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Issue 433

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4 - 17 October 2017

/ Best software / New apps / Firefox extinguished

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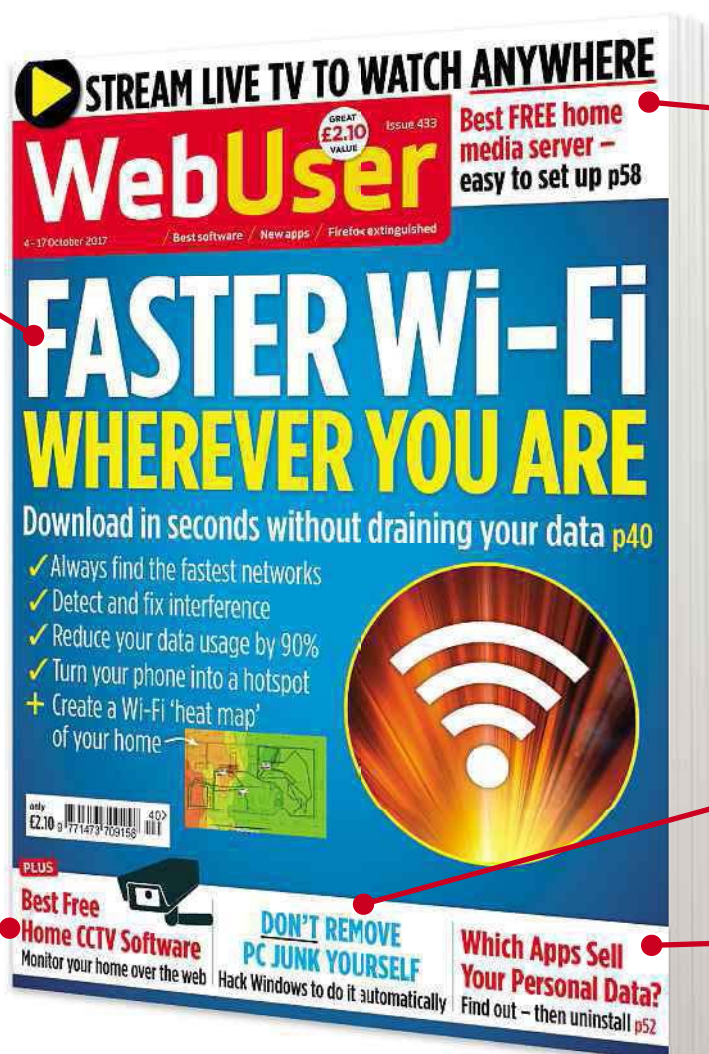
I'm always amused when people rename their Wi-Fi networks as something more interesting than the default of, say, SKY656G4 or BTHub3-4TRW. My favourite examples include: 'Tell My Wi-Fi Love Her', 'I'm Brian And So's My Wi-Fi' and 'Mum Use This One'. Still, it doesn't matter what you nickname your router if the thing ain't got that zing, which is why we've dedicated this issue's cover feature (page 40) to speeding up your Wi-Fi, both around your home and when you're on the move.

From creating a heat map of your house to preventing interference and reducing

your data usage when you connect via 3G, we've got all the tips you need to download and stream quickly and efficiently – wherever you are, and no matter what device you're using.

Also in this issue, we look at the curious case of the browser that seems determined to frustrate and annoy its already dwindling user base. Just what is going on with Firefox? We explain all on page 48.

Robert Irvine, Editor
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
[#webuser](#)



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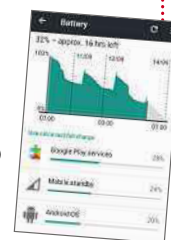
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Get the best download and streaming
speeds at home and on the move



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What's New Online

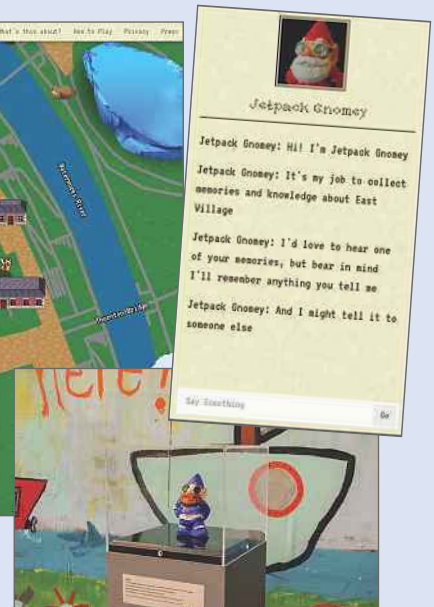
Interact with the Physical Web

Tales of the Park is an interactive map showing the location of 15 3D-printed creatures dotted around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London, including bats, otters and bees. There's a clever twist if you visit in person, because if you follow the site's instructions to set up the Physical Web on your phone, you can engage with the creatures as you get near them.

The Physical Web is a Google project that uses Bluetooth to extend the web to everyday objects. Each creature contains a low-energy Bluetooth beacon that broadcasts its presence and sends your phone a notification when you wander past, inviting you to chat. The creatures use chatbots to hold conversations and the map tells you what they like to discuss. Moonlight the Bat, for instance, will talk about the history of the Olympic Park while Super Gnome will discuss new buildings in the area.



Even if you can't get to the Park, the map is a fun way to see its layout, including the striking 114.5m-tall ArcelorMittal Orbit sculpture and the 80,000-capacity London Stadium. It's a great way to explore the Physical Web and see how objects can be



connected to the internet.

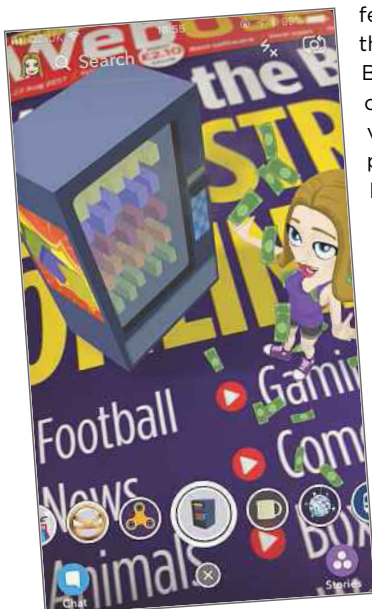
We look at the Physical Web in more detail in next issue's FAQ.

<https://talesofthepark.com>

Project a 3D animation of yourself in Snapchat

www.snapchat.com

If you've created a Bitmoji avatar in Snapchat, you can now project it into the real world using a new augmented-reality feature. Take your snap and tap the screen to see a variety of Bitmoji World Lenses. Selecting one creates a 3D animated version of whatever your phone's camera is capturing, letting you record and share the result with friends. There are different actions your avatar can perform, such as using a vending machine or a fidget spinner, drinking coffee, dancing and waiting for a bus. If you don't have a Bitmoji, tap the logo in the top-left corner, select Create Bitmoji and download the Bitmoji app. Once you've created your likeness, you can link it to your Snapchat account.



Listen to an 'immersive 3D audio' BBC drama

bit.ly/mermaids433

The BBC has created a new interactive 'object-based' radio drama called The Mermaid's Tears, recorded in immersive 3D audio. Created by the Beeb's Research & Development team, the series lets you tune into the perspectives of three different characters. How you interpret what is really happening is influenced by which character you choose, as the evolving story is observed from their point of view, conversations and internal monologues. To get the most from the audio enhancements, you can choose to listen in stereo, surround-sound or with binaural audio on headphones. You can also rate the project and share it, and check out previous audio experiments.

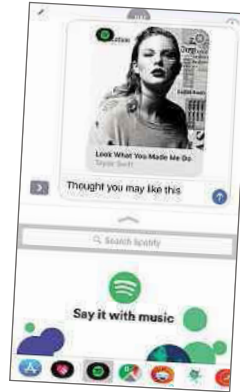


We pick the 10 best things you must do on the web this fortnight

Share Spotify tracks via iMessage

bit.ly/imessage433

With the latest version of Spotify on your iOS device, you can share 30-second snippets of songs directly from the music service's library. In iOS 11, open iMessage, scroll the bottom icons to More, select Edit and move the slider next to Spotify. Now, when you write a message, you can select Spotify and search for songs then send them to a friend.



View weather in real time

bit.ly/balloon433

After rapidly cycling through a number of cities, Balloon.Earth selects a location and lets you see a visual interpretation of the weather as it is right now. It works by blending



real-time weather data with 3D map renderings – so if it is raining, you get to see the

intensity of the drops overlaid on a map of the city; and if it's sunny, buildings are drenched in warm light. Clicking the globe icon in the bottom-right corner takes you elsewhere, while selecting the paper aeroplane icon lets you share on social media. You can switch between Celsius and Fahrenheit, and make use of the Balloon.Earth Chrome extension, too.

Click contact info links in Gmail

mail.google.com

One problem with using Gmail on the web or in its app is that it doesn't convert phone numbers, email addresses and street addresses into hyperlinks, so you need to cut and paste this information into messages. Happily, this problem has now been resolved. Open an email today and you'll see links on numbers and addresses which, when clicked, open default dialers, maps or windows for writing new emails. Gmail has also addressed another irritation by letting you edit your password and profile information, and your privacy and security settings, via the Android app, as well as its desktop version.



Convert a photo of your face into 3D

bit.ly/3dface433

Want to bring your selfies to life? Upload a front-facing image of yourself (or a photo of someone else) and this online tool will use artificial intelligence to create an uncannily accurate 3D model of your face. You can then drag the model around with your mouse, view it from various angles, share it on social media and download it as a Wavefront OBJ file.



5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER



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

Former Smiths frontman Morrissey has got Twitter in a tizz

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

Hilarious snaps showing the worst of Scottish home cooking

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

See examples of a film's name being spoken aloud in the movie

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

Get the latest updates from the security company about its CCleaner blunder

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

With winter approaching, cheer yourself up by following the Sun



See where bands toured

bit.ly/globe433

Type a music artist's name into this 3D Music Globe to see a visualisation of their touring history. The higher the bar, the more times they played that location (though we're pretty sure the Rolling Stones have played London more than 11 times). You can also view upcoming concerts.

Find popular articles on Twitter

www.twitter.com

Twitter has introduced a Popular Articles section on the Explore tab. Scroll down to find it and discover the articles that people in your network are engaging with, and how many of your contacts have tweeted about it.

View North Korea's missile tests

bit.ly/nkorea433

As Kim Jong-un continues to spark worldwide unrest, this highly visual, interactive and descriptive map lets you see every missile test carried out by the nation since 1984.

CCleaner update infects millions of users with malware

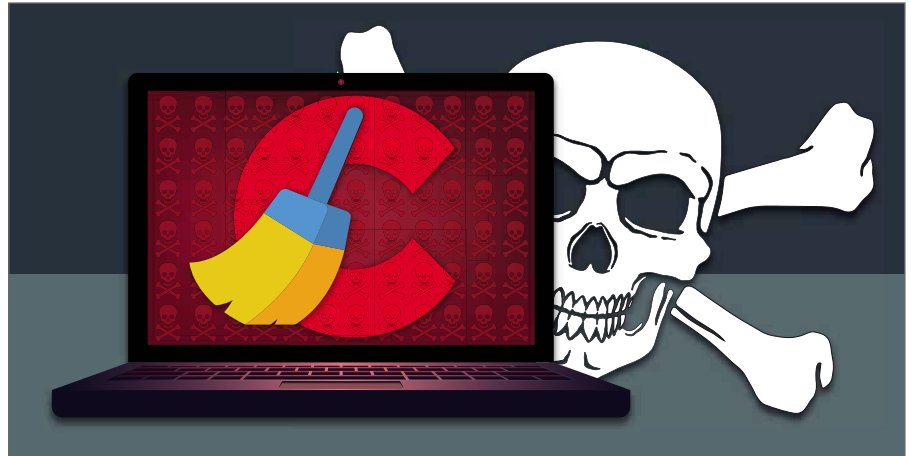
What happened?

Malware hidden in the clean-up tool CCleaner was discovered to be targeting tech giants including Microsoft, Google and Samsung. The malware was spotted by security firms Avast and Cisco, who noticed malicious code hiding in updates to CCleaner, the popular free program that helps boost your system's performance by clearing unwanted junk from your PC.

The dodgy code infected 2.3 million computers and could have been used to take control of those machines, stealing and leaking details such as IP addresses and network details. Although that sounds serious, antivirus company Avast – which now owns Piriform, the developer of CCleaner – said there was no need to worry because the criminals behind the malware didn't appear to be exploiting the infections before the problem was spotted and cleaned up.

Subsequent investigations revealed that the attack wasn't targeting CCleaner users but specific technology firms. Although millions of computers were infected, the hackers were only after a few dozen machines, in particular systems located at companies including Google, Microsoft, Samsung and Sony, as well as Cisco, one of the firms that first spotted the attack.

The hackers used the malicious code hiding in CCleaner to install backdoors in at least 20 computers. Backdoors allow hackers to sneak into networks, where they can install more malware to steal key data. It's not clear how successful the hackers have been in



targeting the companies, or if other organisations were also attacked.

Security experts suggested that the sophistication of the attack meant the criminals behind it were serious and could be working at state level – maybe spies looking to nab intellectual property or other engineering secrets from the target companies.

How will it affect you?

If you use CCleaner, make sure you're running the most recent version, which has been updated to fix the attack. The risk only affected those using a specific version of CCleaner installed on a 32-bit machine between the middle of August and the middle of September, which comprises about 3% of its user base.

Some security experts have warned that anyone who ran the infected version of CCleaner should take extra steps to safeguard their systems, because the infection's sophisticated two-step nature could mean your PC still has malware lurking, waiting to strike. If that's the case, you may need to back up your data and reformat your hard drive. Check Piriform's blog (www.piriform.com/blog) to see any fresh information the company uncovers about the attack, in case further security measures are recommended.

However, it's big companies with valuable intellectual property that were

the target, not individuals, so most of us have nothing to fear from the attack.

What do we think?

This is a particularly scary attack because CCleaner is legitimate software, and keeping it up to date is recommended security advice. Using the product to remove unwanted data from your PC is a wise move for performance and security – more code means more chance to be hacked – and it's always a good idea to keep your programs updated.

In this case, that advice would have left you at the mercy of unknown hackers. CCleaner is a trusted program, so sneaking in malware via an update is an ingenious and devious attack. We often advise against installing software and apps of unknown or questionable origin, but wouldn't hesitate to recommend CCleaner. It's even owned by an antivirus firm, Avast, which makes it feel all the more trustworthy.

In fact, there's very little the average user can do to avoid this type of attack. We need to be able to trust software developers to keep us safe, but this incident shows that's not always possible. The usual advice of installing only from trusted sources and keeping software up to date still applies, but it won't stop all attacks – there's no way to guarantee 100% safety online.



Check the Piriform blog for the latest CCleaner security updates and advice

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

Google pays \$1bn for slice of HTC

What happened?

Google has once again stepped into the smartphone hardware market, picking up a \$1bn share of troubled phone manufacturer HTC. The Android developer is picking up half of HTC's R&D (research and development) team and getting a non-exclusive licence to some of its hardware ideas in the form of intellectual property.

It's not the first hardware purchase by Google. It bought Motorola in 2011, before selling it three years later to Lenovo.

How will it affect you?

If you're a fan of HTC phones, you should consider Google's investment as good news: the Taiwanese hardware manufacturer has been struggling to compete in a competitive market and the \$1bn cash injection will give it another chance to keep its phones in the shops.

Google's influence at the company could also lead to more handsets running so-called 'vanilla Android',

a clean version of the mobile operating system without the extras frequently loaded by manufacturers, such as apps that won't uninstall and branded interface and design tweaks.

If you're keen to avoid such additions, your only option right now is to buy a Google Pixel phone, which – at £599 for the base model – is far from cheap. HTC makes the current version of the Pixel, so hopefully this partnership will lead to a budget version.

What do we think?

This is a sensible move by HTC, which once sold 10% of smartphones worldwide but is now lucky to shift one in a hundred. The extra cash from Google and the ensuing R&D support will hopefully help the brand recover and could lead to more phones from Google itself or devices from HTC offering handsets without any extra software and apps overlaid on Android. Both would be welcome additions to the Android smartphone market.



Government attacks WhatsApp security

What happened?

The government has reportedly accused WhatsApp of creating a "black hole" in security intelligence by refusing to give it access to people's encrypted messages. Sky News quoted an anonymous security source, who claimed that terrorists are "frequent users" of encrypted apps because they know no one can read their messages.

"It is crucially important that we can access their communications – and when we can't, it can provide a black hole for investigators," the source added. Other communication platforms such as iMessage and Telegram also protect their users' messages via encryption and do not allow the government access to the information.

The news comes after Theresa May stressed that technology companies should do more to help the government identify security threats, following the bucket-bomb attack at Parsons Green Tube station.

How will it affect you?

WhatsApp encrypts the content of your messages but it still allows the authorities to see other data such as your account name, when the account was created, the last



known IP address used to access the service and the email address associated with your account. This suggests that it isn't completely watertight for private communications – especially if you're engaging in illegal activities.

But WhatsApp has made it clear it wants to protect its users, and this means messages must stay encrypted and hidden from authorities, just as they are kept safe from criminals.

What do we think?

Encryption remains a thorny issue – nobody wants terrorists and other criminals to have a safe haven where they can evade the authorities. Yet law-abiding individuals have a right to privacy.

WhatsApp itself says: "We carefully review, validate, and respond to law enforcement requests based on applicable law and policy, and we prioritise responses to emergency requests." Forcing the service to stop encrypting messages will only entice criminals to use lesser known and less cooperative tools.

Uber apologises after London ban

What happened?

The chief executive of Uber, Dara Khosrowshahi, said he was sorry for the “mistakes we’ve made” after the taxi-hailing firm lost its London licence. Uber’s reign in the capital looks to be over, after Transport for London (TfL) refused to renew the ride-sharing service’s licence. TfL said it concluded that Uber “is not fit and proper to hold a private hire operator licence”.

In a statement posted on Twitter, TfL said that Uber’s approach and conduct “demonstrate a lack of corporate responsibility”, and lists four points, including Uber’s failure to report serious criminal offences, its approach to medical certificates and its approach to how Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are obtained.

The news came as a huge blow to Uber, which has been beset by problems over recent months, though the decision by a major city to strip Uber of its licence marks a new low point for the company.

Uber responded by saying it will “immediately challenge” TfL’s decision in the courts, but accepts it “must change”. Mr Khosrowshahi said: “While Uber has revolutionised the way people move in cities around the world, it’s equally true that we’ve got things wrong along the way. On behalf of everyone at Uber globally, I apologise for the mistakes we’ve made.”



How will it affect you?

If you’re a regular Uber passenger, you may be dismayed by TfL’s decision: more than 3.5 million people who live and work in London use the service to travel, primarily because it’s cheaper and more convenient than hiring a black cab. Indeed, at the time of writing, more than 750,000 people had signed a petition to restore the firm’s licence.

Uber also has more than 40,000 drivers in London, who will now be deprived of regular income, although the company refused to grant them workers’ rights until forced to by a tribunal panel. It’s possible that Uber

cars could remain on the roads while the appeal goes through the courts.

What do we think?

This was a surprise decision by TfL, but an understandable one: Uber repeatedly avoided taking responsibility for the criminal conduct of some of its drivers, its lax security checks and its disregard towards its workers, passengers and rivals. However, there’s a strong chance that the ruling will be overturned, as it was in Italy in July, if Uber agrees to compromise and improve its business practices – especially given the level of public support for the company.



FIRST LOOK

Fitbit Ionic

www.fitbit.com/uk/ionic

Fitbit’s Ionic is the company’s first stab at a proper smartwatch. No stranger to wearables, its previous devices such as the Fitbit Blaze have all been more akin to fitness trackers than smartwatches.

As with previous Fitbit devices, the Ionic’s main module can be attached to a range of different straps. It comes with an impressive feature list including built-in Wi-Fi, GPS, NFC for contactless payments and Bluetooth for connecting to other devices.

Its new SpO2 monitor, which tracks blood oxygen levels, is another standout feature, alerting users to sleep apnea as well as offering more advanced insights into your workout.

Like the more expensive Fitbit fitness trackers, the Ionic also offers constant heart-rate monitoring.

The Ionic provides 2.5GB of onboard storage – enough space for roughly 300 songs – and it’ll run for an impressive 10 hours (with GPS enabled and music playing) from a single charge. If you use the watch sparingly, you can expect it to last up to four days.

Rather than running on Android Wear, Fitbit has opted to use its own operating system, Fitbit OS, and it’s a sleek and speedy experience – at least, at first glance. There aren’t yet loads of apps but Fitbit has promised that more will become available

soon, including ones from the likes of Starbucks and AccuWeather.

Overall, we were impressed with the Ionic. The only drawback is the price, which at £300 is fairly steep – more than Huawei’s excellent Watch 2, which also offers cellular connectivity.

It’s similarly priced to the Samsung Gear S3 and Apple Watch 2, but you can’t help feeling Fitbit missed a trick by failing to undercut the competition. However, if you like the look of the Ionic, it may be worth waiting a few months to see if its price drops and for more apps to become available.





WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Will Facebook track us on the high street?

Most Facebook users know about how the social network's targeted advertising works – you look in an online store for a certain item and, minutes later, an advert for that very product pops up on your screen.

Now it's rumoured that Facebook plans to start tracking the shops you visit in real life, too. Facebook has brought in new tools for advertisers that tell businesses whether you've been to one of their high-street shops – if you share your location services with the app, that is.

Some of the companies already involved in this scheme include US department store Macy's and fast-food chain KFC. "We recently partnered with Facebook to activate their offline conversions solution to drive in-store sales," said Tessa Kavanaugh, director of social and emerging platforms at Macy's. "We are encouraged by the positive results we saw in-store and are excited to continue testing Facebook's



offline suite to fuel our growth."

Facebook is not the first tech firm to track its customers' whereabouts in this way. Google's Store Sales Measurement scheme lets the tech giant track customers' credit-card transactions – both online and in 'brick-and-mortar' shops. However, a leading privacy rights group is calling on the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to investigate Google, alleging the company is trying to bind people's online behaviour to offline shopping habits.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



We certainly wouldn't put it past poor, cash-strapped Facebook (projected turnover for 2017: \$36bn) to expand its advertising business to the high street. Fortunately, you'll

be able to block offline tracking by turning off location sharing, but this will also prevent you from 'checking in' to places and letting friends know where you are. It seems there's no escape from the ubiquitous social network.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Drim Drum

bit.ly/drim433 | From £45

Sitting in front of a screen all day, whether it's your PC, phone or TV, can lead to back pain and leg cramps, so why not improve your posture with a Drim Drum? Created by a physiotherapist, this exercise device loosens your lower back muscles and strengthens your spine, and it "only takes two minutes a day to feel the difference!". Available in two colours and sizes, so you can choose the correct one for your weight, Drim Drum also comes with a how-to training video to guide you through 10 back exercises. The project has already raised £4,000 of its £14,000 goal. Funding closes on 20 October.



WEBOMETER



WE LIKE...



BBC introduces archive TV service

Launched as we went to press, the new 'From the Archive' section on BBC iPlayer gives you access to more than 450 classic BBC series – including David Attenborough documentaries – at no additional cost to the licence fee.



Samsung's foldable phone to arrive in 2018

The Samsung SM-G888N0 – a smartphone that the company has described as "foldable" – has reportedly been certified for release in South Korea. The groundbreaking device has been dubbed the 'Samsung Galaxy X' by fans.



WE DON'T LIKE...



iOS 11 drains battery life

Security firm Wandera tested the battery life of "moderate to heavy iPhone and iPad users" on both iOS 10 and iOS 11 over three days and found that, in some cases, the battery life for iOS 11 users was only half that of iOS 10.



Deloitte hit by cyber attack

Following an attack which exposed millions of Equifax customers' details, accounting firm Deloitte was similarly targeted by a sophisticated hack, exposing the confidential emails and financial plans of Deloitte's customers.



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Equifax sends customers to fake site

Following the announcement that its systems had been hacked, credit-monitoring firm Equifax's woes continued with reports that it was inadvertently sending customers to a fake site. Equifax set up a website, www.equifaxsecurity2017.com, as a hub for concerned customers looking for help and advice. However, security experts criticised the site for looking like something a scammer would set up and said Equifax should have hosted the hub on its own equifax.com site. To prove the point, security researcher Nick Sweeting set up an almost identical-looking fake site at securityequifax2017.com.

Equifax's official Twitter account then began directing people to the fake site by mistake. The tweets were sent sporadically over a two-week



deleted while others remained. bit.ly/equifax433

Malicious plugin infects WordPress sites

Hackers used a WordPress plugin to install backdoors on up to 200,000 websites, allowing spam to be uploaded to them. According to research carried out by IT security firm WordFence, the plugin, known as Display Widgets, should be removed immediately by website owners. The firm said that the plugin's last three releases have contained code that allows the author to publish content on an affected site.

"The authors of this plugin have been

period, along with tweets referencing the correct site. When Sweeting tweeted the company's error, the linked tweet was

using the backdoor to publish spam content to sites running their plugin. During the past three months the plugin has been removed and readmitted to the WordPress.org plugin repository a total of four times," said Mark Maunders, CEO of WordFence.

Maunder said that Display Widgets was originally developed by its author as an open-source plugin, but was then sold to others on 21 June. The widget was removed permanently on 8 September, and Maunders said that people in the WordPress community should not "start any witch hunts". "Occasionally plugins change ownership and very rarely, that doesn't go well. That appears to be what happened in this case," he said.

bit.ly/wordpress433



Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Marty P Kamden, CMO
of NordVPN
(www.nordvpn.com)



Q Will a VPN keep me completely private and anonymous online?
Richard Gould, Facebook

A A VPN encrypts your internet traffic and sends it via a secure tunnel between your computer and the VPN server. No one can access the data that passes through this

tunnel and it's invisible to everyone, including ISPs, government snoopers, identity thieves and hackers.

However, there are still misconceptions about VPNs and how they can be useful to an average internet user. Here are three to consider:

1 Whatever they claim, all VPNs log user traffic

Some VPN providers don't have a choice because the country in which they operate may legally require them to log their users' internet activity. And when user information is logged, it can easily be shared with the government and other third parties.

However, if a VPN operates from a country where traffic

“Paid-for VPNs are safer, and offer faster speeds and other advantages”

logs are not required by law, it will delete user activity after each session and there are no obstacles to stop it running a log-less service.

2 Free VPNs offer the same level of protection

A VPN provider offering a free service still has to earn money to pay for expensive server maintenance and other overheads, such as staff salaries. Most often, it will do this by selling user data. For this reason alone, paid-for VPNs are safer. They usually offer faster speeds and other advantages, too.

3 VPNs slow down internet traffic

A VPN can sometimes slow down the internet. If the slowdown is noticeable, the VPN may be experiencing temporary technical problems, but if it's always slow, you may need to switch to another provider. Paid-for VPNs usually offer a wider selection of servers to connect to – so when one is heavily loaded and slow, it's easy to connect to another one. Connecting to a server that's closer geographically may solve the speed problem.



Ultra Wide-Color

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UltraWideColor



CurvedDisplay



4K Ultra HD UltraClear 4K Ultra HD

40" 4K curved display
(BDM4037U)

MISCO
A Systemax Business

ebuyer.com

amazon.co.uk

BT Business Direct

PHILIPS

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

PHOTOGRAPHY

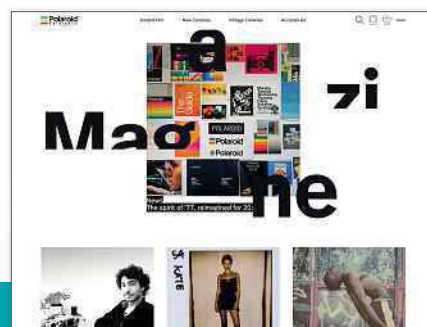
NEW

Polaroid Originals

uk.polaroidoriginals.com

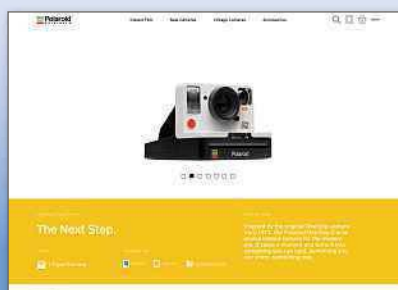
Polaroid stopped making instant-film cameras a decade ago but a deal struck in May has led to the name and concept being resurrected. The result is a new camera called the OneStep 2 that's a modern take on the iconic snapper of the Seventies and this site has the full lowdown. Using vivid images, it gives an impressively close-up look at the product and lets you view (and buy) a range of vintage cameras that have been brought back to life by refurbishers. You can also view great-looking photographs shot by users with the various cameras and read a collection of articles. It's sure to give you instant gratification.

Our rating



MAGAZINE

Browse the fun magazine featuring articles about Polaroid's cultural impact and examples of photos



EXPLORE CAMERA

Zoom into the camera and view it from different angles as you discover more about the product



INSTRUCTIONS

How To Fix A Toilet

how-to-fix-a-toilet.com

Have you ever asked Google how to boil an egg, make money, put on a tie or fix a toilet? If not, then you're probably in the minority. This fun interactive essay, created by a visual-data journalist in collaboration with Google's New Lab, shows the number of times such requests are made. By typing in a country and scrolling down, you can hover over the various "how tos" and see how often people searched for them. You can also click through to the Google results or simply enjoy the readable commentary and trending patterns. It's a fascinating insight with some wry observations and entertaining animations, though you are rather forced to read from beginning to end.

Our rating



ART

Where Are The Poppies Now?

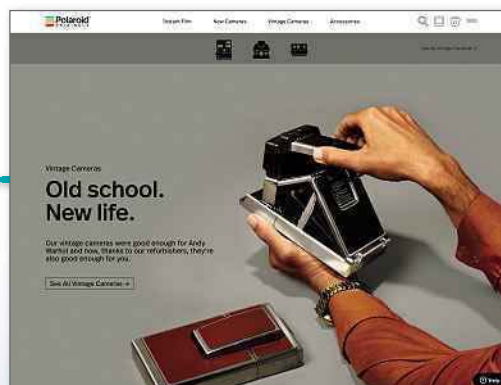
www.wherethepoppiesnow.org.uk

Back in 2014, to mark the centenary of the start of World War One, 888,246 ceramic poppies were installed at the Tower of London, one for each British and colonial life lost during the conflict. Most of the poppies were later bought by the public and this site marks where they ended up. Purchasers can sign up and "plant" their poppy on a map, then add their story. It also has details of the locations of two more poppy sculptures, currently touring the UK.

Our rating

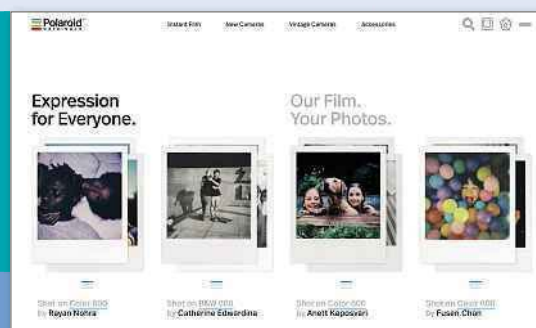


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



VINTAGE CAMERAS
Check out dozens of old Polaroid models and read about their history and capabilities

USER PHOTOS
Keep scrolling and click to see Polaroid shots taken by users of the various cameras



RELAUNCH

PRINTER INK

Cartridge Monkey

www.cartridgemonkey.com

The price of ink cartridges is absolutely bananas, so it makes sense to find retailers that let you print for less. Cartridge Monkey's improved search engine and streamlined options make it easier to locate the places offering the best prices. We like the new quick-order panel that ensures you can manage your order as you build it, and we love being able to quickly place re-orders when you return. The new responsive design works well, while the ability to save your printer, take part in the free recycling scheme, consult the live help facility and read the email newsletter are all welcome features.

Our rating



NEW

GALLERY

Wonders of the Peak

www.pocketwonders.co.uk

Created by the Buxton Museum and Art Gallery to showcase nearly 200 artefacts related to the Peak District, this lovingly curated online collection splits its "wonders" into 10 themes including archeology, art, architecture, geology and local memories. You can search by text and location, saving results to your My Wonders page, and enjoy the mix of images and audio. There's even a Pocket Wonders mobile app that lets you put together a personalised trail that you can follow. A list of contents within each theme and a less blog-like approach would win an extra star from us.

Our rating



NEW

ALLERGIES

Allergy Travels

allergytravels.com

If you have a food allergy and worry about triggering it when you are eating out while abroad, then this website may prove invaluable. The idea is that visitors can leave tips about dealing with allergies in specific countries while saying which airlines best cater for specific needs. At this early stage, the site is still finding its feet – most of the current reviews feel too general and the pages lack a refined structure, making it harder to find specific information. Thankfully, related articles from the web and travel tips written in-house help bridge the gap.

Our rating



BACK ISSUES DISC 2016



Our **2016 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year is now on sale from Amazon

For more information, visit bit.ly/wudisc16 or search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon

You can still buy our **2015 Back Issues Disc** from bit.ly/wudisc15





TECHNOLOGY

Team Knowhow

www.teamknowhow.com

As well as selling electrical items and phones, the retail group of Currys PC World and Carphone Warehouse is intent on boosting its technology support. Team Knowhow has been rolled out to more than 1,000 stores and this site lets you book a repair. Its step-by-step process is intuitive: choose the kit and see the price. You can only book by phone, although you can track repairs on the site and get a sense of what they involve. More impressive are the free kit guides looking at setting up gadgets, cleaning them and other tips. There's also info on support plans, trade-ins and insurance, all wrapped in a cheery design.

Our rating



HOTELS

Hallmark Hotels

www.hallmarkhotels.co.uk

There are 28 Hallmark Hotels and you can now easily book yourself in at any one of them thanks to the company's relaunched website. Choose between a room, spa break, golf break or wedding before opening a full-screen window and selecting a hotel, entering your dates and fine-tuning other details. The site's designers have gone for a less-is-more approach, with a clear map and news about the hotels making up most of the rest of the homepage. The blog has been dropped but there are foodie guides, reviews and special offers to peruse. You can also get special deals by signing up to the newsletter.

Our rating



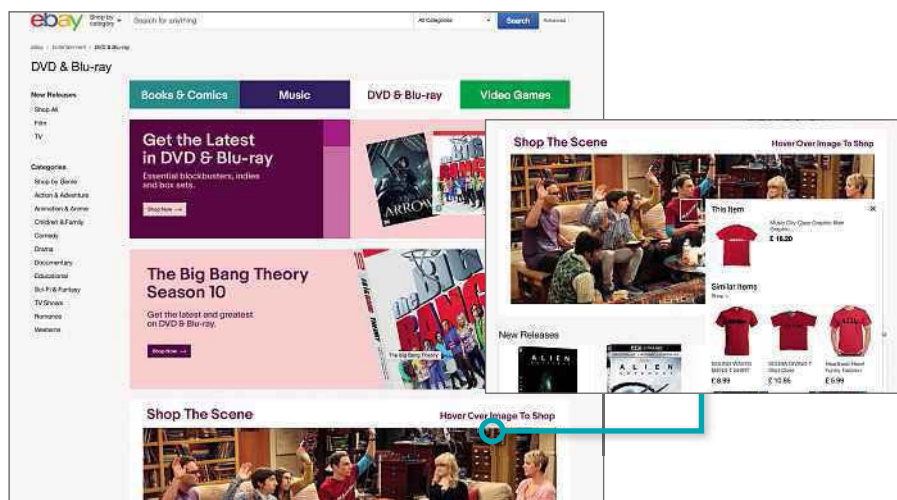
FILM

Screen Daily

www.screendaily.com

Screen International's delightful revamped website is sure to reel in large numbers of film fans. The responsive design works well on mobile devices and the site now benefits from streamlined navigation, larger images and better integration with social media. It continues to serve up an insightful diet of well-written news, film reviews and features while giving the lowdown on festivals, box office figures and awards, as well as the latest from the small screen in the TV section. Annoyingly, there's a hefty charge for full access to the archive and extra content, but there's more than enough free stuff to satisfy most people.

Our rating



RETAIL

eBay Entertainment & Media

bit.ly/ebay433

The first item sold on eBay in the UK, back in 1999, was a CD by German rock band Scorpions. Now it seems that eBay wants to sell more of them – CDs, that is – along with books, comics, movies and games. This newly designed section highlights items of interest, such as the new Foo Fighters album, and includes specific item categories including vinyl, fiction, DVDs and specific consoles. Clicking a category narrows down results, with some sections including items put together (or 'curated') by eBay. In each case, new releases are highlighted. There's a clever "shop the scene" feature under DVDs, too, letting you buy items that appear in images from a TV show or film.

Our rating



SPORT

GreeneKing IPA Championship

www.championshiprugby.co.uk

Fans of English rugby will surely want to tackle this new offering – the first time the RFU Championship (rugby's second tier) has had its own website. Its key selling point is the live streaming of up to 10 games this season, along with preview videos. There's also news, fixtures, results, the league table and info about the competing clubs. Each section is accessed via the main menu, which can feel quite clumsy, especially on a desktop, and the need to adapt to mobile devices has made the design rather spartan but, on the plus side, the site puts content first and is frequently updated.

Our rating



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

WYSIWYG Web Builder updated

Online web-building tools and content-management systems are all the rage, but some people prefer a reliable offline tool that lets you design your site in WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) software, then upload the finished project to your webspace. WYSIWYG Web Builder (www.wysiwygwebbuilder.com) is perfect for the job and



it's just launched version 12, which introduces a new block-level design tool that lets you create great looking vertically scrolling

sites from predefined sections. You can try before you buy for 30 days, after which you can buy the software for a one-off fee of \$49.95 (around £37).

Roll back your website

Tsohost (www.tsohost.com) has added a new backup tool to its security arsenal, designed to help restore your site if disaster strikes and you lose everything. It's called File Rollback and you'll find it in the Basic Management section of your Cloud control panel. The tool lets you restore some or all of your files from a selection of previously saved options.

Deal of the Fortnight

Namecheap (www.namecheap.com) is offering a price of 48 cents per year (around 35p) for certain domain names including 'trade', 'cricket' and 'review'.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:

Paul Nesbitt, Director,
PAC Web Hosting
(www.pacwebhosting.co.uk)



Q I've had an email from a company offering to carry out free SEO (search-engine optimisation) work on my website. Can I trust it? What's the worst thing that could happen?

Ray Fielding, via email

A Do some research and look for reviews of the company's service. SEO takes time to show results and a company offering free services will be eager to prove its effectiveness in the hope that you'll sign up to its paid-for plans. The problem with SEO results that happen quickly is they are often the result of actions that attempt to circumvent Google's search algorithms. When these are detected, the worst thing that could happen is that you drop out of search results altogether!



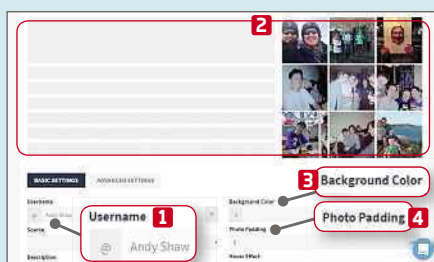
MINI WORKSHOP | Publish social-media content on your website

SnapWidget: snapwidget.com | 10 mins | Any website

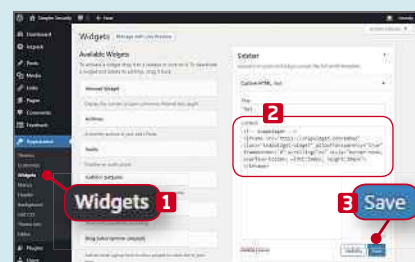
Keeping your website updated can be a chore but if you also document your hobby on a social network, you can use its feed to add content and keep your site looking fresh



1 Sign up and log into SnapWidget. Click the All button **1** to see the available options, then the Free button **2** to filter out anything that will cost money. Options for Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide different ways to create arrangements of photos. Choose one and click its 'Create a new widget' link. **3**



2 Click the Username box **1** and sign into your social-media account. A preview of the widget appears containing your photos. **2** You can change various other settings, such as the background colour (if you want it to better match your website) **3** and the number of pixels between each photo. **4** Scroll down and click the Get Widget button.



3 The Widget Code Snippet appears. Click the 'Copy to clipboard' button to copy the code for pasting into your site. For example, if you're running a WordPress site, go to its Dashboard and click Appearance, Widgets, **1** then drag Custom HTML into the Sidebar box. Paste the code into the Content box **2** and click Save. **3**

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"Serif has put a ton of features into this mobile application, and it looks rather impressive." – **Imaging Resource**

"The iPad Pro made it impressively easy to achieve great results with Affinity Photo" – **Stuff**



Download on the
App Store

Editors' Choice

Also available on Mac and Windows. | No subscription.



What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX**NETFLIX ORIGINAL**
MINDHUNTER

Mindhunter

From 13 October

Netflix just can't stop churning out original series. The trailer for its new crime series *Mindhunter* – which boasts David Fincher and Charlize Theron among its executive producers – was released back in March, and we now know that it'll be premiering from Friday 13 October (a second season has already been confirmed).

This 10-episode series is based on the 1995 true-crime memoir *Mind Hunter: Inside The FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit* by John Douglas and Mark Olshaker. The book chronicles an array of gruesome serial-killer cases from the 25-year FBI career of Douglas, who was the inspiration for Scott Glenn's Jack Crawford in *The Silence Of The Lambs*.

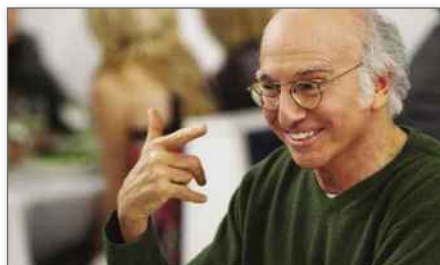
In *Mindhunter*, the Douglas character becomes FBI Behavior Science Unit agent Holden Ford, played by Jonathan Groff, who was previously in *Glee* and *Looking*. He's paired with Anna Torv, who's best known for starring in Fox's celebrated sci-fi crime series *Fringe* and a mystery thriller series in her native Australia called *Secret City*. The duo are joined by veteran actors Holt McCallany, who appeared in key Fincher films including *Fight Club* and *Alien 3*, and Cotter Smith, currently seen in FX's *The Americans*.

**MINDHUNTER****NETFLIX**
A NETFLIX ORIGINAL SERIES

New season of Curb Your Enthusiasm

From 2 October

Seinfeld creator Larry David returns to our TV screens (after a six-year hiatus) when Season 9 of *Curb Your Enthusiasm* premieres on Sky Atlantic on 2 October. NOW TV Entertainment pass holders can stream Seasons 1-8 of the comedy series (until 14 December), so we hope they'll also be able to watch the new shows once they've been broadcast. Most of the series' long-standing characters, including Cheryl, Susie, Jeff, Richard Lewis and Marty Funkhauser, are expected to return, along with guest appearances from the likes of Jimmy Kimmel, Judge Judy and Bryan Cranston (*Breaking Bad*).



Watch Black Lake

Until 16 October

A group of young friends embark on what seems at first to be the perfect holiday, taking over a neglected ski



resort to enjoy exclusive use of the scenic slopes. However, they're soon haunted by a series of disturbing events, which reveal exactly why the place was abandoned so many years before. The script of this eight-part BBC4 Swedish thriller jumps between Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, so there are subtitles to translate. The BBC warns that it contains adult themes, so it's probably not one to watch with all the family!



Watch NWA biopic Straight Outta Compton

From 15 September

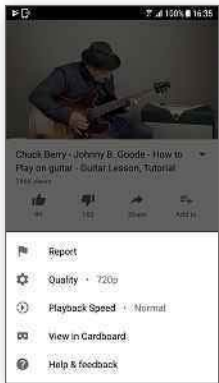
NWA's 1988 debut album *Straight Outta Compton* was one of the most influential hip hop albums of all time, responsible for changing the direction of the genre. The 2015 film of the same name, which depicts the rise and fall of the gangsta rap group, is now available to watch on Netflix, starring Corey Hawkins as Dr Dre, Jason Mitchell as Eazy-E, Aldis Hodge as MC Ren, Neil Brown Jr as DJ Yella and O'Shea Jackson Jr, Ice Cube's real-life son, playing his father.



We reveal what's new on Netflix, BBC iPlayer, Amazon Prime Video and other streaming services

Speed up and slow down videos on YouTube app

It's been possible to change the playback speed of videos on the web version of YouTube for several years, and now you can do the same on the mobile app (for iOS and Android 5.0+). Apparently, the most frequently used speed setting on the web is 1.25x because – like speed listening and speed reading – it lets you consume the same amount of information that little bit faster. Slow speeds, on the other hand, help you to examine finer details, making sense of practical tutorials or complex choreography. To change a video's speed, open it, tap the three-dot button and choose Playback Speed. The fastest option is 2x, while the slowest is 0.25x.



directly from the Google Play Store, so it's much more straightforward to stream and download videos for offline viewing. Unfortunately, the app doesn't support the Chromecast.



Enable subtitles and audio descriptions in All 4

All 4 has been working to improve its accessibility settings, so it's now possible to activate both subtitles and audio descriptions on its Android app (bit.ly/all433). Simply tap the 'S' or 'AD' icon in the player. These new functions aren't available for every programme and you can only enable subtitles on episodes that you stream, not those that you've downloaded. To check if subtitles are available for a programme, open its episode information and look for a silver 'S' icon. Both functions are already

supported in the iOS version (bit.ly/all433) of All 4. To activate them, enable VoiceOver and Subtitles, in the iOS Settings.

Watch TV shows from Korea, China and Japan

Viki (viki.com) is a streaming service dedicated to breaking down the language barriers that stop you watching great content from China, Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Thailand, among other countries. It does this by providing subtitles (submitted by volunteers) in more than 150 different languages – an ambitious aim! You can watch a wide range of genres (Drama, Romance, Comedy, Costume & Period, SciFi, Fantasy, Action & Adventure) on almost any device and as with most streaming services, you get a one-month free trial when you sign up.



Install Amazon Prime Video direct from Google Play

In the past, if you wanted to stream Amazon Prime Video on an Android device, you had to install Amazon Underground and then download an Amazon Video app from within it (after first enabling the installation of apps from Unknown Sources in your device's Settings). This caused a lot of frustration for some users, especially because an app for iPhones and iPads was available directly from the Apple App Store. Now, Amazon has finally released a dedicated Amazon Prime Video app (bit.ly/amazonvideo433), which you can install

Streaming deal of the fortnight

Get a NOW TV box for less

If you've put off buying a NOW TV Entertainment or Movies pass because you don't want to fork out for a box, then you might be tempted by the company's current range of deals. A box ordinarily costs £14.99 on its own, but for £19.99 you can now get a 2-month Entertainment Pass or a 1-month Movies pass thrown in, too. Alternatively, if you already have a Chromecast or other device to watch on, new NOW TV customers can save a whopping 54% by paying £99 up front for a year's access to both Movies and Entertainment (normal cost £215.76).



Readers' Streaming Picks

We asked *Web User* readers on Twitter and Facebook what they've been streaming online. Here's what you told us

The Mist on Netflix. It's totally different from the film, but makes great watching.

@MrChucklies

Vikings on Amazon Prime Video, **Brooklyn Nine-Nine** on Netflix and I'm re-watching **Stargate** on Now TV.

Pete Fitzsimmons

I've enjoyed watching **McLaren** on Amazon Prime. Shame the app doesn't support the Chromecast, though.

Yasir Haniff

Only Fools and Horses, **Alan Partridge**, **The Mist**, and **The Full Monty** to name but a few. We have Sky, Virgin, Netflix and a Now TV Box, so I can't imagine

how we ever managed with only three channels!

Gavin Green

I learned who the original 'Jack the lad' was after watching **Britain's Outlaws: Highwaymen, Pirates and Rogues** on BBC iPlayer

Chris Armstrong

What's the best show or film you've watched online? Let us know at webuser@dennis.co.uk

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Android tablets for under £200

We put three new and updated budget Android tablets to the test



Amazon Fire HD 8

Price: £89.99 (16GB without special offers)
Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/fire433

FOR

- ✓ Fantastic battery life
- ✓ Superb build quality

AGAINST

- ✗ Average performance and screen
- ✗ Customised version of Android



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



Lenovo Tab 4 8 Plus

Price: £199.99
Buy from John Lewis:
bit.ly/len433

FOR

- ✓ Excellent speakers
- ✓ Beautiful design

AGAINST

- ✗ Mediocre battery life
- ✗ Finicky fingerprint sensor



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



Vodafone Smart Tab N8

Price: £129
Buy from Vodafone:
bit.ly/vod433

FOR

- ✓ 4G connectivity
- ✓ Large screen

AGAINST

- ✗ Sluggish performance
- ✗ Disappointing colours



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

While there seem to be hundreds of budget Android phones available, tablets have been in relatively short supply. Popular older models, such as the Tesco Hudl and the Google Nexus 7, have come and gone, never to be replaced.

However, all that's changed over the past few weeks, with Amazon upgrading its range of Kindle Fire tablets with refreshed hardware and adding Alexa; Vodafone launching a new 10in model for its own line of tablets; and Lenovo releasing a new 8in device into the fray. Here, we've taken all three of these tablets and put them through their paces to find out which one best suits your needs.

Price and storage options

The Amazon Fire HD 8 comes in four versions, with two different storage options (16 and 32GB), both of which are available with or without Amazon's 'Special Offers' (essentially, adverts). Removing these costs an extra £10, so the 16GB version costs £79.99 with adverts or £89.99 without them; and upgrading to 32GB is £99.99 or £109.99 without adverts.

All variants of the Fire HD 8 have a microSD slot that lets you expand its storage by up to 256GB, which makes the



**Amazon
Fire HD 8**



**VS
Lenovo
Tab 4
8 Plus**



**VS
Vodafone
Smart Tab
N8**

32GB model rather less attractive when you consider that a 16GB microSD card can be picked up for less than £8. However, you may still prefer to opt for the 32GB model if you don't want the hassle of having to move apps and games to a memory card.

The Fire HD is the most colourful of the tablets reviewed here, available in black, yellow, blue or red. It's worth noting that there's also a version of the 32GB tablet aimed especially at kids, with a rubberised case and a no-quibble two-year guarantee, available for a total cost of £129.99.

Pricing on the Vodafone Smart Tab N8 is almost as complicated. You can get it for £129 on pay-as-you-go from the Vodafone store, which makes it more expensive than the Fire HD 8, but then it is the only tablet here to offer 4G connectivity. You can also get it on a contract, with a 24-month 4G plan starting at £12 per month (£30 upfront) for 2GB of data per month, rising to £31 per month with no upfront costs for 50GB of 4G data.

The Lenovo Tab 4 8 Plus is much simpler, available with 16GB for £200 or 64GB for £50 extra.

Build quality and design

The Fire HD 8 is 9.7mm thick, weighs 369g and has a thick

bezel (the unused space around the edge of the screen), which makes it rather chunky. However, it feels very robust and well suited to the rough and tumble of daily life.

At 7mm thick and 300g, the Lenovo tablet is slim, lightweight and elegantly designed. Its rounded edges make it comfortable to hold and the glass on both front and back gives it a premium look. The distinctive forward-facing speaker grilles are not purely for decoration, either – the tablet supports Dolby Atmos and is by far the best sounding of the three tablets.

Another key feature is its fingerprint reader, built into the power button, which sits alongside the volume rocker on the right-hand side of the tablet, perfectly located for unlocking the device. However, we found it wasn't particularly reliable and it rarely worked on the first try.

The Vodafone tablet's large

“Lenovo's tablet provides enough horsepower to churn through intensive processes and multitasking”

10.1in screen made it the heaviest of the three, at 465g, although its 9mm case is slimmer than the Fire HD 8's. Like the Lenovo, it also has forward-firing speakers, while the back has a textured black plastic finish that makes it easy to grip and prevents the tablet from sliding around when you put it down. This houses a latch that gives access to the 128GB microSD expansion and micro-SIM slot

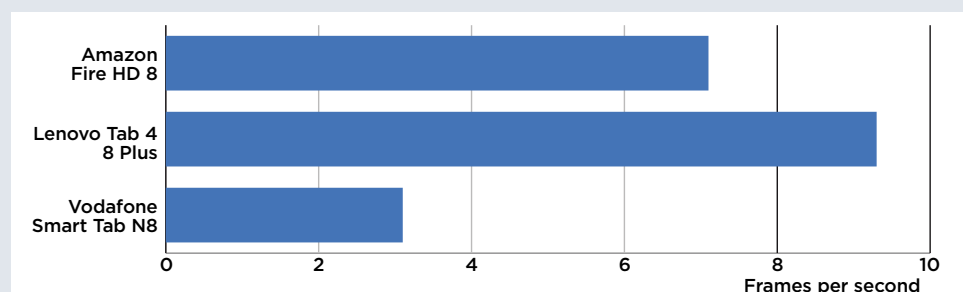
Performance

Start using the Fire HD 8 and it becomes clear how Amazon has managed to keep the tablet's cost low. The quad-core 1.3GHz MediaTek MT8163 processor is adequate but not particularly fast, and

is aided by 1.5GB of RAM, allowing for very minimal multitasking. As a result, it's not particularly well equipped for dealing with high-intensity games, only managing 7.1fps (frames per second) in GFXBench's Manhattan 3 test (see box, below). However, simpler games such as Threes and Temple Run ran perfectly well, so some light gaming is certainly within its capabilities.

Inside the Lenovo tablet, you'll find a 2.0GHz octa-core Cortex-A53-based Snapdragon 625 processor and 3GB of RAM. This provides enough horsepower to churn through intensive processes and multitasking, as was shown by its Manhattan 3

GFXBench Manhattan 3 benchmark test

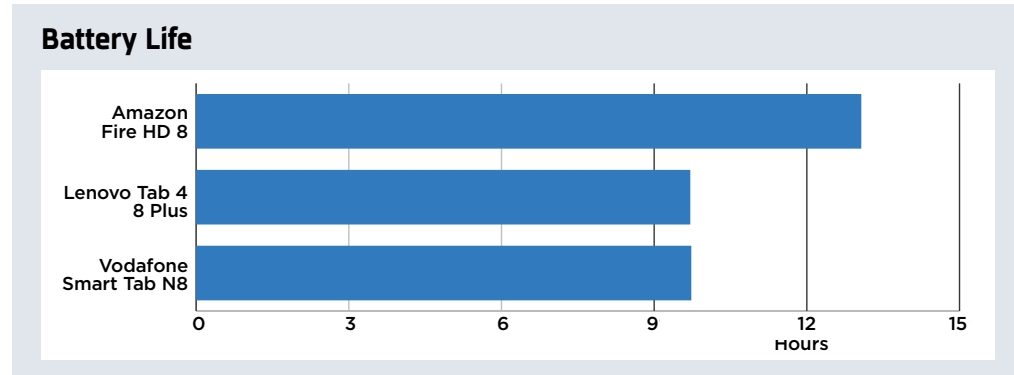


benchmark result of 9.3fps. That's perfectly adequate for casual gaming, but it still isn't a great performance if you're after slick, smooth games, which is disappointing considering how much more it costs than the Amazon model.

Vodafone's Tab N8 is the worst performer. With a 1.1GHz quad-core Cortex-MediaTek processor and 2GB of RAM inside, it struggles with multitasking and is slow to respond to input. Opening Google Maps and swiping around is a painful experience, and while it can handle very basic games such as Candy Crush, it struggles with fast-moving games like Temple Run. With only 3.1fps in the Manhattan 3 benchmark, it's just not built with gaming in mind.

Battery life

When it comes to battery life, the Fire HD 8 really shines. Setting the screen brightness to our predefined measurement of 170cd/m² (candles per square metre),



We were more disappointed that the pricier Lenovo is even worse, managing only 59.2%. The Vodafone Smart Tab N8 was the winner here, achieving 75.7%, although that's still not much to write home about.

Amazon's screen also has a relatively low resolution (1,280 x 800 pixels) but it's the brightest, too, with a high of 455cd/m². That's good enough to be able to read outside, even in sunshine. The Lenovo tablet has a sharper resolution of 1,200 x 1,920 pixels, and while not as bright as Amazon's screen, its

for indoor viewing, but you'll struggle to use it outdoors.

Android and Alexa

Voice assistants such as the Amazon Echo and Google Home are becoming increasingly popular, so Amazon's decision to add Alexa to its Fire devices is a compelling one, effectively gifting you a free Echo with your tablet. Alexa responds to your every beck and call, from reading you an audio book to telling you the weather. The only stumbling block is that you have to hold down the Home button to attract her attention – she won't just hear you if you call "OK Alexa", as she does with the Echo.

Despite this unique and welcome bonus, there are compromises you have to make with an Amazon device, the biggest of which is that you're not getting the Android operating system as Google designed it. We have a preference for clean and untampered-with versions of Android and the Vodafone tablet comes closest to this – it's the pure, unadulterated Android 7 that Google wants its users to experience, with

only a handful of Vodafone apps pre-installed. The Lenovo runs its own take on Android but it's relatively clean with only a few pre-installed apps.

Like the rest of Amazon's tablet lineup, the Fire HD 8 runs Amazon's Fire OS, which is based on Android, but is different. It's not quite as flexible as your typical Android tablet because you're tied into using Amazon's dedicated app store, as well as most of its own services such as Amazon Music, Audible audiobooks and Amazon Photos. So no Google Play Store, no YouTube app and no Chrome browser.

As a result, anyone knee-deep in an Amazon Prime subscription will probably benefit greatly, but non-Prime customers or those less familiar with Amazon's services may not find Fire OS so inviting. Still, the latest version is now much easier to use since its awkward carousel layout has been abandoned in favour of a more traditional grid system. We'd definitely recommend paying the extra £10 to get rid of the ads, though. ■

“Amazon's decision to add Alexa to its Fire devices is a compelling one, effectively gifting you a free Echo with your tablet”

the Fire HD 8 managed 13 hours and 4 minutes of continuous video playback, which is hugely impressive (see box, above). It's by far the longest-lasting Fire tablet we've seen, surpassing both the Fire HD 10 and Fire 7 by around four hours.

The Lenovo and Vodafone tablets provided less impressive results in our tests, though they came remarkably close to each other: the Vodafone lasted 9 hours and 44 minutes, 60 seconds longer than the Lenovo.

Display

At well under £100, we never expected the Fire HD 8 to have an award-winning screen, so its underwhelming display of only 66% of Microsoft's sRGB colour standard came as no surprise.

417.6cd/m² means it's readable in most conditions.

The Vodafone's resolution is the same as Amazon's (1,280 x 800 pixels) but its larger 10.1in screen translates to a lower pixel density, so it doesn't look as sharp. Its maximum brightness of 366.6cd/m² is vivid enough

OUR VERDICT

Despite its shortfalls, Amazon's latest Fire HD 8 is an amazing tablet for the price. At just £90 for the basic 16GB version – without adverts – its excellent battery life, superb build quality and decent performance make it a great choice if you're looking to buy an affordable tablet.

At first glance, the Lenovo Tab 4 8 Plus seems to be a fantastic device, with hardware features above and beyond Amazon's, such as an integrated fingerprint

reader, two front-facing Dolby Atmos speakers and splendid design. However, even with these extras, the price is too high for its sluggish performance and middling battery life.

The Vodafone Smart Tab N8 is a mixed bag. On one hand, it's the cheapest 4G tablet you can buy – just £129. On the other hand, if you're not bothered about connecting to the internet while on the go, it's disappointing in other areas.

BLACK HAWK™

RED EAGLE™

GAMING ON THE EDGE



24.5" **G-MASTER™ G2530HSU**
27" **G-MASTER™ G2730HSU**

@75Hz WITH FreeSync SUPPORT,
1920X1080 (FULL HD),
LOW ENERGY CONSUMPTION,
A+ ENERGY EFFICIENCY CLASS PANEL

27" **G-MASTER™ GB2760QSU**

@144Hz WITH FreeSync SUPPORT,
2560x1440 (WQHD) RESOLUTION
FOR 77% MORE ON-SCREEN SPACE
THAN WITH FULL HD

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GMASTER.IIYAMA.COM



Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

BUDGET PHONE

Samsung Galaxy J5 (2017)

£219 from bit.ly/sams432

Tested: Issue 432

Samsung's updated Galaxy J5 does everything you could ask of a budget phone. Battery life is top-notch, the screen is rich and vivid, and its camera quality is excellent.

NEW!



KEY SPECS

Octa-core 1.6GHz Exynos 7870 processor ■ 13-megapixel front and rear cameras ■ 2GB RAM ■ 16GB storage ■ 5.2in 1,280 x 720-pixel screen ■ Android 7 ■ 146.2 x 71.3 x 8mm ■ 160g ■ Two-years return-to-base warranty

HYBRID LAPTOP-TABLET

Lenovo Yoga Book

£548.97 from bit.ly/lenw431

Tested: Issue 431

The Yoga Book laptop-tablet hybrid genuinely feels like a step forward, with its virtual keyboard and fantastic writing surface that makes it an exceptional note-taking device.



KEY SPECS

Quad-core 2.4GHz Intel Atom x5-Z8550 processor ■ 4GB memory ■ 64GB storage ■ 10.1in 1,920 x 1,200-pixel screen ■ 1 x Micro USB port ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ Windows 10 ■ 256 x 170 x 9.6mm ■ 690g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

NAS DRIVE

Synology DS216j

£161.13 from bit.ly/syn430

Tested: Issue 430

The DS216j is a great-value network storage device with lots of features that make it incredibly flexible. It's not the most powerful choice, but it can do most of the things other NAS drives can do, including pricier models.



KEY SPECS

Dual-core 1GHz Marvell Armada 385 32-bit processor ■ 512MB DDR3 memory ■ 2 x drive bays (drives not included) ■ 20TB (2 x 10TB drive) maximum capacity ■ 165 x 100 x 225.5mm ■ 880g ■ Two-years return-to-base warranty

SSD

Samsung 960 Evo

£211.16 from bit.ly/s9e428

Tested: Issue 428

It looks expensive on paper, but the Samsung 960 Evo is an excellent 500GB SSD that came at or near the top of all our performance tests. It comes with Samsung's Data Migration software to clone your existing Windows installation from your old hard drive.



KEY SPECS

250GB - 1TB capacity ■ AES-256 encryption ■ M.2 connection ■ 200TBW write tolerance ■ Samsung Magician, Samsung Data Migration software

£500 PC

Mesh Home PC

£499 from www.meshcomputers.com

Tested: Issue 426

The Mesh Home PC is compact and quiet, with a great processor. It has a premium operating system in Windows 10 Pro and includes an SSD and a dedicated graphics card.



KEY SPECS

Quad-core 3.4GHz Intel Core i5-7500 processor ■ 8GB memory ■ 120GB SSD, 1TB hard drive ■ 2GB Asus GeForce GT710-2-SL graphics card ■ 6 x USB 2 ports; 2 x USB 3 ports ■ Windows 10 Pro ■ Lifetime labour warranty, two-years parts, one-year collect-and-return

INKJET PRINTER

Brother MFC-J5330DW

£125.78 from bit.ly/brot425

Tested: Issue 425

Provided you can find space for this bulky printer, you won't be disappointed, because it's very reasonably priced, cheap to run and produces great-looking prints - especially photos. You won't have to wait long for them to print, either.



KEY SPECS

4,800 x 1,200dpi maximum print resolution ■ 1,200 x 2,400dpi maximum scan resolution ■ 250-sheet input capacity ■ 100-sheet output capacity ■ Double-sided printing ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 530 x 398 x 304mm ■ 16.9kg

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2018

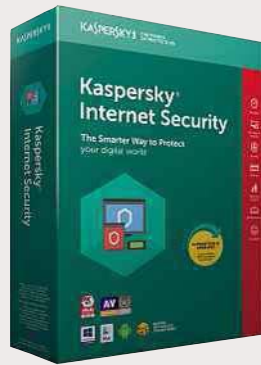
£19.95 from bit.ly/kaspersky2018

Tested: Computeractive Issue 493

Kaspersky is rock solid at protecting your PC from the worst of the web, and has come top in nine 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



Web User Gold Award winners

PDF READER

Sumatra PDF

NEW!

Free from sumatrapdfreader.org

Tested: Issue 432

Sumatra's simple, user-friendly interface doesn't overwhelm you with unnecessary features. It's one of the fastest PDF readers available.



PASSWORD MANAGER

Sticky Password Premium

From £19.95 per year from

www.stickypassword.com

Tested: Issue 431

Packed with features, this password manager is very secure and good value for money.



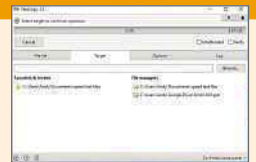
FILE-COPYING TOOL

TeraCopy

Free from bit.ly/ter430

Tested: Issue 430

TeraCopy is a great file-copying tool that's very easy to use and offers lots of useful features. Its handy shortcuts make regular copying tasks much faster.

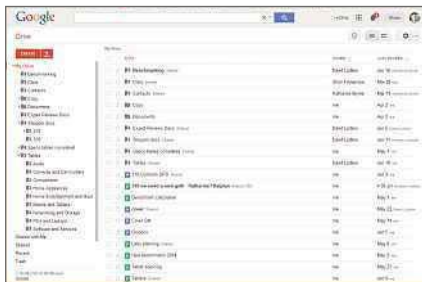


ONLINE STORAGE

Google Drive

From free from drive.google.com

Tested: Issue 389



Google Drive is easy to use and has lots of free storage with the option to buy more if you need it. The Windows software integrates seamlessly 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

ONLINE SITE BUILDER

Wix

Free from www.wix.com

Tested: Issue 429

Wix's website-creation tools are brilliant, with lots of templates and innovative features.



ONLINE VIDEO EDITOR

YouTube Editor

Free from www.youtube.com/editor

Tested: Issue 428

Easy-to-use tools and connection to the biggest video-hosting site make up for shortfalls in this editor's interface.



WEB USER BACK ISSUES DISCS

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2014 TO 2016



Best Free Software

BACKUP TOOL

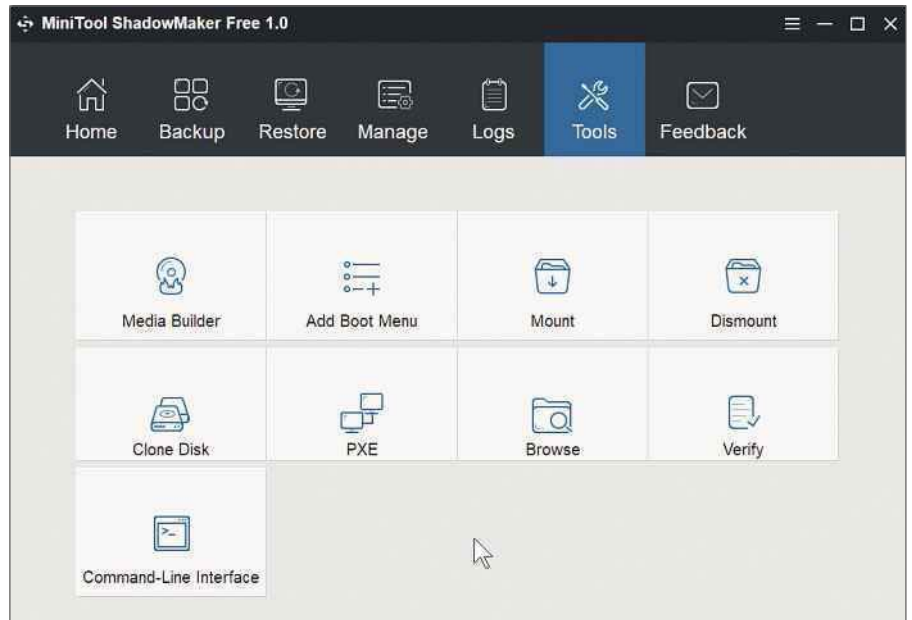
MiniTool ShadowMaker Free

bit.ly/smaker433

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

File size: 69.3MB

MiniTool ShadowMaker Free has been available for a while as beta software, but now the backup tool has received its first full release. The program lets you back up your hard drives and offers a choice of backup methods: Full, which includes all files; Incremental, which backs up only the files that have changed since the last backup; and Differential, which targets items that have changed since the last *full* backup. You can schedule backups to occur as often as you like, and back up either



locally or over a network. The software can even create a rescue disc to restore your operating system to the previous state if your PC fails to boot.

The interface is clean and easy to use, with a strip along the top that takes you to the Home, Backup and Restore screens, as well as the Manage, Logs and Tools sections. Under the Tools section, you'll find the rescue-disc creator, along with tools to add a boot menu, mount or

dismount tasks, clone a disk, browse or verify a backup and access the software's command-line interface.

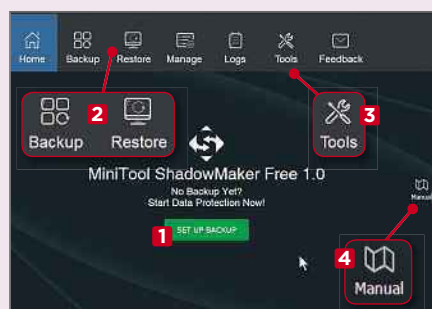
While backup tools can often be complicated, ShadowMaker couldn't be easier to use. Choose to start a backup and the software automatically selects the drive and partition on which Windows is installed, as well as a recommended destination folder. When you're happy with your choices, click Back-up Now to start the process.



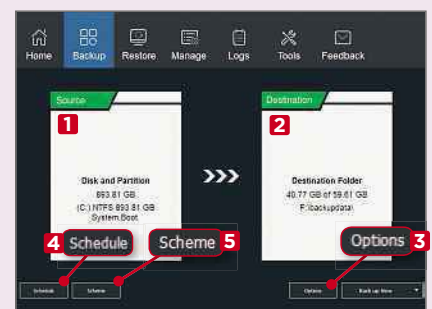
MINI WORKSHOP | Back up your computer with MiniTool ShadowMaker Free



1 Run the software and you'll be given the option to back up the computer you're using **1** or a remote PC or drive. **2** In the latter case, you simply need to enter the IP address **3** and click the Connect button. **4** To back up your current computer, click the Connect button for This Computer **5** instead.

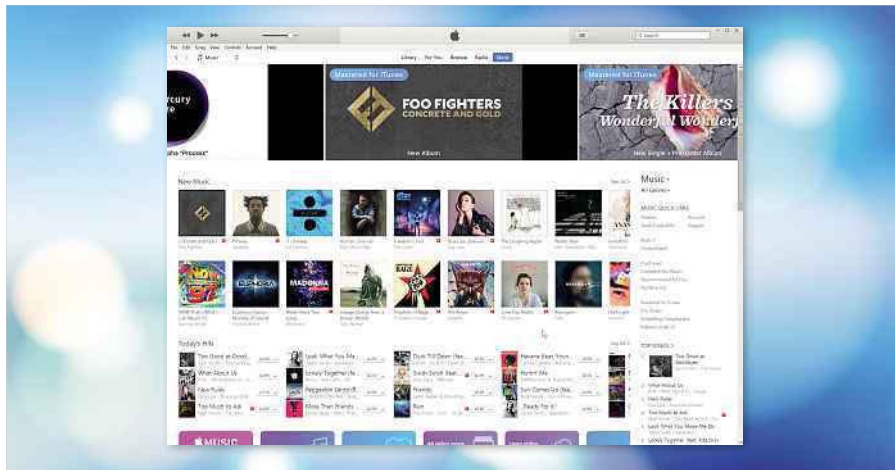


2 When the main program window opens, click the Set Up Backup button **1** to get started. Alternatively, access the Backup and Restore modules from the top strip, **2** or browse the various utilities in the Tools section. **3** Open the manual **4** if you need help.



3 The Backup screen automatically chooses the source **1** and destination. **2** Click the relevant box if you'd like to change either of these. Click Options **3** to change the image-creation mode, file size, compression type and more. You can also create a schedule **4** and pick a backup scheme (Full, Incremental or Differential). **5**

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



MEDIA MANAGER

iTunes 12.7

bit.ly/itunes433

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 **File size:** 249MB

People often complain about iTunes, and it's true that Apple's media software has always been something of a bloated beast. With this new update, Apple has taken the step of removing the app store, ringtone feature and book-management tools to focus purely on music, movies, TV programmes, podcasts and audiobooks. The Internet Radio feature has been moved to your music library's sidebar, and iTunes U is now in the Podcasts section.



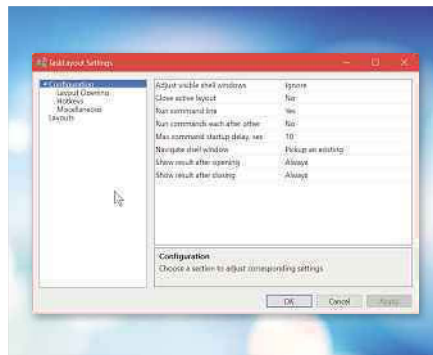
SYSTEM TOOL

Reg Organizer 8

bit.ly/regorg433

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 13.7MB

The Windows Registry doesn't need organising as such, so it's just as well Reg Organizer does more than that. Its advanced uninstaller removes leftover traces of programs, and it has a startup manager, disk cleanup tool and Registry editor. There's also a Registry search function, Registry defragmenter and a search-and-replace option. The latest version adds a Private Data Cleanup tool and can clean the caches of apps.



SYSTEM TOOL

TaskLayout

www.systemgoods.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3.2MB

TaskLayout saves the arrangement of windows on your Desktop so you can restore them again later. Once you've organised everything as you like it, fire up the software and select some or all of the open windows in the list. TaskLayout saves the Desktop setup and assigns it a hotkey. You can then do whatever you like on the Desktop, then hit your assigned key combination to put everything back to the way it was.

New Windows Apps

ImagineAI

bit.ly/imagineai433

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 20MB

ImagineAI helps people with visual impairment organise their photos by using machine learning to describe the images. To get started, select a folder, pick an image and ask the app to describe it.



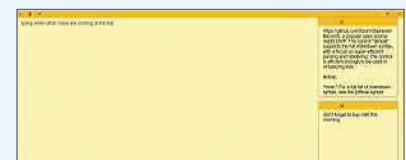
Sticky Noter

bit.ly/noter433

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 21.2MB

Add Post It-style notes to your Desktop with this handy tool. Unlike similar apps (including the one built into Windows 10), Sticky Noter's creations can be set so that they always appear on top.



TMDB

bit.ly/tmdb433

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 22.1MB

This is an unofficial app for The Movie Database, a popular database for movies and TV shows that's edited by its users. You can search for anything, watch movie trailers and find upcoming releases.

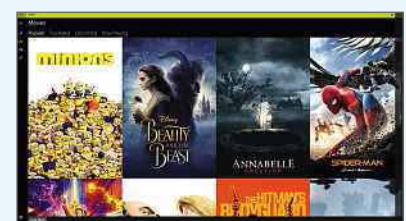


IMAGE VIEWER

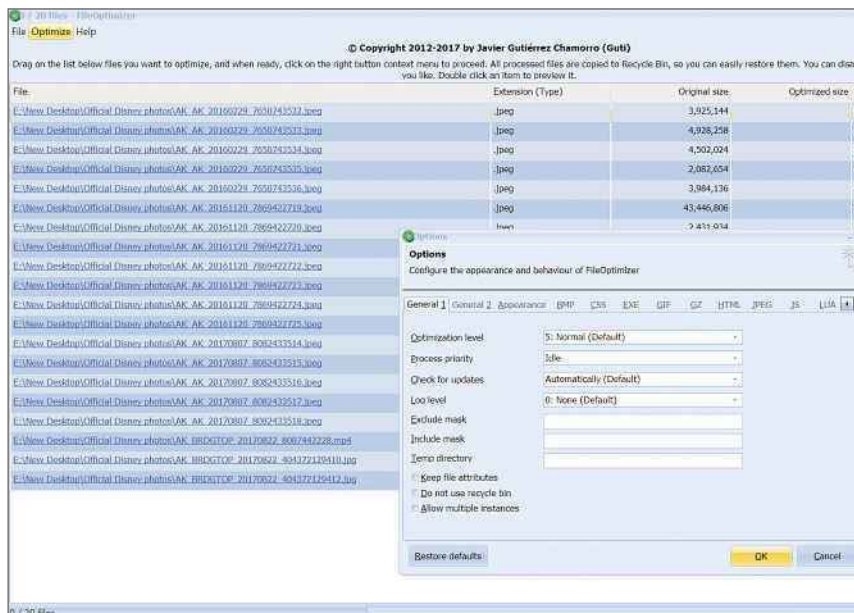
Image Racer 4

bit.ly/racer433

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 5.14MB

Image Racer is a tiny portable picture viewer that you can carry around and run from a USB memory stick or SD card. You can use it to view single images or thumbnails of all the pictures in a folder. It offers a large selection of tools, including an image converter, and can crop, rotate and create a mirror image of your photos, as well as remove red-eye. You can copy pictures directly to the Windows clipboard and apply a range of filters.

The latest version adds touchscreen support and the ability to select and send multiple images by email. Also new is the ability to encrypt and decrypt images.



FILE SHRINKER

FileOptimizer 11

bit.ly/fileo433

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 71.6MB

FileOptimizer aims to reduce the size of your files – including photos, videos, documents and more – and works with most popular formats. To use it, simply drag one or more files to the program's interface. Click the Optimize button at the top of the screen and it will get to work, applying various recompression and optimisation techniques. Once finished, FileOptimizer shows you the original file size and the optimised size, so you can see how much it has saved. There are plenty of options on offer for you to play around with.

The latest version lets you add folders and supports a greater number of file types.

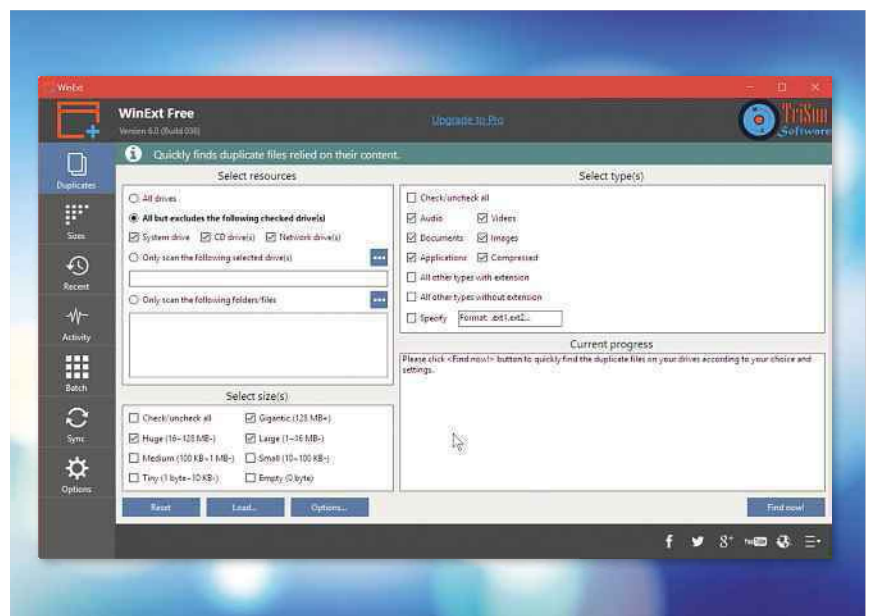
DUPLICATE FINDER

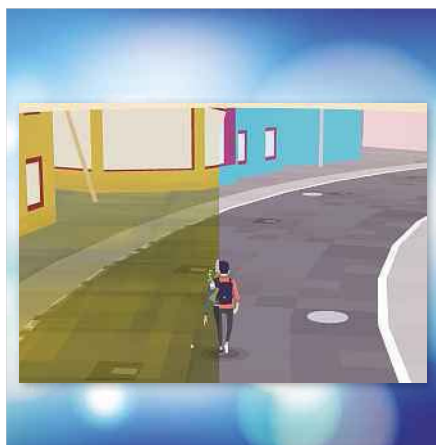
WinExt Free 6

www.trisunsoft.com/we

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 744KB

When we covered WinExt Free just a couple of issues ago, it was on version 4. Since then it has jumped forward to version 6, gaining a lot of new features and improvements along the way. Its interface still borrows heavily from CCleaner's, with all the available features in a strip down the left-hand side. The program can track down any kind of duplicate file, show which files and folders are using the most storage space and track Windows activity. The program lets you enable and disable monitoring and gives you greater control over file deletion. Its performance has been improved, too.





GAME

Like Roots In The Soil

bit.ly/roots433

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

File size: 39.4MB

Less a game than a very short interactive movie, Like Roots In The Soil is the story of two people walking simultaneously down the same street in two different time periods. You can change the viewpoint (which also changes the music) to observe both environments, but that's all. The ending is clever, though.

Don't install...

Windows Performance Toolkit

bit.ly/wpt433

Min requirements:

Windows 8+10

File size: 1.7MB

The Windows Performance Toolkit is a shining example of a PC tool that's only for experts. As part of the Windows Assessment and Deployment Kit, its performance-monitoring tools help you identify problems, but its baffling interface and advanced options will leave you scratching your head.



...Install this instead

BootRacer

bit.ly/boot433

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

File size: 7.2MB

If you think your PC is slowing down, try BootRacer. This simple tool measures exactly how many seconds your PC takes to start and provides this information along with a speed rating. It does this every time you boot (unless you turn it off), so you can tell whether your PC is becoming faster or slower. BootRacer presents a graph to show the level of speed degradation, warns you of potential performance problems and even lets you enter a Worldwide Boot Time Contest. To use the program, just click the Boot Time Test button and restart your computer.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs

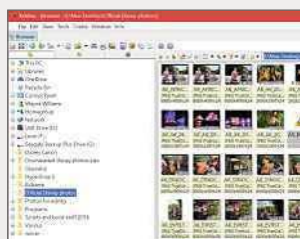


IMAGE VIEWER

XnView 2.41

www.xnview.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

File size: 5.2MB

This photo viewer and converter handles most image types (it supports more than 500 formats), and has a wealth of tools for enhancing your snaps. Version 2.41 fixes a lot of bugs, including problems with the way the program displays filenames and its slideshow feature.



WALLPAPER MANAGER

John's Background Switcher 4.16

bit.ly/johnbs433

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

File size: 2.4MB

JBS changes your wallpaper periodically and can pull images from your hard drive and various websites, including Flickr, Facebook and Instagram. The new release is built on Microsoft .NET 4.5, which means the program installs and runs faster and is more stable.



SYSTEM TOOL

RegSeeker 4.5

www.hoverdesk.net

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+10

File size: 1MB

RegSeeker helps you manage Windows startup entries, services and drivers, and cleans histories, junk files, applications, browser extensions and more. The new release introduces scripts that automate tasks and adds theme support. It also looks better on high-resolution screens.



SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.35

www.piriform.com

Min requirements:

Windows XP/Vista/7/8+

File size: 9.4MB

Piriform (now owned by Avast) has updated CCleaner following the revelation that August's update – version 5.3.3 – had been hacked to infect users' PCs. This release fixes the security flaw and comes with a digital signature to authenticate the software. ■

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Best New Browser Tools

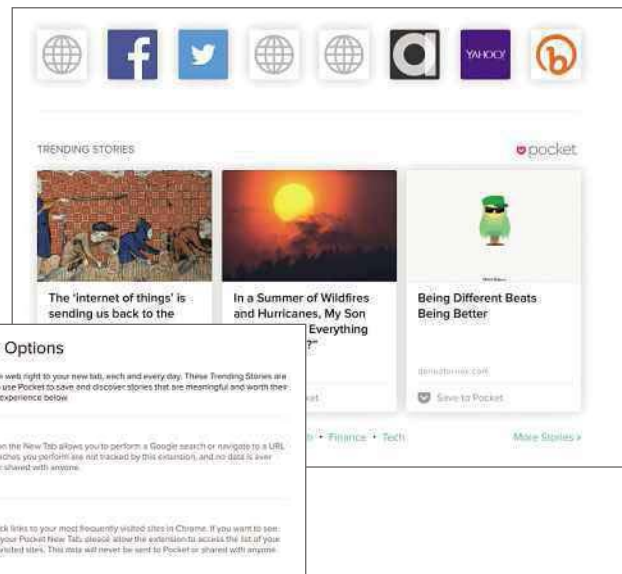


CHROME

Show trending stories on your New Tab page

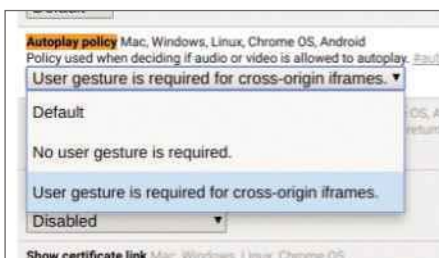
Pocket is one of the most popular tools for saving web content to read later, but its Chrome extension 'Save to Pocket' (bit.ly/saveto433) has fallen foul of a Google policy that only allows add-ons to have 'single purpose'. To this end, Pocket has moved one of the extension's features – the option to view 'trending' stories on your New Tab page – to a separate add-on called Pocket New Tab (bit.ly/pocket433). One benefit of this separation is that you don't need to be a Pocket user to see the stories, although they'll be more relevant to your interests if you are. The articles are curated by Pocket's 30-million strong community and are updated every hour to keep the content fresh. Click 'More stories' to access further selections or choose a specific topic such as Tech or Health.

As with the traditional New Tab page, there's a Google search box, and you can also display your most visited websites, albeit in the form of logos rather than thumbnails of homepages. You'll need to grant Pocket permission to show these, but it promises your data is kept private.



Stop HTML5 videos playing automatically

Autoplaying videos – particularly noisy adverts – are becoming an increasing annoyance, but because most are in HTML5 format, Chrome doesn't offer a 'click-to-play' setting as it does for Flash content. Until now, that is, because the latest version of the browser (61) adds an option that stops HTML5 video playing automatically and allows you to click to play it if you want. To access and activate this secret setting, type `chrome:flags` into the address bar, press Enter and search (using Ctrl+F) for 'Autoplay policy'. Click the drop-down menu for the entry, select 'User gesture is required for cross-origin iFrames' and restart Chrome. Note that this trick won't work for all HTML5 content, but it should make at least some web pages less annoying.



Manage your tabs or your Tabagotchi dies

The more tabs you have open in Chrome, the more memory it uses and the more distracted you become,



(bit.ly/taba433) gives you the incentive to manage your tabs more sensibly by making your actions a matter of life or death. Inspired by the Tamagotchi digital-pet craze of the Nineties, the idea is that you maintain your creature's health and happiness by keeping open tabs to a minimum. For each hour you spend browsing with five tabs or fewer, you get one step closer to evolving your Tabagotchi to a higher form. Conversely, when you open too many tabs, your pet grows angry and ill, and ultimately dies because of your negligence. Your monster!

but it's easy to ignore the risk until it's too late and your browser crashes. A new extension called Tabagotchi

Feel lucky from the address bar

When you search the web by typing a term into Chrome's address bar, you don't get the option to click Google's 'I'm Feeling Lucky' button, but there's a workaround that adds this time-saving feature. Go to Settings, 'Manage search engines' and click Add, then enter a name and keyword for the option – for example 'I'm Feeling Lucky' and 'lucky'. In the URL line, type: `http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=%s&btnI=Im+Feeling+Lucky` and click Save. Now, when you want to use the I'm Feeling Lucky feature, just type the keyword into your address bar, press the spacebar and enter your query. Press Enter and you'll be taken to (hopefully) the most relevant result.



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



FIREFOX

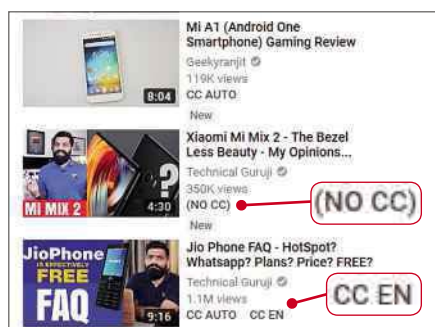
Install the new uBlock Origin WebExtension

As we explain on page 48 of this issue, a number of popular Firefox tools are currently under threat as Mozilla abandons 'legacy' add-ons in favour of WebExtensions. Happily, users of the excellent ad blocker uBlock Origin have nothing to fear, because the developer has released a new 'pure' WebExtension version of the tool (bit.ly/ublock433), which works with Firefox 57 and later. This works in exactly the same way as the traditional add-on, allowing you to block adverts, scripts and other unwanted content on web pages, for a faster and less annoying online experience. The first WebExtension release caused users a few problems, because their uBlock Origin settings and filter lists weren't automatically migrated, but these issues have now been fixed in an updated version (1.14.4).



See which YouTube videos have subtitles

YouTube's automatic captioning of videos – or 'subtitling', as we say in the UK – is one of the site's most useful features, especially if you're hard of hearing or are watching with the sound off. However, not all videos have subtitles – perhaps due to poor sound quality or because the creator has



turned them off – and others may offer 'closed captions' in several languages. A new add-on called YouTube Caption Indicator (bit.ly/caption433) addresses this by adding language-specific subtitle indicators to every video that appears in the 'Up next' list. Just look for the 'CC' next to the video to see whether closed captions have been generated automatically, transcribed manually in English or another language or don't appear at all. You'll still have to click the Subtitles button on the video's menu bar to activate the option.

Search Google anonymously without logging out

If you want to search Google anonymously and prevent details of the sites you visit being stored, you usually have to sign out of your Google account. This then means you can't use other Google services such as Gmail, Drive and YouTube – unless you log back in. The Firefox WebExtension Searchonymous WE (bit.ly/searchonymous433), based on the now-defunct add-on Searchonymous, solves this problem by letting you search Google anonymously while remaining logged into all other Google services. It works by blocking certain cookies and generating random ones to stop Google tracking you, while allowing those that contain your search preferences. Another benefit is that you won't see the adverts and clutter that appear on the Google homepage when cookies are disabled.



OTHER BROWSERS



Disable continuous playback

This is the second tip for autoplaying video in this issue, which just goes to show what a growing menace it's become. This new add-on is called Autoplay No More (bit.ly/disable433) and it prevents popular video sites including YouTube, Vimeo and TED from automatically playing the next video in an 'Up next' sequence (compiled by them, not you) as soon as the previous one



finishes. Of course, you could simply disable the autoplay setting so you're not forced to watch something you don't want, but this extension saves you the hassle.



Inspect images in Vivaldi

Vivaldi's innovations never fail to impress us and the latest 'snapshot' of the browser (1.12.955.3, to be precise) introduces an ingenious feature called Image Inspector. This lets you right-click a photo on an image-sharing site or blog, and select Inspect Image to view detailed information about the picture sourced from its meta data. This includes attributes such as the camera brand, white balance, colour temperature (kelvin), image dimensions and more. It's an excellent tool for amateur photographers who want to learn more about other people's work.



Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

WEATHER

Windy

bit.ly/windroid433

bit.ly/winios433

 (varies) 

Find out if gales are about to put the wind in your sails with this gorgeous, fascinating and resource-hungry app that made our phone so hot we needed a strong breeze to cool it down.

With that criticism out of the way, let's get down to praising Windy. In essence, it's a weather app that focuses on wind speed and direction, displaying both on an animated map of the UK (or wherever you happen to be at the time). But it soon becomes apparent that Windy is whatever kind of weather app you want it to be. In Settings, you can select from overlays such as local webcams, waves and airports (only one at a time, alas), then tap the map to reveal a wealth of related detail. For example, choose airports and you'll see satellite views of runways, pilots' weather alerts and more (see Mini Workshop, right).

Default measurements are Celsius and knots (kt), but you can change these and many others in Settings. You can

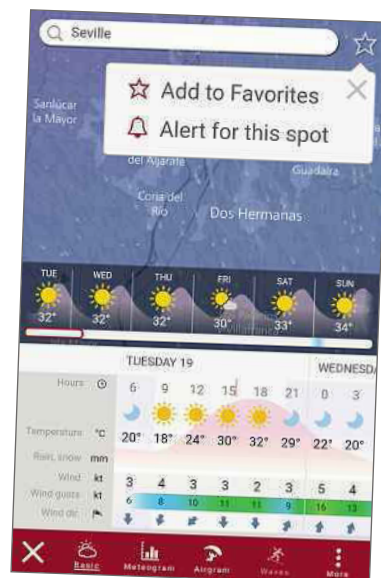
even change the forecast model. The default is ECMWF (European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) but there are two others to choose from; and you can compare their forecasts side by side for any supported location. Find out about the forecast models on the superb Windy website (bit.ly/windy433).

You don't have to register to use the app but you do need to hand over your email address to receive alerts, which come to your email inbox. That seems rather, er, long-winded in 2017; surely it'd be easier to

get a simple notification. That

said, registration is quick, and one tap lets you save all your settings securely to the cloud.

NEW



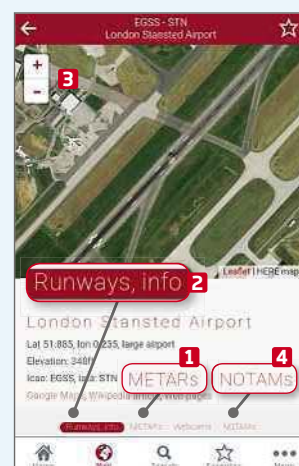
MINI WORKSHOP

Create an airport weather alert using Windy

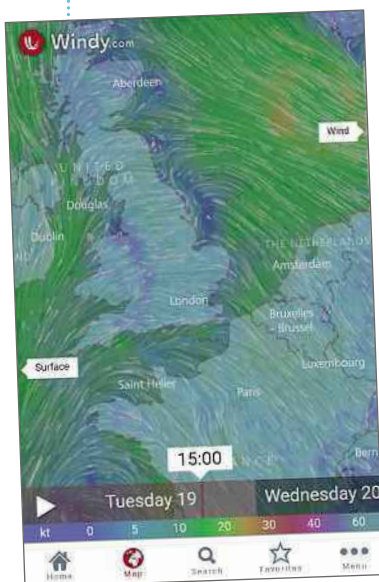
1 Install and launch Windy, then tap Allow to let it know your location. To see a local forecast, tap the temperature info and swipe left through the details for the next six days. **1** Tap Meteogram to add rainfall predictions; **2** Airgram to add wind symbols; **3** and Waves if you're by the sea (if not, Waves is greyed out). **4** Tap X to return to the main map. **5**



2 To see conditions at any airport, open Menu and tap the plane symbol under 'Display on map'. Select Map and tap a green or blue circle to see that airport's METAR (air traffic weather) report. **1** Swipe up for a detailed five-day forecast. Tap 'Runways, info' **2** to see a zoomable satellite view, **3** and NOTAMS to see any current 'Notices to Airmen'. **4**



3 To set up email notifications for that airport – or any other location – tap the star, then select 'Alert for this spot'. On the screen that opens, change the alert name if you want, **1** then drag the sliders to set parameters for the wind speeds you want to be notified about. **2** Tap the toggles to set up alerts for other conditions. **3** Finally, swipe up and enter your email address.



Our rating



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

NOTES

Notin

bit.ly/notin433

 4.4

Notin lets you create quick notes and reminders and keep them handy in your notifications. Just tap Notin's shortcut, then type your note – a shopping memo, phone number, address or whatever – then tap the plus sign to save it to your notification area, so it's available with one tap from any screen until you delete it. The app only displays one line at a time while you write, so this is not a notes app for writing your novel on the train. Nevertheless, it's an ingenious and helpful tool and, despite its beta status, it works beautifully.



Our rating



NEW

ALARM CLOCK

Clockwise Smart Alarm

www.yoursmartalarm.com

 4.4

Rather than startling you from your slumber with an alarm, this personalised clock radio awakens your interest with a news update, weather report, Donald Trump's overnight tweets and any other content of your choosing, all read out in an accent of your choice (well, up to a point – options include Australian Male and 'British Female 2'). It's easy to use – just set an alarm and add 'modules' to it. We had to move our stored music for Clockwise to find it, though, and the full-screen, out-loud ads are annoying.



Our rating



NEW

PHOTOS

Metapho

bit.ly/meta433

 10.3

Explore the metadata of all the photos on your i-device, using the free version of this new app. Metapho reveals EXIF info such as lens focal length, camera type, dimensions and copyright status, and lets you see on a map where the photo was taken. It's rich with detail and beautifully presented, but you can't edit much of the data unless you hand over £2.99 for an in-app purchase. This unlocks the option to remove metadata and edit the location, which is an important security consideration when sharing photos.



Our rating



DISPLAY TOOL

Split-Screen Creator

bit.ly/split433

 (varies)

Split your Android screen into two windows so you can see and use two apps at once – for example, Google Photos and BBC News in our screenshot. Split-Screen Creator is similar to the built-in App Share app on a Samsung Galaxy Note 8, but without the £900 price tag. Once you've installed the app, use its widget to create shortcuts that launch two chosen apps side by side. You can create as many of these shortcuts as you want, and it works with Settings screens as well as installed apps, but it doesn't currently support certain Google apps – including Chrome and Google Maps.



Our rating



NEW

MUSIC

SoundHound

soundhound.com

 (varies)  9

SoundHound's name is confusingly similar to music-streaming service SoundCloud, but the app is much more akin to the song-identifying tool Shazam. SoundHound has had a big redesign to make it easier to navigate, and its song recognition is noticeably faster – and now entirely voice activated. Say "OK Hound, what's this song?" to get a quick ID of that mystery ditty you can't stop humming, or the song being blasted out in the shop you're in. You can then connect with Spotify or use the embedded YouTube player to play songs full-length, and sing along with the lyrics or let it play in the background while you use other apps.



Our rating



UPDATED

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

PUZZLES

Sidewords

milkbag.me/sidewords

Price: £2.89 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)

 5  8

Give your grey cells a workout with hundreds of Sunday newspaper-style logic word games, all original to Sidewords. There are three new games every day, of various levels and lengths.



SOCIAL & NEWS

Fenix 2 for Twitter

bit.ly/fenix433

Price: £2.19

 5

This excellent Twitter client app lets you pick up reading your feed where you left off, juggle multiple accounts, import GIFs and preview media in your feed.



CAMERA

Evidence Camera

bit.ly/evidence433

Price: 89p

 3

This app adds a visible date and time



tag to your photos, using your device's built-in light to illuminate details, even in the dark. It's ideal for capturing car registration plates and other identifying evidence.

NAVIGATION

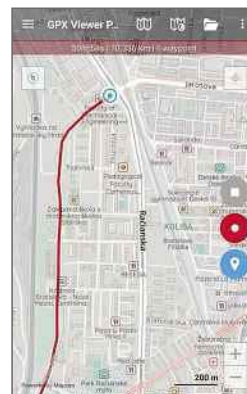
GPX Viewer Pro

bit.ly/gpxviewer433

Price: £3.99

 4.0.3

Record and track offline vector routes using GPX, LOC and other navigation files used by tools including Google Maps and OpenStreetMap. There's also a free version (bit.ly/gpxfree433), but it doesn't let you record routes.



GOLF

Simple Golf GPS

bit.ly/golf433

Price: £1.19

 4.4

Get a fast, accurate distance from your golf ball to the hole. Tap the Google Map where you want your shot to land to get a bird's-eye prediction of your shot. The rest is up to you!



Sidewords



Fenix 2 for Twitter



Evidence Camera



GPX Viewer Pro



Simple Golf GPS

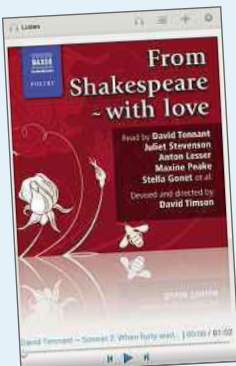


Don't install...

From Shakespeare With Love

bit.ly/love433

To pay or not to pay, that is the question. Forsooth, No! Given the pedigree of its creator Naxos (www.naxosaudiobooks.com), we had high hopes for this £2.49 audio collection of



Shakespeare's Sonnets, read by actors including David Tennant and Maxine Peake. But users who coughed up to download it found the audio didn't work – and Naxos hasn't fixed the problem. In fact, it all but abandoned the app in 2013, despite still letting you buy it.

...Install this instead

The Sonnets By Shakespeare

bit.ly/sonnets433

 2.3.3

The Play Store is rife with Shakespeare apps that art unfit for any place but Hell, so it took us a while to find a decent alternative to From Shakespeare With Love. Even this one has its faults – the full-screen ads are vexatious – but it does at least deliver the full text and an audio option for all 154 of the Bard's sonnets. Contents are fully searchable, so you can easily find a verse to fit your mood, and the Share button lets you copy a sonnet's entire text to your clipboard with one tap. The actors may not be as high-profile as David Tennant, but their delivery is clear, faithful and British-accented. ■





Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our British-film emoji and solve our word puzzle?

**WIN A
WEB USER
MUG!**

Email your answers to
webuser@dennis.co.uk
- one correct entry
will win a
Web User mug



CAN YOU GUESS THE BRITISH FILMS FROM THE EMOJI?

1



2



3



4



5



6



WEB USER WORD PUZZLE

Enter the answers in the grid to reveal a tech-related term in the highlighted column

- 1 Queen of Ancient Egypt
- 2 Sign of the Zodiac represented by a fish-tailed goat
- 3 Very large tropical snake, native to South America
- 4 Band whose hits include *Good Vibrations* and *Surfin' USA* (5,4)
- 5 Actor playing the next Doctor Who
- 6 Youngest daughter of Shakespeare's *King Lear*
- 7 Staffordshire racecourse
- 8 UK Prime Minister, 1979-90

1								
2								
	3							
4								
5								
6								
7								
	8							

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 4 Penclic R2 Wireless Mouse

The ergonomic Penclic R2 Mouse looks, feels and moves like a pen, letting you benefit from the natural control in your fingertips and hands. Your forearm rests on your work surface as you move the screen cursor, preventing RSI in your arms, shoulders and neck. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'R2' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.penclic.se and follow @Penclic on Twitter.



WORTH
£59.99
EACH

WIN 1 OF 4 Acronis True Image 2018 (3PCs)

The 2018 version of Acronis True Image includes major updates to the program's backup and recovery capabilities, and is the first backup software to use artificial intelligence-based technology to actively protect your data against ransomware. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'acronis' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.acronis.com and follow @Acronis on Twitter.



WORTH
£55.99
EACH

? FAQ

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

Apple's new products

The pricey new iPhone wasn't the only trick up Apple's sleeve at its recent launch event. **David Crookes** reveals all



iPhone X

What is it?

The iPhone X (pronounced "ten") is the latest version of Apple's flagship device and its most advanced smartphone yet. Launched to mark the 10th anniversary of the iPhone, it uses the new iOS 11 operating system to its full potential.

Where's the home button?

There isn't one. In a rather significant development, Apple has removed it, which not only makes the iPhone X the first Apple handset not to have one, but also allows for a stunning 5.8in edge-to-edge OLED screen and a lovely all-glass design. The button's removal has also spurred Apple to replace its Touch ID feature – which lets you use your fingerprint to unlock your phone, make purchases and authenticate apps – with a face-recognition system called Face ID.

What is Face ID?

Face ID uses the new front-facing TrueDepth camera, which can map your face using more than 30,000 invisible infrared dots. The pattern this forms then unlocks the iPhone X when you look at it.

Face ID can also be used to customise Apple's new animated emoji, called animoji. These 3D versions of emoji are based on your real-time facial expressions and while they're charming and fun, they are also daft and gimmicky. You'd probably use them a few times and then get bored.

Will it take better photos?

Yes, it will. The seven-megapixel TrueDepth camera takes better selfies, giving them a superior depth of field, and adds auto-image stabilisation, wide colour capture and precise exposure control. The rear dual 12-megapixel camera has a new colour filter and quad LED flash for more consistent illumination. Both cameras



iPhone 8 and iPhone 8 Plus

What, more iPhones?

As if to cushion the blow of the iPhone X's high price, Apple has released a more typical upgrade to the iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus. This means it has skipped the expected 7S range – although, given that iPhone X is pronounced “ten” (what happened to 9?), it seems that logical ordering is out the window.

Why are they interesting?

These are the phones most Apple users are likely to buy and they benefit from a new design that uses durable, wipe-clean, water- and dust-proof glass and aluminium. They stop short of having an edge-to-edge display, which means they retain the Touch ID Home button.

How do they differ to the iPhone X?

Both the 8 and 8 Plus use the X's powerful A11 Bionic chip. They also have augmented-reality capabilities, wireless charging and an improved 12-megapixel rear camera. You don't get the X's OLED screen, enhanced front-facing camera or face recognition, though.

When are they out and how much will they cost?

You can buy one in store or online today. The 4.7in iPhone 8 costs from £699, while the 5.5in 8 Plus starts at £799. Both are available in space grey, silver and gold. Of course, as with the iPhone X, you'll be able to get them on a monthly payment plan to help spread the pain.

Apple TV 4K

What is it?

This fifth-generation version of the Apple TV set-top box is aimed squarely at people who have 4K televisions. It delivers content in Ultra HD (that's 2,160p rather than the 1080p of standard HD) as well as High Dynamic Range 10, which offers a greater range of contrast and colour, and Dolby Vision.

Why is it interesting?

Aside from allowing Apple TV to catch up with the growing number of 4K TV purchases and third-party Ultra HD



services, such as that offered by Netflix, Apple is giving iTunes users an automatic free 4K upgrade of any HD title they've bought. The box also recognises when a 4K TV is connected and optimises its output for the best quality image, aided by its faster A10X Fusion chip.

Is Apple's TV app coming to the UK, too?

It is indeed. Having debuted in the US, Apple announced that its TV app will soon be heading to our shores. This lets you search for and watch content from broadcasters such as ITV and Channel 5 in a single app. Amazon Video will be added later this year.

When is it out and how much will it cost?

Apple TV 4K is out now, and costs £179 for the 32GB version and £199 for 64GB.

work with the iPhone X's accelerometers and gyroscopes to create an enhanced augmented-reality experience.

What about battery life?

Apple promises that the iPhone X's battery will last two hours longer than the iPhone 7's, so you shouldn't need to charge it as often. Apple has also caught up with wireless charging and will release an AirPower wireless charging device next year. You'll also be able to use Qi charging mats.

When is it out and how much will it cost?

Pre-orders will be accepted from 27 October and the device will be available in stores from 5 November. You'll need deep pockets, though, because the iPhone X will cost £999 for the 64GB version and an eye-watering £1,149 for the 256GB model. Whether or not Face ID will have you weeping to your bank manager is another matter.

Apple Watch Series 3

What is it?

It's the latest version of Apple's smartwatch, which uses the new dedicated operating system WatchOS 4.

Why is it interesting?

The new Watch addresses one of the biggest complaints about previous versions: the need to have it close to your iPhone. By introducing a cellular version, it now works independently so you can leave your phone at home and still make calls. It's also 70% faster than the previous S2 version, and has a new barometric altimeter to track elevation data.

When is it available?

You can buy one right now. It costs £329 for the non-cellular model and £399 for the LTE-enabled version (a tiny SIM is built in) but be aware that it currently only works on the EE mobile network. There's a £5-a-month tariff for existing EE iPhone-contract holders.



FASTER Wi-Fi WHEREVER YOU ARE

**COVER
FEATURE**

Don't let weak Wi-Fi and unreliable mobile signals slow you down. **Wayne Williams** reveals how to get optimum download and streaming speeds, both at home and on the move



Internet-connected devices have become so much a part of our lives that it's easy to take Wi-Fi for granted until it starts misbehaving – slowing to a crawl or disappearing altogether. Whether at home or out and about, we feel lost without it, and trying to download or stream content over a sluggish wireless connection can ruin your day.

Fortunately, there are plenty of tricks you can employ to combat flaky Wi-Fi, wherever you are and whatever device you're using. In this cover feature, we reveal the

newest and most effective ways to supercharge your Wi-Fi and mobile data speeds, so you can download everything you want in seconds. Over the next five pages, we explain how to reduce your data usage, optimise your settings and identify and fix common speed problems, either by upgrading your hardware, installing helpful apps or simply tweaking your device's settings.

We also take a close look at Three's new Go Binge deal, which lets customers stream unlimited entertainment from several popular services for free.

FASTER WI-FI ON THE GO

Get a mobile Wi-Fi (Mi-Fi) router

You can use your smartphone to create a mobile hotspot that other devices can connect to, which is useful for areas where Wi-Fi is slow or unavailable.

On an iPhone, go to Settings, Personal Hotspot and turn on that option. Connect to the new hotspot using the generated password. The process on Android phones varies depending on the version of the OS, but in most cases you can go to Settings, 'Wireless and Networks' and open More Settings. Select 'Tethering and Portable Hotspot', and Activate Portable Wi-Fi Hotspots.

Mi-Fi (Mobile Wi-Fi) works in the same way, and lets you connect multiple devices to a single 4G data SIM so you can get online anywhere and enjoy reliable speeds. For this, you will need to buy a Mi-Fi router such as the TP-Link M7350 4G Mobile Router, which costs £75 from Amazon (bit.ly/tplink433). It uses any SIM and allows you to connect up to 10 devices, and offers selectable 2.4GHz and 5GHz dual-band Wi-Fi.

It's likely that your mobile phone provider will offer a Mi-Fi router on a contract. O2, for example, offers the Huawei 4G Pocket Hotspot Plus (bit.ly/huawei433, pictured below) for £19.99 upfront, and £11 a month with 2GB of 4G data and free O2 Wi-Fi. There are plenty of other payment plans available, depending on how much data you require, and you can even buy the router upfront for £67.99, which reduces

the plan cost (still with 2GB of 4G data) to £9 a month. It's definitely worth considering as a means of enjoying a speedy Wi-Fi network wherever you go.

Stop connecting to slow networks

Sometimes, a free Wi-Fi connection can be slower than a 3G or 4G connection – we've certainly found that to be the case in a lot of coffee shops, where the signal is weak or the network is congested. Provided you have a flexible mobile data plan, it's worth avoiding these bad hotspots by making Android forget them, which means your phone or tablet won't automatically connect when in range.



Forget Wi-Fi hotspots that offer slower speeds than your mobile connection

First, you should review all your saved wireless hotspots, which you can do by tapping Settings, Wi-Fi. This brings up the list of Wi-Fi networks in range. Tap the three-dot menu in the top-right corner and select 'Saved networks' to display all the hotspots you've connected to in the past including, probably, quite a few you've forgotten about or only connected to once.

Select a hotspot you don't want any more, then tap Forget and it will be removed from your list, so your device will no longer automatically connect to it in the future. You can easily reconnect to a forgotten hotspot manually, should you want to.

Switch to a fast hotspot in Oreo

The latest version of Google's mobile operating system – Android 8.0 Oreo – has a new feature that lets your device automatically – and seamlessly – switch from one hotspot to another, without

you needing to enter any login credentials.

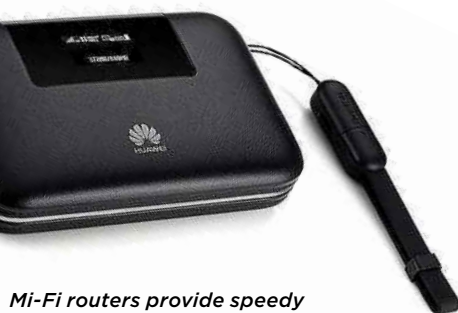
The Wi-Fi-certified Passpoint (also known as Hotspot 2.0) launched in 2012 and is now part of Oreo, although it may not be available in all handsets running the new version of the OS because Google has made it an optional (albeit recommended) feature.



Speed up aeroplane Wi-Fi

If you've ever tried to use free Wi-Fi on a plane, you'll know it can be frustratingly slow. This is because there's only a small amount of bandwidth available and this has to be shared between all the passengers. You can't speed up aeroplane Wi-Fi as such, but your own device could be partially responsible for the lack of speed.

Before you board your flight, make sure all your apps are up to date (so they don't try to update via the plane's slow Wi-Fi) and turn off background updating for all apps via Settings. You should also disable photo backup. If you plan to visit a particular site while in the sky, load it beforehand, so the page gets cached by your browser. This means only the updated elements need to be downloaded.

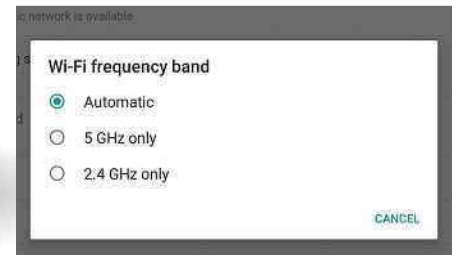


Mi-Fi routers provide speedy downloads to multiple devices wherever you are

FASTER WI-FI AT HOME



Set up a Google Wifi mesh network to speed up Wi-Fi around your home



Make sure your Android device always connects to the faster 5GHz band

Set up a mesh Wi-Fi network

If you live in a big house or your home has thick walls and floors, there's a good chance that your wireless signal won't reach everywhere and you'll probably have weak areas and dead spots. Buying a Wi-Fi range extender or repeater will help speed up your downloading, streaming and browsing, but a much better solution nowadays is to upgrade your Wi-Fi to a mesh network.

This modular Wi-Fi system comprises multiple access points that work together to blanket your home with fast, stable coverage, so you should experience the same quality of Wi-Fi in every area of your property. You start with one device that connects to your modem, then add others around the house. It's not the cheapest solution, but it delivers the best results, so if strong Wi-Fi in every room is a priority, it's definitely worth the expense.

One of the best options is Google Wifi (bit.ly/gwifi433) – a smart looking mesh

product that's easy to set up and manage, with everything controlled via an app on your phone or tablet. A single Google Wifi unit costs £129, while a twin pack will set you back £229.

Another option is the Linksys Velop (bit.ly/velop433). On Amazon, a single unit costs £179.99, a twin pack is £249.99, and a triple pack is £379.99. It also works with Amazon's personal assistant, Alexa, so you can control it using your voice.

Force Android devices to use the fastest band

Modern Wi-Fi routers offer radio signals in either the 2.4GHz or 5GHz frequency bands. For equipment that supports it, the 5GHz band is superior because it tends to be less congested and supports significantly higher maximum data rates – so downloads and streaming should be much faster.

By default, your devices will automatically connect to what they view

to be the best band, but you can force your Android phone or tablet to only connect to the faster 5GHz band. To do this, go to Settings and tap Wi-Fi. Tap the three-dot menu in the top-right corner and select Advanced. Select 'Wi-Fi frequency band' and, in the box that pops up, select '5GHz only'.

Test all your connection speeds – Wi-Fi, 3G and 4G

It's easy to check the speed of your wireless connection – just run a tester such as Ookla Speedtest (www.speedtest.net), which is available on the web and as an app for all mobile devices. Another option is OpenSignal (opensignal.com) which is available for both iOS and Android. It not only checks the speed of your different networks – including Wi-Fi, 3G and 4G – but also shows you how well your mobile network compares with those from rival providers.

We particularly like that OpenSignal



MINI WORKSHOP | Check your network speed using OpenSignal

1 OpenSignal starts on the Find Signal screen. The compass at the top **1** points you in the direction of the source of your mobile signal and tells you what it is, who it's provided by and its strength. Tapping the compass will display local cell towers on a map. You can also find local Wi-Fi. **2**



2 Tap Speed Test **1** at the bottom, then tap Start. **2** This will run a test on your current connection – Wi-Fi, if that's what you're using, but otherwise your mobile connection. Speeds can be shared **3** and you can check past results in the History section. **4**



3 Tap the Coverage button **1** and the map will show mobile data for your local area. Tap Compare Performance **2** to see how your network compares with others for speed. You can filter the results by operator (EE, O2, Vodafone and so on), **3** and by network type (2G/3G/4G). **4**





Test your connection speed and track your data usage with OpenSignal

shows your data usage – mobile and Wi-Fi – over a set period of time, so you can identify when and where you might be downloading or streaming excessively.

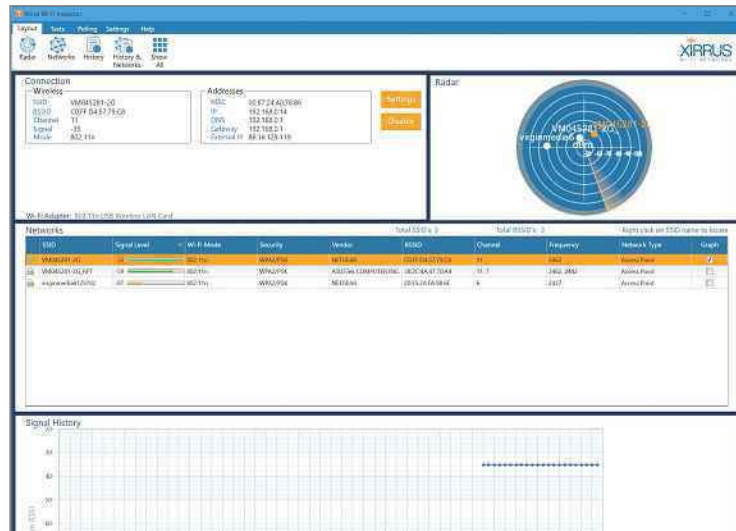
See our Mini Workshop below left to find out how to use OpenSignal.

Spot and stop Wi-Fi thieves

Provided you're using wireless security along with a strong password, the chances of anyone piggybacking on your Wi-Fi connection are slim, but you should check to make sure by using Bitdefender Home Scanner (bit.ly/bdhs433).

This free tool scans your Wi-Fi network and devices to look for weak passwords, as well as vulnerable or poorly encrypted communications. In addition to spotting potentially unwanted users on your home Wi-Fi, who could be slowing down your downloads and streams, it offers detailed security recommendations for your network. To use the software, install and run it, then click the Start Using Home Scanner button. Confirm that you're running it on your home network and it will go to work.

Another way to expose neighbours leeching your Wi-Fi is to use Who's On My Wifi (www.whoisonmywifi.com), which displays a list of all connected devices that you can go through and identify. The software runs in the background, scanning your network every five minutes, and alerts you when any unknown devices are found.



Use Xirrus Wi-Fi Inspector to identify the cause of slow downloads

Troubleshoot common problems

Identifying the cause of slow or problematic Wi-Fi isn't always easy. Sluggish downloads can be the result of congestion; too many people on your network using the connection at the same time; objects or electrical items degrading the signal; incompatible devices; or your neighbours broadcasting on the same wireless channel as you.

Xirrus Wi-Fi Inspector (www.xirrus.com/inspector) can help you find, connect to and troubleshoot a wireless network. It provides details about your current connection, including the SSID (name), Channel, and Mac and IP Addresses. A real-time graph shows the signal strength and history, while a dynamic radar shows all other connections in range, including their names and relative distance.

Detect local Wi-Fi interference

If your wireless signal is suffering as a result of stronger Wi-Fi nearby, you can use the free – but ad-supported – Wifi Analyzer for Android (bit.ly/wifia433)



Discover if nearby Wi-Fi networks are interfering with your current one

Description	MAC Address	Last Computer Name	Last IP Address	Connected	Remote
THREIN NAME	9C:4C:3E:5F:82:83	THREIN NAME	192.168.0.101	YES	UNKNOWN
MAC Address	9C:4C:3E:5F:82:83	THREIN NAME	192.168.0.101	YES	UNKNOWN
PERSONAL PHONE	70:1A:0B:0F:03:03	PERSONAL PHONE	192.168.0.104	YES	UNKNOWN
PERSONAL PHONE	50:11:75:56:03:03	PERSONAL PHONE	192.168.0.101	YES	UNKNOWN
PERSONAL PHONE	8C:1A:0B:0F:03:03	PERSONAL PHONE	192.168.0.101	YES	UNKNOWN
PERSONAL PHONE	70:1A:0B:0F:03:03	PERSONAL PHONE	192.168.0.101	YES	UNKNOWN

'Who's On My Wi-Fi' will show you thieves stealing your Wi-Fi

to track down the problem. It shows all the wireless points nearby – including your own – along with their signal strength and the channel they are broadcasting on. This information will help you troubleshoot any problems and shift to the best channel. You can switch between bands – 2.4GHz and 5GHz – and change the view from Channel Graph to Time Graph, Channel Rating, AP (access point) List or Signal Meter.

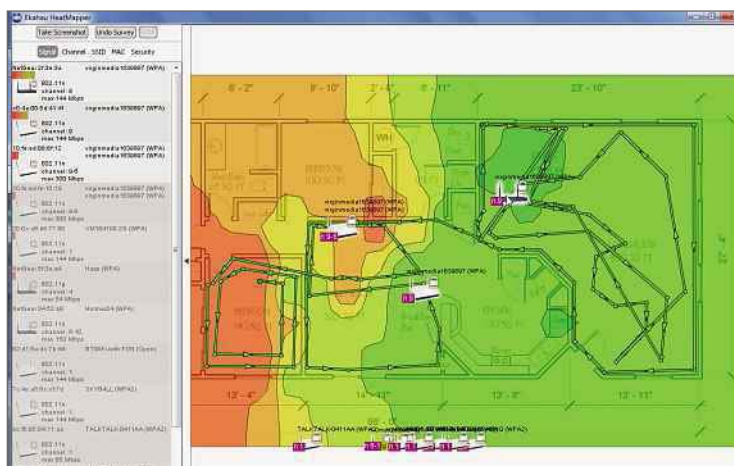
Look for dead spots to eliminate

Your wireless signal can be degraded by all manner of things in your home, including thick walls, floors, furniture, power cables and electrical devices – most notably, microwave ovens. You can identify weak areas and dead spots by creating a Wi-Fi heat map of your home using Ekahau Heatmapper (bit.ly/heat433) to determine the fastest spot for carrying out urgent downloading. You'll need to install it on a laptop or Windows tablet, rather than a desktop PC, because you have to move around your living space to measure the signal.

Heatmapper works best if you have a map of your home to begin with – this can be a blueprint or something you've drawn yourself (as close to scale as possible). You can still use the software if you don't have a map, but the results won't be as useful.

To create the heatmap, move a few feet at a time and click to measure the Wi-Fi at that point to build up a colour-coded map. In addition to your own

Create a heat map of your home to find the fastest places to download



network, you can check any nearby Wi-Fi sources (ones belonging to a neighbour or the local Starbucks, for example) to see how they might be impacting on your signal.

See how apps perform on your current network

Most apps should run fine on your wireless connection but if you find that certain tools are a little sluggish, you can perform a speed test that will highlight potential problems. For this, you will need to install Meteor from

OpenSignal (meteor.opensignal.com). At the time of writing, this is currently only available for Android but a version for iOS is due shortly.

When you run a test, the service will check the download, upload and 'ping' speeds of your wireless connection, then show you how major apps – such as YouTube, Gmail and Facebook – perform. Ideally, they should be labelled as Awesome. You can choose which apps you want to check.

Meteor's Dashboard lets you see how performance compares across



Meteor lets you check the speed of specific apps over your Wi-Fi network

a selection of test locations, and you can filter this by Best or Worst. You can also check performance history. Updating an app to its latest version may help solve any problems with the app's speed.

REDUCE YOUR DATA USAGE

Reduce your data with Opera

Opera Max was an excellent data-saving app for Android that managed to speed up your browsing over both wireless and mobile networks by compressing content before it reached your phone, which meant you downloaded less data. Unfortunately, Opera recently made the decision to kill the app in order to focus more on its browsers.

Still, it's not all bad news. The Opera Browser for Android (bit.ly/operab433) blocks ads, which reduces some of your data usage, and it also compresses videos (you can disable this feature if you don't like the results). The browser has a built-in data-saving mode, too, that uses compression to load pages faster on sluggish networks.

Opera Mini (www.opera.com/mobile) is another browser from the same developer that claims to reduce your data needs by up to 90%. It also comes with an ad blocker, a built-in video downloader (which, annoyingly, doesn't work with YouTube) and an intelligent download manager for getting files faster. You can check your data savings in the Settings menu.

Unlike the Opera Browser, Opera Mini is available for both Android and iOS.

Reduce data using DataEye

DataEye (bit.ly/dataeye433) also significantly trims your mobile data usage, albeit in a more basic way than the old Opera Max. It simply allows you to choose which of your apps can use

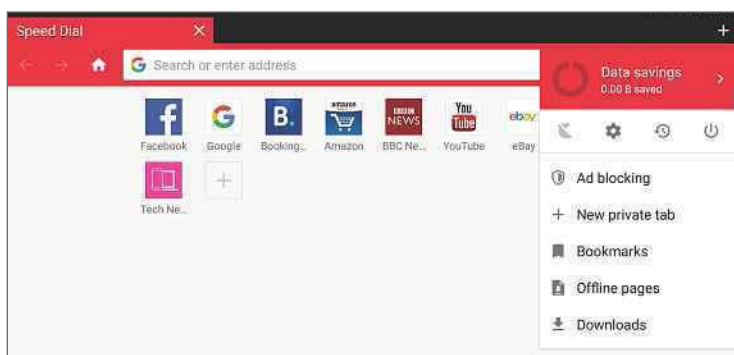


DataEye lets you control which of your apps get priority access to data

your mobile connection, prioritising your download so you don't have to wait while an unimportant app clogs up the connection to pull inessential data from the web.

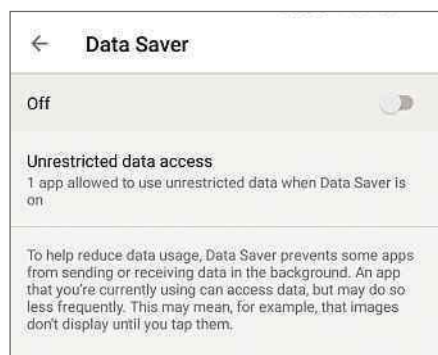
You can view the data savings you've made as a result of this streamlining, and discover which apps consume the most data over time. Usefully, DataEye lets you unblock any apps for 10 minutes at a time (or permanently), and the app has special offers that reward you with extra data for free – although these don't yet seem to be available in the UK.

Opera Mini potentially reduces your data usage by up to 90%



Use less data on Android

The latest versions of Android, Nougat and Oreo have a handy Data Saver feature that stops your smartphone from consuming too much mobile data in the background. Once enabled, it ensures that apps and services can only get their background data via Wi-Fi. Not only does this prevent you from going over your usage cap, it also has the benefit of speeding up browsing and downloading, because the available bandwidth doesn't have to be shared with apps performing actions in the background. Additionally, it asks apps to use less data in the foreground.



Android's Data Saver feature stops apps hogging your mobile connection

To activate Data Saver, open Settings and go to Network & Internet, Data Usage (the exact location will vary depending on your phone). Select Data Saver and turn it on. Not all apps work with this feature, so if you find one that can't handle being blocked from access to background data, you can add it as an exception. Open Settings, go to Network & Internet, Data Usage and select Data Saver. Select Unrestricted Data Access, then enable the app or service that you want to allow to have access to mobile data while this mode is active.

Use a mobile download manager

Thanks to superfast broadband connections, download managers aren't

STREAM UNLIMITED DATA

Three recently introduced a new Go Binge deal (bit.ly/gobinge433), which lets you stream your favourite shows and music without using up any of your data allowance.

Unsurprisingly, this doesn't come without restrictions, and you can only stream unlimited content from Three's media partners – Netflix, TVPlayer, Deezer and SoundCloud. It's possible that more may be added in the future, but for now those are your choices. Also, if you want to stream Netflix, you will need to have a subscription to it.

The deal is available to all new or upgrading Three customers with an Advanced plan of 4GB and above. While streaming with one of the partner services won't eat into your data plan, you still need some of your



GoBinge lets you stream unlimited data without touching your allowance

monthly data allowance left to use the feature.

Most users will welcome this zero-rated streaming (as it's known), although a more sceptical take is that it's a subtle form of advertising – companies such as Netflix are buying your attention and will ultimately gain more customers as a result.

as essential on PCs as they once were. However, they can come in handy on mobile devices, where they accelerate downloads and let you resume any that fail.

For Android devices, you can install Advanced Download Manager (bit.ly/admanager433) which can usefully fetch up to three files simultaneously. As with PC download managers, it breaks each file into multiple pieces for downloading concurrently, saving you a lot of time when on the move. The app is free to install, but contains adverts.

On iOS, you can try Total Downloader (bit.ly/total433) which lets you start multiple downloads, and pause and restart them. It's also ad-supported, and some reviewers have complained that these get in the way, ruining what is an otherwise excellent experience – so bear that in mind.

Another app worth trying is Offline



Grab files faster on the go using the mobile download manager Offline

(bit.ly/offline433), which provides resumable downloads, queues, progress details and error reports. It also auto-renames files, making them easy to find and manage.

The app description claims that "only non-audiovisual files are supported for downloading due to store guidelines", but we found it happily grabbed videos from most popular video-sharing sites, including YouTube. It, too, contains adverts. ■

NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 18 October 2017

WHATSAPP SECRET TIPS



Unlock the best hidden tools in the world's favourite messaging service

PLUS...

⚙️ AUTOMATE YOUR HOME

Control household devices over the web using smart plugs

📱 IOS 11 UNCOVERED

Everything you need to know about Apple's latest mobile OS

🔇 STOP AUTOPLAYING

Mute and disable annoying videos and adverts on any site

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Best free home-surveillance software

If you've got an old webcam, IP camera or even a phone that you no longer use, you can combine them with clever, free software to create a security system for monitoring your home.

Andy Shaw tests six of the best



Ivideon | bit.ly/ivid433 | ★★★★★

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

**WebUser
GOLD
AWARD**

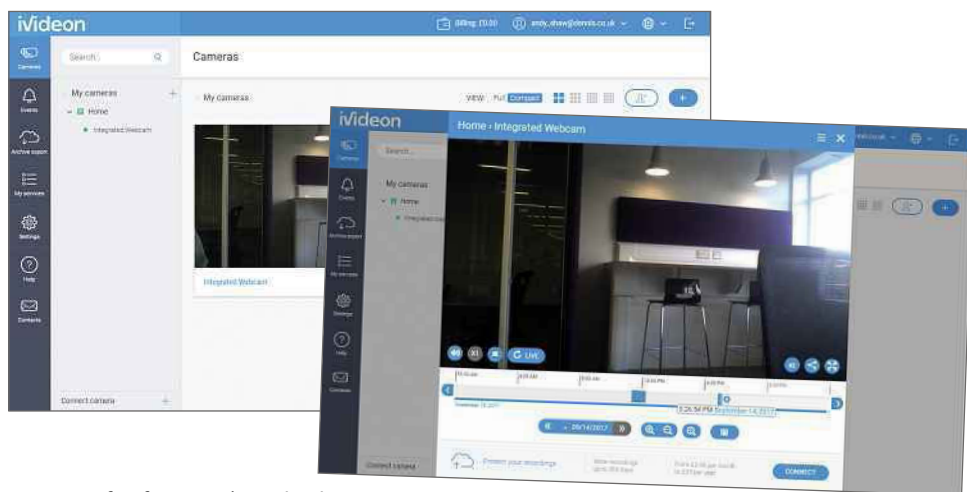
What we liked:

Ivideon uses a server and client system. You install the server software on a PC that either already has a camera connected or is able to access one over your home network.

This PC has to be switched on for the surveillance software to operate. You then install client software on the other computers (there are apps for mobile devices) to access the live streams and any footage saved by your server.

The system works really well if you already have a webcam built into a laptop that you're planning to use as the server. Install the software on it, leave the laptop switched on and the webcam will monitor all movement that goes on around it. It's very easy to connect another camera, whether it's a webcam attached to another device or a more sophisticated standalone network security camera, as long as it hasn't been locked to a particular service by its manufacturer.

The software is free for up to two cameras, accessible from two other devices, and includes the option to store camera footage on Ivideon's cloud service for 24 hours. If you don't need remote access, you can install more



cameras for free – otherwise it costs \$4 per month (around £3) per camera to add more.

The server uploads data from your PC to Ivideon's website, so it's very straightforward to set up because you don't need to get embroiled in port forwarding to bypass your router's security. This means there's a slight delay on live video streams, but it's only a second or two.

How it can be improved:

The limits on the number of cameras you can use and the amount of footage you can store online – as well as the length of time it's available for – are too

restrictive. Monthly and annual prices are charged on a per-camera basis so the costs will ramp up if you want to expand your system.

OUR VERDICT

If you're happy to keep things small – monitoring one or two cameras and keeping on top of the limits for storing footage online – Ivideon is a wonderful system that's simple to set up and use. However, adding extra cameras and increasing your online storage will push up costs.

AtHome Camera | www.ichano.com | ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

**WebUser
SILVER
AWARD**

What we liked:

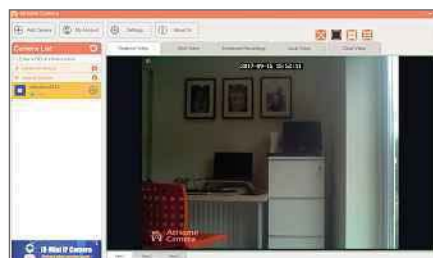
If you've got a lot of old webcams, network cameras or camera-equipped mobile devices kicking around, AtHome Camera provides an efficient way to turn them into a home-security system. As with Ivideon, you download either the server software to stream the footage to the internet; or the camera software to view the footage on another device.

The standout bonus is that the camera software can manage lots of cameras at the same time, so your only limit on the number of locations you can monitor is the number of cameras that you have available. This only applies to live streams, though.

Saving footage online so you can view it later costs \$4.99 per month (around £3.69), though you can buy time in bulk and pay slightly less (around £2.84 per month for 12 months).

How it could be improved:

The software focuses on live streaming,



though you can set devices to record at a particular time – if you want to catch your kids coming home from school, for example. Also, the option to have so many devices means it's tricky to figure out how everything works – a situation that isn't helped by the minimal documentation.

OUR VERDICT

AtHome Camera excels at live streaming, so you can check in on a location when you need to, and you can set up as many cameras as you like. However, you'll have to pay if you want to store footage online for replaying at a later date.

ContaCam | bit.ly/con433 | ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

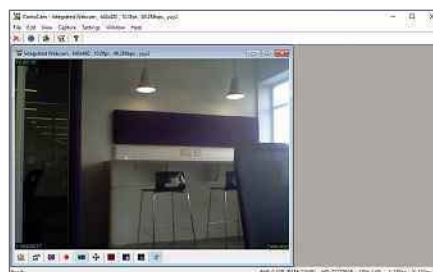
**WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD**

What we liked:

ContaCam is a purely functional piece of software and very little thought has been put into its aesthetic design. That said, it's really easy to set up because, when you first launch it, instructions appear that allow the software to recognise any available cameras, including webcams and network devices. Once you've added a camera, you're taken straight to its settings so you can make sure everything is set up just right before you start monitoring.

Once the camera is running, footage is recorded straight to your hard drive. It also creates a web page, hosted on your PC, with animated thumbnails of detected movement. Again, it's not the most beautifully designed tool but it does the job with an admirable lack of hassle – you don't have to get to grips with any tricky processes.

Because it doesn't rely on external servers, there's no online service to pay for, making this the only software in our round-up that's completely free.



How it can be improved:

Because ContaCam doesn't use an online service, viewing the web page on a remote computer is a bit more complicated. There are no client apps or programs available so you'll need to configure port forwarding on your router to access your footage for when you're away from your network.

OUR VERDICT

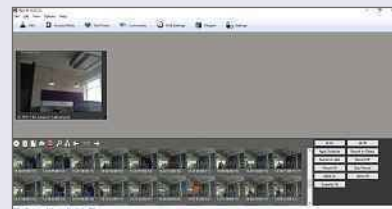
ContaCam is completely free and self-contained, but its interface looks dated compared to its rivals and you need to fiddle with your router settings to view your footage away from your home network.

BEST OF THE REST

iSpy

www.ispyconnect.com

iSpy is open-source software that's free to use and install. Similar to Ivideon, it monitors cameras over a home network for free, but if you want to view footage remotely and benefit from any extra features such as email and text message alerts, you'll need to subscribe. Plans start at \$7.95 per month (around £5.89), which is a bit more expensive than its rivals. Its interface isn't as good looking, either.



Yawcam

www.yawcam.com

Yawcam is general webcam software, so it's not a match for the other programs we've featured, though you can set it to live-stream footage to the web and it includes motion detection, so it could be used for a single-camera setup. However, it's starting to look dated and requires Java to run, which a lot of people are reluctant to install because of previous security problems.



IP Camera Viewer

bit.ly/desk433

If you're happy to sit and watch streaming footage on one or more security cameras (webcams and IP cameras are its speciality), then this is ideal. It can support up to four cameras and will happily let you focus on a single camera or divide your screen into quarters to show them all. What you can't do with the free version is record anything, so this is only useful if you want to monitor what's going on right now.



Should you... **STOP USING** **FIREFOX?**



Firefox was once the browser of choice for savvy web users, but then Chrome took over. **Robert Irvine** examines what went wrong – and what can be done

Back in Issue 251 of *Web User*, we celebrated the release of Firefox 4 by publishing a complete guide to the “brilliant new browser”, with “every new tool revealed”. Seven years later, as Mozilla prepares to launch version 57, the situation couldn’t be more different. Chrome has a 55% market share compared with Firefox’s 6%, innovation is sorely lacking and each release seems to remove rather than add

something useful. In fairness, Mozilla has only been following the trend for incremental updates and, as a non-profit organisation, it can’t match the millions Google spends on Chrome or ensure Firefox is preinstalled on mobile devices. We still think the organisation made mistakes that hastened the browser’s decline, though, and addressing some of these may yet save Firefox from the flames.



X **ADDING UNWANTED FEATURES**

One of the best things about Firefox is that you can customise it using the add-ons of your choice. So when, a couple of years ago, Mozilla started integrating features such as video-call service Hello and read-it-later tool Pocket with the browser, it felt as if they were being forced on us. Similarly, tweaks made to the interface seemed unnecessary – especially the Australis makeover in Firefox 29, which removed the Add-ons bar and replaced the orange menu button with the ‘hamburger’ menu. In 2014, Mozilla even started to show adverts – sorry, ‘sponsored tiles’ – on the New Tab page, prompting a huge backlash from users, which persuaded the company to ditch the feature the following year.



What can be done?

Mozilla seems to have seen the error of its ways, and it now asks for users’ feedback on new features through its



Test Pilot program (testpilot.firefox.com) rather than simply foisting them on us. Current experiments include Snooze Tabs, which reduces memory usage by putting idle tabs ‘to sleep’ until later; and Voice Fill, which brings speech-recognition to the browser. If these tests prove unpopular or require further development, they (hopefully) won’t be built into future versions.

X **USING OUTDATED TECHNOLOGY**

For a long time, Firefox users were left wondering why Mozilla hadn’t released a 64-bit version of the browser. The Firefox-based Waterfox (www.waterfoxproject.org) and Pale Moon (www.palemoon.org) both offered 64-bit versions, and you could get 64-bit Firefox on MacOS and Linux, but poor Windows users had to wait until December 2015. Chrome’s 64-bit version was released in August 2014.

This delay typifies Mozilla’s tendency to lag behind when it comes to using the latest technology. For example, Firefox



is still powered by the ageing Gecko rendering engine (bit.ly/gecko433), whereas Chrome, Opera and Vivaldi use the more modern Blink engine, which is based on WebKit (bit.ly/webkit433). Websites are increasingly being designed for WebKit-supporting browsers, which means some pages may be unresponsive or not display properly in Firefox, and the browser feels comparatively bloated and slow.

Mozilla also used Gecko in its doomed mobile operating system, Firefox OS, which was designed as an open alternative to Android and iOS. Ultimately, Mozilla (as with Windows Phone) found those two juggernauts unstoppable.



What can be done?

Mozilla has been working on a replacement for Gecko under the name Project Quantum (bit.ly/quantum433), which will improve Firefox's rendering engine, making it faster and less resource-hungry. Developers hope to implement at least some of Quantum's improvements by the end of the year. We're also pleased to see that, as of August, 64-bit Firefox is now the default version for Windows.

X DITCHING 'LEGACY' ADD-ONS

When Firefox 57 is released on 14 November, thousands of popular Firefox extensions will stop working. That's because Mozilla will have completed its transition from 'legacy add-ons' to new-fangled WebExtensions, which it regards as the future of the browser. Add-on developers were given a fair amount of warning to update their tools, and WebExtensions have many benefits, including better security (they can be 'sandboxed' to prevent PC infection); improved performance (they're faster and use less memory); and increased flexibility (you can install them in other browsers, including Chrome, Opera and Edge).

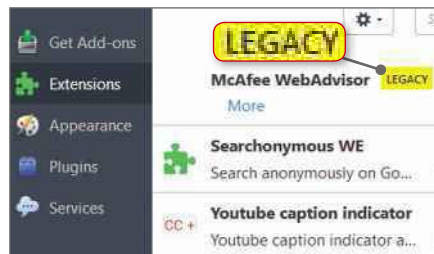


With only a month to go, however, neither the browser's users nor its developers appear to be ready for the WebExtensions era. Favourite extensions have disappeared from Mozilla's Add-ons site without warning, while others bear the giveaway message "Please note this add-on uses legacy technology". Unless a tool is specifically marked as 'Compatible with Firefox 57', you'd better start looking for an alternative that *is* compatible.

What can be done?

The beta version of Firefox 57 included an about:config option called 'extensions.legacy.enabled' that let you continue to use old add-ons, but this is likely to be removed in the stable release. To find out which of your installed extensions will stop working after next month's release, go to Tools, Add-ons, Extensions and look for entries that are marked 'Legacy'.

Fortunately, there is a workaround that will let you use your favourite legacy add-ons for longer, which is to switch to Firefox ESR (bit.ly/esr433). This Extended Support Release version of the browser is intended for businesses and schools rather than users "who want to get the latest features, performance enhancements



and technologies", but it's free for anyone to download. It's updated 24 weeks after each new release of Firefox, which means you can continue to use any favourite add-ons that haven't been upgraded to WebExtensions until 26 June 2018.

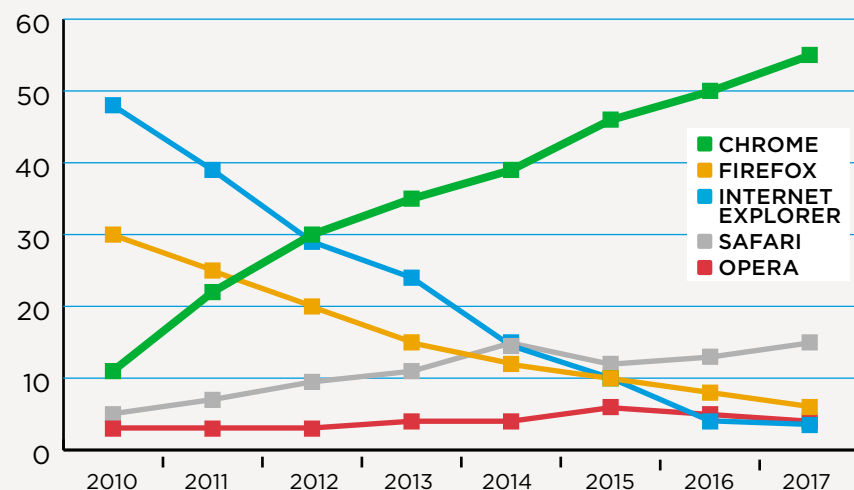
X IMITATING NOT INNOVATING

It's an open secret that until the end of 2014, Mozilla earned most of its \$300m annual revenue from its browser rival Google, for setting the search giant as the default engine in Firefox. Yahoo took over the deal in December 2014, although Google is still the default in Europe. Since then, Chrome has significantly eclipsed Firefox in popularity, and Opera and Vivaldi have shaken up notions of what browsers can do, with innovative tools including a built-in VPN, visual tabs and customisation options. Aside from ill-advised features such as Hello, Firefox has failed to come up with anything original in the past few years, and even its Sync tool, which syncs your data and settings across your devices, is a pale imitation of Chrome's.

Don't get us wrong: we always find something interesting to say about Firefox in each issue's Best New Browser Tools section, but we can't remember when the fox last blew our socks off.



FIREFOX'S SEVEN-YEAR DECLINE



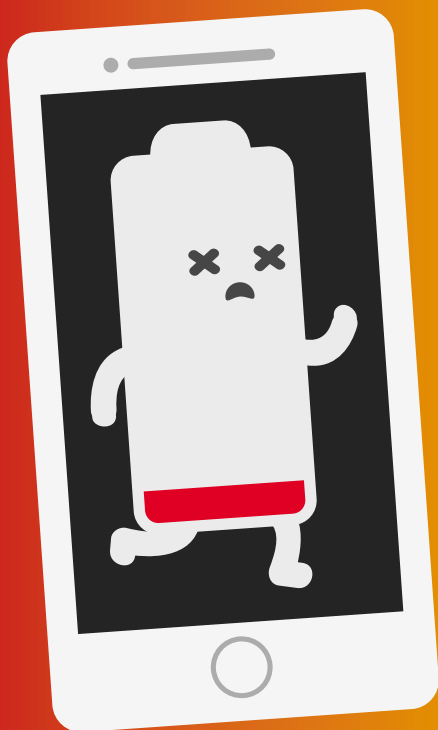
This graph shows browser market share worldwide from September 2010 to August 2017, across desktop and mobile

Source: StatCounter (gs.statcounter.com)

What can be done?

Hopefully, Firefox's 'rebirth' through WebExtensions and Quantum, and its promising Test Pilot experiments, will trigger a burst of creativity in the browser's development. Recently, Mozilla has shown a lot more concern over users' privacy than Google (which, admittedly, isn't difficult), with a blog post outlining its 'transparent' approach to data collection (bit.ly/data433). The constant strides made by Vivaldi may well give it a kick up the tail, too. ■





BOOST YOUR PHONE'S BATTERY LIFE

Tired of low-battery warnings? Remember when your phone used to get you through a whole day? **Nik Rawlinson** explains how to squeeze more hours out of a charge

Identify the battery hogs

The first step is to identify which apps are using more than their fair share of battery power. This isn't hard to do: if you're using an iPhone, open Settings, tap Battery and scroll down to Battery Usage. In Android, go to Settings, Battery. On both systems, you'll see a list of apps, ranked in descending order according to how much power they use.

There's a good chance that one or two apps will be consuming the lion's share of energy – Facebook, WhatsApp

and Google Play services are notorious offenders. You may be able to slash this by disabling features such as location services, or limiting the app's data access when running in the background. You can even uninstall or disable the

most power-hungry apps and switch to more efficient alternatives. There's no reason why you need to stick with the default apps: both Android and iOS use internal libraries for photos and music, so third-party alternatives usually provide all the same core functions.

Optimise your screen

One of the biggest drains on your phone's battery is the screen, so reducing the brightness can make a big



difference. Swipe up from the bottom of the screen on an iPhone to access the relevant controls, or drag down from the top on an Android phone.

If you prefer, you can set your Android device to adjust the brightness automatically by switching on Adaptive Brightness in Settings, Display. On an iPhone, open Settings, Display & Brightness and tap Auto-Brightness.

You can also reduce the length of time your screen stays on before automatically switching off. While it can be annoying to have your screen dim or shut down when you're reading, you can keep it active by occasionally tapping it or slightly scrolling. On iOS, you'll find this option by tapping Auto-lock on the Display & Brightness screen. You can set this to as little as 30 seconds to get the greatest benefit. On Android, open Settings, then tap Display followed by Sleep, and choose 15 seconds.

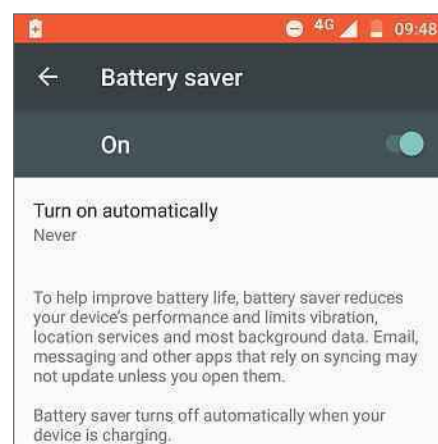
If your phone has an AMOLED screen, you can also switch your wallpaper from a colourful photo to plain black, which

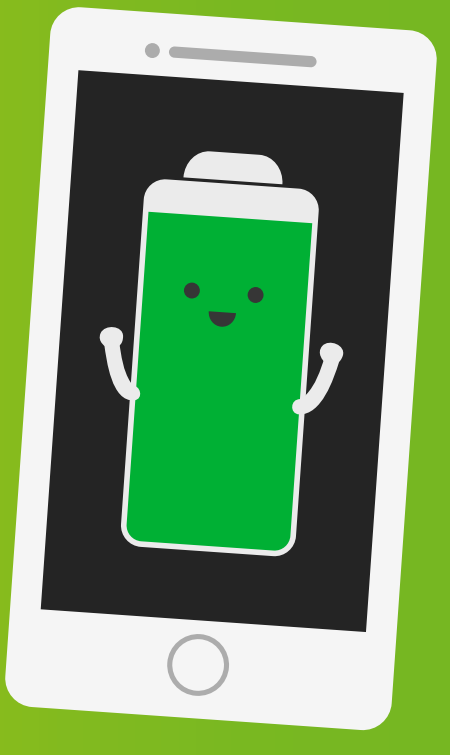
reduces power consumption by minimising the number of pixels that need to be lit up.

Disable non-essential services

You might assume that closing background apps would save battery power – but experts believe otherwise. Google even says on its support pages that “swiping apps closed doesn't save battery. You don't need to close apps unless something goes wrong.” The logic is that background apps are so tightly power-managed that it takes more energy to relaunch them each time you want to use them.

However, you may see a significant improvement in battery life if you turn off rarely used connections and background services. Swipe down on Android, or up on iOS, to access the controls for Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. Disabling these reduces battery drain, so get into the habit of turning off Bluetooth when you're not using a hands-free kit. Make sure you also turn





off tethering so you're not broadcasting an outgoing Wi-Fi network for others to connect to. If you're going to be incommunicado for a while, switch to Flight or Aeroplane mode, which disables radio connections altogether.

Another measure is to reduce the amount of background activity that goes on. Set your email application to check for new messages every hour instead of every five minutes. On an iPhone, turning off Background App Refresh in Settings makes a significant difference to your power consumption, because it disables an app's ability to download data when you're not using it.

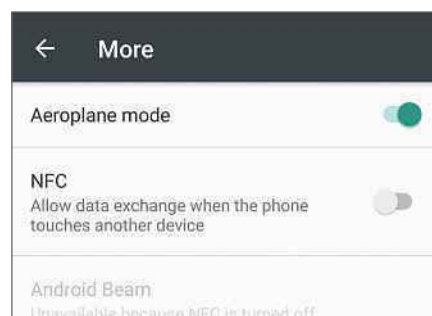
Both Android and iOS have low-power modes, which reduce the frequency at which apps update, shut down non-essential services and extend battery life. On the iPhone, this kicks in automatically when your battery level falls to 20%, and switches off again

when you charge it to above 80%. To activate it manually, open Settings, Battery and tap the switch next to Low Power Mode. On Android, swipe down from the top of the screen, tap Battery, then the three-dots icon and turn on 'Battery saver'.

Download before you travel

If you're planning a journey, you can save a huge amount of battery power by downloading maps over your home network before you leave, rather than streaming them over a 4G connection. Similarly, download music and podcasts in advance to listen to offline, and set your photos to sync to the server only when your phone's connected to Wi-Fi.

Even if you prefer to keep your mobile connection on all the time, it makes sense to disable it when you're in an area where reception is poor or non-existent. If you don't, your phone will automatically ramp up the power as it searches for weak signals. Switching to Flight or Aeroplane mode prevents it from doing this.



Charge your phone more intelligently

Battery technology has advanced significantly in the past few years, and the lithium-ion cells used in modern mobiles don't suffer from the "memory effect" that plagued older batteries.

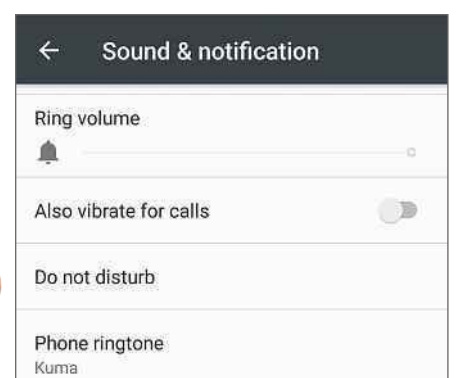


This means you don't need to worry about completely discharging and fully charging your phone every time you plug it in.

With lithium-ion, the advice is to keep the battery topped up where possible, and only rarely allow it to go through a full charging cycle (where you take it to 100%, run it flat and then fully charge it again). This is because lithium-ion cells have a finite lifespan that's determined by the number of cycles they go through. The more cycles a cell goes through, the more its total capacity degrades. A cycle doesn't need to be completed all at once. In Apple's words, "you might use 75% of your battery's capacity one day, then recharge it fully overnight. If you use 25% the next day, you will have discharged a total of 100% in the two days, which will add up to one charge cycle".

Stop your phone vibrating

If you're like us, you may prefer to keep your phone's ringer switched off, and rely on discreet vibration instead. However, this uses a motor, which can sap more energy than simply using the speaker. If you really want to keep your battery usage to a minimum, switch back to the default ringer and turn off any backup vibration. You might also choose to disable haptic feedback, which makes the phone buzz briefly to indicate that a hidden function has been activated, such as the context-sensitive menus that pop up when you press extra hard on some iOS elements. ■



BUY AN EXTERNAL BATTERY PACK

Unfortunately, there's no single trick to magically restore your phone's battery life to its performance when it was new, but a combination of the measures we've discussed in this feature should help you get through the day.

Even so, if you're planning a long journey and will be away from a socket, an external battery can be very useful. The trick here is to buy one that's the right size for your needs. Capacities are rated in milliamp-hours (mAh). To work out what this means in practice, compare this figure with the mAh capacity of your phone's internal battery. For example, the iPhone 7 uses a 1,960mAh cell, so a 10,000mAh external battery holds about five charges' worth of energy. Don't forget that the charging process is nowhere near 100% efficient – you could expect to get three or four charges before you'd need to refill the external battery.





Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

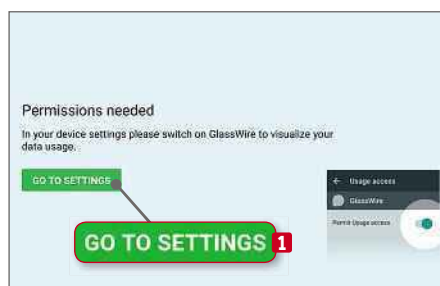
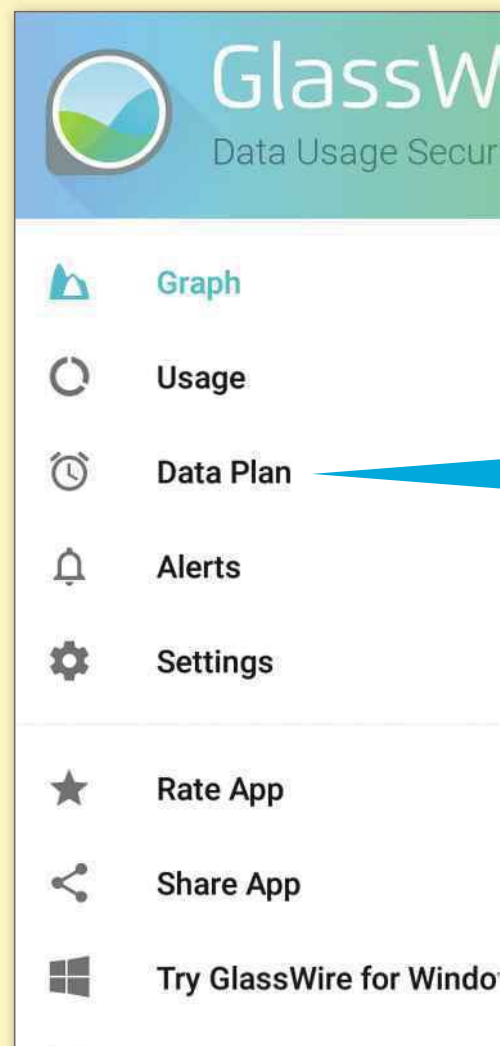
Discover which Android apps are spying on you

Use GlassWire to monitor your data use and track down apps that share your information

GlassWire: bit.ly/glass433 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🤖 Android

A surprising number of Android apps spy on their users, including those designed to measure data use, and Virtual Private Network tools that are actually meant to protect your privacy. They transmit this data to the app's developers or, worse, sell it to other companies. And finding out which apps spy on you isn't easy.

GlassWire for Android can help by showing you which apps are going online, when and how often, so you can build up a picture of their activity. It also monitors your Wi-Fi activity, mobile usage and data limits, potentially saving you money. Best of all, GlassWire's findings never leave your device, so you don't need to worry that it's also spying on you.



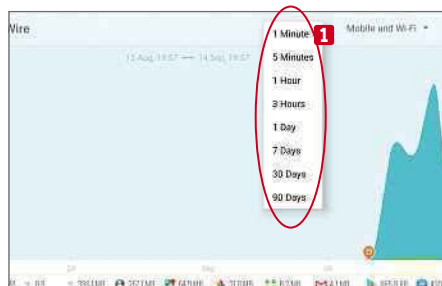
1 When you first start GlassWire, it asks for the permissions it needs to visualise your data usage. Tap the Go To Settings button **1** and on the 'Apps with usage access' screen, select GlassWire. Enable the 'Permit Usage access' option using the toggle switch. Return to the app and tap Next.



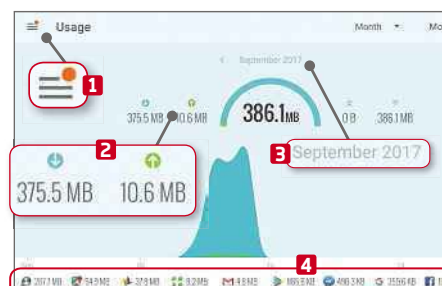
2 Allow other permission requests, and the app will start monitoring usage. It presents a real-time colour-coded graph, **1** and displays download, upload, and mobile and Wi-Fi information at the bottom, **2** as well as details of the traffic being used by apps and Android. **3** There will always be some activity here.



3 If an app suddenly starts using data (such as when Gmail checks for new messages, for example) an icon will appear on the bottom bar. Tap the icon to switch to a graph view for that particular app. **1** You shouldn't worry about this type of usage unless the figures are consistently high.



4 By default, GlassWire shows data usage for the past minute, but to get a better idea of which apps are going online too frequently, you need to extend this time frame. Tap the 1 Minute drop-down menu **1** and choose an alternative duration. This can be anything up to 90 days.



5 Tap the menu button **1** and select Usage. This shows you how much data your device has downloaded and uploaded **2** during the specified time period. **3** The bar at the bottom lists the apps responsible for this usage, **4** and the total amount of data each one has consumed.

**TIME PERIOD**

This bar shows the time period represented in the graph below

MOBILE AND WI-FI

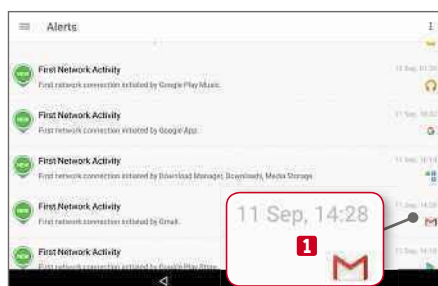
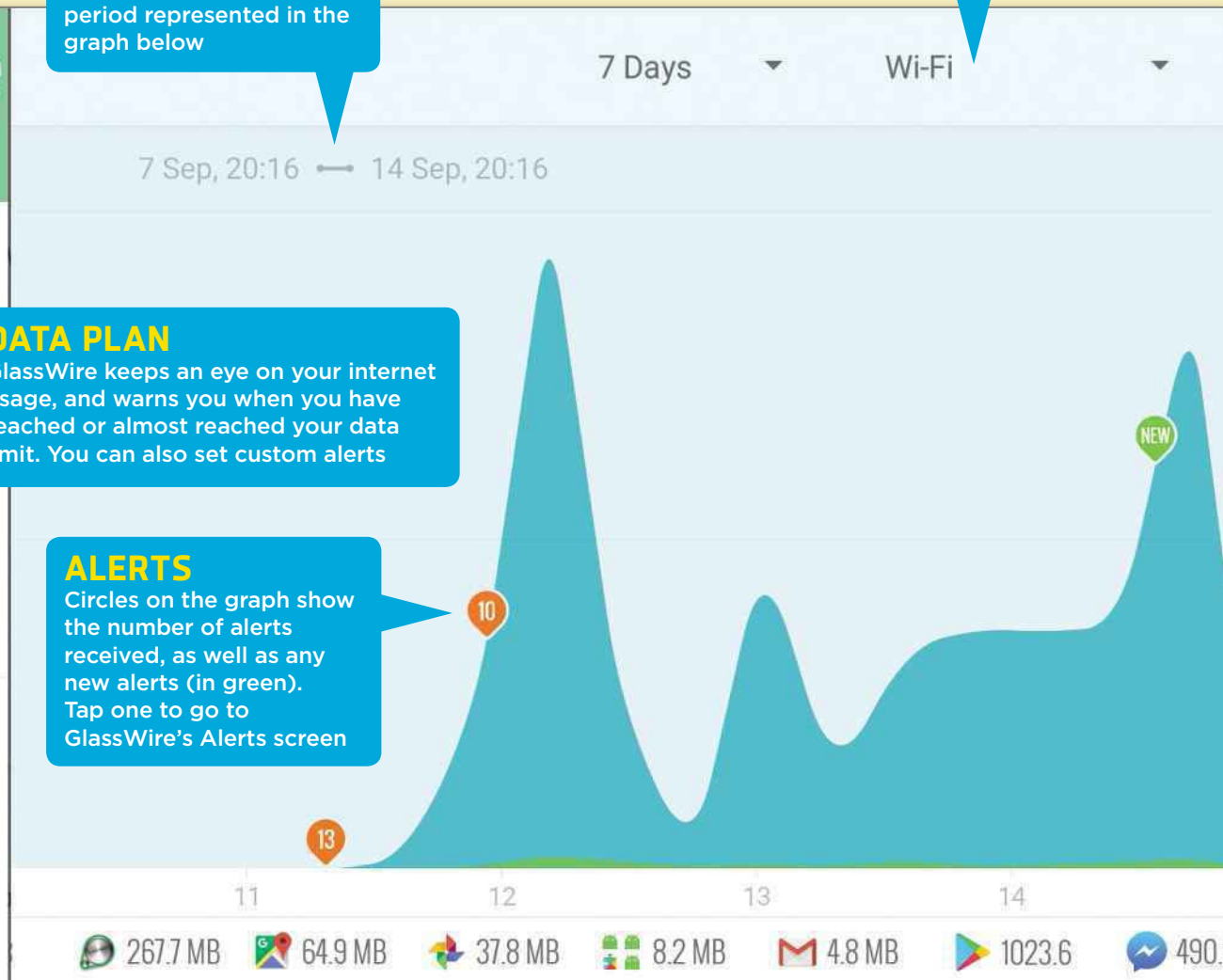
Choose the type of internet access you want to record: Mobile, Wi-Fi or both

DATA PLAN

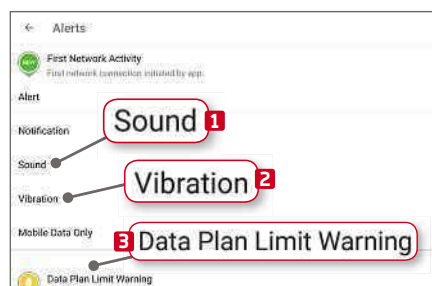
GlassWire keeps an eye on your internet usage, and warns you when you have reached or almost reached your data limit. You can also set custom alerts

ALERTS

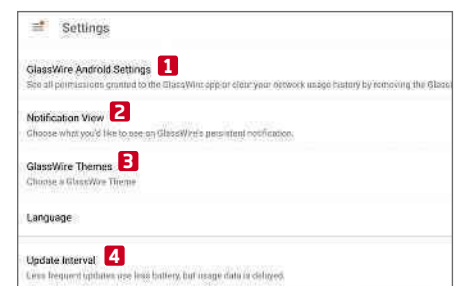
Circles on the graph show the number of alerts received, as well as any new alerts (in green). Tap one to go to GlassWire's Alerts screen



6 Tap the menu button and select Alerts. This screen shows you when an app first connected to the network. **1** In most cases, it will simply be checking for new data or updates. Look for any connections that are unexpected or out of the ordinary, though, and keep an eye on those apps in future.



7 To configure the app, tap the menu button and open Settings. Tap Alerts to choose how you want to be notified when an app connects to the internet. You can opt for an audible warning **1** or a vibration. **2** You can also customise warnings for when you're approaching the limit for your data allowance. **3**



8 The Settings screen shows the permissions you've given GlassWire **1** and the information you want it to display in Notification View. **2** This can include a bandwidth meter and data from a specific time frame. You can also choose a new theme **3** and manage how often the app records data usage. **4**



Set your PC to clean itself automatically every day

Windows tools | ⌚ 20 mins | 🖥️ Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10



EXPERT TIP

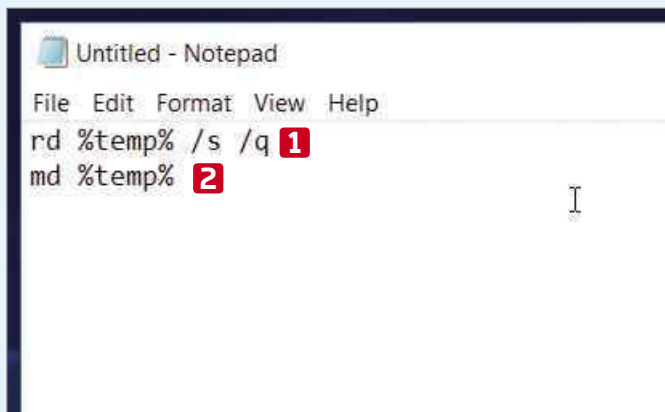
Edward Munn says

You can use Task Scheduler to delete files from any folder, not just Downloads, at a time of your choice. Simply follow the instructions in Steps 3 to 5 and change the filepath in the batch file to the one you want to delete files from.

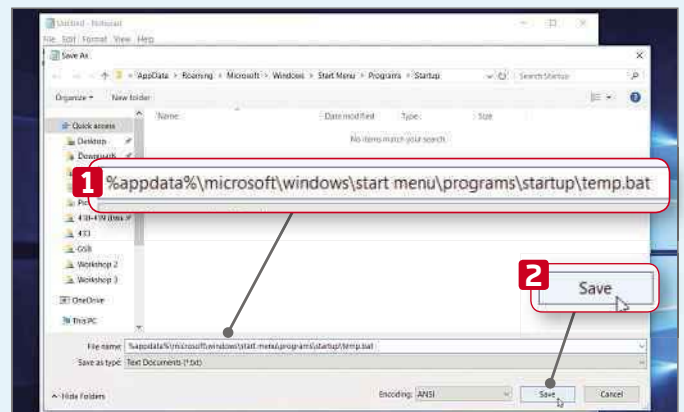


Over time, your PC accumulates lots of unnecessary files that clutter it up and slow it down. In this workshop, we show you how to set Windows to remove this digital detritus automatically, so you don't have to remember to. For example, we explain how to tweak the Registry so that Microsoft Office no longer keeps a list of all your recently opened documents, and how to create batch files that delete Windows temporary files and clear your Downloads folder every time you boot your PC. There are also step-by-step instructions to set Chrome and Firefox to clear your browsing data at the end of every session.

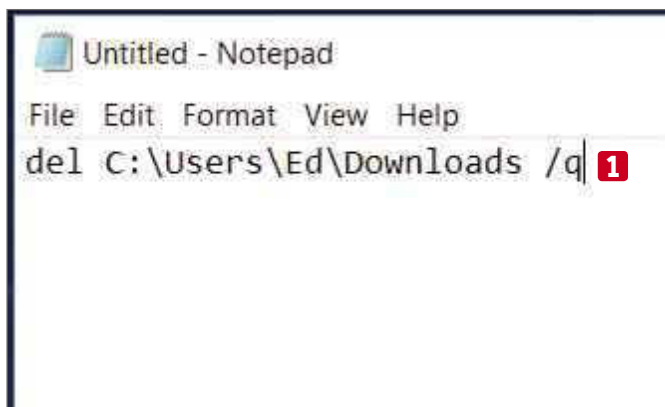
There's no need to install additional software, but because these tweaks often involve making changes to your PC, we also show you how to undo them. As always, we recommend making a backup of your PC and the Registry before proceeding, in case something goes wrong.



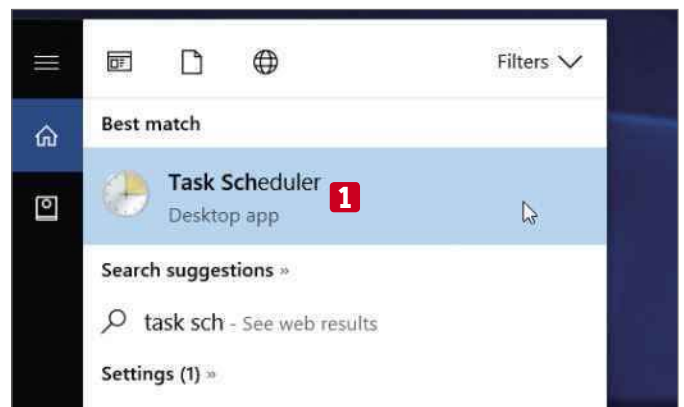
1 To set your PC to clear out temporary files when you start Windows, open Notepad and type `rd %temp% /s /q`. **1** Press Enter to add a line break, then type `md %temp%`. **2** Next, click File and Save As.



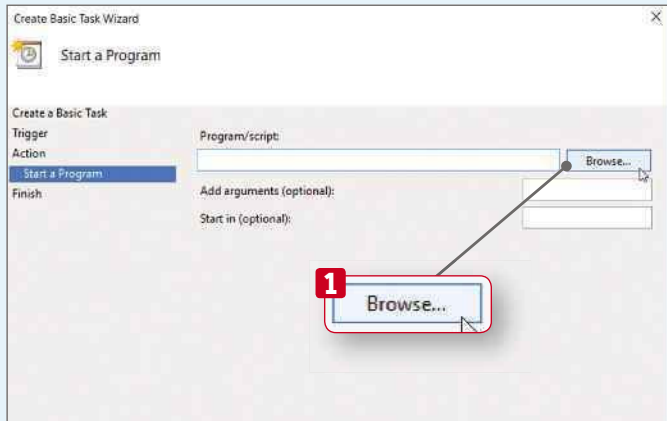
2 Enter the following file name: `%appdata%\microsoft\windows\start menu\programs\startup\temp.bat` and click Save. **2** To stop your temporary files being cleared, navigate to: `%appdata%\microsoft\windows\start menu\programs\startup\` and delete the 'temp.bat' file.



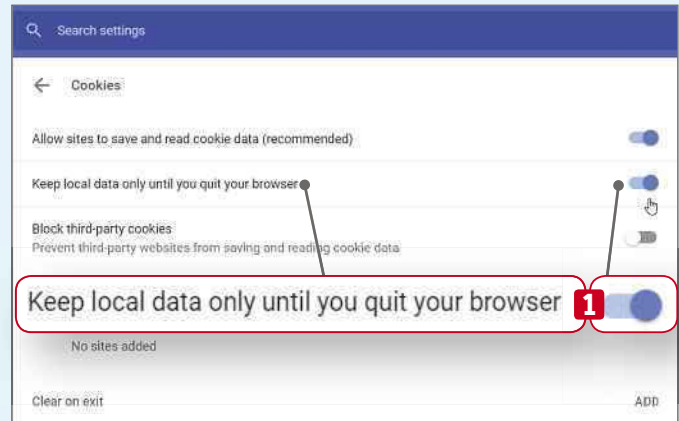
3 To remove files from your Downloads folder at the end of every day, open Notepad and type `del C:\Users\NAME\Downloads /q`, where NAME is your Windows username. **1** Click File and Save As, then save your file with any name but make sure it ends with '.bat'.



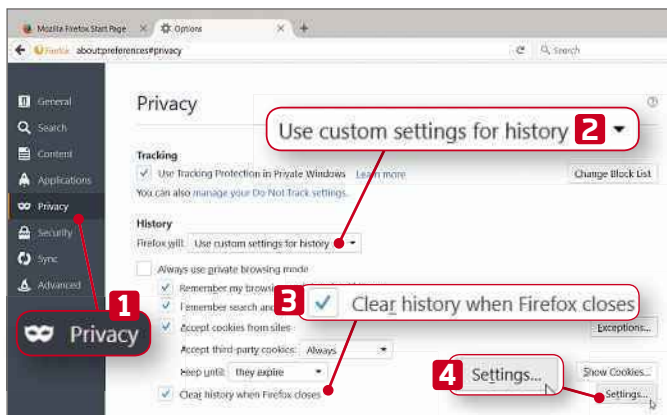
4 Next, double-click the saved BAT file to check that it deletes files from the appropriate folder. Type Task Scheduler in the Start menu and open the app. **1** Click Create Basic Task, and give your task a name and description. Click Next and choose Daily or 'When the computer starts' - whichever suits you better.



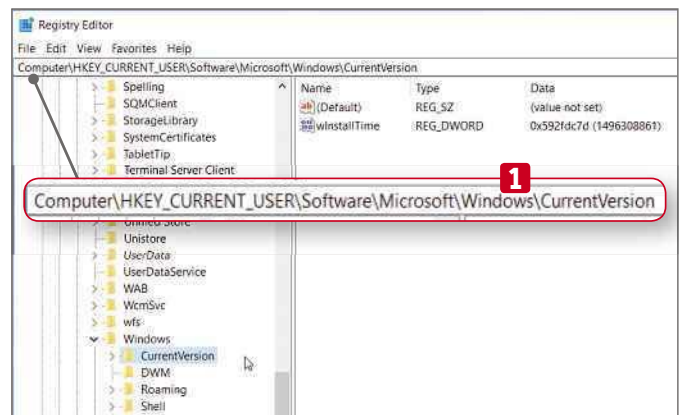
5 If you picked Daily, click Next and choose the start date and time at which you want the action to be performed. Click Next twice more and select Browse, **1** then click the BAT file you created earlier. Finally, click Next and Finish. Your downloads folder will be cleared according to your schedule.



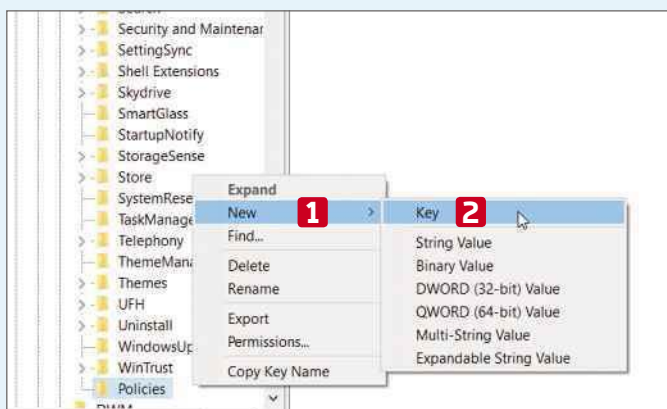
6 To set Chrome to delete cookies when you close it, click the browser's menu button and select Settings. Scroll down to find and click Advanced, then select Content Settings. Next, click Cookies and activate the switch for 'Keep local data only until you quit your browser'. **1**



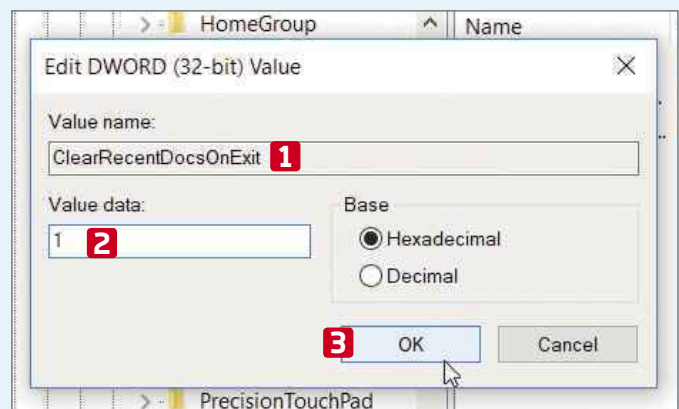
7 Firefox lets you clear all browsing data automatically when you close it. Open its Options menu, click Privacy **1** and under History, use the drop-down menu to select 'Use custom settings for history'. **2** Tick 'Clear history when Firefox closes', **3** then select Settings **4** to choose which items are deleted.



8 To set Windows to clear its record of your recently opened documents (those that appear when you right-click Word in the taskbar), open the Registry Editor by typing regedit in the Start menu, then clicking the top result. Next, navigate to HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion. **1**



9 Open the Policies folder, then double-click Explorer. If you can't see these folders, you'll need to create them. First, right-click CurrentVersion, then click New **1** and Key. **2** Name the folder Policies, then press Enter and repeat the process to create a folder within it called Explorer.



10 Next, click Edit, New and DWORD (32-bit) Value, name the value ClearRecentDocsOnExit **1** and press Enter. Double-click the value and change 'Value data' to 1. **2** Click OK **3** and the recent documents list will automatically clear whenever you close Word or Excel. To switch this action off, just change 'Value data' back to 0.

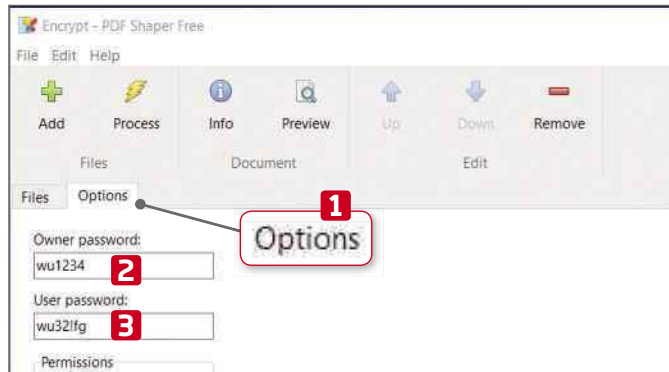


Do amazing things with PDFs

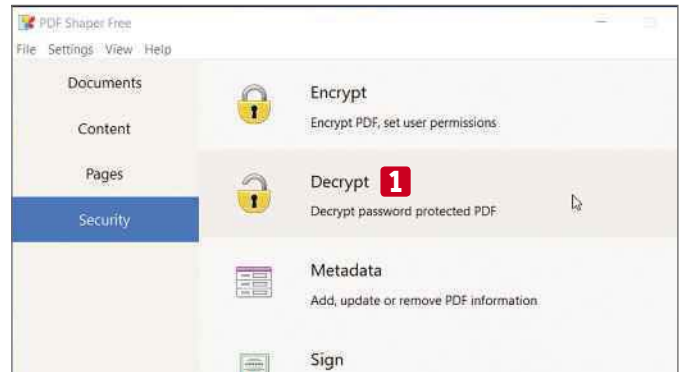
PDF Shaper Free is a lightweight PDF-manipulation tool that lets you perform a range of useful actions not supported by most free PDF viewers (see our round-up of the best in Issue 432, bit.ly/webuser432). Here we show you

PDF Shaper Free: bit.ly/pdfs433 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🖱️ Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10

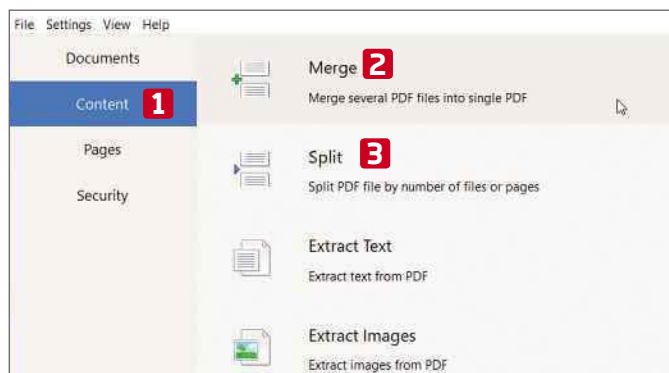
how to use this versatile free tool to password-protect your sensitive documents, extract text from a PDF and add a watermark.



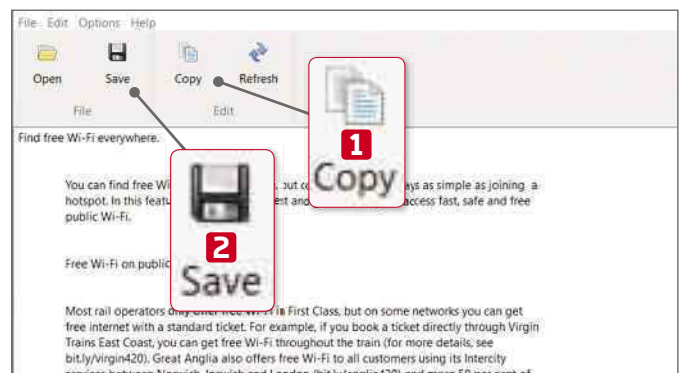
1 Install and run PDF Shaper Free, then click Security. Click Encrypt, then Add and find the PDFs you want to protect. In the Options tab, **1** choose an owner password, **2** which gives you permission to edit and decrypt the document, and a user password, **3** which lets others view but not decrypt it.



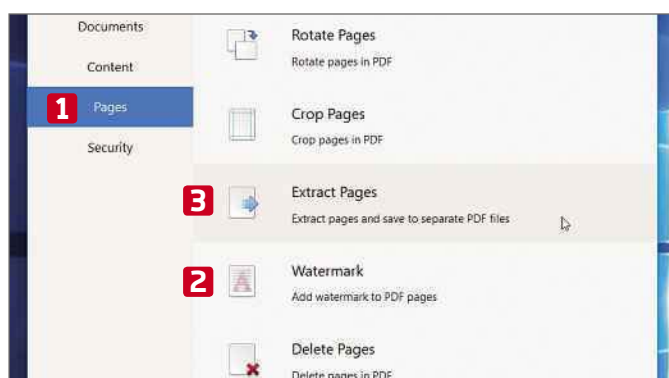
2 Select the permissions you want recipients to have, then click Process and choose where you want to save the encrypted files. When recipients try to open the PDF, they will be asked for a password in whatever program they use. To remove encryption, click Decrypt. **1**



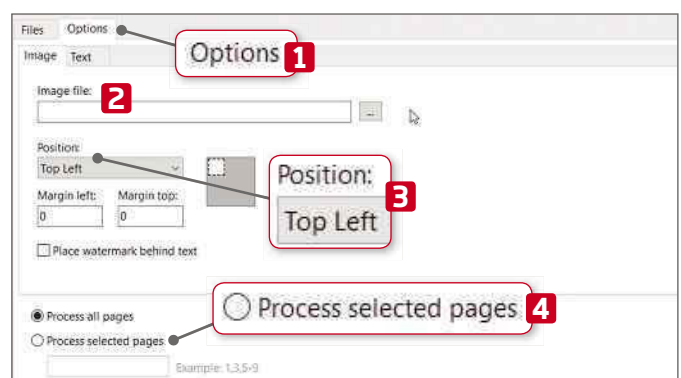
3 Click the Documents tab and you'll see options to convert a PDF to a TXT or RTF file. You can also convert PDFs to images and vice versa. Next, click the Content tab, **1** where you'll see options to merge several PDFs into a single file; **2** or split one document into separate PDFs. **3**



4 There are also tools for extracting text, and extracting or removing images (which can reduce the size of a large PDF). To extract text, choose that option and click Open to select the PDF you want. The text appears in a window. You can edit it before copying **1** or saving it as a TXT file. **2**



5 The Pages tab **1** includes tools to rotate, crop, extract or delete pages from PDFs. You can also add a watermark. **2** To extract some pages, click Extract Pages, **3** then select Add and use the Options tab to specify the range of pages you want to save, before clicking Process.



6 To add a watermark, click Watermark and select one or more PDF files. In the Options tab, **1** browse for the image you want to use **2** and choose its position. **3** As with the page-extraction tool, you can choose a range of pages **4** if you only want to add the watermark to a few of them.



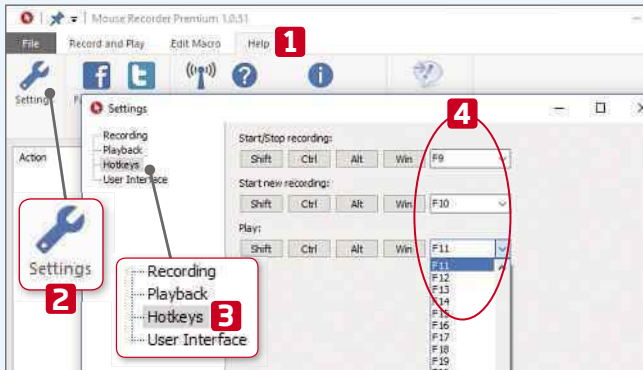
Record your actions to automate repetitive tasks

Do you find that you always do the same things when you start your PC, such as launch the same programs or type in the same details? If so, Mouse Recorder can save you a lot of time and effort. This useful tool records

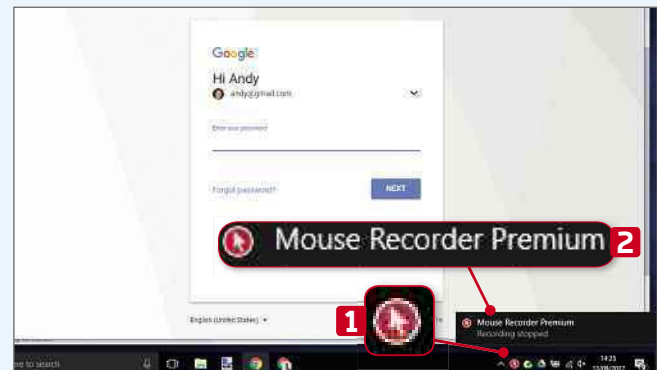
a sequence of mouse movements, clicks and keyboard presses, so you can automate complex repetitive tasks with just a couple of clicks.



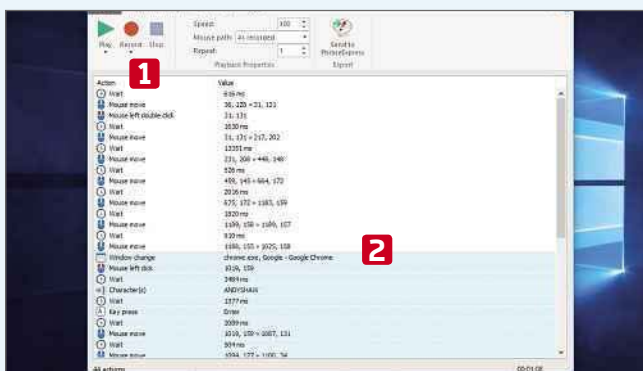
Mouse Recorder: www.mouserecorder.com | **20 mins** | **Windows 7, 8, 10**



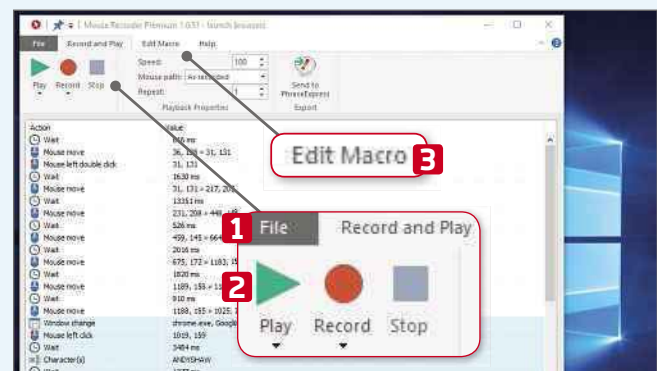
1 Before you start, it's a good idea to set up some keyboard shortcuts to control the software. Open the Help tab, **1** click Settings **2** and select Hotkeys. **3** Use the drop-down menus **4** to choose a key for each of the three options. We've used our PC's function keys.



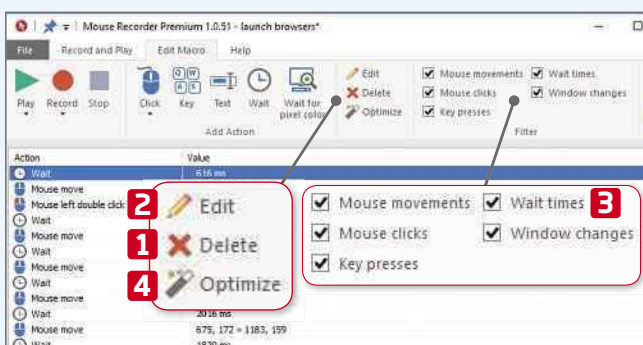
2 Minimise the software to an icon in the notification area. **1** Press your chosen hotkey to start a new recording and perform the actions you want to record. Here, we're signing in to two Google accounts in two Chrome windows. Notifications pop up when you start and stop recording. **2**



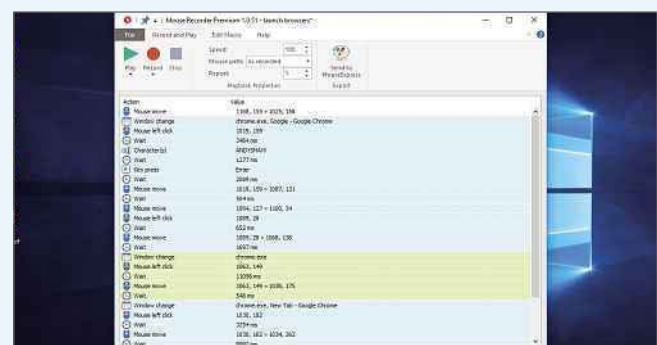
3 When you've finished, the software lists the actions you performed with your mouse and keyboard, including movements, clicks and key presses. **1** The background colour **2** changes to show when the action moves from one window (or the Desktop) to another window.



4 Save your actions in the File menu. **1** Close any windows that your actions opened and click Play **2** to replay the sequence. You'll notice that there are pauses, wobbly mouse movements and possibly even mistakes. To get rid of these, click Edit Macro. **3**



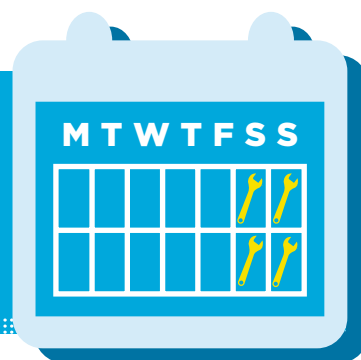
5 To edit an individual action, select it and choose from the tools in the ribbon bar – such as Delete **1** or Edit. **2** You can even change the pointer's location. In the Filter section, untick anything you don't want, such as 'Wait times', **3** or click Optimize **4** and let the software do it for you.



6 If you break your macro, reload the original sequence that you saved in Step 4. Once it's working well, click 'Record and Play' and experiment with the 'Mouse path' (to smooth out your mouse movements), Speed and Repeat options. Finally, save it and run it whenever you need it.

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Set up a media server to stream files to anywhere

Wayne Williams explores Emby, a media server and streamer combo that can play your media files across your network and beyond

Emby (emby.media) is a free, open-source media server that offers an alternative to Plex (www.plex.tv). With the software installed, you can store your movies, music and photos in a central location and stream them to other connected devices, such as an Amazon Fire TV Stick, Chromecast, Android device, iPhone or iPad. You can stream live TV, sync personal media to mobile devices for offline access, schedule tasks, create user accounts for friends and family, and much more.

A simple web-based wizard makes Emby incredibly easy to set up. Install the server on the computer you use to store your media, and you can then connect to it using an app or web browser. You can stream content over your local network or the internet. We show you how to set up the server in our Mini Workshop, opposite.



Server dashboard

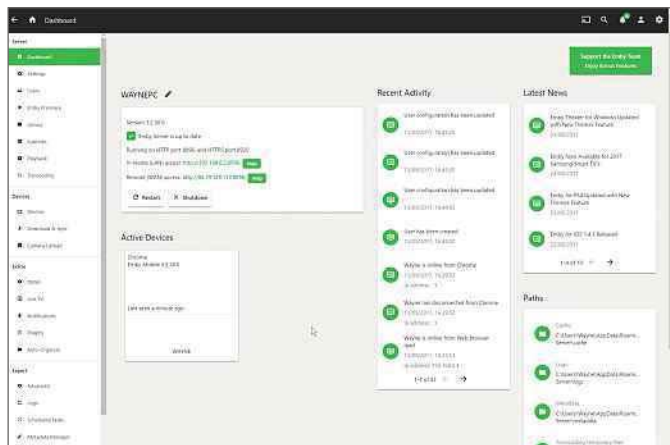
Emby's dashboard provides all the information and tools you need to use the server and configure it the way you want. From here, you can view the addresses you need to access the server over a network or the internet, restart or shut down the server, and view all the devices that are currently connected to it. A 'recent activity' column tells you when a device or browser connects or

disconnects, and when it starts or stops streaming something. There's also a news section to keep you up to date with the latest Emby happenings, including the addition of new themes and features.

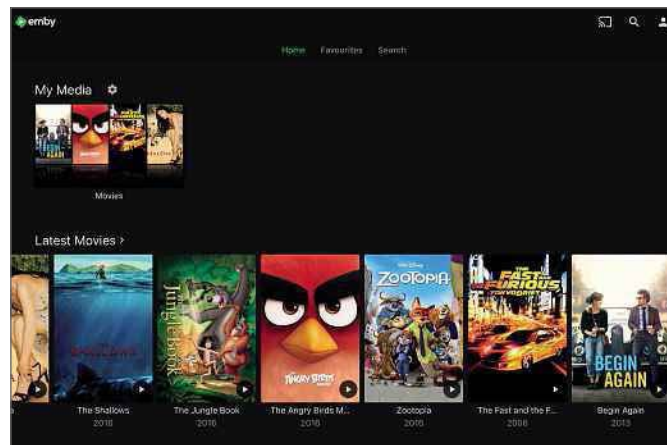
The sidebar on the left lets you access the settings and add new user accounts. You can also scan existing libraries for changes, add new locations, download subtitles, enable Cinema Mode (which shows you trailers and custom intros

before the main movie) and control 'transcoding', so you can watch videos in formats that aren't supported.

On top of that, you can view and remove connected devices, upload photos and videos to the server from a phone or tablet, connect to devices that support DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance), such as a games console, add a TV tuner for live viewing and recording, manage notifications and more.



The server's dashboard gives you access to all the information and features that Emby offers



Emby's apps are similar to using a web browser, but without an address bar getting in the way

Finally, the expert section lets you change ports, enable automatic port mapping and schedule tasks such as checking for application updates.

Stream to Emby apps

Mobile apps are available for iOS, Android, Windows 10 and Windows Phone, and there are also apps for Amazon Fire TV, Apple TV, Roku, Chromecast, Kodi, Xbox One and PS4.

The mobile apps offer a host of benefits and let you stream content from your server, but if you want to watch a movie or TV show on your device, you'll need to unlock that feature with a one-off purchase (£4.99) or an active Emby Premiere subscription (£4.99 a month, or £119 for a lifetime). Premiere features include Emby DVR support (so you can schedule live TV recordings and series links), Cinema Mode and Cloud Sync.

You can stream one minute of your media to the apps for free, so at least you

can get a taste of the quality and playback features. However, if you'd rather not pay to use an app, you can still watch streams through a device's browser. We show you how in our Mini Workshop on page 61.

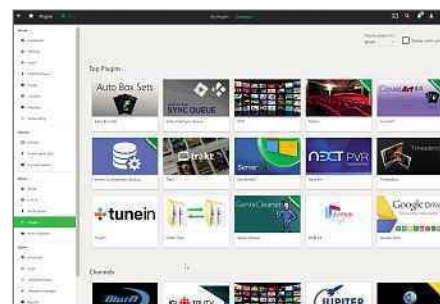
Install plugins

All good media centre software supports plugins – Kodi wouldn't be anywhere near as popular as it is without its add-ons – and Emby is no exception. You can install server plugins directly from the sidebar. Simply click the Plugins button on the left and browse the selection on the right. They are sorted into categories such as Top Plugins, Channels, Content Providers, General, Live TV, Metadata, Notifications and Sync. Select one to find out more about it and install it. Bear in mind that not all of the plugins listed are available for free. Some, such as Cover Art, require a Premiere subscription to use.

Once you've installed a plugin, you must restart the server to use it.

Set up user accounts

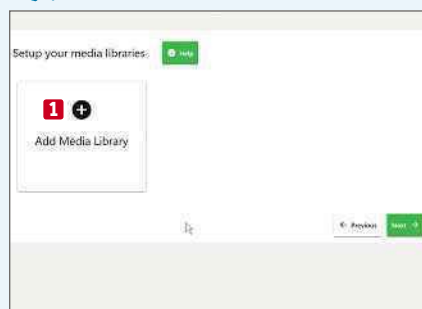
Emby lets you create separate user accounts for friends and family members, each with its own permissions, library access and parental controls. To create a new account, find the Server section in the left-hand bar and click Users, then the Add button. By default, all users have



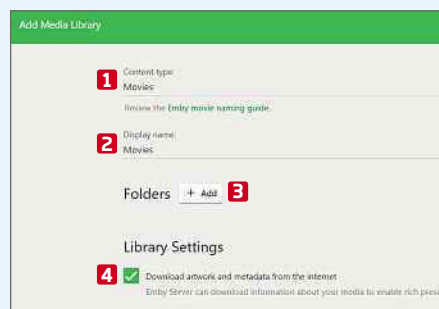
Emby supports a wide range of completely legal plugins



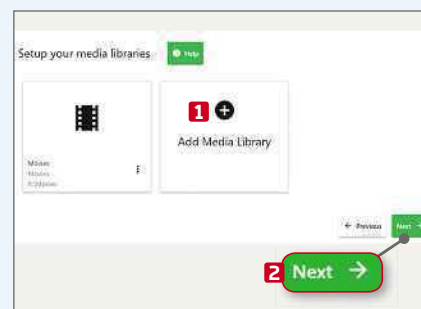
MINI WORKSHOP | Set up an Emby server in Windows



1 Download and run Emby. The configuration wizard will open in your web browser. Make sure English (United Kingdom) is selected as the preferred display language, then click Next. Enter your name and the details of your Emby account, if you have one. You can now set up your libraries. Click the Add Media Library tile. **1**







2 Use the drop-down menu in the window that opens to select a 'Content type' – Movies, Music, TV, Books, Games, Home Videos & Photos, Music Videos, Photos or Unset (Mixed Content). **1** You can also change the default display name. **2** Click Add **3** to locate a folder containing your media. Allow Emby to download artwork. **4**



3 Choose where you want Emby to save the artwork, and whether to enable chapter-image extraction (this takes time and uses a lot of space). Click OK, then either add some more media libraries **1** or click Next. **2** Set the Metadata language to English (UK) and agree to the terms of service. When you've done all that, click Finish.

Broadband Deals

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	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1		TalkTalk: Broadband	£27.00 (£19.95 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £239.40
2		Sky: Broadband	£28.99 (£20.00 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£240.00
3		EE: Broadband	£28.50 (£21.00 for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited*	£252.00
4		Virgin: Broadband	£40.00 (£27.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited*	£324.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

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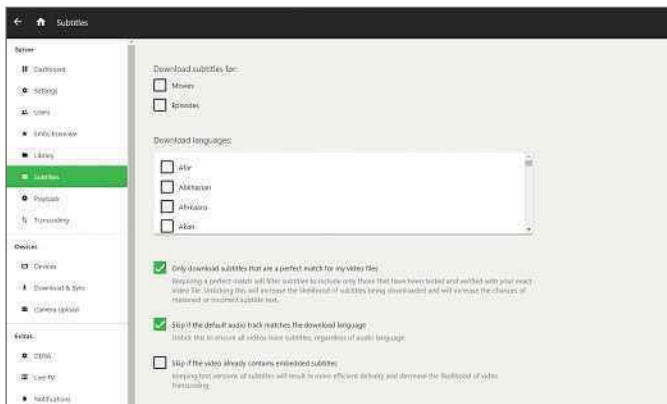
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Emby can download subtitles in any language you choose



Tap on a streaming video to view info and skip to any point

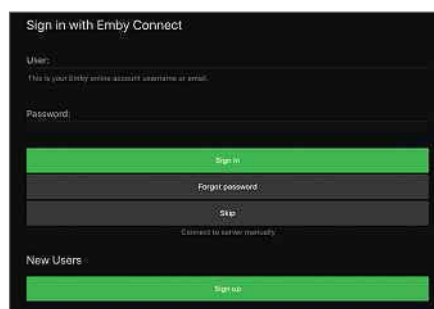
access to all libraries, but you can untick this option and choose which libraries are available to individual users. Enter a name for the new user and click Save.

Now you can choose whether the user is allowed to manage the server, and which features they can access, such as media deletion, live TV access and live recording. You can also set which media playback features are allowed, and whether or not downloads are permitted. The bar at the top lets you tweak the access options, enable parental controls and password protect the account. If you enable parental controls, you can block content that lacks a recognised rating or uses specific tags, and also create a schedule to limit access to certain hours.

Download subtitles

Subtitles are obviously useful for films made in a foreign language, but they can

also help if you're hard of hearing or you want to watch a video quietly with the sound switched off. Emby can find and download matching subtitles for movies and TV shows in whatever language you choose. Click Subtitles in the server's sidebar, then choose which items you want to download subtitles for. Select the language you require from the list.



You can connect your app to the server by signing in or entering its IP address

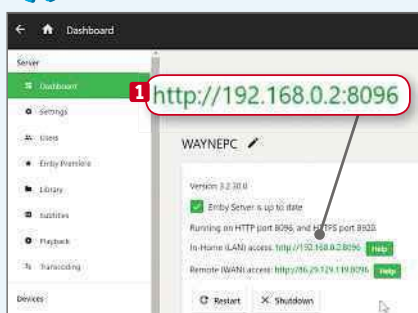
By default, Emby only downloads subtitles that are a perfect match for your video, and will ignore any subtitles that are in the same language as the audio track, although you can override this setting. If the video already contains embedded subtitles, Emby won't download any additional ones unless you specifically ask it to.

Watch live TV

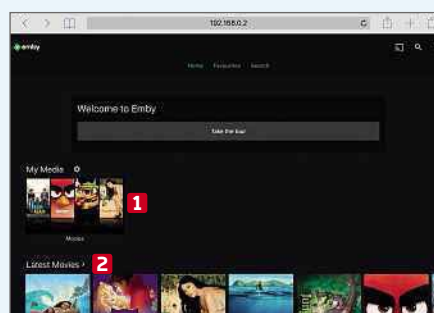
If you have a TV tuner installed on your PC, you can use Emby to watch live television broadcasts. Click the Live TV option in the Extras column, then click the Add button to detect your installed TV tuner. You can also add a guide provider to help you find and record programmes. Emby offers a choice of two by default – Schedules Direct and Xml TV – but you can add your own if you have a preference. ■



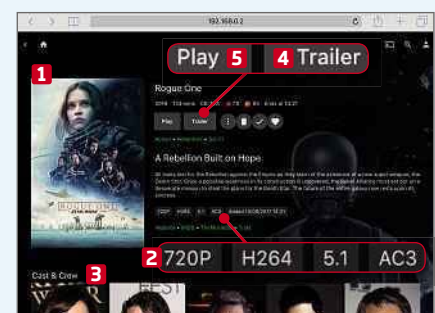
MINI WORKSHOP | Stream videos from your server for free



1 Once your server is up and running, you're ready to stream content from it. The best option is to install an app on your target device, but you have to make a one-off payment of around £4.99 to unlock the streaming feature. You can avoid this by using a browser instead. First, make a note of the IP address on your server dashboard. **1**



2 Open the browser on your target device – an iPad, in our case. Type the address (including the port) and press Enter. There are different addresses, depending on whether you're streaming over a local network (LAN) or the internet (WAN). Your device should connect to the server to display your folders **1** and latest content. **2**



3 Tap an item you want to watch to see information about it (pulled from the internet), including cover art, **1** plot description, details of the video quality and format, **2** and thumbnails of the cast and crew. **3** Tap Trailer **4** to stream the trailer from YouTube. When you're ready, tap Play **5** to begin watching.

NEXT ISSUE

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Web User Masterclass

Our experts demonstrate the best ways to put your **middle mouse button** to work and replicate its functions on your laptop's trackpad

Click the mouse wheel

Even the most basic PC mouse should come with a wheel between the clickable left and right panels. Most often, it's used for scrolling, but it can also double as a third button. Depending on the program you're using, this can provide a quick way of performing an additional action.

The function of the middle button varies from one application to the next – the best way to find out what it does is to experiment. For example, in Windows, you can middle-click taskbar buttons to open a new window. This is handy if you have one Explorer window open and want to move files to another one.

You can middle-click Chrome, Edge and other taskbar buttons to open new browser windows, too. When you're ready to close a window, hover over its button on the taskbar. When the thumbnails appear, hover over the one you want to close and middle-click it.

Most mice have a wheel between the left and right buttons, which often doubles as a third button



Scroll through long web pages

Click the mouse wheel on a web page in Chrome and the cursor will change into a four-way arrow in a circle. The mouse can then be used to move the page up, down, left or right, which may be easier for browsing a long, wide page than using the scrollbars. Click any mouse button to exit this mode.

Middle-clicking works in a similar way in Microsoft Edge. Position the mouse in the middle of the screen and click the scroll wheel. Moving the mouse up or down scrolls the web page in the appropriate direction. There is no change to the mouse pointer to indicate that this feature is activated.

This also works in Firefox, except –

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.

like Chrome – the mouse pointer changes to indicate scrolling.

Some other applications work in a similar way – you can middle-click in a Microsoft Word or WordPad document, for example, then move the mouse up or down to scroll automatically. Click again to exit scroll mode.

Middle-click web links

Links on any browser's web page can be opened in a new tab by right-clicking and selecting 'Open link in new tab'. Alternatively, you can just middle-click the link to open it in a new tab, which is faster and requires less effort.

Holding down Shift while middle-clicking a web link sometimes modifies the action. In Chrome, a basic middle-click opens the link in a background tab, while you remain on the current tab. If you hold down Shift as you middle-click a link, you'll open it in a new tab and also switch to it.

A bookmark is just another type of link and all browsers open a middle-clicked bookmark in a new tab. Use Shift to choose whether to stay on the

current page or to switch to the new tab. If you've organised your bookmarks into folders, you can even middle-click the folder to open all the pages inside it in new tabs.

A browser's forward and back buttons are also links of a sort, and middle-clicking them opens the previous or next web page in a new browser tab. Middle-click the browser's Home button to open that in a new tab.

When you start typing in a browser's address box, a list of suggested URLs is displayed so you can stop typing early and select one. If you don't want to change the page shown in the current tab, middle-click a suggested URL to open it in a separate background tab.

Tap your touchpad

If you have a laptop with a touchpad and no buttons, it will respond to one, two and possibly three- and four-finger taps. Tap with one finger to simulate clicking the left mouse button and tap with two to produce



Check the touchpad's taps and swipes for middle-click and other gestures

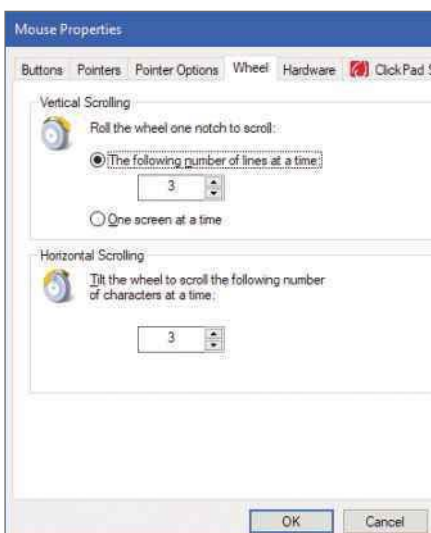
the same effect as a mouse's right-click. Pushing up or down the touchpad with two fingers is like spinning the wheel on a mouse, which is useful for scrolling through web pages and documents. Slide two fingers left and right for horizontal scrolling.

These are the standard gestures and your computer's touchpad may allow more, depending on its make and model. A three-finger tap can open the Cortana/search box in Windows 10, while a four-finger tap might launch the Action Centre. Open the Control Panel, switch to the small icons view and see if you can find anything related to the touchpad, such as Synaptics ClickPad. Open it to see demonstrations of the possible touches and taps, and to enable or disable gestures.

Mouse wheel side-clicks

You won't find this on all mice, but some mouse wheels can be tilted left or right to provide further functions. Most often, this is used to scroll documents and apps left or right.

Open the Control Panel and click Mouse. On the Wheel tab, you may find an option for horizontal scrolling by tilting the wheel. You can choose how many characters at a time to scroll.



Can your mouse wheel tilt? Check the mouse settings in the Control Panel

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

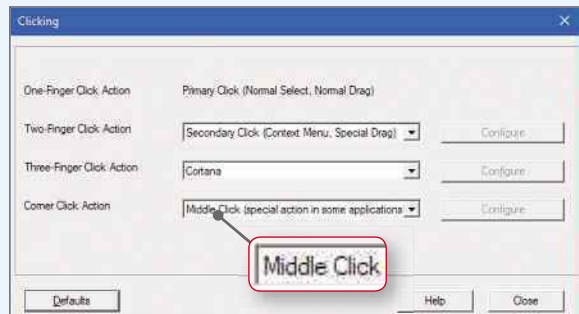
Get a middle-click on your touchpad

Some laptops have physical buttons for left- and right-clicks, and pressing both at the same time can work as a middle-click.

Alternatively, many modern trackpads have no buttons at all and the touchpad itself is clicked like a button.

Depending on the driver hardware, it may be possible to configure it to produce a middle-click, too. It doesn't work on every touchpad but it is worth trying.

Open the Control Panel and click Synaptics ClickPad or Mouse, then ClickPad Settings. Select Clicking, then click the gear icon on the right. There are several options and clicking them shows a list of actions that can be performed by different gestures. For example, you could configure it to assign a three-finger tap or a tap in a specific corner as a middle click.

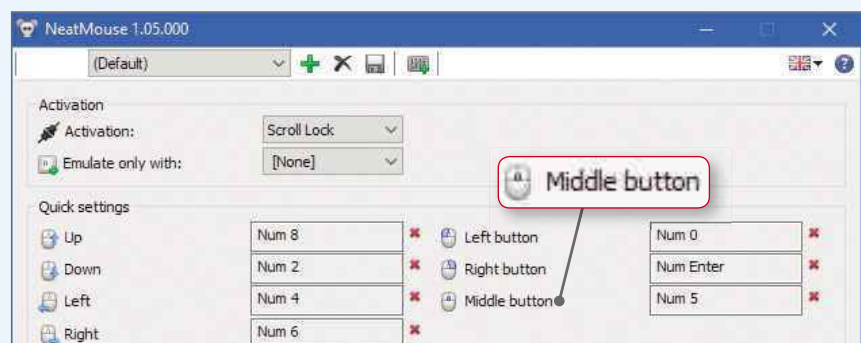


Some touchpads let you configure a middle-click action

Use a mouse emulator

If you don't have a mouse with a middle button – or the wheel only scrolls and doesn't click; or you have a laptop with a touchpad that doesn't support middle-clicking – there is still hope in the form of the free mouse emulator NeatMouse (bit.ly/mou433). It lets you use your keyboard to move the mouse pointer; and to left-, right- and middle-click.

There are standard and portable options available during installation. If you choose the portable version, the tool will appear in a folder on your Desktop. Open the folder and run the program any time you need to use it. It's customisable but the default settings are fine for most people.



Can't middle-click? Use NeatMouse to simulate middle-clicks with the keyboard

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

Change folder icons

Q Is it possible to add more icons to the options that appear when you try to change the icon of a folder?

Barry Singleton, via email

A The folder icons you see on the Desktop and in Explorer are easy to change. Right-click an icon and select Properties on the menu, then choose the Customise tab. The easiest way to customise the icon is to have a photo in the folder, then click Choose File and select it. The icon changes to an open folder, and the photo appears as a document inside the folder.

To change the icon completely, click Change Icon. This reveals a collection of icons from the 'shell32.dll' folder, but you can access more by clicking Browse and selecting 'C:\Windows\



Click Change Icon and select an ICO file to change an Explorer icon

System32\moricons.dll'.

You can find thousands of icons on the web, but to be used as Windows icons they must have an ICO filename extension. Lots of websites offer ICO files, such as Icon Archive (www.iconarchive.com). Browse the icons and, when you see one you want, move the mouse over it and click the ICO option that appears in the top-right corner. Click the Change Icon button followed by Browse, and select the ICO file you downloaded.

Notifications. Here, you'll see a switch to 'Show notifications in the Action Center'. Tick the box to 'Show a notification banner'. It's possible for Mail notifications to be switched on in Windows Settings, System, 'Notifications & actions', but turned off in the Mail app's settings, in which case you won't receive notifications. It must be enabled in both places to work. Check Kaspersky for similar notifications settings, because they may be switched off within the program.

In Windows Settings (Windows+i), choose System, then 'Notifications & actions' to see a list of apps that can display notifications. They all have switches. Clicking the app name opens detailed settings that control how notifications work for that app. For example, it's possible to have Notifications switched on, but 'Show notifications in Action Centre' switched off. It's confusing, to say the least.

HARDWARE

Fix a troublesome touchscreen

Q I'm having problems with the touchscreen on my Sony Vaio laptop, which runs Windows 10 Pro 64-bit. A transparent circle appears at the bottom of the screen over the toolbar and when this happens, the mouse cursor keeps disappearing as soon as I stop moving the mouse. If I try to drag the transparent circle with my finger, it eventually disappears and the touchscreen works properly, but it's very awkward and time consuming.

If I disable USB Input Device under Human Interface Devices in Device Manager, the transparent circle problem disappears, but then I can't use the touchscreen. I've reinstalled Windows 10 and updated all the relevant drivers.

Mark Songhurst, via email

A A few other people have reported this problem, and they have found some strange solutions. One person discovered that pressing Windows+P and selecting Duplicate followed by 'PC screen only' solved the problem.

GENERAL PC

Restore lost notifications

Q I used to get regular notifications on my Windows 10 PC telling me, for example, that it was safe to eject a drive or that my antivirus software had completed a job. Since installing the Creators Update, however, they've stopped. I'm not sure when this happened exactly but it was definitely some time after I installed the update.

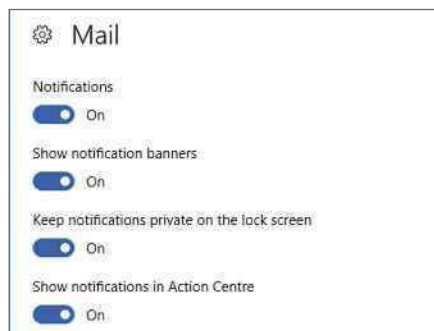
I've checked the Settings, which seem to be in order, and I tried running `sfc /scannow` from the Command Prompt, but it reported no problems. How do I re-enable notifications?

Graham DA Heffernan, via email

A There may be a problem but it could simply be that the settings have changed and some messages are now switched off. To check, open the Control Panel, go to 'Devices and Printers', right-click the USB drive and select Properties. On the Hardware tab, select the device and click Properties. In the next window, click 'Change

settings' and open the Policies tab. If 'Quick removal' is selected (which it usually is, by default) you won't see any notifications about removing a USB device. Only when 'Better performance' is selected do you need to wait for a message saying it's safe to remove a device.

Some apps have their own settings for notifications, and these must be configured for notifications to work. Open the Mail app, for example, and click the cog icon, then select



Notifications and 'Show notifications in Action Centre' are two separate switches



Other options

Touch feedback

Show visual feedback when I touch the screen



Audio options

Open Settings to switch off visual effects that occur when the screen is touched

Someone else found that the bezel surrounding the screen was causing the problem. They placed a suction cup next to the circle and pulled the bezel away from the screen a tiny bit, which fixed it. Someone else switched off the laptop and cleaned the screen. Apparently it was caused by dirt. Another possible fix is to open Windows Settings, click 'Ease of Access', select 'Other options' and turn off 'Touch feedback'.

It could be a driver problem, in which case an update might help. Right-click Start and select Device Manager. Expand 'Display adapters', then right-click each item and select 'Update driver'. Repeat this for every item in 'Mice and other pointing devices' and 'Human Interface Devices'.

CHROMEBOOK

Open large Zip files

Q How do I open large Zip files that the Chromebook's file manager can't handle?

David Plant, via email

A The Chrome add-on Zip Extractor (bit.ly/zip433) uploads your Zip file to a web service that has no problem opening large files. It also handles compressed file types, such as RAR files, that Chromebooks aren't able to manage.

GENERAL PC

Split a widescreen monitor

Q Looking back over the past year of *Web User*, I've noticed that monitors have been getting bigger, both in size and in the number of pixels. When I first used a computer at work, we made do with one monitor each. Later, companies that could afford it equipped us with two, and now some firms, especially in the city, use four large screens.

With suitable software, just one of these new wide-screen monitors can be split electronically into two areas, each working independently, which would be fine for home use. I found a few options and would appreciate your opinion.

Barry Singleton, via email

A Of the three programs you mention in your email, AquaSnap (www.nurgo-software.com) offers a free version that you should try. MaxTo (maxto.net) looks similar but isn't free, and SplitView (www.splitview.com) looks useful but costs \$39 (around £29). However, many of the features offered by these tools are built into Windows 10, so you may already have everything you need. They basically help you arrange windows on large monitors so they don't overlap. Open Windows Settings (Windows+i) and go to System, Multi-tasking. Turn on all the switches on the right under Snap.

If you now drag a window to the left or right edge of the screen, it snaps to fill exactly half the screen. This lets you split the monitor down the middle with an application on either side. If you drag a window into the corner, it fills a quarter of the screen, so you can show four windows with no overlapping.

You can use different combinations,



Windows 10 Snap feature docks windows to the sides and corners of your screen

GENERAL PC

Remove excess Documents folders

Q I have a problem with duplicate Documents folders in Windows 10. When I open File Explorer, I see four folders called Documents, each of which has the same contents. The only difference is that each folder has a different icon representing music, videos, pictures and documents.

According to their Properties, the folders have the same contents and location: 'd:\video editing'. I assume the term 'video editing' is a library label because the contents are actually in a folder called Documents that I created on the D: drive. How do I remove the three Documents folders I don't need?

Clive Davies, via email

so you can drag a window to one side and two into the opposite corners to split the screen three ways. Hold down the Windows key and press the arrow keys to cycle between different layouts. The tools you listed are just slightly more sophisticated versions of this.

MOBILE

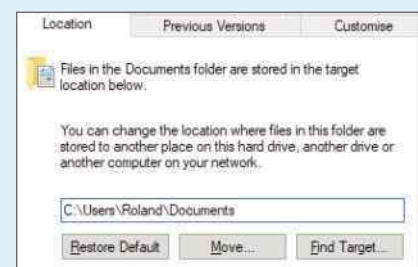
Get free calls to mobiles

Q I recently saw an advert for an Android and iOS app called Voico (www.voico.com), which promises free – or nearly free – phone calls and texts between users of the app in most countries. Is this too good to be true?

Neil Bone, via email

A This is just one of many Skype-like apps that offer phone calls, texts and chats, and we can't see anything to make it stand out from the crowd. You can make Voico-to-Voico calls and texts for free, because they use the internet, but it costs money to call a non-Voico phone number.

The reviews are mostly positive but there are some negative ones. If you can persuade all your friends to get Voico, it could be useful. However, there are more popular apps that they're more likely to have already, such as Facebook Messenger, which lets you place voice and video calls. FaceTime is popular among iOS users; Skype and Viber have over half a billion installs; and WhatsApp has over 1 billion users. All of them let you make free app-to-app phone calls.



Reset your system folders if you're having problems with them

A You should have four system folders – Documents, Pictures, Music and Videos – which should open the corresponding folders in C:\Users\YourName. Right-click each Documents folder and select Properties. Open the Location tab and click Restore Default. If that doesn't work, use the Move button to select the correct Documents, Pictures, Music and Videos folder.



This fortnight Roland has been creating an HTTPS website after news that Chrome will flag non-HTTPS sites as unsafe

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



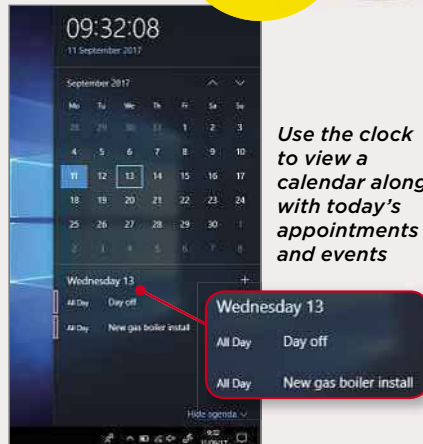
TOP TIP

GENERAL PC

See your schedule

The clock at the right side of the taskbar is capable of doing much more than simply telling the time. Click the clock in Windows 10 to display a calendar of the current month, along with an agenda showing a list of today's appointments and events. It saves having to open the Calendar app.

Click the plus icon to add All Day events and appointments, which then appear in the clock panel. It opens the Calendar app to create the event, which you can then close afterwards. I've not really used Calendar much



Use the clock to view a calendar along with today's appointments and events

before, but this makes it more useful.

Katharine Moore, via email

Mug winner

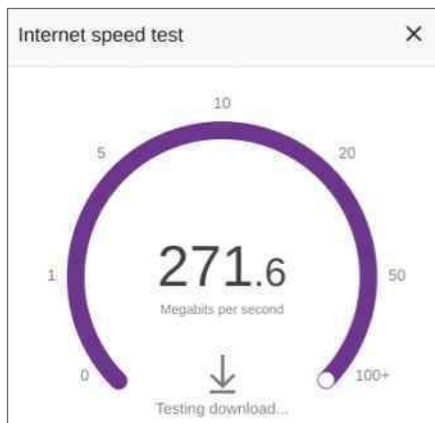


WEBSITES

Test your internet speed in Google

Did you know that you can now test your internet speed directly from Google without having to install an add-on or use another service (such as www.speedtest.net)? Just type speed test into Chrome's address bar, press Enter and click Run Speed Test on the page that loads.

A pop-up window appears and, after the test has finished, it displays a summary of your upload rate, download rate and latency. Below this,



Google lets you test your network speeds directly from its search engine

there's also a summary of what these speeds mean in real terms, such as being able to handle "multiple devices streaming HD videos at the same time".

Although speedtest.net is a perfectly good service, I prefer using this new tool because it's faster and less cluttered.

Ed Wright, via email

GENERAL PC

Remove file associations more quickly

I found a much simpler method for removing file associations than the very complicated workaround that appeared in Readers' Helpdesk in Issue 430 (bit.ly/webuser430). First, create a blank notepad document and save it to your desktop as "test.exe". Now right-click the file you want to remove a program association from and choose 'Open with' and 'test.exe'. Leave 'Always use this program' ticked. Because 'test.exe' isn't a program, the file you're opening it with will have no program associated with it.

Jill Wigney, via email

BROWSERS

Back up your bookmarks

We are always being advised to create backups, but I wonder how many people bother to back up their bookmarks?

It takes seconds to do and it could be useful if they somehow become corrupted or are deleted. Like all backups, you may never need it, but you'll be glad to have it if catastrophe strikes.

In Chrome, open the three-line menu and select Bookmarks, then 'Bookmark manager'. Click Organise at the top and you'll see Export and Import options at the bottom. It takes about a second to save them to a file on your hard drive. You could save it to the OneDrive folder so it's stored online, too.

Jay Allan, via email

APPS

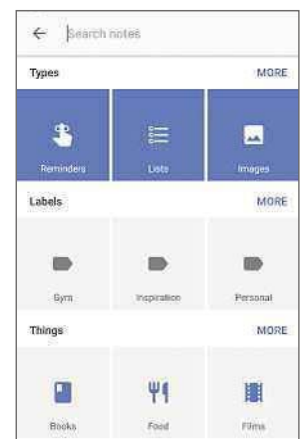
Find old Google Keep notes

Google Keep's search tools are great for using specific keywords to track down old notes, but I recently discovered that it also has options for browsing them. Tap the search bar (or click it on the website) and, under Types, you'll see options for filtering

your notes according to whether they contain Reminders, Lists or Images. On the mobile app, you can tap More next to Types to sift out entries that include URLs or voice recordings.

Further down the page, below Labels, there's another category called Things.

Here, you can tap Books, Food or Films to make Google Keep intelligently filter any notes that contain these items. This is very useful if you have a list of books you've earmarked for reading and want to view them all in the same place.



Browse notes in Google Keep according to their subject matter



Tap More next to the Things category to do the same for Music, TV, Groceries and Travel. My only gripe is that the categories within Types and Things are somewhat limited.

John Sullivan, via email

APPS

Take hands-free photos on Samsung devices

Issue 432 of *Web User* (bit.ly/webuser432) included a handy tip about installing additional camera modes on a Samsung Galaxy S6, such as a sports mode and an animated GIF option. I have a Samsung phone, so this got me to delving into its camera settings.

I discovered some really handy options for triggering photos when you're not holding the camera, such as when you've positioned it on a tripod or propped it against an object to take a group photo. To see these options, open the camera, tap the Settings cog and look for the option 'Ways to take pictures'. This includes a 'Gesture control' option, which lets you take snaps by holding your hand out with your palm facing the camera.

Tap back and scroll up and you can enable an entry called 'Voice control', which lets you say "capture" or "shoot" to take a photo, or "record video" to start filming. I find this more effective than the gesture option but there's less of a delay, so make sure you're ready for your photo when you give the command.

You can also choose to 'Tap to take pictures' and 'Use heart rate sensor', both of which make capturing selfies easier when you're holding the device.

Dan Wallace, via email

SOCIAL MEDIA

Stop Twitter guessing your age and gender

I was poking around in Twitter's settings and found the weirdest thing. Click your profile picture and then click 'Settings and privacy'. Click Your Twitter data and enter your password to continue. If you did not enter your age or gender when you signed up with Twitter, it guesses them based on your tweets.

It obviously thinks my tweets have a feminine slant because it says my gender is female! It's also clueless about my age



Click the links to correct Twitter if your gender or age is wrong

and thinks I am between 13 to 54, which is a very broad guess if you ask me. There are links to change them if it bothers you, but I like the fact that Twitter doesn't know who I am.

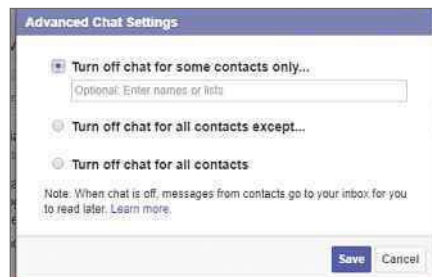
Paul Davies, via email

SOCIAL MEDIA

Block unwanted chatterboxes

If you're being pestered by people on Facebook who you don't want to chat with, or you're busy and don't want to be distracted by anyone, you can apply settings to block them. If the chat window is minimised to a little bar in the bottom-right corner, click the gear icon, then click Advanced Settings.

There are three options. Click the first option to "Turn off chat for some contacts only" and enter names in the box to block specific people. The second option blocks all chats except the people whose names you enter, such as your family or best friends. Click the third



Block Facebook chats, either from everyone or just from certain people

option if you want to block all chats, regardless of who they are from.

Don't worry about missing anything because chat messages are diverted to your Facebook inbox, so you can read them later when (or if) it suits you.

John Irvine, via Email

MACOS

Unlock individual files in the iPhoto library

Some months ago, my old Mac died. I immediately regretted that I hadn't backed up my files, especially my photos. Eventually, I decided to see if I could recover any of the files by removing the Mac's hard drive and placing it in a USB enclosure.

When I plugged the enclosure into my new Mac, I was delighted to find that I could browse all my files. However, my photos were contained in an iPhoto library and clicking it gave me no option to access them individually.

A Mac-savvy friend then suggested that I might be able to see the files by pressing Ctrl when clicking the library, then selecting 'Show package contents'. Thankfully, this worked perfectly and I was able to copy and paste all the original files from folders organised by year and month. I thought I'd pass on the advice in case any other readers ever need to access files stored in an old iPhoto library.

Tim Montgomerie, via email

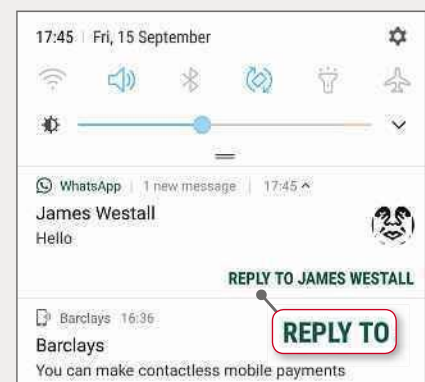
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

ANDROID

Reply quickly to messages on your phone

I'm not sure how long this feature has been available but on my Android phone, when I receive a new message in an app such as WhatsApp or Telegram, I see the words 'Reply to X' at the bottom of notifications. For months, I thought that this simply referred to the fact that if you tap the notification, it opens the app so you can reply. However, I've now realised that if you tap 'Reply to X', a strip appears that lets you reply directly from the notification, without even opening the app.

For instantly sending a reply such as "I'm on my way", this definitely makes things quicker. Note that if you don't see the button, you may be able to



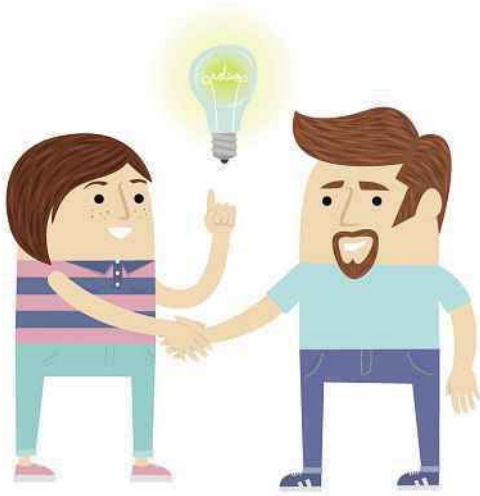
Some messaging apps let you reply directly within a notification

make it appear by swiping down on the notification.

Anne Sharpe, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?
If so, please send your story to webuser@dennis.co.uk





Readers' Helpdesk

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

GENERAL PC

Why have all my Desktop icons disappeared?

Q The latest update to Windows 10 successfully installed on my PC but now none of the icons on my Desktop work. I can't even shut down the computer because the Start button isn't responding. I'm using a friend's laptop to type this. Can anyone suggest how I can fix this problem please?

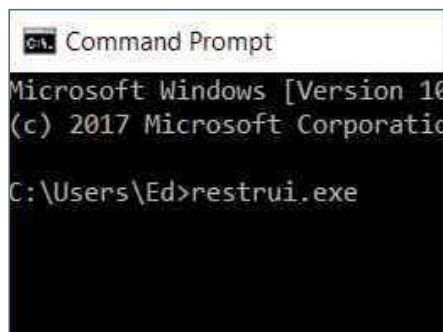
AuraTodd, Web User Forums

A If I were you, I'd use your friend's laptop to create Windows 10 installation media on a USB device or DVD (see bit.ly/win433). Once you've done that, hold down the power button to shut down your PC, then press and hold F2 or the appropriate key to get into the BIOS. From there, you can change the boot order so that you can boot from an installation disc or a USB drive.

Boot from the drive and load the setup page. Confirm the time and currency settings before clicking 'Repair your computer'. Next, click Troubleshoot and see if the option to 'Go back to the previous version' works. If it doesn't, select Command Prompt and type `rstrui.exe` before clicking OK, which gives you access to any restore points on your PC.

The update that caused the problems will eventually install again, but hopefully it won't cause any problems this time.

Cantrel, Web User Forums



Typing `rstrui.exe` in Command Prompt launches System Restore

GENERAL PC

How do I swap the @ and " keys?

Q The keyboard that came with my Lenovo C20 All-In-One PC has the @ and " keys the wrong way around, as well as a few other niggles. Switching to a different keyboard made no difference. Does anyone know why?

Cornelius, Web User Forums

A In Windows 10, you can change the keyboard language by pressing Windows+spacebar or by clicking the ENG tab near the clock in the notification area. By default, English (United Kingdom) and English (United States) should both be installed, so it's possible that you've enabled English (United States) by accident.

If you don't want the US version, click ENG, then select 'Language preferences' to open 'Region & Language'. Next, click 'English (United States)' and select Remove – it can be added again later if necessary.



Check that the language is set to English (United Kingdom) in Windows

If this doesn't fix it, look further down the 'Region & Language' page and click 'Additional date, time & regional settings'. Under Language, choose 'Change input methods'. Check that the keyboard layout listed under English (United Kingdom) says United Kingdom. If it doesn't, click 'Add an input method' and choose the appropriate option.

lizzygraham and Stewart40, Web User Forums

VIDEO

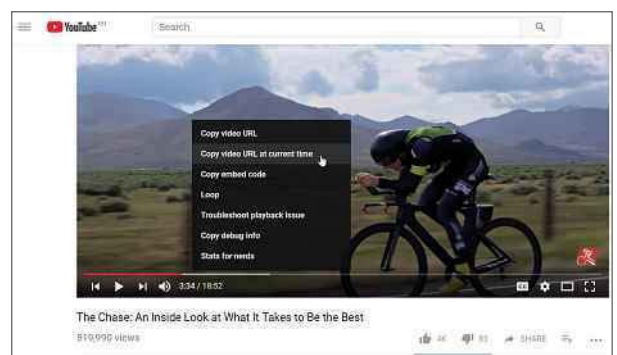
How do I save my place in a YouTube video?

Q When watching YouTube, is there a way to pause a video so that I can come back to watch the rest of it later?

mrmatt, Web User Forums

A In the short term, you can just click the Pause button and leave the tab open in your browser, then come back to it. In the longer term, the best idea is to click the Pause button, then right-click the video screen and select 'Copy video URL at current time'. You can now save this link somewhere, and when you open it again, the video will resume where you left off.

Peru, Web User Forums



Right-click a video and select 'Copy video URL at current time' to share your current position

Web User says: Provided you're logged into your Google account, YouTube should remember how much of a video you've watched. Another option, if you're signed in, is to click the 'Add to' button below a video, then tick 'Watch later'. From the main menu (or Library on the Android app), select 'Watch later' and carry on watching where you left off.



Star Email

Only a fool would pay a grand for a phone

Here we go again. Apple is about to release yet another upgrade to the iPhone – to howls of delight from slaving fanboys and indifferent yawns from anyone who has a lick of sense.

Every year, Apple comes up with a couple of minor tweaks – a slightly larger screen, a slightly better camera – and removes something that people found useful, such as the headphone jack or Home button. It then uses these “groundbreaking” improvements to justify whacking up the price of its already ridiculously expensive phone even further. This year, Apple obviously thought it might as well round up the price to a nice even grand (well, £999 – so not far off) and then sit back and watch the orders flood in.



Sadly, this is exactly what will happen because there are plenty of fools out there who will eagerly part with their money just to have what they believe to be the latest cutting-edge technology. But who exactly are they trying to impress? Each other? Their work colleagues who have lesser but perfectly

useable phones, for which they paid a fifth of the price? People who could put £1,000 to much better use than purchasing a flashy gadget, such as spending it on food, clothes and heating?

Of course, it's completely up to the individuals if they want to waste their money on an iPhone X. I just wonder if they really, truly believe it's worth the investment? After all, this time next year, Apple will bring out the iPhone XI, or 11, for £1,100, and the current phone will be rendered out of date and unfashionable. Why bother?

Personally, I'll stick with my Moto G4, which may not be top of the range but serves me perfectly well for browsing, streaming and – oh yes – making phone calls.

Joel Nicholls, via email

WebExtensions will make Firefox useless

Firefox is about to switch from add-ons to WebExtensions. As a result, all my useful extensions (the main reason I use Firefox) have been marked

as ‘legacy’, and Mozilla intends to disable every single one of them in the next version of Firefox. Ironically, this includes the company's own labs products.

Many of the most popular extensions haven't been updated because that would require a complete rewrite. At this rate, Firefox will soon be as useless as Edge.

Could the Web User team please explore and publish an article on this?

MeesterChris, Web User Forums



Web User says: Funnily enough, we've been thinking along the same lines regarding Firefox's switch to WebExtensions. Turn to page 48 for our views and advice about Mozilla's potential misstep.

Looking for a Watchlist replacement

Since Radio Times closed its wonderful Watchlist (bit.ly/watchlist433), I've been looking for a replacement. I tried out the Series Organizer tool (bit.ly/serorg431) suggested in Issue 431 of Web User but it couldn't cope with some of the Freeview channels and told me that some series had ended when in fact

they'd only just started showing on Drama or Yesterday. Would it be possible to have a feature on the other options available? Watchlist was great, because I could list my favourite programmes, whether they were current or not, and it would tell me which of them were on, day by day, for the next few weeks. It was invaluable for programming my DVD recorder when going on a fortnight's

Quiz Answers: Issue 432

- 1 The Princess and the Pea 👑 + P
- 2 Puss in Boots 🐈 ➡️ 👢 👢
- 3 The Tortoise and the Hare 🐢 + 🐇
- 4 Sleeping Beauty 😴 👢 ☕
- 5 The Three Little Pigs 🐷 🐷 🐷
- 6 The Boy Who Cried Wolf 🧒 😭 🐺

WINNER!

Well done to James Hankin who wins a Web User mug



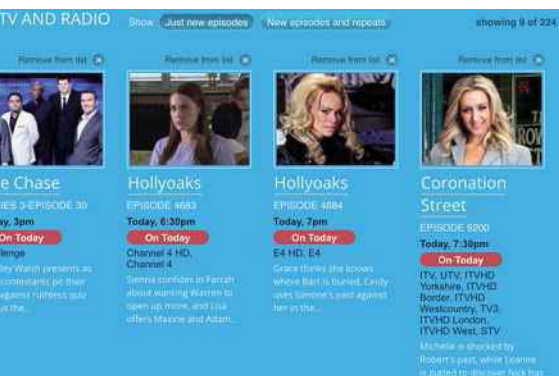
WORD PUZZLE

Web forum



“They’ll be rushing back to their phones faster than you can say ‘pass the gravy’”

Turn to page 74 to find out what’s making Barry mad this issue



holiday! The TV magazines and BBC alerts only tell you what’s on for the next week, not the week after that.

Tamsin Coxen, via email

Phones should be banned from classrooms

I read in your latest issue that school teachers “waste 17 minutes per day policing phone-related disruptions”. I don’t understand why phones are allowed into classrooms in the first place.

Surely, children should be told to put them away at the beginning of the lesson and reprimanded if they don’t comply. Or, even better, they should be told not to bring them to school in the first place.

Previous generations of schoolchildren, including myself and my own children, managed to get through the day without texting, tweeting and playing games. I dread to think how today’s teachers cope when their pupils’ attention is constantly drifting to their screens.

Isabel Hartley, via email

Forget Wi-Fi kettles – just use a timer!

Regarding your ‘Wi-Fi wonders’ feature in Issue 431 (bit.ly/webuser431). What is it with all you young ‘with it’ cool people? Phone your kettle to check the water level and switch it on?! Do you think this idea is new? Haven’t you heard of tea and coffee machines with timers? There are plenty of them available. You simply set



the machine before you go out, or the night before, as I do.

You can do this easily with percolators of all prices, although not yet with Nespresso, Rombouts or any other pod or capsule machines. Those may be able to do lattes, Americanos and cappuccinos, but not on a timer. The nearest you get to that utopia is the four-way pod, ground, ESE and tea machine, but you still have to switch it on manually. You can get a good timer percolator for as little as £25 for 10 small cups or five or six normal ones.

As for George Clooney’s Nespresso, I make four of those things in one large cup – otherwise it’s not worth the bother for a thimbleful of coffee.

Martin Fletcher, Thorpe Hesley

Tor doesn’t work well in practice

My main problem with the secure Tor browser is that it makes using the web ridiculously slow. If you only want to visit normal sites, you’re better off using Chrome or Firefox. If you want to look at hidden sites, you often spend ages waiting for them to load, only to find that they’ve disappeared.

I’ve also found that logging into secure sites such as online banks is impossible with Tor, and it’s annoying having to enter your usernames and passwords all the time, because Tor doesn’t save any cookies.

Tor is a good idea in theory, but in practice I’ve found it very frustrating. In my experience, rather than giving you unfettered access to the web, it impedes your access to it, and the benefits of anonymity are undermined by the fact that it’s so unreliable.

Roger Godfrey, via email

What has Web User got to hide?

In your cover feature in Issue 432, you explain how to stay 100% anonymous using Tor. On page 28, you tell us how to disguise your location using ProtonVPN



and on page 50 you reveal how to make everything self-destruct “leaving no trace of your confidential files and chats”. Then, on page 56, you show us how to blur details in your YouTube videos and, on page 57, how to manage all your private data in one place. All very useful advice, I’m sure, especially for paranoiacs, but it does make we wonder: what exactly has *Web User* got to hide and from whom!? Perhaps you’ll reveal all in a subsequent issue!

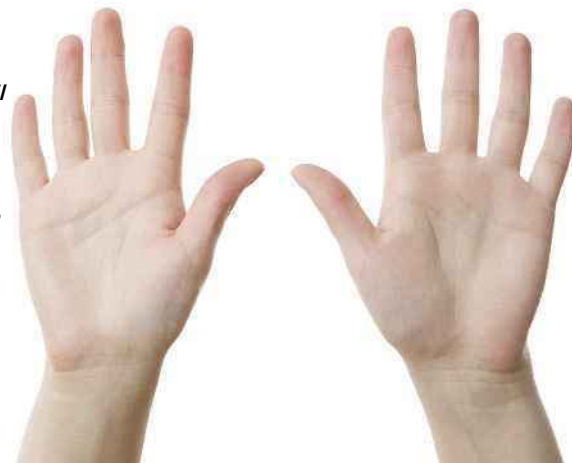
Simon Cranmer, via email

Left and right hands must work together

In his Star Email in Issue 432, Ian Robinson complains that left-handed computer users are mistreated by their co-workers and overlooked by hardware manufacturers, which seems a fair point. However, he then proceeds to regale us, with relish, about the time he deliberately confused his co-workers by leaving his PC mouse and keyboard set up for left-handed use. Mr Robinson appears to find this hilarious, but surely this antagonism and mockery of right-handed people makes him just as bad as they are.

Why can’t we all just respect one another’s physical traits, and treat left- and right-handedness equally, instead of pitching one against the other? Only with both hands working in tandem can we make a better and happier, ambidextrous world.

Colin Lawson, via email





TOP DEFINITION

southpawTo be **left-handed**.The next **batter** at the plate was **swinging** southpaw.

by Turnspike March 16, 2003

Being a southpaw isn't a choice

Hear, hear, George (Inbox, Issue 432). There's certainly nowt wrong with being a 'cuddy wifter' when it comes to using computers, and as a lifelong lefty I've never had any problems with my keyboard and mouse, although of course I've changed the latter to left-handed settings. I also disagree with your Star Email writer about the term 'southpaw' being derogatory and offensive. I've always found it quite endearing. I believe the word comes from baseball, referring to a left-handed pitcher or batter. I've heard worse names for us lefties, such as 'mollie dooker', 'spuddy handed' and 'gibble fisted', but tend to treat them with amusement rather than outrage.

Being left-handed isn't a choice, after all. It's as genetic as being red-haired or short-sighted, so anyone who uses it as a reason to mock you is an idiot and not worth speaking to!

*Keith Reason, via email***Why the slow download speed?**

I sympathise with John McCloy (Inbox, Issue 431), who says he receives download speeds of only 0.6Mbps. I live in Cardiff, about 60 yards from a roadside green cabinet and just over a mile from the telephone exchange, yet I can only get download

speeds of between 0.1 to 0.6Mbps. Curiously, when I perform a speed test using one of the many programs available for this, it gives a reading of 3-4.5Mbps. Why is this?

My ISP sent an engineer to test my system but couldn't find any problem. Maybe it's time BT Openreach checked the state of the connection to my house, although with Virgin Media cable in the road, I doubt I would be a priority.

Tom J, via email**What you say...****WILL YOU BUY THE NEW £1,000 iPHONE X?**

I'm very happy with my iPhone 7 Plus but yes, I will pay that much when I eventually upgrade. The iPhone does everything I need it to.

Pamela J Anderson

No chance. There are plenty of phones for half that price that do the same thing and are far less breakable!

Isabel O'Brien

No. It's the price of my car, which gives me freedom!

Jacqui Hudson

Why would anyone in their right mind pay so much money for something they fully intend to replace in two years? I bought the Huawei Honor 6X for £200 in March, and its performance is more than sufficient for my needs.

*Warren Bennet***FACEBOOK IS ADDING A 'SNOOZE' OPTION TO LET YOU TEMPORARILY BLOCK PEOPLE (bit.ly/snooze433). A GOOD IDEA?**

Yes. When someone starts obsessively posting about a TV programme or a political event, it could be useful to improve the signal-to-noise ratio of your news feed.

David Batty

Haven't they got anything better to waste their time on? How about getting rid of all the scam ads and clickbaiting sites?

Caroline Sharman

Pointless. If you don't want to follow somebody, you unfriend them.

Brian Brown

It would be better if I could snooze everyone in real life indefinitely.

*Joe Joiner @joejoinerr***WILL THE RECENT CCLEANER HACK PUT YOU OFF USING IT?**

I used to use it in the days of slower PCs. Now with Windows 10, terabyte hard drives and fast machines, it's not really needed.

Sir Cumference @Gary_Olsen

Uninstalled it. Using System Ninja now. Once hacked, twice hacked.

Ted Taylor

I updated it and it asked me to update it again. But I had no issues. I'll carry on using it. Advanced SystemCare conflicts with Malwarebytes.

David Robinson

They monitored and reacted to the situation, so yes, I'll keep using it. How many others try to hide by quietly updating compromised software?

Wolf Simpson

Yep, but since I installed an SSD I use CCleaner once a month, if that, so I haven't updated the program for several weeks, fortunately.

*Si Mellor***THERESA MAY WANTS WEBSITES TO TAKE DOWN TERRORIST VIDEOS IN TWO HOURS. DO YOU THINK THIS COULD HAPPEN?**

No. It's easy to fool the censors. Terrorists could use a different 'coded' title of a video, and a variable size (not full screen). Unfortunately, there's always a way to beat the system.

Gavin Green

In her darkest dreams it happens, but even the geniuses know that it is nigh-on impossible.

Iain Wolstencroft

Why not two minutes?

Geoffrey Boow

! Page 404

Barry Collins tackles a very modern problem
- getting kids to put their phones down



Stop your children phubbing you

There is something wrong with young people in society today," said Lord Sugar in a recent debate in the House of Lords. To everyone's surprise, he wasn't talking about contestants on *The Apprentice*.

"I have seven grandchildren and on the very odd occasion that I am blessed with their coming to my home to have dinner, they sit around the table with their faces buried in their smartphones - to such an extent that I have banned the devices from the dining room," Lord Alan of Amstrad moaned. "I urge parents to take a stance to prevent their children spending too much time gazing into these devices."

What's a parent to do? One might suggest replacing the kids' smartphone with an Amstrad E-m@iler - the pay-as-you-go email terminals that Sugar made several attempts to flog at the turn of the century - because *nobody* used those devices. But that would be churlish, cynical and potentially libellous, so I won't.

Instead, I'll do something that doesn't come easily - I'll sympathise with old Sugar because as a parent of a newly minted teenager and another young daughter, I know full well the infuriating phenomenon of being 'phubbed': snubbed by someone in favour of their phone.

There are a few ways to deal with this social exclusion zone. First off, there's Lord Sugar's nuclear option: ban all devices from the dinner table. It's not a bad start but prising a smartphone from a teenager's hands is like removing a limpet from a rock with a plastic teaspoon: easier said than done.

The problem is the siren call of notifications. As soon as the phone starts ping-pong with Snapchat notifications, Instagram posts and whatever else kids use to emoji one another these days, they'll be rushing

back to their phones faster than you can say "pass the gravy".

One way to counter this is to apply access controls. Even basic Wi-Fi routers such as the BT Home Hub have

the option to block selected devices from accessing the internet during certain times. You can apply these controls while you're eating meals or during set periods each day, so that the kids can't

go online after 9pm - unless they're using their mobile data, which you can of course ration.

If you're still finding it's a problem, there are dedicated apps such as *Screentime* (screentimelabs.com), which can be used to impose a prison-style lights out. *Screentime*'s most compelling feature is the house-wide 'pause' button. If you're fed up with that constant "just finishing this level" cry every time you call your brood to the dinner table, you can press the Pause button on your own phone and all the devices in the house will be locked with an immovable pause screen, making resistance futile. Access to such premium features costs £2.99 per month, but some parents may consider that a price worth paying if it brings the house to order immediately.

The final option is the hardest to implement, but the most effective: parenting. Phubbing people is just rude, and if I'm being honest, my kids probably picked it up from me checking work emails, football scores or something else while sat at the table. As Lord Giddens noted when Lord Sugar sat down after making his speech: "He has so far looked at his device three times since he finished speaking". Sometimes you reap what you sow.

“ Prising a smartphone out of a teenager's hands is like removing a limpet from a rock with a plastic teaspoon ”



Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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