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Don't get lost without the web

Going offline for a while needn't be the end of the world, but it can sometimes feel like it, as I discovered on a recent holiday. Being trapped on a plane with a noisy baby and no music to block out its cries; wandering aimlessly around a barren landscape because I forgot to bring a map; paying a small fortune for a taxi after neglecting to check the bus timetables – yes, all these things happened to me, and had me cursing both my lack of internet and lack of foresight.

If only I'd read this issue's cover feature before setting off, because it's exactly these

types of unexpected offline moment that its advice addresses. By downloading essential content from your favourite sites, services and apps in advance, you can happily keep on browsing when you lose connection. We explain how to grab what you want while you still can, from maps and apps to entire websites, so you won't need to flag down a camel to take you to the nearest Wi-Fi hotspot.

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



5 Things you'll learn this issue

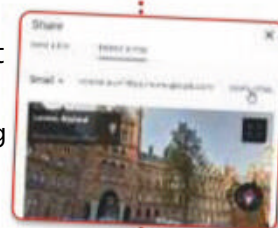
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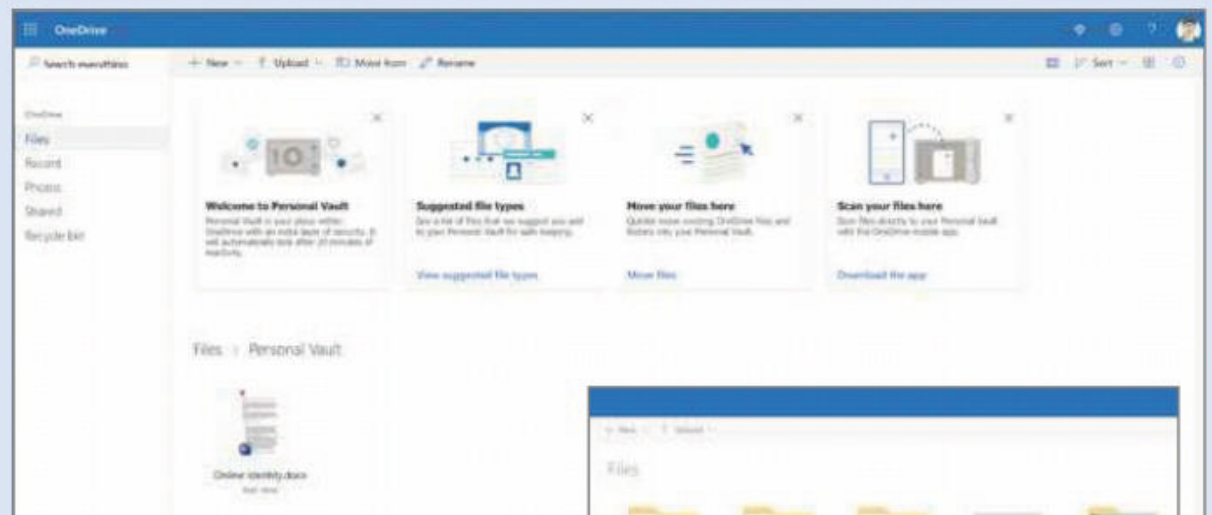


What's New Online

Secure important files in OneDrive

Storing sensitive files in the cloud can feel risky but with Microsoft OneDrive's new Personal Vault, you can pop your most important documents into an extra-secure section of your cloud-storage space. To access them, you'll need to get through an extra layer of security such as a PIN, FaceID, fingerprint or code.

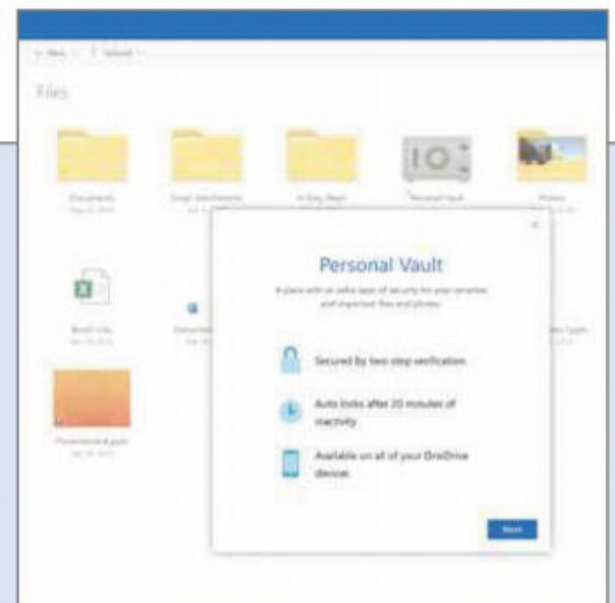
Microsoft suggests storing tax records, credit reports, insurance documents, licences, property deeds, budgets, legal papers and copies of passports in the vault. You can also use the OneDrive app to immediately secure freshly snapped photos and scanned documents. Free users are limited to storing just three files, so you may have to prioritise what you upload to the vault unless you pay £5.99 a month for an unlimited Premium subscription to OneDrive. In either case, the files can be accessed across all your devices and the vault will automatically lock



after 20 minutes of inactivity.

OneDrive is also allowing automatic backups of your PC's Desktop, Documents and Pictures folders, and letting you restore previous versions of your files for up to 30 days. Meanwhile, the OneDrive app for iOS has added a dark mode, which you can turn on via Settings, 'Display and Brightness'.

onedrive.live.com



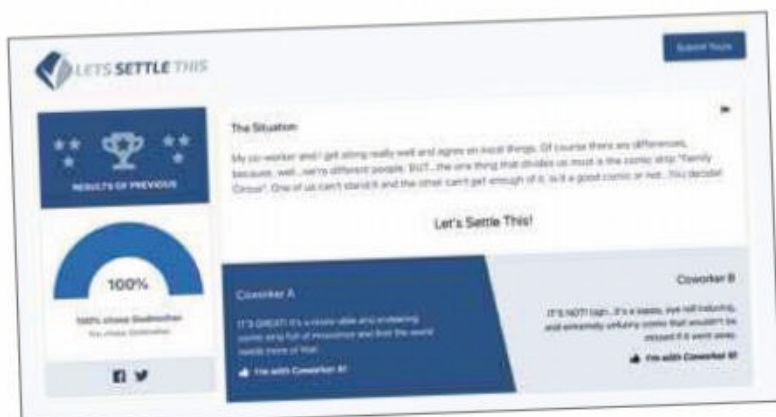
Settle an argument with the internet's help

www.letssettlethis.com

With *The Jeremy Kyle Show* now a distant memory, we're down an option when it comes to settling disputes. So a warm welcome, please, for Let's Settle This, which lets you describe your situation and detail the arguments for both parties before throwing it open for other users to vote on.

The idea is that, after enough responses have been submitted, you'll get a percentage result which should, in an ideal world, resolve the issue. You can also vote on other people's dilemmas and even see if your decision fits in with the majority view. In all cases, the arguments are anonymous and they're often bizarre and surprising – for example, “Do I have to invite my fiancé's bratty brother

to our wedding?”. It's also possible to flag up any inappropriate situations although so far, thankfully, it's been pretty clean.



See the galaxy mapped in real time

solarsystem.nasa.gov

Launch NASA's new site dedicated to the Solar System and click the animated icon to the left of the links at the top of the page to be transported to a digital orrery that shows the exact position of the planets and other celestial objects as they sit in the sky right now.

Zoom in or switch between the inner and outer Solar System to get a closer look at the planetary orbits and their moons. You can also check out comets such as Churyumov-Gerasimenko, as well as spacecraft and telescopes.

Click any of these to see an explanation alongside facts and figures. You can view size comparisons and 3D examinations of the planets, complete with indications of their distance from the Sun, the length of their year and their type. You can also download a free program called NASA's Eyes if you want to immerse yourself further (eyes.nasa.gov).

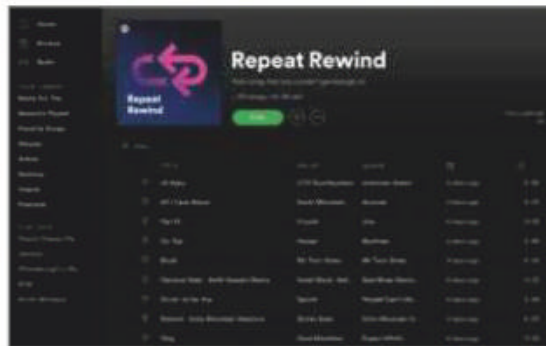


We pick the 10 best things you must do on the web this fortnight

Replay your most listened-to tunes

www.spotify.com/uk

Spotify has released two new playlists that let you listen once more to your favourite tunes. On Repeat keeps track of the songs you've been playing the most over the past 30 days while Repeat Rewind goes back further. In both cases, Spotify will mix things up so that the playlists sound different every time you decide to reminisce.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS



Pick a new voice

Open the iOS Assistant app or say "OK Google" and tap the compass icon, then Settings in Android, before tapping your profile picture and selecting Assistant, 'Assistant voice'.



Get better directions

Siri is now more accurate with directions in Apple Maps. Rather than tell you to make a move by indicating how far you are from a turn, it will use reference points such as the next set of traffic lights.



Plan a cancer fundraiser

Gather some friends and say, "Alexa, start the Stand Up to Cancer quiz" to join Cancer Research UK and comedian Joe Lycett for an Alexa quiz. For more info, visit www.standuptocancer.org.uk/quiz.

Download Google deepfake videos

bit.ly/deepfakes486

Google is concerned about the proliferation of 'deepfakes' – videos

where AI has been used to digitally swap or alter faces to fool the viewer. To help researchers and developers create tools that can detect face manipulation,

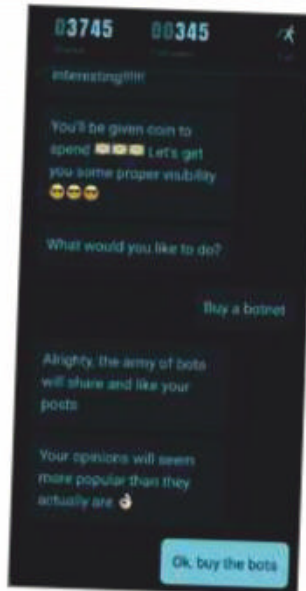


Google has released an open-source dataset of 3,000 videos, each one recorded with the aid of 28 actors and altered using widely available deepfake algorithms. You need to fill out a form to gain access to the dataset – and it's a hefty download – but if you reckon you can do some good work with the images, everything you need is on GitHub.

Watch fake news spread

trollfactory.yle.fi

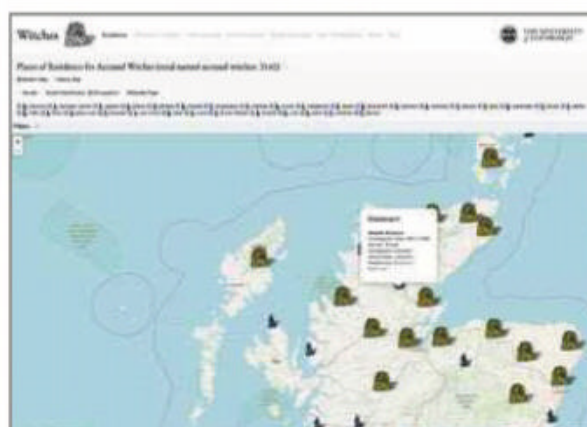
We're fully aware that fake news is quickly and easily spread on social media, but seeing it happen in the guise of a game really rams that home. Troll Factory tasks you with spreading content deemed offensive, stirring up emotions and targeting people receptive to certain beliefs. Since the game uses real posts, it's all the more shocking but, by the end, you'll have explored the murky worlds of fake bots, conspiracy theories and the use of other disinformation tools. As you do, your pretend shares and followers will go through the roof and you'll probably feel pretty uneasy.



View all of Scotland's witches

witches.is.ed.ac.uk

Between 1563 and 1735, some 4,000 people (mostly women) were accused of being witches in Scotland, and many were sentenced to death. This map from the University of Edinburgh shows who they were and where they lived, along with their sex, occupation and social classification. You can also see the locations of their detention, trial and death, along with their Wikipedia page.



Keep score of the rugby

bit.ly/rugby486

Keep up with 2019 Rugby World Cup – running till 2 November – via Google News. View the scores of past games, see upcoming matches, watch highlights via YouTube and check the latest news and tables.

Use Gmail's new dark mode

mail.google.com

To use Dark Mode in the Android Gmail app, set your entire device to the dark theme or open Settings in Gmail and select Theme, Dark. The app also darkens on Pixel phones with Battery Saver enabled. On iOS, go to Settings, Dark Theme.

Tour the Palace of Versailles

bit.ly/vers486

This stunning tour of the majestic French palace includes 18 online exhibitions and 3D models of rooms and objects, as well as a SteamVR app that has reconstructed 3D models of objects from 2D images.

Microsoft unveils foldable devices and new Windows OS

What happened?

Microsoft unveiled a pair of foldable devices, which it says will create a new form of mobile computing.

First up is the Surface Duo, which is either a folding tablet or a dual-screen smartphone, depending on your preference. Thanks to the fully flexible hinge, the Duo can be used as a phone, with one of the two displays used as you would a more typical handset. But unfold the device and the two 5.6in displays combine into a single 8.4in screen. Along with its revolutionary design, the Surface Duo is significant because it runs Google's Android operating system rather than Microsoft's own OS for Windows phones, which struggled to get a foothold in the mobile market.

Little else was revealed about the Surface Duo, but it's safe to assume it'll be a premium device with a price to match when it does arrive next year.

Microsoft also unveiled a folding device running the Windows OS. The Surface Neo has the same design as the smaller Duo but applies it to a tablet-cum-laptop. Two 9in screens are linked in the centre by a 360-degree hinge. You can fold it back for a tablet-sized gadget, unfold it for a book-style device, use it as one giant tablet or set it up as a laptop with a keyboard that folds out of the case.

The device runs a new version of Microsoft's operating system, dubbed Windows 10X, that's essentially the same as Windows 10 but customised to



work with dual-screen devices – not just the Surface Neo but similar devices that are already in the works from other computer manufacturers including Asus, Dell, HP and Lenovo.

Microsoft said Windows 10X also features battery-life enhancements, because those dual displays burn through more power.

How will it affect you?

If you like the sound of the Surface Duo or Neo, you'll have to wait: neither will go on sale until late next year. Microsoft says that the delay is so developers have time to create apps for this new type of device.

If a folding phone appeals, there's also the Samsung Galaxy Fold, which has a slightly different design but also offers dual displays that fold out to a larger tablet size. If this is the future of smartphones and tablets, Microsoft has given its rivals plenty of time to complete any experimental designs hidden away in their labs. 2020 could well be the year that smartphones finally start to look a little different.

And laptops look set to follow. Windows 10X is primed to be taken up by a range of PC manufacturers, Microsoft has said, so we can expect the existing 2-in-1 laptops to not only improve their software but to also adopt more intriguing designs in the near

future. But as with Microsoft's folding devices, Windows 10X hardware from other manufacturers won't be available until next year, with Microsoft predicting new arrivals for autumn 2020.

What do we think?

All recent smartphones and tablets look almost identical, which may just mean that a slim, glass rectangle is the optimum design. That said, it's easy to see the appeal of a single device that can be a traditional smartphone, a larger tablet and also something else – perhaps, as some have suggested for the Surface Duo, a gaming device with the controls on the back and the display on the front.

The Surface Neo fits in with other hybrid two-in-one laptops that use hinges to fold into different positions, such as the Dell XPS 2-in-1 line, Lenovo Yoga or even some models of the Microsoft Surface. But it takes the idea much further, and is more of a tablet than a laptop, even with that built-in keyboard, because the screen you'll be typing on is only 9in – smaller than the average laptop.

It's a shame the Surface Duo and Surface Neo are so far off, and we hope that long year between now and the release date doesn't mean these two exciting new devices never actually materialise.



Microsoft's dual-screen foldable devices won't be available for a whole year

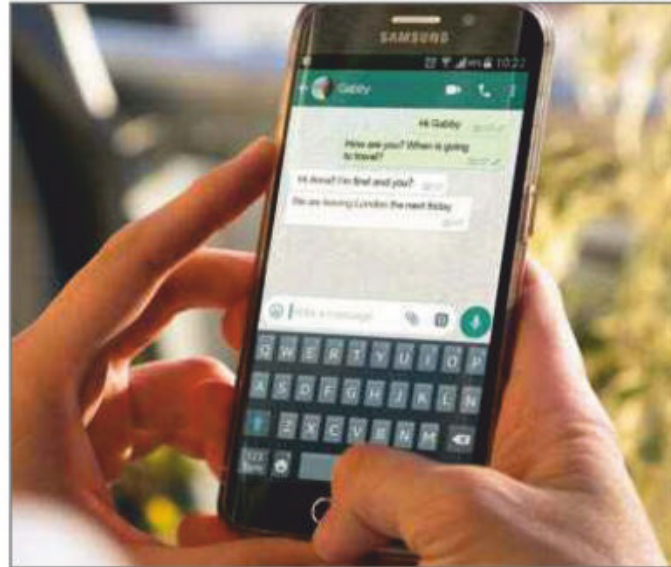
What we think of this fortnight's top tech news stories and rumours, and how they affect you

WhatsApp users warned about GIF flaw

What happened?

Sending silly GIFs to friends and family on WhatsApp is one of the joys of modern life but hackers have found a way to abuse the small looping videos to attack the messaging app.

An independent, anonymous security researcher spotted the flaw, saying that WhatsApp users could be hacked via a malicious GIF. Dodgy code is hidden in the GIF file, so users don't even have to open, watch or download the image for the hack to work. In theory, the hack allows criminals to steal photos, read messages and take other files from your phone. The researcher reported the bug to



WhatsApp and it's now been patched.

How will it affect you?

WhatsApp said in a statement that it didn't believe anyone had been successfully hacked using this technique because its owner, Facebook, put out a

patch via an update. That said, it's wise to ensure you have that update installed by checking you're using the latest version of the app.

Press the three-dot menu button

in WhatsApp, choose Settings, then tap Help, 'App info'. If your version number is above 2.19.244, you're safe from this particular hack. If not, you should install the latest version of WhatsApp from the Apple or Google Play store as soon as possible.

What do we think?

Hacking via GIF is certainly an intriguing technique, but in some ways that makes it less likely to be successful because, after all, any attack that stands out is going to get fixed quickly. Indeed, it's likely that you've already received the patch for this particular hack and are reading about it after the fact. That's welcome news, and means WhatsApp and Facebook are doing a good job of keeping security tight.

To do your bit, make sure that your apps are always running the latest versions with automatic updates, so you get the latest patches without having to make any extra effort.

Credit: Alex Ruhl / Shutterstock.com

Google Maps introduces incognito mode

What happened?

As we predicted in last issue's 'What's the Rumour', Google has added an incognito mode to Maps, which prevents the places you visit and search from being used to 'personalise' the mapping service.

It works in a similar way to incognito mode in the Chrome browser – when you use the mode in Google Maps, locations you've been to won't be shown, nor will recommendations for restaurants and other businesses. Additionally, information about what you're searching for won't be used when you switch to the standard map mode.

How will it affect you?

The new mode, which is being rolled out to Android this month and iOS afterwards, means your data won't be used to personalise ads, but it's not entirely private since Google itself still sees what you search for and your mobile provider always knows where your phone is.

Still, as with incognito mode in the Chrome browser, this is a handy way to ensure that a location you visited or searched for doesn't show up on your map – perhaps if you're looking for a restaurant for a surprise dinner or a shop for a gift, for example, and don't want a partner to spot your efforts.

If you want to delete a

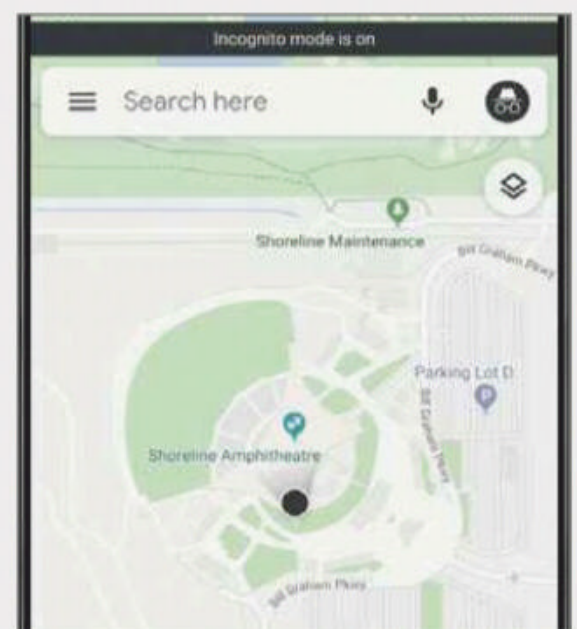
location you've visited from your history, head to Settings in Google Maps, then 'Your data in Maps', where you can edit and delete details of where you've been. You can also turn off any location-based tracking entirely and set your activity to automatically delete after a certain time frame.

What do we think?

It's surprising that it's taken so long to introduce an incognito mode to Maps. Chrome has had this feature for more than a decade, after all, and Google admits

that it's popular.

Hopefully, Google is starting to recognise how highly we value our privacy, and will find more ways to let us keep our web browsing to ourselves.



Apple stops 'unofficial' iPhone screen repairs

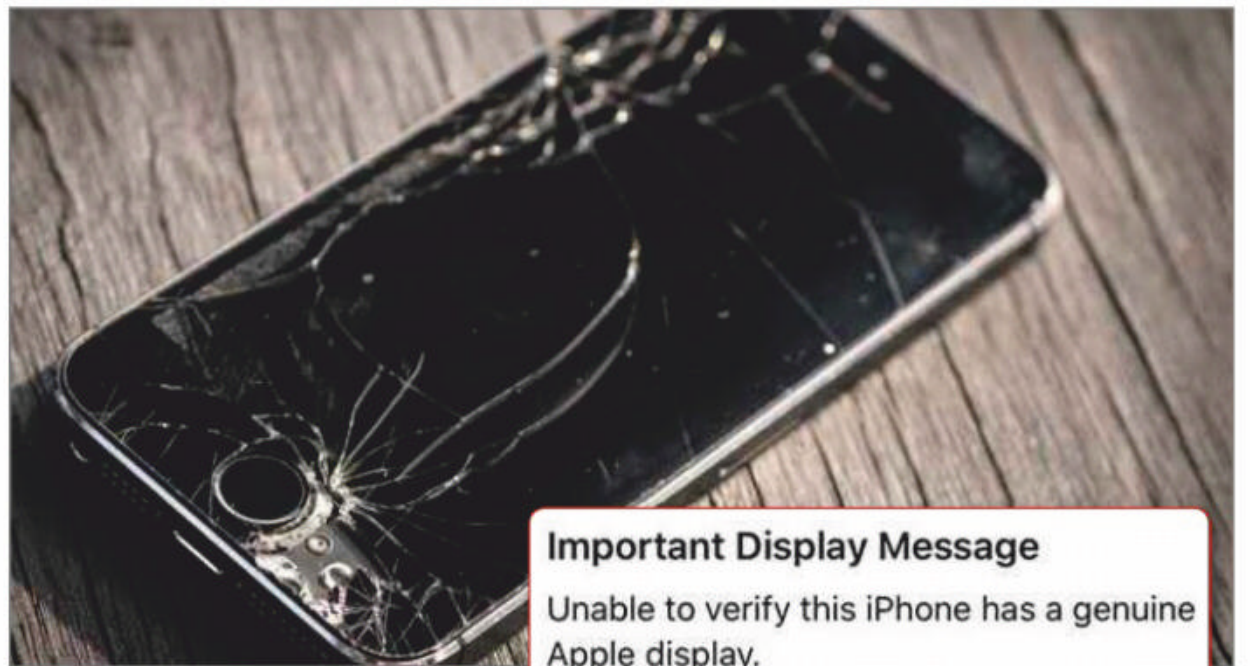
What happened?

Apple has added a new 'feature' to the iPhone 11 that nags you if your phone is repaired using unofficial Apple parts.

Cracked iPhone screens are a common sight and the high cost of a handset means users are reluctant to fork out for expensive replacements. Meanwhile, official repairs are also costly, so most iPhone owners use unofficial repair shops to get their phone fixed – but Apple has always had a problem with this. For years, the hardware manufacturer has pushed its customers to use certified technicians for any repairs, although it has had little control (or success) in this endeavour.

Now, in the latest iOS update, iPhones will display an alert that says 'Unable to verify this iPhone has a genuine Apple display'. According to the company: "Only technicians who have completed Apple service training and who use Apple genuine parts and tools should replace iPhone displays. A non-genuine display might cause compatibility or performance issues."

If it all sounds a bit 'Project Fear', that's because it is. While it's certainly true that, if possible, you should use proper Apple parts, unofficial repair shops remain the easiest and cheapest way for most iPhone users to bring their phones back to life. As far as we know, few users have ever complained about



Credit: Lenscap Photography / Shutterstock.com

a 'non-genuine display' causing any performance issues.

How will it affect you?

If you've used unofficial parts to fix your phone, don't worry: Apple states that you'll still be able to use your phone. These nagging notifications only appear when you go to the phone's About page in Settings.

However, the intent is to push people into paying for official repairs, even if it's not completely necessary. It's as much about customer care as it is about money – and with hardware sales down, Apple will be looking for any way to make up the shortfall.

What do we think?

In the US, Apple has acted in a noticeably anti-consumer manner, arguing against the American government's Right-to-Repair Bill. This latest iPhone update is just part of that battle. While we'd always recommend opting for genuine parts, that's not always possible for everyone. As such, we believe consumer choice trumps all. You should be free to get your phone repaired anywhere you choose, so long as it's safe – and you shouldn't be harassed by Apple about your decision.

See page 22 for our review of the new iPhone 11.



FIRST LOOK

Surface Earbuds

bit.ly/earbud486

At the Microsoft Surface event earlier this month, the company revealed new Surface hardware in the shape of a foldable tablet, a foldable Android phone (see page 8) and the oddest looking earbuds we've ever seen.

Forget Apple's slinky AirPods, which follow the classic earbud design minus the wires – the new Surface earbuds are large, round and unmistakable. It's a design that's likely to divide opinion, enthralling some people and putting off others. Get past the unconventional look, though, and you'll find Microsoft's latest audio effort is incredibly good.

Despite the larger size of the Surface Earbuds, you can barely tell you're wearing them. They're



lightweight with a shallow insert that makes contact with your ears in just two places – ideal if you want to wear them all day, which the day-long battery life makes possible.

Sound quality is excellent, too, although there's no noise-cancellation technology. That's a shame, considering it's a common feature in other brands and, in the case of Amazon, actively being worked on.

Like rival earbuds, they feature gesture control: swipe to alter the volume, tap to play music. It's a

seamless operation and beats prodding buds into your ears when pressing physical buttons.

But these earbuds aren't just for playing the hottest tunes. As Microsoft continues to make forays into the business market, the Surface earbuds are being touted as the ideal companion for voice-related tasks such as dictating emails and documents in Office or swiping through PowerPoint presentations. The buds also feature two microphones for voice recognition and cancelling out background noise when you're on a call.

Unfortunately, there's likely to be a hefty price to pay for the comfort and quality on offer. The Surface earbuds are expected to cost around £250, and should be on sale in time for Christmas.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Google working on a quantum computer?

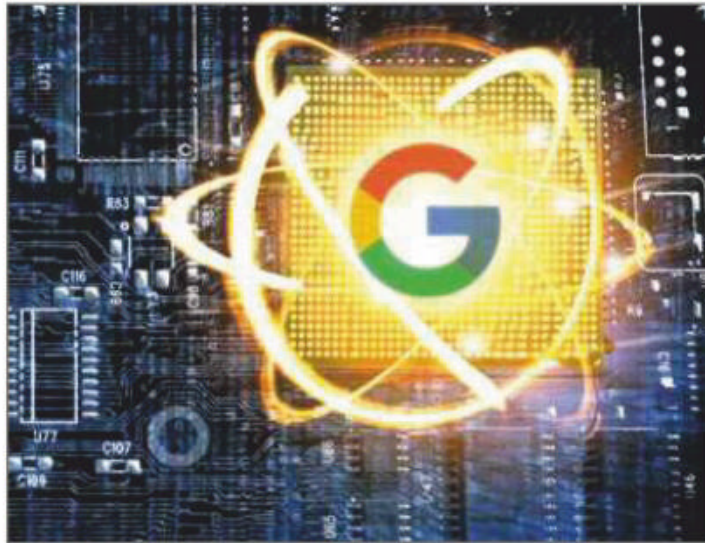
Quantum computing is expected to be the next big tech evolution. With the ability to make billions of complex calculations in a matter of seconds, it'll make every other computer look like a pocket calculator. And the word is that Google has finally made a serious breakthrough.

Recently, a draft paper from the company leaked, suggesting that Google has achieved 'quantum supremacy'. This is a term used to describe a calculation that couldn't be performed by any standard computer.

The research hasn't yet been peer-reviewed or even officially published. That makes it difficult to quantify Google's claims that it's built "the first computation that can only be performed on a quantum processor".

The tech giant won't have the ability to do much with its initial computations. The initial task is to simply execute a massive, random sequence of instructions – these instructions are then outputted in 'qubits', which is quantum computing's super-powered version of binary code.

This is just the first step, and any 'quantum supremacy' calculations will be small fry compared to what will be possible in the future. However, if the whispers are true, it hints at what the future of computing may look like.



LIKELIHOOD RATING



For years, quantum computing has been the dream; a system able to process large datasets and run simulations in the blink of an eye. And the company that can offer it will reap the benefits in both the short and long term. Backed by its wealth, Google is well-placed to be the first company to make this technological marvel a reality. As such, we wouldn't be shocked to find that the leaked paper is telling the truth: Google is the first company to reach 'quantum supremacy'. Its effects might not be immediately felt, but it's an exciting start.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

Google launches Password Checkup tool

Google has added a feature to its online password manager (passwords.google.com) that checks the strength of passwords you have stored in Chrome and Android, and alerts you when your accounts have been compromised.



Touchscreen typing speeds increase

People can now type almost as fast on a phone's touchscreen as they can on a computer keyboard, according to a new study. Average typing speeds on mobiles are now 38 words per minute compared to 52 on a keyboard.



WE DON'T LIKE...

Facial recognition used in job interviews

Artificial intelligence is being used in job interviews in the UK for the first time. Unilever is apparently using the technology to monitor candidates' faces as they answer questions, via a camera on a mobile phone or a laptop.



Hackers target food-delivery services

Cybersecurity firm DynaRisk has found that food delivery companies including Deliveroo, Domino's, Tesco, Morrisons and Whole Foods are being targeted by hackers, with shoppers billed for food and drink they didn't order.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

Surf Window

bit.ly/surf486 | From £299

Whether or not you're a surfer, the Surf Window is an interesting conversation piece. Built from wood, the device depicts sea conditions anywhere in the world – just 'high-five' the wooden octopus to change location. Surf Window uses Wi-Fi to check conditions every 15 minutes and each moving component represents a different variable: the bobbing sea shows wave heights; wind-speed is inferred through the lighthouse window; and the little boat's flashing lights indicate swell period. Pledges start at £299 for early-bird backers. Surf's up!



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Thomas Cook customers targeted by phishing sites

Security researchers have discovered that 53 Thomas Cook-related domains were registered in the week after the travel operator went into receivership, some of which were created for phishing purposes.

Patrick Martin, head of threat intelligence at Skurio, said that none of the sites were actively hosting malware, "but there are 53 domains out there so I'd be surprised if at least one or more [wasn't]". Some were being used as a means of harvesting user data by offering Thomas Cook customers refunds for money they'd lost on cancelled holidays.

Martin added that roughly 25% of the domains were simply piggybacking off the collapse by acting as harmless redirects to other sites, but others appeared to have been set up so that phishing attempts could be made on former



employees and customers from a legitimate-looking email address.

UK citizens have already been alerted to the influx of Thomas Cook-related scams, as banks have issued alerts to customers warning against the rise in threats targeting them.

bit.ly/thomas486

218 million Words With Friends players hit by hack

More than 218 million players of the popular mobile game Words With Friends have



been advised to change their passwords, following a serious data breach last month.

On 12 September, the games' publisher, Zynga, announced that a database containing player account information may have been stolen by an outside hacker. The hacker then came forward to claim responsibility, telling news site The Hacker News that he was able to access the data of every user who had signed up to play Words With Friends on Android and iOS.

The stolen information reportedly included names, email addresses, login IDs, hashed passwords and phone numbers. Zynga said that no financial data was compromised in the breach, that most of its other games were not affected and that it had taken steps to protect users' accounts. "Cyber-attacks are one of the unfortunate realities of doing business today," the company said on a support page.

bit.ly/words486

Credit: TK Kurikawa / Shutterstock.com

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

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



Q How worried should we be about security flaws reported in smart-home devices?

Richard Edwards,
Facebook

A Whether it's virtual assistants or home-security equipment, new devices are increasingly becoming

part of our lives. A recent report by *Which?* found webcams with security flaws being sold by Amazon, which serves as a reminder to owners of webcams, baby monitors and home-surveillance cameras of the dangers that we face, even in our own homes.

Because of the amount of sensitive information exchanged in what is seen as a 'safe' space, hackers are able to access a huge volume of personal information that can be used to devastating



“ By hacking home devices, criminals can spy on people, blackmail them and make them their partners in crime **”**

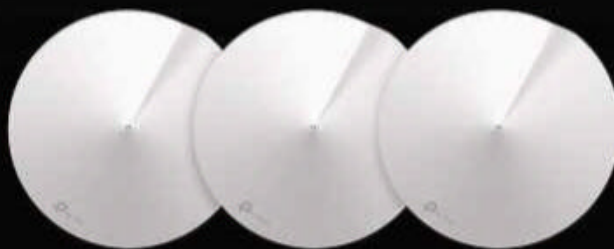
effect. By successfully hacking home devices, criminals can spy on people, blackmail them and even discreetly make them their partners in crime.

To combat this, further government intervention is becoming increasingly necessary. If the government allowed manufacturers who comply with Internet of Things device standards to display a clearly visible mark (similar to the British

Standards Institute kitemark), it would provide an easy way for consumers to tell if something is safe, and to avoid manufacturers who don't comply with these standards.

Security should be implemented by design and, as these Internet of Things devices are manufactured for global consumption, appropriate government guidelines will help make these devices safer.

STREAMING WITHOUT LIMITS



Choose Deco mesh routers for high-speed, seamless, whole home Wi-Fi



Robust Parental
Control



3-Year Built-In
Antivirus



Quality of
Service



facebook.com/TPLINKUK

tp-link.com/uk



twitter.com/tplinkuk

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

RELIGION

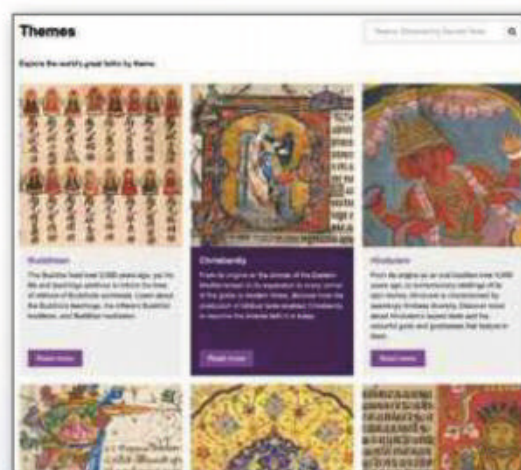
NEW

Discovering Sacred Texts

bit.ly/sacred486

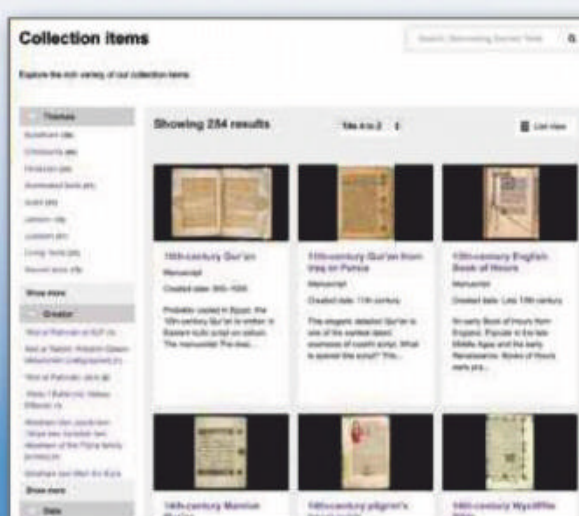
Offering more than 270 digitised items, the British Library's latest website explores the diversity of sacred texts from the UK's leading faiths. Its range of articles examines manuscripts such as those that make up the New Testament, the Torah and the Qur'an, and explores the themes that surround them. Each item in the collection is carefully labelled, described and pictured, and there are downloadable teacher's resources for educators. Easily to navigate and with plenty to pore over, it's a godsend for anyone with a thirst for knowledge.

Our rating



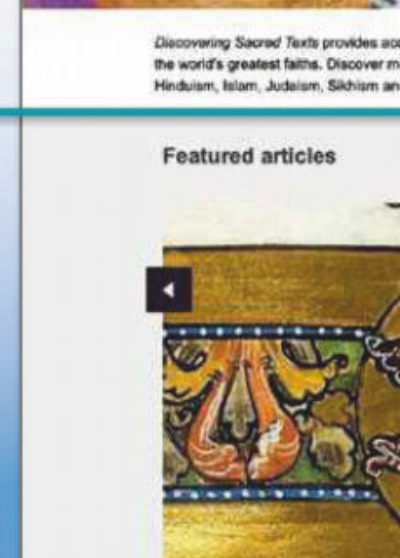
THEMES

The British Library has grouped the world's faiths by theme to aid study and exploration



ITEMS

Each digitised manuscript is well-documented and explained



Uncover evidence of internet censorship worldwide

Open data collected by the global OONI community

Explore

286.7M

233

18.1k

NEW

INTERNET

OONI Explorer

explorer.ooni.org

Many countries block websites, instant-messaging services and circumvention tools, and global volunteers for the Open Observatory of Network Interference are actively identifying what is being censored. This data is publicly available on the OONI Explorer website and, since it goes back eight years, there's plenty to browse. You can compare internet censorship across countries and check the speed and performance of networks and, although it can take a while to get your head around what everything means, you can read censorship reports on several countries. Some nations have very little volunteer data – North Korea, for instance – but that tells a story in and of itself.

Our rating



NEW

HEALTH

Kidney Kitchen

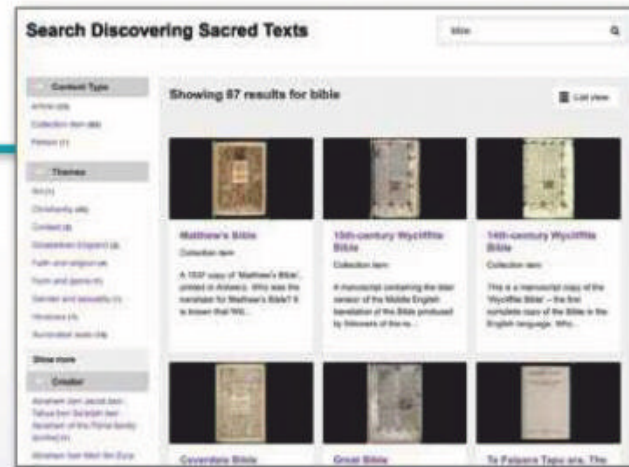
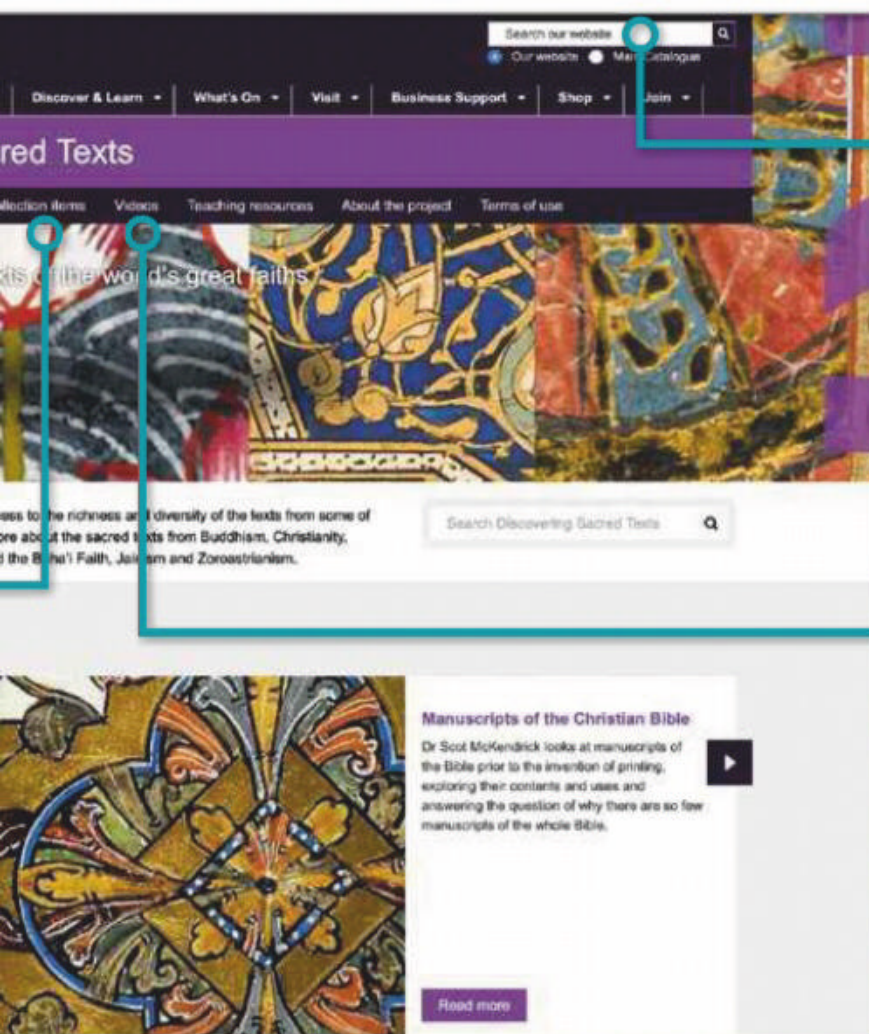
bit.ly/kidney486

People diagnosed with kidney disease need to restrict their diet, but rather than concentrate on foods to avoid, this site provides a host of delicious-looking recipes for the foods you *can* eat. Devised by chef Paul Ripley with the aid of the British Dietetic Association, visitors can filter the content by main meals, desserts and Christmas, with each recipe clearly listing the ingredients and instructions, as well as the preparation time, a photo and food facts that explain why the meal is healthy and how it could be adapted. Each recipe can be printed and many are accompanied by videos.

Our rating

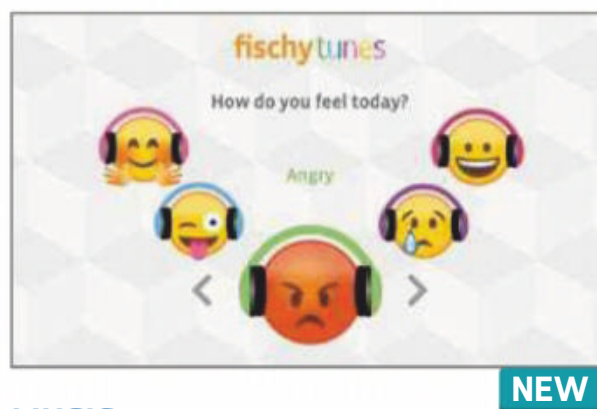


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



SEARCH
The fast and effective search tool makes it easy to find specific items

VIDEOS
Watch mini-documentaries to learn how Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims practise their faith



MUSIC
Fischy Tunes
www.fischytones.com

If a kid is happy and they know it, they've long been urged to clap their hands. But what if their mood is altogether different? On this website, children can also indicate whether they're feeling sad, angry, silly or kind by selecting a relevant emoji. This grants them access to videos, songs and resources that can best support them – a lovely idea which builds on a mental health initiative that has been operating in Scotland for 20 years. Each section has a handful of tunes and it's currently crowdfunding to add more. The site feels like it's at the start of its journey but is sure to improve over time.

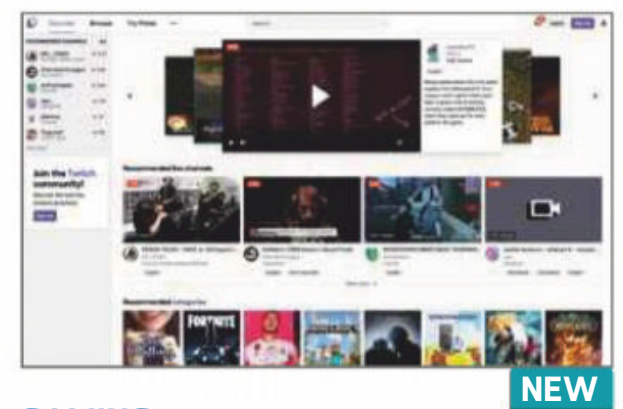
Our rating ★★★★★



FILM
The Daily Bugle
www.thedailybugle.net

Your enjoyment of the fictional Daily Bugle's site will depend on how invested you are in the Spider-Man movies. The most recent film brings back editor-in-chief J Jonah Jameson from the original trilogy, who stars in this promo site's conspiratorial video amid a host of Spider-Man bashing articles and blog posts alluding to the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The deliberately unpolished look of the site is perfectly pitched for the current "fake news" era. A conspiracy corner is said to be coming soon and, if you click through to buy the movie, you can watch a trailer or a 10-minute clip.

Our rating ★★★★★



GAMING
Twitch
www.twitch.tv

Some online brands make big changes to their websites that get users spluttering with indignation, but Twitch has opted for a subtler redesign – a new typeface, a different layout to make navigation easier, a lighter purple for the livery and a feature that lets creators choose a specific profile colour. The overall effect – along with a retro-style logo – is a familiar yet more eye-catching site. Sure, it has attracted complaints – some users reckon the font looks blurred and don't like that the channel viewer's position has changed – but it's a step in the right direction with more additions promised.

Our rating ★★★★★ ➔



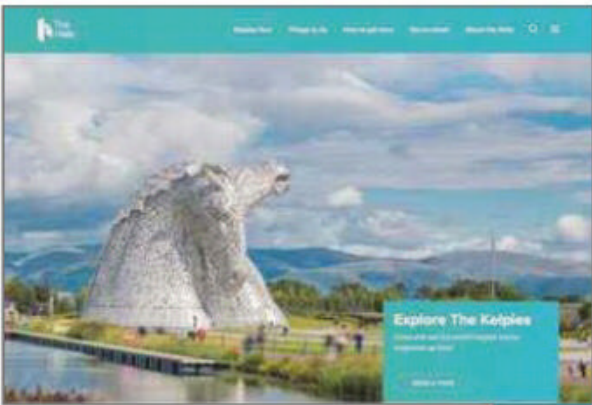
RELAUNCH

CHARITY

Emmaus
emmaus.org.uk

National homelessness charity Emmaus has spruced up its online space in a bid to better promote its activities and draw more donations by giving greater prominence to encouraging visitors to get involved and making it easier to find a local Emmaus. Just as importantly, it brings the stories of homeless people to the fore with dozens of inspiring and heartbreaking tales that help show how the charity has made a difference to many lives. Homeless people themselves can also learn more about Emmaus' services and, although the site has axed its blog, there's plenty of news to keep you coming back.

Our rating ★★★★★



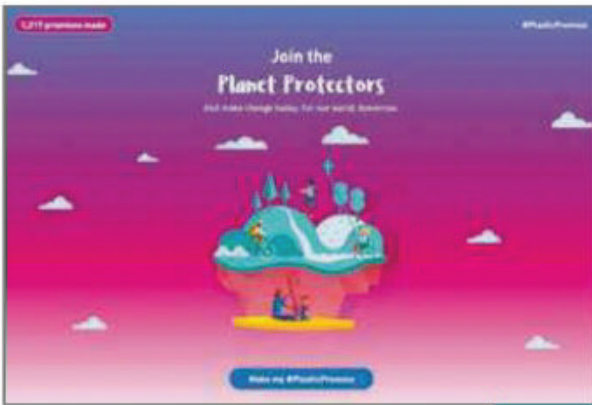
NEW

TOURISM

The Helix
www.thehelix.co.uk

At 30-metres high, The Kelpies horse-head sculptures in The Helix parklands of Falkirk are certainly eye-catching. Gallop over to this website to find out more about them, discover other things to do in the area and figure out how you're going to get there. An introductory video gives you a close-up view of the massive equine sculptures and a taste of the 30-minute tour (which is bookable through the site). With the inclusion of a breezy history of the ecopark, this well designed site pretty much answers any questions you might have about visiting while flagging up forthcoming events and opportunities to volunteer.

Our rating ★★★★★



NEW

ENVIRONMENT

Plastic Promises
www.plasticpromises.co.uk

Created on behalf of the charity Girlguiding, this website is simple, stylish and very effective in getting across the message that society really ought to be moving away from single-use plastic. Click the fun animation on the beautifully designed homepage or select "Make My #Plastic Promise" to see five ways you can pledge to take action, either by using a reusable bottle or coffee cup, steering away from clingfilm and disposable cutlery or simply speaking out. In doing so, you're given a digital badge that you can share on social media to help spread the word and take the opportunity to learn more about Girlguiding.

Our rating ★★★★★



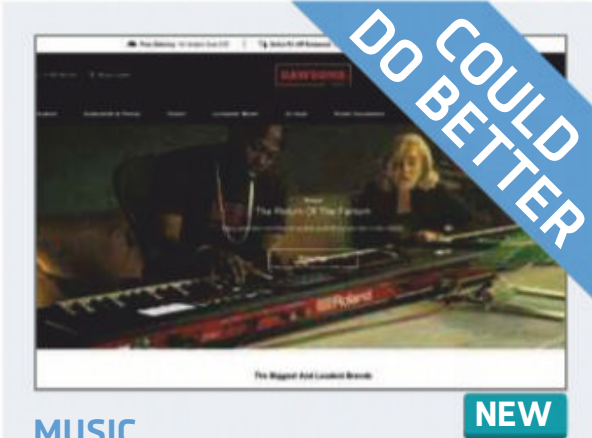
NEW

ENVIRONMENT

Address Pollution
www.addresspollution.org

Worried about the air quality in your area? Then this website will be right up your street. Enter your postcode (currently London-only) and it will draw on data supplied by King's College London to deliver a free air quality report that immediately indicates if the pollution exceeds the legal limit and explains the health and financial costs. Created by the not-for-profit Central Office of Public Interest, the site is low on razzmatazz but strong on action. Should you find the air quality level in your neck of the woods unacceptable, it lets you sign a petition to demand your MP and council take notice of a range of pollution-busting measures.

Our rating ★★★★★



NEW

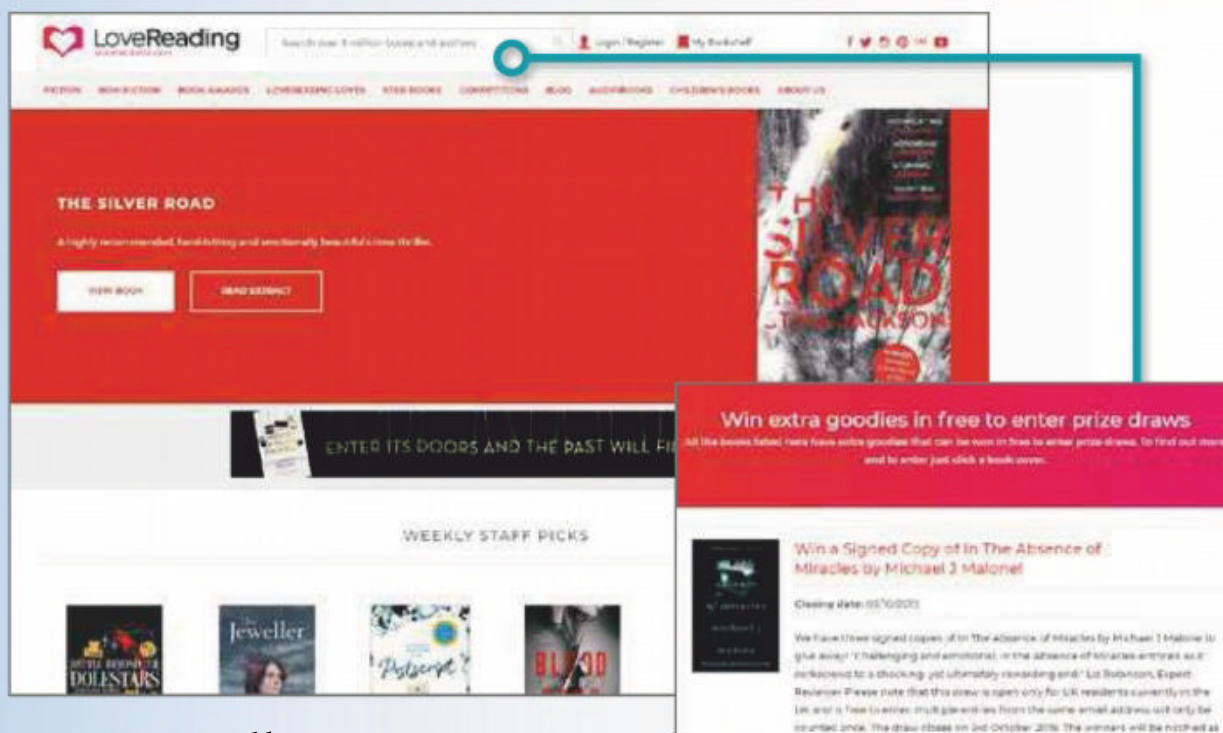
MUSIC

Dawsons Music
www.dawsons.co.uk

Dawsons is one of the UK's leading retailers of music instruments and consumer audio but its relaunched website could do with a fine-tune. Since its primary aim is to sell, its homepage feels too cluttered – highlighting products, promoting its blog and throwing in Trustpilot reviews for good measure. Get past that, however, and the site is perfectly pitched. The items are well pictured, perfectly described and clearly priced. Meanwhile, the blog – Studio D – is actually a goldmine of information, news, suggestions and beginners guides.

Our rating ★★★★★

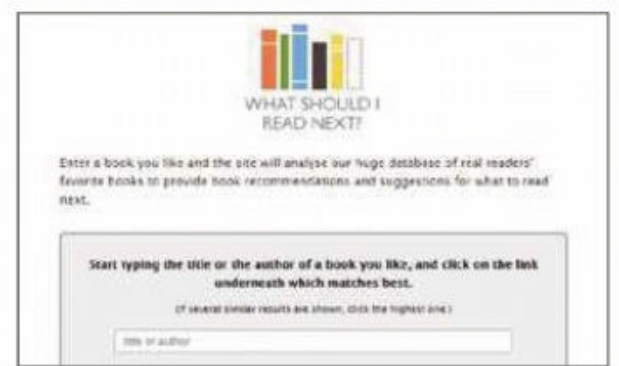
ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Brilliant book sites



LoveReading

www.lovereadings.co.uk

Now in its fourteenth year, LoveReading is a thriving community for bookworms that offers numerous ways to discover new and suitable reads. As well as browsing the site's books of the month, weekly staff picks and themed roundups, you can download lengthy opening extracts from select titles and listen to samples of audiobooks for free. Books of interest can be saved to a virtual 'bookshelf', and LoveReading lets you compare prices across 10 leading bookstores, so you're not limited to Amazon. There are over five million titles and authors on the site, across more than 30 categories, each accompanied by 'if you love this, you might like these' suggestions. LoveReading also runs frequent competitions, with prizes often including signed books.



What Should I Read Next?

www.whatshouldireadnext.com

As if to prove that you can judge a website by its name, this simple site recommends suitable reading material based on any title or author you specify. There are no frills, just a long list of relevant books accompanied by keyword tags relating to the content, themes and genre, and an Info/Buy button. Clicking this takes you to the book's page on Amazon.com, but it's not too much hassle to find the same title on Amazon.co.uk. Sign up with What Should I Read Next to save lists of recommendations based on your favourite books, and help other users find titles that match their tastes using the site's bespoke algorithm.



Five Books

fivebooks.com

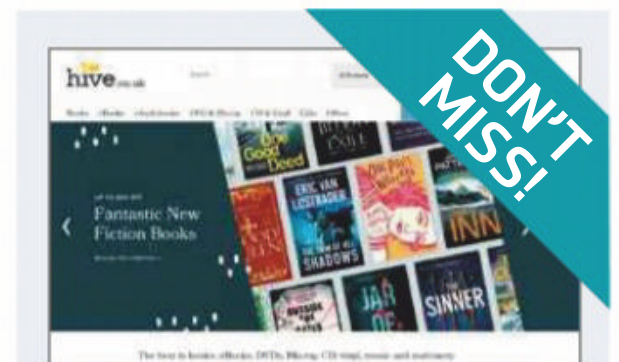
Want to discover the best books about Ancient Rome, Heavy Metal or George Orwell? Then head to Five Books, where you'll find curated selections of books on specific subjects, as recommended by experts. Non-fiction categories span everything from Art and Business to Sport and Technology, while the fiction section ranges from classic English literature to modern thrillers, and suggestions also include graphic novels, poetry and audiobooks. Each expert is interviewed about their five choices – for example, Lynda La Plante on crime novels and PJ O'Rourke on political satire – and there are five thousand recommendations to browse, with links to buy each book from Amazon.co.uk, and a roundup of the best titles of 2019 (so far).



A Little Blog of Books

alittleblogofbooks.com

Dozens, if not hundreds, of books are published each week, so it's easy for titles to get lost in the melee. This blog by book lover Clare Rowland has been reviewing the best new release of the week since 2012, providing a more personal take on non-fiction and fiction than you're likely to find in the Books section of newspapers. Recent reviews include *Confessions of a Bookseller* by Shaun Bythell, *Spring* by Ali Smith and *Sweet Sorrow* by David Nicholls, with an index covering the last seven years. The News & Features section has some fun ruminations, such as 'Books I Never Finished', and Rowland happily engages with visitors in the comments section below each review and notifies subscribers when new content is posted.



Hive

www.hive.co.uk

Love books, but wary of Amazon's bullying business tactics, tax avoidance and alleged poor treatment of workers? Then stock up on reading material at Hive, which supports independent bookstores with every sale it makes, by letting you donate a percentage of your purchase to your preferred high-street shop. You can also collect your order from there, or have it delivered to your home for free, and use Hive's bookshop finder to search for retailers in its network near you. Although Hive's main focus is on physical books, it also sells ebooks and audiobooks, and it undercuts Amazon's prices on many titles.

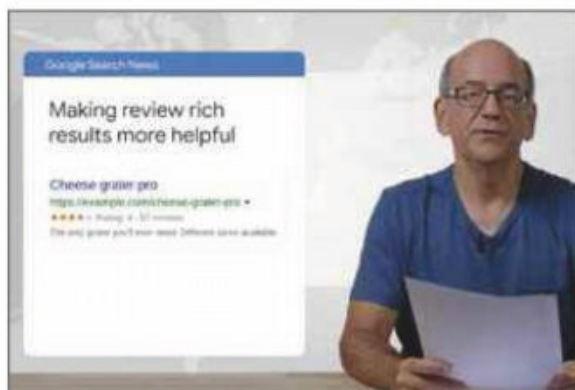
Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Get hints to make your site better

There are some clever tools that scan your website and provide tips to help you improve it. An interesting new addition is Webhint (webhint.io), which looks for a range of potential problems from accessibility to security and suggests what you can do to fix them. Webhint draws out a lot of detail so you'll need to decide what to prioritise, but if you're looking for new ways to improve the way your site is constructed, Webhint will pinpoint where there's room for improvement.



of the latest happenings in and around Google that affect web builders. If you see something you're interested in, there are links to more about each story in the information posted below the video. Watch the first episode at bit.ly/news486.

Watch Google Search news

Google has launched another great series on its Google Webmasters YouTube channel (bit.ly/gwchan486) called Google Search News. Presented by John Mueller, it's a great monthly digest

Deal of the Fortnight

GoDaddy (uk.godaddy.com) is offering WordPress hosting for £1.20 per month for the first year. Use the code GDD1mwp when you check out.

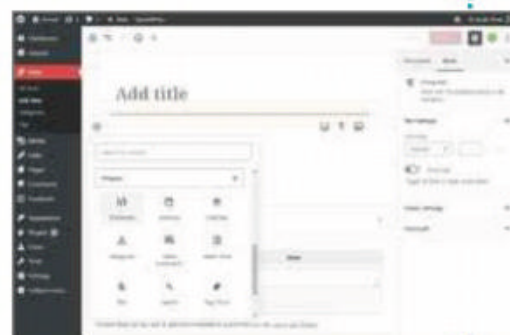
Web-building Helpdesk

Q A WordPress plugin is asking me to enter a 'shortcode' into my site, otherwise it won't display the widget I'm trying to use. How do I enter a shortcode?

Gary Freeman, via email

A Since version 5.0 of WordPress, you can add shortcodes as a block straight from the Add New interface. Click the plus button to add a new block, open the Widgets section and choose Shortcode. These are a bit like HTML tags, in that you can drop them into the text and WordPress will action the instruction inside the square brackets, rather than display the actual code on the page as if it were text.

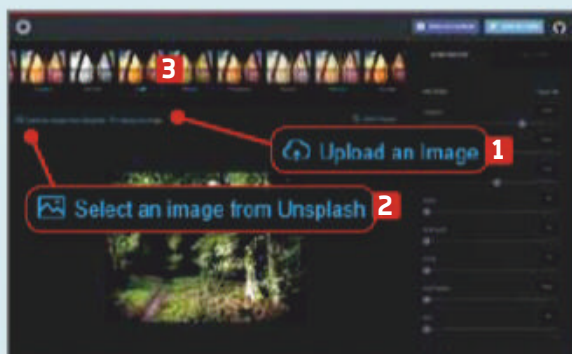
Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor



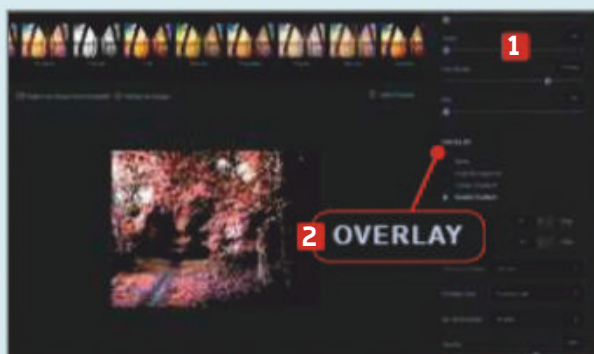
MINI WORKSHOP | Add filters to your images with CSS

cssFilters: www.cssfilters.co |  10 mins | Any website

You can jazz up even the most boring images with a good filter, but if you don't want to permanently change your pictures, cssFilters lets you use code to alter images on your website while leaving the original file intact



1 Go to cssFilters (www.cssfilters.co) and either upload the image you want to use **1** or choose a stock image to experiment with. **2** The thumbnails across the top of the screen **3** are preset filters based on the ones you find on Instagram. Click and hold the mouse button down as you move to scroll through the options.



2 If you're confident with using colours (or just like to experiment), you can create your own filter or fine-tune an existing one to better fit your photo. On the Generate tab, you'll find sliders at the top **1** to change colours, brightness and other elements, and an Overlay section at the bottom **2** for adding more effects.



3 Once you've settled on a filter that you like, click the CSS Code tab. **1** Copy the code in the CSS section **2** and paste it into your site's '.css' file. Use the information in the Markup section **3** to build the image links in your HTML file, adding `<figure class="filter"></figure>` tags around any images.

Have **fun** at work
and increase your **productivity**



Get lost in your creativity but not on your desktop thanks to the 34" ultra-wide **ProLite XUB3493WQSU** offering a 133% larger viewable area compared to Full HD monitors. Be more productive while displaying various applications side-by-side at the same time and enjoy true-to-life colours.

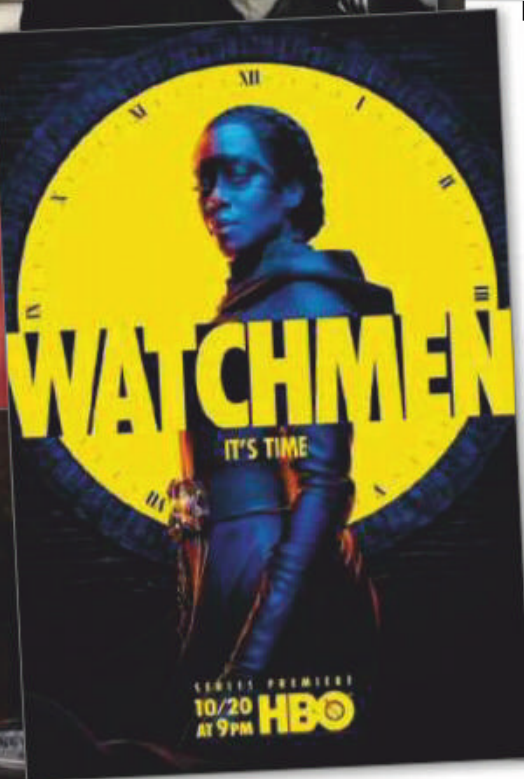
- **UWQHD (Ultra Wide QHD)** resolution offers an ultra wide (21:9) viewable area
- **PiP and PbP** modes allow simultaneous display of images from two different signal sources
- **Flicker Free** and **Blue Light Reducer** for your eyes health and comfort





What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NOWTV

Watch the new TV version of comic book *Watchmen*

From 21 October

This isn't the first time Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' 1985 comic-book series has been adapted for the screen. A 2009 film of *Watchmen* gained a fresh generation of fans for the comics, and now this 10-part HBO show created by *Lost*'s Damon Lindelof promises to beguile a whole new audience.

Moore famously hates people meddling with his work, so Lindelof has left the original story alone and, instead, crafted a sequel, set 34 years later in 2019. The official trailer (bit.ly/watchmen486) paints an anarchic world of spurned superheroes and masked vigilantes. It also offers glimpses of the cast, led by 2019's Best Actress Oscar-winner Regina King plus Don Johnson, Jeremy Irons and Robert Redford – who came out of retirement to play President Redford in the show.

Watchmen airs in the UK on Sky Atlantic, so you can stream it on-demand via Now TV with an Entertainment Pass (£8.99 per month, bit.ly/nowent486). Now TV also has the 2009 film at bit.ly/watchfilm486, but you'll need a Cinema Pass to watch it (£11.99 per month). Both passes have a free 7-day trial.

Elsewhere online, HBO's *Watchmen* site has cast introductions and an interview with illustrator Gibbons (www.hbo.com/watchmen), while the Watchmen Wiki has numerous video featurettes (bit.ly/watchwiki486).



Meet Batman's butler before Batman in *Pennyworth*

From 25 October

Following the success of *Joker* comes another *Batman* origin story, this time about the caped crusader's butler, Alfred. The 10-part drama series takes us back to 1960s London to meet young Michael Caine soundalike Alfred Pennyworth (Jack Bannon) and American billionaire Thomas Wayne,



father of Bruce. The official trailer (bit.ly/pennyworth486) also features singer-turned-actress Paloma Faith, *Lock, Stock*'s Jason Flemyng and plenty of Swinging Sixties clichés.

You can watch *Pennyworth* on Amazon's StarzPlay channel, which costs £4.99 per month with a Prime subscription (bit.ly/starzplay486).

N Watch Meryl Streep in *The Laundromat*

From 18 October

Netflix's latest big-budget film is set against the Panama Papers scandal, a vast document leak in 2016 which revealed how the world's richest people protect their wealth using fraud, tax evasion and dodgy dealings.



Meryl Streep stars a widow who discovers she's a victim of insurance fraud, and Gary Oldman and Antonio Banderas play shady lawyers.

The film is directed by Steven Soderbergh, whose CV is packed with movies about real-life legal wrangles, including *Erin Brockovich*, *Syriana* and *Michael Clayton*.

Watch Netflix's official trailer at bit.ly/laundromat486. The BBC has a handy cheat sheet on the Panama Papers scandal at bit.ly/panama486.



N See double of Paul Rudd in *Living With Yourself*

From 18 October

The world's two most likeable beautiful people, Paul Rudd (*Ant-Man*) and

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



Aisling Bea (whose sitcom *The Way Up* is streaming now via All 4 at bit.ly/thiswayup486), finally meet in this new Netflix show. And as if that weren't incendiary enough, Rudd appears twice, as a dissatisfied everyman and his accidentally spawned doppelganger.

All eight episodes come to Netflix on 18 October at bit.ly/living486, where you can watch the latest official trailer for free.

Return to 80s London for Idris Elba's *In the Long Run*

From 16 October

Idris Elba is carving out a niche in



BritBox is coming to more devices

BritBox will be available on Samsung TVs, Freeview Play devices and YouView set-top boxes when it launches this winter, the BBC and ITV streaming service has confirmed.

Samsung smart TV owners will get first dibs, since their sets will host the BritBox app as soon as it launches in the UK.

Freeview Play and YouView will get the app by the end of 2019. It'll also be available via the web, Android and iOS.

BritBox is set to launch by December 2019, costing £5.99 per month for on-demand access to a huge archive of classic and contemporary BBC and ITV shows, along with new additions Channel 5 and Comedy Central, with more to come. It launched in the US in 2017, where it's amassed more than 650,000 subscribers.

britbox
CREATED BY **BBC & itv**

semi-autobiographical sitcoms. His Sky show *In the Long Run*, based on Elba's teenage years in 1980s London, is now on its second six-episode series, which you can stream on-demand via Now TV at bit.ly/longrun486. There's also a new trailer, at bit.ly/longtrail486 – but, oddly, you can only watch it via the Sky Go app (bit.ly/skygo486).

Meanwhile Elba's other semi-autobiographical comedy, *Turn Up Charlie*, in which he plays a struggling DJ, is now on Netflix at bit.ly/charlie486.

drama, so set your alarms for Episode 7. Each episode is inspired by a different article in the Modern Love section of *The New York Times*, where readers write in to bemoan their love lives. Anne Hathaway and Dev Patel also star, and one episode is directed by Sharon Horgan. Catch the official trailer at bit.ly/modlove486.



Watch Amazon's new romcom *Modern Love*

From 18 October

Fleabag's 'Hot Priest' Andrew Scott and ginger troubadour Ed Sheeran pop up in the same episode of Amazon's new comedy-

In case you missed it...

The Walking Dead just keeps on walking. Season 10 is streaming weekly via Now TV at bit.ly/walking486, where Seasons 1-9 expire in a couple of



weeks. Worry not, the old seasons are also on Amazon. Seasons 1-8 are included with Prime, and Season 9 is available to rent at bit.ly/amazwalk486.

Season 11 is scheduled for next year.

Amazon has plenty of new stuff, too. Alan Moore comic adaptation *Swamp Thing* is not quite the draw *Watchmen* is likely to be – the show was cancelled before Season 1 even finished filming, so there are 10 episodes instead of the planned 13 – but you can judge for yourself via Amazon Prime. Check out DC's official trailer at bit.ly/swamp486.

[swamp486](http://bit.ly/swamp486).

Amazon has also got *Goliath* Season 3, starring Billy Bob Thornton as a jaded lawyer (watch all three seasons at bit.ly/goliath486), and Season 2 of anarchic horror *The Purge* at bit.ly/purge486. Best of all, Amazon has just added the first 200 episodes of Aussie soap *Home and Away* at bit.ly/homeaway486, including the 1988 pilot.

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Apple iPhone 11

Apple fights back against Android with a more affordable iPhone

Apple recently launched three new iPhones: the iPhone 11 we're reviewing here, the iPhone 11 Pro (with a better screen and camera) and the larger iPhone 11 Pro Max. It's the 'basic' model that has piqued our interest, though, with an affordable price (for an iPhone, at least) and an overall package that's only slightly behind its more expensive siblings. At £729 for the 64GB model, it's not only £320 cheaper than the basic iPhone 11 Pro but £70 less than last year's iPhone XR was when it launched.

Build and screen

At first glance, the iPhone 11 looks no different to its higher-powered siblings. It has a square camera plinth at the rear, which is integrated into the single sheet of glass that makes up the back of the case. This model comes in a choice of black, green, yellow, purple, red and white, with an anodised aluminium trim running around its perimeter. It's robust, too – the case's waterproofing can withstand being submerged in up to 2m of water for 30 minutes before it risks taking damage.

From the front, it's barely distinguishable from the other models, with a slightly thicker border around the display than the Pro models but no difference in the size of the notch at the top of the screen.

The display uses IPS technology, which we measured with our

colorimeter to have a peak brightness of 567cd/m² (candles per square metre) and a contrast ratio of 1,563:1. Its colour reproduction is exceptional, too, with highly accurate representation of the sRGB colour standard.

All in all, this is a superb IPS screen but it's noticeably less impressive than the OLED screen on the iPhone 11 Pro, and it's likely that this accounts for much of the price difference between the two models.

Performance and battery

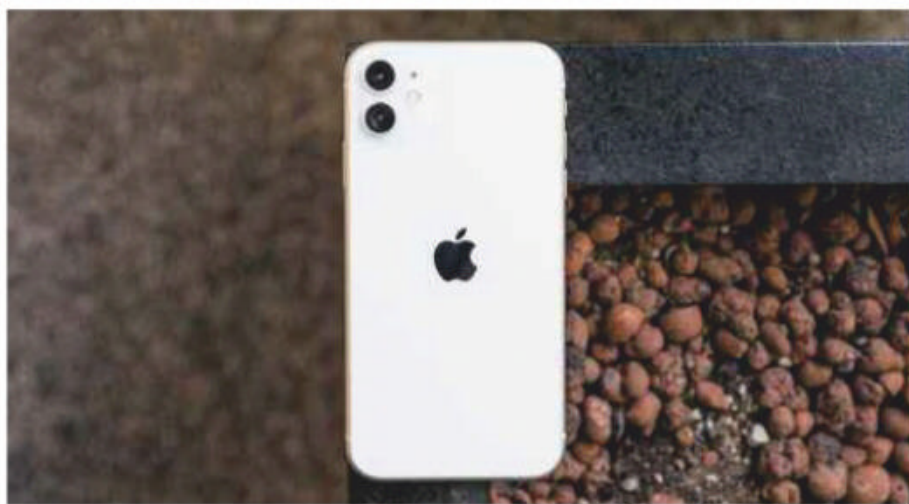
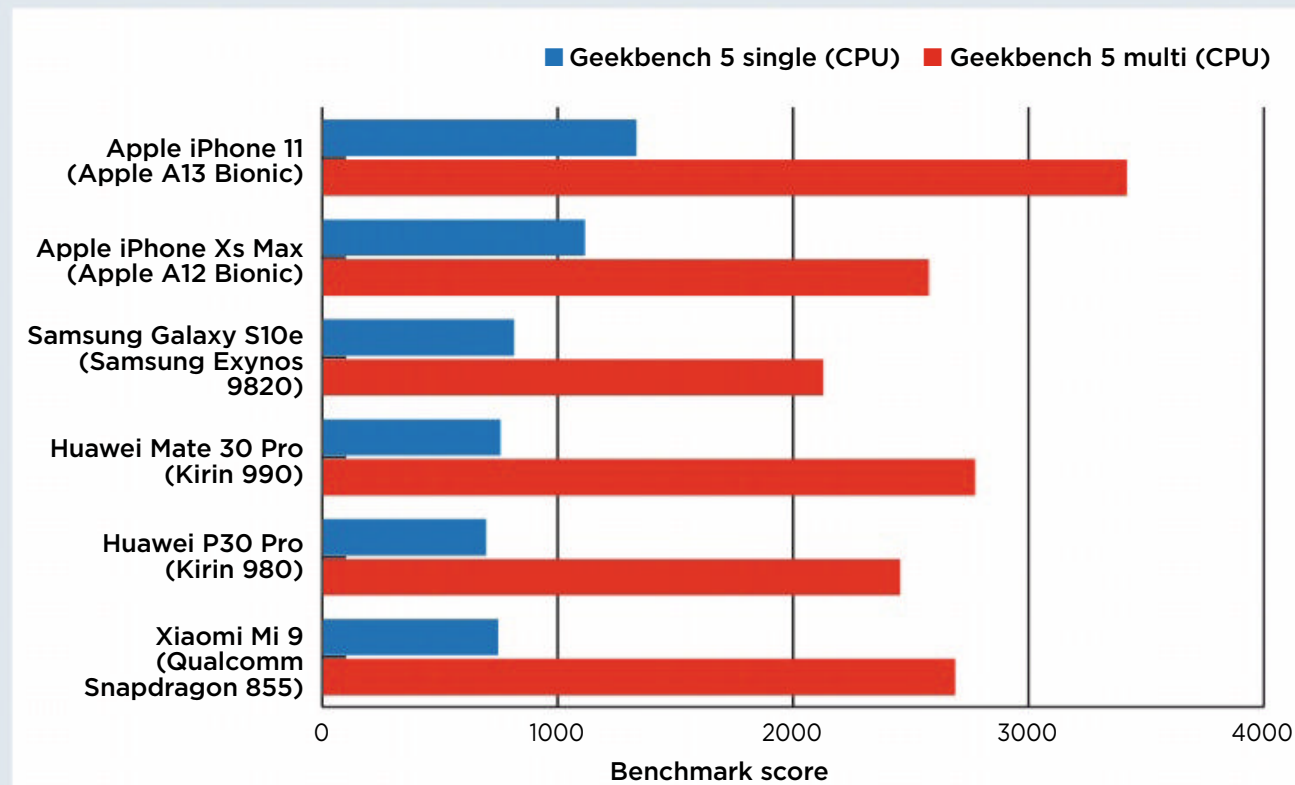
There's certainly no scrimping on the iPhone 11's performance – in our benchmark tests, this iPhone proved faster than any other phone we've tested to date, with the same new A13 Bionic processor and 4GB of RAM as the other new models. For reference, it scored 1,334 in the Geekbench 5 single-core benchmark and 3,417 in the multi-core version. In the GFXBench GL Car Chase benchmark, it achieved frame rates of 60fps onscreen and 77fps offscreen.

This phenomenal performance is put to good use, even beyond its ability to run 3D games. For example, the phone has a 4K video camera with extended dynamic range, which shoots fully stabilised 4K video at 120fps, capturing each alternate frame at different exposure levels and combining them for a pseudo-HDR video effect at 60fps.



“ This iPhone proved faster than any other phone we've tested to date ”

Geekbench 5 (CPU)



Battery life is reasonably good, too. In our video rundown test, it ran for about an hour longer than the iPhone 11 Pro, reaching 18 hours and 36 minutes before needing a recharge. That's a big improvement on last year's iPhones. However, if battery life is your priority, there are Android models that last even longer.

Cameras

The iPhone 11 has a brilliant main camera supplemented by a good ultra-wide-angle camera. These are the same cameras you'll find in the iPhone 11 Pro – delivering 12-megapixel images and fully-stabilised 4K video at 60fps – but without the additional 2x optical telephoto lens.

As part of the update to iOS 13, the camera's user interface has also been updated. There's a new zoom

wheel, some of the core options (flash, Live Photo, timer, filter effects) are now accessed by swiping up on the mode switcher and you get a preview of the ultra-wide-angle view to the left and right of the main preview window. You can also have the camera capture images from both the ultra-wide and primary cameras simultaneously, then use the

the revamped Photos app recompose photos shots after you've taken them.

If you're not committed to iOS, there's plenty of healthy competition from Android. The Samsung Galaxy S10 one-ups the iPhone 11 with an extra camera, a more elegant notch-free screen and double the storage – and at £690, it's nearly £40 cheaper.

If you're happy to sacrifice the S10's telephoto camera, the Samsung Galaxy S10e will save you even more money – around £200 at current prices. You might also consider the OnePlus 7 Pro – a huge phone with three cameras and a super-slick display – which starts at £649. It's about to be replaced by the OnePlus 7T Pro but that's not likely to be a huge upgrade.

OUR VERDICT



We think the iPhone 11 offers the best value for money from Apple's new crop of phones. The display isn't as good and it lacks the telephoto lens, but these compromises have had a significant impact on the price. However, it's worth pointing out that you can get a big-name

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

Android device with all the bells and whistles (if not the performance) of a Pro model, for less than the price of the iPhone 11.

PRODUCT INFO

Apple iPhone 11

Price: £729

Buy from Apple:

bit.ly/iphone486

SPECIFICATIONS

- 6-core Apple A13 Bionic processor
- 4GB of memory
- 6.1in 828 x 1,792 pixels IPS screen
- Rear: 12-megapixels primary camera, 12-megapixels ultrawide camera; front: 12-megapixels camera
- 64GB, 128GB or 256GB of storage
- 3,110mAh battery
- Apple iOS 13
- 144 x 71 x 8.1mm
- 188g

FOR

- ✓ Very fast
- ✓ Decent battery life
- ✓ Superb photos and video

AGAINST

- ✗ No telephoto camera
- ✗ Large notch at top of screen

EVEN BETTER SCREEN

iPhone 11 Pro, £1,049

bit.ly/iphpro486



ANDROID ALTERNATIVE

Samsung Galaxy S10, £639.99

bit.ly/samsung486



Sonos Move

Sonos has a reputation for making the best wireless home speakers but the Move is its first portable model

Sonos speakers have long been the benchmark for ease of use and sound quality in multi-room audio. However, the company has never produced a mobile, battery-powered speaker with Bluetooth – until now. At last, Sonos fans get a speaker that can be picked up and moved wherever you like, with no need for a mains extension lead.

Design and build

At 240mm tall and 3kg, the Sonos Move is big and heavy for a portable speaker. You can lug it into the garden but you probably aren't going to want to pack it in a suitcase and take it on holiday.

It has a fantastic range of features, including support for

both Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant (though not both simultaneously – you have to use its app to select one or the other), Wi-Fi and Apple Airplay 2, full integration with other Sonos devices and the ability to automatically tune itself for best performance based on its current surroundings. It also comes with support for over 100 streaming services, including Spotify.

The main controls – a microphone on/off button, a Play/Pause button and a pair of controls for adjusting the volume up and down – are touch-sensitive, and work reliably and quickly. They sit on the top panel, along with the speaker's far-field microphone array.

The rear of the speaker



on the floor, on shelves and in corners, and the Sonos Move's clever self-adjusting sound consistently produces an excellent balance between

you can buy – better than the Apple AirPod and, given that it supports Google Assistant and Alexa, much smarter too. It's got more oomph than the Sonos One and it's streets ahead of the best Amazon and Google-branded smart speakers or screens.

However, at £399, there's no denying that the Sonos Move is expensive. Apple's HomePod is comparatively cheap at £279, while the top-of-the-range Google Home Max is only £299.

“An excellent balance between powerful bass and high-end clarity”

consists of a scooped-out hollow that doubles as a carrying handle. Within this cavity, there's a power button, a Join button for connecting to a Wi-Fi or Sonos network and another for switching the speaker between Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. To charge the speaker's 10-hour battery, you simply drop it into the supplied ring-shaped charging base or plug it in via USB-C.

Sound quality and price

The speaker's output is impressive, with enough volume to fill a large open-plan room. We've listened to the speaker indoors and out, positioned next to walls and

powerful bass and high-end clarity. We'd go as far as saying that this is the best-sounding smart speaker

OUR VERDICT



Although it's bigger and heavier than most portable speakers, this battery-powered smartspeaker from Sonos produces top-quality sound, made even more impressive by its automatic tuning feature.

You can choose Alexa or Google voice support, and switch between them from the supplied app. It also

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

supports Bluetooth, so you can connect devices to it directly.

There's no denying that it's pricey, but it's also well worth the money.

PRODUCT INFO

Sonos Move

Price: £399

Buy from Sonos:
bit.ly/sonos486

SPECIFICATIONS

- Dual-band 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi
- Bluetooth
- Apple AirPlay 2
- IP56 dust and splash protection
- 10-hour battery
- 240 x 160 x 126mm
- 3kg

FOR

- ✓ Brilliant sound quality
- ✓ Drop- and weather-proof
- ✓ Supports Alexa and Google Assistant

AGAINST

- ✗ Big and heavy
- ✗ Expensive

Get £20 off using code CA20 at the checkout



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Intel Inside®.
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Web User's Best Buys

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

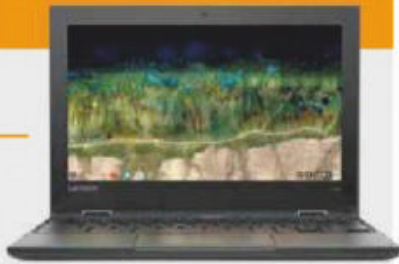
HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

CHROMEBOOK

Lenovo Chromebook 500e

£349.98 from bit.ly/leno483

Tested: Issue 483



This versatile and rugged convertible Chromebook has been designed for the classroom but would be just as useful at home and on the move. It's tough enough to survive a few knocks and you can use a stylus on its touchscreen.

KEY SPECS

Intel Celeron N3450 processor ■ 32GB storage ■ 4GB memory ■ 11.6in touchscreen ■ 1,366 x 768 pixels resolution ■ Intel UHD Graphics 500 card ■ 2 x USB-C, 2 x USB 3 ports ■ 290 x 204 x 20.4mm ■ 1.31kg ■ 1-year collect-and-return

SECURITY CAMERA

Google Nest Cam IQ Outdoor

£279 from bit.ly/nest481

Tested: Issue 481



This is the best-quality external security camera we've tested, capable of capturing clear, sharp video footage. It takes a bit of setting up and is expensive, but it's worth paying for if you're serious about your home security.

KEY SPECS

Outdoor camera ■ 1080p video resolution ■ 130-degree lens ■ Motion and audio detection ■ Night vision ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 128 x 93 x 93mm ■ Three hours of free cloud storage ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

INKJET PRINTER

Canon Pixma TS6250

£114.36 from bit.ly/cango479

Tested: Issue 479



This multifunction printer looks smart and is easy to use, whether you're printing from a PC, mobile device or its own touchscreen. With great results and acceptable running costs, it's easy to recommend.

KEY SPECS

4,800 x 1,200dpi print resolution ■ 2,400 x 1,200dpi scan resolution ■ 200-sheet A4 paper capacity ■ Double-sided printing ■ 7.5in colour touchscreen ■ 802.11n Wi-Fi ■ 372 x 315 x 139mm ■ 6.2kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

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

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

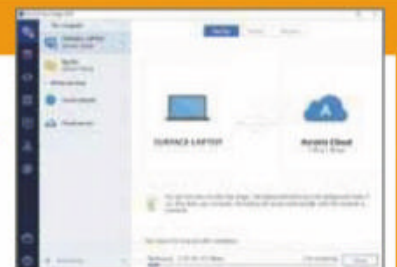
AMD Radeon RX 570 graphics processor ■ 2,048 GPU cores ■ 1,300MHz clock speed ■ 4GB memory ■ 1 x DisplayPort, 2 x DVI, 1 x HDMI outputs ■ 200W power ■ 240mm ■ Two-year repair-and-replace warranty

BACKUP SOFTWARE

Acronis True Image 2019

£35 from bit.ly/acro473

Tested: Issue 473



Acronis True Image is a versatile backup tool that does everything from cloud storage to disaster recovery. It's not cheap compared with rival software, but it's flexible and simple to control, and should cover all your backup 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

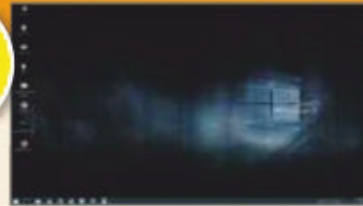
Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

RECOVERY TOOL

Hiren's Boot CD

NEW!



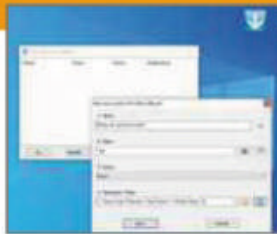
Free from www.hirensbootcd.org

Tested: Issue 485

Hiren's Boot CD isn't just the best bootable recovery disk, it's arguably the only one you'll ever need – packed with tools to fix just about every problem you're likely to run into.

FILE ORGANISER

DroptIt



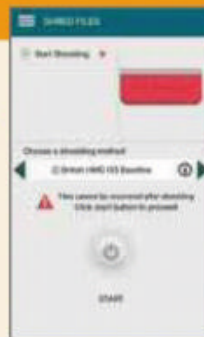
Free from www.dropitproject.com

Tested: Issue 484

DroptIt's great innovation is to place a floating arrow icon on your desktop. When you have a file that needs sorting, just drag it over to the icon and drop it.

ANDROID DATA SHREDDER

Shredder



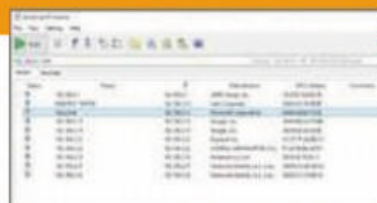
Free from bit.ly/shredder483

Tested: Issue 483

Shredder is an excellent, easy-to-use tool that deletes sensitive and unwanted files permanently, so they can never be recovered.

WI-FI MONITOR

Advanced IP Scanner



Free from

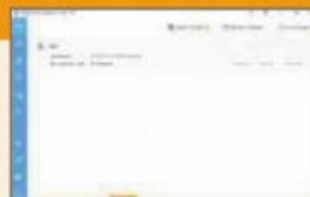
www.advanced-ip-scanner.com

Tested: Issue 482

This handy tool identifies all devices connected to your Wi-Fi network. There's a portable version available, too.

BACKUP SOFTWARE

EaseUS Todo Backup Free



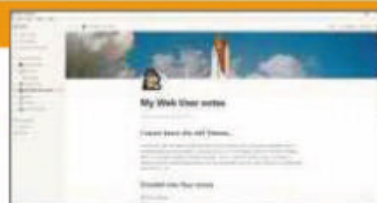
Free from bit.ly/ease481

Tested: Issue 481

The free version of EaseUS Todo Backup is more than enough to keep your PC backed up for years to come. It's missing a few tools but nothing that hampers its usefulness.

NOTE-TAKING TOOL

Notion



Free from www.notion.so

Tested: Issue 480

Notion lets you keep and organise all your inspired thoughts, no matter what device you're using. It has every feature you'll ever need and it's free for personal use.

WebUser

BACK ISSUES DISC 2018



Our **2018 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year is now on sale from Amazon

For more information, visit bit.ly/wudisc18 or search for 'webuser disc'

You can still buy our 2014-2017 Back Issues Discs, search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon



Best Free Software

SYSTEM UPDATER

IObit Driver Booster 7

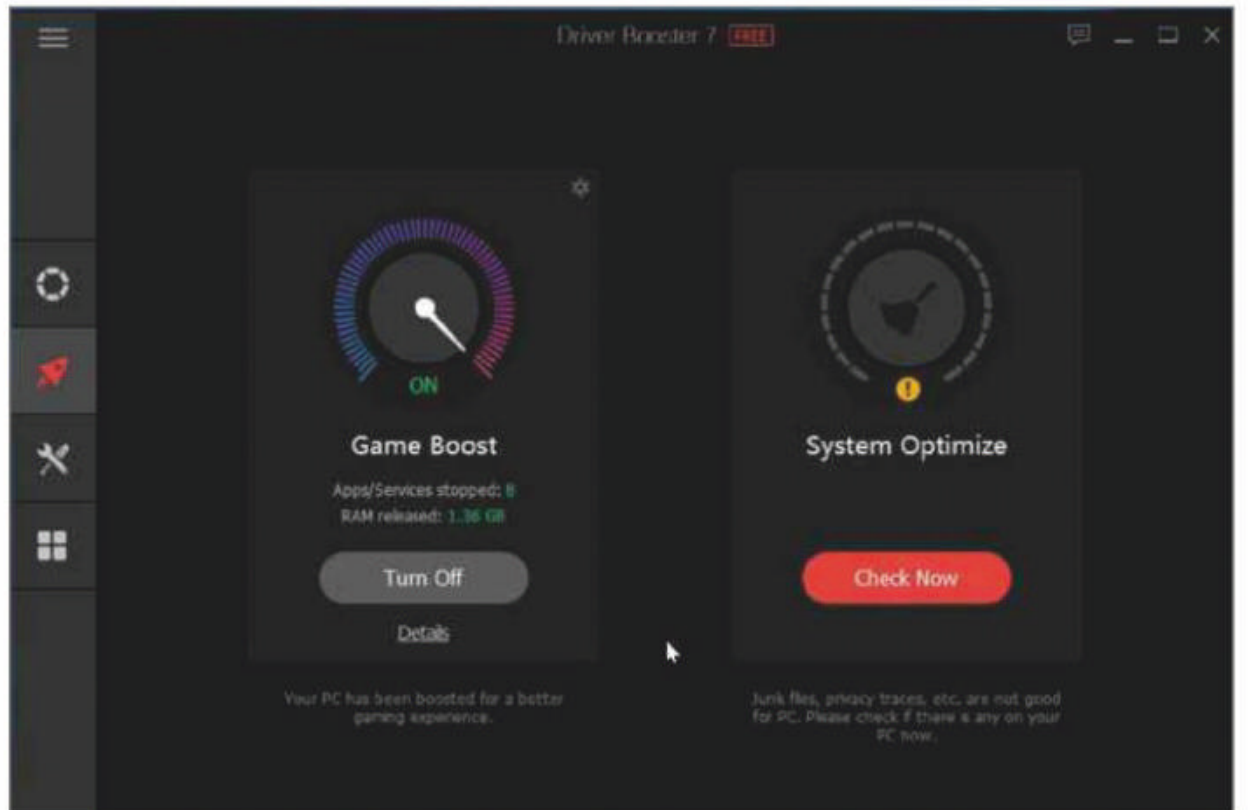
bit.ly/driver486

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 23.5MB

Missing, incorrect, outdated or broken hardware drivers on your PC can lead to all sorts of problems, including freezes and crashes. Windows – especially Windows 10 – does a good job of ensuring you have the drivers you need, but it's not infallible, which is where Driver Booster can help.

This free software scans your system for outdated or missing drivers, and presents you with its findings. You can then update individual drivers, or the whole lot, with a single click. The process is quick and painless and, unlike some other programs, you don't need to upgrade to a paid-for version before



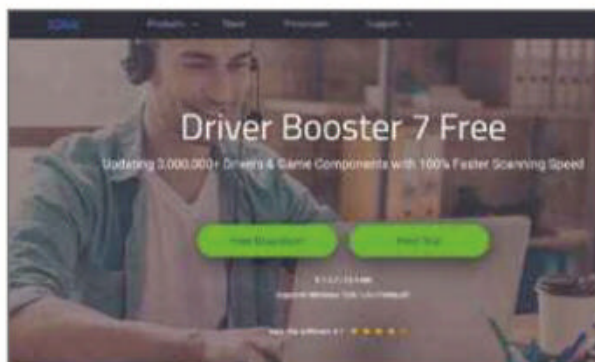
you can get the drivers.

Driver Booster 7 offers an improved Game Boost feature, which frees up memory and disables unnecessary apps and services to speed up gaming. There are also a number of useful tools that fix common problems, such as missing sound, bad screen resolution and network failure. There's a new Software Updater component, too, which scans your PC looking for outdated programs, although you need to install IObit Software Updater to actually update the items it identifies.

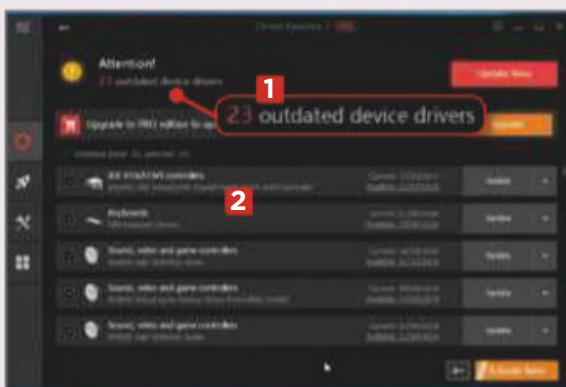
The latest version of the software also silences notifications when it detects that you are running a full-screen task or playing a game, to avoid distracting you.

If you require more features, the paid-for Pro version, which costs £18.61 a year for three PCs and includes a free Tweaks ebook, now covers 3.5 million drivers, including more rare, mismatched and outdated ones, and delivers faster scanning speeds.

Be sure to decline the bundled junk and offers during installation.



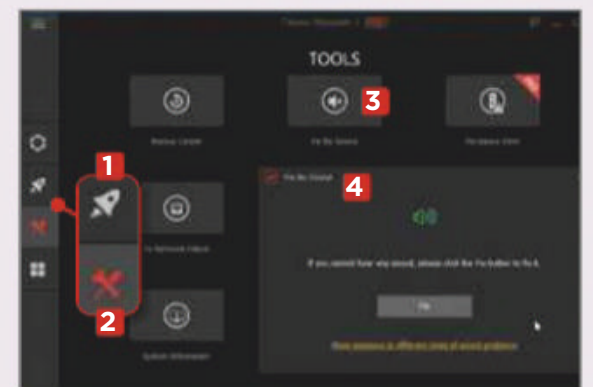
MINI WORKSHOP | Update your system using Driver Booster 7



1 Run Driver Booster and it will automatically scan your PC and present you with its findings in a matter of seconds (you can run a new scan at any time). The banner at the top of the screen **1** provides a summary of the number of drivers available to update, with the full list below. **2**

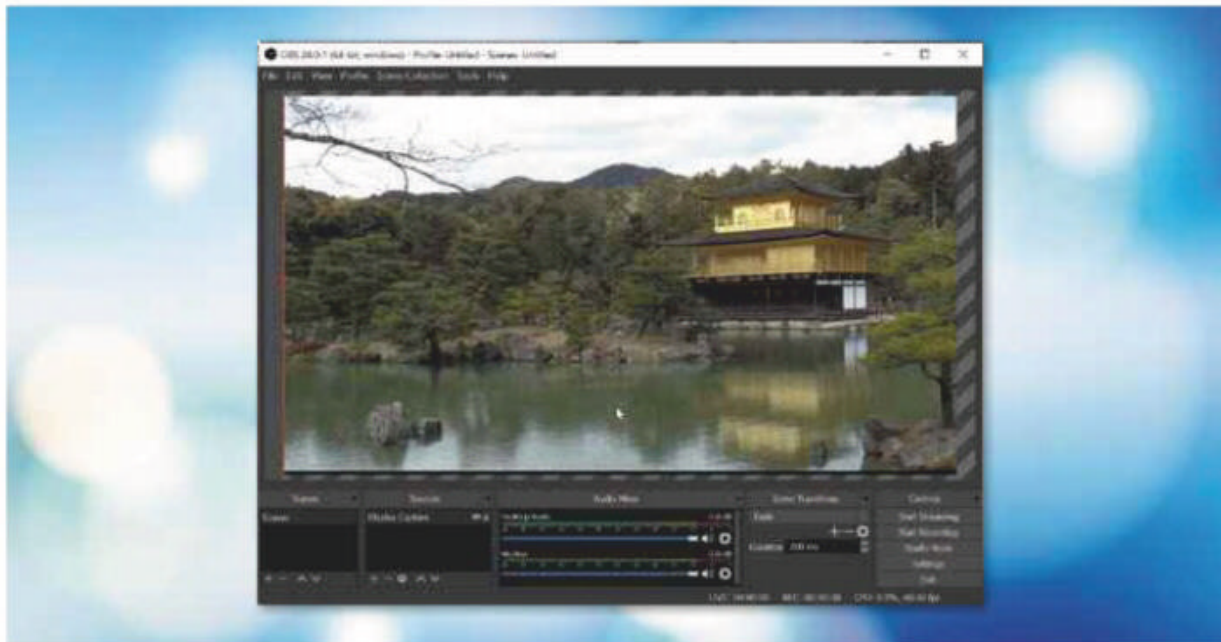


2 Clicking Update Now **1** replaces all the problem drivers. Alternatively, clicking the Update button next to an item **2** will install the latest version for only that item. Click the down arrow next to the button to view the driver details, uninstall it or ignore it. **3** Other options may appear depending on the driver type.



3 Go back to the main screen and click the Boost button **1** in the sidebar to access and enable the Game Boost feature. Tools **2** lets you fix a number of common problems, such as a lack of sound. **3** Click the tile you require, and a troubleshooter will open allowing you to fix the problem. **4**

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



SCREEN RECORDER

OBS Studio 24

obsproject.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 71.5MB

OBS Studio is a free, open-source tool that lets you record on-screen activity and edit and share the results. It's primarily aimed at capturing and broadcasting gameplay – Twitch is one of its main sponsors – but you can use it for all sorts of other tasks. This new version lets you pause recordings, and adds a dynamic bitrate option that manages stream quality. You can set up websites as custom browse pages and control browser audio.

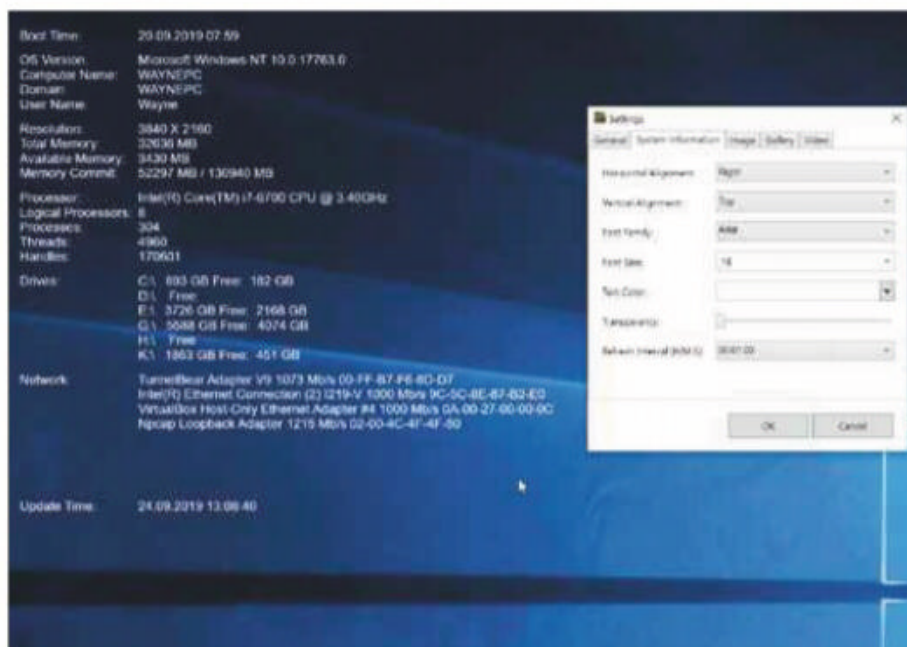
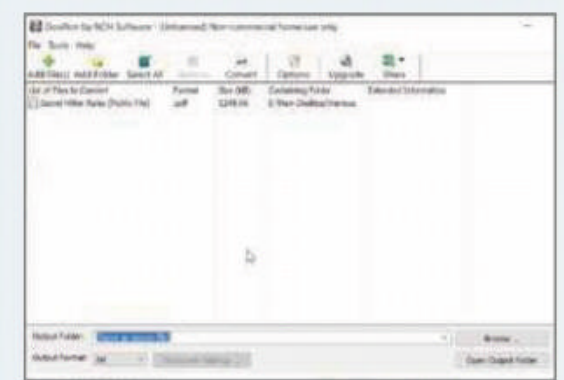
New Windows 10 App

Doxillion Document Converter Free

bit.ly/doxdoc486

File size: 46.81MB

If you need to convert a document from one format to another – PDF to text, for example – then Doxillion Document Converter Free offers a solution. It can convert more than 50 different document formats and supports batch conversion. It's free for personal use but there are some limitations which can be removed by upgrading to the paid-for version for £29.24.



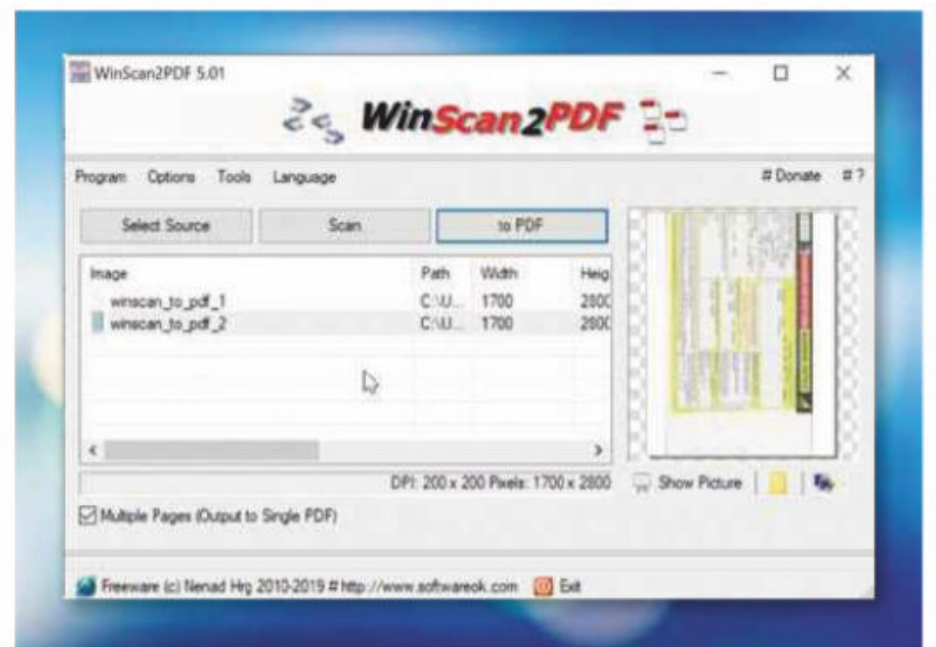
SYSTEM INFORMATION OVERLAY

AwesomeWallpaper

awesome-wallpaper.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 1.7MB

Despite its name, AwesomeWallpaper doesn't actually contain or download wallpaper for your PC. Instead, it lets you choose a type of background to display – System Information (which overlays your PC's specs on top of your current wallpaper), Image, Gallery (a slideshow) and Video. If you use more than one monitor, you can choose which one to display your media on (with mixed results, we've found), and customise the alignment, transparency and autoplay.



SCANNING TOOL

WinScan2PDF 5

bit.ly/w2pdf486

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, scanner **File size:** 109KB

If you have a scanner, you can use this tiny program to scan in documents and save them to your PC in PDF format. It's very easy to use – just select the scanner and any options, click Scan and then click the 'to PDF' button. This update lets you reorder the PDF pages by simply dragging and dropping them in position. It also improves converting an image file (JPEG, PNG, TIFF) to PDF. There are installer and portable versions available.

DUPLICATE FINDER

Find.Same.Images.OK 2

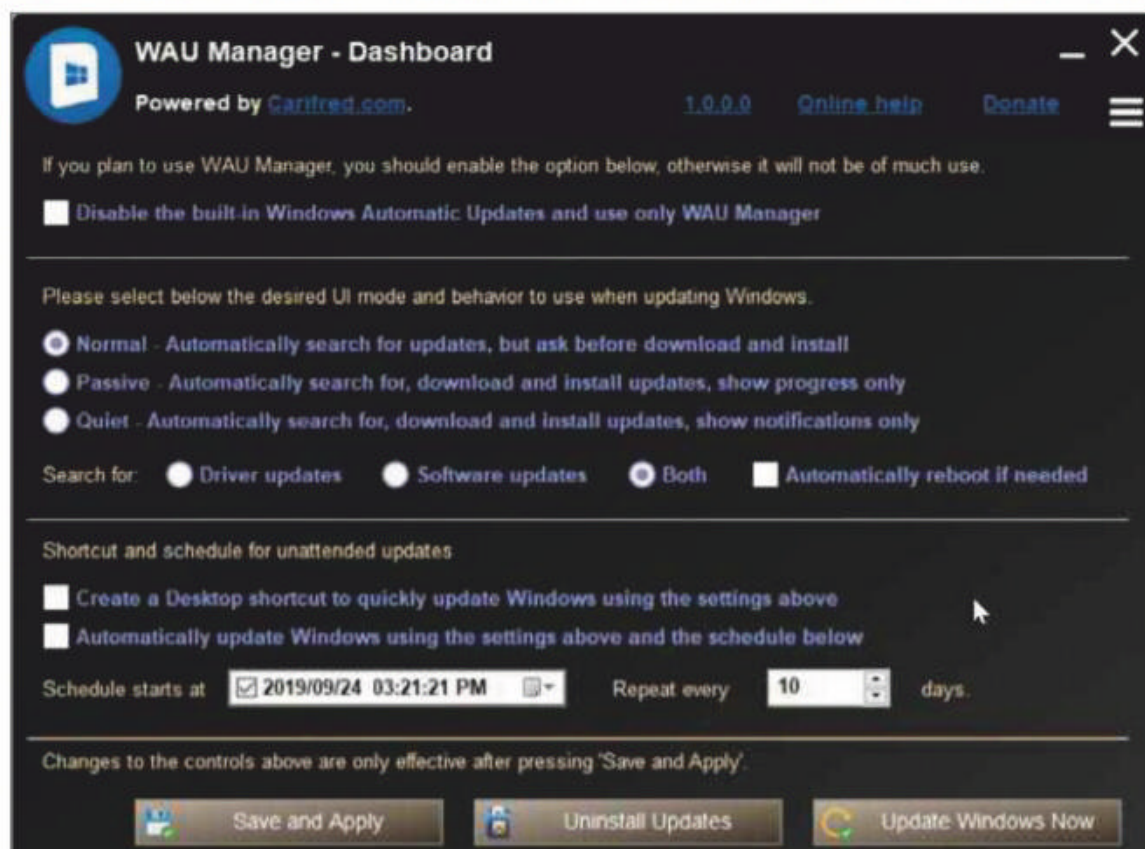
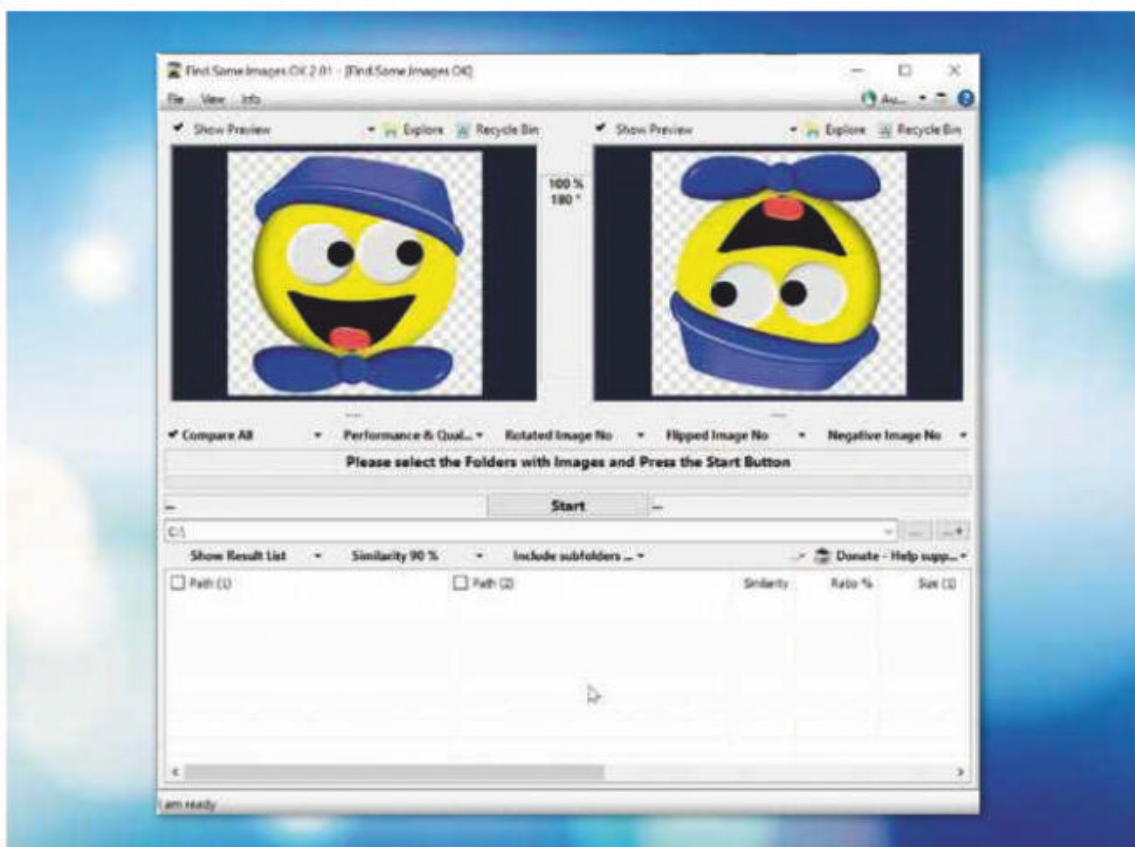
bit.ly/fsiok486

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 895KB

You probably have hundreds or thousands of photos on your PC, including duplicates in different folders or on different drives. Finding these clones is easy if they share the same name and size but, if you've renamed, resized or rotated them, it may be trickier. This is where Find.Same.Images.OK can help. Just select two folders of images to compare and click the Start button. The new version lets you compare a local folder with one over a network, and makes a number of other improvements.

You can either install the software or run it as a portable tool by renaming the installer file to 'Find.Same.Images.OK.exe'.



UPDATE TOOL

WAU Manager

bit.ly/wau486

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 650KB

WAU (Windows Automatic Updates) Manager is a replacement for Windows' built-in update feature. It lets you control which updates get installed and when, and lets you remove any unwanted or problematic ones.

Start by ticking the box to disable the Windows feature, making WAU Manager the default. Once that's done, you can pick the mode you require - Normal (asks before installing updates), Passive (installs updates and shows progress only) and Quiet (installs updates and shows notifications only). You can choose the type of updates to install - drivers, software or both - and set a schedule for them.

PORTABLE WINDOWS CREATOR

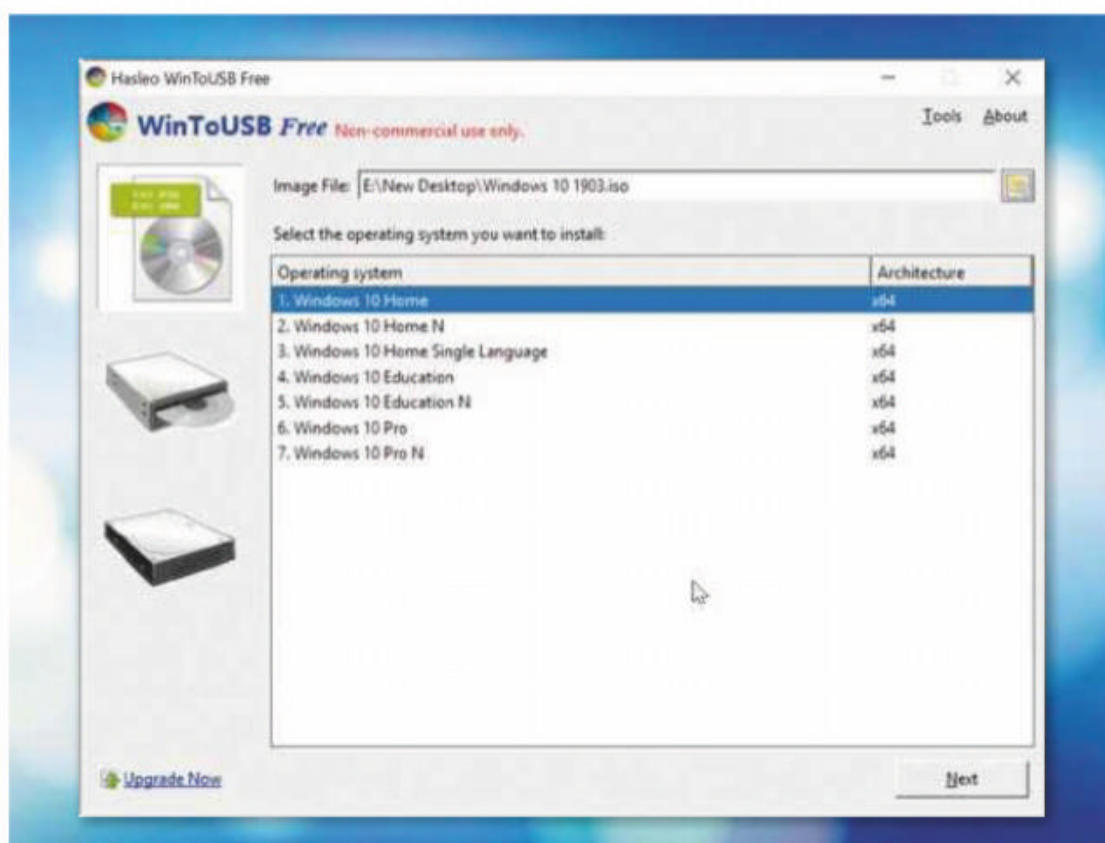
Hasleo WinToUSB 5

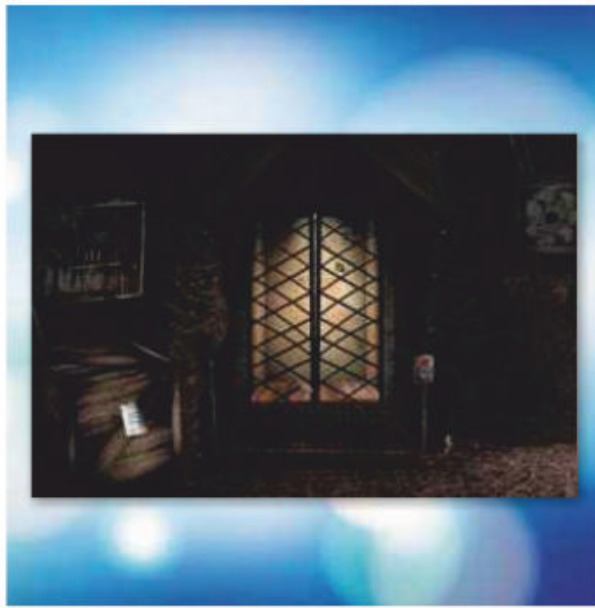
bit.ly/w2usb486

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, USB flash drive **File size:** 5.6MB

WinToUSB lets you boot into and run Windows directly from a USB flash drive. There are a couple of requirements, though - you need a fast USB stick and a copy of your Windows installation media in ISO, WIM, ESD or SWM image file format, or a CD or DVD.

A simple wizard guides you through the process of creating a bootable 'Windows To Go' installation. The latest version improves the cloning process and fixes a number of important bugs. It also adds support for Thunderbolt drives and cloning Windows between disks with different sector sizes. There's a paid-for version available with additional features for \$29.95 (£24.19).





GAME Shiver

bit.ly/shiv486

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

File size: 173MB

Originally released as a commercial game in 2017, this beautiful and atmospheric point-and-click horror adventure is now available for free. Set in the early 1990s, before mobile phones and the internet, you explore the recently closed Windy Oaks National Park and have to find a way to call for help and escape from the woods.

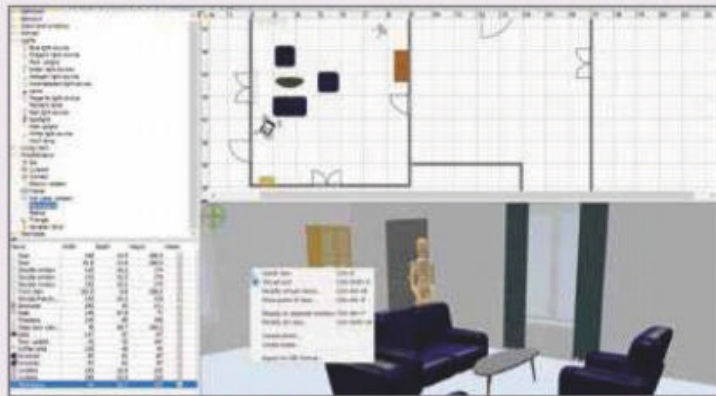
✓ Install this program...

Sweet Home 3D

www.sweethome3d.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 49.4MB

If you've just moved into a new house or you want to change your current home's layout, Sweet Home 3D can help you design and furnish your space. This free interior-design software presents straightforward categories – such as Bathroom, Bedroom, Living Room and 'Doors and windows' – then lets you create a 2D floor plan, add items of furniture and view the results in 3D. All the furniture and objects can be added from a sidebar and the Sweet Home 3D website offers plenty of additional 3D objects – including ones created by other users – that you can import into your virtual home.



...Not this one ✗

Quick3DPlan

en.quick3dplan.com

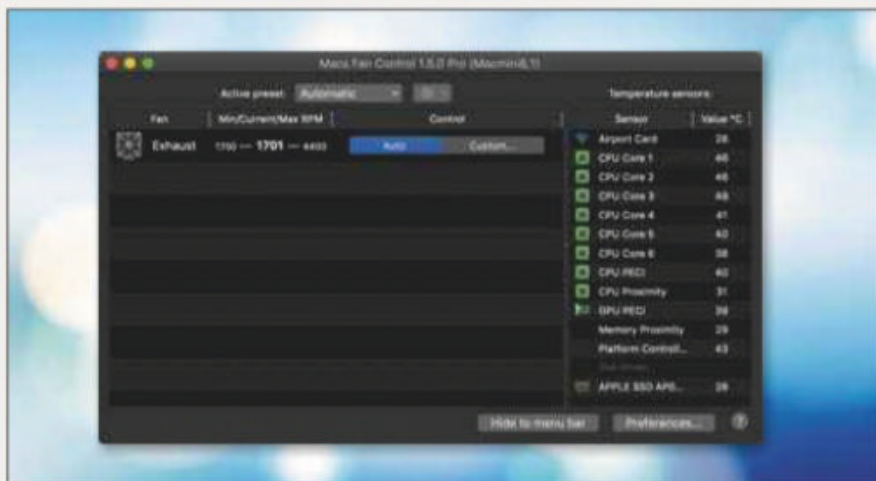
Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 or macOS

File size: 174MB

Quick3DPlan sounds like a handy tool for redesigning your home in a hurry, until you look more closely at its website. Not only is it limited to designing kitchens and cabinets but it'll set you back a whopping \$495 (£397.30) – you might as well hire someone to do the job for you!



OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS What's new for Linux and macOS



SYSTEM TOOL

Macs Fan Control 1.5

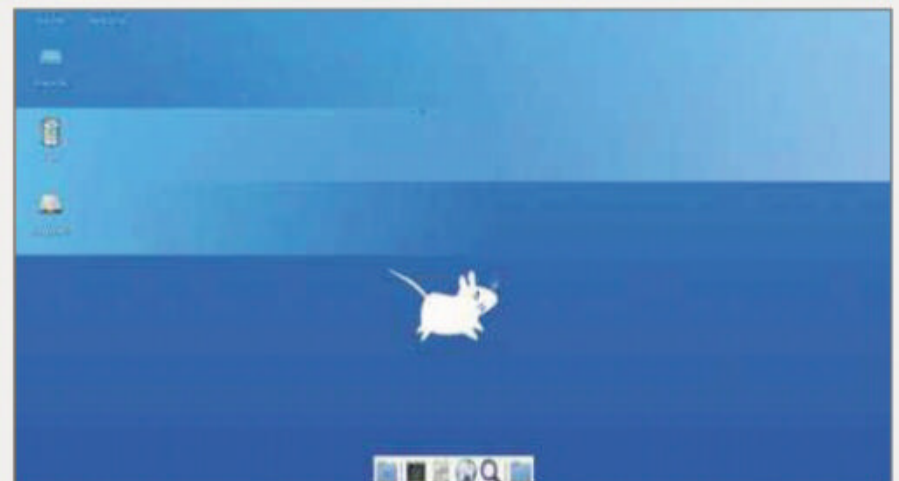
bit.ly/mfan486

Min requirements: macOS 10.14 Mojave or later

File size: 10.1MB

This program offers real-time monitoring of fan speeds and temperatures inside your Mac, and lets you control the fan speed to combat noise and overheating. The free version offers three presets – Automatic, Full Blast and Custom. New to this release is an improved, more stable helper tool, and an updated interface with support for dark mode.

There's a new paid-for Pro version of the software available for \$14.95 (£12.15).



LINUX DISTRO

Fedora 31 Beta

bit.ly/fedora486

Min requirements: 8GB hard drive space, 64-bit processor

File size: 639MB

Arguably the best Linux distribution for advanced users, Fedora 31 has just hit beta at the time of writing. The new version – for 64-bit only systems – comes with GNOME 3.34 (the pre-release build) and updated versions of many popular packages. Raspberry Pi owners can now enjoy the lightweight Xfce desktop environment. Grab the beta from the link at the bottom of the downloads page, or one of the 'spins' from spins.fedoraproject.org/prerelease.

GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST subscribe to Web User at subscribe.webuser.co.uk

Best New Browser Tools

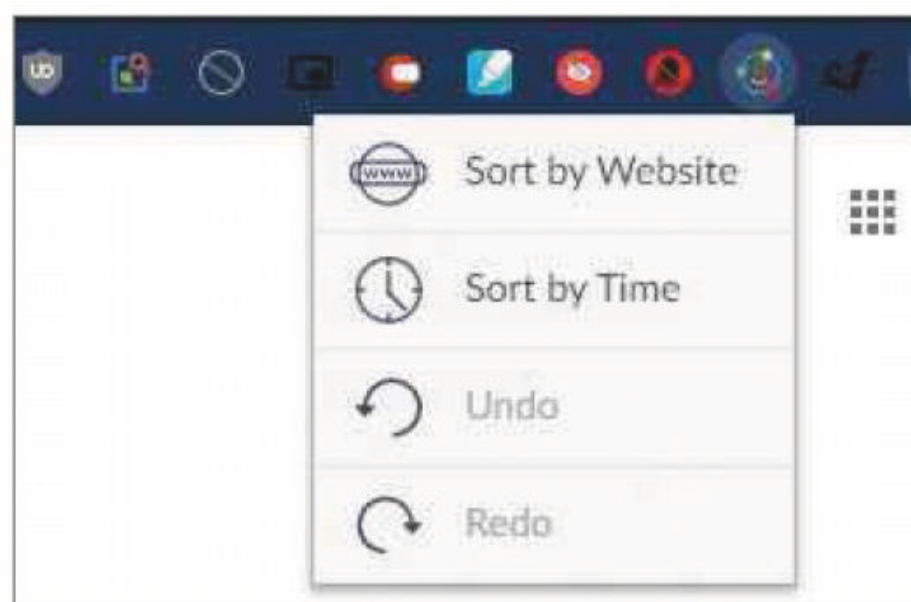


CHROME

Sort your Chrome tabs with two clicks

It happens so quickly: you spend a few minutes on the web, diving down into a Wikipedia rabbit-hole or pondering the ideal venue for your anniversary dinner and, before you know it, your browser is loaded with an overwhelming number of open tabs. And for every tab you close, you tab-out another three.

Sortify (bit.ly/sortify486) can't stop you cluttering your browser with dozens of tabs but it can help you organise them, so they're more manageable. This new browser tool, which is simplicity itself, lets you rearrange all your open tabs in just two clicks: the first click is for the extension's toolbar button, to open a short menu of options; the second click lets you order your open tabs by website or time, and access the tool's Undo and Redo options.

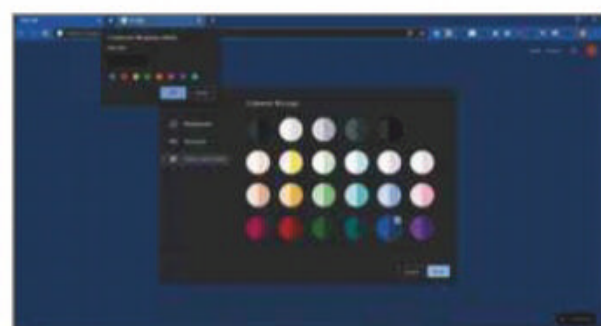


Group tabs together using Chrome 77

The Chrome 77 update has new features for customising colours and grouping tabs together. Open a new tab and click the Customise button in the bottom-right corner, then select 'Colour and theme' to choose your palette.

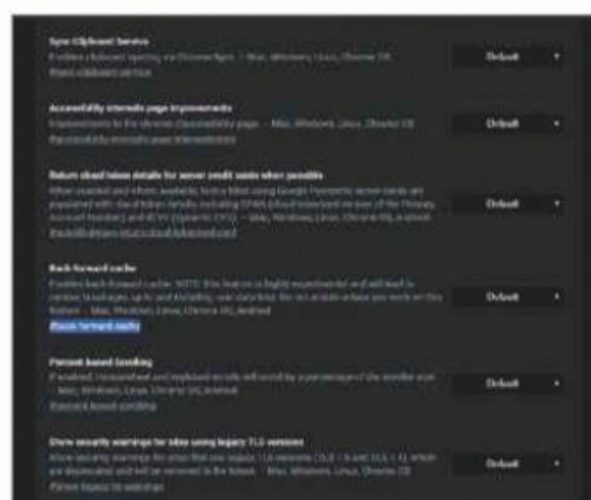
Right-click any tab for the option 'Add to new group'. This sets the tab apart from the others and gives it a new colour. If you're not keen on how it looks, click the dot to the left of the tab group to switch to a new shade. You're also given the option to name your new tab group.

See our workshop on page 57 for more about the new tools in Chrome 77.



Speed up back and forward web navigation

For a while now, Google has hinted at introducing back and forward caching – a feature included in Firefox and Safari. By 'remembering' the page and pulling it from the cache, 'back-forward cache' promises to speed up browsing by 19% when you click the Back or



Forward button.

The new feature is now available in Google's experimental browser, Chrome Canary (bit.ly/canary486). Activate it by visiting `chrome://flags/#back-forward-cache` or search the Experiments page for 'forward'. Click the drop-down menu and switch the option from Default to Enabled. Restart the browser to finish.

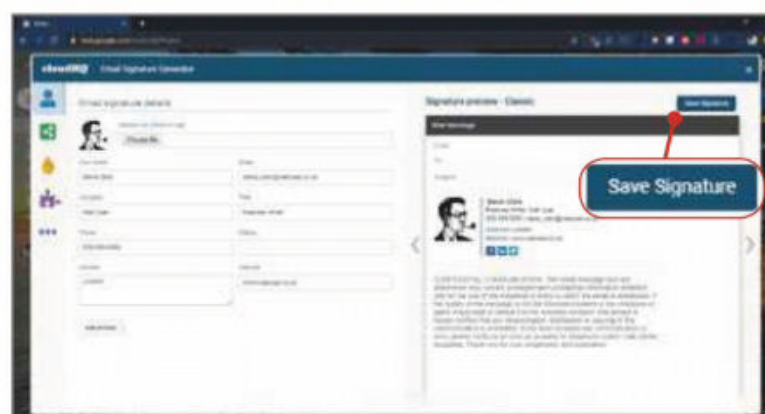
A word of warning, though: this is a highly experimental feature, even for Canary. According to Google, using the back-forward cache "will lead to various breakages, up to and including user data loss". It also means Chrome uses even more memory than it normally does – something that will hopefully be fixed by the time the feature reaches the stable browser.

Design your own email signatures

If you run a club, website or a business, or you just want to include more information than your name at the bottom of your emails, then it's worth creating an eye-catching email signature with a logo, image, link and your details.

Most signature designers charge a pretty penny for these basics but Free Email Signature Generator (bit.ly/emailsig486) costs nothing. Simply sign into your email, grant the required permissions and you're greeted with a form. Fill in your contact details, job title and your website address, and upload a photo or logo.

Once you've sorted the basics, it's easy to add links to social-media profiles or customise the font to your liking. Dip into the extension's settings to create extras such as banner images, custom HTML and disclaimers.



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

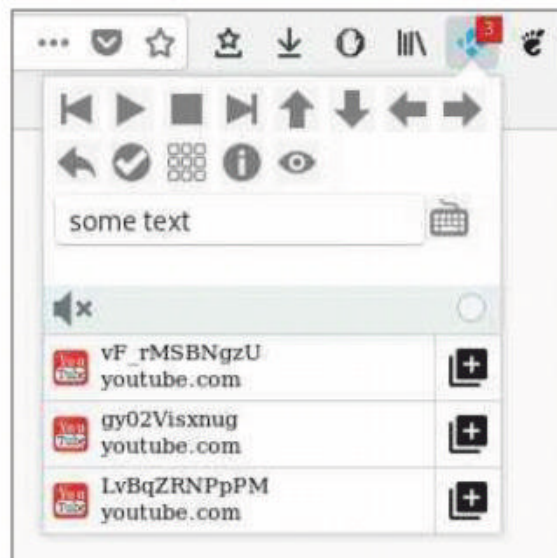


FIREFOX

Control Kodi directly from Firefox

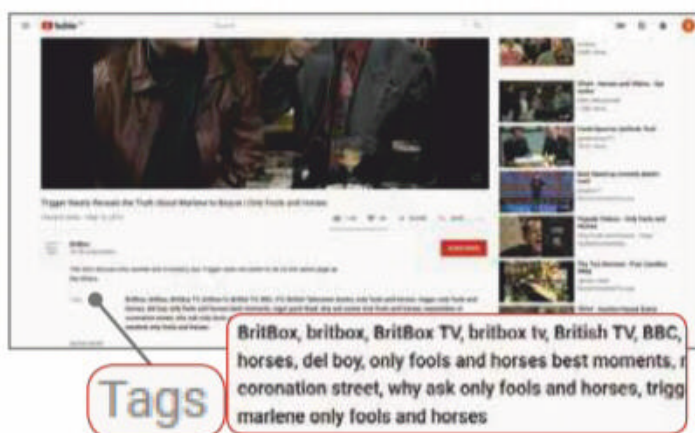
Kodi-Control (bit.ly/kodi486) offers playback controls for the popular media-centre software. As soon as you start playing a video in your browser, the tool kicks in. Click the icon to see all the usual playback options, plus a few extras including a volume slider. It also lets you navigate content using the arrow keys or your mouse-wheel.

Any media you view while Kodi-Control is running is stored and listed in your history, so you can jump back to any point in time. However, it's the sharing options that Kodi users will find most useful. To send videos, images and music to your Kodi device, just click the link in the browser tool's History. A second method is to right-click the media link, choose Kodi-Control, then select either 'send link to Kodi' or 'send link to Kodi queue'.



Find YouTube videos using tags

When YouTubers upload their videos, they're asked to add tags to each one, which benefits YouTube's mystical 'algorithm'. If only you could see these tags, you'd be able to find similar or related videos without blindly relying on YouTube's recommendations.



YouTube Tags (bit.ly/tags486) adds precisely this function to any YouTube video. Scroll down, just past the video screen, to see the video details and, alongside a video summary and options to share, you'll find a new category: Tags, which displays all the video's tags.

Unfortunately, these aren't clickable, but they give you an idea of how each video is positioned (beware potential spoilers). You could even pop the tags into the search box to find other videos you may like.

Turn every web page black and white

Who needs dark mode when you have Darkify Everything (bit.ly/darkify486)? Instead of inverting colours, this tool is similar to the greyscale option on phones, making everything on a page monochrome.

The greyscale feature was originally created to help combat smartphone addiction. Bright colours stimulate our brains and keep us engaged (rather too much, it seems), so turning the screen black and white should make it less appealing.

Now, you can see if that theory holds up on your computer. Darkify Everything is less intrusive than dark mode, which on certain websites doesn't look great. The tool works on text, images and even videos, and makes late-night browsing less of an eye-strain.



OTHER BROWSERS



Record your screen

Desktop Screen Record (bit.ly/recorder486)

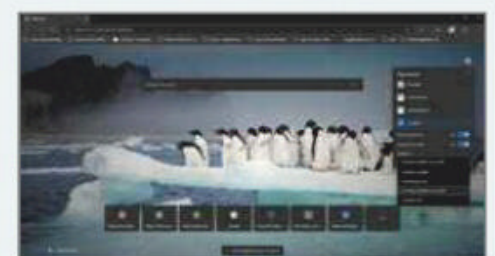
does exactly what its name suggests. Click the extension's toolbar button and you can capture videos of what's on your screen – and it doesn't need to be the Opera browser, either.

Pressing the button gives you three options for selecting the Video Source: Entire Screen, Application Window and Browser Tab. Beneath this, you can opt to add sound via the System or Microphone, or keep your recording mute. Once you're set up, click Start Recording and choose which screen or window to capture. Finally, select Share to start your recording.



Do more with your new tabs

Microsoft's latest update to its Chromium-based Edge browser brings some extra options for new tabs. Open a new tab and click the cog button. Alongside the usual page-layout settings, there is a new option – Custom. Here, you can turn off 'Image of the Day' and Quick Links, and use the drop-down Content menu to decide what content is shown on the New Tab page. To switch on dark mode for new tabs, open the three-dot menu button and navigating to Settings, then Appearance. Under Customize Browser, you'll find three choices: System, Light and Dark.





Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

DRAWING

Adobe Fresco

bit.ly/fresco486

12.4

NEW

Whether you're passionate about art or just like to doodle, you'll love Adobe's new drawing and painting app for tablets. Fresco is currently only available for

iPads, but there are plans

to launch it for selected Windows 10 devices in the future.

The app offers a focused selection of tools for painting on a digital canvas, using touchscreen controls instead of a real-life paintbrush. Unlike many of Adobe's desktop programs, the user interface is relatively uncomplicated, but the tools themselves are extremely powerful. Its 'live' brushes, for example, use advanced AI to translate your on-screen swipes into watercolour or oil brush strokes that behave realistically and feel natural to use.

Adobe Fresco is available on a 'freemium' basis, but you can use it for free albeit with certain (mostly professional) features disabled. Not all brushes are available to free users, for example, and there are some restrictions on cloud saves and the resolution of exported work unless you pay. If you already subscribe to Adobe's Creative Cloud, you

may find you now have access to the full version of Fresco as part of your existing plan. If not, the full standalone version of Fresco costs £9.49 per month, but you can currently enjoy six months free with all features unlocked if you sign up now.

One thing to watch for is meeting the app's system requirements. As well as being limited to devices running iOS 12.4 and up, Fresco only works on iPad Pros, along with selected recent models from the iPad range, specifically the third-generation iPad Air, fifth and sixth-gen iPads and fifth-gen iPad Mini. An Apple Pencil is also recommended, though you can also just use your finger.



Our rating



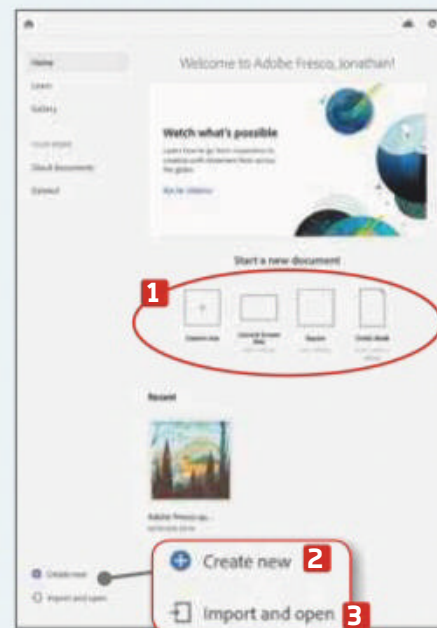
MINI WORKSHOP

Create digital paintings using Adobe Fresco

1 Open Fresco and sign in with your Adobe account – if you don't yet have one, follow the prompts to sign up (this is free). On Fresco's homepage, open a new document by tapping one of the size options listed **1** or by pressing '+ Create new' **2** to browse for more sizes. If you already have a file, you can open it by selecting 'Import and open' **3**.

2 The top of the tool palette **1** offers a choice of three brush tools – pixel brushes (for textured brush strokes), live brushes (watercolour and oil) and vector brushes (flat strokes with solid edges). Double-tap one to customise the brush style. **2** The bottom of the tool palette has options to adjust the colour, size, ink flow and smoothing for your brush. **3**

3 Layers are displayed in a strip along the right. **1** Each type of brush stroke appears in its own layer with a round badge **2** denoting the type of brush used. Tap a layer to work on it. Double-tap a layer or use the buttons on the right **3** for layer actions, such as adding, hiding or delete layers. Press the Share icon **4** to save or export your work.



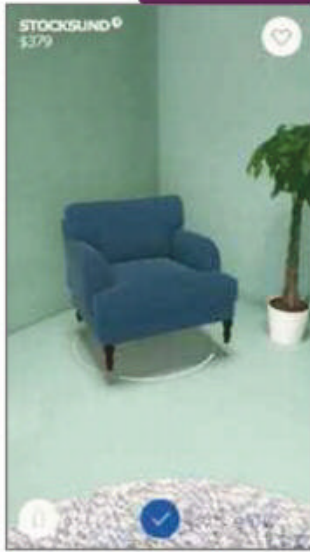
This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android and iOS phones and tablets

HOME

IKEA Place

bit.ly/ikeadroid486
bit.ly/ikeaios486
 7  12.2

IKEA's Place app uses the power of augmented reality to help you visualise how items of furniture from the Swedish retailer would look in your home. The tool has been around for a while but, until recently, it only allowed users to view one item at a time. This update to the app usefully unlocks the ability to place individual pieces yourself or opt for IKEA's own preselected Room Set combinations. The update to IKEA Place is currently only available for iOS users, but an Android equivalent is likely to be in the pipeline.



Our rating

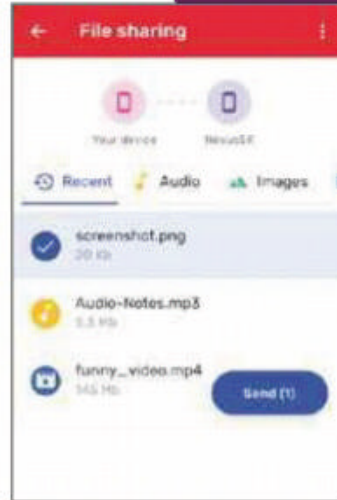


BROWSER

Opera Mini

bit.ly/operamini486
bit.ly/operamini486
 (varies)

The latest update to Opera's lightweight Android browser introduces an innovative new feature – namely, the ability to share files with others offline. The browser, which already uses a compression technique to reduce the amount of mobile data you consume while browsing and downloading, can now save you even more megabytes by allowing you to bypass your mobile network and share files with other users via a direct wireless connection. Tap Send to generate a QR code that can be scanned by the receiving device.



Our rating

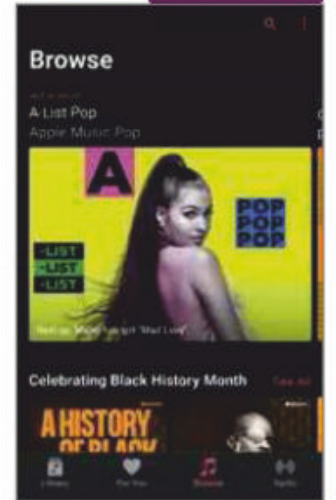


MUSIC

Apple Music

bit.ly/musicdroid486
bit.ly/musicios486
 (varies)

Until recently, Apple seems to have viewed people who use its music-streaming service on non-Apple platforms as second-class citizens. But that appears to be changing. Apple Music recently launched on the web, and the company has now given its Android app a significant overhaul. The latest version of the app adds Android Auto support and gains the ability to stream to Chromecast devices. In addition, Apple Music for Android now features a dark mode and provides access to thousands of live radio stations.



Our rating



GAME

Mario Kart Tour

bit.ly/mariodroid486
bit.ly/marioios486
 4.4  10

For Nintendo veterans, there's an undeniable thrill to be had from playing a Mario Kart game on your mobile device. As with Super Mario Run before it, the Japanese gaming giant has deftly converted everything that's great about the console versions of the game into a touchscreen smartphone (or tablet) title that can be played one-handed. But Mario Kart Tour is not without its problems – there's currently no multiplayer mode and, while this free-to-play game lets you race as much as you like, a great deal of its content and characters (including Mario himself) are locked behind some pretty expensive microtransactions.



Our rating



GAME

Call of Duty: Mobile

bit.ly/coddroid486
bit.ly/codios486
 4.3  9

This isn't the first game from the popular shooter franchise to hit mobile devices, but it's the most determined effort from publishers Activision to translate the full Call of Duty experience to a properly portable format. There's no single-player campaign but you'll find a host of multiplayer options, including a now-obligatory Fortnite-style battle royale mode. The game's makers promise "console quality" gaming on your device. But, while the graphics certainly look impressive and lots of classic maps are included, the game's current lack of controller support is a big omission, and free-to-play progress can be slow.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

TOOLS

Volume Panel Pro

bit.ly/volume486

Price: 59p



This tool adds a handy volume control panel that overlays a mixer-style set of sliders on your screen, as well as buttons for toggling between ring, vibrate and Do Not Disturb.



FUN

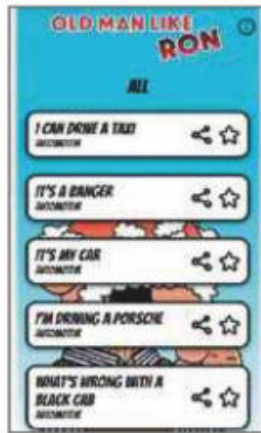
Old Man Like Ron Soundboard

bit.ly/likeron486

Price: 99p



Ron is a grumpy old muppet, fond of making politically incorrect pronouncements on social media. This soundboard app puts the voice of Ron in your pocket, with over 80 daft sayings.



SIMULATOR

SimpleRockets 2

bit.ly/rocketdroid486

bit.ly/rocketios486

Price: £4.59 (Android), £4.99 (iOS)



Space fans will love this 3D sim that lets you build and launch your own rockets, satellites, shuttles, rovers and other space vehicles, and explore highly detailed planets.

WEATHER

Weather by Falcon

bit.ly/falcon486

Price: 69p



You can't control the weather but you can at least make sure that your updates and forecasts are delivered in style, thanks to this beautiful, lightweight app.



TRAVEL

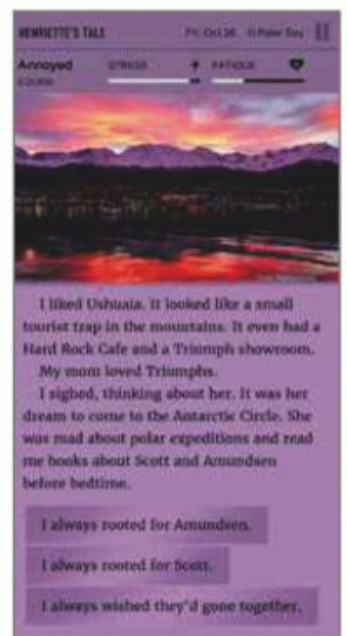
Wanderlust Travel Stories

bit.ly/wanderlust486

Price: £9.99



Part book, part game, this app is like a grown-up version of those old Fighting Fantasy books, where you're offered choices that affect how these stories – all inspired by real-life travel adventures – will unfold.



Volume Panel Pro



Old Man Like Ron Soundboard



SimpleRockets 2



Weather By Falcon



Wanderlust Travel Stories



✓ Install this app...

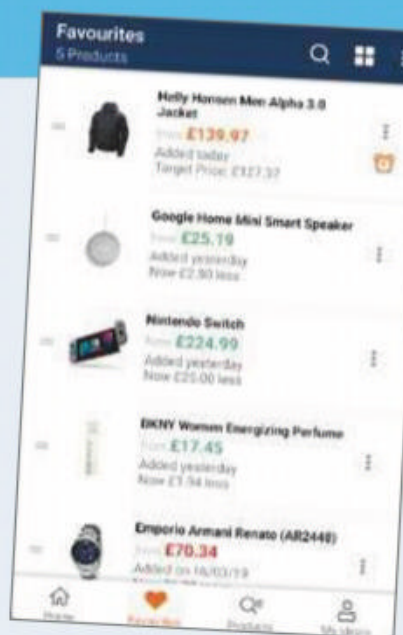
Idealo

bit.ly/idealodroid486

bit.ly/idealoidios486



Nobody likes paying full price for anything any more – and, with Idealo in your pocket, you'll never need to again. Idealo is a price-comparison tool aimed at getting you the best deal on the market, no matter what you're shopping for. It covers a wide range of products, from tech to fashion, fitness and pharmacy, and more. Most of the big online retailers are covered, including Amazon, eBay and John Lewis. You can check the price history for products, save favourites and set alerts for when the cost of specific products falls to affordable levels. You'll never miss a brilliant bargain again.

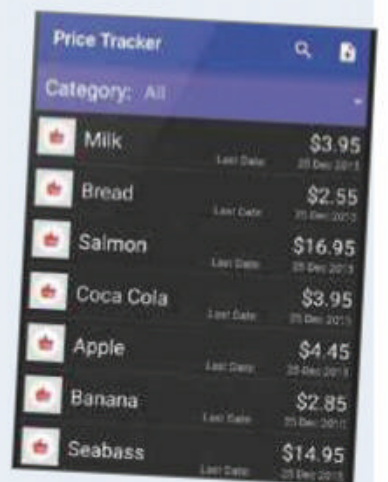


...Not this one

Grocery Price Tracker

bit.ly/grocery486

This app's developers suggest that you can use it to save money by buying your groceries at the lowest price, but it's hard to see how it would achieve this because the search function doesn't work, the interface is counter-intuitive and all it really seems capable of doing is allowing you to log various prices for items you find in shops you visit. It's a complete waste of digital space.





Take a Screen Break

Give your eyes a rest from your browser by taking our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you solve our ITV-show emoji and guess the 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 ITV SHOWS 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 "It was founded in California in September 1995 by computer programmer Pierre Omidyar as part of a larger personal site and became a notable success story of the dot-com bubble."

2 "One of the major factors that contributed to its growing

market share was the collectibility of Beanie Babies in the mid-1990s - collectors internationally were trying to complete their collection."

3 "Controversy has arisen over certain items. For instance, in late 1999 a man offered one of his kidneys for auction, attempting to profit from

the market for transplantable human organs."

5 "In May 2014, the company revealed that its consumer database of usernames, passwords, phone numbers and addresses had been breached. The hack caused its share price to crash."

COMPETITIONS

WIN A... Lumie Bodyclock 750DAB radio

Lumie's new updated Bodyclock Luxe 750DAB radio/Bluetooth speaker gently wakes you with a gradual sunrise effect, ensuring you feel naturally refreshed. It has high-quality speakers, Bluetooth for streaming, plus a USB port for charging phones. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Bodyclock' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.lumie.com and follow [@Lumie_lights](https://twitter.com/Lumie_lights) on Twitter.



**WORTH
£189**

WIN 1 OF 4 Music Box 2 Indigo speakers

With 14 hours of battery life, Energy Sistem's Music Box 2 Indigo lets you listen to your music anywhere. This portable speaker connects via Bluetooth and allows you to answer phone calls using just your voice - no hands needed. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Indigo' in the subject line. For more information, visit www.energysistem.com and follow [@EnergySistem](https://twitter.com/EnergySistem) on Twitter.



**WORTH
£29.99
EACH**



FAQ

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

Our guide to iOS 13

Is 13 lucky for some? **David Crookes** looks at the best new features in the latest version of Apple's mobile operating system

So, another iOS update then?

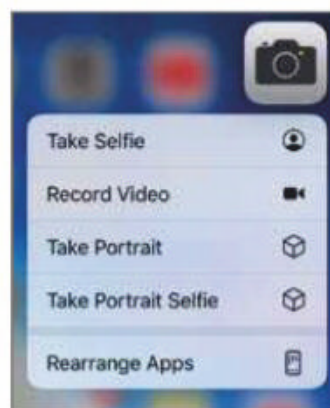
Yes, it's that time of year again. With iOS 13 (bit.ly/ios486), Apple has freshened up its operating system for the iPhone and iPod Touch (the iPad now has the separate iPadOS), bringing a host of new features, a few tweaks and a boost to device performance. Most of these additions will help strengthen iOS's position in an Android-dominated industry but there have been some teething troubles and frustrations, particularly with small changes made to long-established processes.

Does iOS 13 look different?

Not immediately. The familiar grid of icons remains, as does the dock, but there are fresh wallpapers and a new dark colour scheme. This Dark Mode can be turned on and off in the Settings and can even be scheduled to activate at a particular time of the day. Third-party app developers are also being allowed access to the mode so all apps should one day have a Dark Mode that can be controlled by the user.

How different does it feel?

That depends on how you use iOS. Most notably, 3D Touch has been replaced by Haptic Touch – you no longer have to press hard on an icon to view contextual menus because a long-press will do the trick. This speeds up the process and should make you more likely to use the icon shortcuts, such as quickly taking a selfie without opening the Camera app. Apps now open more quickly and Face ID unlocks 30% faster than before.



Use icon shortcuts to perform common tasks such as taking a selfie

So why are some users frustrated?

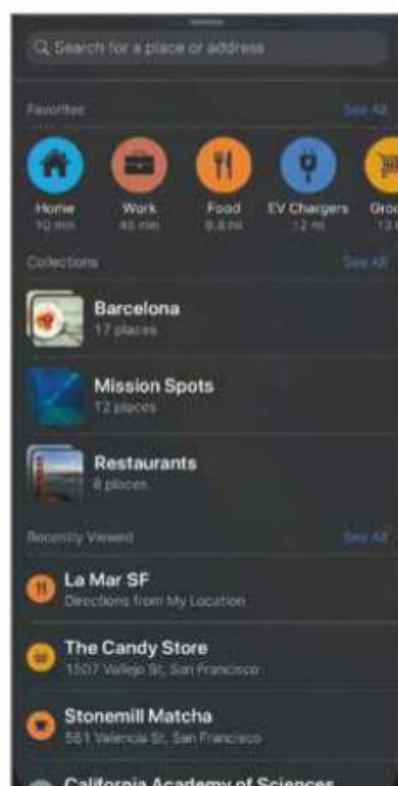
As we reported last issue, it didn't take long for users to realise that iOS 13 was buggy when it launched on



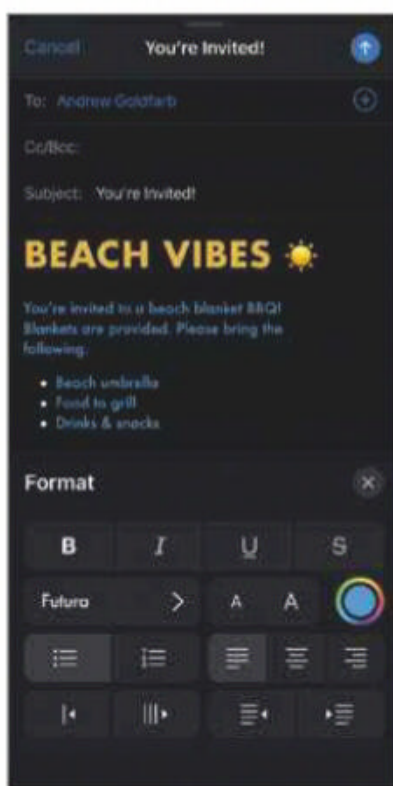
19 September. At times, apps would crash, there were problems with AirDrop and mobile signals, and the Camera app was very slow. Apple was made aware of these issues and rolled out iOS 13.1 a week later (complete with initially missing features such as sharing your estimated time of arrival in Maps). But some minor alterations remain unpopular. The Mail app, for instance, reduces the number of icons displayed on an open email to two, with Reply now containing options that used to have their own buttons – and with the Trash icon rather too close for comfort.

Has Siri improved?

Yes, Siri now has a more natural sounding voice and is more intelligent, so whether you're browsing the web in Safari, listening to a podcast or looking at Apple Maps, Siri will offer personalised suggestions. It also gives reminders when you're chatting to someone in Messages, ensuring plans are not forgotten, and if you use AirPods, then Siri can read incoming messages directly to your ears. Siri shortcuts can be added to



You can schedule the Dark Mode in iOS 13 to turn on at a particular time of day



Some iPhone users aren't keen on changes to the Mail app in iOS 13



The Camera app in iOS 13 has been improved in line with the new iPhone range

automations as well, triggering when particular conditions are met, such as sending a text when you leave the house.

Does the upgrade include the usual camera tweaks?

Absolutely. Apple has gone big on cameras with its new iPhone 11 range. The standard handset has a dual-sensor rear camera that can take wider shots with its 120-degree lens, while the front-facing True Depth camera is able to capture slow-motion selfies. Meanwhile, the iPhone 11 Pro and iPhone 11 Pro Max have telephoto cameras. To that end, iOS has been upgraded to get the most from the hardware, such as a new Portrait Lighting effect called High Key Light Mono that places a subject on a white background. It's also possible to virtually move the lighting to brighten faces, smooth skin and sharpen eyes.

So I'll get much better photos?

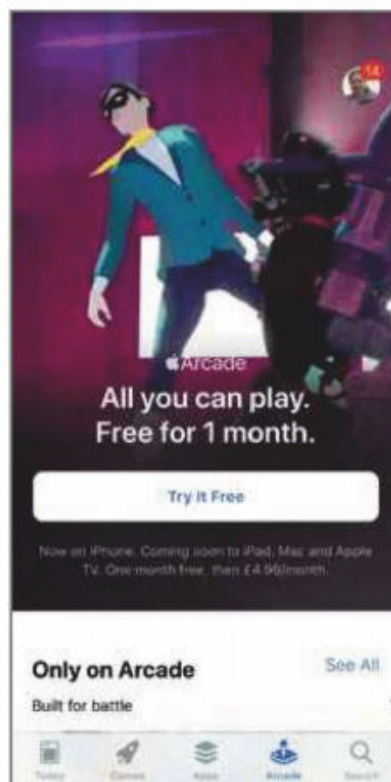
That's the aim. In fact, the Photos app has also been given a major overhaul – by removing clutter, such as duplicates, and letting you jump to days, months and years, browsing your images is now much easier. It also provides a great set of editing tools – with filters and fine-tuned adjustments from exposure, highlights and shadows to black point, saturation and vibrance, your images should shine from the screen. Tapping the altered image lets you instantly view the original and you can even use the tools on videos, which can be cropped and rotated. It's bound to become the editing tool of choice for iOS users on the go.

Will iOS 13 keep me entertained as well?

Sure thing. Apple Arcade, which is now



iOS 13 makes it easier to browse, manage and edit photos on your iPhone



Entertain yourself by playing games on Apple Arcade through iOS 13



You can now protect your email address by signing into apps with an Apple ID

available via iOS 13, lets you play over 100 games for £4.99 per month. You can even connect a PlayStation 4 or Xbox wireless controller. A subscription can be shared with up to five family members and titles include Lego Brawls and Beyond a Steel Sky. Apple TV+ also launches on 1 November, also £4.99 per month, though it's not specific to iOS 13.

Phew! And what about the phone calls?

iOS 13 lets you make and receive phone calls on your iPhone as normal but there is a new feature you can activate that will block incoming calls from unknown numbers. Siri looks through your Mail and Messages apps for contacts to allow through and iOS 13 also takes into account numbers you've recently dialed, which should help cut down on

nuisance calls. See our feature on page 48 for more about blocking spam calls.

And is iOS 13 private and secure?

When iOS 13 was released, private security expert Jose Rodriguez noted that the operating system could expose your contact details by bypassing FaceID, a passcode or TouchID. This flaw was fixed with iOS 13.1 and the upshot is that iOS is more private with better controls over your location and a new Sign In With Apple feature that uses your Apple ID to authenticate third-party accounts with the option to keep your email address private – so, rather than having to give away your own email address, Apple provides a random ID or email address instead.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM macOS CATALINA?

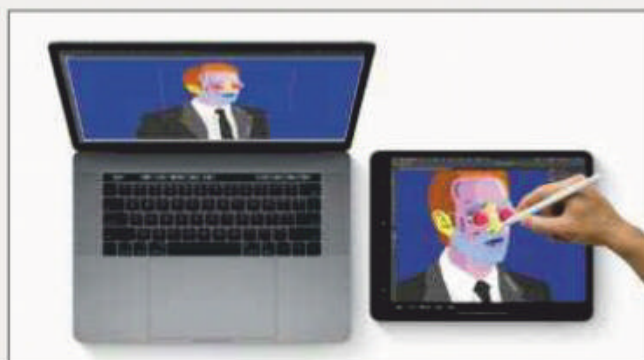
As well as a new version of iOS, Apple has carried out improvements to the next Mac operating system, too.

macOS 10.15 Catalina (bit.ly/catalina486) is an operating system upgrade for Apple Mac computers. Available this month, it ditches iTunes in favour of three new apps: Apple Music, Apple TV and Apple Podcasts. It also allows developers to easily produce Mac versions of iPad apps which, reading between the lines, is an attempt to generate more software for the Mac App Store.

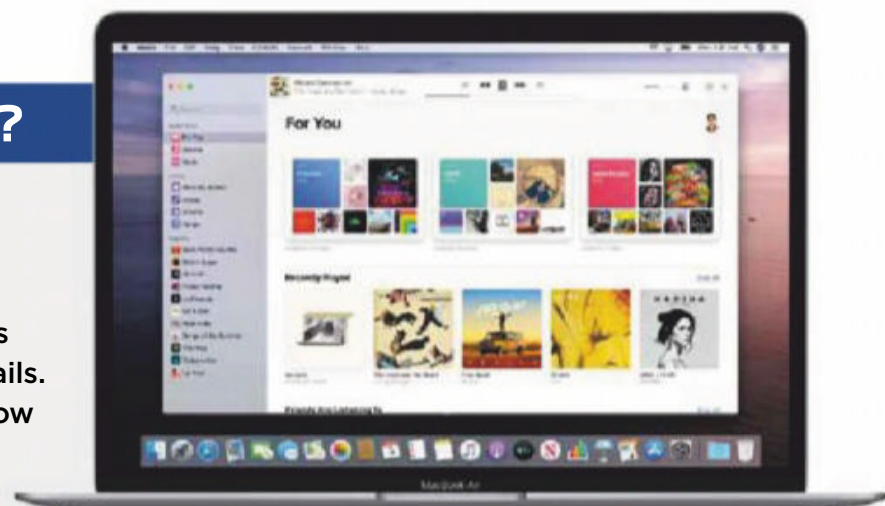
In other changes to macOS, Notes has become easier to view, search and collaborate on; Photos

is filtering out duplicates and clutter; Safari is allowing Siri to make better informed website suggestions; and Reminders lets you add tasks directly from emails.

Just as interesting, you can now use an iPad as a second Mac display, and grab hold of an



Apple Pencil to drag a window from the computer to the iPad. And in an effort to stop you wasting hours being unproductive in front of your display, Screen Time is being made available in macOS so you can see which apps and websites most distract you, and set limits to how long you spend on them.



DOWNLOAD ANYTHING TO BROWSE OFFLINE



COVER FEATURE

You don't need an internet connection to enjoy your favourite websites and services. **Wayne Williams** reveals how to grab content from the web so you can access it offline at any time

We've become so accustomed to having the internet 'on tap' that it's incredibly frustrating when we can't access our favourite websites, apps and services. Whether it's due to a fluctuating signal, a broken broadband connection or a DDoS attack knocking a site offline, downtime inevitably

leads to us bemoaning "I wish I'd looked at that article/map/photo album/email while I had the chance".

The good news is that it's easier than you might think to download and save content from the web, so you can keep browsing, even when the internet – or at least a part of it – is unavailable.

In this feature, we reveal all the great things you can download to access offline and the best free tools for the job. We also explain how you can tell whether a site is really offline or if the problem is at your end, and reveal how to keep playing Windows 10 games without an internet connection.

WEB PAGES & SITES



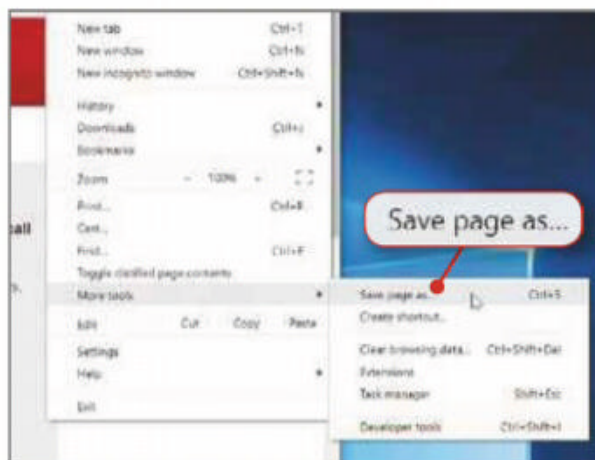
Download web pages to your PC

If you're travelling with a laptop, you can download web pages and articles to view when there's no Wi-Fi available. The process is pretty much the same regardless of which browser you use, and only takes a few mouse clicks.

In Chrome, browse to the site you want to save, click the three-dot menu in the top-right corner and select More Tools, 'Save page as'. In the 'Save as type' box you can choose between 'Web Page, Complete' (which includes images) and 'Web Page, HTML only'.

In Firefox, open the three-line 'hamburger' menu and select Save Page As. This gives you the same download options, but also includes '*.txt'.

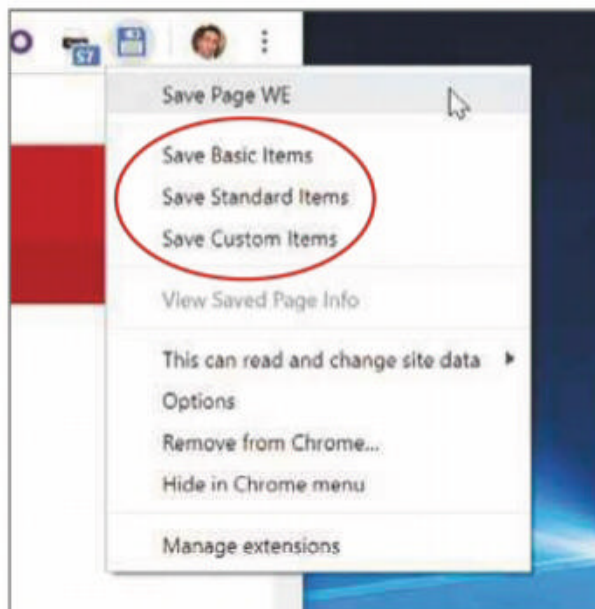
Alternatively, either browser lets you right-click a page and save it from there, or you can just press Ctrl+S – the universal keyboard shortcut for saving something. To open a saved page, just drag it to your browser window or double-click it.



Download web pages using your browser's 'Save page as' option

Download using Save Page WE

There are several third-party tools you can use to save web pages. Our favourite is the Save Page WE add-on for Chrome (bit.ly/chromewe486) and

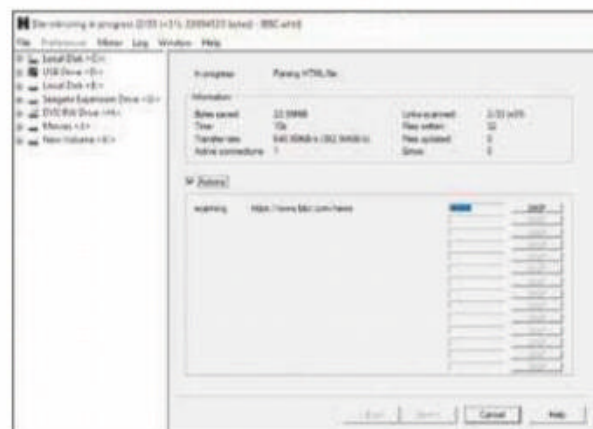


Save Page WE makes it easy to grab web pages to read offline

Firefox (bit.ly/ffwe486). Navigate the web as usual and, when you find a page you'd like to read later, click the Save Page WE button in your browser and the extension will download a copy of it in HTML format. Right-clicking the button gives you the choice of saving basic items, standard items or custom items. The extension also offers some advanced options that let you choose how it works and what it saves, and customise the save-file name.

Download whole sites with HTTrack

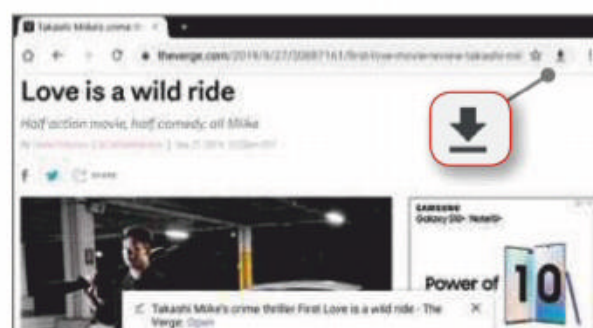
If you plan to spend time exploring a website's contents, rather than just reading a few specific pages from it, you can use HTTrack (www.httrack.com) to download everything. This free program hasn't been updated in a couple of years but it still works well. To use it, install the software, give your new project a name and category, and choose where you want to save the site. Select an action to take (you can download websites, get separated files, test links and more) and enter the address of the site to copy. HTTrack will get to work and grab all the content you need.



HTTrack lets you download entire websites to browse at your leisure

Download web pages on Android

If you're carrying an Android phone when you're out and about, you can save pages to it using either Chrome or Firefox. In the former, tap the Download button in the address bar and that page will be saved, ready for reading offline. You can access the



Download web pages to your Android phone to read when you can't get a signal

saved pages under Downloads.

In Firefox, go to the content you want, tap the three-dot menu in the top-right corner, select Page and you can download it as a PDF.

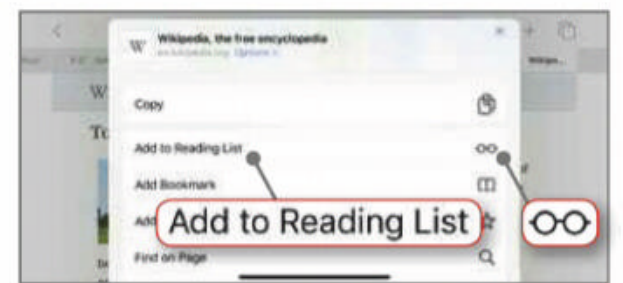
Download web pages on iPhone or iPad

If you own one of Apple's mobile devices, you can download web pages in Chrome for offline viewing by tapping the Share button in the browser address bar and selecting Read Later. When you want to view your saved content, open Chrome, tap the three-dot button in the top-right corner, select Reading List and choose the item you want to open. When you're online, you can refresh the page to get an up-to-date version. To remove an unwanted saved page, swipe it left and tap Delete.



Chrome for iOS lets you create reading lists of offline content

You can also enable offline reading in Safari. Open Settings in your iPhone or iPad, scroll down and tap Safari. Scroll all the way down to the bottom and toggle Automatically Save Offline, under Reading List. Next, you'll want to add some pages to your list. Just find a page in Safari, tap the Share button at the bottom and select Add to Reading List. You can now access your saved pages by tapping the Bookmarks button and selecting the Reading List option (it looks like a pair of glasses).



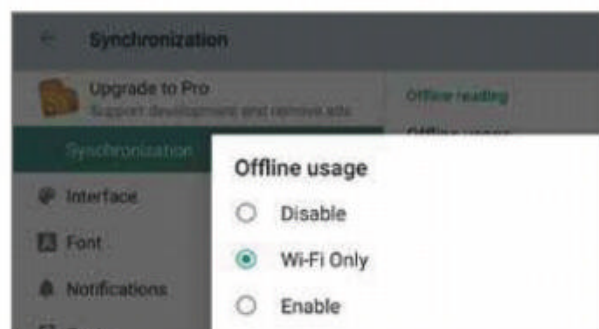
Set Safari for iOS to automatically save content to your reading list

Firefox also offers a Reading List. Open a website and tap the Reader View in the address bar. This displays a simplified text version of the page. Tap the Add button on the right to save it. To view your Reading List, tap the hamburger menu button and select Your Library, then tap the Reading List button.

Download web feeds to read offline

RSS feed readers aren't as popular as they once were, but they're still a great way to view the latest stories from multiple sites. The ad-supported RSS Reader for Android (bit.ly/rssread486) is a simple, clean reader that lets you download your feeds with a single tap, including images, so you can catch up on them later without an internet connection. You need to enable this option in Settings.

On an iPhone or iPad, you can use Newsify: RSS Reader (newsify.co), which does the same thing, including caching images so you can view them offline.



Download feeds from websites to view their latest content offline

Download the whole of Wikipedia

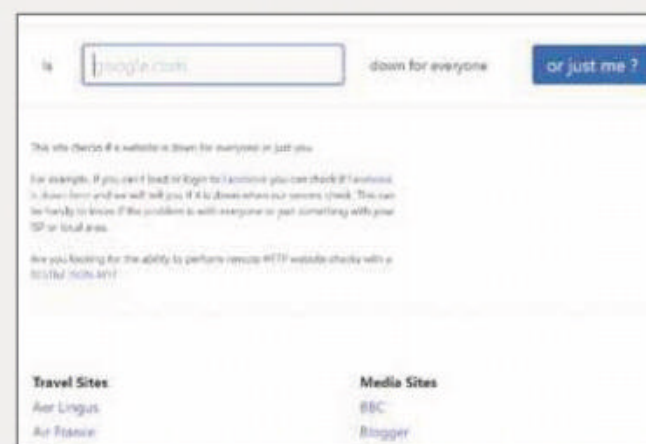
The popular online encyclopaedia is home to a vast number of in-depth articles and will keep you informed and entertained on even the longest flight. The official Wikipedia Android and iOS apps (bit.ly/wiki486) let you download articles of interest for offline reading.

Alternatively, Kiwix (www.kiwix.org) lets you download a full copy of

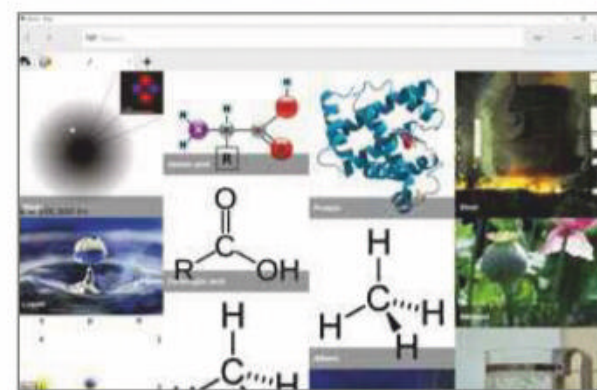
CHECK IF A SITE IS REALLY OFFLINE

Sometimes it's obvious when a site has been knocked offline, because the error message will tell you it's a problem at their end. For instance, if the site is protected by CloudFlare – as a growing number are – you'll be told there's an issue and given the option to try for a live version. But if the site doesn't load and there's no message beyond a generic 'timed out' or 'no route to host', you won't know whether the problem is due to the site itself, your connection or your DNS (Domain Name System).

Assuming other sites load just fine, you can use services such as Down Detector (downdetector.co.uk) or Down for Everyone or just me? (downforeveryoneorjustme.com) to see if a site really is offline or if it's just a problem for you. If it's the latter, try accessing the site in a different browser or on a different device, rebooting your PC, phone or router, or temporarily disabling your antivirus software. It's also worth checking that your PC is set to the correct date and time because this can cause problems, too.



Wikipedia for viewing on Windows, macOS and Linux computers, or an Android or iOS device. The full English language version of the site is a whopping 78GB (without videos) and can be downloaded directly from the Kiwix website or using BitTorrent. There are other smaller collections available to download, including a 14GB version without photos, and ones covering specific topics such as movies, history and computers.

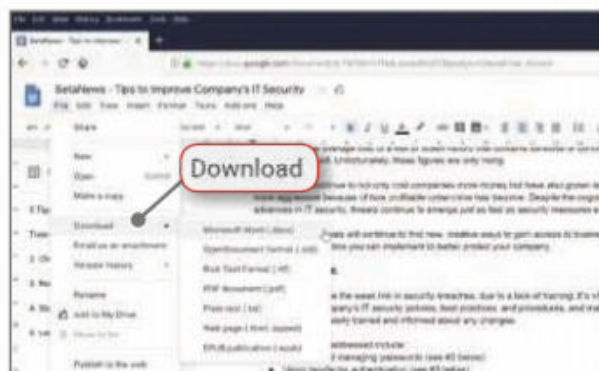


Kiwix lets you download the whole of Wikipedia to browse offline

NOTES & DOCUMENTS

Download files from Google Docs

Like most Google services, Google Docs, Sheets and Slides are designed to be used online. Everything you need to edit and collaborate on your files is provided in your browser, but if you need to work on a file without an internet connection, you can download a copy of it to your computer. Go to File, Download and select the format you

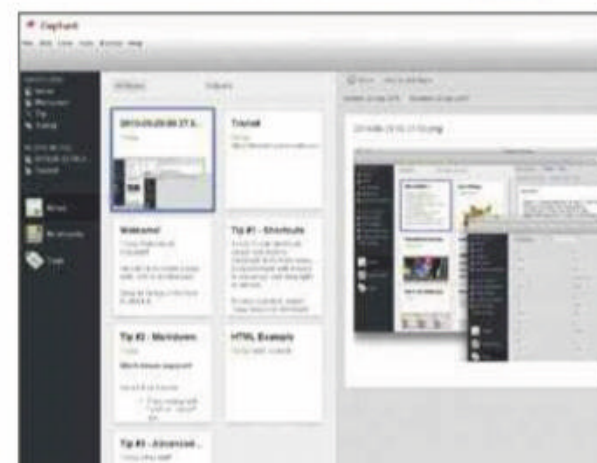


Download content from Google Docs so you can work on files offline

require. Word processor documents can be saved in Microsoft Word and OpenDocument formats, Rich Text, PDF, Plain Text, Web Page or EPUB. Google offers a Chrome extension (bit.ly/docsoff486) that lets you use the web service when offline, but people using it have reported mixed results.

Access all your notes offline

Many powerful note-taking services store your notes in the cloud so you can access them from anywhere. Evernote (evernote.com) keeps a local copy of your synced notes and notebooks on your PC but, on a mobile device, only the notes created on it are stored there. Otherwise, all you'll see are note titles, tags and snippets of text. You can get around this by setting up offline notebooks, though the feature is only available in the paid-for



Elephant is a lot like Evernote, but without the online elements

Evernote Plus and Premium versions.

If you'd rather use an offline-only notes tool, then consider Elephant (bit.ly/ele486). It's available for Windows, macOS and Linux (but not Android or iOS) and offers much of the same functionality as Evernote, without the online elements.

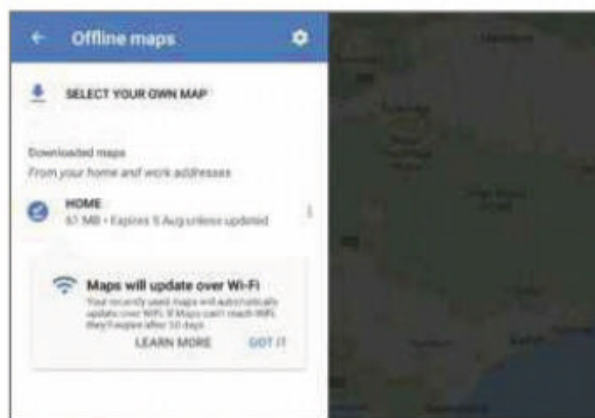
MAPS & TRAVEL



Browse Google Maps offline

If you're going to be driving somewhere with limited mobile internet – such as the wilds of Scotland, for example – then you should download maps of the area to your phone in advance while connected to Wi-Fi. It's worth getting into the habit of doing this anyway because Google Maps can take a massive chunk out of your mobile data allowance, which may cause problems if you're on a limited plan or are likely to incur roaming costs.

To download maps in advance on Android or iOS, find the area you want, open the app menu, select Offline Maps and download the custom map. You'll be told how much space the map will take up, and also how much free space you have on your device. You can search for and get directions on your downloaded map.



Download maps to your phone so you don't get lost when you lose connection

Download maps for offline use in Windows 10

Windows 10 has many hidden features and one of the least known but more useful options is a map downloader, which lets you save copies of maps for

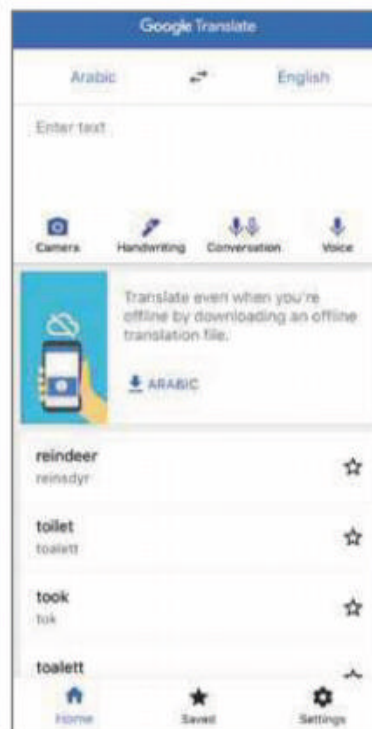
offline use. To get started, type **offline maps** in the Windows Search box and hit Enter. Settings will open on the relevant page.

Check for map updates at the bottom of the screen, then click the plus sign next to 'Download maps'. Click a continent – Africa, Asia, Australia/Oceania, Europe, North and Central America or South America – then choose the country you want. The download size appears underneath each one. If you select the United Kingdom, you'll then be prompted to choose from All Regions, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales.

Once your map has downloaded, you can open it in the Windows 10 Maps app (download this from the Microsoft Store if you don't have it installed). You can delete unwanted saved maps from the Offline Maps page.

Translate languages offline

Google Translate is incredibly handy when you're visiting a country where English isn't the main language. However, its



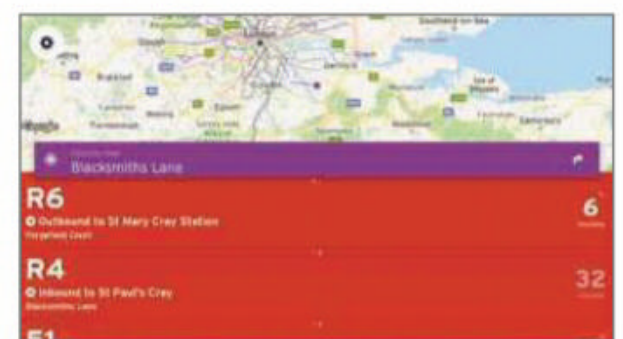
Download Google Translate's language packs for offline translations

usefulness is greatly reduced if you don't have a working internet connection.

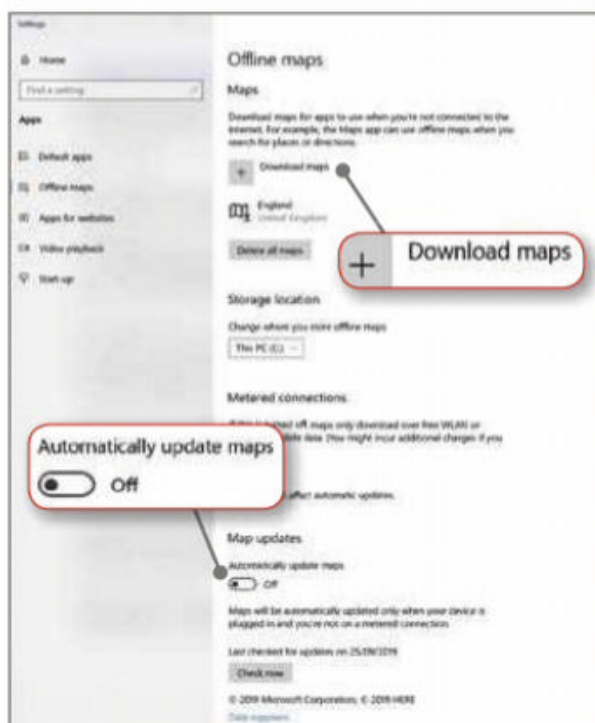
Thankfully, you can download offline language packs for the iOS and Android apps, and they can even be used to translate text using your device's camera. To download a language, open the Translate app, tap a language at the top (left or right sides), then click the Download button next to the language you want. 59 languages can be downloaded and used offline, compared to 103 when online.

Check bus and train timetables

Paper timetables continue to be popular because you can simply grab one for free from the train station or bus garage and refer to it whenever you need. If you prefer to use your phone for this information, then you need the free Transit app for Android and iOS (transitapp.com). It comes with lots of features including the ability to plan trips, view schedules and see route itineraries. Transit covers 200 cities worldwide, although the UK is currently limited to London and Manchester. You can see which elements are available offline at bit.ly/transit486.



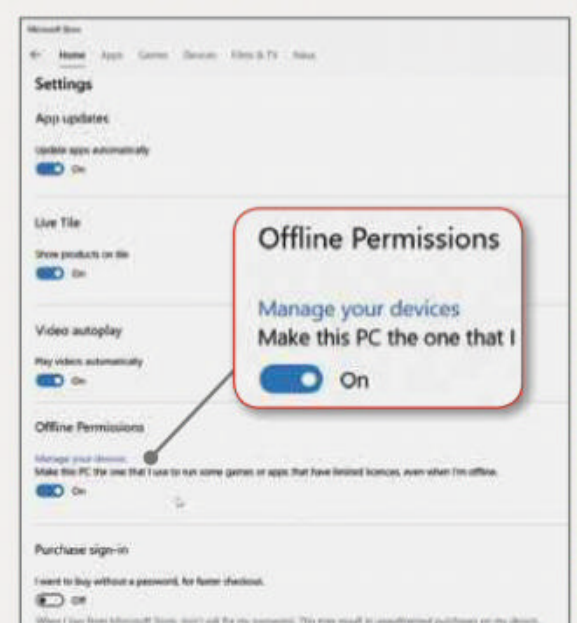
Plan a journey on public transport offline using the Transit app



Windows 10's map downloader lets you explore entire countries offline

ENABLE OFFLINE MODE FOR WINDOWS GAMES

A lot of Windows UWP (Universal Windows Platform) games require an online connection to run, usually for licensing reasons. However, you can set your PC to make these games available without an internet connection. Open the Microsoft Store and click the ellipses (three-dot) button next to your account icon, then enable the Offline Permissions setting. Accessing games offline means you miss out on certain features – such as cloud saves and multiplayer elements – but at least you can keep playing, even when you're unable to get online.



PHOTOS & AUDIO

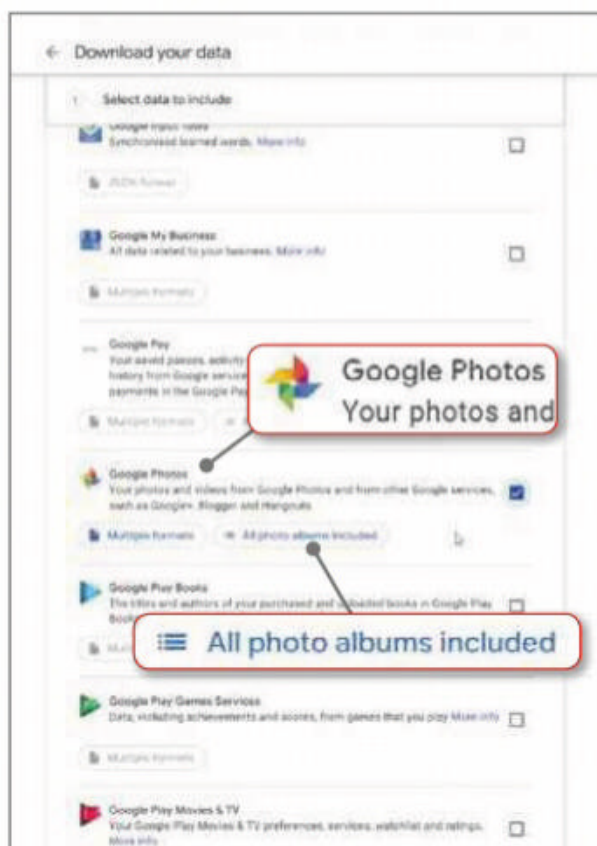


Download your Google photos

It's upsetting to lose years' worth of precious photos because your phone got stolen, misplaced or damaged. Thankfully, apps and services such as Google Photos automatically back up your images to the cloud, so you'll always have a copy. Downloading snaps from Google Photos is easy enough – just go to photos.google.com on your computer, select the image(s) you want and click the Download option – or press Shift+D. Multiple photos will be downloaded in a zip file.

However, if you have a vast amount of photos and/or videos that you want to download, this approach isn't practical. Luckily, there is a way to grab them all in one go. Visit the Google Takeout page at takeout.google.com and click the Deselect All link at the top. Scroll down the very long list of Google services until you get to Google Photos and select it. If you click the 'All photo albums included' link, you can deselect any you don't want.

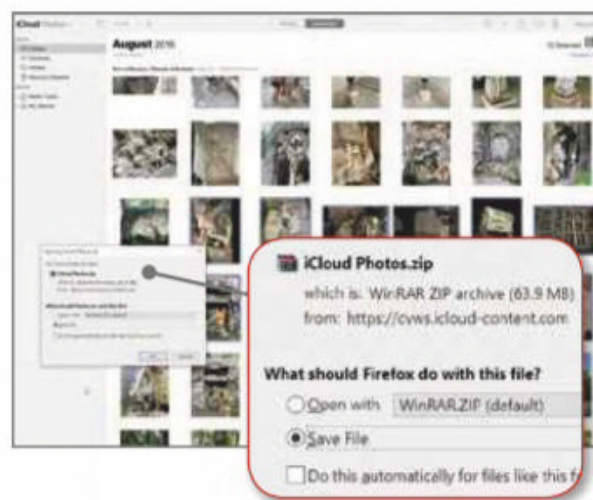
Scroll down to the bottom and click 'Next step'. You'll get the option to receive the download link via email or have the images added to Google Drive, Dropbox, OneDrive or Box. You can opt to have the download happen once, or schedule regular exports, and choose between ZIP and TGZ file types. You can also set the archive size, up to a maximum of 50GB (archives larger than the specified size will be split into multiple files). Click the 'Create archive' button to start the process.



Google Takeout creates a downloadable archive of all your photos and videos

Download photos from iCloud

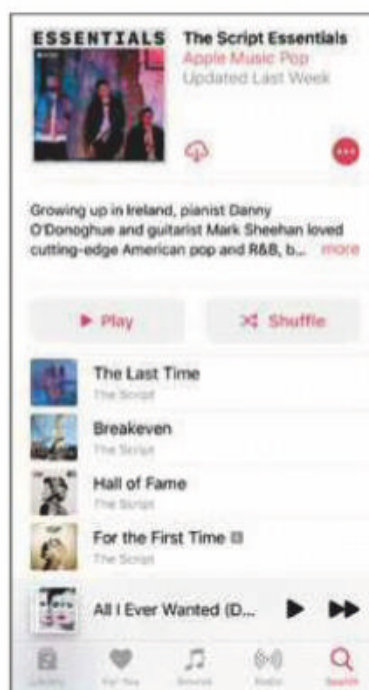
If you own an iPhone and/or iPad, there's a good chance you use Apple's cloud-storage service to back up your photos and videos. You can bulk download images from there to your PC or Mac through the iCloud website (www.icloud.com). Sign in with your Apple details and the Apple ID verification code that appears on your device when you log into the site. Hold down the Shift key and click all the photos you want to download for offline viewing on your computer, then click 'Download selected items' at the top of the page. If you want to select every item (and there could be an awful lot), click the first image, then press Ctrl+A – the standard keyboard shortcut for 'select all'. For size reasons, you are limited to downloading 1,000 photos at a time.



Download up to 1,000 photos at a time from your iCloud account

Listen to Apple Music offline

You can easily download tracks and whole albums for listening to offline in Apple Music. Just open the app, go to the song or album you want to listen to and tap Add. You'll now see a cloud icon next to the album art, as well as individual icons next to each track, if available. Tap the one near the art to download the entire album, or the ones next to the different



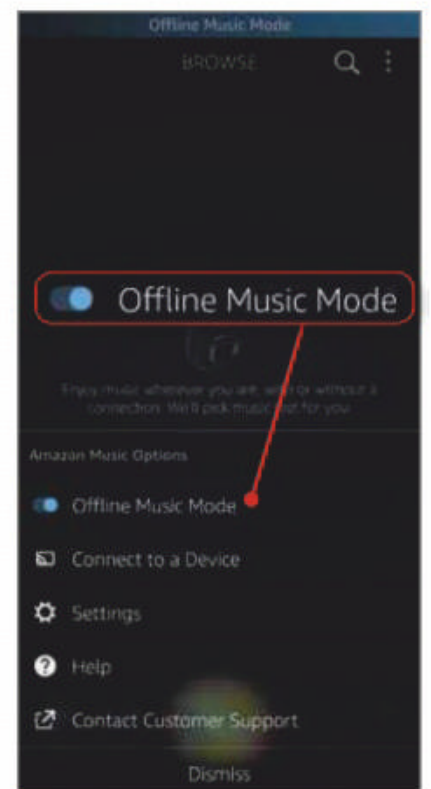
Download songs and albums from Apple Music to listen to offline

songs to save tracks individually.

Although you can download a lot of songs for offline listening, there are exceptions – taster tracks from as-yet unreleased albums are likely to be streaming-only.

Listen to Amazon Music offline

Saving tracks for offline listening in Amazon's streaming music service is pretty straightforward – just open an album or song, then click the download button for it. The mobile app, available on both iOS and Android, has an Offline Music Mode that you can toggle on or off. Just tap the three-dot button in the top-right corner and select the option there. With the setting enabled, only downloaded or locally stored music will be shown.

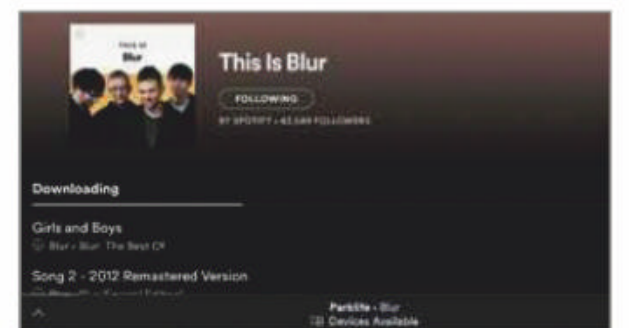


Amazon Music has an Offline Music Mode you can switch on and off

Listen to Spotify music offline

Spotify, like Apple and Amazon's streaming-music services, also allows you to listen to your favourite audio offline. You need to be a Premium subscriber, which entitles you to download up to 10,000 songs on each of up to five different devices. Just open your library, find something to listen to offline, then enable the download toggle. You'll automatically enter Offline Mode anytime you lose your internet connection.

Free users can't download songs, but they can download podcasts, so at least have something to listen to offline.



Spotify Premium users can play music without an internet connection

EMAIL & MESSAGES



Access your **webmail** offline

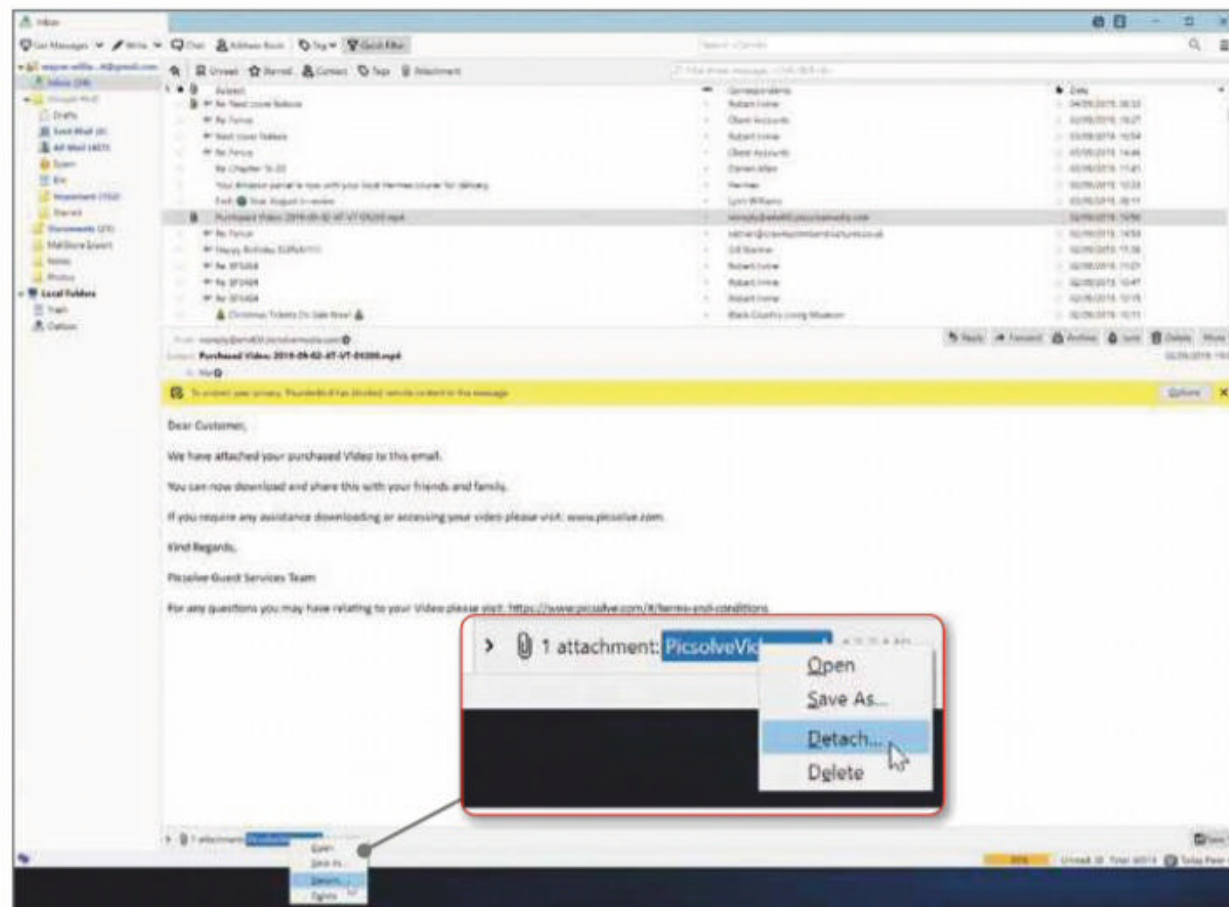
Webmail's great strength is that you can access your inbox and send messages from any device, anywhere – provided you have an internet connection. You can still access your emails when you're offline, but you'll need to take action in advance. The easiest solution is to use an email client such as Thunderbird (www.thunderbird.net) to download all your messages and attachments. Simply add your webmail account to the program by entering your email address and password. Another option is to use a back-up service such as MailStore Home (www.mailstore.com), which archives all your messages and lets you search them.

If you can't be bothered with a separate program, you can simply use

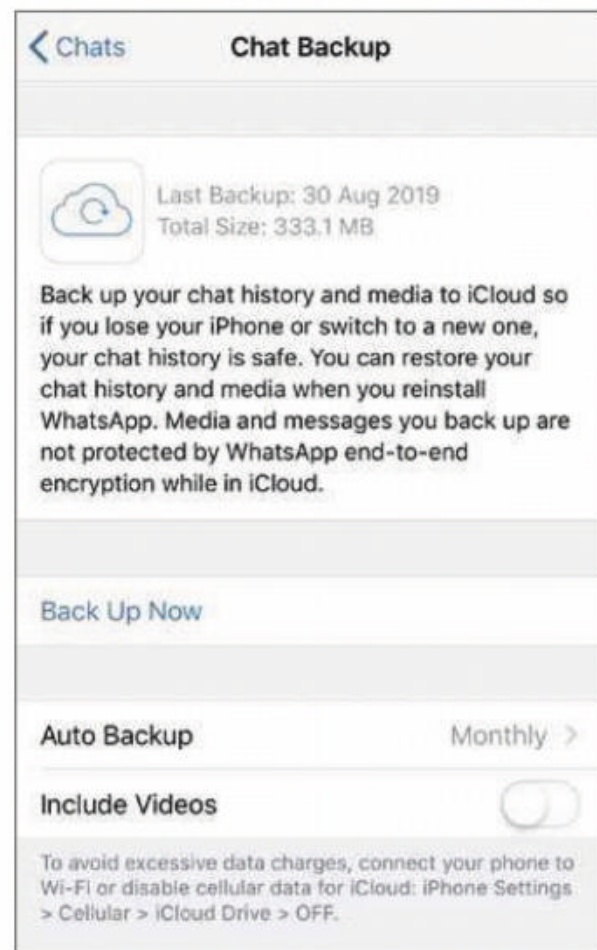
Gmail offline. Access the webmail service in Chrome (this doesn't work in any other browser), click the cog button, open Settings and click the Offline option. Enable the feature there and choose how many days of messages you want to sync, then click Save Changes. You can read messages offline, and compose new emails and replies, though they won't be sent until you have a working internet connection.

Back up your **chats**

Online messaging tools such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger let you browse past chats and photos, even when you're offline. However, if you want to save a backup of chats for offline viewing elsewhere, you can. Open WhatsApp on your mobile device,



You can use Thunderbird to read your webmail messages offline



Create a backup of your WhatsApp conversations to revisit offline

tap Settings, then Chats and Chat Backup. The options available will vary depending on whether you have an Android or iOS device: on iPhone, your chats will be backed up to iCloud; on Android, they will be backed up to Google Drive. You can access these backups through your web browser on a PC or Mac by logging into iCloud or Google Drive.

To back up your Facebook messages, log into Facebook on your computer and click the down arrow in the top-right corner. Choose Settings and click Your Facebook Information, then 'Download your information'. Deselect everything, reselect Messages and download them. ■

NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 30 October 2019

SYNC YOUR PC WITH YOUR PHONE

Merge your desktop
with your mobile to get
the best of both worlds



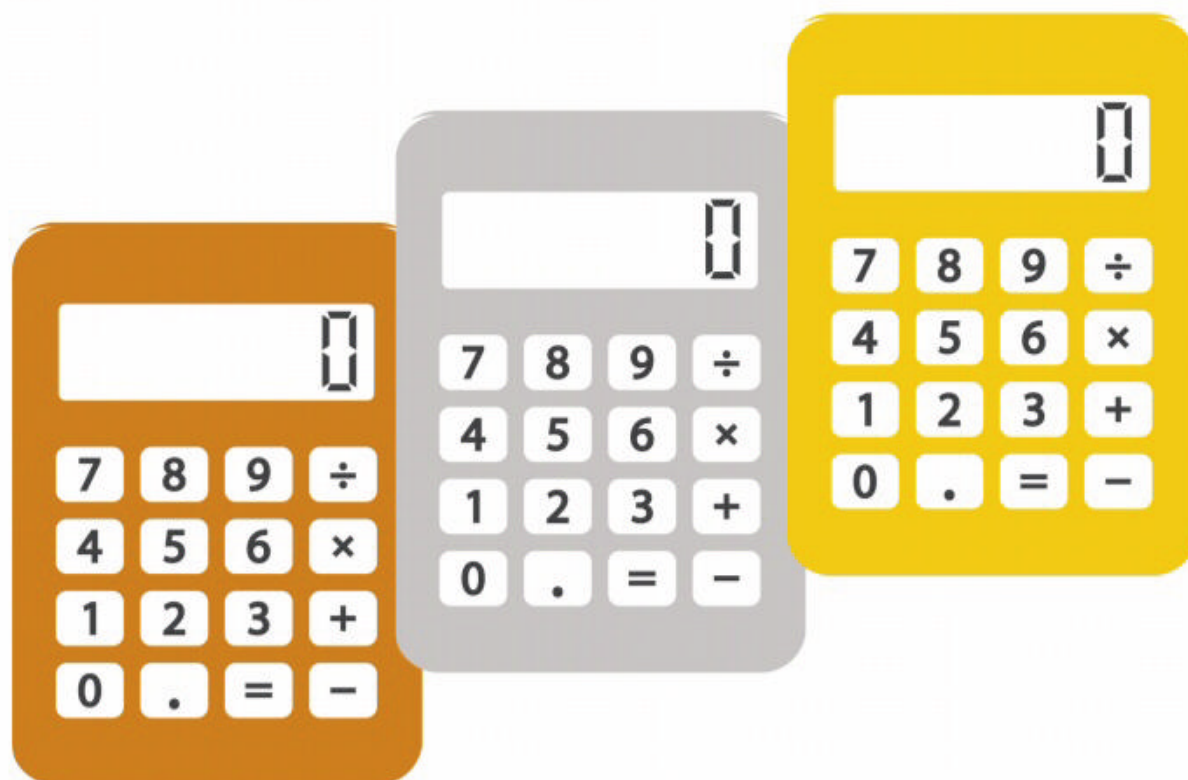
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- **AUTO-DELETE PRIVATE DATA**
Don't let sensitive information fall into the wrong hands
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Find out why Windows updates fail - and fix them
- **MAKE YOUR HOME SMARTER**
It can be done without spending a fortune on expensive devices

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Best free Windows calculators

Windows 10 comes with a calculator preinstalled but is it the best tool for all your calculating needs? **Andy Shaw** compares it to the best free calculators to see what you might be missing



Old Calculator for Windows 10 | bit.ly/oldcalc486 | ★★★★★

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

WebUser
GOLD
AWARD

What we liked:

You don't have to be a curmudgeon to appreciate that some things were just better in the old days. We didn't realise how much we'd miss the old Windows Calculator before they changed it to the new Windows 10 app version. It could do simple sums from your keyboard's number pad and, if you were feeling mathematically adventurous, you could click the View menu and choose the Scientific view. The best thing about it, however, is that it launched as soon as you summoned it, with no load times or splash screens. It was literally quicker to open the old Windows Calculator from a shortcut icon than it would be to reach across a desk and grab an actual calculator.

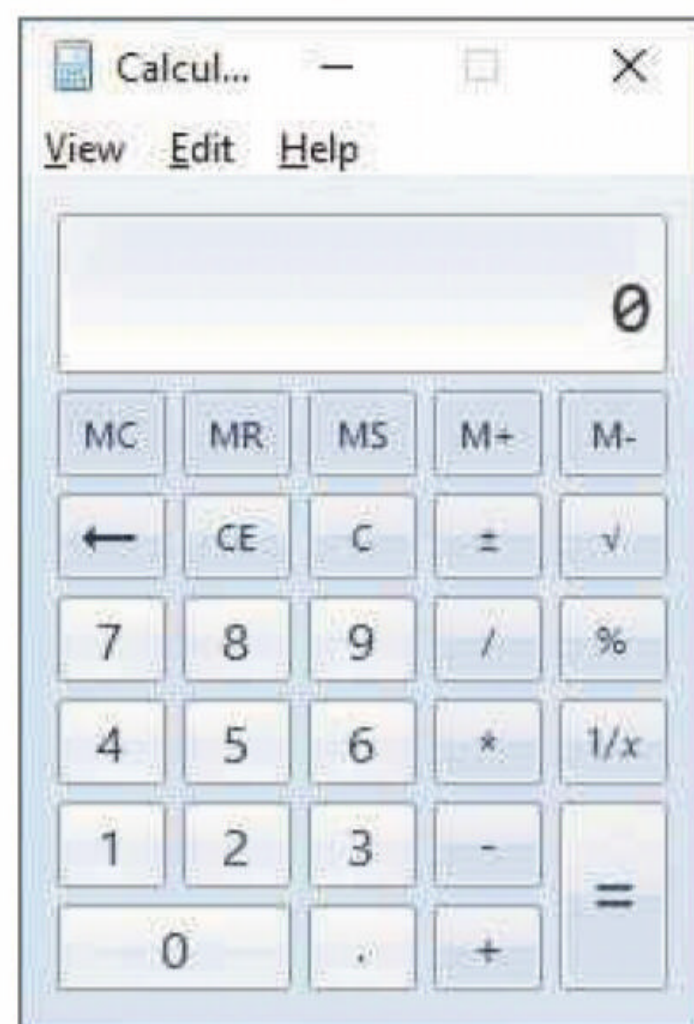
Despite Microsoft revamping the calculator and turning it into a slower Windows 10 app (see opposite), you can still get the original version if you look hard enough. Updated for Windows 10 by Microsoft itself, we found it on the Winaero website at bit.ly/oldcalc486. Download it, install it and you'll never open the Windows 10 version again.

It's a perfect mix of form and function for performing quick calculations. It's

small, easily operated from the keyboard, and it launches in the blink of an eye – even on old PCs. There has been no attempt to make it any more sophisticated but, perhaps surprisingly, it can do almost everything that Microsoft's current calculator can do, but faster and more efficiently, including unit conversion and date calculations. It's enough to bring a wistful tear to your eye as you pine for Windows 7 and how slick and unassuming it was.

How it could be improved:

Of course, this retro nonsense isn't for everyone. If you don't really care that your calculator doesn't appear a millisecond after you've clicked its icon, and think old Windows things look a bit rubbish now, this isn't the calculator for you.



OUR VERDICT

A basic Windows calculator should appear when you call it, sit unassumingly in a corner of your screen when you're not using it

and be capable of performing everyday calculations. Windows' Old Calculator does just that and, quite frankly, we've sorely missed it.

SpeedCrunch | speedcrunch.org | ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

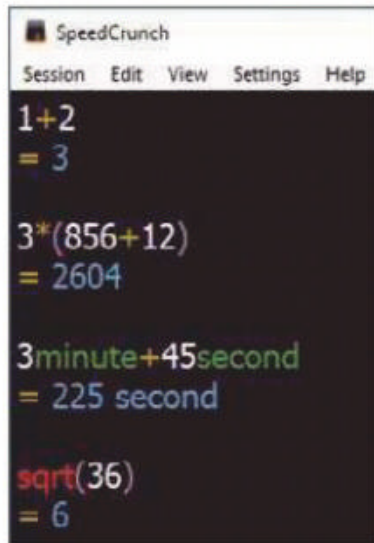
**WebUser
SILVER
AWARD**

What we liked:

When you're sitting at a computer, with a keyboard at your fingertips, it makes no sense

to switch to your mouse and click buttons on the screen. This is the thinking behind SpeedCrunch, which looks more like Command Prompt than Windows Calculator, but can solve everything from basic calculations to complicated equations.

You type your sums into the bottom and results pop out at the top. You need to use commands to work out calculations such as square roots and percentages, which is where the learning curve steepens over a regular calculator with buttons. However, if you start typing the name of the command you want to use – such as an 's' for finding a square root, for example – a list of potential commands starting with 's' (including the 'sqrt' command that



you need), appears in a list you can easily select from. If you miss a standard calculator interface, press Ctrl+K and a keypad appears at the bottom of the window.

How it could be improved:

SpeedCrunch is a great idea but it's ugly. That's forgivable in a command-line tool and

yet Insect (see bottom, right) presents it a lot better. If Insect wasn't locked to a browser, we'd give it the award instead.

OUR VERDICT

There's no reason why a calculator on your computer needs buttons you click with a mouse. SpeedCrunch lets you type your sums straight into it, and streams the results to the window above. If you don't mind losing the standard calculator look, it's well worth a try.

Windows Calculator | Built into Windows 10 | ★★★★★
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

**WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD**

What we liked:

Because the Windows Calculator is built into the operating system, it has a few basic

advantages. For starters, if you begin typing `calc` into the Start menu, options appear so you can choose which mode you launch it in: Standard, Scientific, Programmer or Date Calculation. The latter is a useful addition that lets you quickly work out the length of time to a particular date, or work out a specific date by adding or subtracting a number from the current date.

Windows Calculator includes a history pad that remembers previous calculations, so you can go back and check your work if you're carrying out complex sums with multiple steps. It also includes a converter, which is useful for converting currency or metric to imperial.



Unless you're taking part in a maths course, this has more options than most people will ever need, so if you can't be bothered to add another calculator to Windows, this one is perfectly fine.

How it could be improved:

What frustrates us the most about the Windows 10 calculator is how long it takes to load. Rather than jumping straight to the numbered buttons, you have to endure a splash screen showing a picture of a calculator – as if you need reminding which app you've just chosen to launch.

OUR VERDICT

Functionally, this calculator is exactly the same as the Gold Award-winning Old Calculator. It looks better and, if you're using Windows 10, is already installed. It just takes longer to load.

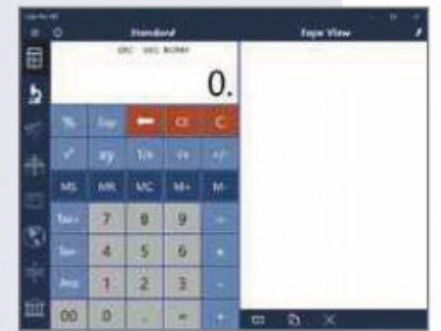
BEST OF THE REST

Calc Pro HD

bit.ly/cphd486

Calc Pro HD opens with its 'Tape View' showing – a notepad where your calculations appear so you can refer back and check your sums.

The free version comes with standard and scientific calculators, with more options (graphing, conversion, currency) available only if you pay £6.69. It's no better than Windows' own calculator, unless you particularly like its alternative look.

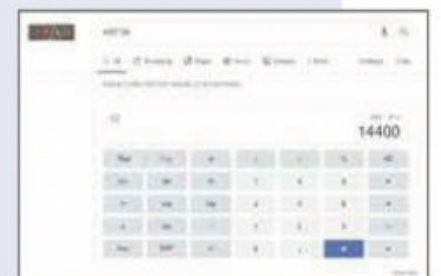


Google or Bing

www.google.co.uk / www.bing.com

You can write a sum into most search engine's search boxes or the address bar of your browser to get your calculation

done. Google and Bing, for example, pop up a calculator interface to help you make any further calculations, and both do conversions, units and lots of other clever things. If you're carrying out a lot of calculations, though, you may not want your calculator hidden in a browser tab.



Insect

insect.sh

Insect is to SpeedCrunch what Google and Bing are to Windows Calculator: online options you can have open in a browser tab.

Like SpeedCrunch, Insect eschews a standard calculator pad in favour of a command line, so you can just type in your sums and see the results. Like SpeedCrunch, it'll perform all sorts of extra functions (type ? to see some examples) but, like Google, you can't easily keep it accessible in the background, which is our only criticism.



Block spam messages and calls forever

Spam isn't dead, it's just evolved to invade more places than ever. Jane Hoskyn reveals new ways to beat today's toughest junk – in your inbox and beyond

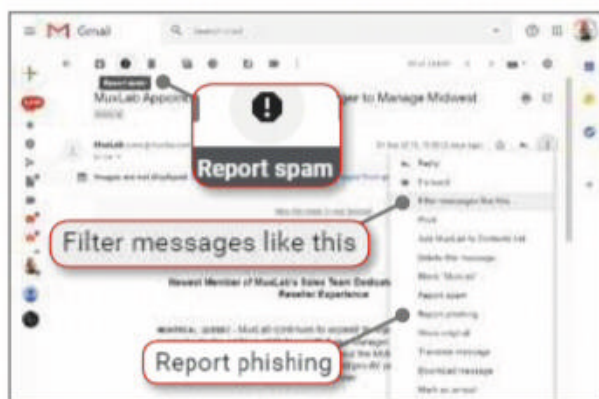


BLOCK SPAM EMAILS FOREVER

Train your built-in spam filters

Gmail, Outlook.com and other major email services detect spam automatically, then funnel it into a Spam folder that's emptied every 30 days or so. But because spam is constantly evolving, you need to train the algorithms by reporting dodgy messages that escape the filters.

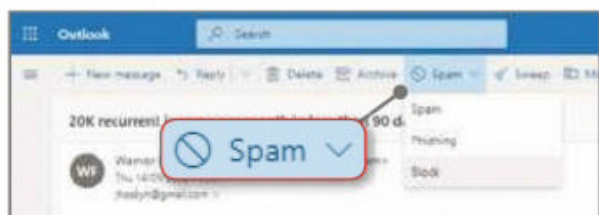
In Gmail, click the exclamation mark at the top of the dodgy message and 'Report spam' or 'Report spam & unsubscribe'. If you suspect it's a scam



Fine-tune Gmail's defences by reporting dodgy senders and tightening filters

that's out to steal your personal data, open its three-dot menu and click 'Report phishing' to add the sender to Gmail's databases. You can also block the sender from this menu.

In Outlook.com, click Spam at the top of the email then Spam, Phishing or



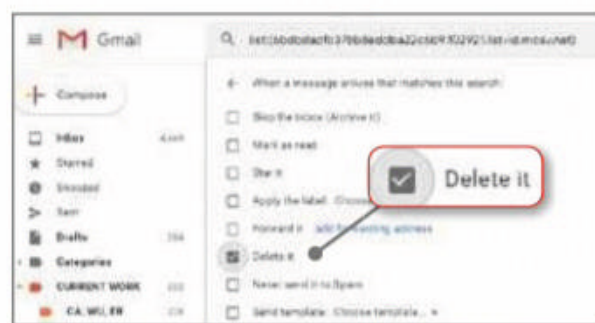
Outlook lets you beef up its filters by reporting spam and phishing emails

Block in the drop-down menu, then OK.

Mozilla's Thunderbird (thunderbird.net) goes one better by letting you mark junk from the subject line.

Block newsletter spam and its trackers

Spam-blocking algorithms aren't designed to stop promotional bumpf, so you'll need to create your own filters to block them. In Gmail, open the message's three-dot menu and click 'Filter messages like this', then 'Create filter', 'Delete it' and 'Also apply filter to matching conversations'. Finally, click 'Create filter' to banish the lot.



Blitz promotional spam by deleting all past and future emails from a sender

In Outlook.com, go to 'Junk email' settings (bit.ly/junk486) and add any offending promo touts to 'Blocked senders and domains', then scroll down and tick 'Only trust email from Safe senders' and 'Block attachments from anyone not in Safe senders'.

Mailing-list spam is often laced with trackers, usually embedded in images, so it's worth blocking these sneaky spies as well. The open-source tool Trocker (trockerapp.github.io) automatically detects and blocks tracking images, without blocking other photos. It now has an extension for Firefox as well as



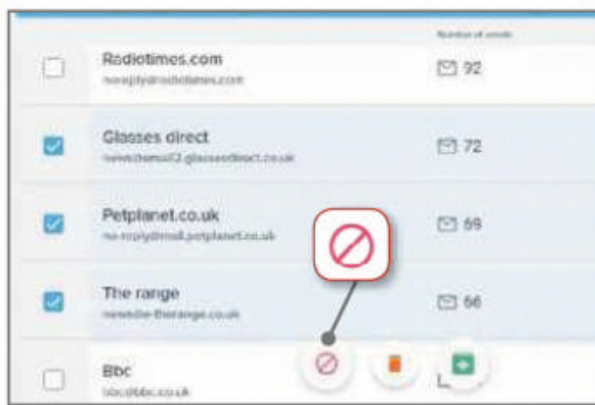
Trocker quickly blocked 11 spam trackers and three suspicious domains for us

Chrome, and supports all webmail services. Click its toolbar button, then Advanced to see how many spam-producing stalkers it's blocked.

The free version of new Gmail add-on Gmelius (gmeli.us) includes tracker detection and blocking, along with newsletter unsubscribe tools. Chrome extension Email Privacy Protector (bit.ly/emailpriv486) adds an eye icon to any Gmail message that's tracking you, and offers to block the sender.

Expunge old mailing-list spam

Blitzing newsletters is tedious if you're on hundreds of mailing lists, so Cleanfox (cleanfox.io) lets you delete the whole lot in one go. It requires several security steps, including a random secure password to link your webmail address, and then takes a few hours to round up all the mailing list spam in your archive. You don't have to stop work while the list is being populated and Cleanfox will pick up where it left off if you need to



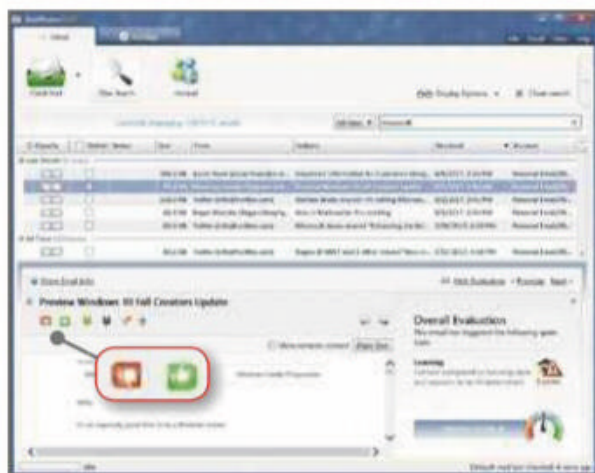
Wipe out newsletter spam from hundreds of senders at once with Cleanfox

shut down your PC. Then simply select one or more senders to unsubscribe and/or delete all their messages from your archive.

Block spam before it even downloads

Even the most carefully configured filters don't stop junk downloading to your devices – they just divert it from your main inbox. To block spam before it can touch your computer, use MailWasher Free (mailwasher.net).

Like Cleanfox, MailWasher links securely to your email account (steps vary between providers; see bit.ly/washsetup486 for instructions). It then acts as a sentry, checking incoming email every 10 minutes and downloads the subject lines only. You click the thumbs up/down symbols to sort spam from non-spam, then download the good stuff. The new version lets you

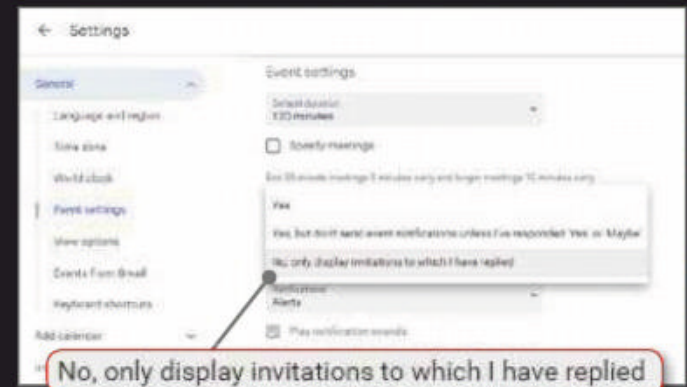


Banish spam by using MailWasher to give the thumbs-down to a subject line

BLOCK GOOGLE CALENDAR SPAM

If it's 14 January, it must be 'WIN AN IPHONE X!!!!' day – hang on, how did that get there? Yes, spammers are now forcing their junk into Google Calendar by exploiting a default setting that lets anyone add "invitations" (containing whatever obnoxious text they choose) to your calendar automatically, simply by mentioning them in a Gmail message.

Luckily, calendar spam is easy to block. Open Settings in Google Calendar and scroll to 'Event



settings', click 'Automatically add invitation' then choose 'No, only display invitations to which I have replied'. The change takes effect automatically.

sort mail by domain and create filters for hiding and deleting messages.

MailWasher also has a free app, but it only works properly if you use MailWasher Pro on your PC (£29.95 per year) – worth a punt if you're plagued with malicious or worrying spam on multiple devices, but the free version is powerful enough for most users.

Spamihlator (www.spamihlator.com) works in a similar way, but hasn't been updated in recent months. It's very easy to use and supports excellent plugins – mostly advanced filters that block specific messages such as those that mention premium-rate numbers or contain 'useless chains of characters'.

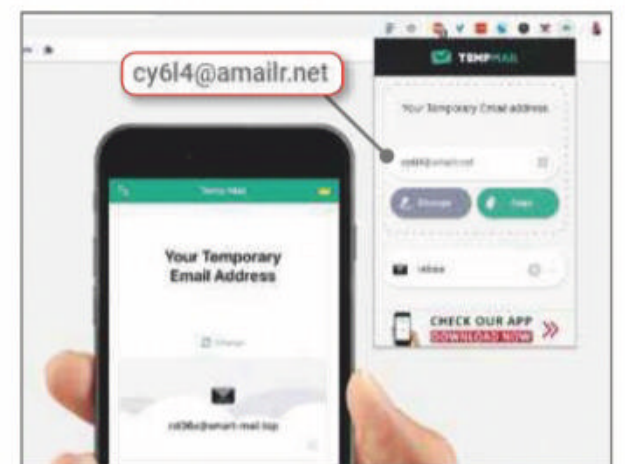
Use a disposable email address for logins

Every time you enter your email address when a website demands it, you're opening the door to spam from every company it shares its database with. So, to limit future damage, use a temporary 'burner' email address.

Most email providers let you add aliases for free. In Gmail, click your picture, then 'Add account', 'Create account'. You can have as many Gmail

addresses as you want, then ignore their inboxes forever. Outlook.com also lets you create aliases but their messages are funnelled into your main inbox (bit.ly/alias486).

A more spam-resistant option is a disposable address that automatically destroys any messages sent to it. Open-source site Guerrilla Mail (guerrillamail.com) generates a random address that you can use for an hour. Temp-Mail (temp-mail.org) lets you choose when to delete your disposable address, and has apps for Android, iOS, Chrome and Firefox, as well as a free web tool.



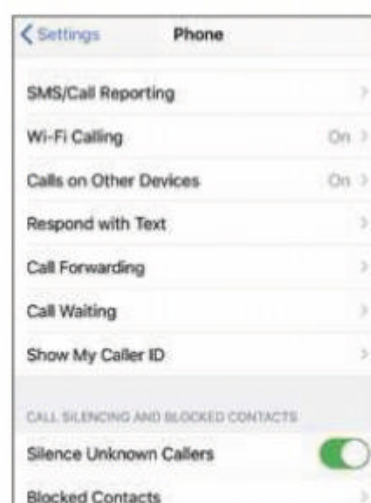
Provide a disposable email when companies demand your address

BLOCK SPAM CALLS AND TEXTS FOREVER

Block phone spam using built-in settings

Android and iOS are taking action against the menace of phone spam, including automated so-called 'robocalls'. The new iOS 13 (see page 38) adds a Silence Unknown Callers option under Phone in the Settings app, muting calls from numbers not in your contacts. On iOS 12 and earlier, set Do Not Disturb to only accept calls from people in your Favorites list. You can also block individual callers from the

Keep unwanted callers out of earshot with iOS's new Silence Unknown Callers option



Recents list, by selecting the number, then 'i', and then Block Contact.

On Android, go to Settings in the default Phone app and tap to enable 'Caller ID and spam protection'. Some devices add the option to send all unknown calls to voicemail. Samsung devices display extra information when unknown callers try to invade your space. To block all unknown numbers completely, go to Phone Settings then tap 'Block unknown callers' under 'Block numbers'.

Block spam forever

Block phone spam using free apps

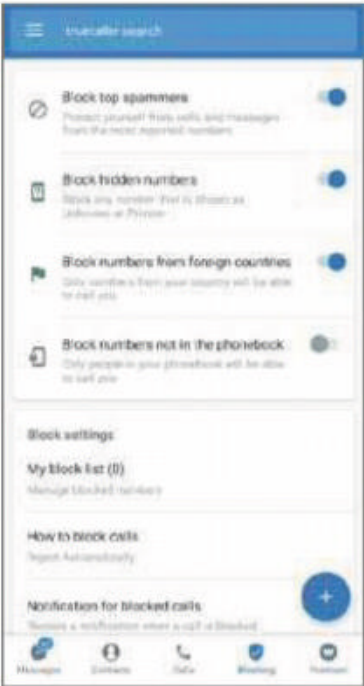
Samsung's spam settings are powered by Hiya (hiya.com), which you can also download as a standalone app for Android or iOS. It works alongside your default phone app to check unknown callers against its spam database, then displays details on screen and checks message contents for malware.

The best spam-blocking app, though, is Truecaller (free for Android and iOS, truecaller.com). It's a fully-featured phone app replacement that you can set to include WhatsApp, Viber, Line and Telegram calls, and it's just been updated to add free internet voice and video calls and call recording.

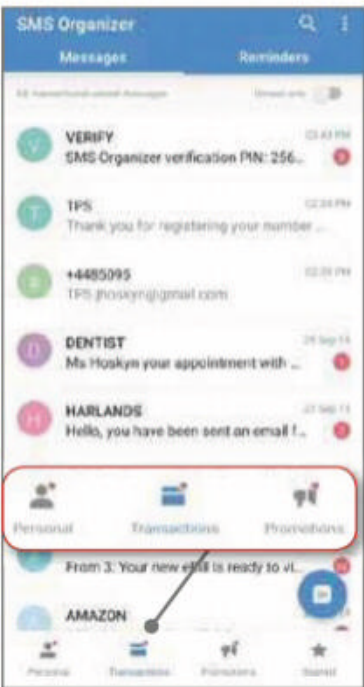
You can set Truecaller to automatically block calls and texts from the most reported spammers in its crowdsourced database, and also block numbers that are hidden, from overseas and/or not in your phonebook. We also like the 'Search the Web' shortcut for each number, which saves you having to paste mystery numbers into Google.

Block spam texts automatically

Truecaller also helps cut text spam by sorting your messages into three tabs: Personal, Others and Spam. But we prefer Microsoft's new app SMS Organizer (bit.ly/smsorg486), which only aims to replace Messages. It's still in beta but works well, automatically sorting texts into Personal, Transactions and Promotions, along with a Starred folder that you



Truecaller replaces your default phone app with a suite of phone-spam tools



Microsoft's new app automatically categorises the texts you receive

WHY THE TPS IS STILL SPAM'S ENEMY NUMBER 1

The TPS (Telephone Preference Service) runs the UK's official 'do not phone-spam me' database. Last year, it looked to be out of a job when the government banned cold calls about compensation and PPI to anyone who hadn't "opted in". Transgressors were fined £500,000 – but the spammers didn't stop. So the TPS register is still a vital step in fending off phone spam. Text the letters 'TPS' and your email address to 85095, or register online



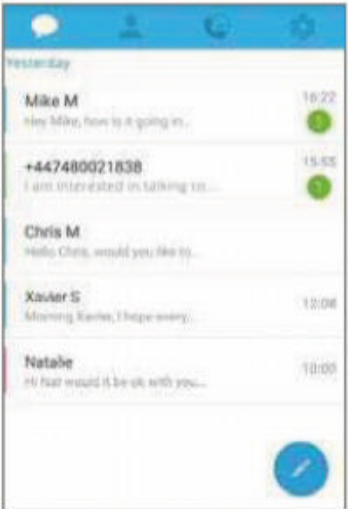
at bit.ly/tpstext486. If you still can't get a phone spammer to leave you alone, lodge a complaint with the TPS via bit.ly/tpscomplain486 and report spam texts to your network operator by forwarding to 7726 (SPAM on the keypad). Phone scams, such as the current spate of dodgy Thomas Cook refunds (bit.ly/cook486), should be reported to Action Fraud (www.actionfraud.police.uk).

configure yourself. You can also block and mute senders, and swipe texts to move them between folders. Your device's native Messages app has spam-blocking features, too. In iOS 12 and 13, the Filter Unknown Senders option filters texts from non-contacts and doesn't notify you about them. Android Messages has 'Caller ID and spam protection', which adds a prompt to 'Report spam' or 'Report not spam' when suspect texts arrive.

Get a burner phone number

To avoid phone spam, use a temporary, disposable phone number for compulsory 'number' fields in online forms. Apps that generate these numbers tend to work exclusively in the US and Canada, but the free web tool GetFreeSMSNumber (getfreesmsnumber.com) covers numerous countries including the UK. However you have to enter your real phone number to use it, which seems to defeat the object.

The safest workaround is UK service Swytch (swytch.com), which offers internet calling from any device for £5 per month. You can add multiple numbers to an account, then use the Android or iOS app to handle calls and texts to



Juggle multiple burner numbers on your mobile with Swytch

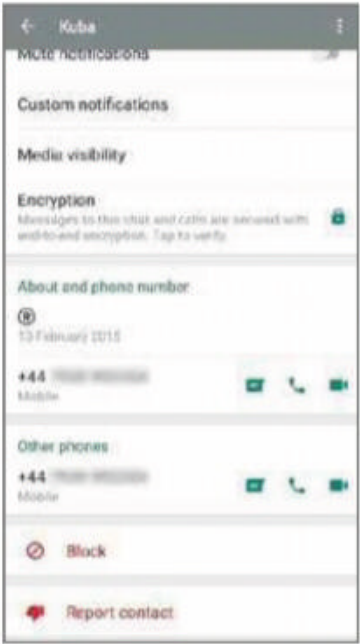
those numbers, so they never go via your default phone and text apps.

Report spam in WhatsApp, Messenger and social media

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram offer oodles of ways to report spam posts, messages and comments. In most cases, you can long-tap (Android) or swipe (iOS) the offending item to open Block and Report links. In Facebook Messenger, you can also tap the 'i' in a dodgy message, then Report. In WhatsApp, open the sender's profile, then tap 'Report contact' or Block.

Twitter automatically hides direct messages that it suspects of being spam, and displays a 'suspicious content' warning that you can tap to select 'This is Spam' or Message OK. To report any tweet (including replies), tap the arrow, then Report. For more info, see bit.ly/twitspam486.

On Instagram, long-press or swipe a spammy comment, tap the '!' and then 'Spam or Scam'. To report a spam post or profile, tap its three-dot button, then Report. With private messages, long-press, then Report. You can find out more at bit.ly/instaspam486. ■



Block a WhatsApp spam sender from their profile, then report them for good measure

Secret uses for Street View

It's 10 years since Google launched Street View in the UK, but are you making the most of it? Robert Irvine offers some suggestions



Travel back in time

If you want to see how an area has changed at street-level over the past few years, Street View can be your TARDIS. Click the down arrow next to the clock icon in the top-left corner to open a panel showing archive Street View imagery of the location you're viewing. Drag the slider to one of the dots to jump to that point in time, then click the image to view and explore it full-size. Some of the imagery dates back 10 years and lines up perfectly with the most recent shots.

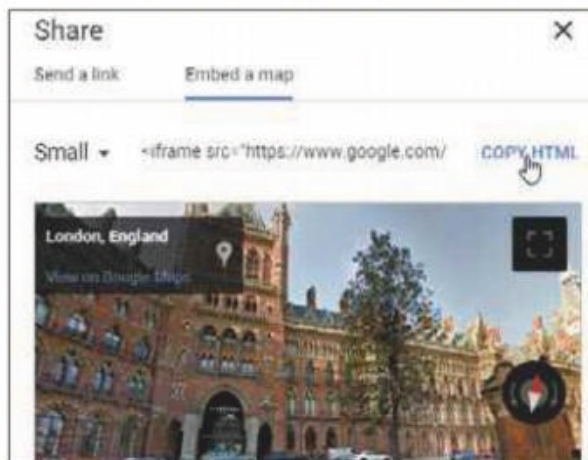


Check for parking spaces

Don't waste time driving around looking for parking in an unfamiliar area – use Street View to research available spaces before you set off. Obviously, the available imagery isn't live, and the reality may involve roadworks, large vehicles and other obstructions, but it's a quick and easy way to identify quiet nearby streets, parking restrictions and designated car parks.

Embed imagery on your website

Providing a map on your website or blog helps prospective visitors plan their route, but the best way for them to recognise that they've arrived at their destination is to embed Street View imagery on the page. To do this, click the three-dot button in the top-left corner and choose 'Share or embed image'. When the Share box opens, click 'Embed a map' and choose an image



size from the drop-down menu. You can then copy and paste the HTML code into your own site or blog, so visitors can view and explore the location.

Verify an address

A marker on a map shows you where a place is but not whether it's up a hill, above a shop, in a gated development or multi-storey property, or no longer exists. Street View lets you preview an address from the comfort of your home, so you know exactly which entrance to use and don't end up walking around looking confused.

Find the best viewpoints

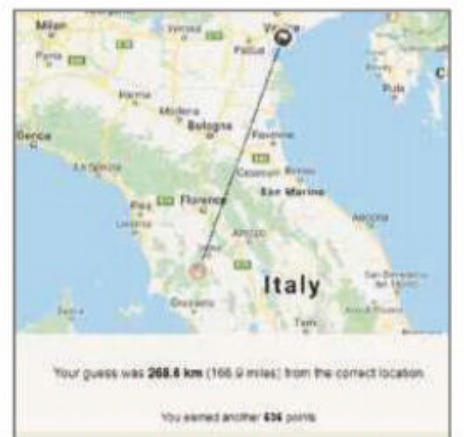
It's easy to waste time on holiday trying to photograph a famous landmark or stunning vista from different angles, only to realise later you missed the best option. Street View lets you plan your perfect shot in advance,

so you know exactly where to stand for the best viewpoint, before you even get there.



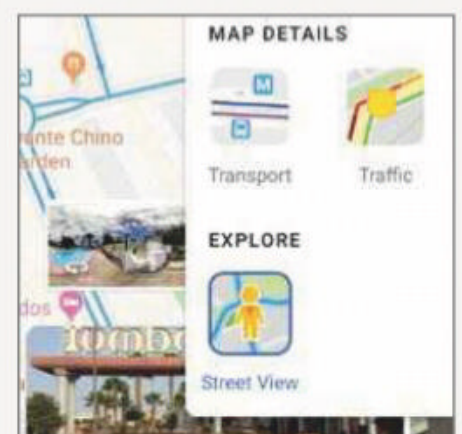
Guess the Street View location

Whether you need a diversion to kill some time or you just want to test your geographical knowledge, GeoGuessr (geoguessr.com) uses Street View as the basis of several fun games, in which you guess the location from random Street View images and earn points determined by how many miles or kilometres astray you were. Games include World, United States, United Kingdom and Famous Places, but (due to Google increasing its costs) free users can now only play two a day. An unlimited Pro subscription costs from \$1.99 (£1.59) per month, with a 10-day free trial. ■



SWITCH TO STREET VIEW INSTANTLY

Accessing Street View via Google Maps on your phone has long been slow and fiddly – the fact that there's a separate Street View app implies Google has always known it's not ideal. Thankfully, the problem was rectified in a recent update to the Maps app, which adds a dedicated Street View layer. Press the Layers button in the top-right corner and select Street View to highlight in blue where imagery is available, then tap where you want to go to launch the Street View viewer.





Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Manage and improve your wireless network with WinFi Lite

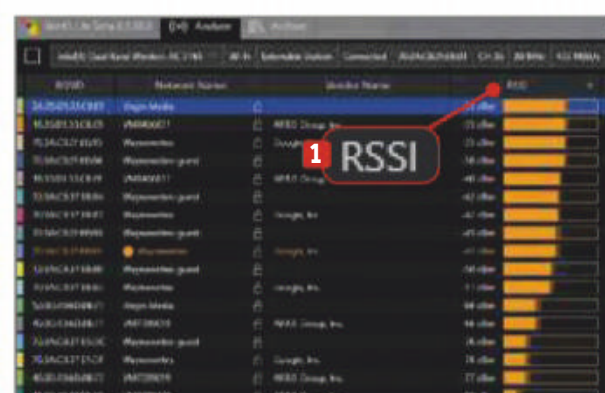
WinFi Lite monitors, analyses and troubleshoots your wireless network. Here's how to use it

WinFi Lite: www.helge-keck.com | 20 mins | 7, 8, 10

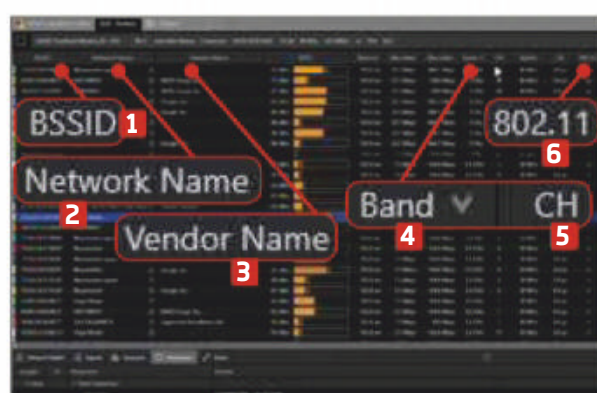
Most of us take Wi-Fi for granted and only give it any thought if things start to go wrong – when it slows to a crawl or disappears altogether. There are numerous reasons for Wi-Fi woes, such as domestic appliances interfering with the signal and neighbours sneakily piggybacking on your wireless connection, and WinFi

Lite can help identify and overcome these problems.

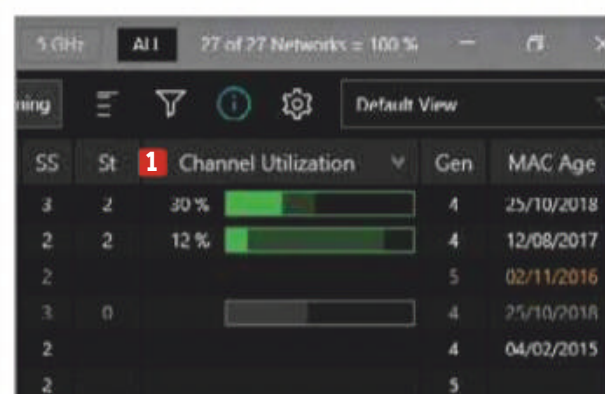
It's available as a free app for Windows 10 and as a desktop tool for older versions of Windows. Although it's currently in beta and aimed at professional Wi-Fi engineers, we've found it to be very stable and easy enough for anyone to use.



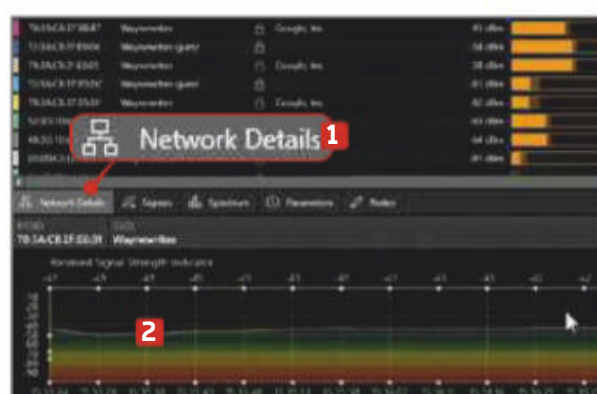
1 On launch, WinFi Lite scans for all wireless networks in range and displays them in order of RSSI (Received Signal Strength Indicator), 1 measured in dBm – decibels relative to a milliwatt. The networks with the strongest signal appear at the top of the page. The order may change due to signal fluctuations.



2 You can order the list of networks by various criteria, but for home use the headings that are of most interest (besides RSSI) are BSSID (Basic Service Set Identifier – the Mac address), 1 Network Name, 2 Vendor Name, 3 Band (2.4GHz/5GHz), 4 Channel 5 and 802.11 (Wi-Fi standard). 6



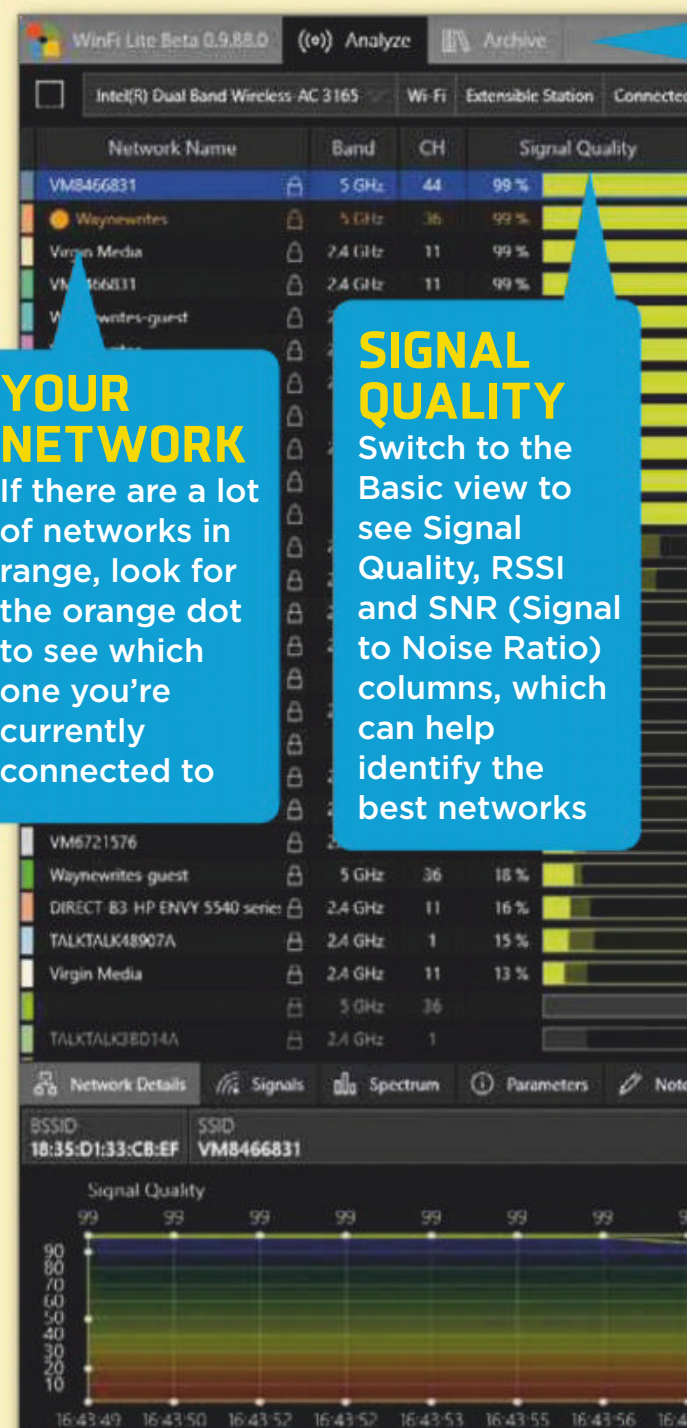
3 A wireless router can transmit on different channels and switching to another channel may help you avoid interference from your neighbours' Wi-Fi. The Channel Utilisation column 1 can show you which channels are the most congested. However, this information isn't reported by all routers.



4 Click one of the networks in the list to view information about it in the bottom strip. Click the Network Details tab 1 to view a graph of the signal strength (RSSI) over time. 2 This helps identify any noticeable changes, such as signal drops, which might come in handy when you're troubleshooting problems.



5 The Signals tab 1 shows how the different networks are performing. The name of the currently selected network is shown on the right next to its graph, 2 making it easy to identify. Each network is colour coded, with its identifying colour displayed in the column on the far left. 3



YOUR NETWORK

If there are a lot of networks in range, look for the orange dot to see which one you're currently connected to

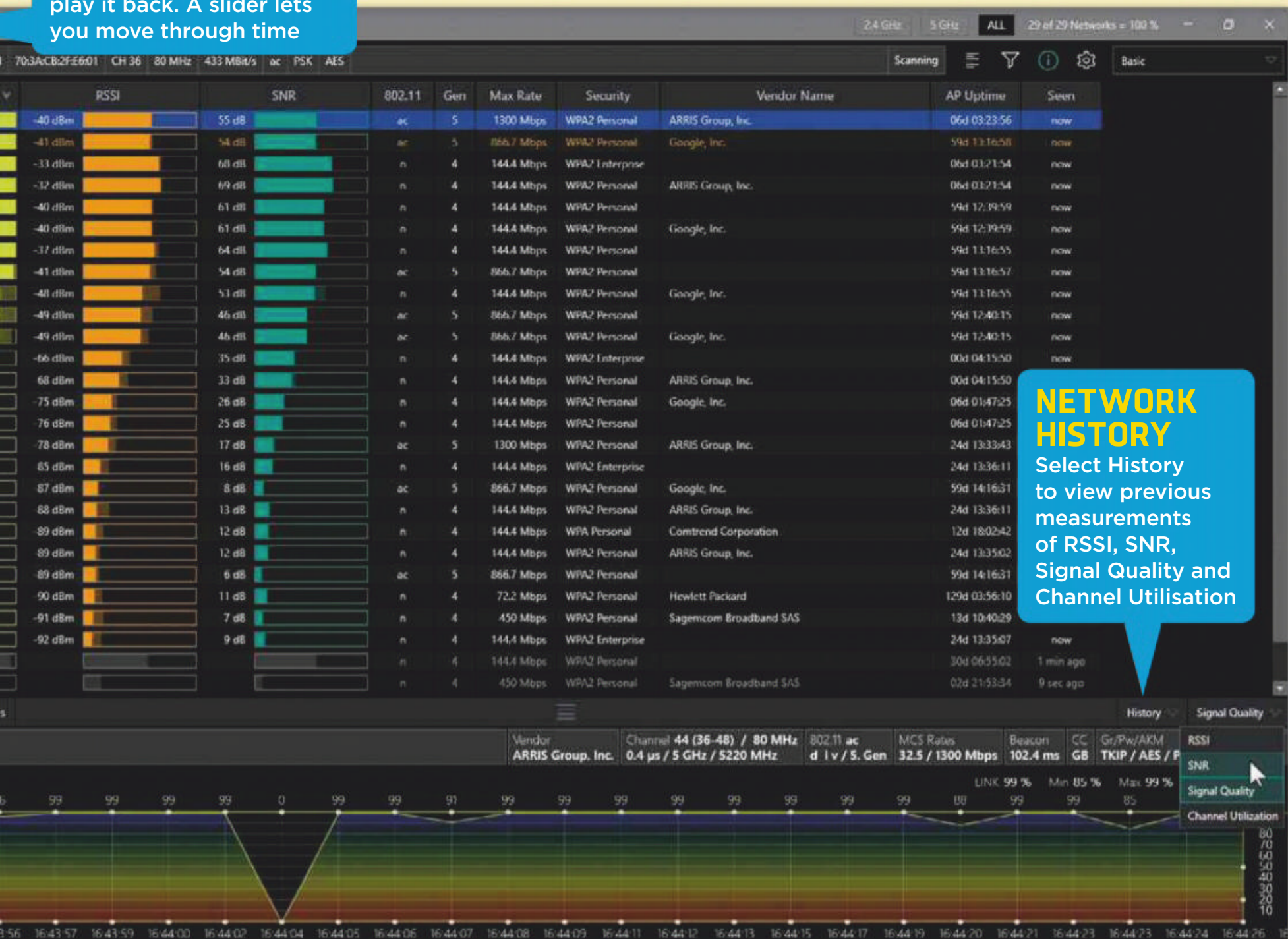
SIGNAL QUALITY

Switch to the Basic view to see Signal Quality, RSSI and SNR (Signal to Noise Ratio) columns, which can help identify the best networks



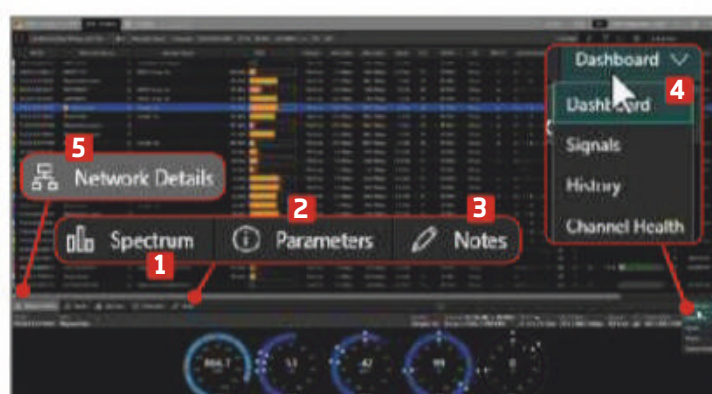
ARCHIVE

The Archive tab lets you view past activity by date and time. Select a listing to play it back. A slider lets you move through time



NETWORK HISTORY

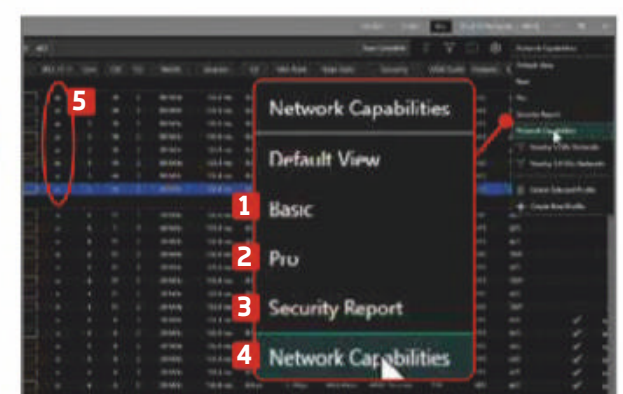
Select History to view previous measurements of RSSI, SNR, Signal Quality and Channel Utilisation



6 You can view the radio spectrum details for all networks in range **1** and the selected network's parameters. **2** You can also add notes to a network. **3** The drop-down box at the far right lets you change what's displayed. **4** The options vary from tab to tab. This is the Dashboard for Network Details. **5**



7 The buttons at the top let you filter the list of networks by band (2.4GHz, 5GHz or All), **1** while the buttons immediately below allow you to group networks by column. **2** You can filter the results using the options in the sidebar on the left. **3** Click the cog **4** to open the Settings sidebar on the right. **5**



8 You can choose between a selection of views to suit your technical knowledge. Basic **1** displays a simplified breakdown of networks; Pro **2** shows more data. Security Report **3** helps identify any network weaknesses, while Network Capabilities **4** orders networks by supported 802.11 standard. **5**



Replace File Explorer with a superior alternative

Tablacus: bit.ly/tablacus486 | ⌚ 20 mins | 🖥️ Windows 7, 8, 10



EXPERT TIP

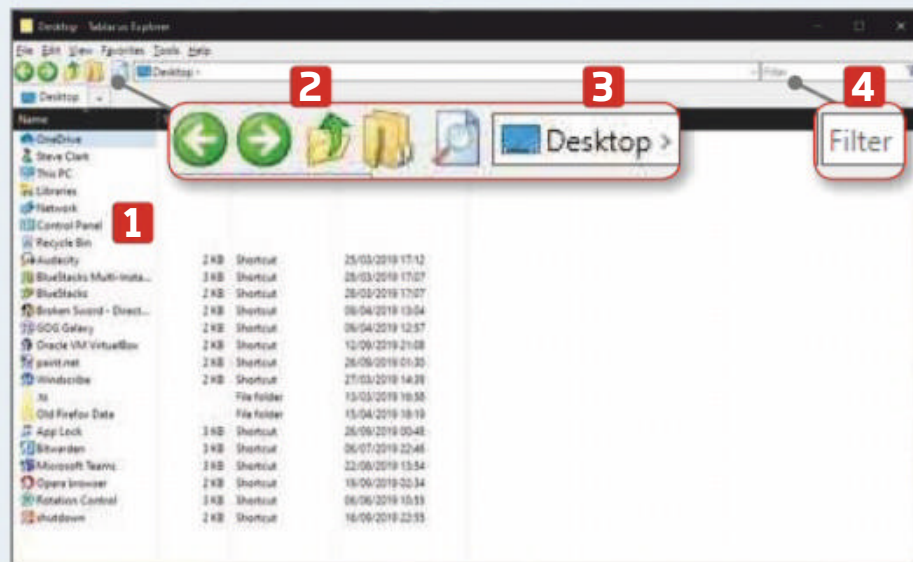
Steve Clark says

Before you start downloading every one of the many Tablacus extensions on offer, make sure you click its Details link for a brief overview. Better yet, when choosing which ones to install, visit the Tablacus Add-ons Wiki at bit.ly/tabwiki486 for the full lowdown. Tablacus is available for both 32-bit and 64-bit machines, so make sure you download the correct version for your computer.

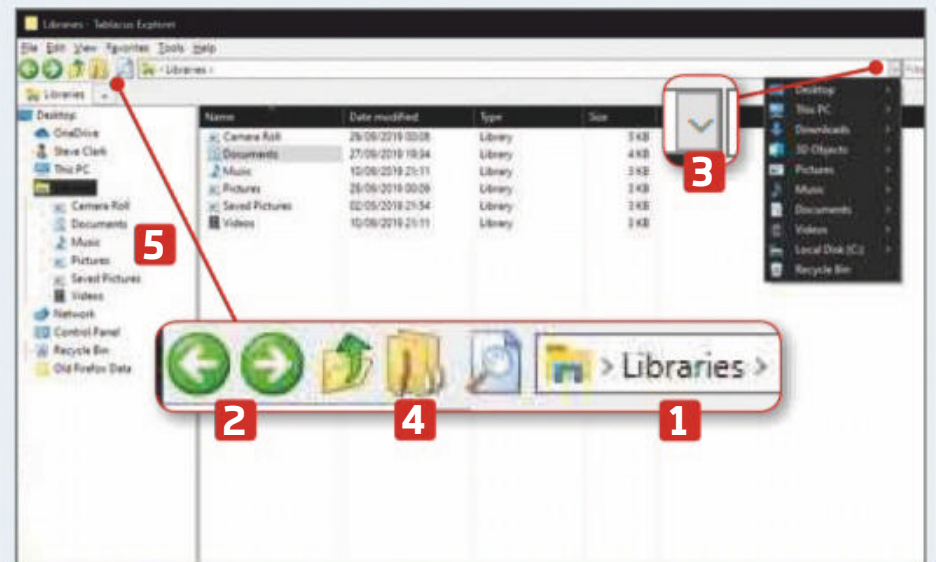


The best anyone can say about Windows' built-in File Explorer is that it does its job, making it easy to find files and folders and look around your hard drives. But there are no bells and whistles, and navigation remains as basic as it ever has been – 'Open in new window' is about as sophisticated as it gets.

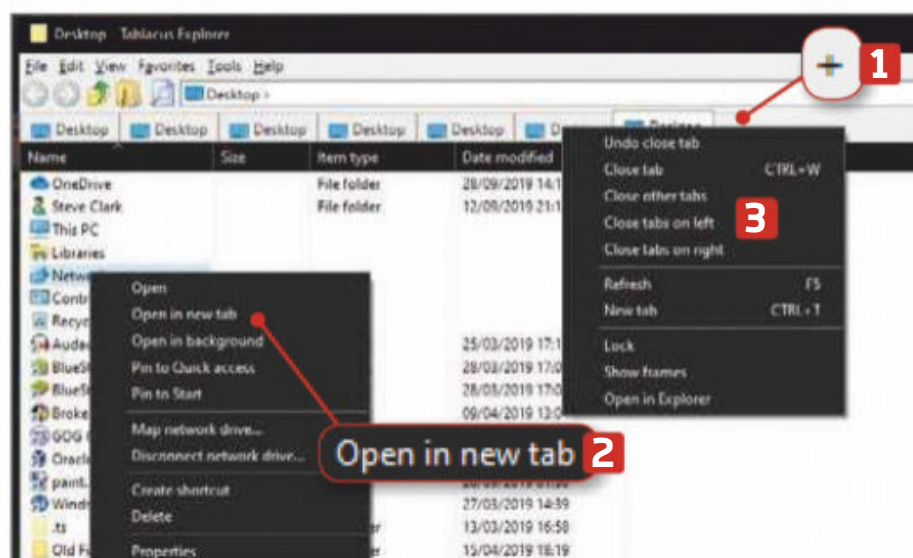
Tablacus is a lightweight and superior substitute for Windows File Explorer. The layout is similar, but the software adds two brilliant features you never knew you needed – tabs and add-ons. The tabs let you open specific folders and locations while keeping your starting position accessible, and the add-ons make this file explorer much more powerful, breathing new life with every extra function.



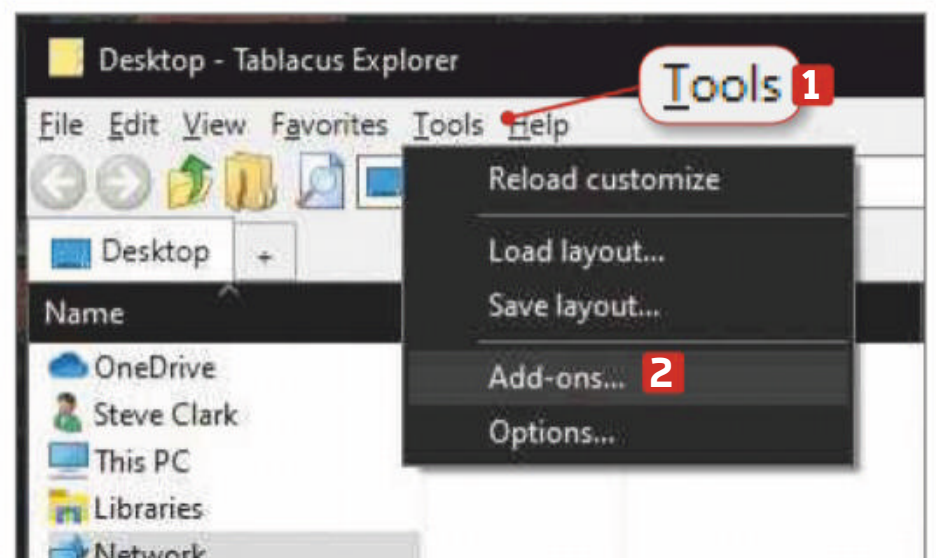
1 Opening Tablacus presents a familiar sight – at first glance, there's little to differentiate it from File Explorer. The main pane displays a list of folders, files and shortcuts. 1 Across the top, there are buttons to jump back, forward and up through folders, 2 then an address bar 3 and a Filter field 4 for searching a folder's contents.



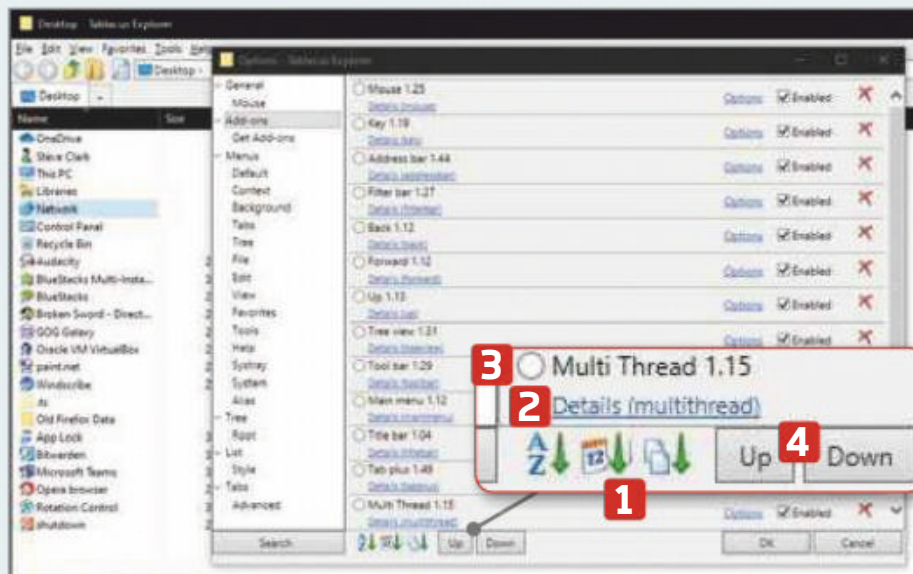
2 Tablacus uses breadcrumb-style navigation in the address bar, 1 as you'd expect. Click the sideways arrows 2 to select next and previous locations. You can also click the Down arrow 3 to jump to the most useful locations. To navigate through Tablacus even more quickly, click the Double Folder icon 4 to add a tree-view side-panel. 5



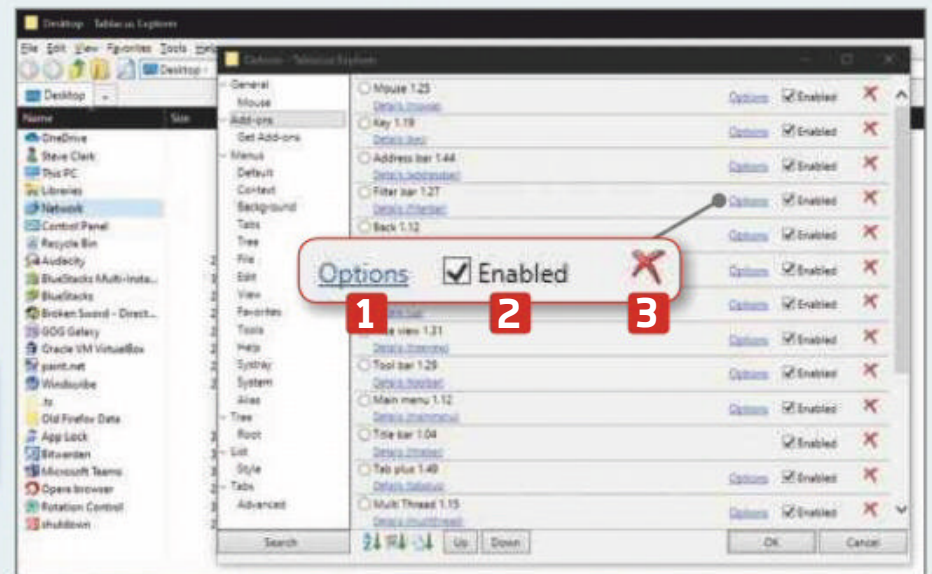
3 Tablacus' main attraction is its ability to open locations in new tabs. To start, click the '+' next to your current tab. 1 Alternatively, right-click a file location and select 'Open in new tab'. 2 Tabs are gathered at the top of the main pane. By right-clicking these tabs, you can close the tab, close other tabs and close all tabs to the left and right. 3



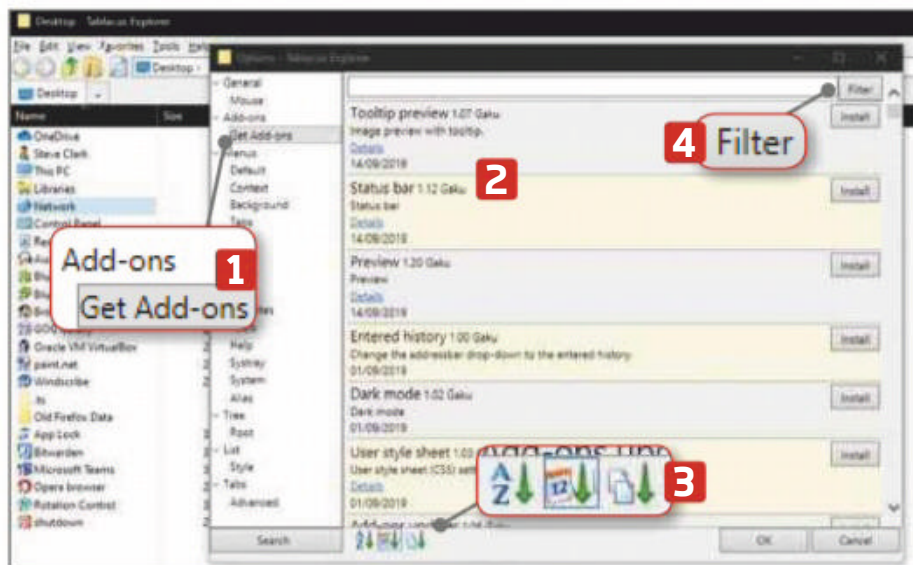
4 The other highlight of Tablacus is its inclusion of add-ons. These create new ways to use your file explorer – for instance, by adding colours to files based on when a file was created or accessed, or using the web-like mouse gestures. The tool comes equipped with a few already – view these by opening the Tools menu 1 and selecting Add-ons. 2



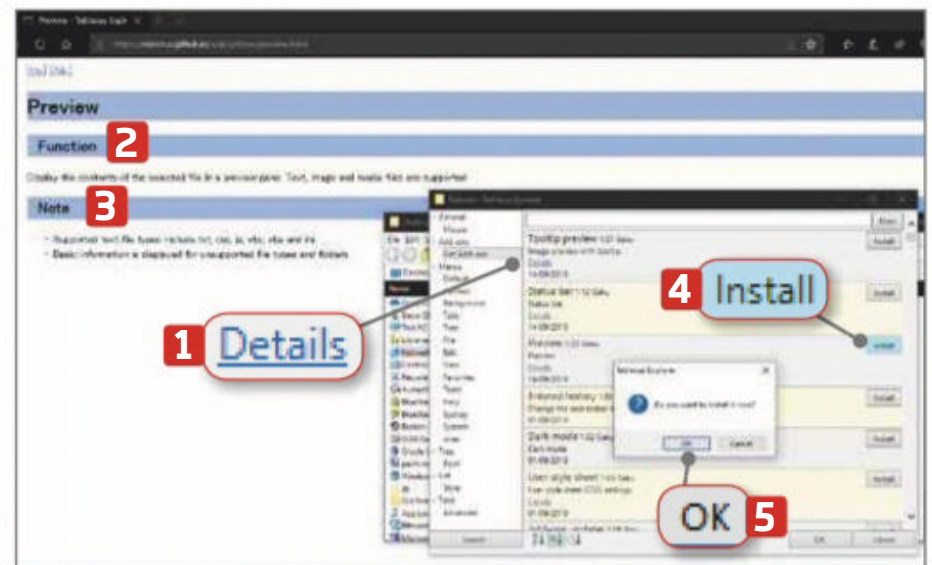
5 At the bottom of this window, there is an option to change the order by Name, Date and ID. **1** Clicking Details **2** shows you what each add-on does. Click the radio button next to each add-on **3** to select it, then press Up or Down **4** to move it through the list to your preferred position.



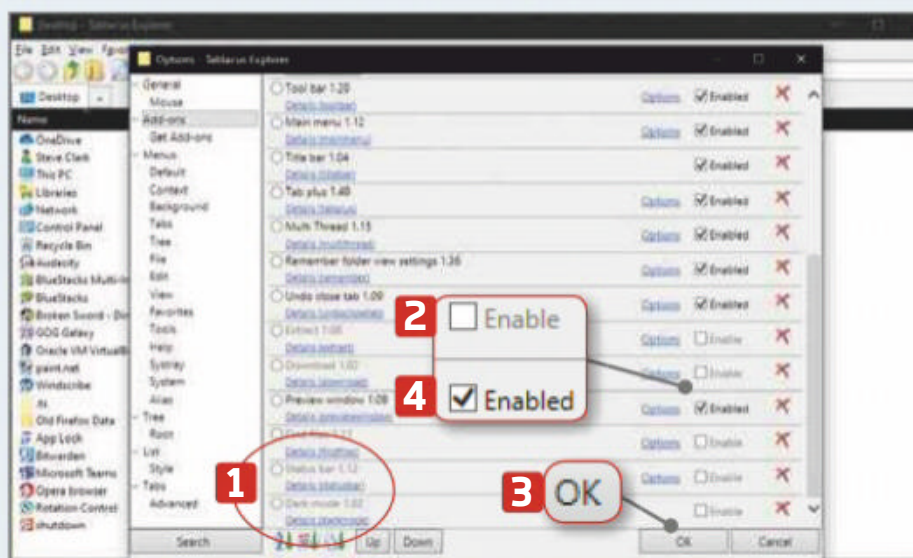
6 All installed add-ons have three choices: Options, **1** Enabled **2** and Delete. **3** To disable an add-on without uninstalling it, remove the Enabled tick. Opening Options lets you tweak certain settings, which vary depending on the add-on. For instance, selecting the options for 'Filter bar' lets you change its size, appearance and position.



7 Tablacus comes pre-loaded with extensions but you can download more. Open the Tools menu again and choose Add-ons, Get Add-ons **1** to see them displayed in a list. **2** As with installed add-ons, these can be sorted by Name, Date, and ID. **3** A search bar is located at the top of the pane – click Filter **4** to search.



8 Once you've found an add-on you like the look of, click Details. **1** This opens up the Tablacus Add-ons Wiki, a handy hub that provides a brief description of its main function, **2** as well as any notes **3** (such as compatibility with other add-ons). Click Install **4** and confirm installation of your add-on. **5**



9 Once complete, the Install button changes to Installed. Head back to Tools, then Add-ons. Unless you've changed the order, the newly installed add-ons will be at the bottom of the list. **1** Tick the Enable box, **2** then click OK **3** (it will change to Enabled). **4** Depending on its function, a new add-on may appear beside the address bar.



10 You can also get new add-ons from bit.ly/tabadd486, where you can search **1** or view add-on details **2** and download **3** them. When prompted, choose Save, then Open. Extract the add-on, choose Browse and navigate to the Add-ons folder in your Tablacus folder. Click OK. You may now Enable the add-on within the tool.



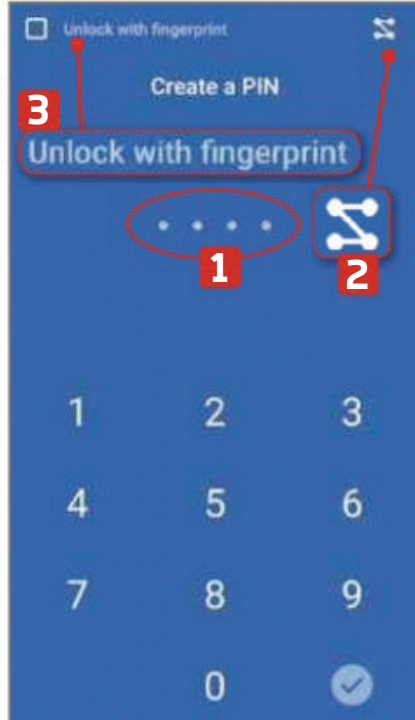
Make your phone's apps tamper-proof

If you're worried that someone could access your apps, or that children using your phone could make accidental purchases, it's a good idea to make them tamper-proof. Unlike app vaults, which hide sensitive apps away in a safe

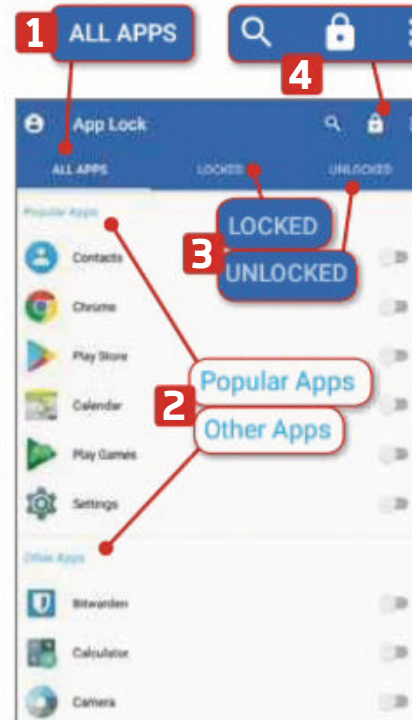
place, an app lock requires a code to open the app. There are a few available but App Lock by KeepSafe is our favourite, thanks to a clean design and its range of unlocking methods.



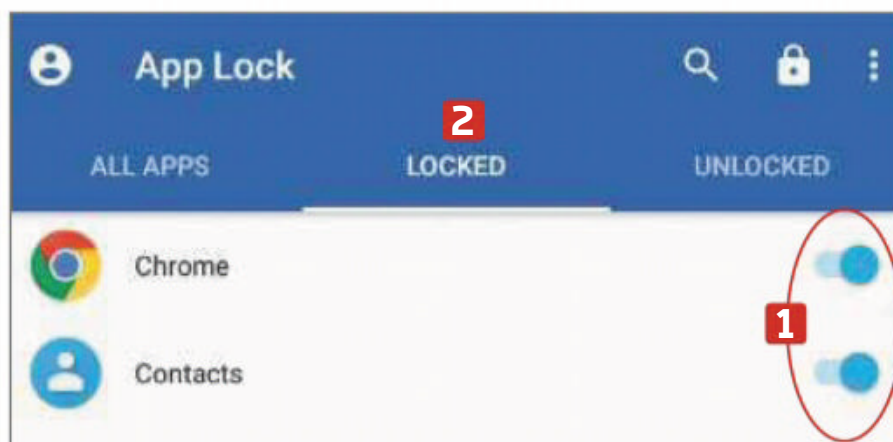
App Lock: bit.ly/appllock486 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🤖 Android



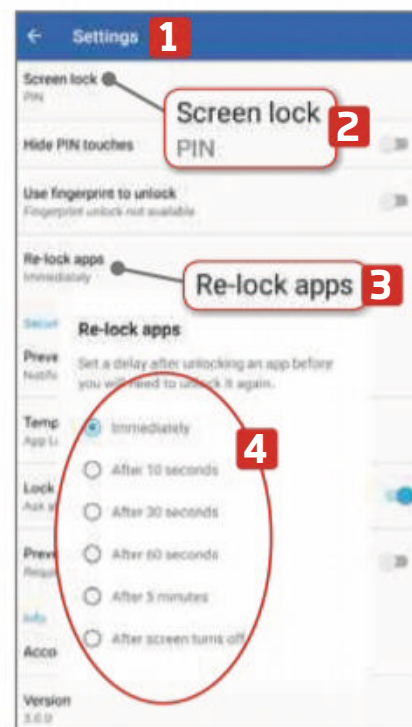
1 The first step to getting App Lock up and running is to create an account using your name and email address. You're then prompted to create a four-digit PIN **1** or, by pressing the backwards Z icon, set an unlock pattern. **2** Tap 'Unlock with fingerprint' **3** to allow this additional method of unlocking.



2 After granting permissions and logging in, you're presented with the App Lock home screen. This opens with All Apps **1** – ordered by Popular and Other. **2** Swipe right to view Locked and Unlocked apps. **3** Use the icons in the top-right corner **4** to search for specific apps, turn off App Lock with a tap of the padlock or open the Settings.



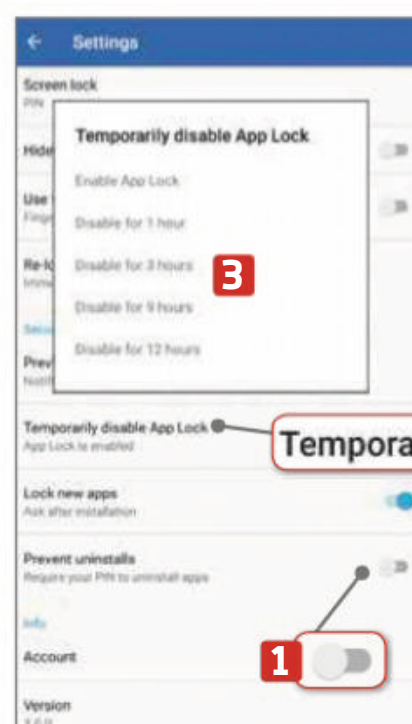
3 To lock an app, scroll through the list, then tap the toggle button to activate the lock. **1** The app will instantly appear in the Locked category. **2** Now, when you or anyone else attempts to open the app, your PIN (or other preferred method) is required to access it. Reverse the process to free an app of its lock.



4 Now that you've set up the basics, tap the three-dot button to open Settings. **1** The 'Screen lock' section **2** provides control over the method used to unlock apps, and lets you change the PIN. Another useful setting is 'Re-lock apps', **3** which lets you change how long an app stays unlocked before you need to enter its PIN again – from Immediately to 'After 5 minutes'. **4**



5 Scroll down further for additional Security settings. **1** Android, along with some specific apps, can override App Lock, which rather negates its purpose. Tap 'Prevent force stop' **2** and change the default 'Notification only' **3** to 'Notification and Device admin'. **4**



6 Toggling on 'Prevent uninstalls' **1** stops phone-jackers removing apps from your device. If you want to turn off App Lock, tap 'Temporarily disable App Lock' **2** and choose how long it's off for – between 1 and 12 hours. **3**

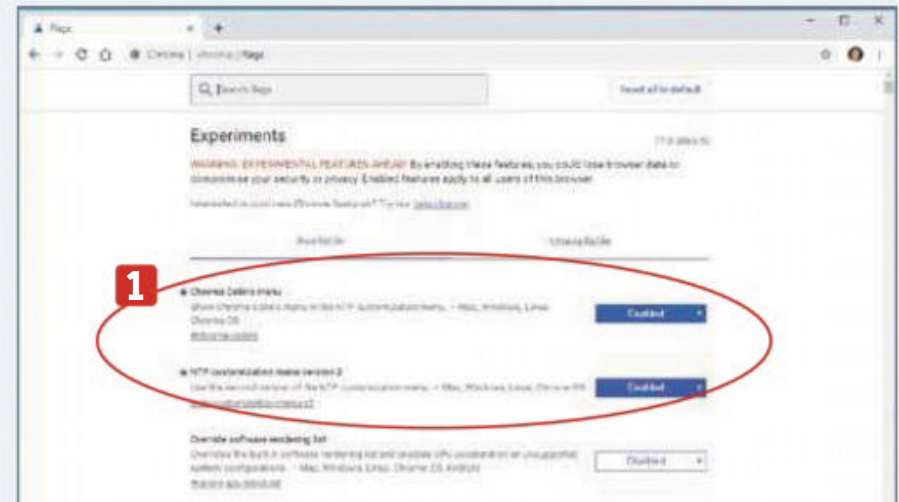
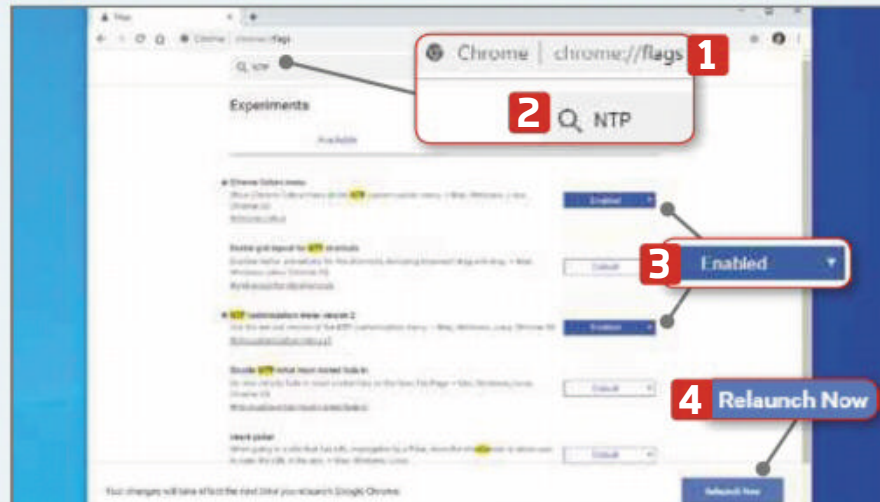


Create your own custom theme for Chrome

The latest version of Chrome has some new customisation tools that let you alter the look of your New Tab Page and change the colours of the bars at the top from Chrome's usual drab grey. These powerful

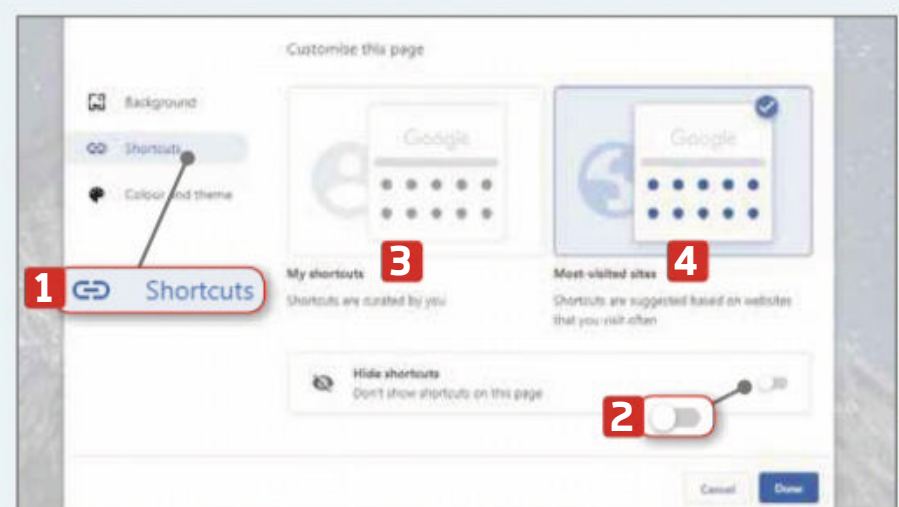
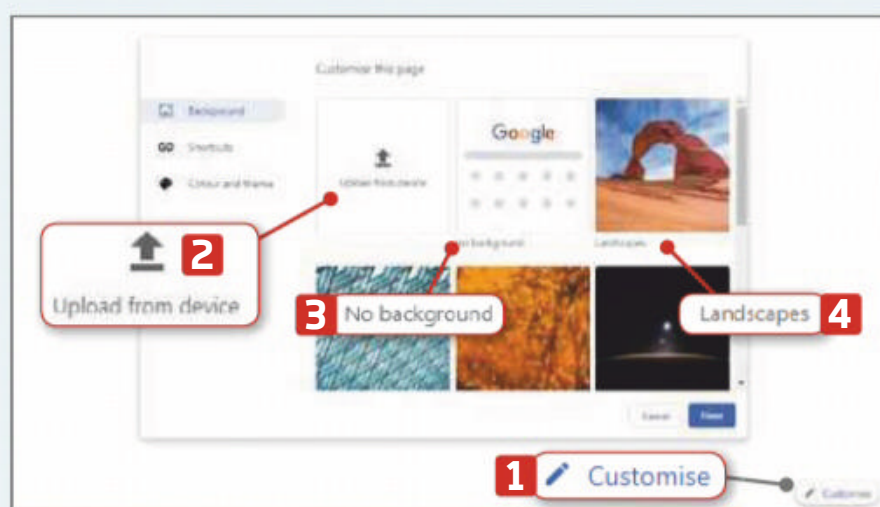
customisation options aren't available in the regular settings yet, so you need to dig deep into your browser's 'chrome://flags' page to activate them.

Chrome: www.google.com/chrome | 20 mins | 7, 8, 9 10.10



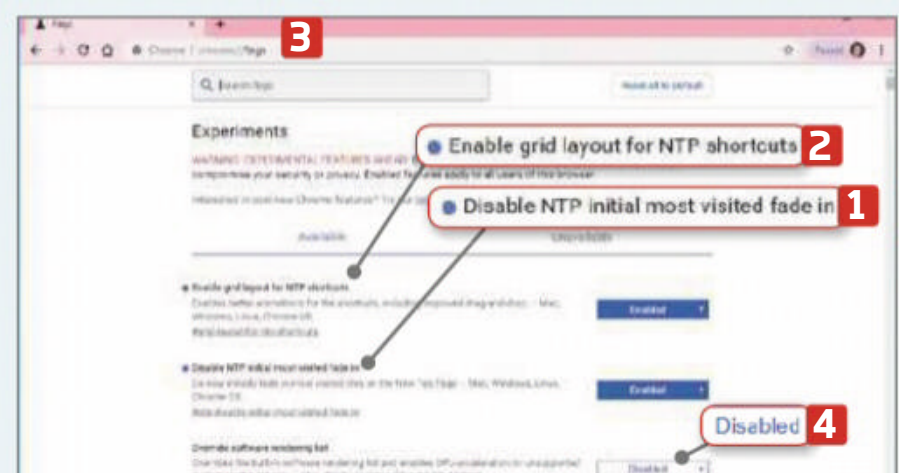
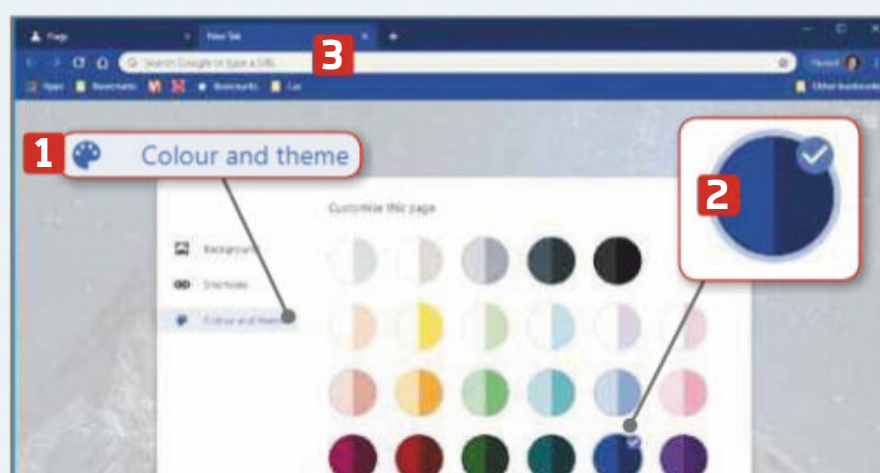
1 Type `chrome://flags` in the address bar 1 and press Enter to open the configuration screen. Type NTP in the search box 2 and use the drop-down menus to enable 'Chrome Colors menu' and 'NTP customization menu version 2'. 3 Save anything important and click Relaunch Now. 4

2 Chrome should relaunch with the same windows and tabs open but you may be signed out of services. Should you need to revert them, the changes you made from the default setting should now be at the top of the main Flags page. 1



3 Open a new tab and click Customise. 1 You can, as before, upload your own background image 2 or keep it blank. 3 To select from Google's images, click a subject 4 and choose an image from what's available. Click the 'Refresh daily' switch to see a new image every day.

4 Click Shortcuts 1 to choose whether shortcuts are displayed under the Google search box. To get rid of them, click the 'Hide shortcuts' switch; 2 to display them, choose your own by clicking 'My shortcuts' 3 or let Google continue to add the sites you visit most often. 4



5 Select 'Colour and theme' 1 to choose paired colours for above the browser window: the left colour 2 for toolbars and tabs; 3 the right for the background. Click the one you want to use. Now, go back to `chrome://flags` and the NTP (New Tab Page) search – as outlined in Step 1.

6 The options we didn't enable in Step 1 set whether a screen fades or just appears, 1 and improve animation when rearranging icons, 2 but this only works if the new tools are switched off. However, changes to the colour scheme appear to stay, 3 even if you disable the menu. 4

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Create batch files to automate PC chores

Wayne Williams explains how to write some simple instructions for your PC to run basic tasks that you perform regularly

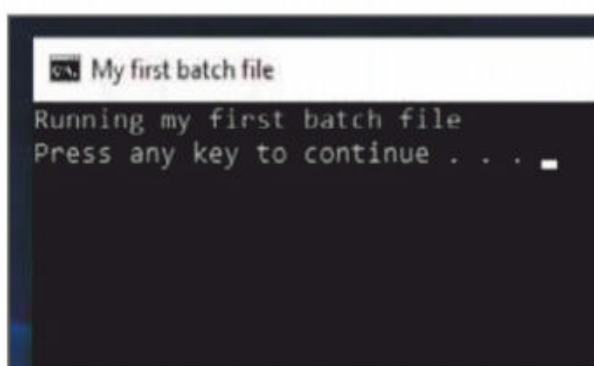
Batch files have been around for a very long time. They were originally run in DOS and early versions of Windows, and are simply text files that carry out a sequence of commands. Probably the best known example for people of a certain age is Autoexec.bat, which was used to execute a string of tasks when the PC first booted, including setting the date and time, loading mouse and keyboard drivers, and starting Windows. These days few people use batch files, but that doesn't mean they don't still serve a useful purpose. If you need to run a series of commands on Windows, then creating a batch file to do this is probably the best and quickest solution.

Batch files can look complicated but they are actually very straightforward, as we'll show you in this issue's Weekend Project.



What you need to know

A batch file is a text file with a special '.bat' file extension. It contains a list of commands that a computer can understand. You can create the file in Windows Notepad, WordPad or any tool that can create a text file. The commands used in a batch file are basically the same instructions you would enter into the Windows Command Prompt to achieve a specific task, but you can string any



This simple batch file displays a message and then waits for you to press a key

number of them together, saving you time and effort. In some cases, you need to run the batch file in Administrator mode to give it the privileges necessary to complete the tasks.

Command basics

Our Mini Workshop, opposite, shows you how to create a simple batch file and covers a few commands, but there are plenty of others you can use. You can



explore the full list of built-in commands at bit.ly/scripts486, but here are some of the more common ones.

`@echo` - `@echo off` hides the commands as they run, while `@echo` on its own shows you the workings of your script, which is useful if you have to troubleshoot problems with it.

`rem` - this is short for 'remark' and lets you add notes regarding your commands. They aren't executed or displayed when the script runs and only appear when you view the file in a text editor.

`pause` - we've used the pause command in our Mini Workshop, below. It introduces a delay, usually to allow time to read something on screen. 'Press any key to continue...' is displayed onscreen when a pause is reached.

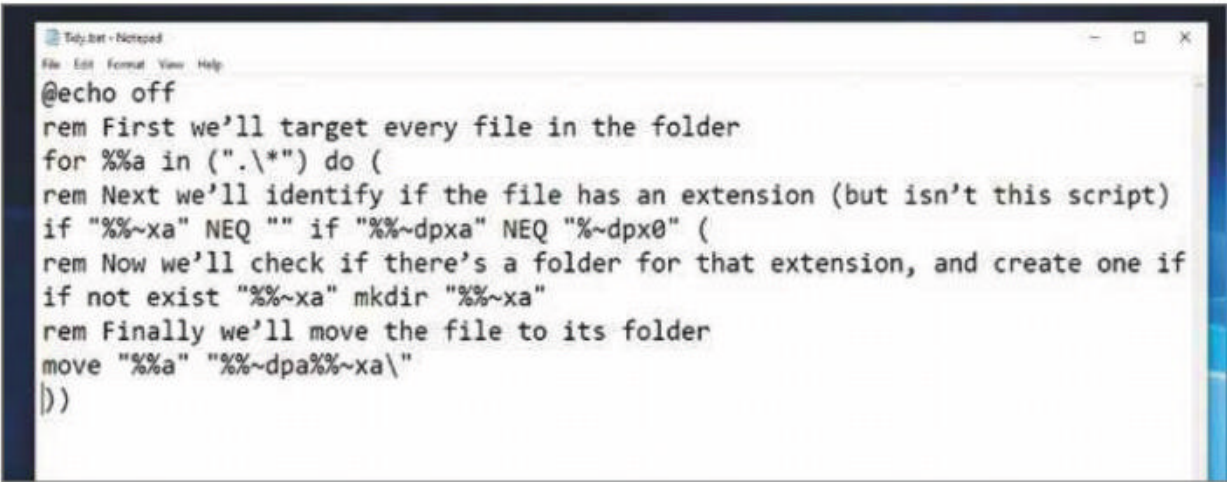
`if` - this is used for conditional commands - essentially, 'If X exists/doesn't exist, then do Y'.

`mkdir` - this command makes a directory and gives it a name of your choosing. For example, `mkdir Folder`. You can use the `md` command instead, if you prefer.

`rmdir` - this command removes directories. You can use `rd` instead, if you wish.

`cls` - this clears the Command Prompt window of any existing text.

`ipconfig` - this displays information about your network, including the type of adapter, IP addresses, default



Run this batch file and it automatically sorts all your files into relevant folders

gateways and so on.

`ping` - this command lets you check that your computer can communicate with another computer or device over a network. It's handy for checking if a website is up or not.

`start` - one of the more useful commands, you can use this to open a file using its default application.

Use a script to tidy your desktop or downloads folder

The most useful batch files you can create are the ones that perform the sort of menial tasks you need to tackle regularly, such as tidying up a messy desktop by sorting files into their relevant folders. For this, we'll use the `if`, `mkdir` and `move` commands.

The script looks more complicated than it actually is because of the inclusion of the `%a` command, but all this means is 'all files in the folder'.

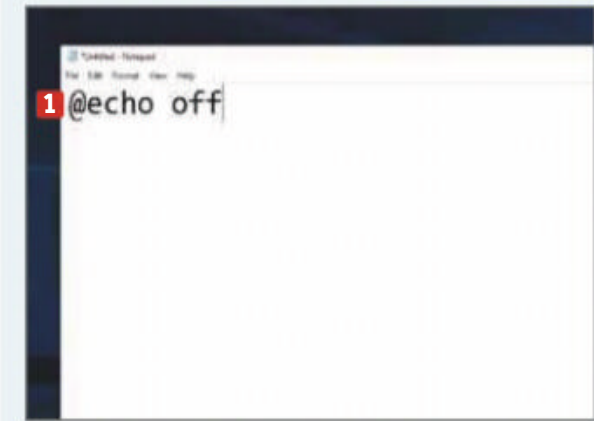
Here's how the batch file should look:
`@echo off`
`rem First we'll target every`

file in the folder
`for %a in (*.*) do (`
`rem Next we'll identify if`
`the file has an extension (but`
`isn't this script)`
`if "%~xa" NEQ "" if "%~dpxa" NEQ "%~dpx0" (`
`rem Now we'll check if`
`there's a folder for that`
`extension, and create one if`
`not`
`if not exist "%~xa" mkdir`
`"%~xa"`
`rem Finally we'll move the`
`file to its folder`
`move "%a" "%~dpa%~xa\"`
`)`

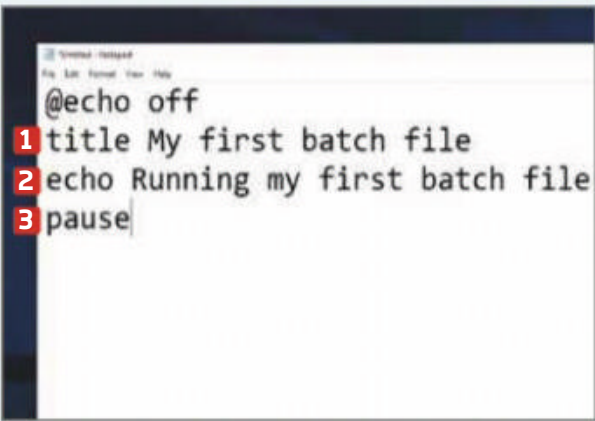
The beauty of a batch file is that it runs in any folder you put it in, so you can move it to wherever it's needed. This means we can save the file we created to the desktop and run it there, then move it to the Downloads folder and run it again, tidying up both locations with the same script.

In the Mini Workshop on page 61, we show you how to create a batch file that

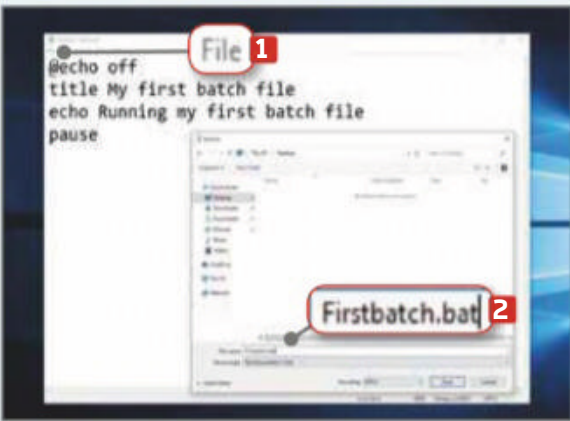
MINI WORKSHOP | How to create a batch file



1 Type `notepad` in the Windows search box and press Enter. The Windows Notepad opens, ready for you to type in the commands you want to run. Most batch files start with `@echo off`, 1 which stops the script from displaying the commands as they run, including the 'echo off' command itself.




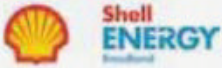


2 You must enter each of the commands in the batch file on a separate line. Give your script a name by typing `title`, followed by a space and then the title of the file. 1 Next, type `echo` followed by the greeting or statement that you want to appear onscreen when you run it. 2 On a new line, type `pause`. 3



3 You would usually now enter the other commands you want to run but, for this basic example, we'll leave it here. Save the file by going to File, 1 Save As, and calling it `firstbatch.bat` (be sure to add the '.bat' extension). 2 When you double-click the saved file, the script will run in a command window.

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3		Sky: Broadband Essential	£25.00 (£25 after 18 months)	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited *	£300.00
4		Virgin Media: Big Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	£33.00 (£54 after 12 months)	12 months	54Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited	£396.00

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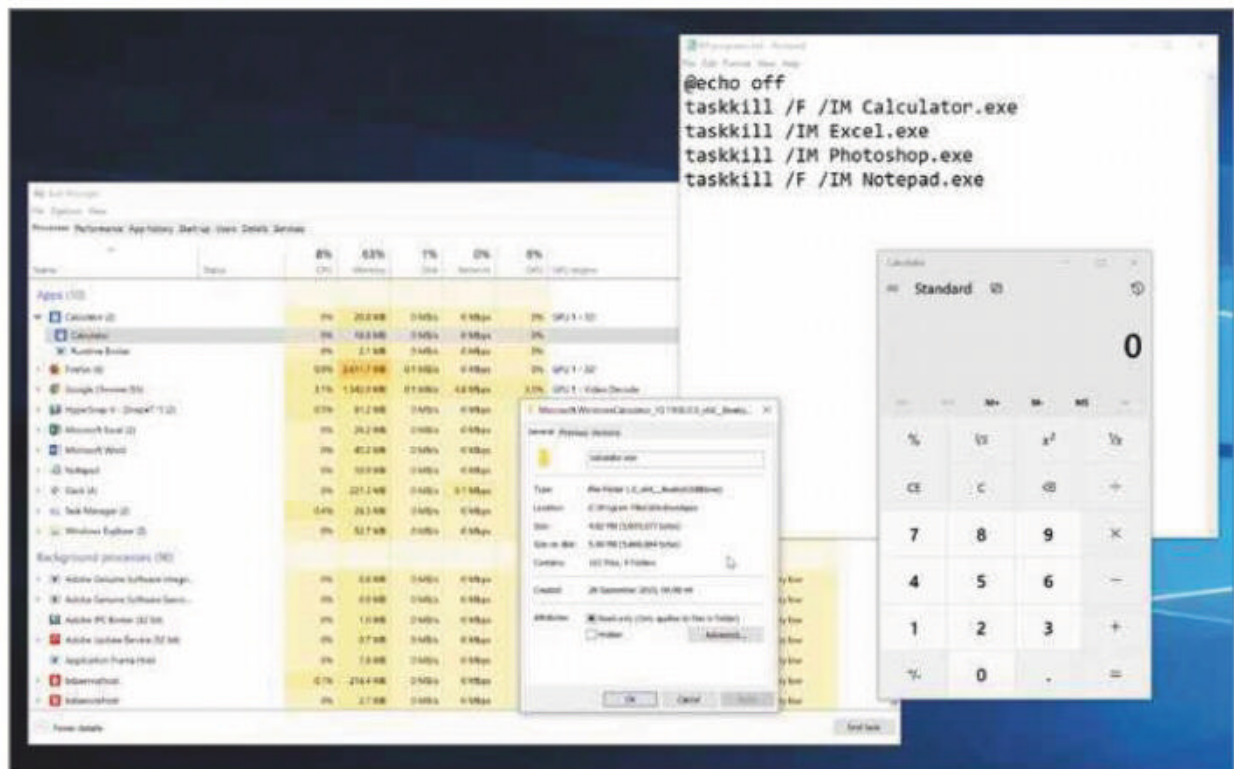
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This batch file can quickly end a number of running programs at the same time

speeds up your PC by disabling unnecessary services running in the background.

Kill applications

Disabling unnecessary services is one way to free up resources but another option is to kill running applications you don't need. The `taskkill` command does this, and there are a couple of parameters to use with it. The `/IM` parameter matches the item name from the Processes column in Task Manager. Right-click the entry and select Properties to get the full name. In the case of the Windows Calculator, this is 'calculator.exe'. To kill that application, type `taskkill /IM Calculator`

.exe. This action basically replicates clicking the red corner X in a program, and you're given the chance to save your work before it closes. If you just want to instantly end some applications, use the `/F` parameter to 'force' it to close. So, `taskkill /F /IM calculator.exe` terminates it immediately.

In our example, we've only used the `/F` switch in applications where a force killing won't cause problems.

Load your favourite websites in one go

If you routinely check a selection of websites first thing in the morning (or at any time of day, for that matter),



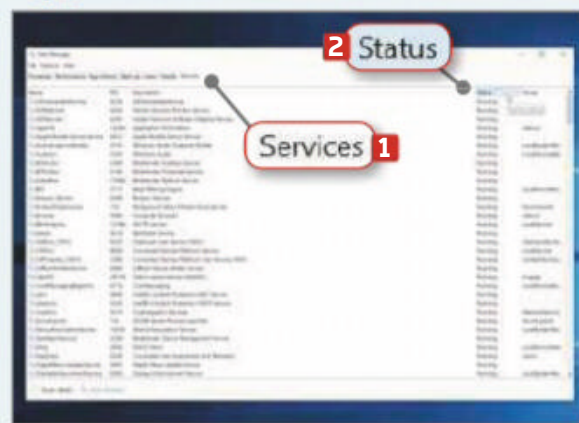
Use a batch file to load all your favourite websites in the default web browser

you can use a batch file to load them in separate tabs in your default browser. Sure, you could bookmark all the sites in a specific folder and load them by right-clicking that folder and selecting 'Open all', but using a batch file is a little bit quicker. For this task you need to use the `start ""` command. Create your batch file, then add the sites one at a time. Your file's contents should look something like this:

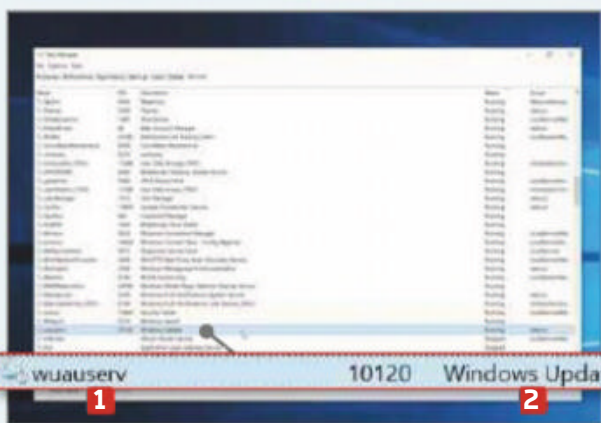
```
@echo off
start "" https://www.bbc.co.uk/news
start "" https://news.google.com/
start "" https://www.facebook.com
start "" https://www.youtube.com
start "" https://www.gmail.com
```



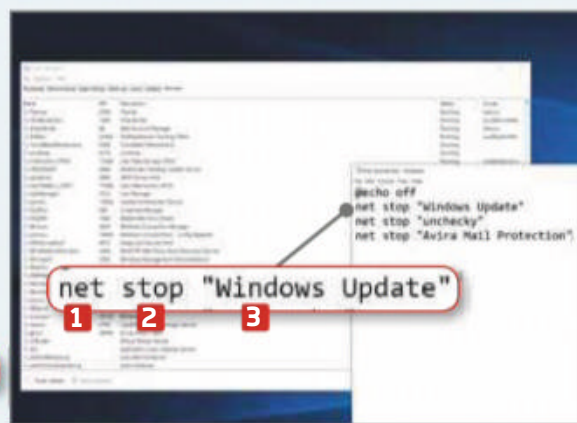
MINI WORKSHOP | Speed up your PC by disabling running services



1 There are programs you can download that disable unnecessary system services, freeing up resources for other tasks, such as running games. Or you can use a batch file. Right-click the taskbar, open Task Manager and click 'More details' at the bottom. Click the Services tab **1** and sort the list by Status. **2**



2 You may be able to identify some of the running services that are safe to disable, but don't stop anything unless you know it's completely safe to do so. You can find a list of safe-to-disable Windows services at bit.ly/services486. Make a note of the Name **1** or Description **2** of a service that you want to kill.



3 In your batch file, use the `net` command, **1** followed by `stop` **2** and the service name or description (put the latter in quotes). **3** Repeat the process for each of the services, then save your file. You'll need to run this one in Admin mode. Create another batch file to restart each service by replacing `stop` with `start`.

NEXT ISSUE

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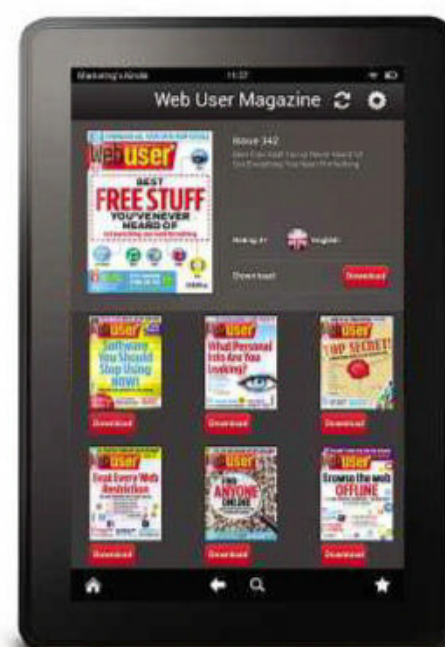
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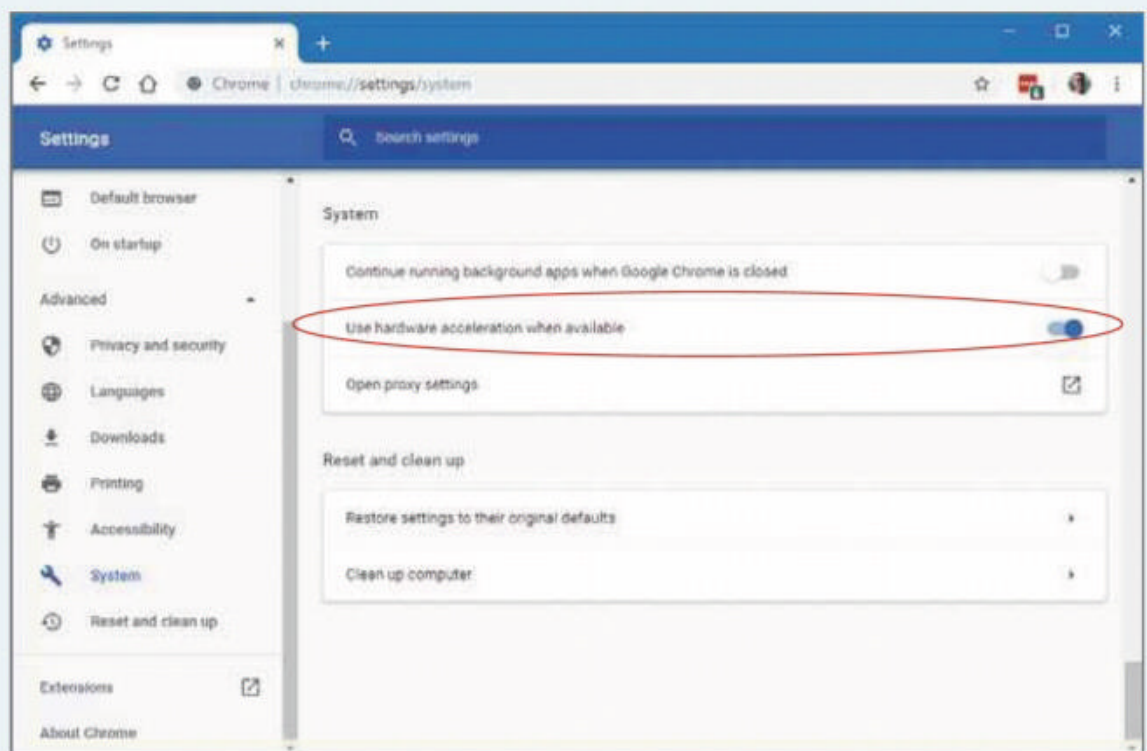


Activate hardware acceleration

Graphics processors can move pixels around the screen at lightning speed, so if you play games in your web browser, watch streaming video or use other graphically intensive websites and online apps, it's worth configuring your browser to get a boost from the graphics processor.

In Chrome and Opera, open Settings, scroll down to the bottom and click Advanced. Scroll down to the bottom again and, under System, enable 'Use hardware acceleration when available'.

In Firefox, open the menu, click Options and, in the General section, look for the box under Performance labelled 'Use recommended performance settings'. Clear the tick to manually configure the settings. Two options appear. Enable 'Use hardware acceleration when available' and set the 'Content process limit' to the maximum.



Enable hardware acceleration if your graphics processor can handle it



Boost your PC's power

A general speed-up for laptops that also boosts your browser is available on the taskbar. Click the power/battery icon and drag the slider all the way to the right for maximum performance.



Limit open tabs

If your PC has 4GB of memory installed, then having around eight to 10 tabs open in your browser can use a major portion of the available memory and cause it to slow to a crawl. You should limit the number of open tabs to no more than half a dozen, unless your computer has 8GB or more installed.

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.



Delete unwanted extensions

Browser add-ons provide useful features and functions, but they also put a strain on memory and processing power. In extreme cases, extensions can slow down your browser, so limit them to the bare essentials – two or three are fine, but more than 10 is not.

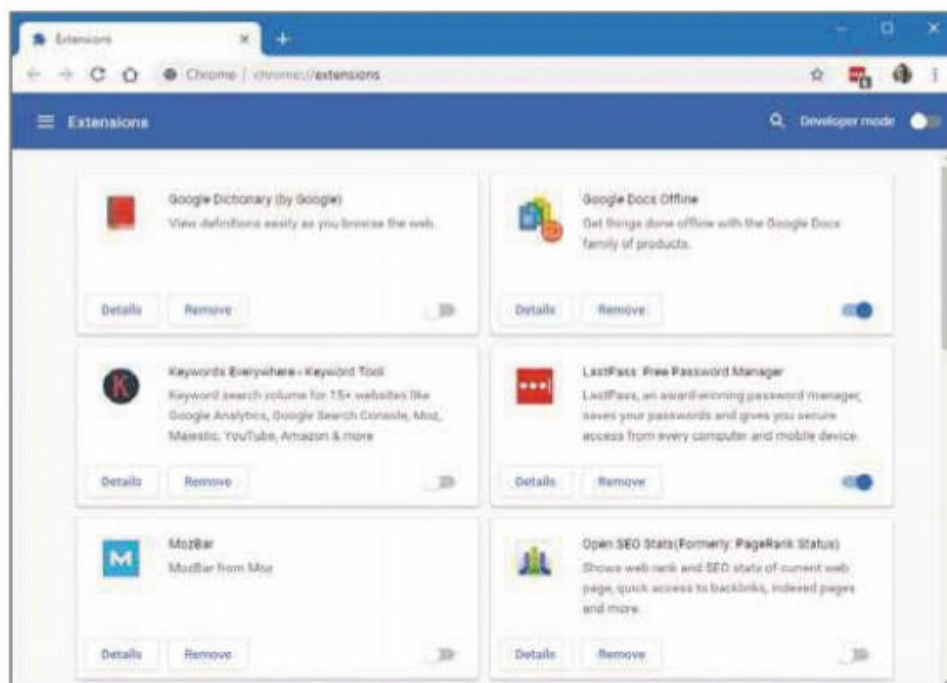
In Chrome, open the menu and click

'More tools' then Extensions. Use the Remove button to lighten the load and increase speed. In Firefox, enter `about:addons` and then remove any non-essential ones.



Blank the startup page

All browsers let you choose what they show when they launch. Setting your



Disable extensions when they're not being used and remove any that you never use



home screen to a large and complex page makes demands on your system, so keep your launch page as lightweight as possible for the fastest startup time.

In Edge, open the three-dot menu and go to Settings. Set 'Open Microsoft Edge with' to 'New tab page' and set 'Open new tabs with' to 'A blank page'. It's not actually blank – there's a search box in the middle – but it is simple and fast.

In Chrome, open Settings and, under 'On startup', select 'Open the New Tab page'. When you now open a new tab, you'll see a search box in the middle and a collection of website icons below. Let the mouse hover over an icon and click the three-dot icon, then click Remove to delete it. When you are left with a plain page with just the search box, Chrome will start faster.

In Firefox, open the menu and click Options. Click Home on the left and, under 'New Windows and Tabs', select Blank Page for both options. Having nothing displayed on startup makes it faster. Remember, you can still search by typing in the address bar – you don't have to go to a search engine such as Google or Bing.



Search for text

The usual way to search for text on a web page is to press Ctrl+F to open the Find bar, then type in the search text. Those two steps can be reduced to one. Open the menu and click Options. In the General section, look for 'Search for text when you start typing' under Browsing. Enable it and you can search as soon as you start typing.



Stop background processes

Some features in Chrome continue to run when the browser is closed. Most people can live without this and would rather Chrome didn't hog the processor and memory when the browser isn't being used. Go to Settings and click Advanced at the bottom, then scroll to the bottom again and switch off 'Continue running background apps when Google Chrome is closed'.



Preload web pages

Browsing the web often involves clicking links to go from one page to the next. Chrome can try to guess which page you'll visit next and download it in the background. If you then go to that page, it loads much faster than normal because it's already stored in the PC's memory. Open the menu, click Settings, Advanced and, in the 'Privacy and security' section, enable the switch next to 'Preload pages for faster browsing and searching'.

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave



Disable sync services

If you use multiple computers, Chrome has a brilliant feature that syncs bookmarks, apps, extensions, passwords, tabs, themes, browser history and more. If you only have one computer, you don't need sync services and they can be turned off, to prevent Chrome from wasting time and resources on them.

Go to the Chrome menu, open Settings, People, then select 'Sync and Google services', 'Manage sync'. The switches let you enable or disable sync services – if you don't use Chrome anywhere else, disable them all.



If you use only one computer, you don't need these sync services



Block bad ads

Adverts are annoying and cause web pages to load more slowly. Although Chrome won't block all ads – unless you use an ad-blocker extension – it can block particularly bad ads, which speeds up browsing on sites that have them. Most sites manage to avoid hosing bad ads but it's still worth enabling this setting.

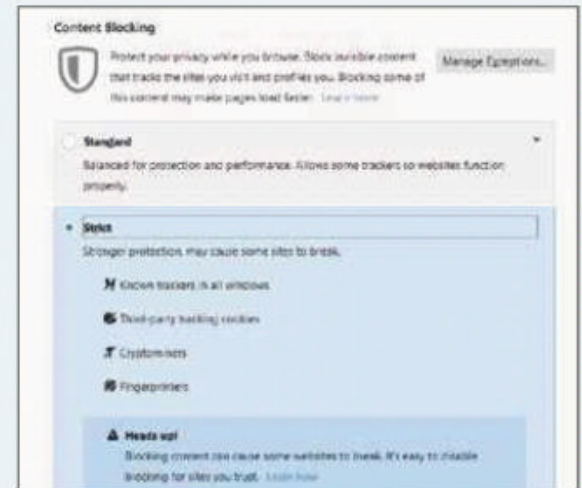
Open Chrome settings and click Advanced. In the 'Privacy and security' section, click 'Site settings', then Ads. Click the switch so the text reads 'Blocked on sites that show intrusive or misleading ads'.



Block unwanted trackers

Web pages contain a lot of items that are invisible, such as cookies, trackers and various types of code. Firefox can block unnecessary or unwanted content on web pages – mainly for privacy reasons – but a side benefit is that web pages load faster.

To speed up browsing, open the Firefox menu and click Options. Select Privacy & Security to see a choice of Standard, Strict and Custom settings. Standard blocks common trackers and cryptominers that slow



Block trackers and other unnecessary items to speed up Firefox

the browser, and most sites work faster and problem-free. Strict breaks some sites, so try it with your favourites and see what happens.

The Custom setting lets you choose what to block: blocking more items speeds up browsing; blocking fewer ensures Firefox is more compatible with websites.



Block ads and more for extra speed

Opera is based on Chromium and works in a similar way to Chrome, but it also has additional settings, some of which affect the speed of the browser.

Click the 'Easy setup' button in the top-right corner of Opera and turn off all the switches except 'Block ads'. This disables a lot of Opera extras, such as Show News and Crypto Wallet, which are interesting but not essential and slow down the browser's startup.

Click the menu button and select Settings. Click Basic and, on the left, you'll see a duplicate 'Block ads' button. There's also 'Manage exceptions', which lets you allow ads on websites you choose. Click 'Manage lists' to see options for choosing advert- and malware-blocking lists. EasyList and NoCoin are the defaults, which should suit most people, but adding EasyPrivacy blocks more, which may speed web-page loading a little. Try it and see.

Click Advanced in Opera's settings and you'll see a 'Battery saver' section. Enabling this reduces the background activities carried out by tabs and Opera, which may speed up the currently active tab. Try Opera with battery saving on and off, and use the setting that works best on your PC or laptop.

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

Solve Windows 10 update errors

Q After months of waiting, my PC finally showed an update for Windows 1903 (I had 1809 till this point). After it downloaded and installed, the PC restarted, so I left it to its own devices and came back later. On my return, I logged back in and found that it hadn't installed at all and I was still on version 1809.

Since then I've checked Windows Update every day, but the 1903 update doesn't show up any more. I realise I could try getting it from the Microsoft website, but should I just wait for the next patch instead?

Marc James, via email

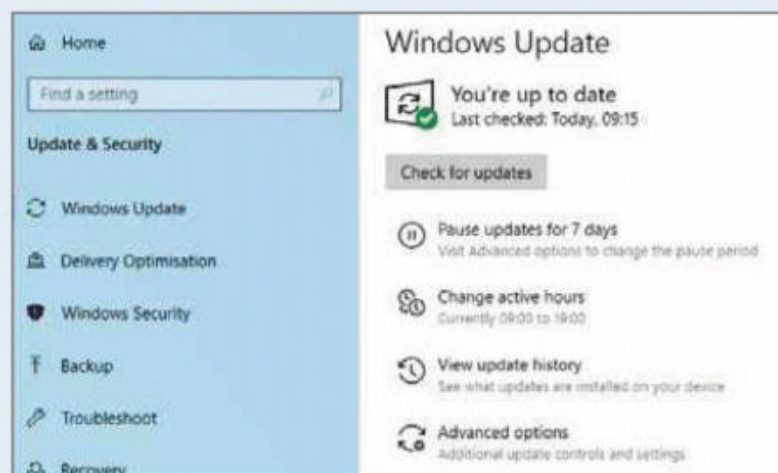
Q In issue 483 (bit.ly/webuser483), your advice to try 'scannow' and RestoreHealth didn't work for me. I was updating '2019-08 Cumulative Update for Windows 10 Version 1903 for x64-based Systems (KB4512941)', but my computer switched off halfway through. I have attempted the update 19 times with the same resulting error message 0x80070002. Some advice on the internet suggests deleting the "pending.xml" file. Should I try this?

RF, via email

A Sometimes, after initially failing to install an update, Windows eventually sorts itself out, so one option is to leave it a bit longer and see what happens. Open Settings, Update & Security and click 'Check for updates' every couple of days. However, it's frustrating waiting for something that may never happen and there are steps you can take to try to fix the problem.

Go to Settings, 'Update & Security', Troubleshoot, then run all the troubleshooters. Click the Start button and type **disk clean-up**. Click the link to run it as an administrator. Tick all the options and clean up the hard drive.

It's possible that a hardware driver is incompatible and causing problems. Click Start and type **device manager**, then open it. Expand each section, except 'System devices' and 'Universal Serial Bus controllers', then right-click each item and select 'Update driver'. Everything may already be up to date, but it's worth checking.



Click 'Check for updates' now and again to see if Microsoft has fixed updates that aren't working

Now click Start, type **command prompt** and click the link to run it as an administrator. In the window, enter:

```
sfc /scannow
DISM.exe /Online /Cleanup-image /scanhealth
DISM.exe /Online /Cleanup-image /Restorehealth
net stop wuauserv
net stop bits
rename c:\windows\SoftwareDistribution SoftwareDistribution.bak
net start wuauserv
net start bits
```

If Windows Update still isn't working, repeat the process two or three times. Once isn't always enough.

HARDWARE

Reinstall a Bluetooth driver

Q My Qualcomm Atheros AR3011 Bluetooth 3.0 adapter no longer works with my HP 635 laptop. I am not sure when it stopped, but I assume that the problem is due to a Windows 10 update. In Device Manager, it shows a small yellow triangle over the entry. I've tried to download the driver updates, but I get a message saying that I already have the latest drivers.

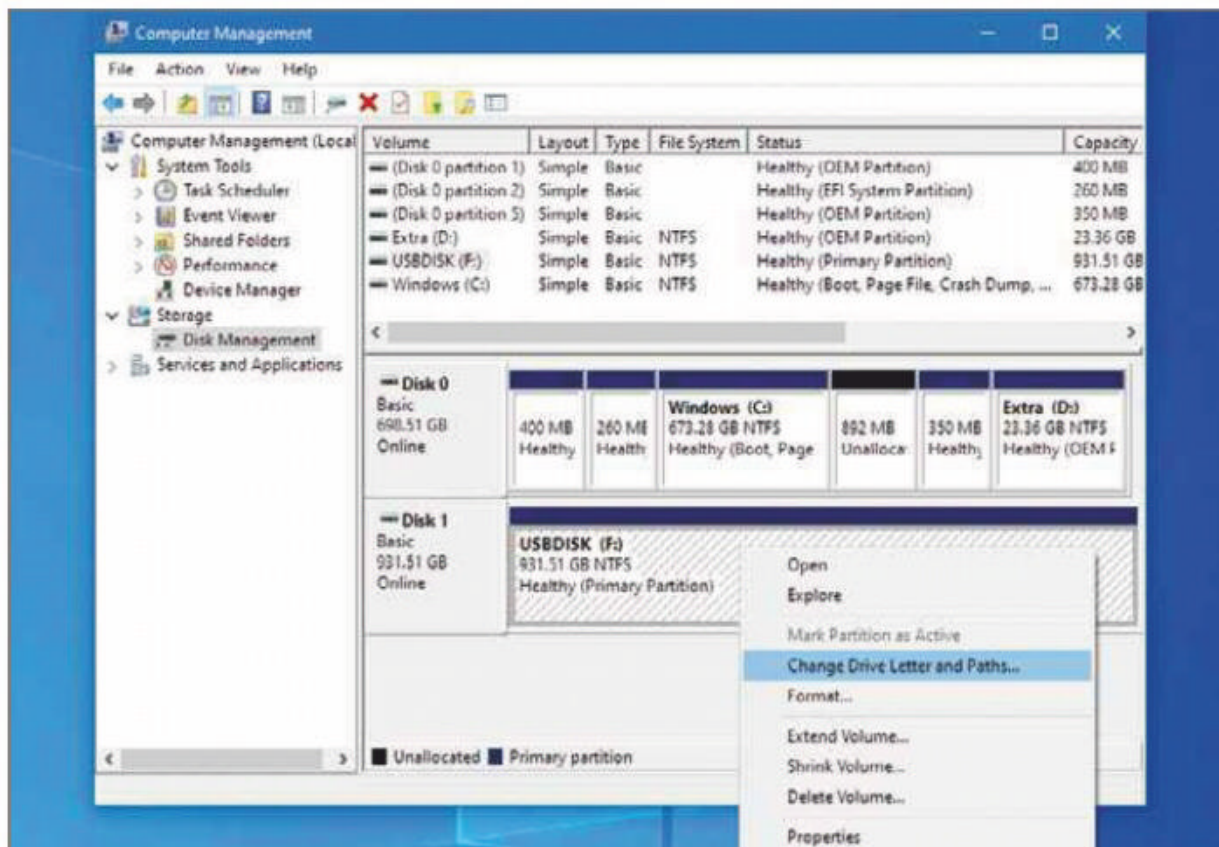
Having had no luck finding a solution to the problem, I bought a cheap Bluetooth dongle, which is working fine. But I'd rather use the built-in Bluetooth so I can free up the USB port.

Al Cathie, via email

A Unplug the Bluetooth dongle and try this. Instead of updating the built-in Bluetooth driver in Device Manager, right-click it and select 'Uninstall device'. Restart Windows afterwards and see if it works. There is a whole page of drivers for this adapter in the Microsoft Update catalogue (bit.ly/mscat486), with no indication of which is best. Try the most



Uninstall a driver to install a fresh copy of the latest version



Make sure that all drives use a unique letter. Change them if necessary

recent version for Windows 10.

The original drivers from the PC manufacturer may also work and are worth trying. Go to the manufacturer's website and search for your laptop model. There may be several software downloads, so look for a general drivers package or Bluetooth, if it's listed separately.

Bluetooth 3 is getting on a bit. The latest version is 5.1, which may be required by some new devices. If all our suggestions fail, you'll have to continue using the dongle. If you're short of USB sockets, consider buying a USB hub.

HARDWARE

Recover a lost hard drive

Q I set up my Sony Vaio laptop to dual-boot Windows 7 and 10 but I have a problem with the USB ports. In Windows 10, I can access a USB memory stick but not my external hard drive, which has its own power source. Both devices appear in the notification area with the 'safely remove' icon, but I can't access the hard drive in Explorer. Everything works fine in Windows 7.

I've tried updating drivers, right down to the Device Manager, but everything is reported as up to date. Windows 10 is also up to date and I have tried Driver Booster, too.

Ian Williamson, via email

A The hard drive works in Windows 7, so the problem must be with Windows 10, which may have its drive letters in a muddle. Windows allocates letters to internal and external drives, such as C:, D:, E: and so on. When you plug in an external drive, Windows allocates it a letter – let's say E:, for example. When the drive is unplugged

and you then plug in a different device, such as a USB memory stick, it may also

be assigned E:. The next time the external drive is plugged in, Windows is confused, because now two different drives have been used with the same drive letter.

The solution is to assign a unique drive letter that won't be used by anything else you might plug in. Open Explorer, right-click This PC and select Manage. Under Storage, select Disk Management. All the drives are displayed on the right.

In the bottom section on the right you should be able to see the external drive that you've connected – the one that isn't showing up in Explorer. Right-click the drive and select 'Change Drive Letter and Paths'. Click the Add button and choose a drive letter that is never used, such as L or K. The external drive should then appear in Explorer and work normally, using the newly assigned drive letter. Windows will remember this setting, so this particular device will always use the same letter.

HARDWARE

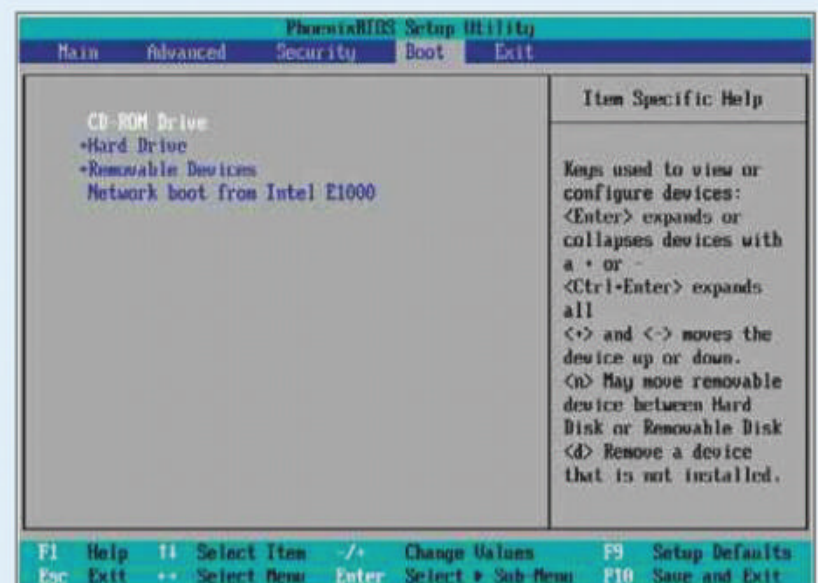
Force a PC to boot from USB

Q I have a very old Sony Vaio PCG-9U1M. It's in good condition but it needs an operating system. I bought Issue 477 (bit.ly/webuser477) for the 'Run anything from a USB stick' feature, which looked like the ideal solution to installing an operating system on my old laptop.

I followed your instructions and loaded the operating system on the USB memory stick, which seemed to go well, then set the BIOS to boot from the USB port. When I go into the BIOS, however, the USB is not on the list, despite the laptop having three USB ports. I have in the list Hard Disk Drive, Optical Drive, Floppy Disk Drive and Network. I would hate to see this old but perfectly serviceable laptop end up in landfill.

John Brown, via email

A The option to boot from a USB is standard on almost all PCs, but it's possible that your particular model doesn't support it. If it is not on the boot menu in the BIOS, there's not



Most PCs should boot from USB but, if not, try installing an operating system from the optical drive

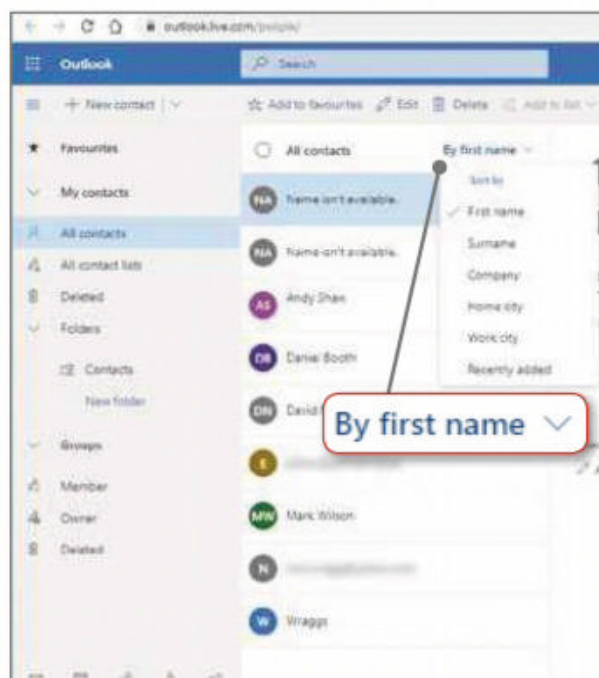
much you can do about it.

One possibility is that this is a hidden option. Try turning on the laptop and pressing Esc, F2 or whatever key gets you into the BIOS setup utility. Find the screen that has the boot options and look for Fast Boot, Quick Boot, Secure Boot or anything else that modifies the boot process. Disable them, then save and quit the BIOS setup.

When the PC restarts, enter the BIOS setup utility again. Hopefully, you now have an extra option – to boot from USB – that can be selected for the first boot device.

Another option is to run an operating system from the optical drive, by writing it to a CD or DVD. This will be slower but you can install the operating system to your hard drive, if you want to keep it.



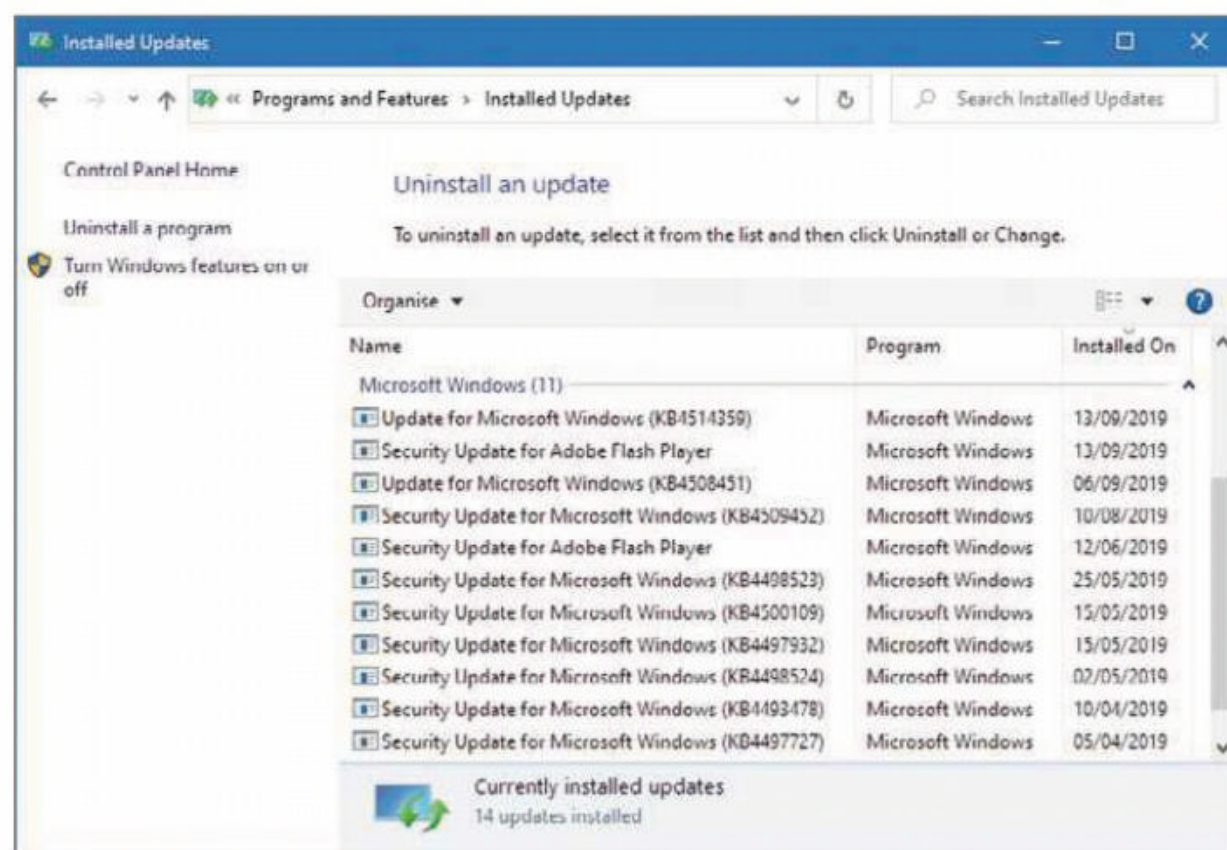


Click here to choose how your contacts are sorted in Outlook.com

EMAIL

Sort random contacts

Q I use Outlook.com for my email and I have a lot of contacts (or People, as they are now called). The problem is that when I want to email someone, my contacts appear to be in random order, which makes it hard to locate individual entries. They used



If an update creates PC problems, uninstall it from the Control Panel

to be displayed alphabetically. How do I sort them?

H Quinn, via email

A There are several ways to sort contacts in Outlook.com and, while

the order may appear to be random, they may be sorted by company, work city, home city or even date added. Go to Outlook.com and click the People icon in the bottom-left corner. When your contacts appear, click the link in the top-right corner of the contacts list and select the sort method you'd like to use, such as 'First name' or Surname.

GENERAL PC

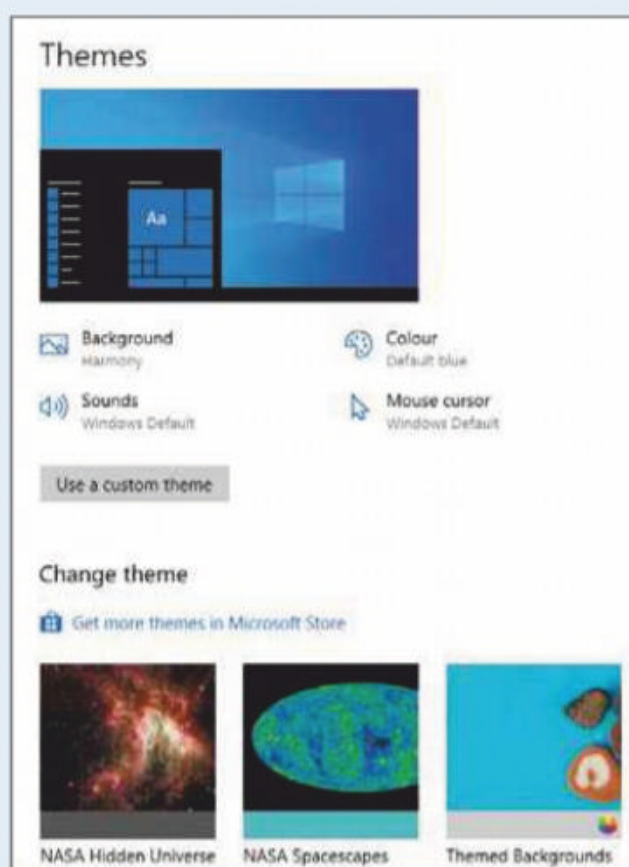
Change the colour of the taskbar

Q I would like to change the background colour of the taskbar in Windows 10, but there doesn't seem to be a way to do this. I know where the settings are in the Settings app, but I can't change them because they are greyed out. Selecting a colour has no effect on the taskbar and it stubbornly remains dark grey or black. Is this a bug?

Shane Dalton, via email

A Windows supports themes, each of which consists of a collection of icons, colours, desktop wallpapers and other elements. These themes change the appearance of Windows but not every element can be individually customised, which means you may not be able to change certain items – such as the taskbar and Action Centre, for example.

Open the Settings app, click Personalisation and select Themes on the left. The 'Windows (light)' theme,



Some Windows themes apply a choice of colours and might not let you change them

which came with version 1903, is one such 'locked-down' theme that prevents the colours from being changed. Select the Windows theme you want, then go to Colours. You will now be able to choose a colour and select the option to apply it to the taskbar and Action Centre.

GENERAL PC

Fix Start and Action Centre

Q After installing the latest update on my computer, I can no longer open the Start menu or Action Centre.

Colin Harris, via email

A This is a familiar problem that has affected a small number of users. Thankfully, there is an update on the way that will fix it. In the meantime, there are several things you can do – for example, use Explorer to run programs instead of Start.

Open Explorer using the icon on the taskbar or press Win+E. Click the View tab and select 'Hidden items', then go to:

C:\ProgramData\Microsoft\Windows\Start Menu\Programs

Most of the items on the Start menu are listed here and you can just double-click an item to run it.

Open the Settings app and go to 'Update & Security', Windows Update, 'View update history', then 'Uninstall updates'. Click the Installed On header to sort the updates by date (scroll right if you don't see it). Now, uninstall the last update, if that's when the problem started.



This fortnight Roland bought a new iPhone 11 and has been selling old phones and PCs to help pay for it



Readers' Helpdesk

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

BROWSERS

Stop Firefox inverting colours

Q When I open Firefox version 60 on my Asus 550C laptop running Windows 10 Home, the text is white on a black background, while the font inside panels is blue, making everything illegible. I can't increase the size of the text, either. Suggested fixes include turning off hardware acceleration or updating the drivers, or there might be malware within the system. I've used Firefox for many years and never had this problem.

Fossewayfella, via email

A You've probably already checked the colour settings in the Options menu, which is where you can tweak your fonts.

Make sure you click the Advanced button and tick the box 'Allow pages to choose their own fonts'.

Turning off hardware acceleration is a good idea because it helps websites display properly.

Go to Options, find the Performance section and untick 'Use recommended performance settings'. This allows you to switch off 'Use hardware acceleration when available'.

Browser display settings can sometimes change after an update. Type **about:config** in the address bar and search for **browser.display**. Under 'background_color', make sure the value is set to #FFFFFF (white), while the foreground colour is #000000 (black).

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User

GENERAL PC

Turn your Start Menu and Taskbar transparent

Q I was looking at Windows 10 on Reddit ([bit.ly/rdtwin486](https://www.reddit.com/r/windows/comments/486t4w/transparent-taskbar-and-start-menu/)) not so long ago, where I saw someone had made their computer's Taskbar and Start Menu

READERS RESPOND

DOWNLOADS

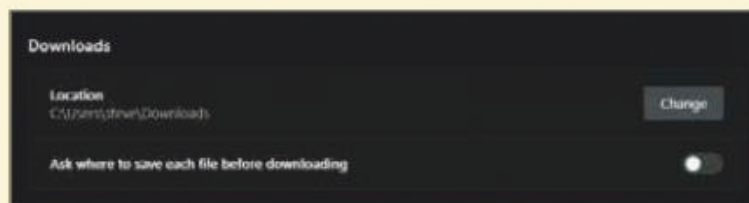
Change your download location

A In Issue 483 (bit.ly/webuser483), Nicholas Bledsoe asked how to change his default download location in Windows 10. First, open your browser. In a Chromium-based browser, such as Opera, type **browsername://settings** and press Enter. Once

Make sure your browser's downloads are saved in the right place

you're in Settings, type **download** in the search bar and you should see options for changing your download location. I hope this helps.

Flynn Farrow, 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.

ANDROID

Q I use my Google Home to set reminders but, recently, they've stopped coming through on my smart speaker and phone. I don't think I've changed any settings, so why am I not getting reminder notifications?

Colin Barthes, via email

EMAIL

Q Every time I open my Outlook app it says 'Load more messages' and I need to manually refresh it. Sometimes it shows emails from months back before new ones appear. Clearing the cache didn't help. What else can I try?

G, via email

transparent. I love customising various aspects of my desktop but I haven't the faintest idea how to do this. Reading the comments, it seems I need a program.

Dale Lauer, via email

A In the basic settings for Windows, you can easily switch 'Transparency effects' on or off. Just search the Start bar for **Show transparency in Windows**. However, we suspect you're looking for greater control, in which case, you'll need to employ our old friend, the Registry hack. As usual, make a backup first, then open up the Registry Editor. To tweak the Taskbar, go to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced

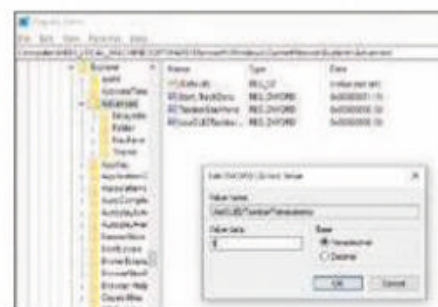
Create a new DWORD (32-bit) called **UseOLEDTaskbarTransparency**. The

value needs to be set to 1. Next, go to: HKEY_CURRENT_USER\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Themes\Personalise

Go into the existing DWORD **EnableTransparency** and change the value to 0. You may need to force the change, so go back to the Windows transparency options, then turn the transparency setting off and on again.

If you're wary of Registry edits, try the TranslucentTB tool (bit.ly/translucent486) instead.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



Use a Registry hack to see through your taskbar

Your Top Tips

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



TOP TIP

GENERAL PC

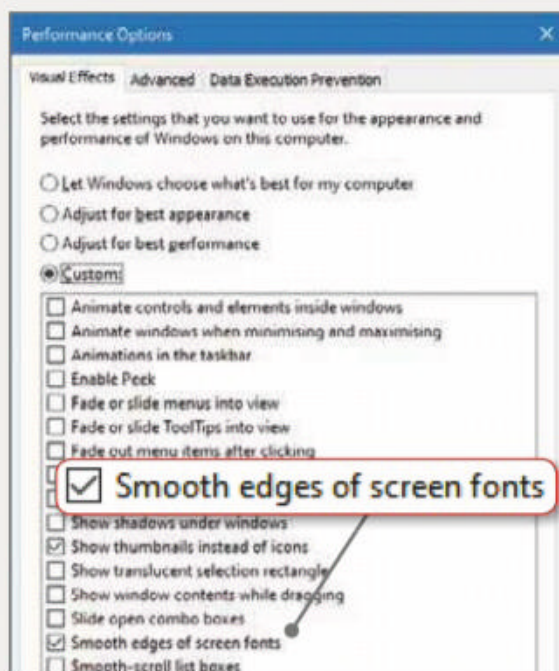
Tweaks that speed up Windows

Here are several tweaks you can make to Windows to help speed up your computer a little. The effects aren't huge but they are worth doing on low-spec PCs.

Open the Windows 10 Settings app and go to 'Ease of Access', then Display. In the 'Simplify and personalise Windows' section, turn off the 'Show animations in Windows' and 'Show transparency in Windows' switches. They may look nice but they slow down your PC.

I'm using Windows 10, but I think the following tweaks also work in Windows 7. Open the Control Panel, and click 'Ease of Access Centre', then 'Make the computer easier to see'. Down near the bottom, in the 'Make things on the screen easier to see' section, tick the box for 'Turn off all unnecessary animations (when possible)'.

Click System in Control Panel, then 'Advanced system settings' on the left. In the new window that opens, select the Advanced tab and, in the



Optional Visual Effects slow down your PC so untick any you don't need

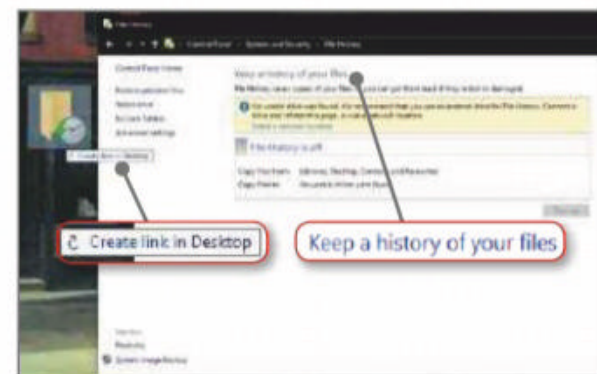
Performance section, click Settings. Select 'Adjust for best performance'. The only setting I really need is 'Smooth edges of screen fonts', otherwise text looks poor.

Seth Davis, via email

you back up files from your Desktop, Documents, Music, Pictures and Videos folders. It's called File History, and I find it especially useful when moving files after upgrading my computer. It usually sits in Control Panel but you can create a shortcut for quicker backups.

Open Control Panel and select 'System and Security', then File History. You should see a small File History icon to the left of the address bar. Left-click this and, holding it down, drag it to the desktop. You can now access File History any time you need to copy your important files.

Matt Farthingwell, via email

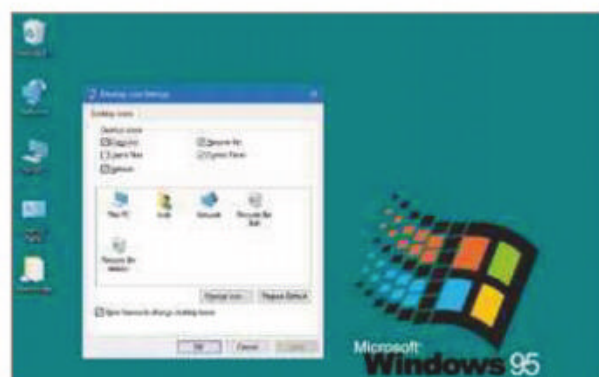


Create a File History shortcut for a quick way to back up essential files

GENERAL PC

Give Windows 10 a retro makeover

Does anyone remember when, years ago, Windows used to have desktop icons for the Recycle Bin, Computer, Control Panel and Network? If you want to give your Windows 10 PC a retro, nostalgic appearance, you can bring them back.



Turn Windows 10 into Windows 95 with retro wallpaper and icons

Open Settings, Personalisation and select Themes in the sidebar. Find 'Related settings' and click the 'Desktop icon settings' link. Select the icons you want to see. Right-click the desktop and hover over the View menu. Select 'Medium icons' and 'Show desktop icons'. Now search Google for 'Windows 95 wallpaper' and download one you like. I found a good collection at Getwallpapers (getwallpapers.com). Right-click the image in the Downloads folder and select 'Set as desktop background'. Windows 10 now has a great retro look.

Dan Watson, via email

GENERAL PC

Quickly back up data using a File History shortcut

Many users may not realise it, but Windows 10 has a special tool that lets

ONLINE STORAGE

Encrypt more OneDrive files

I got a notification about a new OneDrive (onedrive.com) feature – an encrypted folder, called Personal Vault. The setup required either the Microsoft or Google Authenticator app to get a security code, which was fine, but I then discovered that using free OneDrive storage only lets you add three files to the encrypted storage. It was full within about two minutes of enabling the feature!

Then I discovered it would accept zip files and each zip can contain any number of files. Just right-click a bunch of files in Explorer and select 'Send to, Compressed (zipped) folder', then put it in the Personal Vault to get around the three-file limit.

K Johnson, via email



GAMING

Control your Xbox with Google Home

I've just discovered that you can now use Google Home – either the phone

app or a smart speaker – to turn on your Xbox and play games. Setup is quite quick – first, join the Xbox Google Group (bit.ly/xbox486) using the Google account you use with Home,

then open the Google Home app on your phone and press Add, then 'Set up device'. On the following screen, select 'Have something already set up?' and, in the list of available services, choose '[beta] Xbox'. You need to sign into this with your Xbox-linked Microsoft account.

Now, after saying "Hey Google" you can use commands such as 'Play Overwatch on Xbox', 'launch YouTube on Xbox', 'turn on Xbox' and 'take a screenshot on Xbox'. It won't work with every app (BBC iPlayer doesn't work, for example) but it's a good start for a beta and it's worked flawlessly for me.

Steve, via email

BROWSERS

Share files offline with Opera Mini

Is anyone else using Opera Mini on their phone? A recent update introduced support for offline file sharing between two people using the browser on their devices. Press the 'O' button, select File Sharing and, after granting the necessary permissions, you can see available files, or choose to Receive and Send. To do either, you must also let Opera use your location. Next, you'll see a QR code, which needs to be scanned by the person you're sharing with. They'll be able to access your chosen files instantly.

Henry Scotforth, via email



Control Xbox with your voice using Google Home

EMAIL

See more in your inbox

One advantage to using the Mail app in Windows 10 is that you don't get the ads that are on the Outlook.com website. Why open a browser and get ads when your messages are in the Mail app?

You can customise your inbox to show more messages. Open Mail and open the Settings panel by clicking the cog icon at the bottom, then open Personalisation and select Compact in the 'Folder and message spacing' section. Return to the main settings and open 'Message list', then turn off the switch for 'Show sender pictures'. This makes the inbox listing a bit more packed but I like that you can see more of your emails on one page.

Lucy Williams, via email

MOBILE

Let specific callers bypass iOS's Do Not Disturb

I frequently switch on Do Not Disturb on my iPhone, but then worry that I might miss an important call. Thankfully, I've now learned that you can 'favourite' certain contacts so their calls bypass the setting. To do this, go to Do Not Disturb, Phone, Allow Calls From. Make sure this option is set to Favourites.

Next, you need to add contacts to your favourites list, so open the Phone app, then the Favourites tab and find your chosen contact. Select their number in the address book.

You can also turn on Emergency Bypass for any contact by editing their entry in the address book. Select Ringtone, toggle on Emergency Bypass and they, too, will get past any active Do Not Disturb setting.

Helen Savage, via email

BROWSERS

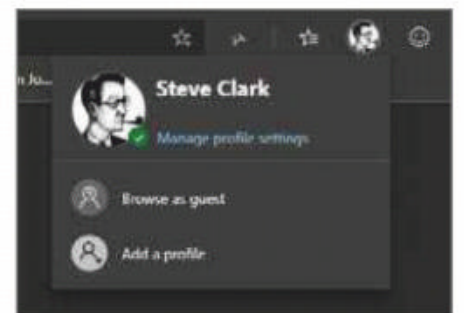
Add multiple accounts to Edge Chromium

Good news for everyone who shares their computer with other people – the new Edge browser supports multiple users, so you don't need to keep logging in and out every time someone else in your house goes online. Open the new browser and

press your profile icon, which is next to the address bar. You should see two options beneath the current profile: 'Browse as guest' and 'Add a profile'.

This lets you add additional local users. You can then sign in with the new Microsoft account when you switch to this new profile for the first time, or by going to `edge://settings/people`.

Brian Cunningham, via email



The latest version of Edge supports additional users in one browser

BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

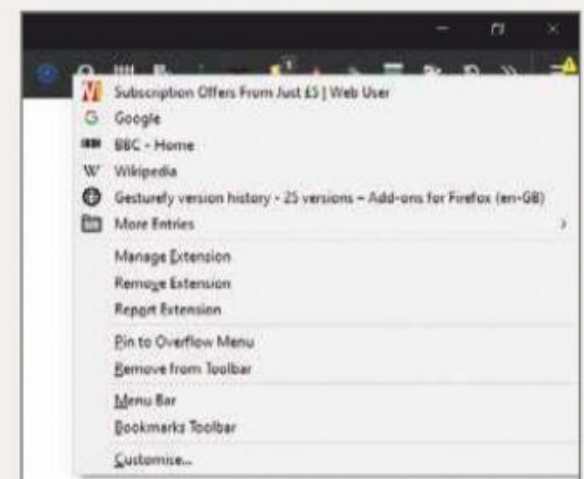
BROWSERS

Never lose an accidentally closed Firefox tab

I can't be the only person who accidentally ends up closing tabs – sometimes multiple times in one session. I've lost reams of work and had to log into sites over and over. I even overspent on Amazon because I clicked the dreaded 'X' by mistake when comparing prices on the site!

In an effort to combat this, I previously used Gesturefy (bit.ly/gesturefy486), which lets you use mouse 'gestures' to reopen tabs. Unfortunately, this only works for the last tab closed.

Now, I've found the perfect add-on. Undo Close Tab (bit.ly/tab486) remembers your last 25 closed tabs. Either click the browser icon to reopen



Gesturefly remembers all your recently closed tabs

the last tab, or right-click it for a list of your recently closed tabs. It certainly helps butter-fingered fools like me!

Kenneth Groves, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

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



Star Email

Firefox is still no match for Chrome

In his Page 404 column in Issue 485, Barry Collins raves about the latest version of Firefox and says that it “may be about to land a sucker punch on Chrome”. Sorry, but what planet is Barry living on? Firefox hasn’t got a hope of winning back users from Chrome, whether it deserves to or not.

Google has such control over the web that its Chrome browser is the automatic choice for most people, and they’ll probably never feel the need to try anything else. Chrome is preinstalled on all Android devices, for a start, and it has all the best extensions including Grammarly, Evernote and Ghostery. I know those same add-ons are available for Firefox, too, but when you search for them, the Chrome versions always



appear first in the results.

Firefox had its chance but it failed to keep up with Chrome and now it’s fallen so far behind that it will be very hard for it to regain popularity. Adding a few privacy tools isn’t likely to help, despite

what Barry thinks, because you can already get those features from add-ons.

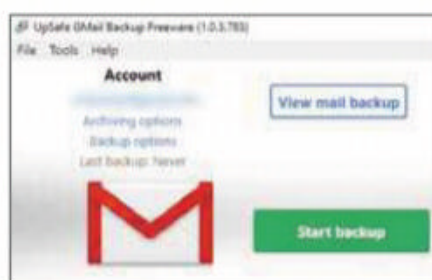
In any case, I don’t use Chrome or Firefox any more. I switched to Vivaldi last year and haven’t looked back. It’s got much more interesting features than either of those browsers and you can install extensions from the Chrome Web Store and sync all your bookmarks and passwords between PCs. As you covered in your workshop in Issue 485, there’s also a Vivaldi app for Android now, so I can even avoid using Chrome on my phone.

I’m not bashing people who like Firefox – if it works for them, then fine – but to suggest that it’s making some sort of major comeback is laughable.

Darren Herman, via email

Backing up Gmail works like a dream

Issue 484 of *Web User* featured a workshop about backing up Gmail to your PC using UpSafe Free Gmail Backup (bit.ly/gmbu484). I’m a taxi driver and my weekly invoice (PDF) and customer statistics come via Gmail. I’ve been looking for a way to download my emails



from Gmail and I have to say that this program is the business. The backup options, along with

the email filtering, work like a dream when sorting my accounts.

In Step 5 of your workshop, you say that “any attached files can be downloaded from the Attachments tab”. The thing is, the attachments are automatically downloaded anyway, which is awesome, so there’s no need to download them separately. That’s a minor point, but UpSafe Free Gmail Backup is definitely an excellent, free program.

This issue was the best £2.30 I’ve spent this year, although I buy your magazine regularly and love it.

Graeme Hanson, via email

Stop scaremongering about smart meters

In response to your question about smart meters (Inbox, Issue 485) – yes, we have one, but I’ve since switched supplier so the readings are not yet automatically sent to my new supplier. They say this will change very soon, though, so the fact that I already have the system in place and ready to use is a bonus. Meanwhile, the indoor meter still works so I can take my meter readings from it,

which saves me ferreting around in the outside cupboard.

Sadly, there’s been some scaremongering, which has put some people off smart meters. They are no different from any other electronic or mechanical meter, except with the bonus that readings can be received by the company automatically and you can see all readings in the warmth of your home without having to dive in cupboards with a torch. They cost the same and yes, you

Quiz Answers: Issue 485

1 **The Wizard of Oz**



2 **Citizen Kane**



3 **A Fistful of Dollars**



4 **Cool Hand Luke**



5 **Duck Soup**



6 **12 Angry Men**



WINNER!

Well done to **Jason Wall** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc



WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE

ZX Spectrum



can still switch suppliers as before, whether or not they currently use smart meters. They soon all will, anyway.

The scaremongering smacks of the same fears people had when electricity originally entered the home – people were afraid of it, thought they could smell it and refused to have it.

Gary Olsen, Facebook

Wikipedia has room for improvement

I read your Star Email from Ross Dallas in Issue 485, 'Hopeless administrators ruin Wikipedia', with great interest and a little sadness. I find myself visiting Wikipedia several times a day, and although it's generally very useful I often get the sense that it's not fulfilling its potential.

Many articles on interesting topics are rather threadbare, while others are needlessly long, considering their mundane subjects, so you have to wonder if the Wikipedia administrators are really doing their jobs properly. I'm sure they don't get paid very much, if at all, but the site would undoubtedly benefit from regular reviews of its content by knowledgeable volunteers.

If, as Mr Dallas suggests, the problem is caused by Wikipedia being staffed by a small team of "ignoramus", then perhaps Jimmy Wales, who owns the site, needs to rethink its long-term strategy. I'm sure there are plenty of people who would willingly contribute their time and judgment to help improve

the content, if the current 'closed circle' of moderators could be opened up.

Wikipedia is popular for

good reason, and it remains an invaluable free resource, but it shouldn't take its status for granted.

Brian Welsby, via email



What you say...

WILL YOU PAY £62 A MONTH FOR VIRGIN MEDIA'S GIGABIT BROADBAND (bit.ly/gigabit486)?

Gigabit speed is great in theory, but will you actually get these speeds? Unless you're a hardcore gamer, do you really need a gigabit?

David P-Smith @david_p_s

Can't see the point of that sort of speed for home users. I won't pay more than £25 per month for my broadband.

Terry Harper

Virgin Media isn't exactly reliable with its current packages, so I'm not going to fork out that much money for its latest wheeze.

Geoff Hines

Wish it was available in the Isle of Man.

Michael Corlett

HOW OFTEN DO YOU RECEIVE SPAM CALLS ON YOUR MOBILE PHONE (see page 48)?

About once a month. I don't answer and then I block their number on my phone straight away. It's more effective than the old system of registering with TPS, which didn't seem to work as well as it should have done.

Rich Grove

Probably once or twice a month at most. I don't generally answer numbers I don't recognise – I Google them to see if they have been previously reported as nuisance callers. If they have, then I block the number. Simples.

Mike Kuhl

I've certainly blocked a few but I don't

get bothered too often. Cold calling should be illegal, of course, but the authorities allow it for some reason.

Russell Cox @RussWWFC

At least once a week, but I use CleverDialer (www.cleverdialer.com) to block calls. It's not as good as the old TPS call blocker, though.

Martin Phillp

Not often but, when I do, Calls Blacklist Pro for Android (bit.ly/calls486) does a good job of preventing further repeat calls.

Harvey Skipsey

I seem to have had lots of accidents that weren't my fault. When I tell them my number is TPS-registered, they don't seem to care.

Simon Mellor @4KBacon

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE AND LEAST FAVOURITE THINGS ABOUT GOOGLE?

It's too nosy, so I avoid most Google services. The good points are that if you get a new smartphone, you only have to log into your Google account and – hey presto – all your contacts and apps appear by magic.

Geoffrey Boow

Google runs my life – calendar, email, contacts – so my favourite thing is that it's so integrated. My least favourite is Google's inclination to retire apps.

Nat Grove

When it comes to Google, I have nothing to declare as a favourite and a whole laundry list of least favourite things. At the top of the list would be the various methods it uses for censorship.

Jarrold Ushkowski

I think Maps is the one Google thing I couldn't live without. And Search, of course, but that goes without saying. My least favourite thing is the fear that it's passing information about my interests to advertisers.

Steve Horner

! Page 404



Barry Collins says technology is partly to blame for Thomas Cook's demise

Tech troubles cooked the travel agent

"Don't just book it, Thomas Cook it," was the now defunct travel agent's slogan when I was a kid. If my recent experience of booking online with the company is anything to go by, the slogan should have been "you just can't book it when you Thomas Cook it".

Like virtually every travel-agent website I can think of, Thomas Cook did a woeful job of handling online bookings. My efforts to secure two hotel rooms for my family were repeatedly thwarted at the final confirmation screen – after I'd laboriously entered every detail, tweaked every flight and selected all the non-optional extras – because the rooms we wanted were now inexplicably unavailable. Only when I finally broke and spent 30 minutes hanging on the company's telephone helpline did a harassed member of staff confess that she had no idea why I couldn't book them. Computer said 'no'.

So, when I read that Thomas Cook still had an expensive fleet of 600 bricks-and-mortar stores that hugely exacerbated the company's already monumental losses, I wasn't the least bit surprised.

Having lost the plot myself with the travel agent's broken online booking system, I could see why it would be preferable to get Sandra at the high-street branch to take over the task of screaming at her screen in frustration.

Online travel booking should have been an open goal for these firms. Back when I was a lad, prospective sunseekers had to wade through pages and pages

“When I was a lad, prospective sunseekers had to wade through pages of Teletext listings to find the holiday of their dreams**”**



of Teletext listings to find the holiday of their dreams. And Teletext Holidays is still going online today, a decade or more after Teletext itself vanished, such is the affection people have for that brand – even though the experience could barely have been more tedious.

Unbelievably, booking holidays and flights online has become even more painful. Websites routinely don't work properly and, even when they do, they often work against you. When flight-booking websites crank up their prices because they've clocked you're a repeat visitor and they now know you're definitely interested – guess what? People get angry. And even if many of these sharp practices are getting weeded out of the industry – either through tighter regulation or because firms have been caught red-handed –

it absolutely destroys customer trust. Can you blame people for wanting to look a human travel agent in the eye when they can't trust the prices on the screen in front of them?

Even when your holiday is booked, the travel agents use technology to blackmail you for more money. A few weeks before we set off on the holiday that we eventually booked with Tui, emails started arriving encouraging us to reserve specific seats on the plane, accompanied by a live map showing that there were only a few left unreserved. The message was clear – expect to spend the 10-hour flight sat apart from your children if you don't pay the extra £100 or so it costs to reserve seats. It's extortion, pure and simple.

Millions of people have lost their holidays and tens of thousands of people have lost their jobs – in part, because Thomas Cook's technology was nowhere near good enough.

Sadly, they won't be the last.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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