

WHICH SOFTWARE Pinpoint the hidden cause p54



# elete WHAT WEBSITES KNOW ABOUT





.and start 2017 with a clean slate p38

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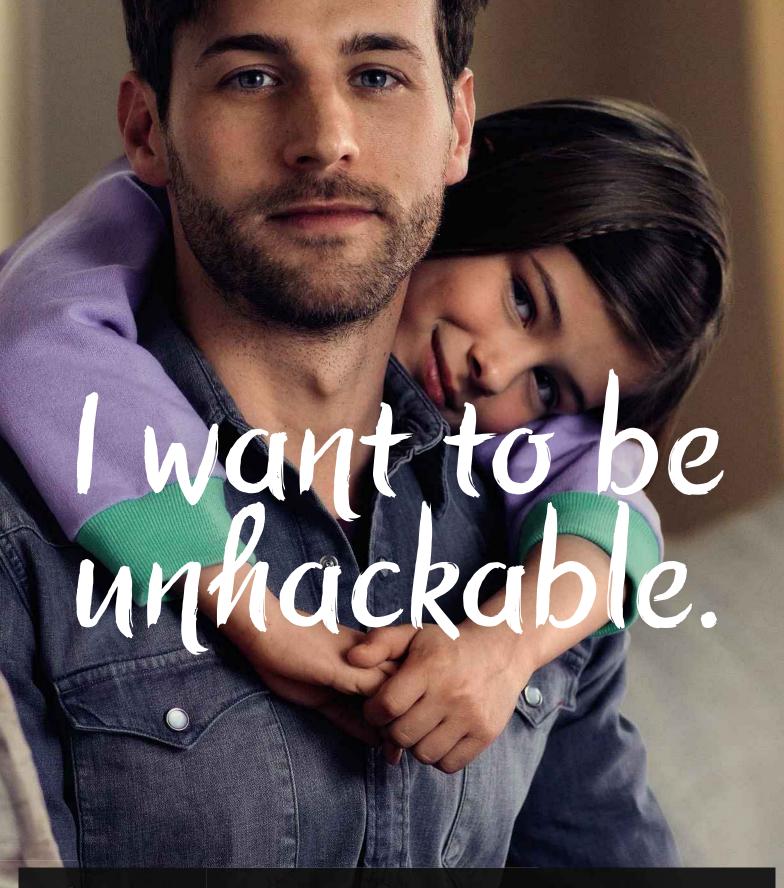
Do you feel ripped off? p74

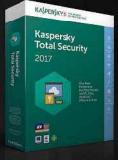
**Remove Duplicate** PC Files - FOR FREE

Software with NO hidden fees p44



Automate it with PowerShell p64





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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# **Homepage**

# Wipe your web profile for 2017

t's no secret that Google, Facebook and Amazon study our online activities, monitoring the sites we visit and the things we 'like' to build a profile of our interests. Although I'm sure the technology behind this data-processing is very clever, I do wonder about its accuracy. Just because I bought a frog mask for a New Year's fancy-dress party doesn't mean I want other amphibious gear, and a drunken YouTube search for Benny from *Crossroads* videos hasn't triggered a desire to see the whole motel-based soap opera.

Our cover feature this issue (page 38)

explains how to stop the web using what you do online to get the measure of you offline, so you can start 2017 with a clean slate. Forget getting more exercise or giving up chocolate – what you really need to do to start the year right is delete your Google history, tidy your Facebook profile and tell Amazon to stuff its 'recommendations'.

Trust me, you'll feel much better without your internet baggage. Happy New Year!

#### **Robert Irvine**

robert\_irvine@dennis.co.uk #webuser





ISSUE 413 30 DEC 2016 - 10 JAN 2017 ON THE COVER



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

Things you'll learn this issue

How to save Windows 10 lock-screen photos to use as Desktop wallpaper page 27

How to restart Chrome instantly by clicking a button on the toolbar

page 30

How to scan old photos using your phone and save them directly to the web

page 32

How to copy unlimited items to your clipboard without overwriting anything

page 56

How to mark petrol stations and other points of interest on Google Maps routes

page 68

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**ISSUE 413** 

**30 DEC 2016 - 10 JAN 2017** 

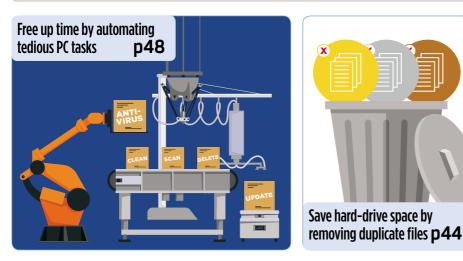




Start 2017 with a clean slate by removing all traces of your online activity

**p38** 

p20





IN DEPTH Articles on the latest tech topics

**36** FAQ

The Snooper's Charter becomes law

38 COVER FEATURE: DELETE WHAT WEBSITES KNOW ABOUT YOU

Clean up your online footprint

44 Duplicate file finders

Six duplicate scanners - tested and reviewed

46 Resize files

How to compress files without losing quality

48 Automate tasks

Schedule tedious PC tasks to run automatically

#### **REVIEWS** Apps, sites and products on test

14 Best New Websites

We review the best new and relaunched sites

hybrid, reviewed

- **20** Product Test
  - Lenovo Yoga Book
  - Devolo dLAN 550+ WiFi Starter Kit
- **26** Best Free Software

This fortnight's most useful free downloads

**30** Best New Browser Tools

Get more from Chrome, Firefox and Opera

32 Best Free Apps

Our favourite new phone and tablet apps









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for technical and buying advice

#### **FAVOURITES Must-read regulars**

What's New Online 10 brilliant things to do on the web

Need to Know This fortnight's top tech news stories

12 Stay Safe Online Security advice for PC and mobile

18 Build a Better Site Expert tips, tools and practical help

24 Best Buys Our pick of the best new products

**50** Broadband Deals Find the best-value package for you

51 Take a Screen Break Solve our news-themed wordsearch



72 Inbox

Tell us your views and opinions

74 Page 404 Barry bemoans roaming

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# Practical WebUser

Workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

52 Workshop 1 Browse with Firefox Focus

54 Workshop 2 RegShot

56 Workshop 3 Expand your clipboard

57 Workshop 4 Block unwanted browser sounds

58 Weekend Project Use your phone as a remote control for your smart TV

64 Web User's Top Tips Switch to PowerShell

**66** Ask the Expert All your technical questions answered

**68** Readers' Tips The best tips from our readers

70 Readers' Helpdesk Answers from our reader forums



Stop programs leaving junk in your Registry





# What's New Online

# See the top global searches for 2016

or some, 2016 has been a year to forget but, perhaps surprisingly, the death and destruction that has hallmarked the past 12 months hasn't been entirely at the forefront of our minds. Google has released its annual Year In Search data. which reveals that the two most searched-for queries of 2016 were "What is Pokémon Go?" and "How to play Pokémon Go".

The game also topped global trending searches, although here in the UK it was trumped by Euro 2016. Donald Trump was our fourth most searched-for term, just behind the late David Bowie. Meanwhile, Prince, Brexit, Alan Rickman, Olympics, US election and Deadpool made up the remaining top 10.

The search terms are always a good gauge of our collective mindset as well as our likes and dislikes. We wanted to discover more about the iPhone than the Samsung Galaxy, for



obsessed about Prince Harry's girlfriend, Meghan Markle. She was the UK's most searched-for woman in 2016, even though we've only really known about her for a couple of months. Meanwhile, Conor McGregor, the Ultimate Fighting Championship lightweight champion, was the most

searched-for man.

There are lots of other categories to explore and several surprising entries, which we won't spoil for you! www.google.co.uk/2016

# Download web content in Chrome to view offline

#### bit.ly/chrome413

Version 55 of Chrome for Android lets you view online content without a web connection, by downloading full web pages to your mobile device. By selecting the main menu



and tapping the Download button, you can save any music and videos to your phone or tablet for offline viewing and listening. Not only that, but you can share the content, too, by going to the Downloads folder and sending it via Google Drive, Gmail, Facebook Messenger or a host of other services (you can delete saved content here too). This news comes hot on the heels of Netflix introducing video downloads (see Best New TV Apps on page 35).

# Play retro games in Facebook Messenger

#### messenger.com

Facebook is literally raising its game to get you to spend more time in Messenger. You can now play lots of bite-size retro and casual games direct

from the chat app, and challenge other users to beat your high scores. The 17 games include such recognisable names as

Endless Lake CREDIT

Pac-Man, Arkanoid, Space Invaders and Puzzle Bobble, with more titles to be added soon. The games have been created using HTML5 so they open in next to no time, and although they're designed for use on Android and iOS, you can also play them on your Desktop via a pop-up window. To get started, simply open Messenger, tap the gamepad icon at the bottom of the screen and tap Play next to a game.

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

# Help people find you in an emergency

#### bit.ly/help413

Google's new Trusted Contacts app for Android lets your closest friends and family monitor your whereabouts when you're out and about. Once you've added your most trusted people, they're authorised to ask for your location. You can approve or deny their request within five minutes, after which it will be automatically shared, potentially raising the alarm and a search party.



# Combine tweets from two Twitter accounts

#### tweetmashup.com



Created by analytics expert Jonathan Adler, Tweet Mashup lets you input two Twitter accounts

before combining them to produce missives of up to 140-characters that appear to come from a single person. You can choose from pre-created combos, such as Cher and Elmo from Sesame Street, or create your own (once you've input your own Twitter account for authorisation). The results are surprisingly coherent most of the time and since you can mix any active accounts, you're only limited by your imagination (and time - it's incredibly addictive).

# See the Earth in timelapse

#### earthengine.google.com/timelapse

Contemplate life on Earth over the past 32 years, from 1984 to 2016, using the newly enhanced Google Earth Timelapse. The project, started in 2013, cycles through a mass of satellite images to bring you a compelling visual history of how the landscape has changed. You see buildings spring up and can witness the effects of global warming. Now, with extra years added, and sharper, cloudless images taken from five satellites, you can turn back the clock with unprecedented clarity. Choose a location, zoom in and out and prepare to be amazed.



# Play Super Mario Run on your phone

#### supermariorun.com

Nintendo's first official mobile game could prove even more popular than Niantic's Pokémon Go. Available for iPhone and soon to come on Android, Super Mario Run is a fast-paced side-scroller in which you guide the eponymous plumber over gaps, onto enemies and up and down pipes, collecting coins along the way. The aim is to get Mario through each level in the fastest time possible. Mamma mia!



# **TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER**

#### @pewdiepie

The YouTube celebrity is ditching his long-running video channel

#### @google

Send Google a food emoji to find a nearby restaurant serving that dish

#### @GGOwners

This feed is dedicated to promoting the delights of 'glamping'

#### @thevoiceuk

Keep up with singing show The Voice, which has moved from the Beeb to ITV

#### @metoffice

Be prepared this winter by checking the weather alerts issued by the Met Office

# Watch video previews in

#### www.netflix.com

Netflix's spruced-up interface uses real-time video to let you watch previews of shows as you're browsing. These deliver a short synopsis of a programme and can be viewed via game consoles, smart TVs and Roku devices.

#### Play a classic synth in your browser

#### juno-106.js.org

Hop online and try this interactive simulation which recreates the layout of the 1984 vintage Roland Juno-106 synth and lets you play around with its analog sound.

#### Look at Tube map rip-offs

#### bit.ly/under413

Henry Beck's famous London Underground map was conceived in 1931 and has inspired many copycats and parodies since. This map uses the classic design to list 300 imitators, using the stations as links to each example.

# Need to Know

# Popcorn Time ransomware makes you infect your friends

#### What happened?

A new twist on ransomware attacks has made the cybercrime even more spiteful. In this version, the attackers offer to unlock their victims' PC for free if they infect two of their friends - or perhaps someone they like a little less.

The Popcorn Time malware may sound like a night at the cinema - and the name is identical to a video-streaming BitTorrent app - but it's far from entertaining. Once your computer is infected, the malicious program encrypts all the files on your hard drive so you can't access them. The attackers then demand a ransom payment via Bitcoin.

That's the standard method of ransomware, but this is where Popcorn Time applies its killer blow. You're effectively offered a deal with the devil: if you don't want to pay the unlocking ransom, you can infect other people instead. If two of the subsequent victims pay their ransoms, then you'll get off without paying - like a pyramid scheme for hackers. It's not yet clear if the offer is genuine or whether anyone has taken the hackers up on it.

The hackers state that they are a group of computer-science students from Syria who are raising funds for aid in the troubled country. Neither claim has been confirmed, and there are surely better ways to support the people of Syria than risking your data perhaps consider donating to the Red Cross instead.



The 'real' Popcorn Time service streams films and TV shows - illegally



#### How will it affect me?

If you're downloading and installing the legitimate (if legally dubious) Popcorn Time app, double- and triple-check that it's the right one, so you don't fall foul of this ransomware.

Searching for Popcorn Time in Google reveals a host of websites claiming to offer the app for download. That's because the software was made open-source to ensure it stayed free to use and couldn't be shut down by copyright complaints. However, this means it's difficult to tell which version is 'genuine', and there are rumours online that some editions are run by copyright authorities in the US.

In other words, do your research and be wary when downloading Popcorn Time. If in any doubt, stick with legal paid-for services such as Netflix or

Amazon Prime.

As ever, the best way to avoid trouble with ransomware is to not get infected in the first place, so make sure you're

running antivirus software, keep your operating system up to date, and use common sense online. It's also sensible to keep your data backed up, which is good advice to follow for a host of PC-related problems. If your data is backed up, you won't have to pay a ransom or sell out your friends to get it back.

If you are unfortunate (or careless) enough to become the victim of a ransomware infection, there's no guarantee that paying the fee will see your data released. If the attackers are unscrupulous enough to lock your files in the first place, it's unlikely they'll honour their promise to unlock them.

#### What do we think?

Ransomware is already the most vicious form of cybercrime around. If a hacker steals someone's payment-card details, it's only their cash they're after, which will probably be reimbursed by their bank. But ransomware holds your data hostage, whether that's your family photos, the novel you've been writing for years or your carefully curated music collection. Our computers are repositories for much that we hold dear, and - for that reason - you should back up your data regularly.

We sincerely hope no one takes the hackers up on the offer of infecting a friend's (or anyone else's) computer. Although we're grudgingly impressed by the devious idea of abusing social trends, using the same techniques as a clickbait site trying to make a story go viral, we wish it was genuinely for a good cause rather than for a ransomware attack. We're hoping the methods used to spread this infection don't catch on, because it's hard enough to trust websites as it is, let alone introduce doubt about links shared by our friends, family and contacts who may secretly wish to do us harm.

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

# Cortana comes to Android and iOS

#### What happened?

Microsoft has finally launched its digital assistant Cortana on Android (and soon iOS) in the UK. The release comes more than a year after a similar rollout in the US, and features a revamped design that includes full-page answers and weather information on the landing page.

You can ask Cortana to send emails, make calls, open apps and more, without having to type a word, and you can get recommendations for nearby places to eat, shop and stay. The app also brings phone notifications to your PC, so you can see when you've missed a call or received a text.

The app means mobile users in the UK will have another digital assistant to choose from. Like Google Assistant and Apple's Siri, Cortana can be accessed hands-free using voice commands but the only phones it was built into were Windows Phones.

#### How will it affect you?

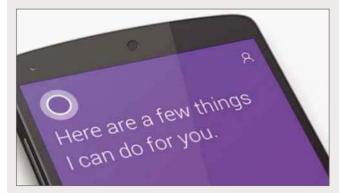
If you're an avid Windows 10 user, this will be

welcome news. Cortana is synced across devices including desktops, laptops and the Xbox One - and the latest rollout looks to be a continuation of Microsoft's general cross-platform Windows 10 strategy. The company also claims that the app is faster than its previous iteration.

For non-Windows 10 users, however, Cortana has to compete against an increasingly crowded digital-assistant market that not only includes Google and Apple's offerings, but also Amazon's Alexa.

#### What do we think?

Considering that the first thing many new Windows 10 users do is turn Cortana off, we find it difficult to get too excited about the voice assistant coming to Android and iOS, especially because those platforms already have their own equivalents. However, if you hate typing and don't feel foolish asking your phone to do things for you, then the app is certainly worth a look. For our part, we'll be sticking with "OK Google".



# **NHS Trusts** still use Windows XP



### happened?

Windows XP is still in widespread use throughout the NHS, two-and-ahalf years after Microsoft

dropped support for the operating system, according to a new survey. Citrix, which commissioned the survey, sent freedomof-information requests to 63 NHS trusts in the UK. 42 of which responded. The gathered data revealed that Windows XP was in use at 90% of the trusts questioned - albeit, in some cases, only on a small percentage of all devices.

The data also revealed that 24 trusts are still unsure as to when they will migrate from Windows XP to a newer operating system. Windows XP was introduced in 2001 and hasn't received official security updates since April 2014, but it remains in use across the world despite a significant effort from Microsoft to persuade organisations to move to Windows 7, 8 or 10.

Around one in 10 (14%) of the trusts surveyed indicated that they would be transitioning to a new operating system by the end of 2016, while nearly a third (29%) claimed they will be making the move

#### How will it affect you?

Naturally, your first concern will be about the safety of your medical records, but bear in mind that the NHS Trusts only admitted to using Windows XP on some devices - not across their entire computer network. Nevertheless, with hackers increasingly picking new targets to steal data from and expose for their lax security, you'd be within your rights to ask your doctor which operating system their organisation is usina.

#### What do we think?

In a few months' time, Windows XP will have been unsafe to use for three years, so we're dismayed that the NHS has yet to upgrade all its computers - even if only a small number are at risk. At the same time, we recognise the expense of testing and switching to a modern operating system on millions of devices. We can only hope that, in the meantime, the NHS is protecting patients' data with effective encryption.

# MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR 2017

It's set to be another interesting year for the internet. Here are the questions we're asking about the next 12 months in tech

#### Will we see driverless cars on our roads?

#### Long answer:

Hand over the car keys and let artificial intelligence (AI) take the wheel as you sit back and enjoy the ride. As appealing as that sounds, you'll have to wait some time before automated chauffeuring is ready for the masses. Despite the hype from companies such as Google and Tesla, the systems that drive the cars need more work - as do the regulations around them.

That said, there will be some

driverless cars on the roads of Britain in 2017 because academics from universities will be running public trials and car manufacturers such as Volvo will be conducting tests. But unless you're part of the research study, the only way to hit the road without taking the wheel is to let another human drive - so hang onto your bus pass in 2017.

#### Short answer:

You'll be stuck driving your commute for the foreseeable future, but trials of automated cars will hit British roads in 2017.



#### Mill the Snooper's Charter **6** be repealed?

#### Long answer:

The Investigatory Powers Bill is only the latest incarnation of the socalled Snooper's Charter, giving security authorities - and many other governmental bodies - access to our web-browsing records. The bill has been given Royal Assent after passing through both houses of Parliament, meaning it will pass into law. Because of that, there are not likely to be many changes to the document itself in 2017.

However, activists, security researchers, academics and many more disagree with the law and will

> keep close watch on how it's used, meaning a legal challenge could be looming. We may not see the Snooper's Charter fully repealed, but its worst intrusions could be blunted in court.

#### Short answer:

No, but legal challenges could limit its powers. See our FAQ on page 36 for more details.

#### Will TalkTalk or another big ISP be hacked?

#### Long answer:

TalkTalk wasn't the only big UK company to be

TalkTalk

targeted by hackers in 2015, but it suffered one of the largest attacks. More than 150,000 customers' details were leaked, and the company was hit with a £400,000 fine in 2016. The hack will have cost the ISP even more in lost customers and other damages.

The attack wasn't the result of online terrorists or organised criminals - one of the hackers was a 17-year-old boy who used longstanding vulnerabilities to target TalkTalk; the other was a 19-year-old who demanded a ransom payment in Bitcoin. If it's so easy to hack a target as lucrative as TalkTalk that teenagers do it in their spare time, then it's likely to happen again - if not to TalkTalk, which has hopefully patched its vulnerabilities, then to another tech company that hasn't yet got the message.

#### Short answer:

Undoubtedly.

#### Will Facebook fix its fake-news problem?

#### Long answer:

The Brexit referendum and US election highlighted a problem with using Facebook to get your daily news: much of it is fake. Some experts believe the level of fake news on the social network may have influenced the outcome of the presidential race, though it's difficult to measure - not least when so many "real" news organisations are less than straight in their reporting.

Facebook has since launched a reporting tool, so users can tell it when a site posts fake news, but it's hard to believe that's going to solve

the problem, not least because fake news is not only a technical challenge but a cultural one. Blocking links to dodgy sites is easy, but answering the backlash to cries

of "censorship" will be much tougher. Facebook has a difficult year ahead of it.

#### Short answer:

It will try but probably fail.

#### Will smart-home assistants take off?

#### Long answer:

In 2016, Amazon and Google both started selling home speakers with built-in voiceactivated assistants that can answer our spoken queries about cinema listings, the weather and when the next bus is due to arrive. The Google Home device is yet to arrive on these shores, but many Brits have already welcomed Amazon's Echo and its Alexa assistant into their homes.



It's tough to predict which technology will last while others fail, but there's a key factor to look for when gazing into a crystal ball: is the new gadget actually useful? Smartwatches clearly weren't, and sales subsequently struggled. Smart-home assistants let you set your phone aside at home and free you from staring at a screen. That's handier than a smartwatch, at least.

Alexa and friends will last longer than wearables.

#### Will Uber and Airbnb 6 face regulation?

#### Long answer:

Uber and Airbnb are the leading proponents of the so-called 'sharing economy', and their peer-to-peer models make them harder to regulate and tax than more traditional companies. They are likely to face

increasing regulation - though it's unlikely that

any new laws or rules will be significant enough to put either out of business. Airbnb has agreed to limit hosts to 90 days of lets - the legal limit without a

permit. That's not a change in law, but it shows Airbnb would rather help enforce existing laws than tempt regulators to write stronger ones. Some Uber drivers have complained that they don't make minimum wage despite working full-time hours, and have taken their case to the courts. Depending on the outcome, this could force sharing-economy customers to top up workers' pay, cutting into the cost savings that made the platform so attractive to users in the first place.

#### Short answer:

Changes loom, but the sharing economy is here to stay.

#### Will BT and Openreach have an amicable divorce?

#### Long answer:

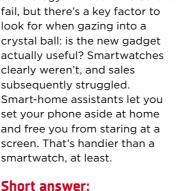
Ofcom wants telecoms giant BT to separate from Openreach, its broadbandinfrastructure arm, to open up access to its services and equipment to rival ISPs, who can use its network of poles, ducts and so on to roll out their own fibrebroadband services. The divorce has been a long time coming, and likely won't run smoothly - BT isn't keen on the change but rival ISPs are hoping to push it along as quickly as possible. That said, BT will still own Openreach but will be legally separated from it, so the change may not prove all that painful in the end.

Expect a year of negotiations, consultations and legal challenges, as Ofcom hasn't yet filed its formal notification to the European Commission to start the process, meaning BT could still convince the regulator to give it more time to prove

#### Short answer:

Nothing broadband-related runs smoothly in Britain, so don't expect the Openreach spinoff to be any different.

its current setup isn't hurting competition.



#### **BBC** and ITV to launch **BritBox in the US**

WEBOMETER

The BBC has teamed up with ITV to launch BritBox, an ad-free streaming service that will feature classic British programmes and new dramas.

WE LIKE...



The cost of a subscription will be announced when the service arrives in early 2017.

#### Cookie warnings to crumble

A leaked directive from the European Commission has revealed plans to relax the laws regarding annoying cookie notices on EU websites. The



laws, which were introduced in 2012, require sites to warn visitors that their personal data is being used.

#### WE DON'T LIKE...

#### Windows update causes network problems

An update to Windows 10 prevented some PC users from being able to connect to the internet, regardless of which ISP or router they use. Microsoft suggested that users restart their PCs to clear the problem.



#### **Netgear warns customers** 🖊 over unsafe routers

Netgear customers have been urged to switch off their routers after a number of models were found to contain a vulnerability that lets hackers gain remote access. The flaw affects R6250, R6700, R7300 and R7900 models, among others.





# Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

# Android malware targets 1 million Google accounts

More than one million Google accounts have been compromised by a new authentication-thieving malware campaign called Gooligan, according to security company Check Point. In a blog post, Check Point said the malware steals authentication tokens from infected Android devices, which can later be used to access Google services such as Play, Gmail, Photos, Google Drive and more. The Gooligan malware campaign appears to affect 74% of in-market devices, particularly those running Android 4 (JellyBean, KitKat) and 5 (Lollipop). Around 57% of these devices are in Asia and 9% are in Europe. Android users can check whether their account is compromised at gooligan.checkpoint .com. If your account has been breached, you should carry out a

clean installation of the operating system on the affected mobile device.

bit.ly/google413

A hack on the popular

# Dailymotion hack exposes 85 million users

video-sharing site Dailymotion has exposed millions of account details, with email addresses and usernames reportedly leaked online. More than 85 million accounts were compromised in the attack, 18.3 million of which had associated passwords, according to LeakedSource (leakedsource.com), a security-breach notification website that revealed the attack took place on 20 October. Although the passwords were 'hashed' - or jumbled - to prevent attackers reading them easily, users may become vulnerable to targeted phishing scams. LeakedSource, which also discovered a recent hack on AdultFriendFinder, said the identity of

the person behind the latest attack is currently unknown.

bit.ly/dailymotion413

# Personal passwords being reused at work

More than one in four UK workers admit to using the same passwords for their work and personal

accounts, potentially putting their employers' data at risk. A survey of over 1,000 UK office workers conducted by YouGov, on behalf of encryption firm WinMagic, revealed that employees' lax attitude to cybersecurity and data protection could be opening up huge security holes in their companies' networks. Password reuse is a huge issue for cybersecurity, and the habit has played a part in many breaches, including a recent spate of Deliveroo hacks. bit.ly/passwords413

# Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Andy Green, senior technical specialist at Varonis (www.varonis.com)



Following the recent hack of TalkTalk routers, how can big internet companies avoid being hacked again in 2017?

Liam Potts, Facebook



The lessons that should be learned from the recent

Mirai attacks against more than 100.000 TalkTalk and Post Office routers is to recognise just how vulnerable companies are as a result of their own laziness. Sure, they can blame harried consumers for treating their home routers and Internet of Things gadgetry - such as toasters and other kitchen appliances - like any other appliance, by just plugging them in and forgetting about them. But what excuse do professionals working in the technology field have for this rookie-level behaviour? Not much! Unfortunately, 'default-itis' still plagues many large organisations.

Hackers can guess weak passwords that were created for convenience

Hackers typically scan for public ports and are able to guess weak passwords that were never changed from the default or were created for convenience such as 'admin1234'. This is exactly the technique that was used in the Mirai botnet attack.

Even if hackers use other methods to infiltrate a network – such as phishing – they can still take advantage of internal software for which default logins were never changed. You have to plan for

attackers breaching the first line of defences, and therefore have in place security controls to monitor and detect intruders. In a way, we should be thankful for the 'script kiddies' who launched the Mirai botnet DDoS (direct denial of service) attack. It's a great lesson for showing that companies should be looking inward when planning their data security to protect themselves and their customers.

# MANAGED CYBER PROTECTION

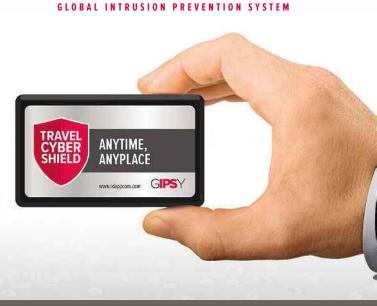
# **24** HOUR

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SHIELD FROM EXPLOITS
Attackers working from

Attackers working from outside your system



PROTECT FROM PHISHING

Invitations to reveal your private information



**BLOCK MALWARE** 

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DEVELOPED BY THE INDUSTRY EXPERTS





# Best New Websites

## Site of the Fortnight

### **Drivetribe**

#### drivetribe.com

Not content with rave reviews of The Grand Tour on Amazon Prime Video, Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May have launched what they've dubbed "YouPorn for cars". This lively community invites you to join motoring "tribes" (think Facebook groups) to discuss driving topics with like-minded folk. Annoyingly, you can only sign in via Facebook but you're quickly treated to great photography and enthusiastic musings. You can show your appreciation for posts by commenting on or 'bumping' them (the equivalent of 'liking'), share items on other social networks and create your own tribe from scratch.

Our rating



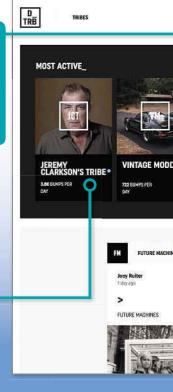


**MOST DISCUSSED Discover which** topics are attracting other people's attention and share your views



#### TOP NAMES

Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May have their own tribes to follow





#### HISTORY

### Charles Booth's London

#### booth.lse.ac.uk

The social reformer Charles Booth documented working-class life in 19th-century London, producing a range of maps between 1886 and 1903 showing areas of poverty along with copious amounts of notes. This website lets you search the maps by district or street, zoom in for greater detail, slide to the modern day and discover what Booth's colour coding represents. You can also browse and download the 450 original notebooks, view 41 digitised versions and filter the books by keyword, collection or page. It's a fascinating collection made accessible through a simple design that draws your attention to key topics such as crime, migrant communities and prostitution.

Our rating





#### **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Rocket Builder**

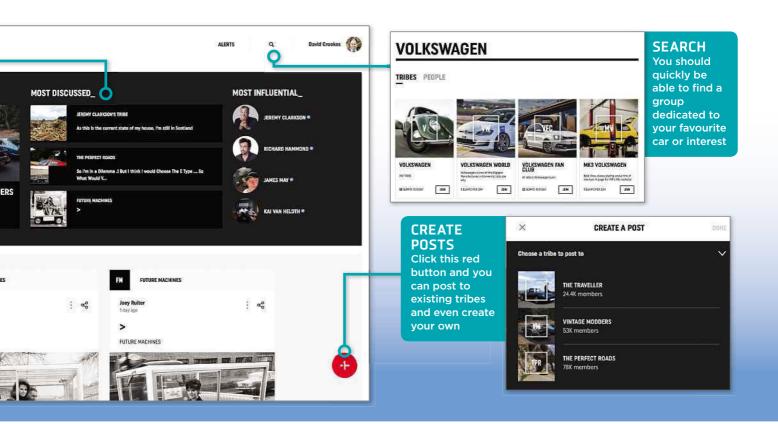
#### www.rocketbuilder.com

If you have a spare \$109m, why not build your very own space rocket? Created by the United Launch Alliance (ULA) - the organisation responsible for sending Atlas V, Delta II and Delta IV rockets skyward - this site lets you specify a launch date, preferred orbit, payload and service plan before giving you a price estimate and allowing you to download your creation as a 3D model. The site is clearly aimed at wealthy aspiring astronauts, but it's fascinating fun for the casual user, too, and we love how it explains the various parts of the rocket so you know what you're getting.

Our rating



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





**CHARITY** 

### **Action for Elders**

#### www.actionforelders.org.uk

Action for Elders runs weekly programmes to help older people gain new skills, encourage exercise and enjoy the company of others. Its new website provides lots of information via swish drop-down menus, with a photo-led layout that's easy to get around. The site promotes volunteer opportunities, showing how it positively affects people's lives, and it's not shy about asking you for a donation. But despite highlighting events and news, it's frustratingly incomplete. Most of the advice and support pages are low on content and the podcast and film section is empty.

Our rating





**GAMES** 

## My Nintendo

#### my.nintendo.com

With a new console (Switch) and iOS game (Super Mario Run) on the way, Nintendo has been busy, but that hasn't stopped it tinkering with its My Nintendo rewards website. It still contains lots of money-saving offers, in-game content and even full games (along with a special treat in your birthday month), but has added a new section for smart device apps and makes it easier to discover how to earn points and find the available rewards. We like that the site has also added the ability to create a unique User ID and that it now lets you create accounts for children under the age of 13.

Our rating





**HEALTH** 

### Thrive Global

#### www.thriveglobal.com

Created by Arianna Huffington, founder of The Huffington Post, Thrive Global is a health and wellbeing site, packed with self-indulgent advice about ways to relax and work smarter, with star-quality contributions from the likes of Amazon boss Jeff Bezos. We like that you can see how long an article takes to read and download an app that deletes new emails when you're on holiday. But it's mainly a cash-cow, encouraging you to enrol on a six-week 'e-course' to "move from surviving to thriving" and buy a phone charger that looks like a bed complete with satin-clad mattress.

**Our rating** 





# WebUser

How do I share Windows 10 apps I've bought with other user accounts on my PC?







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You can still buy our 2014 Back Issues Disc from bit.ly/webusercd





# **Scan Computers**

#### www.scan.co.uk

Gamers and PC enthusiasts will know Scan Computers from the Bolton-based company's award-winning machines and acclaimed customer service, but its messy, confusing website previously let it down. Now cleaned up and much more straightforward to use, the site has moved the search bar to the top, refined its tabs to make it easier to drill down to the various product categories and cut down the amount of scrolling required on product pages. We like that Scan has retained the Today Only section, which details the best time-limited deals, and that Tek Spek continues to discuss and explain the latest tech.







#### **TRANSPORT**

### **Transport for Greater Manchester**

#### beta.tfgm.com

Anyone using public transport in Greater Manchester will surely welcome this newly revamped travel site. There's more emphasis on live information, so you can search for a bus number, tram stop or railway station and quickly see when your ride is due. You can also discover if there are any transport problems, browse timetables and ticket info, and plan your journey to the minute. It's a vast improvement on the old site and the clean, responsive design is much easier to use on mobile devices. You can't yet buy tickets on the site: instead, you have to download the free Get Me There app.

Our rating





#### BOOKS

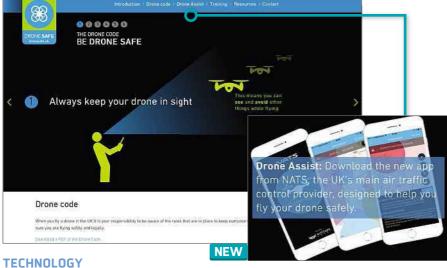
#### The Paris Review

#### www.theparisreview.org

The redesigned website for literary magazine The Paris Review does a superior job of showcasing the excellent writing and art that exists within the mag's pages. As well as more stylish design, it has promoted fiction, essays, poetry, art and photography to its main navigation bar and jazzed up its headlines to draw you into the site's compelling content. Some of the pieces require you to subscribe if you want to read them in full, although there is a 10-day free trial period so you can work out if The Paris Review is your tasse de thé. Subscribers can now gain access to the Review's 63-year archive online.

Our rating





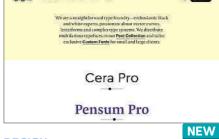
### **Dronesafe**

#### dronesafe.uk

If you got a drone for Christmas, this site lets you check the Civil Aviation Authority's guidelines for flying it in the UK, so you don't fall foul of the law or your neighbours. Its revised "drone code" uses clear infographics to hammer home the six points you need to take on board before you take to the air. It's a highly effective approach that makes the rules accessible and easy to remember and understand. There are also links to useful resources; a handy interactive map app for your mobile device showing areas to avoid when flying; and a section on the legal aspects of drones. Be sure to watch the fun yet authoritative cartoon video guide to flying your drone, too.

Our rating





#### **DESIGN**

### **Typemates**

#### www.typemates.com

Although Times New Roman, Arial and Helvetica serve many people well, there's always room to expand and vary the selection of fonts you use. TypeMates designs and distributes some lovely looking typefaces, and each is available to buy with a few clicks and a PayPal or Stripe payment. The fonts aren't cheap but the website displays them well, letting you view them in italics and at different weights and sizes. The fascinating news section shows how the typefaces are used in real life, and includes some interesting tips and inspirational designs, along with insights into how some of the fonts are created.

Our rating



# **Build a Better Site**

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

# Top Tips of the Fortnight

#### Great new free WordPress themes

Why not treat your website to a new theme for the new year? Themeisle (themeisle.com) has just launched three excellent themes that are available free of charge. Naturelle (bit.ly/nat413) uses vertical scrolling to create stunning single-page sites with great-looking designs. ReviewZine (bit.ly/review413) is a framework for building a review site, aimed at technology reviews but easily adapted to other types. And if you're thinking of setting up a shop, try Azera Luxury (bit.ly/az413).

WordPress.com users shouldn't feel left out because the service has its own free new theme called Ixion (bit.ly/ix413), specifically designed for organisations like clubs that need sites with both permanent information and regularly updated news.

#### WordPress 4.7 launches

If you haven't already done so, you need to pop into your WordPress website's Dashboard and manually upgrade it to version 4.7. As well as the new default theme (Twenty Seventeen, which we looked at in issue 411 bit.ly/webuser411), the latest update also includes a customisation tool that makes it easier to rearrange your content in themes, and a menu-building tool that allows you to create pages on the fly. You can also now see a live preview of what your site will look like if you tweak its CSS settings.

#### **Deal of the Fortnight**

Fasthosts (www.fasthosts.co.uk) is offering Web User readers 25% off its Ignite Web Hosting package for the first year. Use the coupon code IGNITE25 at the checkout.

# Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: James Norman, Content Editor. **Fasthosts Internet** (www.fasthosts.co.uk)



What should I add to my HTML <img> tags to increase my SEO (search-engine optimisation): 'alt=', 'title=' or both?

•••••

Gary Fender, via email

When a search engine is crawling your site and finds an image, it will focus on the 'alt' attribute to

understand what the image is about. Descriptive keyword-focused 'alt' attributes are beneficial from an SEO perspective, but you shouldn't ignore title attributes. Although they aren't as valuable for SEO, image titles are still useful to users and are an integral part of good web design. The words in the title tag will pop up as a tool tip when you hover your mouse over an image.



MINI WORKSHOP | Find out how your site is being searched Search Analytics: bit.ly/seaana413 | 🕒 10 mins | Any browser

Google's Search Analytics provides a fascinating insight into what people who visit your pages are searching for, which pages Google is showing them and how many people are clicking through to your site



Sign in with your Google account and select the Property (website) you want to look at. If you don't already have one registered, you can click the 'Add property now' button. The main screen charts how many times people have clicked through to your site, 1 and lists the search terms they were looking for. 2



Click a specific search term in the list and it will be used as a filter. 🚺 You can use other filters to view different subsets of results, 2 including specific pages, the countries that the search originated from and the device type (desktop, mobile or tablet) that the searcher used.



You'll also find useful statistics from the different options above the filters. Tick the boxes to add them to your chart. As well as the total clicks, you can view the number of times your site was displayed by Google ('impressions'), 11 the average clickthrough rate **2** and the average position your site held in the results.



It's tempting to think that your antivirus is all you need to stay safe, but recent hacks have shown that you require extra layers of defence. In October hackers used the deadly Mirai botnet to take down thousands of websites worldwide. What made it a particularly devastating attack is that it exploited flaws in web-connected devices, such as webcams, routers, printers and even baby monitors. Unlike your computer, these devices AREN'T protected by your anti-virus. You need a different, better security solution to stay safe in the future.

The answer is to use managed security from leading UK firm Idappcom (http:// idappcom.com). It provides businessstrength security for your home, protecting all your devices: webcams, printers, routers - as well as PCs, laptops, tablets, Smart TVs and phones.

#### **MANAGED SECURITY IN** YOUR HOME

What does 'managed' security mean? Well, it simply takes the worry out of staying safe. Instead of wondering when you should



update your anti-virus, just let a cloud-based security operations centre take control. Manned by dedicated professionals, this centre monitors your security 24/7, updating your software when required. It's like having your own private army of security experts protecting you from hackers and scammers.

All you need to do is connect Idappcom's HIPSY box (pictured) to your router. This creates



a secure Wi-Fi hub for all your family's internet-connected devices, including PCs, laptops, tablets, phones and smart devices, protecting them from the latest exploits and malware attacks.

#### **MANAGED SECURITY** WHEREVER YOU ARE

But Idappcom's security doesn't end at your front door. Slip Idappcom's GIPSY box (pictured) into your pocket and you'll have portable protection. Simply connect to your laptop or tablet then to an available Wi-Fi



hotspot to create a secure internet connection wherever you are - on holiday, in a hotel, or just down the coffee

shop. With the GIPSY connected you can safely use any shared internet connection without worrying about who may be eavesdropping or stealing your online ID. With the HIPSY installed on your home network you also have the option to create restricted access-zones to protect younger family members from inappropriate content and social media bullying.

#### 24/7 PROTECTION

How do you know HIPSY and GIPSY work? The clue is in the name: IPS stands for 'Intrusion Prevention System' -



which is the industry-standard technology used by businesses.

In fact, it's not just businesses that use IPS. The technology is so powerful that even the Government and military use it. But until now it's not been affordable to the general public. Idappcom's ground-breaking service finally means that you can enjoy the same level of security that the authorities take for granted.

### YOUR FIRST 3 MONTHS – FOR FREE!

Idappcom is launching the service with a special promotion. If you sign up before 31 December, 2016, you will get the first three months' subscription updates FREE. Just visit www.ipssecurityrules.co.uk and click the 'Buy Now' box on the right. Prices start from less than £100 per year.

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We test and compare the latest products

# Lenovo Yoga Book

Why choose between a tablet or a laptop when you can have both? Nathan Spendelow looks at Lenovo's latest 2-in-1 that does more than a tablet but is lighter than a laptop

e've seen a few hybrid 2-in-1 devices that can operate as both a laptop and a tablet but the Yoga Book is refreshingly different and Lenovo has really pulled out all the stops by completely revolutionising the design of this kind of device.

For starters, there's no physical keyboard. Instead you get a virtual one, which is illuminated and looks convincingly futuristic. The keys vibrate when you tap them, giving you a reassuring sense of feedback as you type.

This isn't merely aesthetic, either, because the Yoga Book's real party trick is its ability to turn that virtual keyboard into a full-blown. electromagnetic resonance (EMR) writing surface. This means you can draw or scribble notes with its bundled stylus at the tap of a switch. Simply press the small stylus button in the top-right corner and the illuminated keys disappear, giving you a spacious area to write on. It's incredibly versatile.

The lack of physical keys means Lenovo has also been able to slim down the Yoga Book's aluminium magnesium-alloy chassis to a mere 9.6mm when closed, making it the world's thinnest hybrid. Likewise, at just 690g, the Yoga Book barely weighs more than a high-quality



paper notebook, making it incredibly easy to slot in your bag and use on the go.

#### **Keyboard and writing** surface

Admittedly, it takes a little time and perseverance to get used to typing on the virtual keyboard. This review was

written on the Yoga Book's keyboard and while the first draft was riddled with typing errors and other mistakes, we soon started to feel more comfortable with it. Just don't expect to type very fast - we found it couldn't keep up the pace as our typing speed increased to full flow.

The Yoga Book's party trick is its ability to turn its virtual keyboard into a full-blown, electromagnetic writing surface

In theory, Lenovo's artificiallearning software should mean that typing on the Yoga Book improves over time. We didn't see much evidence of this taking effect during our tests but it's meant to be able to learn exactly where your fingers land when you hit certain keys and adjust its active key area accordingly. For instance, if you always hit the spacebar below the defined area allocated on the keyboard, the Yoga Book should remember and still register the key press for you.





though, and the Yoga Book unequivocally excels as a device for taking hand-written notes. Using the stylus (which has 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity) feels perfectly natural. We much preferred it to writing directly onto glass and the keyboard's built-in palm rejection means you can rest your hand on it as you write without making any random marks on the page, and see exactly what you're writing on the screen above.

The smartest addition to the Yoga Book is its bundled magnetic clip. This lets you clip any old A5 notebook to the Yoga Book and still take notes, giving you both a physical version and a digital copy to store or share. On the Android model we were sent for review, all notes were instantly saved to Lenovo's own note-saving app; the Windows version saves everything to OneNote, so you can instantly access your digitised notes from any Windows device via the cloud.

#### Screen and performance

Given the fancy keyboard and impressive stylus, the screen is a bit disappointing. It's a 10.1in, 1,920 x 1,200-pixels panel, with a surprisingly high maximum brightness of 422cd/m<sup>2</sup>, but its overall colour accuracy covered just 81.2% of the colours available to the sRGB colour standard. This makes it an inadequate tool for serious graphic work, although it's perfectly capable of carrying out less specialised tasks.

As previously mentioned, there are two types of Yoga Book available - an Android version and a Windows 10 Pro version, which costs £100 more. Both come with the same hardware specifications, including a quad-core Intel Atom x5-Z8550 processor clocked at 2.4GHz, with 4GB of RAM. It's not a particularly fast combination by any means, but it's more than enough for light computing tasks on the move.

In Geekbench 4 (geekbench .com), for instance, the Yoga Book scored 3,222 in the multi-core test and 1,162 in the single-core test. This is low for a laptop, but should serve you well for general use. We didn't experience any noticeable problems zipping around multiple, less-demanding Android applications - only the keyboard occasionally struggled to recognise our top-speed typing.

Graphics performance falls short of the latest cuttingedge tablets, but the Yoga Book's average of 19fps in the GFXBench Manhattan 3 test (gfxbench.com) is still good, putting it roughly on par with one of last year's top-range

smartphones. In practice, running a graphically intense game such as Sky Force Reloaded (bit.ly/skyforce413) was a little problematic, with the occasional noticeable frame drop whenever the action got a little too frenetic. However, simpler games ran perfectly well.

Battery life is good, too. With the screen brightness set to our standard measurement of 170cd/m<sup>2</sup>, the Yoga Book lasted 7 hours and 22 minutes in our continuous video-playback test. This means you'll get a good day's use from it, even if you aren't able to access a mains socket.

A natural downside of having such a thin device is its lack of ports. Still, the Yoga Book tries its best and you get a micro USB port, a micro HDMI port for connecting it to an external display, a microSD port for adding storage and a 3.5mm headphone jack.

As for network connectivity. there's built-in 802.11ac wireless, along with Bluetooth 4, for hooking up external peripherals.

#### PRODUCT INFO

#### Lenovo Yoga Book

£444.99 (Android); £534.99 (Windows 10) **Buy from Amazon:** bit.ly/lyba413 (Android): bit.ly/lybw413 (Windows 10)

#### **SPECIFICATIONS**

- Quad-core 2.4GHz Intel Atom
- x5-Z8550 processor
- 4GB of memory
- 64GB of storage space
- 10.1in screen
- 1.920 x 1.200 pixels resolution
- MicroSD memory card slot
- 1 x micro HDMI port
- 1 x micro USB port
- 802.11a/b/g/n/ac Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth 4
- Android 6.0
- 256 x 170 x 9.6mm
- **=** 690g

#### FOR

- ✓ Super thin and lightweight
- ✓ Fantastic note-taking device
- ✓ Decent battery life

#### AGAINST

X Slightly sluggish performance

#### MORE POWERFUL

Acer Switch Alpha 12, £579.99 Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/acer413



#### LARGER SCREEN

Microsoft Surface Pro 4, £699 Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/surf413



#### **OUR VERDICT**

Despite a couple of niggles, the Yoga Book is an exceptional note-taking device that, for £450, does an excellent job of bridging the gap between laptop, tablet and paper notebook. Lenovo has pushed the boundaries and this genuinely feels like a step forward over the plethora of Surface-alikes we've

**FEATURES PERFORMANCE** 

**EASE OF USE** VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

seen in the past. However, we'd advise that you try the keyboard before you buy, because the lack of physical keys won't be to everyone's liking.



# Devolo dLAN 550+ WiFi Starter Kit

Andy Shaw tests Devolo's latest HomePlug kit, which brings faster Wi-Fi to all corners of your home at an affordable price

he latest addition to Devolo's HomePlug range doesn't claim to bring the speediest Wi-Fi to the difficult-to-reach corners of your home, but it will improve the signal at an affordable price. If your router isn't especially fast anyway - because you're still using the basic model supplied by your ISP, for example - this new 550+ Wi-Fi Starter Kit can bring a significant improvement to your home's worst Wi-Fi blackspots.

Sticking with 2.4GHz Wi-Fi technology and 100Mbps Fast Ethernet rather than Gigabit keeps the cost down. The kit

550+ duo (with two Ethernet ports and a pass-through socket) to connect to your router; and a Wi-Fi unit (which also has a passthrough socket but only one Ethernet port) to bring a stronger Wi-Fi connection to distant rooms. As usual, setting the

comes with two devices: one

devices up is easy. Plug the device for the router into a nearby socket (the power outlet can still be used for other devices, thanks to its own pass-through socket) and connect it to the router using the supplied Ethernet cable. Plug the other device into another wall socket and the two HomePlugs will find each other and create a network. A couple of button pushes will secure it, and it can automatically replicate your router's security settings if you'd like a seamless transfer between networks.

#### PRODUCT INFO

#### Devolo dLAN 550+ WiFi Starter Kit

Price: £109.99 Buy from: www.devolo.co.uk

#### **SPECIFICATIONS**

- 2.4GHz 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi
- 2x2 MIMO antennas
- Fast Ethernet ports (two on router device, one on Wi-Fi)
- 400m range with Range+ technology
- WPA/WPA2 security

#### FOR

✓ Great value for money ✓ Will boost the Wi-Fi signal in

most blackspots

#### **AGAINST**

X Faster alternatives available from Devolo and others

#### **Performance**

We connected a USB 3 portable SSD drive containing a collection of video and photo files to our existing Linksys router (reviewed in Issue 391 - bit.ly/issue391). We timed how long it took to transfer the files to a PC in the furthest room away from the router, one floor up in an extension, which meant the signal had to pass through a ceiling and an external wall. On the router, we tested both 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks, though the Devolo device only uses the 2.4GHz frequency.



The fastest the router could manage to our distant room was 2.44MB/s (megabytes per second) while transferring large video files on the 5GHz network. It was slower when transferring lots of photo files, managing 1.72MB/s. The 2.4GHz network was slower. mostly because it appeared to be less reliable, averaging out at 1.44MB/s when

transferring videos, and 0.93MB/s with smaller files.

Things improved significantly with the HomePlugs installed: we managed to transfer video files at 2.99MB/s (22% faster than the 5GHz network) and the smaller photo files at 3.02MB/s (75% faster than the router's 5GHz network). A marked improvement.

#### OUR VERDICT

The results speak for themselves. The slower your router, the bigger the benefit from this kit. But even with a reasonably good router, you can improve your Wi-Fi's performance in its weakest blackspots around your home. It's an easy and effective fix that can be up

**FEATURES PERFORMANCE** 

**EASE OF USE** 

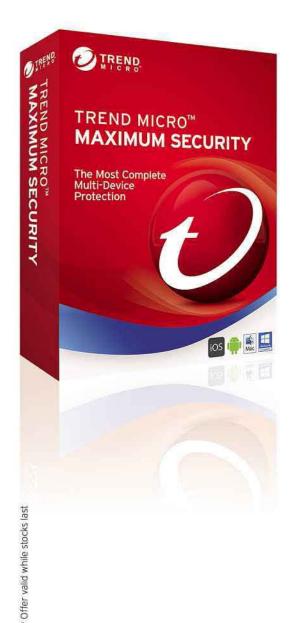
VALUE FOR MONEY ★★★★★

and running in just a few minutes. Shop around and you should be able to get a few pounds off the price we've quoted in this review.



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- Safeguards kids online
- Secures up to 5 devices (PC, Mac, or mobile)
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FROM £29.99\*



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# COMPUTERACTIVE

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# **₩eb User's Best Buys**

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

#### **HARDWARE**

#### **MONITOR**

#### **AOC Q2781PQ**

£299.99 from bit.ly/aoc412 Date tested: December 2016



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/m<sup>2</sup> 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.

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.

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

#### **REMOTE-ACCESS TOOL**

#### TeamViewer 12

#### www.teamviewer.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/

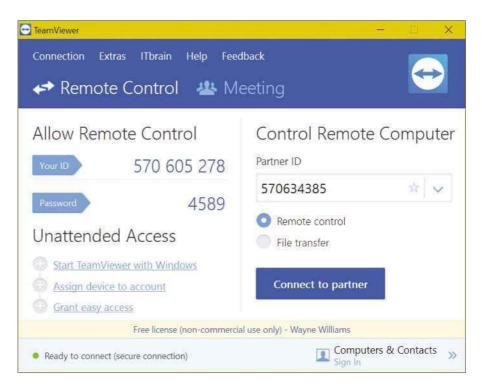
Vista/7/8+/10 File size: 12.2MB

If someone you know is having PC problems, you can use TeamViewer to log into their computer remotely and either fix the faults yourself without having to be physically present or give them an on-screen demonstration to show them how it's done.

You can also use the program to access your own computer remotely and drag files to and from it; host online meetings; collaborate on documents in real time; and watch videos or listen to music stored on a remote system. If you have a multi-monitor setup, you can have different remote-connection sessions open on each screen, and drag and drop files between them.

The software automatically adjusts the connection based on your hardware and network to deliver the best quality, and you can now leave sticky notes behind on the remote computer - which is useful for letting someone know that you've finished fixing their PC.

TeamViewer's interface has been given a makeover and is now easier



to use than ever, while the Remote Device Dashboard provides useful information about performance during a remote session. This latest version of the software introduces some major performance improvements, including 20x faster file transfers (speeds of up to 200Mbps) and remote-session frame rates of up to 60fps.

The program is completely free for personal and non-commercial use, and is really easy to set up - the entire process takes seconds. If you ever need remote access to another computer whether it's yours or someone else's (with their permission, of course) then TeamViewer is by far the best option around.

# MINI WORKSHOP | Connect to a remote PC using TeamViewer 12



1 When you install TeamViewer on your PC, you're given a choice of installation methods - Basic is fine so select this option and run it. Sign up for a free account 11 if you want to create a list of remote computers for easy future access. Run the software on your remote device and copy its Partner ID into the box. 2



Click the 'Connect to partner' button. A box pops up asking for a password. This is displayed on the remote computer. Enter the password and the connection will be made. You now have full control over the remote PC. The TeamViewer Panel 11 gives you access to a number of controls. You can drag this panel anywhere on screen.



To copy files between computers, drag and drop them from one system to the other. The bar across the top offers a variety of options. Home 1 takes you to the TeamViewer dashboard, while Actions 2 lets you perform various useful tasks, including leaving a note. 3 Customise the image quality and speed under View, 4 and chat under Communicate. 5

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



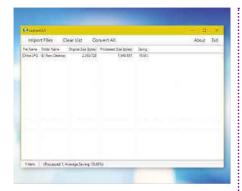
#### **SYSTEM TOOL**

### **Windows Spotlight Tool**

bit.ly/spotlight413

Min requirements: Windows 10 File size: 760KB

The Windows 10 lock screen can display a daily image pulled from the web. You need to set the lock screen to use Windows Spotlight for this, which you can do by going to Settings, Personalisation, 'Lock screen'. There's no easy way to save the Spotlight pictures for use as Windows wallpaper, but the Windows Spotlight Tool can do this for you. Simply specify a save location and the program will download all the daily images to the nominated folder.

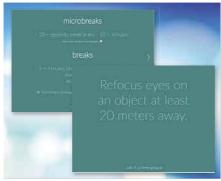


# COMPRESSION TOOL LeptonGUI

nuetools.co.uk

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 447KB

Lepton is an image format from online storage service Dropbox that can compress JPEG images by an average of 20%, and often more. It saves files in the LEP format, and restores them back to JPEG with no loss of quality, which makes it useful for saving drive space. Lepton requires you to use the Windows Command prompt, but LeptonGUI adds a front end to the program that makes it much easier to use.



#### **BREAK REMINDER**

#### Stretchly

bit.ly/stretch413

**Min requirements:** Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10, macOS or Linux

File size: 42.3MB

For health reasons, it's important to take regular breaks away from your PC, but it's easy to let this slip your mind. Stretchly reminds you take breaks every 10 minutes, and suggests tasks to perform during that time, such as blinking or relaxing. You'll be prompted to take regular 'microbreaks', which only last 20 seconds, or longer breaks that last between 5 and 10 minutes.

#### **New Windows Apps**

#### Microsoft Print to PDF Settings

bit.ly/printpdf413

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 1MB

This new app from Microsoft lets

you encrypt your PDF documents. Once the file is secured, you need to enter a password to be able to print, edit or copy it.



#### **Pulsound**

bit.ly/puls413

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 19.9MB

Pulsound is a music player for Windows 10 devices. You can browse artists, albums and music, and create and manage playlists. The ad-free version costs 79p.



#### **Text Swag**

#### bit.ly/textswag413

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 14.6MB

This app has been designed specifically for adding text and effects to photos prior to uploading them to Instagram. You can change the font styles and text colours, opacity and more.



# Best Free Software

#### **MEDIA PLAYER**

#### **VLC 360**

bit.ly/vlc413

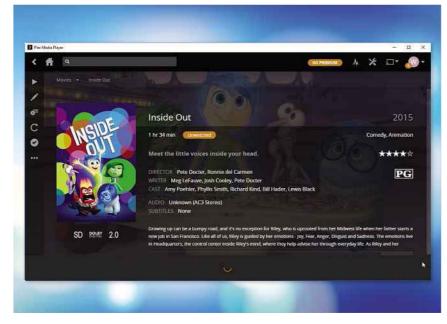
Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 or

macOS File size: 31.9MB

VLC is undoubtedly the best free media player around. It lets you play almost any video format on any platform, and there's now a technical preview that allows the Desktop program to play 360-degree videos. VLC 360 can handle any videos that follow the Spatial Video specification, as well as 360-degree photos and panoramas that follow the Spherical spec. There are test samples available to download on the website.

Click and drag or use the keypad arrows to look around while a video is playing. The download includes a full version of Media Player 3.0 and will overwrite any existing version of VI C.





#### **HOME-THEATRE SOFTWARE** Plex Media Player

#### www.plex.tv

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 or macOS File size: 90.5MB

This powerful media centre can play any audio and video files on a Plex Media Server. It was designed to run full-screen on home-theatre systems and used to require a Plex Pass - Plex's premium subscription service - but it's now entirely free.

If you run Plex in a window on your Desktop, it will switch to the web interface so you can use your mouse and keyboard to watch content or manage your media server remotely. If you're looking for an interesting alternative to Web User favourite Kodi, then Plex Media Player fits the bill.

There's a build of the software available for Raspberry Pi, too.

### **EMAIL ARCHIVER**

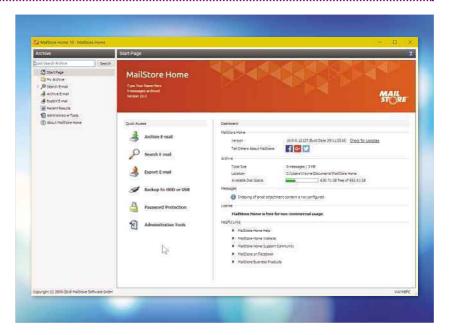
#### MailStore Home 10

bit.ly/msh413

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

File size: 10.2MB

MailStore Home backs up your emails and works with all types of mail service, including Gmail and Outlook. Just select the service(s) to back up and the program will get to work. It cleverly reduces the amount of space that your emails take up by only saving the first instance of an attachment. All your emails are saved in a central location and you can read, search and consolidate them in the software, or burn them to CD or DVD. MailStore Home now fully encrypts all email databases, and lets you password-protect archives so nobody else can open them. Numerous performance improvements have also been made throughout.





#### **GAME** Mundo Lixo

bit.ly/mundo413

Min requirements: Windows XP/ Vista/7/8+/10, macOS or Linux

File size: 20.4MB

If you've ever fancied poking around a rubbish dump to see what people have discarded, then you'll love Mundo Lixo. There's no real objective, besides wandering freely around a giant dump in the company of some scavenging creatures, but the graphics are attractive and there's a retro VHS aesthetic to it, which is an interesting touch.

#### Don't install...

#### Ezvid

#### www.ezvid.com

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

or macOS

File size: 979KB

Ezvid used to be one of the best free screen recorders, but it's now marred by bundled junk that's impossible to decline. Its License Agreement takes some terrifying liberties and the website's claim that Ezvid is "2015's newest, coolest, and easiest video creation tool" leaves you suspicious of the lack of updates.



#### Icecream Screen Recorder

...Install this instead

icecreamapps.com

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

or macOS

File size: 49 1MB

Icecream Screen Recorder is a fantastic free tool that lets you capture any area of your screen, either as an image or a video file. Click the option you require on the home screen and you can record whatever you're doing on your PC; capture videos on streaming services such as BBC iPlayer; and save Skype video calls for posterity - all in HD. You can make notes on your screenshots and videos, add a watermark to what you capture and zoom into your screen while recording. The latest version even lets you upload your recordings directly to YouTube.





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



#### **DISC-AUTHORING SOFTWARE**

#### **BurnAware Free 9.7**

www.burnaware.com

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

File size: 9.4MB

BurnAware Free writes to all types of optical disc. This version introduces improvements to file processing, updates translations and fixes a bug that caused the software to hang when preparing files. Decline the bundled junk during installation.



#### **FILE DEFRAGGER**

#### WinContig 2.1

bit.ly/wincontig413

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 971KB

WinContig defrags individual files and folders on your computer, rather than entire drives. The latest version of the program shows the file count on tabs, and you can search for files by name in the 'Fragmented files' tab. Both of these new features were requested by WinContig users.



#### **SYSTEM TOOL**

#### BootRacer 6.5 www.greatis.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10

File size: 6.9MB

BootRacer is a useful free tool that tells you exactly how long your computer takes to boot into Windows. As of this update, the software can diagnose which programs slow down Windows startup - listing how long each one takes to load - so you can make the necessary changes.



#### **VIDEO CONVERTER**

#### **Any Video Converter** Freeware 6.0.6

www.any-video-converter

#### Min requirements:

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

File size: 48.9MB

The latest version of this video-file converter recognises more subtitle formats, and fixes a bug that crashed the program when downloading web videos. Decline the bundled junk during installation.

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



# **Best New Browser Tools**



#### **CHROME**

# Block online ads - with attitude!

Many ad blockers now allow 'acceptable ads', but a new Chrome extension called Bad Ad Johnny (bit.ly/badad413) refuses to indulge in such pussyfooting. Described as "an ad blocker with swag", this combative add-on from the PureVPN team demonstrates "extreme hatred" for adverts and a "personal vendetta" against malware by filtering everything that could possibly annoy or threaten you online. This includes video, email, and overlay ads; web trackers

and data loggers; and unnecessary scripts and malicious code. "Just turn me on and forget about digital evils forever", boasts Johnny, although he's also flexible enough to let you disable blocking on specific sites and target individual elements rather than everything on a page. Bad Ad Johnny keeps count of everything he's blocked, and you can even follow his surprisingly funny feed on Twitter @Badadjohnny. What a guy!

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825/950

REAL PROPERTY AND ADDRESS OF THE PROPERTY OF T

Secure Cookies

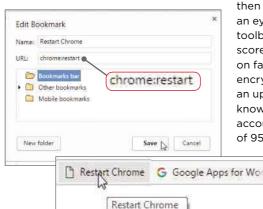
DNSSEC Emplied

See Full Report



#### Restart Chrome with a single click

When Chrome goes wrong, restarting it often fixes the problem, but there's no easy way to do this other than closing the browser and reopening it. One way around this problem is to create a button that restarts Chrome instantly with one click. You can do this by making a bookmarklet for Chrome's 'chrome:restart' page. On any web page, click the bookmark (star) button in your address bar or click Ctrl+D to add a bookmark, then click Edit. Change the name of the bookmark to Restart Chrome (or similar) and enter chrome: restart in the URL field. Select the 'Bookmarks bar' in the list below, click Save and drag the new bookmark to your Bookmarks bar to create a bookmarklet. You can now click this whenever you need to restart Chrome, with no messing around.

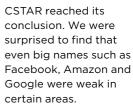


#### Check the security of any website

Now that you can no longer trust Web of Trust with your data, who can you turn to if you want to find out if a website is safe to use? One contender is a new tool from security company UpGuard (www .upquard.com). which uses the company's CSTAR (Cyber Security Threat

Assessment Report) technology to rate the security of any site you visit. Install the Chrome extension (bit.ly/cstar413), then browse the web as usual but keep an eye on the CSTAR button on your toolbar. This displays Upguard's risk score for the site you're viewing, based on factors such as whether it uses encryption, contains malicious code, has an up-to-date security certificate and is known to have exposed users' email accounts in a breach. The score is out of 950, and the icon turns from green to

> red if the site receives a poor rating - or yellow if it's merely 'average'. You can view detected 'failures' by clicking the toolbar button followed by See Full Report to find out how



You can also use the tool without installing the add-on by entering a URL at www.upguard .com/webscan.

#### Play Chrome's dinósaur game online

We've written before about the jumpingdinosaur game vou can play when Chrome

loses its connection, but now you can play it online, too. Just type chrome: dino into the address bar, press Enter and click the dinosaur to begin. The feature is currently only available in the Canary version of the browser (bit.ly/canary413), but should be coming to the stable release soon.



chrome://restart



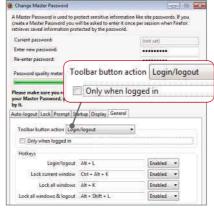
This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera and more

#### **FIREFOX**

Secure Firefox using a

password

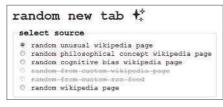
Leaving your browser unattended is a serious security risk - anyone can see which sites you've visited, access your accounts, change your settings and even download malware. The best way to protect Firefox from enemy interference is to install the brilliant Master Password+ (bit.ly/master413). This lets you lock your browser with - you guessed it - a master password, either after it's been idle for a set period of time or when you trigger the lock. You can also set it to ask for the



password whenever you launch Firefox. To set up Master Password+, press Alt+L and enter the password you want to use. In the section below, you can set other options such as how long the browser should wait before logging you out, as well as keyboard shortcuts to lock windows and log in and out.

#### View random Wikipedia pages in new tabs

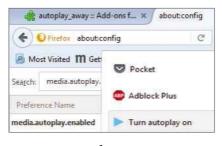
We love wasting time with Wikipedia's 'Random article' feature. Only this morning we learned about the German town of Bad Frankenhausen, waste management in Bangladesh and a rare species of violet. Now, a new Firefox add-on brings such educational surprises to your browser by displaying random articles on your New Tab page. Just install the snappily titled Random Unusual Wikipedia New Tab (bit.ly/ random413) and when you need some distraction, press Ctrl+T or click the new tab button to see what pops up. You can choose to view only 'unusual' random articles, or even pages about philosophical concepts and cognitive bias, if that's what floats your boat!



#### Stop videos playing automatically

Videos that play automatically are annoying, especially when they're loud, but there are times - such as when you're browsing YouTube - when it's preferable for videos to start

automatically. You can solve this conundrum using Autoplay\_away (bit.ly/auto413), which makes it easy to switch the auto-play setting on and off. Rather than delving into Firefox's baffling 'about:config' section to find the 'media.autoplay.enabled' entry, you can simply click the add-on's toolbar button to toggle the setting on and off instantly. It's slightly annoying that the button doesn't show the setting's current status, but it only takes one click to change it.



#### Compare prices across Amazon sites

Are we paying more for Amazon products than our European cousins? Find out using Amazon EU: Price Comparison (bit.ly/amazon413), which compares the price of the item you're viewing with those in Amazon's stores in France, Germany, Spain and Italy. The weak pound means prices tend to be lower in the UK, but you can still find the odd euro bargain.

#### OTHER BROWSERS

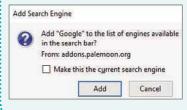


introduced a feature called Reader View, which removes ads, background images and other distracting elements from web pages to make them easier to read and cheaper to print. Opera doesn't offer a built-in equivalent, but you can add Reader View to the browser using a new add-on called. unsurprisingly, Reader View (bit.ly/reader413). Just click the toolbar button to strip the current page of all clutter, and use the options at the side to change the text size and background colour.





Now in its 27th version, Pale Moon (www.palemoon.org) has moved away from its Firefoxbased origins, and has also ditched Google from its choice of search engines. If you're unhappy about this but want to keep using the browser, there's a simple workaround. Go to Pale Moon's Search Plugins page (bit.ly/pale413), select Google and, when the Add Search Engine box opens, click Add. If you want Google to be your default search provider, tick the box 'Make this the current search engine' to change the setting from DuckDuckGo.





# Best Free Apps

## App of the Fortnight

#### **PHOTOS**

#### **PhotoScan**

bit.ly/photo413

Google's latest app turns your phone or tablet into a scanner for digitising old photos. Sound familiar? Well, Photomyne (www .photomyne.com), CamScanner (www .camscanner.com) and Shoebox (shoebox .ancestry.com) all scan your dusty old family photos, and they're currently free for Android and iOS.

But PhotoScan's USP is that it integrates with Google Photos - a combined storage service,

viewer and editor - which means you can scan, edit and save unlimited photos for free, without using up your Google storage allowance.

Cloud integration aside, PhotoScan skips fancy features in favour of good quality. It can't scan multiple photos or export to PDF, like CamScanner does; instead, it captures individual photos very clearly - even tiny, terrible-quality passport-sized photos like the one in our Mini Workshop on the right. Our efforts entailed taking screenshots at the same time, so our hands were very shaky, but PhotoScan still managed to focus and shoot. We got the best results when not shooting too close.

It is tricky at first. PhotoScan reduces glare by passing over the photo while shooting, and this requires that you move your device to "join" four dots in a smooth, level action, which is easier said than done. But it's still less hassle than fiddling with a flatbed scanner, and the results are impressive, especially if you shoot in good natural light and don't rush - as we did.

To coincide with the launch of PhotoScan, Google has



updated Google Photos with more advanced editing tools and 12 new filters that you can use on your device or online. It's free for

Android, iOS and online (photos. google.com).

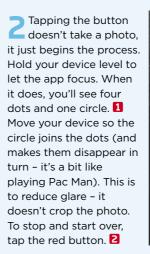


NEW

#### MINI WORKSHOP

# Scan and store old photos using

Install and launch PhotoScan. Tap Start Scanning, then tap Allow to let the app use your camera. Place your photo print on any flat surface, then hold your device parallel to it and position the photo in the frame. 1 It doesn't have to fill the frame. If you're shooting in good natural light, double-tap the lightning bolt 2 to disable the flash. Tap the button to start scanning. **3** 



Once you've made the dots disappear, you'll see a green tick while the app saves the scan. Your new scan will appear in the circle at the bottom-right. Tap it to see your scans. 1 To save them to a PhotoScan album on your device and also to Google Photos, tap Save All. 2 To crop or rotate a scan before saving it, tap it and then tap 'Adjust corners' or Rotate.











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

#### **EDUCATION**

#### Codemurai

bit.ly/ codedroid413 bit.ly/ codeios413 **# 4.1 6** 10

You, too, can build your very own app, and Codemurai is determined to prove it. Start by choosing



a topic (web development, games, iOS apps or Android apps), then a coding language, such as JavaScript. You're then guided through a series of bitesize tutorials, tests and guizzes to help you master the art. It doesn't matter if you don't know what JavaScript or any other language is - the lessons explain the jargon. As you progress, you earn coins to unlock further lessons, or you can buy them via

**DESIGN** 

#### **Fonty**

bit.ly/fonty413 **4.1** 

It's high time someone created a serious app for designing text that isn't expensive or iOS-only (or both). Fonty lets you create

Choose a Font Style or Create

your own lettering styles and customise dozens of presets using typography tools such as clipart, cutting/splicing and calligraphy brushes. Be aware that it's much easier to operate on a tablet screen than on a phone, unless you're using a stylus. Also, annoyingly, Fonty insists that you enter licensing information each time you create or edit a font. You can bypass this faff by





#### Remixlive

bit.ly/remix413



This app lets you create your own dance music by tapping coloured pads to 'remix' packs of samples, sounds and effects, then twiddling virtual knobs to adjust the mix and tempo. The music styles are a bit limited unless you're into dubstep and house, but it's a lot of fun. You can save clips to your device for free, but for unlimited export - and to import music, vocals

and sounds for remixing - you'll need to make an in-app purchase for the ungroovy sum of £5.99.



**Our rating** 



Our rating

in-app purchase.





typing 'me' under Name,

then tapping the tick.

#### **GAMES**

#### **Microsoft Solitaire** Collection

bit.ly/solitairedroid413 bit.ly/solitaireios413



A computer version of the card game Solitaire has been part of Windows since 1990 - longer than the Start button and taskbar. It was developed by Wes Cherry, who was at the time a Microsoft intern, and built into Windows 3.0 "to soothe people intimidated by the operating system," apparently.



It's still part of Windows, albeit in app form (bit.ly/ solitairewin413), and it's finally made it onto Android and iOS, too.

The app offers five Solitaire games - Klondike, Spider, FreeCell, TriPeaks and Pyramid - with Daily Challenges and Statistics to get you hooked. Newcomers will welcome the optional pop-up tips and the detailed 'How to play' section. All platforms support Xbox Live, so you can compete with friends and family.

Some users have complained about ads, but that's a small price to pay for this welcome arrival. Expect to see it on small screens in train carriages everywhere.



#### **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

Order it now from Amazon at bit.ly/androidbook2016

# **Best Free Apps**

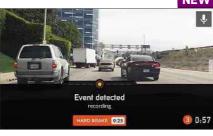
#### **DRIVING**

#### Nexar

www.getnexar.com



Dash cams (dashboard cameras) record the road ahead while you drive,



collecting video evidence if needed for insurance purposes or even a court appearance. Normally, they cost over £100, but Nexar turns your phone or tablet into a dash cam for free. It's more than just a glorified video camera app - it uses artificial intelligence to establish the direction, speed and acceleration of every vehicle in view, then automatically saves the data. It runs in the background so you can use a navigation app at the same time, and on certain phones it can simultaneously record using the front camera, too. Nexar is still in beta on Android; the iOS app is a stable release.



Our rating



#### **PHOTOGRAPHY**

#### Hypocam

www.hypocam.co

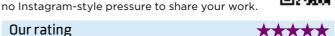


Henry Ford said you could have a car in any colour as long as it's black, and Hypocam follows a similar principle by producing black-and-white photos only. It offers a superb degree of control when composing your shot or editing a photo from your device. As well as adjusting light and focus, you can try out presets and





Our rating



### APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

#### File Manager

bit.ly/file413

Price: 79p



This app lets you take control of files on your iPhone and iPad as easily as you can on your PC. File Manager supports file sharing by web and USB, and includes tools for viewing PDFs, unpacking ZIP files and managing downloads.

#### **DIARY**

#### **Diarium**

bit.lv/diarium413

Price: £3.89 10 Mobile

Keep a detailed, passwordprotected diary on your Windows device or PC. You can add photos, videos, drawings, audio recordings, locations, tags and even ratings to each day's journal entry.

#### **BOOKS**

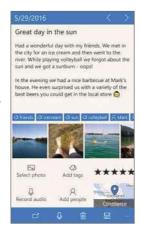
#### **BookScanner Pro**

bit.ly/bookscan413

Price: £14.99







Convert paper books and magazines into ebooks and searchable digital documents using this new tool from leading OCR company Abbyy. Numerous export formats are supported, including PDF and EPUB, and you get free space to store your scans.

#### **AUTOMATION**

#### Workflow

bit.ly/workflow413

Price: £2.29

Create 'workflows' that carry out repetitive tasks with just one tap. For example, you could create one that tweets the song you're currently playing. It's like IFTTT

(see page 49) for your iPad and iPhone.



#### GAME

### **USA Simulator Pro 2**

bit.ly/usasim413 Price: £1.09

4.0.3

Can you do a better job of running America's economy, infrastructure and international relations than President-elect Trump? Find out for sure by playing this engaging strategy game.



File Manager

Diarium

BookScanner Pro

Workflow

USA Simulator Pro 2









## **Best New TV Apps**

#### TV & FILM

#### **Netflix**

bit.ly/netflixdroid413 bit.ly/netflixios413 (select devices only) 👛 8

They said it would never happen, but it turns out they (including the company itself) were wrong, and Netflix is finally allowing you to download selected films and TV programmes to enjoy offline. This means you can save content to binge-watch on your phone or tablet wherever you are rather than streaming over a Wi-Fi or mobile connection. Hundreds of titles are currently available for download, including Netflix original series such as House of Cards, Making a Murderer and The Crown, and more will be added soon. Simply browse the new 'Available for Download' section in the app, choose a movie or programme and save it to your My



Downloads folder to watch offline later.

#### TV & FILM

#### Now TV for Android

bit.ly/nowtv413 **1** 



Sky's no-contract streaming service went from strength to strength in 2016, and this latest update to its Android app sets it up nicely for the New Year. First off, Sky has addressed a long-running problem when streaming Now TV from a mobile device to your Chromecast, so its connection is now less flaky and prone to "brain freeze". Second, the My TV section, which contains your 'watch list' of favourite shows, can be accessed through the status bar at the top of your tablet screen for added convenience (although the feature isn't yet available on Android phones). What's more, My TV tells you the exact date on which the next episode of a series will be available to watch.

#### TV & FILM

#### TalkTalk TV Planner

bit.ly/talktalk413

4.0.3

TalkTalk recently rolled out an improved version of its YouView service to its 1.3 million TV customers, along with this useful new app. TV Planner provides a seven-day programme guide for 80 Freeview channels, as well as any extra Boost channels you've added, and lets you search across both live and on-demand programming. If you have BBC iPlayer, All 4, iTV Hub or My5 installed, you can launch them directly from the app. And that's not all - TV Planner also lets you use your phone to record programmes remotely on your TalkTalk TV Plus box, so they're ready to watch as soon as you get home. You can also set reminders for TV shows and films.



# X Don't install...

#### Scanner Pro

bit.ly/scanner413

If you're looking for an Android app that turns your phone into a pocket scanner, this definitely isn't the one. Not only does it cost £5.49 - superior alternatives are available for



free - but it doesn't even work at a basic level, because it can't turn scanned documents into editable text. Instead, it simply takes photos, which you can do just as well with your camera, and charges more than a fiver to do it. Useless.

### ...Install this instead

#### Office Lens

bit.ly/lens413

(varies with device)

Microsoft's Office Lens is the perfect app for scanning documents, notes and indeed anything that contains a lot of text. On opening the app, you can choose from four modes -Document, Whiteboard, Photo and 'Business card' - to achieve the best scan possible. Then simply point your camera's lens at the document you want to capture and Office Lens automatically outlines the selection. Once you've taken the

picture, the app quickly processes it, correcting wonky perspective and enhancing the colours to make it look like a real scan. It rarely - if ever - makes mistakes and backs up your scans to OneDrive for safekeeping.







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





It's been back and forth through Parliament, but now the controversial Investigatory Powers Act is law. David Crookes explains what it means for web users



For better or worse. The Investigatory Powers Bill is now an Act

#### What is it?

The Snooper's Charter is a new law that allows a host of government bodies and lawenforcement agencies to request access to our online data. It is formally known as the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (bit.ly/

ipa413) and was passed in November following a prolonged and highly controversial parliamentary battle. The Act represents the biggest change to the UK's surveillance powers in more than 10 years.

#### What does the new law do?

Internet service providers and telephone companies now have to keep a full record of every site you visit and phone call you make for a period of 12 months. They will be forced to make this data available to any authorised organisation that puts in a request and will also be obliged to decrypt the data if need be. On top of that, the security services and police will be able to hack phones and computers to collect their own communications data.

#### Whose idea was this?

The law was first put forward in 2012 by Theresa May when she was Home



Who knows what goes on inside the deliberately blurry home of GCHQ?

Secretary and has been seen through by her successor, Amber Rudd. The claim is that by replacing the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, the law will make us safer by allowing the authorities to catch wrongdoers. In particular, Rudd says GCHQ and law enforcers will be better able to tackle the "new opportunities" that the internet has created for terrorists.

#### But who can access this data?

Aside from GCHQ, 47 other organisations and departments can potentially access your browsing records, including the military, the taxman, the Gambling Commission, the NHS and even the Food Standards Agency (see the box on the opposite page for the full list). Opponents of the law have questioned why many of the departments need to see this data. The government has promised to keep the list under review.

#### So basically anyone can access my data?

No. Schedule 4 of the Act lists the minimum office or rank of the people authorised to make a request from each department. Only higher or senior officers in HMRC, for instance, or someone on or above the level of inspector or superintendent in the police, will be able to request data. A warrant is required if the security services wish to bug computers and phones, though. This will need to be authorised by ministers and then go before the Investigatory Powers Commissioner and a panel of judges who have the power of veto.



A panel of judges will need to approve security requests to access our data

#### Why do they want this information?

According to the government, requests for data can help locate a missing person. Call records may establish a link between suspect and victim, while online information could be used to track paedophiles and fraudsters. Other examples given by proponents of the law suggest digital records can support or disprove alibis or be used to tie suspects to crime scenes. Inevitably, supporters say that if you've done nothing wrong then you have nothing to fear, but there are still many privacy concerns.

# It does sound scary. What can be viewed?

Records kept by ISPs will detail the websites and instant-messaging apps you visit and use. Clearing the cache or



The authorities won't know which incriminating videos vou've watched

your browser history won't make any difference because this data is held remotely. However, the logs won't reveal specific pages - such as an article about terrorism or

a video featuring DIY disasters - only that you visited BBC News and YouTube.

# What do the critics say?

The privacy website Don't Spy On Us (www.dontspyonus.org.uk) points out that ISPs and telephone companies will be collecting our information regardless of whether we are a criminal suspect or not. It also says hacking undermines our security. The Open Rights Group, Liberty and Privacy International all say the law is intrusive and oppose "mass surveillance". Big Brother Watch (www.bigbrotherwatch .org.uk) points out that companies with more than 10.000 users can be asked to build "back doors" into their system, so that data can be analysed.



Don't Spy On Us in understandably miffed about the passing of the Bill



You can sign a petition demanding that the Snooper's Charter be repealed

# Is it too late to stop the Act?

Not necessarily. An official petition calling for the law to be repealed (bit.ly/ petition413) has been signed by close to 154,000 people at the time of going to press, which means that Parliament must consider debating it. In truth. the likelihood of a repeal (given the Bill went through on the third time of asking) is very slim. In fact, the government has responded by saying, "the Bill was subject to unprecedented scrutiny prior to and during its passage." For them, it's done and dusted.

# Were there any amendments to the Bill, though?

Yes. Since we looked at the Snooper's Charter in Issue 385 (bit.ly/webuser385), more than 1,700 amendments to the Bill have been tabled and debated in Parliament. The scope for equipment interference was widened, for instance, so that it wasn't solely about preventing and detecting serious crime but also any cases where death or damage to health was at stake. A serious crime was also defined as one that carries a minimum penalty of a six-month custodial sentence.

# But what if the law is misused?

There is always a risk that the new powers could be wrongly exploited but the Act threatens "tough sanctions" for those who do and it has made misuse a criminal offence. Yet James Blessing, the chairman of the Internet Service Providers' Association, told the BBC: "It only takes one bad actor to go in there and get the entire database." He worries "mistakes will happen". There is also concern about bulk hacking - where large numbers of devices in a specified location are targeted - which could result in the harvesting of innocent people's data, such as NHS health records.

# Can I get around all of this?

You can. If you sign up to a Virtual Private Network (VPN), your ISP will only know that you have visited a proxy server and it won't see any websites you open. Since the law only obliges ISPs to hand over data, anything you view from that point is encrypted and hidden within the VPN. NordVPN (nordvpn.com) says it has already seen a significant rise in people signing up. See our main cover feature on page 38 for more about deleting your personal info from the web.



You can use a VPN such as NordVPN to shield your data from snoopers

# So is all of this in place now?

The Act was given Royal Assent on 29 November, which means the powers are now in effect and ISPs are already retaining records. That said, the government believes some of the powers need to be tested and that this may not happen for a while.

# WHO CAN POTENTIALLY SEE MY DETAILS?

- The Metropolitan Police Service City of London Police Police forces maintained under section 2 of the Police Act 1996 ■ Police Service of Scotland ■ Police Service of Northern Ireland ■ British Transport Police
- Ministry of Defence Police Royal Navy Police Royal Military Police Royal Air Force Police Security Service ■ Secret Intelligence Service ■ GCHQ ■ Ministry of Defence ■ Department of Health ■ Home Office
- Ministry of Justice National Crime Agency HM Revenue & Customs Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions NHS trusts and foundation trusts in England that provide ambulance services ■ Common Services Agency for the Scottish Health Service ■ Competition and Markets Authority
- Criminal Cases Review Commission Department for Communities in Northern Ireland Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland ■ Department of Justice in Northern Ireland ■ Financial Conduct Authority ■

Fire and rescue authorities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 ■ Food Standards Agency ■ Food Standards Scotland ■ Gambling Commission ■ Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority ■ Health and Safety Executive ■ Independent Police Complaints Commissioner ■ Information Commissioner ■ NHS Business Services Authority ■ Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust ■ Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Board ■ Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Regional Business Services Organisation ■ Office of Communications ■ Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland ■ Police Investigations and Review Commissioner ■ Scottish Ambulance Service Board ■ Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission ■ Serious Fraud Office ■ Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust



# lete HAT WEBSITES KNOW ABOUT



Want to start afresh on the web in 2017? Wayne Williams explains how to remove all trace of your online activities so you can begin the New Year with a completely clean slate

> t's the beginning of a new year, which is traditionally a time when we try to put the last year behind us and start afresh with a healthier and happier attitude. There's not much point in rebooting your life, however, if remnants of your old one are still strewn across the web - from foolish Facebook posts and incriminating Google searches to records of embarrassing videos you've watched on YouTube and 'personal' items you've purchased from Amazon. In this feature, we explain how to purge your accounts

and wipe your online footprint so that you can start 2017 with a completely clean slate.

Over the following six pages, we explain how to remove your search history from Google and prevent your details from appearing in its search results; how to erase traces of your web activities; and how to clean up your online profiles on Facebook, Twitter and more.

We also show you how to back up your Google and Facebook data before you delete anything, just in case you change your mind.

# Delete what websites know about you



# **REMOVE YOURSELF FROM GOOGLE**

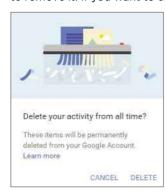
# Clear your Google search history

It's no secret that Google stores every search you make – whether it's through the search engine itself or YouTube, Maps, Google Play and so on – and uses the data to build a profile of your interests and target you with adverts. The frightening part is just how much data the company has on you, and how many searches you perform every day without ever really thinking about it.



Google stores details of everything you've ever searched for

To see exactly what Google knows about you, and to delete these records so you can start 2017 without the baggage of past searches, go to myactivity.google.com and sign into your Google account. Here, you'll see all your Google searches sorted by date and organised by service, such as YouTube. You can click the three vertical dots next to any entry and select Delete to remove it. If you want to erase more



Delete all your Google searches so you can start 2017 afresh

by'.
Choose
a time
period
from the
dropdown
menu
or select
'All time'

than one

at a time.

search

click

'Delete

activity

to delete everything, and choose either a specific Google tool or 'All products'. Click Delete and confirm to clear your searches.

# Stop your details appearing in search results

If you have a common name, such as John Smith, it can be hard for people to find you on Google without adding further details to narrow down the search. People with more unusual names are much easier to find. If when you Google yourself you see personal information, such as your home address or phone number, you can ask the search giant to remove this from the results. Google can't remove the page the information appears on from the web (only the site administrator can do that), but it can make it harder to find. To request a removal, go to bit.ly/ginfo413 and follow the instructions.

# Remove content from Google services

Google won't remove just anything from its services, but if you have legal reasons for wanting content removed from one of its sites, you can submit a notice to Google at bit.ly/gcontent413. This covers services including Search, Google+, YouTube, Blogger, Images and Google Drive/Docs, and complaints such as copyright infringement, defamation and – most pertinently for this feature – privacy intrusion. Annoyingly, if the content appears on more than one service, you need to go through the process multiple times.



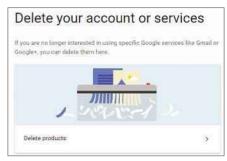
Submit a request to delete information about you from a Google service

# Delete your Google or Gmail account

This is very much a last resort, but if you really want to wipe the slate clean for 2017, you could consider deleting your Gmail or Google account and starting again. Doing this will erase all your emails, contacts, YouTube subscriptions and synced Chrome data, as well as your Android account and more, so you must be 100% sure you want to do it. Make sure you back up any important data beforehand (see box on page 42). You can delete just your Gmail account, which will wipe all your messages and stop you or anyone else using that address in future, or – more drastically

- your entire Google account.

To perform either action, head to the Google Delete Services page (bit.ly/gdel413) and make your choice. If you only want to delete Gmail (or YouTube or Google+) select 'Delete products'. You have the option to download your data before going any further. If you want to bid goodbye to Google entirely, select 'Delete Google Account and data' instead.

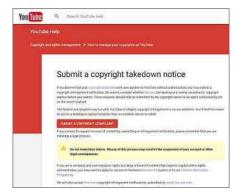


For a full online rebirth, consider deleting your Google account

# Remove yourself from YouTube

As we mention above, you can keep your Google and Gmail accounts but delete your YouTube account, which wipes any videos you've uploaded. If you don't want to go that far, you can just delete certain videos by opening the video manager (www.youtube.com/my\_videos), clicking the down button next to a clip and selecting Remove. Alternatively, you can hide videos so that no-one else can see them.

Popular or interesting videos are sometimes cloned – that is, uploaded by other users. If someone is sharing your work without permission, you can submit a copyright takedown notice to YouTube (bit.ly/ytcopyright413). If you want to be removed from someone else's video, the best option is to ask the person who uploaded it if they would mind taking it down. If they refuse, you can lodge a privacy complaint with YouTube at bit.ly/ytpriv413.



Submit a copyright claim to stop another YouTube user sharing your videos



# **CLOSE INACTIVE ACCOUNTS**

# **Delete your Yahoo Mail account**

Yahoo recently admitted that hackers had breached its security in 2014, stealing millions of account details. Then it was revealed that the company had been scanning users' emails for the NSA and the FBI. If these incidents have prompted you to give up on Yahoo, you can delete your account. Follow the instructions at bit.ly/ybackup413 to save your email, contacts and calendar data, then go to the Delete User page (bit.ly/ ydel413). Log in with your details and follow the instructions. If you change your mind, you have 90 days to recover your account before it's gone for good.

Unlike Google, Yahoo occasionally makes deleted email addresses available to new users, which means that in the future a stranger might receive emails meant for you. Sadly, the only way to ensure this doesn't happen is to keep your Yahoo account active.



If you don't trust Yahoo any more, delete vour old account



Delete your Microsoft account and use Windows 10 without it

# **Delete your Microsoft account**

You need a Microsoft account to get the most out of Windows 10, but you can log in with a local account if you wish, and this option may be preferable if you don't plan to use OneDrive or install apps from the Windows Store (you can now download free apps without an account). There's also the matter of Microsoft collecting your data to build a profile of you.

If you want to delete a Microsoft account completely and you're using Windows 10, you first need to remove it from your PC.

You can't delete an account while you're signed into it, so go to Settings, Accounts and click 'Sign in with a local account instead'. Enter your account password and follow the steps. Once you've

signed into a local account, go to Settings, Accounts. Select Your Info and vou can delete the account from there.

The next step is to delete it from Microsoft's servers. Make sure you've backed up anything you need that's linked to that account, and go to bit.ly/ msdel413. Enter your password and verify your identity with a code. Follow the advice on screen before you close your account, and click the Next button to begin the termination process.

# Delete your eBay account

An eBay account is useful if you ever find you need to buy or sell something through the online marketplace. If you no longer use the website, however, or you simply want to erase all traces of your past transactions, you can close your account by signing in and going to My eBay, Summary. Click the Account tab and then click 'Close my account', which appears on the right-hand side. Be warned that you won't be able to create a new account using the same ID or email address.



Finished with eBay forever? Then close your account today

# MINI WORKSHOP | Remove unwanted accounts using Deseat.me



Go to www.deseat.me and click the button on the homepage to sign in with your Google credentials. 1 If you have more than one Google account, you will need to repeat the process to clear out each one in turn. Click Allow to give Deseat.me permission to view your details.



Deseat.me will check for any sites you have ever signed up with using your Google credentials. The figure at the top tells you just how many there are. 1 You may well be surprised by the number. Work through the list, choosing either to add a site to the delete queue 2 or keep it. 3



Some items in the list are email addresses rather than accounts. To remove them, click the yellow triangle. 1 If an item in the Delete Queue has a dark red button, 2 clicking it takes you to the site's removal page. A pale red button [3] indicates that there's no link yet. Sites not marked for deletion appear under My Accounts. 4

# **Delete what websites know about you**



# Remove several accounts at once using Deseat.me

When you sign up for new web services, you're often given the option to log in using your Google account credentials. This saves you having to enter your personal details and come up with a new password, and because it's Google. you can be relatively confident that it's safe. However, there's a good chance you've forgotten about some of the sites you've logged into, which means your online footprint is larger than you realise. Deseat.me (www.deseat.me) is a new service that lets you see any sites you've logged into using your Google credentials and add them to a delete queue for removal. See our Mini Workshop on the opposite page to find out how to use it.

# Find out how to close different accounts

The procedure for closing an online account isn't always easy or obvious. Some websites make it straightforward - just click a link to begin the process while others go out of their way to stop you leaving. JustDeleteMe (justdelete .me) is a handy directory of links to help you close your accounts, and covers services such as Adobe, Amazon, Dropbox, Gmail, Kickstarter, Instagram, Feedly, and StumbleUpon. Entries are colour-coded to indicate how easy (or otherwise) it is to close an account with that service. Green is simple, amber is medium, red is difficult and black is impossible. Install JustDeleteMe's Chrome add-on (bit.ly/jdm413) and when you visit a site for which you have an unwanted account, click the dot that appears and the extension will take you to the relevant page.

AccountKiller (www.accountkiller .com) is similar, and sorts its list of sites by category – including popular, blacklist (sites you can't remove yourself from) and whitelist (sites you can



JustDeleteMe offers info and links to help you delete accounts with online services

remove yourself from). Adding the SiteCheck bookmarklet gives you an easy way to find out whether a site will allow you to remove your account easily before you sign up to it. You can use this bookmarklet on mobile devices, too, including iPhone and iPad.

Install AccountKiller SiteCheck to delete accounts in one click



# **OPT OUT OF DATABASES**

# Remove yourself from 192.com

The online directory 192.com stores all sorts of information about you, including your full name and that of your spouse, your home address, the names of your neighbours, how long you've lived at your current address, your approximate age and more. It pulls this data from public databases such as the electoral roll. Some information can be accessed for free on the site, but for a more detailed profile, searchers need to buy credits.

To have your information removed from the site, you need to fill in a Record Removal Form (bit.ly/192form413) (PDF file) and send it back to the company by email, post or fax. Removals take anything from seven to 21 days.



Send a request to 192.com to have your personal details removed

# Unsubscribe from mailing lists

Most of us receive at least some regular marketing emails or newsletters from companies we've either signed up to or bought something from. Instead of simply ignoring or deleting these when they arrive, why not take a moment to unsubscribe instead? Gmail is great for this. Open one of the emails, and you should see an Unsubscribe link next to the sender's email address at the top. Click this to unsubscribe. If you can't see this option, check the



Remove your data from marketing databases by unsubscribing

end of the message to see if there's an unsubscribe link there instead.

# Remove your details from Whois

If you own a website, or you've ever registered a domain for one, your personal details, such as your name, home address, email address and phone number, will be available on the Whois database (such as www.whois .net) for anyone to look up. To stop this happening, domain-registration services such as 123 Reg offer Domain Privacy for around £5 a year (bit.ly/ dompriv413). When someone queries a protected domain, all they'll see are the generic privacy service registrant details. You can add this protection to a new domain or one you've previously registered through 123 Reg. Other domain-registering sites offer similar protection.



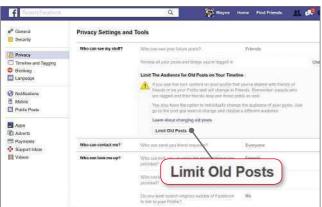
Stop people getting your personal details through your website



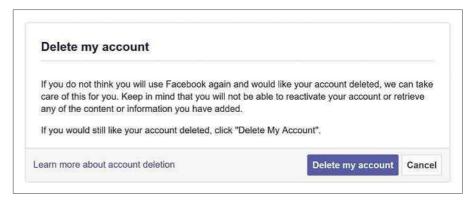
# **CLEAN UP YOUR PUBLIC PROFILES**

# **Bulk-remove social-media posts**

If you're applying for a new job or starting a new relationship and are worried that messages and photos you've shared on Facebook and Twitter might count against you, consider cleaning up your social-media accounts. To hide old public posts on Facebook, click the padlock in the top-right corner and select See More Settings. Click Limit Past Posts, then click the Limit Old Posts button. This changes the settings for content shared on your profile so that only your friends can see it. You can also review any posts and photos you're tagged in by clicking Use Activity Log in the top-right corner. Options include making public content private, hiding specific posts and 'unliking' things you've liked in the past. To make the process easier, you can use the Facebook Post Manager extension for Chrome (bit.ly/fbpost413) to batchdelete content from the site and start 2017 with a clean Facebook slate.



Make sure only your friends can see your old Facebook posts



Delete your Facebook account to reclaim your life in 2017

Similarly, you can mass-delete tweets from Twitter using TweetEraser (www .tweeteraser.com), either within a specific range of dates or from the moment you joined the social network. If you want to wipe all your tweets and start again without affecting all the people you follow and who follow you, try TwitWipe (twitwipe.com). Deleting all your tweets can take a very long

> time, so be patient. The best idea is to leave the process running overnight.

# Say goodbye to **Facebook**

Facebook makes it easy to keep in touch with friends, family and even casual acquaintances, but if you're not careful it can take over your whole life. If you want to

stop using the social network - either forever or just to take a breather - but you don't think you can do it by willpower alone, deactivating your account might be the answer.

To do this, open Settings from the menu and select Security. At the bottom of the page you'll see the option to Deactivate Your Account. Select this, then click (or tap, if you're using the Facebook app) Deactivate Your Account and give Facebook a reason for your decision. Enter your password and select Deactivate Now. If you change your mind later, you can reactivate your account by logging back in.

If you decide that you never want to use Facebook again, you can delete your account completely. To do this, go to bit.ly/fbdel413 and click the blue Delete My Account button. Bear in mind that this is permanent - once you've deleted your account, it's gone for good, so don't select this option just because you're in a bad mood!

### BACK UP DATA BEFORE YOU DELETE As the old saying goes, "act in haste, If you're only backing up a Gmail Your account, your data repent at leisure". In other words, account, try using a free tool such as Export a copy make sure you back up your data MailStore Home 10 (www.mailstore before you delete an account in case .com) instead. To copy messages you change your mind. To do this for from an old Gmail account to a new Google's services, use the company's one, try CloudGopher (bit.ly/ Create an archive with your data from Google products. Takeout page (bit.ly/takeout413). cgopher413). It costs \$24.99 Choose which services you want to (£20) - or \$14.99 (£12) if you include, or select everything. Then publicise it on Facebook. Backing up your Facebook data is 30 Wareho click Next and choose an archive ~ / format to save the data in (ZIP is the just as easy. Go to Settings and, U . E Blogger All blogs default). You can receive your backup under General Account Settings. v. V you'll see a link to download a copy as a download from a link sent by v 🗸 email, or save it to Drive, Dropbox of your data. Click this, then click Chrome All Chrome data types ~ V or OneDrive. Although you can Start My Archive and enter your browse the data, you can't simply password. Your backup will include import it into a new account posts, photos and videos you've your profile. You can't pick what to Takeout is an export-only service. shared, as well as messages, chats and back up - it's all or nothing.

# Delete what websites know about you



# **WIPE YOUR WEB ACTIVITIES**

# Erase your shopping history

Amazon remembers not only the products you've purchased from its store but also anything you've added to your wish list and even items you merely looked at. It then uses this information to recommend similar products to you. This can be annoying, especially if you've been browsing for presents for other people and Amazon continues to display possible gift matches on its front page.

To stop Amazon using your history to make personalised recommendations, go to bit.ly/ ahistory413. Here, you can remove individual items from your history by clicking the Remove button under each one. Alternatively. select the Manage History link in the top-right corner and you can remove all items with a single click. While you're there, you can turn Browsing History off to stop Amazon storing your activity in future.



Stop Amazon using past purchases to recommend future ones

In a similar way, eBay records items you've looked at and displays them on the main page. To stop this, go to bit .ly/ebaypref413 and select 'Do not



You can prevent eBay from showing your recently viewed items

show the My Recently Viewed Items box'. You can opt out of eBay's targeted advertising service by going to My eBay, selecting the Account tab and clicking Site Preferences. Scroll down to General Preferences and click the Show button next to 'Advertising preferences'. Click Edit, untick 'Yes, please use my information to show me relevant ads on eBay and other sites' and click Save.

# **Delete your Netflix viewing** activity

If you share your PC or tablet with someone else, it's possible that you may have watched something on

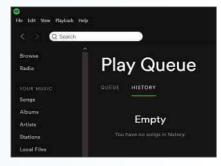


Keep your Netflix habits private by clearing your viewing activity

Netflix that you'd rather didn't appear in your viewing history or the Continue Watching section. To remove this data, log into your Netflix account using your Desktop web browser. Click your profile name, and select Your Account, Under My Profile, click the 'Viewing activity' link, then click the 'X' next to the programme or film you want to delete. Unfortunately, you can't clear your entire viewing history in one go.

# Clean up your Spotify history

Songs you've listened to on Spotify are logged by the streaming service, which means anyone who opens the app on your phone, tablet or PC can see what you've been playing. To view your streamed tracks, click the Queue button in the Desktop player, and click the History tab. Spotify doesn't offer an easy way to remove individual songs or wipe the entire list, but there is a workaround. Press the Windows key+R to open the Run box, type %appdata% and press Enter. Open the Spotify folder, double-click Users and delete your user folder. Then restart Spotify, logging in if necessary, and your history should be cleared and your listening secrets made safe.



Stop people seeing what you've been listening to on Spotify

# NEXT ISSUE

# on sale Wednesday 11 January 2017

# KE SOFTV OU MUST NEVER

Don't get duped by dodgy downloads - we explain how to avoid fake programs and apps



# **OUNSYNC OLD ACCOUNTS**

Remove hardware and software you no longer use

# OGET A BETTER CAMERA Swap your phone's default snapper for a superior app

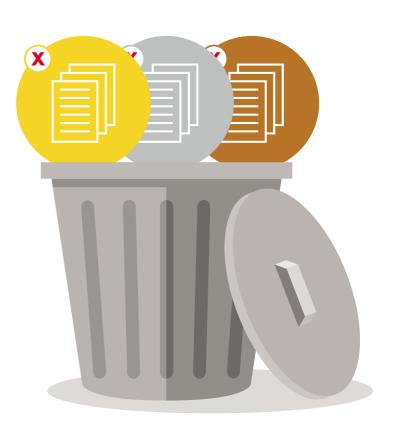
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# **Best free** duplicate scanners

Duplicate-file finders help you to remove redundant files that could be taking up precious space on your hard drive. Edward Munn tests six of the best



AllDup | bit.ly/alldup413 | ★★★★★

FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★

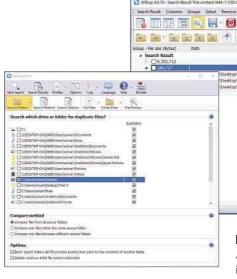
## What we liked:

AllDup is the perfect tool to help you find duplicate images, documents and music files that accumulate on your hard drive over time.

When launched, it lets you choose which drives (including external drives) and folders you want to scan, and you can opt to compare files between all folders or only within individual directories. Next, you can click the Search Method tab to choose the criteria on which your search is based from a list that includes name, size, file extension, content and modified date. You can tick any number of these boxes, or there's a handy Similar Pictures tool that lets you search for images that look the same.

Once you're happy with these settings, you can fine-tune your search using the file and folder filters, which let you exclude (or include) specific folders and formats. Finally, click Start Search and the program quickly displays duplicate files, conveniently sorted into groups. Expanding a group lets you see the files it contains and view important information about each one, including name, location and size.

One thing we particularly like about



AllDup is that it lets you preview duplicates without opening any other software, so it's easy to quickly identify genuine duplicates and choose an appropriate action, such as permanently deleting the copies, moving them to the Recycle Bin, or opening AllDup's File Manager to copy, rename or move them.

AllDup's standout feature is that it includes a Windows right-click menu option that lets you quickly scan folders for duplicates. The software is totally free, optimised for Windows 10 and available as a portable app.

# How it can be improved:

AllDup's interface isn't as simple or as intuitive as DupeGuru. In particular, it took us a while to work out how to close the results page and start a new search.

# **OUR VERDICT**

If you want to free up space on your PC by deleting duplicate files, there's no better program than AllDup. It offers powerful search tools and displays your results in a simple, clear manner, so you can quickly and easily take the appropriate action.

# **Duplicate scanners**

# DupeGuru | bit.ly/dg413 | ★★★★☆

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

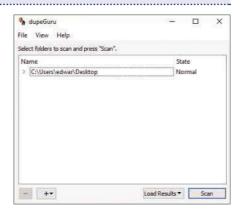
### What we liked:

Despite no longer being supported by its developer (the last Windows version was released in 2014),

DupeGuru remains one of

our favourite duplicate finders because it's simple and works very well, even in Windows 10. The tool has the simplest interface of any duplicate finder we tested: click the + button to choose the folders you want to scan, select Scan, and it quickly displays any duplicate files in a simple, clear list. From this results screen, you can double-click files to view them and there are handy tickboxes to let you move or delete duplicates in bulk.

By default, DupeGuru compares files' contents, which is very effective, but you can also scan files by filename if you open the Preferences menu. When you choose this option, there's a Filter Hardness slider that lets you choose how closely the names must match. Picture and Music editions of DupeGuru are also available although, sadly, these are even more out of date.



# How it can be improved:

Our main criticism is that DupeGuru is no longer supported (unless you're using Linux or macOS), so you may find bugs when using it in Windows 10. It also automatically determines which of your files is the original, which is irritating when it gets it wrong.

## **OUR VERDICT**

DupeGuru's fast, powerful scanning and simple interface make it the ideal tool for quick tidy-ups.

# **BEST OF THE REST**

## **CCleaner**

## www.piriform.com/ccleaner

If you already have CCleaner, you can use its duplicate-finding tool simply by opening its Tools menu. Although it lacks the features of our award winners, it's perfect for quick, one-off searches, especially if you don't want to install additional

software. You can search for files with duplicate content, name, size and modified date (or any



combination of the above), and results are presented in a clear, simple manner.

# **Duplicate Cleaner Free**

# bit.ly/duplicatecleaner413

As its name suggests, Duplicate Cleaner Free is the free version of a paid-for tool, but that doesn't stop it from offering an impressive set of features. Indeed, you can search for files with duplicate content or

similar names (as well as specifying a range of other criteria), and there's even a handy Audio Mode for



finding tracks with the same artists and titles. Unfortunately, to take advantage of the program's Image Mode, you'll need to upgrade at the cost of £19.95.

# **SearchMyFiles**

# bit.ly/search413

SearchMyFiles is a powerful search tool from Nirsoft that lets you find duplicate files based on content

or name. It offers a range of options to help you narrow your search, and it's portable, so you can run it from a USB stick



without leaving traces in the Registry. Unfortunately, we found SearchMyFiles more fiddly to use than other tools that offer the same features.

# CloneSpy | bit.ly/clonespy413 | ★★★★☆

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



# What we liked:

CloneSpy is a sophisticated duplicate scanner that finds files with similar names, and files with the same content but different names. Like

AllDup, it gives you total control over how you compare files, letting you search for duplicates across multiple folders or drives, and compare a distinct group of directories (known as a 'pool') to another. The program's default search simply looks for duplicate content, but you can narrow your results further by specifying, for example, 'duplicates having the same file name' or 'files having the same name and similar size'.

Unlike some of its rivals, CloneSpy can be set to automatically delete all duplicates, but we recommend using the 'Ask user' option unless you know exactly what you're doing. This makes CloneSpy display a pop-up for each match to quickly take appropriate action, whether that's opening a file's location in Windows Explorer, deleting



it or continuing with your search.

# How it can be improved:

CloneSpy is trickier to grasp than either of our other award winners and its Options menu, in particular, takes time to master. We're not keen that it displays duplicates one by one, though this can be changed.

# **OUR VERDICT**

CloneSpy is one of the most powerful free scanners we tested, but many of its features and settings are too complex for the average user.



Files are sometimes too large to store or share easily. Wayne Williams reveals the best ways to shrink images, videos and other files without affecting their quality

# Shrink JPEGs and PNGs

PNG Most image-editing software lets you reduce the size of pictures saved in JPEG or PNG format, but if you're not careful, that can have an impact on their quality. There are several online tools that can shrink your photos without introducing any noticeable flaws, including the excellent TinyJPG (tinyjpg.com) which, despite its name, can handle both JPEGs and PNGs.

Drop up to 20 images (with a maximum size of 5MB each) on to the site, and TinyJPG will intelligently decrease the file size and show you how much space you've saved. Alternatively, try Optimizilla (optimizilla.com) which is similar and can also handle up to 20 files in the two formats.



TinyJPG can shrink the size of your photos without diminishing the image quality

If you prefer to use a Desktop program, try RIOT (bit.ly/riot411), which is specifically designed to shrink images for sharing on the web. The Radical Image Optimization Tool - to give it its full name - delivers high compression rates without compromising image quality. Its full auto mode chooses the best options for you, and the side-by-



RIOT reduces the size of your images so you can share them online

side view lets you compare the optimised version of the image with the original. RIOT works with JPEG, PNG and GIF files.

# Shrink animated GIFs

GIF Animated GIFS can be a lot of fun, and plenty of websites - including Facebook - now support them. Unfortunately, the GIFs you download from the web can sometimes be too large to use on other sites, and your standard image editor may not be able to shrink them without stripping out the animation. The GIFGIFS Online GIF Optimizer (gifgifs .com/optimizer) solves this problem by reducing the number of colours in GIFs and removing non-essential frames. It diminishes the quality a little, but you can choose what to change and remove from your GIFs so the impact should be minimal.

If you need to alter the physical dimensions of the GIF - rather than its file size - you can use GIFGIFs' resizer instead (gifgifs.com/resizer). Simply



Make animated GIFs less unwieldy without making them less fun!

upload the image and use the slider to adjust the dimensions.

Alternatively, you can download GIF Optimizer Free (bit.ly/gifopt411) to change the size of your animated GIFs. Just open the file you want to compress and click Optimise to shrink it.

# Shrink large videos

MP4 Video files are often huge, and can take ages to upload or download. The best solution is to convert the existing video format to MP4, if it isn't already, using a tool such as Handbrake (www.handbrake.fr). This free program can convert most video formats, and is very easy to use. Import



Handbrake looks complicated but it makes shrinking your videos easy

a file to convert, make sure the output container is set to MP4 and tick the 'Web Optimized' box. Select the Video tab and make sure H.264 (X264) is selected. You can tweak the settings if you wish (slower speeds are better), but the defaults should be fine. Choose a destination, then click the Start button to scale down the video without distorting the picture.

# Shrink MP3 files

MP3 As with JPEG, MP3 is a 'lossy' file format, which means it strips and discards certain details from

the original audio. However, because MP3 removes sounds that aren't generally perceptible to the human ear, you probably won't notice the difference on a reasonably good-quality track.

MP3Smaller (www.mp3smaller.com) is an online service that reduces the file size of MP3s by adjusting their bitrate. Upload your file (up to a maximum of 150MB), then pick the bitrate you want from the drop-down menu - the lower the bitrate, the smaller the size. Bear in mind that lowering the bitrate will also reduce the audio quality, so you should experiment to find a balance that works for you. 128Kbps is a decent minimum to aim for, or you can choose 128-256Kbps VBR (variable bitrate). This will attempt to maintain the quality while removing inessential data. The size will be larger than a 128Kbps-encoded file, but should be smaller than a track encoded in 256Kbps CBR (constant bitrate).



MP3Smaller lets you get the right balance between file size and quality

# Shrink Word documents



DOC Images embedded in Word documents can significantly inflate the overall file size. As

with PDFs, you can compress pictures to shrink the Office file without (hopefully) losing too much quality. In Word 2013 or newer, click an image, and select Compress Pictures in the menu. You can choose whether to apply your changes to just the one image, and optionally delete cropped areas of pictures.

You can also adjust the default

# **ENLARGE IMAGES WITHOUT LOSING QUALITY**

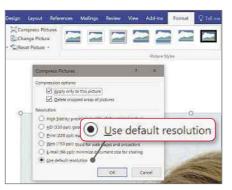
If you have a small image file, making it bigger will introduce all sorts of problems, such as blurring, general loss of sharpness and jagged edges. There are several free programs that you can use to intelligently increase the size of your photos without causing problems. Two of the best are Reshade Image Enlarger (reshade .com), which we wrote about in Issue 407, and A Sharper Scaling (a-sharper-scaling.com). They both use photo-enlargement algorithms to produce crisper resizes. Reshade Image Enlarger was originally a paid program, but is now entirely free. It claims to be able to zoom an image by up to 2,000%, but you need a fairly decent image to begin with if you're



Use Reshade to enlarge your photos without them becoming blocky

going to really super-size it.

If you have a logo you want to resize, it's worth turning it into a scalable vector using the online tools Autotracer (www.autotracer.org) or VectorMagic (vectormagic.com).



.

Adjust the image resolution in Word documents to make the file smaller

resolution - the lower the quality of the images, the smaller the size of your documents. 220ppi is a good quality for printing, while 150ppi is usually fine for viewing on screen. For emails, you might be able to get away with 96ppi. Some images - such as graphs - can be reduced even further without their quality being affected.

Go to File and, under Properties, you should see the current size of your document. From that menu, open Options, and click Advanced. You can discard editing data, which is used to restore edited images to their original state, and choose whether or not Word should compress images in the file automatically. You can adjust the default resolution to lower the quality of the images here, too.

# Shrink PDF files

PDF PDFs contain all the data needed to display a file properly, but some media formats - such as images - inflate the overall file size. PDF Reducer Free (bit.ly/pdfreduce411) can slim down PDFs by resampling any



Pare down the size your PDFs by up to 80% using PDF Reducer Free

photos and graphics and removing unused objects. The publisher claims it can reduce the size of PDFs by up to 80%.

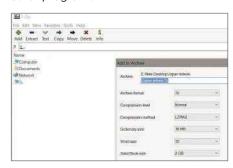
There are no major limitations in the free version, but it does nag you to upgrade every five files.

# Compress files by 70%



When you're compressing files, it's obviously important to save as much space as you can.

7-Zip (www.7-zip.org) generally has the highest compression ratio of other similar programs. To make the most of it, you'll need to use the software's own proprietary 7z format, which promises a 30-70% size reduction over files compressed using the ZIP format in other programs.



7-Zip's 7z format compresses files to a greater degree than other tools



# EDIOUS TASKS IN 2017

Our New Year's resolution is to do less over the next 12 months. Robert Irvine explains how to schedule PC and web tasks to run automatically

# chedule system cleanups during downtime

In the past, removing junk from your PC could take hours, during which time you couldn't use your PC for anything else. Scans are faster and smarter these days, but they can still slow down your system so it's worth scheduling them for quiet times. The easiest way to do this is to use the built-in Windows Task Scheduler to automatically run a cleanup tool such as CCleaner or Disk Cleanup.

To launch Task Scheduler, either search for schedule and choose Task Scheduler or click 'Schedule tasks' in the 'System and Security' section of the Control Panel, then click Create Basic Task. Enter a name for the task, such as 'CCleaner weekly scan', specify how frequently you want to perform it, then choose a start date and time. Select 'Start a program' and browse to the EXE file for the cleanup tool you want to use - this is usually

C:\Program Files\CCleaner for CCleaner, or C:\Windows\system32\cleanmgr.exe for Disk Cleanup

In the 'Add arguments (optional)' field, type /auto to perform an automated CCleaner cleanup or sagrun: 1 for Disk Cleanup. Tick the box 'Open the Properties dialog for this task when I click Finish', click Finish and select the option 'Run with highest privileges' to allow the task to be run as

Create Basic Task Wizard Weekly Create a Basic Task Start: 29/11/2016 - 01:00:00 Trigger Action ☑ Sunday ☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Start a Program Finish Thursday Friday Saturday

Use Windows Task Scheduler to automate tedious system cleanups

an administrator.

Remember that your automated cleanups will run with your most recent settings for that program, so make sure they don't delete too much - or too little!

# elete old downloads automatically

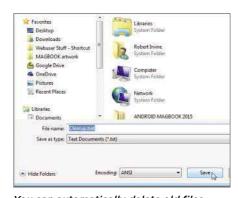
Your Downloads folder is probably crammed with programs, PDFs, ZIP files and other items that you opened once and then forgot about. Although it's easy to delete them all - Ctrl+A, then bosh! - remembering to do so is another matter, so for privacy and space reasons it's worth scheduling regular, automatic clearouts. One option is to use a tool such as CCleaner, as described in the previous step, but a speedier solution is to create a task that specifically targets the Downloads folder to remove files you downloaded more than a week ago.

Open Notepad and type the following (or copy it from our page-by-page links page at bit.ly/links413):

REM Remove files older than 7 days

forfiles /p "C:\[your name]\ Downloads" /s /m \*.\* /c "cmd /c Del @path" /d -7

You can change the number of days from '7' to a longer period, and should



You can automatically delete old files from your Downloads folder

set the path to that of your Downloads folder. Save the file under the name 'Clearup.bat' or similar (the '.bat' is the important part), then double-click and your Downloads folder will be emptied.

Now you know that the task works, you can use it to perform regular clearouts. Open the Windows Task Scheduler, create a basic task as in the previous tip and select the 'Clearup.bat' file at the 'Start a program' stage. Finish the task and your Downloads folder will now be self-maintaining.

# utomate your regular antivirus scans

The paid-for versions of security programs often have built-in schedulers that save you from having to perform scans manually and wait around for them to finish. With free editions, you're usually limited to triggering a 'boot-time' scan that runs when you next start your PC. but there are notable exceptions. For example, Avast Free Antivirus (www.avast.com) has an option to schedule daily, weekly or monthly scans, although it's not easy to find. To access it, click the Scan button on the Avast home screen, choose 'Scan for viruses' and select 'Quick scan' or 'Full system scan' from the drop-down menu. Click the Scan Settings link at the bottom of



Run daily, weekly or monthly malware scans in Avast Free Antivirus



# the screen, choose Scheduling on the left and tick the box 'Schedule this scan'. You can now decide the frequency of the scan, what time and day you want it to start, and whether to shut down your PC when the scan is complete and any malware has been removed.

In Windows 10, you can schedule a malware scan using the built-in Windows Defender tool. Go to Task Scheduler, Task Scheduler Library, Microsoft, Windows, then scroll down and double-click the Windows Defender folder. Double-click the Windows Defender Scheduled Scan option and choose a time and frequency for the scan.

Remember to keep your virus databases up to date, so that scheduled scans detect the latest threats.

# et Ellp to help with å everyday tasks

There are lots of dull but necessary tasks you probably perform on your PC every day, from switching it off at night to launching your browser to visit websites. Happily, you can now get help with at least a few of these chores from a new program called Ellp (www.ellp .com). Simply choose an action - for example, 'When my hard disk is getting full, free up space' or 'When it's time for bed, mute the sound on my PC' and specify parameters for the 'rule', such as the times it should be applied or the threshold at which it kicks in. Click Activate to confirm.

There are only eight tasks in the current free beta version. These span categories including Schedule, Internet

# Automate tedious tasks



Automate common computing tasks using the excellent new program Ellp

and Device, but more are coming soon and you can tell Ellp your email address to add new options as soon as they become available. We love the program's simple, attractive interface and that tasks can be easily toggled on and off.

# utomate everything you do online

The popular task-automation service IFTTT (ifttt.com) has made web users' lives easier since 2011, and was recently revamped with some welcome new features for combining online services. Previously, IFTTT (which stands for 'if this, then that') used a system called 'recipes', which combined a trigger such as 'If someone tags me in a Facebook photo' - with an action - such as 'back up the photo to my Google Drive'. These recipes have now been replaced by 'applets', which allow multiple actions to be assigned to a single trigger. This means you can, for example, create a 'morning routine' that performs a series of actions opening your Google Calendar, playing a Spotify song, updating your Facebook status - at a specific time every day.

You can either create your own applets from scratch by choosing a service, creating a trigger and selecting the desired action; or use one of the thousands of applets that users have shared on the IFTTT website (ifttt.com/discover). Sensibly, IFTTT has also merged its IF and DO mobile apps into one, so creating applets on your Android or iOS device is now very straightforward.

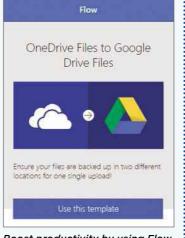


IFTTT automates tasks by combining online services into a single action

# LET BORING JOBS GO WITH THE FLOW

Microsoft often draws inspiration from other companies' ideas (or just copies them), and it recently launched its own IFTTT rival called Flow (flow,microsoft.com). While this is geared toward 'business processes' and Microsoft's own tools, it's certainly worth considering as a more focused alternative to IFTTT's limitless sea of automation possibilities. Flow currently covers 72 services including Facebook, WordPress, YouTube and several other Google tools (although not Gmail) and works in much the same way as IFTTT. Choose a service, then a template (Flow's equivalent to applets) such as 'back up OneDrive files to Google Drive' or 'Get a text when you receive an email from your manager', then sign into the relevant accounts and set your conditions.

Unlike IFTTT, the free version of Flow can



Boost productivity by using Flow, Microsoft's new rival to IFTTT

only be run 750 times per month, and at 15-minute intervals; if you need more, you can pay \$5 (about £4) per month. On the plus side, it offers free apps for iOS and Android, and is adding new services and templates all the time.

<u>.</u>



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2	sky	Sky: Broadband	£27.40 (£22.40 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	<b>∞</b> unlimited	£268.80
3	TalkTalk For Everyone	TalkTalk: Broadband	£22.95	18 months	17Mbps max speed	<b>∞</b> unlimited	£275.40
4	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband	£45.00 (£29.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	oonumuu waxaa wax	£348.00

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Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 13 December 2016.



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

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

# computer 3 CELLE

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# Take a Screen Break

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

# WEB USER WORD SEARCH

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

**BBC NEWS BUZZFEED ITV NEWS MAIL ONLINE** MIRROR ONLINE **SKY NEWS** THE GUARDIAN **THE SUN** THE TELEGRAPH **THE WEEK** 

K K E X U U Z E Z S Δ C E D K

# CAN YOU GUESS THE PROGRAM TITLES FROM THE EMOJI?

WORTH

£125.46









Get the answers online at bit.ly/quiz413

# **COMPETITIONS**

# **WIN 1 OF 2**

# Solwise HomePlug kits

We've teamed up with Solwise to offer two HomePlug kits, each containing the PL1200AV2-PIGGY and PL-1200AV2-PEW HomePlugs, which plug into an



webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'solwise' in the subject line. For more information visit www.solwise.co.uk.

# **WIN 1 OF 6**

# Peli Vault Case for iPhone 7

As the name Vault implies, this case for the iPhone 7 is a reinforced compartment for storing valuables. For ease of use, it has a built-in window so you can see who's calling without having to open the case. There's also a kickstand for

watching videos hands-free. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'peli' in the subject line. For more information visit www.pelimobileprotection

.com and follow @Peli\_Products on Twitter.





# Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

# Browse privately on iOS with Firefox Focus | bit.ly/fff413

Firefox Focus is a fast, private browser and ad blocker for iPhone and iPad. Here's how to make the most of its features

f you're worried about websites tracking your online activity, particularly across accounts and devices, then Mozilla's Firefox Focus is for you. It lets you browse the internet in private, blocking the trackers that follow you around the web and killing any ads you encounter. It's very easy to use, super-fast, and there are no tabs, menus or pop-ups to bother you.

.....

It works with Apple's default Safari browser, too (but, due to Apple's restrictions, not Firefox for iOS), so if you encounter a site that doesn't display properly in Focus, you can switch browsers, and it will continue to block adverts and tracking in the background.

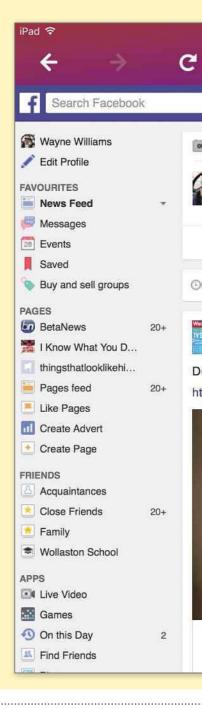
Firefox Focus is only available for iOS for now but may be introduced for Android in the future.



Getting started with the new browser couldn't be easier. Just launch Firefox Focus and you're greeted with this rather sparse purple screen. The slogan 'Browse. Erase. Repeat' 1 perfectly sums up how the app works. Tap the 'Search or enter address' box that appears in the centre of the screen. 2



On the next screen, you can enter some search terms or a website address. 1 Tap Go 2 to action your request. The browser will use your default search engine for queries, which is likely to be Google. You can't change your search preference directly in Focus.





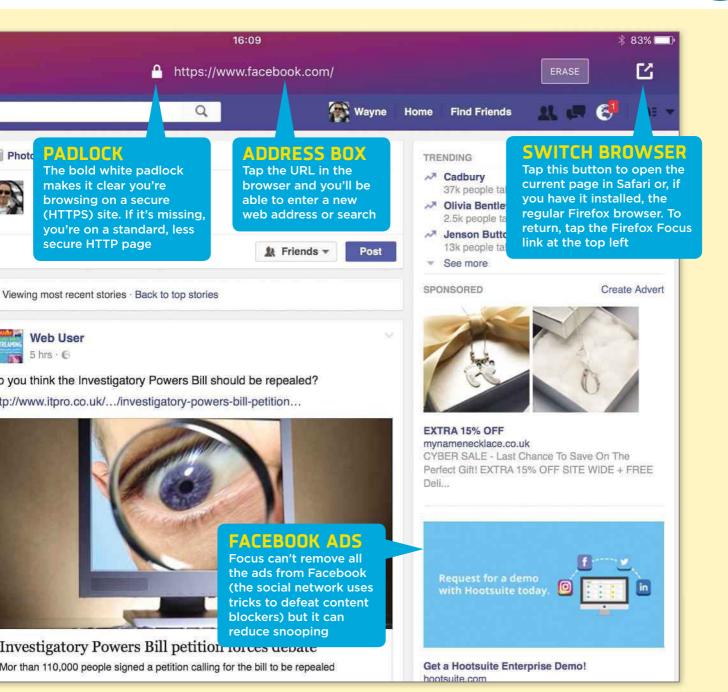
Browse the web exactly as you would normally but bear in mind that Firefox Focus doesn't offer tabs, so you can only have one page open at a time. You can navigate backwards and forwards in pages 11 and reload the current one. 2 To start afresh, tap on the Erase button. **3** 



You'll be taken back to the front purple screen. The web-page details, cookies, and any searches you've performed will be wiped. 1 You can run a fresh search or go to a new website. You'll soon get into the habit of browsing in this way. Tap on the cog in the top-right corner. 2



This screen lets you choose which tools are enabled. Safari integration is off by default. Tap the switch 11 to turn it on and use Firefox Focus as a content blocker in Apple's web browser. Instructions appear that explain what you need to do, or you can follow the instructions in Step 6.





After flicking the Safari switch, open the iOS Settings app from the home screen. Scroll down the list of items on the left until you see Safari. 11 Tap this and locate the Content Blockers entry on the right. 2 Tap it to open the Content Blockers screen.



You should see Firefox Focus listed as a content blocker (there may be other choices here as well, but you can ignore those). Toggle the switch to On. 1 Now when you use Safari, all your browsing will go through Focus and any adverts will be stripped out automatically.



Back in Settings, you can choose which Privacy options to include. 1 'Block other content trackers' 2 may cause videos and other websites to break. 'Block Web fonts' El can improve performance but might mess up how the sites look. 'Send anonymous usage data' can be toggled off if you wish.



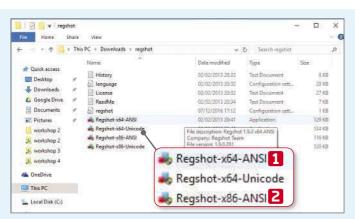
# Stop programs leaving junk in your Registry

Regshot: bit.ly/regsh413 | 🕒 20 mins | 🎥 XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10

hen you install a program on your PC, it makes changes to the Windows Registry. These changes should all be reversed when you uninstall the software, but that's not always the case. You can correct this yourself by using the Registry Editor (or a number of even better tools, such as those we reviewed in Issue 385, bit.ly/webuser385), but it's tricky work and you need to know what you're doing. We recommend that you always create a restore point and back up your Registry (see Step 9) before you start tinkering with its settings.

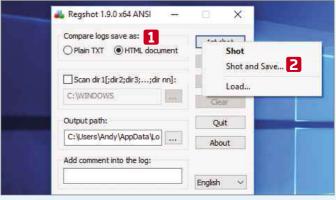
Regshot lets you take a snapshot of your Registry before and after you install software, so you can spot any changes. You can then take more snapshots when uninstalling the software, and check that those changes have been rectified.

Regshot's files are in the compressed 7Z format. If you don't already have a tool that will open them, download and use 7-Zip (www.7-zip.org).

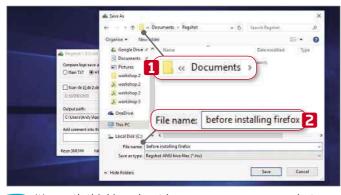


The software is portable so you don't need to install it, just unpack the files. There are four executable files. If you're using a 64-bit version of Windows, double-click Regshot-x64-ANSI. 32-bit users should use Regshot-x86-ANSI. The Unicode versions are for PCs using international characters.





Choose the HTML option. 1 The text version is quicker to load but the HTML version doesn't take much longer and it looks nicer, too. Click the '1st shot' button and choose 'Shot and Save'. 2 After a couple of minutes, a Save As box opens so you can choose where to save it.



It's worth thinking about how you save your snapshots so it's easy to find and identify them later. Create a folder specifically for this kind of file somewhere sensible, such as in your Documents folder. Also, name the files descriptively, so you can see what they are at a glance.



Having taken your first snapshot, you can now install the program you want to monitor. 1 Try to do this as soon as possible after the first snapshot, to minimise the amount of interference from anything else that's going on in the background on your computer.





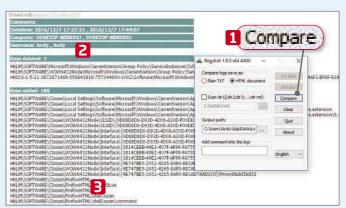
# **EXPERT TIP**

# Andy Shaw says

You can also compare individual folders (rather than the Registry, which is more like a database) to see any changes that may have been made before and after installing software. Tick the box next to 'Scan dir1'. It's set to the C:\Windows folder by default but you can change it by typing in a different one. To add more than one folder, separate the entries with semicolons.



When the software has finished installing, click '2nd shot'. From the options, choose 'Shot and Save'. • If you closed Regshot between snapshots, you may need to reload the first snapshot before comparing them. Click the appropriate snapshot button, choose Load 2 and select the file to restore it.



Click the Compare button. 1 If you selected the HTML option, your browser will now open displaying the results. 2 There will be a lot of Registry changes listed, many of which specifically mention the software you've installed.



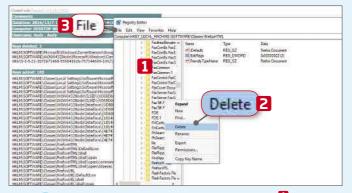
The log files will be saved to the folder specified under 'Output path' and automatically named. To better organise them, right-click a blank area of the page, select 'Save as' 1 and save the file to the folder where you're keeping your other Regshot files. Give them a name that makes sense to you.



Go through the process again when you uninstall the software, taking one snapshot before you start and another when it's finished. Compare the two files and create an HTML document. Hopefully it will list many of the changes that also appeared in your first HTML document. 1



If you find references to the program you installed in the first HTML document that aren't in the second, press Windows+R, type regedit and press Enter. Back up the Registry by opening the File menu 1 and choosing Export. 2 Under 'Export range', ensure that the All option **E** is selected.



Use the folder tree in the left-hand panel 1 to navigate your way to any leftover Registry entries. Right-click the item and choose Delete. 2 If the changes you make cause problems on your PC, you can restore your Registry backup using Import from the File menu.



# Save unlimited clipboard items

opying and pasting in Windows is a straightforward process, but sometimes you might want to copy more than one item, without it overwriting what's already there. ClipLogger is a lightweight tool that lets you copy unlimited

items to the clipboard, without having to switch to another program to paste your saved items every time.



ClipLogger: bit.ly/clip413 | (1) 10 mins | 2 XP, 7, 8, 10



Download ClipLogger, extract its contents and run the application. An empty window appears. Click Hide 11 to minimise the tool. Copy multiple, separate passages, then open ClipLogger from the notification area and you'll see each item listed separately, marked with a timestamp.



From here, you can select and copy some or all of the text using Ctrl+C and paste it to another program. Once 🛮 you're finished with the clipboard text, click Clear 🚺 or press Ctrl+D to delete it from ClipLogger, or highlight and delete individual sections.



As well as copying passages of text, ClipLogger lets you copy file locations from Windows Explorer by rightclicking the file or files in question and selecting Copy. 1 If you'd prefer for this information not be copied to ClipLogger, untick the Filenames box.



For more options, click the 'Settings/About...' button. This menu lets you set ClipLogger to launch on startup 1 and add a shortcut to the Start menu. 2 You can also tick the option to 'Close to Tray' 1 to avoid accidentally closing the software.



By default, ClipLogger spaces out your entries and adds time stamps, but you can untick the boxes to disable these respective settings. 1 Ticking the box to 'Backup Contents to file' saves your clipboard entries to a TXT file saved in the ClipLogger folder.



To change the style of text you've copied to ClipLogger, click the three-dot button and choose a font, 11 font style 2 and size 3 from the dialogue box that appears. Click OK, then OK again to save your new settings.



# Block noisy ads and unwanted browser sounds

t can be both annoying and embarrassing when a website suddenly bursts into noise, whether from an obtrusive advert or a background video you can't even see. Silent Site Sound Blocker (SSSB) is a new Chrome add-on that can fix this problem for good, giving you complete control over which sites you want to be able to hear - such as YouTube - and which ones you don't.



Silent Site Sound Blocker: bit.ly/sssb413 | 🕒 10 mins | 🧑

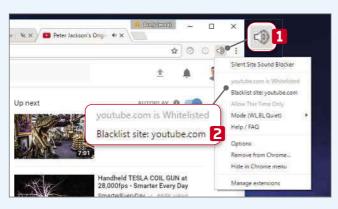




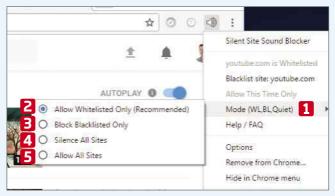
Install the SSSB add-on from the Chrome Store. By default, the app runs in Whitelist mode, so any sites not added to the whitelist are silenced and display the Mute icon. 1 Here, SSSB's button is yellow 2 because the site in our screengrab is neither whitelisted nor blacklisted.



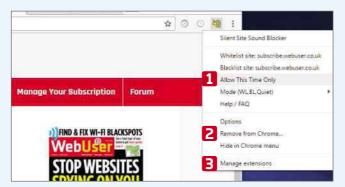
If you open a site that plays audio, a pop-up lets you add the site to your whitelist (always let sound through); lacksquare add it to the blacklist lacksquare (always block sound); or choose to block 3 or allow 4 sound on just this occasion (so you'll see this box again the next time you launch the page).



If you use the box to add a site to your whitelist, the SSSB icon turns white. 11 It changes to black if you blacklist the site instead. If you change your mind about what you want to do with a site, right-click the button and choose 'Blacklist site' 2 or 'Whitelist site' as appropriate.



You can also change the add-on's behaviour by right-clicking the icon. Hover over Mode 11 to open the submenu. You can change the default of only allowing Whitelisted sites 2 to only blocking Blacklisted ones. 3 You can also blanket block 4 or allow 5 all sites if you wish.



At any time, you can allow a site to play sound on a one-off basis. Right-click the button and click Allow This Time Only. 1 From here, you can also remove the add-on 2 if you want all sound back, or click 'Manage extensions' El to disable it.



For settings, click Options on the right-click menu. You can turn off the pop-up prompt, 1 automatically silence tabs moved to the background 2 and always allow pinned tabs. 2 You can also manually add sites to your lists by typing their URLs into the black or white boxes. 4

# **Weekend Project**

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





# How to make your smart TV even smarter

**David Ludlow** shows you how to use your phone to control your smart TV, so you don't have to rely on its clunky remote



# DIAL into your TV

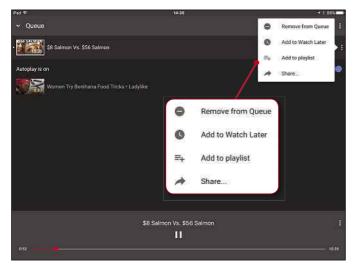
Smart TVs are designed to connect to the internet via Wi-Fi or Ethernet and stream online video straight into your living room. Your living-room TV is a great place to catch up with online entertainment, since it's more than likely the biggest and best screen in your house. However, TV remotes aren't an ideal tool for finding and selecting

YouTube videos. The apps on your TV have been designed to work as well as they can with TV remotes, but they're not as good as the apps you get on your tablet or phone.

One way around this problem is to use DIAL, a technology from Netflix and YouTube, which lets you send YouTube and Netflix content from your mobile device to your smart TV without the

need for any additional hardware.

DIAL stands for Discovery And Launch and is a simple way to let second-screen devices (your phone or tablet) discover and launch apps on first-screen devices (your TV, Blu-ray player, set-top box and so on). For example, you could start watching a YouTube video on your phone, then launch the YouTube app on your TV and continue watching from



Open the queue on the YouTube app to arrange and manage the upcoming videos or add videos to a playlist

Queue \$8 Salmon Vs. \$56 Salmon Autoplay is on Women Try Benihana Food Tricks • Ladylike

When you come to the end of your queue, another video will be chosen and played automatically, unless you switch it off

there. DIAL only claims to let you discover and launch apps on your TV, but we've found that you can control the video from your device, too. For example, you can swipe your device's touchscreen to skip through boring bits of the video that you're playing.

# Differences to Chromecast

DIAL needs no additional hardware, such as a Chromecast, to stream video to your TV. Your phone sends the location of the stream to the receiving device. and your TV connects directly to the source to play it. Chromecast works in a similar way but can also stream content from a PC using Google's Chrome browser.

If you don't have the required DIAL app installed, your TV can

take you to the app store and prompt you to install it. Crucially, there's no need to pair your phone with your TV - it will find it easily as long as you're on the



The Panasonic app is much better than a remote or virtual keyboard for typing information

same Wi-Fi network. Once your TV is playing the media, you can take over full control on the big screen if you prefer.

With Chromecast, DRM (Digital Rights Management) restrictions can

affect what can be beamed, which means some content is locked. With DIAL, if you can access the video on your mobile device, you can beam it to the screen no problem.

# Is DIAL the best option?

Using DIAL from your smartphone or tablet makes navigating and finding content much quicker than using a television remote, especially when you're typing something to search for. Another advantage of DIAL is that guests connected to your wireless network can contribute to what's

# MINI WORKSHOP | Control your TV's YouTube app from your phone or tablet



Check that your smart TV has the YouTube app and is connected to the same Wi-Fi network. On your mobile device, choose a video to watch and start playing it. Tap the DIAL icon (a screen with a Wi-Fi symbol in the bottom left corner), then choose your TV (or other compatible device) from the drop-down list. 1

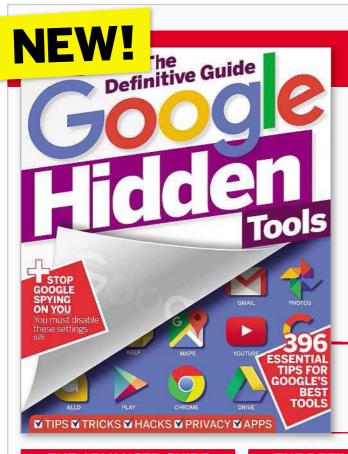


You'll get a 'connecting' message at the bottom of your device's screen 1 and the video you're playing will pause and darken. 2 If it isn't already open, the app will launch on your PC and the video will start playing. This might take a few moments but it's quicker for subsequent videos once you've got the app open on the TV.



While the video is playing, you can move around the interface on your device to find something to view next. Tap a video and you're given the option to interrupt the current video [] or add it to the queue. 2 Tap the down arrow 1 to get back to the main menu for further browsing. Tap the up arrow 4 to see and manage the queue.

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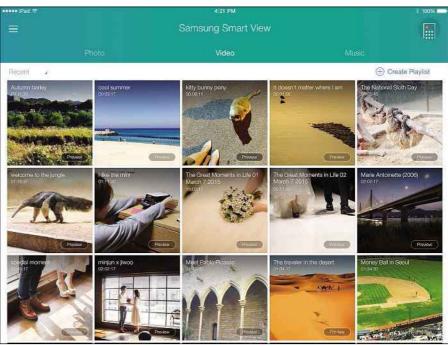


Search your app store for a remote that's suitable for your make and model of TV

being displayed on your TV screen using the Netflix or YouTube apps on their own smartphone or tablet. With YouTube, you can create queues, so multiple viewers can contribute to a playlist of videos, which is great for communal viewing. To see how to connect to DIAL and add videos to the queue, see our Mini Workshop on page 59.

The drawback with DIAL is that your TV has to have the app installed, and it currently only works with YouTube and Netflix. Chromecast has the advantage of allowing you to beam video and audio from a wider range of supported sources, and provides more advanced options, such as streaming from a Plex media server to your Chromecast.

DIAL support is built into most smart TVs, YouView boxes, games consoles (including the PS4, PS3 and Xbox One), Roku and Amazon Fire TV devices.



Use the Samsung app to browse through photos, videos and music on your big screen

# Get a touchscreen remote

If you've bought a smart TV from a big-name manufacturer, the good news is that there's probably already an app, developed by the manufacturer, that lets you use a touchscreen device to control it. At a basic level, you can simply use these apps to switch channels, but they'll often also include a range of extra functions, from playing the photos and videos you have stored on your device to providing a swipe-pad you can use to navigate the TV's apps and tools more intuitively.

To find the right remote for your TV,

go to your app store and type in the brand of TV followed by TV remote. The apps from your TV manufacturer aren't always listed first because other companies also make apps that will work with more than one brand of TV. However, it's best to try your manufacturer's app first to see if it's suitable, because the other ones may require in-app purchases to get the full range of tools.

We show you how to use the Panasonic Viera app in our Mini Workshop, below. Whatever the brand of your smart TV, apps from other manufacturers will work in much the same way.

# MINI WORKSHOP | Control your Panasonic TV with your phone

As with the DIAL app, you need to make sure your device is connected to the same Wi-Fi network as your TV. Open the side menu (it will



already be visible if you're using a tablet) and tap Device Selection. [1] Your TV should appear in the list of options. Tap it to select it. 2

Tap Pad Control to use swines on an open area of your device's screen 🚺 to control apps on your TV screen. This is a great way to browse videos on the TV's YouTube



app if you want to explore the TV app rather than using the DIAL option on the mobile app.

You can also access most of the buttons available on a standard remote control. such as the volume control 1 and channel switcher. 2



The app spreads them across a number of pages, though, so you need to swipe to move between the various options.

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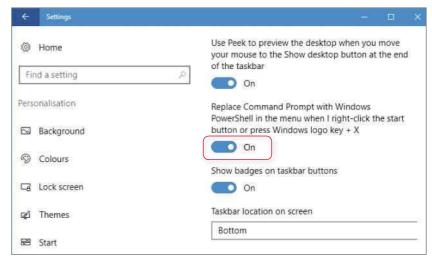
# Web User's Top Tips

The next Windows update ditches Command Prompt for PowerShell. We get you ready for the big changes

# TOP TIPS FOR SWITCHING TO POWERSHELL

# **PowerShell vs Command Prompt**

n this year's Creators Update to Windows 10, Microsoft is downgrading Command Prompt, which has been in Windows since the early days, and promoting PowerShell, which is more powerful. You don't have to wait for the update, though - you can use it now. Press Windows+i and click Personalisation. Select Taskbar on the left and look for the switch in the settings on the right that lets you choose between PowerShell and Command Prompt. Currently this switch is off, but in future Windows versions it will be on. This switch controls whether Command Prompt or PowerShell appears on the menu when you right-click the Start button or press Windows+X, and which tool File Explorer opens. Use the switch to turn on PowerShell and try out our tips.



This setting lets you choose whether to use Command Prompt or PowerShell

# Start PowerShell

To start PowerShell in Windows 10, right-click the Start button and select it from the menu, or run it from the Start menu. PowerShell is the 64-bit version and PowerShell (x86) is the 32-bit version. The 64-bit version is the one to use, presuming you're running a 64-bit version of Windows.

PowerShell is not new and has been around for years. You can even run it in Windows 7 by clicking Start, All Programs, Accessories, Windows PowerShell.

Like all programs, PowerShell can be run in normal or administrator mode. Most functions work in normal mode, but a few require an administrator.

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.



PowerShell has been on the Start menu since Windows 7, but was rarely used

In Windows 10 right-click Start and select Windows PowerShell (Admin). In Windows 7 right-click Windows PowerShell on the Start menu and select 'Run as administrator'.

# Learn new commands

To make it easier to switch from the old Command Prompt to the new PowerShell, many familiar commands work as they did before. For example, you can still type dir for a directory listing and type cd xyz to change the current directory to folder xyz. As with

Command Prompt, you always have to press the Enter key when you've finished typing.

For example, when you open PowerShell, it will start in C:\Users\ YourName by default. Type cd downloads and then dir to see a list of the files and folders in your Downloads folder. To delete a file. type erase followed by the filename. To delete a folder, type rm or rmdir (short for remove directory) followed by the name. To rename a file, type ren oldname newname.

These old commands aren't actual PowerShell commands but aliases. They are automatically converted into the new commands before being run. To see the PowerShell equivalent of an old command, type get-alias followed by the name. For example, type get-alias dir and you'll see the real command is Get-ChildItem. Type Get-ChildItem and it displays a directory listing showing the files and folders in the current location.

To see all the old commands and their new versions, type get-alias

on its own. New commands use both upper- and lowercase letters, but they work when typed all lowercase.

# Get help with commands

PowerShell is complicated but help is available within the software. However, this option isn't installed by default so you have to add it. Open PowerShell in administrator mode and type update-help. It takes a few minutes to download and install, and you'll see the progress at the top of the window. Don't worry if some things don't install.

To use the Help system, type gethelp followed by the name of the command you are interested in. For example, type get-help renameitem. If you don't want to install the Help files or if there is a problem installing them, you can view online Help instead. For example, type get-help rename-item -online and a browser window opens displaying the Help page for that command.

The Help can still be confusing, so ask it to display some examples of usage by adding -example to the end, such as get-help rename-item -example. To see everything that's known about a command, add -full, such as get-help rename-item -full.

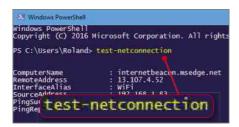
# Test your connection

If you're having problems with your internet connection, you can use PowerShell to test it. At the PowerShell prompt, type test-netconnection. The results appear after a few seconds and if everything is fine, information such as the remote address and IP. your computer's IP, and the results of a ping test (lower numbers indicate faster internet) are displayed. Several parameters can be included with this command and you can specify which website you want to check, and get more detailed information. For example:

test-netconnection

-computername www.google.com -informationlevel detailed

There is a related command called test-connection, which pings websites and devices. For example, you can check that Google can be reached with test-connection google.com.



Check that the internet is working with this PowerShell command

# TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

# **System Restore settings**

PowerShell is more powerful than the old Command Prompt and it can perform tasks that weren't previously possible. For example, you can turn System Restore on or off with a guick command instead of searching through menus, windows and settings. To enable System Restore, type Enable-ComputerRestore. To disable it, type Disable-ComputerRestore.

Suppose you are going to install some software or customise Windows settings. It's a good idea to use System Restore to save the current Windows configuration in case anything goes wrong, so you can put things back the way they were. To create a restore point, open PowerShell and type:

Checkpoint-Computer -Description "Install app"

This creates a restore point and names it 'Install app'. Change the description in quotes to whatever best describes the restore point.

# Copy files and folders

Files and folders can be copied from one place to another, such as from one folder to another on the hard drive, or to another drive. You can either type the full path to the file you want to copy or change to the folder first with cd. So you could open a PowerShell window and type cd downloads to change to it, then copy a file to drive F: by typing copy-item filename f:\.

Copy-Item can also be used to copy folders but the command needs an extra parameter to to do this. Type:

Copy-Item "C:\Folder1" -Destination "C:\Folder2"

If C:\Folder2 already exists, then the contents of Folder1 are copied to Folder2. If Folder2 does not exist, it is created and then the contents of Folder1 are copied into it.



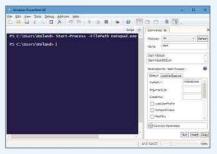
Use Copy-Item to copy files and whole folders from one place to another

# Try PowerShell ISE

PowerShell ISE (Integrated Scripting Environment) is a programmer's editor that lets you develop, test and run PowerShell scripts. It's included in Windows and aims to make working with commands and scripts easier. Here is a simple example.

Go to the Start menu, find Windows PowerShell in the list of all programs, click the drop-down arrow to expand it and click Windows PowerShell ISE. In the Commands panel on the right, type start into the Name box. All the commands that include start are listed. Select Start-Process and, in the FilePath box below (you may need to press 'Show details' to see it), enter notepad.exe. Windows knows where to find Notepad, but you may need to specify the full path with other programs.

Click the Run button at the bottom and a PowerShell script is created, entered and executed. Our example simply starts Notepad and you will see the window open. Look in the main window and you'll see it says Start-Process -FilePath notepad.exe. Typing this into a PowerShell window would produce the same result.



Use PowerShell ISE to explore the commands available and create scripts

# Check running services

Services are special types of programs that run in the background and perform essential tasks. Press Windows+R, type services.msc and press Enter to see them. They can also be seen in PowerShell. Type getservice to see a list of services and whether they are running or stopped.

# List all Windows apps

To see a list of all your installed Windows 10 or 8.1 apps, type Get-AppxPackage. It displays very detailed information so several screens will fly by. Scroll back through the screens to see all the apps.

# 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 won't let me change settings

I have a laptop running Windows 10 Home and I've been trying but failing to set my location so Cortana can tell me the local weather. If I go into Settings for location, it's greyed out and can't be set. Above this, it says "Some settings are managed by your organisation". My laptop is not linked to any organisation.

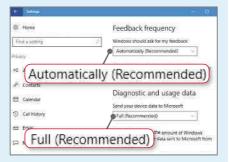
Searching online I've found hundreds of people with this same problem, but none of the solutions work for me. I would be grateful if you can offer any help.

Rob DeVille, via email

This bug occurs for no apparent reason and it may be that a setting in Windows has been wrongly changed during an update. Utilities that configure Windows settings may also be responsible.

Try pressing Windows+i to open Settings, then select Privacy and 'Feedback & diagnostics'. Set the 'Feedback frequency' to Automatic. In the section 'Diagnostic and usage data', select the Full option. Hopefully, these settings are not greyed out.

On most versions of Windows (except, unfortunately, the Home



Use the recommended settings for these two options in Windows 10

version), you can type gpedit.msc into the Windows search bar. Rightclick the search result and select 'Run as administrator', then go to:

Computer Configuration/ Administrative Templates/Windows Components/Data Collection and Preview Builds

Double-click Allow Telemetry and set it to Enabled. In the Options below, set it to Full and click OK. If that doesn't work, double-click Telemetry again and set it to Not Configured.

The setting can also be changed using the Registry Editor. Press Windows+R, type regedit, then press the Enter key. Go to:

HKEY\_LOCAL\_MACHINE\ SOFTWARE\Microsoft\ PolicyManager\default\System\ AllowTelemetry

Double-click 'value' on the right and set 'Value data' to 3.

but during setup it was automatically changed to Outlook.com. I have lost the original password to my Hotmail.com address and any password I may have had to tiscali.co.uk

# Christopher J Cattanach, via email

We've had to edit your query because it was too long to fit it all in, but hopefully the main points remain.

Your internet provider is TalkTalk, which took over Tiscali, and you should be able to recover your email account from them. Go to bit.ly/tal413 and look at the My Account and Email sections. These have links to recover your account name and password, and email password. You will also find contact options and telephone support on 0345 172 0088.

After fixing your tiscali.co.uk email, you can then use Outlook's password recovery. Go to outlook.live.com in a browser and click 'Sign in'. Enter your email address and, when it asks for the password, click 'Forgot my password' and follow the instructions. To contact support, go to bit.ly/out413 in a browser. Outlook technical support is usually only available to paying subscribers, though.

Windows Live Mail is an old program that is no longer supported and cannot access Outlook or Hotmail email accounts. The Hotmail name has been abandoned, too, Existing Hotmail addresses continue to work in the webmail service but you can't create new accounts - you have to use Outlook .com instead. Instead of Live Mail, try using the Windows 10 Mail app instead.



Lost your Outlook or Hotmail password? Click 'Forgot my password'

# **EMAIL**

# Recover lost email passwords

I have been unable to receive email in my Tiscali account since 2 November. I installed Windows 10 when it was first launched and all was well for months. I use Windows Live Mail to read my email.

Windows 10 did not like my tiscali.co.uk address and I had to register it with a Hotmail address, but both Hotmail and Tiscali addresses worked alongside each other in Live Mail. I got a login box requiring a password but I didn't need to enter it, until November. Microsoft

then started insisting I put in my password, but it is not recognised.

I used the automated Help program, which generated a four-digit key and sent it to my email address, but since I cannot access my emails, I was stuck in an endless loop. In the end, I set up a new Outlook.com address, from which I am writing this.

In the days that followed, I received key codes. When I typed them into Windows Live Mail's password box, they were rejected.

When I first set up my new address, I was intending to set up Hotmail.com,

# **Ask the Expert**

## **GENERAL PC**

# Fix a non-booting PC

I decided to try the Maxthon 5 web browser (www.maxthon.com) after reading about it in a recent edition of Web User. It did not appeal to me sufficiently, so I decided to remove it. The removal process appeared to start, but then my PC froze and I was forced to shut it down with the power button.

I tried to restart it, but all was not well. I tried various means including booting in safe mode, but the computer failed to respond and said I needed to boot up in repair mode with an installation disc.

Prior to trying Maxthon 5, I had been tempted to try one of your magazine's other suggestions, Advanced SystemCare 10. However, I found that the URL didn't lead me to the software I expected. I looked up the program's address myself and tried to load the software, but my attempts always led me to download programs other than the one I wanted.

My computer runs Windows 7. I would be grateful if you would advise me how to get out of the predicament in which I now find myself due to having downloaded Maxthon 5. Are there issues associated with this software? Does it not take kindly to being removed?

## Norris Lockley, via email

Let's deal with the easy problem first. Advanced SystemCare 10 is available from IObit (www.iobit.com). Sometimes installers from IObit try to install trials of other IObit software, but if you are vigilant, you can opt out.

Not being able to boot is a more serious problem. The cause was forcibly shutting down the computer while the Maxathon uninstaller was working. If the computer becomes unresponsive while performing a task, it may be that it has just become very slow. Always allow 30 minutes or more before holding down the power button to force a shutdown.

Switch on the power and press the F8 key several times until the boot menu appears. If you can get to it, safe mode might work, but you should also try 'Last known good configuration', which uses the same settings as the last time Windows started successfully. 'Repair your computer' at the top of the screen might also solve the problem. Select it, select the UK keyboard and log in. Try Startup Repair, which fixes boot problems, and System Restore to return to a previous Windows state.

If none of this works, boot with the Windows 7 DVD in the drive. Look for



Use Windows 7 Recovery Options to fix startup problems

the repair option or install Windows over the top of itself. If you don't have a Windows disc, use another computer or ask a friend to download it (from bit .ly/win413) and burn it to a DVD-R. A product key is required to download Windows 7 and this is usually found on a sticker on the PC.

### **HARDWARE**

# Restore a dead DVD drive

I noticed Issue 409's Ask the Experts (bit.ly/webuser409) explained how to 'Recover a lost DVD drive', which I thought may be the answer to my problem. There were lots of suggestions for things to try but none that answered the real question of why Windows stops the DVD drive working.

I've had this problem ever since buying my PC from Medion. When my PC stops responding, I lose my DVD drive. The only way I can get it working again is to

release the securing screws of the DVD connection and tighten them up again, giving the appearance of a new installation. It then starts again for a short while before it stops again.

Every time Windows runs Malicious Software Removal Tool, I lose my drive. Why does it keep doing this? The original drive that kept stopping is now in a laptop and works all the time. Even the replacement now stops and disappears.

### Keith Tunnicliffe, via email

CD and DVD drives sometimes disappear from Windows and the cause is unknown. Instead of physically removing the drive and reattaching it, you might be able to achieve the same result via software.

The problem could be due to corrupted Registry entries. Press Windows+R, type **regedit** and press Enter, Navigate to:

HKEY LOCAL MACHINE\SYSTEM\ CurrentControlSet\Control\Class\ {4D36E965-E325-11CE-BFC1-08002BE10318}

Right-click UpperFilters and delete it, then also delete LowerFilters. Quit the Registry Editor and restart Windows.

Another fix that sometimes works is to press Windows+R, type devmgmt .msc and press Enter to open Device Manager. Expand DVD/CD-Rom Drives, right-click the drive and select 'Uninstall device'. There are more suggestions at bit.ly/cddvd413.

# **HARDWARE**

# Choose a Fire TV device

I have bought an Amazon Prime subscription because it was on offer and I am looking at getting either the Fire TV box or the Fire TV Stick. The problem I have is that my TV, although HDMI 1080p with HDMI and USB ports, is not a smart TV and is about six years old. Also, the USB port is a standard port and the Fire TV Stick uses micro USB.

I believe that I can get an adapter or HDMI splitters or boxes, but what type of USB adaptor is it? USB to micro or micro to USB? Will either work?

Martin Fletcher, via email

Both the Fire TV and the Fire TV Stick plug into the HDMI socket



The Amazon Fire TV Box and Stick both connect to the TV using HDMI

on the television. It does not need to be a smart TV and most TVs with an HDMI socket and the ability to display in 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution are fine. The micro USB socket on the Fire TV Stick is for the power and is not used to connect to the TV, though the USB ports on some TVs will provide enough power to run it. The power adapter is included.



This fortnight Roland ran into problems with the printer he bought last issue - some tech even confounds the experts!

# **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**

# Find points of interest on **Google Maps routes**

I've used Google Maps' Navigation mode for some time and, despite still

being in Beta, it's very good. You not only get step-by-step instructions on how to reach your destination, but it also shows your predicted arrival time based on the current traffic conditions and will even re-route you if you miss a turning or another route becomes faster. I simply place my phone in a holder mounted to the windscreen and charge it from a cable attached to my car's cigarette lighter.

My favourite recent discovery is that it lets you search for points of interest along your

route. When you're in the navigation view on Google Maps, simply tap the

> three-dot button in the bottom-right corner (make sure someone else does this if you're driving) and select 'Search along route'. The app then lets you tap 'Petrol stations', 'Restaurants'. 'Supermarkets' and 'Coffee shops', or you can 'Search for more places'. After tapping one of the default options, you'll see all the relevant locations relative to your route. It also shows a star rating and the number of minutes it'll add to your journey.

winner WebUs

Dylan Kirk, via email



You can find nearby petrol stations by selecting 'Search along route



# **ANDROID**

# Save Chrome bookmarks for offline viewing

Here's an easy way to save bookmarks for viewing offline in Chrome for Android. Type chrome: //flags in the browser's address bar, tap the menu button, select 'Find in page' and type offline p. Find 'Enable offline pages', tap its drop-down menu and select 'Enabled as bookmarks'. Now, when you bookmark a page, an alert pops up saying 'Bookmark saved offline'. To disable this feature, open chrome:// flags and follow the instructions

as above. changing the setting to Default instead of 'Enabled

bookmarks'. Mason Burke, via

email



Enable offline pages Android Enable storing pages locally for offline use. Enabled as bookmarks

Chrome lets you 'Enable offline pages'

# Free up space on your iPhone

I have an iPhone 5S and the only drawback to the device is that I quickly fill its 16GB capacity. Unfortunately, there's no simple way to expand the storage, but last week I stumbled across a handy tip that might help. If you're down to your last few megabytes of free space, just download a large app from the App Store. Fallout Shelter (bit.ly/fs413), which is 1.1GB and free to install is ideal.

When you try to download the app, iOS automatically frees up space by clearing cache from your other apps, a function you can't perform manually. When you install Fallout Shelter, you should see the space taken up by other apps start to shrink. Once the cache has been cleared, you can delete Fallout

Shelter to start using the new, free space.

Avoid downloading large apps when using mobile data or you might end up with a hefty bill. You should only do so on your home broadband if you have unlimited bandwidth.

Tom Wright, via email



Downloading a large app such as Fallout Shelter should clear cached files in iOS

# **NETWORKING**

# Neighbour on my Wi-Fi

My next-door neighbour discovered that he was connecting to my internet! He was at our house for a barbecue in the summer and I gave him the password so he could connect to the web on his phone. Now his phone always connects to my internet instead of his, even when he is at home, because I have a router with a strong signal.

We get on well, so it's not really a problem but I wonder if it is happening to other people, too.

We solved the problem by going into Settings on his Samsung phone, then to



Forget Wi-Fi networks you don't want to connect to on your phone

Wi-Fi. Pressing and holding my network name brought up a menu with 'Forget network'. Now it doesn't reconnect because this wipes the

password.

Mike Johnstone, via email

## **GENERAL PC**

# Fix blank Windows 10 icons

I've found many solutions for fixing a broken Windows 10 icon including an article on How-To Geek (bit.ly/icon413), but I've discovered a much simpler method that involves going through a particular set of steps twice.

First, right-click the problematic blank icon and select Properties, Shortcut, 'Change Icon...' On the pop-up that appears, click OK and select Apply. You may see the message 'Access Denied, Requires Administration Privileges'. Just click Continue and OK. Now repeat the above steps. On the final OK click, the image will be restored. I don't know why you have to do it twice, but it always works for me.

TJ Cody, via email

# **GENERAL PC**

# **Quick shortcuts**

Here are some keyboard shortcuts that are useful for Windows 10 users. Hold down Ctrl+Alt and press Tab to show all the open windows. Select the one to switch to by pressing Tab or clicking it with the mouse. It's easier than Alt+Tab. Press Windows+Tab to show open windows and Desktops, then use the left and right arrow keys to highlight one and press Enter to select it.

Daniel Thorpe, via email

# **GENERAL PC**

# More missing DVD drive problems

In issue 409 (bit.ly/webuser409), Ron O'Brien had a query about fixing a lost DVD drive in Windows 10. After extensively researching this matter due to having similar problems, I wanted to make readers aware that although there are some easy fixes, the main problem lies with Sony Optiarc drives. As with my own drive, the vast majority of models released before Windows 10 simply don't work, and in all likelihood, if you own one of these drives, it is far easier to simply

replace it, as Roland Waddilove suggested. I replaced mine with a TSST (Toshiba Samsung) model for under £15 including delivery from Amazon.

Chris Tuck, Hull

Web User says: Before you splash out, Roland has a few more suggestions you might like to try on page 66.

## **ONLINE STORAGE**

# Host online images in Google

If you want to host an image online to embed on a forum or website, you'd normally have to use a dedicated service such as Imgur (imgur.com) or Photobucket (photobucket.com). But did you know that you can also use Google Drive? Just upload your image, then right-click it and select Share. Click the drop-down menu, select More and 'On -Public on the web'. Click Save before copying the URL and clicking Done.

To turn this link into one you can embed, visit gdURL (gdurl.com), paste the public Google Drive link that you've just copied into the appropriate box and click Create Permalink. The site gives you a standard URL that you can use within HTML <img> tags to embed the image. You can also get a download link and track statistics about how often your image has been viewed and downloaded. To make this process even easier, you can also click the button on gdURL to connect your Google Drive account and create permalinks instantly.

Jack Gold, Web User Forums



GDurl.com lets you turn public Google Drive links into standard URLs

# **ANDROID**

# Add Google weather app to Home

I read a tip in Issue 399 of Web User (bit.ly/webuser399) about adding a Home screen shortcut to Google Now's weather app. Unfortunately, this option was not available on my device and I recently discovered that this was due to a bug in the operating system. I've found a fix for it and I love the Google weather app so much that I no longer use other

dedicated weather apps.

To add the Google weather app to your Home screen open the Google app, search for weather and a full-page weather interface loads. At this point, you

should also see a prompt asking you if you want to add it to your home screen. If this doesn't appear, tap the app's three-dot button and select 'Add a Home screen shortcut' or select the down arrow, open the main menu and choose 'Add to Home screen'.



Select another Google account to make the shortcut prompt appear

If you can't see any of these options, the workaround that fixed the bug for me and several of my friends is to switch to a second account from the Google app (you can create one or log in with a family member's account, if necessary). Now search for weather again and the prompt will appear asking you to add it to your home screen. Tap Add and once the shortcut is on your Home screen, you can switch back to your primary Google account and even remove the additional account altogether.

John Cooper, via email

# **HARDWARE**

# **Battery calibration**

A problem that many people have with old laptops is that the battery doesn't hold as much charge as it used to. My laptop got to the point where it was shutting down, even when the battery indicator in the taskbar was still saying it had 30% charge left. I discovered a fix on the HP website that seems to have worked and the battery indicator is now more accurate.

For anyone else with this problem, charge up the battery to 100%, then go to the Control Panel and click Power Options. Click the link to 'Create a power plan' and name it. Change the settings for the power plan so that it never dims the display, never turns off the display and never puts the computer to sleep. Now remove the mains lead and use the laptop until it runs out of power and shuts down.

Leave the laptop for an hour or so, then plug in the mains lead and charge it to 100%. You can switch back to the previous power plan and the battery indicator should now be more accurate.

Paul Curtis, via email



# Readers' Helpdesk

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

# **HARDWARE**

# Which headset should I buy?

I would like a headset that includes a microphone for use with my Windows 8.1 PC. I'd like to be able to listen to audio on YouTube, iPlayer and the like, but also record voiceovers for the videos I put together.

Do I have the choice between a USB connection and those coloured sockets on the back of some PCs? I don't want to spend more than £30, so what do you recommend?

# Scooby, Web User Forums

I would have a look at Logitech headsets - the company produces good-quality products at reasonable prices. There are several in your price range (£14.99-£24.99), most of which use a 3.5mm jack. If you want a USB connection, you need the H340, which is at the higher end of that price range but is discounted on Amazon (bit.ly/log413).

Alternatively, you could look at the Microsoft LifeChat series of headsets. They are usually pretty good value for money and reasonable quality. The LX-3000, available from Amazon for less than £20 (bit.ly/life413), offers over-ear type headphones, which I prefer. I would recommend going for a USB headset if you can afford it, because the recording quality is usually better.

# ricky101 and TheTechGuy, Web User **Forums**



# **GENERAL PC**

# Why can't I install Movie Maker?

I have downloaded Windows Movie Maker for Windows 10, but I keep getting the error message "MSVR110.dll is missing, download program again". I have tried to download it several times without success. How do I get this file so that Windows Movie Maker will install properly?

# fossewayfella, Web User Forums

I've read that you need to install or reinstall Visual C++ Redistributable for Visual Studio 2012 Update 4 (bit.ly/ visualc413) for Windows Movie Maker to work in Windows 10. There's an update you can use instead, which you can find at bit.ly/update413.

You should find the Wondershare



Download Visual C++ to install Windows Live Essentials software on Windows 10 PCs

article at bit.ly/fixdll413 helpful. It explains what DLL files are and if you scroll down to 'Solving the Missing DLL files issue on Windows 10', it explains that you need to install Microsoft Visual Studio C++ in order to install any of the Windows Live Essentials packages. It's worth noting that Microsoft is removing the Windows Live Essentials download and stopping support from 10 January 2017, though the programs should continue to work.

Madeline, Web User Forums

# **GENERAL PC**

# Why can't I set VLC as my default music player?

I have tried to change my default Windows 10 music player to VLC by opening Settings, then choosing System, 'Default apps' and 'Music player'. However, whatever I do, it reverts to Groove Music. Can anyone suggest a way around this?

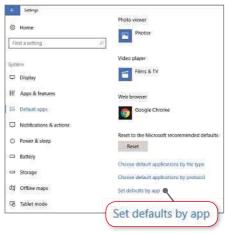
# Minnehaha, Web User Forums

The steps you are taking should work. Have you clicked 'Set defaults by app' at the bottom of the page to check that VLC is set as the default for all the file types and protocols it's compatible with?

Alternatively, you can click 'Choose default applications by file type' to check that VLC is set as the default for the file formats you want to play. One other check you can perform is to open Settings, Privacy and 'Background apps',

then scroll down to make sure that VLC can run in the background. Lastly, check that you've installed all Windows Updates that are currently available, in case one of them fixes the problem.

## **Helmut, Web User Forums**



Click 'Set defaults by app' to make VLC the default app for all its compatible file types





# Star Email

# Mug/

# Shame on Microsoft for its browser block

live in Australia and only received Issue 409 of Web User (bit.ly/ webuser409) today. I think your magazine is terrific and I look forward to receiving it each fortnight, although the postage is very unreliable.

I usually turn to your cover feature first and in Issue 409 I found, staring me in the face on page 42, the item "Microsoft Blocks Chrome 'For Children"! I have been battling with this browser-blocking problem for some time and, quite frankly, I am over it. I am not a child and I don't have children, so I find Microsoft's excuse - that other browsers don't have strong enough filters to "keep your children safe" - far from satisfactory.

to reverse this blocking? After all, I would think this is a matter of interest to fair trading and the competition watchdog. It's more than an overreaction by Microsoft - it is an outrage!

Despite my being reasonably

computer-literate, I couldn't find any way of getting to the 'whitelist' you mention, other than perhaps signing in as a child. I refuse to do that, so is there an alternative way to unblock browsers? I am desperate!

The only browser access I have at present is with Edge, which is very clunky. No wonder it is so unpopular. Even the Favourites are awful and have to be reopened every time you go into the browser. Microsoft should be ashamed of it rather than banning everything else.

Surely there is some hacker out there who could reverse this dreadful situation? I just want to get on with my research - and my life!

Lynnette Hammet, via email

# We want cheaper not faster - broadband

Regarding the recent correspondence in Web User about haggling with your ISP to get a better broadband deal - I called mine a few months back to haggle and the guy on the phone was rubbish, for

Can't someone order Microsoft

want of a better word.

He was quite focused on promoting different package features as he was trying to retain me as a customer, even offering me a higher price with a faster speed. These are textbook mistakes for working in retentions.

Speed wasn't a factor and paying more wasn't either. I wanted them to beat an offer from Vodafone, that's all. When I called again, I spoke with a lad who listened to what I wanted and got me a cheaper deal, without making me commit to more than 12 months.

Mouse, Web User Forums

# Online safety is really just common sense

I have read many letters and articles in Web User over the years regarding security, with people saying that we can't trust the internet to bank online or that we can't let our kids go online in their

bedrooms. The truth is that we have always had people trying to steal our money and prey on children. The internet is just a different way of carrying out these crimes.

In the old days, you would never go to a bank, withdraw £500 cash and then go outside and wave it around. You would put it away safely before you left the bank. You would never leave your passbook lying around for all to see.

If you got a call from someone asking you to nip down the high street withdraw a load of cash and then meet

them in the pub to hand it over, you would have told them where to go.

So it is really no different today - just use a bit of common sense and keep your personal info personal.

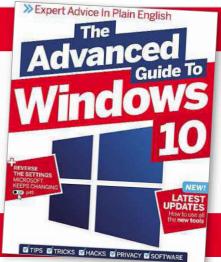
Lee, Belfast

# Clearing the fog of broadband misinformation

Regarding my Star Email in Issue 411 ('Fewer people means slower broadband', bit.ly/webuser411) and the accompanying photo. Calumny, vexatious impersonation! Although I do have

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a floppy hat, my hair is greying and my wife has an Apple laptop, I have not been as 'well built' as the man in the picture (see above) these past three years, nor would I be as sour-faced on attaining the exalted status of Star Email.

I do not know whether to throw a hissy fit at the desecration of my deathless prose or to don my shades and bask in the glare from your sub-editor's polishing efforts. However, I am pleased at the airing that you have given to the subject of poor broadband speeds in thinly populated areas. We will have to go through much protestation from the government, such as insisting that folk like me should throng to our public library (recently closed due to cuts), before the pressing need to appease voter dissatisfaction in 2020 forces the provision of a 10Mbps universal service.

Said dissatisfaction crucially depends on an understanding of the situation, which our masters are keen to deny us. using a lack of facts backed by a fog of misinformation. Not the least of which is playing on the urban voter's indifference to rural matters, hence the assurances that it is only villages that enjoy a slow service well-suited to their slow intellects. Knowledge is power and isn't that what Web User is all about?

Many thanks on both counts. Keep up the good work.

Rod Brown, Birkenhead

# The joy of entertainment at your fingertips

Martin Fletcher is a wet blanket who shouldn't be allowed near a computer, let alone your Inbox pages. If he's not moaning about perfectly good security programs ('Malwarebytes can go to hell', Issue 410), he's giving his tuppence worth about Brexit (Issue 411) and being rude to other readers in the process. My parents always told me "if you haven't got anything nice to say, don't say anything at all". Mr Fletcher would do well to take heed!

Regarding his latest comments. I'm sure that people are well aware that there are more important things to worry about in the world than Spotify and BBC iPlayer. However, in these dark times we need entertainment more than ever, and the convenience and variety of these services means there's always something new to listen to or watch. The fact that you don't have to pay to use them (other than the licence fee, of course) makes them even better. Personally, I am pleased that we no longer have to fork out £15 each time we want to buy a CD or DVD. Rather than seeing streaming services as a reflection of the mediocrity of modern life (as Mr Fletcher suggests), I regard them as among its biggest benefits - especially when we face price rises and cutbacks in many other areas of our lives.

So look on the bright side, and be thankful that we have these options available to us at our fingertips.

Emma Robson, via email



# Malwarebytes is marvellous

I agree with Fran Howlett, who defended Malwarebytes Anti-Malware in Issue 411. I have had IObit and Malwarebytes running in perfect harmony on my Windows 7 laptop for five years and I have never had any problems. Both are the free versions.

I just wanted to stress that readers can have, as I do, Avast, IObit and Malwarebytes all working together on their PC with no conflicts at all. However, from my experience, Avast and AVG don't like to be on the same laptop, and one will not install if the other is present.

Milan Bram, via email

# Unimpressed with Amazon's latest stores

I like Amazon and have been a customer for 14 years. I've never had any problems with returns, and I just got Prime again on special offer and bought the Fire TV box. So far, I am impressed with what it can do and I still have a lot to explore.

All that said, I am not impressed - at least not yet - with either Amazon Certified Refurbished (bit.ly/refurb410) or Amazon Global (bit.ly/global411), as featured in issues 410 and 411 of Web User. On the refurbished site, there are mainly untrustworthy Lenovo laptops and little else, apart from overpriced iPads. I say leave well alone, and stick to other trustworthy refurbished sites, such as Dell Outlet and a couple of the mobile phone companies.

As for Amazon Global - you'd be forgiven for seeing the prices and wondering what ancient gelt they are using. After a look around, it would appear that the prices are in rupees and most of the stuff is in the US. But it does not tell you this until you actually look at an item more closely or try to buy it.

I have attempted only one purchase at present. I thought I would renew my cotton T-shirts as I had thrown some old ones away. None of the three vendors

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









I tried post to Great Britain and I am not messing about looking to find one that does. If Amazon cannot be bothered to show who does what, then they can lose the business. I can buy from the UK easily enough but they did not have the styles and colours I wanted in my size.

It might get better, but once bitten twice shy. I may send them an email, but I may not bother. End of story.

Martin Fletcher, Thorpe Hesley



# Exploding phones soil Samsung's reputation

Lewis Karl Flood is right to accuse Samsung of complacency over its exploding Galaxy Note 7 phones ('What you say', Issue 411). This is not some two-bit company that has just emerged on the technology scene and is offering budget hardware to less-choosy consumers. No, this is an extremely successful multinational corporation that has been around for donkey's years and deliberately pitches its products at the higher end of the market.

If I pay £700 for a new phone, I expect to be able to use it without the device blowing up in my face, burning off my eyebrows, singeing what remains of my hair and choking my lungs with foul smoke. As Lewis Karl Flood says: Samsung knew about the exploding battery problems but ultimately chose profit over safety testing. Despite the proven dangers of the Galaxy Note 7 - and it's very lucky that nobody was seriously injured or even killed -Samsung shamefully put its customers at

> risk and its so-called apology was as mealy-mouthed as they come. Yet no doubt Samsung won't hesitate to launch another overpriced phone later this year, with no concessions for its (in my eyes) now-soiled reputation. Spencer Banks, via email

What you say...

# **HICH WEBSITE** DID YOU SPEND **MOST TIME** VISITING IN 2016?

Facebook, Web User Forums, eBay and Mount Everest The British Story (www.everest1953.co.uk).

Colin Wallace

That's easy: eBay - to buy loads of things I can't get locally.

Gerrit Max

The AnswerBank (www.theanswerbank .co.uk) because it's informative, fun, helpful and a good place for debate

Jenny Jacks @JenJacks3

YouTube. It's fantastic for learning. @ProfessorMesser - his channel is so educational (bit.ly/messer413). It's very useful for my studies.

Pablo @abertawejack

Probably Wikipedia, to check facts and sources.

Stephen Parry @StephenParry80

# **■ HICH GADGET DID YOU USE MOST IN 2016?**

My iPhone because it goes everywhere with me.

Steve Ellis @gb022621

I use an iPad the most, simply because it's easy to pick up and use.

K Manson @polar120

My smartphone - to plan journeys using Google Now.

Patricia Groom @TriciaGroom

My nearly five-year-old Windows 7 PC. Showing its age a bit, but still a capable machine.

Martin Phillp

# F YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE INTERNET IN 2017 WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Make it totally hack-proof. No spam, no malware, no viruses, no Trojans, no hacks. Bliss.

Gary Olsen @Gary\_Olsen

Stop websites asking me to complete a survey. Leave me alone.

Simon Mellor @Simon9Hops

I wish Facebook would allow you to open your private messages in its app again.

Chris Armstrong

Stop Government monitoring.

Adrian Evans

Nothing really. Once it starts changing, it won't be for the better. Davor Prcovich

That BT internet didn't keep lagging. Paul Emsley

# HICH OF THESE ARE YOU MOST LIKELY TO BUY IN 2017: A NEW PHONE, TABLET, **LAPTOP OR DESKTOP PC?**

A phone, because I like shiny new things and I'm due an upgrade next year. I might think about replacing my ageing netbook with a Chromebook, too.

Karl Robson

I'm buying a new laptop as mine expired in August. I had too much to fork out for before, which stopped me being able to afford a new one.

Phil Graham

My old Dell PC is six years old. I fancy a new - admittedly expensive - iMac with the fabulous 27" screen, to use for my photography.

Ian Phipps

None. It's PC components for me because I want to build a compact gaming home-theatre PC.

goldmaster @imthegoldmaster

# **A** Page 404

Barry Collins is angry that visitors to the UK get better mobile reception than we do

# Stop postponing national roaming

s a journalist, there are sentences you hope you'll never have to write, such as "Here, in my first column for the Daily Express" or "It turns out that Mr Hitler wasn't such a bad egg, after all". However, there are no words in my 20-year career that have left me as uncomfortable as the ones I'm about to write: I agree with Grant Shapps.

The Right Honourable Mr Shapps, should he have escaped your attention, is a Conservative MP who famously "over-firmly denied" having a second job and resigned from the Cabinet after a bullying scandal. Now, with a little more time on his hands, he's poked his nose into the state of Britain's telecoms and - much to everyone's surprise - has come out with some rather sensible recommendations.

Shapps' British Infrastructure Group (BIG for, erm, short) wants telecoms regulator Ofcom to impose something called national roaming. It rightly points out the lunacy of foreign visitors to the UK enjoying broader mobile coverage

than the people who have the misfortune to live here, because international roaming lets you hook onto any available network. An American visitor, for example, might be on EE in London, then travel down to a small Dorset village where only Vodafone is available, and their phone will automatically switch

British nationals, on the other hand, are stuck with the network they're contracted to. whether that network offers a signal in a particular area or not. There's no technical

to the new network.

reason why British users shouldn't be allowed to roam across networks, as our foreign visitors have proved. But the mobile networks get their £30 a month off you whether you can use your phone or not, so why should they go to the bother of setting up complex roaming arrangements? Who do you think you are? Paying customers?

Shapps - and the long list of MPs in his BIG tent - do at least appear to have the ear of Ofcom. BIG called for BT Openreach to be split off from the rest of BT earlier this year, something the regulator has since implemented. Now, the head of Ofcom has reportedly written to the four big mobile networks,

> warning them that people are dissatisfied with coverage and asking them to come up with a solution.

It has to be noted, there are

some downsides to national roaming. Calls and data connections can be dropped when you attempt to hop from one network to another, phone battery life can be shortened as the phone constantly hunts for signal, and if one network goes down, there is a chance other networks will be flooded by the influx of traffic.

Yet, speaking as someone who regularly has to wander into the garden to avoid my calls turning into a Norman Collier tribute act, I'd definitely welcome a shift to national roaming to deal with notspots. And if Three had to pay 50p to Vodafone every time I had to jump networks to get a signal, how long do you think it would take before they'd be round putting up a new mast? I'd give it about a fortnight.

In the meantime, a Lancashire-based company called Anywhere SIM (anywheresim.com) offers national roaming across all four of Britain's major networks. It basically works by pretending your phone is a foreigner's. Nobody tell the Daily Express, for Pete's sake...

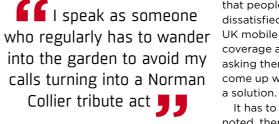




Illustration: Andrew



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