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Your settings have been changed — GET THEM BACK! p54

GREAT 16 - 29 December 201

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# Homepage

### Download merrily on high!

'll be glad when this awful year is over. Aside from all the natural disasters, terrorist attacks and the rise of man buns. it's been a poor 12 months for software, 2015 started and finished with PC manufacturers Lenovo and Dell admitting that they'd pre-installed programs that compromised users' security. In between, there were such lowlights as the discovery of the Freak flaw in browsers, adware being injected into Chrome extensions and Microsoft forcing Windows 10 on people who didn't want it.

Still, things can only get better and, as we reveal in this issue's specially extended

cover feature (page 36), there are lots of promising programs around for 2016. We've chosen 10 of our favourites to help you start the new year with some decent downloads that won't corrupt your computer.

As this is our as Xmas issue, you may notice a few festive touches around the magazine, including a Yuletide-themed emoji quiz on page 51. Have a very merry Christmas, everyone!

Robert Irvine robert\_irvine@dennis.co.uk #webuser





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Your data's already been stolen



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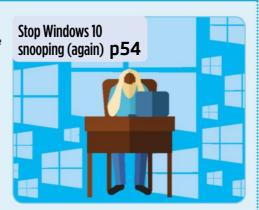
All your technical questions answered

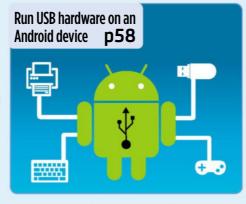
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# What's New Online

# See Amazon's new flying drone in action

ou may think that Jeremy
Clarkson would be interested
only in vehicles that have their
tyres placed firmly on the ground, but
here he is explaining how Amazon's
proposed flying drones would work.
The video appears on a web page
Amazon has built to keep us
interested in Prime Air, which was
announced in December 2013.

Amazon is "excited" about its drone, and is proud of the video of it in action, claiming it is "actual flight footage - not simulated". Clarkson eavesdrops on a family drama in which the villain, a greedy bulldog, has chewed beyond repair a girl's football boot. With kick-off approaching, the mother places an order using an Amazon tablet and a shiny new football boot is added to a drone waiting in a warehouse. We



then follow its aerial progress to a suburban garden, where it lands safely, depositing the boot. Emergency over.

It all looks remarkably straightforward, as though drones could be flying overhead by Christmas. But Amazon acknowledges that making Prime Air a reality "will take some time". The first question in the FAQ at the bottom sums up many people's scepticism: 'Is this science fiction or is this real?'. Judge for yourself after watching the video.

bit.ly/prime386

# Turn your text into bizarre 3D images

### www.wordseye.com

Here's something you don't see every day – a mouse sitting on a cat sitting on an ox, in front of a golden star on a frozen lake, while giant snowflakes fall all around. It is one of the images created by WordsEye, an amazing website and app – currently in 'closed beta' – which turns the words you type into a dream-like landscape, reminiscent of Salvador Dali at his most surreal. The image below is WordsEye's interpretation of a 'Christmas cow on a shiny grass mountain range'. Click 'see gallery' at the bottom of the site to see what else WordsEye is capable of.

To try WordsEye, you need to request an access code



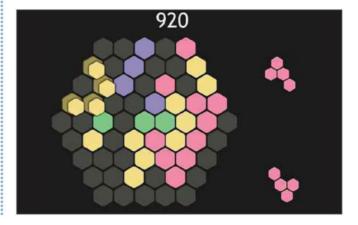
- click the 'Sign up' button at the top. When the full site launches (hopefully, next year), we predict the internet will go mad for it, tweeting and emailing millions of surreal computergenerated pictures. You read it here first!

### Play hexagonal Tetris

### hex.frvr.com

Tetris-style games are nothing new, but Hex FRVR, available as a Chrome Experiment, is one of the most addictive we've played for years. It's wonderfully simple – just drag and drop the blocks into the hexagon, clearing lines as you go. There's no time limit, so you can keep playing until none of the remaining blocks will fit, at which point you'll see the painful message: 'Game over: ouch, no more valid moves'.

Hex FRVR is available for free, with in-app purchases to remove adverts, on iOS (bit.ly/hexios386) and Android (bit.ly/hexandroid386).



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

### **Turn Google into Star Wars** scrolling text

### www.google.co.uk

The Force is strong with Google at the moment. As well as launching a website to celebrate the new Star Wars film (see page 14), Google's Jedis have hidden a brilliant new easter egg. Simply type a long time ago in a galaxy far far away into Google and watch the magic unfold.



### Watch traffic cameras in Bing Maps

### www.bing.com/maps

Microsoft's latest attempt to get you to switch from Google Maps to Bing's equivalent is the addition of live traffic cameras. As explained on the official Bing blog (bit.ly/bing386), 35,000 cameras have been added to city maps in 11 countries, including Sheffield, Leeds and London in the UK. To see them, click the Traffic tab at the top of a map, then zoom in until you see the



camera icon, Click the camera to see the live picture appear in a box on the left.

### **Explore Petra in** Street View

### bit.lv/petra386

More than 30 historical sites in Jordan have been added to Street View, the highlight of which is the ancient city of Petra. Click the link above, then the blue 'Discover Petra' button, and you'll be fast-forwarded to Petra's most famous landmark, the Al Khazneh (also known as The Treasury). You can also listen to an audio guide, so make sure your speakers are turned on. For other places to visit in Jordan, read Google's Lat-Long blog: bit.ly/mapsblog386.



### Listen to Apple Music on Sonos

### bit.ly/sonos386

In September, the co-founder of Sonos, Tom Cullen, told The Independent that adding Apple Music to the service would be a "long, sweaty race to the finish line". Well, it's time he had a shower because Apple Music has launched as a beta on Sonos. Click the link above to sign up.



# TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

### **@NoradSanta**

Follow Santa's progress on Christmas Eve via the famous Norad tracker, which is celebrating 60 years in existence

### **@ChristmasCount**

Find out how many minutes, hours and days are left until the big day

### **@**OfficialSanta

Here's proof that Santa exists - he has his own official Twitter account

### @Beeradventcal

Be quick and you'll catch the final days of this beer advent calendar

### @AnnieLennox

Tweet 'happy birthday' to the former Eurythmics singer, who turns 61 on Christmas Day

### Use 3D Touch in Google Drive for iOS

### bit.ly/drive386

Google has updated its Drive app for iOS to work with 3D Touch on Apple's iPhone 6S and 6S Plus (see bit.ly/touch386). Pressing longer on the Drive app icon brings up options to upload and search for photos.

### Save Skype videos in Android

### bit.ly/skypeapp386

You can now save videos using Skype's Android app, simply by tapping the video and selecting 'Save to Gallery'. Read Skype's blog for details of other new tools (bit.ly/skype386).

### Track your EasyJet flight on your iPhone

### bit.ly/jetios386

EasyJet has teamed up with Flightradar24 (www.flightradar24 .com) to let you track your plane on the airline's iOS app up to three hours before take-off.



# Toy company hack puts children's data at risk

### What happened?

Digital toy company VTech has admitted that the personal data of five million of its customers – and more than six million of their children – has been compromised after its database was hacked.

VTech makes a variety of web-connected children's toys, including tablets, smartwatches and baby monitors, many of which have cameras built in. While no payment-card data was leaked, the breached information included names, genders, addresses and even children's photos, as well as chat logs and audio recordings of conversations between parents and children. The leak was from VTech's Learning Lodge app store database, which lets users download apps, games, ebooks and more.

The breach wasn't discovered by VTech, but the company was informed of the incident by technology website Motherboard (motherboard.vice.com), which reported that the hacker was merely seeking to highlight the security problems and get them fixed, and had no intention of selling the data. But if one 'white-hat' (good guy) hacker can access the data, so can others who don't have such good intentions. VTech took 13 of its online services offline in response, and now faces investigation by authorities around the world.

The hack highlights the problems inherent in connecting devices to the internet. Many smart home and Internet of Things gadgets aren't properly secured, and that includes those we hand to our children. Indeed, Google has come under fire by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF - www.eff.org) in the US, which has filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission saying that the company is holding children's data when it promised it wouldn't. The EFF said that many schools use Chromebooks and Google Apps for Education, which send data directly to Google, without parental permission. Google said its products



comply with the law and it doesn't use the information for advertising or marketing, but to improve its products.

### How will it affect you?

If your child owns a VTech toy or has asked for one for Christmas, you may want to think twice about connecting it to the internet, although the company emphasises that the hack was against its servers and not the toys themselves. The Learning Lodge and other VTech websites including Planet VTech have already been taken offline, so if your child is a fan, it's time to find a new way to keep them entertained.

Customers should already have received an email from VTech but, if you haven't, you can seek more information by contacting the company on consumer\_services@VTech.com. The company said half a million British parents' accounts and 727,000 child profiles were leaked but didn't offer much other advice for parents, other than to change their login details on other sites that use the same email and password combination.

The incident - alongside Google's data gathering - may make parents think twice before buying web-connected toys for children. It's worth considering the security of a product, as you would the safety of an

electronic toy, before handing it to your

### What do we think?

What a disappointment. A toy company should be especially sensitive about security and make it a top priority, not leave it to white-hat hackers and journalists to do their job for them. It's unlikely that any serious harm will come from this incident, because the hacker doesn't intend to leak the data, but it's certainly creepy that a child's name and photo could be floating around the dark web. There's not much that parents can do to check the security of such toys and gadgets, and as such it's best to be wary of any product that connects to the internet and has a camera. Companies need to do much better, whether they're China-based toymakers or Google; if they don't, regulators may need to step in to provide parents with a kitemark or other guarantee for security-accredited products.

This is true not only for connected children's toys, but for any smart home or Internet of Things device. Those webconnected security cameras and

other smart tools don't only collect photos and data on the adults in your home, but the children too. Companies must do better if they want us to welcome such gadgets into our homes and our kids' toy boxes.

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

### Ripping CDs and DVDs is illegal again



### What happened?

You'll once again be breaking the law if you create copies of your own CDs and DVDs. Last year, the government introduced the 'private copying exception', which allowed you to make your own personal copies of content if you're shifting it from one format to another - for example, ripping an MP3 from a CD you own, to listen to on your phone. However, following a complaint from members of the music industry, a High Court judge ruled against the private copying exception.

### How will it affect you?

In short, it won't. We're not qualified to offer legal advice, but no-one is going to kick down your door if you back up your music collection or copy a movie to watch on your tablet. Technically speaking, you will be infringing copyright law, but if you keep your activity to the 'private' levels that were supposed to be covered by the exception, it's very unlikely that any music-rights

holder will find out, let alone take action against you. And if you prefer to stream music rather than rip it, then the ruling won't affect you at all.

### What do we think?

Sometimes the law is a bit of an ass, and this is a case in point. The limitedcopying exception merely legalised what many of us were already doing, and thrusting it back into the 'technically illegal' category won't change anyone's behaviour.

If you're already backing up a copy of a song from your laptop to an external hard drive, you're hardly going to pay to download another version. Indeed, if you buy a track from an online service, they'll often let you 'store' it in the cloud so you can download as you need - which is no different to you copying your own CDs.

If the music industry wants us to take copyright law seriously and prove that it's fit for the modern, digital age, it should start by being reasonable - and this law simply isn't.

### Raspberry Pi Zero is the cheapest PC ever

### What happened?

The Raspberry Pi has never been expensive, but there's now an even more affordable version of the mini computer. The Pi Zero costs just £4 - the previous one was £30 - and as well as being the cheapest PC ever, it's the smallest - just 5mm thick and measuring 65 x 30mm. The reduced size means some features have been cut, so the Pi Zero is perhaps better suited for 'smart home' use or embedded applications than its bigger siblings, but it still makes an inexpensive and easy way for anyone to learn to code.

### How will it affect you?

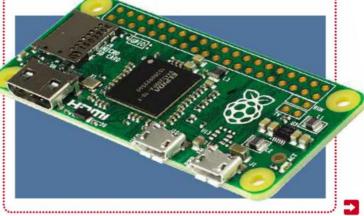
If you've been planning to buy a Pi to help develop your programming skills, you're in luck - if you've already ordered one. The first round of Pi Zeros sold out on the very first day, and it's not clear when the next shipment is due, though another is expected before Christmas. You can also get a cover-mounted Pi Zero with MagPi magazine, although that

too has sold out.

If you do pick up the £4 computer, keep in mind that it's a computing board, not a full machine. The Pi Zero uses micro USB and micro HDMI ports, so you may need adapters some stores are selling them complete with cables. There's also no camera or display interface, so you'll need to add your own.

### What do we think?

Forget about chucking your money away on overpriced iPhones; a £4 PC that you can hold in vour hands is true innovation and a real accomplishment for British computing. Founder Eben Upton and his Cambridge crew are simply brilliant. At such a low price, the Pi Zero can be owned by any student who wants to learn about tech development or coding. The Raspberry Pi sparked a new generation of programmers and the Zero will surely continue that. We'll have a Weekend Project about using the Raspberry Pi Zero in our next issue.



# WEBOMETER

### WE LIKE...

### **Google relaunches Santa** Tracker for 2015

Google has once again launched its Santa Tracker - a Christmas portal that lets you take part in



games and other fun online activities. Open the advent calendar every day to unlock surprises, then follow Santa around the world

on Christmas Eve.

### Facebook founder gives away fortune

Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has pledged to give away 99% of his shares in



Facebook - which are currently worth around \$45bn - to good causes during his lifetime, following the birth of his daughter Max.

### WE DON'T LIKE...

### Adele fans' data leaked

Fans of British singer Adele who bought pre-sale tickets from Songkick to see her live reportedly saw the personal



information of other customers while making their purchase. including addresses and credit card details.

### Major UK ISPs not secure

The security of the UK's major internet service providers needs "major improvement" according to one security expert. The audit of TalkTalk, Sky, BT, Plusnet, EE and Virgin Media found numerous bugs that could be exploited by hackers.



### WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

### Will three iPhone 7s be launched in 2016?

The iPhone 7 is likely to arrive in September 2016, because Apple delivers the new version of its phone, regular as clockwork, at that time every year, and always starts the development cycle well in advance. However, unlike this year's iPhone 6S and iPhone 6S Plus, rumours suggest that for the first time there will be three models launched: the iPhone 7 iPhone 7 Plus and the iPhone 7C.

Apple is now busy testing out designs and features; its handsets are developed way ahead of release and this is why there are so many leaks. And, according to information by a reliable tipster, Apple is testing no less than five iPhone 7 prototypes, each with its own unique hardware characteristics. "By the sound of it, Apple is trying to figure out which technologies would go best in the upcoming model, all the while keeping an eye on the performance of its suppliers," said the report on G for Games (bit.ly/iphones386). "Reportedly, some of the technologies that can be found in these prototypes include a USB Type-C connector compatible with headsets, wireless-charging technology, multi-Force Touch, dual-camera configurations, and fingerprint-recognition technology embedded within the display."



### LIKELIHOOD RATING **JJJ** *J J J*

Although three iPhone models could potentially cause confusion, Apple rarely misses a chance to make more money from its devotees. We'll be happy if at least one of the phones is a budget option, but this will still probably cost a few hundred quid. Also, the fact that it's working on five prototypes suggests there are bound to be lots of misleading leaks over the next nine months!



### What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

### **Mantis Drone Claw**

bit.ly/mantis386 | From £25

Like one of those arcade games in which you try to grab a teddy with a claw crane, the Mantis Drone Claw lets you pick up small objects using your drone or



quadcopter. Just hover above the item you want to recover, fetch or steal; lower the cord and the claw will snatch the object in its five mighty talons. It requires no separate power source and there are three models available: Ultra-light, Hardcore SS (which can withstand flames, chemicals, water and rust) and the sterling-silver Sheffield Star. The team hopes to raise £5,000 by 10 January.

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**BANG IT!** 



**SPLASH IT!** 



**SMASH IT!** 



<sup>\*\*</sup>Source: 1227 Quite Interesting Facts to Blow Your Socks Off



# Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

### Amazon customers told to reset passwords

Amazon has asked some of its customers



to reset their passwords, leading to fears that its systems could have been breached. In an email to users, the store said that it "recently discovered that your password may have been improperly stored on your device or transmitted to Amazon in a way that could potentially expose it to a third party". The site also said it has "corrected the issue to prevent this exposure", and stated that it has "no reason" to suspect fraudulent activity. Considering the apparently small number of customers who received the email, it's unlikely there was a full intrusion of Amazon's systems. However, any knock to the public's confidence in the company could be disastrous, especially over Christmas. bit.ly/amazon386

### VPN flaw could expose users' identities

A flaw in the protocols used by virtual private networks could enable hackers to expose users' real IP addresses, according to VPN provider Perfect Privacy. The bug, known as Port Fail, reportedly affects at least five VPN providers that offer port forwarding. To mount an attack, a hacker must know the victim's VPN

exit IP address, which can be acquired by tricking the user into opening a specially crafted file. The hacker needs to have port

forwarding enabled and must be on the same VPN network as the victim, who is then lured into connecting to a resource controlled by the miscreant. The firm said that in order to mitigate attacks. VPN firms should implement firewall rules at the VPN server to block access to forwarded ports from users' real IP addresses. Penetration tester Darren Martyn said in a blog post that the flaw

could be used by media companies to unmask BitTorrent users downloading movies or music.

bit.ly/vpnflaw386

### Facebook game accused of stealing data

The popular Facebook game Most Used Words has been accused of stealing users' data after UK VPNcomparison website Comparitech published an article stating that the 16 million users who'd used it had "agreed to give up almost every private detail about themselves to a company they likely know nothing about". Although the game requires access to user

information including name, profile, picture and gender, its CEO responded to the accusations by vehemently denying that it

uses your information for anything but generating its results.

bit.ly/facebook386

### Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Mark Bower. **Global Director at HPE Security (www** .hpenterprisesecurity .com)



How worried should we be about the VTech breach which put the personal details of five million people, including children, at risk (see news story on page 8)?

Rachel Chambers, Facebook



This breach exposes a weakness in the regulations

regarding the collection, storage and use of data involving children. It suggests the need for a rethink, because compliance with the rules may not be enough to protect today's children from advanced threats.

In the US, the regulation is called COPPA (Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule), which is controlled by the FTC (Federal Trade Commission). There are specific controls that must be adhered to when collecting and using children's data, but several companies have already been fined for

non-compliance. Breach of children's data in itself carries many serious risks, and anyone collecting such data must take steps to protect it from advanced attacks.

The COPPA regulation for the most part relates to ensuring consent to collect data, but the rule is also quite specific about limiting the disclosure of information. However, this demand for compliance may not take into account the possibility of a security breach.

Programs designed to allow companies to adhere to COPPA, such as KidSAFE, require only basic protections and the VTech breach shows how

inadequate they are at safeguarding children's data. If the data itself is not secured, it is at risk of theft - irrespective of access controls and firewalls - and breach after breach has proven this.

Hopefully, the VTech breach will be a call to action to revise and enhance KidSAFE and COPPA. Companies who truly value the security of their customers and, even more importantly, sensitive children's data, can get ahead of the attack by adopting modern datacentric security to secure data when it's in use, both in motion and in transit.

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INTUITIVE TOUCHSCREEN DISPLAY
BEAMFORMING
1GHZ DUAL-CORE PROCESSOR

amazon.com



















# Best New Websites

### Site of the Fortnight

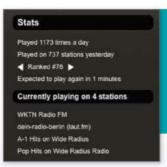
### OnRad.io

### onrad.io

Every day, thousands of songs are played on the radio, but finding one that you actually like can feel like pot luck. With this slick service from the brains behind MP3.com, radio becomes searchable. OnRad.io lets you search for names of songs or artists to find which US radio stations are currently playing them. It's fast and full of neat touches, from lists of recommendations to displays of album covers alongside songs. What's more, if a tune isn't currently playing, the site will tell you how often it has been on recently and the likelihood of it playing again. You can even create specific URLs for songs, to share on social media. Fantastic!

**Our rating** 



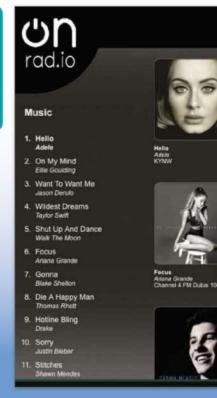


**STATS** Discover which stations are playing a song and how often it is aired



### **NOTIFICATIONS**

OnRad.io predicts when a tune is due and lets you set up a notification





Many screenings for the new Star Wars movie, The Force Awakens, have already sold out, but the hype machine is still flying faster than an X-wing fighter. This tie-up with Google lets you choose between the light side and the dark side, and your decision will determine the look of your Google services until 1 February 2016. A Star Warsthemed background is placed over Gmail, for example, and an intergalactic extension is available for Chrome. It takes a while for the Force to awaken in all tools (including Calendar, Chromecast, Maps and YouTube) but there are lovely flourishes to make you smile, including a red lightsaber loading screen. Truly wonderful, it is.

Our rating





### **Naked Security**

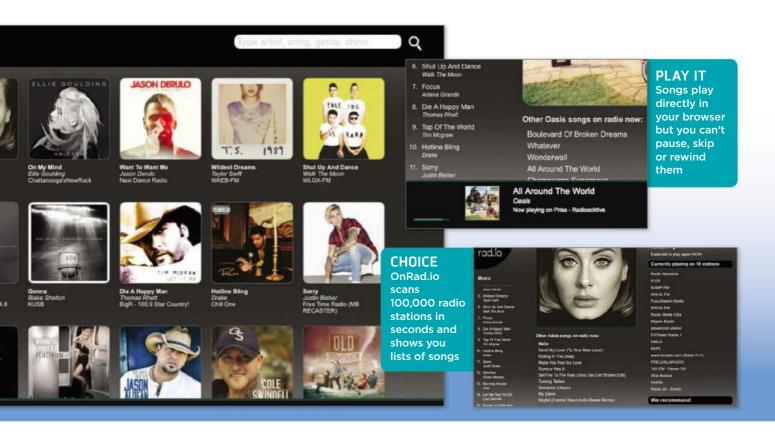
### nakedsecurity.sophos.com

Naked Security is famed for delivering expert opinion and news on internet threats, and its relaunched WordPresspowered website makes it even easier to track what's happening. Not only does it introduce a modern look that requires less scrolling thanks to the better bunching of news stories, but it offers updated content throughout the day. A search engine and tags on articles makes finding stories easy (even if the old navigation options have been removed from the top of the page) and there's a handy set of free security tools to keep your PC and mobile device safe.

**Our rating** 



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





freepostcodelottery.com

**LOTTERY** 

### **CHARITY Free Postcode Lottery** Prince's Trust

Our rating

We've long been fans of the Free Postcode Lottery, and love the idea that you have the chance to win a wodge of cash every day, without needing to pay to play. This revamped website is sure to bag many more entries with its simple explanations and smart design. The concept remains the same - register with your postcode, check the site daily and you could grab an ad-funded pot of dosh - but it feels more stylish and professional than before. There's also lots of stuff to keep you engaged - log in for the draw and you can read a blog and view stats. Best of all, you hardly notice the ads.





The Prince's Trust hopes to reach thousands more young people by better promoting the range of services it offers. The charity has put those it wants to assist at the heart of its redesigned site, using articles and videos to show how it can help people get jobs, start a business, train and unlock their potential. Although the news section feels dry and annoying drop-down menus appear when you accidentally hover over the main navigation options, useful features such as a map showing local opportunities and a section consisting of case studies are both interesting and inspiring.

www.princes-trust.org.uk

\*\*\*\*

RELAUNCH



### Whoscored.com

### www.whoscored.com

Sometimes, poring over the football stats is more exciting than watching the action on the pitch, and this website now offers the best of both worlds. It's a statto's dream, with data on some 15,000 teams in 500 leagues, highlighting info such as pass success, shots on goal and offsides. Although the site is aimed at gamblers, it provides the sort of in-depth analysis that can keep fans engrossed for weeks and now benefits from a new Top Facts section that narrows down the stats to winning or losing streaks. The site also links to Bet365.com, where you can view live streams of some of the games.

Our rating





# WebUser

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# THE PERFECT CHRISTMAS PRESENT





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 \*\*\*

ON SALE Now only £12.71\*
NOW! From bit.ly/webusercd



### **HOLIDAYS**

### Cottages.com

### www.cottages.com

Developed by the team behind Cottages4you, this new holiday website already has nearly 19,000 properties on its books and claims a high standard for them all. It's a well-designed offering that not only lets you search for cottages in Britain, Italy and France, but also properties based upon specific needs, for example, being pet-friendly or near the coast. Each result shows the price of the break and a grade rating for the cottage, giving you enough data without needing to click. You can also save properties to a shortlist. Most bookings can be made through the site, although some shortnotice breaks must be booked by phone.







### **HEALTH**

### Netdoctor

### www.netdoctor.co.uk

With a smart new design and editorial direction, Netdoctor is in good health. It continues to offer incisive and informative articles, many of which are written by expert professionals and journalists, and has supplemented them with famous names including TV doctors Ranj Singh and Dawn Harper. It has moved away from being a simple destination for discovering more about ailments and it has a greater focus on beauty, parenting and healthy eating. We like that the friendly forums have been made easier to find and that you can take a quiz to create a personalised action plan that will help to improve your well-being.

Our rating





### GOVERNMENT

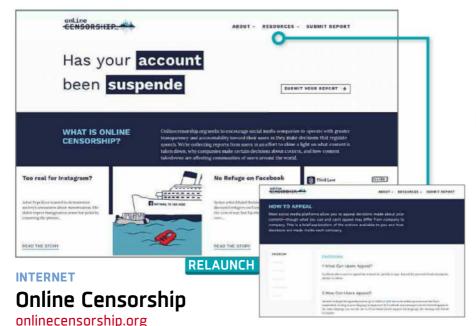
### London.gov

### www.london.gov.uk

The Mayor of London's new website aims to get residents engaged in decisions affecting the city. It's beautifully designed and structured, allowing visitors to go straight to the issues that interest them, be it culture, transport, policing, health or planning. The Get Involved section lists ways people can make a difference, from voting to volunteering, and there is also a full events calendar. You can discover what's happening in a specific part of London, from the Tube-fare zone to the average rent. Sure, there is politicking going on - including lots of blurb from Boris - but it's a fine example of a vibrant government website done well.

**Our rating** 





Social networks encourage people to post updates, images and videos, but they also remove anything that is deemed inappropriate. This can be controversial, with some users baffled as to why their content has been taken down. Online Censorship seeks to build a picture of the kinds of posts affected by inviting people to submit reports to reveal more about the decision-making process. Forms are available for Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Google+, Instagram and YouTube. Each is split over easy-to-complete screens. They ask for the official reason for removal, your view and the impact it had on you. The site also shows you how to launch an appeal and has links to case studies.

Our rating





### HISTORY

### **Fossil Finder**

### fossilfinder.org

Until now, we could only imagine the thrill of looking for fossils to help piece together the past. This lovely site allows armchair anthropologists to experience that for themselves online by encouraging them to scour the Turkana Basin in Kenya and assist in classifying rocks. For those who aren't sure what they are looking for (including us), it can feel like a stab in the dark but the site does have helpful tips. There is a lot to go on, with 46,000 images online and, if nothing else, you can tell the site if the quality of photos is good enough to study. You never know, you may stumble across something amazing.

**Our rating** 



# **Build a Better Site**

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

### Top Tips of the Fortnight

### .UK domains to get more expensive

Domains that end in '.uk' will be 50% more expensive in the new year. Nominet (www.nominet.uk), the organisation that maintains the domains and sells them on to web-hosting companies, is increasing its wholesale price from £2.50 to £3.75, from 1 March



2016. The increased cost will almost certainly be passed on to consumers, so if you were thinking of buying a '.uk' domain in the next few months, consider getting a good annual or longer deal now, before the price rise.

### Google's guidelines improve search ranking

Google is notoriously secretive about how its search ranking algorithms work, but one thing we do know is that it uses real humans to keep an eye on the relevance of its results. These result checkers abide by a set of guidelines, which Google has recently updated and made public for the first time since 2013. Although reading this 158-page document (available as a PDF from bit.ly/goog386) won't guarantee you a better placing in Google, it's worth checking to see if your site has elements that could be marking it down.

### **Deal of the Fortnight**

Mitela (www.mitela.co.uk) is offering a website with unlimited storage, bandwidth and databases for £1.99 per month.

### Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Dan Baker, Webmaster, Xara (www.xara.com)



What's the easiest way to learn how to make sites interactive? I find JavaScript books very heavy going.

Kelly Davies, via email

It depends on what you're trying to achieve. You can add animation to your site using CSS, which is well

supported and easier to learn than JavaScript. There are some great open source CSS libraries with pre-defined animations, such as animate.css (bit.ly/ ani386). Instead of 'learn JavaScript' books, take a look at open-source frameworks and libraries such as jQuery (jquery.com) or AngularJS (angularjs.org). A quick search will reveal thousands of pre-made plugins. Xara Web Designer (bit.ly/xara386) uses point-and-click to create fully interactive sites and completely avoids any coding.



### MINI WORKSHOP | Customise the new default WordPress theme

WordPress 4.4 includes the new annual default theme: Twenty Sixteen. A modern reworking of the classic Twenty Ten blogging theme, it's a two-column layout that works beautifully on screens of any size.



To add a header image, click the 'Add new image' button. 🚺 This opens the Media Library from where you can open or upload a new image. The theme's recommendation is to use one that's 1,200 x 280 pixels. It will appear on every page. 2 You can add more headers and select the one you want or randomise them. **3** 



If your site already has a menu configured, select it from the Menus section. Click the menu to edit it. Click Add Items 11 to include new links. Use the drop-down arrow 2 to adjust an item's settings or remove it. You can reorder elements by dragging. Tick the Primary Menu box 13 to have your menu appear at the top of the page. 4



Select Colors to change the colours on your site. There are five schemes to choose from, which are available from the Base Color Scheme menu. 1 Click an individual colour to fine-tune it to your preference. You can pick a new colour by clicking it and adjusting the slider or entering the colour's HTML hexadecimal value. 2



# Never miss that... "we'd like to offer you the contract" call.

### **BT One Phone**

Every time the office phone rings it could be an amazing opportunity on the other end. But what if no one's there to take the call? With BT One Phone, your employees can handle all their landline calls through their mobiles, so it's easy for them to take every call, especially the really important ones.

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We test and compare the latest products

# Tablets under £250

You don't have to pay a fortune for a new tablet. We've reviewed 10 tablets that cost less than £250 and picked our top five

ot everyone can afford the latest Apple or Samsung tablet under the tree this Christmas, but if you look beyond the newest models, you'll find a great selection of tablets at bargain prices, some of which used to be top-ofthe-range themselves.

The rate of change in tablet technology has slowed a little of late, so even though some of the tablets we've reviewed here are more than two years old, they remain surprisingly well specified. Here, we've put 10 tablets through our rigorous tests and chosen our top five.

### **HOW WE TESTED**

We tested all the tablets using the benchmark tool Geekbench 3 to assess their processor performance. We also used a colorimeter to check each screen's brightness, contrast and colour. We used the cameras and core apps to see how they worked with each tablet and looped a 720p HD video with the screen set to 120cd/m<sup>2</sup> (candles per square metre) to test the battery life.

### Apple iPad Mini 2 | £219 |

www.apple.com/uk

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

It's over two years since the iPad Mini 2 launched and, while the specifications of the newer Mini 4 and the bigger iPads overshadow the Mini 2, Apple has kept the tablet relevant with strategic price cuts, making it an affordable entry point into Apple's tablet range.



The tablet's design, even by today's standards, is superb. It's slim (7.5mm thick) and light (just 331g), with a strong and well-balanced aluminium body. The 2,048 x 1,536-pixels resolution screen has a density of 324 pixels per inch (ppi), which was impressive when the Mini 2 came out and still holds its own. The device's performance also compares favourably to more recent tablets, achieving a single-core Geekbench score of 1,374 and a multi-core score of 2,475, making it the second-best performer in this Group Test. The battery is also good, providing 12 hours and 17 minutes of HD video playback in our tests.

### Nexus 9 | £199 |

www.argos.co.uk

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

We were disappointed by the Nexus 9 when it first came out, because despite going toe-to-toe with the iPad Air 2 and the Samsung Galaxy Tab 8.4, it lacked the superior build quality of its rivals. However, you can now pick it up for less than



£200, which makes it a much more attractive proposition.

The 8.9in screen, with its resolution of 2,048 x 1,536 pixels, is the second-best screen we tested, with only the iPad Mini 2 scoring higher. The device is also very powerful and achieved this group's highest score by a significant margin (3,404) in our Geekbench test. Even the battery life is good, coming third in this group but still lasting 13 hours in our tests.

But it's the overall finish of the device that prevents it from beating the iPad Mini 2, because it's less robust and feels more disposable. However, it's also cheaper and has a bigger screen, which may be enough to tempt you to buy it.

### **VERDICT**



The iPad Mini 2 is a solidly constructed tablet that has stood the test of time and can still rival most of its competitors. We reviewed the 16GB option to keep it below our £250 price limit but the £259 32GB model is worth considering if you want to have more space for apps.

### **VERDICT**



There are many brilliant things about the Nexus 9, particularly its screen and its power. However, it doesn't feel like a tablet that's built to last. This isn't such a huge problem if you're paying under £200 for it, but the iPad Mini 2 feels like a better long-term investment.



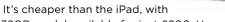
### Asus ZenPad 8.0 | £200 |

www.amazon.co.uk

FEATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★☆

EASE OF USE ★★★☆ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★☆

The Asus ZenPad has an 8in screen with an iPad-like 4:3 ratio and a resolution of 1,536 x 2,048 pixels. Its 320ppi pixel density means it looks sharp and bright. However, the colour accuracy doesn't rival the iPad Mini 2.



a 32GB model available for just £200. However, some of these savings seem to have come from compromises in the build quality, because its plastic case feels a bit flimsy.

Performance is very reasonable. Despite coming fourth in this group, the ZenPad's Geekbench score is very close to that of the Apple and Lenovo tablets, with only the Nexus 9 charging ahead. Its battery life was excellent, too - second only to the Linx 1010, lasting 13 hours and 17 minutes.

The biggest disappointment is its software. Asus has saddled the device with bundled bloatware and hidden Android's standard tools away in a folder of their own.

### VERDICT



WebUse

BRONZE

AWARD

The Asus ZenPad is a good 8in tablet for the money and trumps the iPad Mini 2's storage capacity. However, the build quality isn't as strong and it comes with some bundled extras that you probably won't want.

### Linx 1010 | £180 |

www.ebuyer.com

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

Despite being less popular than iOS and Android, Windows 10 works just as well on a touchscreen as its rival mobile operating systems. While Microsoft's Surface far exceeds the budget constraints of this Group Test, Linx's tablet offers a



good-value alternative that's surprisingly capable.

The screen is the tablet's weak point, with a resolution of just 1,280 x 800 pixels. It isn't as bright as the others we've tested here and the viewing angles aren't as wide. Also, the hardware is underpowered, which shows up in the Geekbench results. Here, again, it comes bottom of the group.

However, you can't argue with its flexibility. It runs any Windows tablet application, comes with two USB 3 ports and provides a superb value keyboard dock, complete with touchpad, available for an extra £15. It also had the longest battery life of all the tablets we tested.

### **VERDICT**



The Linx 1010 may lag behind the other tablets we tested in some key areas, including performance and screen quality, but it's great value for money and has the flexibility to almost become a touchscreen Windows laptop in its own right.

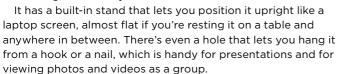
### Lenovo Yoga Tablet 2 | £200 |

www.lenovo.com

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

Unlike most tablets, which are uniformly slim, the Lenovo Yoga tablet has a cylindrical bulge along one side. This contains the battery, so the rest of the device is actually slimmer than most, and gives you something to grip, making it surprisingly

comfortable to hold. However, at over 600g, it's a heavy device.



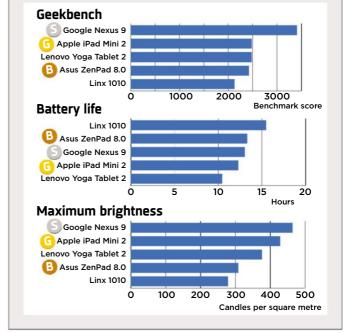
The large screen measures 10.1in on the diagonal, but this leaves it with a lower pixel density than the other awardwinners because of its lower resolution. It's not as bright, either. It also came bottom in our battery-life test, lasting 10 hours and 27 minutes, but this is still a good result.

### VERDICT



If size is everything, the Lenovo Yoga Tablet 2 is an attractive option, because its bigger screen is great value for money. It has a lower resolution and pixel density than our award-winners, though, so it doesn't look as crisp and sharp.

### TEST-RESULTS CHARTS



### **ALSO TESTED**

Acer Iconia One 8 ★★★☆☆ (£120) Amazon Fire 7in ★★★☆☆ (£50) Archos 101 Oxygen ★★☆☆☆ (£180) Dell Venue 8 Pro 5000 ★★★☆☆ (£226) LG G Pad 7.0 ★★☆☆ (£110)



### 🗐 Group Test Tablets under £250

**WEBSITE** 

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**DISPLAY SIZE** 

RESOLUTION

**PIXEL DENSITY** 

**BUILT-IN FLASH** 

WI-FI

**REAR / FRONT FACING** 

**CAMERA RESOLUTION** 

MAX VIDEO RESOLUTION

MEMORY CARD READER

OTHER CONNECTIONS

**OPERATING SYSTEM** 

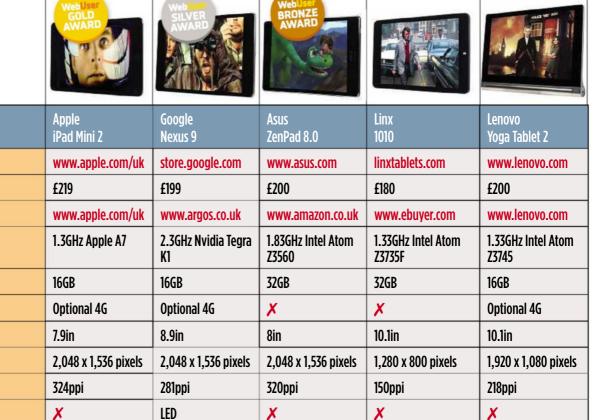
**DIMENSIONS** 

WEIGHT

3G/4G

**PRICE** 

CPU



8 megapixels /

5 megapixels

802.11ac dual-band

1080p

microSD

298g

**USB Type-C** 

Android 5.0.1

203 x 135 x 7mm

### **OUR VERDICT**

We awarded our Gold Award to the iPad Mini 2, which is something of a design classic. Its solid construction is second to none and it has the best screen in this group. However, it's also one of the priciest devices we tested and we'd still urge you to blow the budget and get the 32GB model if you can afford it.

5 megapixels /

1.2 megapixels

802.11n dual-band

200 x 135 x 7.5mm

**d080** 

X

i0S 9

331g

Lightning

8 megapixels /

1.6 megapixels

802.11ac dual-band

1080p

Micro-USB

Android 5.1

425g

228 x 154 x 8mm

Google's Nexus 9 is a worthy winner of our Silver Award, with a beautiful screen and enough power to run any app you throw at it. It's cheaper than the iPad Mini 2 but is less sturdy, with a plastic, rather than aluminium, case.

We gave our Bronze award to the Asus ZenPad, which comes with a generous 32GB of storage. It's a good 8in tablet for the money, and costs £50 less than the iPad Mini 2's 32GB model. However, the build quality isn't as high and it comes bundled with a bunch of extras that will need some tidying up before you can get the most



2 megapixels /

802.11n single-band

Micro-USB. 2 x USB 3

255 x 166 x 10mm

2 megapixels

720p

microSD

Windows 10

590g

8 megapixels /

1.6 megapixels

802.11n single-band

1080p

microSD

Micro-USB

619g

Android 5.0.1

255 x 183 x 7mm

# ₩eb User's Best Buys

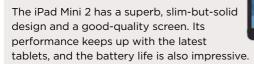
Web User and its sister titles test over 2,500 products every year

### **HARDWARE**

### **BUDGET TABLET**

### Apple iPad Mini 2

£219 from www.apple.com/uk Date tested: November 2015



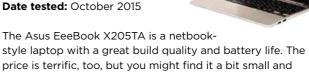


7.9in screen ■ 2,048 x 1,536 pixels resolution ■ 1.3GHz Apple A7 processor • 16GB storage • 5-megapixel rear camera, 1.2-megapixel front camera ■ 802.11n dual-band Wi-Fi ■ iOS 9 ■ 200 x 135 x 7.5mm ■ 331g

### **WINDOWS 10 LAPTOP**

### Asus EeeBook X205TA

£149.99 from www.pcworld.co.uk



### **KEY SPECS**

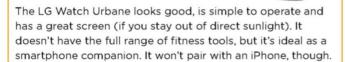
Quad-core 1.33GHz Intel Atom Z3735F processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 32GB eMMC storage ■ 11.6in non-touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 2 x USB 2 ports ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 286 x 193 x 18mm ■ 980g ■ One-year collect and return

cramped because it's been squeezed into such a tiny case.

### **SMARTWATCH**

### LG Watch Urbane

£224 from www.amazon.co.uk Date tested: November 2015



### **KEY SPECS**

Android Wear 5.1 ■ Gorilla Glass 3 ■ 1.3in circular display ■ 320 x 320-pixels resolution ■ 512MB memory ■ 4GB storage ■ Bluetooth ■ 52 x 46 x 11mm ■ 67g ■ One-year return-tobase warranty

### **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.

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-year 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-year return-to-base warranty

### **SOFTWARE & SERVICES**

### **WEB DESIGN**

### Xara Web Designer 11 Premium

f69 99 from www yara com Date tested: November 2015

Xara Web Designer 11 is a great tool for anyone who wants a good-looking website without having to use HTML

or CSS code. The interface is easy to use and the software includes all the tools you need to create flexible sites that change depending on the size of the screen.

### **KEY FEATURES**

90+ templates ■ WYSIWYG design ■ Create responsive websites ■ Embed codes ■ Add HTML ■ Online editing ■ FTP uploader ■ Hosting (requires registration) ■ Browser preview (Chrome, Firefox, IE, Opera)



### 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**

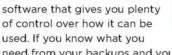
Anti-virus and firewall tools ■ Protects online shopping and banking ■ Identity and privacy tools ■ Dangerous-website alerts ■ Advanced parental control ■ Licences for one, three and five PCs; for one or two years, or pay monthly Multi-Device version ■ Compatible with Windows 10

### **BACKUP AND SYNC**

### SyncBackFree

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

SyncBackFree is very capable of control over how it can be



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

## WIN! Xara Web Designer 11 Premium

Web User has teamed up with Xara to offer 10 readers the chance to win a full copy of Xara Web Designer 11 Premium, which won our Gold Award in Issue 385 and is worth £70.

Web Designer 11 Premium is not like other web design packages; its template-based design gives you complete freedom to make amazing web pages, without any coding knowledge.

### **WEB DESIGNER 11 PREMIUM KEY FEATURES**

### ► EXACTLY THE WEBSITE YOU WANT

If you're fed up with HTML editors that seem designed for creating text-based sites, or page builders that impose serious limits on your creativity, then Xara Web Designer is for you. Xara gives you the freedom to put whatever you want, wherever you want on your web page – text, illustrations, photos, animations – all without you having to write a single line of code.

### **▶**NO CODING REQUIRED

You don't need to know anything about HTML or JavaScript, even to create a mobile version of your site. In fact, Web Designer supports responsive websites where the site design changes dynamically depending on whether it's being viewed on a desktop, tablet or mobile – all from a single HTML file.

### ▶ COMPLETE DESIGN FREEDOM

Choose one of the included web themes and customise every aspect to your requirements, or create a design from scratch – it's up to you.

### ▶FULL WYSIWYG EDITING

No more endless testing to see what your site looks like; with Web Designer 11, the page you have designed is exactly how it will appear on the web. This is the case





### <mark>NEW!</mark> Xara Online Designer

Xara Web Designer 11 Premium users can also take advantage of Xara Online Designer. This powerful service lets you edit text and images in Xara sites directly in your browser from any device, and even collaborate with other users on your website designs.

whether you use a template or create the site from scratch yourself.

### ►INTEGRATED DRAWING AND PHOTO-EDITING TOOLS

Web Designer includes plenty of web graphics templates, all of which can be customised to fit your site. If you can't find a graphic to fit, don't worry – Web Designer has powerful integrated drawing tools to help you create your own. There's even a built-in, ultra-fast and non-destructive photo-editing tool, so you can tweak your images to perfection from within the application.

### ► FREE WEB SPACE AND A FREE WEB DOMAIN

Web Designer 11 Premium not only includes everything you need to design your website; it also gives you what you need to get your site online. Included in the box is 2GB of web space and a free web domain, so you can get your creation online straight away.

### ► AND MUCH MORE!

This is only a small selection of what Web Designer 11 can do. For more info on the program's vast capabilities, visit www.xara. com/uk/web-designer/features, and for an example of the kind of site you could make, see www.xara.com/web-designer-examples/site1.

### **HOW TO ENTER**

Xara Web Designer 11 Premium makes it easier than ever before to create professional-looking websites with the minimum of fuss - no programming knowledge required. It's the only web design package you need, and it can be yours for free.

To be entered into the draw, simply answer the following question:

• How much web space does Web Designer 11 Premium give you for free?

a) 50MB

**b)** 500MB

c) 2GB

# Best Free Software

### **SYSTEM TOOL**

### **Advanced** SystemCare 9

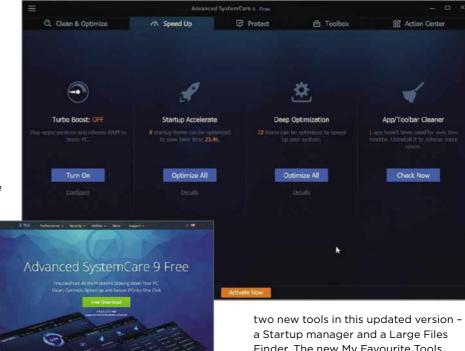
### bit.ly/care386

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 37.8MB

Advanced SystemCare can fix all manner of PC problems, free up drive space, boost performance, remove spyware and clean traces of your online and offline activities with a single click. Hit the Scan button to make the software run through a series of tasks in sequence. The default selection will provide a good basic clean but you can add extra options, such as a disk scan and disk optimisation, if you want the process to be more thorough.

This latest version is fully compatible with Windows 10 and cleans up after the new operating system and Microsoft's Edge browser. There's also a new Win10 Reinforce feature that protects you from Trojans and hacker attacks by strengthening various system weaknesses.

The new Speed Up module helpfully combines the Turbo Boost, Startup Accelerate, Deep Optimisation and App/Toolbar Cleaner functions. It can



optimise memory and hard-drive settings, and remove useless and suspicious browser add-ons and

The Toolbox section gives you access to a range of tools divided between sections for Security & Repair, System Optimise and System Clean. There are

Finder. The new My Favourite Tools section gives you easy access to the functions you use most frequently.

The program's interface looks similar to the previous release, though there have been some minor cosmetic tweaks. and it now offers support for highresolution screens. If you require additional features, such as Registry cleaning, real-time system optimisation, and improved security, you can upgrade to the Pro version for \$19.99 (£13.30).

### MINI WORKSHOP | Speed up your PC using Advanced SystemCare 9



1 Start by running a one-click scan.
You can pick the modules to include from the home screen. 11 The default selection should be fine, but you can choose to Select All 2 if you want the software to perform a full health check. Click the Scan button 3 and the program will work its way through the selected tasks.

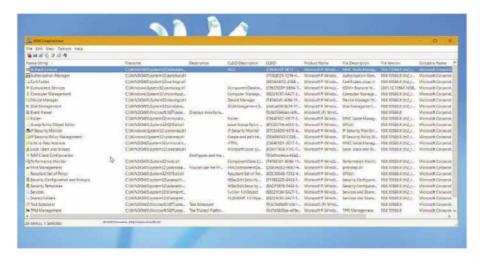


The bar on the left shows which scan 🕳 is currently running. 🚺 You can view its progress 2 and skip or stop it 3 at any time. Skipping a process moves you to the next stage. Problems can be repaired automatically. 4 Click the small arrow and you can choose from a list of alternative actions. 5



When the scan has completed, you'll be shown how many problems were found 11 and see how your system rates for security, performance and stability. 2 You can fix all the problems by clicking the Repair button. 3 Alternatively, select any of the areas on the left 4 to view and repair the different problems individually.

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



### **SYSTEM TOOL**

### **MMCSnapInsView**

### www.nirsoft.net

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 64.2KB

.....

Windows comes with a lot of built-in system components - such as Device Manager, Task Scheduler, Disk Management and Event Viewer. These are known as MMC (Microsoft Management Console) snap-ins. This tiny program from Nirsoft lists all the snap-ins and provides detailed information on each one. It also lets you select multiple snap-ins and open them in a single window. There are 32 and 64-bit versions of the program available.



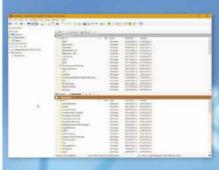
### **SYSTEM TOOL**

### **CPU Monitor and Alert 4**

bit.ly/cpumon386

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3.3MB

This free tool monitors your PC's processor and memory usage, and alerts you if anything starts hogging resources. It can also be set to automatically shut down a problematic process. Bars show the current usage. and the information is recorded in a log file so you can review it at a later date. It's quite a basic looking program, but it works well enough and is highly configurable to suit your needs.



### **FILE MANAGER**

### XYplorerFree 16

bit.ly/xyplorer386

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3.4MB

XYplorerFree is an impressive alternative to the built-in Windows file manager, with a dual-pane interface (displaying the file tree on the left) that makes it easier to browse your hard drive and move content between locations. You can also save your favourite folders for easy future access. The new version adds image tagging and commenting, image file processing, and auto-save settings.

### **New Windows Apps**

### Cast

### bit.ly/cast386

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 18.6MB

This app manages your audio podcasts and synchronises a library across all your Windows devices. You can search for and listen to podcasts directly in the app.



### **Todoist Preview**

### bit.ly/todoist386

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 5.5MB

Todoist is a task-management service that lets you add, manage and edit tasks across devices. You can collaborate with others on shared tasks, add comments, upload files and more.



### 22tracks

### bit.ly/22tracks386

Min requirements: Windows 8+/10

File size: 600KB

This is a curated music-playlist service run by DJs from London, Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris. The selection of tunes, which can all be streamed for free, is updated monthly.



### Best Free Software

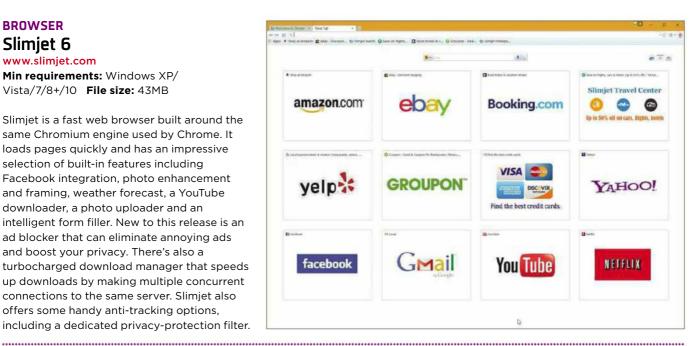
### **BROWSER**

### Slimiet 6

### www.slimjet.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 43MB

Slimjet is a fast web browser built around the same Chromium engine used by Chrome. It loads pages quickly and has an impressive selection of built-in features including Facebook integration, photo enhancement and framing, weather forecast, a YouTube downloader, a photo uploader and an intelligent form filler. New to this release is an ad blocker that can eliminate annoying ads and boost your privacy. There's also a turbocharged download manager that speeds up downloads by making multiple concurrent connections to the same server. Slimjet also offers some handy anti-tracking options, including a dedicated privacy-protection filter.



### if you wish to exit. Otherwise, ess any key to continue . . . restore point... SUCCESS Processes Startup - Scheduled Tasks Services File System Browsers Preparing Report RT has successfully been run. Please review the report in JRT.txt.

### **ANTI-MALWARE TOOL**

### **Junkware Removal Tool 8**

bit.ly/junkware386

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

File size: 1.5MB

A lot of free software comes bundled with unwanted junk, including potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) and adware. This free tool from Malwarebytes can remove more than 205 variants of junkware, as well as unwanted toolbars that take over your browser. It's portable, so you can carry it around on a USB stick. There are no options or settings to worry about - just run it to scan your system and remove any annoyances it encounters.

This eighth version of Junkware Removal Tool has been rebuilt from scratch to make it faster and less resource hungry. It also updates various elements and adds new ways to spot unidentified infections.

### **SYSTEM TOOL**

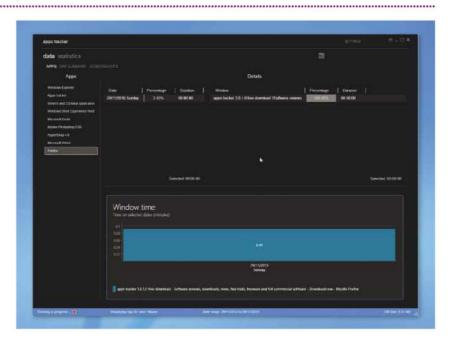
### Apps Tracker

### www.theappstracker.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 5.4MB

Apps Tracker can tell you which applications are being used on your PC, and for how long, so you can identify resource hogs that run in the background and slow down your system. The program provides detailed reports about your computer usage and lets you set daily or weekly limits on the most frequently used apps. Apps can also be grouped into categories, so you can see how long you spend on a certain type of activity ('work' versus 'play', for example).

You can password-protect Apps Tracker to prevent anyone changing your settings, but there's no secret stealth mode and it's easy enough to close the program.





### **GAME** SpillTender

bit.ly/spilltender386

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8.x/10 or Mac OS X

File size: 14MB

The aim of this fun game is to serve your thirsty customers as many drinks as possible by sliding beers along the pub bar using your mouse. You'll collect money in your tips jar for every drink you serve successfully, but many of the beers will end up on the floor, smashed into each other or spilt over the bar - all of which will cost you.

### Don't install...

### ...Install this instead

### GetDataBack

www.runtime.org

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 or Mac OS X File size: 5 6MB

There's something obnoxious about a program charging you \$79 (£53) to recover your own data. GetDataBack offers a free demo that lets you see which deleted files it's capable of rescuing, so if you're desperate to get a file back, then you might be tempted to pay. However, you're likely to achieve the same degree of success with a free program.



### Disk Drill

pc.cleverfiles.com

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

or Mac OS X File size: 15.4MB

This powerful data-recovery software is available for both PCs and Macs, and can rescue data from most forms of storage, including hard drives (internal and external), USB flash drives, memory cards and iPods. The program's smart interface makes it very easy to use, offering a choice of recovery algorithms that it runs through in sequence until it locates your missing data.

Disk Drill works with all the major Windows file systems (including FAT, exFAT and NTFS), and can even rescue data from a partition that's been lost or reformatted. It also has a useful Recovery Vault that keeps a record of all your deleted files.





### **UPDATED** | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



### **BACKUP TOOL**

### AOMEI Backupper Standard 3.2

www.aomeitech.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+ File size: 78MB

This program backs up your system drive, disks, partitions, and files and folders, and also clones drives and partitions. This new version gains a large-window display mode for PCs with highresolution monitors. It also fixes some bugs.



### **SYSTEM CLEANER**

CCleaner 5.12

www.piriform.com

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

File size: 6.5MB

The hugely popular systemcleaning tool gets updated on a monthly basis. This latest version improves cleaning for the Firefox 42 cache and Chrome download history, and offers better support for portable browsers. The 'skip UAC' feature has been improved in Windows 10.



### SYSTEM TOOL

### Windows Repair 3.7

www.tweaking.com

Min requirements: Windows

XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 20.2MB

Windows Repair helps you fix problems with a misbehaving PC. The new version includes a tool for booting out of Windows Safe Mode, which should prevent you from getting stuck when you're trying to troubleshoot problems. Windows 10 permissions have been updated, too.



### **FILE ARCHIVER**

7-Zip 15.12

www.7-zip.org

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

File size: 1.3MB

7-Zip can handle most archiving formats including Zip, TAR and RAR. Its own native 7z format delivers a high compression ratio. This new stable release (the first in a while) introduces various performance improvements and wider support for existing formats.

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



# **Best New Browser Tools**



### **CHROME**

### View time-lapse videos on your New Tab page

Regular readers of this section will know how much we love extensions that turn your New Tab page into a photo gallery. Still, we can say without a trace of hyperbole that Delight for Chrome (bit.ly/delight386) is the most attractive add-on of its kind that we've ever seen. Whenever you open a new tab, you'll be treated to gorgeous time-lapse videos of dawn breaking over a canyon, shooting stars blazing across a velvet sky and other such loveliness. Delight for Chrome also gives you instant access to your bookmarks, history and most visited sites, and can be configured to show the time and temperature for your location. The only drawback is that you become so captivated by the videos that you forget why you opened the new tab in the first place!



### Bring back the Favorite stars on Twitter

Last month, Twitter replaced the star icons used to mark tweets as 'favorites' with hearts that represent 'likes'. "The heart is more expressive," it gushed on its blog (bit.ly/twitter386), "and in our tests, we found that people loved it". However, many users reacted to the change with outrage, sadness and even fear, while the *Guardian* accused Twitter of trying to "kill off its regular users". Happily, there is a solution to this horrifying first-world problem in the form of Fav Forever (bit.ly/fav386), which turns Like hearts back into Favorite stars. The person whose tweet





you 'favorite' will still be told that you've 'liked' it, but at least sanity will reign at your end!

### Fill your browser with snow

Even if we don't get a white Christmas this year, you can transform the web

wonderland by installing Christmas Snow (bit.ly/ snow386). This fun extension applies a

into a winter



calming snowfall effect to every page that you visit, with the flakes settling softly at the bottom of your browser. If the flurry isn't heavy or pretty enough for your liking, you can go into the add-on's Options to change the size, colour, number and speed of snowflakes, and apply delightful effects such as Melt and Twinkle. It's a great way to enjoy snow without suffering the cold and slush!

### Try Chrome's new Site Engagement feature

It seems logical that the websites you spend the most time browsing should be allocated the most memory by your browser, while those that you only glance at deserve minimal resources. So we're pleased that Chrome is testing an option that recognises that some sites are more important than others, and allocates resources accordingly. The feature is called Site Engagement and you can try it now by typing chrome: flags into your address bar, pressing Enter and finding the entry Enable Site Engagement Service. Click Enable, restart Chrome and browse the web as normal. Once you've visited a few sites, type chrome://siteengagement into the address bar, press Enter and you'll see a list of sites that have been scored according to your level of interaction. The more you engage with them, the more points they get and the more resources they're given. Site Engagement is currently an 'experiment', but it's certainly an interesting idea.

### Site Engagement

	Points
http://venturebeat.com/	0
http://www.androidheadlines.com/	0
http://www.buzzfeed.com/	0
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/	1
https://twitter.com/	0
https://uk-mg5.mail.yahoo.com/	1
https://www.google.co.uk/	1



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



### **FIREFOX**

# Block dangerous and unsuitable websites

If you've ever 'accidentally' visited an adult website and had to wash your eyes out afterwards with a hot cup of tea, you can prevent future unpleasantness using Fox Web Security (bit.ly/foxweb386). This add-on protects you and you children from the dangers of the internet by automatically blocking sites that contain adult content, as well as those that harbour malware, phishing scams and other security threats. It



sources data from three trustworthy DNS servers, including Norton ConnectSafe, so if a site you're trying to visit appears on its blacklist, you'll be denied access and told why. If you find Fox Web Security too restrictive, you can adjust its settings so that it only blocks dangerous websites rather than adult ones.

### Look up addresses on web pages on a map

It's not exactly difficult to copy and paste a postcode from a web page into Google Maps, but a handy new add-on called Map & More (bit.ly/map386) makes it even easier. Simply highlight an address, right-click and choose to look it up on Google Maps or Bing Maps. A map pinpointing the location will open in a new tab. Map & More also lets you set the address as a start or end point, which saves you time and typing when you need to get directions from A to B.



### Automatically accept cookies on websites

Since the EU introduced its e-Privacy Directive in 2012, we've all got used to seeing pop-up messages on websites that use cookies. Although, from a privacy point of view, this information is useful to know, having to manually close these boxes soon becomes tiresome. If you'd prefer to skip the warnings and take it on good faith that sites aren't doing anything dodgy with cookies,



install Accept All Cookies (bit.ly/ cookies386). As its name suggests, this

add-on automatically agrees to cookie policies so that you aren't bothered by messages and can instantly access the content.

### Remove annotations from YouTube videos

Even if you use an ad blocker when browsing YouTube, you still have to put up with annotations in videos that block your view by displaying facts about the content and pestering you to 'subscribe now!'. Although these

messages can be disabled, they invariably appear on the next video you



watch, so you're better off tackling the problem at its source and installing YouTube Zero Annotations (bit.ly/youtube386). Use it in conjunction with an ad blocker (Adblock Plus is recommended) and all annoying annotations on videos will be hidden. The add-on even works on YouTube videos that have been embedded on other sites.

### OTHER BROWSERS

**View Goodreads** 

ratings on Amazon Earlier this year, Amazon integrated reviews and ratings from the Goodreads book-lovers community (which it bought in 2013) on its Kindle devices. The new Opera add-on 'Goodreads ratings for Amazon' (bit.ly/ goodreads386) now does this for book pages on the Amazon store. The Goodreads ratings appear directly below those from customers, along with a link to the book's page on the Goodreads website, which you can click to read reviews from the community. Sign up with Goodreads to add your own thoughts on a book.



### Try the new features in Vivaldi If the Vivaldi Workshop

in our last issue persuaded you to try the new browser, you'll be pleased to hear that there have been further improvements to make it even easier to use. These include the addition of a Trash folder for bookmarks and notes. so if you accidentally delete one it can easily be recovered; and the ability to hide individual panels to get more space by right-clicking the left-hand panel bar and deselecting unwanted options. Vivaldi has also fixed more than 50 bugs and made tabs close more quickly. Download it from vivaldi.com.





# 🗾 Best Free Apps 🐞 📹

### App of the Fortnight

### TOOL

### Ofcom Wi-Fi Checker

### bit.ly/ofcom386

Min requirements: Android 4.0, iOS 8.3

Size: 25MB

If your broadband is frequently slower than the speed advertised by your ISP, your Christmas tree could be to blame. That's the festive warning issued by internet regulator Ofcom to promote its new Wi-Fi Checker app, which identifies problems that cause slow wireless connections, ranging from microwaves and baby monitors to electrical interference from the fairy lights hanging on your tree.



The app then offers practical tips to help you improve your broadband speed, without you needing to upgrade to a more expensive package.

When we tried Wi-Fi Checker at home, it quickly performed a series of tests and told us that "your home wireless network appears to be working well". However, when we repeated the tests in another spot, it discovered a data delay with our Wi-Fi that was high enough to "cause problems for some services". The app helpfully identified that many nearby wireless networks were sharing the same

channel as ours, and suggested that we might improve our connection by restarting our router and seeing if it would select a less busy channel (or by forcing it to do so by altering its settings). Tapping the Further Troubleshooting Information button revealed additional useful advice, such as placing our router where there's the least interference. internet problems,

Christmas tree!

If you want to fix your slow downloading Ofcom Wi-Fi Checker is a great place to start - even if it iust means moving your router further away from your



NEW

### **MINI WORKSHOP** Test and fix your

Wi-Fi network Open Ofcom Wi-Fi

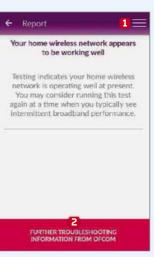
Checker, tap Proceed To Test, then tap Start Wi-Fi Checker. A screen appears showing the app's progress through the two tests 11 and asking you to rate vour satisfaction with vour broadband connection. 2



Once the test is finished. Wi-Fi checker summarises whether your Wi-Fi connection is working well or not. 11 Tap Show Report 2 to see more information about the performance of your wireless network.



To see more detailed results, including data loss and data delay, select the three-line Menu button 11 and tap 'Detailed Results'. Alternatively, for more troubleshooting help, select Further Troubleshooting Information From Ofcom.



**Testing Completed** Your Wi-Fi may be slowing down your broadband SHOW REPORT

Our rating



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

### **PHOTOS**

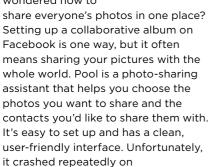
### Pool

### bit.ly/pool386 Min

requirements: Android 4.1, iOS 8

Size: 7MB

Have you ever been on holiday with a group of friends and wondered how to





**TOOL** 

### **Storage Cleaner Pro**

bit.ly/storage386 Min

requirements: Windows Phone

**Size:** 5.45MB

If you receive endless warnings about the storage running low on your Windows Phone, Storage Cleaner

Pro helps you free up some space by clearing your cache, identifying large files and managing your downloads. The app has a handy tool to help you find duplicate photos and lets you compress large image files, too. Despite its 'Pro' name, Storage Cleaner Pro is completely free

to use and has received mostly positive feedback from users in the Microsoft store.



**PODCASTS** 

### Castro: High **Fidelity Podcasts**

bit.ly/castro386

requirements: iOS 9

**Size:** 6.6 MB

Castro is a simple, gesturebased podcast client that uses an 'enisodes'



timeline to help you find new episodes of all your podcasts in one place. Exclusive to iOS, the app also offers a lightning-fast built-in search tool, making searching for and subscribing to new podcasts quick and hassle-free. We particularly like the app's compact controls, which let you fast-forward and rewind by swiping left and

**GET THE DEFINITIVE** 

**GUIDE TO ANDROID** 

right, and its sleep timer, which lets you fall asleep while listening to your favourite shows.



Our rating

Our rating



### Our rating

so we hope these

ironed out quickly!

### **CHARITY**

### ShareTheMeal

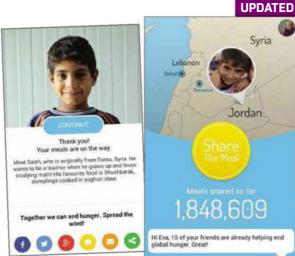
sharethemeal.org

Min requirements: Android 4.0.3, iOS 8.3 Size: 16MB

our Android smartphone,

teething problems are

ShareTheMeal is a charitable initiative from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) that lets you contribute to eliminating world hunger by allowing you to provide meals for starving children. In its introductory sequence, the app tells you that global smartphone



users outnumber hungry children by 20 to 1, to highlight our collective power to change the world. The significance of this arresting statistic is that on the next screen you can use your smartphone to pay for a child's meals for up to a year at a cost of 35p a day. There's no need to set up an account and the app lets you pay for as few or many meals as you like via credit card or PayPal. At the time of writing, the WFP's goal was to provide 20,000 Syrian refugee children with school meals for a year.





### tablet and phone. Discover how to:

Our new updated

packed with 148 pages of apps,

workshops and

Android MagBook is

advice to unlock the

full potential of your

- Master new tools in Lollipop and Marshmallow
- Stop apps leaking your personal data
- Record anything on your phone and tablet
- Prevent updates from wrecking your device
- Remove hidden junk so it never comes back
- Switch from iOS without losing

Order it now from Amazon at bit.ly/defguidetoandroid







### **VIDEO**

### **Adobe Premiere Clip**

bit.ly/premiere386

Min requirements: Android 4.4

Size: 45MB

Our round-up of free Android videoediting apps earlier in the year gave the Gold Award to Kinemaster (www .kinemaster.com), Now, however, Adobe has introduced the even better Premiere Clip: a free, lightweight version of its Desktop video-editing software. The app (which has been



available on iOS since 2014) offers both automatic video generation - for quick, easy edits that match the beat of your soundtrack - and freeform editing, for greater control over the length and sequence of clips. It's

easy to use thanks to the built-in 'coachmarks', but you'll need to set up a free Adobe account to start creating and sharing your edits.

Our rating



### **CAREERS**

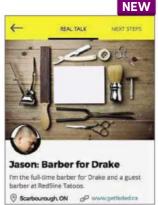
### Real Talk

bit.ly/realtalk386

Min requirements: Android 4.0,

iOS 8 Size: 9.7MB

Real Talk helps young people choose a career by offering helpful insights into the paths taken by hundreds of professionals from different industries. When you first launch the app, it asks you a



series of questions to understand your career interests and presents you with the stories of people in jobs that might appeal to you, be it legal work, teaching or urban planning. Each story offers important details about the salary you can expect to earn (although this is in US dollars) and also provides

useful resources for further follow up research.

Our rating



Pad Pro Review: A Nev

### APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

### **GAME**

### Lifeline 2

bit.ly/lifeline386

Min requirements: Android 4.0, iOS 8

Size: 44MB Price: £2.35

Lifeline 2 is the sequel to the bestselling storytelling game. In it, you follow Akira, a woman on a quest to avenge her parents' deaths, and make decisions to help her reach her final showdown against forces that threaten humanity.



### TOOL

### **Architecture of Radio**

### bit.lv/radio386

Min requirements: iOS 9 Size: 6.5MB Price: £2.29 Architecture of Radio

allows you to see the



invisible world of wireless signals around you, offering a 360-degree visualisation of the cell towers, GPS satellites and Wi-Fi routers in your location.

### TOOL

### Cathode

### bit.ly/cathode386

Min requirements: iOS 7.1 Size: 2MB Price: £3.99 Cathode is an advanced



terminal app that lets you connect to any machine that offers secure shell access with your iPhone or iPad.

### **NEWS**

### Reeder 3

### bit.ly/reeder386

Min requirements: iOS 9 Size: 8.5MB Price: £3.99 This news-reader app supports multiple services including Feedly,

Feed HQ and Readability, as well as standalone RSS feeds. The latest update introduces font options in the article viewer and support for the iPad Pro.



### Football Manager Mobile 2016

### bit.lv/football386

### Min requirements:

Android 2.3, iOS 5.1.1

Size: Varies with device

Price: £6.99 Football Manager

Mobile 2016 lets you pick your favourite

transfers, tactics and selection.

team from leagues in 14 different countries (including all the major European leagues) and attempt to take them to glory by focusing on



Lifeline 2

Architecture of Radio



Cathode

Reeder 3



Football Manager Mobile 2016











### **Best New TV Apps**

### TV & FILM

### All 4 for Android

### bit.ly/all4386

Min requirements: Android (varies with

device)

Size: Varies with device

Channel 4's video-on-demand service has finally been updated to add support for Google's Chromecast, although only its Android app - iOS and Windows Phone users will have to keep waiting. This means you can now stream all your favourite programmes from Channel 4, E4 and More4 from your phone or tablet to your TV, as well as films from Film4, music from 4Music and exclusive bite-size shows. The app has been redesigned to make it easier to browse and less prone to crash, which should address at least some users' grumbles on the Play store. But to keep All 4 free, you still need to sit through ad breaks, which can drag on for several minutes.



### **BBC** iPlayer

bit.ly/iplayerandroid386 bit.ly/iplayerios386

Min requirements: Android (varies with

device), iOS 7

Size: Varies with device

The "iPlayer just got personal", according to this latest update, which sounds rather threatening on the BBC's part, but actually



refers to a new feature that helps you find interesting things to watch. This recommends programmes that it thinks you'll like based on things that you've previously watched and enjoyed - just tap the Love button below a show to express your desire to see something similar. You need to be signed into iPlayer to get the recommendations, but this hardly compromises your privacy. Indeed, over the Christmas period, it could make the difference between discovering a gripping new drama and sitting through yet another repeat of Mrs Brown's Boys.

### **KIDS TV & FILM**

### DisneyLife

disneylife.com/uk

Min requirements: Android (varies

with device), iOS 8

Size: 85.7MB

Disney's new streaming service may not be free but, for fans of animated films and TV shows, it should be well worth the £9.99-per-month subscription. This gives up to six of your family members unlimited access to Disney TV box sets, movies including *The Lion King* and *Aladdin*; and classic music soundtracks such as Frozen and Lady and the Tramp; as well as Disney books, games and a free paid-for app every month. Additionally, to ensure you won't all be fighting over control of the tablet, you can use the service on up to 10 devices. There are no in-app purchases once you've paid the monthly subscription, and there's a free 30-day trial available.



### X Don't install...

### Chat with Santa Claus

bit.lv/santachat386

This horrible, ad-swamped app could give children nightmares all through Christmas. It supposedly lets you talk to 'Santa Claus' directly via instant messaging, but we strongly



suspect it isn't the Lapland-based gift giver at all, but a chatbot dishing out automated replies. Some of these are relevant to your questions - ask "Where's my present?" and be told "It's under the tree" but other answers are bizarre or just plain creepy. Best avoided.

### ...Install this instead

### **Talking Santa**

bit.ly/talking386

Min requirements: Android 4.0.3

Size: Varies with device

From the team behind the Talking Tom Cat apps comes this festive equivalent, which is free to use on Android (it costs 79p on iOS). Speak to Santa and he'll repeat your words with a "Ho ho ho!". Tap his sack and he'll pull out a present; tickle his tummy to make him laugh; and reward him with milk and cookies.

When you're bored of that, or if you're disappointed with your gift, you can knock Santa over with a

giant snowball, smack him in the face and make him say rude words. You can even record your Santa interaction to share on YouTube and Facebook!





COVER FEATURE Try something different in 2016 by installing some useful new software. Wayne Williams picks our 10 favourite free programs for the coming year and explains why you'll love them

# BEST FREE SOFTMARE

ew of us bother paying for software these days because free and open-source offerings are now so good that they often rival (and even surpass) pricey commercial products. But while there's no shortage of free software being released every month, knowing which programs to install and which to ignore can be tricky, especially as some seemingly innocuous downloads come bundled with unwanted junk.

To celebrate the impending New Year, we've chosen 10

of the most promising new and updated programs for 2016. Some of the names you may be familiar with, while others you may not have heard of, but they're all worth downloading and won't infect you with malware.

We also take a closer look at the current state of software as we move into 2016, and select our 10 favourite programs from the last 12 months. Please let us know if you disagree with any of our choices and have any better recommendations!

#### **SYSTEM CLEANER**

#### MPC

#### www.mpc.am

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

File size: 10.7MB

#### Why you'll love it

Giving your PC a good spring clean from time to time can fix common problems - such as freezes and slowdowns - and boost performance. MPC (or More Powerful Cleaner, to give it its full name) is a smart-looking program that's very easy to use. The publisher says it's the world's fastest and lightest PC cleaner and, while we haven't tested that claim by comparing it to every other similar tool, it certainly seems very speedy.

To get started with MPC, just click the green Check Now button and it will scan your system looking for junk and other problems. The software checks 12 areas in total - including System Cache, Web

Cache, Plugins, Other Software Junk, Registry Junk and Web Traces - although some categories, such as Security Protection, are actually features of the software that you may not want to enable (see 'What's the catch?', below). There are also Speed and Protection sections.

MPC's scan results are colour-coded and you can select each section to discover what was found, then repair (clean) or ignore it. If you're the trusting type, you can choose to fix all the problems with a single click.



MPC is an unknown program and you might be wary of trusting it with your system's safety. We would definitely

> recommend that you clean one section at a time rather than using the one-click cleaning

section, for example, changes your part of the "repairs", so you should definitely select Ignore for those just need to take the time to check

We also found that the estimates for potential improvements to performance listed in the overview tend to be slightly exaggerated.



#### TRY THIS INSTEAD

#### CCleaner

www.piriform.com/ccleaner

If you prefer to stick with what you know, the perennial Web User favourite is still the best system cleaner around, and is updated every month with new features and improvements.





#### MINI WORKSHOP | Clean and speed up your PC using MPC



To begin, click the green Check Now button on the home screen. The software will scan each of the sections in turn and colour-code the results. 11 The overview 22 tells you how much more space it can free up, and the approximate performance boost you might see (but this is likely to be an exaggeration).



Click a section to view a breakdown of the problems that were found. You can expand sections by clicking the arrows. 11 Untick anything you want to keep. 2 You can choose to ignore or repair **3** any section. Repeat the process for all areas, or choose to simply fix everything by clicking Repair Now. 4



MPC comes with its own ad blocker. Select Ad Block on the results screen to enable it. Clicking Turn On 1 will activate the filters for web ads and pop-up windows. You can use the switches to turn one or both of these options off at any point. 2 You will need to restart your browser or refresh the page to see the changes.

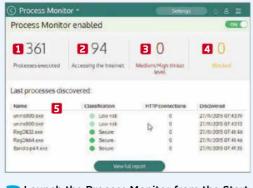
#### **MINI WORKSHOP** Safeguard your PC with **Panda Free Antivirus**



Panda Free Antivirus shows you how many files have been scanned and blocked in real time. 11 To run an on-demand scan, click the 'Scan your PC' tile, 2 and choose the option you wish to run. El Click the 'Start scan' button 4 to begin. You can pause or cancel the process at any time.



USB Protection keeps you safe from auto-running malware. Select the option from the Start screen, then insert a flash drive into your PC. 11 Once it's recognised, you'll be able to 'vaccinate' the drive (block any malicious files) by clicking the button. 2 The program can automatically vaccinate every USB drive that's plugged into your PC. E



Launch the Process Monitor from the Start screen. This monitors all items running on your system and will show you the number of executed processes, 11 how many are currently accessing the internet, 2 any potentially dangerous ones [3] and any that are being blocked. 4 The most recent processes are displayed below. 5

#### **ANTI-MALWARE TOOL**

#### **Panda Free Antivirus** 2016

#### bit.lv/pandafree386

Min requirements:

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

#### Why you'll love it

Unlike some anti-virus software, Panda Security's free solution isn't bloated or

packed with additional features that you'll probably never use. Because all the hard work is done in the cloud, it won't hog resources, making it the perfect choice for older or underpowered systems (you won't notice it's running, which is a definite plus). As well as real-time protection, the software offers an on-demand scanner, process monitor, USB protection and rescue kit. The scanner lets you run a full scan, critical-areas scan (which is much quicker) or custom scan. You can also schedule scans to run at a time and frequency that suits you, and choose which types of threat to target.

The Start screen shows at a glance how many files have been scanned to date, as well as the number of threats blocked and the number of files currently in quarantine.

The 2016 release has a new interface that makes it easy to select the components you want. You can access a module by



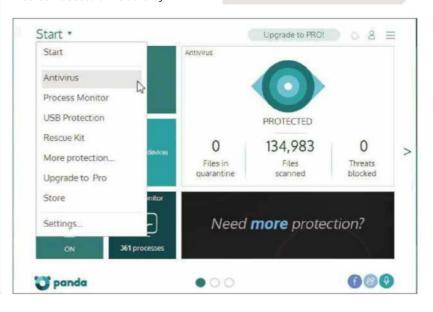
#### What's the catch?

The software offers to install the Panda Security Toolbar (to protect against malicious websites) and change your default search provider and Start page to Yahoo. Make sure you deselect these options during installation. We also find the messages in the interface promoting the paid-for version to be rather distracting, although at least there aren't any pop-ups.



#### www.immunet.com

Like Panda, Immunet uses the power of the cloud to offer a free, lightweight means of protecting your PC. It works happily with your existing security software without causing conflicts.



#### **MEDIA CENTRE**

#### Kodi 16

#### kodi tv

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10, Mac OS X or Linux File size: 77.2MB

#### Why you'll love it

Originally called XBMC (Xbox Media Center), Kodi is a great-looking media player and entertainment hub that lets you manage and play music and video files from local or networked storage media, stream content from the internet, and watch and record live television (provided you have a TV tuner installed). If you've never used a media centre before, the First Run Help tool provides a useful tour of the program's interface and features.

Kodi offers support for third-party add-ons, so you can expand its capabilities, add new channels, play games, customise the look of the interface and more - all for free. It's a great replacement for Windows Media Centre, which Microsoft heartlessly ditched in Windows 10.

The new (beta) version introduces a lot of improvements, including scanning





and organising new music as it's added. This will provide the same stylish library view for you music as is currently used for movies and TV shows. The media centre now correctly stretches 4:3 content to 16:9 without warping it in the process, which is handy if you like to watch older TV shows.

Events are logged, too (a feature that will be improved in future releases), so you can see which files have been copied over, and what other actions have occurred.



#### What's the catch?

Kodi 16 is currently only a beta, which means you might encounter some bugs and other problems. The software can only organise your music if files are properly tagged, and files that aren't tagged correctly could get lost. The new build also says goodbye to the karaoke feature, which might sadden some people (although there's the possibility of it returning in the future).

#### TRY THIS INSTEAD

#### **Plex**



Plex is a slick, classy media server that lets you stream music, photos and videos at home. However, the options available in the free version are limited compared to Kodi's.



#### MINI WORKSHOP | Manage all your music and video in Kodi



Kodi has a very straightforward and intuitive interface. The strip across the centre 11 lets you access pictures, videos, music, programs (add-ons) and system settings. Move your mouse to either side of the strip to scroll it left or right. Hovering over one of the categories will display any sub-menus. 2



To add some movies or TV shows, click Videos, then click Files. Click 'Add videos' 11 and navigate to where they are stored. Enter a name for the media source 2 and click OK. 1 In the Set Content window, use the Scraper box to identify the type of media contained in the folder - None, Music Videos, TV Shows or Movies.



Click Music and repeat the process outlined in Step 2 to add the folders where you store your tracks, then go to Photos and add those as well. To install some add-ons, click Programs and select 'Get more'. Browse the list of add-ons on the left, 1 then click one to install it.

# Top 10 free programs of 2015

This year has seen the launch of some excellent new software, as well as impressive updates to Web User favourites. Here, we count down our 10 best programs from the last 12 months

#### **AtHome Camera** www.ichano.com

This free program and mobile app saves you money on expensive security equipment by turning your home PC, smart TV or spare mobile device into a surveillance camera. Very easy to use, it streams a live feed of your home to your phone or tablet, and starts recording when it detects movement.

#### **Lazesoft Recovery Suite** Home Edition

#### bit.ly/lazesoft365

A PC that won't boot is the stuff of nightmares, but this life-saving program ensures you won't lose your data forever by creating a bootable recovery tool to rescue your PC should disaster strike. It also lets you



restore lost files and reset your Windows password.

#### **Image Composite Editor** Bit.ly/ice366

Despite its dull name, this free Microsoft tool (updated after seven years!) is a brilliant way to create high-resolution panoramas by stitching together overlapping photos of the same location. It intelligently fills in pixels where there are gaps between shots.

#### **Windows Repair** bit.ly/winrepair368

It might not be the most attractive program you've ever seen, but Windows Repair is certainly one of the most useful. It fixes a host of common PC problems, including Registry errors, damaged system files, Windows Update glitches, hijacked settings and more.

**Emsisoft Emergency Kit** bit.ly/emergencykit376 This powerful free security suite offers the perfect

second line of defence to your existing anti-virus software. It scans your PC for viruses, Trojans, spyware, adware, keyloggers and potentially unwanted programs, and removes them all with a single click.

#### Google Earth Pro bit.ly/earthpro365

Reduced from \$399 (£265) to free, Google's featurepacked virtual globe was undoubtedly the software bargain of the year. Highlights include the Movie Maker tool, which lets you record videos of your travels, and the ability to print high-resolution aerial



#### Vivaldi vivaldi.com

If you're fed up with crashes in Chrome, check out Vivaldi. It's the most promising browser we've seen for ages (unlike Microsoft's disappointing Edge) and includes a customisable interface, several innovative features and support for Chrome extensions.

#### **VLC Media Player** www.videolan.org/vlc

Version 2.2 of this fantastic free media player added lots of useful features, including automatically rotating



vertical videos captured on phones; the ability to add extensions from within the program; built-in downloading of subtitles; and resuming playback from where you left off.

#### **Privacy Badger** bit.ly/privbadger381

Our favourite new browser add-on of 2015 (and winner of a Gold Award in Issue 381) offers a simple but highly effective means of blocking spying ads and invisible trackers on web pages. Unlike similar privacy tools, it gives you total control over the domains that you block and allow.

#### **Ultimate Windows** Tweaker

#### bit.ly/tweaker381

There are lots of new programs that help you fix Windows 10's various problems and annoyances, but this one just edges it (pun intended) as our favourite. The tiny download (495KB) offers more than 200 useful tweaks, from tightening your privacy settings to removing unwanted tools and boosting performance, and saves you the hassle of hunting around when you want to perform a specific tweak to the operating system. Check out our Workshop on Ultimate Windows Tweaker in Issue 381 (bit.ly/webuser381).

FixWin (bit.ly/webuser384) and Windows Tweaker (www .thewindowstweaker.com) are other good alternatives and work with older versions of Windows, too.

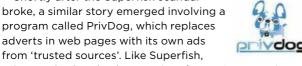


#### STINKERS OF THE YEAR

#### **Superfish and PrivDog**

2015 was a particularly bad year for security breaches and flaws. The so-called 'Superfish scandal' revealed that the Chinese computer manufacturer Lenovo had installed a type of adware called Superfish Visual Search on its PCs. which broke HTTPS encryption. This left users vulnerable to attacks on webmail and online banking, and inserted ads into websites and Google searches. Following widespread condemnation, the Superfish team subsequently changed its name to JustVisual, "in the hope it can turn over a new leaf" (bit.ly/superfish386).

Shortly after the Superfish scandal broke, a similar story emerged involving a program called PrivDog, which replaces adverts in web pages with its own ads



PrivDog also breaks the security of HTTPS connections and was flagged as being malware by many security companies. The makers of PrivDog (www.privdog.com) insist that it combats the threat of 'malvertising' (malware-infected adverts) rather than posing a security risk itself, but we think this dog needs to be put down.



#### **DISK DEFRAGMENTER**

#### **UltraDefrag 7** Beta

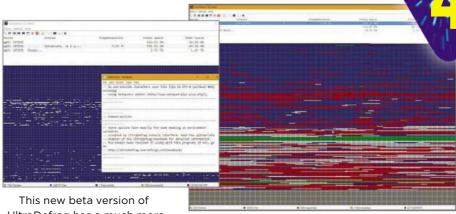
#### ultradefrag.sourceforge.net

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 or Mac OS X File size: 1.5MB

Why you'll love it

Defragging your hard drive reorders its sprawling contents, arranging the data into neat contiguous sections. On a mechanical hard drive (not an SSD), this can deliver some minor speed and 'seek' benefits, so it's worth doing at least once a month. UltraDefrag is a more advanced alternative to the Windows defrag tool which can not only analyse, defrag and optimise your entire hard drive, but also defrag individual files and folders.

It's easy to use: just select what you want to defrag, click the Analyse button, then choose the action you want to take. You can set it to perform a boot-time defrag for when Windows launches.



UltraDefrag has a much more sophisticated user interface, and applies general improvements to make the program faster and more efficient.

#### What's the catch?

Customising UltraDefrag involves editing a text file, which is hardly the most user-friendly way of doing things. Also, this is quite an early beta version, so while the cosmetic changes are mostly complete, many of the tweaks to the defragging engine have yet to be implemented.

#### TRY THIS INSTEAD

#### **Auslogics Disk Defrag Free**

#### www.auslogics.com

This compact and speedy defragmenter takes less than 10 minutes to defrag a standard hard drive. It's very straightforward to use and is completely free with no hidden catches.

#### **BACKUP TOOL**

#### **EaseUS Todo Backup Free**

#### bit.ly/todoback386

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 116MB

#### Why you'll love it

It's vital that you back up your personal files on a regular basis so you've always got copies to hand, should disaster strike. Many people don't have a backup plan, often because it's viewed as difficult and timeconsuming to set up, but Todo Backup Free makes the process so simple that really there's no excuse. The program can back up whatever you require it to - this can be personal data, your entire





system, hard disks, partitions or individual files - and save the backups to a choice of locations, including cloud services such as Google Drive. Todo Backup can also clone a hard disk for upgrading or migrating to an SSD.

Usefully, you can perform full backups, or incremental or differential ones. Incremental backs up only the



files that have changed since the most recent backup; Differential targets those that have changed since the last complete backup.

The program can also check the integrity of an existing image, create an emergency rescue disk, wipe personal data and mount image files.

#### What's the catch?

Backup and restore speeds are slower in the free edition, and you can't choose to exclude certain files from a backup.

#### **TRY THIS INSTEAD**

#### **AOMEI Backupper Standard**

#### www.aomeitech.com

This versatile free tool can back up your system drive, hard drives, partitions, and files and folders. You can either schedule backups for specific times or perform them incrementally.

#### **PRIVACY TOOL**

#### **0&0 ShutUp10**

#### bit.ly/shutup10-386

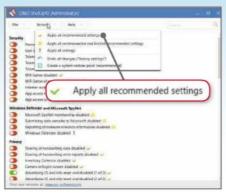
Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 179KB

#### Why you'll love it

Windows 10 might be free - for users of Windows 7 and 8+, at least - but there are sacrifices to be made to your privacy. The new operating system spies on its users in various ways and, while you can turn off many of the snooping settings, you need to know where to look. O&O ShutUp10 makes it easier to protect your privacy by putting all these settings on a single screen. Clicking a tweak will tell you what it does and you can enable or disable items with a single click.

The program doesn't require installation and includes nearly 50



privacy tweaks sorted into straightforward categories, including Security, Privacy, Location Services, Cortana, User Behaviour, Windows Update and Miscellaneous.

You can change individual settings or apply all recommended ones (or all recommended and limited settings). In the unlikely event of problems, you can undo any changes and revert

to the factory settings.

#### What's the catch?

You really need to spend some time investigating each tweak to understand what it does and any possible downsides to disabling it.

#### TRY THIS INSTEAD

#### **Ashampoo** AntiSpy for Windows 10



#### bit.ly/antispy386

Like O&O ShutUp10, Ashampoo AntiSpy brings together all Windows 10's privacy settings in one attractive interface. Adjusting them is as simple as switching each option from On to Off.

#### THE STATE OF SOFTWARE IN 2015

#### **Robert Irvine says:**

2015: it begins

No-one can be in any doubt as to the biggest software release of the

with 'W' and ends in '10' we may have mentioned it in Web User once or twice! Microsoft's new operating system dominated tech headlines throughout the year, from the good (the Start menu's back! It's faster! It's free!) to the bad (upgrade problems, privacy concerns, critical errors) and the ugly (downloading the installation files whether you wanted them or not).

Judging from the emails we've received, many of vou love Windows 10 and think it's the best thing since sliced bread - or since Windows 7, to be more accurate - but an equal number have found it to be nothing but trouble and regret upgrading. Still, 120 million users (and

counting) can't be wrong - or can thev?

What's also interesting about the release of

Windows 10 is the knock-on effect it's had on other software. Certain older programs and games aren't compatible with the new OS -

including Microsoft's own personal-finance software manager, Money and its ditched Windows Media Centre. There are workarounds and alternatives for many incompatible tools, and some software - such as **Kaspersky Internet Security** - has subsequently been updated to work with Windows 10, but the problems hardly made for a 'seamless transition'.

Even worse, as we reported last issue, the big Fall update in November deleted several programs from users' computers, including the popular system tools CPU-Z and Speccy; anti-malware software



Windows 10 was the biggest software release on 2015, but it's not without its problems

Spybot - Search & Destroy; and Adobe Creative Suite. Some cynical users even suggested that Microsoft is wiping programs that it wants you to replace with its own products.

#### Will apps eventually replace programs?

Although Windows 10 strikes the right balance between traditional Desktop programs and apps from the Windows store, it's clear that Microsoft - and software developers in general - are gradually shifting towards the latter, on both PCs and

.....

mobile devices. We certainly haven't come across many new programs in 2015 that struck us as essential downloads to rank with the likes of CCleaner, VLC and Chrome in the Web User Hall of Fame, but we have discovered loads of innovative and useful apps. Mostly, we've just seen updates to software that's been around for years, and new versions that just fix a few bugs and add support for - you guessed it -Windows 10.

On reflection, it's easy to understand why apps are on



#### **UNINSTALLER**

#### Geek **Uninstaller**

#### www.geekuninstaller.com

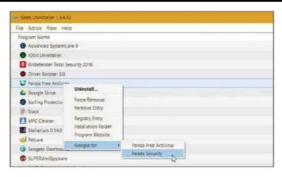
Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 2.5MB

#### Why you'll love it

The built-in Windows uninstaller does a reasonable job of removing unwanted programs but it often leaves some junk behind, including files, folders and Registry entries. GeekUninstaller is a more powerful alternative that not only removes all leftovers once it has finished uninstalling a program, but can force the removal of stubborn or broken programs as well. It starts up immediately and is very fast, and because it doesn't require



installation, you can carry it around on a USB flash drive.

The interface is as basic as you can imagine, with a long list of all of the programs you have installed and a small menu at the top. You can remove an item using this menu, or by rightclicking and selecting an option from the context menu. If you want to know more about a program or the team behind it, you can select the option to perform a Google search.

#### What's the catch?

The real-time installation monitor, which observes installations to guarantee full removal afterwards, is only available in the paid-for Pro version, which costs \$24.95 (£16.60). You can't uninstall multiple programs in one go in the free edition, either.

#### TRY THIS INSTEAD

#### **IObit Uninstaller 5**

#### www.iobit.com

IObit's free program can uninstall multiple items at once and completely remove all leftover traces, including clearing out Registry entries and junk that other uninstallers may leave behind.

the ascendant while oldfashioned programs remain stagnant. Now that we spend so much time 'in the cloud', lightweight tools that connect our devices to online services for email, entertainment, storage, shopping, word processing, photo editing and so on are much more convenient than hefty downloads that take time to install (and uninstall), and consume memory and hard-drive space. Chrome OS has demonstrated that vou can easily perform all your everyday tasks using web apps alone, with many

now letting you work offline if you lose your internet connection. Apps also have the convenience of letting you access the same content. and features across different devices and operating systems. Furthermore (and this brings us nicely to our next point), apps don't tend to come bundled with unwanted and invasive junk.

#### Is bundled junk killing free software?

It's a sad fact that a significant proportion of free software these days comes with so-called 'offers' - extra

tools from third-party companies that often have little relevance to the program you're downloading. In our Best Free Software section, we always take care to alert you to these bundled extras and advise you to deselect them

during installation, but this often involves close reading of each option so that you don't select something you intended to decline. In the worst cases, the 'crapware' installs whether you selected it or not, and often without your knowledge.

Even if you accept that software developers need to make money somehow, it's difficult to condone the devious tactics being employed to get PUPS (potentially unwanted programs) onto your PC. One solution, of course, is to pay for software rather than facing the fallout from a



In these dark days of dodgy downloads, Unchecky is an essential tool for every PC

> dodgy download but, provided you're careful, you can still get programs for free without any consequence. Always choose the Custom install option, rather than the standard ('recommended') one; don't blindly click Next just to speed through the process; and install the brilliant Unchecky (unchecky.com) to automatically deselect pre-ticked boxes.

Free software will be with us for a few years yet, but it's more important than ever to be vigilant and watch what you click.



Tech companies are increasingly moving away from programs and toward apps

#### **BITTORRENT DOWNLOADER**

#### **Tixati**

#### www.tixati.com

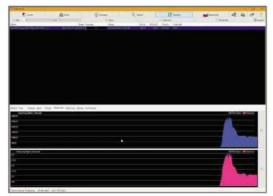
Min requirements:

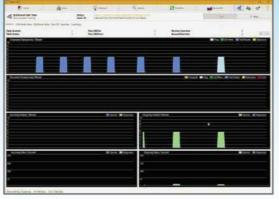
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 or Linux

File size: 12.6MB

#### Why you'll love it

If you download files via BitTorrent, the chances are you probably use uTorrent to do it. It's an incredibly popular client, but it also comes bundled with unwanted extras including (in the past) some pretty nasty ones. Tixati contains no spyware or ads, which makes a





refreshing change, and it offers all of the features found in uTorrent including

> support for magnet links, so you can start a transfer immediately without needing to download torrent files first.

It provides a detailed view of your downloads - including peers, pieces, files and trackers - and affords users an impressive degree of control over download and upload speeds. You can use it to stream media, share files of your own and even chat with other users in channels. Power users who do a lot of torrenting

will definitely get a lot out of this new tool.

#### What's the catch?

The interface isn't particularly polished (although it is highly customisable), and it's not always obvious what some of the elements of the program do. There's a lot to learn if you're determined to get the most from it, which might make it a little off-putting for some less technically proficient

users. Plenty of help is provided throughout, though.

#### **TRY THIS INSTEAD**

#### **Deluge**



With a similar interface to uTorrent, this program is also free from crapware and is available for Windows, Mac OS X and Linux. If you need help or advice using it, Deluge has a busy and friendly online community.

#### **AUDIO CONVERTER**

#### MediaHuman **Audio** Converter

#### www.mediahuman.com

Min requirements:

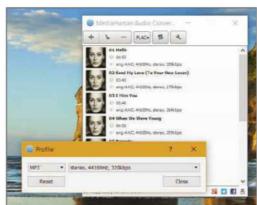
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 21.2MB

#### Why you'll love it

There are lots of different audio formats available, each with its own pros and cons. MP3s, for example, are very widely available and might be quite small in size, but they also deliver lower-quality





sound, compared with, say, FLAC. And while FLAC files offer higher quality audio, they can be quite large.

If you need to convert files from one audio format to another, MediaHuman Audio Converter is the perfect tool for the job. All you need to do is drag and drop the files onto the target, select an output format and (optionally) a sample rate to determine the quality. It supports all the major formats including WMA, MP3, AAC, WAV, FLAC, OGG and AIFF, and can convert multiple files simultaneously, making for a very speedy conversion.

The program can find and download

cover art for music tracks automatically, and add files directly to iTunes once the conversion finishes (provided they are in compatible formats). Albums can be split into individual tracks and, if you want to rip the audio from a video file, MediaHuman can do that

#### What's the catch?

It would be good if the program supported a slightly wider range of

formats, so you could use it to convert more obscure types of tracks.

#### TRY THIS INSTEAD

#### **Freemake Audio Converter**

#### www.freemake.com

This free tool is certainly one of the simplest for converting audio files from one format to another. It used to be our go-to recommendation, but now, sadly, comes bundled with unwanted extras.

#### **PRIVATE CHAT TOOL**

#### Tor Messenger Beta

#### bit.ly/torchat386

Min requirements:

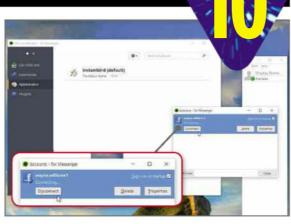
Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10, Mac OS X. or Linux File size: 30.2MB

#### Why you'll love it

It seems as though everything and everyone is spying on us these days, from our operating systems to our government. The Tor Browser (bit.ly/ torbrowser386) is designed to safeguard your privacy when browsing the web, while the Tor Messenger, from the same team, aims to make communications equally private.

It's based on Mozilla's Instabird, a cross-platform chat tool, which means it can be used in conjunction with existing networks such as Jabber (XMPP), Google Talk, Facebook Chat, Twitter, Yahoo and IRC. Your chats are encrypted and anonymous, because they're routed through a network of volunteer computers around the world.





When you start a conversation, you'll be prompted to verify the other participant's OTR (Off the Record) fingerprint, so you can be sure they are who they claim to be.

#### What's the catch?

This is a beta release, which means that although it's pretty stable, it's far from finished and can be a little buggy at times. Tor is planning to introduce some appealing features for the future, such as sandboxing, encrypted file transfers and off-the-record Twitter DMs, but it may be a while before they get introduced. Also, the likes of Facebook and Google Talk may block your chat connections because they appear to originate from different locations.

#### **TRY THIS INSTEAD**

#### Jitsi

#### jitsi.org

This free tool keeps your online communication confidential. It plugs into messaging tools including Facebook Messenger, Yahoo Messenger and ICQ, to stop them logging your calls and chats.

#### What you say...



We asked Web User readers to name their favourite software of 2015. Here's what you told us

My favourite game was without a doubt Fallout 4 (www.fallout4.com), because of its non-linear gameplay and customisation options. Other than games, Comodo Anti-Virus (antivirus.comodo.com). It has low system usage and gets the job done quietly and without any nag screens.

#### Rayinskitoo

Waltr by Softorino (softorino.com) is a crucial piece of software for Macs: it means binning iTunes and is super easy to use. The customer support is second to none, too. And it's also available for Windows!

#### Ricardo Lobo-Morell

eM Client (www.emclient.com) - all the features and functionality of Microsoft Outlook but at a much lower price and with significantly better performance. There's even a free version if you are willing to sacrifice a few of the features.

#### Keith Pearson

DOSBox (www.dosbox.com). It allows you to play old-skool games on a modern operating system.

Si Mellor

Tough choice between Disconnect .me (disconnect.me) and Adblock Plus (adblockplus.org) for blocking intrusive Spotify audio ads (see tip on page 68).

Jack Gold

#### **NEXT ISSUE**

#### on sale Wednesday 30 December 2015

Save yourself time, money and hassle as we flag up 24 awful apps, programs and other junk that you should avoid in the New Year

#### **OWHO'S DOING WHAT** ON YOUR PC?

Track what others do without them knowing

#### **OSPEED UP YOUR BROWSER**

Find and remove what's making you crash

#### **OSTOP PESTERING ME!**

Disable the most annoying PC and mobile notifications

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Free note-taking services

There are plenty of free note-taking services that help you organise your work, research, thoughts and daily life. Some can even sync your notes across multiple devices. Rob Beattie compares six of the best options



#### **Evernote** | evernote.com | \*\*\*\*

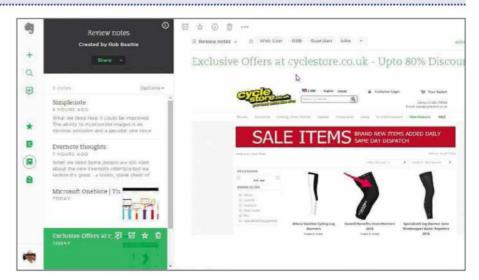
FEATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★☆

#### What we liked:

Some people are still riled about the new web-based Evernote interface but we reckon it's an improvement in every way as clean and clear as

Bronze Award-winning Simplenote, and an oasis of calm compared with OneNote. The free version is entirely usable, despite its monthly 60MB limit, and lets you add as many notes as you like, clip web pages and synchronise notes. It works across any of your devices running the web app, the Windows software or the mobile iOS/Android versions, and also offers basic sharing and collaboration, which is useful if a group of people are planning a trip or working together on a project. This breadth of devices is also available on OneNote but Simplenote still lacks Windows software.

Evernote's web clipper extension is able to grab entire pages or parts of a page, and lets you add tags before saving it to a notebook. The annotation tools aren't perfect, but they are better at producing good results than OneNote's similar tools, although the latter's pen support is generally superior. Simplenote, however, has nothing like this, if you discount copying



and pasting a URL.

The redesigned text editor is a joy to use and we also like the way Evernote is ditching unnecessary elements (Evernote Food recently joined Hello and Peek in their software retirement home) to concentrate on its core note-taking services.

#### How it can be improved:

Currently, you can only get offline access to your notes by paying for a subscription. The 60MB monthly upload limit for free accounts is a touch measly, and Evernote's Windows and OS X

services lag behind the browser-based versions. We'd also love to lose all those intrusive nudges to 'upgrade now'.

#### **OUR VERDICT**

Evernote remains the gold standard for creating original notes, assembling information from the web, organising it into notebooks and then sharing it across different devices. Even the free version includes some excellent and sophisticated sharing tools.

#### Free note-taking services

#### OneNote | www.onenote.com | \*\*\*



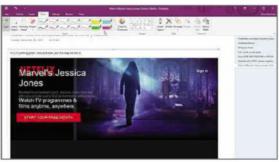
FEATURES ★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆ EASE OF USE ★★★☆☆

#### What we liked:

OneNote is free on all platforms and devices, so it doesn't hold back features for paid-for versions as Evernote does.

It's a good choice if you use other Microsoft products and services because it integrates with OneDrive and has a familiar Office-like interface, which makes it feel like a 'proper' program.

The web clipping isn't as sophisticated as Evernote's but it's quick and easy, and grabbing a section of a site, such as an image, is fast and responsive. The Desktop version offers lots of annotation tools and lets you insert external files, such as spreadsheets and audio files. Integration with Bing is excellent and sharing is more sophisticated than the other award-winners, thanks to its origins as a business tool. The 'blank canvas' approach to notes - where you can add notes, handwritten notes, photos, audio, tasks, weblinks and more - is appealing, once you get used to it.



#### How it can be improved:

OneNote's browser-based tool isn't as sophisticated as the Desktop version, and lacks many of its tools. These inconsistencies make it confusing to use across different devices. There's also a lot to learn.

#### **OUR VERDICT**

OneNote is probably the most powerful collaborative note-taking service around but it still feels like a business tool. As a result, the learning curve is steep compared with Evernote and the web client lags behind the desktop version.

#### **Google Keep**

**BEST OF THE REST** 

keep.google.com

Keep is a handy service that stores notes on Google Drive as part of your free allowance. It's available

via your web browser, on the Chrome OS and on iOS and Android



devices. As well as text, you can add photos, and audio, and create to-do lists. The only reason it doesn't rate higher in this month's roundup is that we remember other non-core Google apps we loved like Notebook and Reader - that were unceremoniously dumped.

#### Thinkery

#### thinkery.me

Thinkery is like a cross between Simplenote and Evernote. It runs in a web browser and on iOS and Android devices, synchronising notes (which can contain text,

images, video. bookmarks and tasks) between them. It's early days



but we're impressed enough so far to hope that the free version remains useful when the promised paid-for one finally arrives. For now it's definitely worth a look.

#### What we liked:



Simplenote is the leanest and nimblest of the note-taking apps and services reviewed here but.

Simplenote | simplenote.com | ★★★★☆

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

unlike Evernote and

OneNote, it doesn't try to cover all bases. Notes can be organised and then searched for using multiple tags. Support for the Markdown mark-up language means you can format your notes to look interesting, although they are nowhere near as good as Evernote and OneNote's formatting controls. Simplenote is great for accessing your notes on different devices. It also lets you email a note to anyone with a single click: share it with other Simplenote users by including their email address as a tag; and publish a note that anyone can read by sending them its web address. Unlike Evernote, there are no premium versions so you're not missing out on any features, and all versions provide a word count (the web version



of Evernote doesn't and OneNote lacks this feature entirely).

#### How it can be improved:

Simplenote doesn't let you incorporate images, and there's no web-clipping tool to capture and display websites copying and pasting a URL just isn't enough.

#### **OUR VERDICT**

SimpleNote is a great choice if you want text-based notes and can use Markdown. Updates have improved the Android and iOS apps but it still lacks a Windows version.

#### Workflowy

#### workflowv.com

This is a web service that also works on iOS and Android devices and is organised like an outliner. It's less useful as a general note-taker and for collecting stuff from websites

but if you're at home with the format, it's elegant, very fast and a



powerful way to organise your notes. You can drill down through the lists and there's a neat 'instant share' feature, which lets you collaborate with fellow Workflowy users. It's not as flexible as the other services here but, if you like outliners, this is worth considering.

# Stop sharing SO MUC ersonal

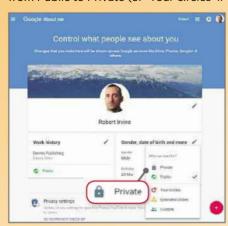
Are you leaking personal details online without realising? Robert Irvine reveals the best new ways to stop Google, Facebook and other services compromising your privacy



#### Control how your info appears on Google

Google is such an integral part of our online lives that it's easy to forget just how much information it stores and shares about us. Perhaps, for example, you created a

Google+ profile a few years ago but then never used it again (you wouldn't be the only one!), or you once drunkenly 'liked' a tasteless video on YouTube. You can find out exactly what details other people can see about you on Google services by visiting your About Me page (aboutme.google.com). This new feature displays your public Google profile and lets you hide any info you'd prefer not to share, such as your date of birth, work history and contact information. Just click the pencil icon in the corner of a panel to edit the details shown or click the globe icon to change the setting from Public to Private (or 'Your circles' if



Visit your About Me page to see your public Google profile as other people do



Avoid sharing everything that you do on YouTube with the whole world

you use Google+).

Once you've edited your Google profile, click 'Go to Privacy Checkup' to make further changes to your privacy settings. Most of the options are pretty innocuous, such as deciding which category tabs appear on your Google+ profile, but others are more disconcerting. For example, unless you tick the box 'Don't feature my publicly shared Google+ photos as background images on Google products & services', pictures that you post online may be displayed as Chromecast wallpaper on strangers' TV screens. Although Google says that it will never use photos of people, enabling this option by default feels rather presumptuous!

Other settings you should check include whether your phone number is publicly viewable; who can see your YouTube videos, playlists and likes; and whether your photos are being 'geotagged' to show where they were taken.

Privacy Checkup's final section is

perhaps the most eye-opening, because it deals with how Google targets you with adverts, based on your interests. If you don't remember ever telling Google about your interests, that's because you didn't - at least, not directly. Instead, it gathers the information from "your activity on Google sites", such as terms you search for, videos you watch on YouTube, places you look up on Google Maps and the content of emails you receive. You can improve the relevance of the ads you see by deselecting any options that don't interest you (we've no idea why Google thinks we like basketball and outdoor toys) or turn off interest-based ads altogether. You'll still see adverts - unless you're using an ad blocker, of course - but they won't specifically target you. We'd also recommend clicking the Control Signed Out Ads button to manage which ads you see when you're not signed into your Google account, to potentially reduce their prevalence.



Prevent Google from targeting you with ads that it bases on your interests

#### **DELETE ACCOUNTS YOU NO LONGER USE**

You've probably signed up for a lot of websites you no longer use, from photo-sharing to social networks, which means there's more info on the web about you than you realise. Individual sites won't reveal too much, but a combination of all the data could allow snoops and cybercriminals to construct an online profile that contains your age, address, contact details and other personal information. For this reason, it's wise to delete accounts for services you don't use.

An easy way to do this is to visit JustDelete.me (justdelete.me), which provides advice and links for deleting accounts with hundreds of online services. Entries are colourcoded by how difficult they are to close: green for easy, red for hard and black for impossible. The latter applies to Blogger (you must delete your Google account) and Evernote (which you can deactivate but not delete).

There's a JustDelete.me add-on for Chrome (bit.ly/justdelete386) that lets you delete your details from a site you're currently viewing.



JustDelete.me helps to delete unused accounts with hundreds of services

#### Tighten your privacy settings on Facebook

Facebook's attitude to your privacy is much like that of a dog to a lamp post; after all, it didn't become a \$300bn

company without a reckless regard for its users' data. As we reported in Issue 383 (bit.ly/webuser383), the social network recently introduced a 'universal search' feature that makes more than 2 trillion public posts searchable and highlights once again the need to monitor your privacy settings.

To its credit, Facebook now offers a Privacy Check-up tool to help you control who can see the content and personal information you share. Launch this by clicking the padlock icon in the top-right corner of the page and choosing Privacy Check-up. Here you can decide who can see your posts (Public, Friends, Only Me or specific people); which apps have access to your account; and whether you want your details - phone number, email address, date of birth - to be private or public.

Privacy

Check-up is

undoubtedly

useful, but it

enough to

stop vou over-sharing

doesn't go far

on the social

network. For



Use Privacy Check-up to keep content private

example, even if you make your future posts private, older ones may still be publicly viewable. To stop anyone apart from your friends viewing content on your Timeline, click the down arrow in the



Tweak your Privacy Settings to ensure old posts can't be viewed by strangers

top-right corner and choose Settings, then Privacy. Click the Limit Past Posts option under 'Who can see my stuff' and choose Limit Old Posts. If you're really paranoid, click Use Activity Log to manually delete everything you don't want people to see.

Finally, you may want to prevent photos people tag you in from appearing in your timeline automatically - especially over the bleary-eyed Christmas season! On the Settings page, click 'Timeline and Tagging', then click Edit next to 'Review posts friends tag you in before they appear on your timeline?' and select Enabled. Further down the page, click Edit next to 'Who can see posts you've been tagged in on your timeline?' and select Friends or Only Me.

To check how your profile appears to other Facebook users, click View As



Check how your public Facebook profile looks

next to 'Review what other people see on your timeline' and choose Public or a specific person.

#### Check what you're sharing using AVG PrivacyFix



Although AVG has been criticised for selling users' personal data to advertisers, the security company also offers a

useful free tool that protects rather than compromises your privacy. AVG PrivacyFix (www.avg.com/privacyfix) shows you what info you're sharing on Google, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, and advises you to change settings to boost your privacy. You may be tweeting your location without realising; your name and photo may be appearing in Google ads for firms you've endorsed; and LinkedIn users may be able to see when you've viewed their profiles.

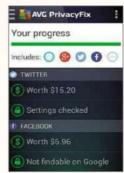
All these 'leaks' and more can be

plugged in a couple of clicks. PrivacyFix Alerts can be set up to warn you when a site tracks you or shares your data, and has a useful tool that shows your worth to social networks based on your



AVG PrivacyFix tells you what personal info you're sharing on social networks

activity on them. Apparently, Facebook could earn £7.61 per year from users with our "characteristics", which doesn't sound like much until you remember that 1.5 billion people use the site! PrivacyFix is available for



Check social privacy settings from your PC, phone or tablet

Chrome, Firefox, iOS and Android, and any settings you change will be applied to your accounts across all devices.



#### Call FREE on 0800 083 2357 to switch your broadband

	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
П			£7.50	18	17Mbps	00	CHEAPEST
1	TalkTalk	TalkTalk: Broadband	(FREE for 18 months)	months	max speed	unlimited	20.00
2		Plusnet: Broadband	£9.99 (FREE for 12 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	<b>○</b> unlimited	£0.00
							20100
3	E	EE: Broadband & Calls	£9.95 (£1 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	unlimited	£12.00
4	sky	Sky: Broadband	£10.00 (HALF PRICE for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£60.00

#### 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 <a href="https://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk">www.broadbandgenie.co.uk</a>. Correct as of 1 December 2015.

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

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

# computer JCE JCE

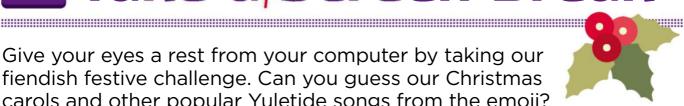
- DON'T GET HACKED IN 2016 How you can stay safe next year
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# reen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your computer by taking our fiendish festive challenge. Can you guess our Christmas carols and other popular Yuletide songs from the emoji?







Get the answers online at www.webuser.co.uk/quiz386

#### COMPETITIONS

#### **WIN 1 OF 5**

**Roku 2 Streaming Media Players** 

Offering more than 1,500 streaming channels in stunning high-definition, the Roku 2 is one of our favourite TV devices of the past year (see our review in Issue 375). Search through the channels by keyword, actor, title or director, and

follow your favourites to get updates on what to watch. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis .co.uk with 'roku' in the subject line. For more information visit www.roku.com and follow @RokuUK on Twitter.

#### **WIN 1 OF 3**

WORTH

£69.99

**EACH** 

#### Kitvision Escape HD5 action cameras

Perfect for family days out and holidays, the new Kitvision Escape HD5 action camera offers amazing value for high-definition video and images. It records 720HD video, is waterproof up to 30 metres and comes with a variety of mounts, including ones for bikes and helmets.

To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis .co.uk with 'escape' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.kitvision.co.uk and follow @KitvisionUK on Twitter.



WORTH £49.99



## Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

## Try Firefox OS on your Android device | bit.ly/ffos386

A preview of Mozilla's mobile operating system is now available to install on Android devices. Here's what you need to know

ndroid and iOS may be the most popular mobile operating systems, but there are several others around, including Firefox OS, which comes from Mozilla, the developer behind the popular Firefox web browser. It's available on a growing number of handsets but, if you fancy trying it without buying a new phone or switching from Android just yet, there's

a new Firefox OS 2.5 Developer Preview app available, which you can install on any Android device.

This app gives you a taste of the Firefox OS experience by replacing your device's home screen, while still running Android below, so you can switch back to your original OS at any time. Despite being aimed at developers, anyone can install the preview.

Open a web browser on your Android device and go to bit.ly/ ffos386. Download the Developer Preview app. Once installed, tap the Home button on

your device. You'll be invited to select a Home app. Choose 'Firefox OS developer preview', 11 then read the welcome screen and click the Done button to begin.

The home screen displays a combination search and address bar 11 and columns of app buttons. 2 Scroll down to see more. New apps included with the launcher are

at the top, while apps you've installed previously are towards the bottom. To rearrange the buttons, tap one and hold it, then drag it to its new position.

# Search or enter address You'd expect to see Firefox as the default browser, but instead there's a specially designed browsing app. It offers private browsing and tracking protection MARKETPLACE Get additional apps, and visit and pin popular websites from here ◁

You can pin your favourite websites and web pages to the launcher for easy access. Open Browser from the home screen

and navigate



to a website. Tap the three-dots icon next to the address bar and select Pin from the menu. Choose to pin the page 🗓 or the website. 2

Pinned sites appear on the home screen, just like regular apps, and can be opened from there. Swipe to the left to see them. [1] To remove a page, press down on it and tap the

bin icon. 2 Tap Done 3 when you've finished.

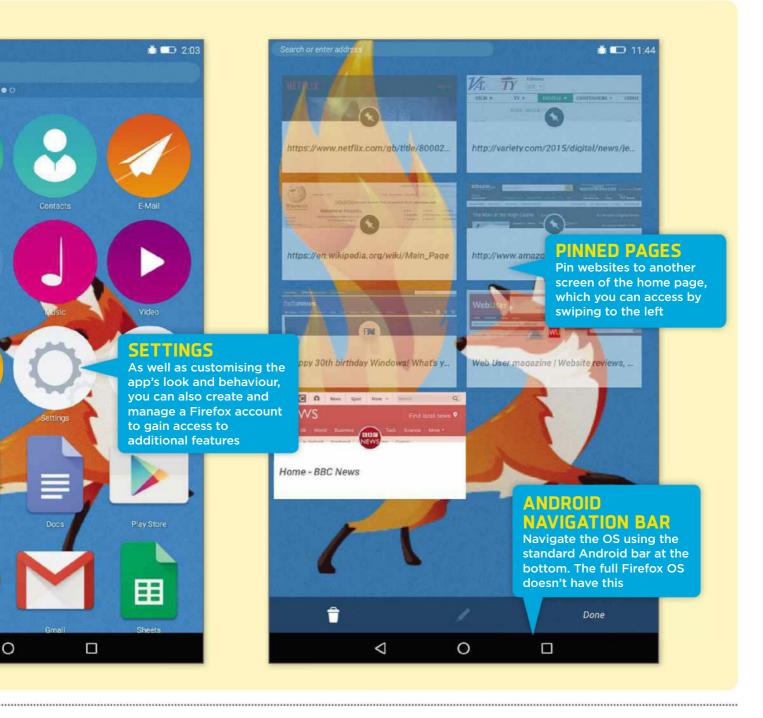
customise the operating system, tap the Settings button. The screen that opens is similar to Android's, with sections for Network & Connectivity. Account

Management,

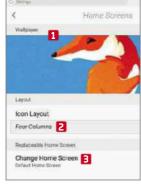
.....



Privacy & Security, Personalisation, Storage and Device. To change the look of the operating system, tap Home Screens. 1



The Developer Preview includes a selection of wallpapers. Tap the wallpaper strip, 🚺 then tap Wallpaper for the default choices or Gallery to use



a photo of your own. You can switch between three- and four-column views. In theory, you can get other home screens, **B** but they aren't yet available to download.

The Browser's landing page shows thumbnails of previously visited and pinned sites, along with a list of websites you've visited recently. 2

There's an

address bar at the top of the screen **B** and a button 4 that shows all the pages you currently have open.



Firefox OS has a built-in privatebrowsing mode which also lets you prevent your browsing Tracking Protection activity from being

tracked across websites. Open Settings and scroll down to Browsing Privacy to turn it on or off. 11 Tap the menu button in Browser to open a new private window.

COR



# Reclaim your privacy from Windows 10 (again)

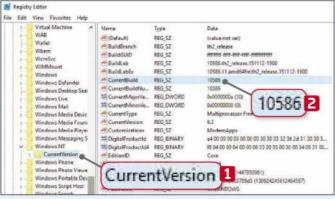
Windows 10: bit.ly/win386 | ⊕ 20 mins | ■ 10

he default settings in Windows 10 leave you vulnerable to snooping from Microsoft, but there are tweaks you can carry out in the Settings app to protect your privacy. Frustratingly, for many users, the Fall Update put those carefully adjusted settings back to their default options.

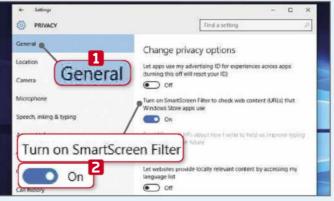
Since then, Microsoft has withdrawn the update from both the Media Creation Tool and from Windows Update, replacing it with a version that doesn't make changes. The difficulty is that even the most knowledgeable Windows users might be confused about which version of the update they've got, and whether that means their privacy settings remain intact.

To help you out, we'll walk you step-by-step through the key privacy settings you'll want to check (and change, if necessary) to ensure you're not giving away too much information. We'd recommend keeping hold of this guide even after you've used it – you never know whether the next update might mean you have to go through the process all over again.

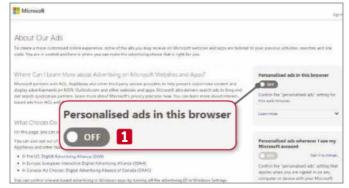




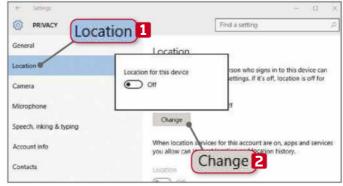
To check you have the update, open the Registry Editor (press Windows+R, type regedit and press Enter). Go to HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion 1 and look for the CurrentBuild key. Anything over 10586 2 is updated.



Click the Start menu and choose Settings. Click Privacy, then the General tab. We'd recommend leaving SmartScreen Filter on but turning the other switches to Off. The SmartScreen Filter protects you from apps that try to send you to rogue websites.



Also click the 'Manage my Microsoft advertising...' link to switch off personalised ads in your default browser. While we were testing this, the site spent some time offline so, if you find it isn't there, make a reminder to yourself to go back later.



Some apps need to know your location for maps and weather forecasts, but if you feel Windows is unnecessarily using this information, click Location, then Change to turn off location tracking. Alternatively, scroll down and allow individual apps to use your location.





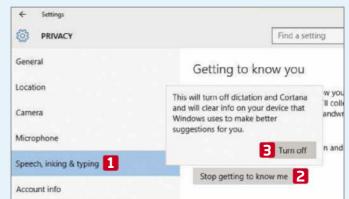
#### **EXPERT TIP**

#### **Edward Munn savs**

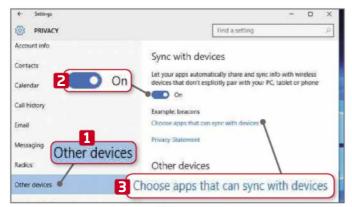
Cortana is a remarkable tool that can get to know your preferences and adapt to your needs. To do this, Cortana has to store everything you type and speak into the search engine and log it against your Microsoft account, which feels like a huge privacy infringement. If you find this creepy, you'll have to forgo its features. Click in the search box, click the Settings icon and switch the top switch to Off.



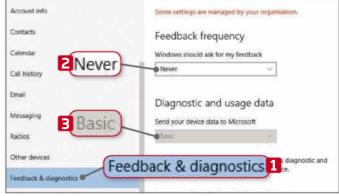
Some apps need to access your camera and microphone, such as voice recorders and communication apps, but most don't. Go through the Camera 1 and Microphone 2 sections and either turn off the whole lot (you'll be alerted if you try to use them) or switch off any you don't use.



The 'Speech, inking & typing' section 1 tries to learn from your voice and handwriting, but also gathers contacts and calendar events. Unless you rely heavily on Cortana, you can turn this off by clicking 'Stop getting to know me', 2 then 'Turn off'. B



The 'Other devices' tab, 1 also in the Privacy section, lets you choose whether Windows 10's apps can communicate with other devices, even if they aren't paired. Click the switch to Off 2 or allow apps on a case-by-case basis by clicking 'Choose apps that can sync with devices'.



Click 'Feedback & diagnostics'. • From the drop-down menu under 'Feedback frequency', select Never. 2 If you can, select Basic **B** from the 'Diagnostic and usage data' section, though it may be greyed out if other options have switched it off.



Click the 'Background apps' tab to choose which Windows 10 apps installed on your PC run and potentially communicate, even if you're not using them. 11 You have to flick the switch 2 next to each one to turn it off.



Windows 10 has a tool called WiFi Sense that shares your network password with people in your contacts list. Turn it off from Settings by choosing Network & Internet, then WiFi. Scroll to the bottom of the list of networks, click 'Manage WiFi settings' and turn everything off. 1



## Highlight and share things you find on the web

ighly is an excellent new browser tool that lets you highlight and share interesting things you find on the web. After setting up an account, you can begin highlighting sentences and longer passages, and share them via

Facebook, Twitter or email. The extension can save time for you and the people you send links to by going straight to the most relevant parts of a web page.



Highly: www.highly.co | (1) 5 mins | (6) Chrome



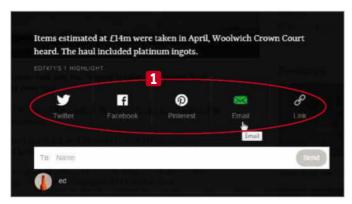




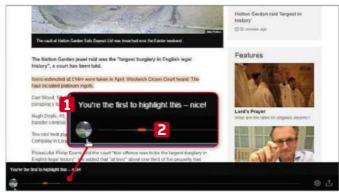
Visit www.highly.co, click 'Get Highly for Chrome' 11 and select 'Add extension' to complete the installation. An icon appears in the toolbar 2 and a page loads showing you how to use the tool. Click Go to start the tutorial. Once you've completed the tutorial, you can begin using Highly.



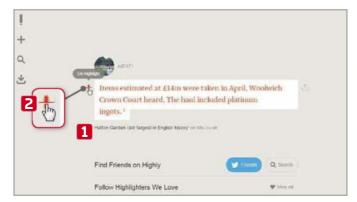
Click I'm Ready, then load an article and press '1' to activate the Highly highlighter. Use the mouse to select 🛾 the passage you want to highlight. 🚺 A box appears asking you to Join or 'Sign in'. 2 Choose Join and Highly lets you sign up with Facebook, Twitter or your email address.



Create your account, then return to the article that contains your highlighted passage. Hover your cursor over the highlighted text, select Share This and you can then share the highlight via Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest, Email or I ink. 🚺



Highly's toolbar shows you if other users have highlighted passages in the same article. 11 Each highlighted phrase is represented by a red marker 2 on its map and you can jump between them by pressing the J and K keys on your keyboard.



Click the target button to see a summary of all highlights in the article. Select the menu button and click Read Feed to see a timeline of your previous highlights. 11 To remove your highlight from a passage, click the button alongside it. 2



The feed page helps you to find friends on Highly and see what they've been highlighting. To see how a highlight appears when it's shared, use the Link option to copy its URL to a new incognito window. 11 Recipients can view the original article by selecting the Source button. 2



## Do anything on your iPad from a single app

nput helps to speed up everyday tasks on your iPhone and iPad by letting you perform multiple actions from one place. The app uses command lines to let you send emails, edit Dropbox files, publish Tweets and add events to Google

Calendar. Unlike most command-line tools, there's no need to learn any code because Input lets you enter commands using handy suggestion boxes.





Install Input and tap OK when the app asks for permission to send you notifications. Next, tap 'Log in with your Google account', 11 enter your username and password and select 'Sign in'. Tap Allow when asked to give Input access to your email address, profile info and contacts.





Tap Add Services and Done to return to Input's home screen. Select the text box and the app will suggest the command lines 'email-me' and 'email'. 🚺 Select 'email' and your Gmail contacts will appear on screen. Select an address or enter a new one in the 'To' field.



Type the email's title in the 🌃 Subject field 🚺 and tap Body to enter the text of your message. 2 Press Go **B** and Input will execute your command, sending the email. A message appears to show that your email was successfully sent to the chosen address.



To add the Dropbox tool, follow the steps above, selecting Dropbox instead of Gmail. Input lets you add text to the start or end of a text file in your Dropbox 11 or display its text 2 directly in the app, which is great for making ongoing notes.



When you're offline, Input stores requests until your connection is restored. The app only gives you free access to two services 1 but you can unlock three more by tapping 'Buy 3 more for £1.49', 2 Alternatively, disconnect one of your services by opening the page where it was activated.

# **Weekend Project**

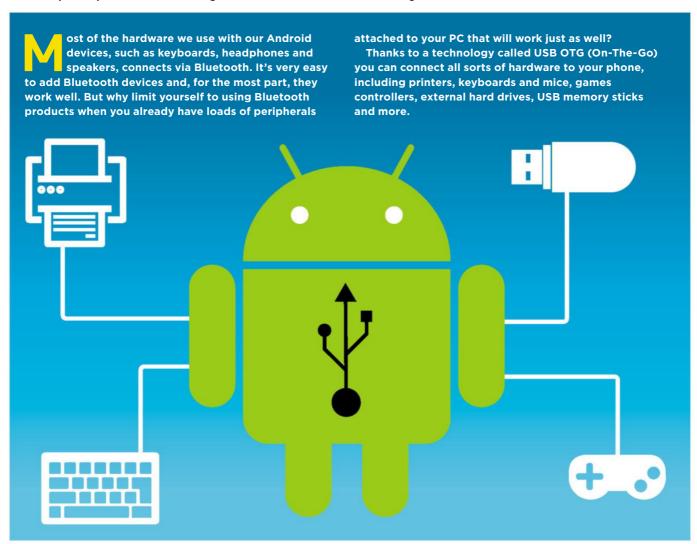
Get to grips with some serious PC DIY to boost your computer's performance





# Run USB hardware on your Android device

USB OTG (On-The-Go) makes your Android device work with your PC's peripherals. Wayne Williams shows you how to use it



#### What is USB OTG?

USB OTG, or just OTG for short, is a standard built into some (but not all) Android mobile phones and tablets, which lets you connect full-sized USB devices and use them with your phone, just as you would with a PC. What's particularly clever about the technology is that it lets your phone act as a dualrole-device (DRD) and function as either the host (the master of other devices that you connect to it) or a peripheral, and switch roles as and when needed.

#### What you'll need

Provided your phone supports OTG (and

we'll explain how to check this shortly), you will need two things to make use of the technology - an OTG cable, which you can buy for a few guid on Amazon, and a powered USB hub, so you can attach more than one device at a time. It needs to be a powered hub because, unlike a PC, your device is unlikely to be



able to power USB devices directly and, even if it could, you'd end up with a flat battery in next to no time.

Another option is to pick up a USB OTG hub, such as the Inateck HB3001G OTG Hub with Card Reader (bit.ly/

inat386). This has three USB 2 ports and slots for SD, microSD, M2 and MS memory cards, and will only set you back around £10 from Amazon. We would recommend this approach as it should work with almost anything.

The cable or hub connects to your phone via its built-in microUSB

device's packaging port. The obvious downside of this is that while you're using the port for OTG, you won't be able to charge your phone.

One other word of warning - just

CERTIFIED

Look for the OTG logo on your

because your phone supports OTG doesn't mean it will recognise or let you use every peripheral you attach to it, and even if it does recognise an item, there's no guarantee it'll function entirely as intended. Most devices should work, but don't be too disappointed if that isn't the

With compatible Android and USB devices attached to a hub, you can get all sorts of peripherals working together

case. Success or failure all hinges on the make and model of your phone and the devices you're connecting to.

On-The-Go

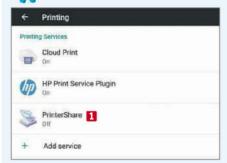
#### How do I know if my phone supports OTG?

Many modern devices support OTG but you don't want to go to the effort or expense, however minor, of buying a cable or hub unless you can be sure. There are several ways to check. If you have the original packaging to hand, look to see if it mentions USB On-The-Go or has the official certified logo. You can try searching for the device name and 'OTG' to see if that reveals anything. Finally, you can install a checker app on your phone, which will confirm things one way or the other. USB Host Diagnostics (bit.ly/ host386) is good, and you could also consider the USB OTG Checker (bit.ly/ check386).

#### Connect a mouse or keyboard

Without question one of the simplest things you can attach to your phone via OTG is a USB mouse. Plug it in and, provided the hardware is recognised, a pointer will appear on screen. You'll be

#### MINI WORKSHOP | Connect an unrecognised printer using PrinterShare Print Service



Install the PrinterShare app (from bit.ly/share386), open Android's Settings and go to Printing. You'll see a list of services, including PrinterShare, 1 which will be Off. Select it and, on the next screen where it says 'Service disabled', flick the switch to On. Connect your printer via OTG and launch the app from the home screen.



You'll see a printer image at the bottom of the screen, along with the words 'Not selected'. 11 Tap the Select button 2 and you'll be presented with a list of possible ways to connect a printer. We'll select Direct USB Connected. El When asked, grant the app permission to access your printer.



You should now see your printer. 1 If you don't, tap the 'Scan for printers' button 2 and hopefully it will be found. Once the printer is listed, tap it. You can choose to use a generic printer driver, **E** or add one manually. The former option will require that you install a driver pack. You'll now be able to print a test page.

# WebUser Bookstore



# THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

If you use an Android tablet or phone, our new 148-page book will tell you how to get the most out of your device. It explains everything you need to know about the latest versions of Android (Lollipop and Marshmallow), so you'll feel confident that you won't get left behind. We also reveal the best apps for everything you'll ever want to do, and expose the dodgy apps that make your device slow and drain the battery. And as hackers continue to switch from PCs to phones and tablets, we'll show you how to stay safe.

#### BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON

at bit.ly/defguidetoandroid

#### THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

This 148-page book is the only guide you need to Microsoft's fantastic new operating



BEST APPS & TIPS FOR EVERY DEVICE

Nexus, Samsung Galaxy, Sony Xperia & more

system. You'll learn how to master all the new tools and software, and how to upgrade without losing anything. It has been updated to include fixes for problems that have appeared since Windows 10 launched.

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### THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO FREE SOFTWARE

Free software can be a worry. Is it as good as a paid-for package? Will it sneak junk on



to your PC? Does it nag you to update to a premium version? In our new 148-page book *The Definitive Guide to Free Software*, we recommend only the best free programs that deliver high-quality features and no nasty surprises.

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#### RASPBERRY PI FOR KIDS

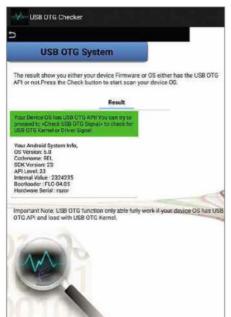
The Raspberry Pi is the incredible £20 British computer that's taking



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

#### **BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON**

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Open Market			
View all my apps on Market			
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DIAGNOSTICS			
Start diagnostics			
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Model	Galaxy Nexus		
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Check your device's OTG compatibility by using free apps from the Play Store

able to move it around as normal and interact with your phone, just as you would a PC. Naturally, not all mice are suitable - gaming devices with a multitude of buttons are unlikely to work as intended - but most standard mice should be fine.

Adding a keyboard is as easy as adding a mouse and should start working as soon as you plug it in, although you'll need to spend a little time setting things up, choosing which language to use and so on. If you have a powered hub, you can have both the keyboard and mouse

connected and working alongside each other.

#### Connect your printer

You can print to pretty much any printer directly from your Android phone without OTG. If it's a wireless printer, you can connect to it directly and, if it isn't, there's always Google Cloud Print (bit.ly/ print386). This is easy to set up and lets you print copies of documents remotely on your home or work printer, but requires you to keep the PC your printer is connected to turned on at all times.

Connecting your printer directly to your phone via OTG solves that problem and works well.

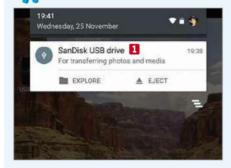
Many modern USB printers should be recognised when you connect them, but not all will be, and older ones are even less likely to work. Fortunately, an easy solution is to use the free PrinterShare Print Service app (bit.ly/share386), which installs as a virtual printer under Android. Some features, such as printing over the internet, require you to purchase the Premium Key for £8 but, if you're connecting directly to a printer over OTG, the free version should be fine. See our Mini Workshop on page 59 for instructions on making the connection.

#### Connect additional storage

One of the more practical uses of OTG is to connect additional storage to your device. This can be an external USB drive. a flash drive or even an SD card. It's not as tidy or practical as expanding your device's storage via microSD, but if your phone doesn't allow this (and many don't), it's a great compromise. It makes it very easy to back up your device's photos and videos, and free up space. You can also pack a drive with a bunch of movies or music files, and use your phone to play them when you're out and about.

The drive should be recognised by your device when you plug it in but, if it isn't, you may need to format it, which you can do through Android's Settings. We show you how in our Mini Workshop, below.

#### MINI WORKSHOP | Add more storage to your device



For this Workshop, we'll use the Inateck HB3001G OTG Hub, but the process is the same regardless of which hub or cable you use. Connect the drive (in this case it's a USB memory stick, but an external USB hard drive would also work) and it should be recognised. Tap the onscreen notification to open the drive.



Depending on your version of Android, you can also view the drive through Settings, then Storage & USB. This will show you your phone's internal storage 11 and also any connected portable storage. 2 Tap a drive to view its contents. You can also eject a drive 🖪 if you want to remove it safely.



Browse the drive's contents, 11 and tap items to open them in your choice of app or service. An 'Open with' menu of options may appear. You can search for files, 2 and order drive contents by name, date or size. El Tap the three dots 4 to switch between grid and list view, and open settings, where you can format the drive.

**NEXT ISSUE** 

**How To...** do new things with your Raspberry Pi Zero

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# Web User's Top Tips

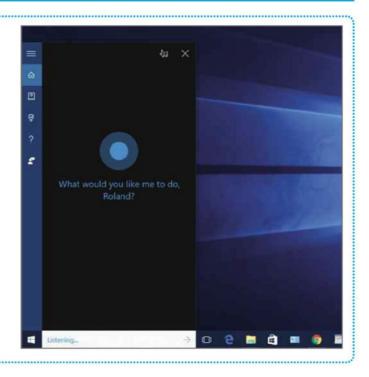
Our experts show how to turbo charge the taskbar and reveal hidden features and functions

#### TOP TIPS FOR CUSTOMISING THE TASKBAR

#### Hide Cortana and search

indows 10 has introduced some great new features to the taskbar, including Cortana and the search box. This means that there are taskbar settings that weren't in earlier versions of the operating system. If you haven't yet discovered them, they are accessed by right-clicking the taskbar, which brings up a menu with Cortana near the top. Hover the mouse over it to get a submenu with three options. Hidden hides Cortana and the search box, if you don't want to see or use them. 'Show Cortana icon' removes the search box leaving just the icon, which saves space and leaves more room for other taskbar items, but still lets you access Cortana by clicking the button. The 'Show search box' setting is the normal search box with a microphone button. If you've already disabled Cortana because you don't like it, the Cortana option will have been replaced by Search.

> If you don't find Cortana very useful, you can hide it from the Taskbar's right-click menu



#### Choose your notification area's tools and icons

Icons for programs running in the background can appear in the taskbar's notification area or in a tray that pops up when clicked. Windows hides most of the icons in the tray, but they can be forced to stay in the notification area, which is useful for icons you use a lot or those that display information. Rightclick the taskbar and select Properties. On the Taskbar tab, click Customize in the 'Notification area' section.

In Windows 10, click 'Select which icons appear on the taskbar' and use the on and off switches to choose what's displayed. Click the Back button, then click 'Turn system icons on or off'. This

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.

displays another list of items, including Clock, Volume, Network and Power. Use the switches to show or hide them.

Windows 7 provides three options: you can either show or hide a specific icon and its notifications, or there is an option to 'Only show notifications'. Click the link near the bottom to show or hide the system icons.



Choose which icons should be displayed on the taskbar

#### Combine taskbar items

When you run an application, a button is added to the taskbar. You can customise this for when two windows for the same application are opened, such as two web browsers or two Explorer windows.

Right-click the taskbar and select Properties. Next to 'Taskbar buttons'. you'll see three options displayed in a menu. 'Never combine' always shows a button for each window, which makes it easy to switch from one window to another by clicking the individual buttons.

The option to 'Always combine, hide labels' minimises the space used on the taskbar because multiple windows will be represented by just one icon. When you hover the mouse over that icon, you can choose which window to open.

The third option is to 'Combine when taskbar is full'. This means that each window will display its own button while there is enough space, but when the taskbar is full, the buttons will be combined.

#### Peek at the Desktop

Having lots of windows open on screen means you can't see the Desktop. Move the mouse to the right side of the taskbar and all open windows will be temporarily hidden until the mouse is moved away. If you don't see this, right-click the taskbar and select Properties. On the Taskbar tab, tick the box next to 'Use Peek...'. In Windows 7, this is called Aero Peek.



You can enable or disable Peek, and customise the taskbar's settings

#### Pin programs to the taskbar

When you run a program, an icon is added to the taskbar. Right-click this icon to pin it, and it will remain in place after the program is closed, which makes it easy to run the program again later. Right-clicking a pinned program can display a jump list, which is a menu of commonly used files and functions. Right-click Chrome, for example, to see a list of your most visited websites. Click one to open it in Chrome. Explorer's jump list shows common folders, which can also be opened with a single click.

If someone else uses your computer, they will be able to look at your jump lists to see what you've been up to. If this is a worry, you can clear them. In Windows 10, open Settings, Personalisation, Start. Turn off the switch on the right labelled 'Show recently opened items...' to clear all jump lists.

In Windows 7, right-click the taskbar and select Properties. Click the Start Menu tab and clear the tick against the two options in the Privacy section to clear the jump lists.

#### Unlock the taskbar and move it to another position

If you prefer to have the taskbar somewhere other than the bottom of your screen, right-click it and clear the tick against 'Lock the taskbar'. Now click and drag it to the left, right, top or bottom screen edge. Monitors are usually wider than they are tall, so it can be useful to put the taskbar on the left or right-hand side instead.

#### TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

#### Faster thumbnails

When you hover the mouse over an icon in the taskbar, a thumbnail image of the window is displayed. You can change the speed at which this thumbnail appears by tweaking a Registry setting. Press Windows+R, type regedit and press Enter. Go to: HKEY CURRENT USER\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\ CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced Select Edit, New and DWORD (32-bit) Value. Name it ExtendedUIHoverTime. Doubleclick it, select Decimal and enter in milliseconds the delay before the thumbnail is to be displayed. For

Hover the mouse over a thumbnail to bring up the program window. The delay before this window appears can also be set in the Registry. In the same location as before, create a new DWORD (32-bit) Value and name it ThumbnailLivePreviewHoverTime. Double-click it, select Decimal and enter the number of milliseconds delay.

example, 1000 is one second and 500

#### Taskbar Tweaker

is half a second.

Some taskbar settings are available only as Registry hacks and Taskbar Tweaker (bit.ly/tt386) gathers many of them into one simple program with tick boxes and menus. Middle-clicking a taskbar icon normally opens a new window, but Taskbar Tweaker provides three more options - 'Switch to'. Minimise and Close.

Double-clicking and middle-clicking the taskbar itself normally does nothing, but Taskbar Tweaker offers a list of actions to choose from, such as

opening Task Manager, showing the Start menu and more.

Files can be dragged from Explorer and dropped on a pinned program to add it to the jump list. Taskbar Tweaker lets you open it in the program instead.

#### Virtual desktop options

Windows 10 lets you create multiple Desktops so you can have separate applications on each one to avoid having them overlap. The taskbar can only show icons for apps on the current Desktop or on all Desktops. Press Windows+i to open the Settings app, go to System, Multi-tasking and, under 'Virtual desktops', select either 'All desktops' or 'Only the desktop I am using'.

#### Use keyboard shortcuts

There are useful keyboard shortcuts that can be used to open applications and menus on the taskbar. For example, hold down the Windows key and press 1 to open the first program, 2 for the second, 3 for the third and so on. Hold down Alt+Windows and press a number key to show the jump-list menu for each program.

Hold down Shift+Windows and press a number to open a new window for that program. For example, if Explorer is the second icon on the taskbar, then pressing Shift+Windows+2 opens a new Explorer window. This is a useful shortcut if you want to have two windows open side by side for moving files and folders

Press Ctrl+Windows and a number key to switch to the last window for that program. If, for example, you

> have two Explorer windows open, then pressing Ctrl+Windows+2 will switch to the last used Explorer window.

If you find yourself having to count the icons to see which number key to press, install 7+ Taskbar Numberer (bit.ly/tn386). This program labels the icons with numbers so you can instantly see which key you need



Customise hidden settings for the taskbar using Taskbar Tweaker

# 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



#### **INTERNET**

#### PC won't connect to the internet

After buying a laptop last year, I stopped using my desktop PC for internet access. Later, I changed my ISP and got a new router, which my laptop, mobile, tablet and TV were all able to connect to for web access.

Recently, I fired up my Desktop PC. It recognised the new router and, after typing in the password, it connected to it. However, it will not talk to the internet and every web address I try results in a 'server not found' message, even after removing all firewalls. No problems were reported after selecting the repair option from the wireless icon in the toolbar.

#### John Vinter, via email

This is a configuration problem and you will have to try changing different settings to find a fix. It might be caused by a fixed IP address in the network settings. Usually, a router assigns an IP address to a connected device. The router should also assign the correct DNS (domain name server), which converts website URLs, such as bbc.co.uk, into IP addresses (which use a numerical code understood by computers). So a fixed DNS address, set to the previous ISP, could be the problem.

To check these settings, right-click the network or Wi-Fi icon in the notification area of the taskbar and



You can use Windows' automatic IP address and DNS settings

select 'Network and Sharing Center' ('Open Network and Sharing Centre' in Windows 10). Click the link next to Connections, then the Properties button, and double-click Internet Protocol Version 4. Make sure that 'Obtain an IP address automatically' and 'Obtain DNS server address automatically' are selected. Restart the PC.

If this doesn't work, open the Control Panel and Internet Options, then select the Connections tab. No settings are required for internet access. Click the 'LAN settings' button, tick 'Automatically detect settings' and clear any remaining ticks. Restart Windows. If there is still no response, try another browser, such as Chrome or Firefox, turn off all security software and see if it helps. You could also try creating a new user account, then see if the internet works when you boot up and log in with it.

'Remove device' at the top. When you restart Windows, it may detect the device and install the correct software. There is a scanner app in Windows 10 and hopefully this will work.

Software for the HP ScanJet 200 flatbed scanner can be downloaded from bit.ly/scan386. Make sure the operating system selected is Windows 10 (click the Change link if it isn't). There are links to the whole installation package and the basic driver, both time-stamped after Windows 10 was released, so either one should work.

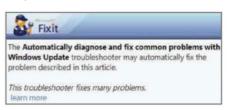
#### **GENERAL PC**

#### Fix Windows Update failure

I have not had Windows updates since June. I phoned Microsoft and they wanted \$100 to examine my PC. I tried restoring a backup and tweaking my settings but it still hasn't helped.

malcbates, via email

Windows Update can sometimes become corrupted. Microsoft has a tool that resets everything, which often gets it working again. Go to bit.ly/ fixit386 and click the 'Run now' button for your version of Windows.



Use Microsoft's Fix it tool to solve many Windows Update problems

#### **WINDOWS 10**

#### Upgrade your scanner driver

I am having a problem installing my HP ScanJet 200 flatbed scanner in Windows 10. An error message appears stating "No Such Interface Supported." I had no problems when installing this software in Windows 7 and the error only occurred after upgrading to Windows 10. I've tried numerous possible solutions from HP's support

website, but I'm still unable to install it. Various messages appear stating that the software is incompatible.

Ron Tansley, via email

There are two things you can try. One is to uninstall all HP software on your PC, then start typing devices and printers into the search box on the taskbar and click the result that's displayed. Click the scanner, then click

#### **HARDWARE**

#### Stop Office overwriting what you've written

I really like Windows 10 but for one small and irritating problem: when typing in Word and Outlook, random sections of previous sentences are mysteriously highlighted and I inadvertently overwrite them. It's most infuriating because I am not a touch typist, so I am usually looking at my keyboard, not the screen, and often don't notice it happening.

Hayden Roberts, via email

When things go wrong in Word or Outlook, press Ctrl+Z to undo the last action. Press it as many times as you need to undo the damage.

The problem could be caused by a hardware fault or a driver problem. Download IObit Driver Booster Free (bit.ly/booster386) and run it to see if there is an update either for the touchpad (if you have a laptop) or the keyboard. Ignore any other updates because they are unlikely to be the cause of the problem. If you have a desktop PC with a separate keyboard, it's worth trying a replacement. You can find budget models for under £10.

#### **WINDOWS 10**

#### Resize Windows 10's reserved partition

My PC is displaying a message that Windows 10 is ready to install. I have attempted to do this several times but. after I've gone through the download process and checked for compatibility, when I try to install the program I get the error message "We couldn't update the reserved partition." The routine updates continue to install without any difficulty. I have tried to contact Microsoft about this but have had no response.

I am currently running Windows 7. About six months ago I updated my SSD (solid-state drive) from an 80GB model to a 500GB Samsung model using its own Windows migration software. Is it possible that this process doesn't include the reserved partition? If so, can I fix the problem without reversing the upgrade?

I have just, rather weirdly, received a text message from Microsoft saying "Use 7 digit underlined number" as Microsoft Reset Code. Could they be listening in or is this just coincidence?

Tom Moss, via email

The problem is that the reserved partition is too small. It is sufficient for Windows 7, but there isn't enough space to install Windows 10's system files. The solution is to resize the partitions on the disk. Decrease the size of the main partition C:, which holds Windows and applications, by about 300MB. Then increase the reserved partition by the same amount.

Partition managers can resize the partitions on the drive without losing any data, but it's best to create a backup before you start. MiniTool Partition Wizard Free (bit.ly/ minitool386), EaseUS Partition Master Free (bit.ly/partmas386) and Partition



Use the Move/Resize tool to resize partitions on the hard drive

Manager Free (bit.ly/partman386) will do the job. In MiniTool, use the Move/ Resize tool to click and drag the edges of partitions to shrink or grow them.

Microsoft can send a code via SMS when there are problems with your account or when you need to verify your identity but if you didn't request it, you should not receive one. Treat the message as suspicious and delete it.

#### Is my anti-malware software missing threats?

I kept seeing glowing recommendations for Malwarebytes Anti-Malware (www.malwarebytes.org), which scans for and removes spyware, so I decided to try it. I was previously using Spybot (www.safer-networking .org) and I have also used Lavasoft Ad-Aware (lavasoft.com).

Malwarebytes didn't find anything serious, just a few hacks I used to use years ago. However, I was surprised that Spybot hadn't picked these up. Instead, it found some relatively harmless tracking cookies, which Malwarebytes didn't find

at all. When I tried Ad-Aware, it found seven things, none of which were flagged up by the other two programs. I decided to try IObit Malware Fighter Free (bit.ly/ malware 386), too. It found five items that none of the other programs found.

What am I to make of this? Should I trust Malwarebytes over and above the others or is it missing things that the other software detects? How does each program find different things?

Gary Olsen, via email

All the programs detect serious threats such as viruses, Trojans, and similar types of malware. The differences you see are often to do with lesser problems such as website cookies, browser toolbars, irritating software, and so on.

There is a significant grey area where it is debatable whether something is a threat or not, such as a cookie. It may be undesirable or annoying, but it isn't actually defined as 'malware', and one security program may ignore it while another flags it. Some security programs have an option in the settings to go the extra mile and find PUPs (potentially unwanted programs). It's not usually malware, just software that few people want.

It is useful to have one security program providing real-time virus and spyware protection, and a couple of scanners and clean-up tools that can be run as and when needed. Malwarebytes Anti-Malware Free is a useful clean-up tool so you should run it in conjunction with your existing security software.

#### **GENERAL PC**

#### **Know when Windows** is ready to use

Windows can take a long time to load and, if you start using it too soon, it seems to get upset and slows down even more. Is there a tool that gives an audible signal when the last thing is loaded and your PC is ready to go? Then you could turn it on, get on with other things and start using the computer after the 'ding'. Knowing when the wait is over would be helpful.

John A C Beattie, via email

There is no tool that does this, but you can see when Windows has finished its startup by right-clicking



Windows has finished starting up when Task Manager monitors fall to idle levels

the taskbar and selecting Task Manager as soon as the Desktop appears. Select the Performance tab and, when Windows has finished loading, the CPU, disk and Wi-Fi monitors will all drop to idling levels. This will take several minutes, but your PC should be ready to use long before that.



This fortnight Roland has been hiding his online activities behind a double VPN

# **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**

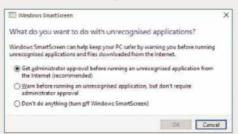
SECURITY

#### **Use Windows' SmartScreen protection**

Sometimes, when I try to run a program I've downloaded, Windows uses SmartScreen to block it because it isn't recognised. It doesn't happen often but, when it does, it means that the program might be malware.

SmartScreen has three levels of protection. To see if your version of Windows is protected, open the Control Panel, then 'Security and Maintenance'. Click the 'Change Windows SmartScreen settings' link on the left to display the three options.

The first requires administrator approval before running unrecognised programs. The third turns off SmartScreen, which might not be a good idea because it stops the protection service, although I imagine



The first Windows SmartScreen setting provides the highest level of security

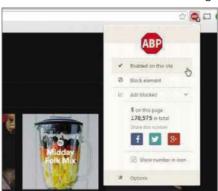
if you have good anti-virus software then SmartScreen isn't needed because programs are scanned anyway. I prefer the middle option, which warns you before running an unrecognised program but does not need administrator approval.

Barry Turner, via email

#### **MUSIC**

#### Stop adverts on Spotify

Did you know that it's possible to block ads on the free version of Spotify? To do this in its web player, simply install Adblock Plus in Chrome. Or, if you have a work PC that restricts you to using Internet Explorer, try clicking the cog icon in the top-right corner and select 'Manage add-ons'. Next, click Tracking Protection, select 'Get a tracking Protection List online' and click Tracking



Adblock Plus stops audio adverts in Spotify's web player

Protection Lists on the Internet Explorer Gallery site. From here, you can add Adblock Plus's EasyList Standard (or TRUSTe, if that fails). Restart Internet Explorer, and you should now be able to listen to a full playlist in Spotify's web player without interruption.

If you use Spotify on an Android device, you can avoid adverts by side-loading the tracker-blocking app Disconnect (bit.ly/disconnect386).

Jack Gold, Web User Forums

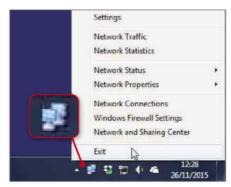
#### **GENERAL PC**

#### Return network connection icon to Windows 10

Many people have bemoaned the loss of the two little TV screens in the taskbar's notification area that showed network activity in Windows XP. Well, there's an application called the Network Activity Indicator available from Softpedia (bit.ly/ networkactivity386) that reinstates the icon on your taskbar. The program is designed for Windows 7, but I've found that it also works well on Windows 10.

The icon doesn't require installation





Network Activity Indicator restores the network activity icon to your taskbar

and several options are available from its context menu, including viewing Traffic and viewing the Network Status and Network Properties for a selected connection. There are also handy shortcuts to open the Network Connections directory in Explorer, access Windows Firewall Settings and open the 'Network and Sharing Centre'.

Download the application, unzip the files and place the EXE file on your Desktop. Run it to make the two blinking monitors appear in the Notification area. Next, go to Windows 10's Settings and click System, Notifications & Actions and 'Select which items appear on the task bar'. From here, make sure that Network Activity Monitor is set to On. To ensure that you don't have to launch the icon manually each time you boot your PC, right-click its icon, click Settings and make sure the box is ticked to 'Load at Windows Startup'.

TJ Cody, via email

#### **SECURITY**

#### Find out why Chrome is blocking a site

Chrome sometimes blocks websites without telling you that they contain harmful programs. Google Transparency Report (bit.ly/trans386) lets you check websites to see if they are safe or have malware, and find out why a blocked

website is classed as harmful. The next time Chrome blocks a site, copy the URL into the Transparency Report and see what it says.

Aston Freeman, via email

#### **OFFICE**

#### An adaptable office suite

I use LibreOffice (www.libreoffice.org) instead of Microsoft Office because it's free and it does everything I need. The software is easily customised and lets you change the icons and the size of the interface.

Open an application, such as LibreOffice Writer, and select Options in the Tools menu. Select View in the LibreOffice section. The Scaling setting lets you make the text on menus and other things bigger or smaller. I prefer it slightly larger and 120% is easier on my eyes. There are small, large and automatic icon sizes for the toolbar buttons, and six different sets of toolbar icons. It's easy to find a setting you're comfortable with.

Joel Bailey, via email



Customise the LibreOffice interface and select your favourite font size and icon set

#### **KINDLE**

#### Free keyboard shortcut book

I am not very good at remembering Keyboard shortcuts in Windows, so I was pleased to discover that there's a Kindle book called Keyboard Wizard (bit.ly/ keyboard386) available for free from Amazon. If you could use some useful reminders, then give this a try. Amazon may change the price, so don't delay!

FratPark, Web User Forums

#### SOCIAL

#### Save Facebook links for later

I've recently noticed a couple of handy features on Facebook that I'd like to share with Web User readers. When you see a post you're interested in, tap the down arrow in the top-right corner to get a drop-down menu of advanced options. The first one worth mentioning is the 'Turn on notifications for this post' button, which alerts you whenever someone comments on the post, even if you haven't liked it or commented on it yourself. This can be useful when you read something contentious and you want to see if a debate develops before getting involved.



You can turn on notifications for a post or save it to read later from the same menu

The second option - which I believe is new - is the 'Save post' button. Select this, tap the menu button, then Saved (under Favourites) to see all your saved posts on a single page. You can save links, videos, places - anything - so it's great for storing things to look at later. Only you can see items in your saved list and it works across all Facebook's mobile and web versions.

Ed Wright, via email

#### Record TV to a USB hard drive

I recently bought a new Samsung H6400 smart TV so that I could access catch-up services including iPlayer, ITV Player and All4. However, I've since realised that there's scarcely a need to use the apps because the TV lets you pause and record live TV, and even schedule recordings directly from its built-in EPG (electronic programme guide).

Remarkably, all of this is possible by simply plugging an old USB flash drive or hard drive into one of the television's USB ports. When you do so, press the Pause button on your remote and a message appears saying that you must format the hard drive to activate 'time shifting'. Once you've done that, you're ready to go and can pause live TV, and record using the Record button or by selecting a programme in the guide and choosing 'Schedule recording'. It's revolutionised the way I watch TV because I can pause the programme when there's a real-life interruption, then use the time gained to fast forward through the adverts.

If you own a Samsung (or indeed any) smart TV, it's worth checking if you can do the same by simply plugging in an old external hard drive.

Pauline Watts, via email

#### **GENERAL PC**

#### Increase the frequency of defrags

Windows Disk Defragmenter is automatic and runs once a week to defragment the hard drive. As most people know, defragging a mechanical hard drive (not an SSD) speeds up the computer a little.

You can change the defrag from once a week to daily. You don't notice the defrag running because it tends to happen when the computer is idle. Running a daily defrag stops the build-up of fragmentation. If you use your PC a lot, it should make a difference, but if you use it only once a week, then the weekly schedule is fine.

To run the defrag daily, open Explorer and select This PC or Computer in the left-hand panel. Right-click the hard drive and select Properties. Click Optimise or 'Defragment now' on the Tools tab. Click 'Change settings' or 'Configure schedule', set it to run on a schedule and choose Daily in the frequency list.

Timothy Daniels, via email

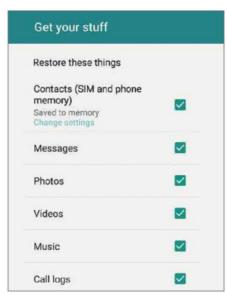
#### **ANDROID**

#### Transfer your data to a new Motorola phone

This week, when I upgraded my phone to a Moto X Play. I discovered Moto Migrate - a tool that's designed to make moving all your data across to the new device as quick and easy as possible. Although the new phone needs to be a Motorola, you can transfer data from any old Android device (by downloading the Motorola Migrate app; bit.ly/migrate386) and there's even an option for migrating from an iPhone.

Once you've set up Migrate on both phones, simply scan a QR code on the old device with the new one. The app then lets you choose the data you want to transfer from a list that includes contacts, messages, photos, videos, music and call logs. The process worked really well for me and everything (except my WhatsApp conversations) was transferred over to the new phone in less than fifteen minutes.

Tom McGregor, via email



Motorola Migrate makes it easy to move data from your old device



# Readers' Helpdesk

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

#### **WEB DESIGN**

#### How do I redirect old pages to my new website?

I have just moved my website over to WordPress. I think I am right in saying that I need to add 301 redirects for each page of the old site so they don't report back as broken links. Does anyone know an easy way of doing this? Is there a plug-in available?

Jedi, Web User Forums

You are right, you need to set up 301 redirects. To do this, you will need to create a text file with a line for each of your pages that says:

301 Redirect /oldpage.html http://newsite.com/newpage

You will then need to use an FTP program to upload the file to the root directory of your site and give it the name .htaccess. If you don't have access to the root directory for your old site, or it uses a different contentmanagement system, you might need to get in touch with your previous hosting company for some further support.

If you search for 'Create 301 redirect', there are loads of articles that will help you out. You don't need a plug-in for your new WordPress site, because that should operate as normal when the old pages are redirected to it.

TheTechGuy, Web User Forums

#### **SOFTWARE**

#### How can I split audio tracks?

I have received some CDs that have no gaps between the individual tracks. Can anyone recommend any software I can use to split the files?

jedcop, Web User Forums

If you mean that all the album tracks are on a single MP3 (or similar) file, you can try using an audio editor to manually cut each individual song from its start to end using the sound wave form as a guide. Some programs can automatically separate tracks by recognising quiet periods in the file, but

#### **HARDWARE**

#### Can I use my TV as a monitor?

I have bought a second-hand Sony flat-screen TV that is about two years old. Can anyone tell me if I can use it as a monitor? If so, should I connect it to my AsusX series laptop via HDMI cable? I've had problems in the past getting my laptop's picture to fill the display on an old 21in monitor, so is there a chance that this might happen again?

fossewayfella, Web User Forums

If both the TV and laptop have HDMI connections, then it should be a simple case of connecting the two and selecting the correct input channel on your TV. Most new flatscreen TVs do not have VGA inputs, so if your laptop only has a VGA output (and no HDMI port), you'll need to buy a device that converts the signal from analogue to digital, which might not be cheap.

Bear in mind that TVs sometimes have lower resolutions than dedicated computer screens because you'd normally sit further away from them. On the other hand, they can also have better panels than monitors in terms of



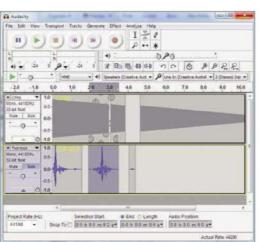
Google's Chromecast lets you cast your PC's screen to a TV without any cables

viewing angles and the like, because it's not always possible for everyone viewing a TV to sit directly in front of it.

TheTechGuy, succulent95, Web User **Forums** 

Web User says: If you own a Chromecast, you can try using your TV as a monitor by selecting the experimental 'Cast screen/window' feature from the Chromecast browser extension.

To do this, select the Chromecast icon and click the drop-down menu. then choose 'Cast screen/window (experimental)' instead of 'Cast this tab'.



Audacity is an open-source, free sound-editing

I've found this a bit hit and miss because it can interpret quiet sections within a song as a break between tracks.

If you don't mind spending a bit of time sorting it out, then I would give Audacity a try (www .audacityteam.org). It's a free, open-source sound recorder and editor that lets you to take your complete audio file and chop it into as many parts as you like.

I've used it several times to trim MP3 and WMA files where there has been excess noise, so it should do the trick.

> Stewart40 and TheTechGuy, **Web User Forums**





#### **Star Email**



#### Microsoft has not got it right with Windows 10

n all the articles you've published about Windows 10, I have not seen mention of a basic problem that Microsoft seems unable to fix. Namely, the sudden appearance of the following message when Windows 10 is switched on, usually after a period of perfectly trouble-free use: "Critical error

- Your Start menu isn't working. We'll try to fix it next time you sign in. Sign out now".

When you sign in again, the problem remains; in my case, Edge and the



box have also vanished. An online

search

search for a solution revealed that I am not alone with this problem and it was reported as far back as February of this year. One response on the Windows 10 Forums said: "We are aware that some customers are

experiencing this error, and are actively investigating. You may be able to temporarily resolve the issue by booting to Safe Mode, and then immediately booting back into normal

mode. This workaround may resolve your problem for a while, however the error may return later."

I upgraded from Windows 7 at the beginning of August and, apart from a couple of problems, all went very smoothly. Then, about 35 days later, I got the error message - just too late to take advantage of Windows 10's 'go back' feature. I've tried various 'solutions' but the only one that gave me back a working Start menu and button was to add a new user, although that did not revive Edge.

I have now gone back to Windows 7 on my PC and thanked my lucky stars that my main computer is an iMac. How can you have the nerve to publish Issue 384 with "Microsoft finally gets it right" on the cover?

Noel Lafone, via email

#### Please make your mind up about Windows 10!



I am disappointed with the conflicting advice in Web User regarding Windows 10. The cover of Issue 384 proclaims "Now is the time to upgrade", yet some of the articles inside

aren't very enthusiastic about it.

I installed Windows 10 on my laptop some months ago and have had no problems. I wanted to know if I should also install it on my desktop PC and was hoping to get some solid advice from your magazine, but I now think that I will wait until the middle of 2016 before upgrading. After all, I can return to my current operating system, as long as I do so within the stated time limit.

Several of my friends love Windows 10, but others hate it. As long as it runs without causing any major problems, I am quite happy with it.

Trevor Bunce, Middlesbrough

#### Why does customer loyalty count for nothing?

When I first went online, I chose Virgin as my ISP. I have stayed with them ever

since, despite better offers from other ISPs, specifically because I have an excellent email address and wanted to keep it. Last May, Virgin switched me to TalkTalk (because they can't be bothered with non-fibre-optic broadband accounts) and said my email address will disappear in May 2016. Talk Talk promptly lost a load of personal data to a teenage hacker, so I have no intention of staying with them.

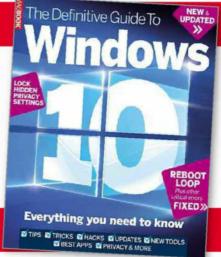
Perhaps naively, I thought of my email address like I do my house address - part of who I am. I've had my email address for 20 years, and have contacts all over the world (not just friends, but government, local government and commercial and household services), so changing it will be really inconvenient.

I have tried to persuade Virgin to let me keep it and have offered to pay. The answers started with a typical "computer says no" response, and I got no reply from Richard Branson's email (other than an automated response). On Virgin's

## **ON SALE NOW!**

Definitive **Guide To Windows 10** 

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#### You can let us know your views and opinions via:

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Facebook page, they suggested that I use the complaints procedure. I did this, but they have now phoned to

confirm that they "can't" do this (by which they mean they can't be bothered, but to hell with loyalty, it's not financially worth it to them). If I can avoid it, I will never take another Virgin plane or train, nor use any other Virgin product.

The moral of this story is that however loyal you are to a company, it means nothing to them.

Martin Davies, via email

#### Barry is right about BT's backside

With reference to Barry's column in Issue 384, I completely agree that BT needs a boot in the rear! We have had problems for years and, because we're 1.5km from the cabinet, our BT Infinity speed and performance aren't great: just 15Mbps download and 2Mbps upload!

Virgin Media isn't ever likely to come to us because there are only about 20 dwellings down at this end of the line, and BT doesn't care about uploading being as important as downloading for



cloudbased sync services such as Google Drive and Evernote.

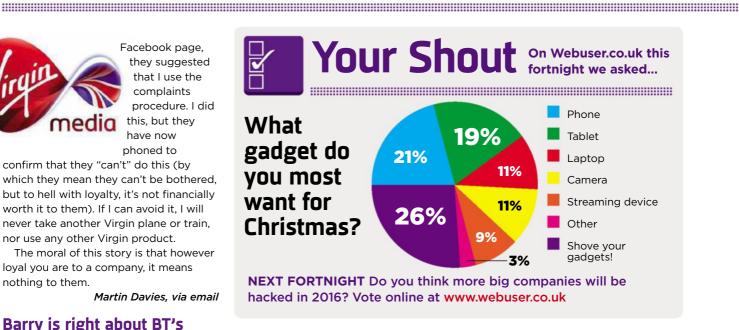
There needs to be a massive shake-up of broadband in this

country, and cable companies such as Virgin should install the infrastructure for at least one customer in an area, which will then attract the rest. The profit it makes everywhere else can subsidise the installations in areas like mine.

Nigel Milligan, via email

#### Look beyond the capital, **Barry**

I often agree with Barry's comments in Page 404 but this week I felt he had not fully understood the reality of living outside of London.



Many rural areas have poor mobile reception, and the construction of some rural properties can block mobile signals, so local people rely on phone boxes. When I visit my daughter in Dorset, I can only get a signal on my EE phone by standing very close to a window.

Adrian Sutton, Leominster

#### Web User says:

Sorry to hear about your signal problems, Adrian. Just for the record, Barry does live outside London - in deepest East Sussex!

#### **Password manager** PasswordBox has passed on

No sooner do you extol the 'free' virtues of PasswordBox in your Group Test of password managers in Issue 384 (bit.ly/ webuser384) than I receive a message from the service that effectively says "goodbye". It seems that Intel's acquisition of PasswordBox means that the service is to be discontinued in 2016 and replaced by one called True Key, which is only free for 15 passwords. After that, it costs \$19.99 per year, which, when I last checked, is more expensive than LastPass.

Gerry, via email



### Lifelong PasswordBox is not for life

Now that PasswordBox is being discontinued, the Firefox extension has stopped working and next year the add-ons for other browsers will follow. The annoving thing is that I paid for a 'lifelong' subscription to PasswordBox, which will not be transferred to the Intel True Key service that is replacing PasswordBox.

Perhaps you could run an article explaining True Key and whether it is worth paying for.

DG Cawton, via email

#### Andy Shaw, Web User Technical & Reviews Editor says:

It was unfortunate timing for us - when Intel bought PasswordBox in December 2014, it not only kept it free but appeared to be leaving the excellent service alone. However, just after Issue 384 of Web User went to press, we too received the announcement that PasswordBox was being discontinued. Unfortunately, this was too late for us to make a change to the review in the magazine.

We'll be reviewing True Key (www .truekey.com), which is replacing PasswordBox, in a future issue. In the meantime, if you'd prefer not to move your passwords to an untested service. Chrome users can continue using PasswordBox for the next six months. Alternatively, take a look at the other award-winning password managers in that issue: KeePass Password Safe (keepass.info) and Clipperz (clipperz.is).







### Why you should turn off your

I strongly disagree with Rob Beattie's opinions regarding routers in his feature 'Leave it on or switch it off?' in Issue 382 (bit.ly/webuser382). This is because he fails to address the potential impact of wireless electromagnetic frequency (at 2.4GHz or even 5 GHz) on children's health and the risk of bandwidth hacking by shady neighbours.

I really don't care about the time it allegedly takes to "resynchronise with the local exchange". During sleeping hours, there is absolutely no need to keep the router switched on. Nor do I think we should disregard the "negligible amount of electricity" consumed by our tech gear, "compared with other kilowatt guzzling appliances" in our homes. True economy takes precedence over 'electro smog' and instant availability!

Basil Balkizas, via email



#### Who's looking over your shoulder?

In the light of recent terrorism, this government is likely to get the green light to monitor all our texts, emails, Facebook stuff and anything we watch and download. The British government has neither the tech nor the skills to pull this off. The Chinese have vast amounts of computer power - greater than England, America and Russia put together. As we are already selling out to China, why not ask them to monitor our electronic mail for us? They already have everything else.

If the government forces ISPs to store information about us, it will be a case of who gets it first - the hackers or the government. My money is on the hackers.

We're not all criminals and we don't all want to rob or threaten the world. Cameron says we are all in it together, so can we monitor his emails and texts? Oh, I forgot - the US, Russia and China already are.

Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes



#### OW LONG DID IT TAKE YOUR PC TO INSTALL THE WINDOWS 10 UPDATE?

It took two hours, but I've not noticed much difference.

Fred Turton @fedory

I installed it on my tablet - it took around 45 minutes. Admittedly, I have a slow machine (a Dell Venue 8 Pro, previously upgraded from Windows 8.1), but it took a lot of restarts and some 'Do not turn off your computer' messages.

Chris Armstrona

It took almost two hours on my laptop. Edgar Lapada

I installed it on my two HP desktop PCs and it took a good two hours on each one. The downside is that my printers wouldn't work, and it took me two days to sort it.

Geoffrey Boow

#### **OULD YOU STOP USING A WEBSITE IF IT ASKED YOU** TO TURN OFF YOUR AD **BLOCKER (AS YAHOO MAIL IS** DOING IN THE US)?

......

Yes - I wouldn't have a website or email service dictating to me.

Cantrel

Any website or email provider that prevented me from using an ad blocker would have to be pretty damn good or indispensable to stop me from going elsewhere.

Scrimper

If Yahoo denies access via my browser I will just use Windows Live Mail. Simples.

Rogerman40

I like Yahoo Mail, so I guess I would have to accept it.

FratPark

#### **OES THE DELL SECURITY** FLAW PUT YOU OFF BUYING A COMPUTER FROM THE **COMPANY?**

.....

I was put off Dell after buying a PC for the in-laws. They had nothing but problems with it.

Dave McAlister @dpmcalister

The Lenovo Superfish problem put me off getting one of their laptops, so I would now feel the same way about Dell.

Robert Slater @Mistyrobert

I can't see myself ever using a Dell machine. Complete lack of trust. If they don't know what's in their own computers, what hope do we have as consumers?

Peter Fitzsimmons

Yes, it would put me right off. Dell are taking people for mugs.

Chris Cole

#### INDOWS CELEBRATED ITS **30TH BIRTHDAY IN NOVEMBER. WHICH VERSION** DID YOU THINK WAS THE BEST **EVER?**

.....

Windows 10. So much faster, cleaner and smoother. I've had very few problems - nothing I couldn't fix easily.

Gary Olsen @Gary\_Olsen

Probably Vista, although I also loved XP. I'm not keen on Windows 8, and 10 is slow.

David Lester

I've used them all since 3.1, but XP and 7 were joint best. ME, Vista and 8 were the bad ones. There are loads of problems with Windows 10.

Steve Ellis @gb022621

XP, for its innovation. In time, Windows 10 may be great, but not yet.

Si Mellor

# **A** Page 404

Worried that your bank details have been stolen? They already have, says Barry Collins

with your data, just like Santa

can't trust his elves to deliver

# You can't trust anyone with your data

nly the paranoid survive," according to former Intel chief Andy Grove. Yet there's not even a tinge of paranoia in what I'm about to tell you: your personal data has been stolen. Get

Unless you've never filled out an online registration form, never bought from an online store and never signed up for a free webmail account, your personal details are almost certainly logged in a stolen database somewhere.

I've lost count of the number of times I've been informed that my personal details "may" have been compromised or I've been asked to change my password because of an attack on a company's systems. Without even rooting through my inbox, I can recall such messages arriving from the online postcard company Touchnote, Sony's PlayStation Network, Adobe and perhaps most worryingly of all - the password-locker service LastPass.

The sheer number of accounts that have been compromised in major attacks makes it almost inconceivable that

your details aren't being traded on the black market. The attack on Adobe affected 152 million different accounts. the Sony attack leaked personal information from 77 million users and the recent TalkTalk attack hit over 150,000 customers, almost 16,000 of whom had their bank account numbers and sort codes exposed.

And that's just the attacks we know about. Companies (in this country, at least) are under no legal obligation to tell us when they've been hacked. They



might not even know themselves. And let's be honest - there's little incentive for big companies to come clean when they've suffered a security breach. TalkTalk's share price bombed by a guarter in the immediate aftermath of its attack - which wasn't as bad as first feared - and the company estimates it

will cost up to **ff** You can't trust companies £35m to put it right. The CEO was embarrassed on national television when she couldn't

the presents confirm if the data had been encrypted. How many other companies have hushed up an attack to avoid the cost, hassle and reputational carnage of admitting customers' data has been stolen? I suspect it's an almost

> You simply can't trust other companies to look after your personal data - just as Santa can't trust his elves to deliver the presents. You've got to do it yourself. If you don't use a password locker that creates random, strong passwords for you, you've got to

everyday occurrence.

manually change passwords yourself at least once a year, perhaps more often. On webmail services, such as the Outlook or Gmail account you use for all your web registrations, switch on two-factor authentication. Yes, it's a hassle having to punch in a code sent to your mobile phone every time you log in from a new computer, but it's less of a hassle than having your Amazon, Tesco or eBay account hijacked because the attacker broke into your webmail account and used it to reset the passwords at the various stores.

Switch credit cards regularly. The longer your credit card number is in circulation, the more chance it has of being swiped. Hackers buy credit card numbers by the thousands, often paying just pennies for each one. Yours is going to be on a list somewhere, and when they marry it up with data leaked from another attack that shows your account is still active, you're going to be a target.

Work on the assumption that your details have been stolen and you've got less to lose when they actually are. Enjoy that Christmas shopping now, won't you?

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