Issue 447

WebUser

18 April - 1 May 2018 / Best software / New apps / See you in a fortnite!

BEAT HARD-DRIVE FAILURE

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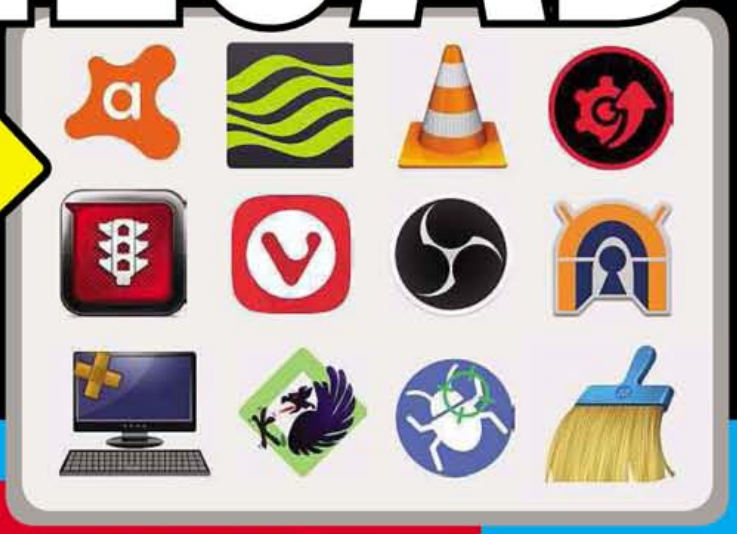

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Ditch your dated downloads

Like Marmite, Brexit and 'Next customer please' signs on supermarket checkouts, this issue's cover feature could prove divisive. "How dare you badmouth CCleaner?", you may protest; while others cry: "What's Opera ever done to you?".

Such complaints are of course justified, but how dull and predictable would we be to devote seven pages to recommending software that you already use and have been for years? More importantly, are the programs and apps that once served you well still as effective and reliable as when you first installed them, or are there now better alternatives available?

In our cover feature, we answer all these questions and more by choosing our favourite replacements for the tools you use every day. After all, today's best free software quickly becomes tomorrow's junk – only four issues ago, we were raving about VPN TunnelBear, yet we now suggest you should shove that grizzly back down his pipe. Find out why on page 40!

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

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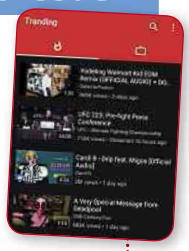

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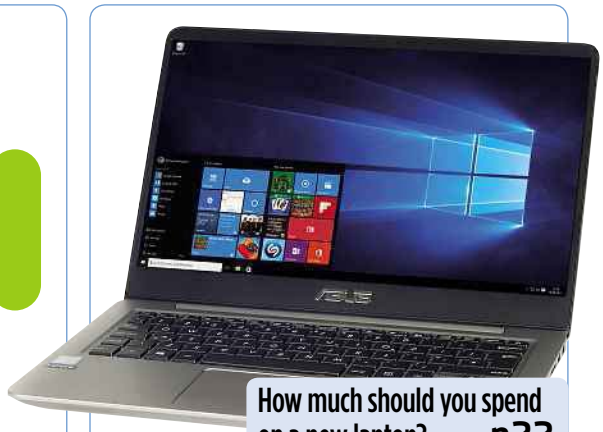

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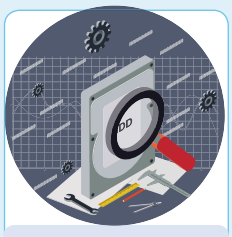
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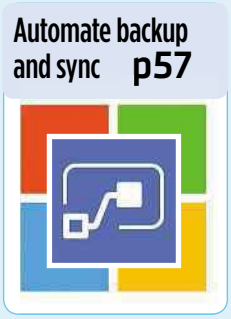
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What's New Online

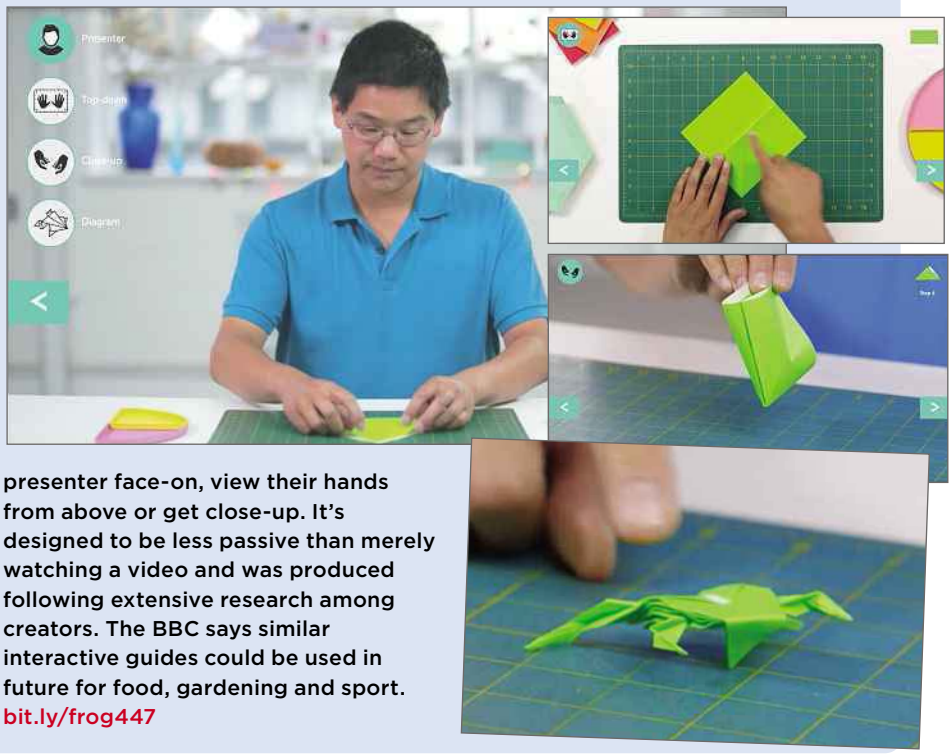
Make an origami jumping frog

Hop along to the BBC Taster website for an interactive lesson in how make your own origami jumping frog. It may sound bizarre, but it's a clever online experiment from the Beeb that lets you view the video guide from three simultaneous camera angles.

Created to accompany the *Make Craft Britain* series on BBC Four, this innovative tutorial pauses after each instruction to give you time to make a fold and move on when you're ready. There are also buttons that let you go back and forward to the different steps, as well as diagrams with written instructions, should you find that method easier to follow. All you need is a piece of paper sized 15 x 15cm, a little patience and nimble fingers.

The 27-step project takes as little as 20 minutes to complete and turns you into both a crafter and a director, as you decide whether to see the presenter face-on, view their hands from above or get close-up. It's designed to be less passive than merely watching a video and was produced following extensive research among creators. The BBC says similar interactive guides could be used in future for food, gardening and sport.

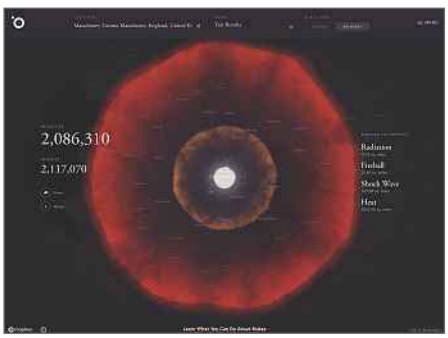
bit.ly/frog447



Drop a virtual nuclear bomb on your garden

bit.ly/bomb447

Nuclear weapons continue to be one of our greatest threats as the recent posturing in Russia highlights. But what if a nuke was dropped on your neighbourhood? By typing the name of a town or city, or letting this grimly fascinating tool use your location, you can see an estimate of how many people would die or become injured by such a devastating bomb. The site maps the affected radius showing the extent of the fireball, radiation, shockwave and heat. You can also view the effects of four different nukes, ranging from the first bomb used in war to the largest USSR weapon ever detonated, while indicating whether detonation occurs on the surface or in the air. There's also lots of information about what happens during a bomb blast, along with timelines of nuclear history and stories about terrorism and the human cost. It all makes for explosive reading.



Tweet live videos of precise moments

www.twitter.com

Twitter has introduced an easy way to share brief clips from live videos, ending the need for people to view entire recordings. Rather than direct your followers to a specific time code, you can now tap the Share button and use a slider to indicate the point at which you want the video to play. From there, you can compose a new tweet, a direct message or share the link via SMS, other social media and email. You can also share a live video by selecting the Share Live option.

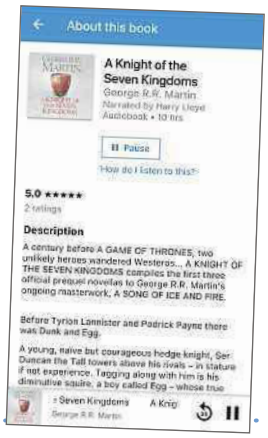
When others click the video you share, they will be able to watch from the moment you indicate and, if the footage is still being broadcast, they can tap 'live' to go to the current stream. The feature works for all live videos, regardless of who is streaming, and is available across Android, iOS, Periscope and Twitter.

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

Rewind and fast-forward audiobooks

bit.ly/books447

When you pause an audiobook from Google Play on Android, iOS and smart devices that use Google Assistant, you'll now be taken back to the beginning of a word or sentence so you don't miss a thing. You can also tap the bookmark icon to save your favourite moments and listen as slowly as 0.5x and as fast as 3x the normal speed.



Convert pixel art to Lego bricks

bit.ly/lego447

If you've ever fancied creating images using Lego bricks or Hama beads, then this free online tool provides the perfect guide. Upload a piece of pixel art (either created by yourself, downloaded from the web or taken as a screenshot from a game) and it will convert the image into the relevant style. Switch between Lego and Hama by pressing 1 or 2, then admire the results or create them by following the patterns. In each case, you can view the artwork full-screen and export them as PNG files. You can also play around with different image effects.

Bulk-remove apps from Facebook

www.facebook.com/settings

The recent Facebook scandal showed how our data can be harvested by third-party apps without our knowledge and used to influence wider events. If, despite this, you're not prepared to take the drastic action of deleting your account, you can instead use a new feature that lets you bulk-delete apps that have access to your data. In both the mobile and desktop versions of Facebook, open Settings and select Apps (tapping 'Logged in with Facebook' on a mobile). Choose the apps you don't want and hit Remove to erase the lot.

Set a map location as phone wallpaper

bit.ly/mapgen447

Fancy personalising your phone using a map as wallpaper? Then enter a city or country into this generator, select a colour and choose your phone model or a suitable resolution. After panning and zooming to get the right spot, hit Generate and apply the PNG file; hold the Home screen in Android and select Wallpapers or go to Settings, Wallpaper in iOS.

NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Send and create cards

Say, "Hey Google, talk to Greetings Cards" to select a greeting and add a personal image to a card to send to a friend. If you use Google Home, the card will also be sent on your phone.

Ask for conversions

To find out what your sterling gets you abroad, say, "Siri, what is £50 in euros/dollars?" You can also ask "what's the tip for $50?" to see the amounts for 10, 15 and 20%.

Enjoy BBC audio content

Listen to podcasts and radio via the BBC's Alexa skill by saying: "Alexa, open the BBC", then uttering commands such as "Alexa, ask the BBC to play Radio Two".

Browse 34 years of *Life* magazine

bit.ly/life447

This experiment uses machine learning to create an interactive encyclopedia from more than four million images in *Life* magazine's photojournalism archives. Scroll through the tags and click to see photos and Wikipedia entries.

Make group video calls in Snapchat

www.snapchat.com

Snapchat now lets you have a video chat with up to 16 friends. Tap the video icon within a Group Chat and send notifications to those you want to join. You can mention friends in Snaps using @ and their username.

Take an ID quiz

bit.ly/idquiz447

Answer 15 questions about yourself and this quiz will try to guess your name – or at least that's the claim. It's actually fake and designed to be a safe way to show how much personal information we give away.

Need to Know

Facebook alerts users affected by massive data scandal

What happened?

Facebook is displaying a pop-up notification to users whose data was collected by Cambridge Analytica, revealing that the political consultancy got its hands on the data of more people than was at first thought. Initially, it was believed Cambridge Analytica mined the profile data of 50 million people, gathered by a researcher using a personality-quiz app three years ago. However, Facebook has now admitted that as many as 87 million users had their data harvested, including more than one million in the UK.

Facebook has also had to scramble to fix another potential data leak, after it was revealed that anyone with a bit of tech know-how and an automated script could scrape phone numbers and email addresses from the social network. Using Facebook's search tool, you could find a person on Facebook simply by entering their phone number or email address. However, the company has conceded that 'malicious actors' have used that feature to scrape publicly available profile data. For example, armed with a collection of email addresses or phone numbers, they could type them into Facebook's search tool and be able to associate real names with those contact details, as well as gather up any public profile information.

Facebook admitted that most of its two billion-plus users have probably had their public profile scraped in this way. The search tool is now disabled – a move that comes as Facebook at long last begins to examine its own systems, announcing new moves to lock down and protect information held on the site. That includes tightening how apps work with Facebook data, in particular limiting their access to personal details.

Additionally, Facebook has "reviewed" how its call and text scanning works. The feature was used to show the people you connect with most at the top of Messenger, but reports suggest it may have been used by Facebook to hold call data and text messages from users' phones.

Facebook is warning users whose data was shared with Cambridge Analytica

Credit: ymgerman / Shutterstock.com

How will it affect you?

If you've received the pop-up warning that your personal data was gathered by Cambridge Analytica, there's very little you can do about it. You can file a subject access request to the data-mining company asking to see any data it holds on you – as you can for any UK-based firm that holds personal data – but asking for it to be deleted at this stage is like closing the barn door after the horse bolted three years ago.

To check if Facebook has your phone number connected to your account – allowing someone to scrape your data – log into the site, click the drop-down menu in the top-right corner and select Settings. Under the Contact heading on the General Account Settings page, you'll see the contact details Facebook has for you. If there's no phone number listed, you couldn't have been searched for via your phone number, though your email address may still have been used.

Still in General Account Settings, click to 'Download a copy of your Facebook data' to find out exactly what Facebook knows about you, including whether any of your calls or texts were nabbed by the social network. It will take some time for Facebook to compile an archive of your data, but you'll get a notification or email when it's ready. You can then download the ZIP file and browse through it – the collections can be huge, so you'll need time to examine it all.

If you're not happy with Facebook's data-leaking, you have two options: either deactivate your account, which removes you from the site but leaves your data held with Facebook so you can easily return if you change your mind; or fully delete your account. You won't be the only one doing so.

What do we think?

We're disappointed with Facebook and its founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg, but we're not surprised. The *Guardian* first reported Cambridge Analytica's data collection back in 2015, and security researchers and privacy activists have been warning about the potential to misuse the phone number lookup system since 2011. That same year, the US Federal Trade Commission slapped Facebook with charges for "failing to keep privacy promises".

Why has it taken Facebook so long to fix these issues? It's clear Facebook has left users at risk by failing to learn lessons about privacy and security. If you're not ready to quit the site, take the time to go through your settings and lock them down as much as possible – but even that may not be enough.

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

Microsoft update tackles ransomware

What happened?

Microsoft rolled out a range of security updates to its cloud services, including a new feature that alerts users if they're being attacked by ransomware and helps them recover their files.

In OneDrive, Microsoft's cloud-storage service, you'll now be able to roll back your account to any time in the past 30 days, which is handy if you accidentally changed or deleted a file or you're hit by a ransomware attack. If the system spots your files being deleted in bulk, it'll let you know so you can retrieve your lost data via the File Restore function.

In its Outlook.com webmail service, Microsoft has added easy-to-use email encryption to protect sensitive messages and prevent emails from being forwarded or copied. Additionally, Microsoft is rolling out more advanced link scanning in Word, Excel and PowerPoint, to help you avoid inadvertently clicking malware-infected links.

How will it affect you?

If you have a subscription to Office 365 Home and Personal, the File Restore and ransomware alerts should soon be available in your account, though hopefully, you'll never have to use either.

The security protections for Outlook.com will be available to anyone using the Microsoft email platform, but if you're sending an encrypted or forward-protected message to someone not using Outlook.com, they'll have to use a one-time password or otherwise prove their identity before they will be able to read the email.

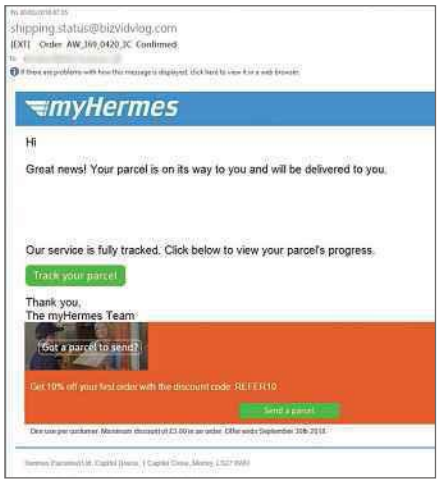
What do we think?

Such security tweaks may seem small, but you'll be grateful they exist if you ever suffer a ransomware attack. The same goes for the encryption tools in email – they're not everyday tools for most of us, but making encryption easy to use means more of us will be protected. Simplifying security tools is the best way to keep us all safe, so well done Microsoft – but please roll out the OneDrive ransomware tools to everyone, not just those paying for a subscription.

Fake Hermes email installs keylogger

What happened?

Fake parcel-delivery notifications are spreading a keylogger, which harvests bank details and other data by tracking everything you do on your computer.



We're all used to receiving scam emails from hackers trying to trick us, but researchers say this particular attack is catching people out because it contains some accurate details about those it's targeting, making the messages seem legitimate. The emails purport to be from Hermes delivery service and say they have tracking information for a package, hoping to trick you into entering passwords. Clicking the link will install a keylogger that tracks everything you type, from bank logins to PayPal passwords. Other variations of the attack install ransomware.

How will it affect you?

Scams like this aren't new, but they're harder to spot when they contain your real name, address or phone number. That data has probably been leaked in other attacks or scraped from the web.

If you receive an email asking you to click a link or download an attachment, don't do it. Most (but, sadly, not all) legitimate companies have learned to stop doing this. Instead, go to the website yourself and log into your account for the information. It may take longer, but it's worth the extra few steps to stay safe.

What do we think?

Such attacks can catch out even the most careful web user, so make sure you have antivirus installed and your files are backed up – it'll put your mind at rest if you accidentally click a link without thinking.

As ever, share this knowledge with your less tech-savvy friends and family, who may assume that the use of their correct name and address in an email is a signal it's legitimate. Given the amount of personal data floating around the web these days, this is no longer a guarantee that the sender isn't a scammer, which is why the constant leaks and breaches are so dangerous to our online safety.

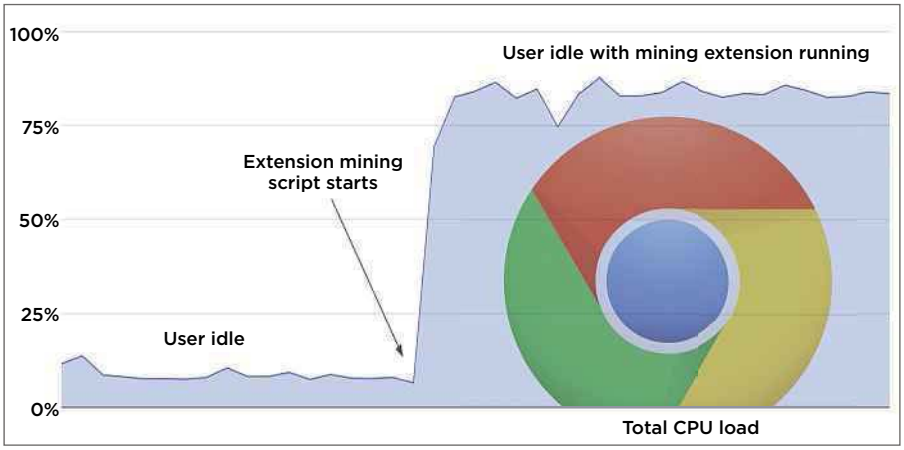
Google bans cryptomining Chrome extensions

What happened?

Google has banned from the Chrome Web Store any extension that features a secret cryptocurrency miner. In a blog post (bit.ly/crypto447), the search giant said that over the past few months there has been a rise in malicious extensions that appear to outwardly provide useful functionality while surreptitiously embedding hidden cryptocurrency-mining scripts that run in the background without the user's consent.

"These mining scripts often consume significant CPU resources, and can severely impact system performance and power consumption," said James Wagner, Extensions Platform Product Manager at Google. He revealed that until now, Google permitted cryptocurrency mining in extensions as long as it was the add-on's sole purpose and the user was adequately informed about the mining behaviour. But Wagner added that around 90% of all such extensions that developers have attempted to upload to the Chrome Web Store have failed to comply with these policies and have been either rejected or removed.

Existing extensions that mine cryptocurrency will be delisted from the Chrome Web Store in late June. "This policy is another step forward in ensuring that Chrome users can enjoy the benefits of extensions without exposing themselves to hidden risks," said Wagner.



Source: Chromium Blog

How will it affect you?

We doubt that *Web User* readers have much interest in the devious practice of stealing processing power from other people to mine for cryptocurrency, but there's a chance you may have inadvertently installed one of these malicious extensions. In Chrome, go to `chrome:extensions` and review all the add-ons you have installed. If anything looks suspicious, delete it immediately.

Cryptojacking Test (cryptojackingtest.com) is a one-click test that lets you check whether your browser is safe from cryptomining. It tries to install a (harmless) coin-mining script in your browser, to discover whether it's protected. If it's not, you should either install No Coin (bit.ly/nocoin447) or add the filter of the same name to your ad blocker.

What do we think?

We're pleased that Google has finally banned these nefarious extensions from the Chrome Web Store, although we have to wonder what took it so long. It's worrying to think that someone could be harnessing your PC's power for their own gain and although cryptomining tools aren't necessarily harmful, they put a strain on your hardware, making it loud, hot and slow. On top of that, you could also get a nasty shock when you receive your electricity bill.

FIRST LOOK

Fitbit Versa

bit.ly/fitbit447

Could the Fitbit Versa be the smartwatch that finally breaks through to the masses? Fitbit certainly hopes so. It's stripped away the non-essentials from its first true smartwatch, the Fitbit Ionic, to deliver a more basic wearable at a cut-down price and size. By doing so, it hopes to attract a wider demographic to the smartwatch party, which until now has been dominated by men.

The watch feels more compact and lightweight than similar wearables, primarily because it houses a smaller battery. Fitbit claims this lasts for just over four days on a single charge but to achieve this, the screen is off most of the time. You can activate it with a vigorous flick of the wrist but, irritatingly, we found this only worked about half the time. On the plus side, the watch supports all the usual smartwatch notifications – such as emails, texts and phone calls – and is waterproof to 50m. It also tracks laps and calories, and is very straightforward to use.

The Versa comes in three colours – grey, rose gold and black – and can also be customised with downloadable faces and a choice of straps. This reinforces the notion that, although it has many elements of a fitness watch, the Versa is best thought of as a 'lifestyle' watch – a wearable that aims to fit in with your lifestyle while simultaneously improving it by, for example, nagging you every hour to get up and do some steps.

The watch has no GPS so if you want to track your run or bike ride, you'll need to bring your phone with you, so the Versa can 'borrow' its GPS chip. If you don't have a phone to couple it with, it will still try to track how far you've been – it just won't be as accurate. Still, at £200, the Versa is a great buy.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Google launching a 4K Chromebook?

Chromebooks are traditionally low-spec and low-cost – it's their main selling point and why they've proved so popular with people on a tight budget, such as students, retirees and tech-magazine journalists. However, this could be about to change as rumours suggests that Google is about to launch a 4K Chromebook.

The mooted machine is codenamed Atlas, and was 'revealed' when a reference to a 4K Chromebook screen was spotted in the Chromium OS source code (the development version of Chrome OS) and reported by the website XDA Developers (bit.ly/xda447). The only information the code provides is the Atlas name and a screen resolution, but since that resolution is 3,840 x 2,160 pixels, which is indeed 4K, it looks like a higher-end Chromebook is on the cards.

This new resolution also means a widescreen 16:9 aspect ratio rather than the standard 3:2 display, which provides more space for browsing, streaming video, working with Google apps and performing other tasks, side by side. A separate report by The Verge suggests that the new Chromebook will not have an SD card slot.

Pricey Chromebooks aren't an entirely new concept – last year's Pixelbook cost nearly £1,000 – but the addition of 4K could mean higher specifications and prices to come. Also, the creation of a 4K Chromebook would push Google's Chromebook partners to follow suit and, in the process, create a range of 4K Chromebook devices.

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

Chromebooks aren't renowned for the quality of their screens, so a 4K model seems like a logical step. Whether Atlas is a one-off or the first of many remains to be seen, but we hope that Google also caters to those of us with tighter budgets by continuing to offer cheaper Chromebooks, too.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Pixel Scores

bit.ly/pixelscores447 | From £10

Football fans nostalgic for the days of checking scores on Teletext and waiting 10 minutes to discover their team was being thrashed 6-0 will love Pixel Scores. This retro results app adopts the familiar Teletext and Ceefax themes to display football scores and updates without "needless info from other sports and leagues". Pixel Scores' creators say they already have a fully working prototype of the iOS version. They hope to raise £3,000 by 30 April to finish development and create the Android app.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

EU introduces borderless streaming

New EU rules allow UK users of streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime to access their home libraries when on holiday. Previously, subscriptions were blocked, or content limited to the country the user was streaming in.

Chrome to add emoji feature

Google is testing a feature that makes it easier to insert emoji when you're using Chrome. The latest version of the Chrome Canary development browser offers a selection of emoji that appears when you right-click a text field.

WE DON'T LIKE...

YouTube 'harvested data about children'

More than 20 privacy groups have filed a complaint alleging that Google has violated the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act by illegally harvesting data about young users under the age of 13 to target them with ads.

Britain's 4G speeds rank poorly

The UK's 4G speeds lag behind much of the world, with its 23.11Mbps average comparing poorly to leader Singapore's 44.31Mbps, according to research by OpenSignal. The UK ranked 39th out of all countries, beaten by Mexico, Ecuador and Armenia.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

150 million MyFitnessPal users hit by data breach

Health and fitness app MyFitnessPal has been hit by one of the biggest data breaches in history, after cybercriminals made off with the personal data of around 150 million users.

Under Armour, the sportswear brand that owns and operates the app, confirmed that usernames, email addresses and hashed passwords were all stolen in the breach. The company said that the majority of the affected passwords were encrypted with the Bcrypt algorithm, which has a good reputation for security.

The breach occurred in February and was detected on 25 March. MyFitnessPal has asked all affected users to change their account passwords. "We take our obligation to safeguard your personal data very seriously and are alerting you about this issue so you can take steps to help protect your information," the company said as part of an announcement notifying customers of the breach.

"Once we became aware, we quickly took steps to determine the nature and scope of the issue. We are working with leading data-security firms to assist in our investigation, as well as law-enforcement authorities."

bit.ly/myfitness447

New Android cryptomining malware discovered

Android smartphones are facing attack from yet another variation of cryptocurrency-mining malware that can potentially cause a device to fail through overheating. Dubbed HiddenMiner, the malware was discovered by cybersecurity firm Trend Micro, which says the software siphons a phone's processing power to generate the cryptocurrency Monero.

Commonly known as 'cryptojacking', the malware can force a processor to run at maximum speed for extended amounts of time, causing the phone's chipset to overheat and fail, or even – in the worst-case scenario – combust.

The code for HiddenMiner doesn't stop mining for Monero until the device is completely drained or it overheats and fails. It poses as a legitimate update for the Google Play app, and continues to pop up as a notification until it is granted administrative access.

"HiddenMiner is yet another example of how cybercriminals are riding the cryptocurrency-mining wave," said Trend Micro. "This reinforces the importance of practising mobile-security hygiene: download only from official app marketplaces, regularly update the device's OS and be more prudent with the permissions you grant to apps."

bit.ly/hidden447

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Tom Gaffney, Security Consultant at F-Secure (www.f-secure.com)

Q Does using a VPN make you completely anonymous online?
Owen West, via email

A Not completely, but it acts as a shield against online snoopers. It's most often used to keep you safe on public Wi-Fi by hiding you from criminals and stopping them intercepting your communications.

A VPN also protects you from overzealous websites and apps that hoover up personal data relating to your location, browsing habits, purchases and social media.

VPNs are also used by people engaging in nefarious activities, from kids accessing adult content to serious criminals wishing to connect anonymously. VPNs do not offer these people invisibility, however, because all VPN vendors need to comply with local-enforcement laws, so under correct judicial process it is technically possible to identify devices based on IP addresses.

Q How can I find out if my VPN is leaking my personal data?
Patrick Gill, Twitter

A Of course, you read those terms and conditions, right? Okay, we're not judging – because who does? But if you're planning to use a VPN as an anonymity tool, then this is important: you need to check the terms and conditions because some free VPN vendors make their money by selling data, such as your browsing history, to third parties. So check that privacy policy and if it's not plain, then steer clear.

Q Is there any point deleting my Facebook account if my data has already been shared?
Jennifer Poole, Facebook

A Yes – we would recommend you periodically purge data from social-media sites. When GDPR comes into effect in Europe, it will extend the right to be forgotten, and although you can't retrieve data you've shared, you can at least limit its use.

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

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Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

VIDEO GAMES

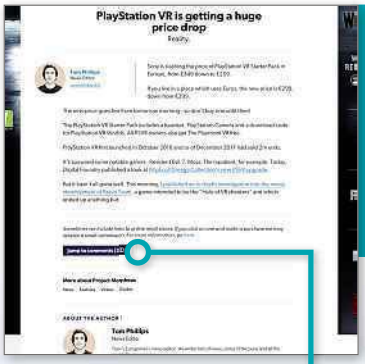
RELAUNCH

Eurogamer

www.eurogamer.net

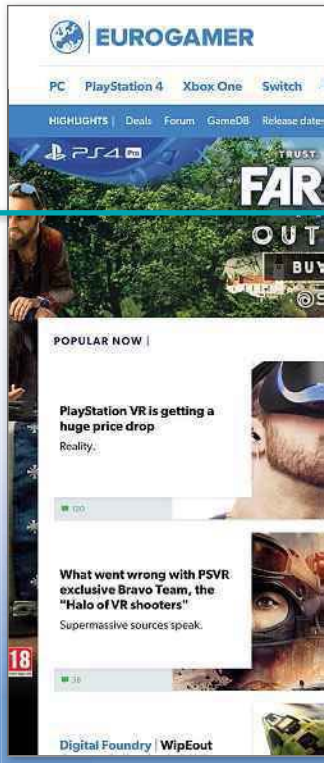
Launched in 1999 and based in the UK, Eurogamer has become one of Europe's most popular gaming websites. With this revamp, the quality of the design has caught up with the excellent standard of writing, presenting a fresher, more modern look. Although this has meant removing the homepage filters that allowed you to select the platform and type of article, the content is now more clearly separated into 'popular now' and 'latest'. Scrolling shows more articles grouped by theme rather than date, and videos are more prominent, which greatly improves navigation. There's also a smart new mobile version of the site.

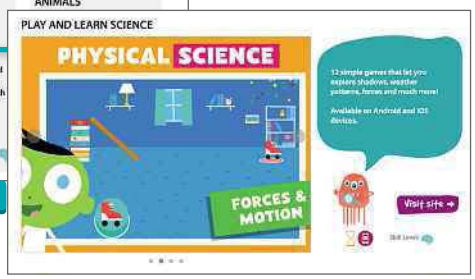
Our rating ★★★★★



CLEARER PAGES The improved design and a new, larger font make article pages easier to read

COMMENTS View the comments beneath stories more clearly, thanks to the new use of threads





NEW

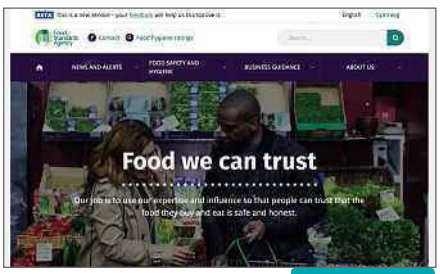
SCIENCE

Wow Science

wowscience.co.uk

Educators have for years tried to teach that science is exciting and this site does a great job of proving it. Wow Science scours the web to bring together fun learning materials aimed at children, parents and teachers. These are presented as games, activities, videos, apps and experiments, most of which are free to explore. It's easy to find material relating to specific topics, with symbols that tell you how easy or hard a task is, and how long it's likely to take. Each activity is explained well and accompanied by links to related resources. Wow Science also features colourful monsters, including gadget-loving Pippy and computer-whiz Snailzilla, who add to the fun.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

FOOD

Food Standards Agency

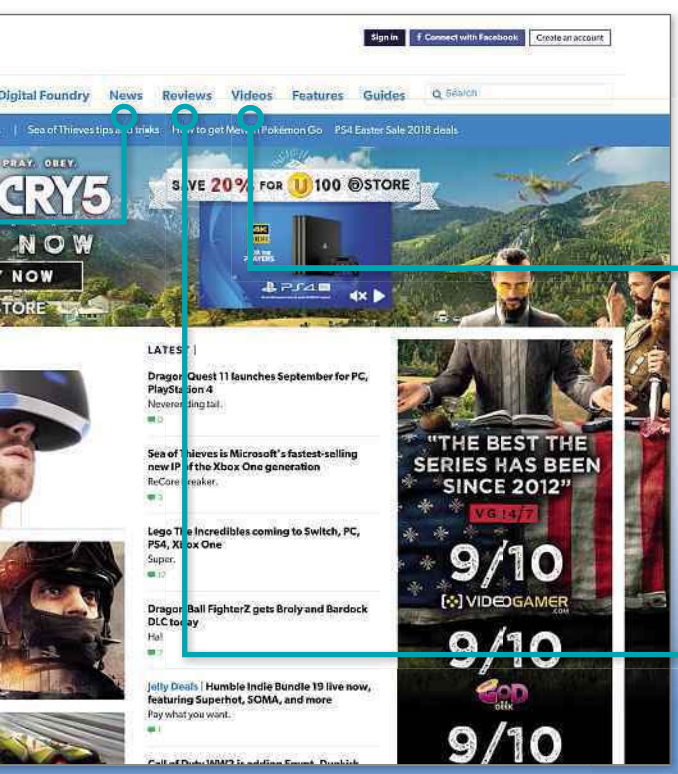
beta.food.gov.uk

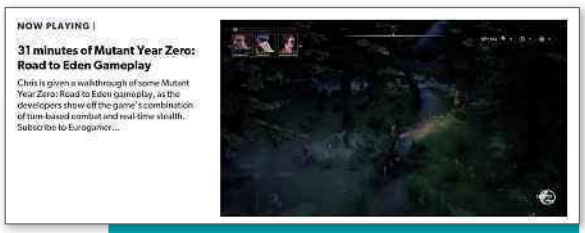
The Food Standards Agency is inviting you to sample a beta version of its new website before it relaunches later this year. Disappointingly, the most interesting section, which lets you view the hygiene ratings of restaurants and takeaways, hasn't been touched by the revamp. However, the homepage is bolder and clearer, with fewer navigation tabs; the latest news and alerts are more prominent; and popular content is highlighted. We'd like to see the info about food allergies higher up the page, but there's still time for improvement.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

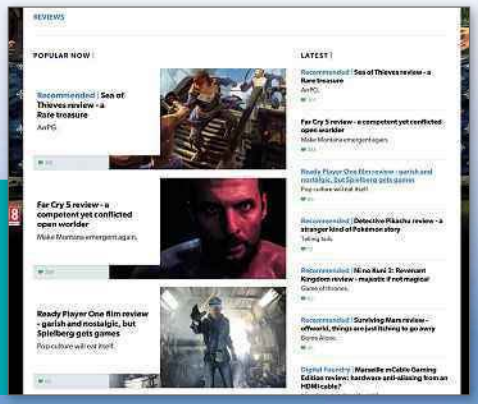
Reviews by David Crookes

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





VIDEOS
Watch 'Let's Play' videos and get tips for games in an embedded YouTube player



REVIEWS
As well as the latest news, Eurogamer is packed with incisive reviews of games

RELAUNCH

VIDEO GAMES

Retro Now!

www.retro-now.com

With the launch of new Atari, C64 and ZX Spectrum machines, 2018 looks set to be the year of retro gaming. This site's relaunch presents an eclectic selection of well-written articles about the growing retro scene and, while the navigation suggests a C64/Speccy bias, the reviews also include the Amiga, arcade games and movies. News stories feel rather at the whim of the writers, lending it a blog-like lack of focus, and the hard-to-read white homepage headlines are a pain, but there are commendable attempts to foster a community, with the ability to share and comment on stories.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

NEW

ARCHITECTURE

Save Dunelm House

savedunelmhouse.com

Durham boasts a magnificent cathedral and castle so why is this site obsessed with saving the crumbling Students' Union building from demolition? Save Dunelm House explains the value of its Brutalist 1960s architecture and goes to great lengths to dispel myths about the building. The main aim is to get people to sign a petition or write to the university's Vice Chancellor but, with plenty of photos inside and out, it's equally great for anyone who enjoys exploring architecture. The site also promises to document alternative plans with the help of skilled architects and engineers.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

SOCIAL MEDIA

Schoolmates

schoolmates.co.uk

Normally, we'd dismiss a new version of Friends Reunited – the now defunct site that let you reconnect with school friends – but with the recent furore over Facebook, perhaps people are seeking an alternative. Schoolmates lets you search by school or friend before prompting you to register. You can then connect to a school, indicate when you started or left there, and invite friends, add photos, create stories and share memories. It's easy to use and looks smart, but it will only work if enough people join. Given the existence of so many social-media sites, we're not sure it's special enough.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

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

BACK ISSUES DISC 2017

Our **2017 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year 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

NEW

FOOD & DRINK

Food and Sake

foodandsake.com

If you think sake should only be paired with Japanese food and served hot in tiny ceramic cups, then take a look at this website from the Japanese government. Aiming to inspire wine enthusiasts, it shows that sake can accompany many foods, from fish and chips to prosciutto, explaining why the combination works and reveals the most suitable brands, as well as listing London restaurants that offer sake combinations, and links to table-booking sites. There's a stylishly designed section revealing 10 notable things about sake, and another that explores the brands in detail. *Utsukushii*, as the Japanese would say: beautiful.

Our rating ★★★★★

RELAUNCH

FILM

Bradford Film Heritage

www.bradfordfilmheritage.com

Although some entries in this collection of Bradford-filmed productions feel a tad desperate (*Countryfile* and *The One Show* are listed), the site is at least comprehensive. Indeed, as a homage to an area's film heritage, it takes some beating, letting you select a century or decade to discover what was made in a particular year. We like the links to the IMDb and the lists of locations for each film, and we love how the site maps the numerous movie, heritage and TV sites, and describes tour routes around the city to see them. There's also an interesting blog that reveals what a labour of love the site has become.

Our rating ★★★★☆

RELAUNCH

FITNESS

Manchester Half 2018

www.manchesterhalfmarathon.com

Created to promote the UK's fastest and flattest half-marathon, the revamped Manchester Half website contains plenty of info to secure a place or make plans to watch, with route maps, road-closure information and details of how to enter. It's a good start, but then the site begins to flag. The Hotels section only lists official partners and the hydration/nutrition section consisted of nothing but a confusing placeholder on our visit, with a single picture from 2017 on the photos page and some sections leading to nothing. That said, the event isn't until 14 October, so there's still time to perfect it.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

RELAUNCH

BOOKS

Tangerine Press

www.thetangerinepress.com

As a champion of maverick, counter-culture writing, Tangerine Press occupies its own niche within the book-publishing industry. This is made more stark by the fact it also specialises in hand-bound, hardcover, signed limited editions, most of which are available to buy via this swish website. Infused with a style that nods to the 1970s, the site lists books by genre, providing a short synopsis of each one, and gives a flavour of the materials used to bind them. There are a few images of the book-binding process and information about the Tooting-based publisher's background, and you can learn about forthcoming books and sign up to a mailing list.

Our rating ★★★★☆

COULD DO BETTER

RELAUNCH

VIDEO GAMES

Atari VCS

ataribox.com

Atari is making a comeback with its first new console in 25 years. Originally called the Ataribox, it's been renamed the Atari VCS, but aside from a few photos and a video, this website has very little detail beyond a few gushing quotes from gamers and references to various tech websites, only one of which is clickable – a news story about the change of name. Even so, the site urges you to join the waiting list for news about the launch which, we assume, will eventually fill you in with the information necessary to make a purchase decision.

Our rating ★★☆☆☆

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Enhance your Wix site with new design tools

Wix (www.wix.com) has added a range of new design tools to its web-building service that make your site look more professional than ever. On a basic level, you can now add filters to your images directly on the site, so you don't have to use an image processor to get them to look consistent. There are also 20 new fonts available to give your text a distinctive look. You can now pin text to your site, so it's still visible when users scroll away, and there are some interesting new effects for freezing, fading and disappearing sections.

Learn from Google on the go

Google has a huge number of resources that teach you the best way to build a website that performs well in its search engine,

but Primer is a great new mobile option. Available for Android (bit.ly/priand447) and iOS (bit.ly/priapp447), it provides a series of interactive lessons on a range of topics, which you can work through whenever you've got a spare few minutes. If the topics on the homepage don't interest you, tap the magnifying glass to see the full range of categories available.

Deal of the Fortnight

UK2 (www.uk2.net) is offering its Essential Hosting package for £1.20 per month for the first 12 months. This saves you 83% on the usual cost of £7.14.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
Paul Nesbitt, Managing Director, PAC WebHosting (www.pacwebhosting.co.uk)

Q As a beginner who knows nothing about creating a site, should I use a site builder, such as Wix, or a content-management system such as WordPress, or should I learn HTML from scratch?

Karl Davies, via email

A The drawback with a website builder is that you are tied into its service and can't simply move your website to another provider. With that in mind, I would recommend WordPress, because it is easy to learn and very popular, is provider-independent and provides loads of plugins and templates that give you pretty much everything you need. Pages can be built visually using a page-building plugin such as WP Bakery (wpbakery.com), which is extremely powerful.

MINI WORKSHOP | Automatically optimise WordPress images as you upload them

Smush: bit.ly/smush447 | 10 mins | Self-hosted WordPress website

WordPress automatically compresses some images when you upload them via its media tool, but they can still be large and cause pages to load slowly. The Smush plugin takes things a step further

1 Go to Plugins 1 in WordPress and click the Add New button. Use the search box to look for Smush 2 and be careful not to confuse it with add-ons that have a similar name. Find Smush and click Install Now. When it's downloaded, click the Activate button. 3

2 The Quick Setup configuration tool appears. By default, the option to optimise images as soon as you upload them is switched on. 1 You can also choose to keep EXIF data, 2 which is off by default, and resize overly large images, 3 which is also off when you start. Make any adjustments and click Get Started.

3 Smush scans your existing images for any it can squeeze and gives you a total. 1 You can squash 50 images at once with the free version. 2 You can also resize images that are too large when they're uploaded 3 and change your media directory if you don't use the uploader. 4 Scroll down to see more settings to explore.

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

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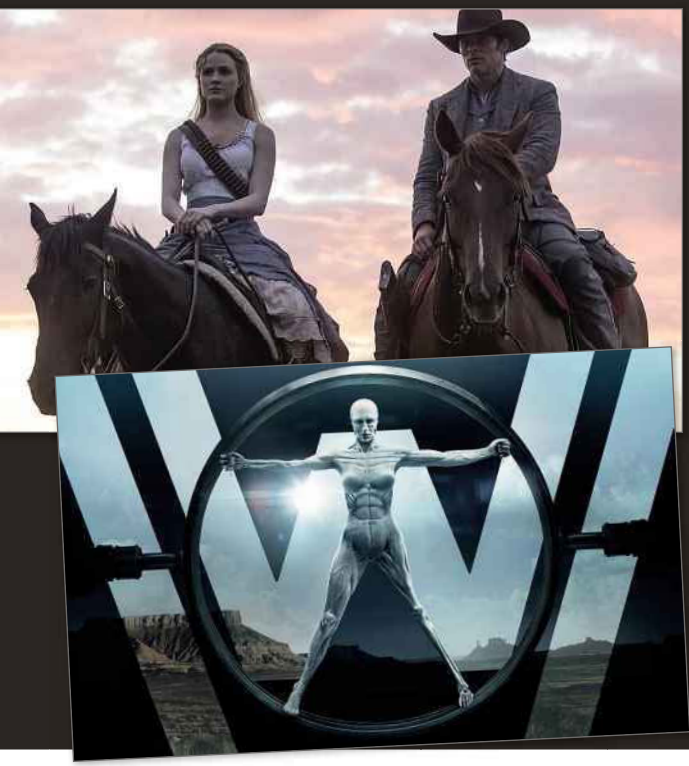
PHILIPS

What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight



Watch Season 2 of *Westworld*

From 23 April

After an explosive end to its first season, which saw several major characters apparently killed off, the sci-fi western drama *Westworld* is back for more gun-toting robot action. Set in the fictional Westworld, a technologically advanced Wild West-themed amusement park populated by android hosts, the HBO-made series impressed critics and viewers alike during its initial outing, and starred Anthony Hopkins, Thandie Newton and Ed Harris in lead roles. Harris has confirmed he is returning in Season 2 as the mysterious Man in Black, but other plot details have been kept tightly under wraps, although it's likely that the robots will continue their breakout from Westworld into the outside world.

As with Season 1, *Westworld* will be shown in the UK on Sky Atlantic, which means you can watch new episodes live and on catch-up via Now TV, even if you don't have Sky. Each of the 10 instalments will be shown at the same time as they're broadcast in the US, which is in the early hours of Monday morning here.

You can watch the official trailer for Season 2 of *Westworld* at bit.ly/westworld447.

Catch *The New Legends of Monkey*

From 27 April

Pigsy! Sandy! Tripitaka! Anyone who grew up in the 1980s will remember the iconic characters from *Monkey*, the poorly-dubbed-from-Japanese series about a magical-staff wielding god who was "born from an egg on a mountain top". Now the story has been rebooted by Netflix in partnership with Australian broadcaster ABC Me, drawing on the same source material – the 16th-Century Chinese fable *Journey to the West* – to create 10 half-hour episodes of action, adventure and magic. Sadly, *The New Legends of Monkey* lacks the catchy theme tune and kitsch humour of the original, but reviews Down Under (where it began screening in January) have been generally positive. You can watch a trailer at bit.ly/monkey447.

Venture *Into the Badlands* Season 3

From 23 April

The third season of this post-apocalyptic martial-arts series finds protective warrior Sunny (Daniel Wu) doing his best to provide for his young son, before a mystery illness forces him back into the titular Badlands. He's joined by Bajie, played by Nick Frost, who UK viewers will best recognise from *Spaced* and *Shaun of the Dead*. Season 3 introduces new villains in the form of a pair of religious zealots, but none of it will make much sense unless you've watched the first two seasons, which are fortunately both still available to stream on Amazon Prime Video.

Brush with *Genius: Picasso*

From 24 April

Antonio Banderas plays Pablo Picasso in the new season of National Geographic's acclaimed series *Genius*,

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

following Season 1 which depicted the life of Albert Einstein. The 10 episodes explore how the Spanish artist's passionate nature and relentless creative drive were inextricably linked to his personal life, which included tumultuous marriages, numerous affairs and constantly shifting political and personal alliances.

The National Geographic Channel is available to stream through various TV apps and set-top boxes, including those from Sky, Virgin Media, BT, Plusnet and TalkTalk. Watch a trailer at bit.ly/picasso447.

Take a voyage with *The Terror*

From 24 April

Executive-produced by Ridley Scott and based on the best-selling novel by Dan Simmons, *The Terror* tells the harrowing story of a Royal Navy crew's perilous voyage into unchartered territory as they attempt to discover the Northwest Passage. Faced with treacherous conditions, limited resources and fear of the unknown, crew members struggle with the elements and each other as they freeze, starve and panic. Ciarán Hinds (*Rome*, *Game of Thrones*) stars as Captain Sir John Franklin in a tale that's made even more terrifying by being based on true events.

The Terror is being shown in the UK on AMC Global, which means you'll need a BT TV or BT Sport Pack subscription to watch it. You can watch the trailer at bit.ly/terror447.

See what *Barry* is up to

From 19 April

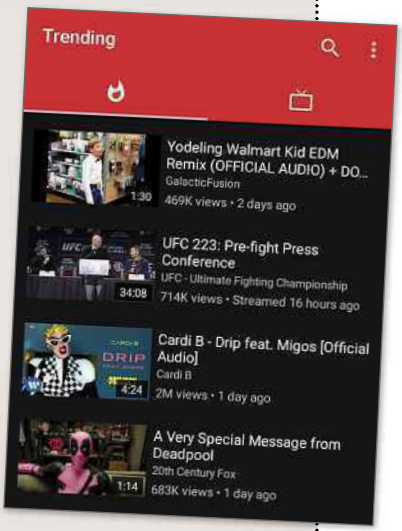
Barry is nothing to do with our Page 404 columnist, but is a dark new US comedy series, made by HBO and showing in the UK on Sky Atlantic – and therefore Now TV and Sky Go. It features comedian Bill Hader as the eponymous Barry, a former marine-turned-hitman who joins a local theatre group in Los Angeles in pursuit of his target. That might not sound particularly rib-tickling, but the show currently has a 98% rating on Rotten Tomatoes and – we *love* this – it co-stars Henry 'The Fonz' Winkler as Barry's acting teacher.

Stream the London Marathon online

22 April

Rather than slumping in front of your TV watching other people slog around the capital for 26.2 miles, why not stream this year's Virgin Money London Marathon to your phone, tablet or laptop? The Beeb is providing full live coverage of the road race via the iPlayer website and app, as well as highlights on-demand. Online streaming of the 'elite' races begins at 8.50am, with a web-only Finish Line stream on BBC Sport from 12.30pm. Notable participants this year include Sir Mo Farah, DJ Chris Evans, celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay and Katie Price.

Watch mobile YouTube videos without ads



You can use an ad blocker to skip adverts on YouTube in your browser, but you're stuck with them on your Android phone or tablet – at least until YouTube Red (www.youtube.com/red) launches in the UK. However, there is a stop-gap solution from an app called NewPipe, which lets you watch YouTube videos without Google tracking your viewing and interrupting your streaming with ads. It also lets you download videos to watch offline – another feature that's only officially available from YouTube Red.

The catch is that – unsurprisingly – NewPipe isn't available from the Google Play store, so installing it isn't easy and involves some risk. You first need to go to Settings, Security on your device and allow the installation of apps from unknown sources. Next, go to f-droid.org in your mobile browser and download the F-Droid alternative app store. Install and open this, then search for, download and install NewPipe (choose the 'Lightweight YouTube frontend' option). You'll now be able to watch YouTube videos unhindered – just remember to disable Android's 'Unknown sources' setting once you've got the app.

Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Affordable laptops

How much should you spend on your next laptop? We tested models priced from £299 to £600 to find out whether you get what you pay for

The concept of an affordable laptop means different things to different people, so we took 10 laptops priced between £299 and £600, and put them through our rigorous performance tests. The big question is: do you get twice the laptop if you pay twice the price for it?

To find out, we've picked out four models, including laptops from both ends of our price scale, to look at in detail.

HOW WE TESTED

We run benchmarking software on all the PCs we test so you can compare how well they run during a series of demanding Windows tests. We also test the batteries by playing a video on a fully charged laptop at a standard screen brightness, measuring how long it takes to run out of charge. Lastly, we use a colorimeter to measure the screen's brightness, contrast and colour depth.

Asus ZenBook UX410 | £539.95 | Buy from John Lewis: bit.ly/asuszb447

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

The Asus ZenBook UX410 isn't the cheapest laptop we reviewed in this test, but we think it's the best value – for your £539.95, you get a laptop that looks and feels like a £1,000 model.

The compact, well-built, robust aluminium chassis houses a 14in screen with ultra-slim 6mm side bezels, giving it a smart and impressive look for a laptop of this price. And the slim lines don't come at the expense of connectivity: you get a full suite of USB 3 and HDMI ports, plus an SD-card reader and a USB-C port. There's also dual-band 802.11ac Wi-Fi.

Our only complaint is the core specification, which uses an Intel i3-7100U processor coupled with 4GB of memory and a 128GB SSD. This means it managed only a mid-table placing among the 10 laptops we reviewed in this test, though it's fine for everyday browsing and office applications.

However, any downsides pale into insignificance when you look at its screen. This model had the best colour accuracy of all the devices we tested, producing high levels of brightness and contrast (362cd/m² and 1,189:1 respectively) and displaying 92% of Microsoft's sRGB colour standard. The sound is a tad harsh with the volume turned up high, but if you set it just loud enough to drown out the occasional whine from the cooling system, it's fine for casual listening.

The battery lasted for 8 hours and 12 minutes in our video playback test, which placed it third overall. That's not bad, but the battery life of the two Acer laptops we tested was significantly better.

VERDICT

★★★★★

This isn't the most powerful laptop we tested, providing middling performance overall, but we love the compact aluminium body and impressive design, which feels built to last and a cut above the competition. The screen looks fabulous and performed very well in our colour and brightness tests. If your computing needs are modest but you want everything to look fantastic on screen, this is an excellent option.

Acer Aspire 5 A515-51 | £569.97 |
Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/acas447

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

WebUser SILVER AWARD

If you're not seduced by the Gold Award-winning Asus ZenBook's looks, and value performance over all else, the Acer Aspire 5 is a great choice. The chassis is predominantly plastic, with an aluminium keyboard surround, but this functional exterior belies its high internal specification, which boasts an Intel Core i5-8250 processor that topped our Windows performance benchmarks in this group.

The screen, however, is a bit of a let-down. At 15.6in, it's the joint biggest in this test and its 256cd/m² brightness isn't bad as long as you're not in direct sunlight. However, it can only reproduce 55.5% of the colours in Microsoft's sRGB colour standard, which is disappointing. The speakers throw out a lot of noise but they lack clarity and finesse, so you'll want to plug in headphones, even at lower volumes.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

Windows performance is the priority with this Acer laptop, but the screen isn't great and its large size makes the whole package bulky. However, battery life is good, lasting 9 hours and 8 minutes in our video-playback test.

HP 250 G6 | £578.40 |
Buy from HP: bit.ly/hpg447

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

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

This HP model's glossy silver casing and faux aluminium keyboard feel sturdy, but it's entirely made of plastic. It bucks the current trend of ditching all manner of legacy ports and devices to achieve a smaller size, and comes with a DVD writer, Gigabit Ethernet port and VGA port, as well as the more common HDMI, USB 2 and USB 3 ports.

The model we reviewed had a good enough processor in the Intel Core i5-7200U, with 8GB of memory and a 250GB SSD. Its performance was some way behind the two Acer laptops but third out of 10 isn't bad, and its battery managed 6 hours and 59 minutes in our test, placing it fourth.

The screen is large, at 15.6in, but 234cd/m² isn't bright enough to use in sunlight and it only produces 53.4% of the colours in the sRGB standard.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

This laptop is a good all-rounder – not as impressively designed and built as the Asus ZenBook or as powerful as the Acer Aspire, but it sits comfortably between the two, offering a middling build, performance and screen.

Lenovo IdeaPad 320S | £299 |
Buy from Amazon: bit.ly/leno447

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

The cheapest laptop we tested still manages to look and feel a cut above a basic budget model, particularly with our test unit's "snow white" finish. At 1.7kg it's light enough to be toted around but you still get a 14in screen and decent connectivity, including a USB-C port.

It's not long, however, before you spot where corners have been cut to accommodate the low price. The keyboard and touchpad aren't quite up to the luxury levels of the more expensive models, but worse than this is the dim screen, which in our tests only peaked at 217cd/m². Battery life was also short, lasting 5 hours and 8 minutes in our tests.

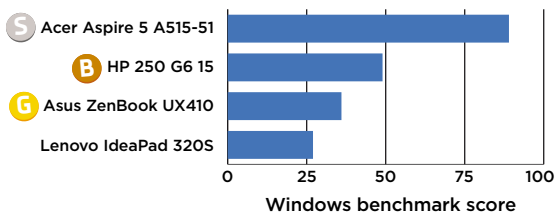
The limited Pentium 4515 processor and 4GB of memory hampered performance, with an overall Windows benchmark score of 27, which was at the bottom of this group.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

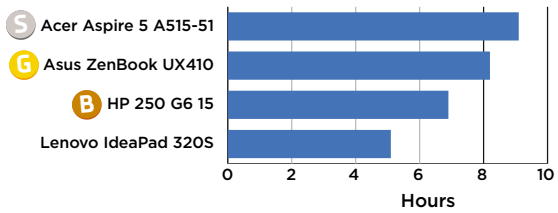
This is a great laptop for such a low price, despite the lacklustre screen and performance, but in almost every respect, doubling your spend gets you more than double the power, battery life and screen quality.

TEST-RESULTS CHARTS

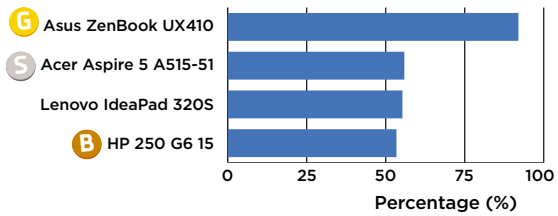
Windows benchmark score



Battery life



sRGB colour coverage



	Asus ZenBook UX410	Acer Aspire 5 A515-51	HP 250 G6 15	Lenovo IdeaPad 320S
WEBSITE	www.asus.com	www.acer.com	www.hp.com	www.lenovo.com
PRICE	£539.95	£569.97	£578.40	£299
BUY FROM	John Lewis: bit.ly/asuszb447	Amazon: bit.ly/acas447	HP: bit.ly/hpg447	Amazon: bit.ly/leno447
PROCESSOR	Intel Core i3-7100U	Intel Core i5-8250U	Intel Core i5-7200U	Intel Pentium 4415U
MEMORY	4GB	8GB	8GB	4GB
SCREEN SIZE	14in	15.6in	15.6in	14in
SCREEN RESOLUTION	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	1,366 x 768 pixels
STORAGE	128GB SSD	1TB HD	256GB SSD	128GB SSD
USB PORTS	USB-C, USB 3, 2 x USB 2	USB-C, USB 3, 2 x USB 2	2 x USB 3, USB 2	USB-C, USB 3, USB 2
NETWORKING	802.11ac Wi-Fi	802.11ac Wi-Fi	Ethernet, 802.11ac Wi-Fi	802.11ac Wi-Fi
MEMORY CARD READER	SD/SDHC/SDXC	SD/SDHC/SDXC	SD/SDHC/SDXC	SD/SDHC/SDXC
OPERATING SYSTEM	Windows 10 Home	Windows 10 Home	Windows 10 Pro	Windows 10 Home
SIZE	323 x 223 x 19mm	381 x 263 x 21.6mm	380 x 254 x 23.8mm	338 x 249 x 17mm
WEIGHT	1.4kg	2.2kg	1.99kg	1.7kg

ALSO TESTED

Acer Swift 3 (£600) ★★★☆☆
Dell Vostro 15 3568 (£469) ★★★☆☆
HP Pavilion x360 14 (£578) ★★★★☆
Lenovo IdeaPad 520S (£599) ★★★☆☆
Medion Akoya S3409 (£599) ★★★★☆
PC Specialist UltraNote IV (£482) ★★★☆☆

OUR VERDICT

Our award winners all sit at the pricier end of this Group Test's range, but even a £540 laptop shows evidence of compromise. We gave our Gold Award to the Asus ZenBook UX410, which has a brilliant screen and a sleek and sturdy design, but lagged behind in performance and battery life.

Our Silver Award goes to the more powerful Acer Aspire 5 A515-51, which was the best performer of the group. However, its screen was disappointing, though fine for indoor use.

We gave our Bronze Award to the HP 250 G6, which is more of an all-rounder but falls short on both performance and screen when compared to the other two award-winners.

The cheaper Lenovo laptop is a good low-cost option, but there's no doubt that half the money buys you a laptop that's only half as good.

BEND YOUR REALITY

AG352UCG AG352QCX

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

AOC GAMING

aocgaming.com @aoc_gaming @aocgaming @aocgaming

SCAN OVERCLOCKERS UK amazon.co.uk

Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

MONITOR

BenQ GL2580HM

£109.99 from bit.ly/benq445
Tested: Issue 445

This BenQ monitor's stylish slim bezel and attractive design are matched by its solid performance and good-quality colour display. However, it's not suited to serious gamers.

KEY SPECS

24.5in screen ■ 1,920 x 1,080-pixel resolution ■ 16:9 aspect ratio ■ 16.7 million colours ■ 50-76Hz refresh rate ■ 1,000:1 native contrast ■ 2ms response time ■ HDMI, DVI and VGA ports ■ two 1W speakers ■ 42.6 x 55.7 x 17.5cm ■ 4.4kg

PC

Palicomp AMD Gravity RYZ1

£799.99 from www.palicomp.co.uk
Tested: Issue 443

This is the best PC we could find for under £800. It's powerful, well built and well balanced, so long as you're happy to use an overclocked processor.

KEY SPECS

AMD Ryzen 5 1600 processor ■ Asus Prime B350M-A motherboard ■ 8GB DDR4 memory ■ GeForce GTX 1060 graphics card ■ 240GB SSD ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 475 x 468 x 230mm tower case ■ Windows 10 Home 64-bit

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

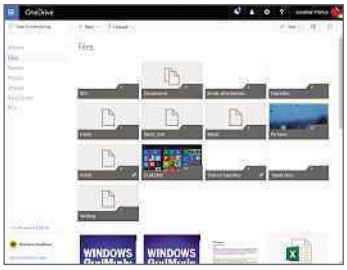
Compatible with Fire OS, Android and iOS devices ■ 802.11a/b/g/n Wi-Fi ■ Line-out with 3.5mm cable or Bluetooth ■ 2.5in woofer, 0.6in tweeter ■ 148 x 88 x 88mm ■ 821g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

All prices correct at time of review

SOFTWARE & SERVICES

CLOUD-STORAGE SERVICE

Microsoft OneDrive



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

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

KEY FEATURES

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

INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2018

£19.99 from bit.ly/kaspersky1pc
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 over £15 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

BROADBAND MONITOR

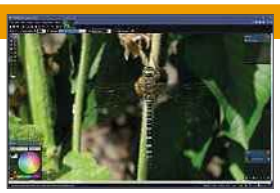
GlassWire

NEW!

Free from bit.ly/glasswire445
Tested: Issue 445
GlassWire provides lots of helpful tools for monitoring bandwidth usage on your PC or mobile device, in a well-designed and easy-to-use interface.

IMAGE EDITOR

Paint.net



Free from www.getpaint.net
Tested: Issue 444
Paint.net sets the bar as the best free image editor around. It has no ads or premium features, just all the tools you need to make your photos look great.

WI-FI SCANNER

Acrylic Wi-Fi Home

Free from bit.ly/acry443
Tested: Issue 443
Acrylic Wi-Fi Home is the free version of a professional tool, but it doesn't feel like a cut-down program and offers virtually all the features a home user will ever need.

EMAIL CLIENT

eM Client

Free from www.emclient.com
Tested: Issue 442
eM Client is simple, versatile and familiar, making it an easy replacement for older tools, such as Windows Live Mail.

RADIO APP

Radioplayer

Free from bit.ly/radioplayer441
Tested: Issue 441
Radioplayer is limited to UK broadcasts and its interface needs updating, but it works well and has lots of features.

WEB USER
BACK ISSUES DISCS

Search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon

EVERY ISSUE FROM 2014 TO 2017

Best Free Software

ART TOOL

Krita 4

krita.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux
File size: 124MB

Krita is a fantastic free painting app that offers lots of tools for both amateur and professional artists, and can also be used to fix and enhance your photos.

The program offers an impressive range of filters sorted into categories including Adjust, Artistic, Blur, Colours, Edge Detection, Enhance, Emboss and Map.

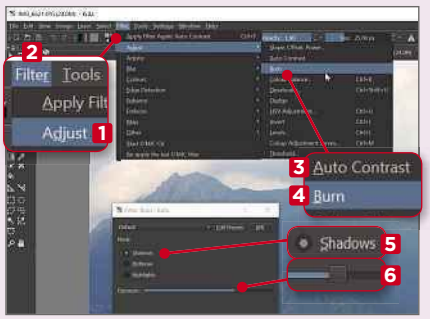
There are also plenty of brushes to choose from, including a selection of airbrushes, pencils, pens, markers, paintbrushes, charcoal, shapes, pixel art and stamps. You can customise your brushes in a number of ways, then save and organise them using the built-in tagging system.

Krita has more tools than other, similar free products, and offers nine drawing assistants for creating straight lines and circles, including Perspective, Ruler and Vanishing Point. Drawing accurately with a mouse can be tricky, so Krita offers a choice of brush stabilisers to smooth your brush strokes, and the pop-up palette makes it easy to switch between colours as you paint.

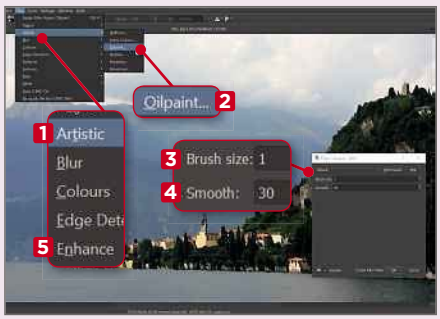
There's a 'wrap-around' mode, too, which you can use to create textures and patterns, as well as tools for vertical and horizontal mirroring. The program also supports vector, filter, group and file layers.

Version 4 of Krita introduces a lot of additional features and changes, such as improved vector tools, SVG support, a new text tool, a new 'colourise' mask tool, Python scripting (which lets you write scripts to create and manipulate images), masked brushes, new brush presets, background saving, better performance and improved filters.

MINI WORKSHOP | Improve your photos using Krita



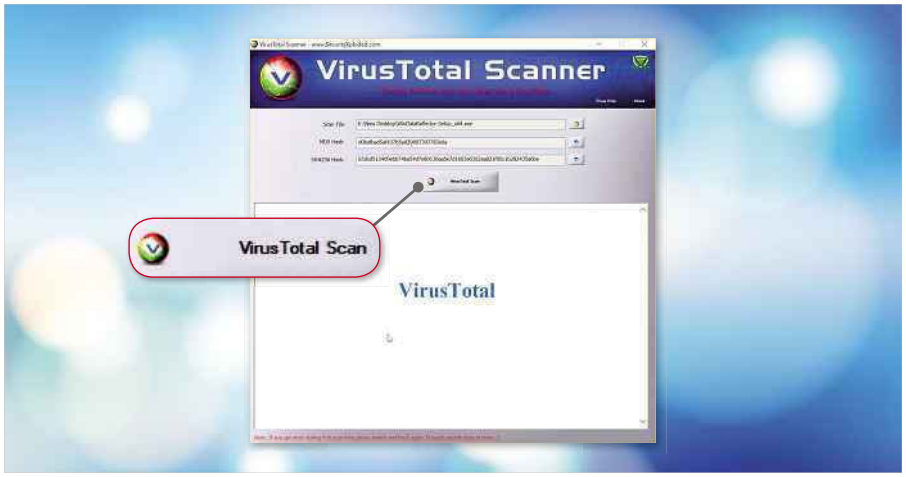
1 Krita's Adjust menu, 1 located under Filter, 2 offers a range of tools for improving the look of your photos. Auto Contrast 3 stops images looking washed out, but you can get even better results by using the Burn tool. 4 Switch to Shadows 5 and adjust the darkness with the slider. 6



2 You can turn photos into works of art in the Artistic section. 1 The Oilpaint filter 2 produces excellent results. Select the brush size 3 and smoothness, 4 then click OK. The filter can take a while to apply so be patient. Enhance 5 removes noise and sharpens a picture.

3 Like most image-editing tools, Krita offers a magic wand 1 that selects areas of the same colour in your photo. You can tweak its settings in the Tool Options on the right. 2 Krita also offers a variation – the Similar Colour Selection Tool, 3 which selects areas of comparable colour.

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



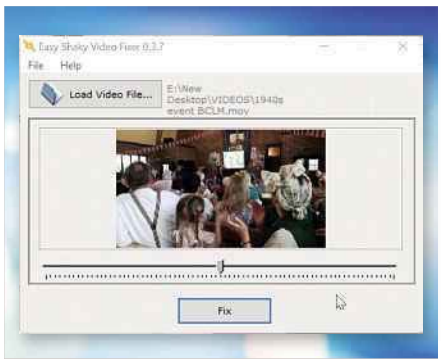
ANTIVIRUS TOOL

VirusTotal Scanner 7

bit.ly/vts447

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3.5MB

If you want to be sure that a file doesn't contain malware, you can upload it to Google's VirusTotal service (www.virustotal.com) where it will be checked using more than 40 different antivirus engines. Uploading files can take a while, so VirusTotal Scanner generates a digital fingerprint of the file (a hash) and checks this instead, delivering a speedier verdict. The new version improves the interface and updates the scanning process. Just add a file and click the VirusTotal Scan button.



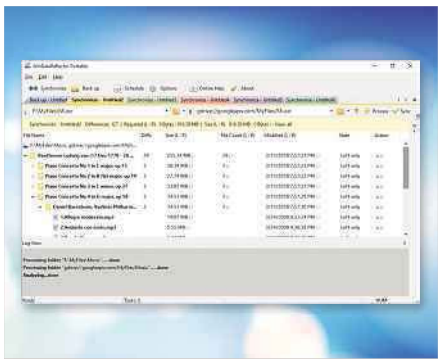
VIDEO EDITOR

Easy Shaky Video Fixer

bit.ly/shaky447

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 11.1MB

This tool's sole purpose is to stabilise shaky video and it lives up to its name by being very easy to use. Just drag and drop a video in need of fixing to the program window, or add it by clicking the Load Video File button. A slider below the preview window lets you scroll through your video (there's no Play button). When you're ready, click the Fix button and give the stabilised video a new name.



BACKUP TOOL

WinDataReflector 2

bit.ly/windr447

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 3.7MB

WinDataReflector is a tab-based file-sync and backup tool. To use it, decide which task you want – backup or synchronisation – then add a folder to the left-hand side, and one to the right, and action the task. You can add multiple folders, but the free version has some limitations you need to be aware of – it can't synchronise more than 150 files or create more than three separate tasks.

New Windows Apps

Cortana Show Me

bit.ly/cortana447

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 14.6MB

Cortana Show Me is a guide to Windows 10 settings. It explains how to perform tasks such as updating Windows and changing your desktop background. You need to be a Windows Insider to use it.

Blu-ray Pro

bit.ly/bluray447

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 125.8MB

Windows 10 can't play Blu-ray discs by default, but this free app makes this possible. It offers track selection, subtitles, support for different languages, a customisable interface and more.

Podcast Lounge 2 Beta

bit.ly/lounge447

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 29.6MB

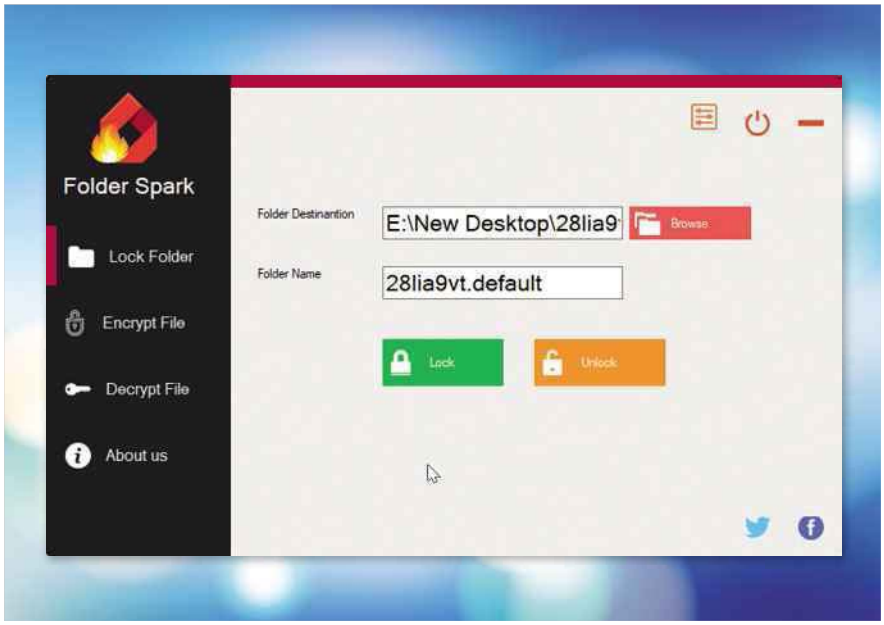
The successor to popular podcasting app Podcast Lounge offers all the features you need, including the ability to search for podcasts, add them to favourites and download episodes.

ENCRYPTION SOFTWARE

Folder Spark

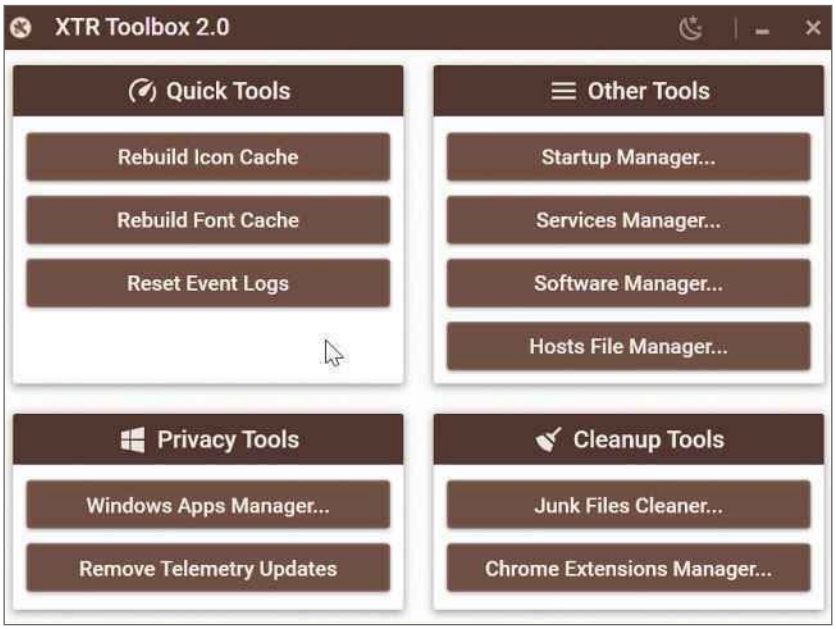
bit.ly/fspark447

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 911KB



Folder Spark is a handy free program that lets you safeguard your personal data by encrypting your files and folders with a strong password. All you have to do is create a master password by entering it twice. The program's menu then gives you the option of locking or unlocking a folder, or encrypting or decrypting a file.

In the case of securing a folder, you just need to navigate to the destination, enter a name for it and click Lock. To encrypt a file, browse for it and enter an encryption password (which can be copied to your clipboard or emailed), then click Encrypt.



SYSTEM TOOL

XTR Toolbox 2

bit.ly/xtr447

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10
File size: 2.7MB

XTR Toolbox is designed to clean, tweak and optimise Windows for smoother performance. The main screen offers a selection of Quick Tools, Privacy Tools, Clean-up Tools and 'Other' Tools. The Quick Tools section can rebuild the icon cache, rebuild the font cache and reset event logs; while Privacy Tools lets you remove telemetry updates (which spy on your activity) and uninstall unwanted apps.

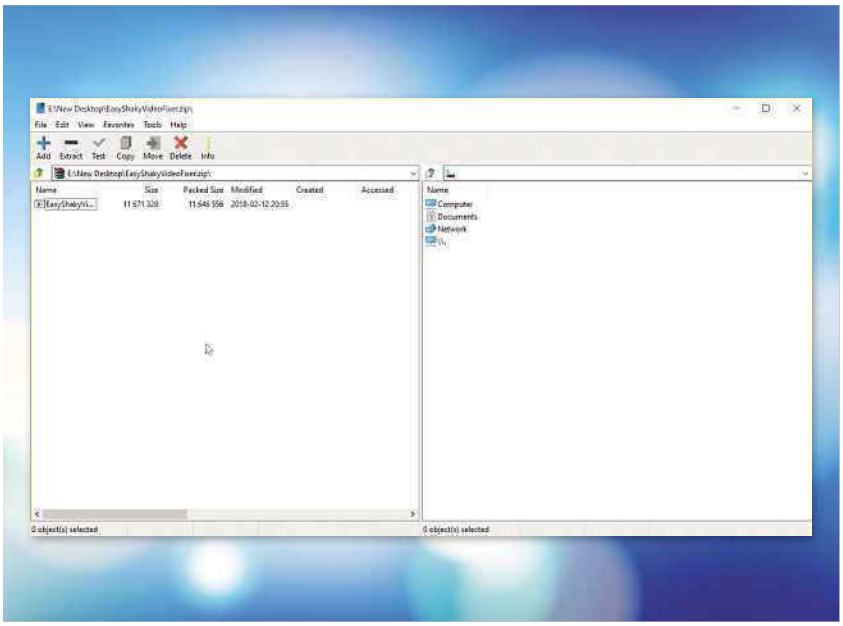
You'll find a junk-files cleaner and a Chrome-extension manager in the cleanup section, while other tools include a startup manager, services manager, software manager and hosts-file manager. Clicking a tool opens it in a new window.

COMPRESSION TOOL

UnZipper

unzipper.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 **File size:** 751KB



UnZipper is a lightweight archiving tool that's both free and easy to use, and supports all the major compression formats, including ZIP, 7z, ISO, RAR and TAR. You can choose which file types to associate with UnZipper, and specify which – if any – commands to integrate with your right-click context menu.

The program is highly customisable, too – you can choose to have one or two panes, and add folders to favourites. It can also email files after compressing them, and offers automatic self-extraction.

UnZipper claims to be faster and 70% more efficient than both WinZip and WinRAR, though we've yet to put this to the test.

GAME

Birthplace of Ossian

bit.ly/ossian447

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux
File size: 174MB

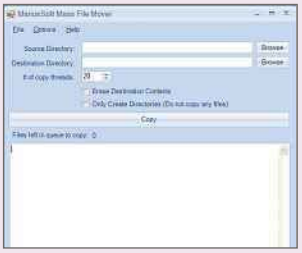
This 'game' is a walking simulator that features 100 square kilometres of fully explorable landscape. There's no aim – it's about strolling through the landscape, soaking up the atmosphere (which is helped by the music and sound effects) and contemplating your existence. Birthplace of Ossian has been around for a couple of years but you can now download it for free.

✗ Don't install...

Mass File Mover

www.mariussoft.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+
File size: 1MB

Considering that this file-copying program hasn't been updated for nine years, it's pretty unlikely that you'd want to install Mass File Mover on your PC, but just in case you stumble across it: don't bother. It was a pretty basic tool back in 2009, and there are plenty of superior free alternatives available today.

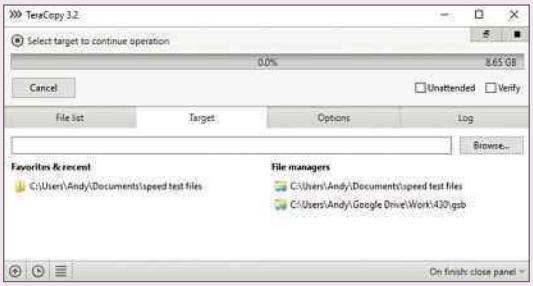


...Install this instead ✓

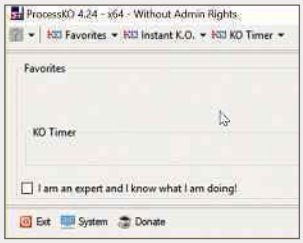
TeraCopy

www.codesector.com
Min requirements: Windows Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 4.4MB

TeraCopy speeds up the process of moving files on, off and around your PC. Its cleverly designed interface is built for simplicity, yet offers lots of useful features, from the ability to pause and resume copying tasks, to finding and reporting problems with damaged files. When you first launch the program, it looks sparse, but once you've dragged the files or folders you want to copy across, the main window expands for easy transfers. Alternatively, you can select a folder from the 'Favorites & recent' or 'File managers' list. TeraCopy can even be set to take over from Explorer whenever files are copied.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



SYSTEM TOOL

ProcessKO 4.24

www.softwareok.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 99.1KB

ProcessKO is a portable free tool that helps you identify and quickly kill any hanging or misbehaving processes. This new version has been recompiled to prevent false positive alerts appearing in Windows 10. The language files have been updated, too.

PDF TOOL

PDFCreator 3.2

www.pdfforge.org
Min requirements: Windows Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 32MB

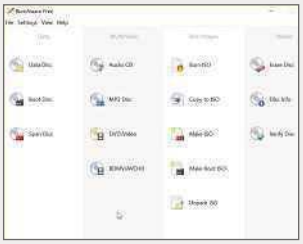
PDFCreator lets you print a PDF from almost any application. The latest version displays the creation date of the file in the main overview, and lets you set a default PDF viewer of your choosing. Be sure to decline the bundled PDF Architect junk during installation.

BREAK-TIME REMINDER

Stretchly 0.16

hovancik.net
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10, MacOS or Linux
File size: 68.8MB

Stretchly reminds you to take breaks from your screen every 10 minutes, and offers a selection of ideas for tasks to do during that time – such as blinking, or closing your eyes and relaxing. The new release sets the limit of a microbreak duration to 60 seconds.



DISC-AUTHORING TOOL

BurnAware 11.1 Free

www.burnaware.com
Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 8.3MB

The free version of BurnAware can write to CD, DVD and Blu-ray, produce audio discs and video DVDs, create and burn image files, erase rewritable media, and more. This update adds a new right-click context menu, and improves the program's installer. ■

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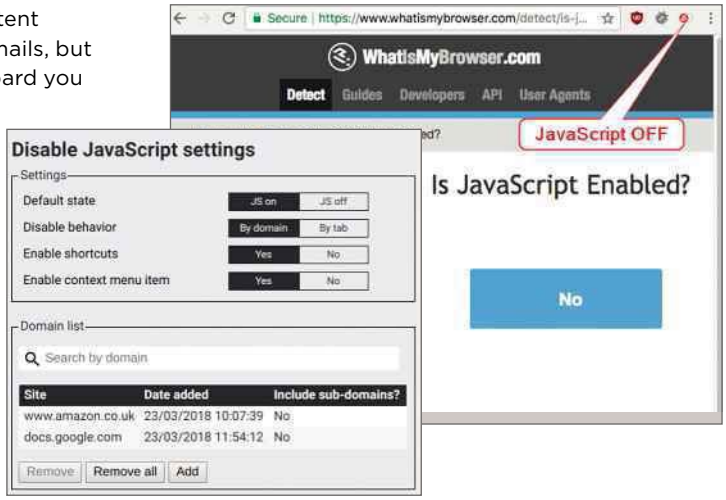
Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

Disable JavaScript on specific websites

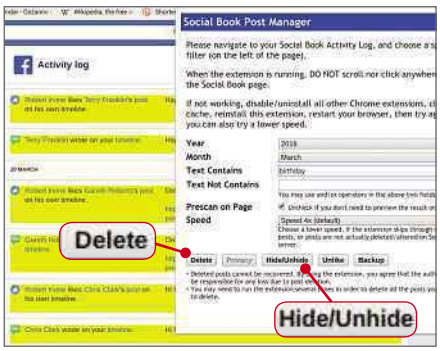
Most popular websites use JavaScript to make their content interactive, from videos and games to comments and emails, but the programming language can also be abused to bombard you with adverts and infect your browser with malware. Chrome lets you enable JavaScript on certain sites but not others, but it's a fiddly business that involves going into Settings, Advanced, Content Settings and adding URLs to a whitelist or blacklist. A much easier option is to install Disable JavaScript (bit.ly/javascript447), which lets you instantly turn JavaScript on and off at the click of a button, or by right-clicking a web page and choosing Toggle JavaScript.

Open the extension's settings to choose whether to disable JavaScript by domain or individual tab, and whether it should be always on or off, and to add specific sites to its exceptions list. Disable JavaScript is also available for Firefox (bit.ly/javafire447).



Bulk delete Facebook posts

If the recent brouhaha about Cambridge Analytica has made you worry about how much info you've shared on Facebook over the years, consider cleaning up your timeline using Social Book Post Manager (bit.ly/social447). Install this Chrome extension, go to Facebook and open your Activity Log – clicking the add-on's toolbar button, then OK, should take you straight there.



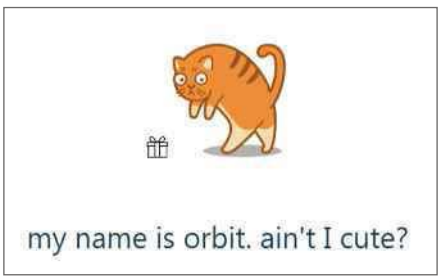
Click the button again to open the manager and specify what you want to delete, such as all posts from a particular month or year, or ones that contain a particular word or name. Matching content will be highlighted in your log, so you can review and further filter the results before clicking the Delete button.

Deleted posts can't be recovered, so you may prefer the less drastic option of hiding content from your timeline or simply 'unliking' posts to withdraw your approval. You can choose the speed at which posts are purged – the lower the speed the more thorough the deletion – and choose Backup to download your data from Facebook before it's wiped.

Add Orbit the Cat to your new tabs

We love tools that make your New Tab page more interesting, especially when they feature cute animals – and Orbit the Cat (bit.ly/orbit447) is one of the most charming examples we've seen. Every time you open a new tab, the titular moggy (who is based on the developer's cat) appears on the page to dispense wisdom, jokes and random thoughts. These messages are different every time, and are sure to raise a wry smile during an otherwise mundane browsing session.

"You're one of the smartest people I know" – aw, thanks Orbit!



Take notes as you browse the web

There are lots of tools for making and saving notes as you browse the web, including Google Keep, Evernote and Pocket, but most suffer from a surfeit of features that you'll never use, which makes them bloated and resource hungry.

In contrast, the new Chrome extension My Notes (bit.ly/mynotes447) keeps things simple by offering a virtual notepad on which you can jot thoughts and ideas, and paste interesting online content. Sign in using your Google account to save your notes directly to Google Drive and email to your Gmail inbox. With no frills and one-click operation, My Notes is a useful and lightweight tool to have to hand.

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

FIREFOX

Detect and delete broken bookmarks

Few of us have the time or the inclination to regularly check that all our browser bookmarks still exist. Fortunately, help is at hand from Bookmarks Organizer (bit.ly/bookmarks447), which has just been updated to work with Firefox Quantum. Click the add-on's 'Check bookmarks' toolbar button to scan your bookmarks for broken and duplicate entries, as well as links that now redirect you to a different page. Bookmarks Organizer presents its findings in a clear, colour-coded list and lets you quickly delete bookmarks that no longer work, or are surplus to requirements, and correct all redirects with a single click. The new version of the add-on fixes a problem that caused it to keep checking bookmarks unprompted and adds an option to run the tool using the keyboard shortcut Shift+F11.

Expand and scan shortened web addresses

Link-shortening services such as *Web User* favourite Bitly provide a handy way to share (and publish) unwieldy URLs, but there is a risk they can be used to direct you to dangerous websites. Unshorten.link (bit.ly/unshorten447 – there's an example right there!) protects you from this threat by automatically expanding shortened links when you click them, so you can see exactly where they're taking you. It also scans their destinations for malware and provides screenshots of the linked pages.

Unshorten.link works with most URL-shortening services, though certain features – such as seeing a history of all shortened links you've visited – are only available in the paid-for Pro version.

Save and restore tabs and windows

Firefox has a built-in Session Restore feature, which lets you reopen tabs after the browser has closed unexpectedly, but it's not particularly sophisticated and sometimes doesn't work at all. To get more control over the tabs you save and restore, install the new add-on Session Boss (bit.ly/session447), which makes backing up your browsing sessions a doddle.

By default, the extension saves all open tabs and windows automatically at 15-minute intervals, and also lets you save them manually in a couple of clicks. Saved sessions are listed in a tidy interface, which displays the tabs and windows contained in each one, and makes web pages easy to restore, either individually or all together.

You can give each session a name for at-a-glance reference, and instantly delete backups once you're finished with them.

OTHER BROWSERS

Enjoy Opera's new error pages

Nobody wants to come across an error page while browsing because it means something's wrong, such as the page being unavailable or your browser blocking an infected domain. Chrome tries to lessen the disappointment by letting you play a game on offline error pages, and now Opera has introduced fun animations to enliven its errors, too. These include a dog jumping for a bone when a page can't be reached, an alien trying to fix its spacecraft when your internet is disconnected and – our favourite – a flying saucer beaming up a cow when you get a malware warning.

Browse extensions more easily

There are still relatively few extensions for Microsoft's Edge browser – less than 100 compared to almost 10,000 for Firefox – but a change to the way they're presented in the Microsoft Store at least makes them easier to find. Previously, you either had to scroll down the homepage or search for a specific name, but now there's a dedicated tab in the store for Edge Extensions. This organises them into categories such as Productivity, Ad Blockers and Shopping, and promotes the most recently released ones at the top of the page.

Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

OFFICE

Pages

UPDATED

bit.ly/pages447

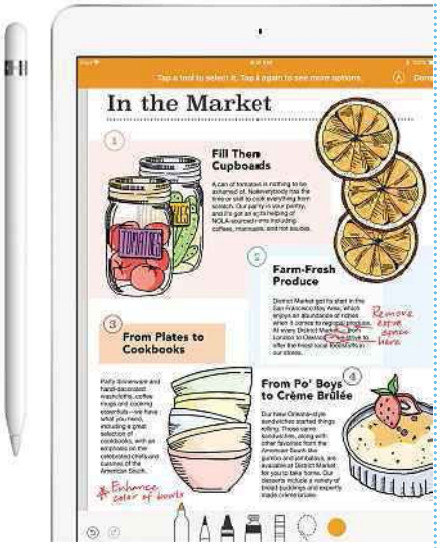
11

Last month, Apple made a distinctly underwhelming announcement about a new line of products, namely 'cheap' (£320+) iPads aimed at students. But at the same time, the company made a much quieter – and potentially more interesting – announcement about a major new update (version 4.0) for its iWorks apps, an office suite for iOS that includes word processor Pages, along with presentation tool Keynote (bit.ly/keynote447) and spreadsheet app Numbers (bit.ly/numbers447).

The headline feature in the latest release is the ability to use the Apple Pencil within all three apps (on supported devices, such as iPad Pro models and the aforementioned new entry-level iPad) to annotate text or draw directly within documents. If you don't own a £100 Apple Pencil or a supporting device, you can just scribble with your fingers instead.

Among the other features included in the latest update to Pages is a new option that lets users create and collaborate on their own digital books. It's now possible to create and add an image gallery to view a collection of photos on a single page, and you can even turn your iPhone or iPad into a portable teleprompter using new Presenter Mode, which automatically scrolls your text at an adjustable speed – useful if you need to make a speech or just for hands-free reading.

Other new features include new editable shapes, doughnut charts, conditional highlighting, support for



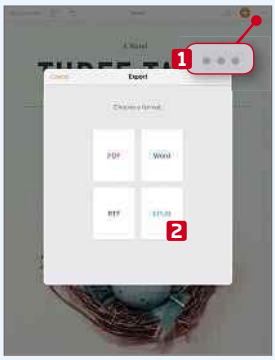
collaborating via Box cloud storage, the ability to create 'master' pages that dictate your documents' design and the option to format your documents as two-page spreads.

Pages, Keynote and Numbers come free with all iOS devices. If you don't currently have them installed, you can download them from the links above.

MINI WORKSHOP

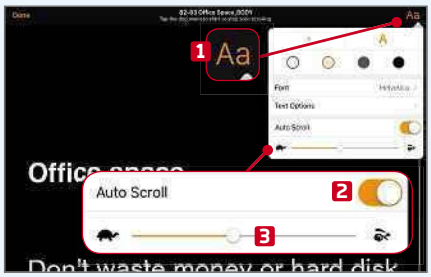
Create ebooks and presentations with Pages

1 To create an ebook in Pages, tap the plus icon and select one of the templates listed under 'Books – Portrait' or 'Books – Landscape'.



Replace the text and images in the template with your own content. When you're finished, tap the three-dot menu icon 1 and select Export. Choose EPUB 2 from the options, then fill out the metadata and tap Send. You can export to iBooks or save your file.

2 By default, Pages documents are formatted as single pages that you scroll through as you read or write. In this latest version of the app, it's possible to opt for a more magazine-like two-page spread layout. Turn your device to landscape orientation, then tap the three-dot menu icon and select Document Setup. Now tap the document icon, 1 turn on the Facing Pages option 2 and tap Done. 3



3 To use your iOS device as a teleprompter, open a document, tap the three-dot menu icon and select Presenter Mode. The view will switch to larger white text on a black background. Press the 'Aa' icon 1 for more options, including the ability to increase font size and colour. Turn on Auto Scroll 2 and adjust the scrolling speed using the slider. 3 Tap the document to start or stop scrolling.

Our rating ★★★★★

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

TRAVEL

UPDATED

Skyscanner

bit.ly/skydroid447

bit.ly/skyios447

4.4 9

Not content with being one of the best apps (and websites) for searching, comparing and booking cheap flights, hotels and car hire, Skyscanner has been updated with the useful new ability to search and book train tickets in the UK. Just tap the new Trains icon on the app's homepage and enter your journey details. At the time of writing, the new train options are exclusive to the iOS version of the app, but we're expecting the Android version to get the same abilities sometime soon.

Our rating ★★★★★

KIDS

NEW

Planets Puzzle

bit.ly/planets447

7

Similar to an animated jigsaw, Planets Puzzle is a colourful, fun game for younger kids, with a mildly educational element. The basic idea is to drag and drop a series of different animals into their correct habitat across a selection of rotating planets. The graphics are cute and – mercifully – the music and sound effects aren't horribly annoying. The first 10 planets are completely free, then you can pay a reasonable £2.99 to unlock the full selection of planets, along with their respective animal inhabitants.

Our rating ★★★★☆

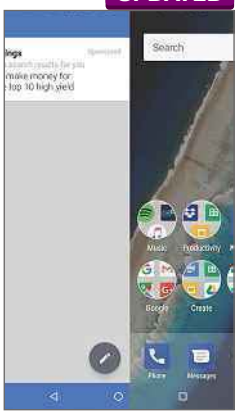
LAUNCHER

UPDATED

Messenger Home

bit.ly/messenger447

5



If you're addicted to texting, then this updated launcher might be the Android skin you've been looking for. As the name suggests, it's a messaging-oriented experience that gives you instant access to your messaging tools with a single swipe from the Home screen. Extra features in this version include the ability to colour-code icons for your contacts, support for more than 3,000 emoji and a voice-to-text function for dictating messages. Messenger Home is currently free with no in-app purchases.

Our rating ★★★★☆

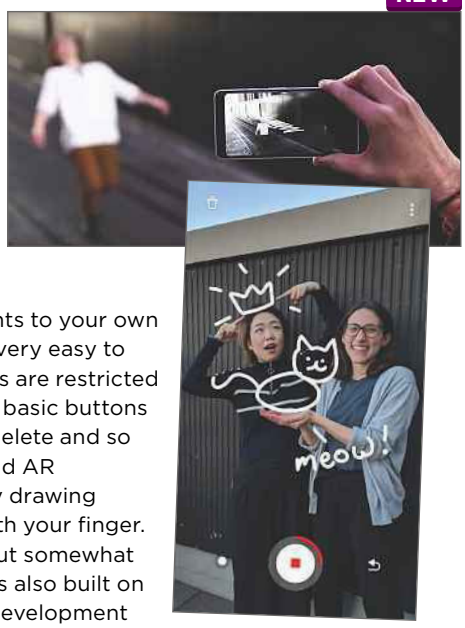
VIDEO

NEW

Just a Line

bit.ly/just447

7



Just a Line is a new experimental app from Google Creative Labs that lets you add augmented-reality (AR) elements to your own videos. The app is very easy to use – video controls are restricted to just a handful of basic buttons (stop/start, back, delete and so on) and you can add AR elements simply by drawing them on-screen with your finger. Just a Line is fun but somewhat limited in scope. It's also built on Google's ARCore development platform, which means that not all Android devices are supported (for a full list of supported models, head to bit.ly/arcore447).

Our rating ★★★★☆

LIFESTYLE

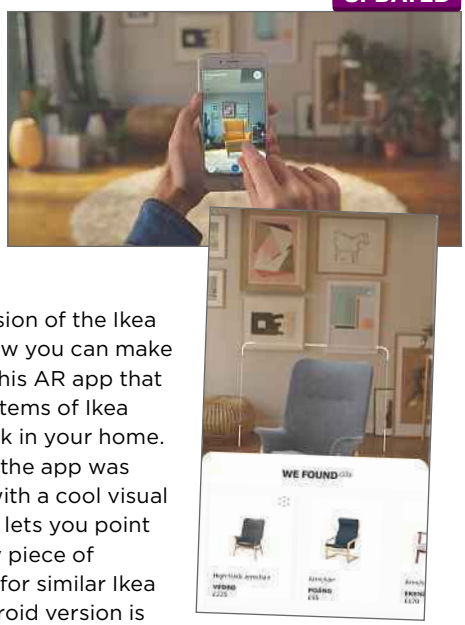
UPDATED

Ikea Place

bit.ly/ikeadroid447

bit.ly/ikeaios447

7 11



Remember that bit in *Fight Club* where Edward Norton walked around a living version of the Ikea catalogue? Well now you can make that a reality with this AR app that lets you view how items of Ikea furniture would look in your home. Still relatively new, the app was recently updated with a cool visual search feature that lets you point your camera at any piece of furniture to search for similar Ikea products. The Android version is based on Google's ARCore platform so, as with Just a Line (see left), check the link we've provided to see whether your device is supported.

Our rating ★★★★★

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

LIFESTYLE

Stylebook

bit.ly/style447

Price: £3.99 (iOS)

10

Need help organising your wardrobe? This app was designed by fashion experts to help you curate your clothing collection. Recently updated, Stylebook now lets you analyse what you wear via statistics.

TOOLS

CamToPlan

bit.ly/camtoplan447

Price: £2.59 (Android)

7

This AR tape measure lets you plan all manner of jobs around the house, instantly calculating area and drawing plans as you measure. It's in beta, so there may be quirks.

GAME

Candleman

bit.ly/candledroid447

bit.ly/candleios447

Price: £2.49 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)

5 8

This imaginative platform game adds an element of light management to its exploration and puzzle-solving gameplay. Burning brighter illuminates dark areas, but means you'll burn out much quicker.

TOOLS

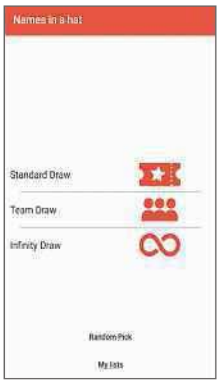
Names in a Hat

bit.ly/names447

Price: 99p

4.1

This is a simple app with a single function. Next time you need to pull a random name out of a hat, just add the names – no hat required!



GAME

Umiro

bit.ly/umirodroid447

bit.ly/umiroios447

Price: Price: £2.59 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)

4.1 6

Clearly inspired by the visuals and gameplay of Monument Valley, Umiro is a great puzzle game in its own right. It's beautiful and atmospheric, and has a surprisingly engaging story.

Stylebook

Candleman

CamToPlan

Names in a Hat

Umiro

✗ Don't install...

Goo.gl URL Shortener (Unofficial)

bit.ly/goourl447

Shortened URLs are, of course, extremely useful – we use them all the time in *Web User*, as you've probably noticed. But the recent news that Google is shutting down its Goo.gl service on 13 April this year means that a lot of URL shortening apps – Goo.gl URL Shortener (Unofficial) included – are now, effectively, useless. Existing Goo.gl users can still manage existing links on the website, but it's no longer possible to create new shortened URLs.

...Install this instead ✓

Bitly

bit.ly/bitlydroid447

bit.ly/bitlyios447

4.1 10

Google's ultimate intention is to replace Goo.gl with Firebase Dynamic Links (FDLs). These are smart URLs that allow you to link to any location within an iOS, Android or web app. For the time being, though, there aren't many user-friendly ways to create these. So, instead, we suggest using Bitly. It's a simple, popular URL shortener that lets you create and edit links as well as view reports based on link usage. Unlike the web-based version, the app requires you to create an account, but other than that it's completely free. Plus, it's the service we use ourselves – and you can't get a higher recommendation than that!

Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser and try our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our celebrity-name emoji and work out our web year?

WIN A WEB USER 2017 BACK ISSUES DISC!
Email your answers to webuser@dennis.co.uk – one correct entry will win a disc

CAN YOU GUESS THE CELEBRITY NAMES FROM THE EMOJI?

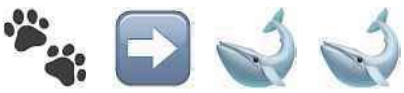
1

2

3

4

5

6 

GUESS THE TECHNOLOGY YEAR

Can you work out which year the following tech news stories occurred in? No cheating!

1 Google buys the popular video-sharing service YouTube for a reported $1.65bn (£883m) in shares.

2 Nintendo launches its innovative new games console,

the Wii, which quickly sells out across the world.

3 The UK's best-selling internet magazine devotes its cover feature to the burgeoning podcasts craze.

4 On 21 March, the first message – or 'tweet' – is posted on a new 'micro-blogging' service called Twitter.

5 Gnarls Barkley's 'Crazy' becomes the first song to top the singles chart based on downloads alone.

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 3
KitSound Hive X Bluetooth speaker

WORTH £79.99 EACH

KitSound's Hive X is a rugged and compact Bluetooth speaker with 20 Watts of portable power and an IPX6 water-resistant rating. Recharge your device through the USB port and listen for up to 20 hours. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'hive' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow @KitSoundUK on Twitter.

WIN 1 OF 6
Alfa Genus V2 earphones

WORTH £39.99 EACH

The Alfa Genus V2 earphones from UK company Rock Jaw have filters that bring out the best in your favourite genre, whether it's rock, pop, hip-hop, classical or jazz. They look great, too, with a beautiful, lightweight aluminium casing. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'alfa' in the subject line. For more information, visit rockjawaudio.com and follow @rockjawaudio1 on Twitter.

FAQ

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

Fortnite Battle Royale

It's the multiplayer survival game that's taken the web by storm. **David Crookes** explains why he hopes to be the last one standing

What is it?

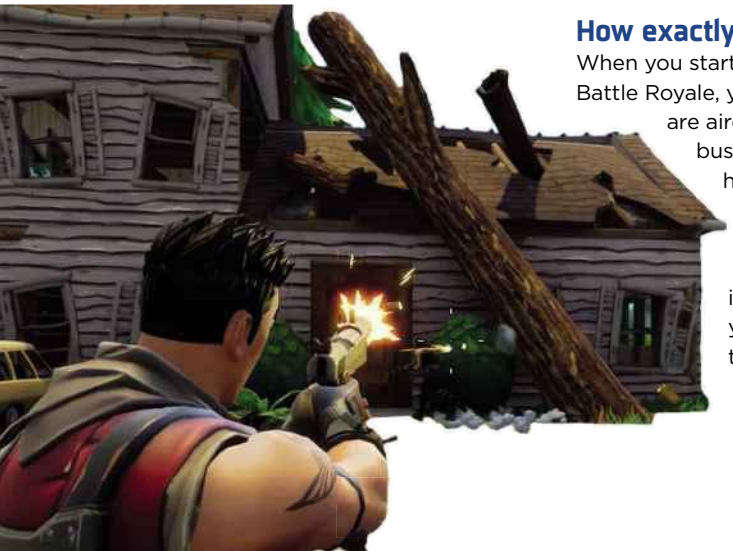
Fortnite Battle Royale (fortnite.com) is a multiplayer survival shoot 'em up game that is currently taking the gaming world by storm. Played online, it pits 100 people against each other in a battle to become the last one standing. More than 45 million players have signed up so far and the numbers are growing fast. It is also free to play, which is a key reason for its success.

Why is it so special?

On the face of it, Fortnite Battle Royale is just another addictive online game. Players enjoy the age-old concept of competing against (and shooting) real people, but they also have to scavenge for weapons and materials to boost their chance of winning. These elements make the game more complex and challenging, which adds to its appeal.

But who's playing it?

Everyone, it seems – or at least everyone with an interest in gaming. It has also attracted a number of celebrity fans including the rapper Drake, who played a game of Fortnite Battle Royale with Tyler 'Ninja' Blevins, a chap who live-streams the games he plays on Twitch (twitch.tv). The feed got 635,000 concurrent views at its peak – a record for the website. Drake praised Fortnite creator Epic Games for doing a fine job of "handling the demand" of the game.



How exactly does it work?

When you start a new game of Fortnite Battle Royale, you and the other players are airdropped from floating buses that are attached to hot air balloons. As you fall, you manoeuvre your player to a position on the randomly generated island that lies beneath you, looking out for places that harbour lots of loot and provisions. Once you land, your first tasks are

Fortnite players are airdropped from buses attached to hot air balloons

to find weapons and mine for resources. You can then seek health items and blast any players who cross your path. All the while, you need to keep an eye on the safe zone, which becomes smaller over time. This forces gamers into tighter situations and brings them into closer contact with enemies. Gunfights prove fast and furious at this point and the excitement is ramped up.

Is it a difficult game to master?

Not at all, it's very accessible – especially if you're an old hand at shoot 'em ups. The learning curve is easy, the graphics are appealing and the violence merely cartoonish, which is why it has proved a hit with younger gamers. That said, the battles are not always for the faint-hearted: games can be nerve-wracking as you engage in combat, remain on high alert and build traps for other players. But it allows for various styles of play so you can be creative or stealthy or aggressively gung-ho to see where each approach gets you. There's a helpful beginner's guide on the gaming website Polygon (bit.ly/polygon447).

Fortnite's controls are simple to master if you're used to shoot 'em ups

So how do I get the game?

You can go to the website and download Fortnite for your PC, Mac, PlayStation 4 or Xbox One (for which you need Xbox Live Gold). There is also a version for iOS, which was released in March, with an Android version promised soon. It's worth pointing out that there's currently a waiting list for the iOS version, so you need to sign up for an email invite at bit.ly/ios447. Watch out for fake invites, though – there are lots knocking around online from people out to con you. Epic Games says the official URLs are fortnite.com and epicgames.com.

How do the developers make money?

Easy: through in-app purchases. These raked in $126m (about £90m) for Epic Games in February alone. What's perhaps surprising is that these sums have been generated by players splashing out on mainly cosmetic, frivolous items such as character skins and 'emotes' (gestures or dances your character can perform).

You can make your Fortnite experience more interesting by paying for extras

How long do games last?

Since Fortnite Battle Royale's playing circle gets reduced as the game progresses, it becomes less easy to hide yourself among the nooks and crannies of the playing area. Instead, you have to get up close to the other players – as a result, games tend to last no longer than 30 minutes. Quickening the pace are simple-to-understand inventory and menu screens that don't take an age to decipher. There's a new Limited Time Mode, too, which provides extra resources, drops supply crates more quickly and decreases the safe zone more rapidly.

Do I have to play the game alone?

No. You can play in a solo mode but also as a duo competing with 49 other pairings, or as part of a squad of up to five players against 20 other teams.

Are there other games like it?

Yes, now that you mention it. PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (known as PUBG) was the first game to popularise the Battle Royale genre, where you compete to be the last person standing. Just like Fortnite Battle Royale, PUBG parachutes 100 players on to an island, has them scavenging for weapons and shooting or being shot – yet Epic Games' version has surpassed PUBG in popularity. That's despite the latter having sold more than 30 million copies on Steam, where it's become the third-highest grossing game of all time.

So it's a blatant copycat game, then?

Well, Fortnite Battle Royale does have a history of its own. The game is a spin-off from the co-operative survival game Fortnite – also made by Epic Games and in development since 2011 – which was released as a paid-for early-access title for PC, Mac and consoles last July.

The earlier game involves getting players together for an online match in a world strewn with zombies. The idea is to build a fortress and survive, completing quests, crafting weapons and scavenging items. Battle Royale was a mode spun out of the original game's code and was released in September.

The most important difference between PUBG and Fortnite Battle Royale is the latter's ability to build structures, which helps players get across difficult terrain and gain a height advantage. Gamers can also create barricades to hide behind, increasing their chance of surviving, or build new paths that allow for shortcuts. Also, as we've said, Fortnite Battle Royale is free so you really have nothing to lose.

Build structures to gain a height advantage so you can pick off your enemies

"NOBODY LIKES PLAYING WITH CHEATERS"

As with many online games, some Fortnite Battle Royale players have sought to cheat to gain themselves unfair advantages. Last October, Epic Games said it had banned thousands of players and was "exploring every measure to ensure those cheaters are removed and stay removed".

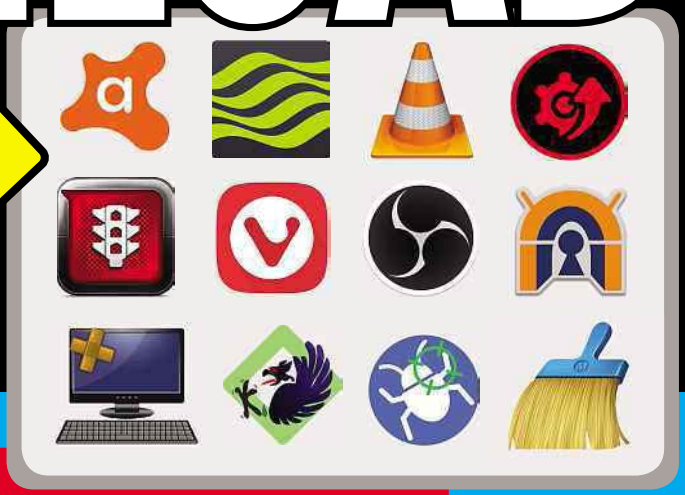
It even went as far as filing lawsuits, including one against a 14-year-old boy who is alleged to have modded the game and caused the developer to lose profits. Epic Games said he had uploaded YouTube videos showing how he cheats.

The developer, which insists that "nobody likes playing with cheaters", also says it has discovered evidence that 'aim-bots' have been used in the game to make it easier to fire at and hit opponents.

Players have also been discovered using code that lets them "see through solid objects, teleport and impersonate another player". Such sneaky practices obviously go against the spirit of this mildly violent shoot 'em up.

You can either play Fortnite alone, in a pair or as part of a squad of five players

DOWNLOAD THIS



NOT THAT!

COVER FEATURE

Don't waste your time installing programs and apps that are past their best. **Wayne Williams** recommends 19 superior alternatives to replace well-known software that no longer cuts the mustard

Discovering a new favourite program is always a pleasure, but sometimes you have to wade through lots of useless downloads to find the perfect tool. Some of the software that appears on the first page of Google search results hasn't been updated for years, compromises your privacy or now comes bundled with adware – details that you won't find mentioned on the developer's homepage. And certain PC programs that were once essential to install have become unnecessary following improvements to the Windows operating system.

In this feature, we round up the best free alternatives to once-popular, outdated and overrated programs, apps and browser extensions, to help you avoid downloading rubbish you'll later regret. Over the following seven pages, we recommend everything from security software and system tools to media players and VPNs, and tell you which programs and apps you should now avoid.

Be sure to tell us if you disagree with our choices!

SOFTWARE YOU SHOULD SHUN

DRIVER UPDATER

Driver Genius

www.driver-soft.com

Windows – especially Windows 10 – does a good job of keeping your drivers up to date, but there are dedicated third-party programs that claim to do this more thoroughly and efficiently. Driver Genius is one such tool but, unfortunately, several antivirus programs have detected malware in the download. Moreover, the software tries to foist unwanted offers on you during installation and it automatically – and unnecessarily – launches with Windows, which slows your boot time.

Driver Booster Free

bit.ly/driver447

Driver Booster scans your system for old or missing drivers, and lets you update individual ones – or the whole lot – with a single click. It only supports drivers that have passed the WHQL (Windows Hardware Quality Labs) test, so they should always be safe to install, and downloads are always performed over a secure HTTPS connection, so there's no chance of them being compromised en route and infected with malware. The software also offers useful tools to fix common problems, and creates a restore point before installing drivers, in case something goes wrong with the installation.

SCREEN RECORDER

CamStudio

camstudio.org

The once-great CamStudio lets you record all on-screen and audio activity on your PC. It can record a region, a fixed region, a window or all screens, and offers lots of video-recording options.

Unfortunately, CamStudio hasn't been updated in years, and the downloads on the official site are known to contain malware. The version on SourceForge (bit.ly/cams447) is supposedly clean, but why take the risk?

OBS Studio

obsproject.com

OBS Studio (Open Broadcaster Software) is a brilliant free open-source tool that lets you record a video of whatever's on your screen and save the result in the format of you choice. Useful features include the ability to edit your video, mix audio, add narration and live-stream the results on sites such as YouTube and Twitch, with no time limits, watermarks or hidden costs. OBS Studio is available for Windows, MacOS and Linux, and is very straightforward to use.

SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner

www.ccleaner.com

CCleaner is everyone's favourite system cleaner, but since Avast bought developer Piriform, the software has lost some of its appeal. It didn't help that last August the company released a compromised version of the program with a backdoor that could be used to download malware, ransomware and keyloggers. Nor that for a while the new owner presumptuously thought it was a good idea to bundle Avast Free Antivirus with the software.

Clean Master for PC

bit.ly/cleanm447

You may already be familiar with Clean Master for Android, which speeds up your phone or tablet by removing unwanted and unnecessary files. The PC version offers much of the same functionality via an attractive interface and colourful scanning animations. The free version optimises your PC by cleaning system, residual and Registry junk, and offers a handy Privacy Clean feature that locks out intruders, deletes personal records and prevents your web browsing from being tracked.

VPN TOOL

TunnelBear

www.tunnelbear.com

TunnelBear is a good, speedy VPN (Virtual Private Network) that offers 500MB of free data a month, and is available for Windows, MacOs, iOS, Android, and Chrome and Opera. However, in March, security company McAfee announced that it had bought TunnelBear, leaving the service's future uncertain. For now, nothing has changed and the TunnelBear team is still working as a separate entity within McAfee, but that might not remain the case forever.

ProtonVPN

protonvpn.com

ProtonVPN, from the company behind the privacy-focused email service ProtonMail, is a free VPN tool you can use to protect your browsing and stay anonymous online. Like TunnelBear, it has a few restrictions: you can only switch between three countries, speeds

get throttled slightly and you can only run the VPN on one device. On the plus side, you get a seven-day trial of the paid-for version of ProtonVPN with the free download, and there are no ads, no monthly bandwidth limit (unlike TunnelBear) and no logging and sharing of your data. As well as the Windows download, there's a Linux command-line tool available, a MacOS beta and a free – and unlimited – Android app.

TORRENT DOWNLOADER

µTorrent

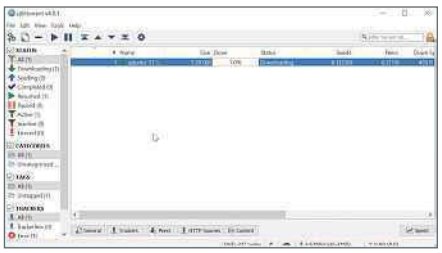
www.utorrent.com

µTorrent is a hugely popular BitTorrent downloading tool but it's not without its controversies. In 2015, it came bundled with cryptocurrency-mining software and at the end of last year, Google's Project Zero identified a serious vulnerability that could allow hackers to remotely control your PC. This was patched, but only just in time.

qBittorrent

bit.ly/.qbit447

The excellent qBittorrent is an open-source alternative to µTorrent, and is available for Windows, MacOS and Linux. It looks very similar to µTorrent but because it's open-source, it doesn't suffer the same problems. The program

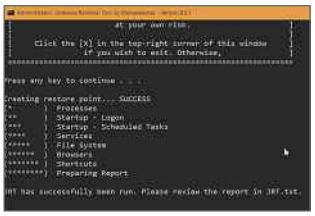


can handle Magnet links, comes with a search engine and can be run in portable mode, so if you're a fan of downloading torrents (legal ones, of course), qBittorrent is the best and safest free option.

JUNK CLEANER

Junkware Removal Tool

bit.ly/junkrt447



Junkware Removal Tool (JRT) is a free program for Windows designed specifically to remove potentially unwanted programs (PUPs), browser extensions, toolbars and adware from your PC. Malwarebytes bought JRT in 2015, and then acquired the similar AdwCleaner a year later. As there is no need for two such tools, Malwarebytes retired JRT late last year and stopped supporting it on 26 April.

AdwCleaner

bit.ly/adw447

AdwCleaner does much the same job as JRT – detecting and removing junk from your system – but has a much more user-friendly interface. It was recently rewritten to give it a makeover, and is now faster and more thorough. To use the software, just click the Scan button, then Clean to remove any junk it finds. AdwCleaner will automatically close any programs it needs to clean, so be sure to save your work before you run it.

ANTIVIRUS SOFTWARE

ZoneAlarm Free Antivirus

www.zonealarm.com

ZoneAlarm was once an essential security download – at least its firewall was – but in recent tests by SE Labs, its free antivirus software scored poorly at protecting computers from the latest threats, preferring to 'neutralise' the malware it detected rather than blocking it altogether. It's not as hopeless as

Microsoft Security Essentials, but its best features are only available in its paid-for version which costs a wallet-busting £54.95.

Avast Free Antivirus

www.avast.com

Avast's powerful free antivirus software scans for security and performance issues, and includes threat detection from both Avast and AVG's antivirus products (Avast now owns AVG). The program's new Behaviour Shield continuously monitors and protects you against suspicious activity, and offers a Game Mode that automatically detects and prioritises gameplay for improved performance. There's also a redesigned password manager and a handy new Wi-Fi Inspector tool that automatically scans your home network for vulnerable devices, and provides advice on how to make them more secure.

WEB BROWSER

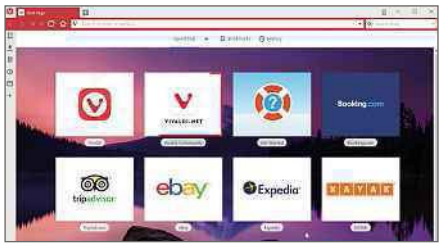
Opera

www.opera.com

Don't get us wrong, Opera is a very good web browser. Like Chrome, it's built on Chromium, so it can run add-ons designed for Google's browser, and it offers several useful features of its own, including an ad blocker and a (recently deprecated) VPN. We don't really have anything against Opera, it's just that we've discovered a new favourite browser.

Vivaldi

vivaldi.com



The highly customisable new browser from Jon S von Tetzchner, the former CEO of Opera, debuted in 2015, and it's been evolving, improving and gaining new features at a very impressive rate ever since. Vivaldi is built around the Chromium engine used in Chrome and Opera, so pages render properly and quickly, and you can install and run Chrome add-ons. Highlights include tab stacking and tab tiling, a Speed Dial page with thumbnails of your favourite sites, a detailed and colourful browsing history, a Notes panel, Quick Commands (keyboard shortcuts) and the ability to 'rewind' to the first page on a site.

START MENU

Classic Shell

www.classicshell.net

When Microsoft released Windows 8 back in 2012, lots of people were put off by the lack of a Start button and traditional Start menu. Classic Shell saved the day by restoring the Windows 7 menu, and remained popular even after Microsoft brought back a Start button and menu (of sorts) in Windows 8.1, then restored them entirely in

Windows 10. However, after eight years of development, the program's creator, Ivo Beltchev, decided to cease work on it. You can still download Classic Shell, but it won't receive any updates or fixes.

Start Menu X

www.startmenux.com

This alternative Start menu makes it easy to find and launch programs, and works with all versions of Windows – from XP through to Windows 10. Like Classic Shell, it automatically replaces the default menu. Locations, such as Desktop, This PC and Control Panel appear on the left, with a sideways-scrolling page of folders and programs on the right.

Start Menu X is highly customisable,

and lets you open the default Windows Start menu at any time by pressing Shift+Windows key. You get a 30-day trial of the paid-for Pro edition when you install the program, but you can skip this if you prefer.

SOFTWARE UPDATER

Flexera/Secunia PSI

bit.ly/flexpsi447

Secunia PSI (Personal Software Inspector) launched a decade ago, in 2008, and has got better and better over the years. The free tool scans your system for old, outdated programs and then provides a direct download link to any newer versions or patches.

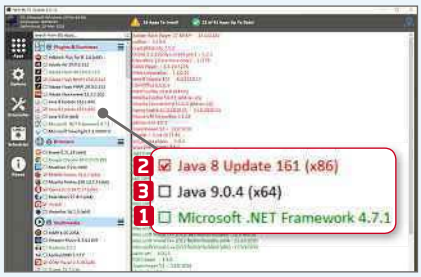
Flexera took over Secunia in 2015, but continued to offer the tool for free. Unfortunately, on 20 April 2018, the product reached its end of life and was pulled from the site. Because it needs to be continually updated to work properly, existing installations of PSI are now useless.

Patch My PC

patchmypc.net

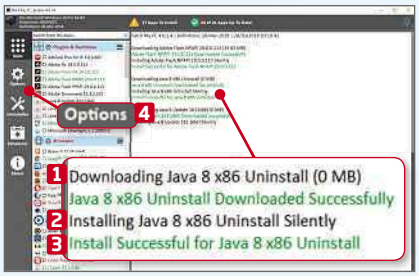
This portable free tool works much the same as Secunia PSI did, scanning your system for old versions of installed programs and letting you update them instantly. Software is colour-coded in green (up to date), red (in need of updating) or black (no longer installed).

MINI WORKSHOP | Update old software using Patch My PC

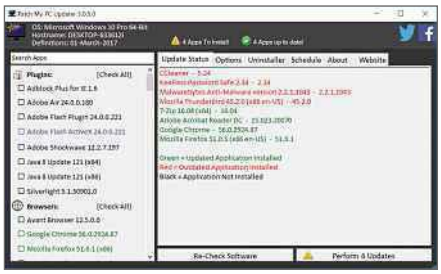


1 Run Patch My PC's updater and it will scan your system for installed software, and present you with a list of supported apps. Green indicates apps that are up to date, 1 red ones are in need of updating 2 and those in black are not found on your PC (because you haven't installed them). 3

2 The total number of apps to update is shown at the top of the program, 1 alongside the number of currently up-to-date apps. 2 Those in need of updating are selected automatically, and you can downloaded the latest versions by clicking the Perform X Updates button at the bottom. 3



3 Patch My PC will download and install the latest versions. 1 It also comes with a built-in uninstaller so you can remove unwanted programs; 2 and a scheduler 3 that lets you choose when the software should run, and which actions to take. You can customise its behaviour in Options. 4



Apps in need of updating are selected automatically, and you can fetch the latest versions by clicking the Perform Updates button. See our Mini Workshop on page 43 to find out how to use it.

WEBSITE BUILDER

Adobe Muse

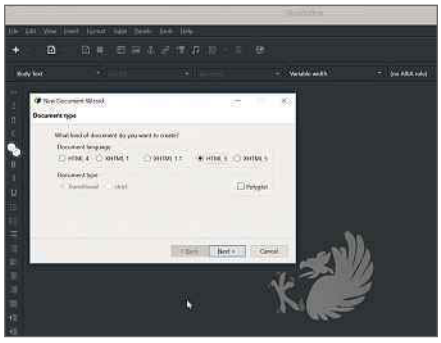
bit.ly/muse447

Muse makes it easy to create and publish beautiful mobile-friendly websites with free-form layouts that suit any screen – no coding required. It comes as part of Creative Cloud and costs £14.98 a month but although it's very good, Adobe has now ceased its development. The final version was released on 26 March, with compatibility updates and technical support until 20 May 2019.

BlueGriffon

bluegriffon.org

Built around Firefox's rendering engine, BlueGriffon is a fantastic website builder (and ebook editor) that offers all the editing features you need to create your own online space. It has a handy function for switching between WYSIWYG and Source modes, and the program's new Wizard lets you quickly put together a basic template site, although certain features, such as responsive design, require an upgrade to the paid-for edition for €75 (£66).



APPS YOU SHOULD AVOID

MOBILE VPN

Onavo VPN for Android

www.onavo.com

VPNs are supposed to protect your privacy. Onavo was acquired by Facebook in 2013, which may already be ringing alarm bells for you, given the negative press the social network's lax approach to privacy has generated lately. If Facebook's ownership of the Android app isn't enough to turn you off, its statement in the product details that it collects details of your mobile data traffic and uses this to improve Facebook products and services definitely should. It even sends back data when not being actively used.

OpenVPN for Android

bit.ly/ovpn447

A recent update to the OpenVPN Connect Android client (bit.ly/openvpn447) caused problems for a lot of people but fortunately, there's another option. OpenVPN for Android is an open-source spin-off that's free, very reliable and connects to OpenVPN servers, so you can remain anonymous when browsing the web on your phone or tablet and pretend to be in a different country. There's a useful real-time graph, too, which shows the speed and status of your connection.

WEATHER APP

AccuWeather

bit.ly/accu447

There's no shortage of great weather apps for Android, and AccuWeather is a popular choice, but last year it was discovered that the iOS version was sharing location details with a company called Reveal Mobile – who sold the data on to retailers – even if the user opted out of providing location data. AccuWeather issued an apology of sorts, and said it would stop sharing data when users opted out of location sharing. Can you trust it, though?

Met Office weather app

bit.ly/met447

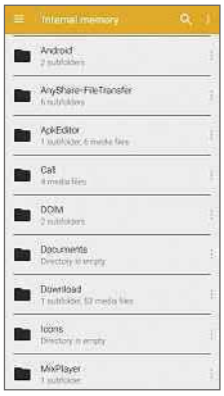
Available for iOS and Android, the official (and recently overhauled) Met Office app provides quality weather forecasts, weather warnings, pollen alerts and more. Search for a place and tap Save, then compare all your saved places' seven-day forecasts on one screen. To stop the app draining your battery by using your phone's GPS, you can get the same result by switching off location access and searching for your postcode instead. The app is free, but includes ads – these can be removed with a £2.99 in-app purchase.

MEDIA PLAYER

Media Player Classic for Android

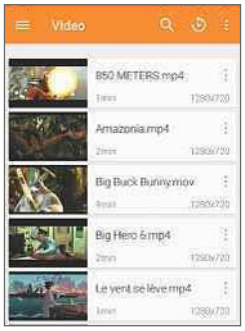
bit.ly/mpc447

Media Player Classic is a good – if somewhat basic – Windows media player. Unsurprisingly, there isn't an official Android version, despite what searches on Google Play might suggest, but a number of these fake apps have appeared for Android, often with variations on the name. They tend to be copies of the VLC Media Player app or MX player, but with added adverts.



VLC for Android

bit.ly/vlc447



Instead of downloading a rip-off, get the genuine VLC app, which is as good as the desktop program and can handle most video and audio formats, as well as network streams. It supports multi-track audio and subtitles, and lets you use touch gestures to control volume, brightness and playback. VLC for Android is entirely free, with no ads or in-app purchases. It even has (beta) Chromecast support.

IMAGE EDITOR

Paint.NET app

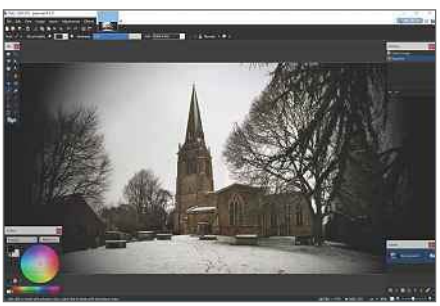
bit.ly/paint447

Paint.NET is a fantastic image editor that's packed with features, including layers, levels, unlimited undo, special effects and more. It even supports third-party plugins, so you can extend its capabilities further still. However, the Windows 10 app isn't free and although it's not going to break the bank at £7.49, there is a free alternative you should consider instead.

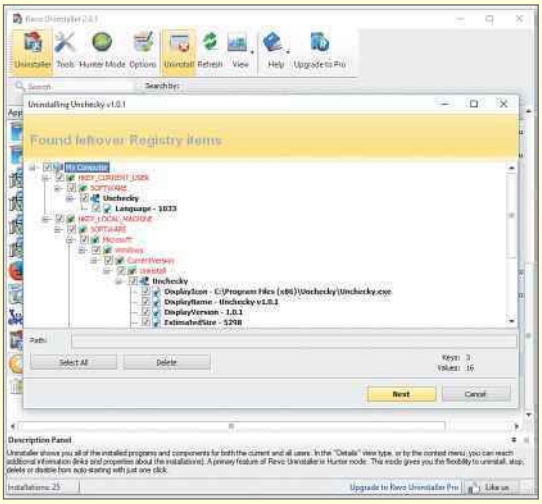
Paint.NET

www.getpaint.net

As explained above, DotPDN LLC, the creator of Paint.NET, charges for its Windows 10 app to help fund its continuing development, but the program itself remains free, and is arguably better anyway, offering more features and flexibility, and being less prone to crashes. Unless you desperately want to use the app version, we suggest you stick with the original for now.



UNINSTALL STUBBORN SOFTWARE COMPLETELY



Once you've decided that you want to uninstall a program, it's likely that you will do this by opening the Control Panel, clicking 'Uninstall a program', choosing the one you want and clicking Uninstall. While this method is quick, it's certainly not thorough, and often leaves behind a trail of Registry data, program files and even processes that continue to run in the background.

The free version of Revo Uninstaller (bit.ly/revo447) lets you purge all this unwanted detritus when removing a program, and takes barely any longer than the Control Panel method – just double-click a program in Revo's list to uninstall it instantly. Revo finds and lists all the program's Registry items and other leftover files, and you can then click Select All and Delete to get rid of them. The program always creates a system restore point in case anything goes wrong.

Revo includes a Hunter Mode tool that you can drag on a program to force-quit and uninstall it completely. It's especially useful for getting rid of programs that run without your permission when you start Windows, and which may not appear in 'Uninstall a program'.

Revo is straightforward to install, but make sure you download the free version rather than the paid-for Revo Uninstaller Pro. There's also a portable edition that can be run from a USB stick without installation, and an Android app called Revo Unstaller Mobile (bit.ly/revodroid447).

EXTENSIONS YOU SHOULD ESCHEW

SECURITY TOOL

Web of Trust

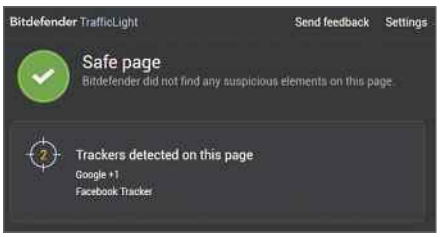
www.mywot.com

Web of Trust is a community-based browser add-on that gives every site you visit a reputation rating for Trustworthiness, Vendor Reliability, Privacy and Child Safety. Bundled with some PCs, it installs a background-controller service that runs with Windows and has the unwanted effect of slowing it down. More worryingly, in 2016, WOT was accused of collecting and selling its users' data. While it now offers an 'opt-out' setting for sharing your data, the matter left Web of Trust looking distinctly untrustworthy.

Bitdefender TrafficLight

trafficlight.bitdefender.com

Bitdefender TrafficLight protects you from malicious websites by checking for malware and phishing attempts, and using colour-coding to highlight safe and risky pages in search results. Although, like WOT, the extension (for Chrome, Firefox and Safari) runs automatically in the background, it's very lightweight and uses the cloud for some of its processing needs to place less strain on your processor. You probably won't even notice that it's running most of the time, but it will give you peace of mind while you're online.



BOOKMARKS MANAGER

Xmarks

bit.ly/xmark447

Xmarks, formerly known as Foxmarks, was once a popular bookmark service for Firefox. In recent months, users have reported that it is buggy, doesn't work, duplicates bookmarks and logs users out on a regular basis. The large number of new one-star reviews says it all and the tool is due to be retired on 1 May.

Bookmark OS

bit.ly/bos447

If you're looking for a more reliable alternative to Xmarks, then Bookmark OS is a good alternative. You can store and sort bookmarks, and filter them with tags. Some features require you to subscribe to the paid-for service for $12 (£8.55) a year (see bookmarkos.com), but it works perfectly well without these extras.

AD BLOCKER

Adblock Plus

adblockplus.org

Adblock Plus is the most popular ad-blocking add-on for web browsers, especially on Firefox, but it's a proven resource hog that can slow down your browser. On top of that, its Acceptable Ads programme means that some ads are allowed through – those from companies who have paid Adblock Plus for the privilege. You can disable this double-standard setting by disabling 'Allow some non-intrusive advertising' in the add-on's Options.

uBlock Origin

bit.ly/ublock447

uBlock Origin has been growing in popularity over the past few years and works with Firefox, Chrome, Vivaldi, Opera, Edge and Safari. It can block all online ads, including those in YouTube videos, and – unlike Adblock Plus – it's easy on memory and processor usage. You can add more ad-blocking and tracking lists to uBlock Origin if you want to tailor what it removes from web pages, and should find it makes your browsing experience much faster and less annoying.

DOWNLOAD MANAGER

DownThemAll

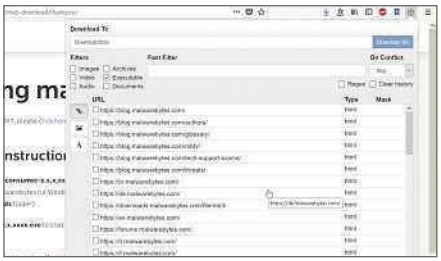
bit.ly/dtall447

DownThemAll is a Firefox add-on that turbo-charges your downloads by splitting the file you want into multiple segments, then fetching each part in parallel (treating all of the pieces as if they were separate files). The developer initially decided not to update the add-on for Mozilla's new WebExtension format but has since relented and is working on DownThemAll Lite for Firefox Quantum. There's no sign of it at the moment though, and the original DTA isn't compatible with the latest version of the browser.

Download Star

bit.ly/dstar447

This Firefox add-on was written specifically to replace DownThemAll, when it emerged that the add-on was no longer compatible with the browser. Download Star works with Firefox Quantum (and future releases), and is very fast and reliable, although it lacks some of the features offered by DownThemAll – most notably, it has no option to pause or resume downloads.



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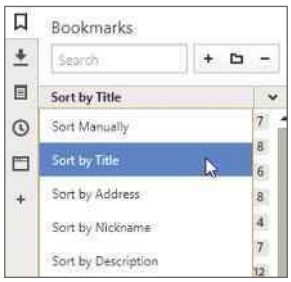
Make everything alphabetical

Alphabetising files, apps and other items makes browsing them as easy as ABC. **Robert Irvine** explains how

BOOKMARKS

If, like most people, your bookmarks menu is a mess of random pages, it's easy to sort the list alphabetically to make it easier to browse. In Chrome, press Ctrl+Shift+O to open the Bookmarks manager, click the three-dot menu button in the top-right corner and choose 'Sort by name'.

In Firefox and Edge, you can simply right-click the Bookmarks or Favorites menu and select 'Sort by name' to arrange your bookmarks alphabetically; in Opera, right-click anywhere in the Bookmarks panel and choose 'Sort alphabetically'; and in Vivaldi, click the menu at the top of the Bookmarks manager and select 'Sort by Title'.

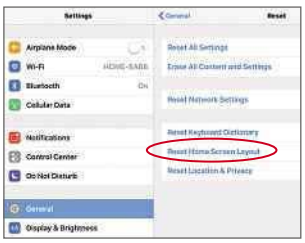


DESKTOP

Windows 10 automatically lists Start-menu items in alphabetical order, and you can jump straight to the one you want by typing the first letter or two. However, the same doesn't apply to your desktop icons, which can quickly become disorganised. To fix this, right-click the desktop, choose 'Sort by' and select Name. This trick also works in previous versions of Windows. You can use the same method to alphabetise the contents of folders: open a folder in Explorer, click the View menu on the toolbar (or right-click an empty space) and choose Name from the 'Sort by' menu.

MOBILE APPS

Rather than manually sorting apps on your phone or tablet into alphabetical order, try the following: on an iPhone or iPad, open the Settings app, tap General, then choose Reset, Reset Home Screen layout. This restores all the preinstalled apps on your device to their default positions, and arranges all other apps alphabetically.

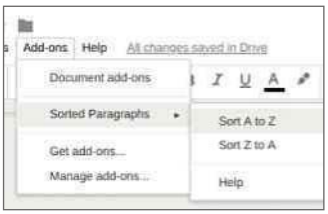


How you alphabetise your Android apps depends on your phone or tablet and the version of the operating system you're running. On some devices, you can open the app drawer, tap the three-dot menu button in the top-right corner and choose 'View as' or 'Sort by', then 'Alphabetical order' or 'Sort by A-Z'. Other devices let you choose Alphabetical from the Apps menu while some Samsung phones have a dedicated A-Z button.

If you can't see a menu option for alphabetisation, consider installing an Android launcher such as Evie (bit.ly/evie447) or Nova (bit.ly/nova447).

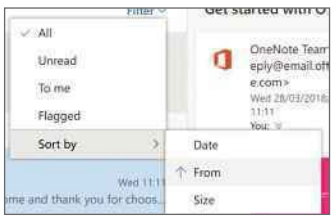
DOCUMENTS

Microsoft Word provides a handy toolbar button to easily sort lists in documents alphabetically. Select the block of text, click the AZ button on the toolbar and choose a sorting preference, such as ascending or descending. Google Docs doesn't offer this option, but you can get it by installing an add-on. Click the Add-ons menu, choose 'Get add-ons' and search for Sorted Paragraphs. Add this to Docs and next time you need to alphabetise a list, select the text, go to Add-ons, Sorted Paragraphs and choose 'Sort A to Z' (or 'Sort Z to A', if you prefer). In Google Sheets, you can make selected data alphabetical by clicking the Data menu and choosing 'Sort range by column [x] A → Z'.



EMAIL

Webmail services sort your messages chronologically so the newest emails appear at the top of your inbox, but you can also sort them alphabetically by sender to see all the messages a specific person has sent you. In Outlook.com, click the drop-down Filter menu above your inbox and choose 'Sort by', From. In Yahoo Mail, click the Sort menu in the top-right corner of your inbox and choose Sender. Gmail only lets you apply this option to group together messages sent by a specific individual. ■



ALPHABETISE ANY LIST

Need to get a list of people, products or places from A to Z in a hurry? Then copy and paste the text into The Alphabetizer (alphabetizer.flap.tv), which sorts any list into alphabetical order at the click of a button, then lets you download, print or share the result. It also offers extra options such as sorting by last name, removing duplicates and ignoring definite articles.

Best file managers for Android

Whether it's a quick cut-and-paste job or a dive into the depths of your phone, free file-manager apps give you more control over your documents than Google's built-in tool. **Steve Clark** finds the right one for you

Astro File Manager | bit.ly/astr447 | ★★★★★

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

WebUser GOLD AWARD

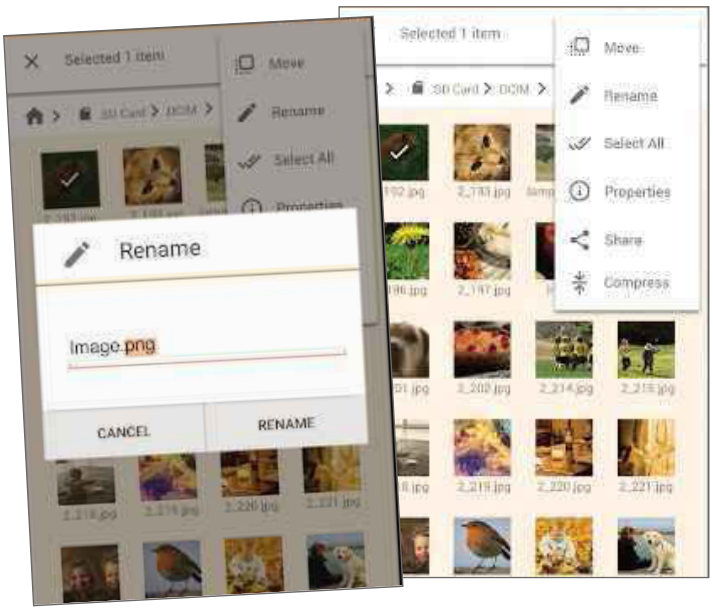
What we liked:

With its attractive and simple interface, and an emphasis on productivity, Astro's file-manager app ensures you won't be confounded by tricky file moves on your Android phone or tablet.

You'll find a familiar Home screen populated with the essentials: file types, storage locations, cloud services, recent files and favourites. Everything you need is accessible from the moment you open the app.

Setup is pleasantly straightforward, too. Thumb-friendly 'Add' buttons jump out from the Home screen offering LAN, FTP, SFTP and SMB server location support. You're also able to connect to most common cloud and social-media services, including OneDrive, Google Drive, Dropbox and Facebook. All this makes it child's play to navigate to your destination. Alternatively, if you don't know where a file is, you can use the search bar.

Peeking under the hood reveals no-nonsense file-manager options. There's nothing too exotic or complicated – ZIP and RAR compression and extraction, alongside app backup and a 'task killer' that can force apps to close to protect battery life. However, Astro's core strength is that it focuses on being a file manager first and foremost, to copy, move and share your files and documents, with no unnecessary extras – not even ads.



How it can be improved:

The Home screen's horizontal swipe is unnecessarily finicky, and cleaning up space using the SD Card Usage option is a challenge, which sees file selection looping you back to its folder location. You can get around this by pressing and holding the file to open it, rather than tapping it as normal. The app could benefit from the inclusion of multiple panes to make navigation even quicker, and a wider range of cloud-storage locations would be also welcome.

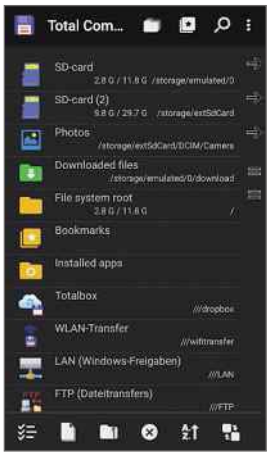
OUR VERDICT

Astro's streamlined functionality may make it look a bit basic, but it's precisely this simplicity that gives the app broad appeal, and there are just enough extras included to meet most common needs. After all, there's only so much a file manager app needs to do and Astro does most of it.

Total Commander | bit.ly/tot447 | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:



Total Commander started life as a desktop program – and it shows.

From design to performance, it feels built for serious users.

You can tell from a glance at the bold, black theme and Windows-like icons that Total Commander means business. There are no flash colour schemes or frivolous embellishments, which is fine if you can live with the existing design.

Total Commander supports FTP, SFTP, WebDAV and LAN connections. You can also connect the app to your OneDrive, Google Drive and Dropbox accounts, but you need to add plugins to the app to get them working. You'll also find handy extras such as the ability to create your own internal commands and a permissions editor. If you've ever used a desktop file manager, you'll feel right at home.

How it can be improved:

The transition from PC software to app means that some terminology, while accurate, isn't particularly user-friendly. Selecting additional plugins takes you to an external site that's little more than a wall of text and a few links – integrating these options in the app would refine the process. At present, the app only connects to a small number of cloud services – we'd like to see more.

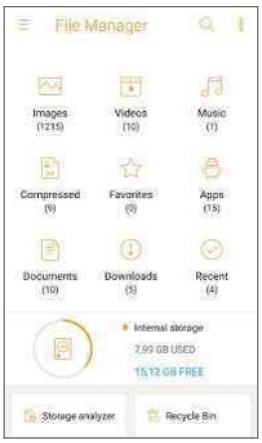
OUR VERDICT

Total Commander isn't just a name; it's a declaration of intent. This, powerful, well-built app will appeal if you want a comprehensive file overview. However, because of its desktop origins, there's a bit of a learning curve involved in fully understanding its quirks.

File Manager | bit.ly/fm447 | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked:



Originally created by Asus for its own phones, File Manager is now available on other Android devices. Despite its bland name and brand-specific origins, the app is a delight to use. Design-wise, it's as if Asus decided to improve upon Astro's minor failings and the striking icons make it very intuitive for Android users. If you're tired of manually navigating to common tasks, File Manager conveniently places key actions such as desktop file transfer and storage analyser at the bottom of the Home screen. The analyser itself is a dream: its large tabs and visual reports are designed with smartphones in mind. Elsewhere, a PIN-protected Hidden Cabinet hides private files from prying eyes. This is a lightweight app that only covers the absolute basics, but it's fast and efficient.

How it can be improved:

The app is so good that in almost every department, you wish it offered more: more actions; more cloud-storage options; more network and server connections. Clever ideas, such as the Hidden Cabinet, are dotted across the app and jar with its restrictions, making it feel underdeveloped. Quick links to additional storage locations on the Home screen would offer a welcome productivity boost.

OUR VERDICT

What File Manager does, it does well. Fluid navigation and a single-minded focus on simple file management make the app a joy to use, but it's held back by limited capabilities.

BEST OF THE REST

ES File Explorer

bit.ly/es447

ES File Explorer touts itself as the world's number one file-management app. Efficient in performance and rich in features, the easy charm of ES should make it the clear Gold Award-winner. Sadly, the ad-supported app forces you to download bloatware to gain access to locked features, which defeats its purpose.

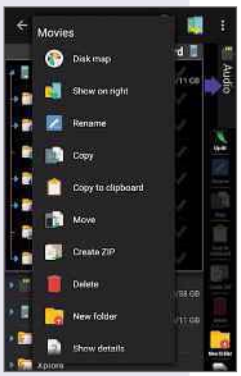
Solid Explorer

bit.ly/sol447

Solid Explorer kicks off with a 14-day free trial and asks a reasonable £1.49 for a full upgrade. It fits in well with the Android aesthetic, so you won't have any trouble navigating most of the app. There are some nice bonuses, including individual file encryption, but moving files across to different storage locations isn't easy, which makes the app difficult to recommend, given that this is a primary function of a file manager.

X-plore File Manager

bit.ly/xplor447



Aping a desktop file manager, X-plore is similar in concept to Total Commander. It supports more cloud services than any other app here, as well as the standard collection of server connections. However, the desktop-style aesthetic is an uneasy fit on Android because the layout is so ugly. Also, opening the nested folders soon crowds the screen. The dual pane goes some way to addressing this, but it's not enough to fix all the app's problems.

Send and receive money online

There are quicker and easier ways to make online money transfers than PayPal and Western Union. **Robert Irvine** rounds up the best options

Transfer money via Facebook Messenger

Last November, Facebook introduced an option to send and receive money using its Messenger app, which could prove a lot more beneficial to your friends than sharing laughing emoji and cat GIFs. To use the new feature, open a message, press the blue '+' icon, tap the green Payments button and set up your payment account (you only need to do this the first time). Enter the amount you want to send, tap Pay and enter your debit card or PayPal information, then choose Confirm Payment to complete the transaction. The recipient can then tap Receive Money, Receive and create their own Payments account to accept the cash.

What's the catch?

Messenger Payments is completely free to use, but the recent scandal about Facebook selling user data may make you reluctant to trust it with your card details. The company says all transactions are secured with encryption and an optional PIN, but the service is probably best used for sending small amounts rather than the maximum of £2,500.

Facebook makes it easy to send money to friends via its Messenger app

Send money using Google Pay and Gmail

Google recently combined its Wallet and Android Pay services in one new system called Google Pay, which lets you make cashless purchases on the high street and speed up online payments. It's also set to offer a way to send and request money on your phone or tablet, but this feature is currently only available in the US, through a separate Google Pay Send app.

However, you can still transfer cash online – up to £9,999 – via the Google Pay website (pay.google.com). Add a payment method such as your debit card or bank account (bear in mind that bank transfers can take up to four days), click 'Send or request' and enter the amount, then click Send. The recipient doesn't need to have a Google Pay account to receive funds. Similarly, you can ask up to five people to pay you money. It's faster than PayPal and there are no fees for using the service.

Send and request money over the web using Google's new Pay service

You can even send money through Google Pay directly from Gmail by clicking the pound-sign icon at the bottom of a new-message window and transferring the payment as an email attachment. If you receive money through Gmail, just click 'Claim money' to bank it.

What's the catch?

As we've mentioned, the Android version of Google Pay doesn't yet allow you to transfer money and we had trouble adding our card details to the app (even though they were accepted on the website). We also hope the Send app is eventually integrated with the main one, because having two separate apps seems pointless.

Transfer money using your banking app

High-street banks don't make it easy to send money to individuals online, usually requiring you to generate codes using a card reader to set up and authorise the initial payments. This security measure helps prevent online fraud, but it can also prove inconvenient when you need to send a friend some dosh in a hurry. Fortunately, most UK banks and building societies now have mobile apps, such as Barclay's Pingit (www.pingit.com), that make it easy to transfer money to another person's account using a system called Paym (paym.co.uk).

Provided both you and the recipient have signed up to Paym through your bank or building society app, you can make a payment simply by selecting the relevant contact or entering their mobile number. Verify their name to ensure

Most UK banks and building-society apps let you send money using Paym

your money is going to the right person, then press Send and you'll receive instant confirmation that the money has been dispatched. Alternatively, you can bypass Paym and manually type the person's sort code and account details, but this is fiddlier and more prone to error.

Barclays also has an e-wallet app called Moneymailme (moneymail.me), which lets 'millennials' send and receive money without touching their bank accounts, as well as engage in encrypted chats and video calls.

What's the catch?

Paym's convenience comes with a couple of restrictions: you can only send up to £250 a day and you can't transfer money abroad. However, it's safe and free to use, offering protection against fraudulent transactions, and is a lot less hassle than a card reader.

Switch to an app-based online bank

Traditional banks took a while to catch on to the benefits of online and mobile payments, but app-based banking services specialise in cashless transactions, not least because they don't have any branches, tellers or ATMs. The best of these is Monzo (monzo.com), which was the subject of our FAQ in Issue 441 and boasts more than half a million UK customers.

Available for Android and iOS, it lets you send money to other Monzo users in a couple of taps, and gives you a current account and debit card, so you can set up standing orders and direct debits, and get funds to non-users via bank transfer. They can also pay you up to £3,750 without signing up for Monzo via your personal Monzo.me link (monzo.me). There are no charges for sending or receiving money.

Monzo lets anyone send you money without needing to open an account

What's the catch?

Monzo may be the "bank of the future", with useful tools for analysing your spending, but you have to pay 50p per day when you go overdrawn by more than £20 and its payment services often suffer outages. Also, while there are no fees for using your Monzo card abroad, free cash withdrawals have been reduced to £200 a month.

Send money to your Skype contacts

Last August, Skype teamed up with PayPal to launch a new service called Money, which lets you easily transfer cash to your friends and family via Skype's Android or iOS app. This

Get cash to friends in a jiffy using Skype's PayPal-powered Money feature

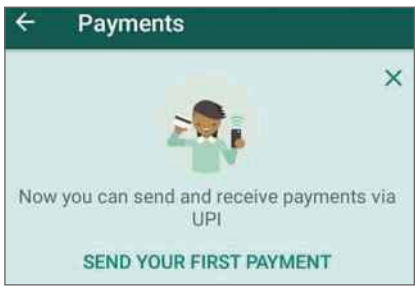
means you no longer have to break from a chat to open your banking app when the person you're talking to asks to borrow a tenner or offers to chip in for a gift you're discussing.

To access Money, simply swipe right (or press Find), tap Send Money, specify the amount and complete the money-transfer process. The first time you use the feature, you'll be asked to confirm your location and link your PayPal account to your Skype profile. The person receiving the cash will also need to have (or open) a PayPal account.

What's the catch?

Money transfers are only available in 22 countries (including the UK, Ireland and US) and because transactions are handled by PayPal, there are charges for sending funds overseas – up to 7.4% of the payment amount plus an additional fixed fee. PayPal also sets a £5,500 sending limit for a single transaction. ■

CASH WITHDRAWALS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE



WhatsApp has followed Messenger's lead by letting users transfer money to each other within their chats. However, the feature is currently only available in India (bit.ly/whatsapp447), in the beta version of the Android app, with no indication as to when it will be rolled out worldwide. To use WhatsApp Payments, you simply verify your phone number, select your bank and choose 'Send and receive money securely with UPI' (a payments system used by Indian banks).

Alternatively, you can transfer cash by scanning a QR code with your phone's camera.

Also unavailable in the UK is the popular US digital-wallet service Venmo (venmo.com), which is owned by PayPal and available for Android and iOS. This lets you instantly pay friends and family using money you've added to your Venmo account, or from a linked bank account or debit card. Not to be outdone, Apple launched a Venmo rival called Apple Pay Cash (bit.ly/applepay447) in December, which also makes money transfers simple and speedy, but again is only available in the US.

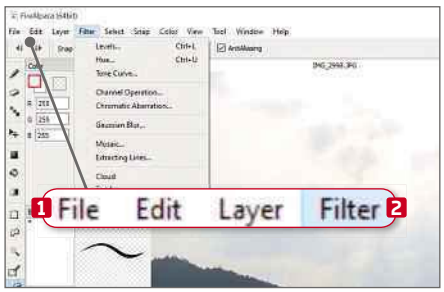
Create illustrations with FireAlpaca

Free paint tool and image editor FireAlpaca has just been updated. Here's how to get the most from its new tools

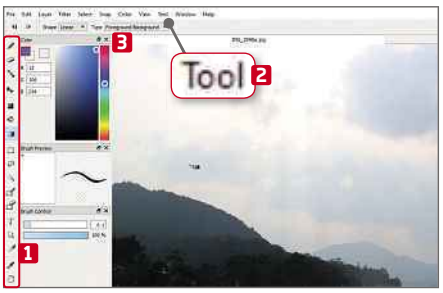
FireAlpaca: firealpaca.com | 20 mins | Vista, 7, 8, 10 10.7+

FireAlpaca is a free tab-based image editor and paint tool. You can use it to enhance your photos and correct any flaws, and create works of art from scratch using customisable brushes. The program offers lots of powerful features including levels, a tone curve and even a dedicated comic template you can use to create your own graphic novels (go to File, New and select the Comic tab). It also supports layers, so you can build up complex creations bit by bit. Despite its impressive power, it's a lightweight program that will even run on an old or slow PC.

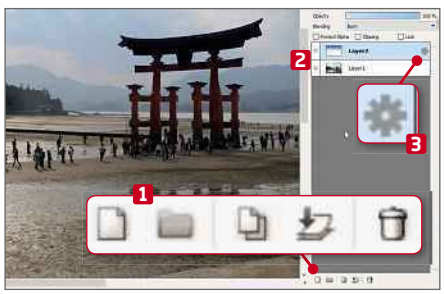
The most recent version of FireAlpaca introduces a separate 64-bit version and additional layer features.



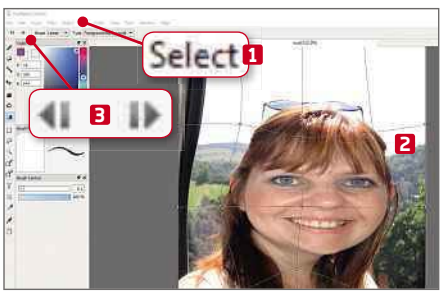
1 You can use FireAlpaca to improve the look of your photos. Go to File, 1 Open and pick an image to edit. The Filter menu 2 lets you manually adjust the levels, tweak the hue and play around with the tone via a curve tool. You can also apply a Gaussian blur or pixelate the image with the Mosaic effect.



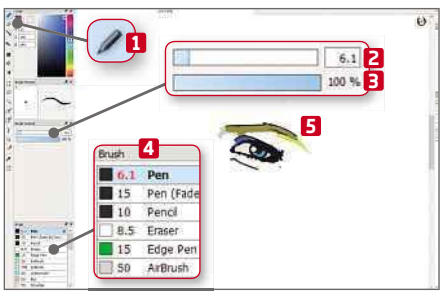
2 The Toolbar on the left 1 includes all the tools you would expect to find, including a brush, eraser, move tool, fill, bucket, gradient, select, lasso, text, eyedropper and hand. These can also be accessed via the Tool menu. 2 Options for each selected tool appear at the top. 3



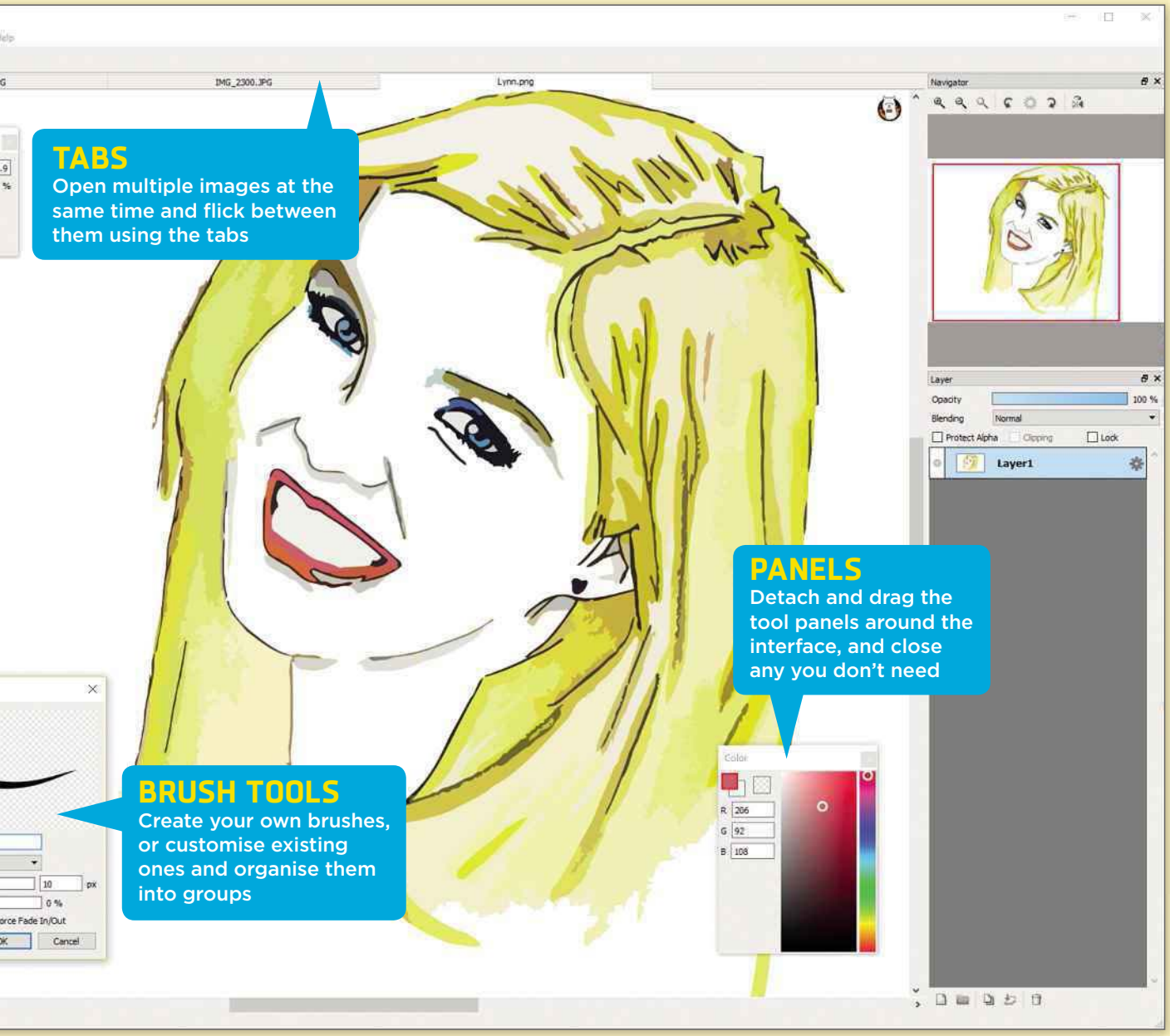
3 Create new layers and folders using the bar at the bottom of the Layers panel. 1 You can also duplicate existing layers, flatten them and delete any you don't need. Reorder layers by clicking and dragging them up or down. 2 Click the cog icon next to a layer 3 to change its properties or choose an effect.

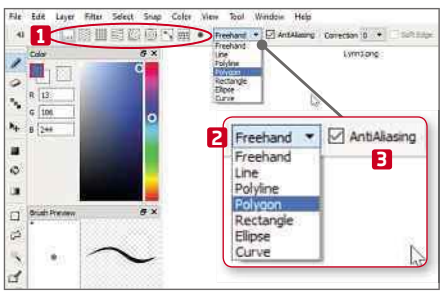


4 The Select menu 1 includes a Transform tool that can resize, stretch, squash and rotate your image. Use the Mesh Transform tool to distort your picture. Click and drag the mesh lines 2 to manipulate the image. Use the Back and Forward buttons 3 to undo and redo any changes.

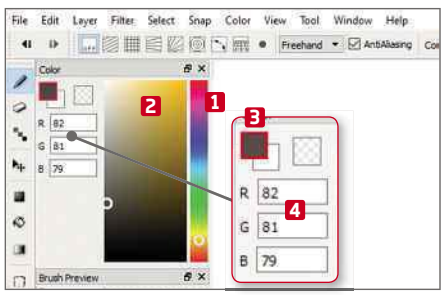


5 FireAlpaca is a great drawing tool. Select the Brush tool 1 and use the Brush Control sliders to adjust the size 2 and opacity. 3 The Brush Preview window above shows the results of your changes as you make them. There's a selection of Brush defaults to choose from. 4 Begin drawing on the canvas. 5

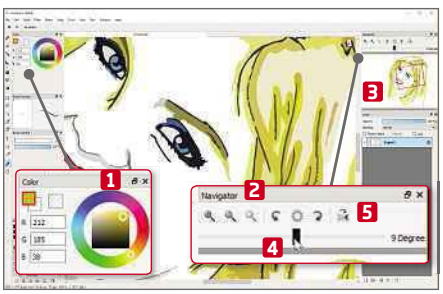




6 The bar at the top lets you select some snap tools. 1 These control the directions you can draw in. The Crisscross shape, for example, only lets you draw horizontally and vertically. You can also choose a drawing type 2 from a list of options. AntiAliasing can be switched on or off from here, too. 3



7 Change the brush colour by clicking a spot in the colour strip or by using the slider, 1 then pick the shade you require. 2 You can switch between foreground and background colours 3 and manually enter the RGB figures for a specific colour, if you know them. 4



8 The Color menu lets you switch from the colour bar to a colour wheel. 1 The Navigator 2 provides a small preview window 3 and lets you zoom in and out, and rotate your picture. Use the slider 4 to get the exact degree of rotation you require. You can also flip your picture horizontally. 5

Get early warnings about hard-drive failure

DiskMark: bit.ly/diskmark447 | 25 mins | Windows

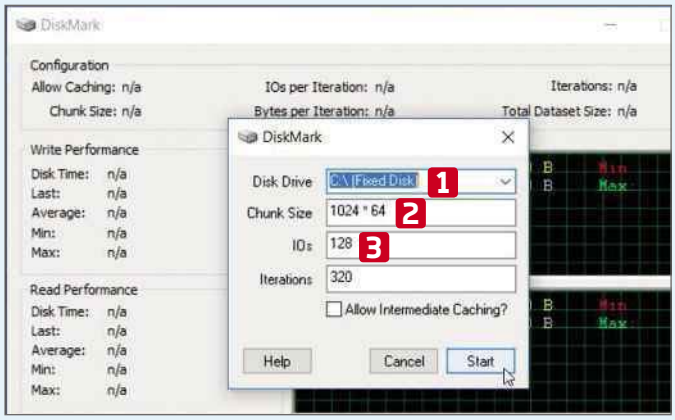
It's a sad fact that hard drives don't last forever. While some failures are sudden and catastrophic, others happen more gradually and you may get noticeable clues of hard-drive fatigue such as higher noise levels and greater heat output, or poor performance when reading or writing data. The problem is that as new technology forever becomes faster, it can be difficult to know if your machine just feels slow or whether its hard drive is indeed on its last legs.

In this Workshop, we show you how to use a simple benchmarking tool to objectively monitor your drive's performance over time. Armed with this information, you'll quickly be able to spot any changes and replace your drive before its failure results in the loss of important files. To increase your chances of identifying a failing hard drive, we also show you how to scan for bad sectors, monitor temperatures and track other important parameters.

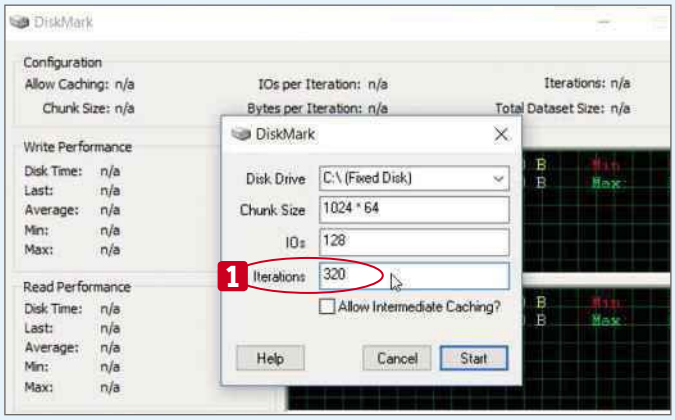
EXPERT TIP

Edward Munn says

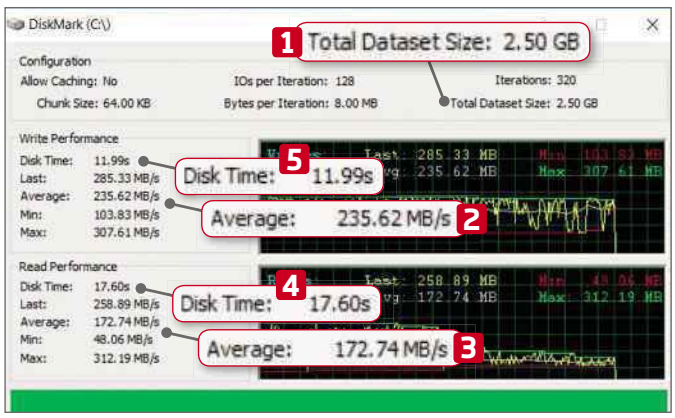
The tests in this Workshop give you an indication that your hard drive is wearing out, but failures can also happen suddenly and with no warning. For this reason, we always recommend you back up important files to either a cloud-storage service or using a tool such as EaseUS Todo Backup (bit.ly/easeus447).



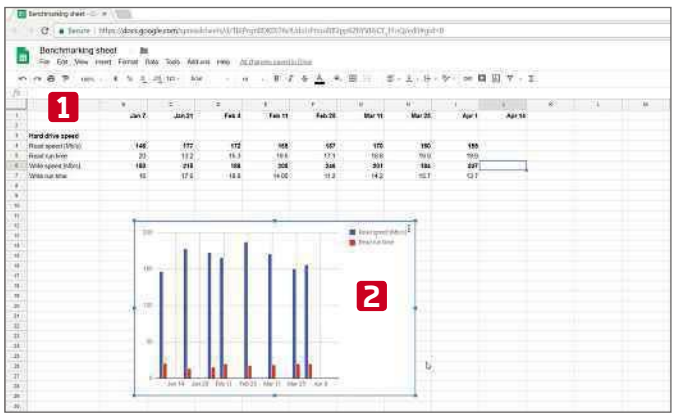
1 Download, install and run DiskMark. Select the drive you want to test **1** from the first drop-down menu. A Chunk Size of 64KB is used by default, **2** but you can change this, along with the IOs, **3** which determines how many times the chunk will be written to the disk.



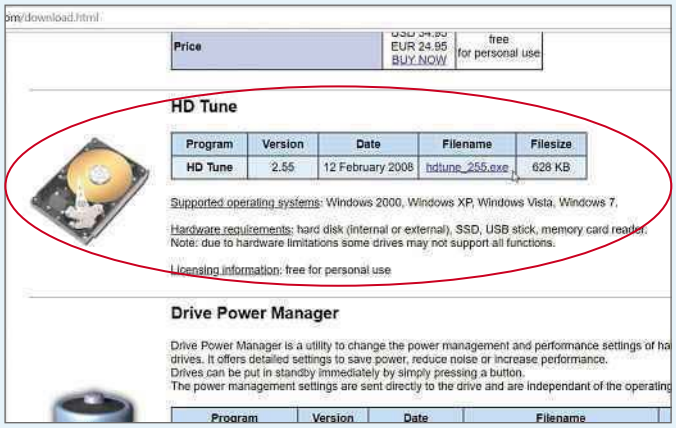
2 Choose the number of iterations. **1** This specifies how many times the benchmark will run. The higher the number, the more accurate the final results will be. If you change your own settings, it's a good idea to make note of them, so you can repeat the test in future.



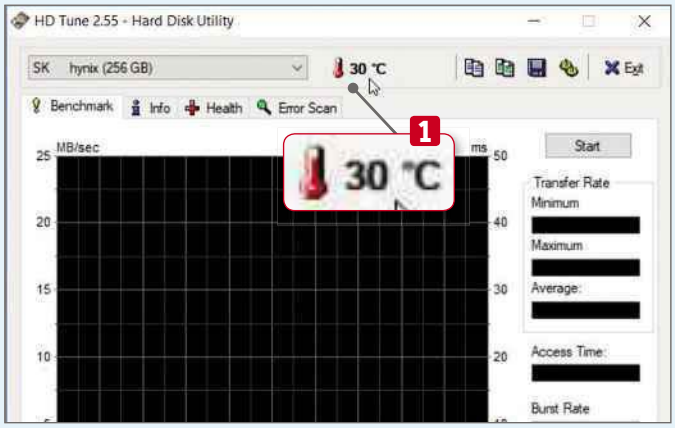
3 Click Start to make DiskMark start running the benchmark test. You'll be able to see the total amount of data transferred while it's running. **1** Make a note of the average write speed **2** and read speed, **3** and also how long it took to read **4** and write **5** the files.



4 You can log these figures in a Google Sheet **1** or similar. Over time, you'll get an idea of what type of variation is normal – creating a chart **2** should make this even easier. We logged average read and write speeds that varied by more than 70Mb/s, so one-off fluctuations are not a cause for concern.

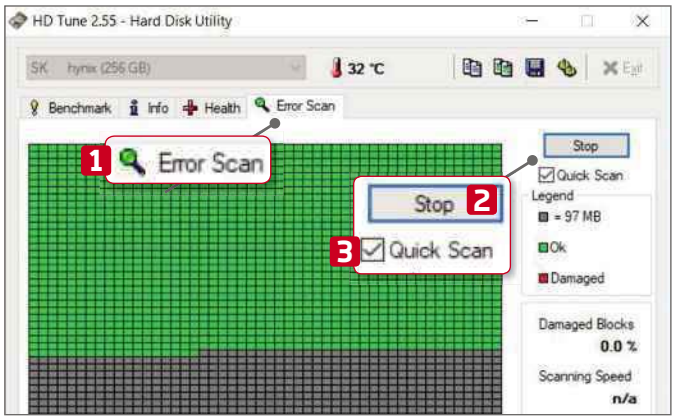


5 If you notice a sustained downward trend in read and write speeds, this could indicate that your drive or SSD is starting to fail and warrants further investigation. To measure your hard drive's running temperature and scan for bad blocks, download and install HDTune (www.hdtune.com/download.html).

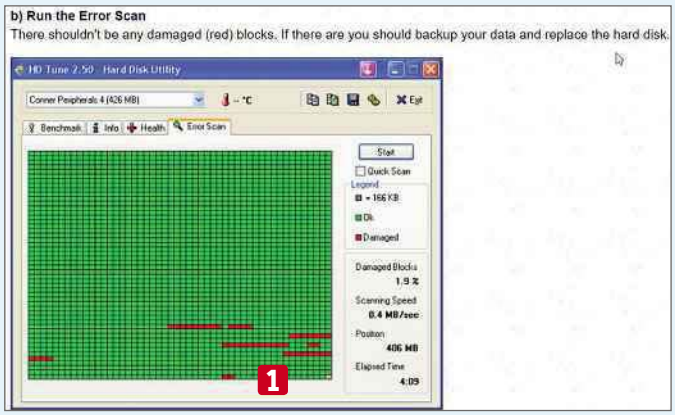


6 Run the tool and make note of the temperature displayed at the top of the window. 1 It's normal for different hard drives to operate at different temperatures, so what you need to look for is a marked increase in heat output compared to previous readings for the same drive.

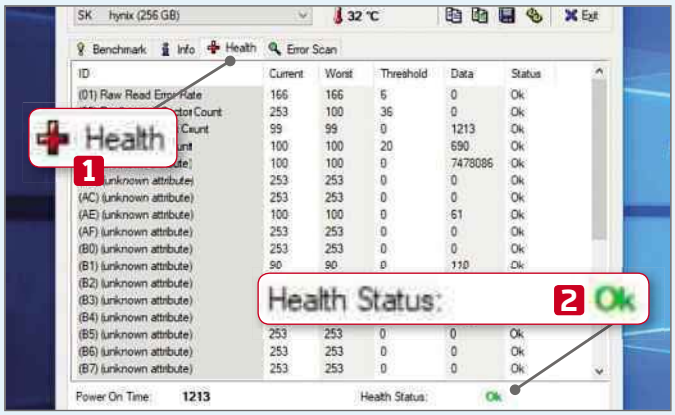
7 Again, it's a good idea to log these readings in a spreadsheet, 1 so that it's easier to spot any trends. If you have no historic data to compare your results with, just bear in mind that temperatures above 40°C are associated with higher levels of wear, and the temperature of your drive should never exceed 55°C.



8 Next, click the Error Scan tab. 1 When you click Start to scan for bad sectors, the button changes to Stop. 2 Alternatively, you can tick Quick Scan, 3 then Start for a much faster – albeit less detailed – scan. This test works for both hard drives and SSDs, with green blocks indicating healthy hard-drive sectors and red blocks indicating damaged ones.



9 When your hard drive has a bad sector, it will usually avoid it and use another sector instead. Some experts claim that a few bad sectors won't necessarily mean your hard drive is failing, but HD Tune recommends that if bad sectors are found, you should back up your files and aim to replace the drive. 1

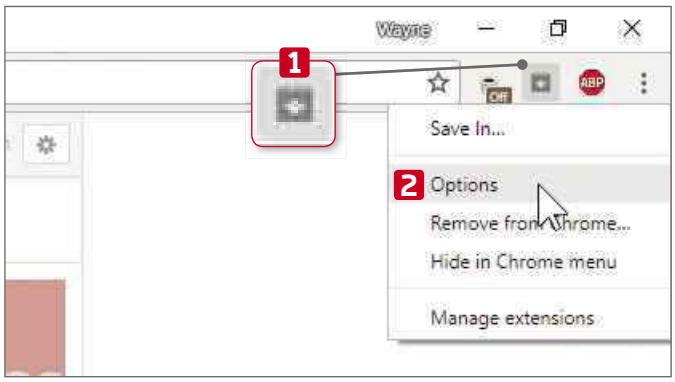


10 HD Tune uses SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) to check your drive for signs that may indicate it's about to fail. Click Health 1 to check your drive's health status. 2 Parameters highlighted in yellow are close to critical and should be checked regularly; red parameters show failure and indicate the drive needs replacing.

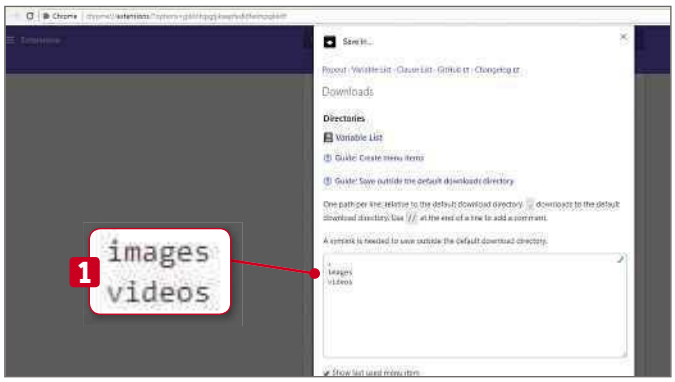
Create multiple download folders in your browser

When you download an item through your browser, the file is saved to your computer's default download folder, from where you can then move it to another location. Save In is a handy new add-on for Chrome and Firefox that lets you create a number of Save As folders. Each time you download an item, you can choose one of these locations to save it to.

Save In: bit.ly/save447 | 5 mins | Chrome Firefox

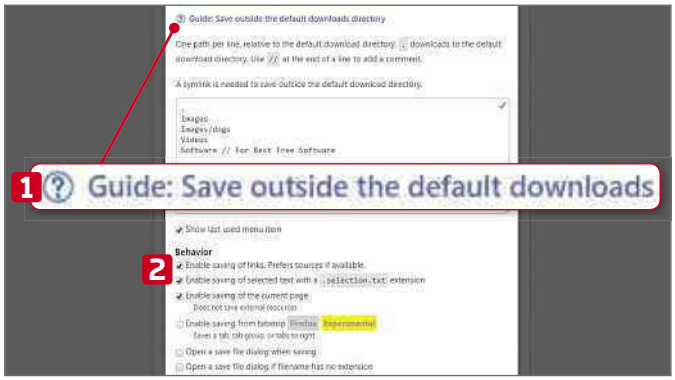


1 To create multiple download folders in Chrome, first install Save In from bit.ly/savein447. The add-on places a button on the browser's toolbar. 1 Click this to open its menu and select Options. 2 A new page opens, which is where you can create and manage the new download destinations.

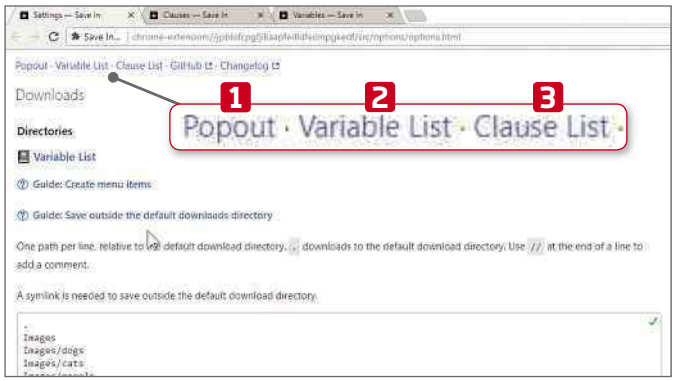


2 By default, Save In creates two new download locations – Images and Videos. 1 These appear inside the default download directory. To add additional locations (also within the Downloads folder), type the folder name in the list. It will be created the first time you download something to it.

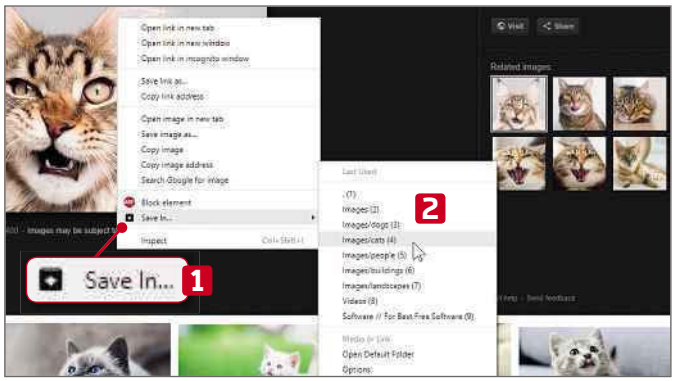
3 You can add a comment to a download folder by typing '//' followed by the remark. 1 This won't appear in the folder name. You can also create subfolders by adding a '/' after the main folder and typing the subfolder's name. Here, we've created a 'dogs' folder within the Images one. 2



4 Saving outside the default download location isn't as easy and requires a 'symlink'. Click the guide for instructions on how to do this 1 but be warned that it's a complicated process. You can customise Save In's behaviour, including what can and can't be saved. 2 There are lots of options.



5 Click Popout at the top 1 to display all the customisable options in a new page. Scroll the list to see notification settings, keyboard shortcuts and more. The Variable List 2 includes everything used in directory and path patterns. Clauses 3 are used for routing and renaming definitions.



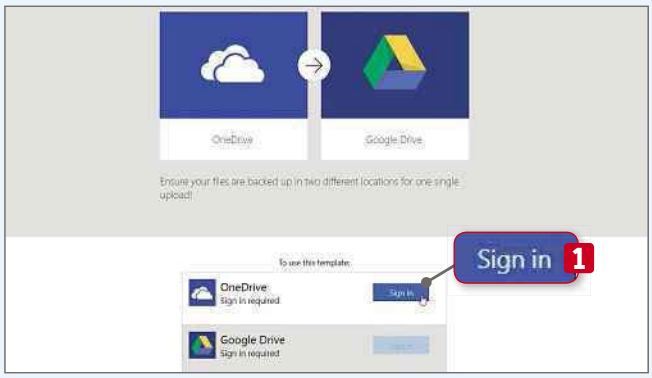
6 Once everything is set up, you can test it out by downloading something. Right-click an image or download link and, in the context menu, select Save In. 1 You should see the list of locations you've added. 2 Select the folder you require and the download will be saved there.

Automate cloud-storage backup and sync

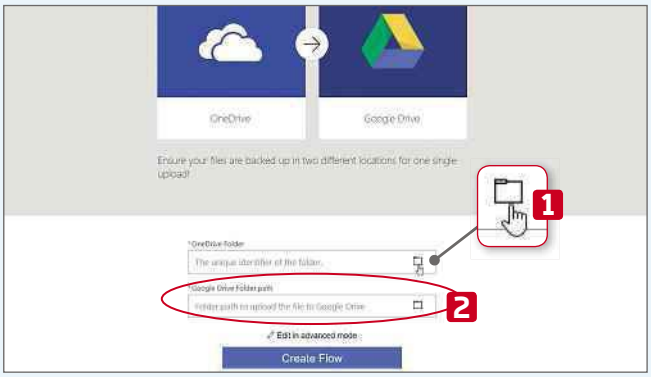
Microsoft Flow is a free tool that lets you automate tasks across different apps and services, such as backing up your files to two or more services in a single upload. When you upload files to a cloud-storage service, such as Google Drive, Flow can automatically upload a backup to another service, such as OneDrive – even if your PC is switched off and unable to sync folders.

Microsoft Flow: flow.microsoft.com | 20 mins | Any browser

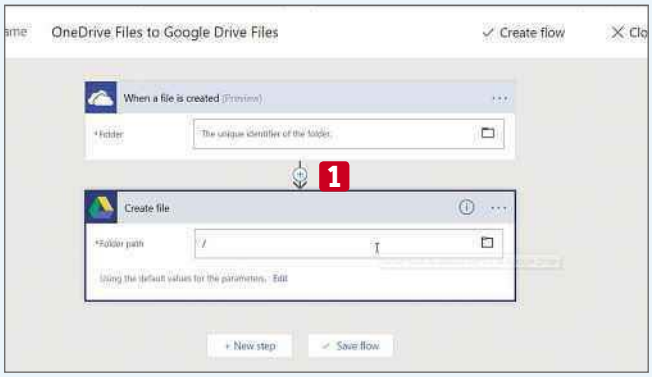
1 Visit flow.microsoft.com and sign in with your Microsoft account, then follow the instructions on screen. Next, search for the cloud service you'd like to sync to another service, such as OneDrive. 1 All existing Flow templates related to that service appear on screen.



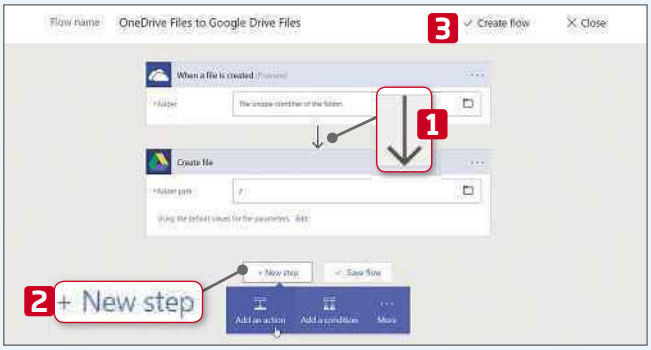
2 Click the template you'd like to use, such as OneDrive Files to Google Drive Files. Scroll down and click the button 1 to sign into OneDrive. After entering your password, you'll be asked to give the PowerApps and Flow permission to sign in and access your OneDrive files.



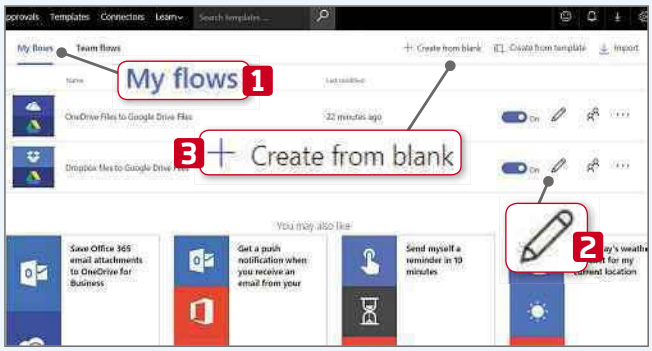
3 Follow the same steps to log into the second cloud-storage service – in this example, Google Drive. Click Continue and select the folder icon for OneDrive 1 to choose the directory to back up. Repeat for Google Drive, choosing where you want the OneDrive files to be saved. 2



4 Click 'Edit in Advanced Mode' and check the wording for the template you've chosen: our example says files will be created in Google Drive when they're created in OneDrive. 1 To create files in Google Drive when they're modified in OneDrive, follow the instructions in step 6.



5 To add required conditions for the 'flow' to take place, click the arrow 1 and select 'Add a condition'; or click New Step 2 to add further actions, such as backing up to Dropbox. When done, click Create Flow. 3 Test the flow by adding a file to OneDrive. Green ticks show it's running fine.



6 Click Done, then 'My flows' 1 for a summary of all your flows. Selecting a flow lets you see its history, or you can edit it by selecting the pencil icon. 2 If a template doesn't entirely meet your requirements, you can click 'Create from blank' 3 to create your own flow from scratch.

Weekend Project

Get to grips with some serious tech tinkering to boost your computer and other devices

How to...

Get Android P and iOS 12 features today

Wayne Williams looks forward to the next big mobile OS updates from Google and Apple, and reveals how to try their new tools

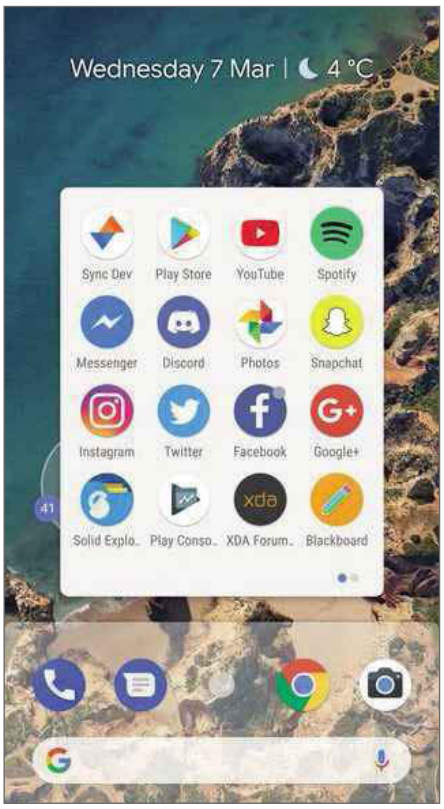
The next versions of Android and iOS are in development right now, but you're going to have to wait – Android 9.0 P will probably be here in August, and iOS 12 a month later. However, we already have some idea of what to expect, as well as a wish list of possible but unconfirmed additions. So if you're impatient to try the future features right now, this Weekend Project takes a look at the rumoured changes and additions, and tells you the best way to mimic them – with no rooting or jailbreak required.

Get Android P features now

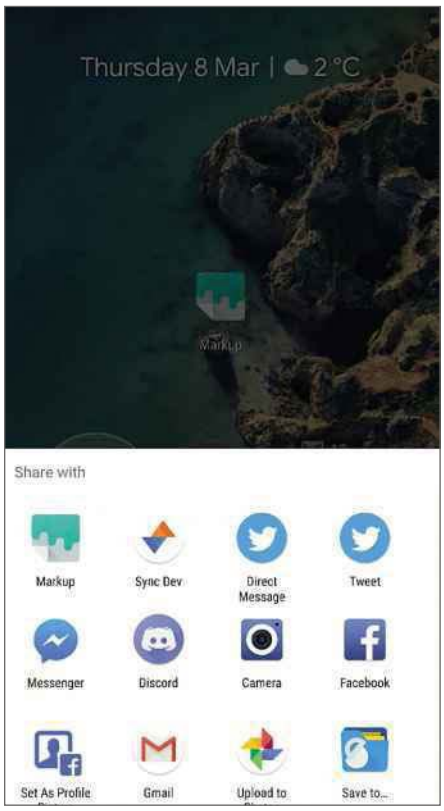
We already know some of the changes Android 9.0 P will deliver, even if we don't yet know the new operating system's actual name – Peppermint? Pancake? Pecan Pie? Or another type of dessert?

The 'notch' found at the top of the iPhone X, which houses various cameras and sensors, is already making its way to a number of Android phones, including devices from Asus and Huawei, and support for a similar notch is being included in Android P. Naturally, it's not something you can replicate yourself, and there's no reason why you'd want to at this stage.

The new OS also introduces other cosmetic changes, including rounded corners for the quick-settings menu and a new look for the dock. You can get this new style (or an approximation of it) by installing an unofficial Android launcher, but you first need to open Settings on your Android phone and tick the 'Unknown sources' option under Applications or Security. Once that's done, download the 'Pixel Launcher from Android P' APK file from bit.ly/plap447, then tap Install and press the Home button. You'll be asked to pick a launcher. Select Pixel Launcher and make sure you select Always so it becomes the default option. Open Settings, select Apps or



Pixel Launcher gives your phone the look – but not the features – of Android P



Android P lets you draw on any screenshots you've taken

Applications, Pixel Launcher, then Permissions to grant the launcher access to the various functions it requires.

Another new feature in the next big Android release is Markup. This lets you edit screenshots you've taken, and add drawings and annotations – much as you can in iOS 11. This has been stripped out of the Android P Developer Preview and is available to install via an APK from bit.ly/gmap447. Make sure the ability to sideload apps from Unknown Sources is enabled, then download and install the app. Take a screenshot, then tap the Share option in the notification pulldown. You'll see the Markup app listed in the sharing options. Select it, then do whatever drawing and cropping you require. Your edited screens will appear in a new folder within the Gallery.

Markup isn't the only screenshot-related change being made to Android P – you'll also be able to capture a screenshot by holding down the power button and choosing the screenshot option from a menu. This can't be recreated on older versions of Android (not yet, at least).

Other features coming to Android P

The notification panel is updated in the new operating system and will have some new features. Contact information is more clearly presented, and recently contacted people are easier to find. The notification quick-settings panel is no longer divided into pages, and coloured circles indicate at a glance whether settings are on or off.

The clock has moved across the screen to the top-left corner in the Developer Preview, but with feedback being mostly negative, it may not stay there. We shall have to wait and see.

You'll be able to zoom text, which is a welcome touch, and the Do Not Disturb feature is no longer enabled by simply turning your volume all the way down – you'll need to actually switch it on.

Idle apps in the background will no longer be able to access the microphone

GET iOS 12 FEATURES NOW

While Google has announced Android P and released a developer preview, Apple has remained tight-lipped about iOS 12. That's no surprise, because it tends to announce new versions of its mobile OS at WWDC (Worldwide Developer Conference), which is usually held in June. There have been leaks and rumours, however, which suggest that iOS 12's biggest improvement will be related to performance. To boost your current device, try shutting down all open apps (Apple says this won't make a difference, but users disagree), disable any apps you don't need, and restart your phone from time to time. iOS 11.3 includes some battery and performance options for iPhone 6 and later. This update wasn't available to us at the time of writing but once it's been released, you can find the options in Settings, Battery.

The next version of iOS is expected to introduce parental controls and there are already third-party apps you can use for this. Boomerang Parental Control (bit.ly/boo447) is completely free, available for iOS 9 upwards and includes safe browsing, location tracking, bedtime schedules, app blocking and a Family Messenger chat tool.

In December last year, Apple announced its acquisition of music- and image-recognition service Shazam. It's expected this tool will be tightly integrated into iOS 12 but in the meantime, you can just download and run the Shazam app (bit.ly/shaza447).

Shazam will be a significant addition to iOS 12 – you can install it now

Boomerang adds parental controls to iOS

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Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 6 April 2018.

Ofcom

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

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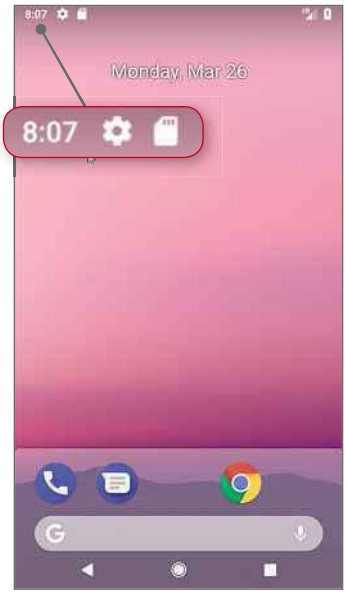
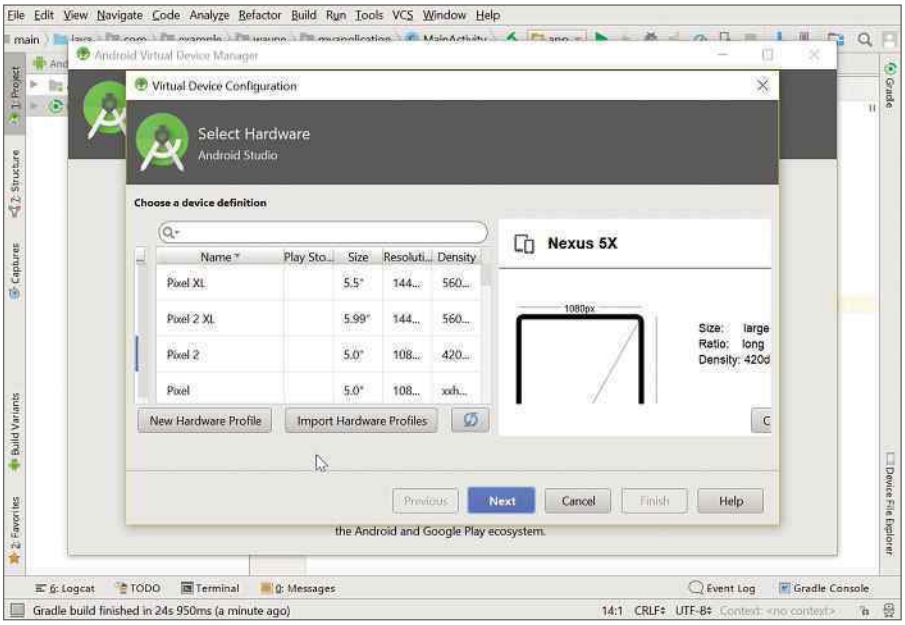


Android P has moved the clock to the left, which has so far proved unpopular



When setting up the emulator, you need a Pixel device as P currently only runs on these

or camera, and a new Lockdown Mode will disable fingerprint unlocking and extended access.

A multi-camera API will allow apps to request the data from more than one camera sensor at a time. This will be useful for devices which have two cameras on the back.

Support for Wi-Fi RTT (Round-Trip-Time) will allow apps to work out where you are inside a building and provide turn-by-turn directions. This will be useful for navigating large indoor spaces, such as shopping centres.

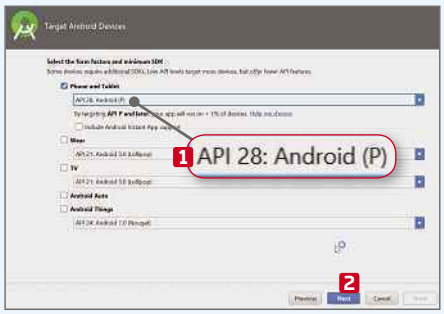
Get the Android P Developer Preview

If you don't want to simply mimic the new features coming in Android P, you can install the actual operating system on your mobile phone right now. Well, sort of. Google has released a Developer Preview of it – an early version that gives you a taste of things to come. There are some restrictions to be aware of, though. Firstly, you will need to be running a Pixel Phone (Pixel, Pixel XL, Pixel 2 or Pixel 2 XL). If you are, head to bit.ly/androidp447 to download the system image and view instructions for flashing it to your phone. You also need to be aware that this is far from a finished version of the operating system. It will be buggy and may cause problems, and is primarily aimed at developers, so you shouldn't run it on a phone you rely on for day-to-day use.

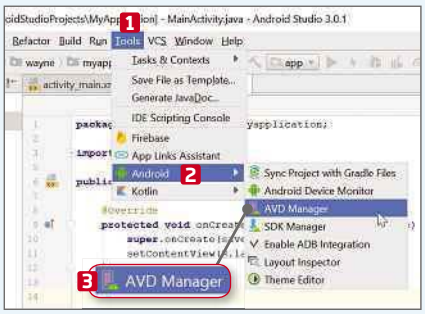
If you don't have a compatible phone or don't want to risk installing the Developer Preview on it, you can run it in an emulator instead. See our Mini Workshop, below, for instructions on how to do this. ■

MINI WORKSHOP | Try Android P on your PC

1 Download Android Studio from the official developers' site (bit.ly/anst447). Run it and select Standard as the setup type, then select the interface theme, verify the settings and click Finish. The components will download. Click Finish and Android Studio will run. Select 'Start a new Android Studio project'. 1



2 The Create New Project window will open. Give the project a name and click Next. Under 'Phone and Tablet', select 'API 28: Android (P)' 1 and click Next. 2 Click Next twice more, then Finish. The My Application window will open. Click the blue links in the messages panel to install the missing elements. Accept the terms.



3 When everything's installed, open the Tools menu 1 and select Android, 2 AVD Manager. 3 In the next window, click Create Virtual Device, select a Pixel model and click Next, then click P in the system image window and Download. Click through the final steps, then hit the Play button to launch the emulator.

NEXT ISSUE **How To...** Stay anonymous on any PC using Tails

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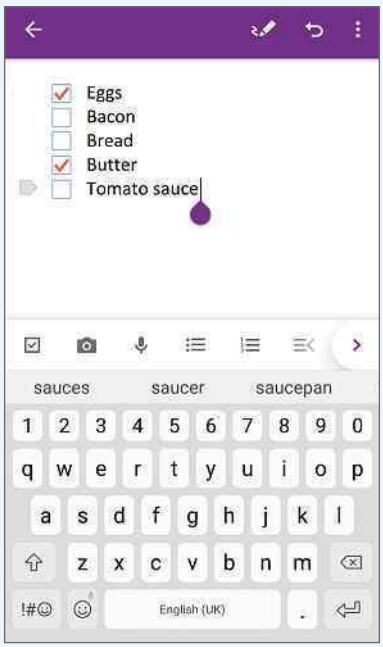
The **mobile note-taking apps** from Google, Apple and Microsoft can do more than you realise. Master them with help from our experts

Create to-do and shopping lists

Google Keep, Apple's Notes and Microsoft OneNote all have two modes, so you can either write freely or create lists with tickboxes, such as to-do lists, shopping lists and so on. Open a note in Microsoft OneNote on your phone and tap the box with a tick in the toolbar to create a list with tick boxes. Next time the note is opened, tapping a box adds a tick.

In Google Keep, tap the list icon in the bottom toolbar to create a new list with tick boxes. In an ordinary note with text, tap the plus button and then tap 'Tick boxes' to insert a list.

In the Notes app on iOS, tap the tick in a circle in the toolbar when writing a note to set up a list with tick boxes.



Create lists with boxes that you can tick when the task is completed

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.

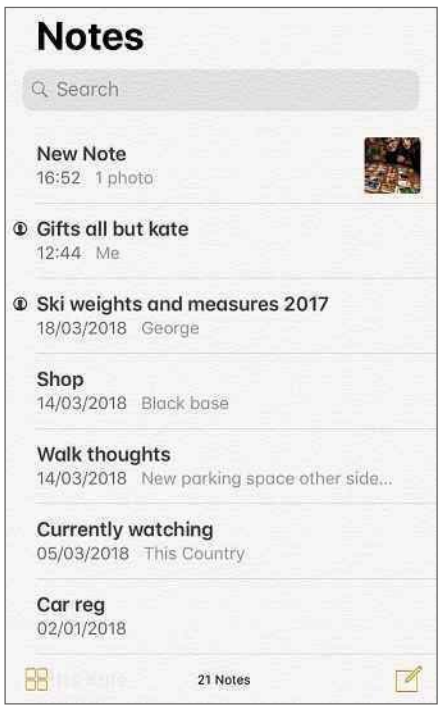
Scan documents into notes

Your note-taking app can store important documents, such as receipts and certificates, keeping them safe and letting you access them from anywhere, which is particularly useful if you're travelling.

In Microsoft OneNote, tap the camera button at the bottom of the screen and select 'Capture a photo'. You'll see some text just above the shutter button – slide it left and right and choose Document, Business Card or Whiteboard. Point the camera at the document and the app detects the edges, crops it from the background and straightens it. This process works best if you place the item on a contrasting background.

The iOS Notes app also scans documents and stores them in photos. Create a new note and press the plus button to bring up a menu with an option to scan documents. Point the camera at a letter or business card and it will detect the edges, crop the background, straighten it and save it in a note.

Google Keep can store your photographed documents in notes, but you need to use the Google Drive app to scan them in the first place. Open Google Drive on your phone, tap the plus button and select Scan, then point the camera at a document to scan it and save it to Drive. Next, create a note in Keep and press the plus button, then select 'Choose image' to display the photos on your phone. Press the menu button in the corner and select Drive, then find your scanned document and select it. The document appears in the note and you can add a title and text.



Notes that include photos usually display a thumbnail of the image

Use photos in notes

To add pictures to Google Keep, tap the camera icon and select 'Take a photo'. The image is inserted into a new note, automatically sized to fit, and you can add a title and additional text. The photo is displayed as a thumbnail when the note appears in Keep's list.

OneNote works in a similar way. Tap the camera button at the bottom and select 'Capture a photo'. A toolbar at the bottom of the screen lets you rotate or crop the image, and you can add more photos using the plus button. The photo appears in a new note, and you can add a title and text, as in Android.

The iOS Notes app not only lets you include images in a note but videos as well. Create a note and press the plus button in the toolbar. Select 'Take Photo or Video'. When you take a photo (or record a video), it appears in the note. As with the other apps, you can add a title and text. Notes with photos show a thumbnail image in the notes list.

Scan documents and store them in notes so you don't lose them

Pin notes

Important or frequently accessed notes can be pinned so they appear first and are easy to access. Open a note in Google Keep and tap the pin icon in the toolbar at the top.

Notes can be pinned in iOS Notes so they appear first, but this feature isn't on a menu or button: you have to swipe right over a note in the list to pin or unpin it. When there are several pinned notes, tap and hold a note to pick it up and drag it to wherever you want it.

In OneNote, tap and hold a note in the list. On the menu that pops up, select 'Add to Home screen'. This adds an icon to your phone's home screen that opens the note with a tap.

Notes on your PC

All your notes can be accessed on any device with a browser. This is a great way to view your notes when you're at a PC, particularly if you need to do some extensive typing:

Google Keep: keep.google.com
iOS Notes: www.icloud.com
OneNote: www.onenote.com

You can access your mobile device's notes on your PC via the web version

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Organise notes

Google Keep has two ways to organise notes – you can either colour them or add labels. When viewing or writing a note, press the three-dot icon in the bottom-right corner to open a menu offering both Labels and Colours. Tap a colour to apply it and tap Labels to select an existing label or to create a new one. A quick way to add a label when writing a note is to type a hash (#) followed by the label name.

Google is the king of search, and labels and colours are searchable in Keep. Tap the magnifying glass and tap a colour or label to see a list of notes with those attributes.

Notes on iOS uses folders to organise notes. At the bottom of the home screen is a New Folder link. Select a folder before creating a new note. To organise existing notes, swipe left across one to reveal three buttons. Tap the purple folder button and select a folder to move it to.

Notes doesn't have a search option but if you swipe right on the device's home screen and use the search, there is a Notes category in the results. You may have to scroll through other categories to find it.

OneNote has a complex structure involving notebooks, sections within notebooks and notes within sections. Open a notebook to see the sections and tap the plus sign to add new ones. New notes can be created in the appropriate section but if you want to organise existing notes, press and hold on a note until a menu appears, then select 'Move page'. It asks which section you want to move it to.

Create location reminders

Google Keep can create reminders, which is handy if you need to see notes on a specific day or time, or when arriving at a location. Open a note and tap the hand with the pointing finger in the toolbar. Set a time and date or select Place and enter a location. It uses the phone's location services to tell whether a note needs to be triggered.

Share notes

You can share Google Keep notes with other people, such as a work project with a colleague or a shopping list with your partner. Both of you can see and edit the contents of the note. Open a note and tap the three-dot icon in the corner. Press Collaborator, then type the email address of one or more people to share the note with.

Open a note in OneNote and press the three-dot icon. Select 'Share page' in the menu to share the note as plain text or a PDF. The latter lets people view the note, but not edit it or see updates.

Share notes and keep other people up to date with any changes

Open Notes on iOS and you'll see an icon at the top to add people via Facebook, Message, Mail, Twitter and more. This sends them a link to the latest version of the note.

Lock your notes

You can lock notes to prevent other people from accessing them, such as if you lend them your phone, tablet or computer. Go to OneNote's Sections screen, then press and hold until a menu appears and select 'Protect section'. Enter a password to lock it with, and all the notes contained in that section will be locked.

Use 'Protect section' in OneNote to lock a section with a password

In Apple Notes, swipe left over a note in the list to reveal three icons and tap the grey padlock.

Google Keep can't lock notes.

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

HARDWARE

Fix a tempermental trackpad

Q The trackpad of my Acer E15 Windows 10 laptop has developed an annoying habit of freezing. The only way to resolve it seems to be to turn the laptop off and on again.

I've updated the drivers from Acer's website but this had little effect. Sometimes the problem goes away for a week but other times it happens two or three times a day.

K Greenacre, via email

A First, try a troubleshooter. Open the Control Panel (start typing `control panel` into the search box and click it when it appears), then open Troubleshooting. Click 'View all', then 'Hardware and Devices'.

If that doesn't help, right-click the Start button and select Device Manager. Expand 'Mice and other pointing devices', then right-click the Trackpad or ClickPad and select Uninstall Device. When you restart the PC, Windows will detect the trackpad as a new device and install a driver for it. If it doesn't, go to Acer's website (bit.ly/acer447) and download the Touchpad Driver. Restart Windows.

Use Windows' own troubleshooters to find and fix problems with your PC

If that doesn't work, download Driver Booster Free from IObit (bit.ly/iodb447). Scan the PC and only update the driver if a newer one is found. Ignore all the other drivers.

INTERNET

See the changes made to a website

Q Is it possible to track the changes that have been made to the text and graphics of a website, going back in time to a specific date? What about WordPress and Web machine?

Rozaliya Radeva, via email

A It's easy to track website changes going forward in time but harder to track backwards. There are services that let you monitor a web page and receive notifications by email whenever they change. You can even focus on a specific part of a web page, such as the text or an image. Two examples of this type of service are Visualping (visualping.io) and Follow That Page (www.followthatpage.com). Enter the URL of a web page, provide your email address and the service will notify you of any changes.

We don't know of any automated services that let you work backwards in time, but you can check manually using the Internet Archive Wayback Machine (archive.org/web). Enter a web address to see a timeline with dates marked for snapshots taken. Click a date in the calendar to see what a page used to look like. There's no way to automate it – you have to load every snapshot and look for changes yourself.

The Internet Archive Wayback machine shows websites as they used to look

OFFICE

Replace missing Excel add-in

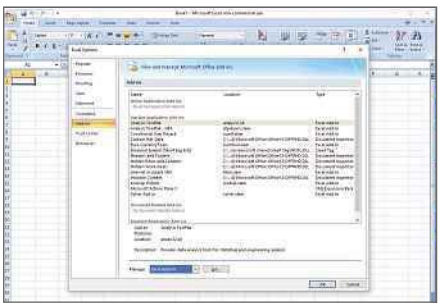
Q Until last year, my laptop running Windows Vista had an Excel 2007 add-in called Enalyze or something similar. It seems to have disappeared.

When I click Add-ins, I get PopTools but no Enalyze. Is the add-on still around?

Gee Sherlock, via email

A There is still a website for PopTools (www.poptools.org) but it's an old Excel add-in that was last updated in 2011. However, since you are running old versions of Windows and Excel, this shouldn't be a problem. We couldn't find an Excel add-in called Enalyze and suspect that the name is wrong. Only references to Analyse and Analysis add-ins were found.

Try the Analysis ToolPak instead. To install it in Excel 2007, click the Microsoft Office button, then click Excel Options. If it isn't already selected, choose Add-ins in the Manage box and click Go. Select Analysis ToolPak in the Add-ins box above and click OK. If you can't see it, click Browse to find it. You may be prompted to install it.



Download add-ons to provide extra tools for Excel 2007

HARDWARE

Record from vinyl to PC

Q I'm trying to connect a Denon DP-200USB turntable to a Microsoft Surface Book. I've tried USB-to-USB but that doesn't work. I'm wondering if the Surface Book is set up properly.

Andrew Mowat, via email

A The Denon DP-200USB turntable lets you turn vinyl LPs into digital recordings that you can play on a PC. It has a USB socket on the front but this isn't designed to connect directly to the PC – it's for a USB memory stick.

Plug a memory stick into the USB port, put a record on the turntable and

This Denon turntable's USB port lets you digitise records to a memory stick

play it. Press the Rec button to save the audio to the stick. Remember to press Pause while you flip over the record or you'll have a big gap in the middle of the recording.

When the recording is complete, remove the flash drive from the turntable and plug it into the PC. Trans Music Manager software is provided with the turntable, which lets tracks be named and edited, but you may find other audio software that works.

The software was designed for Windows XP and Vista, so there may be some issues with Windows 10, but it's worth a try. If it doesn't work, try editing the files with Audacity (www.audacityteam.org).

SOFTWARE

Reset the Photos app

Q My Toshiba Satellite L50 PC is running 64-bit Windows 10 Home Premium. In February, the Windows 10 Photos app suddenly stopped working.

I tried to reset it via the Reset button but this didn't work. I have also reset my PC, scanned it with Malwarebytes and Windows Defender, and cleaned it with CCleaner. Nothing works.

A message on the screen informs me that the app is installed but when I try to activate the Photos app, a blank screen appears. If I try to activate it via the camera roll, the same thing happens.

Will Jobling, via email

A This may be caused by a corrupt photo or a bad filename, so try moving them. Create a new folder, such as 'C:\MyPics' and drag all the photos and folders from C:\Users\Yourname\Pictures to it. Then drag everything from the C:\Users\Public\Pictures folder and the C:\Users\YourName\OneDrive\Pictures folder. Basically, empty every folder that's indexed by the Photos app.

Open the Settings app, then click Apps, Photos. Click 'Advanced options' and click the Reset button. Open the Windows Store app, click the three-dot

Built-in Windows apps can't be uninstalled but can be reset to fix problems

icon in the top-right corner and select 'Downloads and updates'. Click 'Get updates' to ensure the Photos app is up to date. Go to 'Update & Security' in Settings (Windows+i) and check for Windows updates, too.

The Photos app should now open, but it won't display any images because all your photos have been moved. If the app opens, try moving the photos back, a few at a time.

MOBILE

Stop OneDrive using up all your data

Q I installed OneDrive on my Android phone and within a few days, nearly all my mobile data was gone. Why did it do this and how can I stop it happening?

Andy Tinkler, via email

A It is unlikely that the OneDrive app downloaded anything, but with certain settings configured, it may have uploaded a lot of files using mobile data. There is an option to store photos online and to use mobile data to do it.

The first time OneDrive is installed, it will upload every photo you have taken. Once this is done, it will only upload photos as they are taken, which uses a lot less data.

The data usage should have dropped now but could spike if you take a lot of photos in the future, so open the OneDrive app and press Me in the bottom-right corner. Tap Settings, then set 'Update offline files using' to Wi-Fi. If you don't want photos to be uploaded automatically, tap 'Camera upload' and switch it off.

There is a way to stop any apps using data on the mobile network. Go to Settings on the phone and press Connections. Tap Data Usage and you'll see a 'Mobile data' switch, which stops all apps from using mobile data (they can still use Wi-Fi when it's available). Tap Mobile Data Usage, then press OneDrive and turn off the switch 'Allow background data usage'. This setting prevents OneDrive from running in the background and using up all your data.

Set the OneDrive Android app to only use Wi-Fi connections

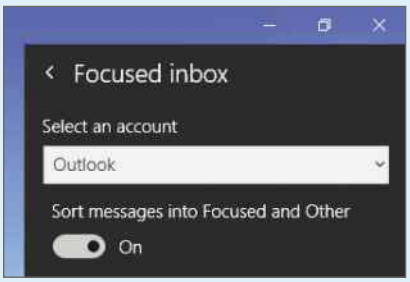
EMAIL

Combine split inboxes

Q My Windows 10 Mail app is linked to my online Outlook account (outlook.live.com). In a browser, my messages appear in my inbox in date order. If I use the Mail app's inbox, I have to click the Focused and Other links to see all my messages. It's as if they are split between them. Can I make Outlook and Mail the same?

M Robinson, via email

A Both the website and the app have options to show only the messages it considers important. These are put on the Focused tab, with everything else on the Other tab.



Microsoft's AI places the emails it thinks are important in the Focused tab

The website and app can be set differently or the same, it's your choice. In the Mail app, click the cog icon at the bottom, then click 'Focused inbox' in the panel on the right and switch it on or off, as you prefer. On the Outlook website, click the cog icon and in the Quick Settings panel, turn 'Focused inbox' on or off.

This fortnight Roland has organised and categorised his video folder, which was overflowing with mobile videos

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

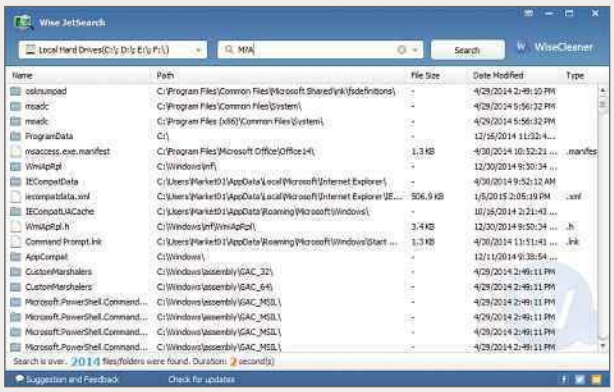
Back Issues disc winner

UTILITIES

Search for files faster

Explorer was driving me crazy with its super-slow searches. The green progress bar that goes across Explorer windows when you enter a search term in the box just goes on and on, and I got tired of waiting for it to finish.

I now use Wise JetSearch (bit.ly/wis447), which is free and comes up with search results in around a second. If you want to find files faster than Explorer, I recommend it.



Wise JetSearch finds results much faster than Explorer when it searches for files

E Lynch, via email

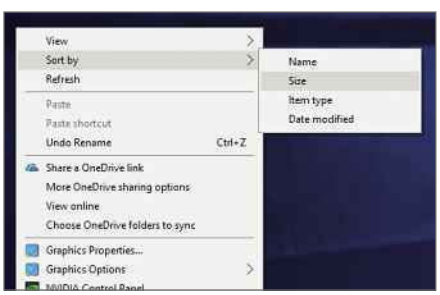
GENERAL PC

Organise your desktop

Lots of people use the Windows desktop as a dumping ground for files, folders and shortcuts. I have seen some really bad cases of this on some of our work computers, where the screen is completely filled.

There are three things you can do to solve the problem and one is to hide everything. Right-click the desktop and select View, 'Show desktop items' to remove the tick on the menu and empty the desktop. Clean at last!

A second option is to right-click the desktop and select View, 'Small icons', to make more space. The last option is to organise the icons to make finding things easier. Right-click the desktop and select 'Sort by', then choose from Name, Size, 'Item type' or 'Date modified'. It might help you to find icons more easily.



Organise the clutter on your desktop by using the sort options

Jon Ryan, via email

BROWSERS

Save web pages as PDF files

Sometimes I want to transfer something I'm reading online to my Kindle. I've found the easiest way is to first save it as a PDF. This means the document can be read in any PDF reader on a computer or sent to a Kindle. To do this, I use a Chrome add-on called 'Save as PDF' (bit.ly/sapdf447).

In Opera, you only need to right-click a page and scroll down to the 'Save as a PDF' option.

FratPark and amason51, Web User Forums

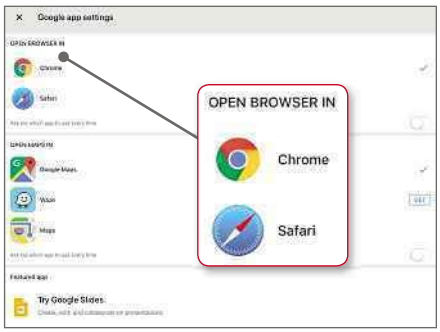
BROWSERS

Open links in Chrome instead of Safari on iOS

When you tap a link on an iPhone or iPad, it opens in Safari. I have Chrome installed on my devices and wanted them to open there instead, but you can't set Chrome to be your default browser in iOS – you have to use Safari.

However, you can set Chrome as the default browser for other Google apps, such as Gmail. Open the Gmail app and find the settings cog – on my iPad, you press the three-line menu button and scroll to the bottom of the list of folders and labels. Tap Settings, then 'Google app settings'. In the Open Browser In section, you can choose whether to open links in Chrome or Safari. You can also switch off the option that asks you to choose each time.

John Daniels, via email



Use Gmail's settings to make Chrome your default browser for links in emails

GENERAL PC

Minimise everything but your working window

I sometimes get to the point where I've got so many windows open that I want to get rid of everything apart from the window I'm working on. I used to click the button to the far right of the taskbar, which minimises everything – however, it's not ideal because it also minimises the window you're working in.

I've found a better option that keeps that window open, but closes everything else. Click and hold the window you want to keep open a few millimetres down from its top edge. While holding down the mouse button, move your mouse from side to side in a vigorous shaking

motion. This minimises all the other windows, but not the one you're working in. When you release the mouse button, it will still be on the screen.

David Watts, via email

GENERAL PC

Windows 7 skips unprotected updates

I've just read that Windows 7 users won't get certain security updates unless they have antivirus software installed. Obviously, most people will have this, but I thought it might be worth pointing it out to anyone who doesn't, simply because it means their PC is going to become more prone to security threats than ever.

The updates in question are the ones that fix the recently exposed Meltdown and Spectre bugs, so they really should be installed on every PC. If you're taking the risk of not using security software in Windows 7, you're now even more vulnerable than you were before.

Mike Chambers, via email

BROWSERS

Add a Home button to Opera

Most browsers have a Home button but Opera doesn't. If you would like to have one, you can get it by installing the 'Homepage in New Tab' extension (bit.ly/hpnt447). It adds an icon, which looks like a little house, to the toolbar. Copy the URL of the page you currently use as your homepage and paste it into the Homepage box in the add-on's Options. When you click the house button, your homepage will open in a new tab. If you prefer, you can have the homepage open in the current tab by going to the add-on's Options and ticking the box 'Reuse the current tab'.

Madeline, Web User Forums

Add a Home button to Opera, which will take you straight to your favourite page

GENERAL PC

Index OneDrive photos

The Windows 10 Photos app shows photos from the Pictures folder but it also displays images stored in OneDrive. You can set it to include every image stored on OneDrive, or just those in the OneDrive Pictures folder. For myself, I like to only show the Pictures folder, but the setting you choose will depend on how you use OneDrive.

Open the Photos app and select Settings in the menu. Under OneDrive, you'll find a master on-off switch, which lets you include or exclude it from the Photos app. Below that, there is an option to include all photos or just the Pictures folder. It's up to you.

Sam Moore, via email

Select which OneDrive folders to include in the Photos app

GENERAL PC

Scroll windows without touching them

I often work with two windows open at a time, tiled vertically on my screen. One window may be displaying a website, while the other might contain a document I'm creating. However, I used to find it annoying that I had to click in the browser window to scroll it, then click back into the document window when I wanted to type something. All those wasted clicks!

WizMouse lets you scroll through a window's contents without clicking

WizMouse is a useful tool that lets you use the scroll wheel on a mouse to scroll any window that your mouse hovers over, so you don't even have to click it. This means I can just move my mouse across to the window, use the mouse wheel, then continue typing as if I'd never left the document window.

Chris Paige, via email

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

GENERAL PC

Keep a computer awake

A friend of mine asked for help because her computer would enter Sleep Mode after just a couple of minutes inactivity. She found this irritating because in order to carry on working, she would have to wake the computer and log back in.

When I had a look, I found that although the screen was going blank, it wasn't actually entering Sleep Mode – instead, it was switching to the screen saver. This took 10 minutes to find because Microsoft has really buried the feature. To access it, you have to open the Windows 10 Settings app (Windows+i) and type `screen saver` into the search box. You can then choose to 'Turn screen saver on or off'. I couldn't find it listed anywhere else.

In the Screen Saver Settings window, there is an option to set a timeout and a tickbox for 'On resume, display log-on screen'. After clearing the tickbox, setting a longer timeout and choosing a different screen saver, all was well.

The screen saver can be found by searching the Windows 10 Settings app

It's also useful to know where the screen saver is located, because it still looks good and it's a handy way to lock your PC when you leave it unattended.

Peter Walsh, via email

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

WebUser Reader Offer

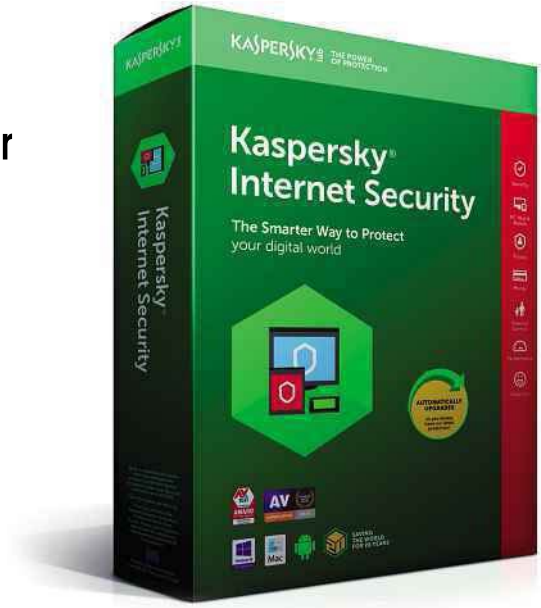
OFFER OF THE FORTNIGHT

Kaspersky Internet Security 2018 - on sale now

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

WHAT'S NEW IN KASPERSKY 2018:

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



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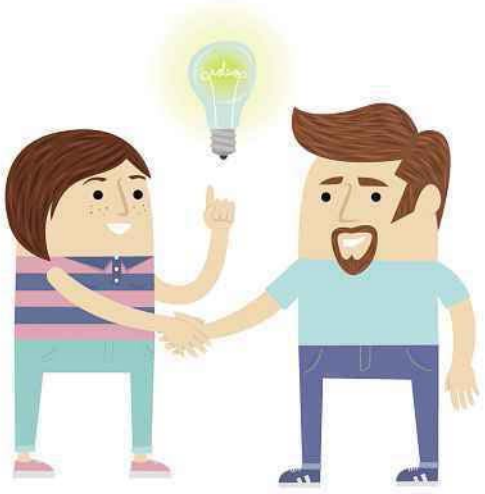


Readers' Helpdesk

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

GENERAL PC

Avoid reopening old windows when restarting

Q Following a recent Windows 10 update, I find that if I am not careful to shut down all my programs at the end of a session, they appear again when I restart the computer. I find this annoying and would prefer to start a fresh session with a blank screen. Is there a way to set the computer to do this?

Minniehaha, Web User Forums

A One way is to use the old shutdown tool that's still hidden in Windows 10 (though not many people use it). Minimise all your open windows (you can use the keyboard shortcut Windows+M), then click the desktop. Press Alt+F4 and you'll see the window used for shutting down old versions of Windows. Choose 'Shut down' or Restart from the drop-down menu, then click OK. This performs a full shutdown that also closes any residual open programs. You can find more about this from Winhelponline at bit.ly/wiho447.

Moonshine, Web User Forums

The old-fashioned Shut Down Windows box closes all running programs

SECURITY

Clean up your Registry

Q I recently performed my regular scan with CCleaner (www.ccleaner.com). After it finished, I did something I haven't done before and clicked the Registry tab, just to see what it was. It produced a list of over 100 problems. These varied a lot, from 'Invalid Default Icon' to 'Help File Issue', but most of them were 'Missing Shared DLL'. All these problems have been pre-ticked and the box at the end lets you 'Fix Selected Issues'. Clicking this fix button, a message pops up saying 'Do You Want To Backup These Changes to the Registry?' A Registry key is shown after every entry.

I have had a few intermittent problems when surfing and wonder if the cause might be among these errors? Should I go ahead and click the button?

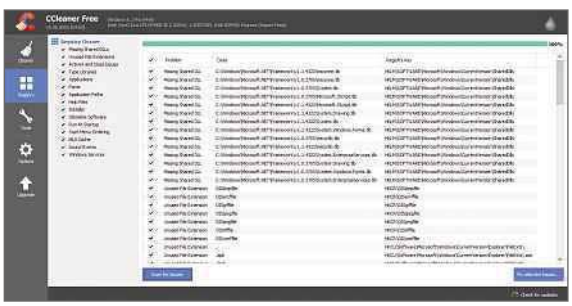
Blotmice, Web User Forums

A I've occasionally used CCleaner's Registry-cleaning tool but I always untick the box for ActiveX/COM. I see the 'Missing shared DLLs' on my Windows 7 laptop even straight after a factory reset, so they could have been there since you took your PC out of its box. I get rid of them using CCleaner just to tidy things up.

CCleaner is an intelligent Registry cleaner and, other than unticking the ActiveX/COM box, you can safely delete those other items.

I used to use the Registry cleaner to remove residue left over from Windows Uninstall but since I started using IObit Uninstaller (bit.ly/iob447), there's no longer any need. I may occasionally check to see if it finds anything substantial but CCleaner's Registry clean has never harmed my PCs and is the only one I trust. However, you do need to know what to include in the scan.

Cantrel, Web User Forums



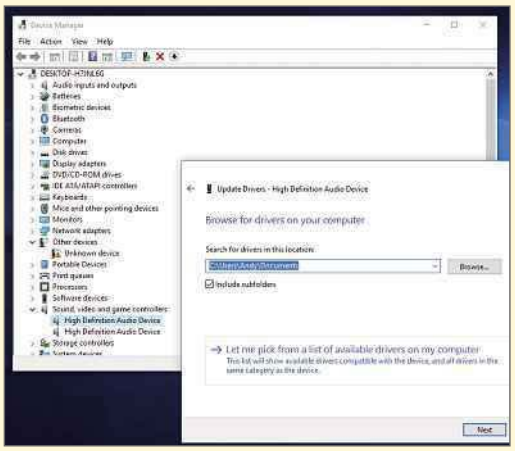
CCleaner's Registry option clears your PC of unnecessary extra clutter, often left behind by old programs

GENERAL PC

Fix a silent PC

Q When I started my Samsung RV515 laptop this morning, which has Windows 7 installed, I found that it wasn't producing any sound. I've checked that I haven't muted the sound by using the speaker icon in the notification area of the taskbar, and have had a good look at the speakers, but nothing appears to be wrong.

gouranger, Web User Forums



If your sound suddenly stops working, try reinstalling your hardware's drivers

A PUPs (potentially unwanted programs) can sometimes affect your PC's audio but you should first try reinstalling the driver.

Open the Start menu, type `devmgmt.msc` and press Enter. Click the View menu and select 'Show hidden devices', then expand the Sound section. Right-click the sound adapter and select 'Update driver'. Click 'Browse my computer...' then 'Let me pick from a list...' and click the driver for your adapter. Click Next and the driver will reinstall.

Cantrel, Web User Forums

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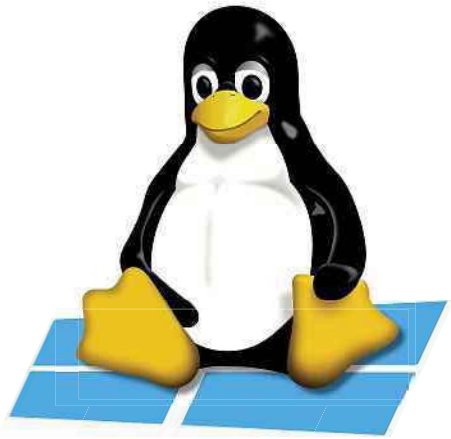
Star Email

Back Issues disc winner

Why Linux is better than Windows

I switched to using Linux after the debacle that was Windows Vista and haven't looked back since. Linux is mine to do with as I wish. I use it for everything I once used Windows for, but without the hassle of constantly having to update my security software, perform housekeeping chores and worry about the latest threats.

The great strength of Linux is that it is inherently secure, from the ground up. Also, because it is community-based, there are literally millions of eyes on it and no software is allowed into its repositories without rigorous cross-checking and testing. All this at no cost (you can make voluntary donations, if you wish) to the end user.



In contrast, Microsoft has ploughed billions into advertising to make sure Windows outsells its competitors. It has also bought out many companies that it perceives as rivals and assimilated better software than its own to preserve its market dominance.

Linux generates very little money because everything is 'free' so there aren't the resources available to advertise. But don't make the mistake of thinking that 'free' means 'no good'. Linux may not rival Microsoft in the desktop world but it is absolutely everywhere else. Practically all major servers run on Linux because it's secure, as do most smartphones.

As you might have gathered, I'm a Linux fan! I'm happy with it and that's good enough for me.

Rich J, Web User Forums

Thanks for singing our praises

On behalf of the Phoenix Singers of Shrewsbury, may I thank you very much for featuring the choir's website (www.phoenixsingersshrewsbury.co.uk) in your Best New Websites section (Issue 445). We are very pleased that our new website was so well-reviewed in your UK-wide publication and are also pleased that it has resulted in some free publicity.

We have an excellent reputation in the area for the quality of our performances and every bit of extra good publicity is a great help to our work and our profile.

Bob Millington, Chair, Phoenix Singers

It's a landline-free life for me

Regarding your cover feature in Issue 444, 'Ditch your Landline', I ditched my landline about a year ago and haven't missed it. Granted, I'm fortunate enough to live in a cabled area, so I don't need a landline to connect to the internet. I feel sorry for those that have to pay for a landline and then pay for the internet on top.

rayinskitoo, Web User Forums

Higher excess isn't always best

Regarding your Star Email in Issue 445, 'Email-address bias has its bonuses'. An additional point that I discovered is that opting for a high voluntary excess with your car insurance does not necessarily reduce the premium.

I recently tried £500 then £0 and found the premium was the same for both.

I phoned the insurance company thinking there must be a mistake, but was told that there is a minimum figure below which they will not give a reduction for increased voluntary excess. I therefore went for the £0 excess.

David Gartshore, via email

Quiz Answers: Issue 446

1 *Thailand*
2 *Bahrain*
3 *Canada*
4 *Seychelles*
5 *Brazil*
6 *Armenia*

WINNER!
Well done to **Rich Grove** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc

TECH YEAR
2007

WordPress is not for novices

I have subscribed to *Web User* for some time but I have to say I was dismayed by your 'Web-building Helpdesk' Q&A in Issue 444, in response to the question 'Should I build it in HTML or use some kind of site builder?'. Your expert from SiteGround suggests to a complete novice that WordPress would be a good idea for their first website. That's like suggesting Everest as a first-time attempt to someone who fancies a go at rock climbing.

Given that SiteGround (a good enough company, but partisan) wrote the piece, it's hardly surprising, but I fear you do your readers a great disservice. A complete novice is infinitely better off with the likes of Wix or Weebly than WordPress, which involves maintenance, updates, security issues and the like. These are completely absent with platforms such as Wix and Weebly.

Shame on you, *Web User*! But the rest of the issue was great as usual.

Dr David Cross, via email

How I beat a drive-by hacker

When my wife told me that her iPad had no signal, I turned on my phone and Norton Mobile Security gave me a red warning that my internet network had been compromised. Her phone gave the same warning, so I went into the dining room and looked out the window. I saw a car outside that I did not recognise, and it's driver was looking at either a phone or laptop. I ran over to the router and turned it off, expecting to see the car drive away sharpish – which is exactly what happened! I then returned the router to it defaults. I changed both the login and wireless key settings and made the hacker aware of it by changing the login to "I know you" and the wireless key to the car's registration. The moral of this story is you *must* have protection on your phone and tablet. Without it, I would have been none the wiser.

Paul King, via email

What you say...

DO YOU ACCEPT MARK ZUCKERBERG'S APOLOGY FOR THE FACEBOOK/CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA SCANDAL?

No, he should resign and donate his entire shareholding to benefit the world's poorest.

Colin Bird

I think it's a disgrace and I'd love to delete my account, but I'd no longer be in touch with friends and family on the same scale I am now.

Si Mellor

No! He has always known exactly what he was doing.

Steve Ellis *@gb022621*

I don't accept it, because he doesn't mean it and is just limiting damage – but I won't be leaving Facebook.

Andrew Wakeman

WHICH OTHER COMPANIES ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT LEAKING YOUR DATA?

Microsoft. Everyone knows how sneaky Windows 10 is. Who knows what they're doing with the data.

Deafinitely Moi *@Gary_Olsen*

Apple. A company that size, no way they keep track of everything.

Craig (Willie) Wilson

The NHS, probably, as they're still using Windows XP and 7.

Jason 'Boz' Bowyer

Netflix, Instagram and YouTube. I use all three.

John Tarbet Walker

Bank of England, Bank of America, Bank of India.

Geoffrey Boow

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NEW 9.7in iPAD?

Been saying this for years, but Apple products always fail to demonstrate where the extra pounds are hidden.

Richard Morgan

The reason I didn't buy last year's was because it wasn't compatible with the Apple Pencil. Glad I waited, as the price is pretty much the same.

Cheyvonne Bower

I've got an Asus Transformer Pro 3, which is far more versatile and powerful than the iPad. It can even run Adobe Creative Cloud.

Goldmaster *@imthegoldmaster*

Apple products are very overpriced, but you have to acknowledge its creativity in marketing.

Brian Brown

THE BBC SAYS IT'S 'UNDER THREAT' FROM TV-STREAMING SERVICES LIKE NETFLIX (bit.ly/bbc447). WHAT SHOULD IT DO TO SURVIVE?

The BBC needs to copy Netflix and Amazon Prime Video by letting viewers watch episodes 'on demand'.

Liz Valette

Good. They have had the monopoly for so long. Now they are being squeezed. Get rid of the licence fee – that will help.

Ian Wishy Wish

Change it from a licence fee to a subscription. If you want it, you pay for it. Just like Sky or Netflix.

Andrew Duerden

Scrap the licence fee and make the BBC go commercial, but with a difference. Adverts only before or after shows, not during the shows.

Mike Hingston

It has a fee that is now outdated. The BBC needs to get with it. Either include ads or introduce subscription

Adam Crankshaw

Page 404

Barry Collins points the finger of blame at the man responsible for the Facebook fiasco

There's no way to save face now

The problem with the Facebook scandal is that I don't know who to lose my rag with first. There's obviously Facebook, the data-harvester-in-chief, which was happy to hand over incredibly sensitive details about your personal life to almost anyone who asked for it. Religious views, friends' telephone numbers, whether you're gay, straight or just like the cut of Alan Titchmarsh's jib – it was all handed over, without question, to the most spurious of app developers.

Then there are the authorities. This stuff has been going on for years. The government has entire departments that are meant to keep an eye on how companies process our personal data, yet the Information Commissioner only ever wakes up when something goes wrong. How hard would it have been for someone from the Commissioner's office to set themselves up as an app developer and see what data could be squeezed out of Facebook? Instead, the Stable Door Department only wades in with its warrants and pitiful fines once someone else has exposed the scandal. It was doubtless too busy hammering NHS Trusts for leaving their laptops on the bus to Clapham.

> "Why does Mattel want to know if I'm a Buddhist before it will let me play a four-letter word?"

Next, of course, are the app developers. I've got a whole bucket full of bile that I'd like to pour over them. Take a poke into your Facebook settings, click Apps and then recoil in horror at some of the different 'companies' you've given permission to access your data over the years. I like to think that I'm pretty conservative about who I let access my personal data, but even I've managed to give 118 different apps access to various chunks of my Facebook data over the past decade.

Now click some of those apps and see precisely what you've handed over. The Scrabble app, for example, asked for my entire list of friends, my relationship status, my date of birth, which school I went to, the photos of my children I've posted on the social network, my religious and political views, and my 'likes'. It's a ruddy *word game*! Why does Mattel want to know if I'm a Buddhist before it will let me play a four-letter word? I've actually got a few four-letter words for Mattel.

More importantly, who is Mattel passing that data to? That data doesn't have much value to a board-game maker. But it has huge value to an insurance broker, a finance company or any of those idiots who call you six times a day because they've heard you've been involved in a car accident. I've no evidence Mattel has sold on such data, but I'd bet my house that one of the 118 app developers on my list has.

But the entity I'm most furious with is the mug you see pictured at the top of this column: me, Barry Collins. I've been writing about this stuff for 20 years. I know the risks of handing over personal data, and yet there I was blithely passing on this highly detailed info to the likes of Mattel, because I was just too lazy to check what they were asking for. Roll up, roll up and take a shot at my private life!

I'm taking down the picture of Mark Zuckerberg on my dartboard and replacing it with one of me.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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

WebUser

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FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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Thank you for reading this issue of *Web User* – we hope you found the tips and advice useful. The good news is that you don't have to wait too long for the next issue. If you subscribe to *Web User* by Monday 23 April (8pm)*, you'll receive it through your letterbox before it's available in the shops!

What's inside the next issue:

COVER FEATURE: BOYCOTT FACEBOOK & GOOGLE

PLUS:

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AND...

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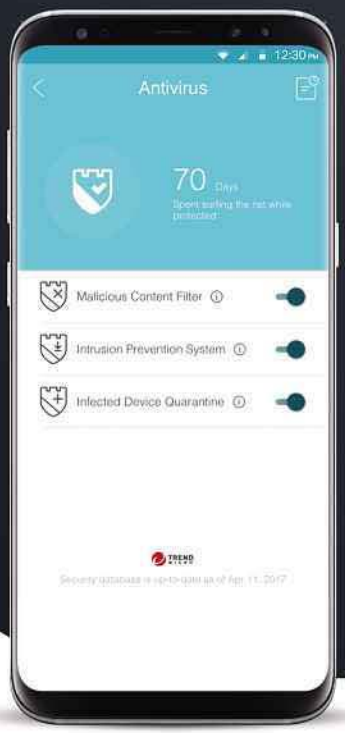

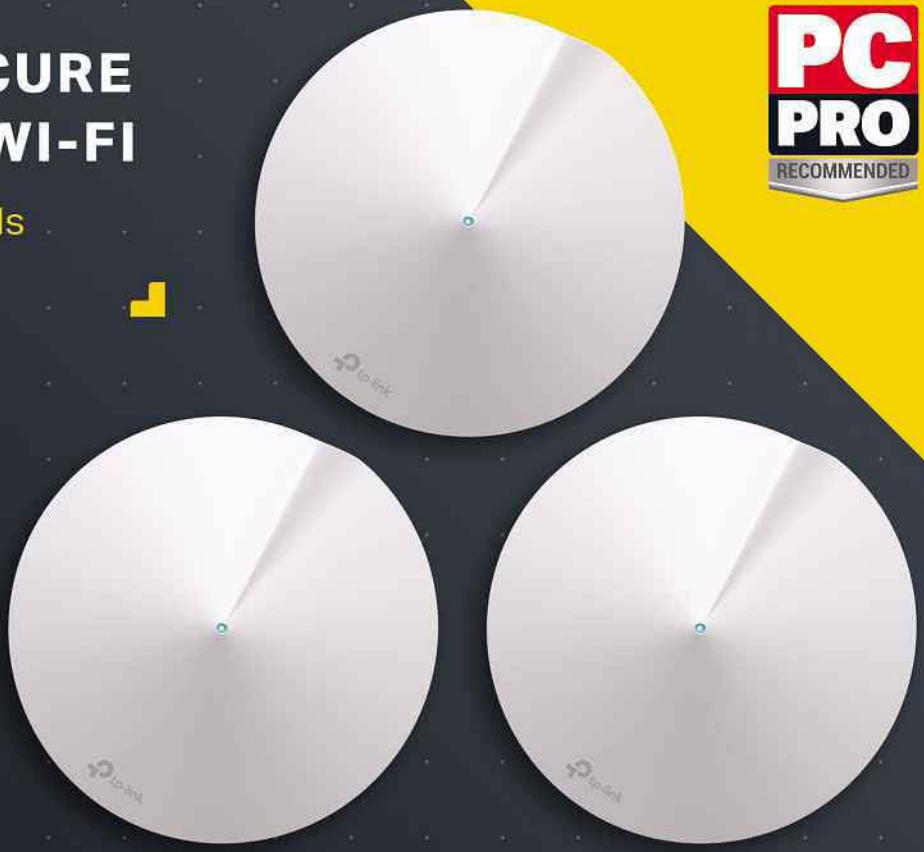

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