

What's NEW from Google

Amazing new features in the tools you use every day (and some you must avoid!) p40

- ✓ New colour-coded Maps
- ✗ Conversation view in Gmail
- ✓ Side-by-side Calendars
- ✓ One-tap Gmail replies
- ✓ Secret 'OK Google' commands
- ✓ Back up smarter in Drive
- ✓ Share YouTube videos faster
- ✗ Autoplay in Search
- ✓ Reduce Chrome mobile data
- ✓ Free up space on Android

PLUS



WET & BROKEN PHONE?

Does the famous 'dry rice' trick
REALLY work? [Find out on p47](#)

DON'T LET UPDATES DELETE YOUR SETTINGS

Do this TODAY! p57



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Google's latest hits and misses

Google is so ubiquitous, it's easy to forget that not everything the search king touches turns to gold. Notable flops include 3D-chat program Lively, real-time collaboration tool Wave and useless social network Buzz, as well as the sinister spying spectacles, Google Glass. I mention these duds not to mock a multi-billion-pound company but to suggest that Google's constant drive to innovate makes the occasional disappointment inevitable.

In this issue's cover feature, we round up Google's hits and misses from the past six months, revealing the latest and greatest

tools in its products and services, while highlighting its blunders and less popular decisions. Considering that Google is rarely out of the news, we certainly had plenty to choose from, including welcome improvements to Maps, Drive and Calendar. What's new from *Web User* is our 2017 Back Issues Disc, which I'm happy to confirm you can now buy from Amazon at bit.ly/wudisc17

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



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Spectre



Vulnerable

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abc Average sales, Jan-Dec 2016, 28,298 copies per issue

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What's NEW from Google

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(but steer clear of the rubbish ones)

p40

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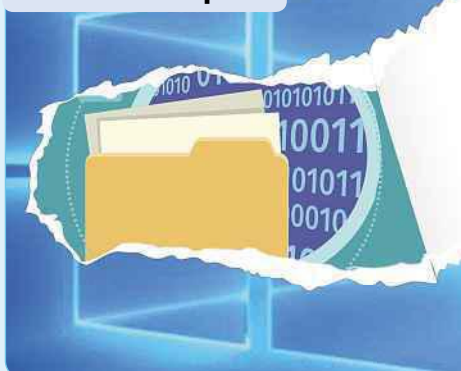
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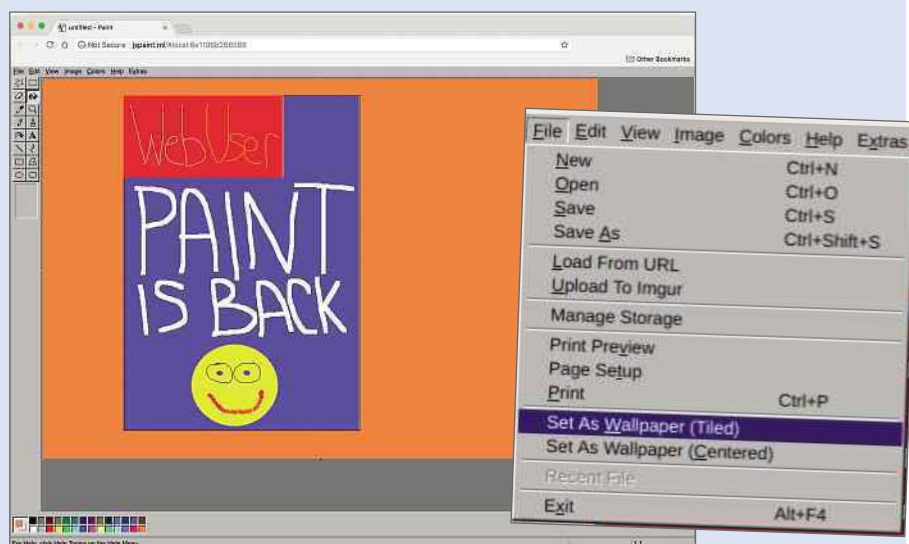
What's New Online

Use Microsoft Paint in your browser

When Microsoft announced plans to replace its 32-year-old image editor Paint with a 3D version, loyal users were understandably up in arms, fearing the loss of a simple but fun way to flex their artistic muscles. So when the company decided to keep Paint, there was a collective sigh of relief.

A new web-based remake of the program means we may not get so upset in future. Closely resembling the Windows 95 version, JSPaint works in any browser and looks instantly familiar to anyone who has used the image editor on an older operating system. There's a colour palette at the bottom of the screen, editing tools can be accessed in the left-hand sidebar and a host of menus are ranged across the top.

You can manipulate your pictures by flipping and rotating or stretching and skewing, and can load and save images, set Desktop wallpaper and



print your works of art.

And that's not all. You can also create GIFs, work with SVG files and edit transparent images. Even better, everything works quickly, there are

unlimited undos and redos, and you can even collaborate on images with other people. It really is a work of art in itself.

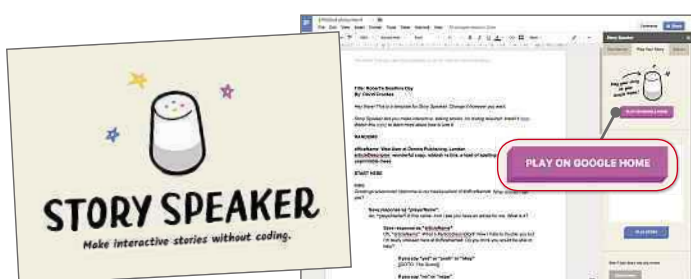
jspaint.ml

Create interactive talking stories with Google

bit.ly/stories442

If you'd like to produce your own game but don't have the necessary coding skills, just install the new Chrome extension Story Speaker. This wonderful tool not only lets you create compelling interactive fiction using nothing more than Google Docs and a set of easily editable templates, it also lets you instantly play the game on a Google Home speaker.

Story Speaker harks back to the days of text-adventure games which involved reading descriptions and issuing commands such as "get axe" or "go west". There are comprehensive instructions at bit.ly/instruct442 and an introductory video. Once you're ready, click Play Your Story and say "Hey Google, play [name of game]". You can also export your tale for other people to play on their devices.

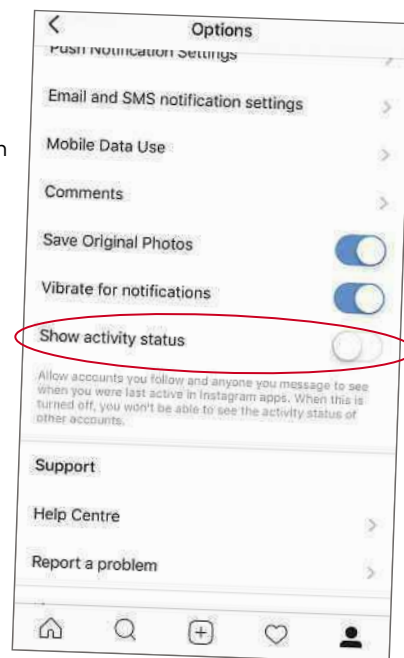


Stop revealing your Instagram status

www.instagram.com

Instagram has quietly introduced a feature that reveals when you last used the app. It displays this information whenever a person who you follow or direct-message scrolls through your feed, which we think feels like an invasion of privacy, particularly since the default setting for this is 'on'.

To turn it off, go to the Settings page in the Instagram app, swipe down and deselect the option 'Show activity status'. By turning it off, you won't be able to see the up-to-date activity status of other accounts, but you may think this is a small price to pay if you don't want people to know when you're active on the social network.

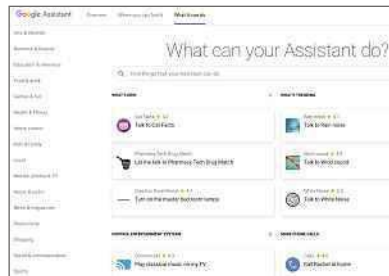


We pick the 10 best things you must do on the web this fortnight

See what Google Assistant can do

assistant.google.com/explore

Google Assistant seems to have all the answers, but what are the questions? Visit this website and you'll soon find out because it lists everything the AI assistant is capable of, with skills organised into sections such as 'Arts & lifestyle', 'News & Magazines' and Weather. Turn to page 64 for more Google Assistant tips.



Have a private Skype chat

www.skype.com/en/insider

It's unlikely that anyone will eavesdrop on your Skype conversations but Microsoft's decision to introduce end-to-end encryption is still a welcome privacy measure. It uses the same Signal protocol as WhatsApp to ensure your chat, files and audio messages are securely transmitted and kept private between you and the recipient. Just click the '+' icon, select New Private Conversation, pick a contact and wait for them to accept your invitation before communicating. The feature is currently available on Skype Preview for Skype Insiders, but we expect it to become public soon.



Check your health online

bit.ly/health442

Worried that you're not exercising enough or keeping in good shape? Then take this online quiz from Public Health England. It's aimed at anyone over the age of 18 and takes around 10 minutes to complete. You just answer a series of questions about your general mood and lifestyle, daily and weekly activities, and food and alcohol intake to get a brief assessment of your answers after you complete each of the five parts. At the end of the quiz, you're given an overall score and a comprehensive analysis of your health. There are details about how you can reduce stress, lose weight and cut bad habits, too.



5 TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER



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

A new account that shares the history of Earth in just 365 days

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

There's more fundraising fun from Sport Relief - 17 to 23 March

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

Follow the news from this year's Mobile World Congress using the hashtag #MWC18

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

News and reviews for the latest claymation comedy from Aardman Animations

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

Get the latest updates about our Gold Award-winning browser

+ Become a Family Guy character

www.familyguyyourself.com

This fun tool shows what you'd look like if you were a character in the animated show *Family Guy*. Pick your skin tone, hairstyle, clothing, facial features and location.

Identify online scams

bit.ly/scam442

Are you too smart to be scammed? Find out with the TakeFive test, which presents you with eight text messages and emails, and asks you to mark them as genuine or part of a scam. It then explains why you're right or wrong.

Take a 360-degree tour of the galaxy

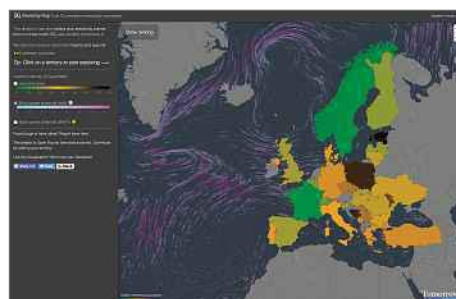
bit.ly/galaxy442

Using data captured by the Chandra X-ray Observatory and other telescopes, NASA has created a stunning 360-degree visualisation of the heart of the Milky Way, which you can explore by clicking the screen to drag left or right.

See a map of electricity production

bit.ly/electric442

If you've ever wondered where a nation's electricity comes from and how much carbon dioxide is emitted to produce it, then power over to this near real-time, colour-coded map. Clicking a country shows the sources of production, carbon intensity and the countries from which it imports electricity. You can also check the potential for wind and solar power.



Need to Know

Malicious YouTube ads use viewers' PCs to mine coins

What happened?

You may not own any Bitcoin, but that doesn't mean you haven't been caught up in the mania surrounding the cryptocurrency. As the price of Bitcoin continued to hit new highs, some web users noticed that their antivirus software was highlighting specific adverts as malicious because they contained hidden coin miners – including ads displayed by YouTube.

Currency such as Bitcoin is digitally 'mined' – a process that limits how many coins are in circulation to manage its value. Every time a coin is successfully mined, the effort required to mine the next coin goes up, which means it uses more processing power and electricity.

In this case, malicious adverts were exploiting YouTube visitors' computers to run mining software, eating up 80% of their processing power, which not only slowed down their PCs but chewed through their electricity. The ads were mining a digital currency similar to Bitcoin called Monero. Experts believe that the perpetrators targeted YouTube because its visitors stay on the site for some time to watch videos, which means the ads are open and able to mine for longer than on other types of site.

Google said it tracked down and removed the offending ads as soon as it was notified of the problem, and will look out for more malicious marketing techniques in the future, but there are fears that such mining tricks will become more common.



PixieMe / Shutterstock.com

How will it affect you?

Although the YouTube ads didn't infect PCs with malware, they could potentially be used for that purpose. If you find that your PC's performance suddenly grinds to a halt while online, look at the ads on the page. Many of the dodgy mining ads were for fake antivirus products and other false companies. Closing the browser window should end the attack.

Users were alerted to the problem by their security software, proving once more that antivirus is essential for everyone. It won't stop all attacks, but it certainly helped in this case.

Another way to avoid dodgy ads is to install an ad blocker such as Adblock Plus or uBlock Origin, both of which now block coin miners. Although many of us would be happy to support the free content we read or watch online by letting sites display ads, it's increasingly risky. It's also worth noting that these mining ads were displayed through Google's own DoubleClick ad network. If even Google can't spot malicious marketing on its own site, how will others do any better?

At least Google is making some effort to improve ads. Its latest move is to let users block 'reminder' ads, which turn products or services you've previously looked at online into ads on other sites you visit, effectively following you around the web. We'll soon be able to mute these annoying ads, though only by turning them off one by one.

Web-based mining isn't limited to ads, either. Reports have revealed that some sites run code that mines coins on your PC while you're visiting. If that happens, you'll experience similar symptoms of slow performance and increased strain on your hardware, which you can stop by closing the browser window.

What do we think?

Advertising is already annoying enough without it secretly abusing your system's resources. In a way, though, it's an extension of normal advertising. Those ads that display on every page are a drain on your PC, and while they don't max out your resources the way miners do, they affect your PC's performance and use more electricity.

It's no wonder, then, that between a quarter to a third of Brits use ad blockers. Not only are adverts irritating to look at and annoying when they follow us around the web, they slow performance and can spread malware. Of course, content creators need to get paid, and no better option than advertising has been suggested so far, although some newspapers have made paywalls work for them.

Rather than fighting back against every little abuse of its advertising platform, perhaps Google's engineers could come up with a new way to fund the internet. Google is the web's biggest ad company, however, so don't expect this model to change any time soon.



Malicious ads secretly harnessed viewers' PCs to mine the cryptocurrency Monero

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

Apple's HomePod arrives in the UK

What happened?

Apple's HomePod speaker and voice assistant will finally appear in the UK, eight months after it was announced, in June 2017, and two months after it was originally due to go on sale here. The HomePod is Apple's answer to Amazon's Alexa-equipped Echo range and Google's Home devices, and uses the same Siri voice assistant as the iPhone.

Not only is Apple releasing its HomePod more than three years after Amazon launched its first Echo, but it costs £319 – significantly more than Amazon's standard device, which starts at £90.

How will it affect you?

If you're an Apple fan and you already own an iPhone or iPad, the HomePod's premium price probably won't faze you, and it may be worth the initial outlay for a system that's designed to work with your devices. The HomePod works seamlessly with the Apple Music streaming service, and automatically

supports any smart-home kit you already control with your iPhone. However, it won't necessarily work with other music providers, including rival streaming service Spotify, although it does include support for other third-party apps, including WhatsApp.

What do we think?

There are plenty of reasons not to buy a home voice assistant: they don't always support the services you use, and they come with privacy concerns. If you decide you want one, consider your options carefully before buying. If you don't yet own a home speaker, the £50 Amazon Echo Dot is a cheap way to try the technology; but if you already have lots of Apple devices, the HomePod may be a better choice.

That said, if you simply want to try a voice assistant, all you need is a modern smartphone: both Apple and Google have built voice-activated helpers into their operating systems. They're more

limited than dedicated hardware assistants, but it's worth giving them a try before you shell out your cash for a standalone device. Turn to our Masterclass on page 64 for our Google Assistant tips.

Welcome HomePod.



Hotmail users stung on insurance prices

What happened?

Research by *The Sun* revealed that insurance companies are charging more for some users based on

their names – or even which email provider they use. The report showed that car insurer Admiral charged drivers £30 more on comparison site Gocompare.com if the would-be customer logged in with a Hotmail account from Microsoft rather than Gmail from Google. Other comparison sites reflected the same differences in charges.

Admiral admitted hiking premiums for drivers who applied via Hotmail, saying that “certain domain names are associated with more accidents than others” (bit.ly/admiral442).

How will it affect you?

If you're looking for car insurance, it may be worth trying multiple email addresses to get the best price, but it's not only email providers that companies could judge you on. Stories abound of airlines, retailers and other online companies charging people more because of their choice of browser, or after tracking their shopping behaviour online. Dither over that purchase and its price may climb or fall to encourage you. It's difficult to avoid leaking

such information online, and price-checking each major purchase in a different browser with a different email address would certainly be an onerous task.

What do we think?

The idea that companies can use data such as your email provider to discover something about your character and driving skills is absolute nonsense. Frankly, many of us have multiple email addresses, so any judgement they make from such data is likely to be faulty.

The Financial Conduct Authority is reportedly considering the revelation, and we think it should take action before other companies decide that this is a good way to gauge customers. In many ways, the ability to compare prices and services online has benefited consumers, letting us find the provider that offers exactly what we want, rather than being limited to what's available on our local high street. But it's worth remembering that retailers can benefit too, by using our own data against us to charge us the highest price possible.



NHS 111 calls 'to be handled by robots'

What happened?

One-third of all patient enquiries to the NHS 111 service will be handled online by artificial intelligence by 2020, according to a leaked report (bit.ly/robots442).

An internal evaluation, leaked to *The Telegraph*, suggests that almost 16 million patient inquiries could be dealt with by AI within two years, at which point NHS smartphone apps, rather than a telephone, will become the "primary method of accessing health services". The draft report comes amid demands to find ways to alleviate mounting pressures on an increasingly overburdened health service.

The UK government has previously warned that the NHS needs to make better use of AI and analytics on patient data if it's to compete against private medical companies. The new service would allow patients to check their symptoms online and read tailored advice generated by an algorithm, with the option of referring their case for a call from an out-of-hours GP.

An NHS England spokesperson told *Web User's* sister site IT Pro: "NHS 111 Online offers an additional route for urgent medical advice as an extra option – alongside telephone advice or a face-to-face consultation. If it frees up time for staff to spend with those patients who do prefer a direct conversation, that should be a win-win."



How will it affect you?

Patient groups have previously expressed concerns about attempts to digitise NHS services, saying that those without access to computers or smartphones would be left out.

Joyce Robins, director of Patient Concern, said that the proposals make "very unfortunate assumptions" about the availability of online devices, particularly when involving elderly patients. "It's also wrong to assume that people want to deal with their health in such a depersonalised way," Robins told *The Telegraph*. The report revealed that younger people were far more likely to use the service than older patients.

What do we think?

We're all in favour of making the NHS more efficient, but we share Joyce Robins' concerns about the limitations of artificial intelligence when dealing with urgent medical enquiries. The government should bear in mind that not everyone has access to – or is able to use – a computer or smartphone, and that depersonalised auto-responses may cause confusion and distress.

That said, the NHS 111 helpline is not intended for emergencies, and patients who are comfortable with using technology may find AI advice faster and more useful than untrained human staff reading from a script.



FIRST LOOK

Amazon Echo Spot

bit.ly/spot442

At the end of last year, Amazon launched a slew of voice-controlled devices in the UK, including the Echo 2, Echo Plus and Echo Show – but, notably, not the Echo Spot. Now, this compact smart speaker, which has been available in the US since September, is finally on sale over here.

The Echo Spot is the fifth speaker in Amazon's Echo range and, like the Echo Show, which we reviewed last issue, it comes with a touchscreen (2.5in and circular, compared to the Show's standard 7in display). However, it's smaller (about the size of an orange), spherical and cheaper, costing just £120 for one and £200 for a twin pack, whereas the Echo Show is priced at £200.



The Spot has a VGA camera so you can conduct video calls. It also displays the lyrics to songs played on Amazon Music and, when you're not doing anything with it, shows a clock face and a selection of news headlines.

The Echo Spot is available in black or white, and takes up much less space

than the Echo Show. Indeed, it's so tiny that Amazon is marketing it as an Alexa-powered alarm clock, which is a tad unnerving when you remember that it has a camera on the front.

That said, the security-conscious will be pleased to hear that the Spot has a 'do not disturb' mode and a mute button at the top of the speaker that lets you manually disable both the camera and microphone.

The Spot's sound quality is intentionally weak – if you want beefier sound, you'll need to hook it up to an external speaker – and although it can play videos, it's not compatible with YouTube. However, for a device that's designed to sit on a desk or bedside table, it's perfectly acceptable and is a welcome addition to the growing range of voice-controlled products.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

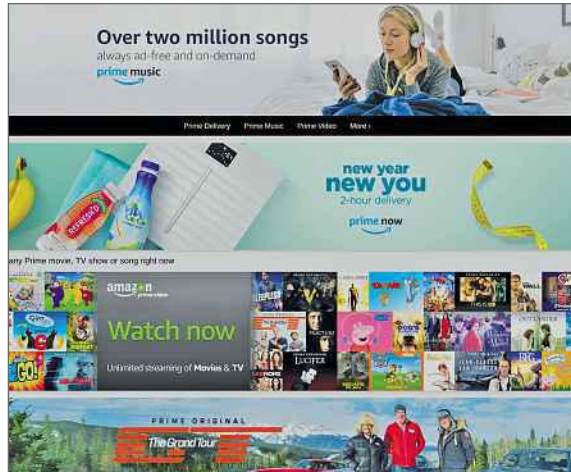
Is Amazon raising the price of Prime?

Amazon has announced a price rise for its Prime subscription service in the US, prompting speculation that it's also set to get more expensive in the UK.

The price of a monthly Amazon Prime membership for new members is going up from \$10.99 to \$12.99, and the price of the discounted Amazon Prime Student monthly plan for new sign-ups is rising from \$5.49 to \$6.49, as of 19 January 2018.

Existing monthly Prime and Prime Student members won't pay the new price for renewals until after 18 February. The price rise only affects monthly prices, so annual prices for Amazon Prime and Amazon Prime Student memberships are staying at \$99 and \$49 respectively. The cost of a separate Prime Video membership is \$8.99 a month.

More information about the rises can be found on the Amazon Prime Price Change page at bit.ly/primeprice442. If you don't intend to continue your membership from a free trial to a paid membership, find out how to cancel your Amazon Prime membership at bit.ly/cancelprime442. As long as you haven't used your Prime benefits, you can get a full refund.



Web User's sister website Alphr has contacted Amazon to find out whether the price rise will be implemented in the UK, but the company said it doesn't comment on future plans.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



We fully expect Amazon to hike the price of Prime on this side of the pond, too – most likely from £7.99 to £9.99 per month, although this may not occur until later in the year. Hopefully, the annual membership fee will remain the same (£79), as it has in the US.



WEBOMETER



WE LIKE...

Tor gets even more secure

Tor has updated its browser to fix several security vulnerabilities, add support for new 'onion' services and offer more help for first-time users. This includes advice about configuring proxy options to ensure you stay anonymous online.



512GB memory card released

British firm Integral has released the world's biggest microSD card, with a total storage capacity of 512GB. The new card surpasses previous record holder, SanDisk, which claimed the title last year with a 400GB model.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Google geo-restricts 'art selfies'

A brilliant new 'selfie' feature in Google's Arts & Culture app matches your face with people in paintings from galleries and museums around the world. However, it's currently not available in the UK and many other countries. We want it now!



Intel's U-turn over chip patches

Intel has warned that software patches issued to fix the Meltdown and Spectre security flaws should no longer be applied, after they caused some PCs to slow or stop working. Intel says it is developing new patches to fix the problem.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

SoleSens

bit.ly/sole442 | From £100

SoleSens is a 'smart insole' that detects when elderly and vulnerable people trip, slip or fall, and notifies a nominated friend, family member or carer. The creator came up with the idea when his grandmother fell over in her kitchen and was unable to reach her phone. The insole can be inserted in shoes and slippers, and automatically sends a message asking for help when an accident occurs. The project is seeking funding to design a PCB board with the sensors and technology for SoleSens to work, and software to assign contacts. It hopes to raise £80,000 by 15 February.



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

New Android Trojan steals WhatsApp messages

Kaspersky Lab has uncovered a serious security threat



affecting Android devices, which it claims is one of the world's most powerful Android spyware tools. Named 'Skygofree', this Trojan lets attackers hack into Android phones and tablets to extract WhatsApp messages.

"The malware can also monitor popular apps such as Facebook Messenger, Skype, Viber and WhatsApp," Kaspersky's Anna Markovskaya revealed in a blog post.

Warning of the dangers of the spyware tool, Markovskaya explained that Skygofree can not only capture audio using a phone's microphone but also forces infected devices

to connect to a Wi-Fi network, so it can gather even more personal data. This includes any websites visited by a victim, and the logins, passwords and card numbers they enter.

Markovskaya said users can protect themselves against this advanced Trojan by only installing apps from official stores and disabling the installation of apps from third-party sources. "Pay attention to misspelled app names, small numbers of downloads or dubious requests for permissions – any of these things should raise flags," she warned.

bit.ly/skygofree442

Thousands hit by OnePlus credit-card hack

Chinese smartphone brand OnePlus has admitted it suffered a widespread hack in which credit-card numbers, expiry dates and security codes were stolen. In a letter to its customers and a post on its forums, OnePlus apologised for the breach and said it had "launched an

urgent investigation" as soon as it was made aware of the attack. It also suspended credit-card payments and has "been working with a cybersecurity firm to reinforce systems".

A malicious script inserted in code on the OnePlus.net payment page allowed hackers to see customers' credit card numbers, expiration dates and security codes – all the information needed to use a card for a fraudulent payment.



The company believes up to 40,000 customers may have been affected, after the malicious code was inserted in mid-November, just before the OnePlus 5T launch. As with all such incidents, affected customers should cancel all credit or debit cards that may have been compromised and inform their banks.

bit.ly/oneplus442

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Yaroslava Ryabova,
security researcher
at Kaspersky Lab
(www.kaspersky.co.uk)



Q Does a padlock icon mean a site is completely safe to use?

Reece Wyatt, Twitter

A When you see a little green lock with the word 'Secure' to the left of a URL, you're likely to assume the site is safe.

Ditto for the words "this site uses a secure connection" or a URL beginning with the letters 'https'.

While more and more sites are switching to HTTPS, those 'secure' symbols don't guarantee that a website is safe from all threats. A phishing site, for example, can legitimately display that comforting green lock next to its 'https' address.

The green lock means that a site has been issued a certificate and a pair of cryptographic keys has been generated for it, encrypting any information transmitted between you and the site. The problem is that the green lock and the issued certificate

“ A green lock doesn't guarantee that a website is safe from all threats ”

say nothing about the site itself. A phishing page can just as readily get a certificate and encrypt all traffic that flows between you and it.

Put simply, all a green lock ensures is that no one *else* can spy on the data you enter. But your password can still be stolen by the site itself, if it's fake.

If the address bar shows no lock at all, that means the website does not use encryption, and any information it exchanges with your browser uses

standard HTTP.

Although Google Chrome has started tagging such websites as unsafe, they might in fact be squeaky clean – they just don't encrypt traffic between you and the server.

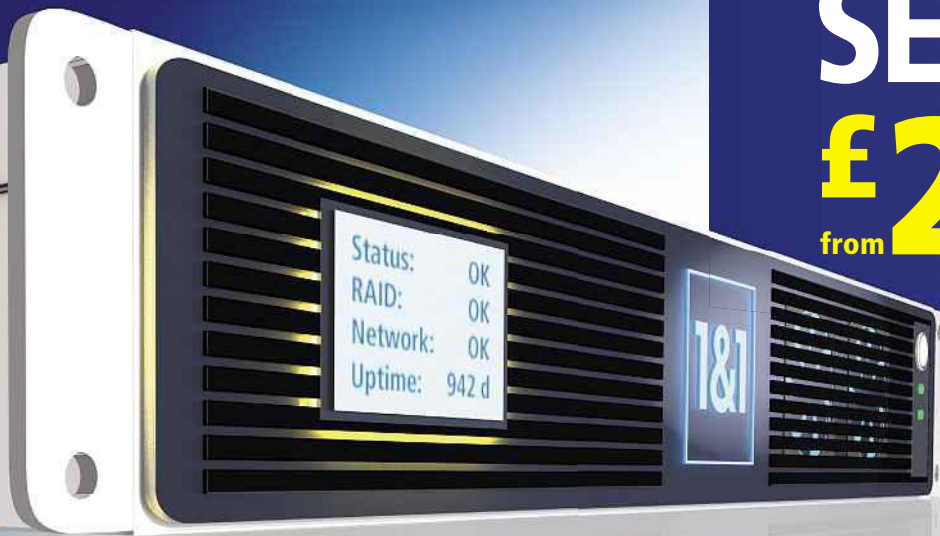
However, most website owners don't want Google to label their websites as unsafe, so more and more are migrating to HTTPS. In any case, entering sensitive data on an HTTP site is a bad idea because anyone can spy on it.

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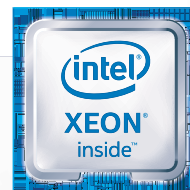
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★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

NEWS

RELAUNCH

The Guardian

www.theguardian.com

The Guardian newspaper recently hit the headlines following its switch to a tabloid format, and its website has undergone a revamp, too. The most noticeable changes include the new black masthead, red headlines and a colour-coded menu for News, Opinion, Sport, Culture and Lifestyle. The new custom Guardian font makes the text bolder and easier to read, and there's better comment signposting on stories, along with picture captions that only appear when clicked. Sections still use the familiar five-column layout of old and all the content that regular readers enjoy remains, but the design is cleaner and looks more like a newspaper.

Our rating



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All the website's content is still free to view but The Guardian continues to ask for donations

Headlines

Wednesday 17 January 2018

Now 5°C

19:00 22:00 01:00 04:00

3°C 3°C 4°C 4°C

London United Kingdom

London Canada

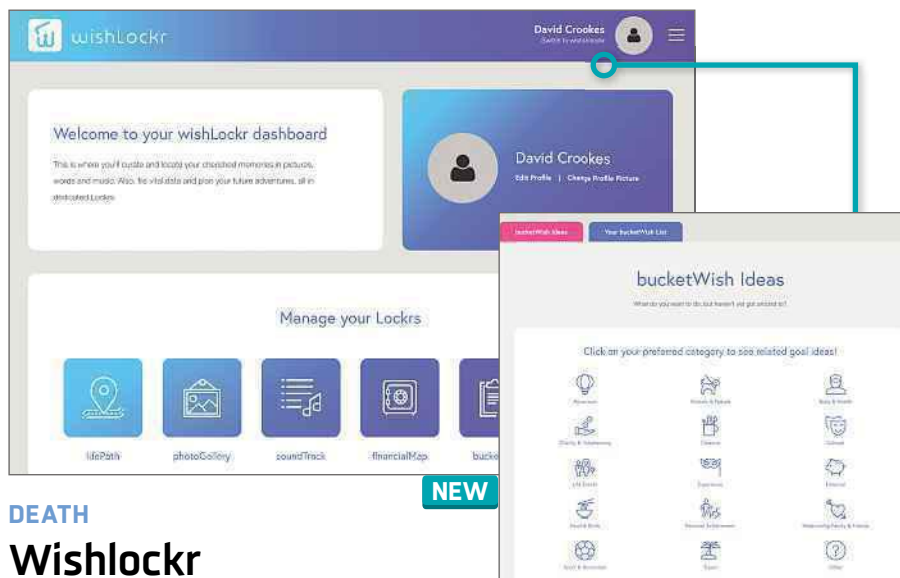
London United States

London Colney United Kingdom

London, Kentucky United States

WEATHER

The weather is now prominently displayed on the homepage and you can change the location



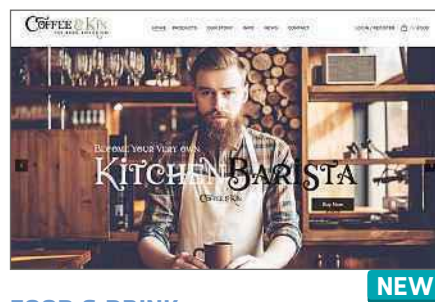
DEATH

Wishlockr

www.wishlockr.com

Talking about your death is likely to dampen the mood somewhat at family get-togethers but this new website offers a solution. It lets you quietly create an online record of wishes and memories that can be accessed by three chosen people after you die. Building your lockers is intuitive and, dare we say, enjoyable: you can jot down your life's path, add images and music, detail your last wishes as well as cover the necessities such as listing your financial information. WishLockr is free if you don't go over 1GB and promises to encrypt your data to protect it from prying eyes. It even encourages living life to the full by letting you create a jam-packed bucket list.

Our rating



FOOD & DRINK

Coffee & Kin

www.coffeeandkin.co.uk

If the sustainability of your coffee keeps you awake at night, try a cup of joe from this company which sells ethically sourced freshly roasted coffee beans, tea pyramids and 100% compostable Nespresso-compatible pods. Each of its products is elegantly displayed in an attractive layout with in-depth descriptions, and a hipster vibe pervades throughout. The site does a fine job of explaining the company's story and mission, and offers details of the Coffee & Kin Foundation, which gets a penny donation for each pod sold and 10p for every bag of beans.

Our rating



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



MORE
Click More and you can see all the subsections within each of the colour-coded categories

MULTIMEDIA
As you'd expect from a news site, stories are enhanced with images and non-autoplaying video



RELAUNCH

MILITARY

The British Army

www.army.mod.uk

The Army had a battle on its hands as it sought to change its logo and drop the slogan 'Be the Best', but there's no such controversy over its new website. Indeed, with a cleaner look, improved navigation and increased emphasis on recruitment, it's firing on all cylinders. The clear design uses large images, infographics and pull-quotes to explain the Army's purpose, structure and equipment, while a zoomable map shows locations where the Army is currently operating. There's an abundance of information and we love the insightful videos, news and details of forthcoming events.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

MUSIC

Donny Osmond

donny.com

There's still a lot of (puppy) love for former US teen idol and singer Donny Osmond, and while his website lets you listen to dozens of songs from his albums, read his biography, view images and browse a detailed timeline of his life that uses words, video, photos and trivia – there are also some unusual elements. These include videos outlining his religious beliefs, a link to his range of home furnishings and a section encouraging you to discover if you're related to him. Fans will doubtless love the insight and you can catch up with the latest Donny news on his Facebook page.

Our rating



NEW

HEALTH

Beat Asthma

www.beatasthma.co.uk

There are 5.4 million people diagnosed with asthma in the UK so although this website aims to help those affected in the North East, it's useful information wherever you live. It provides lots of resources for young people and families along with advice on managing asthma, what to do when faced with an attack and information about current and emerging medication and treatments. The approach can feel a little clinical but it's undoubtedly authoritative and comprehensive. We love the handy tips and the use of case studies, and the flu jab prompts are a welcome touch, too.

Our rating



BACK ISSUES DISC 2017



Our **2017 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year is now on sale from Amazon

For more information, visit bit.ly/wudisc17 or search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon

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





ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology Data Service

archaeologydataservice.ac.uk

This website for the Archaeology Data Service provides three search tools related to heritage data: Archsearch, which sifts through records about monuments and historic environment events in the UK; ADS Archives, for images, plans and databases; and ADS Library, for written records on the historic environment of Britain and Ireland. The site has an academic slant, so you need to have a handle on what you're looking for, but the design is now much improved, with the most important pages made more prominent and outdated content removed.

Our rating



FOOD & DRINK

Tell It Like It Is

www.tellitlikeitis.co.uk

Is dairy really scary? Not according to this website created by The Dairy Council, Dairy UK and AHDB, which aims to encourage farmers to spread a positive message about the nutritional benefits of milk, yoghurt, cheese and butter. To that end, the site provides shareable resources such as colourful and clear infographics, fun social messages and tasty-looking recipes, along with a blog and vlog telling farmers how to get their point across effectively. Annoyingly, you have to save images before sharing them – social-media buttons would make life easier – and the site also fails to address specific concerns about dairy head on.

Our rating



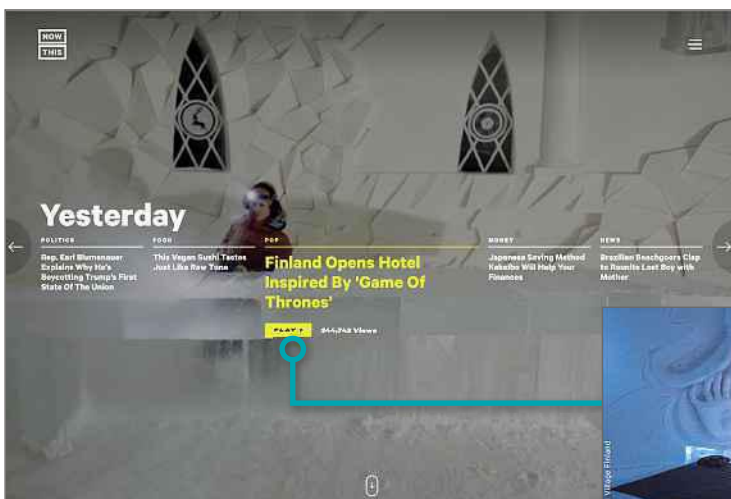
CULTURE

Culturised

culturised.co.uk

With its combination of cultural essays, a guide to what's going on in and around London and descriptive articles rather than reviews, Culturised occupies a unique space in the arts world. The site has had an impressive revamp just a year after its launch, to more effectively showcase its content. Each section is brimming with well-written articles that can be shared and printed (a nice touch) and there's a good selection of related posts to keep you reading. There's no search engine to help you find specific articles, but there is at least a list of topics. You can also join Culturised's mailing list to receive a regular newsletter.

Our rating



NEWS

Now This News

nowthisnews.com

Back in 2015, NowThis closed its website to concentrate on providing content directly to social platforms. Now it's reinstated its "destination website", posting a daily bite-size news roundup, setting videos to music and explaining what's happening via captions. Content is presented in a manner that's slick, smart and accessible, not to mention popular – given the number of views – but the articles, while well chosen, clickable and interesting, aren't particularly authoritative and seem mainly designed to go viral. Still, if that's your thing, you can share the articles on social media, view them full screen and access a host of channels and topics.

Our rating



HEALTH

Live Well

www.livewellcampaign.co.uk

If you live in Essex and are keen to keep fit and healthy this year, you're in luck: the county's local authorities and health partners are encouraging residents to be more active. This has manifested itself in the Live Well campaign, offering advice, information, news and community support, along with a series of challenges aimed at changing people's lives over the course of 21 days. All this is to be applauded but we lost our stamina with some sections: the headings can be a bit dry and too many articles primarily serve as links to other sites. The filterable list of activities and a What's On guide are high points, though.

Our rating



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

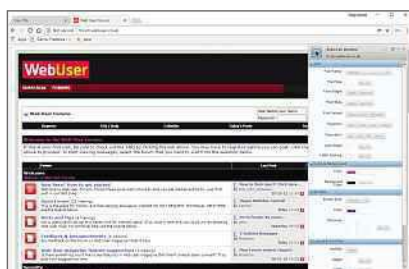
Top Tips of the Fortnight

Multi-functional WordPress add-on

Themelsle (themeisle.com) has a new all-in-one WordPress add-on called Orbitfox (bit.ly/of442), which is similar to WordPress's Jetpack. It adds loads of new features to Themelsle's templates, including its generous selection of free ones. There's a range of things to explore, from simple actions such as adding icons to menus, to more complicated layout options for creating grids of posts. Find out more at bit.ly/ofdem442.

Tweak CSS in Chrome

If you enjoy tinkering with CSS and think you could improve the design of popular sites, you'll enjoy experimenting with the Chrome add-on Stylebot (bit.ly/stbo442). Once you've installed this fantastic tool, you can



experiment with different CSS styling on any web page, changing the fonts, layout, colours and even visibility of elements. You can also share your tweaks and see the changes that other users have made to popular websites.

Deal of the Fortnight

123 Reg (www.123-reg.co.uk) is offering three of its web-hosting packages for £1.20 per month for the first year. Choose from its Essentials, Business or Unlimited options.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S
EXPERT:

Stephan
Wagner, Marketing Project
Manager, OVH (www.ovh.co.uk)



Q Does it matter whether I promote my site as **www.mysite.com** or just **mysite.com**?
Mickey Smith, via email

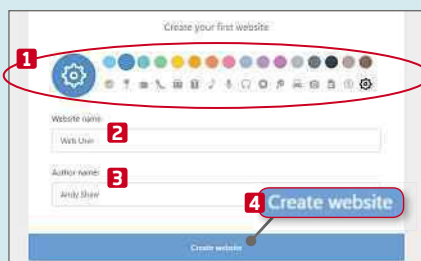
A Unless your site has millions of page views per day, it doesn't really matter. Feel free to choose the one you like best, but stick to one version rather than promoting both. On the surface, the two versions seem identical, but for search engines they are not.

Once you've made your choice, use a 301-redirect to bring traffic from the other version to the one you prefer. Set the canonicals and use only that format for internal links. That way, all link juice and PageRank data is counted for your preferred URL, and that version gets the benefit.

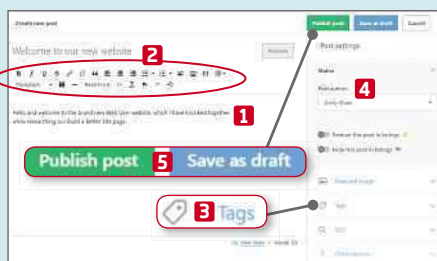


MINI WORKSHOP | Build a website in a jiffy with Static Site Generator Publii
Publii: getpublii.com |  10 mins |  Windows 7, 8, 10 (64-bit)  MacOS 10+

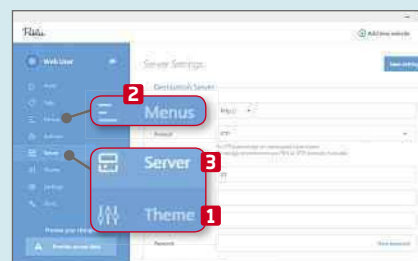
An SSG (Static Site Generator) is like a content-management system for small websites that don't require a database. You create and compile your site offline and upload it when you've finished designing it



1 Install the Publii software and choose a colour and icon from the range of available options. **1** Enter the name of your new website **2** and your own name, **3** then click 'Create website'. **4** You're presented with the main interface for the software. Click the 'Add new post' button.



2 Create a new page as you would with any content-management system, by typing the text into the boxes **1** and using the icon buttons to format it. **2** You can insert images, set a featured image, include tags **3** and change the name of the page's author. **4** Publish the post when it's finished or save it as a draft to work on later. **5**



3 Go to Settings and choose a theme. **1** You can now preview your site, which will open in your browser. Navigation can be added from the Menus section. **2** When you're ready to upload it, enter your webhost's FTP settings in the Server section **3** and the software can sync your site.



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What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

BBC

Stream the Winter Olympics

From 9 February

The 2018 Winter Olympics – or the XXIII Olympic Winter Games, as they are officially known – are about to kick off in PyeongChang, South Korea. Team GB has around 60 athletes competing in the global sporting event and will be looking to beat the haul of four medals – one gold, one silver and two bronze – that they managed at Sochi, Russia, in 2014 (equalling the tally picked up at the 1924 games). There are 15 disciplines in total, across seven Olympic sports – skating, skiing, bobsleigh, biathlon, curling, ice hockey and luge – with 90 nations and 2,500 athletes taking part at 13 competition venues. Controversially, North and South Korea will be marching under the one flag, and will even be fielding a joint women's ice hockey team.

The Winter Olympics will be available to watch on BBC TV, Red Button, iPlayer, the BBC Sport website and mobile app, hosted by Clare Balding, Hazel Irvine, Eilidh Barbour and Radzi Chinyanganya (see left), and also Eurosport. If you want to know what's happening and when, check out the schedule at the official website: bit.ly/olympics442. Bear in mind that PyeongChang is nine hours ahead of the UK.



Watch *Grand Prix Driver*

From 9 February

It seems fitting that the home of *The Grand Tour* should also be the place to watch a riveting new McLaren docuseries. *Grand Prix Driver* takes viewers behind the scenes of the legendary McLaren Formula 1 race team, offering unprecedented access to the drivers, engineers and leaders. All episodes of the four-part series, which is narrated by Oscar winning actor Michael Douglas, will be available to stream from 9 February and cover

what promised to be (and indeed was), a very challenging 2017 season for the team. According to Heather Schuster, head of Unscripted Amazon Originals: "Amazon customers will have a front row seat to the good and the bad – it will be unlike anything ever seen before in racing". Enjoy the trailer for the new series at bit.ly/watchgpd442.



Enjoy free *Motorsport.tv* on Freesat

If you're a Freesat viewer, you can enjoy 24/7 motoring entertainment via Motorsport.tv, which has just joined the service's line-up of free channels. The new inclusion offers a mix of

news, motoring shows and live championship coverage including the FIA World Endurance Championship, Australian Supercars Championship, European Le Mans Series and TCR Europe Series.

N Discover why *Everything Sucks!*

From 9 February

Netflix already got us nostalgic for the 1980s thanks to *Stranger Things* but with *Everything Sucks!* the streaming giant is taking us back to the 1990s. The show, which is set in 1996, revolves around two groups of students from the A/V and Drama clubs at the amusingly titled Boring High School

(it's set in the real town of Boring, Oregon). From what we've seen so far, it looks to be an entertaining coming-of-age story, and Netflix's own head of content has described it as the next "sleepier hit that people should keep an eye on". The show comprises 10 half-hour episodes, and features a young, mostly unknown cast.

To get you in the mood,



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



Netflix's *Everything Sucks!*, trailer hits plenty of nostalgic triggers, showing a world in which chunky TVs served as substitute teachers, deleting text required the use of Tippex, untagging someone

involved scribbling them out of photos and 'sexting' meant typing 5318008 into a calculator and turning it upside down.

You can watch the video at bit.ly/sucks442.

N Watch *First Team: Juventus* From 16 February

Netflix's new docuseries goes behind the scenes at Juventus FC. The show focuses on the 2017/18 season and will have unique and exclusive access to the Italian football club and cover the action both on and off the pitch.

Netflix promises the series will deliver a "profound understanding of the players, the coaches and management on a deeply personal level". Filmed over a period of four months, the series will delve into the lives of *Bianconeri* (Juve squad members) including Gianluigi Buffon, Federico Bernardeschi, Giorgio Chiellini, Douglas Costa, Gonzalo Higuaín, Claudio Marchisio, Miralem Pjanic, Daniele Rugani and manager Massimiliano Allegri, as well as club legends such as Alessandro Del Piero.

The first three episodes will be available to watch from 16 February, with the rest of the season appearing



Audiobooks now available on Google Play

If you wish you had more time to sit down with a good book, audiobooks provide a handy solution – you can listen when in the car or at the gym, or during household chores or gardening. Google Play now lets you buy audiobooks for listening to on iOS and Android devices, Google Home or the web. You get 50% off your first audiobook (until the end of February) and, unlike Audible, you don't need to pay for a subscription – just find a book you like the sound of, try the free preview and buy it.

You can even share your favourite audiobooks with family members, for free, through Google's Family Library (bit.ly/audio442).



later in the year (making it truly a game of two halves).

N Have a laugh with Monty Python From 15 February

If you're a fan of Monty Python, Netflix has a massive treat in store for you. From the middle of February, the streaming service will be the place to go to watch the group's films, live shows, documentaries and sketches. The list of Python goodies to enjoy includes:

- *Monty Python's Flying Circus*
- *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*
- *Monty Python's Life of Brian*
- *Monty Python's The Meaning of Life*



- *Monty Python Best Bits (mostly): Season 1*
- *Monty Python Conquers America*
- *Monty Python: The Meaning of Live*
- *Monty Python's Almost the Truth*
- *Monty Python's Flieger Zirkus: Season 1*

Buy a £15 Now TV streaming stick

Sky has launched a new Now TV streaming stick for the bargain price of £14.99.

The device comes with a Wi-Fi remote and voice-search technology, much like the latest versions of the Amazon Fire TV stick and Apple TV. What's more, you'll be able to pause TV on all Now TV live channels, so you don't miss anything when your viewing is interrupted. As with Now TV's boxes, the streaming stick is made by Roku. It goes on sale later this month from www.nowtv.com.

Now TV has also announced a range of improvements to its service: from spring, you'll be able to download some Now TV content to your phone or tablet, to watch offline.



Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Smartphones for all budgets

How much are you willing to spend on your next phone? Check out our top choice in each price bracket to help you decide

When looking to buy a new phone, most of us narrow the overwhelming choice by setting a maximum spend. In this Group Test, we tested 17 phones to come up with our top choice in each price bracket, ranging from under £600 to under £100. Our favourite three win Gold, Silver and Bronze awards, but even the phones ranked further down our list are all great choices!

You can see a list of the 12 phones that didn't make it into our top five on page 24.

HOW WE TESTED

We put all 17 smartphones through a series of demanding tests to evaluate them. Screens were analysed with a colorimeter to measure colour, contrast and brightness. To test the phones' performance, we ran the Geekbench 4 benchmark test (www.geekbench.com) and compared their scores. Finally, we timed how long the battery lasted on a fully charged device playing a standard looping video.

Samsung Galaxy S8 | £506.99 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/sams442

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

The Samsung Galaxy S8 was widely lauded as a superb phone when it launched last year, and now that its price has dropped from £689 to just over £500 – a saving of more than 25% – it's unbeatable value for money.

The side edges of the display have been completely removed, which means you get a more compact overall size without having to settle for a smaller screen. In fact, the entire front of the phone is almost all screen – and what a screen it is. It displays an eye-popping 99.9% of the sRGB colour standard, can max out the brightness at 569cd/m² (candles per square metre) and achieves perfect contrast – as we'd expect from a device with an AMOLED screen.

The phone's performance hasn't dropped off in the months since its launch and while other, more recently launched phones now include similar processors, the S8 is still faster than all but the latest iPhones in our tests, scoring 1,994 in our Geekbench 4 single-core benchmark test and 6,629 in the multi-core version.

The S8's battery lasted 16h 45m in our rolling video test, which is a few hours short of the Silver Award-winning OnePlus 5T but remains very respectable.

The camera on the phone is also excellent. It's essentially the same model that was included

in the S7 but Samsung has added some great new software tools to enhance its capabilities, including a superb autofocus and an impressive selective focus, which can dramatically change the look of your photos with a minimum of fuss.

Add in IP68-compliant waterproofing, a microSD slot that can support cards up to 256GB and wireless charging, and you've got a thoroughly deserving winner of our Gold Award.



UNDER £600

VERDICT ★★★★★

We think the Samsung Galaxy S8 is the best phone available at the moment. It's fast, looks wonderful, has a superb camera and boasts one of the best screens we've ever seen on a phone. Even with a significant drop in price, it's still the most expensive phone in our top five, but we think it's well worth the price. Other phones may pip it for battery life or raw power, but it comes close in every respect, making it a terrific all-rounder. Even at its old price of £689, we'd give it the Gold Award. Now, it's even harder to beat.

OnePlus 5T | £449 | Buy from OnePlus: bit.ly/onep442

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

Drop down a price bracket from the S8 and you get the OnePlus 5T, available direct from OnePlus for a very reasonable £449. It beats the Samsung on more than just price: in our tests, the battery lasted for an amazing 20h 52m; while the multi-core Geekbench test scored 6,658 (though it fell behind when using a single core, with a score of 1,903).

In other aspects, it comes close but doesn't quite make it. The 6in screen isn't edge-to-edge like Samsung's, and its resolution and peak brightness of 420cd/m² are both lower. It's not water resistant, either, and there's no microSD slot, which for some people could be a deal-breaker.

However, it remains a brilliant prospect, tempered a little by the S8's recent drop in price, but a great choice if you can't get past the £500 threshold.



UNDER £500

VERDICT

★★★★★

The OnePlus 5T falls behind the Samsung Galaxy S8 on features and the screen isn't as impressive, but it's still a very accomplished smartphone. The battery life, in particular, is excellent.

Sony Xperia XZ1 Compact | £399 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/son442

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

Our top two award-winners are phablets – large-screened phones that might struggle to fit in a pocket. If you're after a smaller (and cheaper) alternative, the Sony Xperia XZ1 Compact has a more pocketable 4.6in screen.

The screen has a lower resolution (1,280 x 720 pixels), which means it's not Full HD, but it's bright (611cd/m²), colourful (89% of the sRGB standard) and has good contrast (1,280:1).

The processor is the same as the one found in the OnePlus phone – it put in a respectable performance in our Geekbench 4 benchmark test, with results of 1,814 in single-core and 6,532 in multi-core tests. The battery lasted 16h 29m.

The phone doesn't skimp on extras, either, with IP68 dust- and water-resistance and a microSD memory card slot that lets you expand its 32GB storage by another 256GB.



UNDER £400

VERDICT

★★★★★

Like a more expensive phone squeezed into a smaller case, the Sony Xperia XZ1 Compact has most of the features you'd expect to find on larger, pricier models, including a good screen and powerful components.

Vodafone Smart N8 | £79 | Buy from Vodafone: bit.ly/vod442

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

At the cheapest end of the scale, the Vodafone Smart N8 is available on a pay-as-you-go deal for £79. Obviously, at this price, it's a pared-back model but it's remarkably capable nonetheless.

The screen is adequate – although it's peak brightness of 374cd/m² might not be enough to see clearly if you're outdoors on a sunny day – and provides a good contrast ratio (1,560:1) but lacks vibrancy. Android 7.0 has been installed relatively untouched.

Inside, it has a much slower processor than its rivals. In our Geekbench 4 tests, it managed 537 in the single-core test and 1,542 in the multi-core. In the real world, this makes it feel sluggish, while the battery only lasted 8h 44m.

Still, we were impressed with the camera and the phone is capable of running most apps, as long as you're not looking to play high-powered games.



UNDER £100

VERDICT

★★★★★

You'd expect a phone of this price to be severely sub par but the Vodafone Smart N8 is a pleasant surprise. It's not as slick or as powerful as our award winners but it's a remarkably good phone for the price.

Motorola Moto G5S Plus | £234.99 | Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/moto442

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

If you want a lower-priced phablet than our Gold and Silver Award-winners, the Moto G5S Plus is a great option. It has a 5.5in display with a resolution of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, encased in a slim (8mm) aluminium body. The screen isn't quite up to the quality of the Samsung S8 or OnePlus 5T, but it can produce 85.5% of colours in the sRGB standard and beats the iPhone 8 Plus with a contrast ratio of 1,477:1.

Its Snapdragon 625 processor produced a score of 843 in our single-core Geekbench 4 benchmark test, with 4,265 in the multi-core version. This is where the Moto G5S falls furthest behind its rivals, though it's still a respectable score given the cost saving. In our test, the battery lasted 14h 51m, which should be more than enough stamina to get you through a day.

It comes with Android 7.1.1 installed but Motorola has stated that it is planning to upgrade the device to Android 8.0.



UNDER £300

VERDICT

★★★★★

The Moto G5S Plus isn't in the same league as our large-screen award-winners, but it's a good performer with an excellent display. Corners have been cut to achieve its bargain price, though, so there's no USB-C port or water-proofing.



	Samsung Galaxy S8	OnePlus 5T	Sony Xperia XZ1 Compact	Vodafone Smart N8	Motorola Moto G5S Plus
WEBSITE	www.samsung.com	oneplus.net	www.sonymobile.com	www.vodafone.co.uk	www.motorola.co.uk
PRICE	£506.99	£449	£399	£79	£234.99
BUY FROM	bit.ly/sams442	bit.ly/onep442	bit.ly/son442	bit.ly/vod442	bit.ly/moto442
PROCESSOR	Octa-core 2.3GHz Samsung Exynos 8895	Octa-core 2.45GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 835	Octa-core 2.45GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 835	Quad-core 1.3GHz Cortex-A53	Octa-core 2GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 625
RAM	4GB	6GB	4GB	1.5GB	3GB
SCREEN SIZE	5.8in	6in	4.6in	5in	5.5in
SCREEN RESOLUTION	2,560 x 1,440 pixels	2,160 x 1,080 pixels	1,280 x 720 pixels	1,280 x 720 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels
SCREEN TYPE	AMOLED	AMOLED	IPS	IPS	IPS
FRONT CAMERA	8 megapixels	16 megapixels	8 megapixels	5 megapixels	8 megapixels
REAR CAMERA	12 megapixels	20 megapixels and 16 megapixels	19 megapixels	13 megapixels	13 megapixels and 13 megapixels
STORAGE	64GB	64GB	32GB	16GB	32GB
MEMORY-CARD SLOT	microSD	✗	microSD	microSD	microSD
WI-FI	802.11ac	802.11ac	802.11ac	802.11n	802.11n
OPERATING SYSTEM	Android 7.0	Android 7.1	Android 8.0	Android 7.0	Android 7.1
BATTERY SIZE	3,000mAh	3,300mAh	2,700mAh	2,400mAh	3,300mAh
DIMENSIONS	149 x 68 x 8mm	156 x 75 x 7.3mm	129 x 64 x 9.3mm	145 x 72 x 8.6mm	154 x 76 x 8mm
WEIGHT	155g	163g	140g	151g	168g
WARRANTY	One-year return-to-base	One-year return-to-base	One-year return-to-base	Two-years return-to-base	One-year return-to-base

ALSO TESTED

Huawei Mate 10 Pro | £699 | ★★★★★
 Samsung Galaxy Note | £789 | ★★★★★
 Moto G5S | £179 | ★★★★★
 Honor 9 | £380 | ★★★★★
 Huawei P10 | £400 | ★★★★★
 LG G6 | £400 | ★★★★★
 Nokia 8 | £480 | ★★★★★
 Apple iPhone 8 Plus | £799 | ★★★★★
 Google Pixel 2 XL | £799 | ★★★★★
 Apple iPhone X | £999 | ★★★★★
 Nokia 3 | £100 | ★★★★★
 BlackBerry KeyONE | £419 | ★★★★★

OUR VERDICT

If money is no object, the Samsung Galaxy S8 is an absolute belter across the board. Its speed and battery life are narrowly outperformed by some rivals but the screen is as good as it gets, making it a worthy Gold Award winner.

Our Silver Award goes to the OnePlus 5T. It's around £50 cheaper than the S8 but that's comfortably under the £500 barrier and its battery lasted more than four hours longer.

If you're looking for a smaller, cheaper model, we recommend the Sony Xperia XZ1 Compact, which wins our Bronze Award. It performed well in our tests, is significantly cheaper than the other winners and slips more comfortably into your pocket.



Ultra-fast, powerful and immersive photo editing wherever you go

ONLY
£19.99



AFFINITY PHOTO: the first fully-featured, truly professional photo editing tool for iPad.

"It's mobile photo editing 'neat' not watered down...having something like this for iPad is extremely exciting." – SLR Lounge

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

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



Download on the
App Store

Editors' Choice

Also available on Mac and Windows. | No subscription.



Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

SMARTPHONE

Samsung Galaxy S8

£506.99 from bit.ly/sams442

Tested: Issue 442

The Samsung Galaxy S8 is a terrific all-rounder. It's fast, looks wonderful, has a superb camera and boasts one of the best screens we've ever seen on a phone.

KEY SPECS

Octa-core 2.3GHz Exynos 8895 processor ■ 12-megapixel rear camera, 8-megapixel front camera ■ 4GB RAM ■ 64GB storage ■ 5.8in 1,440 x 2,560-pixel screen ■ Android 7 ■ 68.1 x 148.9 x 8mm ■ 155g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty



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



SOFTWARE & SERVICES

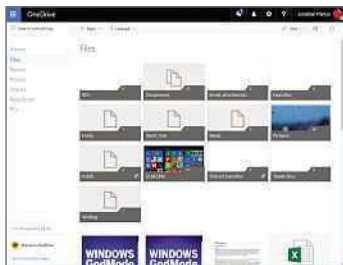
CLOUD-STORAGE SERVICE

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

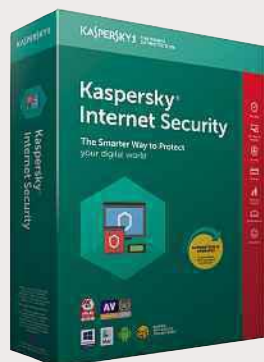
INTERNET SECURITY

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

RADIO APP

Radioplayer

Free from bit.ly/radioplayer441

Tested: Issue 441

Radioplayer is limited to UK broadcasts and its interface could do with updating, but it works really well and is very straightforward to use, with lots of useful features.



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

This smart-looking file-management tool offers lots of great features in its free version, including a 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.



WEB USER BACK ISSUES DISCS

Search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon

EVERY ISSUE FROM
2014 TO 2017



Best Free Software

DRIVE TESTER

HDDScan 4

hddscan.com

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

File size: 3.7MB

If you suspect you might have problems with one or more of your drives, the powerful free tool HDDScan can check and report back. As well as hard disk drives (HDD), the program can analyse and test solid-state drives (SSD) and flash drives.

Run the software (no installation required) and it will provide access to all the drives installed in or connected to your PC. Choose a drive to test from the drop-down menu, then use the buttons below to view the drive's built-in SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) data and run a variety of tests to see



if the drive has any problems. HDDScan also offers a selection of tools to further investigate any issues and, hopefully, fix them.

On the downside, the program does require you to have a degree of technical knowledge to fully understand its reports. The Features test, for example, lets you change some drive parameters, but it's best to only do this if you know exactly what you're changing.

But even with only a basic knowledge

of how drives work, HDDScan can alert you to potential problems, so you can at least back up your data before things get worse.

The latest version of HDDScan has been given a new look, with support for Windows 8 and 10, and an auto-update feature, which you can access through the More button at the top of the interface. You can also change the size of the interface, which is handy if you use a high-resolution screen.



MINI WORKSHOP | Check your hard drive for problems using HDDScan



1 Launch HDDScan and use the drop-down menu **1** to select a drive to scan. Information about your chosen drive, including the model, serial number and name, **2** appear below. Click the SMART button **3** and it will pull this data directly from the drive and present you with a report **4** that you can save or print. **5**



2 If problems are detected or you want to investigate further, click the Tests button. **1** You can verify the drive's integrity, **2** run a quick read test **3** or perform a more involved 'Butterfly' test. **4** You can also securely erase your drive **5** but make sure you're absolutely certain that's what you want before you proceed, because there's no going back!



3 The Tools button **1** lets you generate an Identity information report, **2** open an ATA or SCSI features control window, **3** run Short, Extended and Conveyance SMART tests, **4** and monitor the drive's temperature. **5** You can also build a command-line program (in CMD or BAT format). **6**

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



ANTI-MALWARE TOOL

CryptoPrevent 9

bit.ly/crypto442

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

CryptoPrevent is designed to help protect your PC from new and evolving threats such as ransomware. This latest version sports a new user interface with streamlining options and additional descriptions, and there are new maintenance and repair settings to help keep Windows running smoothly. Program-filtering protection has been improved, too, and the software can detect newer threats more quickly, thanks to expanded malware definitions. CryptoPrevent is also now able to quickly terminate non-essential running programs, including malware.



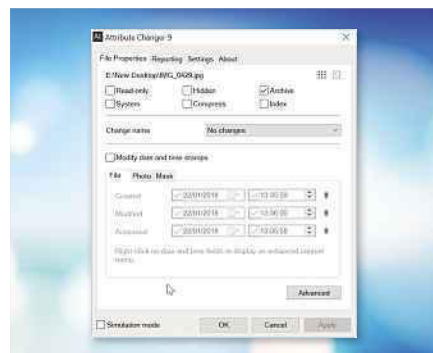
SYSTEM TOOL

Win Update Stop

bit.ly/wus442

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

It's important to keep your operating system up to date, to fix and prevent problems. That said, there may be times when you don't want Windows updating automatically – perhaps to avoid a problematic patch. Win Update Stop lets you manually – and quickly – disable and re-enable Windows Updates. Just run the program and click the Enable or Disable button. There are no additional settings.



SYSTEM TOOL

Attribute Changer 9

www.petgetes.lu

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 5MB

Files on your system have certain attributes that control what you can do with them. Read-only files, for example, can be moved or deleted, but not edited. Attribute Changer lets you easily alter system attributes; change a file or folder's date and time; and modify information stored in photos. This latest version also lets you capitalise file names and rename folders based on the age of the files they contain.

New Windows Apps



zTwitch

bit.ly/ztwitch442

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 30.8MB

zTwitch is a third-party Windows 10 app that lets you watch videos on Amazon's live game-streaming service, Twitch. You can view live videos and past broadcasts, and chat with fellow viewers.



Fitbit Coach

bit.ly/fitbit442

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 107.52MB

You don't need to own a Fitbit to use this training app, but doing so will unlock additional functionality. Without one, you are limited to just a couple of workouts.



Webapp Maker

bit.ly/webapp442

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 24.7MB

Webapp Maker is a basic but useful tool that lets you convert your favourite websites into apps that you can then pin to your Start screen or taskbar for easy access.



SECURITY CHECKER

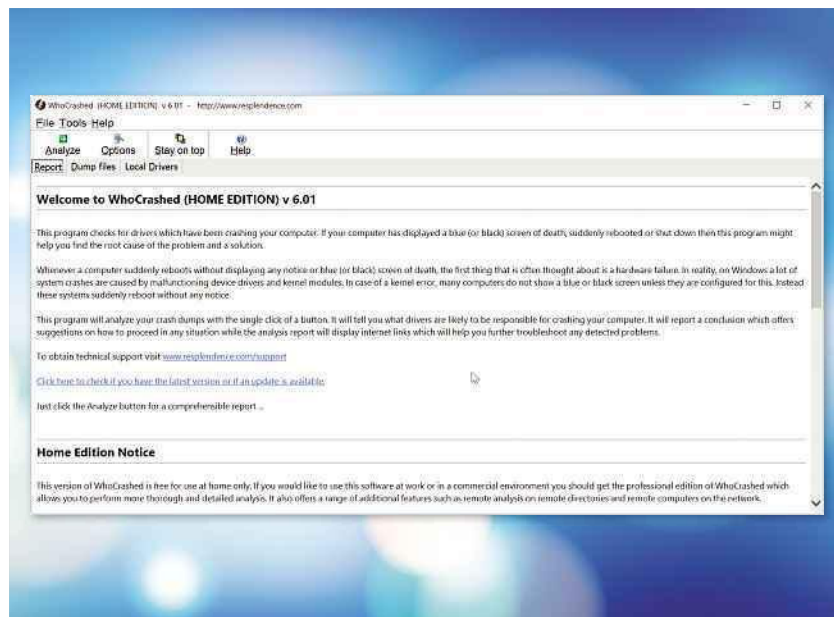
Ashampoo Spectre Meltdown CPU Checker

bit.ly/meltdown442

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

File size: 725KB

We reported in the last issue of *Web User* on the recent discovery of Spectre and Meltdown – two serious vulnerabilities that affect nearly every computer processor manufactured in the last 20 years. These bugs (which are essentially variations of the same problem) could give a hacker easy access to your data. The free program Ashampoo Spectre Meltdown CPU Checker scans your system and presents you with its findings for both Spectre and Meltdown. If your system is vulnerable to either or both bugs, clicking the 'What should I do?' link will take you to the software download page where Ashampoo provides some useful tips for overcoming the problem.



TROUBLESHOOTER

WhoCrashed 6

www.resplendence.com

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

File size: 8.8MB

If your PC crashes, freezes or displays a scary blue-screen message, troubleshooting the cause can be tricky. This sort of problem is usually caused by recently replaced hardware or a new program installation – but that's not always the case.

WhoCrashed can help identify the bad drivers responsible for system crashes. Click the Analyze button and it will search your crash dumps, tell you the cause of your woes, and offer suggestions for fixing the problem.

This new version of WhoCrashed improves Windows 10 compatibility and adds in-depth bug-check analyses and support for multiple crash-dump directories and live-kernel reports.

MEDIA-SHARING TOOL

ScanTransfer

scantransfer.net

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10

File size: 19.6MB

There are many ways to copy photos from your smartphone to a PC, including sending them via email. ScanTransfer is a free Desktop app that offers a simpler method. Just install and run the software (there's also a portable version available) and a unique QR-code will be displayed on screen. Scan this with your smartphone (using the iPhone camera or Android Chrome browser) and you'll be able to transfer your files.

Unlike most media-sharing tools, you don't need to install a companion app on your phone to use it. ScanTransfer lets you choose where to save your photos, and whether to compress the images before you save them.





GAME

Sketch What You See

bit.ly/sketch442

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 116MB

This is an imaginative exploration-style puzzle game in which you have to match sketches in your grandma's notebook to items in the park as you wander about. You can call up the notebook at any time, and flick through the pages as you collect them. Matching a drawing to your surroundings will make changes to the environment or give you a new item to collect.

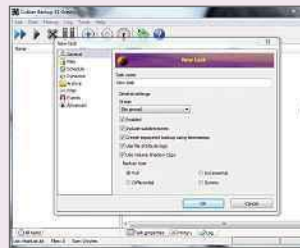
Don't install...

Cobian Backup

www.cobiansoft.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 18.7MB

Cobian Backup was a very good tool for backing up files and folders, with useful features such as AES encryption and scheduling. Sadly, it was discontinued in 2014, although it is still available for download, but we certainly wouldn't advise trusting your important files to a tool that hasn't been updated in four years.



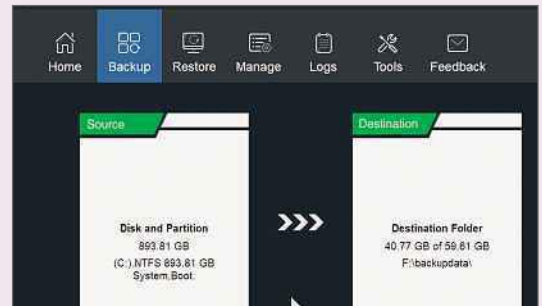
...Install this instead

MiniTool ShadowMaker Free

bit.ly/shadow442

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 69.3MB

This excellent free software makes it easy to create backups of your important files in the form of system images. It offers three backup options: Full (includes all files), Incremental (backs up only the files that have changed since the last backup) and Differential (targets items that have changed since the last full backup). You can schedule backups at a frequency that suits you, and encrypt your backups so they can only be accessed using a password. A lot of backup tools can be complicated to master, but ShadowMaker couldn't be simpler to use.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.39

www.piriform.com/ccleaner

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 10.7MB

The popular Avast-owned system-cleaning tool gets updated on a monthly basis. This latest version fixes a problem with the Disk Analyzer, whereby the tool would crash if an interface layer was still active. It fixes numerous other bugs, too.



IMAGE EDITOR

Paint.NET 4.0.2

www.getpaint.net

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

Paint.NET is one of the best free photo-editing tools around. This latest release comes with the addition of a new dark theme to make the interface easier on the eye; and Explorer thumbnails for TGA and DDS file types. High-DPI support has been improved and a number of bugs fixed.



SCREEN TOOL

F.lux 4.66

justgetflux.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux
File size: 752KB

F.lux intelligently changes your screen's hue to match your environment and time of day, to keep you from straining your eyes. The updated release lets you view the advanced three-slider mode by clicking the graph, and there's a new darkroom hotkey: Alt+Shift+End.



BACKUP TOOL

Iperius Backup 5.4.3

www.iperiusbackup.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 44.1MB

This program lets you schedule backups and perform set tasks before and after they complete. The update optimises backups to Google Drive, OneDrive and Dropbox, and adds the option to perform an incremental FTP backup on a specific day of the week. ■

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Best New Browser Tools

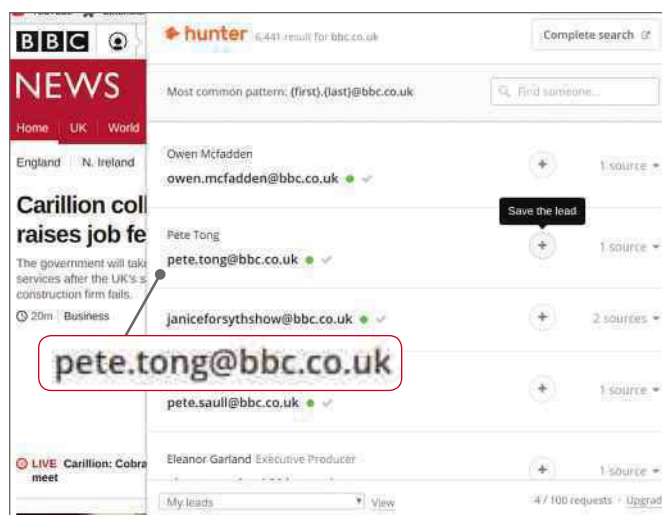


CHROME

Find the email address for any website

If you've ever tried to contact the people behind a particular website – perhaps to get further information or to make a complaint about the content – you'll know it's not always easy to find the relevant email address. A new tool called Hunter (bit.ly/hunter442) solves this problem by showing you the contact details for a website at the click of a button. You can then save the email address to a list for future reference, and view the person's official job title and profiles on social media.

Email addresses are accompanied by an accuracy estimate, and you can search for a name on a company website to discover the person's contact info. You need to register with Hunter to use the service, but this is free and lets you submit 100 requests per month (more are available for a subscription fee). We weren't convinced by some of its suggestions – is Radio 1 DJ Pete Tong really the best person to email about BBC News stories? – but on most sites it found email addresses that were otherwise unavailable.



Block annoying ads without using an add-on

Ad blockers such as Adblock Plus and uBlock Origin deprive websites of essential revenue and use a lot of system memory, but they've become a necessary evil for those of us who want to browse the web without constant intrusion. So it's surprising – considering that ads are its bread and butter – that Google has taken the welcome step of building an ad blocker into Chrome.

As of version 64 of the browser, released on 15 February, you won't need an ad-blocking extension because Chrome will, by default, filter annoying ads including pop-ups, flashing banners and videos that autoplay with sound.

To check that the feature is turned on, click the padlock or 'i' information icon on your address bar and select 'Site settings'. You should see a new Ads option, set to Block, that promises to

“block if site tends to show intrusive ads”. The word ‘intrusive’ is key here – Chrome will still display non-intrusive ads, basing its distinction on guidelines from the Coalition for Better Ads (www.betterads.org). So if you want to block *all* ads on all websites, you'll still need to use an ad-blocking tool.

Speed up Netflix TV shows and films

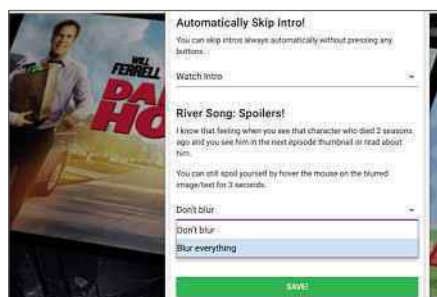
Last issue, we recommended a Firefox add-on called Playback Speed (bit.ly/speed441), which saves you time by making YouTube videos play faster. The new Video Speed Rate option in the updated Chrome extension Super Netflix (bit.ly/super442) does the same on Netflix, letting you play its TV shows and films up to four times faster, or slow them to half-speed. You can also change the video bitrate to improve picture quality; alter brightness, contrast and

saturation; blur thumbnail images and episode descriptions to conceal spoilers; automatically skip programme intros; and control the volume using your mouse wheel.

Super Netflix is a great add-on for fans of the streaming service, but be aware that it only works in your Desktop browser and not Netflix mobile and smart TV apps.

Timestamp your visits to websites

You can usually tell if you've clicked a Google search result before, because the link appears purple rather than blue, but you might not remember how long ago you visited that page. The handy add-on Google When (bit.ly/when442) tags your previously clicked Google search results with the relevant date and time to save you wasting valuable seconds revisiting a page you viewed recently or searching your history to find a site you accessed on a particular day.



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



FIREFOX

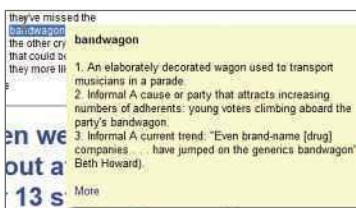
Detect and protect against malware and scams

In our big browser roundup in Issue 440 (bit.ly/webuser440), we bemoaned the lack of built-in security tools in Firefox, compared to the likes of Brave and Opera. So we're pleased that security specialist Malwarebytes has beefed up the browser's defences with a new, free extension. Malwarebytes for Firefox (bit.ly/malware442) offers powerful protection against malware, scams and advertising trackers, as well as 'clickbait' links that can be used for nefarious purposes. You can 'whitelist' specific sites by adding them to an Exclusions list, if the add-on stops them working properly, and turn off individual settings or disable protection altogether. The Malwarebytes add-on is simple to use, with all options enabled by default, and although it's still in beta, we found it worked smoothly.



Get dictionary definitions by double-clicking

If you've ever come across a word in an online article that you don't understand, and had to open a new tab to look up its meaning, you'll appreciate a new Firefox add-on called English Popup Dictionary (bit.ly/dictionary442), which lets you view definitions instantly, simply by double-clicking a word on the page. The information is sourced from the



world's biggest online dictionary, Wordnik (www.wordnik.com),

and appears in a pop-up bubble. You can also click 'More' to look up the word on Google. Sadly, there's no option to set British English as the default language, but most definitions should still prove enlightening.

Change Firefox's colour to match the time

Firefox Quantum is undoubtedly a smarter browser than its predecessors, but its colour scheme is a bit uninspiring. One way to fix this is to install the brilliant new theme Quantum Lights (bit.ly/lights442), which



brightens up your toolbars with shades of blue, purple and orange. The really clever part is that this 'dynamic' theme changes colour to match the time of day, automatically getting darker as night descends and growing lighter again in the morning. There are no other customisation options, but Quantum Lights certainly adds a touch of class to Firefox.

Speed up tab switching using Tab Warming

Tab Warming is a new feature in Firefox Quantum that preloads tabs so you can switch between them more quickly. It's activated when you hover over a tab with your mouse cursor, which means the content is prepared before you even click anything. To turn on Tab Warming, type `about:config` into the address bar, press Enter and skip the warning. Find the entry 'browser.tabs.remote.warmup' and double-click it to change its value to 'false'.

OTHER BROWSERS



Rearrange search engines in Vivaldi

One of the most requested changes for Vivaldi has been addressed in the browser's latest 'snapshot', numbered 1.14.1064.3. This unlocks the list of search engines in Vivaldi, so you can reorganise them to place your favourites at the top and move those you use least to the bottom. To apply your preferences, go to Tools, Settings and click Search in the left-hand menu. Drag and drop the search engines into your preferred order, which will then appear when you click the arrow next to Vivaldi's search box.

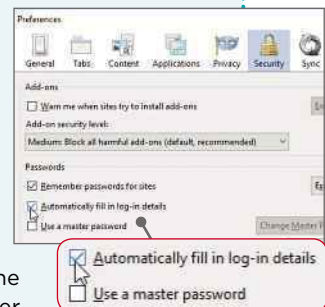


Reactivate auto-login in Pale Moon

Mozilla's switch from legacy add-ons to WebExtensions in Firefox

has had a knock-on effect on Pale Moon, with which it shares code. However,

that hasn't prevented the latter browser from releasing a new version, v27.7.0, which offers several privacy improvements, such as disabling automatic filling of usernames and passwords to reduce the risk of logins being stolen by tracking scripts. If you find this change overly cautious and inconvenient, you can turn the option back on. Click the main menu button and go to Preferences, Security, then select 'Automatically fill in log-in details' and click OK to restore your auto-login.





Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

WEB BROWSER

DuckDuckGo Privacy Browser

bit.ly/duckdroid442

bit.ly/duckios442

(varies)

UPDATED



If you value your online privacy, you're probably already aware of DuckDuckGo, the alternative search engine that pledges not to track you as you search the web. Well, now you've got even more control because DuckDuckGo has extended its promise to protect you "beyond the search box to wherever the internet takes you", with its freshly updated browser app.

The app includes built-in tracker blocking, which exposes hidden tracker networks and protects you from any that it finds – basically, it lets you track the trackers. Whenever you visit a website, you can view the site's Privacy Grade rating (A-F), allowing you to see exactly how protected you are, which trackers have been blocked and more. It's revealing (and worrying) that there aren't many sites that get an 'A' rating.

DuckDuckGo's new browser app also ensures you're using the safest encrypted connection possible while you're browsing sites, routing you to the HTTPS version of a web page, even if a secure connection is not the site's default. On top of all that, the browser app integrates DuckDuckGo's private search tool, so your web searches

won't be tracked, either.

There are, of course, other ways to get these kinds of features, but most involve using a combination of privacy tools rather than a single app.

As well as the mobile app, DuckDuckGo has released a new Privacy Essentials browser extension that effectively adds the same privacy features to your Desktop browser of choice (bit.ly/duckfox442 for Firefox; bit.ly/duckchrome442 for Chrome).

Compared to other browsers, the app is pretty basic: you can add bookmarks,

but the only other setting is to toggle Autocomplete Suggestions on or off. That said, DuckDuckGo is fast, simple and, above all, private. You'd be quackers not to try it!



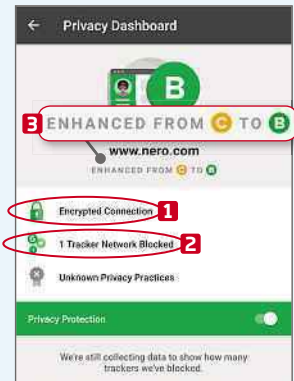
Our rating



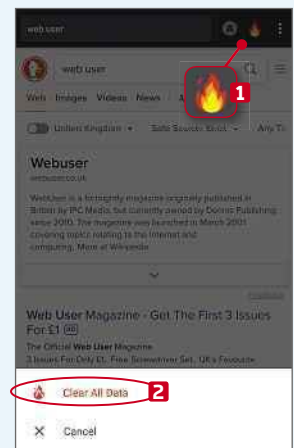
MINI WORKSHOP

Protect your privacy using DuckDuckGo

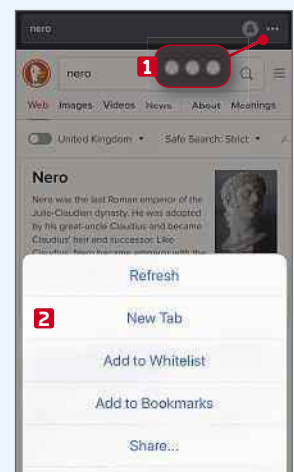
1 Tap the Privacy Grade icon (a letter in a grey circle next to the address bar) to reveal more information about how trustworthy a site is. The padlock icon **1** shows whether the connection is encrypted or not. Press Network Tracker Blocked **2** to see which advertisers the app has caught tracking you. Tap 'Enhanced from...' **3** (if shown) to view more information about how DuckDuckGo improved the privacy rating of your connection.



2 To keep things simple, the DuckDuckGo mobile browser doesn't have many settings. But if you want to clear your browser history, just tap the Fire button **1** (it's at the top of the screen in Android; bottom of the screen in iOS), then tap Clear All Data **2** (Android) or 'Clear All Tabs and Data' (iOS). In both cases, this will erase your tabs and clear your browsing history in an instant.



3 If you're using DuckDuckGo Privacy Browser on iOS, you get a few more options when you tap the Menu button **1** than in Android. From the pop-up list, **2** you can choose to open a new tab, add a site to the browser's whitelist or share a web page via email, messaging app or other means. Android doesn't have these features yet but we assume they'll be added in an update.



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

MESSAGING

WhatsApp Business

bit.ly/whatsapp442

 4.0.3

Everybody and their grandma uses WhatsApp, but the company continues to look for new ways to attract users. As the name suggests, its new app (which is currently Android-only) is aimed at helping business users and customers keep in touch, wherever they may be on the planet. Businesses can set up a professional profile and access time-saving smart-messaging tools that let them reply to frequently asked questions. Customers can carry on using the standard WhatsApp as normal, but companies that use the new app will be listed as businesses.



Our rating



NEW

NEWS

Nwsty

bit.ly/nwstyandroid442

bit.ly/nwstyios442

 4.1 

Nwsty is a news-aggregating app with a difference. Rather than gathering together as many stories as possible and shoving them your way in one big lump, Nwsty does exactly the opposite, bringing you summaries of 6-10 of the most important stories from around the globe, covering current affairs, politics, world news, entertainment, sports, science and more. The stories are concise and to the point, and you can click the calendar icon to view previous days' stories. Best of all, there's no advertising.



Our rating



GAME

HQ Trivia

bit.ly/hqdroid442

bit.ly/hqios442

 5.1 

Ever fancied being a contestant on a game show? Then try HQ Trivia, a general-knowledge quiz that works just like a TV game show but in an app. Anyone can join in to win real cash prizes, often up to \$1,500 (around £1,000). A recent update has added a UK-specific version of the show, complete with a British host (TV presenter Sharon Carpenter) and UK-centric questions. Check in-app to see when the next quiz is taking place. The Android version is still in beta, so you may encounter a few bugs, but hopefully not in the middle of a show!



Our rating



PRIVACY TOOL

ProtonVPN

bit.ly/proton442

 4.4

We're always looking for a decent VPN that's free but not overly restrictive, so we're hoping our prayers have been answered by ProtonVPN for Android. This app has been developed by the Swiss company that brought us ProtonMail – a popular email service that provides end-to-end encryption. Last year, the company launched VPN services at a range of prices and this brand new app lets you use any of them on your mobile device – including the free plan. The free service is slower than the paid-for premium packages, but there's no advertising, no usage caps and ProtonVPN doesn't track your activity.



Our rating



NEW

KEYBOARD

Gboard

bit.ly/gboarddroid442

bit.ly/gboardios442

 (varies) 

Google has made a small, but – for fun-lovers – significant tweak to its rather splendid Gboard keyboard app. It has moved the GIF-maker button to a more prominent position, just above the keyboard – it's the icon with the loop inside a camera silhouette in the screenshot shown. Basically, this means you can now quickly record a looped GIF of yourself (or anything else) to send in an instant message, for example, without having to faff around with another app. Oddly, this update only seems to have made it to the iOS version, but we expect the Android app to get it soon, too.



Our rating



UPDATED

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

MESSAGING

Die With Me

bit.ly/diedroid442

bit.ly/dieios442

Price: 89p (Android), 79p (iOS)

 4  8

As your phone's battery runs out, you can share your pain with other, similarly powerless users via this tongue-in-cheek chat app. It won't actually save you any juice and only works when your battery is below 5%.



TRANSFER TOOL

Import SMS from Windows Phone Pro

bit.ly/importsms442

Price: £1.39

 4.1

When you (inevitably) switch from your Windows Phone to an Android device, this app helpfully transfers your messages across, including – if you pay for the Pro version – multimedia messages.



GAME

Rusty Lake Paradise

bit.ly/rustydroid442

bit.ly/rustyios442 **Price:** £2.69 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)

 2.3  8.1

Take a trip to Paradise – a peculiar island beset by pestilence of biblical proportions – and solve equally peculiar puzzles in this latest entry in the singularly odd Rusty Lake series.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Skyline

bit.ly/skyline442

Price: £1.79

 4.4

Wallpaper apps are two-a-penny on Google Play but this one really caught our eye. It uses satellite imagery (via Mapbox services) as live wallpaper, based on your current location.



GAME

The Room: Old Sins

bit.ly/room442

Price: £4.99

 10

Another helping of slightly creepy, exploration-based puzzling from the people behind The Room 1, 2 and 3. Currently, it's an iOS exclusive, but an Android version is reportedly on its way soon.



Die With Me



Import SMS from Windows Phone Pro



Rusty Lake Paradise



Skyline



The Room: Old Sins



✗ Don't install...

UPnPPlayer

bit.ly/upnplayer442

If you're looking for a way to stream music and movies from your PC to your phone or tablet via UPnP, this isn't it. One clue is that the app hasn't been updated since 2014, but it's the apparently random approach to operation that's the real giveaway. Our attempts to use it got as far as our media server being



recognised, but when we tried to browse content, the app was either completely unresponsive or impossible to navigate.

...Install this instead

Plex

bit.ly/plexdroid442

bit.ly/plexios442

 (varies)  9.3

Plex is the current king of media-streaming apps and, unlike Kodi, it doesn't suffer from legal concerns over dodgy third-party add-ons. You'll need to install a server tool on your PC (get it for free from bit.ly/plexpc442) and it takes a little while to set up, because you need to point the server to the correct folders on your computer's hard drive. But once that's done, the Plex mobile app gives you a beautifully organised view of your music, movies and photos, as well as lots of control over quality and other settings. The latest version adds HDR support (for devices with HDR displays), along with other features and fixes. ■





Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our city-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 CAPITAL CITIES FROM THE EMOJI?

1



2



3



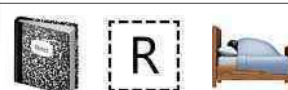
4



5



6



WEB USER WORD PUZZLE

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

- 1 Percussion instrument used by Spanish flamenco dancer
- 2 New York artist (1960-88), collaborated with Andy Warhol
- 3 Purple variety of quartz and February birthstone
- 4 Reddish-brown wood used in furniture-making
- 5 Welsh town and site of 1910 riots
- 6 2016 movie musical starring Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling (2,2,4)
- 7 Type of brandy produced in Gascony, France
- 8 1971 David Bowie album (5,4)

1								
2								
	3							
	4							
5								
6								
	7							
8								

COMPETITIONS

WIN AN... EnMesh 3-pack Wi-Fi router system

The new EnMesh system from EnGenius creates a blanket of Wi-Fi across your home. This three-pod pack covers 4,500ft². Individual pods are available priced £99.14. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'EnMesh' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.solwise.co.uk and follow @Solwise on Twitter.



**WORTH
£268.69**

WIN 1 OF 3 SRM Mouse

Designed for small and medium-sized hands, the SRM Mouse has a vertical grip (used in the 'handshake' position), with two buttons and a scroll wheel. Using it requires much less muscle activity than a standard mouse. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'SRM' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.bakkerelkhuizen.co.uk and follow @BakkerElkhuizen on Twitter.



**WORTH
£61.69
EACH**



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

Best of CES 2018

Once again, the bright lights of Las Vegas shine on a host of innovative new tech products at the Consumer Electronics Show. **David Crookes** picks the best



LENOVO MIRAGE SOLO WITH DAYDREAM bit.ly/daydream442

Why is it interesting?

It's fair to say that virtual reality hasn't proved as popular as some pundits predicted, but that hasn't stopped Lenovo having a crack, producing the first standalone Google Daydream headset that does away with wires and the need to insert a phone. It also uses WorldSense, Google's position-tracking technology, to pinpoint your movements without needing external sensors. The headset offers 4GB of memory, 64GB of expandable internal storage, dual mics and a 2,560 x 1,400-pixels LCD screen. It's compatible with hundreds of apps and Lenovo's new Mirage Camera, which lets you capture or live-stream video footage in 180 degrees, so headset wearers feel in the thick of the action.

When's it out?

According to Lenovo, both the Mirage Solo and Mirage



Camera with Daydream are due out in Spring 2018. There's no confirmation of price yet but Lenovo says the Mirage Solo will cost less than \$400 (about £290).

Do I really need one?

It depends on how interested you are in VR. Try Google Cardboard with your phone first, to see if you're ready for Mirage Solo, which is well-made and reasonably priced.

AIRSELFIE2 www.airselfiecamera.com

Why is it interesting?

If you're after something more sophisticated than a selfie stick, the AirSelfie2 drone offers a 12-megapixel camera and an 85-degree field of view, hovering in front of you as you line up your shot using its mobile app. Once you've taken your selfie, you can either grab the drone or send it to its base, ready for your next session.

When's it out?

The AirSelfie2 is pencilled in for a March release and you can get it in silver, black, gold and rose gold. The makers say it will cost \$300 (around £220).

Do I really need it?

The AirSelfie2 has 16GB of onboard storage and captures decent-quality HD photo and video, but battery life is just four and a half minutes, and it's a lot pricier than a stick!



DELL XPS 15 2-IN-1 www.dell.com

Why is it interesting?

As well as letting you flip back its screen to create a tablet, this 15.6in, 16mm-slim laptop has been turning heads because of its innovative magnetic keyboard. Rather than use switches or membranes, it places rare-earth magnets beneath the keys to provide better, deeper feedback, making it feel similar to a conventional keyboard



When's it out?

April - assuming Dell releases it in the UK. It's priced at \$1,299 (more for the 4K version), so expect to pay around £1,000.

Do I really need one?

That depends on whether you need to upgrade your current laptop. We wouldn't advise buying one for the keyboard alone but it's certainly a good-looking and high-spec machine.

LG THINQ SMART FRIDGE

www.lg.com/uk

Why is it interesting?

LG has created the first fridge to integrate Amazon's personal digital assistant, Alexa, which lets you order food and play music using your voice. But that's not all it does: Alexa can talk you through a recipe and let you know when your food is nearing its expiration date, too. The fridge also comes with a 29in touchscreen that you can double-tap to see what's inside.

How much will it cost?

There's been no indication of price as yet, and LG hasn't revealed a release date, but we expect it to be available later this year.

Do I really need one?

If you own an Amazon Echo, then you already have access to many of ThinQ's capabilities. And if you really need to know what's in your fridge, it's quicker to open the door. However, alerting you to when your food is about to go off saves having to rummage around checking the dates on food packaging.



THE WALL

www.samsung.com/uk



Why is it interesting?

Samsung's jaw-dropping 146in modular television won a lot of attention at this year's CES. It comprises several smaller display panels, and the idea is that you can put any number of them together to create a screen of virtually any size, even covering an entire wall of your living room - hence the name. The Wall uses MicroLEDs, which use red, green and blue sub-pixels to produce their own light, so there's no need for a backlight and the screens are brighter than the current top tech, OLED. They also last longer, boast a wider colour spectrum and don't suffer from burn.

All of this is getting Samsung very excited. Not only does The Wall represent a move away from LCD, it showcases a technology that could prove to be revolutionary.

When's it out?

The Wall could be out as soon as this year, especially because Samsung is pitching MicroLED screens as a consumer product. As for price, we're guessing The Wall's will be pretty high!

Do I really need one?

Maybe not yet, but there's no doubting the impressive technology on display here. We reckon it'll be a worthy competitor to LG's OLED displays if Samsung can reduce the high cost of manufacturing.

AIBO

www.sony-aibo.co.uk

Why is it interesting?

Early versions of Sony's robotic dog range, Aibo, were a little "ruff" around the edges (sorry), but now the canine connects to the internet and can amaze you with artificial intelligence. It makes up for its lack of cuddly fur with touch sensors on its head, chin and back. It also responds to voice commands, moves more realistically, flaps its ears, shows emotions and recognises family members using the camera on its nose. Even more adorably, it can also search for its bone.

When's it out?

The Japanese are already petting Aibo but word is that it will arrive in the UK later in the year. In Japan, it costs the equivalent of £1,300 up front with a £20 monthly subscription.

Do I really need it?

This well-behaved, mess-free dog is one of the ultimate must-have tech toys and you could easily fall in love with it. That said, Aibo ignored commands from Sony's CEO when he showcased the cyberpet on stage at CES, so perhaps it needs a little more training.



ROADER TIME MACHINE CAMERA

www.roader.com

Why is it interesting?

The boast of this wearable camera is that it can record events that have already taken place. Admittedly, that only applies to footage captured up to 10 seconds ago, but it's still perfect for those "Oh, I wish I'd filmed that!" moments. It works by constantly buffering video and automatically creating a clip before transferring the results to your smartphone for viewing.

When's it out?

Pre-orders are currently being taken but the Roader is still at the prototype phase. It costs \$149 (£110) with free shipping to the UK.

Do I really need it?

This clever camera is perfect for capturing special moments that would otherwise be lost forever. It also claims to last up to seven hours on a single charge.



What's NEW from Google

COVER
FEATURE

You wouldn't want to miss Google's best new tools, but who wants to bother with its worst ones? **Robert Irvine** rounds up the good, the bad and the ridiculous

Last July, we ran a controversial cover feature entitled 'Stop Using Google', in which we outlined our problems with the search giant's most popular tools. In the six months since the article was published, our mosquito-like criticism seems to have pierced Google's hippo-thick hide because the online giant has introduced lots of useful new features to improve its products and services.

In this seven-page special,



we round up the latest and greatest tools added to Maps, Gmail, YouTube, Android and your other Google favourites since last August. We also look at Google's mistakes, scandals and disappointments with these tools over the same period, to provide a fully rounded perspective of its progress.

We haven't included Chrome – because we already track the browser's latest development in our Best New Browser Tools section every issue – nor hardware such as the Google Home or Chromecast, but we promise you'll find plenty of new tricks to try and advice on what to avoid.



MAPS

THE GOOD

View colour-coded points of interest

Google Maps is great for finding shops, restaurants, theatres and other amenities in an area, but the abundance of information can make it hard to distinguish between the different types of venue. This has been made significantly clearer thanks to a new colour-coded system for points of interest, which highlights, for example, food and drink spots in orange, hospitals in red, and entertainment and leisure venues in turquoise. Each colour category is further clarified by a relevant icon, making it the perfect medium for planning a pub crawl or a shopping spree.



Explore Uluru in Street View

An amazing addition to Street View takes you on a tour of Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in Australia and lets you check out the home of the Anangu people in all its natural glory. The high point (literally) is of course Uluru itself (or Ayers Rock, as it was formerly known); the 348m-high monolith can now be explored in 360-degrees from the comfort of your computer, tablet or smartphone. You can also check out the native flora and fauna, and the vast waterhole, although Google was careful to capture Uluru according to the Anangu's Tjukurpa law, and avoid trespassing on sacred sites.

Each location is accompanied by a description and the ability to view it on Google Maps, and you can also take

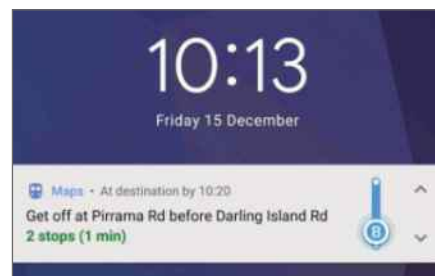


a fascinating guided tour that's packed with traditional songs and stories.

Get step-by-step transport directions

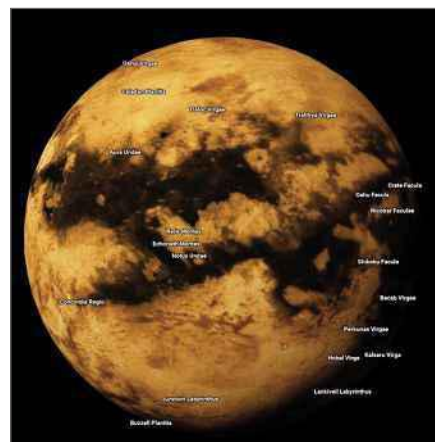
The excellent turn-by-turn directions in Google Maps let you use your phone or tablet as a sat-nav, and it's now been expanded to cover public transport, too. The updated Android app tells you departure times for buses and trains, your estimated time of arrival and when you need to get off or transfer. Simply type your destination, select transport directions and choose your preferred route. Tap Start to begin tracking your progress and you won't need to worry about missing your stop.

See page 69 for one *Web User* reader's experience with this feature.



Explore the moons of Saturn

If you're tired of looking at the Earth, you can now use Google Maps to explore other planets in the Solar System. Data captured by the Cassini spacecraft 20 years ago lets you uncover the secrets of Saturn's many

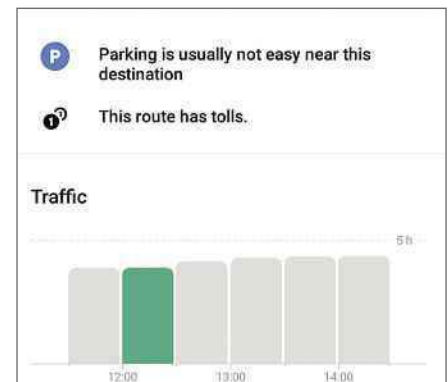


moons, drawing on more than half a million images to let you explore the icy plains of Enceladus, the methane lakes of Titan, the massive crater of Mimas and more. The Space hub (bit.ly/space442) also features stunning new imagery of Venus and Pluto, as well as Mercury, Mars and the International Space Station.

THE BAD

Find a parking space – or not!

A new feature in Google Maps for Android tells you how difficult it will be to park when you search for directions to a destination. This sounds useful, but it currently only covers London and Manchester, provides little information other than parking being "limited" or "not easy" (as it invariably is in those cities), and doesn't suggest where you *will* find a space – as it does in the US. Hopefully, the feature will be expanded and improved for UK drivers soon.



THE WTF?!

The Web User team on Street View

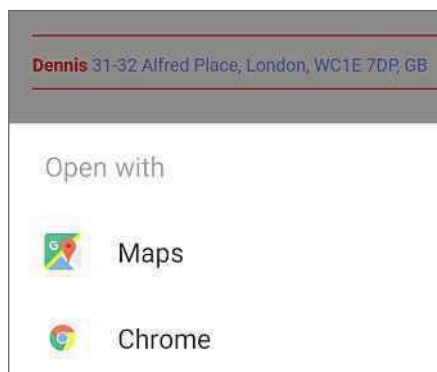
We were mildly alarmed to find ourselves captured by the Street View camera in its most recent imagery update, walking outside the *Web User* office (bit.ly/wuteam442). We've since fled Google's all-seeing eye to a new headquarters, where you'll see *Computeractive's* Production Editor loitering with intent (bit.ly/caprod442).



THE GOOD

Click hyperlinks for contact details

Last September, Google addressed a long-standing problem in Gmail by automatically converting phone numbers and email and street addresses in messages into hyperlinks. You can now click or tap contact details to open a dialling app, compose window or map, rather than having to copy and paste them manually. This welcome feature works on both desktop and mobile.



Avoid fiddly typing by using Smart Reply

Typing emails on the move can be awkward and often leads to mistakes, so we love the Smart Reply feature added to the Gmail app last year. This uses machine learning to provide one-tap responses based on the content of the email you've received and your

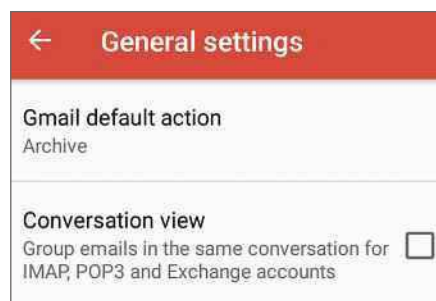


usual writing style; for example, "Sorry to hear that", "Thanks for the update!" and "Sounds good!". The recipient will never know the difference.

THE BAD

Can't turn off Conversation view

Gmail organises the messages you send to and receive from specific people into threads or 'conversations'. This is supposed to keep things tidy but also means your messages aren't displayed chronologically, which isn't to everyone's liking. You can turn this off



in your browser by going to Settings, General and selecting 'Conversation view off', but there's no way of doing this in the mobile app. There's an option to disable 'Conversation view' in 'General settings', but for some reason it doesn't work. We hope Google fixes this irritating bug soon.

THE WTF?!

Add-ons for business users only

Gmail added support for third-party plugins in October, and we were looking forward to trying new ways to customise our inbox and messages with useful new features. Sadly, all the add-ons offered so far – which you can access by going to Settings, 'Get add-ons' – have been for business use, covering tasks such as sales analytics, customer engagement and content management. Very handy, we're sure, if you work for a 'small to medium enterprise', but pretty pointless for the rest of us.



CALENDAR

THE GOOD

View multiple calendars side by side

Google Calendar had a long overdue redesign in October, giving it a stylish new look – in line with the Material Design of other Google tools – and several useful new features. Our favourite of these is the ability to view

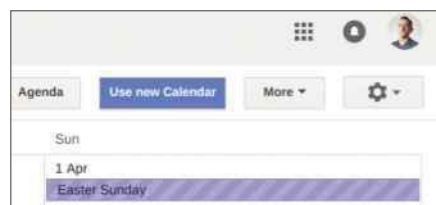
two or more calendars side by side, rather than having to switch back and forth between them. This is particularly handy if you have one calendar for work events and another for your personal life. The feature is only available in Day view, but it's very easy to use – just select the calendars you want to see from the calendar sidebar on the left.



THE BAD

A long wait for the new Calendar

Google has only gradually rolled out the Calendar update, which has left some users still waiting to see the



improvements. If you're stuck with the old 'classic' version, you may be able to upgrade manually by clicking the 'Use new calendar' button in the top-right corner. But if you can't see this, you'll just have to keep waiting!

THE WTF?!

Can't remove 'Battle of the Boyne' bank holiday

Calendar's revamp has failed to address one lingering quirk – the inclusion of Battle of the Boyne on 12 July as a 'Holidays in the United Kingdom' entry. Although the day is a bank holiday in Northern Ireland, the 1690 battle – where James II of England was defeated by William of Orange – is not commemorated in the rest of the UK, but the only way to remove the event is to hide all holidays. Still, if you're a resident of Northern Ireland – enjoy your day off!

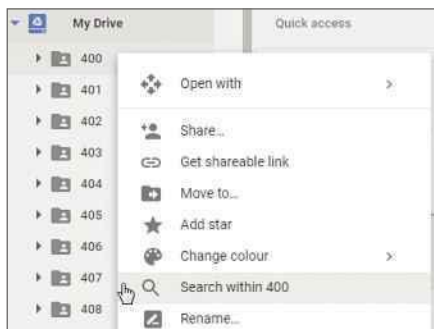


DRIVE & DOCS

THE GOOD

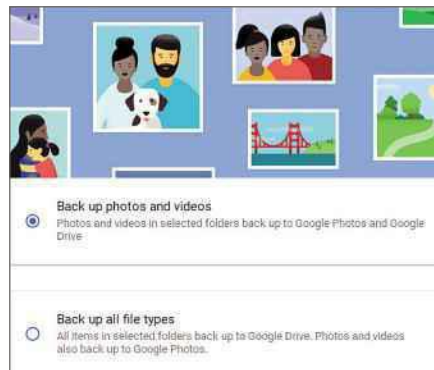
Search within specific Drive folders

Drive benefits from Google's awesome search power, but results are usually presented as a jumble of files from different folders. So we're delighted that Drive has now added the option to search within a specific folder. To do this, you can either right-click a Drive folder and choose 'Search within [folder name]' or click the search bar and select the folder you want from the Location menu. It certainly saves a lot of time sifting through results.



Back up and sync files more easily

In September, Google replaced two rather dated tools – Drive for PC and Mac, and the Photos desktop uploader – with a single tool called 'Backup and Sync', which makes it much easier to back up your important documents,



photos and videos to the search giant's cloud-storage services. It lets you sync specific folders on your computer with their online counterparts; upload photos at high or original quality; and instantly pause or stop the backup/sync process with a single click. You can even back up your entire hard drive, although we wouldn't recommend this as you'll have to pay for extra storage if you exceed Google's 15GB free limit.

THE BAD

Passcode removed on iOS devices

In November, Google removed the option to block access to its iOS apps for Drive, Docs, Sheets and Slides apps using a passcode. If you use an iPhone or iPad, you'll now have to lock your entire device to secure personal files, rather than being able to passcode-protect specific apps. Google offered

no explanation for removing the passcode lock, along with the ability to protect apps using Face ID and Touch ID, which left many iOS Drive users feeling frustrated and angry. The feature has never been available on Android.



THE WTF?!

Google Docs users get locked out

Something spooky happened in Google Docs/Drive on Halloween when some users found themselves locked out of their documents for apparently violating the terms of service (bit.ly/docslocked442). Although Google quickly fixed the problem, blaming it on faulty code "that incorrectly flagged a small percentage of Google Docs as abusive", it raised privacy concerns by revealing that Google scans users' documents and other files for inappropriate content.



7 AMAZING NEW GOOGLE APPS YOU MUST TRY

1 Files Go

filesgo.google.com

This brilliant Android app frees up space on your phone or tablet by detecting and deleting junk; makes it easier to find and share files; and lets you back up important items to Google Drive. See our workshop in Issue 440 for more info.

2 Quick, Draw!

quickdraw.withgoogle.com

Launched in December 2016, this addictive Pictionary-inspired experiment was updated a year later with a data set consisting of 50-million user-supplied doodles. This makes Quick Draw's AI bot even better

and faster at guessing the objects you draw.

3 Storyboard

bit.ly/story442

Our favourite of three 'experimental' new Google photo and video apps, Storyboard converts videos you record on your Android device into a comic strip, complete with hand-drawn effects and a panel-based layout. You can share the result on social media.

4 Access Mars

accessmars.withgoogle.com

Google has teamed up with NASA to let you explore the Red Planet in your browser, using imagery from the

Curiosity Rover. This immersive 360-degree experiment lets you trundle across the surface of Mars, examining points of interest and searching for life.

5 Datally

datally.google.com

Datally lets you monitor and minimise the amount of mobile data you use, so you don't exceed your monthly limit. It also lets you control background data consumed by apps, and find nearby Wi-Fi hotspots.

6 Teachable Machine

teachablemachine.withgoogle.com

This ingenious online

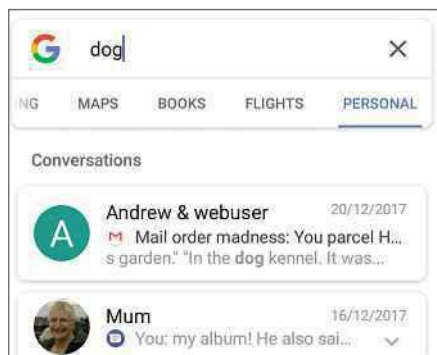
experiment lets you use your webcam to train a machine. Make gestures in front of your camera, such as waving your hand, and the machine will record and recognise them, responding with a relevant GIF, sound or phrase.

7 Google Assistant

assistant.google.com

Initially regarded as a lame rival to Apple's Siri, Google's voice assistant has improved immensely in the last six months, offering an array of useful tasks and compatibility with smart speakers, set-top boxes, phones and tablets – including iOS devices.

See page 64 for our expert tips on using Assistant.



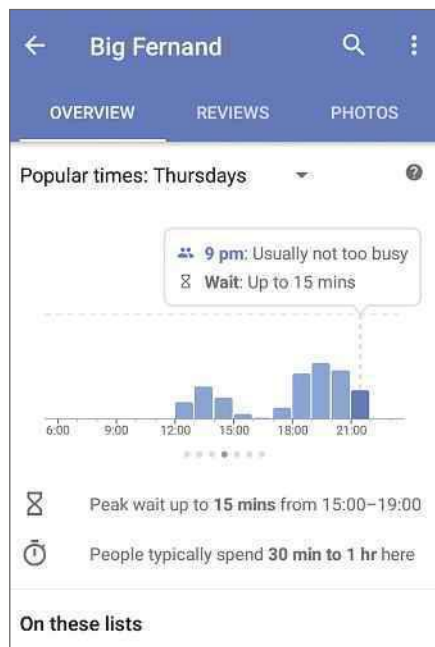
THE GOOD

Get personal search results on mobile

Google is undoubtedly the best way to search the public web, but a feature introduced last year makes it equally adept at finding information in private sources. By adding a Personal tab to search results on your mobile device – swipe the options below the address bar to reveal this – Google lets you find matches for your query in Gmail and other messaging apps on your phone, in Google Photos and Drive, and in your Chrome history. Some users get the Personal tab in the Desktop version of Google by opening the More menu, but we've yet to see this ourselves.

Skip queues in restaurants and bars

Don't fancy hanging around to get fed and watered? Then look up your desired eatery or hostelry on Google (or Maps),

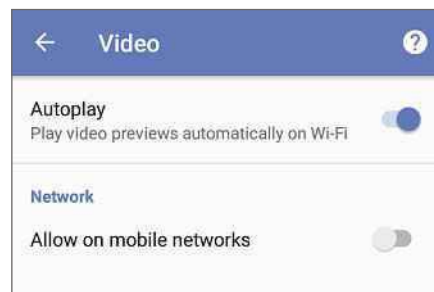


and it will now tell you the average waiting times at different hours of the day; the busiest and quietest days of the week; and even how long people typically spend there.

THE BAD

Autoplay videos in search results

As we reported in last issue's cover feature, Google has introduced 'video previews' in its search results – six-second clips that play automatically on Android devices, and have also been spotted on www.google.co.uk. We find



this intrusive and annoying, but fortunately you can turn them off on your phone or tablet. Open the Google search app, go into Settings and disable the option 'Autoplay – Play video previews automatically on Wi-Fi'.

THE WTF?!

Celebrities answer your questions

Ever wondered if US comedian Will Ferrell can play the drums? Or if Hollywood 'hunk' Mark Wahlberg is left-handed? No, of course you haven't, which makes Google's 'celebrities answer your questions via selfie videos' feature all the more pointless, and a thinly veiled way for US stars to promote their latest projects.

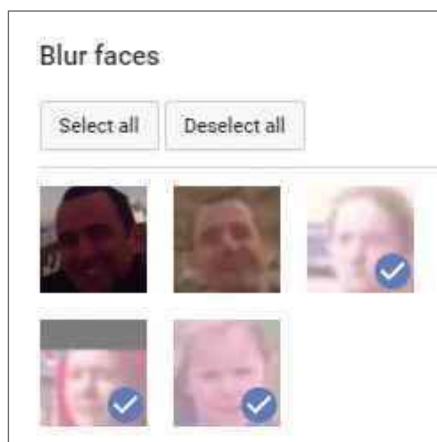


YOUTUBE

THE GOOD

Detect and blur faces in videos

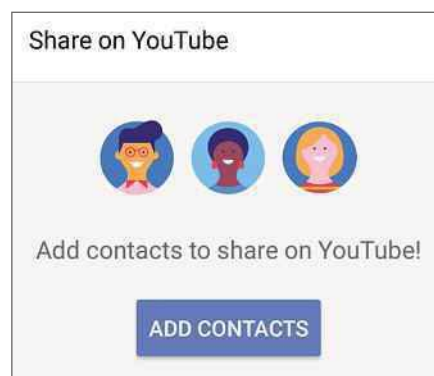
You can now share videos on YouTube without upsetting shy friends or invading strangers' privacy using the site's improved face-blurring tool.



Not only does this automatically detect people's faces in videos, but it lets you blur a specific person for the duration of the clip. To use the feature, click your profile picture in the top-right corner, select Creator Studio and click Edit next to an uploaded video. Select Enhancements, Blurring Effects, click Edit next to 'Blur faces' and choose who you want to obscure.

Share videos directly on mobile

YouTube has made it even easier to share videos with friends on your phone or tablet without leaving its app. Rather than sharing links via WhatsApp, Twitter or Facebook, this new feature lets you choose one of your contacts to share a video with directly. Just open a video, press the Share button and tap the picture of the person you want to send it to. Once they have approved your



request, you can chat about the video in a one-to-one or group conversation.

THE BAD

Failure to remove offensive content

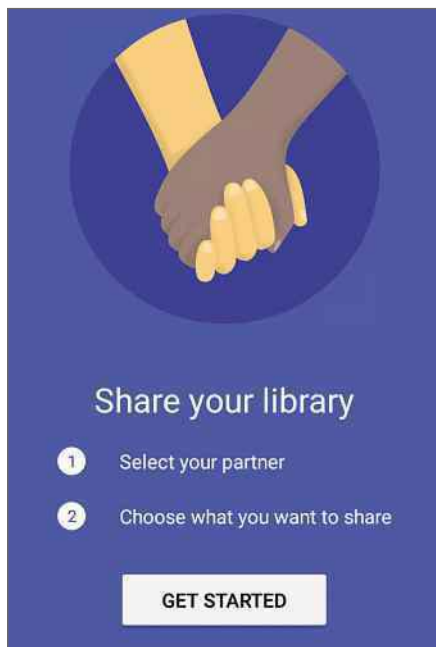
YouTube has been heavily and deservedly criticised over the past year

PHOTOS

THE GOOD

Share your photos with your partner

A new feature in Google Photos means you no longer need to 'lend' a loved one your phone or tablet when they want to browse or show off some pictures you've taken. Instead you can share your image library with that person, so they can enjoy them on any device and get instant updates for further shots you snap. To set up this feature, tap or click the menu button in the Google Photos app and select 'Add partner



account'. Choose the person you want to share your pictures with, and decide what you want to share – you can limit access to older photos. Send an invitation (you can only invite one person) and, once accepted, your library will be automatically shared.

THE BAD

No facial recognition in the UK



One of our favourite features in the much-missed program Picasa was its facial-recognition, which let you identify people the software detected in photos so that future shots of them could be tagged and grouped accordingly. When Google Photos replaced Picasa, this useful tool was dropped – although it is available in the US. Apparently, this is because of EU privacy laws, but we're still annoyed that Google hasn't found a

workaround in the UK, especially because American users can now label pets as well as people.

THE WTF?!

Google bans gorillas from Photos

Back in 2015, Google was forced to apologise when the auto-tagging feature in Photos mistakenly categorised black people as 'gorillas'. Although a fix was quickly issued, tests by *Wired* last month (bit.ly/gorilla442) revealed that all Google actually did was remove the 'gorilla' label from its auto-tagging algorithm, as well as 'chimpanzee' and 'monkey'. *Wired* also found the app unable to identify black people in photos, perhaps to avoid further mislabelling mistakes.



for its failure to remove extremist and offensive content, and its placement of adverts next to videos containing objectionable material. Examples include racist propaganda from white nationalist groups, adult content and comments in its YouTube Kids channel, and the recent furore over vlogger Logan Paul posting a video of a suicide



victim. YouTube has announced plans (bit.ly/ytplans442) to ensure offensive content is more quickly flagged and removed, but the video giant seems more concerned with protecting the site's ad revenue and reputation than the viewers and subjects of its videos.

THE WTF?!

Vote for your favourite advert

Ask anyone to name the worst thing about YouTube and they'll undoubtedly say "the ads", so we were baffled that the site rounded off 2017 by asking viewers to vote for their favourite



adverts (bit.ly/youtubeads442).

We recognise that some ads can be inventive and funny, but YouTube's boast of "539 million views and 14 million hours of watch time" is surely more about money than "inclusion, diversity and empowerment".



ANDROID

THE GOOD

Tasty new features in Android Oreo

We realise that most Android users are still waiting for their devices to upgrade to Oreo, but even if you don't yet have version 8.1, there are several new features to look forward to in the latest update to the operating system, which was released in December. These include the ability to check how much battery life is left on a Bluetooth device connected to your phone or tablet; and a restriction on the number and frequency of notification 'chimes' to one per second.

Highlights from the main Oreo release include the new Picture-in-Picture feature, which lets you view two apps at the same time; and the password tool Autofill, which logs you into apps instantly. There's also better control over memory-hogging background processes.



THE BAD

Mobile-data problem in Oreo

Other than the delayed rollout to non-Google phones, the biggest gripe with Oreo concerns a bug that makes phones use mobile data even when the user is connected to Wi-Fi, which means you could unwittingly exceed your monthly data limit. Other issues include trouble with swiping on the lock screen and poor audio quality when recording video. The good news is that existing Oreo users have already received patches for these problems, and they'll be fixed by the time everyone receives the updated OS.

THE WTF?!

Burger and beer emoji scandal

Early users of Android Oreo were reportedly outraged by two new emoji it introduced. This wasn't for political or moral reasons, but because the burger emoji shockingly showed the cheese *underneath* the patty rather than on top, and the beer emoji impossibly depicted a glass with a frothing head when half the drink had clearly been downed. Google subsequently fixed the controversial emoji in Oreo 8.1. Some people really should get out more!



THREE RECENT GOOGLE FLOPS

1 Pixel Buds

bit.ly/buds442

On paper, Pixel Buds sound like the miraculous Babelfish from *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* made real: ask them a phrase and they translate it into one of 40 languages. In practice, they've been widely panned for being uncomfortable, cumbersome and overpriced at £159. Hopefully the next version will be better.



2 Tango

bit.ly/tango442

Tango was an augmented-reality platform that let phones and tablets detect their location without using GPS or other external signals. However, the need for additional cameras and sensors meant Tango devices were large and heavy, so Google has folded the project into a new AR technology called ARCore.



3 Allo

allo.google.com

It may seem unfair to call an app with 10 million loyal users a flop, but Google's mobile messaging service has barely made a dent in the popularity of WhatsApp and Messenger. Even the launch of a Desktop version in August failed to excite, although Google's video-calling app, Duo, has fared better. Why not combine the two?



NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 21 February 2018

The Ultimate Guide to VPNs

Everything you'll ever need to know about using a virtual private network



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Does it REALLY work?

NEW!

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



Save a wet phone using rice

Wayne Williams tries to rescue his phone from a watery grave with a few paper towels, a woolly sock and a bag of rice

Most phones now come with a degree of waterproofing, so if you accidentally spill your drink over your device, it's not a disaster. However, dropping your phone in the bath, sink or toilet is a lot more serious and can damage it for good. If your handset suffers a dunking, don't just gaze in horror as it lays in water – the first and most important rule is to act quickly. The sooner you snatch it out of harm's way, the better.

A well-known trick for drying out a moist mobile is to put it in a bag of rice. The small, hard grains are inedible until they absorb enough water to plump up into a light fluffy side dish, and the theory is that they will suck the moisture from your phone – thus removing the problem. But can sticking a wet phone in rice really save it, and are there better options out there to try?

RICE ISN'T THE ONLY OPTION...

INSTANT RICE – This is reportedly better at absorbing water than regular rice.

COUSCOUS – Also better at absorbing water.

SILICA GEL – There's the chance you'll have a few packets of this lying around. Whether you'll have enough to dry a phone is another matter, though.

OPEN AIR – One of the best things you can do is remove as much water as possible from the phone and let evaporation take care of the rest.

How we tested it

The most common ruination of a phone is an accidental plunge in the toilet but we decided to go for a more sanitary reconstruction and just immersed it for a minute or so in a bowl of water. Having dropped the phone in the liquid, we simulated having a crazy panic, took some photos of it still working, **1** then snatched it from the water as quickly as possible and turned it off. **2** If your phone has a removable battery, taking out the power source is the quickest (and therefore recommended) way to kill the power.

Our test phone had a removable cover but not a removable battery, so we took the back off, removed anything that could be removed (such as the SIM

card and SD card) to allow water to drain out from any gaps, and dried everything off with paper towels (if we'd immersed the phone in muddy or salty water, we'd have needed to wash it in clean water before taking this step). For good measure, we also put the phone in a thick woolly sock and swung it around for a while, hoping the centrifugal force would fling any water out of the device. Well, it couldn't hurt, anyway.

When all that was done, we filled a ziplock bag with rice, buried the phone among the grains, resealed the bag and left it to dry. **3** The longer you leave the phone, the more chance there is of a recovery, so we manfully resisted the urge to keep checking if it worked for an agonising 48 hours.

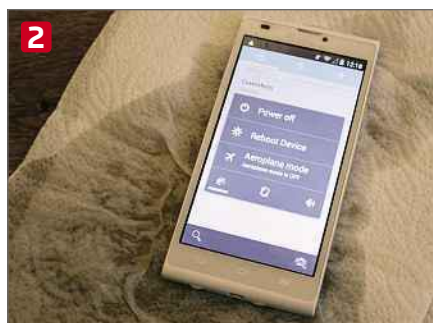
The result

The phone turned on, and seems to work pretty much as before, although it doesn't respond to touch quite as snappily as it did prior to taking a dip. There is a large element of luck when it comes to drying a phone, and your success or failure is partly down to the phone itself, and where the water manages to find its way inside.

It's difficult to say just how much of our test phone's survival is down to the rice, and how much is due to the device drying out naturally. Either way, we still have a working phone – so that's a definite win. The trick is certainly worth a try if your phone gets soggy, but we wouldn't recommend deliberately soaking it to find out.



1 We dropped the phone in some water and waited for it to sink in



2 We rescued the still-working phone and turned it off as quickly as possible



3 Wiped dry and with the back off, we put the phone in a bag of rice and waited

Manage webmail on your Desktop

Webmail is more popular than ever but a Desktop email client makes backing up messages easier, doesn't impose any storage limits and is available offline. **Jonathan Parkyn** tests six of the best



eM Client | www.emclient.com | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

**WebUser
GOLD
AWARD**

What we liked:

With a smart-looking, modern interface and plenty of advanced features, eM Client is easily the best email software for Windows PCs.

Calendar, contacts and tasks are all integrated, and there's even built-in support for chat (via Facebook, Google or Jabber).

Setting up an account is very straightforward – most popular email services are automatically recognised and configured without you having to faff around with SMTP server settings and the like. If you're switching from another email program, eM Client will helpfully offer to import data from your old application, and if you're using an Outlook.com or Gmail account, your calendar and contacts will be automatically synced, too.

eM Client's default interface uses the tried-and-tested three-column (folder list, message list, preview pane) layout, which feels instantly familiar but without looking old-fashioned. You can customise its layout to suit your tastes by clicking Menu, Tools, Settings, Appearance – we prefer the stylish Dark theme (see screen grab, above). It's also possible to switch off Conversation

view, if you prefer.

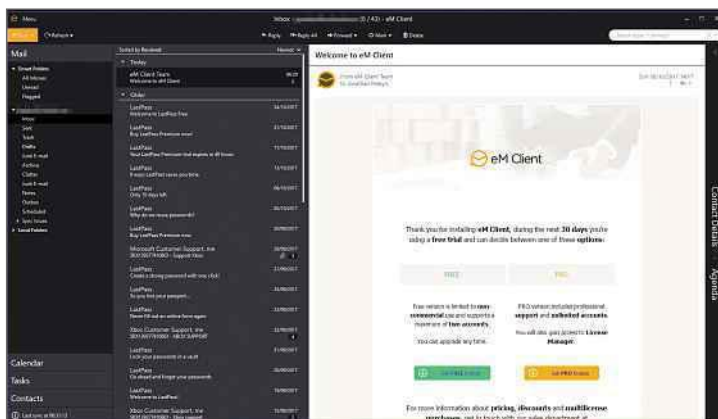
Notable features include superfast search, advanced filtering tools, templates, signatures, tags and the ability to categorise mail using

colour-coding. There's even a built-in translator, which uses Bing's translation engine.

The latest version of eM Client (7.1) adds a number of useful new features, including an improved backup tool that can automatically back up your data in the background, and support for PGP encryption.

How it can be improved:

The free version of eM Client only supports two mail accounts. If you need more, you'll have to pay for the Pro version, which costs £36 (or £72 if you want lifetime upgrades to future versions). After the 30-day trial, you'll need to apply to eM Client for a free



licence (bit.ly/emcf442) to keep using it for free, which seems like an unnecessary step. There's currently no integration with Windows 10's Action Centre – instead, you're alerted to new mail via eM Client's own Notification-area icon pop-up.

OUR VERDICT

Despite some minor quibbles, eM Client easily beats the competition. It's simple to use; familiar enough to seamlessly replace older tools such as Outlook Express and Windows Live Mail; and provides plenty of customisation tools.

Mozilla Thunderbird | www.thunderbird.net | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

What we liked:

Thunderbird is a resolutely old-school email program that offers support for multiple POP and IMAP accounts. It's easily set up for popular services such as

Gmail and Outlook.com, and

you can configure it to look and work how you want, with loads of features including powerful filtering tools, an RSS reader and instant messaging.

Like Mozilla's famous Firefox web browser, Thunderbird's abilities can be expanded further by installing add-ons – from alternative themes to mail-merge tools, password managers and more – though many 'legacy' extensions are being phased out. The once optional Lightning add-on is now integrated with the program, meaning that calendar and tasks features are now built in.

How it can be improved:

Thunderbird lacks native Exchange support, which means some accounts (including Outlook.com ones) don't get the full range of features. There's no support for Windows 10's Action



Centre, either – so you don't get native Windows 10 notifications.

Mozilla has openly admitted that it's struggling to justify Thunderbird's ongoing development. Last year, it managed to keep Thunderbird alive by separating the email client from its core business, but while new features have been promised, its future is far from guaranteed.

OUR VERDICT

Thunderbird is highly versatile, with plenty of built-in features and many more available through add-ons. However, its ageing interface and lack of support for some newer standards are disappointing – and may never be fixed.

Microsoft Mail app | bit.ly/mac442 | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

What we liked:

Windows 10's built-in apps often get a bit of a knocking, but Mail is actually pretty good. It has a pleasant, clean

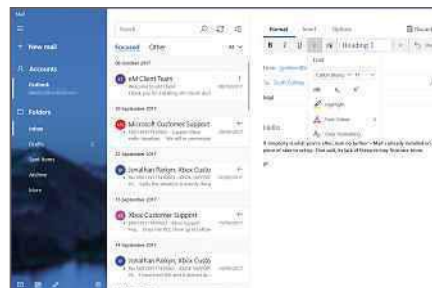
interface, supports most account types (including POP and IMAP) and is refreshingly simple

to set up and use. Its close integration into the OS has a number of benefits, including a live tile in the Start menu and a cross-app relationship with the People (contacts) and Calendar apps.

Microsoft continues to improve its Mail app – last year, for example, it added a Focused Inbox feature for Gmail users (click Settings, Reading to toggle this on or off). The app's intuitive Swipe Action controls make it especially good for using on touchscreen devices.

How it can be improved:

Some of Mail's tools are a bit basic – there's no filtering, for example, and it only supports plain-text signatures (though you can hack this by adding your own HTML code). Also, because



Mail is so closely tied to Windows, its reliability can be affected by updates to the operating system. We've had first-hand experience of such problems and many of the user reviews on the app's Windows Store page indicate that we're not alone in this.

OUR VERDICT

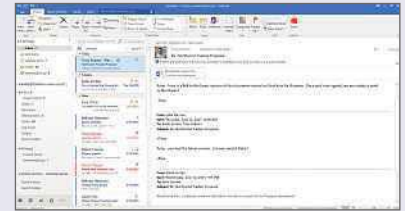
If simplicity is what you're after, then look no further – Mail is already installed on your PC and it's a piece of cake to set up. That said, you may find its lack of features frustrating.

BEST OF THE REST

Microsoft Outlook

bit.ly/mso442

Subscribe to Office 365 (from £5.99 per month or £60 per year), and you get Outlook included: an all-in-one email client, calendar tool, contacts manager and to-do list. It has lots of advanced tools – including a powerful Rules function, fast search and built-in archiving tools – but it feels like overkill, and there are simpler tools available for free.



Mailbird Lite

www.getmailbird.com

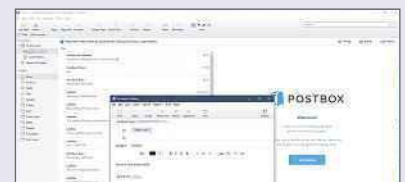
Mailbird Lite feels like Microsoft's Mail app on steroids. It looks great and has the ability to connect to popular apps and services, including WhatsApp, Slack and Facebook, as well as the usual email accounts. However, the free version restricts you to a single email account and lacks some of the full program's better tools, such as attachment previewing and email snoozing. Adding these will cost you £19.50.



Postbox

www.postbox-inc.com

Postbox's uncluttered interface has a reassuringly familiar feel. RSS feeds and newsgroups are supported – although, strangely, there's no built-in calendar – and it has some innovative tools, such as automated responses and placeholders, which can save time if you often find yourself sending the same replies. Postbox's main drawback is that it isn't free: beyond the 30-day trial, you need to pay \$40 (£29) for the full version.



NEVER get locked out of accounts

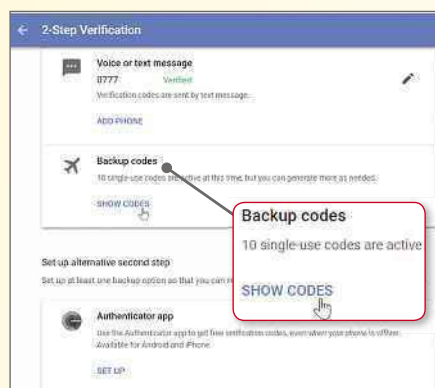
Forgetting your password needn't be a disaster. **Wayne Williams** looks at ways to ensure you don't lose access to your online accounts if you're unable to log in

Don't get locked out by 2FA

Two-factor authentication – or 2FA, for short – adds an extra layer of security to your online accounts by requesting a numeric code in addition to your password. In most cases, this code will be sent to your phone. The trouble occurs if you lose or reset your device – suddenly, that extra layer of security that's designed to stop bad guys accessing your accounts is now locking you out of your own accounts.

When you initially set up 2FA, you may have been given the option to print a hard copy of backup codes that can be used in the same way as a code sent to your phone. If you didn't do this at the time, then it's a good idea to do so now – while you still have access to your accounts.

If you've already set up 2FA on Google, you can access the backup codes at bit.ly/backcode442. You get



Print your 2FA backup codes in case you can't access your mobile phone

10 single-use codes to download and print for safekeeping (you can generate more if you need to). In Facebook, click the down arrow in the top right-hand corner and select Settings. Click 'Security and login', then 'Use two-factor authentication' and scroll down

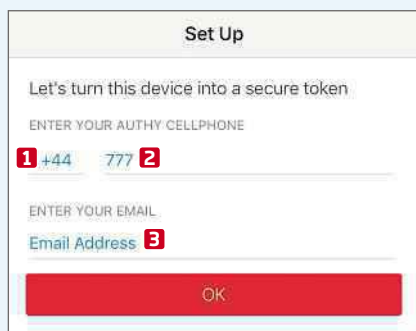
to 'Recovery codes'. Click 'Get codes'. You'll need to re-enter your password for security purposes. As with Google, you get 10 codes to print. If you need more, you can request them, but remember that only the newest batch will work.

Use an authentication app

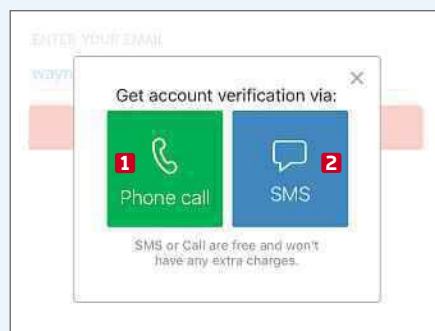
The typical way to log into a site with 2FA is by using a password and a code sent to your phone via text message. While this works fine, SMS isn't completely secure and messages can be intercepted. A better and more secure option is to use an authentication app such as Google Authenticator (bit.ly/googlea442) or Authy (authy.com). These authenticators work by generating new codes every 30 seconds or so. When prompted to enter a code on a site, just open the app, select the site you're logging into and use



MINI WORKSHOP | How to log into websites using Authy



1 Install the Authy app from Google Play (bit.ly/authya442) or the Apple App Store (bit.ly/authyi442) and launch it. To turn your device into a "secure token", enter your country's dialling code **1** and your mobile number. **2** Tap OK. In the new box that appears, enter the email address you want to use. **3**



2 You'll now need to verify your account using one of two available options. You can either request an automated phone call from Authy **1** or ask for an SMS. **2** Both are free. We'll opt for the latter. When the code arrives on your device, tap the Registration Code link and enter the numbers you received.



3 When you enable two-factor authentication on a new site, you'll be shown a QR code that lets you add that account to Authy and get a new login code when required. Authy can store an encrypted copy of your accounts in case you lose your phone. Tap Enable Backups **1** to do this.



NEVER get locked out of accounts

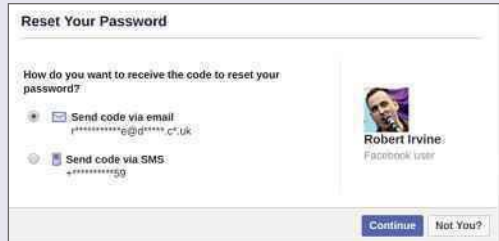
Get back into your Facebook account

If you forget your Facebook password, you can request a new one at bit.ly/fbrecover442. A code will be sent to your phone, provided you have a number on record, and you can use this to begin the recovery process. To get back into your account, you may need to identify friends based on their tagged photos, answer a security question (if you added one to your account) or provide your date of birth. Getting back into Facebook is usually quite easy, if a little time-consuming.

Set up Trusted Contacts for Facebook

Another way to get back into Facebook is to ask your friends for help. The social network's Trusted Contacts feature requires you to nominate between three to five close friends (people you'd trust with a "spare key to your house") who can be called on to help you regain access. The system provides

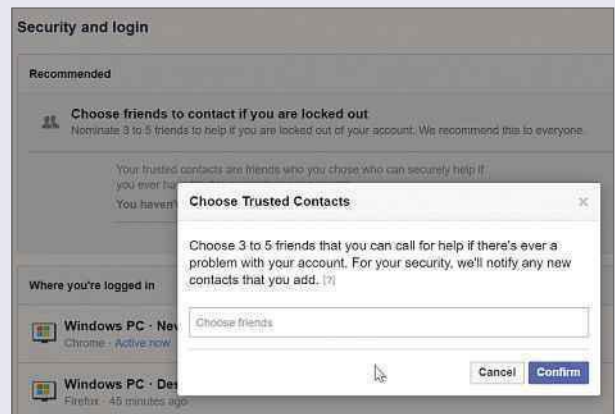
Assign Trusted Contacts to your Facebook account in case you get locked out



Facebook offers a way to access your account if you forget your password

these Trusted Contacts with a security code when needed. Once you have three of these codes, you can enter them into the site and that will get you back in.

To get started, go to the 'Security and login' page at bit.ly/trusted442 and click 'Choose friends'. People you add will then be notified and can choose to accept or decline. Facebook recommends that all users set up this feature, so if you haven't done so yet, now is the perfect time.



Google Authenticator offers a more secure way to use 2FA on your phone

the displayed code.

Google Authenticator works perfectly well but Authy is a lot more flexible. It's fully compatible with Google's tool and can be used in all the same places (you can have both Authy and Google Authenticator on your phone).

See our Mini Workshop opposite to find out how to use Authy.

Remove 2FA from your mobile device

If you rely on your phone for two-step authentication but lose the device, have it stolen or replace it with a new one (with a new number), then you'll need to remove the 2FA safeguard. To do this in Google, go to the 2FA-protected site on one of your trusted devices (which you've logged into previously using 2FA), open Settings and click 'Sign in & security' or go straight to bit.ly/gsecurity442. Click 2-Step Verification under 'Password & sign in method', sign in with your username and password, and select Turn Off at the top of the screen. In the window that opens, confirm you want to disable 2-Step Verification and select Turn Off.



Remove two-step authentication from an old phone to stop unauthorised access

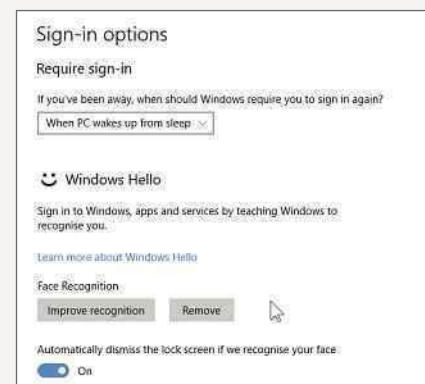
SAY HELLO TO WINDOWS HELLO



If you have a Windows 10 PC with a webcam, there's a chance you might already be using the facial-recognition system Windows Hello to log in, instead of typing a password. When Windows loads, make sure the camera can see you clearly and it should recognise you, then log you in. The process usually takes a matter of seconds. If your device includes a fingerprint reader, you can use this to sign in instead.

To set up Windows Hello, click the Windows 10 Start button, then go to Settings, Accounts, 'Sign-in options'. Provided Windows Hello is available on your PC (it may not be), you should see login options for face and/or fingerprint, or maybe even iris. You can set up Hello here and

start using it. Remember, if you share your device with other people, you will either need to add them to Windows Hello or they can just log in using an existing password or PIN.



Set up Windows Hello so you can log into your PC without a password



Create a giant panoramic image using Photosynth

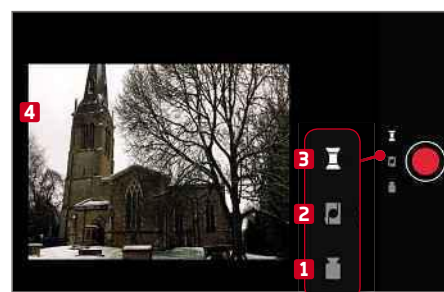
Microsoft's Photosynth was a great tool for making high-resolution pictures from lots of smaller photos. Now, Microsoft has revived it for iOS users. Here's what you need to know

Microsoft Pix: bit.ly/mspx442 | ⌚ 20 mins | 🍏 iOS 10+

Photosynth was a clever free tool from Microsoft that let you turn multiple 2D photographs (taken from different angles, and with some overlap) into an immersive 3D image that you could explore. The software giant took the decision to close the service in 2017 – after a nine-year run – but indicated that parts of the code

would live on in other products.

Now, Microsoft has now chosen to resurrect Photosynth and make it part of the Microsoft Pix app for iOS. It's not, in truth, the same product – it lets you stitch together a giant scene rather than a 3D world – but it works brilliantly on the iPhone and iPad, thanks to the built-in camera.



1 Microsoft Pix offers a choice of three capture options. You can record a video, **1** take a photo **2** or make a Photosynth. **3** Select this last option and a small, live window appears in the centre of the screen. **4** This is what we'll use to build our Photosynth.



2 Point your device's camera at the landscape or building you want to capture, then tap the Record button. **1** The process for recording a Photosynth is similar to that of creating a panorama on your phone, except you aren't restricted to horizontal movement.



3 With the iPhone or iPad recording, start capturing the scene around you. Photosynth will keep recording as you move the device around – you don't need to tap a button. It intelligently understands where you are, and builds up a picture from the images. **1** A tiny preview shows the scene so far. **2**



4 Every so often, a message may flash up on the screen to tell you that you're doing well **1** or warn you that you need to slow down a bit in order to avoid blurry scenes.

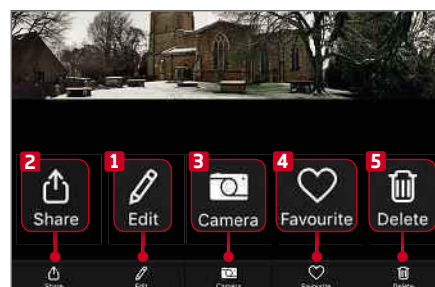


5 Remember to move your device up and down, as well as from side to side. When you're confident you've captured the entire scene, tap the Stop button. **1** The Photosynth will be auto-enhanced to improve elements such as white balance, tonal correction and sharpness. This only takes a few seconds.

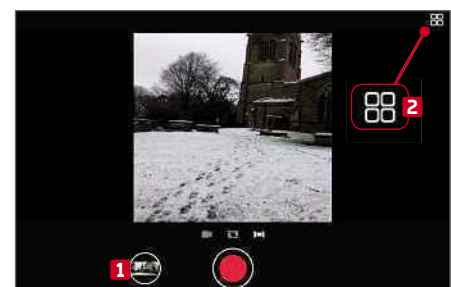




6 You can now view your creation. The bar at the top shows that you're looking at a Photosynth, **1** as opposed to a regular photo. You can zoom in and out of the image using gestures, and scroll and pan around. If you have more than one scene recorded, swipe left or right to move to the next one.



7 The strip at the bottom lets you edit your Photosynth, **1** or share or save it in the usual ways. **2** Camera **3** takes you back to the camera, where you can create another Photosynth. You can Favourite your best creations **4** and Delete any you don't like. **5**



8 Your last creation can be opened directly from the camera screen. **1** To access all your previous Photosynths, as well as any other photos and videos on your camera roll, tap the thumbnail button. **2** A drop-down bar at the top will let you choose to view only Photosynths.



Customise Firefox's menus, toolbars and buttons

Firefox's **userChrome.css** | ⌚ 20 mins | 🦊 Firefox



EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

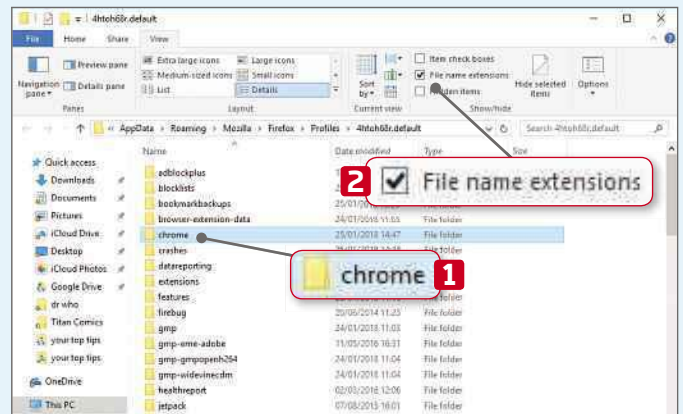
The best resource for customisation tweaks that you can copy and paste is Reddit's FirefoxCSS page (bit.ly/ffcss442). You can learn more about it at www.userchrome.org. Most of the changes you're likely to use – from removing menu items to changing colours – are already well documented. Search for 'userChrome' and the element you want to change. Read the conversation threads on forums and support sites carefully to make sure you use the best answer.

Firefox is a highly customisable browser that uses add-ons (WebExtensions) to provide extra tools and functions, but did you know you can also customise its interface? By creating and editing a simple text file called **userChrome.css**, you can rearrange elements and remove sections to suit your preferences. The file uses CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) to determine the look and layout of the browser, just like a web page.

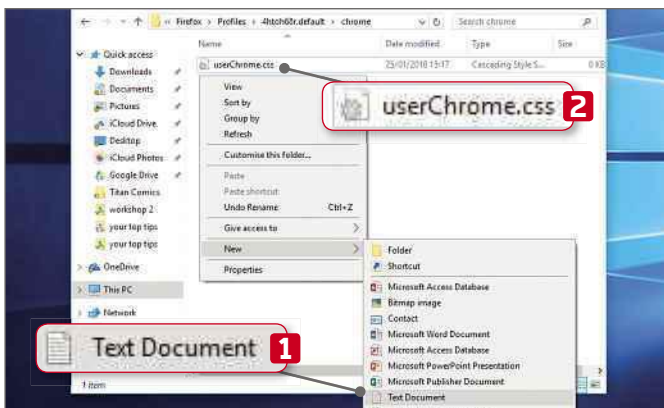
Don't let the 'chrome' in the name confuse you – this has nothing to do with Google's browser. Here, 'chrome' is used in its generic sense, to describe the area of a browser where menus and toolbars are displayed. Google took this and used it to name its own browser.



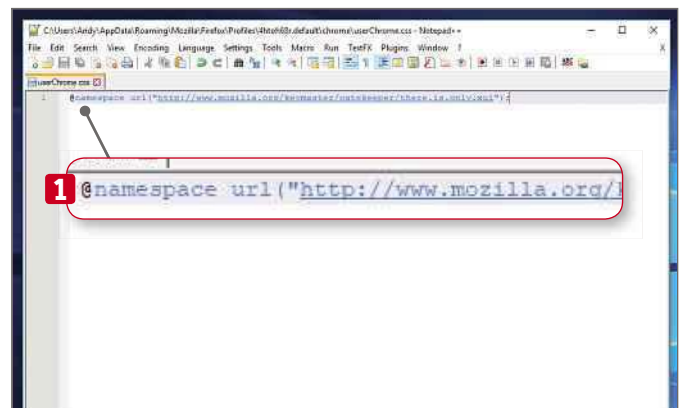
1 Firefox recognises the changes you make to its interface by looking in a folder called 'chrome', which is stored in your current Profile Folder. If you haven't done this before, you may not have this folder. To create it, type `about:support` into the address bar **1** and press Enter. Find the Profile Folder **2** and click the Open Folder button **3** next to it.



2 In the Explorer window, right-click an empty space and choose New, then Folder. When it appears in the list, change its name to **chrome**, **1** taking care that you use only lower-case letters. Double-click the folder to open it. Click the View menu and make sure there's a tick next to the 'File name extensions' box. **2**



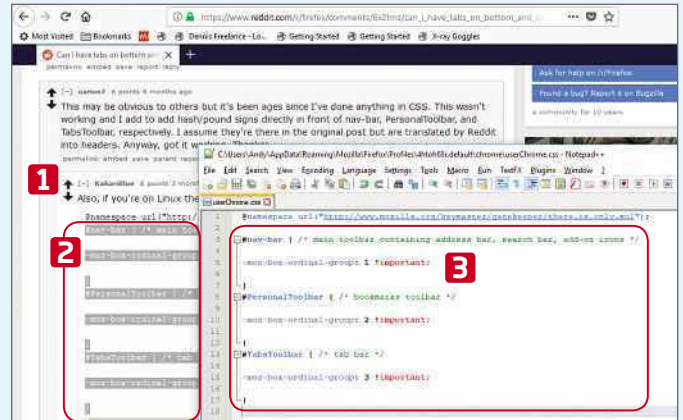
3 Right-click an empty space in the folder and choose New, then Text Document. **1** Rename the file **userChrome.css**. **2** Note that it needs a capital 'C' in the middle and that you should overwrite the existing '.txt' extension and make it '.css' instead. Open the file in a text editor such as Notepad or Notepad++ (notepad-plus-plus.org).



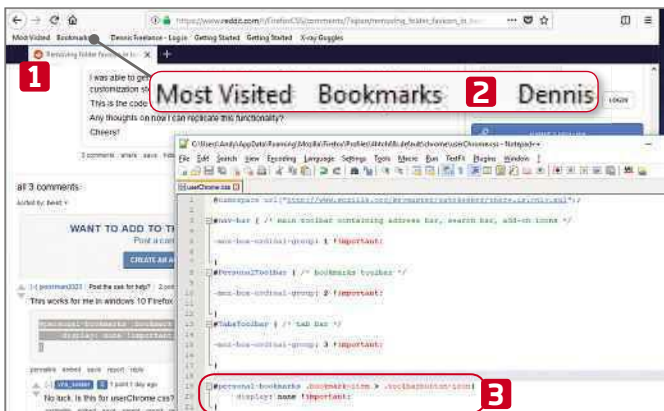
4 Next, you need to enter the line: `@namespace url ("http://www.mozilla.org/keymaster/gatekeeper/there.is.only.xul");` **1** at the top of the page. All the changes we've mentioned in this Workshop work without it but others might not. If you don't want to type it in, you can cut and paste it from the link in Step 5.



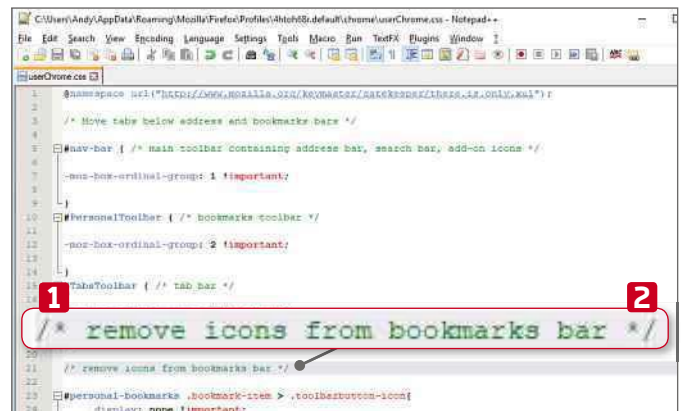
5 Now find the code to make your preferred changes to your browser. For example, a relatively simple layout change is to make the tabs appear below – rather than above – the address bar and bookmarks, as they used to when Firefox first introduced tabs. There's a Reddit page that will help at bit.ly/tabs442. **1**



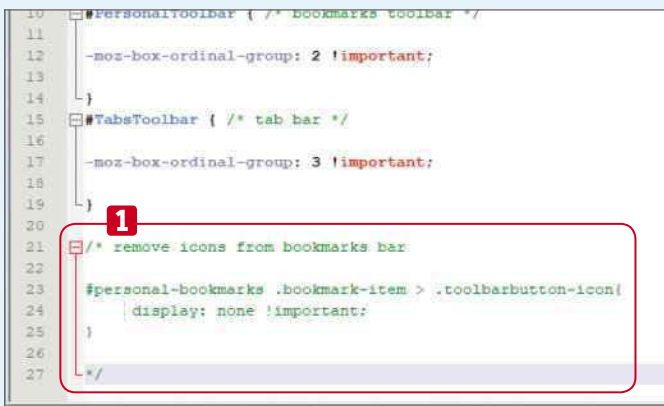
6 Here, Firefox users have shared the code for this tweak. Scroll down to the version created by KakariBlue **1** and copy the text from '#nav-bar' down to the third closing bracket '}'. **2** Paste it into your userChrome.css file in your text editor of choice. **3** Save userChrome.css and restart Firefox. Tabs will now appear below your address bar in the browser.



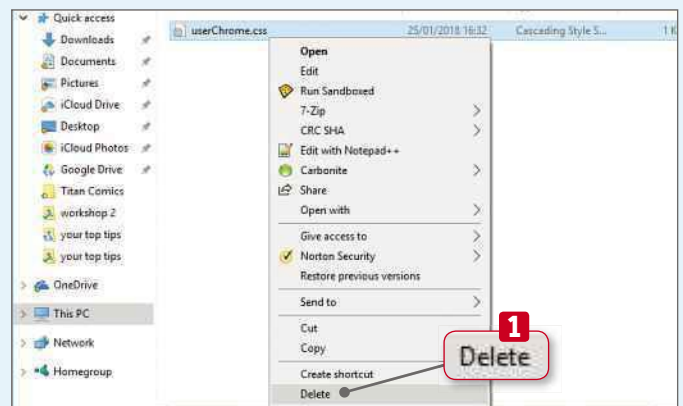
7 You can add more code – just make sure it starts on a new line. There's a Reddit called FirefoxCSS that's full of this stuff and well worth exploring. For example, we used the code at bit.ly/favi442 **1** to remove icons from our toolbar. **2** We pasted this code **3** below the code from Step 6.



8 Before your file becomes too big, it's a good idea to get in the habit of adding comments to your code, so you remember what each line does. To add a comment, start a new line with /*, **1** then finish the comment with */. **2** You can put comments like this anywhere in the code.



9 This makes it easier to take out a single section of code at a later date, if you decide to revert a particular element back to how it was. Just delete the section, save the file and reload. Alternatively, surround the code with /* and */ **1** to turn it from an action into a comment. That way it's easy to reinstate it if you change your mind again!



10 To reset the browser, you can either delete the file entirely **1** or – if you think you might like to edit it again in the future – clear everything from the file and save a blank version. You can also delete the 'chrome' folder, if you want to remove all traces of it from your PC.



Trim and compress videos on Android

The people you send videos to via WhatsApp are no doubt delighted to see your clips but they might not be so keen on the huge files eating into their phone's storage. So why not be more considerate and use the free app

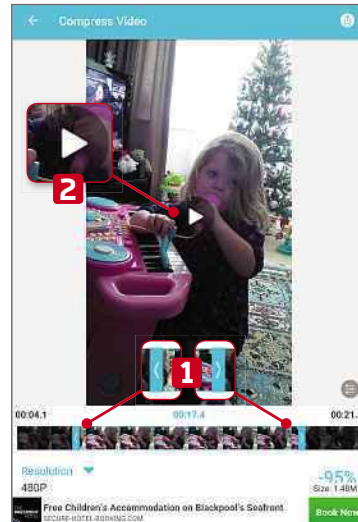
VidCompact to trim, compress and convert your video files before sending? It only takes a few minutes, and your friends and family will thank you for it.



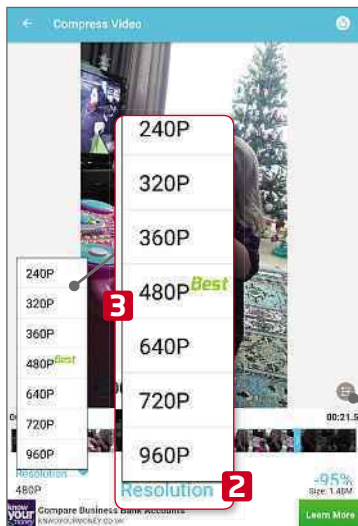
VidCompact: bit.ly/vidc442 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🤖 Android 4+



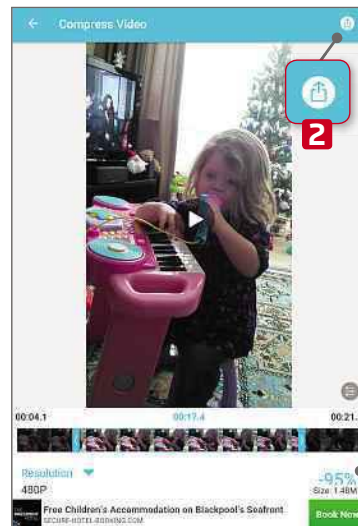
1 Install and launch the app, then grant it permission to access the photos, media and files on your device. You can 'Trim & Compress' your video, **1** batch compress a number of clips **2** or convert your video to the smaller MP4 format. **3** Tap 'Trim & Compress'.



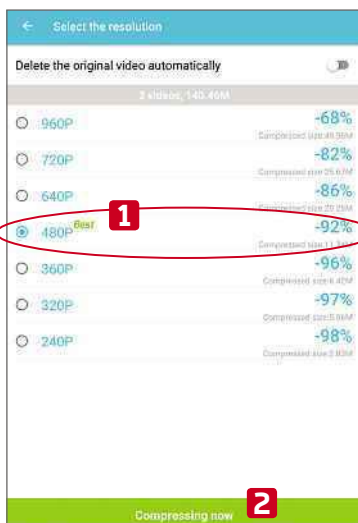
2 The app should show all the videos found on your phone. If you can't find the one you want, click the 'Try this' link to look for it in different locations. Select a video, then use the sliders **1** to mark new start and end points for the clip. Press Play to preview it. **2**



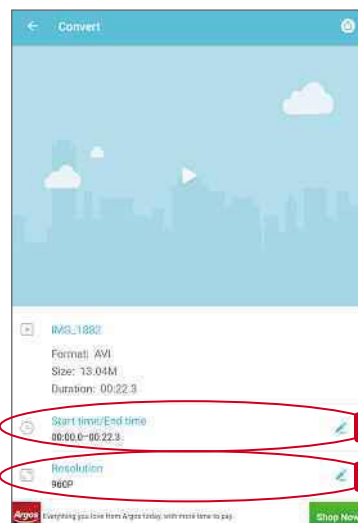
3 Tap the grey button **1** to manually enter the start and end times. Changing the resolution of the video will make a big difference to its file size. Tap Resolution **2** and pick an option from the list. **3** The recommended 480P offers a good trade-off between size and quality.



4 Note the reduction in size. **1** That's quite some saving! If you want, you can save or send the video as it is. Click the Share button **2** and choose to save a copy, or pick one of the standard sharing options, such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, YouTube, WhatsApp, email and more.



5 To use 'Batch compression', select the option from the main screen, then choose your videos. Tap Next and pick a resolution to apply to them all. **1** You can opt to delete the original video afterwards but make sure you back it up beforehand. Tap 'Compressing now'. **2**



6 If your phone doesn't already record videos as MP4s or you have clips from elsewhere you want to share, use the 'Convert to MP4' setting on the front screen to save a copy in the smaller format. Select a video, edit the start and end times **1** and resolution, **2** then tap Share and save it.

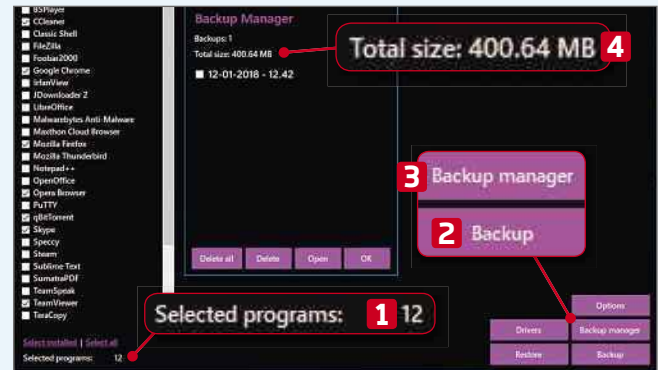
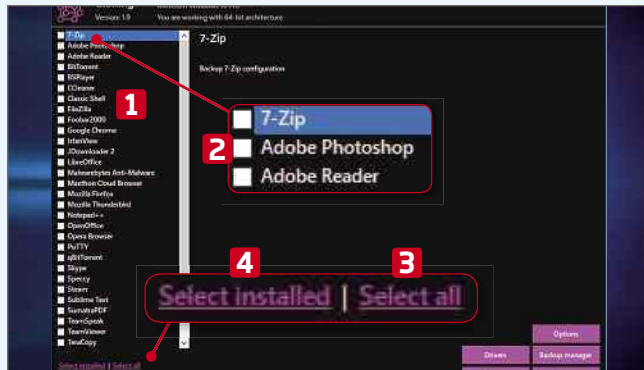


Back up software settings and drivers in seconds

A clean install of Windows gets rid of all the accumulated junk and bloatware from your PC, but restoring your software back to how you like it can be a hassle. Cloning is a simple, free program that backs up all

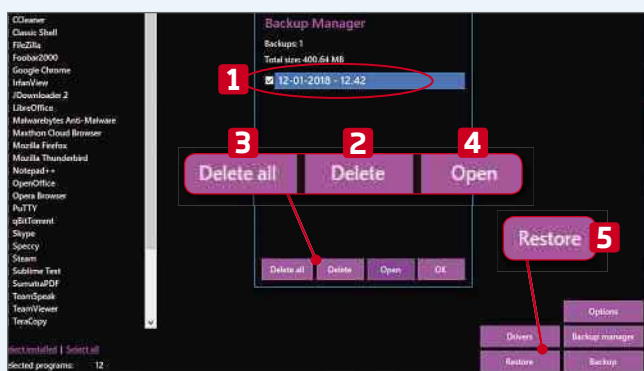
your favourite software settings and drivers, and restores them when required. It works with many popular applications and lets you choose which ones you want to back up.

Cloning: bit.ly/clon442 | 10 mins | Windows 7, 8, 10



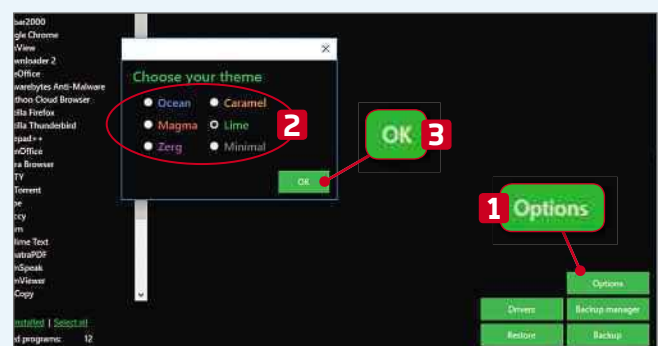
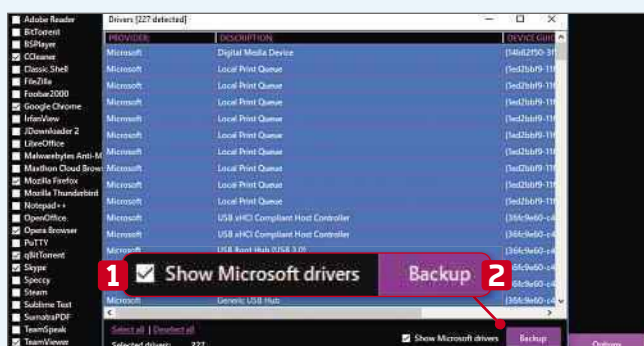
1 You don't have to install Cloning – just unzip and run it, and it will present you with a list of popular programs. **1** You can manually select items to back up by ticking the boxes **2** or 'Select all'. **3** Alternatively, Cloning is able to detect which apps you have installed, and select just those. **4**

2 The number of applications selected is shown at the bottom of the window. **1** Click the Backup button **2** and Cloning will go to work. The backup process should only take a few seconds. Click 'Backup manager' **3** to view your new backup and see how much space it takes up. **4**



3 You can select one or more backups, **1** delete them **2** or 'Delete all'. **3** Click the Open button **4** to view the backup file in Explorer. To restore a backup, click Restore, **5** select the one you want from the list, then click OK.

4 Cloning also backs up your drivers. Click the Drivers button **1** to see a list of the ones it's detected. **2** You can select drivers individually by holding down Ctrl and clicking each one in turn, or choose to 'Select all' or 'Deselect all'. **3** The number of drivers to be backed up is displayed. **4**

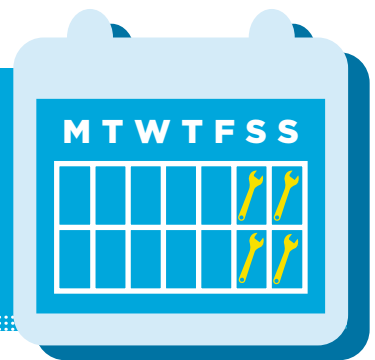


5 Microsoft drivers are hidden by default and aren't included in the list. If you want to back those up too, tick 'Show Microsoft drivers'. **1** This adds hundreds more drivers to the selection. Click the Backup button. **2** A copy of your drivers will be saved to the Desktop.

6 Click the Options button **1** and you can choose a new theme for the software. Just pick the colour you want from the list **2** and it will be applied immediately. When you're happy with your choice, click OK. **3**

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Hide files, folders, apps and Wi-Fi networks in Windows

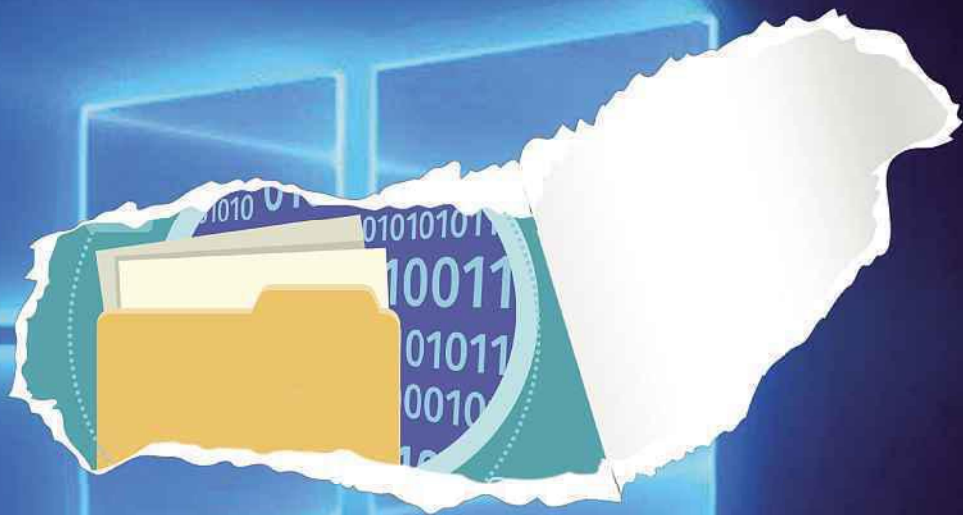
Wayne Williams explores the methods and tools you can use to hide your private files from snoops

Encrypting your private files and folders is the obvious way to keep them safe from prying eyes, but while this will ensure that their contents can't be read, the files and folders themselves are still visible, so a snooper will be aware that you've got something interesting locked away.

If you *really* want to keep your secrets, it's best to hide them completely. If a snooper can't see your files, they

won't even know they exist, and that means they can't try to access or copy them.

In this Weekend Project, we look at how to hide files and folders using built-in Windows tools and software designed for the job. We also explain how to hide other things you may want to keep private, such as your Wi-Fi network from your neighbours and guilty app secrets from the rest of your family.



Use the Command Prompt

You can hide files and folders using the 'attrib' command directly in Windows. Type cmd into the Windows Search box and launch the Command Prompt. In the box that opens, type:

```
attrib [folder location] file  
.xxx +s +h
```

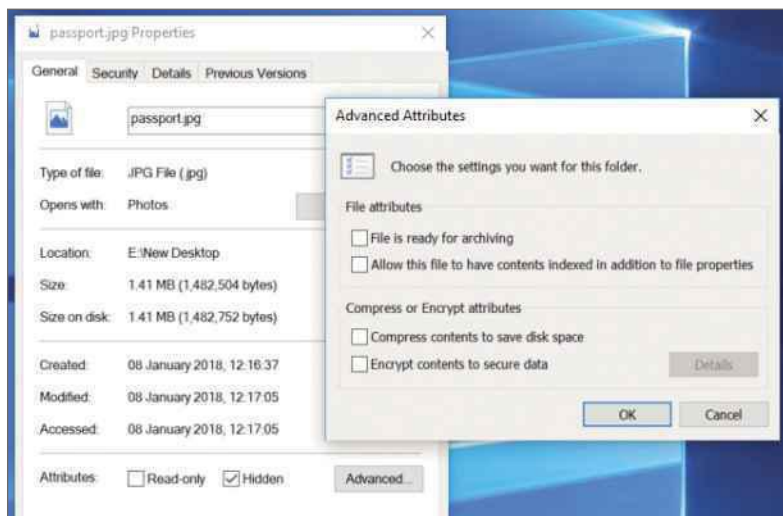
Replace [folder location] with the actual folder location, and file.xxx with the filename and extension.

So, a real-life example might be:
`attrib C:\Desktop\Video.mp4 +s +h`
where the +s is the System file attribute and the +h is a Hidden file attribute. By applying both to our MP4 file, we're telling Windows not to display it in a directory

```
Administrator: Command Prompt  
C:\WINDOWS\system32>attrib E:\"New Desktop"\Video.mp4 +s +h  
C:\WINDOWS\system32>
```

Don't expect to see any kind of confirmation message when hiding files in this way – your chosen item will simply disappear from view

listing. If the folder location includes spaces, you'll need to place quotes around it, for example:



The File Explorer trick isn't the most secure method of hiding a file but it will fool casual snoopers

```
attrib C:\"New Desktop"\Video
.mp4 +s +h
```

You can use exactly the same method to hide a folder by entering its name in place of the filename. For example,

```
attrib C:\Desktop\Hidden +s +h
```

To unhide a file or folder, repeat the process, but use `-s` and `-h` switches instead.

Use File Explorer

You can use the same 'attrib' command to hide files in File Explorer. This isn't as secure as the Command Prompt method (above), but if you're only worried about hiding files from casual (not technically minded) users, then it should suffice.

To make sure your hidden files can't be seen in Windows, open File Explorer, go to the View tab, click Options (or the down arrow below it) and choose 'Change folder and search options'.

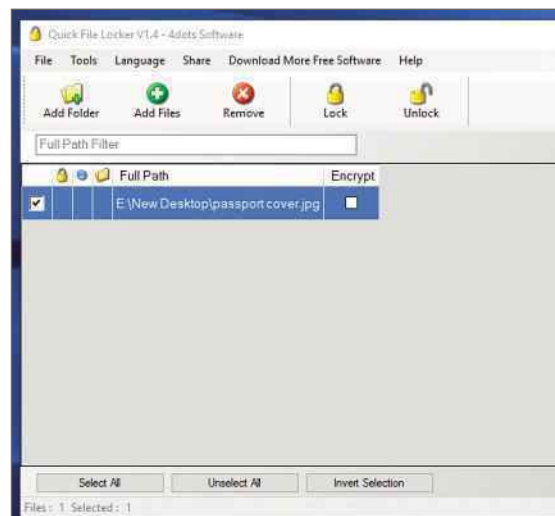
Click the View tab in the Folder Options window and make sure 'Don't show hidden files, folders, or drives' is selected (it should be, as this is the default setting).

To hide a file or folder, right-click it and select Properties. In the General tab, tick the Hidden box, then click Advanced. Untick the options 'File is ready for archiving' and 'Allow this file to have contents indexed in addition to file properties'.

To reveal any files or folders you've hidden in this way, just untick the Hidden option in the Properties window.

Use a dedicated program

Wise Folder Hider (bit.ly/wise442) hides files, folders and connected USB drives so they can't be seen in File Explorer (unless you manually unhide them first). It's very easy to use, and there's a Pro



Quick File Locker hasn't been updated for a couple of years, but still works fine in all versions of Windows

edition available for £19.32, which lets you encrypt files and folders as well as simply hiding them, making it almost impossible for anyone to access your private files. You also get automatic password recovery.

We show you how to use Wise Folder Hider in our Mini Workshop, below.

Another tool worth trying is Quick File Locker (bit.ly/qufl442), which locks and hides files, folders and flash drives. Run the software and drag the content you want to protect to the user interface, or right-click an item and secure it from the context menu. Quick File Locker also has a handy Stealth mode, so even its own existence is kept secret. Just make sure you decline the bundled junk during installation.

Absolute Folder Hider (bit.ly/afhide442) is also very straightforward. Just click the Add button and navigate



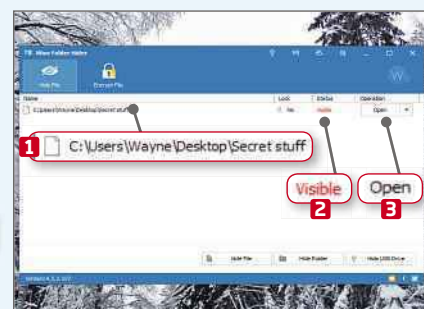
MINI WORKSHOP | Hide files using Wise Folder Hider



1 Run the software and enter a password. This will be used to reveal your hidden content, so make sure it's a good one! Confirm the password and you can now hide any file or folder by dragging and dropping it to the program window. **1** Alternatively, click Hide File **2** or Hide Folder **3** and browse to select it.







2 You can also hide a USB flash drive's contents. Plug in the drive, then click the Hide USB Drive button **1** and use the drop-down box to select the drive you want to hide. **2** You'll be prompted to enter a password to protect the contents of the drive.



3 When Wise Folder Hider is closed, your selected content will be rendered invisible. To be able to see and access it again, launch the program and enter your password. You can see which files and folders you've hidden **1** and their status. **2** Click the Open button **3** to reveal that item in File Explorer.

Broadband Deals

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

	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1		Sky: Broadband	£28.99 (£18.00 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £216.00
2		TalkTalk: Broadband	£27.00 (£19.95 for 12 months)	12 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited	£239.40
3		EE: Broadband	£28.50 (£21.50 for 18 months)	18 months	17Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited*	£258.00
4		Virgin: Broadband	£48.00 (£32.00 for 12 months)	12 months	50Mbps max speed	∞ unlimited*	£384.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 26 January 2018.

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

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

**SNEAK
PREVIEW!**

Computer active

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO CONVERTING YOUR FILES

Make sure you can open ANYTHING
- no matter what it is

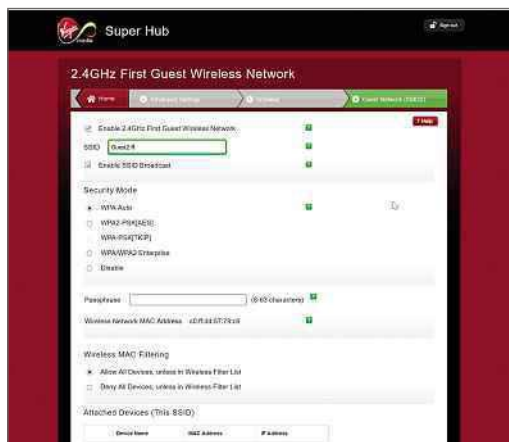
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You can stop your router broadcasting your SSID to get extra security from snooping neighbours



If you've got any apps on your Android device that you don't want people to see, you can use Apex Launcher to hide them from view

to the folder you want to make invisible. You can hide or unhide folders, open them or remove them from the list. Just make sure that Windows isn't set to display hidden folders.

Hide important data in a photograph

There's a clever trick you can use to hide personal data inside a photograph. The process, called steganography, makes the very existence of a hidden file invisible to snoopers. Place the photo in question in a folder full of images and no one will suspect it's any different from the rest of the images around it.

OpenStego (www.openstego.com) is a handy tool that makes the steganography process very simple. Not only does it hide data within an

image (known as a cover file), it can watermark the photo to prevent unauthorised copying. You may need to install Java (bit.ly/java442) to make it work, though.

We show you how to use OpenStego in our Mini Workshop, below.

Hide a Wi-Fi network from your neighbours

The Service Set Identifier (SSID) announces a wireless network's presence. When a Wi-Fi enabled computer or other device searches for a network to connect to, this is the information it's looking for. Turning this feature off makes the network invisible. You can still connect to it, but you'll need to manually enter the correct SSID.

In theory, by not broadcasting your

details, your neighbours won't be able to see your network and therefore can't gain access to it. To hide your SSID, go into your router's settings and untick 'Enable SSID Broadcast' (or similar).

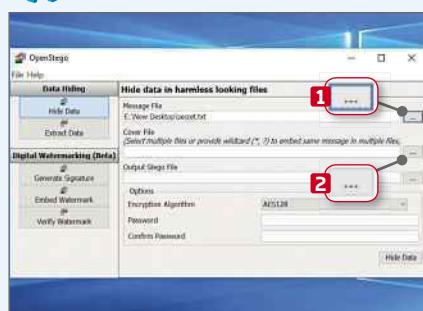
Be aware, though, that certain devices can't connect to a network if its SSID isn't visible.

Hide dodgy apps

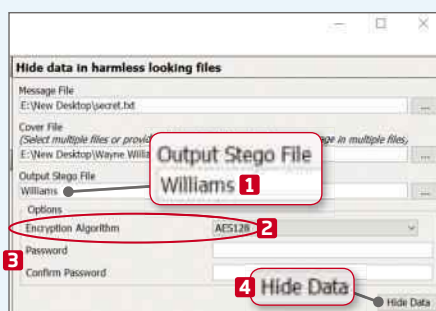
If you've got apps on your phone that you'd rather other people didn't know about, you can hide them. Your Android phone may have this option built in, but if not, try Apex Launcher (bit.ly/ape442). It replaces your default home screen and you can hide any apps by opening Apex Settings, tapping Drawer Settings, Hidden Apps, and then selecting the apps you want to make invisible. ■



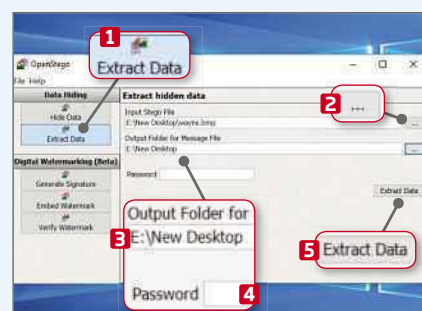
MINI WORKSHOP | Hide text inside an image with OpenStego



1 Create the message you want to hide. To avoid raising suspicion with an oversized file, it's best to create it in Notepad and save it as plain text. Click the ellipses (...) next to Message File **1** and find your saved text file. Click the ellipses button next to Cover File. **2**



2 Select the image(s) you want to hide the message in and enter a name for your new Stego file. **1** You have the option to choose an Encryption Algorithm. **2** Enter a password and confirm it, **3** then click Hide Data **4** and OpenStego will go to work creating a copy of your image with the text hidden inside.



3 To recover the hidden text in your image (or in another image from somewhere else), click the Extract Data button on the left. **1** Tap the ellipses next to Input Stego File **2** and select the secret file. Specify the folder you want to save the message to **3** and enter the password to unlock it, **4** if one was set. Click Extract Data. **5**

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How To... Hack your mobile device without rooting it

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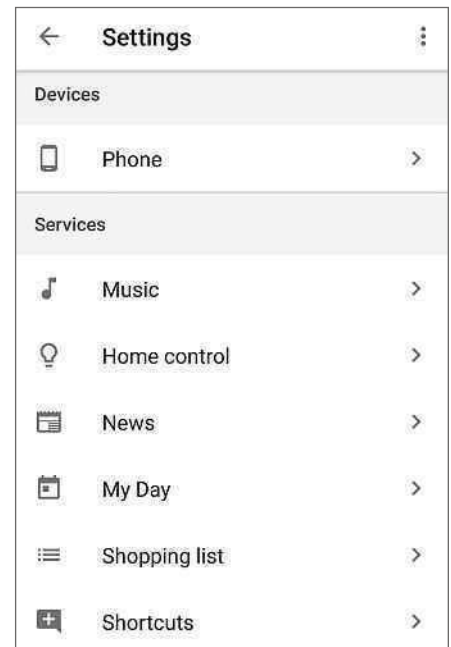
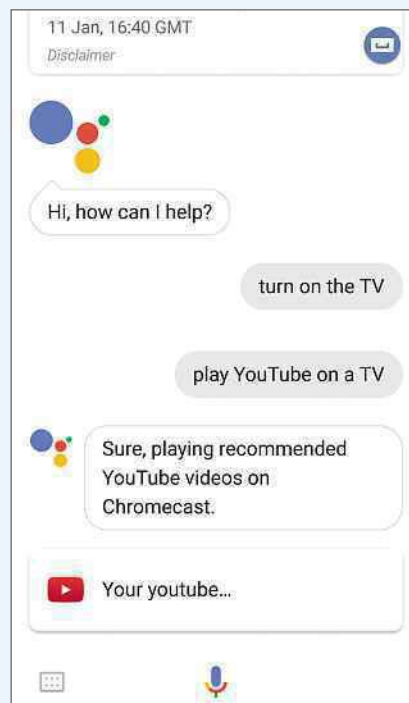
With **Google Assistant** now available on Android devices from version 5 (Lollipop) and up, our experts share their favourite **voice commands**

Things to say to Google Assistant

According to Google, there are more than a million things you can ask its voice-recognising Assistant. The most obvious are the Google search-type queries: “How many dollars in a pound”, “Find coffee shops near me”, “How much vitamin C in a carrot?”, “Lloyds bank stock price” and so on. Just prefix your question with “OK Google” to open Assistant and fire away.

Assistant can also control some elements of your phone’s hardware. You can, for example, tell it to “Turn on Bluetooth” or “Increase the brightness”. It can control remote devices, too: saying “Turn on the TV” switches it on if you have a Chromecast plugged into it (see our advanced tip on the right), and you may have lights, heating and other smart devices that it can control.

Assistant can turn on your TV, play YouTube videos and pause them



Open the settings and visit each section to set up the tools and options

Long-press the Home button or say “OK Google” to call up Google Assistant, then press the icon in the top-right corner. Ignore the two tabs and press the menu button top-right. This is where you’ll find Settings. Open it and you’ll see around a dozen sections that cover everything from personal information to music, shopping lists, news and more.

Silent access

If you’re in a location where you’re not comfortable barking commands at Assistant, you can type your questions instead. Long-press the home button to open Assistant, then press the keyboard button in the bottom-left corner and type whatever you would have said.

Summarise the day ahead

You can imagine yourself in the role of a top CEO with your own PA by asking Assistant: “Tell me about my day”. What happens next depends on how your settings are configured – go to Settings, then My Day to set this. The options include the weather forecast, your work commute, your

Save time and effort

Assistant can carry out a wide range of tasks and speaking your commands saves you the bother of opening apps, typing instructions and setting options. The commands available to you will depend on the apps you have installed, and which smart gadgets you have in your home.

If you want to set an alarm, say: “OK Google. Set an alarm for 8am every day” or “Set an alarm for weekdays at 7am”. The clock app will open and your alarm will be set. Setting a timer, for example: “Set a five minute timer for boiled eggs”,

sets a five-minute countdown in the clock app, with Assistant telling you that the timer has started.

The beauty of Assistant is that it can jump between apps as your commands require. So, for example, if you say: “Create an event”, Assistant will start a conversation asking you what day, what time, the title and so on. You can then go on to ask it to “Set a reminder”, “Open Gmail” and “Send a voice message with WhatsApp”, and even find out if there are “Any pubs nearby?”. The possibilities are endless.

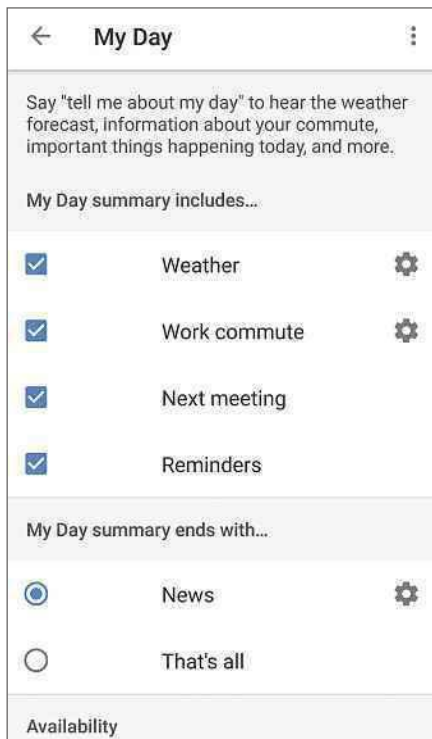
Calls and texts

You can call or text any of your contacts by simply saying: “OK Google. Text Bob” (or whoever), followed by the message. To ring them, say “Call Bob”.

Take control of settings

Google Assistant doesn’t work like a standard app, so it’s not immediately obvious how you get to its settings.

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.



Listen to a summary of your day, including appointments, weather, news and more

next meeting, reminders and the latest news stories. Whatever your choices, just sit back and listen as Assistant tells you about your day and what is happening in the world. It's like a customised podcast – just for you.

Unlock your phone

Keeping your phone locked is a great way to keep it secure from prying eyes, but it's a pain to have to type in the PIN code or password every time you want to use it. Assistant can unlock your phone by recognising your voice.

You may see this offered when you first install and run the app, but it can also be enabled or disabled from the Settings. Open Settings, press Phone and switch on 'Unlock with Voice Match'. You can teach, retrain or delete the detection of your voice by tapping 'Voice model'. Once set up, switch on the screen and say "OK Google" to unlock the phone and go to the home screen.



Unlock your phone by saying "OK Google". It's easier than typing a PIN

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Configure the news

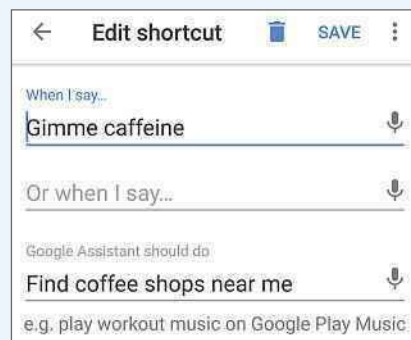
Say "OK Google, play the news" to listen to the latest news stories. To customise the sources, so you get your preferred source, go to Settings and open News. The default sources can be removed by tapping the cross icons on the right. There's also a link to change the order, so if you want to listen to sports news first, just move it up the list.

Tap 'Add news sources' for a list of more than 40 options. Use the tick boxes to choose the ones you want. They are all brief, but there's a big enough selection to put together a news report of 20 minutes or more of your favourites.

Create shortcuts

Like keyboard shortcuts on your PC, Assistant uses shortcuts that are alternative versions of commands. One pre-set example is "Telly time," which starts the Netflix app so you can watch TV shows and movies; another is "Let's have a cuppa," which plays a Spotify playlist of relaxing music.

You can create your own Assistant shortcuts by going to Settings and tapping Shortcuts. Press the plus button in the bottom-right corner and you'll see two boxes. Either speak or type your shortcut, such as "Gimme caffeine!"; then speak or type the command it represents – in this case, "Find coffee shops near me".



Create shortcuts – alternative phrases for common commands

Increase privacy

Google Assistant can show you information that relates to whatever is on your screen. If you'd rather Google didn't read your screen, perhaps for privacy reasons, go to Settings and tap Phone. In the General section, find 'Use screen context' and switch it off.

Play music

Assistant can play music and playlists from several different services. You can specify the app you want to use in the command but the best way to play music in your favourite service is to set a default.

Go to Settings and press Music. The options available are Google Play Music, Spotify and Deezer. If you don't want any of these, select 'No default provider'. Now, when you request Assistant to play a specific track, it will search YouTube for it and play the song via the YouTube app. This means you have access to music, even if you don't have a music app installed or don't subscribe to a streaming service.

Watch more TV

If you have a smart TV or a Chromecast dongle plugged into your TV, you can tell Assistant to show photos or videos on it. Make sure the Chromecast and TV are on and go to Settings. Press Videos and Photos, and find the option to link to the Netflix app – if you have it on your phone. Press the Chromecast link in the Photos section and the Chromecast should be listed. If it isn't, press the plus button to add it.

You're now set up. Say "OK Google, play videos on my TV", and the Assistant will play videos recommended for you from YouTube based on your previous YouTube activity. For a more complex command, say: "Play my YouTube music playlist on my TV". It can play any YouTube video or playlist of videos on your TV. If you want to stop it, say "Pause my TV", "Stop TV" or "Power off my TV".



A Chromecast lets Google Assistant play music and videos

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



SOFTWARE TOOLS

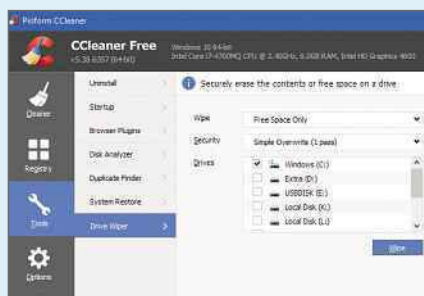
Wipe data from a hard drive

Q The Drive Wipe tool in CCleaner (www.piriform.com/ccleaner) has options to wipe 'Free space' and 'Erase entire drive'. I assume the latter is for when you're getting rid of an old PC. It also asks how many overwrites to perform. What would you advise?

Is 'Free space' just space that isn't currently used to store files? Should I be wiping my free space regularly? And if so, how long does it take?

Didrik Breitholtz, via email

A When you delete a file, it isn't removed from your hard drive. Instead, the space it occupies is labelled as 'free'. New files can be saved to free space, but if you've deleted a lot of files, some may not be written over for a while. This is good for file-recovery tools, which can rescue any files you've deleted by accident, but bad for security,



CCleaner can erase deleted files on your hard drive to prevent their recovery

because someone with access to your PC could recover deleted files containing private information. If you wipe your free space, no one can recover deleted files – including you.

How long CCleaner takes to erase free space depends on how much there is, the speed of your PC and the number of times you want to overwrite it. It could take a few hours.

Twenty years ago, hard drives were sloppy at erasing data, which could be recovered with the right tools. To stop this, data was overwritten up to 35 times. These days, once is enough.

scroll down to the very bottom to click Advanced, then scroll down again to the Reset section. Click 'Reset settings', then the Reset button.

To do the same for Internet Explorer, click the search box in the taskbar, start typing **internet explorer** and click it when it appears. Click the cog icon and select 'Manage add-ons'. Select 'Toolbars and Extensions' on the left and delete or disable any items that appear. Select Search Providers and delete everything except Bing or Google. Select Accelerators and delete or disable all items. Close the window.

Click the cog icon again and select 'Internet options'. On the General tab, make sure only Bing or Google is set as the homepage. Click the Tabs button and click the 'Restore defaults' button. Select the Advanced tab and click 'Restore advanced settings', followed by Reset.

IObit Uninstaller (bit.ly/iobi442) has a useful 'Toolbars & Plugins' section that lists everything installed in your browsers, including adware. Another useful tool is Malwarebytes Anti-Malware (www.malwarebytes.com), which is better at finding and removing potentially unwanted programs (PUPs) than Windows Defender.

Finally, right-click the taskbar and select Task Manager. If you see anything on the Start-up tab that you don't need, select it and click Disable.

SECURITY

Stop a persistent pop-up

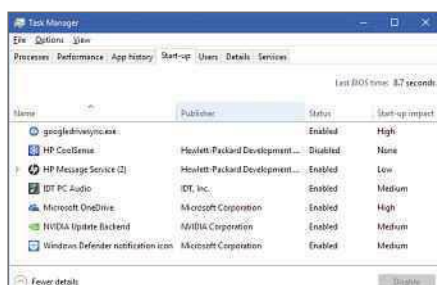
Q A pop-up invitation for Advance PC Care has started to appear on my Windows 10 computer. I think it must have been bundled with some Adobe software I downloaded recently. I've uninstalled the Adobe program but the annoying ad still pops up. It's easily cancelled but it reappears regularly, which is very annoying.

I've opened the Control Panel and examined all the installed programs, but I can't find anything that appears to relate to this pop-up. I've also searched Google, and it seems that the problem is well known, but most of the advice simply says to uninstall it, which obviously isn't appropriate in my case.

Bob Bass, via email

A The culprit isn't Advance PC Care, but adware that's displaying adverts for it. Go back to 'Programs and Features' in the Control Panel and look for anything you don't recognise. It won't be called Advance PC Care but may be a toolbar, helper or something else. Uninstall anything you don't use.

It's also possible that an add-on has been installed in Chrome or Internet Explorer to show ads. The easiest way to clear everything out of Chrome is to go to the menu and select Settings,

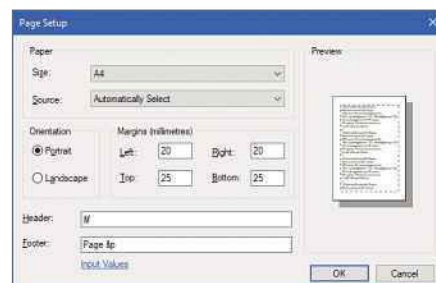


Use Task Manager to check for unwanted start-up items

HARDWARE

Stop printing headers

Q For some reason, whenever I print a document or letter, the filename appears at the top of the page. My Sony



Many programs let you print headers and footers, so check the settings



Vaio laptop and HP Deskjet 1000 J110 printer are both several years old, and I tend not to make changes where none are necessary. I've tried using Restore but the fault remains.

Emily Munro, via email

A This is a configuration setting that's found in many programs. Open Notepad, for example, and select File, then Page Setup. In the Header box you'll see '&f'. This is the code that instructs Notepad to print the filename in the header at the top of every page. Simply delete this to stop it happening.

You don't say which software you're printing from but whatever it is, simply clear the header settings. They may be in Page Setup on the File menu – as they are in Notepad – but header and footer options could be elsewhere, too.

When you select Print, check the Print window for any options or buttons to configure the header and footer. If you print a web page in Chrome, for example, you can tick a box to enable or disable headers and footers.

GENERAL PC Search for missing files

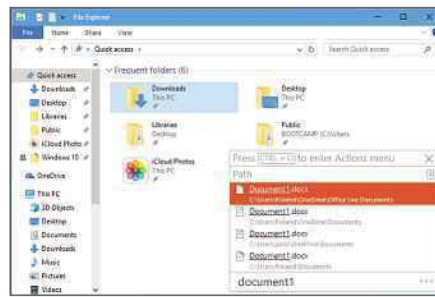
Q I had some files saved on my computer's hard drive, but now I can't find them. What software would you recommend for recovering lost or deleted files?

Andy Hamilton, via email

A Are your files lost or deleted? If a file is somewhere on the hard drive but you don't know where, open a File Explorer window, locate the main hard drive (usually C:) and select it. Type the filename or part of it into the search box at the top to see if Windows can find it. This feature is slow and not perfect, but it's worth trying. If you have Windows 10, click the search box on the taskbar and try that too.

If that doesn't work, try using one of the better search tools, such as Listry (www.listry.com). Install the free version and open Explorer. Click any empty space on the right and begin typing. A list of matching files appears instantly. Click a file to open it or right-click to see a menu of options, including Copy, 'Open folder' and 'Send to'.

Windows has built-in features for recovering files deleted from personal folders such as Documents, Photos and Music. Right-click a folder, select 'Restore previous versions' and you'll see one or more older versions of the folder and the files it has contained in the past.



Listry adds a superfast file-search facility to Explorer windows

Some file-recovery tools go further. Recuva (bit.ly/rec442), from the developer of CCleaner, scans your hard drive for deleted files and, in many cases, it can recover them. It's a good idea to keep a copy of this program on your PC rather than downloading it when you have a problem, because using it straight away increases your chances of recovering deleted files.

GENERAL PC Stop Windows freezing

Q Since the last major Windows update – which I seem to have received after everyone else – my computer has started freezing. It just stops working – although, if I wait for a while, it starts again. What's causing this problem, and how do I stop it?

Barry Hughes, via email

GENERAL PC

What do OneDrive icons mean?

Q When I open OneDrive, I see lots of different icons. Some folders have large double-headed arrows, while others have the same icon but smaller. There's also a blue cloud and a green tick. What do they mean?

Sue Best, via email

A These symbols show the status of your files and folders in OneDrive. A double-headed arrow means a folder is synced – saved on both your hard drive and online storage. A small double-headed arrow means a folder contains files, while a large icon indicates an empty folder. Curved double arrows show that a file or folder is in the process of syncing.

A cloud icon indicates that a file or folder is saved online but not on your PC's hard drive. You can open,

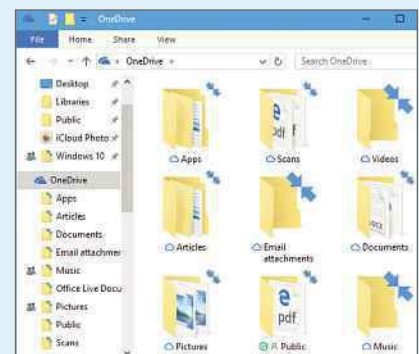
A The most likely cause is an app or driver running in the background. Major Windows updates often replace drivers and remove software, both of which can cause problems.

You may not be able to perform this first tip, but it's worth trying anyway. When your PC freezes, press Ctrl+Alt+Del and click Task Manager. On the Processes tab, sort the list by clicking the CPU column heading. See which process is using the most processing power – it may be the app that's causing the problem.

If you don't know the cause of the problem, you'll have to try a few things and see if any of them work. Open the Control Panel and click Troubleshooting, then 'View all' on the left. As you don't know where the fault lies, your best option is to run all of them.

Next, go to the manufacturer's website and find your computer model. Many manufacturers provide updates for drivers and software, which may solve the problem.

For a brief period after a major update, you have the option to return to the previous version of Windows. Press Windows+i and click 'Update & Security' followed by Recovery. If you see an option on the right to go back to a previous version – and if all else has failed – this should solve the problem.



OneDrive uses symbols to show the status of your files and folders

copy or delete online files as if they were on your hard drive, but there may be a delay if the file needs to be downloaded first. You can only access files and folders with a cloud symbol if you're connected to the internet.

A green tick in a green circle means a file is saved both on the hard drive and online, so you can access it without an internet connection. The grey outline of a person means the file is shared with one or more people.



This fortnight Roland has been trying to dissuade his moggy from going to sleep on his nice warm laptop

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

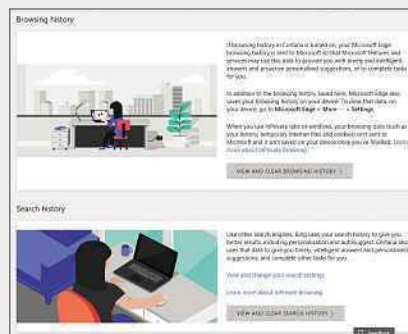
PRIVACY

See personal data stored by Microsoft

Microsoft tracks your activities and stores information about you online, and this is especially true of Windows 10. If you want to know exactly what's being stored, open the Windows 10 Settings app (press Windows+I) and click Privacy. In the General section, click 'Manage my information that's stored in the cloud'. This opens a browser window and goes to account.microsoft.com/privacy. Sign in.

There are sections for web browsing, online searches, locations where you used a computer (a laptop is tracked when you use it away from home), voice activity, health (if you used linked health apps and gadgets) and more.

Click the 'Activity history' menu item on the 'Privacy dashboard' and select



Go online to see what info Microsoft has stored about your activities

the type of tracking information to show. There is a link on the right to clear the activity if you'd rather Microsoft removed the data.

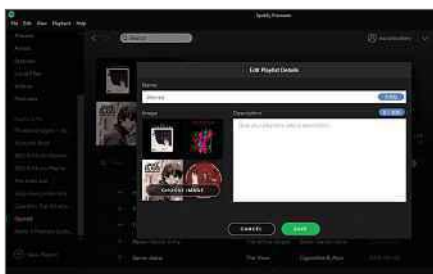
Gary McCourt, via email

MUSIC

Change playlist icons

Did you know you can add custom covers to your Spotify playlists, rather than using the default (which is four tiled album covers of songs included in the list)? It's best to use a square image, (such as 1,000 x 1,000 pixels) or the image will be distorted.

You have to do this on your computer, not on the mobile app, and it only works with a playlist that you've made yourself. On the left, click the playlist you want to edit, then click the round three-dot icon and select Edit Details. From here, you



You can edit a Spotify playlist's details, including changing its cover image

can edit the playlist's name and information, and upload an image, which must be a in '.jpg' format and under 4MB in size.

Jack Gold, Web User Forums

GENERAL PC

Restart File History

I use File History in Windows 10 to back up my files to a USB drive. It mostly works fine but occasionally, when I open File History in the Control Panel, I find that it's stopped backing up and hasn't made a backup for several days.

You need to keep an eye on this tool



Check that File History is running by looking at the date files were last copied

because it has a habit of stopping. Don't set it and forget it, or your files may not be backed up. Click 'Run now' to get it going again.

Peter Foster, via email

GENERAL PC

Explore Windows Settings

The Settings app in Windows 10 and the Control Panel in all versions of Windows have loads of settings that you probably don't even know about. There is an easy way to discover hidden settings by typing vowels in the search box.

Open the Settings app or Control Panel and type a, e, i, o or u in the search box at the top. These

letters are so common that you end up with a long list of commands, some of which you probably didn't know about. The Control Panel has the most tools.

Trevor Simpson, via email



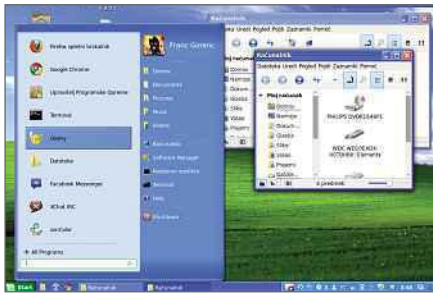
Type a vowel in the Control Panel search box to find functions and settings

GENERAL PC

Bring back Windows XP

I still long for the days of Windows XP, when a simple start menu and colourful windows ruled the roost. In fact, I miss it so much I've gone back to it! Not by reinstalling Microsoft's unsupported operating system, but by getting a clone of the interface that works with Linux Mint.

Setting it up is too complicated to explain here but you can download Linux



Miss XP's interface? Resuscitate it with a fully working Linux Mint theme

Mint from bit.ly/lin442. You'll need to decide whether you're going to dual-boot Windows with it (which is what I've done), run it in VirtualBox (www.virtualbox.org) to try it out, or go the whole hog and replace Windows on an old PC. Then you need to install the alternative interface.

I followed the instructions from a site called Addictive Tips (bit.ly/atxp442).

Henry Jackson, via email

BROWSERS

Keep fewer tabs open

Remember the digital pets that were all the rage in the Nineties? Well now you can get one for your Chrome browser, only instead of having to remember to feed and play with it, you just have to make sure that you don't keep too many browser tabs open.

It's called Tabagotchi and you can add it to Chrome at bit.ly/tab442. If you open more than five tabs, your Tabagotchi will become ill. To help it recover, use Chrome with fewer tabs open. I'm always finding myself with stacks of tabs open and Tabagotchi is an entertaining way to keep my tab habit in check.

Hazel Goldfarb, via email



If you open too many tabs in Chrome, Tabagotchi will get poorly

WEBSITE

Customise Bing's menu

There are some interesting customisation options in Bing's homepage (www.bing.com) which you can access by clicking the three-line icon in the top-right corner. A menu opens with three switches at the bottom. These can add or remove the menu bar, the background image, and the 'news and interests' section. I like having everything switched on but it's

your choice.

If you want to take a break from whatever you're doing, browse the Fun & Games menu option. This brings up a small collection of quick distraction games that run in the browser, including Rubik's Cube, Jigsaw, Sliding Tiles, Crossword and several knowledge quizzes. I like to play these during coffee breaks at work, although you probably shouldn't let your boss catch you!

E Keane, via email



Customise the Bing homepage, play online games and more

WEBSITE

List your favourite software alternatives

There's a website called AlternativeTo (alternativeto.net) that's really good for finding alternatives to programs you've fallen out of love with. It's particularly good for finding free alternatives to

paid-for software, and the site's users can vote for the programs they like, so you know the ones at the top of the lists have been tried and tested.

Late last year, the site added a new Lists tool (alternativeto.net/lists) that lets you collate and save lists of programs you like. You can then share the list with other people or make it public for anyone to see. It's a great way of keeping a list of top software programs



Use AlternativeTo's lists to share favourite programs

for when your less-knowledgeable mates want recommendations. You can also use it to store your AlternativeTo research, so you don't have to search for things twice.

Because you can share your lists publicly, some people (including AlternativeTo itself) already have helpful lists of recommended programs that you can browse

Kevin Harris, via email

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

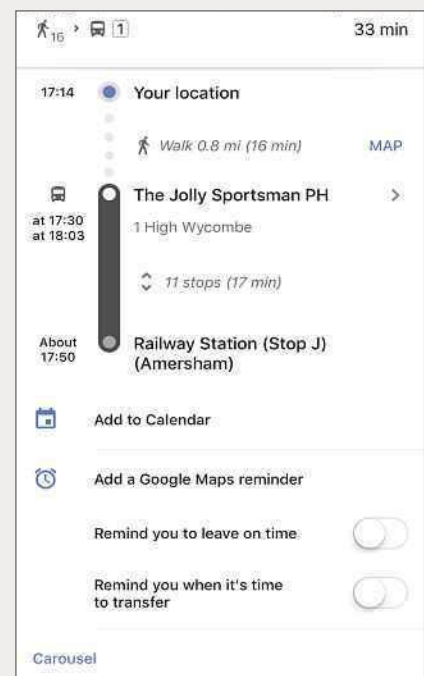
MOBILE

Don't oversleep on the bus

I often catch an extra half hour of sleep on my morning bus ride to work but on a recent occasion, I didn't wake up, missed my stop and had to catch a different bus back again, making me late for work.

However, I've discovered a new setting in Google Maps that alerts me when I'm about to arrive at my stop. Put your destination into Google Maps on your mobile and choose Directions, then set it to public transport. Select the journey you're planning to take, then scroll down. Switch on the option to 'Remind you when it's time to transfer'. Maps then sends an alert when you get to your stop, which is more than enough to rouse me from my slumber and get off the bus.

Ian Graham, via email



Set an alert to have your phone notify you when you reach your destination

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

If so, please send your story to webuser@dennis.co.uk



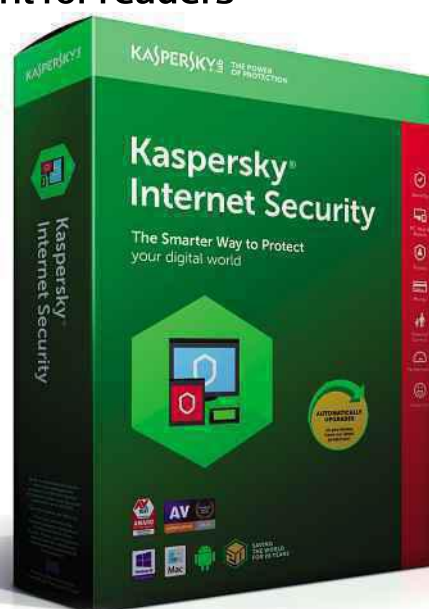
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GENERAL PC

Don't download every update

Q I'm confused by the optional 'preview' updates in Windows. When you download them, they're not ready to install like important updates. I suspect they're rolled into the proper updates later. Can I ignore them?

rufford155, Web User Forums

A Microsoft defines its 'Preview of Monthly Quality Rollup' updates as "a tested, cumulative set of new updates that are packaged together... ahead of the release of the next Monthly Rollup for customers to proactively download, test and provide feedback". Each is unique to a specific version of Windows, excludes security updates and is entirely optional.

I've never taken any notice of them on any of our Windows 7 PCs, and nothing dreadful has happened so far.

Stewart40 and Madeline, Web User Forums

Item	Category	Classification	Language	Version	Size	Download
2017-12 Windows 7 Service Pack 1 (SP1) Update for Windows 7 SP1 x64-based Systems (KB3033926)	Windows 7	Update	English	6.0.2600.5512	100 MB	Download
2017-12 Windows 7 Service Pack 1 (SP1) Update for Windows 7 SP1 x86-based Systems (KB3033926)	Windows 7	Update	English	6.0.2600.5512	100 MB	Download
2017-12 Windows 7 Service Pack 1 (SP1) Update for Windows 7 SP1 x64-based Systems (KB3033926)	Windows 7	Update	English	6.0.2600.5512	100 MB	Download
2017-12 Windows 7 Service Pack 1 (SP1) Update for Windows 7 SP1 x86-based Systems (KB3033926)	Windows 7	Update	English	6.0.2600.5512	100 MB	Download

See the list of updates available for your PC at bit.ly/upcat442. Previews are optional

BROWSERS

Choose between 32-bit and 64-bit Chrome

Q The other day, I had a look at the inner workings of the programs on my PC to see if there was anything superfluous. My PC runs the 64-bit version of Windows 7 Home Premium and is running well.

However, I noticed during my investigations that I have Chrome version 63.0.3239.132, which is the 32-bit version. I visited Google's website and found that a 64-bit version is available.

Should I uninstall the 32-bit version

SOFTWARE

Get a free image editor

Q Google's Picasa was perfect for viewing and organising my photos, but now that it's no longer available, I'm looking for a different program to handle my photographs. Can anyone suggest a good alternative? I can't use Google Photos, either, because I'm locked out of it.

extractor, Web User Forums

A There's no better software for organising and viewing images than FastStone Image Viewer. It's free for home users, contains no adware or spyware and comes highly recommended. You can download



Free image viewer FastStone comes highly recommended by Web User readers

the program and read more about it at bit.ly/fsiv442.

Other tools that are worth looking at include XnView (bit.ly/xnvi442), IrfanView (www.irfanview.com) and Zoner Photo Studio X (free.zoner.com).

tornado and Stewart40, Web User Forums

and install the 64-bit version instead?

Petrosky, Web User Forums

A The 64-bit version of Chrome can run faster than the 32-bit version if your PC is powerful enough, which may increase your browsing speed. However, the 32-bit version requires significantly less memory (about half as much). If your PC has 4GB of memory or less, and you find that your browser tends to slow down, particularly when you have lots of tabs open, you may find that your PC struggles to cope with the 64-bit version.

Note that when you download Chrome using a 64-bit version of Windows, it tries to force you to download the 64-bit version of the browser. However, you can download the 32-bit version from bit.ly/



You can force Chrome to install the 32-bit browser on a 64-bit Windows PC

chro442, should you need to go back at a later date. You can install the 64-bit version on top of the 32-bit version without uninstalling it.

andys, Web User Forums

SOFTWARE

Switch your video editor

Q I've been using CyberLink PowerDirector to edit my home movies, but it keeps crashing and losing all my work. I've had enough and am looking to try something new. Would Nero Platinum 2018 (bit.ly/nero442) be a better alternative? I run Windows 10 on a PC with an Intel i5 processor.

AuraTodd, Web User Forums

A An i5 processor isn't powerful enough to edit Full HD or 4K video in Nero, but you should be able to perform basic tasks. Your PC looks powerful enough to work with Pinnacle Studio (bit.ly/pinn442), although it may struggle with high resolutions. Adobe Premiere Elements (bit.ly/apre442) has a very sleek interface and there's a trial version that lets you give it a spin before you commit to buying it.

Peru and george29, Web User Forums

Star Email

Mug
winner



Opera's arrogance drove me to Vivaldi

Regarding your cover feature in Issue 440 (bit.ly/webuser440), 'Switch Your Browser Now': I have used Opera for quite a long time and until the latest fiasco with its VPN, I was very happy with it. The thing that stirred me to look elsewhere was not that Opera had a problem with the VPN but the sheer arrogance that it exhibited in refusing to even admit to users that there is a problem. There were plenty of postings about it in Opera's own forum and its product manager's blog, but Opera failed to correct its claim that its VPN was fast. In my book, 1Mbps max is not fast!



The company is now Chinese-owned and things may be going downhill, so it could be time to ditch Opera and look

elsewhere. However, I will keep it as my third-choice browser in case of problems. I have installed Vivaldi on your recommendation and am so far happy with its performance, aside from a couple of niggles. These are probably just down to unfamiliarity – I'm sure things will fall into place in the near future with more use and practice.

The only extensions I use are LastPass, Xmarks, uBlock Origin and Print Friendly & PDF. I've installed all of these in Vivaldi from the Chrome Web Store without any problems and I'm very happy so far!

alanwood, Web User Forums

Firefox Quantum deserves an award

I was surprised at the results of your roundup of the best browsers in Issue 440. Not because Vivaldi was first choice (it may be good – I haven't tried it yet), but because you put Firefox Quantum so far down the ranking. Not even the Bronze Award. Is it really that bad?

I have used Firefox for some time now and it's always served me well, but I was a bit sceptical about trying Firefox Quantum, to be honest.



I thought it would get a lick of paint and some add-ons I never use (like Pocket), but I was pleasantly surprised. In fact, I was blown away, especially by its speed. It really is very fast now and a lot of online reviews agree. Of course it's not perfect and some add-ons no longer work, but I think it deserved a higher ranking in your results.

John Young, via email

Vivaldi and Opera were non-starters for me

I have used Firefox for a long time, but after reading your roundup of browsers, I downloaded Vivaldi. All I got was a page asking me to download it, even though I already had. There was no start

page – just "here's your new browser". I ticked all the boxes for my security settings – but still nothing. So I deleted it. I'm not at all impressed. Features – where? Ease of use? I am obviously too thick to understand it.

Additionally, neither Opera nor Vivaldi allow you to import from Firefox. It is the usual story: only Edge or Internet Explorer work.

Like Vivaldi, Opera could not find any start stuff and, frankly, I don't need media garbage all over my start page. What a waste of hard-drive space.

I would have liked to try these

browsers but if they don't even start properly, I'm not going to mess about trying to make them work.

Martin Fletcher, Thorpe Hesley

Estate agents should quote broadband speeds

I read with interest your news story in Issue 440, entitled 'High-speed broadband to be a legal right'. Surely now that the internet has become such an important part of people's lives, there is a lot that companies can do to help promote it. If you run your own business or rely on internet sales, it's crucial to

Quiz Answers: Issue 441

1 **The Eagles**



2 **The Doors**



3 **Tears for Fears**



4 **The Rolling Stones**



5 **Red Hot Chili Peppers**



6 **The Four Seasons**



WINNER!

Well done to
Mike Chalmers
who wins a Web
User mug



WORD PUZZLE

Unfriend



have reliable and fast internet.

One suggestion would be for estate agents to add details of the broadband speed

available at the properties they are selling. They could run a simple test using an app on a smartphone while they are at the property recording all the other details and taking photos. This would be a more accurate indication of broadband speed at the property and not the usual 'up to 30Mbps' you get from ISPs when in reality it's 3Mbps! The results of these speed tests could then be added to the property details. What do you and your readers think?

Mike Timewell, via email

Web User says: Actually, Mike, some property websites do now provide details of broadband speeds, although we wouldn't expect estate agents to be any more honest than ISPs!

Tencent will be an international success

As a regular user of both QQ and WeChat since 2007, I was impressed with your FAQ in Issue 439, which reported on Tencent gaining interest outside Asia. In a world where Facebook, Google and Twitter are the big boys, it's good to see Asian tech giants finally getting some well-deserved attention.



I have a large collection of Chinese pop music and I use QQ and WeChat, along with Tencent Weibo, to keep up with the latest news on a lot of Chinese pop stars including Jolin Tsai, Joey

Yung and SHE (pictured). I believe Tencent will eventually branch out here, due to the UK having a large Asian population.

It's good to see WeChat and QQ gain international status among the bigger messaging services because it's also bridging the gap between east and west, and it's allowing Tencent to gain more customers, clearly giving the US giants something to worry about!

Huang Long, via email

What you say...

AMAZON HAS INCREASED THE PRICE OF PRIME IN THE US. WILL YOU CARRY ON USING IT IF THE UK PRICE RISES?

No. I took out a subscription to get free postage, but I've had emails from Amazon saying they called but I was out. I was in and nobody called, so it isn't next-day delivery – they deliver when it suits them.

Paul Emsley

Definitely not. Don't like the way that they automatically enrol you without your say-so.

Derek Sutton

Don't use it anyway. They did once put me on a trial without my permission. I had to jump through hoops to get them to cancel it.

John Hewett

Yes. I think the postage alone is more than worth it and I do use other benefits, too.

Nat Grove

APPLE HAS LAUNCHED ITS HOMEPOD SPEAKER IN THE UK, PRICED £319. WILL YOU BUY IT?

A *whatpod*? Another Apple money spinner. Alexa and I are very happy, thanks.

Colin Leonard

I could buy another laptop for that money. Anyway, I prefer *not* to have anything with a bitten-apple logo in my house

Zoran NeoGeo @zoran_neoGeo

Nope, I don't want a spy in my house. Same goes for the other speakers. But loads of people will buy it just because it's Apple. Look at the stupid

Apple Watch.

Paul @abertawejack

So it's the same as Google Home/Alexa, but much more expensive. Still, the set-up process is "magical" which may be worth the extra money.

Andrew Duerden

WHAT SECRET TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR PROLONGING YOUR PHONE'S BATTERY LIFE?

Turning off push notifications, especially from WhatsApp group chats. I'm at an event all week where I need to maximise battery life and just muting my groups has dramatically reduced my battery consumption.

Abid Patel @abid_patel

Get a solar battery charger. My HTC One (M8) couldn't hold the charge, so I got it repaired and now it works well. Before it would die at 50%.

goldmaster @imthegoldmaster

Making sure Bluetooth and Wi-Fi are off unless you need them.

Darren Branagh

Leave it at home.

Kev Hopwood

WHICH PROGRAMS AND APPS DO YOU WISH YOU'D NEVER INSTALLED?

The National Lottery app. It spams notifications all the time. Go away!

Si Mellor

The free version of ES File Explorer. It was spamming my lock screen with ads while it was on charge.

Jenny G @dont_be_hasty

Facebook. It uses so much memory. The same applies to Messenger. This is why I tend to use WhatsApp instead.

Brian Brown

Google Opinion Rewards. I installed it about two months ago, but never had a survey come through.

Bruno Di Gradi @Bruno_Di_Gradi

! Page 404

Barry Collins thinks Apple's vanishing voice assistant is symptomatic of bigger problems



Alexa, what's happened to Siri?

Apple never attends CES, the biggest tech show in the world (see our FAQ on page 38), but the company's influence is felt. With accessories for iPhones, software for Macs and developers showcasing the latest apps for iOS, Apple is always there without actually being there.

This year, however, Apple barely flickered on the radar. Two companies dominated the showfloor: Google and Amazon. If CES 2018 was a horse race, Apple would be heading off to the Pritt-Stick factory.

This year's Las Vegas tech beano was all about voice assistants – the computerised butlers that have entered our homes in speakers, smartphones, smart TVs and a gazillion other devices. The tech world is determined to shoehorn Alexa or the Google Assistant into everything: mirrors, robots, coffee machines, deep-fat fryers and printers were among the hundreds of devices on show that came with voice assistants. How many of them were using Apple's

Siri? Not a single one. At least, none that I saw in three days of pounding the halls.

So, how much of a problem is this for Apple? After all, the company has never been particularly keen to have its software running on other people's hardware – you can't legally buy a computer running MacOS unless it's a Mac, for instance. And that's a fair stance, but Apple is in danger of becoming the siloed, high-end loner that almost put the company out of business 20 years ago.

Services such as Alexa and Siri rely on other manufacturers to support them. One of the reasons Alexa and now Google Assistant are breaking into households is because these cheap little speakers can be used to control anything from smart lightbulbs,

to Netflix on your TV, to your thermostat. If Siri becomes a niche player, Apple's going to find it hard to convince other device manufacturers that it's worth their while making products that communicate with Siri.

Apple didn't even manage to get its fiercely expensive HomePod speaker out in time for Christmas. It was first announced in June last year but is only now being released (on 9 February)

with the stupidly high price of £319.

And it's not as if the other parts of the Apple empire have been wildly successful of late. The iPhone X's facial recognition has been an unmitigated flop, with people finally realising that unlocking your phone with your finger is 10 times easier than lifting the phone to your mush – especially when you're wearing sunglasses, a bike helmet or trying to inconspicuously steal a glance at your notifications in a thunderously dull business meeting.

I know people who are scouring eBay for second-hand MacBooks, so put off are they by the frippery of the Touch Bar on the latest models and what it's done to their prices. Meanwhile, the iPad is suffering from a sector-wide tablet malaise (I can't recall a single tablet being launched at CES), smartwatches appear to be a passing fad and Apple is nowhere – absolutely nowhere – on TV.

Apple's not about to go bang. It's got enough cash in the bank to see out a nuclear holocaust and still have enough spare change to buy the moon, but it's most definitely at a turning point.

It's clear to me that Apple is in trouble – it just doesn't know it yet.

“ People are scouring eBay for second-hand MacBooks, so put off are they by the frippery of the Touch Bar ”



Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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