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Issue 467

WebUser

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Upcycle your dusty old devices

Blue Peter once encouraged kids to turn old Fairy Liquid bottles into plant pots, pen holders and space rockets, but in my neighbourhood they were invariably reused as mega-powered water pistols, capable of squirting soapy streams over great distances. Such clever repurposing must be what Nanette Newman meant when she claimed that Fairy lasts longer.

In this issue's cover feature, we extend the idea of creative 'upcycling' to the old phones, tablets and laptops that we all have gathering dust in our drawers and cupboards. From setting up a home security system and a digital photo frame to creating a dash cam for your car and a second monitor for your PC, we reveal how to save a fortune on new devices by finding ingenious uses for your old ones.

Speaking of which, I'm pleased to announce that every issue of *Web User* from 2018 can now be perused on our new Back Issues Disc, which is available to order now from bit.ly/wudisc18.

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

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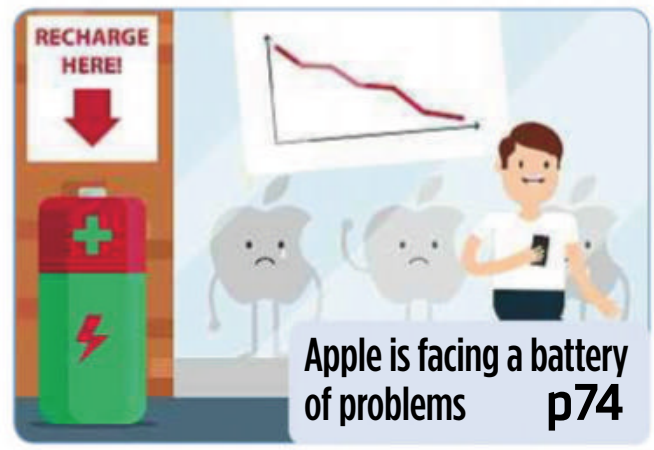

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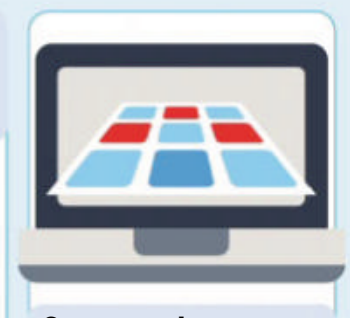

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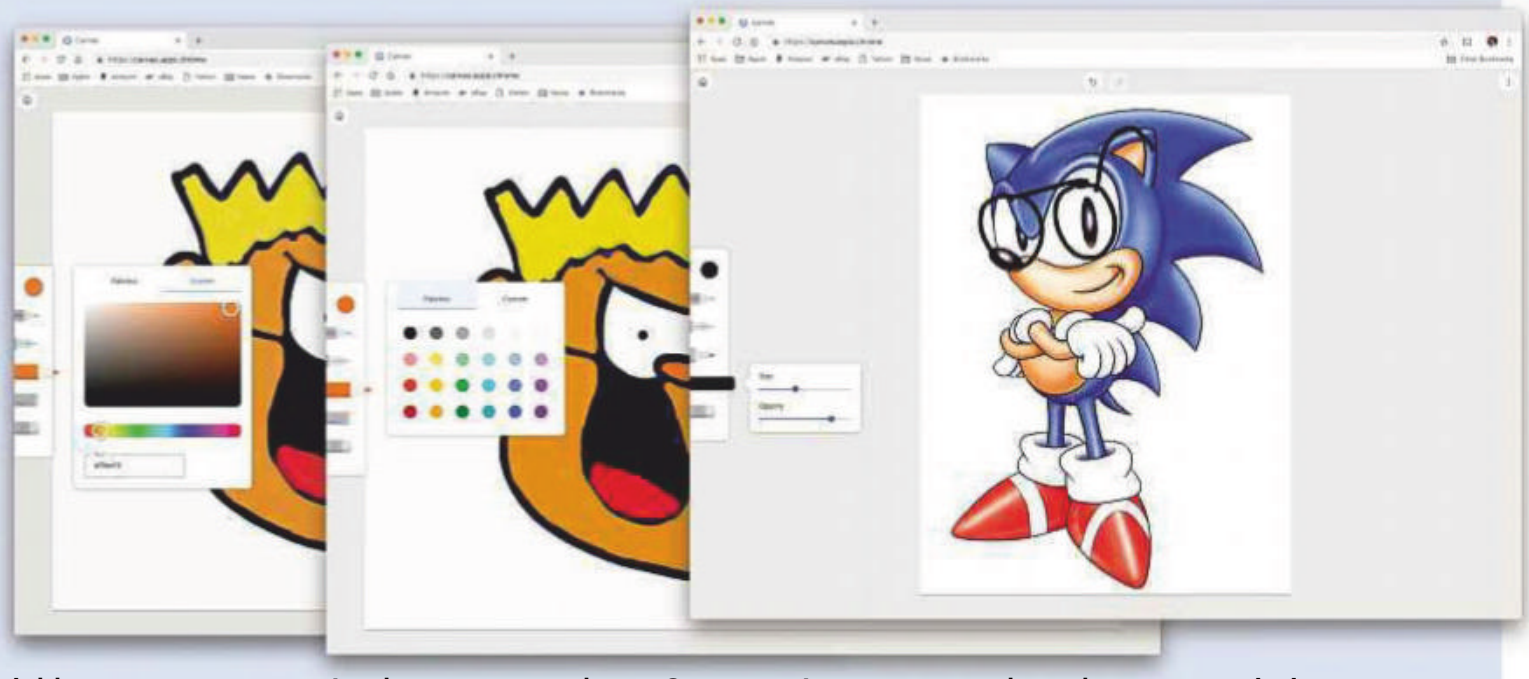
What's New Online

Doodle online with Chrome Canvas



Google is well known for its doodles (www.google.com/doodles) and it's now letting you create sketches of your own using its new progressive web app, Chrome Canvas. This works in any browser that supports WebAssembly – simply choose a pen, pencil, marker, chalk or eraser, then quickly get to work on a piece of art.

As well as selecting the size and opacity of your drawing instruments, you can choose a colour from a palette or click Custom for a specific hue – you can also enter this as a Hex code. If you make a mistake, just click the Undo button – or select Redo if you've been overzealous. Once you've finished, click Home and, as long as you're signed into Google, your artwork will be saved. You can also export it as a PNG file.

If you don't want to start from scratch, Chrome Canvas lets you upload an existing image from your hard drive. It's not advanced, by any means, but we reckon the more artistic among you could achieve great results.

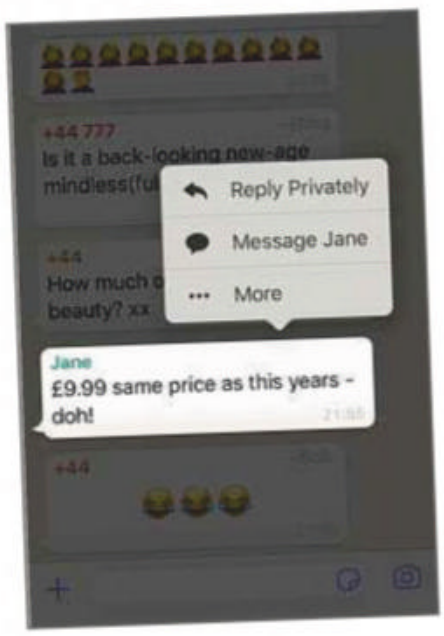
Because Canvas has pressure sensitivity, it works especially well with a stylus and a touchscreen, but it's also useful for scribbling notes and sketching out rough ideas from your imagination.

canvas.apps.chrome

Reply privately in WhatsApp

www.whatsapp.com

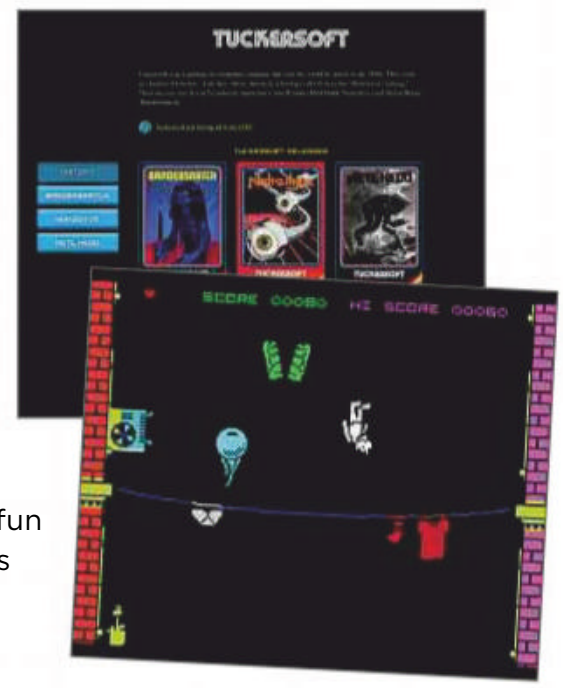
A handy new feature in WhatsApp for iOS (which was added to the Android version last year) lets you reply privately to messages sent in group chats, ensuring that only the selected person is able to see what you write. It's a good way to send sensitive information that you don't want the whole group to view, such as a phone number, while also allowing you to make candid remarks about other chat members without fear of them catching on.



To use the new feature, open a group chat and long-press a message, then tap More and select Reply Privately (Android users need to tap the three-dot menu to see the option). The feature is one of three new iOS additions, with another letting you '3D touch' a contact in the Status tab to see their updates without sending a read notification. You can also now tap the smiley icon to add stickers when editing a photo or video.

Play a Netflix-inspired ZX Spectrum game

bit.ly/nohzdyve467



If you've watched *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*, the acclaimed interactive film currently streaming on Netflix, you'll be familiar with its retro-gaming premise. Set in 1984, it's about a young coder adapting a choose-your-own-adventure novel into a video game.

As well as letting viewers make choices that affect how the film plays out, it also contains some fun 'Easter eggs' – a stroke of genius by creator Charlie Brooker.

The best secret is found in a post-credits scene that contains the unmistakable screech of a loading 8-bit game. When this is run through a ZX Spectrum emulator, it produces a QR code that links to a mocked-up Tuckersoft website from where you can download and play a game called Nohzdyve. It's also possible to bypass the Netflix bit by going straight to the URL printed above. Download the file and load it into the online Speccy emulator at bit.ly/spectrum467.

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

View medieval comet sightings

bit.ly/comet467

Comets have been spotted throughout history and were once thought to be a sign of impending catastrophe. With this short story map, complete with images and literary extracts, you can explore various medieval sightings across England and France, and learn about the events they were linked to.

Get free Apple audiobooks

bit.ly/audio467

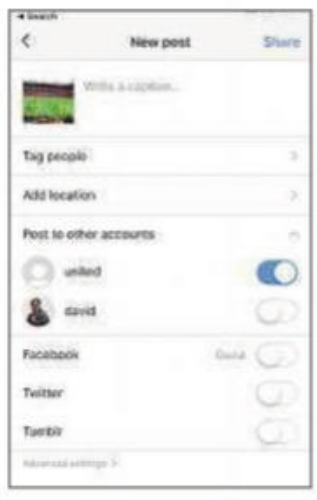
Having revamped and restyled iBooks as Apple Books, the Cupertino-based tech giant has now decided to give away a collection of six audiobooks to its users. They include the classics *Pride and Prejudice* (narrated by Kate Beckinsale), *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Tituss Burgess), *The Secret Garden* (Karen Gillan), *The Time Machine* (Kelsey Grammer), *Frankenstein* (Aaron Mahnke) and a collection of new Winnie the Pooh stories from Disney.

Simply open the Apple Books app, search the store by both title and narrator, then tap Get to download the book for your listening pleasure.

Post to several Instagram accounts

www.instagram.com

If you have more than one Instagram account, you'll be happy to hear that you can now post photos and videos to all or some of them at the same time. Currently rolling out for the iOS app (and likely to arrive on Android soon), you'll see an option to 'Post to Other Accounts' when you're on the verge of sharing a new post. Use the toggles to mark the Instagram accounts you want to use and tap Share. You can also toggle Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr if you want to send your posts to those social networks, too.



Get grammar tips in Duolingo

www.duolingo.com

When you're learning a language, you're sure to have questions about grammar, phonetics, orthography and culture. Duolingo now hopes to answer them by providing a series of tips, which you can access by pressing a lightbulb icon when you're about to start a module in Spanish, French or Chinese. The advice is written clearly by Duolingo experts and throws in audio clips and examples where necessary.

NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Perform actions hands-free

Google Assistant is now integrated with Google Maps for Android and iOS, so you can use your voice to navigate, respond to texts and control your music.

Check your storage space

Say "Hey Siri, how much free space do I have?" to check how much room there is on the hard drive of your Apple Mac.

Hear news from favourite sources

Say "Enable Noa" and ask Alexa to read the news from a range of top newspapers and magazines including the *Independent*, *The Economist* and the *Financial Times*.

See fictional location maps

bit.ly/fake467

From Beanotown to Weatherfield, film, TV and literature have given England, Scotland and Wales many fictional locations. Take a look at this fascinating Fake Britain map to find their exact location.

Mix and match virtual furniture

www.amazon.com/showroom

Amazon's new visual-design tool lets you select items of furniture and experiment with fresh looks based on items sold by its US store. Some products can be delivered to the UK, albeit with hefty fees.

Make B&W images colour

shangse.w7d7.com

On this black-and-white to colour conversion site, click the top-left button, then the Camera icon, upload a B&W image and tap the flashing button to convert it to colour. Don't be put off by the tool being entirely in Chinese.

Tell us your favourite new things at twitter.com/webusermagazine

Need to Know

Amazon's smart doorbell isn't so clever at respecting privacy

What happened?

The makers of the Ring smart doorbell have been accused of breaching users' privacy by leaking streams of footage collected from the devices.

Amazon bought Ring last year for $1bn. The company's doorbells cost from £89 and have built-in cameras so users can see who is at their door and speak to them – for example, to identify a courier and ask them to leave a package somewhere safe or to spot a thief sneaking up to snatch it.

The high-definition camera built into a Ring doorbell includes motion sensors and night vision, so it can watch for activity around your house at night, too. But while Ring helps protect your front door, other security concerns are raised by its constant video stream of your home. Alongside fears that such data could be hacked, companies aren't always as careful with our private information as we'd like – as the various outrages over Facebook have shown.

In this case, a report from investigative website The Intercept (bit.ly/intercept467), based on sources inside the company and former employees, suggests that encrypted videos from customers' cameras were shared, both as clips and as live feeds. These files, saved on corporate servers, could then be viewed by any employee, and the doorbell's owner identified. One of The Intercept's sources said engineers at the company who had the doorbells installed would "tease" each other about who they brought home after a romantic night out.

The Intercept broke the story about Ring employees spying on customers

The report identified a legitimate reason for allowing engineers access to video feeds: they were manually labelling objects in the videos to help train the company's flawed artificial intelligence system, which is supposed to take care of the task automatically.

A Ring spokesperson told The Intercept that it has "zero tolerance for abuse of our systems", and that employees are only allowed to view videos shared via its Neighbours app, which are clips made public by users to share with others living nearby. The company added: "Ring does not provide and never has provided employees with access to livestreams of Ring devices".

How will it affect you?

The report suggests that data protection has improved in the months since Amazon acquired the company and so far, there have been no details of any harm coming from the actions described by The Intercept. Ring denies the crux of the report and says user data wasn't abused in this fashion, but even so, the report is a wake-up call for smart-home technology – though it's hardly the first. We've already heard stories about Amazon Echo speakers accidentally recording conversations, including one case where a random chat was recorded and sent to one of the owner's contacts. As tech companies increasingly push their cameras, sensors and connectivity, consumers need to consider the privacy and security implications of smart appliances such as doorbells.

If you are shopping for a smart device, take the time to read trustworthy reviews that address security and privacy protections, as well as the manufacturer's terms and conditions. It's worth making the effort to find a company that cares about your data security.

What do we think?

You buy a security camera because you're worried about your home being broken into, but it's easy to forget that the real threat might be to your privacy – a leaked Ring feed could be used to harass someone, grab embarrassing video clips or even rob a home when residents are known to be away. As far as we know, that hasn't happened in this case, but it's certainly possible.

How would you feel if a video clip from your front door was leaked? Or a recording of a conversation gathered by Amazon Alexa ended up being sent to a friend? Make sure you consider such factors carefully before shelling out for these web-connected, always-on surveillance tools.

If you have reason to worry about a package being stolen from your front steps or a dodgy person trying to force their way into your home, such devices can prove very useful. Just remember that they come with downsides, especially regarding privacy, and make sure to point the camera away from anything you wouldn't want someone else to see.

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

Windows 7 users suffer activation error

What happened?

Another month, another set of update woes for Windows users. This time, an activation error meant that users running legitimate versions of Windows 7 were shown a notification saying their copy of the operating system wasn't genuine. This problem happened just as a monthly patch was being rolled out, which had its own bugs, including network sharing issues.

Microsoft denied that the activation errors were caused by the patch, saying it was a coincidence that the bug popped up on the same day as the January monthly update.

How will it affect you?

Microsoft has already fixed the problem, reverting its activation servers to their previous state when everything still functioned properly. If you received a notification saying "Windows is not genuine", and you know you are using a valid version of the OS, there's no reason to worry because the problem is entirely at Microsoft's end.

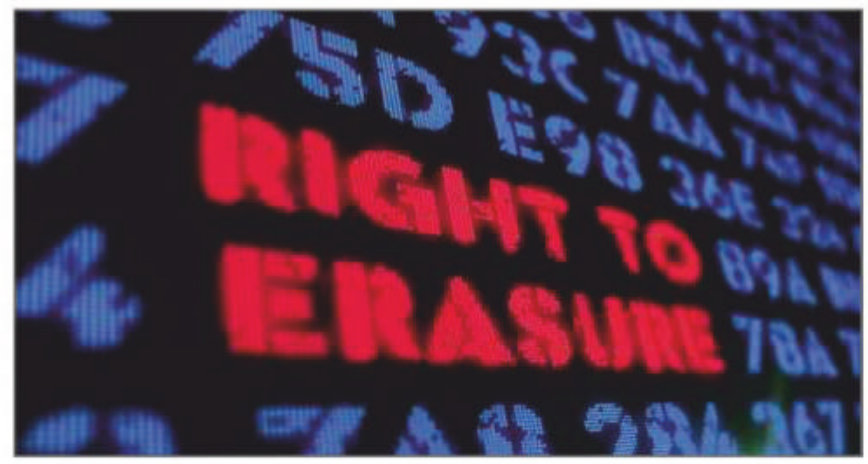
In future, if you see a notification that confuses you, don't panic: it may be a bug. Microsoft posts a list of known issues for each update, but it's not easy for those outside of IT departments to understand, so your best bet is a quick web search to see if anyone else is experiencing the same problems. If so, roll back to a previous version of Windows and wait for Microsoft to fix the issue.

What do we think?

Microsoft can't seem to get its quality control together. Millions of people use different versions of Windows across a variety of computer configurations, so any change to code or systems can have unexpected knock-on effects that may affect hundreds or thousands of users.

The number of update bugs and other errors faced by Windows users over the past year is disappointing. We shouldn't have to think about our operating systems this much and it's high time Microsoft fixed Windows, or it risks users losing confidence in the operating system.

Right to be forgotten will be limited to EU



What happened?

A European court has said that the 'Right to be forgotten' should not be enforced globally. This EU rule lets people request that Google and other online services remove links to out-of-date, incorrect or irrelevant information about them. For example, someone could ask Google to hide a specific result when their name is used as a search term, but the page the link was pointing to would remain online.

The rule applies across the European Union, though Google and other companies can challenge any requests. So far, removals have only been on European domains – such as '.fr' for France or '.co.uk' for the UK – but not internationally, meaning that the hidden result can still be seen elsewhere.

A French privacy body challenged this limitation to the rule, saying removals should be global, but the European Court of Justice (ECJ) disagrees.

How will it affect you?

The move means nothing will change in the EU. If someone successfully applies to have a link removed from Google, it will be removed across European versions of Google's search results, but the result will still appear in Google.com search results.

Although this case was brought by a data privacy group, other privacy advocates suggested that limiting the 'Right to be forgotten' to Europe was a wise move, to prevent giving European data regulators power over the search results of other nations.

What do we think?

When the 'Right to be forgotten' was introduced, the debate was vicious: the rule was seen separately as mass censorship, or as the only curb keeping web behemoths such as Google in check. Millions of requests have been filed, yet the sky hasn't fallen in.

That said, the ECJ may have a point: if other countries want to follow the lead of the EU and roll out a similar rule, they can do so by choice, rather than have the law forced on them by over-eager European data regulators.

Ransomware scams victims using kids' charity

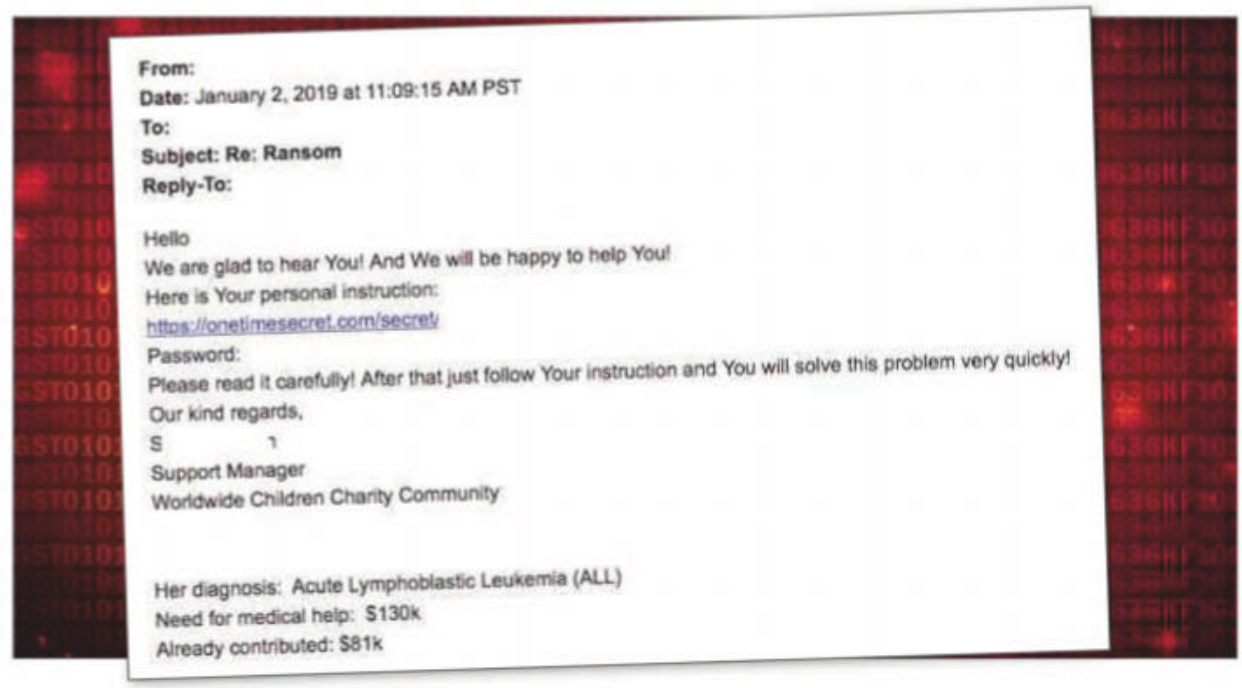
What happened?

Hackers using the obscure CryptoMix ransomware are pretending to donate their ill-gotten gains to a fictional children's charity in a bid to extort more money from their victims.

Traditional ransomware involves hackers encrypting your data, so you can no longer access it, and only agreeing to unscramble the code if you cough up the cash. The latest CryptoMix scam is similar but according to emails sent by the criminals, your money is used to help young cancer sufferers (and if you believe that, we have a seaside property for sale in Birmingham).

The sophisticated lie includes the children's names, images and medical diagnoses, which have apparently been stolen from legitimate crowdfunding sites. The emails, published by cybersecurity firm Coveware (bit.ly/crypto467), direct users to log into a onetimesecret.com page. Instructions are given on how to pay the ransom via Bitcoin and, as with similar scams, the ransom doubles if it's not paid on time.

However, it's the references to sick children that add a disturbing new twist. As Coveware notes: "We are guessing this tactic is meant to assuage the moral hazard associated with paying a ransom" by making it seem like a coerced donation – sure, you've been hacked, but it's for a good cause!



Credit: Coveware

Follow-up emails continue the ruse after the ransom is paid, with further details about the 'charity' and a commitment to share the victim's name with the fictional beneficiary.

How will it affect you?

The best way to avoid ransomware is to stay savvy and ensure your security software is up to date. These scam emails invariably include giveaway clues, such as broken English, unnecessary capitalisation and more exclamation marks than a Donald Trump tweet, while the charity's name is variously referred to as 'International Children Charity Organisation' and 'Worldwide Children Charity Organisation'. If you think you've been hit by CryptoMix, deploy Avast's free offline CryptoMix tool (bit.ly/avast467). Don't pay the ransom because there's no guarantee you'll get your stolen files back.

What do we think?

This Robin Hood-style tactic of robbing the supposed rich to pay the fictional poor is arguably more reprehensible than the usual ransomware; at least most hackers acknowledge their criminality rather than hiding behind a devious fig leaf of compassion. It's a well-thought out scam but make no mistake – you're better off contributing to a genuine children's charity rather than trusting these lowlifes.

FIRST LOOK

Lenovo Smart Clock

www.lenovo.com

Lenovo is hoping that this is the year we all stop using our phones to wake us up and return to the good old days of the bedside alarm clock.

That said, its latest device is more than just a basic digital alarm clock – it's a smart one, thanks to the inclusion of the excellent Google Assistant. That means no more hitting the snooze button, not least because this clock doesn't have one; just tell Google to snooze your alarm instead.

It's a good looking unit, too, with a cute 480 x 800-pixel resolution 4in touchscreen and a body wrapped in neutral grey fabric. If you didn't know Lenovo was behind it, you'd swear this clock came from the same stable as the Google Home Hub and Mini.

The Wi-Fi and Bluetooth-enabled clock is deliberately uncomplicated. The only buttons you'll find control the volume and mute, while privacy-conscious users can rejoice: there's no camera spying on your night-time activities. On the downside, this means that unlike Amazon's similarly petite Echo Spot, you can't make bedroom-based video calls.

Twin 3W speakers adequately perform their modest role – waking you up and playing music – but they fail to deliver the level of quality that audiophiles will crave. The most thoughtful touch is the USB socket on the back – a handy power source for charging your phone at night.

Ultimately, the Lenovo Smart Clock feels a bit limited. You get three different clock faces, plus weather and travel information, but no photos, no videos – nothing but time. As such, it's a less attractive smart home essential than Google's own Home Hub, which is bigger and smarter, and does everything this alarm clock does and a lot more, for only a few extra pennies.

The Lenovo smart alarm clock is set for a UK release this spring, and is expected to cost around £70.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Will the new iPhone have a 3D camera?

A new type of technology may be coming to the next iPhone: a triple-lens, long-distance 3D camera. It's no secret that Sony, which makes half of all smartphone camera chips, is testing a 3D camera sensor, and it's rumoured that Apple is keen to kit out its upcoming iPhone XI with the hardware.

3D isn't new to iPhone users. The iPhone X features 3D mapping for FaceID, and third-party photo apps take advantage of the smartphone's TrueDepth camera. Sony's 3D camera sensors, however, promise more than just novelty 3D selfies.

These sensors ping out 'time of flight' lasers over a distance of five metres, accurately mapping an area in 3D. According to those in the know, Sony has toyed with other applications, including a magic app that recognises hand gestures to cast spells, and – after calculating how big your room is – a virtual goldfish that swims around the furniture in your home. Bolstering the rumours are recently leaked iPhone XI designs, showing a three-camera setup on the rear of the device.

Apple is in choppy waters right now. Non-existent hardware evolution and an underwhelming 2018 lineup has seen users refusing to upgrade their devices – and that's hit Apple's bottom line. The company may be hoping that by introducing new tech such as the 3D camera, it can convince its loyal fan base to buy the iPhone XI, which is expected September 2019.

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

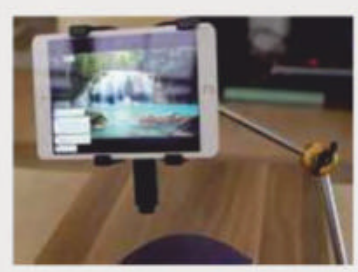
There are two reasons why this will almost certainly happen: Apple desperately needs a new 'killer app' (forget gimmicks such as Animoji); and 3D cameras are potentially revolutionary for the smartphone world, with uses stretching from gaming to security. The iPhone XI isn't the only device getting 3D cameras, but it will be the most high-profile, and could help Apple win back disillusioned users.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

AcroPad

bit.ly/acro467 | From £89



Balancing your phone against your knees or arm can be awkward and uncomfortable, which is not the ideal way to browse the web or watch TV. Taking hold of your phone or tablet, the AcroPad is a flexible helping hand. Secure your device to the arm, clamp it to your desk, bed, sofa or even your car, and swivel into position. 360-degree rotation means you never miss what's on screen – whether it's your sat-nav or your favourite programme. You can support the product for a fiver or pledge £89 to get your own AcroPad.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Facebook to flag false content

Facebook is launching a fact-checking operation in the UK, to review and rate the accuracy of content on the social network. Inaccurate posts, links and videos will be flagged as false, and users will be warned about sharing them.

Tax cheats banned from eBay

Amazon and eBay have evicted thousands of overseas sellers following a tax crackdown. The banned businesses, mostly from China, sold items including British flags, phones and fake eyelashes, but evaded paying VAT.

WE DON'T LIKE...

Android apps infected with malware

Android users are being warned about fake apps in the Google Play store, which have infected millions of devices. Trend Micro discovered that 85 apps, including Easy Universal TV Remote, were infected with malware.

Millennials stream Netflix illegally

More than 18% of millennials violate Netflix's terms of service by using someone else's password, according to a new survey. Netflix is preparing to crack down on illegal account sharing using new artificial intelligence software.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Watch out for TV-licence phishing scam

A phishing scam that uses TV-licence renewal as bait has been circulating in inboxes around the UK, prompting 5,057 complaints to Action Fraud. The email tricks people into opening it by using subject lines about licence expiry and incorrect information. It then directs victims to a page where they're prompted to enter their account number, sort code and card verification code – everything scammers need to steal money from an account. In some cases, the page asks for further information including date of birth, address, phone number and mother's maiden name.

TV Licensing has updated the phishing section of its FAQ (bit.ly/tvscam467) with details of the latest scam, stating: "If you have entered personal information as a result of this fraudulent email you should report the fraud to the Action Fraud Helpline by calling 0300 123 2040. If you have submitted any bank or card details, please speak to your bank immediately."

This isn't the first time the TV licence has been used in a phishing campaign. Back in 2017, fake emails promised recipients a rebate on their licence fee, if they entered their bank details. **bit.ly/phishing467**

Android apps share data with Facebook

Privacy International has found that more than half of Android apps, including big names such as Skyscanner and TripAdvisor, automatically transfer data to Facebook without users' consent.

A report from the digital-rights group – 'How Apps on Android Share Data with Facebook' – revealed that 61% of the 34 apps tested transfer data such as "app installed" or "SDK [software development kit] initialised" when the app is opened, along with details of the device it's installed on and the user's location.

According to researchers, this data is gathered by Facebook regardless of whether users have a Facebook account. "If combined, data from different apps can paint a fine-grained and intimate picture of people's activities, interests, behaviours and routines," the report warned.

Privacy International says this constitutes a breach of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), because data is automatically shared with Facebook before apps are able to ask users to agree. **bit.ly/privacy467**

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 What's the best way to stop our card details being stolen online?
Graham O'Brien, Facebook

A Most of us are so worried about our money being stolen online that we prioritise keeping our card details secure over the protection of other sensitive personal information, such as private photos. It seems more of a disaster if cybercriminals discover our credit card details than our embarrassing photos.

However, the issue of remembering the vast number of passwords and PINs we need to transact online remains a cause for concern. By trying to remember the words and numbers that unlock our accounts, we in fact open them up to everyone due to bad habits.

We might be taught at school to write important things down to help us remember them, but doing

this with financial credentials puts us at risk. Writing a credit card PIN in a notepad, or saving a bank account passcode on a laptop, could make you more vulnerable to attack and result in you losing money. We should all remain attentive to our financial data by not entering our bank details on untrusted websites or making payments from unsecured devices.

Kaspersky Lab recommends using cybersecurity tools that protect online transactions and keep shopping accounts safe. For example, Kaspersky Security Cloud (bit.ly/cloud467) protects your credit card details by opening a secure browser whenever you buy online and by securely auto-filling your payment details.

It includes Kaspersky Password Manager (bit.ly/password467), which gives you secure access to your passwords, PINs and key credentials on any device, making payments both quick and safe.

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

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Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

HISTORY

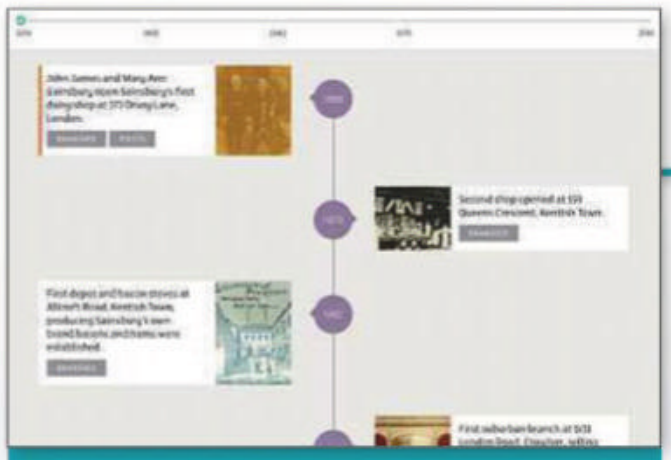
RELAUNCH

Sainsbury Archive

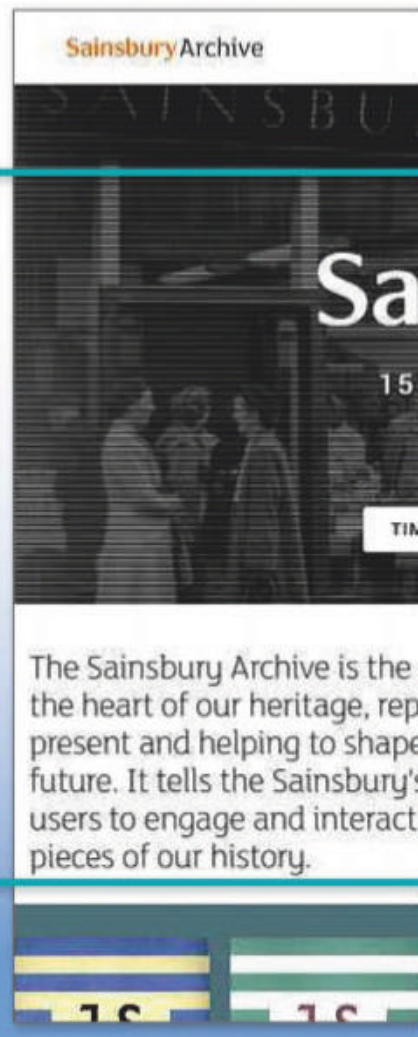
sainsburyarchive.org.uk

Supermarket chain Sainsbury's is celebrating its 150th anniversary with real food for thought. Over the course of the year, the independent Sainsbury Archive charity is digitising around 90,000 items from the past, placing them online for the first time. By doing so, it's helping visitors understand how retail has evolved while casting light on the Sainsbury Family and Britain's changing social norms. It's fascinating to look at old packaging, adverts and recipe cards, and see how staff uniforms have changed over the years. With a speedy search engine, helpfully highlighted items and loads of photos, it's certainly worth checking out.

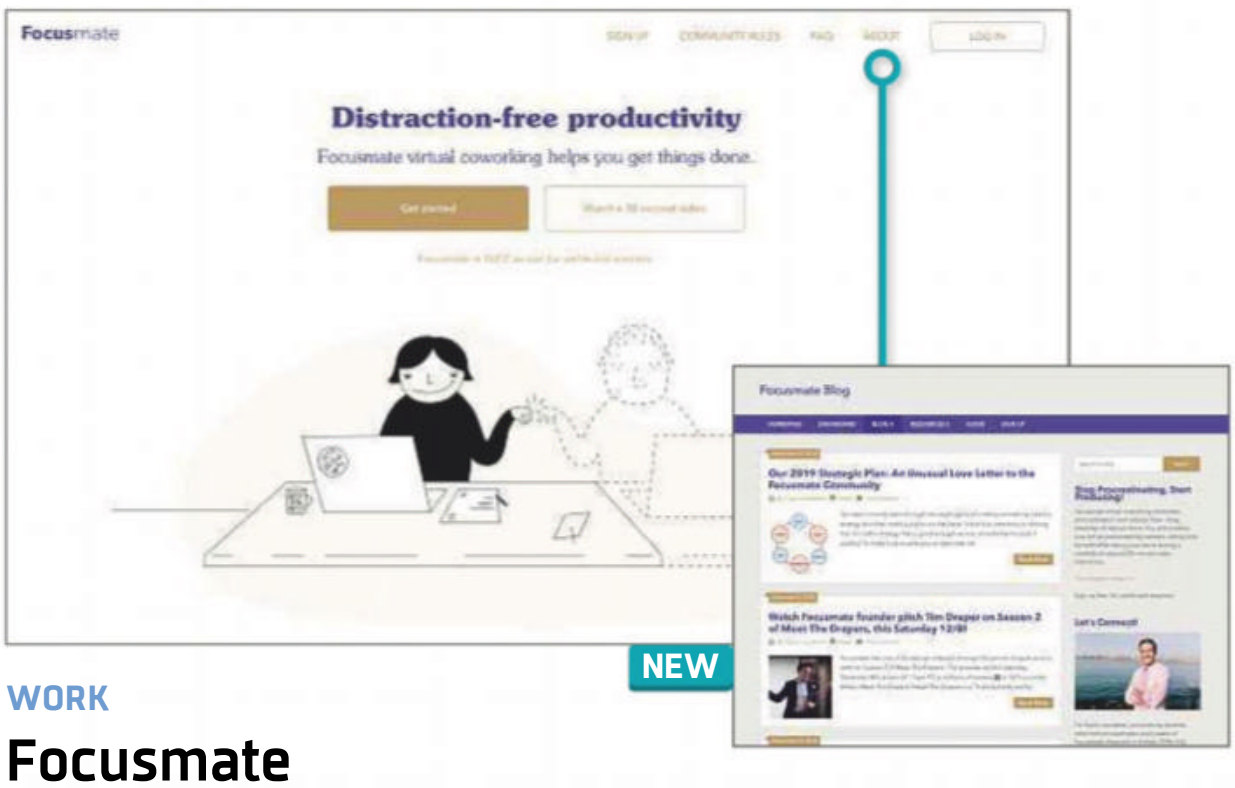
Our rating ★★★★★



TIMELINE
Look back at key moments in Sainsbury's history, broken down into different eras



PEOPLE
Learn about the Sainsbury family, see photos of workers from its past and view wartime images



NEW

WORK

Focusmate

www.focusmate.com

More of us are opting to work from home these days, but it's harder to stay focused in a domestic environment and easy to get distracted by TV, social media and the prospect of another cuppa. Focusmate is an intriguing if somewhat creepy site that aims to end procrastination by buddying you up online with a fellow home worker. The idea is that you "spy" on each other via your webcams in the hope that the added social pressure will make you knuckle down. Each user accesses a dashboard on which you can add sessions and check out your virtual co-workers in advance. There's also an insightful blog and a list of useful productivity resources.

Our rating ★★★★☆

NEW

FILM

Film Stories

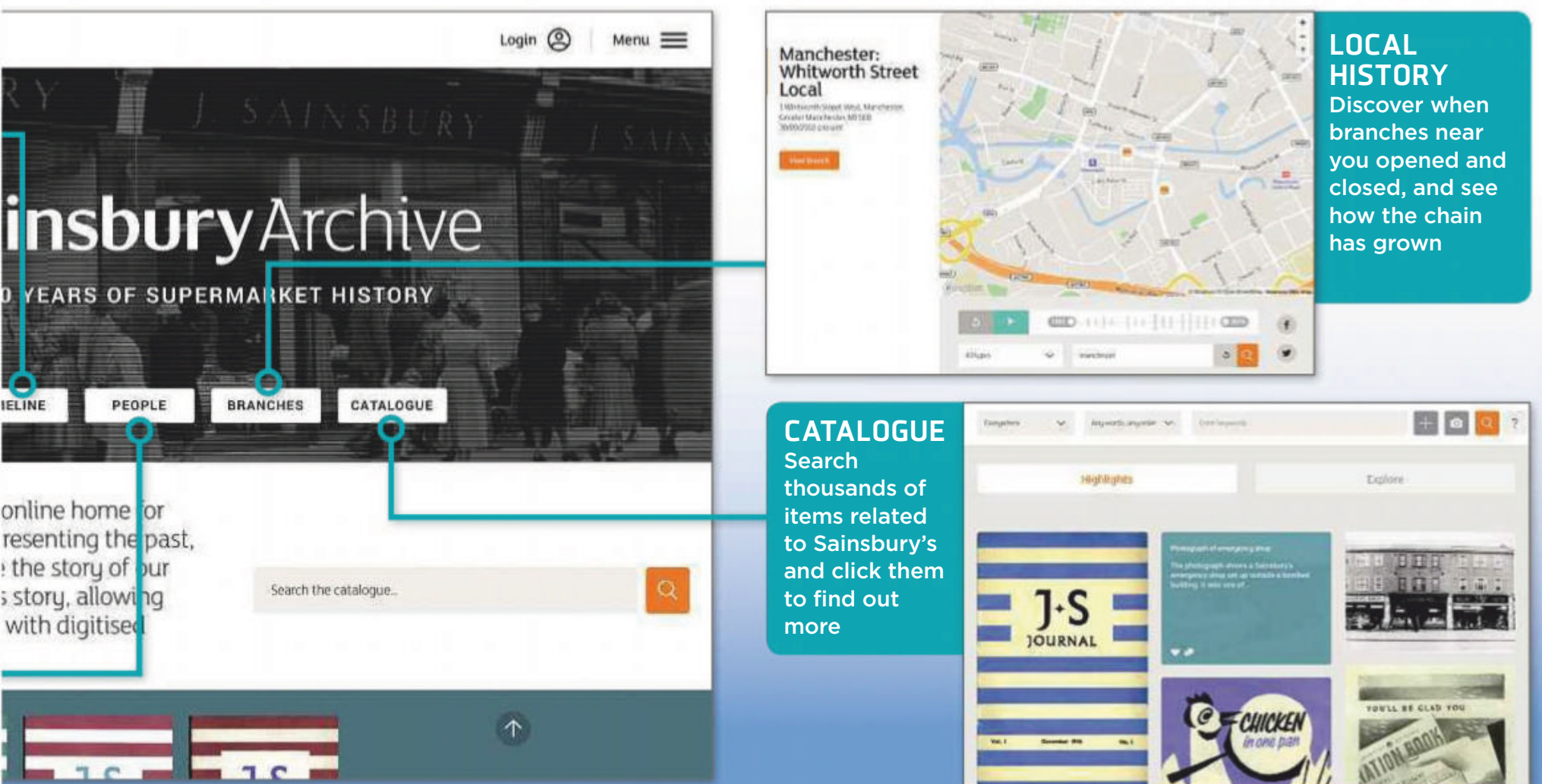
www.filmstories.co.uk

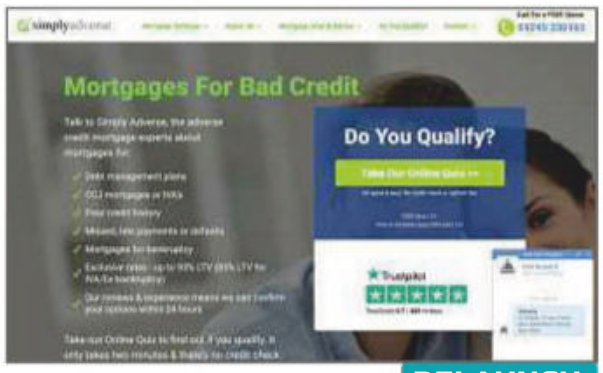
Created by the founder of the superb entertainment website Den Of Geek (www.denofgeek.com), Film Stories' regular series of podcasts delve behind the scenes of movies past, drawing on lots of intricate detail and fascinating on-set tales. Simon Brew's accessible, chatty style is a joy to listen to, and equally entertaining are the semi-regular videos by Dan Cooper, but it's a shame that the site is currently let down by a complete absence of entries in the Reviews section and a paucity of news. We're hoping this will be resolved over the coming months.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Reviews by David Crookes

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





RELAUNCH

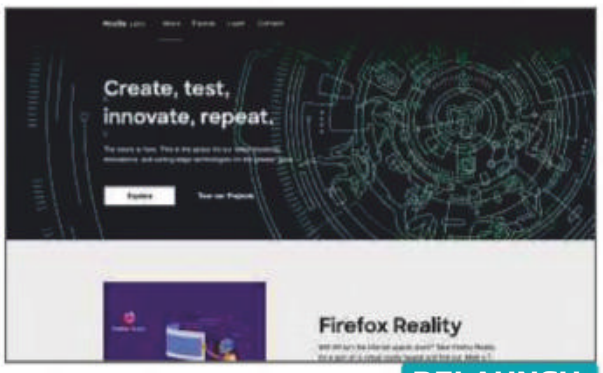
HOUSING

Simply Adverse

www.simplyadverse.co.uk

Companies that help people with poor credit scores to get on the housing ladder are ten a penny but Simply Adverse does a reasonable job of assessing the likelihood of you getting a mortgage. Key to its offering is a two-minute quiz (you have to enter your email address since the results are sent to your inbox) and live support. There's also a handy glossary of adverse credit terms and a comprehensive FAQ. As always with such matters, you should tread carefully: the company's typical broker fee is £1,995 and it charges up to 6% of the loan amount.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



RELAUNCH

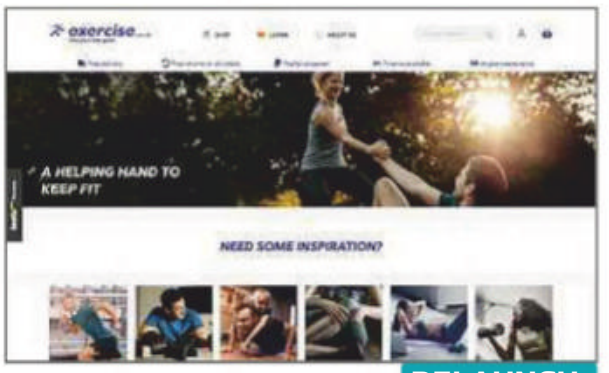
TECHNOLOGY

Mozilla Labs

labs.mozilla.org

Mozilla's experimental platform has been dusted down and revived after it became little more than an archive in 2014. It's now showcasing a host of projects such as Firefox Reality (a browser designed for virtual reality); Common Voice, where people donate their voices to an open-source data bank; and the VR chat room Hubs – while keeping you abreast of the latest news. Highlighting blog posts and an email newsletter, it's a great way to see and learn more about current and future trends and its blend of clearly written text, images, videos and links make each project easy to understand.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

EXERCISE

Exercise.co.uk

www.exercise.co.uk

Buying exercise equipment is one thing, but using it on a regular basis is quite another as many would-be fitness fanatics will have already discovered this year. To keep you motivated, this home-fitness retailer not only lets you find the most suitable multi-gyms, weight benches, cross trainers and exercise bikes for your goal, but also has an inspiring Learn blog that's committed to publishing one article daily with topics such as yoga, top workouts and tips to getting and staying fit. You can sign up to get exercise tips delivered to your inbox and a 10% discount on all items.

Our rating ★★★★★

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

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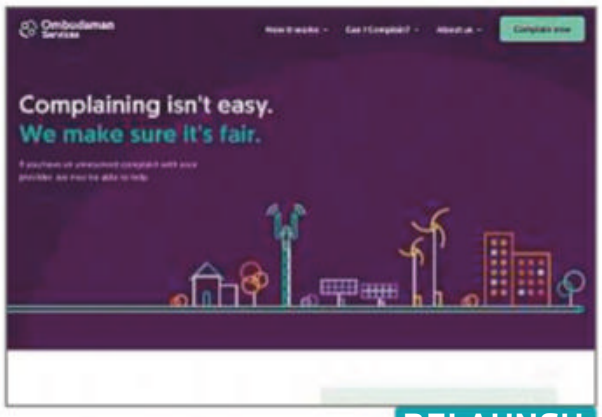


RELAUNCH

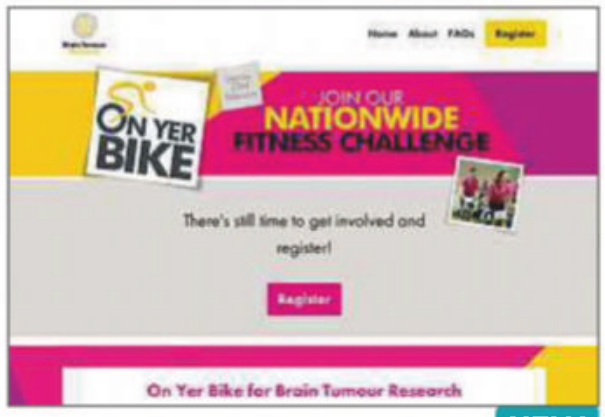
DISPUTES

Ombudsman Services

www.ombudsman-services.org

If you have a problem with a business in the energy or communications sector, you may be tempted to escalate it to a dispute. Resolution specialist Ombudsman Services has a bright and accessible new website that does a brilliant job of outlining the process as simply as possible. It breaks down the information into neat chunks across three sections, making light work of lodging a complaint, and leading you by the hand through a series of questions before making a final resolution. It also offers advice and provides details of other consumer rights agencies who may be able to help. What's more, it's free to use.

Our rating ★★★★☆



NEW

FUNDRAISING

On Yer Bike 2019

www.onyerbikechallenge.org

Launched by former cycling champ Phil Corley, this fundraiser aims to encourage people to get on a bike to raise money for Brain Tumour Research. On Yer Bike's accompanying site lets you register as either a solo rider or as part of a team and, after inputting your details, T-shirt size and whether you're aiming for a set time or distance, takes you to your own fundraising page. By linking to Strava, MapMyRide or Fitbit, friends and family can view your ride, plus there's scope for those seeking to compete in a gym or exercise class. The FAQ answers most questions you may have and it's as easy as a downhill freewheeel to get involved.

Our rating ★★★★★

NEW

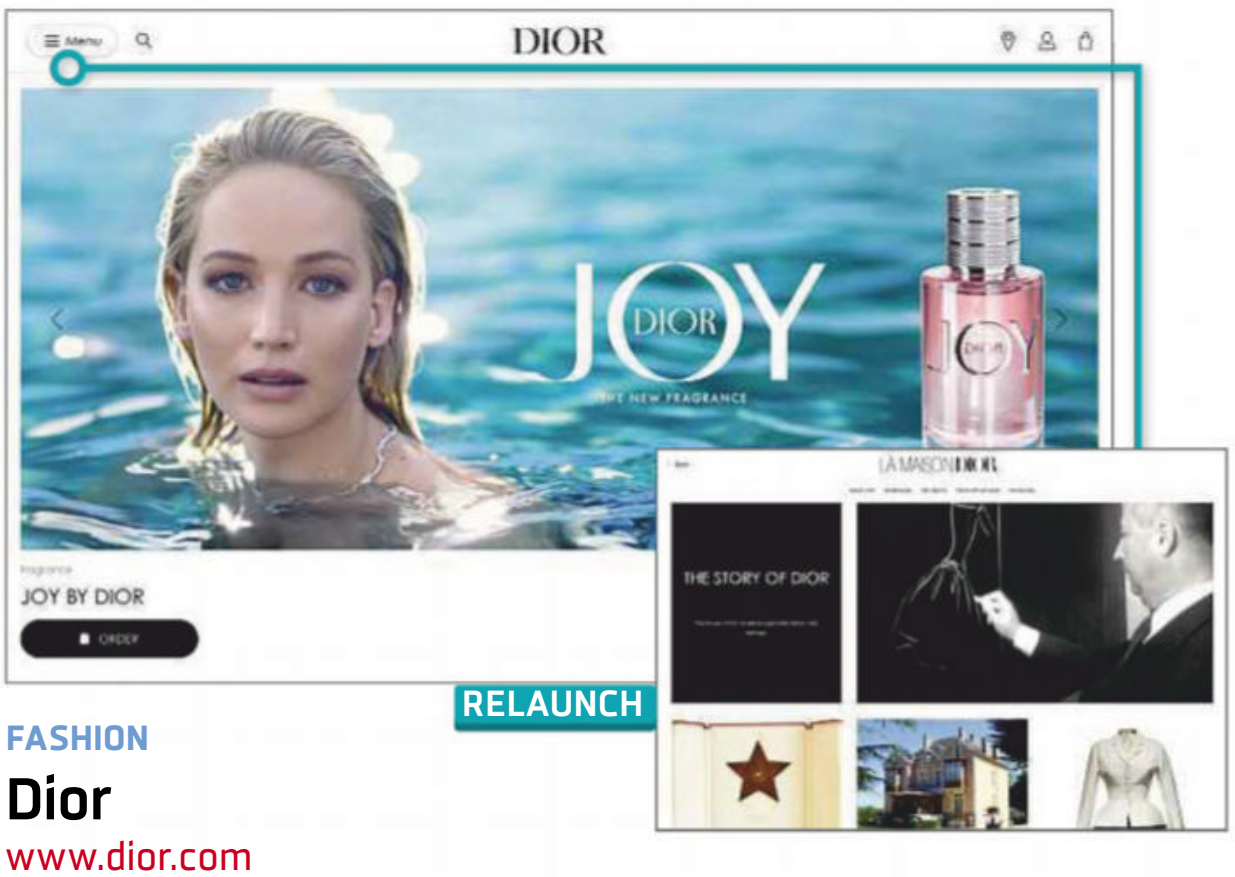
ACTIVITIES

Margam Country Park

www.margamcountrypark.co.uk

Faced with budgetary cuts, the folk who run Margam Country Park in Port Talbot in Wales have been looking at ways to make the area – which includes the 19th-century Margam Castle – more self-sufficient. This new website is part of the plan, providing a useful rundown of events while allowing you to view and download maps and embark on a virtual tour, thanks to a gallery of beautifully shot photos with info on various aspects of the park. Delving into the past as well as exploring the future, it has special sections for activities and families. You can install new Margam Country Park apps for Android and iOS, too.

Our rating ★★★★☆



RELAUNCH

FASHION

Dior

www.dior.com

Luxury fashion brand Dior has pulled up its socks, offering more than merely a way to buy clothes, fragrance, shoes and accessories. Its ready-to-wear collections for men, women and well-dressed babies are available to order direct online for the first time, and the site has an abundance of news, as well as a lively look back over Dior's history, which stretches back to 1947. You can also check out the many Dior exhibitions and read the first few pages of its books. If you're purely here to shop, the revamped site's cleanly presented product pages are packed with tastefully shot images of Dior items, clear pricing and a button to check availability in its numerous boutiques.

Our rating ★★★★★

COULD DO BETTER

RELAUNCH

FILM

Review Plug

www.reviewplug.co.uk

Along with an increased focus on movies and television series, at the expense of music albums, the revamped Review Plug website has also adopted a bold new look. However, the site is rather light on content – you could binge read the lot in less than 10 minutes since most of the handful of articles consist of huge images and short written entries. That said, there are some promising signs, among them a newly launched, London-based film club. It does, however, need much more content to keep reeling in film and TV fans.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

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

Build a Better Site

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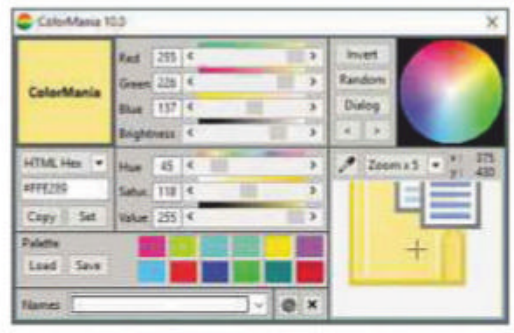
Top Tips of the Fortnight

A watchful eye on your website

UKFast (www.ukfast.co.uk) has launched a new mobile app that you can use on any hosting service to monitor the performance of your website. Zuppit (www.zuppit.co.uk) is completely free, can monitor unlimited sites and lets you know if your site goes down and for how long. Available on Android and iOS, you'll find links to the appropriate app stores on the Zuppit website.

Pick a colour

ColorMania 10 (bit.ly/colo467) is a new version of a brilliant, portable colour-picking tool for Windows. If you see a colour you'd like to use, launch the tool, select the dropper and click the colour, which can be anywhere that's visible on your PC screen. All the HTML info you need to use that colour on your own site is available, or you can tweak the colours further with the sliders. You can also save colours for recalling in the future.



Deal of the Fortnight

InMotion Hosting (www.inmotionhosting.com) has offers across all its hosting packages. Its WordPress WP-1000S hosting, for example, is $7.26 (around £5.66) per month, down from $8.99.

Web-building Helpdesk

Q **I'd like to find software that will mark up any HTML code I enter, but sync notes across my devices – like Microsoft's OneNote. I like how some text editors, such as Notepad++ (notepad-plus-plus.org), use colours to make the formatting of code clearer. Is there something similar that will sync between my devices?**

Frank Byron, via email

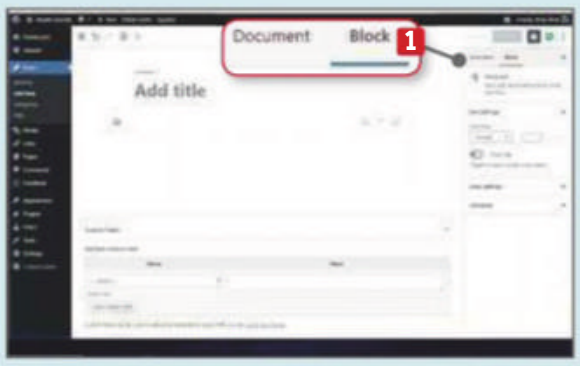
A Boostnote (boostnote.io), available for Windows and mobile devices, is a simple note-taking program that stores notes and lets you organise them in folders – just like OneNote. However, if you type or paste something in HTML or a programming language, it recognises it and marks up the syntax accordingly. Notes sync between devices, and the site promises that the software will remain free forever.

Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor

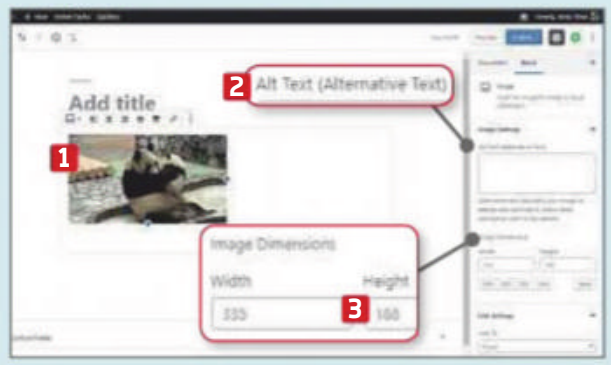
MINI WORKSHOP | Master Gutenberg's dynamic sidebar

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

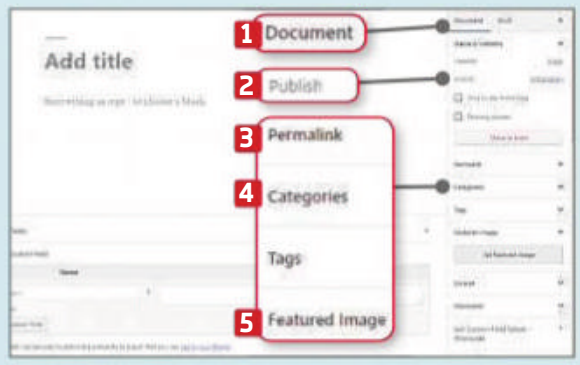
In the last in our series on WordPress 5.0's new block editor Gutenberg, we look at the changes that appear in the right-hand menu



1 WordPress used to have a single sidebar with all the information you needed to configure and publish your page. Since the introduction of Gutenberg's content blocks, however, it now serves a dual purpose. When a block is selected, it'll be set to the Block tab. 1



2 Here you'll find all the options you need to configure the block you're working on. So if the block is an image, 1 you get a box for the Alt text 2 and you can configure the size of the image, as it will appear. 3 If it's a text block, you can control elements such as text size and colour, instead.



3 Items that were displayed in the old sidebar are now hidden in a menu in the Document tab. 1 This makes WordPress run faster, because it's not loading everything at the start, but you have to hunt to find the items. The Documents tab now contains the publishing options, 2 permalink, 3 categories 4 and featured image. 5

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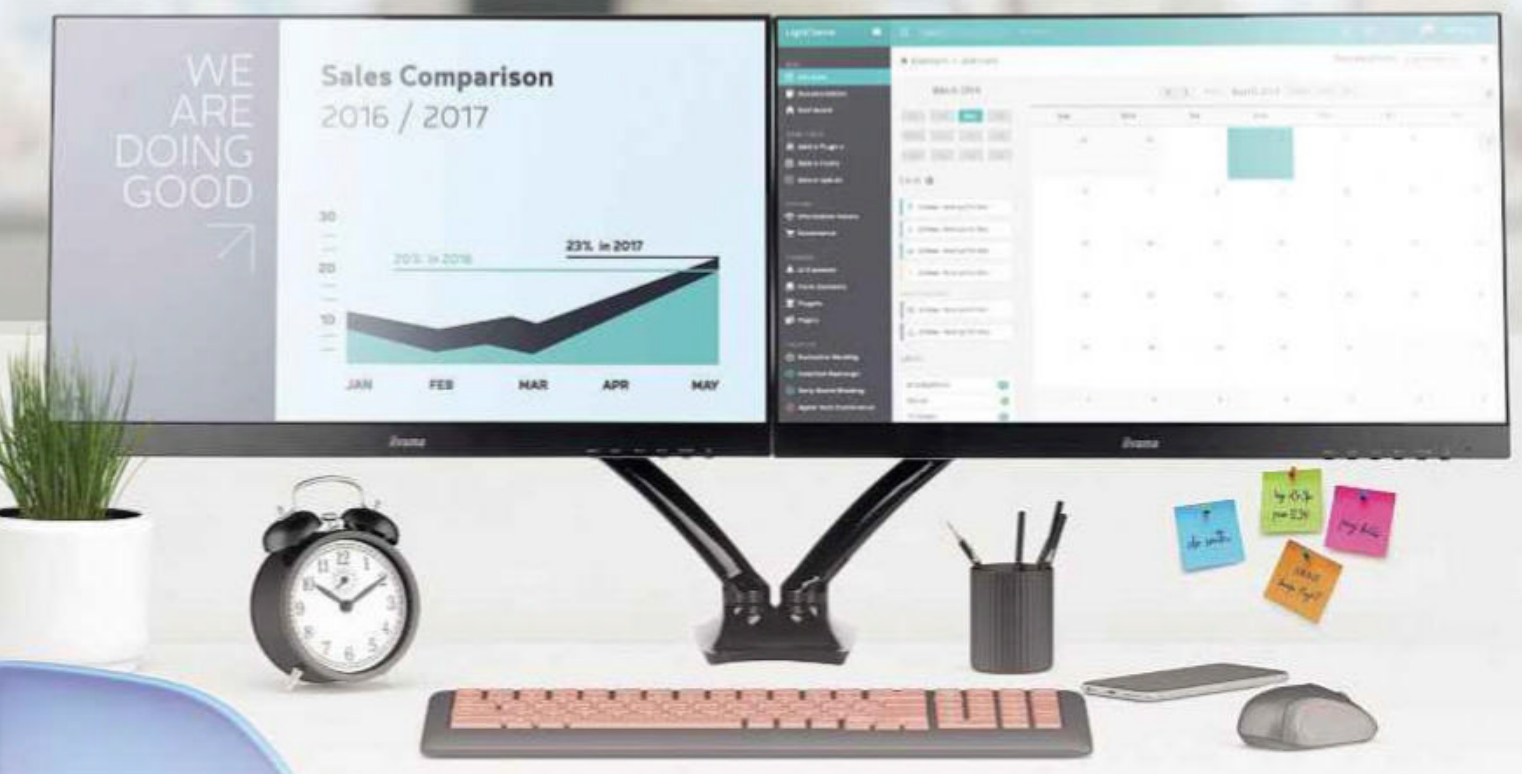

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What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

Pitch your tent with David Tennant in *Camping*

From 31 January

The good news is that Julia Davis's brilliant 2016 sitcom is back, this time starring David Tennant (our favourite Doctor Who). The bad news is it's not a second season but a US remake – complete with Tennant doing an American accent. And when it aired on HBO last year, it did not go down well.

"A camping trip you'd never want to take, with people you'd never like to meet," said the respected RogerEbert.com. "Anything but amusing," said *The Boston Globe*. Oops. But then, critics hated the smash hit film *Bohemian Rhapsody* too. And some US viewers insist the *Camping* reboot isn't all bad – you just have to "get it", as with so many British embarrassment-sitcoms. So we'll give it the benefit of the doubt, especially with Davis still on board as writer (now joined by *Girls* creator Lena Dunham) and a great cast that includes Jennifer Garner (*Alias*) and Juliette Lewis (*Natural Born Killers*). Get a taste from the trailer: bit.ly/camping467.

Camping airs on Sky Atlantic, so you can stream it live and on-demand via Now TV. All six episodes of the original British *Camping* are also on Now TV: bit.ly/campinguk467.

Get stuck in a death loop with *Russian Doll*

From 1 February

Imagine *Groundhog Day*, but with drugs, booze and violent death. That's the irresistible premise of *Russian Doll*, a new Netflix Original comedy-drama created by US comedians Amy Poehler and Natasha Lyonne. Lyonne (*Orange is the New Black*) stars as hedonistic New Yorker Nadia, who bolts from a party and dies, then re-emerges in front of a bathroom mirror, only to perish again in a new, absurdly comic way. Over and over again.

Eight episodes arrive on 1 February at bit.ly/doll467, where you can now watch the trailer for free. Or catch the trailer's non-beeped looping-swearing version on YouTube, where it's had a very warm welcome: bit.ly/dolltube467.

Return to the Rockies for more *Tin Star*

From 24 January

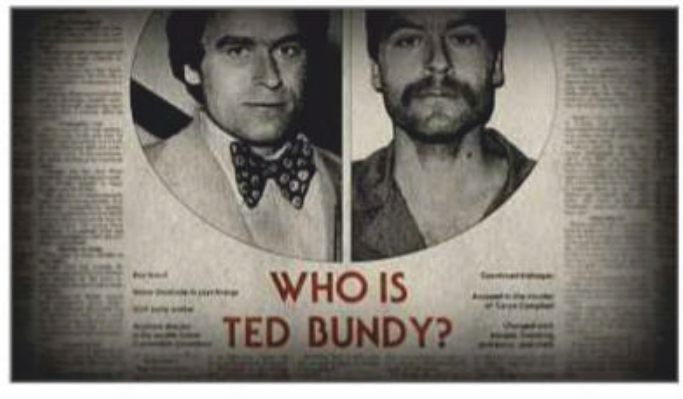
Sky's chilly revenge thriller stars Tim Roth as an alcoholic British copper who moves his family to the Canadian Rockies to become a small-town police chief. Season 1 saw this *Fargo*-esque setting descend into tragedy, leaving Roth's Jim Worth – and his booze-induced alter-ego – mired in chaos.

Tin Star's first season amassed legions of fans when it aired recently on Channel 4. You can watch Season 1 for free on C4's All 4 streaming service (bit.ly/all4tin467) or without the ads on Now TV (bit.ly/nowstar467). Season 2 will also air on C4 eventually (probably autumn 2019) but for now, the only place to watch it online is Now TV. Catch the latest trailer on YouTube: bit.ly/tinstar467.

Meet Ted Bundy in Netflix's latest true-crime doc

From 24 January

True crime fans have yet another treat in store from Netflix. Four-part series *Conversations with A Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes* delves "inside the mind of the infamous serial killer" via previously unheard death row interviews with Bundy (pictured), who confessed to the



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

murder of 30 women in the 1970s. He was executed 30 years ago this month. The series will also explore the media frenzy around his trial, and his marriage to Carole Ann Boone, who he wed in court. Watch all four episodes on Netflix at bit.ly/bundy467.

Flee medieval Korean zombies in *Kingdom*

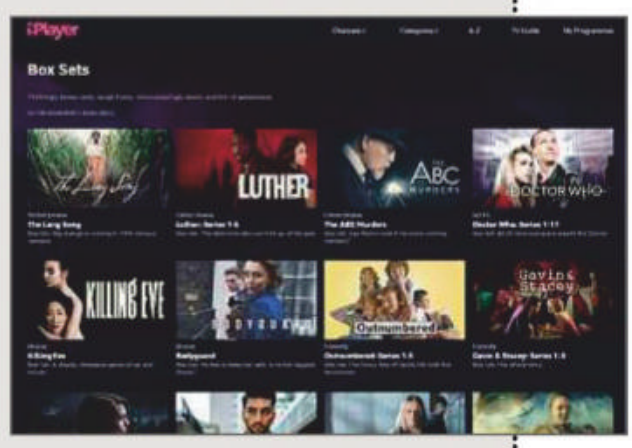
From 25 January

Korean filmmakers know how to freak out viewers with panache, as you'll know if you saw *Oldboy* (rent on Amazon Video: bit.ly/oldboy467). Medieval zombie apocalypse thriller *Kingdom* covers very different territory but it's just as gripping and very, very dark.

Despite challenging viewers with subtitles, Netflix is so confident about *Kingdom* that it's commissioned a second season before anyone's had a chance to see the first. Watch the latest trailer for free on Netflix: bit.ly/kingdom467.

iPlayer seeks approval to rival Netflix

The BBC has launched a public consultation – which you can take part in – over its plans to turn iPlayer into a rival for Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. The consultation was prompted by industry regulator Ofcom, which has accused the Beeb of being anti-competitive in its ambitious bid to improve the iPlayer.



The BBC's plans to offer more value for money to licence-fee payers include more box sets (bit.ly/boxsets467), longer expiry dates (12 months instead of the current default 30 days) and much more on-demand content from the BBC archive. Recent moves in this direction have proved popular with viewers, with previous seasons of *Luther* (bit.ly/luther467) and *Doctor Who* (bit.ly/who467) arriving online to accompany new episodes.

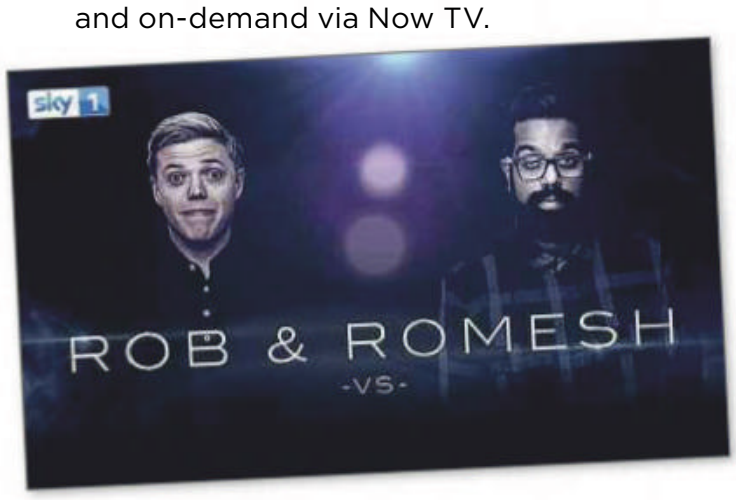
Ofcom claims that the iPlayer's expansion may "come at the expense of its competitors" including ITV Hub and All 4, so it's forced the public hearing before further changes can be approved.

To read the BBC's consultation and submit your own response, visit bit.ly/iplayer467. The deadline for responses is 7 February.

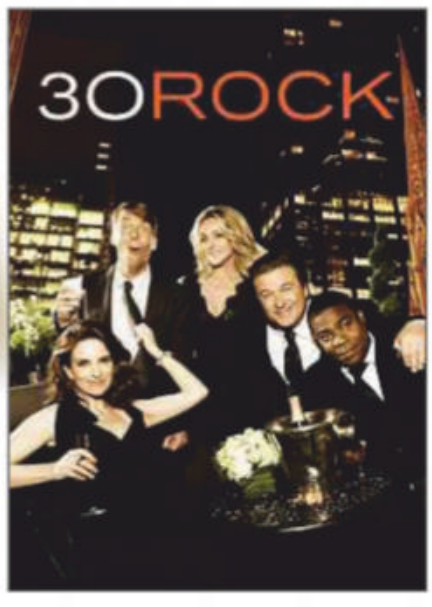
Stream Sky's new comedy show *Rob and Romesh VS*

From 25 January

Friends, comedians and countrymen Rob Beckett and Romesh Ranganathan scored a knock-out when they met heavyweight champ Anthony Joshua for Sky 1 last April (bit.ly/joshua467). They're now back for a five-part series, losing in style against a new batch of sport and entertainment idols. We're promised singing tips from Shania Twain, face-offs with NFL stars and a race against Usain Bolt. Episodes air on Sky 1 every Friday, and you can stream the fun live and on-demand via Now TV.



In case you missed it...



Classic US sitcom *30 Rock*, starring Tina Fey and Alec Baldwin, is now available for free on Channel 4's rapidly improving streaming service All 4. The first three seasons are available on-demand at bit.ly/30rock467, with four further seasons set to join them soon.

James Spader's FBI conspiracy drama *The Blacklist* has returned to Now TV, where you can now stream all five seasons (bit.ly/blacklist467) – presumably to whet our appetites for Season 6, which has now begun airing on US channel NBC. We'll let you know as soon as it's scheduled to arrive on Now TV.

Over on the iPlayer, BBC Three's *The Naked Truth* is back with four new episodes that give a voice to people whose bodies don't conform to the norm. Watch the short films, which explore tattoos, loose skin, male body image and prosthetic limbs, at bit.ly/naked467.

Windows 10 Mini PCs

Looking for a desktop PC that doesn't take over your entire desk? We've reviewed five compact desktops that run Windows 10 brilliantly

Most home desktop PCs come in tower configurations that are designed for stowing under your desk. However, many of us prefer to use a computer in a shared family space, rather than hidden away in an office or spare room – or we would if they didn't look so big and boxy. Here, we've tested a range of compact PCs designed to look good (or at least be inconspicuous) among your other home-entertainment devices.

The Intel and Zotac models are 'barebones' PCs, which means you'll have to add your own memory, storage and operating system before you can use them. Make sure you factor that into the price and the difficulty of setup if you're thinking of buying one.

HOW WE TESTED

We ran our 4K Windows benchmark on each of the PCs so we could easily compare their performance when running a selection of typical Windows tasks. We also tested them with our usual Dirt Showdown gaming test, running the game with its graphical detail turned up to High, and measuring how many frames per second (fps) it produced at various resolutions.

Lenovo IdeaCentre 620s | £479 | Buy from Currys: bit.ly/leno467

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

Like a classic tower PC, the Lenovo IdeaCentre stands upright, but at 224 x 212 x 104mm, it's much smaller. To accommodate its scaled-down proportions, it houses space-saving memory modules and a low-power quad-core Intel Core i5-7400T processor. As a result, we weren't expecting record-breaking performance speeds, and indeed, our Windows benchmark tests bore this out, with weaker performance in image- and video-editing tests. However, it's more than capable of general browsing, document creation and media playback.

Given that it's also the cheapest computer in this Group Test, we expected to see the graphics hardware built into the motherboard, which would have a significant detrimental impact on gaming. However, Lenovo has managed to stuff the IdeaCentre with a 4GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050 Ti – our favourite budget graphics card. It performed well, with Dirt Showdown running at 78fps at Full HD resolution of 1,920 x 1,080 pixels, and though it struggled with more powerful games, that's an impressive performance considering the price.

The device has a 1TB hard drive and a 16GB Optane drive (a type of small SSD designed to make regular hard drives perform faster). Its built-in speaker isn't brilliant but is a useful addition for voice calls (particularly alongside its built-in microphone) and incidental noises, such as notifications.

Multiple monitors are supported by its two HDMI and two DisplayPort outputs, and there are also four USB 3 ports, an SD Card reader and an Ethernet port (802.11ac Wi-Fi is also built in). This is a good collection of connections for a small PC. With the bundled wireless mouse and keyboard, you don't even need to worry about taking up two of those USB ports with essential peripherals, because they run from a single dongle.

VERDICT ★★★★★

This compact PC crams in more power for entertainment, work and even gaming than you might think. For the price, it's a remarkably nifty little PC, with a surprising array of internal components, including ample storage, a decent processor and a separate graphics card that gives it a gaming boost we didn't expect to see. Best of all is the price, which at well under £500 is a true bargain.

MSI Trident 3 Arctic | £1,389.99 |
Buy from Box: bit.ly/msit467

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

WebUser SILVER AWARD

The Trident 3 Arctic looks like a games console and is specifically designed to fit into the type of shelves you might find under your TV. As the price indicates, it's fully geared up to operate as a gaming PC, complete with a hexa-core Intel Core i7-87000 processor, a 6GB GTX 1060 graphics card, 16GB of memory, a 128GB SSD, a 1TB hard drive and Windows 10 Home installed. This is an impressive specification and it came top in all our Windows tests (scoring particularly well in our image- and video-editing tests), and running Full HD Dirt Showdown at 130fps. Higher-spec games ran better on the Zotac model, but the hassle of adding your own components makes that a less attractive proposition.

The unit is equipped with plenty of ports, many easily accessed from the front of the case, making this a brilliant – if expensive – compact PC.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Armed with a Core i7 processor, the Trident 3 Arctic offers full-on desktop power in a living room-friendly package. It's expensive, but that's because it doesn't scrimp on components as most smaller PCs do.

Intel NUC Kit NUC8i7HVK | £838.50 |
Buy from Ebuyer: bit.ly/inte467

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

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

The innards of this latest NUC Kit are centred around an unlikely sounding collaboration between Intel and arch rival AMD: the quad-core Intel Core i7-8809G processor and AMD's Radeon RX Vega M GH graphics hardware. The latter is integrated on the motherboard but has its own 4GB of memory, which should stop the usual problem of it jostling with the processor to claim a share of communal memory. The downside is that, on top of the asking price, you're expected to supply and install your own memory, hard drive and operating system. Once we added the required extras it performed well, running Dirt Showdown in Full HD at 92fps. It wasn't as fast as the MSI Trident or Dell OptiPlex in our Windows benchmarks, but outpaced the Zotac model. However, it works out a bit cheaper than the Trident, even once you've added the extra hardware.

VERDICT ★★★★☆

With a little help from AMD, Intel's revamped NUC is its most powerful barebones system yet, though this makes the price deceptive - you'll need to add more hardware and an operating system before it can actually do anything.

Zotac Magnus ER51070 | £944.99 |
Buy from Ebuyer: bit.ly/zota467

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

Like the Intel PC, the Zotac Magnus is a barebones model, which needs memory, storage and an operating system added to its already weighty price. However, it's fitted with an AMD Ryzen 5 1400 processor (which is good but getting on a bit) and a 3GB GTX 1060 graphics card.

The Zotac didn't perform as well as the MSI or Intel PCs, despite being more expensive than the latter. It fell short of Intel's score in our Windows tests but was only beaten to second place in our Dirt Showdown test by the MSI PC, with a Full HD score of 105fps. Interestingly, however, it was faster at 4K resolutions than the MSI, so it might still be more suited to gaming if the TV or display you're thinking of using has a high resolution. It also works well with virtual-reality equipment, if you're into that sort of thing.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

4K gaming and a good design carry this barebones PC but the processor is showing its age. This makes it a less powerful all-round Windows PC but its strong graphics performance may tip the scales for avid gamers.

Dell OptiPlex 5060 | £781 |
Buy from Dell: bit.ly/dell467

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

Dell's small OptiPlex boxes look a bit corporate for home use but at 292 x 290 x 93mm, they're small enough to be tucked away discreetly. Our test unit included a hexa-core Intel Core i5-8500 processor, overclocked from 3GHz to 4.1GHz, and 8GB of memory – though there are also cheaper 4GB versions available.

This hardware configuration won the Dell PC second place in our Windows tests, thanks to its beefy processor, making it a good choice for Windows users. However, its integrated graphics hardware struggled with games and it could only manage 14fps in our Full HD Dirt Showdown benchmark test.

The OptiPlex shuns SSDs for a standard 500GB hard drive, though a 16GB Optane drive speed booster helps to speed up read (but not write) times.

VERDICT ★★★☆☆

This would make a good office PC but the slow graphics are likely to annoy if you're serious about games. If you just need a computer for office tasks and browsing the web, our Gold Award-winning IdeaCentre is better value for money.

	Lenovo IdeaCentre 620s	MSI Trident 3 Arctic	Intel NUC Kit NUC8i7HVK	Zotac Magnus ER51070	Dell OptiPlex 5060
WEBSITE	www.lenovo.com	uk.msi.com	www.intel.co.uk	www.zotac.com	www.dell.com
PRICE	£479	£1,389.99	£838.50 (not including memory, storage or OS)	£944.99 (not including memory, storage or OS)	£781
BUY FROM	Currys: bit.ly/leno467	Box: bit.ly/msit467	Ebuyer: bit.ly/inte467	Ebuyer: bit.ly/zota467	Dell: bit.ly/dell467
PROCESSOR	Quad-core Intel Core i5-7400T 2.4GHz	Hexa-core Intel Core i7-8700 3.2GHz	Quad-core Intel Core i7-8809G 3.1GHz	Quad-core AMD Ryzen 5 1400 3.2GHz	Hexa-core Intel Core i5-8500 3GHz
MEMORY	8GB	16GB	✗	✗	8GB
GRAPHICS ADAPTER	4GB Nvidia GeForce GTX 1050 Ti	6GB MSI GeForce GTX 1060 Aero ITX	4GB AMD Radeon RX Vega M GH	8GB Zotac GeForce GTX 1070	Intel UHD Graphics 630
STORAGE	1TB hard drive, 16GB Intel Optane Memory	1TB hard drive, 128GB SSD	✗	✗	500GB hard drive, 16GB Intel Optane Memory
USB PORTS	4 x USB 2	1 x USB Type-C, 3 x USB 3.1, 4 x USB 2	3 x USB Type-C, 1 x USB 3.1, 5 x USB 3	1 x USB Type-C, 1 x USB 3.1, 4 x USB 3	1 x USB Type-C, 1 x USB 3, 2 x USB 2
NETWORKING	802.11ac Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet	802.11ac Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet	802.11ac Wi-Fi, 2 x Gigabit Ethernet	802.11ac Wi-Fi, 2 x Gigabit Ethernet	Gigabit Ethernet
MEMORY-CARD READER	✗	✗	SD	SD	✗
OPTICAL DRIVE	✗	✗	✗	✗	DVD-RW
OPERATING SYSTEM	Windows 10 Home	Windows 10 Home	✗	✗	Windows 10 Pro
SIZE	224 x 212 x 102mm	354 x 251 x 72mm	221 x 142 x 39mm	225 x 203 x 128mm	292 x 290 x 93mm
WARRANTY	One-year return-to-base	Two-years return-to-base	Three-years return-to-base	Two-years return-to-base	Three-years on-site

OUR VERDICT

We gave our Gold Award to the Lenovo IdeaCentre 620s, not because it was the fastest PC but because it was the cheapest. Not only is it surprisingly capable for gaming but it's also a solid Windows PC that performed well in our standard Windows tests. If you're looking for a cheap all-rounder, this is a great-value option.

On the other hand, if it's a powerhouse PC you're after, then look no further than the Silver Award-winning MSI Trident 3 Arctic. It looks good and houses a phenomenal array of hardware that does everything well. It's the most expensive PC in this test but is worth every penny.

If you can't spend that much and don't mind taking on a bit of a building project, consider Intel's Bronze Award-winning barebones PC. You'll need to add your own memory, storage and operating system, but the core PC is powerful and performed impressively in our benchmark tests.

An encrypted solution for every user.

UV500 Encrypted SSD

Kingston's UV500 SSD dramatically improves your system's responsiveness with incredible boot, loading and transfer times compared to mechanical hard drives. It uses a Marvell 88SS1074 controller and 3D NAND Flash to power through daily tasks and improve productivity. Perfect for your desktops, small-form-factor PCs and laptops.

kingston.com/ssd/business

Kingston TECHNOLOGY

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Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE

MINI PC

Lenovo IdeaCentre 620s

£479 from bit.ly/leno467
Tested: Issue 467

This compact PC crams in more power for entertainment, work and gaming than you might think, and includes decent graphics performance at an affordable price.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 2.4GHz Intel Core i5-7400T processor ■ 1TB hard drive ■ 8GB memory ■ 4 x USB 2 ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 4GB Nvidia GeForce graphics adapter ■ Windows 10 Home ■ 224 x 212 x 102mm ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

BUDGET SMARTPHONE

Motorola Moto G6

£199.99 from bit.ly/motog466
Tested: Issue 466

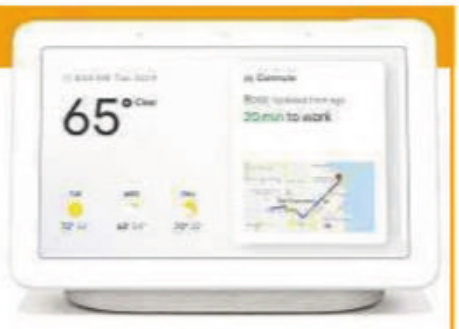
A budget phone that looks good, feels natural to use and takes great photos, the Motorola Moto G6 offers powerful features found in handsets that cost twice as much.

KEY SPECS

Octa-core 1.8GHz Qualcomm Snapdragon 450 processor ■ 3GB RAM ■ 64GB storage ■ 5.7in, 2,160 x 1,080-pixel screen ■ 12-megapixel rear camera, 8-megapixel front camera ■ 154 x 72 x 8.3mm ■ 167g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

SMART SPEAKER

Google Home Hub



£139 from bit.ly/homehub463
Tested: Issue 463

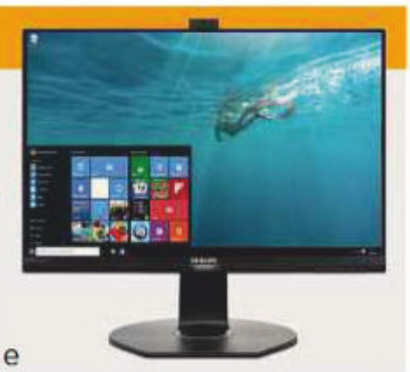
Its low price, seamless integration with Google services and ability to double as a digital photo frame make the Google Home Hub the best smart screen we've seen.

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 ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

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

All prices correct at time of review

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.

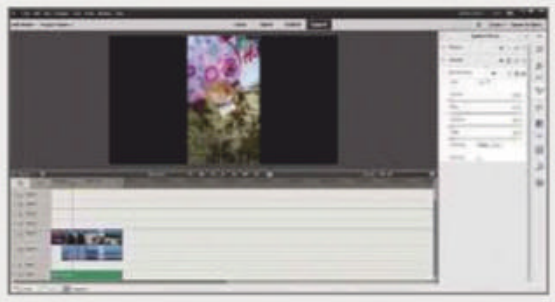
KEY FEATURES

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 CLEANER

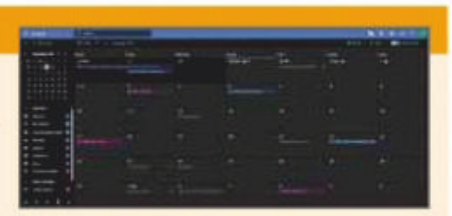
AVG Cleaner

NEW!

Free from bit.ly/avgcleaner466
Tested: Issue 466
AVG Cleaner is a delight to use and is packed with handy features that go beyond merely tidying up photos on your Android phone.

ONLINE CALENDAR

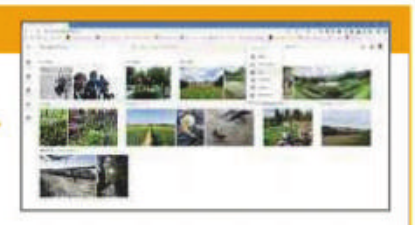
Microsoft Outlook



Free from bit.ly/outlook465
Tested: Issue 465
This excellent cross-platform calendar is the best option for organising your life – wherever you are, whatever device you use and whoever your account is with.

PHOTO-SHARING SERVICE

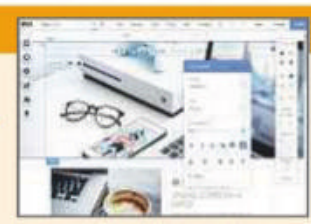
Google Photos



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

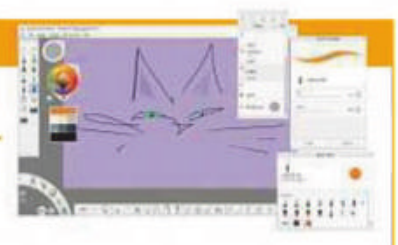
Wix



Free from www.wix.com
Tested: Issue 463
Wix is easy to master and has virtually no limits. Its wealth of 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.

WEB USER
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2018 DISC AVAILABLE NOW!

Best Free Software

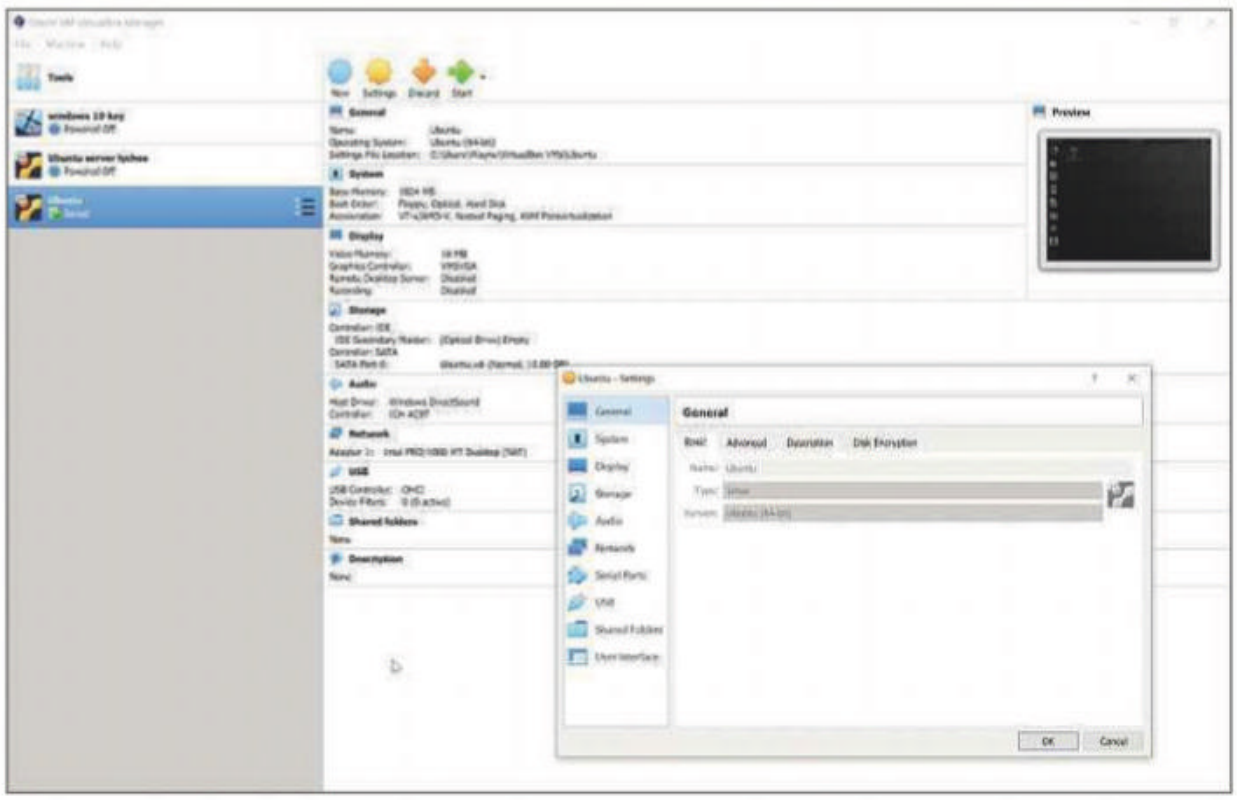
VIRTUALISATION TOOL

VirtualBox 6

bit.ly/vbox467

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, Mac OS or Linux

File size: 203MB



If you're interested in trying a new operating system – such as the latest preview build of Windows 10 or a Linux distro such as Ubuntu or Mint – but you don't want to commit to installing it on your PC, then VirtualBox offers the perfect solution. It lets you install the new OS in a virtualised environment so it runs within a contained area of your current operating system. This means it operates entirely separately from your main OS, though you can enable features such as shared storage and shared clipboard, so you can use the same files across the two.

VirtualBox lets you install as many operating systems as you want and then choose which one to run from the VirtualBox Manager. There's an additional VirtualBox Extension Pack 6 (also free) that you can install to get more features. You can resize the operating system window, running it scaled or full screen, and when you've finished you can save the current state of the OS before exiting, or shut it down fully.

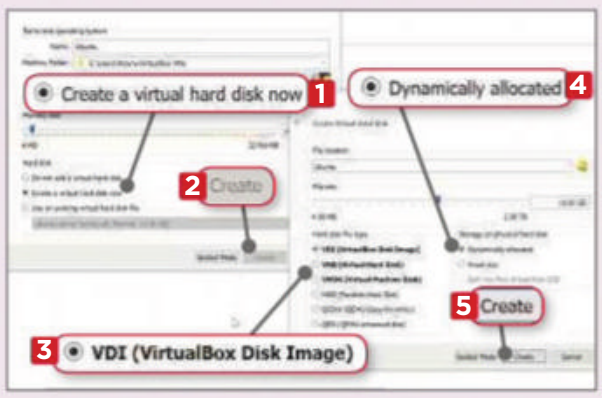
The interface in VirtualBox 6 has received a makeover, which means it looks better, is more intuitive and displays properly on high-resolution screens. The new file manager makes it easier to control the guest file system and copy files between host (your PC) and guest (the virtualised OS).

3D graphics support has been updated, and there's new support for surround-speaker setups (as used by Windows 10 1809, the October 2018 Update). This release of VirtualBox also adds support for exporting a virtual machine to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure.

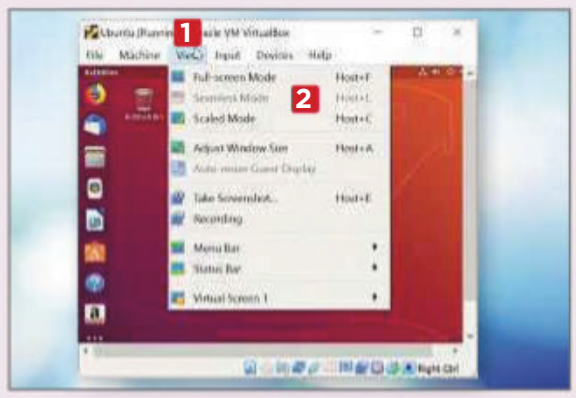
There have been a number of other improvements and additions, along with numerous bug fixes.

MINI WORKSHOP | Run Ubuntu Linux inside Windows using VirtualBox

1 Download Ubuntu in ISO format (www.ubuntu.com), then run VirtualBox. Click the New button in the Manager window **1** and, in the Create Virtual Machine dialogue box, enter 'Ubuntu' **2** as the name of the operating system. Select Ubuntu as the version, **3** then set the Memory Size. **4** The recommended figure should be plenty in most cases.

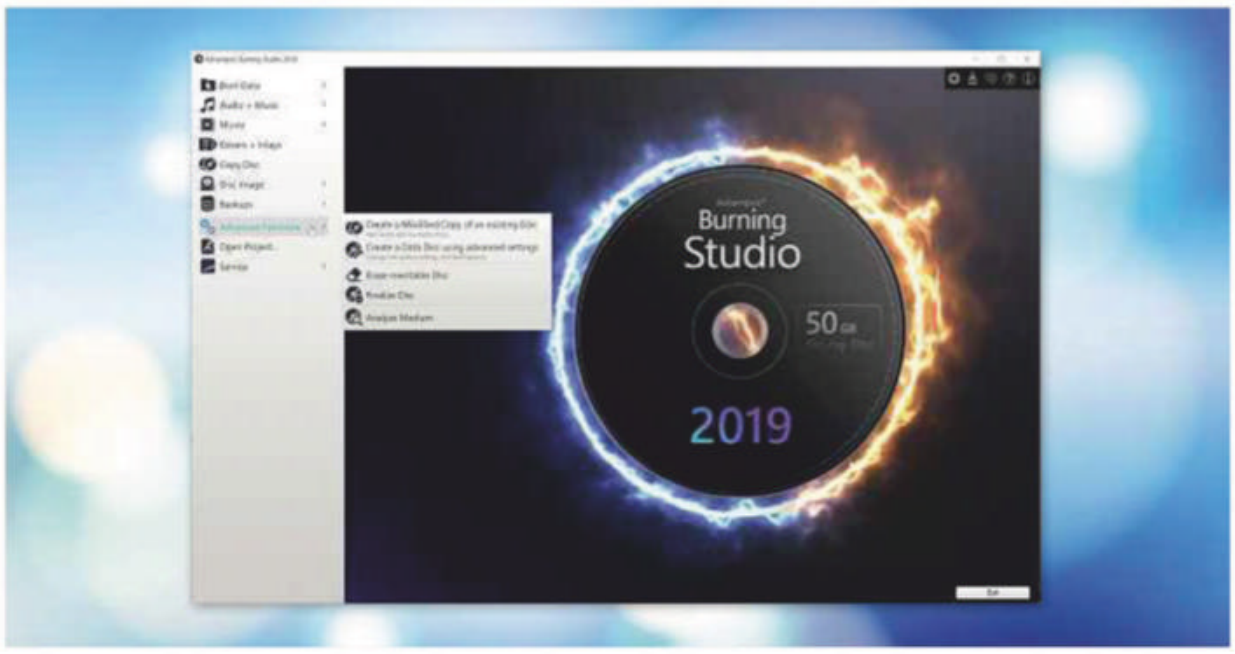


2 Choose to 'Create a virtual hard disk now' **1** and click Create. **2** Accept VDI (VirtualBox Disk Image) as the drive type, **3** create a dynamically allocated disk **4** (or a fixed disk if you prefer) and click Create. **5** When that's done, select the relevant entry in the Manager and click the green Start button at the top.



3 In the window that opens, click the folder icon, navigate to the Ubuntu ISO you downloaded earlier and click Start. You'll now be able to install Ubuntu. Once the Linux operating system is running, you can resize the program window by clicking View in VirtualBox **1** and selecting Full-screen or Scaled Mode. **2**

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



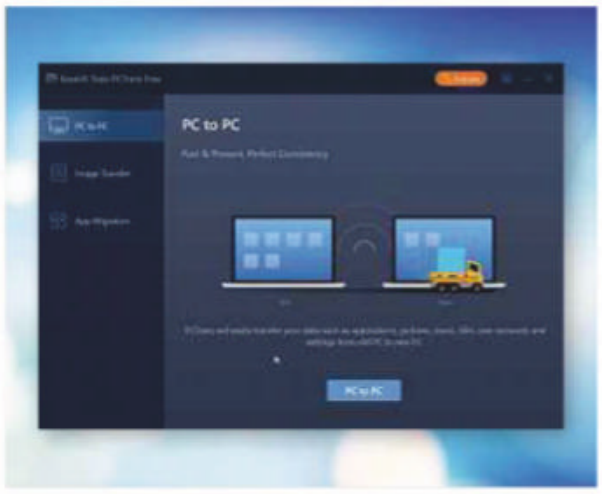
DISK-AUTHORING TOOL

Ashampoo Burning Studio 2019

bit.ly/burning467

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 65.7MB

Although this program is a cut-down version of the paid-for Burning Studio, it's a reliable disc-authoring option that can do most of what you require from it, including writing data to CDs, DVDs, Blu-rays and specialised media such as BDXL or M-Disc. It can create (and rip) audio discs, make and burn disc images, and even print covers and labels. The 2019 version has a new look and offers password-protection for authored discs.



MIGRATION TOOL

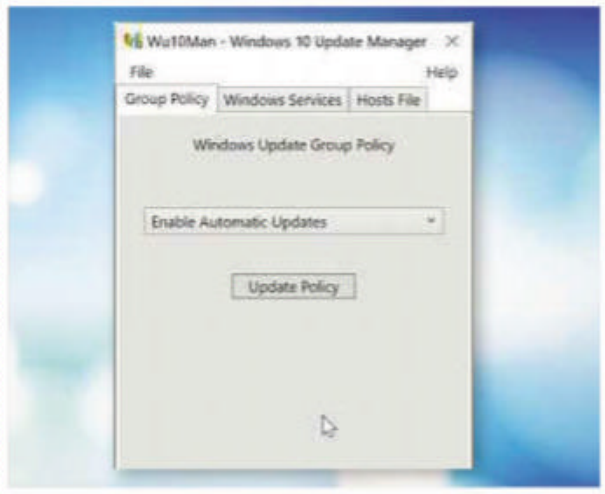
EaseUS Todo PCTrans Free 10

bit.ly/todo467

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 22.1MB

Todo PCTrans lets you easily move files from an old PC to a new one – connect two computers via the same wired or wireless network and follow the wizard. The free version limits you to migrating just two apps, which isn't particularly useful, but this new edition offers a more streamlined and intuitive interface, and improves transfers. The more powerful paid-for version costs £47.99.



SYSTEM TOOL

Wu10Man 2

bit.ly/wu10man467

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 450KB

Windows 10 updates are mandatory, although newer versions of the operating system give you more control over when updates are downloaded and installed. Wu10Man lets you completely stop updates from occurring – which is handy if there's a reputedly bad update that you want to avoid. The software offers three blocking options: group policy, disabling service and blocking specific web addresses.

New Windows Apps

Python 3.7

bit.ly/python467

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 91.5MB

Most Linux operating systems come with the Python programming language included. Windows doesn't, but now you can get it directly from the Microsoft Store. It is a little buggy at the moment, with some limitations.

Picake

bit.ly/picake467

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 32.7MB

Picake offers a simple way to resize multiple images. Choose some photos (or a folder of images), pick a resolution, resizing mode (fit, fill, stretch) and quality, and it will get to work.

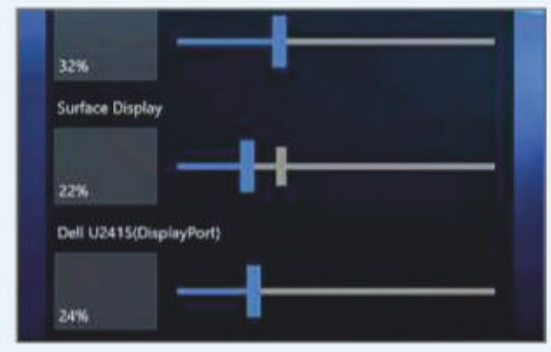
Monitorian

bit.ly/monit467

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 17.2MB

This app can adjust the brightness of one or more screens with ease. It's designed to work with multi-monitor setups, but you can use it with a single display.



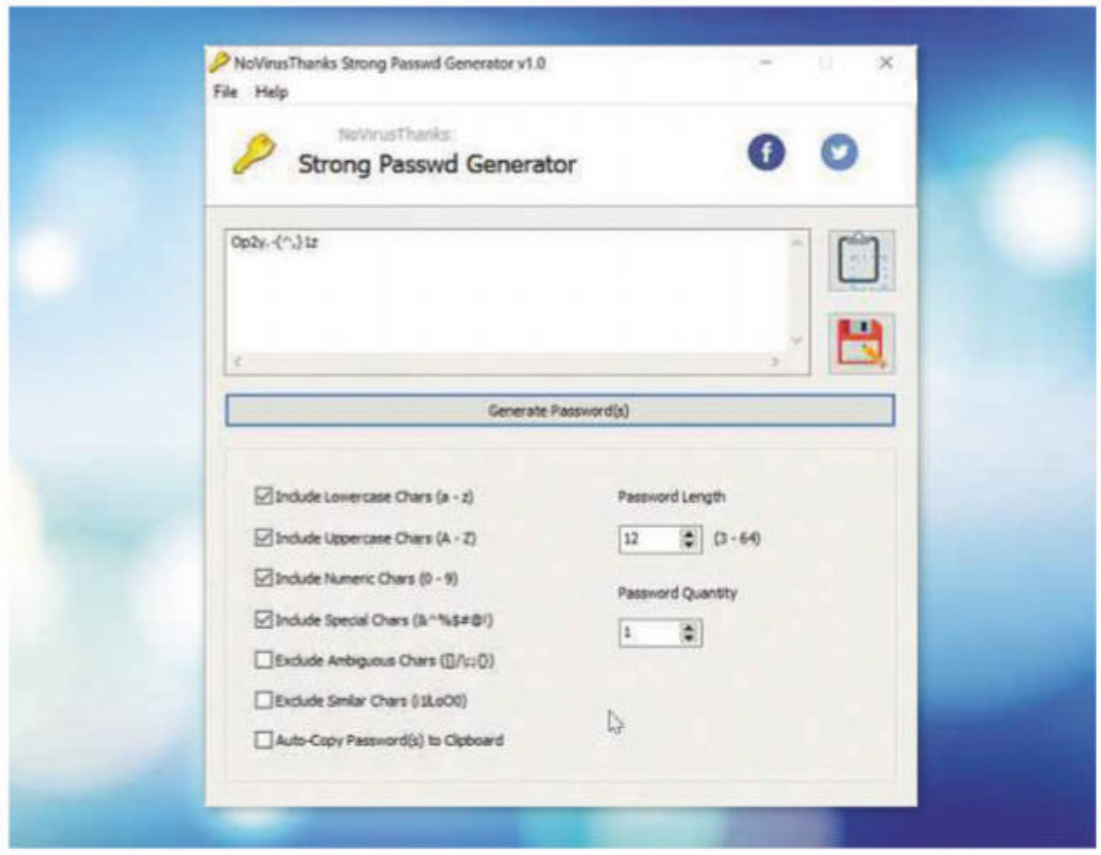
Best Free Software

PASSWORD GENERATOR

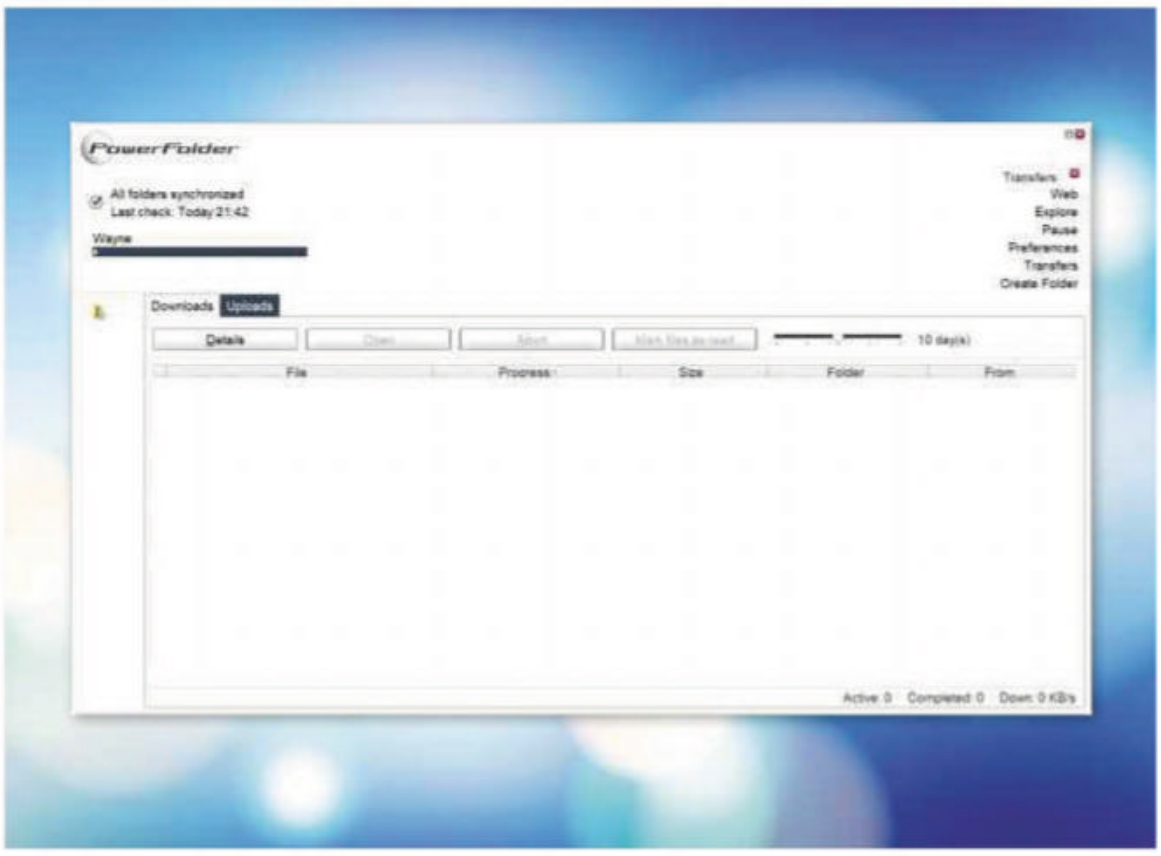
Strong Passwd Generator

bit.ly/passwd467

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 1.3MB



Everyone knows that you're supposed to choose strong, unique passwords for all the websites you sign up to, but as the yearly password roundups published by security companies show, few people do that in practice. Strong Passwd Generator, from NoVirusThanks, comes up with unique passwords for your logins. You can choose which types of characters to include – such as lower- and upper-case letters, numbers and special characters – and set the password length and quality you require. The software can auto-copy the generated password to the clipboard or save it in a text file. You'll need to use a password manager to remember the passwords it creates.



BACKUP TOOL

PowerFolder 14

www.powerfolder.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 77.5MB

PowerFolder is a versatile backup, sync and share tool that lets you back up files locally or to the cloud – free users get 5GB of online storage. Up to five people can use the software and you can specify individual folders to back up. The free edition offers automatic backup, sharing and sync, and gives you the ability to edit Office documents online. You can share links to files or share the files themselves via QR code. The new edition features a redesigned web portal called "Picasso"

If you require additional storage space, a 1TB Cloud Subscription with PowerFolder will set you back £70.24 a year.

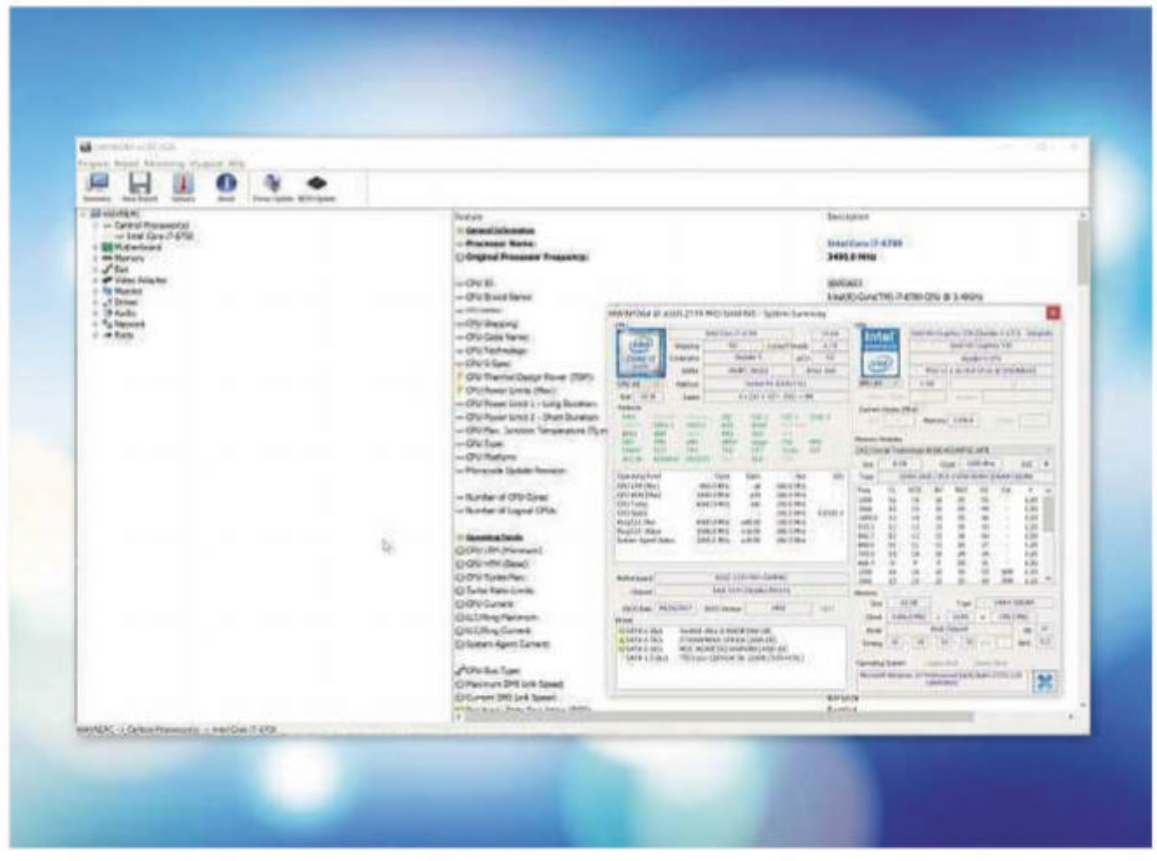
SYSTEM TOOL

HWiNFO 6

www.hwinfo.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 8.2MB

HWiNFO (Hardware Info) provides detailed information about the elements in your computer, including the processor, graphics, hard drives and motherboard. There's also a system summary that opens in a separate window. This updated version supports monitoring of a number of new hardware components, such as the Gigabyte H370 series of motherboards, as well as universal VR temperature monitoring for Haswell and later processors. It can monitor overclocking voltage offsets on newer Intel CPUs, detect DCH-compliant graphics drivers and introduces an optional bold font in the system-tray icon to make info easier to see.



GAME

Attack on Toys

bit.ly/toys467

Min requirements:
Windows 7/8.1/10, Mac OS or Linux
File size: 379MB

Attack on Toys is a third-person shooter containing a mix of real-time strategy elements. The aim is to protect the Green Army base from the invading Tan Army. There are 15 types of toy soldiers and vehicles, two types of tower, six weapons, four maps – including a skirmish on a picnic table – and a multiplayer mode.

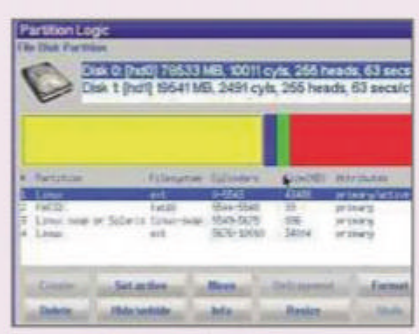
✗ Don't install...

Partition Logic

partitionlogic.org.uk

Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 3.5MB

This free partition manager was hugely popular in its heyday – it was named one of the 100 best products of 2008! But it now looks extremely dated and there hasn't been a new version for several years. If you enjoy a dose of nostalgia while using your PC, there's a version you can run from a floppy disk, if you still have such a drive.



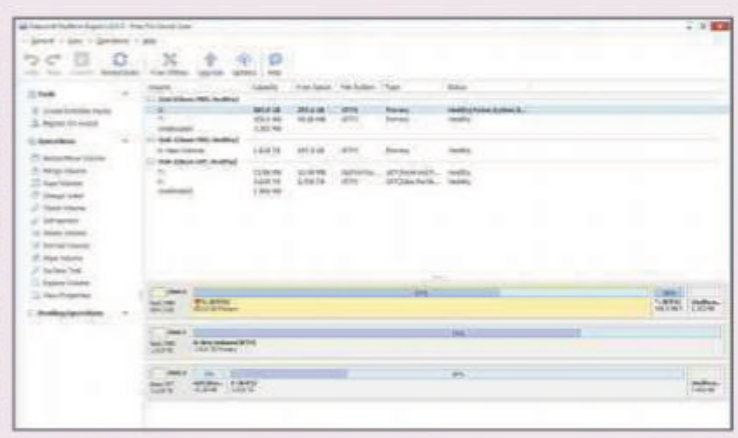
...Install this instead ✓

Macrorit Partition Expert Free

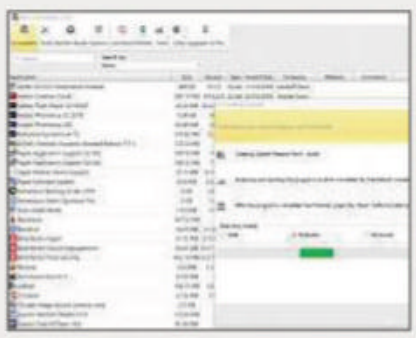
bit.ly/macro461

Min requirements: Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 10.1MB

Macrorit Partition Expert Free is a full-featured free partition manager. Though some options are held back for the paid-for version, the software is crammed with useful tools to quickly and easily resize, copy, move, format and delete partitions; change their drive letters and labels; and check for errors. Its clean and easy-to-use interface isn't as dynamic as some rival programs, but it's simple to configure and use, and doesn't require installation. If you change your mind while performing a partitioning task, you can cancel the process with no loss of data.



UPDATED | New tweaks and fixes for your favourite free programs



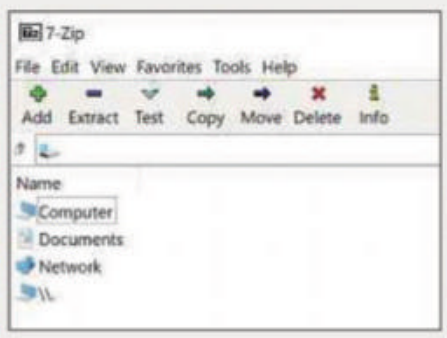
UNINSTALLER

Rev Uninstaller Free 2.0.6

www.revouninstaller.com

Min requirements:
Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 6.8MB

Revo Uninstaller removes unwanted software and deletes leftover junk. This new update – the first in nine months – improves the scanning and cleaning processes, making them much more thorough. It also fixes a number of minor bugs.



COMPRESSION TOOL

7-Zip 18.06

www.7-zip.org

Min requirements:
Windows 7/8.1/10
File size: 1.4MB

7-Zip is a powerful compression tool that handles most archiving formats, including Zip, TAR and RAR. This release improves the speed of LZMA/LZMA2 compression by 3-10%, makes minor changes to the compression ratio and fixes several bugs, including a memory leak.

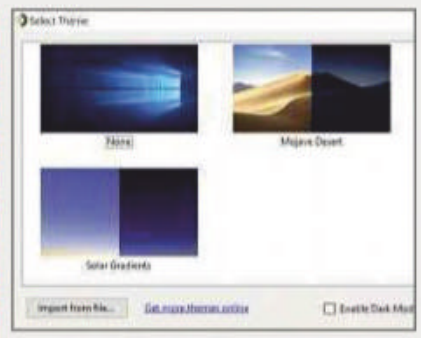
SYSTEM TOOL

Windows Repair 4.4.1

www.tweaking.com

Min requirements:
Windows XP/Vista/7/8.1/10
File size: 37.2MB

Windows Repair resolves problems with Microsoft's operating system and fixes common frustrations, such as Registry errors and internet connection glitches. This release updates the default Registry and file permissions for Windows 7, 8.1 and 10, and fixes a problem with Windows 10's Safe Mode.



DYNAMIC WALLPAPER

WinDynamicDesktop 2.3

bit.ly/windyn467

Min requirements:
Windows 10
File size: 1MB

WinDynamicDesktop cycles through a set of Windows wallpaper images. This new version lets you change the system theme as well as the app theme in Windows 10 Insider builds. It also lets you import themes from Zip files.

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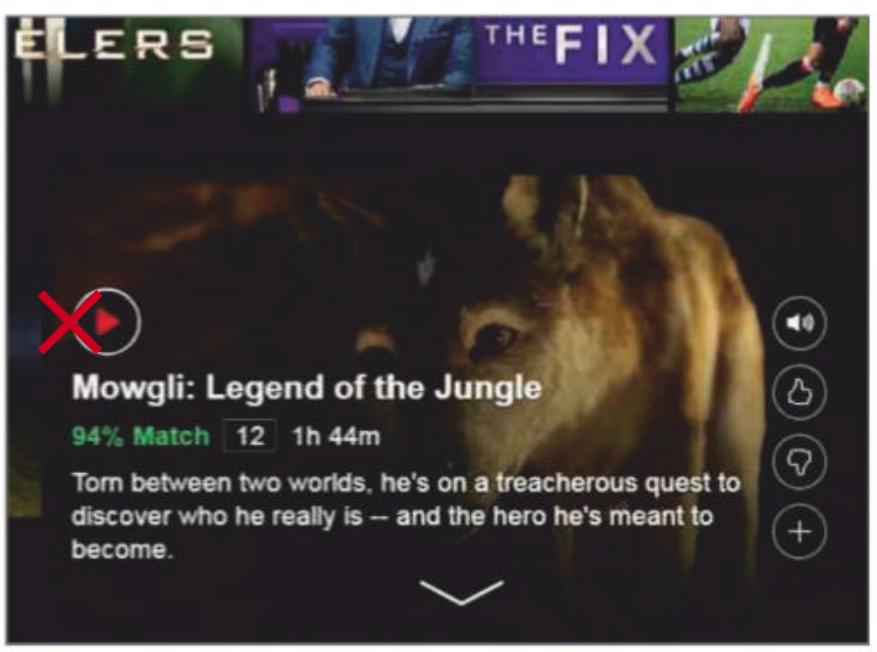
Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

Stop Netflix autoplaying video previews

There's often a huge gulf between what websites think is helpful to users and how their latest innovations actually go down, and Netflix's autoplaying videos are certainly top of our list of annoyances. Hover your mouse over an image of a film or TV show as you're browsing the site and you'll be 'treated' to a pop-up video preview, with sound, which not only spoils the content but can make you jump out of your skin if you're not prepared for a blast of their latest titles.

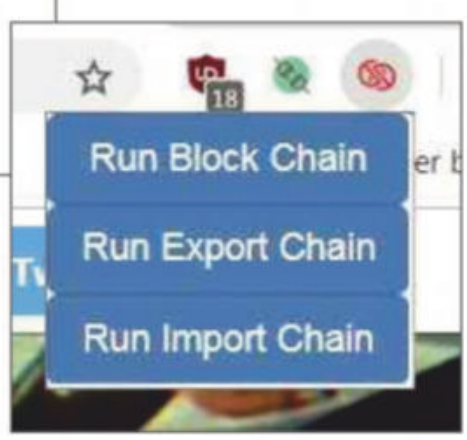
A new Chrome extension called Netflix Classic (bit.ly/netflix467) fixes this problem by disabling what it calls "weird hover states" and autoplaying previews, stopping any annoying pop-ups while you browse the streaming service. You can still get information about a movie or series by clicking its picture to open a dedicated title page. As a bonus, Netflix Classic also removes the 'Who's Watching' prompt that asks you to choose which profile to use when you visit Netflix. If only it worked in the mobile and TV apps, too!



Block someone else's Twitter followers

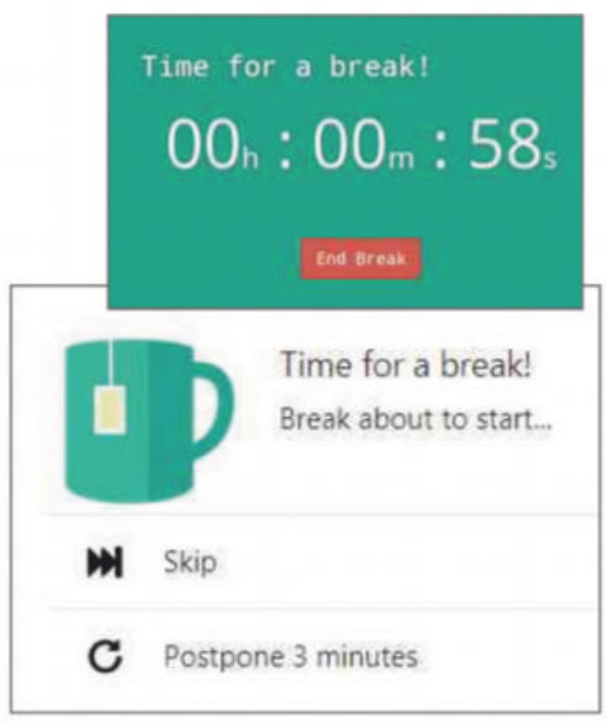
One of the worst things about Twitter is the so-called 'pile-on': when you either deliberately or inadvertently upset, annoy or disagree with another user, and their followers start hounding you or piling on with abusive and unpleasant messages. Previously, your only option was to quit Twitter (and who'd blame you?) or individually block these 'sheeple' (easily led people), but fortunately there's now a third way.

Twitter Block Chain (bit.ly/twitter467), which is nothing to do with crypto-thingy blockchain, allows you to block everyone following a particular Twitter user in one go. Just click its toolbar button when viewing their Followers page and choose Run Block Chain. When Twitter asks if you're sure you want to block all users on the page, click OK. The add-on won't block anyone who follows you, but it can also block all the accounts that the offending person is following.



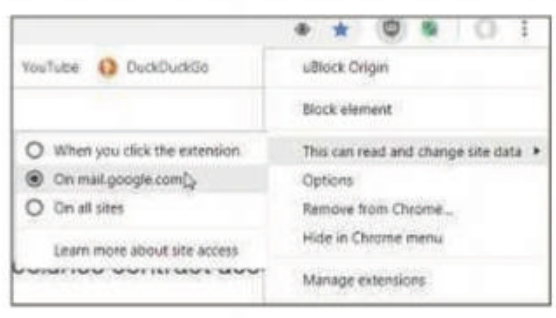
Remind yourself to take regular breaks

We all know that sitting for hours at a computer is bad for our eyes and posture, yet we do it anyway. Break Timer (bit.ly/break467) is a handy new Chrome extension that reduces the risk of eye strain and RSI by reminding you to take regular screen breaks. Unlike other similar tools, you can customise the frequency of these reminders, the length of the recommended break and the words that appear in them, as well as whether they appear as a small notification or a full-screen pop-up (with accompanying 'gong' sound). Break Timer lets you skip or postpone breaks when you're busy, and can be activated (and deactivated) automatically between working hours and on specific days.



Control an extension's permissions

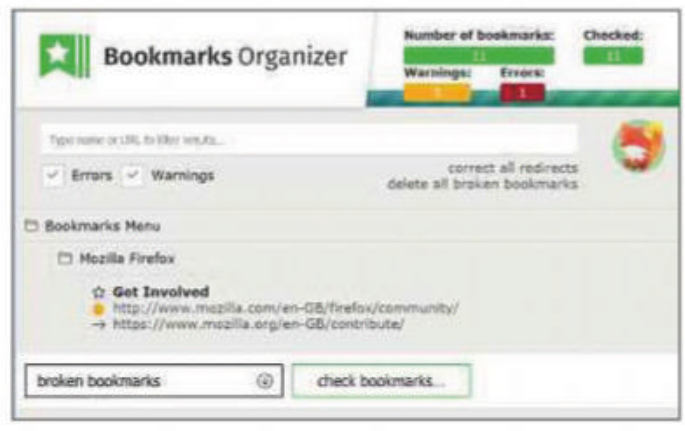
The latest version of Chrome (71) addresses a longstanding concern about extension permissions, which allowed some add-ons to read and change your data on all the websites you visited. You can now control these permissions to limit what data an extension can access. Just right-click its toolbar button, point to 'This can read and change site data' and choose an option from the side menu, such as 'When you click the extension' or 'On [current site]'.



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

FIREFOX

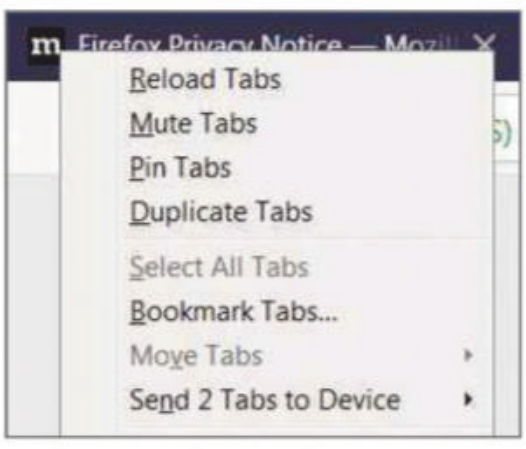
Clean up your Firefox bookmarks



If your Firefox bookmarks are in a messy, random list that's full of broken links, consider giving them an early spring clean for 2019 using the brilliant Bookmarks Organizer 3.0 (bit.ly/bookmarks467). This updated add-on scans your bookmarks for dead and duplicate entries, as well as links that now redirect you to a different page and presents its findings in a clear, colour-coded list. You can then quickly delete bookmarks that no longer work, or are surplus to requirements, and correct all redirects with a single click. The new version of Bookmarks Organizer introduces a whitelist feature that lets you exclude specific bookmarks from its scans, perhaps because they keep producing false positives, and improves the reliability of its dead-link detection. It certainly saves you the hassle of going through all your bookmarks individually to ensure they still work.

Bookmark all open tabs

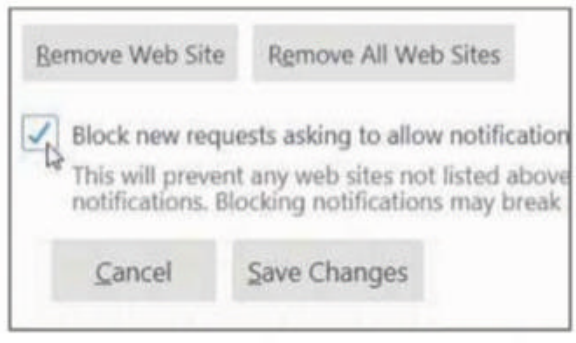
In the latest version of Firefox, 64, Mozilla has made the curious decision to remove the Bookmark All Tabs option, which let you quickly save all open web pages as bookmarks in one go. Fortunately, it's still possible to use this feature – it just takes an extra step. Right-click a tab and choose Select All Tabs, then right-click again and you'll see a Bookmark Tabs option in the menu. Alternatively, you can press Ctrl+Shift+D on your keyboard to bookmark all open tabs (which also works in Chrome). In either case, you'll be prompted to create and name a folder for the saved bookmarks in your main Bookmarks menu.



Block notifications from websites

Like autoplaying videos, push notifications from websites are something that no sane web user welcomes, but they're becoming increasingly common. A new Firefox add-on called nBother (bit.ly/nbother467) prevents sites from asking your permission to deliver push notifications, so you don't have to worry about clicking Not Now each time you're prompted. It works automatically in the background and can be turned off and on with a single click of its toolbar button.

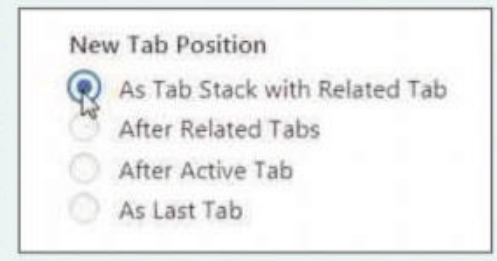
If you'd prefer not to install an extension to tackle nuisance notifications, you can disable them manually. Click the 'i' icon in your address bar and select the cog icon next to Permissions to open the Preferences panel. Click the Settings button next to Notifications and remove all entries from the list of sites that currently show you notifications. Select the option 'Block new requests asking to allow notifications' and click Save Changes.



OTHER BROWSERS

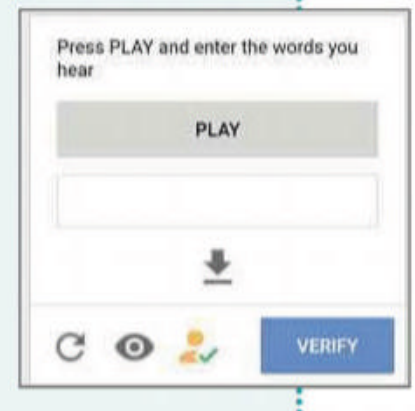
Stack related tabs automatically

One of Vivaldi's many unique and useful features is the ability to 'stack' your browser tabs to keep them organised, and group pages from the same site into a single, tidy stack. The latest 'snapshot' of the browser (1400.4) extends this feature by letting you automatically open related tabs in a stack, rather than spreading multiple pages from a site across separate tabs. To activate this option, click the Vivaldi button in the top-left corner and choose Tools, Settings. Click Tabs in the left-hand menu and, in the New Tab Position section, select As Tab Stack With Related Tabs.



Solve audio CAPTCHAs

Although reCAPTCHA verification is thankfully no longer as common as it was, you'll still occasionally come across an example that challenges you to, for example, click all the images of cars or type the words read aloud to you. A new Opera extension called Buster (bit.ly/buster467), which is also available for Chrome and Firefox, tackles the latter challenge by using speech recognition to solve tricky audio CAPTCHAs – so you don't have to! To use it, just click the button at the bottom of the reCAPTCHA widget. It might not always work, but it's worth a try.



Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

HEALTH

NHS App

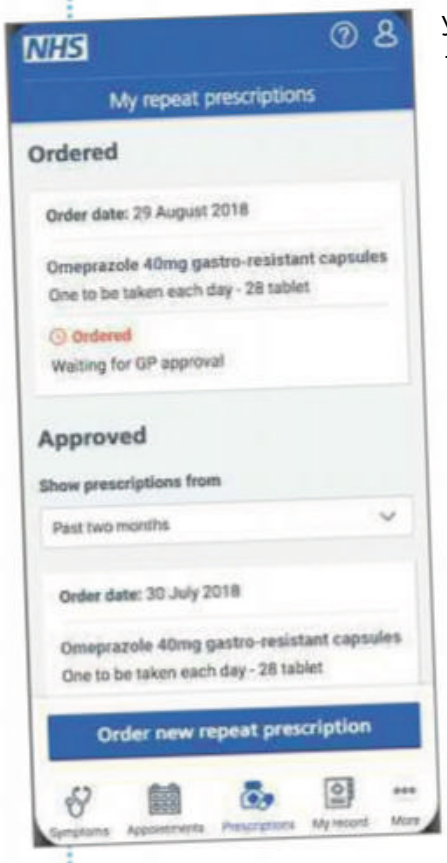
NEW

bit.ly/nhsdroid467
bit.ly/nhsios467

5 9

Whatever your feelings about the current state of the NHS, it's clear that the service is trying to find new solutions that suit both patients and medical professionals. Take the new NHS App, for example. Available for both iOS and Android, this free app lets you connect directly with your GP's surgery.

The idea is to allow patients to take more control of their medical information and the services they receive. For example, patients can book and manage doctors' appointments themselves via their mobile device. The app also lets you order repeat prescriptions and view your own medical records. To make sure access to these is always secure, the app carries out checks to confirm your identity and will send a security code to your device each time you use the service.

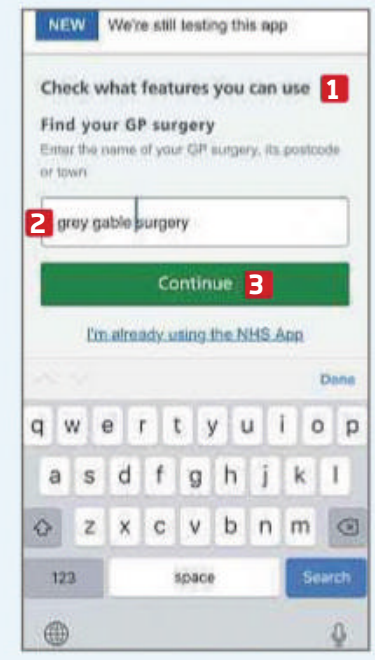


Additionally, the NHS App comes bundled with a handy symptom checker, and provides access to other useful advice and information.

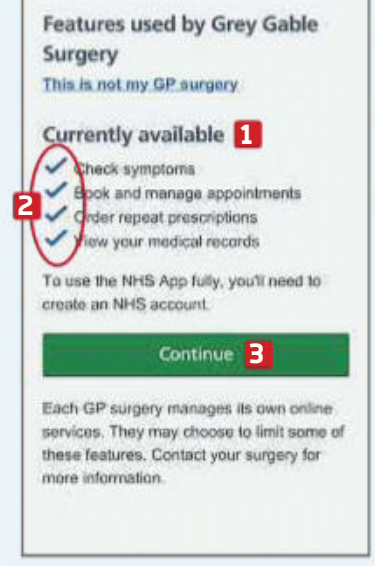
Bear in mind that not all GP surgeries are currently equipped to offer all the features available in the app – full use of the NHS App is being rolled out gradually across England over the next few months and it's estimated that all surgeries will be connected to the service by July this year.

During setup, the app will check to see whether your GP's surgery is currently able to use the app. If it is, you'll be able to create your own NHS login. If not, then you can register your email address so that you'll be informed when your surgery is ready. In the meantime, you can still use the app to check your symptoms and find out what to do if you need medical help urgently.

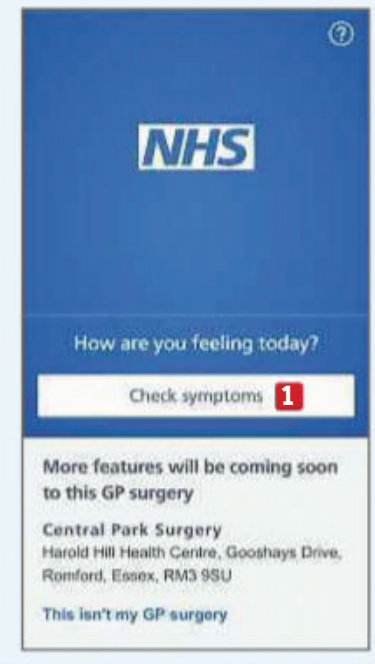
MINI WORKSHOP
Set up and use the NHS App



1 Before you start, make sure you have a UK passport or UK driving licence to hand to verify your identity. You will also need the details of your GP surgery – its name and address. Open the app and swipe through the introductory screens. Eventually, you'll land on the 'Check what features you can use' 1 screen. Enter the name or postcode of your GP surgery in the box 2 and tap Continue. 3



2 Scroll through the list of results and tap the name and address of your GP surgery. Next, you'll see a list of all the NHS App features currently available at your surgery. 1 If four or more are ticked, 2 it means your surgery is already connected, so tap Continue. 3 If you don't yet have an NHS login, select 'No – I want to set one up'. Then tap Continue and follow the remaining steps.



3 If your surgery only has 'Check symptoms' ticked when you select it, this means that it hasn't yet been connected to the app, so advanced features aren't currently available. Tap Continue, then enter your email address to be notified when your surgery becomes connected. Tap Continue, then 'Go to home screen'. From here, you can choose 'Check symptoms' 1 at any time if you have a non-urgent medical query.

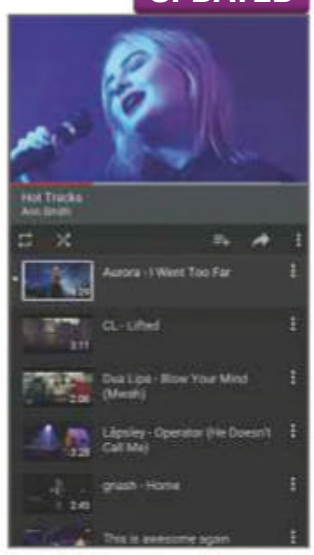
Our rating ★★★★★

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

VIDEO

YouTube

bit.ly/ytdroid467
bit.ly/ytios467
(varies) 10



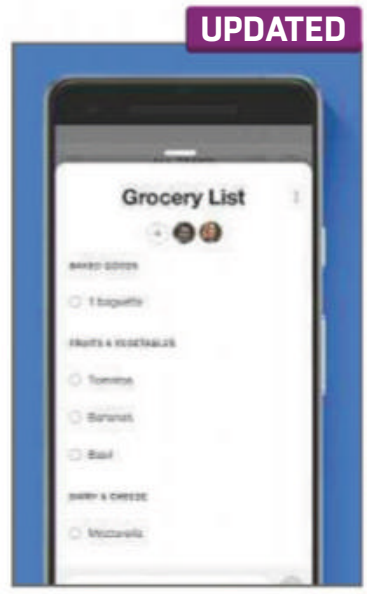
Google is rolling out a new update for its YouTube mobile app, which adds voice searches to the Android version of its online video-streaming service. We know what you're thinking – YouTube already has voice search on Android, courtesy of the mobile OS's built-in support for voice input. Well, this one's slightly different. It's a more powerful search tool that has been specifically designed for YouTube, allowing you to search different areas of the app – your search history or trending videos, for example, as well as simply finding videos by keyword.

Our rating ★★★★☆

TO-DO

Any.do

bit.ly/anydroid467
bit.ly/anyios467
(varies)
10



To-do apps are useful for organising all aspects of our lives, which is why Any.do's new smart shopping-list feature is well worth checking out. It works with smart assistants such as Siri and Alexa, and lets you create multiple different lists for different shops. Not only that, but it automatically sorts grocery items into aisles and your lists can be easily shared with others. Some users of the iOS version of Any.do have had the smart shopping list for a while but, with this latest update, it's now widely available.

Our rating ★★★★☆

VIDEO

VHS Camcorder Lite (VHS Cam)

bit.ly/vhsdroid467
bit.ly/vhsios467
5 8

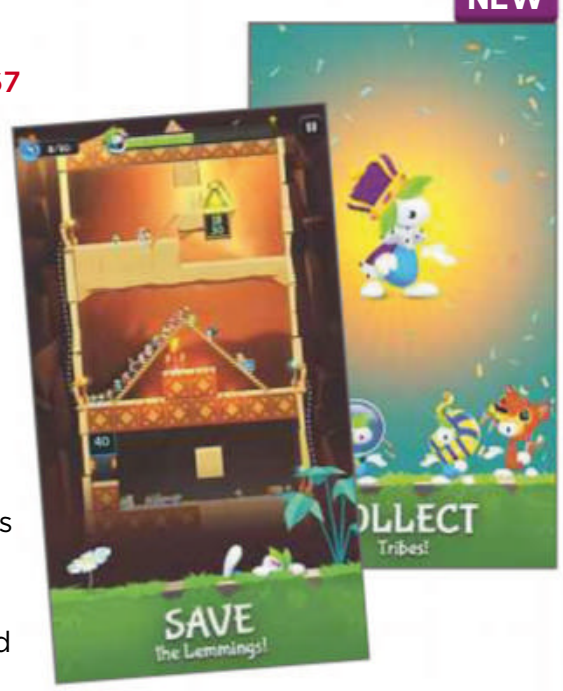
About a year ago, the VHS Camcorder app cost £3, but there's now a free Lite version. This provides you with tools, filters and effects to give your digital video clips an authentic 1980s treatment, with a wobbly, throwback analogue look, complete with scan lines, videotape glitches and old-fashioned burned-in datestamps. Even the controls themselves are retro. The Lite version limits recording time to 20 seconds and locks you out of advanced features.

Our rating ★★★★☆

GAME

Lemmings

bit.ly/lemmingsdroid467
bit.ly/lemmingsios467
4.4 9



If you played games on any kind of computer in the 1990s, then the chances are that you have fond memories of Lemmings. Now, thanks to this new free-to-play mobile game, everyone's favourite little accident-prone, green-haired munchkins are back, and they still need to be guided through all manner of deadly traps, hazards and obstacles strewn in their path. Lemmings has been 'reimagined' for the mobile era, which means that the game features new levels, modern graphics, support for touch controls, unlockable collectables and the ability to take part in online tournaments. Naturally, there are also plenty of optional in-app purchases. Let's go!

Our rating ★★★☆☆

BROWSER

Mint Browser

bit.ly/mint467
4.4

Mint is a new web browser from the Chinese electronics firm Xiaomi. You don't need a Xiaomi handset or a phone running Xiaomi's MUI operating system to use the app – Mint is compatible with pretty much any smartphone that runs Android 4.4 (Kit Kat) and above. It offers most of the features you'd expect from a modern mobile browser, such as tabbed browsing, a pop-up blocker, incognito mode and voice search, but its chief advantages are its small size and fast speed. Taking up just 10MB of storage space on your phone or tablet, Mint is quick to launch and use. A reduced data mode speeds up browsing even more.

Our rating ★★★★☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

ART
David Bowie Is
bit.ly/bowiedroid467
bit.ly/bowieios467
Price: £6.99 (Android), £7.99 (iOS)
7.1 11

Bowie was always at the cutting edge of technology, so it's fitting that his legacy lives on via this AR app, which brings costumes, art and more from the hit exhibition into your home.

GAME
Rome: Total War
bit.ly/romedroid467
Price: £9.99
7

This classic desktop strategy game has just been ported to Android – it's the full-fat epic experience, rebuilt for mobile. Make sure you check the game's system requirements before you buy, though.

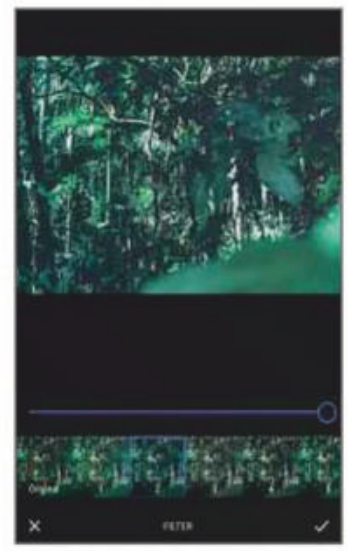
CLOCK
Flat Earth Sun & Moon Clock
bit.ly/flatearth467
Price: £2.79
4.4

If, despite irrefutable scientific evidence to the contrary, you believe the Earth is flat, this app, which shows the face of the planet on an Azimuthal Equidistant projection map, is perfect for you.

FOOD
My Fussy Eater
bit.ly/fussydroid467
bit.ly/fussyios467
Price: £3.99
6 11

Got a picky eater in your family? Or someone with a food intolerance? If so, this recipe app from the makers of the popular My Fussy Eater blog could be an invaluable resource in the kitchen.

CAMERA
Analog Forest
bit.ly/analog467
Price: 99p
4.1



One of developer Analog Pro's series of new photo apps, Analog Forest combines traditional image-editing tools with themed palette filters and overlays to give your photos a unified look.

David Bowie Is | Rome: Total War | Flat Earth Sun & Moon Clock | My Fussy Eater | Analog Forest

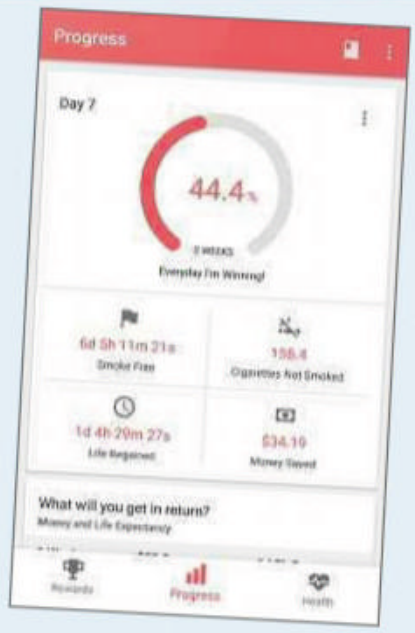
✗ Don't install...

Quit Smoking Affirmations
bit.ly/smoking467

There are numerous apps that claim to help you give up smoking. But many of them, like Quit Smoking Affirmations, are a complete waste of time. It's supposed to subconsciously reprogram you by playing 20 minutes of relaxing sounds and life-affirming statements. What it actually does – after you've paid £3.24 for it – is invariably crash as soon as you hit the Play button.

...Install this instead ✓

Quit Tracker: Stop Smoking
bit.ly/quittracker467
4.4



Giving up smoking can be hard – *really* hard – and you need all the help you can get. Thankfully, some of the 'quitting' apps out there are genuinely useful for anyone desperate to kick the habit. The precise route to giving up can vary drastically from person to person, of course, but Quit Tracker: Stop Smoking is a great place to start. It works a little like a diet or exercise tracking app, offering numerous ways to chart your success and stay motivated, such as the ability to view how much money you've saved and what health benefits you're gaining – for example, 'After 48 hours: Your ability to taste and smell starts to return'.

Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our British-book emoji and our web year?

WIN A WEB USER 2018 BACK ISSUES DISC!
Email your answers to webuser@dennis.co.uk – one correct entry will win a disc

CAN YOU GUESS THE BRITISH BOOKS FROM THE EMOJI?

1

2

3

4

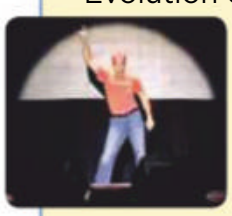
5

6

GUESS THE TECHNOLOGY YEAR

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

1 The most popular YouTube video of the year is Judson Laipply's epic performance 'Evolution of Dance', which is watched more than 70 million times.

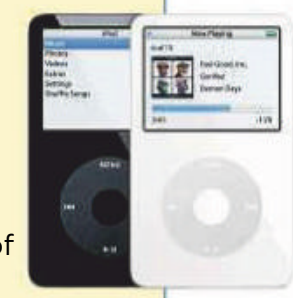


2 Facebook, which was previously limited to college and university students, and workplaces, opens registration to everyone and introduces its News Feed.

3 Google Video launches in the UK as a rival video-streaming service to YouTube. Three months later, Google buys YouTube itself for $1.65bn.

4 Mozilla releases the second version of its Firefox web browser, which introduces tabbed browsing and other new features including session restore.

5 Apple's 5th-generation iPod goes on sale. It's the first version of the portable media player that can play videos and boosts the storage capacity to 80GB.



COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 3

Diggit Bluetooth Outdoor Speaker

WORTH £39.99 EACH

This versatile outdoor speaker has a removable stake that you can stick in the ground for outdoor entertainment. It provides up to eight hours of play time and has an IP55 water-protection rating – so the music won't stop, come rain or shine. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'diggit' in the subject line. For more details, visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow @KitSoundUK on Twitter.

WIN 1 OF 5

Urban Armor Gear iPad Pro 12.9in case

WORTH AROUND £70 EACH

New in Urban Armor Gear's Metropolis range, this case has a firm, tactile grip and a soft core that resists impact. It comes with an adjustable and detachable stand and allows for easy access to buttons, ports and the screen. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'metropolis' in the subject line. For more details, visit www.urbanarmorgear.com and follow @UrbanArmorGear on Twitter.

FAQ

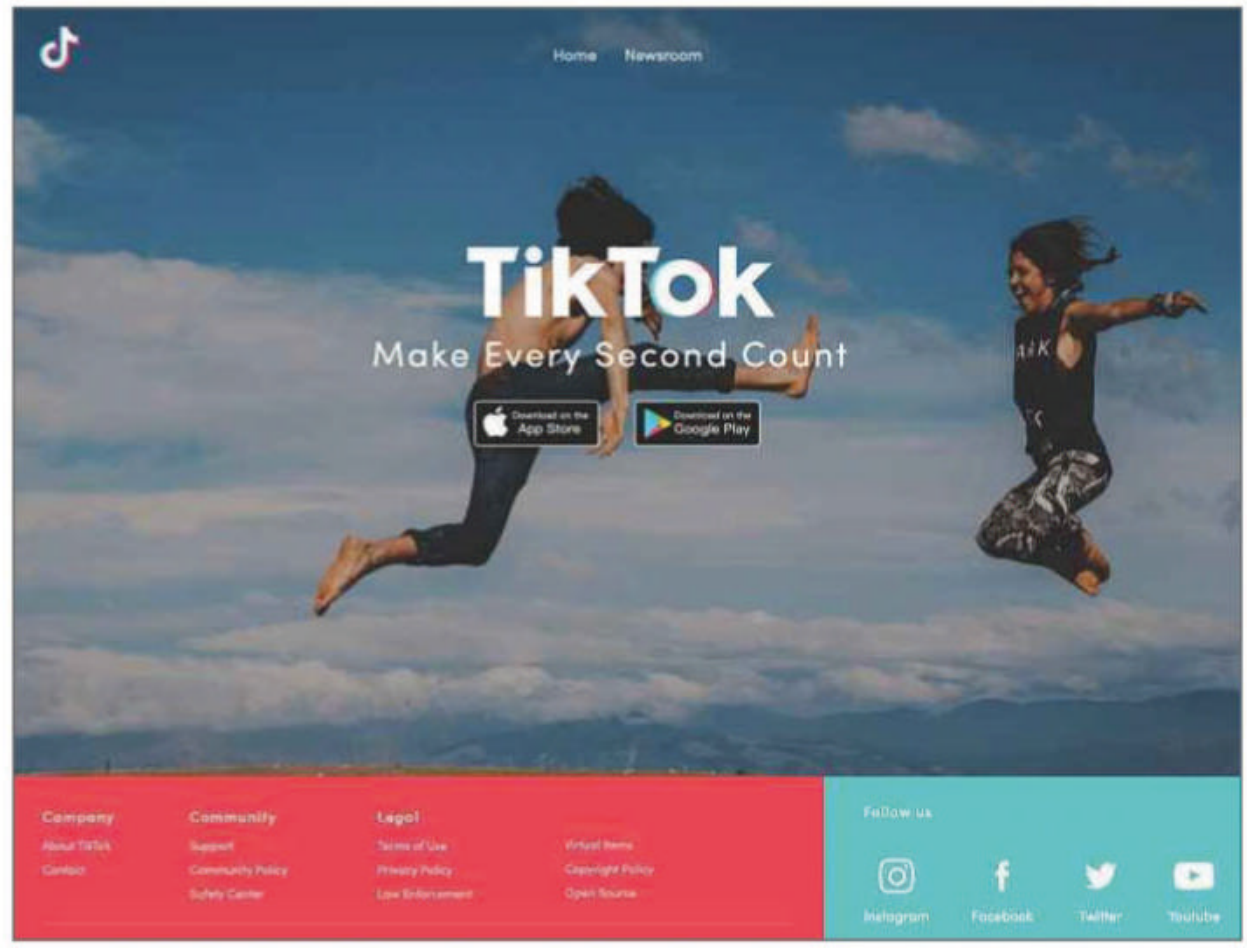
Everything you need to know about the most interesting new technology trends and events

Our guide to TikTok

It's the social network that's getting more popular by the second, but what makes TikTok tick? **David Crookes** explains all

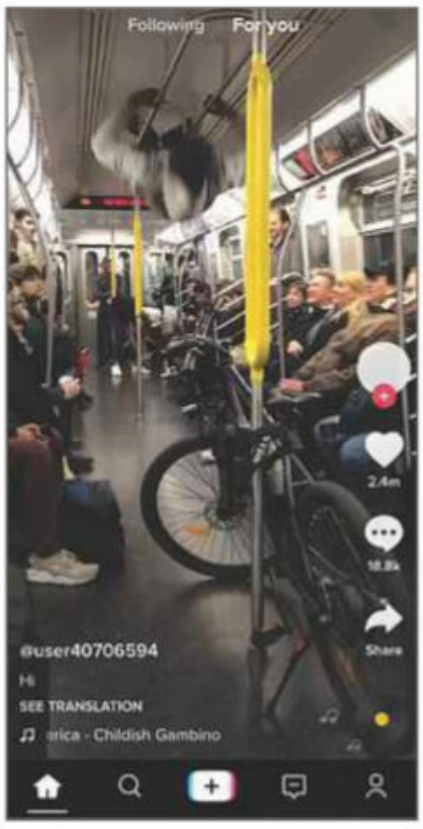
What is it?

TikTok is a social-media app that's taking the internet by storm. Created in Beijing, China (where it's known as Douyin), it initially tapped into users' desire to capture videos of themselves lip-syncing to songs. But as time has gone on, its use has widened, with people also showing off their comedy, acting and dancing skills to an ever-growing online audience.



How can I access it?

TikTok has a website (www.tiktok.com) that lets you watch videos in your browser, but the main action takes place via its free app for iOS and Android. When you launch it on your phone or tablet, you're immediately shown videos on a tab called For You. From there, you can keep swiping up to move from one video to another and view clips, read comments and check out users' profiles without needing to create an account. However, you need to sign up and remain logged in if you want to 'heart' what you see, leave a message of your own or follow someone.



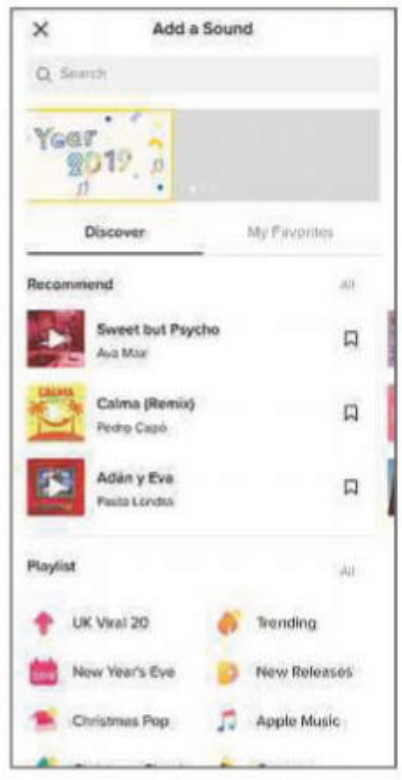
TikTok recommends videos for you – even if you're not logged in

So what makes it so special?

TikTok brings together lots of fun elements – there are interactive filters along the same lines as Snapchat, emoji stickers, beauty effects and the usual methods of giving and receiving feedback. TikTok also taps into the transient frivolity of Vine – the short-form video-hosting service that was bought and then closed by Twitter. More than that, however, TikTok makes heavy use of music – hence the abundance of lip-synced content. It has a library packed with clips of popular songs and users can also upload their own recordings.

Are videos easy to edit?

Yes. The TikTok app has an impressive suite of video-editing tools that let you trim your content down to 15 seconds (clips can be strung together for 60-second videos). They can also be used to make jump cuts, add 3D stickers, apply visual filters and slow or speed up the action. Users clearly put a lot of effort into their videos and there are many tutorials on YouTube showing how you can get the best of out the app's recording and editing tools. It's possible to add a professional gloss to the videos you shoot, and many of them look impressively slick.



TikTok provides popular songs you can use to soundtrack your videos

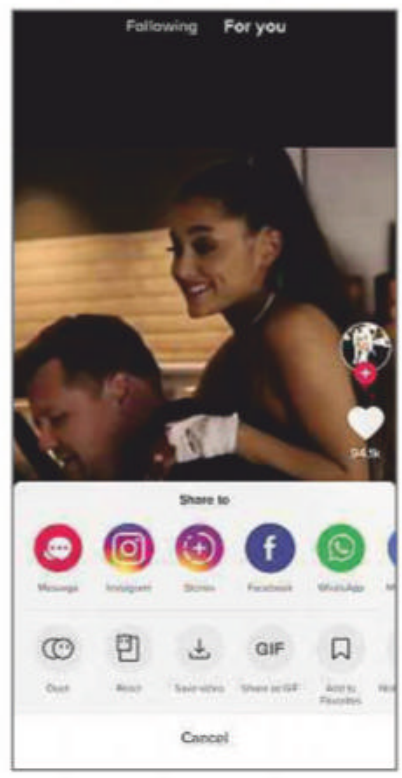
Can I share TikTok videos?

You certainly can. Tapping the heart icon adds a video to your list of likes while tapping the Share button provides a host of options that let you share videos on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter. You can also share content as GIFs and there are options to copy links, download videos, add them to your favourites and indicate disinterest.

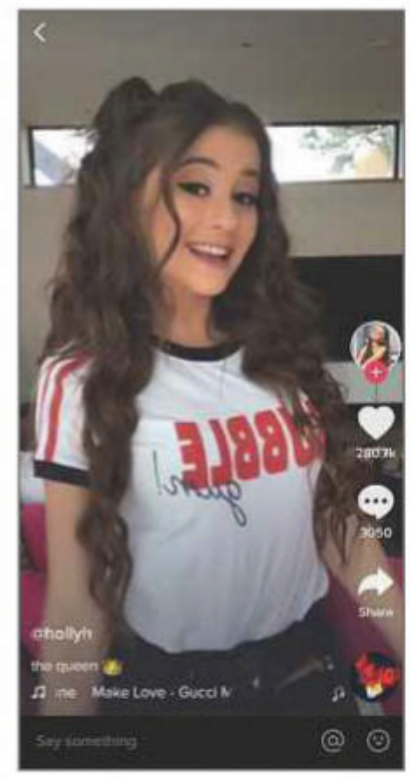
Some people make compilations of TikTok videos and post them on YouTube: sadly, many are mocking in nature, highlighting awkward performances and attempting to humiliate the subject.

What else can I do with a video, though?

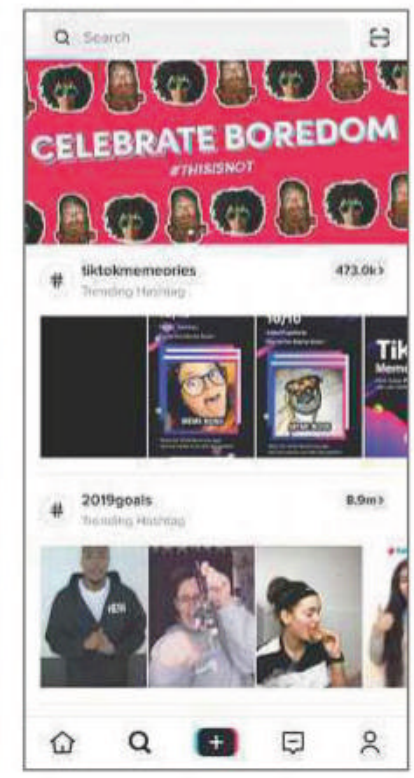
Crucially, you can add something of yourself: a React option within the Share menu, for example, records your reaction as you watch, allowing you to share how you feel about what you're seeing. You can also record a duet with another user, perhaps dancing, singing or performing a double-act comedy skit. This is done by selecting Share, Duet and filming your bit as the original plays. The two videos are then combined into one with your new recording placed to the left, ready for you to share.



TikTok offers lots of ways for you to share your videos with the world



British vlogger Holly H has attracted nearly 13 million TikTok followers



Like Twitter, TikTok uses hashtags to let you find interesting content

How long has TikTok been around?

TikTok's origins stretch back to 2014, the year Shanghai-based entrepreneurs Alex Zhu and Luyu Yang launched an app called Musical.ly. The app, which also gained popularity in the West, let users create lip-syncing videos of between 15 and 60 seconds in length, selecting music tracks and using speed options, filters and effects. In September 2016, Chinese tech company ByteDance launched its similar app, TikTok, then bought Musical.ly the following year and merged the two.

Figures suggest that Musical.ly had 100 million monthly active users in Europe and the Americas, and that TikTok had 500 million across Asia – so that's a good indication of the current install base. Indeed, such figures actually put TikTok way ahead of some of the biggest names on the internet, eclipsing the likes of Twitter (which has 335 million users) and Snapchat (291 million), although it's still trailing Facebook (2.2 billion) by some way. That said, at the time of writing, TikTok was fifth in the UK iOS App Store charts for free downloads. It's certainly popular among British teenagers.

Are TikTok 'celebrities' emerging?

Yes. TikTok stars are referred to as Musers (a hangover from the Musical.ly days) and among the big guns are British vlogger Holly H who currently has 12.8 million TikTok fans, Baby Ariel who has attracted 29.2 million followers and German twins Lisa and Lena who have amassed 32.2 million (Chen He, who posts on Douyin, has 50.7 million followers).

Many of the most-followed users are teenagers, although an increasing number of adults are also creating content. The range of subjects continues to widen and although there is some weird stuff on the platform, there's also lots of cooking, magic, comedy and pets (not unlike YouTube).

Have real-life celebrities flocked to it?

Not in great numbers but there are some well-known names on there such as pro-skater Tony Hawk (bit.ly/hawk467), and US comedians Jimmy Fallon and Amy Schumer (bit.ly/fallon467). In fact, Fallon has helped to boost the number of TikTok users through the bizarre #TumbleweedChallenge, which encourages people to roll on the floor as Western music plays in the background (bit.ly/tumble467) - there are lots of challenges on TikTok. As with Twitter, it's possible to search for people and content via keywords or by hashtag.

Are rival social networks worried?

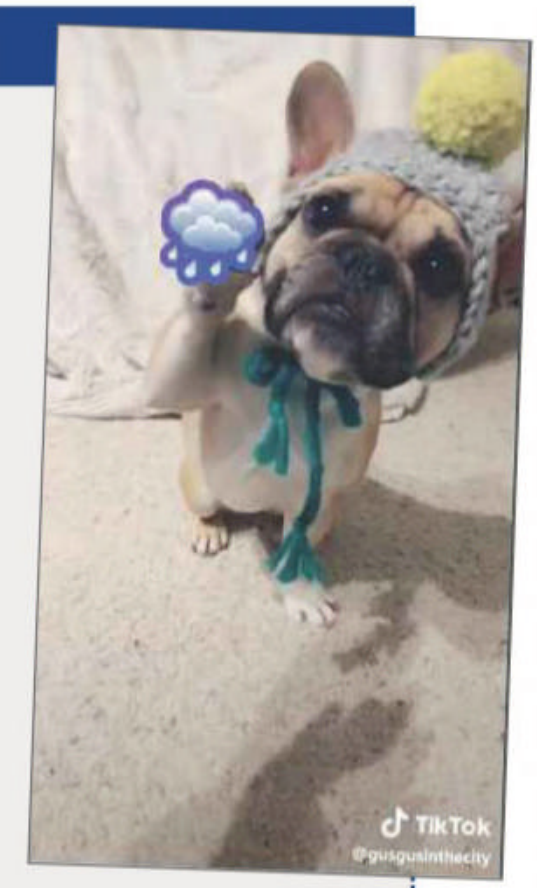
Possibly. Facebook has already launched Lasso, which shamelessly taps into the current lip-syncing trend by offering a near-identical service to TikTok (albeit without augmented-reality effects or filters). Soft-launched and currently only available in the US as a standalone app, it offers syndication options for Facebook Stories but it remains to be seen if it becomes a proper rival. Indeed, with lots of marketing for TikTok on Instagram and YouTube, the clock, it seems, could be ticking on the more established social networks.

IS TIKTOK SAFE TO USE?

TikTok, by and large, appears to be a positive social network. There isn't as much vitriol in the comments as on other social networks, it is news and advert-free and there is an emphasis on having fun, whether you're getting involved in the #raindropchallenge, the #posechallenge, #ForDogs (pictured) or simply doing your own thing.

But – and it's a big but – there is a creepy side. Although users must be 13 and over, younger children are using TikTok since age verification is self-certified. There have been reports of adults inappropriately contacting children, going as far as soliciting explicit images.

As TikTok says, it's not possible to send images or videos in comments or messages and users can block others, report accounts and prevent people from sending them private messages. There have also been issues with racist and violent material being posted, but again such content can (and should) be reported.



DON'T BUY NEW TECH!

COVER FEATURE

Got a laptop, phone or tablet gathering dust in the cupboard? **Wayne Williams** reveals how to save money and avoid waste by converting your old devices into clever new tech

Lots of us received shiny new laptops, phones or tablets for Christmas – or else bought them for ourselves in the sales – which leaves us with the perennial problem of what to do with our old devices.

You can sell your unwanted gadgets (but don't expect to make much money), recycle them through a WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) service or leave them gathering dust in a cupboard or drawer. Alternatively, and more creatively, you can turn your outdated but still functioning tech into something new and useful, and save yourself money on additional devices.

In this feature, we reveal the best ways to 'upcycle'* your old laptop, phone and tablet, and give your faithful but past-it products a second lease of life, such as turning them into a NAS (Network Attached Storage) drive, sat-nav or digital photo frame. We also look at how you can break a non-functioning device into pieces, extracting individual components for use elsewhere.

*"*Reuse (discarded objects or material) in such a way as to create a product of higher quality or value than the original" – Oxford Dictionaries (bit.ly/oxford467).*

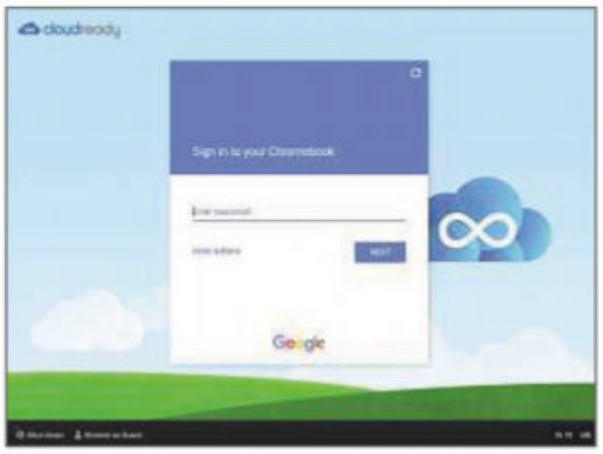
BEST USES FOR AN OLD LAPTOP

Create your own Chromebook

Chromebooks run Google's cloud-based operating system, Chrome OS, which is very lightweight and uses web-based apps rather than the bloated desktop software you get with Windows. This makes it ideal for older, lower-powered PCs and laptops – especially those running outdated software such as Windows XP. You need an internet connection to use Chrome OS, but that shouldn't be a problem because you can get online almost anywhere these days.

The easiest way to turn your old laptop into a Chromebook is to install CloudReady: Home Edition (www.neverware.com). This is a free build of Chromium OS (the open-source development version of Chrome OS) that's specifically designed to run on home computers. To get started, you need to write CloudReady to a USB flash drive, boot into this and then install the OS on your laptop.

CloudReady can be set as your only operating system, or you can opt to have it dual boot alongside Windows. If you choose the latter option, you'll need to select the operating system you want when starting your PC.



Turn an old Windows laptop into a Chromebook by installing CloudReady

Give a Linux distro a try

If you're a dyed-in-the-wool Windows user, Linux can seem mysterious and complicated, but while that may have been the case some years ago, it's no longer true. There are plenty of very good, very user-friendly Linux-based operating systems that aren't that different to Windows.

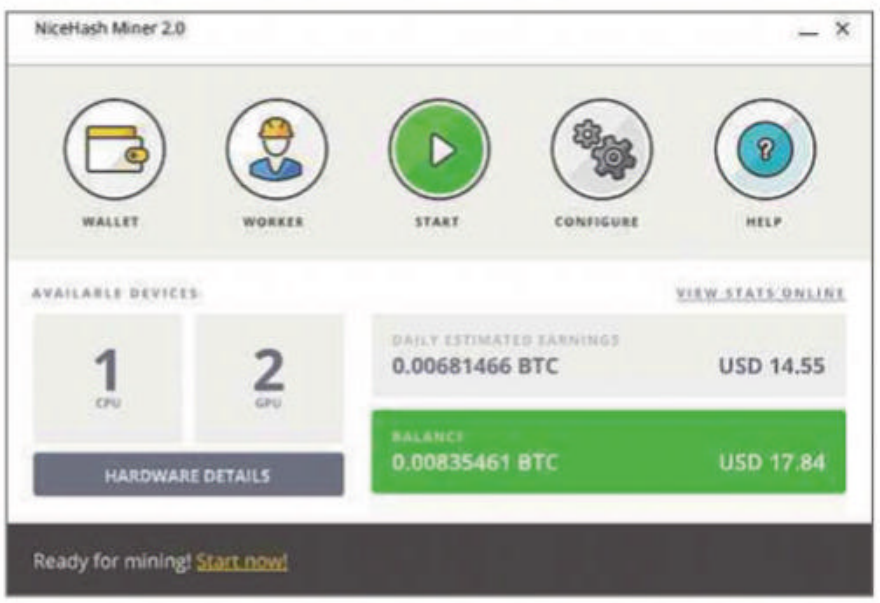
Most people have heard of Ubuntu (www.ubuntu.com), but there are other choices worth considering, including Linux Mint (www.linuxmint.com), Feren OS (ferenos.weebly.com) and Elementary OS (elementary.io). Many Linux distros (distributions) run very well on ageing hardware, so installing one on an old laptop should not only work perfectly but will also let you try out the OS without the risk of overwriting Windows on your current PC. Peppermint OS (peppermintos.com) is a great option – it provides all the benefits of Linux while offering a look and feel that's similar to Windows, but with none of the Microsoft baggage.

Try a new operating system on an old laptop using Linux distro Peppermint

Turn it into a cryptocurrency miner

2018 wasn't a great year for cryptocurrency, with coins failing to hit the highs we saw in 2017. Will 2019 be any different? Possibly not, but there's a low-risk way to find out for yourself by putting an old laptop to work mining cryptocurrency. Simply install the free, beginner-friendly software NiceHash Miner (bit.ly/nicehash467) on your machine and create a free account. You can connect multiple devices to the same mining pool, boosting the amount of money you'll make mining Bitcoin.

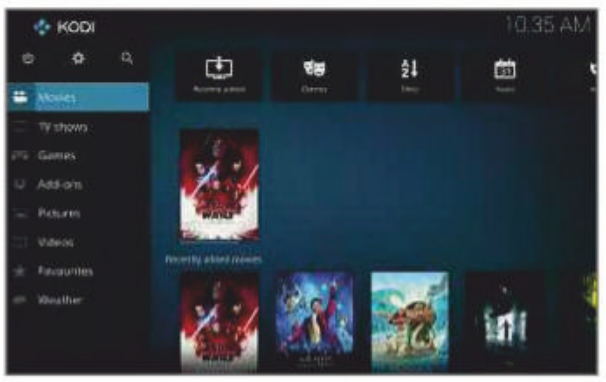
The downside with that particular market-leading cryptocurrency is that you almost certainly won't earn enough to pay for the electricity that it uses to mine for its coins. For a better return, try a smaller coin, such as Monero. Follow the instructions at bit.ly/monero467 for advice on how to get started.



NiceHash lets you mine Bitcoin on an old laptop – but mind your electricity!

Build a home-media centre

An excellent use for an old laptop is to turn it into a dedicated home-media centre. The simplest way to do this is to install Kodi (kodi.tv), then use it to stream content over the internet and play videos and music stored locally on the laptop's hard drive. You can either watch your content on the PC's monitor or connect the media centre directly to your TV, provided it has an HDMI or DVI port. If your PC is too old to have the required connectors, you can use an adapter to make it compatible. You'll find adapters on Amazon and eBay for less than a tenner.



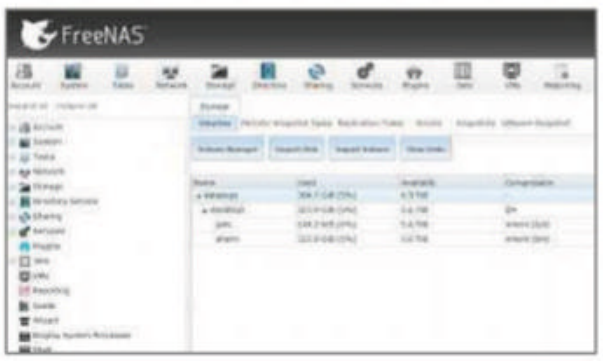
Stream all your entertainment from a dedicated home-media centre laptop

Kodi has received a lot of negative press for its ability to stream pirated content via third-party plugins, but you can easily stay on the right side of the law by just using it to play your own legal content. There are lots of free programs that let you rip DVDs and videos to digital formats, such as MP4 or MKV (Matroska Video), of which our favourites are WinX DVD Ripper (www.winxdvd.com/dvd-ripper) and MakeMKV (makemkv.com). You'll need a large hard drive (at least 4TB) to store all your videos – and bear in mind that ripped Blu-rays will be much larger than ripped DVDs.

Make your own NAS drive

NAS – or Network Attached Storage – is a system made up of one or more hard drives that act as a central repository for all your photos, videos, music and backups. You can buy NAS devices, but these can be expensive, so if you have a spare laptop, try making your own

LAPTOP



Don't buy a NAS device – create your own using FreeNAS on an old laptop

using FreeNAS (web.freenas.org). This free software is based on FreeBSD (Berkeley Software Distribution), a Unix-like operating system. It runs directly from a USB flash drive that you plug into your computer. There are two versions of FreeNAS available – storage only; or storage, plugins and virtualisation. The second option offers the most features, so we'd definitely recommend going for that – it's free, after all.

An alternative system worth considering is Windows Storage Spaces, which is a NAS-like feature built directly into Windows 10. To get started with this, go to Start, Settings, System, Storage. Click the 'Manage Storage Spaces' link under 'More storage settings' and, in the Control Panel window that opens, click the 'Create a new pool and storage space' link. You'll be presented with a list of formatted drives. Tick the ones you want to include as part of your storage pool.

Obviously, this option only works if your old laptop runs Windows 10.

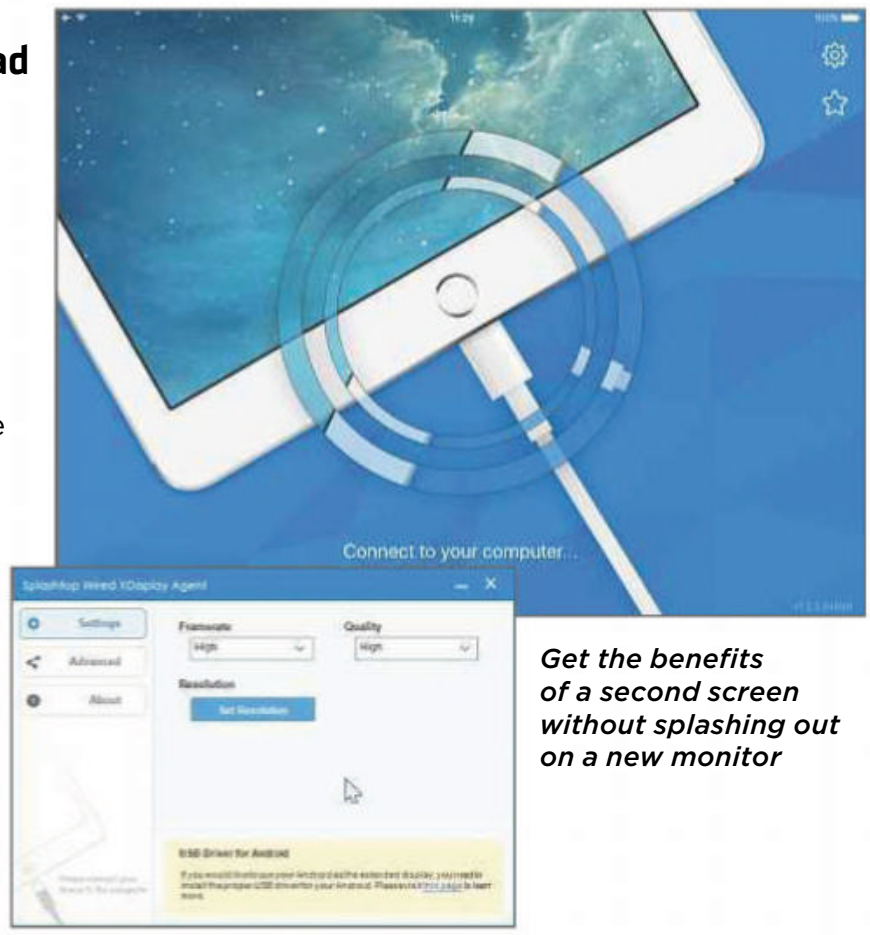
BEST USES FOR AN OLD TABLET

Use it as a wireless trackpad

You can't beat a keyboard and mouse for interacting with your PC, but a trackpad is the next best thing and an app called Unified Remote (bit.ly/unified467) lets you turn an old Android tablet into one. You will also need the server-side software for your computer, which you can download from www.unifiedremote.com. This runs on Windows, Mac OS and Linux.

The free version of Unified Remote offers basic mouse and keyboard control as well as a small number of additional 'remotes' for media playback and the like. Spending £3.89 on the full version gives you access to 90 different remote types and other advanced features.

Turn your tablet into a trackpad to control your PC without using a mouse



Get the benefits of a second screen without splashing out on a new monitor

Add a second monitor to your PC

Having a second screen for your PC or Mac boosts productivity because you can use it to display your email, social media, news headlines and whatever else without impacting your workspace on the main screen. The best way to do this is to buy and connect an additional monitor (you will need a graphics card that allows this), but you can also use a tablet as a small second display.

The Splashtop Wired XDisplay app (www.splashtop.com/wiredxdisplay) connects an Android tablet, iPad or iPhone to a PC or Mac. As well as the relevant app for your device, you'll need the free XDisplay Agent for your computer. Launch the app, connect your tablet to your PC or Mac, and it will display what's on screen. You can adjust the frame rate and quality (you may experience some lag) and also specify the resolution. The app itself is free, but comes with some time limitations. If it does what you need, you can buy the full version on Android for £5.74.

Alternatively, you can try Spacedesk (www.spacedesk.net), which works in the same way and is available for Windows, Android, iOS and Amazon.

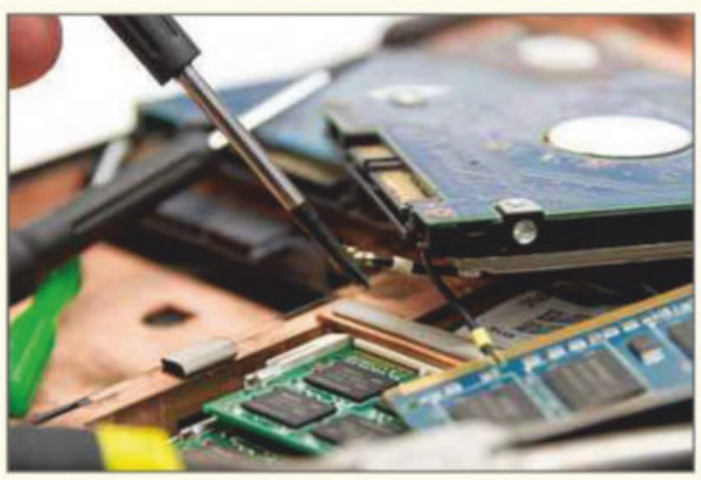
Turn it into a mini arcade machine

If you have an old iPad Mini or a 7in Kindle Fire HD, you can turn it into a table-top arcade machine by buying a Zeon Tech Arcadie mini dock, complete with a built-in joystick and twin buttons. Just slot in your tablet and choose the

BREAK OLD TECH INTO BITS

The components found inside a smartphone or tablet aren't going to be much use to most of us, but if you have a good knowledge of electrical engineering, you could use the fingerprint scanner as part of a door-locking system or upcycle the camera to create your own webcam. Even the battery can be put to a variety of uses.

The insides of a laptop could yield even more useful components – provided you can extract them. Newer devices are filled with solder and glue, which means there's not much chance of retrieving usable parts. If yours isn't, components worth rescuing include the LCD screen, keyboard, memory, power adapter, fans, the heat sink, hard drive, processor, graphics card, battery, speaker, CD/DVD drive, CMOS battery and assorted cables.



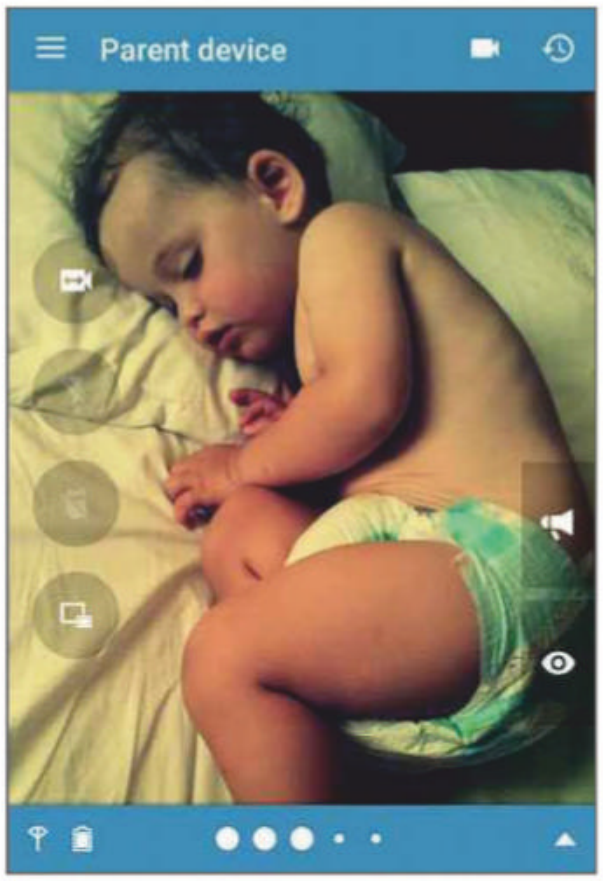
There are some good ideas for projects you can build with reclaimed laptop parts at bit.ly/pcparts467.

Create your own tablet games console using a Zeon Tech Arcadie dock

game you want to play. You can find these cabinets on Amazon and eBay, typically priced between £8 and £12, including postage.

Use it as a baby monitor

Why buy a dedicated hardware monitor to keep an eye on your sleeping cherub when you can employ an old Android tablet for the task? Using Dormi (bit.ly/dormi467), you can set up the tablet in your little one's room, then connect to it with your mobile phone. The app even allows you to connect multiple devices to the tablet, and it works even if the screen is off. You can connect your phone to the tablet via Wi-Fi, mobile data or Wi-Fi Direct. The free version limits you to four hours of monitoring a month but if that's not enough, you can upgrade to the paid-for version for £5.39 and get unlimited lifetime usage.



Save money by upcycling an old tablet to use as a baby monitor with Dormi

Mount a digital photo frame

Standalone digital photo frames were all the rage a few years ago, but the technology – which displays a slideshow of images from local storage or the internet – seems a bit basic these days. An old tablet can easily do the same thing, and it has the added benefits of greater storage space, higher-quality displays, a touchscreen and built-in Wi-Fi.

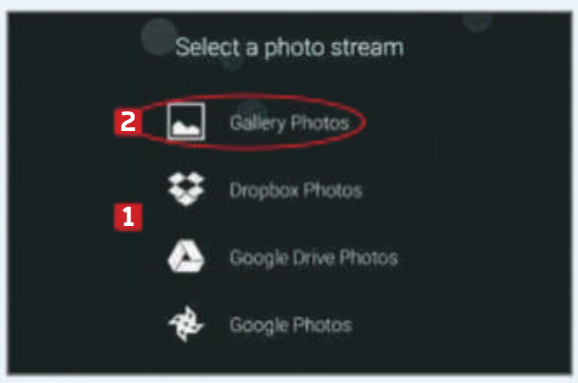
To turn your tablet into a digital photo frame, you will need a stand for the device – so you can place it on a table or mantelpiece – and a charger to keep the battery topped up.

Display all your favourite photos on a tablet turned digital photo frame

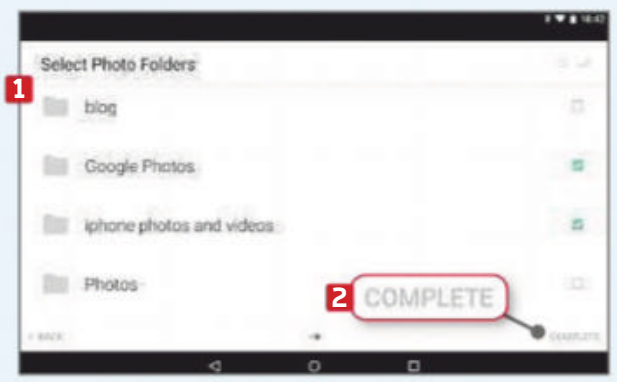
Download and set up Fotoo (bit.ly/fotoo467) on your Android tablet, then copy the photos you want to display to a dedicated folder on a cloud-storage service such as Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive (the app can also display photos stored on the device itself or in a local networked folder, if you prefer).

To stop your tablet turning off the display after a period of time, pull the notification bar down from the top of the screen and tap the cog icon. Go to System, About Tablet and tap 'Build number' a few times until you see a message stating that you're now a developer. Go back to the System menu and tap 'Developer options'. You'll see a new option called 'Stay awake'. Enable this and the screen will remain permanently on while the tablet is connected to the mains. See our Mini Workshop below for further instructions.

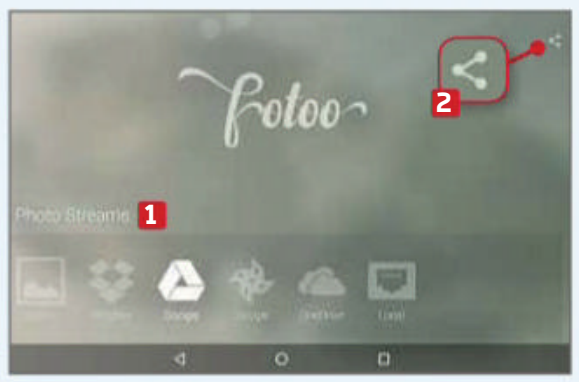
MINI WORKSHOP | Turn your tablet into a digital photo frame



1 Log into your favourite cloud service – Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive – and create a folder for your photos. Fill it with the images you want to display, then install Fotoo on your tablet. Launch it and select your online source of photos from the list. 1 The app can also pull images from the Gallery. 2

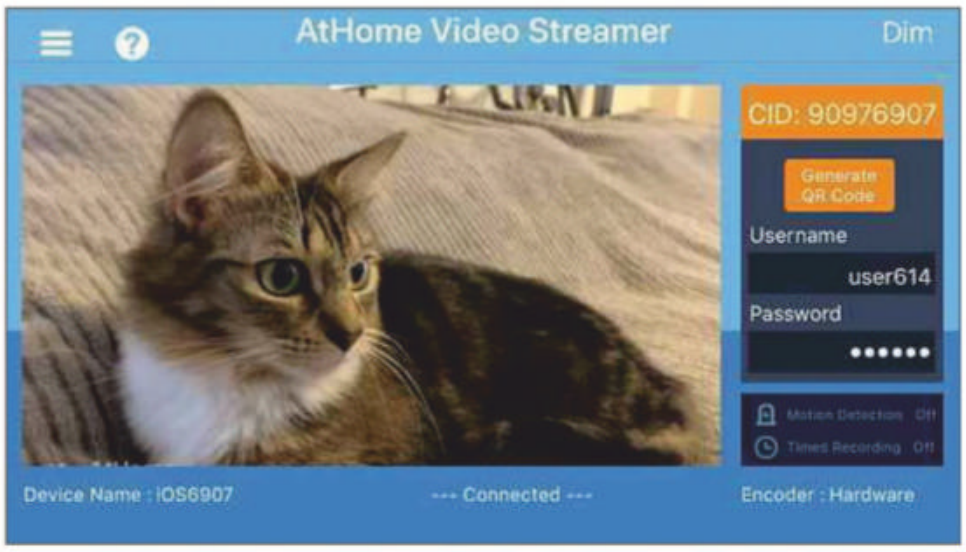


2 Log into your cloud account (the process will vary depending on the service) and grant the app any required permissions. You'll now be prompted to select the folders containing your photos. Tap the one(s) you want, 1 then select Complete. 2 The app will begin to cycle through your images.

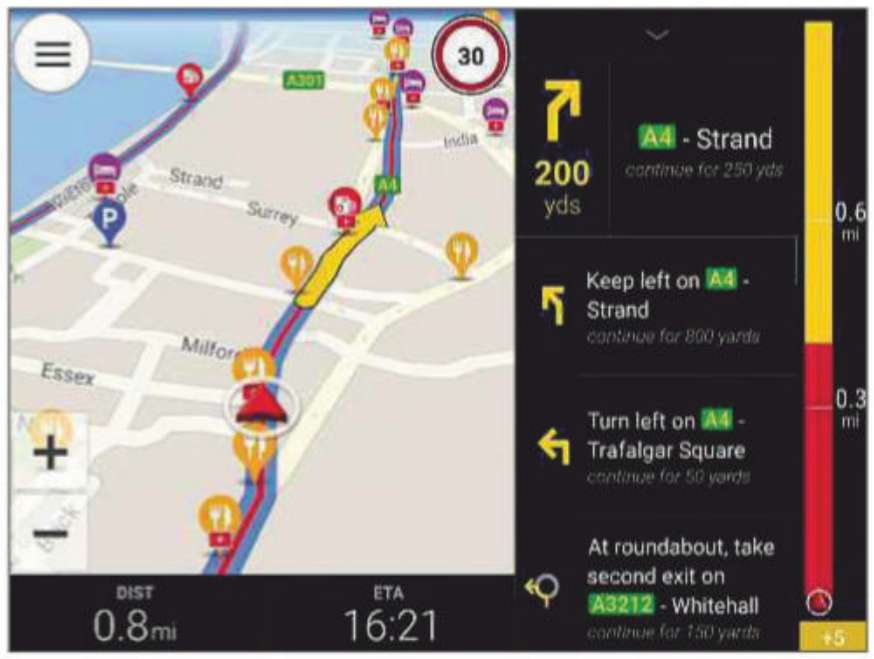


3 Press down on the screen to display controls that let you jump back to a previous image, forward to the next one or pause on the current photo. Tapping on the screen opens the settings. From here, you can add new sources 1 or share the current image in all supported ways. 2

BEST USES FOR AN OLD PHONE



AtHome Camera helps protect your home and puts an old phone to good use



Convert your old phone into a sat-nav using CoPilot GPS and a GiffGaff SIM

Set up a home-security system

Spare phones (and tablets) can be used to set up a home-security system that detects movement and records video footage to the cloud. AtHome Camera (www.ichano.com) for iOS and Android lets you turn an old device into a smart camera with a minimum of fuss.

The idea is to set up your phone as the camera by installing the free AtHome Video Streamer app, then use another handset or tablet to view the live feed via the free AtHome Camera app. You can switch between the front and rear cameras, turn on the device's flash, mute the sound, talk to anyone in the same room as the camera (if you want to give them a scare!) and record video remotely.

AtHome Camera is free to use, but if you want advanced features such as cloud recording, HD video quality, multi-camera display, two-way audio, familiar face alert and more, you'll need to upgrade to the paid-for version. This costs £7.99 a month or £54.99 for the year.

Get a sat-nav for your car

Google Maps, Apple Maps and Waze can all turn an old phone into a sat-nav device, providing you with reliable turn-by-turn spoken directions and real-time traffic information while you focus on the road. They are all free, with no hidden costs, which will save you hundreds on a 'proper' sat-nav from TomTom or similar. However, you should bear in mind that you'll need to have a mobile-data connection to use an old phone for this purpose – a SIM-only plan from GiffGaff (www.giffgaff.com) will keep your monthly costs down.

For a genuine sat-nav experience, consider installing CoPilot GPS – Car Sat-Nav (copilotgps.com) for iOS and Android. It's free, but you need to make in-app purchases to unlock the best features. To use your phone as a sat-nav, you'll need to place it in a holder, so you're not breaking the law by handling it when on the move.

Get a dash cam for your car

You can also use your phone as a dash cam, to record activity going on outside the vehicle. For this, you will need a car charger and cable to make sure your phone doesn't run out of battery life. You will also need a dash mount that will hold your phone steady and allow the camera a good view of the road. It's important to note that attaching your device to the windscreen or a side window is in breach of the

SAVE MONEY ON A SMART SPEAKER

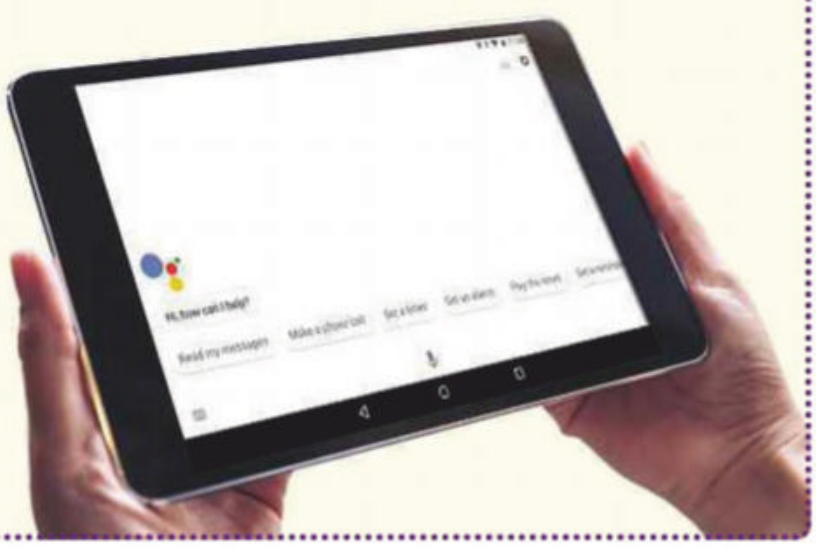
Personal assistants such as Amazon's Alexa and Google Assistant come built into a number of smart speakers, but can also be found on (or added to) mobile devices. If you have an old Android tablet and a Bluetooth speaker (optional), you can make a DIY version of Google Home, the search giant's £130 smart speaker.

The process is very straightforward. Install the Google Assistant app (bit.ly/gassistant467) on your tablet, if you don't already have it. You may need to update Android's Google app to the latest version at the same time. Run the Assistant app and train it to recognise your voice by saying "OK Google" and "Hey Google" a couple of times each. Once that's done, connect the tablet to your speaker and try it out by saying "OK, Google" and then asking it something, such as what the weather will be like tomorrow or whether you have any new messages waiting for you.

Make sure both the speaker and tablet are connected to the mains and adjust your device's display settings so the screen stays on (use the instructions for creating a digital photo frame on page 43).

The Bluetooth speaker should be one that doesn't automatically turn itself off after a period of inactivity. However, it doesn't matter if you don't have a dedicated speaker because Google Assistant can still talk to you via the tablet's own speakers, albeit more quietly.

See Issue 465's cover feature (bit.ly/webuser465) to get more ideas for your DIY Google Home.



Who needs a pricey GoPro dash cam when you can use an old phone instead?

Highway Code and could get you into trouble if it's deemed to be obscuring your view of the road, so make sure you're sensible and legal.

You don't need buttons to control your TV – just use your phone's touchscreen

To capture what's happening around your vehicle, you'll need a dash-recorder app, such as the brilliant free AutoBoy Dash Cam Black Box for Android (bit.ly/autoboy467).

Control your TV remotely

If your TV supports the feature – and most new smart models do – you can turn your phone into a remote control simply by downloading the relevant app. So, if you own a Panasonic TV, just download TV Remote 2 for iOS (bit.ly/remote467). Make sure your TV and phone are connected to the same network, search for the device you want to control in the app and make the connection when found. You can now use your phone as a remote. Other TV manufacturers offer similar apps.

If you have a set-top box, you may be able to download an app to control it. The Fire TV app, for example, can be used to control Amazon Fire devices. It even offers voice control to make it easier to find and play programmes.

Turn it into an alarm clock

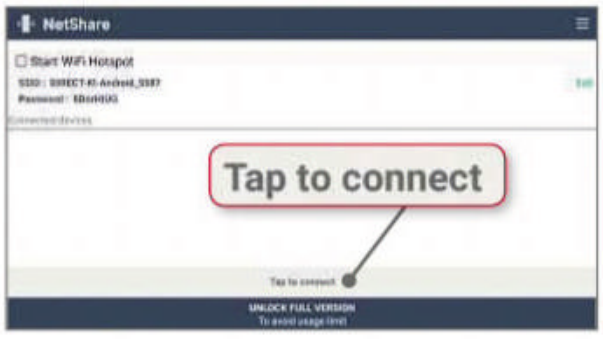
There are lots of great clock apps available for both iOS and Android – from analogue faces to traditional digital designs and 'flip' clocks – that make it easy to turn an old phone into a dedicated alarm clock. To set up your bedside companion, you'll need a cheap, powered smartphone dock, and will have to make sure the phone display isn't set to dim/turn off after a set period of inactivity.

Wake up in the morning to the sight and sound of a home-made alarm clock

Use it as a Wi-Fi extender

If your Wi-Fi is patchy at home, the best solution is to upgrade to a mesh router with multiple access points. If that's a little out of your price range, then boosting your signal with range extenders will make a big difference. These tend to be very affordable, but you can save money by using your old smartphone as a Wi-Fi extender, thanks to an Android app called 'NetShare – no-root-tethering' (bit.ly/netshare467). Check the instructions for how to connect your devices to the network.

The free app has some usage limitations, which you can remove by paying £8.40 for the Pro version. This also unlocks additional features, such as a firewall and the ability to filter device traffic. ■



Boost your Wi-Fi by turning a spare Android phone into a Wi-Fi extender

NEXT ISSUE on sale Wednesday 6 February 2019

MAKE YOUR ROUTER UNHACKABLE

Update the security of your home Wi-Fi network before it's too late

PLUS...

DELETE DUPLICATE FILES
Best free tools for removing junk from your PC

SYNC YOUR BOOKMARKS
Access saved sites across multiple browsers

RECOVER ANY PASSWORD
Locate your lost logins without resetting devices

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Best browsers to keep you anonymous online

Worried you're being watched on the web? **Andy Shaw** tests five browsers to see which ones offer the most secure and hassle-free route to browsing the web in private

Brave | brave.com | ★★★★★

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

WebUser GOLD AWARD

What we liked

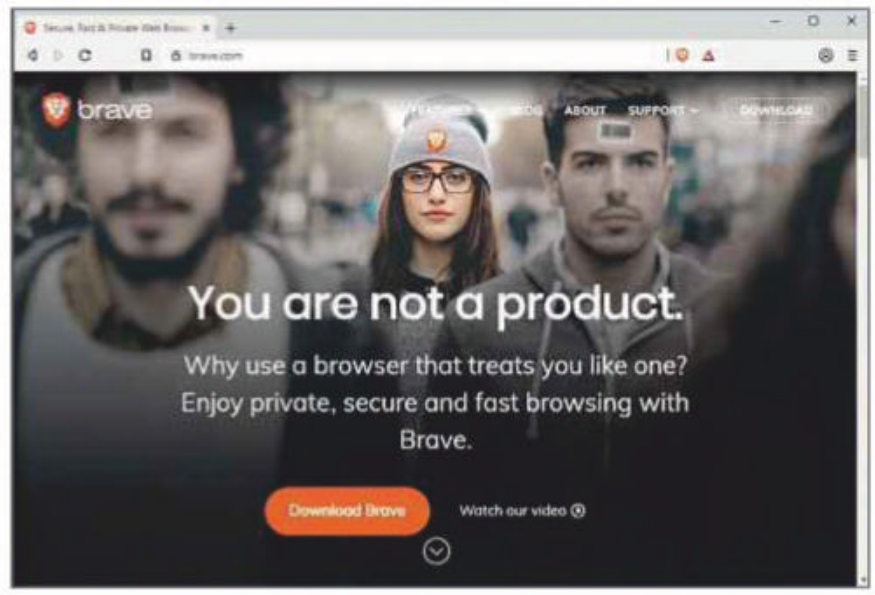
Brave immediately looks and feels familiar because it's built using Chromium, the same Google-developed open-source browser framework that powers Chrome. Brave's icons have a different design, but if you click the menu button, for example, you can't help but notice how the core structure of Chrome has barely changed.

This essentially makes Brave feel like the Chrome browser you're already comfortably familiar with, except that it comes preinstalled with a strong collection of enhancements to counter the internet's privacy-invading tactics.

Brave's defences are mainly concerned with advertising. The browser does a competent job of blocking 'third party' ads and cookies – where information about your activities on one site can be tracked through to another – but doesn't disable 'useful' cookies, such as shopping baskets and preference settings. You can easily adapt the level of protection from a panel within the browser's standard settings page.

As well as avoiding some of the tracking that goes on while you traverse the web, this has the added benefit of speeding things up. There's no question that skipping the adverts makes pages download more quickly – there's simply less data to process.

However, this alone wouldn't be enough to win our Gold Award, largely because the Tor Browser can do so much more for your privacy than block ads. Brave acknowledged this itself last summer and added a new 'private window with Tor' option, which is accessible from the main menu. This means that when you want to browse in the utmost privacy, where even your ISP can't track you, Brave offers it at the flick of a switch. Brilliant.



How it can be improved

Not everything feels right about Brave. For example, it operates a reward system that waves through approved ads and lets you tip websites you like, though at the time of writing this isn't quite finished. How comfortable you are with this 'ransom-style' business model – where Brave guards the gateway to your ads and takes its cut from advertisers it lets through – is down to personal preference. It's not as altruistic a privacy guardian as Tor, for example.

OUR VERDICT

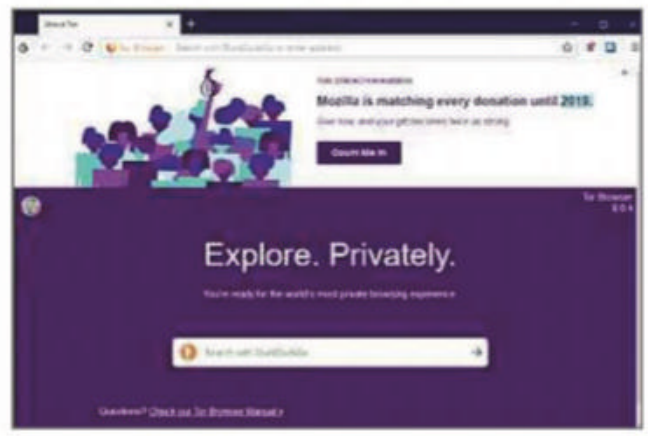
Brave's two-tier security covers all your private-browsing needs. Its standard mode is like Chrome on steroids, familiar but fast – because it skips downloading cumbersome adverts. For times when you want your browsing to maintain maximum privacy, Brave offers a quick and convenient switch to Tor.

Tor Browser | bit.ly/torbr467 | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked

If you take your private browsing extremely seriously, head straight for the Tor Browser. This robustly private browser isn't just about ad-blocking (though it does that, too) – its aim is to totally maintain your privacy from the moment you launch it.



Tor hides your tracks from even your ISP, by encrypting site requests at source and bouncing encrypted data through anonymous, voluntarily run servers. Think of it as a VPN that's open-source and run like a peer-to-peer network, rather than by an individual company.

Tor browser is based on Firefox but has the Tor technology built in, so you can perform private browsing sessions without having to install Tor separately or use it across everything you do on the internet.

How it can be improved

The main drawback with Tor is that it slows down your web surfing. This is an acceptable nuisance when privacy is essential but is arguably unnecessary for everyday web browsing. But unlike our Gold Award winner Brave, the Tor Browser doesn't let you switch it off.

OUR VERDICT

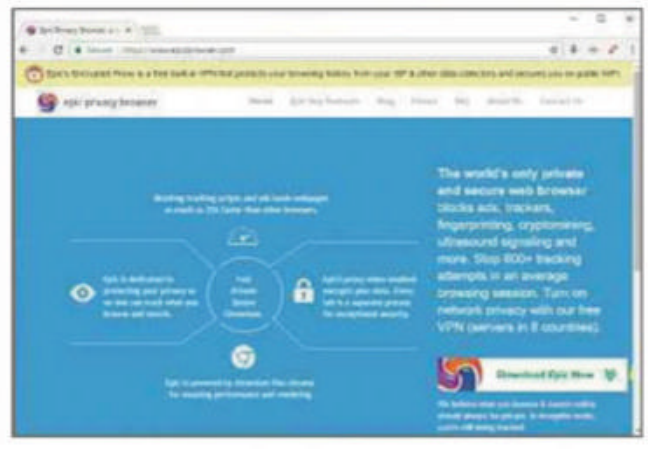
All the encrypting and bouncing of data around its servers means that Tor Browser is very private but it can suffer from being slow. Because of this, and the fact that Brave now offers the same tool as an option you can effortlessly slip in and out of, Tor Browser misses out on our Gold Award.

Epic Privacy Browser | www.epicbrowser.com | ★★★★☆

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

What we liked

There's something ironic about a privacy browser that encourages you to enter your email address in order to stay updated on its development, but that's what you see if you download Epic Privacy Browser from its own website. Once it's installed, however, the privacy starts in earnest.



Ads are blocked by default, though we found a few sites that snuck them under Epic's radar but were successfully spotted by Brave and Tor.

Epic has its own proxy servers built in, so you can make it look as if you're visiting a website from another country, should you wish to circumvent regional restrictions. There are nine proxy locations available, including two in the US.

How it can be improved

The version of Chromium used by Epic Privacy Browser still has trapezoid tabs rather than the rectangular ones introduced in Chrome version 69 in September last year. This must mean that Epic is running a browser that's at least five months out of date, which is a bit worrying.

OUR VERDICT

Epic appears to be falling behind in private browsing, seemingly based on an outdated version of Chromium and failing to keep up with implementing Tor for maximum privacy. If you like the browser and still want Tor, however, you could always install it separately.

BEST OF THE REST

LibreFox

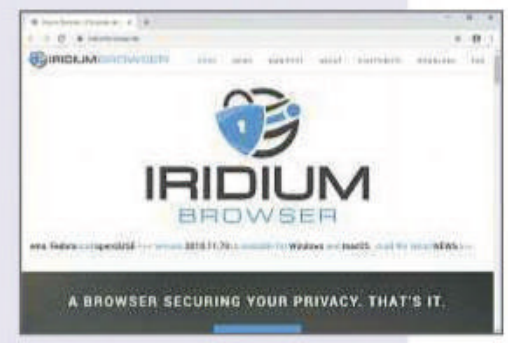
bit.ly/lib467

This is a version of Firefox that has had some of the basic privacy-leaking elements switched off and a selection of add-ons included. Although it saves you the hassle of doing it yourself, there's nothing here that you couldn't recreate with your own choice of privacy add-ons, if you already have a few favourites.

Iridium

iridiumbrowser.de

Iridium is a stripped-down version of Chrome that has all the unpleasant privacy-exposing bits of the basic browser removed. That's only half the story, though. It doesn't make any efforts to block ads or hide your tracks, though you could do this with the usual privacy add-ons. If you want to create your own privacy browser with your preferred add-ons, Iridium is a good starting point. However, it isn't the all-in-one solution that our award-winners offer.



Incognito or Private Browsing modes

Chrome, Firefox, Edge

Isn't it enough that your existing browser already has a private-browsing mode? Well yes, if you only want the local record of your browsing session deleted. However, while you could use it to hide your browsing habits from your family, it won't escape the all-seeing eyes of advertisers, your boss (if you're online at work) or your ISP.

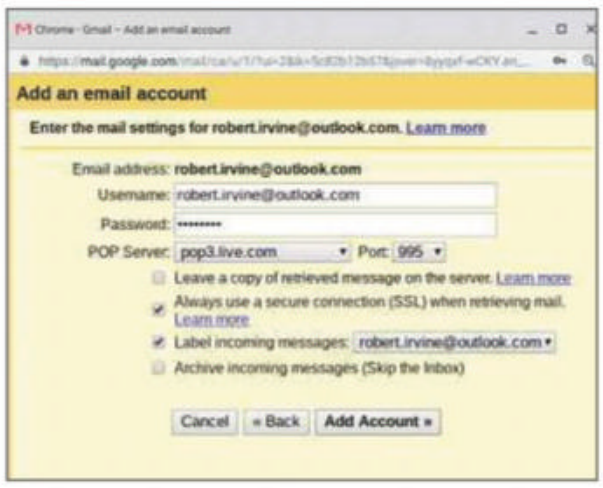
Microogle & Goosoft

Edge will soon start using Chrome's code, but some other Microsoft and Google tools already work well together. **Robert Irvine** explains how to get the best of both worlds

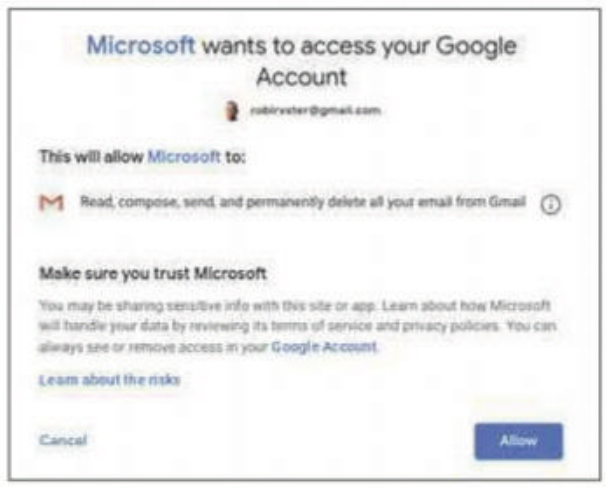
Combine Google and Bing search results

Google is synonymous with search and, according to recent figures (bit.ly/search467), it's the search engine of choice for more than 89% of UK web users. Bing, in comparison, claims a measly 7% share (it's more popular in the US), but for certain searches you may find its results are just as good – if not better – than Google's. To compare the two, and potentially double the quality of your searches, you can use a service that combines them. There used to be loads of these, but the best remaining one is SearchBoth (uk.searchboth.net), which lets you search Google and Bing (or Yahoo, which also uses Microsoft's search engine) simultaneously, and displays the results side by side. You can search web pages, images, videos and more, and click the Split Screen Lock button at the top of the page to give both search providers equal weight.

Alternatively, the Chrome extension Double Shot Search (bit.ly/double467) lets you search Bing and Google at the same time directly from your browser toolbar or address bar.



You can read and reply to your Outlook messages in your Gmail inbox



Sync your Gmail account with Outlook to read everything in one place

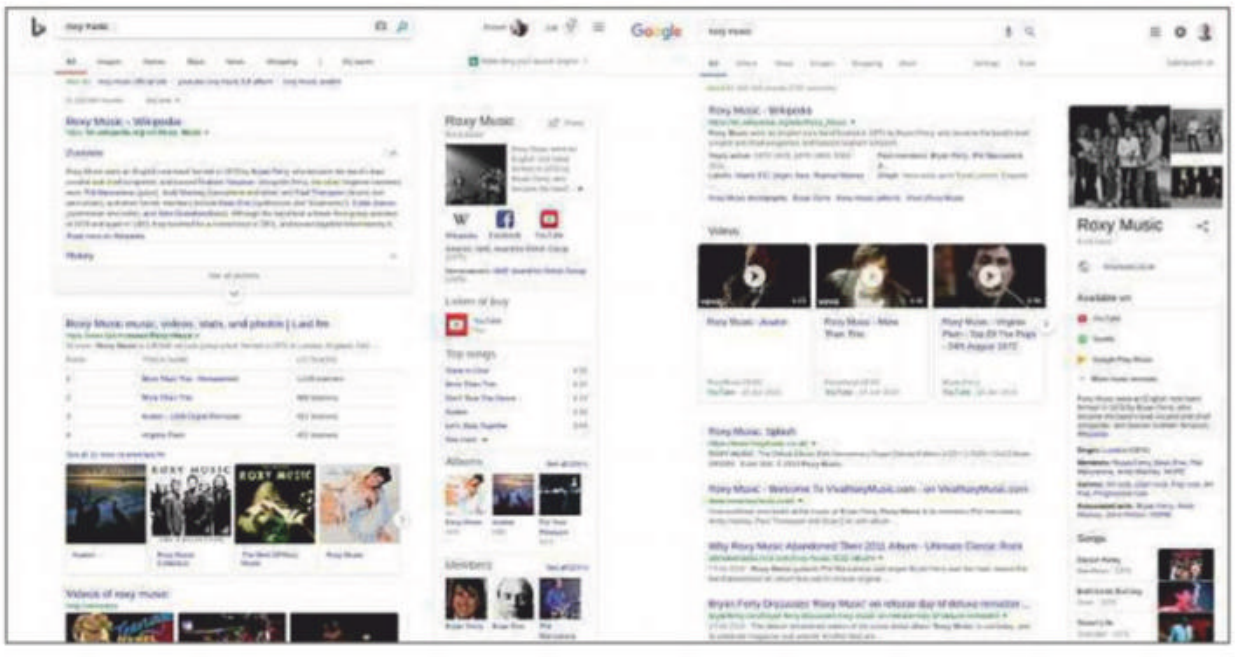
Read Outlook email in Gmail – and vice versa

There was a time when you had to either pick one webmail service or sign up to several and keep switching between them. Now, the two most popular email providers have overcome their rivalry to work happily together.

To read messages from your Outlook account in your Gmail inbox, click the cog in the top-right corner, choose Settings and click the 'Accounts and Import' tab. In the 'Check mail from other accounts' section, click 'Add an email account', type your '@outlook .com' address and click Next. Enter your Outlook password and click Add Account. If you want to import old Outlook messages and contacts into Gmail, click 'Import mail and contacts' on the 'Accounts and Import' tab and follow the steps. On the same page, you can also set up Gmail to send (and reply to) email from your Outlook address, when necessary.

To read your Gmail messages in your Outlook inbox, click the cog icon in the top-right corner, select 'View all Outlook settings', 'Sync email' and, under 'Connected accounts', click Gmail. Choose how you want to connect your Gmail account – as read-only or to send messages from as well – then sign in and click Allow.

If you get a server error when trying



Search Bing (left) and Google (right) simultaneously to get the best possible results

RUN MICROSOFT APPS ON ANDROID DEVICES

After the failure of its Windows Phone and Windows 10 Mobile operating systems, Microsoft has adopted an "if you can't beat them, join them" approach to mobile apps, and released lots of excellent tools for Google's Android OS.

As well as obvious apps such as Android versions of its Edge browser, Office tools and Bing search engine, there are some interesting experiments from its Garage outlet. These include Photos Companion, which lets you transfer pictures from your Android device to your Windows 10 PC over Wi-Fi; the brilliant Android-personalisation app Microsoft Launcher, which was the subject of a workshop in our last issue; and lots of fun, free games. The Garage Workbench page (bit.ly/garage467) lists the full range of projects, but you should note that some apps are currently unavailable in the UK or are iOS-only.

Microsoft also owns SwiftKey (bit.ly/swift467), the popular keyboard app for Android and iOS.

to connect in either direction, ensure that your account is set up to allow POP access – this option can be found on the 'Forwarding and POP/IMAP' tab in Gmail, and the 'Sync email' page in Outlook.

Sync Google Drive files with OneDrive

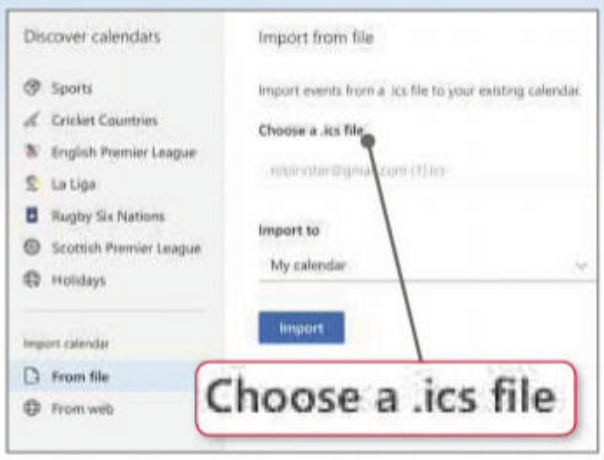
Like money and happiness, you can never have too much backup, and there are big benefits to storing your most important files in more than one cloud-storage service. Not only does this make them easier to access and share, but it safeguards you against accidental deletion, file corruption and account lockout, and the generous amount of free space offered by Google Drive (15GB) and OneDrive (5GB) means you don't need to pay for peace of mind.

To save you uploading files twice to both services, you can sync and manage your accounts through an online service called MultCloud (www.multcloud.com), which is free to use but also offers premium features for $9.90 (£7.80) per month. Sign up with MultCloud, then click the Add Cloud Drives option on the left-hand side of the home screen, choose Google Drive and grant the service access to your account. Click Add Google Drive Account, then repeat the same steps for OneDrive. Next, click Cloud Sync at the top of the page, select Google Drive and OneDrive and either choose the folders you want to sync data between or sync the whole drives. You can decide whether to sync both ways – so that any file you add to one account automatically appears in the other – or one-way only. The free version of MultCloud lets you transfer 50GB of data per month, and also supports Dropbox, Box, Mega and many other cloud-storage services.

Merge your Google and Outlook calendars

In our comparison of online calendars in Issue 465 (bit.ly/webuser465), we named Microsoft Outlook our Gold Award winner, which may have tempted you to switch from Google Calendar (which won Silver) or to manage them both simultaneously. Fortunately, this is easy to do without needing to enter all your events, birthdays and other data from scratch.

In the 'My calendars' section of Google Calendar, click the three-dot icon next to the calendar you want to view in Outlook and select 'Settings and sharing'. On the Calendar settings page, choose 'Export calendar' to save your data as a ZIP file, then extract the '.ics' file from this. Next, open your Outlook calendar, select 'Discover calendars' in the left-hand menu and choose 'From file'. Browse to the Google Calendar '.ics' file on your hard drive and click Import to add it to your Outlook calendar.



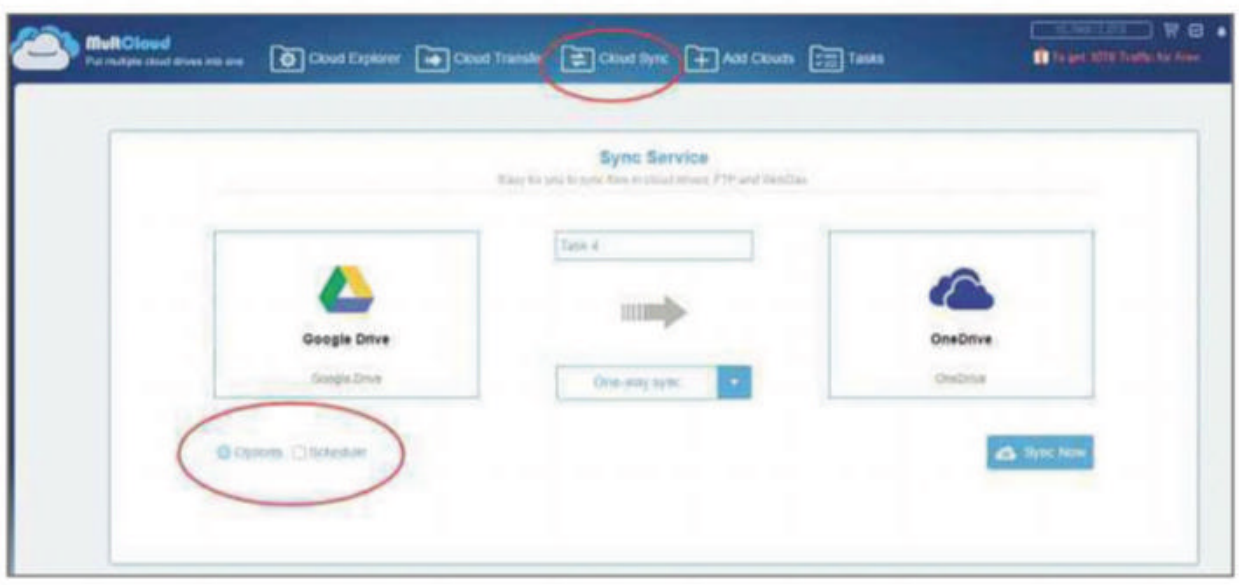
It's easy to import all the data from your Google Calendar into Outlook

Annoyingly, you can't export calendar data from online Outlook into Google Calendar, so this trick only works in one direction.

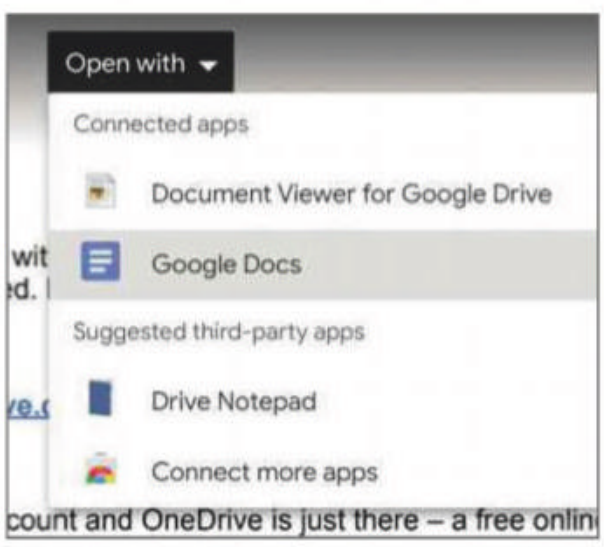
Open documents in rival office suites

Microsoft's default file format for documents created in its Word Online tool is its own '.docx'. This means that when you add a Word document to Google Docs, it won't open instantly as an editable file. Instead, you can either double-click the document and choose Google Docs from the 'Open with' menu, or right-click it in your drive and select the option there. Google makes it much easier to download your documents in a Word-compatible format – just go to File, 'Download as' and select 'Microsoft Word (.docx)' or 'Rich Text Format (.rtf)'.

Similarly, you can open Excel spreadsheets by choosing 'Open with', then Google Sheets; and download Sheets spreadsheets in 'Microsoft Excel (.xlsx)' format.



MultCloud syncs your files automatically between Google Drive and OneDrive



You can easily open Word documents in Google Docs – and vice versa

Play paid-for PC games for FREE

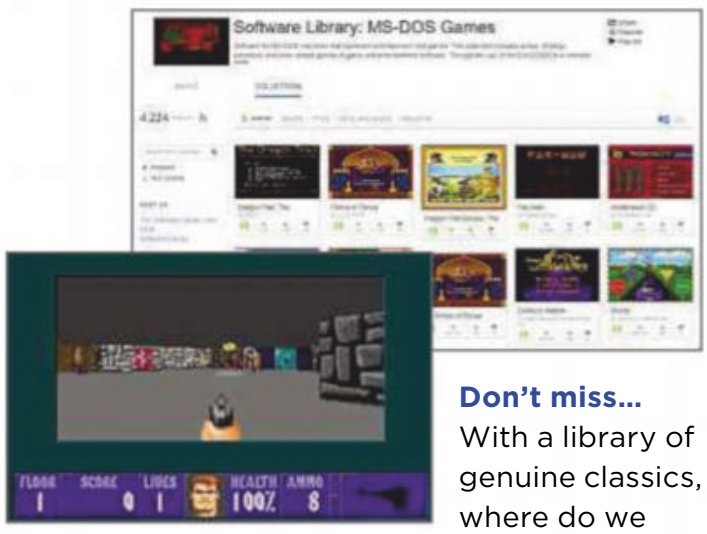
Want to level up your games library without spending anything? **Steve Clark** shows you where to download the best full PC games for free

Internet Archive

bit.ly/archive467

The Internet Archive (archive.org) is loaded with more than 4,000 retro MS-DOS games (bit.ly/games467) you can play in your browser. Filled with iconic (and alliterative) old-school gaming heroes such as Jazz Jackrabbit, Dangerous Dave and Leisure Suit Larry, it's a treasure trove of titles that's guaranteed to fire up your nostalgia for gaming's good old days. Lemmings, Golden Axe, Mario Brothers, Tetris – and that's just the first page. Considering the sheer volume of games on offer, it's worth using the filters in the sidebar to whittle down the list.

Still need a retro-gaming fix? See Wikipedia's list of commercial games that are now free (bit.ly/wiki467).



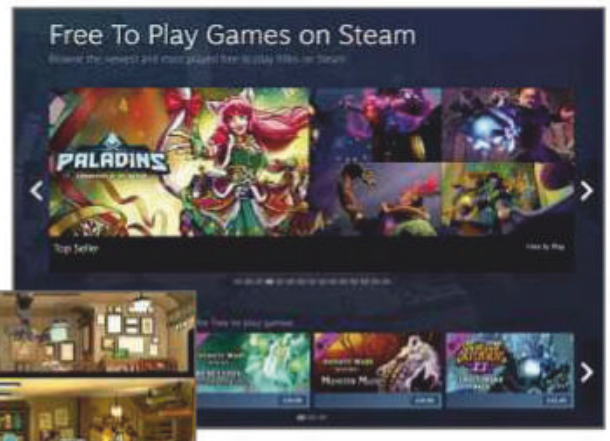
Don't miss...

With a library of genuine classics, where do we even begin: The Oregon Trail? Pac-Man? Dragon's Lair? Our vote goes to fast-paced first-person shooter Wolfenstein 3D (bit.ly/wolf467), which sees you escape a WWII prison, Castle Wolfenstein, by gunning down any Nazi in your path. This 'granddaddy of FPS' defined the genre, and still holds up today.

Steam

bit.ly/steam467

Lurking in Steam's vast digital repository is a host of free and free-to-play games. First, you need to download Steam (bit.ly/steampowered467). Whatever itch you're nursing, you'll find a game to scratch it, from MMOs such as Neverwinter and Eve Online to puzzlers such as Gems of War. And that's before getting started on ever-popular classics including Dota 2 and Team Fortress 2. Mind you, Steam is a free-for-all platform and its quality control leaves a lot to be desired, so it's worth reading the reviews. Also, watch out for 'grindfest' games that rely heavily on pay-to-win mechanics.



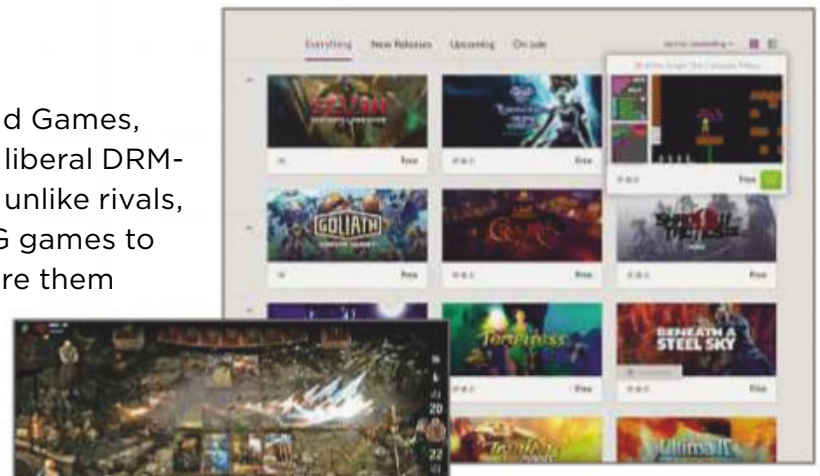
Don't miss...

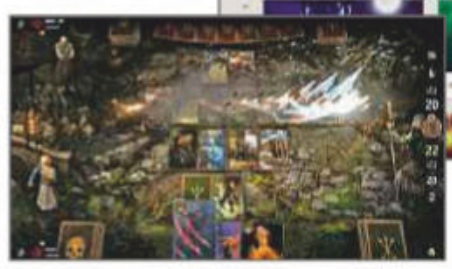
Fallout Shelter (bit.ly/fallout467) is a spin-off from Bethesda's apocalyptic RPG. The cartoony survival sim has you building a shelter while balancing resources to explore a devastated nuclear wasteland and fight off intruders. If you fancy a challenge, try the hardcore Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (bit.ly/csgo467).

GOG.com

bit.ly/gogcom467

GOG.com, formerly Good Old Games, won fans and plaudits for its liberal DRM-free policies – which means, unlike rivals, you can download your GOG games to any computer (and even share them with friends). Like Steam, you'll need to install the GOG Galaxy installer to get started (www.gog.com/galaxy). Unlike Steam, the catalogue of freebies isn't huge – no surprise given the emphasis on older and indie titles – although there's a pleasing number of 1990s point-and-click games. You'll also find a few demos and DLC packs, and the DVD-style extras included with games – such as comics, wallpapers and soundtracks – are a real win.





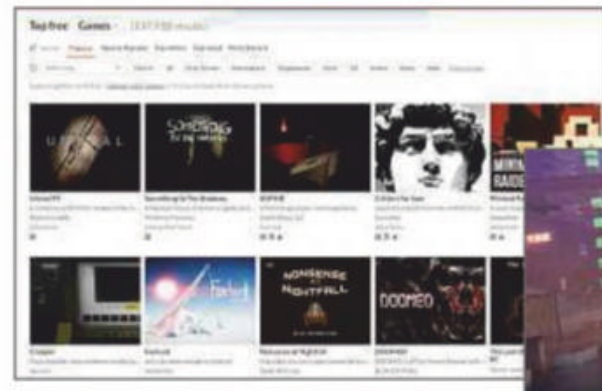
Don't miss...

It's a toss-up between Beneath a Steel Sky (bit.ly/steel467) – a dystopian sci-fi adventure from the team behind Broken Sword; and Gwent (bit.ly/gwent467) – an addictive turn-based card game duel first seen in seminal RPG The Witcher 3. See how the mood takes you.

Itch.io

bit.ly/itch467

Itch.io is the home of independent video games, from one-man bands to small studios. Games vary in quality, as well as length (expect many playthroughs to last 30 to 60 minutes), and there are more romantic 'visual novels' than the world needs. But scratch the surface and you'll find some spirited projects to occupy your time: check out the full and brilliant remake of the PlayStation's terrifying PT (bit.ly/pt467) or Minimal Raider (bit.ly/raid467), which looks like an old Tomb Raider game and plays like a new one. Most free titles let you support the developer by paying an optional 'fair price' for the game.



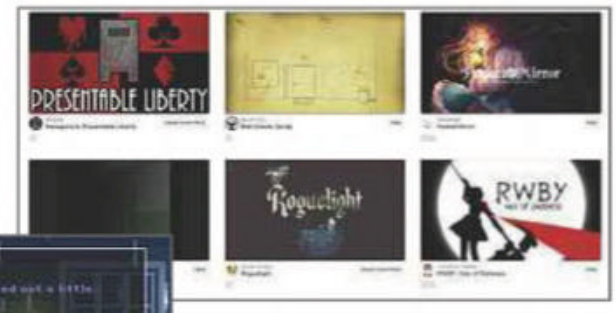
Don't miss...

NeonCode (bit.ly/neon467), a moody hour-long adventure inspired by Blade Runner, Miami Vice and TellTale's choose-your-own-adventure games. Made by one guy on his downtime, with its tongue planted firmly in its booze-addled cheek, it's a fun, neon-soaked noir.

Game Jolt

gamejolt.com

Game Jolt, like Itch.io, offers an electrifying library of independently developed games. And, good news for your wallet, many operate a 'free or name your price' system (bit.ly/freejolt467). The freedom for devs to upload their games means a platform loaded with real diversity; a heady mix of 8-bit-inspired platformers, PlayStation-style 3D games and impressively detailed first-person horror sims – a big gaming trend since Outlast and Layers of Fear. Play games in your browser or download them direct – but if you're planning on binge-gaming, grab the client (bit.ly/gjclient467), which installs multiple games and keeps them updated.



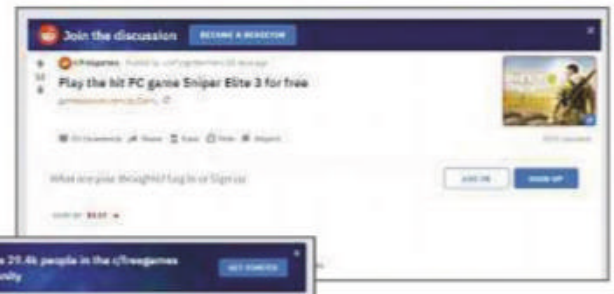
Don't miss...

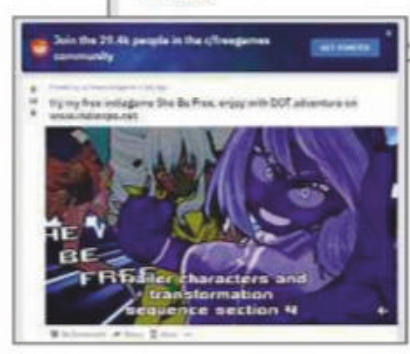
The Darkside Detective (bit.ly/dark467) has you solving six different cases in a retro-style point-and-click adventure with a supernatural twist. The absurdist humour recalls the heyday of Monkey Island and Grim Fandango.

Reddit's Free Games sub

bit.ly/free467

Why scour the internet for free games by yourself – it's a big old place, after all – when you can crowdsource that info? The Free Games subreddit sees bargain-brained Redditors regularly posting links to the latest free games. And not all of these can be found on trusty favourites like Steam and GOG, which leads to a few mobile titles and even hidden gems such as Sniper Elite 3 on GameSessions.com. Keep your eyes peeled for a few indie games, too, uploaded by developers to showcase their art. If it's a free game 'out in the wild', expect it to swiftly land here.





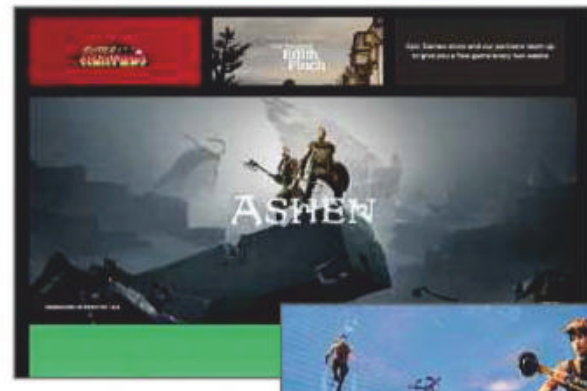
Don't miss...

Subscribing to this subreddit means you'll never miss out. Scammy or spammy games are downvoted into oblivion, allowing the cream to rise to the top. However, it's still advisable to research or run scans on any sites you don't recognise.

Epic Games Store

bit.ly/epic467

New kid on the block, the Epic Games Store, from the studio behind mega-hit Fortnite, offers gamers two free games every month. That's not an entirely kind-hearted measure – the platform wants to quickly build your Epic Games library to compete with Steam. Still, when they're dishing out freebies like the tough-as-nails Super Meat Boy and haunting walking simulator What Remains of Edith Finch, we can't complain. These free games change on a fortnightly basis. They won't be the newest, but expect high-quality titles – at least while Epic establishes itself as a Steam rival.



Don't miss...

Whatever's on offer. With a rotating line-up, check in every two weeks to see which games are up for grabs. While you're there, download Epic's very own Fortnite Battle Royale (bit.ly/fort467), which tasks you with eliminating 99 other players to become the sole surviving victor.

SUPPORT CHARITY WITH HUMBLE BUNDLE

Popularising the 'pay what you want' philosophy, Humble Bundle (humblebundle.com) offers some of the best deals on PC games. Loosely themed games are bundled together, and you select how much you're willing to pay (the average is about a tenner, but the more you spend, the bigger your bundle). It's a cheap way to build your games library – bundles include three to five games with offers updated every two weeks – while supporting creators, charities and Humble Bundle. You can even choose how much each charity receives.

Replace backgrounds in images

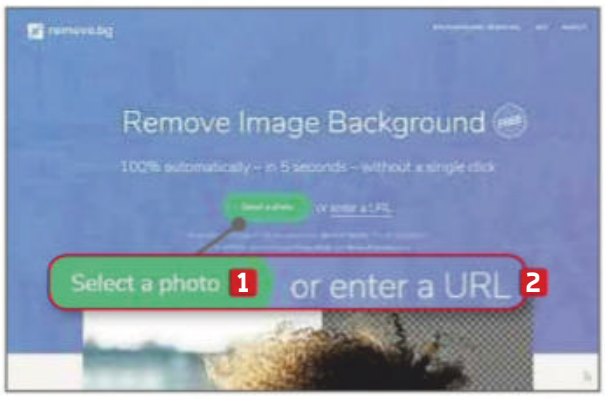
It's easy to replace the background of an image if it's spoiling an otherwise great photo. Here's how

Remove Image Background: www.remove.bg

20 mins | Windows 7,8,10

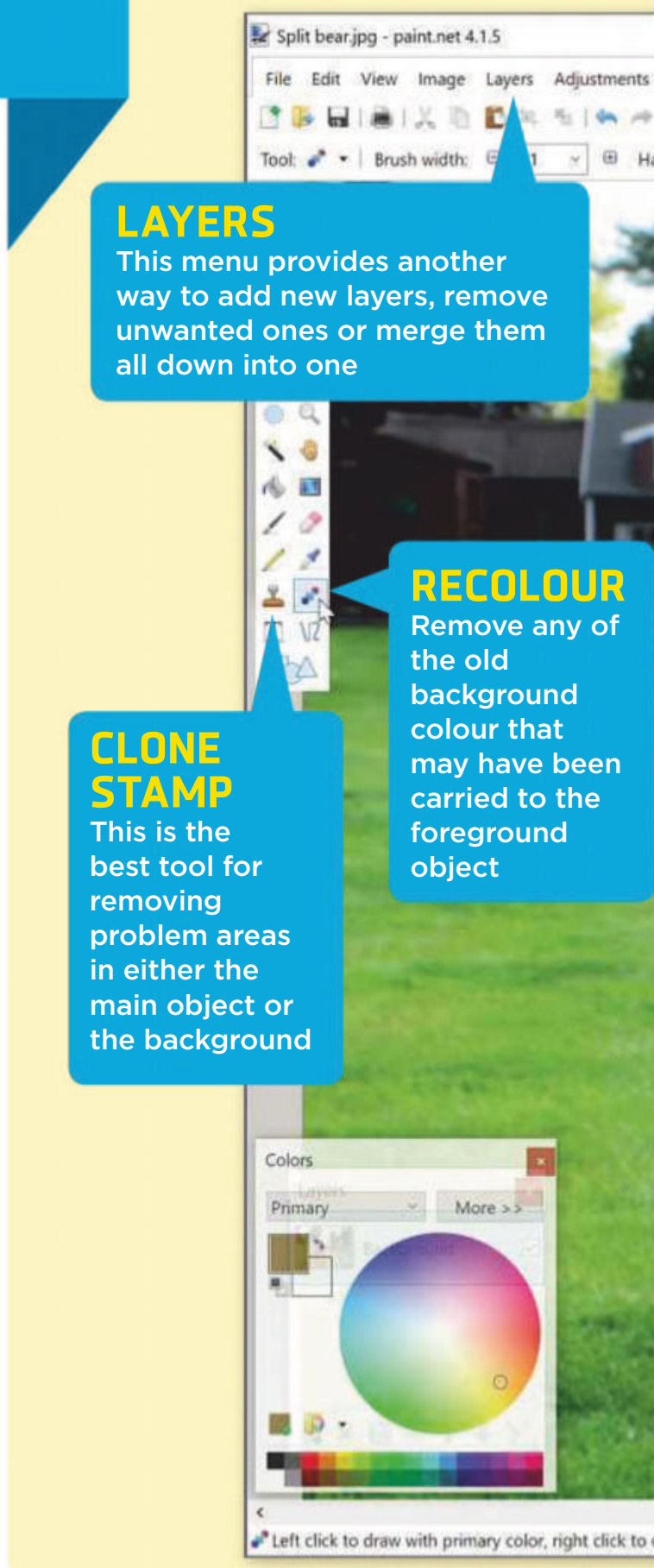
Bland or unattractive backgrounds can sometimes ruin what would otherwise be an amazing photo. Swapping the existing backdrop for something better can often yield superb results, and it's much easier to do than you might expect.

The new Remove Image Background web app does most of the hard work for you by identifying the main object and removing everything else automatically. Once that's done, you can use Paint.net (www.getpaint.net) to add in a new background of your choosing with minimal effort. You don't need any artistic ability and you can try as many replacement backgrounds as you like until you find one that works.



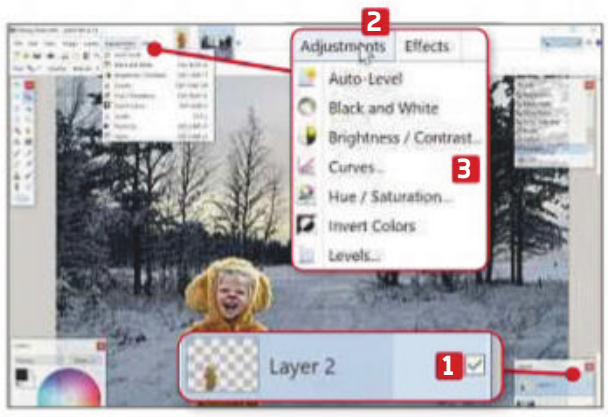
1 Remove Image Background (www.remove.bg) is incredibly easy to use and doesn't need you to do anything other than point it to your photo. You can choose an image from your hard drive by clicking 'Select a photo' 1 or grab one from the web by entering an image's URL. 2

2 Once you've selected the image you want to remove the background from, the web app will go to work and present you with the results 1 after a few seconds. It's usually very good. Save the background-free picture to your hard drive by clicking the Download button. 2

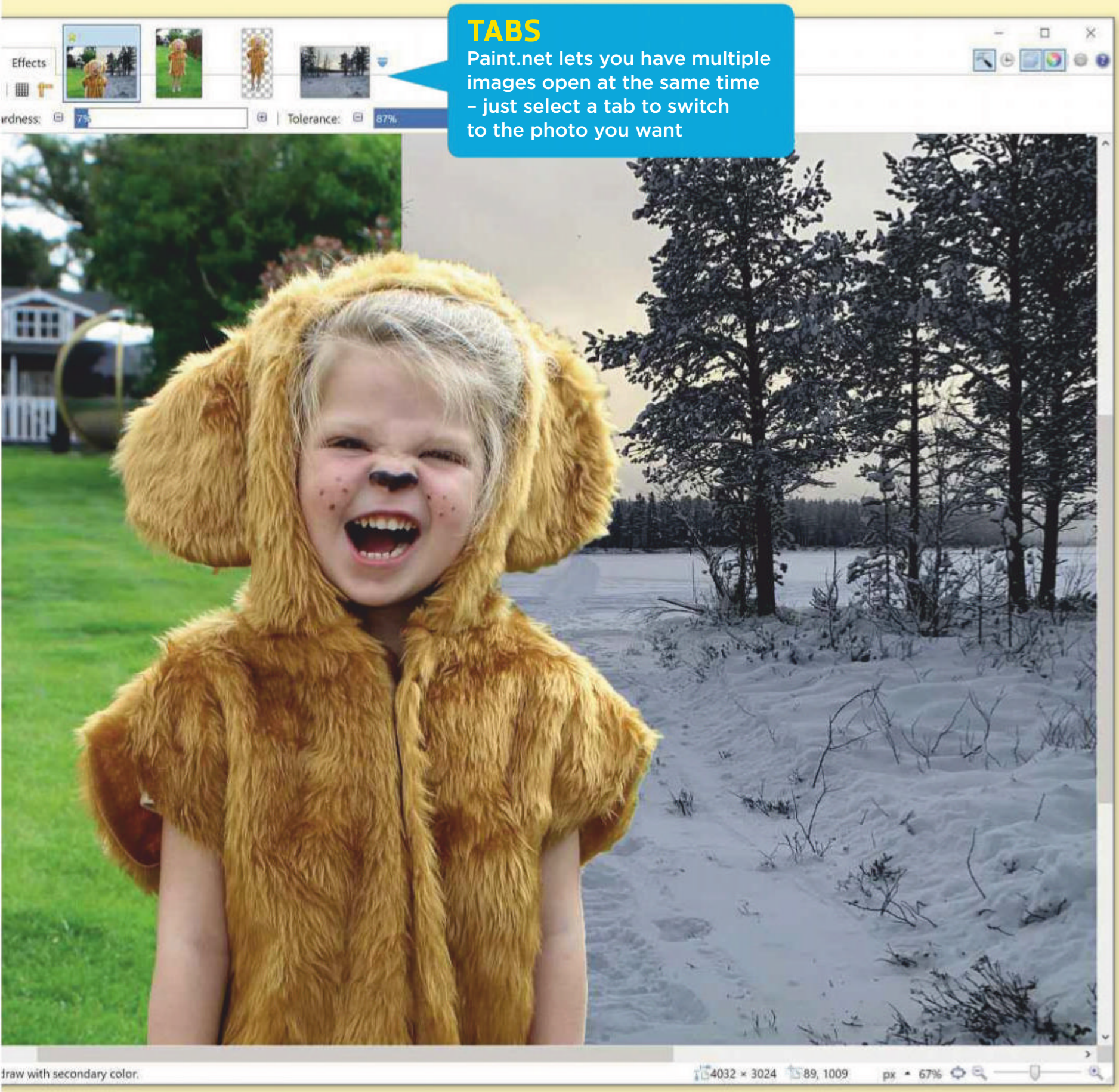


3 You can place your cut-out object on a different background using any image editor. For this stage, we'll be using Paint.net. Open the image you want to use for the background, then open the cut-out object in a new tab. Go to Edit, 1 Select All 2 (or press Ctrl+A) and then Edit, Copy 3 (or Ctrl+C).

4 Switch to the background image tab, then select Edit, Paste 1 or Edit, 'Paste into New Layer'. 2 The latter option is the best because it gives you more flexibility. Your object will appear in the image. 3 Use the Move tool 4 to place it in position, then resize it using the handles. 5

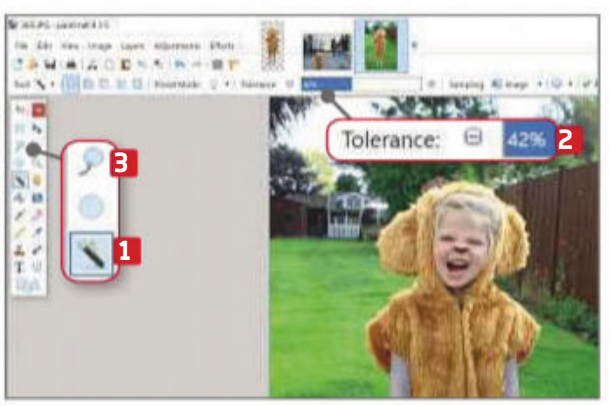


5 With the object layer still selected on the right, 1 go to Adjustments 2 and use tools such as Brightness/Contrast, Curves, Hue/Saturation and Levels 3 to adjust how the object looks, making sure it matches the new background as closely as possible. You won't be able to do much about the lighting direction.

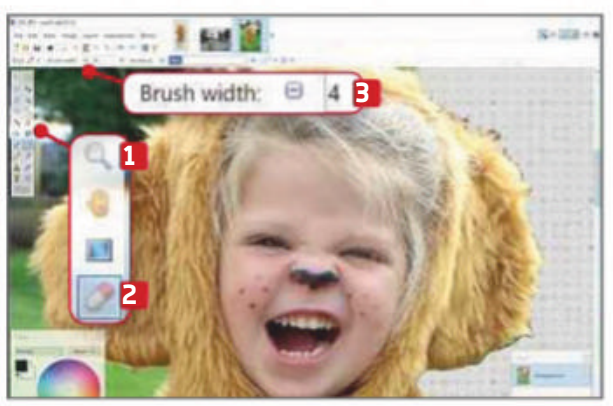


TABS
Paint.net lets you have multiple images open at the same time – just select a tab to switch to the photo you want

6 If parts of the old background are visible, use the Eraser tool 1 to remove them. Click the Merge Layer Down button 2 at the bottom of the Layer pane. You now have a single image with your object in place. Go to Edit, Deselect to remove the selection. Make any additional tweaks to the image.



7 If you're not getting enough accuracy from Remove Image Background, you can use Paint.net to strip out the backdrop instead. Open the image in the editor and either use the Magic Wand tool 1 to select the item (you'll need to adjust the Tolerance) 2 or the Lasso Select tool. 3



8 Another, much easier option – which works best with hard-to-select objects – is to use the Zoom tool 1 to get in close, then remove the background with the Eraser. 2 Adjust the brush width 3 as required. A smaller size will allow you to remove the background more accurately around the object.

How SAFE is your Android device?

SAFE: bit.ly/safe467 | 20 mins | Android 4+

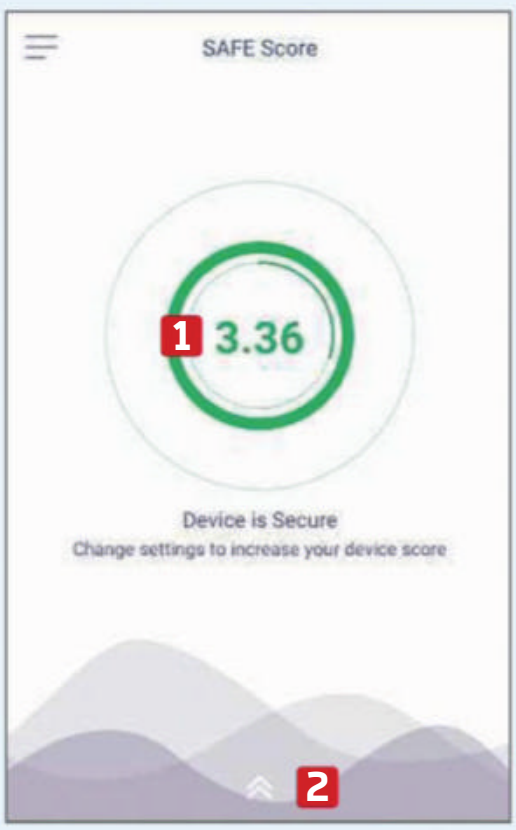
Is your Android phone riddled with security risks? Or are you just suffering cyber-paranoia? At a time when cybersecurity is rarely out of the news, it's worth fully securing all your devices, not just your PC. Enter the SAFE app – 'Security Assessment Framework for Everyone'. Its premise is simple: the higher your SAFE score, the more secure your device. The app rates your current phone or tablet set-up using international security standards and, with its helpful, traffic light-coded read-outs, one glance is all you need to track your security status.

But there's more to SAFE than just a basic security analysis. The app is loaded with security-focused advice, making it easy to take swift action to lock down and secure your Android device.

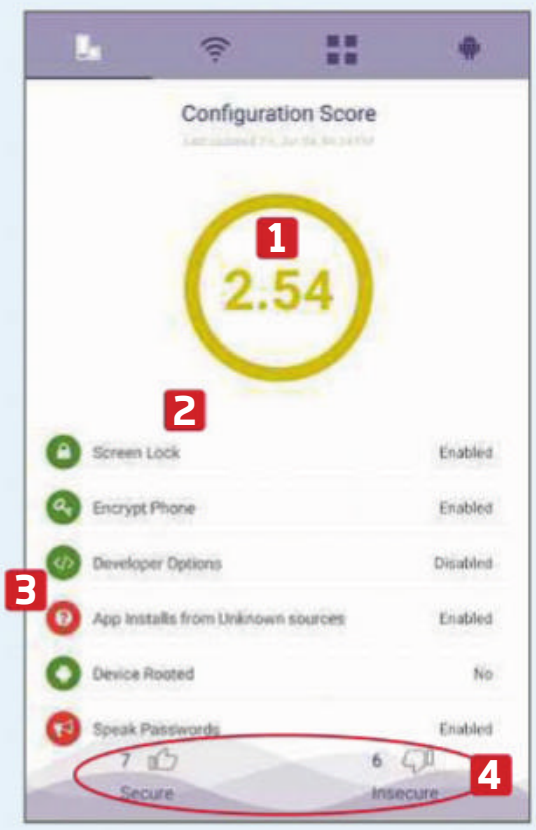
EXPERT TIP

Steve Clark says

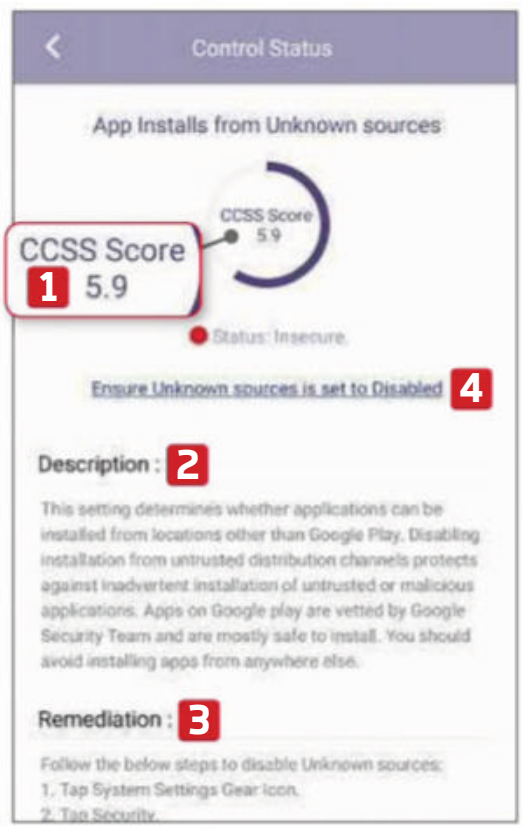
When running SAFE, you'll see a persistent icon in the notification area. As a test, pull down the notification bar and switch your Bluetooth on or off. Your SAFE score should update in real-time to reflect the changing settings. It's worth keeping an eye on this icon, particularly when downloading new apps or tweaking certain phone settings, to stay wise to risks and threats as they appear on your phone or tablet.



1 After tapping through the tutorial screens, SAFE analyses your apps and presents your SAFE score, 1 between 0.01 and 5.00. This overall score is derived from individual benchmarks for your phone's configuration, connection, apps and operating system settings. Scroll up 2 from the SAFE score screen to see an overview for each of these. Tap any section for more detail.

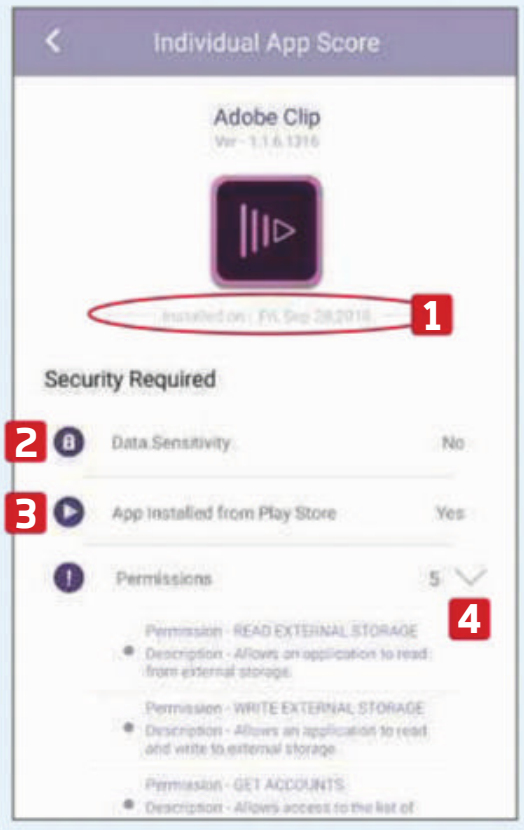


2 Start with your 'Configuration score'. You're presented with the phone's score, out of five. 1 Below this, the app displays a list of your current settings, 2 with a red or green icon beside each one. 3 Green means your setting is optimal, while red highlights serious issues. Use the thumbs up and thumbs down to toggle between viewing secure and insecure settings. 4

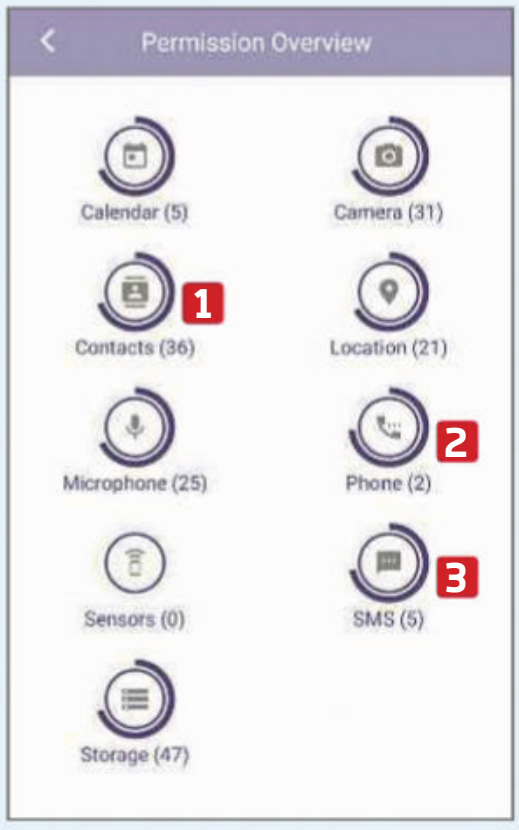


3 To increase your phone's security, tap into any red insecure setting. This shows the setting's Common Configuration Scoring System (CCSS) score, 1 as well as describing the setting's impact on security. 2 It also recommends remedies for potential security risks. 3 Below your security status is a link: 4 click this to open the relevant Settings option, where you can carry out SAFE's suggested 'remediation'.

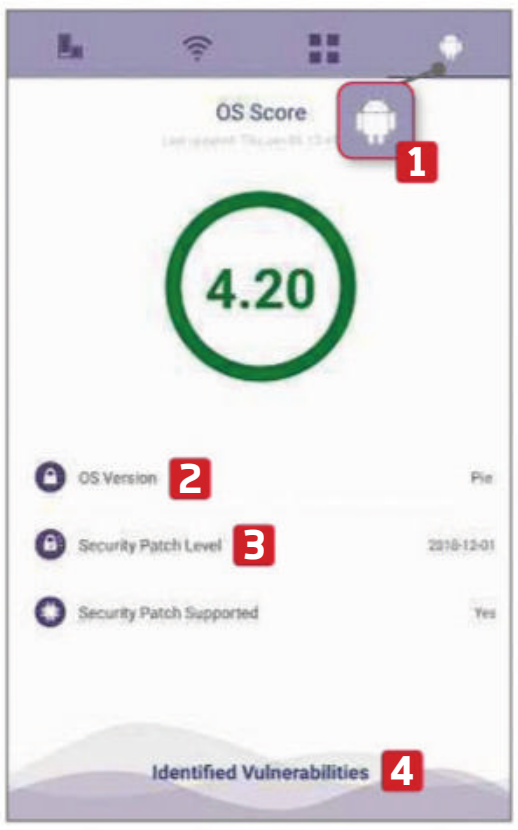
4 Swipe left or tap the Wi-Fi icon 1 to check your Connection Score. This section is similar to Configuration in Step 2. Its settings list is bulleted with green or red icons 2 which you can tap for suggested solutions and a link to the connection's settings. Although the app penalises use of Bluetooth 3 and NFC, 4 you can leave them on if you regularly use them.



5 Tapping the Boxes icon or swiping left again brings up your App Score. Tap any app for information including installation date, 1 whether it accesses sensitive data 2 and where it came from 3 – if you don't recognise the app or its current details, investigate further. Pressing the arrow beside Permissions 4 opens a list of permissions granted, with useful descriptions.

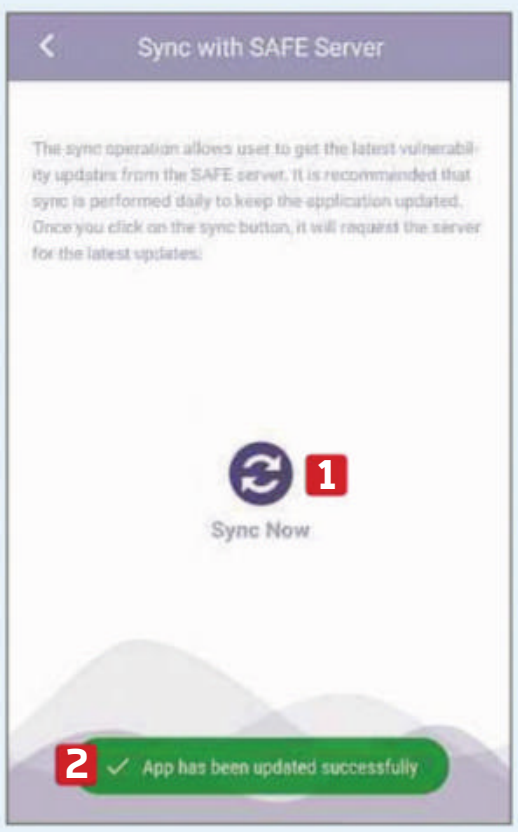


6 The Permissions Overview sits at the foot of the App Score screen: tap it to reveal core permission icons. Tap the circles to see which apps can, for example, access contacts, 1 use your phone 2 or read text messages. 3 You can revoke permissions by opening your phone's Settings and going to 'Apps & notifications'. Tap the offending app, followed by Permissions, then toggle individual permissions On or Off.

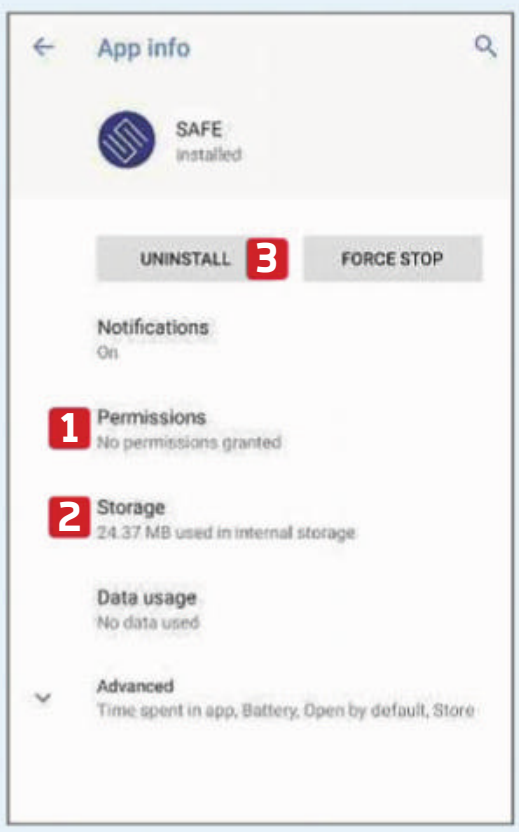


7 Go to OS Score – its icon is the Android robot 1 – to gain an understanding of your system setup. Beneath your rating are details of your operating system 2 and the current level of security support. 3 Towards the bottom, tap Identified Vulnerabilities, 4 which notes specific weaknesses in your operating system. If the problem cited has an 'i' button, you can see more information about it.

8 Tap the Back button to return to the main screen, then tap the three-line menu button and go to 'App Alive in Background'. It's set to Off by default. Toggling the switch 1 to On lets the app run even when it's not open, 2 so SAFE can constantly monitor your phone as you get new apps. This means trading a little battery life for keeping up to date with security checks.



9 Back on the menu bar, there's an option called 'Sync with Server'. Performing this task regularly (the app suggests daily) keeps the app, and its growing database of threats and vulnerabilities, up to date. Press the Sync Now button 1 to begin. A pop-up reads 'App has been updated successfully' once syncing is complete. 2

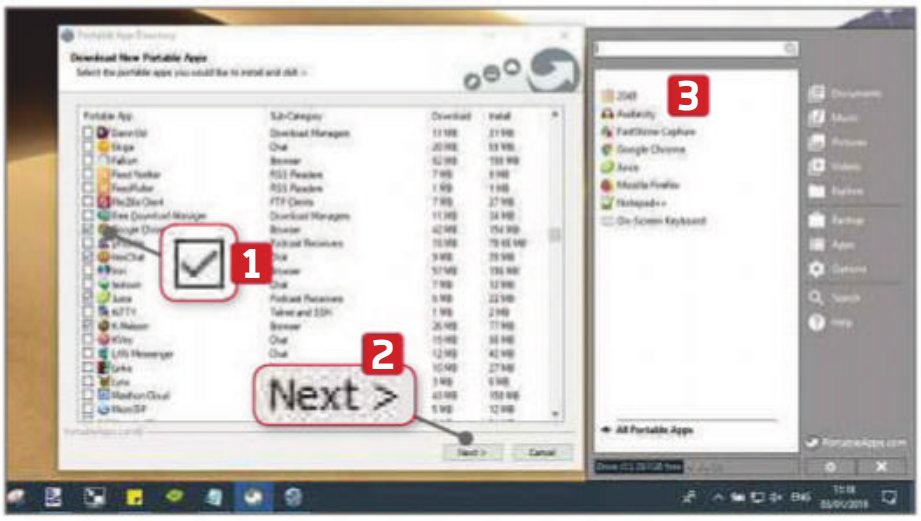


10 If you're concerned that your phone is infected with malware, spyware or worse, go to your phone's Settings, then 'Apps & notifications' and choose 'See all apps'. Tap the suspect app and check Permissions 1 to see what information the app is able to see. Tap Storage, 2 then clear both the cache and storage data. Finally, press Back and select Uninstall. 3 Report the app via the Google Play Store.

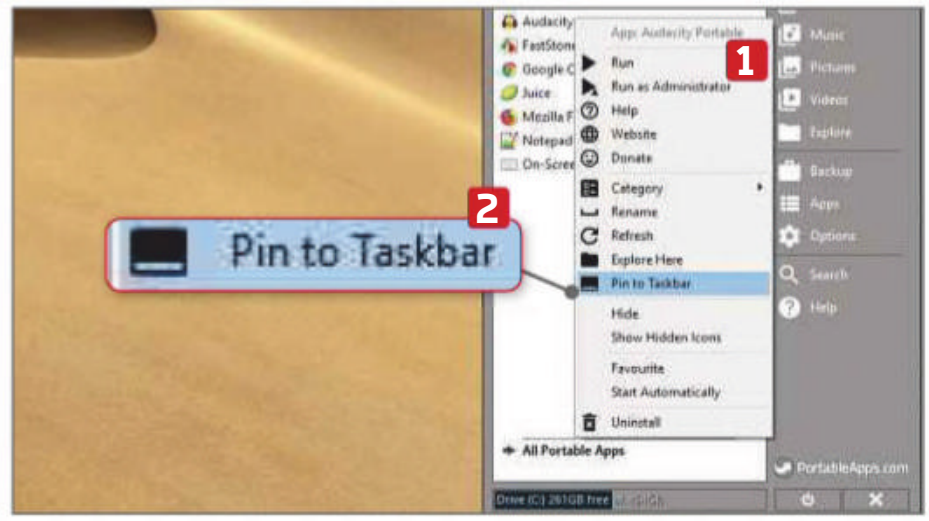
Use your favourite free programs on any PC

PortableApps boasts that, by using the platform, "every PC becomes your PC" – just download the launcher to a USB stick or cloud storage and take your favourite apps with you – wherever you go. The tool's latest update adds a host of new features, from generating troubleshooting logs to expanded options, making it easier to manage and use your chosen portable software on any computer.

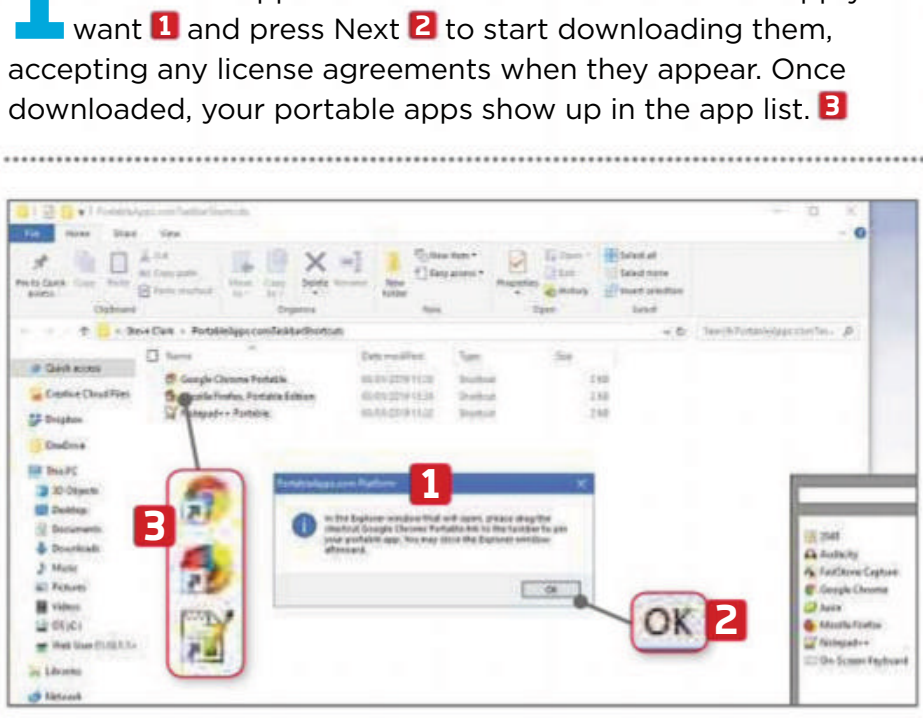
PortableApps: portableapps.com | 10 mins | Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8, 10



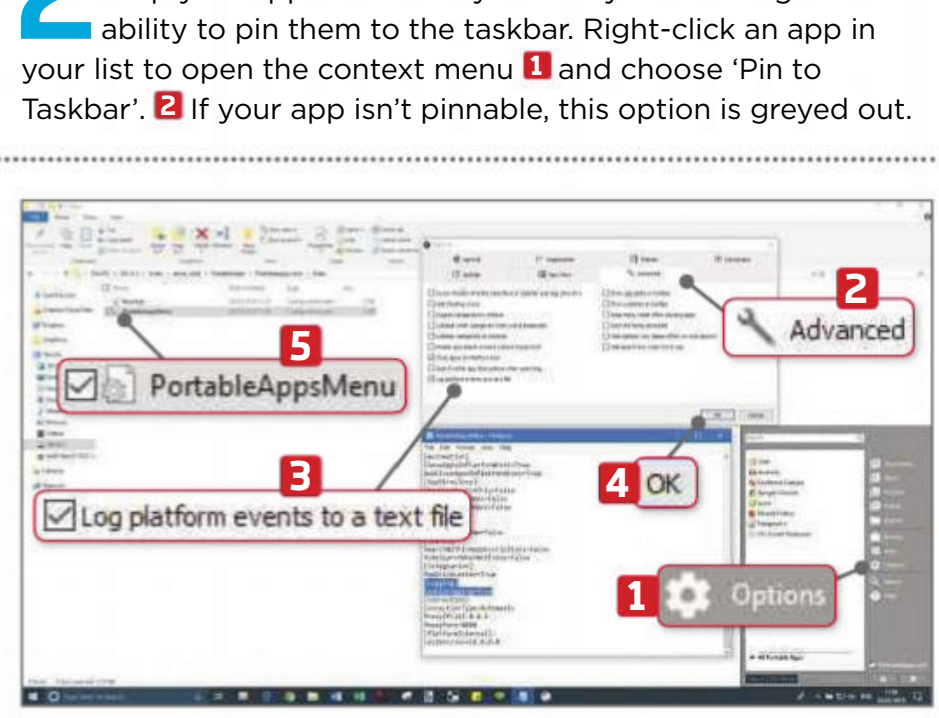
1 The first time you use PortableApps, you're prompted to browse the app store. Tick the boxes beside each app you want 1 and press Next 2 to start downloading them, accepting any license agreements when they appear. Once downloaded, your portable apps show up in the app list. 3



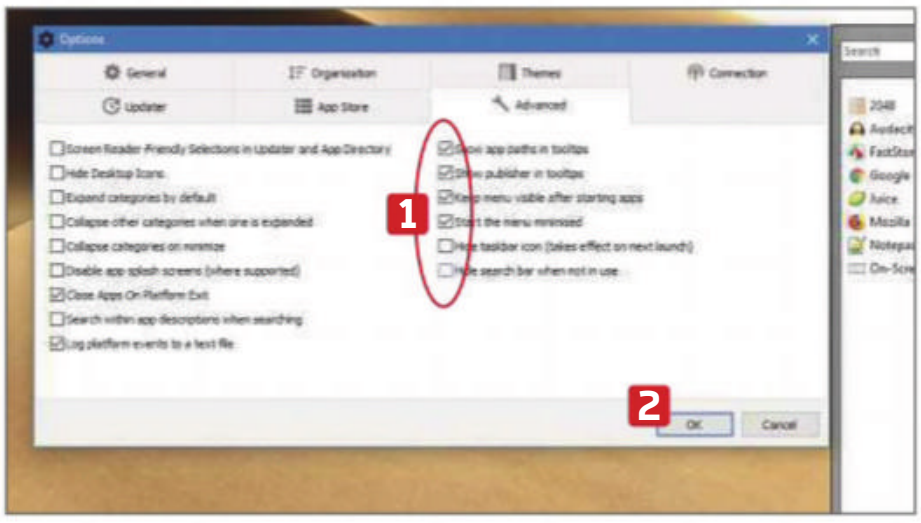
2 The latest update to the PortableApps launcher lets you keep your apps within easy reach by introducing the ability to pin them to the taskbar. Right-click an app in your list to open the context menu 1 and choose 'Pin to Taskbar'. 2 If your app isn't pinnable, this option is greyed out.



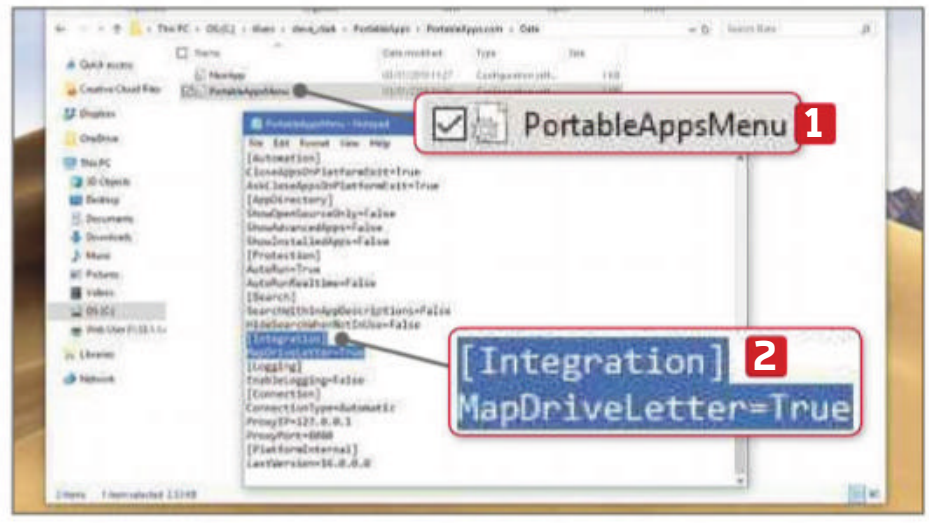
3 A pop-up alerts you that the Explorer window will open. 1 Click OK. 2 Doing so creates an app shortcut file for Windows. With File Explorer open, drag your app icon 3 from the folder down to the taskbar. Close File Explorer and repeat this step for all the apps you want to pin.



4 To enable platform logging – to inspect crashes and unexpected errors – open the launcher and click Options, 1 Advanced. 2 Tick 'Log platform events to a text file' 3 and press OK. 4 Alternatively, click the PortableAppsMenu.ini file 5 in PortableApps\PortableApps.com\Data.



5 The reorganised Options menu adds a handful of extras, such as 'Show app paths in tooltips' and 'Start the menu minimised'. Go to Options, Advanced (as in Step 4) to see all the new options listed in the right-hand column. Tick each box 1 and click OK 2 to enable.

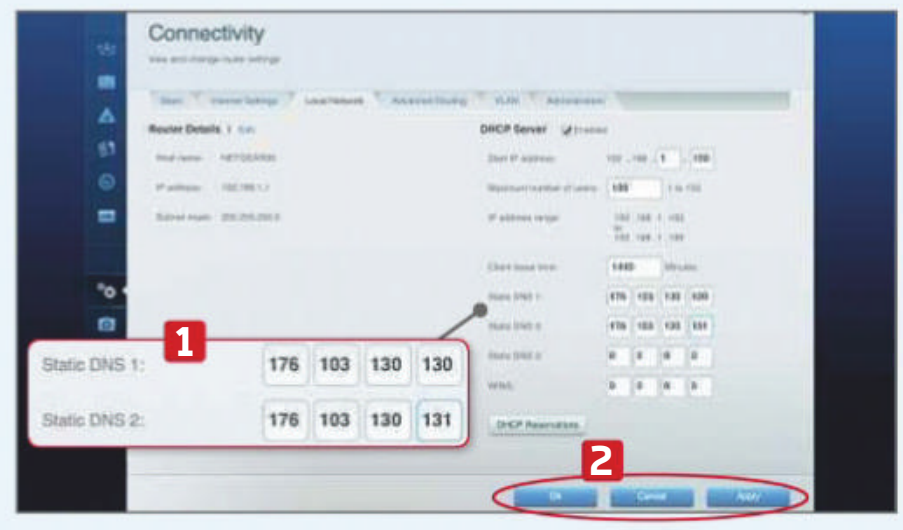


6 PortableApps can be kept on a network drive to use on your networked PCs, and set to automatically map itself to a drive letter (P:). Close PortableApps and open its INI file 1 (see Step 4). If it's not there, add `[Integration]` press Enter and type `MapDriveLetter=True` 2 then save and close.

Block ads on all devices with AdGuard DNS

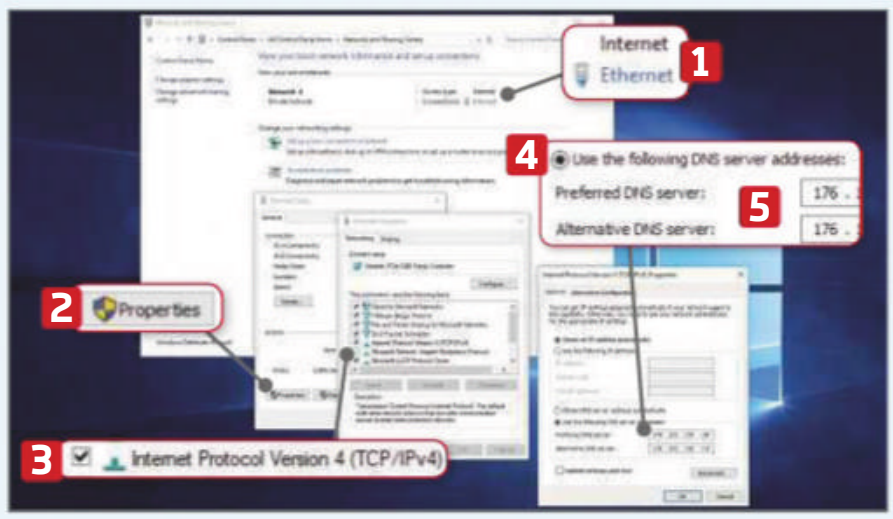
Ad-blocking specialist AdGuard has launched a new DNS service that's designed to stop ads before they reach your device, protecting your privacy and speeding up your internet connection. There are two free versions available: Standard blocks ads (use the DNS addresses 176.103.130.130 and 176.103.130.131); and Family also blocks adult websites (use 176.103.130.132 and 176.103.130.134).

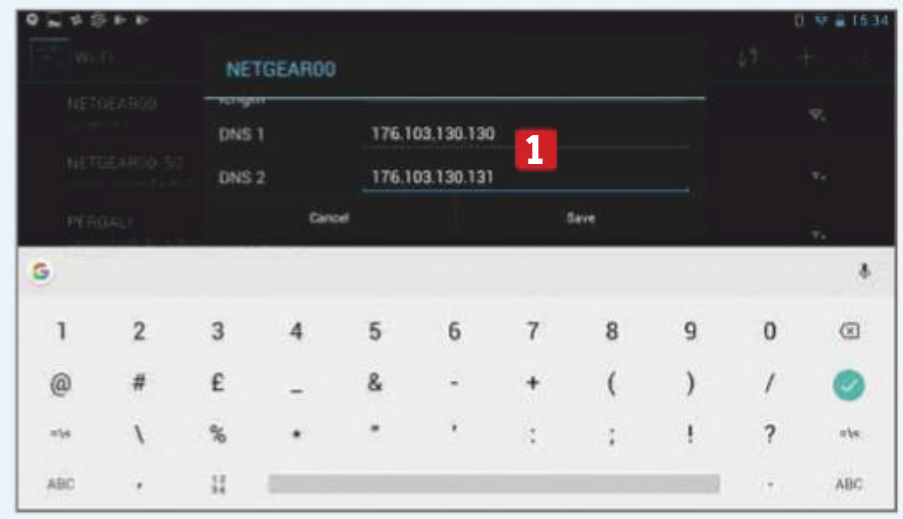
AdGuard DNS: adguard.com | 10 mins | Any device, many routers



1 To set up AdGuard DNS on your router, open its settings [1] by typing its address in your browser (type `ipconfig` in the Command Prompt and find the Default Gateway). Log in with the admin username and password (defaults can be found at www.routerpasswords.com and setuprouter.com).

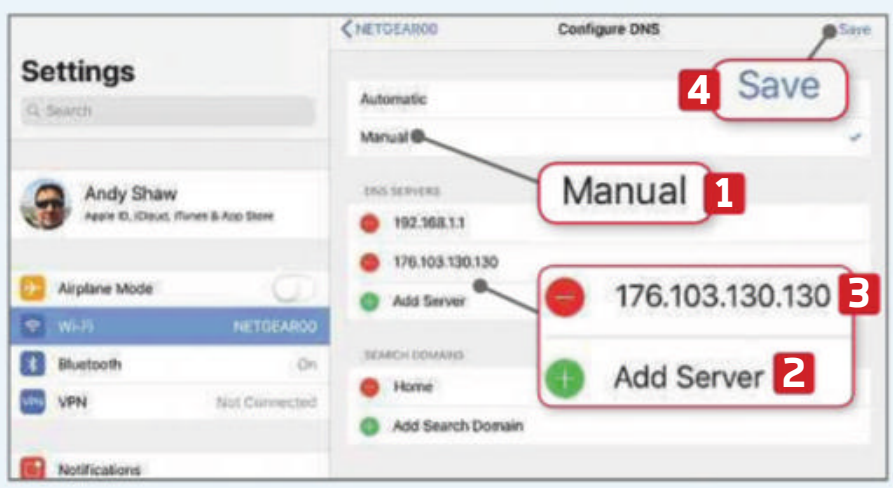
2 In the DNS section, type either the Standard or Family IP addresses in the first two slots. [1] Save the settings by clicking Apply or OK. [2] Your router may also have a mobile app capable of this. Others, such as Sky Hub, don't let you change their DNS settings at all – follow Steps 3 to 5.

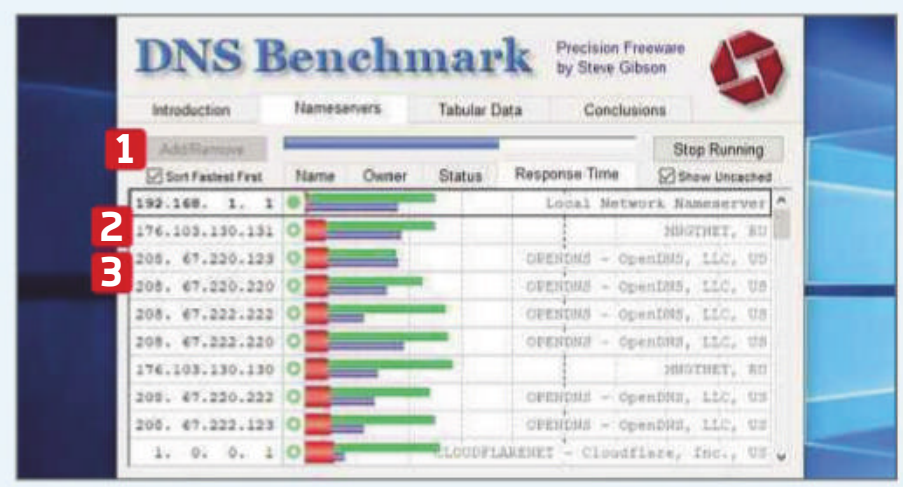




3 To install AdGuard DNS in Windows 10, go to Control Panel, 'Network and Sharing Centre'. Click the link for your connection, [1] then Properties, [2] Internet Protocol Version 4 [3] and Properties. Select 'Use the following DNS...' [4] and enter the addresses. [5] Click OK and close everything.

4 On Android, go to Settings, Wi-Fi, then tap and hold your current connection and choose 'Modify network'. At the bottom, tick 'Show advanced options', then scroll further to 'IP settings' and select Static. Scroll again and enter your desired addresses next to DNS 1 and DNS 2. [1]





5 In iOS, go to Settings and tap your Wi-Fi connection. Tap Configure DNS and choose Manual. [1] Tap Add Server, [2] enter one of the addresses from the Standard or Family options [3] and tap Enter. Tap Save [4] when you've finished.

6 It's worth checking that your chosen DNS isn't slowing you down. Download and run GRC DNS Benchmark (bit.ly/grcdnsbm467). Click Add/Remove, [1] type the new DNS addresses and click Run Benchmark. The fastest are at the top. In our test, AdGuard [2] is as fast as OpenDNS. [3]

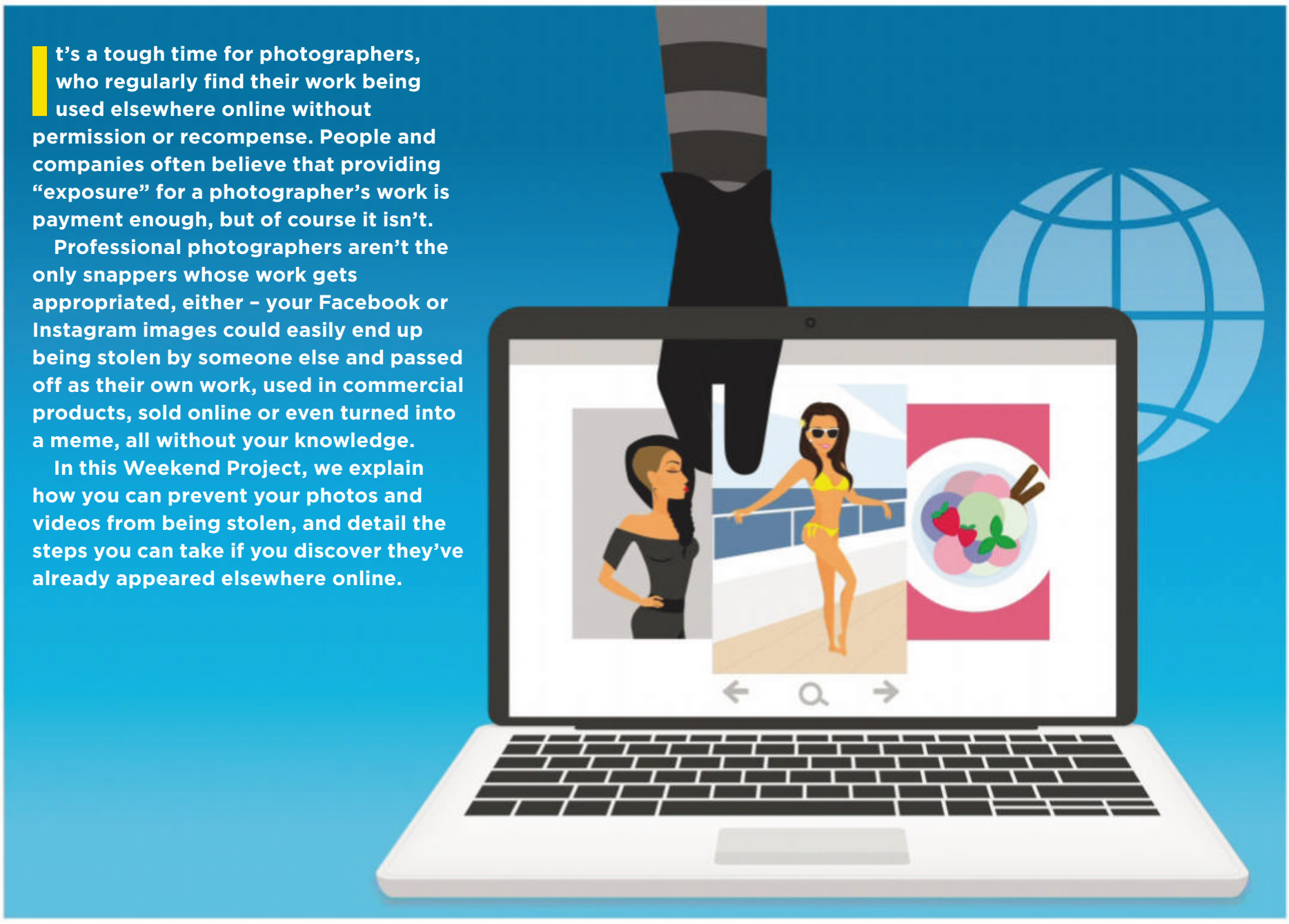
Weekend Project

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

How to...

Stop people stealing your photos and videos

Protect your content online. **Wayne Williams** explains how to ensure that your creativity isn't poached for other people's purposes



It's a tough time for photographers, who regularly find their work being used elsewhere online without permission or recompense. People and companies often believe that providing "exposure" for a photographer's work is payment enough, but of course it isn't.

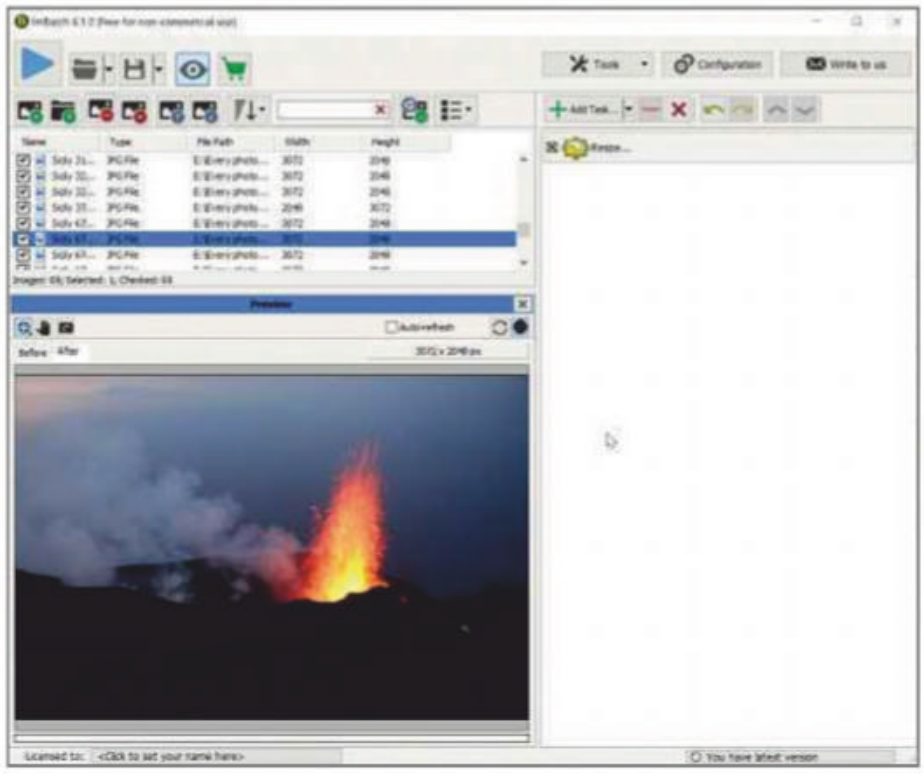
Professional photographers aren't the only snappers whose work gets appropriated, either – your Facebook or Instagram images could easily end up being stolen by someone else and passed off as their own work, used in commercial products, sold online or even turned into a meme, all without your knowledge.

In this Weekend Project, we explain how you can prevent your photos and videos from being stolen, and detail the steps you can take if you discover they've already appeared elsewhere online.

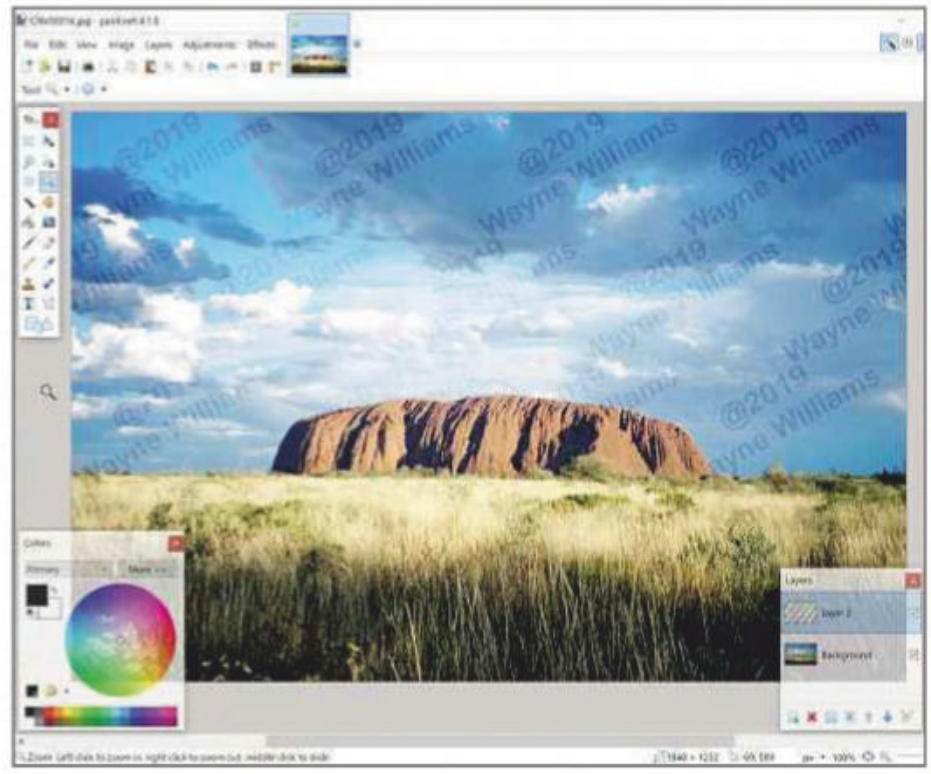
Check terms and conditions before uploading

Some websites and social networks reserve the right to use your photos for their own purposes (which may include using them commercially or selling them on to other people) without seeking your permission or even notifying you of what's happening. Always check the site's terms and conditions to make sure you know what you're getting into.

Facebook and Instagram (which is owned by Facebook) state in their Terms of Use: "We do not claim ownership of your content, but you grant us a license to use it. Nothing is changing about your rights in your content. We do not claim ownership of your content that you post on or through the Service. Instead, when you share, post or upload content that is covered by intellectual property rights (like photos or videos) on or in connection with our Service, you hereby grant to us a non-exclusive, royalty-free, transferable, sub-licensable, worldwide license to host, use, distribute, modify, run, copy, publicly perform or display, translate, and create derivative works of your content (consistent with your privacy and application settings). You can end this license anytime by deleting your content or account. However, content will continue to appear if you



Tools like ImBatch (www.highmotionsoftware.com) make it easy to resize whole folders' worth of photos



You can add a watermark in a new layer in Paint.net. Select the Overlay blending mode and lower the text's opacity

shared it with others and they have not deleted it".

Don't say you haven't been warned!

Resize your images before uploading

When you view images on the web – either on your PC, tablet or mobile phone – you probably aren't seeing them at their actual size. The website or service you upload them to will resize them to suit the layout. However, the full-sized version can often be revealed by right-clicking the picture and selecting 'View Image' or 'Open image in new tab'. Once this larger version is on screen, it can easily be downloaded and used. So, for example, the online marketplace Etsy (www.etsy.com) sells prints of images, among other things, but image thieves could use this viewing trick to print their own versions for free.

The simple way to avoid this is to resize images before you upload them. Find out the maximum size they'll be displayed at and ensure you upload them at that size or smaller. An image with a width of 400 pixels can be blown up to 500 pixels or more, with little obvious loss of quality.

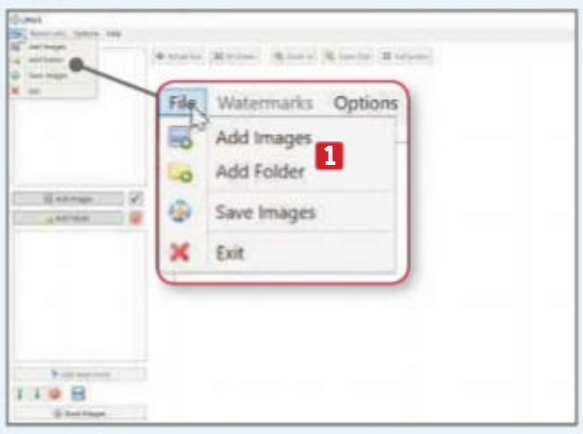
You can also mess around with the resolution and compression level. It's less likely that someone will steal one of your photos, especially to replicate in print, if they can't find a pin-sharp, high-resolution version of it.

Protect your media with a watermark

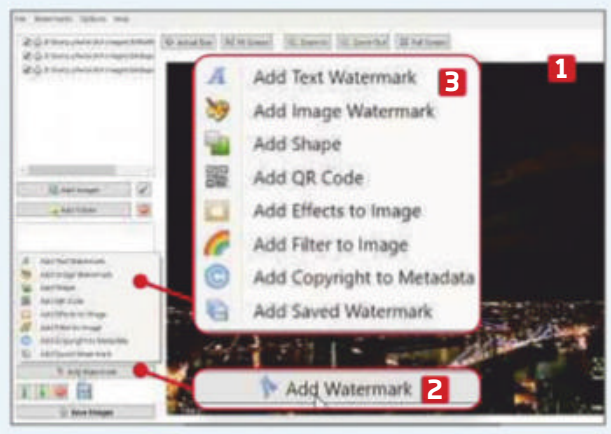
Lowering the size and quality of a photo isn't always a practical solution. If you're trying to sell images online, or want people to marvel at a landscape you've taken, you'll probably want to present it in the best light possible. This is where watermarking your photos can prove useful. You can offer your images full size, yet stop people from claiming them as their own by having your name stamped across them. Most watermarks are partially transparent, so they can be seen and read, but won't fully obscure the image beneath.

You have the option of adding a small watermark to a corner or edge of your photo, but it's worth remembering that this can be easily cropped out or removed using the Heal Brush or Clone tool of an image editor. For that reason, either make sure you place your watermark somewhere important in the

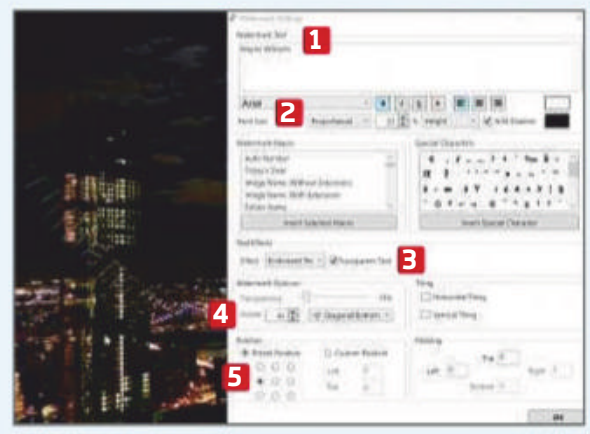
MINI WORKSHOP | Watermark your photos before sharing them online



1 You can manually add a watermark to your photos using any image-editing tool, or opt for a dedicated watermarking solution, such as uMark (bit.ly/umark467). To use it, click File and select Add Images, or Add Folder 1 if you want to batch-protect multiple photos. The free version can protect up to 50 images at a time.



2 Click a photo to see a preview of it. 1 Click the Add Watermark button 2 and you'll be presented with a number of options. 3 You can add a text or an image watermark, as well as add shapes, a QR code and effects. You can also add copyright details to a photo's metadata.



3 Select the option to add a text watermark, then enter some words. 1 You can change the font, 2 apply effects 3 and rotate the text. 4 Pick a preset position. 5 The text will appear on the preview. Tiling is only available in the paid-for edition, which costs $29 (around £23).

Broadband Deals

Call FREE on 0800 083 2357 to switch your broadband

	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	TalkTalk For Everyone	TalkTalk: Fast Broadband	£17.95 (£27 after 18 months)	18 months	11Mbs avg. speed	∞ unlimited	CHEAPEST £215.40
2	sky	Sky: Broadband Unlimited	£18.00 (£30 after 18 months)	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited *	£216.00
3	First Utility broadband	First Utility: First Broadband	£18.99	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£227.88
4	Virgin media	Virgin Media: Player Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£32.00 (£56 after 12 months)	12 months	108Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£384.00

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details
* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Ofcom

Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 7 January 2019.

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

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

SNEAK PREVIEW!

Computer active

SECRET FREE PC FIXES...
...so-called 'experts' want you to pay for

- Schedule your downloads to stop them slowing your PC
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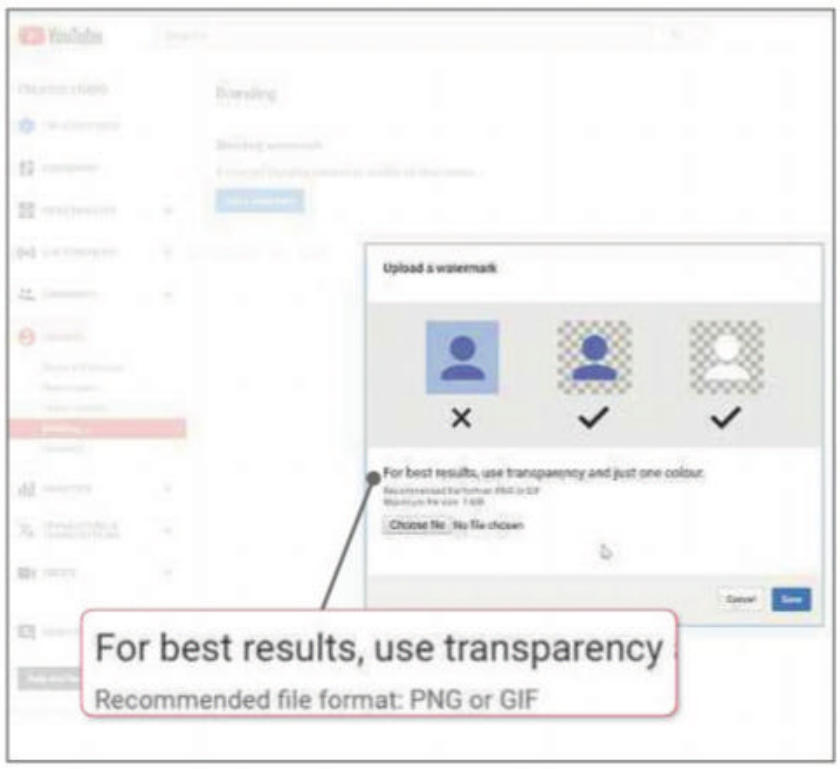
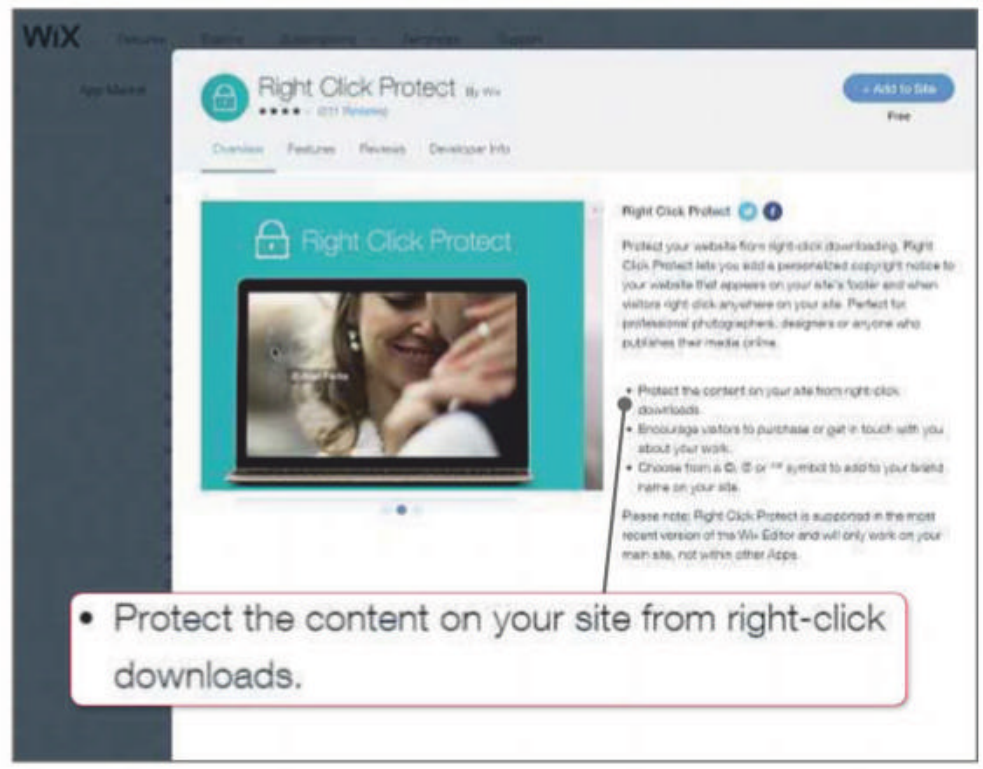


YouTube lets you add branding to your videos to prevent them being copied and posted elsewhere



Site-design tools such as Wix (www.wix.com) provide tools you can use to disable right-click viewing and copying

photo, where it can't be easily removed, or opt for watermark tiling, where the text repeats all the way across your image.

For a simple guide to adding a watermark, see our Mini Workshop on page 59.

Add a logo to your videos

In the same way that you can add a watermark to your photos, you can add a logo to your videos to stop them being stolen and reposted online. Many good-quality video editors provide the option to do this, and YouTube also lets you protect your work in this way.

Sign into your channel, then go to bit.ly/ytbr467 and click 'Add a watermark'. Upload an image to use as your logo. Ideally, it should be transparent and just one colour. This channel branding will appear on all your uploaded videos across devices.

Disable right-click downloads

It's not really possible to stop a determined thief from stealing your photos because whatever blocks you put in place can likely be circumvented one way or another. Website creators will give you the option to disable right-click, which prevents visitors from downloading an image via the context menu. However, it can't stop them taking a screenshot of your work or downloading it through the page's source code. Some right-click disablers can be killed simply by turning off JavaScript.

What to do if your photos are stolen

If you find your photos have been stolen and used elsewhere, try contacting the person who stole them. It's plausible that they had no idea where the photos originated from or weren't aware that you would be anything less than delighted about having your images shared. In our experience, this is often the best solution.

However, that doesn't mean that everyone will be willing to do the right thing. Newspapers, magazines and other media outlets will often blank you, talk about how the image is in the public domain or offer up "exposure" in lieu of payment. They know they can get away with it, because few photographers are willing to go to court to resolve the matter.

The UK government's Intellectual Property Office (bit.ly/ipo467) offers a wealth of advice designed to help you understand what to do next. We'd particularly recommend the PDF on copyright notices, which you'll find at bit.ly/ipopdf467, and which provides a lot of useful information.

The IPO also offers a mediation service which you can use as an alternative to going to court. However, the average six-hour session costs £450 – a staggering sum that puts it well out of the reach of most casual shutterbugs.

CREATIVE COMMONS

In most cases, when you take a photo, you own the copyright to it. If you want to share an image without losing control over it, you could turn to Creative Commons (creativecommons.org), which offers free, easy-to-use copyright licences that let you specify what can and can't be done with your work. This includes allowing adaptations and commercial uses. Popular sites including Wikipedia, Flickr, YouTube and Vimeo all recognise Creative Commons licences.

Creative Commons makes it easy to share your work under a copyright licence that suits you

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Web User Masterclass

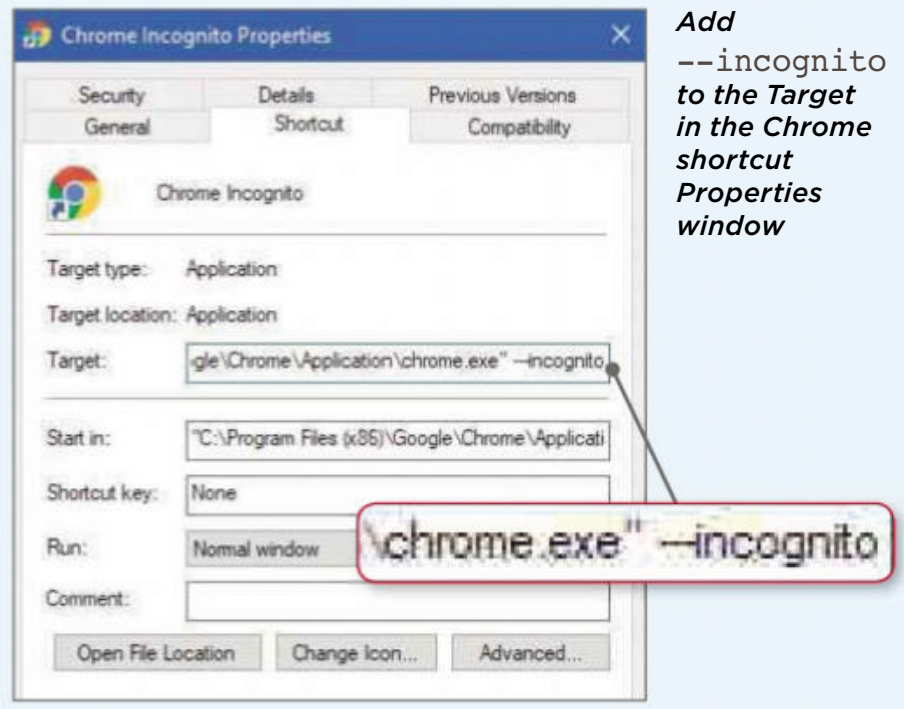
Access hidden command-line tools in Chrome and Firefox

Create an incognito shortcut

Many advanced features in Chrome can be accessed using command-line switches. These are extra items that can be added to the command that starts the browser. It's possible to type these commands into the Windows Run box or a command prompt, but it's easier to use a desktop shortcut. Open Explorer and go to:

C:\Program Files (x86)\Google\Chrome\Application

Right-click Chrome, select 'Send to', then 'Desktop (create shortcut)'. Right-click the desktop icon and select Properties. The Target box is the command that starts Chrome and command-line switches are added to the end (after the closing speech marks). For example, at the end, add a space and type `--incognito` (that's a double dash). Right-click the shortcut and name it Chrome Incognito, then double click it to open an incognito browser.



Add `--incognito` *to the Target in the Chrome shortcut Properties window*

Maximise Chrome

If you work on a laptop with a small screen, you might want to start Chrome with the browser window maximised. Add a space, then add `--start-maximized` to the end of the Target box in a Chrome shortcut.

Open websites like apps

A normal Chrome browser window has a title bar with tabs, a bookmarks bar and an address box with toolbar. You can hide all this for a simpler, cleaner browser interface that's perfect for web services such as email and OneDrive.

Create a desktop shortcut to Chrome, then right-click it and select Properties. Click in the Target box and add a space at the end of the command, followed by `--app="https://mail.google.com"`. Click OK and then try it. Google Mail opens in a clean and simple window, just like an app.

Replace the URL with any website to open it as you would an app. It doesn't work for general browsing because there's no address box to enter a new website address, but it's perfect for some sites such as keep.google.com.

Continue browsing

Sometimes you want to continue exactly what you were doing the last time Chrome was open, including opening all the tabs that were present when you closed the browser. Go to the Chrome menu, open Settings and in the 'On start-up' section, select 'Continue where you left off'.

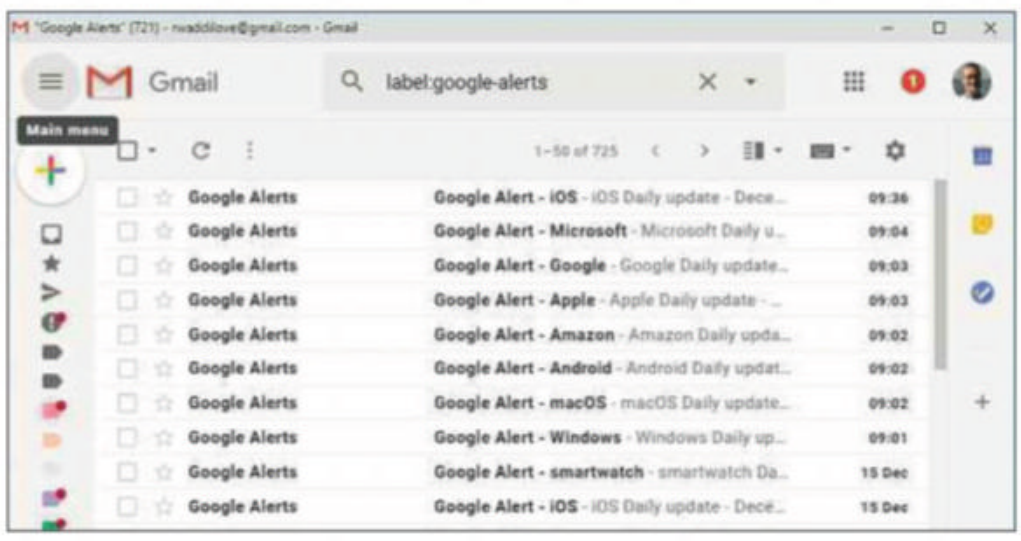
However, you might not necessarily want to use this setting every time you open Chrome, in which case you can use a command-line switch for the option.

Create a desktop shortcut, right-click the icon and select Properties. At the end of the Target box, add `--restore-last-session`. You can then start Chrome in the usual way to open normally or click the desktop icon to open Chrome with your previous session's websites and tabs.

Disable website audio

Many websites have video adverts that play automatically when you visit them. Some even have sound, which makes them doubly annoying. You can, of course, turn down the audio on your PC's speakers, but this isn't an option if you're listening to music as you browse the web.

The solution is to disable sound in Chrome. Create a shortcut and add



Open Chrome like an app – with no title bar, tabs or address box

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.

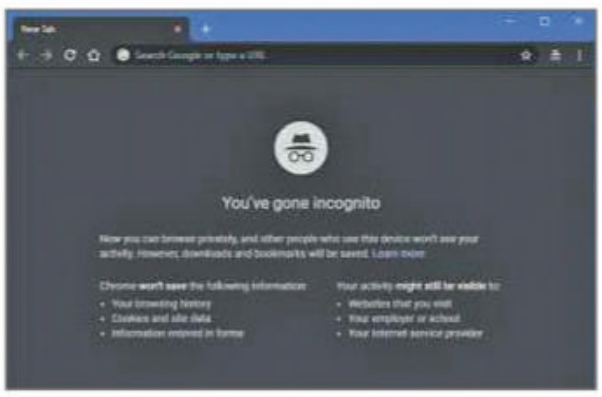
`--mute-audio` to the end of the command line. You will no longer hear any sound from websites in Chrome.

Super incognito mode

We explained earlier that adding `--incognito` to the Chrome command line opens an incognito browsing window. This stops sites from knowing who you are. There is another command-line switch that makes it even harder for sites to track you, making Incognito Mode even more private.

Websites can usually tell which site you visited right before them, and this data can potentially reveal something about you. To see this, go to a site and then visit www.whatismyreferer.com. It works even in incognito mode.

Set the tail of the Chrome command to `--incognito --noreferrers` and websites will not be able to tell where you came from or which website you last visited. It adds an extra layer of privacy.



For maximum privacy while browsing, use `--incognito` and `--noreferrers`

Fix bad add-ons

Sometimes, bad add-ons slip into the Chrome Web Store or an add-on is abandoned and not updated, leading to compatibility issues. If Chrome won't start normally, create a shortcut, right-click and select Properties, then add `--no-extensions` to the command in the Target box. Start Chrome and go to the menu, then select 'More tools', Extensions and remove any add-on that's causing problems.

Command-line Chrome

Chrome can be run from the Windows Run box or the command prompt by entering the full path. For example, press Windows+R to open the Run box and enter the following, all on one line:

```
"C:\Program Files (x86)\
Google\Chrome\Application\
chrome.exe"
```

The quotes are needed because there are spaces in the path. To continue browsing where you left off last time, add `--restore-last-session`.

Position and size windows

Chrome always starts with the window positioned and sized as it was the last time it was used. This usually works fine, but you might want to set the position and size, especially if you often open several applications and always place them in a certain way on the screen, such as a browser on the left and Explorer on the right.

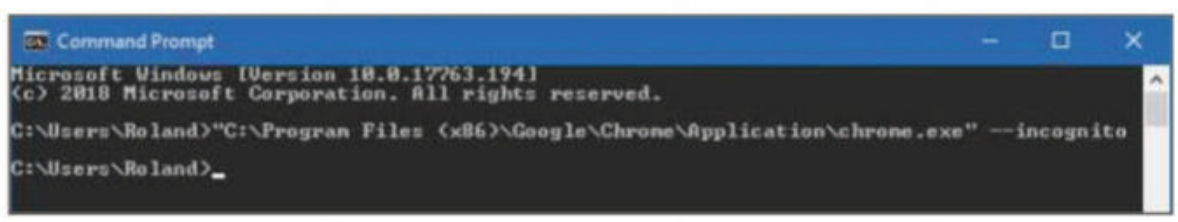
Create a desktop shortcut to Chrome, right-click it and select Properties. Click in the Target box, go to the end of the line, add a space, then type:

```
--window-position=400,0
--window-size=1000,800
```

The numbers refer to the window position and size in pixels, where 0,0 is at the top-left corner of the screen. Combine this with the switch for opening a browser window, such as an app. Here's an example of the full command:

```
--app="https://mail.google.
com" --window-position=960,0
--window-size=800,600
```

These position and size command-line switches only apply to the first Chrome window that's opened. They are ignored if Chrome is already open.



Run Chrome from the Command Prompt and add switches to the end

COMMAND-LINE TOOLS FOR FIREFOX

Choose Firefox profiles

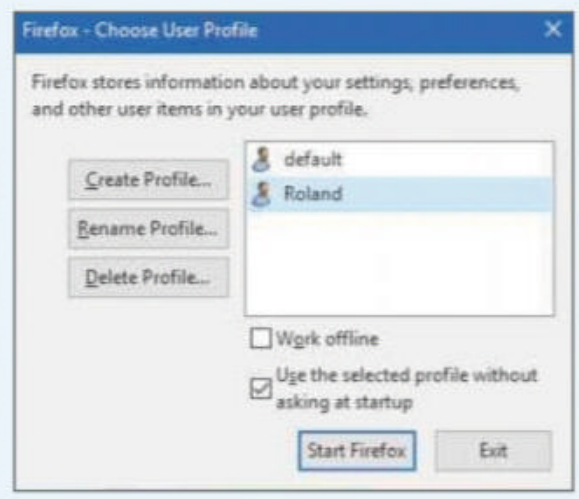
Firefox supports user profiles, where it saves your settings, preferences and other items. Some people may have separate profiles for work and personal web browsing, for example. To access the profile manager, add it to the command line.

To find Firefox in Explorer, go to:

C:\Program Files (x86)\Firefox

then right-click it and select Send to, Desktop. Right-click the desktop icon and select Properties, then add a space to the end of the command in the Target box and type: `-ProfileManager`.

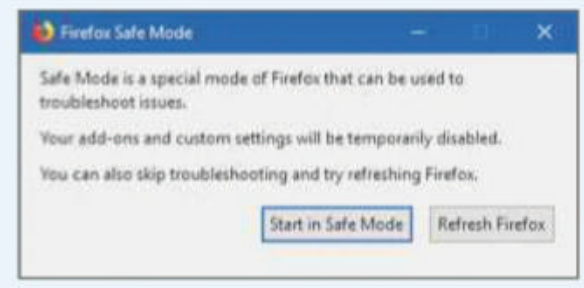
If you've already set up profiles, add `-P "profile-name"` to start Firefox with that profile. You could create a desktop icon for each profile.



Start Firefox with the profile editor to load you settings and preferences

Use Firefox's Safe Mode

If you have been trying out some of the many add-ons for Firefox and find that one of them is causing problems



If Firefox is not working properly, use `-safe-mode` to start it

or crashing the browser, start it in Safe Mode without add-ons by adding `-safe-mode` to the command line. You can then go into Settings and delete the problematic add-on.

Alternative Firefox homepage

Firefox can be set to open with your favourite homepage, but you can override this setting and have the browser start with a different page if you like. For example, you could create one or more shortcuts on your desktop to start Firefox with various different homepages, such as Google, Bing or Wikipedia.

Create a desktop icon, right-click and select Properties, then add `-new-tab URL` to the end of the Target box command. For example: `-new-tab https://www.bing.com`.

Firefox private browsing

Firefox has a private-browsing mode to hide previous activities and your identity. It can be opened from the Firefox menu, but you can also start Firefox in Private Mode by adding `-private` to the command line.

Ask the Expert

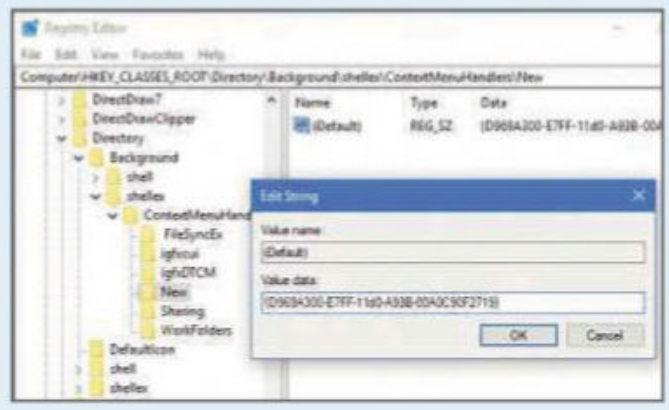
Roland Waddilove, computer programmer and PC journalist since 1981, answers all your technical questions. Email us for help at webuser@dennis.co.uk

GENERAL PC

Bring back the New Folder option

Q I no longer have the option to right-click and choose New to place a new folder on my desktop. This is just about the most irritating of all the niggles Microsoft has managed to accidentally bestow upon us. How do I get it back?

Ray Holland, via email



If you can't create new files, this Registry key may be missing or corrupt

A The New item on the right-click menu (available in File Explorer and on the desktop) is stored as a Registry setting. It's either been accidentally deleted by a Registry cleaner or software uninstaller, or become corrupted for some reason. Restoring the original contents of the Registry item will restore the function.

Press Windows+R, type `regedit` and press Enter to open the Registry Editor. In the sidebar, go to:

HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT\Directory\Background\shellex\ContextMenuHandlers\New

If the New folder doesn't exist, right-click ContextMenuHandlers, select New, then Key, and name it New. On the right is (Default). If it's not there, right-click in the right-hand pane and select New, then Expandable String Value. Double-click (Default) and set the 'Value data' to:

{D969A300-E7FF-11d0-A93B-00A0C90F2719}

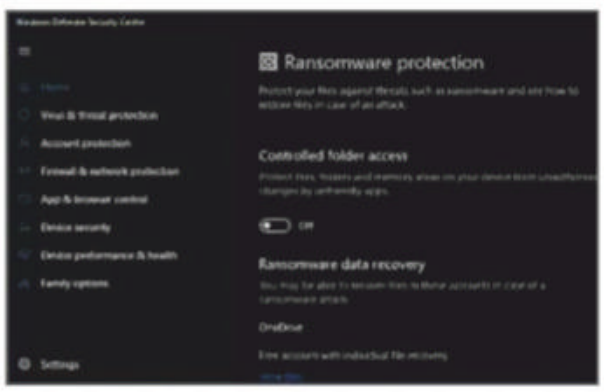
Note that these are all zeros, not the capital letter O. Close the Registry Editor and restart Windows.

SECURITY

Stop Controlled Folder blocks

Q When I try to download the Tor Browser (bit.ly/torb467), I get the reply: Tor not responding. I followed your suggestion in issue 462 under the heading Restore Tor Browser, but when I go through the procedure, it says I cannot access the Controlled Folder because I do not have administrator rights, even though I am the administrator and no one else uses my laptop. Any ideas?

David Thomas, via email



Controlled Folder Access can block some software from working properly

A Windows Controlled Folder Access is a security tool that prevents unauthorised software from accessing important folders on your hard drive, such as those containing documents and photos. It's useful, but it can stop some programs working. To disable it, type `controlled folder access` in the taskbar search box and click it when it appears in the results. Windows Security opens and you can disable Controlled Folder Access via the switch.

Confusingly, even if you're using an administrator account on your PC, you are never logged on with administrator privileges, so you may still have to right-click a program and select 'Run as administrator' or click through the User Account Control pop-up messages.

GADGETS

Connect Fitbit to Samsung

Q Last Christmas, my son-in-law bought me a Fitbit Charge 2 watch. I installed the software on my phone, a Samsung Galaxy J3 2016 with Android version 5.1.1, and it worked perfectly, tracking all my steps and so on, until 20 November. It hasn't tracked anything since that day, although it still tracks on my iPad.

I believe a Samsung software update has broken the connection. My research online suggests that it should work but that the Fitbit doesn't support the J3 yet.

Brian Dingle, via email

A It's up to you to check your phone's compatibility with the Fitbit at www.fitbit.com/devices. The different versions of Bluetooth technology can make connections temperamental and we've even seen situations where two products from the same manufacturer have different versions of Bluetooth and wouldn't talk to each other.

We don't have a Fitbit Charge 2 and Samsung Galaxy J3 to experiment with, but our suggestion is to open your phone's Settings and go to Apps, Fitbit. Tap Force Stop to stop the app running, then tap Storage, Clear Data and Clear Cache. Uninstall the app.

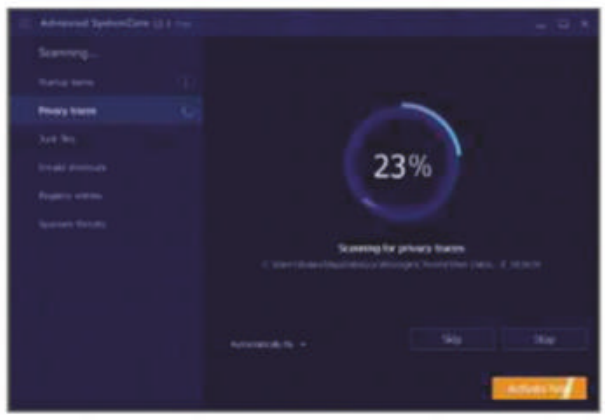
Go into Settings, Connections and make sure Bluetooth and Phone Visibility are both on. Open Bluetooth and tap the cog next to the Fitbit device to unpair it. Restart the phone and restart the Fitbit band, then install the Fitbit app from the Google Play Store and set up the Fitbit Charge again.

Fitbit devices can connect to a Windows PC running the Fitbit Connect software (bit.ly/fbsu467). It's not as convenient as connecting to a phone but it's worth trying.

SOFTWARE

Get the right free software

Q I downloaded IObit Advanced SystemCare 12 Free (bit.ly/ioasc467) after reading Issue 462. I've now installed it but I can't start using it without paying $22. Which part of 'Free'



Advanced SystemCare is a useful Windows cleanup tool from IObit

am I not understanding here?

Brian Forrest, via email

A There are free and Pro versions of Advanced System Care on the www.iobit.com website. Did you download the free one from bit.ly/ioasc467? If not, uninstall it, then download the free version. When installing it, select Custom Install on the first screen and opt out of any extras that are offered. We had no problems starting it and using it to scan for problems without paying a penny.

SECURITY

Restore Windows Defender

Q I'm having problems with Windows Defender. It no longer starts automatically and it doesn't work properly if I try to start it manually. I am using a free antivirus program instead, but I would really like to go back to Windows Defender.

Gareth Morton, via email

A Some security software will disable Windows Defender to avoid having two antivirus/antispyware programs running at the same time. When the software is removed, it can sometimes fail to remove the block on Defender. Malware can also block security software such as Windows Defender and the block may remain even after the malware has been removed.

The first thing to do is to scan the computer for malware and make sure it's clean. Emsisoft Free Emergency Kit (bit.ly/efek467) is a useful tool that doesn't need installing. Run the download to extract the files, then run the software afterwards.

The second step is to clear out all traces of previous security programs. There is a useful list of security software removal tools at bit.ly/av467 but you could use the Registry Editor if you are familiar with it. Press Windows+R, type `regedit` and press Enter. Select Edit, Find and search for keys that contain the software or company name. Always right-click a key and save it before deleting it, in case you need to put it back by clicking the file.

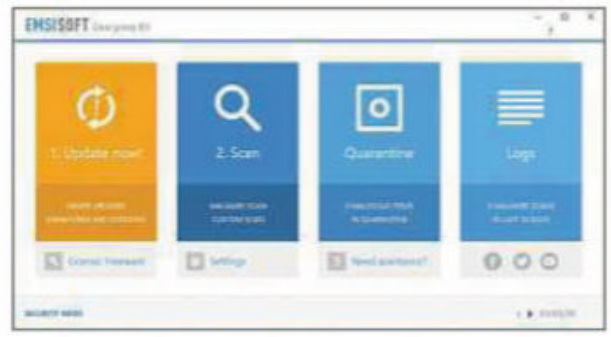
Check that Windows files are not corrupt or missing. Click in the taskbar search box and type `command`. Right-click the Command Prompt in the search results and select 'Run as administrator'. At the command prompt, type `sfc /scannow` and press Enter.

Restarting Security Center sometimes fixes problems, so press Windows+R, type `services.msc` and press Enter. Find Security Center in the services list, right-click it and select Restart.

Look for bad entries in the Registry that may have been put there by malware. Press Windows+R, type `regedit` and press Enter. Go to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Image File Execution Options

Look for items on the right containing MSASCui.exe, MpCmdRun.exe or MsMpEng.exe. Right-click any you find and delete them, then restart Windows.



Keep Emsisoft Emergency Kit on hand in case you need it to remove malware

SECURITY

Silence loud alarm bells

Q In issue 462, in the What You Must Never Do Online cover feature, your comment about typosquatting (where a fake site uses a mis-spelling of a genuine URL) was that "their shoddy designs should set alarm bells ringing", and I have literally had this experience.

TempMail (temp-mail.org) is a similar website to the Fake Name Generator you mentioned in that same cover feature. Recently, I accidentally entered '.com' instead of '.org' and my laptop panicked, emitting a very, very loud, continuous high-pitched tone. It was so loud that it woke my children!

More recently, I was learning about a program called Notepad++ (notepad-plus-plus.org). When I clicked a link for the 'Designer of this Website', I got the same tone. I am scared to click any links in case it happens again.

Esther Lieber, via email

A We tried to reproduce your problem by clicking the links in both Microsoft Edge and Google Chrome, but neither attempt produced any sound. Do you have any security software that might produce an audible warning?

Whenever something unexpected or problematic happens in a web browser, you should try an alternative. If the same fault appears across two or more browsers, then it is a fault with the website, but if one browser has a problem and another does not, then the browser is the culprit.

SECURITY

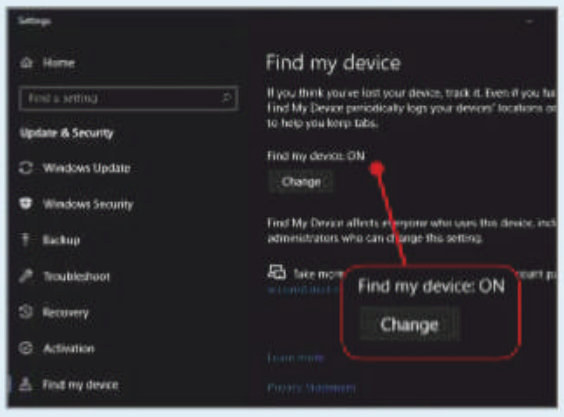
Track a stolen laptop

Q I worry that if my laptop is stolen, someone could get into my user account or my online Microsoft account. Can a laptop be tracked if it is stolen, so it can be recovered?

Martin Baker, via email

A It is very hard, maybe impossible, to hack into a Microsoft account or log into a Windows PC without the login details. Most hacks are the result of reused passwords that have been stolen from another service.

It's possible to access files on an unencrypted hard drive, but BitLocker encryption is only available Windows Pro. Use Veracrypt (bit.ly/vc467) to create encrypted storage to secure your files for free.



Turn on computer tracking to see your PC's location in your Microsoft account

To track the laptop, open Windows Settings and click Update & Security, Find My Device. Switch it on. The computer's location is stored in your Microsoft account whenever it's used. If it's stolen, log in using another computer and see where it is.

This fortnight Roland has been ordering Alexa to repeat his favourite music over and over. It never gets tired of it!

Your Top Tips

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

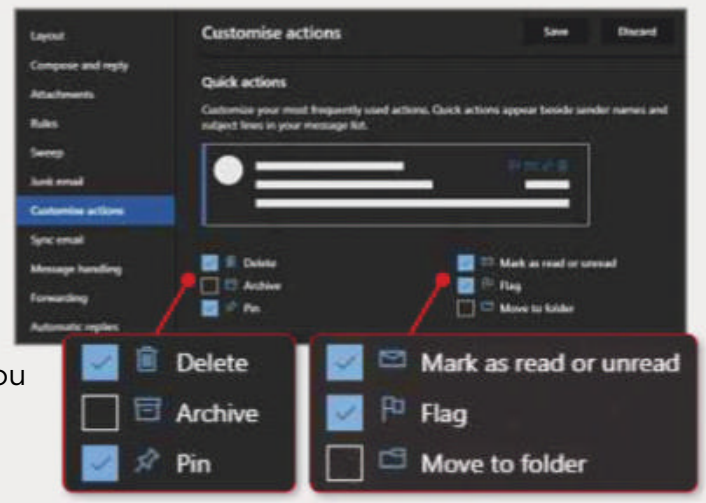
TOP TIP

Back Issues disc winner

EMAIL

Customise Outlook actions

If you use the web version of Outlook (outlook.live.com) for your email, you'll know that hovering the mouse over a message in the inbox list brings up icons on the right, which let you perform common actions such as deleting a message. But did you know that you can choose which icons are shown and the actions you can perform? Click the cog icon and select 'View all Outlook settings' at the bottom, then select Email in the first column and 'Customise actions' in the second. There are six available actions and you can choose any four.

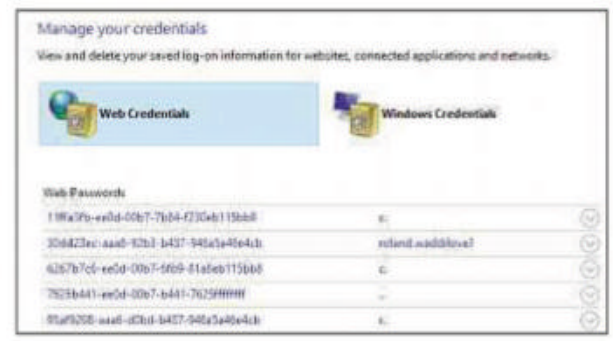


Choose which actions icons appear in the Outlook inbox list

Dave Elliot, via email

details for something. Open the Control Panel, click Credential Manager and select Web Credentials to see a long list of items. Click one to expand it and to display the website URL, username and other information. Next to Password, click Show and enter your Microsoft account username and password to view it.

Brian Bowe, via email



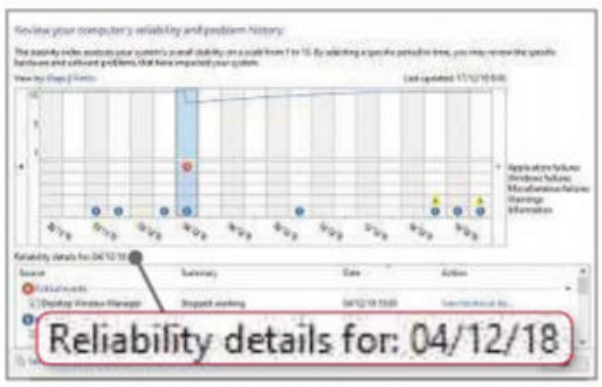
View stored login details for websites and services in the Control Panel

GENERAL PC

See a health report

Sometimes errors are detected on your computer but they aren't serious enough to stop Windows from working. To see a health report, open the Control Panel, click 'Security and Maintenance' and expand the Maintenance section. Click the 'Start maintenance' link and it will run in the background. It takes several minutes to finish, after which it lists various items such as drive status, device software and file history. Click the 'View reliability history' link to see a timeline of events including warnings, red critical errors and successful events such as Windows updates. Click an item in the timeline to see information about it.

Jon Grace, via email



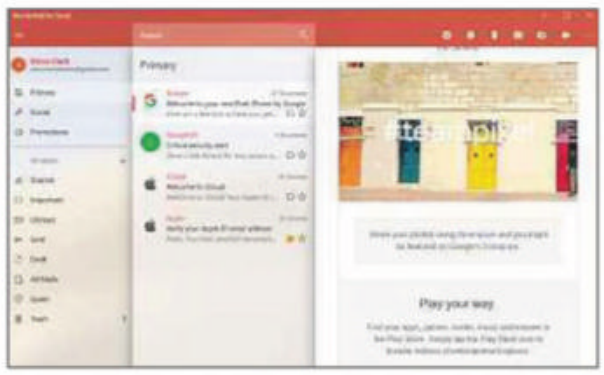
Check Windows' reliability with this Control Panel tool

SOFTWARE

Get a Windows 10 Gmail app

Gmail's desktop Mail app in Windows 10 lacks many of Gmail's useful tools. Wundermail (wundermail.app) is a free desktop app that offers much better support for Google's unique features, because it's built on top of the Gmail API. The free version includes ads, but then so does Gmail if you use it in a browser.

Jack Scullion, via email



Wundermail is a Gmail app alternative for Windows 10

SECURITY

View stored passwords

Have you ever wondered where Windows stores information such as the usernames and passwords for your websites, services and apps? It would be useful to know in case you ever forget your login

OFFICE

Shrink the toolbar in Word

I use the free Word and Excel web apps at onedrive.live.com instead of buying Microsoft Office, because they do everything I need. However, one irritation with the Word web app is the huge amount of clutter – Chrome's title and tab bars, the address bar, a bookmarks bar, then Word's thick blue bar, menu bar and ribbon toolbar. On my laptop's small screen, the actual text of a document starts halfway down the screen! To get around this, click Chrome's three-dot menu and set the zoom to 90%, which shrinks Word's toolbars. Then press F11 (it's Fn+F11 on my laptop) to get rid of Chrome's clutter, leaving just Word.

Paul Ryan, via email

WINDOWS 10

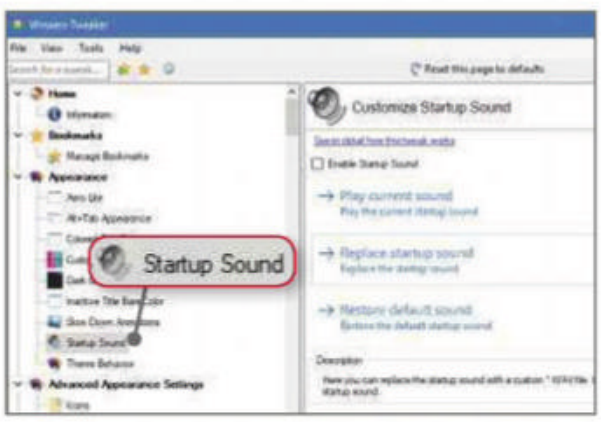
Change your Windows 10 startup jingle

With its latest operating system, Microsoft appears to have turned off those annoyingly catchy old Windows startup ditties that are seared into our brains – but did you know that you can

turn them back on and set your own custom startup sounds? Start by right-clicking the speaker icon in the notification area, then click Sounds. In the box, tick 'Play Windows Startup sound'. Apply and save the change.

Now, here's where things get a bit tricky, so you may want to create a restore point, just in case. Download Winaero Tweaker (bit.ly/winaero467) and go to Appearance, Startup Sound. Click for the option to 'Replace startup sound' and choose any WAV file you like. After rebooting your computer, you'll now hear your preferred startup sound. I've got 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles.'

Ron Pledger, via email



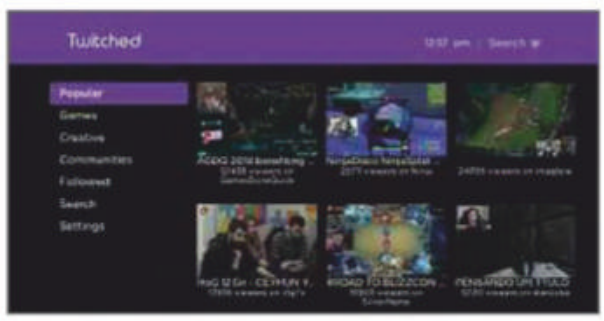
Shake up your startup sounds with this audio overhaul

APPS

Watch Twitch on Roku

I'm currently addicted to watching PUBG matches on the game-streaming site Twitch, and I thought that fellow Roku users may like to know a way to get it on their player since Amazon ditched the official Twitch channel. The unofficial Twitch client is called Twitched (twitched.org) and it has free and paid-for versions. Visit twitched.org/link and enter the given code to complete the set-up and watch all your subscribed channels. It's even possible to stream a channel to your Roku device by downloading the Twitched browser extension (bit.ly/twex467) or using the Android app (bit.ly/tdroid467). All in all, it's an excellent replacement since Amazon stopped supporting Roku.

Paul Mellon, via email



Dodge Amazon's Twitch ban for Roku

BROWSERS

Add insight to your web search

Britannica Insights (bit.ly/brit467) is a Chrome add-on that automatically

Learn more when you search the internet

provides interesting information about anything you search for. Click 'read more' to be redirected to the Encyclopaedia Britannica page or click 'Expand to Learn More' for more information about the site. There are two add-ons available, one aimed at young people. At the moment, Britannica Insights doesn't work when searching on Yahoo.

FratPark, via email

WINDOWS 10

Use God Mode in Windows 10

On page 29 of Issue 464 (bit.ly/webuser464), you featured a system tool called God Mode Launcher. However, there's another way to achieve the same effect without a download. To create a shortcut to God Mode – also known as the Windows Master Control Panel – just make a new folder on the Desktop, then rename it to:

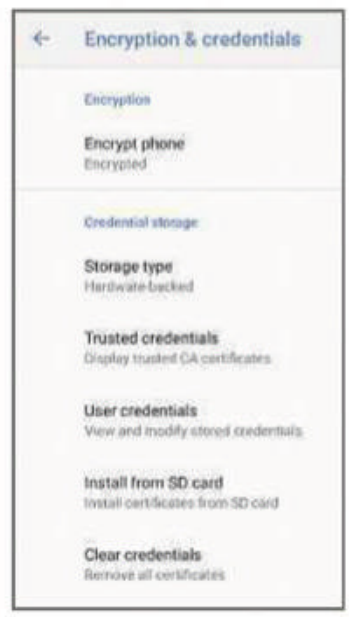
```
GodMode.{ED7BA470-8E54-465E-825C-99712043E01C}
```

It works great on my Windows 10 version 1809.

Steve Squires, via email

MOBILE

Wipe your Android phone



Make your old Android device ultra-secure before getting rid of it

If you're thinking of trading in your old mobile phone or gifting it to a friend, you'll want to do more than just perform a factory reset. There are a few extra steps you should take, such as making sure your handset's encryption is turned on. This setting is found in the Settings, Security section. You should then run an Android data eraser, before performing another factory reset. Finally, make sure you remove your Google account from the phone, otherwise the new owner will need your login details to use it.

Jody Burns, via email

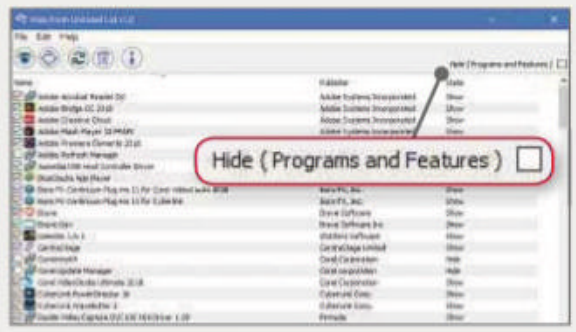
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

WINDOWS 10

Hide apps from your uninstall list

It's happened to the best of us – at least, I hope it has and it's not just me! You're tidying your computer and in the midst of an uninstall-blitz, you inadvertently get rid of a favourite program or app. You then need to download and install it again, which on some of my computers seems to take a lifetime. I've managed to accidentally uninstall VLC Player, Winaero and Paint.net. I blame my eyesight; my wife blames my impatience. The last time I did this – when I accidentally removed Vivaldi – I decided to finally take action, so I hacked the Registry (don't worry, I backed it up first). I opened Regedit and navigated to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Uninstall



Make sure you don't accidentally uninstall your favourite apps

Each folder represents an app that's installed on your computer. Find any apps you absolutely don't ever want to uninstall and delete them so they don't show up in your uninstall list. If you'd rather not muck about with the Registry, download and run the Hide From Uninstall List app (bit.ly/hide467).

Bill Crampton, via email

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

WebUser Reader Offer

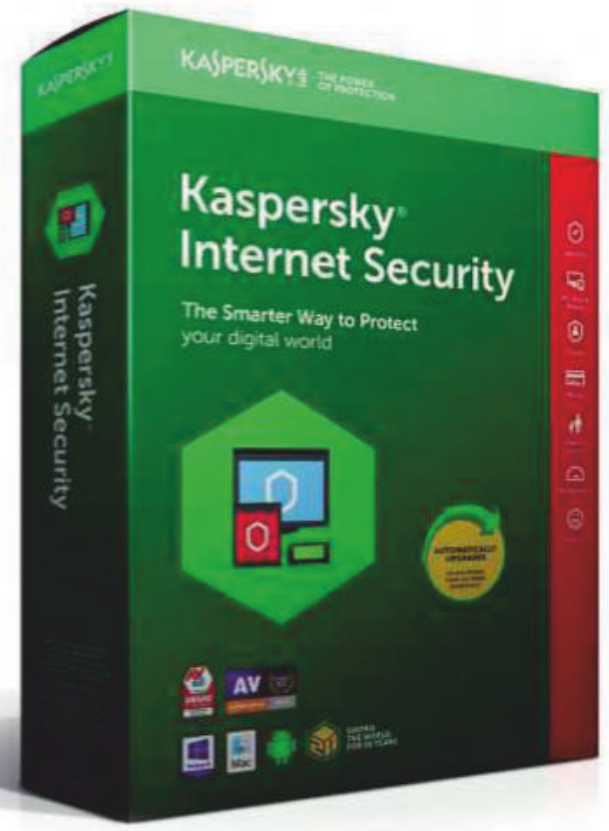
OFFER OF THE FORTNIGHT

Kaspersky Internet Security 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



SINCE WINDOWS 10 LAUNCHED 19,844 READERS HAVE BOUGHT KASPERSKY SOFTWARE FROM THE SOFTWARE STORE

One PC for one year **NOW ONLY £17.99***

Normally £34.99

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

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

Normally £79.99

Buy it from our Software Store at bit.ly/kaspersky2019

*** 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

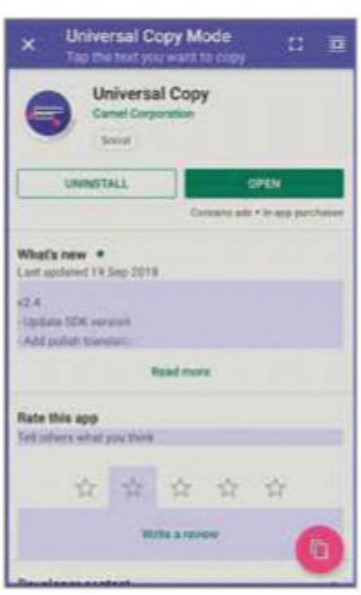
ANDROID

Copy any text on any site

Q If you ask me, the most useless invention is the copy-blocker. You see it all across the internet. Try to copy words from a website or app, or copy your email address from a text box (so you don't have to type it out again) and the site in question stubbornly refuses to let you do it. It might be a bit of a niche problem, but I find it terribly frustrating. Is there a way to override this irritating feature?

Scott Ronson, via email

A Two words for you, Scott: Universal Copy. It's a free app available on Android that lets you copy almost any text. Download it from the Google Play Store (bit.ly/copy467), then open and activate the app. It requires a few permissions to operate because it needs to be able to 'read' any on-screen text. Whenever you come across text you want to copy, pull down the notification bar – you should see the Universal Copy 'notification'. Tap it and the app will scan your current screen. You're then able to copy selected or all text by tapping the area.



Don't let an app or website stop you copying text

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User

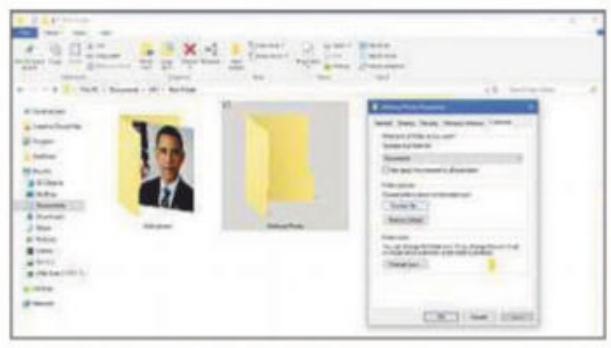
GENERAL PC

Change your folder image

Q Is there any way to change folder pictures on a Windows computer? I know *Web User* has previously covered creating coloured folders but I have so many folders on the go, I'd like be able to see what I'm looking for without faffing about. Besides which, I do love a spot of personalisation.

Jane Phelps, via email

A Assuming you're using Windows 10, it's straightforward to assign a picture to a folder and this makes them much more interesting than the default.



Make your folders look more interesting by assigning photos to them

Right-click your chosen folder and select Properties. Tab over to Customise and look for the 'Folder pictures' section. Click Choose File, then browse Explorer for the picture you want and select Open. Back in Customise, click Apply, followed by OK to set the image. Congratulations, your folder now has a shiny new cover.

To get rid of any image selection, click Restore Default. Alternatively, select Change Icon to use a basic list of default folder images. Or, as you mentioned, try Folder Marker (bit.ly/fm467) to simply change folder colours.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User

READERS RESPOND

Switch off iPhone's camera sounds

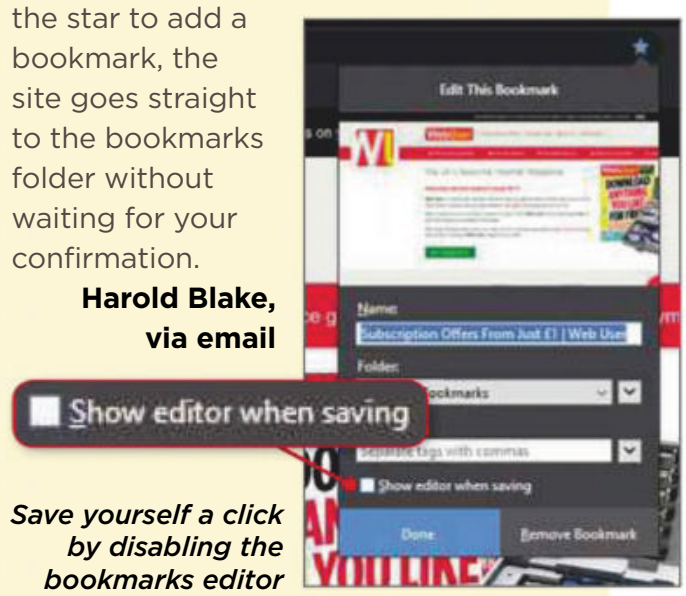
A Regarding Richard Marlborough's 'Can You Help' question about the iPhone camera's shutter sound: flick the Mute button on the side of the phone. Problem solved. Remember to flick it back once you're done. Hope this helps.

Damien @Tree_Of_Chaos, Twitter

Disable Firefox's bookmarks box

A In Issue 463, Hannah Goulet asked for a way to disable the Firefox bookmark dialogue box. I, too, was looking for a solution to this and found the easiest way to do it is to add a new page to your bookmarks – it doesn't matter if you don't actually want to bookmark it. A pop-up appears where you can untick the box 'Show editor when saving'. Now, whenever you click the star to add a bookmark, the site goes straight to the bookmarks folder without waiting for your confirmation.

Harold Blake, via email



Save yourself a click by disabling the bookmarks editor

CAN YOU HELP? webuser@dennis.co.uk

You can 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.

MUSIC

Q I'm always listening to Spotify, making playlists and basically pretending I might still, one day, become a Radio 1 DJ. But, does anyone know how to edit a playlist image? I hate Spotify's default images.

Nathan Williams, via email

BROWSERS

Q Please, please, please will someone tell me how to stop videos autoplaying in Edge? I don't know what I've done to change the setting, but it's doing my head in and my PC's mute button has never been so popular.

Stan McKenzie, via email

Inbox

You can let us know your views via:
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and www.twitter.com/webusermagazine

Star Email

Why must all browsers copy Chrome?

How I miss the days when web browsers were different enough from each other that making a choice between them was a big deal.

I remember with pride the day I waved goodbye to crappy old Internet Explorer and set Firefox as my default browser instead. It was like switching from my spluttery old Ford Fiesta to a shiny new Nissan: pages loaded faster, I could switch instantly between web pages using tabs rather than opening new windows and there were loads of add-ons to make browsing more interesting.

Since then, I've tried plenty of other browsers, including Opera, Maxthon, K-Meleon, Slim Browser, Safari (when it was available on Windows) and Avant Browser, before finally settling on Chrome. I like Chrome/Chromium a lot, but the problem is that all the other browser developers do too, which means that nearly all available options are also based on Chromium. This means they work the same, look the same, have the same features and use the same extensions – so much for variety being the spice of life!

One of the few good things about Microsoft Edge was that at least it was a bit different from Chrome, but now I read in *Web User* that even that browser is switching to Chromium.

Now that PCs have enough power to run several browsers at the same time, there's ample opportunity for developers to experiment and try a different approach – instead of making all browsers the same as Chrome.

Even Firefox now imitates (though it doesn't use Chromium), instead of innovating like it used to. Give us something new!

Barry Nolan, via email

BBC quality is worth paying for

I have to take issue with Martin Fletcher's email in Issue 464, 'The BBC isn't worth the licence fee', which I feel is grossly unfair to the BBC.

My wife and I watch the BBC's channels more than the advertisement-ridden independent ones and find them very entertaining. There is no doubt in our minds that the BBC produces programmes of a quality rarely seen elsewhere and we value the iPlayer immensely.

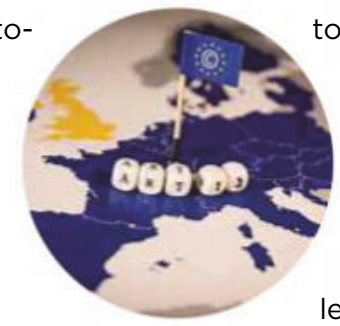
In terms of value for money, we do not begrudge the paltry fee of less than £3 per week.

Steve Squires, Berkshire

Predictive policing invades our privacy

I have never read anything more absurd than your FAQ in Issue 465 about AI predictive policing. The idea that people can be singled out as potential criminals based on computer algorithms is an affront to personal privacy and completely unethical, in my opinion.

The human brain functions very differently to artificial intelligence, so I fail to see how these new methods will accurately identify criminals-to-be. Instead, I can see lots of innocent people being apprehended by the authorities, and subjected to harrowing interrogations and humiliating searches - all because "computer said yes" when reviewing their files.



Even criminals who have served their sentences deserve a second chance – rehabilitation is half the point of prison, after all. How are ex-convicts supposed to rebuild their lives when AI keeps flagging them as likely to reoffend?

The reason we have 12 men and women on a jury and not 12 computers is to give defendants a fair trial. Machine learning is no substitute for human insight, and predictive policing is simply another example of the surveillance society that Britain has become.

Nick Holder, via email

Quiz Answers: Issue 466

1. *The Elephant Man*
2. *Raging Bull*
3. *Flashdance*
4. *The Breakfast Club*
5. *Back to the Future*
6. *Tango & Cash*

WINNER!
Well done to **Michael Chappell** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc

TECH YEAR
1997

Beware of non-refundable GoDaddy

When I received my confirmation to be a registered charity under the name I selected, I quickly registered all versions of the name before others did. GoDaddy offered me a special price for multiple years on '.charity' web names, and I therefore paid for 10 years. But when I wanted to cancel, I discovered that my GoDaddy contract is reliant on buried special terms, which do not allow cancellation! These terms, deeper than the usual terms, were not brought to my notice before contract.

This means that I am stuck with unwanted site names for 10 years! And this is charity money that is being withheld!

Adrian R Berkeley, via email

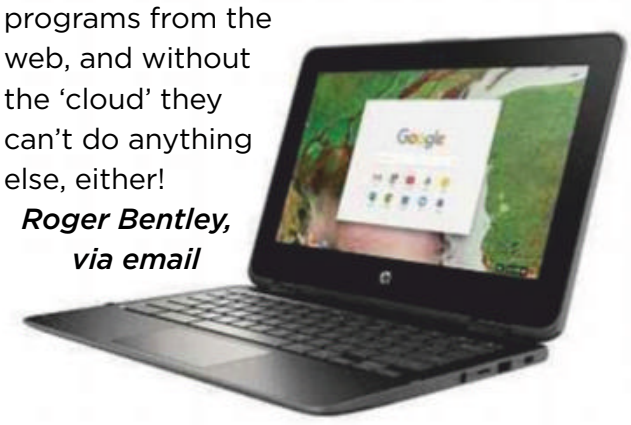
Chromebooks fail without the cloud

In response to Steve Bastiman's Star Email in Issue 465, 'Chromebooks succeed where Windows fails'. I think Chromebooks are all well and good if you spend most of your time on the web, but they have one major flaw, which is that they're completely reliant on you having an internet connection. Without one, you can't access any of your files, photos, emails and other stuff, and the whole Chromebook is rendered useless.

With a Windows laptop, on the other hand, if you can't get online because your ISP is having problems in your area (which seems to happen with Sky about once a month for me), at least you can use software on your desktop, open documents, play games, edit photos and even read your emails offline.

Chromebooks may be lighter and faster than Windows laptops, but they don't let you download and install programs from the web, and without the 'cloud' they can't do anything else, either!

Roger Bentley, via email



What you say...

USWITCH SAYS A ROAD IN BIRMINGHAM HAS THE UK'S HIGHEST AVERAGE BROADBAND SPEED – 265MBPS (bit.ly/broadband467). DOES YOURS COME CLOSE?

I get 204Mbps, but it's like owning a Ferrari. I take it out for a spin every now and then, but never use it to its full potential.

Bruce Lauderdale *@BruceLauderdale*

I get a solid 200Mbps. Virgin Media says they can offer me 350Mbps, but at my cost, not theirs.

Si Mellor

I cut my broadband from 200Mbps to 100Mbps to reduce costs. There's no need for such high speeds, unless you run a business.

@AndrewA33456203

My speed is 264Mbps slower in India! The vendors are giving 24Mbps but it feels like 1Mbps.

Gajendra Saini

OFCOM SAYS THE UK'S 4G COVERAGE IS "PATCHY AND UNRELIABLE" (bit.ly/patchy467). WHAT'S IT LIKE NEAR YOU?

In most of Swansea it's non-existent. You get it in parts of the city centre, but suburbs get next to nothing.

Ian Wish

I was in central Birmingham the other day and experienced some signal drops. But on the whole it is pretty good for being in the boondocks.

Pete A Cox

Being near Birmingham it's a great signal, but I tend to be on Wi-Fi at home and work so I'm not waiting with bated breath for 5G.

Caroline Chapman *@cornfedmind*

I live in the Cotswolds. Never seen 4G here or within a 20-mile radius. I'm told parts of Swindon get it.

Mark Jefferies

USE OF WINDOWS 10 HAS FINALLY OVERTAKEN WINDOWS 7. BUT IS IT ACTUALLY BETTER?

Yes, it's much more automated and user-friendly than any previous version. I run it on four computers.

Gary Olsen

It's not that different on the surface and does everything Windows 7 did. Main advantage is that it will be continuously updated.

John Hewett

Absolute disaster. Hope someone invents something better.

Robert Pawel

It has taken a new, faster PC to see the advantages of Windows 10. I wouldn't go without the Cortana search bar – it makes it so much easier to navigate around the system.

Martin Phillp

A FORMER HEAD OF GCHQ SAYS FACEBOOK IS A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY (bit.ly/facebook467). DO YOU AGREE?

GCHQ is believing Facebook's own press. It's not nearly as influential as it likes to think.

Nat Grove

Threaten democracy? Is that a euphemism for restricting access to information that isn't state sponsored? Ministry of Truth, thy name is GCHQ.

Lee Dodgson

Now they want to control our rights to free speech and there's talk of banning encryption. Sounds like we are sleepwalking into a dictatorship.

Andrew Wakeman

Page 404

Apple is paying the price for forcing people into unnecessary upgrades, says **Barry Collins**

Apple is facing a battery of problems

So, the latest iPhone isn't selling as well as Apple predicted, and the excuses are plentiful: a strong dollar, weak demand from China, fewer subsidies from mobile networks and a sprinking of "macroeconomic challenges".

However, there was one line, slipped in at the end of Tim Cook's flowery list of excuses, that really caught my attention: iPhone sales are tumbling because of "some customers taking advantage of significantly reduced pricing for iPhone battery replacements".

That noise you can hear is the clucking of chickens coming home to roost. Do you remember why Apple started offering cheap battery replacements in the first place? That's right, because the company admitted it was throttling the performance of older handsets to preserve their fading battery life. Or, as others saw it at the time, deliberately crippling older phones so that people would be harried into buying a new one.

I suspect the truth is somewhere between those two extremes: it makes sense for Apple to put the brakes on battery-sapping tasks to improve battery life, but if that forces a few customers to take a trip to their local Apple Store sooner than they might otherwise have done, then so be it.

> "Suddenly the idea of paying a grand or more for a new iPhone X seems as tempting as a timeshare on Tooting Common"

Yet, the unpleasant truth for Apple is that customers are seeing fewer and fewer reasons to buy new iPhones. Stick a £25 new battery in an iPhone 7 to revitalise its performance and suddenly the idea of paying a grand or more for a new iPhone X seems as tempting as a timeshare on Tooting Common.

How does Apple get itself out of this fix? The company has plenty of headroom to cut iPhone prices and still make a handsome handset profit, but that's never been Apple's style. The starting price of everything Apple – including Mac Minis, iMacs and iPhones – has risen sharply in recent years. Discounting is a dirty word. If you want reasonable prices, you have to buy the older models and accept second or third best.

Instead, Apple will turn the screw. Those £25 battery replacements? They've already bitten the dust. They were only scheduled to be offered until the end of 2018 in the first place, and now that Cook's admitted they're harming sales of new handsets, there's no chance they're coming back.

You're now looking at £45 for an out-of-warranty battery replacement for older iPhone models and £65 for the latest generation handsets. It's still a relatively cheap way to breathe new life into a perfectly serviceable older iPhone, but I'd expect Apple to keep inching those battery replacement costs back up to the point where it starts to become a dilemma once more. Check out the cost of out-of-warranty iPad battery replacements, for example. They can cost more than £600!

If you're nearing the end of your iPhone contract and are dithering over whether to stick with what you've got or pay the upgrade ransom, I'd start giving it some serious thought. Get the battery replacement while it's still halfway reasonable and spend the grand on something else.

Just don't invest it in Apple shares. I hear they're not faring too well at the moment.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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

WebUser

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FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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