contain beef or "pink goop". It cheerfully describes how McDonald's products are made, using videos from its Good to Know YouTube channel in which youngsters go behind the scenes at the chain's farms and butchers (conveniently skipping the abattoir!). It's not a bad promotional effort, but you might want to take it with a pinch of salt!

Our rating	★★★☆☆

➕ ALSO NEW

BUSINESS
Virgin Media Pioneers
www.virginmediapioneers.com
★★★★☆

If you fancy yourself as the next Richard Branson, this site could get your dreams off the ground. It provides a place for small businesses and entrepreneurs to find advice, information and inspiration, and connect with like-minded people. Pioneers has been redesigned to give it a fresh lease of life, and provides lots of interesting and useful new content.

SPORT
Snooker Hub
snookerhub.co.uk
★★★★☆

Snooker enthusiasts can find events around the UK at this great-looking site, which also offers league rankings, tournament results and insights from "the heart of the amateur game". The site uses photos, videos and social media to convey its passion, and its constantly updated calendar is an invaluable source for cue action.

MONEY
Free Price Compare
freepricecompare.com
★★★★☆

This relaunched price-comparison site finds you the best deals on everything from car insurance and holidays to broadband and electricity – in one place. Its streamlined, mobile-friendly design makes bagging bargains even easier and there's a new Daily Deals section that rounds up thousands of offers from sites such as Wowcher, Groupon and Living Social.

FUN
Scream Into The Void
screamintothevoid.com
★★★☆☆

Want to vent your spleen on the web without upsetting anybody? Then visit Scream Into The Void, type your negative feelings into the box provided and click the Scream button to watch them slowly disappear into the titular void with an accompanying yell. That's all there is too it, really; let's hope trolls use it as a place to let off steam.

WEBSITE SECRETS

Turn on subtitles in BBC iPlayer

Ceefax may have disappeared from our screens in 2012, but at least one element of the teletext service lives on through the HTML5 version of BBC iPlayer. Currently being tested by the Beeb (you can opt in to try the beta at www.bbc.co.uk/html5), the player lets you turn subtitles on and off by typing 888, as you would to access the subtitles page in Ceefax and Teletext. Yes, you can also activate subtitles by clicking the 'S' icon in iPlayer, but where's the fun in that? ∎

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Make a responsive site in five steps

Incomedia has launched version 12 of its web-design software, WebSite X5 Evolution (www.websitex5.com), which now helps you create responsive sites that look great no matter what size of screen they're viewed on. As with previous versions, the software uses a simple five-step process and doesn't require any knowledge of HTML or CSS, so you can concentrate on the content and design. It can even help you create sophisticated designs such as online shops and password-protected members-only areas. WebSite X5 Evolution 12 is available for £49.99.

If you'd like to see your content published on an app as well as a website, you'll need WebSite X5

Professional 12 (£139). This uses Incomedia's FeedReady tool to create an app for your users to download, to feed your site's updates as you publish them.

Blog straight to Facebook

If most of the traffic for your blog comes from friends and family via your Facebook page, you could consider ditching the blog site and switching to Facebook's newly updated Notes tool (www.facebook.com/notes) instead. This lets you post longer, better formatted posts, and you can save drafts and add pictures throughout.

Deal of the Fortnight

Names.co.uk (www.names.co.uk) is offering 20 per cent off its Starter package, which has 50GB of web space and unlimited traffic for £4.79 per month.

Web-building Helpdesk

Alison Curry-Taylor, Operations Director SME hosting, DailyInternet (www.daily.co.uk)

Q Is it more expensive for a UK resident to register for a foreign domain than for a resident in that country? I'd like to have a web address with an unusual suffix.

Sam Donaldson, via email

A No. The only difference in price will come from the registrar that you choose to register the domain with, and not from any base-level pricing differences dependant on the country you are registering from. Not all foreign domains are open to general registration, however, and you may need a business number or address in the chosen country to use its internet domain suffix. This is just a measure to stop all the local domain names being snapped up by foreign companies and individuals.

MINI WORKSHOP | Create a survey on your WordPress website
CaptainForm: www.captainform.com | 10 mins | WordPress

CaptainForm is a brilliant new WordPress plug-in that lets you find out exactly what visitors think of your site. You can create three forms and gather 500 responses per month, free of charge

1 Download the plug-in from the CaptainForm website, then install and activate it from the Plugins menu by clicking Add New. **1** A CaptainForm option is added to the menu. **2** Click it and press the New Form button to choose the type of form you want. **3** Options include feedback, surveys, quizzes and registering for events.

2 You are given a basic template that you can edit. You can add new fields, **1** edit existing ones, **2** and drag and drop them to change their order. Show Layout Options **3** lets you change elements such as the typeface and size of text. Click Preview Form **4** if you want to see how it's looking.

3 When you've finished the form, click Publish and copy the shortcode. Create a new WordPress page containing the shortcode, to place where the form will appear. Don't forget to link to it, so your visitors can find it. To see the results of your form, select it in My Forms **1** and click the Submissions button. **2**

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

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Apple iPad Mini 4

David Ludlow tests Apple's iPad Mini 4, the updated smaller and more affordable model in Apple's iPad range

Last year's iPad Mini 3 wasn't a bad tablet but it seemed overpriced, given that the only extra it had over the iPad Mini 2 (which is still available) was the TouchID sensor. This year, Apple is back on track with the iPad Mini 4, which improves on previous models in practically every way, delivering specs that more closely match the iPad Air 2, but in a smaller body.

Build quality

As with all previous iPad Minis, the build quality and design can't be beaten – this mini tablet is the best there is. Its aluminium body (available in gold, space grey and silver) looks fantastic, and feels more ruggedly reassuring than even the best plastic tablets available.

Apple has made a few little changes along the way. As with the iPad Air 2, the iPad Mini 4 no longer has the switch on the side, which could be set to toggle the screen rotation lock or put it into silent mode. On previous iPads, it was handy to use this as a mute switch, and we missed it on the iPad Air 2,

but you can still press and hold the volume down button if you need to quickly silence the tablet.

At 203 x 134 x 6.1mm, the Mini 4 is taller and thinner than the Mini 3 (which was 200 x 135 x 7.5mm). While the 18-per-cent difference in thickness sounds significant, it's hard to notice just from holding it in your hand. As before, it's extremely comfortable to hold and use one-handed.

Screen

It's not until you set an older iPad next to a tablet that has a higher-spec screen, such as the iPad Air 2, that you can see how much better the colour accuracy and image detail is on newer models. Our colour calibration tests support this: the iPad Mini 3 is only capable of displaying 67.1 per cent of sRGB colours, while the Mini 4 is capable of

producing 94.8 per cent. This makes it one of the best tablet screens we've used. And although the iPad Mini 4's screen has the same 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution, it's still 324 pixels per inch, which keeps everything looking extremely sharp.

Performance

The last two generations of iPad Mini have used the A7 chip, but Apple has boosted the iPad Mini 4 with an A8 chip, which was first used in the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 Plus. It's not as impressive as the iPad Air 2's A8X chip, which has three cores and improved graphics performance, nor is it up to the new A9 chip, used in the iPhone 6S, but the

improvement in performance remains impressive.

We ran GeekBench 3 (bit.ly/geek382) to measure processor performance and found that the iPad Mini 4 scored 1,694 in the single-core test and 3,058 in the multi-core test – an improvement over the iPad Mini 3's respective scores of 1,385 and 2,485. These results also stand it in good stead against its closest competition, the Samsung Galaxy Tab S2, which scored 1,244 and 4,182 (a higher multi-threaded performance, thanks to its quad-core processor).

Apple's slick Safari browser, combined with its efficient processor and operating system, also made its web performance exceptionally good. It achieved an excellent score in the Peacekeeper

> **"** The iPad Mini 4 improves on previous models in practically every way, and has one of the best tablet screens we've used **"**

browser test (peacekeeper .futuremark.com), proving that this tablet can easily cope with any website you care to visit.

It's also more than capable of running any existing game, as is evinced by its GFXBench Manhattan benchmark (gfxbench.com) score of 925 running at native resolution, and 1,330 result in the 1080p off-screen test.

The 5,124mAh battery also did very well in our tests. It lasted for 10 hours and 43 minutes in our video playback test, with the screen set to a brightness of 170cd/m^3. That's a little over an hour more than the Mini 3.

iOS 9 and camera

The Mini 4 comes with iOS 9 installed, which means you can use the new Split View mode that lets you run two apps side-by-side at the same time, rather than having to flip between them. Our Workshop in last issue's *Web User* (bit.ly/ webuser381) explored some of the useful new features that iOS 9 brings to Apple's devices.

Where the iPad Mini 3 had a 5-megapixels camera, the Mini 4's is 8-megapixels, which provided significantly more detail to our test shots. The outdoor shots were well-exposed, with plenty of detail across all parts of the image, from the brightness of the sky to the darker areas in shadow. But when we tried taking photos indoors, the camera's

limitations started to become apparent, with noise creeping into the image and colours becoming muted. There's no flash on this device so, if conditions are too dark, you simply won't be able to take any shots.

There's the usual range of photo options we've come to expect from Apple devices, including panoramas, 1080p video and 120fps (frames per second) slow-motion at a resolution of 1,280 x 720 pixels. Shooting video, as with photos, works best outside where there's lots of natural light, and suffers from image noise in lower-light conditions.

TouchID

As with the iPad Mini 3, the new model is equipped with the TouchID fingerprint reader. This gives you a quick way to log into your iPad, and saves you having to type a six-digit code (the default

code length for iOS 9) to open the device.

TouchID is also being used by an increasing number of apps, such as for logging into your Amazon account. You can also use it to authorise Apple Pay payments in-app, which saves having to type in your credit card details.

Price

As with all Apple devices, there's no memory card slot, which means there's no way of expanding the storage. This means having to decide at the point of purchase the amount of memory you'll need.

The entry-level model costs £319 but provides just 16GB, which we don't think is enough. However, the £80 jump in price to the 64GB model, which costs £399, isn't prohibitive, and it's probably the model most people will plump for. There's also a 128GB version that costs £479. It's a shame that the entry-level option isn't 32GB, which would make it much more useful.

As with previous generations of iPad, you have a choice of Wi-Fi or Wi-Fi+Cellular models. The first has 802.11ac Wi-Fi for fast wireless connections, which provides noticeably better speeds when you're downloading apps or large files, such as films, if you've got an 802.11ac router and a quick internet connection. If you pay the extra £100 for the Cellular model, you also get a built-in 4G receiver, so you can get online whenever and wherever you like.

OUR VERDICT ★★★★★

The iPad Mini 3 was a bit of a disappointment, but Apple is back on form with the iPad Mini 4, which is hands-down the best small tablet that you can buy.

It makes the most of Apple's new operating system and the boost to its specification brings it closer to the iPad Air 2, with enough power to run

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

the latest apps and games without a struggle.

The battery life has also been improved, giving it an extra hour over previous models.

PRODUCT INFO

iPad Mini 4
www.apple.com/uk
Price: £319 (16GB); £399 (64GB); £479 (128GB)

SPECIFICATIONS

- 64-bit A8 processor
- M8 motion co-processor
- 7.9-inch LED-backlit display
- 2,048 x 1,536 resolution (324 pixels per inch)
- 8-megapixel iSight camera
- 1.2-megapixel FaceTime camera
- 1080p HD video recording (30fps)
- 120fps slow motion
- 802.11a/b/g/n/ac dual-band Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth 4.2
- Touch ID
- iOS 9

FOR

✓ Best of the smaller-size tablets
✓ Significant boost in specifications

AGAINST

✗ iPad Mini 2 now great value for money
✗ Processor a step behind the latest iPhone 6S

CHEAPER ALTERNATIVE

Apple iPad Mini 2 32GB, £259
bit.ly/minitwo382

ALMOST AS GOOD ANDROID

Samsung Galaxy Tab S2 8.0, £320
bit.ly/samsung382

Synology RT1900ac router

Synology is well known for its excellent network attached storage (NAS) drives, but how good is its new router? **Andy Shaw** finds out

Synology has been manufacturing classy NAS drives for years, but it's now put its networking know-how into this new router, which is as pleasurable to use as it is speedy.

The RT1900ac is simple to set up. When you first switch it on, it configures a basic Wi-Fi network which you can connect to using any device – in our case, an iPad. From here, it uses a few simple multiple-choice steps to set up both 2.4GHz and 5Ghz networks, which use similar names and the same password by default. The router connects to the web via Ethernet, so if that doesn't correspond with your existing connection, you'll need an Ethernet modem or to pass the connection through your current router.

Synology provides a web-based configuration tool and a simplified app for its router, both of which are the best we've seen from any manufacturer. The web interface, which is for use on a PC, works just like a Desktop – just click icons to open settings windows – so it's familiar and easy to use. You can also download and install add-on apps, such as a VPN server, download station and media server (which uses the device's USB 3.0 port or SD card slot to host files).

Synology has developed a sophisticated mobile app that provides quick access to a host of useful everyday settings, and it's much easier to use than most router apps we've seen. For example, you simply tap the relevant icon to control traffic management, so you can prioritise traffic to a particular device when you need it. You can also instantly access parental controls, block access to specific devices and keep an eye on the stats, which are clear and well-designed.

We tested the Wi-Fi speed of the RT1900ac using an iPad Air 2 (which has beamforming-compatible 802.11ac networking), using the WiFi SweetSpots app (bit .ly/wifi382) to measure the throughput of the network. To get an idea of how the device compares to other models, we ran the same tests on a Netgear R6300, set up next to the Synology router. This is a lower-rated 802.11ac 1750 router that we'd expect to perform at slower speeds, and is the kind of model you might want to upgrade from.

We didn't see much difference when using the 2.4GHz network, even when we moved around our test house – both routers reached 120Mbps (around 15MB/s) at their peak performance. However, the 5GHz network showed a significant disparity. The Netgear router saw speeds around 135Mbps (17MB/s) across the house, while the Synology put in a cracking performance, reaching speeds of 473Mbps (59MB/s) at close range, and 263Mbps (33MB/s) in a distant room that often struggles with Wi-Fi.

PRODUCT INFO

Synology RT1900ac
www.synology.com
Price: £108

SPECIFICATIONS

- 802.11a/b/g/n/ac (1900 category: 600Mbps 2.4GHz, 1,300Mbps 5GHz)
- Simultaneous dual-band
- Beamforming
- WEP, WPA/WPA2-Personal, WPA/WPA2-Enterprise security
- 4 x Gigabit Ethernet LAN ports
- 1 x Gigabit Ethernet WAN port
- 1 x USB 3 port
- 1 x SD card reader
- 3G/4G dongle support
- 206 x 160 x 66mm
- 0.51kg
- 2 year warranty

FOR

✓ Fast
✓ Easy to set up
✓ Great configuration tools

AGAINST

✗ Little benefit if your devices are stuck on 2.4GHz

OUR VERDICT ★★★★★

Everything that's good about Synology's networked storage devices has been successfully transferred to its new router. The performance is excellent and the interface is wonderful – it's the best combination of web and mobile apps that we've seen on a router to date.

At the time of going to press, the price wasn't yet set, though the £108 we've quoted here is what Synology's team are expecting it to sell for. That's fantastic value for money, considering its excellent performance and brilliantly designed interface.

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

Synology®

Enjoy music

Create Your multimedia centre

Enhance productivity

HOME

DS115j AND DS215j
THE PERFECT DATA STORAGE SOLUTION FOR YOUR HOME
Run your own personal cloud from the comfort and security of your home

POWER-SAVING AND RELIABLE

DS215j features a dual-core CPU, supports up to 12TB of data and consumes less than 14w when active while the DS115j offers a stable storage environment for users with no need for raid, consuming less than 11w when active.

ACCESS ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Synology NAS' and the intuitive DiskStation Manager (DSM) software allow users to sync and share files among multiple devices, including Windows PC, Mac, Linux, iOS, Android and Windows Phone.

MULTIMEDIA CENTRE

Audio Station, Photo Station, Video Station and Media Server transform your Synology NAS into a centralised multimedia hub.
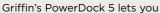
Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

MULTI-DEVICE CHARGER

Griffin PowerDock 5

£79.95 from **www.johnlewis.com**
Date tested: September 2015

Griffin's PowerDock 5 lets you charge a whole household's worth of mobile devices at one time, supplying plenty of power across all five of its USB ports. It doesn't matter whether you've got five tablets or five phones, they'll all sit nicely in this dock, although you'll need to make sure that the cables don't get tangled.

KEY SPECS
Supports five USB devices ▪ 2.1A output on each port ▪ 200 x 130 x 80mm ▪ 340g

WINDOWS 10 PC

PC Specialist Evora

£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

All prices correct at time of review

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2016

£19.99 from bit.ly/kaspoffer2016
Date tested: June 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 £19.99 (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 ■ Compatible with Windows 10

BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

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

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

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

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements 13

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

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

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

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

AVG AntiVirus Free 2016

free.avg.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 2.8MB

AVG updates its range of anti-virus products annually, but only tends to change the interface every two years. The fresh new look introduced in the 2015 edition has been carried over to the 2016 release with some (very) minor cosmetic tweaks. Under the bonnet, there are more significant changes, designed to improve the software's ability to protect your PC from malware.

Behavioural monitoring – which helps AVG detect potential new threats – has been improved, and is much smarter in this new version. As you would expect, the program is also now fully compatible with Windows 10.

The biggest change in the 2016 edition is the introduction of cloud-based protection. This long overdue feature uses 'crowd intelligence' (data sourced from other users) and advanced artificial intelligence to identify malware outbreaks in real time. In theory, this ensures you're always

safe from the latest threats.

AVG AntiVirus Free offers real-time, on-demand and scheduled protection, and safeguards you against rootkits and malicious links (using LinkScanner). It can also protect your other devices via AVG Zen; find problems using PC Analyser; and boost performance if you install the optional AVG PC TuneUp. Additionally, the software protects your

privacy through AVG Identity Protection (enabled by default) and Privacy Fix (another optional add-on).

When installing the program, make sure you select 'Custom installation' and then 'Basic protection' to skip the 30-day trial of the Pro version. You can also choose whether you want to install AVG's web- and email-protection features.

⚙ MINI WORKSHOP | Keep your PC safe from threats using AVG

1 The home screen in AVG AntiVirus Free shows you at a glance which components are active (in green, and marked with a tick). **1** A module that's been disabled will be flagged up; **2** just click Fix Now **3** to repair the problem. The Fix Performance button **4** scans your PC looking for errors and junk files, but you'll need to install PC TuneUp to fix them.

2 To check your PC for viruses and other threats, click the 'Scan now' button. **1** The software will run a whole computer scan, which may take a while to complete. The Reports screen shows the scan's progress, and you can pause or stop a scan at any time. Clicking the cog icon **2** will let you choose the type of scan to run.

3 You can manage scheduled scans; scan the whole computer; target specific files or folders; or run an anti-rootkit scan. There are settings available for each type of scan. **1** You can also adjust the scanning priority (Dynamic, Basic, Medium or Fast). **2** 'Additional scan settings' **3** lets you specify file types to scan or exclude.

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

SYSTEM TOOL
NetworkTrafficView 2
nirsoft.net
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 127KB

This handy bandwidth-monitoring tool from Nirsoft captures the packets that pass through your network adapter and displays general statistics about your traffic. You can see at a glance which browsers are accessing the internet, and which apps are online. The first time you run it, you'll need to select the capture method and network adapter to monitor. The latest version adds four columns to the adapters list in the 'Capture Options' window and displays more accurate information.

GAME
Yume Nikki 3d
bit.ly/yume382
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 46.4MB
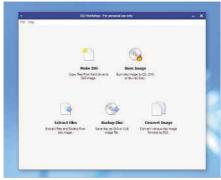
This fan-made game, which is based on the Yume Nikki universe (a Japanese game from 2004), is a 3D adventure in which you control a little girl named Madotsuki. The game begins in her bedroom from where you enter a bizarre dream world of interconnected portals. To finish the game, you need to locate three keys and six 'effects' (including a bicycle and a knife).

ISO TOOL
ISO Workshop 6
www.glorylogic.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3MB

If you want to back up software CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays, the best option is to save them as image files – operating systems are usually available to download in this format. ISO Workshop lets you make ISO files from your own content; view and extract files; convert one image format to another; and write ISO files to disc. The latest version has a new interface and advanced boot options.

New Windows Apps

Candy Crush Soda Saga
bit.ly/candycrush382
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 50.9MB
Like its predecessor, Candy Crush Saga, the aim of this game is to match items (candies and soda in this case) to clear them from the grid. There are lots of levels and game modes.
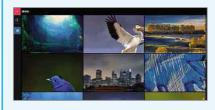

Brilli Wallpaper Changer – Start, Desktop & Lockscreen
bit.ly/brilli382
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 63.1MB
This customisation app uses Bing Images (you can set the region) to create wallpapers for your Desktop, Start screen and lock screen. You can set the interval frequency.
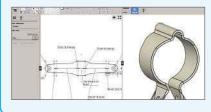

Wedge
bit.ly/wedge382
Min requirements: Windows 8+/10
File size: 21.07MB
Wedge is a simple CAD (Computer Aided Design) tool that lets you create designs and prototype parts. You can import existing CAD designs and export creations as SVG files.
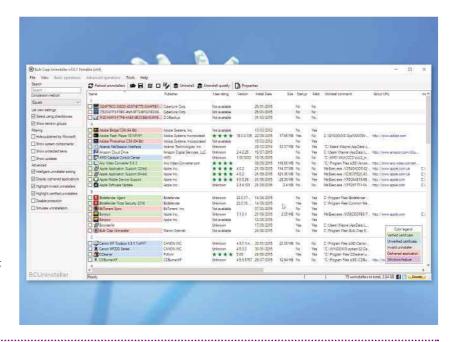
⬇ Best Free Software

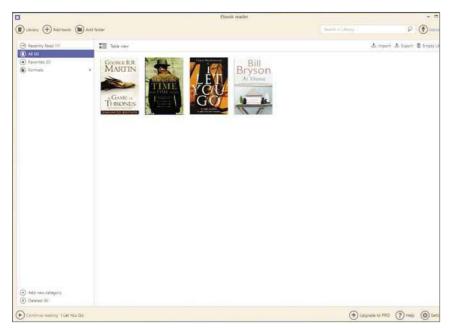## SYSTEM CLEANER
Bulk Crap Uninstaller 3
klocmansoftware.weebly.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10   **File size:** 1.8MB

Bulk Crap Uninstaller – BCUninstaller for short – can remove lots of unwanted programs from your PC in one go, and clear away any leftover junk afterwards. It's available in installer and portable versions, and usefully colour-codes all the software on your system so you can see at a glance if a program is good to go, has an invalid uninstaller, is an orphaned application or is a Windows feature.

The sidebar on the left lets you filter the list by various criteria, and you can choose to remove programs as you would normally, or quickly uninstall them without having to click through multiple prompts.

EBOOK READER
Icecream Ebook Reader 2
icecreamapps.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10   **File size:** 17.9MB

If you have a collection of ebooks in more than one format, you can use this program to organise and read them. It can handle all the major ebook types including EPUB, MOBI, FB2 and PDF. Features include the ability to turn pages, track reading progress, search your library and bookmark pages. The new version lets you change the style of the program (alter fonts and background colours), add your own categories to the library and edit book details. You can now add multiple books to the library by dragging folders to the program.

Note that the free version limits you to 10 ebooks, which is a bit stingy!
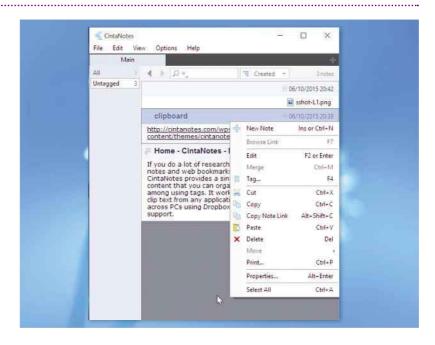
NOTES ORGANISER
CintaNotes 3
cintanotes.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 7.8MB

If you do a lot of research, you probably end up with notes and bookmarks scattered all over your hard drive and Desktop, which makes them difficult to find when you need them. CintaNotes offers a solution to this problem by providing a single location for all the content you've gathered, so you can organise, browse and search them using tags. It works online and off, and lets you clip text from any application. Your notes can be synchronised across PCs using Dropbox, Google Drive and Simplenote.

The newest version allows you to include file and image attachments in notes, and you can track and edit them, too. You can also sync attachments, but there's a 100MB limit.

✗ Don't install...

Partition Magic
www.partition-magic.com
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 19.3MB

If you want to create partitions on your hard drive, we certainly wouldn't recommend this tool. Despite claiming to be a Symantec product, its 'official' website looks suspicious – giving several different names for the program – and hasn't been updated since 2013. What's more, you need to pay $39 (£25.50) to use the software when other similar tools are available for free.

...Install this instead ✓

EaseUS Partition Master Free
bit.ly/partition382
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 28MB

EaseUS's excellent free tool makes it easy to create, copy, resize, format and delete drive partitions. You can also use it to convert, explore and hide partitions, merge them and quickly change drive letters. The recovery wizard lets you restore lost or deleted partitions in a matter of minutes, and the software fully protects your data, making it relatively risk-free. The latest version of Partition Master (10.8) lets you easily migrate your operating system to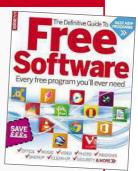 a new SSD (Solid State Drive) or hard drive, and offers better compatibility. Remember to decline the bundled extras during installation.

GET THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

Our new Free Software MagBook is packed with 148 pages of brilliant workshops, tips and advice about every program you'll ever need.

Discover how to:
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- Download free office tools that save you £££s
- Clean your PC to make it run as fast as new
- 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 5.10
www.piriform.com/ccleaner
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 6.4MB

The popular system-cleaning tool's monthly update improves cleaning for Chrome extensions and cookies, and Firefox sessions, and improves cookie management in Edge. It also starts faster than before and resizes windows more quickly.
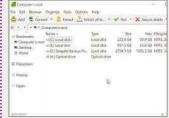
REGISTRY CLEANER
Wise Registry Cleaner Free 8.72
www.wisecleaner.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 3.3MB

This program can find and fix problems with the Windows Registry and offers both on-demand and scheduled scanning. It can also defrag the Registry and tune up your system. The new release improves 'application paths' cleaning, and localisation and language support.

COMPRESSION TOOL
PeaZip 5.8
www.peazip.org
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 6.4MB

This file and archive manager lets you create, convert and extract compressed files in all the popular formats. The latest release adds support for virtual machine disk-image files (QUEMU, VirtualBox, and VMWare), enhances UTF-8 support and improves password management.

BROWSER
Citrio 44
citrio.com
Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 56.3MB

Based on Chrome, the Citrio browser is designed with speed in mind. It lets you prioritise your downloads and share links directly on social networks. It also has a built-in media player, and the latest version adds new features to this, including the useful ability to create playlists. ■

GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST subscribe to Web User at **subscribe.webuser.co.uk**

Best New Browser Tools

Access sites that are blocked in the UK

We've been looking for a good, reliable VPN browser tool ever since that unpleasant business with Hola earlier this year, so we're delighted that rival service Hotspot Shield is now available for Chrome (bit.ly/hotspotchrome382) and Firefox (bit.ly/hotspotfire382). This means you can now access websites and services that are blocked in the UK by 'spoofing' your location directly from your browser. Unlike the Hotspot Shield software, the add-on gives you unlimited bandwidth for free (for the moment) and lets you pretend to be in one of five different countries, including the US, Canada and the Netherlands. Just click the toolbar button, choose a virtual location and visit the restricted site. We didn't have much luck with Hulu, which is notoriously vigilant about blocking non-US residents, but it worked on other sites, and is an effective means of browsing the web anonymously.

Block any website that contains adverts

There's a lot of discussion about ad blockers at the moment (see our feature on page 44) and the fact that by shielding you from annoying online commercials, they also deprive websites of much needed revenue. The Ethical Ad Blocker (bit.ly/ethical382) solves this moral dilemma by automatically blocking any sites that contain adverts,

not just the ads. In this way, you don't get to view their content for free, so no-one can accuse you of 'stealing' it, but you also manage to avoid experiencing those bothersome ads. Instead, you'll see a message saying "Sorry. This page is ad-supported. It would be unethical to view this site".

We don't think the add-on is supposed to be entirely serious – one of the alternative sites it suggests in its blocking message is 'example.com' – but it cleverly draws attention to the controversy around using ad-blocking software.

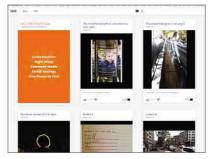### Replace Facebook froth with tech news

If your Facebook feed is full of tedious navel gazing, dodgy politics and soppy motivational messages, you can make it more interesting by installing Detox (usedetox.com). This new add-on for Chrome, Firefox and Safari replaces the content in your feed with "something more positively distracting" from newsfeed dashboard Panda (getpanda.com). Sources include tech-news sites The Next Web, Mashable and TechCrunch. Unfortunately, there aren't any UK-specific sources, such as our sister site Alphr (www.alphr.com), but you can choose 'favourite' feeds you want to see more content from, and select 'randomize' to mix them up. Detox is easy to switch on and off, and lets you set certain times on specific days that it's activated, so you don't completely lose the usual social stuff. It's an interesting way to stay abreast of

tech developments rather than what people's cats are up to.

Give Reddit a more modern look

In Issue 379's cover feature, we mocked Reddit's quaint design, "which hasn't been touched since 2005", and the makers of Shine (bit.ly/shine382) clearly agree with us, because this new Chrome extension gives the site a much-needed facelift. It applies a modern and attractive feel to Reddit's 'list of links' format and lets you switch to a more visually appealing, Pinterest-style grid layout.

We like the menu button in the bottom-right corner that lets you quickly search and post to Reddit, but we're not so keen on the permanent prompt to upgrade to the paid-for Shine Bright version for $1.99, to "unlock some awesome features".

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

FIREFOX

Donate to charity when you shop online

Few of us like being pestered by 'chuggers' (charity muggers) on the high street, but you can help charities when you shop online by installing Give As You Live's Firefox add-on (bit.ly/give382). This donates a percentage (on average, 2.5%) of every purchase you make at more than 1,200 of its partner stores, which include such big names as Amazon, eBay, Argos, M&S and recent addition TK Maxx. You can choose to give to all charities or just specific ones, and keep track of how much you've raised via your online account. Give As You Live has been around for a few years, but the latest version of the add-on is less intrusive (unlike those chuggers!) and usefully lets you click its toolbar button to access your favourite stores.

Use the same login for every website

Don't be shocked by the irresponsible title of this tip – we're not really recommending you use the same password for every site, but rather that you use a new Firefox add-on called Recall My Password (bit.ly/recall382) to store all your passwords under a single "secret keyword". This means you don't need to remember multiple logins, but can simply enter your keyword when prompted. Click the asterisk toolbar button when you register with a site and enter your chosen keyword to generate a random password. You can then log into the site by clicking the asterisk button again and entering the keyword to retrieve your password. It's safer than letting Firefox store all your passwords, but don't forget your keyword!
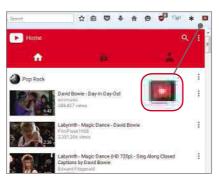
Open links in new tabs more quickly

It wouldn't be Best New Browser Tools if we didn't have at least one new trick for Firefox tabs and, in this issue, it's the turn of QuickTab (bit.ly/quick382).

Install this add-on and you'll be able to open links in new tabs simply by clicking them and holding down the mouse button for 1.2 seconds. It's less fiddly than having to right-click a link and choose 'Open Link in New Tab'.

Watch YouTube videos from anywhere

Rather than visiting YouTube every time you want to watch a video, install the brilliant YouTube Panel (bit.ly/youtube382) so you can stay on the current tab. Just click the toolbar button to open YouTube in a drop-down panel that lets you search for, browse and – most importantly - watch videos in the top-right corner of your browser. Sign into your account and you can also access your YouTube playlists, save videos to watch later and subscribe to channels.
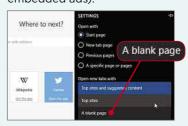
OTHER BROWSERS

Look up Street View imagery instantly

Finding a location on Google Maps is all very well, but to see what that place actually looks like, you should install Speed Street View (bit.ly/street382). Click the add-on's toolbar button to open Street View imagery of your current location in a new tab, then search for another location to explore that, too. You can specify whether you want to find an address, an establishment or a 'geocode' (by entering geographical coordinates), and move into and around the imagery by clicking and dragging the picture in the usual manner.

Make the New Tab page blank in Edge

When you open a new tab in Microsoft's new Edge browser, it shows the usual page of thumbnail images from your most visited websites. If you'd prefer not to see these, you can make the page blank instead. To do this, click the three-dot 'More actions' menu in the top-right corner, choose Settings and scroll down to 'Open new tabs with', then choose 'A blank page' from the drop-down menu. If you change your mind later, you can select 'Top sites' or 'Top sites and suggested content' (for embedded ads).

Best Free Apps

PHOTOGRAPHY
Adobe Lightroom
bit.ly/lightroom382
Min requirements: iOS 8.1
Size: 52.1MB

UPDATED

Until recently, Adobe Lightroom was available as a free download, but this existed primarily as a companion to its Desktop counterpart, which meant you needed a Creative Cloud subscription to use it. That's all changed and you can now take advantage of the app's powerful photo-editing tools without a subscription or even an Adobe ID. Unfortunately, only iOS users can enjoy the free features at the moment, but we're expecting an update to be rolled out for Android soon.

The app's home screen lets you import photos from your camera roll and also take snaps using its newly added built-in camera. Once you've opened an image, you can start making adjustments immediately using the Crop, Presets and Adjust buttons. As you'd expect, the Crop tool gives you full control over the image's aspect ratio and angle, but also gives you the option to rotate and flip it, and use the Auto Straighten button to quickly fix wonky horizons. The Presets menu contains an impressive range of filters for making quick enhancements, and you can also fine-tune the colour, tone and exposure using the app's adjustment tools. Comparing your image to the original is as easy as tapping it with three fingers and, once you're happy, you can share it or show it off using the full-screen Presentation Mode.

MINI WORKSHOP
Edit an image using Adobe Lightroom

1 Open Adobe Lightroom and tap Get Started. Tap Camera Roll to browse the photos on your iPad or iPhone. **1** Select an image to view it full screen and then tap Import. Alternatively, tap Select if you want to highlight and import multiple images.

2 Tap Filmstrip to view thumbnails of the other images you've imported, or swipe left and right to switch between them. Tap Crop and then Straighten **1** to auto-straighten your image. Use the tick icon **2** to approve your changes.

3 Select Adjust to use Lightroom's more advanced editing tools. You can undo any changes using the Undo button **1** or by scrolling to the end of the menu and using the Reset option. Tap the Export button **2** to share your image or view it full-screen in Presentation Mode.

Our rating ★★★★★

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

MUSIC

UPDATED

AmpMe
bit.ly/ampme382
Min requirements:
Android 4.1, iOS 7.1
Size: 9MB

AmpMe lets you sync music across multiple phones and tablets to create your very own multi-speaker system. It's a really clever idea that's especially useful in situations when you don't have the option to connect to a more powerful speaker system. The app is very easy to use: once it's opened, you can choose to 'Host a party' or 'Join a party'. It then uses a unique 'party code' to allow you to connect with your friends and family. At the moment, the app only works with Soundcloud, so we'd love to see support for locally stored files and other streaming services in the future, too.
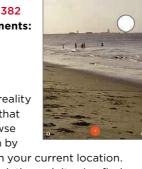
Our rating ★★★★☆

CAMERA

NEW

TapTag
bit.ly/taptag382
Min requirements:
Android 4.0
Size: 5.8MB

TapTag is an augmented-reality camera app that lets you browse photos taken by other users in your current location. When you look through its viewfinder, any posted photos of the area are represented by a floating bubble that can be opened with a single tap. Use it to capture your own images and they too are 'left' for other users to find in the same way. The app also works like a social network, displaying your images in a timeline so that you can follow other people's adventures as they unfold. It's a good idea, but we're not sure everyone will feel at ease with sharing their location and photos so publicly!

Our rating ★★★☆☆

LAUNCHER

NEW

Shine Launcher 3D
bit.ly/shinelauncher382
Min requirements:
Android 2.2
Size: 9.8MB

We weren't quite sure what to expect from Shine Launcher, because its description on the Google Play Store was written in such mangled English that it was virtually incomprehensible. At first glance, the app looked rather confusing, but we're glad we persisted because it's fast, customisable and has many features normally only available in premium launchers. Aside from its fancy 3D animations, Shine works much like two of our favourites, Nova Launcher and Apex Launcher, offering a fully customisable home screen, dock and app drawer. In addition, it lets you set up gesture-based controls and there's also a handy Side Menu, giving you quick access to more of your favourite apps from any screen. One drawback is that the app might occasionally place annoying ads in your notification tray.

Our rating ★★★★☆

ROUND UP | Quick bites

Vibe Tickets
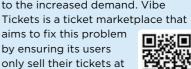bit.ly/vibe382
Min requirements:
iOS 7
Size: 36.4MB

When live music and sport events sell out, the tickets often resell for absurd sums online, thanks to the increased demand. Vibe Tickets is a ticket marketplace that aims to fix this problem by ensuring its users only sell their tickets at face value or less.

Microsoft Send
bit.ly/send382
Min requirements:
Android 4.2, iOS 8
Size: 8.5MB

Micrsoft Send aims to make emailing quicker and more personal by stripping out subject lines and signatures. The app, which is only compatible with Office 365 accounts, displays only conversations started in Send, not your entire inbox.
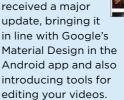
YouTube
bit.ly/youtubeapp382
Min requirements:
iOS 7
Size: 40.7MB

The iOS version of YouTube has just received a major update, bringing it in line with Google's Material Design in the Android app and also introducing tools for editing your videos.

📱 Best Free Apps

KEYBOARD

SwiftKey Neural

bit.ly/swiftkey382

Min requirements: Android 4.4
Size: Varies with device

NEW

We've frequently praised SwiftKey for its excellent autocorrect function and its ability to accurately predict what you're going to type. Now, its developers have released an experimental version of the app that uses neural networks (which imitate the structure and behaviour of the human brain) to produce even better predictions. By understanding complex relationships between words and the longer context of sentences, the new app is able to offer better suggestions, making your typing experience quicker and more productive. It's still in alpha, but can be downloaded directly from the Google Play Store. It looks and feels just like the original SwiftKey app, but currently only works with US English.

Our rating ★★★★★

KEYBOARD

Kibo

bit.ly/kibo382

Min requirements: iOS 8.4
Size: 18.2MB

NEW

Kibo is a keyboard app that lets you conceal private messages in instant-messaging services including Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. After typing a message, tap the keyboard's padlock button and your text will be replaced with a random, innocent-looking phrase. To see the real message, the recipient must copy it to their system clipboard and, if there's any hidden content, it'll appear in a pop-up in the Kibo keyboard. If you're worried that prying eyes might learn how Kibo works as it becomes more popular, you can password-protect messages for extra security. Kibo is currently only available on iOS, but it's set to launch on Android soon.

Our rating ★★★★☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

LIFESTYLE

Instant

bit.ly/instant382

Min requirements: iOS 7
Size: 6.5MB **Price:** £2.29

This 'life-logging' app helps you keep a record of how far you walk, run and travel, as well as how much time you spend on your phone and how many times a day you unlock it.

SOCIAL

Tweetbot 4 Twitter

bit.ly/tweetbot382

Min requirements: iOS 9
Size: 6.8MB **Price:** £3.99

Tweetbot 4 Twitter is a powerful Twitter client that's been updated to take advantage of iOS 9's split-view, so that you can use it alongside other apps. Its new Statistics view makes it easier to track your most popular tweets and see how many new followers you get a day.

HEALTH

Headspace

bit.ly/headspace382

Min requirements: iOS 7 **Size:** 35.3MB
Price: Free (with in-app purchases)
Headspace's Take10 foundation course

helps you learn meditation in 10 short lessons. This introduction is free, but to unlock the app's other inspiring packs, you'll need to pay a subscription costing £9.99 a month or £74.99 a year.

PROGRAMMING

Lrn

bit.ly/lrn382

Min requirements: iOS 7 **Size:** 2MB
Price: Free (with in-app purchases)
Lrn teaches you the programming languages JavaScript and Ruby though a series of interactive mini quizzes. After completing the free tutorials, it'll cost you £2.29 to unlock all the lessons for either language.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Pic Scanner

bit.ly/picscanner382

Min requirements: iOS 7
Size: 47.7MB
Price: Free (with in-app purchases)
Pic Scanner does exactly what it says on the tin and lets you scan printed images using your iOS device. You can try the app for free, but to unlock unlimited scans you'll need to pay a one-off fee of £2.29.

| Instant | Tweetbot 4 Twitter | Headspace | Lrn | Pic Scanner |

Best New TV Apps

TV
TV Player Plus
bit.ly/tvplayer382
Min requirements: iOS 7.1
Size: 16.4MB

There's plenty of TV to watch for free these days, but you still need to pay to enjoy channels that aren't on Freeview. Step forward TV Player Plus, a new subscription service that lets you watch 25 'premium' channels, including National Geographic, Discovery Channel, Eurosport, Sony Entertainment Television and History, for just £4.99 a month, without a set-top box. This is in addition to the 60 channels offered by TV Player's free package, and there's a free one-week trial for the Plus option. You can watch live and catch-up content on your iPhone or iPad, with the latter offering extra features such as a full TV guide, reminders for your favourite shows and the ability to watch while browsing what's on other channels.
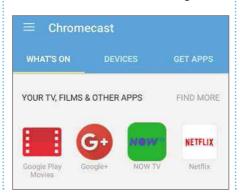
TV & FILM
Chromecast
bit.ly/chromecast382
Min requirements: Android 4.0.3, iOS 7
Size: 8.2MB (Android), 18.5MB (iOS)

To coincide with the launch of its two new Chromecasts (see FAQ on page 36), Google has updated the app for the streaming devices to add some useful new features. Previously, you had to access Chromecast-compatible apps such as Netflix, YouTube and Now TV individually, but you can now browse their content from within the Chromecast app; play and pause videos and music; and adjust the volume. It's also easier to discover new Chromecast-enabled apps and offers, such as extended free trials, and you can display personal photos from your Facebook and Flickr albums on your TV screen when Chromecast isn't streaming.

TV
ITV Player for Android
bit.ly/itvplayer382
Min requirements: Varies with device
Size: Varies with device

Last issue we reported that ITV is planning to replace ITV Player and ITV.com with a single service called ITV Hub. In the meantime, the broadcaster has made some improvements to its unloved Android app, which currently has more than 13,350 one-star reviews on Google Play. Changes include higher quality video streaming, more audio-described content for visually-impaired viewers and "performance and stability enhancements". However, the app still doesn't offer the ITV Player Premium subscription option that's available in iOS, which lets you play £3.99 a month for ad-free viewing. On a more positive note, if you're interested in helping ITV improve the app, you can join its beta programme at bit.ly/itvbeta382.

✗ Don't install...

First Aid Glossary
bit.ly/glossary382

Although it's undoubtedly handy to understand terms relating to medical emergencies, especially when speaking to an operator after you dial 999, this app fails to go any further than providing the titular glossary. There are no pictures, no step-by-step guides and not even any indication as to the action you should take if you identify one of the listed symptoms. However, it still has the nerve to charge you 60p, when you'd be better off using Google!

...Install this instead ✓

First Aid by British Red Cross
bit.ly/firstaid382
Min requirements: Android 4.0.3, iOS 7
Size: 38MB

Whether someone's choking on a peanut, suffering an allergic reaction or having a heart attack, this excellent free app from the British Red Cross could literally prove a lifesaver. It provides clear, step-by-step advice for dealing with a variety of common accidents and medical emergencies, which you can browse alphabetically or search for. The app features videos and quizzes to test and improve your First Aid knowledge, and offers handy Q&As for at-a-glance information. There are no adverts, and you don't need an internet connection to use it, so you'll always have instant access to the help you require, wherever you are. ■

FAQ

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

Google's new products

Google's transition to Alphabet hasn't got in the way of it launching several exciting new products. **David Crookes** takes a closer look at the company's latest hardware and software

important element in Apple's recent announcement about the iPhone 6S, which can take 12-megapixel pictures from the rear and 5-megapixel selfies from the front, as well as 4K videos and 'live' photos. Both Nexus handsets have a 12.3-megapixel rear camera but, while the 5X matches the latest iPhone with a 5-megapixel front-facing camera, the 6P has a more impressive 8-megapixel snapper.

GOOGLE NEXUS PHONES

www.google.co.uk/nexus

What's new about these Nexuses?

Google's two new Nexus handsets – the 5X and the 6P – are being made by different manufacturers: LG and Huawei, respectively. They will be the first smartphones to run Marshmallow, the latest version of Android, and they represent Google's latest salvo in its ongoing battle with Apple.

What are they replacing?

The new handsets are a natural progression from the Nexus 5, which was discontinued in March, and the Nexus 6, which is likely to be around for a few more months yet.

How do the new phones differ?

The most obvious difference is in their looks. The Nexus 5X is made of plastic, and has a 5.2in full HD display with a resolution of 423 pixels per inch (ppi); while the Nexus 6P is metal and has a 5.7in Quad HD screen with a greater

resolution of 518ppi. This makes the screen of the larger, more luxurious-feeling device much sharper and more pleasurable to view.

Are they the same inside?

Not quite. The 6P has an octa-core Snapdragon 810 chip, which is more powerful than the Snapdragon 808 of the Nexus 5X. It also has more memory – 3GB as opposed to 2GB – as well as an enhanced graphics processor. You can get as much as 128GB of storage in the 6P, whereas its smaller sibling can only manage 32GB. The battery capacity of the 6P is better, too. It would appear that Huawei has been instructed by Google to deliver a premium product in the 6P, leaving LG to manufacture a less-powerful device.

Can I take great photos with both?

You can indeed. This has long been a key battleground for mobile and was an

What's the sensor on the back for?

That's Nexus Imprint, a fingerprint sensor that lets you use your finger to unlock your device. With Imprint on the back, you can hold the phone in one hand and simply move your index finger over the sensor. As well as letting you into the phone, Imprint lets you verify transactions made via the new Android Pay. It can also be used within apps.

How much do they cost?

The Nexus 5X comes in three different colours – carbon, quartz and ice – costing £339 for the 16GB model and £379 for 32GB. The 6P is available in aluminium, graphite or frost, priced at £449 for the 32GB version, £499 for 64GB and £579 128GB. Both phones can be pre-ordered from the Google Store (store.google .co.uk) and give you 90 days of free listening to Google Play Music.

CHROMECAST

www.google.co.uk/chromecast

What, another Chromecast?

Yes, there are now two Chromecasts. One still lets you stream video from your phone, tablet or PC to your television, but it's been refreshed with a groovier design and it's better at detecting and using weaker Wi-Fi signals. The second is called Chromecast Audio and lets you stream music straight to your speakers. Both dongles cost £30.

Do I need a new Chromecast?

It depends on how well your existing one is performing. Be sure to install the new Chromecast app, though, which brings together all the shows that are available for streaming, and makes it easier to browse and search YouTube and Netflix. There's also a feature called Fast Play that picks up on what you like to watch and queues up the next episode so that it loads more quickly.

Can I use it to play games?

That's the plan. Google is working with game developers on a system that allows people to play games on their phone or tablet while viewing the images on a television. The Chromecast understands how games work and even how many players there are: if there are more than one, the display automatically splits.

What is Chromecast Audio like?

Chromecast Audio is a separate dongle that connects to a speaker through a 3.5mm audio jack or via optical or RCA inputs. It can be used with iOS, Android, Mac, Windows and Chromebook devices to stream music over Wi-Fi, and it works with some big names including Spotify and Google Play Music. Don't expect it to support Apple Music, though!

PIXEL C

pixel.google.com

What is it?

Pixel C is a high-end 10.2in Android tablet – the first that Google has built "end-to-end", as it points out on its website. Not only does it look swish with a lovely aluminium body but the device comes with a removable, optional full-size Bluetooth keyboard which is held tightly in place by magnets. Like the Nexus phones, it also has a USB Type-C port. The screen has a resolution of 2,560 x 1,800 with a pixel density of 308ppi, and is powered by Nvidia's Tegra X1 chip. It comes with 3GB of RAM and up to 64GB of storage.

Is it worth getting?

It's certainly worth considering. This tablet – which will be out in time for Christmas – looks set to go head-to-head with the Microsoft Surface and the iPad Pro, both of which have keyboard attachments and are aimed at the market for tablet-laptop hybrids. Pixel C looks smart and it delivers more than enough power to run Android Marshmallow. UK pricing has yet to be announced but we're sure the tablet will be available here.

ANDROID MARSHMALLOW

bit.ly/marshmallow382

So not Android Milkshake then?

No, nor Marzipan, Moon Pie or Marijuana. Android continues the theme of naming its latest versions after tasty desserts and Marshmallow is the name of 6.0. Google will be hoping that Marshmallow boosts the number of people using Android. Not that it's struggling: it currently has 1.4 billion users.

Anything particularly notable?

Google Now has been expanded so that holding down the Home button while you're in any app – email, Maps, music or whatever – makes it scan whatever is showing on the mobile device's screen to look for key information. This could be anything from the nearest petrol station to appointments you need reminding about.

What about Android Pay?

Android Pay is built into Marshmallow. It lets you add your debit or credit card so you can complete transactions in shops by unlocking your phone and placing it near a contactless terminal. Like Apple Pay, it keeps your card information safe. Android Pay will begin rolling out to Nexus devices over the next few weeks, but other phones and tablets might not get it until next year.

Hack Your

Messing with the Registry can be risky, but it can also yield impressive results. **Wayne Williams** presents the 27 best Registry tweaks to customise, enhance and speed up Windows
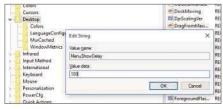
SPEED UP WINDOWS

Speed up your Start menu

When you open the Start menu or select a program in Windows, there's a noticeable pause. This is true regardless of whether you're using Windows 7 or Windows 10. You can remove these delays and make the menu feel faster by navigating to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop

Locate the entry 'MenuShowDelay' on the right. This is the speed at which the menu opens. Right-click it, select Modify and reduce the value data from 400 to around 100. The Start menu should open significantly more quickly when you restart your PC.

Reduce the time that it takes for your Start menu to open

Speed up Aero Peek

When you move your mouse over the 'Show Desktop' button on the right of the taskbar in Windows 7, the Aero Peek feature hides everything on screen. It takes a second or two to work, but you
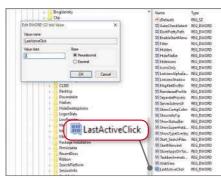
can reduce this delay by going to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ Explorer\Advanced

Find 'DesktopLivePreviewHoverTime' and double-click it, then select the Decimal Base option and change the value to 0 to remove the delay.

Instantly switch to the last active window

When you hover over a taskbar button in Windows 7, 8 or 10, you'll see thumbnails for all the open windows relating to it. You can then select the one you require, but if you'd rather save time by just opening the last active window instead, a simple Registry tweak will change the default behaviour

Save time by always switching to the last active window
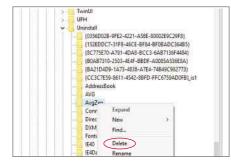
of the taskbar buttons. Go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ Explorer\Advanced

Create a new DWORD (32-bit) on the right hand side, and name it 'LastActiveClick'. Set the value to 1.

Remove problem entries from the Windows uninstaller

If you've had a problem uninstalling a program – for example, if the uninstall has gone wrong or you've simply deleted it – you may still see it listed in the 'Uninstall or change a program' list in the Control Panel. One solution is to try reinstalling and then uninstalling the software, but if that doesn't work, navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\

Stop programs outstaying their welcome in the Uninstall list

COVER FEATURE

Own PC!

M any PC users deliberately avoid fiddling with the Registry, preferring to leave system tweaks to software such as CCleaner. But provided you're careful and know how to undo any changes you make, there are plenty of benefits to delving under the bonnet of your computer, such as customising Windows to make it look and behave the way you want, speeding up your PC and turning off features you don't need. In this feature, we've rounded up 27

of the best secret Registry hacks for boosting the performance of your PC without messing it up.

Over the following six pages, we show you how to speed up the Start menu, add a custom message to the Windows 10's login screen, force Disk Cleanup to target newer files, remove unwanted entries from the right-click menu and much more.

We also explain how and why you should back up the Registry, and show you how to create your own Registry tweaks.

WARNING! The Windows Registry is where the operating system stores all the settings that are required for Windows and installed software to function properly. Every time you install a program, data about it gets written to this database. Because the Registry is such an integral part of the whole Windows set-up, it's important to take care when making any changes to it. Any slip-up could potentially cause major problems with the operating system. For this reason, you should always back up the Registry before making any changes to it, just to be on the safe side. See step 3 of our Mini Workshop on page 40 for instructions.

CHANGE HOW WINDOWS LOOKS

SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Uninstall

Find the program entry you want to remove and delete it. This won't uninstall the program, but it will remove the offending entry. It works in Windows 7 and upwards.

Speed up your shutdown
Windows waits for running applications and processes to end before it shuts down, but these sometimes hang and take ages to close. You can reduce the amount of time Windows waits by tweaking the Registry. Go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop

double-click HungAppTimeout and change the default value from 5000 to 1000. Do the same for the entry WaitToKillAppTimeout. Navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\ CurrentControlSet\Control

and double-click the entry WaitToKillServiceTimeout, then change the value data to 1000.

You can also force Windows to automatically close any non-responding programs by going to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop

Double-click AutoEndTasks and change the value from 0 to 1.

Enable Windows 10's hidden 'dark' theme
By default, Microsoft's new operating system uses a light theme, but you can unlock a dark alternative by using a simple Registry tweak. Navigate to

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ Themes\Personalize
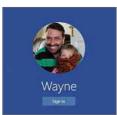
then right-click in the right-hand pane and select New, DWORD (32-bit). Name it 'AppsUseLightTheme'. Right-click it and select Modify. Make sure the Value Data is set to 0.

Restart your PC, or log off and log on again, and the dark theme will be applied. Change the value to 1, or delete the DWORD to go back to the default light theme.

Give Windows 10 a darker look by applying its hidden theme

Change the Windows 10 logon screen to a solid colour

Keep things simple with a solid-colour logon screen

If you'd prefer to have the Windows 10 logon screen display a colour rather than an image, which may make it load slightly faster, navigate to

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\ Policies\Microsoft\Windows\System

and right-click in the right-hand pane. Select New, DWORD (32-bit) and name it 'DisableLogonBackgroundImage', then give it a value of 1. Windows 10 will use the same colour as your Desktop wallpaper. You can change this under Settings, Personalisation, Colours.
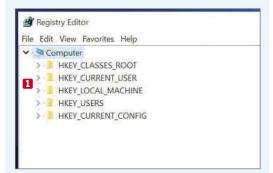
Get back the old volume control in Windows 10
Windows 10 introduces a new, horizontal volume control. If you prefer the old up-and-down vertical style, get it back by going to
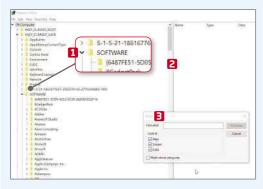
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\ CurrentVersion
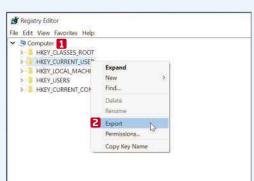
Right-click CurrentVersion and select ➡

Edit the Registry using Regedit

1 The built-in Registry Editor (Regedit) is a good tool if you only edit the Registry occasionally. Click Start and type `regedit` into the search or Run box (depending on the version of Windows you have) and hit Enter. You may need to OK a UAC prompt. The Registry Editor will open showing the list of HKEYs (Handle to Registry Key) on the left. **1**

2 Navigating the Registry is just a matter of clicking the little arrows (or plus signs) next to each key **1** to open up that section. As you expand the tree, you may run out of space, so use the divider in the centre **2** to resize the pane accordingly. You can search for a particular key **3** by going to Edit, Find.

3 Always back up the Registry before making changes. Right-click Computer **1** and select Export. **2** Choose a save location and name your backup. The full Registry backup will be very large, but you can just back up selected branches, by right-clicking and exporting those. If you need to, double-click a saved backup to import or restore it.

New Key. Name it 'MTCUVC' and, in the right-hand pane, right-click and create a new DWORD (32-bit). Call this 'EnableMTCUVC'. Double-click it and make sure the value is 0. You don't need to reboot your PC to see the change.

You can make the Windows 10 volume slider vertical again

Restore the old clock and calendar in Windows 10
Clicking the time in your System Tray in Windows 10 opens a transparent clock and calendar panel. We quite like it, but the 'modern' look won't be to everyone's taste. If you preferred the old design, you can get it back by navigating to:
    HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\ImmersiveShell
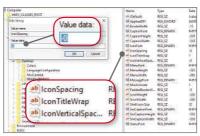   Right-click in the pane on the right and select New, DWORD (32-bit). Name it 'UseWin32TrayClockExperience'. Right-click the entry, select Modify and set the value to 1. Now, when you click the time, it will open a panel with the classic clock and calendar interface.

Change icon spacing on the Desktop
If you're running Windows 8 or 10, you can adjust the horizontal and vertical spacing around icons on the Desktop by tweaking the Registry (Windows 7 offers controls to do this). Navigate to:
    HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop\WindowMetrics
    and look for the 'IconSpacing' and 'IconVerticalSpacing' keys. Increase the number for each to pad out the spacing between icons.
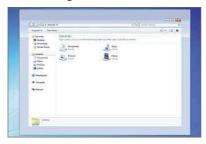

Move your icons further apart to prevent accidentally clicking them

The values are in twips (twentieth of a point). Roughly, -17 is equal to 1 pixel and -28 equals 2 pixels.

Customise window borders and scrollbars
In Windows 7, you can make the size of window borders and scrollbars super-thin. Go to:
    HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Control Panel\Desktop\WindowMetrics
    and set 'PaddedBorderWidth' to -0, and both 'ScrollWidth' and 'ScrollHeight' to -200. As with icon spacing, these values are in twips. If you want super-fat borders, change the figure to -750, or anything less than that figure.

Make your window borders fatter so they are easier to move around

Add the Recycle Bin to Computer or This PC
To save you returning to the Desktop to check the Recycle Bin for your deleted files, you can add a shortcut to Computer (or This PC in Windows 10) by navigating to:
    HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\ MyComputer\NameSpace
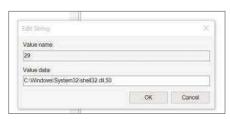   Right-click in the pane on the right and select New, Key. Name it {645FF040-5081-101B-9F08-00AA002F954E}. Now, when you go into Computer, you should see the Recycle Bin. This works in all versions of Microsoft's OS, from Windows 7 to 10.

Create a shortcut to the Recycle Bin for easier access

Remove the arrows from shortcuts
When you create a shortcut (or a program creates one for you), the icon appears with a small arrow in the bottom-left corner. Removing

Remove the arrows from shortcuts to make them look cleaner

this will make shortcut icons look tidier. To do this, navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\Shell Icons

(if you don't see Shell Icons, you'll need to create this key). Right-click the right-hand pane to create a new String Value. Name it '29'. Double-click it and change the Value Data to 'C:\Windows\ System32\shell32.dll,50'.

Close the Registry editor, click Start and type `CMD`. Hit enter. In the Command Prompt window, type:

`taskkill /IM explorer.exe /F`

and hit Enter. This will close Windows Explorer, so don't be alarmed when the taskbar vanishes. Next, type the following three commands, hitting Enter after each one:

`cd /d %userprofile%\AppData\ Local`

`del IconCache.db /a`

`shutdown /r`

This final command will restart your PC. When it reboots, the shortcut arrows will be gone. To restore them, simply delete the 29-string value. This trick works in all recent versions of Windows.

Add a custom message to your login screen

You can add a message of your choice to the Windows 10 login screen that will be the first thing you see when it boots up. To do this, navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ Current Version\Policies\System

Double-click 'legalnoticecaption' and enter a title for your message in the Value Data box. Click OK. Double-click 'legalnoticetext' and enter your message. Log out, and the message will appear when you log back in. To clear it each time, click OK.

IMPROVE HOW WINDOWS WORKS

Remove the Action Center from Windows 10

The Action Center is a new feature in Windows 10 that displays notifications from apps and your system. If you don't need it (and most people don't), you can remove it by going to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Policies\Microsoft\Windows\Explorer. Right-click in the right-hand pane and select New, DWORD (32-bit)

Call it 'DisableNotificationCenter'. Double-click it and change the Value Data to 1. Click OK and exit the Registry Editor. The Action Center will vanish from the taskbar when you next restart your PC.
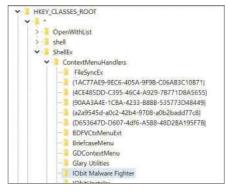

Remove the Action Center to hide Windows 10 notifications

Remove unwanted entries from the right-click menu

The right-click 'context' menu gives you instant access to various options that change depending on where you are in Windows and what software you have installed. The menu can become cluttered over time and fill up with entries you don't use. To manage the context menu entries using the Registry, navigate to

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT*\shellex\ ContextMenuHandlers

A list of programs that have added

Clean up your right-click menu by removing unwanted entries

themselves to the context menu will be displayed. To remove an entry, just select and delete it, but make sure you know what it is before you get rid of it. This works in all versions of Windows.

Disable Security Center notifications

Windows runs regular checks to make sure important security functions – such as your antivirus, firewall and Windows Updates – are running, and alerts you if there's a problem. If you've deliberately turned off these security features, being alerted to the change can soon become annoying. To disable these alerts, go to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE \Microsoft\Security Center\Svc

In 'AntiVirusDisableNotify', 'FirewallDisableNotify' and/or 'UpdatesDisableNotify', change the values from 0 to 1. This works in Windows 7 and 8.1, but not in 10.

Force Disk Cleanup to delete newer files

If you use the built-in Windows Disk Cleanup tool to remove junk files from your PC, you may have noticed that it leaves newer files behind. You can force it to clean up these more recent junk files in any version of Windows by navigating to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\ VolumeCaches\Temporary Files

Double-click 'LastAccess' and change its value from 7 (days) to 0 to delete all newer files.

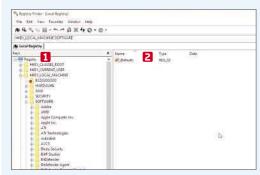*Make sure Disk Cleanup deletes the latest junk files from your PC*

Stop Windows Update restarting your PC

Being forced to restart your PC to install updates when you're in the middle of something can be annoying and time-consuming, but Windows Update is very persistent. You can stop it from bothering you in Windows 7 and Vista (later versions don't have this problem) by tweaking the Registry. Go to:
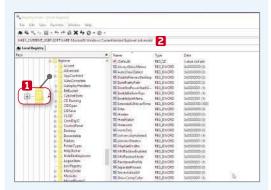
HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\ Windows\WindowsUpdate\AU

then right-click in the right-hand pane and choose New, DWORD (32-bit) Value. Name the value 'NoAutoRebootWithLoggedOnUsers', then double-click it, enter a value data of 1 and click OK.
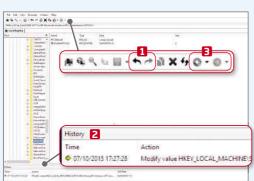
Edit the Registry using Registry Finder

1 The Windows Registry Editor does a perfectly good job, but the free tool Registry Finder (registry-finder.com) is a better option that makes it easier to find specific keys and perform simple edits. It looks similar to Regedit, with the list of HKEYs down the left **1** and the details on the right. **2**

2 Navigate the Registry in the same way, by clicking the + signs. **1** Registry Finder displays the current location in a handy address bar. **2** You can copy and paste strings into this box, which makes jumping to a particular point in the Registry incredibly simple.

3 You'll need to run the program in admin mode to make any changes. Registry tweaks can be undone and redone using the buttons on the toolbar. **1** The History strip at the bottom **2** lets you view the changes you've made. The forward and back buttons **3** work in the same way as their counterparts in a web browser.

If the WindowsUpdate\AU entry doesn't exist, right-click Windows, choose New, Key and name the key WindowsUpdate. Now right-click this key, choose New, Key and name it AU.
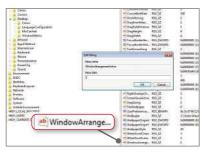
Turn off the Aero Snap feature

In Windows 7, open windows snap to the side of the screen. If you find this annoying, you can stop it happening by navigating to:

HKEY_CURRENT_ USER\Control Panel\Desktop

Find the entry 'WindowArrangementActive', double-click the value and change it to 0.

Prevent windows from 'snapping' to the side of the screen

Disable the Aero Shake feature

Windows 7 lets you grab a window

Turning off Aero Shake makes you less likely to accidentally minimise open windows

by the title bar, and shake it about to minimise all other open windows on your screen. It's an amusing effect, but if you don't need it, disable it by navigating to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Policies\Microsoft\ Windows

Right-click 'Windows', select New, Key, and name it Explorer. Right-click in the right-hand pane and create a new DWORD (32-bit). Call it 'NoWindowMinimizingShortcuts' and change the value to 1. You need to restart your PC for the change to take effect

Disable or delay taskbar previews

When you hover your mouse over an open program or folder in the taskbar, Windows displays a thumbnail preview. This happens in Windows 7, 8+ and 10. If you find this feature annoying rather than

Stop thumbnail previews appearing above taskbar items

helpful, you can disable it by navigating to:

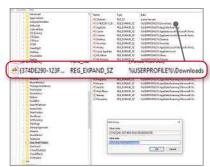HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced

Locate 'ExtendedUIHoverTime' on the right (create it if it isn't there) and double-click it. Change the value to something like 10000. This is the time, in milliseconds, before the preview appears, so a large number will stop it popping up.

Change Microsoft Edge's default download location

Edge is still very much a work-in-progress browser, with many important features currently missing. It's possible to change the default download location but, frustratingly, not in the browser itself. To get around this, go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\ Software\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\User Shell Folders

and locate '%USERPROFILE%\ Downloads' on the right. Double-click the entry and change the value to a new location, such as Desktop. Restart your PC.
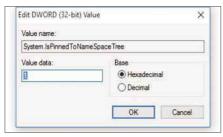

You can change the location where Edge downloads files to

Remove OneDrive from File Explorer in Windows 10

Microsoft's cloud storage service is built into Windows 10. If you don't use it, you can prevent it from being included in File Explorer (this tweak won't actually uninstall the service). Navigate to:

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\CLSID\ {018D5C66-4533-4307-9B53-224DE2ED1FE6}

then double-click the value name

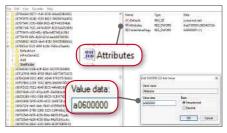*If you don't use OneDrive, you can remove it from File Explorer*

'System.IsPinnedToNameSpaceTree' and change the value to 0. Restart your PC to make the change.

Remove the Quick Access entry from File Explorer

If you'd prefer not to have your most recently opened files and folders appear in File Explorer, you can remove Quick Access and keep that information private. First, hide the feature by going to View, Options. Under the General tab, change 'Open File Explorer to' from 'Quick access' to 'This PC'. Next, open Regedit and navigate to:

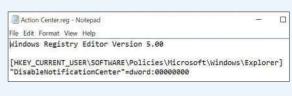HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\ CLSID{679f85cb-0220-4080-b29b-5540cc05aab6}

Expand it and right-click 'ShellFolder'. Select Permissions, then click the Advanced button. In the 'Advanced Security Settings for ShellFolder' box, click the 'Change' link, then click 'Advanced', click the 'Find Now' button and, in the 'Search results' box, select 'Administrators'. Click OK twice, then Apply, and hit OK until the box closes. In

Protect your privacy by removing Quick Access from File Explorer

CREATE YOUR OWN REGISTRY HACKS

Once you've applied a Registry tweak to one PC, you may want to repeat it on another computer. Instead of going through the whole process again, you can output your tweak as a Registry hack that can be run elsewhere (this will merge the changes with the target device's Registry).

All you need to do is select the key you made the change to, right click it, choose Export and give it a name. If your tweak involves more than one key, save each one, then right-click your first saved REG file and select Edit. Open the second key and paste the main [Hkey] part below the first. You will need to have 'Windows Registry Editor Version 5.00' entered at the top of the page. This should only appear once in the REG file.

'ShellFolder', double-click 'Attributes', and change data value to 'a0600000', then click OK. Restart your PC.

Remove low drive-space alerts

Windows will notify you when you're running out of space on your hard drive, which is helpful, but can become irritating – it's more common on laptops than desktop PCs. You can disable this prompt in Windows 7 onwards by navigating to:

Stop Windows reminding you that you're running out of space

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\ Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\ Policies

Right-click 'Policies' and select New, Key. Call this new key 'Explorer', then right-click it and select New, DWORD (32-bit). Call the value 'NoLowDiskSpaceChecks'. Double-click it and change the value to 1.

Disable the Caps Lock key in Windows

It's very easy to knock the Caps Lock key accidentally, so that you end up TYPING WHOLE SENTENCES IN CAPITALS. It's not vital to have Caps Lock enabled, because you can just hold down Shift when you need to type upper-case letters. To disable the Caps Lock key, navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\ CurrentControlSet\Control\Keyboard Layout

Right-click anywhere in the right-hand pane and choose New, Binary Value. Name the value 'Scancode Map' and double-click it. Now comes the tricky part. On the first line, enter the value data: 0000 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 (the first four zeros will be filled in automatically, then it's another eight pairs). On the second line 0008 will be filled in automatically for you; after this, type 02 00 00 00 00 00 3A 00. Finally, after the 0010 on the third line, type 00 00 00 00. Click OK to save the data, restart your PC and Caps Lock will be disabled. To turn it back on again, just delete the Scancode Map value and restart your PC. ∎

NEXT ISSUE
on sale Wednesday 4 November 2015

BEST NEW APPS FOR ANY TASK

We round up the best free tools to make your phone and tablet work faster, last longer and stay safe from security threats

PLUS...

⊕ **DOWNGRADE SOFTWARE**
Undo updates to revert to your preferred versions of programs

⊕ **HACK YOUR DOORBELL**
Avoid unwanted visitors – screen them from your phone

⊕ **STOP YOUR PC DYING**
Spot when something's wrong and act before it's too late

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Best iOS content blockers

With the release of iOS 9, Apple has opened up Safari to content-blocking software, to keep your mobile browser free of ads and other distractions. But which of these new apps is the best? **Andy Shaw** puts them to the test

Purify Blocker | £1.49 | bit.ly/purify382 | ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★☆   **PERFORMANCE** ★★★★★   **EASE OF USE** ★★★★★   **VALUE FOR MONEY** ★★★★☆
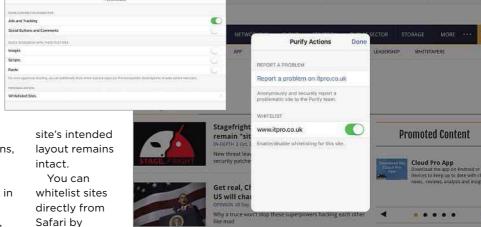
WebUser GOLD AWARD

What we liked:

Unlike many of the other content blockers in this test, Purify isn't free. However, we think that £1.49 is well worth paying for its handy selection of configuration tools that let you set up the app so it blocks exactly the items you want to block.

There are five basic blocking options, with 'Ads and Tracking' selected by default. You can also block 'Social Buttons and Comments' if you're not in the mood for sharing. There are additional options to turn off images, scripts and fonts, so you can strip a website back to its basic elements if you wish.

Purify does a good job of blocking items, catching and removing all the ads on sites that use generic advert-hosting systems such as Google's, and also filtering out insidious and annoying ads that pop over or surround a site's content. YouTube ads are blanked out rather than removed, so you still have to wait a few seconds before an ad-supported video plays. Similarly, on some sites, there are empty spaces in place of the blocked ads, so screen space is still wasted but at least the site's intended layout remains intact.

You can whitelist sites directly from Safari by tapping the Share button and selecting to add the whitelist icon to the row of tools. Whenever you want to add a site to the whitelist, you just click the icon or manage the list from the app's preferences.

What we don't like

The app's design is basic and functional, which doesn't make you feel as if you're getting good value for your money. Also, some of the options are linked, so you can't block one thing without the other. This makes sense with adverts and tracking, but it would be better to split

social buttons and comments into separate options, because you might conceivably want to block one of these while maintaining access to the other.

OUR VERDICT

Purify has a good balance of options. It offers more customisations than the basic 'stop everything' apps without getting too complicated. It isn't free, but we think £1.49 is a small sum to pay for such a useful and configurable app.

Adblock Plus | Free | bit.ly/adblock382 | ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★☆☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

WebUser SILVER AWARD

What we liked:
Adblock Plus has its own content-blocking browser available for iOS but is now also available as a standard iOS blocker for Safari. Like all the other versions of Adblock Plus, it's free, and makes revenue by charging publishers to join its 'acceptable ads' policy rather than making you pay for the app. This policy is implemented via a whitelist that's switched on by default, though it can be adjusted if you still want to block sites that Adblock deems acceptable.

The blocker is relatively basic, concentrating on adverts and trackers, but nothing else. With the acceptable-ads filter in operation, you're still faced with a significant amount of advertising, but we found during our tests that the most invasive ones were successfully blocked. However, it also took out ads on the Guardian website, which appeared no worse than some it removed from other sites.

How it can be improved:
There aren't many options to play with, other than letting through advertisers that subscribe to its 'acceptable ads' program. It also annoyed us that the app itself tries hard to push you into switching to Adblock Plus's own iOS browser.

OUR VERDICT
Adblock Plus rules the roost when it comes to blocking ads in browsers and elsewhere, so it's no surprise to see it win an award. It's free to download, so it's a good option if you don't want to spend any money, but we preferred having the extra blocking options offered by Purify.

1Blocker | Free (£2.29 in-app purchase) | bit.ly/1block382 | ★★★★☆
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★☆ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★☆☆

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

What we liked:
1Blockr is free if all you want to do is block adverts, but it also has a huge collection of other tools available. You can choose one of these to use for free, or make an in-app purchase of £2.29 to use any or all of them at the same time. The list is impressive and far longer than any of the other programs we tested, letting you block specific URLs, cookies, CSS page elements, trackers, social media widgets, custom fonts, Disqus comments and more.

The app did a good job of blocking most ads, including Google ads and the more invasive ones we ran it past. It also blocked YouTube ads by adding a few seconds of blank screen to the start of videos. The extra blocks all appeared to work well when we tested them, too.

How it can be improved:
1Blocker is the most expensive content blocker in this test, but it also has the most extras. If you don't want to pay, you could run it alongside another ad blocker and just use one of its tools at a time.

OUR VERDICT
This is (potentially) the most expensive app in this group but it also has the most options and, if you pay, you can run them all at the same time. If you want complete control over what you see in your browser, it's worth the investment.

BEST OF THE REST

F-Secure AdBlocker | Free
bit.ly/fsec382
F-Secure's AdBlocker has hardly any customisation options, beyond turning it on or off. However, you can tap and hold Safari's reload button to add sites to its whitelist, which is handy if you want to support a particular site or find one that won't otherwise load properly. It blocked all the basic ads we tested it against, but it didn't block adverts on YouTube.

Crystal | 79p
bit.ly/crystal382
Crystal did a good job of removing ads from most of the websites that we tested it on. It also squashes sites up and over the gaps left by ads, so you don't see ugly empty spaces where adverts have been removed. Its tools are very basic, however, with no extra settings to tweak and no option to whitelist pages that you want to support, which is a bit disappointing in a paid-for app.

Freedom | Free
bit.ly/free382
Freedom is another free ad blocker and, like most free options, it has no settings to tinker with. It also failed to block all ads. When we tested it on the Sky News site, for example, it only blocked one Google AdChoices advert at a time – when one was blocked, another appeared. Reloading the page caused the blocked ads to switch. It's really not worth the time you spend downloading it.

BOOST YOUR SECURITY
using hacker tricks

Protect yourself from cybercriminals by using their own tools to fight them. **Robert Irvine** explains the best free and legal ways to turn the tables on the bad guys

TEST THE STRENGTH OF YOUR PASSWORD

It's a common misconception that websites store their users' login details in plain text, which would mean that when passwords are stolen in a security breach, the hackers have instant access to your account. In fact, any site that cares about security will convert your sign-up password into a string of characters called a hash, which it stores in its database. When you sign into the site, it generates a hash of the password you type and compares it to the hash in its database; if the hashes match, then you'll be logged in. Sadly, hashes don't provide a failsafe means of protecting your account, because hackers can generate huge lists of every possible combination of password, generate hashes for each one and then use the resulting database to crack the code.

Make sure your hash can't be cracked

The best way to foil the hackers is to

Type a password into QuickHash to quickly convert it to a secure hash

come up with the strongest password – and therefore the most 'uncrackable' hash – possible, and we don't just mean using a mixture of numbers and letters (we're sure you know that one already!). To find out whether your password can be easily 'unhashed', type it into a secure online hash generator such as QuickHash.com (https://quickhash.com), select an algorithim with which to hash it (SHA-256, SHA-512 and Whirlpool are among the most secure) and click the button to generate your hash.

Copy the string of characters to CrackStation (https://crackstation.net), which uses a massive database containing billions of hashes to try to crack passwords with the same hashes (you may need to complete a CAPTCHA first). If it succeeds, it will highlight the resulting hash and the password in green, and you'll know that your login is weak and can easily be cracked. If it fails, both will be highlighted in red and you can be fairly confident that you're using a strong password.

For example, if we type in the most commonly used password of 2014 – yes, it's

CrackStation instantly deciphered the hash of the most commonly used password

still `123456` – into QuickHash.com, and then copy the hash into CrackStation, it instantly comes up green and throws the weedy password back at us. In contrast, a combination of upper and lowercase letters, numbers and symbols is likely to leave it baffled.

Why your hash should always be salted

Naturally, many hackers have access to much more powerful tools with even larger databases than CrackStation's, so this doesn't mean your password can't be cracked. This is why many websites use a process called 'salting' for additional security. This adds a random string of characters to the password before it's hashed, so the resulting hash is unique every time. Many big companies that have been hacked, including Adobe and LinkedIn, were heavily criticised for not salting their hashes and have changed their security measures accordingly.

CHECK WHETHER YOUR ACCOUNT HAS BEEN HACKED

Hackers love to boast about their exploits, but the companies they attack aren't always as forthcoming about security breaches and sometimes don't tell users their details have been compromised for days, weeks or even months. If you're worried that one of your accounts has been hacked and your email address and password stolen, there are several tools that can tell you. This information is particularly important if you use the same login for more than one website (we all do it!). Our favourite is Have I Been Pwned (haveibeenpwned.com), which claims to have details of more than 222 million accounts from the leaked databases of 54 'pwned' websites ('pwned' means 'gained ownership of').

Enter your email address or username to see if they've been compromised – this may sound risky in itself, but Have I

Oh no! Our email address was 'pwned' in the Adobe security breach

Been Pwned is adamant that it doesn't store any passwords or log any user data. We were annoyed to find that our email address was one of the 153 million included in the Adobe security breach in November 2013.

If your account has been 'pwned', you're advised to change your password pronto, not just on the hacked service but on any others that use the login. To stay informed of future hacks, you can receive notifications when your email address appears in a leaked database.

Find out when (but not where) you were hacked

BreachAlarm (breachalarm.com) – formerly Shouldichangemypassword .com, works in a different way to Have I Been Pwned. It tells you when your password was compromised but not where, until you upgrade to the paid-for

version of its Email Watchdog service, which costs from $10 (£6.50) per year. If you stick with the free option, it will still track one email address and notify you immediately if it appears in a breach.

If you're not convinced about the trustworthiness of these sites, you might prefer PwnedList (pwnedlist.com), which lets you look up a hash of your email address rather than the plain-text version. Again, this tells you when rather than where your account was hacked, which might not sound like much use but at least prevents other hackers from knowing the exact details and using the information to their advantage. It also means you'll know to change your password.

Some tools tell you the date you were hacked but not the website

Have I Been Pwned tells you if one of your accounts has been hacked

SHARE SENSITIVE FILES SECURELY ONLINE

Most web users know that BitTorrent is an effective means of sending files directly to other people without anyone else knowing, which is why it's used by many hackers to share content illegally. But last year, hackers from the Hackito Ergo Sum community thoroughly analysed the security and privacy of the official BitTorrent Sync tool (getsync .com) and found several vulnerabilities in the service. Their conclusion was: "do not use for sensitive data" (you can read the full results of their tests at bit.ly/ hackito382).

So what should you use instead, if you

BitTorrent Sync is fast and easy use, but it may not be completely secure
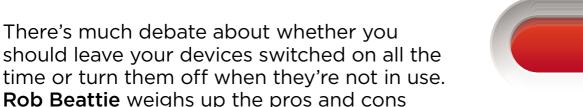

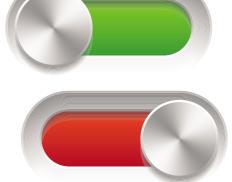*Syncthing lets you share your sensitive files securely over the web*

want to prevent third parties from intercepting your private data? The Hackito Ergo Sum hackers recommend a free tool called Syncthing which, despite being open-source, is "preferable to BitTorrent Sync". Available for Windows, Linux and Mac OS X, Syncthing stores files securely on your computer, rather than a central server, and encrypts them when sent to other people by using TLS (Transport Layer Security) "to prevent any eavesdropper from ever gaining access to your data". It lets you share as many folders as you need and doesn't reveal your IP address; instead, your computer is identified by a unique ID that you give

to the intended recipient of your data and that no-one else will ever know. You can find a guide to getting started with Syncthing at bit.ly/syncthing382.

Don't let your BitTorrent client be exploited

In August this year, researchers found that several popular BitTorrent clients, including uTorrent and Vuze, contained flaws that could make them vulnerable for use in Distributed Reflective Denial of Service (DRDoS) attacks. The hackers could source bandwidth from BitTorrent 'peers' to flood the sites they were targeting with 50 to 120 times more data, and bring them down without detection. For this reason, it's essential to update your BitTorrent software to the latest version, to patch the vulnerability, or you risk being exploited by hackers. We wouldn't recommend using uTorrent, anyway, because of the rubbish it now comes bundled with. Deluge (deluge-torrent .org) is a safer alternative and has a similar, simple interface.

LEAVE IT *ON* OR SWITCH IT *OFF*?

There's much debate about whether you should leave your devices switched on all the time or turn them off when they're not in use. **Rob Beattie** weighs up the pros and cons

YOUR PC

Why leave it on?

Mainly, for convenience. Despite recent improvements to Windows' boot-up speed, it's still not fast enough, and we've got better things to do than hang about waiting for a PC to start up or shut down. The popularity of tablets and smartphones that turn on instantly has made us even more intolerant of slow startup, and it's more convenient to simply nudge your mouse or tap the spacebar to coax your desktop PC back into life.

Switching your PC on and off all the time also leads to wear and tear on its components, especially if you're using an older machine with mechanical drives that need to spin up and spin down. Every time you switch on your PC, it gets a little electrical 'kick' from the mains supply as everything grinds into gear, and this uses the components more than if the machine is always left on. That 'kick' also causes the components – including SSDs – to heat up, and overheating is one of the main causes of PC breakdown. Meanwhile, a lot of system software (Windows, antivirus, online backup, browser add-ons) goes about its business in the background, and turning off your machine prevents this from happening.

Why switch it off?

You often need to switch off (or at least restart) your PC to finish installing software updates that otherwise sit there waiting to complete. These days, Windows is such a complicated beast that an occasional restart will solve niggling problems such as low memory, and generally benefit performance and improve stability.

Turning off your machine may save electricity, but it's a negligable amount when compared with other kilowatt-guzzling appliances in your home.

Verdict:

On, but restart it a couple of times a month

YOUR PHONE OR TABLET

Why leave it on?

One of the main advantages of owning a tablet or smartphone is that you're always connected, so if you want to receive important emails, Facebook messages, WhatsApp notifications – even old-fashioned phone calls – the moment they arrive, you'll need to leave the device switched on. Both iOS and Android are pretty good at limiting the problems that can be caused by buggy apps, so there's not much benefit in restarting your device if something goes pear-shaped. It's far more convenient to 'force stop' the individual app, then start it again.

Why switch it off?

If you don't want to be tracked by your friends and family using an app such as Apple's Find My Friends, for example, then just turn off your phone. It's the simple, foolproof way to disappear – at least temporarily. If you're not bothered about staying in constant contact, turning off your device while you charge it overnight speeds up the process and keeps the temperature down. On a less technological note, you should also consider switching off your phone when you're out for the evening because there's nothing sadder than a table of people in a pub or restaurant all looking at their phones instead of each other. And if you leave it on in the cinema, you deserve to be kneecapped by the usher.

Verdict:

On. But give yourself, your device and those around you the occasional 'off' break.

YOUR ROUTER

Why leave it on?

Following a query from Web User forum member The Badger, our Practical pages have been full of discussion about this. The main benefit of leaving it on is, obviously, that you can instantly access your beloved internet from any device connected to your network. Moreover, every time you turn your router off and back on again, it has to resynchronise with the local exchange and there'll be some back and forth of data before it achieves the fastest, most stable connection again.

Why switch it off?

Merchants of doom warn about unnecessary electricity consumption (by our reckoning about £1 per month – tops) and hint that older models may be a fire hazard (in which case, just get rid of the device and buy a new one).

Verdict:

On. And that's our final word on the subject, The Badger!

YOUR PRINTER OR SCANNER

Why leave it on?

Because printers, scanners and all-in-ones are designed to be left alone to look after themselves. Most modern devices of this type will go to sleep if they haven't been used for about 20 minutes, but keep just enough juice running so they can 'hear' an incoming fax (remember those?) coming through or, more commonly, a print request from your PC.

Why switch it off?

If you're not going to be using the device for a day or two, you might as well turn it off because you'll save a little bit of power. Always use the proper on/off switch rather than turning it off at the mains or yanking out the cable, because most devices go through a proper shut down/startup process to make sure their print heads are safely 'parked'.

Verdict:

On. The electricity you'll save is hardly worth the trouble of switching it off.

YOUR LAPTOP

Why leave it on?

Laptops share many of the same characteristics as desktop PCs, so much of the same advice applies. The only special consideration is battery life. Laptop manufacturers consider batteries to be consumables (like printer cartridges) that have a finite number of charge cycles, so it's to your advantage to leave the laptop plugged in and running off the mains whenever you can, because this will extend the usable life of your battery.

Why switch it off?

Laptop batteries are designed to be charged and then discharged; if you only ever run your computer off the mains, then the battery life will degrade more quickly because it's not running through those charge cycles like it's supposed to.
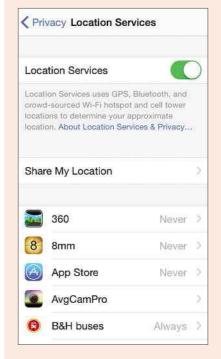
Verdict:

Both, but the question is not so much 'on or off?' as 'mains or battery?' The answer is: mains when it's available, battery when it's not. All batteries degrade but balanced usage will make yours last longer.

YOUR WIRELESS TECHNOLOGY

Why leave it on?

So many different services and devices rely on technologies such as GPS, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth – including maps, social networks, photo tools, weather apps, dating services and many more – that you'll miss them when they're not available. And although each of those apps sucks a little bit of life out of your battery, the whole point of mobile devices is their connectivity, so why on Earth would you want to turn them off?

Why switch it off?

You should turn off Bluetooth (the world's least favourite wireless technology) unless you're using an external mini keyboard or hands-free headset with your phone, because it makes big demands on the battery. For the same reason, lose the Wi-Fi because your device will otherwise be constantly looking for hotspots and trying to connect to them, even when it can't. You can also save battery life by turning off Location Services, with the added benefit of not informing Apple, Google and the rest of the world where you are at every given moment.

Verdict:

Off. Save battery life and protect your privacy until you need to use the apps.

Broadband Deals

Call FREE on 0800 083 2357 to switch your broadband

	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Broadband	£7.50 (12 months for FREE)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £0.00
2	sky	Sky: Broadband & Calls	£10.00 (12 months for FREE)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£0.00
3	EE	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£1.00 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited **	£12.00
4	plusnet	Plusnet: Broadband & Calls	£9.99 (£2.50 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£30.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details
*First-year cost does not include line rental. Cost is calculated at monthly price x12 with all introductory offers subtracted. Additional charges incurred outside of free inclusive calls not included in first-year cost. ** Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.
Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 9 October 2015.

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

Take a Screen Break

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

WEB USER WORD SEARCH

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

CHROMECAST
GOPRO
IPAD
IPHONE
KINDLE
NEXUS
PAPERWHITE
PLAYSTATION
ROKU
XBOX

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

CAN YOU IDENTIFY THESE TV SHOWS FROM THE EMOJI?

1. 🏡 ♣ ♠ ♦ ♥

2. 🎮 👑 👑

3. 👍 🇬🇧 🍰

4. 😷 🆔 ❓

Get the answers online at www.webuser.co.uk/quiz382

COMPETITIONS

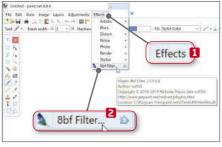# Extend Paint.NET with Photoshop filters | www.getpaint.net

You can now use image-editing filters designed for Photoshop in Paint.NET, and it won't cost you a penny. Here's what you need to do

Adobe Photoshop costs hundreds of pounds, which is far more than most of us would be willing to spend on image-editing software. Paint.NET – originally designed as a basic replacement for Windows Paint – is a free alternative that offers many of the same tools, including support for layers, levels, unlimited undo and special effects. It even supports third-party plug-ins, so you can extend its capabilities further. With the right plug-in installed, you can use filters designed for Photoshop to create professional-looking works of art with the minimum of effort. While all the filters should work without any problems, the software suffered from the occasional crash when we used it, so make sure you save your work regularly.

1 First, install the PSFilterPDN plug-in. Download the latest version from psfilterpdn.codeplex.com. Open Paint.NET's effects folder in Explorer. It's usually at C:\Program Files\Paint.NET\ Effects. Unzip the plug-in and copy PSFilterShim.exe **1** and PSFilterPdn.dll **2** to the Effects **3** folder. Click OK.
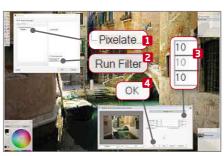
2 You don't need to run the PSFilterShim.exe file, just copying it and the DLL into the folder is enough to install it. Open Paint.NET and click Effects. **1** You should see a new 8bf Filter entry. **2** This shows that the plug-in is working as intended. If you don't see it, close Paint.NET and repeat step 1.
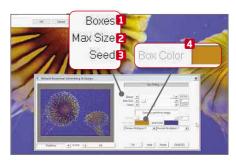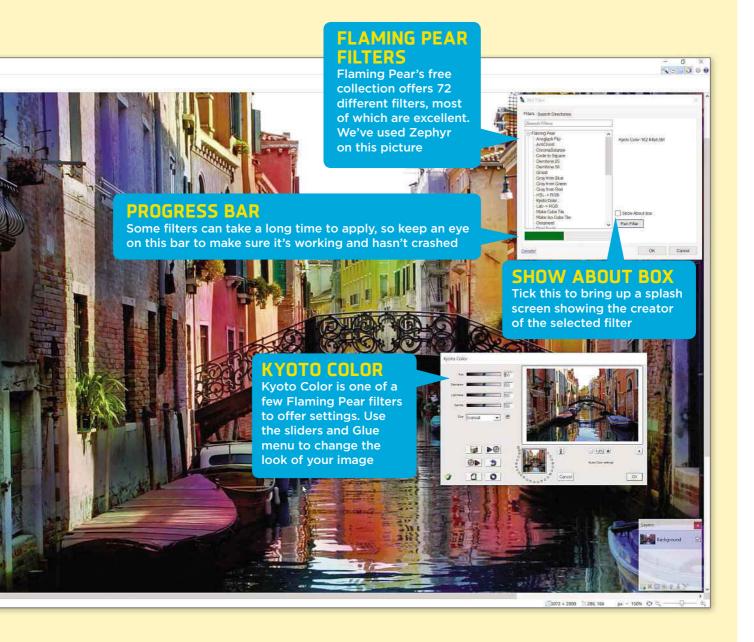
3 There's no point in running the plug-in until you've installed some filters. You can install any Photoshop filters with the 8bf extension. Richard Rosenman's site (richardrosenman.com/ shop) has several free ones. Browse and download any of the free choices, such as Pixelate. **1**
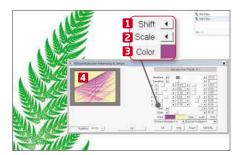
4 Unzip the download and drag the .8bf file to Paint.NET's Effects folder. Open a photo in Paint.NET and go to Effects, 8bf Filter. In the window that opens, click the plus sign next to Richard Rosenman and select the filter to apply. **1** Click the Run Filter button, **2** adjust the settings **3** and click OK **4** to apply the effect.
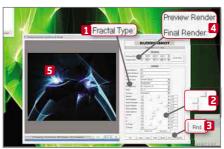
5 Download and install any other filters that take your fancy. You don't need to restart Paint.NET each time. Box Fitting uses different-sized boxes to make up your photo. You can change the number **1** and size **2** of the boxes. Seed **3** displays different variations. You can alter the colour of the boxes, too. **4**

FLAMING PEAR FILTERS
Flaming Pear's free collection offers 72 different filters, most of which are excellent. We've used Zephyr on this picture

PROGRESS BAR
Some filters can take a long time to apply, so keep an eye on this bar to make sure it's working and hasn't crashed

SHOW ABOUT BOX
Tick this to bring up a splash screen showing the creator of the selected filter

KYOTO COLOR
Kyoto Color is one of a few Flaming Pear filters to offer settings. Use the sliders and Glue menu to change the look of your image

6 Not all Richard Rosenman's filters are designed to be applied to existing photographs. The Barnsley Fern Fractal, for example, generates fractal art from scratch. You can adjust the settings, **1** scale **2** and colour. **3** The default design is a fern, but it can be manipulated to create different variations. **4**

7 Buddhabrot produces stunning abstract fractal art. Select the type of fractal **1** (Mandelbrot is a good choice) and adjust the sliders **2** to change the settings. Clicking Rnd **3** produces a random result. Adjusting the Preview and Final Render **4** time improves the quality of the preview **5** and finished artwork.

8 Flaming Pear (bit.ly/pear382) also has several free Photoshop filters. ChromaSolarize **1** applies a light-sensitive contrast to the colours. There are no settings to play around with – just make a selection and click Run Filter. **2** Some filters take a while to apply, so be patient.
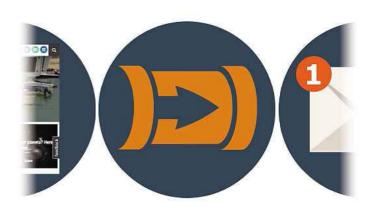
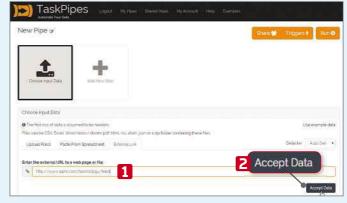# Get personalised news updates in your inbox

TaskPipes: taskpipes.com | ⏱ **10 mins** | **Any browser**

TaskPipes is a powerful, free service that lets you extract data from a web page, email or spreadsheet, then manipulate it in any way you like before exporting it using a range of options. There are endless uses for such a tool but, in this Workshop, we've shown you how to create a 'pipe' that extracts news stories and their URLs from Alphr's Technology feed (www.alphr.com/technology), then emails you an update at the same time each day. RSS feeds are interpreted by TaskPipes as several columns of data, which you can clean and standardise so they are presented exactly how you want. You can delete and rearrange columns as required, sort the data and even filter entries you don't want to see, giving you an unparalleled level of control over what you receive. By understanding what TaskPipes can do, you should be able to take advantage of the service's impressive tools to automate other data-related tasks, which can save you an enormous amount of time.
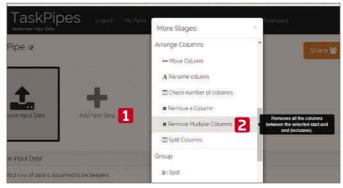
1 Visit taskpipes.com, click 'Use now' **1** and enter your details to set up an account. You'll receive an email containing a link; just click it to confirm. Next, click My Pipes and select View next to New Pipe.

2 Paste the RSS feed address of a website you follow (for example, www.alphr.com/technology/feed) into the box labelled 'Enter the external URL…' **1** and click the Accept Data button. **2** A preview of the feed appears below.

3 Because we're only interested in the RSS feed's 'title', 'pubDate' and 'link' fields, the remaining columns can be hidden. To do this, click Add New Step, **1** More, then Remove Multiple Columns. **2** Select the appropriate Start Column and End Column, then click Save.

4 To move the 'title' column to the left-hand side, click Add New Step, More and Move Column. Choose '3: title' from the first drop-down menu **1** and leave the second as Start. **2** Click Save. **3**
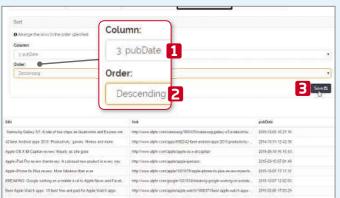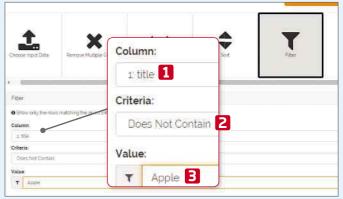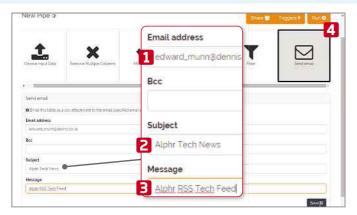
EXPERT TIP

Edward Munn says
Using the Trigger outlined in Step 9, you can run your pipe by simply sending an email to a specified address. To make this even quicker, try using IFTTT's Do Button (bit.ly/do382) to send the email directly from your smartphone's home screen.

5 To sort the articles by date, click Add New Step and Sort. Choose '3: pubDate' from the Column drop-down menu **1** and select Descending **2** as the Order before selecting Save **3** again.
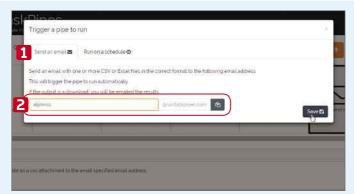
6 You can use TaskPipes to filter any content that you don't want to receive from the RSS feed. If, for example, you're not interested in reading stories about Apple, click Add New Step and select Filter. Next choose '1: title', **1** Does Not Contain **2** and type `Apple` in the Value field. **3**
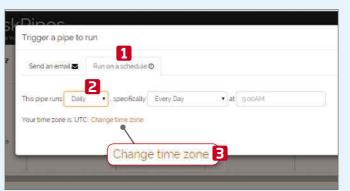
7 To have the results of your pipe emailed to you each time it's run, click Add New Step, then select More and 'Send email'. Enter your email address, **1** subject **2** and message, **3** then click Save. To test the pipe, click Run. **4**

8 Once you're happy with your pipe, you can rename it to something more memorable by clicking the Edit button. **1** To set the pipe to be run on a schedule or when you send an email to a specified address, click Triggers. **2**

9 TaskPipes shows the 'Send an email' option **1** by default. Choose a memorable email address that describes your pipe **2** to prefix the @run.taskpipes.com ending. You can run the pipe at any time by simply sending an email to this address.

10 If you want your Pipe to run on a schedule, click the 'Run on a Schedule' tab **1** and choose Daily, Weekly or Monthly from the drop-down menu. **2** Make sure you remember to click 'Change time zone' **3** because it is set to UTC (Coordinated Universal Time) by default.
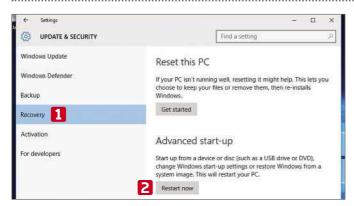
Find Windows 10's hidden recovery tools

In previous versions of Windows, you could get to Safe Mode by booting up the PC and pressing one of the function keys. Although this no longer works in Windows 10, the OS still has a Safe Mode, along with a range of other handy troubleshooting tools – it's just not obvious how you get to them. In this Workshop, we'll show you what recovery tools are available and how to find them.

Windows 10: bit.ly/win382 | ⏱ 20 mins | ⊞ Windows 10

1 Open the Start menu and click Settings, then 'Update & security'. Click Recovery **1** and, under the 'Advanced start-up' section, click the 'Restart now' button. **2** Alternatively, click Start, Power, then hold down the Shift key and click Restart.
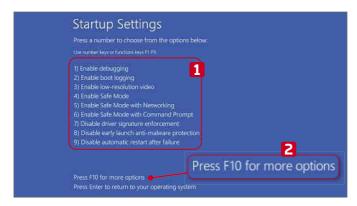
2 On the 'Choose an option' screen, click Troubleshoot. Choose to 'Reset this PC' or select 'Advanced options'. 'Reset this PC' refreshes your Windows installation but removes apps and settings. Use 'Keep my files' **1** or 'Remove everything', **2** but use both options with caution.

3 Less drastic tools are available in the 'Advanced options' menu. System Image Recovery **1** can restore a snapshot of your hard drive created with Backup & Restore. Start-up Repair **2** is an automatic process that can scan and fix any problems Windows is having when loading.

4 Click System Restore **1** to access your recent restore points, which might be enough to roll back your PC if you've installed something and you're having trouble reversing it. If you've had enough of Windows 10, use 'Go back to the previous build'. **2**

5 Start-up Settings can help you get Windows going, even if there's something wrong with it. Select the option from the Advanced menu to see a list of options, including various types of Safe Mode. **1** Use the F1 to F9 keys to select an option or press F10 to see even more options. **2**

6 If you can't boot into Windows, you can't reboot into these recovery tools – unless you've got a Windows disc or a USB recovery drive. Download a Windows ISO for writing to a DVD at bit.ly/winiso382 or create a recovery drive on a USB stick by searching for 'create a recovery drive'. **1**
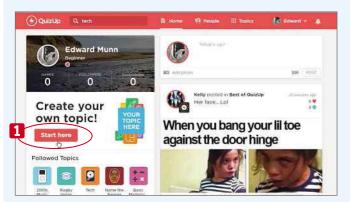
Make and share your own online quiz

There are loads of entertaining quizzes on the web, but if you want to add to the fun, it's remarkably simple to create one of your own. QuizUp makes this very easy to do, letting you set up quizzes on any topic.

In this Workshop, we show you how to create a free account on the site and start making quizzes that you can challenge your friends and family with.
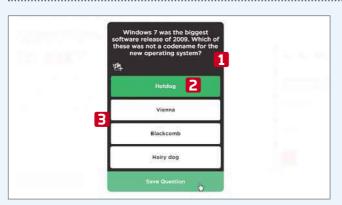
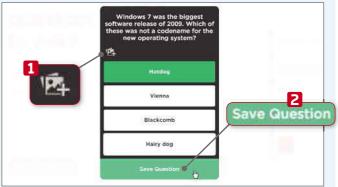**QuizUp: quizup.com** | ⏱ **10 mins** | **Any browser**

1 Visit QuizUp and click Sign Up to create an account. From the homepage, click 'Start here', **1** then 'Let's do this' to create your own quiz topic. Enter a descriptive name for your quiz topic and then click Next.

2 Choose a tagline for your topic, **1** then follow the on-screen steps to select its language, category and an icon. After confirming this information, you can begin writing questions for your quiz.

3 Click Add New Question to enter your first question. The question must fit within the top box, **1** which is limited to 150 characters. Below it, you need to write a single correct answer in the green box **2** and three incorrect answers in the remaining boxes. **3**

4 All questions are multiple choice and are randomly selected and displayed when your quiz is played. To give users a pictorial hint, you can click the picture icon **1** to add an image to the question. Once you're happy with a question and its answers, click Save Question. **2**

5 Repeat this process until you have added at least seven questions, then tick the box to agree to QuizUp's terms and conditions. **1** Click Create Topic. **2** To test your completed quiz, click Play from the 'Topic page'.

6 Use 'Share URL' **1** to share your quiz with your friends and family. Their Rankings will appear on the Rankings page. **2** Click the Questions tab **3** to add, delete or edit your questions, and use the Settings page to tweak your quiz's name, tagline and icon.
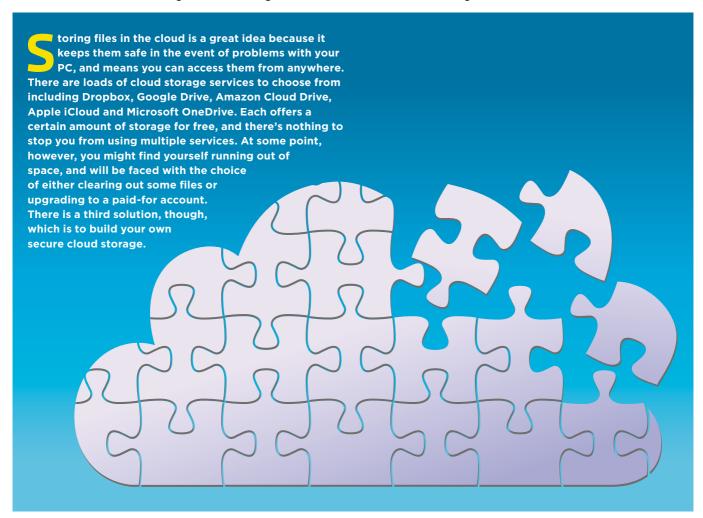
How to... Build your own cloud storage

Why limit yourself to a few gigabytes of cloud storage when you could have terabytes? **Wayne Williams** shows you how

Storing files in the cloud is a great idea because it keeps them safe in the event of problems with your PC, and means you can access them from anywhere. There are loads of cloud storage services to choose from including Dropbox, Google Drive, Amazon Cloud Drive, Apple iCloud and Microsoft OneDrive. Each offers a certain amount of storage for free, and there's nothing to stop you from using multiple services. At some point, however, you might find yourself running out of space, and will be faced with the choice of either clearing out some files or upgrading to a paid-for account. There is a third solution, though, which is to build your own secure cloud storage.

Why create your own storage?

There are lots of reasons why you might want to set up your own cloud: it's easy to do, it's cheaper (in the long run) than subscribing to a paid-for service, it's more flexible and you can have as much storage as you like. OneDrive gives new users 15GB of storage for free, which sounds generous, but once you've uploaded the photos from one or two smartphones, it will soon start to fill up. The beauty of a do-it-yourself cloud service is that you don't have to worry about limits; you can have several terabytes of storage at your fingertips.

There are two other big reasons to consider running your own cloud storage – security and reliability. While it's unlikely that OneDrive or Google Drive will be hacked or disappear for any great length of time, there's always the possibility. Are you happy to trust those companies with your personal data?

What you'll need

Creating your own cloud storage simply requires you to connect an external drive to your router. There are two ways of doing this. If your router has a USB port (not all of them do), you can connect a

You can buy pre-configured cloud storage drives in a variety of shapes and sizes

USB drive to it. Alternatively, you can connect a Network Attached Storage (NAS) drive via Ethernet. The latter option is best and offers two further choices: you can either buy a ready-made cloud storage solution or you can use a spare internal hard drive to create your own NAS. You will need to buy an enclosure if you want to go down the second route, but these are affordable and come with free mobile apps, so you can access your data from anywhere.

Buy ready-made cloud storage

The easiest and least problematic solution is to buy a ready-made NAS drive. There are numerous makes and models to choose from, but our top recommendations are WD My Cloud (bit.ly/wd382), Seagate Personal Cloud (bit.ly/seagatecloud382) and LaCie CloudBox (bit.ly/cloudbox382), which come in a range of capacities starting from 2TB and going up to 6TB. They are available as single-drive and dual-drive systems – with the two-drive models, you can either have double the storage or use the second drive as a backup copy for the first. Prices start around £99 for a 2TB WD My Cloud.

NAS drives can be controlled from a web interface, such as this one from the Western Digital My Cloud

NAS drives connect to your router via Ethernet and often have USB ports, which can be used to back them up to an attached external drive. Once the drive is set up, you can automatically back up and access content from any PC or Mac, as well as from smartphones and tablets via a free app.

NAS drives are essentially mini computers in their own right, with their own operating system, so they can control what happens on the drive and provide access to its contents. We show you how to set up a Seagate model in our Mini Workshop, below.

Make your own storage

If you have a spare internal hard drive lying around, you can use it to create your own NAS drive. You will need to buy a NAS enclosure in order to connect the drive to your router via Ethernet. The D-Link ShareCenter 2 Bay Cloud Network Storage Enclosure (bit.ly/sharecenter382) is very good and has a free app you can download that lets you access and stream your content on a mobile device. As the name suggests, the

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MINI WORKSHOP | Connecting a NAS to a router

1 Getting started couldn't be simpler. Connect the Seagate (or any other NAS) to a spare Ethernet port on your router using the supplied cable **1** and attach the power supply. **2** The device will automatically configure itself, taking around 10 minutes to complete. The drive will be ready to use once the light on the front stabilises. **3**
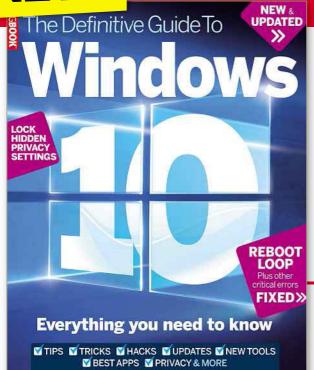
2 You can access Seagate Personal Cloud through Windows Explorer. There are folders Music, Photos and Videos, ready to drag content into. The Public folder under Network/PERSONALCLOUD **1** also has subfolders for content. **2** Double-click the Personal Cloud internet shortcut **3** to launch the Setup Wizard.

3 First, install any available firmware updates. The web interface displays a selection of icons – Device Manager, Download Manager, Backup Manager, App Manager, Sdrive and Seagate Media. Sdrive is a Windows/Mac program that offers secure access to your content. **1** Seagate Media **2** is the app used for mobile devices.

D-Link has ready-made NAS drives available but will also supply an empty enclosure if you have your own drives

This device from Addonics can connect eSATA drives to your router

enclosure accepts two 3.5in SATA drives, and you can hot-swap them (replace the drives without needing to power down or reboot). A USB 3.0 port lets you connect additional external storage or a USB printer, and you can use it to copy the contents of a USB flash drive at the press of a button. This enclosure is currently for sale on Amazon for just £40, and there are also 4TB, 6TB and 8TB bundles available if you'd prefer to get an enclosure with the drives included and already set up for use. However, these are quite expensive and prices start from £210 for the 2TB version.

If you have an external USB drive that isn't being used, you could consider turning it into a NAS device using an adapter. The Addonics NAS 4.0 Adapter (www.addonics.com) lets you plug in either two eSATA or two USB 2.0 storage devices at one end, and then link the device to your router using an Ethernet cable at the other. If you get a USB hub, you can connect up to 16 drives. The adapter will set you back £77 from Aimtec (bit.ly/addon382).

The software-only option

The cheapest way to create cloud-like storage is to make all the files on your PC accessible over the internet. If you have a spare internal drive, you can limit sharing to just that drive, which would be an even smarter option. Tonido Server (www .tonido.com) is a free tool that turns your PC into a web server and lets you securely access your files from anywhere, share content with friends and stream music over the internet. You can mount the server as a drive in Windows; sync other computers with it; and access the content on iPhone, Android, BlackBerry and Windows Phone devices.

There's also a portable version of Tonido Server for USB drives, as well as versions for Mac OS X, Linux and Raspberry Pi. We show you how to set it up on your PC in our Mini Workshop, below.

MINI WORKSHOP | Share your PC's files over the internet using Tonido

1 Download and install Tonido Server (www.tonido.com) on the computer you want to use for your cloud storage, and grant it access through the Windows firewall. Choose an account name, **1** which will be used to access your files remotely, and a password. **2** Enter your email address. **3** More Options **4** can be used to recover an existing account.

2 Follow the onscreen instructions to finalise the setup, and choose which folders to use for remote access and sharing. Tonido will index files on your hard drive to make them easier to find. **1** It will index the default Videos, Music and Pictures folders, **2** but you can add additional locations if required. **3**

3 You can download an app for your mobile phone or tablet. Once you've finished, the web interface will open. You can log into this from anywhere. Here, you can browse the drives; **1** view Music, Photos and Videos in your library; **2** share content, **3** stream media in the player; **4** and sync files with other computers. **5**

NEXT ISSUE   **How To...** Hack your doorbell

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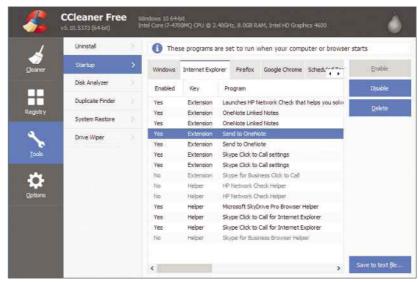
Web User's Top Tips

Our experts take a fresh look at CCleaner, and explore its lesser-known, new and advanced tools

TOP TIPS FOR CCLEANER

Remove unwanted browser add-ons

Most browser add-ons enhance your enjoyment of the web, but some display adverts and redirect you to websites you don't want to visit, which is just irritating. All the main browsers have options that let you disable or delete add-ons, but sometimes the add-on prevents you from doing this or cannot be removed for some other reason. CCleaner (bit.ly/cclean382) can override this and remove any add-ons you don't want.

Select Tools, then Startup, to see tabs for Internet Explorer, Firefox and Chrome. Click a tab to see a list of the add-ons for that browser. Select an add-on to activate the Enable, Disable and Delete buttons. Use Disable first, then check that this doesn't cause problems with the browser. If everything is working, you can return to CCleaner and hit Delete.
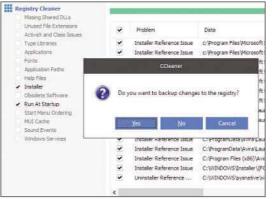

Clean up your web browsers and remove unwanted extensions

Always make a backup

There are two golden rules for using CCleaner and other tools of this type. The first is to only fix a small number of problems at a time. Don't try to fix everything at once because, if a problem arises, you won't know what caused it. Select just a few items in the left panel, then use your computer for a while to check that everything is working properly.

The second rule is to create a backup whenever possible. When using the Registry Cleaner, for example, CCleaner prompts you to save a backup (the default save location

Always click Yes when asked if you want to make a backup

is the Documents folder). Do not skip this step. Again, use your computer for a while afterwards before you clean any more unused or faulty Registry entries.

Wipe your hard drive

When you delete a file, it actually remains on your hard drive until the space it occupies is used for something else. With the right tools, your deleted files can still be recovered, so if you

want them properly gone, you need to erase the free space to overwrite any deleted files.

Go to Tools, then Drive Wiper. Select Free Space Only for the Wipe option and Simple Overwrite for the Security setting, then select the drive you want to wipe. Bear in mind that if you have a 1TB drive that's only lightly used, it will have a lot of free space, so wiping it could take a very long time. Using the top security setting of 35 passes is unnecessary and may take several hours to run.

You can also choose to erase an entire drive. You might want to do this if you have bought a second-hand drive, such as an external USB drive, or if you are disposing of one. The Windows drive (usually C:) cannot be erased.

Securely erase with every clean

Once the free space on your hard drive is cleared, you can keep it clean

> 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.

by securely erasing files from within CCleaner. Go to Options, Settings and select 'Secure file deletion'. Set it to Simple Overwrite so that every time you use CCleaner to clean-up junk files, it will securely erase them. The 35-pass option is not required because it'll just make deleting files extremely slow.
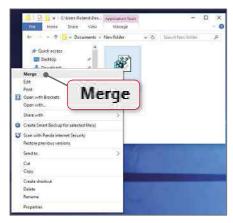
Use the portable version

If you are trying to clean up a computer, you may not want to install even more software, in which case you can use the portable version of CCleaner. It is supplied as a Zip file and, after extracting the contents, it can be run by opening the folder and clicking CCleaner or CCleaner64, depending on whether you have the 32- or 64-bit version of Windows. It then works exactly like the regular installed version.

Another advantage of the portable version is that it can be copied to a USB flash memory drive and used on other computers without having to be installed. Get it from bit.ly/ccport382.

Restore Registry changes

CCleaner is fairly safe to use but, on rare occasions, after you have used the Registry Cleaner tool to remove Registry entries, you might find that something is not running correctly. Restoring the last Registry changes will cure the problem.

To do this, open an Explorer window and go to the folder where the Registry backup is stored. Right-click the file and, on the menu that's displayed, select Merge. This puts everything back that was removed or changed.

Right-click a Registry backup and select Merge to undo changes

Stop startup programs

Not only does CCleaner remove junk from your hard drive, it can also be used to stop junk from loading with Windows. Select Tools, Startup, then the Windows tab. As with browser add-ons, select something on the list to activate the Enable, Disable and Delete buttons.

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

Stop scheduled tasks

Some programs on your PC are scheduled to run and certain actions can be triggered by specific events. If something is loading with Windows and doing something you don't want, such as displaying adverts, it could be a scheduled task rather than a startup item. Programs and tasks can be run automatically with Windows' built-in Task Scheduler tool, but it's not easy to use. CCleaner offers a simpler way to access it.

Select Tools, Startup, then the 'Scheduled tasks' tab. Some of the items can be difficult to identify, but if you see something obvious, such as a program you don't use or want, select it and use the Disable button. Delete it after testing your PC to make sure it is running properly without it.

Edit the right-click menu

When you right-click files or folders, either on the Desktop or in Explorer windows, the context menu appears. Some of its items are useful, such as the option to scan for viruses or to compress files into a Zip archive, but if you spot any that you never use, CCleaner can remove them. Go to Tools, Startup and select the Context Menu tab. Select a menu item and click Disable. If your PC works fine without it, return to CCleaner and hit Delete to remove it completely.

Clean up restore points

System Restore is a Windows feature that performs a limited type of backup. It saves your PC's current state to the hard drive whenever something major happens, such as a Windows update. Some programs save restore points automatically, but

you can also create them manually, and CCleaner provides an easy way to manage them.

Click Tools, then System Restore to see a list of restore points. Any of them can be selected and deleted. Usually, Windows will delete the oldest one when the allocated drive space is used up, but CCleaner lets you choose which ones to keep and which to remove.

Delete duplicate files

Transferring files from online drives, downloading photos from cameras and phones, and editing files and photos can mean you end up with duplicate copies of files in different places on your hard drive. Duplicates waste space, so it's worth removing them, but it can be a hassle trying to track them down. CCleaner can do this for you.

Go to Tools, Duplicate Finder and set the options before starting the search. You want to look for duplicates of documents, photos, videos and music, but it's best to clear the ticks against 'System files' and 'Hidden files'. Click Search.

If you find duplicates of system files, such as DLLs, it's best to leave them alone. Removing them can lead to problems because a program may expect to find the DLL in a specific place. Only enable the System and Hidden options if you are an expert, and back up everything first, then take care to test the PC afterwards to make sure everything is working.

Create a shortcut

If you like to tidy up your PC after a day's work, you can create a Desktop shortcut that cleans it and then switches it off. Right-click the Desktop and select New, then Shortcut. Click Browse, then find and select CCleaner.exe. To the end of the command line, add `/AUTO /SHUTDOWN`. Click Next and name it 'Clean and shutdown'. When this shortcut is clicked, CCleaner will use whatever options are currently set to clean the PC, then turn it off.

Remove any System Restore points you no longer need

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

Stop Windows 10 updates

Q I recently read that you can turn off automatic updates by going to Settings, 'Update & security', 'Advanced options' and ticking the 'Defer upgrades' box. I followed the instructions but I couldn't find a 'Defer upgrades' box to tick.

Colin Ormesher, via email

A Windows 10 has had several updates and this option may have been removed. It's certainly not there in the current version of the Home edition. But there is another way to stop updates.

Some people have a metered internet connection, which means there is a limit on how much data they are allowed to download. To avoid Windows Update using up your data

Stop Windows 10 downloading updates by turning on 'Metered connection'

allowance, you can set your network connection as metered, which makes Windows ask permission before it downloads updates. At the prompt, you can either put them off till later or download them. It's not a perfect solution, but it's the best we've got!

Click the network icon in the notification area and click 'Network settings', 'Advanced options', then turn on the switch to 'Set as metered connection'.

MUSIC
Back up Windows Media Player's library

Q I want to upgrade my 32-bit version of Windows 7 Ultimate Edition to make full use of the memory I have installed, which is more than the 32-bit version can handle. However, I'm not ready to take the plunge with Windows 10, so I'm considering Windows 7 64-bit. I'm planning to do a full backup first, but I was wondering if I could back up my entire Windows Media Player 12 music library as it appears right now, rather than dragging music folders one by one to the open window of WMP 12 after I have upgraded?

João Rua, via email

A It isn't possible to convert 32-bit Windows to 64-bit – you have to erase the hard drive and install a fresh copy of Windows. This will wipe everything, so you should back up your music, photos, videos and documents to an external drive before you start, then

copy them back afterwards. You must also do this with your drivers – and because all your software will be erased, it too must be downloaded and reinstalled on the new PC. It's a lot of effort for not much benefit.

The 32-bit version of Windows can access 4GB of memory, but some of this is reserved for the PC to use so, in practice, there is less than 3GB available. However, 64-bit Windows and its software require more memory to run, so any gain is offset by higher usage. That said, if your PC can take it, installing 8GB of memory and running 64-bit Windows would make a big improvement.

Getting back to your original question about Media Player, the music database cannot be transferred. You have to back up your music files and import them again after upgrading.

HARDWARE
Cloning to a larger hard drive

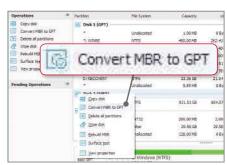**Q** I have a Dell Optiplex 3010 running 64-bit Windows 7 Professional, with

an Intel Core i5-3470 processor and 6GB of memory. I cloned the 1TB hard drive on to a new 4TB model using the free version of HDClone (bit.ly/hdclone382), but the new drive is only showing 1.83TB.

E Foster, via email

A There are several different drive-partitioning and formatting options, and each has its limits. The MBR type has been used for years and is very common, but it has a maximum size of 2TB, so if a drive exceeds this capacity, any storage over 2TB becomes inaccessible.

The solution is to convert the drive to a scheme called GPT, which provides support for higher-capacity drives. This can be carried out using the Disk Management tool in Windows, but EaseUS Partition Master (bit.ly/ease382) is free and makes it even easier. Run it and it will display the drives attached to your PC. Right-click a drive and select 'Convert MBR to GPT'.

We haven't tried it ourselves, but you probably can't convert the C: drive while it's in use. This means booting up from the old drive and attaching the new one as a second drive to convert it. It might be erased in the process, so you may have to clone the old drive's contents to the new drive again afterwards.

Use EaseUS Partition Master to convert large MBR disks to GPT

SECURITY
Office documents won't copy

Q I can't copy some of my Word and Excel documents to another drive. To remedy this, I have to right-click the problematic document and select Properties, then the Security tab, then click Edit, Add and type au (for 'all

users'), then click Apply. Is there some way of overriding this? It only happens on documents I have recently edited.

Adrian Bonnington, via email

A The Windows security system includes a set of permissions that is different for each user. It's not letting you copy the file because you don't own it and do not have permission to copy it. By changing the ownership of the file to 'all users', you can copy, move and delete it.

Instead of doing this for each individual file, you can take ownership of the folder and everything it contains, including subfolders and files. Repeat the procedure for the folder and tick the option to apply it to all subcontainers and objects.

WINDOWS 10
Upgrading a Sony Vaio

Q I upgraded my Sony Vaio laptop from Windows 7 to 10, not long after it came out. But then, while perusing the Sony website, I noticed that it said that Vaio users shouldn't upgrade their laptops to Windows 10 under any circumstances because Sony still needed an update to make it compatible. "Uh oh," I thought, "too late". I have to say, however, that so far it is working fine. Have I done any harm by upgrading to Windows 10?

Kaye Bell, via email

A The warning not to upgrade is probably down to a compatibility problem with a driver. It won't harm your computer, but it could prevent Windows from running properly. Since you haven't noticed any problems, it may not affect every laptop. You might have been lucky. Support for hardware in Windows 10 is very good and it is possible that Microsoft has installed alternative drivers. Either way, there is no need to worry about your laptop.

WINDOWS 10
Stop automatic Desktop reordering

Q I was happy using Windows 10 for the first three weeks after I upgraded, but now my Desktop keeps rearranging my icons on the left in alphabetical order every 20 minutes or so. I have checked everything and can't find out why this has suddenly started happening. 'Auto-arrange Icons' is unticked and 'Align icons to grid' is ticked. I'm not using a second monitor and my resolution is set to 1080p, fed via an HDMI cable. I'm at my wits' end

Save the positions of desktop icons and restore them with DesktopOK

because I usually arrange my 25 or so icons in groups and now they are continually being reset.

Barrie Ellison, via email

A This problem has been around for a decade or more. It only occurs after installing software, but there's no agreement on which program might be the culprit. However, a tool called DesktopOK (bit.ly/dtopok382) can provide a workaround.

When changing screen resolutions, Windows will automatically rearrange the icons to fit the new size. This small program allows you to save icon positions and to restore them. Click the icon in the bottom-left corner of the program window and select English when you first run it.

GENERAL PC
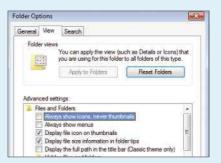## Restore lost thumbnail images

Q I use Windows 7 and have suddenly lost all the thumbnails in my Pictures folder. Now I just get the filenames. What has happened?

Jo Pester, via email

A There are several possibilities. First, open the Control Panel and click Folder Options, then select the View tab. Find 'Always show icons, never thumbnails' at the top of the list and make sure that the option isn't ticked. Some people have found that clearing the tick solves the problem.

Another option is to select the General tab and click Restore Defaults. Go to Control Panel, System and click the 'Advanced system settings' link. Select the Advanced tab and click the Settings button in the Performance section. There may be another option to enable or disable thumbnails. Make sure thumbnails are enabled.

A program must be associated with image files in order to generate the thumbnail images in Explorer

GENERAL PC
Fixing a DLL error

Q Periodically, the following message appears on my Windows 7 PC: "TaskSchedulerHelper.dll. The special module could not be found." It doesn't do any harm but I find it irritating, and I don't know how to stop it. Any ideas?

Peter Kaldor, via email

A This file is not part of Windows. Some other piece of software has told Windows to look for it, but it now can't be found. It may be that the software that used it has been uninstalled but there is still a reference to it somewhere within Windows.

Auslogics BoostSpeed (www.auslogics .com) has been known to use this file. If you had this and removed it, reinstalling it again and then uninstalling it with a tool such as IObit Uninstaller (www.iobit .com) should solve the problem. You could also scan your system with AutoRuns (bit.ly/runs382), then use the search tool to find the reference to it. It will probably be highlighted in yellow to indicate the file cannot be found. Right-click it and delete it.

Make sure Windows is set to show thumbnail images and not icons

windows. If there are no thumbnails, then it might mean there is no associated program. This can happen when a photo editor or paint program is installed, becomes associated with image files, and is then uninstalled, leaving the system without an associated program.

Right-click an image, such as a JPG file, and select 'Open with'. Select 'Choose default program' and select one, such as Paint, Paint.net or Windows Photo Viewer. Click OK and the thumbnails should reappear in your Explorer windows.

There is also a 'Fix it' tool you could try at the Microsoft website (bit.ly/ fixit382). Just click the button to repair several faulty Explorer settings.

This fortnight Roland has been using Windows 10 on an Apple Mac – it runs well and you can choose which OS to boot

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

WINDOWS 10

Easier access to multiple Desktop programs

There's a new feature in Windows 10 that lets you work with multiple Desktops, and it's very useful. The only minor irritation I found was that I could not easily switch to programs that were on a different Desktop.

Pressing Alt+Tab works as it always has, letting you switch between programs on the current Desktop, but it doesn't give access to programs that are open on other Desktops.

I eventually found an option buried in Settings that lets you see and switch to all windows, which is much more convenient. Click the Start menu, then Settings, and click System. Click Multi-tasking on the left. On the right, you'll

You can configure the multiple Desktops options in the Windows 10 settings

see two options under 'Virtual desktops'. One is about app icons in the taskbar and the other is for the Alt+Tab program switcher. For both options, you can choose to either show only windows on the current Desktop or all windows on all Desktops. The latter setting is much more useful, but it wasn't the default on my PC.

Dave Ivory, via email

EMAIL
Add a Gmail signature above quoted text

For as long as I can remember, Gmail has had the option to add a signature to the bottom of your emails. To do this, simply open Settings and look for Signature under the General header.

The only problem with the feature is that it adds the signature to the very bottom of emails, after any quoted correspondence. This isn't much good if

Tick 'insert signature before quoted text' to ensure it appears near your reply

you have forwarded or replied to an email, because you have to cut the signature from the bottom and paste it in the correct position.

Thankfully, a solution to this frustrating problem now exists via a tool that was previously only available in Gmail Labs. Under the text box in the settings where you type in your signature, there's a tick box that lets you 'Insert this signature before quoted text in replies...' Tick it, scroll down and select Save Changes. Your signature will now appear below your response but before the rest of the email conversation's history.

Ed Wright, via email

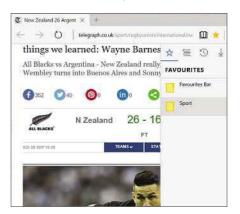### BROWSERS
Create folders in Edge's favourites

I recently received a phone call from a relative asking how to create a new folder in Microsoft Edge's Favourites list.

Although it's not particularly difficult, I thought it might be worth sharing.

Right-click one of the items (including folders) in your Favourites list and select 'Create new folder'. By default, the folder appears as 'New folder', but you can type any name and press Enter to confirm. Once the new folder has been created, you can drag and drop bookmarks to add them to it. It's a helpful way of organising your favourite websites into categories, if you've got lots of them.

Tornado, Web User Forums

Edge lets you sort your favourite websites into different folders

EMAIL
Log into Gmail more quickly

You don't have to type your full email address to log into Gmail. Simply enter your user name without the '@gmail.com' ending, then click Next, enter your password and click 'Sign in'.

Jack Gold, Web User Forums

SOFTWARE
Share Word documents

Did you know that you can share a document with someone and both of you can edit it? I am co-authoring an ebook with a friend and we often work on the Word document together.

You could do this by working on a document on your computer and

emailing it to the other person for updates. However, this would be a lot of hassle and could lead to confusion if your emails overlap.

What I did instead was to create a file on OneDrive using the free Word web app. Clicking the Share button at the top of the page lets you invite someone else to edit your document by entering their email address. They will then receive an email with a button that can be clicked to open the document.

It is even possible for both of you to edit the same document at the same time. A coloured cursor shows where the other person is typing and it appears in the document with their name next to it. However, we found it got confusing when both of us were editing at the same time, so we generally avoid this. The document shows up in the other person's Shared folder if they use OneDrive.

Ryan Winston, via email

Share documents on OneDrive and invite other people to edit them

WINDOWS 10
Swipe through your mail

After swapping an old PC running Windows XP for a new Windows 10 computer, I have finally switched from Outlook Express to the new Mail app. My shiny new laptop has a touchscreen and the Mail app lets you deal with messages in the inbox using swipes. You can swipe left or right over an email, and each direction performs a different action.

Click the gear icon, then select Options to choose which action a left- or right-swipe should perform. For example, the message can be deleted, archived, moved, have a flag set or unset, and more. There may be more touch actions in Mail, so it's worth experimenting if you have a touchscreen.

Simon Hannon, via email

SOFTWARE
Diagnose PC crashes

When your PC crashes, you won't necessarily know what's caused the problem and, more often than not, you'll go back to using your computer as normal. However, your PC will have created various dump files when it crashed and, with a bit of detective work, you can work out which program has been causing the crashes. This means

WhoCrashed helps you identify programs or drivers that cause your PC to crash

you can try removing the culprit to see if your PC becomes more stable.

WhoCrashed (resplendence.com/whocrashed) is a lightweight, free program that takes care of all this detective work for you. It's now compatible with Windows 10, so if you have had any teething issues with the new operating system, it's certainly worth giving it a try.

Tom Wilson, via email

GENERAL PC
Remove automatically-downloaded Windows 10 files

I'd like to say thanks to *Web User* for alerting its readers to Microsoft downloading the Windows 10 upgrade to their PCs without consent (Issue 380, bit.ly/webuser380). When the files are downloaded, they're saved to the directory $Windows.~BT, which I found on my C: drive. Unfortunately, I was unable to remove the files manually but I found some very clear instructions on how to do so at Bleeping Computer (bit.ly/windows382) and I thought these might be helpful to anyone else experiencing the same problem.

Dick Greener, Web User Forums

SOFTWARE
Half-price Office 365

Last week, Microsoft announced that Windows 10 users with Office 2010 or earlier can get 50 per cent off their first year's subscription to Office 365 Personal via the pre-installed Get Office app that comes with the operating system. I have Office 2007 installed and the second time I opened Get Office, the special offer appeared, as promised. To read the Microsoft blog post, visit bit.ly/office382

DavidNewton, Web User Forums

GENERAL PC
Choose an operating system

I have Windows 7 and Windows 10 installed on different partitions of my hard drive. This worked well for a while, but then it stopped giving me a choice and just booted straight into the default operating system. After a lot of fiddling

about, I've managed to get a screen that gives me the choice again. It's not as pretty as the original but it works fine.

To get it, run the Command Prompt as an administrator and type the following:

```
bcdedit /set {bootmgr}
displaybootmenu yes
```

Press Enter and close the Command Prompt. When you next restart your PC, a menu will appear letting you select the operating system you want to use.

Dave Cooper, via email

ANDROID
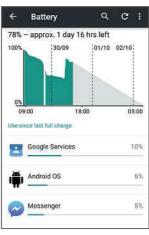## Give your phone a new lease of life

I recently noticed that my Android phone had slowed down significantly and the battery was draining more quickly than it used to. I would expect this to happen in an ageing device, but I wasn't yet ready to give in and buy a brand new handset.

To try and fix the battery problem, I first checked the usage details in Android's Battery menu. No single app or process stood out as using more than its fair share of power but I wondered whether a large number of apps each using a small amount of battery power might collectively have a big impact.

With this in mind, I went through my app drawer and uninstalled any that I don't use regularly. Amazingly, it's improved the battery's performance by as much as fifty per cent, so it was well worth the time spent uninstalling things.

Funnily enough, I think it's also fixed the problems I was having with my phone slowing down. It transpired that I had less than 1GB of

The Battery menu shows the amount of power used by different apps

spare space on the device, and although that still sounds like a reasonable amount, the effect of having more storage space and fewer apps using processor power has been very noticeable.

Before you consider chucking away your phone or tablet in a fit of rage, make sure you try clearing out all your unused apps to see if it makes a difference.

Richard Willier, 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 can't I uninstall my anti-virus program?

Q I uninstalled Avast Free Antivirus (www.avast.com) using Revo Uninstaller (www.revouninstaller.com). Although it no longer appears in the Control Panel, I can still open it from my taskbar. Can anyone help please?

Parbuster, Web User Forums

A Did you carefully follow the process in Revo Uninstaller to remove Registry entries associated with Avast? It would have shown the Registry entries in bold and you would have needed to tick these for removal. Also, have you tried using the Avast uninstaller? You can download it from the Avast website (bit .ly/avast382), and I would definitely recommend trying it.

For future reference, there's a helpful list of links to the uninstallers for all the major anti-virus programs at bit.ly/antivirus382. Personally, I always use IObit Uninstaller (bit.ly/iobit382) and I've never had any problems. If you'd rather not download another uninstaller, there are some handy instructions on the AskVG website at bit.ly/askvg382 that guide you through uninstalling software manually.

Stewart40, rogerman40, Cantrel and yodelcontact, Web User Forums

Most security programs, including Avast, can be removed using their own tools

GENERAL PC
How do I reinstall an OEM version of Windows?

Q My laptop recently packed in after some kind of hard-drive failure. I've
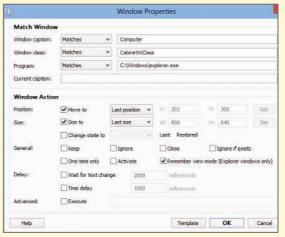
WINDOWS 10
Can I stop Edge opening in different positions and sizes?

Q I can't seem to keep my Edge browser in the same place. I don't mean it moves around the screen, but if I have it open in the lower three quarters of the screen and then close it, the window reappears anywhere but where I left it when I open the browser again. Moreover, it's often much smaller, although it occasionally loads full screen. Back in the days of XP, I seem to remember there was a way of locking a program window's size and position. Is there an equivalent tool for doing this in Windows 10?

dave1510, Web User Forums

A I've used ShellFolderFix (bit.ly/shellfolderfix382) for a few years, but it's made for Windows Explorer, so

WindowManager can be used to set the position and size of your programs' windows

I can't say whether it will work with Edge. However, the application's developer recommends using a tool called WindowManager (bit.ly/desksoft382), if you want something that will work with all programs.

Moonshine, Web User Forums

followed various guides available on the internet but nothing I've tried has managed to resurrect it. I eventually gave in and bought a new laptop but my daughter has been asking for a PC and I wondered if I might fix up the old one to save some money. Unfortunately, the restore options I created when the laptop was new have been lost. If I buy a new hard drive, how can I put the OS and other necessary software on it?

I have the licence details for the OEM version of Windows 7 on the certificate of authenticity underneath the laptop, so would I be able to download and install it to the new hard drive? Or am I better off installing a version of Linux?

Jptykes, Web User Forums

A Microsoft used to have a site where you could enter a valid Windows 7

key and download the ISO, but it looks like this has been scrapped and they are no longer selling anything Windows 7-related. You can try other ways to get hold of a Windows 7 ISO disc, but although the licence code on your laptop casing should start the installation, it might not be able to activate the OS if it is a different version to the one installed on your PC by the manufacturer. This means it will only work for the 30-day trial period and you'd then have to contact Microsoft to ask if they'll activate it for you.

A good alternative might be to contact the vendor and buy the OEM recovery disc, which will factory reset the PC. When I did this for one of my Toshiba PCs, it cost about £30 and it came on a single disc.

Cantrel, Web User Forums

Star Email

Protect us from the ravages of Microsoft

Web User readers will already be familiar with the underhand antics of a friendly little company called Microsoft. I recently had a chance experience that highlights the depths it will sink to.

After I read the news story in Issue 380 of *Web User* concerning the sneaky download of Windows 10, I followed the instructions for removing the Windows 10 icon from the taskbar. I'm pleased to say that it worked well. But, earlier this week, a simple search brought something else to my attention.

I have a laptop and a PC both running Windows 7 Professional. I use Office 2010, which mostly works well and just needs the customary updates. While I was looking on my laptop for updates relating to Windows 10, I noticed that one update, namely KB2553347, which is connected to Office 2010, came up twice. Following a search, I found no less than 22 identical updates, of which I removed 21. I then turned on my PC and – to my horror – discovered 20 more of these KB2553347 updates.

A general duplicate file finder does not show these updates (I found them by using CCleaner). I believe Microsoft has plummeted to the depths of desperation by deliberately crippling its own programs to keep the profits rolling in.

In the days ahead, I will have to spend my valuable time carefully inspecting all Microsoft updates on both machines. I have always been aware of sneaky online tricks, but it never occurred to me that a time would come when the ravages I needed to protect myself against would come from Microsoft itself. It appears that Windows is now an operating system that may decide to sabotage your own paid-for software and hardware.

D Moran, via email

Technology comes at the cost of privacy

MI5, CIA and Windows 10 – spot the difference. How many times have we been warned, in television, films and books, that we are being spied on? And not only by our PCs, because the government now has plans to gain more power to monitor mobile phones, listening and waiting for keywords. We are well past *1984* and well into Big Brother territory. But the spying does not stop there; think about all the things we buy that are now computerised in some fashion – televisions, cars, fridges and CCTV cameras – and all in the name of security.

We also have to think about the money side; we have Mr Gates, who is one of the richest people on this planet; he's rich enough to buy an entire country, so how much influence does he wield?

Every day, some new form of tech comes out, or an idea for new tech is announced, and even the poorest of nations go mad for it. Why is it that we put technology before people and hunger? It seems that we are willing to destroy ourselves for the sake of cutting-edge technology.
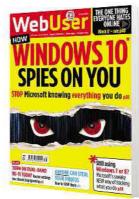
Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes

Drop your obsessive paranoia about privacy

I have been a subscriber to *Web User* for some years but, sadly, I'm strongly considering cancelling my subscription. As I have enjoyed the magazine for so long, I feel I owe you the courtesy of telling you my reasons.

It's my perception that the magazine has become obsessed with privacy. Of course, I understand the importance of privacy but, lately, *Web User* has run stories about this on virtually every page. Microsoft and Windows 10; almost every aspect of Google; the NHS leaking data, and so on, presented under lurid headlines.

Okay, maybe I'm exaggerating a little and there are still many good articles in the magazine, but I do feel that there appears to be a crusade against these terrible people who want to see my holiday snaps and know if I have visited Tesco. Incidentally, my own view is that I'm happy to let companies such as Google get their hands on my data in return for my being able to use their excellent software 'free of charge '. Keeping the readers informed is one thing, but building up fear is another.

Please can we get back to items about the actual technology and website content, and leave the paranoia to the newspapers.

Roger Venison, via email

Windows 10 gives me no reason to moan

I am writing to complain about your magazine and, in particular, the people who write to it. Their letters are making me feel left out and isolated.

For instance, why is it that I have had no problems upgrading four computers to Windows 10,

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

Your Shout
On Webuser.co.uk this fortnight we asked...

How often do you use eBay these days?

- **22%** More often than I used to
- **49%** Less often than I used to
- **11%** About the same as ever
- **18%** I've never used eBay

NEXT FORTNIGHT Is Google getting too big for its boots? Vote online at **www.webuser.co.uk**

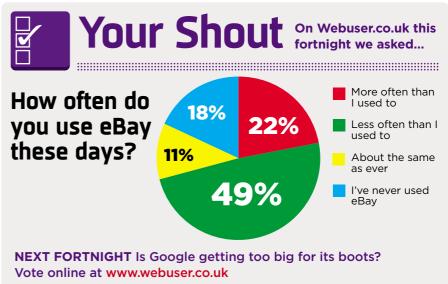including one old laptop of very low specification? What am I doing wrong?

Why is it that I am completely happy about the small amount of advertising in free apps and the Start Menu. If I was upset about the apps, then I would probably pay the money to have an ad-free version.

Why do I feel pleased that Microsoft chose to let me have free upgrades to all my computers and has offered to even upgrade the software without me having to do anything? Do I need therapy for my behaviour?

I really wish I could join in with the moaning and feel disgruntled, because it's not fair that I am missing out.

I doubt that I will be renewing my subscription to *Web User* unless you start producing articles that show me how to get it all wrong. Then I might` have some ammunition to be able to write in and moan.

Paul Hildreth, via email

My old Nokia phone has lasted for eight years

Barry Collins is quite right in his column in Issue 381 (bit.ly/webuser381) to call attention to the increasing problem of people throwing away their gadgets just because they've gotten a bit slow. I still have an old Nokia 6300 phone that works perfectly fine eight years after I bought it, and I wouldn't dream of throwing it away. Some of my friends have got through three or four phones in the time I've owned it, which has cost them a pretty penny.

Sure, my old Nokia may not have the 'smart' features that everyone demands today, such as apps and Wi-Fi and a decent browser, and its camera is only 2-megapixels. But – and this is a 'but' as big as an elephant's – the call quality is

still excellent after all these years; text messaging is easy and doesn't entail a tiresome process of jabbing at a screen; and it fits snugly in my pocket without squeezing everything else against my thigh. More importantly, the battery lasts for three days – not a matter of hours, like an iPhone's.

So yes, Barry is right that there's a lot more life left in your old gadgets than you probably realise. Don't bin them, just keep them clean and don't drop them in the toilet. You'll be laughing all the way to the bank.
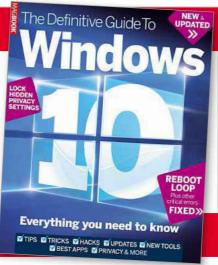
Toby Parry, via email

We should have a choice about Flash

I was interested to read in your FAQ in Issue 381 about the web turning its back on Flash. Although I can understand there are good reasons for this, such as that it poses a security risk to browsers, I will be disappointed if I can no longer play the Flash videos and games that I regularly enjoy online.

I think we should have a choice about whether we see Flash content or not, at least until all websites have had time to convert their videos and games into

HTML5. I really don't like the thought of Google and Mozilla taking away that option, especially because – as you say in your article – BBC iPlayer still uses Flash. I think there would be uproar from viewers if we woke up one morning to find that our browsers were stopping us from watching our favourite shows. Provided we continue to use the latest version of Flash, I really don't see the harm, and I think the web might be overreacting about the risks.

Ellis Gilbert, via email

Why can't I download Kaspersky 2015?

After purchasing Issue 380 of *Web User*, I saw an advert for Kaspersky 2015 for £17.99 - a big saving on the full price of £39.99. However I am unable to download it from the Kaspersky website. Can anyone tell me why this is?

Dave Fairhurst, Facebook

Web User says: Hi Dave. Kaspersky is now selling its 2016 antivirus software, which is compatible with Windows 10. We would recommend that you install this instead. It's available for £19.99 (50% off) from www.snipca .com/17874 - see our Best Buys section on page 25.

Where are the quiz answers for Issue 377?

While looking for something totally unrelated, I happened upon my copy of Issue 377 of *Web User*, which was open at the Take a Screen Break quiz page. I wrote down my answers and then went to check online but there were no answers to be found at the link provided! Does anyone know where they are?

Leopold, Web User Forums

Web User says: Hi Leopold. Apologies for the late posting of the quiz answers for Issue 377. You can now find them at www.webuser.co.uk/quiz377.

What you say...

DO YOU TRUST MICROSOFT'S CLAIM THAT WINDOWS 10 (bit.ly/msprivacy382) DOESN'T SPY ON YOU?

I wouldn't believe a word Microsoft says. They said Edge was the best ever browser. Obviously, it's not. The lies continue.

Jason 'Boz' Bowyer

Microsoft and Google both do it. Does it stop me using their services? No!

Martin Phillp

I will refrain from accusing them, but it might be nice to know more!

Joe Friswell

They do spy on you, but loads of people won't believe that. I'll never trust them.

Shawn Adams

IS IT BULLYING TO UNFRIEND SOMEONE ON FACEBOOK, AS RULED BY AN AUSTRALIAN JUDGE (bit.ly/bully382)?

If I unfriend someone on Facebook, it's probably because I don't wish to see them on my Wall anymore. If I wanted to bully then, I could keep them there and make fun of them every day – but I'm not 12 years old.

Joanne Evans

Give me strength. This reminds me of a story I heard about a school that said all kids had to be invited to birthday parties. What happened to choosing your friends?

Paul Hughes

Surely "unfriending" someone is the complete opposite? Does that mean I was a bully when I deleted my Facebook account?

Dave McAlister @dpmcalister

What ever happened to Aussie grit?

Richard Bond

The PC brigade strikes again?

Bob Walker

TWITTER IS APPARENTLY CONSIDERING EXTENDING ITS 140-CHARACTER LIMIT. IS THAT A GOOD IDEA?

Noooo! The joy of Twitter is its brevity.

Caitlin @grimbletweets

Brain overload! Any more than 140 characters and I'll spontaneously combust!

Roger Whitcomb @milairpix

No. Trashing its unique selling point just makes no sense. It would make the feed a nightmare.

John Moore @ondrive

Yes, but I think you should be allowed one URL, one photo and still only 140 characters.

RaspberryPi-Spy @RPiSpy

I think it would ruin the creativity of Twitter. Packing as much into one tweet is what makes it fun!

Ian Phipps

WILL YOU BUY THE NEW CHROMECAST AUDIO (www.google.com/chromecast/ speakers)?

No. I've got the first Chromecast and don't use it. It was a waste of money.

Donna Drummond-Berry

Yes. I've been meaning to get one for ages and I love the idea of an audio-streaming device. I really don't want to replace my hi-fi, but it has no wireless connectivity, so the new Chromecast Audio would be just the job.

Wood Spoon

Probably not. The two I have work okay. Since I got my Fire TV box, I no longer stream Amazon Prime, Netflix or photos.

Harvey @haskipsey

⚠ Page 404

Barry Collins is tired of companies stealing bandwidth for software updates and patches

Beware of the bandwidth thieves

Here's a simple maths puzzle. If your monthly broadband data cap is 10GB and Microsoft secretly swallows 4GB of that without your permission, how angry would you be (show your working)?

That's the very scenario facing some Windows users, who've been hit with extra bills from their broadband provider because Microsoft decided to download the installation files for Windows 10 to their PCs, even if they would rather share a bath with a toaster than run Microsoft's new operating system. These massive files were downloaded in the background, with no warning whatsoever – they were simply shoved down the pipe to anyone who had switched on Windows Update, a system designed to deliver critical security updates, not gigabyte upon gigabyte of operating-system files.

And so the poor folk on BT's cheapest broadband package, paying £5 per month for an ADSL line with a 10GB cap, not only get their speeds choked by Microsoft clogging up the line with unwanted downloads, but have to pay £1.50 for every gigabyte by which they exceed their monthly allowance. "Sorry, kids, you can't download *Horrible Histories* on iPlayer: Microsoft's chewed through our quota with an operating system we didn't want."

It's not only Microsoft that plays fast and loose with your bandwidth.

I'm sick to death of picking up my iPad to find a dozen different apps downloading updates. And when you click to see what's included in those updates, it's risible. "General improvements," say the update notes for Skype 6.2, which came down the pipe in September, and was seemingly no different to Skype 6.1. "Bug fixes" claimed Netflix, for an update that came two days previously. And while a 40MB update here and a 78MB update there might seem trivial, they soon add up. Especially in households where everyone has their own phone and tablet. Which, these days, is pretty much every household.

Games consoles are massive data thieves, too. The PlayStation and Xbox frequently require system updates that are hundreds of megabytes in size, but they're nothing compared to the updates for the games themselves. A colleague of mine popped the new Forza 6 racing game into his Xbox One over the weekend, only to find it "needed" a 2.2GB update. You should be even more wary if the kids ask you to download the game itself from the Xbox Store – it weighs in at a colossal 45GB.

These multi-gigabyte patches for products are sheer sloppiness from software developers, who push products out the door before they're ready, safe in the knowledge they can fix the bugs after us poor mugs have paid. Indeed, if you're on a limited data cap, you could literally end up paying for their mistakes.
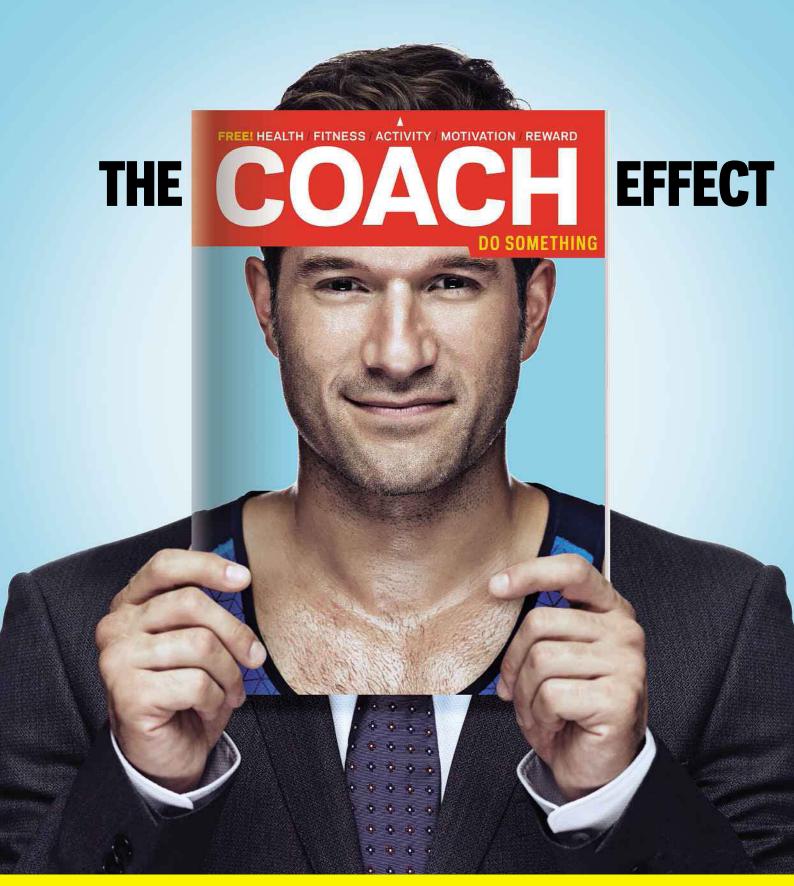
That's if you can download the patch in the first place. If you're one of the millions stuck on a slow broadband connection of, say, 2Mbps, it would take almost five hours of absolutely flat out downloads to even get that 2.2GB Forza update. It could take all day to download the unwanted Windows 10.

Software makers are behaving recklessly with our bandwidth. It's time they upped their game, instead of our broadband bills.

> ❝ Windows Update is designed to deliver critical security updates, not gigabyte upon gigabyte of operating-system files ❞

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

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