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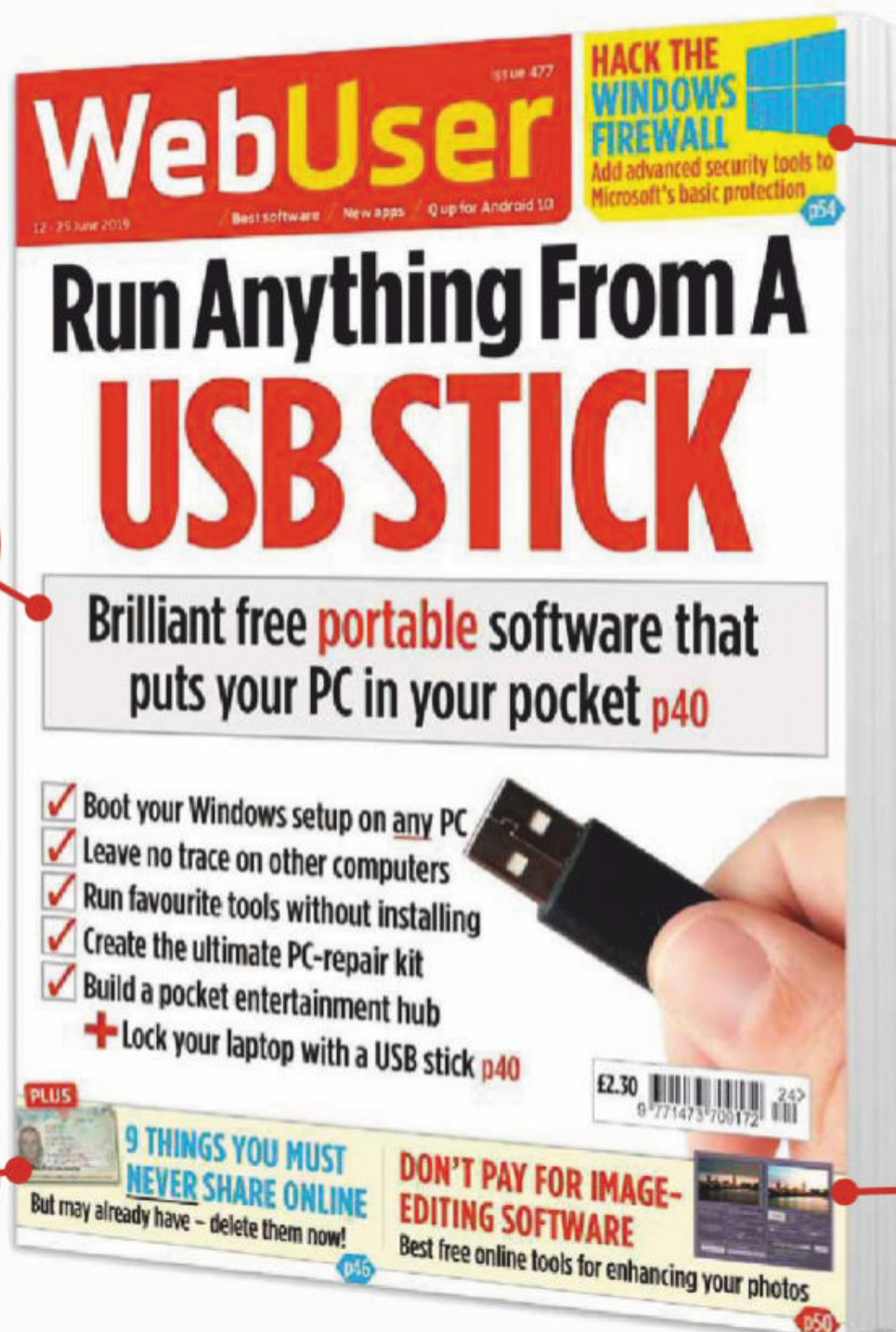
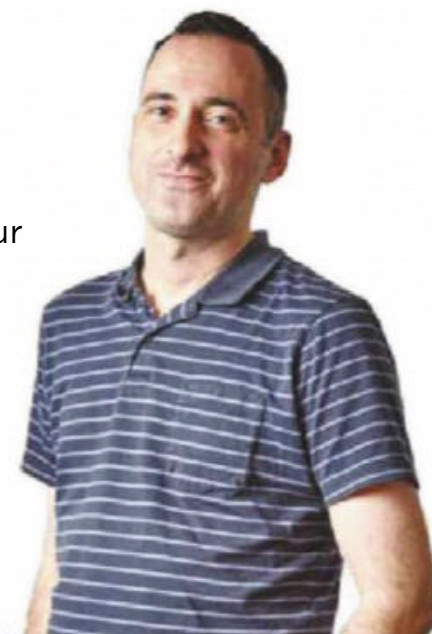
Keep your PC in your pocket

One of our younger *Web User* writers once mocked me for owning a USB memory stick that was hopelessly small in capacity – a mere 512MB – while embarrassingly bulky in size. “It’s like a Graf Zeppelin,” he giggled, as I furtively emailed HR for his P45. With hindsight, the dongle’s memory was rather puny, but I’d had it since 2004 and it served me well over the years, for ferrying files from A to B – and anyway, it’s not how big these things are, it’s what you do with them that counts, right?

In this issue’s cover feature, we reveal lots of useful tasks you can perform with your

USB stick, although some require more space than my trusty old 512MB device. From running a portable version of your preferred operating system to creating a system-repair kit packed with powerful tools and compiling a portable suite of your favourite programs, we’ve got everything you need to slip your PC in your pocket with no unsightly bulge.

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



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Run Anything From A USB STICK

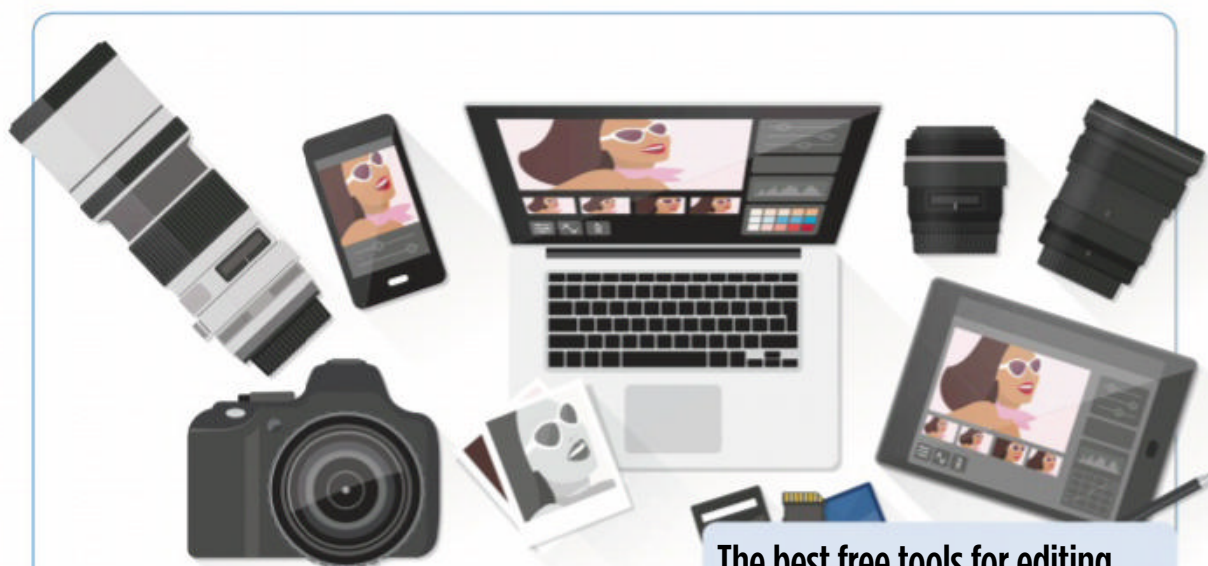
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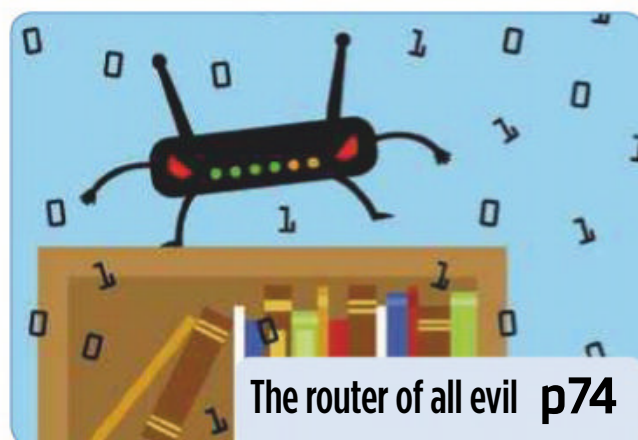
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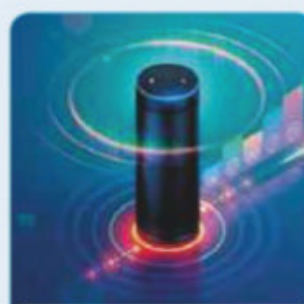
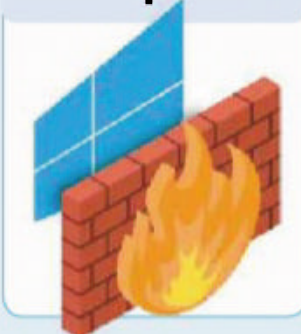
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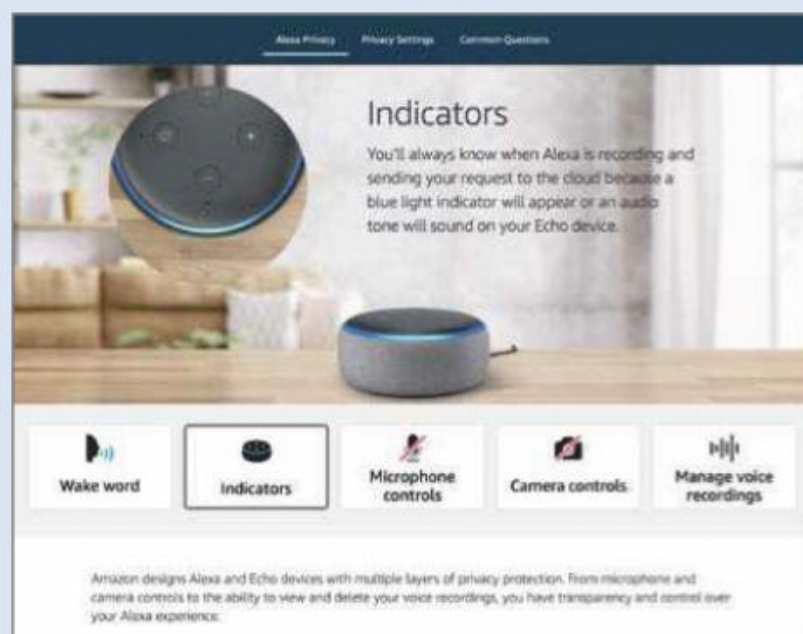


What's New Online

Manage Alexa's privacy settings

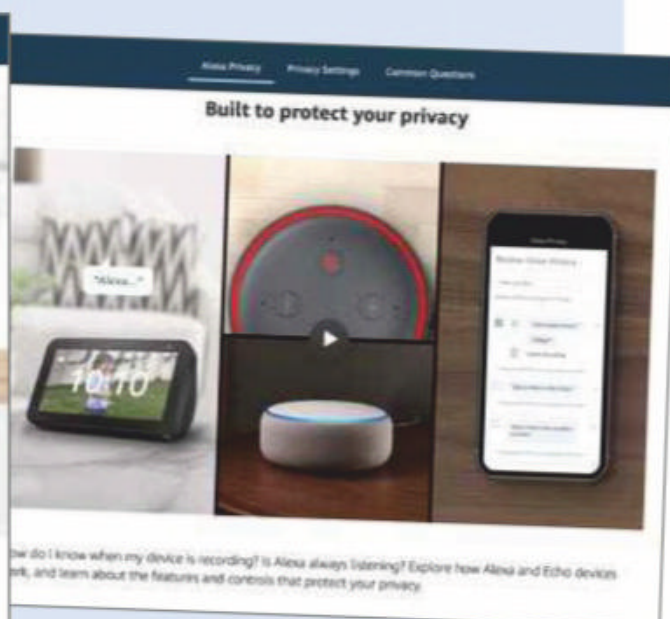
Alexa appears to be listening to users' concerns over privacy, so much so that Amazon has set up a new Alexa Privacy Hub to explain how your voice recordings are taken and handled. It follows concerns that the company's employees are asked to review recordings to verify that Alexa is correctly understanding them.

The hub shows you what happens when you utter the wake word, explains the purpose of the blue light indicator on your Echo speaker and explains how to turn the microphone and camera controls on and off. More importantly, it points you towards Alexa's privacy settings, where you'll be able to review your voice history, manage skill



permissions and decide whether or not you wish to allow Amazon access to your recordings for the purpose of improving Alexa's features.

On top of that, Alexa will also let you delete the day's recordings simply by saying, "Alexa, delete everything I said today". This must be activated first by



going to Settings, Alexa Account, Alexa Privacy, Review Voice History and toggling Enable Deletion By Voice. It's not available in the UK yet, but you can find out how to manually erase Alexa voice recordings in our workshop on page 56.

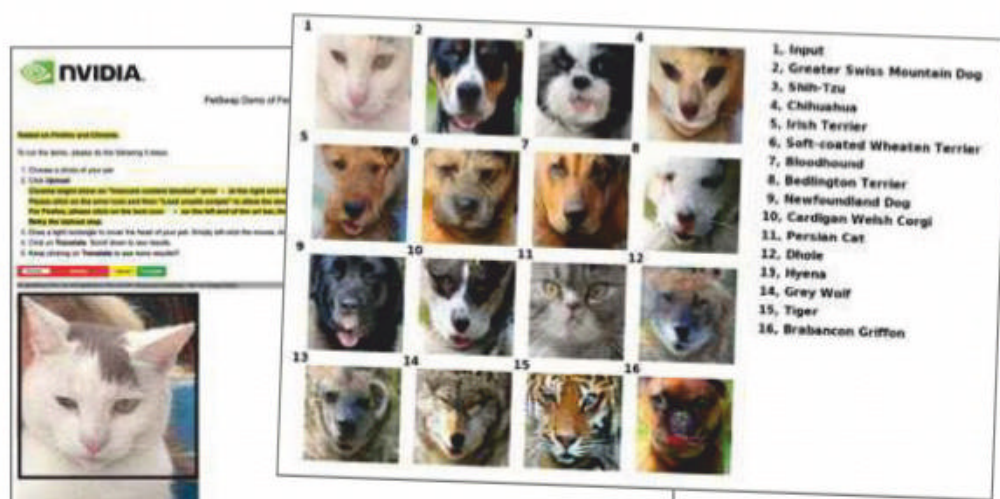
bit.ly/alexaprivacy477

See what your dog would look like as a cat

bit.ly/petswap477

Ever wondered how your pets would look if their faces were transplanted onto another species? Nvidia's new algorithm, uses a technology called FUNIT and its own "imagination" to make this animal makeover possible. Simply upload a photo of your pet, draw a rectangle around its head and click Translate for the bizarre results.

It's possible to try a similar trick on your own face using Snapchat's new gender-swap filters: position yourself on screen, tap the smiling face and select the male or female icon to see how you'd look as a member of the opposite sex.

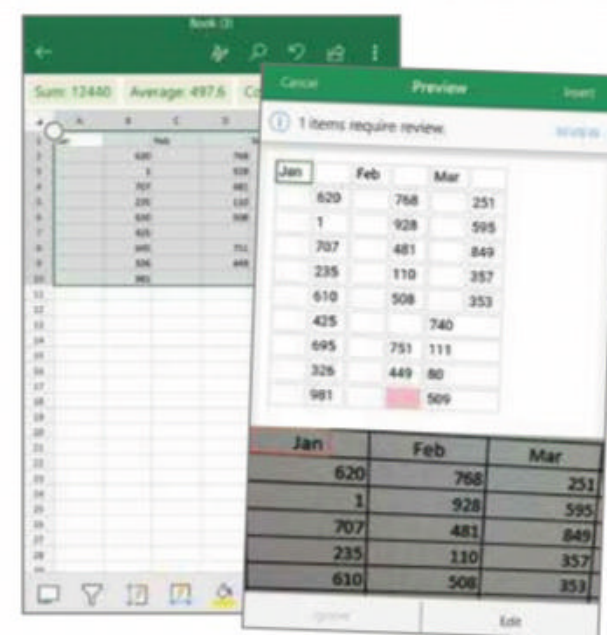


Convert a photo of data into a spreadsheet

bit.ly/excel477

It's inevitable your heart will sink when faced with inputting reams of data into a spreadsheet, but a new update to Microsoft Excel for Android is sure to put you in a better mood. You can now take a photo of a set of data and convert it into editable rows and columns. It's even possible to preview the captured data so that corrections can be made before it's inserted into your workbook.

To get started, open a new file and tap the 'Insert Data from Picture' icon (a tiny image of a camera) at the bottom of the screen. Position your mobile's camera over a set of data and determine what information should be captured using a red rectangle. You can then tap Capture, make alterations and tap Insert when you're happy. The feature should be available in the iOS app by the time you read this.



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

Call up to eight people at once in Google Duo

duo.google.com

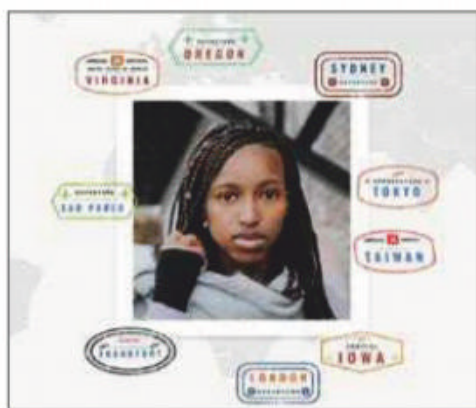
You can now make group calls with up to eight people using Google Duo. The feature is available in the iOS and Android versions of the app and, while it still falls somewhat short of the 50 people allowed in Skype and 32 in FaceTime, all conversations are encrypted end-to-end which ensures they remain private.



Send a selfie around the world

bit.ly/selfie477

Fancy travelling around the world without having to leave your home?



Then upload a selfie image to Google's new Showcase tool and you can take a virtual

journey through the Google Cloud network in a matter of seconds. It's been created to show you how fast data travels around Google's private network and allows you to view a map to watch your photo ping from one data centre to another. This earns your virtual self a series of country stamps in the process. Once you "arrive" back, you can learn exactly how long the journey took.

View a map of the internet

live.networkatlas.com

The world's oceans are criss-crossed by underwater cables, whizzing data along the seabed to keep the good ship internet afloat. This interactive map shows where they are, alongside the cables laid on land and the location of data centres, vendors and internet exchange points. You can isolate the subsea network and view information about particular systems, including their activation year. You can also read Wikipedia entries (if they're available) and use the Subsea Time Machine to see how the global internet will look in years to come.

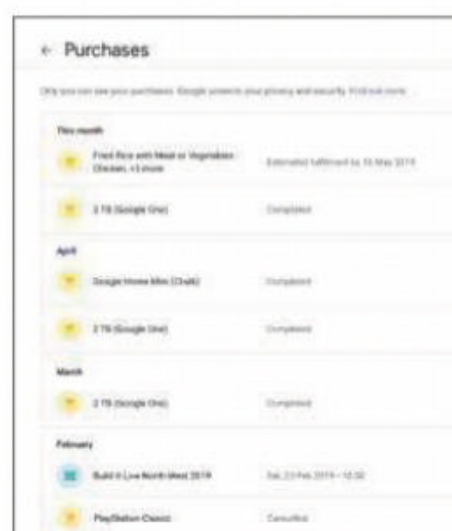


Guess what? - it's going to get a lot bigger.

See how Google tracks your purchases

myaccount.google.com/purchases

Google has been sneaking a look at purchase receipts sent to Gmail and this section of your account lists what it's found. It's a little creepy - it knew we'd cancelled an order for a PlayStation Classic and bought a portion of fried rice - but you can click entries to remove them. Rather worryingly, though, you can't prevent collection.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS



Talk to Dustin from *Stranger Things*

Season Three of *Stranger Things* is coming soon to Netflix, so why not chat to one of the show's characters by saying "Hey Google, talk to Dustin from Stranger Things".



Let Siri handle meetings

Open Settings in the Microsoft Outlook app, enable Siri Shortcuts and ask it to check when your next meeting is due. It can also tell others if you're running late.



Use Alexa hands-free in Windows 10

The latest version of Windows 10's Alexa app lets you use your voice to activate it. Say "Alexa" to wake the assistant, even if the app is running in the background.



See how Earth's temperature has changed

bit.ly/temp477

Spin the two globes to compare the change in average surface temperature before and after 1970. You can read more info and find links to various reports in the accompanying article.

Switch to dark mode in Google Calendar

calendar.google.com

Google Calendar and Google Keep are the latest apps to get a dark mode. Go to Settings, General, Theme in Android Nougat and later to activate the Calendar mode; and go to Settings, Enable Dark Mode in Android Lollipop and later for Keep.

Manage Sky Broadband

bit.ly/buddy477

If you're a Sky Broadband customer, you can download the Buddy app for more control over your family's internet use: set time limits, view visited sites and create filters.

Google to stop ad blockers working in Chrome

What happened?

Google is following through with a change to the way that extensions work in Chrome, and the move will effectively stop ad-blocking tools working. The only version of Chrome that will be allowed to use ad blockers is the Enterprise edition.

The changes are part of a revamp to the extension system, in a relaunched version of the browser dubbed Manifest V3. Third-party extensions use tools called APIs to interact with Chrome, to access user data and to take control over how the browser works. One of those APIs, called WebRequest, is used by many ad blockers to prevent ads from being downloaded and shown in the browser. Those particular capabilities in WebRequest API are being “deprecated” under Manifest V3, which is coding speak meaning that the ad-blocking side of that tool is effectively being removed.

The full WebRequest API will still be available in the Enterprise version of Chrome, which businesses pay to use. That’s probably so companies can build extensions that block specific content not deemed suitable for an office, rather than indicating corporate support for ad blockers.

Everyone else using the free version of Chrome is left with weaker protection. There is an alternative API



that ad blockers can use, called DeclarativeNetRequest, but it has some limitations, including a shorter list of what it can block. Google has said it’s working on a solution to allow ad-blocking tools to continue being used, but these plans have been in the works – and criticised openly by ad-blocker developers – for months.

That’s not the only change impacting third-party extensions, though the other major alteration is of more obvious benefit to Chrome users. At the moment, extensions can ask users for permission to access their data, but some request more than they actually need, so Google is clamping down, increasing protection of user data by restricting permissions. If tools in the Chrome Web Store gather more data than is necessary, Google may ban them from the store and disable them in the browser.

How will it affect you?

Manifest V3 is still in development, so it’s not clear if and when these changes will roll out. The clamour of criticism that’s greeted those details that have been announced may yet influence Google’s decisions. Additionally, the mooted mitigations, such as extending the blocking capabilities of the replacement API, could be rolled out in time for affected extensions to update and avoid the worst aspects of the changes.

As it stands, if Google rolls out Manifest V3 as planned, blocking and

anti-tracking tools such as uBlock Origin, Adblock Plus and Ghostery will no longer work as well – if at all. The developers behind those tools will be able to alter how they operate, but they probably won’t block as many ads and trackers as they do now.

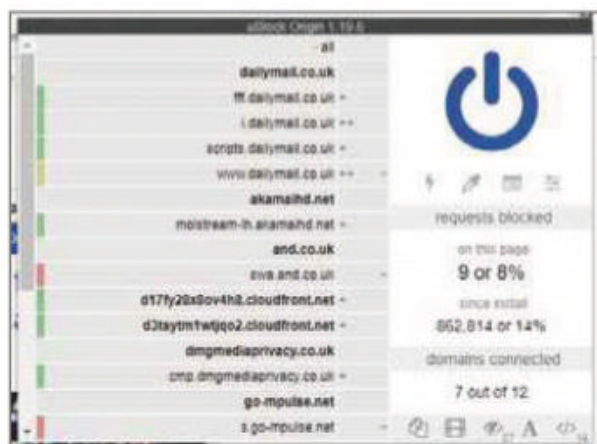
Of course, Chrome has its own built-in ad blocker, which it introduced last year. However, this isn’t a ‘proper’ blocker because it only removes ads that Google has deemed too annoying or intrusive, based on a set of standards the company helped set, which includes ads that automatically play sound or take over an entire page.

If Google doesn’t back down from these changes, and ad blockers such as Ghostery and uBlock Origin can’t find a way to work around them, the only solution will be to switch to a new browser.

What do we think?

Google makes the bulk of its revenue from advertising, so it’s hardly going to be a fan of ad blockers. The filtering tool built into Chrome reveals what Google would like to see, which is better ads that we don’t feel compelled to block. Google isn’t the only online company worried about the rise of ad blockers – newspapers and other publishers have suffered from the shift to the web, and that’s only likely to continue if web users block all ads.

On the other hand, ads chew through your mobile data allowance, irritate by taking over the entire page or playing audio and videos, and have even been known to spread malware. And that’s before we even get to tracking for behavioural advertising. No wonder a quarter of Brits block ads, according to eMarketer research. If those web users want to stick with full ad blocking, it could be good news for Mozilla Firefox and other, rival browsers, and bad news for Chrome.



Popular ad blockers such as uBlock Origin could soon stop working in Chrome

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

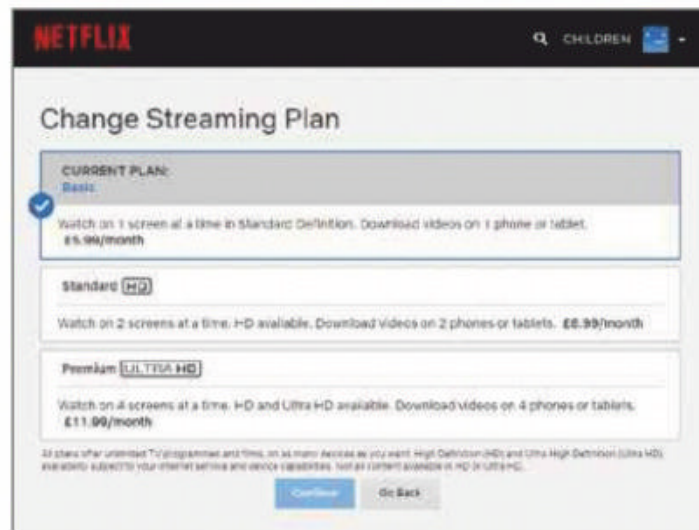
Netflix raises its subscription prices again

What happened?

The cost of a Netflix subscription has risen again, this time up by as much as a fifth, as the company shells out on developing its own programmes and buying in popular classics. The increase comes as no surprise – the streaming service bumped up prices in the US at the beginning of the year, so the UK and other markets were bound to eventually follow that lead.

How will it affect you?

If you're on the standard Netflix plan, the monthly fee will climb from £7.99 to £8.99 on your next bill, while the Premium plan is



up from £9.99 to £11.99. Both of those subscriptions allow simultaneous streaming on multiple devices, and offer HD and above. If you're on the Basic plan, which only allows a single stream at a time and is only available in standard definition, the price will remain at £5.99.

If that extra quid or two a month means Netflix is no longer affordable, remember that you're only paying month to month – you can

quit at any time. And if you find you're not using multiple screen viewing – a roommate or family member watching on a different device at the same time – and are happy to watch in standard definition, you can always step down to the cheaper option to save £3 or more a month.

Also bear in mind that if you are going on holiday or don't expect to watch TV in a given month, you can put your account on hold and save that monthly charge without cancelling your subscription.

What do we think?

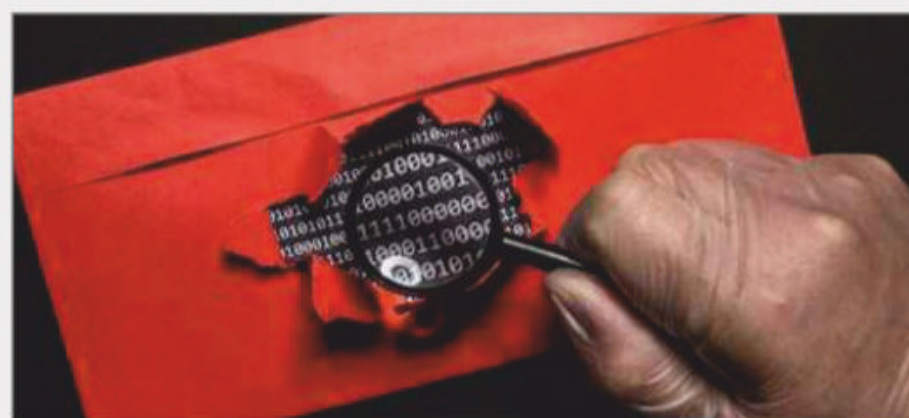
At £5.99 a month, Netflix's bottom-tier subscription remains a steal of a deal. It's a shame to see prices going up for other plans, but they remain a low-cost option for accessing a wide range of quality television shows and films. Hopefully looming competition, including from Disney's soon-to-launch streaming service, will help keep prices low.

Tech giants fight government surveillance

What happened?

Technology firms, online services and government authorities have been locked in a debate about messaging apps for years, with the latter claiming that encryption makes it too difficult to police serious crime such as terrorism. At the end of last year, GCHQ and UK policing authorities suggested one way to get around encryption would be for messaging apps to allow police to slip into protected conversations as a "ghost" – unseen by any of the participants, but able to look at what they discuss and with whom.

Tech companies including Google, Apple and Microsoft have now



signed an open letter in response (bit.ly/letter477), saying such a move would "undermine user security and trust" and leave a backdoor open to surveillance abuse.

How will it affect you?

The UK government and others around the world have been regularly seeking ways to get around encryption, but so far haven't yet found a solution. This particular

proposal is nothing more than a suggestion, and – if Google, Apple and Microsoft have their way – won't actually come to fruition.

So far, there are no plans for "ghost" cops in messaging apps, but it's only a matter of time before a solution that everyone agrees with is eventually found. In the meantime, encryption remains the best way to keep your messages secure.

What do we think?

Authorities such as the police claim encryption makes their job harder but messaging apps don't seem to have stopped security services from finding specific info. In the UK, it's legal for policing agencies to hack phones, such as surreptitiously installing keylogging software to watch everything a suspect writes, whether they're using an encrypted app or not. Given there are already solutions to these challenges, it seems foolish to undermine user security with tools such as "ghosting," which could be abused by spies and criminals to snoop on our conversations.

EE launches first 5G network in the UK

What happened?

EE has launched the UK's first 5G service and, as you'd expect from Britain's largest mobile network provider, the rollout wasn't limited to a humble press release on its website. The official launch, which took place on the River Thames, featured a firework spectacular and a performance from UK grime star Stormzy.

EE's 5G network means that its customers will now be able to access the internet on the move faster than ever. So, while the 4G phone in your pocket is probably hitting around 100Mbps download speeds, or a lousy 384Kbps on 3G, the latest service is set to reach speeds of 10Gbps. While that's far from the Wi-Fi-like speeds marketing materials promised, it's a substantial boost that makes on-the-go browsing faster than ever before.

Beyond increased speeds, 5G also promises to cut down on latency issues. If you stream a movie on 4G, it's not actually instant – there's a 50-millisecond lag as the website 'talks' to the network. On 5G, however, that lag is potentially cut down to just 1 millisecond, making for a smoother streaming experience.

Although EE is first out of the blocks, Vodafone is gearing up for its own 5G release in the coming weeks. Expect other providers to follow, too.



Credit: Matt Crossick/PA Wire

How will it affect you?

Your first thought may be that mobile browsing with 5G is going to be, like *The Six Million Dollar Man*, better, stronger and faster. While that may be true, it comes at a price.

When we first covered the 5G revolution last year, we warned that the new service is likely to be comparable to 4G's initial rollout costs, which were – compared to today's cheap-as-chips tariffs – prohibitively expensive. EE's lowest-priced 5G deal costs a whopping £54 a month, plus a one-off £170 fee for a 5G-enabled phone. Because, of course, you'll need to buy a new mobile device that works with the service, too. For that price, you'll only get 10GB of

data, which isn't much if you plan on taking full advantage of 5G.

Worse still, the rollout is currently limited to parts of Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, London and Manchester. Bad luck if you live elsewhere.

What do we think?

After all this time, we're excited to see 5G hit the UK – and with a colossal speed boost, it's going to be technology that plays a part in making the fabled 'Internet of Things' future a reality. But we're not convinced it's at a mainstream price-point just yet and we expect most customers will stick with a cheaper 4G-and-WiFi setup for now.



FIRST LOOK

Apple iPod Touch

bit.ly/ipod477

It's been four years since the iPod Touch received its last upgrade. Now, Apple has unveiled the 7th generation of its popular portable music player.

Cynics may say that this revamp of a classic is further proof that Apple has lost its creative edge, but the new iPod Touch really isn't half bad. The design will be familiar to anyone who owned an older model – slimline figure, graceful curves and a dinky 4in screen reminiscent of the gone-but-not-forgotten iPhone SE. In fact, the only visible difference is the updated icons, reflecting its modern iOS 12 operating system.

Inside, however, it's a different story. You're no longer limited to a choice between 32GB and 128GB models

– the new iPod Touch has a maximum storage capacity of 256GB, which is all but required these days, especially for a device predicated on media downloads and streaming. It also packs a more powerful A10 Fusion chip which, according to Apple, offers up to double the performance and three-times better graphics, and also allows the device to be used for augmented-reality games such as Pokémon Go and Minecraft Earth. This leads us to the 'killer app': the new iPod Touch is almost certainly



designed to push users towards the company's forthcoming gaming subscription platform Apple Arcade.

For shutterbugs, there's a basic 8-megapixel camera, with an *f*/2.4 aperture, supporting HDR photos and 1080p video recordings. The front-facing FaceTime HD camera fares a little worse, as is standard.

You get a choice of six colours (Space Grey, Gold, Silver, Pink, Blue and Red) and prices start at £199 for the 32GB model. The 256GB version may seem expensive at £399, but that's still a full £400 cheaper than an iPhone.

If that's not enough to sway you, then consider the very good news that the new iPod Touch features a traditional headphone jack.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Facebook about to launch a Bitcoin rival?

Credit: rvlsoft / Shutterstock.com

Cryptocurrencies have had a turbulent time of late, struggling to find their place in the modern financial landscape. But that's about to change with rumours that Facebook is about to introduce its own cryptocurrency to compete with the likes of Bitcoin and Ethereum.

It's thought that Facebook's interest in cryptocurrency stems from its drive to move away from advertising. After a year of negative headlines accusing the platform of abusing the personal data of its fans (and losing millions of users as a result), it's no surprise the social-media honchos are seeking new revenues.

According to those in the know, the cryptocurrency, dubbed GlobalCoin, will be available on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Mark Zuckerberg has, it appears, already held secret talks with Bank of England governor Mark Carney about the regulations surrounding cryptocurrencies. Reports suggest that GlobalCoin will see an initial release by the end of the year, before a full launch in 2020.

Zuckerberg's position is at odds with Twitter's CEO Jack Dorsey, who has often shown support for Bitcoin, publicly stating that mass adoption is "inevitable". If Facebook is intent on creating a rival to Bitcoin, we could be looking at the latest battlefield in the social-media war.



LIKELIHOOD RATING



Time to open that virtual wallet – cryptocurrencies are about to become big again. After a couple of years being mocked and feared in equal measure by traditional financial institutions, it's clear that Facebook, with its billions of users, wants to bring them to the mainstream. But that's what you get when the world's largest social-media site employs the former president of PayPal, although there are still crypto-issues that need crypto-ironing out. As a recognised brand, Facebook seems well-placed to do that. If it stops Zuckerberg selling our private data, we're in favour.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

↑ Apple splits iTunes into separate apps

Apple is to retire its bloated iTunes software after 18 years, splitting it into three different apps: Music, TV and Podcasts. However, the iTunes storefront for purchasing music, films and TV shows is expected to remain up and running.



↑ NordVPN to launch file-encryption service

VPN company NordVPN is to launch a file-encryption service called NordLocker for Windows and macOS, which will let users secure their files using simple drag and drop. You can sign up for early access at nordlocker.com.



WE DON'T LIKE...

↓ North Face hacks Wikipedia articles

Clothing brand The North Face admitted to changing photos in Wikipedia articles to show models wearing its clothing in remote locations, so that North Face appeared at the top of Google results when people searched for 'adventure'.



↓ Fake cryptocurrency app targets Android users

Security researchers found a fake app disguised as a popular cryptocurrency wallet on the Google Play store, designed to steal money from Android users. The app was the second-ranked result when searching for the legitimate app.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Space Invaders – The Board Game

bit.ly/space477 | From £24

This stylish board game recreates the 1978 classic arcade game with its colourful, blocky aliens tumbling downward to fortified spaceships manned by our only hope: you. This table-top version, which suits two to four players, combines the thrill of building up a powerful deck of cards with intense strategy. Defend your moonbase by shifting powerful cannons across the board and gather intelligence against your alien foes. You can become humanity's last hope with a £24 pledge, or pay £59 for the deluxe version.



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Flipboard hack forces users to reset passwords

The news aggregation service Flipboard has suffered a security breach that gave hackers unauthorised access to its internal systems for more than nine months. Flipboard has notified all affected users and, as a precautionary measure, has reset the passwords of everyone who uses the service.

Flipboard has more than 145 million monthly active users, but hasn't yet disclosed the exact number of accounts involved in the breach. The data stolen included sensitive information such as usernames, email addresses and encrypted passwords.

"We're still in the process of determining the total number," the company said. "We do know that not all accounts were compromised. We have not found any evidence the unauthorized person accessed



third-party account(s) connected to users' Flipboard accounts."

The good news is that the majority of the stolen passwords between June 2018 and March/April 2019 were protected with a strong password-hashing algorithm called Bcrypt, which is considered very hard to crack.

bit.ly/flipboard477

Malware-ridden laptop sells for over a million

A laptop laden with some of the most infamous examples of malware has sold for \$1.3m (£1.03m) in an online art auction. 'The Persistence of Chaos', a piece by artist Guo O Dong, is a 10.2in Samsung Netbook from 2008 that's been infected with six different strains of malware believed to have collectively caused \$95bn in damage to systems across the world.

The malware on the "world's most dangerous" laptop includes ILOVEYOU, a virus that originated in the Philippines in



2000; MyDoom, allegedly a Russian email worm from 2004, which is said to be one of the fastest spreading viruses ever; and WannaCry, which crippled the NHS and many other public and private organisations around the world in 2017.

"Malware is one of the most tangible ways that the internet can jump out of your monitor and bite you," said Guo. He emphasised that all the ports on the machine have been disabled to prevent the malware from spreading.

bit.ly/laptop477

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

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



Q Should we worry about hidden spy cameras while travelling?
Joel North, Facebook

A The headlines about hidden cameras spying on people renting accommodation prove that secret surveillance is not just something you see in

the movies – it's happening in real life. In April, a family discovered that their activities were being live-streamed through a camera hidden in the living-room smoke alarm of their rented cottage in Ireland – one of several recent examples of such activity.

Staying secure needn't involve high tech and expensive countermeasures – basic kit and common sense go a long way towards keeping your digital gear and information safe so you are free to enjoy your holiday. To ensure there are

“ Secret surveillance is not just something you see in the movies ”

no hidden cameras in your hotel room or rental apartment, you can travel with a small GPS-tracking tool (readily available online) that incorporates a radio-frequency scanner, light-emitting diodes and a red glass.

This tool lets you find any sources that emit electromagnetic waves (as most wireless bugs and cameras do) and to look for hidden cameras. A camera lens reflects light

significantly better than other surfaces do, so if you point light from the diodes at what appears to be a camera, and look toward it through the red glass, you'll see a bright red dot.

You can also use your mobile phone to spot cameras that use infrared illumination, because cameras in mobile phones can detect infrared emissions. Bear in mind, however, that the infrared filters in some phones, such as iPhones, are too strong for this trick.





CCL COMPUTERS



CCL Reaper GT Gaming PC

- AMD Ryzen 7 2700 3.2GHz
- 16GB 3000MHz DDR4 Desktop Memory
- NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2070 8GB
- 256GB NVMe SSD
- 3TB Seagate BarraCuda HDD
- Corsair Carbide 275R TG Case



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★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

ENTERTAINMENT

NEW

Wizarding World

www.wizardingworld.com

We're sceptical of websites that require you to register before you can delve any deeper but Wizarding World's combination and celebration of the Harry Potter and Fantastic Beasts franchises had us instantly spellbound. This joint venture between Pottermore and Warner Bros aims to provide a single hub for JK Rowling's fantasy worlds. Currently, you can build a magical Passport (profile) by answering quizzes, get placed within a House and discover your Patronus – a form of advanced magic, in this case determined by your gut instinct. All wonderfully frivolous but slickly created and encouragingly shareable.

Our rating

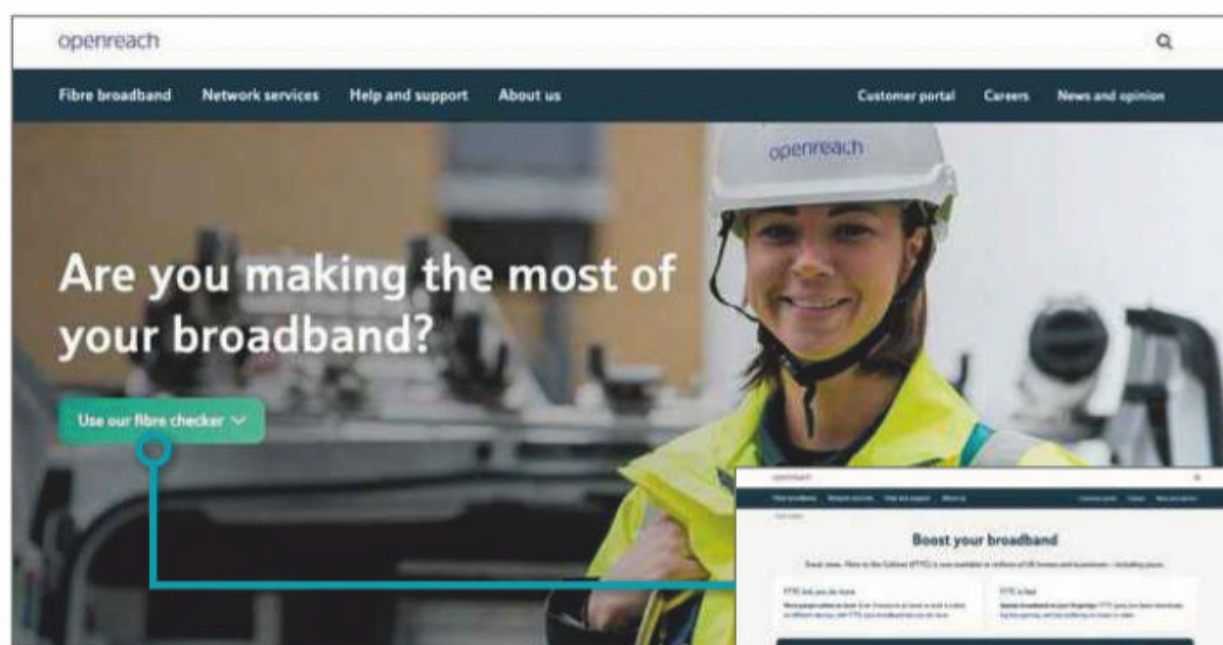
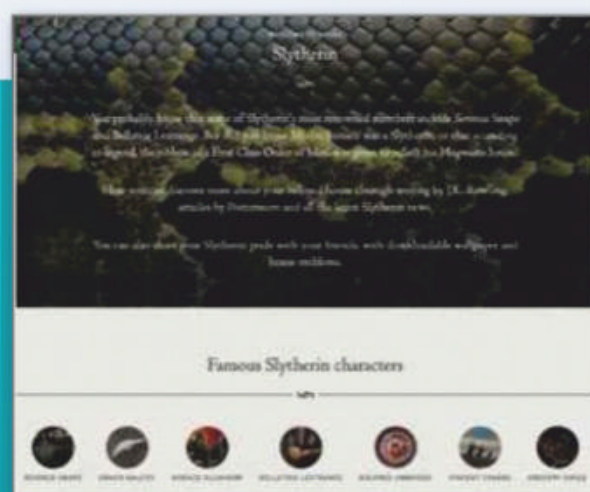


MORE POTTER

Clicking these links currently takes you to Pottermore.com but the content will eventually move to Wizarding World

HOME FROM HOME

Answer multiple-choice questions to discover more about your assigned house, wand and Patronus



RELAUNCH

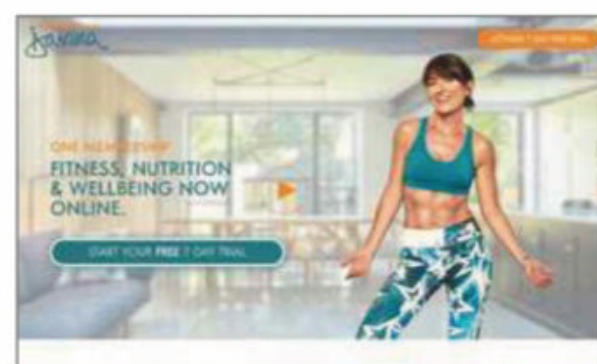
TECHNOLOGY

Openreach

www.openreach.com

Telecoms giant Openreach has overhauled its online infrastructure in response to reasons why people visit its website. It now immediately presents its fibre checker, which lets you enter a landline number or postcode to see availability in your area, before displaying a list of providers. The site also lets you discover more about Openreach's work – complete with the latest news – while offering a clear section for complaints, reports of damage and broadband issues with new-build homes. It's certainly an intuitive site that works well on mobile devices but despite there being less overall information than before, it entails a lot of scrolling on desktops.

Our rating



NEW

HEALTH

Own Your Goals Davina

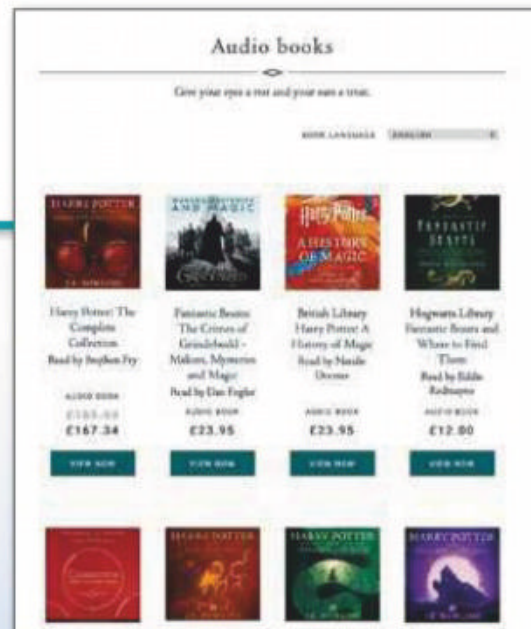
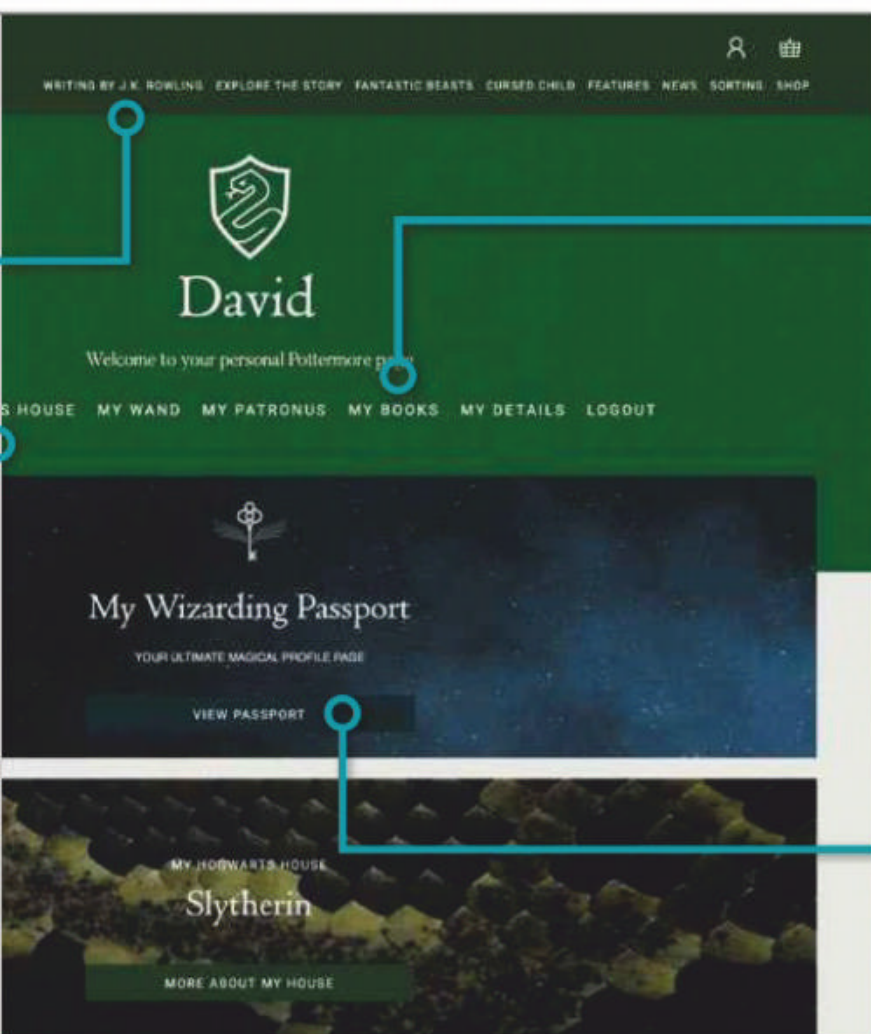
ownyourgoalsdavina.com

There's no doubt Davina McCall looks fit and healthy and, if this new venture works out, her bank balance is bound to follow suit. For £14.99 a month, you get access to the TV presenter's "secrets" – a personalised fitness plan, weekly workout videos, recipes catering to every taste and the support of an online community. The cost is on a par with other paid-for fitness services and there is a seven-day free trial (requiring payment details upfront) as well as some preview videos. There's also a selection of articles on this well-presented site – sadly, none of which we could actually open.

Our rating

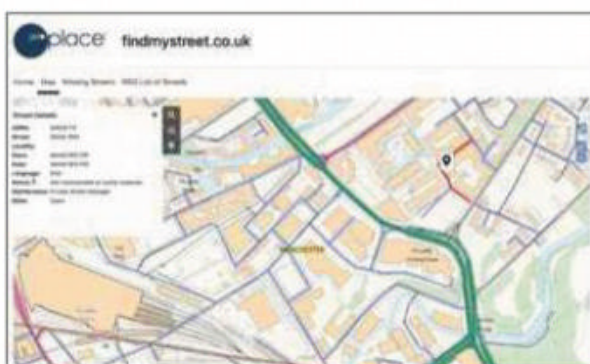
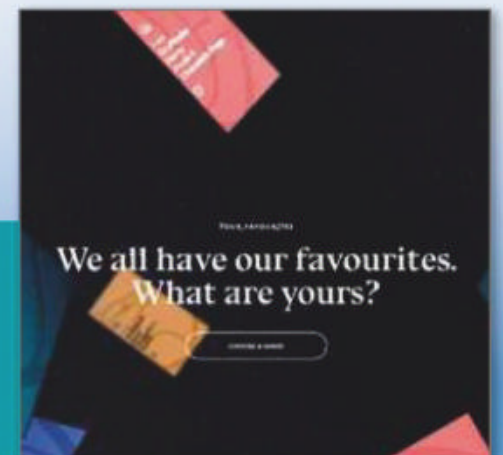


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



ACCESS YOUR BOOKS
Enter an email address, and any ebooks and audiobooks you've bought from Pottermore will appear like magic

YOUR PASSPORT
After registering, you're asked to build your profile. Add favourite characters, spells, objects, food and more



NEW

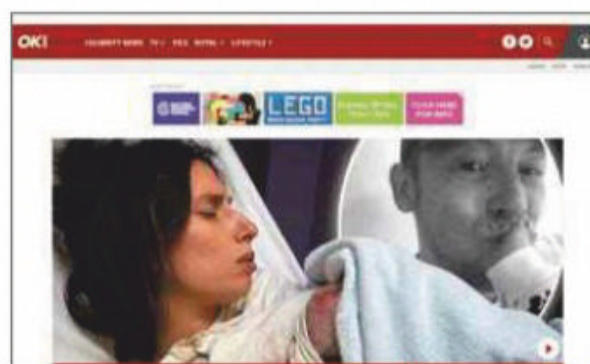
MAPS

Find My Street

www.findmystreet.co.uk

Created to support the Deregulation Act (2015), this site helps you identify public rights of way, unadopted roads and, for the most part, those managed by local authorities, so you can find out who is responsible for their upkeep. The process is a bit fiddly: start by searching for a local authority and address, and you're presented with an explanation. You then have to click the Map tab to get started and select Search, which isn't particularly intuitive. If you can't find a street, there's a good chance it's not listed, in which case you can click Missing Streets to notify the relevant contact.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

CELEBRITY

OK! Magazine

www.ok.co.uk

If you need a fix of celebrity news and gossip, then OK! magazine is an essential read, but if you've only ever wanted to gawp at the photos, you're now better served than ever because the website's makeover has gone big on images. Not only does there appear to be more of them, thanks to the new layout, but they dominate the homepage and articles. What's more, each photo loads more quickly and galleries only take up a single page. Having videos autoplay and follow you around the page is incredibly annoying, but it's good that the site now works well on any screen size.

Our rating



NEW

TRAVEL

Travel and Climate

travelandclimate.org

The newsworthiness of climate change has led to a growing consciousness of the impact of travel on the environment. If you're concerned, visit this site and enter your journey details to get an idea of your climate footprint. The design is a bit clumsy – you're likely to go straight to the large blue button since it's not immediately apparent that you need to click and fill in the details in the sentence above it – but from that point, you simply select transport and accommodation to get a comparative impact, along with how much Arctic ice could be melted by your trip.

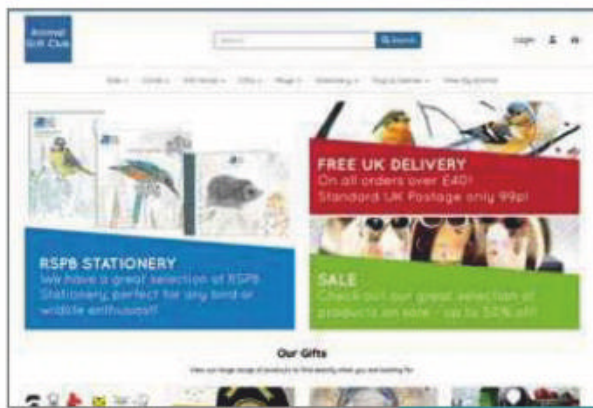
Our rating



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or search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon


RELAUNCH

ANIMALS

Animal Gift Club

www.animalgiftclub.com

Tweet all about it: this animal-loving gift store's new plumage gets a roar of approval from us. The improved highlighting of featured gifts and special offers, along with tidy product pages, are pleasingly concise and accompanied by great photos and notifications of new stock if an item is unavailable. Some features have been dropped during the revamp – the infrequently updated blog, for starters – while others have been moved (the artists' biographies are relegated to links at the bottom of pages) to make the content more focused. Prominent links to its Amazon and eBay stores should help boost sales, too.

Our rating


RELAUNCH

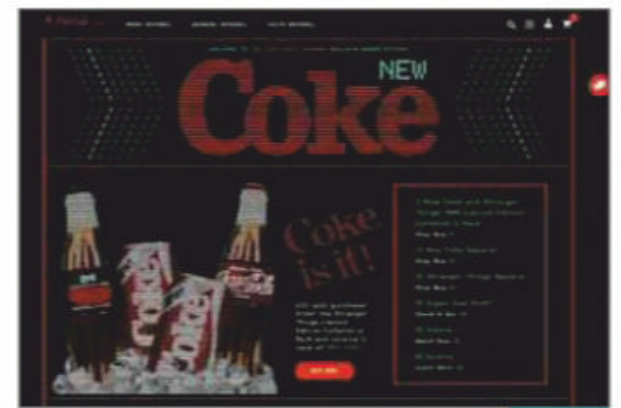
FILM

PremiereScene

premierescene.net

Created by film and television professionals, journalists and PR bods, this site promotes movies from the smallest indies to the biggest blockbusters, delivering some unique content. The red-carpet access and bustling film calendar cover premiere announcements, festivals and awards; while movie reviews are accompanied by cast lists, film stats and video interviews. Sharper navigation and a clearer design provide a better showcase than the old site although, sadly, it fails to fully highlight its archive, and our searches resulted in reviews that can't be stumbled upon while browsing.

Our rating


NEW

TELEVISION

New Coke

intl.cokestore.com/1985

When Coca-Cola revised its recipe and launched New Coke in 1985, it left such a bitter taste among soda fans that it was pulled after just 79 days. Fast forward 34 years and the drink is being revived in honour of the imminent third series of *Stranger Things*, and this retro website – created to resemble an old Bulletin Board System – is part of the fun. Though the site won't deliver cases of soda to the UK, typing 'Stranger Things' in the search box lets you find and buy apparel. You can also watch a specially made 1980s-style advert and download Coke wallpapers – enough to whet your appetite for the new season's debut in July.

Our rating


RELAUNCH

FINANCE

Moneyfacts.co.uk

moneyfacts.co.uk

The decision to splash the cash on a new-look website for Moneyfacts.co.uk has proven to be a wise investment. Gone is the tiny text that hadn't been improved since the dawn of the recession and in its place are bold menus and comparison charts that display more information without ever threatening to overwhelm. We like the wealth of filters on the loans page and the upfront presentation of the best savings and mortgages rates. With the financial guides and social media made more prominent, this makes for a user-friendly site that's now better value than ever for anyone looking for the best deals on loans, credit cards, mortgages and much more.

Our rating


NEW

EDUCATION

Informed Choices

www.informedchoices.ac.uk

Even before students choose a degree, they're often considering which A-level subjects will best prepare them. This website by the Russell Group of universities aims to help, and notably replaces a list that tended to favour traditional academic subjects with one that puts creative studies on an equal footing. It's useful, but not much more than a starting point – you click a degree subject to see essential or useful subjects, yet there's little explanation as to why, and it's no substitute for one-to-one career advice.

Our rating



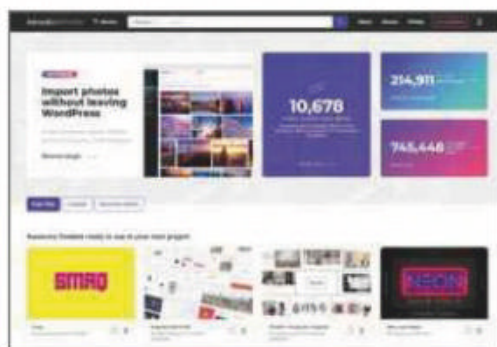
Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Check for mobile friendliness

Furthering its search engine's push towards favouring sites that work well on mobile devices, Google has announced that all new websites will now only be indexed using its mobile web-crawler. This means that being mobile friendly is more important than ever. To check whether your site passes the tests, use your Google account to sign into Google's Search Console at bit.ly/gsc477 - you'll have to set up your site if you haven't used it before. Click URL Inspection and type the address you want to test, such as your homepage. Your site's mobile-friendly status is indicated in the Mobile Usability section.



designers can upload their work for other people to use - a bit like Spotify for designers. The site provides a free option you can sign up to that showcases the service and lets you use a curated selection of designs for free, which changes monthly. Sign up for a free account to see what's available.

Get professional designs for free

Envato Elements (elements.envato.com) is a subscription-based service where professional

Deal of the Fortnight

Tsohost (www.tsohost.com) is offering up to 80% off for the first year on its 'xyz', 'online' and 'tech' domain names.

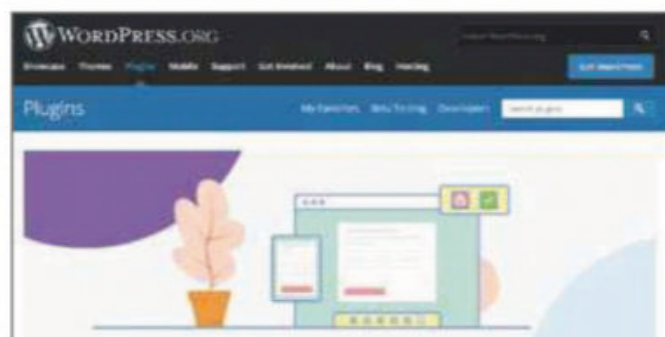
Web-building Helpdesk

Q I have a WordPress website and want to build an application form that people can fill in and submit. Is there a free plugin for this?

Olubunmi Adewumi, via email

A Everest Forms is a relatively new form-building plugin for WordPress. It has a lovely drag-and-drop interface, which lets you take typical form fields and drop them into your layout. The plugin's page (bit.ly/ever477) has a video you can watch to see if you think it will be right for you. If it is, you can download the free version or install it from your dashboard.

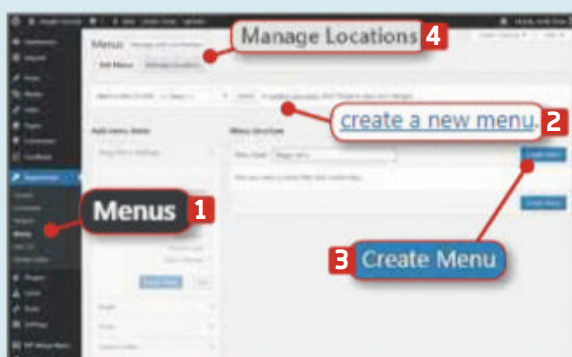
Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor



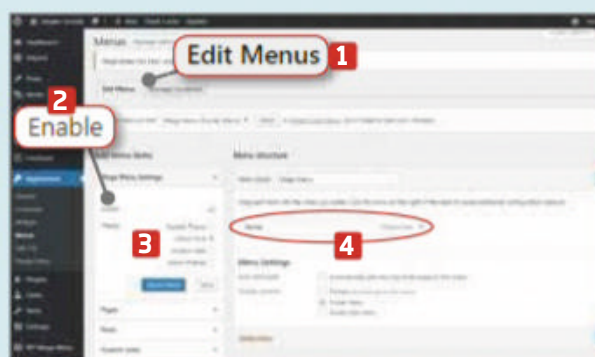
MINI WORKSHOP | Make a Mega Menu in WordPress

WP Mega Menu: bit.ly/wpmm477 | 10 mins | Self-hosted WordPress website

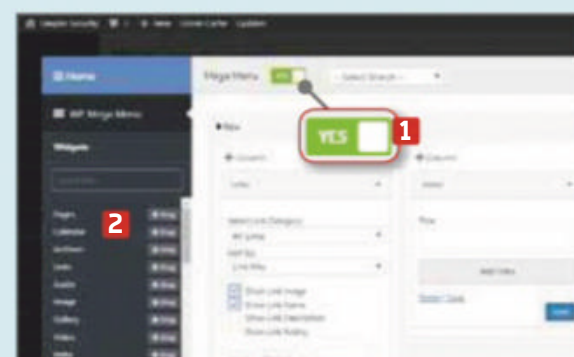
Website menus are generally limited to boring text links, but if you install the Mega Menu plugin on your WordPress website, you can fill your menus with anything - even pictures and videos



1 Install WP Mega Menu in the usual way. Click Appearance, then Menus, **1** then click 'create a new menu'. **2** Give it a name and click the Create Menu button. **3** Click Manage Locations **4** and choose one of your theme's menu slots to position the menu, then click the Save Changes button.

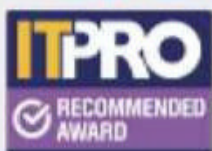


2 Return to the Edit Menus tab. **1** In Mega Menu Settings, tick the box next to Enable **2** and choose one of the themes. **3** Select an option from the regular menu and drag it across to begin building your menu. We've started with a Custom Link, which we've labelled Home and chosen to have pointing to our front page. **4**



3 Hover your mouse over the item to see a WP Mega Menu button. Click this, then click the switch **1** to configure it as a Mega Menu, then click Add Row and choose the layout you want. Lastly, drag options from the menu on the left to the empty slots to build your menu. **2**

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What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

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STARZPLAY



Watch Patricia Arquette in true-crime drama *The Act*

From 14 June

Patricia Arquette (*Boyhood*) stars in this unsettling eight-part drama based on the true story of Dee Dee Blanchard, a mother with Munchausen syndrome by proxy, and her daughter Gypsy (played by Joey King). As written about by journalist Michelle Dean in a 2016 BuzzFeed article (bit.ly/buzzfeed477), Dee Dee was obsessed with inflicting unnecessary medical treatments on teenager Gypsy, who ended up seeking revenge for the abuse.

The Act might risk descending into prurient shock-tainment in the hands of lesser actors, but Arquette and King – who at 19 is a veteran of quality TV, including Netflix's *Fargo* (bit.ly/fargo477) – received acclaim when *The Act* premiered on US streaming service Hulu. Watch Hulu's official trailer on YouTube at bit.ly/theact477.

You can watch all of *The Act* on Hulu if you have a VPN and a brass neck (it's at bit.ly/acthulu477), but the best way to stream it in the UK is Amazon's StarzPlay channel, which costs £4.99 a month plus £7.99 for Prime. Find out more about Amazon channels at bit.ly/channels477.

Hulu says *The Act* will return for a second season next year with a different story based on a similarly shocking real-life crime.

N Time-hop in German sci-fi thriller *Dark*

From 21 June

"Better than *Stranger Things*" insist fans of this time-hopping German sci-fi drama, returning for a second season on Netflix. Season 1's series of mysterious events involved the disappearance of children, a local nuclear power plant, a murderous priest – and a sudden flip back to 1986. Season 2's script hints at scenes from 1954, 1987 and 2020.

Catch up with the action so far on Netflix at bit.ly/dark477, where Season 2 joins Season 1 on 21 June. You can watch the latest trailer – which boasts



1,200 thumbs up and a mere 12 thumbs down from YouTube viewers – at bit.ly/darktrail477.

NEW Watch Italian Mafia thriller *Gomorrah*

From 19 June



Sky's Italian drama series is about – you guessed it – the Mafia, with family-on-family violence at its core. Season 4 picks up after the death of a major character (we won't spoil), and explores a whole new rivalry.

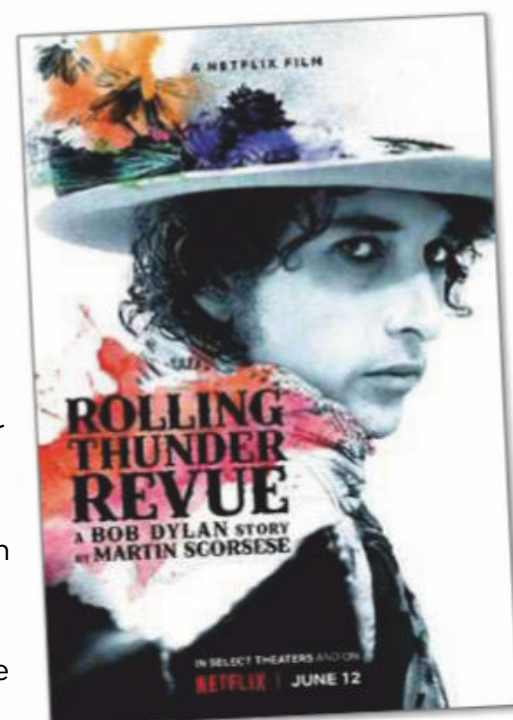
Based on Roberto Saviano's bestseller (bit.ly/gombook477), *Gomorrah* arrived on Now TV last year as a three-season box set (bit.ly/gomorra477). New

episodes will arrive weekly from 19 June, reportedly as double-bills. To watch, you'll need a Now TV Entertainment Pass. Accept a trailer you can't refuse on YouTube at bit.ly/gomtrail477.

N Stream Martin Scorsese's new Bob Dylan film

From 12 June

It's fair to assume Hollywood director Martin Scorsese is a Bob Dylan fan. Fourteen years after his five-hour epic *No Direction Home*, which chronicled the life and career of the folk-rock



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

troubadour, Scorsese is back with a new Netflix documentary about Dylan's 1976 Rolling Thunder tour.

Rolling Thunder Revue: A Bob Dylan Story by Martin Scorsese, to give the film its full face-purpling title, combines concert footage and "fantasy" (Netflix's word), and features musicians including Patti Smith and Joan Baez. Stream it on-demand at bit.ly/dylan477.

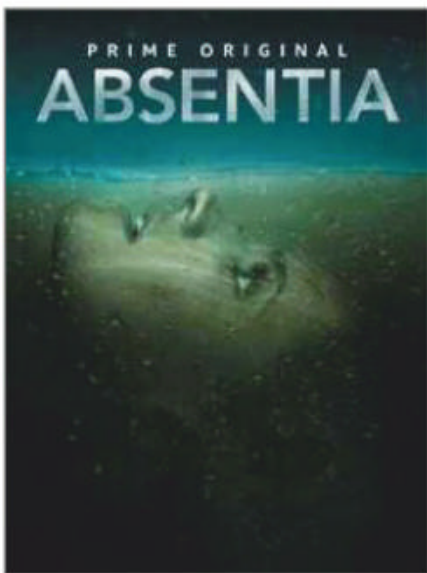
Annoyingly there's no trailer, but YouTube's Rolling Thunder tour footage should whet your appetite at bit.ly/rolling477.



Follow the unravelling mystery in *Absentia*

From 14 June

Stana Katic (*Castle*) plays presumed-dead FBI agent Emily Byrne, who emerges after six years to find her



family doesn't recognise her and she's under suspicion for a string of murders. This convoluted setup never quite found its groove in Season 1, but maybe it's a slow-burner. Give it a go

when Season 2 joins Season 1 on Amazon Prime at bit.ly/absentia477. Watch the latest trailer at bit.ly/abtrail477.

In case you missed it...

Two award-hoovering shows from British writers have just returned with new seasons. Round two of *Killing Eve* is finally on the iPlayer at bit.ly/



[killingeve477](http://bit.ly/killingeve477), having already been shown on BBC America, where it's doing its level best to live up to the excellent first season. Also back is Netflix's

BT Sport beats Sky Sports to HDR stream

BT Sport has launched HDR (High Dynamic Range) streaming in addition to 4K ultra-high definition (UHD), adding up to what it calls "the world's best image quality".

BT debuted HDR for the Champions League final in Madrid on 1 June, and says up to 70 live events will be shown in HDR each season. They'll be available in HD HDR on the small screen BT Sport app, and 4K HDR on large screens with a 4K add-on. Find out more at bit.ly/bt-hdr477.

Meanwhile BT Sport's app is now available for all PlayStation 4 consoles, four months after launching for Xbox One. Users can access the three main BT Sport channels plus ESPN, Boxnation and BT Sport Extra, from £10 per month.



Say farewell to Marvel's last Netflix hero *Jessica Jones*

From 14 June

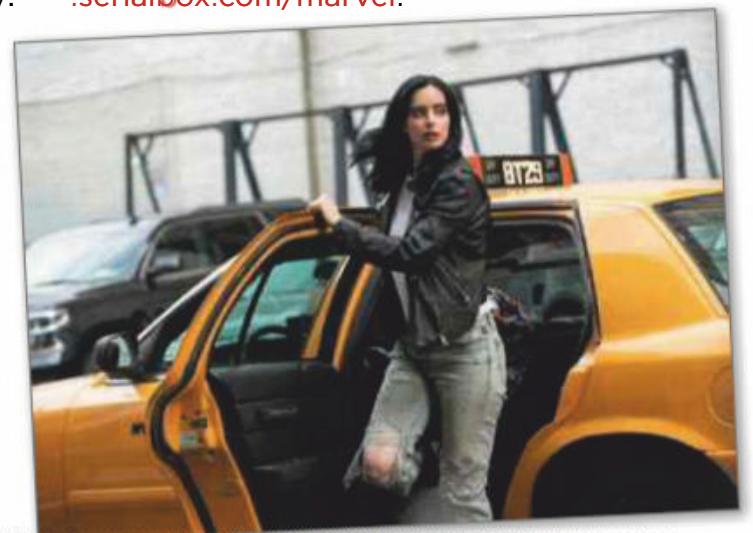
Jessica Jones, alcoholic private investigator and jeans-clad pugilist, is Netflix's last Marvel Defender standing – and now she's bowing out.

The end was confirmed by official "Netflix insider" Twitter account See What's Next, which tweeted on 28 May: "In the third and final season of #JessicaJones (June 14!), Jessica & Trish team up to take down a highly intelligent psychopath" (bit.ly/jesstweet477). Not that we expect the sisters' relationship to end well.

The creepy villain is played by Jeremy Bobb (*Russian Doll*), whose disembodied voice features in a teaser (bit.ly/jessteaser477). Bobb appears with Krysten Ritter as Jessica and Rachael Taylor as Trish, although

David Tennant won't be back as Kilgrave.

Season 3 joins its predecessors on Netflix at bit.ly/jessica477 on 14 June. The show may be over, but Jessica Jones – along with Thor, Black Widow and Black Panther – lives to fight again in a new series from audiobook creator Serial Box. Sign up for updates at www.serialbox.com/marvel.



futuristic satire *Black Mirror*, by BBC *Screenwipe* maverick Charlie Brooker. Watch Season 5 on-demand at bit.ly/blackmirror477, and watch the latest trailer at bit.ly/mirrortrail477. For

another go at the interactive one-off *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch*, go to bit.ly/bandersnatch477.

Over on Now TV, HBO's *Deadwood The Movie*

arrived on 1 June to offer much-needed closure. You can also watch Seasons 1-3 of *Deadwood* on-demand until December this year at bit.ly/deadwood477.

Now TV also welcomed a sixth season of FBI profiler drama *The Blacklist*, starring James Spader (*Sex, Lies and Videotape*). New episodes arrive weekly at bit.ly/blacklist477, and the latest trailer is at bit.ly/blacktrail477.

Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Mini PCs under £750

Bigger doesn't necessarily mean better – here, we've reviewed six compact computers designed to suit any space

If you don't have the space for a bulky, boxy desktop PC, the alternative is to buy a laptop. But if you don't want to limit the size of your screen and would rather use a keyboard that sits some distance from it, then another option is to get yourself a mini PC. These smart, compact units are less powerful than their desktop counterparts, but still capable of good Windows performance; and their smaller, more efficient components make them ideally suited for running quietly next to a TV, and a perfect fit for smaller, multifunctional spaces such as bedrooms.

In this Group Test, we've reviewed six mini PCs to see how they stand up to everyday use, so you can decide whether you're ready to abandon a hulking tower in favour of a more discreet machine.

HOW WE TESTED

We ran our benchmark suite on each computer, which tests how well each one can run a demanding series of tests including video and image editing. We also tested their gaming performance using the Unigine Superposition benchmark (bit.ly/unin477) at its 720p setting. However, we wouldn't recommend any of these small PCs if your primary focus is on gaming.

**ASRock DeskMini 310 Series | £139.70 (barebones),
£668.70 (as reviewed) | Buy from Stuff-uk.net: bit.ly/asro477**

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

Looking at our photo, you'd be forgiven for assuming that the ASRock DeskMini is a full-size tower PC. It's only when you spot the comparative size of the USB ports that you realise it seems to have shrunk in the wash.

Based on the tiny STX form factor, this is a true barebones system: as standard, it comes with only the case, power supply and motherboard. Everything else must be bought separately and manually fitted, including a method for keeping its temperature stable.

There's not much clearance inside the case, so the chassis can only take low-profile coolers. We fitted it with the recommended Noctua NH-L9i cooling fan (£38 from Overclockers UK at bit.ly/noct477), an Intel Core i5-8400 processor and 16GB of memory. This pushes the price up to £668.70 but it makes for a great combination, which

proved better at running Windows programs than any of the other devices we tested, ranking second in the Unigine gaming benchmark.

There are other processors you can fit to customise the device to suit your needs: a Core i7-8700 will get top performance from the motherboard, or you can spend a lot less on a Pentium G5400T if your performance requirements are low and you'd prefer it to draw less power.

The case can accommodate two 2.5in SATA drives, which are tucked away on the rear of the removable motherboard tray, and it allows for an impressive amount of ventilation at an extremely low noise level – not as quiet as the Bronze Award-winning fanless system we tested, but far from any level that you would find objectionable.

The one-year return-to-base warranty is a bit miserly, though, and (unless you choose a custom-build option) only covers the motherboard, chassis and external power supply.



VERDICT ★★★★★

The performance of this diminutive PC comes remarkably close to a full-size system. The main downside is that there's no room for graphics hardware, so it's never going to excel as a gaming PC. However, it's compact, quiet and runs Windows well, as long as you're willing to spend extra on the necessary components and are happy putting the device together yourself.

Intel NUC7 Home Mini PC | £544.98 | Buy from eBuyer: bit.ly/inuc477

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



You can buy one of Intel's NUCs (which stands for Next Unit of Computing) either in its barebones form or with internal components supplied. Our test model came pre-built with the memory and hard drive installed, but it might be worth fitting your own as the 4GB of supplied memory is a bare minimum.

The unit is smaller and lighter than most of the other PCs we tested, and one of the few to include Intel's Thunderbolt 3 technology, which means you could add external graphics hardware to boost its graphics performance at a later date.

Having said that, the NUC7 came top of our gaming benchmark as it is. The speed isn't mind-blowing but it's adequate for a small PC, undoubtedly helped by its extra 16GB Intel Optane memory, which is built into the interface and provides the mechanical hard drives with an SSD-like speed boost.

VERDICT



The specification of this NUC was a little low and could have done with a bit more memory, but it still performed well in our tests. We found the fan a little noisy for such a small device, though.

QuietPC UltraNUC Pro 7 Fanless | £629 | Buy from QuietPC: bit.ly/qpun477

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



This is one of Intel's Silver Award-winning NUC systems (see review, left), removed from its original housing and installed in a different case, which doesn't need a fan to stay cool. The QuietPC website lets you add any upgrades you fancy when you order your mini PC - our test unit came with 8GB of memory and an Intel Core i3-7100U processor, which is less powerful than the chips in our other award winners. This was reflected in the results of our Windows and gaming tests, despite this model's superior memory. However, if you're carrying out less processor-intensive and more memory-hungry tasks, such as browsing with a lot of tabs open, this model does an excellent job.

Rather than a fan, the case uses fins to dissipate the build-up of heat, so there's no noise at all. If you want a silent PC, it's the perfect device, but the case is a little larger than Intel's as a result.

VERDICT



This QuietPC runs completely silently, so it's a great device for keeping next to a TV. The processor is a little light for intense Windows work but its generous memory means it can multitask less demanding jobs with ease.

ALSO REVIEWED

We reviewed three more diminutive computers before coming up with our favourites. The one most similar to our award winners is the **Jetway JBC420** (£234 | bit.ly/jetw477 | ★★★★★). It's a barebones PC, so we had to spend an overall total of £328 to get a working specification. However, it's primary function is for hooking up an internet appliance, so it didn't pass muster in our performance tests.

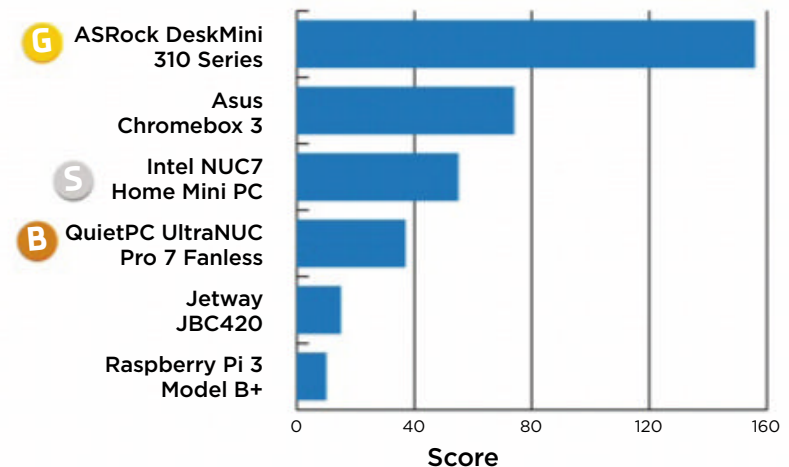
You don't have to run Windows, of course. If you'd prefer to run Google's Chrome OS, there's the **Asus Chromebox 3** (£553.98 | bit.ly/asus477 | ★★★★★), which comes with a Intel Core i5 processor and 8GB of memory. However, for the price, we think it's better to get something capable of running Windows software.

Lastly, it wouldn't be a mini computer roundup without mentioning the **Raspberry Pi** - we tested a Model B+ in an Argon One case (£53.26 from bit.ly/rasp477 | ★★★★★), which is made of aluminium and gives the device a proper mini-PC feel. However, you can only run Linux and while it's wonderful for tinkering and experimenting, it's not powerful enough to be considered a full desktop PC.

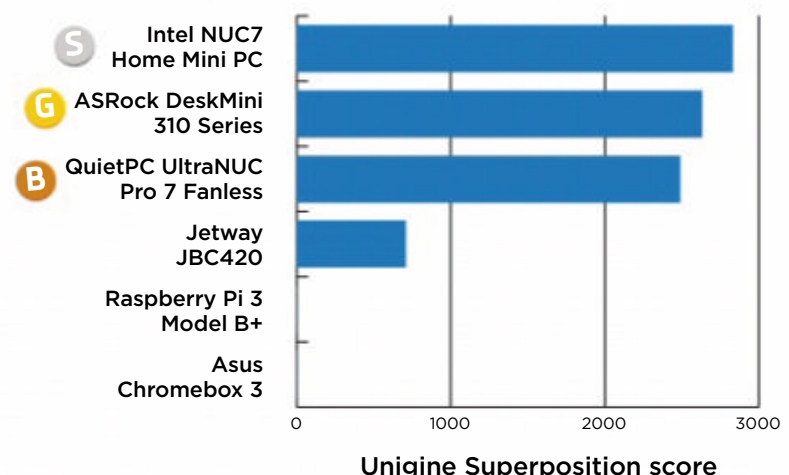








TEST-RESULTS CHARTS

Overall benchmark score



Unigine Superposition benchmark



	 WebUser GOLD AWARD	 WebUser SILVER AWARD	 WebUser BRONZE AWARD			
	ASRock DeskMini 310 Series	Intel NUC 7 Home Mini PC	QuietPC UltraNUC Pro 7 Fanless	Jetway JBC420	Asus Chromebox 3	Raspberry Pi 3 Model B+
WEBSITE	www.asrock.com	www.intel.co.uk	www.quietpc.com	www.jetwaycomputer.com	www.asus.com	www.raspberrypi.org
PRICE	£139.70 (barebones), £668.70 (as reviewed)	£544.98	£629	£234	£553.98	£53.26
BUY FROM	Stuff-uk.net: bit.ly/asro477	eBuyer: bit.ly/inuc477	QuietPC: bit.ly/qpun477	Mini-ITX: bit.ly/jetw477	eBuyer: bit.ly/asus477	Amazon: bit.ly/rasp477
PROCESSOR (AS TESTED)	Intel Core i5-8400	Intel Core i5-7260U	Intel Core i3-7100U	Intel Celeron N3160	Intel Core i5-8250U	Broadcom BCM2837B0 Arm Cortex-A53
MEMORY (AS TESTED)	16GB	4GB	8GB	4GB	8GB	1GB
GRAPHICS	Intel UHD Graphics 630	Intel Iris Plus Graphics 640 64MB eDRAM	Intel HD Graphics 620	Intel HD Graphics 400	Intel UHD Graphics 620	Broadcom VideoCore IV
MONITOR PORTS	DisplayPort, HDMI, VGA	HDMI, USB Type-C with DisplayPort	2 x HDMI	DisplayPort, 2 x HDMI	HDMI, USB Type-C with DisplayPort	AV out, DSI, HDMI
DRIVES	250GB SSD	16GB M.2 Intel Optane, 1TB hard drive	500GB M.2 SSD	60GB M.2 SSD	128GB M.2 SSD	32GB MicroSD
USB PORTS	1 x USB Type-C, 2 x USB 3.1, 1 x USB 2	5 x USB 3, 1 x Thunderbolt 3, 1 x USB Type-C	4 x USB 3, 2 x USB 2	4 x USB 3	1 x USB Type-C, 5 x USB 3.1	4 x USB 2
NETWORK	802.11ac Wi-Fi, 1 x Gigabit Ethernet	802.11ac Wi-Fi, 1 x Gigabit Ethernet	1 x Gigabit Ethernet	1 x Gigabit Ethernet	802.11ac Wi-Fi, 1 x Gigabit Ethernet	802.11ac Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet
SIZE	158 x 155 x 80mm	115 x 111 x 51mm	207 x 177 x 61mm	129 x 112 x 35mm	149 x 149 x 42mm	106 x 94 x 31mm
WEIGHT	1.87kg (as reviewed)	918g	1.94kg	736g	809g	338g
WARRANTY	1-year return-to-base	3-years return-to-base	2-years return-to-base	2-years return-to-base	1-year return-to-base	1-year return-to-base

OUR VERDICT

We gave our Gold Award to the ASRock DeskMini 310 Series. We beefed up the components to create a £668.70 Windows beast, though you could certainly cut some corners to knock the price down. Our configuration made it the best of the bunch and deserving of its award.

The Silver Award-winning Intel NUC7 Home Mini PC could have done with a bit more memory but turned out to be surprisingly capable in our tests. The supplied fan was a bit noisy, though, and had to work hard to keep itself cool in the confined space.

It was the absence of noise that attracted us to the QuietPC UltraNUC Pro 7 Fanless, which won our Bronze Award. The processor in the unit we tested was a little underspecified for our intensive tests but it would make a great casual PC for keeping next to a TV. ■



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HARDWARE

MINI PC

ASRock DeskMini 310

£668.70 from bit.ly/asro477
Tested: Issue 477

The performance of this diminutive PC comes remarkably close to a full-size system, once you've paid for and installed its components. It's compact, quiet and runs Windows well.

KEY SPECS

Intel Core i5-8400 processor ■ 250GB SSD ■ 16GB memory ■ Intel UHD Graphics 630 card ■ 1 x USB Type-C, 2 x USB 3.1, 1 x USB 2 ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi, Gigabit Ethernet ■ 158 x 155 x 80mm ■ 1.87kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

NEW!



GRAPHICS CARD

Asus ROG Strix RX 570 OC

£189.99 from bit.ly/asusbox475
Tested: Issue 475

Asus's twin-fan graphics card gets the balance perfectly right. It comfortably plays games that are designed to push a graphics-processing unit to the limit, and for the price it kicks cards with similar specifications right out of the game.

KEY SPECS

AMD Radeon RX 570 graphics processor ■ 2,048 GPU cores ■ 1,300MHz clock speed ■ 4GB memory ■ 1 x DisplayPort, 2 x DVI, 1 x HDMI outputs ■ 200W power ■ 240mm ■ Two-year repair-and-replace warranty



SMARTPHONE

Moto G7 Power

£179.99 from bit.ly/pow472
Tested: Issue 472

Battery life is at the heart of what we love and hate about our phones, and the Moto G7 Power lasted an incredible 26 hours and 22 minutes in our tests. Its specs and price are also great.

KEY SPECS

Octa-core 1.8GHz processor ■ 64GB storage ■ 4GB RAM ■ 6.2in, 720 x 1,570-pixel screen ■ 12-megapixel rear camera, 8-megapixel front camera ■ 5,000mAh battery ■ 159.4 x 76 x 9.3mm ■ 193g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty



WI-FI EXTENDER

Netgear Nighthawk X6S

£145.99 from bit.ly/ngx6s471
Tested: Issue 471

The Nighthawk X6S's unbeatable combination of high speed and top-end features makes it the best Wi-Fi extender available. It's big and boxy, but its performance gives mesh-router systems a run for their money.

KEY SPECS

Works with 2.4GHz and 5GHz networks ■ 4 x Gigabit Ethernet ports ■ Access control ■ Wi-Fi schedule ■ WPS button ■ 277 x 170 x 93mm ■ Two-year warranty



SECURITY CAMERA

Blink XT

£149.99 from bit.ly/blink470
Tested: Issue 470

The Blink XT can be positioned anywhere in your home, indoors or out, and includes a lifetime subscription to its cloud-storage service. You get a couple of years' use out of the camera before you need to replace the batteries.

KEY SPECS

HD Video ■ Motion and temperature sensors ■ Built-in microphone ■ Camera mount included ■ Weatherproof ■ Infrared night vision ■ Wi-Fi connectivity ■ Instant alerts to your phone ■ Two years of battery life



LAPTOP SSD

Samsung 970 Evo

£75.51 from bit.ly/sevo469
Tested: Issue 469

The Samsung 970 Evo is a smart, affordable choice for anyone looking to get better performance from their laptop. It's very fast, with excellent file-transfer speeds, and there are higher capacity versions with up to 2TB of storage.

KEY SPECS

256GB capacity ■ 3,600MB/s maximum speed ■ M.2 PCIe Gen 3 x 4 interface ■ Samsung Phoenix 5-core processor ■ Samsung V-NAND 3-bit MLC flash memory ■ 22 x 80 x 2.38mm ■ Five-year warranty



SOFTWARE & SERVICES

BACKUP SOFTWARE

Acronis True Image 2019

£35 from

bit.ly/acro473

Tested: Issue 473

Acronis True Image is a versatile backup tool that can do everything from cloud storage to disaster recovery. It isn't cheap compared with rival software, but it's flexible and simple to control, reasonably fast and should cover all your backing-up needs.

KEY FEATURES

Windows, macOS, Android, iOS ■ Local backup ■ Disc-image backup ■ Restore from the web ■ Create disaster recovery ■ AES-256 encryption ■ Continuous, daily, weekly or monthly backups ■ Multiple backup sets

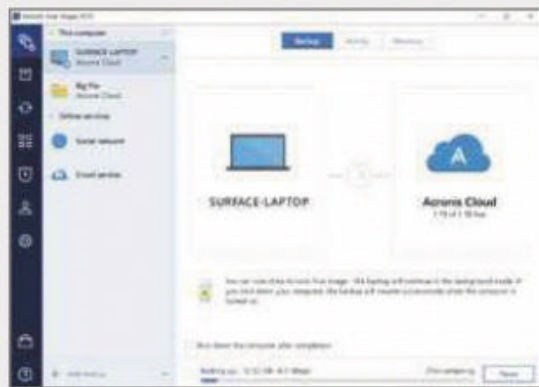


PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE

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



Web User Gold Award winners

CLIPBOARD MANAGER

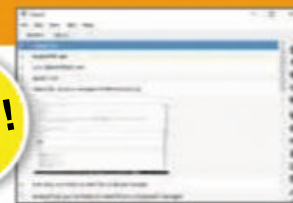
CopyQ

Free from bit.ly/copyq476

Tested: Issue 476

Intuitively designed and undemanding, CopyQ delivers everything you need from a clipboard manager. It has no trouble with text, images or anything else you throw at it.

NEW!



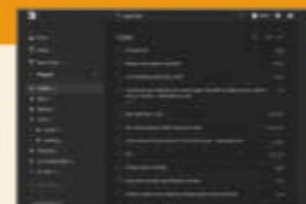
TO-DO LIST TOOL

Todoist

Free from www.todoist.com

Tested: Issue 475

Todoist has all the tools you need for managing your daily tasks, wrapped up in an attractive interface. It works well across all phones, computers and other connected devices.



URL SHORTENER

Kutt.it

Free from kutt.it

Tested: Issue 474

Kutt.it offers all the tools you need from a URL-shortening service without any of the clutter of its rivals. It's entirely free and open-source, which gets it a thumbs-up from us.



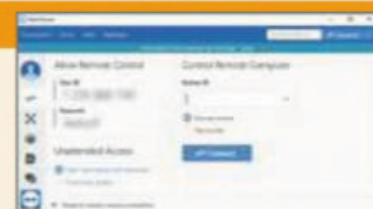
SCREEN-SHARING TOOL

TeamViewer

Free from www.teamviewer.com

Tested: Issue 473

Robust and reliable, TeamViewer surpasses its rivals with a range of powerful options that's free to personal users.



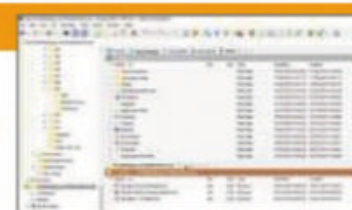
FILE-EXPLORER ALTERNATIVE

XYplorer Free

Free from bit.ly/xypl472

Tested: Issue 472

Fast and effective, XYplorer Free's excellent tabbed interface makes managing your files impressively easy.



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MEDIA SERVER

Serviio 2

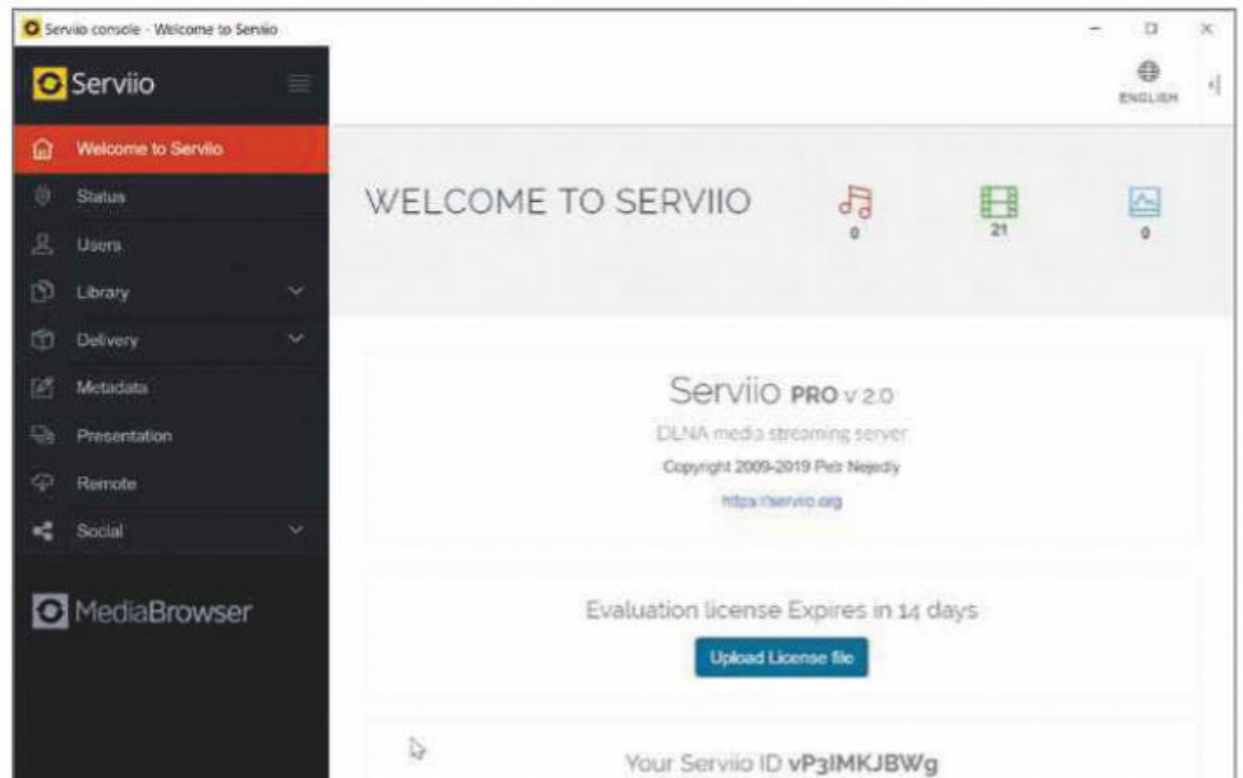
www.serviio.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, macOS or Linux

File size: 155MB

If you have a large collection of DVDs and Blu-rays gathering dust since you switched to streaming services, you can rip them to your hard drive, along with any digital movies you've downloaded, and make the whole collection accessible over your network via a media server. There are several tools you can use to set up your server, such as Plex (plex.tv) and Emby (emby.media), but another option to consider is the newly updated Serviio.

This powerful free program lets you store your media (songs and photos, as well as videos) in a central location and

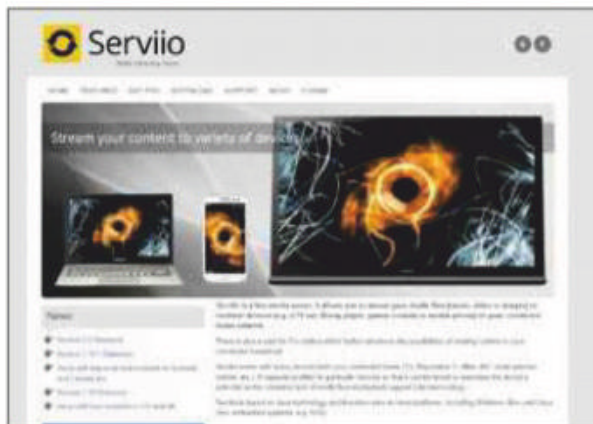


stream it to DLNA (Digital Living Network Alliance) certified devices on your network, such as mobile phones, tablets, computers, games consoles and smart TVs. There are some limitations with the free version – you can't stream your media over the web, for example – but it will let you watch local and online content on any compatible devices over your network, either in their native format or transcoded (in real time) into another playable format.

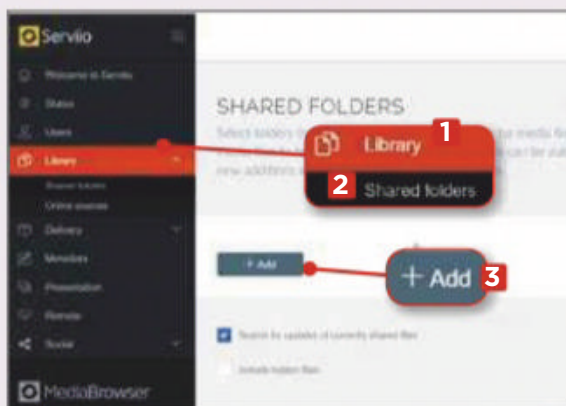
Serviio supports plugins too, so you can expand its capabilities, and there's an Alexa skill available that lets you

control playback using your voice. It can also handle RAW camera images and display subtitles.

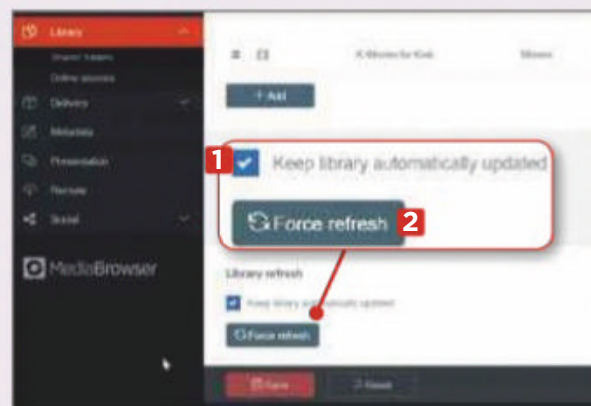
This updated version of Serviio lets you browse movies by length, and ignore folders and files by name or extension. It also updates video-format support. The paid-for version introduces multi-user functionality, so other people can access your media over the network (with your permission), and you can create limited accounts for under 18s. Upgrading to the Pro version costs \$25 (£19.67), but there's a 14-day free trial available so you can test it out first.



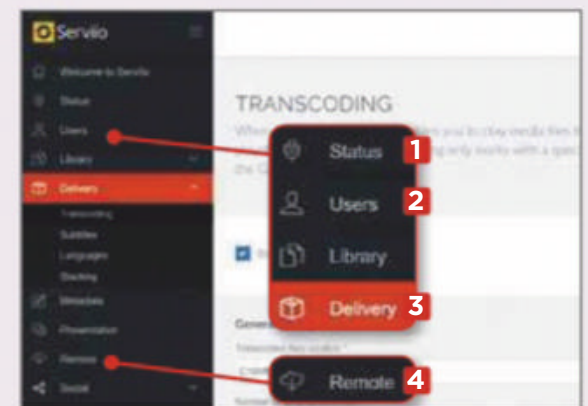
MINI WORKSHOP | Set up your own media server with Serviio



1 Install the server file for your host device (Windows, macOS or Linux), then start the Serviio service and launch the console. Once it's connected, you'll be ready to add your media. Expand the Library section on the left **1** and click Shared Folders. **2** Click the Add button **3** to link your media folder.

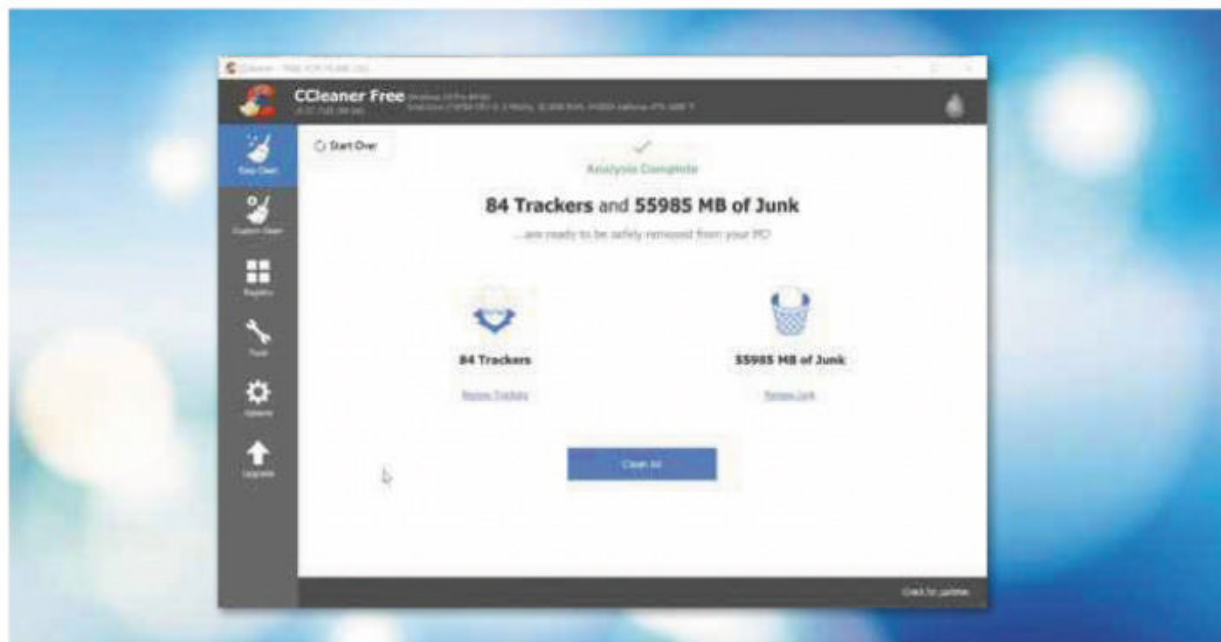


2 Select the media type contained in the folder, browse to the location and enter a display name. Click OK. When you've added some folders, click Save. You can add more locations later if required. Your library should automatically update when you add new files to the monitored folders, **1** or you can force a refresh. **2**



3 You can view the connectivity of your server under Status **1** and choose the network adapter to use if you have more than one. Click Users **2** to create user accounts. Delivery **3** lets you manage transcoding and subtitles. When your server is fully configured, you can connect to it using any DLNA device. **4**

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



SYSTEM CLEANER

CCleaner 5.57

www.ccleaner.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 20.3MB

The Avast-owned system-cleaning tool can remove all manner of junk from your PC, fix Registry errors, manage Windows startup, find duplicates, securely wipe a drive and more. It can now also identify programs that need updating, but you need to upgrade to the paid-for Pro version for £19.95 to actually do so. This latest version introduces a wizard-based Easy Clean mode which steps you through the cleaning process, making it much easier for beginners to use.

New Windows 10 App

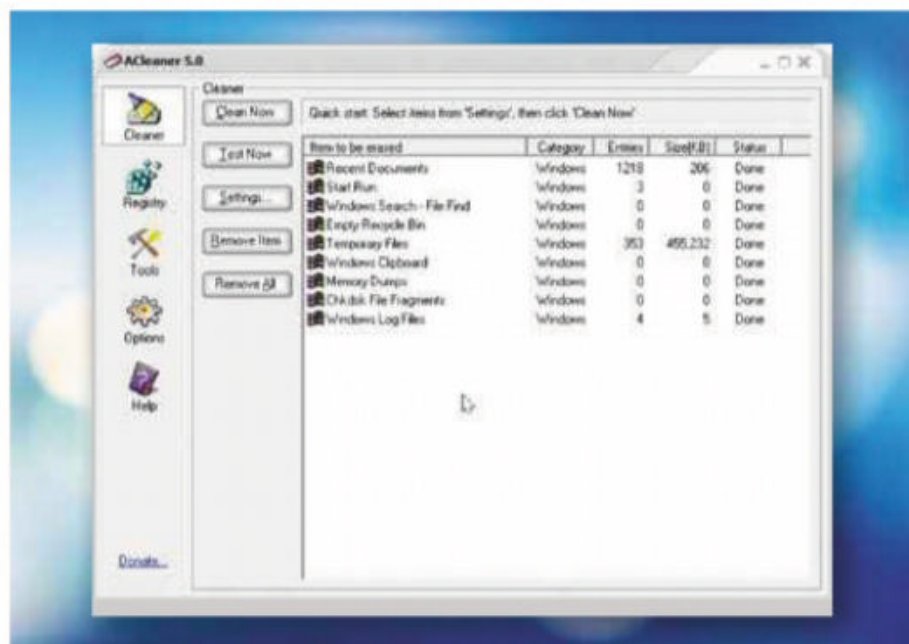
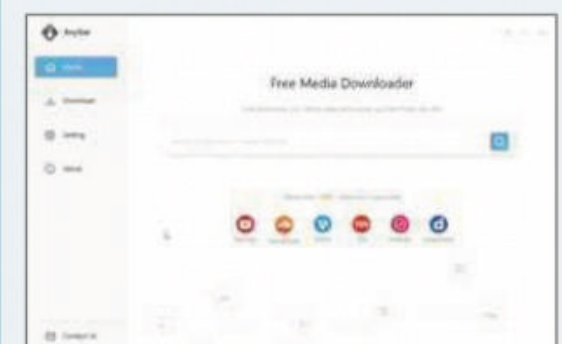
AnyGet

bit.ly/anyget477

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 2.77MB

AnyGet can download videos and music files from over 1,000 websites including YouTube, Vimeo, DailyMotion, SoundCloud, TED, Facebook and Instagram. You can search for keywords or paste in a URL if you have it, and view files that are currently downloading or have downloaded. The free app can also convert web videos to MP4 format, and audio files to MP3.



SYSTEM CLEANER

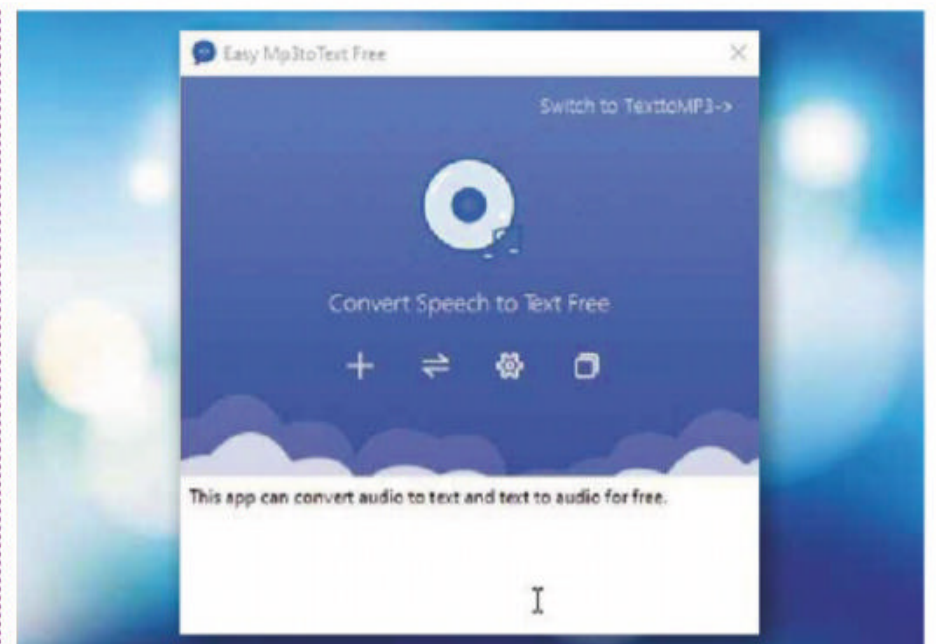
ACleaner 5

www.cleansoft.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 1.4MB

CCleaner may be the best known system cleaner, but it's not the only one. ACleaner removes junk from your PC, wipes traces of internet usage, fixes Registry problems, securely deletes files, and much more. It's not as attractive as CCleaner or other, similar tools, but it's a much smaller download and uses fewer resources. This new release makes a number of small changes to the cleaning features so it's more thorough.



AUDIO TO TEXT CONVERTOR

EasySpeech2Text

easyspeech2text.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 6.2MB

This free tool converts audio to text and text to audio for free. Just add the file you want to convert and click the button to start the process. Text converted to audio can be recorded using a choice of male and female voices. There are some limitations to be aware of at the moment - the conversion only supports English and there's a maximum of five minutes of audio content or 1,000 words.

PDF TOOLKIT

PDF Shaper 9

www.pdfshaper.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 6.4MB

PDF Shaper is a free collection of tools that splits and merges PDF files, rotates and crops pages, extracts text and images, edits metadata, adds a watermark and converts PDFs to JPEGs (and vice versa) and to text. You can also preview PDF files and view their details – such as the program they were created with. This latest version introduces a new interface that jettisons the previous single-screen approach. It also updates all the tools and adds new command-line options. Users of the paid-for Professional and Premium versions get access to some new tools including PDF to PDF, insert pages and move pages.

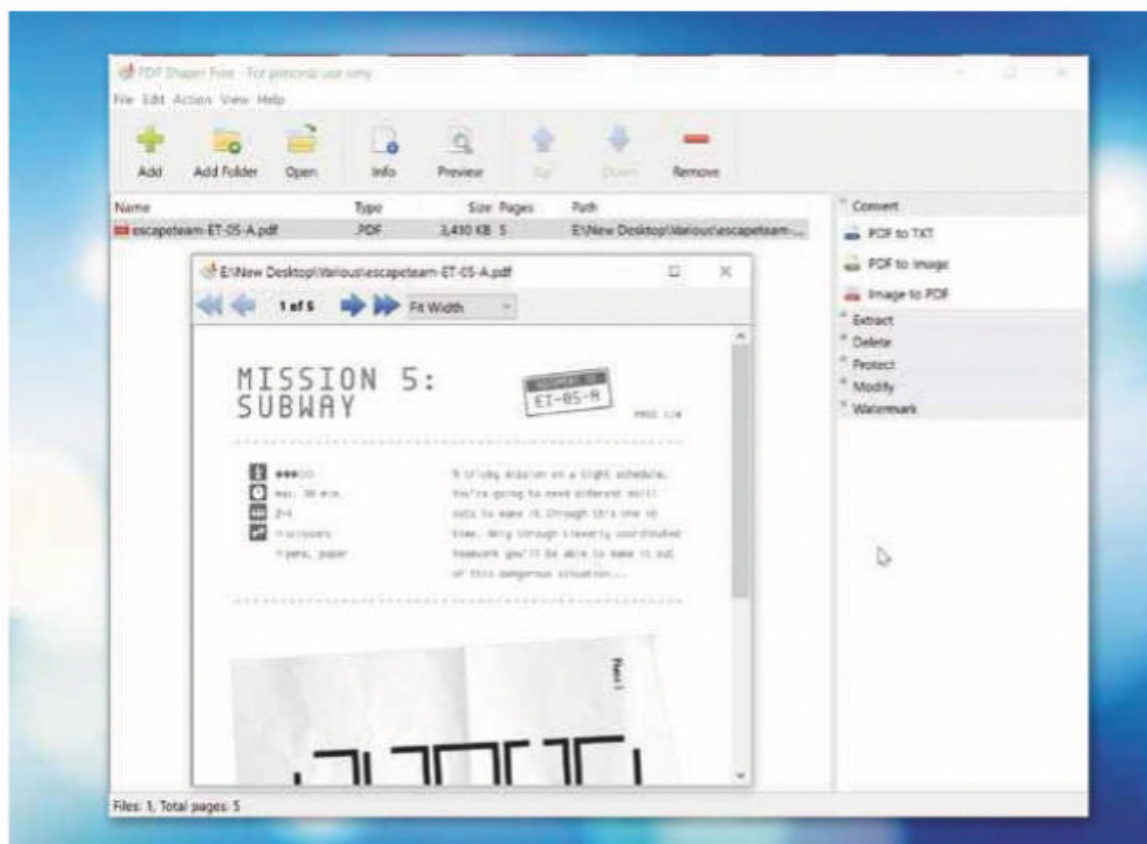


IMAGE FINDER

SimilarImagesFinder

kurtzimmermann.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 816KB

It's easy to end up with thousands of photos on your computer, with several duplicates in different folders or on different drives. Finding these clones is easy enough if they share the same name and size, but not if you've renamed, resized or edited them.

SimilarImagesFinder is a free program (labelled ImageFinder on the website) that helps you track down exact image duplicates in the folders you choose, and even similar images. Just add some locations to the software, click Search and it will get to work. You can specify how close a match you require by using the slider to set a percentage.

SYSTEM PROTECTION

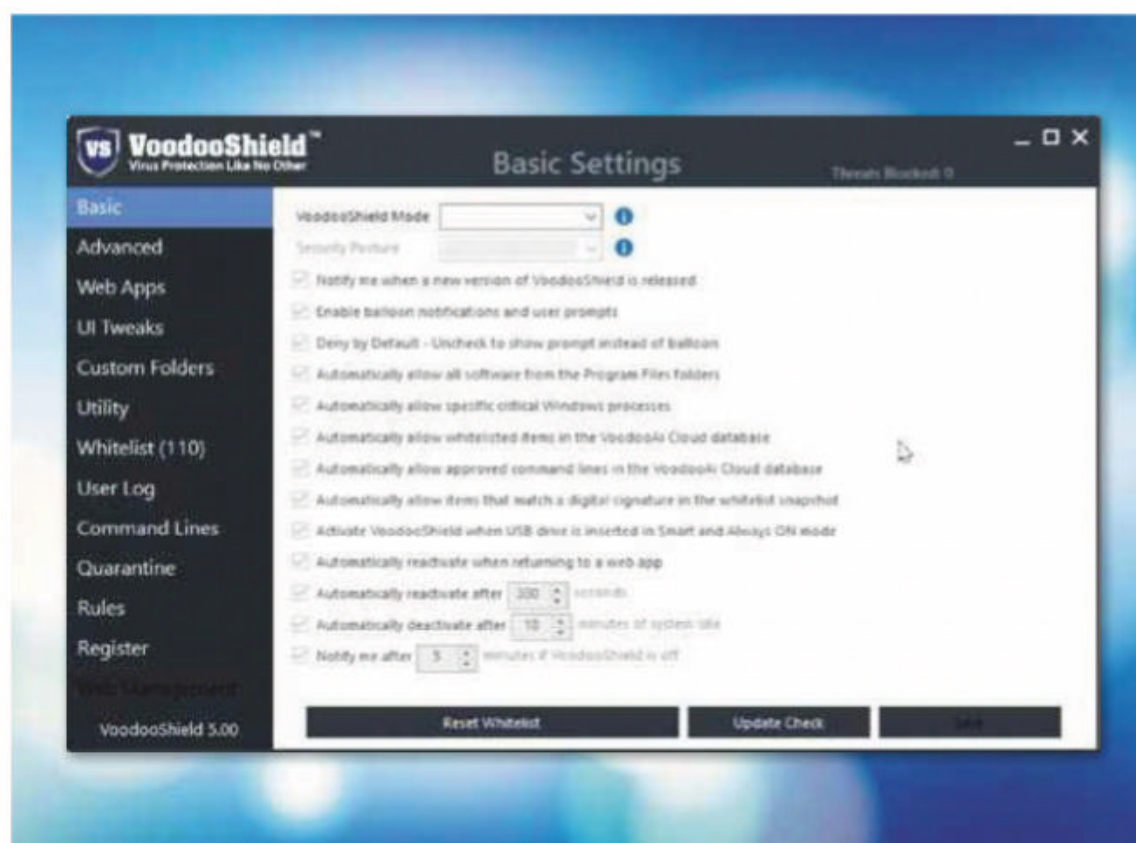
VoodooShield 5

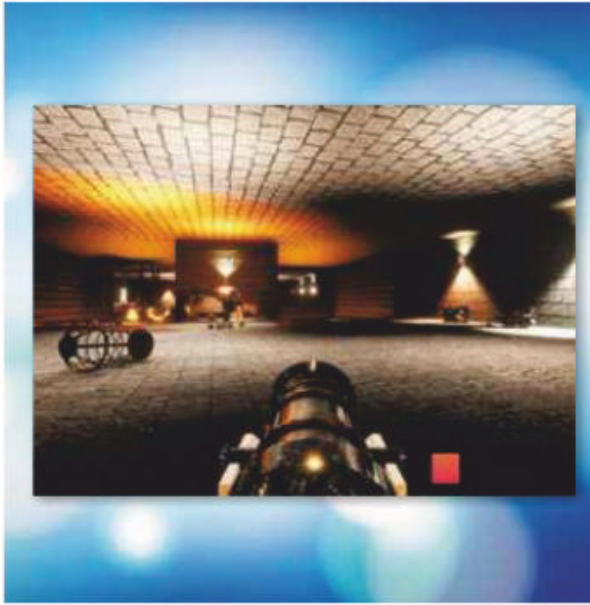
voodoooshield.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 30MB

Even if you have a reliable, fully up-to-date antivirus program on your PC, it doesn't mean you're completely immune from malware or hack attacks. VoodooShield provides another level of very clever protection to keep you safe. It offers two modes: in the Off mode, your PC is unlocked and VoodooShield learns which programs to allow; in On mode, your PC is locked and only currently running software (and specific Windows system files) are allowed. You can whitelist anything you don't want blocked. However, you need to upgrade to the Pro version for \$29.99 (£23.62) a year if you want to unlock additional features and configuration options.





GAME

CalciumCannon

bit.ly/calcann477

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 132MB

The aim of this game is to fire a skeleton out of a cannon (as you do), and get it to travel as far as possible, avoiding dangerous obstacles such as swinging maces and lava. You can control the cannon's direction and power, and spend in-game currency in a shop that sells handy items such as a jetpack, rubber dinghy and a second skeleton.

Don't install...

Hard Drive Inspector

www.altrixsoft.com

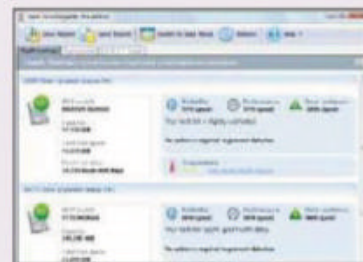
Min requirements:

Windows XP/

Vista/7/8.1/10

File size: 2.7MB

When it comes to making sure that your hard drive isn't about to die, the developer of this program advises that "prevention is better and much cheaper than cure". However, it'll still cost you \$29.95 (£23.60) and the lack of any updates for four years doesn't give us much confidence about its capabilities.



...Install this instead

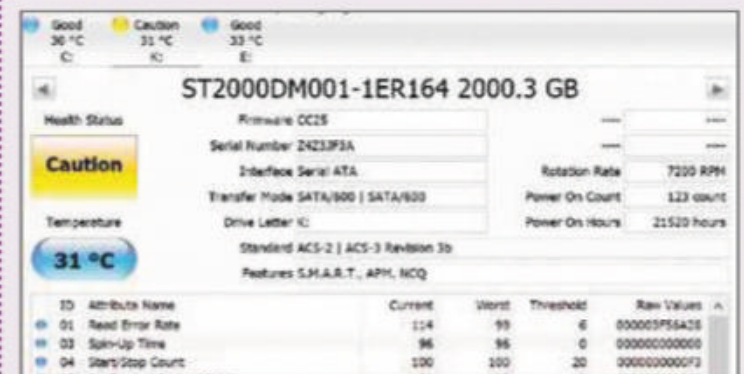
CrystalDiskInfo

bit.ly/crystal477

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

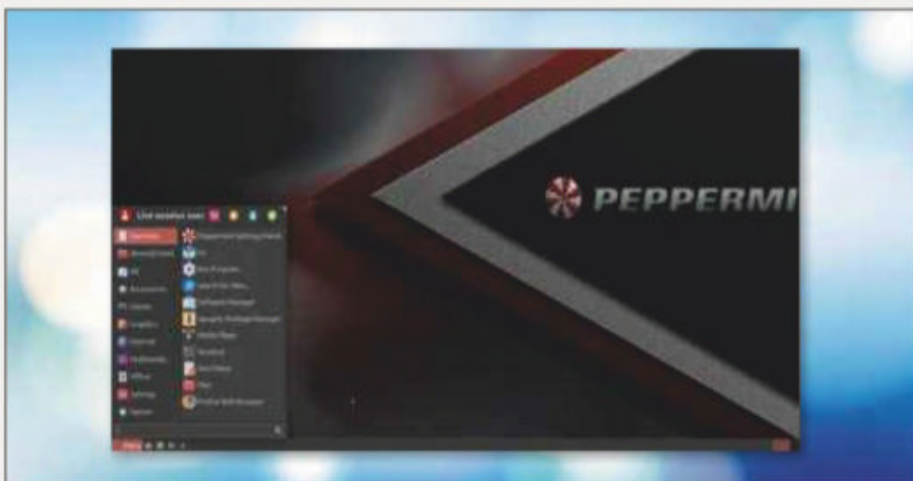
File size: 4.3MB

Hard drives and SSDs have a limited lifespan and when they start to go wrong, it can have catastrophic consequences – especially if you don't have a solid backup. CrystalDiskInfo monitors all your drives and displays their SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) health status and info, so you can take quick action if problems develop. The program also displays a drive's current temperature, and the number of hours it has been active for. CrystalDiskInfo is free to download – just be sure to choose the Standard Edition EXE file on the website.



OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS

What's new for Linux and macOS



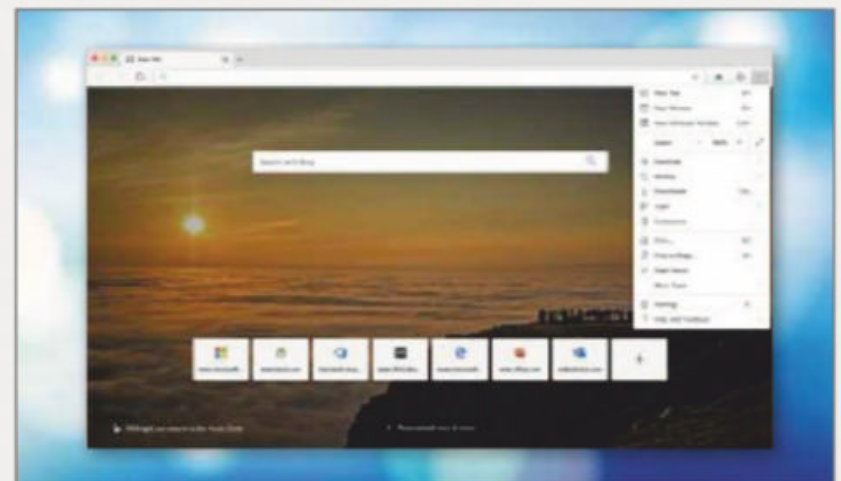
LINUX DISTRO

Peppermint 10

peppermintos.com

Min requirements: 2GB RAM, 4GB storage **File size:** 1.5GB

If you have an old, somewhat underpowered PC, breathe new life into it by installing a Linux distribution such as Peppermint – which has just hit version 10. Peppermint is built on Ubuntu 18.04 LTS (long-term support) and uses a lightweight Xfce desktop environment. There's even a 32-bit version available for older hardware. There have been a number of changes made to the operating system besides updating the code base, including adding new graphics and wallpapers. The bundled applications have been updated, too.



WEB BROWSER

Microsoft Edge for macOS

www.microsoftedgeinsider.com

Min requirements: macOS **File size:** 120MB

Edge is Windows 10's default browser but Microsoft is working on a new version built around Chromium – the open-source version of Google Chrome – and has just released a 'Canary' build for macOS to tempt Apple users away from Safari. This uses Mac conventions for fonts, menus, keyboard shortcuts, title casing and more, and promises macOS-exclusive features, including contextual actions via the Touch Bar (such as website shortcuts and tab switching) in the near future.

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Best New Browser Tools



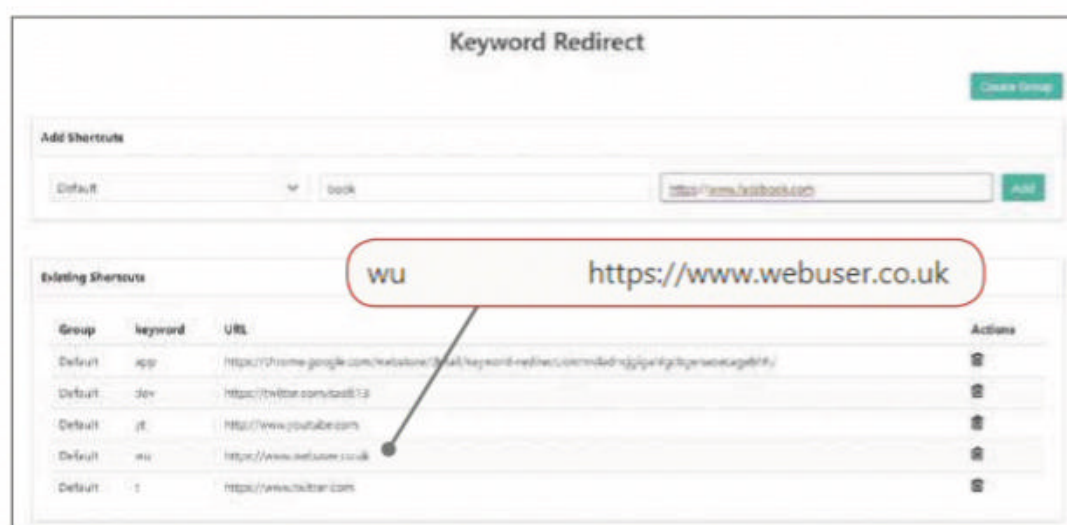
CHROME

Access long web addresses using shortcuts

Adding Keyword Redirect (bit.ly/keyword477) to Chrome essentially means you'll never have to type a full URL again, or guess which autofill address you want. Since most browsers automatically do this as you type, this extension is most useful for unwieldy URLs or those that are lower on the list of suggested websites.

Set up the extension by right-clicking its toolbar button and selecting Options to open the settings page. Here, you'll need to decide what your keyword (or letter) will be, and input the full web address – for instance, 'wu' and '<https://www.webuser.co.uk>'. There's also support for groups, which assigns set keywords to a collection of related links without the need to create individual redirects.

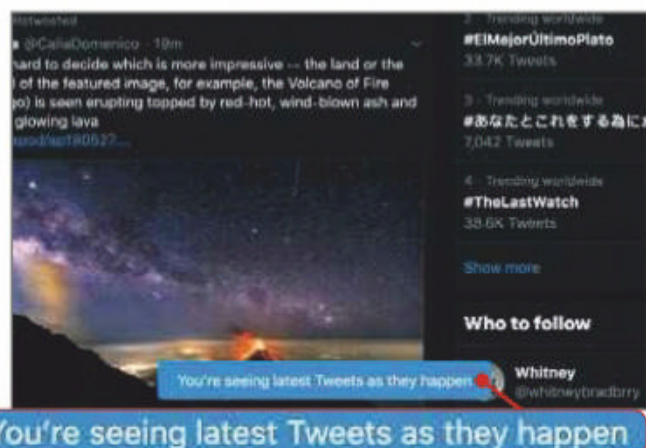
Once you're back in the browser, type go into the address bar, followed by your keyword. Press Enter and you'll be instantly whisked off to your chosen website.



Reorder Twitter to show the latest tweets

Remember how, back in the day, Twitter's news feed used to update in real-time – every new tweet landing straight at the top of the pile? These days, the social network tends to display a handful of the latest tweets, then tweets liked by people you follow, coupled with those that are hours or even days old (and that's before you throw adverts into the mix!). If you're looking for the hottest of hot takes from those you follow, you need to go directly to their profile page.

TwitterLatest (bit.ly/twit477) does away with all that, taking Twitter back to its 'breaking thoughts' origins. Once installed, you won't have to do anything – the change is automatic. No word yet, though, on a tool to bring back the 140-character limit that once made the platform so sharp.

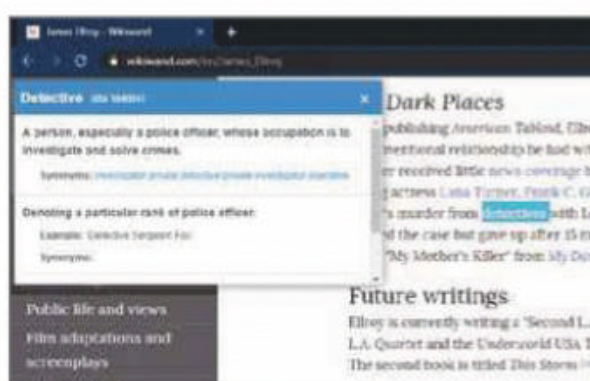


Get word definitions as you browse

The moment you stumble across a new word, you're jolted out of your comfort zone and feel a thrill, followed by insatiable curiosity as you try to work out what it means in context. And then you find yourself copy-and-pasting it into a new window to discover the true definition. Well, that's how it is for us.

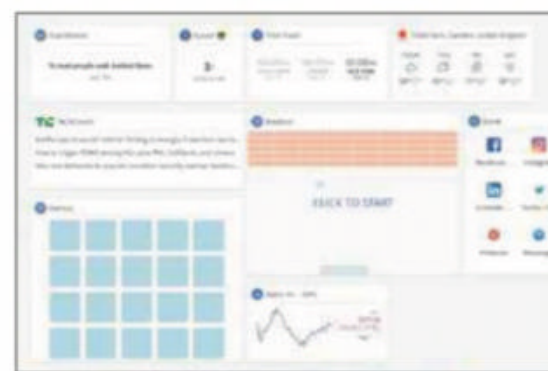
The English to English Dictionary add-on (bit.ly/english477), which pulls information from the Oxford English dictionary, gets you there a bit quicker. Highlight any word on a web page with a double-click, then right-click with your mouse. With the extension installed, you'll see the option Translate. Click this to discover the definition of a word, alongside the correct phonetics, examples and synonyms.

Originally designed to help foreign-language speakers, we've found the extension invaluable for on-the-fly dictionary definitions.



Turn new tabs into a productivity hub

In no time at all, the internet can become a time-sink – within seconds of cracking open Chrome, we suddenly find ourselves confronting too many tabs to count. And by the time we finally start going through our morning ritual, we've already lost half the day.



If this sounds like a familiar scenario, DashOne (dashone.app) is for you. Here's a browser tool that replaces tab overload by introducing widgets on a single new tab. If you're seeking to enhance productivity, you can get a variety of news and weather reports; for down-time, add inspirational quotes, social media and even games such as the classic Breakout.

Free-forever accounts can add 10 new tab widgets, and with such a wide range available, we found this more than adequate.

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



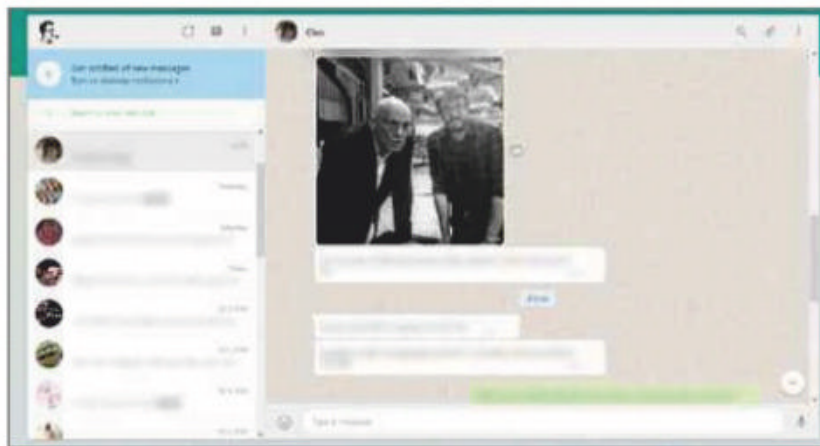
FIREFOX

Keep your WhatsApp web chats private

Despite its connection to the data-guzzling, privacy-trampling Facebook, WhatsApp continues to dominate the messenger market. But while it's relatively easy to hide your messages on your phone (a quick tilt of the screen should suffice), it's not so straightforward when you're checking WhatsApp on the web.

That's where Privacy Extension for WhatsApp Web (bit.ly/whatsapp477) comes in. This Firefox add-on automatically blurs out every conversation, including message previews and user statuses, on the big screen. The only way to reveal the contents is to hover your cursor over each message.

The browser tool also keeps the message you're writing slightly more private by changing the text to a less easily snoopable faded grey. If you download the Chrome version (bit.ly/whatschrome477), you'll also be able to change which on-screen element the extension blurs with a click of the icon.



Control videos using your mouse wheel

It may not have the catchiest name, but 'Playback and volume with mouse' (bit.ly/play477) is an absolute must for anyone who regularly watches online videos. The trick to mastering this add-on comes down to cursor placement: with the add-on installed, every HTML5 video is divided into six invisible sections, each controlled by the wheel of your mouse or laptop trackpad. The top half of the screen is given over to Full-screen, Volume, and Speed. Below this are options to skip forward or back by two, five, and ten seconds with every roll of the wheel.

The extension works from the get-go – the only set-up needed is if you want to flick to full-screen: you need to head into Firefox's about:config section and

change the value of 'full-screen-api.allow-trusted-requests-only' to False.

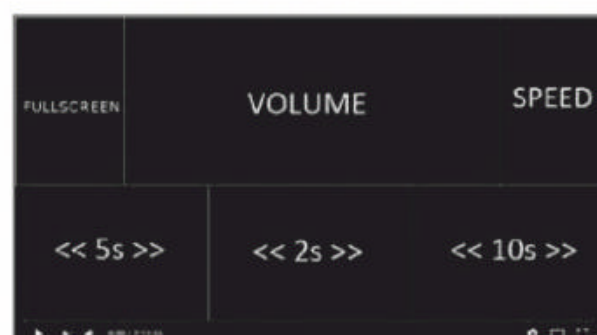
Remove annoying overlays from websites

In Issue 475 (bit.ly/webuser475), we looked at the extension Behind the Overlay (bit.ly/behind477), which blocks any infuriating panels that pop up and cover up websites. It's an excellent tool, but to close overlays, you need to click the toolbar button or use keyboard shortcuts.



Now, there's a new alternative – and it works without you lifting a finger. Overlay Remover Auto (bit.ly/overlay477) is, as the developer openly states, based on Behind the Overlay, but unlike its older sibling, it automatically detects and closes overlays and pop-ups.

Overlays that have been blocked are counted on the toolbar and you can choose to disable the extension on sites where the pop-up is important.



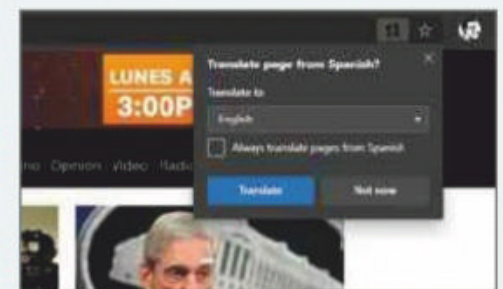
OTHER BROWSERS



Translator and dark mode come to Edge

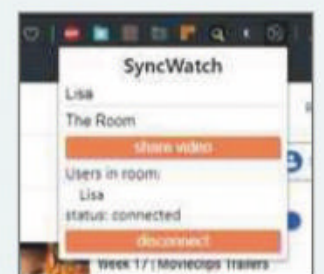
Microsoft's new Chromium-based Edge continues to receive updates before it's rolled out to a wider audience. A dark mode is now available – and, as with Google Chrome, it's set to follow your operating system settings. To set this up, search for colour settings in the Start menu and change 'Choose your colour' to Dark.

Even more useful is the built-in translator. Using automatic detection, head over to any foreign-language page. Edge will prompt you to choose which language to translate to (and an option to keep this as the default in future).



Watch videos with your friends

Watching videos online needn't be a solitary affair. SyncWatch (bit.ly/sync477) for Opera lets you create a room and share a video with friends that's synchronised for every viewer. It's relatively easy to set up a communal movie night – get started by clicking the toolbar button, adding your name and giving your 'room' a unique name. After hitting



Connect, you're able to invite your friends and family and share the video. All they have to do is click the link to watch a movie that's completely in sync with everyone else.



Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

OFFICE

Zoho Show

bit.ly/zohodroid477

bit.ly/zohoios477

5 9.3

NEW

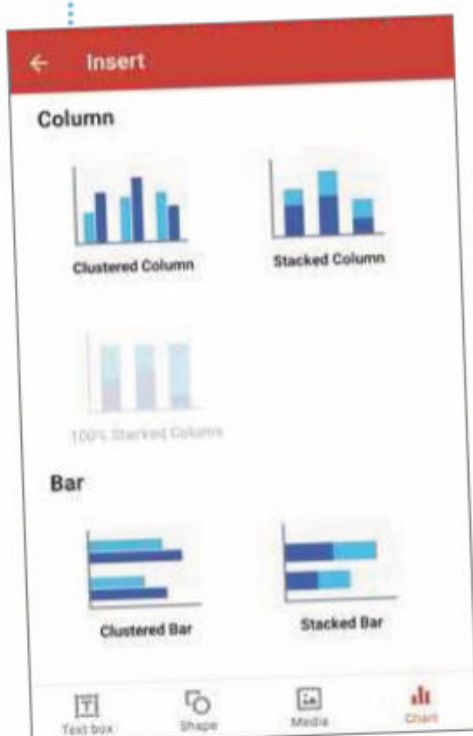
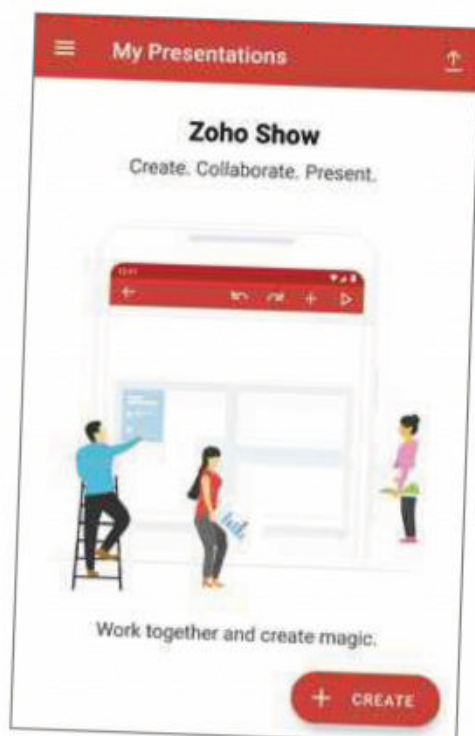
Microsoft and Google often seem to have a monopoly when it comes to office apps. It's easy to forget that Zoho also offers a range of great online tools for creating documents and office files of various types – with Zoho Show being the company's latest offering.

It's a presentation tool, similar to PowerPoint or Slides, that provides a quick and easy way to knock up professional-looking presentations while you're on the go. Zoho Show is intuitive to use – see our Mini Workshop, right, to get started in seconds. But it's also surprisingly feature-packed. There's a range of pre-designed templates to choose from, all of which can be refined by adding your own text, images, graphics and so on. On-screen elements can be animated for an extra wow factor, and there are more than 30 different transitions to choose from.

Your finished presentations can be saved as PDF files or as images, or, if you have a Zoho account, you can store your projects in the cloud and sync them between devices, or invite others to collaborate on them online.

Perhaps the cleverest thing about Zoho Show for Android, however, is that it supports Chromecast, which means that you can cast your slideshows wirelessly to any Chromecast-ready TV or device. Users of the iOS version get the similar ability to cast from the app to an Apple TV or AirPlay device. You can even import existing presentations – including Microsoft PowerPoint PPTX files – from

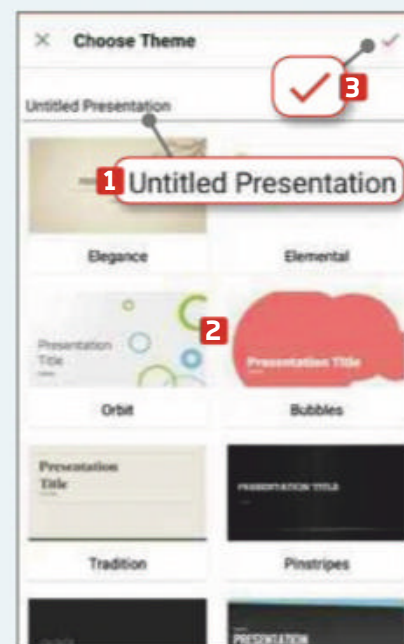
Dropbox or Google Drive – and use Zoho Show to cast them. While casting, your mobile device effectively turns into a remote for controlling your slideshow on the big screen.



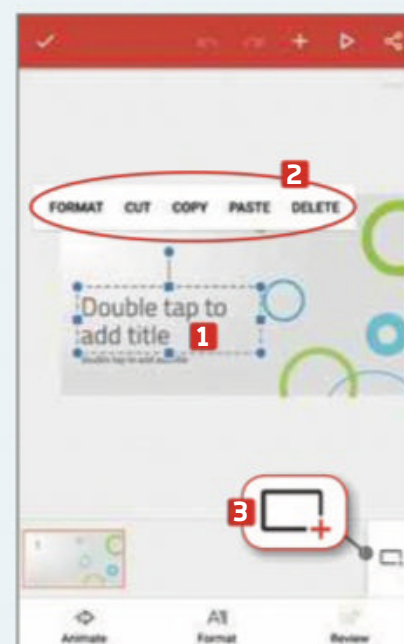
MINI WORKSHOP

Create a free mobile presentation in Zoho Show

1 Launch Zoho Show and press the '+ Create' button, then tap Untitled Presentation. **1** Type a name for your presentation, then select a theme from the thumbnails below. **2** Once you're ready, press the tick icon. **3** If this is your first time using Zoho Show, you'll see some hints and tips for using the app. Keep tapping Next to work your way through them.



2 Eventually, you'll see a default title slide – you can double-tap any of the sample text here **1** to change it to your own text, then press the tick icon when you've finished. Single-tap the text to format, cut, copy, paste or delete it. **2** To add another slide, tap the square with a plus sign icon **3** and choose one of the slide styles from the thumbnails displayed.



3 To add an image, text box, shape or chart to a slide, select an empty box, **1** then tap the plus sign. **2** On this Insert screen, press the tab at the bottom that corresponds to the type of element you want to add ('Text box', 'Shape', 'Media', 'Chart'), then browse for the element you want. To insert a photo, for example, tap Media, then From Device, then select a picture and tap Open.



Our rating



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

TV

Scribbl

bit.ly/scribbl477



Adding a little pizzazz to your photos has never been easier, thanks to Scribbl. As its name suggests, this Android app allows you to draw colourful animated doodles all over existing images and export your work as MP4 video files. The app is easy to use and includes a surprising number of its options unlocked with the free version, including two new colour styles – Disco and Color Fade. If you're willing to pay for the Pro version of Scribbl (either through an 89p-per-month subscription or a £5.49 one-off fee) you can get rid of the watermark and the annoying ads.



Our rating



UPDATED



WALLPAPERS

Artwalls

bit.ly/artwalls477



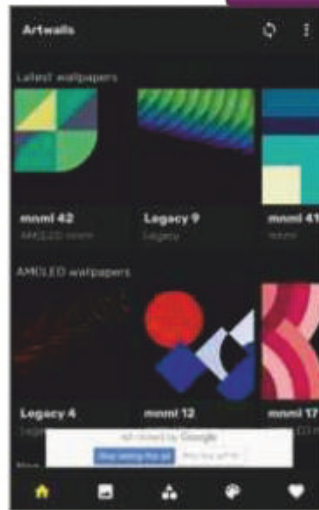
Some people are happy with the built-in backgrounds provided with their device; others prefer to display images of family, friends or pets staring back at them from their lock or home screens. However, if you're the sort of person who likes to have something distinctive as their phone or tablet wallpaper, then the selection of images provided by this new (beta) app is definitely worth exploring. Designed for AMOLED screens (but compatible with any display type), the high-quality images offered share a modern, minimalist, high-contrast and arty look.



Our rating



NEW

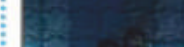


GAME

Ailment

bit.ly/ailmentdroid477

bit.ly/ailmentios477



In this retro-inspired pixel-art adventure, you wake up on a spaceship to discover that your crew mates have succumbed to an intergalactic illness that has turned them evil, and now most of them are out to kill you. It's your job to find out what happened – and, of course, survive. Gameplay, which involves equal parts exploration and shooting, is often tense and action-packed. Witty dialogue and atmospheric sounds help lift Ailment above similar releases.



Our rating



NEW



DOWNLOAD MANAGER

Download Navi

bit.ly/navidroid477



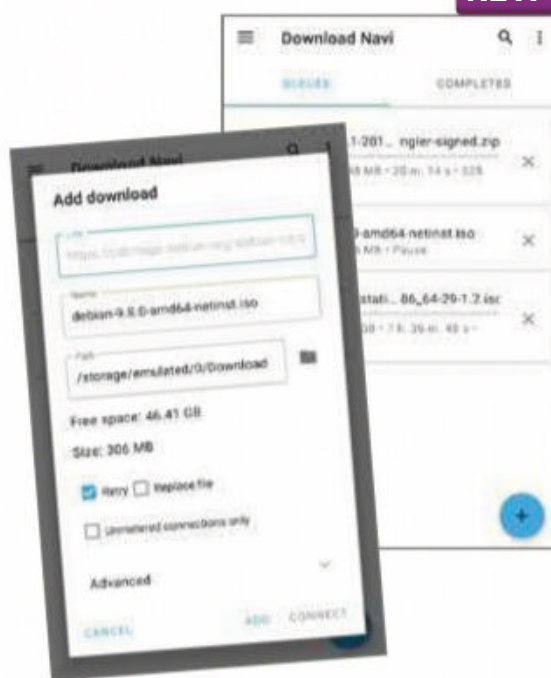
Android has its own built-in download management system, but it's a fairly barebones affair. Thankfully, there's no lack of third-party download managers available to add missing features. One thing that sets Download Navi apart from the rest is that it's Free and Open Source Software (FOSS), meaning that not only is it free to download, but you also won't be plagued by ads while you use it. It helps that it's also very well put together, employing Material Design cues and a simple, effective interface. Handy features include pause and resume downloading, simultaneous downloads, multi-part downloading, power management and more.



Our rating



NEW



BROWSER

Tor Browser

bit.ly/tordroid477



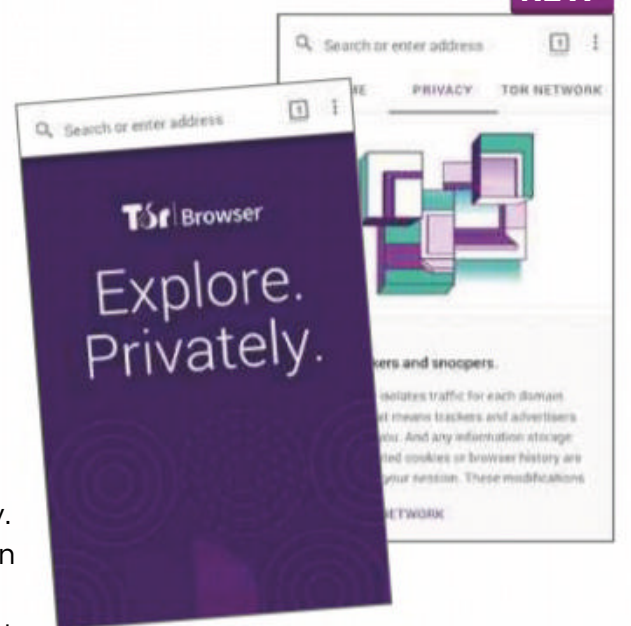
Tor famously offers one of the most private ways to browse the web, via a network of encrypted servers that effectively disguises your location and identity. Until now, it has been possible to use Tor on Android via Orbot, a proxy app. But now Tor has released an official, fully integrated solution that lets you browse the web privately, without the need for multiple apps. Based on Firefox, Tor Browser provides a standard browsing experience but with the added benefit of some excellent privacy-focused features, including tracker blocking, fingerprint resistance, multi-layered encryption and geographical restriction bypassing. Look out for a workshop about the app in our next issue.



Our rating



NEW



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

FOOD & DRINK

Value for Money Wines Pro

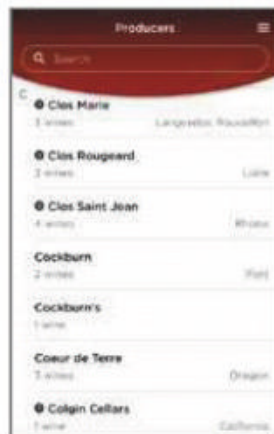
bit.ly/winedroid477

bit.ly/wineios477

Price: £3.99

 4.1  9

Love wine? This invaluable app lets you check 27,000 wines to see if the price you're being asked to pay in a bar or restaurant is value for money. It works in 32 different currencies.



PUZZLE

Word Forward

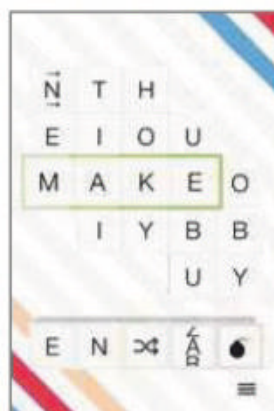
bit.ly/worddroid477

bit.ly/wordios477

Price: £2.69 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)

 4.1  7

Word Forward puts a fresh spin on Scrabble-style puzzling. Spell out words on the 5x5 grid of letters to remove tiles and earn points, while modifiers add a strategic element to gameplay.



KIDS

Cheeky Beasts

bit.ly/cheekydroid477

bit.ly/cheekyios477

Price: £1.99



 6  9

This selection of quirky poems about animals, combined with gently educational exercises, helps young readers (up to age 6) practise comprehension, phonics, vocabulary and other literacy skills.

COMICS

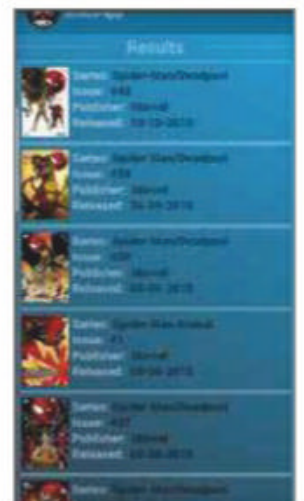
Comco

bit.ly/comco477

Price: £2.99

 7

If you're an avid buyer of comics, it's easy for your collection to get out of hand. This app lets comic collectors scan and catalogue comics quickly and easily. You can rate issues and create a wish list, too.



VIDEO EDITING

Adobe Premiere Rush

bit.ly/rushdroid477

bit.ly/rushios477

Price: £8.99 per month

 (varies)  11

Adobe's pocket version of Premiere made its debut on iOS last year and has finally been released for Android. It's tailored towards online video for YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.



Value for Money Wines Pro



Word Forward



Cheeky Beasts



Comco



Adobe Premiere Rush

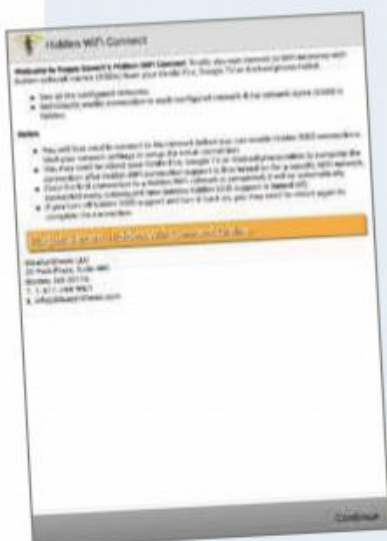


Don't install...

Hidden WiFi Connect

bit.ly/hidden477

When does an app officially become abandonware? It's difficult to be certain, but when a tool such as Hidden WiFi Connect is stuck on v1.0 and hasn't been updated once in three years, then we'd say it has pretty much hung up its boots. Screenshots that betray an ancient interface and user reviews that complain the app doesn't actually work are further giveaways indicating its neglected status.




...Install this instead

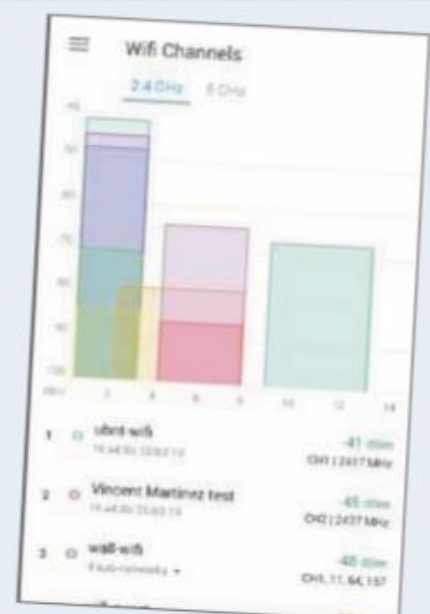
WiFiman

bit.ly/wifiman477

bit.ly/wifimanios477

 4.2  10

Regularly updated with fixes and features (most recently, the ability to test your broadband performance via Speedtest.net), WiFiman is a brilliant app that continues to be supported and improved by its developer. It has multiple uses, allowing you to analyse nearby Wi-Fi networks to, for example, troubleshoot crowded channels, as well as view any devices currently connected to your network, identify rogue Bluetooth connections, test connection speeds and more. The app is bursting with features and comes wrapped in a sleek, modern presentation. The developer even takes the time to respond to user reviews and queries.





Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our 1970s-songs emoji and our Wikipedia article?

**WIN A
WEB USER
2018 BACK
ISSUES DISC!**

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



CAN YOU GUESS THE 1970s SONGS FROM THE EMOJI?

1



2



3



4



5



6



GUESS THE WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE

Can you work out which technology-related Wikipedia entry the following clues refer to?



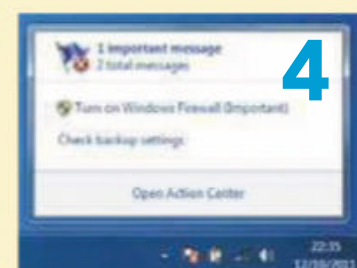
WIKIPEDIA

1 "In July 2009, within eight hours, it became the highest-grossing pre-order in Amazon's history, surpassing sales of the previous record holder, the seventh Harry Potter book."

2 "New features included advances in touch and handwriting recognition, support for

virtual hard disks, improved performance on multi-core processors and kernel improvements."

3 "It included 13 additional sound schemes: Afternoon, Calligraphy, Characters, Cityscape, Landscape, Delta, Festival, Garden, Heritage, Quirky, Raga, Savanna and Sonata."



5 "It received critical acclaim, with critics noting the increased usability and functionality when compared with its predecessor, describing it as a "massive leap forward".

COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 5 iPad Pro Scout 12.9in case

Urban Armor Gear's Scout is the first iPad case to work seamlessly with Apple's Smart Keyboard Folio, securing your iPad without interfering with the Folio's multiple viewing and typing positions. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'scout' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.urbanarmorgear.com and follow [@UrbanArmorGear](https://twitter.com/UrbanArmorGear) on Twitter.



**WORTH
£49.99
EACH**

WIN 1 OF 4 KitSound Diggitt Bluetooth Outdoor Speaker

With a removable stake that's easily stuck into the ground, KitSound's Diggitt is a versatile outdoor Bluetooth speaker. The stereo-pairing feature lets you connect another speaker for impressive sound, and battery life is eight hours. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'diggitt' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow [@KitSoundUK](https://www.instagram.com/KitSoundUK) on Instagram.



**WORTH
£39.99
EACH**



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

Android Q

Will you be joining the queue for the tenth version of Google's mobile operating system? **David Crookes** reveals what Android Q has to offer

What is Android Q?

Android Q, also known as Android 10, is the forthcoming version of Google's mobile operating system, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. It's actually the 15th iteration of the OS and follows on from Android 9, also known as Pie, which was released last year. As expected, it comes with a raft of new features, some of which are security-related while others are simply set to prove rather useful.

So what does the Q stand for?

At the moment, we don't know, but it's sure to be something food-flavoured. The Android OS was dubbed Cupcake when it arrived in April 2009 and subsequent versions have been named Donut, Eclair, Froyo, Gingerbread, Honeycomb, Ice Cream Sandwich, Jelly Bean, KitKat, Lollipop, Marshmallow, Nougat, Oreo and Pie. So perhaps this time out it will be Quiche or Quinoa, although these don't really fit the 'sweet treat' theme, or perhaps there will be another commercial deal. Android 10 Quorn, anyone?

Will it look and feel different?

Judging from the public betas that have been rolling out recently, Q is not going to represent a giant leap forward - it's certainly not a dramatic update along the lines of Ice Cream Sandwich. But there will be a little bit of a learning curve, not least because of its greater use of gestures.



Android Q is unlikely to take as much of a leap forward as Ice Cream Sandwich

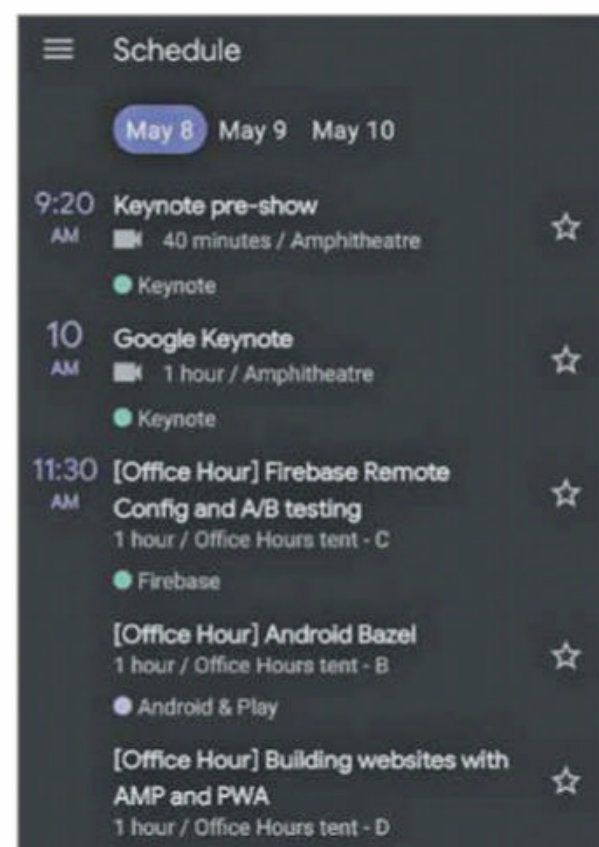


What gestures does it introduce?

Q is ditching navigation buttons and is taking a tip from Apple by introducing a Home Indicator bar, placed in its own section at the bottom of the screen. Swiping up on the Home Indicator sends you to the home screen, as it does in iOS, but the difference is that swiping up and holding lets you access your recently used apps, and a quick swipe left or right cycles between your apps. If you simply swipe up on the display rather than the indicator, you'll be able to view the app drawer. Android Q also does away with a Back button. Instead, you swipe in from the left or right edge of the screen.

Dark days for buttons then?

And for your eyes. Android 10 also follows the current tech trend for dark modes by introducing what it calls a Dark Theme to reduce glare and eye fatigue. This will work across the operating system and you will have a choice of



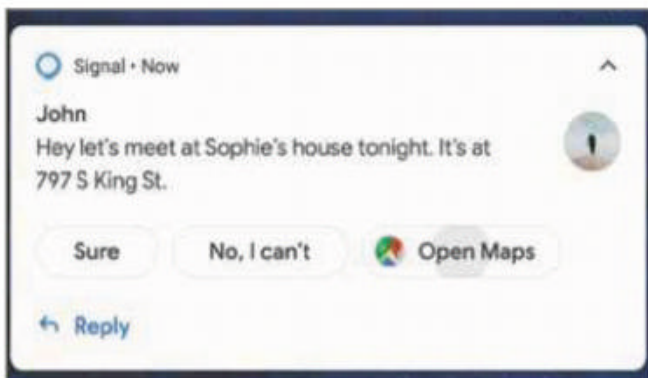
Android Q's Dark Theme stops you straining your eyes and saves battery life, too

enabling it throughout the day or having it switch on automatically at night. Doing so is as easy as calling up the Quick

Settings menu and tapping a Dark Theme button and, because the theme uses a true black, it should help to conserve battery life, particularly on phones with OLED displays.

Will it save me time, too?

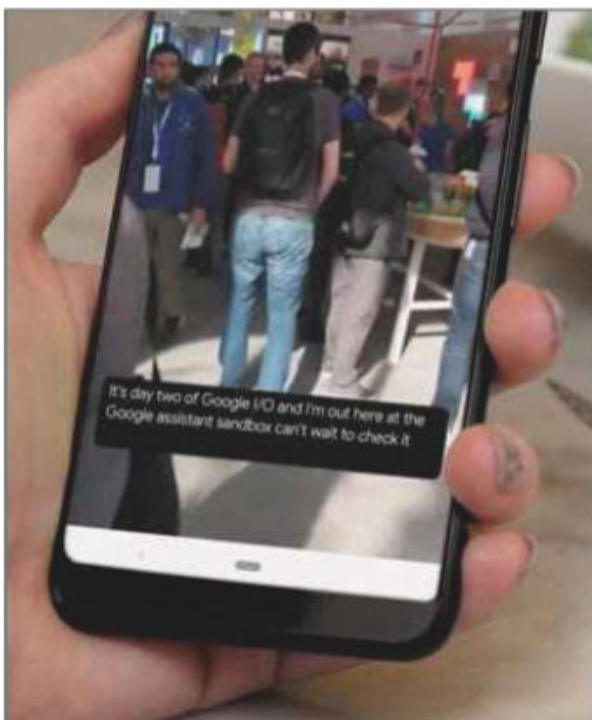
In some respects, yes. Android Q will extend Google's Smart Reply function outside its own tools such as Messages and Gmail, so it can be used by a broader range of apps. As before, it will monitor the context of a message and offer suggested replies but it also goes a step further: let's say someone sends you an address, the OS will predict that you may want to view it and so offer a supplementary function to open Google Maps. What's more, the machine learning will be carried out on your device rather than in the cloud, and it will prioritise the notifications that matter the most.



The expanded Smart Reply will save you time when dealing with messages

What else is new?

Well, there's a fantastic new feature called Live Caption that lets you watch any video or listen to audio without having to crank up the volume – assuming you have a compatible higher-end phone, anyway. Although it's aimed at people who are deaf or hard of hearing, it will be useful to everyone, particularly in public areas where playing sound aloud may disturb others. The



Use Live Captions to watch videos in public without bothering other people

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH ANDROID AUTO?

Google is driving forward development of its in-vehicle platform Android Auto (www.android.com/auto) by adding a raft of new features. It has worked on allowing drivers to view the screen without becoming distracted, adding a default dark theme, extra fonts and a colour palette that is easier on the eyes, along with a new persistent navigation bar and notification centre.

Drivers will be able to see turn-by-turn directions at the bottom of the screen if the full Maps app isn't open or they'll be able to control their music



if the map is in full view. It'll be possible to manage messages, alerts and recent calls, and Google Assistant can be activated with a single tap.

function is activated in the accessibility settings and uses machine learning to generate captions with a single tap. And because the captions are generated on your device rather than in the cloud, you don't even need to be connected to Wi-Fi or have access to data in order to use it. The function will even caption your own recordings.

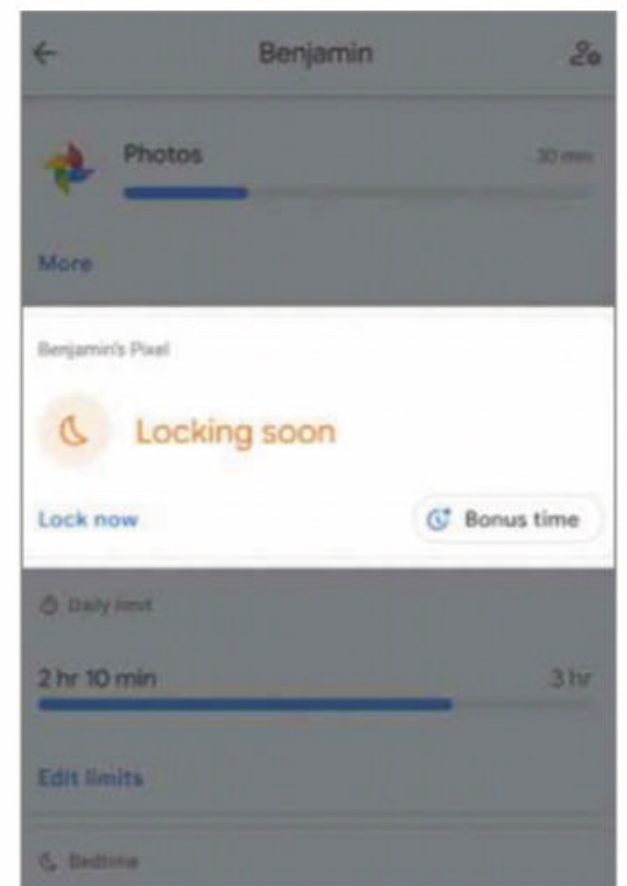
How does Android Q improve security?

Google is aware that the security patches it issues on a regular basis are not being installed by every user, which means that many phones are not sufficiently protected. A major issue is that mobile networks and manufacturers are currently involved in distributing patches, so Google is now taking the matter into its own hands under the name Project Mainline. This will make smaller security updates available direct from the Play store and, since they are not going to be distributed as part of full system updates, it will also reduce the number of times a phone has to be rebooted to install them.

What about app security?

App developers will have to ask for permission if they want their apps to access your phone's IMEI and serial number, and their apps will only be able to access the system's clipboard if they're running and on-screen. Voice commands will also be processed on your device rather than in the cloud so that such information is less likely to be leaked.

Additionally, Android Q ensures that you're notified when an app is accessing your location, and the OS is adding a new Privacy section in the settings so you can determine how your data is used. Being able to decipher the level of access available to apps, coupled with the ability to toggle what you do and don't want them to know, will be very useful.



New parental controls let you limit how long your children spend using their phones

Are we going to be glued to our phones even more?

It's unlikely that we're ever going to fully prise ourselves from the hypnotic draw of our screens but Android Q is at least trying to discourage us from bingeing too much. Parental controls are appearing in the Digital Wellbeing section (usage can be tracked and screen time limits can be set, although there will be a "five more minutes" function to give a child a little extra leeway) and you'll be able to use a new Focus Mode to indicate which apps you'd like to lock away for fear of procrastination.

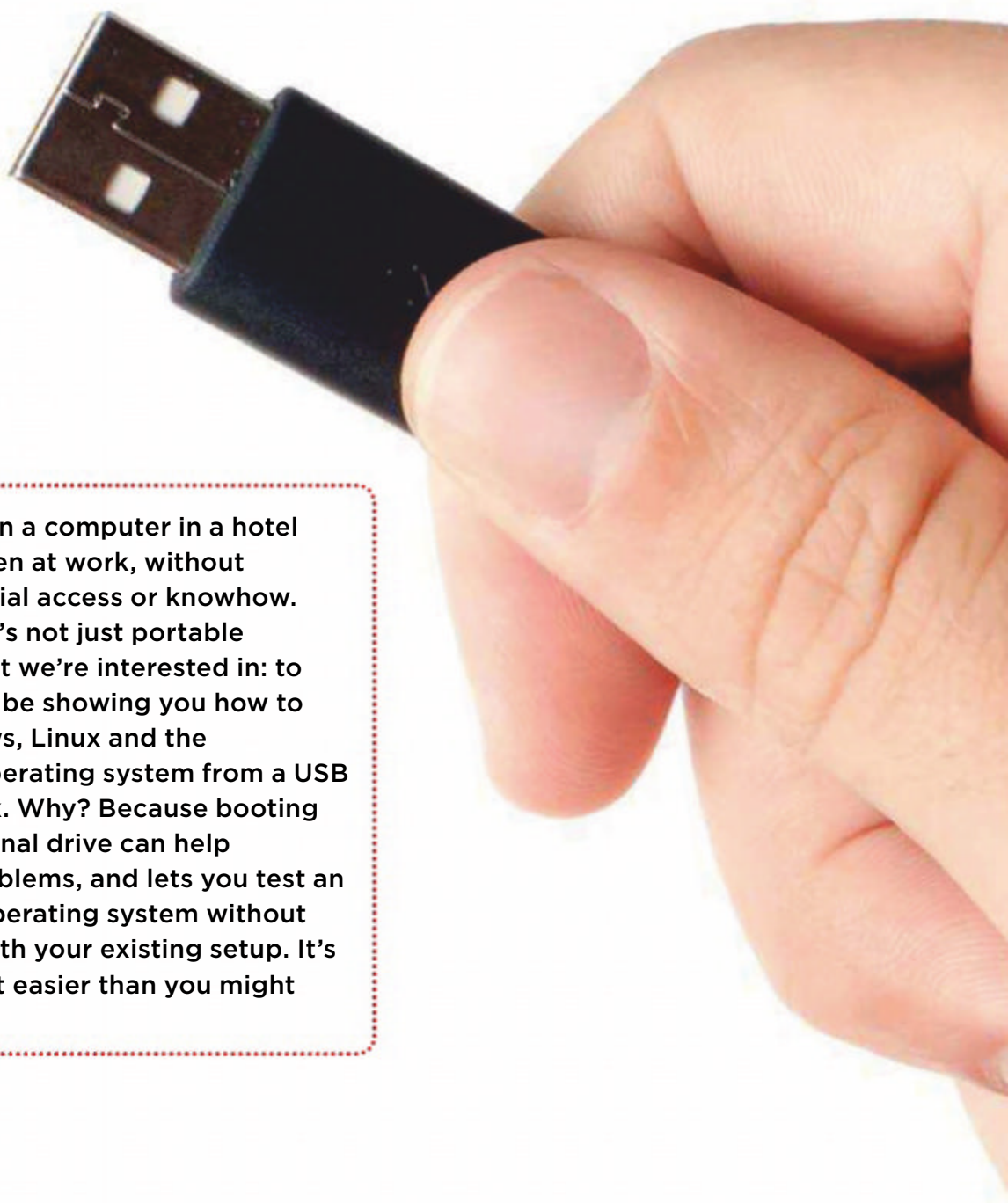
When can I get Android Q?

Public betas are available now for a good number of devices (see bit.ly/androidq477) but if you want to wait for the final, stable release, then expect it to be rolled out from August.

Run Anything From A USB STICK

**COVER
FEATURE**

USB sticks are the perfect devices for storing and running brilliant free, portable software. **Nik Rawlinson** explains how you can take your favourite programs and whole operating systems with you, wherever you go



Memory has never been cheaper and that's especially true of USB sticks, whose prices are falling almost as quickly as capacities are increasing. You can pick up a 64GB USB 3 SanDisk Ultra stick for just £13 on Amazon (bit.ly/sandisk477), or a 32GB USB 2 Toshiba stick for less than a fiver (bit.ly/toshiba477).

These pocketable devices can do far more than just ferry your files around. Over the next six pages, we explore the best standalone tools that run from a USB flash drive. They don't leave clutter in their wake, so you can use them on a

friend's PC, on a computer in a hotel lobby and even at work, without needing special access or knowhow.

However, it's not just portable programs that we're interested in: to kick off, we'll be showing you how to boot Windows, Linux and the Chromium operating system from a USB memory stick. Why? Because booting from an external drive can help diagnose problems, and lets you test an alternative operating system without interfering with your existing setup. It's all a whole lot easier than you might expect.

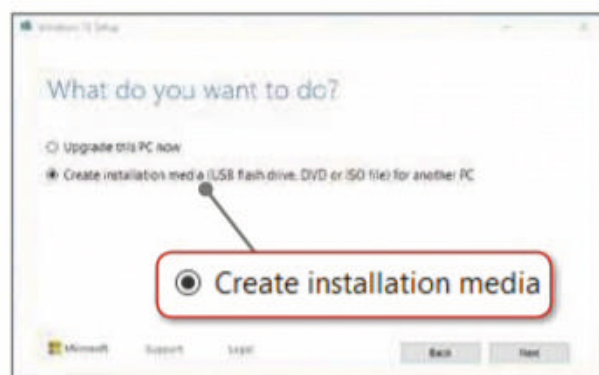
Run a portable operating system

Install an operating system on a bootable USB drive, and you can take your whole computer with you – almost. Granted, you still need a PC or laptop to plug it into, but it is a great way to carry your favourite programs and essential data wherever you go. You can access them on someone else's PC, even if they're not willing to share their login credentials with you.

Install Windows on a USB drive

Despite its power, Windows actually has fairly conservative system requirements, and it will happily live on drives as small as 16GB (for the 32-bit version) or 32GB (for the 64-bit edition).

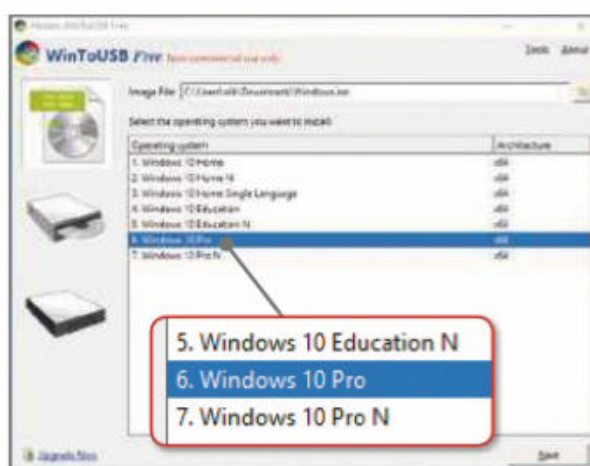
Go to the Download Windows 10 page (bit.ly/windows477) and click 'Download tool now'. When asked whether you want to save or run the linked file, click Run and, once it's launched, click through the wizard, accepting all the defaults until it asks 'What do you want to do?'. Click the radio button beside 'Create installation media (USB flash drive, DVD or ISO file) for another PC', followed by Next. Leave 'Use the recommended options for this PC' ticked and click Next again, then select 'ISO file' and click Next. Select your Downloads folder as the destination for the download and click Save.



Tell the Windows 10 Setup tool you're creating media for another PC

Now that you've downloaded an image of the Windows installation disc, you'll need a copy of WinToUSB (bit.ly/wintousb477) so you can write it to your USB stick.

Launch WinToUSB, confirm that you're happy for it to make changes to your system, then click the folder icon to the right of the Image File box. Navigate to your Downloads folder and select the installation file (Windows.iso). Select the version of Windows for which you have a licence and click Next. On the following page, select the USB drive



Be sure to select the Windows Installation file you have a licence for

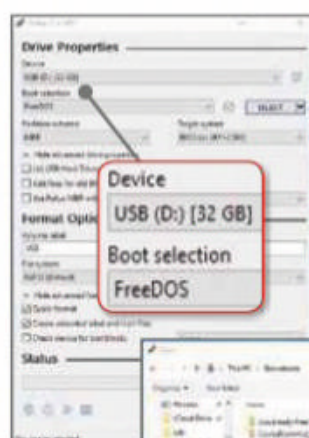
on which you want to install Windows from the drop-down menu.

WinToUSB will ask you to select a partition scheme. Leave the default selection as it is and click Yes, and the tool will format your USB drive. This will remove all its data, so make sure you back up anything you want to keep. When the format completes, you'll be asked to select an installation mode. Select Legacy and click Next. WinToUSB will then start installing Windows on your stick.

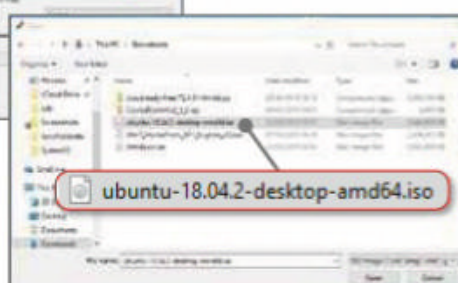
The time this takes to complete will depend on the speed of both your PC and the USB stick – in our case, it was over 30 minutes. When it's finished, leave the stick plugged in and reboot, making sure your computer starts from the external drive (see page 42, 'Booting from an external drive').

Install Linux on a USB stick

Linux and Windows can live side by side on the same machine, if you're happy to adjust the way your hard drive has been partitioned. However, this requires tweaking your PC's setup at the most fundamental level, so it's not for the

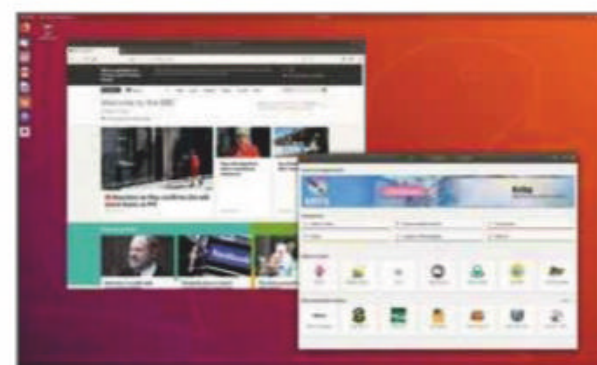


Rufus formats your USB stick and installs Linux. If multiple USB drives are plugged in, be sure to choose the correct one



faint-hearted. Installing Linux on a USB stick instead lets you boot to it whenever you choose, without putting your data at risk.

There are several versions of Linux to choose from, but we favour Ubuntu because it's one of the friendliest for first-time users. Download a copy of the ISO file from bit.ly/ubuntu477 by clicking the Download button in the uppermost box (at the time of writing, the latest long-term support version was Ubuntu 18.04.2 LTS). Opt to save, rather than run, the download, and don't open it when it's completed.



Ubuntu is one of the easiest of the Linux 'flavours' for newbies to get to grips with

At the same time, download and install Rufus (bit.ly/rufus477), which is a free tool that converts your humble USB stick into a bootable drive. Launch it and select your USB stick from the first drop-down menu, immediately below Device. If you only have one stick inserted, it should already be selected, but if you have both a stick and a USB drive, double-check that the correct device is selected.

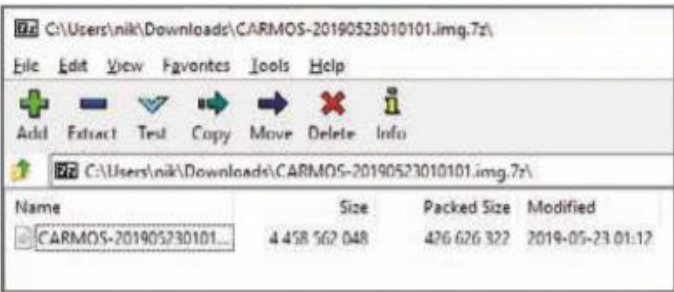
On the next line down, select FreeDOS from the 'Boot selection' menu, then click Select on the right and navigate to the Ubuntu ISO file you just downloaded. Select it and click Open. Finally, click Start – if Rufus warns you that it needs to download two additional files, click Yes to authorise this. When it's retrieved them, leave the 'Write in ISO Image mode' on the following screen as it is, and click OK twice. Rufus will format your USB stick, make it bootable and install Ubuntu.

After the process has completed, reboot your PC and when the loading menu appears, select the first option – to try Ubuntu without installing it. The Linux operating system will launch from your USB stick and you'll have access to all its features. Any files you create can be saved to the USB stick so they'll be available wherever you happen to use it.

Install Chromium OS on a USB drive

We're big fans of Chrome OS, Google's internet-focused operating system, which only officially ships on its own and third-party Chromebooks. It's lightweight, boots quickly and runs apps on the web through the built-in Chrome browser. Better yet, because your files are stored online, Chromium OS, on which Chrome OS based, is the perfect mobile operating system for running from a USB drive.

Chromium OS is released by its developers as open-source code, which needs to be compiled before it will run. Fortunately, that's already been done for you, if you instead download it from bit.ly/chromium477. Click the file at the top of the list for the most recent version. As you'll see from its extension, this has been compressed in 7-Zip format, so you'll need to download 7-Zip from bit.ly/7zip477 (if you don't already have it) to open it. Save the expanded file to the desktop so it's easy to find.



The Chromium OS installation files have been compressed in 7-Zip format

In the meantime, download and install Etcher (bit.ly/etcher477), which performs a similar function to Rufus in that it formats and makes your stick bootable, then installs the operating system on it.

Launch Etcher, click Select Image and point it at the file you unzipped from the Chromium download. Click Select Drive and choose your USB stick, then click Flash. Etcher will wipe your stick and create several partitions on it, which Windows will see as unformatted virtual drives. When the process completes, Windows will offer to format each partition in turn - you should cancel the offer every time.

Quit Etcher and any other running programs - but leave the USB stick connected and restart your PC so it



Etcher formats your USB stick, makes it bootable and installs the Chromium OS

UNLOCK YOUR PC USING A USB STICK



Passwords and PINs are effective security tools, provided nobody's looking over your shoulder. A safer way to foil nearby snoopers is to lock and unlock your PC using Predator (bit.ly/predator477), which lets you configure a USB stick to act as a key. As soon as you remove the stick, the PC is locked until the key is once again plugged in.

What if someone copies your stick? Not a problem. Predator uses a secret security code to unlock your PC, which is written to the stick and changed frequently. So, while a copied stick may unlock your machine once, it's not a long-term backdoor.

Other built-in tools let you set specific times when the PC can be unlocked; use a single USB stick to manage multiple machines; and take pictures of anyone who tries to use the PC in your absence, using its built-in camera.

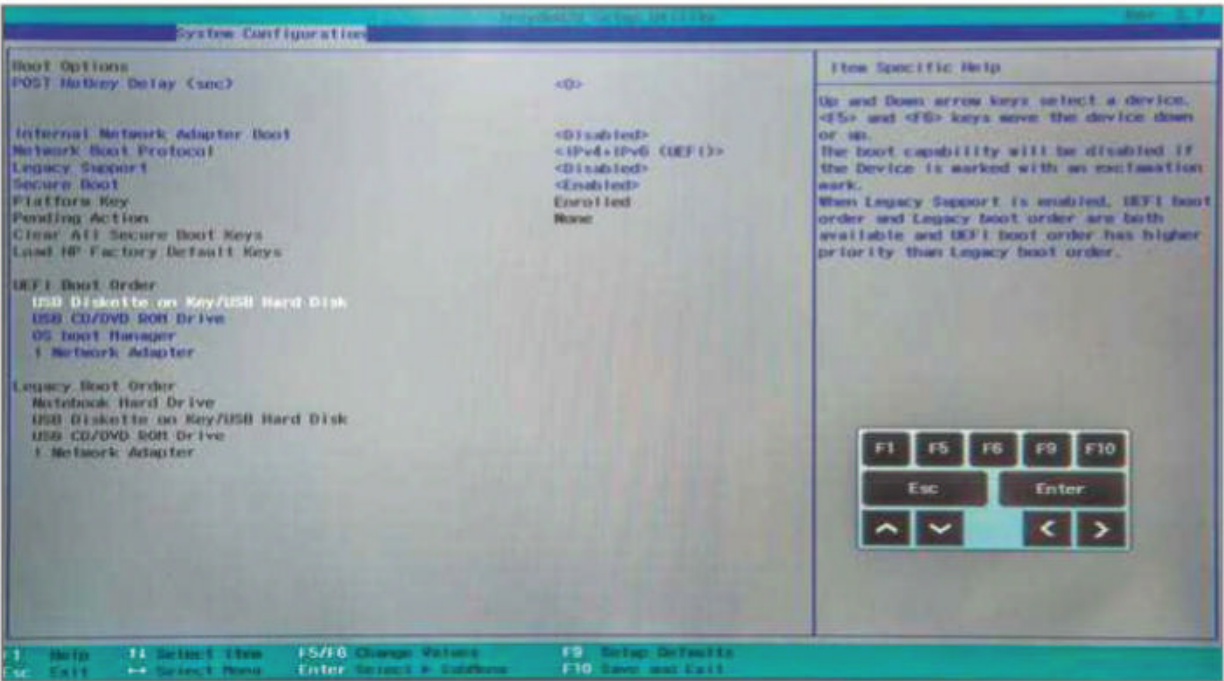
boots into Chromium. See the section below for advice on setting your PC to boot from USB rather than its internal drive.

Booting from an external drive

You'll need to configure your PC to stop it launching from your regular hard drive by tweaking the settings in your PC's BIOS (Basic Input Output System) or UEFI (Unified Extensible Firmware Interface). You can access these by pressing a shortcut key while your PC reboots - often, it's F10, but the

designated key will normally be displayed briefly during booting. If this doesn't happen, check your manual.

Navigate the menus until you find an option for setting the boot order, and rearrange the options so that USB has priority, then save the settings and exit. Your PC will reboot, this time launching from the USB drive. If you reboot without the drive plugged in, it will resort to the second, third and lower priority options, eventually finding your internal drive again and launching Windows as usual.



Your PC will default to booting from your regular hard drive unless you change its settings in the BIOS or UEFI

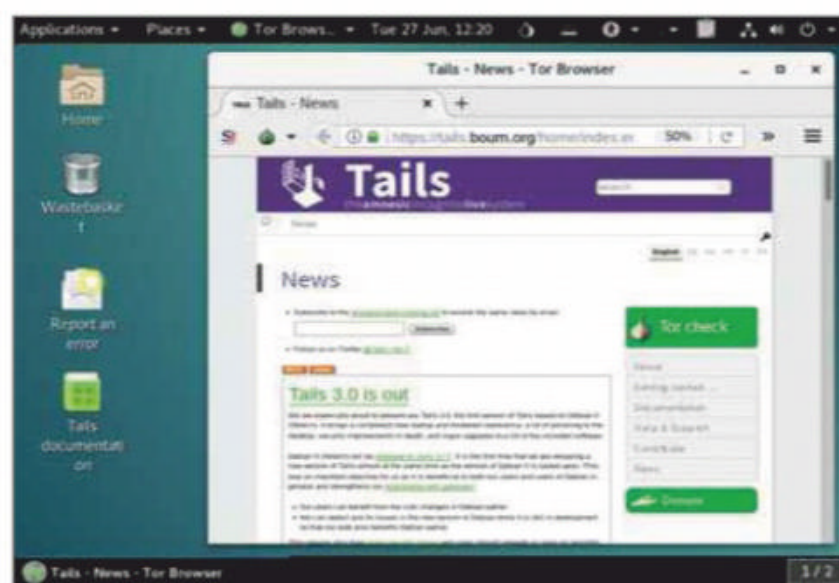
Other OS options for USB sticks

These aren't the only operating systems you can run from a USB stick. If you're worried about security, check out Tails (The Amnesic Incognito Live System), which routes your internet traffic through the Tor network to obscure its origin and destination, and makes it difficult for digital evesdroppers to see what you're up to. It leaves no files on the computer it boots, so it's a hyper-secure alternative to piggy-backing an existing Windows installation in a hotel or cyber café. Download it from bit.ly/tails477.

Sugar (bit.ly/sugar477), the USB-booting variant of which is called Sugar on a Stick, is an operating system

designed specifically for school pupils, which has been engineered to encourage discovery and collaboration.

Mac users can likewise install macOS on an external drive and boot from it on Macs built using Intel processors. This is particularly useful if you're using an all-in-one device such as an iMac or MacBook because it lets you carry on working even if the internal drive needs replacing.



Install Tails on a USB stick and you can run it on any PC without leaving a trace of your activities

Compile a portable app suite

USB-friendly apps can run individually, but many of the best ones have been bundled together in PortableApps, a handy collection of more than 400 programs, wrapped up in an easy-to-manage, simple-to-update suite. The tools themselves can be saved to a PC, cloud drive or USB stick and run without being fully installed on your PC's hard drive.

Go to bit.ly/portableapps477 and click 'Download from PortableApps.com'. When asked whether you want to run or save the linked file, click Run. Select a language, click Next and check through the Licence Agreement. If you're happy with its contents, click I Agree, select New Install and click Next.

Plug in an empty USB stick and leave Portable selected when asked where you'd like to install the PortableApps platform. Click Next, select the USB stick from the drive options, and click Next, then Install.



PortableApps makes it easy to manage more than 400 USB-friendly programs

When PortableApps first runs, it will update its built-in directory of programs and present a full list of options with tick boxes beside each one. Select the tools

you want to include in your PocketApps platform, then click Next. Each app will download, and some will pop up installation windows in the background, so listen for Windows alerts and allow them to install on your USB stick.

Each program will be added to the PortableApps launcher, which opens with a click on the Taskbar's PortableApps icon. It looks like the Windows menu, but opens on the opposite side of the screen.

Of course, just as the PortableApps tools aren't installed on your hard drive, neither is PortableApps itself, so if you quit it, you won't be able to relaunch it from the Windows menu.



Select the tools you want to include in your personal build of PortableApps

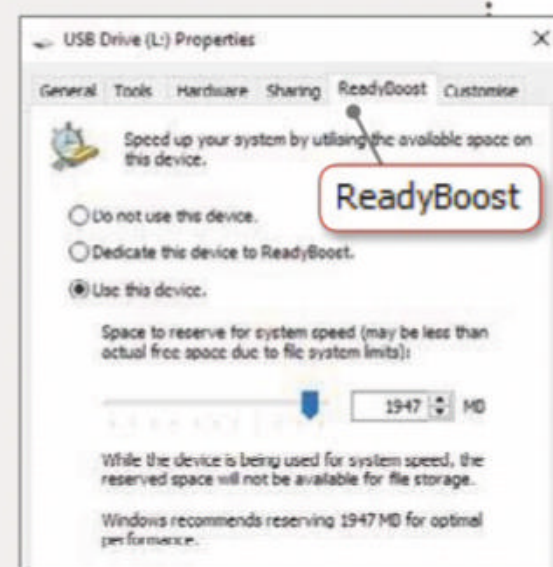
Instead, you have to navigate to your USB stick and launch Start.exe.

USE READYBOOST TO SPEED UP YOUR PC

Plug in a USB stick with at least 256MB of space (the bigger and faster, the better) and right-click its icon in Windows Explorer. Select Properties, then click the ReadyBoost tab in the dialogue that appears. Click the button for 'Use this device', then drag the slider to specify how much of the stick Windows can use as a temporary store for any files it's working on writing to disk.

By dumping them out of its internal memory to fast flash storage, rather than waiting for them to transfer to a slow hard drive, that internal memory can be reused for the next queued process more quickly, making your PC feel more responsive as a result.

If you have an SSD rather than a hard drive, any benefit you derive from ReadyBoost may be negligible, but if you use an older PC, the difference it makes could help you put off an upgrade for another few months.

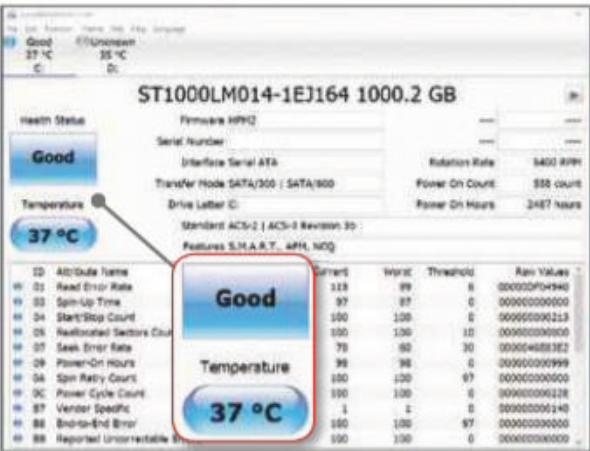


Create the ultimate PC-repair kit

Planning ahead, by installing some essential PC maintenance and repair tools on a USB stick that you keep in a safe place, could be a lifesaver should disaster strike. Here, we look at some of the best tools to keep on your pocket drive.

Diagnose a dying drive

If your hard drive seems slow to move things around, it could be approaching the end of its life. Back up your files and use the PortableApps version of CrystalDiskInfo (bit.ly/crystaldisk477) to check its SMART (Self-Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Technology) data. This tells you how many bad sectors it has, how often it's had to relocate data, and how many sectors are lost and unrecoverable. It aggregates all this data to provide a clear Health Status: blue and marked Good; yellow for caution; and red indicating danger. In either of the latter cases, you should budget for a new drive right away.

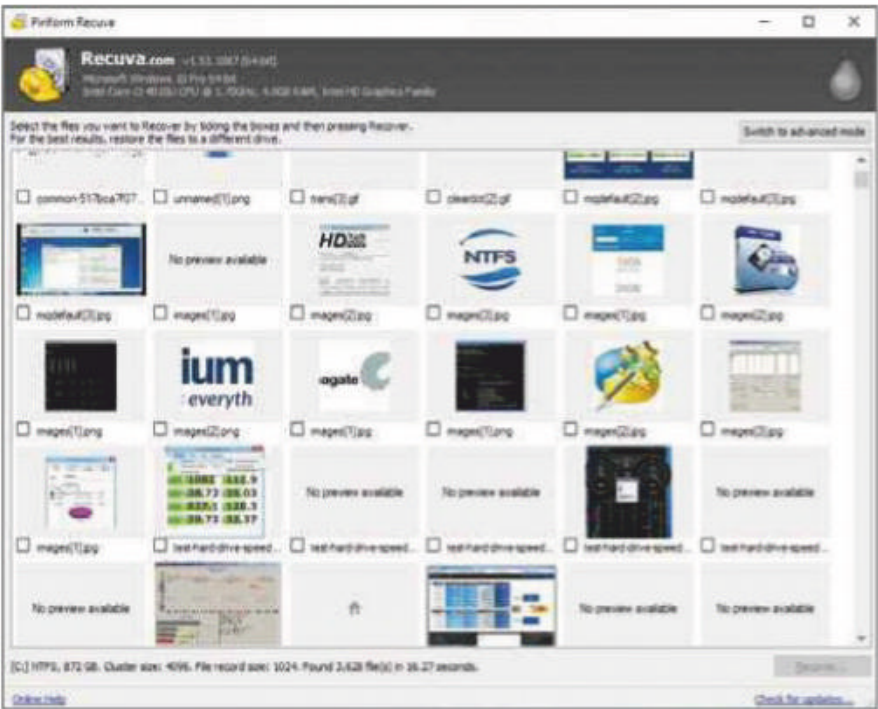


CrystalDiskInfo uses your hard drive's SMART metrics to gauge its health

Undelete missing files

Files aren't physically deleted from a hard drive, even when you empty the Recycle Bin; references to them are simply removed from an index that tells Windows where to find them, and they remain in place until the sectors they occupy are overwritten. If you can get to those sectors before another program does, you have a good chance of recovering your lost data.

Running Recuva (bit.ly/recuva477) from a USB stick rather than your hard drive reduces the risk to your data as it explores the file system sector by sector and lists all the files it finds that are missing from the hard drive's index. You can filter the search to only find specific file types, such as photos, and sort the results according to your chances of

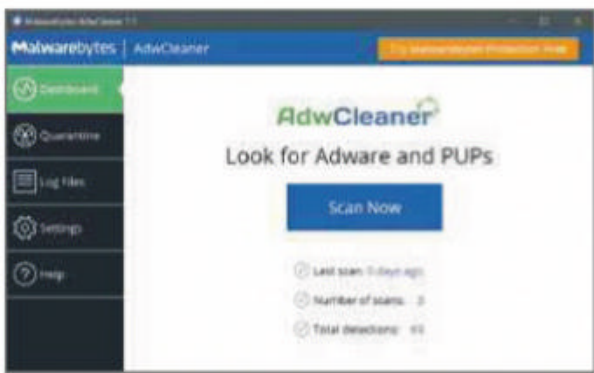


Recuva searches your hard drive for deleted files and helps recover lost data

recovering them, which will save you getting your hopes up or wasting time over files that are likely beyond reach.

Abolish annoying adware

Malwarebytes AdwCleaner (bit.ly/adwcleaner477) detects and removes adware, which routinely pops up annoying alerts, installs browser toolbars and changes your homepage. Without the help of a tool like this, tracking down the hidden files that lie behind the disruption can be tricky – sometimes impossible. Also consider adding an antivirus tool such as ClamWin to your arsenal, which usually needs installing directly but can run from a USB stick if you follow the instructions at bit.ly/clamwin477.



Run Malwarebytes AdwCleaner from a USB stick to detect and remove adware

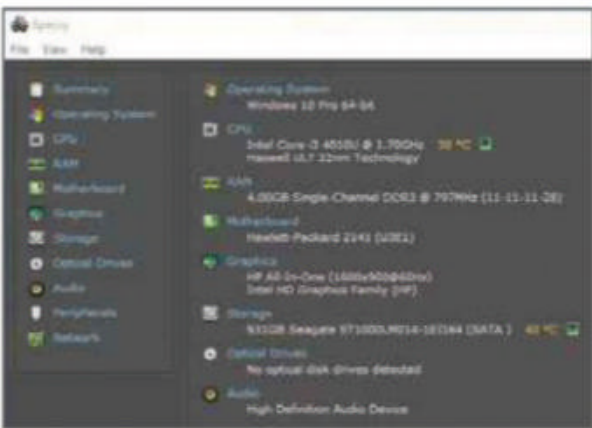
Create a minimal build of Windows for booting

When your PC won't boot, having a copy of WinPE to hand can be a lifesaver. Short for Windows Preinstallation Environment, this free cut-down operating system will help

you diagnose a malfunctioning system and get it back up and running. AOMEI PE Builder (bit.ly/pebuilder477) simplifies the process of creating the bootable stick, which will be compatible with both older BIOS-booting computers and more recent PCs that use UEFI instead, saving you the head-scratching task of working out which one you need.

Get secret PC specs using Speccy

Speccy (bit.ly/speccy477), from the team behind CCleaner, drills deep into your computer's configuration to tell you what's hidden under the hood. From the processor and graphics card, to the memory and hard drives, it produces a comprehensive report and lets you save snapshots of the current configuration. Make sure you download 'Speccy – Portable' from the website if you want to run the program from a USB stick.



Speccy reveals your full PC specs, which is helpful when you're trying to fix problems

Make your passwords portable

The portable edition of free password manager KeePass (bit.ly/keepass477) lets you access your passwords from any computer, even if it's not your own. It lets you set unique credentials for every site without having to remember them, even if you need to log in from computers other than your own. Without a portable password manager, this wouldn't be possible, because the passwords would otherwise be stranded on your PC back home.

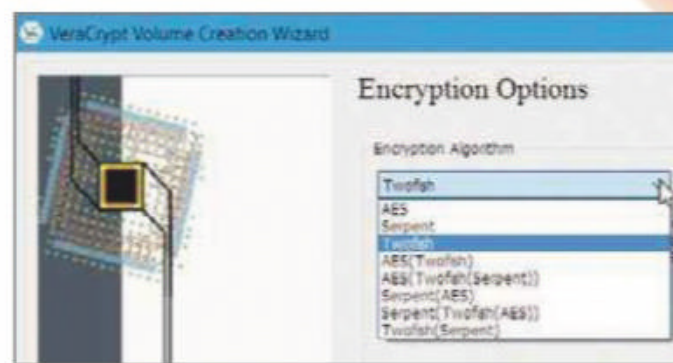
Encrypt a drive or partition

The developers of the free tool VeraCrypt (bit.ly/veracrypt477) say its open-source disk-encryption software makes your data immune to brute-force attacks. It does this by scrambling it several times over and decoding it on the fly when it's accessed, and it promises to do this

without impacting performance.

If you're not running Windows 10 Pro or Enterprise, and don't have access to the operating system's built-in BitLocker tool, this is a great way to keep sensitive information out of harm's way.

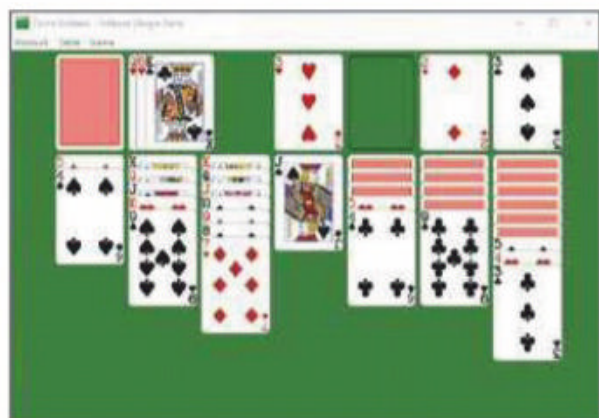
Encrypt sensitive data wherever you go by installing VeraCrypt on a USB stick



Build a pocket entertainment hub

PortableApps includes several games and entertainment programs that run without installing on your PC. Bear in mind that anything involving streaming media or gameplay is resource-intensive, so if you plan to run these apps from a USB stick, look for a USB 3 device and buy the fastest one you can afford.

Solitaire disappeared from some later versions of Windows, and although you can download the Microsoft Solitaire Collection from the Microsoft Store (bit.ly/solitairecollection477), the alternative **Quick Solitaire** (bit.ly/solitaire477) runs from a USB stick, so you can enjoy a quick game wherever you happen to be.



Quick Solitaire has card games from earlier Windows releases

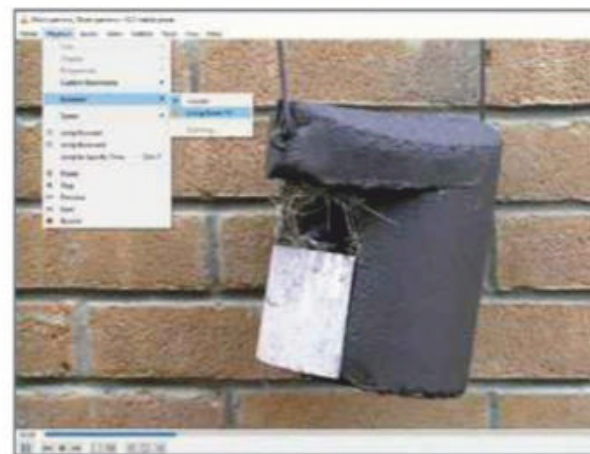


Choose your vehicle, track and character, then get racing in SuperTuxKart

SuperTuxKart (bit.ly/tux477) should appeal to anyone with fond memories of Super Mario Kart – although its creators assure players it's not a clone. It offers a range of tracks, including European cities, farmyards and an arena for battle-mode racing.

Test your grey matter with **Lucas Chess** (bit.ly/lucaschess477), which has 40 different intelligence engines for players of any age or ability. A range of training modes helps you spot the best move, read the board and more – and there's a kids' mode that explains how each piece moves.

Although it's bundled in an installer, **foobar2000** (bit.ly/foobar477) includes



VLC for Windows media player handles a wide range of video and audio formats

an option to set it up in portable configuration. This creates additional files on your stick, tells the app to save your music there, too, and doesn't touch the Windows Registry. If you're taking songs to a friend's party, putting the tracks on the same stick as Foobar2000 will let your friend play them without copying them across to their own PC.

VLC for Windows (bit.ly/vlc477) plays just about any video file you can imagine, including DVDs, along with audio CDs, VCDs and streaming media. It's so versatile that even if you don't plan on carrying it around on a stick, we'd still recommend downloading a copy to run locally on your PC. ■

NEXT ISSUE

WHO'S WATCHING YOU ONLINE?

We expose the companies that track your web activities and explain how to stop them

on sale Wednesday 26 June 2019

PLUS...

- ⊕ **DON'T GET 'JUICE JACKED'**
Avoid the scary new security threat targeting your phone
- ⊕ **AMAZON ALTERNATIVES**
Online stores that are better than the Bezos behemoth
- ⊕ **UPDATE WINDOWS NOW!**
Force your PC to install the Windows 10 May Update

SUBSCRIBE TO WEB USER AT
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WHAT YOU MUST NEVER SHARE ONLINE



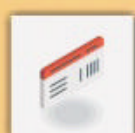
It's easy to post photos, videos and information on social media without considering the consequences. **Robert Irvine** suggests nine things you should always avoid sharing



HOLIDAY PLANS

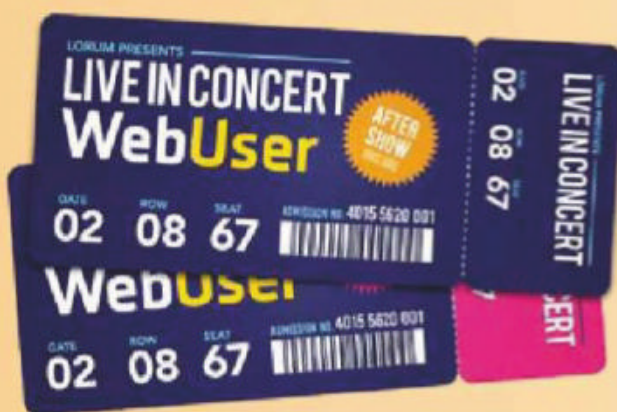
"Only three more sleeps until we fly to Australia for two weeks!" may seem like harmless excitement over your forthcoming holiday but when posted on social media, it's tantamount to saying "My house will be empty! Help yourself to everything inside!".

Facebook even has a 'travelling to' option that lets you tell people you're on the plane – like an alert to burglars to warm up the van. Similarly, sharing photos and videos of you and your family sunning yourselves in exotic locations and 'checking into' restaurants and attractions are surefire giveaways that you'll be a long way from home for some time. It's much wiser to be discreet about your holiday plans and activities until you're back, no matter how fabulous they might be. If you must share your getaway glee with friends, then do it privately via a messaging service such as WhatsApp, not online where criminals can see.

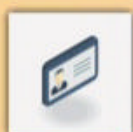


EVENT TICKETS

When your tickets arrive for a hotly anticipated concert, festival or sporting event, you may want to boast by posting a photo on social media, so



your friends can share your delight and express their envy. But try to resist the temptation. Nearly all tickets these days feature a barcode or QR code that's scanned on the door to permit your entry to the venue. Someone could easily use the picture you share to create a duplicate ticket and potentially invalidate your genuine one if they get to the event before you. So if you must shout about attending the gig of a lifetime, don't blow it by giving away your ticket – or at least crop or blur the photo before uploading.

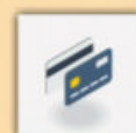


FORMS OF IDENTIFICATION

Posting a picture of your driving licence to celebrate passing your test, or your new passport to bemoan the awful photo, may get you lots of



'likes' but it also hands sensitive data to passing scammers, including your full name, date and place of birth, and the unique identification number of the document itself. Within hours, copies of your licence or passport could be circulating on the Dark Web. Either use an image editor to obscure these details before you upload the image, or don't share it at all.



CREDIT & DEBIT CARDS

It's common sense not to publicly share a photo of your bank or credit card on which the account number and expiration date are clearly visible, but people still do it! There's even a now-defunct Twitter feed (@NeedADebitCard) dedicated to examples of chumps who were so keen to tell – and show – the world that their new card had arrived that they didn't consider the consequences. Even without the CVV (card verification value) number on the back, fraudsters can still use details from a photo of a card to steal your money and your identity, so don't take the risk.

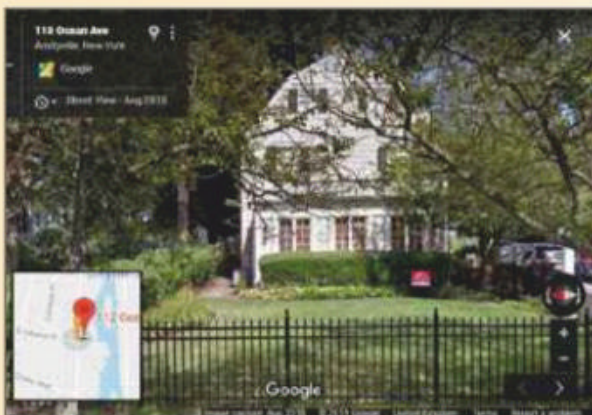




YOUR HOME ADDRESS

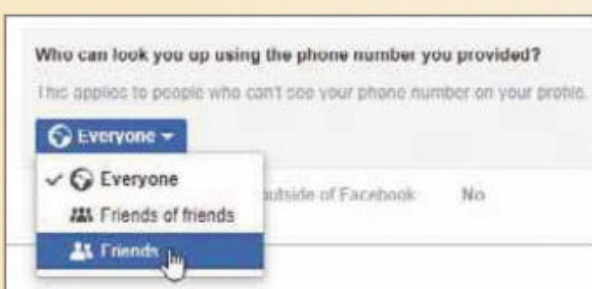
Obviously, family members and close friends know where you live, but revealing your home address on a public forum such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram leaves you open to stalkers, scammers, burglars, trolls and other troublemakers. You may not even realise you're disclosing the information – perhaps in a picture of your house in which the number is clearly visible or a geo-tagged photo posted from your abode. It doesn't take much effort for an online snooper to look up your address on Google Street View, so they can see exactly where you live and get directions to your doorstep.

You can remove geotagging data from images you upload from your Android phone or tablet by opening the camera app, going into Settings and switching off the option 'Store location data', 'Save location', 'Allow location access' or similar. On an iPhone or iPad, go to Settings, Privacy, Location Services, Camera and tap Never.

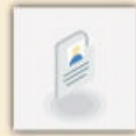


YOUR PHONE NUMBER

With 'robocalls' (automated messages from telemarketing companies) an increasing menace, it's essential to keep your phone number off the web, but that's easier said than done. Facebook requires your number to enable two-factor authentication, and this is then linked with your profile, which means people can "look you up". Even if you don't tell Facebook your phone number, it may still be added when your friends share their contacts with the social network. To protect your privacy, first click About on your Facebook profile page, then hover over your phone number in the 'Contact & basic info section' and click Edit. Here you can decide exactly who can see

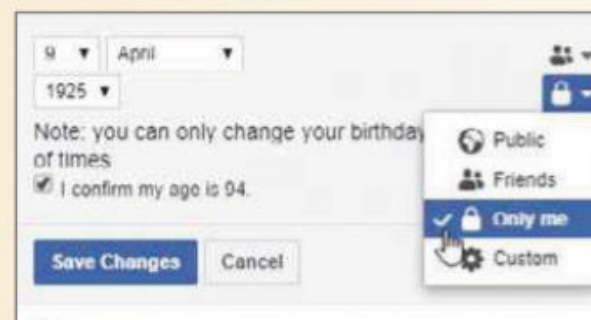


your phone number or remove it altogether. Next, go into your account settings (www.facebook.com/settings), click Privacy and change the setting 'Who can look you up using the phone number you provided' from Everyone to Friends.

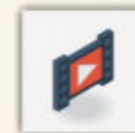


YOUR DATE OF BIRTH

We all like receiving birthday messages, especially from people we don't hear from very often, but there's no need to provide your date of birth on your social-media profile all year round. This has got nothing to do with nosy parkers knowing how old you are and everything to do with identity theft. Anyone can use the combination of your real name and your real birthdate to pretend to be you and gain access to all manner of your private information. Keep the year of your birth secret, and preferably the day as well, at least until your birthday approaches. To hide this info on Facebook, go to your profile page, click About and, under Basic Information, hover your mouse over 'Year of birth'. Click the privacy symbol, choose 'Only me' from the drop-down

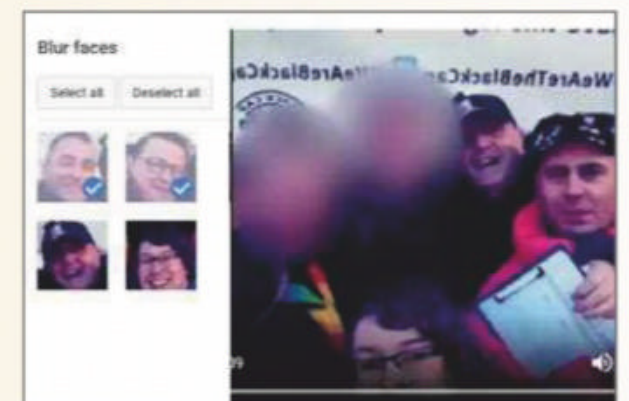


menu (or Custom to let specific friends see this detail) and click Save Changes.



UNAUTHORISED VIDEOS

It's not illegal to upload a video to the web without the consent of the people who appear in it, unless the clip contains obscene content or is intended to cause distress (such as with 'revenge porn' – see the Ask the Police article at bit.ly/police477). However, from an ethical point of view, publicly sharing a personal video of someone without asking their permission is pretty dubious, especially if they can be easily identified and are likely to be embarrassed.



YouTube offers a tool that automatically detects faces in videos and lets you blur people who might not want to be recognised – click Edit Video, Editor, Add Blur and choose the faces to conceal. But if you're in any doubt, don't share the video until you obtain the subjects' consent – especially if the footage features anyone under the age of 18. ■

HIDE YOUR FINGERPRINTS ONLINE

Posting a selfie in which you make a peace sign or a show the palm of your hand might not seem like risky behaviour, but it could actually compromise the security of your phone. Many handsets now use fingerprint recognition to verify who you are, so you can unlock them with a single touch, and criminals can potentially steal this biometric information from your pictures. Researchers in Japan found that, if the focus and lighting were right, they could recreate fingerprints from images shot up to 10 feet away from the subject (bit.ly/finger477). Although someone would have to go to a lot of trouble to turn that fingerprint into a mould and physically get hold of your phone to bypass its security, it's still a scary thought.

Pictures of fingerprints can also

prove incriminating, even without a face in shot. Last year, South Wales Police were able to identify and convict a drug dealer from a close-up WhatsApp photo of him holding some ecstasy tablets in his palm and said the case had "opened the floodgates" for using similar techniques in future (bit.ly/hand477).



Best free PDF editors

You don't need a dedicated program to see a PDF's contents – just open and view the file in your browser. However, if you want to make changes, you'll need specialist editing software. **Andy Shaw** checks out six free tools that let you tweak text and images in PDFs



Apowersoft Online PDF Editor | bit.ly/apow477 | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
GOLD
AWARD

What we liked:

Apowersoft's PDF Editor comes in two flavours: an online version and a free download. We recommend using the online version because the free download stamps your

PDFs with a watermark.

Using the online version requires that you download a launcher, so it doesn't feel like an online tool in the traditional sense that you need to access it in a browser. We loaded some complex PDFs into the software and it immediately discovered the text (even text in unusual fonts) so we could get on with editing it. The tool is adept at distinguishing tricky elements such as images placed in layers, and allowed us to move and remove them. All this is done by simply clicking the Edit button at the top and selecting the element you want to change.

It can't edit absolutely everything – we found a few fonts that it couldn't handle and it wouldn't work on text that had been rotated. It also failed to edit the images in some documents – we suspect it depends how the original designer has saved the file. But don't let these minor setbacks put you off – there are still plenty of things you can do with



this software.

At a document level, you can remove pages and insert new pages. You can also create PDFs from scratch, though it's not ideal for this because it doesn't have enough layout tools. Also, it uses American paper sizes, so you'll need to set the size of an A4 PDF manually.

How it could be improved:

Apowersoft's tool does an excellent job of editing PDFs, but it's primarily designed for corrections and minor changes – you can't, for example, dramatically alter a page so it looks like a completely new layout, and anything

you add will sit over existing elements, rather than flowing around them.

OUR VERDICT

We were impressed by how much we were able to edit our test PDFs with this tool. There's no guarantee that it will be able to tackle absolutely everything, but the basics are well covered and there are several excellent advanced tools. We were impressed that it could remove layers of images and edit complex-looking text.

PDF-XChange Editor | bit.ly/pdfx477 | ★★★★★

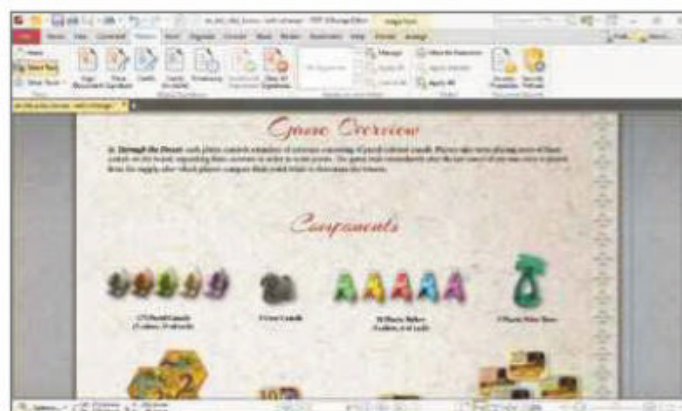
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser
SILVER
AWARD**What we liked:**

PDF-XChange Editor provides both free and paid-for versions, but its website reassuringly claims that 60% of the tools in the full version are active and usable in the free one. Unfortunately, some of that missing 40% affects the editing sphere so while you can, for example, edit text for free, making other changes – such as manipulating images or other features, or adding new pages – will leave your saved version stamped with a watermark.

Nevertheless, we were impressed with the power of the text editing, which was able to tackle some text items that even the Gold Award-winning Apowersoft tool couldn't make changes to.

The interface will look reassuringly familiar to anyone who's used a Microsoft Office program in the last decade. The tools are laid out in a ribbon toolbar that's very easy to find your way around, even when you're first getting to grips with the program.

**How it could be improved:**

This is powerful software, but the free version is hamstrung by the lack of certain key editing tools. The worst bit, however, is having to hover over an option before you can see whether or not it's available for free.

OUR VERDICT

PDF-Exchange Editor is a good option if your main editing focus is on text. The interface is professional and easy to use, but you'll have to pay £34 if you want it to perform as many tasks as our Gold Award-winner provides for free.

Sejda PDF Editor | bit.ly/sejda477 | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD**What we liked:**

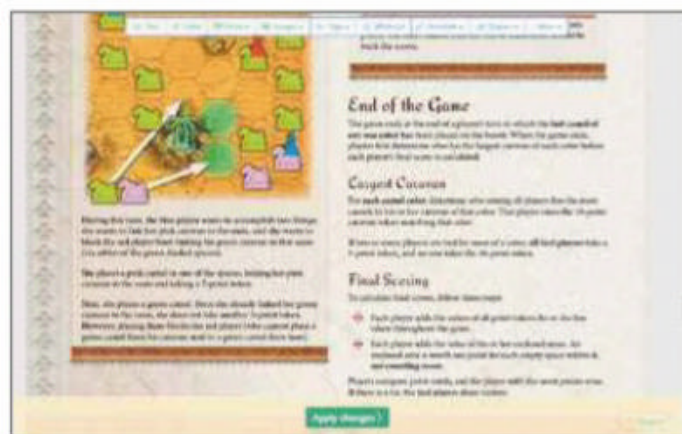
Sometimes, all you want to do is make a small change to the text of a PDF file, such as correcting a typo in your otherwise carefully crafted document. In such cases, having to download a whole program seems like overkill, and you can just as easily do the job using a browser-based tool.

Sejda PDF Editor might be all you need. Most of the things it can do are concerned with adding elements to your PDF, such as extra pages and images – so long as you're happy for them to lay on top of the existing contents. If you need to block out a whole section, for example, this tool could handle that easily.

There's also a text-editing tool that did a surprisingly good job of detecting fonts and letting us edit text in place.

How it could be improved:

The only problem we encountered with the text editing was that some of the



fancy fonts used in our test documents were editable but shifted slightly in the editing process. A casual reader might not notice but it made the document look odd in places.

OUR VERDICT

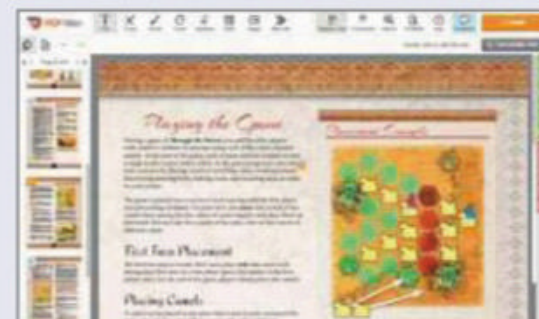
There's nothing here to top what you get from our Gold and Silver Award-winners, but Sejda PDF Editor is a useful online option for an emergency edit if you don't want to go through the rigmarole of downloading and installing a full program.

BEST OF THE REST**Icecream PDF Editor**bit.ly/icec477

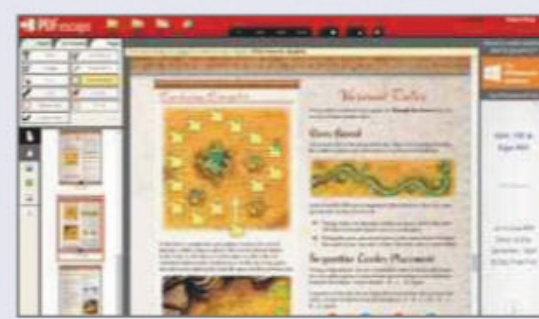
Icecream PDF Editor's clean interface is very easy to use – simply click an element to edit it and make your changes. Unfortunately, the execution isn't quite as clean – some changes we made to documents didn't pick up the correct font and defaulted to a basic Windows version, which was disappointing.

**PDFfiller**pdf-editor-online.com

This online PDF editor works with files of up to 25MB in size. Because it's online, you have to first upload your PDF to the site, so it's not as immediately usable as a downloaded program. Once that's done, though, just switch your browser to full screen and it's just like any other software. It wasn't so good at replacing unusual fonts, though, and switched them instead for similar-looking alternatives.

**PDFescape**www.pdfescape.com

This online editor is designed to accompany a more sophisticated paid-for program, and we found the tool had been pared-back too far. You can add elements – images, text boxes and even more complex additions such as forms – to a page, but you can't edit what's already there without upgrading to the paid-for version.



Enhance your photos online – *for free*

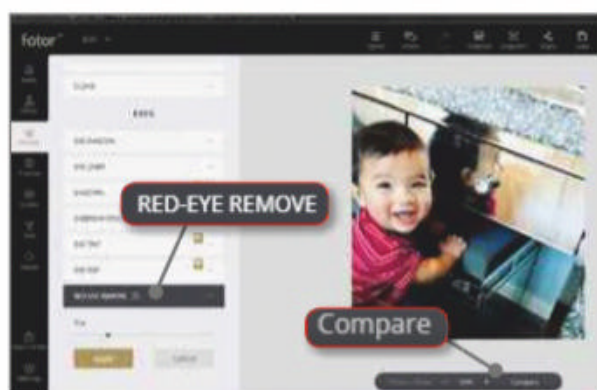


You don't need complex software to transform your snaps into works of art. **Steve Clark** picks the best free web tools for editing images in your browser

Get rid of red eye (and other blemishes)

Red eye – which occurs when bright light reflects off the retina at the back of the eye – has been the bane of photographers since the invention of the modern camera flash. Fotor's red-eye remover (bit.ly/redeye477) provides a quick fix: simply click Get Started, choose the red-eye remover and select the radius of the on-screen circle used to identify the affected area. Add your own photos to the gallery by using the Import button, then drag the circle into position and click on each eye. Removal is instant.

At the bottom of the image, you'll find the Compare button, which you can click and hold to view the before and after effect. Fotor also features several other tools for tweaking physical appearance, such as the age-defying wrinkle remover.



Fotor's tool fixes your snaps by getting rid of 'demon eyes'

Add colour to your photos

The premise of Algorithmia's Colorize Photos tool (bit.ly/colour477) is simple: black-and-white image in, coloured photo out. It's smart, too, and can identify faces and automatically add a flesh tone.

To use the tool, just upload your picture or paste an image URL, click Colorize It and wait. Once complete, you'll see a bisected image: black-and-

Algorithmia's tool will spice up your monochrome snaps with some colour

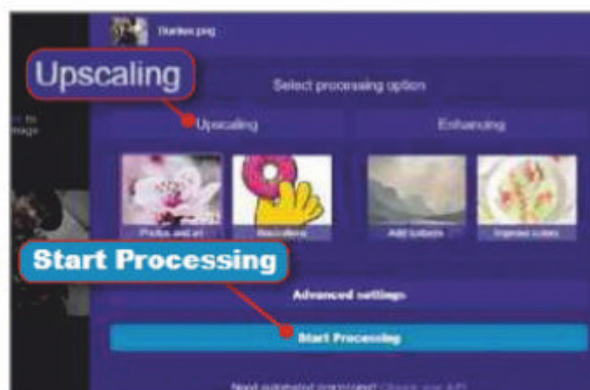


white original on one side and fresh, coloured version on the other. Drag the slider to compare before and after shots and download either the comparison image or the full-colour pic.

Enhance your images without pixelation

If your photo gallery is let down by low-res graphics, Let's Enhance (letsenhance.io) can help. Using machine learning, this online tool upscales images, removing the compression that leads to pixelated pictures and giving them a quality upgrade.

After uploading your photo, you're given two choices: Upscaling and Enhancing. If you're upscaling, select whether it's a photo or an illustration; for enhancements, choose whether to add textures or improve washed-out colours. Clicking the 'Advanced settings'



Let's Enhance gives your photos a quality upgrade without blockiness

beneath these options simply lets you decide whether to save as a JPEG or PNG file.

Once you've made your selection, click Start Processing. With that done, head back to your account and hover over the thumbnail to either bin it or download the photo. Just one note: you'll need to sign up for a free Let's Enhance account, which limits you to five photo upgrades. After that, you'll need to pay a subscription or on a per-use basis.

Remove unsightly backgrounds

Remove.bg (www.remove.bg) promises to get rid of backgrounds from images "100% automatically – in 5 seconds – without a single click". This isn't strictly true, since you'll need to click when choosing to upload your photo or entering a URL. But other than that, the site delivers on its promise, and the results are impressive.

There are options for small or medium-sized downloads and basic editing tools that let you erase or restore specific areas of the image. You can also add a colour to the background (the default is transparent) or add a photo – perfect for faking your climb to the summit of Mount Everest or an encounter with the Queen, if you're so inclined.



Now you see, now you don't – Remove.bg is effective against all backgrounds

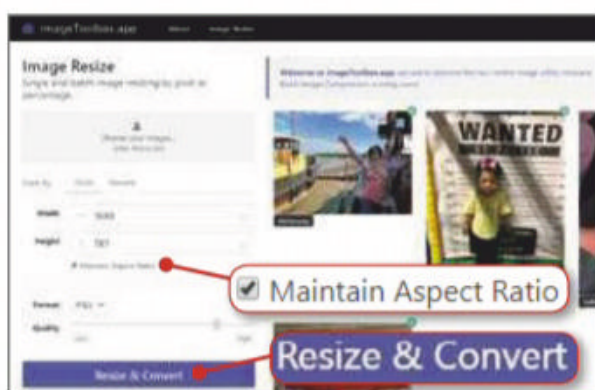


Resize multiple photos at once

Microsoft Paint is fine for resizing individual pictures, but Image Toolbox (imagetoolbox.app) goes further by letting you resize photos in bulk. Start by selecting your images and determining how much bigger (or smaller) you want them to be. This can be done by pixel-count or percentage – percentage being easier but giving less control. Leave the Maintain Aspect Ratio box checked.

If you want to save as a JPEG, whizz the slider along to your preferred image quality – PNGs, however, don't have this option. Finally, click Resize & Convert.

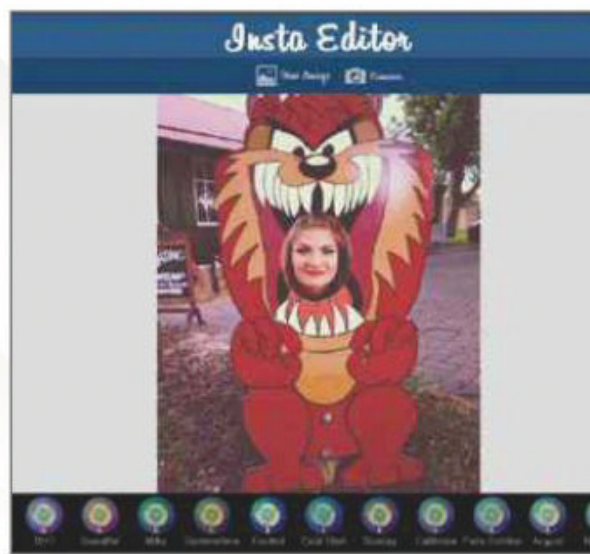
Image Toolbox isn't the fastest tool around but once your photos are done, you can easily download the ZIP file and save your newly sized images.



Blow up lots of images in one go using Image Toolbox

Apply Instagram-style filters

The most famous aspect of Instagram – beyond the Kardashians and pictures of food – is its wide array of filters, designed to make even the duller snap look interesting. But if you don't have the app to hand, visit the easy-to-use Insta Editor (insta-editor.com) and either upload your own photo or take a snapshot using your webcam. Now, cycle through 24 different filters to find the one for you. Make it look like an old Polaroid picture with the '1977' filter or



Insta Editor: Now you, too, can become an Instagram influencer

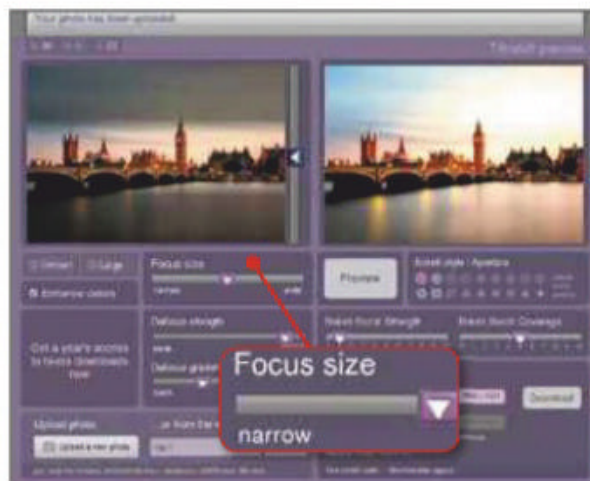
try 'Gotham' for Batman-esque grit.

The Settings wheel displays even more image-editing options, from basic cropping to blurring the edges. When you're happy, press Save to download the JPG.

Create a 'miniature' tilt effect

Bokeh has become a mainstay of the photography world – an effect that focuses on a single aspect of an image while blurring the rest. The result is a real-world image that looks like a miniature model.

Tiltshift Maker (tiltshiftmaker.com) recreates this effect in three steps, working best with landscapes. Start by



Pretend you live in Lilliput by treating your photos with Tiltshift Maker

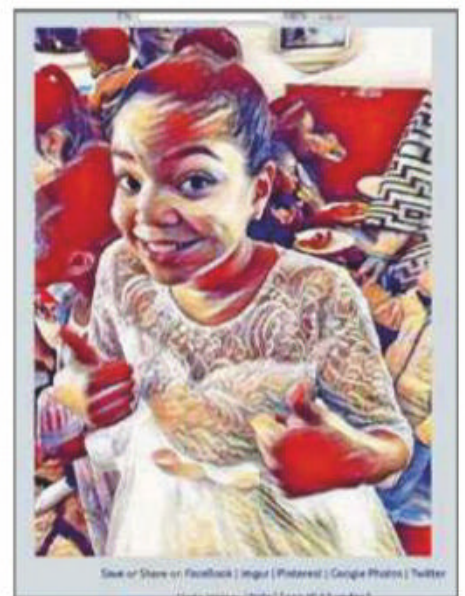
uploading or linking to an image. The next screen looks complex, but all you need to do is use the vertical slider to determine which part of the image to keep in focus. Next, decide the focus size. Click Preview after every edit to track changes in the preview pane. When you're happy, select your image size and click Download.

Turn your photos into artwork

LunaPic (www.lunapic.com) is filled with different image effects – from adjusting lighting to adding classic filters – but it's the artistic overlays that really draw attention. The service is generous with photo import options, supporting standard uploads and URLs, but also social-media and cloud-storage uploads.

With your image uploaded, hover over Art or Effects along the top. The dazzling array of options include transforming it into a watercolour or mimicking masters such as Picasso and Escher. If that's not enough, try turning your image into an old-fashioned movie reel or GIF using the Animation drop-down menu. Finally, save or share the results on social media.

The only problem we found is that it can sometimes take a while to apply a change. If you don't like a particular effect, use the History thumbnails to go back to a previous version. ■



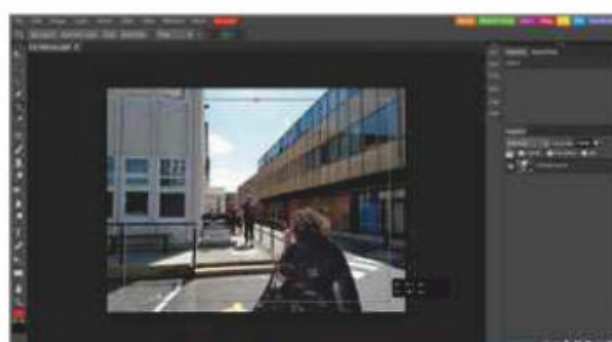
LunaPic offers a massive choice of overlays to transform your photos

DITCH PHOTOSHOP FOR PHOTOPEA

With its advanced editing and enhancement tools, Photopea (www.photopea.com) is the closest thing to Adobe Photoshop you'll find on the web. You can achieve almost every effect with this free online suite

– with the added bonus of no downloads, no lag and no expensive subscriptions.

If you've never used professional-level image-editing software, check out Photopea's dedicated subreddit (bit.ly/redpea477) where you can ask for advice and become a power user. If you're not quite ready for a professional career in browser-based graphic design, you'll find simpler features here too, such as quickly removing a blemish. It's an absolute must-have for your bookmarks bar.





Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Create party invites with Canva

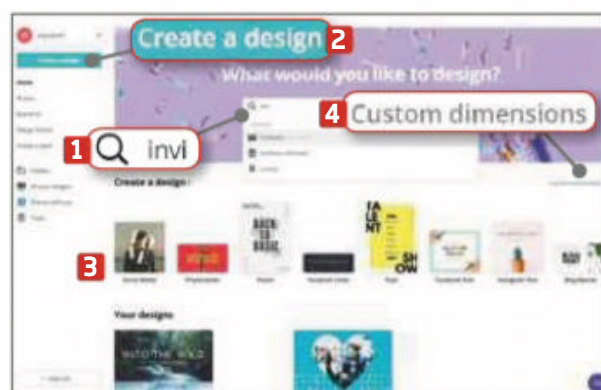
Canva is an online design tool for creating party invitations and posters for free – no artistic ability required. Here's what you need to know

Canva: www.canva.com | ⌚ 20 mins | Any browser

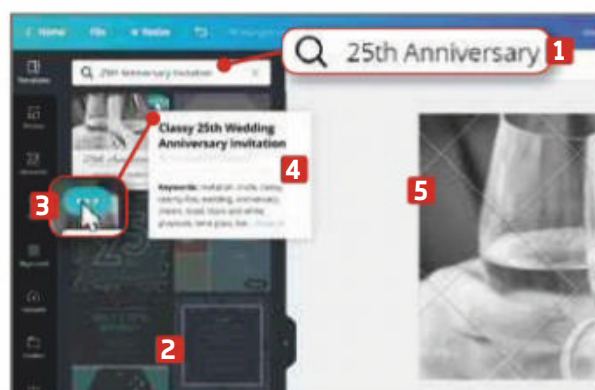
If you're announcing a party, you could just buy generic invitations from your local card shop or supermarket, but creating your own adds a personalised touch that makes the event seem more special. You could use a word processor for the task or some kind of DTP (desktop publishing) software, but that requires a fair amount of effort and the

results may be less than satisfactory. This is where Canva comes in. This free online design tool lets you put together your own professional creations in a matter of minutes.

You'll need an account to use it, and can either sign up with your email address and a password or log in with your Facebook or Google credentials.



1 To get started, either search for the type of item you'd like to create – 'invitation', in our case **1** – or click the 'Create a design' button **2** to view the full selection of options. You can also browse the thumbnails below. **3** If you want to make a new design from scratch, click 'Custom dimensions'. **4**



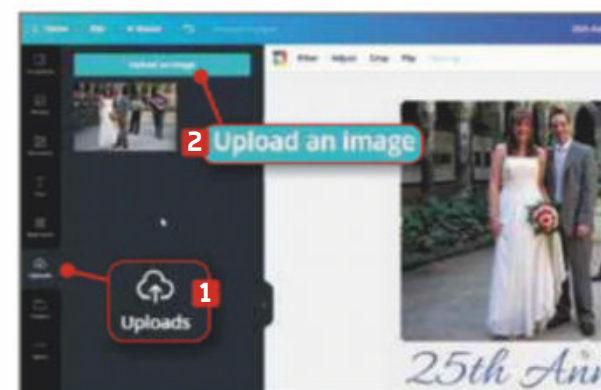
2 You're presented with a blank canvas and a number of templates sorted into categories on the left. You can search for one by name **1** or explore the choices. **2** Hover your mouse over one and click the three-dot button **3** to view its details. **4** Double-click the template to load it. **5**



3 Customising the design is just a matter of clicking an element, such as some text. Use the bar at the top to change the typeface, **1** size **2** and colour. **3** You can also resize, move or rotate it using the box handles. **4** To change the text, click it and start typing.



4 The image in this template is stamped with a watermark. **1** Click Remove Watermarks **2** if you want to buy the photo. **3** Alternatively, you can select Photos on the left **4** and pick a free image. **5** You can search for something or browse the categories. **6** Drag the new image into place.



5 If you want to create a truly personalised invite, you can use your own images by clicking Uploads. **1** Drag an image to the sidebar or click 'Upload an image' **2** and navigate to it.

FILE

From here, you can choose to show margins and the print bleed, create a new design and save your work (it also saves automatically)

MORE

Get additional photos, embed media from the web, add emoji, import Facebook or Instagram photos, and more

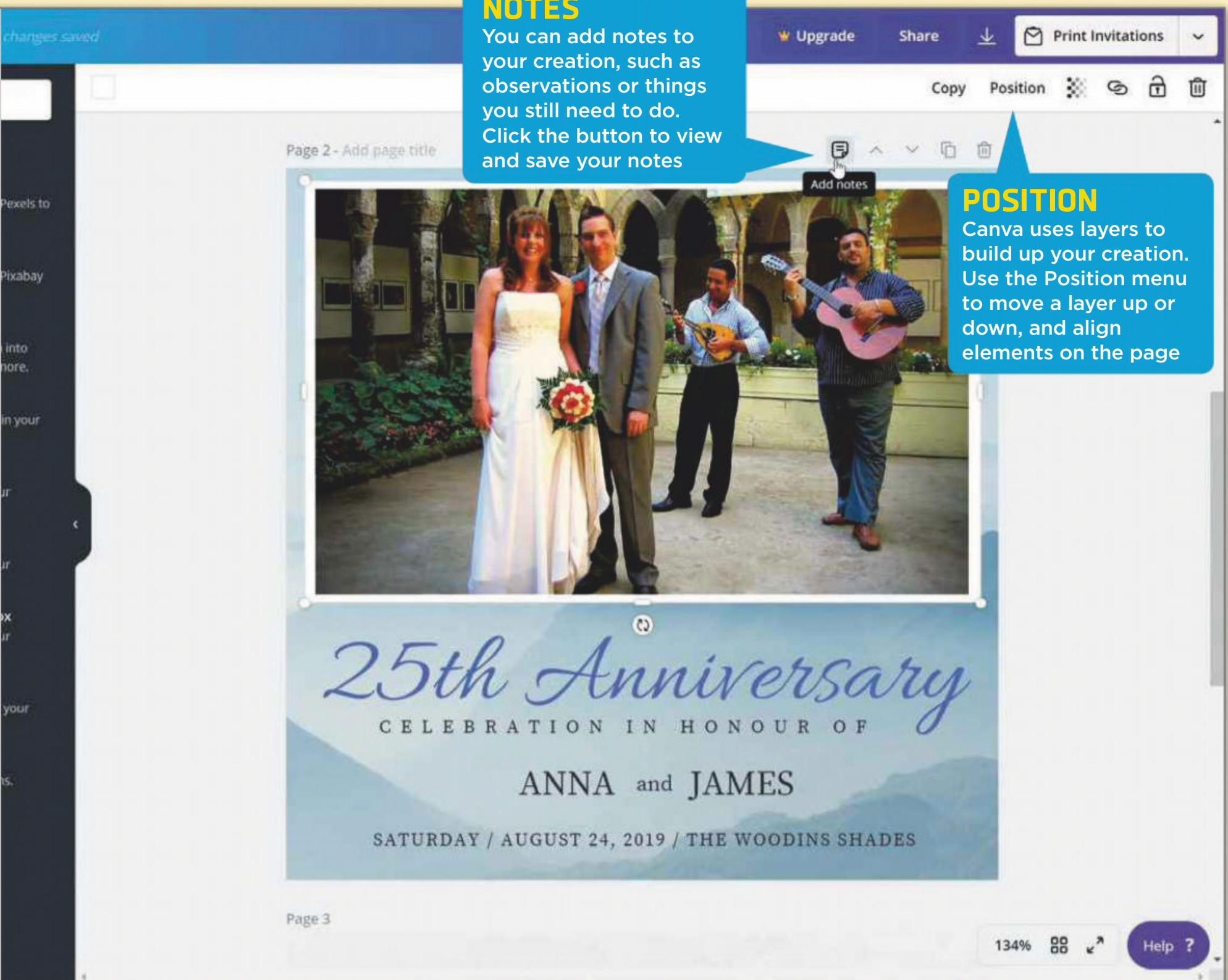


NOTES

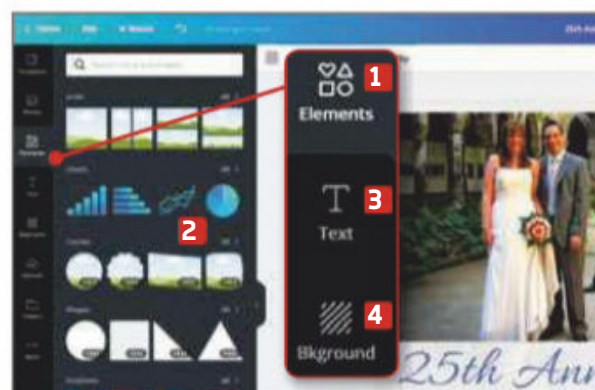
You can add notes to your creation, such as observations or things you still need to do. Click the button to view and save your notes

POSITION

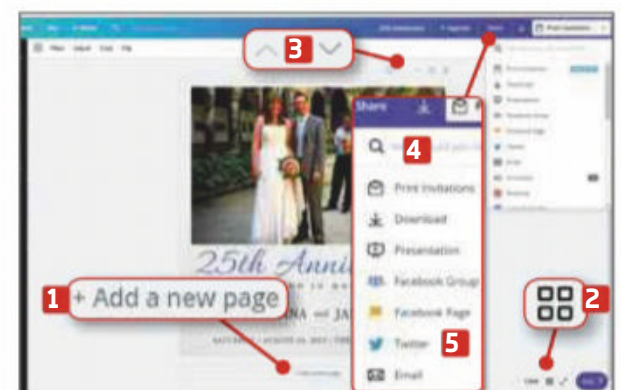
Canva uses layers to build up your creation. Use the Position menu to move a layer up or down, and align elements on the page



6 You can adjust the look of images by using the bar at the top. From here, you can apply a filter **1** and use the slider to adjust its intensity. **2** Adjust **3** lets you tweak the photo's brightness, contrast, saturation and more. You can also Crop and Flip it. **4**



7 The Elements section **1** lets you add items such as grids, charts, frames, shapes, gradients and lines. **2** You can also add text **3** to your invite and apply a background. **4** There's a selection of background images available or you can use a solid colour.

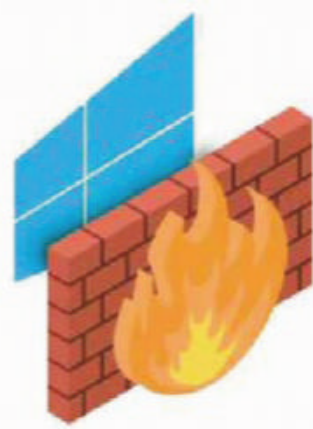


8 If you want multiple pages or a design on the back of the invite, click 'Add a new page'. **1** The Page Manager **2** lets you choose the page to work on, or you can use the buttons to move up and down. **3** When you've finished, you can Share, download or print your invite, **4** or publish it using various methods. **5**



Upgrade the Windows Firewall with Simplewall

Simplewall: www.henrypp.org/product/simplewall | ⌚ 20 mins | 🖥️ Vista, 7, 8, 10



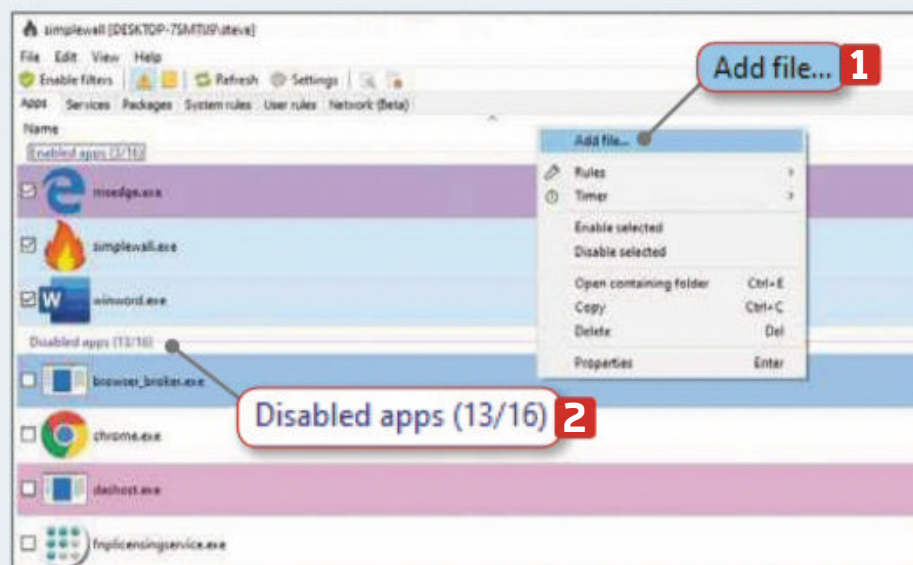
EXPERT TIP

Steve Clark says

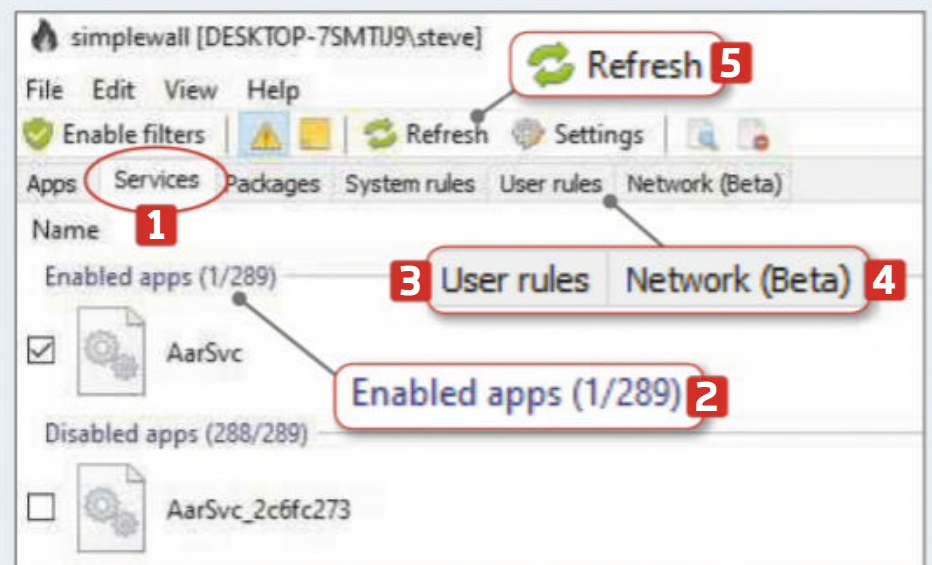
Simplewall uses the Windows Filtering Platform, which means your Simplewall configurations change existing Windows Firewall settings. To get it working effectively, you need to disable your current firewall. If you use the Windows default, this option is automatic when enabling the tool. However, you can also search the Windows 10 Start bar for `firewall` and switch off Windows Defender Firewall in the 'Firewall & network protection' settings.

Windows 10 comes loaded with its very own Windows Defender Firewall, but it's not the most intuitive security software and doesn't offer much control. Simplewall, on the other hand, provides a staggering array of settings, so you can decide precisely which apps and Windows services are granted network access, and stop potentially malicious tools using your internet connection behind your back.

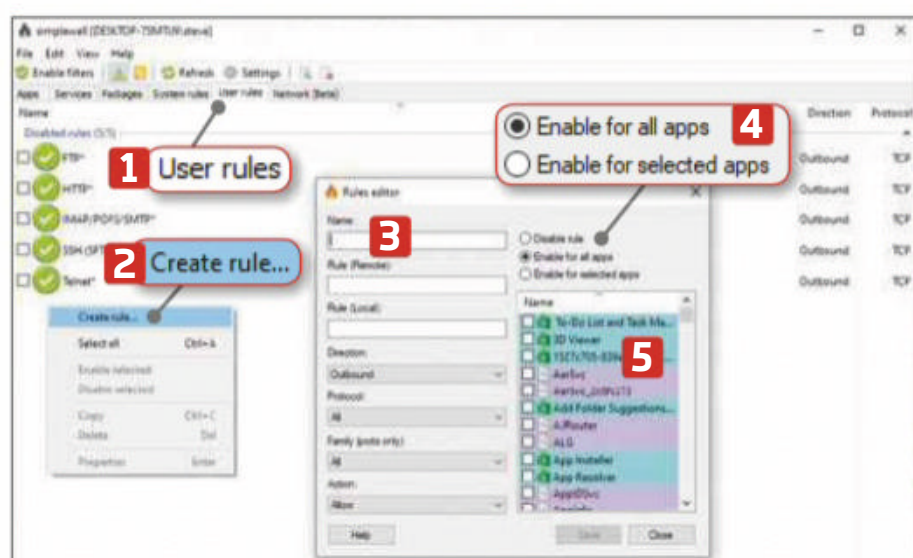
The software is a great way to block suspect apps from getting online (and sending who-knows-what to who-knows-where), but with the right setup, Simplewall can also stop Microsoft collecting data and spying on you, and even halts Windows updates in their tracks.



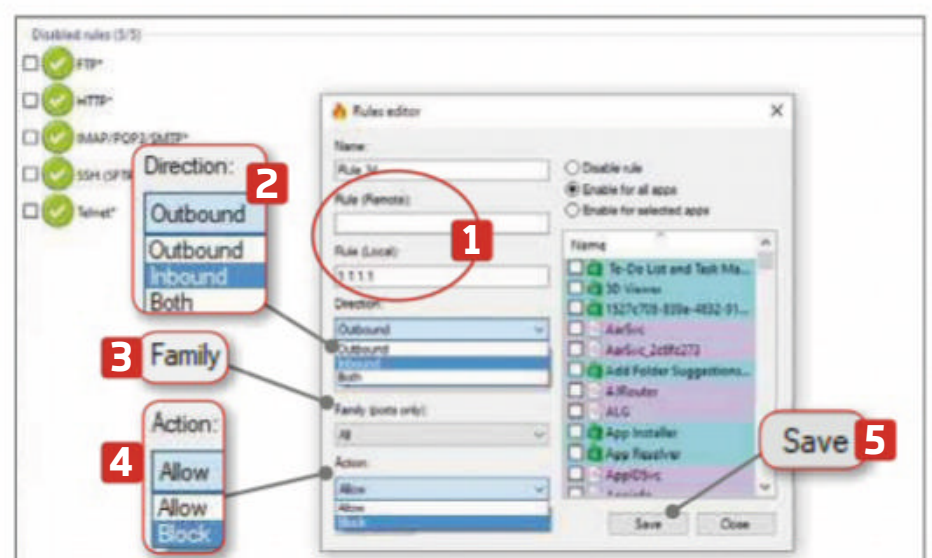
1 There are two ways to add a program to Simplewall: the first is to drag and drop the icon straight into the tool; the second is to right-click anywhere within the window and select 'Add file', **1** then navigate to your chosen app through File Explorer and press Open. By default, your program is added to 'Disabled apps'. **2**



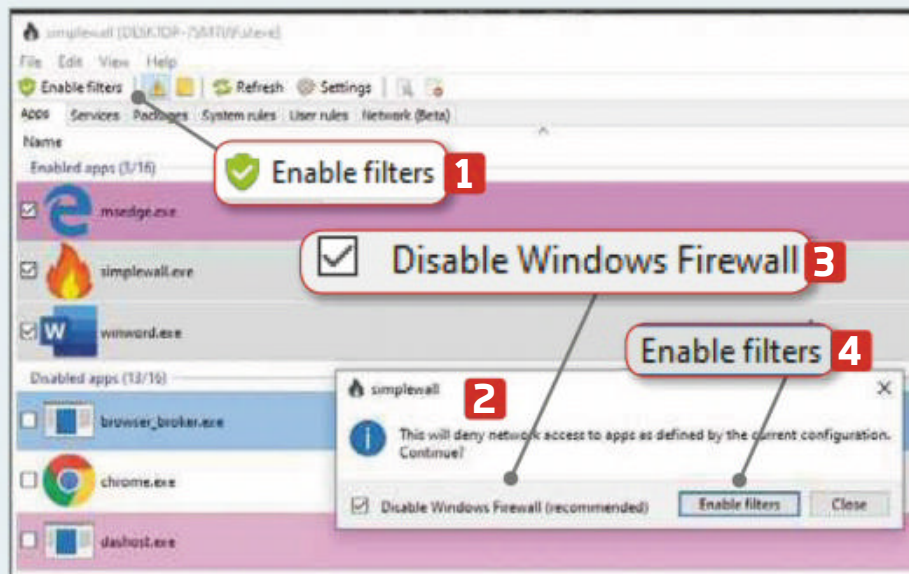
2 Click the Services tab. **1** Adding a tick next to a service moves it from 'Disabled apps' to 'Enabled apps', **2** but only make changes to Windows services if you know what you're doing. Tick the boxes to configure the UWP Packages and 'User rules'. **3** It's also worth monitoring open connections by visiting Network (Beta), **4** then pressing Refresh. **5**



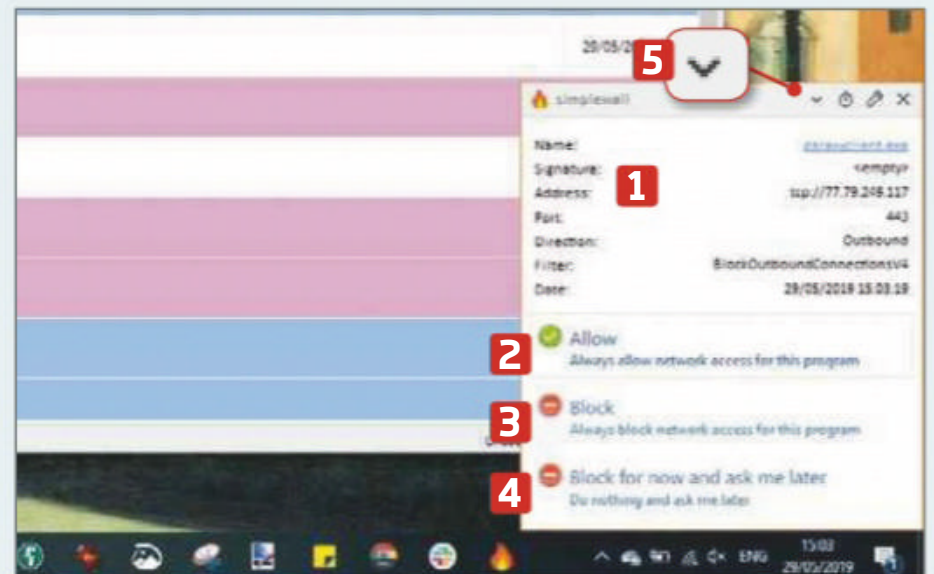
3 In the 'User rules' tab, **1** you can create or edit rules for app network requests. Right-click the pane, select 'Create rule' **2** and name it. **3** Next, tick the radio button to decide whether this rule applies to all or specific apps. **4** If it's the latter, select them in the table below. **5**



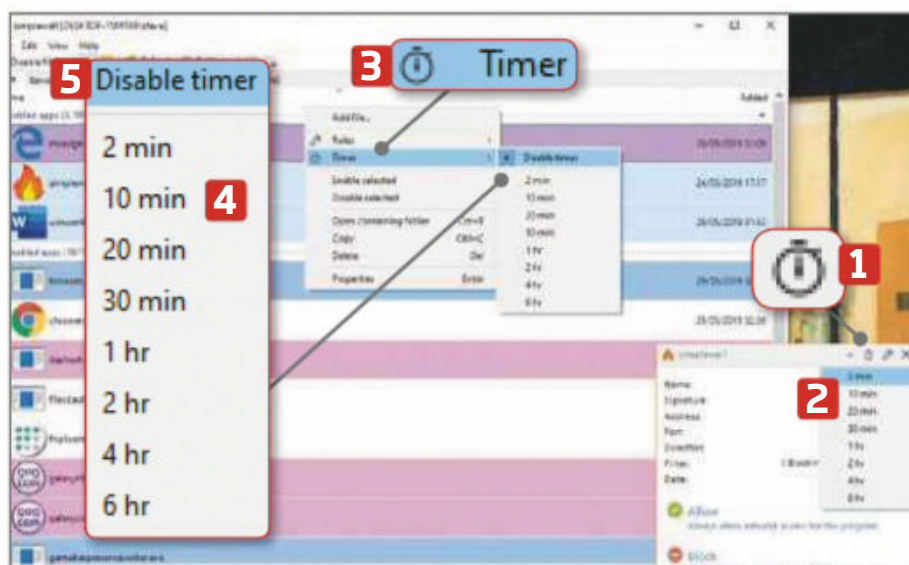
4 Depending on the connection, add the IP address to 'Rule (Remote)' or 'Rule (Local)'. **1** Direction **2** lets you choose whether the rule affects apps on your PC connecting to the network (Outbound) or vice versa (Inbound). Change Protocol and Family, **3** if required, and whether your rule blocks or allows an app's connection. **4** Click Save. **5**



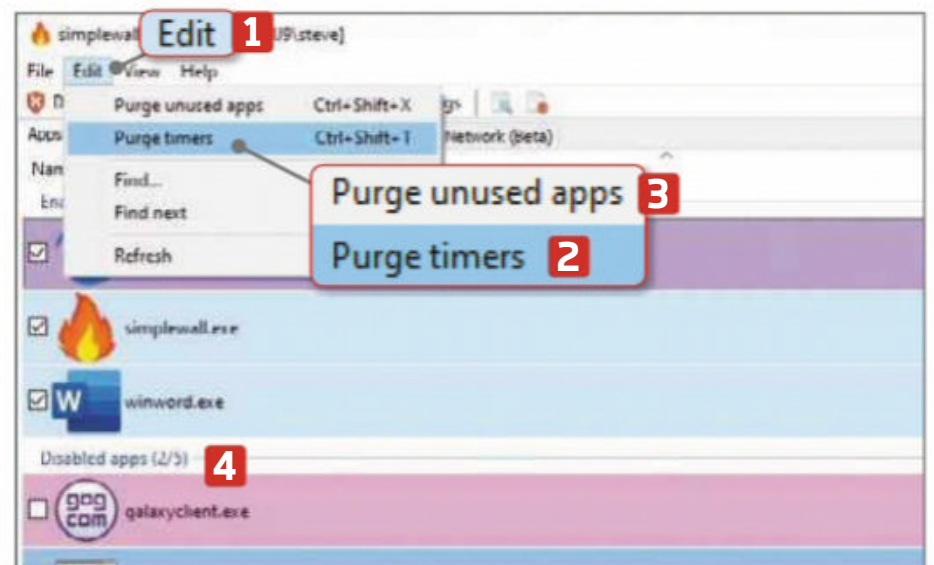
5 Having configured Simplewall, you still need to enable it. When you're all set, click 'Enable filters'. **1** A pop-up warns that invoking this will 'deny network access to apps', **2** which is exactly what you want. Before you confirm the current settings, make sure the box marked Disable Windows Firewall is ticked. **3** Click 'Enable filters'. **4**



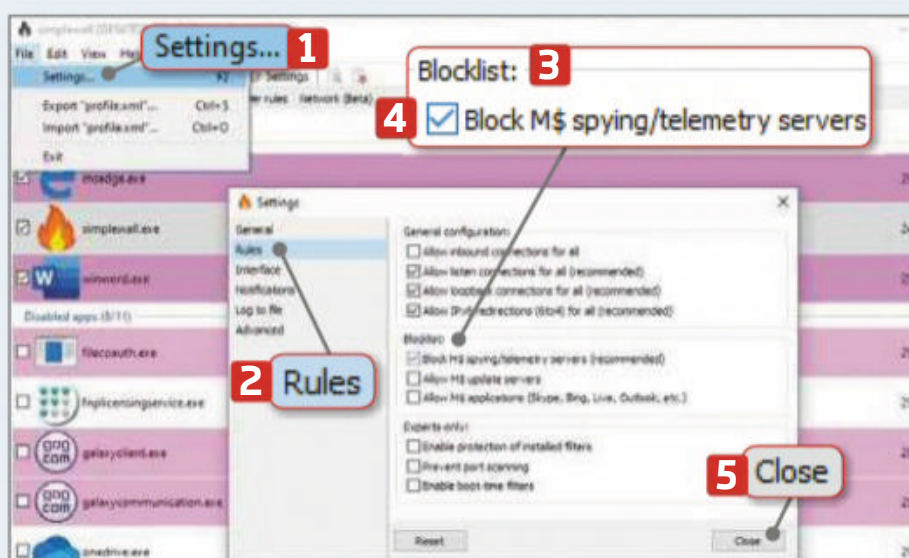
6 If any apps not currently enabled are running, a prompt appears above the notification area **1** showing important details about the app's attempted connection. You can permanently Allow **2** or Block **3** network access, or temporarily 'Block for now'. **4** If you received multiple notifications, click the down-arrow **5** to switch to the app and take action.



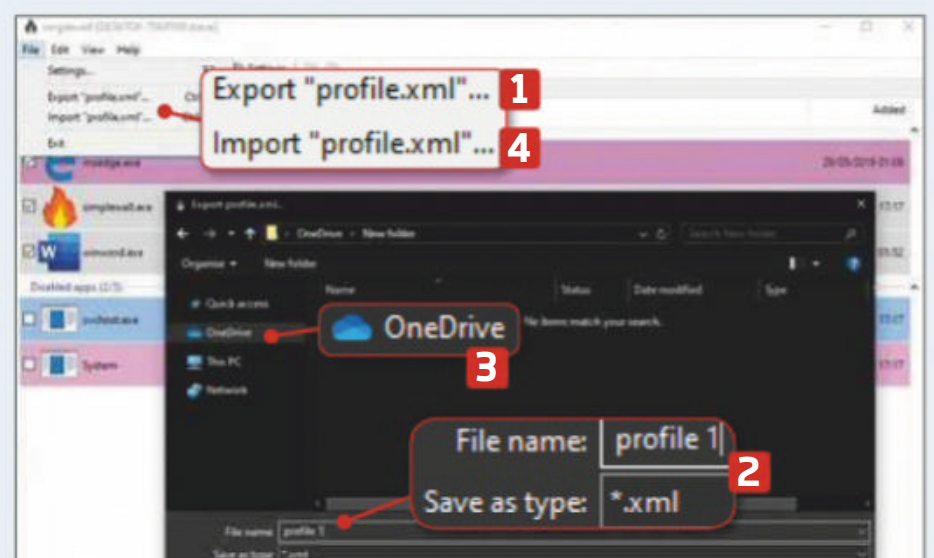
7 You can add a time limit to an enabled app, between two minutes and six hours. In the notification prompt, click the stopwatch **1** and choose how long network access is allowed; **2** or, in the main window, right-click any app, select Timer **3** and choose the time period. **4** You can also choose 'Disable timer' **5** to remove any time restrictions.



8 Simplewall provides a way to manage multiple time-limited apps. Click Edit **1** and select 'Purge timers' **2** (or Ctrl+Shift+T). This moves all time-enabled apps to 'Disabled apps'. **4** Clicking 'Purge unused apps' **3** sends any app that's not actively connecting to the internet to the 'Disabled apps' list.



9 Simplewall lets you block Windows telemetry data, which means it stops Microsoft spying on you. To ensure this is running, click File, Settings, **1** Rules. **2** Under Blocklist, **3** ensure 'Block M\$ spying/telemetry servers' **4** is ticked. You can also block Windows updates and Microsoft apps. When you've finished, click Close. **5**



10 To transfer your configuration to multiple computers, click File, Export. **1** Using File Explorer, create an XML 'profile' **2** and save it somewhere accessible, such as OneDrive. **3** Open Simplewall on another computer, press Settings, Import **4** and open this profile. Now, you won't need to define which apps have network access every time.



Stop Google and Alexa recording your voice



Google and Amazon don't publicise the fact but you can use their smart speakers without having your every voice command recorded – however, as you'd expect, it's not the default option. Here's how to stop these companies

snaffling all your personal info and storing it on their servers indefinitely. If you have multiple Google and Amazon accounts, you'll need to tweak these settings for each one.

Google Activity Controls: bit.ly/activity477 **Alexa:** alexa.amazon.co.uk | ⌚ 5 mins | Web 🤖 🍏

1 Your first port of call is Google's 'Activity controls' site at bit.ly/activity477. You can also find a link to this portal via the Google Home app (bit.ly/home477, bit.ly/homeios477). Press the Account icon, **1** then tap My Activity. **2** This takes you to the site on your phone.

1 Scroll down to Voice & Audio Activity **1** and use the toggle **2** to turn it off. Google warns that doing so 'may limit or disable more personalised experiences across Google Services' but this generally won't affect how your smart speaker operates. Click Pause, **3** then click Manage Activity. **4**

2 Scroll down to Voice & Audio Activity **1** and use the toggle **2** to turn it off. Google warns that doing so 'may limit or disable more personalised experiences across Google Services' but this generally won't affect how your smart speaker operates. Click Pause, **3** then click Manage Activity. **4**

3 You can delete each day's recordings by tapping the bin icon; **1** or individual recordings by clicking the three dots beside each recorded command and selecting Delete. **2** For bulk deletion, choose 'Delete activity by'. **3** In the 'Delete by date' drop-down, **4** choose 'All time'. Click Delete **5** to confirm.

4 Amazon's Alexa is less opaque. Open the Alexa app (bit.ly/alexadroid477, bit.ly/alexiios477) or head to alexa.amazon.co.uk. If you're using the app, press the three-line icon in the top-left corner. Open Settings **1** and under Alexa Account, **2** click Alexa Privacy. **3** This opens a new window.

4 Amazon's Alexa is less opaque. Open the Alexa app (bit.ly/alexadroid477, bit.ly/alexiios477) or head to alexa.amazon.co.uk. If you're using the app, press the three-line icon in the top-left corner. Open Settings **1** and under Alexa Account, **2** click Alexa Privacy. **3** This opens a new window.

5 To stop Amazon storing your voice recordings, visit Manage How Your Data Improves Alexa. **1** Once again, you're warned that toying with this setting means Alexa 'may not work well for you'. Switch off Help Develop New Features, **2** then confirm the setting by pressing Turn Off. **3**

6 Now click Review Voice History in the sidebar. **1** This is where your every command is listed. Change the Date Range drop-down menu to display All History, **2** then press 'Delete All Recordings for All History'. **3** In the pop-up, confirm your selection by clicking Yes. **4**

6 Now click Review Voice History in the sidebar. **1** This is where your every command is listed. Change the Date Range drop-down menu to display All History, **2** then press 'Delete All Recordings for All History'. **3** In the pop-up, confirm your selection by clicking Yes. **4**

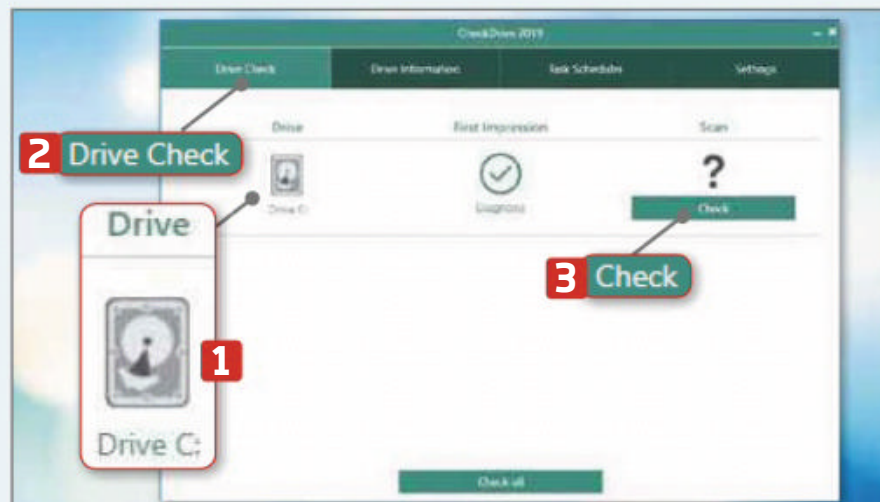


Give your hard drive a health check

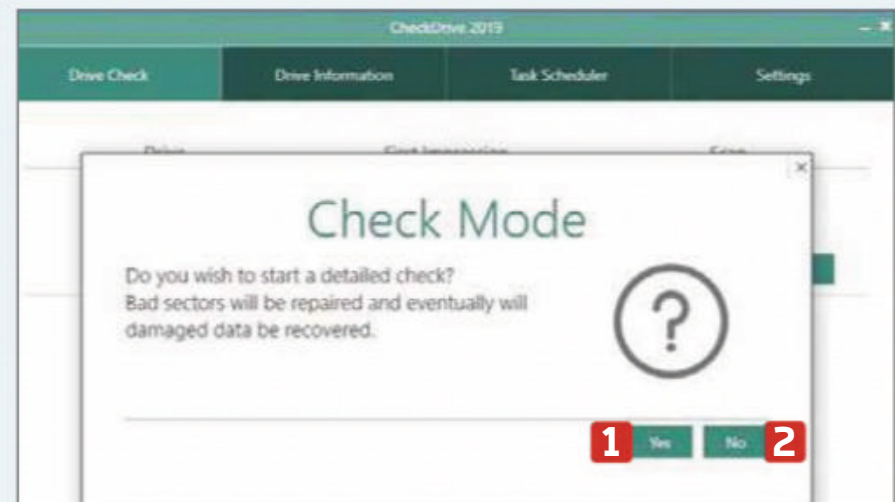
Hard drives are prone to failure, especially as they get older. While Windows does a good job of isolating and quarantining hard-drive problems, the drives themselves are often packed with hidden diagnostic

information that can provide a lot more useful detail. CheckDrive helps you access your drive's hidden health data and warns you if things are likely to go wrong.

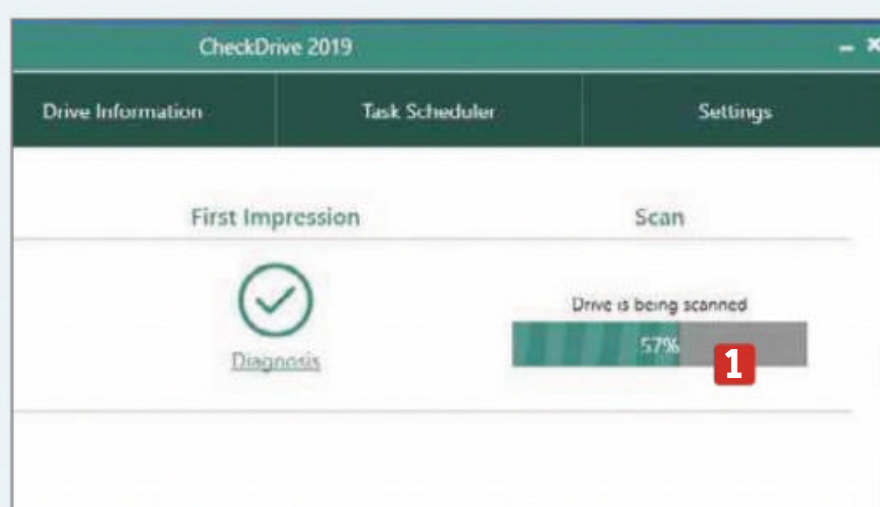
CheckDrive: bit.ly/ascd477 | **20 mins** | **Windows 7, 8, 10**



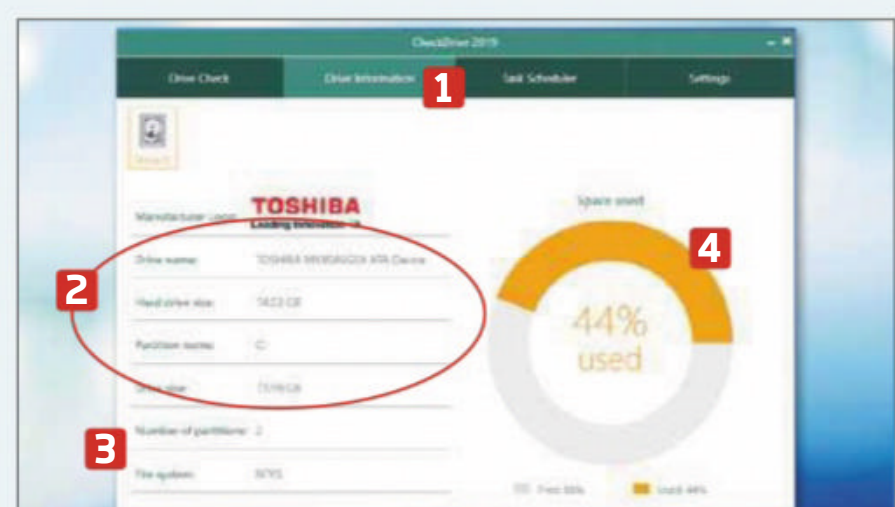
1 Download and install the free version of the software, then register your name and email address to activate it. When you get access, you'll see your hard drives listed **1** on the Drive Check tab. **2** To carry out your first drive scan, click the Check button. **3**



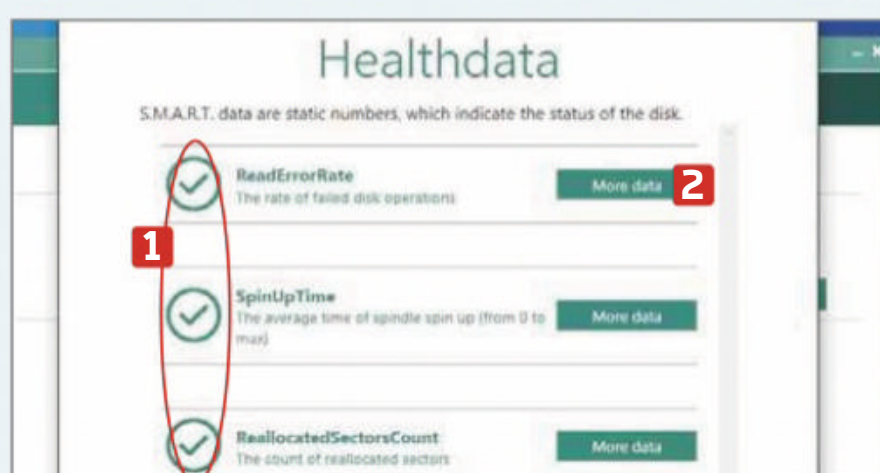
2 You're asked if you want to do a detailed drive check. If you select Yes, **1** your PC will need to restart to perform a low-level scan of the drive before Windows boots. This is a good idea if you're worried that your hard drive is poorly. Otherwise, click No **2** for a standard scan.



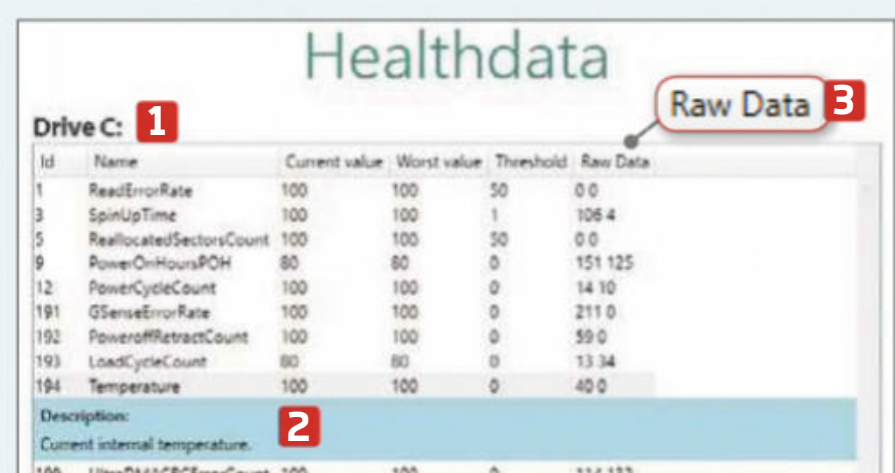
3 The standard scan should only take a few minutes, **1** but the detailed scan may take longer. The length of time it takes relates to the health of your drive – if it's in a bad way, you might find the scan takes a long time, and could give you an indication of problems to come.



4 After the scan, CheckDrive displays info about your hard drive. The Drive Information tab **1** reveals basic information such as the make, model and size, **2** how it is formatted and whether it has any partitions. **3** There's also a visual guide to the amount of space being used. **4**



5 Under First Impression, click the Diagnosis link. This opens the Healthdata, which shows you specific areas where there may be problems. You can see from the ticks **1** that our drive has a clean bill of health in the three key areas. To drill down further, click 'More data'. **2**



6 You'll see a detailed breakdown of the drive's health. **1** This standard SMART data is accessible from most modern hard drives. Hover your mouse over a row for more info **2** and use the Raw Data for exact values. **3** If you don't understand what the data means, look it up online.

Weekend Project

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



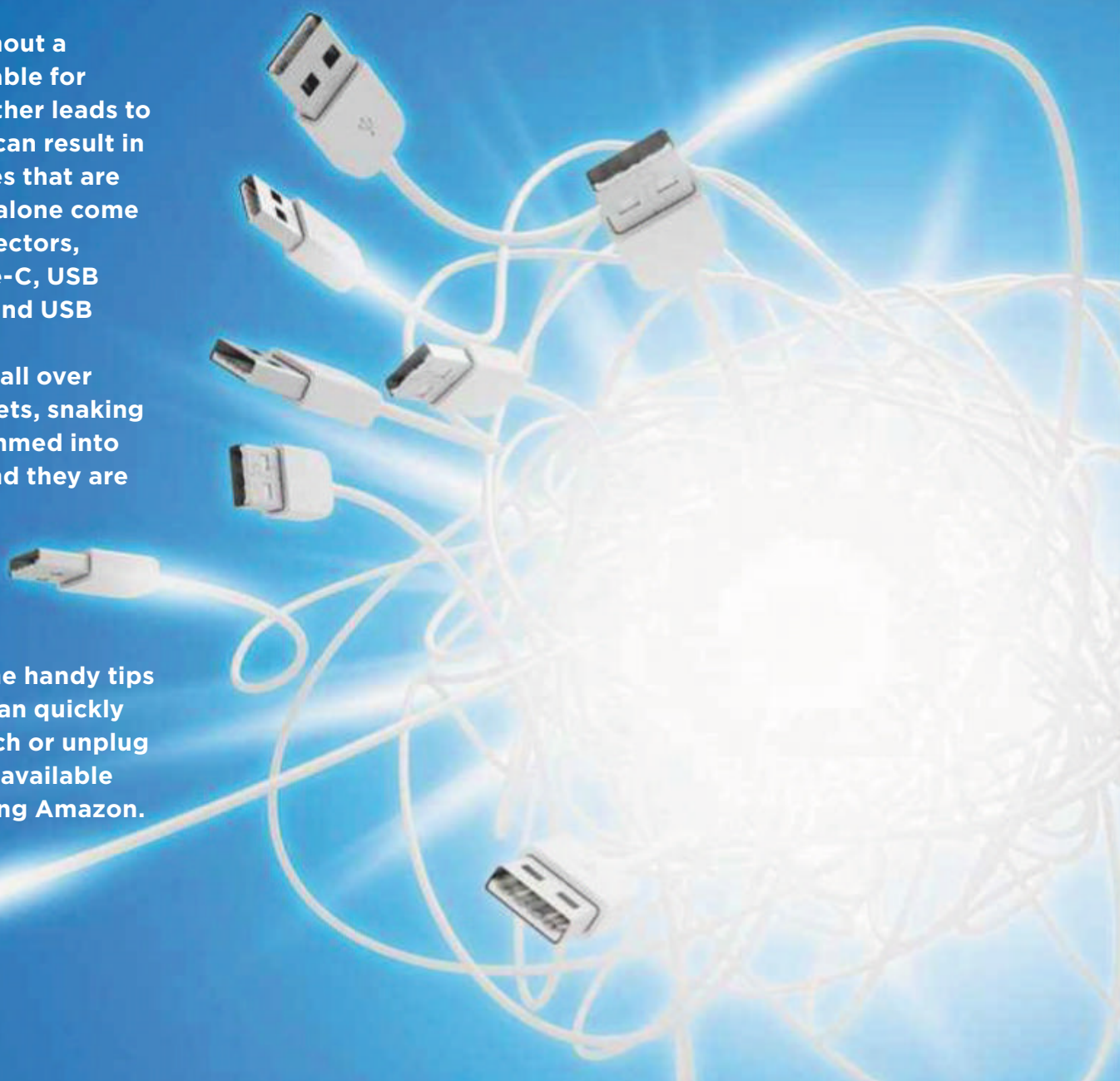
How to...

Organise your cables and keep them tidy

Wayne Williams shows you how to turn the tangled mess behind your desk into a neatly organised and easy-to-access bank of cables

Every electrical device without a built-in battery needs a cable for power and many need further leads to connect to other devices. This can result in an overwhelming array of cables that are hard to tell apart – USB cables alone come with a dizzying variety of connectors, including Type-A, Type-B, Type-C, USB Mini A or B, USB Micro A or B, and USB Micro B Super speed.

Chances are you have cables all over your home – plugged into sockets, snaking around and behind devices, jammed into drawers and storage boxes – and they are most likely tangled up and intertwined, forming an ugly mess and making it impossible to single out the one you need. In this issue's Weekend Project, we offer some handy tips on cable management so you can quickly find the one you want and attach or unplug it with ease. Everything here is available from a range of sources including Amazon.

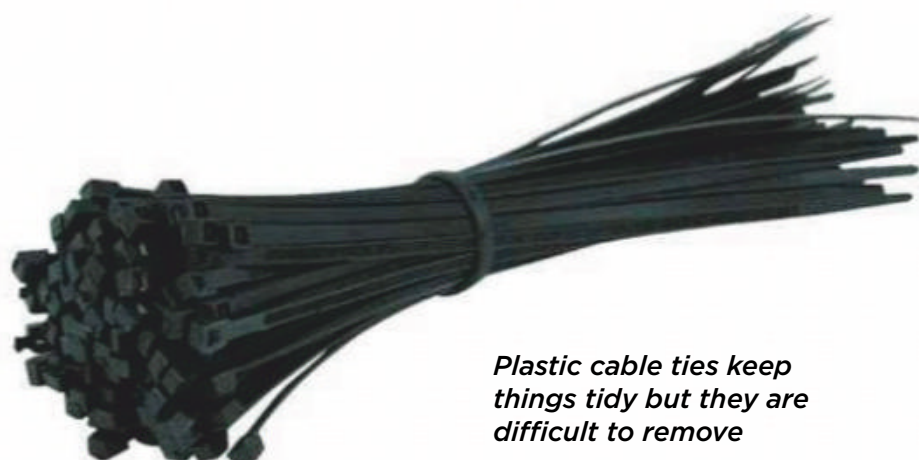


Use cable ties

One of the simplest ways to keep your wires tidy is by using plastic cable ties. They're cheap and it takes seconds to secure a bunch of cables. The downside is that if you need to replace or remove a cable, or reorganise the bunch, you have to cut through the ties. This can be fiddly and could even lead to you accidentally slicing through the cables.

A better option is to use Velcro ties

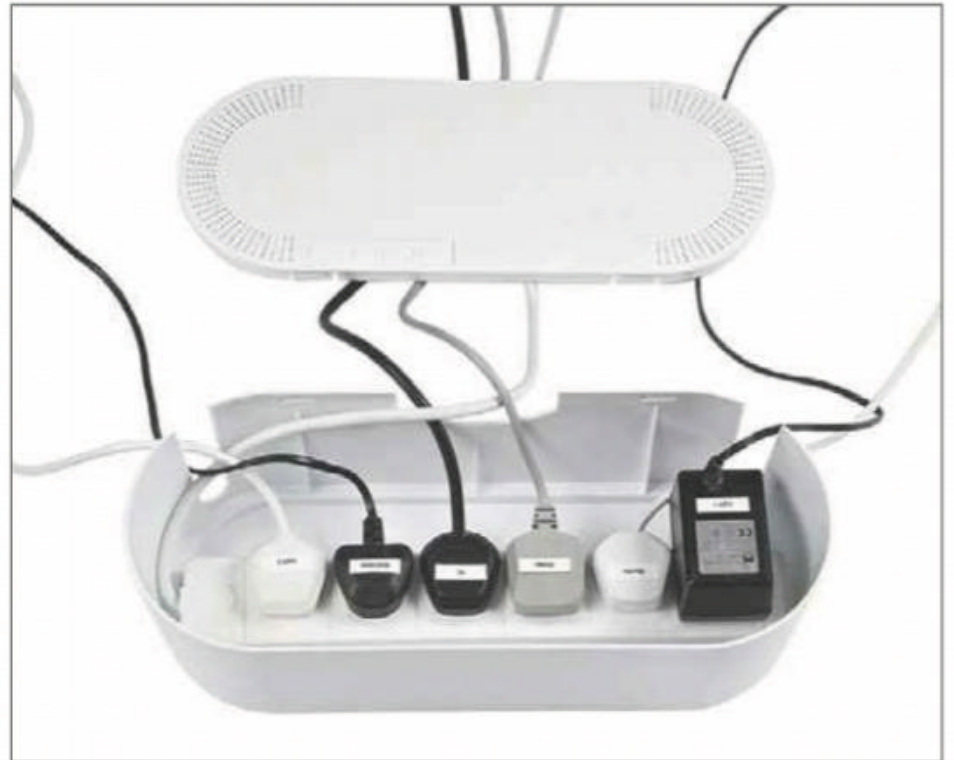
(also referred to as “hook and loop”). These are wider than cable ties, so they work best on thicker wires such as those found behind a TV or desktop PC. While they can hold cables together almost as securely as plastic ties, they can be undone quickly, and with one



Plastic cable ties keep things tidy but they are difficult to remove



Spiral sleeves let you poke cables in and out at any point



As well as looking more professional, a cable box like this one from D-Line is more sturdy and safe than an exposed power strip

hand. Another bonus is they can be reused over and over again. A pack of 100 or so will only cost you around £5 on Amazon and can be used for lots of different tasks. For example, you can get a set of Velcro cable ties in different colours and use them to keep a drawerful of cables individually looped, tied and sorted by colour – thus avoiding the nightmare of power leads, stereo jack-to-jacks, USB, Ethernet and HDMI cables, and everything else ending up in one massive impenetrable knot.

Use cable sleeves

A cable sleeve is designed to wrap around a group of cables, acting as a containing pipe from source to destination and stopping individual cables from coming loose and getting tangled up along the way. The sleeves are usually made of neoprene (a synthetic rubber material which is both strong and flexible), and come with a zipper or a Velcro strip down the length so you can open them up, put the cables inside, and then seal them back up. They come in different lengths (ones with zips can't be cut down but Velcro

ones can), and if you have a cable that needs to exit (or join) partway along, you may be able to cut a hole in a sleeve to feed a wire through.

You can also buy spiral wrap sleeves, which look a bit like the spine on a spiral notebook. Simply insert your cables and then wrap the coil around them. This doesn't look as pleasingly tidy as a neoprene sleeve because you can still see the wires inside, but it's much easier to poke cables in and out along the path of the sleeve. They are ideal for shorter wires, and you can cut longer sleeves down to size with scissors.

If you shop around, you can find the type of cable sleeve you want in a range of colours, which will help them fit in with your décor.

Raceway channels and trunking

Wi-Fi and powerline networking have thankfully reduced the need for trailing Ethernet cables around your home, but if you need to have cables running up or along the walls, then raceway channels are an excellent solution. These hard plastic enclosures are designed to contain and conceal cables and while

they are still visible, they look a lot better and blend in more than a collection of trailing black wires.

If you need to run cables along the floor, and can't simply place them under carpets (perhaps because you have solid wooden flooring), then trunking – of the type found in offices and at events – might be the answer. These rubber bumpers sit on the floor with the cables running through them. Trunking isn't a particularly attractive solution, but it does stop power cables and the like from becoming a trip hazard. You can also buy skirting boards which have a channel on the back that can hold wires, so they stay hidden out of the way.

Cable box organiser

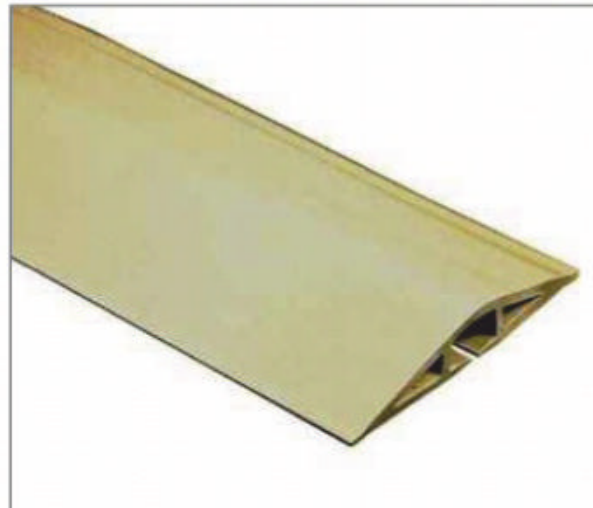
If you have a lot of power cables plugged into a power strip or surge protector, it's likely to be a bit of an eyesore, with the various wires running off in different directions. It's also a potential danger for curious toddlers and pets who like to chew. A cable box organiser fits under or over the power strip, so everything is much safer and looks tidier – the wires come out of either end. The boxes should also have enough space inside to hold power adapters, and any unused lengths of cable.

Desktop cable clips

If your desk is anything like ours, you probably have a number of USB cables snaking across it. You can keep these organised and prevent them from getting tangled up by using a simple cable clip. This sticks to the desk or a wall with the cables secured in the slots. Cable clips are available in different sizes, with gaps for between two and five cables. They can be bought in sets, so you can mix and match them as required.



Raceway channels hide wires that run up walls







Trunking stops you falling over cables on the floor



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3		Sky: Broadband Essential	£20.00 (£31 after 18 months)	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited*	£240.00
4		Virgin Media: Player Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£33.00 (£54 after 12 months)	12 months	54Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£396.00

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Cable clips can help keep your desktop tidy

Cable identifiers

If you have a lot of similar looking cables you use in close proximity (USB or HDMI cables, for example), telling them apart can be tricky. Colour-coded cable identifiers can be clipped to a visible part of the wire, so you can see at a glance where a cable originates from.

Cheap and free options

You can bind your cables together for free by wrapping sticky tape around them. Getting the cables free again isn't always so easy, however. Another option is to use twisty bag ties (plastic coated wires). You can buy large numbers of these for a reasonable price, but the chances are you'll have some lying around from previous electrical item purchases. You can also use a bulldog clip, if you have one.

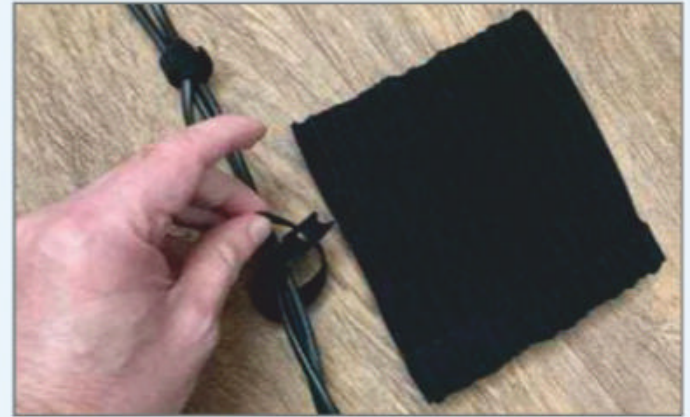
If you want to keep wires under a desk and off the floor, you could consider using an old paper towel roll attached to the underside. If necessary, you can slice it open, place the cables inside, and then tape it back up. A similar, more robust solution is to use the cardboard tube found inside kitchen foil. This is obviously nowhere near as flexible a solution as a neoprene sleeve, but it might be all you need. ■

Cable identifiers make it easy to mark a cable to see where it belongs

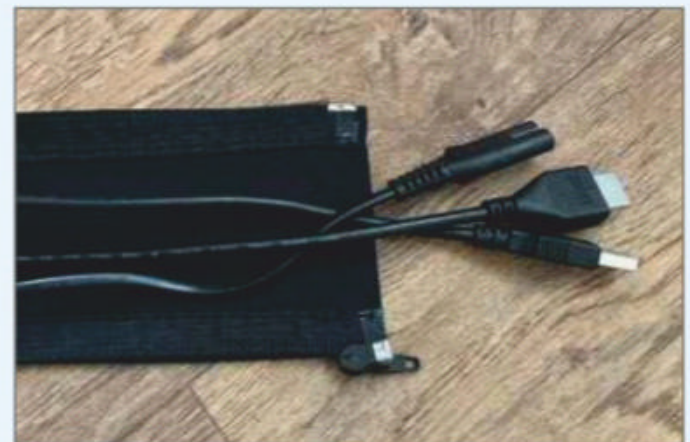


MINI WORKSHOP

Keep your cables organised with these solutions



1 Velcro ties are the simplest and cheapest way to bundle groups of wires together. They often come packaged in a block – just poke your fingernail in the gap and pull one free. With the shiny side up, place your cables in the centre, poke the tongue through the hole and pull it tight.



2 Cable sleeves are a good solution for a thick bunch of wires around the back of a television or desktop computer. There are different types available, but the example shown above is typical, made of thick neoprene material with a zip fastener on either side. Place your wires down the length of the sleeve.



3 An extra convenience is that you can wrap the sleeve around your wires without having to unplug them first. Fold the sleeve in half lengthwise, then connect the fastener and zip it up. Depending on how many wires you have jammed in there, it might be a bit snug, but the material is stretchy enough to accommodate 8-10 comfortably.

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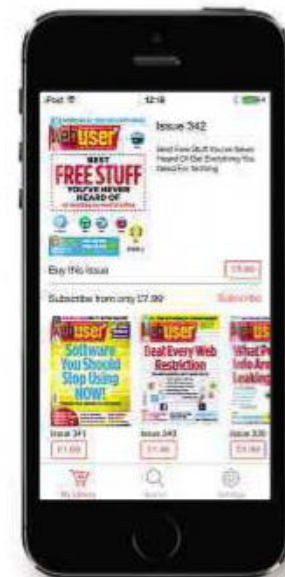
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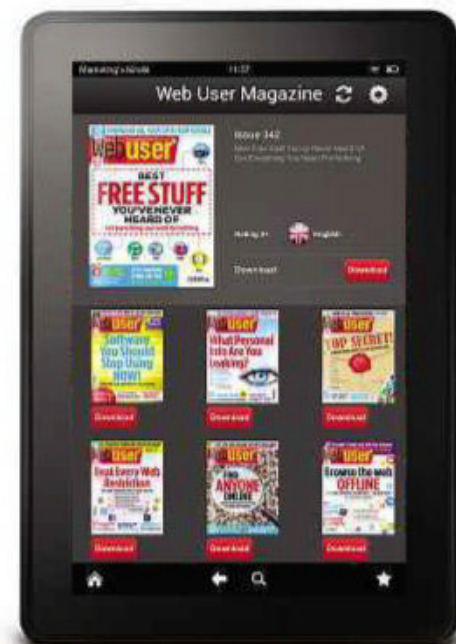
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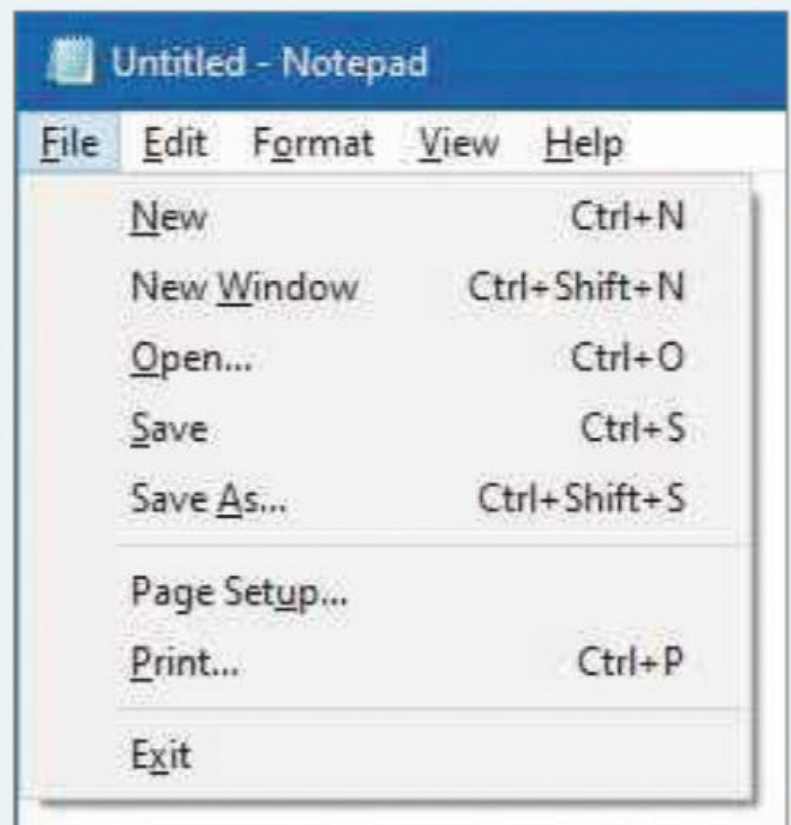
Web User Masterclass

Revolutionise the way you use Windows with keyboard shortcuts

Access menu options using shortcuts

Programs that use menus let you access their options using keyboard shortcuts, so you can navigate around them even if you don't have a mouse. The relevant keyboard shortcut is indicated by an underlined character – if you can't see any, switch them on from the Windows 10 Settings (Windows+i) by clicking 'Ease of Access', Keyboard, then scrolling down on the right and turning on 'Underline access keys when available'.

To test how this works, open Notepad. As you can see in the screen grab on the right, the 'F' in the File menu is underlined, which means Alt+F opens it. Each option on the menu has an underlined letter, such as 'S' in Save, so once the menu is open, you simply press the letter. Instead of using the mouse to click open the File menu and select Save, just press Alt+F, then S. This works in lots of programs, not just Microsoft ones.



Underlined letters on menus indicate keyboard shortcuts, and direct shortcuts are often listed, too

Learn keyboard shortcuts

Menu shortcuts let you quickly open menus but there are faster ways to access their features. The next time you use a menu in a program, look to see if it displays a direct shortcut to its right. In Notepad for example, as described above, you need two lots of key presses – Alt+F then S – to save a file. But if you use the direct shortcut – Ctrl+S – you achieve the same result with one.

The next option down – Save As – lets you press Ctrl+Shift+S to save the file in a different file format or give it a new name. It's also useful if you want to preserve the original draft of a document you are working on and save any changes you've made separately.

Use text shortcuts

Some functions are common to all

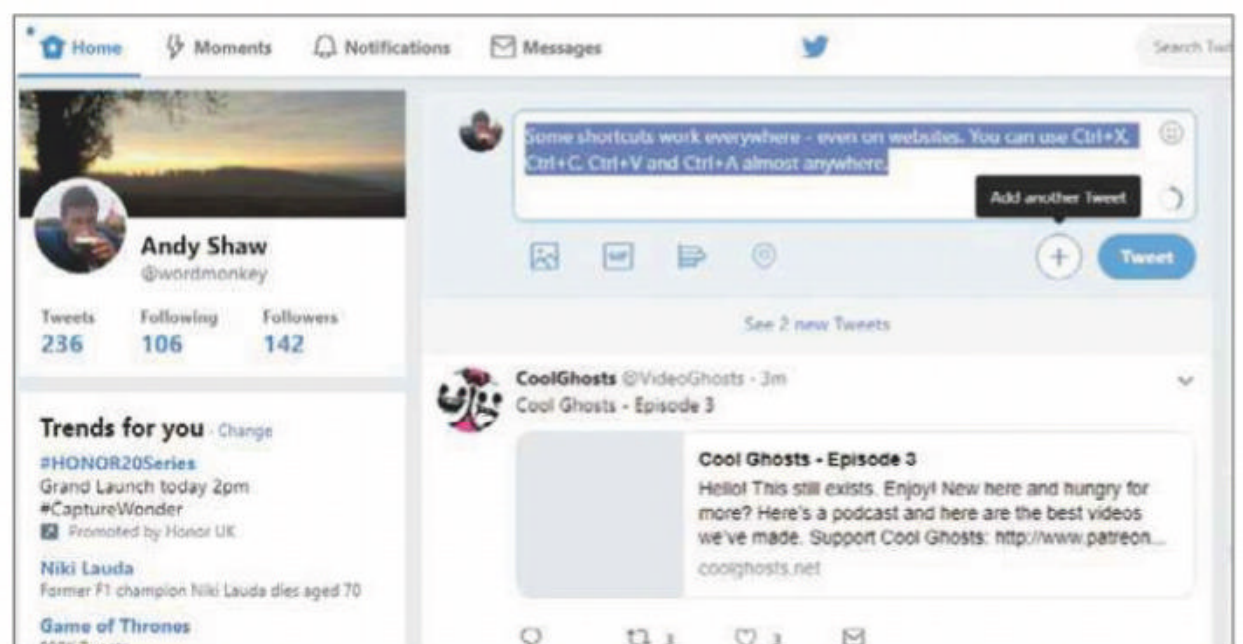
If you see words that look like they've been typed in a typewriter, follow the instructions and type them exactly as they appear, paying close attention to spaces and punctuation.

programs and use the same keyboard shortcuts. Ctrl+S can be used in most programs with a Save option, and Ctrl+P is often used to print, while pressing Ctrl+C copies selected text and Ctrl+X cuts it. You can then move the text cursor and press Ctrl+V to paste it.

If you don't want to use a mouse to select text, press Shift+right arrow or Shift+left arrow to select text to the right or left of the cursor position. Shift+up and Shift+down selects whole

lines of text above or below the cursor. Ctrl+A selects everything. Once your text is selected, pressing the left or right arrow keys moves the cursor to the start or end of the selection.

Ctrl+B, Ctrl+I and Ctrl+U are common shortcuts to switch to bold, italic and underline. Press the key combination again to switch it off. You can use these formatting shortcuts to save going through menus in Word, WordPress, emails



Some keyboard shortcuts can be used in almost any program – even forms and boxes on websites



and more. An extra shortcut in Gmail is Ctrl+Enter, which sends the email.

Shortcuts can be used in unexpected places, such as websites, when you're typing forms and comments on web pages or writing social-media posts; and can sometimes be used in places where there are no formatting buttons available to click with a mouse. When typing a Facebook post, for example, the text can be edited with the Cut, Copy and Paste keyboard shortcuts.

Start and switch to taskbar programs

Does it matter how you order the icons on your taskbar? Yes, because pressing Windows+1 switches to the first program, Windows+2 the second, Windows+3 the third and so on.

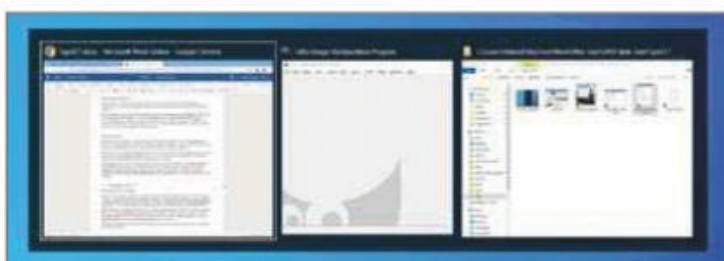
Run a program – such as Chrome, for example – and you'll see an icon appear on the taskbar. Right-click this and select 'Pin to taskbar'. You can now click and drag your taskbar icons left or right to rearrange them and place your most used items first. There's no need to reach for the mouse to launch them, just press Alt+n, where 'n' is the number of the icon. Ignore Cortana and Task View icons, Edge is usually number one (unless you've already removed it).

Toggle between programs

If you have two, three or more programs running simultaneously, press Alt+Tab to switch to the last program used. Hold down Alt and repeatedly press Tab to cycle through all running programs, then let go when the one you want is selected.

This shortcut can also be used to close programs. If several programs are running, hold down Alt and press Tab until the program you want is highlighted, then press Delete (while still holding down Alt) to close it.

Windows+Tab works in a similar way and it can be used with multiple desktops, too. Press Windows+Tab to display your desktops at the top of the screen, allowing you to create new virtual desktops (click the plus icon) and select them. Don't go through this screen to switch desktops, though – instead, press Ctrl+Windows+left/right arrow keys to switch to the previous or next desktop.



Alt+Tab switches between programs; Ctrl+Alt+Tab makes the thumbnails stick

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More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Move and resize windows

Sometimes a bug can position a window with the title bar off the top of the screen. This means it can't be clicked and dragged with the mouse, but don't panic – you can use the keyboard to move it back on the screen. Press Alt+Spacebar, then 'M' and use the cursor keys to move the window around the screen.

Open Settings in Windows 10 and go to System, Multi-tasking and turn on 'Snap windows'. You can now combine the Windows key with the directional arrows to move and resize program windows on the desktop: Windows+right arrow snaps to the right side of the screen; Windows+left arrow snaps to the left; Windows+up arrow maximises the window; and Windows+down arrow minimises it.

Press Alt+F4 to close a program, which is easier than using the mouse.

Capture your screen

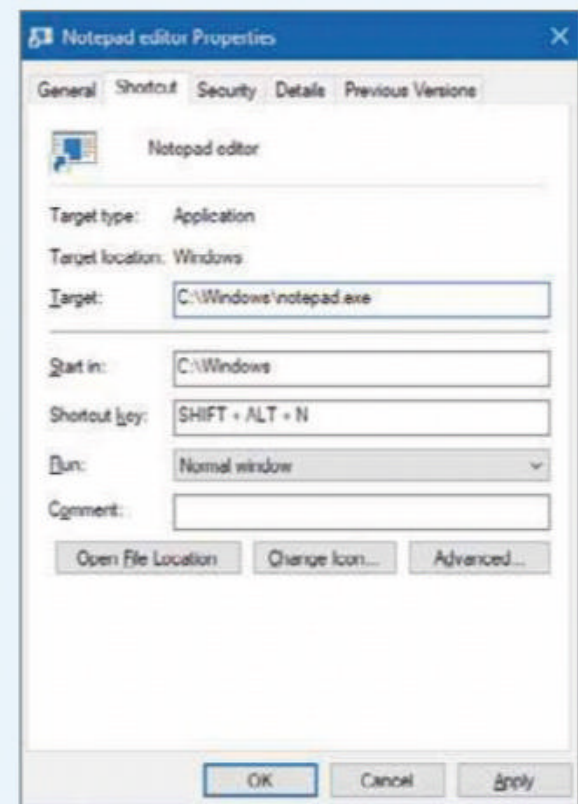
The Print Screen key, often abbreviated to Print Scrn or PrtScn, saves a screenshot to the clipboard. Windows+PrtScn saves it to Pictures\Screenshots. You can change this in Windows 10 by opening Settings and going to 'Ease of Access', then Keyboard. Scroll down to the 'Print Screen shortcut' section and switch to opening the screen-snipping tool instead of saving the screen.

Press Windows+Shift+S to capture whole screens or to snip and save part of the screen. A toolbar appears at the top of the screen with screen-saving options. Let the mouse hover over each icon to see a description.

Use shortcuts to start programs

Instead of hunting for programs in the Start menu or clicking around the icons on the taskbar, you could create your own keyboard shortcuts to run them. Right-click the desktop and select New, Shortcut, then click the Browse button and find a program on your hard drive, such as 'notepad.exe' in the C:\Windows folder. Click Next and name it Notepad (or whatever it's called).

Right-click your newly created desktop shortcut and select Properties, then open the Shortcut tab, click the 'Shortcut key' box and assign it a key combination, such as



Create a desktop shortcut, then edit the properties and add a keyboard shortcut

Shift+Alt+N. You'll have to use trial and error to find a key combination that isn't already assigned elsewhere. Click OK and you can now use this keyboard shortcut to launch the program, no matter what you're doing or which program you're using.

Control programs using shortcuts

There are some useful commands that can be used in most programs, such as pressing the Tab key to move to the next option. In programs and web pages, when filling in a form such as a login or registration, pressing Tab jumps to the next box, while Shift+Tab jumps to the previous box.

This works with other controls and not just text boxes. Open the Settings app in Windows 10 and pick a section. Press Tab and the currently selected item, indicated by a box around it, jumps to the next item. Open Explorer, click Home to open the home ribbon toolbar and tap Tab. Each toolbar item highlights in turn. Pressing Enter is like clicking the selected item.

Click a web page and you can often press Tab and Shift+Tab to jump from link to link. Pressing Enter is like clicking a link.

You can open the run box to start a program – it's most often used with system tools. Press Windows+R to open the run box, then type regedit, cmd, services.msc, msconfig or diskmgmt.msc for example.

Ask the Expert

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



GENERAL PC

Stop Cortana bothering you

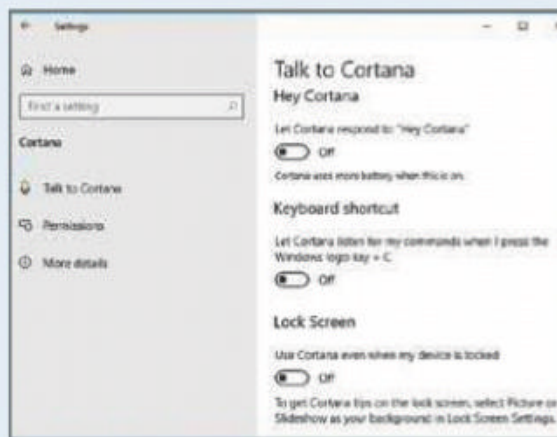
Q I have succeeded in switching off Cortana's meddling, but Windows still inflicts its annoying voice on me. How do I switch it off?

Alan Beasley, via email

A There is often a sound on/off button situated on the keyboard that you can use to mute all sound.

For a more targeted solution, open the Settings app (Windows+i), click Cortana and select 'Talk to Cortana' on the left. Turn off all the options on the right, then right-click an empty part of the taskbar and clear the tick against 'Show Cortana button'. Now open the Edge browser and click the three-dot icon in the top-right corner. From the menu, select Settings, Advanced, then scroll down to the bottom and turn off the switch under Cortana.

Another method is to disable Cortana in the Registry. Press Windows+R, type **regedit** and go to: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\



Use the switches in Windows 10's Settings app to silence Cortana

Windows

If there's a 'Windows Search' key below, select it; otherwise select Edit, New, Key and create it by selecting 'Windows Search' and clicking Edit, New, 'DWORD (32-bit) Value'. Name it 'Allow Cortana', then double-click it and set the value to 0. Now go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Search

Look for a value called BigSearchEnabled. If it doesn't exist, select the key and click Edit, New, 'DWORD (32-bit) Value' to create it. Double-click this newly created key and set the value to 0. Now quit the Registry Editor and restart Windows.

private produces error 403. AnyDesk has a membership section where you can create an account and log in and it's possible the URL you tried was for members only. You don't need a members' account to use AnyDesk, just go to the homepage and download it.

AnyDesk is very easy to use. You can download the program and run it – there's no need to install it. The top-left corner shows This Desk and a nine-digit number, which is your computer's address. Run AnyDesk on a second computer – or even your phone – to see the address displayed under This Desk. There is also a Remote Desk box. Enter the address of the other computer or device to access it and see the desktop.

On your computer, click the top-right menu button and select Settings, Security. Tick 'Enable unattended access', so you can remotely access the computer and set a password. Without this setting, you would need to be at your computer to click the button to allow access.

Select Display and, in the Visual Helpers section, select 'Show remote cursor' and 'Follow remote cursor'. This shows the mouse cursor on the remote computer or device, as you're using it.

GENERAL PC

Make space for Windows updates

Q I read that the next Windows 10 update will require at least 20GB of free space to install. My 120GB SSD (Solid State Drive) has only 16.8GB of free space and I don't know what files can safely be transferred to my external 1TB drive.

James Munroe, via email

A Windows updates are big and require a lot of free space, which is a problem if your PC is fitted with a small SSD. There are two ways to free up space and you should try both: compress the contents of the drive and move files elsewhere.

Open Explorer and select This PC in the sidebar, then right-click the C: drive and select Properties from the menu.

SOFTWARE

Manage screen-sharing tools

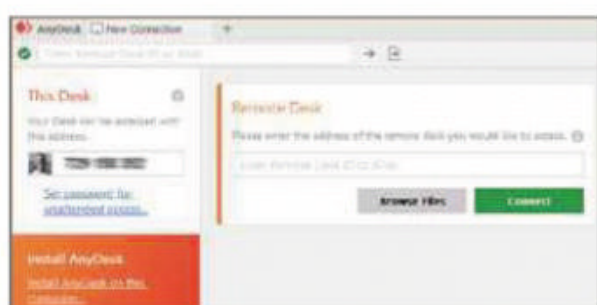
Q I read your article on screen-sharing tools (Issue 473, bit.ly/webuser473) but couldn't get the Silver Award-winner AnyDesk (anydesk.com) to download. Instead, I got a 403 error. I seem to be getting a lot of these recently.

I have a dual-boot setup on my laptop,

with Windows 10 Pro on one partition and Ubuntu 19.04 on the other. To get past the 403 error, I opened the download in a new tab on the Ubuntu side, where it downloaded normally. Trying this trick in Windows 10 failed, so I used Ubuntu to download the Windows version, then transferred the file via a USB memory stick. However, I still don't have a clue how to set it up to get AnyDesk to work.

Bill Power, via email

A A 403 error means the URL you typed into the browser is trying to access a part of a website or a file you don't have permission for. Websites have public and private areas, and trying to access a file or page that's



Remotely access and control your computer using AnyDesk



At the bottom of the General tab, tick 'Compress this drive to save disk space'. This can save several gigabytes of space, but leaves Windows and any software to work exactly as it did before so you shouldn't notice any difference.

To move files to an external drive and make room for the Windows update, create Videos, Music and Pictures folders on your external drive, then copy over the contents of the same folders from the C: drive. You can then delete the files from C: drive and move them back after you've updated Windows.

If you want to permanently relocate these Windows system folders instead of just temporarily moving the contents, right-click the folders in the Explorer sidebar and select Properties, Location tab and click Move. This can clear a lot of space on your internal hard drive, but be aware that to access your files, the external drive needs to be permanently on when Windows is running.

If you have a lot of files stored on OneDrive, you can free up space by moving them to the cloud. Right-click OneDrive in Explorer's sidebar and select Settings. On the Settings tab, tick the box under 'Files on Demand', click OK, then right-click OneDrive in Explorer and select 'Clear space'. Your files will now be stored online, yet they will still appear on the C: drive and can be accessed as if they were there.

GENERAL PC

Fix poor memory-card connection

Q My Acer Aspire One Cloudbook 14 AO1-431 is running Windows 10 Home, and I use a 128GB SDXC memory card for additional storage. Sometimes, the memory card disconnects, then reconnects after a second – this can happen several times in an hour. The only way I've found to get things working again is to reboot the PC.

Stefano Pazzaglia, via email

A It could be a poor connection between the card and the computer, so remove it, clean it with a soft cloth and replace it. Another possibility is that Windows may be disabling the USB drive to save power. When the problem occurs, click the battery icon in the taskbar and drag the slider all the way to the right for maximum power. See if that cures it.

If it doesn't, try tweaking the power settings. Open the Control Panel and click Power Options, 'Change plan settings', 'Change advanced power



Power-saving settings may make devices or components disconnect or go to sleep

settings'. Expand 'Hard disk', 'USB settings' and PCI Express, then disable the power-saving options. Choose maximum performance and power.

You may need to update the drivers in case the problem is being caused by a bug that's been fixed. Download and run Driver Booster Free (bit.ly/driv477), but don't update everything – just look for anything to do with storage and drives. Always make sure you have a backup before updating drivers because it's best to be safe.

SECURITY

Recover from a crash

Q After a crash, the hard drive on my Windows 8.1 PC was over 20% fragmented, yet my last check showed only 1%. Now all my programs look like they're set to 2016 versions. I managed to update Windows and Norton, but other programs show the licences as expired. Meanwhile, a Windows notification says the status of my spyware, virus and firewall protection is switched off, yet Norton thinks they're all running.

Alan S, via email

A Fragmentation doesn't cause crashes and only affects speed. Press Windows+R and type `dfmgrui` to start Defrag manually, then click 'Change settings' and set it to run weekly or daily on a schedule.

Open the Control Panel and type `time` in the search box, then click 'Set the date and time'. Make sure it's correct because it may have been reset. This might fix your date problems.

Action Center in the Control Panel shows your PC's security status by communicating with security software, but it seems that they aren't talking to each other. Norton is right and Action Center is wrong, so don't worry about it.

INTERNET

Stop DuckDuckGo breaking websites

Q I installed DuckDuckGo for Firefox after you recommended it in Issue 473 (bit.ly/webuser473) for its anonymity when browsing. I'm researching my family history and trying to use the Lancashire Parish Clerks Project (www.lan-opc.org.uk), but DuckDuckGo disrupts loading and stops the search page displaying. Disabling the extension allows the search page to open, and I can enable it again when I've finished using the site. But is there a better way?

Brian Everett, via email



Whitelist a website if it doesn't work with DuckDuckGo enabled

A DuckDuckGo Privacy Essentials Firefox extension (bit.ly/ddg477) works by stripping out code in web

pages that could be used to track you. Normally, a site will work fine but in some cases, it can cause problems. If you come across a site that won't work, click the DuckDuckGo button on the toolbar, then click the Set Privacy Protection switch to disable the extension and add the site to a whitelist of exempt websites.

We visited the site you mentioned with DuckDuckGo enabled, and nothing appeared on the search page.

However, with the site whitelisted, it loaded. We couldn't perform a full test because the site's search function was broken when we tried it, but at least the page loaded.



This fortnight, Roland has been buying laptops for his family but, unfortunately, not one for himself

Your Top Tips

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

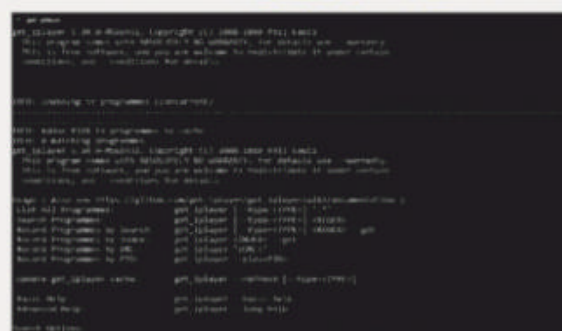


TOP TIP

TV

Search for old shows with Get iPlayer

In Issue 474 (bit.ly/webuser474), your 'Download streaming video' article said that Get iPlayer (bit.ly/geip477) can only search for BBC shows broadcast in the last 30 days. This is only true if you're trying to download programmes via the cache. If you use the full internet address for the programme you want to download, the 30-day cache limitation doesn't apply. For example: `get_oplayer --pid=https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0074dlv/`



The Get iPlayer tool means you're no longer on a catch-up time limit

doctor-who-series-1-1-rose will download a programme broadcast on 26 March 2005. Not surprisingly, other programme archives on iPlayer don't go back that far.

Paul Birch, via email

GENERAL PC

Use Control Panel shortcuts

Windows 10 has moved many items into Settings, but there's still enough in the

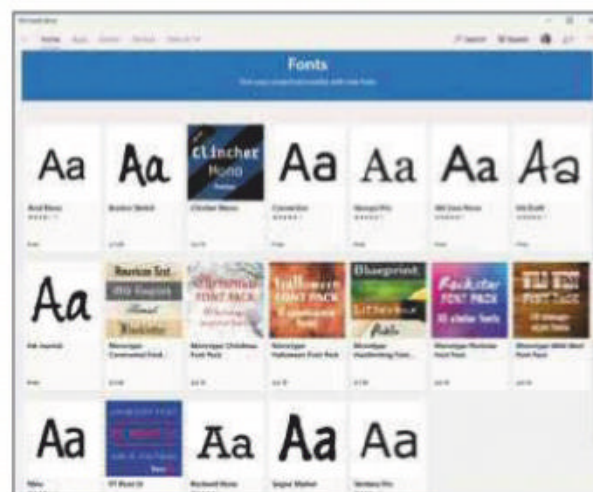
for 'Show sync provider notifications'. I haven't seen any ads but someone I know has and they said this tip works.

Bill Winston, via email

GENERAL PC

Get more Windows fonts

Windows provides a collection of fonts but if you want to add more, open the Settings app (Windows+i), click Personalisation and select Fonts. Click the link at the top 'Get more fonts in Microsoft Store' to open the Store app, then go to the Fonts section. You have to pay for some but I counted 10 free fonts when I looked. Click a font, then click the Get button to install it. The font will now



Add fonts to Windows and use them in documents and programs

appear as an option in apps such Word, WordPad and more.

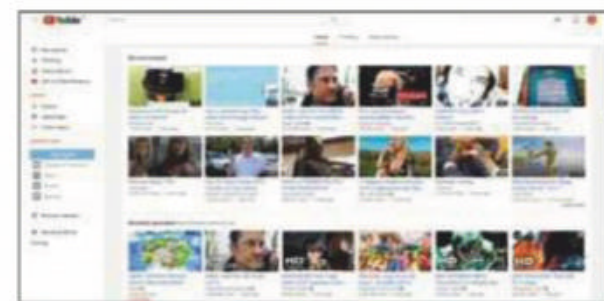
R Johnson, via email

VIDEO

Bring back classic YouTube

Does anyone else miss the old YouTube layout? I recently found a new extension for Firefox called YouTube Classic (bit.ly/youtube477) that reverts the modern design back to how it used to look. Once it's installed, it works automatically. I like how it strips away some of the clutter that the site has accumulated over the years. Apparently, it used to be available for Chrome, but it appears Google has pulled it from the Web Store for now.

Sol Morse, via email



Nothing beats a classic - see YouTube how it used to be

RADIO

Listen to breakfast shows worldwide

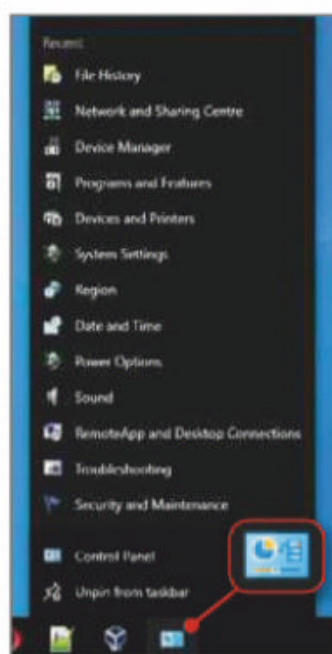
You may be aware of Radio Garden (radio.garden), which lets you scan the globe for radio stations. Another good site is Global Breakfast Radio (globalbreakfastradio.com), which lets you listen to breakfast shows as the morning sun moves around the globe.

FratPark, via email

GENERAL PC

Reformat a hard drive without losing your data

Reformatting a corrupted hard drive usually means wiping everything, but I recently found a way to avoid losing my data. First, reformat as normal - open File Explorer, This PC, 'Devices and



Right-click the taskbar's Control Panel icon for shortcuts to its sub-sections

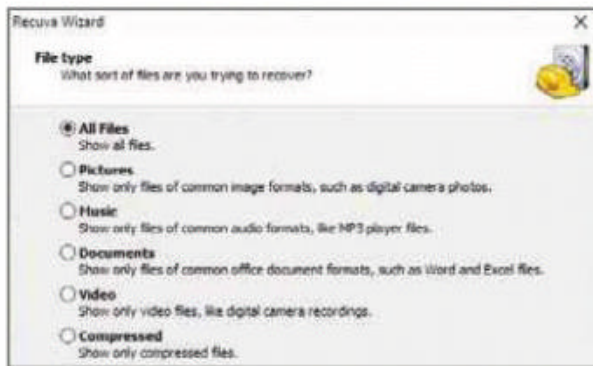
Control Panel to make it really useful. Open Control Panel from the Start menu in the Windows System section, then right-click the icon in the taskbar and select 'Pin to taskbar' to add a permanent icon. The shortcuts are even better: right-click the Control Panel icon in the taskbar, even when it's not running, to bring up a list of Control Panel items. Click one to go straight there.

Sue Levey, via email

GENERAL PC

Block ads in Explorer

If you're seeing ads in Windows 10 File Explorer, open Explorer and go to View, Options. In the View tab, scroll through the Advanced settings and tick the box



You don't have to delete all your data when reformatting a hard drive

Drives', then right-click the hard drive and choose Format. In the next box, leave all the options as they are but tick the Quick Format box, then click Start. Next, you need to run recovery software – I used Recuva (www.ccleaner.com/recuva) because it has a free version. The software should be able to recover the data saved to the drive – but only if you ticked that Quick Format box earlier.

Geoff Mills, via email

BROWSERS

Pin websites to the desktop

I used to be able to drag a website icon from Internet Explorer and drop it on the desktop to create a shortcut to the site. Edge doesn't have this option, but there are a couple of workarounds. Go to the menu and select 'More tools', then 'Pin this page to Start'. This adds a tile to the Start menu that instantly opens the website in Edge. An even better solution is to switch to a different browser – Chrome lets you drag the padlock icon situated to the left of a URL and drop it on the desktop to create a shortcut.

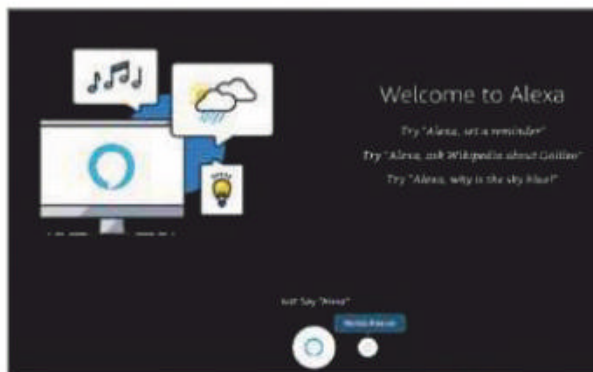
Mike Balding, via email

VOICE ASSISTANTS

Use Alexa hands-free on a PC

I wasn't keen to own an Amazon Echo, particularly because of the security and privacy worries, but I received one for my birthday and now I find Alexa absolutely invaluable and use it daily. I even downloaded the Alexa app on Windows 10, but it wasn't very good because the voice controls only worked on certain computers. Finally, the app (bit.ly/alexa477) has received an update that lets it listen out for the 'Alexa' wake word on any PC, including mine.

Download the app from the Microsoft



Transform your PC into an Amazon Echo

Store, sign into your Amazon account and let Alexa access your computer's microphone. Congratulations, you've just turned your PC into a super-powerful smart speaker!

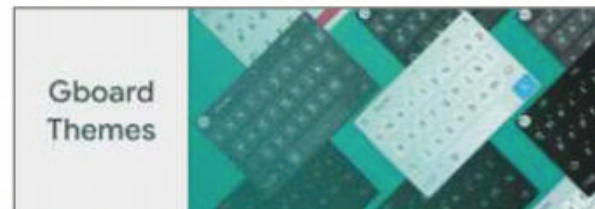
Jules Macdonald, via email

ANDROID

Get more themes for Gboard

Android has some colourful themes for its built-in keyboard and if you have a rooted device, you can get even more using the Magisk module Gboard Themes (bit.ly/gboard477). Open Magisk (bit.ly/magisk477), search gboard themes and tap the download button. After restarting your device, tap Gboard's paint palette icon to view theme settings. Look for an option in the menu called System to see the new themes in Gboard Themes. Find the one you like and apply it as you normally would. Easy!

Mike Gant, via email



Liven up your phone with more than 100 Gboard themes

iOS

Hide folder names on iPhone and iPad

I love using folders on my iPhone, placing all my TV apps together or tidying away my social-media apps, but the folder names make the screen feel very busy. You can create folders in the dock that

don't have names, but for all others, the method is trickier.

First, open a blank text message or email and type [] (note the space between the brackets). Next, press and hold the space between the brackets and select to copy it. Now, go back to your folders on the Home screen and press and hold one until they start to shake – usually, you do this to move icons around the screen. Open the folder you want to rename, use the X to clear its current name and double-tap in the space. Select Paste when the option appears and the iPhone will add the space you copied earlier into the field. Tap Done and you now have a folder with no name. This method should also work on the iPad, though I haven't tried it yet.

Andy Lawler, via email

IMAGE EDITING

Round your photos' corners

Rounding the corners of your photos makes them stand out from the crowd and GIMP (www.gimp.org) is a great tool for this. Load your photo and select Filters, Décor, Round Corners. In the settings window that appears, set the edge radius (roundness of corners), add a shadow, use blur and more. It's a great effect for your images.

Colin Shepherd, via email



Use GIMP to add eye-catching effects to photos

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

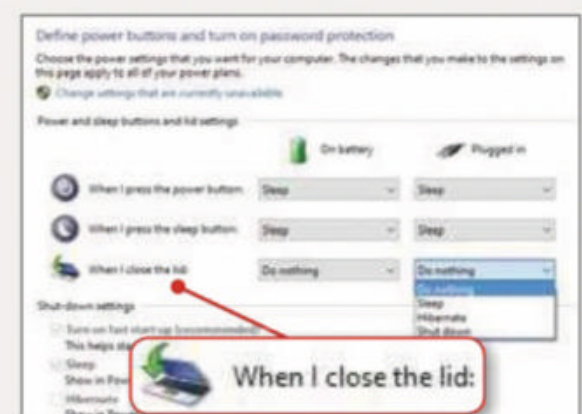
HARDWARE

Close your laptop and still keep it on

Closing the lid of your laptop will send it into Sleep mode but because I often have mine connected to a larger screen via a mini DisplayPort cable, I often leave my laptop open and running to avoid this. However, in these eco-aware days, that's not ideal.

After exploring some Windows 10 settings (one of my favourite things to do), I found a setting in the Control Panel that let me close the lid without sending the laptop to sleep.

Right-click the battery icon in the System Tray and select Power Options. On the right, click 'Choose what closing the lid does' and you can set it



Change this power setting to keep your laptop awake

to send the laptop to Sleep, Hibernate, Shutdown or, in my case, 'Do nothing'.

Joseph Linde, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

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



OFFER OF THE FORTNIGHT

Kaspersky Internet Security 2019 - on sale now

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GENERAL PC

Stop Windows linking to your phone

Q I believe you've mentioned before how to link Windows 10 to a smartphone. However, I go on my laptop to get away from the mindless distractions of my phone, not see even more of them. I don't need Microsoft telling me I have a text message or whatever else it does. Any ideas how to stop all this 'interconnected' nonsense?

Frank Caldicott, via email

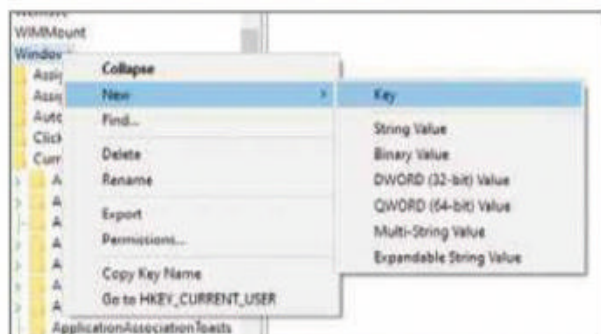
A There is a way to disable phone linking if you're happy to dip into the Registry Editor. As ever, be sure to create a safety backup before you try this.

Type **regedit** into the search box on the taskbar and press Enter when it's selected. Navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows

Right-click the folder marked Windows and select New, then Key. Name this new key **EnableMmx** and give it a value of 0. Click OK, exit the editor and restart your computer. Hey presto! Phone linking is now a thing of the past.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



Keep your phone and computer separate with this Registry hack

ANDROID

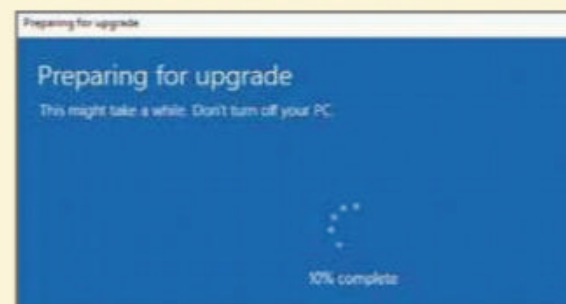
Edit your autofill settings

Q I'm a huge fan of Google's fabulous autofill feature, which makes it easier for me to complete forms without having to fiddle about typing everything in full – or so I thought. I recently moved house and I now have to either type out my new address and telephone number, or I end

READERS RESPOND

Upgrade your Windows 7 PC

A After reading the Star Email in Issue 473 (bit.ly/webuser473) and Phil Cantor's email in Issue 475 (bit.ly/webuser475), I decided to upgrade from Windows 7 to Windows 10. It took the best part of an afternoon, but now it's all working well and much quicker than Windows 7. I thought I'd have to enter my product code from my Windows 7 software but nothing was asked for and I haven't had to pay anything. I've checked in my security



Are you ready to make the switch from Windows 7?

settings, and all appears to be in order. On startup, my login was the same as before. The only change I had to make was to adjust the screen resolution so I could see the Start tab.

Anne Bennett, via email

CAN YOU HELP?

webuser@webuser.co.uk

You can seek help or suggest solutions to other readers' problems by emailing webuser@webuser.co.uk or via www.facebook.com/webusermagazine or twitter.com/webusermagazine.

GENERAL PC

Q I use Sticky Notes to keep track of tasks but since the new update, when I turn on my computer, the tool opens to almost full screen. Can I make it go back to a little Post-It note in the corner of my computer?

Jonathan Begley, via email

HARDWARE

Q It seems a mobile number starting with 07472 is remotely hacking my router. I've also found spyware on my Apple SE phone. Can you or any readers help? What's the best way to stop or combat this?

Patrick Francis, via email

up accidentally clicking the existing saved address. At least I haven't cancelled my credit card and got a new one because I can't be doing with fetching my wallet and writing that out every time I buy something online! Anyway, sorry for the ramble, but is there any way to fix this, short of a factory reset?

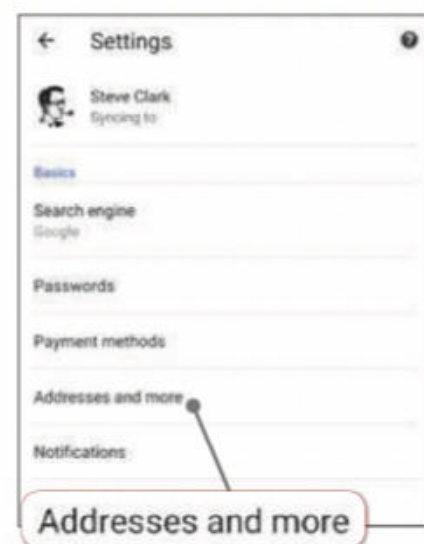
Richard Armstrong, via email

A Congratulations on moving home, Richard! Sounds like an incorrect autofill is the last thing you need after all that stress. Thankfully, it's not difficult to edit or remove your information on Google. Start by opening Chrome on your phone, then tap the menu button (the three dots by the side of the address bar) and choose Settings. Under Basics,

there are three autofill options – Passwords, 'Payment methods' and 'Addresses and more'. You want to tap the latter option and either click the existing saved address to edit it (along with the phone number) or create a new one by pressing the plus sign.

Sorted – no reset required!

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



Google hides its autofill settings in Chrome

Star Email

Huawei is innocent until proven guilty

There's been so much fuss in the news about Huawei and how many technology companies, including Google and Microsoft, have turned against it. But why? Because Donald Trump and the US government told them to. And why is that? Because it's a Chinese company, and America doesn't like the threat that China poses to its dominance of global trade.

I've seen nothing in any of the stories to convince me that Huawei is using its products to spy on consumers. It's all speculation and paranoia, just like the McCarthy 'Red Scare' of the 1950s. Just because Huawei is based in China doesn't mean



that it's in league with the Chinese government, any more than the manufacturers of the many other products we import from China are.

I have a perfectly good Honor phone (Honor is owned by Huawei) and I don't

see why I should lose access to essential Android apps because of American scaremongering triggered by concerns about international trade. Besides, with all the revelations about the NSA a few years ago, the US can hardly deny accusations of state spying itself, so this is a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

I believe that Huawei is innocent of espionage charges until it can be proven guilty, and I certainly won't be throwing away my

Honor phone. The technology industry should be ashamed of its knee-jerk response and of kowtowing to President Trump without having any hard evidence.

James Quinn, via email

Make complex programs easier to install

Why are computer programs so complex and impossible to install? I tried twice to install Kodachi (bit.ly/kodachi470) on a USB stick by following the developer's website instructions, but both attempts failed so I gave up and deleted it. I tried the same with Tails (tails.boum.org), but the instructions were so complicated that I just could not be bothered to attempt it and deleted it – all in all, a total waste of time and electricity.

I travel to countries where web access is limited to what the government thinks fit, so no BBC or CNN, and even Google and Yahoo are virtually off limits, so I rely on portable software. Also, I am not a 'techie' or a 'geek' – I need simple solutions.



If developers want us to use their programs, then for Pete's sake make installation easy or

just sell USB sticks with the software already preloaded. Both Kodachi and Tails were recommended by *Web User*, but I'm sorry: they are absolutely useless as far as I am concerned.

John C Kent, via email

We don't need another voice assistant

I read in your Webometer in Issue 475 that the BBC plans to launch its own voice assistant called Auntie. I have to wonder if this is really necessary, let alone a justifiable use of licence payers' money. There are already enough voice assistants, what with Siri, Alexa, Cortana and Google Assistant, so what is the point of having another one?

Your story says that Auntie will "let

users search for content verbally on their mobile devices and TVs". This isn't exactly difficult to do at the moment – you just open BBC iPlayer and look for what you want to watch. It takes a matter of seconds, and you don't need to say "Hey Auntie, find me *EastEnders*" to do it.

The BBC should be investing more of the money we give it through our licence fees in original, quality programming, not



Quiz Answers: Issue 476

1 **Glasgow**



2 **Weymouth**



3 **Cannock**



4 **Runcorn**



5 **South Shields**



6 **Weston-super-Mare**



WINNER!

Well done to **Simon Borg** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc



WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE

Amazon



wasting it on frivolous novelty projects that viewers neither want nor need.

Colin Taswell, via email

The changing face of computing

Your Star Email in Issue 475, 'Who still uses Internet Explorer?', caused me a wry smile, and shows the very wide range of experiences among your readers. I don't recall using anything else!

My first connection with computer



processing was in 1959, 60 years ago. In the 1970s, the mainframe computer had banks of thermionic valves and a memory of 245K.

PCs came along some years later, with, for example, Windows 95 and Windows 3.1. Our first home computer was an ex-office IBM machine. I now have a desktop computer and a laptop. Both of them run Windows 10.

I retired more than 24 years ago, but recently I have designed and published two books on my computer, one of 96 pages and the other of 112 pages. Both are in full colour and were given to the printing firms in their final PDF formats.

Brian Mace, via email

Ban people from texting in the road

I read today that New York is planning to make it illegal for pedestrians to read or write text messages on their phones while they are crossing the road. What a good idea, and one I can only hope is taken up over here once the government sorts out the Brexit mess and has time to deal with other things.

I've lost count of the number of times I've nearly knocked someone over – not because I was speeding or driving recklessly, but because they were so glued to their phone screens that they stepped into the road without looking where they were going. Luckily, I was able to brake and beep my horn, but it rankles me that if the person had been hurt, it would have been deemed my fault!

Using your mobile phone while driving is already illegal, so why not fine pedestrians too if they disregard road safety because they can't take their eyes off their phones for a few seconds?

Alan Henshaw, via email

What you say...

HOW WORRIED ARE YOU ABOUT GOOGLE TRACKING YOUR PURCHASES THROUGH GMAIL (bit.ly/gmail477)?

Google knows where and when I am going on holiday. It shows the dates I'm booked to stay at the campsite on Google Maps. That data was taken from my Gmail account. It's the price we pay for the brilliance of its free services, I guess.

Chris Armstrong

I have a Gmail account but never use it. I avoid Google and I stopped using Chrome. I now use Firefox with DuckDuckGo as my search engine.

Geoffrey Boow

I'm not worried. I know that I have to sell some of my privacy to have Gmail for free.

Leopold Hans Birkholm

If I want something to be private, I keep it off the internet; otherwise I always assume *someone* is watching

Nat Grove

How is this suddenly news? It always seemed obvious, seeing as how buying tickets for an event meant they were displayed in Google Calendar. What amazes me is how long it's taken for the penny to drop.

Rich Grove

WHAT'S THE MOST ILL-ADVISED THING YOU'VE SEEN ANYONE SHARE ONLINE?

I once saw someone share unedited photos of her very first, brand new, credit card! Someone else then jokingly asked what the three numbers on the back were – and she told them!

Marie Davies

Holiday photos posted while they are away, especially when their posts are 'public'.

Caroline Sharman

A Nintendo gift card with the code uncovered showing all the details. He then replied to his own tweet saying someone had used the code.

Goldmaster @imthegoldmaster

Usually posts about going on holiday while leaving their address visible.

Ashley Smith

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF BT'S PROPOSED NEW LOGO (bit.ly/btlogo477)?



It looks meaningless and retrograde; cold, formal, uninviting and uninspiring. A bit like trying to complain about something to BT. It doesn't convey what the business is about, like the current logo does.

Lance Parkington

Dearie me. Why do companies do this? What a waste of cash and time. Stick with the original and reduce prices for existing customers. That will have far more impact.

Iain Kenworthy-Neale

Shouldn't a logo encapsulate what a company is about? This one tells me that BT is minimal and bland and doesn't provide much to be desired.

Sam Higgins

Blimey, I could've thrown that together in a few minutes! Next time you want to change your logo, BT, put it on *Blue Peter* as a competition for kids.

Sean Cooper

What an utter load of rubbish! If BT wants to impress me, how about replacing the 3.2km of damp string connected to our home with some fibre optic?

Dave Spinks

Whose child came up with this design?

Anthony Higham

! Page 404



Barry Collins baulks at paying yet another BT subscription – just to get a router

More money for the router of all evil

Stop the press – we’ve officially reached the tipping point of the must-sell-absolutely-everything-as-a-subscription-package craze that has swept the tech industry over the past few years. Because now, ladies and gentlemen, BT wants to sell you routers for a conveniently overpriced monthly sum.

This comes in the form of BT’s Complete Wi-Fi package – a concept that gets right up my nostrils before you even get to the subscription part. “We guarantee Wi-Fi in every room!” BT’s marketing email screams. Whatever next? Running water from every tap! Light through every window!

You shouldn’t need to pay BT extra to guarantee Wi-Fi reception in every room of the average home – it should be the minimum requirement. If BT’s standard Smart Hubs had proper external antennas instead of the sealed units they currently sell, this wouldn’t be an issue for 99% of its

customers in the first place.

Instead, BT’s trying to exploit its own hardware deficiencies by upselling customers to Complete Wi-Fi for, in my case, an extra £7 per month on top of the £42 I already pay for BT’s top-whack fibre connection.

What does Complete Wi-Fi consist of? The very latest BT Smart Hub 2 and one

– count ‘em, one – Wi-Fi Disc. The Wi-Fi Disc acts as a Wi-Fi extender, repeating the signal

from your Smart Hub so that it reaches that back bedroom or loft extension that the Smart Hub struggles to reach under its own steam. BT promises it will give you up to two more of these Discs if you don’t get a “strong” Wi-Fi reception in every room, although I wish you the

very best of British when it comes to arguing what constitutes a “strong” reception with the BT call centre.

What BT isn’t so forward in telling you is that you can pick up these Wi-Fi Discs much more cheaply from Amazon (where they’re called Whole Home, instead of Complete Home, for some

strange reason – that must have been a particularly long lunch in the BT marketing department). So, instead of signing a new 18-month contract for an extra £7 per month – total cost

£126 – you can pop over to Amazon now and buy one of these Discs for £74.50.

Even the two-Disc pack costs only £123.85, which is still marginally cheaper than the “exclusive” deal BT is trying to flog me. Granted, you don’t get a new router, but I wouldn’t mind betting that most people will see little or no performance difference between their current Hub and BT’s latest model, especially once you’ve got the Discs relaying the signal.

As I’ve grumbled in this column before, I’m sick of seeing my disposable income bled dry by subscriptions – mobile phone, broadband, Netflix, Spotify, online backup, office software... the list goes on. BT already gets its monthly pound of flesh from me. To try and upsell an extra subscription to deliver what any half-decent router should be capable of in the first place is really taking the Richard Bliss.

Still, where BT leads the rest generally follow. Keep an eye out for your next “exclusive” offer in an inbox near you and get ready to clear some space in your Junk folder.

“We guarantee Wi-Fi in every room!” BT’s marketing email screams. Whatever next? Running water from every tap! Light through every window!”



Illustration: Andrew Torrens

WebUser

**SUBSCRIPTION
OFFER**
FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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COVER FEATURE: WHO'S WATCHING YOU ONLINE?

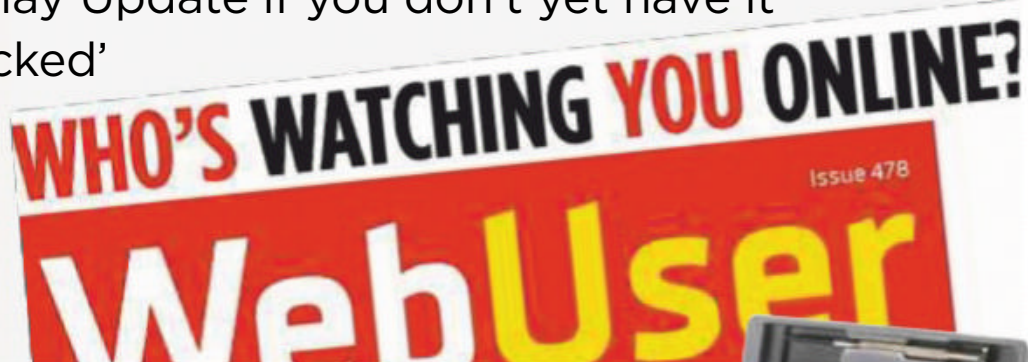
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