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Hey Alexa!

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ANYTHING
with your
voice!

OK Google!

60 Best Commands
To Make Your
Smart Speaker Do
Whatever You Want

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52>

PLUS...

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IT'S NOT TOO LATE



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Hey Alexa, say Happy New Year!

Pity *Web User's* poor Advertising Manager, Alexa, who has been forced to get rid of her Amazon Echo after it kept interrupting and offering to help when people spoke to her! Although you can set your device's 'wake word' to something else, if you're called Alexa you're probably better off changing your name, considering the huge popularity of Amazon's voice assistant.

Over the last two years, smart speakers such as the Echo and Google Home have become so clever that they're almost sentient – indeed, you can ask yours to “open the pod bay doors” in tribute to the

psychopathic HAL 9000 from 2001.

In this issue's cover feature, we celebrate the wonders of Alexa and Google Assistant by revealing 60 of the most useful and unusual things they can do. From making hands-free calls and compiling to-do lists to checking what's on TV and calculating Pi, there's so much your voice assistant can do that you need never touch anything again!

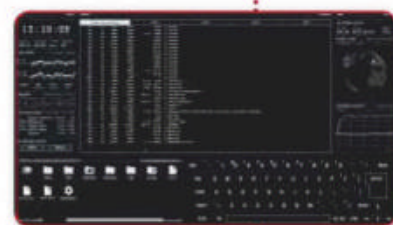
Robert Irvine, Editor
robert_irvine@dennis.co.uk
[#webuser](https://twitter.com/webuser)



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28 DEC 2018 - 8 JAN 2019

**COVER
FEATURE**

Hey Alexa!

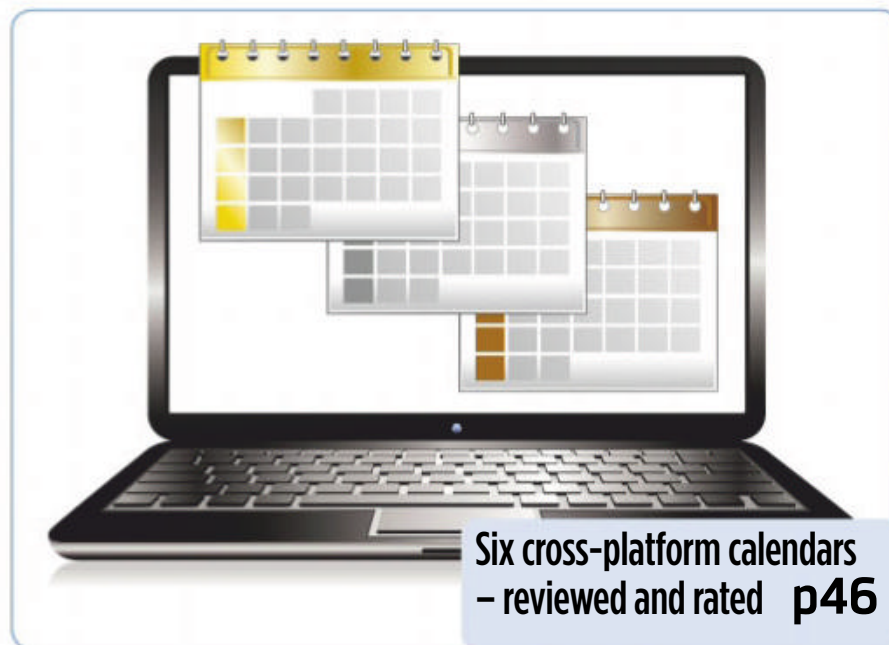
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60 smart things you can do with Amazon Echo and Google Home

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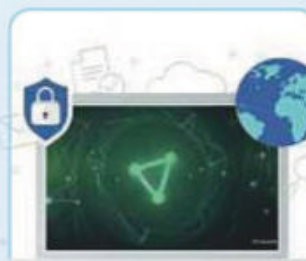
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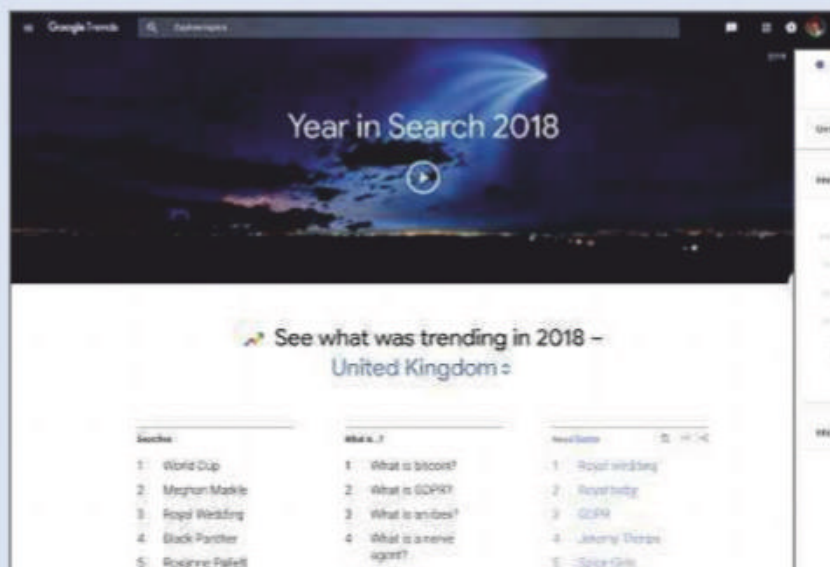
What's New Online

See Google's top searches for 2018

So, this year, did you learn how to floss dance, wonder what Bitcoin was, seek news about the royal wedding or become hooked on *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*? Then you haven't been alone.

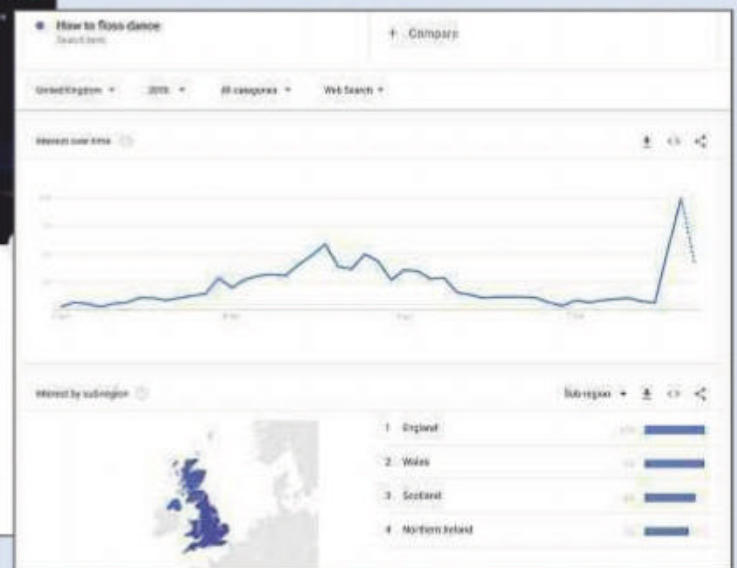
These subjects were among the most popular search terms on Google in 2018 according to its annual Year In Search roundup, and they either make for enlightening or depressing reading depending on your point of view.

Most dominant in our minds was the World Cup (even, surprisingly in the US where it trumped Hurricane Florence and Anthony Bourdain).



Indeed, football topics were ahead of Meghan Markle, the movie *Black Panther* and Roxanne Pallett, whose 'Punchgate' controversy in the *Big Brother* house caused a minor scandal back in August.

There are some surprises. A good number of searchers wanted help deleting Instagram while others wanted to know how to get the old Snapchat



back. GDPR also caused intrigue, as did the burning question: "What is an ibex?" (it's a wild mountain goat). Google Trends lets you click all these revelations to see which regions asked what and how the level of interest peaked. You can also view trends from across the world.

bit.ly/2018trends465

Play an interactive Minecraft adventure

bit.ly/minecraft465

With 150 million sales, the Microsoft-owned game Minecraft seems to be taking over the entertainment world block by block. As such, *Minecraft: Story Mode* is now available to enjoy on Netflix as an interactive "choose your own adventure" television show. And while viewers cannot directly control the characters – Netflix insists it's not a game – it does let young viewers make key decisions that determine how the branching narrative plays out over the course of its five fun-filled episodes.

Each instalment can be played on smart TVs, games consoles, computers and iOS devices using the various Netflix apps, with the concept neatly explained before the first episode gets underway. They can also be streamed via the dedicated Minecraft: Story Mode app on Android. Decision-making is determined through a remote, gamepad, finger or mouse depending on the platform, and your first choice is between a male or female protagonist.

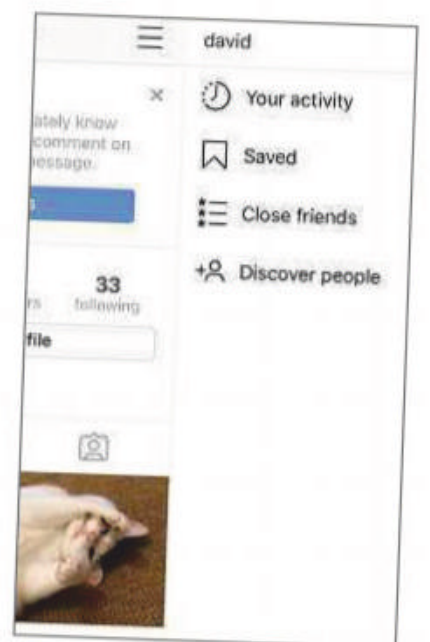


Create a 'Close friends' list on Instagram

www.instagram.com

The original idea of social media was as a way of sharing thoughts and photos with your friends. Over the years, however, you'll have accumulated a mish-mash of random people in your circles, many of whom you may never have set eyes on. Addressing that, Instagram is now letting you produce a list of close friends, so you can share your Instagram Stories only with people who you know and trust.

Simply open your profile in the app and tap the side menu, where you'll see a new option marked Close Friends List. Tap this and you'll see a list of people and an option to search for others. Hit Add next to their names to build your list, selecting Remove against anyone you add by accident (or have fallen out with!). From that point, you can opt to share a Story with 'Close friends' only. These posts will be marked with a green badge to let others know you've opted for intimacy.

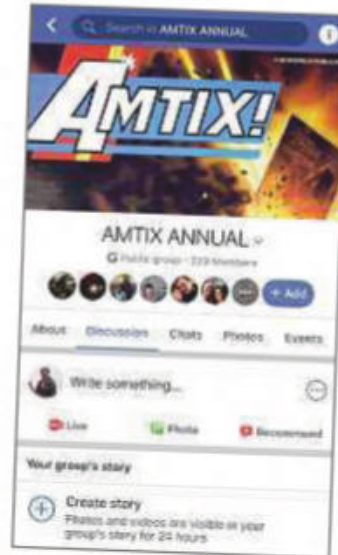


We pick the 10 best things you must do on the web this fortnight

Create a group story on Facebook

www.facebook.com

Facebook has brought Stories to all groups, allowing members to share and react to collections of photos and videos about specific moments. The feature is located high up on a group's page, giving options to create, view and add depending on the stories' status, with admins able to approve or delete stories as required.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Receive polite responses

In an attempt to make us more pleasant to our digital devices, Google Assistant is now specifically listening for "please" and "thank you", rewarding you with politeness in return.



Add OK Google to Siri

You can now ask Siri to open Google Assistant on iOS. Open the Assistant app, tap Add to Siri and say "Hey Siri, OK Google". Google Assistant will then be ready.



Get delivery information

Delivery company Hermes has launched a set of Alexa skills that let you find the nearest Hermes ParcelShop, set a designated safe place and ask for your parcels to be delivered to a neighbour.

Step into a virtual art gallery

artsandculture.google.com

Vermeer's paintings are spread across 17 collections in seven countries so the opportunity of seeing them all is

rather remote. However, you can now take a stroll through a virtual Vermeer gallery thanks to the power of augmented reality and Google's ever-impressive Arts and Culture site and app. Featuring all 36 Vermeer

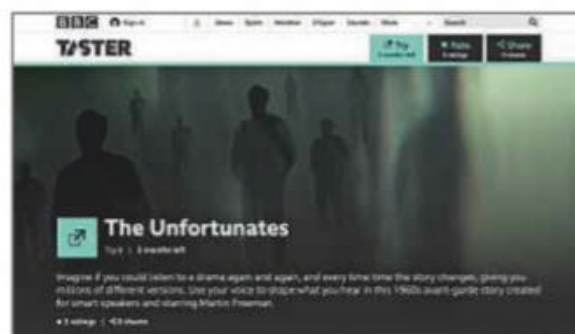


masterpieces, it lets you select a room, walk up to paintings and learn more about them; and while it can be a bit fiddly, the effect is worth the effort. To access the gallery, select Meet Vermeer, scroll to the AR feature and click or tap Get Started.

Engage with a BBC drama

bit.ly/unfortunates465

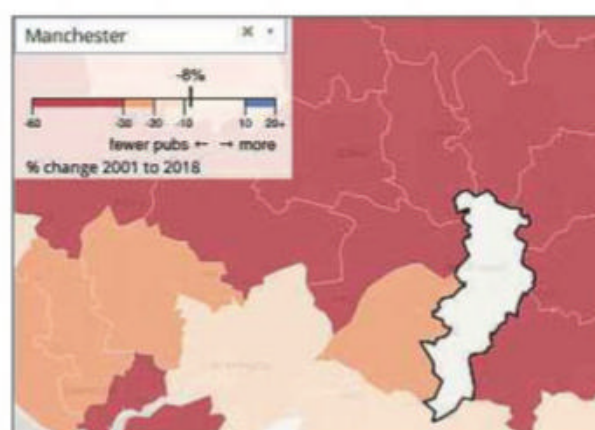
The BBC has reworked a Radio 3 play starring Martin Freeman to create a new interactive drama for Alexa devices. The Unfortunates lets you follow a sports journalist whose memories of a dead friend are rekindled during a football match. Ingeniously, the experience is different each time you listen from scratch because the chapters of the 1969 book on which it's all based were intended to be read in a random order. To get started, say "Alexa, enable The Unfortunates". See our cover feature on page 40 for further fun with Alexa.



Browse a map of pub closures

bit.ly/pubs465

Discovering how many local boozers have closed down over the past 17 years is rather sobering, but that's exactly what you can do with this map from the Office for National Statistics. Type in an area and you'll see a graph showing a percentage of pub closures: Blackburn, for instance, has lost 43% of pubs since 2001 (although Blackpool has seen an increase of 6%).



Organise your Google translations

translate.google.co.uk

Any translations you save in Google Translate are now labelled with details of the two languages involved. This makes it easier if you speak multiple languages to search for phrases you regularly use.

Print return labels

bit.ly/labels465

Don't have a printer and need to return an item? Then go to one of 11,500 Post Office branches and they'll now print a label for you. Visit the Royal Mail returns portal beforehand, enter your details and you'll be emailed a QR code.

Hear a personal playlist

spotifywrapped.com

In 2018, the world's most listened-to male and female artists were Drake and Ariana Grande. View your own personal faves and top-streamed tracks in Spotify's microsite to make a playlist based on your tastes.



Need to Know

7 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR 2019

It's going to be another interesting year for the web. Here are the questions we're asking about the next 12 months in technology

1 WILL REGULATORS FORCE FACEBOOK AND GOOGLE TO BE BROKEN UP?

Long answer: 2018 wasn't a great year for the web giants. Facebook was heavily criticised over the Cambridge Analytica scandal, with demands for Mark Zuckerberg to explain his company's actions to Parliament. Meanwhile, Google's CEO Sundar Pichai was hauled before US Congress to answer questions about its data collection and process for producing results, amid accusations of bias. And European Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager hit Google with a €4.3bn fine regarding the market dominance of Android.

One concern is that even if web users are displeased with Facebook or Google's behaviour, we're all but locked in – it's one thing to ditch Facebook, but are you ready to give up Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram as well? Given the current political climate,



it's not likely that regulators will break up the tech giants, though the threat may be wielded as motivation to improve in other areas, such as with privacy and battling hate speech.

Facebook and the other tech monoliths could curry favour by selling off or spinning out their previously acquired businesses, such as Instagram, but given that the photo-sharing platform's popularity continues to grow

while Facebook's wanes, that seems unlikely. However, they may shy away from any major public acquisitions in the coming year. Twitter and Snapchat aren't necessarily up for sale, but if they were looking for a buyer, there'd be a guaranteed antitrust case if any tech giant put in a bid.

Short answer: Facebook and Google will remain behemoths, but their invincible growth may be curbed.

2 WILL FACIAL RECOGNITION BECOME THE NORM?

Long answer: If you own an iPhone, you may already use facial recognition to unlock your device. But facial recognition is being used far beyond mere convenience, and often without permission. The Metropolitan Police has been running trials of the technology to spot violent criminals in crowds, including at the Notting Hill Carnival, concerts and major sporting events. However, reports reveal that the technology is woefully inaccurate, leading to false positives and innocent people being questioned. Pop singer Taylor Swift even used facial recognition to spot stalkers at one of her concerts, and while it's understandable that she'd try anything to keep safe, we need to ensure such a potentially dangerous and disruptive technology is used ethically and accurately. So far, that doesn't seem to be the case. Expect not only more facial-recognition trials in the new year, but legal challenges against the technology, too.

Short answer: Facial-recognition already is the norm – let's make sure it's used fairly and not invasively.



3 WILL 'DEEPFAKES' MAKE FAKE NEWS EVEN WORSE?

Long answer: Considering the rise of social-media disinformation campaigns – better known as 'fake news' – and falling investment in journalism, it's already difficult to know what's true or not these days. But it's about to get harder thanks to deepfakes – videos or photos that are altered using AI-based software. These are easy to make and hard to spot, and researchers have already used the technology to put words in former president Obama's mouth in a doctored video, so we can expect troublemakers to follow suit.

Short answer: It's only a matter of time, sadly. Be prepared to treat everything more sceptically.

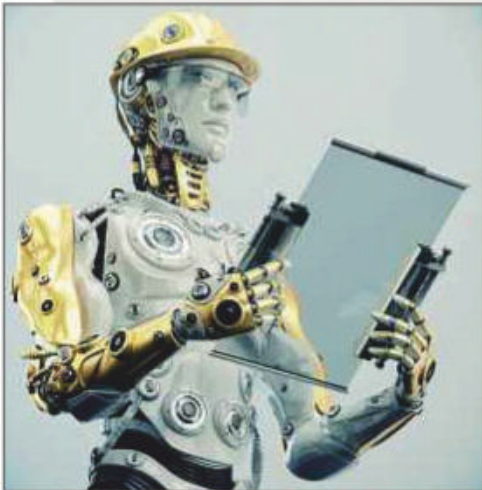


What we think of this fortnight's top tech news stories and rumours, and how they affect you

4 WILL AI ROBOTS TAKE OUR JOBS?

Long answer:

We've been hearing about automation, robotics and artificial intelligence stealing jobs away from humans for years, with reports from academics at Oxford suggesting as many as a third of British occupations are at risk. Changes to the way we work are coming, but they won't be sudden, and some industries will be more heavily affected than others. Manufacturing is a case in point: cars are mostly made by robotics, and have been for years.



However, if you work in retail, in an office or in a service or caring role, your job should be safe for the foreseeable future.

That said, almost everyone will see more automation and smarter technology edging into jobs, in a shift that's being called the "augmented workplace". Rather than being replaced by a robot or AI, you'll be assisted by it. Nurses will get robots to help lift and manoeuvre heavy patients, customer-service requests may be analysed by chatbots before being passed on to a human representative, and data will be sifted by AI. The hope is that such changes will make us more productive, be able to focus on more interesting or fulfilling work, or even work fewer days a week – not that the rise of computers did any of the above, but we can hope.

Short answer: Robots aren't coming for your job, but they may soon be working alongside you.

5 WILL MICROSOFT LAUNCH A 'LITE' VERSION OF WINDOWS 10?

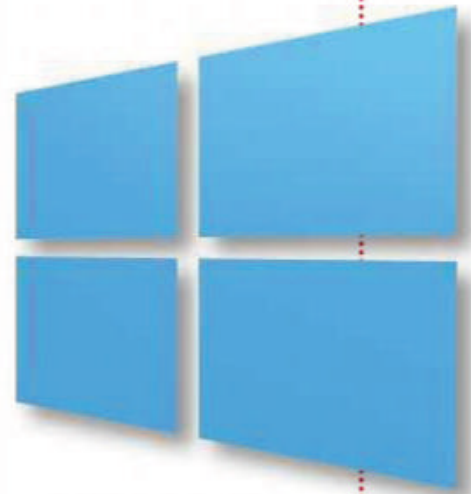
Long answer:

Microsoft said back in 2015 that Windows 10 would be the final version of the operating system. That doesn't mean there won't be updates and upgrades – we've seen plenty of those over the past year – but that Microsoft is evolving its OS to work in a similar way to a web browser, where the version number doesn't matter and most of us are automatically updated to the latest code.

That's a great idea for plenty of reasons – the OS is easier to support and the latest security patches can be quickly and universally implemented – but after Microsoft flubbed so many major updates this year, rolling out bug-infested code time after time, it's understandable if Windows users have become less keen on frequent, automatic updates.

Microsoft is potentially eyeing another technology – a 'lite' version of Windows that's similar to Google's ChromeOS and designed for Chromebook-style laptops. This makes sense, because Windows is a demanding and bloated OS that can overload low-budget laptops, maxing out the memory so they struggle to run software updates. However, reports indicate that Windows Lite is likely to be a version of the OS that's installed by manufacturers, rather than something users can download.

Short answer: Changes are on the way with Windows, but exactly what form it'll take remains to be seen. Fingers crossed for better updates in 2019, though.

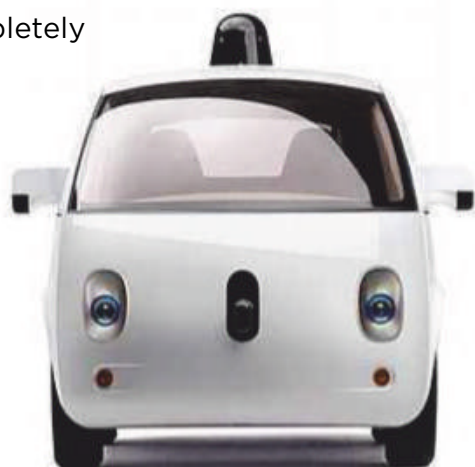


6 WILL DRIVERLESS CARS FINALLY HIT THE ROAD?

Long answer:

Google's Waymo promised driverless taxis by the end of 2018; they arrived, but with safety drivers sitting behind the wheel. Those human drivers are unlikely to disappear in 2019, either. While great strides have been made in partial automation, driverless cars are still proving tricky and there's a huge gap between almost there (known in the industry as "level 4") and completely capable of any situation on the road ("level 5"). You'll hear more hype about self-driving cars in the months to come, but don't expect to get a ride in a robot vehicle anytime soon.

Short answer: It's unlikely. If you don't fancy driving, you're still limited to buses, trains and (manned) taxis.



7 WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO GDPR?

Long answer:

Right now, Britons have specific data-protection rights under EU directives. These won't immediately change post-Brexit because the regulations are already written into our own laws. But once the dust has settled, the UK would be free to come up with its own set of rules. Even so, it's likely that the UK will keep strong protections in line with Europe, to keep data between the UK and countries on the continent flowing freely and fairly. That means GDPR will mostly likely survive intact.

Short answer: GDPR will remain after Brexit, but it could evolve in the longer term.



Tumblr bans all adult content

What happened?

Tumblr has confirmed that, after its app was pulled from Apple's App Store due to "illegal pornography", all adult content is now banned from the social-media platform.

In a blog post titled 'A better, more positive Tumblr' (bit.ly/tumblr465), the company sounded the death knell for images, videos and GIFs featuring "real-life human genitals or female-presenting nipples".

The blanket ban isn't limited to pornographic material; it also affects artwork, films and photos of content that was once categorised as 'artistic' but is now strictly tagged as NSFW ('Not safe for work'). The only exceptions to the rule are "certain types of artistic, educational, newsworthy or political content featuring nudity".

Behind the scenes, Tumblr is relying on automated algorithms to locate and remove proscribed content. Human staff continue to oversee the system, but already users are complaining that innocent media is being deemed 'explicit'. It seems Tumblr's robots now consider statues, digital paintings of caves and images of dinosaur bones (pictured) too hot to handle. In one instance, Tumblr's own blog post was flagged as inappropriate (bit.ly/announce465).

In the 11 years since its creation,



Tumblr has largely ignored the proliferation of legal lewd content – indeed, it's one of the main reasons for its enduring popularity. However, the site is now owned by Verizon's Oath subsidiary, which has apparently forced Tumblr to clean up its act.

How will it affect you?

Unlike broad social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, Tumblr generally

has a younger audience mostly interested in self-expression and social justice. And even if you're a fully paid-up Tumblrina, you may not notice the change unless you follow others who re-blog these images and videos. What you may notice, though, is a drop in the number of users. The crackdown has led to a mass exodus of artists flocking to NSFW-friendly sites such as the long-running Newgrounds.com (bit.ly/newg465). If you do upload to Tumblr, visit bit.ly/guidelines465 to check your post doesn't breach the guidelines.

What do we think?

Tumblr did the right thing by removing illegal pornography from its platform, but that type

of imagery has always, rightly, been forbidden. A mass ban feels like overkill and, given that other sites manage to moderate NSFW content, we suspect this has more to do with advertising dollars than creating safe spaces. Tumblr's user-generated 'art' may not float our boat, but we're concerned that larger companies can so easily sanitise and dictate what people see online, against the wishes of its own users.



FIRST LOOK

DJI Osmo Pocket

bit.ly/osmo465

The Osmo Pocket shake-free camera, from drone-maker DJI, is designed for "anyone with a story to tell". That's marketing speak for YouTubers, but it doesn't mean this feature-rich device won't appeal to everyday consumers.

Measuring a graceful 122mm and weighing just 116g, the Osmo Pocket is a highly portable handheld camera that adds Steadicam-style stability to often jittery smartphone recordings.

Equipped with a motorised three-axis gimbal, it captures ultra-stable 4K footage at 60fps. Still photographers, meanwhile, can take advantage of a 12-megapixel camera with a 1/2.3in sensor, 80° field of view and f/2.0 aperture – the type of setup you find in most mid-range cameras.

Built into the sandstone grip are two buttons for recording and switching modes, along with a boxy touchscreen viewfinder which, while impressively responsive, is also perfectly square, making it less than brilliant for judging precisely what's in frame. We recommend connecting your smartphone to see exactly what you're shooting. You'll want to grab the new DJI Mimo app (bit.ly/mimo465), too, to access greater capture controls, a simple video editor and a one-tap movie creator.

DJI has also added a suite of software extras, to ensure your videos take on a professional, cinematic feel. Timelapse, a mainstay of the brand's



products, makes a welcome return alongside Motionlapse. Switch on ActiveTrack to keep subjects centrally framed, or flip the camera into selfie mode to start up the all-new FaceTrack feature. For those seeking the perfect shot, you'll get a kick out of automatic night mode and a 3x3 panorama mode for snapping wide-angle scenes.

The Osmo Pocket is priced at a reasonable £329, but you need to factor in optional accessories such as the pan-and-tilt control wheel and Wi-Fi and Bluetooth connectivity module if you want to turn your home movie into a cinematic masterpiece.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Microsoft scrapping its Edge browser?

Here's the joke: the only thing Microsoft Edge is good for is downloading Chrome. Bundled with Windows 10 – so you've got it whether you want it or not – Microsoft Edge hasn't captured many hearts. Now, a well-placed insider says the unloved browser's Edge HTML code is facing the chopping block.

The company is reportedly working on a new browser, codenamed 'Anaheim', based on Google Chromium – the same code that runs rival Chrome. Eagle-eyed Microsoft-watchers will note this with some irony because adverts for Edge have long touted its speed and battery efficiency over Google's popular but sluggish browser.

Edge aficionados may lament its passing but the switch will bring browsing on-par with Chrome, which, despite some glaring flaws, offers a more consistent and reliable experience – not least because it's the go-to browser for developers and testers. All too frequently, users find websites act differently (or not at all) in Edge, and the browser is frequently criticised for its instability.

It's not known whether Microsoft will keep the current interface – all bets are off since it ditched the universally recognised 'Internet Explorer'. However, Edge on Android and iOS run on platform-specific rendering engines, and are vastly better as a result. Could we expect something similar for desktops?



LIKELIHOOD RATING



It's no secret that Edge has failed to win public support – and given Microsoft's success on the Android platform, it wouldn't surprise us to see it co-opt Google's open-source code for desktops, too. But with the new Edge making use of Chromium, what is its unique selling point? We're not convinced Bing is enough to get punters through the door, but it's possible that Microsoft is banking on apathy driving use of its new browser: why download Chrome-Prime when your computer essentially has it already?

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

↑ DuckDuckGo takes over Duck.com

Google has settled a long-running dispute with rival DuckDuckGo by selling the privacy-focused search engine the domain name Duck.com. Previously, anyone visiting that site would be redirected to Google instead of DuckDuckGo.



↑ Amazon adds Hunches to Alexa

Amazon has added a feature called Hunches to Alexa, which makes the voice assistant remind you if it thinks you've forgotten something, such as turning off the lights or locking the door. See our feature on page 40 for more Alexa commands.



WE DON'T LIKE...

↓ YouTube disappoints with Rewind 2018

YouTube's Rewind 2018, its annual review of highlights, has been widely slated by viewers, with 82% saying they did not enjoy the video. After attracting more than 10 million dislikes, Rewind 2018 is now YouTube's least popular video ever.



↓ UK broadband as slow as 0.14Mbps

A village street in Bamfurlong, Gloucestershire, has the slowest broadband in the UK, according to an annual survey by uSwitch. Homes on Greenmeadows Park averaged just 0.14Mbps, compared to the average UK speed of 46.2Mbps.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Pixel

bit.ly/pixel465 | £12

Not to be confused with Google's top-spec smartphones, the Pixel, from Leeds-based startup Oxegen Design, answers the familiar question: "What's your Wi-Fi password?". The petite unit houses near-field communication technology that lets you tap it with an NFC-enabled Android or iPhone 6+ to access the local Wi-Fi. No more 'Password123'; this is much more secure than easily guessed passwords and vulnerable open networks. The Pixel comes in seven colours and can be mounted using the built-in magnet. Pledges start at £12 for one Pixel, while bosses will want to check out the £70 business package.



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

ICO challenges police over facial recognition

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has launched an investigation into the UK police's use of facial-

recognition technology (FRT), after expressing concern over its legality and effectiveness.

Earlier this year, a report (bit.ly/face465) suggested that London's Met police had a failure rate of 98% when testing the technology at the Notting Hill Carnival, misidentifying 95 innocent people as criminals. The police force admitted it had not made a single arrest as a result of using facial recognition.

"How does the use of FRT in this way comply with the law?" asked Information Commissioner Elizabeth Denham. "How effective and accurate



is the technology? How do the systems guard against false positives and the negative impact of them?"

Denham said she had set out these concerns in letters to the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council, and will consider legal action if her concerns are not addressed.

bit.ly/facial465

Marriott hotel hack affects 500 million guests

Hotel giant Marriott confirmed that 500 million customers were affected by a four-year hack of its systems. Marriott first received an alert about unauthorised access to its reservation database in September 2018, but only alerted customers to this fact on 30 November after a two-month internal investigation.

Of the 500 million customers, 173 million only had their names and addresses or email addresses stolen. A further 327 million had more information taken, including a

combination of their gender, date of birth, trip details and passport number. The hotel chain wasn't sure if credit card information was stolen – because all such data is encrypted – but it warned that the card decryption keys were possibly stolen too.

Marriott discovered that the breach began in 2014 with an initial hack into the Starwood hotel chain, which was acquired by Marriott in 2016.

The company has set up a help website for those affected (answers.kroll.com) and a free helpline on 0808 189 1065.

bit.ly/marriott465



Credit: Cenz07 / Shutterstock.com

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 serious was the hack on Marriott Hotels (see story above)?

Steve Barker, Facebook

A This is one of the largest data breaches we've ever seen. The Marriott Group is a respected international hotel chain,

but questions need to be asked as to how 500 million guests have been affected by this cyber-attack.

Although we don't yet know the full extent of the attack, the security solutions that Marriott had in place clearly weren't sufficient. The data was encrypted, but the attackers also stole the keys, which demonstrates that an extra layer of security should have been in place to prevent this from happening.

Marriott hotel guests will receive a notification if they have been affected by the breach, but we urge those who are concerned to check with Marriott Group. We also warn consumers to remain

vigilant, because these types of breaches give scammers an opportunity to target vulnerable people by claiming to be from the Marriott Group.

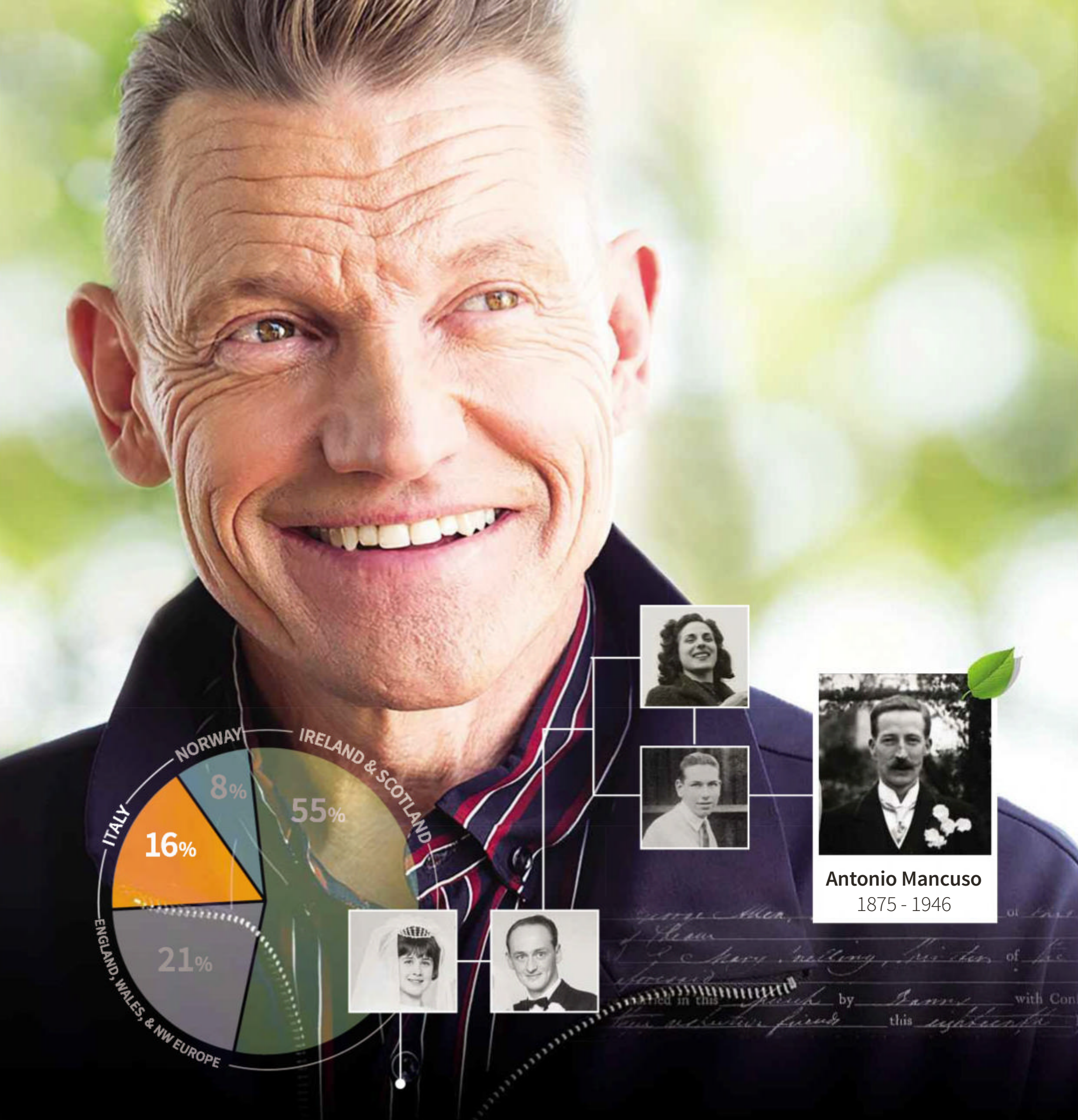
Q How worried should we be about banking Trojans?

Peter Telford, Twitter

A Although banking Trojans mostly target individuals at online financial services, some of these malware families now hunt for data related to online shopping accounts. These Trojans intercept data entered on a shop's payment

page, which means that cybercriminals are able to reap the rewards of shoppers who are not aware that they are conducting transactions on an infected device.

By taking some simple steps – securing any devices you use to shop online, applying updates to your operating system and software as soon as they become available, double-checking the integrity of an online retailer's website before entering any data and not clicking links in messages – the risk of falling victim to a banking Trojan can be dramatically reduced.



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Ancestry can help you build your family tree and explore your heritage. Combine the largest collection of online historical records with cutting-edge DNA science.

Start a 14-day free trial at [Ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk)*



*One free trial per person. Requires registration with valid credit or debit card. Cancel before trial ends or chosen membership will begin and you'll be charged relevant price. Membership automatically renews at same price at end of each membership period, unless you're notified otherwise. Cancel at least two days before renewal date by visiting your My Account section if you do not wish to renew.

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnite

GAMES

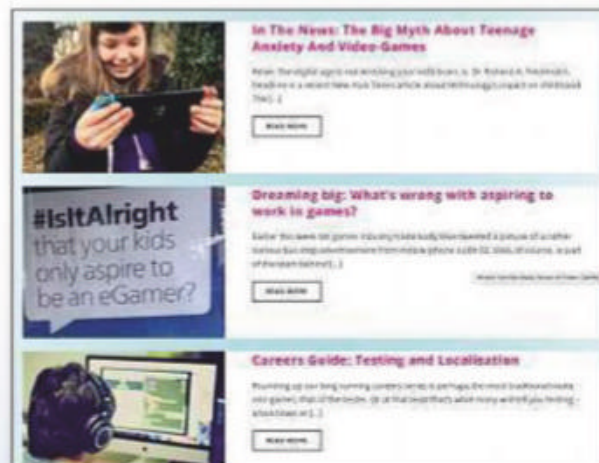
RELAUNCH

Ask About Games

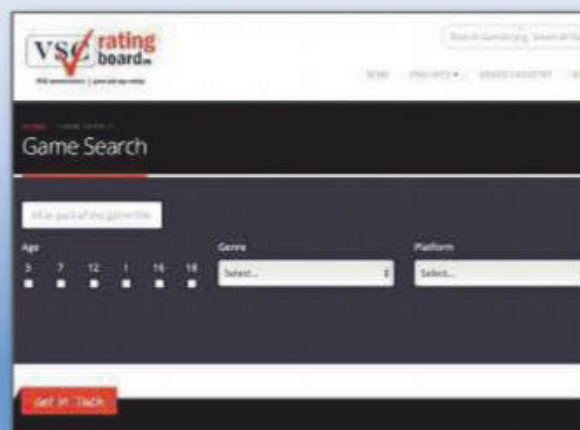
www.askaboutgames.com

Not sure what a PEGI rating is? Then maybe it's time to level up your knowledge with help from this superb parental guide to games. Blasting a path through misconceptions and myths, Ask About Games explains how Pan European Game Information (PEGI) works and gives the lowdown on the icons you're likely to encounter. The revamped site also highlights the various parental controls you can set up on consoles, phones and tablets, lists the top-selling games in each age category and offers lots of jargon-free video content. You'll be up to speed on key titles from FIFA 19 to Fortnite in no time.

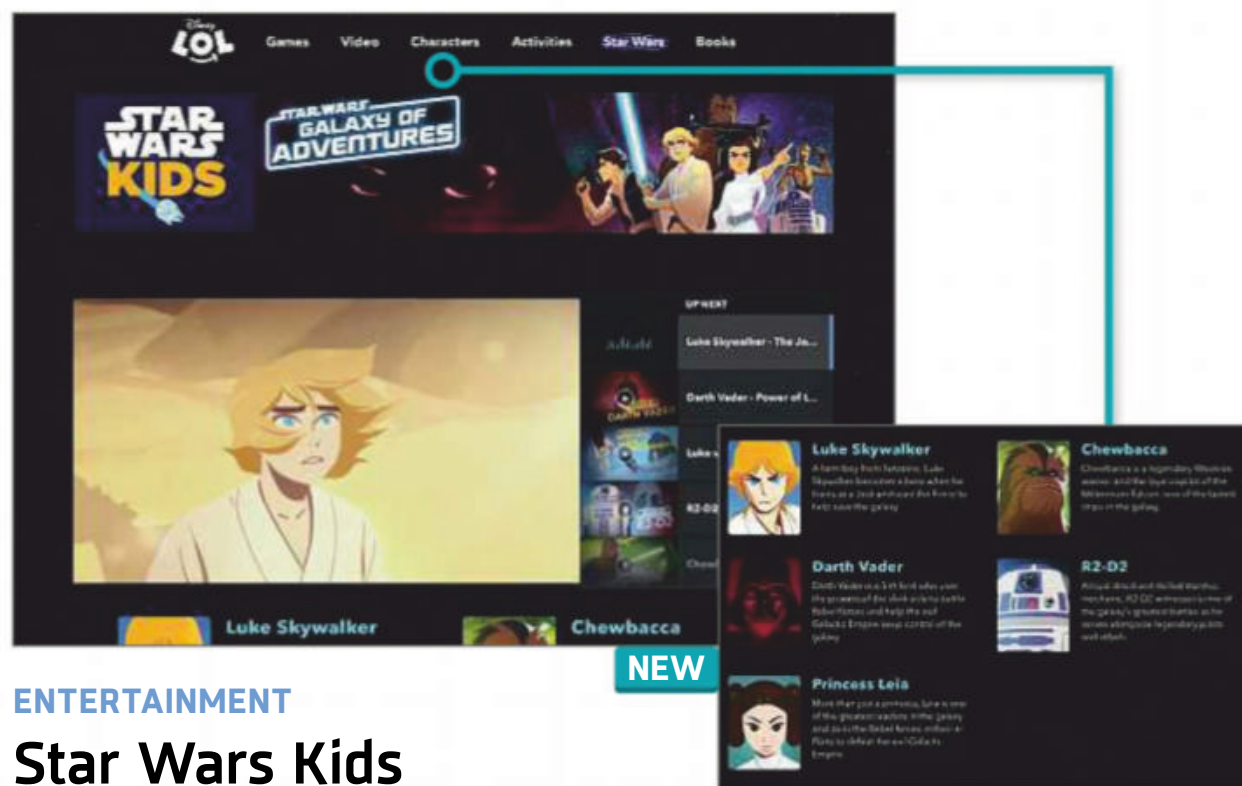
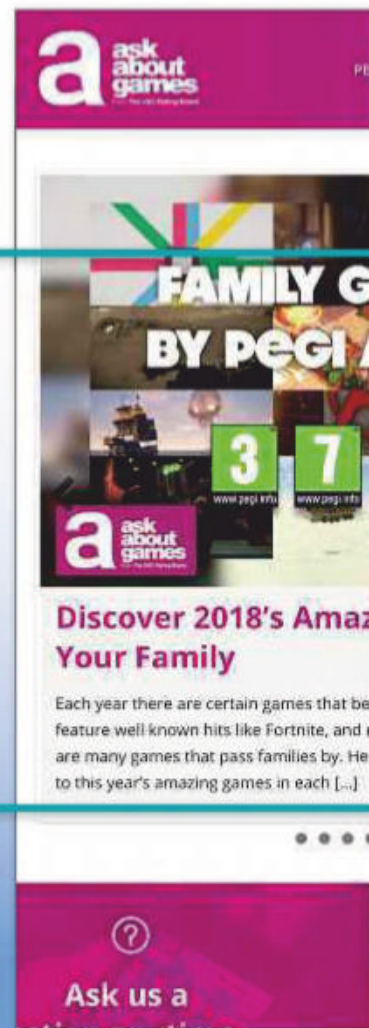
Our rating



CAREERS
Discover the many varied (and well-paid) careers in the video-game industry



FIND AGE RATINGS
Use the VSC Ratings Board's search engine to find information about specific games



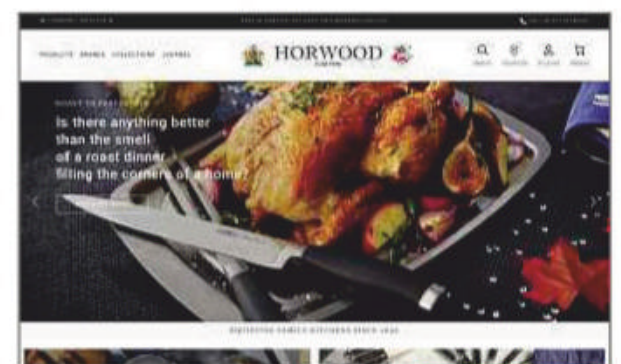
ENTERTAINMENT

Star Wars Kids

www.starwarskids.com

Having bombarded *Star Wars* fans with prequels, sequels and spin-offs, Lucasfilm is now helping children make sense of the saga with a series of animated shorts. Available for free through this site (and YouTube), and running for less than a minute each, the clips explore key moments from the space-based franchise, using dialogue and sound effects from the original films. A built-in media player makes viewing easy, and a well-positioned list shows you what's coming up next. With introductions to the key characters thrown in, this site lays the groundwork for a new fanbase to emerge. Quite what they'll make of Jar Jar Binks when he appears is anyone's guess.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

SHOPPING

Horwood

www.horwood.co.uk

The main aim of Horwood's new website is to sell the company's range of Judge and Stellar cookware, but it also contains the necessary ingredients to make mealtimes a success. As well as a choice of five filterable product categories, it serves up recipes, ideas, tips and guides, takes a comprehensive look at the anatomy of a pan and explains the dozens of different types. The product pages include high-quality images, and you can create a wishlist, ask questions and compare items. There's also a new stockists section to help you find a Horwood retailer nearby.

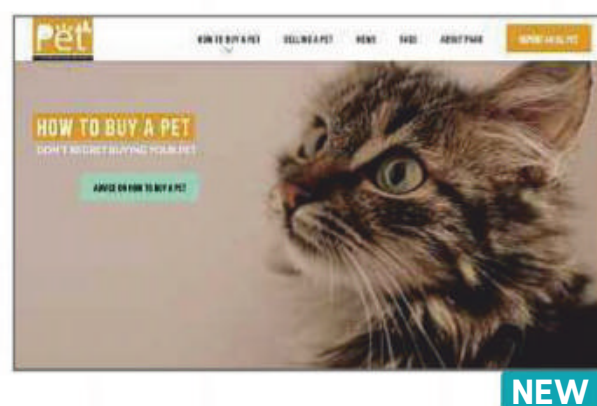
Our rating



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

ASK AWAY
This section features an FAQ and lets you email questions to the site's editor

PARENTS' GUIDES
Don't feel out of the loop - find out about gaming's most popular titles



PETS

How To Buy A Pet www.howtobuyapet.co.uk

According to the Pet Advertising Advisory Group, 37% of Britons fail to do any research before acquiring a new furry friend. Dodgy pet sellers have flourished as a result, but this new website offers to lend a helping paw to anyone considering a dog, cat, bird, fish, rabbit, reptile, horse or amphibian. Its expert advice includes lists of dos and don'ts, information on life expectancy and lifetime costs and, crucially, details of common scams, which it promises to update regularly. With links to organisations that help with ill pets, you'd be barking mad not to check it out.

Our rating



COMMUNITY

TAP London www.taplondon.org

London Mayor Sadiq Khan has launched a campaign to reduce the huge number of rough sleepers in the capital. The idea is that people can tap a contactless card at "giving points" to donate £3 - and this site helps you find the nearest one. Annoyingly, you can't simply enter your postcode, so you're forced to zoom in and out of a Google map, but you can donate online using Apple Pay or a credit card (although, oddly, the lowest suggested amount is £2 rather than £3). There's also lots of information about the campaign, including eye-opening statistics and a comprehensive FAQ.

Our rating



ENVIRONMENT

NoBeef www.Ob Beef.com

There's a new moo-vement in town, and it seems there's a lot at "steak". Cutting out beef, according to campaigners, can combat deforestation, preserve water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions - and this site explains how. Starting with a video that was banned by Facebook in the US, it makes its arguments across 17 sections, peppering them with facts, photos and infographics. The site also details the campaign's successes to date, encouraging visitors to sign a pledge to switch to animal-free proteins or chicken and pork. It's certainly a noble cause but the content could be better organised.

Our rating



BACK ISSUES DISC 2017



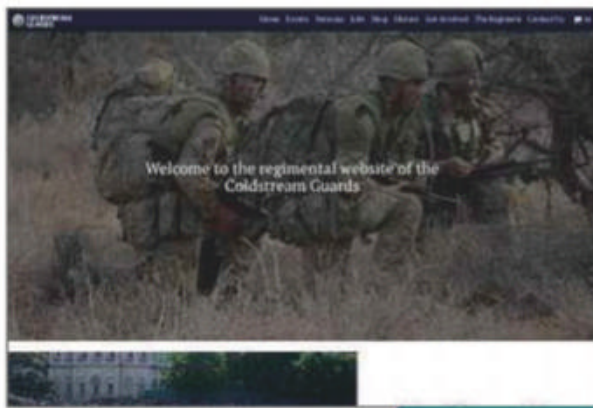
2017 Back Issues Disc

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
MILITARY

Coldstream Guards

coldstreamguards.org.uk

Founded in 1650, the Coldstream Guards is the British Army's oldest continuously existing regiment. If you're heading to this revamped site for a history lesson, however, you may have a battle on your hands. Much of regiment's background is contained in 14 historic volumes and, although there are links to each one, they're split across the Internet Archive and the Hathi Trust Digital Library, which offer access to these packed tomes in various ways. Still, history buffs will find the effort worth it, while others can check out the current regiment's event diary, find out how to get involved and buy merchandise from the online shop.

Our rating

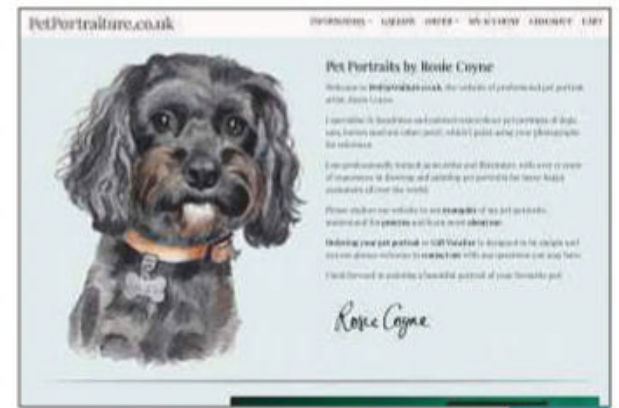

RELAUNCH
CHARITY

Royal Life Saving Society

rlss.org.uk

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) states that "all drownings are preventable and we exist to make sure no one ever drowns". You may not recognise the name but you're sure to have come across at least one of the organisation's ongoing campaigns, such as 'Don't Drink and Drown'. Heartbreaking personal stories highlight the tragic cost of such deaths, while elsewhere you'll find water safety tips, details of charity events and fundraising ideas. The site can be slow at times, with drop-down menus that refuse to drop down, but it's certainly a charity that deserves support.

Our rating

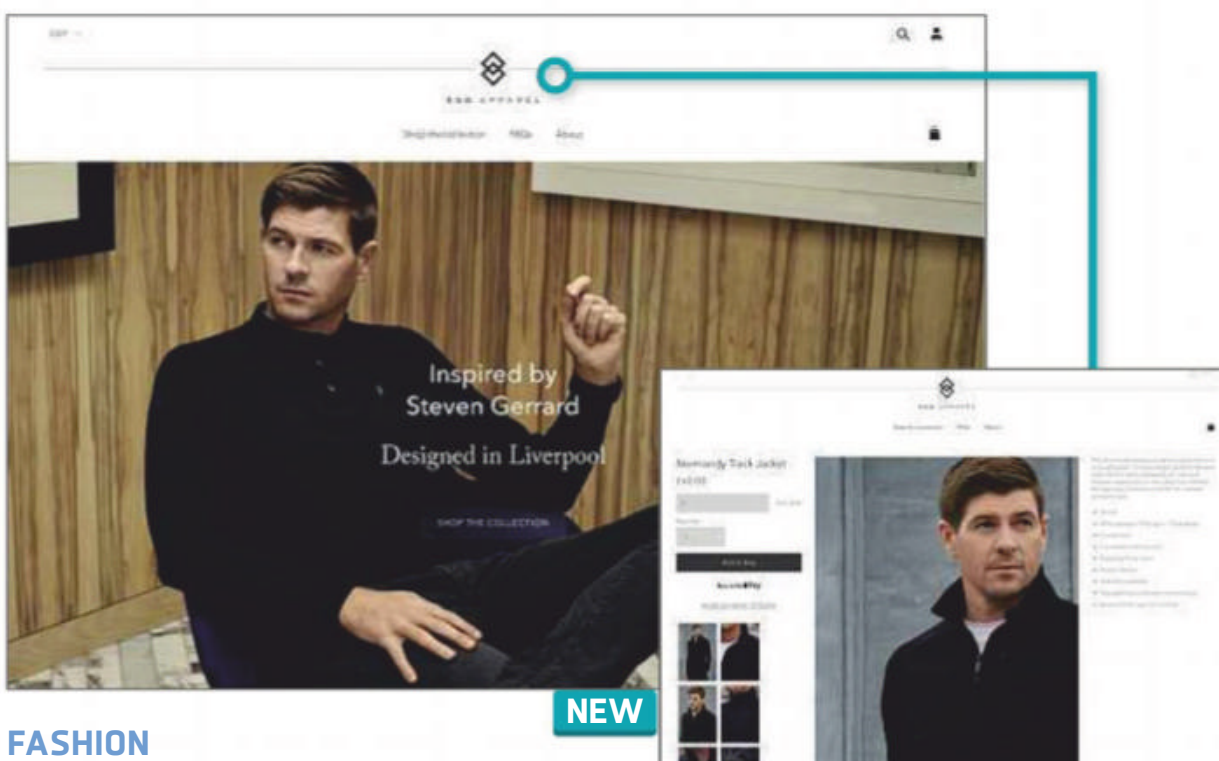

NEW
PETS

Pet Portraiture

petportraiture.co.uk

Your pet is part of the family, so why not treat it to a personal portrait? That's what's on offer from artist Rosie Coyne, who has previously worked as an illustrator for the likes of Coca Cola and Samsung. You'll be relieved to hear that the creative process doesn't involve dragging your furry pal into an artist's studio and begging them to sit still: simply photograph your dog, cat, gerbil or whatever, upload the image and let the artist create a bespoke watercolour of your favourite furball. You'll also find tips to help you get the best results and a gallery featuring the cutest models this side of a Bonny Baby contest.

Our rating


NEW
FASHION

SGG Apparel

www.sggapparel.com

Former Liverpool FC legend Steven Gerrard has effortlessly slipped into his new role as Rangers manager and now he's bravely entering the world of fashion with a new range of clothing made in his home city. This winning website perfectly showcases his mix of slim-fit jumpers, polo shirts, hoodies and T-shirts, all inspired by refined lad culture and modelled by Gerrard himself. Large images illustrate each item, accompanied by bullet-point descriptions and size options. Pricing is also clear, and payment methods include Apple Pay and GPay. It's a classy affair, and with the addition of social-media options and an email newsletter, it has lots to shout about.

Our rating


NEW
TRAVEL

Terahaku

en.terahaku.jp

If you're visiting Japan, staying in a temple or shrine can both save you money and give you peace of mind. With Zen meditation, waterfall training, yoga and tranquil tea ceremonies to enjoy, it beats laying your head in a generic hotel. Terahaku helps you find temple lodgings by typing an area, city, temple or experience into the search bar, or clicking one of the suggestions on the homepage. There are around 100 temples on offer, but poor descriptions and photos, as well as a cluttered reservation page, make for a frustrating experience.

Our rating



Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Get a '.blog' address for free

WordPress is offering free '.blog' subdomains to its users for free. WordPress owns the '.blog' suffix, so it already has a lot of domains registered, including 'art.blog', 'food.blog', 'movie.blog', 'home.blog', 'poetry.blog' and many more. If any of these take your fancy, you can add a subdomain to them for free. So, for example, you can register your film fan blog as 'my.movie.blog'.



Go to wordpress.com and click 'Add a new site'. Click the Start Now button and, on the next page, tick the box labelled 'Share

ideas, experiences, updates...'. The following page gives you the option to use a free '.blog' domain.

Guide Google to Q&As

Does your site have a forum where people ask each other questions? Google loves this kind of content, because people often search for answers by typing questions. Google is adding new tools to help people find the answers on your site, but you need to add additional code so Google recognises the answers it needs. To find out more, visit Google's Webmaster Central blog at bit.ly/qanda465.

Deal of the Fortnight

Names.co.uk (www.names.co.uk) is offering a 'website' domain for £3.60 for the first year, down from £24. Go to the new domains site at bit.ly/wbst465.

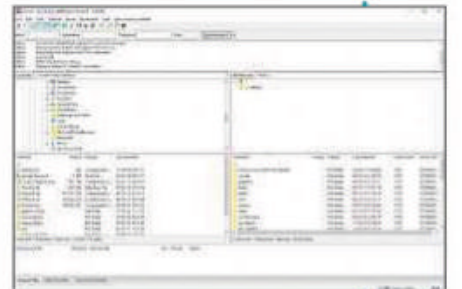
Web-building Helpdesk

Q Fire FTP was a great free Firefox add-on, but updates stopped it working. Can you recommend an FTP client, preferably an add-on or a software alternative, that is also free and as easy to use?

John Young, via email

A I use FileZilla (filezilla-project.org). The software is free to download and use. You can type the details of your website at the top, for a quick connection; or store the details if you use it regularly. It uses two windows: one for the local PC and the other for the remote connection, so you can just drag and drop files from one window to the other. Once you get used to it not being in the browser, I think it's better than any add-on.

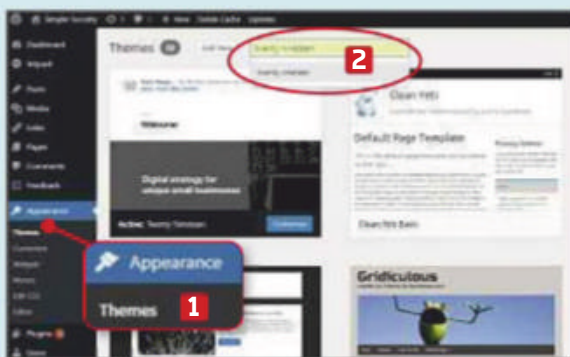
Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor, Web User



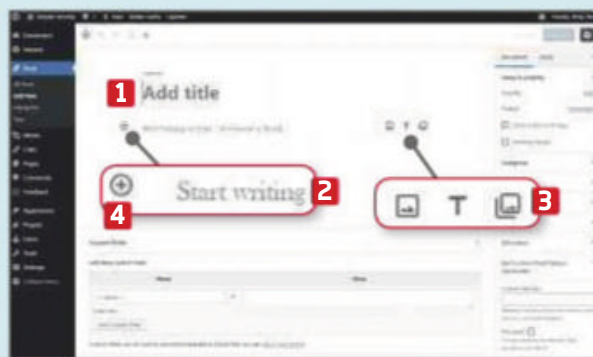
MINI WORKSHOP | Get started with Gutenberg in WordPress 5.0

WordPress 5.0: wordpress.org | 10 mins | Self-hosted WordPress website

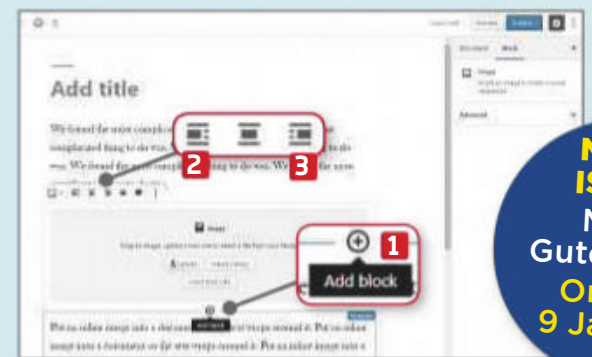
WordPress 5.0 should have launched by the time you read this. Here, and in the next few issues, we'll show you how to get the most from its new post editor, Gutenberg



1 To get the most from Gutenberg, you need a compatible theme. In this workshop, we're using WordPress's own Twenty Nineteen theme, which is installed with the update. To install it on your own blog, click Appearance, Themes, **1** then search for it in the Search Installed Themes box. **2**



2 Open a new post. Type the title in the indicated area. **1** If you simply want to start writing your post, click the 'Start writing' section below. **2** There are preconfigured icons to click if you'd prefer to add an image, heading or image gallery. **3** Alternatively, click the plus symbol **4** to see all the available blocks.

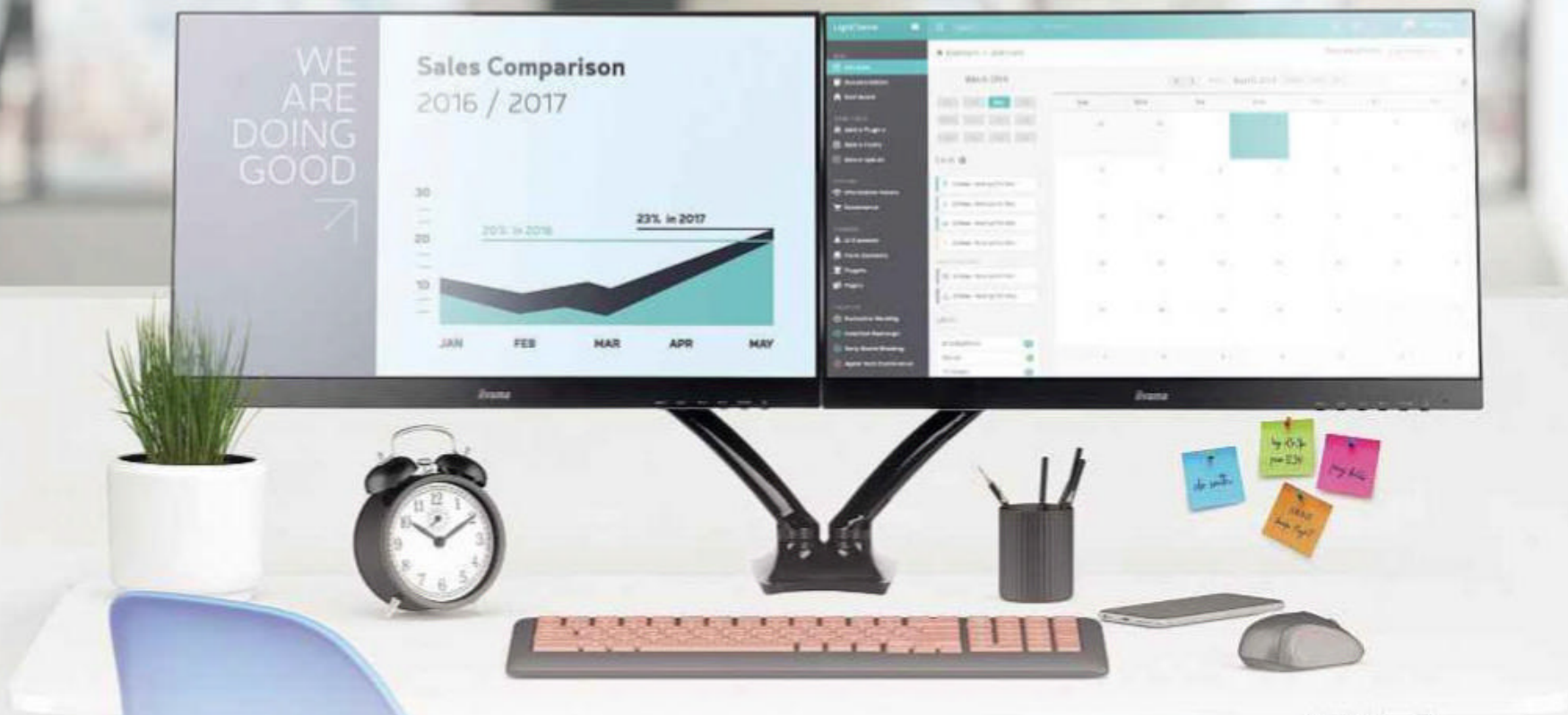


3 Create two text blocks by writing paragraphs as normal - pressing Enter at the end of the first creates a new Paragraph block. Hover near the top of the second block and click 'Add block'. **1** Choose an Image block, select the image and choose the 'Align left' **2** or 'Align right' **3** buttons if you want the text to flow around it.

NEXT ISSUE
More Gutenberg!
On sale 9 January

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What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NETFLIX

Smash into a new season of *Black Mirror*

From 28 December

The lead-up to Season 5 of Charlie Brooker's dystopian anthology felt like part of the show. First came rumours of sequels to fan-favourite episodes, denied by Brooker ("Nope"). Then came news of a choose-your-own-adventure interactive episode (true). Then an official Netflix account (twitter.com/NXOnNetflix) tweeted: "Black Mirror: Bandersnatch 12/28". The tweet was swiftly deleted, but not before fans had carved the date in their diaries.

Conspiracy theories abound, but it's really just a repeat of last year's schedule, when Season 4 began on 27 December. And if 'Bandersnatch' turns out to be a festive special, it'd match the pattern of 2014 - when Jon Hamm's 'White Christmas' episode arrived a week before the rest of the six-part season.

Lewis Carroll fans will recognise the Bandersnatch from *Through the Looking Glass* (mirror, geddit?). It's also the name of an ill-fated ZX Spectrum game from 1984 (bit.ly/bandersnatch465), the year hinted at in photos from the *Black Mirror* set (bit.ly/bmset465).

Keep an eye on *Black Mirror*'s Netflix page (bit.ly/blackm465) for trailers, which you can watch without a Netflix subscription.

BLACK MIRROR: BANDERSNATCH 12/28



N Close the book on *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

From 1 January

Adapting the children's books by Lemony Snicket, known to his mum as Daniel Handler, is no easy task - as Hollywood discovered with its \$140m movie flop in 2004. But Netflix's series has been a triumph, hitting the steampunk trend and thrilling fans of the novels. To ensure you don't miss a waxed whisker of its Tim Burton-esque stylings, Season 3 will be available in Ultra HD (4K).

Returning for the final seven 50-minute episodes are Patrick

Warburton (*Seinfeld*) as Lemony Snicket and Neil Patrick Harris (always Doogie Howser to us) as evil Count Olaf, nemesis of the Baudelaire orphans. Watch the latest official trailer at bit.ly/snicket465.

now Pick up Season 2 of *X-Men* spin-off *The Gifted*

From 6 January

Superhero shows always hold a mirror

to real life, but this *X-Men* spin-off - based on the comics by the late Stan Lee - is closer to the bone than most. Stephen Moyer (*True Blood*) and Amy Acker (*Angel*) star as ordinary parents of mutant kids whose powers see them becoming refugees in the Mutant Underground, where we return for the second half of Season 2.

Seven new episodes arrive week by week on Fox UK, which you can stream

Buffy makes friends with Facebook Watch

You can now watch every episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel* and *Firefly* on Facebook - but only if you're in the US.

Facebook has signed a deal with Fox to bring Joss Whedon's classic shows to its Watch on-demand service (www.facebook.com/watch). Watch has now been rolled out to all Facebook users, but content is subject to the usual geo-blocking.

In other US-only streaming news, Stateside viewers can now watch free ad-supported films on YouTube. Certain movies, including *Rocky* and *Legally Blonde*, have ditched their price tags and added commercial breaks (bit.ly/ytads465).

You can, of course, use a VPN to pretend you're in the US and unlock the geo-blocks. We'll let you know if and when the content becomes available globally.



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



live and on-demand via Now TV. The first eight episodes of Season 2 (except episode 4, for some reason) are still available to watch until 14 January (bit.ly/nowgifted465). The Gifted's YouTube channel is packed with

videos including catch-ups, trailers and cast interviews: bit.ly/gifted465.

N Lock up your online profiles and watch You

From 26 December

"You want to be seen," leers Joe (Penn Badgley from *Gossip Girl*) over the Facebook profile of Beck (Elizabeth

Lail), reminding us all how easy we are to stalk. Joe graduates to actual murder in his quest to make Beck fall in love with him, which seems an odd strategy. But *You* is an unashamed potboiler – and it got such good reviews in the US that it

managed a 90% score on aggregator site Rotten Tomatoes (www.rottentomatoes.com/tv/you).

Stalk a handful of official trailers on the *You* Netflix page, with or without a subscription: bit.ly/youflix465.

Watch four new Luther episodes

From 1 January

The Beeb wishes you an Idris new year with a new four-episode season of *Luther*. Traditional telly viewers get a new helping of Mr Elba's troubled 'tec at 9pm every night from 1-4 January, which is still 23 hours too long between episodes if you ask us. Sadly, we don't yet know if all four episodes will be available on the iPlayer from the start of

their TV run (as with recent BBC hits *Killing Eve* and *Informer*) but if they're not, you won't have to wait long to watch them in one go.

In the meantime, you can watch the first four seasons (16 episodes in all) plus the latest trailer on the iPlayer: bit.ly/luther465. Season 1-4 are also on Netflix (bit.ly/lutherflix465).



In case you missed it...

Following the success of his 2016 documentary *The Undiscovered Peter Cook*, Victor Lewis-Smith is back with three new films about Peter Sellers, Kenneth



Williams and Tony Hancock. The series is screening on Sky Arts, which you can stream live and on-demand via Now TV (bit.ly/nowarts465).

Future; and *The Great British Bake-Off* 2018. To watch all these shows, you need an Entertainment Pass (£7.99 per month, bit.ly/nowent465). *RuPaul's Drag*

Now TV also has a fourth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars* (bit.ly/rupaul465); *Romesh's Look Back to the*

Race, by the way, is getting a UK spin-off on the Beeb's online channel, BBC3, in 2019 (bit.ly/rubbc465).

Amazon Prime Video has taken delivery of three excellent feature films: Kevin Macdonald's documentary *Whitney*; Oscar-winning credit crunch comedy *The Big Short*; and acclaimed animation *The Breadwinner*, about a girl growing up under the Taliban.



Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Synology DS119j

Add your own hard drive to this network-attached enclosure to store important files securely and privately, and make them accessible from any device – wherever you are

This latest addition to Synology's range of network-attached storage (NAS) devices is a single-drive enclosure, which means it has space to house one hard drive inside its case. It's the most affordable of Synology's range of NAS products, aimed at people who don't currently have a NAS drive, and offers a broad range of useful and easy-to-use features.

NAS snobs will tell you that this type of single-bay NAS can't provide the same level of secure backup as a device with multiple drives – one that offers 'redundancy' in that more than one copy of a file is saved to more than one drive, so nothing is lost if one of the drives fails. While this is true, the DS119j will back up your PC just as well as a standard external hard drive. In fact, it's better than most because it has its own built-in software for the job and doesn't even need to be connected to the PC you want to back up.

Backups aside, the main benefits of this NAS become apparent when you use it to access and share files over the internet. Store your collection of movies, photos and music on the device and you can use the supplied software to create your very own range of cloud services. However, instead of having to trust your content to a corporation that

may be hoping to harvest your data for its own profit – as many cloud services have been accused of doing – these files will remain under your control, stored safely in your own home and on your own device.

Easy setup

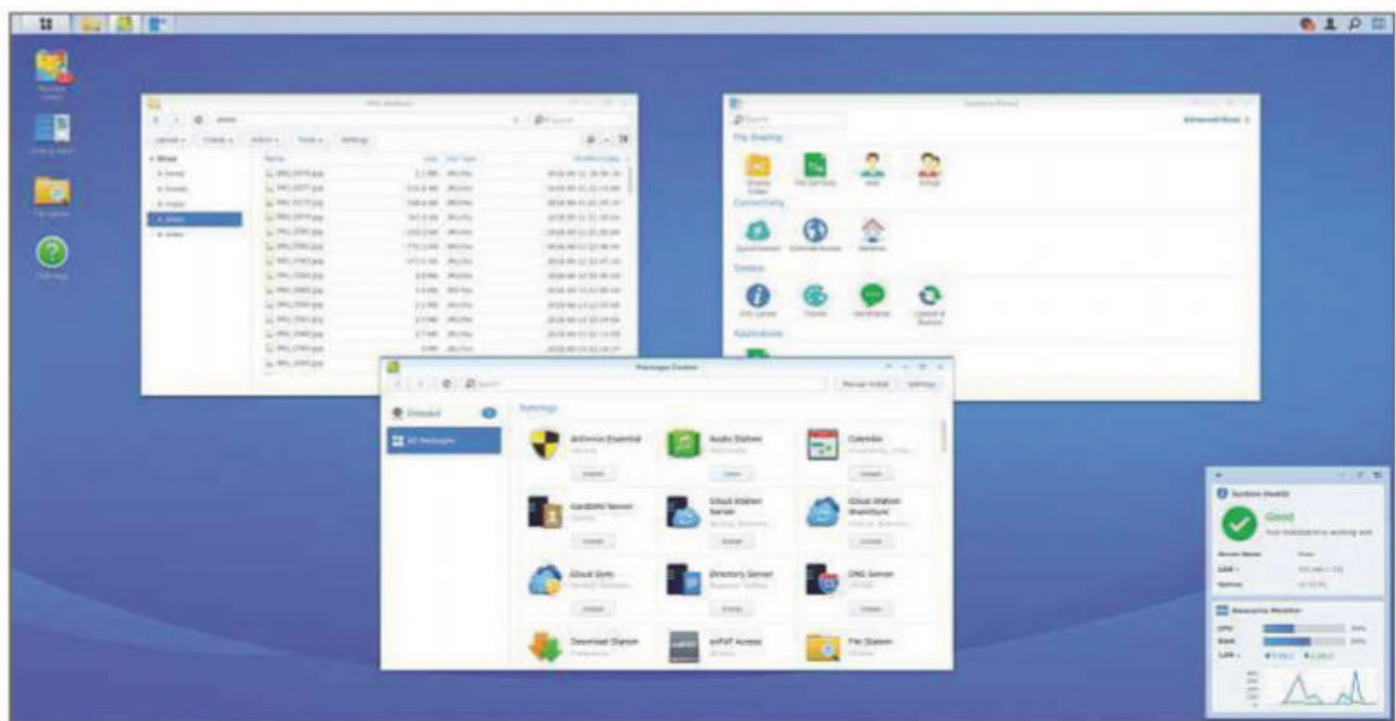
For the sub-£100 price, you only get the enclosure, not the hard drive, but you can stick almost any SATA drive in there. If you already have a spare, you're all set to go. We used a WD Red drive that we

happened to have hanging around. Otherwise you'll need to buy one – a 1TB WD Red costs around £50 on Amazon (bit.ly/wdrtb465).

Installing a drive in the DS119j is simple – all you need is a small screwdriver to secure it. The device's case slides apart, exposing a SATA connection for a 3.5in drive to slot into, and the supplied screws fit into the chassis to hold everything in place. If you have a smaller, 2.5in laptop-style drive, you'll need



“The software is way ahead of most NAS drives – vastly more accessible with an impressive range of useful apps”



The DS119j has a browser-based operating system built in

PRODUCT INFO

Synology DS119j

Price: £98.49
Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/syn465

SPECIFICATIONS

- 800MHz Marvell Armada 3700 88F3720 64-bit processor
- 256MB of DDR3L memory
- 1 x 3.5in drive bay (2.5in drive supported with optional Disk Holder)
- 14TB maximum drive size
- 1 x Gigabit Ethernet port
- 2 x USB 2.0 ports
- 224 x 166 x 71mm
- 699g (enclosure only)
- Two-year warranty

FOR

- ✓ Create your own cloud
- ✓ Keep files accessible, but private and secure

AGAINST

- ✗ Slower than online services
- ✗ Good apps but not as good as the best online alternatives

TWO DRIVE BAYS

Synology DS218j,
£151.49
bit.ly/synd465



DRIVE PRE-INSTALLED

WD 2 TB My Cloud
Personal Cloud Storage,
£174.99
bit.ly/wd465



an adapter – you can buy Synology's own Drive Holder Type C for around £10, but anything that can house a 2.5in drive in a 3.5in chassis will do the trick. You can then secure the case with screws to lock the drive inside.

The next step is to connect the NAS to your router with the Ethernet cable (we found the supplied Ethernet and power cables rather too short) and plug it into the wall. Now open a browser and type find.synology.com to set up the device. You'll be invited to download and install the latest version of the drive's operating system, which takes about 10 minutes.

Operating system

Synology's operating system is the star element of its products. This might sound a rather grand term to use for software that controls a jumped-up hard drive, but the way it uses the enclosure's computing power to create such a powerful window-driven browser interface is exceptional. Not only can you use it to access the files on the drive, but it also lets you install all kinds of apps, from media players and tools that download torrent files, to full website-management systems such as WordPress.

The only downside is that while the app itself is slick, the interface can feel a bit slow. Because it has to range over your network and beyond, interrogate a hard drive and

then send all the data back again, you get a palpable lag. But let's not over-egg this: the software is way ahead of what you get with most NAS drives, is vastly more accessible and has an impressive range of genuinely useful apps.

Making a NAS drive accessible over the internet, so you can access its contents when you're away from home, is no mean feat, but Synology has cleverly avoided the usual problems by getting you to sign in to its own service, thus circumnavigating the need to forward ports or configure firewalls on your router. This means that within minutes of uploading your photos to the device, you can be up and running with – for example – a photo app called Moments. This looks just like the photo apps you find on mobile devices, but is accessible over the web and only by you or those you give access to.

OUR VERDICT



The Synology DS119j lets you store your files on a secure drive in your own home, while still making them as accessible over the internet as if they were kept in Google's or Microsoft's cloud-storage services. But what you gain in privacy and security, you lose in speed and convenience – Synology's software and apps are

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

brilliant but you won't find this system as slick and responsive as the online services, which are hosted on vast servers with super-fast industrial-speed internet connections.

D-Link DCS-2802KT

This new wireless security camera kit comes with two cameras and a generous subscription to store your footage in the cloud

The D-Link DCS-2802KT security-camera system comes in two parts: a hub that connects to your router and two IP65-rated weatherproof cameras, which can be placed around your home to report back to you whenever there's movement or sound. The supplied hub supports up to four cameras – however, there are only two in the box and there's currently no way of buying additional units, though they should become available soon.

The two cameras are easy to set up. They magnetically attach to a half-ball mount that can be screwed into the wall, and their rechargeable

“A high-quality system with lots of security features”



PRODUCT INFO

D-Link DCS-2802KT

Price: £369.99

Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/dlin465

SPECIFICATIONS

- 2-megapixel camera
- Infrared
- Built-in microphone
- Works with Amazon Alexa and Google Home
- 1080p (1,920 x 1,080) video, up to 24fps
- 2.4GHz 802.11n Wi-Fi
- IP65 rating for outdoor use
- Rechargeable battery
- Hub connections: 1 x Fast Ethernet; 1 x microSD slot; 1 x USB 2.0 port

FOR

- ✓ Incredible battery life
- ✓ Free cloud storage
- ✓ Good quality 1080p footage

AGAINST

- ✗ Doesn't constantly record video
- ✗ Slightly confusing app

batteries are powered via micro-USB – although the battery can't be removed, so you'll have to endure some downtime while charging. However, at the time of writing, our cameras had been active for 21 days, during which the battery gauge dropped 11% on one camera and 15% on the other, which indicates that you shouldn't need to charge them more than four times a year.

Cloud storage

Once the cameras are installed, you can watch a livestream on your phone. More usefully, the kit's motion and noise detection records a snippet of video if anything moves within its field of vision, then logs it, sending you an instant notification so you can check it. Footage is recorded in crystal-clear 1080p video and works well in the dark.

This footage is stored in the cloud for a set period of time, depending on how much you're prepared to spend on a subscription. You get the Premium level free for the first

year (unlimited clips from up to five cameras, stored for two weeks), then the subscription reverts to the Free plan (three cameras, stored for 24 hours). You can download clips from your account at any time and notifications of captures are instant, so with a bit of discipline the free account could be enough. The Basic plan ups this to seven days of storage for £2.29 per month (or £21.99 per year), which is reasonable, or you could continue with the Premium offering for £4.49 per month (or £43.99 per year). The top tier is the Pro package, which supports ten cameras for 30

days, and costs £8.99 per month or £87.99 per year.

Alternatively, you can attach your own storage to the hub via microSD or USB. This won't help if a thief knows what they're doing and nicks the hub or the storage, but it's still a valuable backup for the Free subscription.

Two more features deserve a mention: first, the hub has a very loud siren built into it, which can blast out over 100 decibels when movement is triggered; second, the cameras come with a two-way microphone, so you can speak to people if they appear at the other end of the camera.

OUR VERDICT



This D-Link camera kit is a high-quality system with lots of useful security features. It's simple to set up, the batteries last for ages, you get two cameras and the free year of Premium cloud storage is a bonus. Even after this

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

expires, D-Link's Basic plan provides peace of mind at a very reasonable price.

PHILIPS

Monitors

Vivid, true-to-life colours
in an elegant design

276E7QDSW

innovation ✨ you



amazon



ebuyer.com



Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

SMART SPEAKER

Google Home Hub

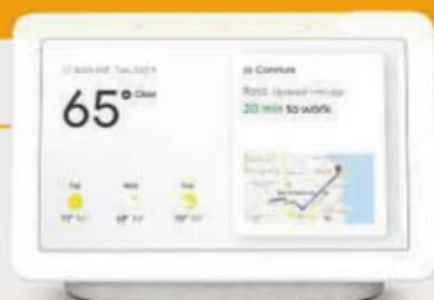
£139 from bit.ly/homehub463

Tested: Issue 463

Its low price, seamless integration with Google services and ability to double as a digital photo frame make the Google Home Hub the best smart screen we've seen.

KEY SPECS

7in LCD touch screen ■ 1,024 x 600-pixels resolution ■ Dual-band 802.11b/g/n/ac ■ Bluetooth 5.0 ■ 178 x 118 x 67mm ■ 480g ■ Choice of Aqua, Chalk, Charcoal or Sand ■ One-year return-to-base warranty



MONITOR

Philips Brilliance 241B7QPJKEB

£209.20 from bit.ly/phil462

Tested: Issue 462

This Philips monitor is superb value for money. Its impressive colour accuracy and contrast ratio make it ideal for watching films and browsing the web.

KEY SPECS

24in screen ■ 1,920 x 1,080-pixel resolution ■ 16:9 aspect ratio ■ IPS ■ 60Hz refresh rate ■ 1,000:1 native contrast ■ Webcam ■ HDMI, VGA and DisplayPort ports ■ 5ms response time ■ 2W internal speaker ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty



TABLET

Amazon Fire HD 8

£79.99 from bit.ly/amazon461

Tested: Issue 461

The Fire HD 8 offers excellent battery life, superb build quality, seamless Alexa integration and impressive performance – all at a great-value price.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.3GHz processor ■ 16GB storage ■ 1.5GB memory ■ 8in, 1,280 x 800-pixel screen ■ 2-megapixel rear camera, VGA front camera ■ 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi ■ 214 x 128 x 9.2mm ■ 341g ■ 1-year return-to-base warranty



BUDGET SMARTPHONE

Motorola Moto E5 Plus

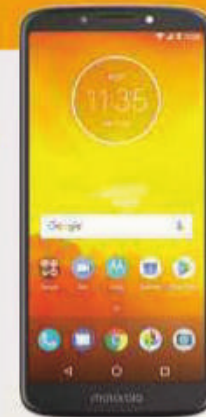
£149 from bit.ly/motoplus460

Tested: Issue 460

Impressive specifications, a 6in screen, excellent battery life and a 12-megapixel camera that captures stunning images – the Moto E5 Plus is astounding value for money.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.4GHz Snapdragon 425 processor ■ 2GB RAM ■ 16GB storage, expandable by 256GB ■ 12-megapixel rear camera, 8-megapixel front camera ■ 6in, 720 x 1,440-pixel screen ■ 161.9 x 75.3 x 9.35 mm ■ 200g ■ Fingerprint reader



LAPTOP

Acer Aspire 5

£629.99 from bit.ly/acer458

Tested: Issue 458

The Acer Aspire 5 is a no-frills, fast-performance laptop. It's not as slim and lightweight as top-of-the-range models, but is a reliable Windows workhorse that powers through tasks.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 1.6GHz Intel Core i5-8250U processor ■ 256GB SSD ■ 8GB memory ■ 15.6in, 1,920 x 1,080-pixels screen ■ 1 x USB 2, 2 x USB 3, 1 x USB Type-C ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ Windows 10 Home ■ 382 x 263 x 21mm ■ 2.2kg ■ 1-year return-to-base



ROUTER

Linksys EA9500 Max-Stream

£224.99 from bit.ly/lksy456

Tested: Issue 456

The EA9500 Max-Stream is a superb router that's packed with features and sensibly priced. It delivers terrific wireless speeds, creates two 5GHz networks on separate frequencies and offers an excellent smartphone app.

KEY SPECS

802.11a/b/g/n/ac ■ 8 x Gigabit Ethernet ports ■ 2 x USB 3 ports ■ Guest-network mode ■ DLNA media server ■ 318 x 265 x 67mm ■ Two-years return-to-base warranty



SOFTWARE & SERVICES

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE

DxO PhotoLab

£99 from
bit.ly/dxo455

Tested: Issue 455

If you're put off by Adobe's subscription costs, DxO PhotoLab is the best alternative for managing and editing your photos. Its interface is streamlined and elegant, and the editing and image quality are exceptional. It's also very simple to use and comes with lots of sophisticated tools.

KEY FEATURES

RAW conversion ■ High quality noise-reduction ■ Optical corrections ■ Red-eye correction ■ Advanced light and colour ■ Batch processing ■ Selective tone ■ Full-screen mode ■ Spot-weighted mode



VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE

Adobe Premiere Elements 2018

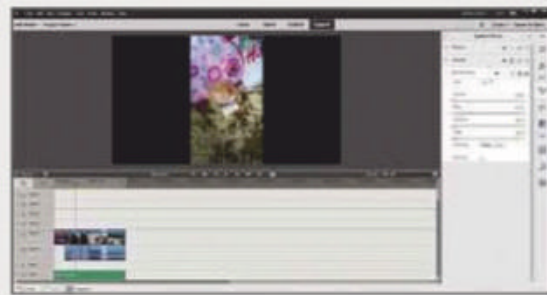
£86.56 from
www.adobe.com/uk

Tested: Issue 453

With its clean interface and sackful of special effects, Elements performs just about every action you'll ever need from a consumer-level video-editing suite. It's a powerful beast and rendering is super-speedy, even when exporting at 4K – but note that it only runs on 64-bit systems.

KEY FEATURES

Automatic editing ■ Image stabiliser ■ Surround-sound support ■ Stop-motion capture ■ Variable-speed control ■ Unlimited timelines ■ DVD disc authoring (no Blu-ray support) ■ 4K support ■ Requires Windows 7/8.1/10 or Mac OS (64-bit versions only)



Web User Gold Award winners

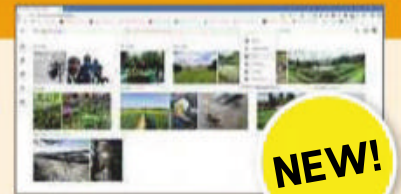
PHOTO-SHARING SERVICE

Google Photos

Free from photos.google.com

Tested: Issue 464

Simple and smart, Google Photos has overtaken Flickr as the best way to share photos online. Its unlimited free storage is unbeatable and its Assistant is invaluable.



WEBSITE-BUILDING TOOL

Wix

Free from www.wix.com

Tested: Issue 463

Wix is easy to master and has virtually no limits. Its wealth of brilliant add-ons can be used to create any kind of site you want.



ILLUSTRATION SOFTWARE

Autodesk SketchBook

Free from sketchbook.com

Tested: Issue 462

This powerful drawing program is hard to fault and perfectly balances ease-of-use with sophistication and creative extras.



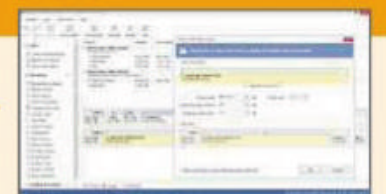
PARTITION MANAGER

Macrorit Partition Expert

Free from bit.ly/macro461

Tested: Issue 461

Partition Expert has a clean, easy-to-use interface with many more features than the basic Windows Disk Management tool.



ANDROID VIDEO EDITOR

Adobe Premiere Clip

Free from bit.ly/prem460 **Tested:** Issue 460

Premiere Clip's excellent no-cost ad-free toolbox of features makes editing videos on your Android device incredibly easy.



WEB USER BACK ISSUES DISCS

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EVERY ISSUE FROM
2014 TO 2017



Best Free Software

IMAGE EDITOR

ImBatch 6

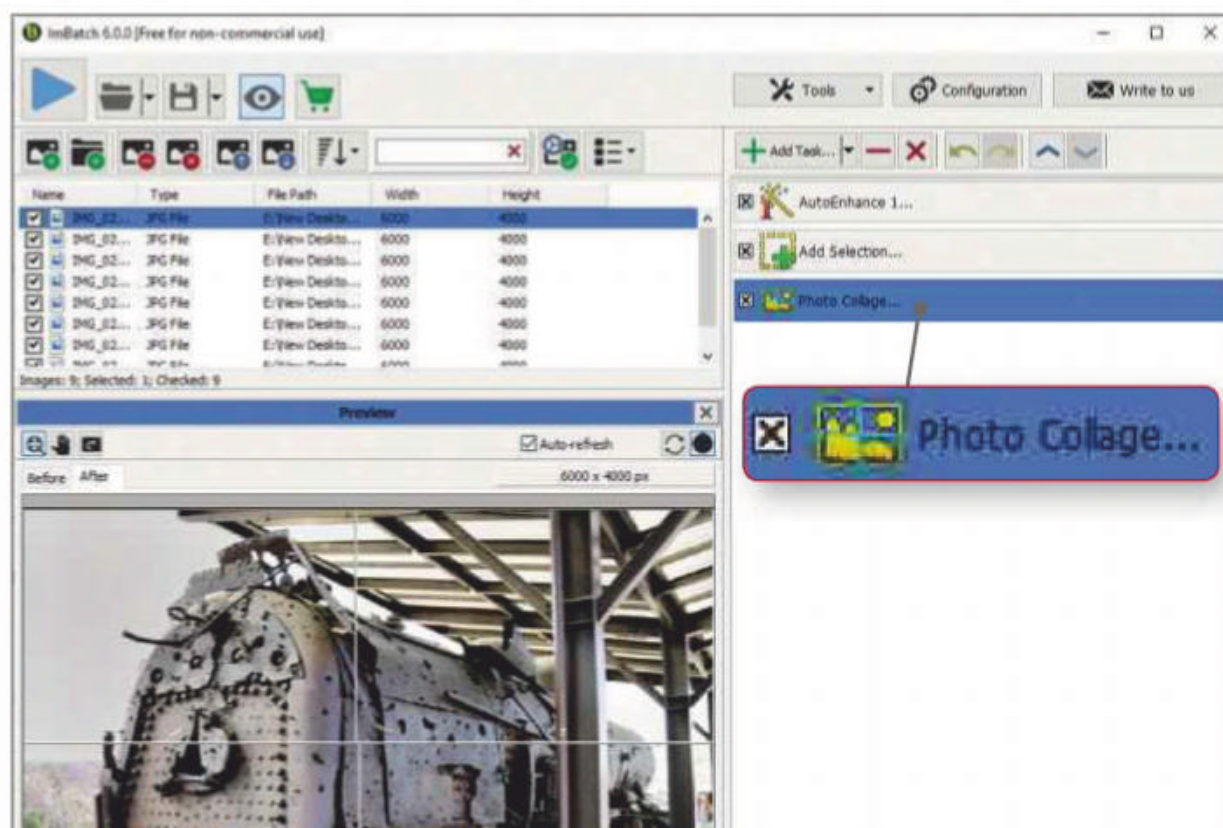
bit.ly/imbatch465

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 20.1MB

It's generally fairly easy to fix problems and apply improvements to your photos, and there's no shortage of free software you can use for these tasks, but if you're applying the same fixes to a large number of images, the process quickly becomes monotonous.

ImBatch solves this problem by letting you make multiple changes to whole batches of photos in one go by queuing up tasks. The software comes with a huge selection of different options to apply, including AutoCrop, AutoEnhance, Brightness/Contrast, Colour Balance, Resize Canvas, Curves, Fish Eye, Frame, Mosaic, Photo Collage, Publish on Facebook, Resize and Rotate. You can add images individually or



select whole folders of them.

The latest version of ImBatch has been rewritten using a new coding platform, and the design has been tweaked so that the interface looks more modern. "No more fancy skins", as the developer puts it.

The way the program displays the batch processing has been improved, and there are some welcome new tasks – Panorama and Remove Red Eyes. There's also a new Recent category that provides easy access to the 10 tasks you used last. ImBatch will now give you the

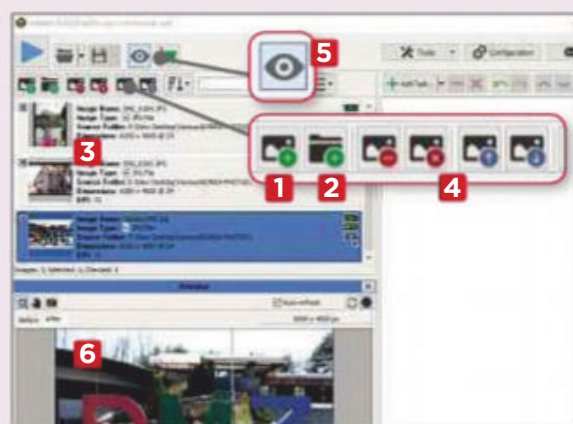
option to remove all images from the list once processing is complete.

Finally, image selection has been improved with a new setting that lets you choose between all, only marked and only unchecked – and there's now an option to save form settings.

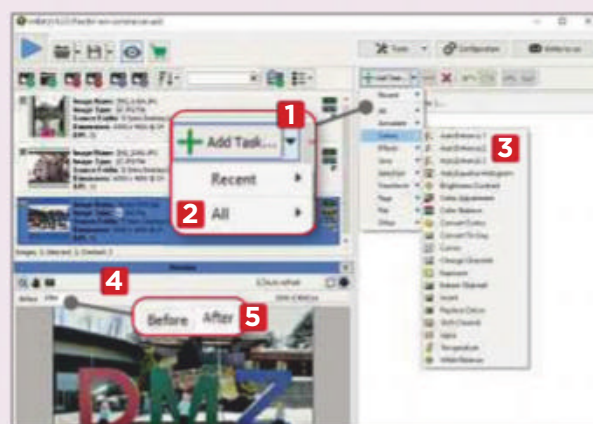
ImBatch was already a very useful program, but the latest changes make it even more essential for anyone who needs to make the same improvements to multiple images. It's completely free for personal use, but commercial usage requires a licence.



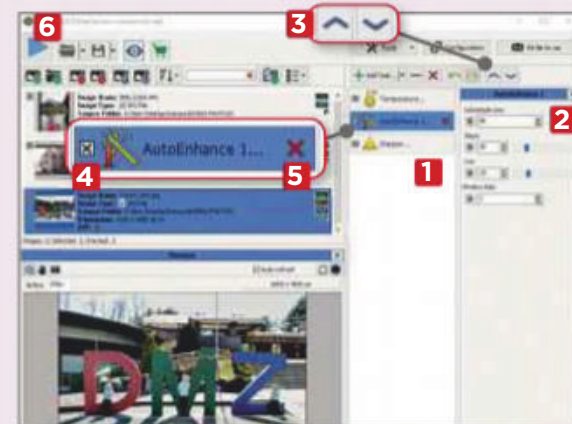
MINI WORKSHOP | Improve your photos using ImBatch 6



1 To get started with ImBatch, either drag and drop some photos onto the interface or click the buttons to add multiple files **1** or a folder. **2** The list of pictures to edit will appear on the left. **3** You can use the buttons above to remove photos or reorder them. **4** Click the Eye button **5** to show the preview pane. **6**

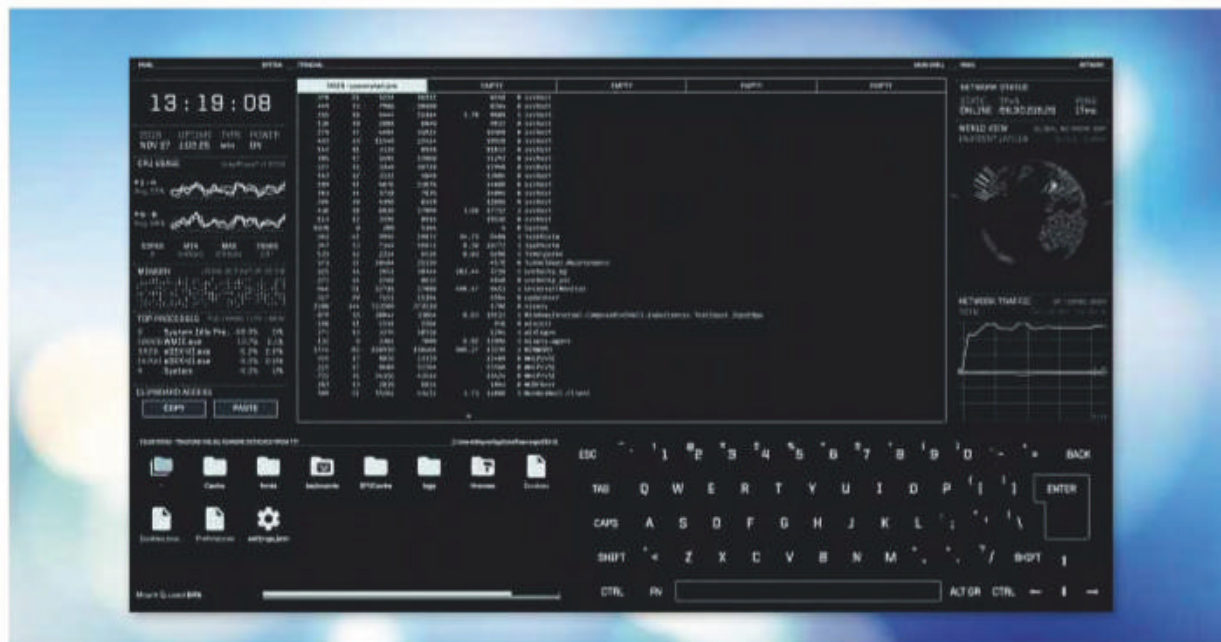


2 The next step is to add some tasks to apply. Click the arrow next to Add Task on the right, **1** and choose the first option to include. All **2** displays the full list. The AutoEnhance options **3** under Colours are a good place to start. The results will be reflected in the preview window, **4** and you can switch between Before and After views. **5**



3 ImBatch usefully lets you queue up multiple effects. **1** Click one to customise it. **2** Use the arrows above **3** to reorder the tasks. Click the X on the left **4** to deselect a task, or the one on the right to remove it. **5** Click the Run button **6** to apply all tasks.

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



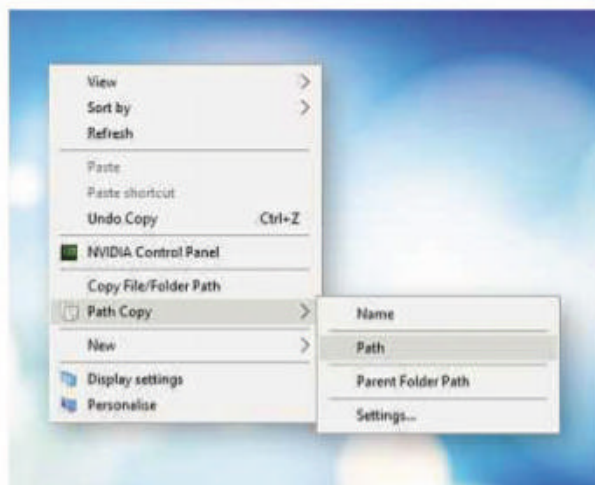
SYSTEM TOOL

eDEX-UI

bit.ly/edex465

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, Mac OS or Linux **File size:** 65.8MB

Ever wished your computer looked more like those found in classic sci-fi movies? If so, give eDEX-UI a try. This is a fullscreen desktop application that displays information about your system and includes a real terminal window (Bash on Linux and Powershell in Windows). It's designed to work with touchscreens, but can be controlled using a keyboard and mouse if you prefer. There are five different themes available for the program, with more planned for the future.



SYSTEM TOOL

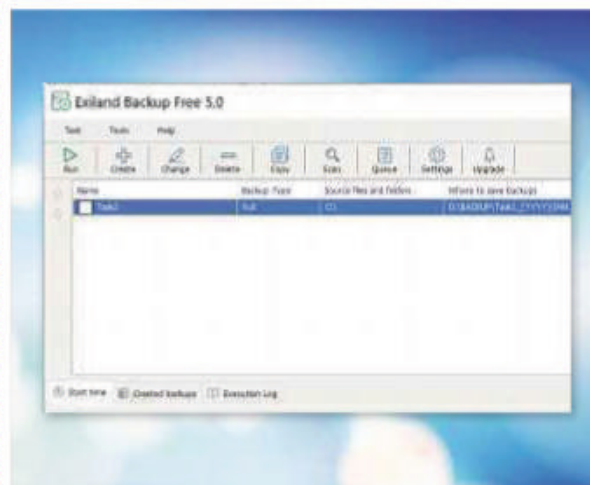
Path Copy Copy 16

pathcopycopy.github.io

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 1.3MB

This program lets you easily copy the full path to any file or folder on your PC. It adds some commands to the context menu, so all you have to do to use it is right-click an item and select Copy File/Folder Path. There's also a Path Copy entry that lets you copy the item's Name, Path or Parent Folder Path. This new version can copy WSL (Windows Subsystem for Linux) paths, and add double quotes to paths.



BACKUP PROGRAM

Exiland Backup Free 5

exiland-backup.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 5.3MB

Exiland Backup Free is a simple tool for backing up important personal files. It can create full and differential backups, and synchronise files between locations. To use it, create a new task, then follow the wizard to choose the source and destination locations. The program can back up files on demand or on a schedule. This update improves the interface, fixes bugs and adds a global file-masks editor.

New Windows Apps

DVD & Video Audio Player For All Formats

bit.ly/dvdvid465

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 33.14MB

This free DVD and video player can handle all common formats, play audio and apply subtitles and effects to playing videos. It handles 4K and 360-degree content, too.



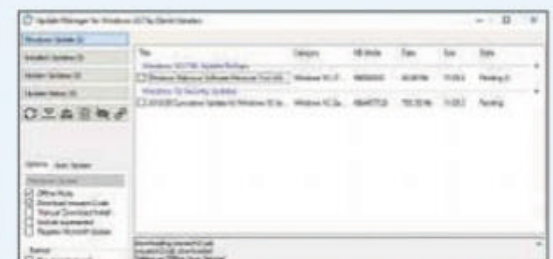
Update Manager for Windows

bit.ly/update465

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 1.05MB

This app lets you control the process and timing of Windows 10 updates. No more unwanted forced reboots or long update sessions at the worst possible times. You can also manually download updates.



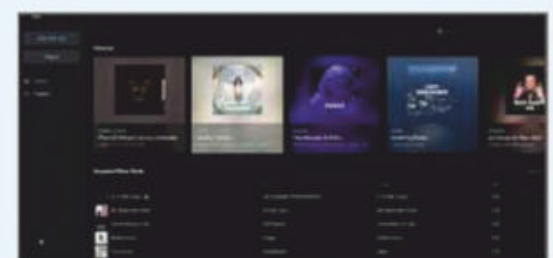
Tidal

bit.ly/tidal465

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 136.71MB

Tidal is a music-streaming service created by rapper Jay-Z. Songs are high quality and ad-free, but it's a paid-for service and you need to enter your credit card details to access the free trial.



HARD-DRIVE CHECKER

CrystalDiskInfo 8

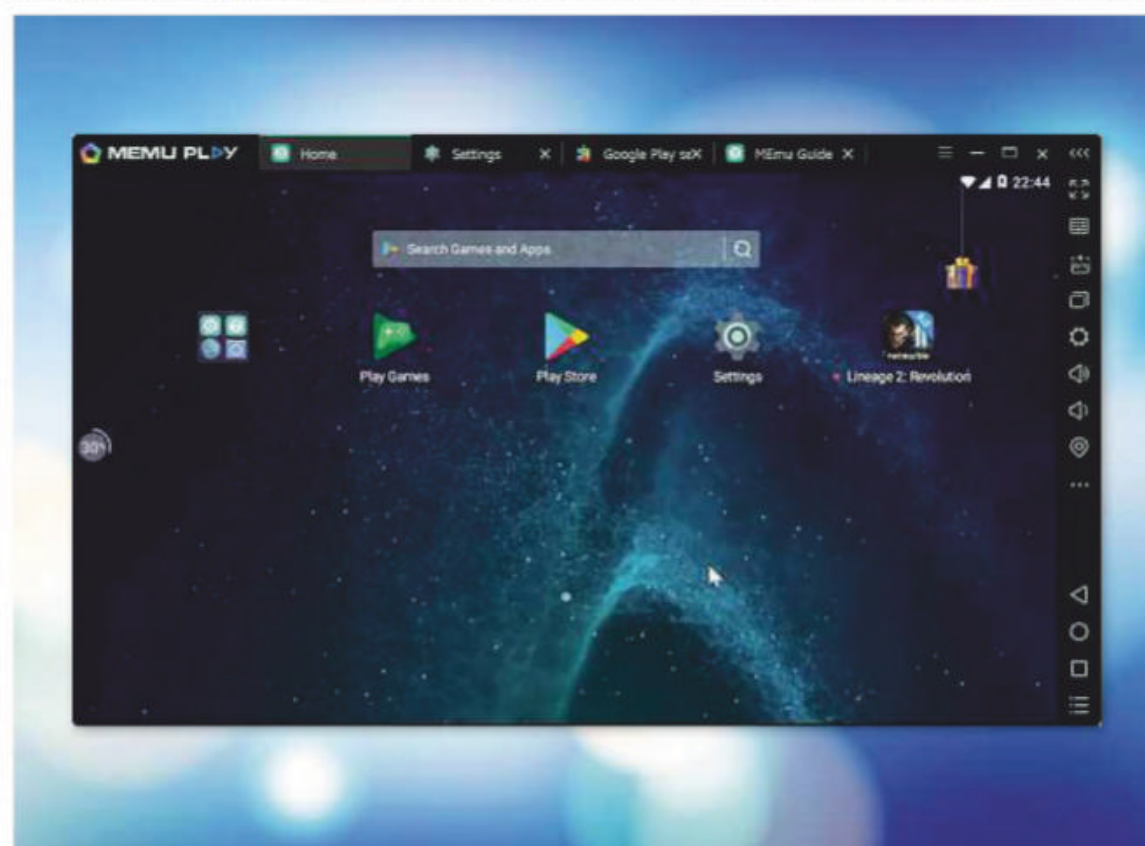
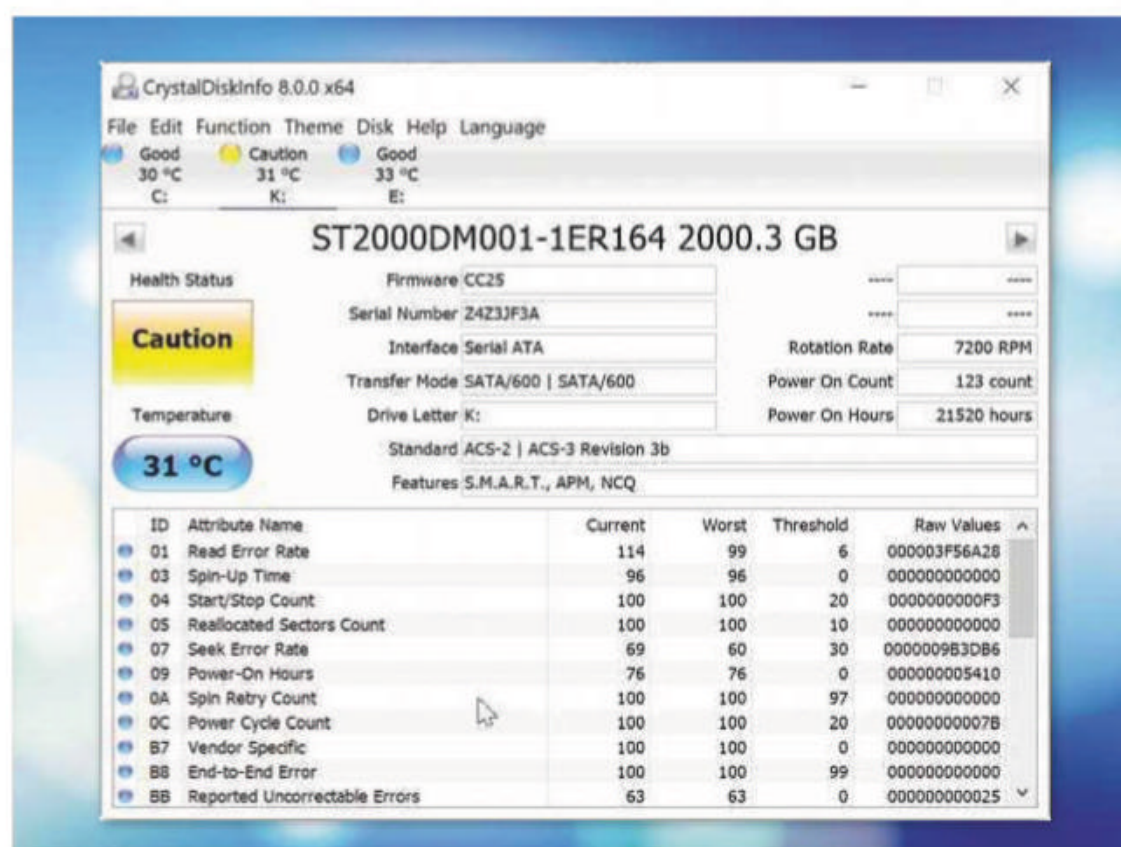
crystallmark.info

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 4.3MB

Hard drives and SSDs have a limited lifespan and when they start to go wrong, it can have catastrophic consequences – especially if you don't have a solid backup plan in place. CrystalDiskInfo monitors all your drives and displays their SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) health status and information, so you can quickly take action if problems start to develop. The program also displays a drive's current temperature, and details such as the number of hours it's been active.

This latest version of CrystalDiskInfo adds support for new drive controllers and chipsets, and gains official support for ARM64.



ANDROID EMULATOR

MEmu 6

www.memuplay.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 2.5MB

MEmu is an Android emulator for Windows that runs almost any app available from the Google Play store and beyond. It even offers a Multi-MEmu mode you can launch from the Start menu to run multiple emulator windows at the same time. This latest version has an upgraded core engine for better performance, and boot time has been reduced by 30%. The emulator's internal storage has increased to 32GB, and processor usage has been improved significantly in OpenGL mode. You can now choose a microphone directly in the program for apps that offer voice control.

Make sure you decline the bundled junk during installation.

PDF EDITOR

AlterPDF 2

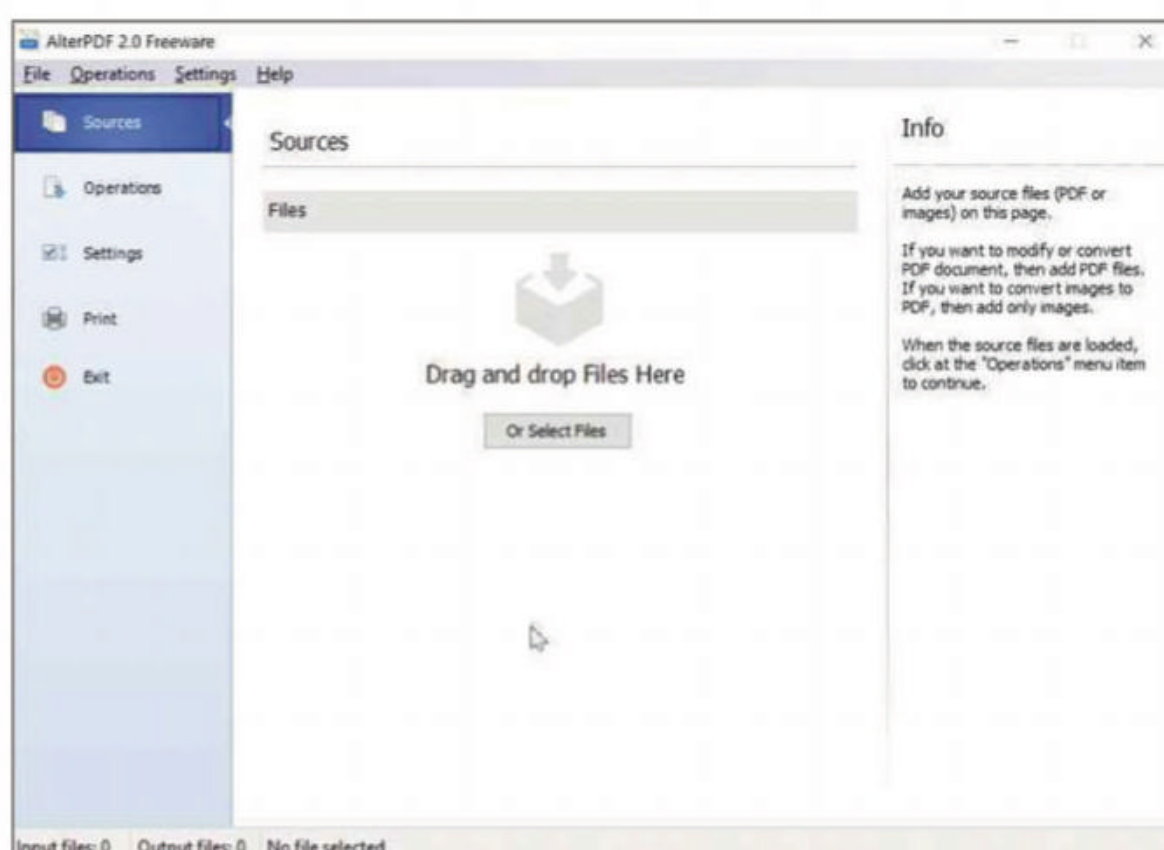
www.alterpdf.net

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 9.9MB

PDFs are designed to display on any device, regardless of the operating system and setup. Unlike images, PDF files can be edited and changed using the right software. AlterPDF is a collection of free tools that let you convert a PDF to a JPEG, and vice versa, extract text and images, merge multiple PDF files into the one document and split a single PDF into multiple files. You can also rotate, crop and remove content, encrypt, decrypt or sign a document, and change its metadata.

AlterPDF 2 gains the ability to work with multiple input documents, which saves you having to switch between individual files.





GAME

The Child's Sight

bit.ly/csight465

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 722MB

This first-person horror game takes place in an old attic, with flashbacks to what happened to you when you were a baby in your cot. The story becomes clearer as you progress and unlock more chapters, and there's also a Time Attack mode that makes the game easier. The graphics and sound are highly atmospheric and help to make this a very creepy piece of work.

Don't install...

NetWorx

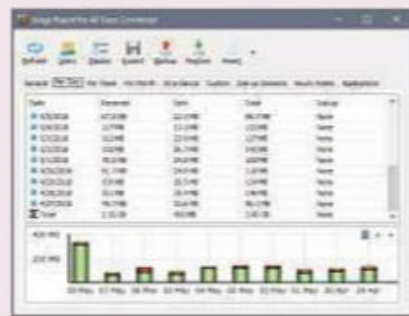
www.softperfect.com

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8.1/10,
Mac OS or Linux

File size: 9.6MB

NetWorx provides useful tools for monitoring bandwidth usage and setting excess usage warnings. It's a good program but its developers have stopped producing a freeware version, so NetWorx now officially costs £19, which seems a bit steep when other, similar tools cost nothing.



...Install this instead

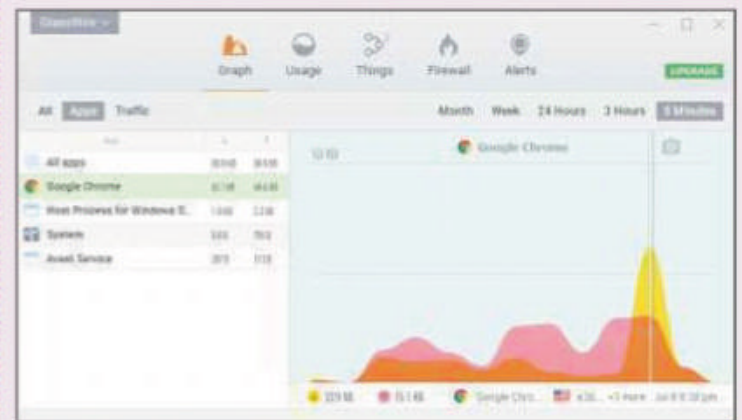
GlassWire

www.glasswire.com

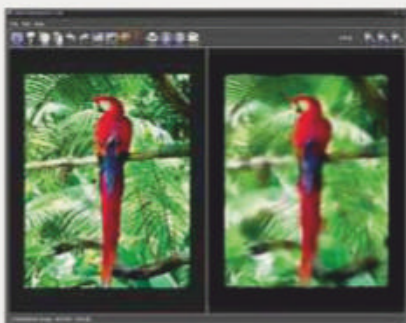
Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 or Android

File size: 33.7MB

GlassWire is technically a firewall, but as well as blocking network connections, it also monitors network usage – so if your ISP imposes a data cap, you can set an upper limit in GlassWire and receive a warning when your usage gets near it. Click GlassWire, Settings, Data Plan, Unlock and select 'Notify me if this computer uses a certain amount of bandwidth'. GlassWire's default view displays a graph showing your network activity in real-time. Select Apps to see which programs are the worst hogs and click the Usage icon for more stats about incoming and outgoing traffic.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



ART PROGRAM

FotoSketcher 3.40

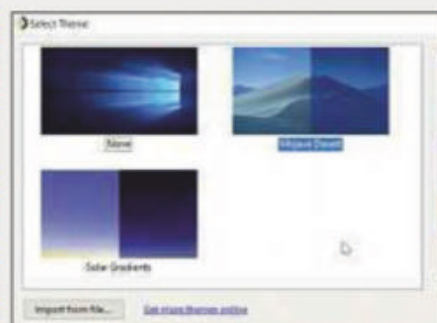
www.fotosketcher.com

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 9MB

FotoSketcher lets you transform photographs into stylish works of art. This update introduces a new Painting 2 (brushstrokes) effect, and the red bar that lets you stop an effect early now works with batch processing. The 64-bit build is now the default.



DYNAMIC WALLPAPER

WinDynamicDesktop 2.2

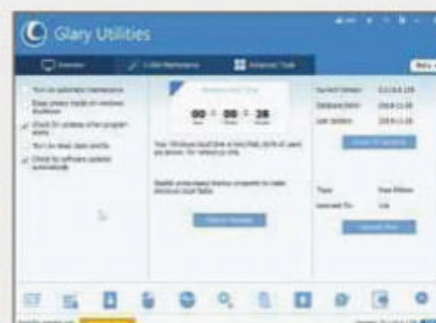
bit.ly/windyn465

Min requirements:

Windows 10

File size: 912KB

Apple's Dynamic Desktop feature cycles through a set of images of the desert taken at different times of day, matching the passing of time in your own location. WinDynamicDesktop brings this feature to Windows 10. It now lets you import and remove custom themes.



SYSTEM TOOL

Glary Utilities 5.110

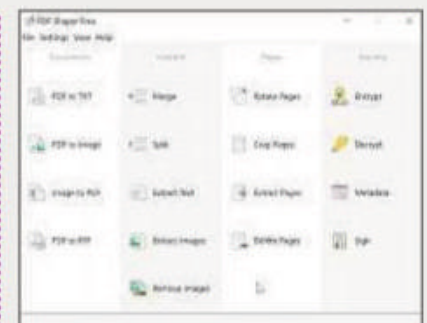
www.glarysoft.com

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 16.6MB

Glary Utilities is a suite of tools that can fix problems with your PC, optimise Windows and protect your privacy. The new version adds support for the latest versions of Foxit Reader and CyberLink PowerDirector 7, provides some minor interface tweaks and squashes a few bugs.



PDF TOOL

PDF Shaper 8.8

www.pdfshaper.com

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 8.5MB

PDF Shaper is a collection of tools that let you perform various actions with PDF files. This updated release redesigns the List view and offers improvements to text extraction and error detection in the Merge tool. Decline the bundled junk during installation. ■

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Best New Browser Tools



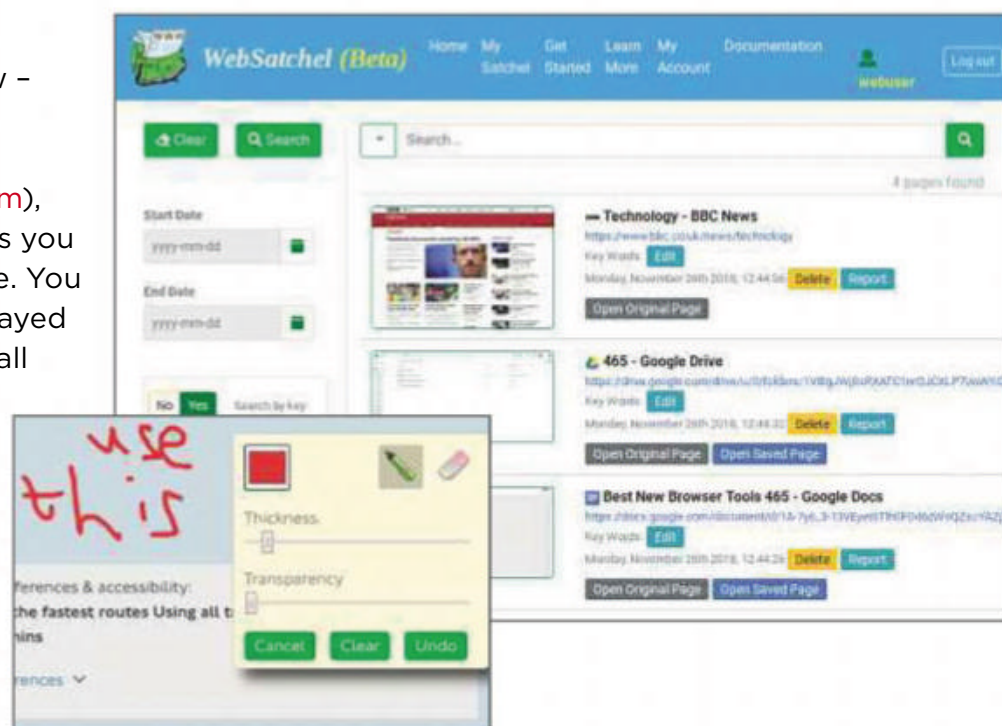
CHROME

Create a personal archive of web pages

The web is constantly changing, and content that you bookmark today may be altered or removed tomorrow – or the site you found it on may even have vanished altogether. To make sure you don't lose access to interesting articles, install WebSatchel (websatchel.com), a new extension for Chrome, Firefox and Edge that lets you save static versions of web pages to a personal archive. You can add annotations before saving, which will be displayed when you retrieve the page. WebSatchel also indexes all the content you add to your archive, so you can search for keywords and between specific dates.

To use the add-on, just click its toolbar button and choose Save Page or Save Link. Click Marker if you want to annotate the content and enter optional keywords to find the page in future.

You need to register to use WebSatchel to create your personal 'satchel', but this is free to do and doesn't require your email address.



Timestamp visited links in Google results

Sometimes when you search for something in Google, it highlights results you've clicked before with a message reading "You visited this page on [date of visit]" or "You've visited this page 2 [or however many] times". This saves you wasting time revisiting previously viewed content, but it's not particularly precise and the information doesn't always appear. WhenX (bit.ly/whenx465) makes it easier to track which links you've clicked and when by timestamping your search results. This stamp tells you how many minutes,

hours or days ago you visited that page, and hovering your mouse over it reveals the exact time you clicked that link. If you'd prefer WhenX

didn't store these details for certain searches, you can disable it by clicking the toolbar button and switching the slider to Off.

The extension's developer says the option to leave notes on timestamps will be added in a future version.

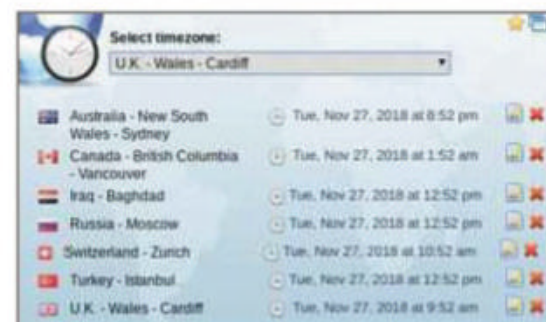
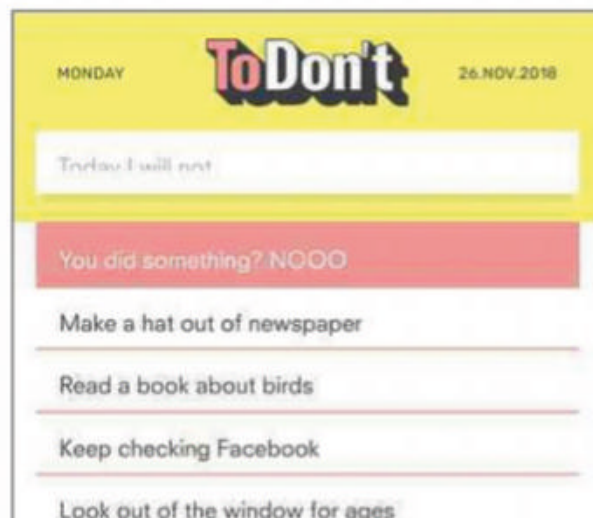
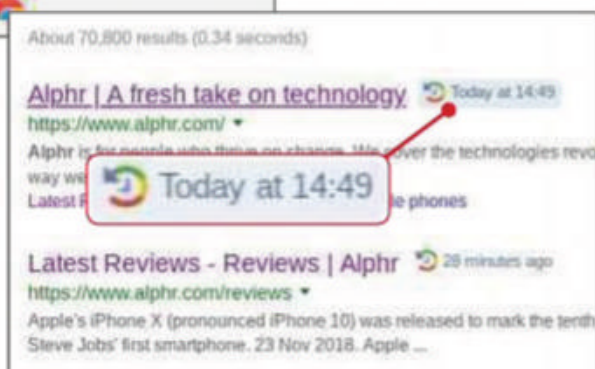
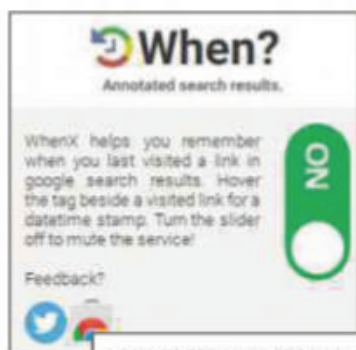
Be more productive by *not* doing things

The trouble with many to-do list Chrome extensions is that they put you under pressure and make you feel guilty about the things you haven't done yet. For a lazier approach to boosting your productivity in 2019, install The To Don't List (bit.ly/dont465), which helps you avoid tasks rather than perform them. At the start of each day, create a list of things that you shouldn't be doing, such

as wasting time on Facebook or staring out of the window for ages – then try your best not to do them. If you can make it through the day without ticking off any items in your To Don't List, the add-on will congratulate you. It even provides 'laze-piration' using GIFs of procrastinating pets. As the developer says: "Doing nothing has never felt so good!".

Check the time across the world

If you have friends and family in foreign countries, make sure your New Year's Eve message or phone call gets through at the right time by installing World Clocks (bit.ly/world465). This handy Chrome extension lets you add multiple locations across the world to its detachable toolbar panel, so you can instantly see what the time is in each place. Happy New Year to Sydney, Zurich and Vancouver!



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



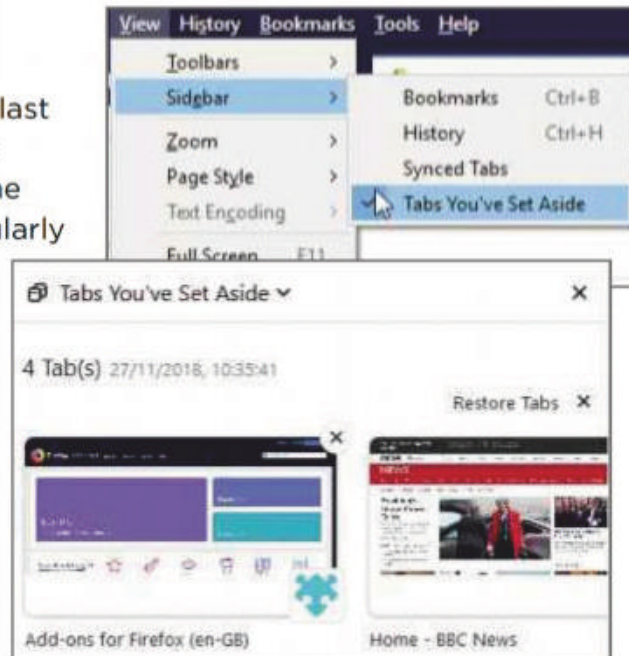
FIREFOX

Set aside tabs you're not using

When Firefox Quantum was released last year, Mozilla claimed that it "uses less memory than the competition", but the browser is still a big RAM hog, particularly when you have lots of tabs open.

A new add-on called Set Aside (bit.ly/aside465) addresses this problem by letting you – as its name suggests – set aside tabs you're not using, to free up memory and reclaim space on your tab bar. It also allows you to save a set of tabs so you can peruse their content later. To use Set Aside, click its icon – which appears in the

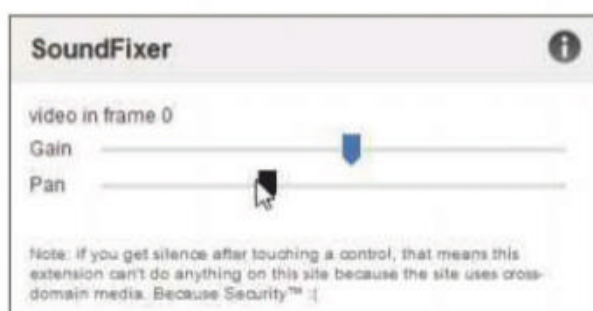
top-right corner of the browser, above the add-on bar – and choose 'Set these Tabs aside'. All open tabs will be added to a sidebar, which you can view by going to View, Sidebar, Tabs You've Set Aside. From there they can be restored individually or all at once. The sidebar also tells you the date and time that the tabs were set aside, and can be moved to the right of the browser if you prefer.



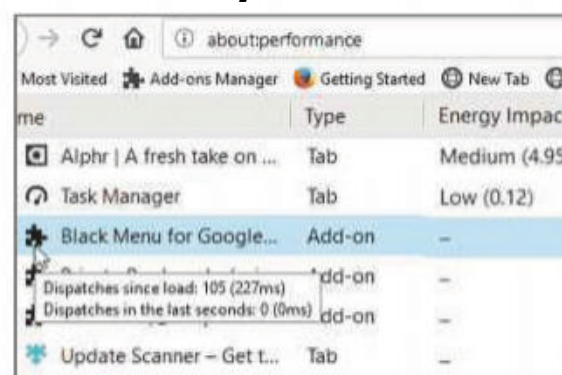
Fix sound problems in YouTube videos

Like the porridge in *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*, some YouTube videos are too loud, while others are too quiet and the rest are just right. Getting the correct audio level can involve a lot of fiddling around with volume controls, so SoundFixer (bit.ly/fixer465) aims to make things easier. With this add-on installed, all you need to do is click its toolbar button when viewing a video that suffers sound problems, and use the Gain and Pan sliders to increase or decrease the volume. SoundFixer can go quieter and louder than YouTube's minimum and maximum levels, and also works on other video- and audio-streaming sites (though not those that use "cross-domain media").

To restore the default audio level, just reload the page.



Manage Firefox processes more easily



One of Chrome's most useful tools is its built-in Task Manager, which lets you see which tabs, extensions and processes are using the most memory so you can close the worst offenders. The latest version of Firefox (64) finally adds a similar feature, which you can access by typing `about:performance` into the address bar and pressing Enter. Here, you'll see a list of all running processes, along with details of their type (Tab or Add-on, for example), as well as their 'energy impact' (the amount of processing power they're using) and memory usage. You can then terminate resource hogs instantly by clicking the 'X' to the right of that entry.

OTHER BROWSERS



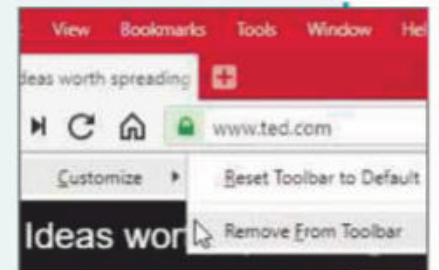
Customise the navigation bar

Vivaldi (vivaldi.com)

is already one of the most customisable browsers around, allowing you to easily change the way it looks and behaves to suit your browsing preferences. In its latest 'snapshot' (beta version),

Vivaldi goes even further by letting you remove individual

elements from the navigation toolbar, so that it only shows the options you need. Just right-click an icon, such as the Fast Forward or 'Go to homepage' button, and choose Customize, Remove From Toolbar. If you change your mind, right-click the bar and select Customize, 'Reset Toolbar to Default'.



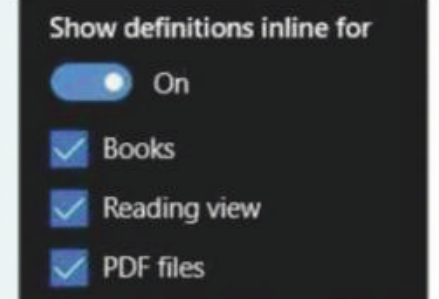
Look up definitions of words

The October 2018

Update for Windows 10 added a useful dictionary to Edge that lets you look up definitions for words you encounter while browsing a web page in Reading view, reading an ebook or viewing

with a PDF file. Simply double-click a word for an instant pop-up

definition and click the speaker icon to hear how it's pronounced. If, on the other hand, you find the feature annoying, you can turn the dictionary off. Click the 'Settings and more' button in the top-right corner and choose Settings, General. Under 'Show definitions inline for', switch the slider to Off.





Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

TOOLS

Typing Hero

bit.ly/typing465



NEW

Nothing beats a touchscreen for interacting with a device, except when it comes to typing large amounts of text. Tapping an on-screen keyboard is a chore at the best of times, but it's even more frustrating when you find yourself laboriously typing the same things over and over and again. If only there was a way to save time and make repetitive typing tasks easier. Well, it turns out there is, and it's called Typing Hero.

Typing Hero is described as a 'text expander'. What this means is that the app is able to expand short keywords into longer chunks of text – put simply, it allows you to create quick shortcuts for longer phrases and other text that you use frequently. For example, you could create a short keyword that, when typed, inserts your full home address into a document, email or message, so you don't have to type the whole thing from scratch every time.

The app (which is currently Android-only) is very easy to use and lets you customise practically everything. You can choose your own keywords and set any phrase as the expanded text. It's possible to create a long list of different

shortcuts for various frequently used phrases. Using Typing Hero's shortcuts is much quicker and easier than copying and pasting – the trick is coming up with memorable keywords for your shortcuts.

Typing Hero works with most apps, but there are a few notable

exceptions – see www.typinghero.app/limitation for a list. Annoyingly, Gmail and Google Docs are among the apps that are currently unsupported, but the developer is working on a fix for this. For security reasons, it's also not possible to set shortcuts for passwords.



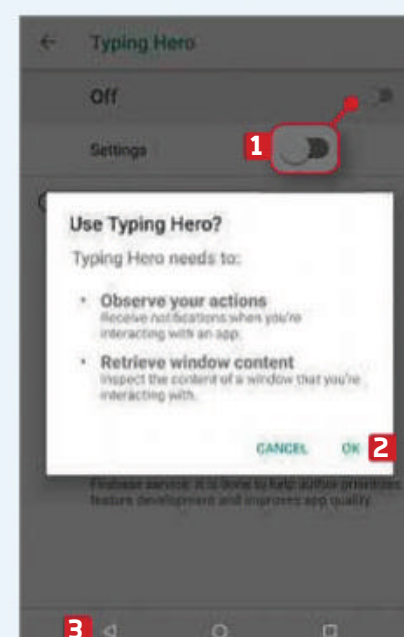
MINI WORKSHOP

Create and use text shortcuts in Typing Hero

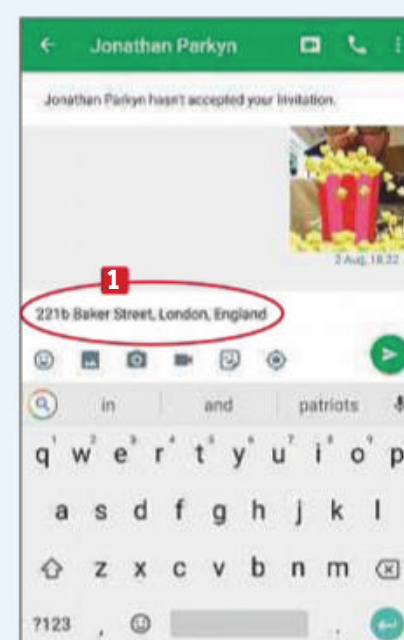
1 To set up your first shortcut, open the app and tap the blue plus icon in the bottom-right corner. Under Keyword, **1** type a short but memorable shortcut – we'd suggest an abbreviation of the phrase you want to type, with a 'z' or 'x' at the beginning, so 'address' might be 'zadr', for example. Under Text, **2** enter the text you want to create a shortcut for, then tap Save. **3**



2 Typing Hero must be enabled in your device's system settings before you can use it in other apps. Tap the icon of a person in the top-right corner of the app's main screen to open your device's Accessibility settings. Press Typing Hero, then tap the switch **1** to turn Typing Hero on and tap OK **2** at the prompt. Press the Back button **3** twice to return to the app.



3 To use your shortcut, type it in any app – as soon as you finish typing, it will magically expand into the full phrase. In our example, we typed our address shortcut zadr into Google Hangouts and the full address appeared. **1** To add more shortcuts, repeat Step One. You can edit existing shortcuts by tapping them on the main Typing Hero screen – simply make your changes, then tap Save.





Our rating



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

RADIO

Heart

bit.ly/heartdroid465
bit.ly/heartios465
 4.4  10

The Heart app is no longer just for tuning into your favourite radio station on the go. The latest update (available now for iOS, coming soon for Android) includes a built-in podcast feature, which lets you not only catch up with your favourite Heart shows, but also subscribe to, stream and download hundreds of podcasts from around the world, including selections that have been curated specifically by the Heart team. The new Heart app can even learn which podcasts you like to make personalised recommendations.



Our rating

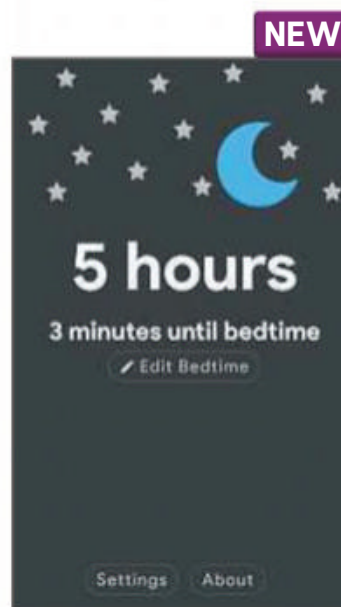


HEALTH

Go to Sleep

bit.ly/gotosleep465
 5

Do you have trouble getting yourself to bed at a decent hour? Having enough sleep is vital for our wellbeing, and this open-source app could help you kip better in 2019. Sadly, Go to Sleep can't provide a cure for insomnia, but it does allow you to set up a sleep schedule and help you stick to it, by gently reminding you when it's time to hit the sack. The free version of the app gives you the choice between unlocking additional features (such as customisable notifications) or banishing ads. Paying £1.39 lets you have both.




Our rating

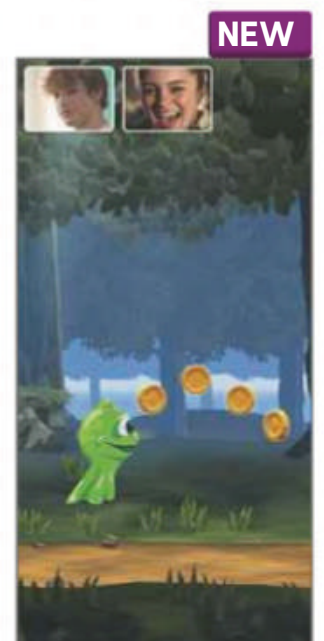


GAME

PlayJ

bit.ly/playj465
 5

Gaming doesn't have to be a solitary pursuit, and this app from Sony makes it easier to enjoy socially by letting people video chat with each other and share their screens while playing games. PlayJ works with games that you already have installed on your device and is very simple to use – just fire up the app, choose a game, then invite a friend. It also works for non-gaming apps. So, for example, you and a friend could watch a YouTube video together, even when you're miles apart. The app is currently in beta so you may experience the occasional bug.




Our rating

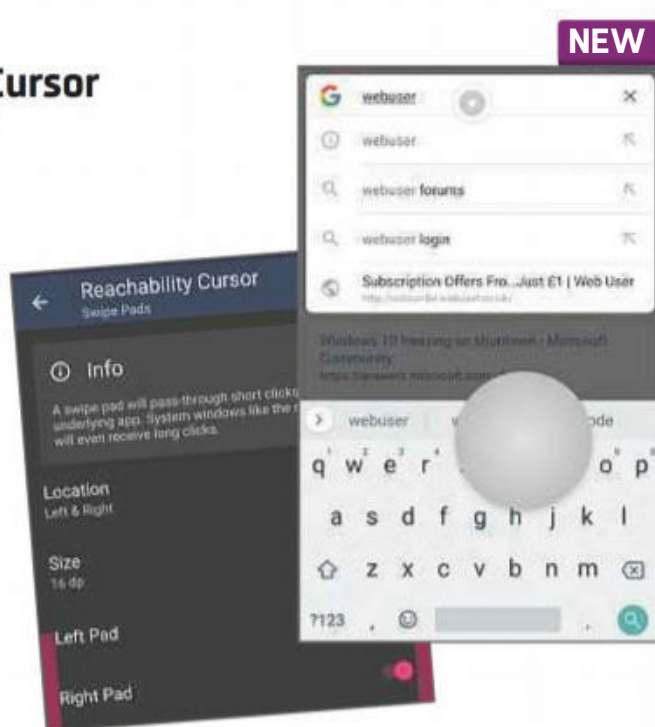


TOOL

Reachability Cursor

bit.ly/cursor465
 (varies)

Phone displays are getting bigger, which is great for our eyes but not for our fingers because larger-screen devices can be hard to control with one hand. Reachability Cursor is an ingenious tool that turns the lower portion of your screen into an invisible laptop-like trackpad, which you can slide your thumb around to control a cursor in the upper portion of the screen. A quick swipe of your screen activates the trackpad function and it quietly hides itself again when it's no longer needed. Reachability Cursor is currently in beta but it's well worth checking out.



Our rating



PHOTOS

Zoetic

bit.ly/zoetic465
 4.3

Ever wanted to stitch together photos of the same subject to create a movie that shows it changing over time – a person getting older, perhaps, or a building project at various stages of construction? Well, that's the simple, clever concept behind this little app. It's not one of those gimmicky face-morphing apps, nor does it require much technical skill in setting up shots or blending them together – the app aligns the photos automatically. The free version has a few limitations compared to the Pro (99p) version, including the number of photos you can include in your videos and the maximum resolution.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

GAME

Help

bit.ly/help465

Price: £2.99

 **4.1**

Inspired by the 1995 War Child Help Album, this Android app (coming to iOS soon) contains a compilation of five games from various developers, and all proceeds go to charity.

ART

Shepard Fairey AR - Damaged

bit.ly/sheparddroid465

bit.ly/shepardios465

Price: £4.59 (Android), £4.99 (iOS)

 **7**  **9**

It's not always possible to make it to an art exhibition in person. This app has the answer – it brings Shepard Fairey's latest exhibition into your home, via the power of AR.

GAME

Chuchel

bit.ly/chucheldroid465

bit.ly/chuchelios465

Price: £4.49 (Android), £4.99 (iOS)

 **4.1**  **10**



If you like adventure games, then this quirky, comedic app is not to be missed. The design is gorgeous and the puzzles are pitched just right.

NAVIGATION

Greater London A-Z Street Map

bit.ly/azdroid465

bit.ly/azios465

Price: £6.99

 **4.1**  **8**

Before map apps, the best way to navigate the capital was to use the London A-Z. Now you can have both. There's a cheaper (£3.99) Central London-only version, too.

HEALTH

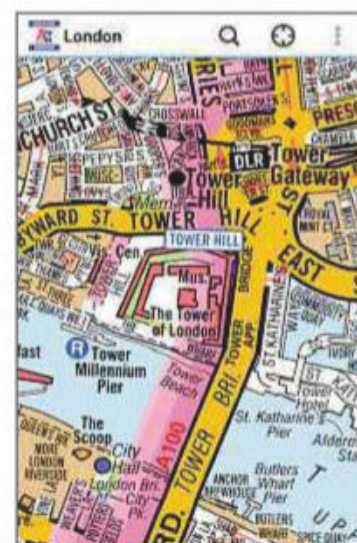
ChillScape

bit.ly/chillscape465

Price: 99p

 **10**

Whether or not meditation is your cup of tea, you'd be hard pressed not to find this bubble-popping app relaxing, with its chilled-out tunes and hypnotic, lava lamp-style graphics.



Help



Shepard Fairey AR - Damaged



Chuchel



Greater London A-Z Street Map



ChillScape



Don't install...

Daily

bit.ly/daily465

Whether it's giving up smoking or taking more exercise, sticking to your New Year's resolutions can be tough. And you certainly won't get any support from this app. It purports to track daily tasks – such as taking a walk – while motivating you to keep up your good practices. In reality, though, Daily (which, tellingly, hasn't been updated since 2012) does virtually nothing and charges you 99p for the privilege.



...Install this instead

Goal Tracker & Habit List

bit.ly/habit465

 **2.3**

A much better – and cheaper – way to track your habits and get help accomplishing your goals is to use this free app. Goal Tracker was inspired by comedian Jerry Seinfeld's productivity tip that you can improve yourself by marking your daily successes on a calendar. The app lets you set multiple daily, weekly, monthly or yearly habits or goals, which you can then track via its built-in calendar view. You can set notifications to gently remind yourself of your tasks, while widgets allow you to track your success directly from your home screen. The app is well designed, easy to use and entirely free of adverts. ■





Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our male-singer emoji and our tech year?

**WIN A
WEB USER
2017 BACK
ISSUES DISC!**

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





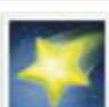
CAN YOU GUESS THE MALE SINGERS FROM THE EMOJI?

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 Commodore launches its 8-bit home computer, the Commodore 64. It goes on to become the biggest-selling computer of all time.



2 Disney releases *Tron*, the first mainstream film to use computer-generated graphics and whose plot is also about computer programming.



3 *Time* magazine breaks its annual tradition of choosing a 'Man of the Year' by naming the personal computer its 'Machine of the Year'.

4 Sun Microsystems, the company behind the Java programming language and the Network File System is founded at Stanford University.



5 Atari rush-releases ET the Extra-Terrestrial for its Atari 2600 console. It's now regarded as one of the worst video games of all time.



COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 10

Peli 0915 Memory Card Cases

Crush-proof and water-resistant, Peli's 0915 Memory Card Case can hold 12 SD cards, six miniSD cards and six microSD cards. It's small enough to easily fit into bags or pockets. To enter, email webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'peli' in the subject line. For more details, visit www.peliproducs.co.uk and follow [@Peli_Products](https://twitter.com/Peli_Products) on Twitter.

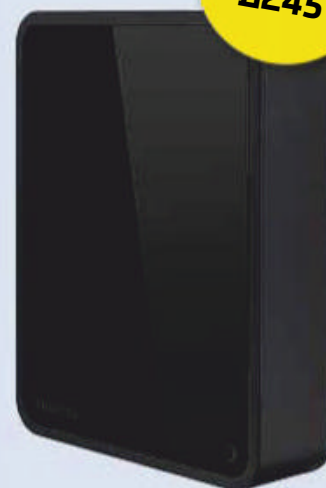


WORTH
£32.99
EACH

WIN A...

Toshiba hard-drive bundle

Toshiba has given us two hard drives to offer as a prize bundle: the Canvio for Desktop, a 4TB drive worth around £160 (pictured), and the 1TB Canvio Advance, worth around £85. To enter, email webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'canvio' in the subject line. For more details, visit www.toshiba-storage.com and 'like' www.facebook.com/ToshibaStorageEU.



WORTH
£245



FAQ

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

EU Copyright Directive

It's been dubbed the "link tax" and the "meme ban" but what exactly is it and how will it affect you? **David Crookes** investigates

What has happened?

The European Union has updated its copyright rules for the digital age to try to redress the balance between the large technology companies that share content and the people who actually create it. The aim is to protect copyrighted material and produce a more level playing field that prevents content from being illegally shared online. The EU is doing this by shifting the onus from the content owners to the platform operators – which isn't going down well with the latter.

Why is it causing a stir?

The European Union Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market spans 17 individual articles (bit.ly/eud465) but most organisations have

been focusing on just two: Article 11 and Article 13. The former will make online platforms pay newspapers and other press outlets whenever they link to their content, while Article 13 will force websites that host user-generated content to remove any

copyright-protected work that has been uploaded without permission.

Who is complaining?

Big tech companies including Google and Facebook are understandably worried. Article 11 is being dubbed the "link tax" and there are concerns that it will affect services such as Google News, which currently links to articles without passing on any cash. Backers of the move say Google and Facebook have long profited from the work of others



by capitalising on online advertising, which is one of the reasons behind the change. Yet publishers have come to rely on big online platforms linking to their content. There is a concern that the tech companies will simply close their services in the EU rather than pay.

Isn't that just an idle threat?

As it happens, no. Google News has been through this situation before when Spain passed a law in 2014 saying that Spanish news sites had to charge for their content. Google News simply closed its service, fearing fines for publishing headlines and extracts of articles without paying. It led to a reduction in readers on Spanish news sites, which caused a dip in digital revenue. The search engine's vice-

president of news, Richard Gingras, says the same action could be taken across the EU.

But can't we just visit the sites direct?

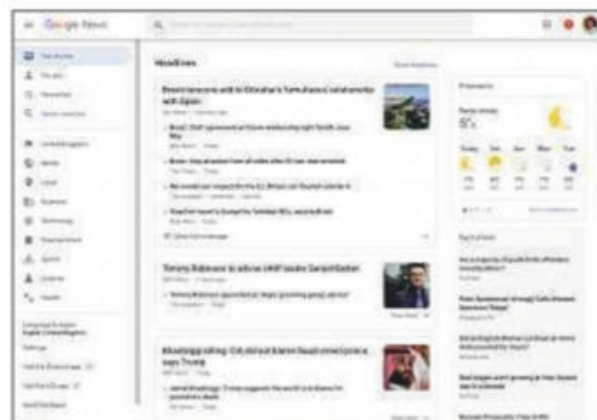
Of course, but Article 11 could still affect you. There is a chance it will cause a clampdown on people posting links on social media. That's because Article 11's wording is rather vague. It says it won't prevent legitimate private and non-commercial use of press publications by individual users, which means you can email or text a link without consequence, but isn't very clear about sharing on social media. Although it's unlikely that anyone is going to chase you for cash, social networks may block links to news outlets for fear of having to pay.

Could the "link tax" also affect Wikipedia?

No. Online encyclopedias and other non-profit organisations are exempt from the directive, which is a great relief to Wikipedia's co-founder Jimmy Wales who has already dubbed Articles 11 and 13 "nightmares" in a Reddit post. "Remember, an explicit and stated goal of the content industry is a removal of



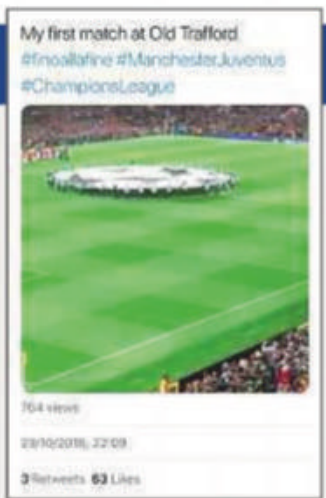
This innocuous-looking document could change how content is shared online



Could you live without Google News? You might have to if it storms out of the EU

A QUESTION OF SPORT

As well as Articles 11 and 13, Article 12a of the EU Copyright Directive is also proving controversial. It gives sports event organisers copyright over recordings of their events. This means they will have the sole rights for posting videos and photos of sporting events, preventing members of the public from doing so. It could potentially affect selfies being taken in stadiums or even videos of fans chanting. Hope they have fun implementing that one!



Fair Use. The most extreme move would be to have no outlet at all should YouTube end up being pulled. But YouTube videos aren't the only problem.

What else will be affected by Article 13?

Memes – those funny photos, short videos and GIFs that we share in droves. Since most of them are based on copyrighted

images, there's a chance they could be wiped out through use of a copyright filter, although supporters of Article 13 say this won't happen. The Society of Authors, for example, said: "Parody is not threatened, and neither are 'memes' – it's already covered by an exception to copyright and the proposals say rights holders can't prevent uploading of works covered by exceptions." Amusingly, people have now started using memes to share news about Article 13.



The anti-meme Article 13 has already been skewered by memes – that'll teach it!

Will the directive be passed?

Even though the EU Copyright Directive was rejected by MEPs in July, an amended version was approved by the European Parliament in September, with 438 in favour and 226 against. It now has to face a final vote in January, but it's widely believed that it will be passed, at which point individual member states have to work out how they will implement it and what interpretation they put on it.

Will the UK be affected in light of Brexit?

As with anything Brexit-related, it's unlikely we'll know for certain until our relationship with the EU becomes clearer. Our guess is that the new copyright directive will affect the UK in the short term at least.



The European Parliament doesn't just deal with Brexit, it also tackles online copyright

containing copyrighted material before it's published, but even that is likely to be costly.

What does YouTube say about this?

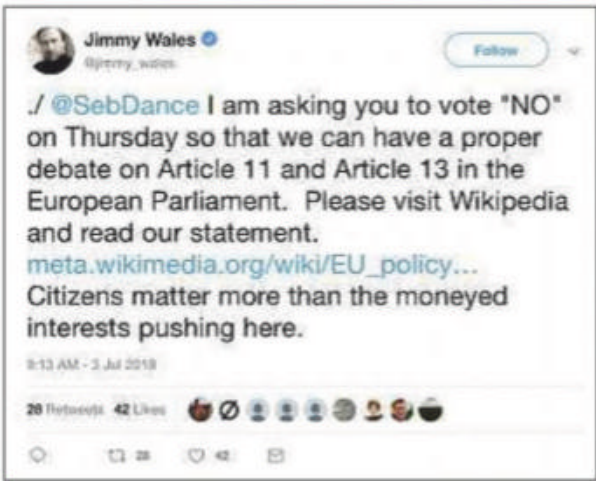
Quite a lot. Susan Wojcicki, the CEO of YouTube, has written a blog post (bit.ly/youtube465) stating the video service's case. She says the creator economy is under threat from Article 13 and that "EU residents are at risk of being cut off from videos that, in just the last month, they viewed more than 90 billion times". With more than 400 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute, she says the financial risk may be too great for it to continue operating in EU countries. Only the smallest online platforms will be exempt.

Surely content-makers should be paid, though?

Wojcicki says YouTube already forks out €800m to content owners and she says it pays the global music industry more than €1.5bn from advert-generated revenue alone. YouTube does this via systems such as Content ID, which automatically checks videos for infringements after they have been uploaded, giving copyright owners a choice of monitoring, monetising or blocking. Yet the music industry backs Article 13, with Geoff Taylor, the chief executive of the British Phonographic Industry (BPI, www.bpi.co.uk), saying YouTube needs to take responsibility for the content it publishes. He points out that even ad-supported videos with billions of views don't earn anywhere near the revenues of music made available via other means.

So no more music videos on YouTube?

Don't panic: YouTube may relent and decide to pay up for content where a copyright holder can be identified. Given its stance, however, it is more likely to deny access to certain videos in the EU, thereby making it harder for users to get an audience for their work, even if creators believe they're operating under



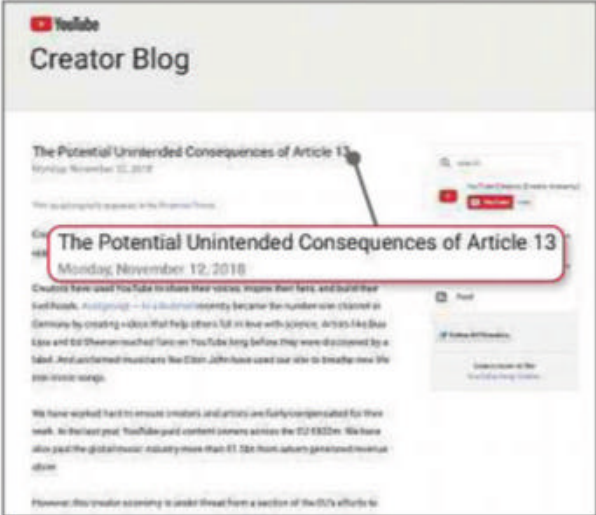
Although Wikipedia is not affected by the rules, Jimmy Wales is not happy (as usual)

'safe harbors' – which means forcing platforms to stop YOU from doing the things that you normally and naturally have every right to do," he elaborates.

So why is Article 13 seen as a bad thing?

In many ways, Article 13 is viewed as the worst of the two "offenders" because it forces services such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to work out who holds the original rights to any uploaded content (as opposed to removing content when a rights holder complains). If the directive is enacted, these platforms will effectively need to police every bit of uploaded content.

It's likely to prove difficult to identify every copyright holder, but the responsibility will nevertheless lie with the platform operator. The easy path would be to try to cull any content



YouTube could become a barren wasteland if forced to pay for copyrighted content

Hey Alexa!

ABOUT ALEXA



Alexa is the voice assistant that powers Amazon Echo speakers. Named after the ancient library of Alexandria, the retail giant's fount of instant knowledge is also available on Amazon's newer tablets and Fire TV products, and a number of third-party speakers, smart TVs and computers, with an app available for iOS, Android and Windows 10. In the US, you can even buy an Alexa-powered microwave and a Big Mouth Billy Bass fish!

The digital assistant is summoned by saying its name, and can be used for a vast range of tasks, including answering questions, performing web searches, playing music, home automation, ordering food (and products from Amazon), messaging and calls, and much more. The Alexa Skills kit (developer.amazon.com) lets third-party developers create abilities, so new tricks are being added all the time.



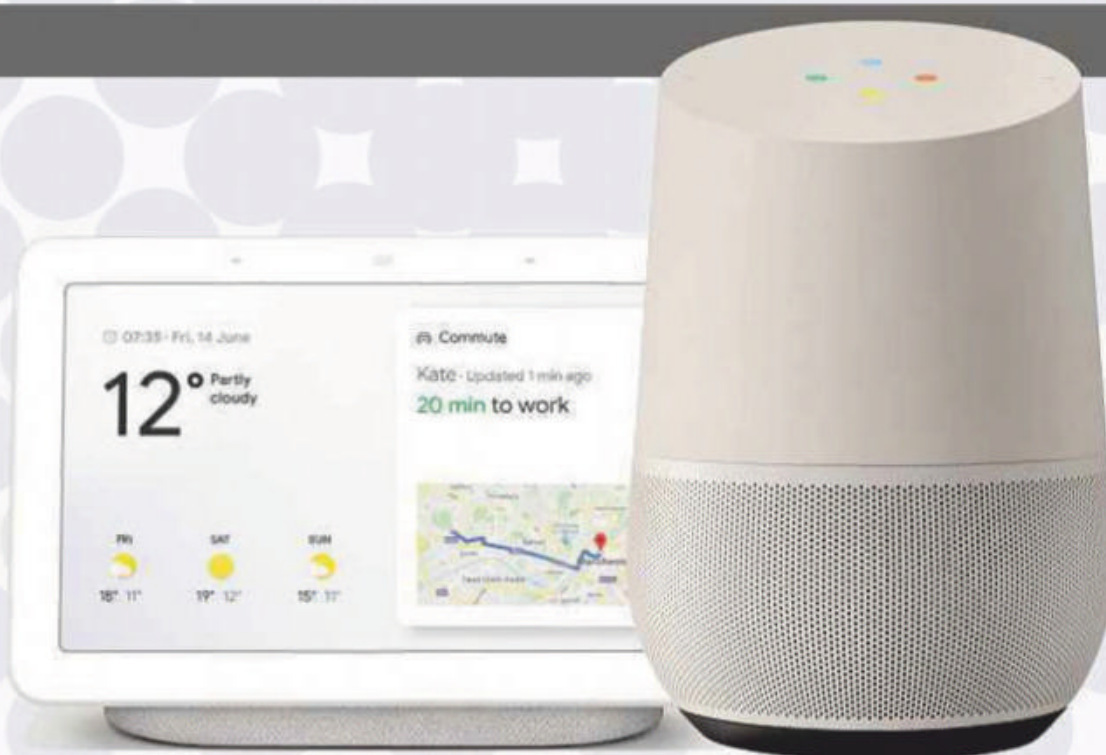
ABOUT GOOGLE ASSISTANT



Google Assistant is the successor to Google Now and originated on Google's Pixel smartphones before graduating to other devices including other

Android phones and tablets, Wear OS devices, iOS, some smart headphones and of course Google Home – the search firm's smart-speaker range. You summon it by saying “OK Google” or “Hey Google”, and it can perform many of the same tasks as Alexa, although not necessarily in the same way.

‘Actions on Google’ (developers.google.com/actions) is the equivalent of Alexa Skills for Google Assistant, and lets developers create their own smart-home commands.



OK Google!

COVER
FEATURE

Your Amazon Echo or Google Home is capable of doing much more than you realise. **Wayne Williams** reveals the 60 smartest things you can do with your voice-enabled smart speaker

Back in April, research by YouGov (bit.ly/yougov465) revealed that one in 10 of us now owns a smart speaker. Following the launch of many new devices in 2018, as well as generous discounts for Black Friday and the run-up to Christmas, we wouldn't be surprised if that number has now doubled or even trebled.

Amazon's Echo range and the Google Home family are by far the most popular smart speakers, thanks not only to the weight of the huge companies behind them, but to the versatile voice assistants that power the devices. These

are constantly being refined and expanded to let you perform thousands of useful tasks hands-free, and are not only available on speakers but on phones, tablets, PCs, TVs and more.

In this feature, we round up 60 of the most innovative and interesting Alexa skills and Google Home commands that can make your life easier. We also explain how to maintain your privacy when using a smart speaker by checking what's been recorded by your voice assistant, and deleting some (or all) of the audio.



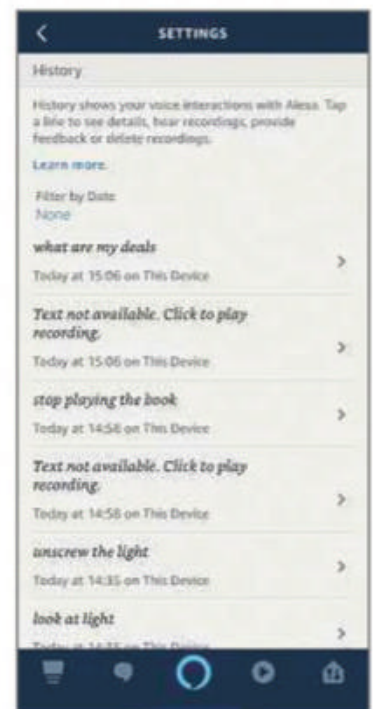
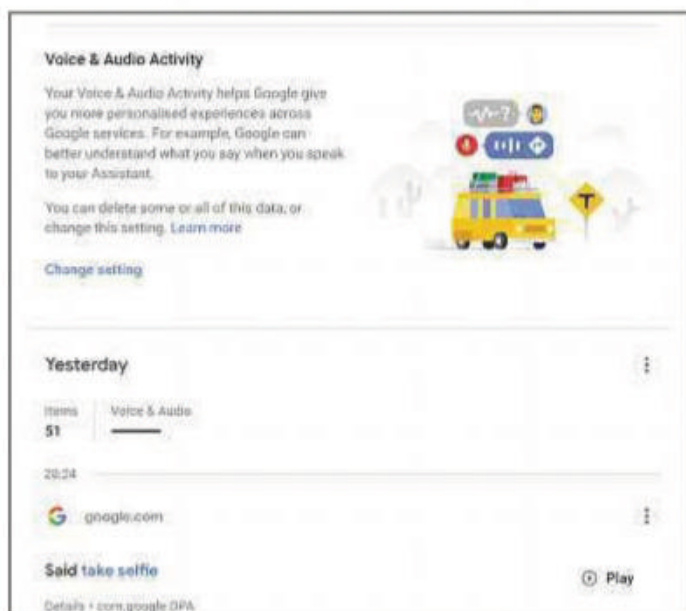
DELETE VOICE COMMANDS FROM ALEXA AND GOOGLE

Google Assistant records everything you say to it, but there may come a time when you regret something you voiced and want to delete it. Fortunately, Google makes this easy – just open your desktop browser and

go to the activity controls page at bit.ly/activity465. Make sure you're in the correct Google account, then scroll down to the Voice & Audio Activity section and click the Manage Activity link. You'll now be able to see all your voice activities by date and can listen to the recordings or click the three-dot button on the right to delete them.

Alexa also records everything you say to it. To review these recordings in the Alexa app, go to Settings, Alexa Account, History to see a list of everything you've said to the voice assistant and when. Select an item and click the Play button to listen to the recording, or click the Delete Voice Recording button to erase it. Some listings will say

"Text not available. Click to play recording" and state that "Audio was not intended for your Echo – nothing was returned". This means Alexa was triggered but recognised this was unintentional and stopped the recording. However, you may want to delete these entries anyway for privacy reasons.

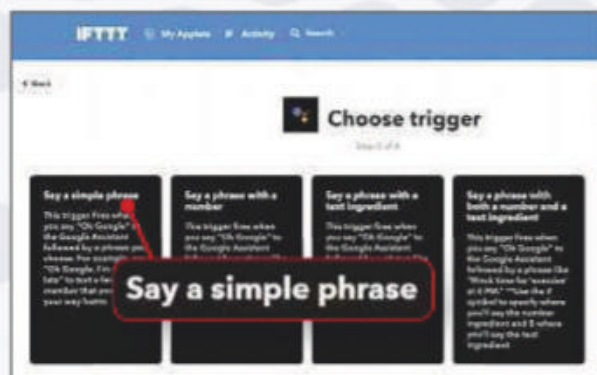


AROUND THE HOME

Create your own skills and commands

There are many ready-made skills and commands for Alexa and Google Assistant, but it's fun to create your own using personalised content and responses. If you want to create skills for Alexa, then Amazon's Skill Blueprints (blueprints.amazon.co.uk) offers a great place to begin. The site explains how to get started and offers a good selection of ideas to get you up and running. Essentially, you pick a blueprint – for example, Quiz, Chore Chart or Custom Q&A – click Make Your Own, then edit the examples given by the site or add your own to tailor your skill to your needs. Once the skill has been created and saved, it can be used on all your personal Alexa devices.

For Google Assistant, you can use IFTTT (If This Then That) to build commands that let you control devices and online services. Go to ifttt.com, create an account and search for Google Assistant. Existing examples include using Google Home to find your phone, and creating an event on your iPhone's calendar. You can also make



You can use IFTTT to create your own commands for Google Assistant



10 BEST ALEXA AUDIO TRICKS

- “Alexa, restart” (restarts the current song)
- “Alexa, stop playing in X minutes” (sets a timer)
- “Alexa, what’s playing?” (provides handy song information)
- “Alexa, play [playlist] on Spotify” (starts a playlist on Spotify)
- “Alexa, add this song” (adds a playing song to your Prime Music library)
- “Alexa, play [title] on Audible” (if you have an Audible account)
- “Alexa, stop in the kitchen” (stops music playing in a particular room)
- “Alexa, I like/hate this song” (tell Alexa what you think about songs playing on custom stations)
- “Alexa, volume up/down” (too quiet or too loud? Alexa can help)
- “Alexa, play something I haven’t heard in a while” (plays songs that you haven’t listened to for ages – possibly with good reason!)

your own commands by chaining together various popular apps and devices so they can “talk” to each other, and connecting triggers to actions.

Go to ifttt.com/create, click the ‘+ this’ link and search for Google Assistant. Choose a trigger (such as ‘Say a simple phrase’), then enter the phrase to use and click ‘Create trigger’. Click the ‘+ That’ link and pick an action. IFTTT supports a wide range of products and services. Connect your choice or choose an action, then follow the steps to set it all up. One example is that IFTTT sends an email to a pre-chosen address (or addresses) when you say “Hey Google, I’m running late”.



Control your lights and heating

Using Alexa or Google Assistant to control your home will make you feel like you’re living in the future, and it’s now easier than ever to get this set up. If you own a smart hub, such as those offered by ISPs including BT and Virgin Media, it’s likely to be compatible with Alexa and (possibly) Google Assistant.

However, you don’t need a hub to control elements such as your lights because you can buy smart LED bulbs and smart plugs with Wi-Fi that your voice assistant can control. You can even lock or unlock smart-door locks, and control alarm systems and smart

Amazon’s new Smart Plug adds voice control to any electrical socket



thermostats, such as Nest (nest.com/uk), which is now owned by Google. Amazon recently introduced its own Alexa-compatible Smart Plug (bit.ly/plug465) which costs £24.99 and adds voice control to any electrical socket, but there are plenty of affordable third-party alternatives. See bit.ly/alexa465 for Amazon’s official selection.

Once you’ve set up your smart devices, summon your choice of assistant, then say something like “turn on the kitchen lights”, “dim the living room light” (if it’s dimmable), “turn off all the lights” or “Turn on the coffee machine”.



Control Fire TV playback

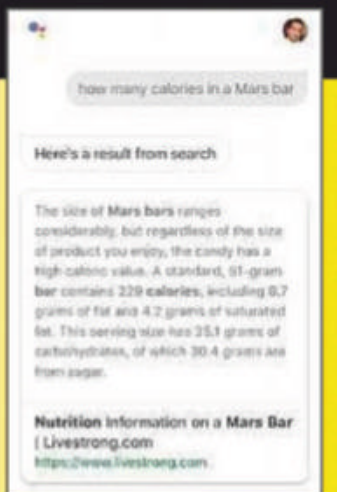
If you have a new Fire TV product (including the Stick) with Alexa built in, you can use the assistant to control what’s happening using commands such as “Alexa, [pause/play/stop/resume/fast-forward/rewind] on Fire TV”. You can search for something to watch and for shows and movies starring a particular actor – “Alexa, show me titles with George Clooney on Fire TV.” To return to the main screen, just say “Alexa, return home.”

There’s no need to press buttons with an Alexa-enabled Fire TV stick



5 FOOD AND DRINK ACTIONS

- “Hey Google, I’m hungry” (will list nearby restaurants)
- “Hey Google, any coffee shops nearby?” (will pinpoint local coffee shops)
- “Hey Google, find lunch recipes” (will list some popular sites that offer recipes)
- “Hey Google, how many calories in a Mars Bar?” (or any other food or drink type)
- “Hey Google, ask Just Eat to order food” (you will need to connect a Just Eat account)



ENTERTAINMENT

Play music based on a theme


Alexa can play tracks that suit a particular mood. Try saying something like “Alexa, play music for work”, “Alexa, play music for cooking” or “Alexa, play baby-making music” (yes, really!). Some of the choices might surprise you, but they are usually pretty good. You can narrow down the music on offer by genre – “Alexa, play rock music for driving”, for example. Songs come from Amazon Prime playlists or radio stations, and are curated by Amazon’s music experts. You’ll need an account with either Amazon Prime Music (which is included with a Prime subscription) or Amazon Music Unlimited to use this skill.

Identify and play mystery songs

Ever had a song stuck in your head and want to listen to it for real, even though you don’t know what it’s called or who recorded it? Try saying “Alexa, play the song that goes [the lyrics you remember].” Alexa won’t get it right every time, but keep trying with different or additional lyrics and she might be able to find it for you.

Check sports scores

If you want to quickly find out how the football team you support is getting on, both Alexa and Google Assistant can tell you. Summon your assistant and ask “How are [my team name] doing?”. You can see the latest score or find out how well they are performing in general – for example, where your favourite football team is in the Premiership. You can also ask questions such as “When do Manchester United play next?”.



Ask Alexa or Google if your team is winning or losing

Find out celebrity heights

Ever wondered how tall Tom Cruise really is, when he’s not standing on a box? You can ask both Alexa and Google Assistant for the height of any famous person by saying “How tall is [celebrity name]”. You can also compare celebrity heights by saying “Who is taller, X or Y?” and Google Assistant will provide you with the relevant information. Alexa will go one better and tell you the height difference.

Who is taller warwick davis or tom cruise?

Tom Cruise is 5 feet 7 inches tall, which is 2.08 feet taller than Warwick Davis. Warwick Davis is 3 feet 6 inches tall.

Instantly find out how tall celebrities are and who’s the tallest

Have Alexa read you a Kindle book

If you have some interesting books stored on your Kindle but your eyes are too tired to focus on the screen, you can ask Alexa to read them to you. Say “Alexa, read [book name] on Kindle”. In future, you can say, “Alexa, read my Kindle book”, and Alexa will pick up where she left off. It’s not as good as a professionally recorded audio book, but it’s surprisingly listenable.

Play choose-your-own-adventure games

There are a number of audio-based adventure games you can play via Alexa. Some of the best to try are Escape the Room (“Alexa, open Escape the Room”), The Magic Door (“Alexa, open the magic door”), Dungeon Adventure (“Alexa, start dungeon

ESCAPE THE ROOM

Escape the Room

You take a closer look at the light. You try to force it open, but it’s screwed on tightly. What would you like to do?

Play a fun interactive adventure without needing a screen

adventure”) and Colossal Cave Adventure (“Alexa, start Colossal Cave”). Earplay (“Alexa, start Earplay”), an interactive audio play, is also very entertaining. For kids, there’s Red Riding Hood (“Alexa, open Red Riding Hood”), Hansel and Gretel (“Alexa, start Hansel and Gretel”) and many more.

Find out what’s on TV tonight

Alexa’s TV Guide skill provides a quick way to find programmes to watch in the evening. Try saying “Alexa, ask my TV guide what’s on telly tonight?” to plan your evening’s viewing. You can also ask about specific channels: “Alexa, ask my TV guide what’s on BBC1 tonight?”.



No more checking the Radio Times – just ask Alexa what’s on the box

10 FUNNIEST THINGS TO ASK ALEXA

Rap for me

I’m Alexa, and I’ve got more skills than Napoleon’s got dynamite. I can tell you jokes, order pizza, turn on your lights. My assistance might be virtual but my talent is real. Use my far-field microphones to tell me how you feel. The name is Alexa, A L E X A. I get a little smarter, every single day. Other AIs, don’t be surprised, just get out of my way.

- “Alexa, sing me a song” (she will!)
- “Alexa, rap for me” (Eminem has nothing to fear)
- “Alexa, make me laugh” (she’ll tell you a joke)
- “Alexa, open the pod bay doors” (HAL impersonation time)
- “Alexa, make me a sandwich” (she actually will)
- “Alexa, what is the value of Pi?” (it’s a really long number)
- “Alexa, find Chuck Norris” (are you sure?)
- “Alexa, will you go out with me?” (welcome to the friendzone)
- “Alexa, how much do you weigh?” (you should never ask a female AI this question)
- “Alexa, how was your day?” (it’s nice to ask)

COMMUNICATION

Make and receive hands-free phone calls

One of the more useful things you can do with both Alexa and Google Assistant is to get them to place hands-free phone calls. If you have the Alexa App, verify your mobile number and import your contacts. The people you want to chat to must also have the app, and will need to have enabled



Who needs a phone when you make calls through your smart speaker?

Alexa calling and verified their number. Place a call simply by saying "Alexa, call [contact name]". If someone calls you, you can respond by saying "Alexa,

answer the call". This will work with any Alexa-enabled device, or just through the app.

You can also make calls using Google Home, as long as you have the latest version of the Google Home app. UK users can call UK phone numbers for free, although you need to sync your contacts. You can do this through the Google Home app's Account section. By default, calls you place will come from "private" or "anonymous", but you can change this to your name in the Account section. To place a call, just say "Hey Google, call [contact name]" or "Hey Google, call [phone number]".

Make home-wide announcements

If you have more than one Echo device in your house, you can use Alexa to broadcast a message to all of them at the same time. Examples of things you can say include "Alexa, announce that dinner is ready" and "Alexa, broadcast we are leaving now". What's particularly great about this feature is the announcement will be made in your own voice, so everyone who hears the message will know it's come from you, effectively turning your speakers into a tannoy system.

You can also broadcast messages in Google Assistant, in the same way.

5 QUICK MESSAGING COMMANDS

- "Alexa, play messages" (she'll read your latest messages)
- "Alexa, send an SMS to [contact name]" (will send an SMS to someone who has signed up for Alexa Messaging)
- "Alexa, drop in on the living room" (lets you chat with someone in a particular room, intercom-style - provided there's an Echo there)
- "Alexa, call X on Skype" (call someone via Skype)
- "Hey Google, send a message" (this will step you through sending an SMS to a contact)

LIFESTYLE

Set up a personal routine

Amazon and Google's personal assistants both let you create

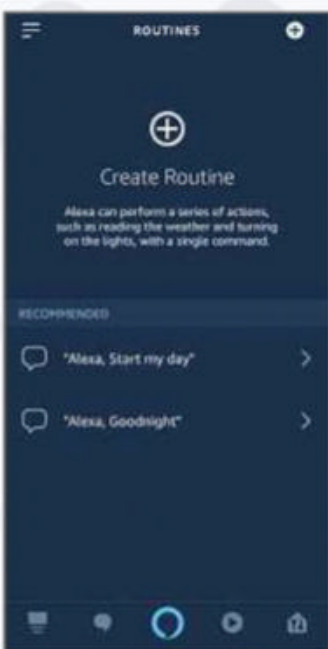
on the weather and traffic in your area. To create a routine in Alexa (or customise one of the existing ones), open the menu in the app, tap Routines, then add triggers and actions. Routines can be started by voice, schedule, devices or Echo buttons.

Creating a routine in Google Assistant requires you to open the Google Home app and tap Settings. Select 'More settings' under 'Google Assistant services' and go to the Assistant tab at the top. Tap Routines and then either

select one of the customisable ready-made options - which include Good Morning, Bedtime, Leaving Home and I'm Home - or make your own.

Compile to-do lists and set reminders

If you're a busy person - or just rather forgetful - then it's handy to have your digital assistant remind you about upcoming events and tasks. With Alexa, launch the app, open the menu and tap either Lists or Reminders & Alarms,

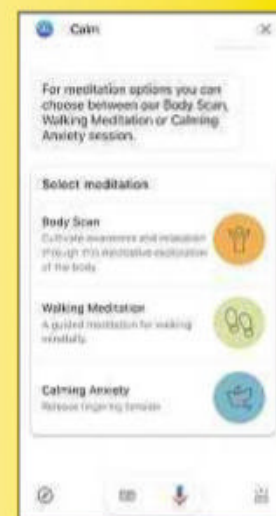


personalised routines that will run through a sequence of actions from a single command. When you wake up in the morning, you might say "Alexa, start my day", for example, and have Alexa turn on the lights, read you the news headlines and report

You can combine your everyday tasks into a single routine

7 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH

- "Alexa, start seven-minute workout" (opens the seven-minute workout skill)
- "Alexa, ask Fitbit how I'm doing today" (connects to a Fitbit app/account)
- "Alexa, open Stop Breathe Think" (meditation skill)
- "Alexa, launch fitness exercises" (suggests a random exercise to do)
- "Hey Google, talk to 5-Minute Plank" (counts down while you do the plank exercise)
- "Hey Google, talk to Calm" (connects you to Calm, which will help you meditate or sleep)
- "Hey Google, help me to relax" (plays relaxation sounds)



Say a phrase with a text ingredient

This trigger fires when you say "Ok Google" to the Google Assistant followed by a phrase like "Post a tweet saying 'New high score!'" **Use the \$ symbol to specify where you'll say the text ingredient

What do you want to say?

Add \$ to my tasks

Enter a \$ where you'll say the text ingredient

What's another way to say it? (optional)

Enter a \$ where you'll say the text ingredient

And another way? (optional)

Enter a \$ where you'll say the text ingredient

Use IFTTT to create task lists through Google Assistant

depending on what you want to create. The app offers customisable Shopping and To-Do lists, or you can create your own. You can also ask

Alexa to create a list for you, then later ask her what items are on it and add new ones over time.

Google Assistant isn't as good at creating task lists, although there is a shopping list that you can access and customise under Services in Google Home. The best workaround for this is to use IFTTT (If This Then That). Go to ifttt.com/create, click the blue '+ this' link and search for Google Assistant. For the trigger, select 'Say a phrase with a text ingredient'. Under 'What do you want to say?', type Add \$ to my tasks. Click Create Trigger, then '+ that'. Pick any supported note-taking or to-do service that you use – such as Evernote, Todoist or Toodledo – and click Connect.

When you've finished setting it up, click 'Create action', name the new applet and click Finish. To use it, just say something like "OK Google, add Read Web User to my tasks".

Ask Google Assistant to take a photo hands-free

You can ask Google's personal assistant to take a photo on your phone hands-free. This works on both Android devices and iPhone. Just say "OK Google, take a photo [or picture]" or – if you prefer – "Hey Google, take selfie" and the camera will open and a countdown will start. You can cancel the



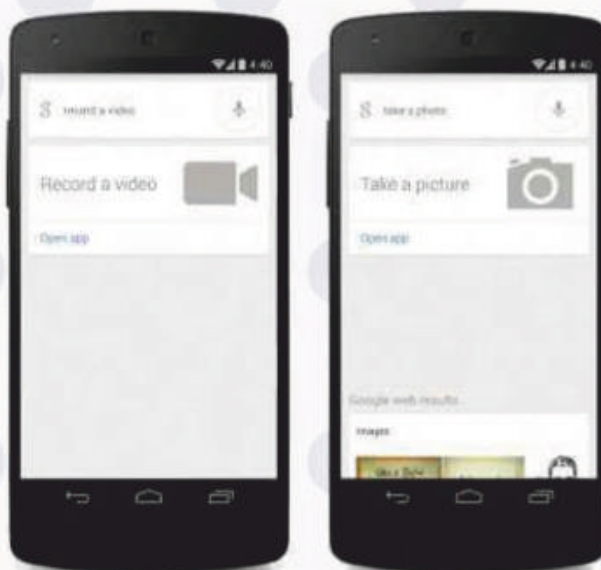
7 MOST USEFUL SHOPPING COMMANDS

- "Alexa, buy [X]" (you'll be presented with the top choice for your product request and can buy it directly from Amazon)
- "Alexa, where's my stuff?" (wondering when your outstanding Amazon order will arrive? This is how to find out)
- "Alexa, what are your deals?" (Alexa will list some bargains to be found on Amazon and give you the chance to buy them. Say "Next" to move on)
- "Alexa, buy this song"/"Alexa, buy this album" (when you hear something you like playing on Amazon Music)
- "Hey Google, what's on my shopping list?" (you'll need to have populated the list beforehand)
- "Hey Google, talk to Asda" (if you have an Asda account, you can add items to your basket and check prices)
- "Hey Google, what's the closest supermarket?" (so you don't need to travel far for shopping)



photo at any point. You can also ask Google to "take video" if you want to record something. Unlike the photo options, there's no countdown – the video will begin recording immediately. Captured photos and videos will be saved to Google Photos.

You can also ask Google Assistant to turn your phone's torch on or off, if it's getting dark.



Tell Google Assistant to capture a photo or video for you

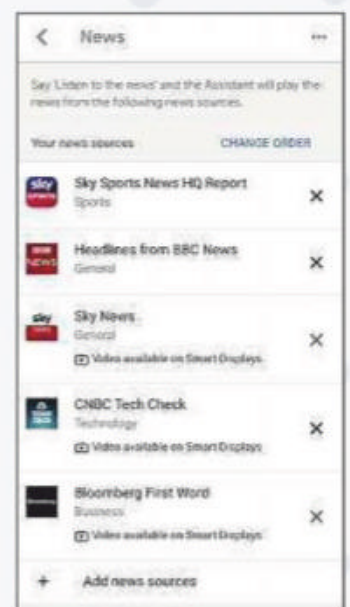


Listen to the news

Both Alexa and Google Assistant can play the latest news headlines to you.

Just summon your assistant and say "Play me the news".

Both assistants use BBC News and other British and international services. To customise the news sources in Alexa, open the app, open the menu, tap Settings and select Flash Briefing. To customise Google Assistant's choices, open the Google Home app, tap Settings and select 'More settings' at the bottom. Tap the Services tab and select News. You can remove unwanted services, add new sources, and reorder the list. ■



Get the latest news headlines direct from your voice assistant

NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 9 January 2018

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Best free online calendars

What better way to start planning for the New Year than with a new calendar that syncs across all your devices? **Steve Clark** organises the best cross-platform calendars and puts them in order



Microsoft Outlook | bit.ly/outlook465 | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★



What we liked:

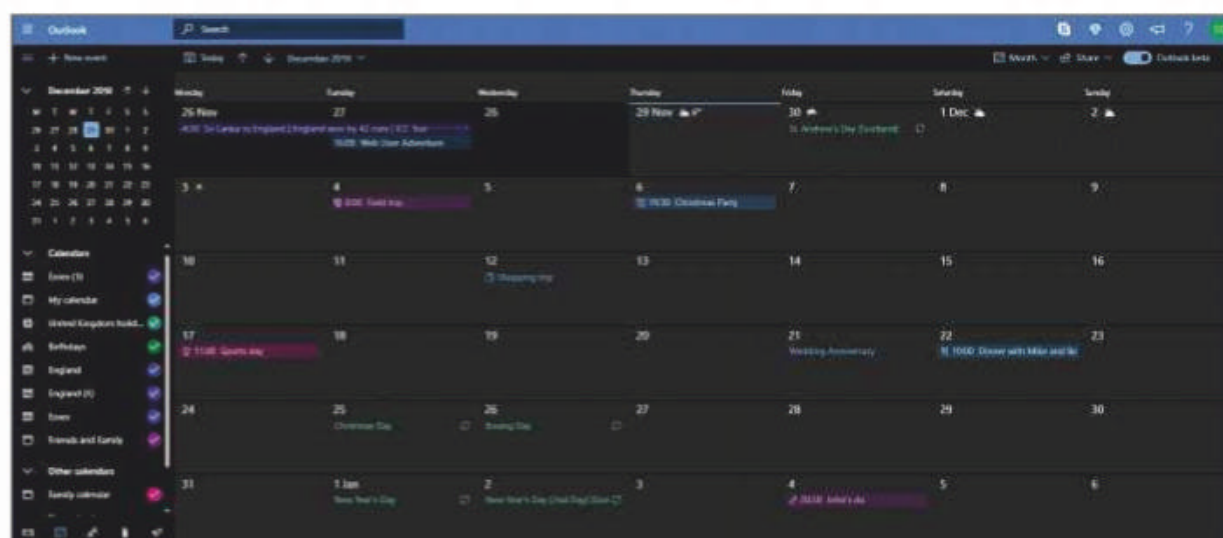
Embracing Windows, Mac OS, smartphones, tablets and the web, Microsoft's Outlook is the king of cross-platform calendar apps (with a slice of email thrown in). And while

Microsoft's Office 365 subscription gets you the full Outlook software, we found the free Windows Mail offers near-identical tools without the need to stump up the annual charges. All you need to get started is a personal Outlook account.

Most calendar apps have a dull interface – there's not much you can do with a grid of numbers, after all – but Outlook is clean almost to the point of understatement across all platforms, with slim, colour-coded agendas neatly occupying the generously proportioned boxes assigned to each day.

Creating calendar events is as simple or as detailed as you need it to be. The basics let you set a name, description, date and time. Then, if required, you can go ahead and include any of Outlook's optional extras: add a location, invite a pal, attach a file or set reminders that ping notifications to whatever device you're using.

You're also free to change which



'calendar' this event is tied to, because one of Outlook's best features is its ability to pull multiple calendars together. So, if you're running a Google or Apple calendar on the side, add it to Outlook and view it alongside your others. Calendar apps from Evernote, Facebook, Wunderlist and Meetup are also supported, while Microsoft lets you add schedules for nation-specific holidays and your favourite sports teams, automatically displaying forthcoming games and even updating once the score comes in.

How it can be improved:

Outlook is an all-in-one organisational powerhouse, home to calendar, email, contacts and tasks. However, this

multi-functionality is also its downside – it's not a dedicated calendar, which means opening it (or logging in) always defaults to email. Despite our best efforts, we couldn't find a way to change this. It's not a cohesive app, either, with certain tools available on some platforms but missing on others.

OUR VERDICT

Microsoft Outlook is cross-platform in every sense. Wherever you are, whatever device you use, whoever your account is with, Outlook is the 'Calendar +' option. It's especially good for accommodating all your disparate calendars under one roof.

Google Calendar | calendar.google.com | ★★★★★☆

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

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

What we liked:

Google Calendar is perfectly balanced for personal and professional use.

Dig into this distraction-free calendar and you'll find a bounty of clever features, such as switching time zones and deploying Find A Time to scour your agenda and prevent clashing appointments.

Who said calendars need to be boring? Switch to Schedule view and the calendar's smart enough to add stylised boards to forthcoming events based on themes or locations. Got a dinner reservation? Google pulls up a photo of the restaurant, while birthdays display your contacts' photo.

The smartphone app also lets you schedule reminders, out-of-office responses and goals. This excellent feature reminds you to take some 'me time' for the important things in life. Set your goal and the app locates the best



time based on other calendar events, adjusting as it learns your habits.

How it can be improved:

Google Calendar's main failing is that it doesn't sync seamlessly with other services' calendars, which you can't see and sync live. Instead, you're limited to importing them, or enticing your family into the Google-sphere. Also, there aren't many

'calendars of interest' to add, and it's completely web and app-based, with no software you can install on a PC.

OUR VERDICT

Google Calendar is a feature-packed modern app, but it's unnecessarily restrictive. So long as you and all your friends, family and colleagues only use Google Calendar, sharing events (or even full calendars) is a cinch. If not, then hard luck!

TimeTree | timetreeapp.com | ★★★★★☆

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

What we liked:

TimeTree is a mobile and web-based calendar that's earned itself an Editors' Choice stamp in the Google Play Store.

Not only does it let you escape the clutches of Microsoft and Google, it's also happy not to reinvent the wheel, displaying large, spacious boxes that let you quickly see events without squinting and scrolling.

Create a new calendar and give it a purpose – Family, Work, Groups and so on. After choosing who or what your calendar is for, you can add a cover image, a colour and a description. These personalisation options are such a simple addition that we expect TimeTree's more famous competitors will nab the idea soon.

The focus of the calendar is on sharing, so once it's set up, just fire off a link to anyone who needs to see it – all they need is an email address. The developers are promising to introduce a Weekly View soon.



How it can be improved:

Like Google Calendar, TimeTree is limited to the web and apps for Android and iOS – although, in our tests, syncing between the two was instant. Sadly, there's no way to export your calendar for use in other calendar apps. We'd also like to see file attachments included when creating events.

OUR VERDICT

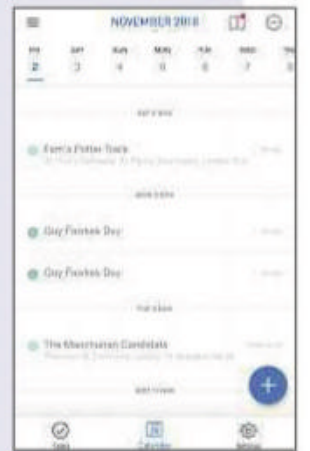
This social planner offers almost all the same features as Google and Microsoft, and looks just as sharp. It's completely free and, while the apps claim to contain ads, we didn't see any during our testing period.

BEST OF THE REST

Any.do

[Any.do](http://any.do)

Combining tasks, to-dos and calendars, Any.do is almost the ultimate cross-platform time-management app: not only is it available on smartphones, but also smart speakers; and not just Windows, but wearables, too. Oh, and don't forget browser extensions. There's no true web app yet, but it's on its way, and as soon as it's available, Any.do will be a serious contender for our coveted Gold Award. One to watch.



OneCalendar

oncalendar.nl

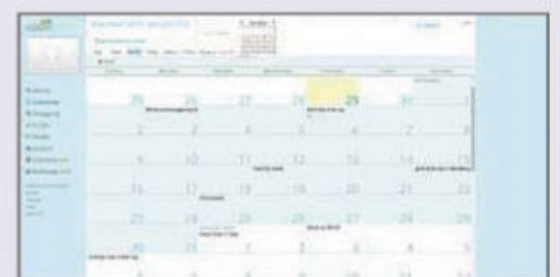
OneCalendar is more collator than calendar, seamlessly pulling together all your other calendars – from Google to iCloud, Facebook to Office365 – into a single app. Best of all, it features offline support and stores all your data on your device, keeping it more secure than cloud-based alternatives. If you use Windows, Android, iPhone or iPad, there's much to recommend here. However, with no web application, Mac OS users need to go elsewhere.



Cozi

cozi.com

Cozi is, strictly speaking, a family organiser. Don't let that put you off, though. This multi-platform calendar has been around for yonks – it shows in its creaking design – but it's got unique extras such as shopping lists, meal planners, to-dos and a journal. A few functions are locked behind a paywall, but the free version performs basic calendar tasks well.



20 THINGS YOU MUST DO ONLINE IN

2018 wasn't a vintage year for technology, but 2019 looks much more promising. **Steve Clark** and **Robert Irvine** preview the web highlights for the next 12 months

UPGRADE TO THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

1 Browse faster on the move using 5G

2019 is set to be the year of 5G, which won't mean much if you still can't get 4G but theoretically means much faster mobile browsing, with download speeds of up to 21Gbps and upload speeds of 10Gbps. The UK's biggest mobile network, EE, is bringing 5G to 16 UK cities including Newcastle, Liverpool, Nottingham, Coventry and Bristol; and rival service Three also plans to switch on 5G in the second half of 2019.

You'll need a compatible phone to enjoy 5G, and many manufacturers are rushing out handsets in preparation, including the Samsung Galaxy S10, OnePlus 7 and Motorola 5G Moto Mod. The next Apple iPhone and Google Pixel are also expected to support 5G.

But just because 5G is available in your area doesn't mean you'll be able to access it, and some experts predict that it won't be fully functional until 2020. Bear in mind, too, that the cost of purchasing 5G spectrum and setting up new 5G networks is likely to be passed onto consumers by mobile operators,

so initial 5G contracts are likely to be very expensive. Find out more at bit.ly/5g465.

Expected: Autumn 2019

2 Upgrade to Wi-Fi 6

Wi-Fi names are already changing – so it's farewell, 802.11ac, hello Wi-Fi 5. This rebrand will make the tech terms less confusing and let you more easily identify devices that offer the fastest



speeds possible. With that in

mind, you may want to wait until the release of the all-new Wi-Fi 6

(bit.ly/wifi465) sometime in the new year.

According to tests, Wi-Fi 6 provides four times the speed of Wi-Fi 5 in crowded and built-up areas, along with improved battery life for internet-connected devices. It features the handy ability to 'talk' to your smartphone or laptop, so it knows when to hit the snooze button on the Wi-Fi signal and when to wake it up again.

Expected: Summer 2019

3 Make the switch to Windows 10

Love it or loathe it, Windows 10 is here to stay – and, just to ram home the message, Microsoft is pulling support for its older operating systems. 9 April 2019 is the last time Microsoft will release a security update for any Windows 7 machine running the SHA-1 SSL certification. To continue receiving security fixes after this date, you'll need to patch your machine to accept the more secure SHA-2. Even if you do switch to the new security certification, your PC is on borrowed time. Come

December, we predict Microsoft is going to unleash those annoying nag screens on Windows 7 users, urging them to upgrade to

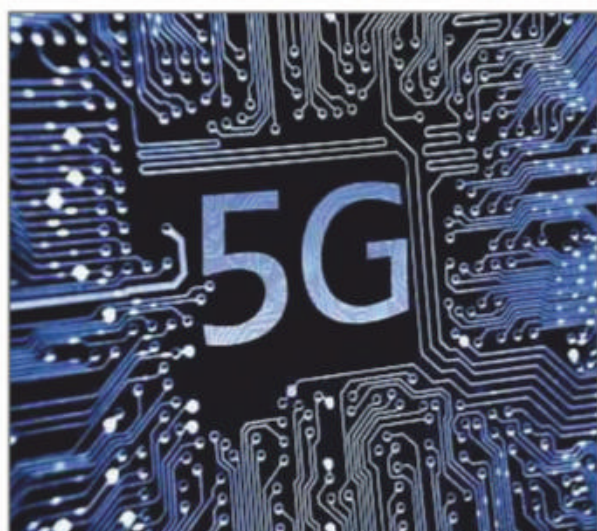
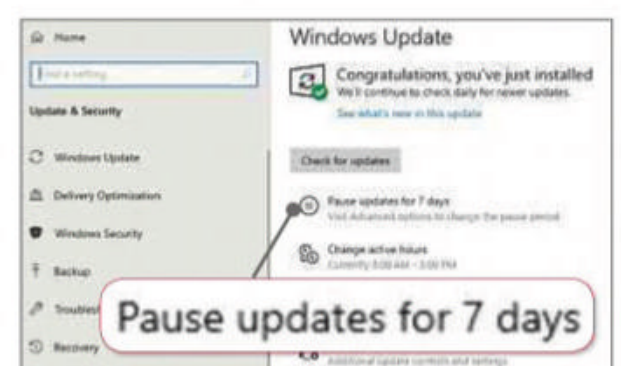
Windows 10. This year might be the time to take the plunge (or find a new OS), since without support, you're leaving your computer vulnerable to hackers.

Expected: April 2019



4 Pause and delay Windows updates

As has become the norm, the October 2018 Update wreaked havoc with Windows 10 PCs across the world, causing problems with drivers, deleting files and even triggering the dreaded Blue Screen of Death. The next update, codenamed 19H1, is expected in April 2019, and will doubtless bring its own problems; but on the plus side, it also makes it easier to pause future updates. This option is already buried in Windows 10's Settings, but 19H1 places it on the main screen and lets you delay updates for as long as you like (the default is seven days). Another welcome new feature, called Intelligent Active Hours, analyses your daily activities to





ensure Windows Update doesn't restart your PC unexpectedly when you're in the middle of something. See bit.ly/windows465 for more information.

Expected: April 2019

5 Use a foldable version of Android

Rumoured for ages, this year finally saw the reveal of not one but two foldable Android phones. In 2019, smartphone-



cum-tablets look set to be the biggest design shake-up since Apple brought us the notch, and Google is throwing its full weight behind the idea. According to news reports (bit.ly/fold465), Google has been working closely with Samsung to develop a unique version of the Android operating system for the new folding phones. Google has also suggested that 2019's Android Q will be specifically built to support all Android devices, including foldables.

Expected: August 2019

6 Browse anonymously with BullGuard VPN

Back in September, we named NordVPN (nordvpn.com) our favourite VPN of 2018, praising its ease of use, generous choice of servers and double layer of anonymity. The company has now teamed up with security specialist BullGuard to create a powerful new VPN



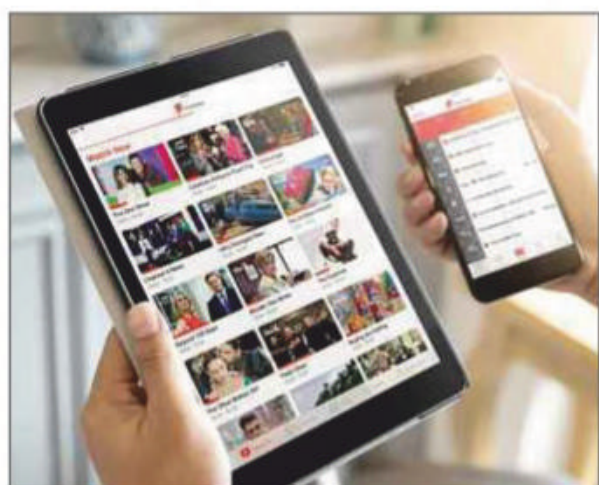
for Windows, Mac OS, Android and iOS. BullGuard VPN will keep you anonymous online using military-grade encryption; let you switch between servers in 16 countries including the US, UK, Switzerland, Spain and Australia; and impose no limit on the amount of data you can use. There are three plans to choose from, starting at £64.99 for one year.

Expected: January 2019

ENHANCE YOUR ENTERTAINMENT

7 Stream live and on-demand Freeview to your phone

As we reported last issue, Freeview is finally joining the streaming revolution with a new app that lets you watch live and catch-up TV on your phone or tablet, without the need for a television aerial. As well as streaming live channels from the BBC, ITV and Channel 4, you'll be able to view on-demand content from Player, ITV Hub, All 4, My5 and UKTV Play, with further services to be



added in due course. The app will also feature a search facility and offer recommendations covering all the supported players, although you'll still need to install separate apps for individual services. The iOS app will be available from 22 January, with the Android version following in early 2019.

Expected: January 2019

8 Finally watch Hulu in the UK

There have long been rumours about the US streaming service Hulu launching over here – back in 2009, a Hulu spokesperson said “the UK is our number one priority” – but content-licensing restrictions have scuppered its expansion plans. In 2019, Hulu will at last be going global, following Disney's purchase of 21st Century Fox, which gave it 60% ownership of the streaming service (bit.ly/hulu465). However, before you ditch your VPN, note that those pesky licensing restrictions mean we're unlikely to see the same content



as American viewers, while some Hulu TV shows are already available on UK Netflix, iPlayer and All 4.

Expected: Autumn 2019

9 Watch YouTube Originals for free

Like Netflix and Amazon, YouTube funds the creation of its own TV shows and films, but if you want to watch YouTube Originals you need to pay £11.99 per month for its Premium service. Happily, that's set to change in 2019 because YouTube plans to make its Originals free for everyone to stream – supported, of course, by ads (bit.ly/originals465). This means you'll be able to view popular



Originals such as *Cobra Kai*, *Origin* and *Mind Field* without subscribing to Premium, as well as upcoming sci-fi anthology series *Weird City*.

Expected: April 2019

10 Stream Apple's new TV service

Industry whispers suggest that Apple's long-rumoured TV subscription service



will be launched in over 100 countries in 2019 following an initial US roll-out (bit.ly/stream465). There's plenty of exclusive content to look forward to – the website Macworld lists almost 30 original shows (bit.ly/appletv465) including the Dragon's Den-style *Planet of the Apps*, a new M Night Shyamalan thriller, a reboot of Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories* and a drama about a morning talk show starring Steve Carrell, Jennifer Aniston and Reese Witherspoon.

Expected: Spring 2019

11 Switch over to a OnePlus smart TV

OnePlus has made a name for itself with its high-spec but mid-price smartphones, the latest of which – the OnePlus 6T – went on sale last month. The Chinese company is now working

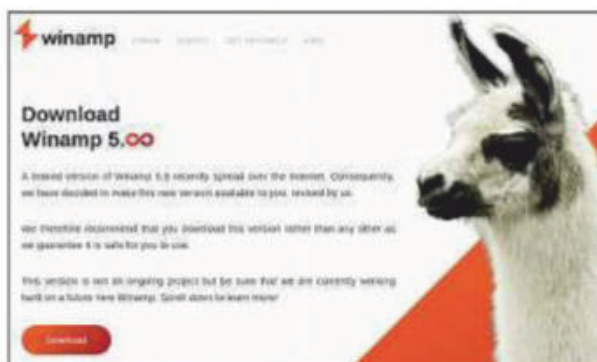
on its first smart TV, to be launched in 2019. OnePlus said it believes that "TV has the potential to be so much more than where you watch your favourite shows" (bit.ly/oneplus465). It's likely that OnePlus TV will be based on the same software as Android TV, just as OnePlus phones run a custom version of Android – OxygenOS – and combine advanced features with affordability.

Expected: November 2019



12 Stream music using Winamp 6

One of the biggest surprises of 2018 was the unexpected return of the audio player Winamp (www.winamp.com), which released its first update for five years to make it compatible with Windows 10. And that's just for starters – 2019 will see a major reboot to bring it



in line with the likes of Spotify and Apple Music. Indeed, it's been hinted that Winamp 6 will integrate with existing streaming services, as well as letting you play podcasts, radio and music stored locally. Few details have been confirmed yet, other than that the player will be available for Android and iOS, and will retain its distinctive llama branding.

Expected: Spring 2019

13 Stream music using Spotify's voice assistant

Controlling Spotify with your voice is one of the most useful things you can do with Alexa and Google Assistant (see our cover feature on page 40), but the music-streaming service clearly has its eye – and its ear – on the bigger picture. The company is reportedly working on its own voice search engine and accompanying smart speaker, which will let you find and play music, create playlists and more, without the need for third-party software or hardware, or using your hands. That's all the information we have at the moment, although the image below of an in-car speaker or hands-free music player was leaked and swiftly removed in April.

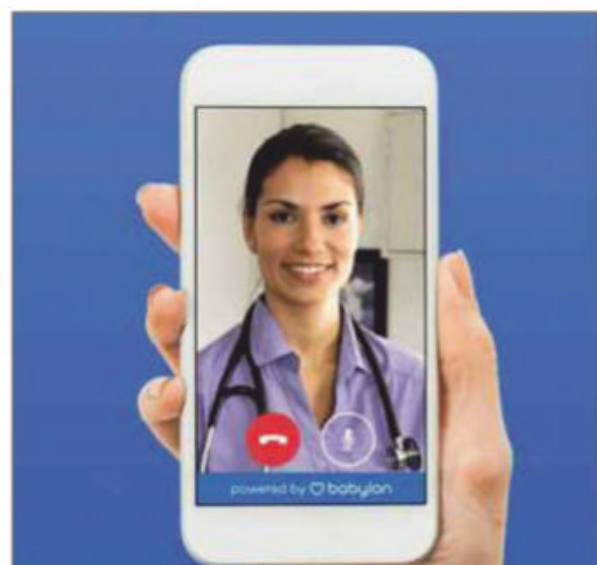
Expected: Summer 2019



INSTALL AMAZING NEW MOBILE APPS

14 Consult your GP via video using the new NHS app

Health Secretary Matt Hancock says he wants to make the NHS "the most



cutting-edge system in the world for the use of technology to improve our health", and that starts with a new NHS app that lets you check your symptoms, order repeat prescriptions and book appointments with your GP (bit.ly/health465). In 2019, developers will introduce GP video-calling, making it more convenient to 'see' your doctor. This should help alleviate pressure on NHS services, allowing GPs more time to focus on patients who genuinely need face-to-face consultations. According to the Department of Health, the app will work on 99% of UK smartphones.

Expected: Spring 2019



15 Capture looping videos using Byte

Back in 2012, Twitter bought an app called Vine, which let you create six-second-long looping videos to share online. Vine attracted 200

million monthly users, but it didn't make any money, so Twitter controversially closed it four years later. If you miss the bite-sized fun of the service, the good news is that a new version is coming in 2019, now called Byte and free of the 'monetisation' obsession of Twitter. Little has been confirmed yet, other

PLAY INNOVATIVE NEW GAMES



18 Play Mario Kart Tour on your mobile device

Fresh off the back of its first foray into mobile gaming with Super Mario Run, Nintendo is set to release Mario Kart Tour in 2019 (bit.ly/kart465). Back in February, the company revealed that the “checkered flag has been raised” for the much-loved go-kart racer, then confirmed the “plan to start a service for Mario Kart Tour, a Mario Kart application for smart devices”. Nintendo has previously been hesitant to compete against its own world-beating portable consoles, so we’re glad to see it fully embrace mobile gaming.

Expected: March 2019

19 Play Angry Birds in augmented reality



Good news if you enjoy flinging birds at precariously balanced, porcine-packed structures: an augmented-reality version of the smash-hit mobile game Angry Birds

is on its way. The project is still in the early stages of development, but according to Simo Hämmäläinen, Rovio’s top brand-man, it’s “an application that’s going to be AR-based, and its function is going to be more for the use of our licensing partners and us, linking the physical, licensed products to the digital environment of Angry Birds” (bit.ly/angry465). That sounds suspiciously like a setup that involves you scanning official merchandise with your phone to add extra content to the game.

Expected: August 2019

20 Play next-generation games consoles

The current generation of consoles reaches its fifth year in 2018, which means we’re nearing the end of the usual console cycle. Gamers are now buzzing about the imminent arrival of ninth-generation consoles (bit.ly/games465), with the PlayStation 5 rumoured for launch before the end of the year. With digital games increasing in popularity, the next big evolution could be game-streaming services – Google and Assassin’s Creed developer Ubisoft already showcased a proof-of-concept earlier this year (bit.ly/streaming465), while Microsoft is said to be planning a cheaper, streaming-only Xbox.

Expected: June 2019



WILL HACKERS TAKE DOWN THE INTERNET IN 2019?



2018 saw more major hacks and security breaches than we can remember, including Facebook, British Airways, FIFA, Dixons Carphone and Marriott. This raises the question of which target hackers will attack next, and one security company believes that it will be the internet itself.

In its annual report, WatchGuard Technologies (www.watchguard.com) predicts that: “a hacktivist collective or nation-state will launch a coordinated attack against the infrastructure of the internet in 2019”. The company warns that hackers could launch a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack on “critical points” that provide internet services, taking down millions of websites and effectively holding the internet hostage.

Watchdog’s other grim predictions (see bit.ly/watch465 for the full list) include the rise of fileless-malware worms that traditional security software can’t detect, and AI chatbots “going rogue” and tricking users into downloading malware. Still, at least you’ll be able to play Mario Kart on your phone!

than that Byte is “a new looping video app by the creator of Vine”, but keep an eye on byte.co for updates. Judging by the site’s forums, there’s already plenty of buzz about Byte.

Expected: Spring 2019

16 Use Photoshop on your iPad

It’s coming. And not just a stripped-down, threadbare version, but an

experience that was described as “real Photoshop” for the iPad during its unveiling at the Adobe MAX event in



October (bit.ly/photo465). The Photoshop iPad app – designed to welcome beginners and professionals alike – makes full use of Adobe’s all-new file format, Cloud PSD. This lets you start a project on one device, then seamlessly continue on another. It’s part of the company’s continued drive to embrace creative freedom.

Expected: spring 2019

17 Unlock your iPhone and iPad with your face

If you’re already using the iPhone X, then you’ll be familiar with Face ID – the tech that lets you unlock your phone



just by looking at the camera. No more fiddly passcodes or patterns to remember. Now, according to one analyst (bit.ly/faceid465), Apple is adding Face ID to all new iPhones and iPads.

Rumours are swirling that Apple will junk Touch ID fingerprint scanners – just when most modern smartphones have followed the trend – and once again redefine the modern smartphone. It

makes any new iPhone model an attractive choice if you’re seeking advanced security features.

Expected: September 2019



Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

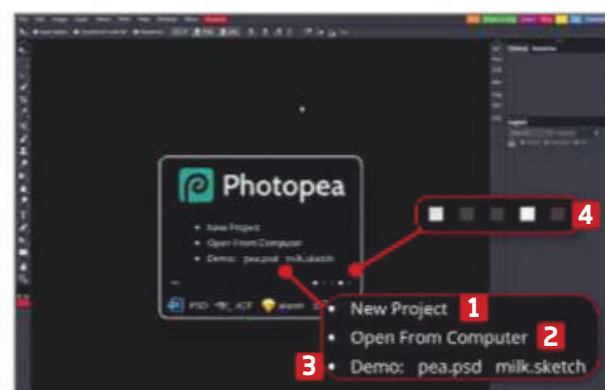
Edit your photos with a free web app that rivals Photoshop

PhotoPea uses advanced features to fix and improve your photos. Here's how to use it

PhotoPea: www.photopea.com | ⌚ 20 mins | Any browser

Free software such as Paint.net (www.getpaint.net) and GIMP (www.gimp.org) means you don't need to spend money to get great photo-editing software. PhotoPea goes a step further by bringing advanced photo editing direct to your browser, so you don't even need to download anything. It can perform simple tasks, such as resizing,

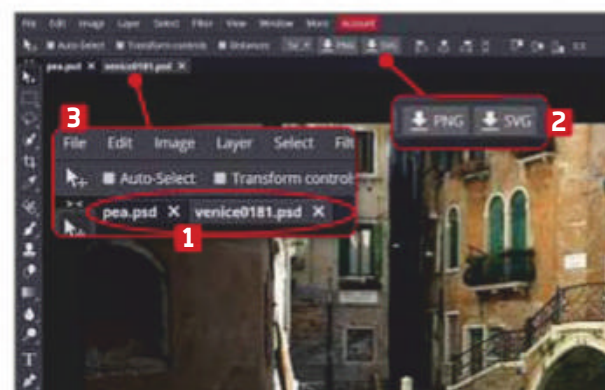
rotating and colour-correcting images, and includes smart tools and support for layers, layer masks and styles. It can even open and edit vector graphics and PSD (Photoshop) files. PhotoPea is updated regularly, and the latest version adds live shapes, and new Distortion and Difference Clouds filters. It also has thousands of new fonts in the Text tool.



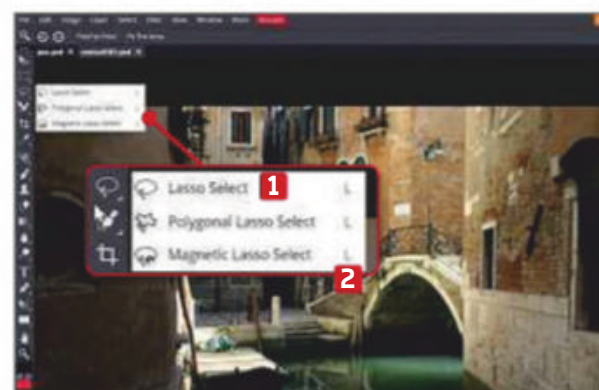
1 Go to the website and the editor will open. Switch to your browser's full-screen mode by pressing F11. You can start a new project, 1 open a file on your computer 2 or play with one of the two demo images. 3 You can also change the interface colour from here. 4



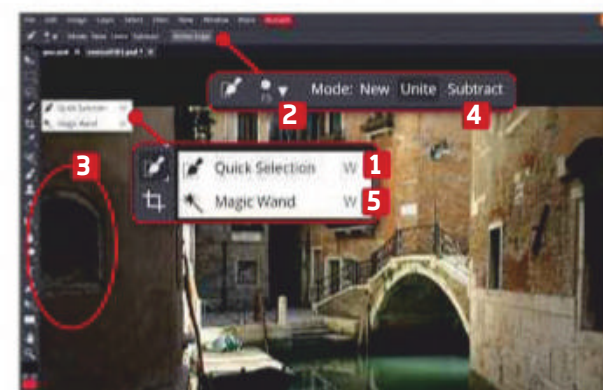
2 This is the Pea.psd sample file. 1 It's not very attractive but it's made using lots of layers. 2 Clicking the eye next to a layer 3 toggles its visibility on or off. You can reorder layers (which may also affect their visibility) by dragging and dropping them.



3 You can open more than one image and switch between them using the tabs. 1 Click the tab's cross to close an image. Use the buttons to quickly save copies of a photo in PNG or SVG (Scalable Vector Graphics); 2 or choose Export As from the File menu 3 to choose from more file types.

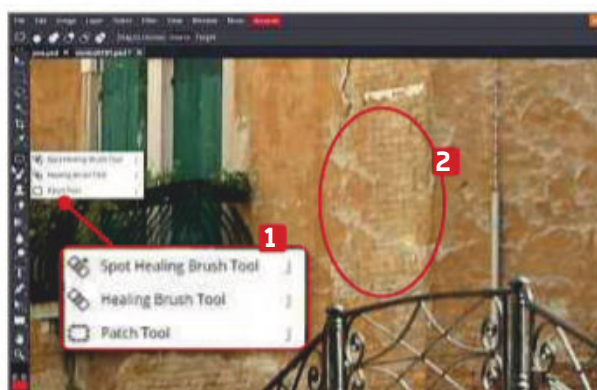
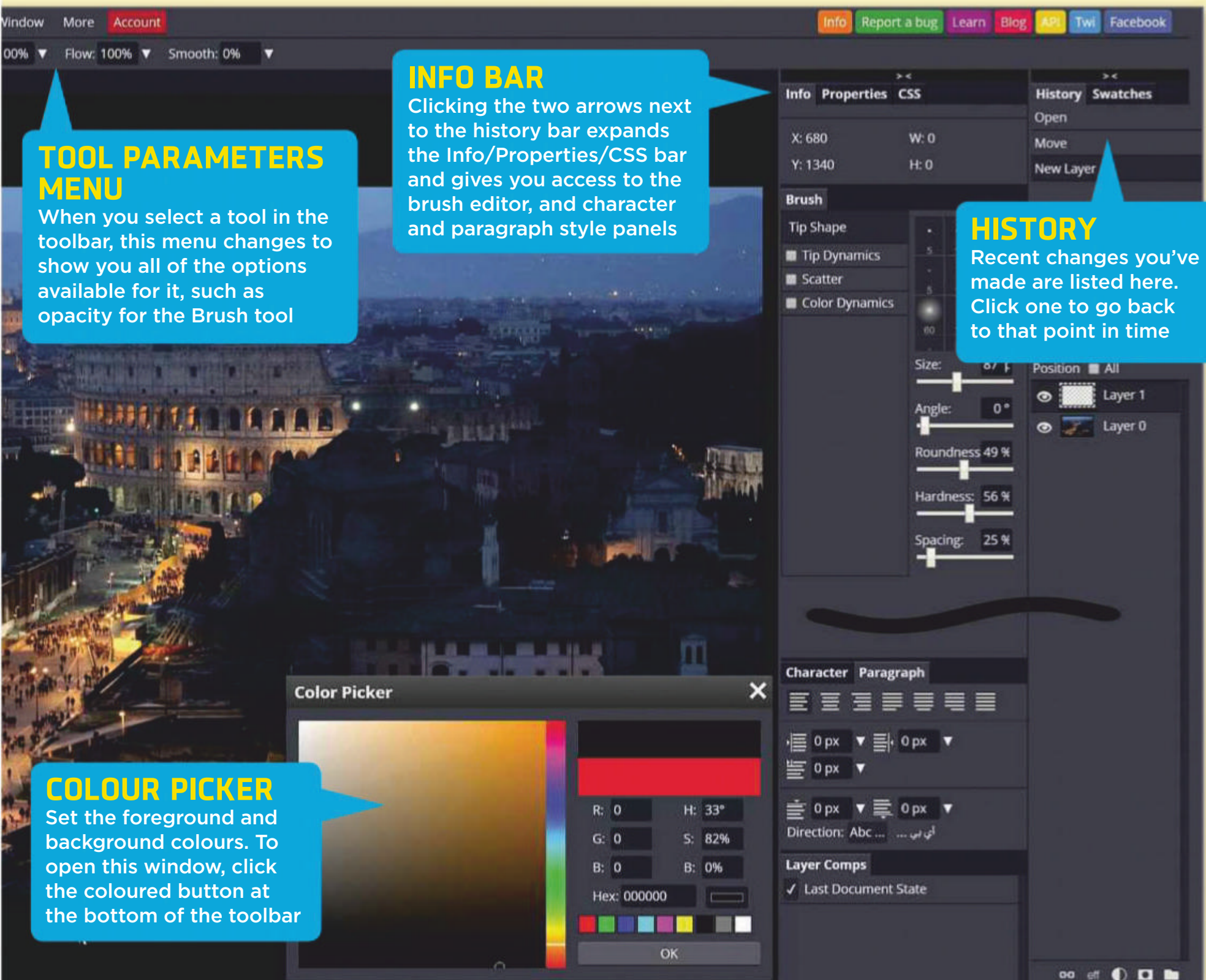


4 The toolbox on the left provides access to all the main options. For example, if you want to select part of an image, use one of the Lasso methods. 1 Tapping L 2 cycles through the choices. All tools have keyboard shortcuts assigned. Pressing B switches between Brush and Pencil, for example.

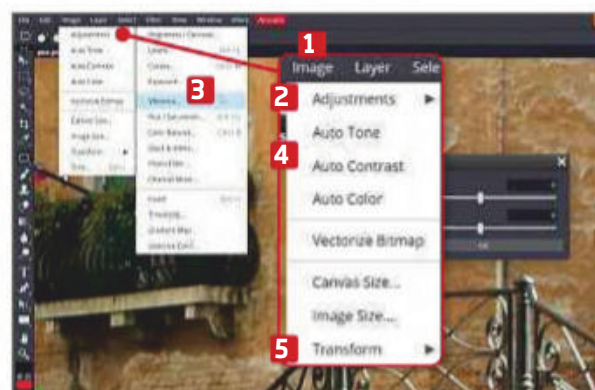


5 The Quick Selection method 1 works like a brush. Select the size in the toolbar 2 and draw some strokes over the part you want to cover. It will cleverly select the area and expand it accordingly. 3 You can use Subtract 4 to remove unwanted selections. Magic Wand 5 selects areas of a similar colour.





6 Use the Healing tools **1** to remove unwanted items in your photos. The Spot Healing Brush replaces the area you draw with pixels from the surrounding area. Healing Brush clones from an area of your choice. To use Patch Tool, select an area, then click and drag to pull part of the image into it. **2**



7 The Image menu **1** lets you tweak the look of your photos. In Adjustments, **2** set the Brightness, Contrast and Vibrance, and access the Levels, Curves, Exposure, Saturation and more. **3** You can make quick changes with Auto Tone, Auto Contrast and Auto Color. **4** Use Transform **5** to rotate or flip the image.



8 PhotoPea offers a number of effects you can access via the Filter menu. **1** Liquify **2** lets you warp the image by pushing and pulling it. There are various blur, sharpen and distortion effects, too. Some effects, such as the Unsharp Mask, **3** have controls you can use to further configure them.



Share your Google tools and services with family members

Google One and Google Family: one.google.com | ⌚ 20 mins | Any browser



EXPERT TIP

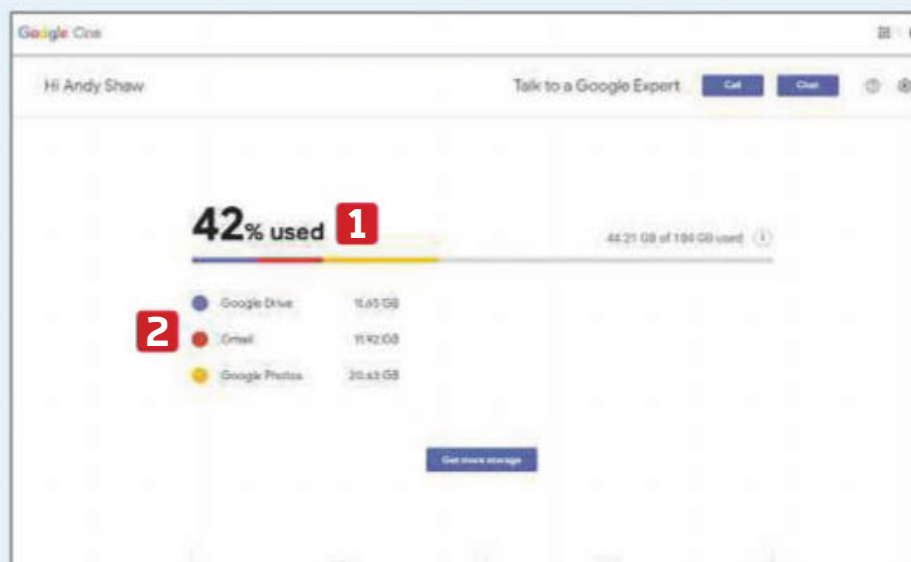
Andy Shaw says

You need at least two other people in a family group for some of the services to kick in, such as sharing in Google Photos. If your family is only you and a partner, the family icon won't appear and you'll have to share directly with that person's Google account. As soon as you create a larger family, the Family icon appears when you share. However, Photos has a Partner Account option you can use to share pictures if you're a family of two.

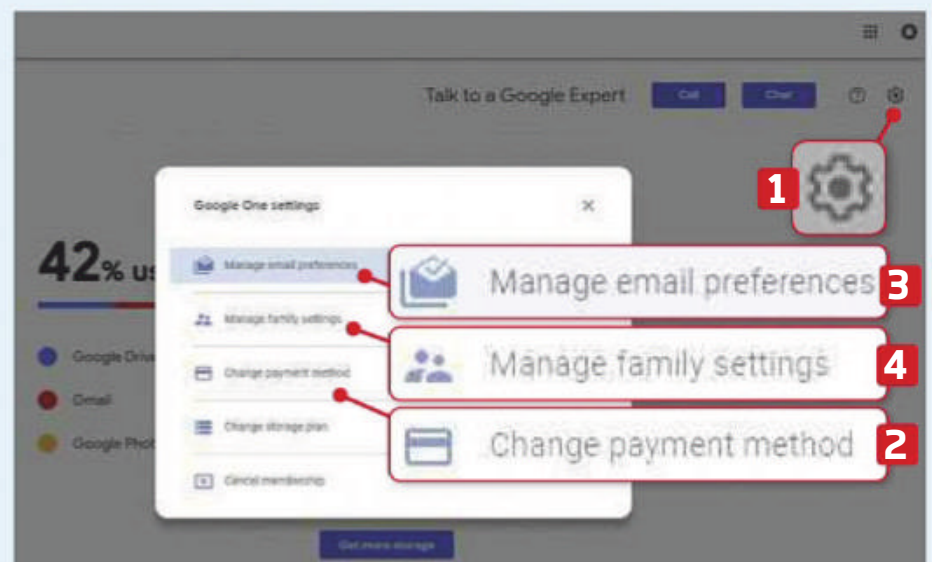


As a *Web User* reader, you're probably the go-to tech person in your household, the one who fixes any computer hiccups and tends to the security and maintenance of the family PC. Well, Google has just made your job easier by introducing its new One account. This lets you bring up to six Google users into a family group, to simplify sharing and communication. So, for starters, you can share online storage between all the members of your family, making better use of any extra storage you're paying for.

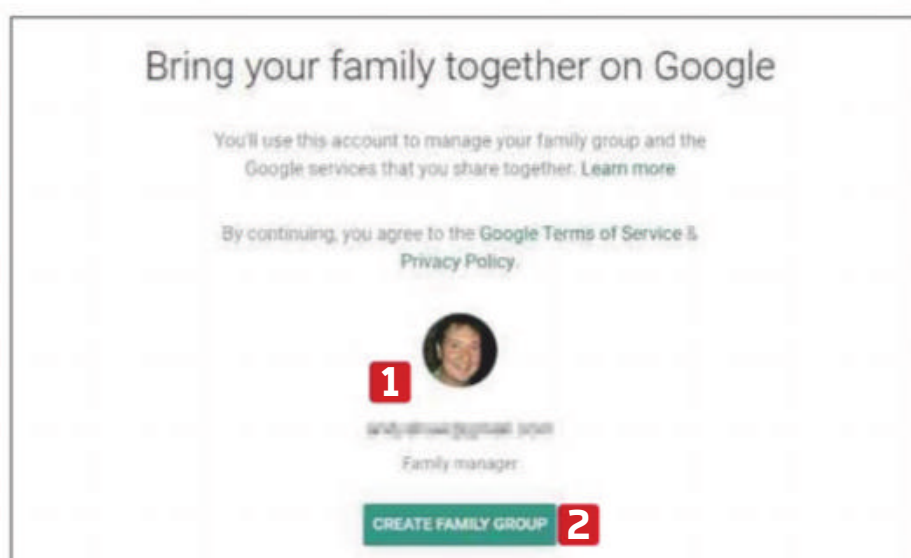
Even more interesting, however, are the new Google Family tools, which aim to make life simpler by adding group tools to some of Google's services, such as adding family events to a joint calendar or easily sharing photos of a family event.



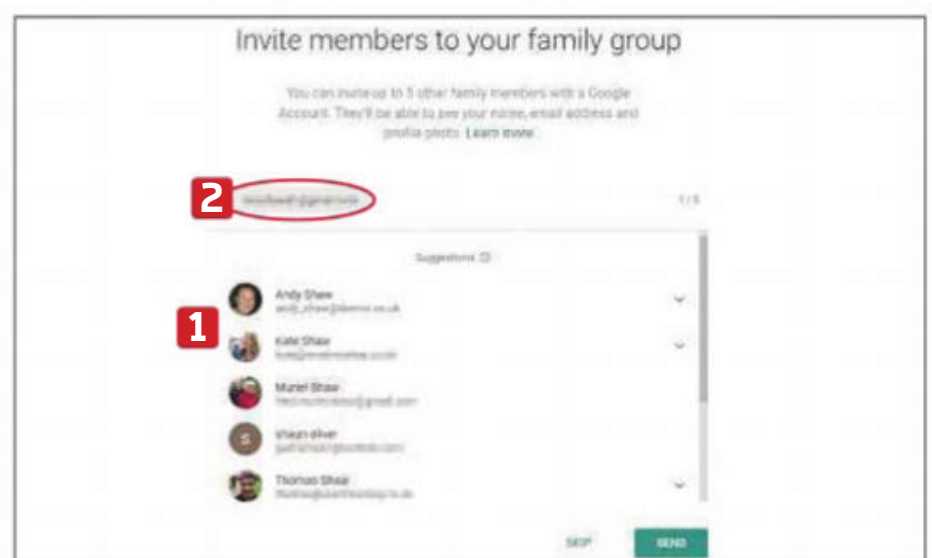
1 Go to one.google.com and sign in. The top part of the screen displays the percentage of storage space you're currently using, **1** and the amount of space that's being used by individual services including Google Drive, Gmail and Google Photos. **2** When you add a family member, their share appears below.



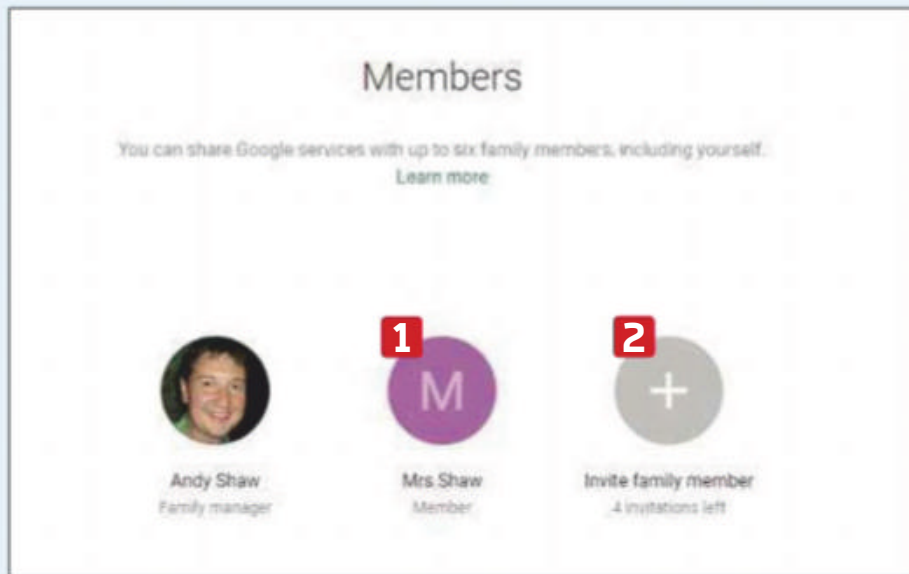
2 Click the Settings cog **1** to display a range of admin tasks, such as changing the credit card you pay with **2** and altering your email preferences. **3** Later, a 'Share Google One with family' switch will appear so you can share online storage, but first you need to set up your family members – start by clicking 'Manage family settings'. **4**



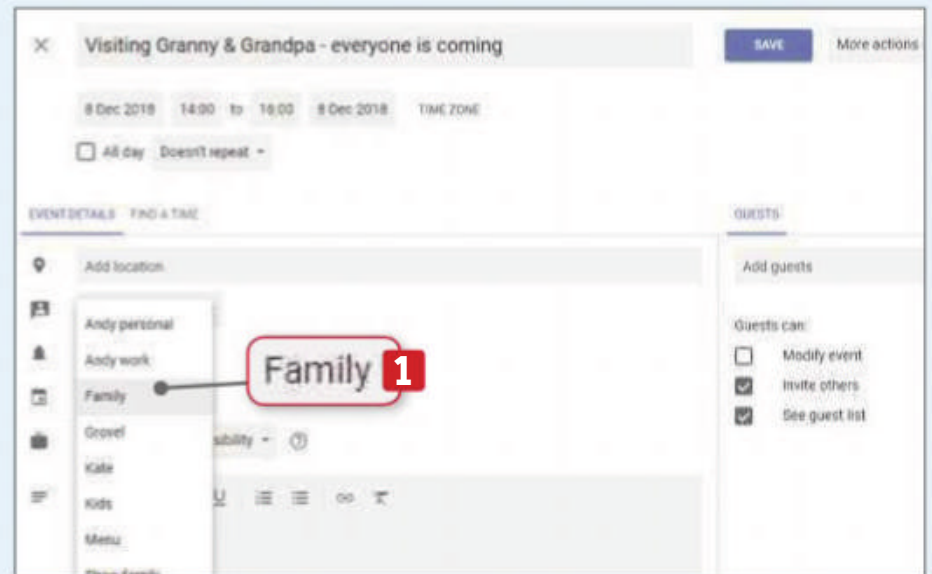
3 This takes you to the new Families page at families.google.com. Click Get Started. It will show the account you're currently logged into and remind you that this account will be the 'Family manager'. **1** Click Create Family Group. **2**



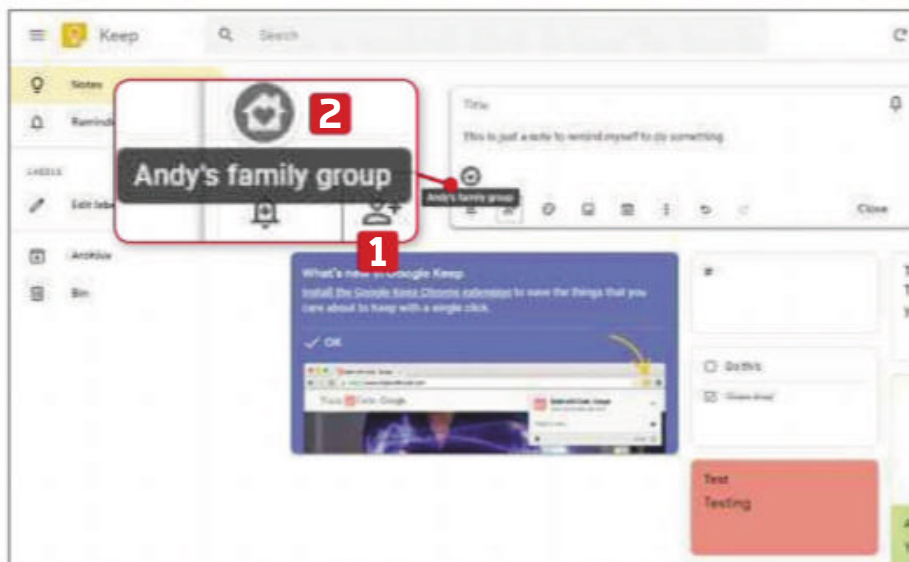
4 Families can contain up to six people, so you can invite five more to join the group you've created. Click them if they appear in the list of recent people you've contacted, below. **1** Otherwise, type their email address into the space above **2** and click 'Add recipient'. Click Send, then Go To Family Group.



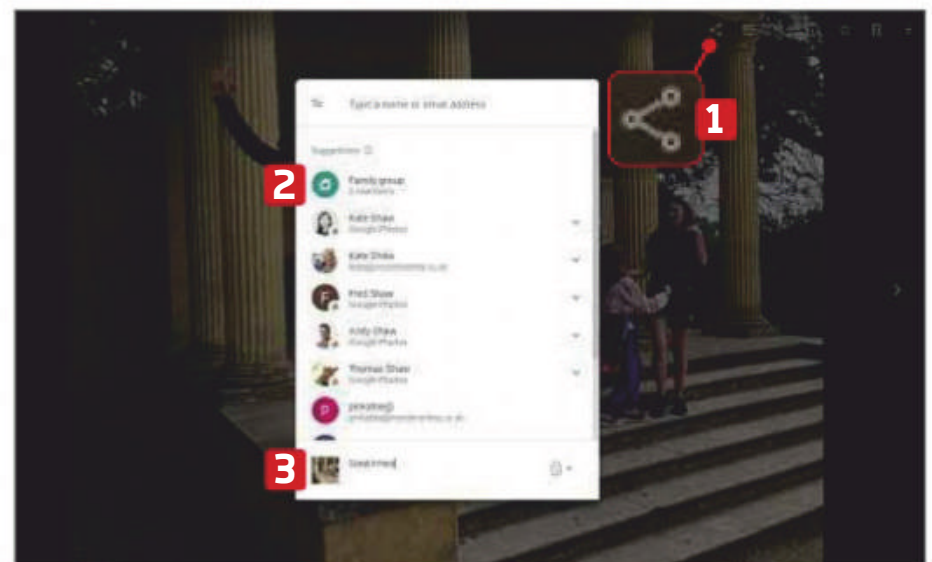
5 Each person you invited will receive an email asking them to confirm whether they want to join your family or not. Once they've clicked and confirmed, they'll appear on your console as a member. **1** There's also a button to add more members, **2** if your family grows or you want to add someone else.



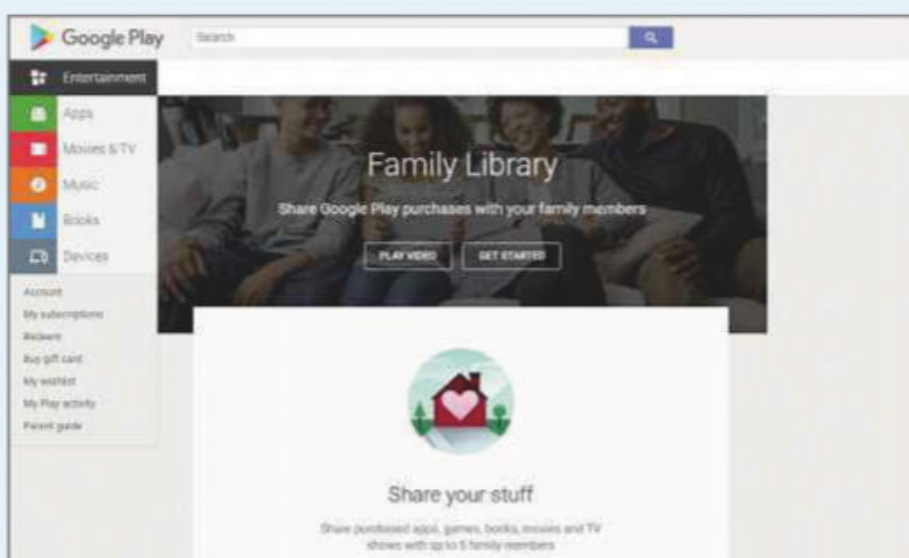
6 Scroll down to see what you're sharing with your family. Click Calendar – you'll see a new entry for Family in the colour-coded list on the left. If you add a new event that you want to appear on every family member's calendar, choose Family **1** next to the calendar icon. You can set alarms and reminders to appear on your group's devices, too.



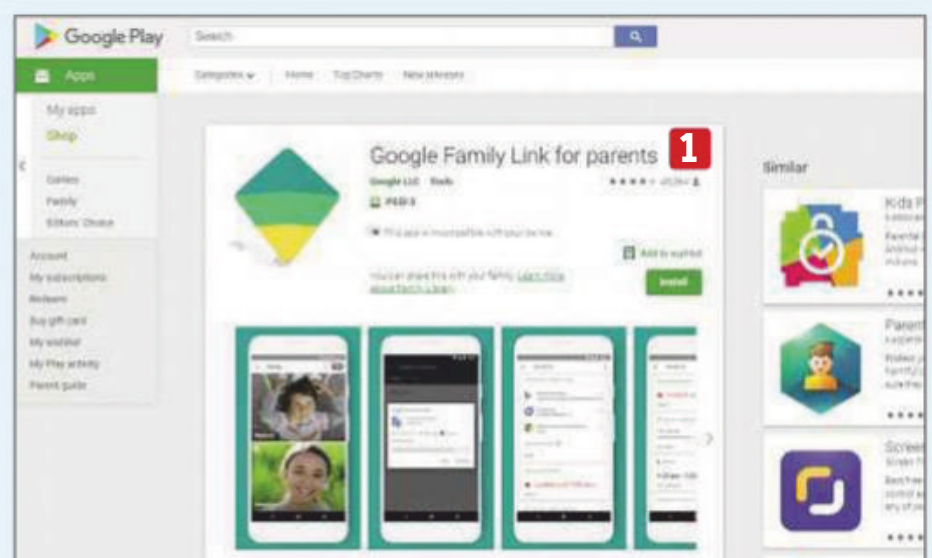
7 In Google Keep, you can assign notes to other Keep users. Once you've created the note, click the Collaborator icon. **1** You can type in an individual address as you would normally, but if you click the new 'family group' icon, **2** the note will be sent to everyone in the group.



8 Google Photos lets you share photos and albums. To share a single photo, click it, then click the Share icon **1** and choose your 'Family group' **2** from the list. Add a message if you wish, **3** then click the Send arrow. Albums can be shared by clicking their three-dot menu icon.



9 You can set up the Google Play store to share apps, movies and other downloads with your family members, even if they're paid-for. Go to bit.ly/playfam465 to register your family with the service. You'll need to confirm whether you're happy for everyone to use your existing credit card, but can approve any purchases made by under 17s.



10 Under 13s shouldn't have standard Google accounts but you can create them for children via the Family Link app (available for Android at bit.ly/goofli465 and Apple at bit.ly/gflios465). **1** The app lets you control their screen time and monitor the apps they install. You can also give another member parent responsibilities.



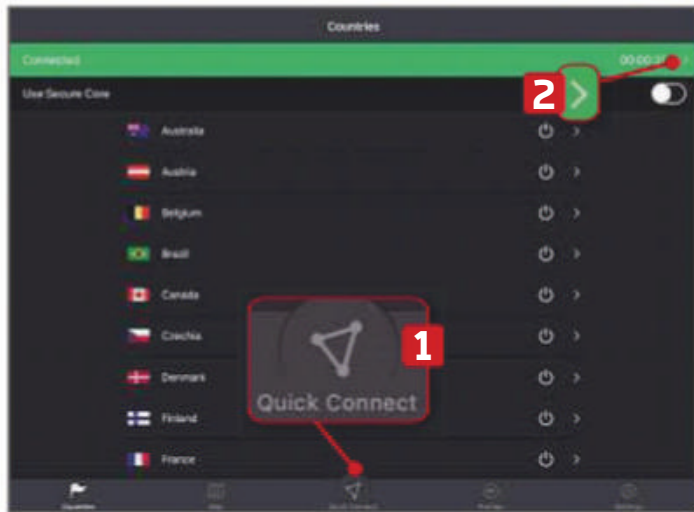
Workshop 3

Use a free, trustworthy iOS VPN

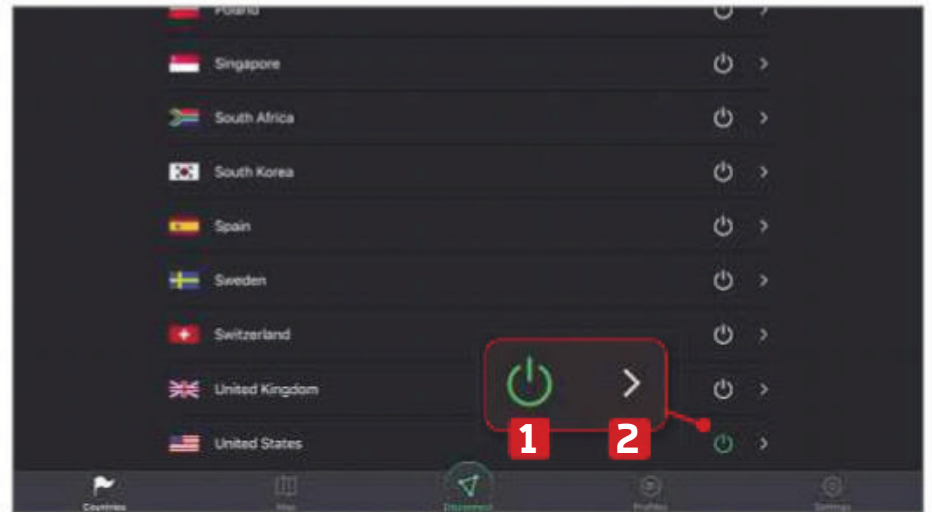
ProtonVPN for iOS is a new, free VPN that works on iPads and iPhones. It's from the same Swiss developer behind ProtonMail, the encrypted email service we introduced you to in Issue 444 (bit.ly/wu444). Before you start, you'll need

a free Proton account – if you signed up for ProtonMail previously, you can use the same one. Log in before you start.

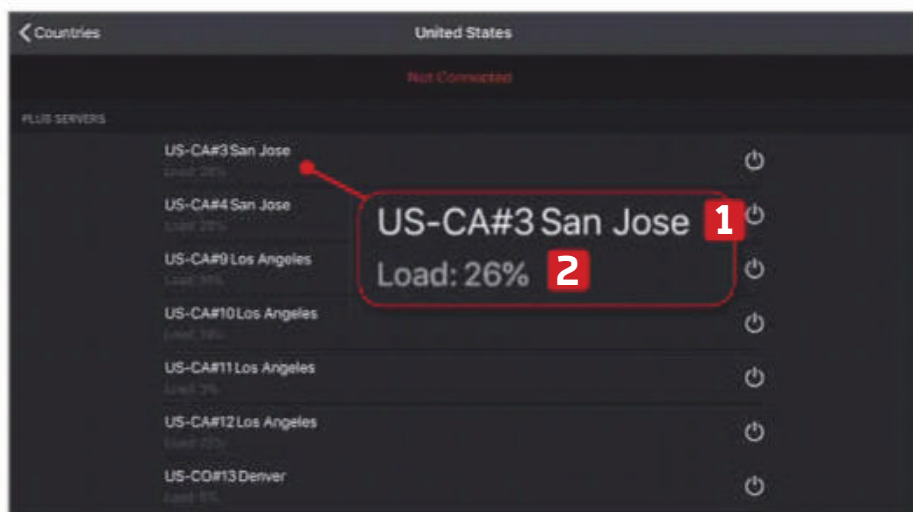
ProtonVPN for iOS: bit.ly/pvpn465 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🍏 iOS 10+



1 If you simply want to connect to the web and get a quick private session running, tap the Quick Connect button. **1** You're probably now connected to a local VPN but you can check by tapping the arrow on the Connected bar, **2** which takes you to the Status screen.



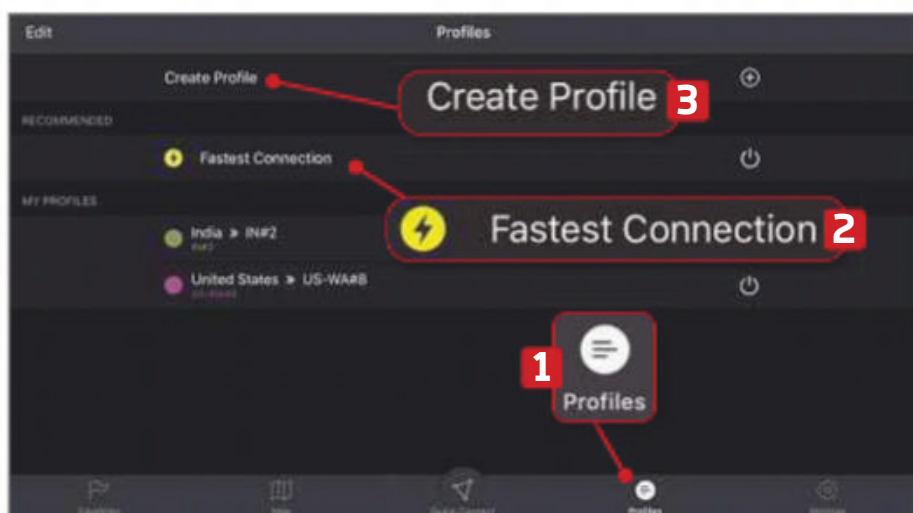
2 If you'd rather choose which country you appear to be from, scroll through the list of options. Tap the power icon **1** to connect to a random server in that country or tap the arrow **2** for more options. The seven-day trial includes all countries but drops to three when the Free account takes over.



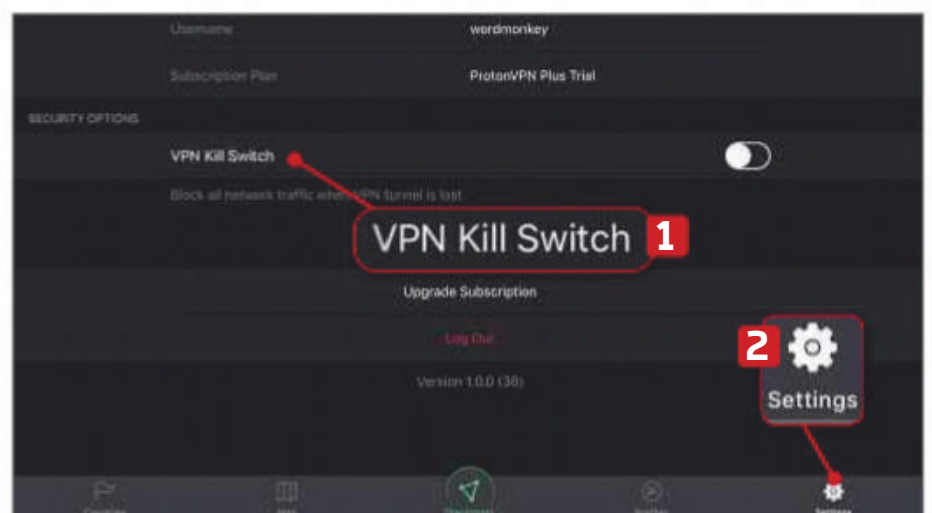
3 From here, you can further refine the location of the server to choose whereabouts in a country you want to appear to be from. **1** Under the server's name, you can see how busy it is. **2** Quieter servers should provide a faster, better connection.



4 Get back to the main list by tapping the Countries button. **1** You can also choose a server from a map by choosing the Map option, **2** then tapping a flag pin to connect to a server in that country. **3** You can't tap through to the full list of server details from here, though.



5 If you find a server that works particularly well, save it by going to the Status screen (see Step 1) and tapping 'Save as Profile'. Choose a saved profile by tapping the Profiles icon. **1** On this screen, there's a link to the fastest server **2** and a Create Profile option **3** to set up a new profile from scratch.



6 The Use Secure Core switch on the main screen slows your connection but routes it through countries with strong privacy laws, though it's only available in the paid-for Plus account (around £6 per month). The Kill Switch **1** in the Settings **2** halts the VPN if the secure connection drops.

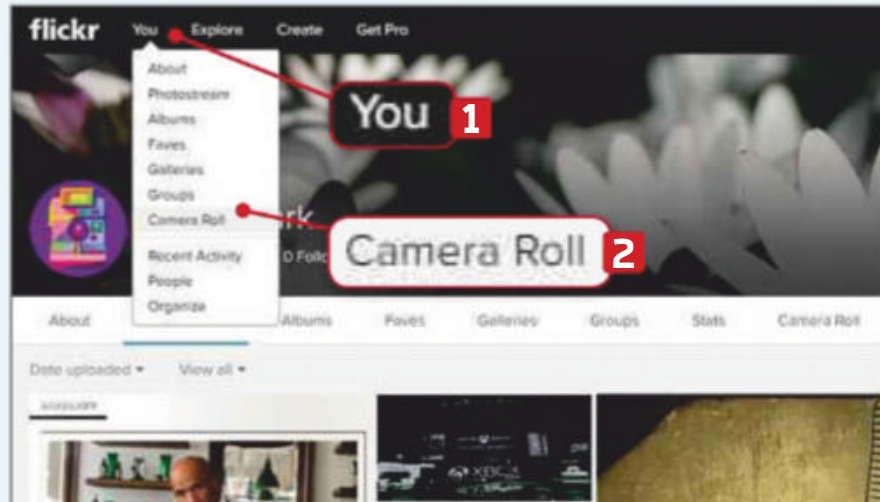


Save your Flickr photos from being deleted

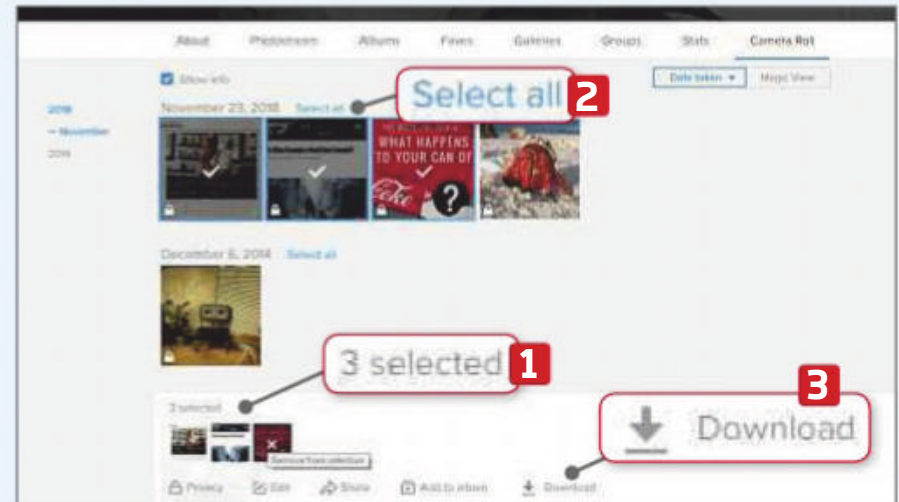
Say goodbye to Flickr's generous 1TB of free online storage – if your free account contains more than 1,000 photos, you'll need to download them before they're permanently deleted. On 8 January 2019, the photo-storage

service will stop you adding pictures; and on 5 February, it'll begin removing older photos that breach the new maximum allowance – unless you sign up for a paid-for account.

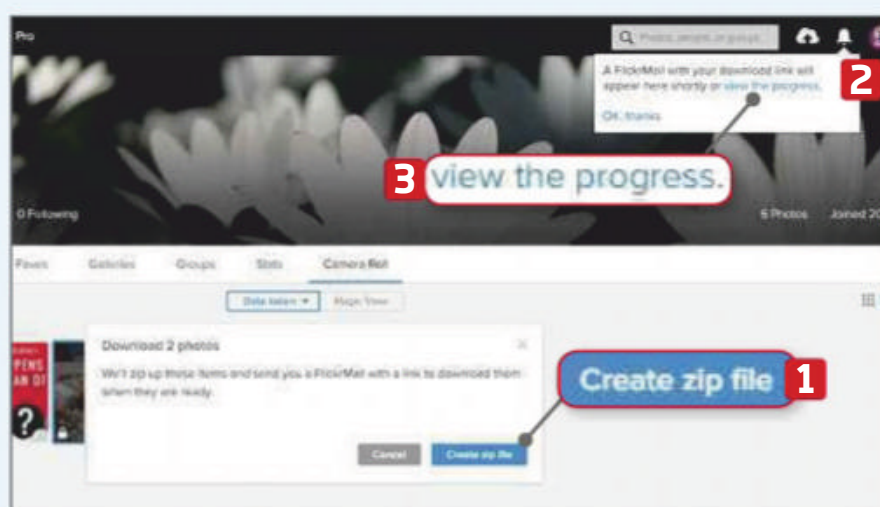
Flickr: www.flickr.com | 10 mins | All browsers



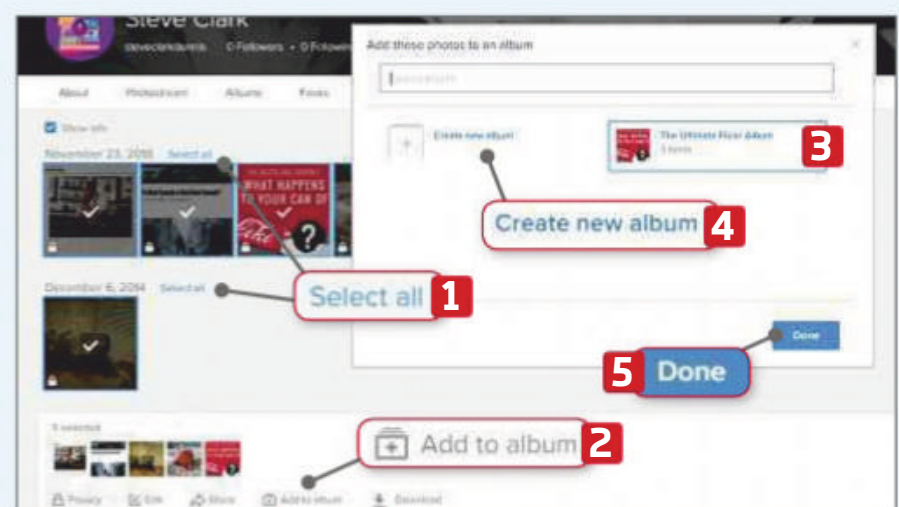
1 You can either download your Flickr photos individually or bulk-download an album. The camera-roll method is best for smaller numbers. Log into Flickr and hover your mouse over the You button **1** to open its menu. Select Camera Roll **2** to view all your images in chronological order.



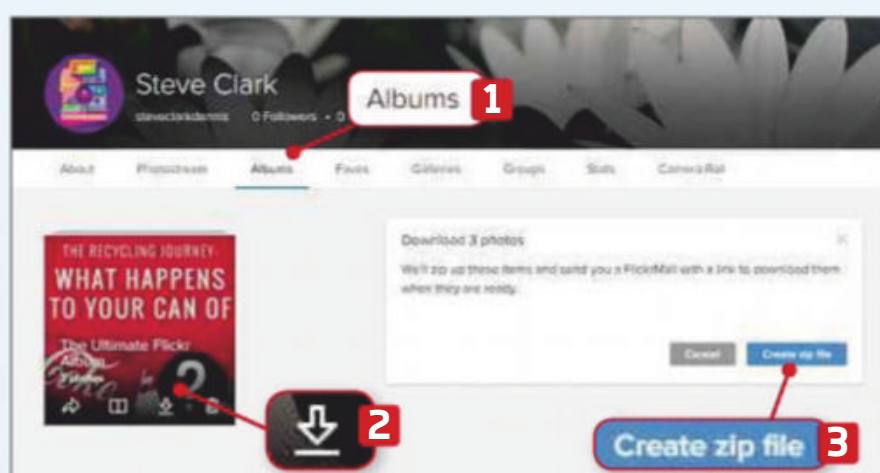
2 Click each photo you want to keep. Selected items are displayed in a bar along the bottom of the screen. **1** Click 'Select all' **2** to highlight every photo within the date range. Clicking individual photos in the camera roll or the bar at the bottom deselects them. Click Download. **3**



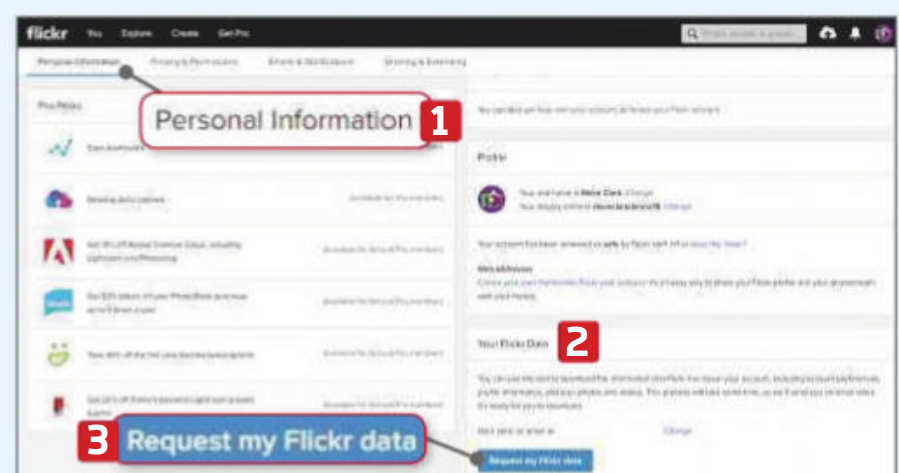
3 A pop-up says a photo-download link is being created. Click 'Create zip file'. **1** A confirmation appears under the bell icon. **2** Click 'view the progress' **3** to check the downloads. A notice tells you it's done, so click this and, on the next screen, choose 'Click here to download your items.'



4 If you have a lot of photos on Flickr, placing them in an album makes the download process more manageable. To do this, click every 'Select all' **1** in the camera roll, then press 'Add to album'. **2** Click an existing album **3** or choose 'Create new album' **4** and name it. Click Done. **5**



5 Click the Albums tab, **1** then hover your mouse over the album you want to download and click the download button; **2** or click into the album and click the download icon under the album title. When you see the pop-up, select 'Create zip file', **3** then follow Step 3.



6 Flickr can gather your photos together for you. Go to flickr.com/account, click the Personal Information tab **1** and find Your Flickr Data. **2** Click 'Request my Flickr data'. **3** Once it's greyed out, your request is sent. You'll get an email when the file is ready to download.

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Upgrade your computer's BIOS

Wayne Williams guides you through the process of updating your PC's BIOS – it's not as daunting as you think!



You probably haven't spent much time considering your PC's BIOS. It's something you might dip into if Windows won't start or you want to change the boot order of your drives, but for the most part it quietly does its job in the background, making sure all the components that make up your PC are functioning when you switch it on.

In truth, your BIOS is an incredibly useful tool and it's worth spending some time configuring it because upgrading to the latest version can fix problems, improve performance and stability, and allow your PC to support newer hardware. The process for upgrading the BIOS is not without its risks, and can seem daunting if you've never done it before, but it's actually very straightforward.

What is the BIOS?

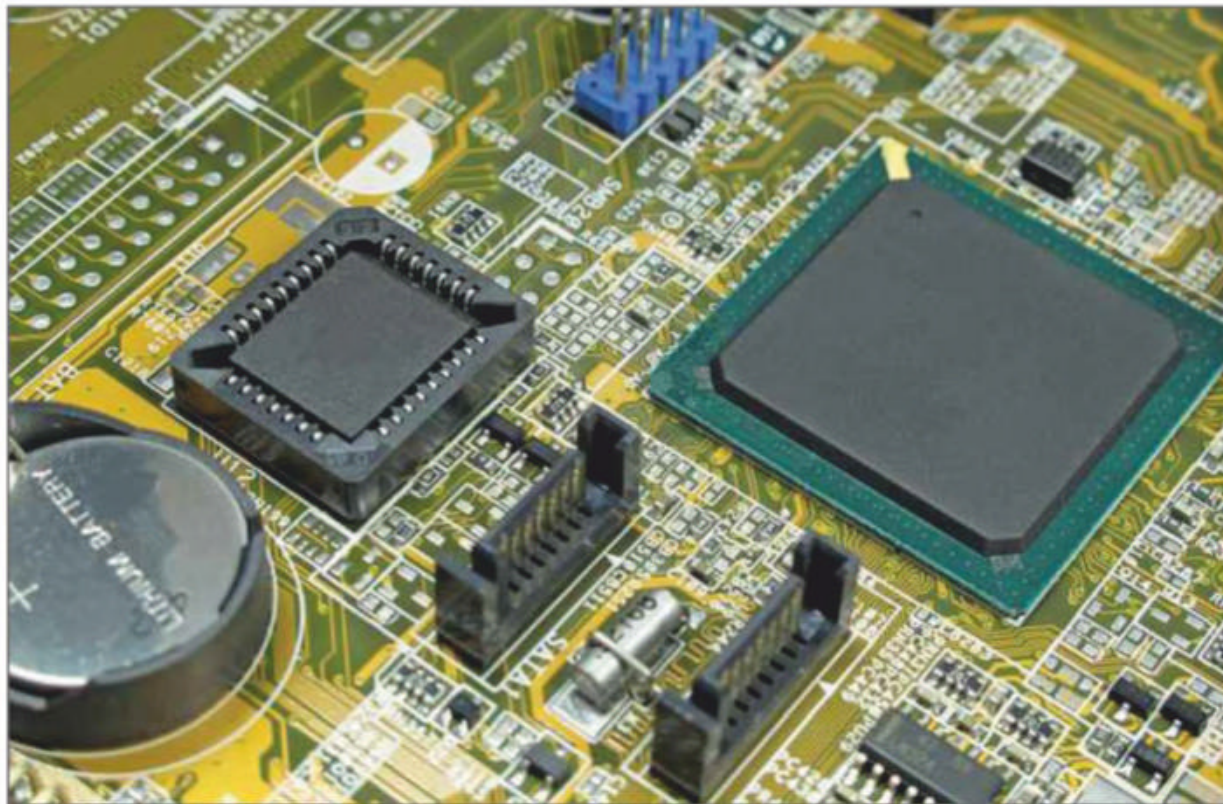
The BIOS (Basic Input/Output System) is software that's permanently stored on a memory chip on your PC's motherboard (typically referred to as CMOS – Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor). This handles POST (Power On Self Test), a series of diagnostics tests that run as soon as the computer is switched on and which ensure everything is working as intended.

You can access and configure the BIOS via the BIOS Setup Utility, which lets you check the core hardware in your PC and make fundamental changes, such as switching the boot order, overclocking the processor, tweaking memory settings, altering the date and time, enabling or disabling built in features – such as onboard audio – and much more. The BIOS firmware is what's known as “non-volatile”, meaning any changes you

make to it will remain in place, even after your PC has been powered off.

All PCs have a BIOS, regardless of which operating system they're running, including Windows, Mac OS or a form of Linux – and there are a number of different versions, supplied by vendors such as Phoenix Technologies, American Megatrends (AMI), Dell, IBM and Gateway.

Newer PCs have what's known as UEFI



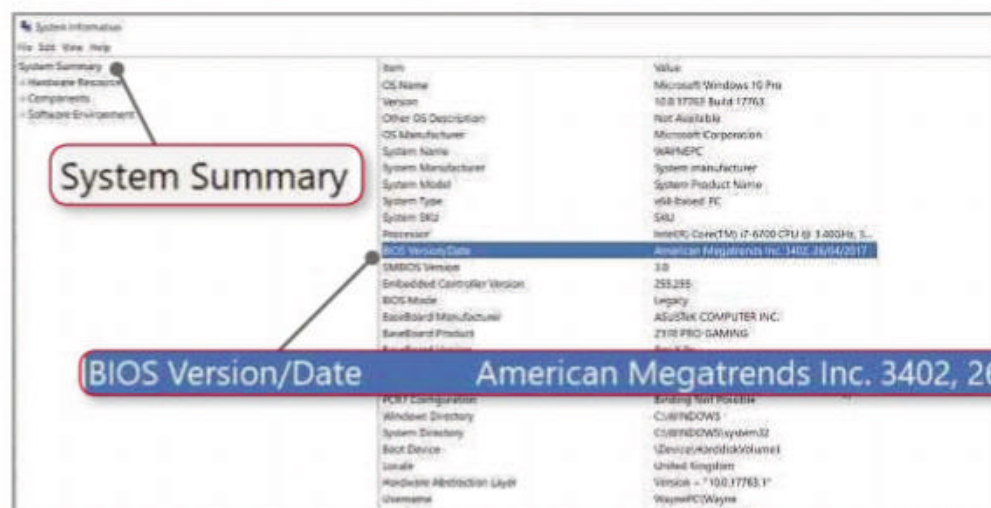
The BIOS is stored on a small chip, mounted on your motherboard, which stores the information even when the PC is switched off

(Unified Extensible Firmware Interface), a replacement for BIOS which has a more modern interface that works with a mouse and often has other benefits, such as advanced security and a browser you can use to access the web.

What you'll need

First, you need to identify the BIOS your PC is running. There are several ways to do this, such as running the BIOS Setup Utility or using a third-party tool, but the easiest method is to use the built-in System Information feature.

In the Windows search box, type `msinfo` and press Enter. Select System Summary on the left and look for BIOS Version/Date in the pane on the right. This shows you who created the BIOS, its version number and date. You should also make a note of the baseboard manufacturer, product and version, because you may need this to get the



The System Information window tells you which BIOS version you have

correct BIOS file for your setup.

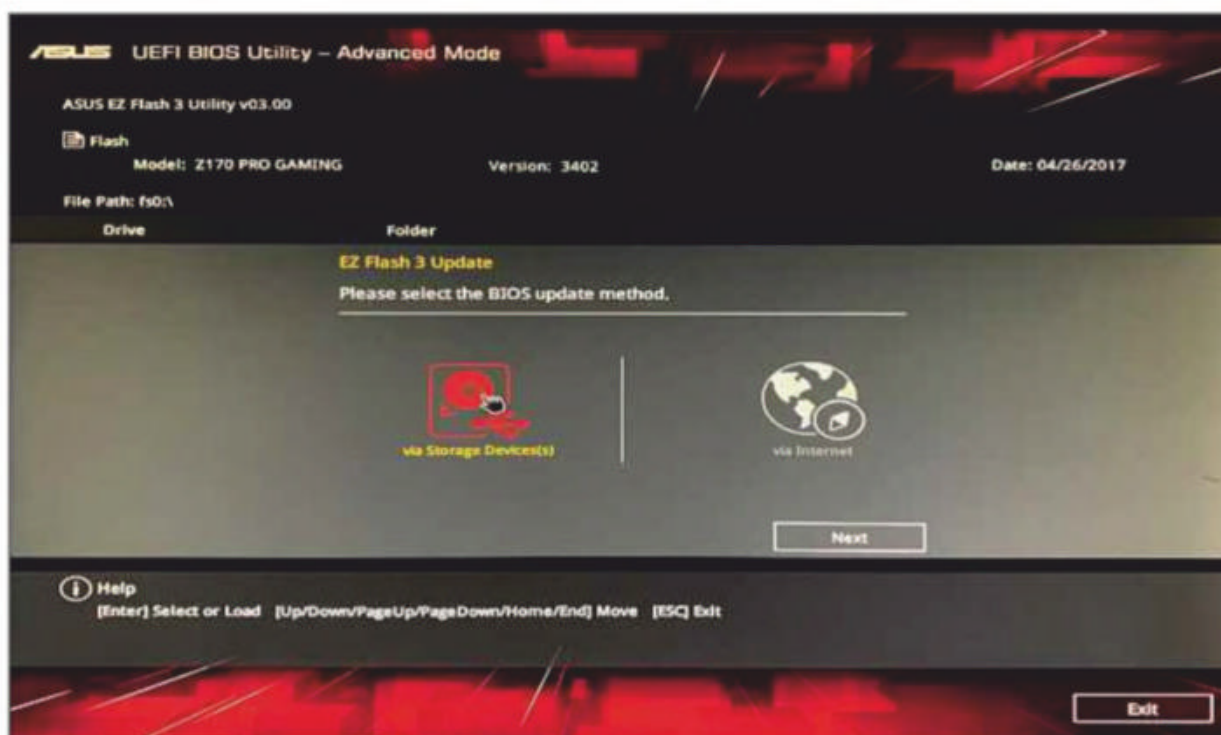
Once you've collected all the necessary information, you can check for an updated BIOS from the motherboard or laptop manufacturer's site (don't try to find it on the BIOS vendor's site). Look in the Support section for the BIOS and firmware downloads, and get the correct version for your PC. You should be able to

tell quite easily if there's a newer update, and the site may provide information about what's new and changed in this revision, so you can decide whether it's worth performing the upgrade.

Use a supplied program to update the BIOS, if there's one available. You can see the option offered by Dell in our Mini Workshop on page 61. Otherwise, go directly through the BIOS setup menu where the process usually goes as follows:

- Find and download the latest BIOS from the manufacturer's website
- Unzip it and copy the file to a USB memory stick
- Restart your PC and enter the BIOS
- Locate the BIOS update menu (look for something called 'EZ Flash', 'Q Flash' or 'M Flash')
- Select the BIOS file from your USB drive and follow the instructions

As you're going through this process, check to see if there's an option to back up the existing BIOS. Some programs perform this automatically but others require you to make the backup manually. If you can't find a backup option, check your motherboard's manual. Performing this upgrade without a backup is not a risk that we would recommend taking.







The EZ Flash tool in the American Megatrends UEFI BIOS Utility lets you update via a storage drive or the internet



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3		TalkTalk: Fast Broadband	£19.95 (£27 after 12 months)	12 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£239.40
4		Virgin Media: Player Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£32.00 (£51 after 12 months)	12 months	54Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£384.00

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

Ofcom

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

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Computer active

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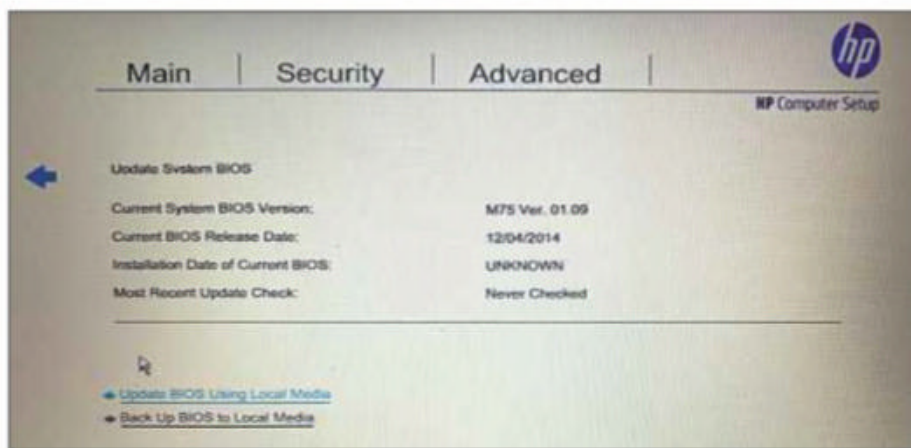
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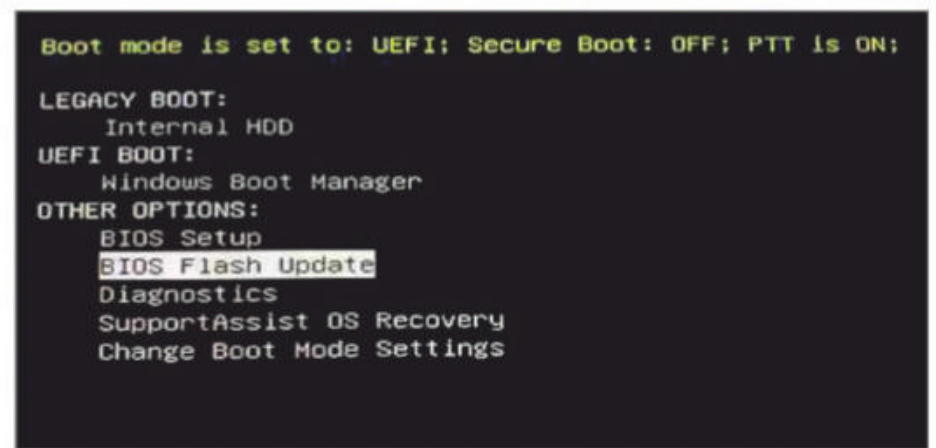
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This is one way you can update the BIOS on an HP PC



You can also update a Dell BIOS through the One-Time boot menu

You may need to place the BIOS file(s) in a particular location when preparing the flash drive, and in some cases you will need to perform other preparations, such as disabling secure or fast boot modes. When downloading a new BIOS, carefully read the instructions and make sure you follow them closely.

If you haven't updated the BIOS in a while – or indeed, ever – then you might need to install an intermediate version before updating to the latest release. The download site will tell you if this is the case.

One-Time boot menu method

Our Mini Workshop, below, shows you how to update the BIOS on a Dell PC, but an alternative method is via a special bootup screen that's available on most systems built after 2012. To get into the BIOS setup screen, you would normally start your PC and hold down F2. However, if you hold down F12 instead, the One-Time boot menu loads in its

place and you can update the BIOS from here. To do so, you will need a USB memory stick formatted as a FAT32 drive (it doesn't need to be bootable), with the Dell BIOS executable saved in the root (in other words, straight to the device and not sitting in a folder).

In the menu, use the arrow keys to select BIOS Flash Update and press Enter. In the window that opens, click the Browse button, then select the BIOS flash executable file in the list. Click OK and, on the next page, click the Begin Flash Update button. When the warning message shows, click Yes. Your PC reboots and the update begins.

Update an HP BIOS

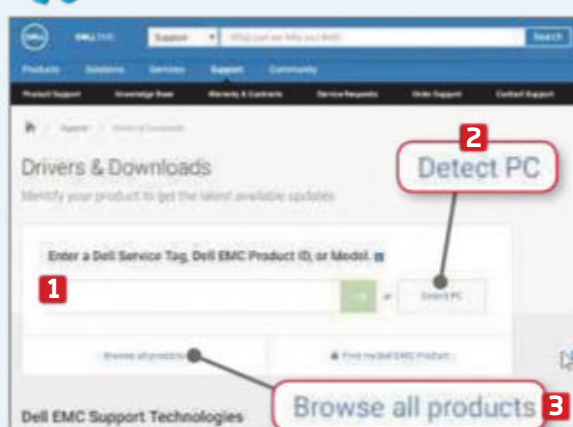
To update the BIOS on an HP PC, download the new version and copy the BIOS BIN file to a USB memory stick formatted using FAT32. Create a 'Hewlett-Packard\BIOS\New' folder on the drive and place the BIN inside it. Copy the HP BIOS update utility

(HpBiosUpdate.efi) and signature file (HpBiosUpdate.s12) into a 'Hewlett-Packard\BIOSUpdate' folder, then press the power on button on your PC and tap Esc to enter the startup menu. Under Main, you'll see an Update System BIOS link. Click this and you'll be shown information about your current BIOS, including its version, release date and most recent update check. Under this you'll see two links: you can Back Up BIOS to Local Media – handy in case you run into problems – and Update BIOS Using Local Media. Plug your USB drive into a spare port and select the latter option. Different models may allow you to update the BIOS in other ways.

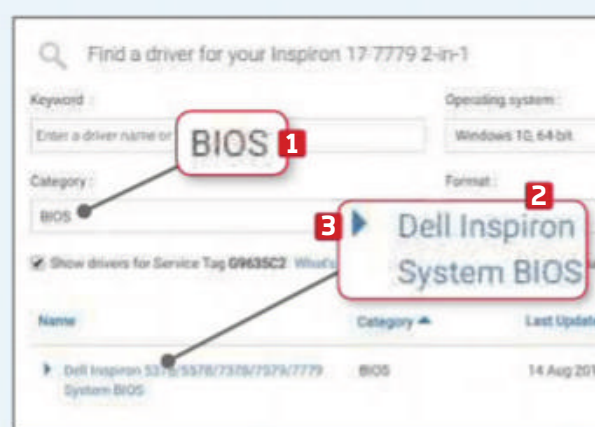
What to do if the update fails

Updating the BIOS is usually quick and painless but if the update fails for some reason, close the flash updating tool and try again. If that doesn't work, or isn't possible, try restoring the BIOS backup (assuming you made one). ■

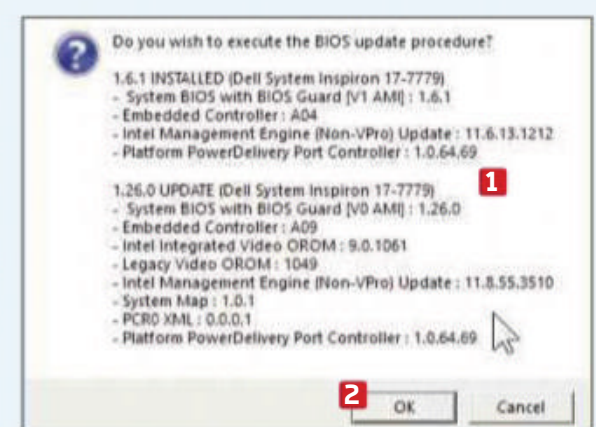
MINI WORKSHOP | Update the BIOS on a Dell PC



1 If you have a Dell PC, you can update its BIOS within Windows, making the whole process entirely painless. Go to the Dell support page at www.dell.com/drivers. If you have the details the page is asking for, you can enter them here. **1** If not, you can click Detect PC **2** or 'Browse all products'. **3**



2 If you chose to detect your computer, you may be prompted to install Dell's SupportAssist. Once you have the correct system selected, click the Category drop-down and choose BIOS. **1** This will show only the available BIOS downloads. **2** Click the arrow next to an entry **3** to find out more about it.



3 Click the Download link next to a file to begin the download. When it's finished, double-click the executable. In the window that opens, read the information **1** and confirm that you wish to replace your BIOS. **2** Your computer will restart and the update process begins. When complete, your PC will reboot.

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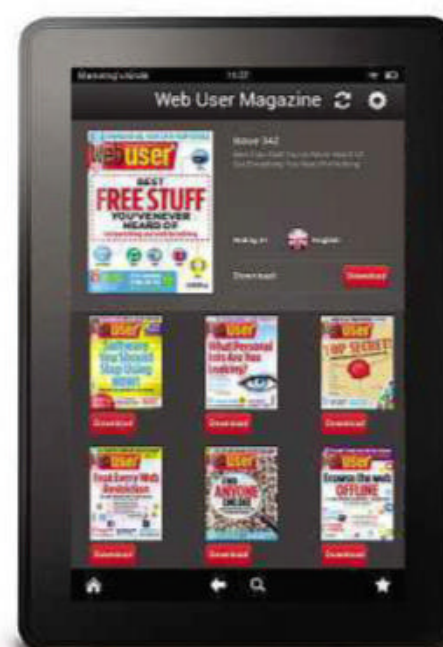
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Web User Masterclass

Progressive web apps are mini browser-based programs you can use anywhere

Save space on mobile devices

A progressive web app (PWA) is not an app at all, in the traditional sense. It's actually a website that's designed to look and work like an app. One of the advantages of a PWA over a traditional app is the storage space it saves. Some PWAs are little more than shortcuts to a website, which makes them very useful on phones and tablets that have limited storage and can't be expanded with a memory card. Replace a traditional app with its PWA version and you could save hundreds of megabytes of storage space, which can then be used for more photos and apps.

Can you tell whether this is the Twitter app or its PWA? It looks similar but it's actually the PWA



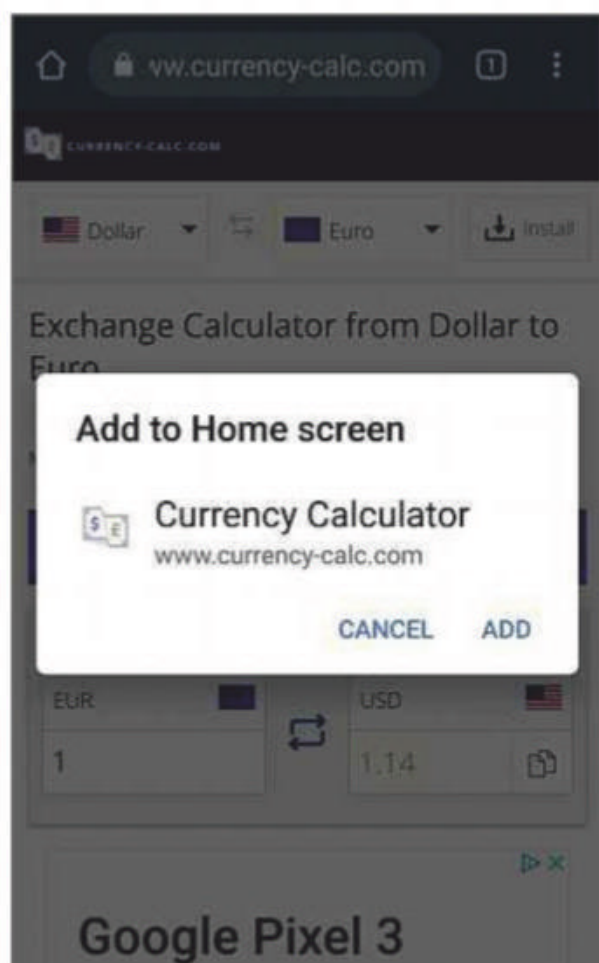
If you see words that look like they've been typed in a typewriter, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.

takes up almost no space.

If you don't see a request to create a shortcut, try manually adding it to the home screen. In Safari on an iPhone, for example, press the Actions button at the bottom of the screen and select 'Add to Home Screen'. Edit the title if it's too long and press Done.

Find good PWAs

There are some excellent websites that provide directories of PWAs and highlight the best. One of our favourites is Appsco (appsco.pe), which is worth bookmarking. This has a great catalogue of PWAs and the site organises them into categories, to make them easier to find.



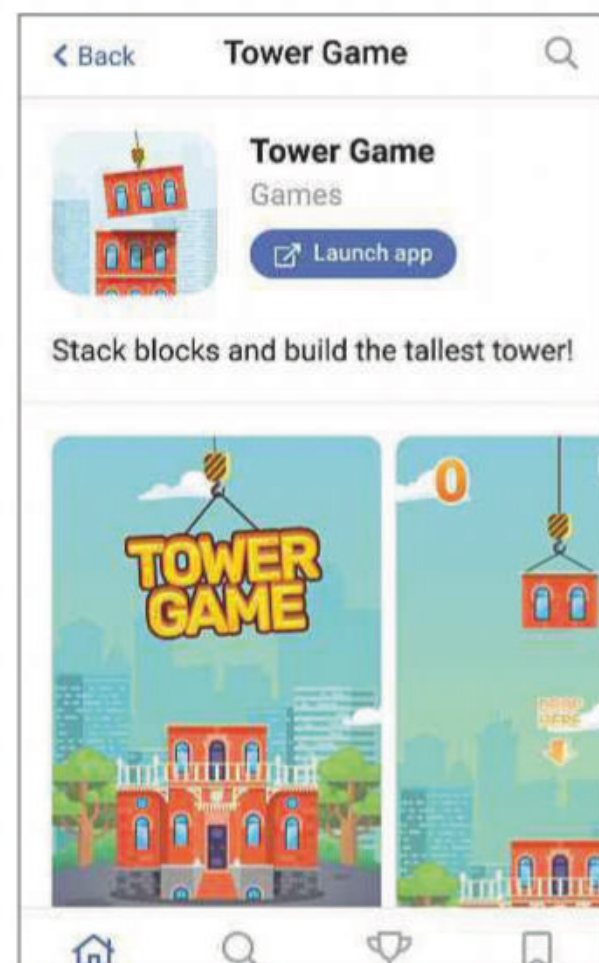
Visit a website that offers a PWA and you'll see an option to add it

Get PWAs from websites

Social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn have websites that work in an almost identical manner to the apps they make available on mobile devices. They are so similar, it can be difficult to tell the difference. News websites and some sites offering online tools may also have PWA versions that can be installed instead of apps.

Try visiting a popular website in Chrome on an Android phone. If a message appears on the screen asking if you want to create a shortcut on the home screen, that means it is a PWA. Go ahead and create it. A good example of this is Instagram (www.instagram.com).

However, it can be confusing if both an app and a PWA are available, such as with Sky News. You may see messages offering both. The app message usually appears at the top of the screen and links to the app store, while the PWA message is at the bottom. The Sky News app is 80MB on an iPhone but the PWA



Find and run PWAs at the Appsco website (appsco.pe)



Visit the Top List, which contains 50 of the best PWAs. There is a mixture of all sorts of categories including social networks, games, online tools and more. There are many well-known names among the apps, such as Twitter, Instagram, Google, Uber and Starbucks. The Appscope website is itself a PWA that you can add as a shortcut to the home screen of your phone.

Browse the PWAs on Appscope and tap one to open its details screen. Press the 'Launch app' button to run the PWA, which you can then use straight away. If you don't see an option at the bottom of the screen to add the PWA to your phone's home screen, press the three-dot icon at the top and select the menu option to open it in Chrome. Add it to create a shortcut.

Other good PWA directories can be found at pwa.rocks and pwa-directory.appspot.com.

The best PWAs to try

Tower Game (www.towergame.app) is a very simple but entertaining game in which you have to build a tower. A crane lifts each section and, as it sways left and right, you have to tap the screen at the right moment to drop it onto the sections below. Miss too many times and the game is over. See how high you can build the tower.

Smaller Pictures (smaller-pictures.appspot.com) and Squoosh (squoosh.app) – see our Workshop in last issue, bit.ly/webuser464 – are two tools that use advanced compression techniques to reduce the file size of images. The size of an image can be reduced by 50% or more.

BMI Calculator (bit.ly/bmic465) is a simple tool that calculates your body

mass index (BMI). This formula is used as an indicator of the amount of body fat you are carrying, which lets you know whether you are a healthy weight. Enter your weight and height, and you'll be shown your BMI. It is simple, but useful. Use it the next time you weigh yourself.

BMI Calculator is a simple PWA for checking your health

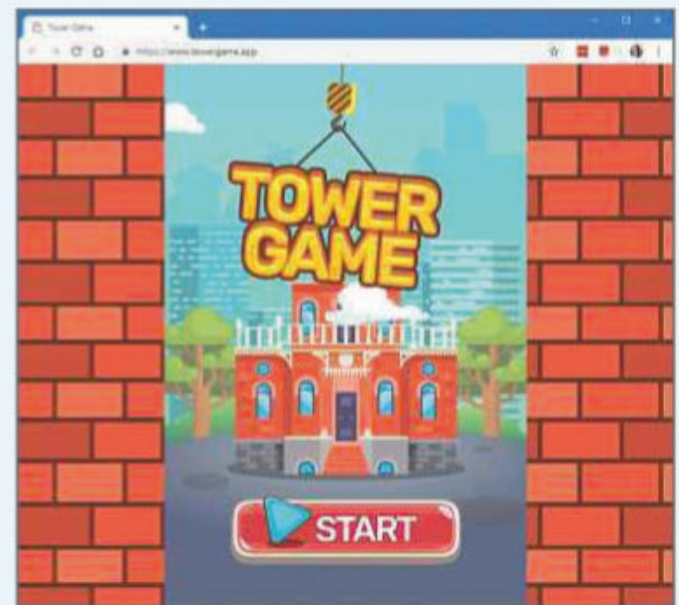
TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

PWAs and security

Normally, we wouldn't recommend installing apps from outside the Google Play store because it increases the risk of security issues and malware. It's impossible to install apps from outside of the iOS App Store on an iPhone or iPad.

However, PWAs aren't real apps, they're websites. This means they're a whole lot safer than installing external apps. Running PWAs is no different to browsing websites and security is provided by the browser. PWAs don't have permission to access anything on your device, so they're much safer – and they work on iOS, too.



A PWA running in Chrome on a desktop PC

use the PWA like you would any other website.

Close PWAs

A progressive web app may continue to run in the background when you switch to another app or go to the home screen on your phone or tablet. This is noticeable when using PWAs that have audio, such as games that play music. If this happens, call up the task switcher that shows the running apps and swipe away the PWA.

Your phone may have a button to access the task switcher or a swipe gesture you have to perform with your fingers.

Uninstall PWAs

Progressive web apps install very little. There's a shortcut on the phone's home screen or a tile on the Windows Start menu, and there may be a few small files placed on your computer or device, but the space used by a PWA is tiny compared to the tens of megabytes that an app installs. There is very little benefit in uninstalling a PWA, but you may just want to keep your home screen tidy. In Windows, right-click the tile or the menu item on the Start menu and select Uninstall to remove it.

On an Android phone, press, hold and drag the shortcut to the Uninstall link that appears. On an iPhone, press and hold the icon until it wiggles, then tap the cross to delete it.

Use PWAs in browsers

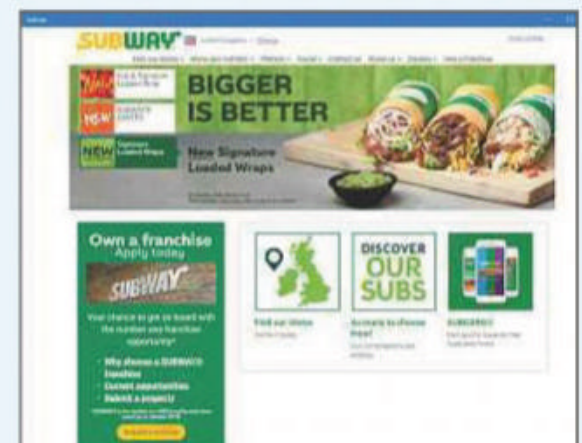
You can access PWAs in Chrome, Edge or whatever your favourite browser is. Just go to the URL and

PWAs for Windows

Progressive web apps are mostly aimed at phones and tablets, but Windows 10 supports them and, if you've downloaded apps from the Microsoft Store, you may have some PWAs on your PC without realising it. A PWA can be put in the store so that when it runs, it looks and behaves just like a regular app, running in a Window, adding a tile to the Start menu and so on. However, it's still just a website designed to look like an app.

One way to find PWAs in the Microsoft store is to search by typing PWA. This won't find all of them but it's a good place to start. If you're browsing the Microsoft Store, look out for messages such as "This app lets you experience publicly available website content as an app." You'll find this message on the Subway and Boots apps, for example.

You may find it more convenient to click a regularly used app than to open a browser and go to the website.



Some Microsoft Store apps for Windows 10 are actually PWAs

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

Don't rush the October update

Q It's mid-November and I've still not seen hide nor hair of the Windows 10 October 2018 Update. I think it's five or six weeks since version 1809 was released and I am still on 1803. Why don't I have it and – more importantly – how do I get it?

Len Gleeson, via email

A The latest version of Windows was released, then withdrawn because of problems, then released again later. The rollout has been anything but smooth.

If you don't have it yet, it may mean that Microsoft hasn't solved all the compatibility issues with an element of your computer's hardware or software. The latest problem to block



Tired of waiting for the latest version of Windows? You can force it to update

its installation is with Apple iCloud, which you might have if you own an iPhone or iPad, particularly if you use iTunes for accessing photos, videos and other content from these devices.

Microsoft recommends that you wait for Windows Update rather than forcing it, to ensure that it's compatible with your PC. However, you can try to force an update by visiting bit.ly/winup465 and clicking the 'Update now' button.

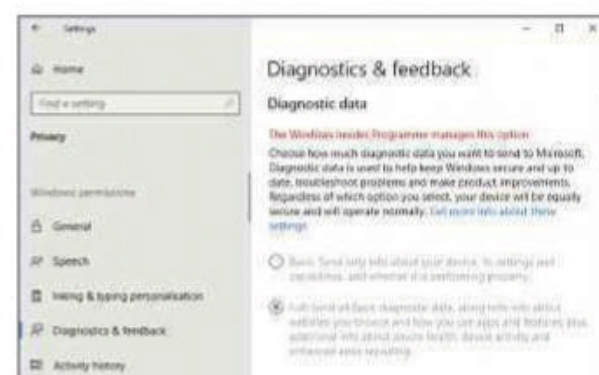
started' under 'Get Insider Preview builds'. That was some time ago, but I have not yet seen any difference or any sign of a beta. Did I miss something?

Lance Moore, via email

A You might not have Windows correctly configured to receive previews. Microsoft needs to track everything happening on a PC running the previews, so it can identify problems and fix them for the public release.

Open Privacy in the Settings app and enable everything in every section. For example, in the 'Diagnostics & feedback' section, the setting for 'Diagnostic data' needs to be set to Full (not Basic), to be compatible with the previews. Further down, set 'Feedback frequency' to Automatically. Turn on all the switches in the General section and go through all the other sections to enable everything related to Microsoft and Windows.

Laptop updates might be delayed while you're running on battery power and you may need to connect to the mains to get the updates. You should find that the previews now download. Bear in mind that these are less frequent just after a major update but increase as the bi-annual April and October release dates approach.



You have to give up some privacy to use the Windows 10 Insider Preview

WEB BUILDING

Find a missing web module

Q I can't install some software because 'mod_rewrite' Apache module isn't installed. My web host is no help and doesn't offer support tickets.

I bought a PHP program and it told me to go to "admin area. Go to siteURL/Folder/admin123", but I can't see a

HARDWARE

Unfreeze a wireless mouse

Q When I start my computer, my wireless Logitech mouse works for a while, but then the arrow freezes. I've changed the battery and removed the dongle at the back of the PC to reset it. If I then turn on the PC, I find the cursor has vanished. This has happened twice now. I had the same problem with my last mouse, which was also a Logitech model. Should I give up and get a wired mouse?

Aura Todd, via email



If your wireless mouse is playing up, check its drivers, software and Windows updates

A Wired mice have fewer problems than wireless ones because there's so little that can go wrong with them. It's worth keeping a wired mouse as a backup – you can get one for under £5.

There could be an incompatibility between the Logitech wireless mouse's software and Windows. Uninstall all Logitech software and download the latest version from bit.ly/log465. This includes Logitech Gaming Software, Logitech Options and Setpoint, all of which have recently been updated. Fixes may be included in Windows updates, so make sure they are up to date, too.

GENERAL PC

Configure privacy to get Insider updates

Q I want to join the Windows Insider Programme so I can see new developments without having to wait for the next big release. However, I can't get it to work. I've tried opening the Settings app and going to 'Update & Security'. The last item in the menu is Windows Insider Programme and I clicked 'Get



program called admin123 in the tree under the folder. So how does this work?

Adrian Bonnington, via email

A The mod_rewrite Apache module is a common extension for web servers that lets a URL be redirected to another URL – for example, if you change the address of a web page and want people typing it or clicking a link to be sent to a new page. It even works if the original page has been deleted, and can be used to move a whole website to a different URL, so anyone typing the old URL is automatically redirected to the new one.

Most paid-for hosting plans support mod_rewrite but it might not be available in free or low-cost hosting, such as WordPress.com or Blogger. You may need to change web hosts – many hosting companies will move a website for you, especially if it is WordPress, because it's a straightforward process.

PHP is a programming language that can be embedded into the HTML of web pages and managed through phpMyAdmin. The PHP program may be asking for configuration changes. It is accessed through the web hosting account and not from the website itself.

Some web-hosting companies provide a tool called cPanel (cpanel.com) to access admin tools; others have their own admin interface. Log into your account and browse the menus. Free web-hosting services such as WordPress.com and Blogger don't offer access to phpMyAdmin features.



Website tools such as phpMyAdmin are accessed via cPanel or via your web host

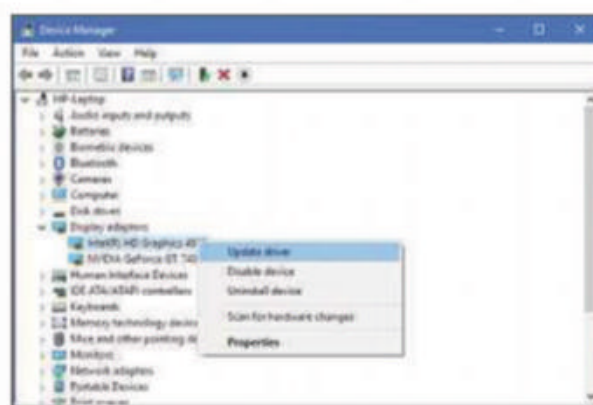
VIDEO

Solve video playback problems

Q About half the videos I play on my HP laptop look OK, but the other half appear out of focus and in black and white. This is a recent problem that's just started on my PC and I wonder if it is the result of a Windows update.

Alan Bull, via email

A This is likely to be a problem with the graphics driver and an update may fix it. Right-click the Start button, select Device Manager, expand the 'Display adapters' section and right-click



Solve video problems by updating the drivers for the 'Display adapters'

the graphics card. Select 'Update drivers' to install the Microsoft driver, which is usually the most compatible. If it doesn't solve the problem, go to the PC manufacturer's website, search for the computer model and download the latest graphics drivers for it.

If you're playing web video through Chrome, open the Chrome menu and click Settings. Click Advanced at the bottom and turn off 'Use hardware acceleration when available' in the System section. Quit and restart Chrome to see if that helps.

In Windows 10, open the Control Panel (start typing it into the search box and click it when it appears) and click Troubleshooting. Click 'View all' on the left and run Video Playback.

VIDEO

Download 4K YouTube video

Q In the last few editions of *Web User* you have covered a number of YouTube problems. I have had a number of issues that I've tried to raise with YouTube to no avail. For example, 4K downloads are not always 4K, even though I have used the correct software and the conversion seems to take a long time. Also, the trial version is priced in

US dollars. Is there a UK source I can download it from?

Gary Chattaway, via email

A The free ad-supported version of YouTube doesn't support downloads. However, other tools have been created to get around YouTube's restrictions and allow you to do this. Unfortunately, they don't work in every case and there may be some videos that either don't download or do so at the wrong resolution.

YouTube is frequently updated and some changes intentionally cause problems for downloading tools that provide extra features or modify how it works. It's a battle between YouTube and these developers. If the developer is on the ball, they will quickly update their tool, so watch out for new versions.

If something you want to download is only priced in dollars, there isn't anything you can do about it. You can still buy it – services such as PayPal and credit cards will convert the currency into pounds, though you should be aware of the exchange rate they use (some use a rate that benefits them enormously) and whether you incur any further charges. Some services are much better value than others.

YouTube Premium is a subscription service that costs £11.99 a month and one of the benefits is support for downloads, which will be more reliable than using a tool developed by someone else. Begin watching a YouTube video on the mobile app, for example, and tap the download button below the video. Select the video quality you want and it will download and save. Downloaded videos are shown on the Library and Account tabs.

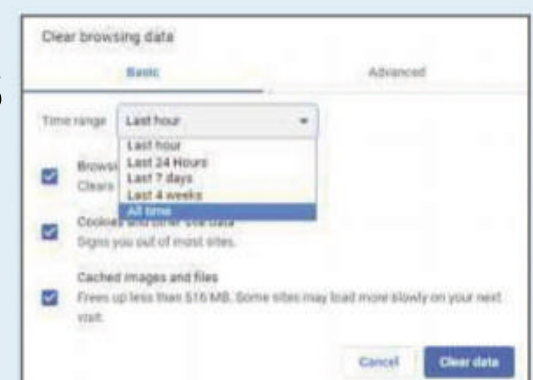
EMAIL

Regain access to emails

Q I can only access my Outlook email account via an incognito window. I can't get into my Gmail at all – it just gets stuck in an infinite loop.

Ta Willo, via email

A The difference between incognito and normal mode in Chrome is that incognito has no browsing history or cookies. The Outlook problem may therefore be solved by deleting Chrome's history and cookies. This will log you out of all websites, so make sure you know your login details



Clean up Chrome problems by clearing the browser's history

and URLs. Go to the Chrome menu, choose History, then History again, and click 'Clear browsing data'. Set the time range to 'All time'. It might fix the Gmail problem, too.



This fortnight Roland has been digitising stacks of old photos using his phone's camera as a scanner

Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. Please send questions and answers to webuser@dennis.co.uk



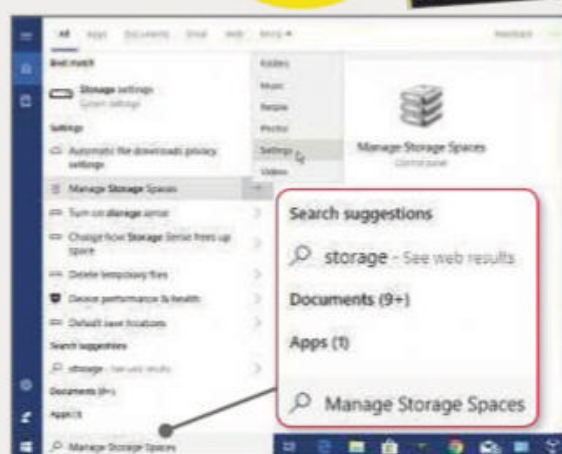
TOP TIP

GENERAL PC

Search your PC

At one time, I could find everything on my PC in a menu or as an icon – now you have to search for everything. But at least the search tools are improving. If you need an app, click Start and type its name, then click it in the search results. If you need a setting, click Start and type it. Not sure where a setting is? Open the Settings app and type a word or two from the description to display a list of suggestions.

You can discover apps and settings you didn't know were on your PC by typing in the search box on the taskbar. For example, type `storage`



Don't hunt through menus – just search for what you need in Windows 10

and see what comes up. Click More at the top and select Settings to focus on settings about storage features.

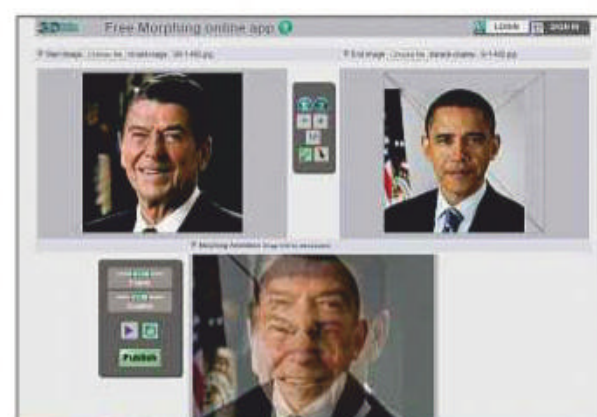
James Tate, via email

Back Issues disc winner



– I recommend clicking 'Face Morph online app' when prompted by the site. The 'app', which is actually still a browser tool, scans the photographs to find the common elements found on most faces, leading to better, funnier results.

Roy Blunt, via email



This face-morph tool might change how you see yourself

BROWSERS

See tab previews in Firefox

Using Alt+Tab in Windows lets you see previews of your open programs. I've just found out that Firefox offers the same option for tabs in its browser, making it a lot easier to see what I have open. You need to go to `about:config` and look for 'browser.ctrlTab.previews'. Double-click this preference so the value changes to 'True'. Now, you can hold Ctrl and press Tab to flick between Firefox tabs.

Gillian Cartwright, via email

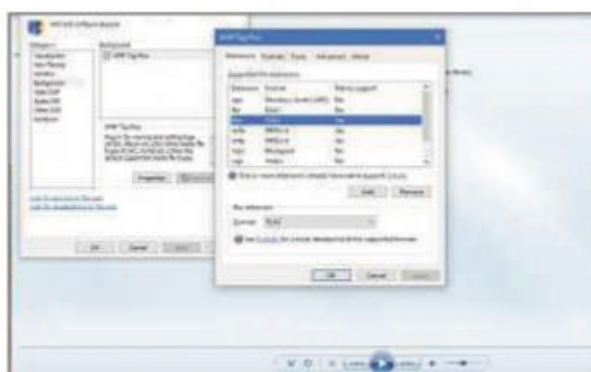


Switching between tabs is easier in Firefox

GENERAL PC

Add new formats to Windows Media Player

Windows Media Player has a limited selection of playable formats – mostly just the popular or mainstream file types – so I was delighted to discover the WMP Tag Plus extension (bit.ly/wmptag465), which lets the program play lots more



Get Windows Media Player to play new audio formats

higher-quality formats. Don't worry, though – if a format doesn't require changing (because it's already supported by Windows Media Player), this little extension leaves the file type well alone.

Howard French, via email

IMAGE EDITING

Morph one face into another

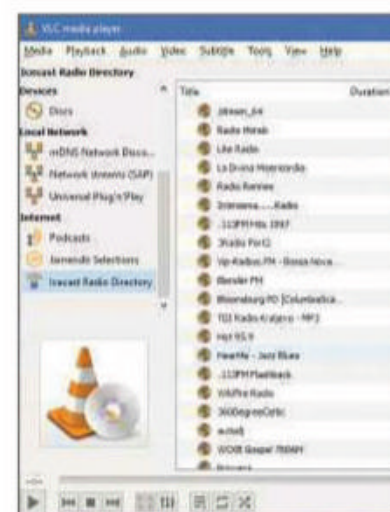
This is a fun thing I stumbled across. Go to bit.ly/morph465 and upload two images. Use the sliders to determine the number of frames to use and the duration, then press Play to see one image magically morph into the other. If you're planning on morphing your own face into someone else's – for instance, if you want to see how closely you resemble the Queen or President Trump

SOFTWARE

Listen to the radio using VLC

I love VLC Player even more now I know it can stream radio stations. I discovered this by accident, when I clicked View, Playlist in the settings. This unexpectedly created a sidebar, where I found two radio directories under the Internet category. I particularly like RadioGroovy. If you go to Media and Open Network Stream, VLC lets you paste the URL of any unlisted radio station to play it through the software.

Abbas Khan, via email



Listen to hidden radio streams in VLC

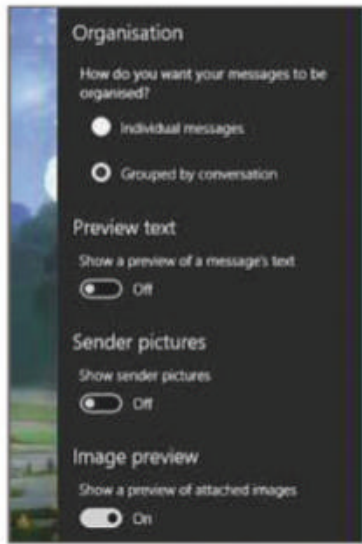
EMAIL

See more of your mail

A few simple tweaks to the Windows 10 Mail app let you see more of the emails in



your inbox. Click the cog icon to open the settings panel, then click 'Message list'. Under Organisation, select 'Grouped by conversation'. This means that emails



These settings squeeze more emails into the Mail app's inbox

that have gone back and forth between people will be grouped into single email 'threads' under one email heading, so you can see more of your emails on the first page of your inbox. Turn off the switch under 'Preview text' and only the email sender and subject are listed, so more emails can be displayed in the inbox. Lastly, turn off Sender pictures to compress the inbox listing even more. This makes it compact, shows only what you need and fits more in the window.

Mike Haynes, via email

GOOGLE

Publish your Google Docs on the internet

Further to some really helpful readers' tips on using Google Docs, I thought I'd share my personal favourite: many people don't realise that you can actually publish your document to the web. If you open your document and click File, you'll see the option to 'Publish to the web'. Click this and decide whether to create a direct link to it or grab an embed code for your website. Just don't forget to set your permissions by clicking 'Published content and settings'.

Henry Cotten, via email

OFFICE

Stop Word problems with language settings

I was sent a Word document, which I put on OneDrive so I could edit it in the Word web app. However, it kept crashing. I eventually discovered it was due to the proofing language that was set in the document. Changing it to English solved the problem. To do this, open a document in the Word web app (go to onedrive.live.com in a browser) and click the Review tab. Click the down arrow next to Spelling & Grammar and select 'Set proofing language'. Select English (UK).

Nicola Horn, via email

IOS

Fly over a city in 3D

I've just discovered Flyover Tours on my iPhone. Open Apple Maps and search for a big city, and you'll see the option for a



Apple Maps lets you fly over some of the world's big cities

Flyover. Tap this and you get a 3D birds-eye view of some really stunning cities, just by moving your iPhone around. I have to say, London is looking particularly nice this time of year – on my phone, at least!

Rachel Dinenage, via email

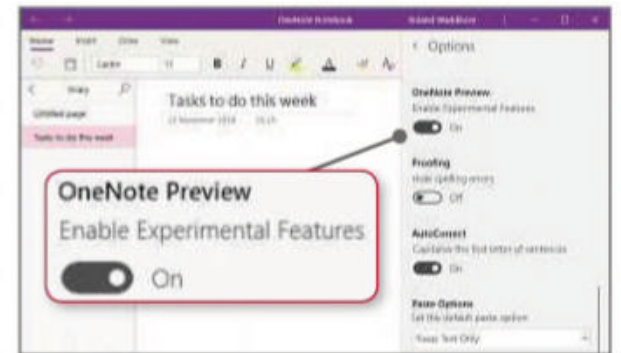
OFFICE

Test new OneNote tools

The OneNote app (bit.ly/on465) is a handy way to store notes and snippets of information. I have it on my phone and my Windows PC, and because they sync, my notes are available on both devices.

There is an interesting option in OneNote to enable experimental features. I'm not sure what these are, but I'm guessing you get beta updates instead of the regular release. It might be worth trying if you like cutting-edge products.

Open the OneNote Windows 10 app and click the three-dot icon in the corner to open the menu. Select Settings, then Options and scroll down to the OneNote



Switch on OneNote Preview to see its experimental features

Preview section. Switch it on. The app needs to be restarted for the setting to take effect. Whether you see any immediate change depends on whether there are any experiments happening at the time you join.

Will Murphy, via email

GENERAL PC

Hide the People icon in Windows 10

I've yet to meet anyone who actually uses Windows 10's People feature, which lets you pin contacts to the taskbar for easy access. As such, I was very glad to figure out how to remove it completely – it's so easy, my two-year-old niece could do it. Take hold of your mouse, move the cursor to the taskbar, then right-click. See where it says 'Show People on the taskbar'? Click that so the tick beside the option disappears. The People icon disappears with it.

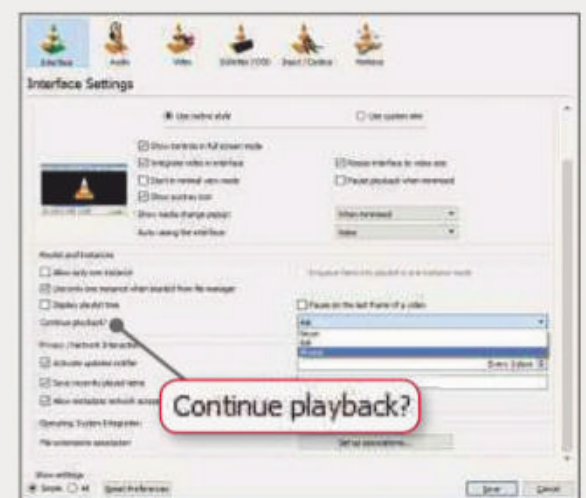
Russ Elliot, via email

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

SOFTWARE

Force VLC to remember your last-played position

Oh, the number of times I've watched videos using VLC Player, closed it down, then tried to remember where I'd got to the next time I came back. Sometimes my desk is littered with hastily scribbled timestamps on post-it notes. I've stepped away from the computer, wandering around the house, repeatedly murmuring, "One hour, six minutes, seventeen seconds...". I'm certain my wife thought me mad! Finally, though, I can put away the post-it notes. With the right settings, VLC will remember the last-played position of the hundred most recent videos. In the program, go to Tools, Preferences (or press Ctrl+P) and find 'Continue playback?' The drop-down



Never lose your spot again with VLC's Continue Playback option

menu is set to Ask, so click and change it to Always. Now all videos will resume from the last point they played.

Frank Hook, 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

Kaspersky Internet Security 2019 - on sale now

Our sister title *Computeractive* is now selling the new and improved 2019 edition of the multi-award-winning antivirus Kaspersky Internet Security at a special discount for readers

WHAT'S NEW IN KASPERSKY 2019:

- ✓ Finds and removes dodgy browser extensions
- ✓ Identifies software that needs to be updated
- ✓ Gives you more control over which adverts are blocked
- ✓ More advanced options to keep malware off your PC



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* while stocks last

**WINNER OF THE PAST NINE COMPUTERACTIVE
ANTIVIRUS TESTS**



Readers' Helpdesk

Can you help your fellow readers with their computer problems? Send your questions and answers to webuser@dennis.co.uk

ios

Delete iPhone photos without losing them online

Q I want to save all the photos on my iPhone but there doesn't seem to be a way to do it. When I looked this up on the web over the weekend, the general consensus was that if I delete the photos on my device, they will be deleted on iCloud and Google Photos, too. My iPhone's storage is now full, and I can't update the operating system because there isn't enough space. It appears that I'll have to delete my photos and lose them forever. Surely, this can't be right?

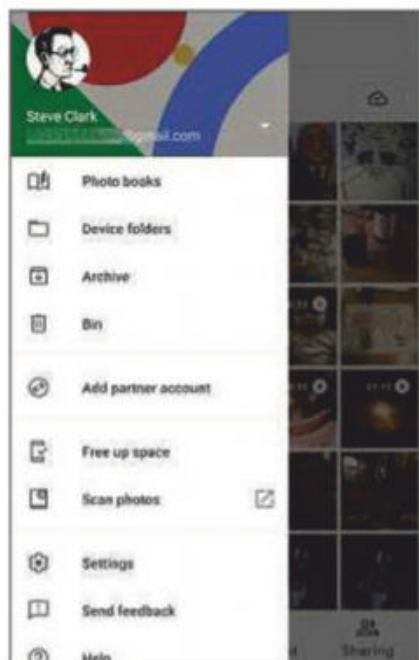
Tricia Christmas, via email

A You're right that iCloud will wipe images if you delete them from your iPhone, but there's a workaround using the Google Photos app. First, make a complete backup of your photos on a computer. You can do this by plugging in the phone with its USB cable or by using OneDrive (onedrive.live.com) or Dropbox (dropbox.com). That way, if the iPhone wipes everything on the device, you'll still have copies of your photos stored separately. You could also place copies in a separate iCloud folder. Once you've done that, open Google Photos. Click the three-line menu icon and tap 'Free up space'. This will delete every photo on the device that's already backed up to the cloud.

Google explains the procedure in greater detail at bit.ly/free465.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User

Deleting photos from an iPhone removes them from iCloud, too. Do it from Google Photos and you won't lose them

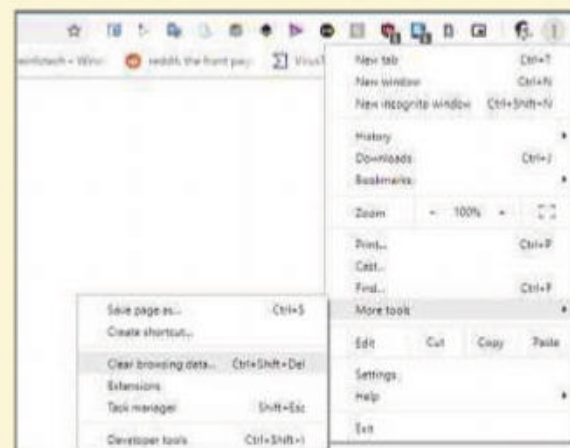


READERS RESPOND

Change Chrome's autosuggestions

A In Issue 463, poor old Fraser was having difficulty with his browser's autosuggestions. You're not alone, Fraser! I made the exact same mistake and fixed it by opening Chrome, clicking the three-dot menu and choosing 'More tools', then 'Clear browsing data'. Unfortunately, this clears all URL suggestions.

To clear individual addresses, start typing the URL you want to get rid of, such as 'facebok', and use the arrow



Fix Chrome's autosuggestions at a stroke

keys to highlight it. Then press Shift+Delete to remove it forever.

James Skidmore, via email

CAN YOU HELP?

webuser@dennis.co.uk

Following the closure of our forums, you can now seek help or suggest solutions to other readers' problems by emailing webuser@dennis.co.uk or via www.facebook.com/webusermagazine or twitter.com/webusermagazine.

ios

Q When I use my iPhone to take a photo, it makes a click like an old camera. Can anyone help redeem my sanity and tell me how to stop this?

Richard Marlborough, via email

GENERAL PC

Q Malwarebytes will not let me open IOBit's Advanced SystemCare. Can anyone help?

Christopher Cornwell, via Facebook

GENERAL PC

Visit the right Microsoft Store

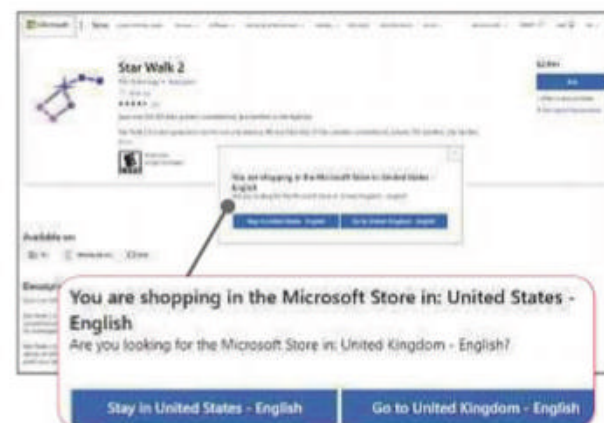
Q I liked your recent article 'Explore space from your PC' in Issue 461 (bit.ly/webuser461). I have the Star Walk 2 app on my iPad but your article recommended the PC version, so I visited the Star Walk 2 website (bit.ly/sw465) and clicked the Windows 10 icon. The Microsoft page asked for \$2.99 and, during the process, which country I live in – but I couldn't get any further. How can I get this application for Windows? I don't mind paying a small charge for it.

Trevor White, via email

A Microsoft runs multiple stores for different countries, and the link on the Star Walk site sends you to its American store. If you're not prompted to switch to Microsoft's UK store, try bit.ly/

[swuk465](http://bit.ly/swuk465) instead. In future, if a link takes you to the wrong store, just change the part of the address that reads 'en-us' to 'en-gb'. Press Enter and you'll be redirected. Alternatively, open the Microsoft Store app on your PC and search for the app you want to download.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



Make sure you're shopping in the correct Microsoft Store for your country

Star Email

Don't trust Google with our medical data

I was alarmed by your main news story in Issue 463 (bit.ly/webuser463) about Google taking full control of the AI research company DeepMind ('Privacy concerns as Google gobbles up health data'). I have to say – and I'm sure I won't be alone here – that I find the thought of Google having access to NHS patients' medical information truly chilling.

It's worrying enough that the NHS is using out-of-date technology such as Windows XP to store patients' confidential health records, but to hand over our data to Google, of all companies, is enough to give you nightmares. Google has rightly been



criticised over the years for gathering and analysing its users' data, and sharing it with third parties for advertising purposes. How can we trust the company not to delve into our medical histories for similar gain, and use details of our most private and sensitive information to tailor its adverts accordingly.

You say that "all patient data remains

under NHS control" and that patients won't be included in the data-sharing scheme unless they opt in, but similar rules in the past haven't stopped Google collecting data first, then half-heartedly apologising later. I can't really see any other reason why Google would be interested in the UK health

service, and I'm sceptical of the company's altruistic claims.

I'm sure recent technological improvements have done wonders for medical research, but the NHS shouldn't be sharing our data with such an untrustworthy and unscrupulous company.

Rachel Manning, via email

Beat the loyalty-penalty rip-off

There's a simple solution to the problem of companies overcharging loyal customers, as described by Barry in his column in Issue 463. Set up Google

Calendar to remind you when each utility, insurance premium and phone contract is about to come to an end, then shop around for the best deal. From experience, I find that many companies will

match (or sometimes better) the cheapest quote you find, saving you the time and effort of switching to a new supplier.

The idea that our banks might help us do this seems unlikely, and it could be unreliable. I've been following this simple procedure for years, and the amount of cash one can save is substantial.

R Thomas, via email

Motorola phones are not rubbish!

I couldn't disagree more with John C Kent (Inbox, Issue 463), who says Motorola phones are "absolute rubbish". I have a Moto G4 Plus, which cost me less than £150 but gives me everything I need from a phone and has excellent

battery life to boot. The camera is good, there's a fingerprint reader for security and I've had no trouble with the phone in the year since I bought it.

As for Mr Kent's claim that Motorola phones are "preloaded with so much crapware", mine came with only a couple of preinstalled apps, which are easy to ignore if you don't need them. When you consider that



























Samsung's Android phones cost upwards of £700 and are also "preloaded with crapware", I think I've got the better deal.

The only downside is that cheaper Moto phones don't come with much storage, but you can get round this problem easily by adding an SD memory card.

I've happily recommended Motorola phones to several friends. Perhaps Mr Kent and his wife should give them another try.

Peter Smedley, via email

Quiz Answers: Issue 464

- 1 **Santa Claus is Coming to Town**   
- 2 **Walking in the Air**   
- 3 **Winter Wonderland**   
- 4 **Mistletoe and Wine**    
- 5 **Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow!**      
- 6 **I Believe in Father Christmas**     

WINNER!

Well done to **Terry Thornton** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc



TECH MONTH

March



The internet controls our personal data

Some email providers mine your emails and use the data they collect to target you with adverts for goods and services. Search engines also gather data about your browsing habits and use it to target you. They know so much about you that they can influence elections by sending



you politically biased information. If you upload photos to some cloud-based services, the

small print says they own the copyright to your pictures and can use them in any way they want. Even if you close the account, they still have this right.

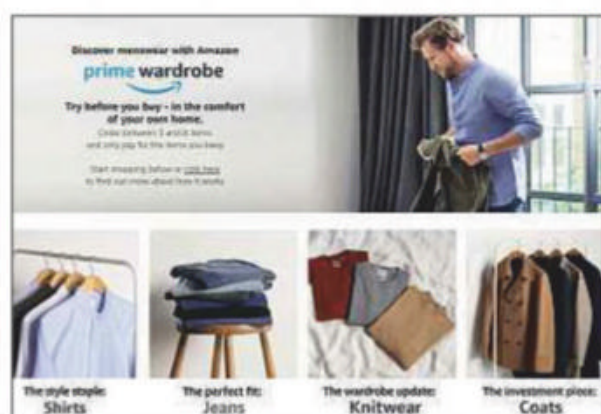
The internet is no longer the free-speech platform it once was. The big fish let you see whatever suits their agenda but they remove or censor videos that don't. Even books are now being removed from big websites if they fall foul of their political dogma.

Adrian Bonnington, via email

Amazon's clothes fall short of expectations

I looked at Amazon's new try-before-you-buy Prime Wardrobe service (www.amazon.co.uk/primewardrobe), which you mentioned in Issue 462. As I suspected, it's high fashion for the young and stupid who love ordering stuff and then sending it back, which pushes up prices for the rest of us. You're right to say that the sizes aren't for older people or those who are short. I'll stick with Premier Man (www.premierman.com) because they have the right orangutan-type clothes for my physique! I only buy a few things from them because they charge high interest if you don't pay off in time.

Martin Fletcher, Thorpe Hesley



What you say...

Looking back to 2018...

WHAT DID YOU MOST ENJOY DOING ONLINE IN 2018?

Researching the history of my football team, Crawley Town.

Gavin Green

Downloading music and films, selling stuff online (through Amazon, Gumtree and Facebook Marketplace), and chatting on Facebook and Twitter.

David Griffiths

Buying goodies from Amazon, including the BT Decor 2600 Advanced Call Blocker phone (bit.ly/blocker464), which has stopped me receiving scam and sales calls.

Lynn Sharpe

I've found a social-media app called Candide (candide.eu) for gardeners and plant lovers. I spend more time on there than on Facebook.

Jason 'Boz' Bowyer

WHAT ANNOYED YOU MOST ONLINE IN 2018?

Autoplay ads, especially those on local news sites run by *The Mirror*, which appear in the middle of stories.

Si Mellor

People on Facebook who share posts without a thought as to whether they're true or not.

David Batty

Watching a film on Netflix and having the credits chopped off by a trailer.

Anne-Marie Miller

GDPR pop-ups. It's become a sport to find the 'X' and close them within the first millisecond.

Alastair Shortland

...And forward to 2019

WHAT DEVICES ARE YOU PLANNING TO BUY IN 2019?

A new media centre to replace my hulking old one, and some smart tech, perhaps. I'm even thinking of converting part of the garage into a homemade data centre.

Lee Dodgson

Several things, provided next year's tech is sufficiently better than what I already have: a replacement phone, a smart watch, Echo devices, a smart TV and possibly a new PC.

Jan Swanton

My phone is up for renewal next year. I'll probably go for the budget Samsung J3 to keep the cost down.

Martin Phillp

I have a Samsung J3 phone and will probably go for a J6 next. I used to buy Samsung's high-end phones, but there's no point now because lower-end devices have decent tech.

Gabs Silva

IF YOU WERE IN CHARGE OF THE INTERNET IN 2019, WHAT WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO CHANGE?

A ban on all nonsense – especially from the PC brigade.

Leon Brown @LeonBrown

I'd make sure people knew the difference between 'your' and 'you're' before they were allowed to post anything.

Helen Blackburn

I'd remove anonymity from social media to deter trolls from hiding behind their keyboards.

Caroline Chapman @cornfedmind

I would stop our betters trying to lay all of society's ills at the internet's door.

Richard Morgan

! Page 404



Barry Collins picks the tech innovations of the past 12 months that are best forgotten

The top tech nightmares of 2018

While my colleagues are full of the vim and optimism that a New Year brings, let me drag you down to hellish depths one last time and lay the boot into the tech events of 2018 that made me want to gouge my own eyeballs out with a toothpick.

Buenas notches

If there's one tech innovation – and I use that word in the loosest possible sense – that has triggered my inner Hulk in 2018, it's the ruddy notch. Apple started this nonsense in late 2017, putting a small black segment at the top of the iPhone X's screen to house the cameras. Of course, the lemmings in the phone industry fell over themselves to copy the high-tech equivalent of a piece of black masking tape, whacking notches into almost every major smartphone release of 2018, as if creating two useless strips at the top of each screen was the best idea since deporting Noel Edmonds to Australia. (What do you mean they're letting him back in the country? Oh, for Pete's sake.)

GDPR grind

Before you read the rest of this column, do you accept *Web User's Privacy Policy*? Do you? Well, do you? I'll ask you three times in every future column from now on, just to make sure. Yes, welcome to the world of GDPR hell, where European legislators are so concerned about our privacy that they make us click cookie-warning messages on every website we visit, so that we can be no better informed about who's making off with

“Welcome to the world of GDPR hell. We're no better informed about who's making off with our data, but thunderously irritated”

our data, but thunderously irritated. Leaving behind this kind of nonsense is the best argument for Brexit yet.

Don't fix it, close it

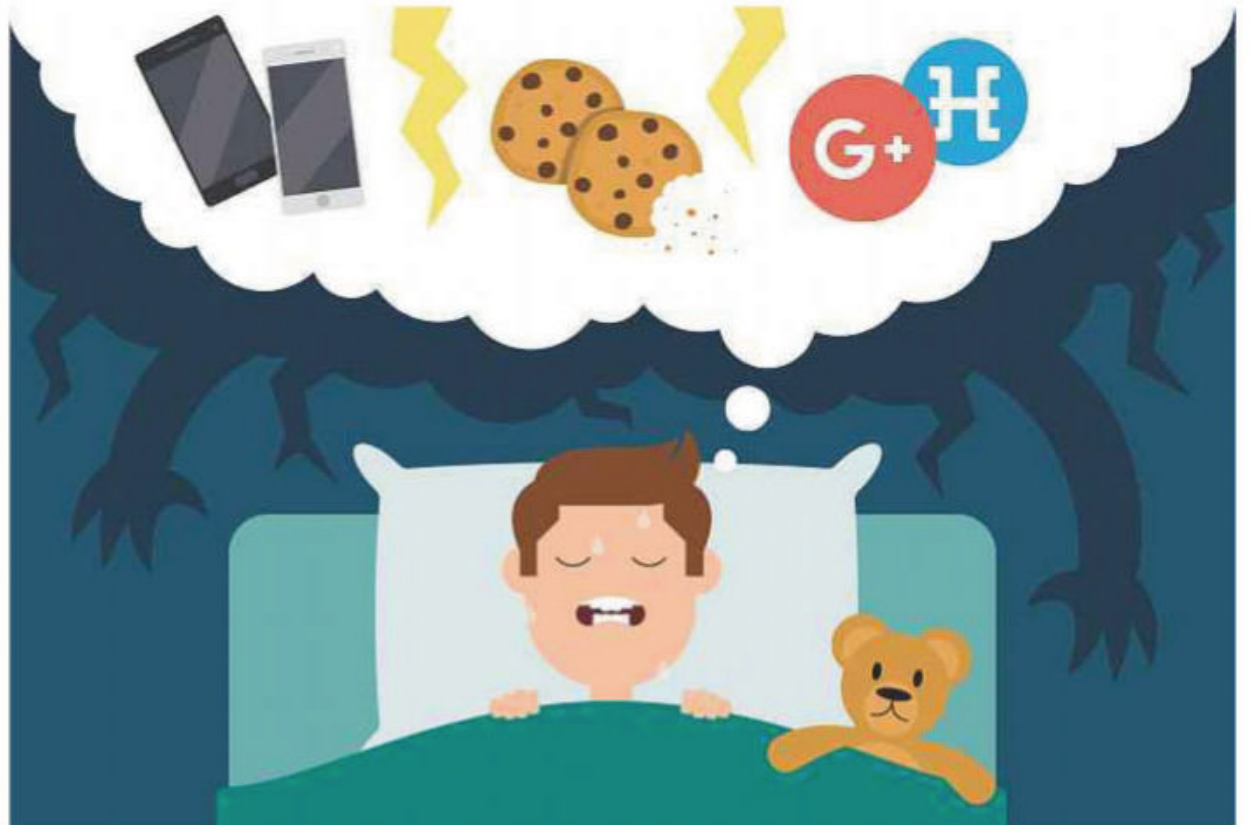
You have to admire Google's sheer bloody ruthlessness. When it was revealed in October that Google+, the social network you've probably never heard of, had leaked the private details of some 500,000 users, Google didn't launch a massive internal investigation or send the affected users a bunch of flowers and a Curly Wurly. Instead, it announced it was shutting the service. Granted that Google+, which has been dubbed Google Pus by memesters, is going to be missed about as much as a cold sore, but let's hope Gmail doesn't suffer a

data breach or we'll all be traipsing back to Yahoo Mail.

Blockchain bluster

The only thing worse than Ian Wright's punditry during half-time of last summer's World Cup matches was Hdac's adverts. They showed a nightmarish smart home where the flowers watered themselves, the fridge paid for an extra pint of milk and the gas meter spoke like the bloke who announces the National Lottery balls. All of this space-age crud was, so the advert claimed, “smart and secure, thanks to the blockchain solution”. Cue loads of people arriving at Curry's the next morning, asking the poor Saturday girl where they could get their hands on this “blockchain solution stuff”, as if it were an ointment you could rub on your washing machine to make it do the laundry while you went down the pub.

Here's hoping that 2019 is much less annoying!



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