



# AWFUL APPS TO AVOID IN 2020

What you must never install on your phone  
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PC Specialist recommends Windows  Windows 10



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## Make 2020 an app-ealing year

**S**o, that was 2019, the year that Brexit didn't get done, Thomas Cook went bust and the UK came last in the Eurovision Song Contest. Still, it wasn't all doom and gloom – Greggs launched a vegan sausage roll and train stations stopped charging you to use the toilet!

Over in the tech world, meanwhile, many of the biggest stories involved dangerous mobile apps, which users were urged to "delete now or pay the price" ([bit.ly/delete491](http://bit.ly/delete491)). There have been so many of these warnings that it's difficult to keep up with exactly which apps

you should be uninstalling.

In this issue's cover feature, we provide a handy guide to the dodgiest apps of 2019, a selection of terrible tools that harvest your data, infect you with malware, bombard you with ads, steal your money and slow your phone or tablet to a crawl. By using superior alternatives, you can keep your mobile device safe and fast in 2020. A very 'appy new year to you all!

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[#webuser](https://twitter.com/webuser)



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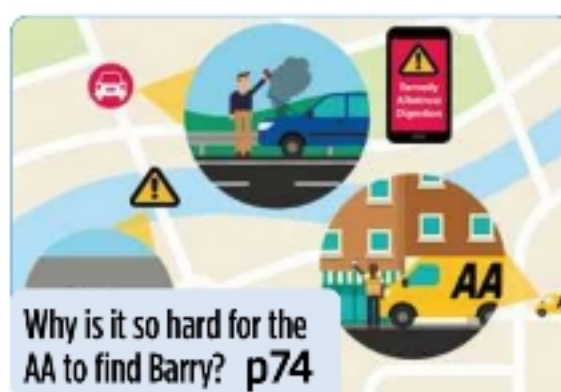
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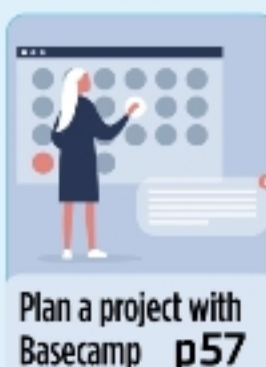
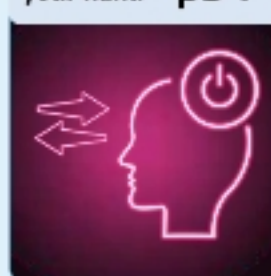
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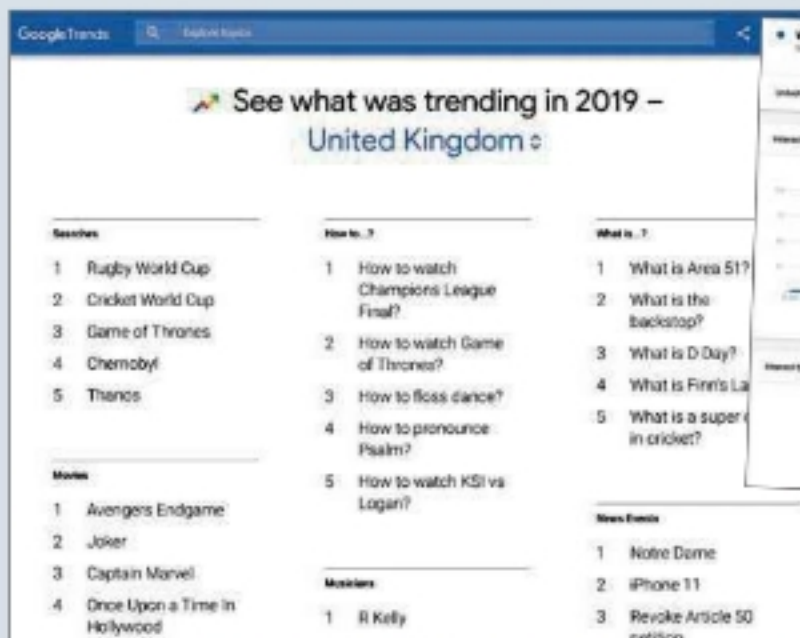


# What's New Online

## See Google's top searches in 2019

**B**rexit dominated the news over the past year but, judging by Google Trends' roundup of the most popular search terms of 2019, our minds have been focused elsewhere. Its most prominent mention concerned the perplexing question of the backstop, but that was beaten by people keen to learn about Area 51 – a reaction to a call on Facebook to storm the top secret US air force base back in July.

The Notre Dame fire and the iPhone 11 were also burning issues but the biggest searches were related to sport: the rugby and cricket World Cups were first and second overall, ahead of *Game of Thrones* and the hit



person, *Avengers Endgame* was top of the movies and R Kelly the most requested musician (but perhaps not for his music).

As always, you can click all these entries to see when they peaked, discover which regions were most enquiring and discover trends from across the world.

[bit.ly/trends491](https://bit.ly/trends491)

## Enjoy an interactive adventure from the BBC

[bit.ly/adventure491](https://bit.ly/adventure491)

The BBC is continuing to experiment with interactive storytelling, using its web-based StoryFormer technology. This allows individual elements such as audio, video and captions to be combined into a branching narrative, with users determining the path they wish to follow by making decisions along the way.

The aim of *His Dark Materials*, based on the Beep's recent TV series, is to discover a daemon that mirrors your soul. In many ways, it feels like a story wrapped within a personality quiz spread across numerous locations. It can end quickly or take some time, depending on the answers you give.

While it's perfectly playable on a computer, the site



suggests you play it on your phone turned sideways with the sound on. In either case, you can share your resulting daemon on Facebook and Twitter, and replay to see how you could have done things differently.

## Discover your most played songs

[spotify.com/uk/wrapped](https://spotify.com/uk/wrapped)

At the end of each year, Spotify unwraps Wrapped, a feature highlighting the top artists, songs and genres you've listened to over the past 12 months. This time, as well as the annual list, you can also get the lowdown on the whole of the 2010s, while still discovering how many minutes of music you listened to during 2019 and how many songs you 'liked'.

Spread over 13 pages, you just need to scroll down for the highlights. The main attraction is a curated playlist of your most-played tunes that you can share on social media. If you're not a Premium subscriber, you may get an offer, too.

Globally, Post Malone was the most streamed artist of 2019 with more than 6.5 billion streams, and there were a billion streams of *Señorita* by Shawn Mendes and Camilla Cabello. Over the past decade, *Love The Way You Lie* by Eminem and Rihanna was the most-streamed song.





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

## Explore hyperlapse videos of London

[hyperlapsem.com](http://hyperlapsem.com)

If you want a quick tour of the capital, then click one of the blue markers on this new map and you'll be able to watch an incredibly speedy hyperlapse video of a given route. It's a great way to get your bearings without manually manoeuvring through Google Street View, with the map's coverage set to grow via crowdsourced contributions.



## Play Amstrad CPC games

[bit.ly/amstrad491](http://bit.ly/amstrad491)

Lord Sugar launched the Amstrad CPC 464 in 1984 and, while it was always seen as the outsider in the Commodore 64 versus ZX Spectrum wars, it was nevertheless a decent computer with a loyal user base. To help former Amstrad users relive some memories, online archivist Jason Scott has undertaken the mammoth task of

playing and testing some 3,000 games in a CPC emulator. Running in your browser on the Internet Archive, they're

accompanied by demos, compilation disks and public domain programs. Gems include Robocop, Switchblade and Fantasy World Dizzy.

## Watch 2019's finest YouTube moments

[bit.ly/youtube491](http://bit.ly/youtube491)

Last year's YouTube Rewind was the service's most disliked video of all time since it featured celebrities such as Will Smith rather than content creators. This time, it's back on track with a video lasting 5 minutes and 36 seconds showcasing the likes of PewDiePie, Minecraft and Korean boy band BTS. The montage concentrates on the biggest milestones of 2019, showing the top moments in various categories – from dance videos to video games. YouTube's most popular UK video of 2019 was the live stream of Liverpool FC's win over Barcelona in the second leg of the UEFA Champions League semi-final.



## NEW VOICE COMMANDS



### Listen to a Frozen story

Enthral children with a beautifully presented story related to the movie *Frozen* and choose a character to narrate it. Say: "Hey Google, tell me a Frozen story".



### Type directly to Siri

As of iOS 13, you can instantly use Siri without speaking. Swipe left on the homescreen and type your query in the search bar. Don't press Search – scroll to the bottom of the screen and select Ask Siri.



### Get free Audible tales

Audible now lets you listen to short stories read via Alexa by big-name narrators including David Jason, Andrew Scott and Juliet Stevenson. Say "Alexa, open Audible Stories" and select a genre.



### Compare property prices

[bit.ly/property491](http://bit.ly/property491)

Thomas Sanderson's property-price tool takes the average cost of a house in your area and puts the results on a Monopoly-style board. Do you live in the equivalent of Old Kent Road or Mayfair?

### Create a dance routine

[bit.ly/dance491](http://bit.ly/dance491)

Throw some shapes in front of a webcam and Google's new machine-learning tool will scour the archive of choreographer Wayne McGregor for the closest dance match. You'll see a clip of the move, from 100 hours of footage used.

### Buy a recipe's ingredients

[bit.ly/asda491](http://bit.ly/asda491)

Search for recipes on the Asda Good Living website, then click a button to add all the ingredients to your online basket. The site gives you the cost per serving and lets you swap items or remove those you already have.

## Write like President Trump

[www.finalwordfromthepres.com](http://www.finalwordfromthepres.com)

Remember Donald Trump's "I want nothing" speech, written in the president's handwriting? Those letters have been used as the basis of a new font, letting you type whatever you wish before downloading as a poster. Writing certain words such as "thing", "dog" and "Trump" uncover some Easter eggs, and you can download the font itself, too.





# Need to Know

## 7 MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR 2020

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

**1 Will drones start making deliveries?**  
• **Long answer:**  
They already are, in some places, but don't expect them to be landing in your garden anytime soon. The use of airborne drones to deliver packages is happening in remote regions for emergency supplies, such as Zipline dropping off blood in Rwanda. In the US, drone deliveries are also being used in very limited ways for medical supplies and test samples.

So far, the US Federal Aviation Authority has approved drone delivery permits for two companies. One is the Wing project from Google's parent company Alphabet, which is allowed to use a single drone overseen by a pilot.



The other is UPS, which can use multiple drones and fly them beyond line of sight, but is limited to medical deliveries.

Here in the UK, Amazon has tested drone deliveries but is yet to roll out a wider service. Given the new limits on drones that require operators to register

and limit where they can be flown, such a service could be limited to remote regions or emergency supplies, too.

• **Short answer:**  
Delivery drones are already in the air, but you still need to wait for a courier in a van.

**2 Will political advertising and fake news be solved?**  
• **Long answer:**  
It's unclear at this point who could solve the issue of fake news and fix inaccuracies in political advertising. Some progress has been made in social media, with Twitter banning political ads, but preventing users from sharing misleading information may prove impossible. A false claim can spread far and wide before it becomes clear that it was planted by a bot.

The problem is one of trust. We no longer trust the media, politicians or what we read online, unless it already fits with our world view. That makes it easier to fall for clever lies – be they shared by malicious bots or by your well-meaning uncle.

This is really a problem we need to solve ourselves. Find sources you trust and take a slower approach to news. That may sound difficult, but it's easier than waiting for Facebook to stop taking money for political advertising or depending on AI to weed out lies for us.

• **Short answer:**  
Don't count on it – we need to learn to solve these problems ourselves.



**3 Will Microsoft get users to ditch Windows 7?**  
• **Long answer:**  
Depending on which figures you look at, Windows 7 is used by between 14% and 40% of users. Windows 10 overtook it earlier this year, but many people still depend on the decade-old software, despite Microsoft ending mainstream support in 2015.

Extended support ends on 14 January, which means it's well past time to upgrade, but many of the Windows 7 PCs still in use include businesses where it's sometimes difficult to shift to newer operating systems because of budgetary constraints and bespoke software that doesn't work on newer versions of Windows. Regardless of such challenges, they'll now have to make the switch, because sticking with the no-longer supported OS will require shelling out for extra security.

• **Short answer:**  
Most people should make the switch if they haven't already. See our feature on page 50 for more advice.





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

4

### Will driverless cars ever arrive?

#### • Long answer:

In some ways, driverless cars are already here; in other ways, they may never arrive. In the US, Arizona is a hub for testing automated vehicles, with Google's Waymo project ferrying human passengers about in cars with no human driver. But those rides are limited to very specific areas, only a select group of passengers and don't run in adverse weather. The same is true in the UK.

Whether automated cars ever leave the testing phase and graduate to mainstream use remains to be seen. Google and other tech giants clearly think it's possible, given the amount of investment they're chucking at research and development. But many experts believe that driverless vehicles may never be clever enough to manage our complicated traffic systems and move beyond private roads or very low speeds.

#### • Short answer:

Driverless cars are on the roads, but they're still being tested – and may never be ready.



5

### Will we get 5G — and will it matter?

#### • Long answer:

5G coverage is slowly rolling out across the UK and you may already have access, depending on your network, location and handset. So far, coverage is fairly limited and, while some of us will see faster download speeds, the real benefit over 4G is increased network capacity, which means more people can get good connections at the same time; and better coverage through solid objects, which should lead to a better signal inside houses and buildings.

Even if you already have a 5G connection, you're still likely to be using 4G for most downloads.

However, from 2022, the newer network will start to take on a bigger role – so, if you buy a new phone in the next year, make sure it supports 5G.

#### • Short answer:

5G is slowly arriving, but you may not even notice it in 2020.



6

### Will NHS data be sold off to the highest bidder?

#### • Long answer:

Medical data is incredibly valuable – not just to us but also to tech giants. The latter are hoping to develop machine-learning systems that can spot disease and diagnose illnesses, and to do that they require health data to train that AI. There may well be no better collection of medical data in the world than that held by the NHS, but that doesn't mean we should simply hand it over.

Privacy naturally needs to be a consideration but so, too, does transparency. Patients will demand to know how their data is being used, and may well be fine with an academic medical researcher looking to cure cancer. However, they may be less pleased about Google using the information to develop a medical machine-learning product that it then profits from by selling it back to the NHS.

This is a problem that needs public debate but, right now, the discussion is behind closed doors. The data held by the NHS could revolutionise health care, but we need to ensure that tech giants don't abuse access to that data.

#### • Short answer:

Contracts are already being signed by medical companies but patients need more transparency.



7

### Will our personal data finally be respected by tech companies?

#### • Long answer:

No, we don't see Facebook, Google and the rest suddenly becoming more sensible with our data. There has been headline after headline in 2019 about horrible misuses of personal data but little has been done to tackle the problem.

Regulatory action is looming. The EU has cracked down on some misuse and tightened laws via GDPR. But it's difficult to see if that will translate to real action that will change how our data is treated.

Right now, the entire web is designed to track us. Serious change is needed but making it happen in a widespread way will be more difficult. To some extent, this will come down to web users themselves, with individuals opting to use privacy-focused browsers and phones, and eschewing voice assistants and smart-home devices. But, in some cases, there's little option but to trade away your data if you want to use a convenient service.

#### • Short answer:

Don't hold your breath, but protect your privacy in every way you can manage.





# Your smart TV may be spying on you

## What happened?

The FBI has warned owners of smart TVs to change the settings on their internet-connected televisions to improve security and ensure that they aren't being spied on.

In a press release ([bit.ly/fbi491](http://bit.ly/fbi491)), federal agents in Oregon sought to raise awareness of the perils of smart TVs in the home. The agency highlighted the fact that when these TV sets are used straight out of the box, the microphones and cameras they're equipped with can be used by makers to listen in and observe you while you binge-watch Netflix.

But it's not just that "your TV manufacturer and app developers may be listening and watching you". The Feds also stressed that, because it's an online device, smart TVs are vulnerable to hackers. They stated that "it is possible that your unsecured TV can give him or her an easy way in the backdoor through your router". And while they may just toy with you by changing channels, they could just as easily cyberstalk you by hacking a smart TV's mics and cameras.

The announcement was timed to draw attention to the issue during the Black Friday and Christmas sales.

## How will it affect you?

If you don't own a smart TV – or haven't



jury-rigged one using a Chromecast, Firestick or games console – then you should have nothing to fear. However, if you do, now might be a good time to take the FBI's advice and lock down your device.

In its press release, the security service offered five tips for "building a digital defence with your TV": find out which features your smart TV has and learn how to control them; change all passwords on the device; stick masking tape over the camera if you don't use it; check the manufacturer's security updates and read the privacy policies for the TV manufacturer and any streaming sites you use, such as Netflix

and Amazon Prime.

## What do we think?

All web-enabled devices are open to cyber-attacks, but we're glad to see the FBI is taking the issue seriously – not everyone will realise that a smart TV is as vulnerable, if not more so, than a laptop. As the agency says: your "television can also be a gateway for hackers to come into your home".

While following the FBI's suggestions may not stop someone snooping on you, it does make it substantially harder – and helps you determine if your manufacturer can be trusted with your data and easy access to your TV.



## FIRST LOOK

### Chuwi UBook Pro

[bit.ly/chuwi491](http://bit.ly/chuwi491)

If you've ever fancied getting your hands on a Microsoft Surface but balked at the ridiculous prices, then the Chuwi UBook Pro may be the answer.

This Chinese-built 2-in-1 Windows laptop isn't shy about positioning itself as the budget Surface but, while it may bear a passing resemblance to Microsoft's dominant machine, corners have been cut to hit the sub-£400 price tag.

The UBook Pro, a lightweight, souped-up version of the original UBook, features a 12.3in HD touchscreen that can be affixed to a Surface-like, backlit keyboard. This is all powered by an Intel Core m3-8100Y processor and 8GB of RAM.

While that's far from the best that Intel has to offer, you should be able to run most programs on the device.

If you're intending to use the device as a tablet, you'll find a handy kick-stand sitting flush with the frame and tucked round the back. The thick stylus is comfortable to hold but don't expect Surface Pen-level features: it's best-suited to basic writing and drawing tasks – so long as you keep your hands from accidentally knocking the screen, which is harder than it looks.

There's a bevy of connection options: two USB 3.0 ports, one type-C USB, a 3.5mm audio jack and a mini HDMI connection. For anyone looking to upgrade the built-in 256GB solid-state drive, there's also a microSD card slot.

The UBook Pro's 2-megapixel front



camera and 5-megapixel rear camera are unremarkable and fall far short of even an old smartphone, let alone a professional 2-in-1. On a full charge, you'll get about seven hours of use.

The Chuwi UBook Pro may like to pretend it's in the same league as Microsoft's flagship device but scratch this 'surface' and you'll find it's really just a reasonable, low-budget alternative. The UBook Pro is available now for £322.





## WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

## Is Avast stealing your browsing data?

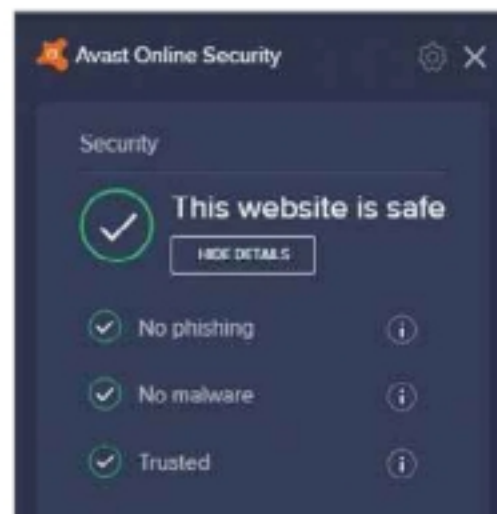
Say farewell to the Avast and AVG add-ons for Firefox. The browser's developer, Mozilla, has struck them from the list of available extensions after fears that they were tracking and scraping data from users.

Anyone installing Avast or AVG antivirus software is automatically 'gifted' the browser tools, which alert users to phishing scams and other net nasties. However, it turns out the add-ons themselves were guilty of less-than-transparent data dealings.

According to security researcher Wladimir Palant, both companies' add-ons were collecting a host of private data including URLs, website referrals, page titles and operating system. Discussing the Avast Online Security extension, Palant claimed that "it will transmit data that allows reconstructing your entire web browsing history and much of your browsing behaviour. The amount of data being sent goes far beyond what's necessary for the extension to function".

The security boffin immediately warned Mozilla, which stepped in and removed the tools from the add-on store. He also flagged the issue to Google but, at present, the extensions remain on the Chrome Web Store.

In response, Avast didn't quite manage to refute the allegation. It stated that "it is necessary for this service to collect the URL history to deliver its expected functionality" but



denied gathering a user's identification. So that's all right, then.

## LIKELIHOOD RATING



It's possible that these extensions – and, presumably, many more – are snooping on as much data as they can. And while there may be legitimate reasons for collecting some of this, we don't believe they were all necessary for the browser tools to work.

As usual, it's worth keeping a close eye on how any extension functions and the data it may want to access. See our cover feature on page 40 for details of more apps and add-ons you should avoid.

## ↑ WEBOMETER ↓

## WE LIKE...

## ↑ YouTube bans malicious insults and threats

As part of its new harassment policy, YouTube will block videos that "maliciously insult someone" based on "protected attributes" such as race, gender identity or sexuality. The site has also banned "implied threats of violence".



## ↑ Twitter upgrades the quality of photos

Twitter will no longer reduce the quality of images uploaded to the social network, but will preserve JPEGs as they were originally encoded. The upgrade applies to the Twitter website but is expected to come to the mobile apps, too.



## WE DON'T LIKE...

## ↓ 44 million Microsoft accounts at risk

Microsoft's identity-threat researchers revealed that 44 million of its users were still using passwords that had previously been compromised in past data breaches. Microsoft has forced the affected users to reset their passwords.



## ↓ BBC iPlayer broken on Samsung TVs

A software glitch stopped BBC iPlayer working on many Samsung smart TVs over the Christmas period. Samsung released a software update to fix the problem, but some older models will not get the patch until the new year.



## What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

## Orba

[bit.ly/orba491](http://bit.ly/orba491) | From £68

"A musical instrument designed for your hands," is an odd way to sell the dinky Orba. Isn't every instrument designed for your hands? Instead, think of the palm-sized Orba as a handheld digital studio that features a synth, looper and MIDI controller. Compositions are cleverly crafted by selecting various instrument buttons, then tilting, swiping and tapping out tunes on the touch-sensitive face. You can then play back your musical masterpiece via the built-in speaker. Pledges begin at £68 for a single Orba (plus delivery from the US) or pay £114 and the company will donate a second device to a good cause.





# Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

### Apple admits tracking iPhone 11 users

Apple has confirmed that a tracking feature in the iPhone 11 Pro monitors your location, even when all location service settings are turned off.



The issue involves a set of apps and system services that persistently seek an iPhone 11 Pro user's location, even when each service is set to 'never' request such location information, according to security researcher Brian Krebs. It was first assumed to be a privacy leak or software flaw, but the company has since confirmed location tracking in this way has been implemented in the iPhone 11 Pro by design.

Apple claims the tracking relates to ultra-wideband technology that "provides spatial awareness" allowing

the iPhone to understand its position relative to other phones fitted with the feature. This short-range technology essentially lets iPhone 11 Pro users share files locally with other iPhone 11 owners.

However, Krebs claims that this behaviour undermines Apple's own privacy policies. Apple says it plans to include a dedicated option to enable or disable ultra-wideband technology in a forthcoming iOS update.

[bit.ly/iphone491](https://bit.ly/iphone491)

### Microsoft warns of complex new malware

Microsoft has revealed details of a new strain of malware called Dexphot, which has been infecting Windows PCs since October 2018. The 'polymorphic' malware hijacks system resources to mine cryptocurrency and generate revenue for the attackers.



Dexphot reached its peak in June 2019, infecting almost 80,000 computers before gradually decreasing over the following months because of Microsoft's intervention. It uses various sophisticated methods to evade security software, including encryption and the use of randomised file names to hide the installation process. Dexphot then uses fileless techniques to run malicious code directly in a PC's memory and hijack legitimate system processes to disguise malicious activity. If not stopped, Dexphot ultimately runs a cryptocurrency miner on the infected device, and evades attempts to remove the malware.

Although up-to-date security software, including Microsoft's own Defender tool, is now able to block and remove Dexphot, Microsoft warns that similarly complex forms of malware threat are likely to become more common.

[bit.ly/dexphot491](https://bit.ly/dexphot491)

## Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

### THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:

**Ray Walsh, Digital Privacy Expert at ProPrivacy**  
([proprivacy.com](https://proprivacy.com))



**Q** Is Apple deliberately trying to track iPhone 11 users (see story, above)?

John Gosley, Twitter

**A** It's hard to believe that Apple, with its vast power and development expertise, has done this accidentally. And

the speed with which it has gone on the record to claim it doesn't see any negative security implications with the practice seems telling.

Apple says it will let iPhone 11 Pro users disable the option in a future update but whether this actually stops the tracking will remain a corporate secret known only to those behind the closed platform. It's impossible to tell exactly what Apple is doing in the background, so it's theoretically possible that iPhone devices could

continue to record people's location data secretly.

**Q** How worried should TikTok users be about the app leaking their data ([bit.ly/tiktok491](https://bit.ly/tiktok491))?

Matt Tanner, Facebook

**A** Allegations that TikTok has been accumulating data about its users – including personally identifiable information – and extracting it back to servers in China are

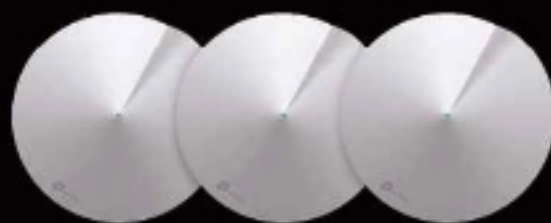
unsurprising. Despite TikTok's previous claims that it was not sending data to China, scepticism has long existed among privacy advocates surrounding this Chinese company's data practices.

The potential that the TikTok app is surreptitiously collecting user content – even when users do not publish videos to the platform – is extremely concerning and rings serious alarm bells. If these allegations turn out to be true, TikTok is potentially accumulating all kinds of data that its users believe they have ensured will not be shared.

**“Theoretically, iPhones could continue to secretly record people's location data”**



# STREAMING WITHOUT LIMITS



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Robust Parental  
Control



3-Year Built-In  
Antivirus



Quality of  
Service



[facebook.com/TPLINKUK](https://facebook.com/TPLINKUK)

[tp-link.com/uk](https://tp-link.com/uk)



[twitter.com/tplinkuk](https://twitter.com/tplinkuk)



# ★ Best New Websites

## Site of the Fortnight

TECHNOLOGY

IT Pro

[www.itpro.co.uk](http://www.itpro.co.uk)

This technology news and reviews hub for computing professionals was looking very tired but turning it off and on again has made it feel like a whole new system. Sporting a new logo and a more modern design, it now makes much better use of the screen space by focusing on the key stories of the day and running the latest news down the right-hand column rather than taking up the bulk of the homepage. The new layout allows room for a grid of popular stories and highlighted resources, tutorials and reviews, helping to save you browsing time and making the site an invaluable bookmark for IT businesses and decision makers.

Our rating



NEW



**RESOURCES**  
IT Pro is packed with in-depth, authoritative reports that help readers find tech solutions



**NEWSLETTER**

Keep scrolling down for an option to have a daily newsletter sent to your inbox

ITPro. Business Cloud

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

**European Commission new president pledges action on AI**

Ursula von der Leyen calls for GDPR-style legislation on artificial intelligence

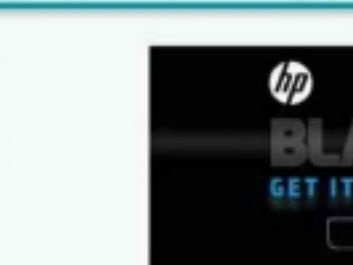
28 Nov 2019



DATA BREACHES

Adobe discloses Magento Marketplace data breach

28 Nov 2019



CULTURE

British Museum

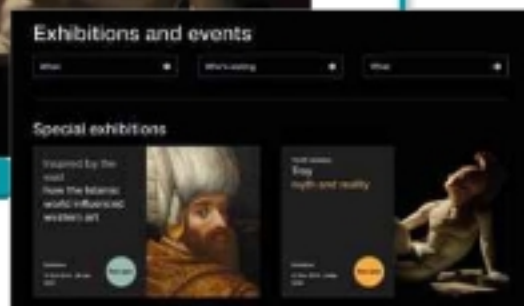
[www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org)

With better integration of its event calendar, the British Museum is looking to increase its visitor numbers both in person and online. It is now making a big feature of its latest exhibitions while providing details of what's coming up in the future, and also lets you check out what you can see for free. Indeed, the website gives you lots of information about each event using blog posts, image highlights and ticket details. You can still use the site to explore the museum collection online but this too is undergoing a revamp. Items that have been catalogued since 2017 and a new way to search are among the additions planned for the Collection section next year.

Our rating



RELAUNCH



FOOD

Vegan Food and Living

[www.veganfoodandliving.com](http://www.veganfoodandliving.com)

This site dedicated to all things vegan has the same ingredients but a fresh look that places a greater emphasis on recipes. These are arranged in an easily navigable grid format and many have a slider so you can adjust the ingredient amounts according to the number of servings you need. On mobile, you can easily switch between ingredients and method - indeed, the whole site has become more user-friendly thanks to a simplified menu system, a good use of tags and clearly flagged news and features. With a refined search menu, too, the revamp is proving to be a recipe for success.

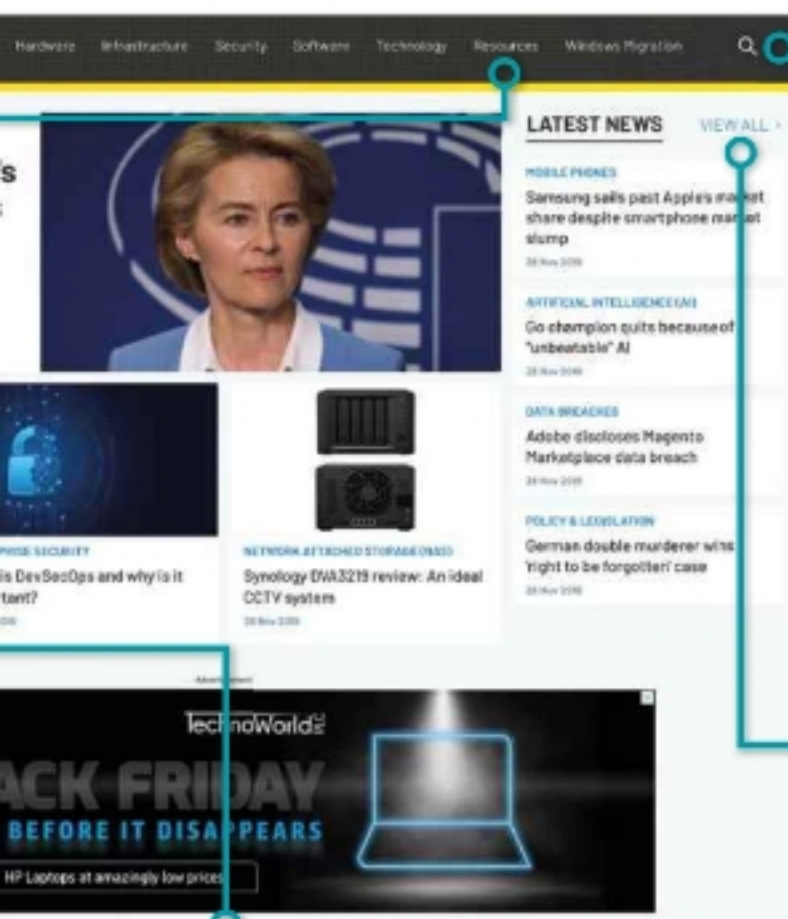
Our rating



RELAUNCH

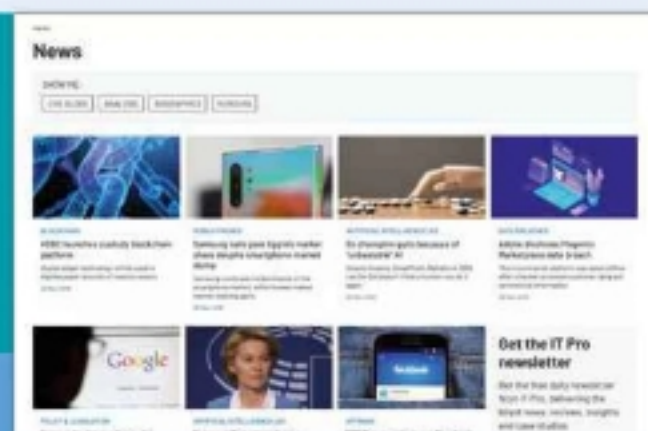


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



**PODCASTS**  
There are no direct links to IT Pro's podcasts but you can find them by searching

**NEWS AND ANALYSIS**  
Tech news is IT Pro's bread and butter but you'll also find lots of analysis on a range of subjects



RELAUNCH

## CHILDREN

**Early Learning Centre**  
[www.elc.co.uk](http://www.elc.co.uk)

Having been bought by The Entertainer in February 2019, the Early Learning Centre's new mobile-friendly website has taken on the same look and feel as [thetoyshop.com](http://thetoyshop.com), with a new predictive search engine and a Present Finder button that lets you select an age and budget for suitable gifts. Its simple design showcases the products well, and items can be added to the basket straight from the homepage. You can jump between the ELC and The Entertainer, and items you add to your basket on one site show in the other, so you can shop on both and checkout just once.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

## PHOTOGRAPHY

**Royal Photographic Society**  
[rps.org](http://rps.org)

If you're a fan of photography, the Royal Photographic Society's website is a good way to keep abreast of the latest exhibitions. It has an exhaustive list of events, from those held at the society's Bristol HQ to ones being staged across the UK and internationally. Select Search to filter the events by special interest and region, and browse the homepage to discover the latest news and happenings. There's a PDF of the events programme, a monthly email newsletter and a well-stocked online shop. It's also possible to book events online when advance tickets are available.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

## MOBILE

**Juice**  
[www.juice.co.uk](http://www.juice.co.uk)

Juice – formerly known as Gusto – makes a range of mobile-phone accessories that are available to buy on the high street. Its website lets you find out about its cables, chargers and speakers, and buy them online. Each product is showcased using a set of images and enough detail for you to make an informed decision. You can instantly see available colour options and buy immediately with Apple Pay. However, the handy ability to search by phone has been dropped and an infrequently updated blog added. We found some items cheaper elsewhere so it might pay to shop around.

Our rating







RELAUNCH

## TOYS

### Casdon

[www.casdon.com](http://www.casdon.com)

Vacuuming is no fun as an adult but children love playing with miniature versions of domestic appliances. Casdon Toys creates pretend replicas of big name brands including Henry, Dyson and Flymo, and its revamped site lets you browse the full range and, via retailer links, find out where you can buy them too. The design is colourful and bright, with bold and easy-to-follow navigation links. Each item lists the developmental benefits for children, along with related toys. Delve deeper and you can browse items from Casdon Toys catalogues past and present, and view a timeline of the company's long history.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

## HISTORY

### Canvey Island

[www.canveyisland.org](http://www.canveyisland.org)

Home to 45,000 people, Canvey Island is located in the Thames estuary in Essex. This website is intended as a hub for residents but it's equally interesting for anyone with an interest in English history. There are hundreds of photos looking at key moments in Canvey's history, such as the Great Flood of 1953 and events such as the carnival, alongside archive articles from the local *Echo* newspaper and a look at well known people and places. There are 600 categories and 5,200 pages, neatly presented in a design that is a world apart from the old dated site. We like how it highlights recently added pages, which will encourage repeat visits.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

## FOOTBALL

### Footie Trader

[www.footietrader.com](http://www.footietrader.com)

Footie Trader lets football collectors buy and sell nostalgic items, ranging from various pieces of kit to autographed memorabilia. Signing up and listing an item is now entirely free. However, when we last looked at this website in issue 481, we said it wouldn't allow you to filter by club and this remains a problem. The search engine is fast and the listings are generally clear, showing bids and buy-it-now options as well as direct ways to contact the sellers, but more work needs to be done on the design and we'd like to see protection for buyers and sellers introduced. A swap option is advertised as coming soon.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

## HOLIDAYS

### easyJet Holidays

[www.easyjet.com/holidays](http://www.easyjet.com/holidays)

Following the collapse of Thomas Cook, easyJet has relaunched its holidays business with package breaks for more than 5,000 properties in 100 destinations. As a new member of ABTA, it offers greater customer protection while providing a wealth of info on hotels and nearby attractions. We love the well presented accommodation pages, many of which carry TripAdvisor ratings, and like that you can choose the exact length of your stay. Yet bookings can be frustrating, particularly when the dates you specify are unavailable, and it doesn't offer alternative suggestions. Also, if you come across a hotel that's no longer available, the site sends you back to the start.

Our rating



RELAUNCH

## RECYCLING

### UK Win

[ukwin.org.uk](http://ukwin.org.uk)

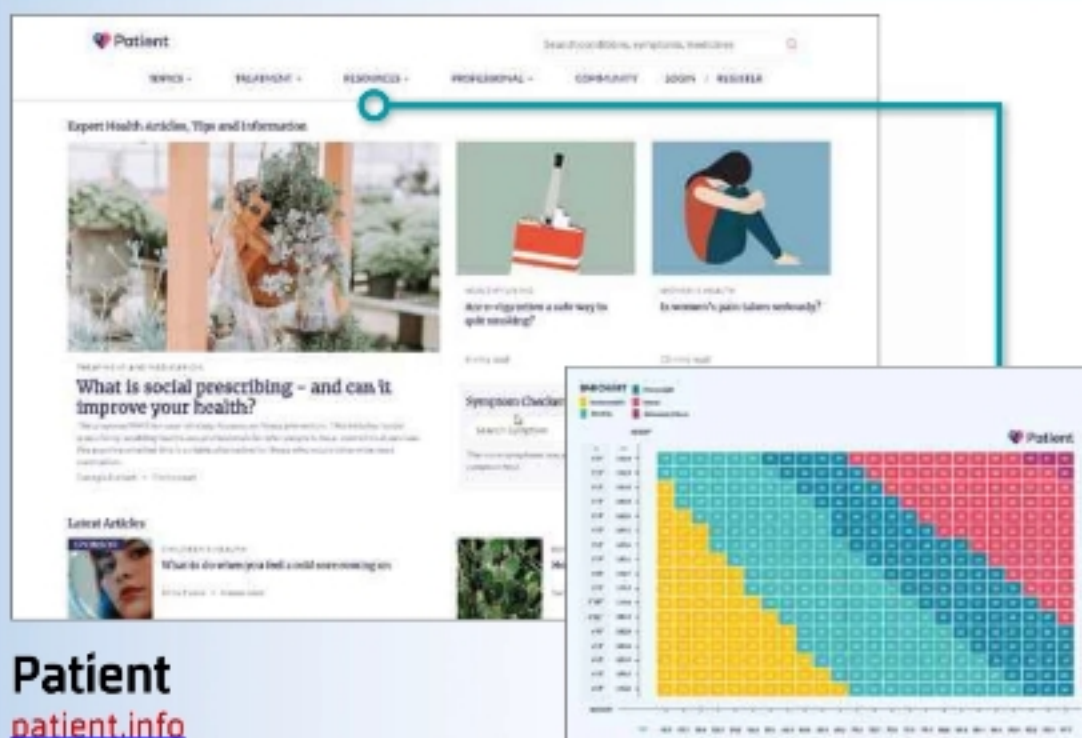
For a campaigning website to win over visitors, it helps if it is immediately engaging. Headline stats, a good use of images and persuasive bullet points enable a message to get across effectively. Unfortunately, UK Win looks dull, reads like a set of reports that require time and effort to get to grips with and buries its facts and figures within a dense page of text. With better organisation, this laudable level of depth could be made more accessible. We did like the map of UK incinerators, however, and it displays well on mobile.

Our rating





# ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Handy health resources



## Patient

[patient.info](http://patient.info)

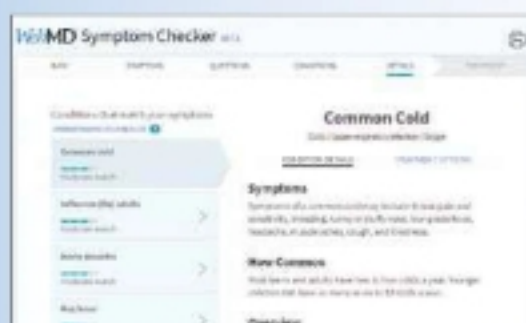
With so much confusing and conflicting health advice online, it's important to have a resource you can rely on, which is what makes Patient such a brilliant bookmark. It covers a vast range of medical topics, including allergies, chest, heart, kidney and senior health, in informative, jargon-free articles that are written and reviewed by doctors. Particularly impressive is the Treatment section, which provides details of every drug and medicine you're likely to encounter, and lets you browse by drug name or condition. The site includes tests and tools such as a BMI calculator, symptom checker and 'Do I have diabetes?' quiz, recipes for healthy meals, a thriving community where you can get answers to your health questions, and much more.



## NHS 111 Online

[111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk)

When you feel ill but it's not an emergency, call 111 or visit the service's NHS website to seek medical help near you. Simply enter your postcode (or click 'Use my current location'), sex and age, then search for the symptom that's bothering you most, such as 'rash' or 'feeling sick', or browse the topics by category. Once you've answered a few questions about your condition, the site will tell you what action to take - which is often simply to contact your GP. It also suggests ways you can treat yourself and tells you what to do if you start feeling worse. For a list of instances when you should phone 999 immediately, visit the NHS page at [bit.ly/when999](http://bit.ly/when999).



## WebMD Symptom Checker

[symptoms.webmd.com](http://symptoms.webmd.com)

This handy online tool is no substitute for an appointment with your GP, but it can give you a rough idea of what ails you. Tell it your age and gender, then provide details of your symptoms - or choose from presets such as headache, cough or fatigue - to view a list of matching conditions. Click a result to see the full details of that condition, including how common it is, risk factors and how to obtain a diagnosis, as well as relevant facts, such as: "Going outside with wet hair will not give you the flu". The site also suggests preventative measures, treatment options and questions to ask your doctor, and includes links to the relevant WebMD discussion board for further advice.



## Cancer Info & Support

[your.macmillan.org.uk](http://your.macmillan.org.uk)

This recently redesigned section of the Macmillan website is a superb resource for anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer or is simply worried about it. With so many different types, terms and treatments for patients to understand, the site's 'A to Z' directories offer easy access to all the information you need. There's an alphabetical list of articles on the 'Impacts of cancer' - from 'Anger and frustration' to 'Work and cancer', and comprehensive guides to the different stages of cancer, including diagnosis, treatment and after treatment. The site even provides contact details for further sources of help and support, as well as a link to Macmillan's friendly (and anonymous) online community.



## Check Your Health

[bit.ly/check491](http://bit.ly/check491)

Are you overweight? Is your heart ageing faster than the rest of you? Are you sleeping enough? Find out at this site from Public Health England, which provides a range of tests and quizzes to help you gauge your physical and mental health, and offers advice and links to relevant resources where there's room for improvement. The Heart Age test, for example, uses your height, weight and other factors to estimate how long you can expect to live (73, for us). The site stresses that its questionnaires are not medical assessments and that you should speak to a professional if you're worried about your health.



# Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

## Top Tips of the Fortnight

### Check your site's layout

It's a good idea to see how your website looks on a variety of operating systems and browsers, to ensure it's accessible to all potential visitors. Comaparium ([comaparium.app](http://comaparium.app)) emulates these setups on the web, providing you with a screenshot of how your site looks on a combination of different devices and browsers.



Type the address of the page you'd like to check, then select the computer and browser options from the drop-down menu. Click the Test button and wait for the tool to return your screenshot.



### Make a better menu

Your website's menu is an essential navigation tool for people to find their way around your site, so why not make it more dynamic – with images, better layout and a range of other options? In WordPress, you can do this easily with the Max Mega Menu plugin ([bit.ly/mmm491](http://bit.ly/mmm491)). It adds a new option to your Appearance, Menu tool, for extra control over the design and layout of standard WordPress menus.

### Deal of the Fortnight

[Names.co.uk](http://Names.co.uk) is offering '.com' domains for £2.39 for the first year, down from £17.99.

## Web-building Helpdesk

**Q** I've taught myself CSS to take the styling code out of my HTML files but, without a proper teacher, it's hard to know if I'm doing it right. How do I check it's okay?

Tim Finch, via email

**A** A tutor or mentor would be nice but, in lieu of such luxuries, there are plenty of websites that can pick holes in your code and advise how to improve it. Try Code Beautify ([bit.ly/cssv491](http://bit.ly/cssv491)). Copy and paste the text from your CSS file into it and click the Validate button. These automatic code-checking tools usually err on the side of strictness, so try to fix any errors it finds but don't worry too much about warnings, unless you're a stickler for making your code perfect.

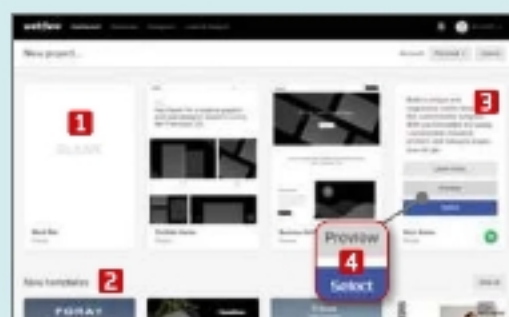
Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor



## MINI WORKSHOP | Get started on a new website with Webflow

Webflow: [webflow.com](http://webflow.com) |  10 mins | Any browser

Webflow is a sophisticated online site-building tool that mixes the block-based simplicity of Wix with sophisticated web-design software. We show you how to build a basic site for free



**1** Sign up or use your Google account. Click View Dashboard, then the New Project button. You can start a new site from scratch **1** or choose a template, **2** some of which are free, while others are paid-for. Hover over a template to see more information about it, **3** and click Preview or Select. **4**



**2** Name your project and click 'Create project'. Double-click text boxes **1** to make changes to the words. To add images, first click the Assets button **2** in the sidebar on the left, then choose Upload. **3** When your image appears, drag it to the page. We found that the easiest way to replace existing images is to delete the placeholder first.



**3** New elements can be added to a page in a block system. Click Add **1** and choose the block from the available options. **2** Use the device icons **3** to preview how your site will look on various devices. **4** When you're ready, click Publish. **5** Make sure the 'webflow.io' option is selected, then click 'Publish to Selected Domains'.



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# What To Watch Online

## Pick of the fortnight

**BBC iPlayer**



### Watch Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat's *Dracula*

1-3 January

*Sherlock* creators Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss explore an altogether darker literary icon for their latest limited series, a gory adaptation of Bram Stoker's 1897 vampire thriller. *Dracula*, which stars Claes Bang as the titular Transylvanian, arrives on the iPlayer in three feature-length chunks over consecutive nights from New Year's Day. It'll be on Netflix at a later date, at [bit.ly/dracflix491](http://bit.ly/dracflix491).

Judging by the Beeb's official trailer ([bit.ly/dracula491](http://bit.ly/dracula491)), this adaptation is serious nightmare fuel. Unlike *Sherlock*, it sticks to its original setting of Victorian London – the main shift made by Gatiss and Moffat is to promote Dracula from the "shadowy presence" of Stoker's novel to the centre of the story. They discuss their adaptation on YouTube at [bit.ly/moffat491](http://bit.ly/moffat491).

Gatiss also explores Drac's enduring appeal in one-hour documentary *In Search of Dracula* (on the iPlayer from 3 January at [bit.ly/search491](http://bit.ly/search491)), while BBC Radio has Miles Jupp's *The Trainspotter's Guide to Dracula* ([bit.ly/train491](http://bit.ly/train491)) and Bram Stoker's play *Dracula's Guest* ([bit.ly/guest491](http://bit.ly/guest491)).



### Welcome back ITV's murderous 'tec Bancroft

1-3 January

It's quite sweet to see the BBC and ITV don their armour for a good old-fashioned schedule battle, as though we don't all watch on-demand now, anyway. Going up against *Dracula* is Sarah Parish's return as murderous detective Elizabeth Bancroft, airing over three nights at the same time as the Beeb's vampire.

The second series sees Bancroft face the fallout of her dastardly actions at the end of Series 1, which you can catch up with via BritBox ([bit.ly/banc491](http://bit.ly/banc491), £4.99 per month after 30 days free). The new series will be on ITV Hub (free,

or £3.99 per month to watch ad-free: [bit.ly/itvhub491](http://bit.ly/itvhub491)), and you can watch the latest trailer at [bit.ly/bancroft491](http://bit.ly/bancroft491).



### Watch Profumo drama *The Trial of Christine Keeler*

From 29 December



*Apple Tree Yard* writer Amanda Coe flips the Profumo Affair on its head for this six-part BBC drama, putting 19-year-old Christine Keeler at the heart of the story. Sophie Cookson stars as Christine and Ben Miles plays disgraced minister John Profumo in the adaptation, whose first two episodes arrive on the iPlayer on 29 and 30 December at [bit.ly/keeler491](http://bit.ly/keeler491). There's no trailer, but YouTube has archive BBC content including a *Newsnight* interview with Keeler in 1980 ([bit.ly/nnight491](http://bit.ly/nnight491)).



### Watch the final episodes of *Power*

From 6 January

Rapper 50 Cent executive-produced this New York-set drama series, now wrapping up the story with the second half of Season 6. Omari Hardwick returns as drug lord James 'Ghost' St Patrick, whose fate hangs in the balance following a mid-season cliffhanger. Five new episodes arrive weekly after airing on US network Starz, joining all previous seasons on Netflix at [bit.ly/power491](http://bit.ly/power491).



### See Jodie Whittaker battle Cybermen in *Doctor Who* S12

From 1 January

Between them, BritBox and the iPlayer now have all 784 episodes of *Doctor Who*. That's 627 classic episodes on





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



BritBox, plus 157 revival episodes on the iPlayer – with 10 more landing weekly from 1 January.

Thirteenth Doctor Jodie Whittaker is back for Series 12, along with Tosin Cole, Mandip Gill and Bradley Walsh as her



pals. Stephen Fry, Lenny Henry and the Cybermen also pop up this series. Head for the Beeb's

Who site ([bit.ly/who491](http://bit.ly/who491)) for updates and every 21st-century episode, and watch the latest Season 12 trailer at [bit.ly/doctor491](http://bit.ly/doctor491).

### Meet DC's superhero survivors *Doom Patrol*

From 2 January

Timothy Dalton and Brendan Fraser head DC's new superhero ensemble, each of whom acquired their powers in a nasty accident. The show launched



In case you missed it...



*Doctor Foster* writer Mike Bartlett brought the horrors

of workplace bullying to your cosy Christmas with *Sticks and Stones*, a three-part psychological thriller streaming in full via the ITV Hub. Watch the trailer at [bit.ly/sticks491](http://bit.ly/sticks491).

BBC iPlayer gems you may have missed in the

festive maelstrom include fact-based film *Responsible Child* and new coming-of-age comedy *Shrill*. Meanwhile, on Christmas Day, Amazon Prime added a third season of the highly-praised US family drama *This Is Us* at [bit.ly/this491](http://bit.ly/this491).

## iPlayer adds dozens more box sets

The BBC has expanded its library of box sets, with shows including *Call the Midwife*, *Life On Mars*, *Luther* and *Absolutely Fabulous* returning to the iPlayer to watch in full.

The iPlayer's Box Sets category ([bit.ly/boxsets491](http://bit.ly/boxsets491)) also includes every episode of recent hits *His Dark Materials*, *The Capture* and *Vienna Blood*, all available until well into 2020.

Returning box sets include many that launched with the £4.99-per-month BritBox service, such as *Ashes to Ashes*, *Rillington Place* and every episode of *Porridge*.



to ecstatic US reviews a year ago, and finally arrives in the UK via StarzPlay, where you can watch all 15 episodes from 2 January. Meanwhile, check out DC's extended trailer at [bit.ly/doom491](http://bit.ly/doom491).

You can now access StarzPlay via its app as well as through Amazon Channels. A subscription costs £4.99 per month after seven days free ([www.starz.com/gb/en](http://www.starz.com/gb/en)).

### NEW Hibernate with Now TV's returning cop shows

From 3 January

You can't move for fine upstanding uniformed Americans on Now TV, which adds new seasons of four soapy

procedural dramas on the same day.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service's Major Case Response Team (pause for breath) is back for Season 17 of *NCIS* (watch the trailer at [bit.ly/ncis491](http://bit.ly/ncis491)); the firefighters of Engine 51 return for Season 8 of *Chicago Fire* ([bit.ly/fire491](http://bit.ly/fire491)); while their cop and medical colleagues are ready for action in *Chicago PD* Season 7 ([bit.ly/cpd491](http://bit.ly/cpd491)) and *Chicago Med* Season 5 ([bit.ly/med491](http://bit.ly/med491)).



## Netflix ditches free trial

Netflix has suddenly dropped its 30-day free trial for new customers. Anyone who's already started a trial can continue it, but new UK customers will no longer get a free month.

The service's subscription prices remain at £5.99 per month for one screen in standard definition, and up to £11.99 for four screens in 4K.

Free trials are shrinking across the industry. Now TV reduced its 14-day trial to one week, the same as the new StarzPlay app and ITV's ad-free Hub+. Channel 4's ad-free All 4+ gives you 14 days, while BritBox and Amazon Prime still offer 30 days free.





# Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

## Smartphones under £400

Choosing a new smartphone from the hundreds of available makes and models is a minefield. To help you decide, we've picked out nine of the best phones that cost less than £400

**T**here are so many smartphones available now that choosing your next model can feel like a lottery. How do you choose between one slab of glass and plastic, and another? To help you make a more informed decision, we've chosen nine fantastic phones, costing from £99 to £400. We've run a series of comparative tests on each phone, measuring everything from the life of the battery to the brightness of the screen, so you can ensure that you're getting a device that won't let you down.

### HOW WE TESTED

To compare the phones, we put them through a series of benchmarks from GeekBench and GFXBench to test the performance of the processor and graphics. We use a colorimeter to measure the screen quality and run our own battery-rundown test under strict conditions to get a comparable guide to the phone's battery life.

**Google Pixel 3a | £399 | Buy from Google: [store.google.com](https://store.google.com)**

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

Google's own-brand phones claim to deliver "the best of Google", and it's hard to argue that it hasn't succeeded with the Pixel 3a. The 3a costs a lot less than a top-of-the-range iPhone or Samsung, so there are compromises at play – it doesn't look as sophisticated, the processor isn't cutting edge, the back is made of plastic and it can't be charged wirelessly. However, we think these trade-offs are in all the right places.

For starters, this phone has a superb camera, delivering images up to 12 megapixels in size with optical image stabilisation. Photos taken in good light are packed with detail, while portrait shots look fantastic. In low light, none of the other phones in this test come close. You get stunning images, rich in colour and contrast.

Video capture was disappointing, though, with the camera unable to capture 4K resolution at more than 30fps (frames per second). However, stabilisation is impressively smooth.

The display is exceptional. At 5.6in, it's small compared to the others we've reviewed here, and the screen doesn't extend to the top and bottom edges of the device, but its colour reproduction is superb.

Because it's a Google phone, you'll get Android updates, features and security patches as soon as they become available. The software is responsive, though its processor doesn't perform as well as the Silver Award-winning Xiaomi. It also fell behind in our 3D graphics tests.

Battery life sits in the middle of our performance table, though there isn't much to separate the phones directly above and below it. The storage is a bit stingy at 64GB, especially as there's no option to expand it with a microSD card, but it shouldn't run out of space as long as you don't overdo it by storing lots of large apps and videos.



### VERDICT

★★★★★

For a pure Google Android experience, the Pixel 3a can't be bettered for the price. Rivals such as the Silver Award-winning Xiaomi push the hardware further, but Google holds its own with a brilliant camera and an amazing screen, coupled with the promise of unadulterated Android and fast access to future updates. The downside is that elements of the hardware are a little dated, particularly the lack of an edge-to-edge screen, and the processor isn't as new and fast as some rival models reviewed here. However, we think the compromises have been made in all the right places.



## Xiaomi Mi 9T Pro | £368.50 | Buy from Amazon: [bit.ly/xia9t491](https://bit.ly/xia9t491)

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

WebUser  
SILVER  
AWARD

Xiaomi made an explosive UK debut in 2019 with aggressive pricing and great phones. The Mi 9T Pro is built around the latest Qualcomm Snapdragon 855 processor, which other manufacturers reserve for phones that cost twice as much, putting its performance at the top of our tests.

It has a brilliant battery (only beaten here by the Moto G7 Power), Gorilla glass on the front and rear, and a great screen with a 6.39in AMOLED panel providing perfect contrast and exceptional colour coverage.

The selfie camera pops out of the top, so there's no notch or hole to interrupt the screen and, on the rear, its main 48-megapixels camera is joined by separate ultra-wide and telephoto lenses. The quality of images taken on any of the four cameras is superb, though it doesn't match the Pixel 3a for photos taken in low light.

### VERDICT

★★★★★

Xiaomi's Android phones come equipped with its own choice of launcher, but we don't see that as an improvement over Google's. However, if you want a slick, attractive phone at an exceptional price, the Mi 9T Pro is a steal.

## Motorola Moto G7 Power | £139.90 | Buy from Amazon: [bit.ly/gpow491](https://bit.ly/gpow491)

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

WebUser  
BRONZE  
AWARD

Short battery life is the bane of all smartphones and there's nothing worse than finding your brand new phone can't be trusted to range too far from a power socket. The Moto G7 Power is designed to combat such nonsense, with a monster 5,000mAh battery that lasts longer than any other phone in this Group Test. This adds to its bulk and weight, but not as much as the extra charging blocks you'd need to carry around to get this kind of longevity from a different model.

The plastic body houses a relatively low-res 1,570 x 720-pixels screen, but the display is bright and colourful enough for the price. The processor isn't the latest model but performance isn't far behind the much more pricey Gold Award-winning Pixel 3a. Meanwhile, the camera, which uses a single lens but takes acceptable photos in decent light, is adequate but nothing special.

### VERDICT

★★★★★

This isn't the fastest or sexiest phone in this Group Test but the price is pleasing and the battery life is phenomenal. It may be cheap and cheerful, but it's the only phone in our top three that lets you expand its memory with a microSD.

## BEST OF THE REST: £200-£300

### Xiaomi Pocophone F1 | £239 | [bit.ly/poco491](https://bit.ly/poco491) | ★★★★★

This phone offers superfast performance and a decent battery life but the camera isn't great in low light.

### Motorola One Vision | £219.90 | [bit.ly/mov491](https://bit.ly/mov491) | ★★★★★

If looks are important to you, this glass-clad model is the bee's knees, but performance suffers as a result.

### Motorola One Action | £219.99 | [bit.ly/motoact491](https://bit.ly/motoact491) | ★★★★★

In contrast to the Vision, the Action's camera is superb, particularly its wide-angle video.

## BEST OF THE REST: Up to £200

### Xiaomi Redmi Note 7 | £170 | [bit.ly/xianot491](https://bit.ly/xianot491) | ★★★★★

A generous processor makes this phone superfast for the price, but at the expense of the camera and build quality.

### Motorola Moto E6 Plus | £99.99 | [bit.ly/motoe491](https://bit.ly/motoe491) | ★★★★★

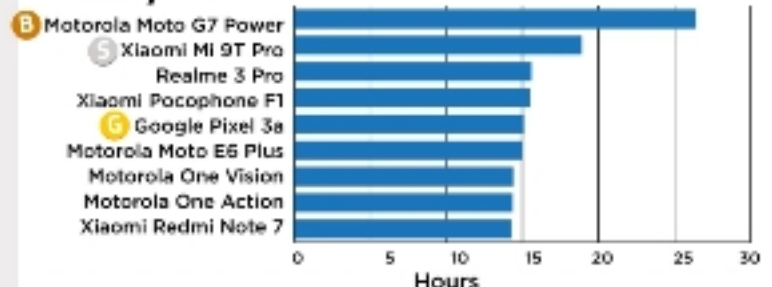
This incredibly cheap phone is more than adequate if your budget doesn't stretch beyond £100.

### Realme 3 Pro | £179 (around £157) | [bit.ly/real491](https://bit.ly/real491) | ★★★★★

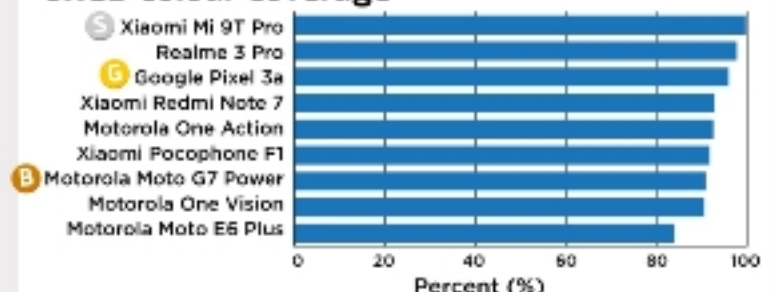
Like the Xiaomi Redmi Note 7, this is a good performer for the price but its camera is lacklustre.

## TEST-RESULTS CHARTS

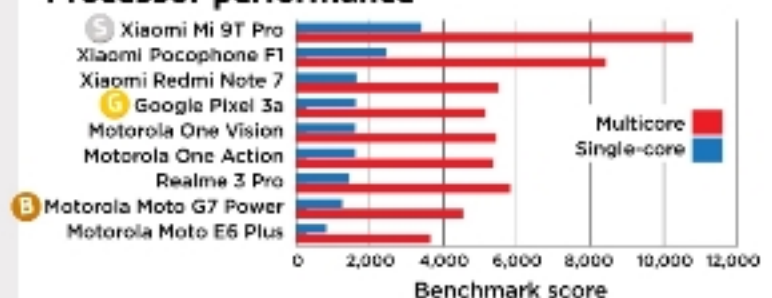
### Battery life



### sRGB colour coverage



### Processor performance





## Group Test Smartphones under £400

	 Web User GOLD AWARD	 Web User SILVER AWARD	 Web User BRONZE AWARD		
	Google Pixel 3a	Xiaomi Mi 9T Pro	Motorola Moto G7 Power	Xiaomi Redmi Note 7	Motorola Moto E6 Plus
WEBSITE	<a href="https://store.google.com">store.google.com</a>	<a href="https://mi.com">mi.com</a>	<a href="https://www.motorola.co.uk">www.motorola.co.uk</a>	<a href="https://mi.com">mi.com</a>	<a href="https://www.motorola.co.uk">www.motorola.co.uk</a>
PRICE	£399	£368.50	£139.90 (64GB)	£157 (128GB)	£99.99
BUY FROM	Google: <a href="https://store.google.com">store.google.com</a>	Amazon: <a href="https://bit.ly/xia9t491">bit.ly/xia9t491</a>	Amazon: <a href="https://bit.ly/gpwr491">bit.ly/gpwr491</a>	Amazon: <a href="https://bit.ly/xianot491">bit.ly/xianot491</a>	Amazon: <a href="https://bit.ly/motoe491">bit.ly/motoe491</a>
PROCESSOR	8-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 670	8-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 855	8-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 632	8-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 660	8-core MediaTek Helio P22
RAM	4GB	6GB	4GB	4GB	2GB
SCREEN SIZE	5.6in	6.4in	6.2in	6.3in	6.1in
SCREEN RESOLUTION	2,220 x 1,080 pixels	2,340 x 1,080 pixels	1,570 x 720 pixels	2,340 x 1,080 pixels	1,560 x 710 pixels
SCREEN TYPE	OLED	OLED	IPS	IPS	IPS
REAR CAMERA	12.2 megapixels	48 megapixels	8 megapixels	48 megapixels	13 megapixels
FRONT CAMERA	8 megapixels	20 megapixels (pop-up)	12 megapixels	13 megapixels	8 megapixels
STORAGE	64GB	128GB	64GB	128GB	32GB
MEMORY-CARD SLOT	✗	✗	microSD up to 1TB	microSD up to 256GB	microSD up to 512GB
WI-FI	802.11ac	802.11ac	802.11n	802.11ac	802.11n
OPERATING SYSTEM	Android 9	Android 9 (MIUI 10)	Android 9	Android 9 (MIUI 10)	Android 9
BATTERY SIZE	3,000mAh	4,000mAh	5,000mAh	4,000mAh	3,000mAh
DIMENSIONS	151 x 70 x 8.2mm	157 x 74 x 8.8mm	159 x 76 x 9.3mm	159 x 75 x 8.2mm	156 x 73 x 8.6mm
WEIGHT	167g	191g	193g	186g	150g
WARRANTY	1-year return-to-base	2-years return-to-base	1-year return-to-base	2-years return-to-base	1-year return-to-base

### OUR VERDICT

Our Gold Award goes to the Google Pixel 3a – not because it's the most advanced phone out there but because it brings decent hardware together with a pure Android experience. The camera is also top notch, and the screen, though it doesn't stretch to the edge of the device, is excellent.

For the best hardware, look no further than the amazing Xiaomi Mi 9T Pro. This phone performed better than Google's in many of our tests but Xiaomi layers its own launcher over the top of Android, which put us off slightly. However, if you can live with that, the Mi 9T Pro is truly deserving of its Silver Award.

If your budget doesn't stretch to the top of our price bracket, we'd recommend the Motorola Moto G7 Power, which won our Bronze Award. It doesn't have top-spec hardware but it isn't as far behind as its price might suggest. More importantly, it has a phenomenally long-lasting 5,000mAh battery. ■







Make It Yours.



# DUAL TOWER HEATSINK

## MASTERAIR MA620M

The **MasterAir MA620M** comes with dual blacked out aluminum towers with a uniform 6 heat pipe layout to dissipate the heat evenly.

The MasterfanSF120R provides high air pressure with silent performance to cool away the heat from the heat pipes in silence.

Easy mounting system along with array of Addressable RGB LED lighting makes the **MA620M** the best option in the market for an air cooling solution.







# Web User's Best Buys

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

## HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

### SMARTPHONE

#### Google Pixel 3a

£399 from [store.google.com](https://store.google.com)

Tested: Issue 491

NEW!



For a pure Android experience, the Google Pixel 3a can't be bettered for the price. It has a brilliant camera and an exceptional screen, plus the promise of access to future updates and security patches as soon as they're available.

#### KEY SPECS

8-core Qualcomm Snapdragon 670 processor ■ 4GB RAM ■ 64GB storage ■ 5.6in, 2,220 x 1,080 pixels resolution screen ■ 12.2-megapixel rear camera, 8-megapixel front camera ■ Android 9 ■ 151 x 70 x 8.2mm ■ 167g ■ 1-year return-to-base

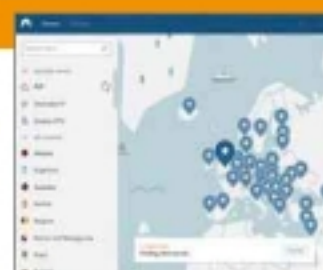
### VPN

#### NordVPN

From £2.29 per month from

[nordvpn.com](https://nordvpn.com)

Tested: Issue 489



NordVPN strikes the perfect balance between usability, features and price. It's easy to set up a private connection and it has servers in dozens of countries across the globe.

#### KEY SPECS

Six simultaneous connections ■ Choice of 60 countries ■ 5,500+ servers ■ IKEv2, OpenVPN protocols ■ Double VPN security ■ Router support ■ 1,000+ BitTorrent servers ■ Static IP option ■ Windows, macOS, Linux, Android, iOS, Fire TV

### LAPTOP

#### HP Pavilion x360

£679 from [bit.ly/hp487](https://bit.ly/hp487)

Tested: Issue 487



Slim, attractive and powerful, and with a great keyboard, the HP Pavilion x360 gets more or less everything right, at a price that undercuts most of its rivals. The ability to flip the laptop's screen into tablet mode is a bonus.

#### KEY SPECS

Intel Core i5-8250U processor ■ 256GB SSD ■ 8GB memory ■ 14in screen ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ 2 x USB 3, 1 x USB-C ports ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ Windows 10 Home ■ 326 x 224 x 20mm ■ 1.61kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

### CHROMEBOOK

#### Lenovo Chromebook 500e

£349.98 from [bit.ly/lenco483](https://bit.ly/lenco483)

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 ■ One-year collect-and-return

### SECURITY CAMERA

#### Google Nest Cam IQ Outdoor

£279 from [bit.ly/nest481](https://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](https://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



## Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

### PORTABLE BROWSER

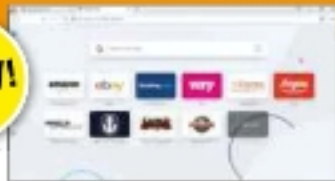
#### Opera

Free from [www.opera.com](http://www.opera.com)

**Tested:** Issue 490

Opera is the perfect portable browser. Its interface is clean and focused, but also rich in features, and includes elegant, built-in privacy tools to help you browse more carefully.

**NEW!**



### EMAIL SOFTWARE

#### Mailspring

Free from [getmailspring.com](http://getmailspring.com)

**Tested:** Issue 489

Mailspring is a modern, well-designed take on classic email software. Standard features sit alongside some quirky extras, but the focus remains firmly on sending and receiving emails.



### OFFICE SUITE

#### Google Docs

Free from [docs.google.com](http://docs.google.com)

**Tested:** Issue 488

Google's suite of cloud-based tools is the king of free office suites – online and off. It offers comprehensive collaboration, access from any device and unlimited file storage.



### LINUX DISTRO

#### Lubuntu

Free from [lubuntu.net](http://lubuntu.net)

**Tested:** Issue 487

Lubuntu is as close to perfect as a lightweight operating system can get. Its interface is instantly appealing and is packed with all the tools you need.



### CALCULATOR

#### Old Calculator for Windows 10

Free from [bit.ly/oldcalc486](http://bit.ly/oldcalc486)

**Tested:** Issue 486

Old Calculator appears instantly when you call it, sits unassuming in a corner of your screen when you're not using it and can perform all everyday calculations.



### RECOVERY TOOL

#### Hiren's Boot CD

Free from [www.hirensbootcd.org](http://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.



# 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](http://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

## SECURE STORAGE TOOL

### NordLocker

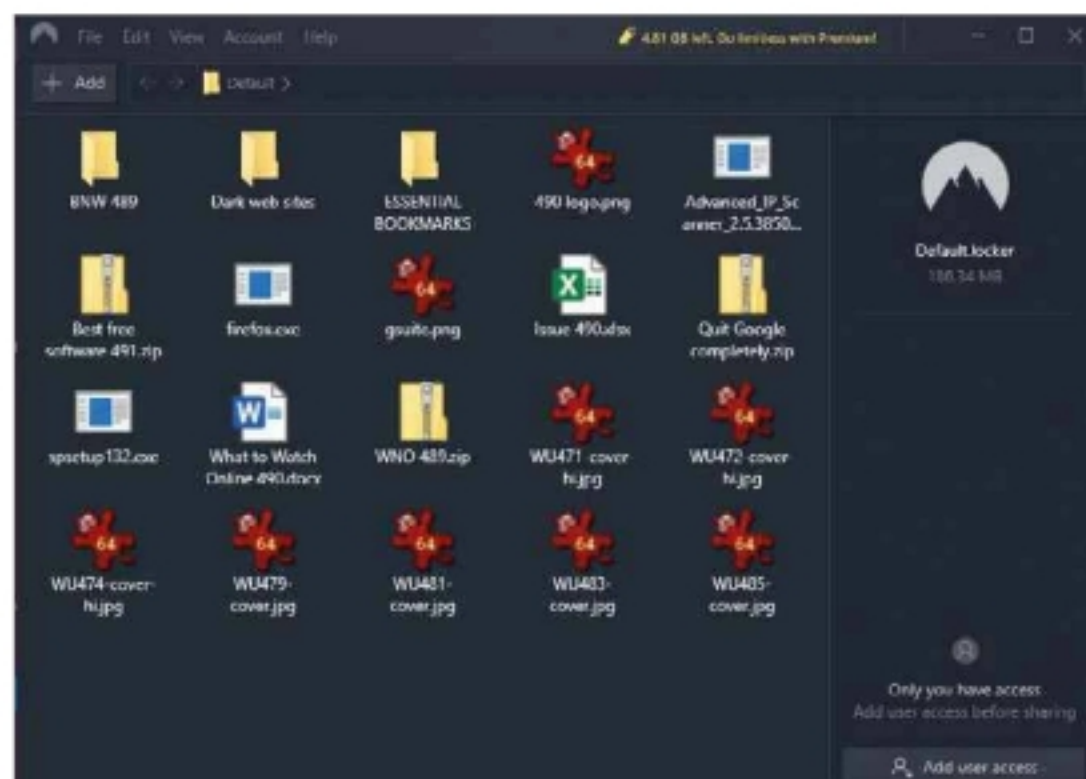
[nordlocker.com](https://nordlocker.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10 or macOS

**File size:** 10.1MB

Cloud-storage services such as Google Drive, OneDrive, iCloud and Dropbox have become invaluable for everyday tasks such as automatically backing up the contents of your phone, and accessing and sharing files and folders from anywhere. But while these services are incredibly convenient, they do come with a risk. Once you've uploaded something to the cloud, it's no longer completely under your control, and you have to rely on the company that runs the service to keep your data safe.

NordLocker, from the firm behind our Gold Award-winning VPN service NordVPN, is a new encryption tool



based on GoCryptFS that acts as "middleware", adding a layer of security to your data. Essentially, it encrypts your files and folders prior to you uploading them to the cloud.

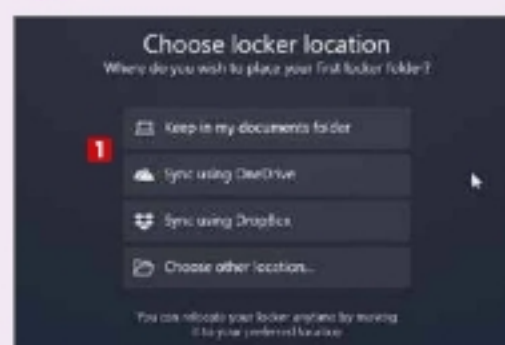
NordLocker supports documents of any type and size. Once they are in your secure locker, they can only be accessed and decrypted with a master password. You can grant access to files, allowing friends or colleagues to open them (they will need NordLocker installed), and you're not limited to using the

software for cloud-bound files - you can just encrypt content to keep on your PC or share by other means. There's no way of recovering a lost master password (it's not stored anywhere), but you can reset it using the recovery key that's provided when you create an account.

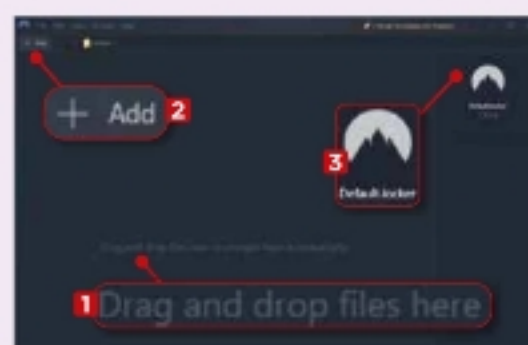
The free version of NordLocker limits you to 5GB of encrypted data, but that should be enough for most people's secure storage needs. Upgrading to Premium for \$71.85 (£54.83) a year gives you unlimited encryption.



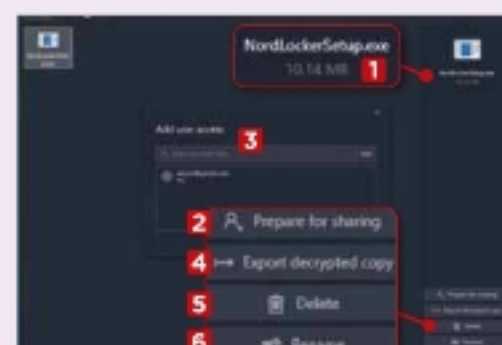
## MINI WORKSHOP | Encrypt your personal files with NordLocker



**1** To get started with NordLocker, create a free Nord account, verify your email address and sign into the software. You then need to create a master password for encrypting and decrypting files. You'll be presented with a recovery key you can use to reset your password if you lose it. Choose the folder to use as your locker location. **1**



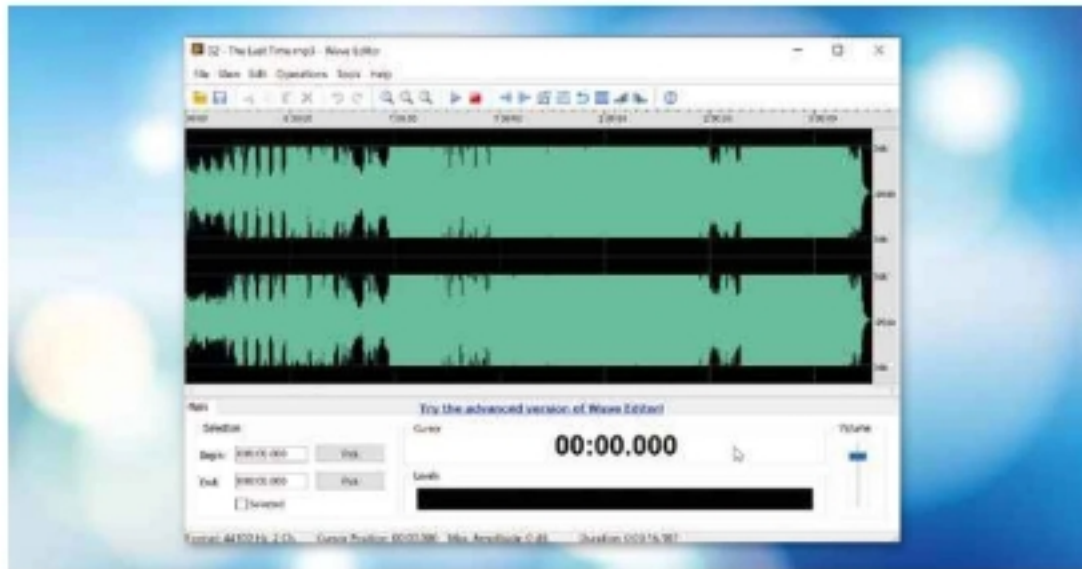
**2** To encrypt some files, just drag and drop them to the user interface. **1** Alternatively, you can click the Add button at the top **2** and navigate to the files or folders you want from there. The encryption process is pretty quick. Click the Locker tab at the top **3** to view its contents.



**3** Click an item in your locker to see its size **1** and prepare it for sharing. **2** You will be prompted to enter the email addresses for anyone you want to grant user access to. **3** You can also export a decrypted copy from here, **4** delete the item **5** or rename it. **6**



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



## AUDIO EDITOR Wave Editor 4

[www.wave-editor.com](http://www.wave-editor.com)

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

Audacity ([www.audacityteam.org](http://www.audacityteam.org)) is the best known free audio editor, but there are other options worth considering. Wave Editor is particularly good, and balances ease of use with a number of powerful features. Its non-destructive editing lets you make changes to a file without overwriting it. Version 4 of the software optimises the interface so it displays better on high DPI screens and updates the Lame encoder that's used for producing MP3s.

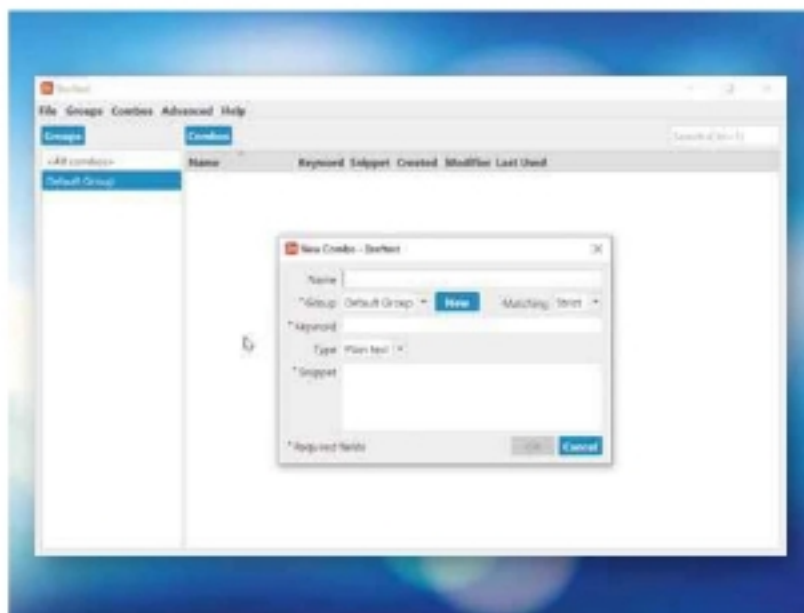
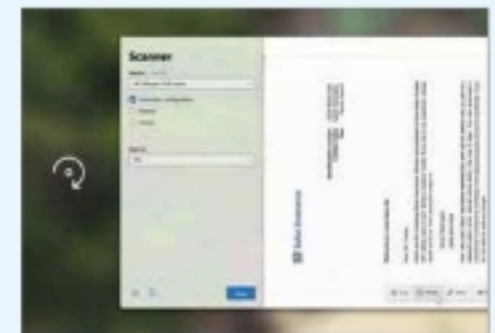
## New Windows 10 App

### Scanner for Windows 10

[bit.ly/scan491](http://bit.ly/scan491)

**File size:** 31.61MB

This free application offers support for both wired and wireless scanners, and comes with a number of editing tools. You can rotate scans, sign and highlight documents using Windows Ink, and copy and share scans directly from within the application. You can choose the scanner to use in the drop-down menu, if you have more than one connected to your PC.

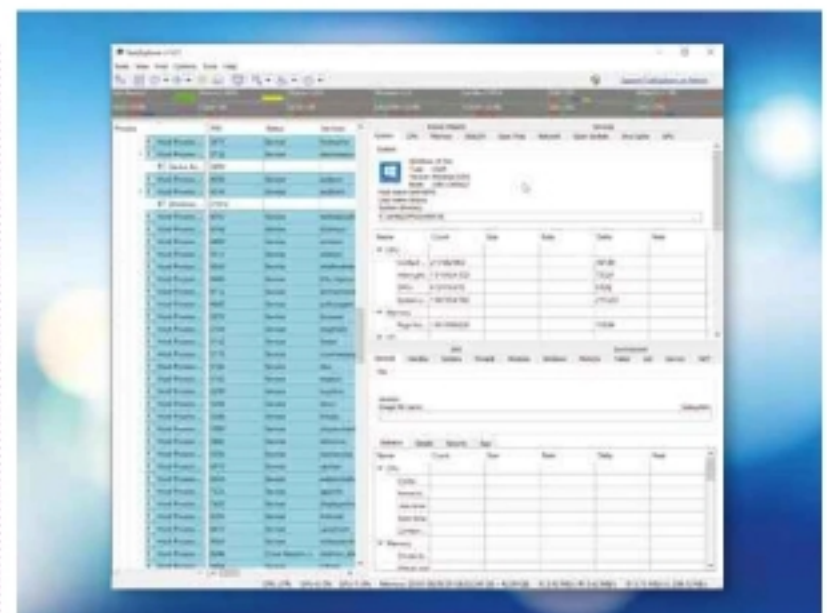


## TEXT TOOL BeefText 6

[beeftext.org](http://beeftext.org)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 7.6MB

If you regularly need to type a long piece of text, such as a custom email signature, BeefText can save you time and effort. All you need to do is type your text into the program, then assign a 'combo' (text shortcut) to it. This updated version of the software adds support for rich text in snippets and introduces tabs to the Preferences dialogue. It also fixes bugs affecting sound and non-US keyboards.



## TASK MANAGER TaskExplorer

[bit.ly/taskex491](http://bit.ly/taskex491)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 37.4MB

Microsoft has made a lot of improvements to the Windows Task Manager over the years, such as showing you details of hardware usage. TaskExplorer is a Task Manager alternative that shows you what applications are actually doing, and provides useful graphs and system info panels. It's primarily aimed at users with a degree of technical know-how but the basic features are easy enough to master.



## MIGRATION TOOL

### PCmover Express

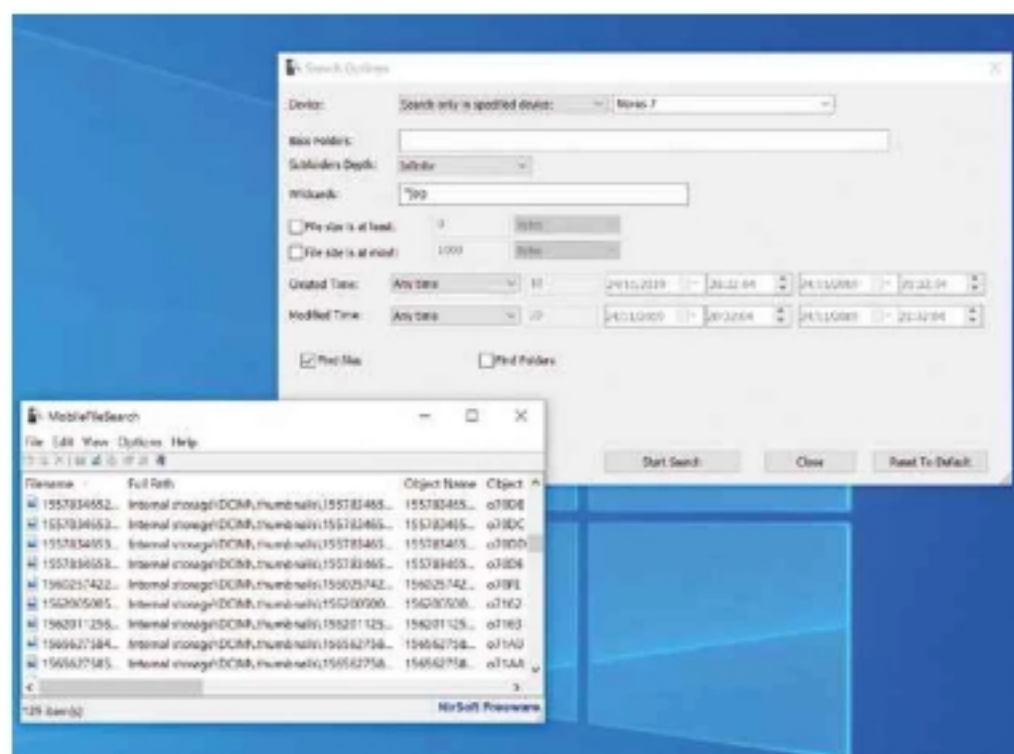
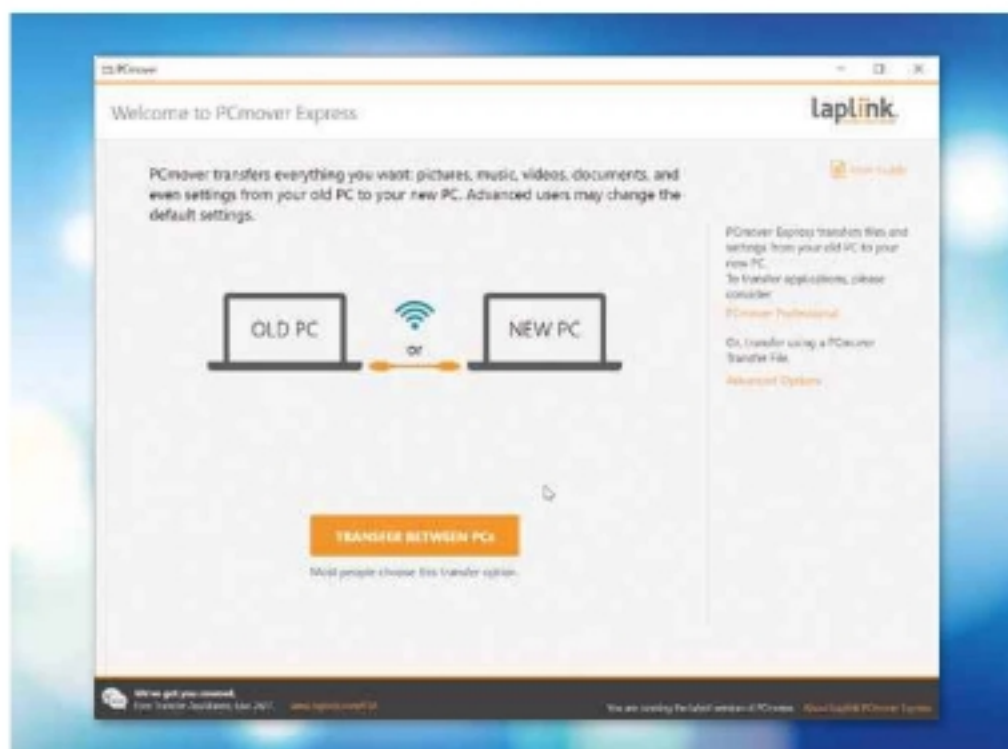
[bit.ly/pcmove491](http://bit.ly/pcmove491)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10

**File size:** 272MB

Microsoft is due to stop supporting Windows 7 on 14 January so, if you haven't already upgraded your PC, now is the time to take action. You can perform an in-place upgrade using Microsoft's Media Creation Tool ([bit.ly/mct491](http://bit.ly/mct491)), but if you plan to move to a new Intel-powered Windows 10 PC, you can use Laplink's PCmover software to simplify the process and transfer your data, settings and user profiles. The software used to cost £21, but has been made free for home users.

This version doesn't transfer applications, unfortunately, so you'll either have to install them manually or upgrade to the paid-for Professional edition for £21.



## SEARCH TOOL

### MobileFileSearch

[www.nirsoft.net](http://www.nirsoft.net)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10

**File size:** 85.6KB

The latest free program from NirSoft is a useful tool that uses Media Transfer Protocol (MTP) to search for files inside any mobile device (smartphone or tablet) that's connected to your PC via USB.

MobileFileSearch doesn't require installation - just connect your device, run the software and choose what you want to search for, either by file name, date or other criteria. If you have multiple devices connected, you can pick the one you want. Once you've found your file, you can open it with the program of your choosing, or copy or delete it.

See our workshop on page 56 to find out how to use MobileFileSearch.

## REMOTE-ACCESS TOOL

### TeamViewer 15

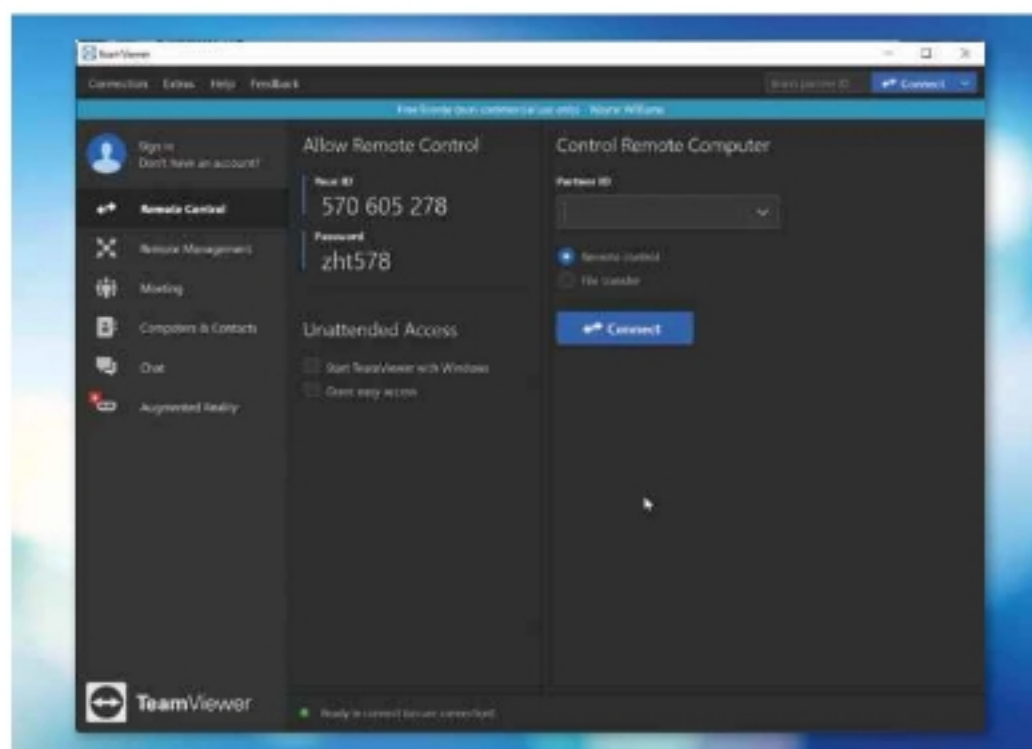
[www.teamviewer.com](http://www.teamviewer.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10

**File size:** 25.2MB

If someone you know is having problems with their PC, you can use TeamViewer to log into it remotely (with their permission) and either show them what to do or fix it yourself without needing to physically be there. You can also use the program to access your own computer from somewhere else and drag files to and from it, host online meetings, collaborate on documents in real time and much more.

Despite the bump up to version 15, this latest release of TeamViewer isn't massively different to the previous one. The most significant change is improved audio transmission quality.







## GAME

### No Players Online

[papercookies.itch.io](http://papercookies.itch.io)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10

**File size:** 58.2MB

In No Players Online, you find a dusty old VHS tape containing footage of a 'capture the flag' game from 1986, which turns out to be fully playable. Exploring an ancient Quake-style 3D shooter on your own isn't much fun, but things take a spooky turn as the game progresses, and there are different endings and hidden secrets to uncover.

## ✓ Install this program...

### Belarc Advisor

[www.belarc.com](http://www.belarc.com)

**Min requirements:** Windows 7/8.1/10

**File size:** 13.9MB

Belarc Advisor debuted back in 1996 as an internet sales program, but has since evolved into a popular and comprehensive PC-auditing tool. The free program scans your system and provides an extremely detailed profile of all the hardware and software you have installed. It lists software versions and licences, and installed and missing Microsoft Hotfixes, and even reports your IP address and Windows product key. Just run the software and it will scan your system and display its findings in a local web page in your browser, so that – unlike similar auditing tools – the information never leaves your PC.



## ...Not this one ✗

### Specy

[ccleaner.com/specy](http://ccleaner.com/specy)

**Min requirements:**

Windows 7/8.1/10

**File size:** 6.6MB

We've long been fans of Specy and often recommended it as a tool for discovering useful information about your system. Sadly, it seems to have gone the same way as its big brother, CCleaner – three scanners on VirusTotal now detect malware in the program download and some users accuse it of trying to install other software on your PC.



## OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS

What's new for Linux and macOS



## LINUX DISTRO

### Debian 10.2 'Buster'

[www.debian.org](http://www.debian.org)

**Min requirements:** 1GB RAM, 10GB hard drive space

**File size:** 2.4GB

Debian is the Linux operating system that many other distros are based on, including Ubuntu. Debian 10 'Buster' comes in a choice of desktop environments – GNOME, Cinnamon, KDE Plasma, LXDE, LXQt, MATE and Xfce (If you're not sure which one to go for, stick with GNOME). This second update to the stable distribution fixes a number of security issues and bugs, and updates some of the packages included in the OS.



## TO-DO APP

### Planny 3

[www.kevinreutter.de](http://www.kevinreutter.de)

**Min requirements:** macOS 10.15 or later, 64-bit processor

**File size:** 7.6MB

Planny is an excellent to-do manager that was designed for iOS and iPadOS but, thanks to Apple's Project Catalyst (which makes it easier for developers to port applications to the desktop), it's now available for the Mac as well. The app includes a daily list for today's tasks, a review of the previous day, deadlines and reminders, notes for tasks, rewards, lists, a dark mode and more. You can access additional features by upgrading to Planny Premium for \$15 (£11.49) a year.

**GET FREE SOFTWARE FIRST** subscribe to Web User at [subscribe.webuser.co.uk](http://subscribe.webuser.co.uk)



# Best New Browser Tools



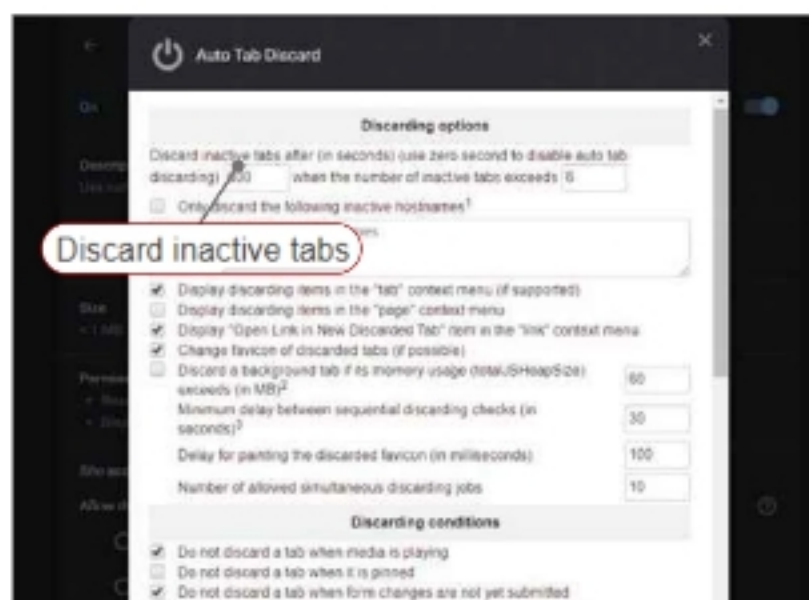
CHROME

## Discard inactive tabs automatically

Auto Tab Discard ([bit.ly/discard491](http://bit.ly/discard491)) solves everyone's biggest moan about Chrome – by automatically 'killing' unused tabs, it claws back much-needed memory. This should speed up your browser and save battery life when you're using a laptop.

Click the extension's toolbar button for a range of quick settings that let you swiftly discard the current tab or any other tab you may have open, in any Chrome window. Your tabs won't suddenly disappear – instead, the browser tool puts a discarded tab into a suspended state until you click back into it, at which point it will reload. You can also jump between current tabs, close them using the navigation arrows or order all tabs to remain open during your session.

However, it's in the add-on's settings where the 'auto' part of its name occurs. Here, you can set a time limit that kicks in when you have a specific number of tabs open.



## Read YouTube comments while you watch

Normally, you have to scroll down to read comments on a video, which means missing the main event. This can be resolved with a browser tool called Super YouTube ([bit.ly/super491](http://bit.ly/super491)), which turns the 'suggested videos' area to the right of the screen into a multi-panel section. Along the top, there are options to jump between Info (usually positioned directly below a video), Comments and Videos. There's no delay when flicking between the three options, and the overall design is geared toward letting you read while you watch – though we take no responsibility for the comments on some videos.

Super YouTube is so good, in fact, we're not sure why Google doesn't offer the feature itself.



## Create anonymous email addresses

AnonAddy ([app.anonaddy.com](http://app.anonaddy.com)) is a service that lets you create fake email



addresses when signing up to newsletters and websites. This keeps your real email address secret and also lets you know which sites are flogging your personal data. Instead of using your own email, you can just make up an address, such as 'newsletter@myemail.anonaddy.com'. Messages will be forwarded to your actual email account, but companies won't have your real address on their systems.

There is some setup involved. First, register for the service with an AnonAddy username and your real email address, then visit the Settings page. Here, you can quickly create an alias on the fly that you can give out instead of your real email address. Look out for a workshop on AnonAddy in our next issue.

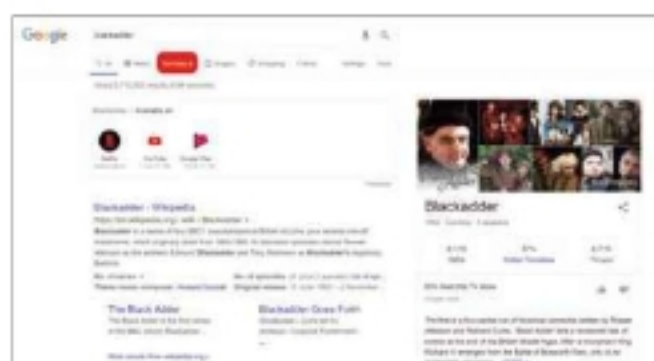
## Change Google Videos to YouTube

Run a search on Google

and, beneath the search bar, you'll find an option to see videos of your search query. The trouble is that these results from Google Videos are typically uncensored and often only loosely related to your actual search terms.

YouTube It ([bit.ly/video491](http://bit.ly/video491)) does what Google Videos should do – redirects your search to YouTube, so you can home in on what you're looking for. You don't need to set anything up – just install the extension, then head to Google. When you search, give the extension a second to kick in and you'll see the word Videos change to a big red button that says YouTube It.

After clicking this, you're whisked away to the video-streaming site where you can view the search results. It makes sense because YouTube is where we're most likely to end up when looking for videos.





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



## FIREFOX

# Make dark-mode text easier to read

Dark mode has become ubiquitous and, while it's gentler both on your eyes and on your device's battery, it's not always easy to make out the words on the screen. Some sites simply aren't

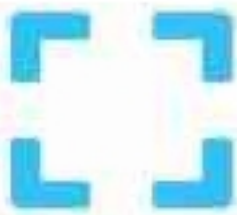
designed for dark mode and it shows – unlike the text on the page!

Text Contrast for Dark Themes ([bit.ly/contrast491](http://bit.ly/contrast491)) makes subtle tweaks to text, so that words can be more easily read. Click the toolbar button to quickly switch to standard colours or turn off the extension's effects. You can also whitelist and blacklist sites, so they follow your settings or override them.

Clicking the cog icon, meanwhile, lets you modify the default contrast settings to your liking. To switch on dark mode in Firefox, click the three-line menu button, select Customise, choose the theme from the drop-down menu and click Done.



## Force videos to play full-screen



It's not always easy to get embedded videos to play full screen. Often, the option isn't visible or it's unavailable. On some sites, such as

Facebook, even selecting Enlarge won't make the video truly full-screen and you may still be left squinting at the screen.

Windowed Fullscreen Video ([bit.ly/fullscreen491](http://bit.ly/fullscreen491)) does the hard work for you. Navigate to the desired video and make sure it's visible on the page, then click the extension's toolbar button and the video will immediately spring into full-screen mode while playback controls remain at the foot of the page. Another click of the button and the video will revert to small-screen view.

The tool works best with YouTube videos, of course, and Twitch. It won't work with every video, though. In these instances, you'll see a dialogue box explaining that the video can't be found.

## Remove comments from websites

The web can sometimes feel like one tiresome rant – an argument between fools, a flame war with no end in sight.

With Hide Comments Everywhere ([bit.ly/comments491](http://bit.ly/comments491)), you can make it more pleasant – or, at least, less shouty.

This browser tool automatically hides comments on a whole range of websites, including YouTube, WordPress, Facebook and sites using Disqus. Despite its claims, we couldn't get the extension to work on Twitter – arguably, the shoutiest place on the internet – but every other site was instantly made quieter.

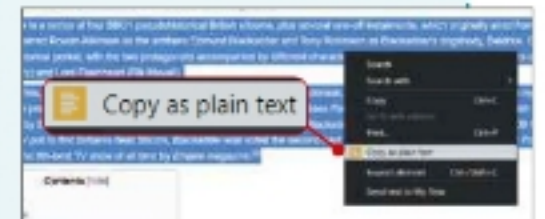
After activating the add-on, comments can be toggled on and off. Website URLs can also be added to Allow and Block lists, if you want to automatically show or hide comments.



## OTHER BROWSERS

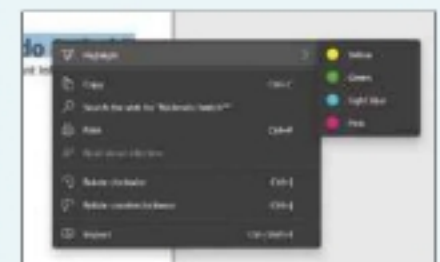
### Copy text without formatting

Copy as Plain Text ([bit.ly/text491](http://bit.ly/text491)) is a useful tool for copying large amounts of text from websites. Generally, when transferring text to a Word document, you carry over all the formatting, which then needs to be reverted to plain text. This extension saves you performing the extra steps – just highlight your text and right-click. Alongside the usual context-menu options, you'll find 'Copy as plain text'. This adds your text to the clipboard without any annoying formatting, such as font size and URLs.



### Block more trackers in Edge

Despite being mere weeks away from release, Microsoft is still adding new features to its Chromium browser. These include enhancements to Tracking Prevention – a setting that stops websites following you and swiping your data. The latest update blocks new trackers without breaking your browsing experience. There's also a new option for highlighting text in PDFs. Open a PDF in the Edge's Dev or Canary browser, highlight your text, then right-click to bring up the Highlight option, where you can choose between the Yellow, Green, Blue and Pink highlighter.





# Best Free Apps

## App of the Fortnight

### PASSWORD MANAGER

#### NordPass

[bit.ly/norddroid491](http://bit.ly/norddroid491)

[bit.ly/nordios491](http://bit.ly/nordios491)

 6  12

One day, passwords will be obsolete – replaced by simple, infallible biometric methods for securing our accounts and private information. At that point, we'll look back and wonder how on Earth we coped.

Until then, a password manager is the best way to generate, organise and enter the myriad passwords we currently need to use every day. And NordPass, from the developers of our recent Gold Award winner

NordVPN, is the latest such tool to join the fray.

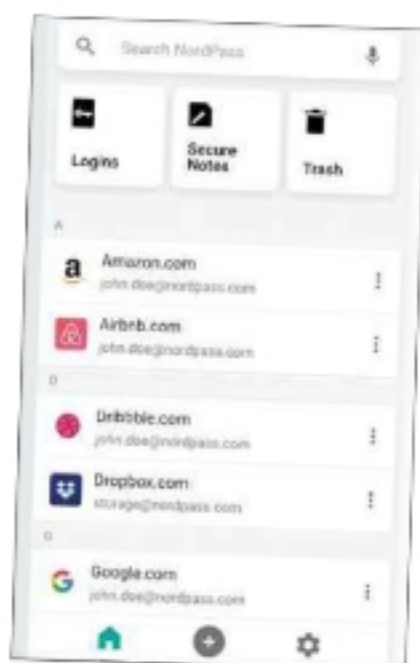
Available for both Android and iOS devices (as well as offering a desktop browser extension for Chrome, Firefox, Opera and Edge), NordPass lets you store passwords, credit card details and other sensitive data, such as private notes, in a secure vault that only you can access. When entering your passwords to access an account, NordPass makes it easy by autofilling your credentials for you.

Designed with the very toughest security in mind, NordPass uses zero-knowledge encryption – basically, your passwords and private data are encrypted before they even reach NordPass's servers, so no one but you can ever see your information. NordVPN also supports two-factor authentication for an added layer of protection, as well as fingerprint unlocking (on devices with the requisite sensors). It's possible (though somewhat fiddly) to import passwords from browsers and other password managers.

NordPass is free to use, but is currently limited to a single device. Paying for NordPass Premium (£34 per year) unlocks additional features,

including the ability to access your password vault across multiple devices and the option to share passwords and other private data with others securely.

NEW



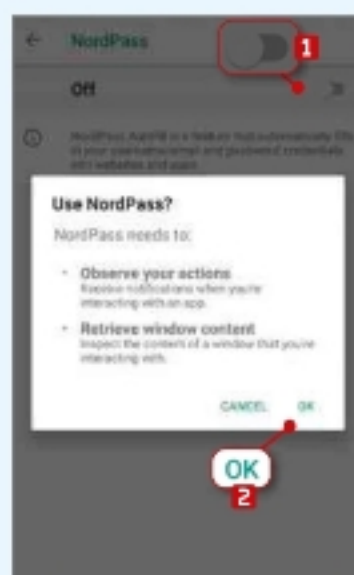
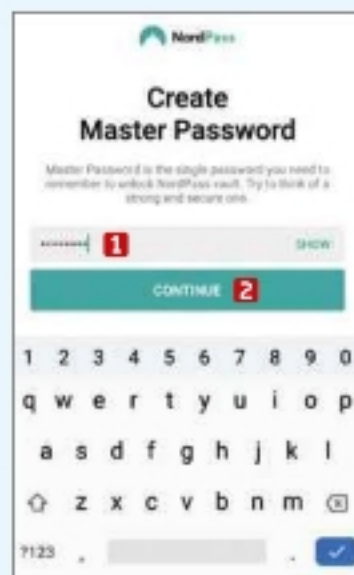
### MINI WORKSHOP

#### Protect your passwords using NordPass

**1** When you first launch NordPass, you're asked to log in. Choose 'Sign up', enter your email address and a password, then tap Sign Up to set up an account. You'll be sent a six-digit code via email. Enter this into the app and you'll be prompted to create a master password. **1** This password will unlock your NordPass vault, so make sure it's strong and memorable. Press Continue. **2**

**2** You'll be asked to confirm your master password – type it in the box and tap Confirm. If you forget or lose your master password, you can't access any of your other passwords, so NordPass gives you a recovery code **1** – a 24-character code that you can use in an emergency. Note this down somewhere safe, make absolutely sure it's correct, tick the 'I understand...' box **2** and press Continue. **3**

**3** You're offered a free trial of NordPass Premium, which requires you to choose a paid-for plan, but you can dismiss this and use the free version by tapping the X in the top-left corner. Tap Open Settings, choose NordPass in the Accessibility settings screen and tap the slider **1** to enable it – this allows NordPass to autofill passwords. Press OK, **2** then return to the app and begin adding passwords.



Our rating






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

### BROWSER

#### Opera for Android

[bit.ly/opera491](http://bit.ly/opera491)  
 (varies)

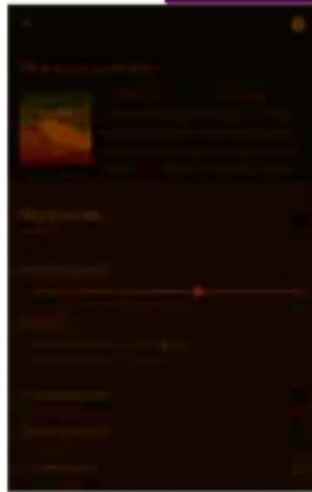
Everybody and their Auntie Jill is adding a dark mode to their apps these days. But the latest update to Opera's mobile browser goes one step further by offering a wide range of customisable settings for its new Night Mode. As you might imagine, this allows you to switch to a darker theme, but you can also set a custom schedule, fine-tune the colour temperature, alter the screen-dimming settings, enable dark web pages (even on sites that don't offer them natively) and force the keyboard to appear dimmed.



Our rating




UPDATED



### BROWSER

#### Vivaldi Browser

[bit.ly/vivaldi491](http://bit.ly/vivaldi491)  
 5

The Android version of Vivaldi is now in its second beta version. In addition to a refreshed interface and some stability improvements, the update introduces a selection of handy new settings. You can now enable the ability to close tabs by swiping them in the tab switcher, for example, and it's now possible to enable scrollbars (which are otherwise invisible) or default to the desktop version of sites. The update lets you customise your homepage and offers powerful tools for removing unwanted bookmarks and notes.



Our rating




UPDATED



### PHOTOS

#### 1Gallery

[bit.ly/1gallery491](http://bit.ly/1gallery491)  
 7

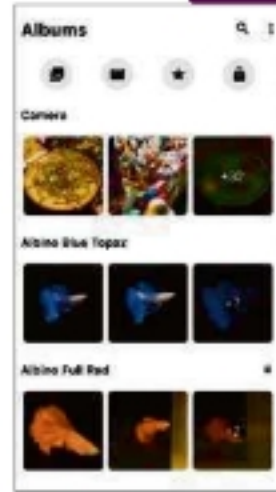
1Gallery is a photo gallery tool that provides a fast, attractively minimalist interface for browsing through the photos and videos stored on your device. Like other similar tools, the app lets you organise photos, share them, create albums and more, and includes some simple but effective editing tools. However, 1Gallery's party trick is that it also allows you to send photos and clips to special, secure encrypted albums that are password protected, which makes it particularly handy for keeping certain images (your driving licence or passport, for example) private.



Our rating




NEW



### MUSIC

#### Playlistmania

[bit.ly/playlist491](http://bit.ly/playlist491)  
 5.1

Different music-streaming services offer their own playlists of tracks. If you discover a playlist of songs you like on a streaming service you don't subscribe to, you can use Playlistmania to convert it into a playlist for the service that you do use. You can also use the app to organise your favourite playlists and share them with others. It's a fantastic idea, in theory. In practice, the app currently only supports converting between Spotify and Deezer, which isn't much use to Apple Music, Amazon Music or YouTube Music subscribers. It's early days, but this tool has the potential to be brilliant.



Our rating




NEW



### PHOTOS

#### Nude

[bit.ly/nude491](http://bit.ly/nude491)  
 5

If you've ever been embarrassed by someone accidentally finding a private photo or video on your phone, then it might be worth installing Nude. The app is designed to safeguard your 'private media' by scanning your photo library for potentially sensitive images and offering the choice of hiding or deleting them. Hidden photos are stored in Nude and can only be viewed by tapping in your PIN code or by using your fingerprint to unlock them (on devices with a fingerprint sensor). It's a good way to automate this type of process but accuracy isn't always guaranteed, and the app currently doesn't support SD cards.



Our rating



NEW





# 5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

## FOOD

### Ingredients

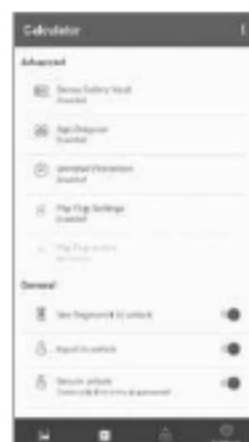
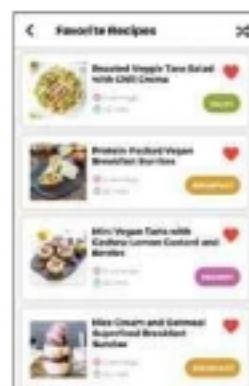
[bit.ly/vegandroid491](http://bit.ly/vegandroid491)

[bit.ly/veganios491](http://bit.ly/veganios491)

Price: £2.79 (Android), £2.99 (iOS)

4.1 8

Start the year eating healthily with the help of this app's 275 wholesome vegan recipes from Andrew Olson, the chap behind the award-winning One Ingredient Chef website ([www.oneingredientchef.com](http://www.oneingredientchef.com)).



## SECURITY

### Calculator Applock & Media Vault

[bit.ly/applock491](http://bit.ly/applock491)

Price: £6.49

5

This tool is the digital equivalent of fake baked-bean tin moneyboxes used to foil burglars. Outwardly, it's a functioning calculator app but it masks a secret vault for hiding private photos and video files.



## GAME

### Necrosphere

[bit.ly/necrosphere491](http://bit.ly/necrosphere491)

Price: £2.99

7

This unashamedly retro platform game – where you take on the role of a recently deceased agent looking to escape the underworld – is simple to play but tough to complete. After a successful run on PC and console, it's now available on iOS.

## HEALTH

### Circa Solar

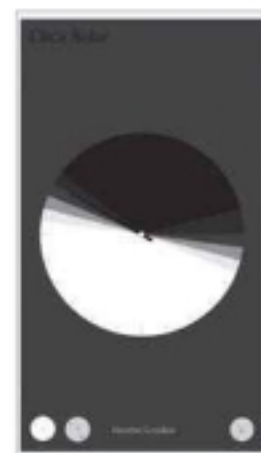
[bit.ly/circadroid491](http://bit.ly/circadroid491)

[bit.ly/circaios491](http://bit.ly/circaios491)

Price: £5 (Android), £4.99 (iOS)

6 12

If you're feeling out of step with the rhythms of nature, give this app a spin. The idea is to realign yourself with the natural light and dark cycles of the day, depending on the time and your location.



## CUSTOMISATION

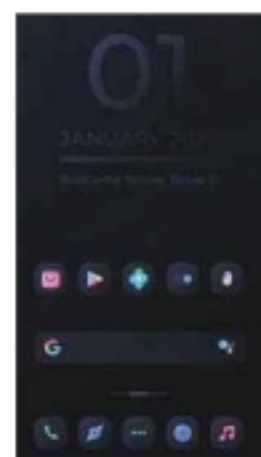
### Viola Dark Icon Pack

[bit.ly/viola491](http://bit.ly/viola491)

Price: £1.39

4.1

Make your home screen look dark and sophisticated but still easy to read using this superb icon pack, which includes more than 1,350 icons and 12 wallpapers, as well as a dynamic calendar.



Ingredients



Calculator Applock & Media Vault



Necrosphere



Circa Solar



Viola Dark Icon Pack



## ✓ Install this app...

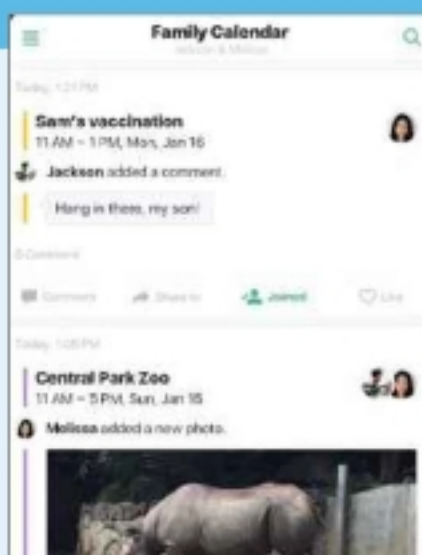
### TimeTree

[bit.ly/timedroid491](http://bit.ly/timedroid491)

[bit.ly/timeios491](http://bit.ly/timeios491)

5 11

If you're hoping to keep yourself better organised in 2020, then TimeTree might be all the help you need. It's a calendar app that lets you set up multiple shared calendars – for family, work, school and so on – that you can invite others to join. All members can add and edit events, and reminders can be sent to everyone in the group. Each event has its own chat room, where you talk with other members and even share photos, just like a messenger app. There's a great 'My Schedule' view that lets you see the events from all your calendars in a single view.



## ...Not this one

### Simple Calendar Widget

[bit.ly/simple491](http://bit.ly/simple491)

This once-popular tool, which displays your upcoming appointments on your home screen in a variety of different styles, appears to have fallen on very hard times. Things started to go wrong when the free version of the app began spamming users with ads. This was, apparently, fixed, but there have been no further updates since 2013 and now it's either crashing or not working at all, which puts this firmly in the corner marked 'abandonware'.







# Take a Screen Break

Take a rest from your browser with our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you solve our TV-personality emoji and guess our Wikipedia article?

**WIN A  
WEB USER  
2018 BACK  
ISSUES DISC!**  
Email your answers to  
[editor@webuser.co.uk](mailto:editor@webuser.co.uk)  
- one correct entry  
will win a disc



## CAN YOU GUESS THE UK TV PERSONALITIES 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** "The company behind it was founded in Palo Alto, California, in October 2003. The early intentions were to develop an advanced operating system for digital cameras."

**2** "In 2005, the company was acquired by Google for at least \$50m. Google marketed the

platform to handset makers on the promise of providing a flexible, upgradable system."

**4** "Google engineers have argued that malware threats on the platform are exaggerated by security companies for commercial reasons, to sell virus-protection software to users."



**5** "It has suffered from hardware and software 'fragmentation', making the task of developing applications that work consistently across the ecosystem harder than on rival platforms."

## COMPETITIONS

### WIN 1 OF 3 Kygo A3/600 headphones

Kygo Life's ultra-lightweight and wireless A3/600 headphones provide great everyday comfort and style. Just one charge gives you up to 23 hours playing time, with superior AAC Bluetooth sound quality. To enter, email your address to [webusercomp@dennis.co.uk](mailto:webusercomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'Kygo Life' in the subject line and follow KygoLife on Instagram or Facebook. For more info, visit [www.kygo.life](http://www.kygo.life).



WORTH  
£79.99  
EACH

### 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](mailto:webusercomp@dennis.co.uk) with 'Indigo' in the subject line. For more information, visit [www.energysistem.com](http://www.energysistem.com) and follow @EnergySistem on Twitter.



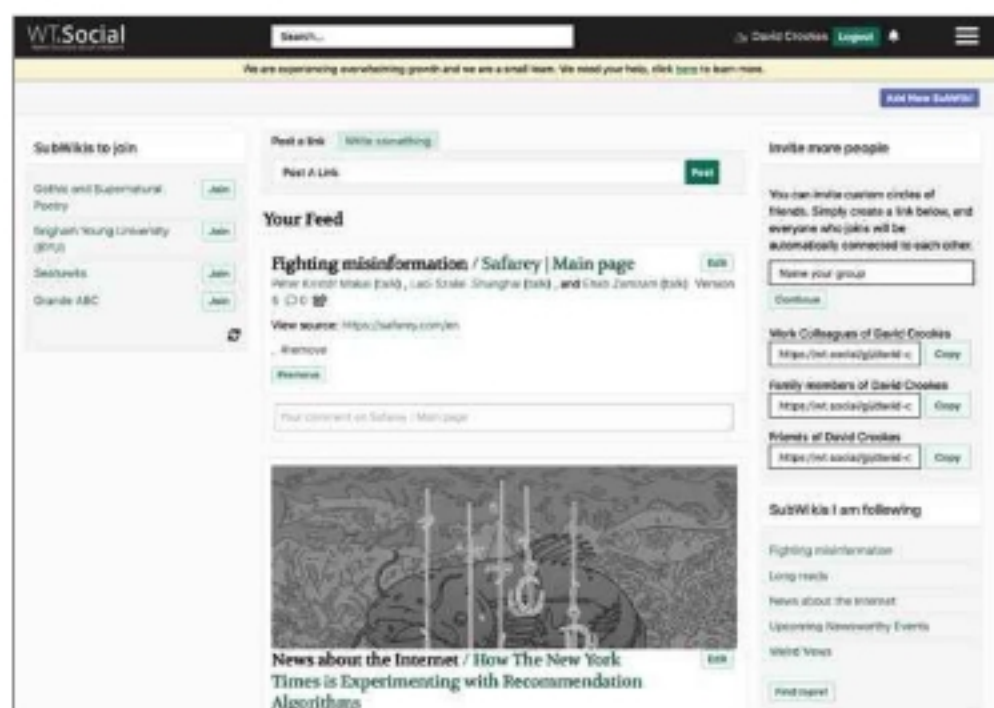
WORTH  
£29.99  
EACH





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

# Our guide to WT.Social



Tired of fake news and targeted advertising on Facebook and Twitter? **David Crookes** checks out a new social network that's free of misinformation and ads

## What is it?

WT.Social is a new social network created by Jimmy Wales, the co-founder of Wikipedia. The idea is to challenge Facebook and Twitter by offering an ad-free platform with an emphasis on news, that lets users choose what they'd like to see and empowers them to discourage the spread of disinformation.



*Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales is the man behind WT.Social*

## How does it work?

Once you've signed up, WT.Social invites you to select 'subwikis' that interest you. News items posted by members of those subwikis will then appear in your feed, as they would if you joined a Facebook group. Rather than simply flagging problem posts, however, you can edit misleading headlines directly. This way, the social network can collectively weed out fake news.

## Doesn't that sound like WikiTribune?

Yes, and there's a good reason for that. WT.Social is a new version of the now-



WT.Social lets you choose topics you're interested in, such as *luge* and *eating meat*

defunct news-sharing service set up by Wales in 2017 (WT stands for WikiTribune). The difference is that the new service is wrapped up within a social network and doesn't rely on volunteers (or employ journalists) to write, curate, fact-check or add sources before posting. Instead, stories on the network are edited collaboratively, just like the articles that appear on Wikipedia.

## Is it part of Wikipedia?

Apart from having the same person at the helm, the sites are not connected. They share values, however, and the range of topics WT.Social covers is vast, like Wikipedia. You can see news related to everything from politics and technology to wrestling and gardening.



Help WT.Social defeat Facebook by sharing its news on other sites – such as Facebook

## How can I engage with posts?

As well as editing headlines and flagging misleading content, you can comment on every post and share stories on other social networks and by email. This suggests the WT.Social team understands that it won't replace its rivals but will end up complementing them. Wales says he hopes that high levels of engagement will help to "conquer Facebook" and combat the ever-present issues of clickbait and misleading news.

## Won't WT.Social's algorithms manipulate users?

Unlike Facebook and Twitter, which use algorithms to push sponsored content and popular posts, WT.Social shares articles in a timeline, with the latest





The aim of WT.Social is to provide meaningful content that's policed and edited by other users



You don't need to pay to use WT.Social but, if you do, you'll jump the queue of people waiting for free access

appearing first. While this could mean having to wade through lots of uninteresting content (there is already talk of adding an 'upvote' button), it means posts are less prone to outside interference, while the community is asked to police potential abuses.

According to Wales, the goal is to provide meaningful content rather than pursuing clicks. In a post announcing the reboot of WikiTribune ([bit.ly/wiki491](http://bit.ly/wiki491)), he said that other social networks had prioritised advertising and user engagement over quality, and that these were factors he wanted to change. "We will foster an environment where bad actors are removed because it is right, not because it suddenly affects our bottom line," he told the *Financial Times*.

### But how will it make any money?

Most social networks make their money through paid-for content, advertising and the selling of user data. Wales says his network will do none of these things. Instead, like Wikipedia, it relies on users donating some of their own hard-earned cash. You can opt to pay £10 a month or £80 for the year. We couldn't find any details of how to cancel your

subscription, but we assume that the money won't be taken on a rolling basis.

### Do I have to pay to use it?

No. There is currently a waiting list for anyone who wishes to join the social network for free – at the time of writing, we were number 263,261 in the queue. Stumping up for a subscription gets you immediate access to the website, and you can also find your way in by sending invitations to work colleagues, family members or friends using one of three different links. In our case, we only needed a single acceptance to gain access, and there were no restrictions on what we could do once we were in.

### Are many people using it?

Wales said the service had 160,000 members within days of launching, and that the number now stands at more than 300,000, but that's still small fry compared with other social networks. Facebook has 2.45 billion monthly active users, while Twitter has 321 million, so WT.Social has a long way to go to catch up with these giants. Wales has said he would be happy to gain between 40 and 50 million users over time.

### How have Facebook and Twitter reacted?

Neither of the social network giants are cowering in fear over this potential threat to their dominance. In fact, there has been no direct response from Facebook or Twitter, and there isn't likely to be for some time.

What we're seeing is a reaction to the growing concern that Facebook and Twitter are packed with clickbait, fake news stories and false accounts, and that social media platforms are being used to spread political disinformation. Twitter has been the most proactive of late, banning all political adverts (see Need to Know, Issue 489). Facebook, meanwhile, says it is trying to identify clickbait and push it further down its users' feeds.

### Should I sign up to WT.Social?

That depends on your expectations. At the moment, the site looks a little dated and, until your friends sign up, it can feel like stepping into a party full of people you don't know, where everyone has already formed their own cliques.



Adding a subwiki to WT.Social doesn't give you any special control over it

WT.Social's heart is certainly in the right place, but some people don't seem to mind fake news as long as it suits them, which means the new service may never attract the huge user bases of rival social networks. But at least WT.Social is travelling in the right direction and, if it ends up offering a more objective approach to stories, no matter what they're about, it could well become a popular new community.

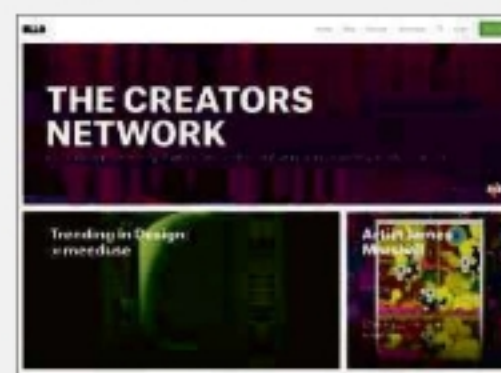
## WHATEVER HAPPENED TO ELLO?

In our FAQ in Issue 357 ([bit.ly/webuser357](http://bit.ly/webuser357)), we looked at Ello ([ello.co](http://ello.co)), a social network that promised to be an ad-free, privacy-conscious alternative to Facebook.

Integrating elements of Twitter, the platform was created by a group of American artists and designers who claimed it wouldn't collect or sell personal data and would be open and transparent with its users. And yet, nearly six years on, few talk about it.

Even so, Ello has about a million users and it is now billed as a "global community of artists". Rather than going toe-to-toe with the social

network giants, it has found its niche with creators and writers, and feels more akin to Pinterest, with an emphasis on showcasing creative endeavours.





# AWFUL APPS TO AVOID IN 2020

COVER  
FEATURE

Don't compromise the security, privacy or performance of your phone or tablet. **Wayne Williams** highlights the dodgiest must-ditch apps for Android and iOS and suggests what to use instead



**T**here have been lots of news stories over the last year urging smartphone users to uninstall dangerous apps because of the security and privacy risks they pose. In October alone, ESET discovered 42 apps in the Google Play store that contained adware ([bit.ly/eset491](http://bit.ly/eset491)), while a 'clicker Trojan' was found in 17 iOS apps in the Apple App Store ([bit.ly/clickware488](http://bit.ly/clickware488)). A month later, 10 supposed antivirus apps for Android were found to contain "dangerous malware, spyware and questionable

permissions" ([bit.ly/antivirus491](http://bit.ly/antivirus491)). Truly, 2019 has been an app-ocalyptic year!

However, it's not only apps loaded with malware that you need to look out for but those that require unnecessary permissions, drain resources on your phone or tablet, and bombard you with ads and nags to make in-app purchases. In this feature, we name and shame the worst offenders that you may have installed or be thinking of installing, and recommend what to use instead in 2020.



## APPS THAT POSE SECURITY THREATS

## Don't use

## ES File Explorer

ES File Explorer used to be one of the best – if not the best – third-party file managers for Android but, in recent years, it's been embroiled in a number of scandals. In 2016, it incorporated a sketchy feature called a 'charge booster', which displayed ads on the user's lockscreen and, in January 2019, a researcher found it was running a hidden web server in the background ([bit.ly/ESF491](http://bit.ly/ESF491)).

More recently, the software's publisher was involved in a 'click fraud' scheme. A BuzzFeed News investigation ([bit.ly/buzz491](http://bit.ly/buzz491)) found

that some Android apps owned by DU Global (itself partly owned by Chinese tech giant Baidu) were automatically clicking ads without the user's knowledge and sending recorded data to China. Google responded by removing all the apps in question and banning accounts belonging to

*ES File Explorer has been involved in dubious business with ads*

DO Global. ES File Explorer was removed in this cull because it was found to be owned by DU Global (a subdivision of DO Global – keep up!) and not ES Global, as was claimed.

The app still isn't available through Google Play, though it may return in the future. It's possible to install it through other means but given everything that's happened previously, our advice is to steer well clear.

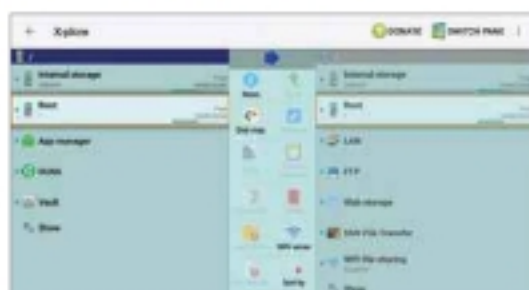
## Use this instead

## X-plore File Manager

[bit.ly/xplore491](http://bit.ly/xplore491)

Android 4.3

This file manager is an excellent alternative to ES File Explorer and offers an intuitive dual-pane tree view that shows you which files take up the most space on your device, while providing quick access to all the popular cloud-storage services. Features include an app manager, support for USB OTG (On-The-Go), a built-in PDF tool, batch



*X-plore File Manager is packed with useful features and is free of dodgy ads*

renamer, fast image viewer, favourite folders and more. Some features – including a music player, video player with subtitles, a vault for personal files and Wi-Fi file sharing – require a donation to unlock. In-app purchases range from 90p to £14.40 per item.

## Don't use

## CamScanner

CamScanner is a handy app that turns your phone into a portable scanner. It can even use OCR to convert images into text. According to the developers, it has been installed on more than 380 million devices in over 200 countries around the world. While the app itself is safe, Kaspersky researchers recently discovered it was using an advertising library "containing a malicious module".



*CamScanner was found to be using a malicious advertising module*

which could download malware and sign users up to paid subscriptions for other, unwanted services ([bit.ly/camscan491](http://bit.ly/camscan491)).

Following this news, Google pulled the app and CamScanner's developers acted swiftly to remove the malicious component. It's back up on Google Play once more, but scans now come with a large watermark stamped on them and you're required to sign up for a premium subscription – costing \$4.99 (£3.81) per month/\$49.99 (£38.17) per year, which renews automatically – to unlock most features.

## Use this instead

## Adobe Scan

[bit.ly/adobescan491](http://bit.ly/adobescan491)

Android 5 iOS 12

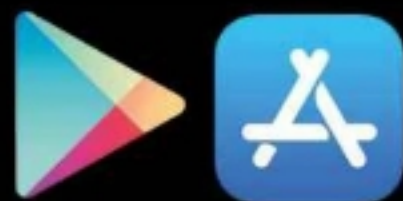
Adobe's free scanning app for Android and iOS can turn any paper document into a PDF. Powered by Adobe Sensei, the app improves scans by detecting borders, removing shadows and using OCR to extract text (including handwriting). Its tools let you add, remove and reorder pages, as well as crop, rotate and adjust the colour of images. Adobe Scan can now remove marks from your scans, and there's a dark mode, too. The only catch is that you need to sign into Adobe to use the app.



*Adobe Scan turns paper documents into editable digital files*

## WHAT'S BEING DONE ABOUT AWFUL APPS?

Apple's App Store has always been safer than Google Play because the iPhone developer runs more stringent quality-control checks. The vast majority of bad apps mentioned in this feature are for Android, which has had multiple scares over the years, but things may be about to improve with Google's newly created App Defense Alliance ([bit.ly/aopda491](http://bit.ly/aopda491)). This aims to identify more Potentially Harmful Applications (PHAs) and take appropriate action. As well as scanning apps with its own system, it will now also use scanning engines from ESET, Lookout and Zimperium. Also, the search giant has already introduced more thorough checks on apps from new developers who don't have a proven track record ([bit.ly/bbcreport491](http://bit.ly/bbcreport491)). Apple, meanwhile, has introduced a new 'Sign in with Apple' service to help improve user privacy. Users sign into apps and websites with their Apple ID but the login data isn't shared, and they can't track or profile you. It's not imperative for apps to offer this service, so shady apps will probably ignore it, but it's still a useful additional line of protection.





## APPS WITH PRIVACY CONCERNS

### Don't use

#### Virus Cleaner 2019

With so many scare stories regarding malicious Android apps, you can't blame people for wanting to protect their devices with antivirus software. But the truth is that unless you regularly

download apps from outside the Google Play store or spend your time browsing suspect sites, the chances of your phone becoming infected are slim and installing some 'virus cleaners' can cause more harm than good.

Virus Cleaner 2019 - Antivirus, Cleaner & Booster (to give its full name) has been downloaded from Google Play by more than 50 million Android users but, when

installed, asks for a raft of unnecessary permissions. These include the ability to read and write external storage, read contacts, access your location, view account details and access your camera, which - according to a report from VPNPro ([bit.ly/vpnpro491](http://bit.ly/vpnpro491)) - could allow it to "add more malware to your device".

### Use this instead

#### Bitdefender Antivirus Free

[bit.ly/bitdef491](http://bit.ly/bitdef491)

Android 4.1

As mentioned above, you probably don't need an antivirus app on your phone but, if you still want one, it's best to stick with well known security developers. Bitdefender's software often comes top in AV tests and its Android app is entirely free. It's also lightweight so, unlike similar products, it won't slow down your phone or drain its battery. If you need extra protection, you can pay £9.99 to upgrade to the paid-for version, Bitdefender Mobile Security, but it's not essential.



If you want an antivirus app, stick with a trusted name such as Bitdefender

### Don't use

#### Turbo VPN

If you're concerned about your privacy or want to circumvent annoying



**Turbo VPN is accused of stealing its users' data and sending it to China**

geographic restrictions on the web, then running a VPN is a no brainer. However, not all VPNs are created equal. A case in point is Turbo VPN for Android and iOS, which - according to a report by Top10VPN ([bit.ly/turbo491](http://bit.ly/turbo491)) - collects a large amount of user data and has a privacy policy that allows this information to be sent to China. Another red flag is that the customer support contacts are all Gmail addresses, which is worryingly unprofessional.

In its summary, Top10VPN noted: "These policies fell far short of what we would expect from a mainstream VPN and we would recommend consumers avoid these apps."

### Use this instead

#### Windscribe VPN

[windscribe.com](http://windscribe.com)

Android 4.2.2 iOS 9

Windscribe is currently our favourite free mobile VPN. You get 10GB of bandwidth per month, with a choice of 10 countries - including the US and the UK - and it offers a split-tunnelling feature that lets you designate which apps should use the VPN tunnel. If you want unlimited bandwidth and connections, along with access to more servers, you can upgrade to the Pro version for £8.49 a month or £43.99 a year.

Unlike many VPNs, especially those with a free version, Windscribe has a strict no-logging policy.



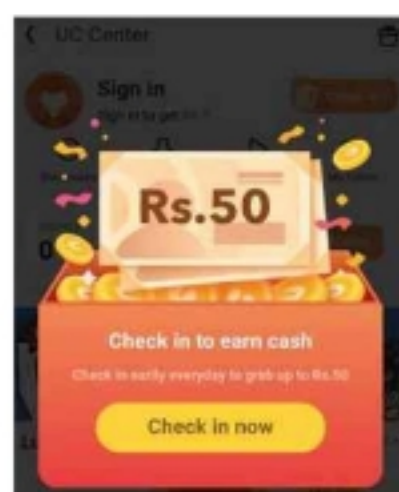
Windscribe VPN has an excellent free option and doesn't log your data

### Don't use

#### UC Browser

There are plenty of excellent, trustworthy browsers to choose from on Android, so there's really no need to switch to one that bombards you with adverts and doesn't care about your privacy. A report in 2016 ([bit.ly/ucbad491](http://bit.ly/ucbad491)) showed UC Browser ([bit.ly/ucb491](http://bit.ly/ucb491)) transmitted "personally identifiable information with very weak encryption" and, in 2017, the browser was discovered to be sending data to a remote server in China.

In March 2019, Doctor Web ([bit.ly/drweb491](http://bit.ly/drweb491)) identified a hidden ability in the browser that would allow it to "download and run questionable code on mobile devices", bypassing Google Play's own servers.



Don't use UC Browser if you value your privacy when browsing the web

### Use this instead

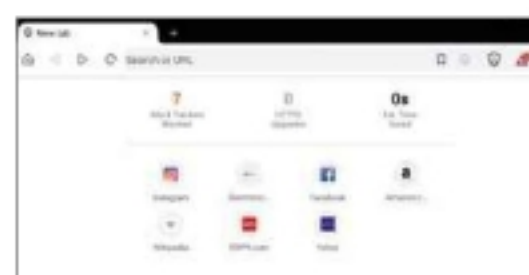
#### Brave Browser

[brave.com](http://brave.com)

Android 5 iOS 12

Sure, we could recommend Chrome (which comes with your Android phone), Firefox or even Opera, but we're rather partial to the new mobile version of Brave, created by a former CEO of Mozilla - indeed, it was our 'App of the Fortnight' last issue. It uses the Chromium engine (the open-source version of Chrome), is very fast and focuses on safeguarding your privacy. The mobile browser blocks pop-ups, adverts, malware and more, and loads pages with impressive speed.

See our workshop on page 52 for details of the latest desktop version of Brave.



The mobile version of Brave is a brilliant browser for privacy-focused users



## RIP-OFFS &amp; SCAMS

## Don't use

## Facebook Viewpoints

Facebook Viewpoints is currently only available to Facebook users in the US but the social network has plans to expand it to more countries in 2020, including the UK, so consider this an early warning. The app, which rolled out to US users at the end of November 2019 for iOS and Android, pays you for participating in surveys, tasks and research. The company says it will use the insights it gleans to improve its products – including Facebook, Portal, Instagram, WhatsApp and Oculus – but won't share your data with third-parties.

The social network already knows a lot about you, so handing over even

more information for paltry amounts of cash seems like a monumentally bad idea, especially given how little Facebook has been proven to care about its users' privacy in the past.

*Facebook Viewpoints wants you to share even more personal data*

**Congratulations, you completed the program!**

You earned 1,000 points for completing the Well-Being Survey. We'll notify you when there's a new program available.

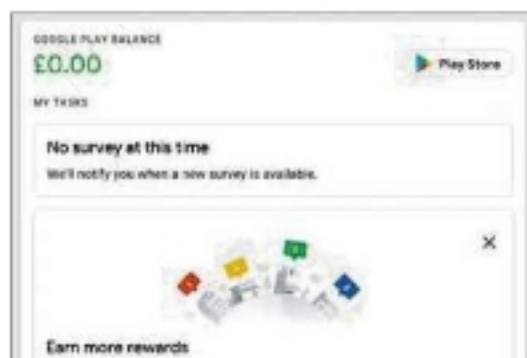
## Use this instead

## Google Opinion Rewards

[bit.ly/googleop491](https://bit.ly/googleop491)

4.1

Switching a Facebook survey app for one from Google may seem pointless, given both tech giants' data-guzzling habits, but Google's service – already available in the UK – fully anonymises and aggregates your answers and won't use the results to improve its services or tailor the ads you see. Earnings come in the form of Google Play credits that can be used to purchase apps, games, movies, TV shows, magazines and music from the store. However, credits expire after a year, so make sure you spend them before that happens.



*Earn money by answering questions anonymously in Google Opinion Rewards*

## Don't use

## Ai.type

With more than 31 million users, Ai.type is a popular, customisable on-screen keyboard for mobile devices that learns your writing style and auto-inserts emoji as you type. The free app was pulled from Google Play in June 2019 due to shady behaviour and, shortly afterwards, the anti-fraud platform Secure-D – run by mobile technology company Upstream – noticed a spike in suspicious activity. This included delivering millions of invisible ads and non-human clicks, and attempting premium purchases without the user's knowledge.

Upstream reported ([bit.ly/upstream491](https://bit.ly/upstream491)) that the app was subscribing “users to premium services, depleting their mobile data and adding charges that eat into their pre-paid airtime” (pre-paid airtime is something that is popular in emerging markets). The app was also found to be reducing battery life and putting the device under strain as a result of all the unseen background activity.



*The popular free keyboard app Ai.type could end up costing you dearly*

## Use this instead

## SwiftKey Keyboard

[bit.ly/swift491](https://bit.ly/swift491)

5 10

Owned by Microsoft, this AI-driven keyboard learns your writing style, helping you to write faster, as well as quickly add emoji and GIFs. You can customise the keyboard size and layout, choose from more than 100 themes and



*Microsoft's SwiftKey Keyboard helps you type much faster on your phone*

## AWFUL BROWSER ADD-ONS TO STOP USING

It's not only mobile apps that can put your privacy and security at risk. There are plenty of bad browser extensions that should be avoided and uninstalled, too. Add-ons you install directly from Google or Mozilla should be safe – at least, safer than the ones you sideload or download from elsewhere – but there's no guarantee that that's the case. As a prime example, in 2018, Google removed four extensions from the Chrome Web Store after they were found to be covertly clicking pay-per-click ads ([bit.ly/badaddon491](https://bit.ly/badaddon491)).

Some add-ons share personal data about you, so always check their permissions and privacy policies before installing. There have also been occasions in the past where harmless add-ons with a sizable user base have been purchased by third parties who then added malware to them.

In summer 2019, security researcher Sam Jadali discovered eight browser add-ons for Chrome and Firefox that collected and sold the user data of a number of large companies and millions of individuals. These add-ons were:

- Branded Surveys (Chrome)
- HoverZoom (Chrome)
- Panel Community Surveys (Chrome)
- PanelMeasurement (Chrome)
- SpeakIt! (Chrome)
- FairShare Unlock (Chrome and Firefox)
- SuperZoom (Chrome and Firefox)
- SaveFrom.net Helper (Firefox)

Google and Mozilla removed the dodgy extensions from their stores, and disabled them, but Jadali found they were still tracking user info. If you have any of these add-ons installed, you should remove them immediately.





## RESOURCE HOGS

even create your own photo theme. SwiftKey Keyboard supports over 300 languages and lets you enable up to five at the same time. It also offers tap-to-type or swipe-to-type functionality, to make composing messages a breeze.

### Don't use

#### Smart Video Compressor

If you've captured some video footage you want to share with friends and family, but your film is too large for email or your favourite messaging app, then Smart Video Compressor, for iOS and iPadOS, can help. The software claims to reduce the size of HD video by 70-80% and provide live compression progress. Sounds great, right?

Unfortunately, Smart Video Compressor was one of 17 apps from Indian developer AppAspect Technologies that Wandera ([bit.ly/wandera491](http://bit.ly/wandera491)) found to be infected with clicker Trojan malware. This simulated user actions - opening web pages,

clicking links in the background and more - to fraudulently collect ad revenue.

Apple removed all 17 of the infected apps from the App Store as soon as it was informed

*Smart Video Compressor is one of 17 iOS apps infected with a clicker Trojan*

about them, but there's a chance you may still have one installed.

### Use this instead

#### Video Compress - Shrink Vids

[bit.ly/shrinkv491](http://bit.ly/shrinkv491)

1.3

This app - also available for Android - can shrink your mobile videos so they're easier to share via email, messaging

apps and online. It works as described but is funded by ads, which you can choose to make personalised or non-personalised, or pay 99p to

*Video Compress is supported by ads but you can remove them for just 99p*

remove them entirely. You can also upgrade to the Unlimited version of the app for £4.99.

### Don't use

#### QR Code Reader

If your phone's camera doesn't have a built-in reader for QR codes, there are plenty of apps that offer this useful functionality. QR Code Reader-Barcode scanner & QR Code Scanner isn't the most elegantly titled of these solutions, but that's not even its biggest problem.

The app, which has now been removed from Google Play, displayed a deluge of annoying full-screen ads and pushed users to subscribe to a three-day

free trial to unlock all its features. After the trial expired, the app automatically charged an annual subscription of \$95. That's more than £70 for the privilege of using a QR scanner!



*This QR code reader looks useful but it's designed to rip you off*

Android Police documented its findings on the app at [bit.ly/apolice491](http://bit.ly/apolice491).

### Use this instead

#### Trend Micro QR Scanner

[bit.ly/tmqar491](http://bit.ly/tmqar491)

4.4

Trend Micro is a well-respected security company, so the focus of its QR scanner is on making sure that any barcodes you scan are safe. Should a code try to take you somewhere dangerous, it will be blocked and reported instantly. The app is entirely free and there are no third-party adverts to pester you. It can scan

QR codes directly through your device's camera or by reading saved images.

*You can trust Trend Micro to scan QR codes for hidden security threats*



### Don't use

#### Clean Master

This hugely popular app promises to remove junk files from your Android phone, boost its performance, protect your privacy and phone security, and safeguard you from viruses. With over a billion users and a five-star rating, it's got to be brilliant - right?

Dig through the less enthusiastic reviews, however, and you'll see complaint after complaint regarding excessive and intrusive full-screen adverts, and aggressive nag screens pushing you

to upgrade to the paid-for Premium version. Users who have upgraded complain they still see adverts afterwards.

The amount of space Clean Master frees up is suspect, and it's a massive resource hog, causing any phone

it's installed on to slow down rather than speed up, while draining the battery. Users also complain that some of the adverts it displays have overly sexual content.



*Clean Master promises to remove junk but it's complete rubbish itself*

### Use this instead

#### Files by Google

[bit.ly/files491](http://bit.ly/files491)

5

If you want an app that can free up space on your phone, boost



*Free up space on your phone using the marvellous free Files by Google*



performance and find, manage and share files, as well as move items from internal storage to an SD card, then Google's own free app is the perfect solution. It's small, lightweight and, unlike other similar tools, it won't bombard you with adverts or force you to upgrade to a paid-for premium version (because there isn't one). The latest update adds support for Google Cast, which is a welcome bonus.

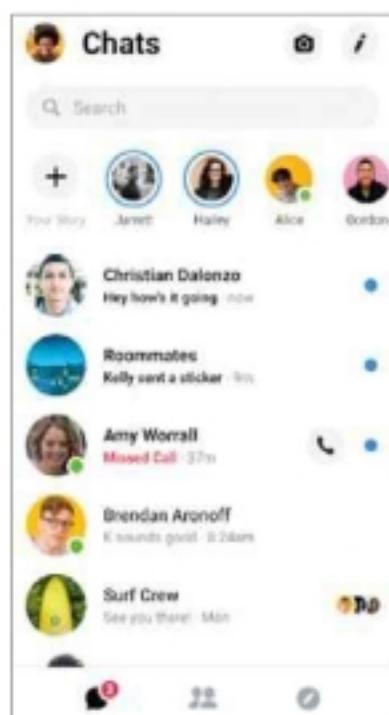
## Don't use

### Facebook Messenger

Facebook's chat app is hugely popular, with over 1.3 billion monthly users. It provides a quick and easy way to message friends, but it's also bloated, hogs resources and comes packed with features you'll probably never need or use – including a few that have been brazenly 'borrowed' from Snapchat. If your phone is getting a little old or a little full, or you're trying to limit how

much mobile data you burn through on a monthly basis, then removing Facebook Messenger will make a noticeable difference. Still need it to chat with friends? Don't worry, you don't have to look far.

*Facebook Messenger is a bloated data-guzzling resource hog*



## Use this instead

### Messenger Lite

[bit.ly/mlite491](http://bit.ly/mlite491)



Facebook offers a Lite version of Messenger that was originally designed for use in developing nations. It works in the same way as the main app, but is smaller, lighter and consumes far less mobile data. It also works much better in rural areas, which often suffer from patchy and slow network coverage. You can use it to message your friends, make Wi-Fi calls and conduct video chats, and send photos and links.

The social network also offers a Lite version of Facebook itself ([bit.ly/fblite491](http://bit.ly/fblite491)), which you might want to use as a companion app to Messenger Lite, although the most recent reviews for it aren't very kind.



*Messenger Lite gives you the best of the messaging app without the bloat*

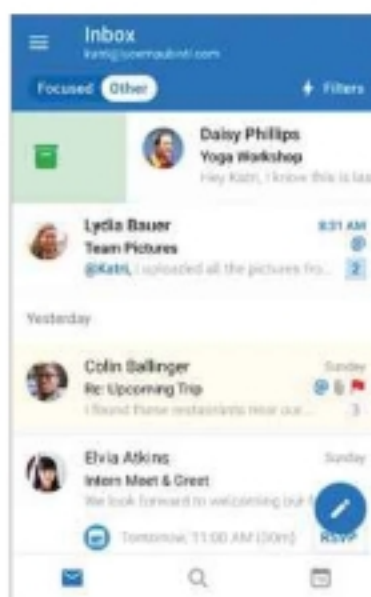
## Don't use

### Microsoft Outlook

Microsoft's email app for Android is decent enough, but recent negative reviews claim it fails to sync messages, shows notifications that don't take you to the new email in question and makes it impossible to navigate large email threads. If that's not bad enough, the app uses a huge amount of resources and will eat through your battery life in no time at all. Apparently, the only way

*Microsoft's Outlook email app drains your Android phone's battery*

to curb its resource consumption is to reduce the frequency with which it checks for messages – which isn't much use.

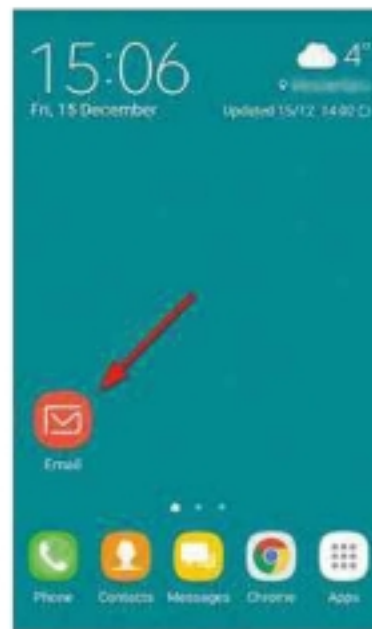


## Use this instead

### Your default email app

Your Android or iOS device will have a built-in email app for managing all your email accounts. It may not necessarily be the fanciest-looking option available, but it will do its job. Having just the one app to regularly check for emails will save battery life, use less of your mobile data plan and also save space, because you'll have just one copy of each of your emails and attachments. ■

*The default email app on your phone may be all you need to get by*



NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 8 January 2020

# MICROSOFT EDGE REBORN



Everything you need to know about the brilliant new Chromium-based browser

## PLUS...

### LET ME BACK IN!

Regain access when you're locked out of your accounts

### STOP WINDOWS SPYING

Block the new trackers that have sneaked on to your PC

### FIND FILES FASTER

Smart new ways to organise and search your hard drive

SUBSCRIBE TO WEB USER AT  
[SUBSCRIBE.WEBUSER.CO.UK](http://SUBSCRIBE.WEBUSER.CO.UK)



# Best open-source cloud-storage services

Worried about storing your private files with data-hungry tech giants such as Google and Microsoft? **Steve Clark** tests six open-source alternatives



**Cozy** | [cozy.io](https://cozy.io) | ★★★★★  
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser  
GOLD  
AWARD

## What we liked:

If you're planning to take the plunge by moving away from traditional cloud platforms run by the big tech companies, mobility and security should be high on your list of considerations. You need to be able to access your files any time, anywhere, and they should be safe from nefarious net-dwellers snooping on personal data.

Cozy offers exactly that. You can operate within your browser or download the app for your computer. Refreshingly, the company also "prohibits any use, for its benefit or for the benefit of anyone, of all or part of your 'private' data".

Thanks to a clean layout and large fonts, Cozy's design is effortlessly user-friendly. A simple sidebar ensures navigation is slick and familiar, while adding your files to the cloud is achieved with one click of the Upload button. Clicking the three-dot menu reveals options to create new folders and select multiple items and, once you've added files, you can then manage items through the second three-dot menu that appears beside it, renaming and moving files, and sharing them with others. If you're a convert



from the Google and Microsoft services, you'll have no trouble mastering Cozy.

During our tests, we found uploading to Cozy was almost instant. As with other cloud services, a progress bar in the bottom-right corner provides a visual indication of everything you're uploading to your Cozy cloud drive.

You'll find another handy shortcut by clicking the company logo in the top-left corner, which lets you quickly jump between the standard cloud service, your Photos folder and the Cozy Bank service (if you sign up for it).

## How it can be improved:

Cozy doesn't offer the best deals when it comes to storage. Free accounts are capped at 5GB, which is fine for basic

use, but you'll need to shell out around £3 a month to increase that to a more respectable 50GB. While it's a simple process to create new folders and the like, we'd love to have a Google Drive-style context menu to manage files with a simple right-click of the mouse.

## OUR VERDICT

Unlike some of its rivals, Cozy's cloud service requires absolutely no technical know-how to get started. It's a great alternative if you're seeking to move away from more famous cloud providers, such as Google and Dropbox.



**XOR Drive** | [xordrive.io](http://xordrive.io) | ★★★★★  
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

WebUser  
SILVER  
AWARD

## What we liked:

Security lies at the heart of XOR Drive. Proudly proclaiming itself as "encrypted cloud storage", the platform

abandons centralised systems in favour of a decentralised blockchain-based service. So, rather than letting a single company keep all your data, you're completely in control of it, making XOR Drive the choice for the truly privacy conscious.

To get started, you need to create an account with Blockstack, which powers the service. You can then access your cloud storage and, once you're in, things start to look a little more familiar. In fact, if you didn't know about XOR's emphasis on security, privacy and data ownership, you'd think this was just another cloud-storage platform – and that's no bad thing.

Uploading to the service is speedy. Unlike other contenders, you can also drag and drop files to upload them. Sharing, too, offers the option to share publicly or to send files direct to other



Blockstack users, keeping them private.

## How it can be improved:

If you're a heavy user of cloud storage, you'll notice everything slows down when uploading files over 10MB to the free account. Likewise, upload and download times are penalised if you're using more than 10GB of storage. Occasionally, when attempting to see files, we received the notification that XOR 'Failed to load preview'.

## OUR VERDICT

Security is a priority for XOR Drive. Driven by blockchain tech, your data and files belong to you alone, but the payoff is a cap to upload times and a basic storage of 10GB.

**Bloom** | [bloom.sh](http://bloom.sh) | ★★★★★  
 FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

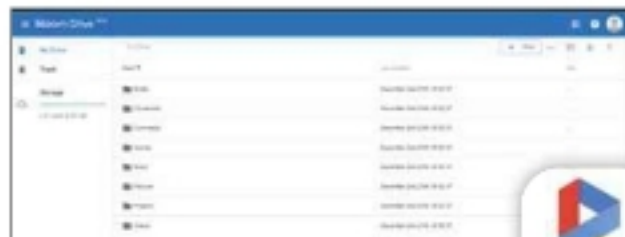
WebUser  
BRONZE  
AWARD

## What we liked:

Bloom – currently in beta – is very similar to Cozy. This browser-based cloud-storage service is big, bright and easy to navigate, and includes an Android app.

The interface's mobile-style icons take you to different areas – Drive, Photos, Music, contacts and so on. And while you may not have any games saved, visit Arcade anyway, for a free version of popular puzzler 2,048. You can also access Bitflow, for downloading files saved as torrents.

Once you get into the actual drives themselves, it begins to feel less mobile-inspired and more like a traditional cloud platform. Looking like a mash-up between OneDrive and Google Drive, navigation is standard and uploads are fairly quick, though by no means the fastest. Bloom's storage is certainly generous – sign up for free and you'll immediately get 30GB to use how you choose.



## How it can be improved:

Because it's not yet had a full release, Bloom is lacking in certain areas. There's no iOS app (though there are hints that it's under consideration) and no dedicated desktop installation – all that cloud magic happens in your browser or in the Android app. That may be a deal-breaker, particularly for iPhone and iPad owners.

## OUR VERDICT

Bloom performs most of the actions you'd expect a cloud service to provide but, because it's still in beta, it may be worth waiting to see what's added before committing to the platform.

## BEST OF THE REST

### Mega

[mega.nz](http://mega.nz)

One of the most famous cloud-storage sites in the world, Mega has built a solid reputation for its end-to-end encryption. It's available on just about every platform and even free users get a decent 15GB storage. For those reasons alone, Mega almost made it into our top three. However, using the service felt ungainly and it's had its fair share of off-putting controversies since its inception in 2013.



### Next Cloud

[nextcloud.com](http://nextcloud.com)

Next Cloud is a huge name in open-source cloud-storage, and with good reason. It's simple to use and available for plenty of different devices. Setting it up isn't too taxing: either use your own server details or, more conveniently, sign up with a provider – there are plenty out there but a standard Next Cloud account should be fine. However, its 3GB storage cap feels stingy.



### Syncthing

[syncthing.net](http://syncthing.net)

Syncthing is cloud storage with a difference: rather than storing your data in some nebulous 'cloud', it lets you share files stored on your computer with multiple other devices. This requires you to set up each device to send and receive files through Syncthing. While this means it's more limited than classic cloud services, it also means you have far more control over everything that's stored and shared.





# Try new software before everyone else

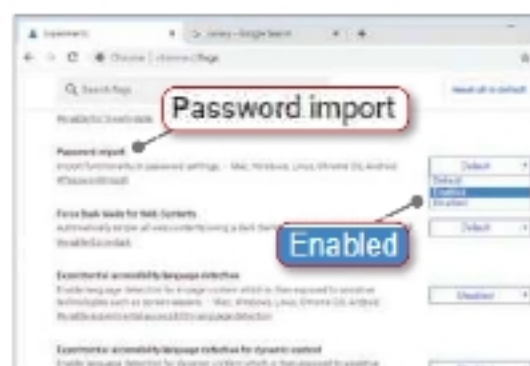
Want to test-drive new features in your favourite tools, months before they're released? **Jane Hoskyn** explains how to join the best betas and get first dibs



## Test Chrome's forthcoming password and tab tools

Google's early-beta browser Chrome Canary ([bit.ly/canary491](http://bit.ly/canary491)) looks the same as Chrome's stable version but, if you open its list of experimental features (<chrome://flags>), you'll find tools so new they're in nappies.

Canary's latest 'flags' include 'Password import', which adds a new Import button to password settings; 'Omnibox tab switch', which adds a 'Switch to this tab' button to search suggestions - handy if you have lots of tabs open; and Forced Colors, which sets all sites to high-contrast mode. To try them, select Enable from their drop-down menu, then relaunch the



*Add an Import button to your password settings in Chrome Canary*

browser. Annoyingly, Google doesn't publish a Canary changelog with new flags, so keep an eye on the Chrome Reddit ([bit.ly/reddit491](http://bit.ly/reddit491)) for tips.

You can install Canary, along with

other pre-release versions, via The Chromium Projects ([bit.ly/chromium491](http://bit.ly/chromium491)). Or get Chrome Canary for Android ([bit.ly/ccdroid491](http://bit.ly/ccdroid491)) for early-access treats including an Incognito toggle button and a repositioned URL bar.

## Test-drive Microsoft Edge's new Collections

Edge's imminent shift to the Chromium engine brings numerous new tools such as Collections, which lets you create your own scrapbook-style pages by dragging and dropping text, images and even videos from other sites.

For a sneak preview, install Edge Canary via [bit.ly/edgedown491](http://bit.ly/edgedown491), then bookmark the Welcome page, which is full of beta tips but only appears the first time you run the browser. Now go to <edge://flags> to enable experimental features such as configurable tracking prevention, iOS/Android data sync and Collections (<edge://flags/#edge-collections>).

We'll be taking a closer look at the new Chromium Edge in next issue's cover feature.



*Collections lets you grab website content to create a scrapbook-style private page*

## CAN YOU JOIN FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP BETAS?

Popular betas fill up fast, and they don't come more popular than the official Android betas for Facebook ([bit.ly/fbbeta491](http://bit.ly/fbbeta491)) and WhatsApp ([bit.ly/wabeta491](http://bit.ly/wabeta491)).

Lucky testers are currently enjoying features such as dark mode, fingerprint lock and self-destructing WhatsApp group messages. Unfortunately, neither programme is accepting new members, so how can you get in?

If you're willing to risk failure or a ruined phone, try sideloading



APKMirror's installation files for Facebook Beta ([bit.ly/fbapk491](http://bit.ly/fbapk491)) and WhatsApp Beta ([bit.ly/wapak491](http://bit.ly/wapak491)). You'll need to allow 'Unknown apps' in your device settings before you can run either file.

Alternatively, be patient. People uninstall

betas all the time, which frees up space for new testers. Check the official pages regularly, as well as the 'Early access' tab in the Play Store app. Meanwhile, follow [facebook.com/FacebookAndroidBeta](https://www.facebook.com/FacebookAndroidBeta) and the excellent [@WABetaInfo](https://twitter.com/WABetaInfo) on Twitter to get updates.



## Kill all notification pop-ups in Firefox Nightly

Firefox also has several pre-release versions, the earliest being Nightly ([bit.ly/nightly491](http://bit.ly/nightly491)), where you can enable tentative tools at 'about:config'. Start by browsing the list at [bit.ly/ffox491](http://bit.ly/ffox491) or the plain(er)-English Nightly blog ([blog.nightly.mozilla.org](http://blog.nightly.mozilla.org)), so you know what to search for.

Nightly's current beta tools include configurable blocking of irritating 'This site wants to display notifications' pop-ups (see screenshot, below), crypto-mining blockers and a Megabar search bar with enhanced info snippets. For updates, and to send feedback, visit the Get Involved page ([bit.ly/involved491](http://bit.ly/involved491)).

There's also a Firefox Nightly Android app ([bit.ly/nightapp491](http://bit.ly/nightapp491)) and more stable Firefox Preview ([bit.ly/preview491](http://bit.ly/preview491)), whose test features include selective sync, controllable media autoplay and a navigation bar you can move around the screen.



FireFox Nightly lets you banish annoying notification pop-ups for good

## Help shape Wikipedia's mobile app

Wikipedia Beta for Android ([bit.ly/wikibeta491](http://bit.ly/wikibeta491)) has leapt aboard the dark-mode bandwagon, but only in Android 10 – which itself has just left beta testing ([google.com/android/beta](http://google.com/android/beta)). If you have the new OS, you'll find a new 'Match system theme' toggle under 'App theme' in Wikipedia Beta settings. Enable it to keep the app's dark-mode

setting in line with your device's.

The beta app is also now testing Wikipedia Zero, which lets you browse online for free on some mobile networks. Depending on feedback, it may soon follow other beta-tested features – such as Wiktionary

Go dark in the Wikipedia Beta app for Android 10

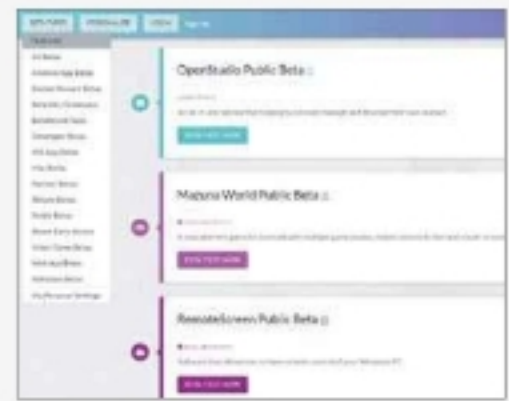


## WHERE TO FIND THE BEST NEW BETAS

**BetaList ([betalist.com](http://betalist.com)):** Apps from "tomorrow's startups today", including book-publishing tool Interior Builder and web-based video editor Recast Studio. BetaList has a great track record – it gave IFTTT and Pinterest their first platform.

**Betabound ([www.betabound.com](http://www.betabound.com)):** Click Beta Types for categories including iOS App Betas, Steam Early Access and Web App Betas.

**Sourceforge ([bit.ly/source491](http://bit.ly/source491)):** Mostly developer tools, but explore the filters on the left to find media and mobile gems such as audio converter MP3 Decoder, church music synthesiser Byzorgan and fantasy map creator Mapographer.



**TestFlight Reddit ([reddit.com/r/TestFlight](http://reddit.com/r/TestFlight)):** A lively source of betas for iPhone and iPad, with indie developers sharing invitations to their betas such as GIF creator 5SecondApp ([bit.ly/5secs491](http://bit.ly/5secs491)) and recipes app Be Cook ([bit.ly/becook491](http://bit.ly/becook491)).

definitions and a customisable Explore feed – for inclusion on the main app ([bit.ly/wikiapp491](http://bit.ly/wikiapp491)).

There's a beta programme for iOS, too, but you'll need the main Wikipedia app ([bit.ly/wikibios491](http://bit.ly/wikibios491)) plus TestFlight ([bit.ly/test491](http://bit.ly/test491), see below).

## Use screenshots to shape future iPhone apps

The Google Play Store is so packed with beta apps that they have their own section (tap 'Early access' in the Play Store app), but iOS is a different story. To join an iOS beta, you have to go via Apple's TestFlight app ([bit.ly/testf491](http://bit.ly/testf491)), which gives app makers the opportunity to test their creations for 90 days before booting them off.

The upside for users is that TestFlight makes finding and testing betas a doddle. No messing around with flags and "configs", just browse the lists of current betas and choose what to join.

The latest version of TestFlight automatically enables user feedback, and even lets you offer comments by

sending annotated screenshots to the developer. The app then keeps you updated with builds and changelogs, and saves a record of your previously tested apps.

## Join Google's secret office betas

There are umpteen Google Drive and Docs beta schemes for testing ideas that may or may not make it to the public releases. These currently include Smart Compose, a scaled-up version of the AI assistant that offers stock responses in Gmail ([bit.ly/gdocsbeta491](http://bit.ly/gdocsbeta491)); Originality Reports, which detects plagiarism in documents ([bit.ly/orig491](http://bit.ly/orig491)); and 'Offline for Binary Content', which adds offline Drive support for PDFs and photos ([bit.ly/drivebeta491](http://bit.ly/drivebeta491)).

The catch is that these betas are only open to G Suite account holders (from £4.14 per month, [gsuite.google.co.uk](http://gsuite.google.co.uk)) and they often fill up quickly. However, more come along just as fast, so keep an eye on the G Suites blog for news ([gsuiteupdates.googleblog.com](http://gsuiteupdates.googleblog.com)).



TestFlight puts you first in the queue to test iOS betas



Get one-click writing suggestions with Google Docs' new Smart Compose



# What to do when Windows 7 'dies'

Support for Windows 7 ends on 14 January 2020. If your PC is among the estimated 25% that still run Microsoft's 10-year-old operating system, **Nik Rawlinson** outlines your best options

## Run Windows 7 in a virtual machine

Windows 7 won't suddenly stop working on 14 January and, as long as your system is up to date, you won't be any less secure than you are today – at least, in the short term. However, to safeguard against hackers and malware, we wouldn't recommend clinging to Windows 7 for longer than is absolutely necessary unless you run it in a virtual machine. This is a simulated computer that runs inside a more up-to-date operating system, such as Windows 10 or even macOS, and shares the host computer's hard drive, processor and memory. It's safer than booting directly into Windows 7, because any security issues will be contained within the virtual environment, so you can wipe the OS and start again if it comes under attack.

Your best option is to download the

free virtualisation software VirtualBox ([virtualbox.org](https://www.virtualbox.org)) and specify Windows 7 as the system you want to install. Assign it at least 1GB of memory (which is deducted from the memory available to the operating system hosting the virtual environment) and a virtual hard drive of at least 20GB (again, this is subtracted from the storage available elsewhere). Insert your Windows 7 installation disc, specify this as the source media and wait for setup to complete.

There are two downsides, however. First, because you're running the OS in a virtual machine – even if it's on your old PC – Windows 7 will think you've installed it on different hardware, so you may need a new licence to activate it. The same may be true of other software, such as Microsoft Office. If you have an Office 365 account and haven't used all your bundled licences yet, this shouldn't

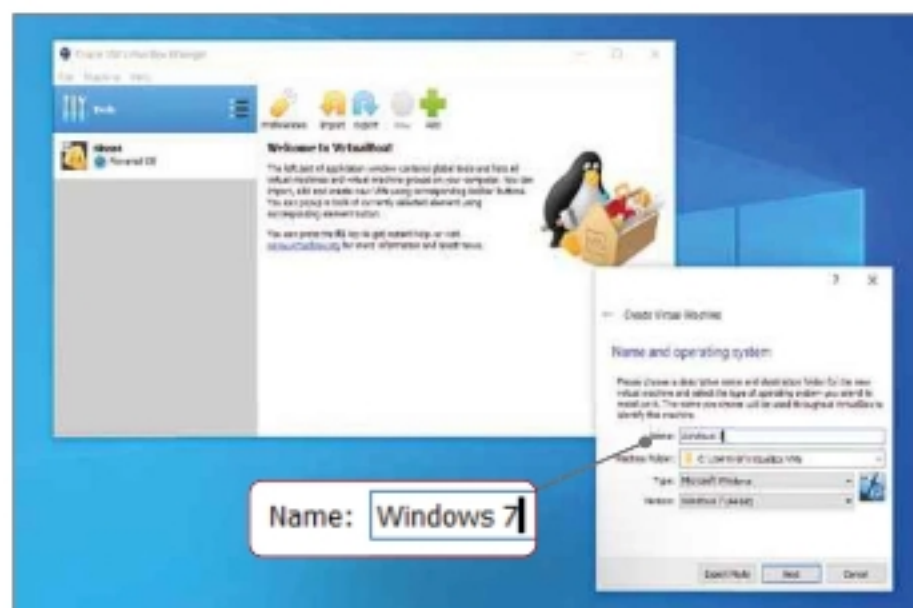
be a problem; if you've assigned them all, deregister your old Windows 7 installation

and reassign the licence to the virtual machine. A second problem is that although you're running Windows 7 in a virtual window, you need a recent operating system to host it – which almost certainly means Windows 10.

## Upgrade to Windows 10 for free

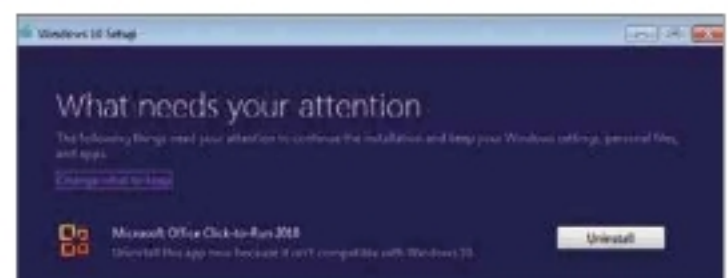
Microsoft was so keen to recruit the world to Windows 10 that, for the first year, it was available as a free upgrade to anyone who had the necessary hardware. Officially, that offer expired a long time ago but *unofficially*, it's a different story. You can still upgrade from Windows 7 and 8 to the latest operating system by using the Windows Media Creation Tool, and avoid paying the £119 (Home) or £219 (Pro) Microsoft charges for a fresh installation.

Go to the Windows 10 download page ([bit.ly/windows491](https://bit.ly/windows491)) and click 'Download tool now'. If Windows asks whether you want to save or run the download, click Run. Otherwise, launch the tool when the download has completed and click 'Upgrade this PC now'. The Windows Media Creation Tool checks your eligibility and, as long as you already



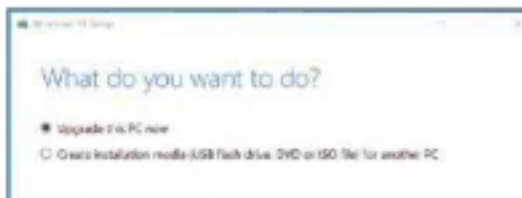
Running Windows 7 in a virtual machine lets you keep it alive in a secure, up-to-date environment

be a problem; if you've assigned them all, deregister your old Windows 7 installation



Some software, including Microsoft Office, may no longer work when you run it in a virtual machine





*You can still upgrade to Windows 10 for free using Microsoft's Media Creation Tool*

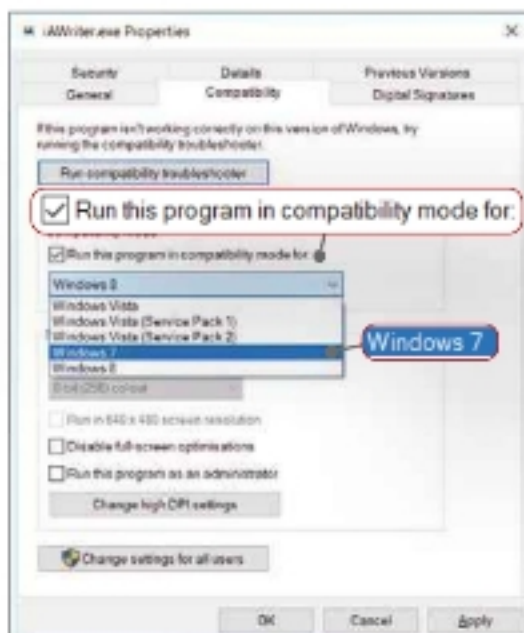
have a properly licensed version of the operating system, it will upgrade you to the equivalent version of Windows 10. For example, Windows 7 Home users receive an upgrade to Windows 10 Home, while Professional users are upgraded to Windows 10 Pro.

Click through the wizard and you can leave the installer to run unattended. Once it's complete, your Windows 10 installation should be activated automatically. If it isn't, wait for your PC to reboot, then open Settings by pressing Windows+I and click 'Update & Security' followed by Activation.

As well as saving you money, the benefit of upgrading this way rather than installing from scratch is that all your compatible programs should continue to work as they did before, without you having to reinstall them. If you find that a favourite application refuses to launch in Windows 10, you can trick it into running by emulating an earlier version of the operating system. Right-click its icon and click Properties, then switch to the Compatibility tab and check the box beside 'Run this program in compatibility mode for' and use the drop-down menu to select the most appropriate version of Windows for your program. Click Apply, then OK to save your setting.

## Make Windows 10 look like Windows 7

Visually, the biggest changes between Windows 7 and 10 are the Start menu



*If a favourite program doesn't work in Windows 10, use compatibility mode*

## SWITCH FROM WINDOWS TO LINUX

This is perhaps the most drastic option, but don't rule it out. Windows 7 is more than 10 years old and, if your PC is of a similar vintage, upgrading to Windows 10 could leave it feeling sluggish. Windows 10 requires at least 32GB of storage and Microsoft recommends 4GB of memory; for Windows 7, those figures were 16GB and 1GB respectively.

Linux is no longer the scary text-based environment it once was. Although such versions are still available, there are plenty of friendly graphical interfaces to choose from, most of which work just like Windows. They run many of the same programs, too, including LibreOffice, online versions of Microsoft Office, photo editors such as Gimp and browsers including Chrome and Firefox. Best of all, they cost nothing to install and many have been optimised for older PCs. Ubuntu ([www.ubuntu.com](http://www.ubuntu.com)) is one of the most



*Many versions of Linux, including Ubuntu, will feel familiar to Windows users who make the switch*

popular and easiest to use, and has spawned several spin-offs for specialised use. These include Lubuntu ([www.lubuntu.me](http://www.lubuntu.me)), which runs on basic hardware (even the bare-bones Raspberry Pi), so it's perfect for breathing new life into an ageing computer.

If you'd rather look before you leap, and you have a spare USB stick to hand, you can try the 'live' version of Ubuntu, which you can boot into without replacing your existing Windows 7 setup. Visit [bit.ly/linuxusb491](http://bit.ly/linuxusb491) for full instructions.

and the inclusion of Modern-style (previously Metro) apps. You can easily ignore the latter if you don't want to use them, but you can't get around using Start. Fortunately, you can make it look - and work - like Windows 7.

Open-Shell modifies the Windows 10 Start menu so it looks like the one in Windows XP, Vista and 7 - and it does the same for Explorer windows. It's free to download from [bit.ly/openshell491](http://bit.ly/openshell491) - click the '.exe' file in the table immediately below Assets for the most recent entry in the list of releases. For us that was OpenShellSetup\_4\_4\_142.exe,

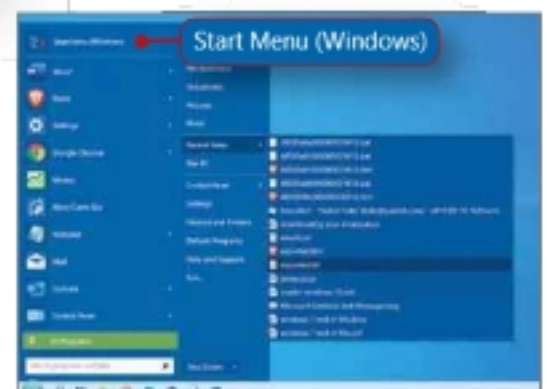


*Open-Shell can emulate various Windows Start menus including Windows 7's*

but a newer version may be available by the time you read this.

Switching to the old-style Start menu doesn't stop you accessing the tiled Windows 10 menu if you need it. You'll find it at the top of the left-hand column - just click 'Start Menu (Windows)'

Windows 10's default browser is Edge, but you can switch this to Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox or any other browser of your choice. Open Settings (Windows+I) and click Apps, followed by 'Default apps'. Click Microsoft Edge beneath 'Web browser', then select the browser you prefer from the list of previously installed alternatives. If you haven't yet installed another browser, do so before completing this step, or click 'Look for an app in the Store'. ■



*You can access Windows 10's tiled menu from the classic Windows Start menu*





# Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

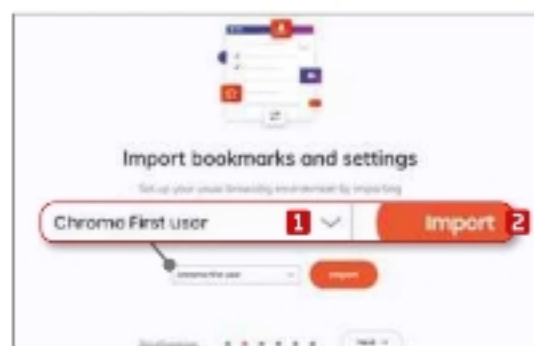
## Browse the web with Brave

After nearly four years in development, the privacy-focused web browser, Brave, is finally out of beta. Here's what you need to know

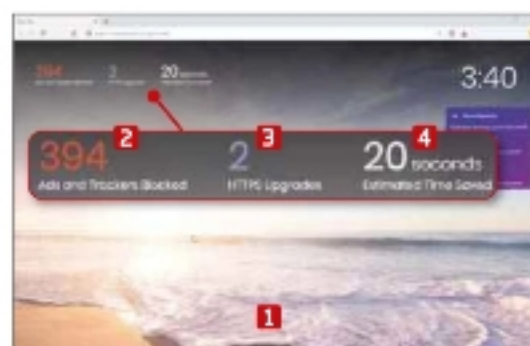
Brave: [brave.com](https://brave.com) | ⌚ 20 mins | 🖥️ 7/8/10 🍏 macOS/iOS/iPadOS 🐧 🤖

Most of us use Chrome, Firefox, Opera or Microsoft Edge to browse the web but there are excellent lesser-known choices available, such as Brave, which has just reached version 1.0 after several years of development. Created by Brendan Eich, a former CEO of Mozilla (the organisation behind Firefox), it promises faster page

loading and better privacy. Brave blocks ads, trackers and autoplaying videos automatically, and doesn't store or sell your browsing data. Its optional Brave Rewards scheme lets you make financial contributions to your favourite sites to compensate for blocking their ads. It also has a private mode that uses Tor to reroute your searches anonymously.

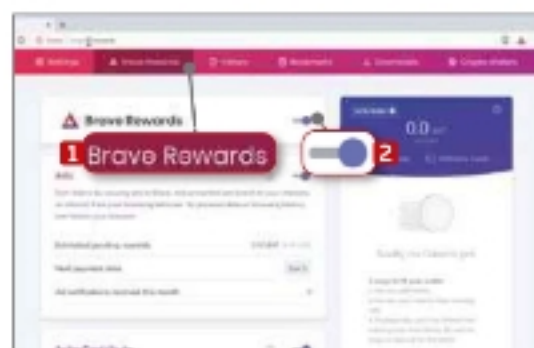


**1** When you first run Brave, a tour explains how to use the browser and gives you the option to import your settings and bookmarks. Select your main browser in the drop-down menu **1** and click Import. **2** You can then choose your default search engine, pick a theme and optionally enable Brave Rewards.

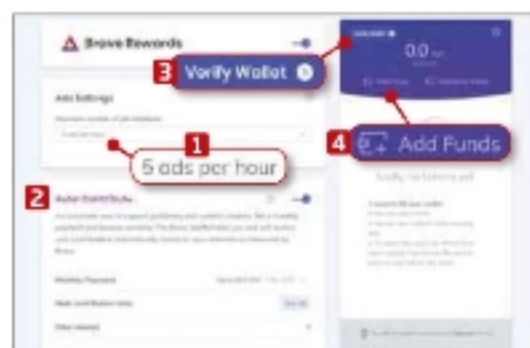


**2** Once you're set up, browse the web as normal. Open a new tab and you're greeted with an attractive photo **1** and details of the number of ads and trackers blocked. **2** It also shows how many times you've been redirected to the HTTPS version of a website **3** and the amount of time saved by blocking ads. **4**

**PHOTO BY**  
Brave credits the photographer responsible for the current image on its new tab page. Click the credit to visit their site



**3** The new tab page also provides details on Brave Rewards, including earnings so far this month and any tips and contributions. You earn tokens by viewing ads or adding funds. Click the Brave Rewards box or enter `brave://rewards` **1** in the address bar. Toggle Brave Rewards on or off. **2**

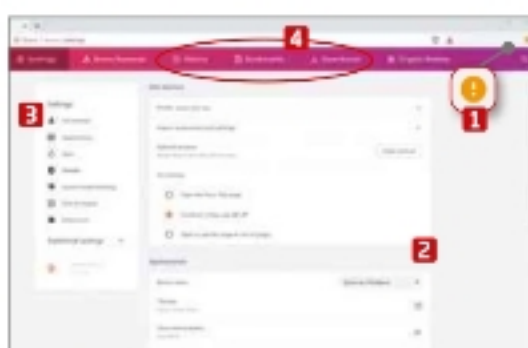
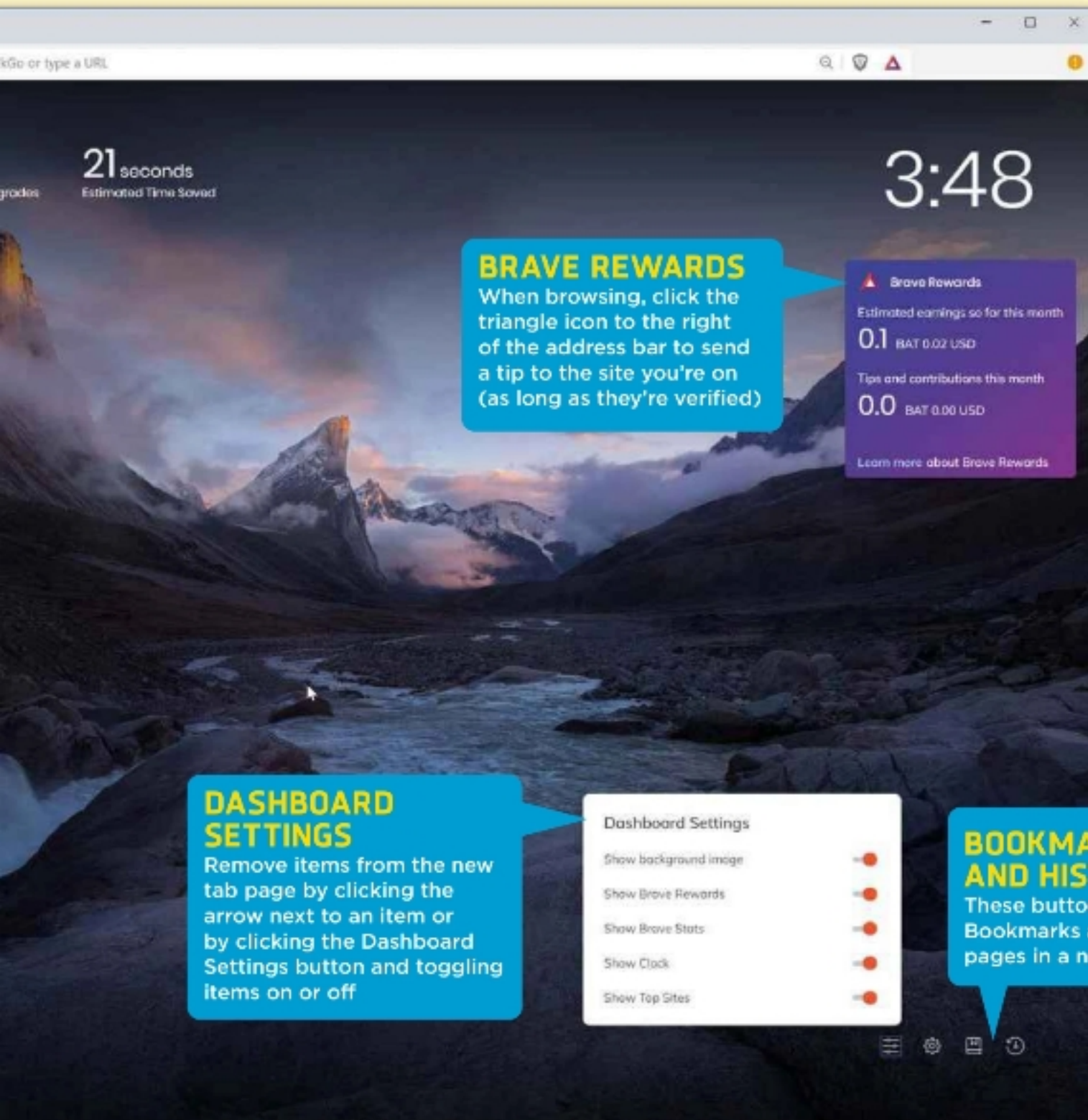


**4** You can toggle ads on or off, and click the Ads Settings button to specify how many ads you want to see - between one and five per hour. **1** By default, the browser will auto-contribute to verified sites you visit. **2** You can verify your wallet **3** and add funds. **4**



**5** The Shields button to the right of the address bar **1** shows when the browser has blocked something on the current site. Clicking the button identifies the blocked item. **2** The Advanced View **3** lets you manage the ad blocker, cookie control and so on. You can also change the global shield defaults. **4**





**6** Open the browser Settings by clicking the Edit Preferences button on the new tab page or the top-right button, **1** or by going to `brave://settings`. Scroll down to change the settings **2** or jump to a section using the sidebar. **3** You can also access your History, Bookmarks and Downloads. **4**



**7** When the browser has something to tell you, the button in the top-right corner displays an alert. Click it to see details, such as when new extensions have been installed. **1** From this menu, you can open a new private window with or without Tor, **2** and customise Brave Ad Block. **3**



**8** In a private window, search switches to the privacy-focused DuckDuckGo **1** and browsing is automatically routed through a Tor relay, **2** so searches are anonymous (a bit like a VPN). You can use this window to access the dark web, where sites have a '.onion' extension - for example, `bbcnews2vjtpsu.onion`.





# Control your PC using just your head

eViacam: [bit.ly/evia491](https://bit.ly/evia491) | ⌚ 20 mins | Webcam, 🖥️ 7, 8, 10



**W**e all occasionally suffer from mouse fatigue, particularly if you spend a lot of time at your PC. While it's no reason not to take a screen break, using an alternative set of muscles to control your computing for a while could offer some relief.

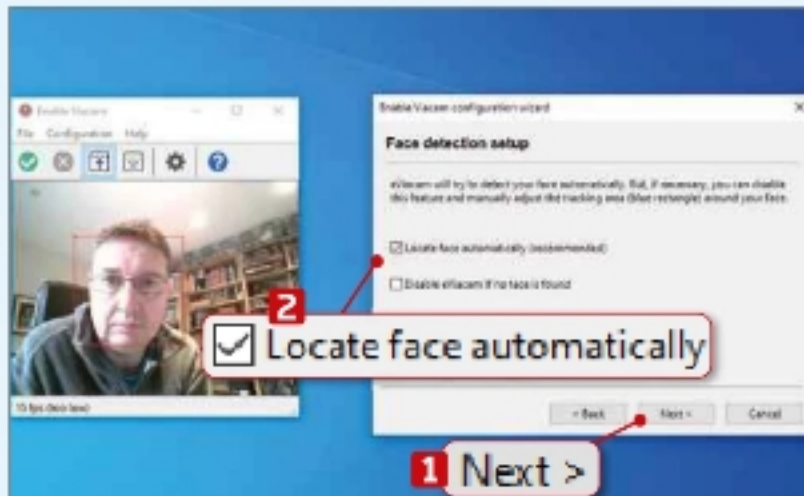
Enable Viacam (or eViacam for short) is a fascinating free tool that lets you use head movements – instead of hand movements – to control the position of the mouse or trackpad pointer on your PC screen. With your webcam following the movements of your head, using eViacam feels a bit like magic – you only have to look at what you want to do and the pointer obeys your command.



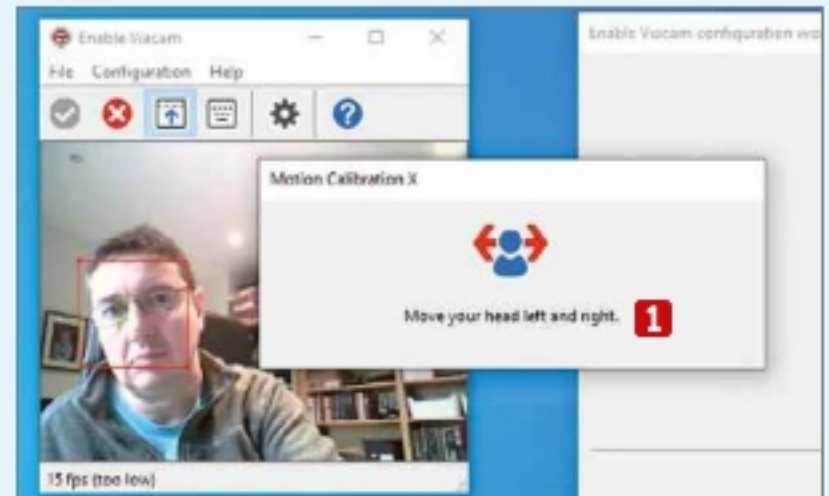
## EXPERT TIP

### Andy Shaw says

Because this software needs your webcam to be on at all times, you might want to consider restricting the apps that can access it. Open the Settings app, choose Privacy, then Camera. You can switch off 'Allow apps to access your camera' or check the list below to see if there's anything you want to let through. Scroll down to 'Allow desktop apps to access your camera' and switch it on. Only eViacam should be listed below.



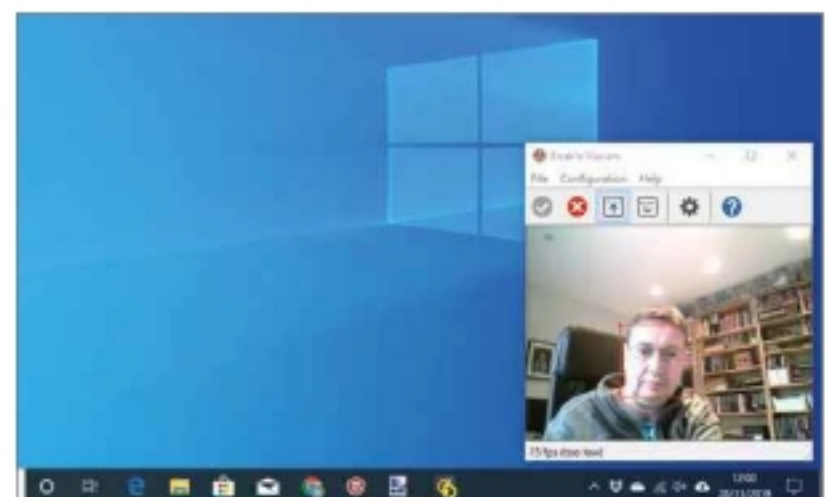
**1** Launch Enable Viacam and start the configuration wizard by clicking the Next button. **1** Work your way through the setup, choosing to 'Locate face automatically' **2** and making other choices as you deem appropriate. Choose to 'Perform assisted calibration'.



**2** Follow the onscreen instructions to move your head around – first left to right, **1** then up and down. Once calibrated, the screen shows a confirmation option. Click OK, Cancel or Retry. Now try moving your head to move the cursor to OK, then hover over it to click.



**3** This Dwell Screen effect works well for clicking buttons and selecting things, but can sometimes lead to accidental actions triggered because you've stopped moving. If you don't like Dwell Click, the next screen lets you disable the pointer-control feature. **1**

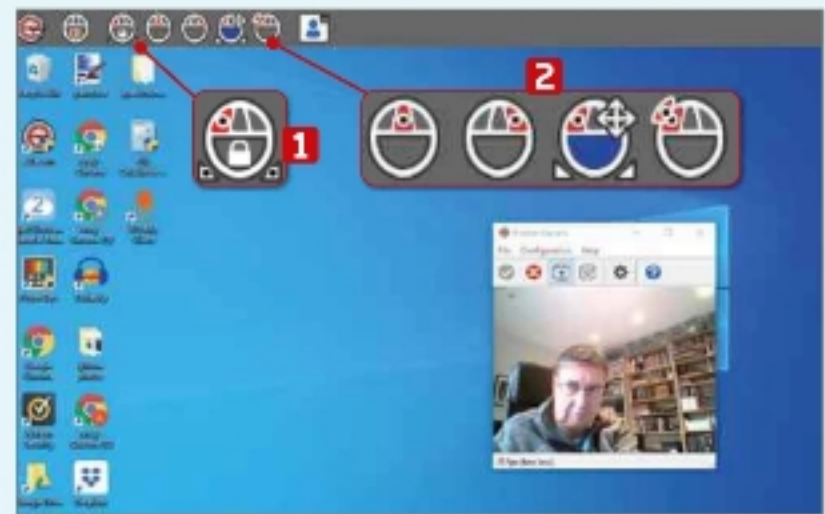


**4** Once you start using Enable Viacam, you may sometimes find that your mouse isn't in the centre of the screen when you're looking at it straight on. To sort this out, look straight at the middle of the screen then use your mouse to move the pointer there. You can press F10 to centre the pointer if you select the shortcut in Settings.

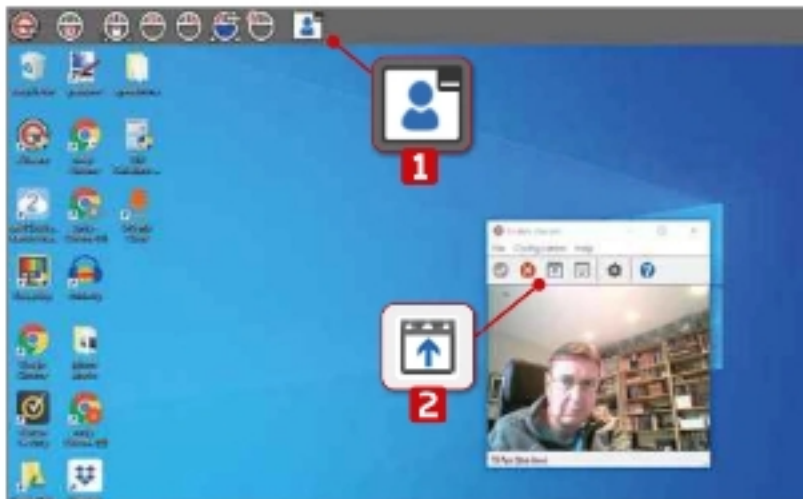




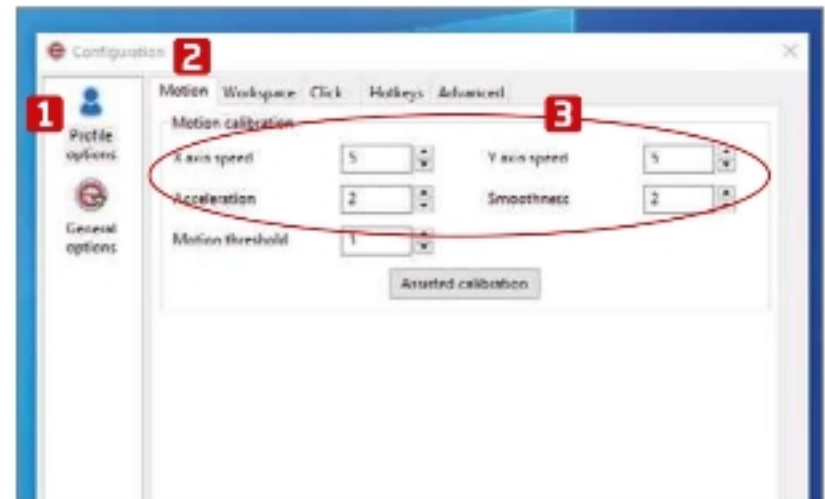
**5** The toolbar across the top of the screen can be used to control the actions that Dwell Click performs. After the logo on the left, the first icon **1** temporarily switches off Dwell Click, so you can stop it from making accidental clicks while you're not using it.



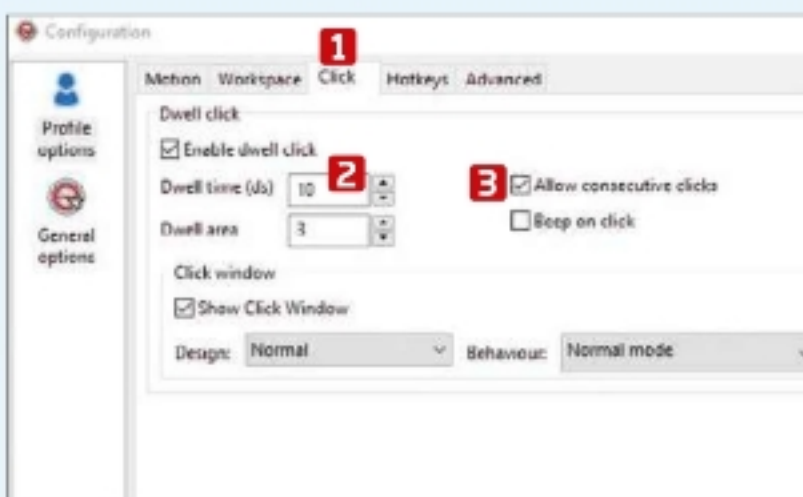
**6** The left-click icon shows a padlock. **1** This means that if you switch the click option to one of the others - middle-click, right-click, left-click and drag or double-click **2** - the Dwell Click option will revert back to left-click immediately after.



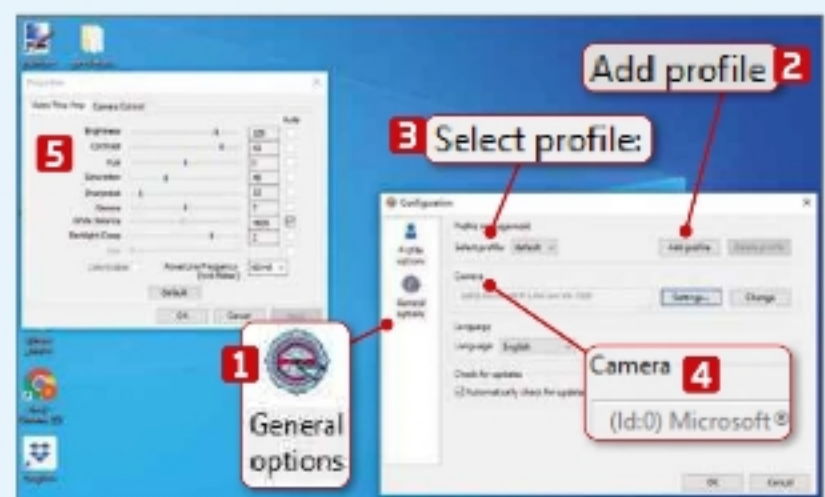
**7** The final button on the row **1** shows or hides the window displaying your face, so you don't have to stare at yourself while using the software. You can also hide the top toolbar using the Click Window button. **2**



**8** Click the Settings cog, choose 'Profile options' **1** and open the Motion tab **2** to access the settings that fine-tune how the mouse cursor moves when you move your head. It's worth experimenting with these settings to adjust the speed **3** and acceleration of the pointer to suit you.



**9** Likewise, if you want to fine-tune the Dwell Click action, select the Click tab. **1** Here, you can adjust the length of time the cursor has to hover over something before it's clicked **2** and choose whether continuing to hover over a button clicks it again. **3**



**10** You can set up profiles with personalised settings for different people to use the software. Click 'General options', **1** then 'Add profile'. **2** Choose the profile from the menu on the left. **3** From here, you can also select from any available cameras **4** and further adjust the settings **5** if you need to.





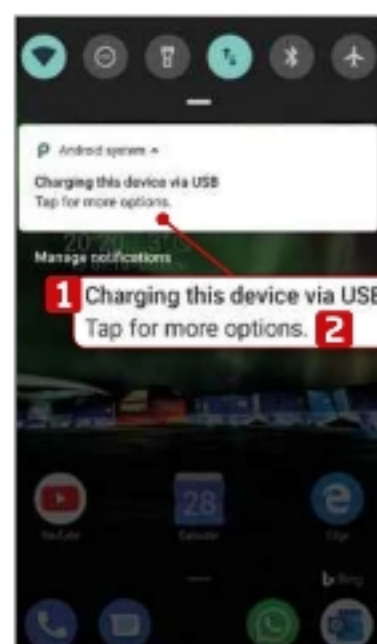
## Workshop 3

# Find files on your phone using your PC

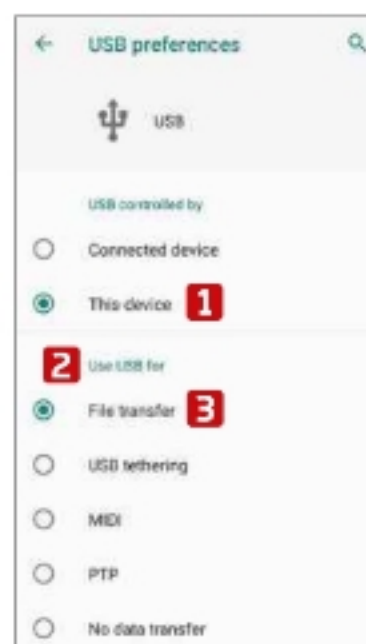
The way your photos, documents and other files are saved across your mobile device can make them difficult to locate, and it's even harder to move them across to other devices. NirSoft's MobileFileSearch simplifies the process. Its

**MobileFileSearch:** [www.nirsoft.net](http://www.nirsoft.net) | 10 mins | 7, 8, 10

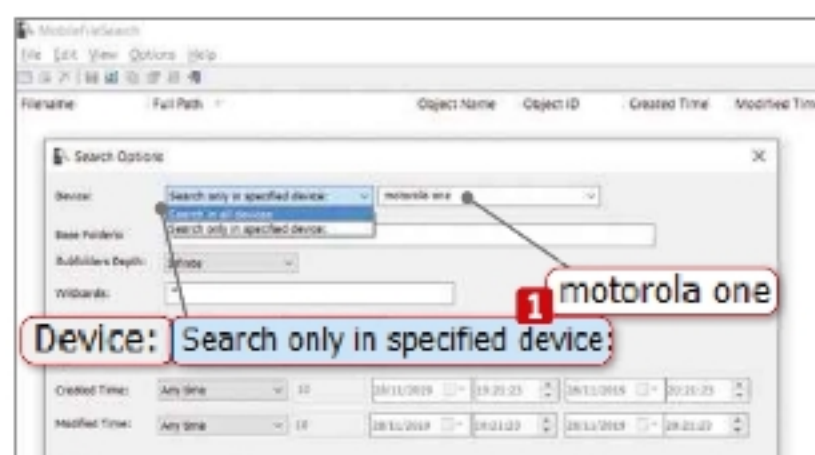
File Explorer-type layout lets you quickly zero in on specific folders and file types, or view every file on your phone in one place.



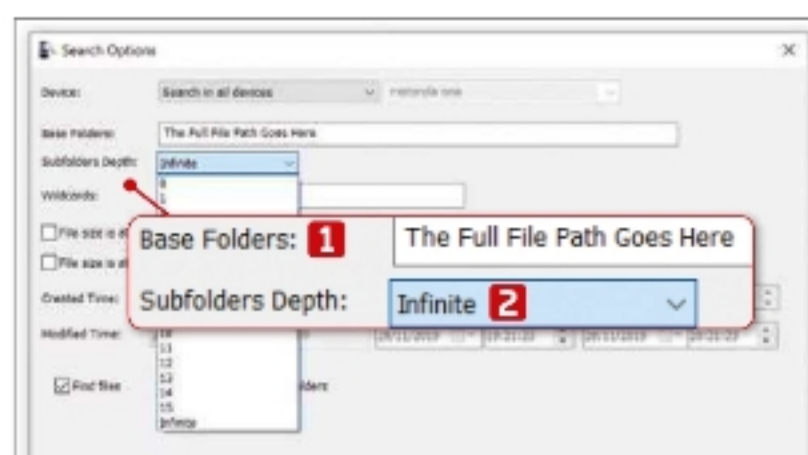
**1** Start by connecting your phone to your computer using a cable. Once you receive the notification that your computer and the device are connected, a notification should pop up on your phone that says 'Charging this device via USB'. **1** Select the option 'Tap for more options.' **2**



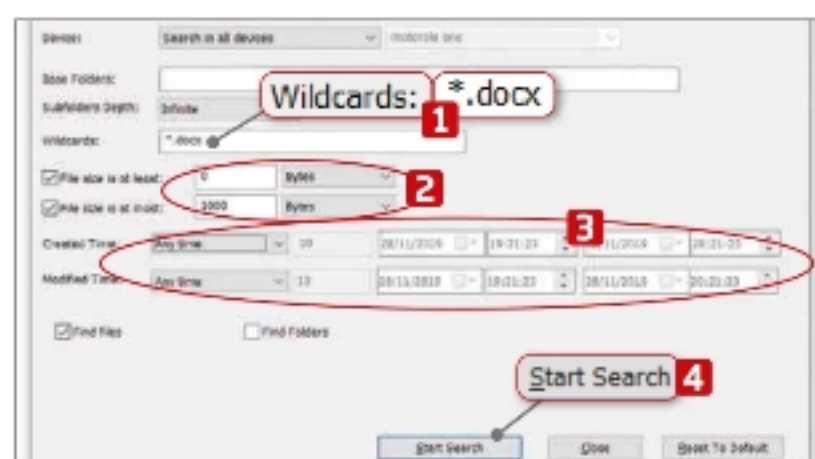
**2** You're next presented with a 'USB preferences' screen. The top options let you switch which device is controlled by USB - leave 'This device' selected. **1** Beneath this, change 'Use USB for' **2** from 'No data transfer' to 'File transfer'. **3** Another notification may display on your computer confirming the switch.



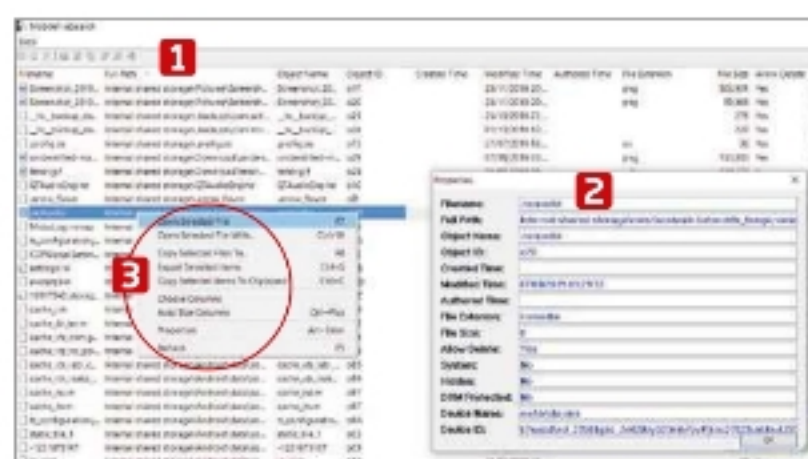
**3** Return to MobileFileSearch on your PC. If the Search Options box isn't open, click File, Search Options. By default, the program searches all connected devices. If you have multiple phones connected, you can specify a single device by selecting it from the Device drop-down menu. **1**



**4** The Base Folders option **1** lets you search a particular folder. However, in this field, you must enter the full file path name - leave it blank to search every folder on your phone. Leaving the Subfolders Depth as Infinite **2** will take more time but gives better search results.



**5** The Wildcards field lets you determine which file types to search for, such as '.docx' or '.png'. Leave the asterisk in place and type '[file type]'. **1** You can further narrow the search by choosing file sizes **2** and modification dates, **3** though they're not required. Click Start Search. **4**



**6** Search results appear in the main window. **1** Double-clicking a result displays the file's details. **2** To perform actions on the file, such as opening or copying them to your computer, right-click the file and choose the appropriate option from the context menu. **3**

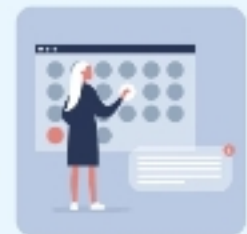




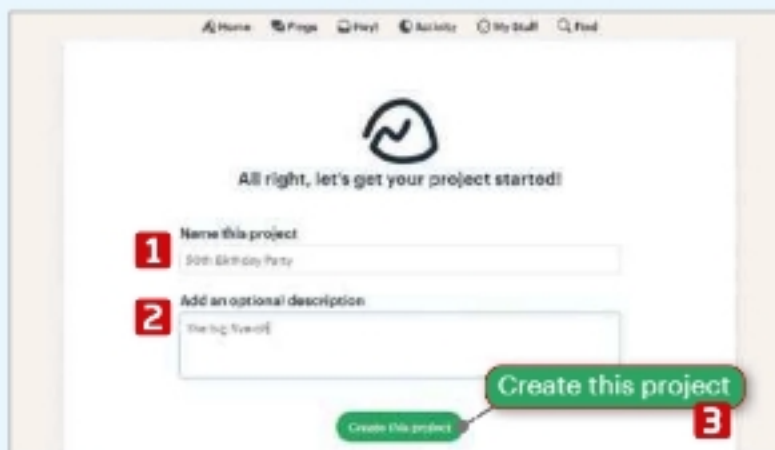
# Organise your next big project online

Planning a big holiday or a major celebration can be frustratingly complicated, especially if you're trying to enlist the help of others. You can make the process a lot easier by using Basecamp to coordinate everything. This

powerful collaboration tool used to be expensive but now a new free Personal account is available that lets you manage up to three projects and 20 people.



**Basecamp:** [basecamp.com](https://basecamp.com) | 20 mins | Any browser, iOS, Android



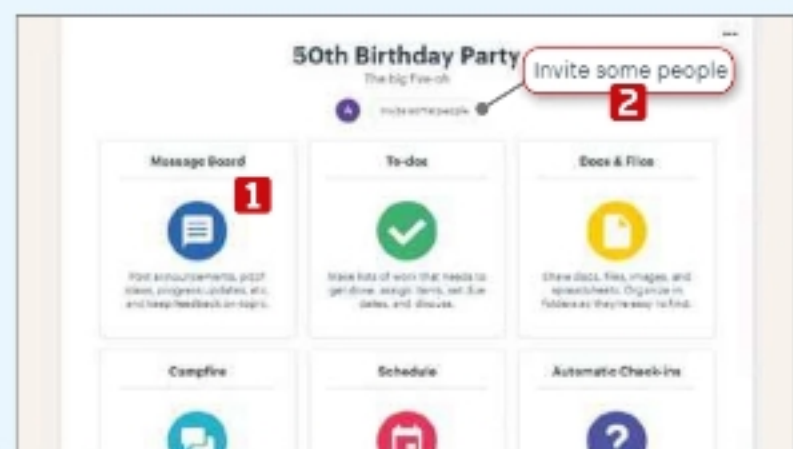
**1** Once you've signed up for Basecamp Personal, the tool takes you to a page called Your Projects. Click the big green Plus button. Give your first project a name **1** and description, **2** then click 'Create this project'. **3** This opens the project's main page.



**2** Before you invite anyone to join you in your project, add any key events, such as the main event itself, and any other meetings or deadlines you need. Select Schedule, then click the 'New event' button **1** and fill in the calendar entry. **2** Click 'Post this event'.



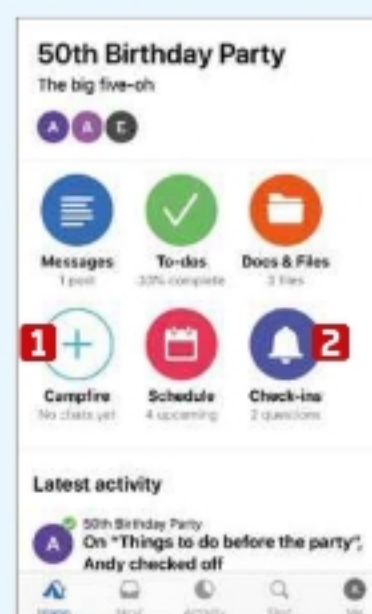
**3** You can use Basecamp as a space for creating documents or organising any existing files. Click 'Docs & Files', then the New button. **1** You can create a native document, **2** upload a file from your PC **3** or add a file from a cloud service. **4**



**4** Add a welcome message to the Message Board. **1** Here you can leave general messages for your collaborators. Now it's time to gather your team, so click 'Invite some people', **2** then 'Add people'. Fill in the contact details and a message, then after a quick preview click 'Send now'.



**5** Once you've recruited some helpers, you can start assigning tasks. Click To-dos, 'New list'. Name your list, then add items by entering a description of each task. **1** Assign it to a person, **2** set a deadline **3** and add notes. **4** Every page includes a space to discuss the project. **5**



**6** The Campfire **1** is a simple chat forum, while Automatic Check-ins **2** remind you to discuss how the project is going. As you'd expect from an online service, Basecamp also syncs with mobile devices. Its apps for Android and iOS sync instantly, offering all the same tools as the website, and are great for ensuring you're always on top of your projects, even when you're away from your PC.



# Weekend Project

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



How to...

## Build a website with WordPress 5.3

**Wayne Williams** shows you how to create a sophisticated website using WordPress 5.3 and the new Twenty Twenty template

**T**here are many ways to create a professional-looking website, but one of the easiest is to use a content management system (CMS) such as WordPress ([wordpress.org](https://wordpress.org)). This open-source software uses the PHP programming language and MySQL open-source database to create a website or blog that you can then upload to a hosting service of your choice. This is not to be confused with [WordPress.com](https://WordPress.com), which is a separate online site-creation and hosting service that lets you quickly build a basic WordPress site.

The latest version of the WordPress software - 5.3 "Kirk" (named after jazz legend Rahsaan Roland Kirk) - was released recently, and comes with a selection of new blocks in the block editor. There's also a smart new template called Twenty Twenty, which is perfect for building your website.



### What you'll need

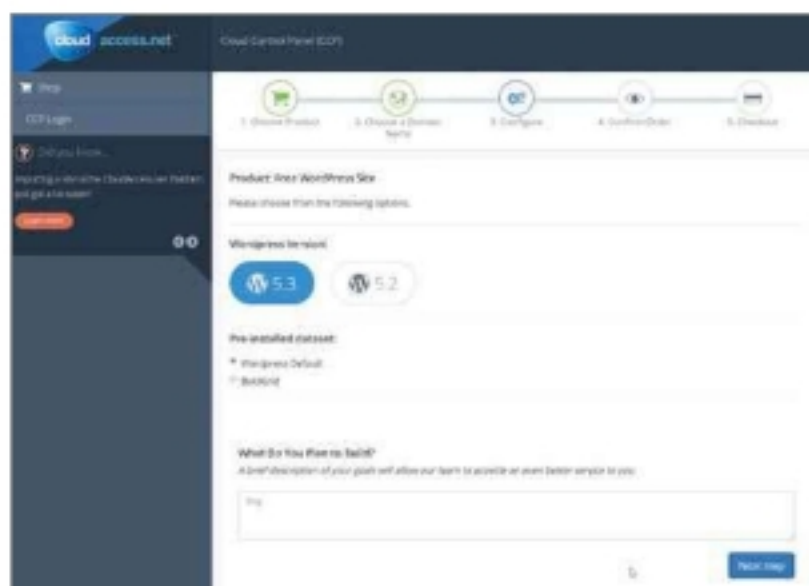
Before you can create a WordPress site, you need to sign up for a web-hosting service. There are lots of different hosts to choose from, so shop around to find one that suits your needs and budget. Most hosts offer one-click WordPress installation, which saves you the hassle of installing the software yourself. If you've never created a WordPress site before and you don't currently have any hosting,

opt for one that lets you jump straight in and start designing your website. If you'd rather install WordPress yourself, you'll find detailed instructions at [bit.ly/installwp491](https://bit.ly/installwp491).

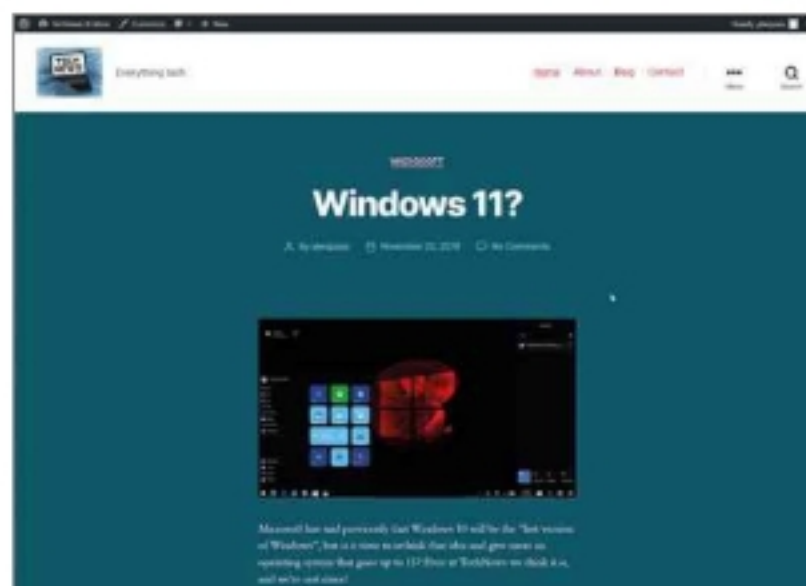
For the sake of simplicity, we're using [CloudAccess.net](https://CloudAccess.net) ([bit.ly/cloudaccess491](https://bit.ly/cloudaccess491)) for our Weekend Project. This offers 30 days of free WordPress hosting, and you don't need to enter your credit card details when you sign up.

To get started with [CloudAccess.net](https://CloudAccess.net), enter a site name into the box on the main page, then click the Launch Now button. You can sign up for a free account using a valid email address, or your Facebook, Google or Twitter credentials. Complete the steps, choosing WordPress 5.3 when prompted. Check your order summary, which should show a price of \$0.00, then click Checkout and complete the order.





CloudAccess.net offers 30 days of free hosting and comes with WordPress 5.3 as standard



We used WordPress's new default Twenty Twenty theme to design this website because it looks clean and works well

As soon as you've received an email containing your WordPress login details, you can start work on your website – see our Mini Workshop, below.

## Content blocks

Before version 5.0 of WordPress came along, the method for creating new posts was to type a title at the top, then enter some body copy in the box below. To upload or add a photo, you had to click the Add Media button. Version 5.0, which launched at the end of 2018, revolutionised the system by introducing a new block editor. The latest version, 5.3, expands and improves this feature, making it even easier to use.

Blocks are customisable building elements that can contain headings, body text, images, lists, quotes, audio, files and more. Click the Add Block

button while writing a post to access the Most Used blocks, or scroll down to explore further options. You can also embed widgets from other services, such as tweets, YouTube videos, Facebook posts, Spotify content and more. Select a YouTube block, for example, and it appears on the page with a prompt to enter the URL of a YouTube video.

Clicking a block reveals a list of options in a sidebar on the right. The choices available depend on the type of block you've selected, but they allow you to customise the content in a number of ways. For example, a Paragraph block provides options to adjust the font size, add a drop cap, change the colours and so on.

The latest version of WordPress includes a new Group block, which lets you divide a page into sections, and

supports fixed-column widgets in the Columns block. Heading blocks now have their own set of controls for changing the text and background colours, too.

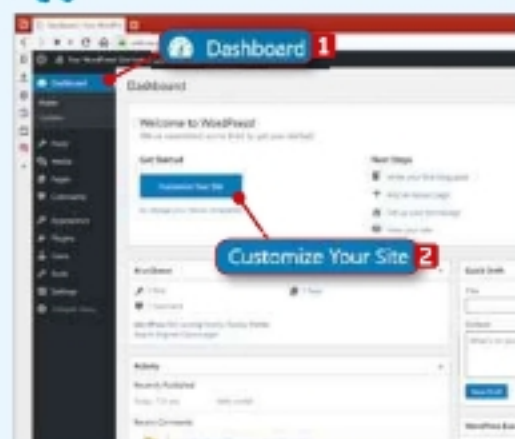
The block-based editor can take a little getting used to, especially if you're used to the old way of doing things in WordPress, but we think it's a great improvement and you'll soon get the hang of it. We guide you through the process in our Mini Workshop on page 61.

## TwentyTwenty theme

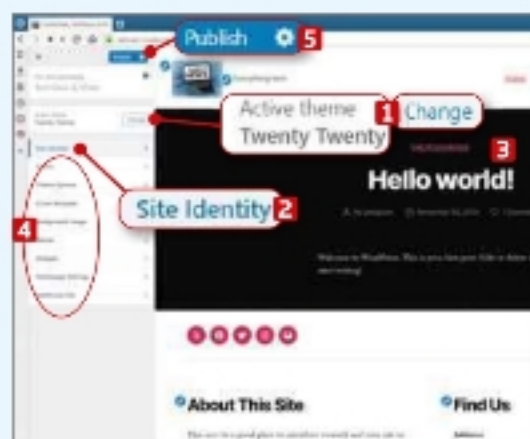
The latest version of WordPress includes a brand new theme with the focus on "clarity and readability". The Twenty Twenty theme uses a new variable typeface called Inter, which reduces load times. Like all previous WordPress themes, it's highly customisable, so you can change it to suit your needs. It's a



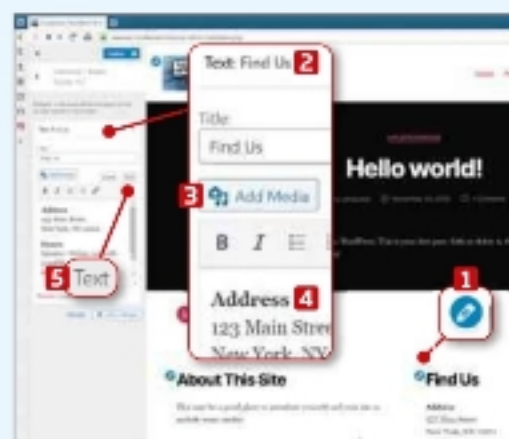
## MINI WORKSHOP | Get started on your WordPress website



**1** Click the link in the email from your hosting company to log into WordPress, entering the username and password provided. This opens the Dashboard, **1** where you can change your site's appearance and add content. WordPress uses the Twenty Twenty theme by default, but you can customise it **2** or pick a different one.



**2** On the customisation page, you can choose a different theme. **1** Click Site Identity **2** to enter a new title and tagline for your site, which appear at the top of the page. **3** You can also change your theme options, add a background image and customise your homepage. **4** Click Publish **5** for your changes to take effect.







**3** If you want to make changes to an item, click the pencil icon next to it. **1** With the Find Us widget, **2** for example, you can change the title, add media **3** and edit the contact information that appears. **4** Select the Text tab **5** if you'd prefer to edit the HTML code directly.



# Broadband Deals

Call **FREE** on 0800 083 2357 to switch your broadband

	Provider	Package name	Monthly price	Contract length	Broadband speed	Allowance	First-year cost*
1	 <b>Shell ENERGY</b>	Shell Energy: Fast Broadband	<b>£16.99</b>	<b>18</b> months	<b>11Mbps</b> avg. speed	∞ unlimited	<b>CHEAPEST</b> <b>£203.88</b>
2	 <b>TalkTalk</b> For Everyone	TalkTalk: Fast Broadband	<b>£17.95</b> (£30 after 18 months)	<b>12</b> months	<b>11Mbps</b> avg. speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£215.40</b>
3	 <b>sky</b>	Sky: Broadband Essential	<b>£20.00</b> (£25 after 18 months)	<b>18</b> months	<b>11Mbps</b> avg. speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£240.00</b>
4	 <b>Virgin media</b>	Virgin Media: Big Bundle + Fibre Broadband + Weekend Calls	<b>£33.00</b> (£54 after 12 months)	<b>12</b> months	<b>54Mbps</b> avg. speed	∞ unlimited	<b>£396.00</b>

Terms & Conditions apply - see ISP sites for details

\* Fair-usage or restriction policy applies.

Data supplied by [www.broadbandgenie.co.uk](http://www.broadbandgenie.co.uk). Correct as of 6 December 2019.

**Ofcom**

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

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

**SNEAK  
PREVIEW!**

# Computer active

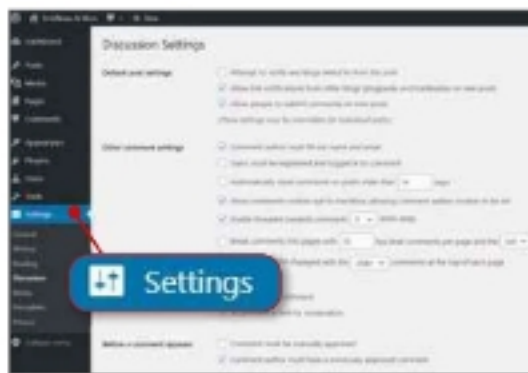
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Get a cheaper package today - your 7-point plan
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**On sale  
Fri  
3 Jan**





Manage commenting and moderation under Settings, Discussion in the left-hand panel

great choice if you're creating your first WordPress site because it looks clean and automatically displays your work to look its best on any size of screen.

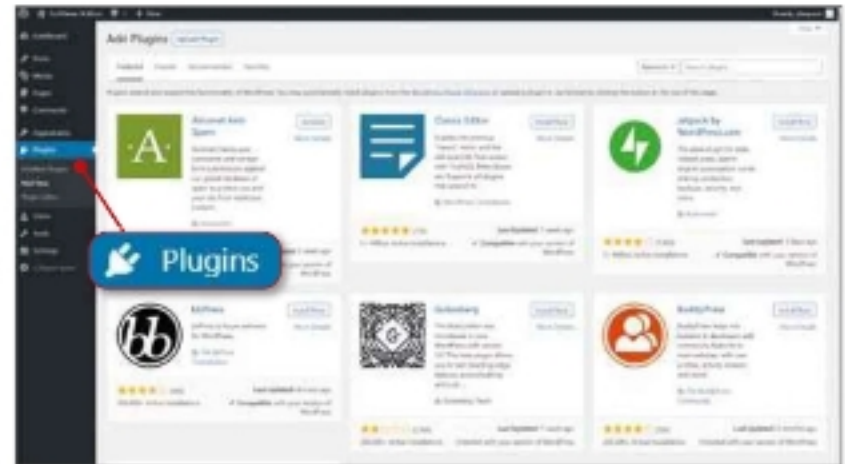
### Other improvements

Version 5.3 of WordPress features a wealth of other small but useful improvements, such as automatic image rotation (which rotates pictures according to their orientation data), better site-

health checks (which you can find under Tools) and periodic admin email verification to ensure your admin details remain up to date. The software offers full support for PHP 7.4 – the latest version of the programming language – and improves date and time functionality, too.

### Edit your sections

You can add, remove and modify any section of your site through the Pages menu. This is well worth looking at when you first set up your site because you can remove any default elements you don't need, such as sample pages, contact details and so on. You'll probably want to keep pages such as About and Privacy Policy – just update them so they're relevant to your particular site. The process for editing a page is similar to editing a post.

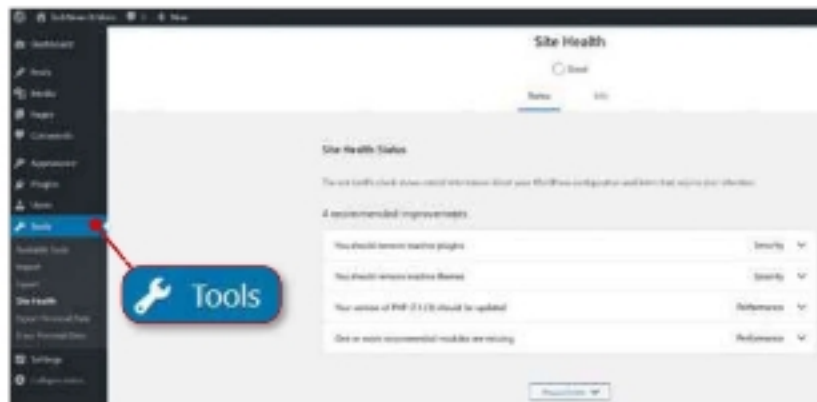


Add useful (and not so useful) plugins to your WordPress installation

### Install plugins

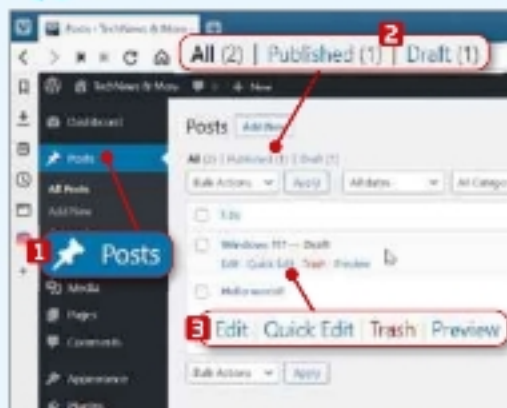
One of WordPress's most useful features is its support for third-party plugins to expand what the software can do. The default installation comes with Hello Dolly (which displays a song lyric in the upper-right corner of the admin screen on every page and was one of the first plug-ins created for the platform) and Akismet Anti-Spam (which, as its name suggests, protects your site from spam).

If you're using [CloudAccess.net](https://cloudaccess.net) to host your website, you'll also see an Auto Login tool. To install more options, click Add New under Plugins and browse the selection. These are categorised by Featured, Popular, Recommended and Favourites, or you can search for a particular plugin by name. Jetpack is one you should definitely install, because it provides useful information about site traffic and search engine optimisation. ■



The Site Health tool recommends improvements to your site

## MINI WORKSHOP | Create a new post on your website



**1** Go to the Dashboard's sidebar and click Posts. **1** Here you can see all the posts you have created for your site, or select only the Published or Draft posts. **2** Hover your mouse over a post for options to edit it, send it to the trash or see a preview. **3**



**2** Click Add New **1** to write a new post. WordPress uses different blocks to create the various sections of your post. Type a headline into the first block, **2** then add some body text. **3** Click a block to reveal its formatting options. **4** The plus button **5** lets you add a new block type, such as an image or gallery block.



**3** To add an image, you can either upload it to WordPress or go to your media library and choose one you uploaded previously. When writing your body copy, tap Enter to create a new paragraph block. To reorder blocks, drag the handle on the left. **1** You can preview your page **2** at any time. Click publish **3** when it's finished.

## NEXT ISSUE

How To... Unlock secret uses for your smart speaker

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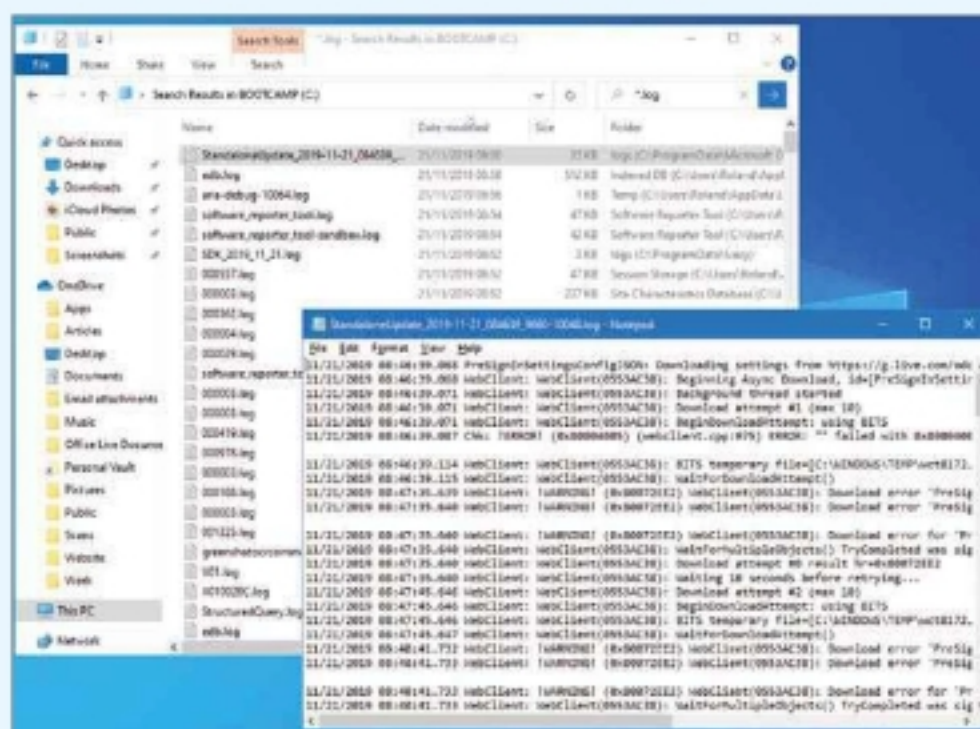
# Web User Masterclass

## Diagnose problems by analysing Windows log files for errors and warnings

### Find your log files

**W**indows and other programs create log files to record various activities, such as successful or unsuccessful updates, changes to settings, actions performed while your PC is starting up or running, and so on. To see the log files that are stored on your PC, open Explorer, select drive C: and type \*.log into the search box. Windows scans your entire hard drive for log files and lists them.

The process can take several minutes, so be patient. When it's finished, set the view to Details and click the 'Date modified' column header so that the most recent logs appear at the top of the list. Log files aren't essential so you can delete them if you're short of drive space or you think they're causing a problem. However, they can be useful, so it's best to keep them if possible.



Search for log files in C: or C:\Windows, and double-click to view them

### View your log files

Most log files are stored as plain text, so double-clicking a \*.log file in an Explorer window opens it in Notepad. Log files are usually structured with one entry per line. You can make them easier to read in Notepad by selecting Format and clearing 'Word wrap', although this means you may need to scroll horizontally to see long entries.

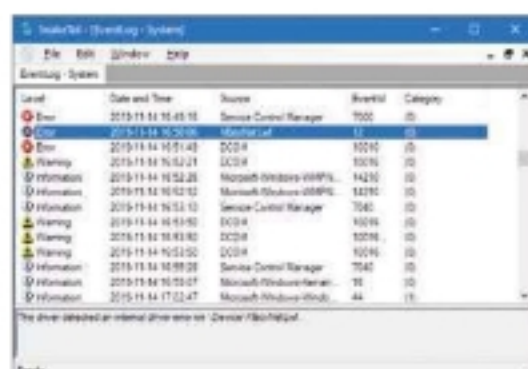
The content of log files is often technical and can be difficult to understand unless you're a software developer. However, they sometimes contain brief explanations in plain English, which makes them very useful for diagnosing problems.

A log file may include a list of actions that occurred just before Windows or a program failed, which can shed light on

any problems. Sometimes you'll find minor errors in Windows and apps that aren't serious enough to generate a message on screen. Windows usually notifies you of serious problems, but it's still worth checking the log files for minor problems.

### Clear your log files

Log files are useful for troubleshooting your PC, so it's generally not a good idea to delete them. However, clearing them can sometimes help to solve problems. If Windows Update gets in a muddle, for example, you should remove Windows Update's log files to clean up previous update attempts.



SnakeTail is a simple Windows log viewer that shows system events

The best way to remove them is to click Start and type disk clean-up. Select it in the search results to run it, then click 'Clean up system files'. Tick the box next to items described as log files, then click OK to delete them.

### Simple Windows log viewer

Windows includes a powerful log viewer, but it can be quite complicated and hard to understand.

SnakeTail ([snakenest.com/snaketail](http://snakenest.com/snaketail)) offers a simpler way to browse and view Windows logs. On the website, click the Download Latest Version link and, on the next page, download the '.zip' version of SnakeTail. Unzip the file and double-click SnakeTail.exe to run it. No installation is required.

Click File, Open EventLog and choose a log, such as Applications or System. SnakeTail lists logged events and lets you see information, errors and warnings. Select an event to view a brief description in the box below.

### Research Windows logs

If you want to know more about Windows log files and the events they describe, click the Start button and

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.





type event logs. Select one of the items in the search results to see what information is available online. Click a link to open a browser window and read the relevant web articles.

## View Windows log sizes

Windows logs a huge number of events, and the basic text log files that many applications produce are not particularly easy to view. Thankfully, Windows stores events in a special log and provides a utility to browse and view them. To access it, click Start, type event viewer, then click it when it appears in the search results.

Alternatively, open Control Panel, then click Administrative Tools, Event Viewer – this option works in Windows 7, too.

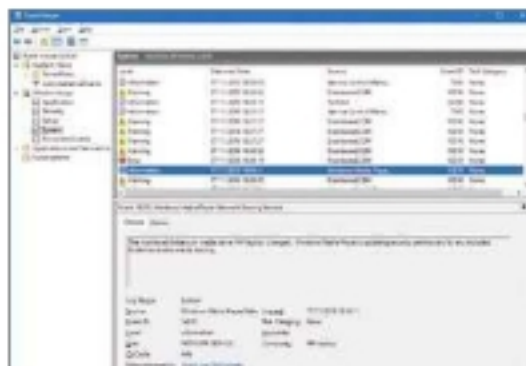
Select Windows Logs in the left-hand sidebar, and the logs appear in the middle section, showing the type, the number of events in each type and the size. Some can be tens of megabytes.

## View application logs

When you run an application, including system tools such as the disk defragmenter, the event is stored in the applications log, along with its result. This happens whether it's successful or not. Sometimes the log file is the only way to find out about minor problems that don't warrant a Windows alert.

Click Start, type event viewer, open it, then expand Windows Logs in the sidebar and select Application. Look for warnings, errors and critical events indicated by yellow triangle and red circle icons. A white 'i' icon indicates successful events such as starting programs and performing actions of various types. These entries are included simply for your information.

Select an event from the list to see a description. This can be technical and you may not understand much of the information, but sometimes the cause of the problem is obvious, such as an error of some sort. You may be surprised by what goes on in Windows without you knowing – there are often lots of warnings and errors, even when your PC seems to be running perfectly well.



Use Event Viewer to explore Windows log files and check for errors

## TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

### View system logs

Windows Update is a major source of frustration for many people. Thankfully, if it gets stuck or stops working, the logs can reveal the nature of the problem. Even with logs the cause may not be obvious, but it's certainly worth trying.

After a failed or successful Windows update, click Start, type event viewer, open it, expand Windows Logs in the sidebar and select System. Lots of other system events appear in this log file besides Windows Update, so look for WindowsUpdateClient in the Source column. Select an event to read its description.

The System log section also contains details of virus definition updates for Windows Security and many Registry operations such as clearing and setting Registry values.

### See more Windows Update logs

Windows can generate more than 20 different types of log file when running Windows Update. There are logs for when an update is successful, when it fails, when it fails during the second restart, and so on. To see the names and locations of these files, go to [bit.ly/logs491](http://bit.ly/logs491).

### Show administrative events

In the Event Viewer, expand Custom Views and select Administrative Events. Unlike other logs, which show

successful operations, this one only collects errors, which makes it a good place to look if you're having problems with Windows.

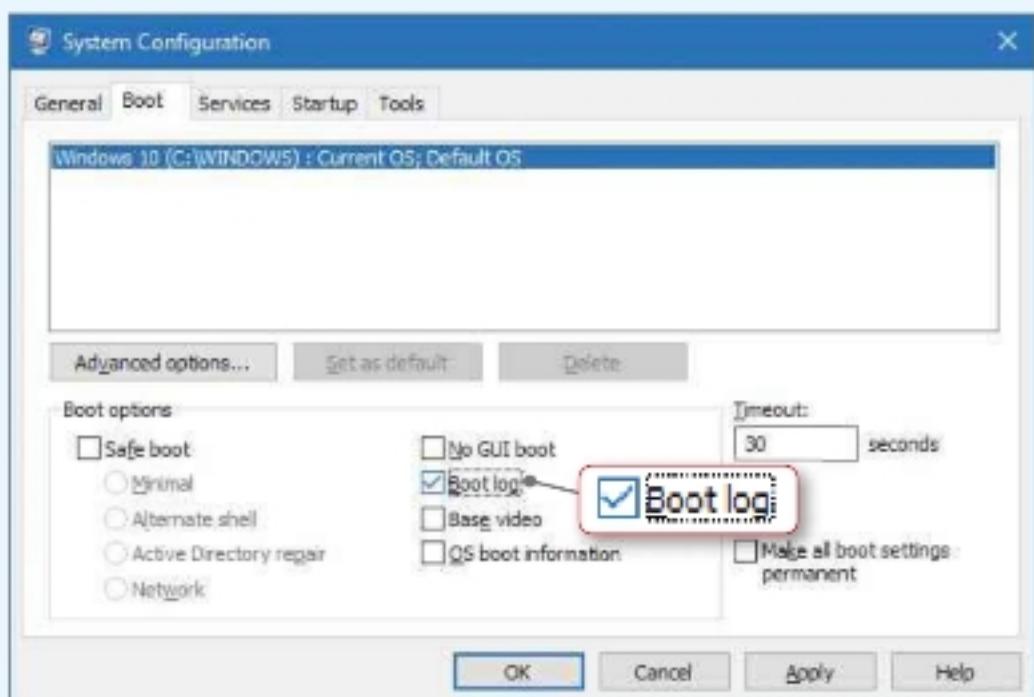
Feel free to investigate errors, but don't worry about them too much because Windows constantly detects and ignores minor problems. When you see how many there are, you realise how well Windows copes with them. It would be nice if we could solve them all, but it's not realistic. Serious problems generate error messages on screen, and it's those that you really need to worry about.

### Log Windows startup

What does Windows do when it starts up and loads the desktop? Do you see any error messages or warnings? Is it loading malware? Is something failing? If you want to see what's going on and perhaps try to solve any startup problems, enable the Windows boot-logging feature.

Press Windows+R and type msconfig to run the System Configuration tool. Select the Boot tab and tick the box next to 'Boot log', then click OK. When you next restart your PC, Windows will log every file it loads to C:\Windows\ntbtlog.txt. Double-click the log in an Explorer window to open it in Notepad.

When you've had a look at the file, go back to System Configuration and clear the tick next to 'Boot log', because there's no need to create a log every time you start Windows.



Log Windows startup processes by enabling the 'Boot log' option



# 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](mailto:webuser@webuser.co.uk)



## GENERAL PC

### Should I upgrade my Windows 7 PCs?

**Q** I was interested to read James Oliver's email about upgrading from Windows 7 to 10 in Issue 487's Ask The Expert ([bit.ly/webuser487](http://bit.ly/webuser487)).

I run Windows 7 on three PCs and have been receiving messages from Microsoft advising that support for Windows 7 will end in January 2020. However, they also don't recommend installing Windows 10 on an older PC.

All three of my computers are in good working order and it seems an unnecessary waste and expense to replace them by buying new ones. What are your thoughts?

**Gary Kirby, via email**

**A** You can keep using Windows 7 if it does everything you want. Microsoft won't provide updates, which may mean that a future security flaw doesn't get fixed (see [bit.ly/winsup491](http://bit.ly/winsup491) for more details), but security software from reputable companies should continue to protect you from threats. Apart from security

risks, some software doesn't work on Windows 7, such as the Microsoft Store and its apps.

Microsoft has tried to make Windows 10 compatible with old computers, so it should run on your Windows 7 PCs. However, there is a small chance it won't – it depends on the hardware.

The safest option for security and compatibility is to buy a new computer, which is why Microsoft recommends it. Bear in mind that Windows 10 costs £120 from Microsoft, so you have to wonder whether it's worth spending that much to install it on an old PC. For the price of Windows 10 licences for all three of your Windows 7 PCs, you could buy a brand new Windows 10 PC and, depending on the specifications of your existing

Windows Support Downloads Community

### Windows 7 support will end on January 14, 2020

Applies to Windows 7

#### Windows 7 support lifecycle

Microsoft made a commitment to provide 10 years of product support for Windows 7 when it was released on October 22, 2009. When this 10-year period ends, Microsoft will discontinue Windows 7 support so that we can focus our investment on supporting newer technologies and great new experiences. The specific end of support day for Windows 7 will be January 14, 2020. After that, technical assistance and software updates from Windows Update that help protect your PC will no longer be available for the product. Microsoft strongly recommends that you move to Windows 10 sometime before January 2020 to avoid a situation where you need service or support that is no longer available.

Show All

- What does end of support mean for me?
- What should I do?
- Can I upgrade my existing PC to Windows 10?
- How can I upgrade to Windows 10 for free?
- What happens if I continue to use Windows 7?
- Can Windows 7 still be activated after January 14, 2020?

**Soon, there won't be any more bug and security fixes for Windows 7**

computers, it's likely to run Windows 10 better than your current PCs run Windows 7.

See our feature on page 50 for more advice on what to do when Windows support ends.

## GENERAL PC

### Get backups working again

**Q** I have been happily using AOMEI Backupper Standard ([bit.ly/aomei491](http://bit.ly/aomei491)) for many years but, for the last few months, after being redesigned with an attractive new interface, it's stopped working. It backs up the system files as before but, when it comes to the restore stage, it stops before it can get to the non-Windows environment.

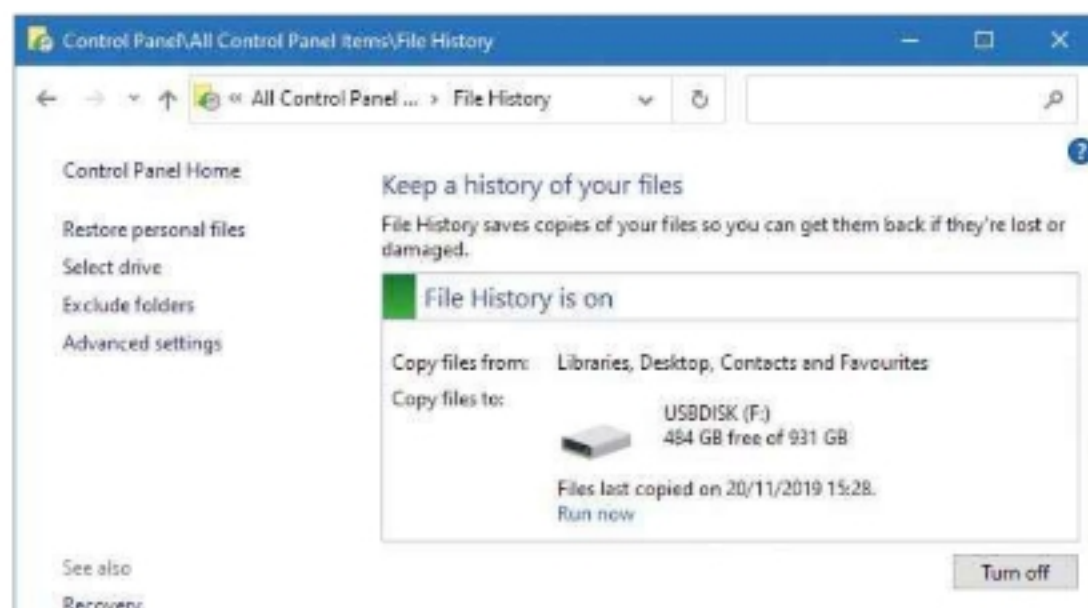
The following message appears: "The program is preparing for Restart Mode. After completing the preparation, the computer will be restarted automatically and enter into this Restart Mode. If the program is unable to restart the computer or failed to enter into Restart Mode, you could see FAQ to solve the problem. Code:4143". I couldn't find anything useful in the FAQ.

EaseUS Todo Backup Free ([bit.ly/](http://bit.ly/))

[todobu491](#)) also worked in the past but now doesn't work at all.

Is there something turned off on my

laptop? I also can't alter the BIOS to start up from a USB flash drive or external hard drive because it won't save the



**Use File History with a USB drive as an alternative way to back up your files**





If you don't activate Windows, some personalisation features are unavailable and you'll see a watermark in the bottom-right corner of the screen

setting when I quit the BIOS interface.

The Windows 7 backup-restore tool works, but it's very user unfriendly. Why can't Windows 10 have a simple system backup and restore program?

**Peter Kaldor, via email**

**A** The best way to restore using any Windows backup software is to create a recovery CD or flash drive. All it needs is a small USB memory stick costing just a few pounds. The PC can then boot from this to run a backup restore utility.

It's not normally necessary to enter the computer's BIOS setup program when you want to boot from another device and there are other, simpler methods. Open the Control Panel in 'Small icons' view and click Power Options, then 'Choose what the power buttons do' on the left. Click 'Change settings that are currently unavailable' and clear the tick next to 'Turn on fast start-up' and click 'Save changes'.

The computer now starts more slowly but, when a bootable device such as a CD/DVD or USB flash drive is available, the computer should automatically detect it and display an option to boot from it on the screen. It might only appear for a few seconds – then the PC will start in the normal way if you don't select anything.

Another possibility with slow booting is to use the function keys. There are 12 on a standard keyboard and one of them – often F10 or F12 – when pressed just after powering on the PC opens a boot menu from which you can choose an external drive, flash drive or CD/DVD.

It's odd that both AOMEI's and EaseUS's backup tools don't work for you. Press Windows+R and enter **services.msc**, then look for the Microsoft Software Shadow Copy Provider and Volume Shadow Copy services. Double-click them and set

the startup to automatic. They are used by backup software.

Windows has a simple backup tool called File History, which is accessed from the Control Panel. It only backs up files, so it can't restore a damaged or replaced hard drive, but at least you won't lose your content. Just turn it on

## GENERAL PC

### Fix compatibility between Kodi and Windows 10

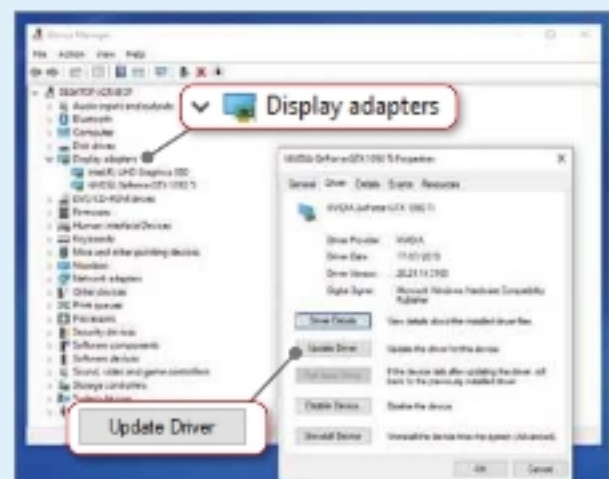
**Q** I know Kodi ([kodi.tv](http://kodi.tv)) is much maligned these days, but I still find it useful for legitimate uses such as playing games and watching old movies. However, following a recent Windows 10 update from Microsoft, I am unable to load Kodi. I keep getting this error message: "Kodi: unable to create GUI. Exiting."

I never had any problems with Windows 7. Do you have any advice?

**Graham Reeves, via email**

**A** This could be a problem with the graphics driver and the Windows update may have installed a newer one that is incompatible. Click Start and enter **device manager**, then click it in the search results. Expand 'Display adapters', right-click each item and select 'Update driver'. If no newer drivers are available, double-click each item and select the Driver tab. If 'Roll back driver' is available, click it to restore the previous driver. Now restart Windows and try running Kodi again.

Windows' own graphics drivers may



Update the drivers for your graphics hardware if the software won't work after Windows updates

not be compatible with Kodi, but those of the graphics-card manufacturer might be. Use Device Manager to see the make and model of your graphics card, then go to the manufacturer's website and look for the latest drivers to download.

Make sure that your version of the Kodi software is the latest version, as it is frequently updated. Some people have found that add-ons cause problems. Press Windows+R and enter **%appdata%**, then open the KodiuserdataDatabase folder, delete the Addons27.db file and try running Kodi again. Finally, try uninstalling Kodi and installing it again. Uninstall it from 'Programs and Features' in the Control Panel, then press Windows+R and enter **%appdata%**. Delete any Kodi folders that are left over.





## EMAIL

### Stop spam emails

**Q** I've been having more and more problems with spam recently, and the common factor is that it's all coming from Amazon servers. They are all of the type that are designed to separate naive recipients from their money, focusing on Bitcoin, loans and so on.

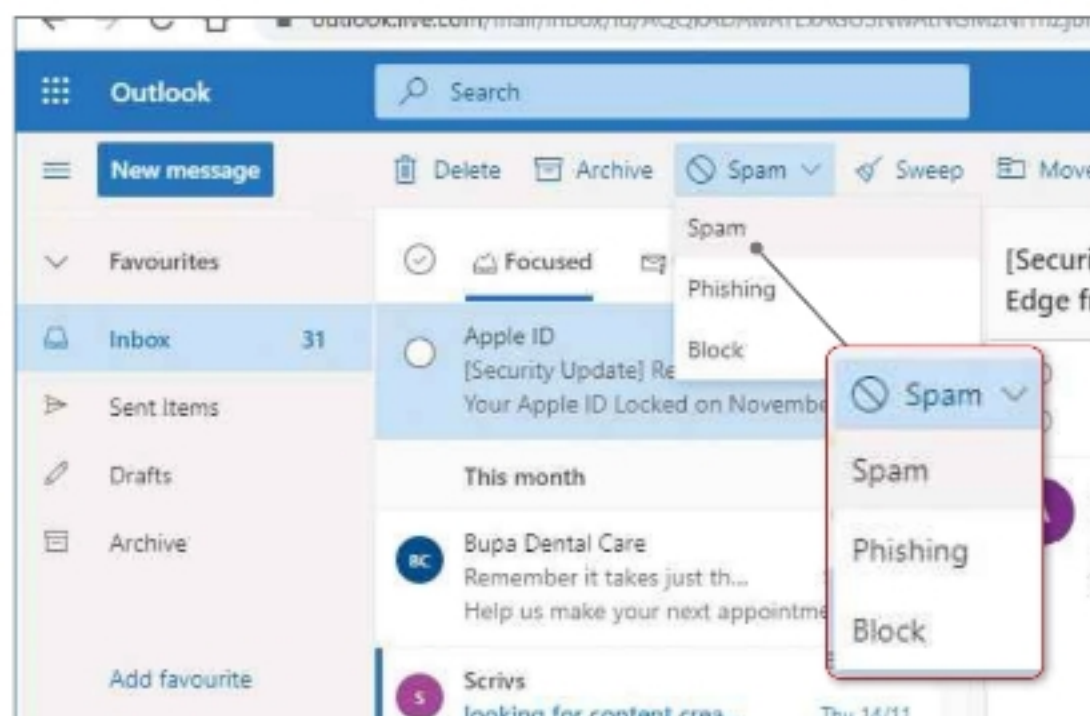
There also tends to be duplication in the sender's friendly name (seven emails in the past month from "Steve McKay"), suggesting that this is another common factor.

I thought Amazon would be shocked to know that its users were spamming and would leap into action to limit any damage to the company's reputation by resolving the situation. However, I have sent numerous reports with header information to the Abuse team and still the problem persists.

Are there any other organisations I could report this issue to, who are able to apply pressure on Amazon to ensure effective action is taken?

**Len Barrows, via email**

**A** According to some estimates, 281 billion emails per day were sent in 2018 and of those, 56% were spam. That's 157 billion spam messages a day. Preventing spam is very difficult and email providers are most likely overwhelmed with reports, so yours are a drop in the ocean and action may not be taken. It's like 'whack-a-mole' - get



*To avoid spam, train Outlook by selecting emails in the inbox and clicking Spam*

rid of one spammer and another immediately pops up.

What you should do is train your email service to recognise the spam so it can make sure it doesn't end up in your inbox. If you use [Outlook.com](https://outlook.officeapps.com) email, select a message, click Spam in the menu bar and select Spam in the menu. Gmail has a Report Spam icon in the toolbar when an email is selected. This will teach your email filter to detect this and similar emails as spam.

Rules can also be created to automatically delete or move messages to a spam folder. In Outlook, click the

cog icon, then 'View all Outlook settings'. Select Rules and click 'Add new rule', then name it and, in the next step, select From or 'Sender address includes' and enter **Steve McKay** or another common element of your spammer's email address. Click 'Add another condition', select Subject or body includes' and enter **Steve McKay** again. For the action, select 'Move to' and choose the Junk Email folder.

Gmail has similar rules in the settings and you can search for words in the sender, subject and body, then choose an action to take.

## INTERNET

### Can't connect to the internet

**Q** My laptop works fine at home and, when I am out and about, connects with Wi-Fi in cafés and other places. However, there is one establishment I visit where I cannot get on the internet. It's not their Wi-Fi because I can connect to it with my Android phone. Do you have any suggestions?

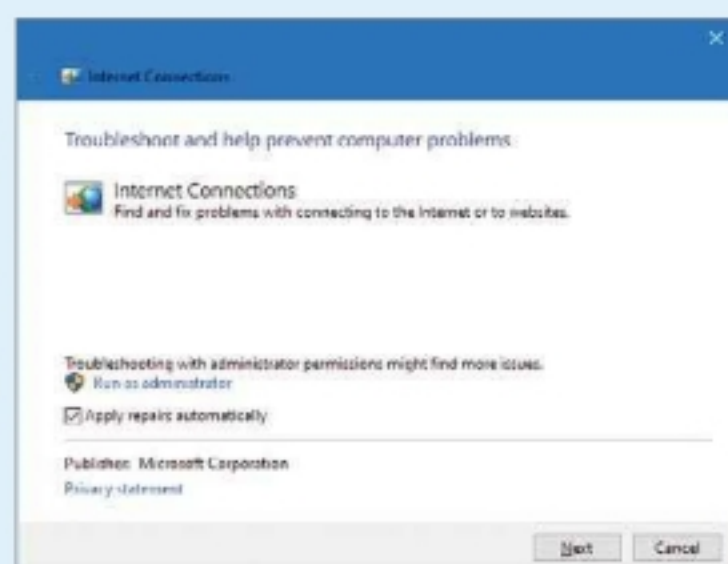
**Phil Baker, via email**

**A** Always keep two web browsers on your computer and, if one doesn't work, try the other. This is a useful way to tell if there is a problem with one particular browser. If neither browser works, there is something more fundamental that needs to be fixed.

If you were at home, you could reboot the router but in a café, that's

not an option. If you see anyone around you using a computer, you could ask if they have internet access. If others are having problems, ask a member of staff to switch off the router and switch it back on again.

To check if the problem is with the internet connection on your computer, click the Wi-Fi icon in the notification area to list the wireless connections. Right-click the current non-working connection and select Forget, then restart Windows and reconnect to the Wi-Fi to refresh the settings. This sometimes



*If you're having problems with the internet, run the Internet Connections troubleshooter as an administrator*

solves the problem.

Another possible fix is to open the Control Panel, click Troubleshooting, then View All. Run the troubleshooters for Internet Connections and Network Adapter.



This fortnight Roland disposed of an old PC by destroying the hard drive with a large hammer and recycling the rest





# Readers' Helpdesk

Can you help your fellow readers with their computer problems? Send your questions and answers to [webuser@webuser.co.uk](mailto:webuser@webuser.co.uk)

## GOOGLE

### Stop Google Maps rerouting you

**Q** I use Google Maps as a sat-nav in my car but I've become very irritated by its insistence on rerouting me while I'm driving, which requires me to either accept the new route or take my hands off the wheel and press a button on the screen to dismiss it and stay on the original route. This seems very dangerous and, often, the new route only shaves a couple of minutes off my drive. How do I stop Google Maps doing this?

**Robert Garner, via email**

**A** Fiddling with a phone while driving is indeed dangerous and we can't understand why Google forces you to opt out of the new route, rather than the

other way around, or why the option is even included since many of us find it distracting.

Unfortunately, it's been a problem for several years and the only fix is this: first, download your required route so it's available offline. Next, set your desired route in Google Maps, then switch off Wi-Fi and mobile data (or just turn on Aeroplane mode). Since there's no connection, the app will be unable to update, preventing rerouting from taking place. Drive safe!

**Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User**

## EMAIL

### Solve Thunderbird's latest update glitch

**Q** I recently tried to update my Thunderbird email software, but instead of upgrading my existing software, a brand new version was

## READERS RESPOND

### DRIVERS

### Find a 64-bit Epson scanner driver

**A** In Issue 488 ([bit.ly/webuser488](http://bit.ly/webuser488)), Keith said he wasn't able to find a Windows 10 64-bit driver for his Epson Perfection 2480 Photo scanner. I experienced the same issue and discovered that I could use the Windows 32-bit driver – file name 'epson12204.exe' – available at [bit.ly/epson491](http://bit.ly/epson491). It runs on Windows 10 Pro 64-bit without any problems.

**John, via email**



*Epson's 32-bit Perfection 2480 scanner driver works in 64-bit Windows 10*

## CAN YOU HELP?

[webuser@webuser.co.uk](mailto:webuser@webuser.co.uk)

You can seek help or suggest solutions to other readers' problems by emailing [webuser@webuser.co.uk](mailto:webuser@webuser.co.uk) or via [www.facebook.com/webusermagazine](https://www.facebook.com/webusermagazine) or [twitter.com/webusermagazine](https://twitter.com/webusermagazine).

### STREAMING TV

**Q** Is there a website where I can log into all my different TV streaming sites, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, to watch them all in one place?

**Helen, via email**

### GENERAL PC

**Q** The last time Windows 10 updated, it disabled Cortana saying it wasn't available in the UK. Is there any way to bring 'her' back?

**George Pepperwood, via email**

installed. Thankfully, my old version remains intact but I'm having to ignore constant alerts to upgrade to the latest version. Is this a common problem?

**Chris Silverthorne, via email**

**A** This seems to be a rare experience and there may be several reasons why you're continuing to see this update alert. It may be that Thunderbird is trying to run a 32-bit version on a 64-bit machine – though it seems unlikely. There may also be some conflict with add-ons and extensions you have running. You can also check the Thunderbird Updates folder to see which updates you currently have installed. To check you have the right one, open the 'updates.xml' file and see if it mentions the latest version. Next, with Thunderbird closed, move the updates subfolder and the files 'update-config.json' and 'updates.xml' to a backup

folder, then run the program again.

If none of this works, run the full Thunderbird installer ([bit.ly/thunderbird491](http://bit.ly/thunderbird491)). This should update your current version to the latest version, without forcing you to uninstall everything and start from scratch. Failing that, we may have to await the next update. Let us know how you get on.

**Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User**



*One reader has upgraded Thunderbird only to find a second version on his hard drive*



# Your Top Tips

Our pick of the best advice from our readers. Please send questions and answers to [webuser@webuser.co.uk](mailto:webuser@webuser.co.uk)

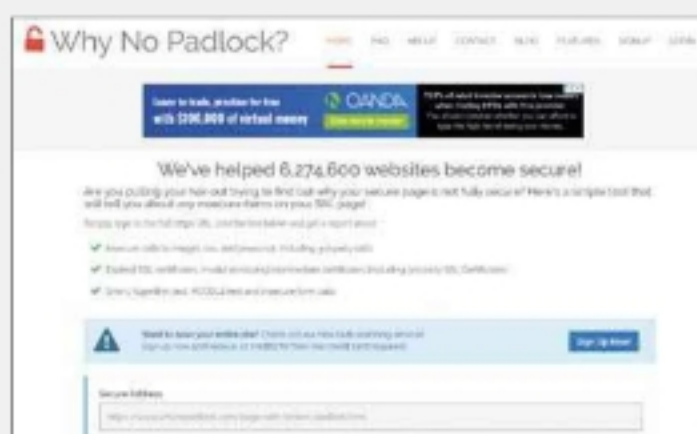


## TOP TIP

### WEB BUILDING

## Uncover hidden website security issues

Today, I received a security alert on a website I built that has a valid SSL Certificate. Numerous website checkers alluded to security issues with images on my website, but without being precise. I then discovered Why No Padlock ([www.whynopadlock.com](http://www.whynopadlock.com)), which told me exactly which lines in my website's code were vulnerable. As a result, I made some simple changes and got a clean bill of health. I strongly



*Find out exactly where your website is vulnerable*

recommend this free online tool to anyone with SSL 'padlock issues'.  
**Chris Silverthorne, via email**

### GENERAL PC

## Create custom hotkeys

Following on from the last tip I sent you about LeoMoon SessionGuard software (Issue 490, [bit.ly/webuser490](http://bit.ly/webuser490)), I'd like to draw attention to another piece of software from the same place – the excellent HotKeyz program ([bit.ly/hotkey491](http://bit.ly/hotkey491)), which lets me create my own Windows shortcuts. Personally, I find hotkeys save me a lot of time, so having the flexibility to set them up however I want has been invaluable. It's all totally free, too, so you can create as many

shortcuts as you need without needing to pay to unlock extra features.

**Roger Mitchell, via email**

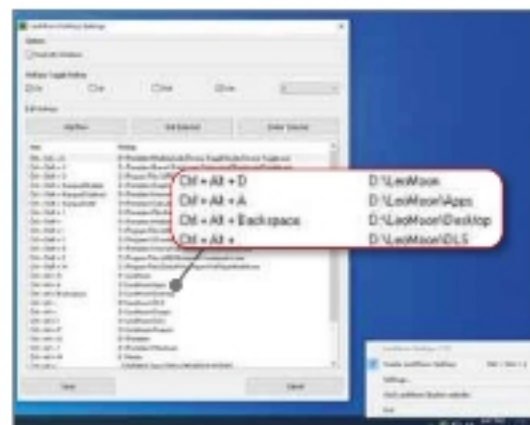
### GENERAL PC

## Bring back Windows Photo Viewer

My favourite program for viewing all types of photos and image files on my computer is Windows Photo Viewer. You just double-click a file, it opens in the viewer and you can zoom or shrink photos, view them full-screen, go to the next or previous image, and view slideshows. Brilliant!

To associate Windows Photo Viewer with an image type, such as '.jpg', right-click an image, select 'Open with' and then 'Choose another app'. Select Windows Photo Viewer and tick the box 'Always use this app to open .jpg files'.

This works fine if you upgraded your computer from Windows 7 or 8, but it won't work if you have a clean install of Windows 10 or a new Windows 10 PC because Windows Photo Viewer isn't available in Windows 10. Instead, you're forced to use the Microsoft Photos app, which I don't like.



*It's never been easier to create custom hotkeys on your computer*

The exception is '.tif' files, which still open in the old Windows Photo Viewer when double-clicked, but you can't associate any other image type. So, if you have a folder of files you want to browse with Windows Photo Viewer in Windows 10, rename one file to '.tif', then double-click it. It opens in Windows Photo Viewer and you can then use the Forward and Back buttons to browse all the other image files in the folder.

**Will Doyle, via email**



*A clean install of Windows 10 only offers limited access to Windows Photo Viewer*

### SECURITY

## Block remote access

If you work for a large company, you may have access to an IT department that fixes problems with your computer – and, with modern versions of Windows, they can perform this maintenance remotely, without you having to physically bring your PC to them. At home, however, you're more likely to fix any PC problems yourself, so there's no need for your computer to be set up for remote access. I'm not sure if remote access puts your PC at risk from malware or hackers, but I think it's probably a good idea to disable it when it's not needed.

In the Control Panel, open System and then click the 'Remote settings' link. Click the Remote tab in the next window and clear the box, 'Allow Remote Assistance connections to this computer'.

**Robert Gordon, via email**





## BROWSER TOOLS

## Get website recipe info quicker

I've found a way to cut through the annoying text on recipe blogs – you know, the ones that want to tell you their life story before handing over the actual recipe. It's a simple browser add-on called Recipe Filter ([bit.ly/recipe491](http://bit.ly/recipe491)), which grabs the recipe from the bottom of the page and displays it at the top of the screen. For most sites, you'll also get the option to save or print the recipe if you need to.

Grant, via email



Cut straight to the food you want to make without the nonsense

## GENERAL PC

## Hide Cortana if you're not using it

I read that Microsoft is discontinuing its Cortana digital assistant – at least, in the mobile app on phones and tablets. I'm not surprised because I've never used it anywhere, even on Windows 10.

You can hide Cortana by right-clicking the taskbar in Windows 10 and clearing the tick against the 'Show Cortana button'. In fact, on my PC, clicking it simply shows a message saying Cortana is not available in the UK, which is odd because it used to work. A search for Cortana in the Settings app returns nothing, although it may show up in older versions of Windows 10. If it does, and you never use it, you might as well disable it.

Simon Bishop, via email

## BROWSER TOOLS

## Use the backspace key to navigate web

I've found something that should help people who, like me, would use



Change the way you navigate back through websites

backspace to get to their previous web page. Old browsers let you use this as a shortcut but, for some reason, both Edge and Chrome have stripped it from their latest versions. Just grab Go Back With Backspace from the Chrome Store ([bit.ly/backspace491](http://bit.ly/backspace491)), install it and – hey presto! It has worked well for me so far, and still lets you use backspace for deleting text if you're typing.

Max Wilde, via email

## SMART HOME

## Control your heating with a smart plug

I use a wireless thermostat, placed beside a table lamp that's plugged into a smart plug. When I use my mobile phone to switch on the lamp, it warms the thermostat, turning off the heating – and the converse is also true. The heating can be set to constant, controlled solely by my phone. If it were controlled by a timer, then this would only work when the timer had already switched the heating on. My arrangement eliminates the need to duplicate the timer and thermostat. Not bad, eh?

Jeff, via email

## SECURITY

## Check which sites support two-factor authentication

There's really no excuse for sites not to be using two-factor authentication when it's known to be a lot more secure than a simple password. I've started checking the site Two Factor Auth ([twofactorauth.org](http://twofactorauth.org)) to make sure that any companies I use are properly secure, and I thought I'd share it so that other security geeks can do the same. After you search for a site, it shows you exactly what authentication they use so you can understand their security processes



Make sure the sites you use are super-secure

properly. If you're ready to campaign for the cause, then there's also the option to send tweets and emails to the brands that aren't on board yet, encouraging them to sign up for 2FA.

Charlie, via email

## GENERAL PC

## Block Edge from opening

Does anybody else hate Microsoft Edge? I'm not a fan, so I've found a way to block it from opening altogether. Make sure you have another browser installed first, so you can still get online, then download Edge Blocker ([bit.ly/edbl491](http://bit.ly/edbl491)). It's a free bit of kit that stops Windows from forcing you to use Edge.

Mark Jones, via email



Edge Blocker stops Microsoft opening Edge, rather than your preferred browser

## BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

## GENERAL PC

## Solve Windows update issues

This tip may help some readers having problems updating Windows 10. My i5 3rd-generation Asus desktop PC, connected to my router via Ethernet, auto-updated to version 1607 with no trouble at all. However, every feature update from Microsoft since then has repeatedly failed and reverted to 1607, wasting hours of time. Windows Update Assistant didn't help, nor did the update troubleshooter, and neither

did stopping and starting various services and updating all the drivers. Microsoft support failed to resolve the problem, too.

Before I resorted to buying a new PC, I tried removing the wireless card, downloading the latest Windows Update Advisor and running it. The update ran smoothly and left me running Windows 10 version 1909.

Mostyn Davies, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

If so, please send your story to [webuser@webuser.co.uk](mailto:webuser@webuser.co.uk)





## Star Email

### Free broadband plans are unworkable

I'm sure that by the time this is published, we will know which party won the General Election (I assume the Conservatives), but I wanted to share my tuppence worth on Labour's proposal to offer free broadband to everyone in the UK (Need to Know, Issue 489).

On the face of it, this sounds like an excellent plan – the internet is now such an essential part of our lives that everyone should be able to access it, regardless of their financial circumstances. Many companies and government departments now insist on digital applications, statements and account management, rather than conducting their business via post or over the phone, which means that people who can't get



online may be left high and dry.

However, I fail to see how Labour can deliver on its promise to provide national broadband services free of charge because the infrastructure demands constant investment and the money has to come from somewhere. That's not to

mention paying the engineers, support teams, administrative staff and countless other employees of ISPs to do their jobs. If internet providers are to be nationalised, as Labour suggests, then surely the funds will need to come from taxpayers, so the broadband is unlikely to be 'free' after all!

As for the suggestion that technology companies could be taxed more heavily to cover the cost – Amazon, Google, Facebook and the rest are hardly renowned for paying their fair share of tax, so why should they start now?

So while 'free broadband for all' is a nice idea, it won't work in practice, in the same way that we're not entitled to free gas, electricity or water.

*Michael Hewitt, via email*

Back  
Issues  
disc  
winner



### Why Microsoft is forcing Windows 7 users to upgrade

Much has been said about Microsoft ending support for Windows 7 in 2020, but what hasn't been explained is *how* this will happen.

Until now, Microsoft has pushed – often aggressively – users of Windows 7 to upgrade to Windows 10 but, so far, its tactics have failed because Windows 10 is much less user-friendly than Microsoft claims in its hype and cannot (will not?) support some software currently used on people's PCs.

Windows 10 is not as popular as Windows 7 and that seems to annoy Microsoft – the company has spent huge amounts of money on it, yet it still needs constant patches to correct its faulty updates. At some point, shortly after support for Windows 7 ends, Microsoft will (in its infinite wisdom) supply the final update, which will be nothing more than a piece of code that disables Windows 7 and everything associated with it.

I believe that very soon after, Windows 10 will become a monthly paid-for service – Microsoft has already said that there will be no "single version" release



of Windows 10 and has hinted at users having to pay for it as they do for Office 365. It will become yet another cash cow for Microsoft.

*Barry Singleton, via email*

### My concerns about YubiKey security keys

Reading your cover feature about YubiKey and two-factor authentication (2FA) in Issue 489 left me feeling very uncomfortable. What

happens if my key fails, or I lose it? What if it's stolen or I just forget to carry it with me?

It seems to me that YubiKey offers short-term convenience but, potentially, long-term problems. Your article covered implementing 2FA but was not so clear on how to deal with multiple devices. I have a smartphone, tablet, desktop and laptop – would I use the same key for all of them? The answer is no, because my phone and tablet have USB-C ports,

## Quiz Answers: Issue 490

- |   |                                       |  |  |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Frosty the Snowman</i>             |  |  |
| 2 | <i>Home Alone</i>                     |  |  |
| 3 | <i>Santa Claus: the Movie</i>         |  |  |
| 4 | <i>The Nightmare Before Christmas</i> |  |  |
| 5 | <i>Jingle All the Way</i>             |  |  |
| 6 | <i>The Muppet Christmas Carol</i>     |  |  |

### WINNER!

Well done to **Brian Hansen** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc



WIKIPEDIA  
ARTICLE

**BT**





while the desktop and laptop have USB-A – although

I concede that a YubiKey may help if I needed to recover an online account.

Your article was useful in providing instructions on setting up 2FA, but I believe the disadvantages and process of recovering your accounts justified more emphasis.

*Len Barrows, via email*

## Microsoft's clash with McAfee broke my PC

I like to be ahead of the game, but the last update to Windows 10 bricked my PC! Something caused my computer to reboot twice, then left me with a screen asking me to reboot into Safe Mode or reinstall Windows 10. After a lot of searching, I found it was McAfee's

antivirus software causing this issue and, after uninstalling it, I was able to get into Windows.

I accept that I have no-one to blame for this problem but myself, but it

took me three days to resolve. I found that I could reinstall McAfee but, when I did so, it removed the 'old' copy of Windows 10, so I was unable to roll back the system. When I rebooted, the same issue came back.

This is a salutary lesson, and I don't blame Microsoft because they can't be expected to check Windows against every piece of software on the market. Nor can I blame McAfee. I have now stopped Windows from updating until the next full update.

For those who may be experiencing the same issue, the problem lies with the McAfee file 'C:\Windows\System32\drivers\mfefhidk.sys'.

*Barrie Ellison, via email*

## Stop auto-renewing subscriptions

Reading the Star Email in Issue 489 ('Don't get ripped off by auto-renewal'), I have a solution regarding annoying auto-renewal. Make your payment using PayPal, then simply log into PayPal, go to Manage Payments and cancel any payments you don't want to repeat. This way you can't be charged for a sneaky renewal.

*Lee Belfast, via email*

## What you say...

### DO YOU AGREE THAT BLACK FRIDAY SALES ARE ALL HYPE ([bit.ly/black491](http://bit.ly/black491))?

Totally. Stores reduce the prices on the stuff they're trying to clear off the shelves. I wait until the week before Christmas for the real deals.

*Simon Mellor*

There's usually a sting in the tail. Anything that is overhyped is likely to be disappointing.

*Lance Parkington*

Definitely. I find Amazon to be particularly misleading. A quick check on [Camelcamelcamel.com](http://Camelcamelcamel.com) invariably leads to me find that the product on sale has been cheaper fairly recently and I am better off waiting.

*Rich Grove*

Black Friday has become a piece of advertising jargon. Every shop in the high street and every online retailer is using it, so it's become meaningless.

*Derek McMillan*

Yes and no. I always look elsewhere to double-check prices and use tools to see recent prices. Sometimes the bargains are there to be had, but it depends what you are looking for.

*Gavin Green*

Like the January sales, it's a chance to shift stock they can't sell at full price.

*Russell Cox @RussWWFC*

### WHAT WERE YOUR FAVOURITE MOBILE APPS OF 2019?

The encrypted messaging app Signal ([signal.org](http://signal.org)). It's simple to set up, it offers good options, you can use it for text messages as well as video calling, and it's the best alternative to the

Facebook-owned WhatsApp. It's also endorsed by Edward Snowden.

*Goldmaster @imthegoldmaster*

I don't know about my favourite mobile app, but my least favourite was Mario Kart Tour. Supposed to be free but you have to pay to unlock most of the features. What a rip-off.

*Carl Varley*

Duolingo on my Android phone. I haven't learned to speak French fluently yet, but I do know the words for various types of fruit.

*Mark Houghton*

WhatsApp, now that I've finally persuaded my elderly mother to use it. I like that it shows me when she's read my messages, and vice versa.

*Maria Keith*

### HAVE YOU EVER BEEN SENT THE WRONG ITEM WHEN SHOPPING ONLINE ([bit.ly/wrong491](http://bit.ly/wrong491))?

Yes, I bought some postcard-sized photo books that we'd ordered before and were sent photo frames. It wasn't Amazon that slipped up but an outside company. It took ages to get what we ordered. Their excuse was that they were moving their warehouse.

*Lynn Sharpe*

I ordered a pair of light-up (multicoloured lights) gloves but was sent plain white. I contacted the seller and he sent me the correct pair, and I got to keep the white pair as well.

*Kevin Gadget Man Benton*

When my mate orders stuff, he sometimes gets duplicates. He ordered an electric food mixer, received two and sold the other one. It was worth about £100.

*Andrew Wakeman*

Not the wrong item, but I've been sent the wrong size clothes on a couple of occasions. They were easy enough to exchange, though.

*Derek Trent*



# ! Page 404

Barry Collins despairs as the emergency services struggle to find him

## A breakdown in communications

I got home at 2am last night. No, I didn't leave a nightclub with a couple of lucky foxes, I left the A27 with one particularly unlucky fox embedded in my car radiator. In case you're wondering what cooked fox smells like, it's *nothing* like chicken.

I hit the poor beast right by Brighton & Hove Albion's stadium in Falmer. If you're hoping for convenient landmarks to break down next to, a massive football stadium that can probably be spotted from space isn't a bad one.

And yet, despite telling the bloke in the AA call centre that I'm broken down on the slip road right next to Brighton's stadium, they dispatched the police – who had to attend because I was in a live traffic lane – and their own recovery vehicle to Devil's Dyke, some eight miles away. I mean, you can probably see the stadium from there.

How is this even possible on the cusp of 2020? I'm talking to the AA on a smartphone fitted with GPS radios that are so accurate they can tell what lane I'm in on a motorway, and yet the police and the AA's own rescue vehicle spent more than an hour on a wild goose chase around dark Sussex roads because the call centre is still relying on misheard instructions.

Now, to be fairer than the AA has any right to expect, the company does have a smartphone app that you can tap to report an accident, which sends your precise location to the help centre. However, my membership comes via my

bank, which requires you to call a hotline to report incidents.

Even so, there are brilliant apps that could have saved me, the Sussex constabulary and the busy breakdown firm a lot of time. Take the magnificent

What3words, for example, an app that I actually do have installed on my phone after writing about the firm last year.

What3words has broken the entire globe down into 3x3m squares. Each square is

“I'm talking to the AA on a smartphone fitted with GPS radios that are so accurate they can tell what lane I'm in on a motorway”

given a unique three-word identifier so, if you get lost, you just ask the app to pinpoint your current location using the smartphone's GPS and it provides a three-word phrase to give to the emergency services. They then type that same phrase into the What3words website ([what3words.com](https://www.what3words.com)) and know exactly where you are within seconds.

The beauty of What3words is it's ideal for any location that's tough to describe. Whether it's a house down a country lane where postcodes cover several square miles, the middle of a country park with no discernible landmarks or right next to THE BIGGEST FRIGGING LANDMARK IN THE ENTIRE COUNTY (deep breaths, Baz), the app can direct someone so close that they'll be invading your personal space.

Alas, the AA man had never heard of What3words. When I told him I had broken down at “remedy albatross digestion”, he wasn't sure whether to call an ambulance or to get the police to breathalyse me.

So I've got another three words for the so-called Fourth Emergency Service: sort it out. And three for you: Happy New Year!





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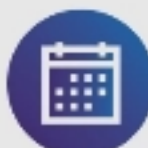
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