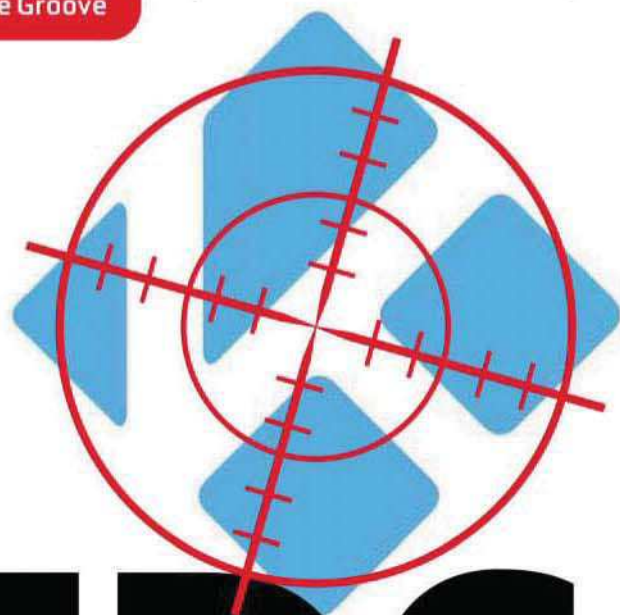


KODI KILLERS



Brilliant **FREE**
TV streamers
that are better
(and safer) **p40**



£2.20 9 771473 709165 26>

PLUS...



**STOP STRANGERS SHARING
YOUR PHOTOS ONLINE** p50
+ Keep your videos & emails **PRIVATE** too

AND...

**RUN YOUR WINDOWS 10
ON ANY PC** Take your software,
settings & Start menu with you **p58**



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with 4K in an immersive design

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

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CurvedDisplay



4K UltraClear 4K Ultra HD

40" 4K curved display
(BDM4037U)

MISCO
a Systemax business
ebuyer.com

amazon.co.uk

BT Business Direct

PHILIPS

Jump the pirate ship to safety

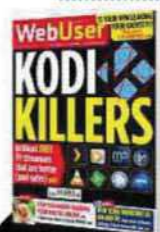
Poor Kodi. Like discovering that someone you thought loved you was only after your money, all those fairweather users it attracted last year were only interested in its dodgy add-ons. Despite being a legitimate media tool, Kodi is now forever tainted by police crackdowns, court cases and huge fines, leading disillusioned devotees to look elsewhere.

Happily, as we reveal in this issue's cover feature, there are plenty more media-streaming tools in the sea – and we don't mean a sea ruled by pirates (the pira-sea?). If all you want is to enjoy your videos, music

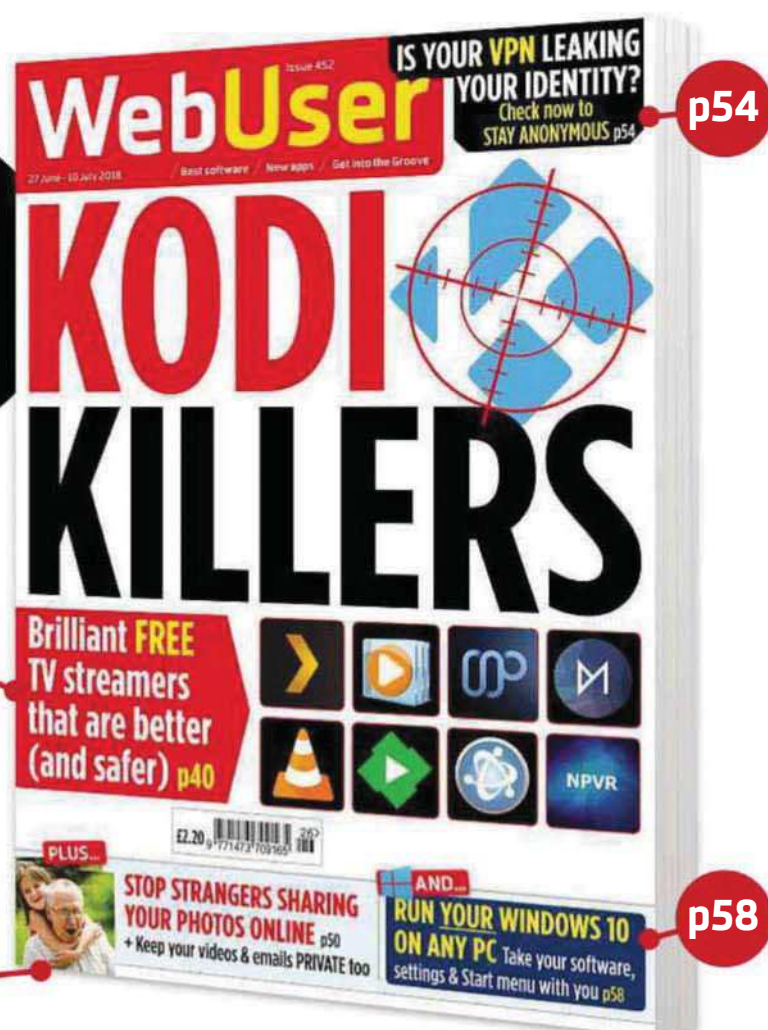
and photos on any device, without fear of reprisals, it's time to jump ship from Kodi for superior software. We've rounded up and reviewed the simplest, safest and most versatile alternatives for former Kodi fans.

Speaking of fans, we're delighted to unveil a new free gift for prospective *Web User* subscribers: a Hama USB Desktop fan. Turn to page 62 for further details.

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



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!
Web User's got two different covers this issue... Want to know why? Email webuser@dennis.co.uk



5 Things you'll learn this issue

1 How to use Amazon to book a professional tradesperson for a household task **page 6**

2 How to stop Windows installing unwanted updates on your computer **page 29**

3 How to secure your Firefox account using its new two-factor authentication **page 33**


4 How to clone your Windows 10 installation to a USB drive so you can boot to it from any PC **page 58**

5 How to keep track of your children's whereabouts using Microsoft Launcher **page 69**



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ISSUE 452

27 JUNE - 10 JULY 2018

KODI KILLERS



COVER
FEATURE

Eight media
streamers
that are better
and safer
than Kodi

p40



Silence social-media bores
without them knowing p46

Palicomp's powerful new PC
gets a glowing review p22



Protect photos and videos you
post on social media p50



IN DEPTH Articles on the latest tech topics

- 38 FAQ**
Progressive Web Apps
- 40 COVER FEATURE**
KODI KILLERS
Eight alternatives to the once great software
- 46 Shut up and leave me alone!**
Discreetly mute annoying social-media users
- 48 The best free mobile podcast apps**
Enjoy a wealth of free audio entertainment
- 50 Stop anyone reusing your content**
Lock down your videos, photos and more online

REVIEWS Apps, sites and products on test

- 14 Best New Websites**
Track icebergs in the North Atlantic
- 22 Product Test**
 - Palicomp Intel i7 Nebula
 - AOC G2460VQ6 monitor
- 28 Best Free Software**
EaseUS has a new free backup-scheduling tool
- 32 Best New Browser Tools**
Secure Firefox with two-step authentication
- 34 Best Free Apps**
Create stunning videos on your phone or tablet

FAVOURITES Must-read regulars

- 6 What's New Online**
Facebook offers live game streams
- 8 Need to Know**
This fortnight's top tech news stories
- 12 Stay Safe Online**
Security advice for PC and mobile
- 18 Build a Better Site**
Expert tips, tools and practical help
- 20 What to Watch Online**
Films and TV shows you can't miss
- 26 Best Buys**
Our pick of the best new products
- 37 Take a Screen Break**
Guess the Bond-film emoji



- 60 Broadband Deals**
Find the best-value package for you
- 72 Inbox**
Tell us your views and opinions
- 74 Page 404**
Barry shows his phone who's boss



Practical WebUser

Workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

16 pages

- 52 Workshop 1**
Groove Music
- 54 Workshop 2**
Check that your VPN isn't leaking your personal data
- 56 Workshop 3**
Add tabs to your Windows programs
- 57 Workshop 4**
Take control of cookies in Firefox
- 58 Weekend Project**
Clone Windows 10 to a USB drive
- 64 Web User Masterclass**
How to manage your PC's drivers
- 66 Ask the Expert**
All your technical questions answered
- 68 Readers' Tips**
The best tips from our readers
- 71 Readers' Helpdesk**
Answers from our reader forums



Test your VPN for security leaks p54



Add tabs to your programs p56

Carry your Windows 10 setup everywhere p58



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PRINTING

Printed by Wyndeham Bicester, Oxon
Distributors Seymour 020 7396 4000

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WEB USER
PRINTED IN THE UK



What's New Online

Watch live game streams on Facebook

If you enjoy watching people play games, you'll undoubtedly be familiar with the streaming hub Twitch (www.twitch.tv), which boasts more than 15 million active viewers every day and two million broadcasters each month.

Sensing an opportunity, Facebook has launched its own rival platform to make it easier to find shared gaming content. This serves up a mix of live and pre-recorded streams while tapping into the creators and games you follow, the pages you like and the groups you belong to, to figure out the kind of things you'd like to watch.

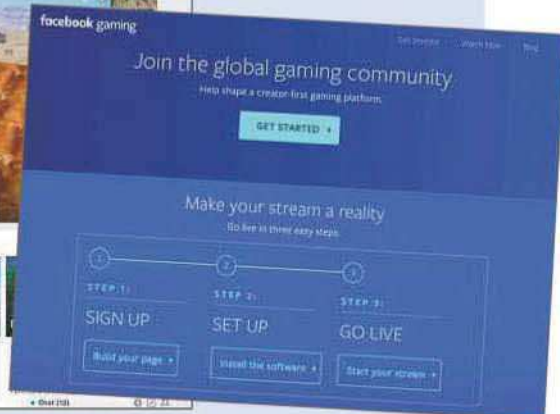
As soon as you visit the site, a featured stream will autoplay and you can click to watch other live streams. You're told how many other people are viewing and when the



broadcast began, and can search for streams by game, check out suggested streamers and see videos that have been watched by your friends.

Facebook says the site is still an experiment, but there are some nice additions including esports

competition feeds and promised content from gaming industry events. You can also go live yourself if you're adept at playing a particular game. See the instructions at bit.ly/fbgaming452. www.fb.gg



Unsend embarrassing Snapchat messages

www.snapchat.com

As the saying goes: we all make mistakes – which is why pencils have erasers. On the web, however, a misjudgment can haunt you for days, weeks, months or even years – which is why many people will welcome Snapchat's new way to 'unsend' problematic messages, photos, stickers,

memories and audio and voice notes. All you need to do is go to the conversation containing the content, then press and hold it and select Delete. Be warned that when you do this, other people in the conversation will be notified of the deletion, which could be embarrassing if you're then asked to explain what it was or why you decided to remove it.

On the plus side, the feature works regardless of whether a message has been looked at or saved. Of course, you should still be careful about what you post, so maybe pausing before you tap Send is an equally good idea.



Book a tradesperson on Amazon

bit.ly/services452

Not content with delivering items to your door, Amazon wants to infiltrate your U-bend and is now offering the services of professional tradespeople to carry out tasks around your home. These range from plumbing and cleaning to other odd jobs.

The company claims to handpick the highest-rated providers in "hundreds of postcodes around the UK" and carries reviews from verified customers. There's a 'happiness guarantee' that promises to put things right or refund you if you're not happy, and there are two ways to hire help – either when you're making a purchase (for instance, getting someone to mount a TV on the wall) or by going direct to the new Amazon Home Services page.

In each case, the appointments are chosen online and you only pay once the job has been completed. Be aware, though, that prices can be rather high – for example, we spotted fees of £250 to replace up to three light switches and £59.29 to set up a printer.



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

Learn about the road to equality

bit.ly/equality452

Google Arts & Culture has curated a huge archive of documents, videos and stories to celebrate 100 years since women were given the right to vote. You can read about inspiring individuals such as Millicent Fawcett, learn about the history of the women's movement and browse protest banners, thought-provoking online exhibits and engrossing features.



Keep up with the World Cup

www.google.co.uk

With attention now focused on the knockout rounds of the World Cup and the final in Moscow on 15 July, football excitement is peaking.

To help you stay on top of the game, Google has been providing as much coverage as possible with line-ups before kick-off, news, score updates via Google Assistant and the Google News app for Android, and timelines showing

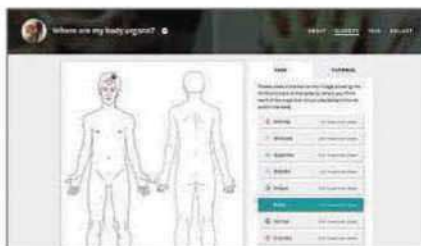
in-game moments, live images and statistics. You can also visit Google Trends (trends.google.com) to see what football-related terms people are searching for. Finally, you can head to YouTube and catch video highlights from the BBC. What a result!



Try a global anatomy survey

bit.ly/anatomy452

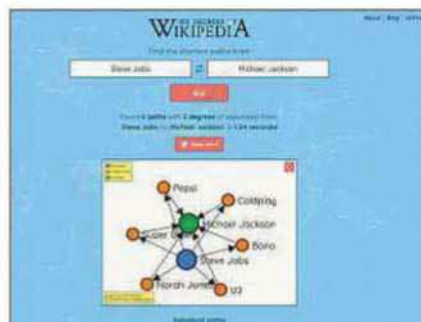
Reckon you know your knee from your elbow and everything else in-between? Then test yourself with this huge interactive study from scientists at Lancaster University. Set up to work on computers rather than touchscreen devices, it asks you to mark the location of 25 different organs to test your knowledge of anatomy. It then asks a few personal questions so researchers can deduce which groups have more knowledge than others. There are no answers or results, but doctors and nurses can use the data to better treat and understand patients.



Play six degrees of Wikipedia

www.sixdegreesofwikipedia.com

Enter two subjects into this updated online tool to discover how they are linked on Wikipedia and view a map showing the shortest paths between them. It'll tell you, for instance, that Steve Jobs and Michael Jackson were just two degrees away via six different paths (Pepsi, Coldplay, Super Bowl, Bono, Norah Jones and U2). From there, you can click any node to read the relevant Wikipedia page.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Watch All 4 TV shows
With All 4's new skill, you can stream your favourite Channel 4 shows via your Chromecast and a Google Home or Home Mini. Say "OK Google, play [show name]".

Find Spotify songs
If you see a microphone when you tap the search icon in the Spotify iOS app, you'll now have the ability to bypass Siri and verbally request songs, playlists, artists and albums.

Track a parcel
Even if you didn't place your Amazon order via Alexa, you can now ask when your next package from the shopping giant is due to arrive by saying: "Alexa, where's my stuff?".

+ Relive Facebook memories

www.facebook.com

Facebook has expanded its On This Day feature to create Memories, which lets you view monthly recaps, the friends you made each day and any memories you may have missed over the past week, all on one page.

See a map of Ice Age Britain

bit.ly/iceage452

Created by Sheffield University's geography department, this map lets you see how Britain looked during the last ice age, by entering postcodes and place names, then zooming and panning. Glacial lakes are coloured blue.

View railway station passenger numbers

bit.ly/railway452

Since the railways were privatised, passenger numbers have grown rapidly, but some stations have steamed ahead of others. This map lets you see the rise and fall in numbers using five years of data.

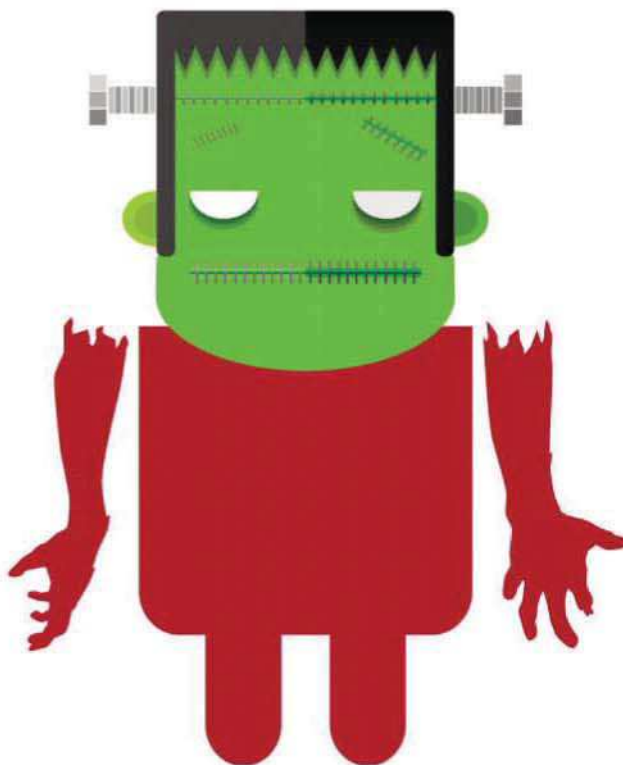
'Frankenstein' malware targets Android phones

What happened?

Sounding like a mash-up between sci-fi and Victorian horror, a mysterious 'Frankenstein' virus has been stalking Android phones. The malware, called MysteryBot, has been described as a "Frankenstein" creation because it cobbles together bits of ransomware, Trojans and keyloggers to create a virulent threat that can attack devices in multiple ways.

Researchers from security firm ThreatFabric (bit.ly/threatfabric452), who discovered the malware, say it can take over your smartphone or tablet and steal data such as emails and contact details. MysteryBot can also Hoover up passwords by overlaying apps with fake login pages and by tracking touchscreen gestures to spot what you're typing on your device's virtual keyboard. The malware can also reportedly lock your files in a password-protected ZIP file to hold them ransom, demanding an email address to send payment instructions. "This bot has most generic Android banking Trojan functionalities," said ThreatFabric, "but seems to be willing to surpass the average".

MysteryBot spreads as an apparently legitimate app, such as Adobe Flash Player, with the dodgy code hiding inside. The reason Flash Player apps are used to hide the criminal code is that some websites still use Flash



components, but they aren't supported on Android. That could send users hunting for a way to access the website content, encouraging them to install supposed Flash Player apps without realising the trouble that lurks beneath.

How will it affect you?

This malware, the researchers say, even works on recent versions of Android, including handsets running Android 7 (Nougat) and 8 (Oreo), so updating the operating system on your phone or tablet won't protect against this attack. The only guaranteed defence is to never download apps from outside the official app store unless you're absolutely sure of their provenance. Dodgy apps can slip through on Google Play, but it's much less likely, because Google is alert to the threat.

One giveaway is the number of permissions such apps demand. When you install an app, legitimate or otherwise, it lists the permissions it needs to work, such as access to your

files or camera. There are genuine reasons for an app to need such permissions, but be wary if it's asking for everything but the kitchen sink – dangerous apps need those permissions to steal your data. This malicious app uses the Accessibility aspects of your phone, which the researchers say is a common tactic used by hackers.

There is good news: the researchers say that MysteryBot isn't yet in wide use or for sale on underground criminal forums. Indeed, it may even still be in development. That said, it's worth keeping an eye out for apps that behave strangely or ask for too much of your phone's data.

What do we think?

MysteryBot sounds like a terrifying piece of malware but it's reassuring that it's been

spotted before it's in wide use – so well done to the researchers at ThreatFabric for finding it before it infects our Android phones. It's also good news that the apparent makers of the malware spread their previous work via text messages and emails, rather than directly through the Google Play app store. While dodgy apps can sneak into official markets, the fact that these were spread unofficially via side-loading means most of us will be safe.

To keep safe, avoid side-loading apps from unofficial sources – only install them from official app stores – and pay attention to permissions demanded by the app. Beyond that, there's little you can do to avoid this particular threat. Hopefully, the news coverage will shut down the dodgy developers and keep this Frankenstein malware from spreading, because the combination of Trojan, keylogger and ransomware certainly is frightening and shows just how far hackers will go to make a profit from our data.



ThreatFabric discovered the MysteryBot malware – it's not yet been seen in the wild

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

O2 offers customers free Netflix streaming

What happened?

Mobile operator O2 is the latest company to offer new and existing customers a free subscription to video-streaming service Netflix. Vodafone has offered a similar free package with Netflix before, while Three customers with Samsung handsets get a free subscription and everyone else on contracts of 12GB and up can stream without using any data, via Three's Go Binge plan. O2 is also offering a bonus double of data on a number of contracts so customers can make the most of their Netflix subscription.

How will it affect you?

The free Netflix deal is available to new customers switching to O2, as well as to current O2 customers who are moving to a new contract and buying a new SIM card or device. If the deal is for a smartphone, you'll have to shell out for a 15GB tariff or above; for tablet contracts, it starts from 5GB.

Depending on the contract, the free Netflix

will last for either six months or 12. If you already have a Netflix subscription, you can still take advantage of the deal. The O2 offer is only for standard Netflix, which is limited to HD on two devices; if you're already signed up for the more expensive Premium service, you'll get a discount over the promotion period. The offer ends 8 August, so you should sign up soon to reap the benefits.

What do we think?

Whether O2 is offering the right deal for you depends on how you use your phone, but even with the Netflix deal it may be worth shopping around. Getting an iPhone X on O2's Netflix offer costs £76 a month for a whopping 50GB of data. Head to GiffGaff and unlimited data for the same handset costs £65 – adding your own Netflix subscription means you're still coming out ahead. Even with attractive offers such as this, it's worth looking for a package that best meets your needs.



Apple closes iPhone security loophole



What happened?

A loophole in Apple iPhones that police have used to access criminals' devices has been quietly closed. The most famous use of the flaw was two years ago when US authorities paid a security firm more than \$1m for details of how to use the loophole to unlock the San Bernardino gunman's iPhone, though it's reportedly been used many other times since then.

To open locked iPhones, law enforcement connect the smartphone via the charging and data-transfer port to a computer running software that can open the device. Apple will now block that from happening via an update that it's pushing out to all phones.

How will it affect you?

Once the update is installed on your iPhone, if you connect the device to a laptop to charge it or transfer data, it will lock itself down after an hour. It will keep charging, but if you want to copy data after that point, you'll have to reenter the iPhone's password. It's a small

change, but it will block the workaround that police are using to access the devices.

"We're constantly strengthening the security protections in every Apple product to help customers defend against hackers, identity thieves and intrusions into their personal data," Apple said in a statement. "We have the greatest respect for law enforcement, and we don't design our security improvements to frustrate their efforts to do their jobs."

What do we think?

Police will find another way in – they may just have to pay for it. A few security companies offer workarounds to the iPhone security, with one device using this loophole costing \$15,000 (about £11,300). Police departments won't be happy that the hack no longer works, but if the authorities can use the flaw, then so can criminals. Apple is right to keep its customers safe with this update and the companies supplying police with access will surely find a new way in soon enough.

Credit: Twin Design / Shutterstock.com

Forum support ends for Windows 7 and 8.1

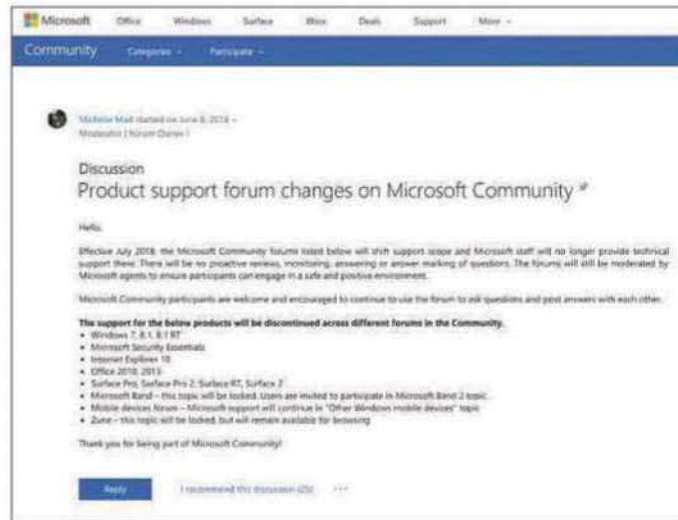
What happened?

Microsoft announced that, from July, it will no longer offer forum support to users of Windows 7, 8.1 and 8.1 RT. If you've ever experienced problems with Microsoft's products and services, you're no doubt familiar with the Microsoft Community, a collection of official forums that cover everything from Skype to the Windows Insider Program. However, despite spanning a broad range of topics, it has never amounted to a particularly useful knowledge base.

The move, which Microsoft explained in a forum post (bit.ly/msforum452), also sees the company abandoning or locking threads for obsolete brands such as Zune, older Surface tablets and its flop fitness tracker, Microsoft Band. Microsoft Security Essentials, IE10, and Office 2010 & 2013 will also lose moderated forum support.

"Microsoft staff will no longer provide technical support [in the forums]," the company stated, adding that "there will be no proactive reviews, monitoring, answering or answer marking of questions".

Moderators (or agents, as Microsoft



calls them) will continue to oversee the 14 affected forums to stop them being spammed or descending into a lawless, Reddit-style free-for-all. Just don't expect them to offer any advice on how to use your ancient Windows Phone.

How will it affect you?

If you don't require assistance from a moderator, you may not even notice any difference. As long as a forum hasn't been locked, Microsoft still urges users to "ask questions and post answers with each other". This may even improve the service, given the moderators' heavy reliance on standard copy-and-paste

answers.

The change won't affect users who subscribe to Microsoft's 'extended support' – typically commercial enterprises – which will continue until Microsoft officially ends support for Windows 7 in 2020, and for Windows 8.1 in 2023.

If you're determined to continue receiving forum support from a Microsoft agent for your OS, the only option is to upgrade your PC to Windows 10.

What do we think?

The demise of these forums comes as no surprise. After all, in a bid to encourage the transition to Windows 10, Microsoft dropped mainstream support for Windows 7 back in 2015, while 8.1 support ended earlier this year. What's more, many of the services and products on the company's removal list are well past their sell-by date.

Of course, speedy Microsoft-approved assistance is still available through the company's Live Chat facility, but we'd really like to see some Microsoft forums that offer in-depth support, rather than lazy stock responses that infuriate those in need.



FIRST LOOK

BlackBerry Key2

bit.ly/blackberry452

Does anyone really need a smartphone with a physical keyboard in this day and age? Apparently so. It seems that enough people with an aversion to onscreen keyboards bought the 2017 BlackBerry Key, justifying the company's decision to make another one. Bear in mind, though, that the BlackBerry Key2 runs Android Oreo 8.1, so you'll still need to employ a little touchscreen dexterity to use it.

The keyboard takes up nearly a third of the Key2's length, but it's a neat handset, with a matte finish and wraparound aluminium frame. The silver version looks particularly snazzy. The keys are 20% larger than those of its predecessor, which should allow

for faster typing with fewer mistakes, and they're certainly satisfying to press.

Sadly, the cramped 4.5in screen has a disappointing resolution of 1,080 x 1,620 pixels, which for many people will be barely good enough to watch YouTube videos, let alone Netflix. And while this is the most powerful BlackBerry phone so far, it lacks processing power compared to its competitors, with a Snapdragon 660 processor, just 6GB of RAM and an underwhelming battery life.

At least BlackBerry has managed to keep up with the competition in one department: the Key2 offers dual 12-megapixel cameras with a 2x optical zoom. These work in unison for top-quality selfies, and offer fast autofocus, image stabilisation and automatic white balance.

However, the hefty £579 price makes the BlackBerry Key2 hard to



recommend unless you're willing to pay that much for a physical alternative to an on-screen keyboard. It's a decent enough phone, but it pales in comparison with the similarly priced OnePlus 6 and LG G7.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Apple scrapping the iPhone Lightning charger?

Apple has a reputation for using its own restrictive ports and hardware – but sources inside the technology market now claim that the dongle-addicted company will ditch the iPhone's exclusive Lightning charger in favour of USB-C.

Speaking to Chinese technology newspaper DigiTimes, anonymous sources reasoned that "Apple's adoption of Type-C in its iPhones will accelerate other smartphone companies' adoption." However, with Apple allegedly "still in its redesign phase," we won't see a USB-C-powered iPhone until 2019, if at all.

USB-C has quietly edged out Micro USB as the industry standard for laptops and phones over the past few years. True to its image as a technology leader, Apple pioneered its use, removing everything but a single USB-C port from its 2016 MacBook range, and squeezing its speedy Thunderbolt 3 technology into USB-C-shaped connectors.

The iPhone is a different beast, however, and it's not clear whether Apple – which takes a \$4 cut from every licensed connector made – is prepared to abandon its proprietary interface. Remember that while the iPhone 8 and iPhone X support USB-C turbo chargers, you need to buy a Lightning-to-USB-C converter and a compatible fast-charging plug to gain the benefit,



because Apple conveniently left those items out of the box.

If the rumours are true, the switch also risks infuriating iPhone owners who shelled out for accessories such as Lightning headphones when Apple removed the 3.5mm headphone jack.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



Apple prides itself on defining the direction of the tech industry – where Apple goes, others follow – so a U-turn on USB-C would seem uncharacteristic. However, the twist in the tale is that in 2015, insiders were whispering that USB-C was in fact a proprietary connector that Apple invented before secretly donating it to standards bodies. If that's true, all bets are off.



WEBOMETER



WE LIKE...

Google Translate now works better offline

Google has added neural-machine translation to the offline mode of its Translate app for Android and iOS. This makes it easier to translate words and phrases to and from 59 languages without needing an internet connection.



Donkey Kong comes to Nintendo Switch

Nintendo has revived the original version of its classic arcade game Donkey Kong for its latest console, the Switch. The release contains three variations of the game, with remastered sound, and costs £6.29.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Dixons Carphone suffers huge data breach

Technology retail giant Dixons Carphone revealed that hackers attempted to steal the card details of 5.9 million customers in a huge data breach last July. More than 105,000 cards not protected by chip and PIN were accessed.



WhatsApp blamed for spread of fake news

WhatsApp has been blamed for an outbreak of yellow fever in Brazil after it was used to distribute anti-vaccine videos. Meanwhile in the UK, the messaging service is being used as a "conduit for misinformation", according to the *Guardian*.



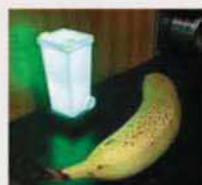
What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

The BinDayCator

bit.ly/binday452 | From £29

It may look like a novelty lamp, but this 3D-printed smart device checks your local council's website for the latest refuse-collection data, then lights up in an appropriate colour to remind you which bin to put out. It started life as a pet project for forgetful techie Darren Tarbard, but since then the BinDayCator has garnered interest from government departments, councils and even broadcaster Jeremy Vine, thanks to planned IFTTT support. If you're feeling particularly flush, you can pledge £5,000 for a life-size BinDayCator.



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Alton Towers scam takes WhatsApp users for a ride

A new WhatsApp scam appears to be offering free tickets to Alton Towers, but actually links to a malicious website that attempts to steal your personal details.



"Alton Towers is giving away 5 free tickets to 500 families," reads one version of the fraudulent message, accompanied by a link to a URL that looks like the Alton Towers website (www.altontowers.com), except for an almost imperceptible dot over the second 'o'. Clicking the link directs users to an online survey that asks them to enter personal information and encourages them to share it with 20 of their friends via WhatsApp.

The theme park and leisure resort issued a warning to avoid the offer at

all costs: "This is a scam. Action is being taken to remove the fake offer and we urge guests not to share their personal details or forward the offer to their contacts. The safest way to buy tickets is always to go directly to our website".

bit.ly/alton452

Facebook suffers yet another privacy glitch

Facebook has apologised for a glitch that may have resulted in 14 million users having their private social posts shared publicly. An error in the social network's 'audience selector' tool meant posts were automatically flagged to share to the general public, the company admitted in a blog post.

Facebook has begun notifying the 14 million users affected by the glitch, which was active from 18 to 27 May. Out of caution, the company has urged all users to review their posts during this time.

"This bug occurred as we were building



a new way to share featured items on your profile, like a photo," Facebook's chief privacy officer, Erin Egan, said in a statement. "Since these featured items are public, the suggested audience for all new posts – not just these items – was set to public." Egan later apologised for the error.

The swift disclosure seems to be part of Facebook's move to become more transparent, having been roundly criticised over the Cambridge Analytica scandal.

bit.ly/fbglitch452

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:
David Emm, Principal Security Researcher at Kaspersky Lab
(www.kaspersky.co.uk)



Q How worried should MyHeritage users be about the recent data breach?

Elizabeth Howe, Facebook

A When the news broke that ancestry site MyHeritage had been breached, it potentially meant the details of

92 million customers worldwide were vulnerable to attack. But what was refreshing was the response from the company's chief information security officer. Within hours of the breach being discovered, he had taken to the company's website to explain what MyHeritage had discovered, what steps it was taking to rectify the issue and how it protects people's data in general.

Often, when a breach occurs, one of the biggest failings is the lack of honesty and disclosure to the victims, leaving consumers unaware that they need to take action.

Of course, the data is still at risk, and it's especially

“By acting swiftly and definitively, MyHeritage has allowed its customers to regain some control over their personal data**”**

concerning when you consider the type of data (such as DNA) that this site holds. But by acting swiftly and definitively, MyHeritage has allowed its customers to regain some control over their personal data – by changing passwords, checking for suspicious account activity and exercising caution. If the breach had been kept secret while the company investigated or gave itself time to 'stage manage' its

public response, those customers would have been at even greater risk from fraudsters.

The advice to MyHeritage users is the same as in any breach: change your account password and any associated passwords, monitor all your accounts for suspicious activity and do not click any links in emails purporting to be from the firm – instead, go to your online account to check for messages.

NEW

BARE METAL SERVER

Dedicated server
with cloud features

from **£49.99** /month*
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Next Generation: 1&1 Bare Metal Server

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*Example price for a Bare Metal Server S with a standard configuration for one full month. Invoice amount plus costs for any additionally booked resources is due after one month. No setup fee, no minimum contract period. The preparation time of eight minutes is based on the server's provisioning time after booking. Prices exclude 20% VAT.

1and1.co.uk

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

NATURE

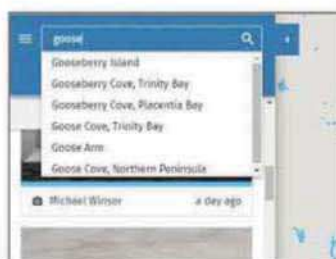
RELAUNCH

Iceberg Finder

www.icebergfinder.com

Canada's Atlantic Marine Ecozone – or Iceberg Alley, as it's also known – seems an odd choice for a tourist attraction, but the new-look Iceberg Finder site forms a core part of that drive for tourist dollars. Packed with travellers' tips, facts and a stunning gallery, Iceberg Finder serves as Newfoundland's base for berg chasers and armchair enthusiasts alike. The jewel in the frozen crown is the Iceberg Map – an interactive experience that pinpoints icebergs in real-time using satellite imagery and user-generated photos. It's a major step up from the old site's clunky navigation tools, as is the option to upload your own snapshots.

Our rating



SEARCH BY LOCATION

Pick a location, and the site highlights it on a map, listing icebergs that are nearby



UP-TO-THE-MINUTE PHOTOS

Check out iceberg images from eyewitnesses, or switch to satellite images



HISTORY

NEW

Journey to the Past

bit.ly/footsteps452

Spearheaded by Bangor University, Journey to the Past aims to give “modern tourists insights from past visitors to Wales”, most of them historical travel writers from France and Germany. It's a fascinating look at Wales' past, as seen through the eyes of Europeans, and showcases great new translations of 18th- and 19th-century travel writing. Its design isn't particularly modern, but the content is first-class. You'll find charming image galleries, as well as trails divided into regions and other categories, such as religion and myths. You can even enjoy a virtual-reality trip to Tintern Abbey – just download the file and hook up a VR viewer such as Google Cardboard.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

SOCIAL

The Grandparent Hub

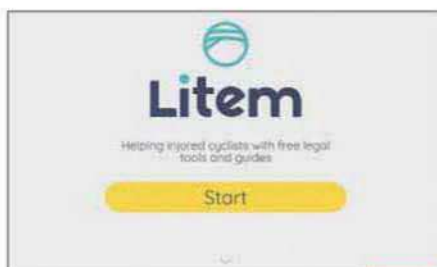
www.thegrandparenthub.com

This is an online community for modern grandparents, which means it's out with clichés about Werther's Originals and slippers, and in with digital skills, artful activities and unique recipes that grandkids will love. Fostering a sense of community is what the site does best, with its line-up of 'Grandbloggers' and a social-media feed that offers engaging pursuits such as the 'Granddad Joke of the Year' competition. Some articles are a little light, though, and there's a lot of so-called sponsored content. As it's a relatively new site, we'll forgive it for now, but we hope it ages gracefully.

Our rating



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



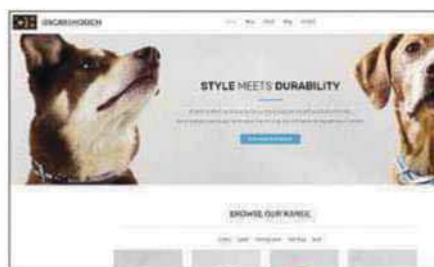
LEGAL

Litem

www.litem.co.uk

If you speak Latin, you'll know that the legal term 'ad litem' means 'for the suit', which is perfect for a site that offers free legal advice and tools to cyclists who have been injured on the road. The sparse interface directs visitors to the site's only interactive element: a 'Start' button. Click it and Litem asks 10 simple questions to ascertain whether you have a case. If you do, clever algorithms draft a letter to the responsible party. Other content is limited to an FAQ and a reminder that Litem isn't designed for serious or complex cases that require a face-to-face meeting with a lawyer.

Our rating



PETS

Oscar & Hooch

www.oscarandhooch.com

Why play fetch when you could be making your pooch more fetching? If you have the type of chic canine that wouldn't look out of place under Kardashian's arm, you'll appreciate online pet store Oscar & Hooch's facelift, which ditches its old dark theme for a pure white background more befitting the luxury brand. Navigation is simple, while hi-res images promote the store as the premium port of call for pet owners. The blog is a joyous collection of articles that inform and entertain. And there's good news for trade stockists: Oscar & Hooch has now introduced online ordering.

Our rating



CLOTHING

Wild Thang

www.wildthang.co.uk

Not to be confused with a Troggs tribute band, Wild Thang is a Liverpool-based branded-clothing specialist selling T-shirts, jackets, sportswear and more. Its wild side is on full display across a new website loaded with attitude, from the brick wall background ready-made for graffiti to the in-your-face orange splashed across every page. Searching for and buying items is straightforward, although for a brand that deals in visuals, the site feels incredibly wordy. On the other hand, we're glad to see the back of the cheesy stock images that cheapened the old site and made it look a bit fake.

Our rating



BACK ISSUES DISC 2017



2017 Back Issues Disc

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





RELAUNCH

FOOD

Fairburns Eggs

www.fairburnseggs.co.uk

If you've ever wondered which came first, the chicken or the egg, Fairburn & Son has the answer: 150 chickens. And, after almost 70 years of experience, the family-run farm is now Britain's largest egg producer. The company's colourfully revamped website, which is full of interesting facts, plays up the 'family farming' angle, with lots of photos of the Fairburn family and their hens at work and play. If you're feeling peckish, pop over to the recipes section, where you'll find a selection of egg-based delicacies neatly arranged into breakfast, lunch and dinner recipes. Best of all, the new site is *laid-en* with egg-cellent puns.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

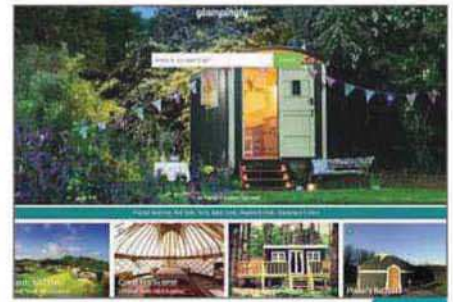
MONEY

The Mortgage Lender

www.themortgagelender.com

Who said mortgages had to be dull? The Mortgage Lender is trying to smash the "financial landscape" with an eye-catching relaunch. Rainbow colours liven up the page, while its accessible content eschews the stock-in-trade tedium of other financial firms. Select the Customer or Intermediary option from the homepage, and the site presents comprehensive resources that make borrowing from The Mortgage Lender easier and your decisions more informed. Mind you, even all that technicolour can't hide the seriousness of those warnings that "your home may be repossessed" if you fail to keep up your repayments.

Our rating



NEW

TOURISM

Glampingly

www.glampingly.co.uk

If you're willing to forgive the name, Glampingly is an excellent new site for those seeking the Great Outdoors experience without the discomfort. Enter a UK or European destination, decide on a glamp-site and choose your preferred accommodation – shepherd's huts, treehouses and even a converted helicopter are available. So far, so easy, but unfortunately the booking process isn't as straightforward as it could be, and at first glance it seems to send you round in circles. Once you've got your head around it, though, booking a weekend away is simple, if a little pricey compared with a humble tent in a field.

Our rating



NEW

MONEY

MoneyLens

www.moneylens.com

MoneyLens is on a mission to help millennials take control of their finances. But even with its youthful slant, the information is useful for anyone who needs financial advice. Many of the writers and editors have worked in the industry, and the project is backed by global investment firm Schroders. Despite being a new site, it has plenty of articles offering money-saving tips, investment advice and reviews of finance apps, set against a colourful background that looks professional without being boring. Most useful of all is the jargon-buster, which educates visitors in the often opaque world of financial services, where terms such as "targeted absolute return" abound.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

NEWS

Leicestershire Live

www.leicesterm Mercury.co.uk

When Reach, formerly Trinity Mirror, snapped up a host of regional news sites, it celebrated with an extensive rebrand, and Leicestershire Live is the latest beneficiary. It's essentially identical to all local 'Live' sites, with the usual staples, from jobs and property sections to the crossword you'll never complete. But while local interest pieces form most of the site, you can't escape clickbait articles and lazy 'Twitter-equals-news' stories – a sorry indication of the direction local journalism is being forced to take. Confusingly, the site uses the old Leicester Mercury URL.

Our rating





Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

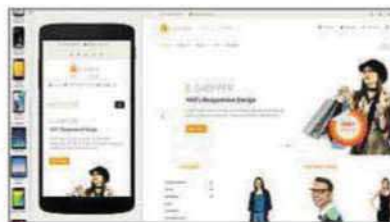
Top Tips of the Fortnight

1&1 extends free encryption to subdomains

It's a good idea to encrypt any information that passes between your visitors and your website – not just for your visitors' peace of mind, but for ranking well in Google searches, too. 1&1 (www.1and1.co.uk) has offered free SSL (Secure Socket Layer) since 2016 but has recently extended it to include subdomains, too. This means you'll be able to protect 'yourwebsite.com' with an 'https://' prefix as before, but now subdomains, such as 'subdomain.yourwebsite.com', will also be protected.

Actual-size emulation

The latest update to browser add-on Blisk (blisk.io) provides an excellent way to see exactly what your website looks like on a specific mobile device, even if



you don't have physical access to that particular model. You can now choose which device you'd like to view your website on and you'll see an actual-size representation of that device, with your website displayed on its screen. You can use this to check that your site doesn't break when viewed on screens of different shapes and sizes.

Deal of the Fortnight

Easyspace (www.easyspace.com) is offering three months for free if you take out one of its annual hosting packages.

Web-building Helpdesk

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:

Barnaby Puttick,
Director, My Hosting

Bubble (www.myhostingbubble.com)



Q Will a simple website built from scratch be faster or slower than one made with a template tool, such as Bootstrap (getbootstrap.com)?

Frank Harper, via email

A Frameworks, templating and content-management systems make it easy to create professional-looking websites, but they come with a level of bloat that can make pages load slower than a static site. The amount of bloat varies depending on the type and number of features you use, but using bootstrap templates to build a simple site is unlikely to have any measurable impact. Site-optimisations such as only loading minimum resources for pages, implementing caching and choosing a quality hosting platform are more likely to affect your site's page loading.



MINI WORKSHOP | Add search to your WordPress website

Add Search To Menu: bit.ly/search452 | 10 mins | WordPress website

WordPress comes with a brilliant search tool you can add to any widget section of your site. However, if you'd prefer to have the search tool alongside a menu, you'll need a plugin. Here's how to set it up



1 The simplest way to add a search box is to use the existing sidebar widget. In your WordPress Dashboard, click Appearance, then Widgets. **1** Scroll down the list of Available Widgets until you find Search. Click it and choose the location where you want it to appear, **2** then click Add Widget. **3**



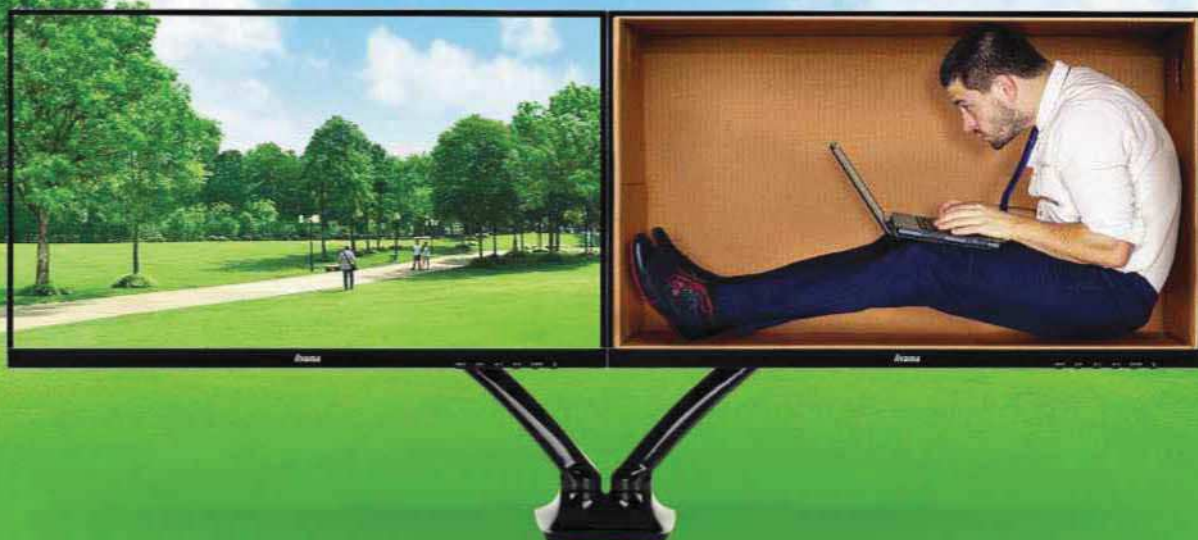
2 You can give the section a name and it will appear in your chosen location. If you'd rather have the search box appear next to your main navigation menu, you'll need a plugin. Click Plugins, then Add New. **1** Type add search to menu into the Search Plugins box, **2** then install **3** and activate it.



3 Refresh your site and the search box appears in the main menu. If there's more than one menu location to choose from and you want to move the search box to one of them, click Settings, Add Search To Menu. **1** Choose the menu from the list at the top. **2** You can also tweak the search box's other settings. Scroll down and click Save Options.



PROLITE XUB2492HSU | SET YOUR MIND FREE



PROLITE XUB2492HSU-B1

Give a boost to your productivity and comfort. Choose the ultra slim 24" XUB2492HSU and install it on the stylish iiyama dual gas spring arm DS3002C-B1 to gain the space you need to let your creativity blossom.



iiyama

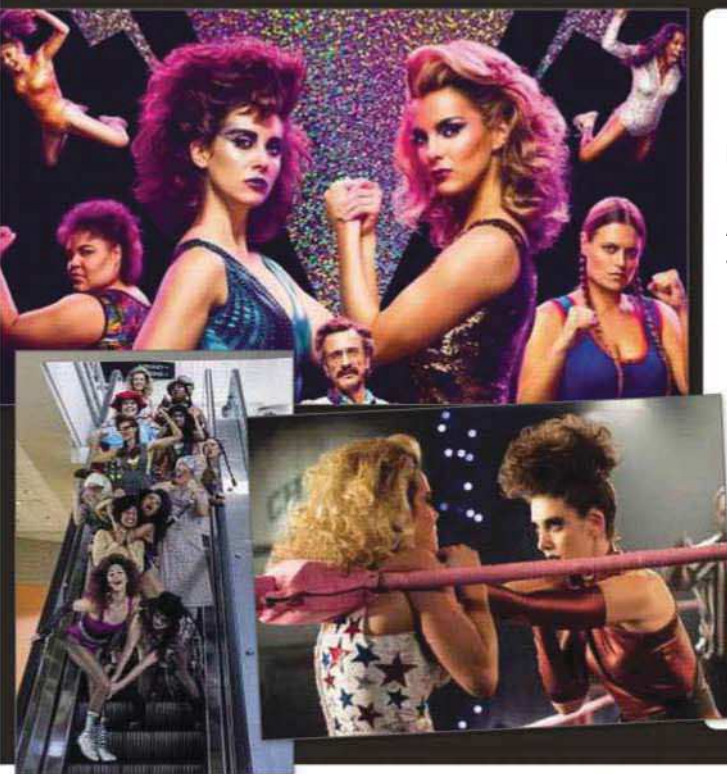
Find your match at www.iiyama.com



What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX



Dust off your spandex for more *GLOW*

From 29 June

Netflix has been somewhat axe-happy of late, cancelling *Disjointed*, *Gypsy*, *The Get Down* and many of its other Originals after just one series. So *GLOW* scores a smackdown of sorts with its second bout of leotards, lip-syncing and wry social analysis.

Season 2 of the 1980s-set comedy-drama sees the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling adjusting to life as local TV celebs and dealing with issues closer to home, including single parenthood and strained friendships. Alison Brie (prim Trudy from *Mad Men*) is back as our heroine Ruth, with Betty Gilpin as her frenemy Debbie, Marc Maron as small-town svengali Sam Sylvia and singer Kate Nash as nice-but-dim grappler Britannia. Joining the ensemble in the LA suburbs is Shakira Barrera as Mexican-American dancer/stripper Yolanda, aka Yo-Yo.

All 10 half-hour episodes arrive on Netflix on 29 June. In the meantime, you can watch trailers, features and Season 1 of *Glow* at bit.ly/glow452, plus a feature-length documentary, *The Story of the Gorgeous Ladies of Wrestling*, which explores the 1980s TV phenomenon that started it all: bit.ly/glowdoc452.

Take your seats for Wimbledon 2018

2-15 July

You don't have to be interested in sport, or indeed tennis, to be caught up in the excitement, suspense and beauty of Wimbledon. Its presenters – notably Sue Barker and John McEnroe – are some of the best in the business, and the whole tournament is available for free, and ad-free, on BBC iPlayer. There's a good chance it will even be streamed in Ultra HD 4K like the World Cup, although the Beeb hasn't confirmed this yet.

Watch the action live, catch up on the games you missed and enjoy exclusives at bit.ly/wimbeeb452. The official



Wimbledon site (bit.ly/wimbledon452) has lots of free videos, including a documentary about the beginnings of the Open Tennis era 50 years ago.

Feast on film noir from Fritz Lang

From 28 June

If your film taste is more cult classic than blockbuster remake, then treat yourself to a Mubi subscription (mubi.com). For £7.99 a month, you can stream and download up to 30 hand-picked movies at a time, with a new title added every day. Big-name directors such as Francis Ford Coppola (whose *Rumble Fish* is available until 10 July) and Brian De Palma (*Raising Cain* and *Body Double* until 1 and 2 July) pop up regularly, and now Mubi has lined up a rare treat from *Metropolis* auteur Fritz Lang, whose noir masterpieces *The Big Heat* (with Lee Marvin, pictured above) and *Human*



Desire arrive as a double bill on 28 June. You can watch Lang trailers, documentaries and interviews at bit.ly/mubilang452.

Meet Anne With An E

From 6 July

Like *The Handmaid's Tale*, this Netflix drama started as an adaptation of a classic novel, but now adds a second 'What if...?' season that's sure to delight some fans and infuriate others.

Seven new episodes of *Anne With An E*, based on LM Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and created by *Breaking Bad* producer Moira Walley-Beckett, see the spirited teenage orphan navigating her new life on Canada's Prince Edward



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

Island in the 1890s. Themes of gender identity, prejudice and bullying are explored through the lens of 14-year-old Anne (Amybeth McNulty), with the magnificent Geraldine James (*Kavanagh QC*, *Little Britain*) as her accidental adoptive mum Marilla. Watch the new season's trailer at bit.ly/anne452.

Catch up with *Power* From 2 July

Just a year after *Power*'s first four seasons arrived on Netflix UK, Season 5 is already upon us, and a sixth has just been commissioned. The series, which has rap star 50 Cent as its executive producer, follows a wealthy New York nightclub owner and drug kingpin, played by Omari Hardwick (*Kick-Ass*), as he tries to extricate himself from the narco world. It could have been a riot of clichés, but a sharp script and excellent performances make *Power* a compelling watch. You can see all previous series at bit.ly/power452, and the Season 5 trailer at bit.ly/powertrail452.



live online at TVPlayer's TVP One site (bit.ly/tvpone452). Freeview channels are free to stream, and TVPlayer Plus adds seven-day catch-up plus 37 premium channels for £5.99 per month.

Binge on *Nailed It* From 29 June

For some of us, the phrase "comedy cooking" is simply a description of what happens every time we venture into the kitchen, but *Nailed It* has discovered an appetite for this kind of thing and returns to Netflix for a second six-episode helping of barmy bakes. It's like a loud US cousin of *Bake Off*'s showstopper round, but with terrible

cooks and a cash prize of \$1,000. Comedian Nicole Byer presides, as contestants try to pull off their edible masterpieces, with mixed results that we'd happily devour anyway.

Stream the Tour de France and British Grand Prix

7-29 July; 8 July

World Cup broadcasters the Beeb and ITV aren't the only channels to share streaming duties this summer. ITV and Eurosport are sharing the Tour de France (7-29 July), while Channel 4 and Sky Sports share the British Grand Prix (8 July). How very sporting!



ITV4 is showing all stages of Le Tour live, and you can stream them for free at itv.com/hub/itv4. For more extensive coverage (but still too many ads), head for the Eurosport Player (bit.ly/eurotour452), which costs £6.99 per month after a free two-week trial. If you prefer your wheels with engines attached, stream the F1 action from Silverstone for free at f1.channel4.com, or watch Sky Sports online at Now TV for a £7.99 Day Pass (bit.ly/newsport452).



Watch *Designated Survivor* for free on Paramount Network

Launches 4 July

Entertainment broadcaster Paramount Network has been around in one form or another for 35 years. Most recently, it has been broadcasting as Spike, a Dave-style sister network to Channel 5. Now rebranded as Paramount Network, it relaunches on 4 July with a slew of free-to-air content including shows that used to require a Netflix subscription (such as the Kiefer Sutherland vehicle *Designated Survivor*, pictured above, right); new royals in their old jobs (*Suits* Season 7); and crowd-pleasing films such as *Catch Me If You Can* and *Groundhog Day*.

The channel's own website will offer only limited content, but you can watch



Amazon's Premier League score



Amazon has managed to break BT and Sky's stranglehold on Premier League football. That means you'll now have to shell out for three TV services if you want to follow a team all season.

It's not quite the sea-change that got the tabloids so flustered in early June, however. BT and Sky still get the lion's share of matches. Sky paid a whopping £3.75bn to show 128 games per season over three years starting in 2019, while BT paid £975m for 52. Amazon paid an undisclosed amount to live-stream 20 third-tier matches (mostly mid-week and bank holiday games), at no extra cost to Prime subscribers.

The big story will be what happens next. If those 20 games deliver enough new Prime sign-ups, Amazon will be willing and able to bid enough next time to grab all streaming rights from BT and Sky. We'll find out in three years.

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Palicomp Intel i7 Nebula

It may be eye-wateringly expensive but in a line-up of eight similarly priced PCs, the Nebula performed its way to the top

We review a lot of affordable PCs and laptops in *Web User* and, for many people, £500 to £700 will seem like more than enough to spend. However, you get what you pay for, and a PC with components capable of playing the latest games and performing your everyday Windows chores at lightning speed doesn't come cheap.

If you're going to spend a fortune on a PC, it might as well look the part and the Nebula is certainly dripping with bling. It comes in a gigantic Kolink Observatory case with a glossy, semi-transparent side panel and see-through front. Behind the front panel you'll find three fans, with another one working at the back. Each fan has 16 LEDs with a choice of over 300 lighting effects. On our test model, Palicomp had pre-configured a rotating, colour-changing light show, which is great for showing off when the lights are low but will probably need to be toned down when you're sharing a room with it.

Behind the impressive but arguably frivolous firework display, this PC has plenty of

substance, starting with the Intel Core i7-8700K processor, which usually runs between 3.7 and 4.7GHz but which Palicomp has overclocked to 4.8GHz to make it perform even faster. Then there's the Palit GTX 1080 graphics card, with its own 8GB of memory, also overclocked to match the processor, and – as if this weren't speed-crazed enough – Palicomp has also fitted two 256GB Samsung PM981 M.2 SSDs, configured as a RAID 0 array to maximise space and performance (RAID 0 uses the drives independently rather than having one backing up the other). Running the AS-SSD benchmark (bit.ly/ssd452) saw sequential read speeds in excess of 3,250MB/s and write speeds of over 2,800MB/s. That's ludicrously fast. Palicomp also supplies 16GB of DDR4 memory.

The Asus TUF-Z370 motherboard provides an

excellent platform for all these components and controls the PC's ID-Cooling FrostFlow water-cooling system. This, coupled with the whopping 240mm radiator, ensured that we rarely saw the processor's temperature creep above 60°C, even during our punishing benchmark testing.

The case itself is spacious, with plenty of room to work

inside, which should make future upgrades a breeze. There's space for another two DDR4 DIMMs, plus three PCIe 3.0 expansion slots, though one of the larger slots is partially obscured by the double-height graphics card.

Down at the bottom of the case, there's a spare 3.5in drive bay, just below the space where the 2TB Seagate Barracuda hard drive sits, which you can use for all the everyday files you don't want to keep on the SSDs.

It's great to have all this room for future upgrading but you aren't going to need it for a while, because the PC is



“Behind the impressive but arguably frivolous firework display, this PC has plenty of substance”

ALSO TESTED

We tested eight PCs before crowning this one the winner. Here's the best of the rest:

CCL Reaper GT

(£1,478.99 | bit.ly/cclgt452 | ★★★★★)

The CCL is a subtler-looking alternative, with a cool white case that will still turn heads. It's not as fast as the Palicomp, though.

Scan 3XS Gamer

(£1,500 | www.scan.co.uk | ★★★★★)

If you've got a 4K monitor to hook up to your new PC, this Scan model performed brilliantly at high resolutions.

CyberPower Infinity X88 GTX

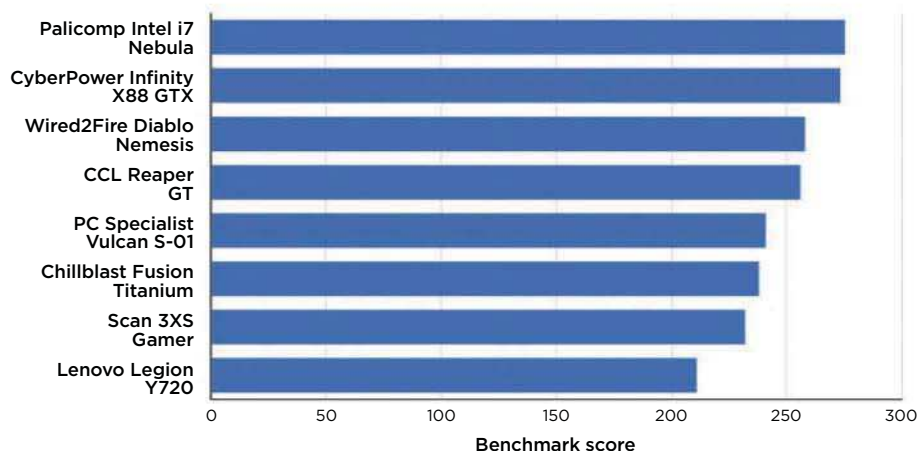
(£1,585.20 | bit.ly/cpix452 | ★★★★★)

The CyberPower outperformed our top choice when running a couple of games benchmarks that the Palicomp found difficult to run while overclocked.

Also reviewed:

Chillblast Fusion Titanium (★★★★★),
Wired2Fire Diablo Nemesis (★★★★★),
PC Specialist Vulcan S-01 (★★★★★),
Lenovo Legion Y720 (★★★★★)

Overall 2D Windows benchmark results



already fast. We compared it to seven other similarly priced PCs and the Palicomp was the fastest in our 2D benchmarks, with only the CyberPower providing any serious competition (see our chart,

above). This impressive performance also applied to games, with the Palicomp running 12fps (frames per second) faster than the next fastest PC on Far Cry 5 at 1080p, and 2fps faster at 4K.

It wasn't all plain sailing, though. Running the Rise of the Tomb Raider and Metro: Last Light benchmark gaming tests at their highest resolutions required us to turn off this PC's overclock in order to get the games running. This allowed the CyberPower PC, which was slightly less aggressively overclocked, to outperform the Palicomp, which might be worth thinking about if games are your main consideration.

So has Palicomp over-

egged its overclocking on this PC? Well, these issues only occurred in these two benchmarks, and not in any other recent games we sampled. Given the extreme speeds on offer, even the Palicomp's performance at its lower clock speed is fantastic in most games, so we'd suggest keeping the overclock for certain titles but stepping it back for others. It's easy enough to do this from the motherboard's settings.



PRODUCT INFO

Palicomp Intel i7 Nebula

Price: £1,549.99

Buy from Palicomp:
bit.ly/pali452

SPECIFICATIONS

- Intel Core i7 8700K processor
- Asus TUF Z-370 Plus Gaming motherboard
- 16GB DDR4 3,200MHz memory
- Palit GTX 1080 Jetstream 8GB GDDR5 graphics
- 2 x 256GB Samsung PM981 SSDs, 1 x Seagate 2TB hard drive
- 2 x USB 3.1 Gen2, 3 x USB 3.1, 4 x USB 2, 1 x USB Type-C
- HDMI, DVI-D, 3 x DisplayPort
- Gigabit Ethernet
- Windows 10 Home
- 435 x 435 x 201mm
- 3-years return-to-base warranty

FOR

- ✓ Extremely powerful PC
- ✓ Great components
- ✓ Get what you pay for

AGAINST

- ✗ Eye-wateringly expensive
- ✗ Excessive light show

OUR VERDICT



Awesome performance combines with a dazzling light show to create a killer PC. A machine this expensive isn't going to be within everyone's budget, but if you're looking for maximum performance then the Nebula is tough

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

to beat. It's big, brash and expensive, but it's also an incredible PC.

AOC G2460VQ6

This affordable 24in monitor from AOC is sturdily built and, with a few tweaks, can deliver a good performance

At the refreshingly low price of £135, this 24in monitor is one of AOC's cheapest. However, it still has a solid, sturdy body and enough ambition to stand out from the crowd.

Its circular stand has a smart brushed-metal effect and the area beneath the screen is decorated with a curved red band that houses the OSD buttons. Its back panel is reassuringly resistant to bending and the base is solid and doesn't wobble.

The only indication that this is a budget monitor is the relative lack of adjustment options: you can tilt it, but that's all. It also has thick bezels around all four edges, but that's not a problem unless you're considering a multi-monitor setup.

If you have AMD graphics hardware installed in your PC, this monitor is compatible with its FreeSync technology (bit.ly/fsyn452), which basically ensures that the graphics and monitor are operating at the same speed to create smooth animation. The monitor peaks at a 75MHz refresh rate, which might fall short of the capabilities of the very latest graphics cards, but should be fine with a modest PC. We found it worked well with our test PC, proving smooth and consistent while gaming.

There are two built-in 2W speakers but their output isn't great – you'll be better off channelling sound through separate speakers or using headphones. It has sufficient video outputs – DisplayPort, HDMI and VGA – but there's no USB port, which is unusual for a new monitor.

We were also disappointed by the OSD (on-screen display) that's used to choose options – it opens across the bottom of the panel and uses awkward horizontal menus that are slow and confusing to navigate.

Performance

The monitor's performance delivered mixed benchmark results. Out of the box, its contrast ratio of 706:1 is middling and its black level of 0.37cd/m² isn't the best, though it's still pretty good for a screen at this price. After some experimentation, we



“ It worked well with our test PC, proving smooth and consistent while gaming ”

found that the monitor's sRGB setting, which you can select from the OSD, was the best built-in option. This improved the contrast ratio to 769:1 and proved capable of recreating 96.8% of the sRGB colour standard, which is a

very respectable result.

Perhaps the biggest problem we found was the uniformity of the panel – it lost 14% of its backlight power in its bottom-left and top-right corners. But it's still a great screen for £135.

PRODUCT INFO

AOC G2460VQ6

Price: £135

Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/aocg452

SPECIFICATIONS

- 24in TN screen
- 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution
- 75Hz refresh rate
- DisplayPort, HDMI, VGA
- Three-years collect-and-return warranty

FOR

- ✓ Affordable
- ✓ Benefits from connection to AMD graphics hardware
- ✓ Good build quality

AGAINST

- ✗ Screen not uniformly bright
- ✗ Needs tweaking from factory defaults

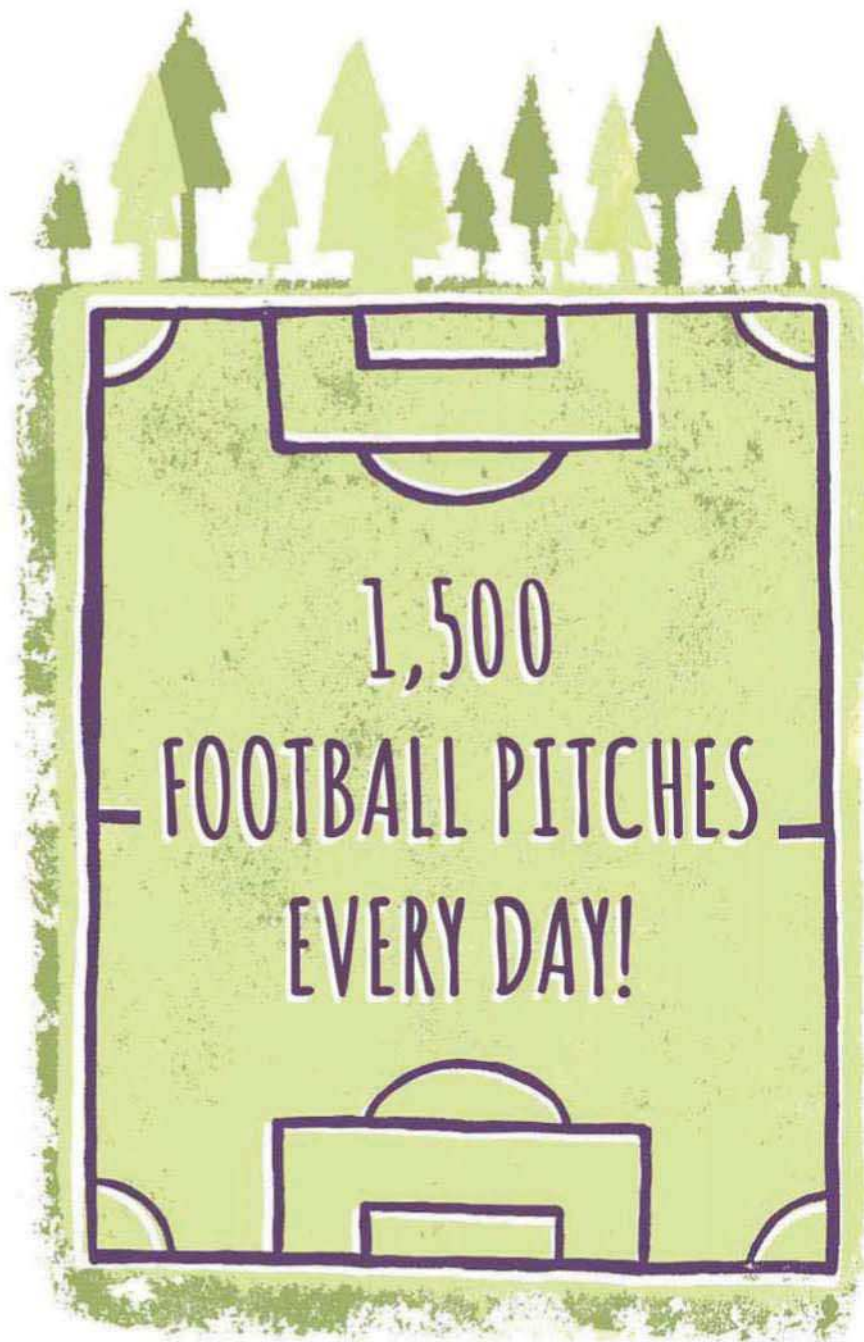
OUR VERDICT



The AOC's performance could be a lot better but you can't expect miracles for £135. It doesn't do anything seriously wrong and its built-in sRGB setting can be used to deliver broadly better results than the out-of-the-box setup. AMD FreeSync

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

support alongside a decent selection of inputs and a good build quality, make it a bargain.



Did you know that European forests, which provide wood for making paper and many other products, have been growing by over 1,500 football pitches every day!

Love magazines? You'll love them even more knowing they're made from natural, renewable and recyclable wood.

UNFAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment 2005-2015

Two Sides is a global initiative promoting the responsible use of print and paper which, when sourced from certified or sustainably managed forests, is a uniquely powerful and natural communications medium.

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Discover them now,
twosides.info





Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

PHOTO PRINTER

Epson Expression Photo HD XP-15000

£251.96 from bit.ly/epsonexp450
Tested: Issue 450

Epson's XP-15000 lacks some of the features of a true all-rounder but it prints photos beautifully, all the way up to size A3+.

KEY SPECS

5,760 x 1,440dpi maximum print resolution ■ 250-sheet input capacity ■ Double-sided printing ■ Colour touchscreen ■ USB, Ethernet, Wi-Fi connectivity ■ 479 x 370 x 159mm ■ 8.5kg ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty



SMART THERMOSTAT

Honeywell Evohome

£199 from bit.ly/honevo449
Tested: Issue 449

The Honeywell Evohome is a powerful multi-zone smart heating product that lets you control all the radiators in your central heating system. This will save on heating bills, but it may take a while before you recoup the cost of the initial outlay.

KEY SPECS

Remote thermostat ■ Battery-powered ■ Hot-water support ■ Individual radiator support ■ Alexa voice-assistant support ■ IFTTT support ■ 13.9 x 2.1 x 10.1cm ■ 898g



LAPTOP

Asus ZenBook UX410

£539.95 from bit.ly/asuszb447
Tested: Issue 447

This laptop, with its compact aluminium body and impressive design, feels built to last. Performance was middling, though it's fine for everyday tasks, and the screen looks fabulous.

KEY SPECS

Dual-core Intel Core i3-7100U processor ■ 4GB memory ■ 128GB storage ■ 14in 1,920 x 1,080-pixels screen ■ USB-C, USB 3, 2 x USB 2 ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ Windows 10 Home ■ 323 x 223 x 19mm ■ 1.4kg ■ 1-year return-to-base warranty



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 8 ■ 68.1 x 148.9 x 8mm ■ 155g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty



SOFTWARE & SERVICES

CLOUD-STORAGE SERVICE

Microsoft OneDrive

From free from onedrive.live.com

Tested: Issue 438

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



KEY FEATURES

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

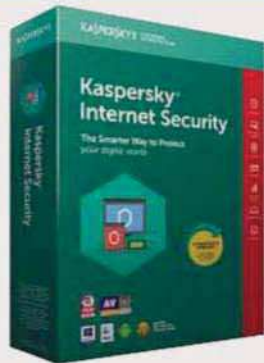
INTERNET SECURITY

Kaspersky Internet Security 2018

£19.99 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

IMAGE VIEWER

PhotoScape X

Free from bit.ly/psx451

Tested: Issue 451

PhotoScape X does what most image viewers do, only better. It's fast, practical and intuitive, and packed with useful tools.

NEW!



VIDEO DOWNLOADER

4K Video Downloader

Free from bit.ly/fkvd450

Tested: Issue 450

Simple and effective, 4K Video Downloader supports multiple formats and isn't bundled with any annoying extras.



WINDOWS SEARCH TOOL

Agent Ransack

Free from bit.ly/agent449

Tested: Issue 449

Agent Ransack's extensive search filters, options and simple interface deliver reliable results.



SOFTWARE UPDATER

SUMo

Free from bit.ly/sumo448

Tested: Issue 448

SUMo is lightweight, easy to use and supports a wide range of programs, checking for updates every time your PC starts.



FILE MANAGER

Astro File Manager

Free from bit.ly/astr447

Tested: Issue 447

With an attractive interface that emphasises productivity, Astro File Manager makes it easy to manage files on your Android phone.



WEB USER BACK ISSUES DISCS

Search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon

EVERY ISSUE FROM
2014 TO 2017





EaseUS ToDo Backup Free 11

File size: 71.3MB

ToDo Backup Free lets you back up hard drives, partitions, your operating system or individual files. It can also clone disks/partitions or your system, which is handy if you're migrating your data to a larger drive or an SSD.

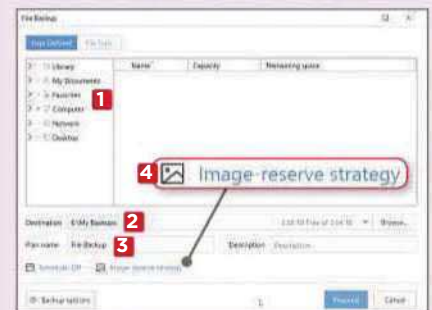
The latest version of ToDo Backup Free has a redesigned, more intuitive interface, and offers faster backups over a network. It also includes a number of

If you require additional features, upgrading to the paid-for Home edition – which cost \$29 (£21.65) for a lifetime licence – adds Outlook email backup and recovery, the option to transfer your system to a different PC, email notifications and the ability to exclude certain files from a backup.

Be sure to decline the bundled junk when installing the free version.



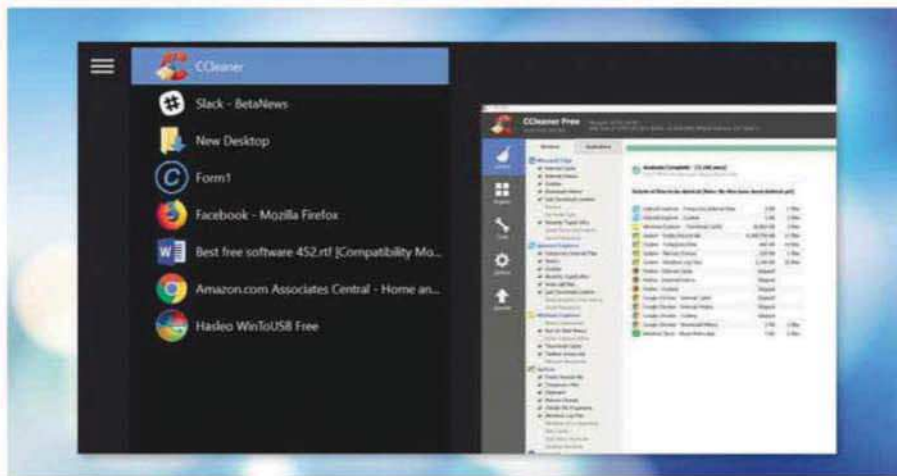
MINI WORKSHOP | Back up your PC using EaseUS ToDo Backup Free 11



2 Choose the option to back up a disk or partition, then select the location in the window that opens. **1** Select a save destination, **2** then give your plan a name **3** and enter an optional description. **4** You can access the backup options here. **5** Hit Proceed **6** to begin the backup process.

3 If you prefer, you can back up files and folders. Select the areas you want to target (the common save locations are selected by default). **1** Set a destination for your files to be saved to **2** and enter a plan name. **3** The Image Reserve Strategy **4** helps you manage previous backups.

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



TASK SWITCHER Alt-Tab Terminator

bit.ly/alttab452

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 2MB

Alt-Tab Terminator replaces Windows' built-in Alt-Tab feature with a more powerful version. Once activated, it displays a list of all running tasks, with previews, and lets you switch to any of them, and close or terminate unwanted ones. You can navigate the interface using your keyboard or mouse, and it's fully customisable. There's a choice of themes and optional full-screen and compact modes. Right-clicking a program entry brings up a list of tasks you can perform.



SYSTEM TOOL Secure File Deleter 6

www.cyrobo.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10 **File size:** 1.9MB

When you 'delete' a file from your PC, all you actually do is remove the reference to it on your hard drive, which means that it remains there and anyone can restore the deleted content. Secure File Deleter overwrites an unwanted file numerous times to prevent its recovery, offering a choice of overwriting methods and other security options. This version has been rewritten and has a new wizard-based interface.



SYSTEM TOOL StopWinUpdates 2

bit.ly/stopwin452

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 768KB

It's important to keep your PC up to date to ensure it runs smoothly and protects you against the latest vulnerabilities. However, there may be times when you don't want Windows updating automatically. This is where StopWinUpdates can help. Choose which elements you want to enable/disable and then reboot. This new version fixes a problem with Defender auto-update not working.

New Windows Apps

Screen Sketch

bit.ly/ssketch452

Min requirements: Windows 10
File size: 2.4MB

This free app from Microsoft lets you quickly annotate screenshots, photos and other images using your pen, touchscreen or mouse. You need to be a Windows Insider to get the app.



PhotoPad Photo Editor Free

bit.ly/photopad452

Min requirements: Windows 10
File size: 22.67MB

The PhotoPad photo editor lets you crop, resize, flip and rotate images, and enhance them using a number of preset filters. You can preview effects before applying and share tweaked images on social media.

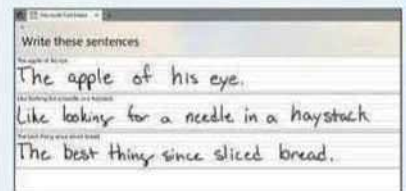


Microsoft Font Maker

bit.ly/font452

Min requirements: Windows 10
File size: 15.6MB

This app from Microsoft lets you create your own handwriting fonts that you can install in Windows. It requires a device with touch capabilities and pen support to work.



ANTI-RANSOMWARE TOOL

AppCheck Anti-Ransomware

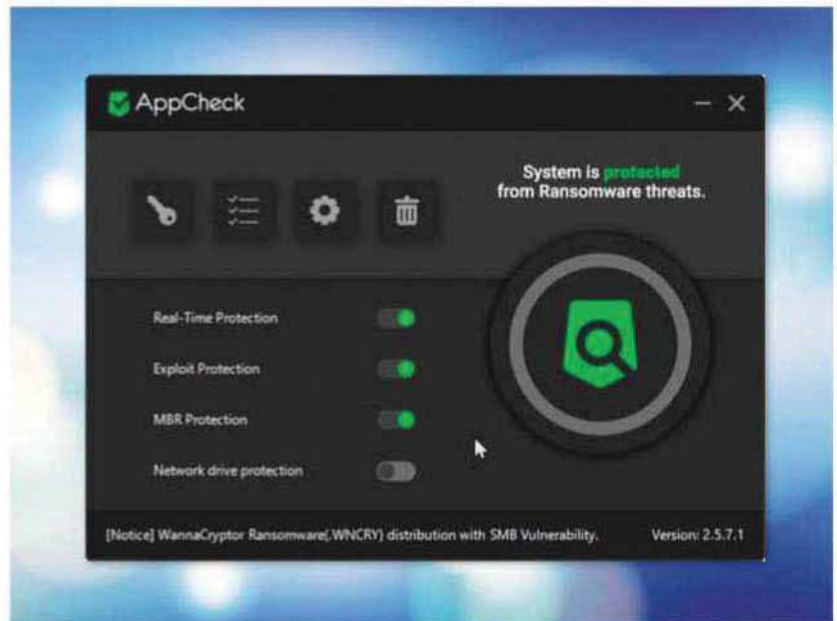
www.checkmal.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10

File size: 10.3MB

Ransomware remains one of the nastiest forms of malware around – it encrypts your personal files, then demands a ransom to unlock them, and there's no guarantee that paying the demand will get your content back.

AppCheck Anti-Ransomware is designed to protect you from this type of threat and will run alongside your existing anti-malware software without clashing. Once installed, the tool can simply be left to get on with protecting your system, but you can optionally toggle the real-time, exploit and MBR (Master Boot Record) protection modules on or off, and configure them as required through the comprehensive Options screen.



BOOTABLE USB CREATOR

Rufus 3

rufus.akeo.ie

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 994KB

The majority of operating systems – including Windows and Linux – are available to download in ISO image format, ready to be mounted or written to CD or DVD. They can also be used to create a bootable USB flash drive. Rufus simplifies this process to a handful of steps. Select a USB flash drive, choose your ISO file, click Start and it will go to work.

This latest update to the program is no longer compatible with Windows XP or Vista, and sports a new interface designed to follow the “flow of user operations”. It also fixes a number of problems and improves support for certain ISO formats. See our Weekend Project on page 58 for more about booting from USB.

DATA-RECOVERY TOOL

MiniTool Power Data Recovery Free 8

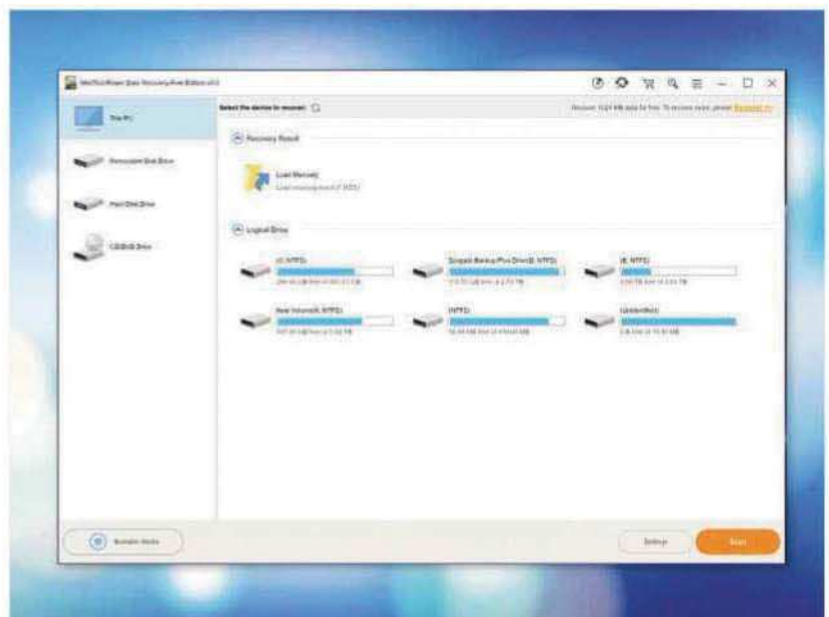
bit.ly/pdrf452

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10

File size: 17.2MB

MiniTool Power Data Recovery can restore data lost as a result of accidental deletion, hardware failure or formatting. Like other, similar tools it's very easy to use – select the target device to scan, then preview and save any found, recoverable files. The free version can only recover a maximum of 1GB of data, but that should be enough for most emergencies.

Version 8 of the program has a new, more intuitive interface, and improves the speed of the data-recovery engine. You can now pause or stop the scan once you've found the files you're looking for, and save files while still scanning.





GAME

Claude and the Phantom

bit.ly/claude452

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, MacOS or Linux **File size:** 43.5MB

This cute little point-and-click adventure is set in an antiques shop in the quiet seaside town of Dastard's Cove. You play Claude, the shop owner, and your challenge is to help free the ghost of a cat that's trapped in a recently donated painting by following clues, and collecting and manipulating objects. The game was created for the AdventureJam2018 competition.

Don't install...

Wellnomics WorkPace

www.workpace.com

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10
File size: 81MB

We know we often use this section to complain about software that charges you to do what other programs perform for free, but a tool that costs £55.75 to remind you to take regular screen breaks really takes the biscuit. We like that it suggests exercises you can do, but so does the free Workrave (see right).



...Install this instead

Workrave

www.workrave.org

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8+/10 or Linux
File size: 13.6MB

For health reasons, it's important to take regular breaks from your computer so that you don't develop RSI (repetitive strain injury) or hurt your eyes. Workrave monitors your keyboard and mouse activity and reminds you when it's time to have a 'micro-break' or a longer rest. If you skip too many breaks, the program insists you stop what you're doing. You can decide how often the reminders appear and the length of your breaks. Workrave also suggests exercises to try while you rest from your PC. It hasn't been updated for a while, but it's an invaluable tool for workaholics.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



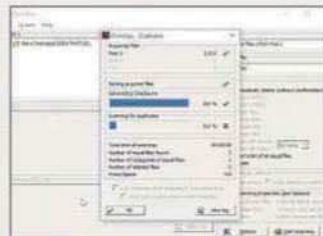
GAMES LAUNCHER

LaunchBox 8.3

www.launchbox-app.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 187MB

If you're a fan of old games, then you'll love LaunchBox. It's a portable database and launcher that can handle pretty much any game you want to play. This updated version makes improvements to the handling of the essential Retroarch emulator.



DUPLICATE REMOVER

CloneSpy 3.41

www.clonespy.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 4.5MB

CloneSpy helps you save and recover space on your computer's hard drive by finding and removing any duplicate files on your system. This new release can log files and folders that are ignored during scanning. It will also now remember the size and position of the Add Folder window.



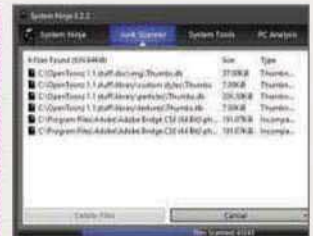
UNINSTALLER

BCUninstaller 4.4

bit.ly/bcu452

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 3.1MB

BCUninstaller can batch-remove lots of unwanted programs and thoroughly clear away any leftover junk. This latest release adds support for the Chocolatey application manager (chocolatey.org) and adds the ability to remove selected Store Apps using a PowerShell script.



SYSTEM CLEANER

System Ninja 3.2.2

singularlabs.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 2.4MB

System Ninja removes all manner of junk from your PC. This update fixes a Recycle Bin cleaning bug that could potentially crash the program, and overcomes some display problems on low-resolution screens. It also improves cleaning of Google Chrome. ■

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Best New Browser Tools



CHROME

Make colourful web pages less distracting

Last issue, we revealed how you can protect your eyes by activating 'night mode' for your favourite sites and software. But if that's too dark for your tastes, why not go grey instead using Grayscale the Web (bit.ly/gray452)? This new Chrome extension drains all the colour from every web page, so sites look plain and greyed-out – "much more boring, and that's the whole point".

This prevents you from getting distracted by eye-catching colours and means you won't suffer eyestrain and headaches from garish hues. You can add specific websites to a whitelist to retain their intended tints and stop them turning grey, and easily turn the add-on on or off.

Note that when you first install Grayscale the Web, you'll need to refresh any open tabs for the extension to work its monochrome magic.



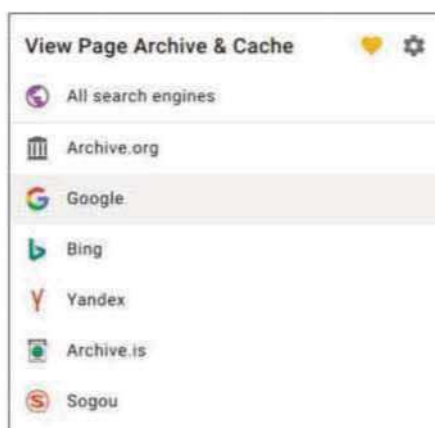
Get instant Wikipedia info on any page

If you often find yourself leaving the article you're reading to look up a name, term or word on Wikipedia, you'll appreciate a new Chrome extension called Qikipedia (bit.ly/qiki452). This lets you search Wikipedia for any text on a web page without needing to open a new browser tab or risk losing your place. Instead, just highlight the words – you can select up to seven – and a Wikipedia summary will appear instantly in a pop-card, providing a definition, picture and other useful information, along with a link to read the full article. If no card is shown, then no Wikipedia entry is available for the highlighted text, but you'll be pleasantly surprised by how often and how quickly the add-on works.



Access archived versions of web pages

Content on the web is constantly changing and a page you view today



might not be there tomorrow – perhaps removed for legal reasons or tucked behind a paywall. A handy new extension called View Page Archive & Cache (bit.ly/archive452) offers a workaround by letting you easily access cached and archived versions of web pages. Simply click the add-on's toolbar button – or right-click the page – and choose a search engine such as Google, Bing or Archive.org. You'll then be shown the most recently saved version of the current URL, so you can see how the page looked before things changed. Alternatively, you can select 'All search engines' to open multiple cached and archived versions of the page in separate tabs. Further search engines can be activated via the extension's Options page.

View Page Archive & Cache is also

available for Firefox (bit.ly/archivefire452).

Test the security of your passwords

The invaluable security tool Have I Been Pwned (haveibeenpwned.com) tells you if any of your online accounts have been compromised in a data breach. To ensure you don't log into sites using unsafe passwords, you can now install PassProtect (bit.ly/passprotect452), which uses data from Have I Been Pwned to warn you about breached credentials. When you type in a password to sign up with or log into a site, the extension checks the Pwned database to see if the password has been involved in any breaches and – if it has – advising you to change it. PassProtect uses 'k-anonymity' to ensure your passwords are never seen, stored or sent over the network during the checking process.



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



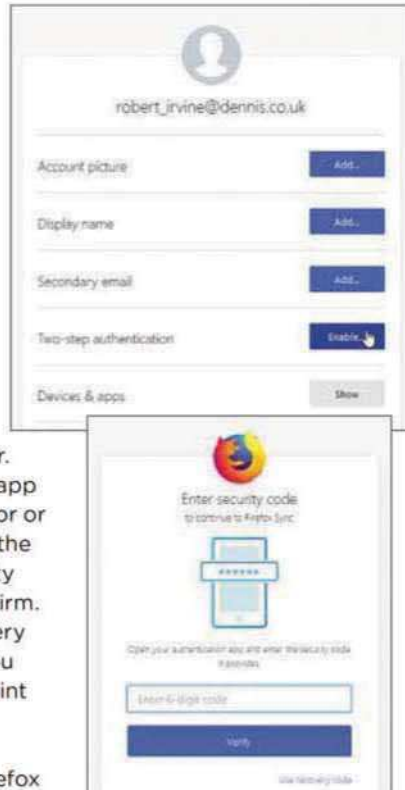
FIREFOX

Secure your Firefox account with two-step authentication

If you've registered for a Firefox account so you can sync your bookmarks, logins, open tabs and other browser data across devices, it's wise to make it as secure as possible – and we don't just mean by using a password. The latest version of Firefox introduces two-step authentication as an extra layer of protection, requiring you to enter an additional one-use security code to sign in. Go to Options, Firefox Account and click Manage Account, then select Enable next to 'Two-step authentication'. If you can't see the option listed on the page (the feature is being rolled out gradually), go to bit.ly/twostep452 to force it to appear.

You then need to install an authenticator app on your phone, such as Google Authenticator or Authy (links are provided). Use this to scan the QR code on the page, then enter the security code that appears in the app and click Confirm. You'll now be presented with a set of recovery codes that let you access your account if you can't use your phone. Download, copy or print these codes, then click Done.

You're now set up to use two-step authentication. When you sign into your Firefox account on any device, you'll be asked to enter a security code to verify that it's you, and even if hackers get hold of your password, they won't be able to access your account without this code. If you end up finding two-step authentication too much of a faff, click Disable on your Manage Account page to turn it off.



Keep trying to load unavailable pages

A website may go temporarily offline for all kinds of reasons – system maintenance, server overload or even problems with your own connection – but you probably don't have time to keep repeatedly refreshing the page until it reappears. A new Firefox add-on with the festive name Make a Merry Try Again (bit.ly/merry452) solves this problem by automatically reloading an unavailable page after a specific number of seconds, and continuing to do so until it's back. It's based on an old extension called TryAgain, which was discontinued seven years ago, and works in the same way: bypassing your browser's cache to try and load the

latest available version of the page. You can set the number of seconds after which to 'make a merry try again' in the add-on's Options.

Watch Netflix films in ultra-wide screen

If you're lucky enough to have a huge monitor, you may find that certain content on Netflix – usually feature films – appears with black bars around it, even when you're watching full-screen. You can fix this annoyance by installing Ultrawide Netflix (bit.ly/ultra452), which ensures videos from the streaming service in the 21:9 aspect ratio always completely fill your 21:9 screen. Keyboard shortcuts allow you to zoom in and out.

OTHER BROWSERS



Save online articles to read later

There are lots of tools that let you save web content to read later, including Pocket and Evernote, but Microsoft has now built similar functionality into its Edge browser. When you come across an article of interest, you can click the Favorites star in the address bar and choose 'Reading list', Add to save it to peruse at your convenience. Saved content can be read offline, which is handy for when you're travelling and can't get an internet connection, and is synced across other devices on which you use Edge.



Preview Opera's new Settings page

Opera has redesigned its Settings page to look more like Chrome's, applying a Material Design interface and listing all the settings in one place rather than spread across different sections. The new look is currently available in Opera's Developer version but if you're curious to check it now, there's a workaround. Type `opera://flags/#new-md-settings` into your address bar, press Enter and select Enabled from the drop-down menu next to 'New md settings'. Relaunch the browser and go to `opera://settings` to see the difference.





Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

VIDEO

Quik

bit.ly/quikdroid452

bit.ly/quikios452

5 10

Quik is an official video-editing app from GoPro, the makers of those little video cameras that cyclists and extreme-sports fans strap to helmets, handlebars and surfboards to capture epic moments, hands-free. But you don't need a GoPro device – or a surfboard – to use Quik. It works with clips you've recorded on your phone or tablet's built-in camera, as well as footage from pretty much any other source, too. Not only that, but Quik is completely free to use, with no in-app purchases or even any adverts to contend with. And if that wasn't already generous enough, GoPro has just updated the app with a selection of fresh new features and extras.

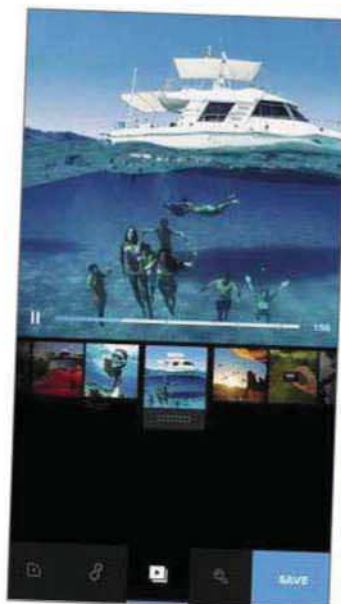
The idea behind Quik is to help you produce and share amazing-looking videos in just a few taps. It does this by automating the video-editing process as much as possible, cutting out the boring bits and using clever algorithms to identify the most exciting moments of your recordings. The app has been designed to be fast and easy to use, though it may take you a few attempts to get used to the way it works – see our Mini Workshop, right, for some tips.

The latest version of Quik lets you format your videos in portrait mode, which is perfect for Instagram and Snapchat. Additional trim modes have been added, too. Action mode automatically looks for jumps, speed and other dynamic moments, for example, while Travel mode looks for panoramic shots, and People

mode looks for faces and spoken dialogue.

The update also improves voice, wind and underwater detection, and includes a selection of new tunes to cut your mini masterpieces to.

UPDATED



MINI WORKSHOP

Edit your mobile videos using Quik

1 We're using iOS here – bear in mind that Quik is similar but slightly differently on Android. To edit a video, tap the plus sign (+) at the bottom of the main screen. On the next screen, tap All Photos **1** to select your source – this could be the Videos section of your device's photo library, **2** for example, or footage you have stored in an online account, such as Dropbox.



2 Scroll through the thumbnails, selecting any clips that you want to include in your video. Whenever you select a clip, you'll see a HiLight button. **1** Pressing this will let you manually select and add specific moments from your clip by scrolling through the footage and marking each moment with a tap of the Bookmark button. When you've selected all the clips you want, tap Add. **2**



3 Under the preview of your edited video is a swipeable selection of trim-mode icons. **1** Tap one to apply a different style to your clip. Below, you'll find tools for fine tuning. **2** Tap the musical note to change the music; or the spanner icon to adjust formatting and duration. To remove the Quik watermark, tap the clips icon, **3** then the Quik logo and press the bin icon. Tap Save **4** to finish.



Our rating



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

TOOLS

Google Lens

bit.ly/lens452



Originally a Pixel 2 exclusive, Google Lens was subsequently rolled into other devices and services, and now it's available as a standalone app. The main drawback is that it's not particularly good – at least, not yet. It's supposed to magically recognise things you point your device's camera at and provide you with relevant search results and information. The potential for this is clearly enormous but, currently, the app's ability to recognise things is hit and miss, and many users report that they can't get it to run at all.



Our rating



NEW

ALARM CLOCK

Snoozle

bit.ly/snoozdroid452

bit.ly/snoozios452

4.1 4.8

Snoozle is an innovative (and potentially irritating) 'social alarm clock'. You can set it to go off at specific times of the day, like a normal clock app. But instead of being woken up by one of your clock's alarms, you'll be roused from your slumber to the sound of short 'snoozles' (voice messages) that your friends have recorded. It's a fun idea but Snoozle, devised by Phil and Dan Neale – 'The Neales' from ITV's *Britain's Got Talent* – currently needs more features to save it from being a one-hit wonder.



Our rating



NEW

TOOLS

Clean Share

bit.ly/clean452



When you share a link with someone, it's possible you might inadvertently share information about your own online activities as well. Some URLs include tracking parameters – for example, if you tap a link for a shopping site in Facebook and then share the link elsewhere, it could reveal that you originally came to the shopping site via Facebook. Clean Share is a handy tool that strips out tracking parameters automatically. Using it couldn't be easier – just tap the Share button in your browser, then select Clean Share.



Our rating



COMMUNITY

Pear App

bit.ly/peardroid452

bit.ly/pearios452

4.4 4.9

If you're a parent or grandparent, you've probably searched the web for answers to childcare-related issues on more than one occasion. Pear aims to provide practical advice as well as a community platform for parents of kids of all ages via its website (www.pearparenting.com) and this new Android and iOS app. The app is simple to use, with its content browsable by both category (medical, recipes, travel and so on) and age group (infant, toddler, big kid and so on). The forum and news feed are the most useful sections, though. Subscribing for £11.49 per year unlocks exclusive content and lets you make your own contributions.



Our rating



NEW

WEATHER

Overdrop

bit.ly/overdrop452

(varies)

Weather apps tend to fall into two categories: practical or pretty. Overdrop manages to be both. It offers a seven-day forecast and detailed information about current temperature, pressure, cloud cover, humidity and more, using 'hyperlocal' weather service Dark Sky as its data provider. It all comes wrapped in a very attractive modern interface, with beautifully designed animations illustrating current conditions. You can store your favourite locations and there are several brilliant widgets to choose from. Overdrop is currently in beta but it works well. There's also a paid-for Pro version (99p) that adds more features, including extra widgets and a dark theme.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

TOOLS

Battery Charging Animation

bit.ly/battery452

Price: 59p

 4.0.3

Cheer up your battery charges with cool animations that play when your device is plugged in. This app also features low-power alarms and handy widgets.



Price: £2.99

 4.4  8

The prolific Toca Boca team sets its latest kids' app in a haunted house. Learning is encouraged via a series of mini games featuring monsters, potions and slime.

PRODUCTIVITY

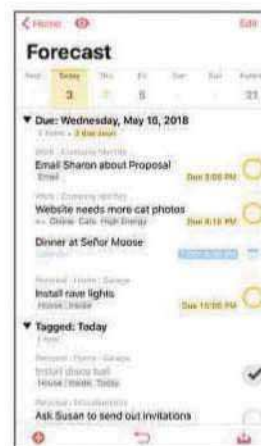
OmniFocus 3

bit.ly/omnifocus452

Price: £19.99

 11.3

Take control of home or work projects, tasks and collaborations with the latest version of this incredible organisational tool. It's pricey but worth it if you're busy.



GAME

Super Monkey Ball 2: Sakura Edition

bit.ly/monkeydroid452

bit.ly/monkeyios452

Price: £1.99

 4.2  8

This brilliant Sega game finally arrives on Android (and is updated for iOS). Use your device's motion-sensing tech to roll cute little monkeys around 125 levels. Pay to lose the ads.



GAME

Tile & Error

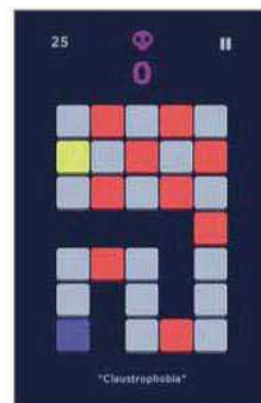
bit.ly/tiledroid452

bit.ly/tileios452

Price: £1.79 (Android), £1.99 (iOS)

 4.1  7

This pattern-recognition puzzle game looks simple – swipe the blue tile to reach the yellow one and repeat – but it's fiendishly difficult and very addictive.



Battery Charging Animation



Super Monkey Ball 2: Sakura Edition



Toca Mystery House



OmniFocus 3



Tile & Error



Don't install...

Travel Deals

bit.ly/deals452

Unless you're the sort of person who plans their summer holiday with military precision, it's entirely possible that you might be looking

for a cheap last-minute deal right about now. And, while there are numerous apps available that can make this process easier, Travel Deals is definitely not one of them. It's basically a feed of random deals pulled from Skyscanner and other sources, jumbled together with confusing and intrusive ads.




...Install this instead

Skyscanner

bit.ly/skydroid452

bit.ly/skyios452

 4.4  9

Why bother with half-baked apps like Travel Deals when you can go direct to the source for a much wider, more up-to-date selection of deals? Skyscanner lets you browse or search for the latest cheap flights, along with bargain deals on hotels, car hire and even train tickets. If you know where and when you want to go, you can use the Search tool; otherwise, tap Explore and be inspired by recommended or popular destinations, or browse the best deals by month. Signing up for a free account lets you receive travel updates and sync your trips across all your devices. 





Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our Bond-film emoji and 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 BOND-FILM TITLES 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 The mobile game Flappy Bird is downloaded more than 50 million times, only to be pulled from app stores by its creator for being too addictive.



2 A serious security bug called Heartbleed is discovered in software used by millions of servers. Web users are advised to change their passwords everywhere.



3 eBay admits that one of its databases, containing encrypted passwords and other personal data, was hacked between February and March.

4 The European Court of Justice upsets Google by legally backing the 'right to be forgotten', allowing web users to request the removal of personal data.



5 The Ice Bucket Challenge, which involves pouring a bucket of ice and water over a person's head, goes viral, promoting awareness of motor neurone disease.



Credit:
slgkqg,
CC BY 2.0

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 5 Energy Sistem Music Box 5+

Energy Sistem's Music Box 5+ is a wireless speaker with Bluetooth 4.1 connectivity. It has 10 watts of power and a microSD card reader with a 128GB capacity. The 2,000mAh battery delivers up to 14 hours of music. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'music box' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.energysistem.com/en and 'like' www.facebook.com/EnergySistemWorldwide.



WORTH
£64.90
EACH

WIN 1 OF 2 AVM FRITZ!Box 7590

The FRITZ!Box 7590 is one of the most powerful routers today. It boasts a wide range of features and functions due to FRITZ!OS. Mesh Wi-Fi will be added soon via a free update. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'avm' in the subject line. For more information, visit en.avm.de, follow [@AVM_INTL](https://twitter.com/AVM_INTL) on Twitter and 'like' www.facebook.com/fritzboxinternational.



WORTH
£225
EACH



FAQ

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

Progressive Web Apps

What do you get when you cross websites with apps? PWAs, that's what. **David Crookes** explains the benefits of using this new technology



What are they?

Progressive Web Apps – PWAs, for short – work in your browser but behave in much the same way as software on your phone, tablet or computer. In that sense, they combine the accessibility and convenience of websites with the speed and reliability of apps. Lots of companies are invested in this technology, so you'll be seeing lots of PWAs very soon.

How do PWAs work?

From a user's perspective, you just open your browser, type the URL of a PWA – such as the Financial Times (app.ft.com) – and access its content and features in an app-like interface. However, you can also install the PWA direct from the browser, which is where the magic kicks in, because by doing so, you benefit from extra app functions such as notifications and location services that you don't normally get from a website.

On the surface, though, there's not much difference between a Progressive Web App and a standard mobile or Windows app, other than that the latter is fully installed on your device from an app store.



Check out a PWA today by viewing the Financial Times app in your browser

So why not just download an app?

It's true that on phones and tablets, mobile apps have huge advantages over standard websites – they are programmed for specific tasks and usually store their data on your device, which means they run more quickly. Apps also offer freedom of design, enhanced personalisation and the ability to use your device's built-in features, such as the camera. They can also work offline, which is handy when the network signal is patchy. But PWAs have the potential to do all of this, too, and because they are hosted online, you can access them from anywhere and they take up very little room on your device.

How are they different to mobile apps?

Mobile apps are typically written in HTML5 and the only 'installation' method for them is to create an icon that sits on your home screen. Progressive Web Apps go beyond that, with support for push notifications and background syncing – two of their most important features – which makes them more akin to full desktop apps.

So how do PWAs work?

PWAs can be broken down into three elements. First, you have the app shell, which uses HTML, CSS and JavaScript to handle the design and functionality of the PWA. Second, there are Service Workers – essentially,

Progressive Web Apps can send the push notifications we all know and love

JavaScript files that are built into the main operating system, running separately from the main browser thread to cache data and deliver push notifications. This allows the PWA to be used offline. Third, there are Web App Manifests, which let you install PWAs via a browser and, as with mobile apps, pin them to your home screen.

What happens when you launch a PWA?

Once you've decided to install your PWA, its 'shell' is stored on your home screen, so you can just tap or click to quickly launch it. Any content you've saved during previous sessions is made available to access online or off, so you can then simply relax and enjoy an app-like experience from a website, complete with smooth animations and transitions. Additionally, HTTPS encryption ensures that PWAs are secure.





Google has pioneered the use of PWAs by supporting them in Android and Chrome



Mozilla is keen on Progressive Web Apps and offers full support for them in Firefox

Which platforms offer PWAs?

Google (bit.ly/googlepwa452) was the first to support Service Workers when it incorporated them into its Android operating system and allowed them to be run in Chrome. This was probably motivated by a desire to break into the 'walled garden' of its rival, Apple, since it has long been shut out of lots of data and potential advertising revenue by competing iOS apps. However, Apple recently followed suit by including Service Workers in iOS 11.3 and MacOS 10.13.4, effectively allowing you to install apps on iOS without the need for App Store approval. Microsoft has also introduced PWAs for Edge and Windows 10, which are available from the Microsoft Store.

Which browsers can I use?

Most modern browsers let you use PWAs: Firefox, Chrome and Opera fully support Service Workers; Safari mostly supports them; and Edge is currently working on supporting direct PWA downloads.

What are the benefits for developers?

PWAs re-establish the supremacy of the browser, positioning it once more at the forefront of the web experience. Instead of having to produce apps for various different platforms, a developer can create one PWA that works across multiple browsers, so there's no need to invest lots of time tailoring the app to a device or getting people to visit an app store. Additionally, search engines link to PWAs, making them easy to find.

Further, developers can update PWAs on their own servers rather than having to seek approval for inclusion in app stores, and still retain the advantages of a standard app by accessing a device's tools such as the camera, geolocation and sensors.

Why should companies use PWAs?

Websites viewed in mobile browsers – even ones that are responsively designed

to fit different sized screens – don't engage our attention as effectively as apps. Slow page-load times are a problem (US company SOASTA, which tests websites and web applications, says just one second of added page-load speed can see sales drop by 27%), as is the inability to access web pages offline.

Apps are better at engaging people, which converts into sales and revenue. PWAs are seen as a bridge between apps and websites, and have already been picked up by companies including Starbucks (app.starbucks.com) and Ali Express (m.aliexpress.com).



The Starbucks PWA lets you order a coffee without speaking to a barista

Are there restrictions?

Yes, but mainly on iOS. If you're using an iPad, for example, you can't allow PWAs to share your screen, whereas apps can use Side or Split Views. PWAs can't access your background location or contacts, either, and there is no Siri integration, push notifications or access to in-app payments, TouchID, FaceID or Bluetooth. You can't store more than 50MB of data and files with a PWA on iOS and, to install one, you need to press the Share icon and tap 'Add to Home Screen' – there's no prompting in Safari. You can't use PWAs in third-party browsers on iOS, either.

What about on Android?

Things are very different on Android. PWAs can store more than 50MB of data and files, and push notifications and Bluetooth access are both available. Also, Android won't delete files if you fail to use a PWA for a few weeks, whereas iOS will. All in all, Android is currently best equipped for PWAs but we can expect that to change over time. The key is to persuade companies to switch from responsively designed websites and mobile apps, but given their dominance, this isn't likely to be achieved overnight.

Playing the PWA version of a game saves you having to download a large file



HOW TO USE A PROGRESSIVE WEB APP



1 Visit the site
Here, we're using the Chrome browser on Android. Type the URL of a PWA – for example, app.ft.com – to see a prompt at the bottom of the screen. Tap Add To Home Screen.

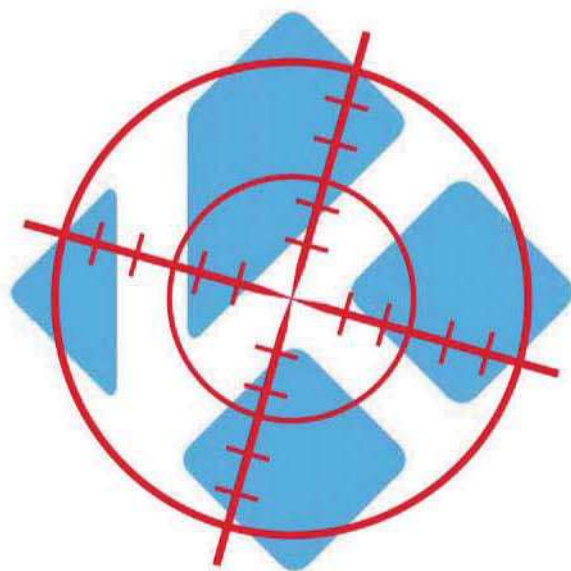


2 Wait for installation
The shell of the PWA is installed on your device and an icon appears on your home screen. To launch the service, tap the icon as you would with any other app.



3 Enjoy the PWA
This PWA takes up the whole screen on your device, like any standard app. In fact, it looks, feels and works like an app, right down to push notifications and offline abilities.

KODI KILLERS



**COVER
FEATURE**

Until recently, Kodi was king of the media-streaming tools, but now it's fallen into disrepute and disrepair. **Jonathan Parkyn** reveals the perfect replacements for this once great software

2017 was, unofficially, 'The Year of Kodi'. The media-streaming software went from an obscure open-source Xbox hack to a massively popular mainstream sensation, practically overnight. All of a sudden, Kodi was everywhere you looked – not least within the pages of this magazine. But sadly, it wasn't meant to last. A slew of dodgy third-party add-ons that allowed the app to be used for streaming copyright-protected content illegally drew the ire of the sport and entertainment industries, and Kodi's name began to be associated with piracy.

The media centre's reputation was further tarnished by the arrival of unsanctioned Kodi-branded set-top boxes that were pre-configured to deliver sporting events, Hollywood blockbusters, adult content and other pay-per-view content for free – all illegally. Cease-and-desist letters were sent, functionality started to break and development

on the project appeared to stall. Even though Kodi's developers had done nothing illegal themselves, the cumulative effect of all this on the software has been devastating. These days, Kodi is barely fit for purpose and the situation doesn't seem to be getting any better.

In March this year, Google banned the term 'Kodi' from its autocomplete feature, citing the brand's close association with copyright infringement as the reason. On top of that, there have been increasing reports of Kodi users being infected with malware and cryptocurrency miners. We've yet to see any hard evidence of this, but right now we feel that Kodi is pretty hard to recommend.

Fortunately, Kodi isn't the only media-streaming software available. There are plenty of brilliant alternatives and in this feature, we explain why each of them is now a better choice than Kodi.

WebUser
GOLD
AWARD

Plex | plex.tv | ★★★★★

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



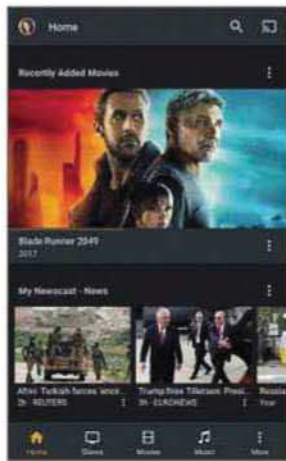
What we liked:

Plex is available on just about any device you can think of – PCs, Macs, phones, tablets, games consoles, smart TVs, streaming boxes such as Apple TV, Chromecast and Amazon Fire TV and more. Heck, there's probably a version for your toaster!

Once Plex is up and running, it's a bit like having your own private Netflix-meets-Spotify service – you can browse music, videos and photos stored on your PC and stream them around your home to other devices, or even over the internet (as long as your host PC is switched on).

The entire Plex system is designed from the ground up to be very easy to use. Install the server tool on your computer (or compatible NAS device), point it to the folders where you keep your media files and Plex will automatically organise your music, photos and video content into beautiful-

looking libraries, complete with album art, movie posters and tons of detailed information for each item. Once this is done, you can connect and stream to apps on as many devices as you like.



As we said – it's super-easy and you'll be up and running in no time.

If you like to tweak your software to add useful extra features, Plex offers plenty of opportunity to exercise your tinkering skills. The system supports add-ons and has a selection of official plugins to install, including iPlayer and Vimeo, as well as the ability to add some great unofficial tools.

Almost all Plex's features can be used for free, but there are a handful of premium options locked behind a paid-for subscription to Plex Pass, which costs £3.99 per month, such as streaming and recording live TV (with a compatible TV tuner), and syncing content with other devices for offline playback. A small in-app purchase (£4.99) is required to unlock full streaming capabilities for both

the iOS and Android apps, but this can be avoided if you've already paid for the Plex Pass. Additionally, you can use Plex via your web browser for free on any device.

Why it's better than Kodi

While Kodi is apparently stuck in development hell, Plex continues to be frequently updated and enhanced. A recent update, for example, added official podcast support to the service. Plex is also less fiddly to use than Kodi and less prone to freezes and crashes.

How it can be improved:

Most of the time, Plex works smoothly, automatically recognising your media files and adding them to your library without you having to lift a finger. Occasionally, however, it gets things wrong – particularly with film and TV titles – and resolving these problems can be a bit tricky. If you're going to use Plex to stream movies and TV shows you've recorded, you'll need to take a little time to organise your files and make sure that file names correspond to Plex's somewhat strict naming conventions (see the first expert tip, below) before you install the server on your PC.

Also, Plex doesn't let you customise or 're-skin' its interface the way you can with Kodi, although this option may be added in future.

OUR VERDICT

Slick, simple, flexible and – for the most part – free, Plex is the current gold standard for media-streaming software and it's getting better all the time. If you want to enjoy videos, music, photos and more on any device you own, get Plex!



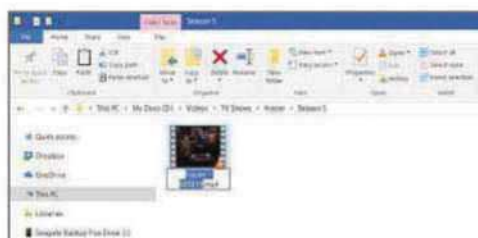
EXPERT TIPS FOR STREAMING WITH PLEX

Organise your media folders

Before you install Plex, it's worth organising the files and folders on your PC. Plex uses metadata that's already embedded in your music files to manage your music library, and your home movies and photos are sorted by date, but it's a good idea to use file- and folder-naming conventions with films and TV shows to help Plex identify content correctly. With movies, for example, try to include both the title and the year in the file name

– Batman (1966).mp4 and Batman (1989).mp4, for example. With TV shows, try to store individual series within their own folders – TV Shows/

Frasier/Season 05, for instance – and include the series and episode numbers in the name of the file: Frasier – S05E11.mp4.



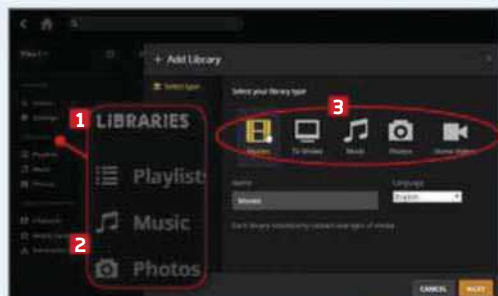
Optimise media for streaming

Plex is compatible with dozens of different formats, but the devices you're streaming to might not support the same ones. To work around this, Plex 'transcodes' (converts) media on the fly, optimising it for the device you're streaming to. But transcoding

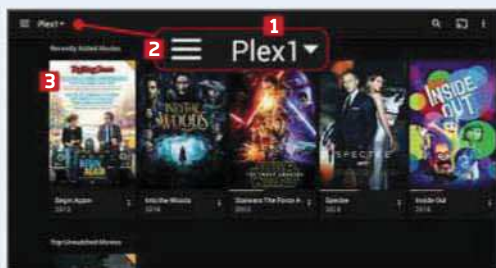


MINI WORKSHOP

Start streaming videos with Plex



1 Download and install Plex on the computer that hosts your media. Click Launch and Plex will run minimised in your taskbar's notification area. Double-click the icon to open Plex in your web browser – the dashboard is empty to begin with. Under Libraries, **1** you can access Music and Photos. **2** To add a section for videos, hover your mouse over Libraries and click the plus sign that appears. You can choose from Movies, TV Shows and Home Videos. **3**



2 Plex is designed to stream content over your network, so you need to install the Plex app on the other devices you want to stream to, such as the one for Android (bit.ly/plexdroid452). Launch the app and select your Plex server from the drop-down menu in the top-left corner. **1** Tap the three-line menu button **2** to open a sidebar where you can access Playlists and Channels, as well as your Movies, **3** Music and Photos libraries.



3 To configure your Plex server, click the Settings button and choose Server. **1** You can change the server name **2** and enable or disable remote access, **3** so your videos can be viewed outside your network. Click Library to change when and how often Plex checks for new files in your libraries. You can even share your Plex libraries with other people. Click your profile in the top-right corner **4** and select Users, then Friends. Click Invite Friend and enter the person's email address.

can put a strain on the server computer's processor, so Plex also lets you pre-transcode specific files, converting them ahead of time so they are already optimised for streaming when you need them.

To optimise a file, open the Plex web app on the server PC and click a file, then click the three-dot More button and select Optimise. In the window that opens, select the quality setting from the drop-down menu **1** and click Optimise. **2**



Stream Plex content to your Chromecast

You can stream video from Plex to your TV via your Chromecast from your computer or your mobile device. On the desktop, launch Chrome, then open the Plex Web App, either by visiting app.plex.tv/desktop or by going to the main Plex website (plex.tv) and clicking the orange Launch button in the top-right corner. Click the Plex Players button in the top-right corner of the Web App to open the Google Cast extension, then choose Chromecast from the list of options. Start playing a video and it will be streamed to your TV.

Alternatively, you can use the Plex app for Android (bit.ly/plexdroid452) on your phone or tablet, which offers full Chromecast support and compatibility with the Google Home app.



Watch the news headlines in Plex

Following Plex's acquisition of news service Watchup early this year, it launched a new feature called Plex News (bit.ly/plexnews452), which lets you stream the headlines from more than 190 news sources worldwide, including CNN, Sky News and CBS News, as well as regional content. Plex News was initially only available to Plex Pass

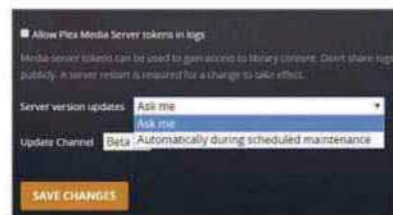


subscribers, but free users can now tune in, too, on any device. The service is ad-supported, but then so are most TV news channels!

Try new Plex features before other people

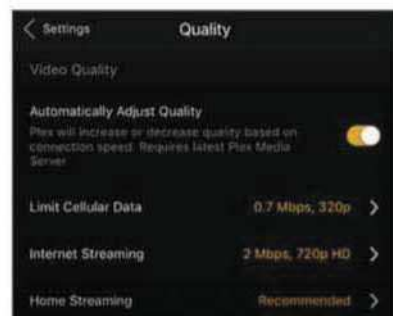
If you want to try experimental Plex tools before everyone else, you can turn on Plex beta updates to get priority access to the latest tools and early releases of the software, although you'll need a Plex Pass to do so.

To activate the option, open the Plex Web App, choose Settings on the left-hand side and set the Update Channel option in the General section to Beta. Choose 'Ask me' next to 'Server version updates' (so you can decide whether or not to install a beta release) and click Save Changes.



Reduce buffering on Android and iOS

Last year, Plex introduced a new auto-quality option, which lets your Plex media server automatically decide the best quality to stream to your phone, tablet or set-top box. It does this by analysing your internet speed to determine whether your Android or iOS device can handle full HD streams or slightly lower quality. To turn on this feature, go to the Quality Settings section in the Plex app and select Automatically Adjust Quality.



WebUser
SILVER
AWARDEmby | emby.media | ★★★★★

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

**What we liked:**

Emby works in a similar way to Plex – there's a media-server tool you need to install on the computer or NAS device where your media is stored, and it offers client apps for Apple, Android, consoles and numerous other platforms. It's easy to set up and, if you've been using Kodi up till now, you can make your transition to Emby easier by installing it as an add-on to your existing Kodi setup, should you so wish. Head to bit.ly/emby452 to find out how.

Like Kodi (but unlike Plex), Emby is largely open-source. It also supports plug-ins and there's a small but active community of developers producing add-ons for the app. These are easy to install directly from within the web app – just click Settings, Plugins, then Catalog to see what's available.

Why it's better than Kodi

Kodi can be a bit of a pain to configure, but Emby is a much simpler proposition. A step-by-step process guides you through the methods for adding media



folders, and you can connect other devices to your Emby server using a PIN code.

How it can be improved:

Though it's free, Emby recently started to reserve several of its features for paying subscribers of its Premiere service (around £4 per month). While this isn't an uncommon approach – Plex works on a similar model – we think it's a shame that Emby traps useful options

such as on-the-fly conversion, themes, folder syncing and backup behind a paywall.

OUR VERDICT

Although Emby isn't as polished as Plex, it's easy to set up and it's an excellent option for anyone migrating from Kodi. It works on a wide range of devices and is mostly free to use.

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARDMediaPortal | team-mediaportal.com | ★★★★★

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

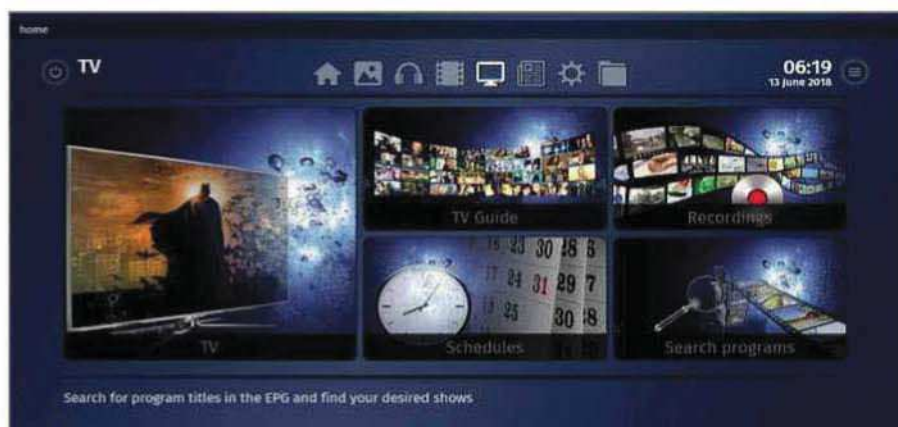
**What we liked:**

When Microsoft pulled the plug on Windows Media Centre, a lot of people turned to Kodi as a replacement, and MediaPortal fulfils a similar purpose. You can install it on your computer to turn it into a home theatre PC (HTPC) – a one-box entertainment system for watching and recording TV, playing DVDs and Blu-rays, browsing photos, listening to music and more.

As with Kodi, there are hundreds of plugins available for MediaPortal for adding more features, including games, such as Tetris and Sudoku, weather apps, radio streaming and more. Best of all, MediaPortal is completely free – none of its features require a subscription fee or one-off payment.

Why it's better than Kodi

MediaPortal has built-in PVR (personal-video-recorder) abilities, though you'll need a compatible TV tuner to take advantage of them. In contrast, with Kodi, you need to install a third-party



backend, such as NextPVR to watch and record live TV.

How it can be improved:

MediaPortal isn't anywhere near as user-friendly as Plex or Emby. Basic tasks, such as setting up your media libraries and streaming to other devices, require a bit of know-how, and a lot of the language used in the menus is very techie. It doesn't help that there are two completely different versions of MediaPortal in circulation: MediaPortal 1

is older, but has more plugins available; MediaPortal 2 is newer, but offers less customisation, because it currently has far fewer plugins and skins.

OUR VERDICT

MediaPortal isn't as easy to use as Plex or Emby, but it's great for anyone looking to build an all-in-one home-theatre PC. We particularly like the wide range of plugins for the service.

BEST OF THE REST

Universal Media Server www.universalmediaserver.com



FEATURES
PERFORMANCE
EASE OF USE



Universal Media Server is compliant with DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance). Run it on a PC, Mac or Linux computer, and it allows you to stream content to a vast range of different devices, including mobile phones, games consoles, smart TVs – basically anything that supports the DLNA protocol.

It doesn't offer any kind of fancy front end for the devices you want to stream to – you'll need a third-party DLNA-compliant media-player app for that, such as VLC (see separate review) – but it offers many more features than Windows' built-in media server,



including on-the-fly transcoding, thumbnails, DVD streaming and more.

Why it's better than Kodi

Not everyone needs the full media centre experience that Kodi and similar tools provide. If all you need is a basic way to stream media from your PC to other devices, Universal Media Server is a good, no-frills option.

Windows Media Player Built into Windows

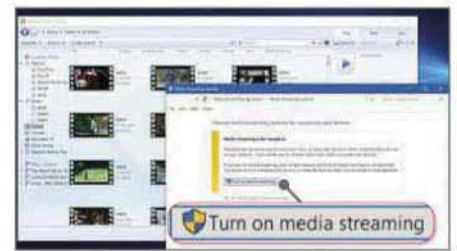


FEATURES
PERFORMANCE
EASE OF USE



Microsoft may have killed off Windows Media Centre, but a lot of that program's functionality – including media streaming – remains available in Windows 10 in the form of Windows Media Player (WMP). This means that if all you're after is a basic way to organise your media library and share content from your PC with other devices, you may find you don't need to install any additional software at all.

Open the app from the Start menu, click Organise, then 'Manage libraries' to add your media folders. Now click Stream, then 'Turn on media streaming'



to enable Windows' built-in media server. You can connect and stream your files on any media player app that supports DLNA.

Why it's better than Kodi

Windows Media Player is already built into your PC's operating system and will be instantly familiar – and therefore easy to use – if at any point in the last 10 years you've owned a computer that runs Windows.

VLC videolan.org/vlc



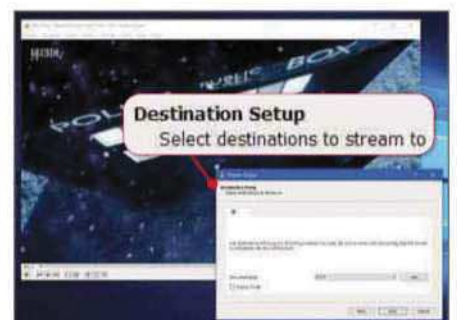
FEATURES
PERFORMANCE
EASE OF USE



Most people use VLC as a straightforward media player, but the program has many useful hidden features – among them the ability to stream media to or from your PC. Granted, it's a lot less straightforward than some solutions (you have to click File, then Stream on the host PC to select a file, then use the Open Network Stream option in VLC on another device and fiddle around with IP addresses), but for existing VLC users, it means that you don't have to clog up your PC's hard drive with lots of different tools – especially if you only need to stream content occasionally.

Why it's better than Kodi

Frequently updated and packed with features, VLC can play music, movies, DVDs, network streams and more



STAY SAFE AND LEGAL WHEN STREAMING

Kodi's name has become synonymous with piracy, but there's nothing intrinsically illegal about streaming media unless the content you access is obtained unlawfully. It's fine to stream music you own, TV shows or movies you've recorded or content you've generated yourself, such as your own photos or home videos – but it's *not* fine to stream copyright-protected media – such as films or pay-per-view streams – if you haven't paid for them.

Under the Digital Economy Act, written into British law last year (bit.ly/digital452), streaming any copyright-protected content illicitly is a criminal activity and carries a maximum sentence that's been raised from two years to 10. Tougher punishments tend to be reserved for people committing serious offences, such as selling 'fully-loaded' Kodi boxes, rather than those streaming the odd pirated movie. That said, some broadband providers, including BT, Sky and Virgin Media, have started sending warning letters to people whose IP addresses are used to access copyright-protected material illicitly.

To stay on the legal side of streaming, it's best to steer clear of dodgy third-party add-ons altogether, especially ones that promise to deliver content you'd normally have to pay for. There are plenty of safe, legitimate ways to stream copyright-protected movies and TV shows – the Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT) recommends visiting FindAnyFilm (findanyfilm.com) to track down a legal copy of a movie you want to watch.



across multiple devices, without the need for any add-ons – although lots are available if you need extra features.

OSMC

osmc.tv



FEATURES
PERFORMANCE
EASE OF USE



OSMC is a slightly different proposition to the other options in our roundup, providing a completely free, open-source media-centre system. It's effectively a Linux distro that's been designed specifically for watching videos, listening to music and browsing photos. You can't just install it on any PC, though – currently, OSMC only officially supports the Raspberry Pi, Apple TV (first generation) and its own hardware platform, the Vero 4K box. Technically speaking, OSMC isn't really a replacement for Kodi – it actually includes Kodi and provides access to Kodi's endless supply of add-ons.



Why it's better than Kodi

If you're looking for a simple, elegant way to run a media centre on a tiny device such as the Pi, OSMC could be the way forward. Its installer tool makes it reasonably simple to set up.

CAN KODI BOUNCE BACK?

On 1 April, Kodi's developers announced a name change to XBMC and an end to support for all platforms bar the Xbox One console (bit.ly/kodiapril452). It was, of course, an elaborate April Fool's joke – XBMC was the project's original name back in 2002, when it was created as a media centre for Microsoft's first games console. But, with development on the latest stable release (version 18,

codenamed Leia) seemingly stalled, and so much negative press around the project, it was plausible that Kodi might have to take radical action to survive.

Despite the ongoing legal crackdown, it seems unlikely that Kodi itself will be shut down by the courts. Most prosecutions are aimed at the developers of third-party add-ons and sellers of cracked Kodi boxes, rather than Kodi. Back in February, for example, Amazon, Netflix and a number of leading Hollywood studios won an injunction in the US against TickBox TV, a manufacturer of Kodi-based set-top boxes.

That said, it's clear that Kodi must evolve if it's going to make a comeback. The developer's frank and frequent blog posts show that it's actively discouraging people from using illegal Kodi boxes (bit.ly/kodibox452) and that it's considering supporting DRM as a way to change the perception that Kodi is a "piracy facilitator" (bit.ly/kodidrm452). Steps like these might please content publishers, but they're unlikely to make Kodi's users or its community of add-on developers particularly happy.



NextPVR

nextpvr.com



FEATURES
PERFORMANCE
EASE OF USE



If your chief focus is on recording TV and viewing videos, then NextPVR may be all you need. It's a free personal video recorder (PVR) which, when paired with a suitable TV tuner card such as Hauppauge's WinTV-dual HD (which costs around £55, bit.ly/wintv452) can turn your computer into a homemade Tivo-style system. You can schedule recordings and stream live TV or videos to a mobile device using the

NextPVR app (£6.99 for iOS, bit.ly/nextios452, or £6.49 for Android, bit.ly/nextdroid452).

Why it's better than Kodi

NextPVR can be used as the PVR backend for Kodi or Emby, but it can also be used as a media centre on its own, complete with support for music, photos and DVDs. ■



NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 11 July 2018

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Shut Up and Leave Me Alone!

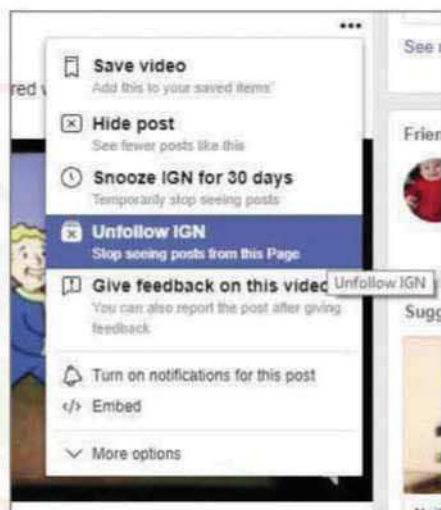
Is someone spoiling your carefully curated social feeds? **Steve Clark** explains how to silence annoying people without ditching or blocking them – and without them knowing

FACEBOOK

 If your Facebook news feed is packed with over-sharers, game invitations and angry rants, there are multiple ways to silence these nuisances. Visit a profile or page and click Following (on Facebook's website) or tap More (in the mobile app). Now choose Following and change it to Unfollow. You can also unfollow users in your news feed by clicking the three-dot menu on a post and choosing 'Hide post', 'Snooze for 30 days' or Unfollow.

To bulk-manage your feed, locate the down arrow on the blue banner, select 'News Feed preferences', then 'Unfollow people to hide their posts'. On mobile, tap the three-line menu icon in the top-right corner, find Settings & Privacy and select Settings. Scroll down to 'News Feed preferences' and, again, choose 'Unfollow people'.

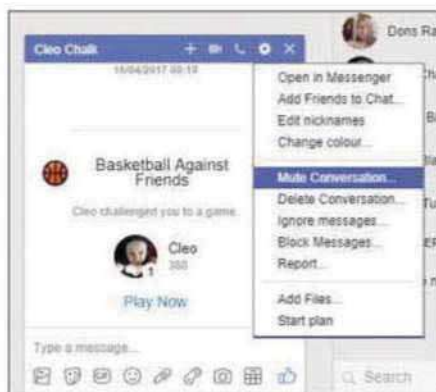
Quick tip: Is a snap-happy colleague sharing a continuous stream of boring holiday photos? Click the offending photo album's three-dot menu and choose 'Unfollow album'.




MESSENGER

 Facebook makes it similarly easy to hush annoying people on Messenger. In the desktop version, open a message from the garrulous friend, click the cog icon and choose whether to 'Ignore messages' or Mute Conversation. On your phone, tap 'i', then Ignore Messages, which moves all messages to the Message Requests inbox. You can also click Notifications, then tap Mute Conversation. Finally, determine how long your 'friend' is muted for – from 15 minutes to forever.

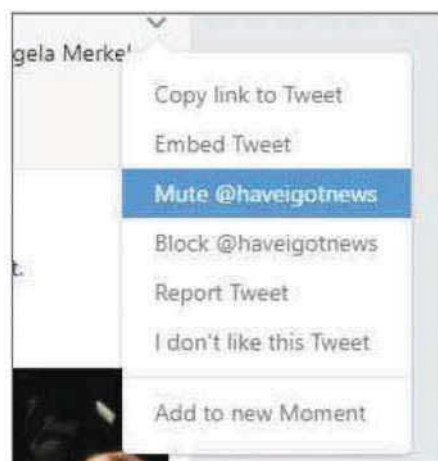
Quick tip: Don't forget to go into your Messenger settings and click Turn Off Chat to ensure you won't be hassled while browsing Facebook.



TWITTER

 There are two methods for eradicating bothersome Twitter users from your timeline. The easiest way is to visit the user's profile page and click or tap the three-dot menu button next to their name. This reveals options including Mute. Click or tap this and confirm the action.

On individual tweets, click the arrow to the right. This lets you select 'Mute @




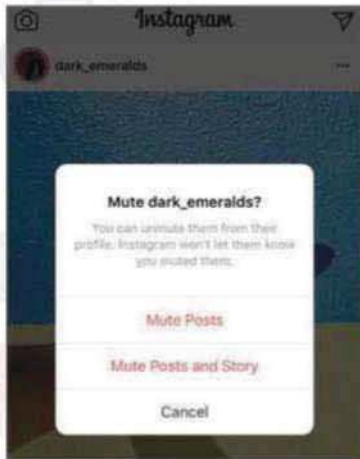
username'. You'll also see another option: 'I don't like this Tweet'. This acts as a 'dislike' button, instructing Twitter's algorithms to block similar posts in future.

To see all the accounts you've silenced, visit 'Settings and privacy', then click 'Privacy and safety'. Scroll to the Safety section and select 'Muted accounts', where you can also Unmute people via their profile.

Quick tip: Want to ban certain words from your timeline? Visit 'Settings and privacy' – or, on mobile, go to your Notifications tab and tap the cog icon – and click 'Muted words'. Now add the words you never want to see again.

INSTAGRAM

 As we reported in last issue's What's New Online (bit.ly/webuser451), Instagram recently introduced a Mute button to quieten profiles, posts and stories. Not everyone has access to this feed-based mute option yet – Instagram is still rolling it out across iOS and Android – but expect to get the feature soon. On every post, you'll see the ellipsis



(...) button which, when tapped, presents options including Report, Embed and Mute. Tap Mute, then select either Mute Posts or 'Mute Posts and Story'. This option is also available

via user profiles, again by pressing the ellipsis button.

To mute Instagram's user-generated Stories, long-press the person's profile picture. This brings up the option to mute the user and all those stories you never wanted to see in the first place.

Quick tip: Like Facebook, it's technically possible to avoid seeing someone in your feed simply by not interacting with them: no likes, no comments and no shares. Instagram's algorithm will eventually sit up and take notice.

YOUTUBE



The YouTube community has a poor reputation – we can't even print the majority of comments found on the video-streaming site. The Toggle YouTube Comments extension for Chrome (bit.ly/youtube452) shields you from the inane and often offensive babble that defines the comments section of almost every video. This very welcome add-on automatically hides all comments on YouTube videos, replacing them with the option to Show Comments. Best of all, it doesn't track you and seamlessly fits in with the YouTube design.



Quick tip: To mute comments across the web, try Shut Up: Comment Blocker (bit.ly/shutup452). This handy tool auto-blocks comments on almost all sites. If you want to read the unfolding madness, just click the Shut Up icon to see comments appear as if by magic.

QUORA



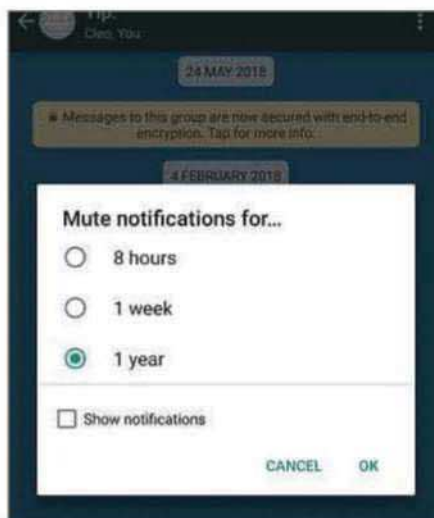
Quora – the internet's Q&A section – is a fount of knowledge. But if you're sick of hearing from know-it-all loudmouthed users, muting them is easy. Click the person's name by their picture. Once on their profile, pressing the ellipsis (...) button lets you choose to Mute, Block or Report that user.

Quick tip: Remove stories from your topic feed by clicking the 'X' in the right-hand corner of the Q&A box. Doing so hides the story and offers greater control over what you see, letting you unfollow question-askers and answer-givers, as well as showing fewer related links.

WHATSAPP



Fed up with rowdy WhatsApp group chats and private messages pinging at all hours of the day? To silence them, scroll to any message or group chat, then press and hold the message. Once selected, you'll see a blocked-out speaker at the top of the screen. Click the speaker for options to mute notifications for eight hours, one week or one year. Make your choice, then tap OK.



To mute notifications from within a message, click the three-dot menu at the top of the screen and select 'Mute notifications'.

Quick tip: In addition to muting noisy chats, you should turn off the blue tick Read Receipts by visiting your Settings, Account, Privacy and toggling 'Read receipts' to Off – that way, at least, you can plead ignorance and pretend you never saw their message.

SNAPCHAT



Snapchat's version of mute is called Do Not Disturb, which blocks notifications from any user or group chat you choose to silence. Tap into your feed, then press and hold your friend's Bitmoji or profile picture. When the pop-up box appears, click Settings, then Do Not Disturb. The option will change to 'Turn on Notifications'.



Alternatively, click into your friend's messages and press the three-line menu button, then toggle the Do Not Disturb switch to On.

To mute stories from your Snapchat feed, follow the steps above but select Mute Story instead of Do Not Disturb.

Quick tip: You can prevent specific users from seeing your Stories – think of it as a reverse-mute. Click the cog icon on your profile page and scroll to the section titled Who Can, then click View My Story. Choose Custom and decide who can see your Snapchat Stories. ■

HAVE YOU BEEN BLOCKED ON FACEBOOK?

Think someone's given you the Facebook heave-ho? There are three ways to find out for sure.

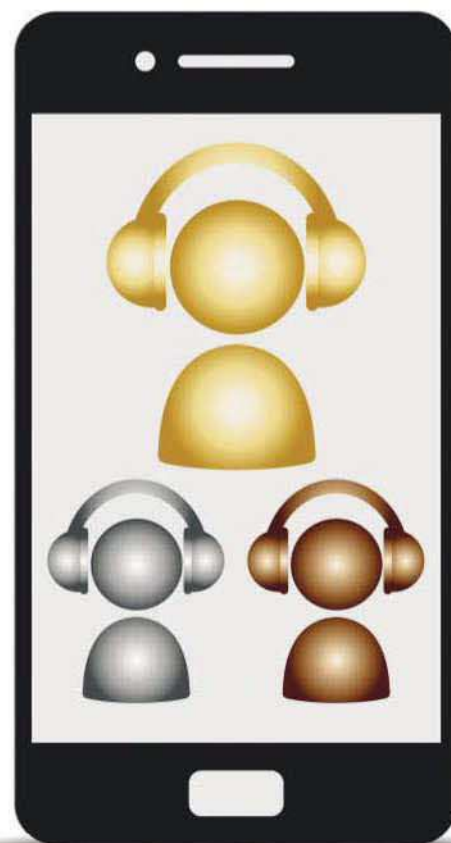
- Run a search for the user while logged in – if they don't appear in the search results, log out and search again. If they magically appear, it means you've been blocked.
- Locate a comment or message from the user. Anyone who has blocked you, or otherwise made

their profile inaccessible, will appear in bold black and you won't be able to click their name.

- Remember that Facebook lets users block people on both Messenger and Facebook separately, so fire off a message. If a pop-up warns that you can't reply or the user is unavailable, it's likely that you've been blocked on Facebook's messaging platform, too.

Listen to podcasts on your phone

Android has no built-in podcast app outside the US, and Apple's own offering is pretty basic. **Steve Clark** tunes in to find the best free podcast apps for your mobile device.



Castbox | castbox.fm | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★



What we liked:

Castbox is 'the YouTube of audio', claims creator Renee Wang, who sold her house to fund the app's development. That ambition goes beyond aping the slick interface and navigation of Google's video-streaming site and with its sizeable catalogue of popular and niche podcasts, audiobooks and radio stations, Castbox promises hours of entertaining content.

As with YouTube, you're not tied to a single device. Castbox features cross-platform support – sign up and log in, and your subscriptions are synced across your phone, tablet and PC, along with Android Auto and Amazon Echo integration.

Running beneath the home screen's revolving carousel of top shows, there are tabs for exploring Categories, Audiobooks and Networks. Further down, the Listen tab offers more ways to discover the freshest podcasts.

Building your library is very straightforward: simply click in a channel and press Subscribe to move shows into the Subscribed tab, or scroll down for the complete episode list. Swiping left lets you read the channel description and see similar shows, while



playing an episode presents additional options to share, download or add to playlist. There's also a lively comments section full of enthusiastic observations, reviews and chats.

However, it's the app's in-audio search that's truly remarkable: most podcast apps rely on tags and keywords when

you search, but Castbox's machine-learning bots transcribe every podcast, then display search results in context alongside precise timings, so you can jump straight to specific content.

All the while, Castbox's clever algorithm is quietly scanning your preferences and listening habits, then serving up personalised recommendations.

How it can be improved:

The main problem with Castbox is the subscription model, with that now-ubiquitous monthly fee. Even at 89p, the cost outweighs the negligible benefits of a personalised homepage and improved customer service. Limiting free users to 100 channel subscriptions may deter serial podcast listeners, and we'd like the audio controls expanded beyond adjusting playback speed (0.5x – 3.0x) and boosting volume.

OUR VERDICT

Castbox's subscription model needs a rethink, but this is a smartly designed app for dedicated podcast listeners. Effortless to use, it offers more podcasts than you could listen to in a lifetime.

PodBean | podbean.com | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

What we liked:

Available for Android, iOS and Windows, PodBean greets first-timers with a tutorial overlay.

It's a convenience that's replicated across the app, thanks to an impressively clutter-free interface.

A menu bar gives you speedy access to subscriptions, settings and search, while hundreds of popular shows cascade beneath. It's an ideal showcase for discovering new talent, enhanced by a row of thumb-friendly icons providing the quickest route to shows, radio stations and audiobooks.

You can cast to other devices via Chromecast direct from the Android app, and Batch Manage is useful when organising extensive libraries. However, PodBean's standout feature is Intelligent Speed – once activated, it cleverly cuts out any audio silences so you get the most content out of your listening time. Head into the settings' Listening Stats



and you can see how much time Intelligent Speed has saved you. Alongside this, the gamification-style Listening Level increases your level the more hours you listen, like earning experience in video games.

If you're a podcast creator, you can record shows in-app at any time, and PodBean will happily host and monetise it for you – for a fee.

How it can be improved:

PodBean's catalogue isn't as broad as Castbox's, and it's missing the smaller shows, so if home-brew podcasts are your bag, you'll need to look elsewhere.

OUR VERDICT

PodBean is quick, smart and fun to use. There's an unfortunate lack of lesser-known channels, but if you tend to stick to popular podcasts, PodBean is a good choice and a pleasure to play with.

Podcast Republic | podcastrepublic.net | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

What we liked:

The Android-only Podcast Republic declares itself 'the most customizable

podcast app you can have'. You can tweak almost every aspect, from the colour theme to the default download location, and switch on 'Smart download' to automatically get the latest shows. It's also one of the few podcast apps that can delete played items for you from playlists and downloads once you've listened to them.

Adding a podcast or radio station reveals even more options: search or browse the charts; import an OPML (the link used to subscribe to a podcast in any app); or use a web address. You can even add virtual podcasts and those found on YouTube – the choice is yours. It's very mobile-friendly, too. Like text messages and emails on your phone, you swipe left or right to uncover



additional options (there are so many, it has to hide some away), such as deleting, marking episodes as played, or adding searchable tags.

The app is ad-supported – they run unobtrusively along the bottom of the screen – but a one-off fee of £2.99 removes them entirely.

How it can be improved:

Without an iOS version, it's impossible for Podcast Republic to compete with our other award winners. Listening to podcasts on a PC is a clunky series of clicks and scrolls, and despite the customisations, the interface doesn't feel as modern as its rivals.

OUR VERDICT

It's not much to look at, but Podcast Republic does everything you need and more – unless you're an iOS user. For Android, however, the freedom and control is superb.

BEST OF THE REST

Stitcher

stitcher.com

Stitcher – so-called because it lets you 'stitch' together podcasts into a rolling, relevant playlist – is a crisp, contemporary app available on Android, iOS and Windows. The premium version costs around £4 a month, earning you an ad-free experience, bonus episodes and Stitcher Originals. But that's a hefty price for what you get compared to, say, Castbox or even Spotify. Besides, Stitcher is an on-demand radio player first, and a decent podcast player second.



Spotify

spotify.com

It's the go-to app for music, but Spotify also has a strong line in podcasts (it used to call them 'Shows' but at the time, no-one knew what that meant). Think supermarket, not boutique: it's all big-name brands and very few small, indie channels. Expect ads if you're listening for free, but if you stream a lot of music and podcasts, it may be worth investing in the monthly £9.99 subscription fee.



AntennaPod

antennapod.org

Open source, with no subscriptions and no ads. If it were available on all platforms – and not just Android – AntennaPod could steal our coveted Gold Award. The app is maintained by volunteers, which is most noticeable in its design: AntennaPod lacks the fancy-pants appearance of its more professional rivals. However, it's almost identical to – and shares much in common with – Podcast Republic.



Stop anyone **REUSING** your content

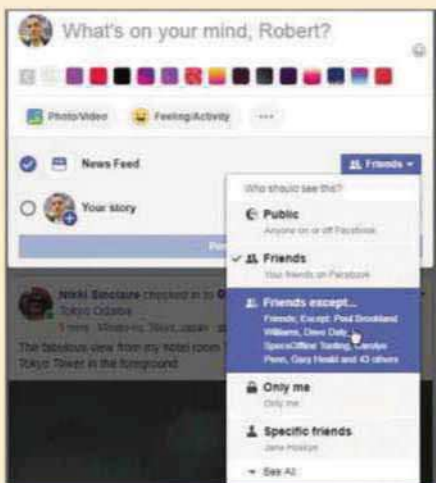


Sharing photos, videos and messages online doesn't mean others can re-share them. **Robert Irvine** explains how to lock down your content

Stop people sharing your Facebook photos

One of the most common questions asked in Facebook's Help Community is "how do I stop people sharing my photos?". This relates to the Share button that appears under everything you post on Facebook, and lets people share your content with others – even, and this is the controversial bit, someone who isn't a friend. This means that an acquaintance of an acquaintance can easily share your personal photos with a load of strangers.

Sadly, there's no 'disable' option to prevent the widespread sharing of your pictures and other content, but there is a workaround that stops the Share button appearing. Before you post something on Facebook, click the drop-down 'Who should see this?' menu next to News Feed, but instead of choosing Public or Friends, choose 'Friends except...'. Select at least one person (perhaps someone you don't know that well), click Save Changes and post as usual. The Share button will be



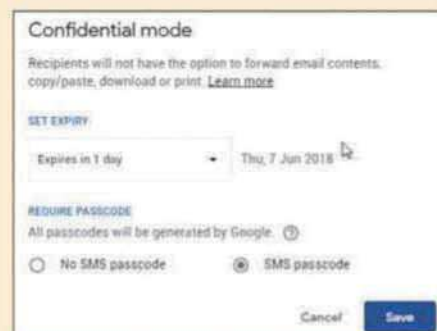
You can stop the Share button appearing on photos that you post on Facebook

unavailable not only to the person you excluded, but to everyone, which means nobody can repost your content.

Prevent people from re-sharing your emails

The Forward option provided by email services is a useful way to quickly pass on information to someone else, but it also poses privacy concerns – what if an unscrupulous person forwards sensitive content on to other people? It may sound paranoid, but such is the stuff that 'viral emails' are made of – see bit.ly/viralemails452 for infamous examples – which can lead to public humiliation, disciplinary action and even relationship breakdown.

Gmail's recent redesign addresses such concerns with a welcome feature called 'Confidential mode', which offers several measures for preventing people from sharing your emails without your permission. When you activate the feature by clicking the 'Turn confidential mode on' button at the bottom of a Compose window, it disables the recipient's ability to forward, copy/paste and download the content of your message. For extra security, you can set the email to expire after a specific length of time (such as one day, week or



Gmail's new Confidential mode stops people forwarding and copying emails

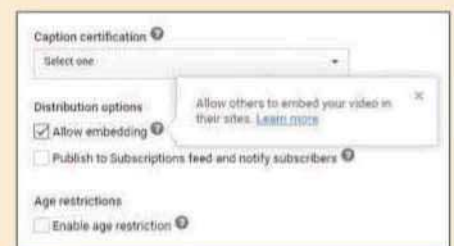
month), and if that still seems risky, you can lock it with a passcode that the recipient is sent separately, and needs to enter to open the message.

Disable embedding of your YouTube videos

By uploading a video to YouTube, you're in effect sharing it with the world – not to mention Google – and waiving any rights you have to keep the content private. You can of course set the video to Private and share it only with specific people, or else make it unlisted on YouTube, but if you want the clip to be publicly available *and* maintain control over it, you need to disable embedding. This option is switched on by default and if you leave it that way, you risk your video appearing on other people's websites, blogs and social-media pages. Fortunately, it's easy to turn off.

Log into YouTube, click your profile photo and choose Creator Studio. Click the Video Manager link on the left and choose Videos, then click the Edit button next to the video you want to protect. On the Info & Settings tab, select 'Advanced settings' and, in the 'Distribution options' section, untick the box to 'Allow embedding' and click 'Save changes'.

To see where a video has already been embedded, click Analytics in the



Turn off embedding to stop people sharing your YouTube videos on other sites



Use Content ID to catch people copying your YouTube videos

Creator Studio, select 'Playback locations' and click 'Embedded player on other websites' for a list of every site on which your video is embedded.

If you earn ad revenue from the videos you share on YouTube (or would like to), you can sign up for its Content ID system (bit.ly/contentid452), provided you "own exclusive rights to a substantial body of original material that is frequently uploaded". Content ID not only alerts copyright owners when someone uploads another video with the same content, but lets you block embedding on all other websites and apps, or allow it only on specific ones. See bit.ly/embed452 for more details.



Don't let anyone re-share your Instagram photos

The whole point of Instagram is to show off your photography skills (or enviable lifestyle) by sharing your pictures, so it would be odd to get coy about it and keep them completely private. However, earlier this year Instagram started testing a re-share – or Regram – option that lets users add publicly shared photos and videos to their own stories, which you may think oversteps the privacy mark, especially as your username will also appear.

PROTECT YOUR PHOTOS WITH A WATERMARK

If you're worried that your photos are being reused without your permission, consider adding a watermark to them. This makes it clear that you own the content, and ensures you receive credit even when they have been copied without your consent. Annoyingly, the most popular photo-sharing service, Google Photos, has yet to add a watermark option, but there are plenty of free programs and apps you can use. We particularly like uMark Free for Windows and MacOS

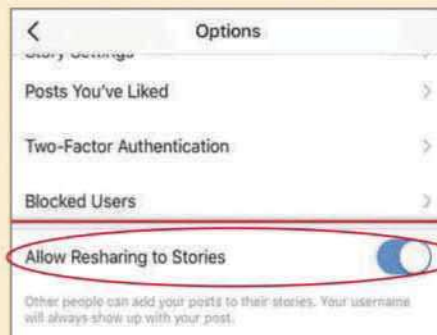


(bit.ly/umark452), which offers a choice of watermarks and positions, supports the five most popular image formats and lets you stamp up to 50 photos at once. For phones and tablets, try Photo

Watermark for Android (bit.ly/photowater452) and eZy Watermark Lite for iOS (bit.ly/ezywater452).

Place your watermark somewhere that doesn't obstruct the main image, but that also makes it difficult to remove without spoiling the picture (so not right on the edge).

A limited version of this feature has just been introduced that lets people re-share posts they've been tagged in, but either way you may prefer to nip this 'regramming' in the bud. Open your Instagram profile, go to Settings, 'Story settings' and turn off the option to 'Allow Resharing to Stories'.



Don't let people add your photos to their Instagram Stories – unless you don't mind



Lock your PDFs against editing and printing

One of the main benefits of the PDF format over standard documents is that their content can't easily be copied and edited by other people, so it is always presented as intended. However, there are programs that bypass this protection and allow PDFs to be altered, as well as the old-fashioned method of printing and scanning the document to make changes that way. If you want to safeguard your PDFs against unauthorised access, try the brilliant free online tool Protect PDF at PDF2Go.com (bit.ly/protectpdf452).

Upload a PDF, or add one from Google Drive or Dropbox, and set an owner password to lock down the file so that nobody else can print, copy or modify its contents. Click Save Changes to convert and download the PDF – other people will be able to view it, but that's all! ■

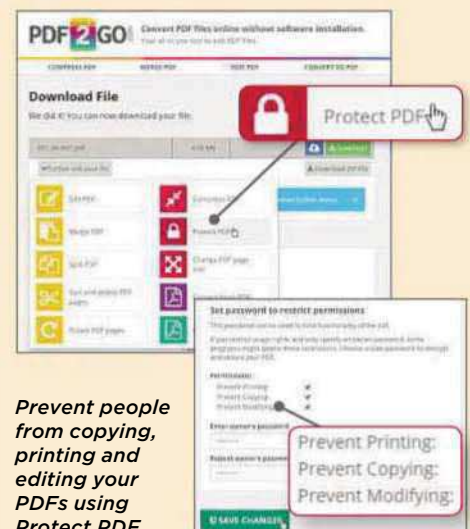
CHECK IF PEOPLE HAVE COPIED YOUR PHOTOS

The best way to find out if your photos have been reposted elsewhere is to use a reverse-image search engine such as TinEye (www.tineye.com). You can either upload a picture to the site, paste its URL in



the search box, drag and drop it on the homepage or install the browser add-on, right-click the photo and choose 'Search Image on TinEye'. The search engine finds online matches for the picture and lets you click through to the pages hosting them to identify those responsible. You can also compare your image with each result to see if it's been modified without your permission.

Google Images (images.google.co.uk) also performs reverse-image searches. Just click the camera icon next to the search box to upload a photo from your hard drive or paste its URL.



Prevent people from copying, printing and editing your PDFs using Protect PDF



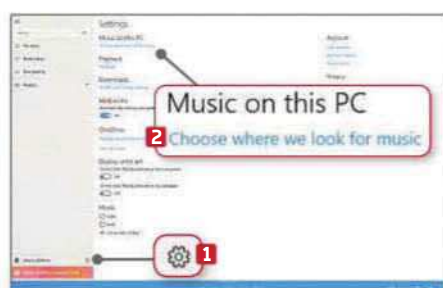
Store and play your own songs through Groove Music

Microsoft's digital music service is much better than you might think. Here's all you need to know

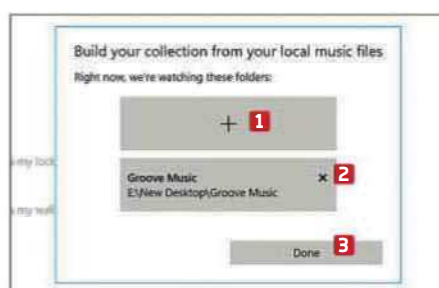
Groove Music: bit.ly/groo452 | 20 mins | Windows 10

Groove Music was Microsoft's answer to Apple Music and Spotify, and originally came bundled with Windows 10. You could either stream songs via a paid Groove Music Pass subscription or buy tracks from the Windows Store. In October 2017, Microsoft pulled the plug on its streaming service and removed the iOS

and Android apps, but Groove Music is still being updated and has become a handy tool for managing and playing music stored on your PC or OneDrive (you can manage and sync OneDrive content through Groove Music's Settings screen). Music that's streaming from the cloud has a 'OneDrive' label next to it, making it easy to identify.



1 If you've never previously used the Groove Music app to manage music, you'll want to add some tracks. Click the cog icon next to your name **1** and, under 'Music on this PC', click the 'Choose where we look for music' link. **2** Groove Music will suggest some folders but you can also add your own.



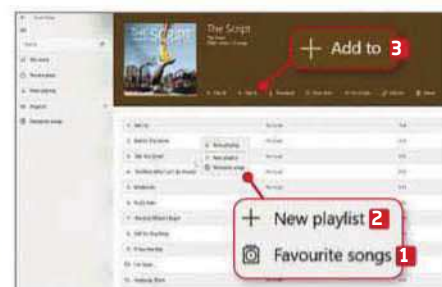
2 To add a folder, click the plus sign **1** and navigate to the place where you want to store your music. You can add as many locations as you like. Remove any unwanted ones by clicking the X. **2** When you're finished, click Done. **3** The program gets to work importing all your music.



3 You can view your imported tracks by Songs, Artists or Albums, **1** and sort them by date added, A to Z, release year or artist. **2** You can filter them by source and genre, and select 'All genres' **3** to see all your music. Click 'Shuffle all' **4** to start a random track playing. **5**



4 Create a playlist by clicking the plus sign next to Playlists in the left-hand sidebar and naming it. **1** Click the 'Create playlist' button **2** to open it, ready for you to add some new content. Click the 'Go to Albums' link to start picking songs.



5 To add something to your new playlist - be it a song or an album - hover your mouse over it and click the plus sign that appears. Select the playlist you want. **1** You can also create a new playlist from that item. **2** Alternatively, you can click the 'Add to' button above. **3**

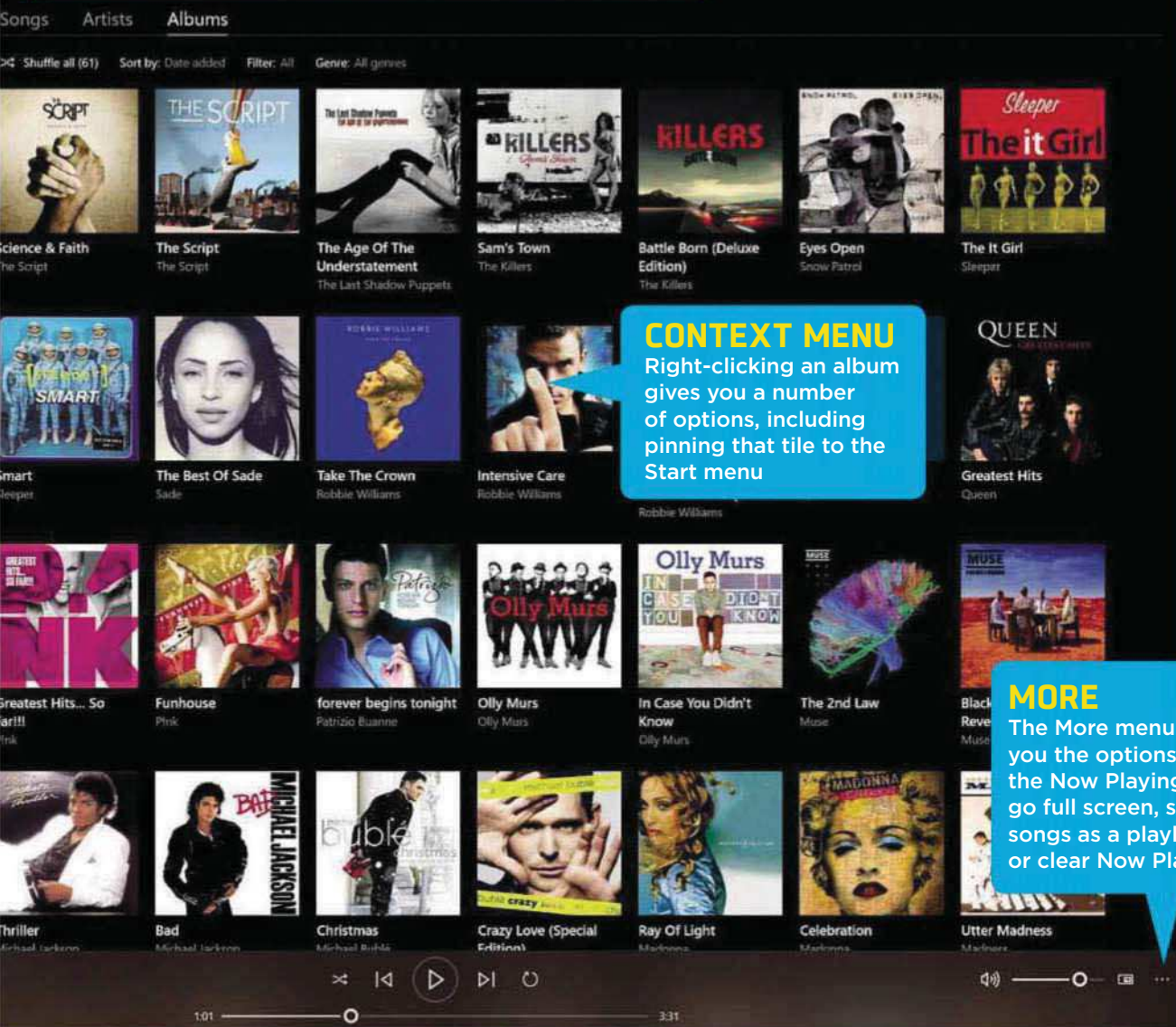
DARK MODE

Groove Music has a choice of modes - Light, Dark or 'Use system setting'. You can choose the one you want by going to the Settings screen

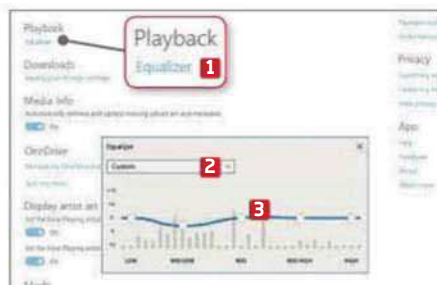


MINIMISE SIDEBAR

Click the menu button to minimise or maximise the left-hand sidebar. When it's shrunk, only the icons are visible



6 One of our favourite new features in Groove Music is the ability to display artist artwork on the Windows desktop and lock screen. This changes along with the song that's playing. To use it, click the settings cog next to your name and enable 'Display artist art' on the lock screen **1** and desktop. **2**



7 The Equalizer is another new feature. Open Settings, click Equalizer under Playback **1** and, in the window that opens, you can select a preset from the drop-down box. **2** Options include Flat, Treble Boost, Bass Boost, Headphones and Home Stereo. You can create your own wave by dragging on the circles. **3**



8 There's also a mini player you can switch to. This stays on top at all times, and can be resized and moved around the screen. Click the 'Play in mini view' button next to the volume controls to switch to it. You can pause/play songs and skip between tracks, **1** and switch back to full mode. **2**



Check your VPN isn't leaking personal information

IPLeak: ipleak.net | 10 mins | Any browser



When you launch your VPN software and head out into the wilds of the web, you justifiably expect your privacy to be protected. Your VPN should be hiding your IP address from the sites you visit, disguising the location of your PC (so you can watch video restricted to other countries) and using its own DNS server to look up the addresses of the websites you visit, so even your ISP won't know what you're doing.

However, you shouldn't take this protection for granted. Whichever VPN service you use, whether free or paid-for, it's worth performing the battery of tests we recommend in this Workshop to ensure that your VPN is doing its job properly.



EXPERT TIP

Andy Shaw says

To further investigate your VPN's effectiveness, try ExpressVPN's comprehensive software toolkit for monitoring your privacy. It's too complex for us to cover in this Workshop, but if you're interested in exploring its impressive potential, you'll find the tool on GitHub at bit.ly/evlt452 and a guide to using it at bit.ly/setup452.



1 It's best to test your VPN in a location you assume to be safe, such as on your home network. With your VPN switched off, go to ipleak.net. Three main privacy threats are covered. At the top, you'll see your IP address, **1** which is the unique number that identifies your connection to the internet.



2 Below that is the WebRTC detection, **1** which shows your IP address on the local network. This is a controversial service that deliberately leaks information about a PC's connection to the internet so that another PC can communicate with it directly, such as when making a video call.



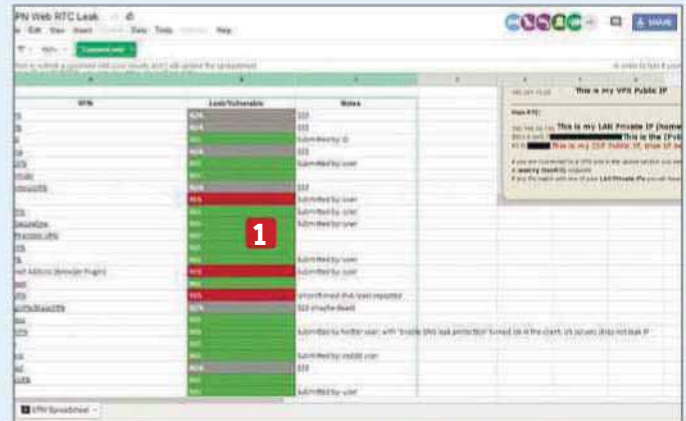
3 Further down is the DNS address. **1** This will be controlled by your ISP unless you've changed it to something else, but whoever controls it can see what sites you're visiting. Unless the DNS owner specifically states that it doesn't log this information, you should assume that it keeps a record of every site you visit.



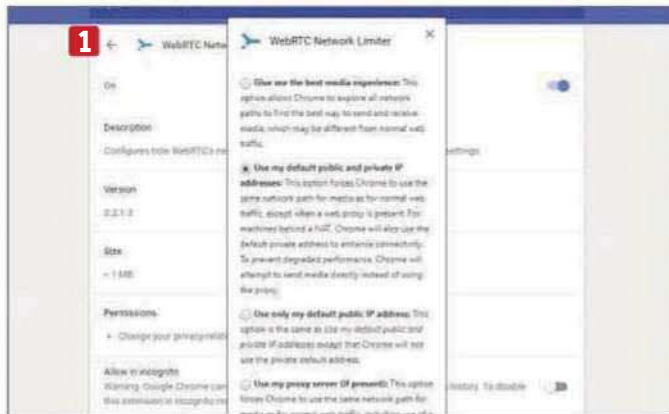
4 Switch on your VPN and reload the site. You should see a different picture. The first thing to check is the IP address. **1** It should be different to the actual IP address shown in Step 1, and may also be giving you the appearance of being in another country. **2** This is particularly important if you're using your VPN to access geoblocked sites.



5 The WebRTC detection isn't strictly controlled by your VPN, though some will block it. Here, your internal IP address should be displayed **1** but within a Private Use box, with no reference to your ISP. If your ISP's name appears here, there's a good chance that your privacy is being compromised.



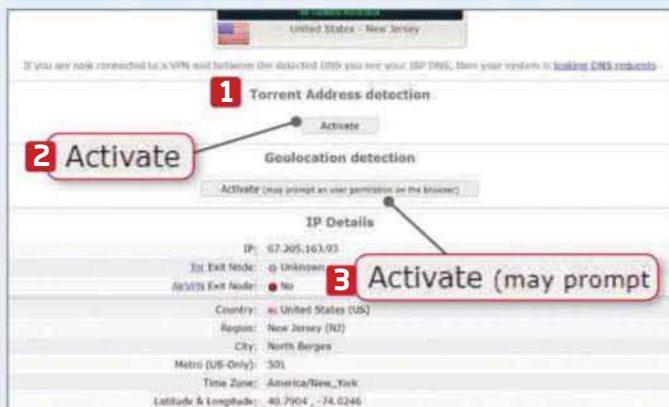
6 If you find that your WebRTC is leaking, you could change your VPN. Voidsec (voidsec.com), the organisation that discovered and first highlighted the problem, has information about it at bit.ly/wrtcvpn452, where you'll also find a link to a spreadsheet of all the VPNs they've tested. Choose one with a green cell in the Leak/Vulnerable column. **1**



7 If you prefer, you can plug this security hole manually in your browser. In Chrome, you can download Google's own WebRTC Network Limiter (bit.ly/wrtc452). **1** In Firefox, go to about:config and double-click 'media.peerconnection.enabled' to set it to False. This might stop some video services operating, though.



8 Back in ipleak.net, at the bottom, you'll find the DNS Address. **1** This should make you appear as if you're in the same country as your IP address. The address of the DNS server should also be different from the one shown in Step 3.



9 Below the DNS info is 'Torrent Address detection'. **1** If you use BitTorrent software to share files, click Activate **2** to see whether your VPN is allowing your torrent software to expose your IP address. Click the Activate button under 'Geolocation detection' **3** to check whether your browser asks permission before revealing your whereabouts.



10 If you're interested to know what further information is slipping out about you, your browser and your PC, keep scrolling down the page. You should see a map **1** (hopefully, showing your VPN's location, not yours) as well as information about your hardware and browser add-ons. **2**

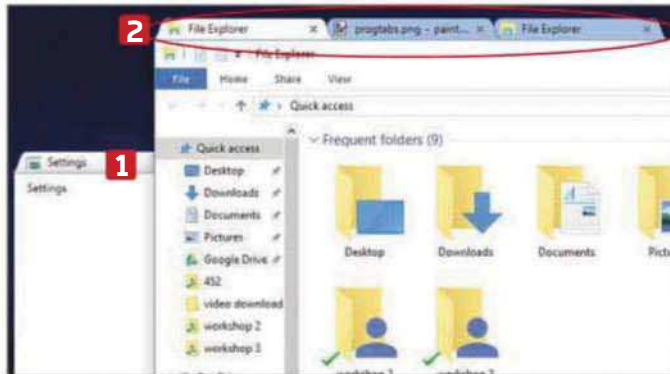
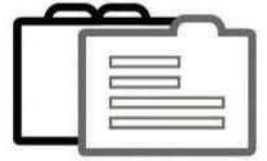


Get tabs in Windows programs before the update

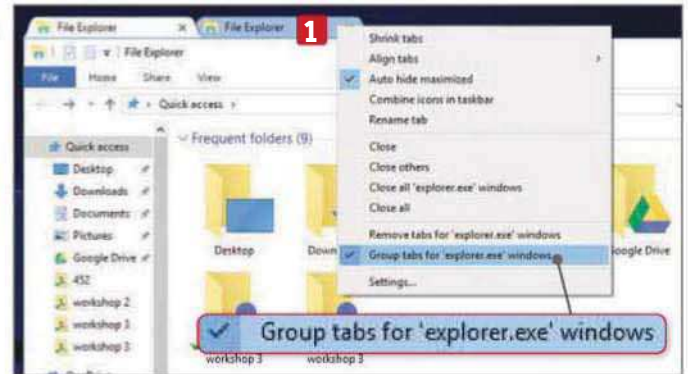
Microsoft is bringing browser-like tabs to more programs, but not until the next major update to Windows 10, expected in the Autumn. If you don't want to wait and would like tabs on all your Windows programs right now, install

WindowTabs: windowtabs.com | 10 mins | Windows XP, 7, 8, 10

WindowTabs (windowtabs.com). There are a couple of limits: the software hasn't been updated for a while and the free version only allows three tabs per window.



1 When you run the WindowTabs software, any open windows will be given their own tab. **1** You can add a program into a group by dragging its tab and dropping it on another. **2** Drop it to the left or right of another tab, depending on where you want it to appear.



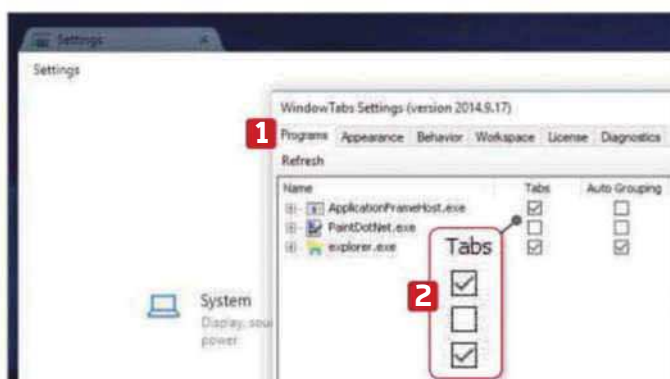
2 Opening a new instance of a program doesn't automatically place it in an existing group. However, you can set a program to open all its tabs in the same window when you open a new instance of it by right-clicking one of its tabs **1** and clicking 'Group tabs for...' **2**



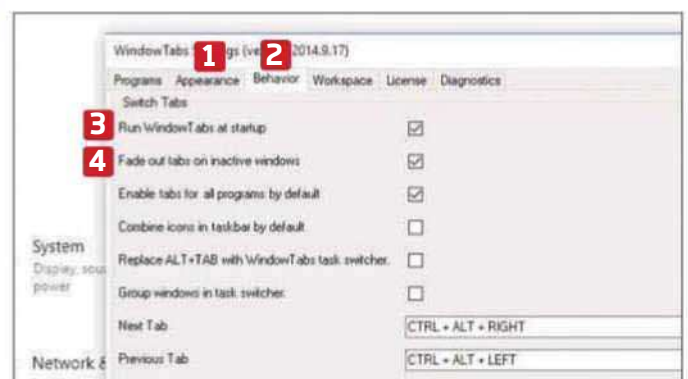
3 If you prefer your tabs compact, right-click one and choose 'Shrink tabs'. **1** You can also choose where the tabs should appear, **2** and whether or not you want to see them when a window is set to full screen. **3**



4 If you have more than one tab open, clicking a tab's cross **1** simply closes that tab, rather than the whole window. You can right-click a tab to close all the other open tabs (but not the one you clicked); **2** close all the tabs from a particular program or app; **3** or close every tab in the group. **4**



5 If there are programs that you don't want tabs to appear on, right-click the tab and choose Settings. On the Programs tab, **1** untick the box in the Tabs column next to the program's name. **2**



6 It's also worth exploring the Appearance **1** and Behaviour **2** sections. Appearance lets you control the size and colour of the tabs; Behaviour lets you tweak what the software does, such as whether it starts automatically with Windows **3** and whether background tabs are faded out. **4**

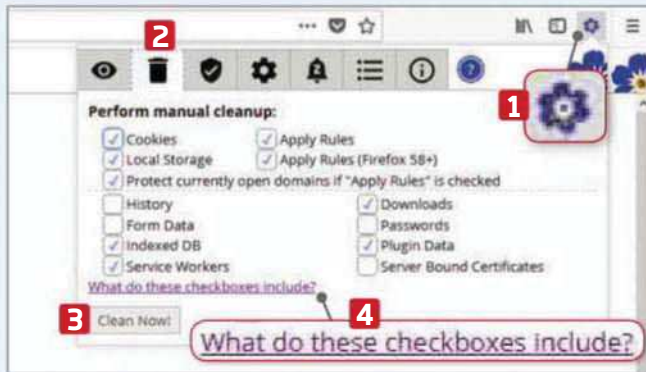


Manage cookies more easily in Firefox

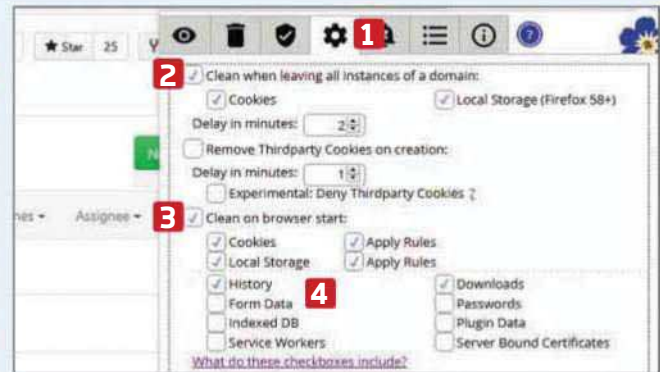
Forget Me Not is a handy Firefox extension that's just come out of beta. It lets you clean up your computer and take control of cookies, so you can avoid being tracked online. Whether you think cookies make browsing

Forget Me Not: bit.ly/forget452 | 10 mins | **Firefox**

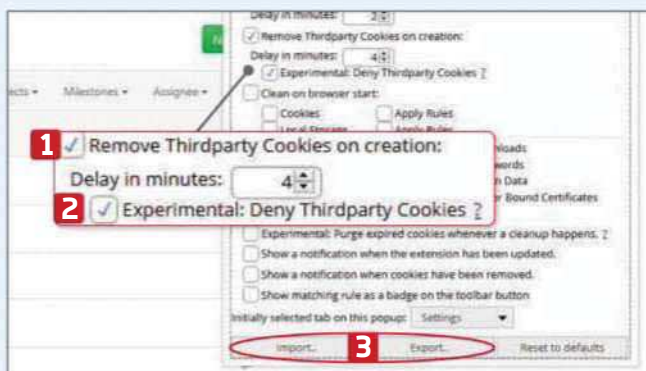
quick and convenient, or you treat them as a privacy concern that must be eliminated, Forget Me Not guarantees fully customisable configurations to suit every online session.



1 Install the plugin and click the Forget Me Not icon. **1** Go to the Bin tab **2** and tick every item you want to remove, then click Clean Now **3** to perform a manual cleanup. If you're not sure whether to remove an item, 'What do these checkboxes include?' **4** provides an overview of each option.



2 The Cog tab **1** lets you configure how Forget Me Not handles cookies. Tick 'Clean when leaving all instances of a domain' **2** to automatically delete them when you exit a site. Tick 'Clean on browser start' **3** and select the elements you want to remove every time you open Firefox. **4**



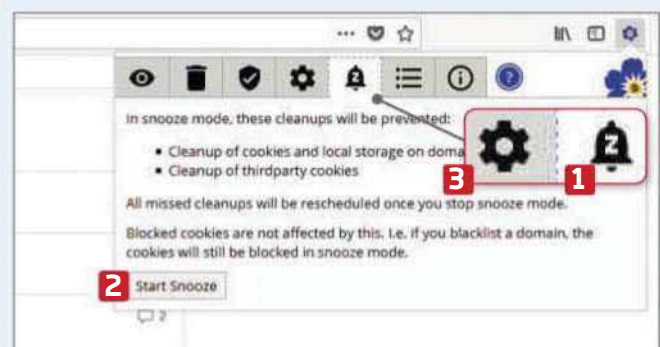
3 To block or delete third-party cookies, tick 'Remove Thirdparty Cookies on creation' **1** and set a delay time. You can Deny Thirdparty Cookies **2** but this might stop sites working properly. Click Import or Export **3** to download or upload existing configurations on more than one PC.



4 By default, the software blocks all cookies. **1** If a site you trust isn't working without them, add it to a whitelist. Click the Eye icon, **2** then click Add Rule. The domain will be shown in the 'Define rules' box. **3** Edit it if you need to, or click Add **4** to whitelist it.



5 Once you've added a site to your list, you can use the colour-coded drop-down menu **1** to refine whether to whitelist, blacklist or temporarily graylist a site's cookies. By clicking the Checklist icon, **2** you can view or add custom cookie rules for all recently visited sites.



6 To pause the service, click the Bell, **1** then Start Snooze. **2** Stop Snooze reverses it. Once it's fully configured, go to the Cog tab **3** and use the drop-down menu to select the default tab when opening Forget Me Not. Finally, tick 'Show a notification when cookies have been removed'.

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Clone Windows 10 to a USB drive to boot anywhere

Wayne Williams shows you how to make a portable version of Windows that holds all your favourite programs and settings

Windows is highly customisable – you can change how it looks and behaves to suit your needs, choose which software you want to use for specific tasks and even set your favourite programs as the defaults. But if you have to use someone else's PC, they will also have it set up just how they like it, which means you'll have to tolerate their customisations and choice of programs. It may not even be running the same

version of Windows.

One solution to this problem is to remotely access your PC, but this means you have to leave your own computer switched on and relies on a good internet connection at both ends. An alternative option is to clone your current Windows installation to a portable USB drive that you can boot into and run from anywhere. In this issue's Weekend Project, we show you how to do just that.



What you'll need

Windows 10 (and Windows 8, for that matter) comes with a feature called Windows To Go, which lets you build a portable version of the operating system you can run directly from a USB drive. You just plug the drive into any USB port on any PC and boot into it.

The first thing you need is a spare USB drive – but not any drive will do because

there are some requirements to be aware of. If you're simply creating a new Windows To Go installation – that is, a clean version of Windows 10 – the drive you choose will need at least 32GB of free space. You can use a USB memory stick for this. If, however, you're cloning your existing Windows 10 installation – the one that you are running on your PC with all its customisations and

preferences – then you will need a much, much larger drive. Our Windows installation, for example, is about 530GB in size and even if yours is smaller, it's still likely to be too large for a basic, cheap memory stick.

The drive you use should ideally support USB 3.0 or later, otherwise loading and using the operating system on it will be very slow. Bear in mind, too,



Removing previous Windows installation files can reduce the size of your system

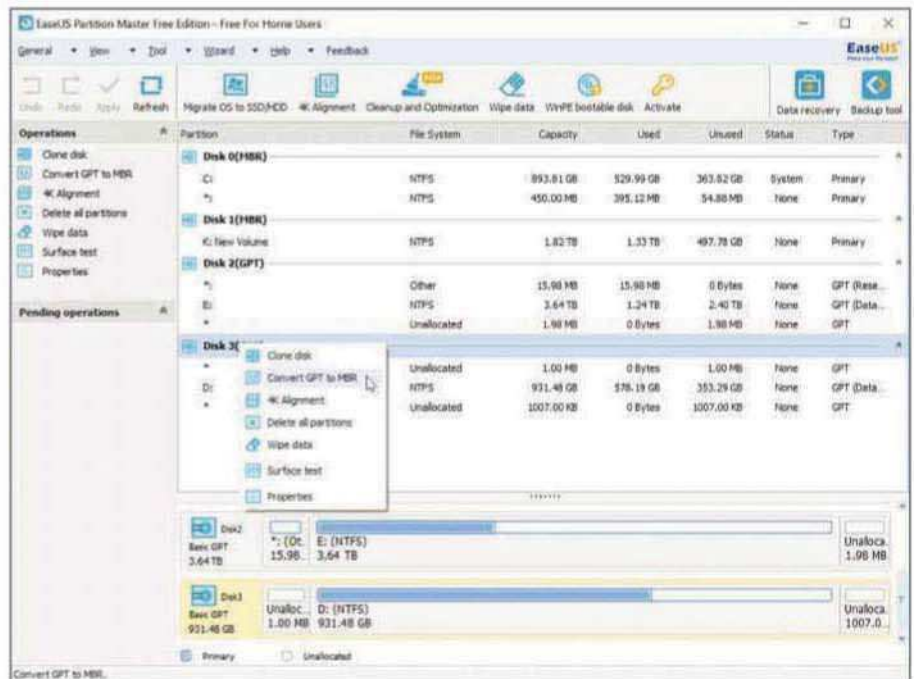
that not all USB 3.0 drives are equal – you should buy the fastest you can find. This means spending a little more money but the outlay will be well worth it. Ideally, you want your target drive to be around 20% bigger than your source partition.

Finally, you'll need the free WinToUSB software (bit.ly/wtu452), which creates the Windows To Go version of your OS on the USB drive. The program was recently updated to make it possible to 'hot clone' your operating system, which means you can clone your OS while it is running. It also improved the cloning process and fixed a number of important bugs.

We show you how to use WinToUSB in our Mini Workshop on page 61. Just make sure you read the rest of this article before you begin because there are a few more things you need to do first.

Carry out a little caretaking

Before you start, you should spend some time freeing up as much space as possible. The smaller you can make your existing installation of Windows, the quicker and easier it will be to clone it to a USB drive, so start by uninstalling any applications you don't require. A program such as IObit Uninstaller (bit.ly/iobu452) lets you list the items installed on your PC in size order. Get rid of anything you



Use EaseUS Partition Master Free to convert a GPT USB drive to MBR

don't need, then clear any clutter from your desktop and empty the Recycle Bin.

If you have some large files, such as videos or operating system ISO files, move them to another drive. You can use a tool such as CCleaner (www.ccleaner.com) to go through your hard drive and remove additional clutter.

If you've recently upgraded Windows 10 to the April 2018 Update, you might want to remove your previous Windows installation files because this can free up around 30GB of hard-drive space. There are two ways to do this. The first is to click Start and start typing **disk cleanup**. When it appears, right-click the Disk Clean-up entry and select 'Run as administrator'. Make sure the hard drive containing Windows is selected, then click OK. Click the 'Clean up system files' button.

Select your main drive once more and click the OK button again. This time you'll see a new option – 'Previous Windows installation(s)'. This will include the files created by installing the April 2018 Update. Tick that box, along with the 'Temporary Windows installation files' one, then click OK to remove those backed-up items.

The other method is to open Settings and go to System, Storage. Under Storage Sense, click 'Free up space now'. On the next screen, select the 'Previous Windows Installation(s)' entry, then click 'Remove files' at the top.

Prepare your target drive

The drive that you'll be writing Windows to needs to use the MBR (Master Boot Record) partition scheme and have system and boot partitions. There's a good chance your drive will use GPT (GUID Partition Table) but converting it to MBR is straightforward enough.

The easiest way to do this is to use EaseUS Partition Master Free (bit.ly/eapm452). Run the software, locate your drive, right-click it and select 'Convert GPT to MBR'. Click the Apply button at the top to action the task.

If you don't convert your drive to MBR, you won't be able to copy Windows to it using WinToUSB.

Use your USB drive





The cloning process takes a long time so for that reason, it might be worth running it overnight. Exactly how long you need to wait for it to complete will depend on the size of the partition you



The cloning process can take several hours to complete, so be patient

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

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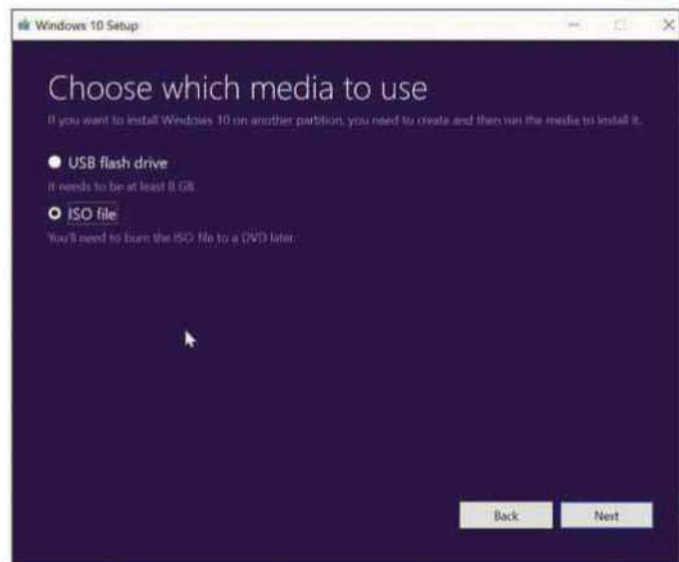


PLUS: DIY fixes for Windows problems Microsoft ignores

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When making a new, portable version of Windows 10 on a USB memory stick, you need to format it first



You can download Windows 10 in ISO format using the Media Creation Tool

are copying and the speed of your drive. Ours took four and half hours to finish. By default, WinToUSB will shut down your PC once the operation completes.

To use the drive, just plug it into any PC and boot from it. The PC will need to be set to boot from USB. If it isn't, you can either select the drive from the boot menu (by pressing whatever key is used for this task – typically F8, F11 or F12) or configure the boot order in the PC's UEFI or BIOS firmware. Power up your PC and press the key required to enter setup (usually F2 or Del), then look for a boot-order menu. Remember to save your changes.

Create a new, portable Windows 10 installation

If you prefer, you can use WinToUSB to create a fresh Windows 10 installation on a USB drive, then customise this to suit your purposes. Start by downloading a copy of the operating system in ISO format, which you can do using Microsoft's Media Creation Tool (bit.ly/mct452). Choose the option to create installation media for another PC, click Next and select the required language, edition and architecture (32-bit, 64-bit or both). The edition needs to match your Windows licence.

Click Next and choose ISO file as your

installation media. Click Next again to download the ISO file. It's several gigabytes in size so it will take a while to complete, depending on the speed of your internet connection.

Once it's downloaded, run WinToUSB, select 'Image to USB' on the left and browse for the ISO in the Image File box. Choose the Windows version, click Next, and select a destination drive.

You're given the option to format the drive. Choose the format type you require ('MBR for BIOS', 'GPT for UEFI' or 'MBR for BIOS and UEFI'). Once that's done, just follow the steps and create your Windows To Go OS. ■



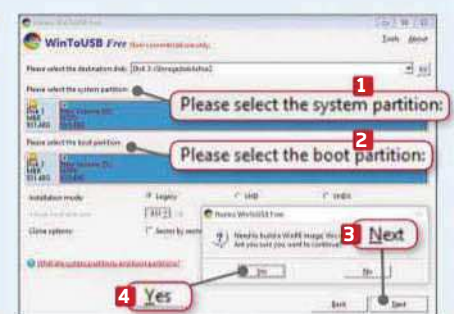
MINI WORKSHOP | Clone your existing Windows installation to USB



1 Insert the USB drive that you want to install your Windows To Go clone on into a spare port and run WinToUSB. Select the 'Physical to USB' option **1** on the left. The name of the OS you're running, version number, and system and boot-partition details are shown on the right. **2**



2 Assuming the details are correct, click the Next button. Select the destination drive to copy Windows to. **1** It should only offer you the one choice, but if there's more than one drive listed, make sure you pick the correct one. You'll be informed if there's a problem – for example, if the destination drive is too small.



3 Select the system partition **1** and boot partition **2** in the partition list. Click Next. **3** You'll be asked to build a WinPE image. Click Yes, **4** wait while this happens, then click Yes to confirm you understand the process will wipe your data. Click Yes again and your PC will reboot and begin the cloning process.

NEXT ISSUE

How To... Stop other users making changes to your devices

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Web User Masterclass

Update, replace and uninstall the drivers that keep your PC running

Download and back up all your drivers

Finding the drivers and other essential software for a new desktop PC or laptop is easy enough for most models, but it can be a much more complicated proposition for an old computer. Manufacturers have been known to abandon a computer just a few years after launch, removing its drivers from their websites and leaving you high and dry, so it's a good idea to prepare for this eventuality by finding all your PC's drivers and software, saving them to your hard drive and making a backup now, before it's too late.

The easiest way to do this is to search for your computer's model on the manufacturer's website and download everything you can find for safekeeping. You will almost certainly need these files at some point in the future.



Go to your computer manufacturer's website and download all your drivers

Gather hardware information

To find the correct drivers for your computer, you need to know its make and model, and the components inside it. You may be able to get the relevant information from labels and logos on the outside, but the best way to find out what's inside your PC is to go to Start, Windows Administrative Tools, System Information (Windows 10); or Start, All Programs, Accessories, System Tools, System Information (Windows 7). Everything you need to know is there.



Use System Information to see your computer's hardware components

Where to find the best drivers

There are three official sources of drivers: the PC's manufacturer, the manufacturer of the component and Microsoft – but it's not always

obvious which is the best. The PC manufacturer's drivers are designed for the version of Windows that was provided with your computer. Since Windows 10 is significantly updated twice a year, and there's not much chance to opt out, these drivers may not be the best option further down the line, and may eventually stop working altogether. That said, the manufacturer may have chosen drivers specifically because they're compatible with the components inside your PC, and may have tweaked or customised them to make them more compatible with your

setup than the original versions from the component manufacturer.

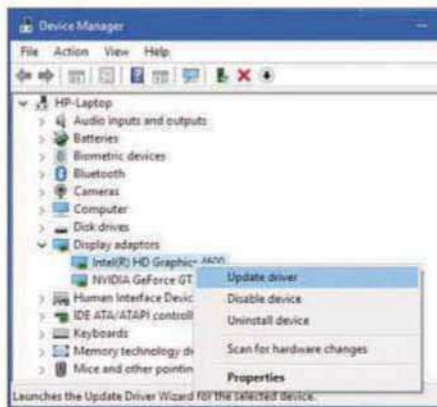
Microsoft provides drivers as part of Windows and a wide range of hardware components are supported. Sometimes Microsoft's drivers only offer the bare minimum needed to get a component working. For example, you can get a picture on your monitor with the default Windows video driver, but the manufacturer of the video card may have a driver with extra tools and higher performance.

Update your drivers using Device Manager

Microsoft has a vast collection of drivers for a large number of devices, new and old. While they may not always be the best, they are often the most compatible, designed to keep Windows working above and beyond the capabilities of the hardware. Because of this, they're worth trying if your PC is experiencing problems.

To try a Microsoft driver, right-click the Start button in Windows 10 and select Device Manager. Windows 7 users should run the Device Manager

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.



Use Device Manager to update your hardware with drivers from Microsoft

from the Control Panel.

Expand a category to see a list of devices, then right-click one to display a menu and select 'Update driver'. You'll be asked how you want to search for drivers – the best option is 'Search automatically for updates to driver software'. Follow any instructions that are displayed.

Roll back drivers

Drivers can be updated in several ways – by Windows, via software or manually – but if there's a problem, you can sometimes fix things by going back to a previous version.



If a new driver doesn't work, try rolling back to an older version

Right-click a device in Device Manager and select Properties from the menu. Select the Driver tab to see the Roll Back Driver button. Sometimes the button will be

greyed-out and can't be clicked but if it's available, click it to replace the current driver with the previous version that Windows has backed up and saved.

Uninstall faulty devices

If a device develops a fault, the easiest way to fix it and make sure you have the correct drivers may be to remove its associated software and leave Windows to find and install its default drivers.

Right-click the device in Device Manager and select 'Uninstall device'. This won't permanently remove the device, it just deletes any associated software. When you restart Windows, the operating system will detect the device and install its own default driver, if it can find one.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

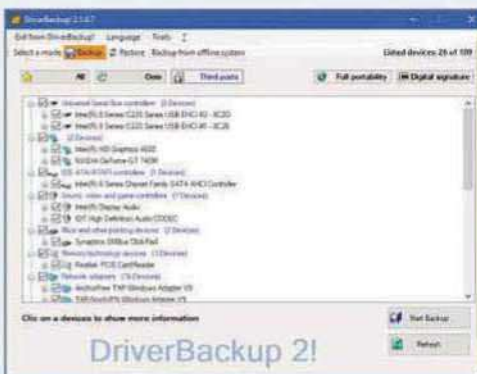
More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Back up everything

Backups of your hard drive are like insurance policies – hopefully, you'll never need them but, if you do, you'll be glad they're there. Free tools such as AOMEI Backupper (www.backup-utility.com), Todo Backup Free (bit.ly/todo452) and Paragon Backup & Recovery Free (bit.ly/para452) do a good job.

The alternative to backing up the entire disk, which can take hours, is to only back up the drivers. DriverBackup 2 (bit.ly/db452) is a free tool that backs up and restores drivers. Unzip the download and double-click DrvBk.exe to run it. The software scans your computer and presents a list of all the drivers. Select them all by clicking the All button or choose to only download original-manufacturer or third-party drivers. Click Start Backup, then Browse to choose where to save it. Click Start Backup again to save the driver.

To restore a backup, click Restore on the home screen, click Open Backup File and select the backup you saved. Then choose the drivers you want to restore.



Use DriverBackup to save and restore your existing drivers

Back up your PC's drivers

Windows stores all its drivers in the following folder:

C:\Windows\System32\DriverStore\FileRepository

It's a huge folder (23GB on our PC) with dozens of subfolders. You can copy it to an external drive if you want to save absolutely everything.

Each subfolder contains a driver but it's not always clear from its name what it does. A few, however, have recognisable names, so use Explorer's search box to find the folders for audio, battery, camera, display,

Bluetooth and so on. To manually install a driver, right-click the INF file and select Install from the menu.

Use a driver-update tool (with caution)

There are driver update tools that scan your computer for drivers and tell you if there are newer versions available. If there are, the tool offers to download them for you.

Not all driver-update tools are useful: some require payment to download and install, and they can often contain unwanted bundled extras. IObit Driver Booster Free (bit.ly/iob452), for example, does a good job but you should take care to use the custom-install option to avoid being stuck with the extra adware that's bundled with it.

Run the software to bring up a list of all the drivers on your PC for which there are newer versions. Use the tickbox at the top to deselect everything. Newer drivers are not necessarily better drivers, so don't indiscriminately update everything. If you're having problems with a specific driver and it's not working

properly, see if there is an updated version in Driver Booster and update only that one driver.

Roll back with System Restore

System Restore is a type of backup for Windows but it doesn't save everything. When you update a driver, make sure you perform a System Restore backup in case it causes problems. This will allow you to undo any changes made by installing the new driver.

To create a restore point, open the Control Panel and type **system restore** into the search box. Click 'Create a restore point'. If System Restore is on, click Create to save a restore point. If it's off, click Configure and select 'Turn on system protection'.

If you encounter any problems, first try rolling back to a previous version of the relevant driver. If that doesn't help, go to System Restore and click the System Restore button. In the list of restore points, select the most recent one before the driver problems started, then follow the instructions.

Ask the Expert

Roland Waddilove, computer programmer and PC journalist since 1981, answers all your technical questions. Email us for help at webuser@dennis.co.uk



GENERAL PC

Fix a persistent update failure

Q In Issue 449 (bit.ly/webuser449), you mentioned that you had failed to update Windows 24 times. My updates have failed hundreds of times since last autumn. I've tried every trick in the book, but I always see the message "Windows cannot complete the update". I don't want to do a clean installation, so I'm stuck. Any ideas?

Thomas Turnbull, via email

A For many people, Windows Updates install without problems but a minority run into difficulties. Windows 10 April 2018 Update (version 1803) fixed the problem in some cases, because instead of trying to patch Windows version 1709, it replaced it so that the failed updates were no longer needed.

If you've tried everything else (and some people have, without success), you may still be able to install the latest version of Windows manually. Go to the Windows 10 download page



You may be able to fix problems with Windows Update by updating manually

on Microsoft's website (bit.ly/wiso452). There are two options, one of which will hopefully work. Click Update Now to download an installer that runs directly from the Downloads folder. If that fails, use the option to create Windows 10 installation media, which lets you create a boot DVD or USB memory stick with the full Windows installation 10 on it.

When updating manually, Windows will ask you if you want to keep your files or erase them. Choose to keep them, but also back up manually before you start in case something goes wrong. At the very least, you should back up your Documents, Pictures, Music and Videos folders.

if you attempt to stream from an internet address in another country. The BBC, Channel 4 and Channel 5 websites say you need to be in the UK to stream TV programmes, because they only license programmes for UK broadcast.

Netflix says you can watch the same programmes abroad that you can access at home, but only for a limited period. No time limit is specified – Netflix just says "We'll let you know when the limited period is over". This sounds as if short holidays are okay, but extended stays may not be.

Amazon Prime is the same in the EU as it is at home, but in non-EU countries, you can only use Watch While Abroad, which offers a limited selection of content. So you can use Prime in France but not Switzerland or Norway.

When you use a hotel's Wi-Fi, you may be required to fill in details or agree to terms and conditions on a login screen before you can access the internet. All the devices you mention stream TV over Wi-Fi, but the login screen may cause problems because you need a web browser to sign in.

Some people have resorted to taking their laptop on holiday with them. This would let you use a VPN to connect to the local network in a hotel, and gets round the problems you face with devices that connect to a TV.

HARDWARE

Take your TV abroad

Q If I take a TV streaming device (such as a Fire TV Stick, Roku Streaming Stick or Now TV Smart Stick) to Europe with me on holiday, will I be able to use BBC iPlayer and Sky's Now TV while I'm away? I assumed this was why the BBC started insisting we log in to use the

iPlayer. Also, if the iPlayer does work in Europe, will it only stream programmes that have already been broadcast, or can I use it to watch live TV, too?

Steve, via email

A The answer is complicated, and different products and services have different rules about watching from abroad. If you buy and use Now TV in the UK, for example, you can use it in EU countries for up to 30 days. It then stops working until you return home and use it in the UK for a while.

This includes the Now TV box and Smart Stick. However, it doesn't mean that every app will work, because TV catchup apps such as iPlayer have their own rules and may block access

HARDWARE

Reconnect a wireless printer

Q I've been using my HP Pavilion 15 laptop with my HP Colour LaserJet Pro M252dw for over two years now without any problems. They connect over a wireless network from my Sky



Take a streaming TV device with you on holiday to access some of your favourite streaming services



Use the 'HP Print and Scan Doctor' to diagnose printer problems



router. After a recent Windows 10 update, however, the two no longer communicate with each other, even though other devices, such as our smartphones, still connect to the printer.

I have uninstalled, reinstalled and updated all the relevant software and drivers from HP's support website but nothing has worked. Documents are apparently being sent to the printer, and the print icon appears on the taskbar for a minute or two, but nothing ever comes out. Troubleshooting software can't find anything wrong either.

Richard Sanders, via email

A There is no simple solution to this problem, so you'll just have to try a few things and see if any of them work. The first is to switch off the computer, printer and router. Turn on the router and wait for it to start up and activate the wireless network. Then turn on the printer and wait until it connects and is ready. Finally, turn on the computer and try to print something.

If you installed other printers before this one, it's possible that your current printer has lost its default status. Open the Control Panel and click 'Devices and Printers'. Right-click your printer and select 'Set as default printer'. When printing, make sure the correct printer is selected.

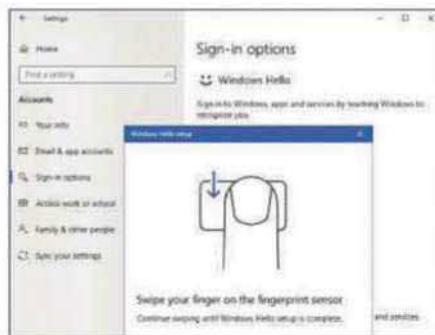
If it's still not working, uninstall the printer's software, preferably using an uninstaller that removes Registry entries and left-over files, such as IObit Uninstaller Free (bit.ly/iobun452). If the printer is still listed in 'Devices and Printers' in the Control Panel, right-click it and remove it.

Now connect the printer to the PC with a USB cable and install the software and drivers. A direct connection always works, and once the printer and driver are set up correctly, it should work wirelessly, too. If not, go to the HP website and download 'HP Scan and Print Doctor' (bit.ly/hpdr452). Run it and follow the instructions. It tests the printer and fixes any problems it finds.

Some people have found that installing the PCL6 print driver solves the problem. Go to bit.ly/pcl452 and download it, then follow the installation instructions on the page.

GENERAL PC Sign in with biometrics

Q I recently updated my Windows 10 computer with the April 2018 Update, and now my Windows Defender Antivirus icon has been



Windows Hello lets you log in using a fingerprint or iris scan

replaced with Windows Defender Security Centre. When I click the icon, the window that opens looks different to the old one. In the 'Security at a Glance' section, one of the options is called 'Account protection'. When I click this, Windows suggests that I 'Set up Windows Hello for faster, more secure sign in'. There are two options here: Set Up and Dismiss.

My current sign-in process simply requires me to type in a password. Am I right in thinking that choosing Dismiss will leave my sign-in option as it is, but that pressing Set Up will change my login and allow me to choose more sign-in options?

Darren, via email

GENERAL PC

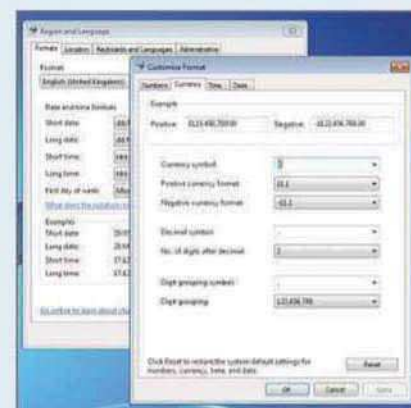
Restore 'Region and Language' options

Q How do I access tabs that are greyed out in Windows 7's 'Region and Language' settings?

Ken Mulvey, via email

A First, make sure you're logged into Windows with an administrator account. This is usually the case with Windows 7 but it's worth checking. Open the Control Panel, then open 'Region and Language'. The tabs shouldn't be greyed out, and you should be able to work through all the settings and configure them for the UK.

There are lots of settings, and you have to click every button and link on every tab to check that UK is set across the board. This includes number, date and currency formats, keyboard layout and language, default location and also niche items such as 'Language for non-Unicode programs'. Check everything!



The Region and Language settings are a labyrinth of tabs, menus and buttons

If all the tabs are greyed out, even when you're using an administrator account, you need to edit a Registry key. Press Windows+R, type **regedit** and press Enter. Go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Policies\Microsoft\Control Panel\International

Look for the HideAdminOptions value. Double-click it and set it to zero. Close the Registry Editor and restart Windows.



This fortnight Roland has been trying back up software and now has four backups of his PC. You can never have too many!

Your Top Tips

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



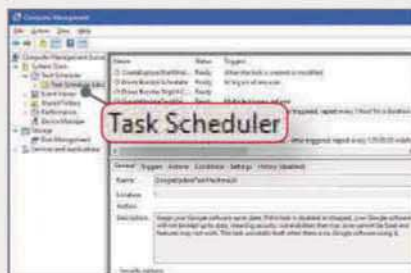
TOP TIP

GENERAL PC

Check scheduled tasks for hidden resource hogs

You probably already know that you can select the Startup tab in Task Manager to see which programs start with Windows, but there are other things not listed here that may also be launching when your PC starts. Scheduled tasks, for example, can run at login or at any other time of the day. To see them, open Explorer, right-click This PC and select Manage. Expand System Tools and Task Scheduler, then click Task Scheduler Library.

You can see what is scheduled in the list of items. The Triggers column shows when it will run and, to see what it does, select it and use the tabs



Open Task Scheduler to find more programs that run automatically

below. I found a few surprises, such as programs set to automatically load or run at certain times of the day. Most were harmless but I uninstalled a few I knew I didn't need.

Derek Frost, via email

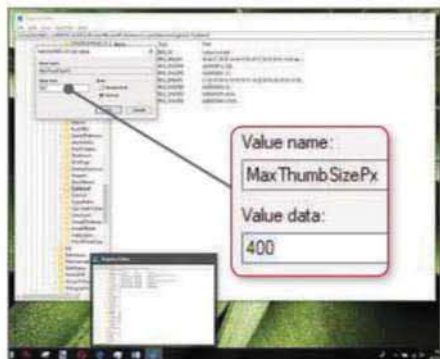
GENERAL PC

Change the size of taskbar thumbnails

Did you know you can change the size of the thumbnail images you see when you hover over a taskbar icon? Open the Registry Editor (press Windows+R, type regedit, then press Enter) and find:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Taskband

Right-click an empty space in the large window on the right, then choose New, 'DWORD (32-bit) Value'. Name it



Increase the size of your taskbar thumbnails

MinThumbSizePx. Double-click it, select Decimal and change the 'Value data' to the desired pixel size (the default is 216 pixels). Next, create another 32-bit DWORD called MaxThumbSizePx with the same value data.

You need to restart the Explorer shell for the effect to work, so either sign out of Windows and sign back in again or, for a faster option, open the Task Manager, select the Processes tab, right-click Windows Explorer and select Restart.

Damian Andrew, via email

GENERAL PC

Customise photo folders

You can make browsing through your Pictures folder more efficient (and interesting) by setting a custom image for each subfolder, so you can see at a glance what each one contains. I have a folder for each year, then subfolders for events during that year.

Right-click a folder in the Pictures folder and click Properties. Select the Customise tab and, in the 'Folder pictures' section, click Choose File. You can then select a photo from the folder to use on the folder icon and click Apply

or OK. You may need to refresh the view for the image to appear. Choose the 'Extra large icons' view so you can see the image more clearly.

Sue Thorne, via email

BROWSERS

Change the colour of links you've visited

My eyes aren't as good as they used to be and I sometimes find it difficult to tell the difference in colour between links that I've visited and those that I haven't. Your 'Page Titles' tip (Issue 450, bit.ly/webuser450) provided help with navigation, so now I'd like to point readers in the direction of Color Links (bit.ly/color452). This Chrome extension lets you change the colour of links you've already clicked to one of five preset colours. What I really like, though, is that you can also input your own hex code. My preferred colour is this yellow: #f9e825 (bit.ly/yel452).

Richard Olver, via email

GENERAL PC

Use a new troubleshooter shortcut

I noticed after the latest Windows 10 update that you can now run the Sound Troubleshooter by right-clicking the speaker icon in the taskbar. It appears on the right-click menu and could be useful for quickly fixing audio problems.

H. Williams, via email



Right-click the speaker icon for a shortcut to the troubleshooter



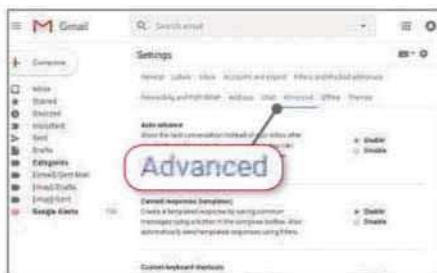
EMAIL

Access experimental Gmail tools

I am enjoying the Gmail redesign and think it looks a lot better than before. The old Gmail had a Labs tab in Settings that let you try experimental features which, in the new design, seems to have been renamed Advanced. Go to Settings and click the Advanced tab to display a list of tools with Enable and Disable buttons. You can switch on tools such as Auto-advanced, Preview Pane, Unread message icon and others. I don't think there are as many as there used to be but the ones that are there are useful.

If you like experimental tools, I also noticed a new setting on the General tab. About halfway down the page is a new option called 'Enable experimental access'. Tick the box and you can enroll yourself as a beta tester to see new features before everyone else.

Phil Bannon, via email



The new Advanced section in Gmail contains some useful extras

GENERAL PC

Most popular apps

Which apps do you use the most on your computer? Task Manager can tell you. Press Shift+Ctrl+Esc and select the 'App history' tab. Click CPU Time to sort the list by time used.

Kevin Moore, via email

ANDROID

Track your children with Microsoft Launcher

I've recently started using Microsoft Launcher, which lets me keep an eye on the whereabouts of my kids. To get started, sign into your Microsoft account and go to the Family tab. You should see the option to 'Add a family member'. Choose the Child option to send an invite to their email (you may have to prod your little darling to accept!). Install the Microsoft Launcher on their Android phone (bit.ly/msl452) and sign them into the device's launcher. Now you're all set to track their location.

Go back to the Family tab online and click your child's account, selecting 'More options' to get the choice to 'Find on a map'. Toggle the 'See my child's location on a map' button to On, if you haven't

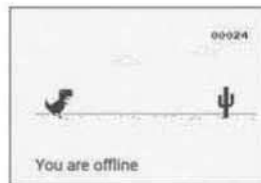
already, and refresh the page to track their whereabouts.

Joel Perkins, via email

GAMES

Play a fun offline game on your phone

Shut off the Wi-Fi and mobile data from your Android or iPhone and open the Chrome browser. Now



A dropped connection can be good news!

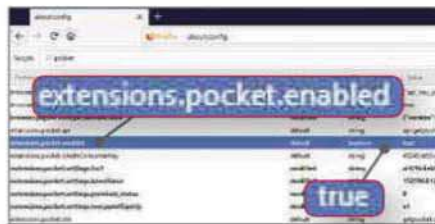
try to navigate to any web page, such as forum.webuser.co.uk. Press the T-Rex on your screen. You'll thank me later!

Mickey Hoffman, via email

BROWSERS

Disable Pocket on Firefox

Here's a quick tip if you use Firefox but don't need Pocket, the read-it-later add-on that's installed by default. Type `about:config` and accept the risks if it asks you to. Type `pocket` in the search box and double-click 'extensions.pocket.enabled'. This should adjust the value



Remove Pocket from Firefox's address bar from `about:config`

from 'true' to 'false'. You can even remove the Pocket icon from the address bar by right-clicking it and selecting 'Remove from Address Bar'. To bring it back, click the three-dot menu on the address bar, right-click 'Save Page to Pocket' and click 'Add to Address Bar'

Jake Beardsley, via email

GENERAL PC

Change the size of the Start menu

Is the Windows 10 Start menu not big enough for you? You can adjust it by clicking the Start window and holding down the Ctrl key. Each press of the up arrow will make your menu grow. You can also make it smaller by pressing the down-arrow key, and expand or contract it left and right by pressing the corresponding arrow keys.

Joe Whatley, via email



Use arrow keys to customise the size and shape of your Windows Start menu

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

GENERAL PC

Move folders without breaking the programs within

I decided to reorganise my hard drive but I didn't realise that moving folders can affect the programs they contain and cause them to stop working properly. I ended up breaking a whole bunch of programs and wasted a lot of time finding workarounds and reinstalling software.

Now I've decided that I still don't like the system and want to reorganise it again. However, this time I'm prepared - I've found FolderMove (bit.ly/foldermove452), which creates a link



Keep your programs working, even after moving them

between old and new folders, so I shouldn't encounter any problems.

James Carlyle, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

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



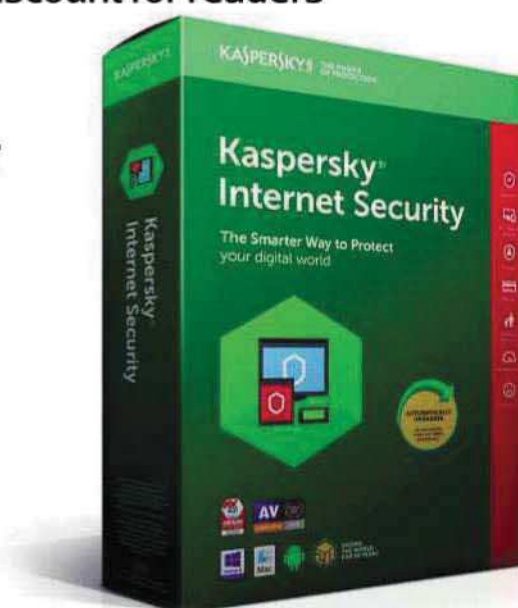
OFFER OF THE FORTNIGHT

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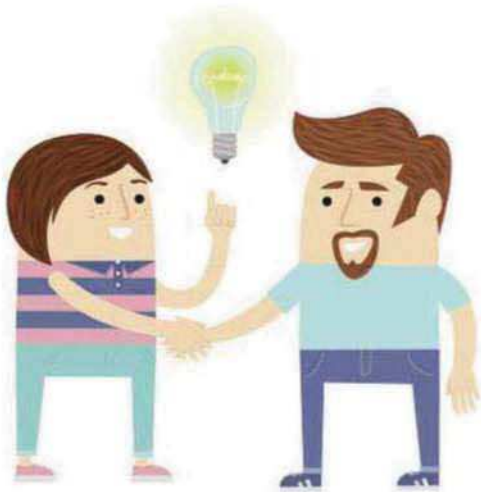
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GENERAL PC

Burn to DVD the right way

Q I'm burning photo files to a 4.7GB DVD on my Windows 10 PC. I've selected all the photos, then right-clicked and chosen 'send to' CD/DVD. When I did this, it said there wasn't enough room on the disc, so I copied a few images and then retried it with the remaining ones. A box popped up to confirm copying, but at 0% it's not doing anything.

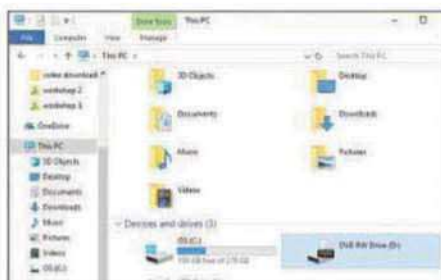
Am I doing something wrong? It used to be so much easier with Picasa but since that's gone, I've had to make do with Windows. Can someone explain the process to me, please?

AuraTodd, Web User Forums

A There are several ways to burn files to optical discs in Windows 10. With a disc inserted, open File Explorer, click This PC and right-click the Drive. If 'Delete Temporary Files' shows in the menu, click to remove them. Now find your images and select the ones you want to burn. Check the Status Bar in the bottom-left corner to see the total size of your selected files. This mustn't exceed the disc's capacity.

Drag the images over the drive in File Explorer's left-hand column. The 'Files Ready to Be Written to the Disc' window should open, along with a pop-up in the bottom-right corner, informing you that they are there. Click Manage in the menu bar, then Finish Burning.

In the dialogue box that opens, give the disc a name or leave it as the default (the date). Check the available record speeds.



Find your CD or DVD burner in File Explorer's This PC section

BROWSERS

Stop Edge nagging for your location

Q When I use Edge to visit the BBC News website, I get a persistent message above my taskbar telling me that "www.bbc.co.uk/news wants to use your location...". This only appears in my Edge browser when I access the BBC's News page. It doesn't appear if I switch to the BBC's Sport or Business pages.

I don't get this message on other browsers, such as IE11, Firefox and Avast Secure. If I click Settings, I'm taken to the Windows 10 Location settings page, where everything is switched off, including all my Privacy settings. No other websites display this message or anything like it. If I hover over the red cross, I get the option to Dismiss, which then removes the message. However, it reappears when I return to the page.

I've combed through the Edge settings (including Advanced) but I can't find anything that permits this annoying message. I suspect that it's Microsoft that wants my location,



Switching this on stops annoying screen nags – but it'll share your location, too

rather than BBC News.

tornado, Web User Forums

A You mentioned that all options on the Location page in Settings are switched off – this is why you are getting this message. BBC Weather wants your location to show you weather in your area, and it can't do that without location access. To dismiss this message permanently, open Settings and click the Privacy section. Select Location in the left-hand pane, then switch the toggle under 'Location service' to On. Now scroll down. In the list of apps, make sure the toggle for Microsoft Edge is switched to On.

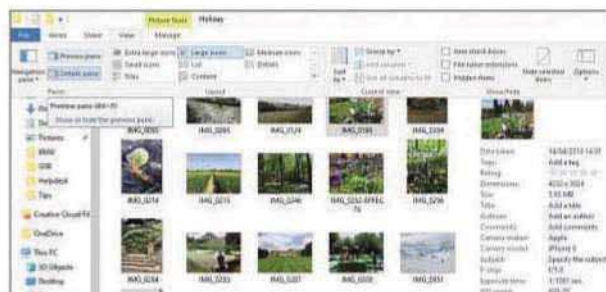
ben.ward, Web User Forums

It's safest to choose a speed that's somewhere between the fastest and the slowest, to minimise write errors. Click Next to start burning.

When it's complete, you'll have the option to 'Burn to another disc'.

Now click Finish. This method should allow the disc to be read on PCs and CD/DVD/Blu-ray players.

Moonshine, Web User Forums



Previews can be a real pain. This is how to switch them off

and properties. How do I get rid of it?

mrmatt, Web User Forums

GENERAL PC

Remove unnecessary panes from Windows Explorer

Q I don't know how this happened, but I'm seeing a pane on the right-hand side of Explorer, which shows a large icon

A Click the View tab in the ribbon. Deselect both 'Preview pane' and 'Details pane'. You can also use the keyboard shortcuts Alt+P and Alt+Shift+P to hide the pane.

Moonshine, Web User Forums

Star Email

We need a united front against Microsoft

Back
Issues
disc
winner



In your 'Ask the Expert' section in Issue 450 of *Web User*, you printed a letter from Jaise Jose about Windows 10's automatic updates. The letter explained how Microsoft keeps trying to install unwanted software. This is just one of many complaints published in *Web User* and *Computeractive* every issue. No previous release of Windows has ever been plagued by so many problems and inspired such dislike – not even Vista!

This is really frightening when you consider what Microsoft is likely to do in the near future – no later than 14 January 2020 for Windows 7. Currently, 42.39% of Windows users



still run Windows 7, compared with the 34.29% who have moved to the latest operating system, Windows 10. Microsoft obviously isn't happy that so many people don't want its latest OS, so what will it do about it? Simple! When people set their PCs to download the latest 'updates' from Microsoft, one of those

'update' downloads could shut down the user's version of Windows and make it unrecoverable. The only option would then be to 'upgrade' to Windows 10!

Many people around the world are happy with the OS they use and don't want to upgrade to one that is plagued by problems. It's about time *all* magazines that write about computers, software and PC peripherals started working together to condemn companies such as Microsoft and encourage them to sort the problems out – even if it's through the courts. A united front is required.

BE Singleton, via email

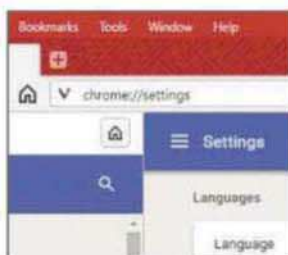
Vivaldi tip made me lose my composure

I'm somewhat miffed by something you printed in Your Top Tips, Issue 450. In it, you claim that a tip I posted in the Web User Forums said: "the Vivaldi browser has extra settings other than those in its 'Tools and Settings' menu. Type vivaldi://settings into the address bar...". What I actually said was "Type chrome://settings into the Location Bar...".

The version you printed is pointless – people who do that will simply see the basic Startup Settings menu that they could already access by clicking the Menu button, File, Tools, and not the additional options.

Did someone assume that I'd accidentally typed 'chrome' instead of 'vivaldi'? Did anyone bother to check? I hope this will be mentioned in a future issue of *Web User* in case any Vivaldi users who read the magazine but don't visit the Web User Forums are confused by an apparent non-tip.

Madeline, Web User Forums



Web User says: We apologise for the change we made to the tip you shared in the Web User Forums when we printed it, and to any readers who were confused by our mistake. We believe the problem arose because Vivaldi automatically changes `chrome://settings` to `vivaldi://settings` when it's typed into the address bar, even though it takes you to the Settings page for the former. Thanks for clarifying your advice with the correct version of the tip, which we're happy to reprint here.

Switching to O2 resolved my signal problem

Having read Mason Chandler's letter in Issue 449, 'Shop around for a better mobile signal', I feel I have to comment. Many years ago, my wife gave me my first mobile phone as a present – it wasn't something I would have bought myself! She got it from a local shop, and it used the Orange network and worked perfectly.

Eventually, of course, EE took over the Orange network. That was a bad move

Quiz Answers: Issue 451

- 1 **Chicken Run**
- 2 **The King's Speech**
- 3 **The Crying Game**
- 4 **A Fish Called Wanda**
- 5 **Carry on Camping**
- 6 **Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels**



WINNER!

Well done to **Stewart Gibson** who wins a Web User Back Issues disc



TECH YEAR

2013



for me because my signal simply disappeared. I found I could only get a signal if I stood by my back door, and I soon got fed up with that. When I complained to the company by phone and in person at an EE shop, I was told that nothing had changed (the staff had obviously been told to say that!). My daughter, who lives in a different part of town, was also with EE and also experienced

reception problems.

Then I learned that many of my friends who were signed up with EE had lost their signals, too.

I eventually bought myself out of my EE contract a month early and moved to O2. It was the best thing I ever

did! I've had perfect signal reception ever since and I'm happy with my contract with O2. My daughter also left EE for a family deal with Tesco Mobile, and she is no longer having problems either!

Allan Watt, Hawick

Honour our requests to unsubscribe from emails

When the new General Data Protection

Regulation (GDPR) was introduced, my husband and I – like many others – were bombarded with emails on a daily basis. What concerned me, however, was that most of these messages came from mailing lists we'd already unsubscribed from.

If we've unsubscribed, why do these companies still have our email addresses? Why aren't they respecting our requests to be removed from their mailing lists – which ought to be legally honoured?

It makes me wonder if the system of requesting to be unsubscribed actually works. If you give people the power to unsubscribe, the company's database of contacts is bound to be weakened. I suspect that these companies are deciding not to adhere to our requests simply because it suits their purposes – but it's our privacy they're invading.

We hate being pestered in this way and are fed up with constantly deleting unwanted email messages. Whatever happened to the right to be forgotten?

Sharon Boothroyd, Brighouse

What you say...

YAHOO MESSENGER IS CLOSING IN JULY (bit.ly/yahoo452). DID YOU USE IT?

I didn't even know it existed until I saw this! Now I use WhatsApp, but I used to use Windows Live Messenger.

David P-Smith @david_p_s

Never knew it was even there. Used AIM and MSN, but briefly. Never really saw the need for messengers. Used SMS or email instead.

Nat Grove

I used it very occasionally, but didn't like its cluttered appearance. MSN/Windows Live Messenger was my preferred messenger, but WhatsApp and Facebook have made it easier to communicate with friends and family.

Carlos Fandango @Fandango2013

Yahoo *what?* I've got a Yahoo ID – it's great for registering with websites I'm not sure about and trapping spam afterwards!

Steve Ellis @gb022621

About time! Used it a few times in days of old but even then it was risky with trolls, spammers and ads.

Deafinitely Moi @Gary_Olsen

AMAZON HAS WON RIGHTS TO SHOW PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL FROM 2019 (bit.ly/football452). WILL THIS MAKE YOU SUBSCRIBE?

No, more people will just pirate the stream because of limited accessibility.

Goldmaster @imthegoldmaster

I already have Prime, but it wouldn't have given me reason to pay for it. People will just find more ways to access it illegally.

Joanne Evans

Already do! My son will be ecstatic. No more buffering when trying to watch the match.

Cheyvonne Bower

It finally pays to have Prime! I use it for free delivery about once a month. Otherwise, it's mainly to watch *The Grand Tour* or cartoons for the kids.

Gabrijel Todorovic

PAPUA NEW GUINEA IS PLANNING TO BAN FACEBOOK FOR A MONTH (bit.ly/papua452). WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF IT WAS BANNED HERE?

Organise protests and marches to Downing Street. It wouldn't be losing Facebook generally that's the issue, but impinging on my freedom of speech.

Gavin Green

I'd be thrilled. Let's face it, in all honesty – it's rubbish.

Ian Graham

Buy shares in a VPN service.

Scott Alexander Winchester

A Facebook detox wouldn't be a bad thing. People may even talk to each other again, or send postcards.

Colin Leonard

SIMON COWELL SAYS HE HASN'T USED HIS PHONE FOR 10 MONTHS (bit.ly/simon452). COULD YOU LAST THAT LONG?

It's easy to live without a phone when you have an entourage of assistants, like I'm sure Simon does.

Darren Branagh

I've easily lived without Simon Cowell for years.

Martin Phillip

He hasn't made a call, sent a text or written an email in 10 months? Whatever.

Iain Loudon

! Page 404



You don't have to ditch your phone to protect your mental wellbeing, says **Barry Collins**

Time to show your smartphone who's boss

Simon Cowell says that discarding his smartphone for 10 months has been "so good for my mental health". Not having Simon Cowell on my TV every Saturday night would do wonders for my mental health, but I find myself in the rare position of agreeing with *Mr Britain's Got The X-Factor Get Me Out of Here*. Smartphones are bad for your inner wellbeing – but only if you let them control you.

It's all well and good Cowell telling us to lay down our smartphones, but he has a PA to pick up all the important stuff he'd miss without one. Still, we don't have to capitulate to these attention-seeking devices – we just need to shackle their ability to ruin our day.

By far the biggest curse of the smartphone is its ability to interrupt your personal life with work. There are

lifestyle wonks who urge you not to put work accounts on your phone, but that's simply not an option for many people, such as those of us who are self-employed or who work for companies that insist on piling their intranet and phone apps onto our devices in a bid to be 'modern'. You can, however, confine the times that your phone is allowed to interrupt you with work nonsense.

Both Android and iOS have a handy Do Not Disturb mode that lets you schedule certain times of day when notifications are blissfully silenced. I turn off all notifications after 10pm at night,

so I can wind down with an hour or so of Netflix before I head to bed. Actually, who am I kidding? I'm asleep on the sofa 10 minutes into an episode of *Narcos*.

The clever thing about the Do Not Disturb modes is that they allow you to set exceptions. You can let through calls or messages from 'favourite' contacts, alleviating the worry

of missing a call from your teenage daughter when she's stranded at a bus stop at 11pm. You can let notifications from certain apps through, if you want to receive the Twitter bleeps but not the work emails. And you can even let repeat callers break the silence, so if there really is a fire raging at work, you can rush to action.

Removing your phone from your bedroom is another key factor. It always makes me shake my head in dismay when I check Facebook in the morning and a friend has written: "Wide awake at 3am. What's wrong with me?". Well, picking up your phone at 3am for a start. If anything's going to compound the anxiety, stress or whatever else it is keeping you awake in the small hours, it's that slab of metal and glass in your hand. Don't use the smartphone as an alarm clock – get it out of your bedroom altogether. We use an Amazon Echo Dot as our alarm clock. You can set multiple alarms, it doesn't have a distracting display and if the power cuts off during the night, the alarm will still go off.

Smartphones are like children – wonderful things, but they must be set limits. You don't have to bury your iPhone in a kitchen drawer to maintain your sanity. You just need to curb its enthusiasm.

“A friend has written:
“Wide awake at 3am.
What's wrong with me?”.
Well, picking up your phone
at 3am for a start”



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Bloodsport by Timothy Poulton - Shoot The Frame Affinity Photo Contest Winning Entry

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