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Issue 412

Just change this setting
instead
p56

14 - 29 December 2016

Best software

New apps

Read all about it (later!)

BEST FREE SOFTWARE 2017

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RECOMMENDED**

50>



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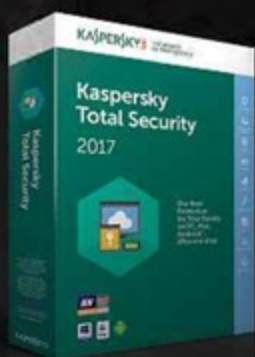
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I want to be unhackable.



My daughter should be having fun online without her seeing anything I don't want her to see. Also, our family shops online a lot and our credit card details need to be safe. That's why I want a security solution to keep us protected.

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OF PROTECTION

Nothing guarantees complete protection, so please exercise caution online.
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Stuff your stocking with software

Like Black Friday discounts and the John Lewis Christmas ad, *Web User's* 'Best Free Software for next year' special has become an annual festive tradition. Indeed, data leaked from Lapland and circulating on the dark web reveals that the shiny issue you're now holding has usurped Lego and the Amazon Echo to become the most requested gift of the season. Harried parents have been queuing for weeks to ensure their little 'uns get their hands on a copy and Santa's been forced to hire extra reindeer!

Exaggeration aside, I can assure you that this year's round-up of free programs

is our best yet, with 10 terrific tools for the next 12 months. From a powerful new malware scanner to a sophisticated screen recorder, we've got all the great software you need to boost your machine in 2017.

As this is our Christmas issue, you'll notice a few festive touches throughout the magazine, as well as our fiendish quiz of the year on page 51. Have a very merry Christmas, everyone!

Robert Irvine
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
[#webuser](https://twitter.com/webuser)



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 Average sales, Jan-Dec 2015, 29,463 copies per issue

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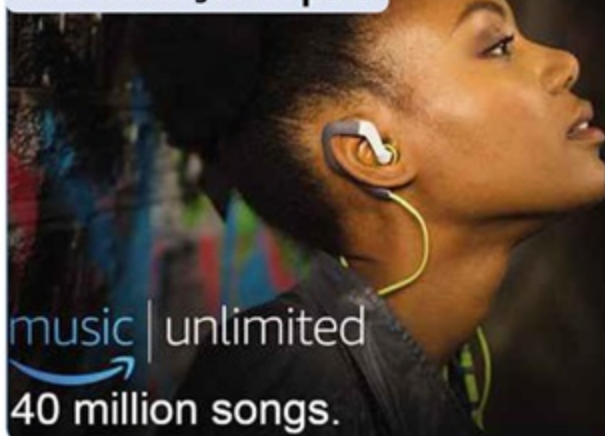
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WEB USER
PRINTED IN THE UK



What's New Online

Track Santa and play with his elves

Santa Claus is coming to town – depending, of course, on how good you've been. In the meantime, you can keep an eye on the bearded one by visiting the NORAD Tracks Santa website. Continuing a tradition which goes back 61

years, the North American Defence Command monitors Santa as he travels across the world on Christmas Eve.

As well as a countdown to sleigh lift-off, the site lets you explore Father Christmas' village where there are lots of tunes and videos to enjoy. You can learn about holiday traditions around the world and play new festive games throughout December.

Not to be outdone, Google's Santa Tracker has an interactive map of the North Pole that's stuffed with fun animations and imaginative elf-themed games that you can either play in your browser or in the

Android or iOS app. As with NORAD, new activities are unlocked every day.

We particularly like the brilliantly innovative Code Boogie section. Set to a bouncy tune, this lets you create your own festive dancing character and see how the code looks in JavaScript. It can't fail to fill you with Christmas cheer.

www.noradsanta.org
santatracker.google.com



Create a QR code for your Twitter account

www.twitter.com

Amassing a large number of followers on Twitter is something of an art form, so Twitter's new QR-code generator feels rather apt. It follows in the footsteps of

Snapchat, allowing you to produce a direct link to your profile by embedding your picture within a colourful matrix barcode. Then anyone who wants to see what you have to say can scan it using a barcode scanner. To get your own code, simply open the Twitter app, tap the Me tab at the bottom of the screen and select the cog icon. Choose QR Code from the list to generate an image that you can save, tweet or share. If you're not happy with the colour, relaunch the app and repeat the process until you find one you like.



Mark yourself as safe during disasters

bit.ly/safety412

Facebook has made some tweaks to the Safety Check feature it introduced in 2014. Instead of letting its own staff choose which disasters it can be used for, the social network now lets affected users indicate when the check should be activated. The network's algorithms will quickly detect when lots of people are posting about an incident and ask each one if they are safe. From then on, it'll be possible to invite friends to do likewise.

This approach addresses accusations that the company has been selective in the crises it has chosen in the past. For example, it offered a Safety Check following last year's terrorist attacks in Paris but neglected to do the same after attacks in Ankara, Turkey and Beirut.

Facebook also plans to launch a new feature called Community Help next year that asks for your assistance with food and shelter following local natural disasters.



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

See street-level photos of anywhere

bit.ly/pic4carto412

Amateur photos often tell you a lot more about a location than professional shots, and Pic4Carto makes it easy to find and view them. Zoom in on a map to virtually anywhere in the world – or search for a specific place – then click a segment of the grid that appears showing street-level photos taken from Flickr, Wikimedia and Mapillary.



Play a drawing game against Google

quickdraw.withgoogle.com

This clever spin on the classic board game Pictionary pits your drawing skills against artificial intelligence. Created by Google, Quick Draw asks you to sketch a series of images using



your mouse or finger. A neural network then tries to guess what you're drawing, suggesting words as it

cycles through the possibilities. The idea is that it will learn over time, picking up on mistakes and becoming ever more accurate. You can also see examples of how other users tackled each drawing, together with images of what it thought you were attempting to produce.

See what the web knows about you

clickclickclick.click

At ClickClickClick, you can find out what the web knows about you – in the creepiest of ways. This experiment gives you a running commentary on absolutely everything you do when you visit. It knows when you move the cursor and where you're moving it to. It knows when

you're hovering over a button, when

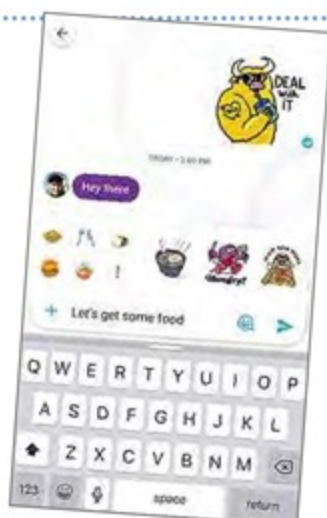
you accept cookies and the time of day. It becomes aghast when you click another window and even clocks when you've closed the site down and reopened it. It really brings home just how much data your browser leaks about you.



Find the perfect emoji for chats

allo.google.com

According to Google, most of us use only 3% of all the emoji available to us. So to help you discover more, Google's chat app Allo now has a Smart Smiley button that you can tap when you're composing a message. The app quickly scans what you're writing and assesses the sentiment, then suggests appropriate emoji and stickers that you can use to enhance your message.



+ Discuss web news at forum.webuser.co.uk

5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

[@tinycarebot](https://twitter.com/tinycarebot)

This new account reminds you to take care of yourself

[@morrisons](https://twitter.com/morrisons)

Morrisons supermarket runs frequent competitions for food, drink and vouchers

[@nytimes](https://twitter.com/nytimes)

The New York Times is taking a more international approach to news these days

[@bbcstrictly](https://twitter.com/bbcstrictly)

We're nearing the end of this year's Strictly Come Dancing. Who'll win?

[@jamieoliver](https://twitter.com/jamieoliver)

Ensure your Christmas dinner is a delicious feast with tips from the celebrity chef

+ See Buster's garden in VR

bit.ly/lewis412

If you can't get enough of Buster the dog in the John Lewis Christmas advert, you can now see his friends bounce on a trampoline in a 360° YouTube video. Move your mouse to see the action from different angles.

Calculate your binge-watching costs

bit.ly/binge412

Ever wonder how much electricity you've used watching your favourite TV boxsets? This fun tool asks you to select the series you've viewed, then shows your estimated energy consumption.

Check if a bar or shop is busy

www.google.co.uk/maps

Want to avoid the crowds this Christmas? Google Maps now tells you how busy a shop, bar or restaurant is. Search for a business to see a graph of the busiest hours and whether it's jam-packed or quiet at the moment.

Here's looking at you – the Snooper's Charter is now law

What happened?

The widely criticised Investigatory Powers Bill has been given royal assent, bringing into law a host of measures that will allow security agencies to view and use our web-browsing data and digital communications.

Commonly referred to as the Snooper's Charter, versions of the bill have been brought to Parliament since 2007, but previously failed to pass due to criticism from MPs and campaigners. This time around, the Act's progress wasn't impeded by the Labour Party. However, it was heavily criticised by tech companies, rights activists and even web creator Sir Tim Berners-Lee, who called it a "security nightmare".

The aim of the bill – now officially called the Investigatory Powers Act – is to give security services access to digital communications to investigate major crimes, including terrorism. The new surveillance privileges include forcing communications companies – which include ISPs and service providers such as Google – to keep records of every website and messaging service we access over a 12-month period.

Only the top-level domain – not the exact page – of the site you visit will be stored, but the data will be accessible without a warrant by dozens of government bodies, including the Home Office and GCHQ but also apparently incongruous departments such as the Food Standards Agency, and fire and rescue authorities.

Furthermore, the government will be allowed to hack phones, computers and servers, and bulk-collect and retain data



– the very thing that whistleblower Edward Snowden is exiled to Moscow for revealing the US was doing.

Snowden called the bill the "most extreme surveillance in the history of western democracy".

There are controls on the use of the information, with warrants required for much of it and extra levels of judicial approval. The bill also criminalises abuse of the surveillance powers.

How will it affect you?

Other than the potential for abuse by the government (which is a rather major point to set aside!) this data will be a valuable target for hackers. It'll be held by private companies which, given TalkTalk and Yahoo's hacks this year, doesn't fill us with confidence about the security of our private data.

The recording of your online activities means you should take precautions when viewing a site that's potentially sensitive or could contain damaging information if leaked, whether that's accessing adult sites or viewing your medical information. If you're concerned, use a VPN to protect your web browsing from external viewing.

If you're dead set against the law, you could sign the online petition (bit.ly/petition412). It has already reached the 100,000 mark, so it will be considered

for debate in Parliament, but there's little hope of stopping the bill now it has been given royal assent.

What do we think?

The passage of this bill into law is a disappointment for web users and for the digital-rights campaigners who worked tirelessly to prevent it. They successfully held off previous versions of this Snooper's Charter with valid criticism about the level of intrusion and lack of accountability. The last round of legislative wrangling was led by Theresa May, before she became Prime Minister, and she has clearly had more success pushing through the much-criticised law now that she's leading the party.

Many critics complain that Labour hasn't offered much opposition, but those with longer memories will recall that the party brought in its own version of this bill – which was also knocked back – when it was last in government.

With the UK's most powerful parties both backing the alarming new powers, it's telling that it took so long to pass. Now the onus is on web users to protect themselves – against hackers and their own government – and for digital-rights campaigners and more web-savvy MPs to keep watch on how the laws are used.

We take a closer look at the Snooper's Charter in next issue's FAQ.

Repeal the new Surveillance laws (Investigatory Powers Act)

A bill allowing UK intelligence agencies and police unprecedented levels of power regarding the surveillance of UK citizens has recently passed and is awaiting royal assent, making it law.

This means it's not just a label. This is an absolute disgrace to both privacy and freedom and needs to be repealed.

[Sign this petition](#)

150,795 signatures

A petition to repeal the Act has enough signatures to force a debate in Parliament

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

Netflix supports offline viewing at last

What happened?

Streaming service Netflix is now letting subscribers download TV shows and movies to watch offline, making it easier for commuters to avoid breaching their mobile data caps and for viewers to catch up on shows without a web connection.

The feature comes at no additional cost, and works on Android (4.42 and later) and iOS (8 and later) devices. Similar services are already offered by rivals such as BBC iPlayer and Amazon Prime Video, and Netflix executives had recently suggested such a feature was in the works, but gave no indication that it would become available before Christmas.

How will it affect you?

To download shows, you'll need a phone or tablet with the Netflix app installed, although not all devices are supported. It won't work on your smart TV or PC, and DRM restrictions mean you can't stream downloads to your Chromecast. A download button appears next to the

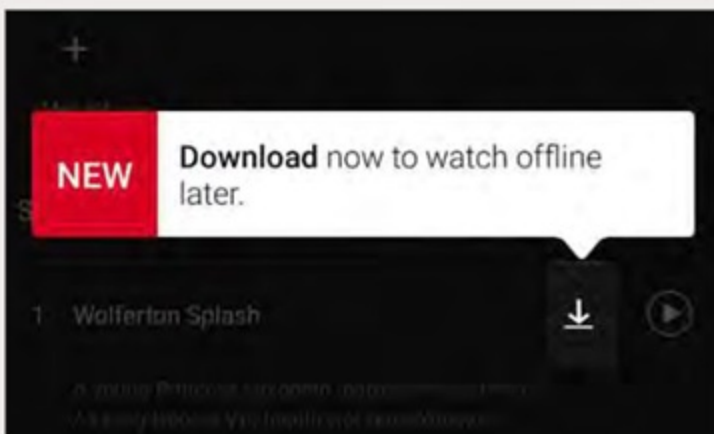
name of the show or film, which you can click to save it for offline viewing.

However, not all content is currently available for download. Anything produced by Netflix, such as *Stranger Things*, can be viewed offline, along with a selection of other series and movies. The streaming service said it hopes to add as many titles as possible to the list.

What do we think?

It's about time – we've been waiting for this feature through many dull flights and long commutes. To an extent, that shows how spoiled we've become. Ten years ago, the idea that we'd be able to bring our favourite television shows with us anywhere would have been a dream. Now we expect it to happen – and for free.

We're also pleased that Netflix isn't trying to upsell subscribers to a more expensive package to get the new feature – a move we hope is echoed by the TV and film studios that are holding out on offering offline support.



Sky Mobile offers free data rollover



What happened?

Sky is the latest ISP to join the mobile market, adding the service to its existing broadband, TV and fixed-line phone services – and it's hoping to shake up the way data is priced.

Sky Mobile will let customers switch between any of three data packages they have each month, though they'll still need to sign up to a 12-month contract. It will also let customers roll over any unused data into a 'piggybank' for future months, which they'll be able to use for up to three years. That means if you roll over data, and later have an unusually heavy month of downloads, you won't have to pay extra.

Sky doesn't have its own mobile network, but operates a virtual network using O2's infrastructure, similar to how rival GiffGaff works. That means that if you're currently happy – or not – with O2's network coverage, you'll know what to expect from Sky.

How will it affect you?

If you're a Sky TV

customer, you'll get calls and texts for free, while others will pay £10 a month for unlimited service. With the company clearly eyeing data as the deal-breaker with modern mobile packages, it's offering a 1GB a month plan for £10, 3GB for £15 and 5GB for £20. That compares well to standard operators, though fellow virtual operator GiffGaff offers unlimited data for £20 a month.

If you're on the same network as other family members, you'll be able to save money by sharing your 'piggybanked' data.

What do we think?

Finally, a mobile operator has considered what customers might want, beyond low prices. The ability to flip to a better data package – whether it costs more or less – is something any customer on any network should be allowed to do, and stacking up "unused" data is a clever way to benefit subscribers at little additional cost. Hopefully, other mobile operators will consider such features, too.

EE wipes out the UK's 4G blackspots

What happened?

EE has called for all networks to be transparent about their 4G coverage as it revealed it has wiped out 5,000km² of 4G black spots overnight. The company also reported it had improved signal in 500,000 homes around the country as it strives to keep its title as most reliable 4G network provider.

EE said it will report all coverage in geographic terms by the end of 2017, making it easier for consumers to make a decision about which provider to sign up with. The company wants all networks to use the same criteria for coverage, to enable consumers to make better comparisons before deciding who to go with.

"Today, people think they will get mobile coverage absolutely everywhere, because as an industry we've talked about coverage with confusing population metrics, and language that sets the wrong expectations," said EE CEO Marc Allera. "Too often, the customer experience has been very different from the marketing. That has to stop. We're asking our peers and the mobile industry to get 'Clear on Coverage'. All operators should publish clearer geographic coverage information, and we're seeking support from Ofcom as the independent source of information on mobile coverage and quality."



Having extended 4G coverage to an additional 25% of the UK this year, EE is confident that 95% of the UK can be covered by 4G by the end of 2020.

How will it affect you?

EE customers may notice better 4G coverage in areas that were previously signal-free. You should also see better coverage if you use a network that piggybacks on EE such as BT Mobile, Asda Mobile, Co-operative Mobile or Virgin Mobile. Even if you have a contract with a network that's not listed, you could see better coverage in the near future as EE puts pressure on its competitors to publish clear information

about signal strength in different areas.

What do we think?

We're pleased that EE is striving to improve its 4G coverage despite already being the UK's largest network. For years, it's been difficult to establish which networks offer better coverage in specific areas beyond glancing at a multi-coloured map and using anecdotal evidence from friends and family. We therefore think it's great that EE is planning to report its coverage in simple terms that make it easier for consumers to make an informed decision about which network is best when signing up to a new contract.

FIRST LOOK

GoPro Hero 5 gopro.com

GoPro has, for many years, dominated the action-camera scene. Such has its focus been on image quality, however, that it omitted certain features up to this point, most notably built-in waterproofing, which it now offers to a depth of 10 metres.

The Hero 5's design might come as a shock to some people. It has the same basic rectangular shape, but it's curvier and grippier, thanks to a rubberised finish and ribbed areas on the rear. The 2in colour touchscreen on the back makes controlling the camera easier than ever, and if you don't fancy fiddling with the buttons, you can use voice control. This isn't anywhere near as advanced as Siri, but it works pretty



well and allows you to speak basic commands such as "GoPro turn on" and "GoPro start video".

Not much has changed inside. The Hero 5's sensor is the same size as in the previous model and it can record in resolutions up to 4K, but still only at

30fps. The main upgrade comes from the electronic image stabilisation, which smooths out particularly shaky footage, but at the cost of a slight reduction in overall quality.

Video quality is stupendously good. Footage has pin-prick detail and it's a good performer in dimly lit conditions. However, while the battery has been given a capacity boost in the Hero 5, in intensive stop-start use we found it failed to last longer than a morning.

Overall, with more features, simpler controls and waterproofing, plus improved audio capture, the GoPro Hero 5 is undoubtedly the new king of action cameras. At a time when prices for consumer electronics are rising, the Hero 5 is also slightly cheaper (£350) than the Hero 4 Black was when it first launched.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Could Nokia see a revival in 2017?

Nokia is releasing at least two new Android phones in early 2017, according to a report on Phone Arena (www.phonearena.com). The company announced that its CEO, Rajeev Suri, will be speaking at Mobile World Congress in January 2017, alongside chief executives of major network carriers and app and service developers. Meanwhile, the CEO of Microsoft's Asia-Pacific branch, James Rutherford, has said HMD Global – the firm that acquired the rights to sell Nokia phones (and is teaming up with Nokia itself) – will launch multiple devices in 2017.

Details of an alleged Nokia flagship phone expected to launch in 2017 emerged on 24 November. The leaked specifications, which were published on the Chinese social network Weibo, imply there could be two versions of the device: one with a 5.2in display and another with a larger 5.5in screen.



Both models are rumoured to run Android Nougat 7.0 and will offer Quad High Definition resolution displays, along with waterproofing, Carl Zeiss cameras and a Qualcomm Snapdragon 820 processor.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



We think that Nokia can carve a niche for itself in the Android phone market: the Nokia brand is strong and has a lot of history. Unlike BlackBerry, Nokia was always a consumer brand and a lot of its phones are classics. Most people, at some point in their life, have owned a Nokia

phone and remember it fondly.

What's more, Nokia has a better understanding than most companies about what makes a great phone. The market for high-end handsets will be challenging, because it's already dominated by Apple and Samsung, but we believe a strong return with Android in 2017 could see people out in droves for Nokia's more affordable devices.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

QuadBot

bit.ly/quadbot412 | From £1

QuadBot is a robot for hobbyist hackers and aspiring roboticists alike. It can be programmed to walk, dance and light up, and its sensors even allow it to follow you and avoid obstacles. You don't need any programming experience to use it, but QuadBot's developers have left the code open to make almost anything possible as your confidence increases. If you have access to a 3D printer, you can save some money by buying the Maker Kit (£135). Otherwise, the Full Kit will set you back £199. The project has already reached its £12,500 target.



WEBOMETER



WE LIKE...

Facebook adds games to Messenger

Facebook has updated its Messenger app for iOS and Android with 17 games, including Pac Man, Space Invaders and Words With Friends. To play a game, tap the three-dot button and choose Games.



Amazon tackles fake products

Amazon will crack down on the sale of counterfeit goods on its website, following a rise in complaints from disgruntled customers in recent years. The fake items include Apple products and accessories.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Talk Talk and Post Office routers hacked

Broadband customers of TalkTalk and the Post Office were hit by a cyberattack that left them with no internet connection. The attack involved a variant of the Mirai worm and targeted victims' routers.



National Lottery accounts hacked

Around 26,500 National Lottery accounts have been hacked according to Camelot. The operator did not believe its own systems had been compromised but rather that players' login details had been stolen elsewhere.





Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Hackers target cash machines

Cybercriminals are using malicious software to hack cash machines in countries across the world, forcing them to dispense money. The hack was discovered by Russian cybersecurity firm Group IB, whose research claims the attacks have been taking place for the past five years. The first cash machines targeted were in Taiwan and Thailand, but attacks have now become more frequent in Europe, too.



Originally, hackers were only able to target small numbers of ATMs because they needed accomplices to visit the cash machines to remove the money. Commands were sent from remote locations in Asia and Europe, and the cash would be snatched when it was dispensed. Recently,

attacks have involved larger numbers of machines, so criminals can maximise the amount of money taken before the hacks are intercepted. Group IB's research revealed that \$2.5m was stolen from Taiwan's First Bank and \$350,000 was taken from Thailand's Government Savings Bank in July.

bit.ly/cash412

Malicious video crashes iPhones

A short video hosted on Chinese app Miaopai has caused iPhones and iPads to become unusable and eventually crash. Playing the MP4 video in Safari on any iOS device causes it to slow down and eventually freeze after about 30 seconds. The direct cause of the problem



“\$2.5m was stolen from Taiwan's First Bank and \$350,000 was taken from Thailand's Government Savings Bank in July”

is not known, but a corruption in the file causing a memory leak in Safari is the most plausible theory.

The three-second video clip, which shows someone standing by a bed with the word “Honey” printed across the screen, affects all iOS devices but fortunately does not appear to have any long-term effects. Indeed, after holding down the power and home buttons simultaneously (or home and volume down on an iPhone 7) to perform a soft reset, affected devices appear to function as normal.

The problem doesn't affect Android devices, but one Mac user running Sierra said that the video crashed their machine.

bit.ly/video412

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Mark James, Security Specialist at ESET
(www.eset.co.uk)



Q Should schools educate children about cybersecurity to discourage hacks by 'bored teenagers'?

Sean Hazlett, Twitter

A Understanding cybersecurity and how it affects everything we do in our

lives today is paramount in building foundations for our future protection. If we can start that education as early as possible, alongside general IT training, then it may well help in channelling the youth of today's expertise into the 'good side' of computing.

Although it's great for parents to lead the way, they may lack the necessary skill to provide the best knowledge or advice for cyber safety. This is where the right early start and ongoing education can and does help to enable children to understand the risks and channel their interest into forming skills that will help them possibly become our

future advocates for cybersecurity.

Q Are manufacturers of 'Internet of Things' devices doing enough to warn consumers about security risks?

Colin Butcher, Facebook

A The Internet of Things (IoT) is expanding massively, with more and more devices embracing technology to enable services and features that can be used on the move. The problem is one of ensuring we understand the security risks of making all this data interchangeable.

Security has to be one of the first things considered if the IoT is going to work, not – as in some cases – added as an afterthought. The difficulty is that consumers want a good deal and security often comes at a price. When we choose our connected devices, we look at features and cost, with security often considered last, if at all.

All manufacturers should be educating their users on how they can protect their devices. In some cases, they should be forcing certain default options to be personalised on first use.

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★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

NEWS

RELAUNCH

The Mirror

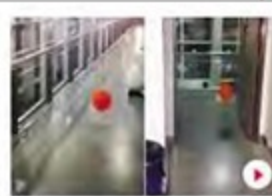
www.mirror.co.uk

The UK's third most popular newspaper website, with more than five million daily readers, has been redesigned with much-improved navigation, faster page-loading times and a mobile-friendly layout. The site's "in your face" homepage is packed with punchy articles and videos, accompanied by succinct, eye-catching headlines. This requires a lot of scrolling, but you can use the permanent links at the top of the screen to jump straight to each section. You can also share and comment on articles and get section-specific updates sent to your inbox. We like that the clickbait videos are largely sectioned off on their own page, too.

Our rating



Grotesque leg cyst explodes with puss on operating table as surgeons slice into giant lump



'Haunted balloon' floating through children's hospital believed to be the ghost of a dead child

WEIRD NEWS

Many of the articles contain videos which, annoyingly, sometimes play automatically

COLUMNISTS

Controversial opinion is mixed in among the news, sport and celebrity gossip

John Cruick
"United in Arsenal used to decide the title, now it's becoming a fight over finishing fourth"



Sean Caffery
"Wayne Rooney looked like he was crying out for help - he could be using alcohol to cope with his decline"



Mirror

NEWS • POLITICS • SPORT • FOOTBALL • CELEBS • TV



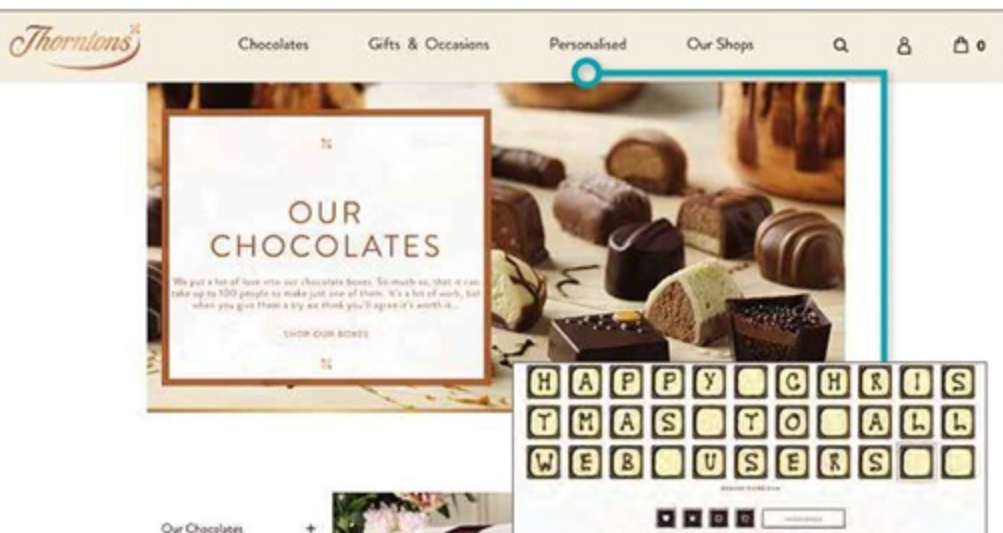
"I believe we're invited to..."

In front of over 300 VIP guests the...



Sleep deprived Kanye West 'handcuffed and hospitalised after breakdown'

TO NOB...
Celebrity...
is he re...



CHOCOLATE

Thorntons

www.thorntons.co.uk

Created in time for the annual Christmas rush, this tasty-looking redesign from Thorntons makes it easy to choose from the famous chocolatier's full range of treats. Using the two main drop-down menus, you can narrow your searches by your favourite type of chocolate, the collection you like or the occasion you're buying for. You can also browse a range of personalised gifts - in some cases using an on-screen keyboard to see exactly how your message will appear. The products are impressively well photographed, with pack shots showing the ingredients, nutritional values and clear descriptions. It's great to see lots of special offers available, too. Yum.

Our rating



NEW

POLITICS

JFK Centennial Celebration

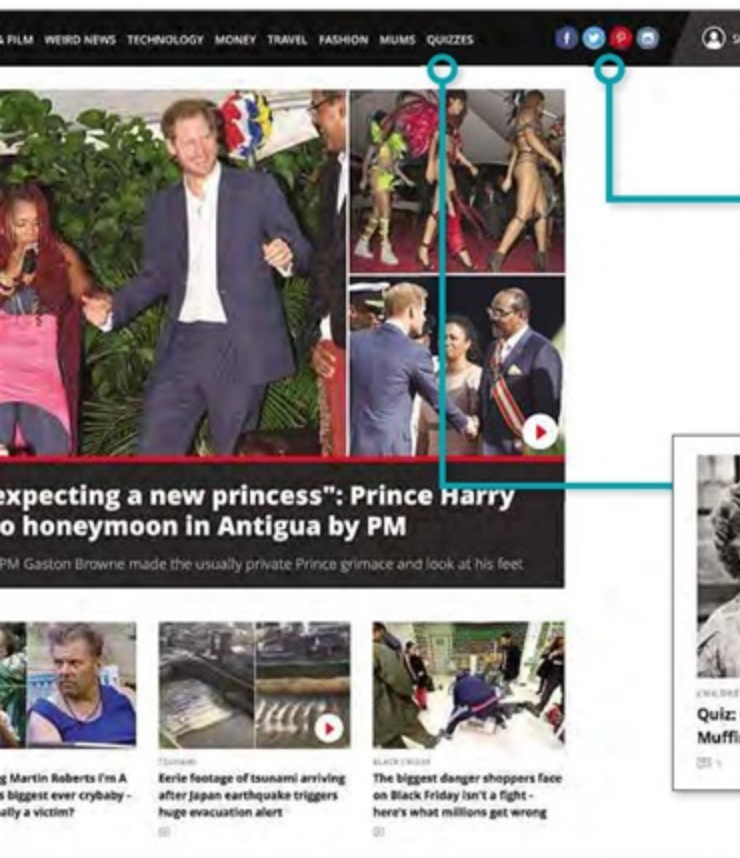
bit.ly/jfk412

This online memorial marks 100 years since the birth of John F Kennedy and uses audio, video, text and photos to explore JFK's five ideals of justice, service, freedom, gratitude and courage. There's lots of information about the president's life and his beliefs, and details of the events being staged at The Kennedy Center in Washington DC throughout 2017, in case you fancy popping across the Atlantic. However, the site's arty design is slow to load and, despite its lavish production values, takes a very frustrating approach to navigation.

Our rating

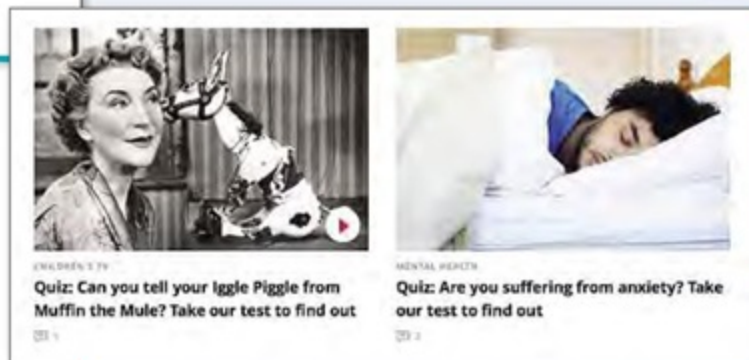


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



SOCIAL

You can vote in daily polls, share items on social media and comment on articles



QUIZZES

There are lots of fun quizzes and crosswords to give you a break from news



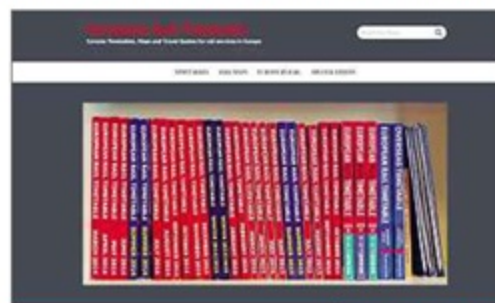
SEARCH

Find UK People

www.findukpeople.org

There are better ways to find people than a Google search, and this website aims to do the hard work for you. Guaranteeing to find the correct person at their current address, it can reveal telephone numbers and financial and employment details – data that's useful to landlords and companies. The results are emailed within seven days and the site explains the process well, with a fun video, solid FAQ and comprehensive pricing guide (the service isn't free). The forms are easy to fill and we also like the blog, which offers (free) tips on tracing people, tenant referencing and debtors.

Our rating



TRAVEL

European Rail Timetable

www.europeanrailtimetable.eu

The European Rail Timetable has been around since 1873 but it almost ran out of steam three years ago when Thomas Cook stopped publishing it. Thanks to a group of former staff who picked up the baton, you can continue to snap up a digital or physical copy through this revamped site, while also browsing its handy European guidebooks. It's not the world's best-looking site, but we like its simple navigation – with links to timetables, rail maps and special offers – and the ability to sort sections by price, date and popularity. Full speed ahead!

Our rating



WEATHER

Get Ready for Winter

bit.ly/winter412

The Met Office has launched a new campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of the cold season, covering topics such as winter travel, keeping your home warm and looking after elderly people. Its website offers useful advice and videos, and lets you move swiftly from section to section. But it buries useful content rather than displaying it clearly, so information about flu jabs and checking tyre treads is easy to miss. At the same time, the site links to dull government reports and uses terms such as "resilience practitioner", which makes it less accessible than it should be.

Our rating



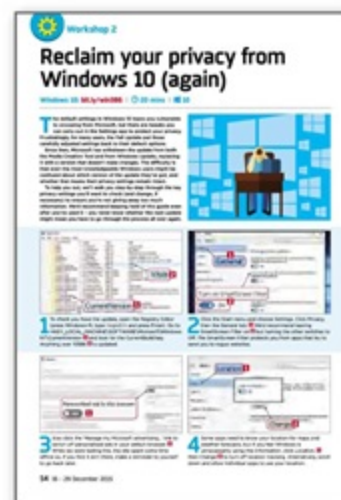
WebUser

Q

Which privacy settings should I change in Windows 10?

A

Page 54, Issue 386



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NEW

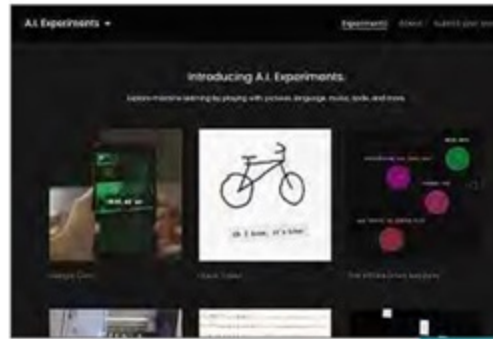
RELIGION

The Art of Dying Well

www.artofdyingwell.org

Death may be inevitable but it's not an easy subject to confront, so this site, commissioned by the Catholic Church, may not be everyone's cup of tea. It provides videos and articles about the physiological and emotional aspects of the "final journey", while encouraging you to talk about death and face up to what that means. We were struck by the beautiful design and clear signposts to various sections that make it easy to navigate and engage with. It also breaks the text into digestible chunks while allowing you to share articles on social media or print them. Colourful, thought-provoking and comforting.

Our rating



NEW

TECHNOLOGY

AI Experiments

aiexperiments.withgoogle.com

If you're interested in artificial intelligence and machine learning, then bookmark this amazing new site from Google. AI Experiments brings together a host of projects that explore artificial intelligence through the use of images, language and music. It's already full of fun ideas including a music program that lets you create tunes by snapping a photo, a drum machine and a Pictionary-style game. Coders are being encouraged to submit their own experiments (check out the helpful creative tools and resources), so there are more goodies to come, and you can follow links to lots of Chrome, Android and art-based experiments.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

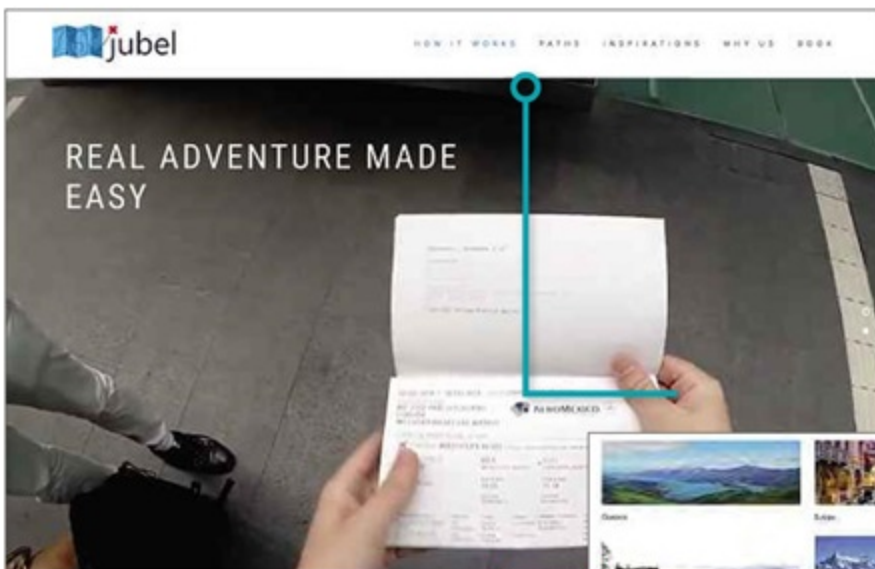
FOOTBALL

Newcastle United

beta.nufc.co.uk

The Magpies are favourites to gain promotion from the Championship this season but they've already scored with this fan-friendly website revamp. Although still in beta, it now offers all content, including videos, for free and has adopted a smarter design that works a treat on mobile. We love the site's emphasis on news, features and match reports, and it's interesting history section. Best of all, the site changes on a match day, reflecting every moment of the game. There are some niggles: finding match tickets requires too many clicks and we'd like to see the supporters' section given greater prominence.

Our rating



NEW

TRAVEL

Jubel

www.jubel.co

Booking your next holiday through this website could be a real surprise because it can, if you want, keep your destination a total secret. The site explains everything very well, providing both a brief overview and a more comprehensive breakdown of each "adventure", but it's really only a jumping point. There are suggested destinations to give you inspiration, but once it's asked you an exhaustive (yet thankfully short) list of questions about the kind of trips you enjoy (and the places you really want to avoid), you'll work directly with Jubel to tailor your experience and set the price. It certainly saves you aimlessly browsing travel sites.

Our rating



NEW

BOOKS

Recommend Me A Book

www.recommendmeabook.com

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover but what about forming an opinion from its first page? That's the premise of this bookworm's paradise - a site that lets you read the first few hundred words of various recommended novels in the hope that you'll want to get stuck in. While short on features (you can change the font size but that's about it), the site shows you extracts without revealing which books they are from. If you like what you read, you can click to reveal the title and author, and buy the book from Amazon, although there's also an option to browse the covers first.

Our rating



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

New WordPress backup option

Jetpack (jetpack.com), the brilliant multifunction WordPress add-on, has launched a new paid-for option that sits between its existing Free and Premium services. The Personal package gives subscribers unlimited daily offsite backups of their website for \$3.50 (around £2.80) per month or \$39 (around £31.29) per year. You can also use the service to move your site from one web host to another. It doesn't include Premium's malware-scanning tools but it's a significant reduction on Premium's \$99 (around £79.53) cost and is a great package if you need safe, reliable site backup.

'blog' domains now available

If your website is a blog, you might be interested in the new '.blog' domain suffix that has just become available. The suffix has



gone through its initial period, where trademark holders and businesses get to register their interest in domains connected to their brands, and is now open to everyone else. To see if your preferred domain is available, go to get.blog and type the name you want into the box. If it's available, you can buy it for \$22.50 (around £18) per year.

Deal of the Fortnight

Names.co.uk (www.names.co.uk) is offering an extra three months free and a free domain name with its annual cPanel hosting and DIY Web Builder packages.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:

Richard Stevenson, Head of Corporate Communications, ePages (www.epages.com)



Q I want to set up an online shop to sell my hand-carved wooden animals but I don't know where to start. What are my options?

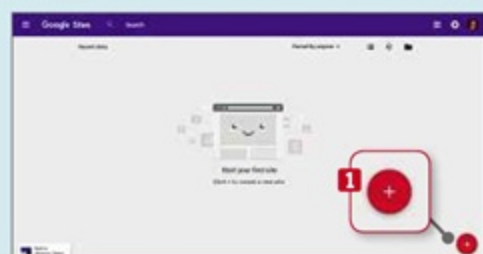
Terry Hardwick, via email

A Research by ePages found that 44% of Britons (and 54% of 25-34-year-olds) have added to their income by selling goods or skills online. While the sheer range of options may seem dizzying, the good news is that most eshop services (which cost from £5 a month) let you sell through several 'channels' at once. Choose a package that will list your goods in popular marketplaces such as Amazon and eBay and also on your own website to help you build your brand. Activate a range of payment options and apps to make buying from you as convenient as possible.

MINI WORKSHOP | Use Google's new website-building tool

Google Sites: sites.google.com |  10 mins | Requires Google account

Google's free web-building tool, Sites, provides everything you need to make brilliant mobile-friendly websites. Its easy to use and, because it connects with Google Drive, you can easily collaborate with others



1 Go to sites.google.com and sign in using your Google username and password. Click the New Google Sites link if your browser doesn't take you straight there. If you're creating your first site, click the plus button. **1** Any sites you're currently working on or have finished will be listed here so you can come back to them later.



2 You add elements to your page from the Insert menu, **1** whether it's a text box, an image, a link or an embedded item such as a YouTube video or Google Map. Click an item to edit it. Text-editing tools are provided, including layout and HTML tools. **2** If you click on an image, you can perform simple edits such as cropping and adding Alt text for accessibility and SEO purposes.



3 You can change the overall look of your website from the Themes tab **1** and add pages using the Pages tab. **2** Give your website a name **3** and Preview it by clicking the eye button. **4** When you're ready, click the Publish button **5** to send your site to the web. You have to choose a unique address and decide whether or not you want it to be included in search engine results.

mitchell & johnson

DISRUPTIVE NEW TECHNOLOGY ABOUT TO STORM THE WORLD .

"Portable electrostatics, that smash the electrostatics price barrier, no need for extra amplification or an extra power supply"



"IF Your ears are good enough, these cans will delight you"

Electrostatic headphones are known for giving the greatest sound quality. The challenge until now has been that they always used to need to have an extra power supply and an extra amplifier to deliver the bass we all crave.

The Scientists at the Taipei Institute of Science and Technology invented a micro film, that could be super charged to hold an electrical current that got rid of the need for an extra power and amplifier source.

Now you can look good and with these headphones hear the best possible sound quality that your ears can give you. They are called Hybrid- Electrostatics, as they combine the best of both worlds drivers. An electrostatic driver for the mids, trebles and highs, and a cone driver for the punchy bass rhythm's..

Head over to www.mitchellandjohnson.com for loads more technical details and videos to explain the technology. A recent Kickstarter campaign, gave us over 400 very happy users all over the world who are now enjoying the best sound possible that their ears can deliver. You just need a pair of Mitchell and Johnson Hybrid headphones to deliver the precision and clarity you may never have heard before.



Our Christmas present to you is a 20% discount using the code shown below...

Join the Sound Evangelists mission to bring the best sound that is possible for the ears that you have. No question, these headphones will unveil how well your ears can deliver sound to you.

Famous recording artists and leading academics and industry experts have auditioned these headphones and have had nothing but positive things to say.

"PP Arnold who made her name in the 60's and 70's with The first cut is the deepest and Angel of the morning, LOVED THESE HEADPHONES"

Dr Lorenzo Picinali Senior Lecturer in Audio Experience Design Director of Undergraduate Studies Dyson School of Design Engineering Imperial College London, was very impressed with the tightness and precision of the sound.

Artists and Studio engineers who have worked with Alicia Keys, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Tina Turner, Whitesnake, have all auditioned and been very complimentary about the precision and clarity that the cans unveiled, at the same time as being amazingly low priced for such sound quality.

Rob Salter ex Buying Director at Tesco said "These are a step change in price and quality, you can't get this technology at this price."

Alan Young ex SVP Warner Music, the warmth and the smoothness these cans deliver is exceptional and is barely believable at the price.

£299.99



£399.99



£199.99



£599.99



£499.99



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Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Monitors under £350

Do you use your PC for working in Windows, playing games or watching movies? Or all three? **Andy Shaw** tests five affordable models to help you find the perfect display for your needs

Monitors come in all sorts of shapes, sizes and resolutions, and the best one for you will depend on what you mostly use your PC for. We've picked out a selection of five models in this Group Test, ranging from just under £150 to just under £350, to suit every purpose. The more expensive models tend to have high resolutions and serious gaming features, but those at the other end of the scale offer everything you need for general use. If your monitor is starting to let you down or you fancy a new model that performs better, look no further.

HOW WE TESTED

We test each monitor with a calibration device, which uses its own software to measure the percentage of sRGB colours that each one can display. We measure this out of the box, without adjusting the settings, because most people don't have their own calibration equipment. We also measure the contrast ratio (which indicates how well a monitor can pick out detail in dark images) and the maximum brightness.

AOC Q2781PQ | £299.99 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/aoc412

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

The AOC Q2781PQ's bezel (the plastic surround encasing the screen) is just 8mm thick, which means the display takes up 93% of the entire front of the monitor. This makes the screen appear larger and more spacious than its actual dimensions because the viewing area feels less boxed-in.

The monitor's curved metal stand adds a further touch of class, and has the added benefit of saving space on your desktop. For the most part, the AOC monitor is only 15mm deep and only thickens slightly where the stand meets the screen. Overall, its design looks more high-end than its £300 price tag implies.

The monitor's interface pops up from the bottom of the screen and is simple enough to use, but there's little reason to fiddle with it – we found the monitor's setup was almost perfect the minute we plugged it in. Our colour calibration tool measured 97% of the standard sRGB colour range without needing to tweak the monitor at all, which makes it incredibly easy to use.

On the downside, we noticed some light leaking from the top-left corner of the panel when the monitor was displaying a pure black



image. You won't notice this in day-to-day general use but if you're specifically looking for a monitor to play games or watch movies, this may become distracting.

Furthermore, the screen has a relatively slow 4ms response rate and was prone to ghosting (blurring and double images) when showing fast-moving objects, such as the scrolling scenery in a racing game. For that reason, it's not best used for gaming, although it's perfectly sufficient for most general-purpose use.

VERDICT ★★★★★

This is a good-value monitor with impressive image quality and a classy design. It's well set up, so you don't need to worry about calibrating it or tweaking its settings. However, you may find the backlight bleed and relatively slow pixel-response time is distracting when playing games. But if you're after a monitor with a resolution of 2,560 x 1,440 pixels to accompany a general-purpose Windows PC – rather than an entertainment model – this is the one to buy.

Iiyama G-Master GB2888UHSU | £329.99Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/iigb412FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★**WebUser
SILVER
AWARD**

If you dismissed our Gold Award-winner because it doesn't match up to your gaming needs, this Iiyama should get your pulse racing. It's a 28in 4K-resolution screen with a 1ms response rate (the length of time it takes to change from one pixel colour to another) and FreeSync technology that further enhances fast-moving games (so long as you have an AMD graphics card). The viewing angles are narrow, so it's best for solitary use rather than as a display for a family PC, and we had to carry out some major tweaking to get its colour properly balanced. This took it from displaying 86.6% of the sRGB colour palette, when we first set it up, to 96.3% after calibration.

It performed well in our games tests, though, especially considering the price, and provided the kind of performance you'd expect from far more expensive models.

VERDICT

★★★★★

You'll need to put in a bit of effort to get the best colour accuracy from this monitor but once you do, you'll have a great 4K-resolution monitor at a very reasonable price.

**Iiyama ProLite XB2481HS-B1 | £147.60**Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/iixb412FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★**WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD**

If you're on a budget (or looking for a second monitor for a multi-screen setup), this 23.6in Iiyama model is ideal. It's surprisingly attractive for such a cheap screen, with a 12mm bezel and a practical, unfussy stand, which also lets you rotate the display by 90

degrees into portrait mode. It has HD resolution (1,920 x 1,080 pixels), and single HDMI, DVI and VGA connectors.

The screen produces deep blacks and accurate colours straight out of the box. We measured 94.3% of the sRGB colour range. Contrast was also excellent, partly because it has a very deep black, with very little light leaking out. This makes it particularly good with text, and displaying detail in dark images and movies.

Its control buttons are hidden at the back of the monitor, which looks neater but makes them tricky to use.

**VERDICT**

★★★★★

This is a good-quality monitor for general-purpose Windows use, and it comes at a great price. Its menu controls are a bit fiddly but it comes well-configured out of the box, so you shouldn't need to use them once you've set the brightness.

Samsung C27F591FDU | £224.99Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/sams412FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

This 27in Samsung model is the only curved monitor in our Group Test. Its 1,920 x 1,080-pixels screen doesn't come cheap – you'd pay £80 less for the Bronze Award-winning Iiyama – but the curvature of the screen gives it a dynamic, modern feel and helps immerse you in whatever you're viewing.

The screen's default settings are fantastic, displaying 99.2% of sRGB colours and a very high contrast ratio. With a colour calibrator you could easily make this perfect.

If you're buying this monitor to play games, you'll find plenty of further options to tweak, including the same FreeSync technology that's on the Silver Award-winning Iiyama. You can also tweak its response time, which speeds up the length of time it takes the monitor's pixels to change from one colour to another.

**VERDICT**

★★★★★

This is an attractive monitor with a good-quality screen, but a lower resolution than our Gold- and Silver-award winners. However, we think curved screens work better on a larger monitor and are a bit of a gimmick on this smaller model.

ViewSonic XG2401 | £247.93Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/view412FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
EASE OF USE ★★★★★ VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

The XG2401's price tag may feel rather steep for a 24in screen but it's aimed at gamers and is brimming with features and specifications. It has support for AMD FreeSync, a very high 144MHz refresh rate, a 1ms response time and its own technology for making pixel colour changes even faster.

Before calibration, the screen was capable of displaying an impressive 96% of sRGB colours, though we nudged it up to 98% with our calibration tool. The high refresh rate makes everything look smooth, which is great with games but also gives Windows animations a slick feel that you might not get with other monitors.









However, we found it gave black text a pink tinge when scrolling in basic Windows applications, which we couldn't fix with any of the built-in controls. You can't see it during gaming but it's distracting when you're trying to work.

**VERDICT**

★★★★★

With a premium build quality to match the price, this is a fantastic gaming monitor with a very high specification and great extras. However, problems with the text colour when working in Windows make it a poor all-rounder.

Group Test Monitors under £350

	 	 	 		
	AOC Q2781PQ	Iiyama G-Master GB2888UHSU Gold Phoenix	Iiyama ProLite XB2481HS-B1	Samsung C27F591FDU	ViewSonic XG2401
WEBSITE	aoc-europe.com	iiyama.com	iiyama.com	www.samsung.com	www.viewsoniceurope.com
PRICE	£299.99	£329.99	£147.60	£224.99	£247.93
BUY FROM AMAZON	bit.ly/aoc412	bit.ly/iigb412	bit.ly/iixb412	bit.ly/sams412	bit.ly/view412
SCREEN SIZE	27in	28in	23.6in	27in	24in
RESOLUTION	2,560 x 1,440 pixels	3,840 x 2,160 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels
SCREEN TYPE	IPS (In-Plane Switching)	TN (Twisted Nematic)	VA (Vertical Alignment)	VA	TN
CLAIMED CONTRAST RATIO	1,000:1	1,000:1	3,000:1	3,000:1	1,000:1
CLAIMED BRIGHTNESS	350cd/m ²	300cd/m ²	280cd/m ²	250cd/m ²	350cd/m ²
REFRESH RATE	60Hz	60Hz	60Hz	72Hz	144Hz
CLAIMED RESPONSE TIME	4ms	1ms	6ms	4ms	1ms
HORIZONTAL VIEWING ANGLE	178°	170°	178°	178°	170°
VERTICAL VIEWING ANGLE	178°	160°	178°	178°	160°
PORTRAIT MODE	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓
INTERNAL SPEAKER	✗	✓ (3W)	✓ (2W)	✓ (5W)	✓ (2W)
USB HUB	✗	2-port USB3	✗	✗	2-port USB3
VIDEO INPUTS	DisplayPort, HDMI, VGA	DisplayPort, 3 x HDMI, VGA	DVI, HDMI, VGA	DisplayPort, HDMI, VGA	DisplayPort, 2 x HDMI
SCREEN SHAPE	Flat	Flat	Flat	Curved	Flat
SCREEN DEPTH	15mm	60mm	13mm	10mm	24mm
BASE DIMENSIONS	330 x 180mm	295 x 220mm	248 x 230mm	530 x 220mm	295 x 225mm
WARRANTY	Three-years collect-and-return	Two-years collect-and-return	Two-years onsite	Two-years collect-and-return	Two-years collect-and-return

OUR VERDICT

The AOC Q2781PQ wins our Gold Award because it's a great monitor for Windows users. It comes well set up so you can use it straight from the box, it has an attractive design and is good value for money. The only thing wrong with it is that it isn't the best choice if you play a lot of games.

If gaming is more important than Windows performance, consider the Silver Award-winning Iiyama G-Master GB2888UHSU Gold Phoenix. You'll need to do a bit of setting up to get the best colour accuracy from this monitor but it'll be worth it, especially if your PC can handle its game-boosting tools and 4K resolution.

Our Bronze Award goes to the Iiyama ProLite XB2481HS-B1, which is surprisingly affordable at less than £150. It's a smaller screen than our other award winners, but it's a great all-rounder. ■



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HOME INTRUSION PREVENTION SYSTEM



GIPSY

GLOBAL INTRUSION PREVENTION SYSTEM



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Web User's Best Buys

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HARDWARE

MONITOR

AOC Q2781PQ

£299.99 from Amazon bit.ly/aoc412

Date tested: December 2016

NEW!



This good-value monitor offers impressive image quality, a lovely design and 178-degree horizontal and vertical viewing angles. You won't need to calibrate it, either. If you're after a monitor with a resolution of 2,560 x 1,440 pixels, buy this.

KEY SPECS

27in flat screen ■ 2,560 x 1,440 pixels resolution ■ 1,000:1 contrast ratio ■ 350cd/m² brightness ■ 60Hz refresh rate ■ DisplayPort, HDMI, VGA inputs ■ 330 x 180mm base ■ Three-year collect-and-return warranty

BUDGET TABLET

Amazon Fire HD 8

£89.99 from bit.ly/8hd410

Date tested: November 2016



For its low price, Amazon's Fire HD 8 is a pleasant surprise: it's great for media streaming and web browsing, its battery life is exceptional and it's easy to use. Once it's integrated with Amazon's Alexa voice assistant, it will be even better.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.3GHz processor ■ 8in 1,280 x 800 pixels resolution screen ■ 2-megapixels rear camera ■ 16GB storage (12.09GB free) ■ MicroSD memory card slot ■ Fire OS operating system ■ 214 x 128 x 9.2mm ■ 341g

CHROMEBOOK

Acer Chromebook R11

£229.99 from www.amazon.co.uk

Date tested: October 2016



The Acer Chromebook R11 laptop has a keyboard that flips behind its touchscreen, so it can also be used as a tablet. It's not hugely powerful but it runs all the web apps you might need and its battery lasted over eight hours in our tests.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core 1.6GHz Intel Celeron N3050 processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 11.6in touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 16GB eMMC drive ■ 1 x USB 2, 1 x USB 3 ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ SD card reader ■ 295 x 203 x 20mm ■ 1.2kg

WINDOWS 10 LAPTOP

Acer Aspire One Cloudbook 14

£199.98 from www.pcworld.co.uk

Date tested: September 2016



The Cloudbook 14 is as good a laptop as you'll get for less than £200. It's not particularly fast and doesn't have a brilliant display, but it's fantastic value, especially because it includes a year's subscription to Office 365 Personal.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core 1.6GHz Intel Celeron N3050 processor ■ 2GB of memory ■ 32GB SSD ■ 14.1in non-touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ 1 x USB 3, 1 x USB 2 port ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 339 x 235 x 17.9mm ■ 1.6kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

E-READER

Amazon Kindle (2016)

£69.99 from www.amazon.co.uk

Date tested: August 2016



The highly capable Kindle is lightweight, great for reading and matches its rivals for usability and content. Despite the lack of a front light, it remains the best e-reader you can buy for less than £100.

KEY SPECS

6in E Ink Pearl screen ■ 800 x 600 pixels resolution, 167 ppi ■ Optical touchscreen ■ 4GB storage ■ 160 x 115 x 9.1mm ■ 161g ■ No front light ■ £10 less with Amazon Special Offers ■ Up to four weeks' battery life (if used 30 minutes per day)

BUDGET SMARTPHONE

Motorola Moto G4

£159 from www.amazon.co.uk

Date tested: August 2016



This fantastic smartphone offers better features and performance than any other phone of this price. Its screen is sharp and bright, and its cameras are excellent. Battery life is well above average, too.

KEY SPECS

5.5in screen ■ Octa-core 1.5GHz processor ■ 16GB of storage, expandable by 128GB ■ Android 6.0.1 Marshmallow ■ 13-megapixel rear camera, 5-megapixel front camera ■ 1,980 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ 3,000mAh battery ■ 155g

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2017

£19.95 from bit.ly/kaspersky2017

Date tested: August 2016

Kaspersky is rock solid at protecting your PC from the worst of the web, and has come top in eight of our most recent tests, blocking all malware with its robust defences. Use the URL above to save £15.04 on the software (normal price £34.99).



KEY FEATURES

Antivirus and firewall tools ■ Protects online shopping and banking ■ Identity and privacy tools ■ Dangerous-website alerts ■ New software updater ■ Secure-connection VPN ■ Advanced ad-blocking system ■ Multi-device version ■ Compatible with Windows 10

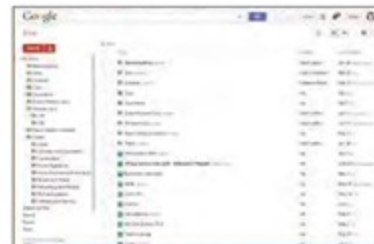
ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

From free from drive.google.com

Date tested: January 2016

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

16GB free storage ■ Web-based office software ■ Works with XP, Vista, 7, 8+ and 10 ■ Chrome browser add-on ■ Android and iOS apps ■ 100GB extra storage for £1.36 per month; 1TB for £6.01 per month; 10TB for £60.16 per month

WEB DESIGN

Xara Web Designer 11 Premium

£69.99 from www.xara.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)

BACKUP AND SYNC

SyncBackFree

Free from bit.ly/syncback366

Date tested: March 2015

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



KEY FEATURES

Synchronise: Copy files in both directions ■ Restore backup files easily ■ Email logs ■ Schedule backups ■ Simple and Advanced mode ■ Runs on Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8 and 10 ■ Extensive Help documentation and support

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Photoshop Elements

£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+ and 10 (32- and 64-bit) ■ Bundled photo organiser ■ Content-aware edits ■ Guided edits ■ People-beautifier tools ■ RAW support

VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Elements

£81.08 from www.adobe.com/uk

Date tested: December 2014

Premiere Elements' 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

Best Free Software

ALTERNATIVE START MENU

Start Menu X 6

www.startmenux.com

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

File size: 6.1MB

Windows 8 did away with the traditional Start button and menu, which had been a part of Microsoft's operating system since Windows 95. Following an outcry, Microsoft backtracked by reintroducing the button in Windows 8.1, but it was generally viewed as being too little too late, and by then numerous third-party Start menus had arrived to fill the gap. Start Menu X is one of the best examples we've seen and it works with all versions of Windows, from XP right the way up to Windows 10.

Start Menu X 6 is aimed at "professionals", which means it's designed to make it much easier to find and launch programs, especially if you have a lot of software installed. Like all similar Start menus, it automatically replaces the default menu.

Once it's installed, click the Start button. The menu displays locations (such as Desktop, This PC and Control Panel) in a panel on the left alongside a page of folders and programs that you can scroll through on the right.



The menu is highly customisable and there are plenty of options that let you configure everything to your precise requirements. You can open the default Start menu at any time by pressing Shift+Windows key.

The download includes both the free and Pro versions of Start Menu X 6. You get a 30-day trial of the Pro edition but

can opt to just install and run the free version if you prefer. There are no ads or prompts pestering you to upgrade, which is refreshing. However, there is a small Get Pro link at the bottom of the menu, so you can easily upgrade if you wish to, for £7.99. Doing so will give you access to some additional features, including the ability to add tabs.

MINI WORKSHOP | Replace the Windows Start menu



1 Install Start Menu X 6, then open the menu by clicking the Start button or pressing the Windows key. Popular destinations are shown on the left, **1** and all your programs (including ones you may have forgotten about) are on the right. **2** You can scroll through the collection and click to launch anything.



2 Add or delete items from the left-hand panel using the buttons, **1** and search for programs using the Search box. **2** The handle at the top **3** lets you resize the menu. You can also drag the menu to another position on the Desktop. It will stay wherever you place it.



3 To customise the menu, click the Options cog in the bottom-right corner and select Options in the menu that appears. Personalization **1** lets you change the look of the menu. You can pick a different skin **2** and change the scale. **3** Virtual Groups **4** lets you group programs into categories (all Office software, for example).

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



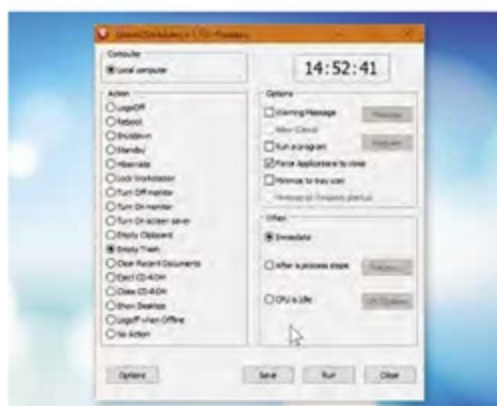
SYSTEM RESCUER

All in One – System Rescue Toolkit Lite

bit.ly/aiolite412

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 6.9MB

If something goes wrong with your PC, trying to fix it can be a nightmare and you could even end up making things worse. This tool aims to simplify things by automatically running a series of repair steps to fix common issues. The Lite version is aimed at less technical users – all you have to do is run it and wait. It tests components such as your processor, memory and hard drive, and will check for malware and bad system files, and also clean and defrag your PC.



SYSTEM TOOL

Lomsel Shutdown

bit.ly/shutdown412

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 1.2MB

Lomsel Shutdown is a small system tool that can automatically perform tasks such as shutting down or restarting your computer, turning your monitor on or off, emptying the clipboard, emptying the Recycle Bin, opening the CD drive, showing the Desktop and more. You can select the tasks you want from the main menu, and choose when to run them, or action them from the system tray.



SYSTEM TOOL

GUIPropView

www.nirsoft.net

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 77.5MB

GUIPropView is a new NirSoft program that displays detailed information about all windows currently open on your computer. The top pane shows the main windows, and when you select an item, the bottom pane will display any related 'child' windows – that is, elements that make up the main window, such as status bars, menu bars and other pieces of interface furniture.

New Windows Apps

Windows Defender Hub

bit.ly/wdhub412

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 9.66MB

This official Microsoft app displays security tips and news, and information on how to get the most from Windows Defender. You can also launch Defender directly through the app.



合并

bit.ly/dice412

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 8.6MB

The aim of this game (Chinese for 'merge') is to place dice on a board. When three dice with the same number of spots touch, they turn into a single die with the next higher number.



Network File Manager 10

bit.ly/nfman412

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 20.2MB

If you have several computers on your network, this app lets you manage files and folders shared across them. You can cut, copy, paste and delete content, and create and edit folders.



SYSTEM TOOL

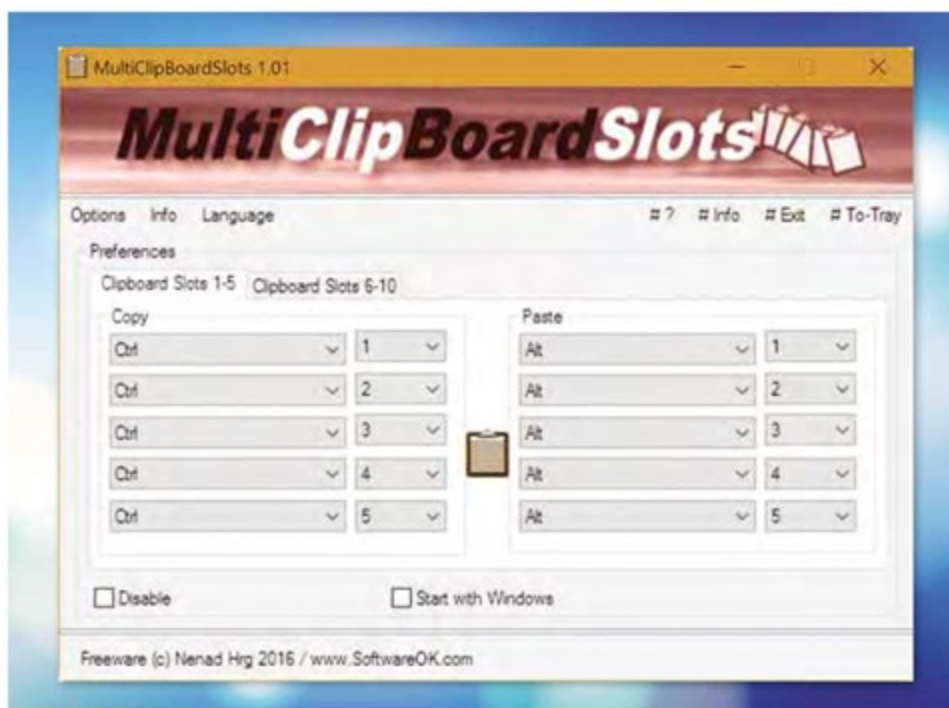
MultiClipBoardSlots

www.softwareok.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 85KB

The Windows clipboard will probably be enough for most of your copying and pasting needs, but sometimes it's handy to be able to copy and hold more than one item at once. MultiClipBoardSlots makes this requirement a reality by providing access to up to 10 clipboards.

The tiny portable program is very easy to use – all you have to do is select the item you want to copy, then press Ctrl and the number of the clipboard you want to save the copied content to – Ctrl+1, for example. To paste something, press Alt and the corresponding clipboard number. You can customise the hotkeys as required.



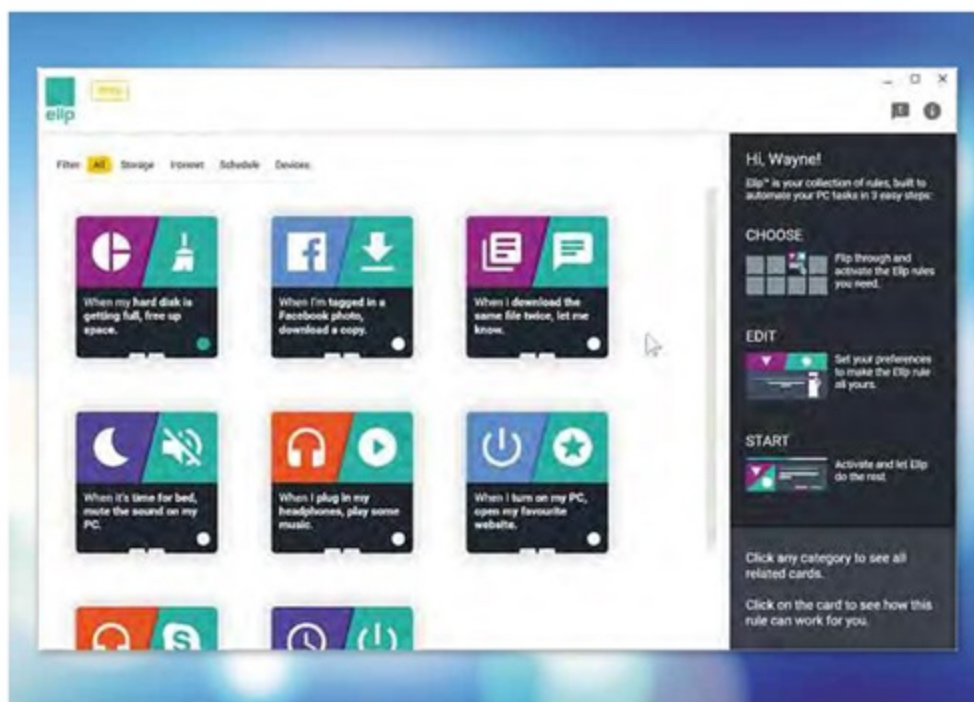
AUTOMATION SOFTWARE

Ellp

www.ellp.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3MB

Ellp is a program that automates common tasks to save you time. Once installed, you can choose and activate some ready-made tasks. These include, 'When my hard drive is getting full, free up space', 'When I'm tagged in a Facebook photo, download a copy', 'When I download the same files twice, let me know' and 'When I turn on my PC, open my favourite website'. There are only eight tasks at the moment (more are coming soon) and these are sorted into categories such as Storage, Internet, Schedule and Devices. You can edit tasks to suit your needs – for example, specify where to download Facebook photos.



SYSTEM TOOL

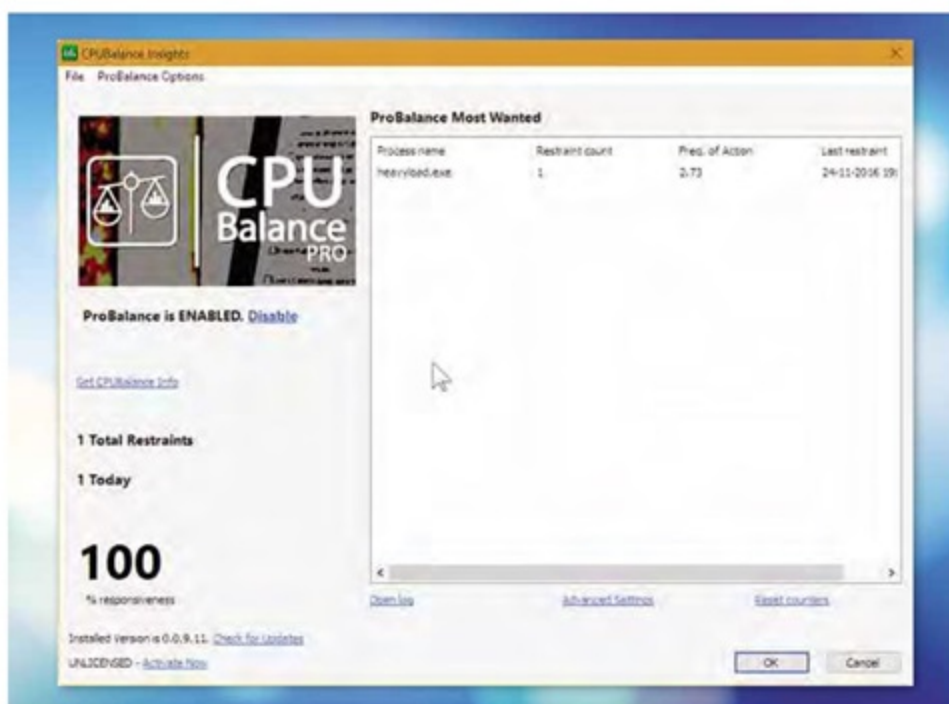
CPUBalance

bit.ly/cpub412

Min requirements: Windows XP/
Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 1.1MB

If your PC is getting a little old, or it wasn't all that powerful to begin with, you might find it starts to chug a bit when you run resource-hungry software. CPUBalance, from the developer behind the excellent Process Lasso (bitsum.com), helps you overcome this by reigning in problematic programs that might normally bring your system to its knees. It's very easy to use – just install and run the program and it will get to work, handling everything automatically. There are plenty of options available if you want to fine-tune anything.

CPUBalance can be run on its own, or in conjunction with Process Lasso.





GAME

Sara is Missing

bit.ly/saraim412

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 88.6MB

A woman called Sara has disappeared and your only lead is her mobile phone. Trawl through Sara's personal messages, notes, emails, pictures and videos to try and discover what happened to her. There are multiple endings and subplots to discover in this excellent adventure game, which is also available for Android.

Don't install...

DaVinci Resolve

bit.ly/davinci407

Min requirements:

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

File size: 400MB

This is primarily a colour-correction tool but it also offers professional-level video editing. The interface should suit experienced editors but novices will find the abundance of tools overwhelming. The program is also slow to install and run, unless you have a suitably high-spec computer.



...Install this instead

VSDC Free Video Editor

bit.ly/vsdc407

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

File size: 34.7MB

VSDC is one of the most powerful free video editors you'll find. As well as letting you perform basic edits such as splitting your clips and speeding up or slowing down footage, it offers a range of advanced video effects including colour adjustments, filters and transformations. You can even add text, shapes and animations to your movies and use the advanced audio-editing tools to perfect the soundtrack. Despite being the free version of paid-for software, VSDC imposes no significant restrictions on the length of your videos. It also now offers a useful 'Get Started' guide and online how-to videos.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



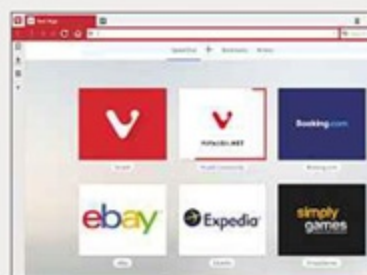
SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.24

www.piriform.com/ccleaner

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 8.2MB

This latest version of the popular system-cleaning tool improves Firefox history cleaning, and Opera and Vivaldi session cleaning. It also improves support for Internet Explorer and Microsoft Edge, and updates monitoring notifications.



WEB BROWSER

Vivaldi 1.5

vivaldi.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 38.5MB

This Chrome-based web browser comes from the former CEO of Opera. The latest version adds support for coloured Philips Hue lighting, so you can control compatible lights through your browser. It also adds multiple tab selection. See page 40 for more about the vivacious Vivaldi.



IMAGE MANAGER

ImBatch 5.1.1

www.highmotionsoftware.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 15MB

ImBatch lets you make multiple changes to whole batches of photos in one go by queuing up tasks. The latest minor release adds new functionality to the Tag editor, and removes the annoying message box that occasionally appeared when you launched the program.



SYSTEM TOOL

Glary Utilities 5.64

www.glarysoft.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 15.7MB

Glary Utilities is a collection of powerful tools for fixing problems, optimising Windows, and protecting your privacy. The new version adds cleaning support for more programs and optimises the Tracks Eraser feature. Make sure you decline the bundled junk during installation. ■

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

Best New Browser Tools



CHROME

Tweet directly from your address bar

Have you ever thought of something hilarious or fascinating to tweet, but completely forgotten what it was by the time you opened Twitter? If so, you need Chromnitweet (bit.ly/chromnitweet412), which lets you tweet from wherever you are on the web via Chrome's address bar (or Omnibox, if you must). Install the extension, grant it access to your Twitter account – don't worry, it can't read your direct messages or see your password – and you can start tweeting by typing `tw` into your address bar. Press Space and you'll see 'Chromnitweet' appear in the bar, after which you can type your tweet. Helpfully, Chromnitweet tells you how many characters are remaining of Twitter's 140-character limit, and you can post your tweet simply by pressing Enter. You'll still need to visit Twitter to view replies and retweets, but it saves you time and stops you getting distracted by what's 'trending'.

Authorize Chromnitweet to use your account?

Authorize app

Cancel

This application will be able to:

- Read Tweets from your timeline.
- See who you follow, and follow new people.
- Update your profile.
- Post Tweets for you.

Will not be able to:

- Access your direct messages.
- See your Twitter password.



Chromnitweet

By Casey Driver

chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/chromnitweet/nimen-ljs

A Chrome extension that allows a user to Tweet from the Omnibox by typing "tw [insert Tweet here]"

Chromnitweet Hello Twitter, you bunch of c

111 characters remaining. - Chromnitweet

tw Hello Twitter, you bunch of c - Google Search

Expose untrustworthy news sources

There's been a lot of controversy recently about 'fake' news stories appearing on Facebook, both in adverts and in users' feeds. These trick you into clicking their links to read the full articles, which contain inaccurate information and earn revenue for the authors through pay-per-click advertising. As we reported last issue, Facebook and Google are both clamping down on fake news, but you can also expose it yourself using BS Detector (bit.ly/bs412). This new Chrome extension detects unreliable stories on the web and flags them as being from a "questionable source", so you don't fall for them. Rather than using an algorithm to identify misleading content, it keeps a database of hoax sites, which means it doesn't

always catch fake stories. However, it did spot the spoof item: "Fake news is way better than real news," insists Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg!

See how long a site takes to load

Speedtest for Ookla (bit.ly/speed412) lets you test your download and upload speeds without needing to go to www.speedtest.net, and it's one of our favourite

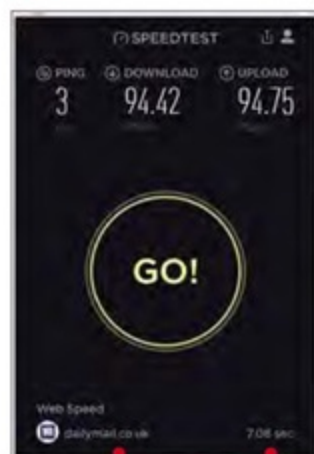
Chrome extensions of 2016. It's now been updated with a useful new feature called Web Speed, which tells you how long the websites you visit take to load. Web Speed can

be turned on and off via the add-on's Options and works automatically in the background. When you visit a site, click the Speedtest toolbar button and, at the bottom of the panel, you'll see the number of seconds the page took to

load. A forthcoming feature in the extension will show you how your Web Speed compares to other users with your ISP or in your region.

Scan download links for malware

The brilliant VirusTotal (virustotal.com) already has add-ons for Chrome and Firefox, but they haven't been updated since 2012 and can be quite slow. Download Virus Checker (bit.ly/virus412) is a new, faster alternative for both browsers (and Opera) that also runs URLs through VirusTotal's 68 anti-malware engines. As soon as you click a download link, it springs into action to perform a thorough malware scan. If there are three or more negative results (you can reduce this to just one if you prefer), the extension displays a warning along with a detailed report.



Web Speed

daily mail.co.uk

7.08 sec

Stop! This link might be affected!

File name: Unknown
URL: http://download.freemake.net/FreemakeOriginal2/FreemakeVideoCo...
Start Time: 16/11/2016, 13:20:23
Reported: 6/59
View online: https://www.virustotal.com/ui/927152e9d713dee21200ac1e071443b...

Based on this report, decide whether you want to cancel the download and delete the local file or keep it. This is just a warning report!

SCUMWARE.org	malware site
FraudSense	clean site
Opera	clean site
Camodo Site In...	malware site

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



FIREFOX

Find words on web pages more easily

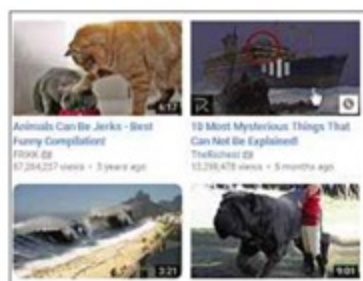
You're probably familiar with Firefox's 'Find in page' feature, which is activated using the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+F and searches the page you're viewing for specific words, names and phrases. The main drawback is that the tool finds all instances of the sequence of letters you type – so, if you type **ink** to find refills for your printer, the results will also include 'pink', 'stink', 'tiddlywinks', 'cufflink' and 'Henry Winkler'. Firefox 50 solves this problem by adding a Whole Words option to the 'Find in page' tool. Click this after typing your search query to eliminate instances where your word appears within other words. It's only a small tweak, but it's a useful one.



Preview YouTube videos before playing

The thumbnail images for YouTube videos are sometimes deceptive, tricking you into watching a 10-minute economics lecture for a funny cat that never arrives (or vice versa). Avoid getting caught out in future by installing Video Thumbs for YouTube (bit.ly/thumbs412), a new Firefox add-on that displays

previews of videos before you click to play them. Just hover your mouse over a thumbnail image – be it



on the homepage, in the 'Up next' list or among your recommendations – to see the content of the clip without opening its page. By default, the preview starts from the beginning of the video, but you can move this to halfway through – and skip the boring buildup – via the add-on's Options, where you'll also find a setting to change the default volume.

Clear your password from the clipboard

Picture the scene: your computer, December 2016. You're registering with

a new online store to do a spot of Christmas shopping. It asks you to enter a password, so you copy and paste your fiendishly constructed and impossible-to-guess login from another source – perhaps a password generator – then complete the sign-up process. But afterwards, you forget that your password is still stored in the clipboard, which means anyone who uses your PC can paste it, view it and use it to access your account. Five sentences later, *Web User* gets to the point: this nightmare scenario can be easily avoided thanks to a Firefox add-on called ClipSafe (bit.ly/clipsafe412), which automatically clears text from your clipboard once you've pasted it into a password field. This prevents anyone else from viewing your login and eliminates the risk of you accidentally sharing it on social media.



OTHER BROWSERS

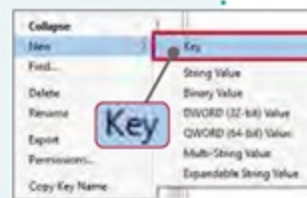
Suspend inactive tabs automatically

Opera isn't as big a resource hog as Chrome or Firefox, but the same rule applies – the more tabs you have open, the more memory is guzzled. The new Opera extension Tab Suspender (bit.ly/tab412) automatically 'unloads' tabs that have been inactive for a specific length of time (the default is 30 minutes, but you can increase or decrease this) to free up memory while keeping them available. Tab Suspender can be set to ignore pinned tabs and those that contain unsaved form-fill data.



Disable advanced settings in Edge

You can lock Edge's 'about:flags' page to stop anyone turning on experimental features and changing advanced settings. Press Windows+R, type `regedit` and hit Enter to open the Registry. Browse to the path: `HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft`. Right-click the Microsoft (folder) key, select New and click Key. Name the new key `MicrosoftEdge` and press Enter. Now right-click the `MicrosoftEdge` (folder) key, select New, Key and name the new key `Main`. Select this, right-click in the right-hand pane and select New, DWORD (32-bit) Value. Name the value 'PreventAccessToAboutFlagsInMicrosoftEdge', then double-click it and change its value from 0 to 1. Click OK and your 'about:flags' page will be locked.



App of the Fortnight

TV

Attenborough's Story of Life

bit.ly/story412

 4  8

BBC Earth's latest app presents the biggest-ever digital release of Sir David Attenborough's work and – incredibly – it's completely free.

Launching the app, even on a tiny phone screen, is like going down the rabbit hole. You're sucked straight in by 10 'featured collections' of curated video clips from Attenborough's programmes through the decades, including wonderful vintage footage as well as clips from his latest blockbuster, *Planet Earth II*. Swipe through the collections, which include 'Behind the scenes of *Planet Earth II*', 'Unique species first filmed', 'The abilities of apes' and more, then tap to watch clips, each of which lasts around three minutes. You can skip through them, but when we tried this a few times the app crashed. That'll teach us to fast-forward when David's on screen.

'Featured collections' are only the start. Swipe up to see 'all clips' (more than 1,000 of them) and down for 'my collections'. As with the Beeb's other big apps, including BBC+ (see Issue 403), Story of Life gives you the tools to organise the content yourself. You have many ways (too many, really) to organise collections of up to five favourite clips. Our Mini Workshop on the right shows you how.

Story of Life gathers together an enormous archive of work from our greatest-ever broadcaster, and the app is slick, stunning and versatile. On the downside, its content-organising features are too busy – at least at first. The app bombards you with animated menus and tips, and the effect is somewhat less relaxing than David Attenborough's voice. And although, at 42.74MB, the app certainly isn't huge, it devours memory and battery life, and should only be used on Wi-Fi unless you have unlimited data. Should

we knock off a star for that? Sorry, we can't: this is an app you must have.



Our rating



NEW

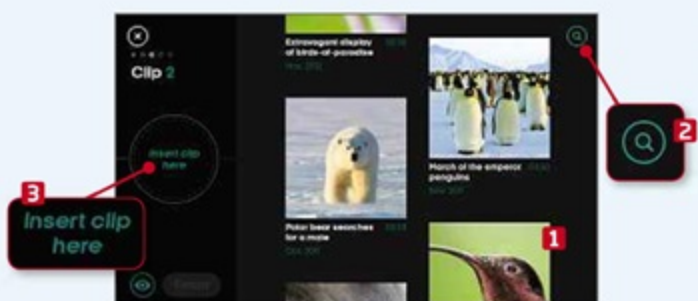


MINI WORKSHOP

Compile your own collection of wildlife clips



1 Install and launch Story of Life. When the 'featured collections' screen appears, swipe right and tap a collection. Its first clip will start playing. The controls disappear after a few seconds – tap to bring them back. To fast-forward, tap and drag the circle. **1** If subtitles are available, tap the 'S' to see them. **2** To create a collection using that clip, tap the documents icon. **3**



2 Tap Create, and you'll see a screen of thumbnails of suggested clips for your collection, with your chosen clip ('Clip 1') hidden off to the left. Swipe to see or remove it. Swipe up to view more thumbnails. **1** You can also search for particular clips. **2** Tap a thumbnail to see the clip, then tap the 'X' to close it. To set it as 'Clip 2', drag its thumbnail to where it says 'Insert clip here'. **3**



3 Once you've chosen three or more clips (up to five), tap Finish to save your collection. On the screen that opens, select 'tap to create your own title', **1** enter a title for your collection and tap 'I'm done'. **2** Tap the eye icon to play your clips. **3** To access your collections, swipe down from the 'featured collections' screen. From here, you can also create collections using topic filters.

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

ACCESSIBILITY

Color Binoculars

bit.ly/binoculars412
 10

This latest Microsoft Garage app is designed to help colour-blind people distinguish objects more easily. It works with your device's camera to replace difficult combinations, such as red and green, with more distinct colours - or "colors", to adopt the app's own transatlantic spelling. It could come in very handy when choosing clothes or determining whether food is cooked or even safe to eat. One of the app's developers, Tom Overton, is colour-blind and describes the app as "a very personal project" - but it could make life easier for millions.



Our rating



ART

Learn How To Draw

learnhowtodrawapp.com
 4.1

Receive free sketching tutorials from Irish comic book artist Will Sliney, whose work for Marvel Comics includes *Spider-Man 2099* and *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. The app offers tutorials for every level of artist, starting with the proportions of the human body and going on to help you create your very own cartoon character. New lessons are added every few weeks and most of the content is free. However, some tutorials, including those for creating muscle-bound 'heroic poses', are bundled into books, each of which requires an in-app purchase of 59p.



Our rating



PHOTOS

Adobe Photoshop Fix

bit.ly/adobefix412
 5  9

Photoshop Fix is yet another free app from digital photography powerhouse Adobe and is now available for Android as well as iOS devices. The app is designed for making little corrections - removing a spot here, brightening a corner there - but we found it powerful enough for making full-photo colour and exposure adjustments, and even editing shapes using the Liquify and Warp tools. You need to sign up for an Adobe ID to use the app (or sign in using your existing ID), but you don't need to pay for an expensive Adobe Creative Cloud subscription.




Our rating



SYSTEM TOOL

Fingerprint Gestures

bit.ly/fingerprint412
 5

Most Android devices running Android 6 and later have a built-in optical fingerprint sensor - a high-contrast scanner that can capture your unique fingerprint and respond to it by, for example, unlocking your mobile banking app. This new app lets you carry out more mundane but equally useful tasks automatically by tapping or swiping your finger (or anybody else's) on the sensor. You can set a single tap to pause music, for example, a double-tap to see recent apps and a swipe to open Settings.

Other tasks you can control this way include auto-rotate and ringer mode. Some, including sleep timer, work only on rooted devices, and we don't advise going down that, um, route. Sadly, you can't invent your own gestures (a finger wiggle, say). For extra security, you can set the one-tap gesture to respond only to your fingerprint.



Our rating



GET THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO ANDROID

Our updated Android MagBook is packed with 148 pages of apps, workshops and advice to unlock the full potential of your tablet and phone.



Discover how to:

- 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 data

Order it now from Amazon at bit.ly/androidbook2016

APPS

AppChecker

bit.ly/appchecker412

4.0.3

Your Android device may be ready for Android 7 Nougat and new features such as split screen, but many of your apps won't be. AppChecker lets you discover the TargetAPI of all your installed apps – or, in other words, find out which version of Android each app is designed to work on. You may find that many of your apps don't even support Android 6 Marshmallow and its 'granular' (separate) permissions yet. On the other hand, some will already support Nougat even if your device doesn't. Simply launch AppChecker and swipe up to discover which of your apps are stuck in the past and which are embracing Android's latest powers.



Our rating



PODCASTS

Overcast

overcast.fm

9

Apple's iOS devices already have a built-in podcasts app – inventively named Podcasts – so is there any point in giving up another 11.5MB of space for Overcast? If you have even a passing interest in podcasts, audiobooks and radio, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. Created by Instapaper developer Marco Arment, Overcast masters the basics – so you can browse thousands of podcasts, download episodes for offline listening and create playlists – but also offers clever features such as Smart Speed, which plays episodes faster without making them chipmunk-fast. Voice Boost improves the clarity of speech, and the new version offers recommendations based on your Twitter feed.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

MEASUREMENTS

Moasure

bit.ly/moasure412

8

Price: £1.49

Measure distances, angles and room sizes accurately – even if there's something in the way. How? Well, the developers say the app uses "the same technology found in space-rocket guidance systems", so it's very clever.



DIET

My Macros+

www.getmymacros.com

4.0.3

Price: £2.89 (Android), £2.29 (iOS)

Track your food intake using this new diet tool, which works offline if needed. The app includes a barcode scanner for adding food items to the 4 million-strong database.



VIDEO

NewTek NDI Camera

bit.ly/newtekndroid412

bit.ly/newtekios412

4.1

Price: £17.99 (Android), £14.99 (iOS)



Turn your device into a live video production camera for recording or live streaming. It's a great app, but for the best results you need a mobile with a decent sensor and lens.

PHOTOGRAPHY

CameraSim

bit.ly/camdroid412

bit.ly/camios412

4.3

Price: £1.99

(Android),

£1.49 (iOS)

CameraSim isn't a camera app but, as its name suggests, a camera simulator. Learn how to master DSLR photography by experimenting with the various settings in a range of conditions.



FILE MANAGER

File Cards

bit.ly/file412

10 Mobile

Price: £5.39

Treat your files like a deck of cards, by laying them out, moving them around and sorting them into groups. This excellent app works on Windows 10 PCs, too.



Moasure



My Macros+



NewTek NDI Camera



CameraSim



File Cards





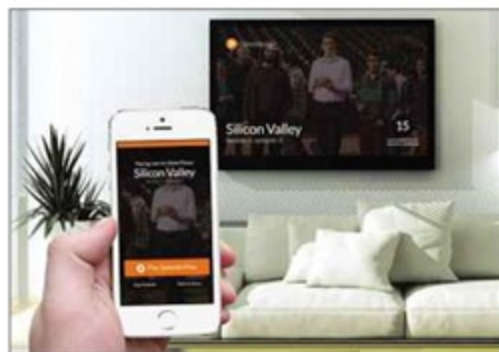
Best New TV Apps & Games

VIDEO

Videostream

getvideostream.com**Min requirements:** Android (varies with device), iOS 8.1

Lots of apps offer Chromecast support, so you can stream films and TV shows from a mobile device to your television, but it isn't so easy to watch videos you've downloaded to your PC. Unless, that is, you install Videostream, which makes streaming videos from your PC to your TV a doddle, with no need to set up a media server. Browse videos stored on your PC from your phone or tablet, then 'cast' them to your TV over Wi-Fi, using your device as a remote control. Videostream supports all the major video formats and offers an ad-free Premium service with extra features such as playlist creation, subtitles and download notifications. This is now available on mobile, too, and costs from £1.49 per month.



TV & FILM

Roku

bit.ly/roku412**Min requirements:** Android 2.3, iOS 7; Roku streaming device

One drawback to streaming video from a mobile device to your TV is that you can't listen through headphones – unless they have a really long cable – which means you risk annoying your housemates. Roku's solution to this problem is a new feature called Private Listening, which is available on its Android and iOS apps (although not the Windows Phone app, typically). To activate it, connect the mobile app to your Roku player, plug your headphones in and you'll see a headphone icon with a green dot, indicating that Private Listening is active. To restore sound to your TV, tap the icon so the green dot disappears. The update also improves the app's integration with your mobile keyboard, which makes searching for content a lot easier.

GAME

The Archers 2

bit.ly/archers412**Min requirements:** Android 2.3

This simple but addictive game has nothing to do with Radio 4's farming soap opera and everything to do with stickmen firing arrows at each other. The idea is to destroy your enemies with your bow before they smite you with theirs. To beat your foe, you have to hit them once in the head or twice in the torso, arm or leg. This gruesome prospect is enhanced by blood spurting from the character's wounds when they're struck, but because they're only stickmen, it's pretty tame stuff compared with other combat games. The Archers 2 offers single and multiplayer options, with the latter letting you and your friends bombard each other with arrows. The app requires the latest version of the Google Play Games app, and you need to pay £1.19 to remove ads.

 Don't install...

Tree Identification

bit.ly/ident412

This supposedly free app promises to help you identify more than 650 trees "of the flora of Europe". However, you soon discover that it actually costs 72p per year, and it's simply not

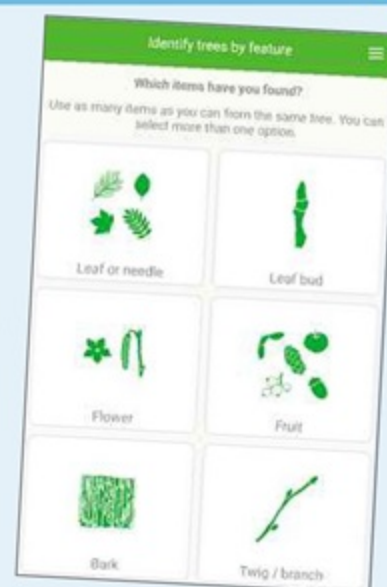
worth the money. Its identification methods consist of showing you photos of trees, which you could easily find yourself for free by searching Google. No wonder it has received so many one-star reviews.

...Install this instead 

Tree ID - British Trees

bit.ly/treedid412**Min requirements:** Android 4.1, iOS 9

Can you tell an oak tree from an ash, even at this time of year when they've shed most of their leaves? If not, you need the brilliant Tree ID app from the Woodland Trust, which identifies British trees – both native and non-native – from their bark, twigs, buds, leaves, flowers and fruit. Just choose an option, scroll through the illustrations and select the closest match to discover the name of your mystery tree. You can then view more information about it, including its life expectancy, origin and provenance. The app also includes an A-Z directory of British trees and lets you save your sightings on a map. ■



Amazon Music Unlimited

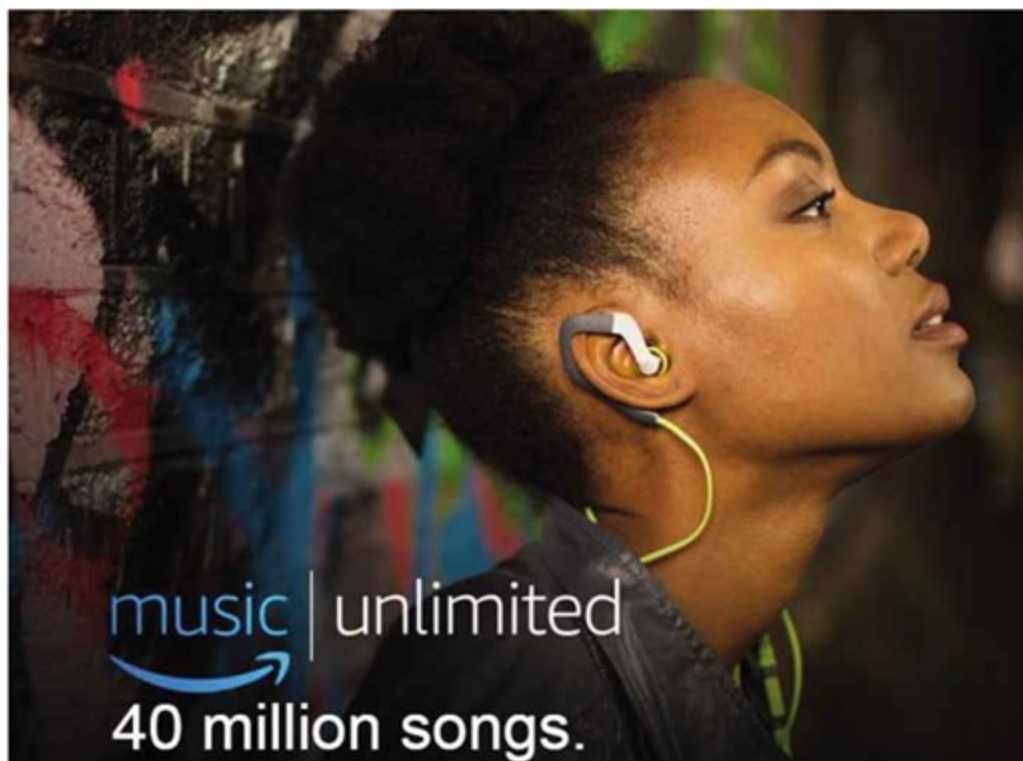
Amazon is taking on Spotify and Apple Music with its own music-streaming service. **David Crookes** explains what makes it different

What is it?

Amazon is hoping to strike a chord with music lovers with its new on-demand music-streaming service, Amazon Music Unlimited (amazon.co.uk/music/unlimited). Designed to compete with Spotify and Apple Music, the service offers 40 million tracks for a monthly fee, and promises to make it easier to access the songs you want.



You can stream more than 40 million tracks through Amazon Music Unlimited



So it's just like Spotify and Apple Music, then?

Well, yes and no. Like its competitors, Amazon Music Unlimited provides curated playlists, offline listening, the latest releases and a welcome lack of adverts, as well as a huge music archive. But it's also tightly integrated with Amazon's new digital assistant, Alexa, which makes voice control a key feature. As such, the new service is being touted as the perfect partner to the Amazon Echo range of internet-connected speakers. The retailer says this goes over and above what Spotify offers.

Hasn't Amazon streamed music before?

It has, indeed. In 2014, Amazon launched Prime Music for customers signed up to Amazon Prime – the service that also offers one-day delivery, unlimited photo storage, a million free ebooks and early access to Lightning Deals. Yet although Prime Music is going to continue as a perk of Prime membership, its streaming catalogue only includes two million songs. This relatively low number has

prevented it from posing a real threat to Spotify and Apple Music's popularity.



Amazon will still offer its Prime Music option to less music-hungry listeners

How does Amazon Music Unlimited work with Echo?

To play music via the Echo device, you just utter an instruction. You could say, "Alexa, play Adele", for instance, and the music service will select a playlist by the world-conquering songstress. But you could also search for songs based on title, lyrics, time period, mood or even nicknames of artists. For example, you can say, "Alexa, play songs by the King of Pop from the Eighties," and it will play tracks from Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. It even recognises the words and mood

of tracks, so you can say: "Alexa, play the song with the lyrics, 'today is gonna be the day'," to hear 'Wonderwall' by Oasis, or command, "Alexa, play some happy pop songs" to fill the room with Kylie.

Sounds good. How many moods are there?

It's understood that there will be 11 moods in total, with 5,000 songs initially tagged to each. Machine learning and clever algorithms are constantly widening the number of tunes that can be heard for each of the moods. But that's only part of what Amazon Music Unlimited

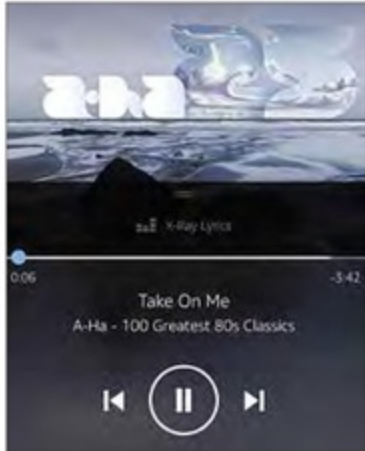


Tell Alexa that, like this man, you want to hear the latest song by Radiohead

has to offer. It will even know when a new song by a certain artist is out. Just say, "Alexa, play the new song by Radiohead", or whichever musician you want.

What if I don't have an Echo?

Even without an Echo, you can still enjoy Amazon Music Unlimited. There are apps



Apps for Android and iOS devices let you stream A-ha on the go

Each version has an easy-to-use interface that lets you click or tap to create playlists, search for tunes and listen to music – just as you would in Spotify or iTunes.

Will it learn my taste in music?

Yes. The more songs you play, the more it will deduce the kinds of tunes you enjoy listening to. This means that asking for descriptive playlists such as "soulful music" or "music for a romantic evening" will eventually result in a selection that suits your music tastes. Also, the service automatically downloads tracks you may like, so you can listen to them offline. Given that Amazon Music Unlimited has access to songs from the three major music labels – Universal, Sony and Warner – and hundreds of indies, it certainly offers impressive choice.

What about lyrics – can I see those?



Sing along with Sting by following the lyrics

Not on the screen-less Echo, obviously, but if you are accessing your music elsewhere, the apps will not only show you the lyrics but let you scroll through them, too. It also highlights when the words are being sung –

AMAZON ECHO EXPLAINED

Amazon Echo launched in the UK on 28 September and its little brother, the Echo Dot, arrived on 20 October. Here's the lowdown

What does it do?

Amazon Echo is an always-on cylindrical speaker that can be controlled using your voice. It uses Amazon's digital personal assistant, Alexa, which is similar to Siri, Google Now and Cortana, and can be used to perform a number of everyday tasks such as deliver the latest news and weather, play radio stations



and music, create shopping lists, set timers and book Uber taxis.

Why are there two versions?

The 9in Echo (£149) incorporates a 2.5in woofer that fills the room with an immersive sound and delivers a deep bass response. The smaller and more portable Dot (£49) is equipped with a lesser-quality speaker. You simply hook it up via Bluetooth to any compatible speaker in your home, saving you money while allowing for greater flexibility as to where you listen.



a form of pocket karaoke, if you will. On top of that, there's a unique feature called Side By Side. This offers commentaries on certain songs that artists have recorded exclusively for Amazon Music Unlimited.

Are there any album or artist exclusives?

Not as yet. Thankfully, Amazon Music Unlimited doesn't appear to be going down that path. Some rival music-streaming services, in particular Apple Music and Tidal, regularly boast of their exclusives with artists including Rihanna, Kanye West, Drake and Frank Ocean. Amazon's current stance is good news for the wider music-loving public: it's one thing signing up artists to provide exclusive Side By Side commentaries, but quite another to restrict songs to one particular service. We hope Amazon joins Spotify in refusing to treat music fans in such a petty and partisan manner.



Amazon's Side By Side lets artists talk you through their songs and share secrets

How much will this new service cost me?

The standard subscription fee for Amazon Music Unlimited is £9.99 per month, which is equal to that of its rivals. But if you're an Amazon Prime member, you can get it for the cheaper price of £7.99 – although that's on top of the £79 per year membership fee. However, if you own an Amazon Echo speaker, the service will only cost you £3.99 per month (again in addition to the £79 per year). It's something to seriously consider, but bear in mind that the latter option has no offline playback and it limits you to listening on just one designated Echo. Also, unlike many streaming services, there's no support for Chromecast.

Is there a way to try before I buy?

Yes there is. You can sign up to a free 30-day trial to check out the features before you decide to fully commit (if you are using an Echo, just say, "Alexa, try Amazon Music Unlimited"). As with Spotify and Apple Music, there will also be a six-account Family Plan offered before the year is out, costing £14.99.



You can try Amazon Music Unlimited for free before paying from £7.99 per month

BEST FREE SOFTWARE 2017

COVER FEATURE

We've never had more free software to choose from, so what should you download next? **Jane Hoskyn** picks the 10 most useful programs to see you through the next year

If Microsoft hoped we'd start 2017 using Windows apps to meet our every need, it can dream on. PC programs are here to stay. In fact, Windows 10 has given them a new lease of life. Microsoft's new operating system has spurred developers on to improve their software and create new tools that help you get more out of your PC. Most of them work well in earlier versions of Windows, too.

For our annual software round-up, we've picked the 10 most useful, powerful and innovative programs you should download now – and we've also thrown in 10 alternatives that you might like to try. Some are new and unfamiliar, while others have had major updates that make them worth revisiting. They're all free, safe to use and well worth a chunk of your PC's hard-drive space.

1 SECURITY SOFTWARE

Winja

www.phrozensoft.com/freeware

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

Size: 18.8MB

Why you'll love it

'Winja' is short for 'The Windows Ninja', which raises a smile, but Winja's working title, VirusTotal Uploader, is a better description. This new program lets you check any files you're wary of against online security database VirusTotal (virustotal.com), and delivers an up-to-date safety report on each one.

If you're not familiar with VirusTotal, try uploading a file to the website to see how the system works. If the file receives a score of 0/56, that's great, because it means none of 56 or so antivirus (AV) companies in the database thinks it's unsafe. A score of 2/56 means two AV firms flag the file as



unknown or unsafe. This often happens with EXE (executable) files for new programs that haven't yet been whitelisted by all AVs, and tends to indicate a false positive. Any file that scores more than about 5/56 isn't worth the risk.

VirusTotal's site is incredibly useful but it's also rather slow and clunky. Winja turns you into a VirusTotal power user while bypassing the need to use

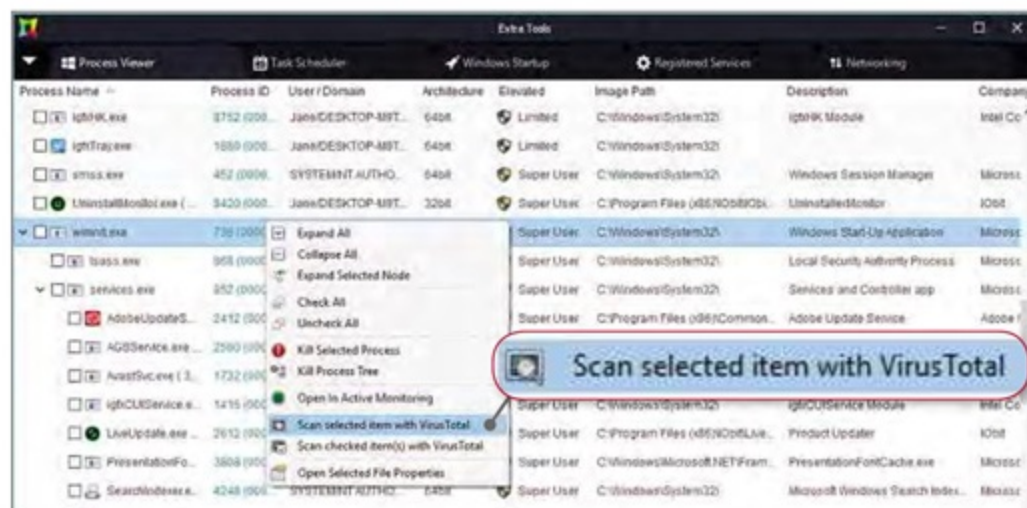
the site at all. The program lets you check several files at once, then delivers a series of colour-coded safety notifications and saves detailed results that reveal what different AV companies say about each file. You can also use Winja to check files before you download them, and investigate deep system processes for untoward activity.



What's the catch?

If a single AV company flags a file, Winja tags it as 'Infected' – even if 55 others confirm that it's safe. Ironically, this happened with Winja's own EXE file. The installer for Synei System Utilities (see page 41) –

another excellent program that's completely safe – also earned an 'Infected' tag after one little-known AV flagged it as 'unknown', even though all the others confirmed that it was safe. An amber code or question mark might have been more useful in both cases.



ALSO TRY

**Malwarebytes
AdwCleaner**

bit.ly/adwcleaner412



AdwCleaner scans your PC for adware and spyware with one click, and then removes it with another click. Version 6 of the software adds support for new browsers, including Vivaldi. Like Winja, it doesn't run in the background, so it won't conflict with your installed AV software.

MINI WORKSHOP | Check files for malware using Winja



1 To scan files on your PC, click 'Browse for File', **1** select some files you'd like to scan and then press Enter or click Open. You can also scan a file before downloading it from the internet: click 'Download and Scan' **2** and paste in its URL (ending '.exe' or '.pdf', for example). To check your PC's processes, click Quick Process Scan. **3**



2 The Running Scan Tasks tab **1** opens automatically to present you with a list of your selected files and their scan status. **2** After scanning each file, the program sends you a Desktop notification containing the results. **3** Click the notification to open the file's Analysis Report, which lists the verdicts from a range of antivirus companies.



3 Click Session Scan Results **1** to see a summary of all the files you've scanned since launching Winja. To open a file's Analysis Report, right-click it, then click Open Report Window. **2** If you would prefer the results to open automatically in your browser, go to Settings **3** and click 'When ready...'



MINI WORKSHOP

Create your own mouse gestures using Vivaldi



1 Click the cog icon 1 and select Mouse. 2 In the Gesture Mapping box, click a command - Close Tab, for example - and Vivaldi will demonstrate its default gesture with an animation. 3 To edit the gesture, click the pencil. 4 To create a gesture for a new command, click the plus sign. 5



2 Clicking the plus sign reveals a new drop-down menu, 'Pick a Command'. Click it to see the available commands. Select one, such as Fullscreen Mode, 1 and click Next. 2 You can't create gestures for commands that are not on the list - there's no command to open an on-screen keyboard, for example.



3 The outline of the gesture box turns red. 1 Hold down your left mouse button as you draw a gesture, using horizontal and vertical lines. 2 You can redraw it as many times as you like. When you're happy with it, click Save Gesture. 3 To use a saved gesture in Vivaldi, move your mouse while holding down the right mouse button.

2

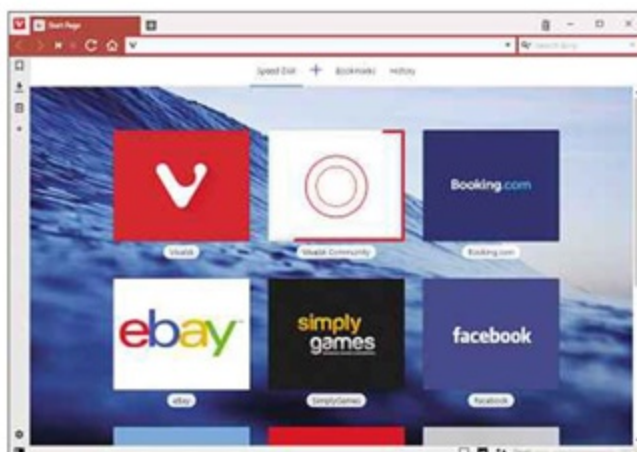
BROWSER

Vivaldi

vivaldi.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

Size: 304MB



Why you'll love it

Windows 10 has many assets, but sadly its default Edge browser isn't one of them. Chrome and Firefox are obvious alternatives, but as we move into 2017, there's less reason to stick with the obvious. Step forward, Vivaldi.

Vivaldi, which came out of beta in April 2016, feels much more personal than the big-name browsers. From the moment you first launch it, you're invited to customise its appearance and features to suit you. It's also packed with the kind of built-in features you only get in Chrome, Firefox and Edge if you install add-ons (assuming you're lucky enough to find a suitable add-on for Edge). You can make searchable notes

about web pages; stack and tile tabs into groups; view multiple pages in a single window; take screenshots; and configure keyboard shortcuts - all without downloading a thing. Not only does this save you hassle and hard-drive space, it also keeps you safer by minimising the risk of dodgy downloads.

The pace of Vivaldi's progress puts established browsers to shame, too, with major updates arriving every month. In recent weeks, the

developers have added the ability to schedule customisations for different times of day, and to block WebRTC, which feeds your IP information back to websites. It even lets you customise up to 90 mouse gestures for a variety of commands - so you can Clear Private Data or 'Paste as Plain Text' simply by nudging your mouse. We show you how to set this up in our Mini Workshop on the left.

What's the catch?

Vivaldi is brilliant for juggling multiple pages, but it's not great at managing add-ons. Because it's based on the same Chromium foundations as Google's browser, it supports extensions from the Chrome Web Store (bit.ly/chrome412). However, Vivaldi is decidedly less powerful than Chrome, and we found that large add-ons, such as Office Online and LastPass, struggle and sometimes even crash in the browser.

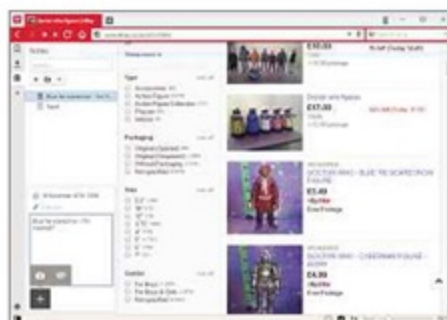
ALSO TRY

Opera

www.opera.com



Launched 22 years ago, Opera is in many ways the original Vivaldi. Past versions were packed with customisation features, but it's now a stripped-back program with a focus on performance and privacy. It's still innovating, though, with a built-in VPN and ad blocker in its latest version, 41.



3

SYSTEM CLEANER

Synei System Utilities

bit.ly/synei412

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

Size: 10.03MB

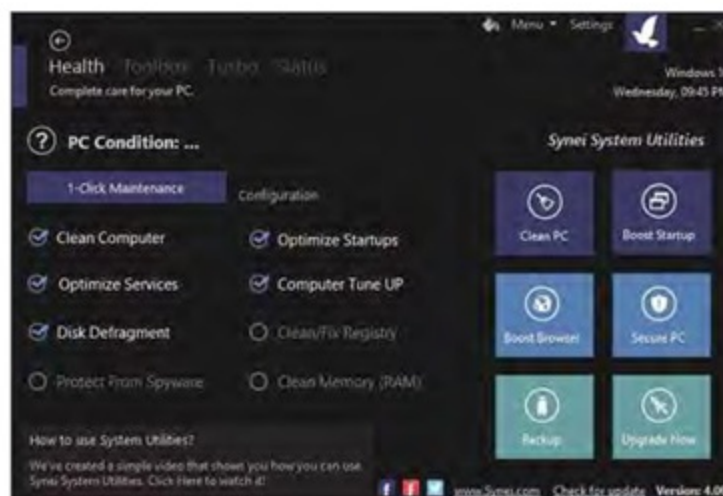
Why you'll love it

Programs that claim they can rejuvenate your PC with one click aren't always useful or even safe. Thankfully, Synei System Utilities is both, and it's also quick to install, lightweight, fast and easy to use. To get the best out of it, however, you need to look beyond its '1-Click Maintenance' feature and delve into its tools.

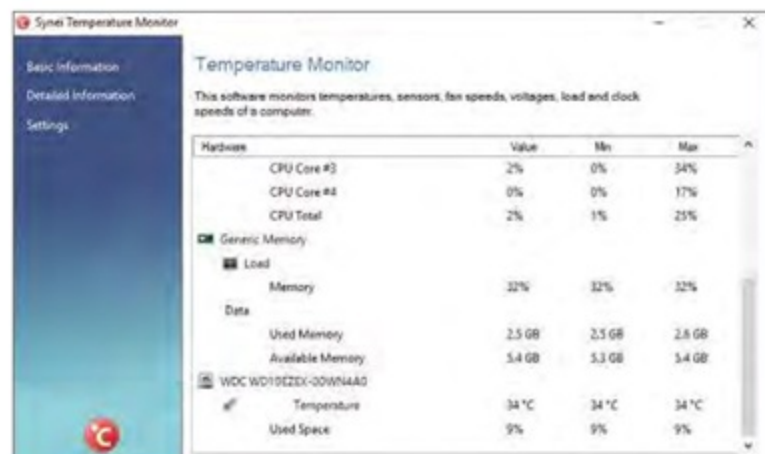
Synei (pronounced "see-nay") is half the size of CCleaner and a quarter of the size of Glary Utilities, but it's packed with useful features. Click Toolbox and you'll find tools such as PC Temperature, Backup Manager and Encrypt Files, as well as a new Force File Deleter tool for obliterating files and folders that

Windows claims it can't delete because they're 'in use' – often a sign that a file is malicious or has been corrupted.

We've noticed a trend for developers to make their programs available both as installable and portable versions, and Synei follows suit here. If you're running Windows 8+ or 10, go for the installable version, but make sure you download the free one. Use the web address printed above, scroll down the page and click the left-hand Download link. If you're running Windows 7 or earlier, use the new portable version instead. Click 'Download the portable (.zip) edition' under the Premiere button



– are greyed out. If you click one, you're invited to cough up for the paid-for edition, which costs \$19 (£15.50) and isn't really worth it. Most options are free, though – and with PC cleaning, less is often more. Take your time and use the cleaning components one by one.



and extract the contents of the ZIP.

What's the catch?

Certain useful-sounding components listed in the '1-Click Maintenance' clean – including Clean Memory, Protect From Spyware and Clean/Fix Registry

ALSO TRY

Wise Force Deleter

bit.ly/wiseforce412

This new 1.45MB tool from the maker of system-boosting suite Wise Care 365 is a more polished version of Synei's Force File Deleter. Unlike Synei's tool, it lets you drag stubborn files to its program window for easy annihilation and adds a Force Delete option to your right-click menu.



MINI WORKSHOP | Remove unwanted files using Synei System Utilities



1 When you launch Synei, it opens the default Health screen. **1** Here you can run a '1-Click Maintenance' clean, but that's a rather heavy-handed approach. To take greater control over the process, click Toolbox, **2** then click 'Clean your PC'. **3** In the window that opens, tick the types of file you want to remove and click Scan. **4**



2 To force-remove any files Windows has locked, click Toolbox and click Force File Deleter. **1** Click Add Files **2** or Add Folder, **3** then select the items you want to remove and click Delete. **4** This forcibly ends any associated processes in Windows and removes the items from your PC completely, bypassing the Recycle Bin.



3 To search for junk and obsolete files on your hard drive – or any other drive or folder – use the Deep Cleaner tool. **1** The software selects your local drive (C:) by default. To change this, click Scan Specific Folder. Click Next, then tick the boxes beside the types of file you want to find and remove, **2** and click Scan. **3**

Our Top Free Programs Of 2016

It's been a rollercoaster of a year for news, but 2016 has also seen the launch of some excellent software. Here we count down our 10 favourite free tools of the past 12 months

10 HDD Guardian hddguardian.codeplex.com

This program helps you avert PC disasters by monitoring your hard drives and SSDs using their built-in SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Technology) information. It alerts you at the first hint of trouble, whether it's impending drive failure or overheating.

9 Reshade Image Resizer reshade.com

Enlarging small photos usually makes them blurry, blocky and jagged, but not when you use this brilliant tool. Previously a paid-for program, Reshade can magnify images by up to 2,000% while maintaining their quality, and includes options to reduce image noise and other defects.



8 Listary listary.com

The Windows search tool has never been much cop, so we love Listary 5, which finds any file on your hard drive instantly. Not only that but it lets you launch programs using keyboard shortcuts and remembers the files you've used most often or most recently for speedy access.

7 Kaspersky Cleaner free.kaspersky.com/uk

Although it won't replace CCleaner in our affections, Kaspersky's free system cleaner has lots to recommend it, including options for deleting



specific data from your browsers and disabling Windows 10 features that gather info about you. It's currently still in beta.

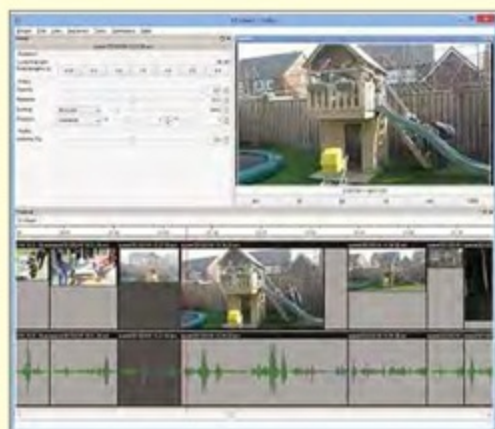
6 SnailDriver snailsuite.com

Unlike other driver updaters, which charge you for important features – including the actual driver updating – SnailDriver is completely free to use and isn't bundled with junk. Despite its name, the program scans your PC quickly and lets you choose exactly what to update.



5 Vidiot bit.ly/vidiot412

Video-editing software tends to be bloated, complicated and prone to crashing, but not the marvellous Vidiot. This lightweight tool takes minutes to master, yet it offers a host of powerful editing tools, and lets you add titles and transitions to your home movies.



4 TunnelBear www.tunnelbear.com

We've given free VPN TunnelBear lots of coverage this year, and this third version, which the developers released recently, is its best yet. It offers a cleaner, friendlier interface and speedier connections from whichever country you're pretending to be in. It's much smarter than the average bear!

3 Gaia Sky bit.ly/gaia412

This program is literally out of this



world, providing a three-dimensional map of the galaxy that you can explore from your PC or Mac. It's packed with astronomical features, including a Spacecraft mode that lets you glide through space and even record your voyages.

2 Kodi kodi.tv

Originally called Xbox Media Centre, Kodi has been around since 2002, but 2016 was without doubt its breakthrough year. This fantastic free streaming software proved so popular that it was even pre-installed on some set-top boxes, and brilliant new Kodi add-ons and custom versions just keep coming. See our Weekend Project on page 58 to learn how to make the most of Kodi.

1 WhySoSlow bit.ly/whyso412

"Why so slow?" is a question many of us ask our PCs every day, so we were delighted to find a new program that provides the answer. WhySoSlow monitors and analyses your PC's processor speed, memory usage, hard-drive fragmentation and other elements and rates them so you can see what's slowing down your PC. It also offers a handy Alarms feature that warns you if your PC's processor goes above a certain temperature and an AntiFreeze Emergency Task Manager that lets you quit unresponsive programs.

A new beta version (v0.97) has just been released, and a full, stable version is due in 2017.



4

UNINSTALLER

Revo Uninstaller 2

bit.ly/revo412

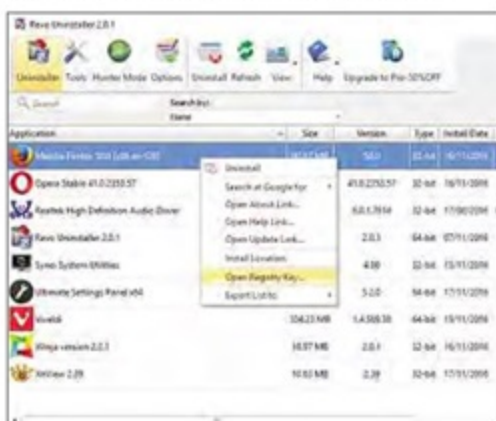
Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

Size: 21.22MB

Why you'll love it

Two of our favourite software-removal programs upped their game recently. First place (if only just) goes to Revo. It may look rough and ready but it's very powerful, with the ability to create system restore points before it gets to work eradicating stubborn leftovers.



Revo 2, the software's first big update in three years, adds an option to export a list of all your installed software, including details of each program's size and installation date, and a web link.

To see the list, right-click any program in the main window, select 'Export List to' and choose Text or HTML. The right-click menu now includes Open Registry Key and Install Location options for investigating program files.

There's no junk to dodge during installation, but be careful that you download the right installer - we'll come to that in a moment. If you're using Windows XP, Vista or 7, use the portable version instead: click the Download button under Other Downloads.

What's the catch?

Revo's website seems to be desperate to trick you into downloading Revo Uninstaller Pro by mistake. Ignore the Free Download button at the top of the page - that links to a free trial of the paid-for version, which costs



\$39.25 (£32). Instead, scroll down the page and click Free Download next to Revo Uninstaller Freeware. Revo Pro adds a few useful options, such as a spreadsheet format in the 'Export list to' menu, and can uninstall multiple programs at once.

ALSO TRY

IObit Uninstaller 6

bit.ly/iobit412



Unlike Revo, IObit Uninstaller 6 integrates with Windows, adding options to your right-click menu. Its new version lets you uninstall Edge add-ons and Windows 10 apps completely, and IObit no longer bundles junk in its installer.

5

SYSTEM TOOL

Ultimate Settings Panel

bit.ly/ultimate412

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

Size: 23.08MB

Why you'll love it

Remember the wonderful Windows XP Control Panel, which brought together all your system's settings in a single window? Bliss. Windows 10, by contrast, scatters controls and configuration options all over the place. Microsoft has provided a search box, of course, but a search box isn't much use if you don't know what to search for.

Now you can restore order using Ultimate Settings Panel, which lets you see all your Windows settings at a glance. Click a tab (such as Windows 7 or Windows 10) and browse the buttons (such as Add Features or Display Settings), then click a button to open the corresponding setting in Windows. There are dedicated panels for particular programs, including Outlook and Chrome, as well as a Windows Advanced panel, where you'll find deeper settings such as DiskPart and System Restore.



What's the catch?

The lack of a search box feels like a serious omission, but then the point of Ultimate Settings Panel is that it lets you browse your settings instead of searching. More annoying is the insistence that you tweet about Ultimate Settings Panel before you can receive a download link from the developer's site (www.ultimatesettingspanel.co.uk). You can get around this by installing the program from SourceForge instead (bit.ly/ultimate412).

ALSO TRY

Hardinfo

bit.ly/hard412

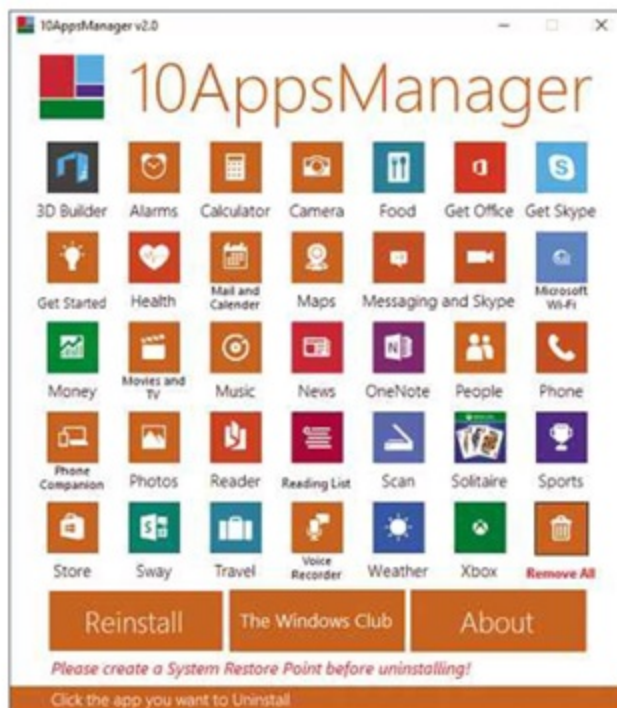


This powerful benchmarking tool has been redesigned and optimised for Windows 10 but is also compatible with Windows 7 and 8+. It now includes an Operating System information screen that shows all the details Windows buries.

6

WINDOWS 10 TOOL

10AppsManager


bit.ly/10apps412
Min requirements: Windows 10**Size:** 195KB**Why you'll love it**

Pre-installed apps may be hard to avoid on your phone and tablet, but thanks to 10AppsManager you don't have to live with them on your PC. Not all of them, anyway.

This tiny portable program lets you uninstall most Windows 10 apps, individually or all at once, and reinstall them if you change your mind. It can remove any app that has an Uninstall option when you right-click it in your Start menu, plus several that don't, such as OneNote, Photos and Store.

To get 10AppsManager, use the web address above, and scroll down

the web page, click Download File and extract the contents of the ZIP.

What's the catch?

10AppsManager can't remove Cortana or Edge – the least popular apps of all. And as if to prove who's really the boss around here, Windows 10 blocked the program the first time we tried running it. It's safe, but Windows just doesn't want you to use it. To beat the block, click 'More info' on the SmartScreen pop-up, then click 'Run anyway'.

ALSO TRY**O&O ShutUp**
www.oo-software.com/shutup10

Another tiny (620KB) portable program for Windows 10, O&O ShutUp can disable Cortana – but not Edge, yet. Use its toggles to switch off annoying and intrusive Windows services, including telemetry and automatic updates.

Software to avoid in 2017

Sadly, the past 12 months have seen many once-good programs turn bad. Here are five tools that you can no longer trust

**WEB OF TRUST**
www.mywot.com

Oh, the irony! Yes, we were as shocked as you were last month when the popular security tool Web of Trust (WOT) was revealed to be selling its users' data to marketing companies. This is a tool we've recommended in *Web User* (albeit several years ago) as a means of avoiding dodgy websites, so it pains us to say that you must now uninstall it. WOT were they thinking?

**AUSLOGICS DISK DEFRAG**
www.auslogics.com

Don't get us wrong: Auslogics Disk Defrag is not a bad program. Indeed, for a free disk-defragmentation tool it's impressively fast and efficient and has appeared many times in our Best Free Software section. The problem is that it now tries to install its paid-for Boost Speed and Driver Updater tools alongside it, with their boxes pre-ticked even when you opt for Custom installation. That's not acceptable.

**CHROME ON XP AND VISTA**
www.google.co.uk/chrome

Naturally, we wouldn't suggest you stop using Chrome altogether – that would be madness! But Google is no longer supporting it on older versions of Windows and Mac OS X. This means it won't receive any more updates or security fixes, leaving the browser open to all manner of online threats. Opera is now the only major browser that runs securely on XP and Vista.

**EASEUS PARTITION MASTER FREE**
www.easeus.com

Another example of 'great program, dodgy download', EaseUS annoys prospective users from the outset by making them enter their email address to get the download link – sorry, but why is that necessary? Its installer then tries to foist two other EaseUS programs and two 'sponsored offers' on you, with only tiny links to let you opt out of this unwanted junk. Get past this stage and you're home free.

**MCAFEE WEBADVISOR**
home.mcafee.com

McAfee SiteAdvisor was once an essential browser add-on, but it became bloated and annoying. Now McAfee has rebooted it as WebAdvisor, which has a terrifying licence agreement – "we may collect and process personal data, including sensitive information" – and attaches itself to your browser like a resource-sucking leech before you've even agreed to it. Avoid.

7 PORTABLE-TOOLS SUITE NirLauncher

launcher.nirsoft.net

Min requirements:

Windows 2000/XP/Vista/7/8+/10

Size: 40.8MB

Why you'll love it

NirSoft (www.nirsoft.net) – otherwise known as software developer Nir Sofer – is a one-man portable-programs powerhouse. All his tools run from a USB stick on PCs going back to Windows XP, and some even work on Windows 2000, but Windows 10 is keeping him busier than ever.

His database now contains more than 200 system tools, so downloading each one separately would be a mind-boggling chore. That's why he's created NirLauncher to save you the bother. The launcher is itself portable, and you can use it to launch any NirSoft tool by double-clicking it in the window. Click the buttons to narrow down the lists, and search by pressing Ctrl+F.

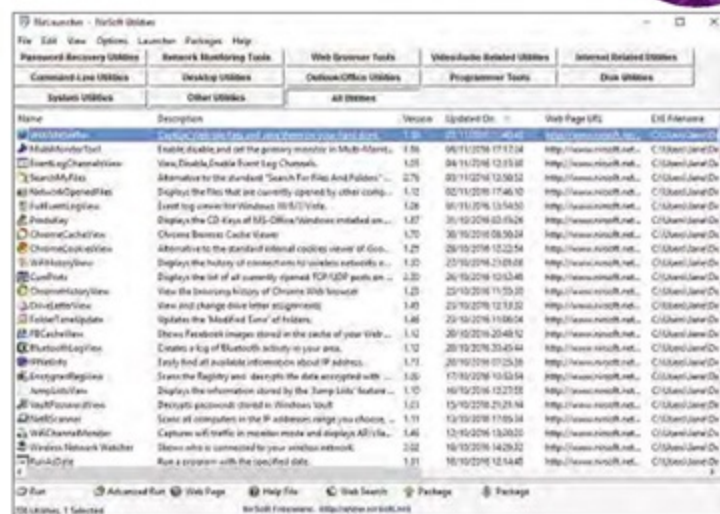
Recent additions to the launcher include BrowserAddonsView, which lists every browser add-on on your PC, and

VaultPasswordView, which recovers passwords. There are also tools for taking control of deep Windows processes, managing files, boosting your Wi-Fi and much, much more.

To get NirLauncher, click Download and then click the green Download button. The program file is less than 1MB, but it only works if you run it from inside the folder, which contains data amounting to 40.8MB at the time of writing. That's still a modest chunk of hard drive space for 200 tools.

What's the catch?

Some antivirus programs block NirLauncher. The software and its component tools are safe, but they let you do things, such as recovering passwords, that can be exploited by less trustworthy types, so security software takes a dim view of them. If your antivirus software won't let you



download NirLauncher, either whitelist it or try the password-protected link on the download page.

ALSO TRY

PortableApps Platform
portableapps.com

Choose from a huge selection of portable tools, including familiar names such as LibreOffice, and download several at once. It comes in installable and portable editions. There's not much to dislike, except that it calls programs 'apps'.



THE STATE OF SOFTWARE IN 2017

Jane Hoskyn reflects on how software has changed over the past year

Apps, apps, everywhere – it's enough to make old-fashioned software developers hang up their executables and switch to making slick little tools for tablets instead. But they haven't. If anything, we're more impressed by the state of traditional PC programs now than we were a year ago. Perhaps a little competition – from free online tools as well as apps and even Chromebooks – has done them good.

Browsers are a surprisingly rich seam. Chrome still dominates, but we've seen Opera take on a whole new role as the trailblazer for speed and

security, while Vivaldi has blossomed into the savvy web user's browser of choice. Edge, meanwhile, has sunk to the sea bed despite Microsoft's insistence on pushing it onto the taskbars of Windows 10 users with its heavy-handed updates.

Ah yes, Windows 10. Like many of you, we find the not-so-new OS both a blessing and a curse – as do software developers. The need to upgrade and update their programs for Windows 10 has nudged them (eventually) to create more powerful versions of software that had been coasting for

years. They've also been inspired to invent tools that address Windows 10's annoyances. Programs such as O&O ShutUp10 (www.oo-software.com) and 10AppsManager (see page 44) exist purely to help

you regain control and restore your privacy. You'll never find a Windows 10 app or online tool that does what those programs can.

Microsoft doesn't like these tools one bit. Windows 10 has an alarming tendency to block system-tweaking tools, claiming they're unsafe when they're not. Anyone who's read *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* knows why that's potentially dangerous.

If we can't trust Windows 10 to tell a safe program from a dangerous one, it's more important than ever to treat downloads with caution. Despite the efforts of some developers (notably IObit) to clean up their installers, dodgy downloads are still free software's dirty secret, so be careful when installing and keep the brilliant Unchecky (unchecky.com) running in the background. But it seems that, increasingly, software developers are not out to trick you with junk – they simply love creating programs that put you in your PC's driving seat.



8

PHOTO VIEWER

XnView

www.xnview.com

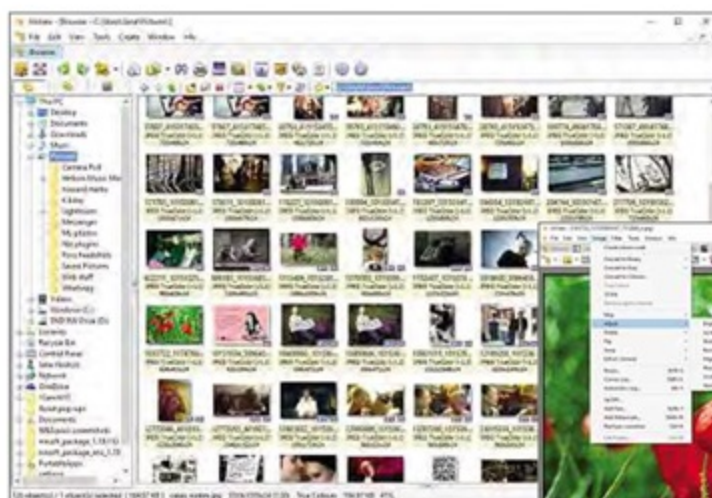
Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

Size: 10.63MB (Minimal), 19MB (Standard), 54.7MB (Extended)

Why you'll love it

XnView's developers describe their program as an 'image viewer', which is seriously underselling it. This fabulous software not only lets you view and manage your photo library but also crop, rotate and resize photos, adjust the exposure and colour, add filters, convert between formats, weed out duplicates, create slideshows, edit metadata... and that's just the Minimal edition. There's also a Standard edition, which supports more formats, and an Extended edition that includes plugins for video export and more.

XnView is more than a match for your vast collection of digital photos and works well in Windows 10. But if you want something more cutting-edge, try the new beta version, XnView MP (www.xnview.com/en/xnviewmp).



MP stands for Multi Platform but might as well stand for More Please, because it's basically a souped-up version of XnView, with batch-conversion tools and support for even more formats.

What's the catch?

XnView is no substitute for Photoshop. Unlike FastStone Image Viewer (www.faststone.org), it doesn't have a spot-removal tool, but that's unlikely to be a deal-breaker unless you deal with spotty photos on a daily basis. You can add some image-manipulation tools by downloading Adobe Photoshop plugin packs (bit.ly/xnphoto412), but they consist mainly of filters and masks.

ALSO TRY

Gimp

www.gimp.org



Graphics program Gimp is the best free alternative to Photoshop. The latest version, Gimp 2.10, is due out "soon" and uses a powerful new processing engine that paves the way for non-destructive editing – the holy grail of photo programs.

9

SCREEN RECORDER

OBS Studio

obsproject.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

Size: 180.2MB

Why you'll love it

This new open-source program lets you record a video of whatever is happening on your screen. You could use it to create a how-to video for your favourite software, for example. It's also a quick and easy way to convert your own videos: simply play them and record the playback in a new format.

We know what you're thinking: people will use this to record programmes from BBC iPlayer and Netflix, so they can keep them forever. Yes, some people

might do that – screen recording is not really that different from recording TV broadcasts using your old VHS recorder.

Whatever use you have planned for OBS, the basics are easy to master: simply choose Display Capture under Sources, select the area you want to record, click to start and click again to stop. OBS saves the finished video automatically in your specified format, which you set by going to Settings and selecting Output. There are no time limits, watermarks or hidden costs.

OBS Studio offers some advanced features, too, such as the ability to add narration and automatic capture from YouTube. And if you're ready for your close-up, OBS Studio even lets you stream your own live broadcasts.

What's the catch?

OBS Studio is a big, bamboozling beta. It doesn't (yet) have a user guide, and its



controls and menus are hard to navigate. It's much easier to use if you have two monitors because you can then record from one monitor in full-screen while controlling OBS on the other.

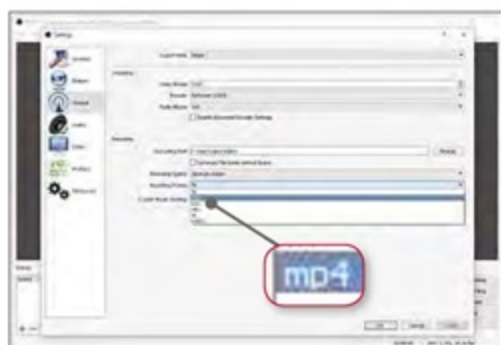
ALSO TRY

oCam

bit.ly/ocam412



This free tool is as easy to use as OBS Studio is baffling – just position the green rectangle and click Record. Simplicity comes at a cost, though. There's only one export format (AVI), and the program won't work at all if your PC doesn't have speakers.



10 MEDIA MANAGER

MediaPortal 2

www.team-mediaportal.com

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8+/10

Size: 300.5MB

Why you'll love it

This open-source program is a brilliant replacement for Windows Media Centre, which Microsoft cast aside in Windows 10. Like WMC, it's a TV tuner (as long as your PC has a tuner card), video recorder, music player, radio, media file manager and photo viewer all in one. Install it on a spare laptop, plug it into the TV and it could be the only set-top box you ever need.

The original MediaPortal 1 is still around but won't be supported for much longer, so users are being nudged over to the new MediaPortal 2. Despite being more powerful than its predecessor, MediaPortal 2 uses less memory, and all its controls and settings are now presented in a single program window. It adds a few new built-in features, too, such as picture-in-picture support, playlist import and YouTube video plugins.

What's the catch?

MediaPortal 1 supports dozens of third-party add-ons (plugins) for features including subtitles, on-screen lyrics and even sleep timers (bit.ly/mediaplug412), but at the time of writing, MP2 supports a miserly 14. Whether you opt for MP1 or MP2, installation is a painful process.



We recommend you read the MediaPortal wiki (bit.ly/mediawiki412) before you attempt it. The program is safe, but you will need to whitelist it in Windows Firewall to avoid aggravation.

ALSO TRY

Kodi

kodi.tv

Kodi is similar to MediaPortal but better known – partly because it supports some third-party add-ons that people have used to watch paid-for TV for free. Controversy aside, Kodi is a great media player and is considerably easier to set up than MediaPortal.

What you say...



We asked *Web User* readers about their favourite free software of 2016. Here's what you told us

HitFilm 4 Express (hitfilm.com/express). It's the best free video editor I've used.

Jason Forster @Jaffo

MiniTool Partition Wizard (www.partitionwizard.com). This hidden gem is simple to use and powerful.

Si Mellor

SharpKeys (sharpkeys.codeplex.com) let me reprogram the Home button as a Delete key when I got a new keyboard and it had moved!

Chris Armstrong

AutoHotKey (ahkscript.org). I've used it to create scripts to automate mundane tasks. It can also create standalone programs. A must-have.

Gary Olsen

Filebot (www.filebot.net). I couldn't cope without it. Ideal for organising media for my Plex Server at home.

Dave Harper

CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner). It easily erases System Restore points, which take up a lot of space, and cleans up junk files.

Brian Brown

Google Nik Collection (www.google.com/nikcollection). The Silver Efex tool is excellent for processing black-and-white photos.

Colin Wallace

NEXT ISSUE

on sale Friday 30 December 2016

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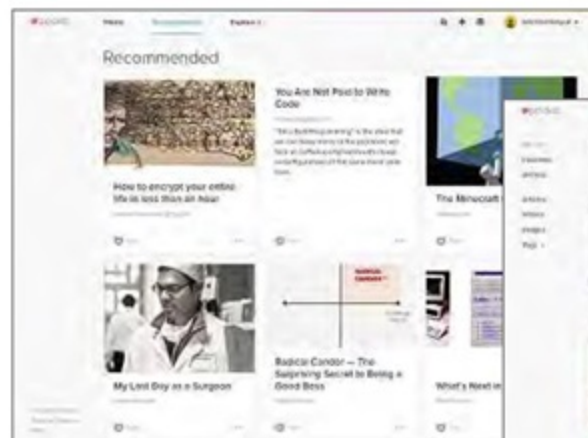
WebUser
GOLD
AWARD

What we liked:

Most read-it-later tools are superficially similar. Like the others we've tested here, Pocket installs a button on your browser that, when clicked, saves the current web page to your own personal list of items to read later. If you find a long article that you haven't got time to read or stumble across something distracting that isn't really what you should be looking at right now, it's a slick and simple way to put the item to one side, while ensuring that it's tucked safely away where you can find it easily.

When you return to the service, either on the web or using a mobile app, you'll see a virtual card for each page or article you've saved, with a headline and a picture, so you can easily find what you want to read. Click or tap a card to see the full text and pictures from the article, but in a format that's free of ads and menus and other distractions, with a typeface that's easy on the eye.

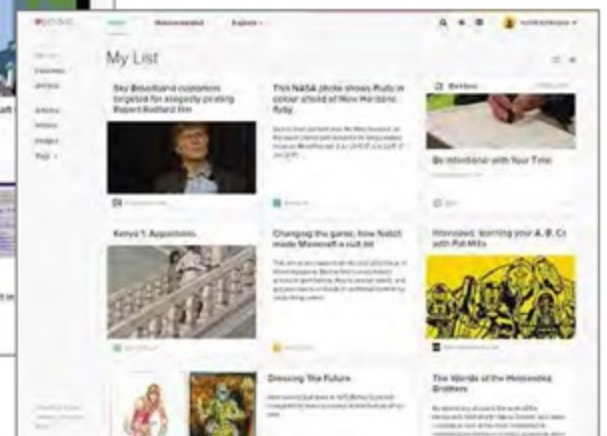
Pocket's main benefit over Instapaper is the ability to add tags to saved items, which lets you organise your reading list as you go. For example, you may be browsing around the web and come across a page you want to look at when



you next have a spare moment at home, and another that's more suitable for work time. Tagging them as 'work' and 'home' lets you sort your reading list into categories so you can quickly find an appropriate article the next time you want to read something.

How it can be improved:

Pocket still offers a Premium version, which means it's holding something back from users of its free service. It's not cheap, either, at \$44.99 (around £36) per year. However, the tools it reserves for paying customers are for features such as advanced search and backup, which you'll only need if you get heavily into the service and use it as a full bookmarking tool.



OUR VERDICT

This feature was originally inspired by Instapaper going completely free but although Pocket maintains a paid-for premium tool, we still prefer it. The free version is perfectly adequate for most users, as long as you don't want to keep your bookmarks for longer than it takes to read them. Until then, its tag-based organising tools raise it above Instapaper, especially if you like to collect a lot of things to read.

Instapaper | www.instapaper.com | ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

What we liked:

Instapaper is incredibly simple. To save a link in your browser, click the add-on button (available for Chrome and Safari) or, if there isn't an add-on for your chosen browser, drag the page's URL from the address bar to the Instapaper bookmarklet to save it.

Instapaper makes one long list of the things you've saved. Once you've read something, you can archive it or delete it. You can mark particular items as favourites to pick them out from the rest, and you can separate videos, for those times when you're in the mood for watching rather than reading.

The service includes a number of interesting supplementary tools. We really like Instapaper's distraction-free reading tool, which displays only the text and pictures of an article without the ads and extras. It also has an interesting Speed Read tool, which flashes up the words, one after another, on your screen, to help you read faster than normal.



How it can be improved:

Although there's an argument for keeping Instapaper simple, we'd prefer it to have tags for organising your reading list. This would help you find the right thing to read at a particular time.

OUR VERDICT

Instapaper's simplicity is an asset, and its distraction-free pages and speed-reading tool help you quickly get through your backlog of reading. However, it could do with tags or folders to help with organisation.

Candy | www.candybank.com | ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

What we liked:

Adding a site to Candy is easy: simply drag your cursor over a quote you want to use to identify the page, then save it by clicking the button that appears when you release the left mouse button. You can also save the page without highlighting anything.

The add-on creates something like an index card of content, which you can add to 'storylines'. These are like tags or folders, although Candy insists on likening them to playlists. You can click through one of these to the original content of the page, which is archived (so it will still be there even if the site disappears) and presented in a distraction-free format, with no ads, menus or other website detritus.

Candy prides itself on its integration with current business tools such as Slack (slack.com) and Trello (trello.com), and although this feels a bit like it's jumping on the bandwagon, it's a useful addition if you're organising lists for groups of people rather than just for yourself.



How it can be improved:

The add-on puts an icon in the bottom-right corner of Chrome, which is fine if nothing else uses that space (it clashes with Ghostery, for example) but can be intrusive. Title editing is temperamental, too, and we missed having a mobile app.

OUR VERDICT

If you do most of your browsing in Chrome on your PC and want to be able to organise your reading lists, Candy has some powerful tools. It's not as intuitive as it looks, though, and the lack of mobile apps limits where and when you can use it.

BEST OF THE REST

Wallabag

www.wallabag.org

Wallabag is very different to the other services in this round-up because it's an open-source program that you install on your own web server.



This is an extreme option but guarantees your privacy and hands you complete control of your service. Although the software is free, it requires PHP and a database, so you'll need to pay for web hosting to use it.

Flipboard

flipboard.com

Flipboard works perfectly well as a service for collating articles to read later, but it has positioned itself more as a content-discovery service. It collects pages you save into 'magazines' which you can then

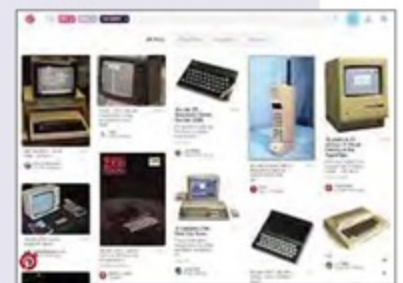


share with other people. Flipboard also has deals with brands such as *Vogue* and *National Geographic* to produce magazines to which you can subscribe.

Pinterest

www.pinterest.com

The fact that Pinterest bought Instapaper suggests that the company doesn't see its own product as a read-it-later tool, although you can certainly use it as one. Like







Flipboard, however, Pinterest is more social and is largely arranged around the idea of

sharing. It's also more about pictures than text but, if you're visually minded, it's a great place to keep images you might want to view and share later.

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3		TalkTalk: Broadband	£22.95 **	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£275.40
4		Virgin: Broadband	£45.00 (£29.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited*	£348.00

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Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 29 November 2016.

Ofcom

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

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AND...WINDOWS 10 IN 2017 -

Changes you need to prepare for

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Take a Screen Break

How much do you remember about the biggest tech stories of 2016? Find out by taking our fiendish festive challenge

1 Which app was downloaded 500 million times in its first two months of release?



2 What did Google call the seventh version of its Android mobile operating system, which was released in August?

3 Which mobile network caused controversy with its plan to block nearly all adverts?



4 What feature did Apple drop from the iPhone 7, in what it claimed was an act of "courage"?

5 What was the name of the

popular photo-organising software ditched by Google in March?

6 Which celebrity quit Twitter in February because "too many people have peed in the pool for you to want to swim there any more"?



7 Which tech giant bought the social network LinkedIn for a reported \$26.2bn (£21.1m)?

8 Which of the following companies *didn't* report a hack in 2016: Yahoo, Dropbox, Amazon or Tesco Bank?

9 As of October 2016, what percentage of computer users worldwide runs Windows 10: 12%, 23% or 47%?



10 Which browser won lots of new fans by including a built-in VPN in its 40th version?

11 Which website was criticised for censoring the famous 'Napalm girl' photo of the Vietnam War?



12 Why was Samsung forced to recall and apologise for its Galaxy Note 7 'phablet'?



13 What was the minimum broadband speed promised to everyone in the UK in the Queen's Speech?

CAN YOU GUESS THE 2016 EVENTS FROM THE EMOJI?

1



2



3



4



Get the answers online at bit.ly/quiz412

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 4 Penclic Mouse D2 Wired

The Penclic Mouse D2 Wired looks, feels and moves like a pen, facilitating a relaxed working hand posture that helps to alleviate RSI. It allows your forearm to rest on the work surface while moving the mouse cursor around the computer screen precisely and quickly. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'penclic' in the subject line. For more information visit www.posturite.co.uk and follow @Penclic on Twitter.



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16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Master Google's new Gmail and Calendar apps for iOS

bit.ly/gmail412 & bit.ly/calendar412

Google has made big changes to its Gmail and Calendar apps for iOS. We explain them here

Gmail on iOS has been tweaked a little over the years, but it hasn't changed significantly since it launched – until now. The app's biggest overhaul in nearly four years introduces a new look and new tools, including the ability to undo message sending to prevent embarrassing mistakes (just as you can in the web version). Search is now faster and more accurate, and the

app offers easy new ways to clear your inbox. Calendar for iOS has received a similar makeover, and offers more ways to keep up to date with your schedule; support for non-Gregorian calendars; and the ability to search for events and more using Apple Spotlight Search.

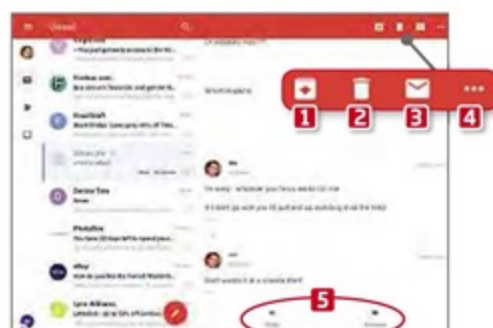
While the two updated apps look straightforward enough, there's more to them than you might think.



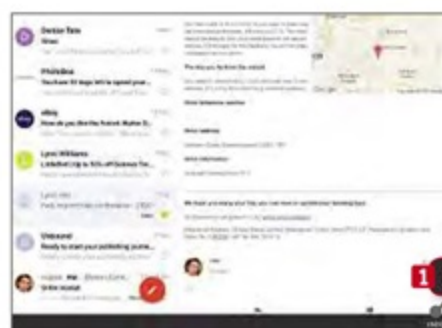
1 Gmail's new look introduces a red strip along the top **1** that shows which mail box you currently have open, and lets you search for something. You can quickly archive any message (that is, hide it from the Inbox view) by swiping left or right. If you do this accidentally, you can undo the action. **2**



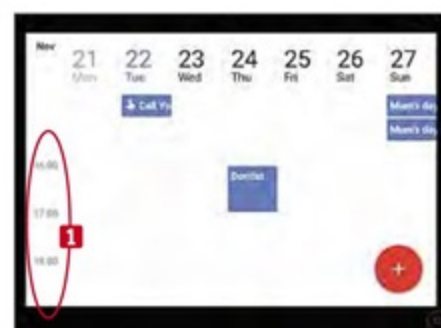
2 Tap the menu button **1** to open the sidebar. From here you can select a folder to view, such as Unread, Important, Everything **2** or Sent. **3** Scroll down to the bottom to open the Settings. Here you can choose whether swiping archives messages or deletes them. You can manage notifications, too.



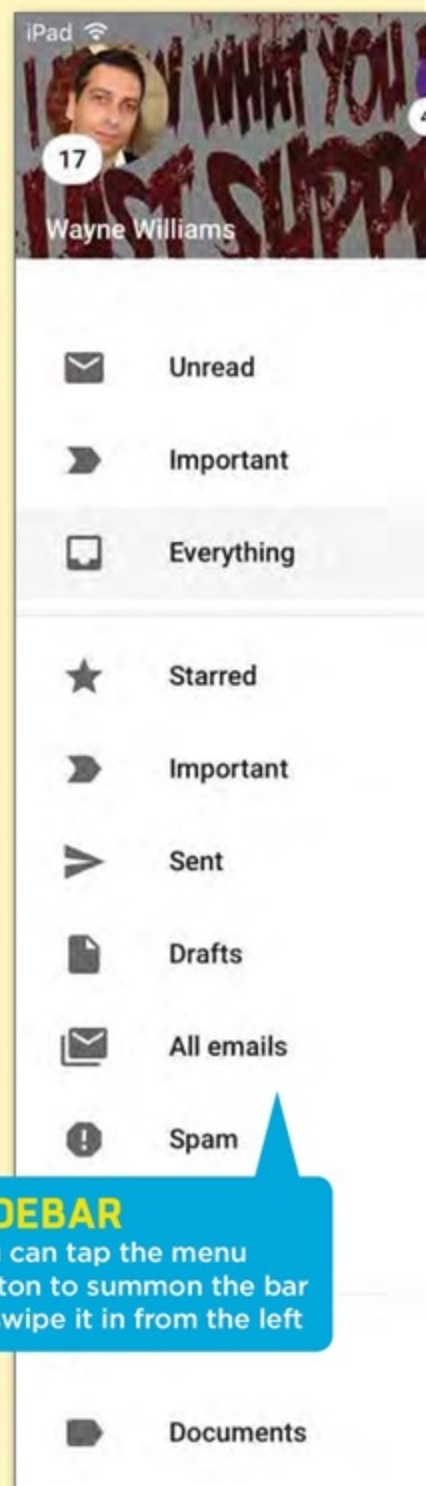
3 Tap a message to open it. From the top strip you can archive the message, **1** delete it **2** or mark it as read or unread. **3** Tap the ellipses **4** to access the 'Move to', 'Change labels', 'Mute' and 'Report spam' options. Scroll to the bottom to reveal the Reply and Forward buttons. **5**



4 Replying and forwarding messages works as you'd expect. You can add an attachment by tapping the paper clip icon and send the email by tapping the arrow. If you press Send by accident, you have five seconds to reverse the action by tapping the Undo option that appears in the bar at the bottom. **1**



5 Google Calendar displays your schedule by default. Scroll down to view events, and tap any event to find out more about it, such as when and where it's scheduled. If you rotate your phone or tablet sideways, you can view your schedule in landscape mode, with each event given a time slot. **1**



SIDEBAR

You can tap the menu button to summon the bar or swipe it in from the left

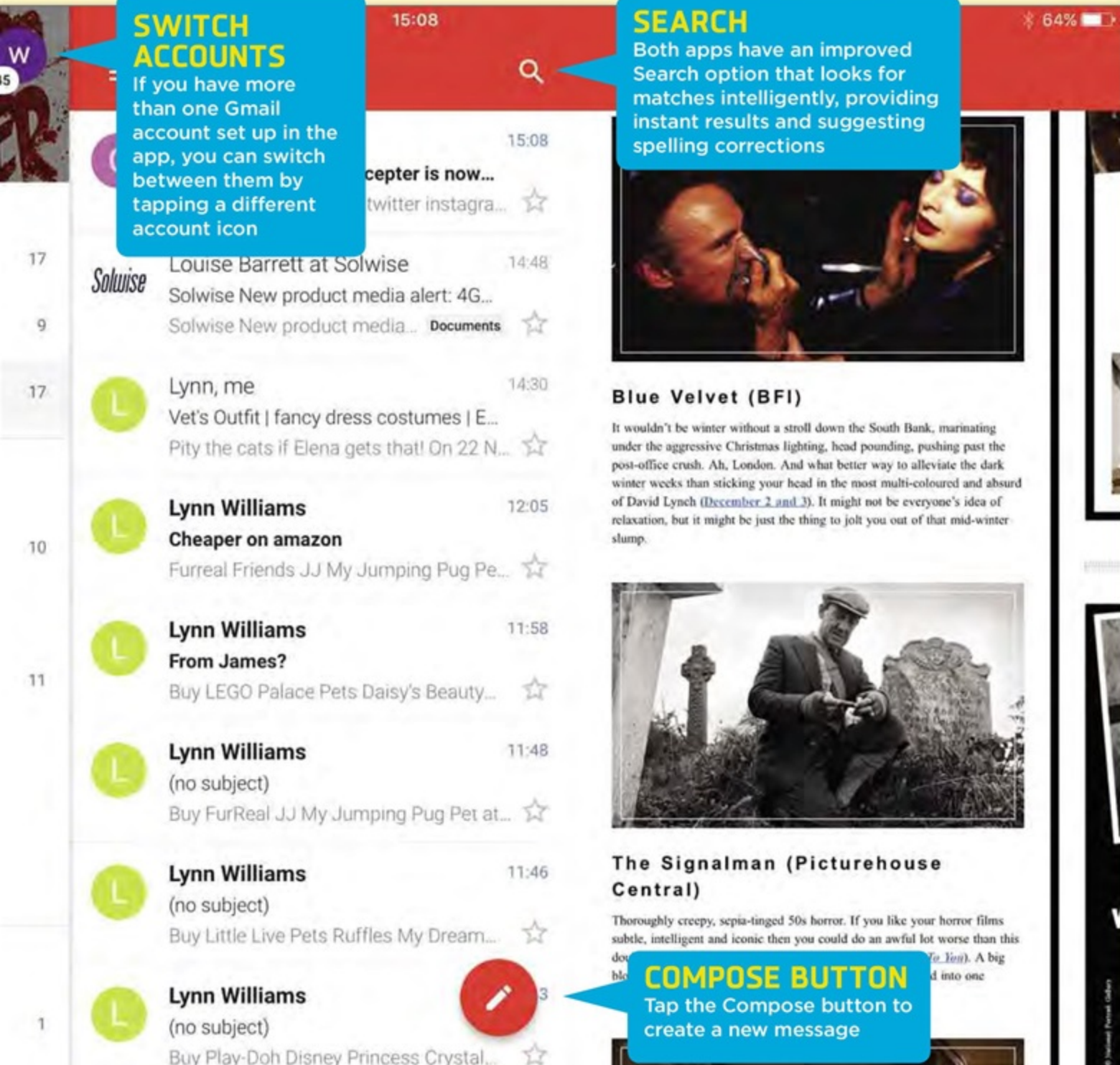


SWITCH ACCOUNTS

If you have more than one Gmail account set up in the app, you can switch between them by tapping a different account icon

SEARCH

Both apps have an improved Search option that looks for matches intelligently, providing instant results and suggesting spelling corrections



Blue Velvet (BFI)

It wouldn't be winter without a stroll down the South Bank, marinating under the aggressive Christmas lighting, head pounding, pushing past the post-office crush. Ah, London. And what better way to alleviate the dark winter weeks than sticking your head in the most multi-coloured and absurd of David Lynch ([December 2 and 3](#)). It might not be everyone's idea of relaxation, but it might be just the thing to jolt you out of that mid-winter slump.



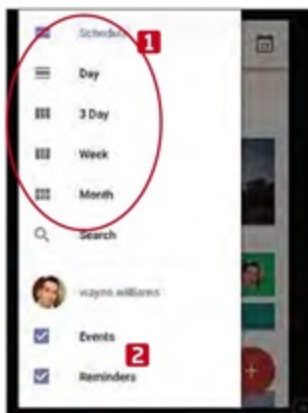
The Signalman (Picturehouse Central)

Thoroughly creepy, sepia-tinged 50s horror. If you like your horror films subtle, intelligent and iconic then you could do an awful lot worse than this do... ([The Signalman](#)). A big bl...

COMPOSE BUTTON

Tap the Compose button to create a new message

6 As with the Gmail app, tapping the menu button opens the sidebar. From here you can choose a different view – Schedule, Day, 3 Day, Week or Month. **1**



Switching between portrait and landscape mode works in each of the views. You can choose what the calendar displays, including events, reminders, birthdays and holidays. **2**



7 Tap the gear icon at the top-right of the sidebar to access the Settings. From here you can customise what the calendar shows, manage accounts and choose whether or not to pull events from Gmail. Tap General, Alternative Calendars and you can add any of the listed non-Gregorian calendars. **1**

8 Google's Calendar app now integrates with Spotlight Search in iOS. To access this, simply swipe down from the centre of the home screen. You can then type what you're looking for, including events, reminders and goals, into the search box. **1** Matching results will appear beneath. **2** Tap one to open it in the Google Calendar app.





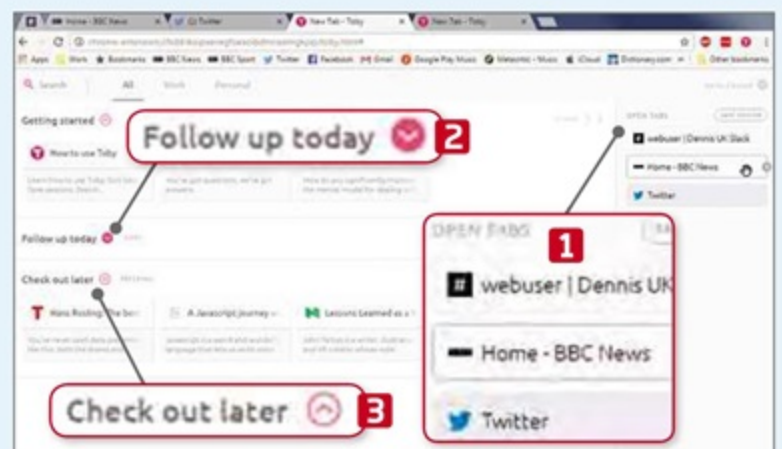
Stop Chrome hogging your PC's memory

Toby: www.gettoby.com | 15 mins | Chrome

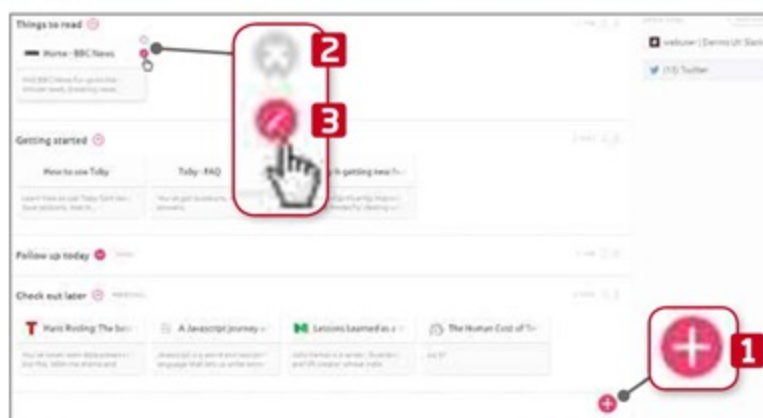
If you open the Windows Task Manager while Chrome is running and sort your PC's processes in order of memory usage, there's a good chance the browser will be at the top of the list. The easiest way to stop this RAM-hungry program slowing your PC to a crawl is to make sure you don't leave too many tabs open. Handy tab-management add-on Toby makes this easy. The tool appears whenever you open a new tab, and displays a clear overview of your current tabs, which is useful if you have so many open that you can't see what they are. What's more, it lets you close tabs easily or save them for viewing later, freeing up your PC's resources. The add-on uses 'lists' and 'labels' to help you organise your saved tabs, so you can view pages according to categories such as Personal, Work or any other you care to set up. In this Workshop, we show you how to use Toby's best features, including the ability to sync your saved tabs to Google Drive so you can pick up where you left off on any PC.



1 Visit www.gettoby.com, click 'Add Toby to Chrome' and 'Add extension'. Next, click 'OK, I'm ready' and drag the highlighted tab, as prompted. A window appears asking you to create an account. Enter your details and click 'Create Toby account' **1** or click 'Not now, I don't want free features' **2**.



2 When you open a new tab, you'll see Toby's tab-management page, with a list of your open tabs on the right. **1** Drag and drop work-related items to the 'Follow up today' list **2** and personal tabs to 'Check out later' **3**. You can close tabs by hovering over them and clicking the X.



3 To create a new list, click the + button **1** and give it an appropriate name. You can open saved tabs by clicking them. To remove a saved tab, hover your cursor over it and click the X. **2** Clicking the pen icon **3** lets you change a tab's title.



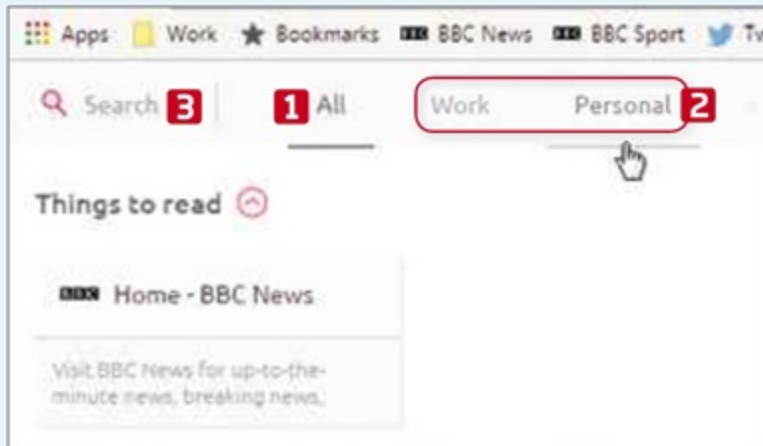
4 Toby shows the number of tabs you have saved in each list. By clicking a list's menu button, you can elect to 'Open these tabs' **1** all at once. The menu also contains options to choose or create new labels, **2** or you can delete the list completely. **3**



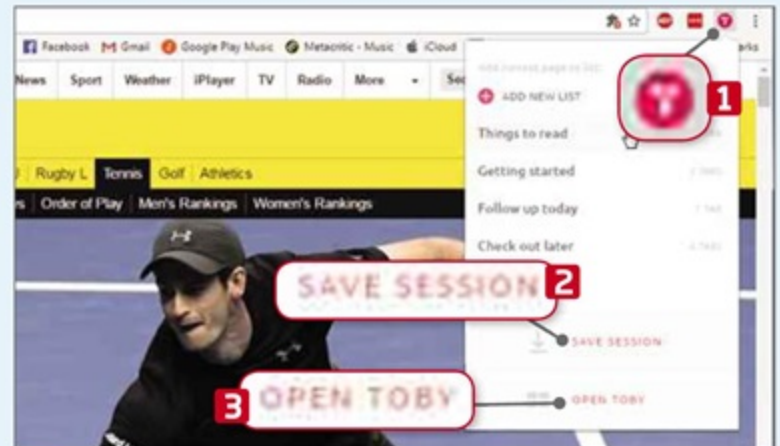
EXPERT TIP

Edward Munn says

Instead of clicking the Toby button in your toolbar, you can also right-click any blank space in a web page and choose Toby from the context menu to save the tab or save your entire session.



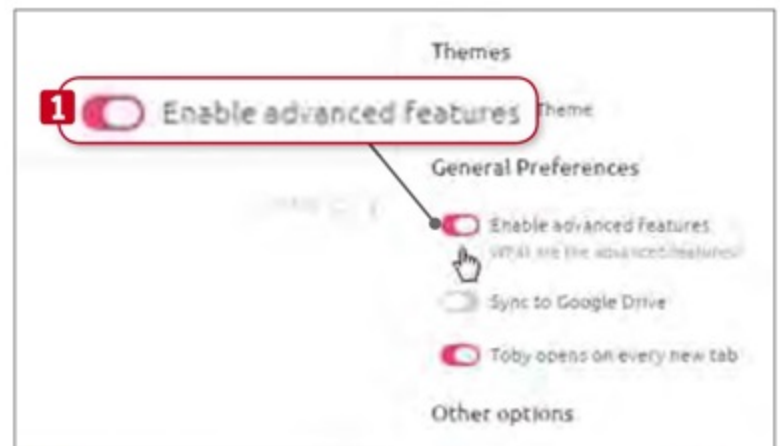
5 By default, Toby shows the All labels view, **1** but you can filter your saved tabs by selecting a label from the top menu. **2** If you can't find a saved tab, choose All and use the Search bar **3** to enter a keyword.



6 While viewing a web page, you can click the Toby button in Chrome's toolbar **1** to save the tab to a list of your choice. Alternatively, clicking 'Save session' **2** saves all your current tabs to a new list, which is labelled with the time and date. This menu also includes an Open Toby shortcut. **3**



7 From Toby's tab-management page, click the cog icon **1** to open the settings menu. Here you can enable the add-on's Dark Theme. **2** There's also an option to stop Toby automatically opening with every new tab **3** if you'd rather open it yourself from the toolbar when you need it.



8 Clicking the button to 'Enable advanced features' **1** adds two more options to Toby's list menus. One of these is 'Add all open tabs to list', which is self-explanatory. The other is 'Close all, open these', which closes all current tabs and opens those saved in a list.



9 If you'd like to sync your tabs between PCs, click the button to 'Sync to Google Drive'. Click Allow **1** when prompted to give Toby access to Google Drive. Now any tabs you save will be synced to any PC on which you install Toby and sign in.



10 The What's New link **1** in the Settings menu is a handy way of keeping up to date with the extension's latest updates. Another way is to sign up to Toby's newsletter by clicking the appropriate link. **2** To log out of Toby, click the icon next to your email address. **3**



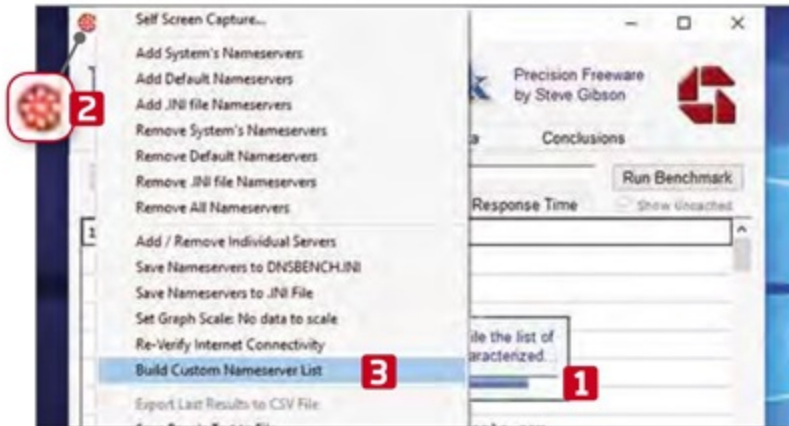
Speed up your internet with a faster DNS server

A Domain Name System (DNS) server is a computer on the internet that takes the web addresses you type into your browser and converts them into IP addresses, which the internet uses to find the website you want. A faster, more

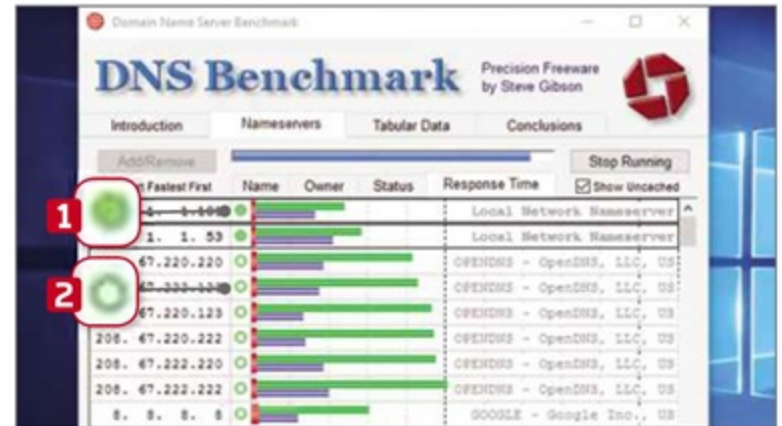
responsive DNS server will make web pages load more quickly. DNS Benchmark is a tool for finding the fastest server near you, so you can change your settings accordingly.



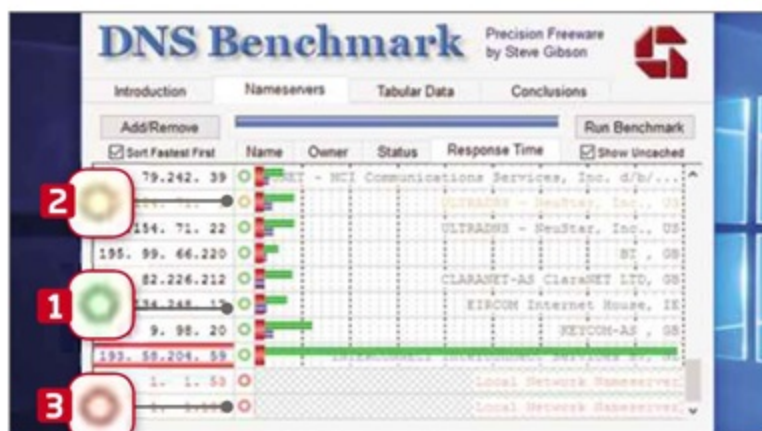
DNS Benchmark: bit.ly/dnsb412 | ⌚ 50 mins | 🖥️ Vista, 7, 8, 10



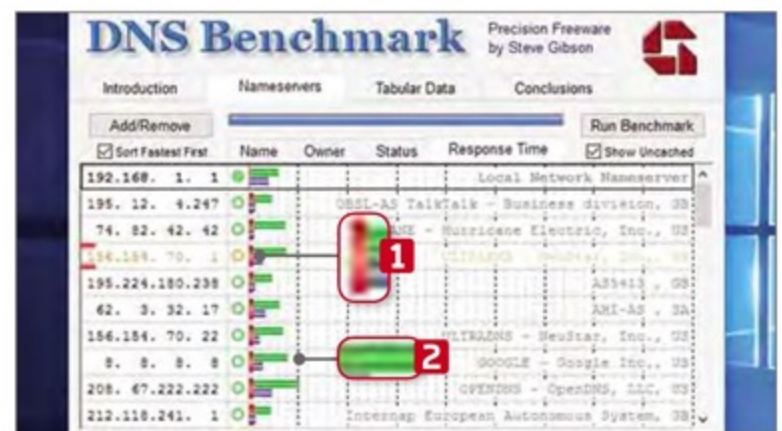
1 Download and run the software – you don't need to install it. Click the Nameservers tab and wait for the software to configure. **1** Click the red icon **2** to open the main menu. Click Build Custom Nameserver List, **3** then Build Custom List. It takes about 40 minutes, but you only have to do it once.



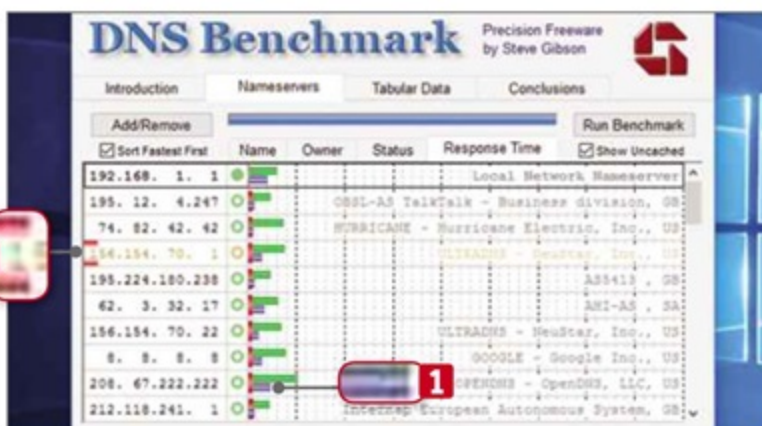
2 Click Run Benchmark and wait for the process to complete. A solid circle **1** appears next to the DNS server you're currently using. This is always at the top, regardless of how fast it is. Hollow circles **2** highlight alternative options that may be worth a try, depending on their colour.



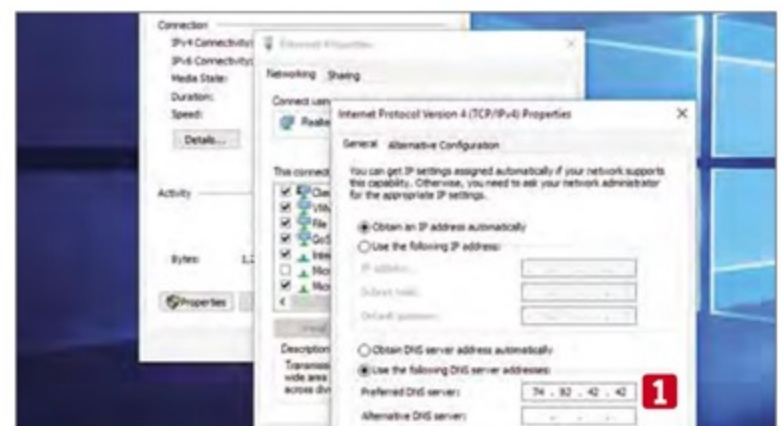
3 The software uses a traffic-light system to rate the DNS servers it finds. A green ring **1** indicates a good DNS option; an orange ring **2** signifies that a server has some flaws (such as failing to flag up non-existent URLs); and a red one **3** highlights a server that's completely unresponsive.



4 The bar chart shows performance. The red bar **1** is the most important: it shows how long a server took to return addresses cached in its database, which are for the most popular sites. Smaller is better. The green bar **2** shows the extra time taken if it had to get an address from another server.



5 The blue bar **1** is similar to the green one but it relates specifically to finding '.com' addresses that aren't already in its cache. You may find that some entries have a red highlight in the IP address column. **2** This appears if a server doesn't always respond and indicates that it may be unreliable.



6 The best place to change your DNS server is in your router's settings, although this option is blocked in some ISP-supplied routers. Check your ISP's support pages to find out how to do it. Alternatively, change Windows' DNS settings **1** by following GeekSquad's instructions at bit.ly/gs412.



Stop mobile apps leaking personal details

Opera Max recently introduced a new feature to protect your privacy against sneaky apps that use trackers to share your private information, including your name, email address and phone number.

Opera Max: bit.ly/om412 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🤖 Android 4.0+

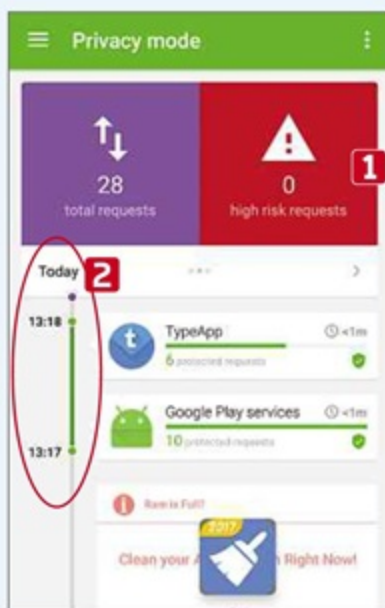
The Opera Max app also includes a useful tool to reduce your data consumption, and another that can even block some apps from using data altogether.



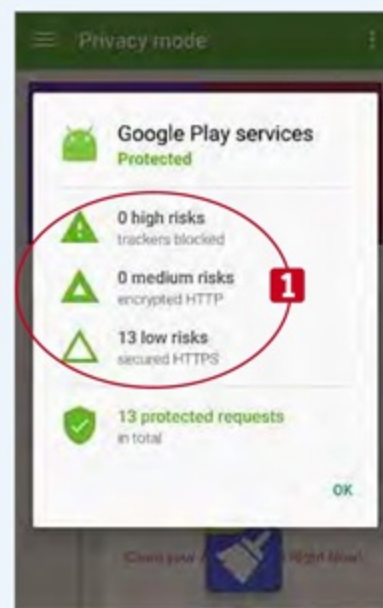
1 Install and run Opera Max and skip its introductory screens, tapping Agree & Continue when prompted. Open the app's main menu, tap 'Privacy mode' and then Skip. Tap the large Protect button to enable privacy protection. A pop-up appears asking you to set up a VPN connection. **1**



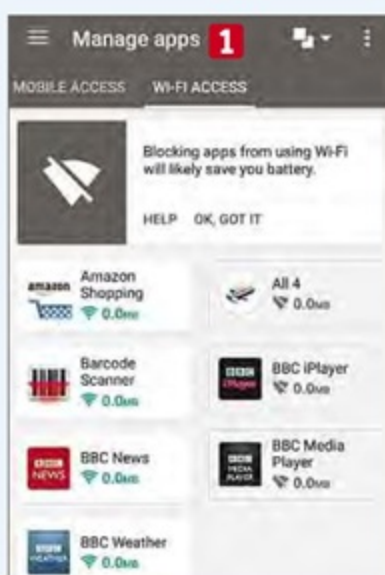
2 Tap OK and a screen loads to show that Privacy mode is turned on for the next 12 hours. A key icon in the notification bar **1** also indicates that your connection is protected. Tap Back and you'll see a summary of the time remaining, **2** the total number of requests made **3** and the number of protected requests. **4**



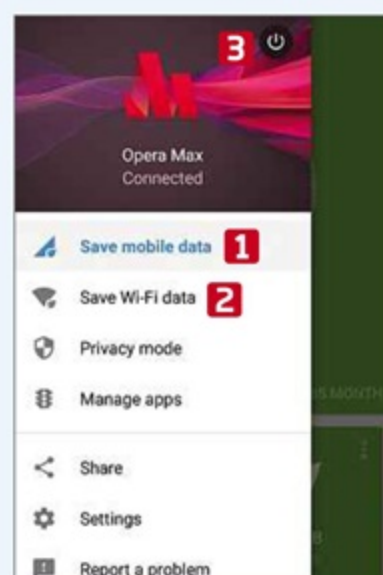
3 Tap Add Time to extend the period for which you're protected, or tap the right arrow to view more statistics, including the number of high-risk requests made, **1** the total apps used and the number of protected apps. Swiping up the page reveals a timeline of requests made by your apps. **2**



4 The number of requests made by each app is shown. Tap one to see a more detailed summary, listing the number of high, medium and low risk requests that it's made. **1** To turn off Privacy mode before its timer runs out, tap the three-dot button and select 'Turn off privacy'.



5 To see how much data your apps are using, select 'Manage apps' from Opera Max's menu **1** and tap Enable when prompted. The 'Mobile Access' tab loads by default, but you can also check how much your apps use on Wi-Fi by tapping Wi-Fi Access. To block an app from using data, tap it. The app will move to the right-hand column.



6 Alternatively, if you want to minimise data usage without blocking apps, select 'Save mobile data' **1** or 'Save Wi-Fi data' **2** from the main menu. Tap the 'Start Saving' button to turn on savings and Opera Max will display a list of apps that the feature is compatible with. To turn off Opera Max, open the main menu and tap its power button. **3**

Weekend Project

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



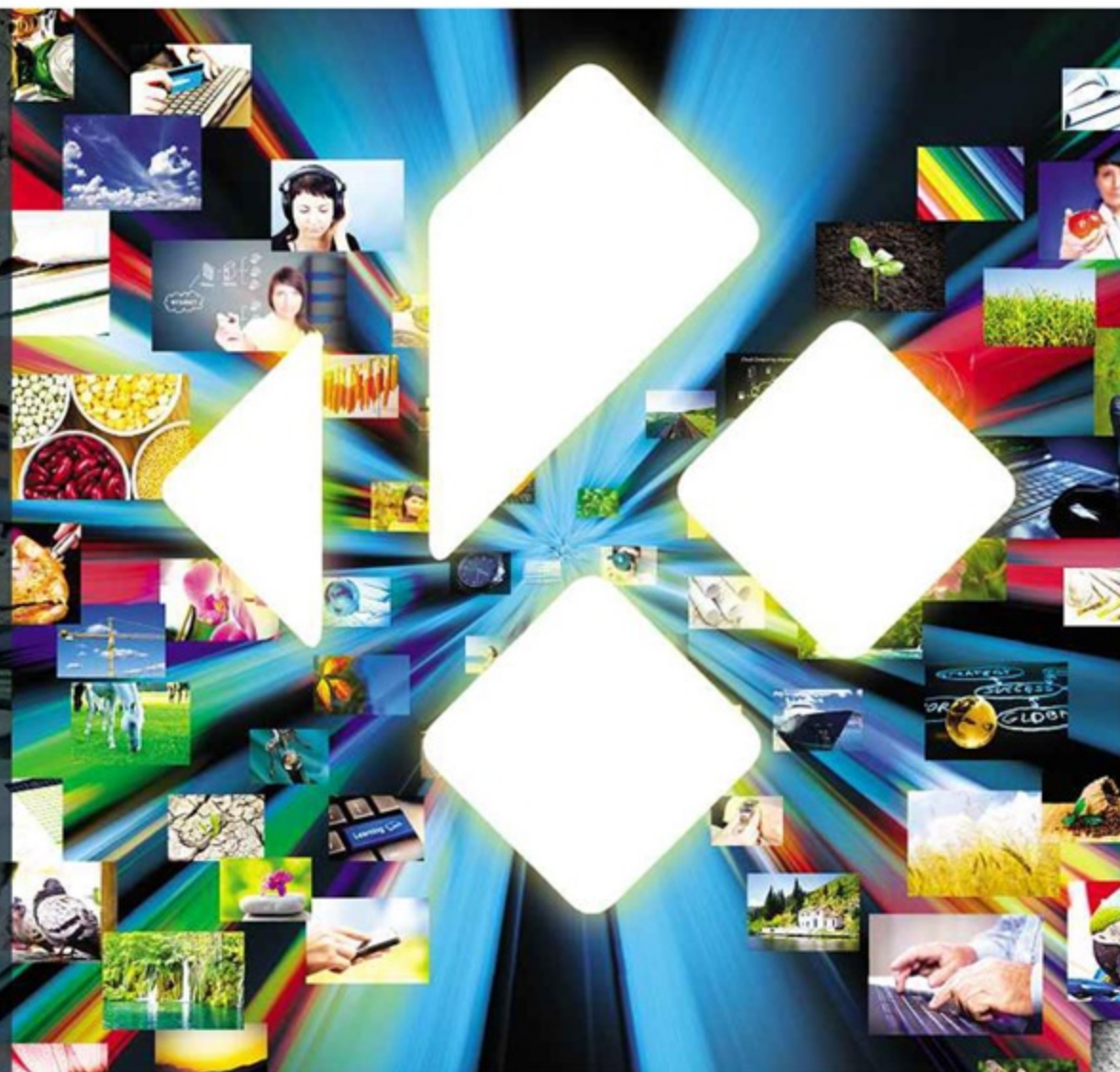
How to...

Build the ultimate Kodi entertainment system

Using only the free Kodi software and an old PC, you can build a powerful home media centre. **Wayne Williams** explains the process

Kodi started life as the Xbox Media Centre in 2002, before becoming XBMC in 2004 and then finally adopting its current name in 2014. Designed to turn your PC into a home-entertainment hub, the software can play all sorts of media, including videos, music, DVDs and photos. It also supports scripts and plugins so you can expand it by installing any of the ready-made add-ons or, if you're feeling particularly creative, write your own.

If you have a spare PC (or even a cheap little Raspberry Pi computer), you can run Kodi on that and attach it to your TV like a set-top box. Or, if you prefer, you can simply use it on your regular computer, either in full-screen or windowed mode. Kodi is available for Windows, MacOS, Linux, Android and iOS.



Build a dedicated entertainment hub

You can run Kodi on any PC, but if you really want to get the most out of it, consider turning an old computer or Raspberry Pi into a dedicated media centre that you can connect to your TV. You don't need anything particularly powerful for this – just a PC with an HDMI port (so you can connect it to your TV using a standard HDMI cable), a decent-

sized hard drive and a DVD or Blu-ray player if you want to watch movies from disc. For the ultimate system, consider getting a decent graphics card and sound card, too.

Once you've installed the software, connect your PC to your TV using an HDMI cable and it should just work. If you don't hear any sound, go to System, Settings, click System and select 'Audio output'. Change 'Audio

output device' from 'DIRECTSOUND: Default' to one of the HDMI choices.

Kodi is designed to be used from a sofa rather than sitting at a desk with a keyboard, so it has what the developers refer to as a '10-foot user interface'. This means the software is a lot easier to use with a remote control than with a keyboard and mouse. There are plenty of compatible remotes online. A quick search on Amazon or eBay will turn up a



Open Embedded Linux Entertainment Centre (OpenELEC) is a Linux-based OS that turns your computer into a dedicated Kodi media centre

wide selection, most of which cost less than £10. There's also the free official Kore remote app for Android devices (bit.ly/kor412). To use this, your phone or tablet must be on the same wireless network as your Kodi system. We show you how to get it working in our Mini Workshop, below.

Another thing to consider is that when you switch on your Kodi media centre, Windows loads first and you then have to launch Kodi, which is far from ideal. Launcher4Kodi (bit.ly/laun412) runs the software at startup and keeps it in the foreground at all times, as well as offering other tweaks and functions. If you prefer, you can replace Windows entirely with OpenELEC (openelec.tv). This small, Linux-based operating system is built around Kodi and is so tiny that it can be installed and run on a Raspberry Pi.

Create multiple profiles

You may be happy to share Kodi with everyone in your house, but if you'd

rather keep your media choices separate from others you can create individual password-protected profiles for each user. That way, you can limit your children's choices to kids' movies when they log in, and you won't be bothered by their film choices when you access your own account.

Setting up individual accounts is very straightforward. Go to System, Profiles and click Profiles on the left. Click the 'Add profile' button and enter a name for that user. Click Done, then browse for a folder that contains their media. In the 'Edit profile' window, you can add a profile picture, set lock preferences and

choose sharing options for Media Info and Media Sources. You have a choice of 'Entirely separate', 'Shares with default' and 'Shares with default (read only)'.

Set a screensaver

Streaming devices such as Chromecast and Roku have a screensaver tool that



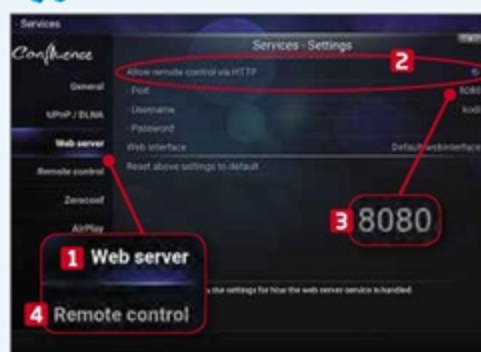
Create a separate profile for each of your family members and choose which content to share



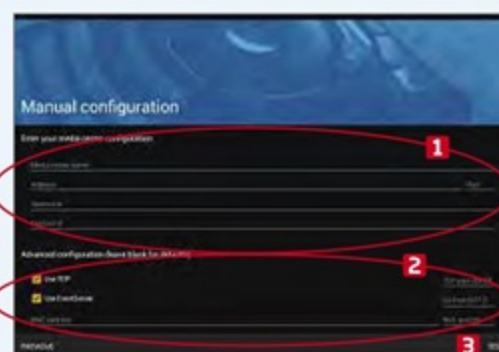
The Big Pictures Screensaver displays images pulled from various photojournalism sites when your Kodi media centre is idle



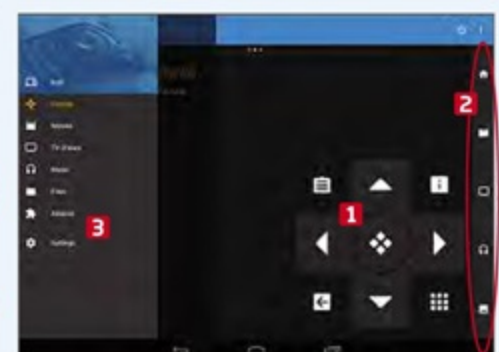
MINI WORKSHOP | Use an Android phone or tablet as a Kodi remote



1 Open Kodi and go to System, 'System info'. Make a note of the IP address, then go to System, Settings and click Services. Click 'Web server' **1** and enable 'Allow remote control via HTTP'. **2** Make a note of the port number. **3** Finally, click 'Remote control' **4** and enable both options.



2 Install the Kore app (bit.ly/kor412) on your Android device and run it. Click Next, and Kore should find Kodi and connect automatically. If it doesn't, tap Next to connect manually. Enter the media centre name, the IP address and port number from Step 1 and a user name (Kodi). **1** Leave the advanced configuration boxes blank. **2** Tap Test. **3**



3 Once the two devices have made a connection, you can use Kore to control Kodi. Move around the media centre menu using the controls **1** and access other options from the strip of icons on the right. **2** Tap the menu button on the left to open a sidebar **3** that you can use to access add-ons and settings.

WebUser Bookstore

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THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO WINDOWS 10

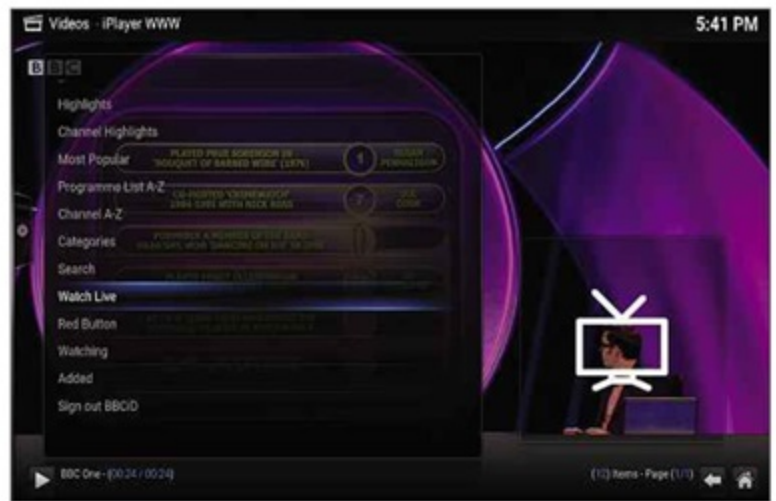
This 148-page book is the perfect way to get started with Microsoft's fantastic operating system. You'll learn how to master all the new tools and software, and how to upgrade without losing anything. It has been updated to include fixes for problems that have appeared since Windows 10 launched.



BUY IT NOW FROM AMAZON
at bit.ly/guidetowindows10



AppTV is a skin for Kodi that's inspired by the design of the Apple TV interface



The iPlayer WWW add-on lets you watch BBC channels live, or catch up on past programmes

kicks in after a period of inactivity and displays attractive images rather than a boring menu or paused programme. Kodi can also display a screensaver. The default choice (Dim) is rather bland, but there are plenty of other options available that are more interesting.

To enable the screensaver, go to System, Settings, click Appearance on the left and select Screensaver. Click the 'Screensaver mode' option to select the type of screensaver you want. You can preview the selection and set a wait time to specify how long Kodi needs to be idle before the screensaver kicks in.

If none of the choices on offer appeals to you, click the 'Get more' button on the right of the screen to browse through some additional screensavers.

Change the way Kodi looks

You can give Kodi a makeover by changing the default background and installing a different skin. To change the background, go to System, Settings, Appearance, Skin, Settings and click Background Options. Select 'Enable custom background', then click 'Background path' and browse for the image you want to use. To change the skin, go to System, Settings, Appearance, Skin, Skin and click 'Get more'. Browse the selection to find one you like.

Watch BBC TV through iPlayer

BBC iPlayer is available on many set-top boxes and smart TVs, and although it isn't installed on Kodi by default, you can add it (and a range of other 'channels')

using an add-on called 'iPlayer WWW'.

You can watch catch-up and on-demand programmes, and also live BBC channels. To install it, go to Videos, Add-ons and click 'Get more'. Scroll down the list to iPlayer WWW. Select it and click Install.

To launch iPlayer, go to Videos, Add-ons and click iPlayer WWW. A message appears warning you that you need a UK TV licence to watch iPlayer content legally (both live and on demand). Click OK and you can browse the options, which include Highlights, Channel Highlights and Watch Live. Select the Live option and choose the channel you want. It should start streaming after a couple of seconds.

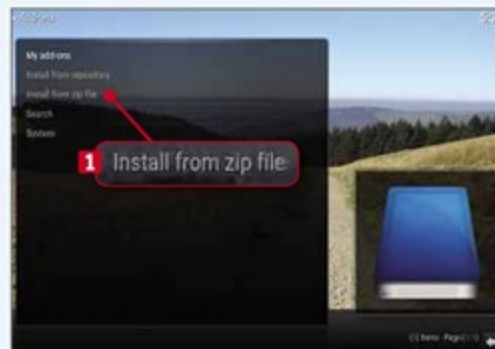
We show you how to watch ITV channels in our Mini Workshop, below.



MINI WORKSHOP | Watch ITV on Kodi



1 As we explain above, setting up iPlayer in Kodi is a simple matter of installing an add-on. Setting up ITV for watching live programmes and catch-up TV is rather more complicated. To begin, go to System, File Manager and double-click 'Add source'. Click <None>, **1** type <http://xfinitytalk.me/xfinity> and click Done.



2 Click OK. Go back to the Home screen and select System, followed by Add-ons. Next, select 'Install from zip file'. **1** If you can't see this option, keep clicking the dots at the top of the screen to navigate through the directory structure until you find it. Select 'xfinity', then 'XfinityTalk_Repository' and 'Install from repository'. Finally, select 'XfinityTalk Repository'.



3 Click 'Video add-ons', then select ITV and click Install. You can access ITV by going to Videos, Add-ons, ITV. Select ITV Player **1** to browse through a selection of past programmes and episodes that are available to stream, including *Coronation Street*, *Emmerdale*, *Doc Martin*, and *Man About the House*. You can also watch ITV's various channels live. **2**

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Web User's Top Tips

Our experts explain how to master VirtualBox any run operating system in a window on your PC

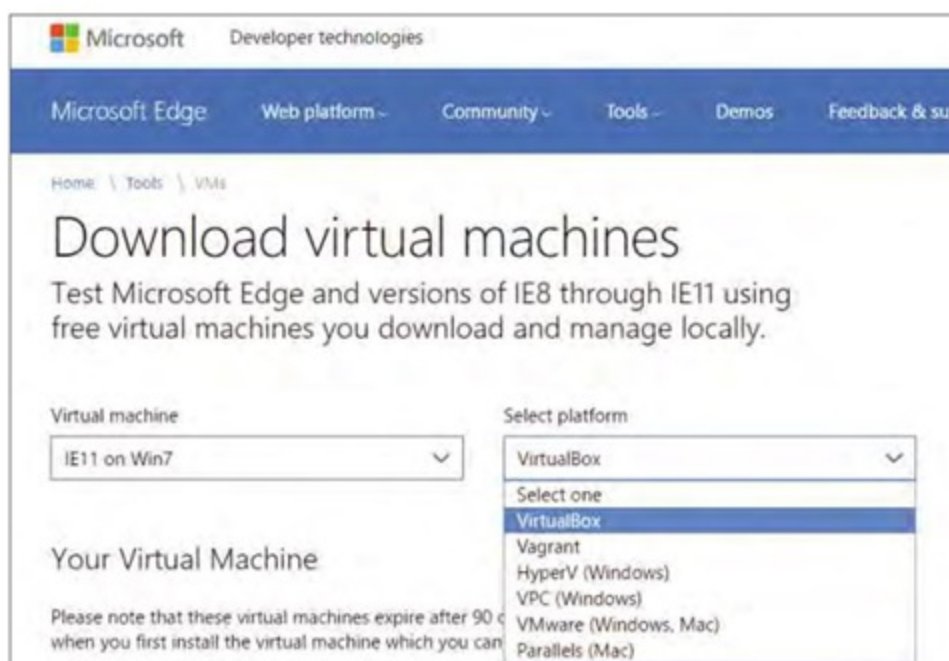
TOP TIPS FOR VIRTUALBOX

Get Windows 7, 8 and 10 for free

You can download recent versions of Windows for free and use VirtualBox to run them as virtual machines in a window on your Desktop. It's great for trying Windows 10, running Windows 7, testing software in a safe environment and more.

Download and install VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org) and run it to install the extensions. Then go to bit.ly/winvm412 and choose Windows 7, 8 or 10 and select VirtualBox as the platform. Download the ZIP and extract the file it contains.

In VirtualBox, click File, Import Appliance and select the download. Once imported, select the virtual machine and click Start. Your downloaded version of Windows will run in a separate window. It won't work forever, but when it expires in three months, you can delete it, import a fresh copy and repeat the process.



Download and run different versions of Windows for free in VirtualBox

Test unknown software

Any software installed in Windows or Linux in a virtual machine is contained within, so it can't infect or make changes to the rest of the computer. This makes VirtualBox a safe environment for testing software you're unsure about. You can check that software doesn't install malware, adware or spyware; see whether a program is useful before you install it for real; note the changes it makes to Windows; and practise with advanced tools. If you mess up Windows or something else goes wrong, just delete the virtual machine and create a new one.

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.

Revisit old programs

Windows 10 does a great job of supporting old software and almost everything works. However, if you find a program that doesn't run, Windows 7 in VirtualBox will let you run some older programs that are incompatible with newer versions.

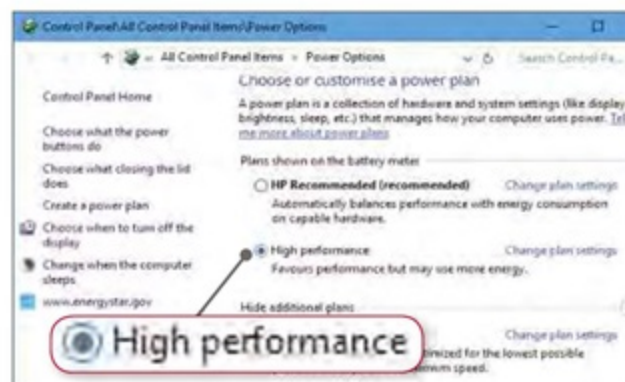
Boost VirtualBox performance

VirtualBox is sensitive to the power plan that the main version of Windows on your computer is configured to use. If a power-saving plan is selected, VirtualBox respects it and limits the performance of the operating system in the virtual machine, too. This may cause a Windows or Linux virtual operating system to run slowly. Choose a high performance power plan if you want VirtualBox to run at maximum speed. Right-click the power/battery

icon in the notification area on the taskbar and select Power Options. The Control Panel opens with two or three power plans listed. Select the High Performance option to boost VirtualBox's speed.

Assign more memory

When a guest operating system is run in VirtualBox, your computer will be running two operating systems simultaneously. The amount of



Select the 'High performance' power plan to boost the speed of VirtualBox



memory assigned to each one will affect performance, and if too much is given to either one, both will run slowly. You need to set the balance just right to get maximum speed.

If your PC has 4GB of RAM, the maximum you should assign to a virtual machine is 1.5GB. Windows 7 and Linux can run with just 1GB, which leaves enough memory for the PC as a whole to continue working well. Select a virtual machine and click Settings, System, Motherboard, then set the memory to 1024 MB.

If your PC has 8GB of RAM, assign 2GB to Windows 7 and Linux virtual machines, and 4GB to Windows 10 virtual machines.

Set video memory

A good-quality video card has a lot of memory to help it work faster. Select a virtual machine, click Settings, Display, Screen and drag the slider to the maximum memory available.

Share files with VirtualBox

Sharing a folder is a convenient way to move files from your PC to a virtual machine running Windows or Linux, or for files created in the virtual machine to be accessed on your main PC's OS.

Before launching a virtual operating system, select it in VirtualBox and click Settings. Select 'Shared folders' and click the blue folder with a plus icon. Click in the Folder Path box and select the C:\Users\Public folder on the PC. Set the folder name to Public and tick the Auto-mount box. This makes an extra drive available from the virtual version of Windows Explorer, which is a direct link to the PC's public folder. Put files here that you want to access on both the PC and the virtual machine.

The process for Linux is a little more complicated. Open a Terminal window, type `su`, then press the Enter key and type: `mount -t vboxsf Public /media/YourName`

This creates a Public folder that accesses the PC's Public folder (C:\Users\Public) so that you can exchange files.



Create a shared folder to move files to and from the guest OS in a virtual machine

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave



You can run several operating systems at once, including various versions of Windows and Linux

Install Linux

Linux is less well-known than Windows but it has some very enthusiastic followers. You can try it in VirtualBox, which runs it from within Windows. The simplest version of Linux is Mint (linuxmint.com).

Download the latest version, then start VirtualBox and click New. Set the type to Linux and the version to Ubuntu (Mint isn't listed but Ubuntu is a close match). Set the memory to at least 1,024MB, but choose more if your PC can handle it. Click through the hard drive setup pages and set the size to 20GB.

This configures Mint but it's not yet ready to start. Select it and click Settings. Select Storage, then the Empty CD, click the little CD icon and select the Linux file you downloaded. Select System on the left and, on the Motherboard tab, set the boot order to Hard Disk first and Optical second. Now start the virtual machine and Linux will run.

Install Guest Additions

You can install Windows, various versions of Linux, and other operating systems in VirtualBox and they will all work. However, they might not always work well. VirtualBox Guest Additions is a set of drivers essential for boosting performance and adding support for features and devices.

Start Windows in VirtualBox and, when the Desktop appears, go to the Devices menu at the top of the window and select Insert Guest Additions CD. This is a virtual CD, so you don't actually need a CD drive. The Guest Additions should run automatically but, if they don't, just open the CD in Explorer and double-click the program to run it.

In Linux, insert the Guest Additions

CD from the Devices menu. Some versions of Linux automatically run the additions. If not, open a Terminal window, change to the directory where the CD is mounted and run it by typing: `cd /media/YourName/VBOXADDITIONS_x_y_z`

Then hit Enter and type:

`'sudo sh ./VBoxLinuxAdditions.run'`

Restart your PC and the virtual operating system should be faster. It will also support window resizing. Drag the window border to make it bigger or run it full-screen by pressing Right-Ctrl+F.

Assign more CPUs

Modern processors have multiple cores, which allow Windows and other operating systems to run faster. The more cores, the better the performance, which is partly why an Intel Core i7 processor is better than a Core i3. Giving a virtual machine more of your processor's cores will make it run faster.

Select a virtual machine in VirtualBox and click Settings. Select the System category and then the Processor tab. For the best performance, assign half the PC's processors, so if you have a Core i7 with eight CPU cores, assign four. If there are four cores, then assign two.

If you are unable to assign more than one processor, the problem could be a setting in the PC's BIOS. Start the computer and press Del, Esc or one of the function keys to enter the BIOS setup (check the screen as you reboot to see which key it is on your PC). Look through all the screens for Virtualisation Technology and enable it. Save the settings and quit the BIOS setup. Return to VirtualBox and you can now increase the cores available to your virtual machine.

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



GENERAL PC

Windows 10 isn't updating

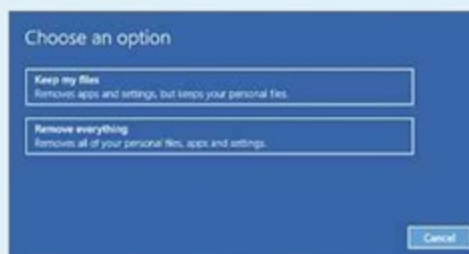
Q I upgraded my two laptops – an Asus and an Acer – to Windows 10. Since October, neither laptop will download and install updates. Is it Windows 10 that's a load of rubbish or should I just buy a new laptop?

R Cull, via email

A Wait! There's no need to buy a new laptop because you should be able to fix this. First, check the hard drives. Open Explorer and select This PC in the left-hand panel, then right-click the hard drive and select Properties. Select the Tools tab, then click the Check button. Scan the drive, even if it says you don't need to.

Now, right-click the Start button and select Command Prompt (Admin). Type `sfc /scannow` and press the Enter key. All Windows files will be checked and repaired if necessary.

Right-click the Start button and select Control Panel. In the 'View by' menu, choose 'Small icons' (if it isn't



Windows 10's Reset function reinstalls the operating system on your PC

already selected), then click Troubleshooting. Click 'View all' on the left, then Windows Update.

Following these steps should solve the update problem but if it doesn't, press Windows+i to open the Settings app. Click 'Update & security', then select Recovery on the left. Under 'Reset this PC', click the 'Get started' button. Select the option to keep your files and follow the instructions. This reinstalls Windows but keeps any personal files you've saved in Documents, Pictures, Videos and Music.

though the numbers vary.

The router settings homepage appears and you may need a password to log in. This is different for each router and you may find it printed on a label on the back or base of the router. Once in the settings, go to every page and either make a note of each setting or use Windows+Print Screen to take a screenshot of the page (screenshots are saved in the Pictures folder).

When you switch to a new router, go into the settings and set everything the same as the old one. Different routers have different menus, so we can't provide specific instructions.

SECURITY

Remove adware from browsers

Q I am running Windows 10. I can launch any browser, but if I try to visit a web page or click a link, a load of tabs open showing advertising sites. I've tried closing them, but they reappear immediately. If I reboot and enter a web page again, the whole thing starts over. Should I reinstall Windows? I know it's a bit drastic, but it's my last hope.

Wal Rhoden, via email

A A clean install of Windows will solve the problem but you shouldn't have to resort to such extreme measures. Your computer has been infected by some form of adware, which is getting in the way of your internet use. There are often several components to adware and each one has to be removed to get rid of this irritating problem.

Right-click the Start button and select 'Programs and Features'. Look at each program in the list and ask yourself whether it could be adware – the words 'toolbar' or 'search helper' can be an indication. Be suspicious of any program you don't remember installing and look up its name on Google to find out what it is. Uninstall anything you don't need.

Other components of the adware will be installed in each of your browsers, so you'll have to clear each one in turn. In Chrome, open the menu and select Settings. Click 'Show advanced settings',

HARDWARE

Back up your router settings

Q I searched all the way back to Issue 321 of *Web User* looking for details of how to transfer the router settings of my ISP's router to another router, but I can't find the information anywhere. Please could you tell me how to save the details and make the transfer?

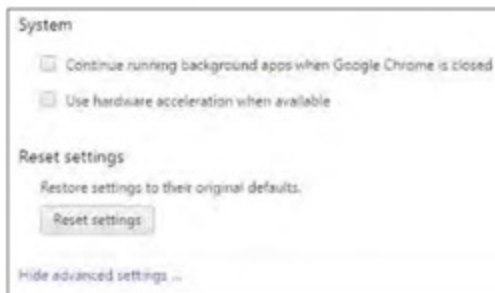
S Marshall, via email



Log into your router and write down its settings to use them in another router

A The router establishes a connection between itself and your ISP using your username, password and various network settings, but there's no easy way to transfer this information from one router to another. Some routers have backup options, but you can't back up from one make or model of router to a different one – it would have to be the exact same router. If you get a router from your ISP, it may come pre-configured and work out of the box, but if you want to use a different brand, you must manually configure the settings.

While your router is still working, press Windows+R, type `cmd` and press the Enter key. Type `ipconfig` into the Command Prompt and press the Enter key. Look for the Default Gateway setting and enter the four numbers into a web browser. This is the router's IP address and it will be something like 192.168.1.254,



At the bottom of Chrome's advanced settings, there is a button to reset it

scroll down to the bottom and click 'Reset settings'. This may be enough to fix the problem, but you should check that everything is now fixed. Go to the 'On start-up' section and select 'Open a specific page or set of pages'. Click 'Set page' and delete every item by clicking the cross on the right. One entry for google.co.uk is all you need.

In the Search section, click 'Manage search engines'. Hover your mouse over each item and click the cross to delete it. Leave only the items you recognise, such as Google, Wikipedia and Yahoo. Set the default to Google.

Start Edge, click the menu button and select Settings. Under 'Open Microsoft Edge with' select 'New tab page'. Under 'Open new tabs with' select 'A blank page'. Right-click the Start button and select Control Panel. Open Internet Options by typing it into the Start menu, then select the Advanced tab. Click the 'Restore advanced settings' button, then click Reset. That may be sufficient, but select the General tab and make sure the homepage is set to a page you trust.

Select the Programs tab and click the 'Manage add-ons' button. Select 'Toolbars and Extensions' on the left, then select each item and disable it with the button below. Click Search Providers on the left and select each item on the right to remove it. You only need one item – Bing, Google or whatever search engine you want to use.

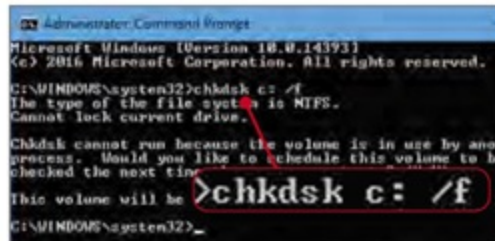
GENERAL PC

Stop folders duplicating

Q I have a problem, perhaps a virus, that duplicates my folders and shows a shortcut with a name like 'system32'. I mistakenly copied files from my laptop to my portable drive and it seems to have infected the drive. Is there a way to clean it up without losing the files on the drive?

Johnny Walker, via email

A This is unlikely to be caused by a virus, but it is always a good idea to scan your PC when strange things happen with no apparent cause. Use the



Use this command prompt tool to schedule a disk check on boot up

free Emsisoft Emergency Kit (bit.ly/seek412) to scan your hard drive. The free version of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware (bit.ly/mbam412) is another good tool.

The most likely cause of the problem is a hard-drive fault or file corruption. Minor faults can occur on the drive that are not noticeable at first, but which grow and become worse over time. Open Explorer and select This PC or Computer in the left-hand panel. Right-click the hard drive, select Properties on the menu and

select the Tools tab. If you use Windows 10, click Check in the Error Checking section, then click Start, 'Schedule disk check' and restart Windows. If you're running Windows 7, click 'Check now'.

In Windows 7 and 10, find Command Prompt on the Start menu, right-click it and select 'Run as administrator'. Type **chkdsk C: /f**, press Enter and choose Yes. Restart Windows to check the hard drive for errors. Return to the command prompt, type **sfc /scannow** and press Enter again.

All these tasks will tackle viruses and drive faults, so if the problem is still occurring, it may be caused by a faulty program running in the background. If there are program icons displayed in the notification area on the right of the taskbar, left- or right-click them and quit or exit to stop them running. See if this cures the problem.

EMAIL

Messages disappear from inbox

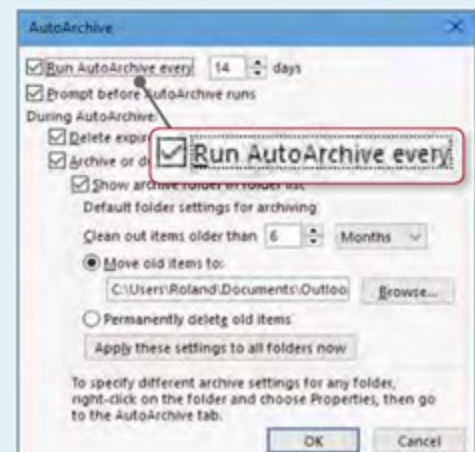
Q I use the version of Outlook that came with Office 2010 Professional and have a BT Internet email account. Outlook automatically deletes all emails from my inbox that are over seven days old. This doesn't happen in other folders I've created, but if I don't manually move the emails out of the inbox and into another folder, they disappear. After a call to the BT Internet helpline, I altered the settings in my Outlook account, but it hasn't helped. Is the problem with the BT server or my Outlook settings?

Frank Milnes, via email

A It's almost certainly a setting in Outlook, and not a fault with BT, that is clearing emails after a set period of time. You can test this by accessing your email using a web browser at home.bt.com and seeing if it solves the problem.

The 2010 edition of Outlook is several versions old, and its menus and features have changed over time. If your version has a Tools menu, select Options. Select the Other tab and click the AutoArchive button. In the latest version of Outlook, click File, Options then select Advanced on the left and click AutoArchive settings on the right.

Clearing the 'Run AutoArchive every' tick at the top should solve the



Outlook can automatically move or delete old emails from your inbox

problem, but if you want to keep using this tool, there are lots of configuration settings below, such as 'Delete expired items' and 'Archive or delete old items', that determine the actions taken when the automatic inbox clean-up feature runs. Disable all the options that archive or delete messages, to stop the emails disappearing from your inbox.

There are other ways to set the AutoArchive feature. In the main Outlook window, right-click each folder, such as the Inbox, and select Properties. Click the AutoArchive tab and select 'Do not archive items in this folder'. You can also right-click your email account name in the left panel and select 'Account properties' then 'Account settings'. Double-click your account in the window that appears and use the slider to determine how long to keep your emails. Drag it to the All setting to keep them forever.



This fortnight Roland replaced his old printer and he can now print from his PC, phone and iPad

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

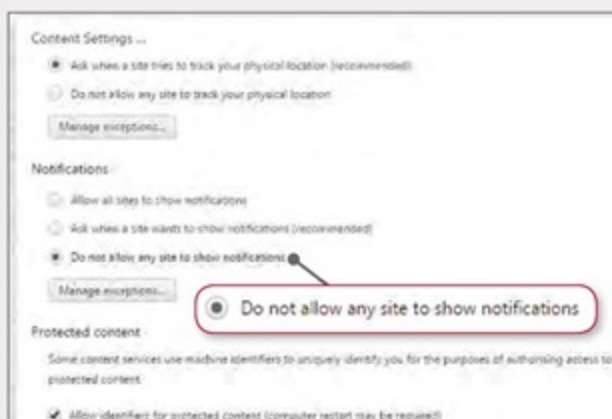
Mug
winner



BROWSERS

Turn off notifications in Chrome

I've noticed a growing trend for websites to show an annoying pop-up window that asks for permission to display notifications. I can't think of a single example where this might be useful. Fortunately, I discovered a setting in Chrome that blocks these pop-up messages. To get rid of them, go to the menu and click Settings. Click 'Show advanced settings' at the bottom, find the Privacy section and click the 'Content settings' button. Find the Notifications section and click the option 'Do not allow any site to show



Disable notifications to block pop-up messages from websites in Chrome

notifications'. Close Settings and you'll never see the pop-up again.

Mike Teasdale, via email

because my antivirus software was scanning the folder's contents before displaying them. When my current antivirus subscription expired, I looked around for a faster security program. I switched to ESET (eset.co.uk), and now I don't see the creeping green bar anywhere near as much as I did.

Ron Egan, via email

GENERAL PC

Zip files more efficiently

This may be old news to many of you, but I only discovered last week that you can add files to a zipped archive in Windows simply by dragging and dropping them to the compressed folder. This will save you a lot of time if, like me, you usually extract the files and create a new archive from scratch when you've forgotten to add something the first time.

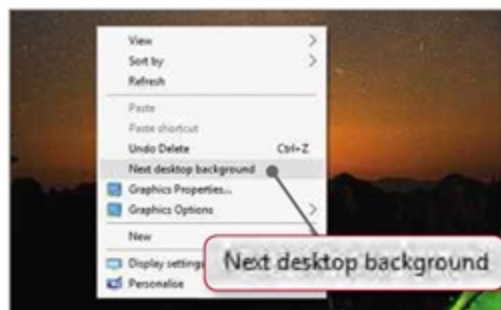
Another handy tip when zipping files in Windows is that the archive is named according to the last file you select, so press the Ctrl button and select the files you want to compress one by one, leaving the one you want the archive to be named after until last. Then, right-click it, select 'Send to' and 'Compressed (zipped) folder'. Even once you have created the archive, you can change its name by right-clicking it and selecting Rename. If you want an archive to be

GENERAL PC

Switch Desktop backgrounds quickly

In Windows 10, I have a number of Desktop themes to choose from. Each time I select a new theme, I set the picture to change every 24 hours. However, if you don't like a particular background image that appears, you don't need to put up with it for a day or open the Background settings to skip it. Instead, simply right-click the Desktop and click the 'Next desktop background' button.

FratPark, Web User Forums



Change your background image directly from the Desktop

GENERAL PC

Drag and pin to start

When you install a program, Windows 10 doesn't always create a Start tile. You can right-click anything in the Start menu's programs list and select 'Pin to Start' from the menu, but recently I found a quicker way to do this. Find the program on the Start menu (new ones appear on the left), then click, drag and drop it wherever you want to create a tile.

Stephen Stott, via email

SECURITY

Banish the green bar

Whenever I select certain folders in Explorer, a green bar creeps across the top of the window and I have to wait 10 seconds or more for the list of the folder's contents to appear. I suspected that this might be



7-Zip automatically names archives according to the folder in which the files are saved



named according to the folder in which you saved the original files, install 7-Zip (7-zip.org), which does this by default.

Ed Wright, via email

WEBSITES

Roman numeral converter

Sometimes films and TV programmes display the year of copyright in Roman numerals. Whatever the reason for this, not everyone can quickly work out what the Roman numerals represent. A number of conversion tools are available online but my favourite is OnlineConversion (onlineconversion.com). Click Numbers then Advanced Roman Numeral Conversion and you can enter the Roman numerals you want to convert into the box. To help you understand the basics of Roman numerals, there's a summary of what all the different letters mean. You can also use the tool to convert numbers to Roman numerals, should you need to.

FratPark, Web User Forums

GOOGLE

Create invisible tables in Google Docs

If you've ever written a formal letter in Google Docs, you might have experienced the problem where you can't align one address to the right-hand side of the page and another to the left-hand side. Sometimes, even when I select the addresses independently, the other follows suit and jumps across the page.

Thankfully, I've worked out a trick that lets you get around this problem. First, click Insert and Table, then choose '2 x 1'. Paste your own address into the right-hand column and that of your recipient into the left-hand column. Now you can highlight your address and click the button to 'Right align' and the recipient's address will remain aligned to the left.

The next step is to right-click anywhere in the table and select 'Table properties...'. From this menu, set the 'Table border' to Opt and also set the 'Cell padding' to 0. Now not only will the table be invisible, but the text will also sit

in line with the margins.

Even if you don't write letters very often, it's useful to know that you can format your text this way.

Val M, via email

HARDWARE

Check printer performance

Before starting a print session on expensive photo paper, I find it useful to print out the colour chart at bit.ly/chart412, which I found on Google. This gives a better indication of how my printer is performing than the simple nozzle check. I hope this is of help to other readers.

Eric Page, via email

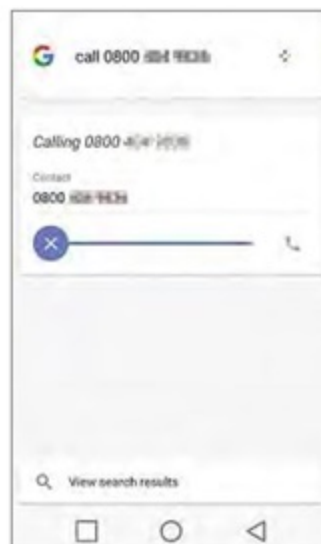
ANDROID

Dial phone numbers using your voice

If you need to ring a number that isn't stored in your Android phone, you can ask Google to call the number for you. Just tell it which number to call – so, for instance, you might say "OK Google, call 01234 567890". It

will dial the number for you. This saves you having to tap in the number using your keypad, and if you have a few people to ring it could save you time. The Google Android app was recently updated to let you perform voice actions offline, so make sure you install the latest version to make the most of this.

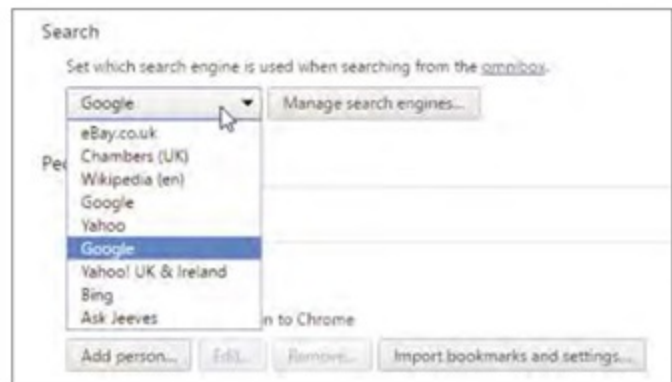
dangermouse75, Web User Forums



Dial numbers with your voice using "OK Google"



Google Docs lets you create tables without any borders or padding, which is handy when writing formal letters



You can easily change your browser's default search provider from Chrome's Settings

can't find the search engine you want, click 'Manage search engines' to pick from others you've used in the past or to add a new one manually.

FratPark, Web User Forums

MOBILE

Fully reboot iOS

One of the first things to try when you have a problem with almost any electronic device – computers, phones, tablets, routers and so on – is to switch it off, wait a minute and then switch it back on. The problem with some devices is that they don't switch off, or they save their state, which is a little like going into sleep mode, so restarting them doesn't solve the problem.

With an iPhone you can't take out the battery, and pressing the sleep/wake button until the power-off slider appears is more like putting your device into sleep mode. If you really want to power off an iPhone or iPad to clear the memory, hold down the sleep/wake button and the home button for 10 seconds until the Apple logo appears.

This works for all iPads and every iPhone up to and including the 6S. To reboot the iPhone 7, hold down the sleep/wake and volume-down buttons until the Apple logo appears.

Paul Quinn, via email

GENERAL PC

Remove shortcut arrow in Windows 10

I contacted *Web User's* technical expert Roland Waddilove for advice when a tool I use to remove shortcut arrows in Windows 10 stopped working following the Anniversary Update (see Issue 411, bit.ly/webuser411). He suggested a handy Registry tweak that fixes the problem, but for those who don't want to mess around with the Registry Editor, Ultimate Windows Tweaker (bit.ly/ultimatw412) has released a new version (4.2.1) of its software that also fixes the problem. I believe it's the first tool to include a workaround, and its developers were quick to respond to my queries, so this program comes highly recommended.

Chris Shelbourn, via email

BROWSERS

Change search provider in Chrome

To change the default search engine in Google's browser, open Settings and use the drop-down menu under Search to select the one you want. As well as Google, you can choose from eBay, Wikipedia, Yahoo and Bing. If you



Readers' Helpdesk

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

ANDROID

My tablet is completely unresponsive

Q I was using my Lenovo Tab A10 and when I came back to it some hours later, the screen had become unresponsive. No matter what I try, the problem persists.

suttyjosie, Web User Forums



Holding down the power button will soft reboot an Android device

A Have you tried a soft reset? Hold down the power button until the tablet powers down, then let it reboot and see if that clears the problem. If that doesn't

work, try a hard reset. To do this, hold down the volume up and power buttons for 10 seconds. You should get a menu of options, including the opportunity to factory reset the device. Do this if everything else you've tried has failed.

TheTechGuy, Web User Forums

EMAIL

Outlook won't send emails

Q We recently changed our ISP from Plusnet to TalkTalk. Although the internet is working fine, my dad's Vista laptop no longer sends emails from Outlook 2003.

Jack Gold, Web User Forums

A If your dad was using a Plusnet email address, his account may have been shut down, unless he opted to pay to keep it open. It may be that the outgoing server has simply been switched off before the incoming server, so he has time to move his emails over to a new email provider and notify everyone of his new address without losing any emails.

GENERAL PC

My laptop's battery is draining fast

Q When I bought my HP envy laptop 12 months ago, I'd get between five and seven hours out of it, but now the battery only lasts about two hours. Also, I never used to hear the hard drive or fan running, and now they're running non-stop. Do I need a new battery or is something else causing the problem?

johnty1954, Web User Forums

A If you're running Windows 10, right-click the taskbar, select Task Manager, then select the Start-up tab to see what's listed there. Each program is rated by its impact: Low, Medium or High. If there's anything you don't need that's having a high impact, try uninstalling it. While Task Manager

Name	Publisher	Status	Startup impact
Classic Start Menu	Intel	Enabled	Low
Everything		Enabled	Medium
Google Drive	Google	Enabled	High
Launchy.exe		Enabled	High
Linksys (3)	Belsoft	Enabled	High
Microsoft OneDrive	Microsoft Corporation	Enabled	High
NVIDIA nView Wizard, versio...	NVIDIA Corporation	Enabled	Low
Windows Defender notificati...	Microsoft Corporation	Enabled	Medium
Wox	Wox	Enabled	High

The Start-up tab in Task Manager shows which programs are impacting your PC

is open, select Processes and click Memory to see if anything is using more than its share of resources.

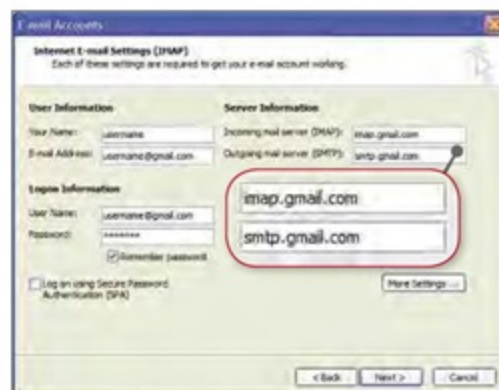
To check your battery's status and the temperature of your PC's components, install the free version of HWMonitor (bit.ly/hwmonitor412).

These steps should help you identify the cause of your battery problems.

Cantrel, Web User Forums

Now that you've switched ISP, he could add his TalkTalk email account to Outlook 2003, or it might be worth using a Gmail or Outlook.com account as his primary email address, to prevent this problem from occurring again in the future.

TheTechGuy, Web User Forums



You can use Outlook 2003 with most email accounts by entering the necessary settings

TV

Who makes the best Freeview recorders?

Q I've decided it's time our Panasonic DVD Recorder was replaced, so I'm looking for something that can record two or more TV programmes while we're

watching another. We don't have Sky and only need access to Freeview channels.

I was tempted to buy a Humax product, specifically the HDR-1800T. Is Humax the market leader for ease of use and installation or should I look at other models?

George, Web User Forums

A My mum bought a Panasonic DMR-HWT130EB recorder (bit.ly/panasonic412) a few months back after her previous recorder failed, and she swears by it now. Apparently it's much easier to use than the Sky box and it effectively turns her TV into a smart TV. Unlike some Humax boxes, it also has Wi-Fi built in, so you don't need to connect it to your router with an Ethernet cable. It'll let you record two channels while watching a third, unlike the the Humax HDR-1800T, which only lets you record one channel while watching or recording one other.

If you want a Humax box that lets you record two channels while watching a third, have a look at its 4000T model.

TheTechGuy, ricky101, Web User Forums

Star Email

How to beat the printer-ink ripoff

Regarding Ian McGarrigle's problems with his Epson printer not accepting perfectly good generic cartridges (Inbox, Issue 410, bit.ly/webuser410), I thought it was well known that if you update the firmware on any printer, it will never accept generic cartridges. My printer often tries to install the newest version of the firmware but I stop it in its tracks.

I am a post-graduate student and am dyslexic, so when my old printer died my university was kind enough to give me money for a new printer and £100 for cartridges. I picked the Epson Workforce 2650 and bought enough generic cartridges to last me for four years or more – and I print a lot!



The printer came with a written warning saying "do not update the firmware or these generic cartridges will not be accepted". If I had bought official Epson cartridges, that £100 would only have paid for about six weeks of printing.

The generic cartridges work perfectly and when the printer warns me about inserting a non-genuine cartridge, I just

click 'Ignore'. I accept that this breaks the warranty of the printer, but I don't have the money to buy Epson cartridges.

Sadly for Ian, I don't know how to undo the firmware update – if that is indeed the problem – but for other readers I'd suggest that if your printer is working fine, then don't ever update the firmware.

Printer makers often sell their printers cheap, then make their money by charging a lot of money for the cartridges, which seems a bit dishonest. I spent £180 on a good printer and 11 shoe boxes of ink. I've had this printer for almost a year and a half – it is still working fine and I have nine shoe boxes of ink left.

Lewis Karl Flood, via email

Martin's Malwarebytes problem solved

I write in response to Martin Fletcher's letter about Malwarebytes Anti-Malware in Issue 410. This program is available as a business program and what might be acceptable on a home computer might not be considered acceptable for one being used in business. However, if you use Malwarebytes and find it annoying that some of your most valued and even paid-for programs are being identified as malware, you can tweak this from within the program itself.

Click Settings, then 'Detection and Protection'. In the list that appears on the left, you can choose from a number of

options that are available in the Non-Malware Protection section, under the heading

'PUP (Potentially Unwanted Program) detections'. The default setting is, 'Treat detections as malware', but you can set it to 'Ignore detections' or 'Warn user about detections'. I should point out that

I have no connection with Malwarebytes and only know this because I have used the program.

M Belshaw, via email

Malwarebytes works perfectly for me

I refer to Martin Fletcher's email saying "Malwarebytes can go to hell" because of a problem he experienced with the program identifying Driver Booster as a potentially unwanted program (PUP).

I have been using the Premium version

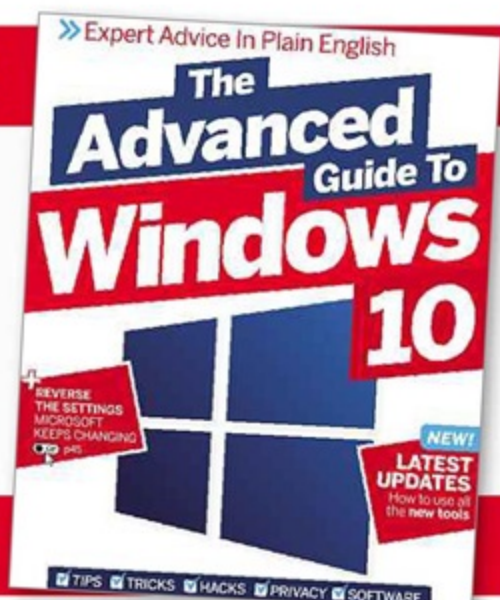
of Malwarebytes Anti-Malware for a very long time and a few months ago I installed the free version of Driver Booster 4. This has since updated 72 drivers on my laptop without subsequent problems occurring. No conflicts or problems between the two programs have been identified, even following my recent update to the latest version of Malwarebytes. This update was immediately followed by a full scan which showed no problems – it certainly didn't identify Driver Booster 4 as a PUP.



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However, comparing the free and paid-for versions of Driver Booster at www.iobit.com/en/compare, I noticed that the paid-for version (which is the version that Martin Fletcher was



complaining about) has nine additional functions and it may be one of these that is causing the problem.

Personally, I'm not sure why anyone would want to pay \$22.95 (£18.37) per year for a program that only needs to be used very occasionally. Perhaps Martin would be better off trying the free version of Driver Booster to see if the problem still persists.

Roger Prettyman, Bedford

Don't judge Malwarebytes too harshly

I think Mr Fletcher has been too judgmental regarding Malwarebytes. When I bought Advanced System Care from IObit, Driver Booster came packaged with it. After a time, Malwarebytes identified both of these programs as PUPs. However, rather than blaming the software, I just added both programs to the exclusion list in Settings, and now everything is fine.

Even good antivirus software can identify some programs as false positives, but I would not even consider emailing them to have a rant about it. I find that Malwarebytes works extremely well, and when I did have a problem with malware that I could not get rid of, the company was very helpful and its excellent technical support solved my problem.

Frank Haley, Worcestershire

Yahoo is beyond a joke

What has happened to the Yahoo website? It's beyond abysmal. The new black-and-white design is appalling – why not keep the lovely blue of old? The news items are no better than a 10-year-old could write and the layout is truly awful. The same news item is

repeated *ad nauseam* and most of the news seems to be US-oriented. What's more, it's impossible to read one's own comments now, and when I tried to obtain a new Yahoo.co.uk email address I had to have '.com' or nothing. Why?

In short, Yahoo is beyond redemption.
John C Kent, via email

Yahoo glue is a laughing matter



Yahoo to a horse being shuffled off to the glue factory. Horse murder? Really? Gives a whole new meaning to the Badminton Horse Trials.

Charlie Collins, Belfast

Corrections and clarifications

It was nice to see that two of my tips were published in Your Top Tips in Issue 410. Unfortunately, poor editing resulted in some misleading errors.

For the tip entitled 'Block the Windows 10 lock screen', the magazine states that if you restart your PC, you have to repeat the instructions to stop the lock screen reappearing. I didn't say that, because it isn't true. If you start your computer normally, the lock screen remains blocked.

In the other tip, 'Hide other users' notes', the magazine published the original tip I shared in the Web User Forums in January 2014! The whole point of my adding to this post was to update the tip for Windows 10. Pressing Alt+F4 no longer removes sticky notes from your screen in Windows 10. However, all you need to do is right-click and choose 'close window'. The sticky note then closes but isn't lost.

FratPark, Web User Forums

Web User says: We're very sorry about the errors we made in editing your tips. We'll be careful to avoid this in future and hope that you continue to share your tips with our readers.



Questions about an Asus laptop

In your recent Group Test of laptops (Issue 407, bit.ly/webuser407), you reviewed an Asus Transformer Book Flip TP200SA, which fulfils my requirements. Unfortunately, I'm unable to source the item at your quoted price of £177.92.

The cheapest I've found it is £212.64 from Scan (www.scan.co.uk), which is some £34.72 dearer than your quote. Can you please advise me as to where I can buy the laptop for £177.92?

Also, can you please tell me what 'return to base' means – does it mean return to Asus or return to Scan?

Brian Watt, via email

Web User says: Laptops are something of a commodity item, and prices can fluctuate, but if you type Asus



TP200SA into Google and select the Shopping link, you should see a number of options. Here's a link that should work: bit.ly/asus412.

As we go to press, I can see Ebayer selling the laptop for £159.99 including delivery (bit.ly/ebuyer412). Alternatively, you could try John Lewis, which is selling it for £179.95 (bit.ly/john412), only a smidge over the price we quoted.

As to your second question, a return-to-base warranty means that if you

Our 2015 Back Issues Disc is on sale now from Amazon, visit bit.ly/wudisc15





experience any problems with your laptop during the warranty period, the retailer will fix them for you for free, but it's your responsibility to send the item to the company and pay for the postage.

Hooray for honest broadband prices

It's about time broadband providers were forced to tell us the real price of their packages (Need to Know, Issue 410), rather than withholding the full cost from us until we've signed on the dotted line.

I joined Sky two years ago on the understanding that I'd be paying £15



per month, which seemed very reasonable. However, it soon emerged that this didn't include line rental or the cost of the router, so I actually pay closer to £30 per month.

It was interesting to see that the prices in your Broadband Table have shot up accordingly, from £0 for the first year to more than £250. I'm just surprised it took so long for this change to happen and that ISPs were able to get away with conning consumers about broadband costs as well as speeds. Honesty is always the best policy, after all.

Derek Muswell, via email

Give Windows 10 a chance in 2017

In every issue of *Web User*, you seem to print at least one letter from someone moaning about Windows 10, so here's a more positive one in time for the season of goodwill to all PC users.

I like Windows 10. I wouldn't go so far as to say I love it, because that would

sound odd, but I find it fast, stable and easy to use. Why so many people have experienced problems with it is beyond me. I can only think that their PCs aren't up to scratch, or they have lots of old software installed that's causing errors.

I'm pleased to see that *Web User* has got over its initial scepticism and is now offering lots of good advice for Windows 10 users. And to those people who are clinging to Windows 7 because they're scared that they might not like Windows 10, I say give it a try. It's nearly the start of a new year, after all, and it can't be any worse than the last one!

Nick Matthews, via email

What you say...

WILL YOU BE SWITCHING FROM THREE FOLLOWING THE RECENT HACK?

Depends whether any other network gives me unlimited data on pay-as-you-go.

David Robinson

I've been a Three customer for nearly 11 years. My contract is up for renewal in February but I will be staying with Three because their customer service is impeccable.

Brian Brown

Yes, I'll switch to Talk Mobile (talkmobile.co.uk).

Paul Howcroft

No, it hasn't put me off using Three. I think I get great value from Three, with 250 minutes, and unlimited text and data for £18. Brilliant service.

K Manson @polar120

THERE'S A PETITION TO REPEAL THE INVESTIGATORY POWERS BILL (bit.ly/ipb412). DO YOU THINK IT SHOULD BE REPEALED?

Yes. I also think Tor (www.torproject.org) will become increasingly popular once people become more aware of the bill and what it means.

Roger Whitcomb @milairpix

It's good for catching sexual- and cybercrime, but not for the everyday Joe and the occasional pirate. We're becoming a nanny state. No matter how many signatures there are, the Government always get their way.

Jason 'Boz' Bowyer

If we're clean and be good boys, we ain't got nothing to worry about. On the matter of national security,

on the other hand, it's needed. So no. It'll happen anyway.

Gary Olsen

ARE YOU ANNOYED BY FAKE NEWS ON FACEBOOK?

A lot of the bogus news items turn out to be clickbait articles which spread malware and nasties. A quick flick through Mail Online and Twitter usually separate the curds from the whey.

Si Mellor

I worry about fake news on BBC News.

Kieren Dight

Facebook is for us cat lovers to exchange photos. Those who confuse it with a news feed must live in a truly confusing world.

Richard Morgan

I would never get my news from Facebook, but it feels like the damage has already been done in the US, and we will all suffer for it now.

Rich Grove @Rich_Grove

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS MORE HOMES TO GET 1Gbps BROADBAND. DO YOU NEED SPEEDS THAT FAST?

We may not need them now but probably will in the future. Plus it's not likely to happen soon anyway, if at all!

Wendy Lilygreen

When 4K streaming is widely available it will be essential.

Shaun Vaughan

1Gbps is more for companies. I'd settle for 100Mbps for a family of five.

Cunningham Hutchison @chutchyhutchy

These speeds will probably be required for virtual-reality gaming in the future. I stopped playing games aged 18, but I would love to see VR Skype chats with my family in the USA without buffering.

Chris Armstrong

! Page 404

Giving a new gadget for Christmas? Prepare for festive frustration, says Barry 'Scrooge' Collins



The glitch that stole Christmas

Ah, Christmas morning. A hearty breakfast, carols drifting gently from the speakers, presents being hastily unwrapped. What could possibly disrupt this festive idyll? Everything. Absolutely everything could go wrong because you've made the same mistake as last year and bought *another* piece of technology for Christmas, you poor misguided fool.

Here are five ways a tech present is going to ruin your big day:

1 Windows is updating

You spent six hours queuing in Currys on Christmas Eve to get your daughter her new laptop, but little did you realise that the PC actually left the factory in March, meaning that it now has 4,674 'critical' updates to install the moment you enter your Wi-Fi details. Cue six hours spent looking at nothing more than progress bars. On the plus side, that's still more compelling than watching the annual *EastEnders* Christmas Day gloom-fest.

2 Wi-Fi's taken the day off

Televisions, microwave ovens, clothes pegs – there's not a single device you can buy nowadays that doesn't demand to be connected to your Wi-Fi network. Which is of course why, come Christmas Day, your router will decide to down tools and fire up more blinking red lights than the ruddy tree. Naturally, you call your broadband provider's tech support line, but despite having outsourced support to Thailand back in the days when Rolf Harris was a much-loved children's entertainer, they've still only got six staff working, leaving the automated message to inform you that your call is 'very important to them' and will be answered sometime in March. How are you going



to install the latest antivirus updates for your electronic toothbrush now?

3 Incompatible charger

You've bought your other half a fabulous new smartphone/tablet/internet loo-roll holder, but this is 2016 and the concept of providing a charger in the box so that you can actually use the thing you've spent hundreds of pounds on went out with Shakin' Stevens. Thus, Christmas morning is spoiled by a heated argument over the difference between micro-USB and mini-USB connectors, and a futile hunt through the kitchen drawer where you keep the cables that "will come in handy one day".

4 Password problems

You've plugged in your new internet kettle, filled it with water and are ready to go back to bed so you can, erm, make a cup of tea without getting out of bed. All you need now is to remember the unique, 12-character, 'must contain two Arabic letters and an Egyptian hieroglyph' password that

you entered during the kettle's set-up procedure about six minutes ago. Alas, a second glass of Bucks Fizz before 8am has dulled your memory and, after the eighth failed password attempt, your internet kettle has earmarked you as a hacker and locked you out. You're sent out to the garage to retrieve the limescale-encrusted non-internet kettle before your guests arrive.

5 Cracking the codes

Being a trendy uncle, you decide not to give your nephew one of those awkward £20 notes that they can spend in any shop in the entire country, and instead hand them a £20 iTunes voucher. The family Christmas Quiz is suspended while you all gather round, trying to work out whether the 39th character in the voucher code is an 'l' or a '1', only to discover that little Tarquin has an Android phone and the voucher's about as much use to him as a colostomy bag.

But seriously, folks – I hope you get everything you want this year and have a fantastic Christmas!

Illustration: Andrew Torrents

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Thank you for reading this issue of *Web User* – we hope you found the tips and advice useful. The good news is that you don't have to wait too long for the next issue. If you subscribe to *Web User* by **Thursday 15 December (8pm)***, you'll receive it through your letterbox before it's available in the shops!

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