Issue 441

WebUser

24 Jan - 6 Feb 2018 / Best software / New apps / Take a Shotcut

DO YOU HAVE AN 'EVIL TWIN'?

Protect yourself from the latest Wi-Fi danger p52

Block Autoplay Videos & Ads FOR GOOD!

Kill all the annoying stuff your ad-blocker never will p40

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- ✗ Videos in Google search results
- ✗ Never-ending YouTube videos
- ✗ Stupid GIFs and emoji
- ✗ Embarrassing sounds on your phone – and more p40

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9 SURPRISING WAYS YOU'RE LEAKING PERSONAL INFO

So THAT'S where scammers got your number

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DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

The popular 'trick' that makes Wi-Fi worse!

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NUU metal body

Pay for things you need, not things you don't

SPECIAL OFFER!
10% off phone
50% off cases

HERE AT NUU MOBILE, we believe in spending money where it matters. When we design our phones, we want them to look good, to speed through everyday tasks and to be affordable.

That philosophy is obvious through our pair of new phones, the all-metal M2 and M3 (the only key difference is the size of the screen). Based on Android 7, with no additional bloatware or overlays, they're simple to use and boast a slim, stylish design.

As always with NUU Mobile phones, they include space for two SIMs. If you're holidaying abroad, that means you can buy a local SIM and not have to worry about how much data you're using – and you can keep your normal SIM in place so you don't miss calls or texts.

Or perhaps you want more storage than the 16GB built into the phone? No problem. Just slip a microSD card (up to 64GB) into the dual-purpose slot.

These phones haven't just been designed to appeal to consumers. Complete with SOTI certification for business, they're designed to fit in with your mobile strategy – especially if part of that strategy isn't to pay over the odds for features you don't need.

You can buy from NUU Mobile with confidence, too. We offer a two-year warranty with all our phones and provide a UK-based 7 days a week support centre you can call or email about any setup, hardware or repair issues.

We've also created a special offers for Web User readers. If you buy a phone before 31 January 2018, we'll give you 10% off the phone and 50% off accessories! For more information, email sales@nuumobile.com or visit **nuumobile.com/webuser**

	M2	M3
Price	£119.99	£129.99
Display	5.0" HD	5.5" HD
OS	Android™ 7.0	Android™ 7.0
Cameras	8MP/5MP	8MP/5MP
Memory	2GB RAM + 16GB Memory	2GB RAM + 16GB Memory
Dual SIM/microSD slot?	Yes	Yes
Battery size	2,400mAh	3,200mAh
Quick charge battery?	No	Yes
Dimensions (WDH)	144 x 72 x 7.4mm	152 x 77 x 7.9mm
Weight	145g	172g

Sleek metal body design

Android 7 Nougat

4G Dual SIM / microSD

nuu mobile

For more detail, visit nuumobile.com/webuser

Make the web less annoying

The worst things in life are invariably those you have no control over, such as rail-fare hikes, miserable weather and stinking winter colds. But you expect to be in charge of what you see, do and click online. Until, that is, your quiet browsing is interrupted by a blast of autoplaying video that defies you to focus on anything else.

Autoplay content is surely the worst thing to happen to the web since Internet Explorer 6, assaulting you with annoying ads and vacuous videos that you'd never choose to watch voluntarily. In this issue's cover feature, we explain how to combat this growing menace by blocking all autoplaying content on your PC, phone and tablet, so that it never startles or irritates you again.

Also in this issue, we kick off our new 'Does it really work?' series about testing common tech 'hacks', beginning with aluminium foil as a fix for weak Wi-Fi. Please let us know of any further tricks you'd like our experts to investigate.

Robert Irvine, Editor
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
#webuser

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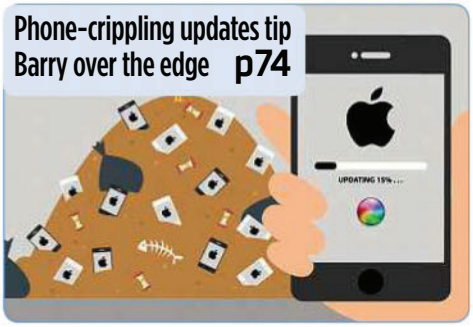

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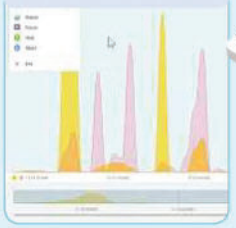

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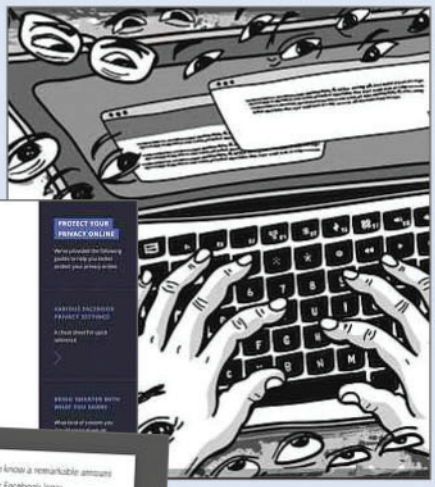
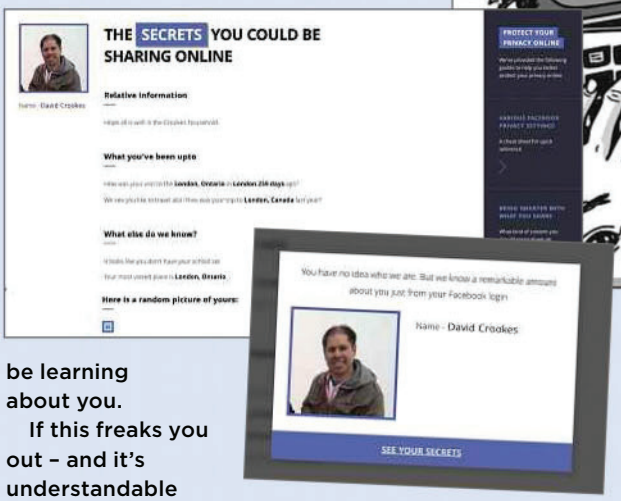
What's New Online

Discover what secrets you're sharing online





Even if you think you're being careful on social media, it's still easy to unwittingly give away information about yourself. Facebook, in particular, holds a wealth of personal data that advertisers can use, so it's important to check how much you're sharing online to stop it falling into the wrong hands.

A new tool called Supremo highlights the 'secrets' you're divulging. It does this by getting you to sign in via Facebook before asking for access to your personal information. By doing so, it collects the information it says other sites can access, including where you've travelled, the schools you attended, your photos and details of your relatives. It then presents all this data on a single page, hammering home just how much these websites could be learning about you.

If this freaks you out – and it's understandable why it might – check out Supremo's cheat sheet, which shows you the various Facebook privacy settings you should be paying attention to. You can also read advice on the type of content you should not be sharing. Once you're done, just close the window – the site promises to remove all the information it has gathered about you.

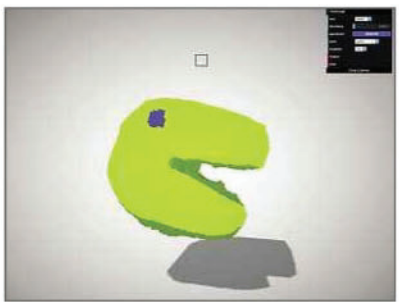
See our feature on page 48 for more about controlling what you share online.

bit.ly/supremo441

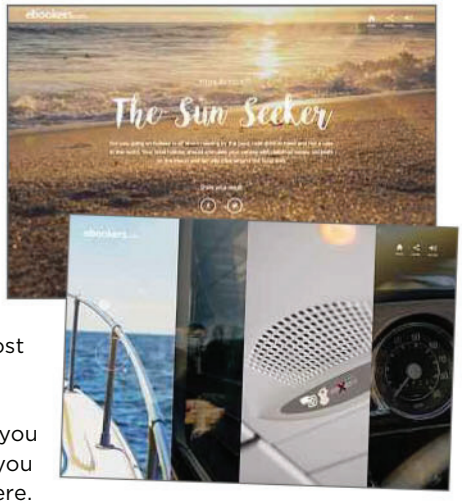
Sculpt and paint a block of voxels

bit.ly/voxels441

Forget bronze, marble, clay or even ice. If you fancy trying your hand at sculpting, you can now do so using an amazingly fun, creative online tool called VoxSculpt. Designed for use in Chrome browsers, it presents you with a cube of 'voxels' – essentially, the building blocks from which 3D models are calculated and displayed. You're then invited to use your mouse to sculpt and paint it to your heart's content, while selecting the required brush sizes, colour and style. It's certainly easy to use, thanks to its simple controls, and as the images on the introduction page show, it is possible – with patience and skill – to come up with all kinds of weird and wonderful creations. Once you've produced your masterpiece, you can save your work as a BMP file. You can also import files as an image or in the Magica Voxel VOX format.



Choose a dream holiday with your face



bit.ly/holiday441

Want to book a holiday but not sure where to go? Then stare at Ebookers' new Sensational tool and it may point you towards the ideal destination. By studying your face as you gaze at eight sets of four images, it picks up on the ones you look at most intently, hoping to tap into your subconscious and deduce the type of places you like to visit and the things you like to do when you get there.

To get started, allow the website to access your webcam and ensure your face is in position. When the images appear – accompanied by background sounds – simply turn your head and the on-screen pointer will move, settling on the image you look at the longest. Once you've finished the quiz, you'll be presented with potential holidays which you can then check out on the Ebookers website.

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

Get background noise in Street View

bit.ly/street441

Google Street View lets you explore locations from the comfort of your armchair but the lack of sound means you lose much of the ambience. Imaginary Soundscapes injects some atmosphere by automatically drawing on artificial intelligence to create background noise, depending on what you're looking at. You can visit random places or enter a street address.

Guess the mystery animal

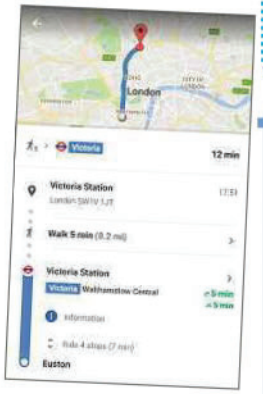
mysteryanimal.withgoogle.com

There are two ways to play this spin on the classic game of 20 Questions: either via a Google Home device or on the accompanying website. The experience is the same on both: you ask a series of yes-or-no questions – such as "do you have legs?" or "can you fly" – to try and guess a random animal. The computer will then give you the answers while cajoling you to hurry things along. It's very enjoyable and it can be easily played alone or with friends. To get it working on Google Home, just utter "Hey Google, talk to Mystery Animal".

Get step-by-step map directions

maps.google.co.uk

When travelling, do you ever worry that you'll miss your stop or get muddled over which mode of transport you ought to be getting next? Google Maps for Android has added a new feature that gives you an estimated time of arrival, departure time and, crucially, a notification to let you know the next step and when you should be getting on or off buses and trains. All you have to do is enter your destination and choose how you wish to get there. Once you've selected a preferred route, tap Start to view the all-important pointers.



View English football's global reach

bit.ly/football441

Some football clubs – for example, Manchester United – are well known for their worldwide support but just how far-flung are those fans? To find out, Twitter has mapped the global reach of 20 English teams based on the whereabouts of the people following them. You can compare two clubs to see which is most popular, and see how many Twitter followers they both have.

5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER

@GooglePay
Android Pay and Google Wallet have combined into a single brand

@oprah
Join the rumoured presidential candidate's 41 million followers

@AppleTV
Apple's new feed for the old iTunesMovies account discusses Apple TV and Prime Video

@Paul_Gascoigne8
The former Spurs and England midfielder has taken to Twitter

@DietCoke
The fizzy-drinks brand has four new flavours and a new can design

Check your diesel tax

bit.ly/diesel441

If you own a diesel vehicle, you may be hit by extra tolls if you drive in a restricted 'clean air zone' in the UK. To see if your car will be affected, type your registration number into this tool and view its Euro Emissions Standard.

Test a gaming service

bit.ly/nvidia441

Find out if your PC or Mac is up to running high-end games by testing the cloud-based gaming service GeForce NOW. This lets you play blockbuster games at high resolutions and smooth frame rates, and it's free during the beta period.

See the Queen's preferred brands

bit.ly/queen441

Several companies have a Royal Warrant of Appointment, from Bolton-based Scan Computers to mattress-maker Sleepeezee. This searchable, colour-coded Esri map lists all such brands along with explanations of what they do.

Need to Know

Manufacturers patch serious Meltdown and Spectre flaws

What happened?

Millions of devices, from computers to smartphones, have been hit by serious flaws in their processor chips, leaving them at risk of being targeted by hackers. The first flaw, dramatically dubbed Meltdown, affects Intel chips going back more than two decades; while the Spectre flaw impacts processors from Intel, AMD and ARM.

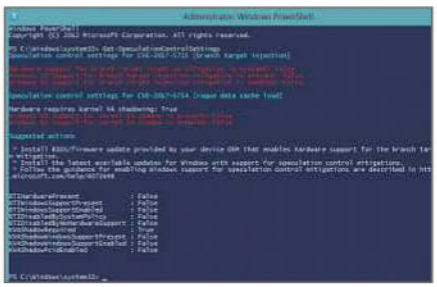
Both leave data vulnerable to hackers, but in different ways. Meltdown lets data leak between the operating system and installed applications, which means your data could be at risk if you are running an unpatched OS and a vulnerable chip. In Spectre's case, the vulnerability is between two different apps – so an otherwise secure application could be put at risk by one with flaws, again leaking your data.

Both bugs were discovered in 2017 by a team of researchers, led by a Google employee, and disclosed to relevant companies to give them time to create patches before the flaws were made public at the beginning of this year.

How will it affect you?

If you use a device running an Intel, AMD or ARM chip made in the past 10 or more years, you're likely to be affected by these vulnerabilities – in other words, if you use a tech gadget of any sort, consider yourself at risk.

Aside from the billions of devices and people affected, it's very difficult to detect whether Spectre or Meltdown have been used against you. Any type of data, including passwords, could be leaked. The researchers are unsure if either flaw has been used by hackers yet, but you should be reassured that anyone attempting to steal your data using Meltdown would need to have physical access to your computer. Spectre, however, could be triggered simply by visiting a malicious website.



Microsoft has issued a PowerShell script that lets you check for and patch the flaws

Patches for Meltdown have already been rolled out for Windows and Apple computers, as well as for Android smartphones, with more devices set to follow. Microsoft has warned of compatibility issues with some antivirus software, though these problems are being slowly addressed by the companies in question and should be solved soon. Google will roll out a fix for Chrome to avoid Spectre issues in the next version of the browser, and you can turn on a feature called 'site isolation' in the meantime, via the 'chrome:flags' Experiments page.

The fixes for Meltdown and Spectre should arrive as automatic updates – which you should already have enabled on your devices. Indeed, while these security flaws will cause sleepless nights for the security industry, they won't create much work for users.

Once the flaws are patched, however, there is still a downside. The Meltdown patches stop hackers using the vulnerability to steal data, but they also slow down the chips by as much as 30%. Microsoft said a Windows 10 device released in 2016 or later will only experience a single-digit percentage slowdown, which most of us won't notice, but if you upgraded to Windows 10 on an older device, the performance losses could be more marked. If you're using an older machine that isn't running the latest OS, you'll definitely notice the difference, Microsoft admitted.

You can test if your Windows PC is at risk from the Meltdown and Spectre vulnerabiltiies using a PowerShell script from Microsoft called Speculation Control. See bit.ly/spec441 for details.

What do we think?

We applaud the researchers – notably Jann Horn, at Google's Project Zero – for uncovering this flaw and working with the industry to fix it. It's a timely reminder that no computing product is ever 100% secure. If it doesn't have any flaws, it just means they haven't been discovered yet.

But such flaws are a problem for the industry, rather than users. If you own a mainstream, standard device, just keep it up to date – not just the OS but any applications you use, too. Experts have noted that blocking ads and tracking scripts stops apps being loaded with malicious code to target weakened systems, so if you're feeling particularly under attack, an ad blocker may help.

Some devices, however, can't be updated automatically. If you own such a device, you'll probably be notified directly by the manufacturers, who should offer tech support or hardware replacements. If we can't reasonably fix these devices ourselves, we shouldn't have to pay for new ones to stay safe.

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

Facebook overhauls your News Feed

What happened?

Facebook has yet again tweaked the algorithm for its News Feed to highlight posts by people you actually know, rather than brands and businesses. The aim, according to founder Mark Zuckerberg, is to refocus the site on "meaningful" interactions rather than "relevant content" to make the social network "good for people's well-being".

The algorithm tweak comes amid claims that social media is bad for our mental health, as well as criticism that Facebook's News Feed has helped the spread of "fake news". But the announcement has raised concerns among publishers who gain much of their traffic from story recommendations via the site.

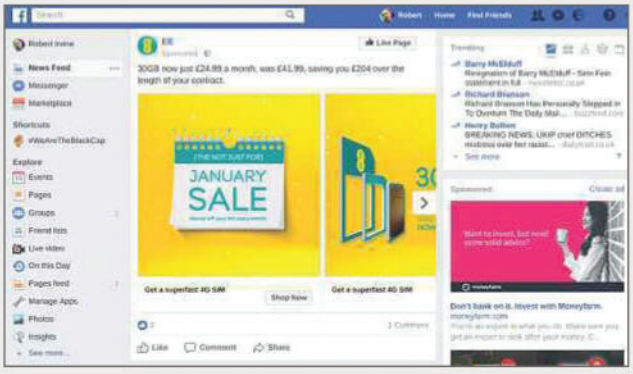
How will it affect you?

If you're still using Facebook, you should see more posts by your friends and family and fewer suggestions of 'content' from businesses, news sites and other brands. Oddly, Zuckerberg admits that by encouraging meaningful interactions rather than focusing on marketing content, users may spend less time on the site. He argues the time spent will be more "valuable" – for us, that is. But if it's not also more valuable for advertisers, you can expect investors to start complaining.

What do we think?

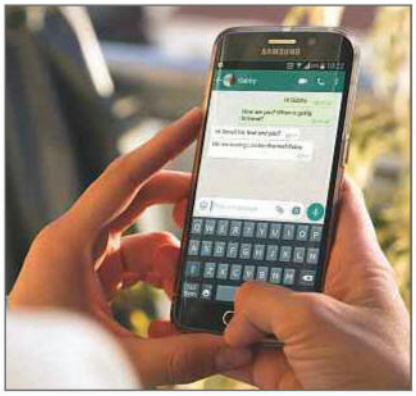
Facebook has been heavily criticised over the past year for failing to take serious action to combat the spread of fake news. Simply showing less content doesn't address the core issue, but refocusing the site on friends and family may make it much nicer to use.

Given the pressures on social-media sites to clean up their act, it's wise of Facebook to take action before it's forced by regulators to behave in a more responsible manner. We wonder why it took Mark Zuckerberg so long to realise that users will drop the site if their feed is full of marketing nonsense and fake news. After all, it's meant to be a social network, not an advertiser.



WhatsApp group chats can be hacked

What happened?



Alex Ruhl / Shutterstock.com

Researchers have revealed that WhatsApp group chats could be spied on despite the messaging app's famous end-to-end encryption. However, that's not necessarily a reason to panic.

Anyone able to take control of the app's servers could join group chats without admin approval, the researchers noted, but the app notifies everyone in a group chat that someone has joined, so such spying won't be very stealthy at all. Plus, the person joining will only be able to see new messages, not scroll back and see your old posts.

How will it affect me?

Such privacy issues are worth noting, even if they don't impact most of us. This flaw won't be a problem for most users, and exploiting it requires sophisticated skills or access to WhatsApp's servers, meaning it could really only be used by Facebook, which owns the messaging app, or by governments demanding access.

Additionally, a user being targeted would be aware of it – making the flaw rather less useful for spying. Still, it's a fact worth knowing if you're genuinely worried about being targeted by government-level authorities, and you may instead want to switch to a messaging app that's even more securely locked down. Signal, for example, uses the same encryption system as WhatsApp, but with tighter security – and it's not owned by Facebook.

Indeed, Microsoft has just introduced end-to-end encryption into Skype using the Signal protocol, to bring it more closely in line with WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Google Allo.

What do we think?

Not every design decision is a flaw. It's good to have independent researchers poking and prodding messaging apps for security reasons, but we need level-headed reporting and responses to avoid unnecessary panic. WhatsApp's security isn't perfect because there's no such thing. Its encryption and design make it a solid security choice for most of us looking to chat over the internet, so there's no urgent need to abandon it.

Police to let you report crime using Alexa

What happened?

Your smart assistant may soon be your first port of call when reporting a crime instead of phoning 101 or 999. Lancashire Police is set to roll out localised updates on crime that you will be able to access via a smart home speaker, such as the Amazon Echo. According to Rob Flanagan, the Innovation Chief of Lancashire Police, people will soon be able to ask Alexa for daily crime reports and information on terror attacks.

Moving forward, however, the UK-based police force has much bigger ambitions for its Alexa tie-in. While the initial release will allow the public to ask questions such as: "What do I do with this lost property?" or "How do I report this?", a future release will let you report crime simply by speaking to Alexa.

"I would like to be the first force to use this for crime reporting. We are a long way off from that, but the technology is there. We would definitely be there by the end of 2018," Flanagan told Mail Online. "If we can reduce demand into our call centres via the use of voice recognition or voice-enabled technology and actually give the community the information they need without them needing to ring in to police, then that's massive," Flanagan said.

How will it affect you?

There are, of course, privacy concerns about using a smart assistant in this manner, especially because crime reports can be highly sensitive in nature. For this reason, you may regard it as rather inappropriate for the police to encourage victims of crime to report all kinds of criminal activity using Alexa. Secondly, the crime reports would not be stored in the police systems. All recordings will be the property of Amazon, and will be streamed, stored and processed remotely.

What do we think?

As smart assistants become ever smarter, we're not surprised to learn that law-enforcement agencies are looking at beneficial ways of using the technology. However, we are slightly cynical about Alexa being used to report crimes because of the increased scope for abuse, which would surely put more pressure on the emergency services rather than relieving it. In 2016 alone, timewasters made 20,000 calls to the emergency services in the UK at a cost of more than £500,000. However, as Lancashire Police point out, they're still some way off introducing such a system, so we're sure they'll give full consideration to any possible pitfalls of using voice assistants in this way.

FIRST LOOK

Razer Mamba Hyperflux

bit.ly/razer441

A wireless mouse is nothing new and may not sound particularly exciting, but the Razer Mamba Hyperflux is a cutting-edge PC peripheral that signifies a revolution in technical design and prowess. Combined with its companion – the Firefly Hyperflux mouse mat – it has the potential to change how *all* wireless peripherals work. That's primarily because the Mamba Hyperflux is a wireless mouse that's completely battery-free.

Instead of relying on a rechargeable or replaceable battery, the system uses a coil around the edge of the Firefly Hyperflux mat to deliver wireless power directly to the mouse. Don't confuse this with wireless charging; it isn't that at all. If you take your mouse off the mat for more than 10 seconds or so, it'll lose charge and switch off. The Firefly pad is powering the mouse directly.

By ditching the mouse's battery, Razer has managed to address one of the key problems with wireless gaming mice – weight. The Hyperflux comes in at under 100g, which might not sound revolutionary, but we found this made a huge difference. Razer has also made significant efforts to ensure the device's accuracy isn't diminished, by equipping the Mamba with a hyper-precise optical sensor.

This isn't the only battery-free peripheral that Razer plans to introduce – the Hyperflux is set to be the first in a new range. There's no word yet on the details, but we're expecting Razer to launch a Hyperflux keyboard that will inspire other manufacturers to follow suit.

The Razer Mamba Hyperflux and Firefly Hyperflux will be available worldwide within the next few months at a price of $250/€280 for both the mouse and the mat. At the time of writing, no UK price has been given, but we'd expect the pair to cost around £250.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Are PDAs making a comeback?

In the days before smartphones, PDAs (personal digital assistants) such as the Palm Pilot and Psion were all the rage among gadget fiends. Now, thanks to an Indiegogo crowdfunding project called Gemini, they could be set to make a comeback.

Described as an "ultra-thin clamshell mobile device with fully integrated tactile QWERTY keyboard that fits in your pocket", Gemini's prototype was displayed at CES 2018 (which we'll be covering in more depth next issue), where it certainly got people talking.

In almost every sense, Gemini is an updated version of a device from a bygone era. Rather than running an antiquated operating system, Gemini dual-boots Android and Linux, and has 4G, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connections. The 5.99in touchscreen display is similar in size to the original Psion PDAs, and you can connect an external keyboard, screen and mouse.

Inside, you get a 2.6GHz processor, 4GB of RAM and 64GB of storage, and a battery that reportedly offers two weeks of standby time and 12 hours of talk time.

However, considering that there's nothing mindblowing about the Gemini's spec, we have to wonder who would opt for a PDA over a high-powered 'phablet' like the Samsung Galaxy Note 8.

The obvious answer is anyone who wants a physical QWERTY keyboard – especially this one, which, its creators claim, is "recognised as the world's best yet smallest full-sized keyboard for finger touch typing."

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

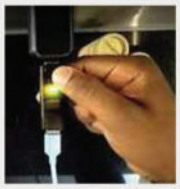
Frankly, we're surprised that the Gemini has received the hype that it has. After all, tactile keyboards didn't save BlackBerry, and other devices with QWERTY touchpads have hardly been a roaring success. However, backers have shown that there is a market for a modern PDA, so it will be interesting to see if smartphone manufacturers take notice.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Charggee

bit.ly/charggee441 | **From £10**



The convenience of rechargeable batteries is offset by the electricity wasted if you leave them plugged in indefinitely and the damage that could be caused to your gadgets if there's a power surge. Charggee solves this problem by letting you specify how long you want to charge your device for and then disconnecting it once the time is up. Just connect your phone, tablet, wireless keyboard or other device to Charggee, then plug it into your wall charger or computer's USB port and control it via the Charggee mobile app. The Charggee team hopes to raise £30,000 by 2 February.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Check your flight time using Alexa

A new 'skill' for Amazon's Alexa voice assistant delivers instant information about flights to and from Heathrow airport. Just say "flight", followed by your flight number and Alexa will confirm the details and tell you the most recent status update.

Nuisance-call companies heavily fined

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has fined four companies a combined total of £600,000 for harassing people with marketing calls and messages. Barrington Claims and Newday were the most complained-about businesses.

WE DON'T LIKE...

HP recalls risky laptop batteries

HP has recalled batteries in 50,000 of its laptops in the US and Canada because of a fire hazard. So far, eight of the company's machines have combusted, with users reporting "overheating, melting or charring" of the batteries.

Porn malware infects children's apps

Pornographic adverts and images were found in children's apps in the Google Play store. More than 60 apps were infected with malware that sent adult-themed ads to users' phones. Google has since removed the offending apps.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Security flaws found in MyCloud NAS drives

Western Digital has urged customers to update the firmware on their NAS drives after a security researcher discovered several vulnerabilities. The most serious is a hard-coded backdoor that lets attackers log into your NAS device using a pre-set username and password that can't be changed or modified.

The vulnerabilities affect Western Digital's MyCloud range of NAS drives – see bit.ly/mycloud441 for the full list. Western Digital told *Web User*'s sister site IT Pro that it had already been notified of the flaws, and that the issues were addressed in its most recent firmware update.

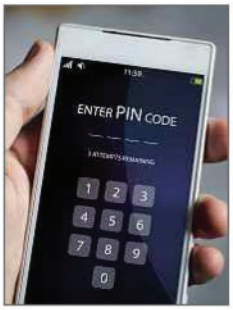
A spokesperson said: "As a reminder, we urge customers to ensure the firmware on their products is always up to date; enabling automatic updates is recommended. We also urge you to implement

sound data-protection practices such as regular data backups and password protection, including to secure your router when you use a personal cloud or network-attached storage device". bit.ly/wd441

Phone sensors help hackers guess your PIN

The sensors built into your smartphone could help a hacker guess your PIN code, according to researchers from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) in Singapore. The researchers developed an algorithm that could guess a PIN with a 99.5% accuracy rate on the first try, using a list of the 50 most common PINs. The algorithm used data from six phone sensors, including the gyroscope and accelerometer, which are used to detect how the user is tilting the device; and the ambient light sensor, which automatically adjusts the screen brightness to conserve battery life.

"When you hold your phone and key in the PIN, the way the phone moves when you press 1, 5 or 9, is very different," said Dr Shivam Bhasin from NTU. "Likewise, pressing 1 with your right thumb will block more light than if you pressed 9." He advises users to use PINs with more than four digits, combined with one-time passwords, two-factor authentication and fingerprint recognition.



Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Jornt van der Wiel, Security Researcher at Kaspersky Lab (www.kaspersky.co.uk)

Q How worried should we be about the Meltdown and Spectre flaws (see news story on page 8)?

David Heller, Twitter

A Either of these two vulnerabilities could let attackers seize sensitive data from programs and apps by accessing the hardware's core memory. Meltdown can effectively remove the barrier between user applications and sensitive parts of the operating system; while Spectre, which is found in AMD and ARM processors, can trick vulnerable applications into leaking their memory contents.

Installed apps on a device generally run in 'user mode', away from the more sensitive parts of the OS. If an app needs access to a sensitive area, it must ask permission to use 'protected mode'. In Meltdown's case, an attacker could access protected mode and the core memory without permission, effectively removing that barrier to steal data from the memory of running apps. This data could include passwords, logins, encryption keys, credit card information and more.

> "Meltdown could allow hackers to steal passwords, logins, encryption keys, credit card information and more"

Conversely, with Spectre, the memory of a (vulnerable) application can be read. So, for example, JavaScript code on a website would be able to read the logins and passwords that are stored in your browser's memory.

Meltdown and Spectre are hardware bugs, so patching them can be tricky. Patches against Meltdown have been issued for Linux, Windows, and MacOS, but work is still on the way to protect against Spectre.

In the meantime, it's as important as ever to install the latest security updates as soon as they're available – it won't take long for cybercriminals to start exploiting these vulnerabilities, especially as the sample code has already been published.

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

Ultra Wide-Color

with 4K in an immersive design

Colours like you've never seen before. This brilliant 4K UHD resolution display with Ultra Wide-Color offers the richest and most vivid colours wrapped in an immersive curved design for a your best creations yet.

innovation you

UltraWideColor

CurvedDisplay

4K Ultra HD UltraClear 4K Ultra HD

40" 4K curved display
(BDM4037U)

MISCO A Systemax Business

amazon.co.uk

ebuyer.com

BT Business Direct

PHILIPS

Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

HEALTH

NEW

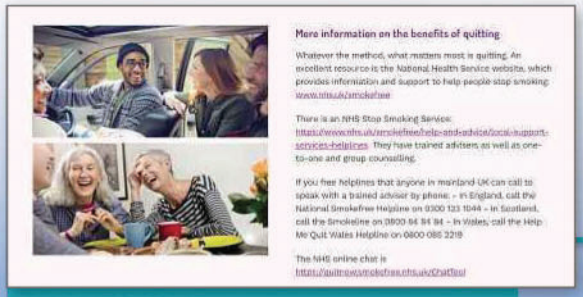
Smoke Free Future

smokefreefuture.co.uk

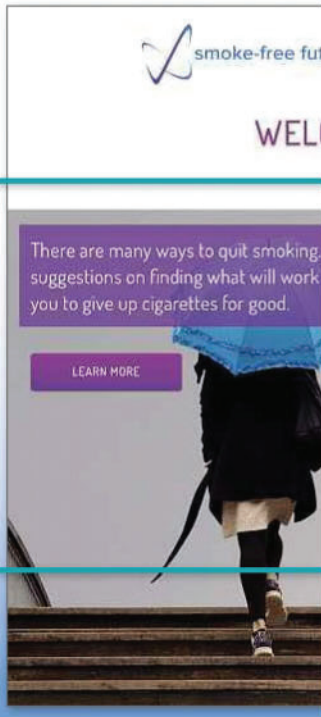
There are lots of websites that can help you quit smoking but this one is run by the tobacco company behind one of the world's most recognised brands, Marlboro. Indicating its move toward smoke-free products, Philip Morris's site contains numerous links to stop-smoking services, and examines and promotes cessation products, heated tobacco and e-cigarettes. To that end, it's effective, delivering helpful information without feeling preachy or resorting to overt scare tactics. Whether or not you feel it's a cynical move, however, is another matter.

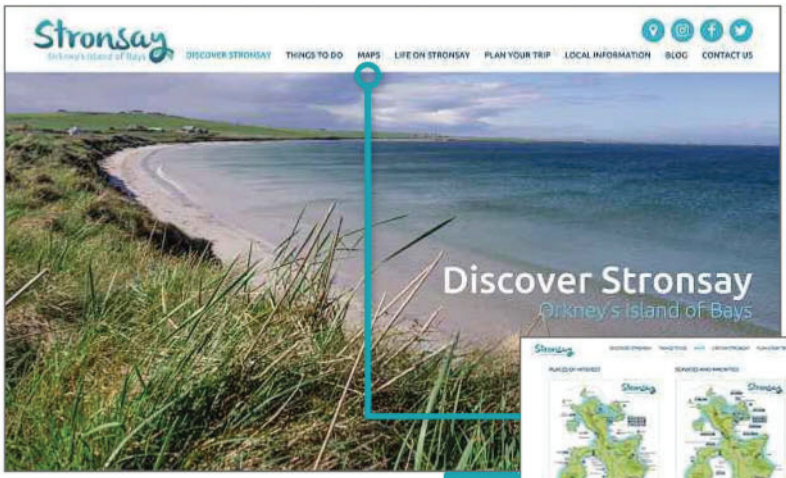
Our rating ★★★★★

EXPLANATION
The tobacco company explains why it aims to go smoke-free from this year onward



HELP TO QUIT
The most useful parts of the site are the links to NHS services, apps and phone numbers





NEW

TRAVEL

Visit Stronsay

visitstronsay.com

Only around 600 people a year visit Stronsay, a tiny island off the west coast of mainland Orkney, but its 349 residents want to double that number and encourage more people to live there. This beautifully presented website does a fine job of promoting the island, highlighting the best sights, walks and scenery, and providing details of the few places to stay. It also delves into myths and legends, as well as local culture and heritage. There's help for planning your trip, a couple of maps and an event calendar, too. Finally, for those considering getting away from it all, there's a section about life on Stronsay and a blog about a family who live there.

Our rating ★★★★★

NEW

PROPERTY

Roof Over Your Head

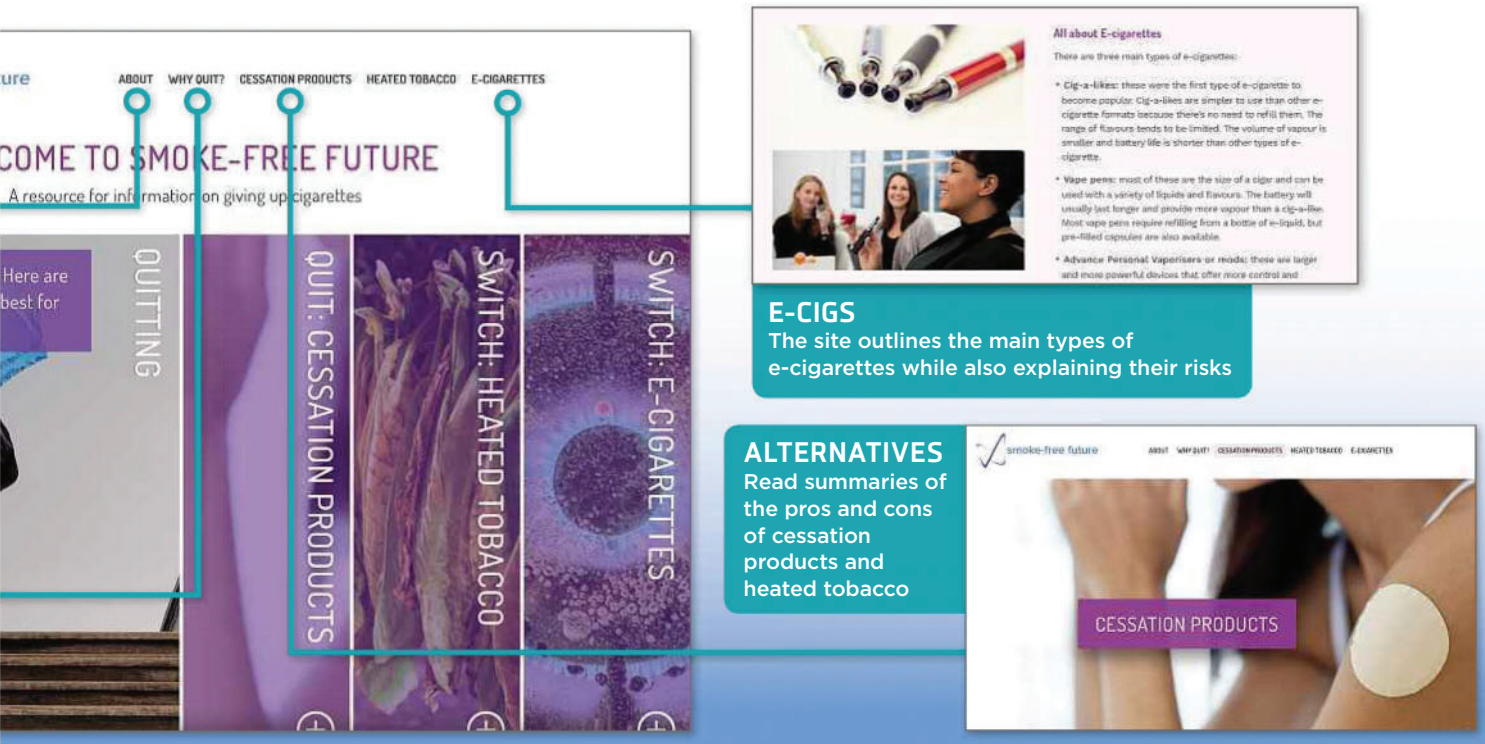
www.roofoveryourhead.com

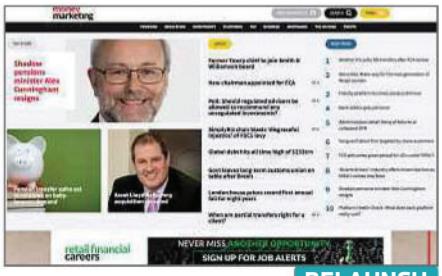
As anyone who has ever sold their home through an estate agent knows, it is not a cheap or easy process. Roof Over Your Head lets you market and sell your property online, giving your home a personalised site, two unique web addresses, marketing material to print or email, and a For Sale board. Crucially, it is also free, with the site apparently making cash through the sale of support services. Unfortunately, properties are not listed on Rightmove or Zoopla and the site's design lacks impact. But with the potential to save thousands, it's certainly worth investigating.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Reviews by David Crookes

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





FINANCE

Money Marketing

www.moneymarketing.co.uk

Money Marketing's packed homepage provides a punchy, comprehensive overview of financial reports, analysis and comment, making it perfect for anyone who is serious about their investments. Although it's primarily aimed at financial advisors, there are new fund-performance tables and a historic-charting tool – useful if you want to keep tabs on your investments and understand what you're looking at. The investment section has been expanded and you can search for news on companies such as Aviva and Royal London. If you've got a full piggy bank, it's worth a look.

Our rating ★★★★☆

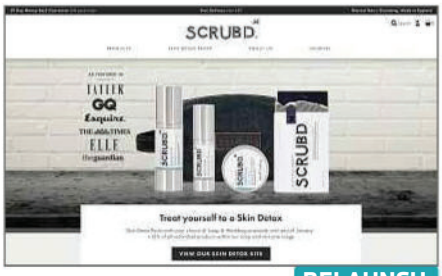
SOCIETY

We Are Beam

www.wearebeam.org

This crowdfunding platform aims to help homeless people by raising money for employment training. It focuses on specific individuals, allowing you to read their stories, view their targets and pledge money towards their future. But it also lets you make monthly donations that are shared between all live campaigns. We like how each page clearly displays the full cost along with the person's likes, dream job and action plan. We also love the simplicity of donating and that Beam is transparent about how much it takes for itself to keep the project running.

Our rating ★★★★☆



GROOMING

Scrubd

www.scrubd.com

This natural-grooming specialist has given its site a makeover, shaving away unnecessary fluff in favour of a fresh, clean look. The redesign makes it easy to find items, and browsing is improved by large, well-shot images accompanied by informative, no-nonsense descriptions and, in some cases, user reviews. Of particular note is the new journal, which is billed as a monthly digest of the grooming scene. Although there are currently only a few articles, there's useful advice about work-outs, skincare and soap, as well as lots of information about Scrubd's history and ethos.

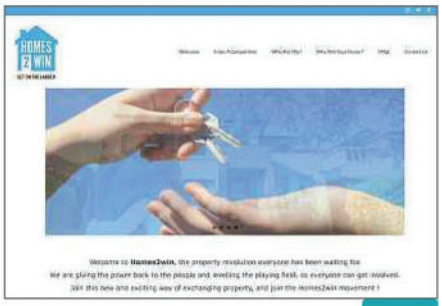
Our rating ★★★★☆

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

BACK ISSUES DISC 2017

Our **2017 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year will be on sale soon from Amazon

You can still buy our 2016 Back Issues Disc from bit.ly/wudisc16



NEW

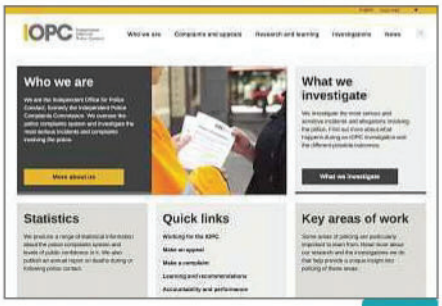
PROPERTY

Homes2win

www.homes2win.co.uk

The concept of offering a house as a raffle prize is by no means new. In fact, we covered a similar site to this one (rafflemyhouse.com) in Issue 438. But as a way of getting property on the cheap, it takes some beating, encouraging you to answer a question and part with £2.50 per entry in the hope of winning a one-bedroom maisonette in Guildford (there's only one home on the site so far). Everything is well explained, right down to an FAQ and clear terms and conditions. There are also plenty of images of the home in question. With a percentage of the fees going to charity, Homes2win is certainly worth a viewing.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



NEW

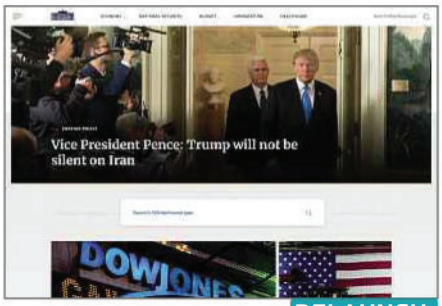
POLICE

Independent Office for Police Conduct

www.policeconduct.gov.uk

'Ello, 'ello, what do we have here? Why, it's the replacement for the Independent Police Complaints Commission, as announced by Theresa May when she was Home Secretary. The IOPC investigates serious matters involving the police and the site explains exactly what it covers. Although it's low on visuals, it tells you all you need to know about making a complaint and the appeals procedure. You can also access statistics, read the latest complaint-related news and find out how to become an investigator yourself. Each page can be shared and there are 'easy-read' options too.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



RELAUNCH

POLITICS

The White House

www.whitehouse.gov

Unlike the current US president, there's nothing controversial about The White House's revamped offering. To save money, Trump's administration has switched the site from Drupal to WordPress. It now feels more 'newsy', though (obviously) with a pro-government slant, and more issue-led: the main navigation headings are Economy, National Security, Budget, Immigration and Healthcare rather than Briefing Room and Administration. Less reliant on a bunch of links at the bottom of the home screen, it's far easier to navigate. There's also lots of history to delve into, a newsletter and a speedy search engine.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

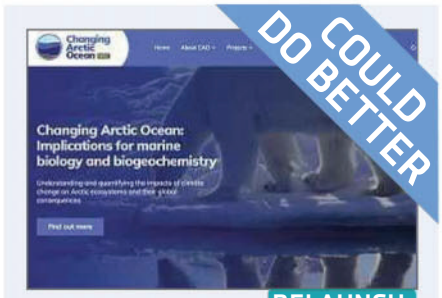
ARCHITECTURE

Pioneering Women of American Architecture

pioneeringwomen.bwaf.org

If you enjoy architectural history, then this celebration of the contribution that women have made to design in America will be right up your street. Covering the period between 1880 and 1980, it profiles 50 women, most of whom are relatively unknown. Yet the mix of biographical information and details of major projects, awards and honours soon brings them to life, while lots of photos and plans do the same for their work. It's easy to find the women by looking for their name in an alphabetical or chronological list, and you can also browse the designs, hovering over each one to see who did what. It's a work of art in itself.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

ENVIRONMENT

Changing Arctic Ocean

www.changing-arctic-ocean.ac.uk

Created by the UK's National Environment Research Council, this site explores four major projects that are tackling the effect of climate change on the Arctic ocean. Packed with explanatory documents, it's a bit dry and text-heavy, and could do with some explanatory visuals and videos. Navigation could be improved, too, but we enjoyed the news section with its links to sharable environmental features, press releases and media coverage.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Help visitors print better

PrintFriendly (www.printfriendly.com) is a website that lets you strip unnecessary extras, such as ads, from a web page before printing (see our main tip on page 68). The site includes a handy button-creation tool at bit.ly/pfbu441, which you can use to insert a PrintFriendly link on your website. This works with standard HTML sites, but there are also plugins for content-management systems including WordPress, Joomla, Drupal and Blogger.

When visitors to your site click the PrintFriendly button, they'll be taken to a ready-to-print version of your site without having to cut and paste your page's address.

Get SEO help from Google

Google has launched a series of short video guides to answer frequently asked webmaster questions about the search engine and how it works. Called SEO Snippets, it already has answers for questions about how sites rank on Google, including whether having multiple HTML headings is a problem and if sites should be kept in subdomains or subfolders. Keep an eye out for more tips coming soon at bit.ly/seos441.

Deal of the Fortnight

Names.co.uk (www.names.co.uk) is offering domains with a '.co.uk' or a '.uk' suffix for free for the first year.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Hristo Pandjarov, WordPress and SEO Specialist at SiteGround (www.siteground.com)

Q I would like to add some photos to my website. What's the best way to do this? Should I simply post the images on the page or would it be better to use some kind of gallery software?

Colin, via Web User Forums

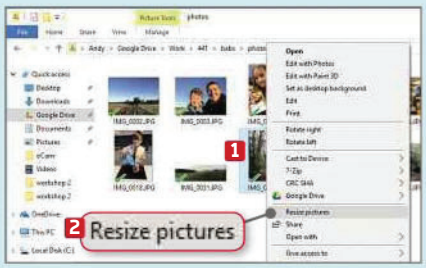
A If you are using a modern content-management system such as WordPress, I'd recommend you simply upload your photos. The application will automatically resize them to the appropriate image sizes and let you insert them into the page in a way that will look good on all devices.

If you are manually editing static pages, I would suggest you use an image editor to resize the photos yourself.

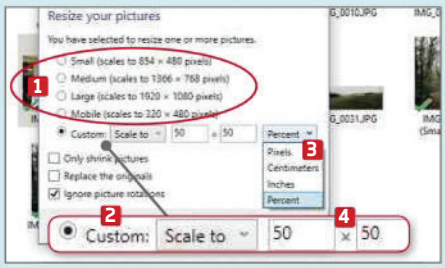
MINI WORKSHOP | Resize images from your right-click menu

Image Resizer: bit.ly/imre441 | 10 mins | Windows 7, 8, 10

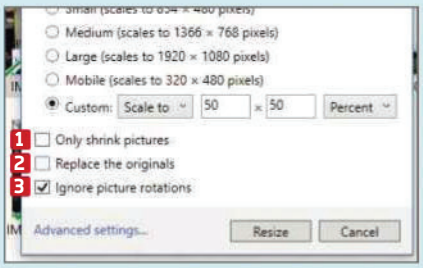
If your website contains images, you may find you spend a lot of time resizing them. This handy program makes the process much quicker and easier by adding a resize option to the right-click menu



1 Download the software from bit.ly/imre441 and install it. From File Explorer, you can either right-click a single image 1 and choose 'Resize pictures' from the menu, 2 or resize multiple images by using Shift or Ctrl when making your selection.



2 There are preset sizes available if you want to convert images to the same standard size. 1 Otherwise, click Custom, 2 choose the unit of measurement you want from the menu on the right 3 and type the size you want in the boxes. 4



3 Tick the first box if you don't want to accidentally increase the size of an image that's smaller than your chosen preset. 1 The second tick box lets you decide whether to keep the original image or replace it with the resized one. 2 Tick the last box to ensure that your images keep their existing aspect ratio. 3

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

BEND YOUR REALITY

AG352UCG AG352QCX

QHD | NVIDIA G-SYNC | 200HZ | Adaptive Sync | 35"

AOC GAMING

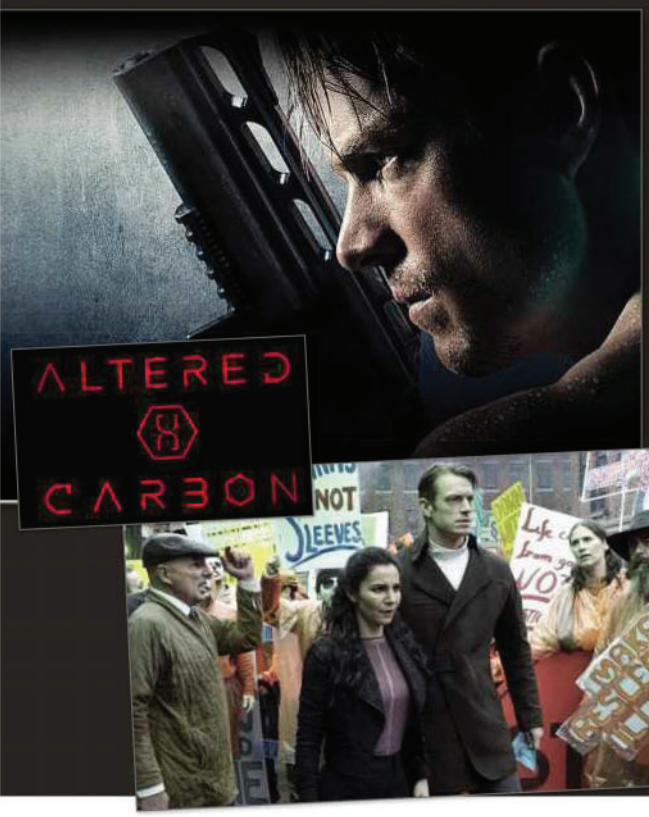
aocgaming.com @aoc_gaming @aocgaming @aocgaming

SCAN OVERCLOCKERS UK amazon.co.uk

What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX



Watch *Altered Carbon* Season 1

From 2 February

Based on the 2002 best-selling cyberpunk novel by Richard K Morgan, *Altered Carbon* is yet another binge-worthy Original series from Netflix. This quality slice of sci-fi has more than a touch of *Blade Runner* about it. The action takes place in the near future (2384, to be exact) where humans can extend their lives indefinitely by transferring their minds from body to body – or sleeve to sleeve, to use the show's parlance – via a portable chip called a Cortical Stack. The plot follows elite soldier Takeshi Kovacs (*Suicide Squad*'s Joel Kinnaman), who has been brought back to life after centuries to help find out who murdered the Earth's wealthiest man (*The Following*'s James Purefoy).

There's a lot more to the story than a simple murder mystery, though, with plenty of high-octane action to keep you entertained and a well fleshed-out future world. The 10-episode series, which has the tagline 'No body lives forever' looks set to be another massive hit for the streaming service, and it's definitely one we'll be glued to when it debuts at the start of February.

You can watch the trailer at bit.ly/watchac441 and find out more about *Altered Carbon* on Netflix's official page at bit.ly/altcarbon441.

Stream the Syfy channel on Now TV

Sky's Now TV service, which lets you watch Sky TV shows, films and sport without a contract, is already a worthy rival to Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, and its Entertainment Pass just got even better. As well as adding 50 new box sets of complete series, including *Six Feet Under*, *The Wire* and *Dexter*, Now TV has added a new channel, SyFy, which you can stream live or watch on catch-up through your phone, tablet, TV or computer. SyFy (www.syfy.co.uk) offers such sci-fi, fantasy and horror delights as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Merlin* and *The Exorcist*.

A Now TV Entertainment Pass costs £7.99 per month and gives you access to more than 300 box sets, as well as live channels including Sky One, Sky Atlantic, Gold, Comedy Central and Discovery.

Watch *Goodfellas*

From 31 January

"As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster." The opening narration, delivered by mob associate Henry Hill (played by Ray Liotta), is the perfect introduction to Martin Scorsese's 1990 American crime drama *Goodfellas*. The film follows Hill's ascent through the ranks of an Italian-American crime syndicate, and is packed with classic and iconic moments, as well as a scene-stealing performance from Joe Pesci, who went home with a well-deserved Oscar for Best Actor in a Supporting Role at the 1991 Academy Awards.

If you've never seen *Goodfellas*, now is the perfect time to right that wrong (although be warned, the film doesn't hold back on violence and profanity). If you haven't seen it in a while, it's worth watching again just to remind yourself how good it is.

Watch *A Futile and Stupid Gesture*

From 26 January

Doug Kenney was one of the co-founders of the ground-breaking *National Lampoon* magazine, which went on to change and shape American

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

culture in the 1970s. This Netflix movie stars comedy actor Will Forte as Kenney, and co-stars *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*'s Domhnall Gleeson as Henry Beard, another founder. It charts the rise of the magazine and how it diversified into other areas, including radio, TV, theatre and, most famously, movies. Bill Murray, John Belushi, Chevy Chase, Christopher Guest, Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd, Rodney Dangerfield and other actors of that era all make an appearance – played, naturally, by other actors (including the likes of Seth Green and Joel McHale). It's not the most accurate biopic you'll ever watch, but it certainly promises to be one of the more entertaining. If you've enjoyed a lot of *National Lampoon*'s films in the past – which include *Caddy Shack*, the *Vacation* series and *Animal House* – you're in for a treat.

See the amusing trailer at bit.ly/watchAFSG441.

Watch *Six Nations* Rugby Union

From 3 February

England won the *Six Nations* back to back in 2016 and 2017. Will it be the first nation to win the championship three years in a row? We'll find out come the middle of March, when the competition reaches its climax, but before that you can follow all the action on terrestrial TV and catch-up services. All matches will be shown live on the BBC or ITV, and on catch-up via iPlayer and ITV Hub. The contest starts on 3 February with Wales vs Scotland, which will be broadcast by the BBC. England's first game takes place the following day, with ITV covering the action.

See the fixtures and find out more about the championship on the official Six Nations site at www.sixnationsrugby.com.

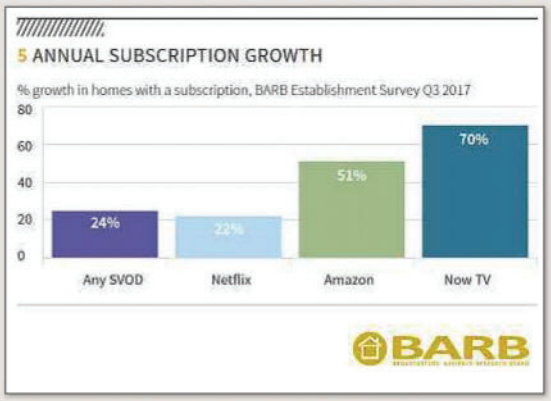
Watch *Suits* Season 7, part 2

From 30 January

After ending on a massive cliff-hanger before its mid-season break, legal drama *Suits* returns for the second half of Season 7. If you've never watched the series, we won't spoil it for you (all previous seasons and episodes are available on Netflix if you fancy settling in for a massive binge-watch), but we'll just say that this is your last chance to catch Prince Harry's bride-to-be, Meghan Markle, in the programme. Markle has appeared in the show since the very beginning but – perhaps unsurprisingly – has now given up acting and will instead focus on humanitarian work. Expect to see wholesale changes to the programme when Season 8 arrives later in the year.

Streaming feuds: NETFLIX vs amazon prime video

Netflix twice as popular as Amazon Prime Video



You probably won't be surprised to hear that Netflix is the king of the streaming services, with an audience that's nearly twice that of its largest rival, Amazon Prime Video. According to a new report from the Broadcasters Audience Research Board (BARB), 7.34 million UK households had Netflix subscriptions by spring 2017, compared with 3.82 million for Prime Video. Netflix's audience grew by 22%, adding another 1.4 million subscribers to its tally, compared with Amazon's 51% growth and Now TV's impressive 70% increase (which equates to an additional 600,000 subscribers). Overall, the number of UK households that subscribe to at least one streaming service has increased by 24% year on year. Virgin Media customers in particular seem to be drawn to Netflix. BARB says more than 40% of those users have a Netflix subscription.

You can view the full report at bit.ly/barbpdf441 (PDF).

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Samsung Galaxy Book

Lee Bell tests an affordable Windows 10 hybrid that offers a surprisingly robust alternative to Microsoft's Surface laptop

Mention Samsung and most people will think of Android phones, but the manufacturer has also produced a notable series of Windows hybrids – a combination of tablet and laptop – over the last few years. The latest is the Galaxy Book, the successor to the Galaxy TabPro S. Although the Galaxy Book has been available for a few months, its price recently dropped considerably, making it well worth a look if you're after a laptop-tablet hybrid at a terrific price. There are two versions available: a 10.6in and a 12in model. Both are fully-fledged Windows tablets with clip-on keyboards and true go-anywhere credentials.

If you've used a Samsung TabPro S, you'll feel right at home with the Galaxy Book. Not only do these products look similar, but place the two side by side and you'd struggle to tell them apart. One key difference, however, is that the Galaxy Book's more powerful hardware requires a bulkier chassis.

The design of the Galaxy Book isn't what we'd expect from Samsung. Its chassis has a faux gun-metal trim, which makes it look like it's forged in aluminium, but it's plasticky to the touch and feels more like a mid-range tablet than a premium Windows device.

Keyboard and touchpad

We love the Galaxy Book's keyboard, which – in a nod to Apple's Smart covers – clips on securely and folds at the back, Toblerone-style, to prop up the tablet. The downside is that it can only be rested in two positions, which means it isn't always possible to position the display at the optimum angle, as you can with Microsoft's more flexible Surface tablets.

> "Windows 10 runs smoothly and there wasn't the slightest hint of lag with touchpad or touchscreen gestures or web browsing"

The keyboard is more comfortable to use than most other hybrids we've tried. With plenty of movement to each keystroke and a satisfyingly clicky feel, it's a joy to type on. However, the keys on the 10.6in model are a little on the small side, which takes a bit of getting used to.

The touchpad on the 10.6in model is similarly tiny but it still works superbly. Not only is it smooth to run your fingers across but it works

perfectly with Windows 10's multi-touch gestures. The stylus is included in the box for free, too.

Screen and internal components

Both the 10.6in model's 1,920 x 1,260 pixels resolution and the 12in model's 2,160 x 1,440 pixels resolution provide a crisp display. However, while the smaller screen is a standard LCD panel, the 12in version has a Super AMOLED display that also supports HDR, delivering a dramatic increase in image quality.

We tested both screens with a colorimeter and found that the 10.6in model delivers a maximum brightness of 387cd/m² (candles per square metre) and a contrast ratio of 928:1; while the 12in model's screen is 376cd/m² with the nominally perfect contrast that AMOLED typically achieves. Colour reproduction across both is also superb, but the 12in model has a slight edge, with more vibrant and eye-popping colours.

On the inside, the 10.6in Galaxy Book is powered by a modest Intel Core m3 processor alongside 4GB of RAM and 64GB of eMMC storage, which is expandable via microSD. This is noticeably less powerful than the 12in model, powered by an Intel Core i5-7200U, which comes with either 4GB of RAM and a 128GB SSD, or 8GB of RAM and a 256GB SSD.

Performance, battery and value for money

Both tablets acquit themselves well in daily use. Windows 10 runs smoothly on both, and there wasn't the slightest hint of lag with touchpad or touchscreen gestures or day-to-day web browsing. In benchmark testing, though, the 10.6in Galaxy Book achieved a modest total of 25, placing it just ahead of Huawei's MateBook E, while the 12in model hit a more impressive 47, though it lags behind the recent Core i5-equipped Surface Pro.

Battery life isn't the Galaxy Book's best feature. In our tests, the 10.6in model managed 7 hours and 18 minutes of video playback from a full charge before it died, which is just enough for a day's work but still a long way behind the 10.5in iPad Pro's 12 hours 59 minutes and Asus Transformer Mini's 11 hours 19 minutes. However, you can squeeze an extra hour out of the 12in model.

The Galaxy Book's main competitor is Microsoft's newest Surface Pro, but it outstrips its rival on price. Now in its fifth incarnation, the Surface Pro is still an expensive option. Prices start at a lofty £720 for the Core m3 model with its 4GB of RAM and 128GB SSD. You'll also have to fork out an extra £150 for the Type Cover and a further £100 if you want the new Surface Pen. The Core i5 Surface Pro is £1,229 all in and the iPad Pro is even more expensive for the full package.

Samsung's Galaxy Book, on the other hand, gives you all of the above included in the box for a one-off cost of just £450 for the 10.6in model and £900 for the Core i5 version, with 4GB of RAM and 128GB of storage. That's a whole lot more value for money.

OUR VERDICT

★★★★☆

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

It seems Apple and Microsoft have some genuine competition with Samsung's tablet/laptop hybrids and both 10.6in and 12in Galaxy Book models are strong contenders.

Despite not being the most luxurious-feeling devices, they provide a sensible balance of price, performance and usability and, best of all, the top-notch keyboard and stylus are included at no extra cost.

PRODUCT INFO

Samsung Galaxy Book

Price: 10.6in £450.20; 12in £899.99
Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/sgbten441 (10.6in), bit.ly/sgbtwe441 (12in)

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel Core m3 (10.6in) or Intel Core i5 7200 U (12in)
- 10.6in: 1,920 x 1,280 pixels resolution TFT or 12in: 2,160 x 1,440 pixels resolution Super AMOLED FHD
- 4GB or 8GB of memory
- 128GB or 256GB eMMC/SSD
- Wi-Fi 802.11a/b/g/n/ac
- Bluetooth 4.1
- Windows 10
- 261 x 179 x 8.9mm (10.6in), 291 x 200 x 7.4mm (12in)
- 648g (10.6in), 754g (12in)

FOR

✓ Great price (particularly the 10.6in model)
✓ Gorgeous screen
✓ Brilliant keyboard included

AGAINST

✗ Slightly thicker than rivals
✗ Smaller model has lower specification

HIGHER SPECIFICATION

Microsoft Surface Pro, £719
bit.ly/surf441

BETTER BATTERY LIFE

Apple iPad Pro (10.5in), £619
bit.ly/ipad441

Amazon Echo Show

Jonathan Bray reviews the most expensive Echo in Amazon's range, which adds video calling to its extensive list of capabilities

The growth in popularity of Amazon's and Google's voice-controlled assistants caught many by surprise, perhaps because every must-have device these days is equipped with a screen. Now, Amazon's latest smart speaker has restored the status quo by incorporating a visual display, though thankfully it's still more of an Echo than an Amazon Fire tablet.

The design of the Echo Show is practical rather than aesthetic, with a blocky, angular body that's ugly when compared with the stylish, fabric-clad Echo. Its 7in screen, with a resolution of 1,024 x 600 pixels, is mounted above a rectangular-shaped speaker grille and has a 5-megapixel webcam at the top. The front panel is tilted back at a slight angle to make it easier to read, and the base is reassuringly solid and heavy, covered with a thick layer of rubber. Apart from the touchscreen, there are just three buttons on the top panel (volume up, down and mute).

Despite the addition of a screen, the Show can do everything a regular screen-less Echo can do: answer general questions, provide a weather forecast, find recipes, set timers and alarms, order goods from Amazon and play music and radio. All this can be controlled using your voice – there's no need to touch the Show if you don't want to.

Amazon's Echo speakers are getting better at producing decent sound and the Show has the best speakers yet. It can't match the sound quality of a dedicated Bluetooth speaker of the same price, but the gap is narrowing.

But all this is mere window dressing: it's the touchscreen that really enhances this device. By default, it displays news headlines on a series of cards, along with forthcoming calendar entries, reminders and suggestions of things you can ask Alexa. Requests for weather, sports results and various other queries generate a graphical info card, like those you find on Amazon Fire tablets; and radio stations and music streaming are accompanied by currently playing cards with album cover and play/pause/skip/shuffle controls. It's even possible to watch Prime Video and, of course, buy stuff from Amazon's online shop.

> "The Echo Show's party trick is its ability to make video calls"

The Echo Show's party trick, however, is its ability to make video calls. This works either from one Echo Show to another, or between the Show and any mobile device with the Alexa app installed (available for both Android and iOS). We found it worked well, with good call quality, using either a home network or a mobile connection.

The Echo Show's display isn't going to dazzle you with its quality but it's certainly good enough for video calls. One particularly nifty touch is that the screen dims when there's no-one in the room and flicks back on as soon as it detects movement.

PRODUCT INFO

Amazon Echo Show

Price: £199.99
Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/aesh441

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel Atom x5-Z8350 processor
- 7in touchscreen display
- 5 megapixels camera
- Dual 2in stereo speakers
- 802.11 a/b/g/n (2.4GHz and 5GHz)
- Bluetooth
- Advanced Audio Distribution Profile (A2DP)
- 187 x 187 x 90mm
- 1.17kg

FOR

✓ Adds a screen to voice-activated devices
✓ Video calling between Amazon devices and Alexa app

AGAINST

✗ Most expensive Echo
✗ Least attractive design of the Echo range

OUR VERDICT

★★★★☆

The Amazon Echo Show combines all the flexibility and voice-activated brilliance of regular Echo speakers with a dash of visual flair. However, it costs a lot more than the screen-less Echo devices. If you're eager to use its video-calling and video feeds, it's definitely worth it, but even if you don't, its display enhances rather than detracts from the simplicity and accessibility of the Echo range.

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

Vigor 2862 Series

NEW

The Ultimate 'xDSL' Router

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- 802.1q VLAN tagging & multiple subnets
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- Managed Wireless for DrayTek APs
- DrayDDNS Service - **New**

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See web site for details

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See web site for full details

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DrayTek's new managed wireless facility is built into the Vigor 2862 router - Just add DrayTek wireless access points and your users and guests can have reliable coverage and optimised performance, whilst you have control, security and comprehensive monitoring.

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All specifications subject to change. 02/16
Please check web site for current model specifications.

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HARDWARE

MINI PC

Asus VivoMini

£672.99 from bit.ly/asus440
Tested: Issue 440

With capable performance, generous storage and extensive connectivity, the Asus VivoMini is an impressively versatile mini PC. It's great for use in a home office and usefully offers both a main SSD and a back-up hard drive.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core 2.5GHz Intel Core i5-7200U processor ■ 8GB memory ■ 128GB SSD, 1TB hard drive ■ 6 x USB ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet connectivity ■ 190 x 190 x 52mm ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty

KEYBOARD

BakkerElkhuizen UltraBoard 940

£79 from bit.ly/bakk438
Tested: Issue 438

The Ultraboard 940 is designed for all your computing needs – desktop, laptop and mobile. It's very comfortable and has a much better build quality than most portable keyboards.

KEY SPECS

Compact form ■ Scissor-switch technology ■ Multimedia function keys ■ 2 x USB 2 ports ■ Wireless ■ Height adjustment ■ Windows, MacOS, Android, iOS ■ 285 x 147 x 19mm ■ Two-years return-to-base warranty

VOICE ASSISTANT

Amazon Echo

£89.99 from bit.ly/echo437
Tested: Issue 437

With its sophisticated speech recognition, Amazon's second-generation Echo proves that smart digital assistants have a bright future, and it keeps getting better and better.

KEY SPECS

Compatible with Fire OS, Android and iOS devices ■ 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi ■ Line-out with 3.5mm cable or Bluetooth ■ 2.5in woofer, 0.6in tweeter ■ 148 x 88 x 88mm ■ 821g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

HIGH-SPEED ROUTER

TP-Link Deco M5

£229.99 from bit.ly/tpl435
Tested: Issue 435

This is a finely balanced mesh system with good range, although it isn't the fastest router available. However, it's got great additional features including built-in antivirus and powerful parental controls.

KEY SPECS

Mesh-networking kit ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ Combined network of 2.4GHz and 5GHz bands ■ WPA2-AES security ■ 1 x WAN port ■ 2 x Gigabit Ethernet ports ■ 120 x 120 x 38mm ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty

BUDGET TABLET

Amazon Fire HD 8

£89.99 from bit.ly/fire433
Tested: Issue 433

Long battery life, superb build quality and decent performance make this an excellent 16GB tablet for the price. It's worth paying the extra £10 for this ad-free version, too.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.3GHz MediaTek MT8135 processor ■ 1.5GB memory ■ 16GB storage (expandable to 256GB) ■ 8in 1,280 x 800 pixels screen ■ 2-megapixel rear camera ■ Fire OS ■ 214 x 128 x 9.7mm ■ 369g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

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.

KEY SPECS

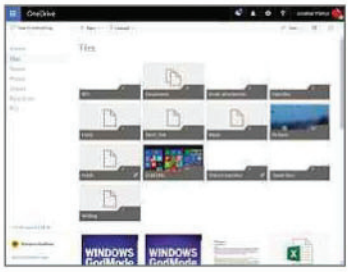
Octa-core 1.6GHz Exynos 7870 processor ■ 13-megapixel front and rear cameras ■ 2GB RAM ■ 16GB storage ■ 5.2in 1,280 x 720-pixel screen ■ Android 7 ■ 146.2 x 71.3 x 8mm ■ 160g ■ Two-years return-to-base warranty

All prices correct at time of review

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

CLOUD-STORAGE SERVICE

Microsoft OneDrive



From free from onedrive.live.com
Tested: Issue 438

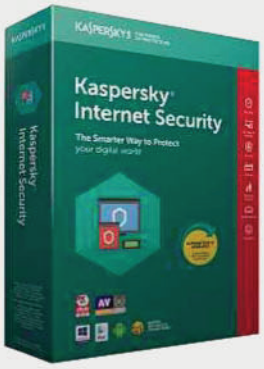
If you use Windows 10 or Microsoft Office, then OneDrive is a no-brainer. It's simple to use and already integrated into your PC. Recent improvements have added some excellent new features though we wish Microsoft would increase its free storage allowance. OneDrive also integrates well with both Android and iOS.

KEY FEATURES

5GB free storage ■ Web-based Office Web Apps including Word and Excel ■ 10GB maximum file size ■ Android, iOS and Windows 10 apps ■ Up to 50GB extra storage for £1.99 per month; Office 365 and 1TB of storage from £5.99 per month ■ Files expire after one year of inactivity

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

START MENU REPLACEMENT

StartIsBack++ 2.5.2

£2.23 from startisback.com
Tested: Issue 440
With its familiar look and many customisation options, StartIsBack is the closest equivalent to the popular but discontinued Start-menu replacement program ClassicShell.

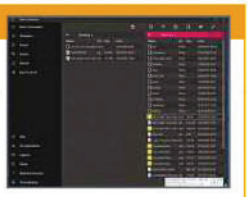
PHOTO-EDITING APP

PhotoDirector

Free from bit.ly/phod439
Tested: Issue 439
PhotoDirector is easy to use and very effective at enhancing images. Although it's a free version of a paid-for app, it doesn't feel restricted in its provision of tools.

WINDOWS 10 FILE MANAGER

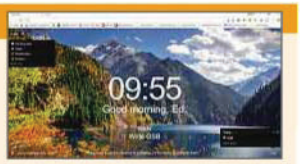
Metro Commander



Free from bit.ly/metr437
Tested: Issue 437
Metro Commander is a smart-looking file-management tool that offers lots of great features in its free version, including a very useful dual-pane view.

NEW TAB PAGE

Momentum



Free from bit.ly/momentum436
Tested: Issue 436
Make your day more productive with Momentum, which fits loads of useful tools into an attractive Chrome New Tab page.

ANDROID LAUNCHER

Microsoft Launcher

Free from bit.ly/microsoftl435
Tested: Issue 435
This is the best free launcher for performance, usability and features. It's very fast and supports gestures.

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Best Free Software

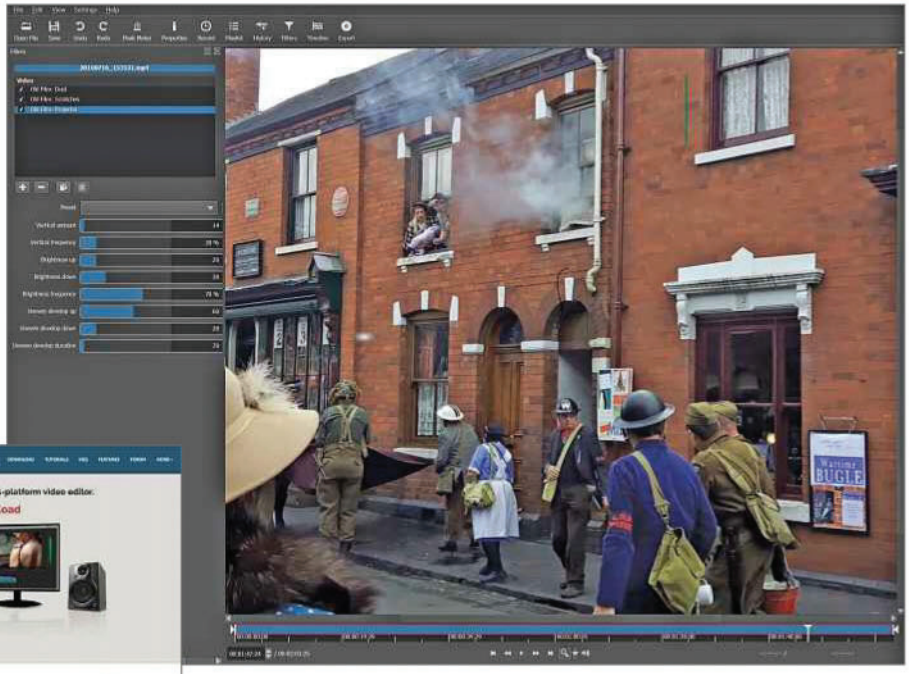
VIDEO EDITOR

Shotcut 18

www.shotcut.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux

File size: 184MB



Shotcut is an excellent free video editor that's both open-source and cross-platform, which means it works on all desktop operating systems. Its interface feels instantly familiar and is very easy to use, and it offers nearly all the editing features you could wish for.

The program uses the popular third-party tool FFmpeg to import audio and video files, and can therefore handle all the main – and latest – media formats. It even supports 4K-resolution video. You can import video directly from a webcam and capture audio separately, too.

All the editing in Shotcut is performed on a multi-track timeline, which can handle clips of different resolutions and frame rates. Unlimited undo/redo and a history view allow you to experiment as much as you like, then roll back the changes if required.

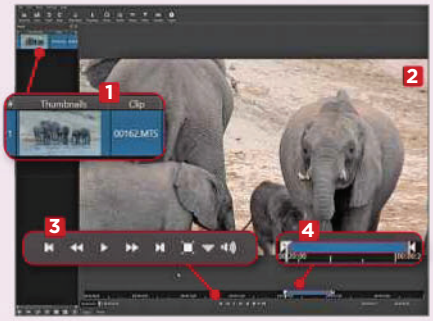
There are plenty of effects, filters and transitions you can apply to your projects, with wheels for colour correction and grading, and an eye-dropper tool that lets you pick a neutral colour for white balance.

Video filters on offer include Blur, Brightness, Diffusion, Glow, Invert Colours, Lens Correction, Mirror, Old Film, Saturation, Sepia Tone, Sharpen, Stabilize and Wave.

Shotcut is simple enough for beginners to master, but it also has plenty of advanced features for more experienced video editors, such as video compositing and blending modes, Chroma key and more.

The latest version adds a new Audio Spectrum Visualisation filter, and support for font size and italics in the Text filter. There's also a new Mask filter.

MINI WORKSHOP | Edit videos using Shotcut 18



1 Get started with Shotcut by dragging and dropping a clip on the playlist. 1 The clip will appear in the preview window 2 and you can use the controls underneath 3 to play the video, fast forward or rewind it, and zoom in. To cut out part of the video, use the sliders to mark the area you want to remove. 4

2 Click the plus symbol 1 under the playlist to add that clip. You can remove a clip by clicking the minus symbol. 2 Click the Timeline button 3 at the top to open the timeline at the bottom of the window. 4 Drag clips from the playlist to the timeline. You can use the slider 5 to zoom the timeline in or out.

3 To apply effects in Shotcut, click the Filters button. 1 Click the plus symbol under the Filters box to show the list of favourite choices. 2 Select one you require, and its options will appear below. Click the Show Video Filters button 3 to see the full list of image filters.

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

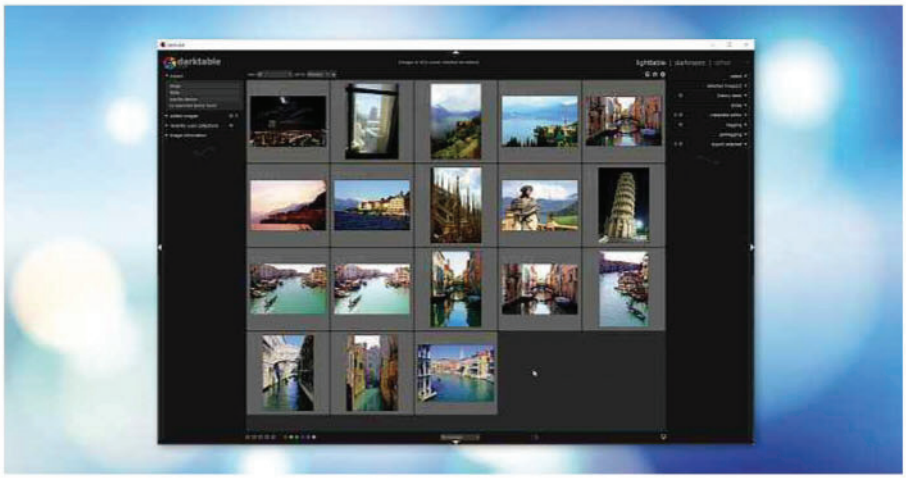


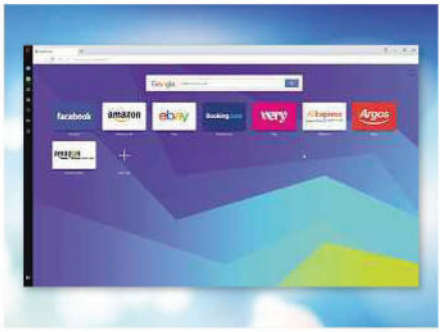
IMAGE EDITOR

Darktable

www.darktable.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 61.5MB

Darktable is a free, open-source photo editor and manager that's similar to Adobe Lightroom. It offers RAW processing, non-destructive editing throughout, professional colour management, a powerful export system and a wealth of editing tools. Although Darktable has been available for Mac and Linux for a while, this is the first full Windows release. However, there are a few limitations to be aware of – there are currently no printing options and TIFF file management is a little buggy.



WEB BROWSER

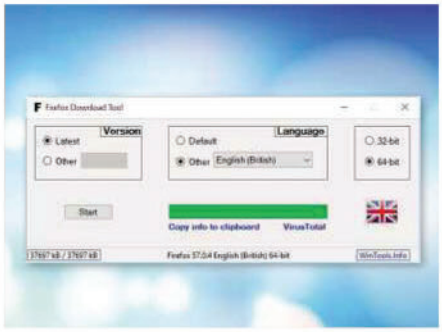
Opera 50

www.opera.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux

File size: 1.2MB (Installer)

This latest version of Opera offers a wealth of new features including an anti-coin-mining tool (see page 33 for details) and support for Chromecast and Oculus Rift VR headsets. You can now save web pages as PDFs and the currency converter has been extended to include cryptocurrencies. Opera's built-in VPN service has been upgraded, and there's better protection for browsing sessions following crashes.



BROWSER DOWNLOADER

Firefox Download Tool

bit.ly/ffdt441

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

File size: 119KB

This free tool lets Firefox users quickly download any version of Mozilla's web browser. Choose the language you require (this is US English by default), and specify whether you want the 32 or 64-bit build. It can download the latest version of the browser, or a previous build, starting with Firefox 48.0.2. Just select the one you want from the drop-down menu and click the Start button to download.

New Windows Apps

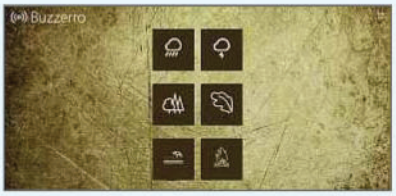
Buzzerro

bit.ly/buzz441

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 69.3MB

This app is designed to play relaxing sounds while you work. It offers a section of samples – such as rain, wind, birdsong and fire – and lets you combine any sounds.



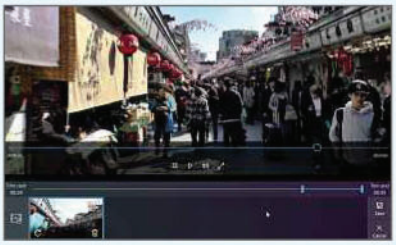
Movie Maker - Free

bit.ly/movie441

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 57.7MB

This is a basic video editor that lets you trim, rotate and merge clips. You can also use it to create slideshows from images or videos, complete with transitions and background music.



Unigram

bit.ly/uni441

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 124.3MB

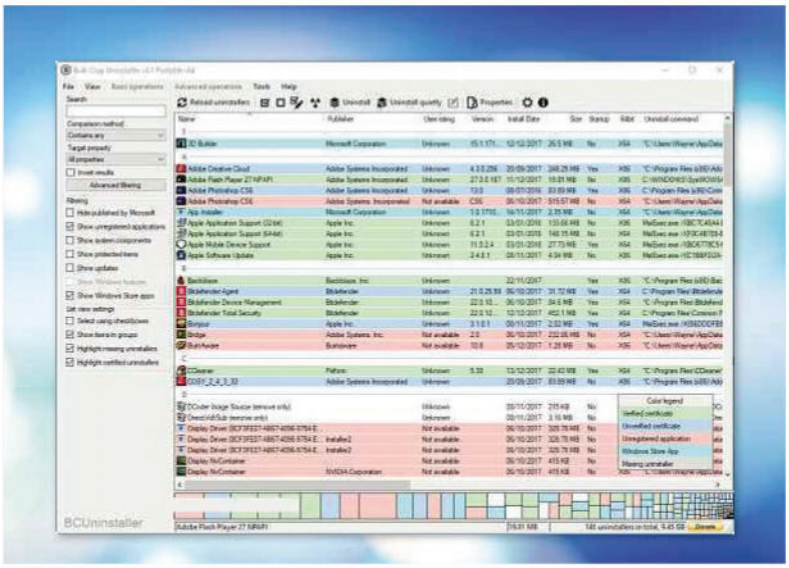
Unigram is a free third-party app for the Telegram chat service. It matches your system theme and supports live tiles. It recently entered the beta stage of development.

SYSTEM CLEANER

Bulk Crap Uninstaller 4

bit.ly/bulk441

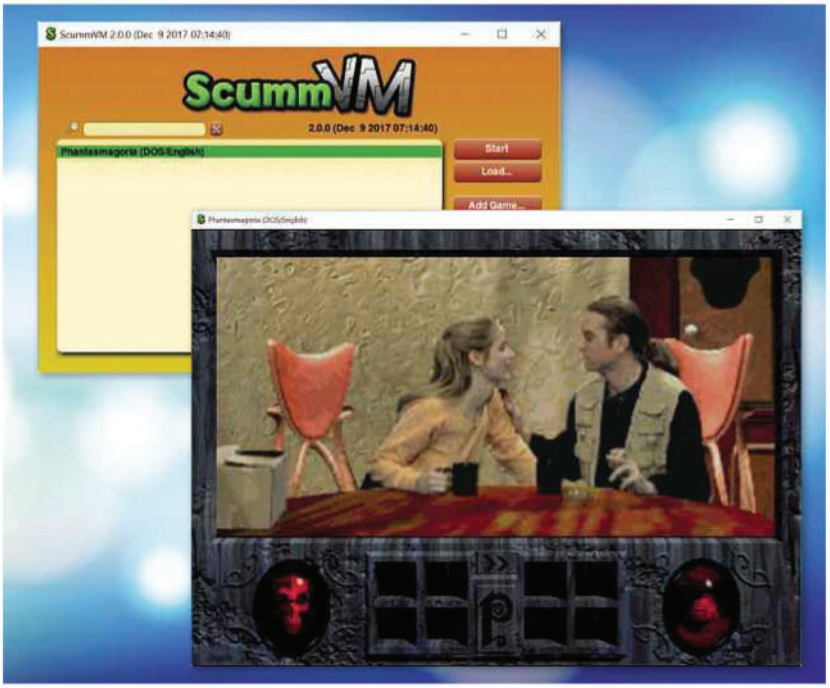
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 2.94MB



BCUninstaller can batch remove loads of unwanted programs, then clear away any leftover junk afterwards. It colour codes all the software on your system so you can see at a glance if a program has an invalid uninstaller, is an orphaned application or a Windows feature. You can remove programs as you would normally, or quietly uninstall them without having to click through multiple prompts.

The latest version of the software adds a new treemap to the bottom of the interface so you can quickly identify the largest programs.

See our Mini Workshop on page 57 to find out how to use Bulk Crap Uninstaller.



ADVENTURE GAME EMULATOR

ScummVM 2

www.scummvm.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 11.4MB

SCUMM (Script Creation Utility for Maniac Mansion) was a programming system developed by LucasArts for Maniac Mansion and its subsequent graphic adventure games including the Monkey Island series. The ScummVM emulator can play those games and other similar adventures. The latest version adds support for 23 new games, including Nineties classics such as Gabriel Knight, Leisure Suit Larry 6 and 7, Riven (Myst's sequel) and Phantasmagoria 1 and 2. Compatibility has been improved, too.

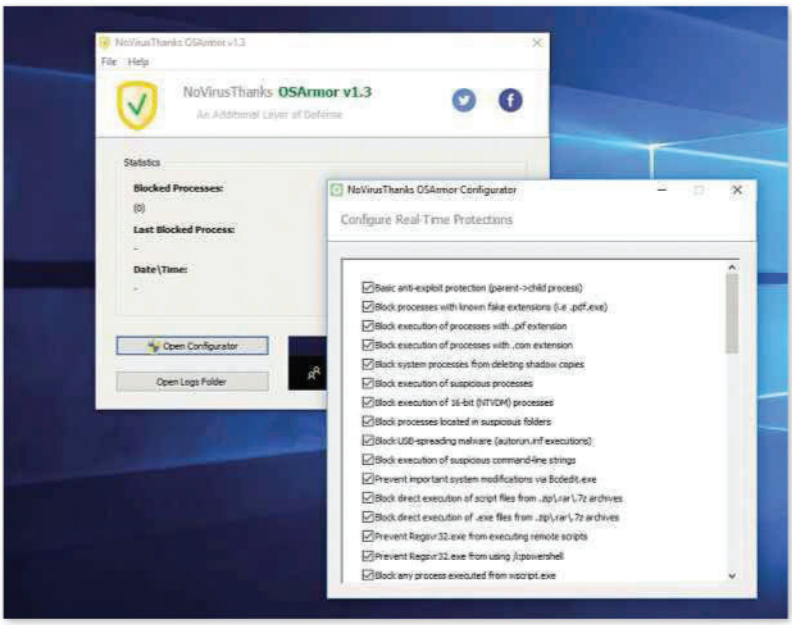
To use ScummVM 2, you need a digital copy of the games you want to play. You can either buy them or find and download copies from the web – just make sure you use reputable sources.

SECURITY TOOL

OSArmor

bit.ly/osarmor441

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 6MB



This new security tool from NoVirusThanks monitors your system and identifies and blocks suspicious processes and actions, helping to prevent infection from malware or ransomware. It's very lightweight and doesn't require any setup – just install and launch it, and it will run silently in the background until a problem is detected.

OSArmor's Configurator lets you choose which real-time protections you do and don't require – such as 'Block process with known fake extensions (for example, 'pdf.exe)' and 'Block USB-spreading malware (autorun.inf executions)' – but you don't really need to worry about this.

The only other button on the interface lets you open the logs folder.

GAME

Burke and Hare

bit.ly/burke441

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 or MacOS **File size:** 549MB

Think you know the story of the infamous Burke and Hare? Well, think again. In this amusing university project, the titular body snatchers are not 19th Century murderers but female medical students trying to stop a zombie plague. The aim is to avoid the guards and dig up all the freshly buried corpses before they come back to life.

✗ Don't install...

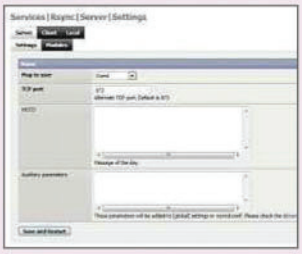
Rsync

rsync.samba.org

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

File size: 3.3MB

Aside from sounding a bit rude when you say its name out loud, this tool for syncing files doesn't have much to recommend it. Rsync is difficult to use, suffers frequent errors and hasn't been updated since 2015. It's also designed for Unix systems, although there is a Windows version available.



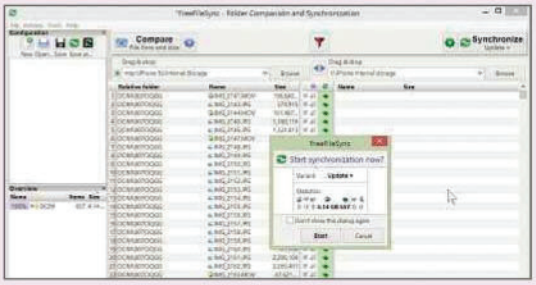
...Install this instead ✓

FreeFileSync

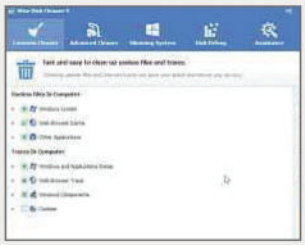
www.freefilesync.org

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 12.5MB

FreeFileSync makes it easy to synchronise files and folders, ensuring you always have the latest versions to hand wherever you are. It gives you a choice of synchronisation settings and determines the differences between a source and target folder, to transfer only the minimum amount of data necessary. The interface is very simple to use and there's no limit on the number of files that can be included in a synchronisation task. This means you can back up even the largest folders and the sync process can be entirely automated. Make sure you decline the bundled junk during installation.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



SYSTEM CLEANER

Wise Disk Cleaner Free 9.62

www.wisecleaner.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

File size: 3.5MB

Wise Disk Cleaner cleans up and removes junk and unwanted Windows features. This version updates cleaning in all the major browsers and improves removal of surplus system files. It also updates translations and tweaks the interface.

DATA-RECOVERY TOOL

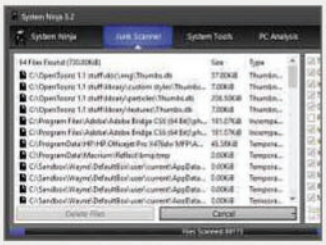
EASEUS Data Recovery Wizard Free 11.9

www.easeus.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

File size: 31.5MB

EaseUS Data Recovery Wizard Free can restore data lost as a result of accidental deletion, hardware failure or formatting. The free version can recover a maximum of 2GB. The latest release is able to preview all types of pictures, and recover data from ReFS partitions.



SYSTEM CLEANER

System Ninja 3.2

singularlabs.com

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

File size: 2.3MB

System Ninja removes junk from your PC, including temporary files, internet cookies and history, thumbnail caches, and more. This update improves support for Firefox Quantum, and the progress bar now shows a marquee animation when the scan time can't be predicted.

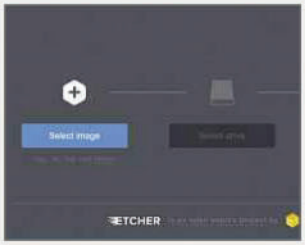


IMAGE BURNER

Etcher 1.2.1

etcher.io

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 50.1MB

Etcher simplifies the process of writing disc images, such as ISO or IMG files, to USB drives or SD cards. This release fixes handling of temporary read/write errors, to make burning a smoother process, and improves verification from the cache to speed things up. ■

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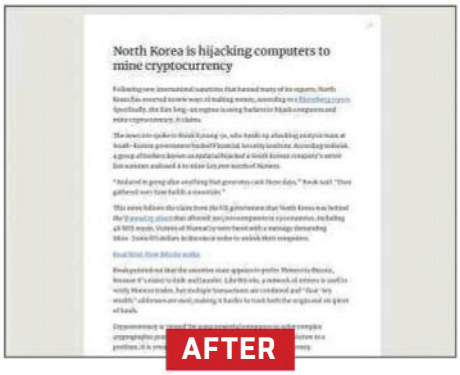
Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

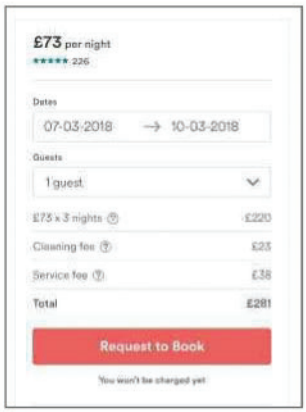
Add a one-click reading mode to Chrome

Most browsers now offer a 'reading mode' or 'reader view' that removes adverts, sidebars and other superfluous elements from web pages so you can read articles without distraction, but for some reason the Desktop version of Chrome has never added this feature (it's available on mobile). Fortunately, there are several extensions that bring this functionality to the browser, of which the latest example is Simply Reader (bit.ly/simply441). Designed to let you "read the internet in pleasure" (though, wisely, it hasn't been named Simply Pleasure), this add-on strips everything but the text and images from online articles at the click of its toolbar button – or by pressing Ctrl+full stop. Not only does this make pages easier to read, it also means they use less ink and paper when you print them. You can switch back to the 'full' version using the same command.



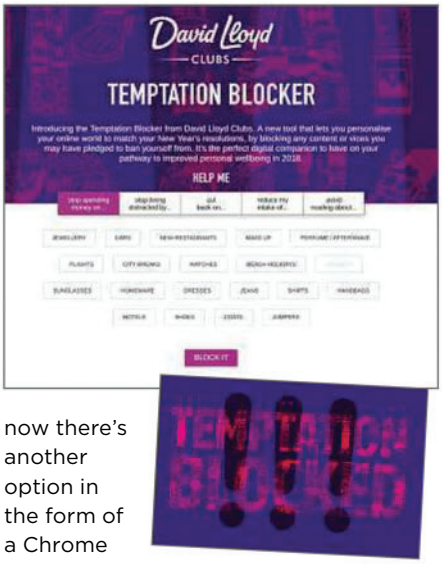
See the true cost of Airbnb bookings

If you're already planning your 2018 holiday, you may be browsing Airbnb for an alternative to booking an expensive hotel. To ensure you don't end up paying too much for your apartment, villa, windmill or whatever, it's worth installing a new Chrome extension called Airbnb Price Per Night Corrector (bit.ly/airbnb441). This overrides Airbnb's tendency to list the basic price per night for accommodation, which doesn't take into account taxes and other fees, by calculating the true cost with all extras included. Sometimes the difference is only a couple of pounds, but it's still useful to know from the outset exactly how much your stay will cost you.



Resist temptations by blocking them

"The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it," wrote Oscar Wilde, but now there's another option in the form of a Chrome and Firefox add-on called Temptation Blocker (bit.ly/temp441). Created by David Lloyd Clubs to help web users keep their New Year's resolutions, it invites you to specify the types of temptation that you'd like to avoid – for example, to stop spending money on gadgets or shoes; stop being distracted by social media or streaming sites; and reduce your intake of pizza or crisps. Once you've made your selection, click Block It and the extension will automatically block your access to sites containing the relevant temptations. Should you try, you'll just get the message "Temptation blocked", until you get annoyed with Mr Lloyd and unblock it again.



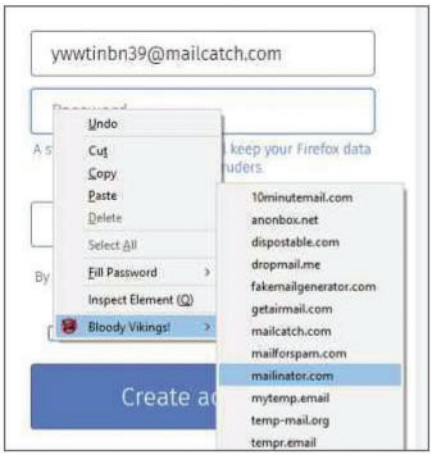
Receive compliments on new tabs

There are lots of New Tab page extensions that try to keep you focused and motivated, but sometimes all you need to get you through the day is a compliment. That's the idea behind RatherNice (bit.ly/nice441), which customises your new tabs with a cute picture of a glass of water (almost full, of course) and a flattering message. Examples include "Your friends are really lucky to know you", "You're looking rather nice today, as always" and "You'd make a marvellous painting". Well, it would be rude to disagree!

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

FIREFOX

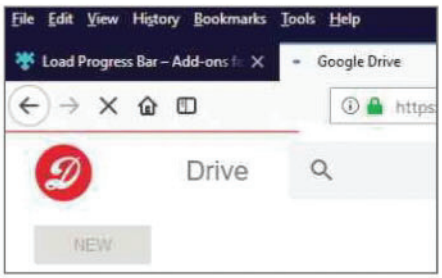
Beat spam using fake email addresses



Back in Issue 402 (bit.ly/webuser402), we raved about a Firefox add-on called Bloody Vikings (bit.ly/vikings441), which lets you create temporary email addresses on the fly as a means of avoiding spam (it's named after a line in the Monty Python sketch that inspired the term for junk email). So we're happy that the tool has successfully made the transition to WebExtension to allow Firefox Quantum users to remain anonymous and free of spam. Simply right-click the email field on a registration page, select 'Bloody Vikings!' and choose from one of 14 disposable email services, including Dropmail, Fake Mail Generator and Mailinator. Bloody Vikings enters your fake email address automatically and opens your temporary inbox in the background, so you can confirm your registration without leaving the page.

Add a progress bar to Firefox

There was a time when all web browsers used progress bars to show how much of a page had loaded – this was especially handy in the days of dial-up, as you could decide whether to wait or go and make a cup of tea. A new add-on called Load Progress Bar (bit.ly/progress441) restores this feature to Firefox in the form of an unobtrusive thin red line that runs from left to right below the address bar. On many sites, this may zip across so quickly that you don't even notice it, but when pages 'hang' while loading, the extension provides a useful indication as to how long they'll take to complete.



Speed up and slow down YouTube videos

Whether you want to watch the latest movie trailer but are short of time or you just enjoy seeing people walk around really quickly in the manner of a Benny Hill sketch, there are lots of benefits to speeding up video playback. Find out for yourself by installing the Firefox add-on Playback Speed (bit.ly/speed441), which offers an easy way to make videos on YouTube and other sites play faster. Simply click its toolbar button and select '1', '1.5' or '2' to increase the playback rate by that factor, or drag the slider to make the video play up to four times faster.

Alternatively, you can make even the cheesiest music video or silly cat clip look 'arty' by slowing the speed right down to a third of the usual playback rate. Adjusted videos can be opened in a new tab so that other content plays as normal.

OTHER BROWSERS

Stop coin mining in Opera

In response to the recent controversy about websites sneakily harnessing your PC's processing power to mine for cryptocurrency, we've recommended add-ons that stop this happening, but the ever-alert Opera has gone a step further by offering built-in protection against coin mining. The feature is available in Opera 50, which is currently in beta – you can download it from bit.ly/operabeta441. To activate the cryptocurrency-mining protection, go to Settings, Basic and select 'Block ads' to turn on Opera's ad blocker. In the Recommended lists of ad filters, choose NoCoin, and coin-mining scripts will be blocked automatically.

Sync your data in Vivaldi

When we named Vivaldi our favourite browser in last issue's cover feature, one of our few reservations was that it doesn't yet offer the syncing options found in Chrome, Firefox and Opera. So we couldn't be happier that Vivaldi is now testing "synchronisation functionality" to keep all your bookmarks, passwords and other data synchronised (and encrypted) across all computers on which you use Vivaldi. Sync is available in the browser's latest Snapshot (beta version) and can be accessed by opening Settings and choosing the Sync option or by clicking the new cloud-shaped icon in the Status Bar.

Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

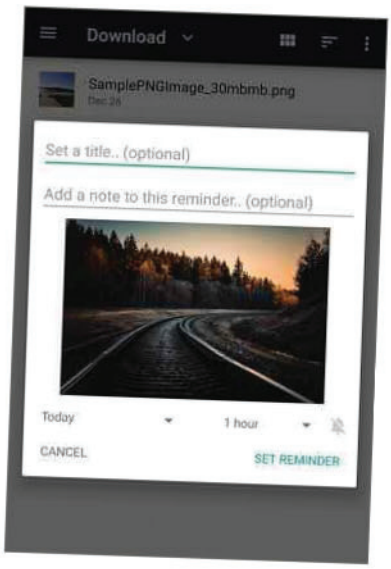
REMINDERS

NEW

Remindee

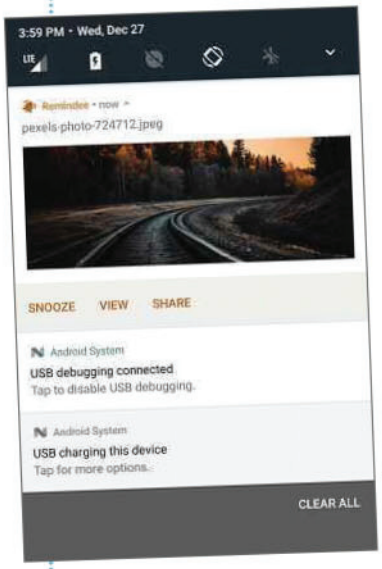
bit.ly/remindee441

4.1



Let's be honest: there's a lot of rubbish on Google Play. The Android app store appears to have a limitless supply of gimmicky tools, apps that don't work properly, glorified adverts, rip-offs and clones – and it seems to gain ever more useless junk on a daily basis. But every so often, an app comes along that astonishes you with its brilliance. You'll wonder why no one has thought of it before and will quickly become unable to live without it. Remindee is precisely this kind of app.

As with many of the best tools, Remindee is an elegantly simple idea: it lets you set reminders for yourself from within almost any app, by adding itself to your device's share options. So, if you're browsing a web page and see something you'd like to read or check out later, you can remind yourself to do so by opening the browser's share options (in Chrome, for example, tap the menu button, then Share), then choosing the Remindee option from the 'Share via' list.



Aside from setting a time, date and other details for your reminder (see our Mini Workshop, right), that's pretty much it. The beauty is that you can do this from practically anywhere – your Photos app or music player or even your messaging app – basically, any app that has a Share function. You can also enable the app's only setting, which offers to set a reminder whenever you copy something to the clipboard.

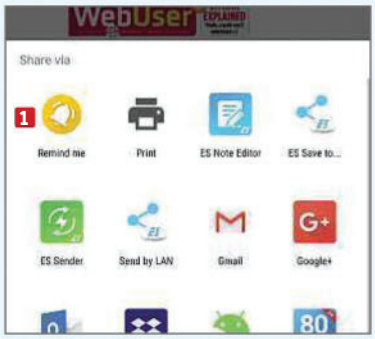
Remindee doesn't claim to compete with the many feature-filled to-do and note-taking apps available (Evernote and Google Keep, for example); it's simply a quick and convenient way to jog your memory.

Our rating ★★★★★

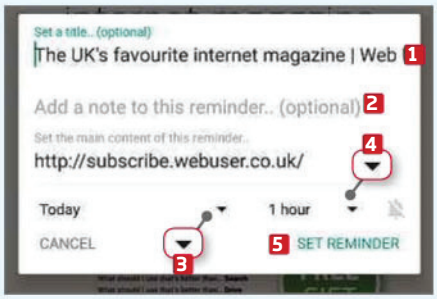
MINI WORKSHOP

Set and review reminders using Remindee

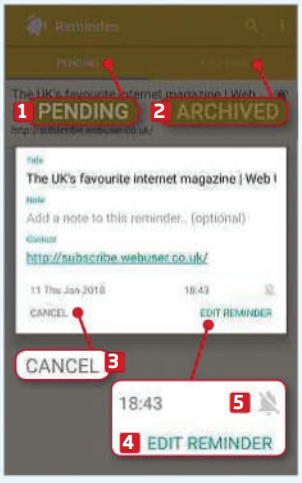
1 Most apps have some sort of Share button, and installing Remindee adds a 'Remind me' button to your device's share options. When you come across something on your device that you want to remind yourself about – while you're browsing the web, for example – tap the Share button for the app you're using, then tap 'Remind me'. 1 You need to allow some permissions the first time you do this.



2 In the window that opens, add or edit the title at the top. 1 If you want, you can add more details where it says 'Add a note'. 2 You'll see a thumbnail or a link below, depending on what you're reminding yourself about. At the bottom, set the date and time for when you want to be reminded, by tapping the down arrows next to Today 3 and '1 hour'. 4 Tap Set Reminder. 5



3 Your reminder will pop up at the scheduled moment. In the meantime, you can review your reminders by opening the Remindee app itself. Upcoming reminders are listed under Pending. 1 Tap Archived 2 to view older ones. Tap a pending reminder, then tap either Cancel 3 or Edit Reminder 4 to change the date, time or content. Tap the alarm icon 5 to toggle audio alerts on or off.



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

KIDS

NEW

Meet the Alphablocks

bit.ly/alphadroid441
bit.ly/alphaios441

4.1 7

This free tie-in to the popular CBeebies pre-school show lets children interact with all 26 of the programme's characters to help familiarise them with the letters of the alphabet and their phonetic sounds. Tapping each Alphablock brings it to life and makes it sing its special letter sound. There's not a great deal to the app beyond that, but Alphablocks uses the same best-practice phonics taught in schools, so it's a great way to prepare younger kids for their future education, and the execution makes it fun for adults, too.

Our rating ★★★★☆

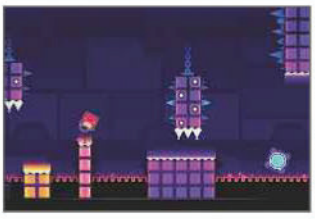
GAME

NEW

Geometry Dash SubZero

bit.ly/geometrydroid441
bit.ly/geometryios441

4 8



The latest entry in the Geometry Dash franchise takes rhythm platform gaming to a whole new level. The SubZero environment provides a cool neon geometrical theme, while the music is more frenetic than ever and gameplay remains as addictively challenging as its predecessors.
The free, ad-supported version gives you access to a good selection of levels, but if you're willing to pay the princely sum of £1.99, you can unlock new levels along with a nifty level editor, and play some user-generated levels, too.

Our rating ★★★★★

STORAGE

UPDATED

Upthere Home

bit.ly/uptheredroid441
bit.ly/upthereios441

4.4 9

This is the first proper release for the Upthere Home app since Western Digital snapped up the online storage company last year. It lets you auto-upload photos and videos from your device, so you never lose important files, and quickly share anything with friends and contacts via something it calls 'loops' (basically, groups). The app is free and it costs nothing to sign up for an Upthere account. However, after the three-month trial, you have to subscribe to a paid-for storage plan to keep using the service, at a cost of £1.50 per month.

Our rating ★★★★☆

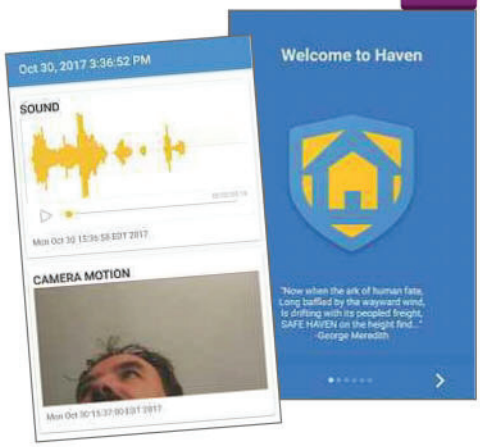
SECURITY

NEW

Haven

bit.ly/haven441

4.1



Haven is a new security app that turns your Android phone or tablet into a kind of undercover surveillance device. It uses your mobile device's sensors as motion, sound, vibration and light detectors. Leave it somewhere innocuous and it'll keep a lookout for unexpected guests or unwanted intruders, capturing video and sound recordings as evidence. The big difference compared to other systems of this type (such as Nest Cam), is that Haven isn't tied to any corporate cloud service and can be controlled remotely via encrypted channels, such as Tor, for absolute privacy. Haven is currently in beta, but it's well worth checking out if you're security conscious.

Our rating ★★★★☆

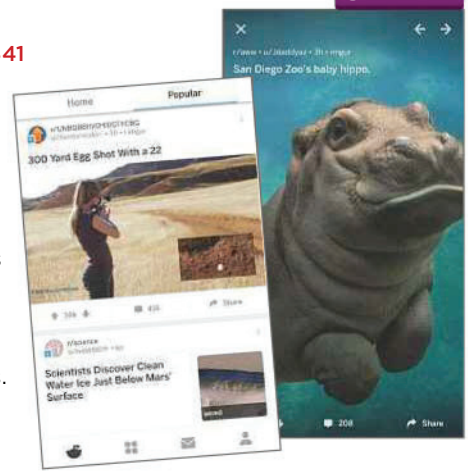
SOCIAL MEDIA

UPDATED

Reddit

bit.ly/redditdroid441
bit.ly/redditios441

4.4 10



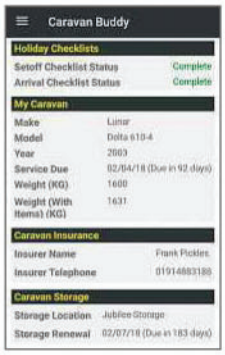
Reddit's official app has received its first major update since it was released last April, bringing with it a number of significant features. Reddit users on iPhones and iPads are treated to an all-new 'Theater mode', which lets you view photos and videos at full-screen. Additionally, iPad users now get support for multitasking and scrolling on edges.

Android users aren't left out, either: the latest update adds the ability to quickly navigate between a post's top-level comments. Both platforms offer a number of improved tools for moderators as well as a new Cakeday status icon to celebrate your anniversary as a Redditor.

Our rating ★★★★★

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

TRAVEL
Caravan Buddy
bit.ly/caravan441
Price: £2.99
4.0.3
Like a Swiss Army knife, this app for seasoned caravanners is packed with useful tools providing everything you need for your trip, including a caravan leveller, checklists, service reminder for your vehicle and more.



GAME
Vignettes
bit.ly/vignettedroid441
bit.ly/vignetteios441
Price: £2.89 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)
4.1 9
Explore this psychedelic puzzle game by manipulating objects and shifting your perspective. The controls are simple and it's satisfying when you reveal hidden secrets.

GAME
Sonic Runners Adventure
bit.ly/sonicdroid441
bit.ly/sonicios441
Price: £2.99

4.0.3 8
Sega's spiny mascot finds himself fronting a lot of dubious games these days but, thankfully, this fun arcade platform runner isn't one of them. You'll get a kick of nostalgia from the familiar locations and characters, too.

WALLPAPER
Mapapers
bit.ly/mapapers441
Price: 99p
4.2
The perfect app for map lovers, Mapapers converts your favourite locations into cartographical wallpaper for your Android device. You can apply a variety of different colours and styles to your maps.

AUDIO
Muse
bit.ly/muse441
Price: 89p
4.4
Ever want to just tune out the world around you? Muse lets you relax or focus, depending on your mood, by playing loops of 15 different ambient sounds, including Thunderstorm, Campfire and Inside Train.

Caravan Buddy

Vignettes

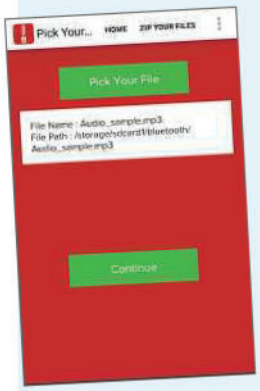
Sonic Runners Adventure

Mapapers

Muse

✗ Don't install...

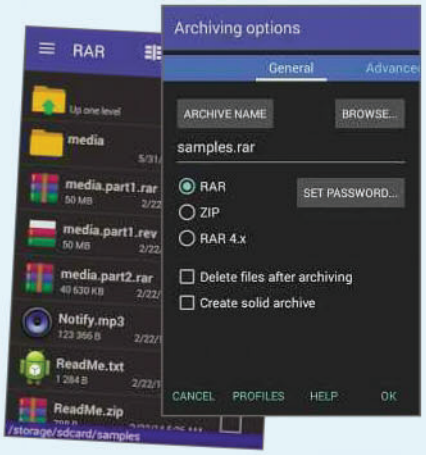
Zip-Gzip
bit.ly/gzip411



Remember those useless Android apps we mentioned earlier that litter Google Play? Well Zip-Gzip is a prime example. It doesn't cost anything, but then half the time it doesn't do anything, either. It's also infuriating to use, requiring the most illogical series of steps to compress or uncompress an archive file. And don't even get us started on the hideous red, green and white interface. Zip-Gzip is a complete dead loss.

...Install this instead ✓

RAR
bit.ly/rar411
4.0.3



RAR is a much better solution for all your file-zipping and unzipping needs. As well as being something a lion might say, a RAR is also a type of archive file. RAR (the app) supports RAR (the archive format) and ZIP, and is capable of unpacking an even broader range of archive file types, including TAR, GZ, BZ2, XZ, 7z, ISO and ARJ. You can password protect your archive files and opt to delete the originals after you've zipped them up. RAR is fast, easy to use and doesn't have a migraine-inducing colour scheme.

Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our band-name 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 BAND NAMES FROM THE EMOJI?

1 🦅🦅🦅

2 🚪🚪🚪

3 😭 4 😱

4 🤣 💎 💎

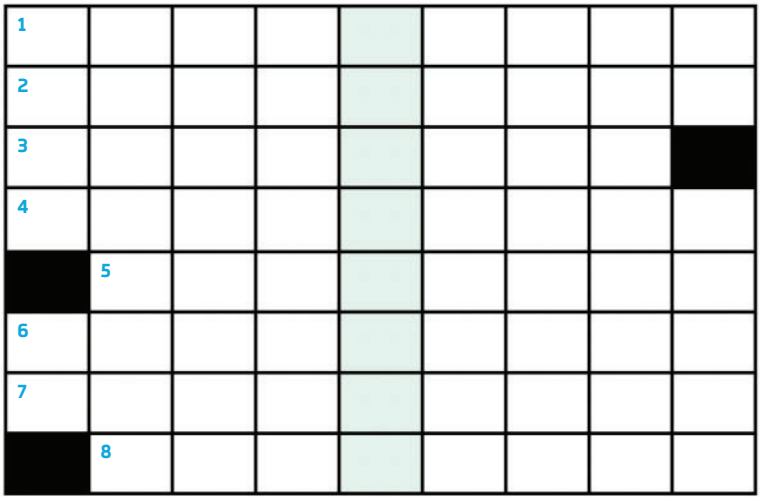
5 🔴 🔥 🌶️ 🌶️

6 🌱 ☀️ 🍂 ❄️

WEB USER WORD PUZZLE

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

1 Country bordering the Baltic sea, capital Vilnius
2 Jamaican sprinter, World and Olympic champion, retired in 2017 (5,4)
3 British World War Two fighter plane
4 Purple egg-shaped fruit, eaten as a vegetable
5 Manchester nightclub 1982-1997
6 *League of Gentlemen* and *Inside Number 9* actor
7 UK singer-songwriter, topped the charts in 1979 with *Cars* (4,5)
8 Youngest of King Lear's daughters



COMPETITIONS

WORTH £259.99

WIN A...
Happy Hacking Keyboard Professional2

The Happy Hacking Keyboard Professional2 (HHKB Pro2) will revolutionise your typing. It has 60 keys, fewer than most keyboards, making it faster, more comfortable and easier to use. There's no number pad, so the mouse is closer to hand. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'HHKB' in the subject line. For more information visit www.hhkeyboard.com and follow @hhkb_pro2 on Twitter.

WORTH £50 EACH

WIN 1 OF 4
KitSound Arena Matte Wireless Headphones

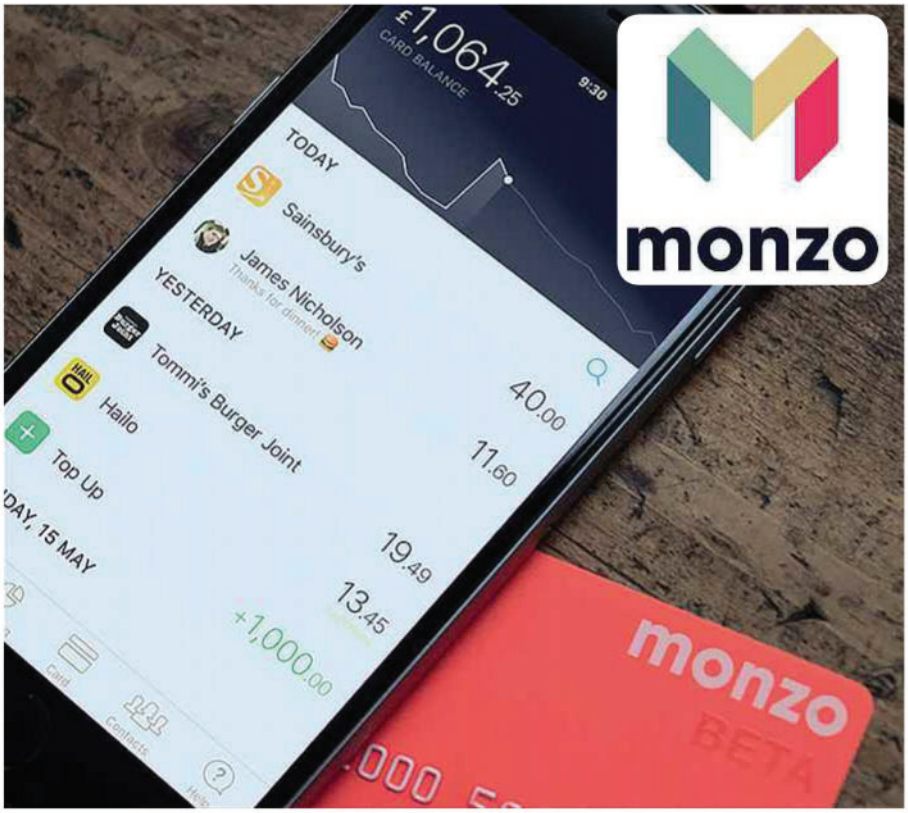
KitSound's new Arena headphones have a rechargeable battery that lasts up to 10 hours, and an in-line microphone for handling phone calls. You can change tracks and adjust the volume using earcup controls. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'arena' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow @KitSoundUK on Twitter.

FAQ

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

Our guide to Monzo

Can you bank on an app to manage your finances rather than relying on an established high-street name? **David Crookes** finds out



Isn't Monzo one of the Muppets?

You're thinking of Gonzo. Monzo (monzo.com) is an app-based bank, which has generated a cult following since it launched less than two years ago. Promoting itself as the bank of the future, it claims to make your finances more visible and controllable. That's because it lets you do everything you need to do on your phone, while removing the hassle of bricks-and-mortar branches and anything as old-fashioned as a chequebook.

Is it the same as Mondo?

Well spotted. Mondo was the service's original name but a trademark dispute forced a change in August 2016. The London-based company co-founded by CEO Tom Blomfield asked its customers for suggestions and 12,560 alternative names were put forward. It took six great minds to come up with the ingenious wheeze of changing the 'd' to a 'z' and Monzo emerged the eventual winner.

Monzo's CEO Tom Blomfield is literally laughing all the way to the bank

How does it all work then?

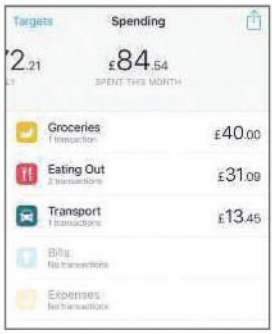
That depends on when you joined. Initially, Monzo only offered a distinctive coral-coloured Mastercard debit card that needed to be topped up from a bank account or through Apple Pay (bit.ly/applepay441) via the app. Your first top-up had to be £100 but once this sum was loaded, the card could be used in stores or online, or for cash-machine withdrawals. Today, however, Monzo offers current accounts. New customers can open these immediately while existing users can upgrade. It's a major step forward for the service and it also lets you tie your Monzo debit card to Android Pay (www.android.com/pay).

Connect your Monzo account and debit card to Android Pay

So what do I get from Monzo?

Monzo's original key feature was its ability to break down your outgoings into categories for better money management, so you can instantly see how much you're spending on eating out, for example. By setting daily and monthly targets, it helps you stay within your budget. As well as tracking spending on your card, Monzo also alerts you to rogue transactions.

But now that Monzo offers current accounts with account numbers and sort codes, you can also make bank transfers, have your salary paid in and set up direct debits and standing orders. This is possible because Monzo's banking licence restrictions were lifted in April 2017 to make it a fully authorised bank.



Monzo keeps track of your daily spend

Why shouldn't I stick with my own bank?

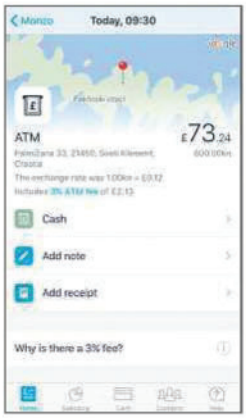
That's a good question. All banks have apps and internet services these days

that let you check your balance, transfer money, pay bills and so on, and there's a good chance that you're perfectly satisfied with your current arrangements. Certainly, if you bank with First Direct (www.firstdirect.com), you may want to think twice before switching. According to Which, this branchless, phone-and-internet-only bank has the consumer association's highest rated customer score of 83% (bit.ly/whichbanks441).

That said, Monzo's real-time spending breakdown and its instant balance updates and notifications are an improvement on the services offered by the high-street banks, so it's certainly worth a look.

Can I use a Monzo account when I'm abroad?

You can indeed. One of the big enticements for joining Monzo has been the promise of free cash withdrawals, currency conversions and no-fee payments when you're outside the UK. But this hasn't been without its problems – the more people withdrawing cash from ATMs outside the UK, the more Monzo has to pay to the machines' owners, so from 4 January 2018, Monzo started restricting foreign monthly withdrawals to £200. When that sum is reached, a 3% charge kicks in.



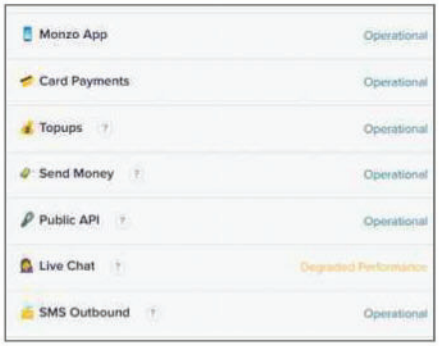
Monzo lets you withdraw up to £200 for free when abroad

What if my card gets lost or stolen?

Don't panic – Monzo users have customer support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and this is available within the app, via email or by phone. However, as Monzo attempts to move people from pre-paid cards to current accounts, it is restricting access for those who don't upgrade (thankfully, cards can be frozen and unfrozen within the app if they ever get lost). Monzo also says that pre-paid cards will eventually stop working, although it promises to provide two months' notice.

So, is it a reliable banking service?

Well, all banks change their terms from time to time but the biggest worry concerns outages: one in March 2017 was severe enough to knock out the service for much of the day. In August, technical problems saw its pre-payment card processor go down for up to an hour at a time and, in October, Monzo users were unable to send money, top up or make card payments. The company believes that having its own connections to Mastercard's network for current accounts will reduce such issues in future. You can check the current status of Monzo's services at mondo.statuspage.io.



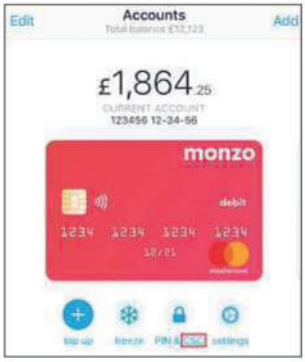
Find out if any Monzo services are currently down via its website

So how do I get an account?

Join the queue. Although more than 400,000 customers have already joined Monzo, there has been a waiting list since its launch. The good news is that you can speed up the process by downloading the app and joining that way. But be prepared to wait at least a week or maybe even a few depending on how many people are trying to sign up.

And what if I'm a saver?

Monzo has created a new feature called Pots that lets you set money aside within your account. This allows you to amass cash for larger purchases or for a rainy day, and you can even set up multiple Pots if you have more than one purpose in mind. It works well, allowing you to move money in and out of the Pots at will. Even better, the cash designated to your Pots is not included in your overall available balance. Just bear in mind that you don't earn any interest on the cash you're putting away.



Monzo makes it easy to save money but it doesn't pay interest

Is there any way to earn interest?

Afraid not. Monzo doesn't pay interest on any money you have invested with it. However, it does offer an optional overdraft (you pay a daily fee of 50p when you go overdrawn by more than £20) and doesn't charge you for bounced payments (when there isn't enough money in your current account to fund a pre-arranged payment). There is also a Financial Services Compensation Scheme offering protection of up to £85,000 (bit.ly/fscs441).

OTHER APP-BASED BANKS TO CONSIDER

STARLING BANK

www.starlingbank.com

Like Monzo, Starling offers a current account along with real-time app notifications and up-to-date transactions. It doesn't charge for using its Mastercard debit card globally and it also lets you earn interest at 0.5% AER on balances of up to £2,000 and 0.25% between £2,000 and £85,000.

ATOM BANK

www.atombank.co.uk

As the first bank in the UK to offer an app-based banking service, Atom has fixed saver accounts that earn you up to 2.20% AER as well as mortgages. It saw a flood of sign-ups in March 2017 when it offered a market leading one-year bond. It is planning to roll out current accounts in 2018.

TANDEM

www.tandem.co.uk

Tandem doesn't yet offer accounts to the general public and it doesn't have a banking licence. But its app promises to alert you to increasing bills and payments, and you can sign up for early access. We expect to hear more from Tandem in 2018, now that its takeover of Harrods Bank has been approved.

Block Autoplay Videos & Ads FOR GOOD!

COVER FEATURE

It's loud, it's very annoying and even your ad blocker can't stop it. **Robert Irvine** explains how to beat the menace of autoplaying content for good, on any device

When online advertising became too intrusive, many of us turned to ad blockers to make the web less annoying. But now we have a problem that's arguably even worse, as it screams for our attention, guzzles our data and evades all attempts to stop it.

Yes, we're talking about autoplaying content, specifically the loud videos and adverts that leap out from websites and apps to make you jump out of your skin. Like a novelty musical birthday card, these audio annoyances interrupt peaceful browsing sessions without warning, contain little to nothing of interest and make themselves as difficult as possible to silence or stop.

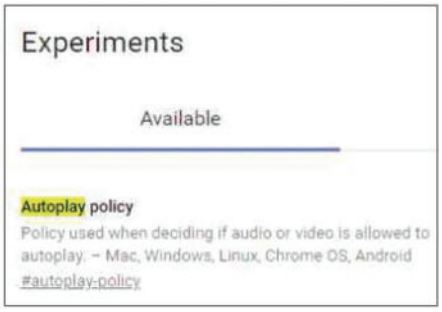
In this feature, we reveal the best ways to combat the growing autoplaying menace and prevent those heinous videos and ads from ever coming back. We also explain how to tackle some of the milder forms of autoplay, such as never-ending streaming, and look at what's being done to make the technology more tolerable.

BLOCK AUTOPLAY IN YOUR BROWSER

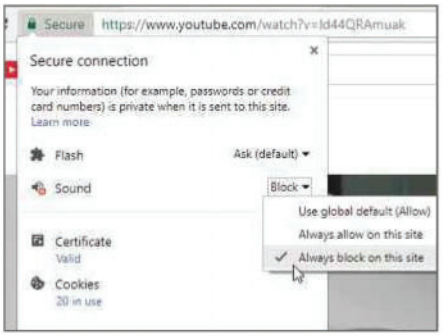
Block noisy autoplaying videos in Chrome

The just-released Chrome 64 addresses the problem of noisy autoplaying content "to give users more control over audio" on desktop and mobile devices (bit.ly/chrome441). From now on, autoplay will by default only be allowed if the sound is muted or if you interact with the page first by clicking or tapping it. There is a catch, however – if you've previously played a video with audio on that site (even on a different page), then content *will* play automatically with sound – if, that is, you watched for more than seven seconds. On Android devices, Chrome will only autoplay audio on sites that you've added to your Home screen.

If you want to stop *all* videos playing automatically, regardless of sound, you can tweak the new autoplay policy in Chrome 64 so that content can only be triggered manually. Type `chrome:flags` in the address bar and press Enter to open the Experiments page. Find the entry 'Autoplay policy' and select 'Document user activation is required' from the drop-down menu. Restart the browser and videos will no longer autoplay. This new policy works across Windows, MacOS, Linux, Chrome OS and Android.



Chrome 64's new autoplay policy mutes noisy web videos by default

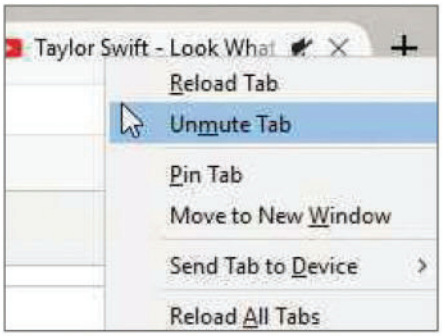


Chrome now lets you block sound on specific websites automatically

If you only want to mute autoplaying audio on specific websites, click the info or padlock icon in the address bar to open the site's 'Page information' panel and choose 'Site settings'. Find the Sound entry, select 'Always block on this site' from the side menu and your ears will never be troubled by that site again. If you change your mind, you can turn the audio back on in the same manner.

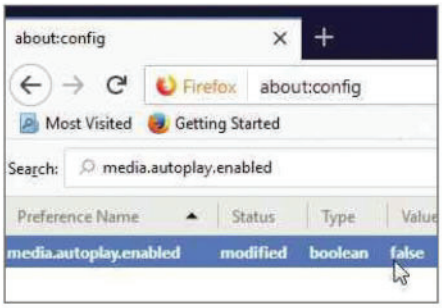
Mute or stop autoplaying videos in Firefox

Mozilla has yet to follow Google's lead by automatically silencing noisy content in Firefox, but you can install an add-on that does the job. Mute Sites By Default (bit.ly/mute441), as its name suggests, assumes that you don't want to be startled out of your skin while browsing the web and silences all online sound accordingly, unless you tell it not to. You can 'unmute' a tab either by clicking the speaker icon, pressing Ctrl+M or right-clicking and choosing Unmute Tab. The extension also lets you create a whitelist of sites on which to always allow autoplaying sound.



Mute Sites By Default lets you beat noisy autoplay videos in Firefox

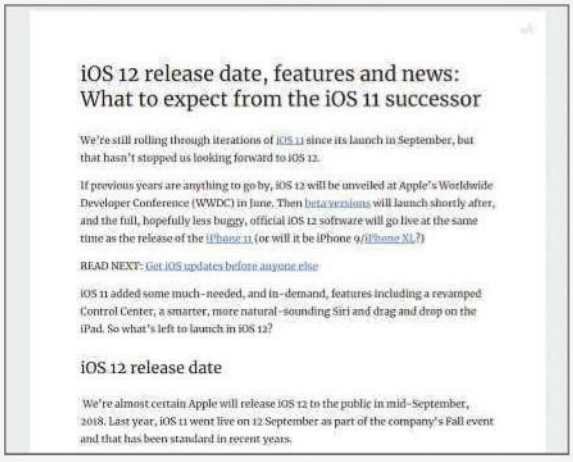
If you want to go further and stop videos autoplaying altogether, try this secret Firefox hack. Type `about:config` in the address bar, press Enter and accept the 'Here be dragons' risk. Search for the preference 'media.autoplay.enabled' and double-click it to change its value to 'false'. Note that this hack applies to *all* sites, so you'll have to click the Play button every time you want to watch a YouTube video. Changing the value back to 'true' will re-enable autoplay.



You can tweak Firefox to prevent it from autoplaying all web videos

BEAT AUTOPLAY BY SWITCHING TO READER MODE

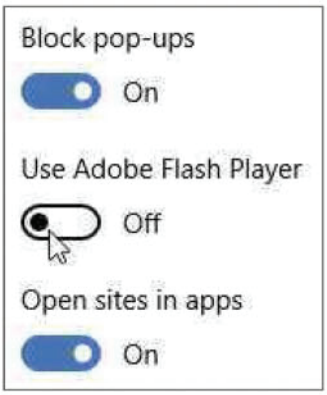
If you're uncomfortable about using an ad blocker, or you're forced to disable yours to access a site, one way to avoid autoplay is to switch to your browser's 'reading mode' or 'reader view'. Firefox, Edge, Safari and Vivaldi have this feature built in, as do the mobile versions of most browsers, and there are extensions to add it to Opera and Chrome (see Best New Browser Tools on page 32). Reading mode can usually be activated by clicking an icon in your address bar or toolbar, and it removes all content from web pages except the main text and images – including adverts and videos. In Firefox, you can force autoplay-heavy sites to always open in reading view by installing Automatic Reader View (bit.ly/reader441) and adding the relevant URLs to its Options. In Edge, insert `read:` at the beginning of a web address to open the subsequent page in reading view.



Use your browser's reader mode to avoid autoplaying content

Block autoplaying Flash videos in Edge

The dearth of extensions for Microsoft Edge means there's no easy way to prevent content from playing automatically, but the browser does have a setting that at least stops autoplay videos that use the outdated Flash format. Click the three-dot button in the top-right corner of the browser to open the main menu, then scroll or swipe to the bottom and choose Settings. Select 'View advanced settings' from the foot of the subsequent menu and slide the setting Use Adobe Flash Player to Off. Unsurprisingly, this won't affect autoplaying HTML5 content, but it should at least make the web slightly less annoying.

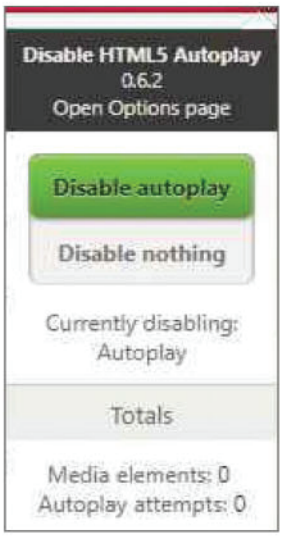


Microsoft Edge lets you block autoplay content that uses Flash

Stop autoplaying video and audio in Vivaldi

Vivaldi also lets you disable autoplaying Flash content – go to Tools, Settings, Webpages and select Never Allow Flash – and with the aid of an add-on, it's possible to halt HTML5, too. Install Disable HTML5 Autoplay from the Chrome Web Store (bit.ly/disable441 – Vivaldi supports most Chrome extensions) and it will prevent annoying HTML5 video and audio from autoplaying, unless you tell it otherwise. Sadly, the tool – which is also available for Opera (bit.ly/disableopera441) – is no longer being maintained, partly in response to Chrome's new autoplay policy (see first tip), but we found that it still works perfectly on most sites. If you only want to mute sound, install the extension Silent Site Sound Blocker (bit.ly/silent441)

The Vivaldi team says it's currently working on a built-in way to stop autoplay, which will appear in a future version of the browser.



You can disable autoplay content in Vivaldi using a Chrome extension

Block autoplay videos in Safari

Apple beat Google in tackling the autoplay menace when it updated its Safari browser for the latest version of its MacOS operating system, High Sierra, which was released last September. You can permanently block autoplaying videos for the site you're currently viewing by right-clicking the address bar and choosing 'Settings for this Website'. Open the Auto-Play menu and either select 'Stop Media with Sound' to block only videos that contain audio, or Never Auto-Play to block all autoplay videos on that site.

To prevent content from autoplaying on every site, go to Safari, Preferences, Websites and select Auto-Play in the list on the left. Click the 'When visiting other websites' menu and either choose 'Stop Media with Sound' or Never Auto-Play (you can exclude specific sites in the list above).

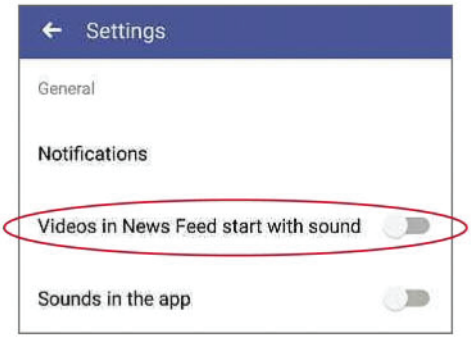
Safari lets you block autoplaying videos with sound on specific websites

BLOCK AUTOPLAY FOR SPECIFIC SITES & APPS

Silence Facebook's noisy autoplaying videos

It's been nearly a year since Facebook introduced autoplaying videos with sound on mobile devices. "As people watch more video on phones, they've come to expect sound when the volume on their device is turned on", it said at the time, failing to note that people also want to use their phones without loud audio blasting out at inopportune moments and causing public embarrassment. The feature is enabled by default and matches the current volume of your device, to the gratitude of precisely no one.

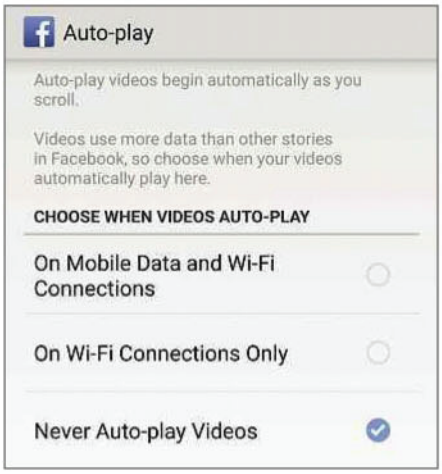
Happily, there is a simple way to silence this noisy nuisance. On your Android phone or tablet, open the menu in the top-right corner of the Facebook app, swipe down to App Settings and switch off the option 'Videos in News Feed start with sound'. To stop videos autoplaying completely, tap Auto-play on the Settings screen and select Never Auto-play Videos.



Avoid public embarrassment by muting Facebook's autoplaying videos

On iOS, tap the More menu in the bottom-right corner of the app, go to Settings, Account Settings, select 'Videos and Photos' and toggle the switch for 'Videos in News Feed start with sound' to Off. You can also turn off Autoplay altogether.

On the Facebook website, videos autoplay silently, but even this can prove annoying. To stop it, click the down arrow in the top-right corner, select Settings and click Videos.



Turn off autoplay altogether to make your Facebook feed less annoying

Click the drop-down menu next to Auto-play Videos and select Off.

Turn off autoplay videos in Google search results

Last year, Google introduced 'video previews' – six-second clips that

play automatically in its search results on Android devices. These only play audio when you touch them, and only appear when you're connected to Wi-Fi, but they're still a feature that nobody requested and undermine Google's more 'measured' approach to autoplay in Chrome 64. The good news is that you can easily turn off this automatically enabled annoyance. Open the Google search app on your phone or tablet, tap the three-line 'hamburger' icon and choose Settings from the menu. Swipe down to Video and disable the option 'Autoplay – Play video previews automatically on Wi-Fi'.

The bad news is that Google has been testing video previews on the Desktop, too, and there's no option to disable these – other than tweaking your browser's autoplay settings (see earlier tips).

You can stop Google autoplaying videos in your mobile search results

Block autoplaying videos on Mail Online

One of the most annoying things about Mail Online (other than its clickbait headlines) is its 'flyout' video player. Not only does this start playing automatically when you reach a certain point in the page, but it remains on-screen in a pop-up window as you scroll down, until you close the player manually. It even bypasses ad blockers, despite often being used to display ads.

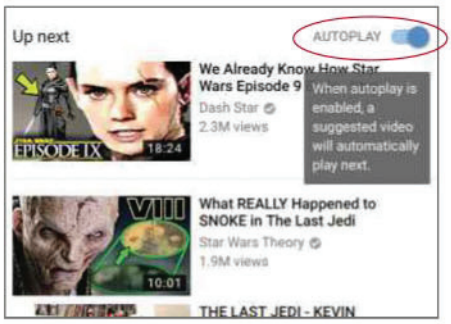
Fortunately, there is a way to stop this flyout irritant on the world's most popular news website. This involves creating a new filter in your ad blocker that prevents the offending player from running. In uBlock Origin, for example, go into Options, 'My filters' and type: `dailymail.co.uk##.vjs-flyout-placeholder`. In Adblock Plus, go to Options, Advanced, Start Writing My Filter List and enter the same text. Save this filter and when you next browse Mail Online, videos will only start when you click to play them.

Banish the Mail Online's annoying 'flyout' video player forever

You can try the same trick on other sites that use flyout video players. On CNN.com, block the element `||registry.api.cnn.io/assets/fave/theoplayer$domain=cnn.com` and on Bloomberg, use `||cdn.gotraffic.net/projector/latest/bplayer.js$script,important`.

Stop YouTube playing videos automatically

YouTube has two types of autoplaying video – those that begin when you load a YouTube page and those that play automatically once you've finished viewing the current clip. The latter is more annoying because you probably have better things to do than sit around watching 'suggested' videos all day (or night). Luckily, it's easy to turn off on the YouTube website and in its app – just slide the Autoplay option above the 'Up next' list to the 'off' position.



It's easy to stop YouTube trapping you in a neverending autoplay loop

If you want to stop YouTube videos starting until you click Play, you can either use one of the browser-wide tweaks we've already mentioned or install Magic Actions for YouTube (bit.ly/magic441). This feature-packed extension for Chrome (and therefore Vivaldi), Firefox and Opera has a handy Stop Autoplay setting that prevents

Magic Actions prevents all YouTube videos from playing automatically

HOW AUTOPLAY CAN BE MADE USEFUL

Although we've explained how to stop Facebook's annoying autoplay videos, they can sometimes be put to positive use, as demonstrated by a new advertising campaign by BBR Saatchi & Saatchi. Designed to promote Bekol, an Israeli non-profit organisation that helps people suffering from hearing loss, the ads play on the fact that Facebook users prefer videos to be silent by using subtitles to entice them to click for audio. As described by Adweek (bit.ly/adweek441), one ad shows a happy woman on a surfboard, paddling out to sea, while a menacing *Jaws*-style orchestral score plays in the background. "If you've turned on the sound and this video still looks fun to you," reads the caption, "you'd better get your hearing checked". The point is that if you do click the video and it still looks and sounds fun, then there's clearly something wrong with your ears. So next time you block an autoplaying Facebook video, consider that it might be trying to help rather than irritate you!

Some autoplaying ads aim to be creative rather than annoying

videos from playing automatically.

Recently, YouTube started testing a *third* type of autoplaying video, which appears when you browse the Home section of its Android app. Although these clips are silent, they use subtitles to get your attention and are enabled by default. To block them, go to Settings, General and turn off 'Play as you browse' (you won't see this option yet if you're not part of Google's test).

Turn off autoplay videos on Twitter

Like Facebook, Twitter clearly believes that its users can't get enough of autoplaying videos, and enables the feature by default – although at least the clips are silent until clicked. To stop them appearing in your feed on the Twitter website, click your profile photo in the top-right corner and select 'Settings and privacy'. Scroll down to Video Tweets and untick the option 'Video autoplay'.

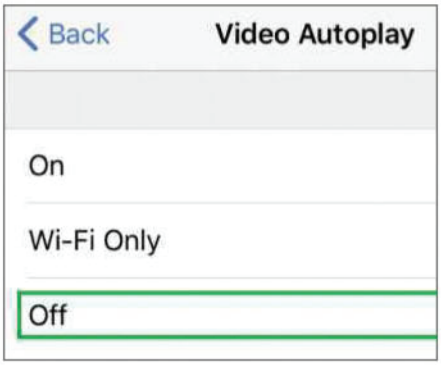
In the Twitter app for Android and iOS, go to 'Settings and privacy', Data Usage, 'Video autoplay' and either select Never Play Videos Automatically or choose to only allow autoplay when you're connected to Wi-Fi, so that videos don't waste your mobile data.

Prevent videos from playing automatically in your Twitter feed

Block video previews in the iOS App Store

In another example of bizarre corporate thinking, Apple decided – as of iOS 11 – that iPhone and iPad users want to see autoplaying video previews for apps as they browse the App Store. These previews not only guzzle mobile data but slow down other tasks on your device and are pretty irritating, too.

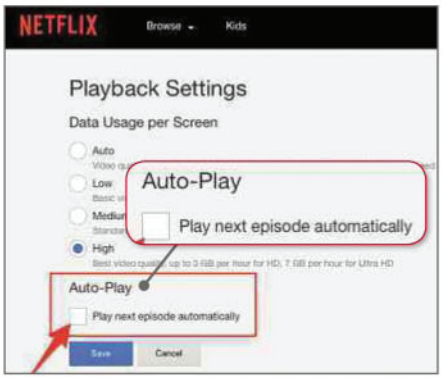
To turn them off, open the Settings app, select iTunes & App Stores and tap Video Autoplay. Here, you can either disable video previews completely or set them to only play when you're connected to Wi-Fi.



Switch off the irritating video previews in the iOS App Store

Stop Netflix autoplaying the next episode

Netflix has a feature called Post-Play that automatically plays the next episode of a TV show when you finish watching the current one. This is a great way to 'binge watch' series because you don't need to manually select the following episode, but less welcome when you're deliberately viewing a show out of sequence, or you really need to go to bed! To turn off Post-Play, go to the Netflix website, click your name in the top-right corner, select Your Account and click 'Playback settings'. Deselect the Auto-Play option 'Play next episode automatically' and click Save. This setting will be applied to every device on which you watch Netflix.

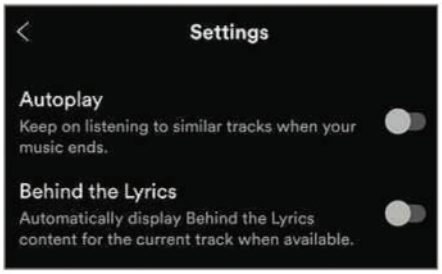


If you don't want to binge-watch Netflix series, then turn off autoplay

Amazon Video's Next Up feature autoplays episodes in the same way. To turn it off, go to the Amazon Video Settings page (bit.ly/amazon441), scroll down to Player Preferences and set Auto Play to Off.

Don't let music autoplay on Spotify

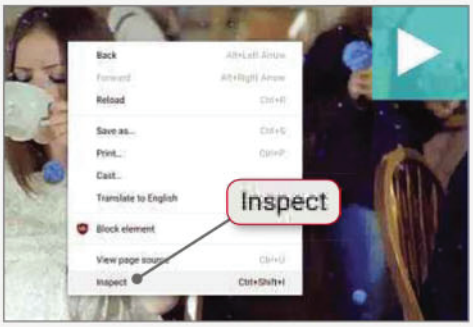
When you've finished listening to an album, playlist or selection of tracks on Spotify, the streaming service automatically plays similar songs "so the music never stops". However, there are times when you may be very keen indeed for the music to stop, so here's how to disable autoplay. In the Spotify Desktop app, click the down arrow in the top-right corner, select Settings and scroll down to Autoplay. Switch the setting 'Autoplay similar songs when your music ends' to Off. In the Spotify apps for Android and iOS, go to Your Library (or Your Music), Settings, Playback and turn off Autoplay there.



Stop Spotify autoplaying songs when your listening time is up

BANISH 'UNBLOCKABLE' AUTOPLAY ADVERTS

As we explained in the Mail Online tip on page 43, it's usually possible to block autoplaying ads and other annoying videos that bypass your ad blocker by adding the page elements that run them to a custom filter. To do this, right-click the autoplaying ad or video and choose to block it with your default ad blocker – AdBlock, Adblock Plus and uBlock Origin all provide this option in your right-click menu. When a panel opens in your browser, add the selected element to your ad blocker's filters.



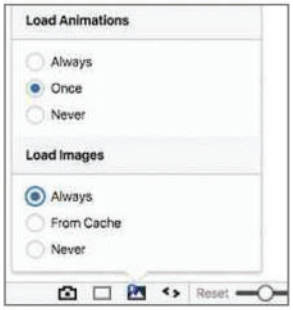
Add autoplaying videos to ad filters so you never see them again

However, this method will only block that particular ad in future visits, so it's wise to target the source, too. To discover the necessary details, right-click the offending element, select Inspect or Inspect Element and look for URLs among the highlighted code. Copy and paste the responsible domain – for example '||brightcove.net' – into a new filter in your ad blocker.

BLOCK OTHER AUTOPLAY ANNOYANCES

Stop animated GIFs playing automatically

There's no escape online from animated GIFs, those low-quality loops of video that people who can't be bothered to articulate their thoughts use to punctuate their conversation. GIFs are amusing when used sparingly and relevantly, but if you'd rather browse the web without being distracted and slowed down by embedded clips of cats falling down stairs or people looking confused in slow motion, you can easily block them. Gif Jam for Chrome (bit.ly/gifjam441) stops them playing automatically and shows only the first frame of the image sequence. If you decide you're up for a burst of 'hilarity', you can turn the add-on off by clicking its toolbar button.



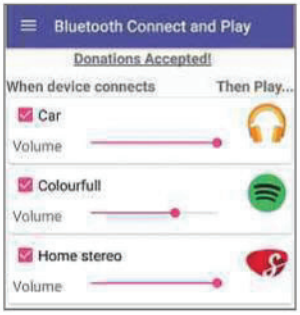
Vivaldi's built-in tool blocks annoying animated GIFs

The ever-clever Vivaldi offers the same functionality as a built-in option, so you don't even need an extension to block animated GIFs. Instead, click the 'Toggle images' icon on the status bar at the bottom of the browser and, under Load Animations, click Never. Alternatively, you can choose to play GIFs only once rather than have them repeat on a loop.

Silence autoplaying music in your car

Many modern cars connect to their drivers' phones via Bluetooth so they can automatically stream audio from the moment the engine is turned on. This is undoubtedly a useful feature for music and ebook lovers, but there are times when it might prove less welcome – perhaps you've got a pounding headache or you've got passengers who won't appreciate banging German techno at eight in the morning.

The obvious solution to this problem is to ensure the volume is turned right down in your car, but you should also check your vehicle's Bluetooth settings to see if there's an option to disable autoplay. Before you get in your car, make sure that the Spotify, Apple Music or other streaming app isn't running in the background on your mobile device and, on an iPhone, that CarPlay is set to Off.



Control the volume of apps that auto-stream audio to your car

If you use a voice assistant such as Siri or Google Assistant, instruct them to "Stop playing" as quickly as you can and disable Bluetooth unless you really need it. If you do, there's an Android app called Bluetooth Connect & Play (bit.ly/bluetooth441), which lets you mute the volume for specific apps that autoplay through your car.

Prevent Windows 10 from autoplaying content

When you insert a CD or DVD in your computer's disc drive, or plug in a removable drive such as a USB memory stick, Windows 10 can be set to automatically open any content it finds on them. If you'd prefer this didn't happen, in case it displays photos, videos and other files you'd rather keep private from those around you, it's possible to turn off or at least restrict Windows 10's AutoPlay feature. Open the Settings app, click Devices and select Autoplay in the list. Click the 'Removable drive' and 'Memory card' menus to decide what should happen when media is detected – for example, 'Take no action' or 'Ask me every time'. Alternatively, you can disable AutoPlay for all media and devices.

You can prevent Windows 10 from automatically opening media content

Hide animated emoji on web pages

There was a time when emoji were limited to inoffensive smiley faces inserted at the end of an online message, but there are now thousands of the things and they've increasingly started moving, too. If you find animated emoji annoying and distracting, you can block them using a Chrome extension called Nomoji (bit.ly/nomoji441), which replaces them on web pages with a definitive '[no]'. ■

NEXT ISSUE on sale Wednesday 7 February 2018

What's new on Google

The good, the bad and the pointless – we put all Google's latest tools to the test

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Best free radio apps for mobile devices

Your Android or iOS device is the gateway to a world of music, sport and chat radio. **Jonathan Parkyn** picks the best ways to tune in via your tablet or phone

Radioplayer | bit.ly/radioplayer441 | ★★★★★

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

WebUser GOLD AWARD

What we liked:

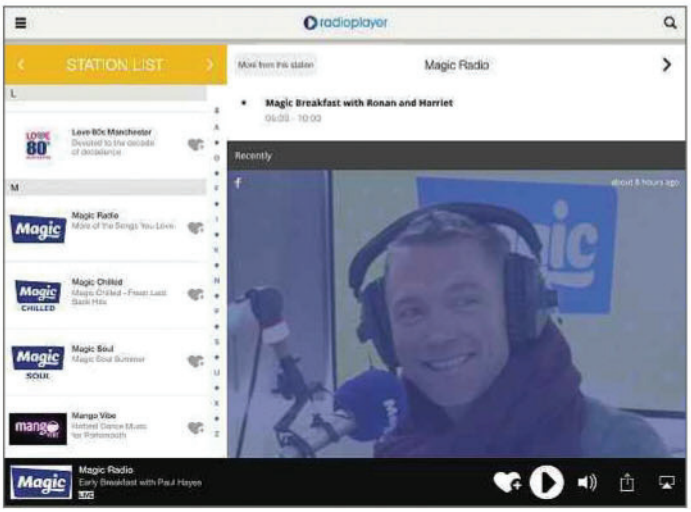
Developed as part of a non-profit partnership between the BBC and UK commercial broadcasters, Radioplayer is a wonderfully simple app that provides free access to hundreds of national and local broadcasts from your tablet or phone. You get all the BBC stations, of course, plus around 400 others, spanning everything from big names – such as Heart, Jazz FM and Magic – to student and community radio.

In addition to live broadcasts, the app provides access to vast amounts of on-demand content, including podcasts and catch-up programmes, across a wide range of broadcasters, including the Beeb.

It's not the flashiest or most modern-looking app we tested, but there's no on-screen advertising or distracting clutter to contend with. You can look up a specific station via the Search box at the top of the screen, or you can tap one of the main headings – Recent Stations, Favourites, Station List, Recommended, Trending, Location or Catchup – and browse for something to listen to.

Unlike the BBC's own iPlayer Radio app, Radioplayer is reliable. Sound quality is usually pretty good, too (depending on the station and your connection).

Recent updates have added support for Chromecast, Android Wear, Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, while new alarm-clock and sleep-timer functions let you either wake up or drift off to your favourite stations.



If you own a device with an integrated DAB tuner – such as the LG Stylus 2 – you can tune in via this, rather than your Wi-Fi or 3G/4G connection, potentially saving valuable battery life as well as data costs.

How it can be improved:

It's a shame there's no Record function – although, admittedly, this might be hard to implement, due to copyright issues. Our main gripe is that some of the longer station lists are a bit unwieldy on Android devices. In iOS, there's a shortcut bar that lets you jump straight to a specific letter of the alphabet to save endless scrolling – a feature we'd like to see in Android, too.

OUR VERDICT

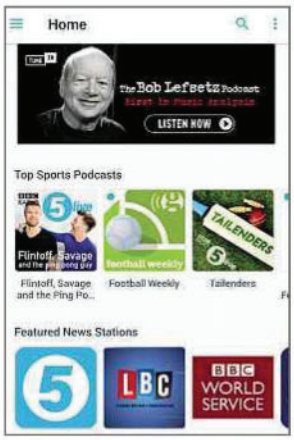
It's limited to UK broadcasts and its interface could do with a bit of updating (especially on Android), but Radioplayer comes out on top, mainly because it works really well and is straightforward to use.

TuneIn | tunein.com | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:

TuneIn's scope is a great deal broader than Radioplayer's, offering access to more than 120,000 radio stations from all around the world – everything from Antarctica's 'A' Net Station to Zambia's Breeze FM, and almost anything else in between.



UK networks are featured, too, including local and national BBC stations and commercial broadcasters. TuneIn also provides access to more than five million podcasts, including many popular on-demand BBC shows, such as *The Archers* and *Desert Island Discs*.

You can browse TuneIn's vast selection by location, language and genre, or search for something specific by name. TuneIn supports Chromecast, Apple Watch, Android Wear, CarPlay and Android Auto.

How it can be improved:

TuneIn's biggest selling point is also its main drawback in that the sheer scale of choice feels overwhelming. It can be confusing to navigate, with lots of irrelevant content – including subscription-only live US sports channels and free audiobook samples – getting in the way of the stuff you really want to listen to.

Apart from removing ads and providing access to full audiobook and US sports content, the £7.99-per-month subscription version doesn't add many useful radio features.

OUR VERDICT

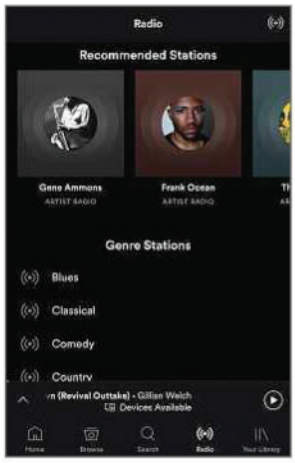
TuneIn is great if you're keen to explore broadcasts and podcast from far-flung places, but the app feels a little bloated and can be awkward to navigate.

Spotify | www.spotify.com | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:

Spotify isn't a traditional radio app – it can't be used to tune into network radio broadcasts – but it lets you listen to themed 'stations' from Hot Hits UK to Classical, Country and many more, and to podcast content, which makes it a radio service in all but name.



The occasional ads in the free version are no more intrusive than they would be on a commercial radio station (possibly even less so) and you can, of course, listen to specific albums or artists and compile your own playlists.

The mobile app's social-networking integration makes it easy to share tracks, stations and playlists with your friends, and you can even collaborate with others to build the ultimate shared music channel.

How it can be improved:

It would be great to see Spotify integrating some third-party radio providers into its selection of stations – having access to, say, live and catch-up radio content from the BBC has the potential to make it a one-stop-shop app for all your radio needs.

The free version only lets you play albums and artists in shuffle mode, and high-quality audio requires a subscription to the premium service (£9.99 per month).

OUR VERDICT

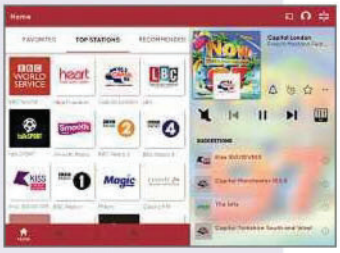
Spotify works as an excellent radio app if you like to have more control over what you listen to. But if traditional radio broadcasts are what you're after, you'll need to look and listen elsewhere.

BEST OF THE REST

myTuner Radio

bit.ly/mytuner441

It doesn't have quite the same scope as TuneIn but myTuner still lets you carry 40,000 stations in your pocket – including 1,000 UK ones – and download one million podcasts. It's fairly easy to use and works well, though the interface feels a little cluttered, particularly on smaller devices. The alarm and sleep timer are welcome extras. Paying £2.99 removes on-screen adverts and adds an EQ.



Simple Radio

bit.ly/simple441

The name says it all – this is a frill-free experience with a very basic interface. There are only two headings: Recommended and Favorites. To find the station you want, you need to search for it. There are 40,000+ stations to choose from, but no podcasts. Full-screen adverts and ads masquerading as stations can be annoying, and the sleep timer is only available if you pay £2.79 on Android or £3.99 on iOS.

Radio UK

bit.ly/radiodroid441 (Android)
bit.ly/radioios441 (iOS)

Like Radioplayer, this one's limited to UK broadcasters – although there are more than 1,000 stations to choose from, as well as podcasts.

The interface is rudimentary, but you can customise it to display stations as a list or as tiles. Removing ads is cheaper than with some other apps (£2.09 on Android, £2.99 on iOS), and paying for this also unlocks an EQ function.

STOP LEAKING personal info online

Are you revealing more than you realise online? **Wayne Williams** explains how to make sure your private data isn't being made public

STOP Make your Amazon wishlist completely private

By default, everything you wish for on Amazon is made public. To explore your wishlist and everything you've saved to it, all anyone needs is your email address. To see for yourself, go to bit.ly/wishlist441 and enter your email address, or the email address of anyone with an Amazon account (although shame on you for prying!).

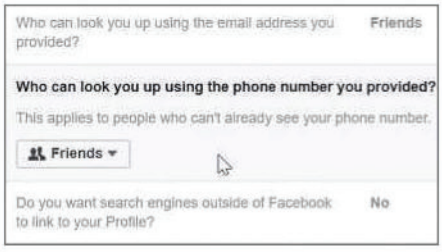
To hide your wishlist from nosy parkers, log into Amazon and hover over Your Lists (next to the Basket in the top-right corner). Click Wishlist and, at the top, you'll see an 'Edit this list' link. Click it, then in the window that opens, change the privacy of the list from Public to Shared (if you're happy to share it with friends) or Private (if you don't want anyone to see it). Amazon lets you set up more than one wishlist, so you can create one that's public if you need to and keep your private one to yourself.

Make sure your Amazon wishlist isn't available for all to see

STOP Restrict access to your phone number on Facebook

If your mobile number is linked to your Facebook account (and there's a good chance that it will be), then anyone searching for that number on the social network will be taken to your public account page, regardless of whether they are friends with you or not. It works a bit like a reverse lookup, and is a way for strangers to easily find out who a phone number belongs to.

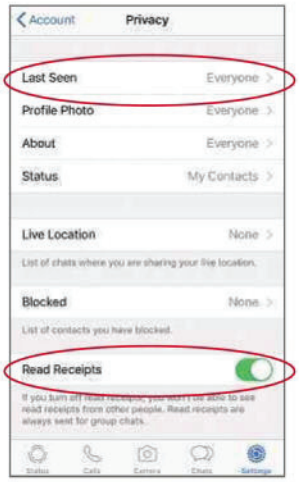
If you find this a bit creepy, you can make your number more private on the social network. Go to your General Account Settings page at bit.ly/FBphone441, click Privacy on the left and choose 'Who can look you up using the phone number you provided?'. Make sure this is set to 'Friends' (or 'Friends of Friends', if you prefer) and only people you know will be able to identify you using your mobile phone number.



Stop people searching for your phone number and finding you on Facebook

STOP Hide your online status in WhatsApp

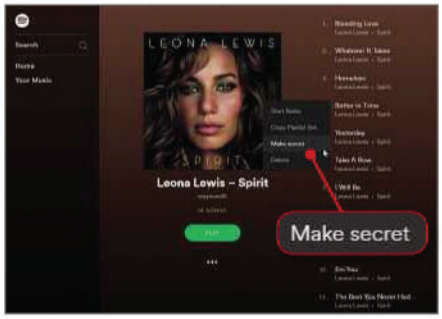
People are expected to be available to chat 24/7 these days, but it can be good to set boundaries. If you don't want people to know when you're on WhatsApp, you can take steps to disguise your availability. In iOS or Android, go to Settings, Account, Privacy. Set the Last Seen option (which shows other WhatsApp users when you were last online) to Nobody, and turn off Read Receipts so no one knows when you've received (grey double-tick) or read (blue double-tick) their messages. If you want to prevent someone from bothering you, you can temporarily block them here – just don't forget to unblock them again afterwards.



Use WhatsApp's settings to hide when you're online

STOP Hide your music tastes in Spotify

Your nearest and dearest may

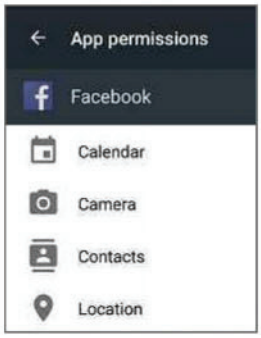


Make sure nobody else knows what songs you're listening to in Spotify

be aware that you're partial to a couple of Taylor Swift hits but that doesn't mean you want the whole world to know your embarrassing musical tastes. Luckily, Spotify's privacy settings let you keep your listening activity away from prying eyes (and ears). In the Desktop app, click Settings in the top-right corner and go to Social. From here, you can disable the option to automatically make new playlists public, temporarily hide what you're listening to and disable the option to show your listening history and top artists. You can also hide specific playlists by right-clicking one in the app (or web player) and choosing Make Secret. You can do this in the iOS and Android apps, too.

STOP Stop Facebook tracking where you go

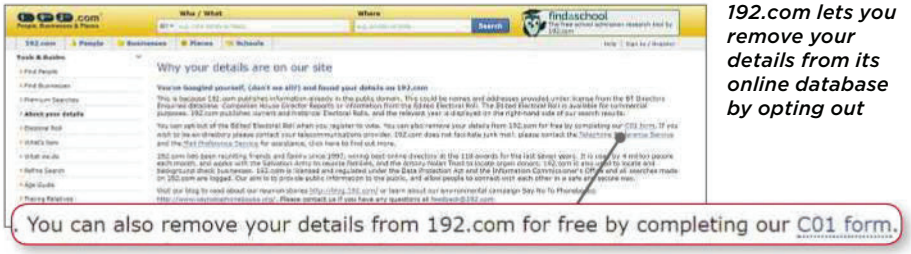
Facebook uses your mobile phone's location to build up a picture of where you go in the real world, and when. You can stop it from doing this by tweaking your device's settings. In Android, open Settings and tap Apps. Locate Facebook in the list and select it. Tap Permissions and turn off the Location entry. In iOS, go to Settings, Privacy, Location Services. You can either turn this feature off entirely or scroll down to Facebook, tap it and set Allow Location Access to 'Never'.



Stop Facebook knowing exactly where you are at all times

STOP Remove your details from online databases

Online databases such as 192.com use information from a number of sources, including BT Directory Enquires and the Edited Electoral Roll, to gather data about you that's publicly available, then make it visible to anyone who runs a search on the site. Some info is offered free of charge – search for your own name to see how much is publicly viewable – while access to other details requires the searcher to pay a fee. You can remove yourself from some of these databases by opting out. Just follow the instructions provided at bit.ly/192com441.



192.com lets you remove your details from its online database by opting out

STOP See what info your browser leaks about you

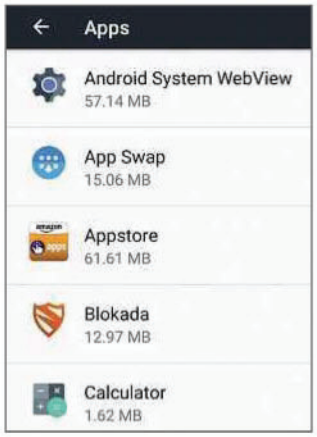
Regardless of which browser you use – whether that's Chrome, Firefox, Edge or something else – it's likely to be revealing some details about you and your browsing habits. BrowserLeaks (browserleaks.com) is a simple site that lets you see what personal data is being shared online – without your knowledge or permission – as you browse the web. There are tests for IP Address, JavaScript, Flash Player, WebGL, Content Filters and Geolocation API.

BrowserLeaks tells you what information you're revealing without realising

Just click a test to see what information is being leaked, and read the advice about how to keep your browser more private in future.

STOP Manage your phone's permissions

Mobile apps often request permissions that they don't need, and which you shouldn't really be granting – such as to your contacts, messages and sometimes even your camera. When you install an app, think about whether you're happy to allow the requested permissions; if you're not, say no (you will probably have to do without the app, but at least your privacy won't be impacted). To see which permissions an installed Android app has access to, open Settings, and tap Apps. Locate the app to inspect in the list, select it and tap Permissions. You can revoke any unwanted permissions there, although bear in mind that doing so may stop the app working properly (in which case you'll just need to toggle those permissions on again, or uninstall it). ■



Some Android apps take liberties with accessing your personal data

HOW TO HIDE YOUR PUBLIC IP ADDRESS

Your public IP address works a bit like a postal address and is assigned to your PC, phone or tablet. Each address is unique, and so can be used to identify you online. You can view your public IP address on IP Location (bit.ly/IPaddress441), alongside other personal details, such as location, browser type, OS and more. The easiest way to hide your IP address, and thus disguise what you get up to on the web, is to use an anonymous proxy server or a VPN. We recommend you try TunnelBear (www.tunnelbear.com), Windscribe (windscribe.com) or Hide.me (hide.me), which all offer a degree of free protection.

Does it REALLY work?

NEW!

We test intriguing tech hacks from the web to discover if they're fact or fiction

Aluminium foil parabolic Wi-Fi aerials

Andy Shaw builds a set of cardboard and aluminium Wi-Fi aerials to see if they can do the job of HomePlugs and Wi-Fi extenders

How we built it

Using instructions from FreeAntennas (bit.ly/ante441), we embarked on building a pair of Ez-12 antennas. The materials were easy enough to find around the house: we salvaged a couple of cereal boxes from the cardboard recycling, got out the aluminium foil and printed a pair of templates from the website onto A4 paper.

If you want to try this for yourself, you'll also need a few basic tools: we used a pair of scissors, a craft knife, a cutting board, a metal ruler, a glue stick and some sticky tape. 1 We also used a screwdriver, but that was only to put a fresh blade into our craft knife because the one we had was slightly blunt and pulled on the aluminium foil.

To make the parabola, you separate the two parts of the template and fix them to the cardboard using the glue stick. 2 We found that the largest surface of an average cereal package is slightly smaller than an A4 page, so we needed two packs to make two parabolas, because the parts of one template wouldn't quite fit on a single panel. If you don't have a large enough piece of cardboard, try printing the template slightly smaller.

Glue the back panel on the foil's shiny side, then trim around the edge to make it neat

The next step was to stick foil to the back of the rectangular panel used to construct the parabola. 3 Only this section needs to be covered in foil because it will be used to reflect the Wi-Fi signal. We mistakenly covered the other section as well, which was a waste of time (and foil!). Make sure that the shiny side of the foil is stuck to the cardboard, since this is the surface that's going to be reflecting the signal. Try to keep the foil as smooth as possible. 4

You can then cut out the shapes using the scissors and knife. Cut the holes in the back panel with the knife and cut a cross through the marks on the templates. You may need to make these bigger to fit your router's existing aerials (we tested the holes for size with a router aerial to make sure they fit). 5

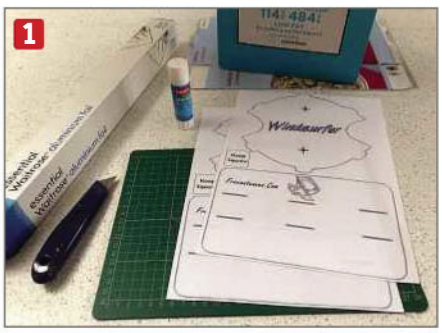
The back panel should be smooth when you bend it into shape

You can now attach the cardboard bracket to the back panel. Our construction failed to hold together, so we bent the tabs that slot through the holes and taped them up on the back.

The aerials look impressive 6 although the template is a low-res image so the logo printed on them looks a bit rough. However, the foil stretched neatly over the back of the parabola and we felt the aerials looked capable of beaming our Wi-Fi signal to previously unreachable areas.

Put it to the test

We tested the aerials in the same way as we would any piece of networking hardware. We connected a USB 3 SSD drive to our router, to wirelessly transfer a selection of large files to a fast PC



You can build the Ez-12 Parabolic Reflector with items found at home

Print the template, glue it to some cardboard and cut out around the edges

Test that the aerials fit into the bracket's holes before you fix it onto the back panel

No matter how fast your Wi-Fi signal, you'll always want more. Every year, as broadband suppliers and router manufacturers provide us with faster internet and better routers, we soak it all up by adding more devices and demanding more of our networks. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to speed up your Wi-Fi that didn't involve upgrading to expensive hardware?

Well, you can! At least, that's what you'll be led to believe if you type the question into Google, where you'll find plenty of results claiming you can boost your Wi-Fi signal with a home-made device. Suggestions range from soldering aerials into Pringles tubes (though larger food cans, the internet tells us, work much better) to mounting your existing router aerials in front of a metal sieve to act as a type of Wi-Fi satellite dish (though we're not sure where that leaves you the next time you need to drain some rice).

If you're not confident wielding a soldering iron and are loath to upset the family chef, the most appealing version of the home-made Wi-Fi booster will be one that's made from everyday items that no one will miss. It's called a reflective parabola and you can make one from household rubbish.

The concept sounds convincing – 'parabola' is a satisfyingly sophisticated mathematical term that sounds like it should work. After all, the curves of satellite dishes are based on parabolic principles and if you can use one of those to receive TV from space, it sounds feasible to apply the same concept to sending Netflix to your front room.

You'll find a range of sources on the internet claiming to demonstrate the construction of Wi-Fi aerials that do a great job of boosting your signal. We decided to put the 'trick' to the test.

Two finished Parabolic Reflectors

The router before the antennas are installed

with solid networking capabilities. This test is designed to make sure that the bottleneck in the process is the device we're testing – in this case, measured by the speed at which the router sends the files to the computer.

We tested on both 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks, and compared results both with and without the aerials attached. We also moved as far away from the router as possible, up one storey and across to the other side of the house.

Without the aerials attached, the results went as expected. On the 5GHz network, we had a reasonable connection with speeds of around 14MB/s (megabits per second). The signal dropped off on the 2.4GHz network, only managing 4.6MB/s. With room for improvement, we were optimistic about testing the router with our home-made aerials attached. We slotted them on the router's rear aerials (so as not to block the signal from the front aerials), then pointed them toward our distant room and ran the tests.

We ran the 5GHz test first. Despite several attempts, we couldn't improve on the original. In fact, the best we managed was actually a couple of seconds slower – an overall speed of 13MB/s.

Wi-Fi-boosting aerials are hardly a new idea so it occurred to us that they might work best on the older 2.4GHz channel. However, switching to this resulted in a complete disaster. The device still seemed to be receiving a decent signal from the router but the transfer speed fell through the floor. We tested several times but the transfer took more than 10 minutes, whereas without the aerials, it took a minute and a half. This worked out to a transfer speed of 0.75MB/s. We repositioned the aerials several times to try for a better stream but to no avail.

The router after the antennas are installed

To make sure that the problem wasn't due to the failure of our network, we removed the aerials and retested. Instantly, the 2.4GHz network returned to normal and managed a reasonable connection speed. We tried the aerials again, repositioning them, but we just couldn't get a better signal.

Was it worth it?

This was all rather disappointing. Having spent an entire morning constructing the devices, using up a fair amount of cardboard and aluminium foil and having a load of mess to tidy up, our hopes and dreams of a faster network were shattered.

It's heartening to think that you might be able to boost your Wi-Fi signal with a home-made device instead of having to fork out for Wi-Fi-boosting gadgets but sadly, in our experiment, it just didn't work.

What we did with the antennas after we found they didn't work

So it looks as if HomePlugs, extenders and more advanced routers are still the way to go if you aren't getting the Wi-Fi coverage you need, particularly if – like us – your home-made devices leave your Wi-Fi coverage even worse than it was before!

Tempted to try this hack yourself? Why not let us know if you got better results than us at webuser@dennis.co.uk

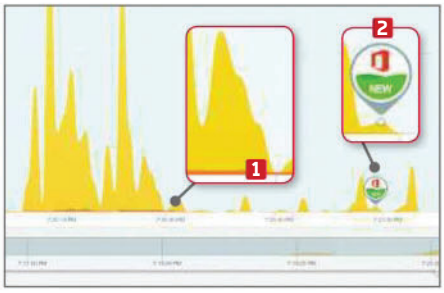
Monitor activity on your wireless network with GlassWire 2

GlassWire lets you see current and past activity, and block malware or badly behaved programs

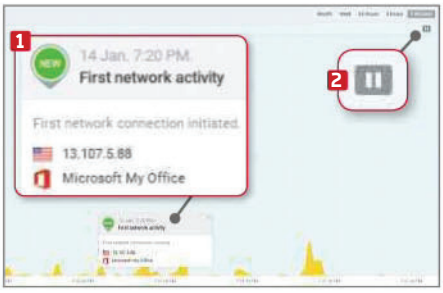
Glasswire: www.glasswire.com | 20 mins | Windows 7, 8, 10

GlassWire is a free network-monitoring tool for Windows that shows when programs and Windows components go online, and the amount of bandwidth they use. You can view up to a month's worth of activity and use it to identify odd or unexpected behaviour, such as malware messing with your system, neighbours stealing your Wi-Fi and applications hogging your internet connection. The latest version has a new look and additional tools, such as the option to scan suspect files using VirusTotal and the ability to detect 'evil twins' (a fake Wi-Fi access point with a name similar to your current one).

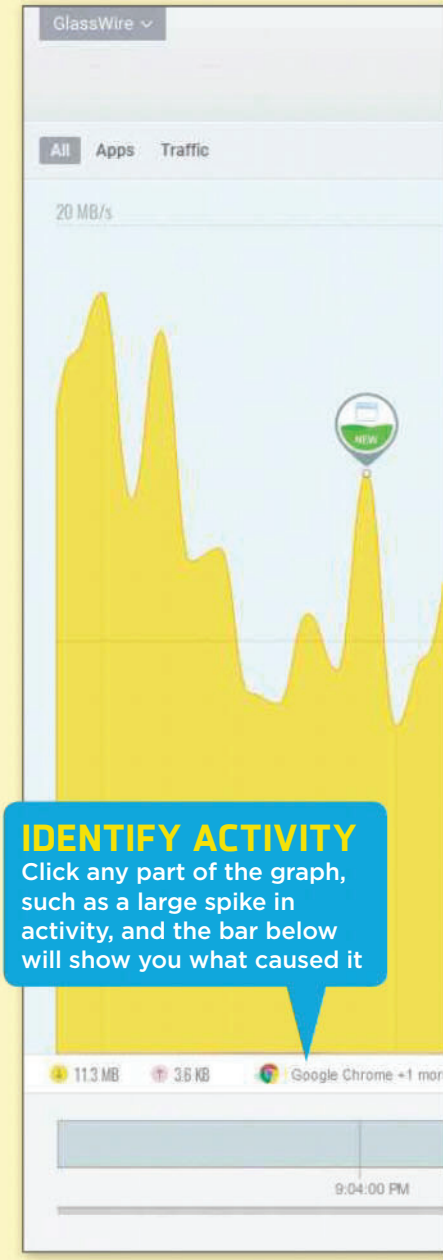
The free version comes with a seven-day trial of the paid-for edition.

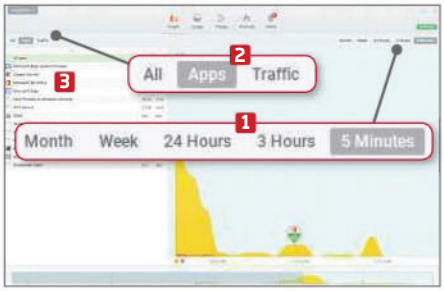


1 Run GlassWire to monitor your network usage. The main window shows a real-time colour-coded graph, 1 displaying download (yellow) and upload (red) traffic. Activity registers even if you aren't doing anything. If a new application goes online or changes its behaviour, markers appear on the graph. 2

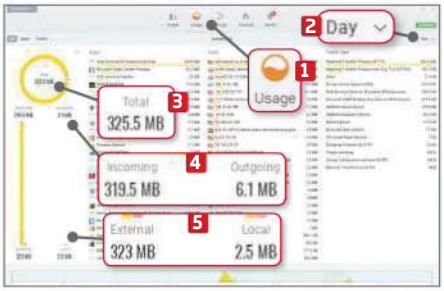


2 Click a marker to find out what it is. In this instance, it's the first network connection for Microsoft Office. 1 While you're reading the information, the graph will pause, preventing new changes and markers scrolling off the screen. You can also freeze the graph yourself by clicking the Pause button. 2



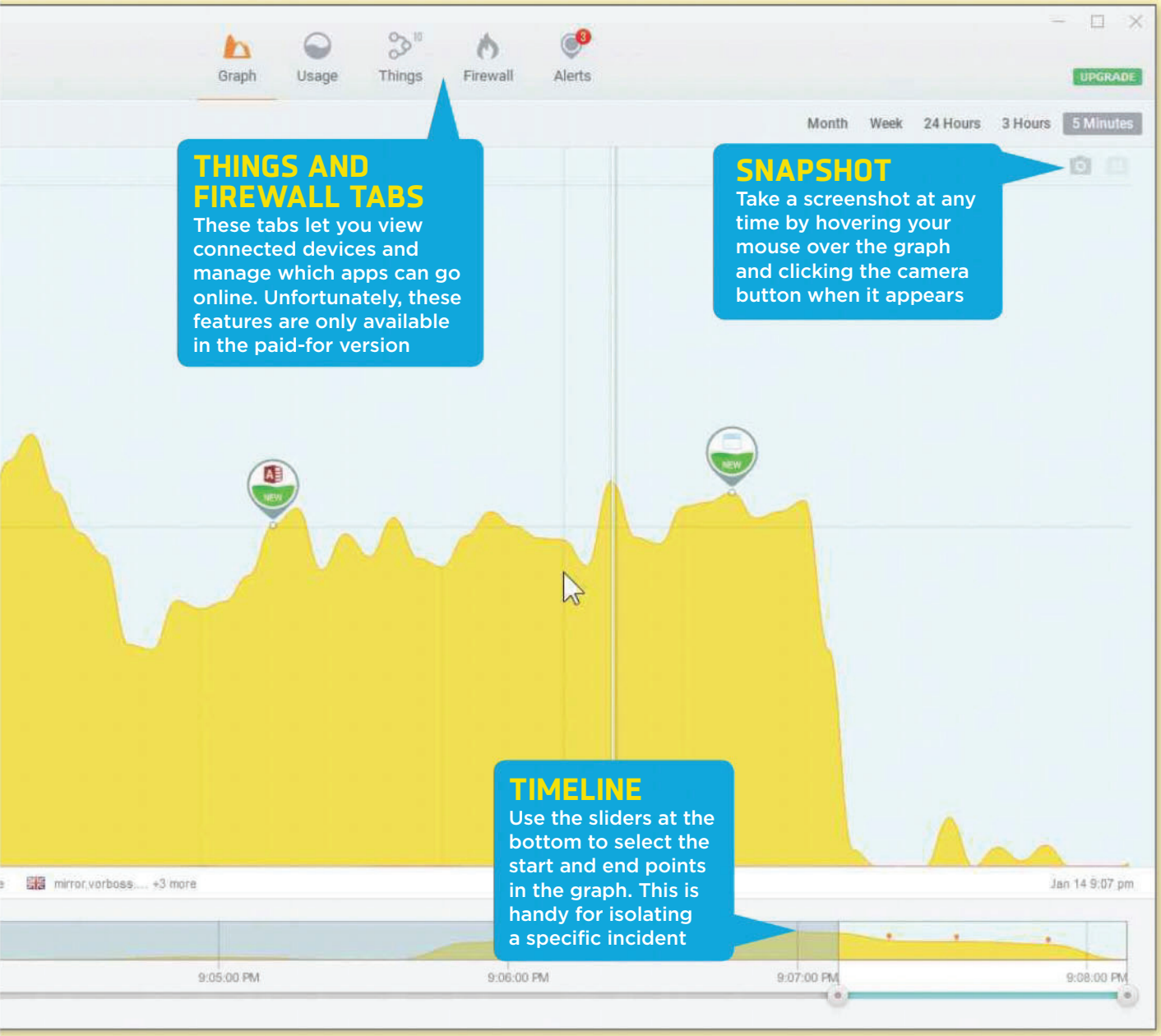


3 By default, GlassWire displays activity from the past five minutes, but you can expand this to show the previous three hours, 24 hours, week or month. 1 You can view all activity in the graph, show only app activity or just traffic. 2 The list on the left shows the items that are using the most traffic. 3



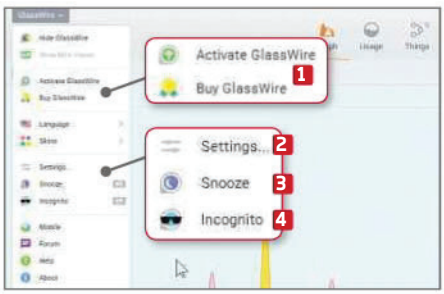
4 Click the Usage tab 1 for a detailed overview of your bandwidth use, viewable by Day, Week, Month or customise. 2 The columns show apps on your network, hosts and traffic type. The sidebar displays the total usage for the period; 3 incoming and outgoing traffic; 4 and external and local traffic. 5

5 One of the useful new tools in this latest version is the ability to check suspect items using VirusTotal (www.virustotal.com). First, you need to enable the feature. Click the GlassWire button 1 and go to Settings. Click VirusTotal, 2 then click Unlock. 3



6 Accept the security prompt. You can now 'Enable manual file analysis' 1 and 'Automatically analyse all apps with network activity'. 2 Click OK. 3 Manual checks can be run at any time by right-clicking or double-clicking an app and selecting Virus Scan. The item will be analysed and hopefully marked as safe.

7 The Alerts tab 1 shows all notable activity, such as first network connections, a change of app info or the detection of an evil-twin network. You can sort these alerts by Date, Apps and Type. 2 Colour coding shows their importance. You should regularly review these alerts. You can mark new ones as read. 3



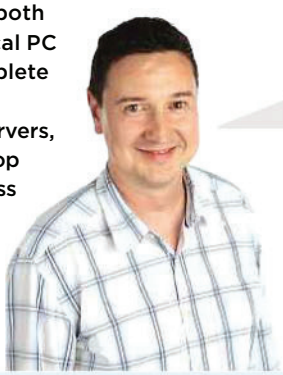
8 Click the GlassWire button to activate or buy the software, 1 change the graph colours (the free version only offers Classic, Orange and Plum, or Orange and Orchid), 2 snooze notifications 3 or run it in Incognito Mode, 4 which temporarily stops the software logging your actions.

Access your PC remotely from any Chrome browser

Chrome Remote Desktop: remotedesktop.google.com | 10 mins | Chrome

Chrome Remote Desktop has had a significant update. Previously, you had to have either Chrome and an add-on or the Chrome app installed on both the remote PC that you wanted to access and the local PC you were sitting at. This meant you had to have complete control over both the PCs you were working with.

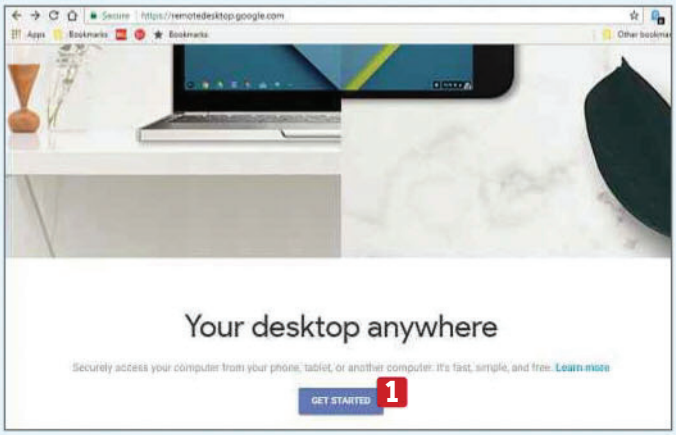
Google is now running the software from its own servers, so you no longer have to have Chrome Remote Desktop installed on the local PC you're working from. To access it, go to remotedesktop.google.com in the Chrome browser on any computer and sign in with your Google account. This provides access to any remote PC that's switched on and that you've got permission to access.



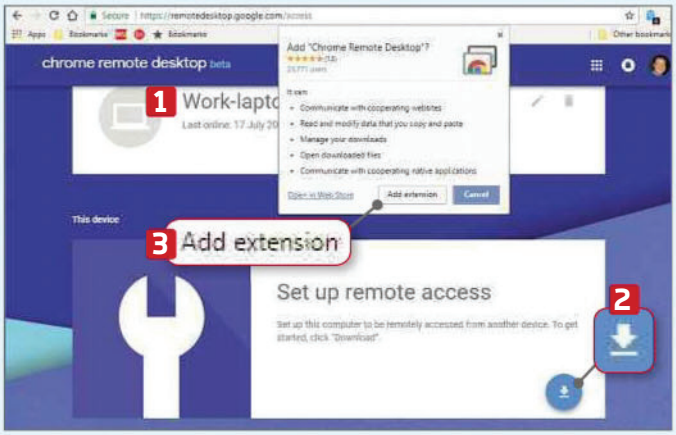
EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

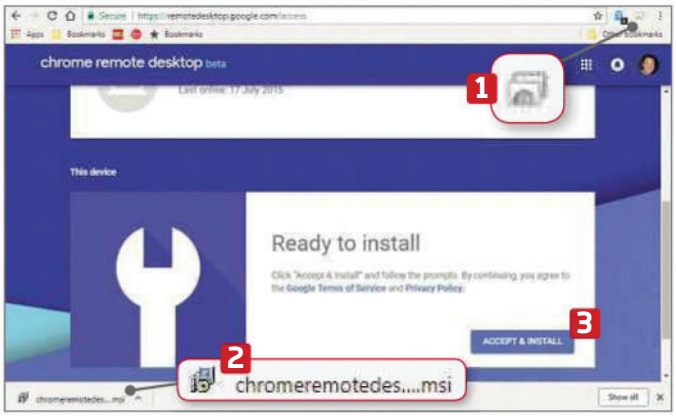
You can use your phone or tablet to access a PC that uses Chrome Remote Desktop. However, you can't yet do this simply by logging into Chrome on a mobile; you still have to download and install an app (bit.ly/crdand441 for Android; bit.ly/crdios441 for iOS). You can use touch controls to navigate the remote PC, as you would if it were a regular app, or operate the mouse and keyboard buttons to emulate a full Windows interface.



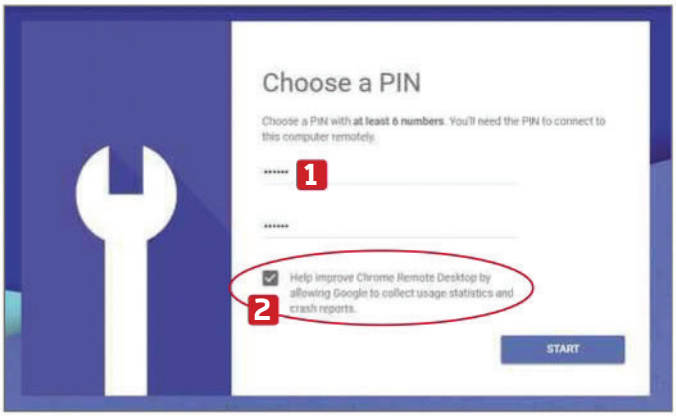
1 If you want to be able to access a PC remotely using Chrome Remote Desktop, you need to make sure the computer is switched on and has Chrome and the add-on installed. Go to remotedesktop.google.com and click the Get Started button. 1 Sign into your Google account if necessary.



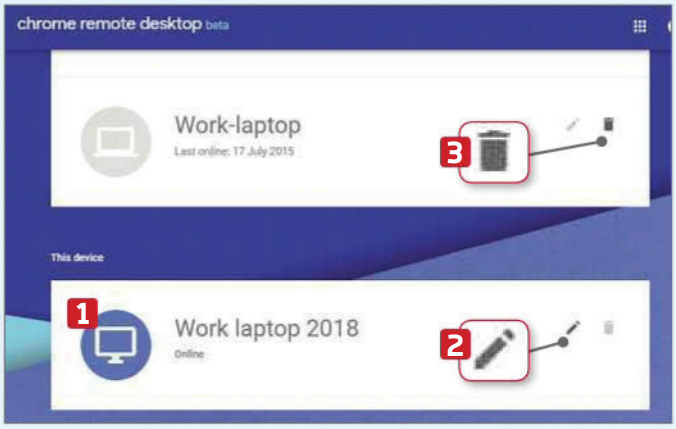
2 A web page appears showing a list of devices, if any, that have previously connected to Remote Desktop. 1 Scroll down to 'This device'. If you haven't set it up before, download the Chrome Remote Desktop tool by clicking the Download button. 2 Click 'Add extension'. 3



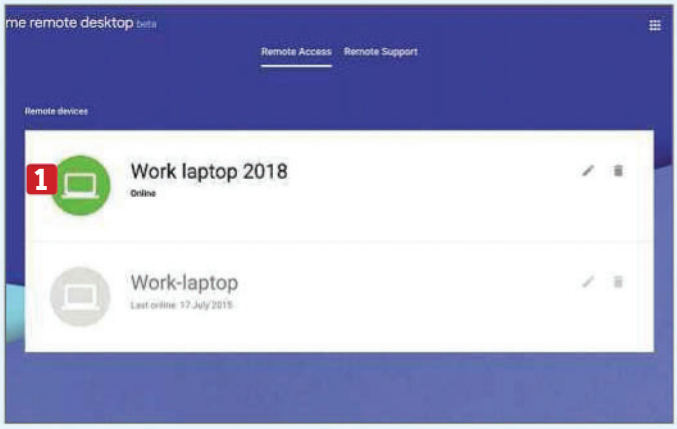
3 A browser add-on is installed in Chrome, an icon 1 appears in the top-right corner and the Chrome Remote Desktop program is downloaded. 2 Back on the website, click 'Accept & Install' 3 to complete the process. When prompted by the 'Choose a name' box, type a name that helps you distinguish this computer from any others you access.



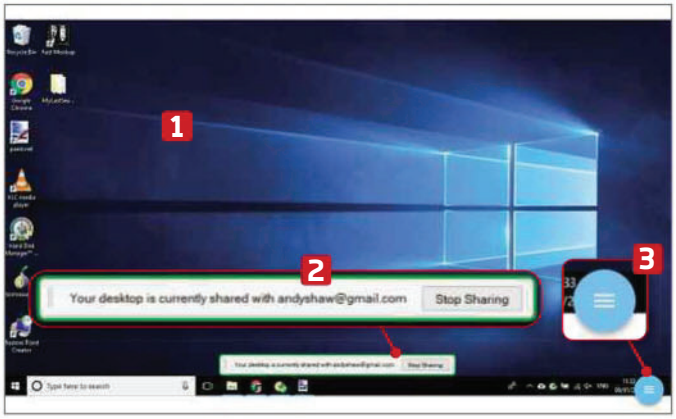
4 Set a PIN code of at least six digits. 1 Don't use any pre-existing PIN codes that you have – make this unique to this tool and your PC. You can also choose to opt out of Google's collection of usage data and crash reports, if you wish. 2



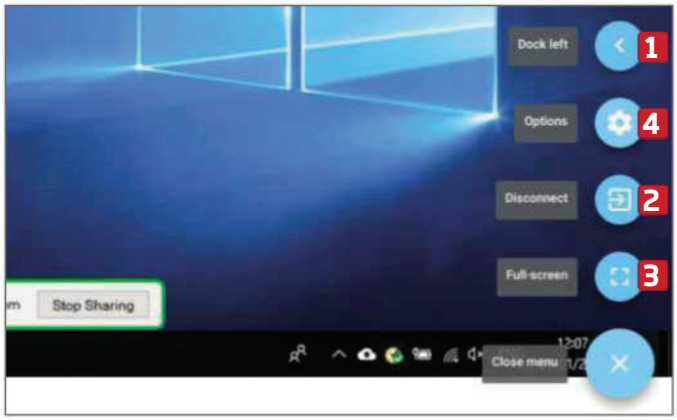
5 On the Chrome Remote Desktop website, the PC you are currently using ('This device') is indicated by a blue Online icon. 1 Click the Pencil 2 to edit the computer's details. If there are any PCs further up the list that you don't use anymore or don't want to keep online, click the bin icon 3 to remove them from the list.



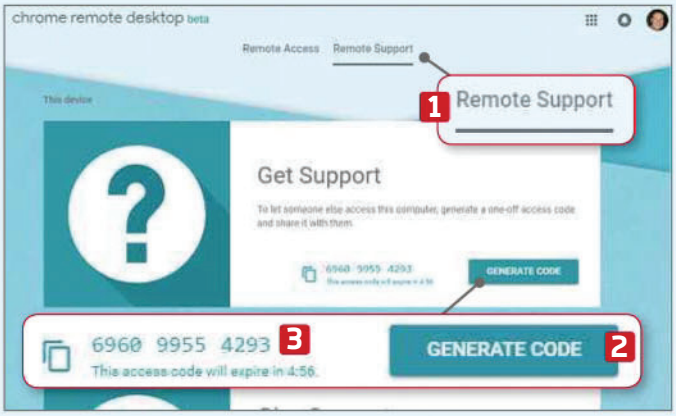
6 Open a Chrome browser on another computer or Chromebook, go to remotedesktop.google.com and sign into your Google account. A list of the PCs you can access ('Remote devices') is displayed. Any computers with a green icon 1 are online and available. Click one.



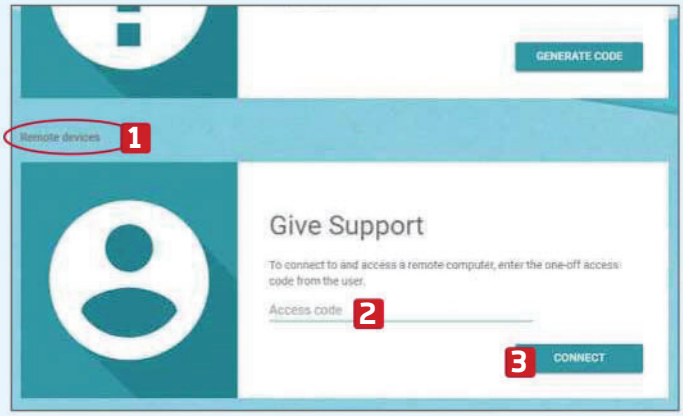
7 The Desktop of the PC you're connected to appears on your screen. 1 A green-bordered message appears at the bottom of the screen on the remote PC 2 to tell you that it's being accessed and controlled by another computer, and a menu button 3 is overlaid on your browser.



8 Click the menu button to expand it. You can move the menu to the other side of the screen, 1 disconnect from the remote PC 2 and go full-screen. 3 Options 4 lets you choose how the remote PC appears in your browser and provides ways to access keyboard shortcuts you can't otherwise perform, such as Ctrl+Alt+Delete.



9 Chrome Remote Desktop can also provide a single session of remote access to another user, so you can either give them support or receive support yourself. Go to remotedesktop.google.com and click Remote Support. 1 If you want to Get Support, click Generate Code. 2 Send the code 3 to the person you want to get support from within five minutes.

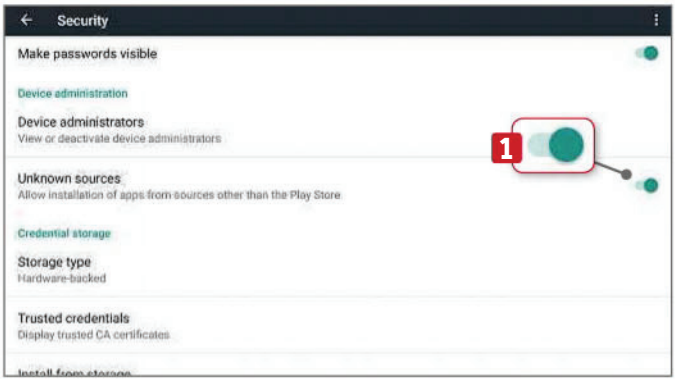


10 If you're the person providing support, click the Remote Support page, as you would in Step 9, but scroll down to the 'Remote devices' section. 1 Type the code you've received into the 'Access code' space 2 and click the Connect button. 3

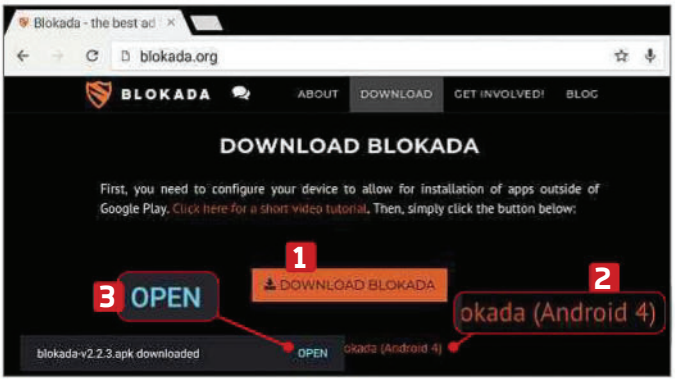
Block Android ads in all your apps

Most ad blockers simply strip the advertising from websites as you browse, but Blokada for Android goes a step further by also working across all your apps – blocking the annoyance, but also protecting your privacy, speeding up your device and reducing data usage. The free, open-source software blocks ads, trackers and malware, and works on both Wi-Fi and mobile networks.

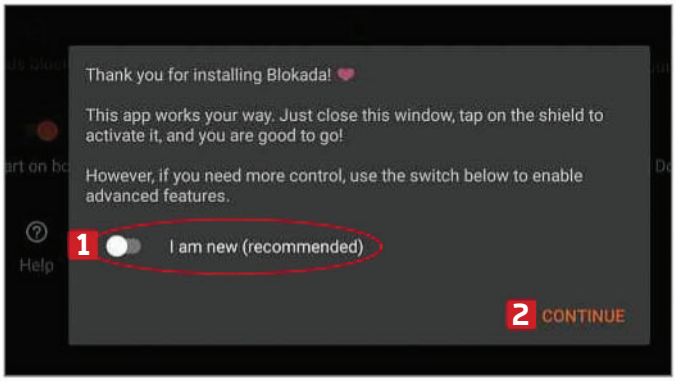
Blokada: blokada.org | **10 mins** | **Android 4+**



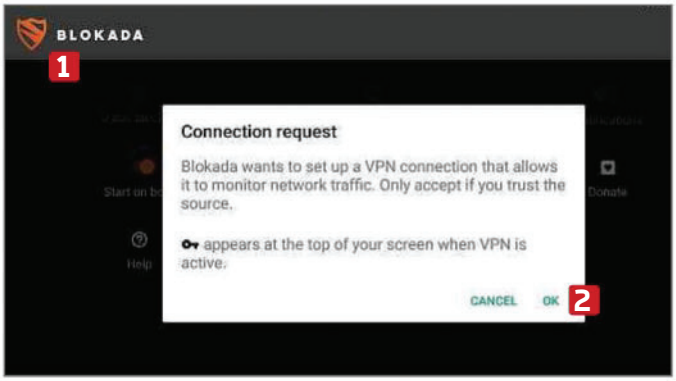
1 Google reversed its decision to ban ad blockers for browsers from Google Play a while back, but Blokada still isn't available there so you'll need to install it in a different way. Go to Settings on your Android device and look under Security for the 'Unknown sources' option. Enable it. 1



2 Open your mobile device's browser and go to Blokada's website (blokada.org). Click to Download Blokada 1 in APK (Android Package Kit) format. Use the link below 2 if you're running an older version of Android. When the download has completed, tap Open 3 to start the installation process.

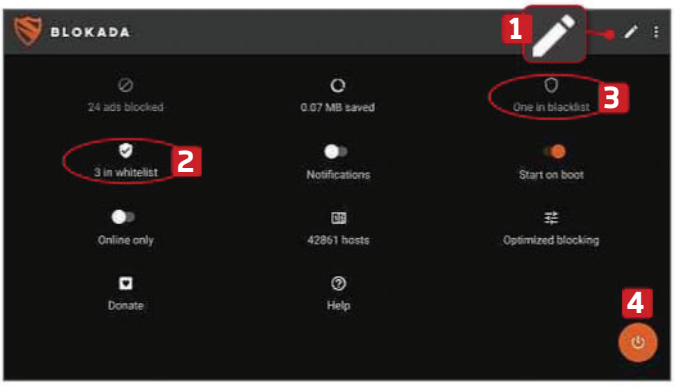


3 Blokada doesn't require any special access (such as rooting), so just tap Install. When it's finished, tap Open. You can run the app as a new user with basic settings, or as a power user with additional options; use the toggle switch to choose. 1 Tap Continue 2 to move on.



4 Tap the shield button at the top 1 to set things up. Tap OK 2 to enable the required VPN (Virtual Private Network). Once that's done, Blokada will run in the background and automatically block ads when you launch apps and visit websites. Use your device as you would normally.

5 The key icon at the top shows Blokada is working. 1 You can see the number of ads it's blocked so far 2 and the amount of data you've saved. 3 Make sure 'Start on boot' is enabled. 4 Notifications 5 inform you when an ad has been blocked.

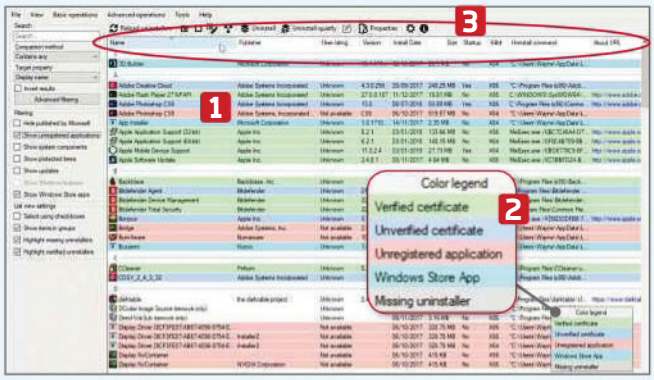


6 Tap the pencil icon, 1 select any greyed-out advanced features to enable them, then tap the pencil icon again. The new options appear. You can whitelist 2 and blacklist 3 sites to get greater control over which ads get blocked. Use the power button 4 to pause the ad blocker at any time.

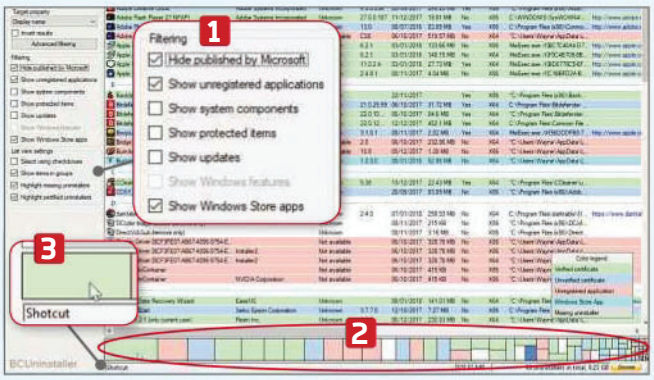
Remove all your unwanted software

The Windows uninstaller does a reasonable job of removing programs you no longer want, but it only targets one application at a time and often leaves junk behind. Bulk Crap Uninstaller can remove several programs in one go and cleans up properly after every one of them. The latest version also provides a graphical view that lets you see which programs are hogging your PC's resources.

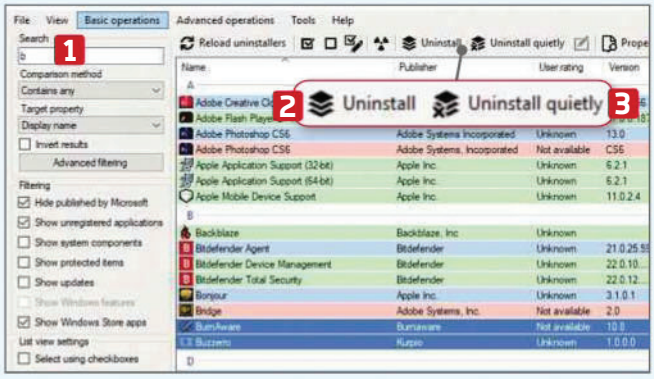
Bulk Crap Uninstaller 4: bit.ly/bulk441 | 10 mins | Windows



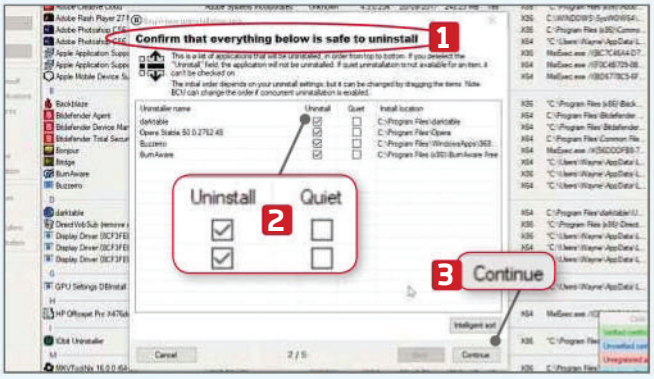
1 BCUninstaller lists all the programs installed on your PC 1 and colour-codes everything to make each type of software easily identifiable. The 'Color legend' box 2 tells you what each colour means. You can sort the list by Name, Size or any other column headings by clicking them. 3



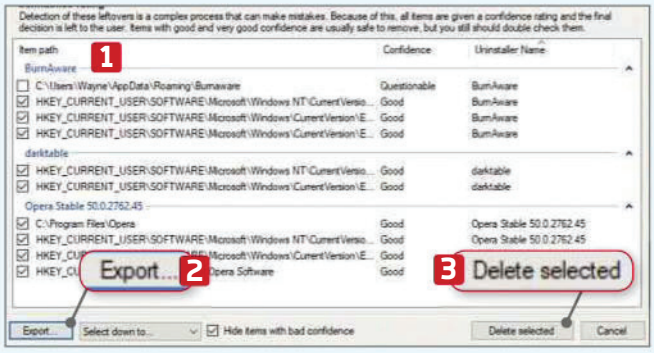
2 The Filtering section 1 lets you show or hide specific types of software, such as anything published by Microsoft. The new treemap view across the bottom 2 lets you identify the biggest space hogs. Hover your mouse over a block to see the name of the program it represents. 3



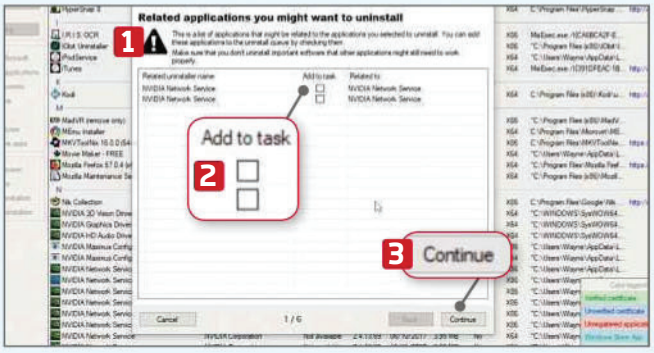
3 If you want to find a particular program, search for it by name. 1 The list on the right updates as you type. To remove one or more items, select them, then click Uninstall. 2 Alternatively, you can 'Uninstall quietly', 3 so you're not pestered by prompts.



4 Confirm that your selected items are safe to uninstall. 1 You can choose the type of uninstall (standard or quiet). 2 Click Continue. 3 You can create a system restore point and customise the removal settings. Click Continue, then Begin Uninstallation. Each uninstaller runs in turn.



5 When asked if you'd like to look for leftovers, click Yes. The software scans your PC and presents you with a list of files and Registry keys to remove. 1 Choose any you want to delete, export a backup 2 and click 'Delete selected'. 3 You can create a Registry backup before continuing.



6 Related app-detection is another new feature. If you have multiple instances of the same program installed, or programs that are similar but not identical, the software should identify them and let you remove the duplicates. 1 Tick 'Add to task', 2 then click Continue. 3

Weekend Project

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

How to...

Hack your monitor to get a better picture

Don't give up on your old monitor just yet. **Wayne Williams** has plenty of tips to make its display better than ever

Monitors are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with fast refresh times and resolutions of 4K and beyond. But these flashy new models aren't cheap and there's really no need to spend a fortune on a raft of unnecessary features when your trusty old screen can be tweaked and customised to improve its performance.

In this issue's Weekend Project, we look at the many ways you can improve your monitor's display without actually replacing it. We'll also explain how you can give an old screen you're no longer using a new lease of life.

Calibrate the screen to make the picture better

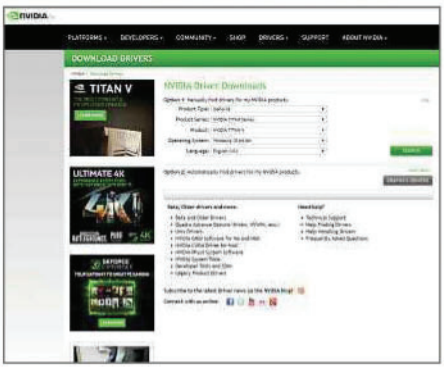
Your monitor will come with built-in calibration settings you can use to adjust the brightness, contrast, sharpness and colour. Just press the relevant button on your monitor to access the settings.

All versions of Windows from 7 onwards also come with a useful wizard you can use to make sure colours display correctly on your screen. We show you how to use this tool in our Mini Workshop, opposite.

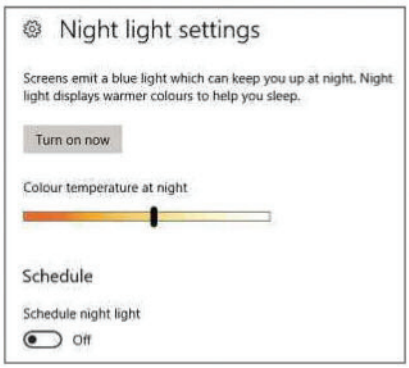
Get the best drivers

Getting the latest drivers for your monitor and graphics card may improve the quality of the display. Most monitors don't need any extra tools when they're connected to a PC – they just work – but it's worth installing a dedicated driver if one is available because it might provide a wider range of display resolutions and enable additional features, such as a webcam. Check the monitor manufacturer's support page to see if there are new drivers available.

If you have a graphics card installed, it's definitely worth checking if there are new drivers for it. Gaming and 3D graphics cards come with powerful software that can improve the quality and performance of the display. Even if



Check for new drivers on your graphics-card manufacturer's site



Night Light is more basic than f.lux, but you don't have to download anything

This adapter lets you connect an HDMI device to a DVI-enabled one using a standard DVI-D cable

you're using on-board graphics, it's worth checking with the manufacturer to see if updated drivers are available.

Follow our workshop on page 61 for a guide to help you check whether your PC needs updating.

Make your screen more comfortable on the eyes

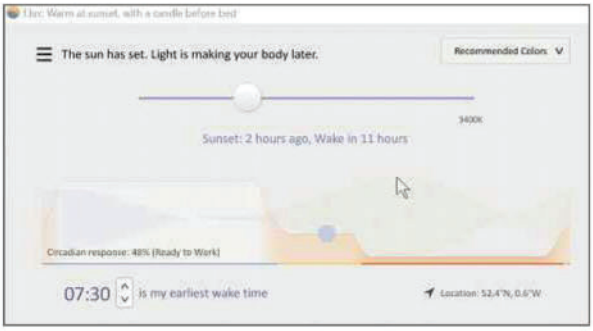
Your monitor is set up to work best in the daytime. At night, the screen's brightness can cause eye strain and the blue light it emits can be disruptive to sleep. Thankfully, there are tools you can install to make your screen less glaring in the evening and at night. The best known of these is f.lux (justgetflux.com), which automatically adjusts your display settings to match the time of day: during daylight hours, your screen will be at its brightest, but as evening falls, it slowly dulls and takes on a yellow hue. You can manually adjust the settings to suit the lighting of your room and disable the program for an hour at a time if you need to carry out colour-sensitive work. SunsetScreen (bit.ly/sset441) is a similar program and both are free.

Windows 10 users don't need to install a third-party program because the latest version of the OS comes with built-in Night Light settings. To enable them, type `night light` into the search box and press Enter. In the settings window, click 'Turn on now'. You can adjust the night-time colour temperature and schedule the night light here.

Buy a display adaptor

If you're thinking of buying a new monitor or computer, make sure the screen inputs match your PC or graphic card's outputs. It's not the end of the world if they don't because you can buy adapters to convert one display connection into another (upgrading your graphics card or installing a new one if you have onboard graphics is another option to consider).

Search Amazon for the type of adapter you want and you should find plenty of cheap products. You'll find adapters for most types of connections, such as Mini DisplayPort to VGA, DisplayPort to DVI, Mini DisplayPort to HDMI, Mini HDMI to VGA, DVI to HDMI, and so on.

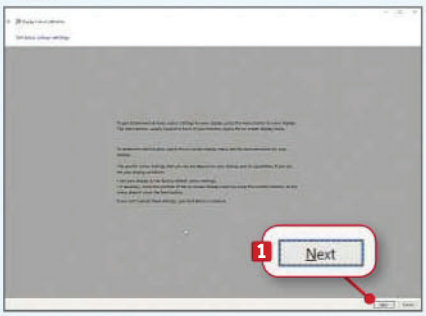


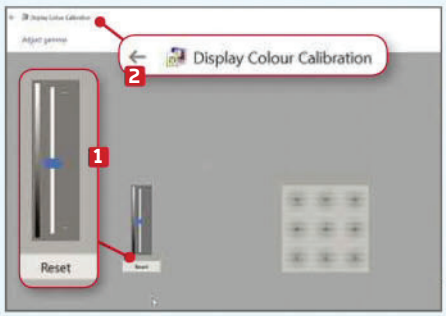
f.lux has lots of options to suit your viewing preferences

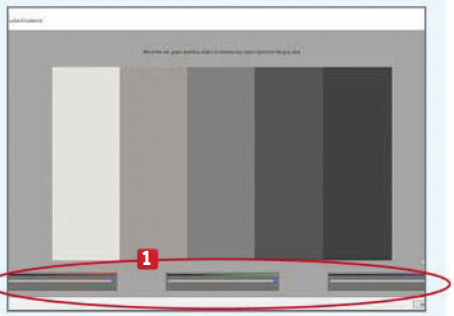
Add a second screen

If you're thinking of upgrading to a newer, larger monitor, don't throw away your old screen. One of the easiest and best ways to boost your productivity is to add a second screen to your setup. You can use it to

MINI WORKSHOP | Calibrate your screen's colour in Windows







1 Type `calibrate` into the Windows search box, then launch the 'Calibrate display color' tool. If you have more than one monitor attached to your PC, drag the tool's window to the display of the monitor you want to calibrate. Click Next and the tool will switch to full screen. Click Next 1 to begin.

2 The tool will now let you set the Gamma (the relationship between red, green and blue colour values). A sample image showing optimum Gamma will appear. Click Next, then use the slider 1 to try to match it. Click the Back arrow 2 if you want a reminder of what you're aiming for.

3 Click Next and use the controls on your monitor to adjust the brightness, then the contrast. You can skip these stages if you wish. You'll now be able to adjust the colour balance. Use the sliders 1 to remove any colour cast from the grey bars. Finally, click Finish to save and use the new settings.

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2	sky	Sky: Broadband	£28.99 (£18.99 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£227.88
3	EE	EE: Broadband	£28.50 (£21.50 for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited *	£258.00
4	Virgin media	Virgin: Broadband	£48.00 (£32.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited *	£384.00

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

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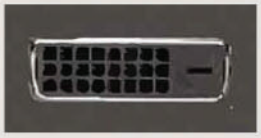
KNOW YOUR INPUTS

Monitors use a number of different ports to connect to your PC – the ones available to you will mostly depend on the age of your screen. The most common are:

Video Graphics Array (VGA)

Mostly found on very old screens (such as Cathode Ray Tubes) and used for analogue signals. Only use this if you have nothing better available.

Digital Visual Interface (DVI)



There are three types of DVI port – DVI-A (analog signal), DVI-D (digital signal) and DVI-I (integrated analog and digital signal). It's fairly outdated but better than VGA.

High-definition multimedia interface (HDMI)

Digital port capable of carrying audio and video. Best used for connecting a PC to a TV, but works with modern monitors. Sizes available are HDMI (Type A), mini-HDMI (Type B) and micro-HDMI (Type C).

DisplayPort

Digital port capable of carrying audio and video. This is the most common port found on modern displays and supports fast, very high resolution.

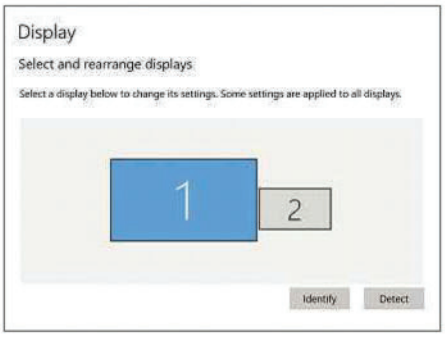
USB Type-C

This is the latest option, found on newer laptops and monitors. As well as outputting video, it can transmit audio, data and power. This is the connection we'll probably all be using in the future.

permanently display your emails or Facebook page, for example, while you use your newer screen to work on.

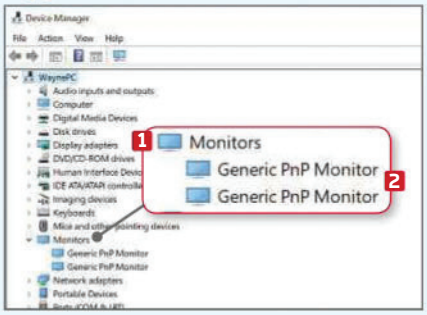
Windows now supports multi-monitor setups, so it's very easy to get another screen up and running, although you will need a video card with two outputs (or a secondary graphics card) to do this, as well as the relevant cables and plenty of free desk space.

To add the second monitor, turn off your computer and use whatever cables and connections you need to attach both screens. Switch your computer back on and Windows should automatically recognise both displays. To manage the screens, right-click your Desktop and select 'Display settings'. If the second monitor isn't shown, click Detect. Select and rearrange the displays, setting the main one as your primary screen. You can adjust the scale, layout and resolution here. Under 'Multiple displays' make sure 'Extend these displays' is selected. ■

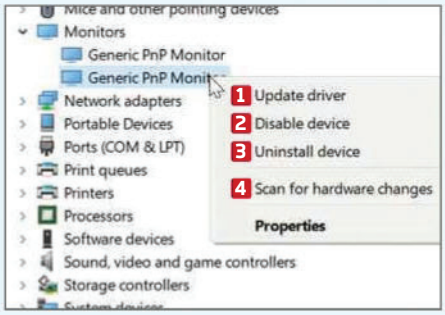


Connect a spare monitor to your PC, and configure it in Windows

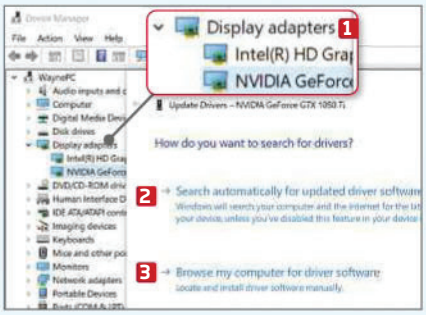
MINI WORKSHOP | Check whether you need new drivers



1 Windows 10 should automatically download new drivers via Windows Update, but you can check for the latest ones through the Device Manager. Type `drivers` into the search box and press Enter. Locate Monitors in the list 1 and click the arrow next to it. This will show any currently installed screens. 2



2 Our example shows we have two monitors installed, both detected as generic plug-and-play models. To check for updated drivers, right-click your screen and select 'Update driver'. 1 If you run into problems, you can always disable the device 2 or uninstall the driver. 3 You can 'Scan for hardware changes' here, too. 4



3 Go back to the Device Manager and locate and expand the 'Display adapters' entry. 1 Right-click your graphics device and select 'Update driver'. In the window that opens, you can automatically search for updated drivers (both online and off) 2 or browse your computer for previously downloaded ones. 3

NEXT ISSUE

How To... Hide things you'd rather keep private

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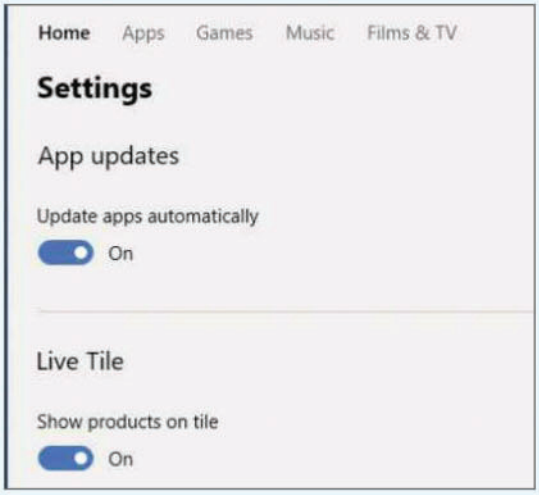
Web User Masterclass

Microsoft sneaks new features into **Windows 10 apps** without much fanfare. Our experts guide you through a few improvements you may have missed

Update apps automatically

The easiest way to ensure you always have the latest versions of your apps is to set them to update automatically. Open the Microsoft Store app, click the three-dot menu in the top-right corner and select 'Downloads and updates'. If no apps are listed, click 'Get updates' to check for recent changes. Afterwards, return to the Store menu and select Settings, then turn on the switch under 'App updates'. This keeps your apps up to date with the latest versions.

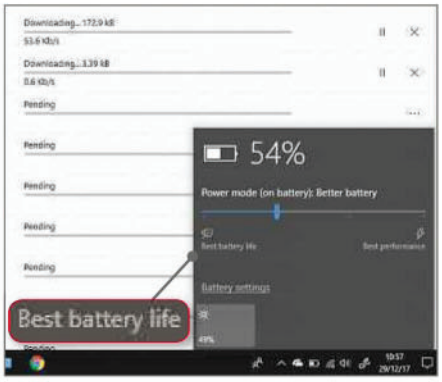
Sometimes, an app highlights new features when you run it for the first time after an update. If it doesn't, you can always find a list of new and updated features on the app's page in the Microsoft Store. Search for 'microsoft corporation' to find apps that are bundled with Windows 10. A 'What's new in this version' section usually appears halfway down the page.



Turn on automatic updates in the Windows Store app

Pause app updates

If you find that apps listed in the 'Downloads and updates' section aren't updating, your power settings may be to blame. Click the battery/power icon in the notification area on the right of the taskbar. Windows won't update apps when the slider is all the way to the left ('Best battery life'), because this setting prioritises battery life over PC performance. Drag the slider to the right to increase the power available and you should see apps starting to download and update in the Microsoft Store.



Apps won't update if the power slider is pushed all the way over to the left

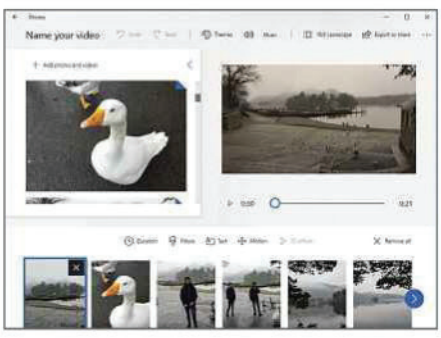
Microsoft Photos' video tricks

The Photos app has received lots of new features recently, and has changed significantly from the app that was first released with Windows 10. For example, the Create menu includes an option to turn photos into videos. Click Create and select 'Video project' from the menu. Browse the photos and select any you'd like to include. Click Add and the app will create your video automatically.

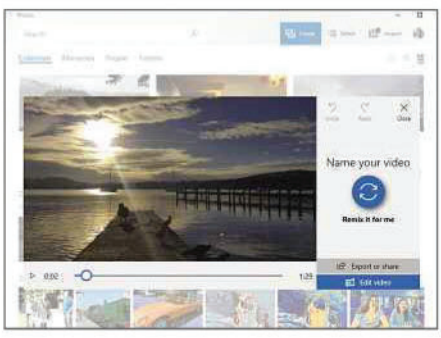
The photos open in a simple editing tool, which has too many features to cover in detail here, but it's worth experimenting with. One example is the Music button, which lets you add background music. Photos offers a selection of music but you can use your own if you prefer. Once you've selected your perfect soundtrack, you can set the app to automatically edit the video to match the rhythm of the track.

Any photos you use in the video are displayed along the bottom of the window. Click and drag them to rearrange the order in which they appear. Click a thumbnail, then click Duration to change how long the image is displayed, or Motion to change how it moves. Click Filters to browse a collection of special effects.

When you've finished editing your video, click 'Export a shareable video file' and save it as a small (S), medium (M) or large (L) video. Small is ideal for sharing online, while large is better for watching on a big-screen TV.



The Photos app contains a useful video editor



Create, remix and edit videos in the Photos app

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.

If you don't want to edit your video manually, select 'Video remix' on the Photos app's Create menu and choose the images you want to use. Click Add, and the app creates a video for you automatically. If you don't like it, click 'Remix it for me' to rearrange the photos, durations, music and so on. If you want more control over the process, you can open a remixed video in the video editor to customise it.

Edit standard photos, too

The Photos app's photo editor offers an improved range of new tools. To try some of them, click an image to open it, then press the 'Get creative with this photo' button. Click Edit to access a sidebar with two tabs: Enhance and Adjust. Enhance offers a collection of fun filters to apply to the image, while Adjust provides sliders for adjusting the light, colour and more.

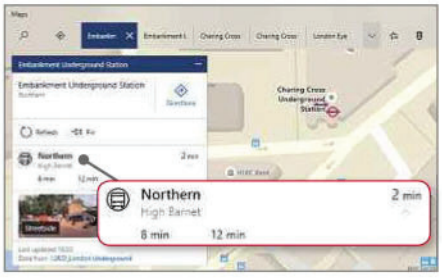
Select Draw to doodle on your photos. Choose a pen type and a colour in Tools, then draw with the mouse. The app saves the result as a 'living image', which is basically an animated replay of your drawing. You can then share the results on social networks.

Photos has many more new and improved features. To see a list, visit the Photos app page in the Store.

There are now more controls for enhancing and fixing photos

Get public transport times

The Maps app now provides public transport times. The feature is fairly limited at the moment but if you zoom into London, for example, you'll see that Underground stations are labelled. Click a station symbol and the app tells you when the next trains are due.



The Maps app can tell you how long you need to wait for the next train

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Program Windows Calculator

The Calculator app has a new Programmer mode, which won't mean much to you if you don't understand code but will come in very handy if you do. It converts decimal to octal, binary and hexadecimal and can perform functions such as XOR, NOT, OR, AND, MOD and others. Scientific mode contains a few extra functions, too.

Draw with a ruler in OneNote

OneNote has a new built-in ruler, which you can use if you have a touchscreen. To use it, create or open a note and select the Draw tab. Click a pen, then Ruler. You can drag the ruler around with one finger and rotate it using two fingers. When you draw with a pen, it draws along the ruler at whichever angle you've set it.

Create Sticky Notes with bullets

The Sticky Notes app lets you save random pieces of information as notes on your Desktop, and it has seen some updates recently. Bullet points are a new addition: start a new line with an asterisk (*) and a space to create a list with bullet points. Press Enter at the end of the line to create the next bullet point or press Enter twice to end the list.

The app is better at handling physical addresses, too. When you type an address into a Sticky Note, it turns blue. If you click the link and select View Address, Windows Maps opens in a small window above the note to show the location. You can get directions, too.

Take panoramic photos

If you have a Surface laptop, you can use the Windows Camera app to take panoramic photos. Owners of regular laptops are limited to taking single shots, burst shots and videos. To take a photo burst (which captures several photos in rapid succession), click the gear icon and select 'Photo burst' under 'Press and hold camera button'.

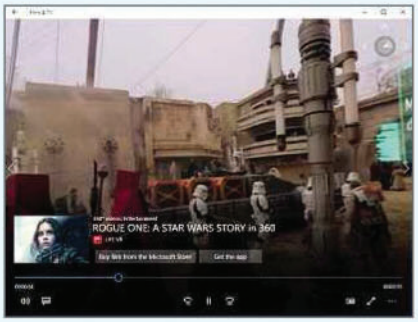
Make your own music

Microsoft is phasing out the ability to buy music from its Groove Music app, but you can play music you've already bought, as well as files you've saved in the OneDrive Music folder. In the bottom-left corner of the app, you'll see an ad for Spotify, which Microsoft recommends as a replacement for its own music-streaming service.

View Films & TV in 360 degrees

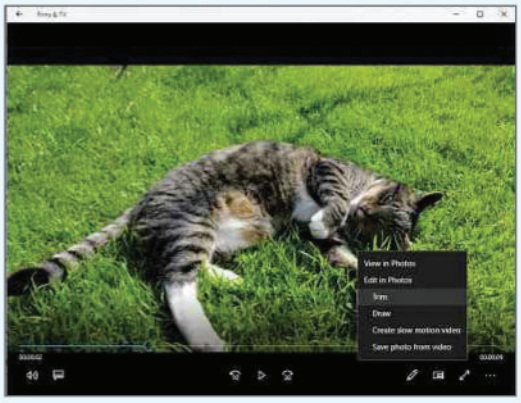
The Films & TV app has been improved. As well as offering more movies and TV shows, it has a new Trailers section. These are mainly for items you can buy or rent rather than forthcoming cinema blockbusters.

The new 360 degree section has some amazing videos. Click and drag on the screen as the video plays to look up, down, left and right.



Check out **Star Wars Rogue One** *in 360 degrees in the Films & TV app*

To see your own videos, select Personal at the top of the window. Click one to open it, then pause it and click the pencil icon on the right. The app provides options to trim the video, draw on it, create a slow-motion version or edit it using the video editor in the Photos app.



Draw on videos, trim them or edit them in Photos from Films & TV

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

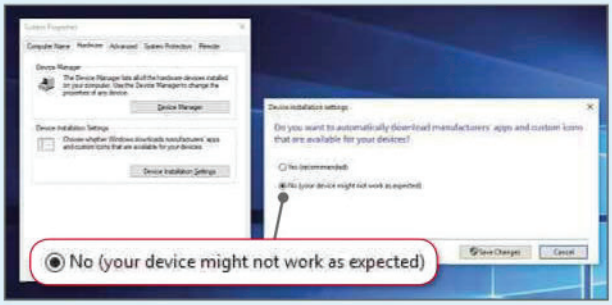
GENERAL PC

Block unwanted update on HP laptop

Q I have an old HP Pavilion laptop running Windows 10 with the latest updates. HP Support Assistant and Microsoft keep updating the IDT High Definition Audio CODEC from the Windows 8.1 version of 2012, which works fine, to a Windows 10 one that makes the sound almost inaudible.

I have blocked the HP Support Assistant service. I don't want to make a driver folder read-only as this might cause other problems during Windows 10 updates, should it ever be needed. Is there anything else I can do?

John Ashby, via email



Use a setting in the Control Panel to stop receiving manufacturers' updates

A Sometimes older drivers work better on old PCs than new drivers. Also, occasionally, Windows Update replaces existing software with an alternative that doesn't suit that particular computer. It's not possible to block a single update, but there's a global setting that lets you stop all manufacturer updates.

Start typing `control panel` in the taskbar search box. Click it when it appears, then click System in 'Small icons' view. Click 'Advanced system settings' on the left. In the next window, select the Hardware tab. Click Device Installation Settings. You can choose whether to automatically download manufacturers' apps. Select No, but bear in mind that this will also stop other updates.

Another solution is to keep a copy of the driver on the computer and reinstall it if Windows replaces it. Go to hp.com and search for your computer. Look for the audio driver among the software downloads and save it.

SECURITY

Is Microsoft's anti-malware tool worth having?

Q Microsoft automatically downloads and runs the Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool each month. You can also download and run this tool manually from bit.ly/msrt441. I did this using the 'Full scan' option (which takes over an hour to run) and it came up with over 500 infected files, many in Microsoft's own software. However, on completion it states that "No malicious software was detected". Even if I view the detailed results, it simply states, "Not Infected". Is this tool broken? If so, is there any way of stopping Windows downloading such a completely useless tool? I need to reserve my megabytes for things that are useful.

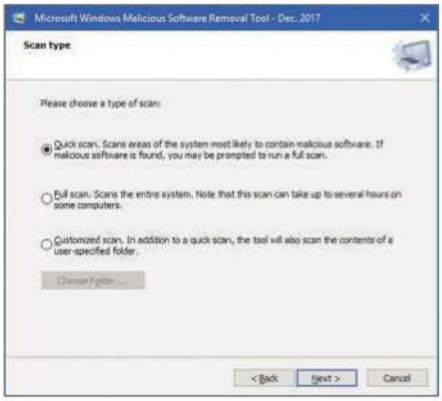
Maurice Belshaw, via email

A Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool (MSRT) is designed to run quickly and scan the most important parts of Windows for a small number of common types of malware. It automatically downloads and runs once a month when Windows Update is used.

MSRT is really aimed at people who don't have any other security software installed or have inadequate security. The tool performs a quick scan in the background and cleans up the PC if any infections are found.

If it's run manually, then full and custom scans are available, but it's not as thorough as Windows Defender or third-party security software. So if your PC is adequately protected, you don't need to download and run it – at least, not manually. It's a 40MB download but there is no way to opt out of automatic scans with Windows Update once you have agreed to them, which you may have done years ago.

MSRT creates a log file after each run and it can be read by pressing Windows+R and typing `%windir%\debug\mrt.log`, then pressing Enter. This may contain additional information about scan results. It is possible that MSRT finds suspicious files and flags them, but then sends 'fingerprints' of them to Microsoft, which checks them more thoroughly. This may reveal that they are actually harmless, which could be why infected files are found during the scan but then afterwards MSRT states they are not infected.



MSRT can be downloaded (from bit.ly/msrt441) and run in manual mode

HARDWARE

Set Opera to work with webcam

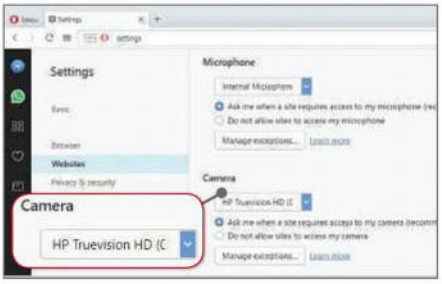
Q I bought a new HP webcam which works with everything on my PC except Opera. I don't know why. I tried everything suggested by the supplied documentation but it still doesn't work.

Richard Coleman, via email

A The first thing to check is whether the problem is specific to one site or affects all sites. If a website needs to use the webcam, it displays a tiny camera icon at the left side of the address box. If this is grey, it means the camera is disabled. Click the icon to display a small window that lets you clear the problem and reload the web page.

You may need to install Flash to enable the webcam to be used on web pages. Open Opera and go to bit.ly/abfla441. If you see a jigsaw-puzzle piece, click it and Flash should play. If you see a tile saying Install Flash, you need to click it to install it.

There are some settings in Opera that may cause webcam problems. Click the menu and, in Settings, select Websites on the left. Under Flash, select 'Ask first before allowing sites to run Flash' and, under Camera, you should see the webcam listed. Select 'Ask me when a site requires access to my camera', click 'Manage exceptions' and clear everything. Also, try switching off ad blocking. It shouldn't be a problem but you never know.



Make sure that websites have access to the camera and microphone in Opera

EMAIL

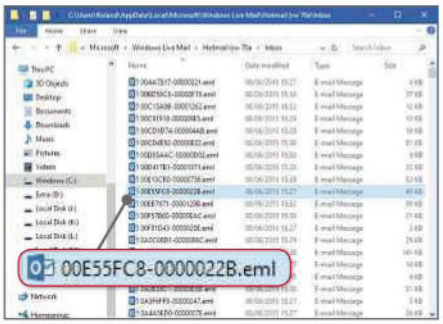
View email lost in Live Mail

Q I used to use Windows Live Mail but I now can't get back in to view my emails. Is there a way to access them since I don't have them backed up anywhere?

knightonr, via email

A Windows Live Mail is old software that's no longer supported by Microsoft. It recommends you use other software instead, such as the Windows 10 Mail app or webmail. Windows Live Mail could be used to access online mail such as Outlook.com (formerly called Hotmail) and if this is what you used it for, you can simply access your email in a browser at the website.

Some other email services also have web-based interfaces, such as Gmail and Yahoo Mail. See if your email provider has web-based access using



Emails were stored by Windows Live Mail as text files with the '.eml' extension

a web browser. You may find all your emails are still stored online.

Windows Live Mail stored emails at: C:\Users\YourName\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows Live Mail\AccountName\Inbox.

You may need to make hidden folders visible in Explorer to see them. Click View and tick the box for 'Hidden items'.

The email messages are all files with an '.eml' extension but they are plain text and can be loaded into Notepad. Try double-clicking the EML files to see if they open in an app. Opening each one is a painfully slow way to read emails and the filenames are meaningless so you can't see what each one is about. They are all there, though, so nothing should be lost.

GENERAL PC

Set portable hard drive security

Q I recently had occasion to add security permissions to a Seagate portable hard drive. I did this successfully and access was reinstated, but I have encountered a similar issue with a second hard drive.

Acting as an administrator, I added the necessary settings: Authenticated Users, Users and Everyone; the respective levels of access; and the folders, sub folders and files they applied to. However, when I tried to apply these, the following error message was received: "An error occurred while applying security information to F:\$Recycle Bin. Failed to enumerate objects in the container. Access is denied."

Alistair Maitland, via email

A Sometimes security problems like this crop up when accessing drives, folders or files that were created by someone else. It may even happen if you were the original owner, but use a different computer or account name. Setting the security options as you described is usually sufficient, but sometimes extra steps are required.

Right-click the folder with the security problem and select Properties. In the window that appears, select the Security tab. This is where you would usually change permissions. In this case, click the Advanced button at the bottom instead to open a new window.

Click the Change link to the right of the owner. Click Advanced in the next window and another window opens. That's a lot of windows! Click Find Now in this last window and select your user account in the search results list. Click OK, OK, Apply, OK and so on to close most of the windows.

When you get back to the second window (Change/Advanced), tick the box next to 'Replace owner on subcontainers and objects' and 'Replace all child object permissions entries with inheritable permission entries from this object'. Click Apply and OK. This returns you to the first window (Security tab in the Properties window) where you can change the permissions to allow you access.

HARDWARE

Startup dual screens

Q When I start up my PC with two screens, only one screen is illuminated. If I immediately restart the PC, both screens are illuminated.

David Gartshore, via email

A If the second screen is not showing in Windows 10, right-click the Desktop and select Display Properties. It says that some older displays may not always connect automatically and you may have to use the Detect button to connect them. This should solve the problem.

If a second monitor is not showing, click the Detect button to fix it

This fortnight Roland has been testing various types of backup software. Now he has no excuse for losing files.

Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. To get help or offer it to others, visit forum.webuser.co.uk

TOP TIP

Mug winner

WEBSITE

Strip the clutter from printed pages

I love the web but I prefer to print pages to carry around with me rather than read them from a screen. However, it's annoying to have to print the adverts and other unnecessary bits and bobs that appear on websites.

PrintFriendly (www.printfriendly.com) is my new favourite site. You type the address of the page you'd like to print into the box on the main site and press the Preview button. This brings up a new window displaying the reformatted page.

PrintFriendly lets you strip out superfluous elements and only print what you need

Hover over any section and you can delete it, which is useful if there are extra bits you don't want to print, such as pictures. You can resize both text and images, and choose whether you want to print, email or PDF the reformatted page.

Henry Goodman, via email

ONLINE STORAGE

Quickly share OneDrive photos

Did you know that photos saved in your OneDrive Photos folder can be embedded in a website or blog, and shared on Facebook and beyond? It's a handy way to share photos with friends or make them public for anyone to see.

Go to onedrive.live.com in a browser and open the Photos folder. Find the picture you want to share and click the thumbnail to view it. In the toolbar across the top, click the '</> Embed' button (you may have to click the three-dot menu button first) to open a panel on the right. Click the Generate button.

You can choose the image size from a drop-down menu and the link is displayed below. Just copy the code and paste it into a new post on Facebook, for example, and the image will appear in the post without you having to upload it.

John Morris, via email

Share OneDrive photos on Facebook without having to upload them

BROWSERS

Tab switching in Chrome

I've started using Google Docs instead of Microsoft Office but I miss being able to use Alt+Tab to switch between windows, such as when I want to quickly move between my browser and my writing. Alt+Tab doesn't work because you can't use it to switch between tabs.

I partially solved this problem by breaking out the browser tab displaying Google Docs so it's in a separate window. This is fine on my Windows PC but, annoyingly, doesn't work on my MacBook.

I've come across another solution, though, which is to use Ctrl+[tab number]. Think of the tabs as numbered from left to right. With Docs open in tab three and my research in tab five, I can simply use Ctrl+3 and Ctrl+5 to switch between the two. This method also works on my MacBook, using the Cmd key instead of Ctrl.

Anthony Marks, via email

TV

Watch Sky Q on standby

If you have Sky Q and use the Sky Q app on your smartphone or tablet, you can watch programs on the Sky Q app, even when your Sky Q box is on standby. This is particularly useful if you want to watch in bed because you can put the box into standby to save electricity, and you can start watching again in the morning without having to get up and switch on your box.

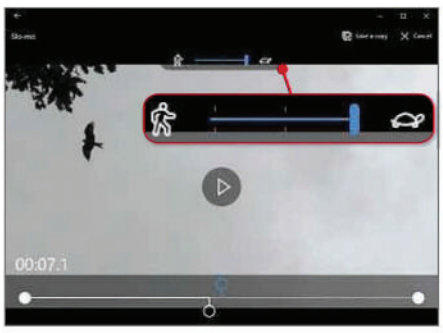
MicroKid, Web User Forums

SOFTWARE

Add a slo-mo effect to videos

The latest version of the Photos app that comes bundled with Windows 10 has a lot of interesting new tools, but my current favourite is its ability to add a slo-mo effect to videos. Find the video you want to change in File Explorer, right-click it and select 'Open with'. Choose Photos from the list.

When Photos opens, click the Edit & Create menu, then choose 'Add slo-mo'.



Use the slo-mo tool in the Windows 10 Photos app to extend a short video

Use the slider across the top of the video to change the speed – the tortoise end of the scale is the slowest. When you've got the video to the speed you want, click 'Save a copy' to make a new file with the slowed-down video.

Bradley Woods, via email

GENERAL PC

Pin people and post photos

The Fall Creator's Update added a People icon to the taskbar, which lets you pin a contact. It suggests a selection when you click the People icon, but you can search for anyone and pin them.

Once you have a contact pinned to the taskbar, you can use it to send them a photo. Just drag a photo from your Pictures folder and drop it on the pinned contact. A message pops up asking how you want to send it if the contact has more than one email address, such as 'work' and 'home'.

G Holmes, via email

OFFICE

Abbreviate your frequently used words

If you use Google Docs to write letters, reports and other documents, you can save a lot of effort by turning common words and phrases into abbreviations. When you type the abbreviation, the word magically appears.

Let's say you live in the famous Welsh town with the longest name in Europe, Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrnd-robwllllantysiliogogogoch. That's not something you want to have to type over and over again, so you could create a shortcut to save you the effort.

Create shortcuts to long words and phrases in Google Docs

In Google Docs, open the Tools menu and Click Preferences. Tick the 'Automatic substitution' box and type `llan` (our abbreviation) in the first box and the word it should be expanded to in the second. Click OK, then try it out by typing `llan` and pressing the spacebar. The whole word should appear.

You can do this with phrases that contain several words – not just one. There probably aren't that many long words or phrases that you repeat that often, but creating shortcuts for even a few can save a lot of effort.

Sue Jenkins, via email

BROWSERS

Switch to Vivaldi

If you're thinking of switching to a different browser, I've found an excellent tutorial on Vivaldi's blog that shows you how to make the move in just five minutes, and still have time to customise it so it's set up exactly how you want it. The blog includes information on themes, page backgrounds, importing bookmarks and setting the browser as your default. You can find all the information at bit.ly/viv441.

Madeline, Web User Forums

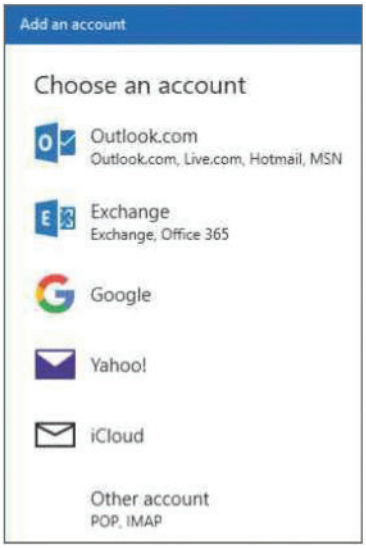
Web User says: See last issue's cover feature for more about why you should switch to Vivaldi

EMAIL

Get webmail in the Mail app

I know that some people don't like accessing email in a web browser and prefer to run an email program on their computer. You can actually do both because the Mail app in Windows 10 can access Outlook.com, Gmail, Yahoo Mail and more.

It's easy to set up. In the Mail app, click the gear icon at the bottom of the left-hand panel, then click Manage Accounts in the settings panel on the right. Click Add account, then choose Outlook.com, Google, Yahoo or iCloud.



Add web-based email services to Windows 10's Mail app

The only information you need to set this up is your email address and password.

Mike Davies, via email

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

HARDWARE

Don't waste time combining incompatible HomePlugs

I've just wasted a lot of time trying to get a secure set of HomePlugs, which are equipped with pairing buttons, to work with three older devices that have no buttons. My conclusion is that it's not possible.

However, I have managed to create a network using all the devices. The answer is to plug two devices, one of each type, into the plugs next to the router (fortunately, I have a double socket in this location). I used two Ethernet cables, one from each device, and plugged them into two of the router's Ethernet sockets. This means I have two subnetworks running from the router but all my HomePlugs can access the internet.

It might sound like overkill but the power usage is actually very light, drawing less power than a lightbulb.

Bedstor, Web User Forums

If newer HomePlugs won't work with older ones, try running two concurrent networks until you can upgrade

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

WebUser Reader Offer

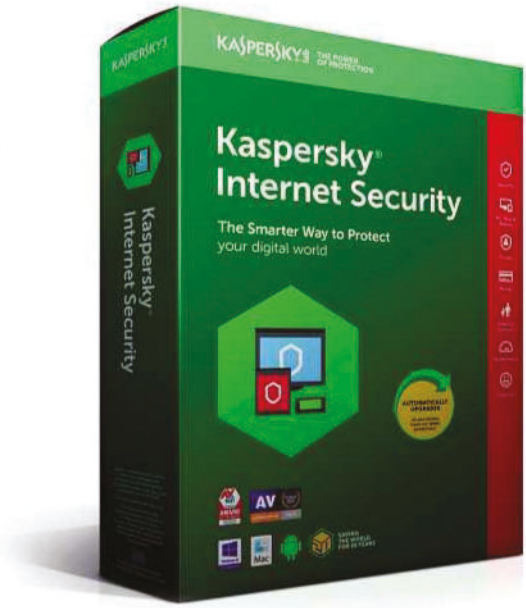
OFFER OF THE FORTNIGHT

Kaspersky Internet Security 2018 - on sale now

Our sister title *Computeractive* is now selling the 2018 edition of the award-winning antivirus Kaspersky Internet Security at a special discount for readers

WHAT'S NEW IN KASPERSKY 2018:

- ✓ Blocks infections that strike as your PC boots
- ✓ Improved notifications for hacked websites
- ✓ Faster startup and update times
- ✓ Stops viruses modifying files on your computer



SINCE WINDOWS 10 LAUNCHED 15,870 READERS HAVE BOUGHT KASPERSKY SOFTWARE FROM THE SOFTWARE STORE

One PC for one year **NOW ONLY £19.99***

Normally £34.99

Buy it on our Software Store at bit.ly/kaspersky1pc

Three PCs for two years **NOW ONLY £39.99**

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*** while stocks last**

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

BROADBAND

Get a better broadband deal

Q My BT contract is due for renewal in a few months and BT has offered me a new deal. It's an 18-month contract for the same fibre package that I currently have, but for an extra £2.50 per month (total of £45) they'll send me a new BT Smart Hub, which costs £65 to buy separately, so represents a saving of £20. There's a £9.99 delivery charge in both cases. I currently have an older hub so I'm interested in taking up the offer.
If I hold out until I'm closer to the end of my contract, am I likely to get an even better deal?

vista, Web User Forums

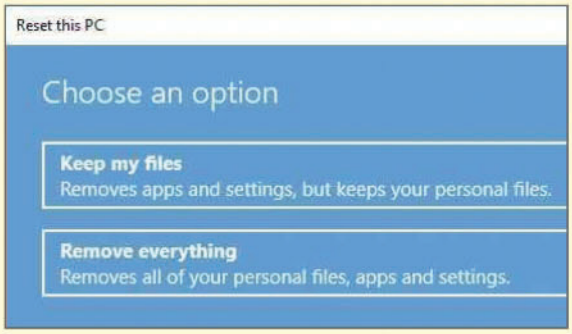
A It's probably best to wait until you are at or near the end of your contract to see if you can squeeze an even better deal out of them. I don't know how much flexibility their customer service teams have but my ISP always seems to be able to come up with sweeteners when pushed, sometimes reducing prices by 50%. With my ISP, when you are out of contract, you continue on a rolling monthly charge of whatever you were on before, not including any discounted deals, so you don't lose out by holding on. It usually works in your favour.

Cantrel, Web User Forums

Should you accept an early renewal offer for a discount on new hardware or hold out for something better?

GENERAL PC

Pass on an old laptop



Wiping a Windows 10 PC using the Reset option leaves recoverable data on the hard drive

Q I recently got a new laptop, so I'd like to pass on the old one. What's the best way to clear all the information on the hard drive and set it up with a fresh installation of Windows 10 Home? Before it was upgraded to Windows 10 it had Windows 8.1 installed.

sjw, Web User Forums

A If you wish to keep the operating system but not your personal data, then the best option is to reset the PC. Open the Settings app (Windows+i), click Update & Security, then Recovery on the left. Under 'Reset this PC', click the 'Get started' button. You are given the choice to 'Keep my files' or 'Remove everything'. Choose the latter.

Keep in mind that it's possible for someone to recover some or all of the information you've deleted, though. The only way to completely safeguard against this is to replace the hard drive and destroy the old one.

DavidNewton and pete.i, Web User Forums

HARDWARE

Revitalise a laptop battery

Q The battery on my Lenovo IdeaPad Yoga 2 11 netbook should last for six hours. It used to last this long and I'm aware that batteries deteriorate, but I think this is something else. I only use the device when travelling and it has only been used about four times in the last 12 months. When not in use, I take the device out of it's bag to check that the battery isn't completely discharged. Just prior to my last trip, I found the battery was almost empty (about 7%).

I fully recharged it to 100%, unplugged it just before going to bed, and the next morning it was down to 30%, even though it was properly shut down from within Windows.

Since then, I've fully recharged it several times and left it powered off for 24 hours. In that time, the battery drops to about 10% or less without any use.

jak, Web User Forums

A To calibrate a laptop battery, you normally run it down until you are told to connect an alternative supply (usually around 5-7%). At this stage, you should connect the power supply and, when it's fully charged, shut down, remove the power supply and then remove the battery (if possible). This allows the battery to cool down. While it's cooling, with the battery removed, you can continue to use the PC plugged-in.

Cantrel, Web User Forums

If your battery is running down when not in use, try recalibrating it

Inbox

You can let us know your views via:
webuser@dennis.co.uk, www.facebook.com/webusermagazine,
www.twitter.com/webusermagazine and forum.webuser.co.uk

Star Email

Mug winner

Y can't anything be truly free?

I have been enjoying Y-cam's free seven-day cloud storage with no monthly fees for many years now. I have four cameras – two inside and two outside my home. Last night, I went to check some footage, only to find there was none. It seems the 'free forever' advertised and printed on the box has become unsustainable.

Apparently, emails had been sent out, but I never got mine. Now, for my cameras to be of any use at all, I'd have to pay a subscription of £2.99 per camera per month, or £9.99 per month for Y-cam Protect Plus, which gives you 30 days for all the cameras you own. Like many other users, I was a little upset. Personally, I would have liked Y-cam to at least update the firmware so I had the option to connect my cameras to my own NAS storage.

To take a step back and put things in perspective, I've had these cameras for years and they all still work great, and I've enjoyed free seven-day cloud storage for all that time. I've had a good run and the terms and conditions of service in the small print always said the company could change the offer with just 14 days notice. Let's be honest, anything that sounds too good to be true generally is, and nothing is ever truly free, is it?

However, Y-cam isn't the only company touting unsustainable offers. I have the feeling this is the first of many cloud services that people are going to find are nothing but hot air.

Vincent Loates, via email

Advances in technology take us back

In response to the email from Doug Seabury in Issue 439, 'How I maintain my privacy online'. We have this giant thing called the internet and it's supposed to help people by getting them talking and breaking down barriers. So what have we come to: having to hide away, masking what we like, using VPNs and DNS, and whatever else is there to come?

This giant leap for mankind has taken us 10 steps forward but also moved us several giant steps back. If I could, I would go back to writing letters, but everything is internet-oriented – even paying your utility bills is cheaper online than talking to a representative on the telephone.

We have to keep up with all the advances in privacy just to keep our secrets, if we have them. So are we really advanced? Can we really say we are free? Unfortunately, it doesn't seem like it.

Terry Bradley, Milton Keynes

Smart speakers just spy on you

I normally derive a lot of pleasure and help from your magazine, but please don't expect us all to swallow the nerd garbage. Talk to my hardware? No thank you. I already have voice control – my wife! She controls me and the dog. All those so-called smart speakers just spy on you.

Never have I seen a less deserving Star Email than the one from the person giving an old man – who should know better – a Google Home Mini speaker to spy on him. Wake him up in the night? What for? Doug Seabury had the most sensible letter about maintaining his privacy online.

Martin Fletcher, Thorpe Hesley

What I'd like from voice control

Thanks for a great cover feature in Issue 439 ('Control Anything With Your Voice'). I'd like to use voice control to ask about the weather, view today's date, play music and so on, as shown in your article. However, I'd also like to use it to view my week's calendar, load web

Quiz Answers: Issue 440

1. *Hotel California*
2. *Tapestry*
3. *Bat out of Hell*
4. *Tango in the Night*
5. *Purple Rain*
6. *Atom Heart Mother*

WINNER!
Well done to **Rachel Church** who wins a Web User mug

WORD PUZZLE

Read-only

pages, see specific pictures and documents (such as recipes), dictate emails and simple Word documents, get the media centre on my network to play music and control a Nest device at home and another at a separate premises.

Smart speakers won't do most of these things, although Amazon's Echo Show, which has a screen, may do more. It's really unfortunate that Microsoft hasn't released the Connected Home service that's available in the US for Cortana Notebook. This controls several smart-home devices such as Nest and Hive.

Does anyone know if or when Connected Home will be available here?

Dave Bartlett, via email

A pedantic plea about a percentage

I am presently by my computer, thumbing through Issue 436 and considering trying IObit Advanced System Care 11, which is mentioned in Best Free Software.

However, your short write-up states that "the entire cleaning process is now up to 150% faster, compared to the previous version". Is there any chance that you could explain what that means? For example, if the previous version took 10 minutes to complete, how much time (at optimum speed) would the new version take? 150% of 10 is 15, which would make the scan 5 minutes slower. I know that you are simply reiterating a claim made by the manufacturer, but it is the sort of statistic that confuses those of us who are less mathematical. Many thanks for any clarification.

Ian Acocks, Nottingham

***Web User* says:** You've got us there, Ian. What we should have said is that the latest version of IObit Advanced System Care is 1.5 times as fast as the previous version, so if a cleanup once took 10 mins, it will now take 6.66666 mins (10 divided by 1.5) to run. Well, that's what we think, anyway. We promise we'll be more careful with such figures in future!

What you say...

WHAT DO YOU MOSTLY USE YOUR AMAZON ECHO/ GOOGLE HOME FOR?

Listening to music at the moment, but I'm trying to make it do other things using IFTTT – with marginal success. I'm being outwitted by a plastic box!

Pete Fitzsimmons

Mainly digital radio, though the constant dropouts on the new BBC 'skill' can be irritating.

John McGarvey *@johnmcg*

I listen to music on it all the time to let the kids have a dance around the living room.

Kev Hopwood

My Google Home is now a lazy man's TV remote for Netflix, and a speaker for Spotify and Radioplayer.

Greg Talt

My kids use a Google Home Mini for their homework. They have one each in their bedrooms. It cuts down on screen time.

Matt McAuliffe

Doorstop? Paperweight?

Rob Goldring

WHAT NEW DEVICE WILL YOU DEFINITELY BUY IN 2018?

Raspberry Pi. A mate of mine recently showed me how he uses them to teach kids in a local college to code.

John O Brien

I'm most likely going to go for one of the mesh Wi-Fi options, as I've had terrible trouble trying to get decent wireless connectivity in my home since I moved.

Lee Dodgson

Thinking of a wireless Bluetooth speaker like Sonos, but need to research it a bit.

Chris Armstrong

Sadly, there's not a lot to get excited about at the moment, so unless 2018 produces a 'must-have' bit of kit, or any of my existing tech lets me down, my wallet is staying in my pocket.

Richard Morgan

MICROSOFT HAS ENDED MAINSTREAM SUPPORT FOR WINDOWS 8. DO YOU STILL USE IT?

Nope. Couldn't stand the lack of Start menu. I reserved Windows 10 as soon as Microsoft let me.

Ben Ward *@_BenW_*

No. My laptop came with it installed, but I quickly jumped over to Windows 10. It was funny when Microsoft had to put the Start menu back.

Si Mellor

I wish! Still using Windows 7 in my work. No doubt they'll upgrade to Windows 10 shortly before it goes out of support.

Mark Chatham

WHAT WOULD YOU NEVER SEARCH FOR ON GOOGLE?

'Google', because you are already on it. Saying that, I would use Startpage (www.startpage.com). It's more private than sharing my data with an advertising company that has links with the government.

Shaun Aubert

How many days to Christmas.

Darren Phillips

Anything that their algorithms can hold against me to be annoying on other websites.

Nat Grove

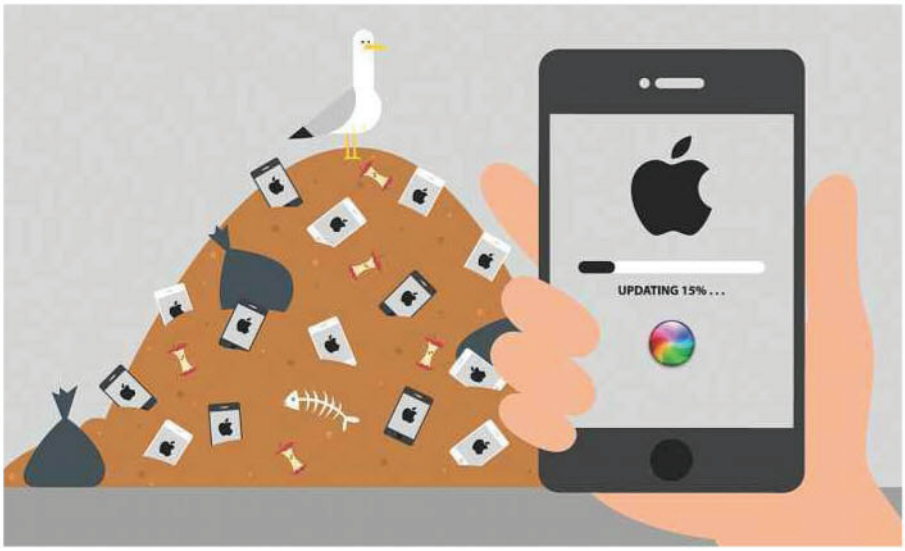
Myself – afraid of what I might find.

Graham Bullock

Page 404

Apple slows its own devices as much as the dwindling battery does, says **Barry Collins**

A battery of excuses for poor performance



So it's not just paranoia – as we reported last issue, Apple *does* deliberately hamper the performance of older iPhones. Except this isn't a ruse to sell you a grand's worth of new iPhone – perish your cynicism! Instead, Apple's doing *you* a favour, preventing your knackered old battery from crashing the phone when it's doing something demanding. And yet that's not quite the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It's a Cupertino-varnished version of the truth that still doesn't explain why every Apple device I've ever owned has been slowly reduced to landfill.

Apple's admission that it's crippling the performance of older iPhones will come as little surprise to anyone who's ever owned one of the things. Get past the two-year mark – conveniently, when most contracts come to an end – and you're lucky if the battery gasps on until tea time. Performance becomes so sluggish that you begin to wonder if Apple's been taken over by Southern Rail.

> "You're buying a lease on a piece of hardware that Apple can – and will – effectively cripple at a time of its choosing"

Having been caught in the hobbling act by some clever folk and their inconvenient benchmarks, Apple is now trying to spin this as a feature. "We have never – and would never – do anything to intentionally shorten the life of any Apple product, or degrade the user experience to drive customer upgrades," Apple pleads in a public message to customers.

Instead, to prevent the phone from suddenly blacking out, "iOS dynamically manages the maximum performance of some system components when needed to prevent a shutdown," Apple explains. "While these changes may go unnoticed, in some cases users may experience longer launch times for apps and other reductions in performance."

What Apple fails to mention is that it's the successive updates to iOS that cause performance problems in the first place. When I first bought my iPad Air, apps would open in the bat of an eyelid. Now, three major versions of the operating system later, I have to wait several seconds for anything to happen, often longer. Scrolling through web pages is juddery, app crashes are frequent, battery life is dwindling faster than my chances of winning Miss World – and the exact same thing happened to my iPad 2, which is now barely operable.

Apple's relentless – almost compulsory – operating system updates do more damage to device performance than anything else. You could argue that's the price of progress and a better state of affairs than the Android market, where devices are often left to drift on outdated versions of the operating system within a year of being launched.

But for Apple to pin the blame for slumping performance on the "characteristics of battery chemistry" is at best disingenuous, at worst a cold deception. If it took greater care to ensure operating system updates for older devices were less demanding of ageing hardware, iPhones and iPads would last a great deal longer.

Apple is now trying to make amends by offering owners of ageing iPhones replacement batteries on the cheap. Us owners of older iPads can seemingly go whistle.

It's time to stop thinking that we "own" devices such as iPhones and iPads. You're really buying a two-to-three-year lease on a piece of hardware that Apple can – and will – effectively cripple at a time of its choosing. Apple says its "customers' trust means everything to us". Apparently, their repeat custom means a whole lot more.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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

WebUser

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER
FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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