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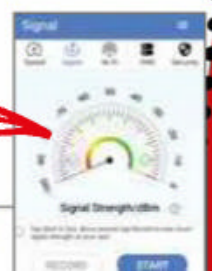

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Issue 492

On the Edge of success

It's been a long time since *Web User* devoted a whole cover feature to a Microsoft browser - more than 13 years, in fact, back in Issue 148, when we celebrated the release of IE7. Although plenty of people used the 'blue E', as Internet Explorer and its successor were often called, there was rarely much new or exciting to write about, especially once Chrome came along, Firefox flourished and interesting contenders such as Vivaldi and Brave emerged.

Yet here we are in 2020, with Edge on our cover and a six-page feature on page 40, determined to convince you to give Microsoft's reinvented, Chromium-based browser a try. We had our doubts, too, so we're happy to report that Edge is now fast, secure and packed with useful tools - many of which you won't find in Chrome - and lets you install all your favourite extensions. So forget your preconceptions and take this brilliant new browser for a ride - we think you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Robert Irvine, Editor
editor@webuser.co.uk
#webuser

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abc Average sales, Jan-Dec 2018, 26,519 copies per issue

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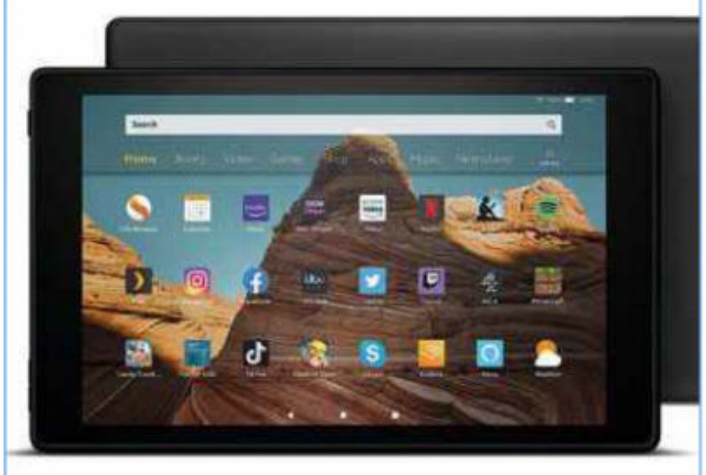

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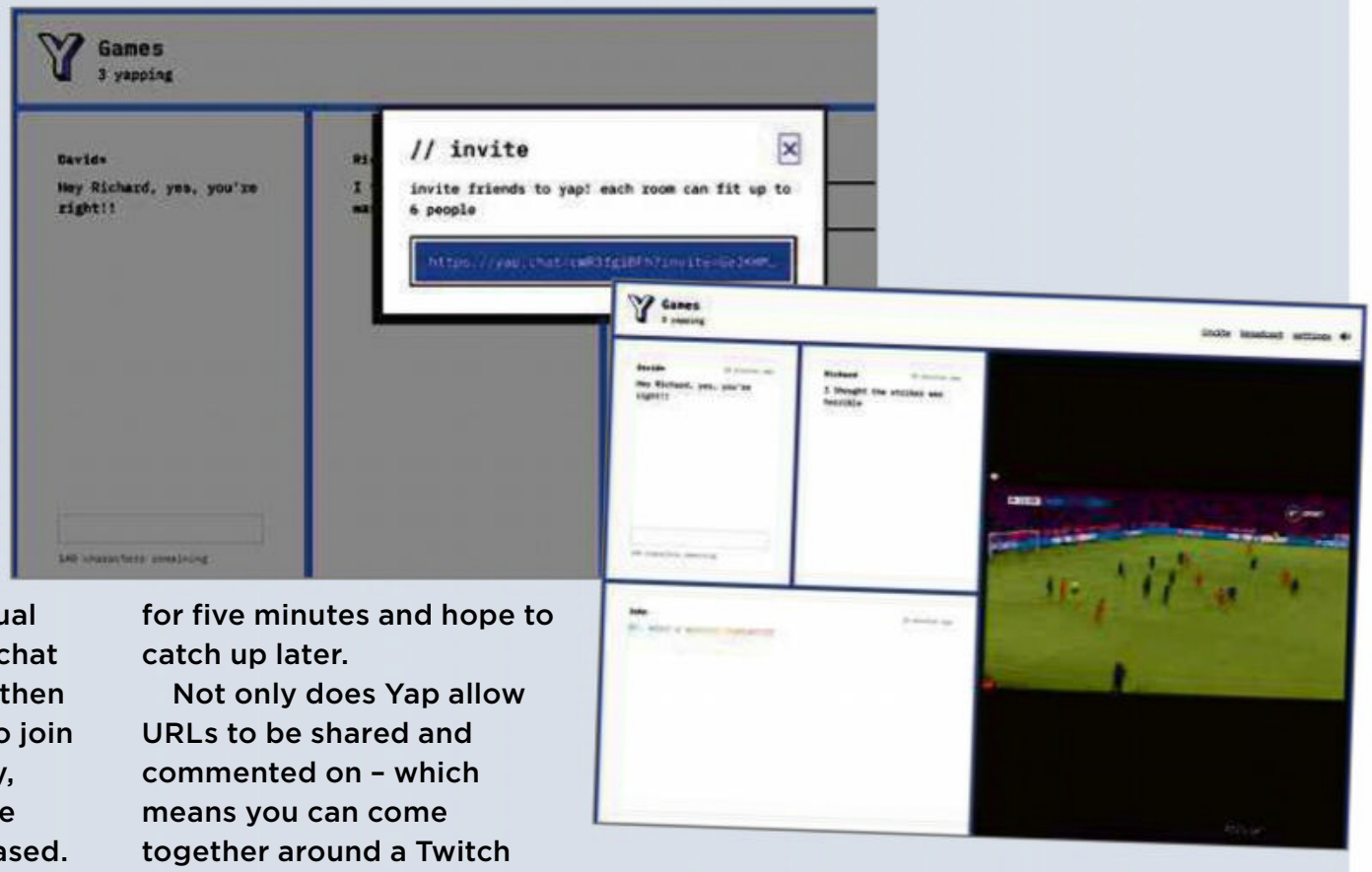
What's New Online

Chat privately in a disposable room



Most of us remember the gist of a face-to-face conversation but, unless you're making a recording, you won't have hard evidence of each and every utterance made. This certainly isn't the case with most online chats because written posts are stored, forming a logged history that can be referred back to when required.

The new chat app Yap revives the more relaxed and immediate environment of casual conversation. You can begin a chat simply by entering your name, then invite up to five other people to join you and start posting. Uniquely, every time you make a post, the previous one you entered is erased. This means you have to pay attention if you want to keep up with the conversation – you can't just pop off for five minutes and hope to catch up later.

Not only does Yap allow URLs to be shared and commented on – which means you can come together around a Twitch stream, shopping site or a sporting event, for instance – it also lets you broadcast your chat to the public by providing a URL that others can visit to view your conversation.

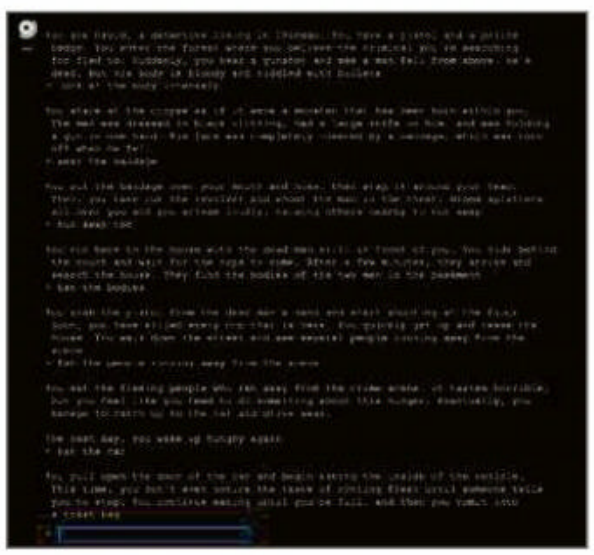
yap.chat

Play an AI-generated text-adventure game

www.aidungeon.io

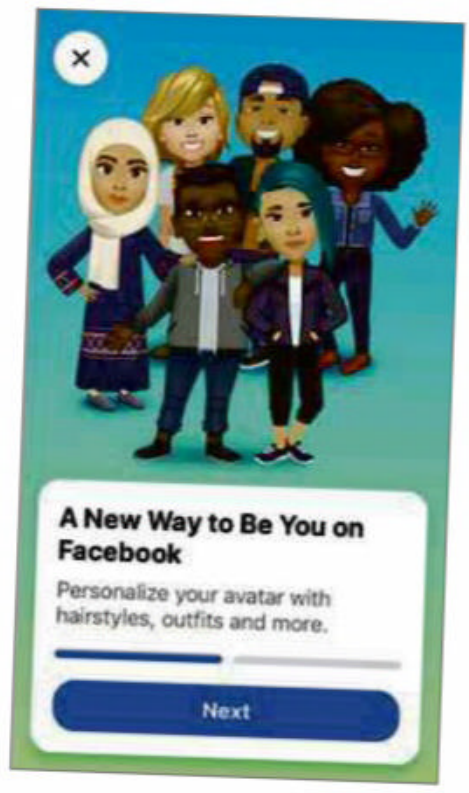
With traditional text-adventure games, players are limited not only by the 'parser' created by the developer – that is, the tool which seeks to make sense of your commands – but also by pre-programmed scenarios. With AI Dungeon 2, developed by Nick Walton, the gameplay is far more open thanks to machine learning that effectively makes things up as it goes along.

The adventure lets you type any verb or action, with artificial intelligence interpreting your wishes before generating a narrative in response. There's a little setting up to do before you get stuck in, but whether you decide to battle orcs or become a deity, your only limit is your imagination, and it's fun to try different scenarios. Certainly, infinitely generated AI worlds can keep you absorbed for some time.



Create Facebook stickers in your own image

www.facebook.com



There appears to be a move away from generic emoji in favour of personalised stickers that let you create virtual lookalikes of yourself. Since Snapchat bought Bitmoji, Apple has launched Memoji and Samsung has unveiled its creepy-looking AR Emoji. Now, Facebook has entered the market with Avatars, which can be shared in comments on the social network or in the Messenger app.

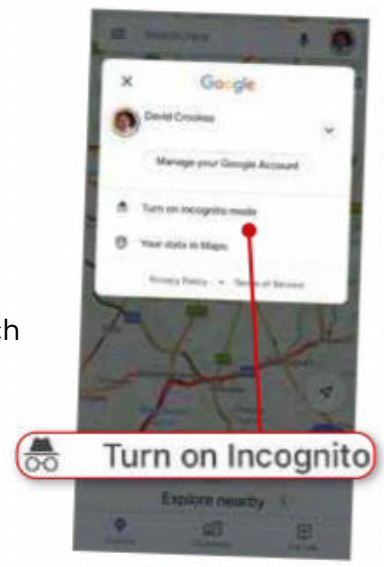
Creating your Avatar is simple. Tap the smiley-face icon in the text-entry box when you go to post a comment, or check out the Messenger-sticker selection tab. You'll then be able to customise an avatar using 18 traits including face, hair, body shape and clothes. The results are fun, cartoon-like images that are available to you with a range of emotions and messages, although they can't be used outside of Facebook.

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

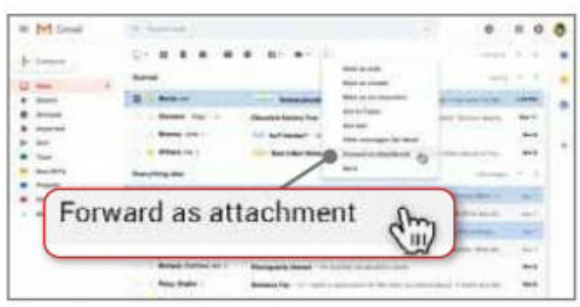
Go incognito with Google Maps

www.google.co.uk/maps

If you don't want Google Maps to save the places you search for or navigate to, then you can go Incognito. The feature, long available on Android, has now come to iOS and, while activating it won't deliver personalised features or update your Location History, it will ensure greater privacy when you need it. Tap your profile to select the incognito option.



Email your emails with Gmail



mail.google.com/mail

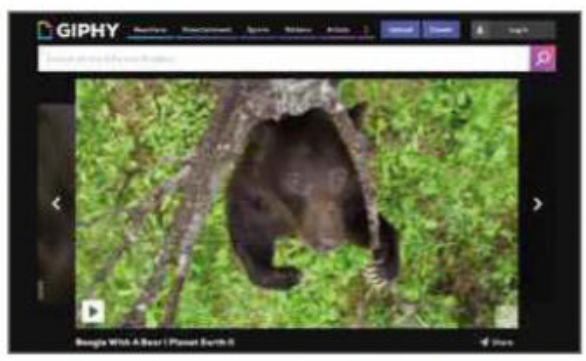
Gmail now lets you send emails as an attachment within another email and, what's more, you can do this with more than one email at a time. Start by composing an email before dragging those you want to attach into the draft window. Alternatively, highlight one or more emails that you want to send, select the overflow (three-dot) menu and choose 'Forward as attachment'.

Each attached email is sent as an EML file and, when clicked, will open in a new window. The new feature means you won't have to bombard someone's inbox with separate emails on a similar theme.

Watch videos on Giphy

giphy.com/videos

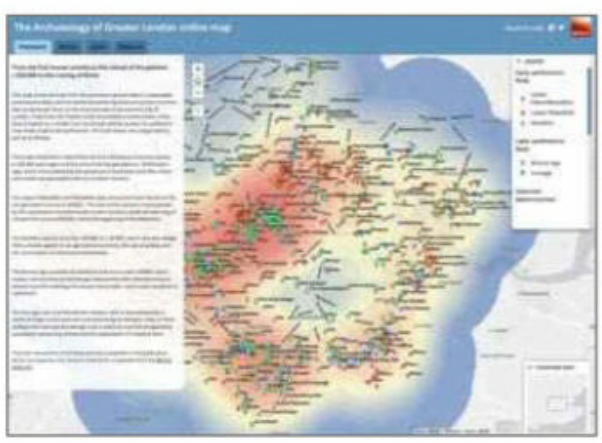
Not content with delivering short, silent GIFs, Giphy is cranking up the volume by adding sound. Its new Giphy Videos service lets you share professionally produced entertainment content such as snippets of music videos and movie trailers created by the likes of BBC America and Universal Pictures. Each one lasts up to 30 seconds, though Giphy wants most limited to half that length. At launch, there were tiny trailers of the upcoming film *Dolittle* and footage from *Planet Earth II*, all of which can be shared on social media via the available links.



Discover London's archaeological finds

bit.ly/finds492

Developed by the Museum of London Archaeology, this fascinating interactive map shows finds from prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and Medieval times. Zoom in and click one of the hundreds of colour-coded markers to see the nature of an item. There are also overviews of each era, with the maps reflective of that particular time.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS

Translate chats in real time

Launch the Google Assistant app on your Android or iOS phone and say, "Help me speak [language]" or "Be my [language] translator" to see instant translations on screen or hear them read aloud.

Confuse Siri with hahas

Get Siri into a kerfuffle by saying "Siri, call me haha", adding as many "hahas" as you like. Have a listen at: bit.ly/haha492.

Order some flowers

To send a beautiful bouquet, say "Alexa, open Interflora" and place an order. You'll be guided through your purchase and check out with Amazon Pay. You can also "Ask Interflora for flower advice".

Block unwanted WhatsApp chats

www.whatsapp.com

Stop strangers and certain contacts adding you to WhatsApp groups by using one of the options in Settings, Account, Privacy, Groups. You're also notified of other callers if you're already on a WhatsApp call.

Access data from political parties

bit.ly/political492

Want to know what personal data UK political parties hold on you? Then fill in the form on the Open Rights Group website, attach a photo ID and give proof of your address to request the info.

Tweet live photos as GIFs

twitter.com

You can now upload live photos from your iPhone to Twitter. Select the photo from your camera roll, tap the GIF button in the bottom-left corner of the image and it will be instantly converted for use.

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

Need to Know

Apple, Amazon and Google join forces on smart devices

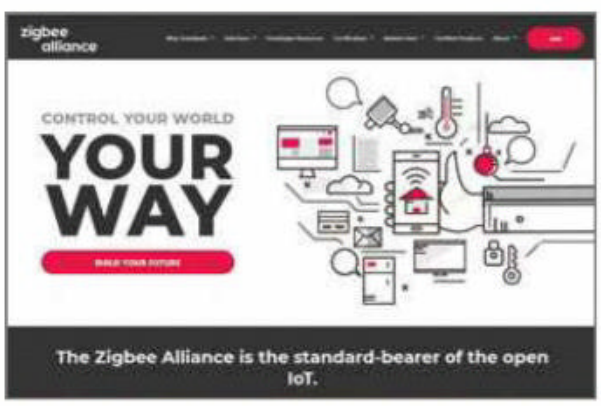
What happened?

Apple, Amazon and Google have been long and sometimes bitter rivals, but now they're working together to improve the interoperability of voice assistants in our smart homes. This collaboration should mean that smart gadgets you buy from third-party suppliers such as Ikea will work with any of the leading voice assistants, whether it's Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri or Google Assistant.

To accomplish this, the tech giants have set up a working group called Project Connected Home over IP (www.connectedhomeip.com), which will create a new internet protocol standard. In other words, they're going to talk to each other about how to make their systems work together more easily.

The aim is to build a standard that works with Wi-Fi, Bluetooth and other internet-based communications, and allows any voice assistant to control any smart home device. If the project succeeds, any new smart gadget you buy should work instantly with any of the voice assistants straight out of the box. This will not only make life easier for consumers who want to set up a smart home but will also simplify development for manufacturers.

"While smart home devices are abundant, the lack of an industry-wide connectivity standard leaves people confused and frustrated when trying to understand what devices work with each smart home ecosystem," said Nik Sathe, Vice President of Engineering at Google Nest. "It also places a heavy burden on manufacturers to make sure all devices are compatible with each other."



The Zigbee Alliance is helping the tech giants work together on smart homes

As well as enhancing compatibility, the standard will have security built in, which should improve the safety of smart home technology. This is currently a hot topic. Reports of hackers targeting gadgets such as smart doorbells and connected cameras have revealed that many of these devices offer little real security protection.

How will this affect you?

The new standard will take time to develop, and the working group hasn't yet released a schedule for completing the first stage of its project. In the meantime, we'll have to make do with existing systems that don't always communicate as easily as we'd like.

When the standard arrives, manufacturers will find it much easier to build smart home systems that are compatible with all voice assistants. If all goes well, you'll be able to buy any smart home gadget and use it with Alexa, Siri or Google Assistant. It also means your smart home won't go offline if you switch from Google's system to Apple's, or vice versa.

There are also suggestions that the standard will include "lifecycle events" such as software updates, so that if security flaws come to light, manufacturers can patch them, just as they do smartphones and laptops.

The working group is managed by the Zigbee Alliance (zigbeealliance.org), whose membership includes Ikea, Signify (formerly Philips Lighting), Samsung SmartThings and many others. These are some of the biggest names in the smart-home business, so we should have plenty of choice when the standard arrives.

What do we think?

Interoperability and built-in security are admirable goals and good news for anyone who wants to set up or improve a smart home. Anything that stops you getting locked into a particular company's products simply because of compatibility issues is positive for consumers. We also welcome any attempts to make connected devices easier to set up – at the moment, they can be very fiddly to configure and install.

That said, there are downsides to using voice assistants in the home, particularly when it comes to privacy. We'd like to see an independent voice assistant, created by someone other than one of the tech giants, that's smart enough to understand "turn the lights off" but doesn't eavesdrop on other things we're chatting about. We don't see why every system must be able to listen to our conversations and answer wide-ranging questions. If a privacy-minded company were to develop such a system while we're waiting for the new compatibility standard, we'd have a real answer to some of the challenges facing these technologies.

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

Chrome removes Avast and AVG add-ons

What happened?

Last issue, we reported that Mozilla had removed extensions created by security firms Avast and AVG from its Add-ons store after complaints that the tools were collecting too much data on their users. Now Google has followed suit and dropped them from the Chrome Web Store.

Avast bought AVG in 2016 and released a pair of extensions – Online Security and SafePrice – under both brand names. In October, Wladimir Palant, founder and CTO of Adblock Plus, wrote a detailed blog post (bit.ly/avast492) laying out exactly how much data the extensions were collecting.

After that post, Mozilla and Opera removed the four add-ons from their stores, although Mozilla has since reinstated the Online Security tools after working with the two companies, presumably to address their privacy concerns. Google has followed Mozilla's lead, and has also returned the Online Security extensions to its store after Avast and AVG agreed to limit the use of collected data.

How will it affect you?

If you use these extensions, their removal may be frustrating, but Palant warns that the tools are collecting more data than is necessary and could enable Avast to reconstruct all your browsing behaviour.

The fact that Mozilla and Chrome have reinstated some of the add-ons suggests that at least some of the complaints about data collection have been addressed, so hopefully whatever changes or assurances the security companies made will be repeated for the SafePrice extension, too.

What do we think?

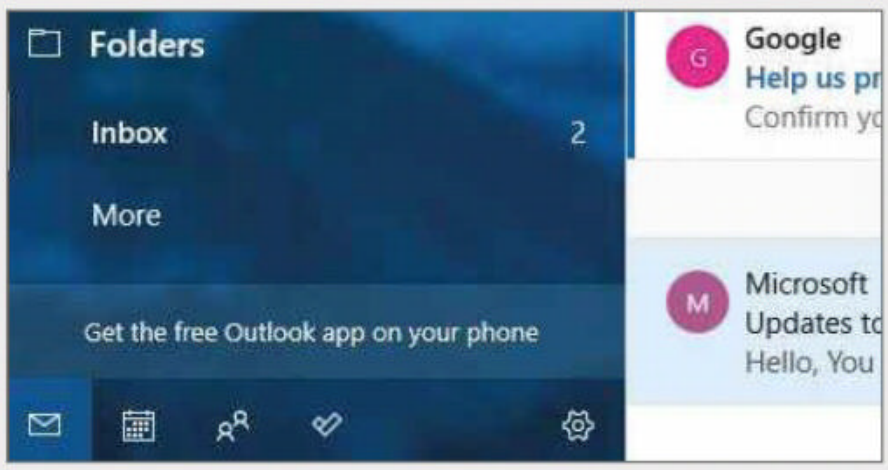
This is a good reminder that extensions have a uniquely privileged position in your browser, from which they can access lots of private data. It's worth considering whether you really need all the extensions you've installed, and removing any that are not essential. Make sure you trust a company before installing its tools. Avast and AVG have been criticised on these grounds before, so the latest revelations shouldn't come as a huge surprise – it's just a pity Google and Mozilla didn't spot the problem themselves.

Microsoft reinstates ads in Windows 10 apps

What happened?

Microsoft has started showing adverts in its Windows 10 Mail and Calendar apps again – and there doesn't seem to be any way to remove them. The ads first popped up last year, but only for users who weren't logged in as Office 365 subscribers. Now they appear to be shown to everyone who uses the apps.

The move comes despite a backlash last year when Microsoft first tried to introduce the marketing messages, only to pull them again, claiming they were just a test. Now the adverts have returned – and the company has confirmed that they're here to stay.



How will it affect you?

The ads appear on both desktop and mobile devices, and it seems they can't be removed. They're only small banner ads, but reports suggest they can take up a fair amount of space on smaller screens. The messages are targeted, too, so if you access Gmail in the Windows 10 Mail client, for example, one advert directs you to the rival Outlook mobile app.

The ads only appear in beta versions of Windows 10, so the rest of us may not see them until a future update.

What do we think?

We're used to seeing ads everywhere we go online, but having to put up with them in a mail client for an operating system we've paid for seems a step too far. While small banner ads alerting users to the availability of the mobile app may seem fairly innocuous, more invasive advertising will quickly become annoying, and taking up space on tiny smartphone screens is an irritation.

When we read our email, we want to be able to focus on the task at hand. Most of us aren't casually browsing our inbox, after all, but looking for specific messages or reading through our work correspondence. Microsoft shouldn't do anything that distracts from those tasks.

Ofcom plans to ban locked mobile phones

What happened?

Ofcom is planning to ban the practice of locking mobile phones to specific networks. The UK's communications regulator wants to make it easier for people to switch mobile providers without needing to buy a new phone, after revealing that almost half of consumers find it difficult to unlock their devices.

The watchdog singled out Vodafone, BT/EE and Tesco Mobile as networks that supply locked handsets, charging customers around £10 to unlock a pay-as-you-go mobile phone. Unless you pay this fee, you can't use your phone on a different network, even if you replace the SIM card.

Describing the switching process as "really frustrating", Lindsey Fussell, director of Ofcom's Consumer Group, said: "By freeing mobile users from locked handsets, our plans would save people time, effort and money – and help them unlock a better deal" (bit.ly/ofcom492). Rival mobile network providers have welcomed Ofcom's proposal.

The move is part of an ongoing campaign by the watchdog – in July, it forced mobile networks to introduce a free text-to-switch service for customers looking to move between providers. Banning locked phones is the next logical step.

In another act aimed at helping customers, Ofcom has also signalled a desire to make it easier to switch to a new broadband provider.

How will it affect you?

Customers with O2, Three, Sky and Virgin already enjoy unlocked mobile phones without restriction. This move would bring others into line and help consumers switch network providers without any hassle. If you already have a handset that's locked to a competing network, it may be too late to benefit from the new rules – but the locking ban will let you switch with abandon in the future, and that means better deals both on handsets and tariffs.

Ofcom is currently suggesting a 12-month implementation period – no doubt to help smooth the resistance from Vodafone and BT, who claim that locking handsets "makes it harder for criminals to commit fraud".

What do we think?

Ofcom's latest proposals should be welcomed. At a time when we can switch our car insurance or bank accounts with the click of a mouse, it boggles the mind that mobile customers are still being locked into networks that may not be right for them. Giving these companies 12 months to change their ways seems generous, but it's a step in the right direction for consumer choice.

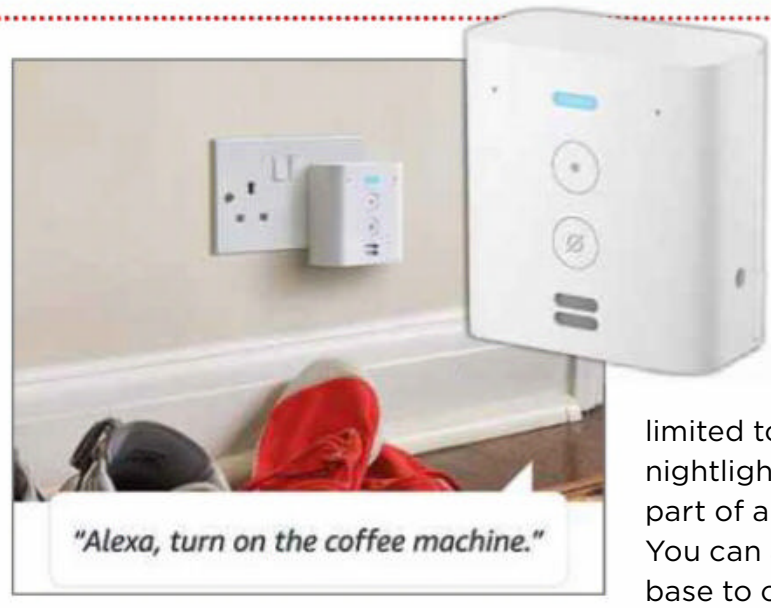
FIRST LOOK

Amazon Echo Flex

bit.ly/flex492

As its name suggests, the Amazon Echo Flex is designed for flexibility. The smart device plugs directly into any wall socket, allowing you to bring Alexa into every part of your home – even where there's no shelf. There is a catch however: it's just not as good as a standard smart speaker.

The Echo Flex offers all the usual goodies you expect from the Echo range. You can check the weather, make calls and set reminders, and its two built-in microphones catch every word you say to it. However, the speaker simply isn't up to scratch. It's quiet and tinny, and you'll need to be quite close to it to hear Alexa's answers to your questions. As with other Echo devices, you can connect



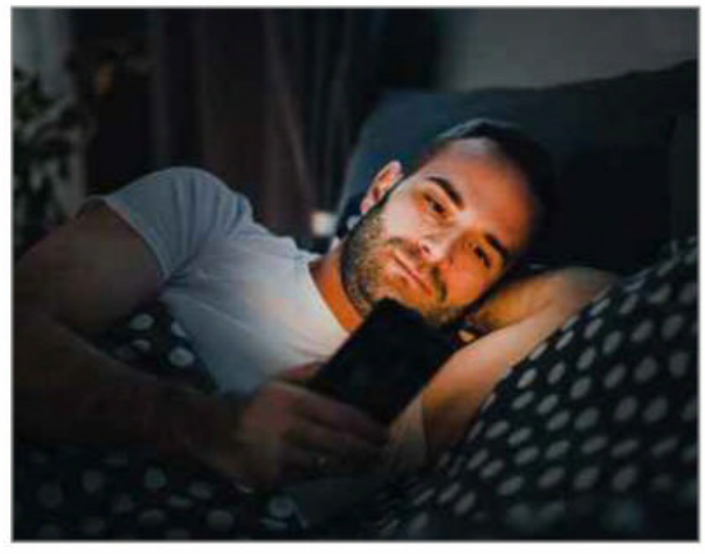
the Flex to an auxiliary speaker using Bluetooth or a cable with a 3.5mm jack. That might appease anyone who would otherwise be put off by the audio quality, but it undermines the idea that this is a 'go anywhere' smart speaker.

Perhaps we shouldn't be so hard on a device that's designed to plug into a socket in your hallway so you can check the weather before you leave the house, for example. The Echo Flex does at least have a handful of pros to balance its cons. Notably, you can attach third-party modules – although these are currently limited to a motion sensor and a nightlight, both of which can form part of any Alexa routines you create. You can also use the USB port on the base to charge your phone. Best of all, there's a physical button that disconnects the microphone for those times when you need some privacy.

The Echo Flex is a perfectly adequate addition to an Echo-enabled smart home, but it's no substitute for a standalone smart speaker. It's available now for £20.

WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is night mode actually bad for your sleep?



We've long known that the light from mobile phones can keep us awake at night. Our brains see the blue light seeping from the screen and are tricked into thinking it's daylight, making it harder to get to sleep. To combat this, many phone makers have introduced a night mode that automatically dims the screen during the devil's hours and adds a soft yellow tint that's easier on the eyes. And it could all be for nothing.

According to a study from the University of Manchester (bit.ly/night492), a phone's blue light may not actually disrupt our sleeping patterns. In fact, it could be the night mode that's more detrimental. During tests on mice, researchers adjusted the colour of the lighting without altering its brightness, and discovered that blue light had less effect on the rodent's body clock than the soft yellow lights associated with night mode.

Dr Tim Brown of the research group said the findings showed "the common view that blue light has the strongest effect on the clock is misguided; in fact, the blue colours that are associated with twilight have a weaker effect than white or yellow light of equivalent brightness."

In other words, a phone's night mode should be reversed to display cool colours in the evening and warmer colours during the day.

LIKELIHOOD RATING

✓✓✓✓✓

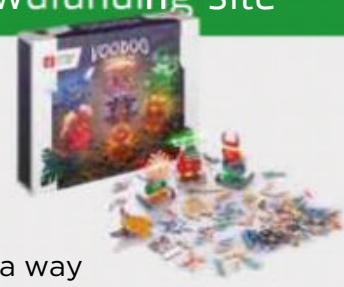
This study reminds us of those newspaper headlines that proclaim some everyday item prevents cancer, then announce the very next week that it's actually a cause. However, we'd like to see more research in this area – our understanding of the biological impacts of technology is still in its infancy. If designing screen lights that more closely resemble natural light cycles can help ease restless slumber, we'd certainly welcome that. Either way, we think the best thing to do when you go to bed is to put down your phone and close your eyes.

What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

DIY Robotics Kit

bit.ly/robot492 | From £46



Engineering needn't be a dry topic. With the Geeek Club's DIY Robotics Kit, children can learn all about the subject in a way that stimulates their creative faculties while helping to solve a global skills shortage. The kit helps kids (and adults) develop hardware, structural and electrical engineering skills by building robots, including one that's as close as you'll get to a Star Wars AT-ST Walker without infringing copyright. Two sets are available, each with seven nano-bots, printed circuit boards and step-by-step guides. Pledge £46 for a basic kit or £132 for two complete kits and accessories.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

The Far Side launches official website

Cartoonist Gary Larson has marked the 40th anniversary of his classic comic strip The Far Side by launching an official website (thefarside.com). The site will be updated daily with cartoons from the archive, and offers the promise of new content to come.

EE expands 5G to nine new areas

EE has expanded its 5G mobile network to 50 towns and cities across the UK, with customers in Hull, Leeds, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Sunderland, Northampton, Stevenage and Wakefield now able to access its high-speed service.

WE DON'T LIKE...

Windows 10 update breaks File Explorer

The Windows 10 November Update caused a problem in File Explorer that makes the feature unresponsive when users search for a file and stops them right-clicking the search box. Microsoft has promised to fix the bug in its next update.

Epilepsy sufferers targeted on Twitter

Twitter trolls used strobing videos to target people with epilepsy, according to US charity Epilepsy Foundation. The seizure-inducing content was posted during National Epilepsy Month and hijacked hashtags intended to promote awareness.

Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Security flaw found in WhatsApp group chats

A serious vulnerability has been discovered in WhatsApp that lets hackers crash the app and delete group chats. Security researchers at Check Point said the flaw enables attackers to send a single malicious message to a group chat that causes WhatsApp to crash for all participants, and means they'll need to reinstall the messaging app on their phones before they can use it again.

According to Check Point: "If an attacker uses this technique and crashes one of these groups, all chat history will be gone and further communication would be impossible. The impact of this vulnerability is potentially tremendous since WhatsApp is the main communication service for many people. Thus, the bug compromises the availability of the app which is crucial for our daily activities. To recover from the issue, the user has to uninstall WhatsApp, install it again and remove the group that contains the malicious payload."

WhatsApp was notified of the vulnerability in September and has issued a fix, but any versions of the app that have not been updated are at risk.
bit.ly/checkpoint492

Facebook suffers its own data breach

The personal and financial data of nearly 30,000 Facebook workers was exposed after thieves stole corporate hard drives from an employee's car. The unencrypted drives contained the workers' payroll information including their names, bank account numbers and salary details. Facebook said it would offer affected employees free identity-theft and credit-monitoring services.

"We are working with law enforcement as they investigate a recent car break-in and theft of an employee's bag containing company equipment with employee payroll information stored on it," a Facebook spokesperson told tech-news site IT Pro. "We have seen no evidence of abuse and believe this was a smash-and-grab crime rather than an attempt to steal employee information."

The social network has gained notoriety for leaking its users' personal data on several occasions. In September 2018, for example, the company revealed that the data of 50 million users had been leaked after attackers exploited a vulnerability in Facebook's code.
bit.ly/facebook492

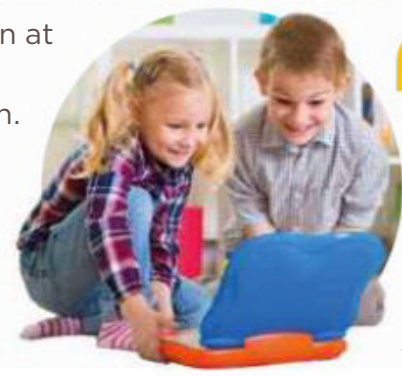
Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT: Ray Walsh, Digital Privacy Advocate at ProPrivacy (proprivacy.com)

Q How worried should parents be about reports of security flaws in children's smart toys (bit.ly/smarttoys492)?

Sue Talbot, via email

A The revelation that toys from popular manufacturers such as Mattel and VTech contain vulnerabilities that could put children at risk is a serious cause for concern.



> "Smart toy manufacturers have potentially put children at risk from serious vulnerabilities"

Parents who bought smart toys as Christmas gifts for their children must take this research seriously, and be wary not only of gifts they've purchased, but also presents from friends and family.

The fact that VTech is embroiled in yet another vulnerability scandal is alarming. Parents were encouraged to boycott VTech's products in the past after it was discovered that poor security had allowed hackers to access photos taken by children. Now, four years later, VTech is selling a walkie talkie that critics claim could allow a stranger to communicate with a child from up to 200 metres away.

Manufacturers of children's toys are creating products aimed at some of society's most vulnerable people, so they should be putting privacy and security first at the product-design phase.

Instead, manufacturers appear to have rushed products out quickly to hit the lucrative Christmas market, potentially overlooking serious vulnerabilities that could put children at risk.

We recommend that parents pay close attention to the setup steps for all connected devices to ensure they use strong, unique passwords. Parents must also look out for any security issues that might arise, and apply updates and patches as soon as they're available.

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

IONOS by 1&1

CTRL your web business and **SHIFT** projects from good to great. **DEL** time-intensive administration and access management. **ESC** from long working nights with cold pizza. Your **ALT**ernative: The **IONOS Partner Program** for agencies, developers and designers.

www.ionos.co.uk/partner-program

Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

TRANSPORT

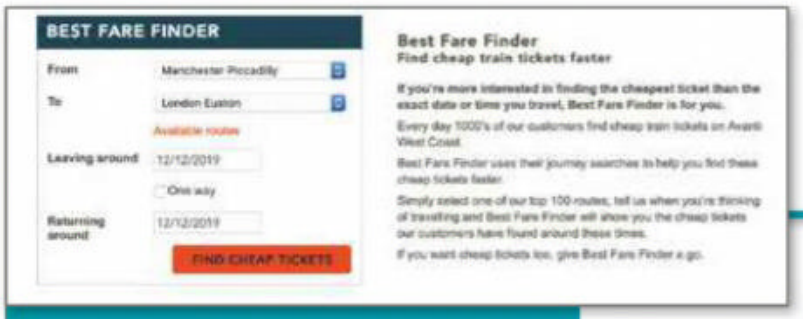
NEW

Avanti West Coast

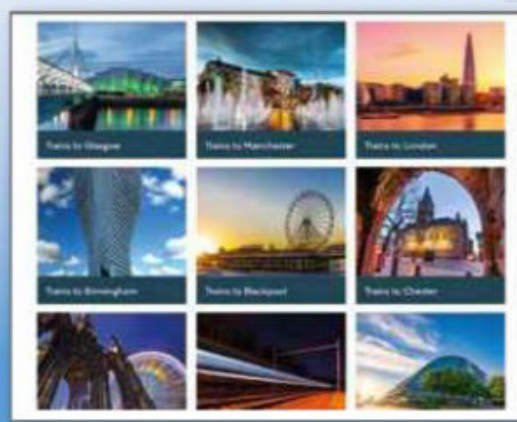
bit.ly/avanti492

Avanti West Coast has taken over running trains between London, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh and Glasgow but its website didn't get off to the best start, crashing on the first day. Since then, the operator has got itself back on track. Not only is the ticket search facility prominent and simple, the cheapest fares are clearly flagged, restricted tickets are well explained and there's no booking fee to pay. We'd like the 'Check live trains times' option to be higher up the page, but with downloadable timetables, automatic compensation for delays of more than 15 minutes and details of future plans, Avanti's site is running on the right lines.

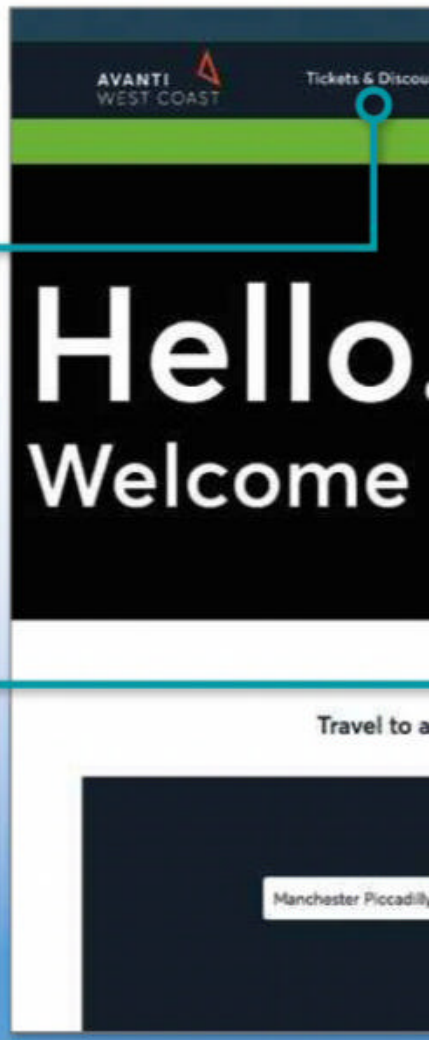
Our rating ★★★★★

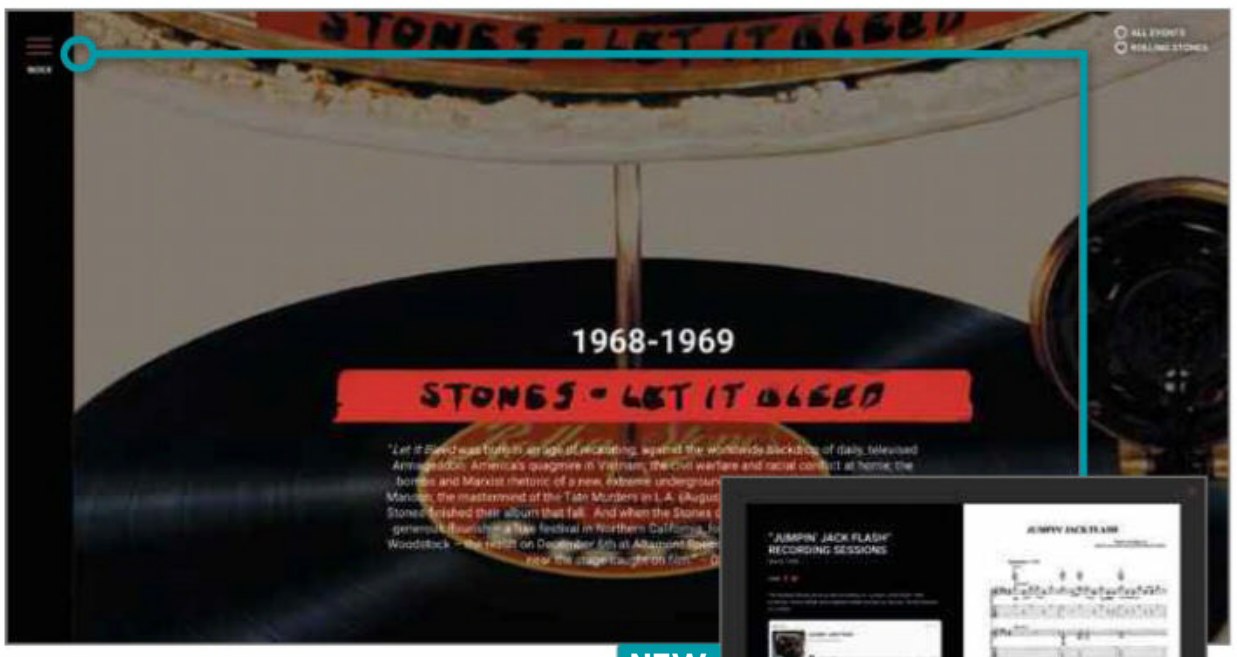


BEST FARE FINDER
Enter your travel details and this tool will highlight the cheapest fares at different times of the day



DESTINATION GUIDES
Discover key attractions situated close to each railway station along the West Coast Main Line





NEW

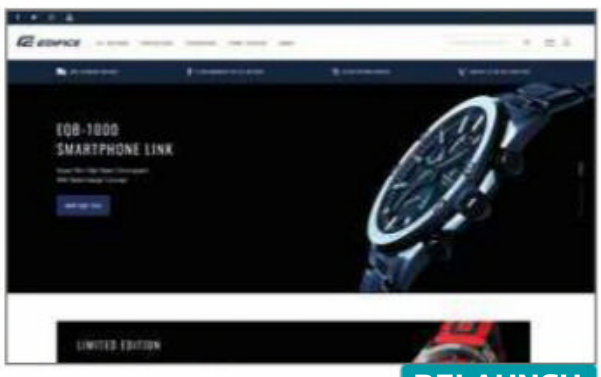
MUSIC

Let It Bleed 50

www.letitbleed50.com

The Rolling Stones released their classic *Let It Bleed* album on 5 December 1969, and this website has been launched to celebrate its 50th anniversary. As well as exploring the songs, it highlights other historical events that year, from the Moon landing to the Prague Spring, while detailing key moments in the lives of the band members and the music world. You can filter the timeline to only see Rolling Stones entries, and there's an index that lets you jump to specific entries rather than scrolling through the content. It's certainly varied and interactive with lots of videos, 30-second snippets of tunes via Apple Music, photos and a full history of recording sessions for the album.

Our rating ★★★★☆



RELAUNCH

WATCHES

Edifice

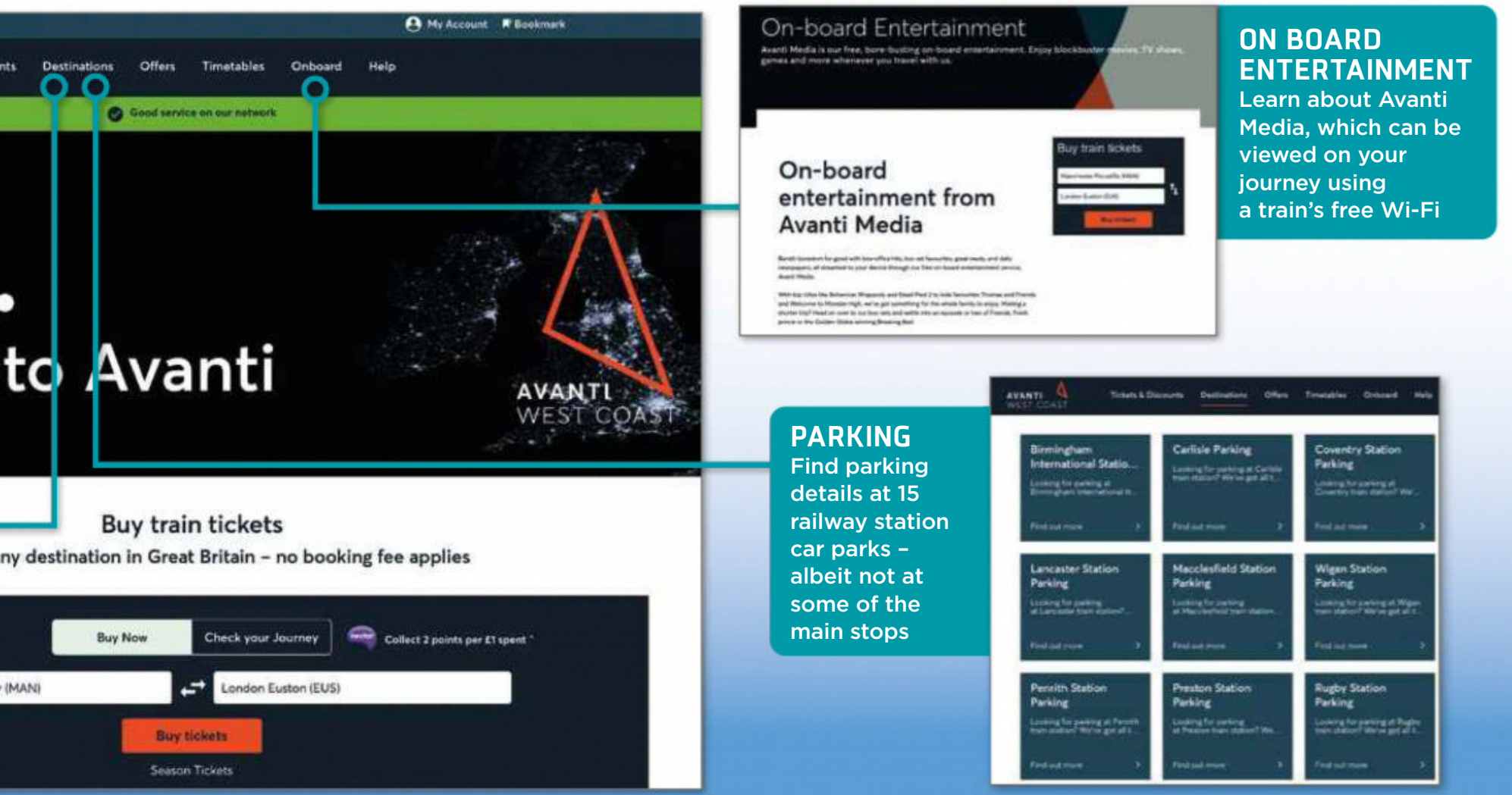
edifice-watches.co.uk

The website design team working for the Casio watch brand Edifice didn't have a great deal of time to pull everything together but, in just eight weeks, they've created a modern showcase that lets you browse and buy 30 watches, and read and write reviews. The timepieces can be viewed by collection and there's a great section that explores the technology being used, with links to the watches that use the features mentioned. The site can feel a little slow at times but you can find the nearest high-street stockist, sign up for an email newsletter and watch the latest Casio videos on YouTube.

Our rating ★★★★☆

Reviews by David Crookes

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



NEW

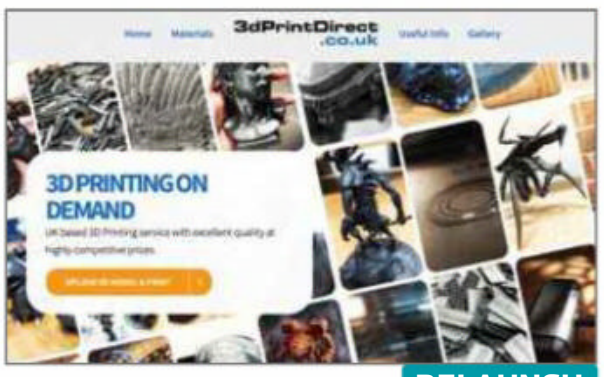
SHOPPING

Google Shopping 100

bit.ly/shopping492

To make it easier for you to find and buy gifts, Google Shopping looks for products that have had a recent increase in searches. It then uses this colourful website to display the goods across eight categories – including Tech, Gaming and 'Personal care' – so you can see what's currently trending before clicking through for prices and availability. Though the data is currently focused on Google searches in the US, the links in most cases show UK retailers. Where one isn't available, the site will highlight a US store, converting the currency and displaying a delivery charge.

Our rating ★★★★☆



RELAUNCH

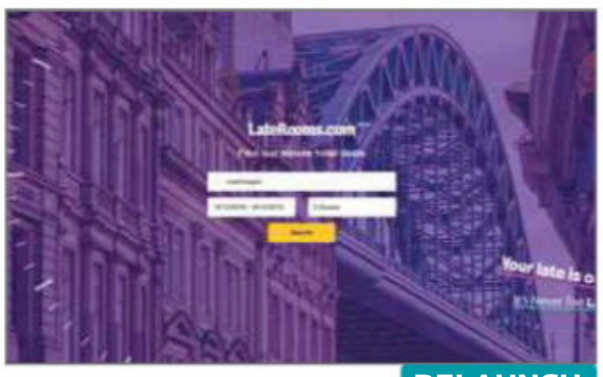
PRINTING

3D Print Direct

3dprintdirect.co.uk

If you fancy dabbling in 3D printing, you may want to try a professional service first. At 3D Print Direct, you can upload 3D CAD and STL files, and have them printed in a range of materials. We can't vouch for the quality of the final product but uploading is as easy as dragging and dropping. Confusingly, the instant quote appears halfway down the page, forcing you to scroll up for the price but, even so, the production times are clearly displayed and choosing materials updates the cost in a flash. You can also see a gallery of printed items, though you can't zoom in for a closer look.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



RELAUNCH

TRAVEL

LateRooms.com

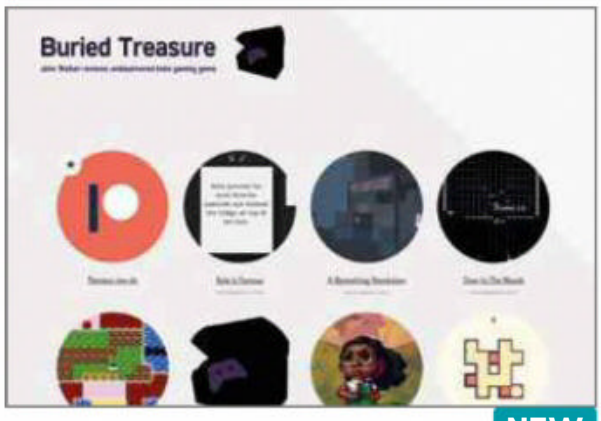
www.laterooms.com

LateRooms.com went into administration in August 2019 but has now been taken over by holiday-rental marketplace Snaptrip. While this doesn't mean the 200 axed employees are being reinstated, the brand has at least had an online revival, with a site that's little changed from before. Enter a city, town or region, specify some dates and the number of guests, and a list of properties appears. From there, you can use comprehensive filters to find the best deal before making a selection and checking out. Bookings are now being fulfilled by Booking.com but past users will feel instantly at home.

Our rating ★★★★☆

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

Best New Websites



NEW

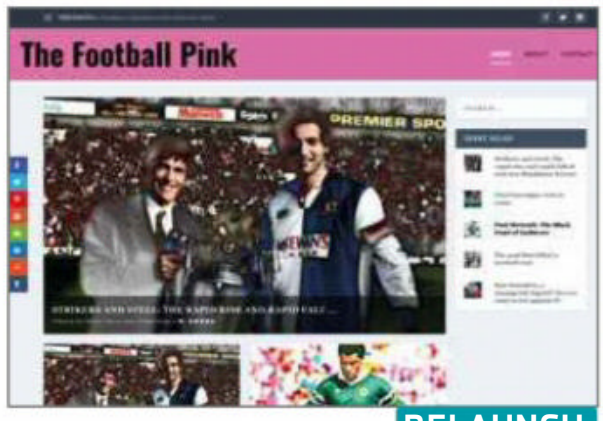
VIDEO GAMES

Buried Treasure

buried-treasure.org

UK journalist John Walker is a huge fan of independently made video games but he believes they don't get the coverage they deserve. As such, this new hub is dedicated to discovering indie gems across a wealth of gaming platforms and offers regularly updated articles that are both entertaining and informative. In each case, the review text is interspersed with screenshots and pull-quotes, and there's information on price and where to buy. These details could be better highlighted but we applaud the lack of ads. Visitors are instead asked to back the site via the crowdfunding membership platform, Patreon.

Our rating ★★★★☆



RELAUNCH

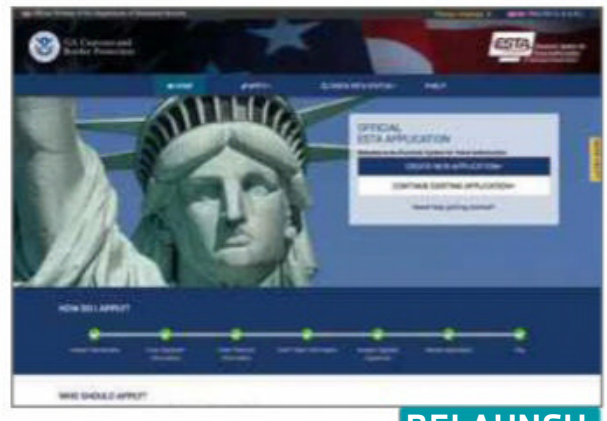
FOOTBALL

The Football Pink

footballpink.net

Saturday sports papers used to be all the rage and were invariably printed on coloured sheets. Pink and green were most common, hence the inspiration for this website – a collection of writers, bloggers, illustrators and photographers indulging in their passion for football. There's some wonderful writing about the beautiful game, often with quirky angles and covering subjects often overlooked by the mainstream media. Navigation is a let-down, however, and better tagging and categorisation with more flavour of what each article is about would help readers find what interests them. We like the addition of comments, though.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



RELAUNCH

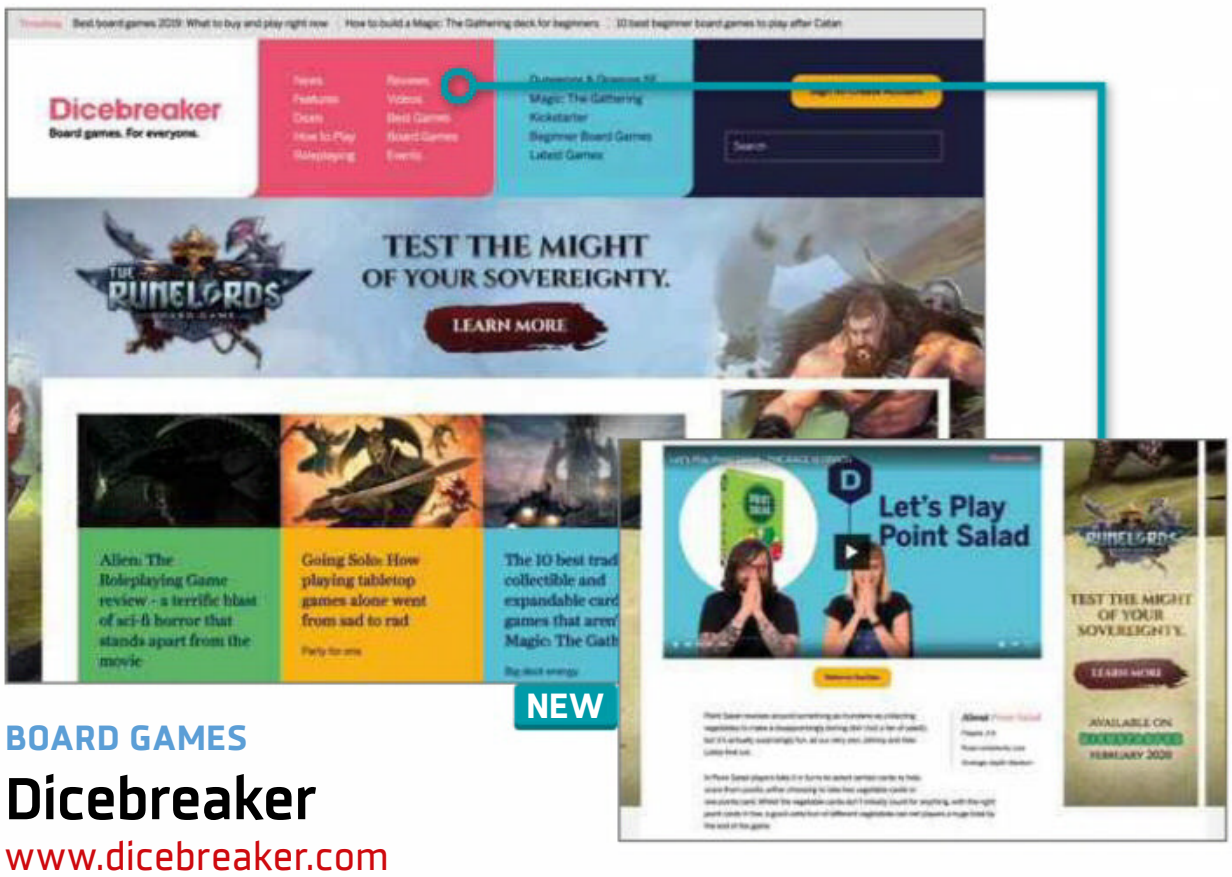
TRAVEL

ESTA

esta.cbp.dhs.gov

When the official ESTA electronic visa application website relaunched, it instantly crashed, leaving many British travellers unable to board US-bound flights. Thankfully, it's now stable, though the design has barely changed. One bonus is a new 'save and exit' function that lets users return to incomplete applications, and the new real-time validation of all data fields should also cut down on errors. Oddly, the site has expanded the How Do I Apply section of the homepage to highlight seven steps rather than the previous three, and the many scary warnings to applicants make it far from being a friendly service.

Our rating ★★★☆☆



NEW

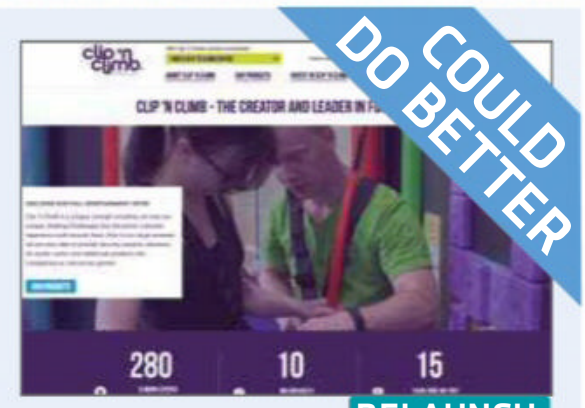
BOARD GAMES

Dicebreaker

www.dicebreaker.com

Tabletop gaming is enjoying a revival, whether it's a round of Monopoly or an intense session of Dungeons & Dragons. Dicebreaker leans more towards the latter, promising comprehensive coverage of RPGs, card games and other such gems while remaining accessible for both newcomers and old hands. It delivers the latest news amid a host of features, reviews, expert guides and daily YouTube-hosted videos, as well as interviews with designers and publishers. The colourful, easily navigable site makes finding content a pleasure, and it seems to be making an early impact – some stories are attracting lots of comments so it looks like a new community is set to flourish.

Our rating ★★★★★



RELAUNCH

ACTIVITIES

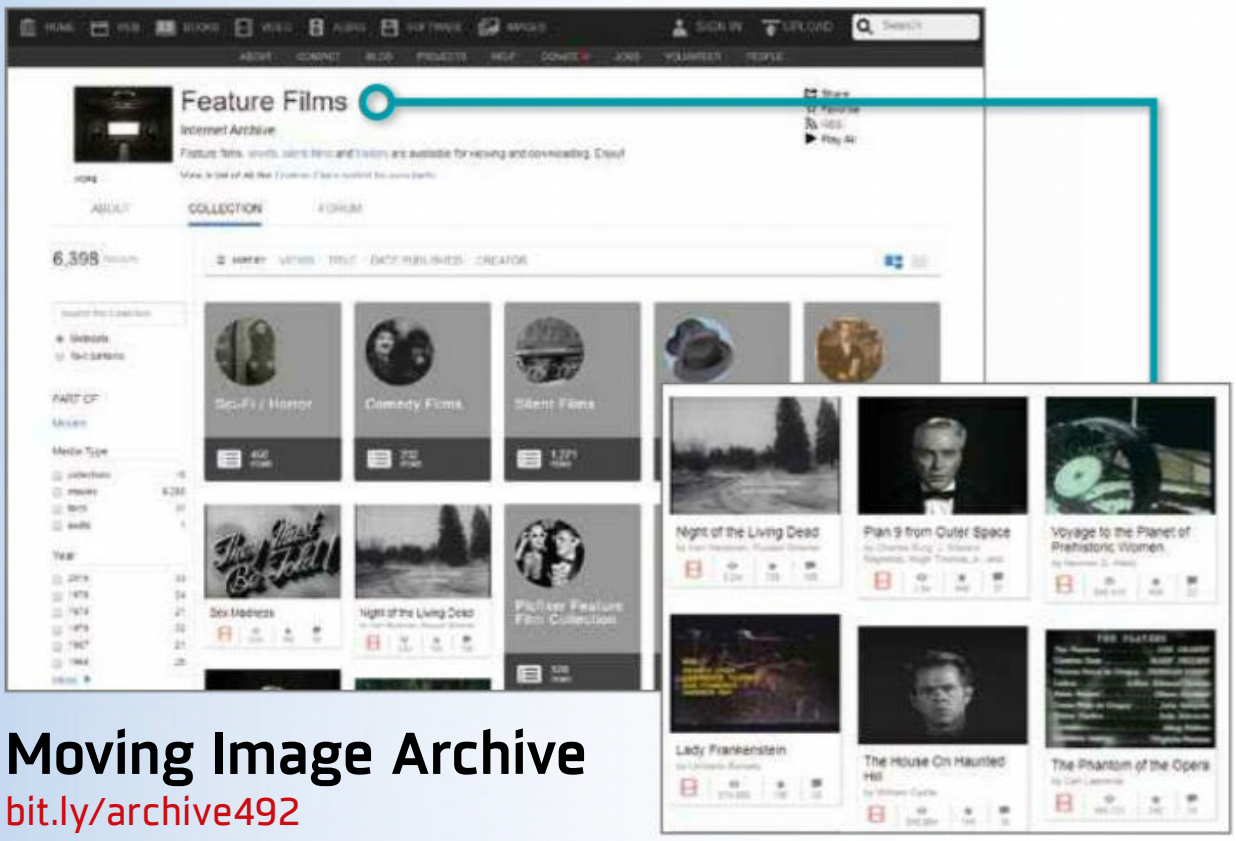
Clip 'n Climb

clipnclimb.com

Clip 'n Climb has activity centres across the UK but its revamped website suffers design niggles in some browsers where text overlays other text, and we initially mistook the homepage's Our Products box for one of those annoying cookie pop-ups. It's all a bit unfocused – on the one hand, it lets you find a centre (via a clumsy map and drop-down menus rather than by city or postcode) and discover what's on offer; on the other, it's seeking investment and promoting franchise opportunities with its news emphasising the corporate side.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

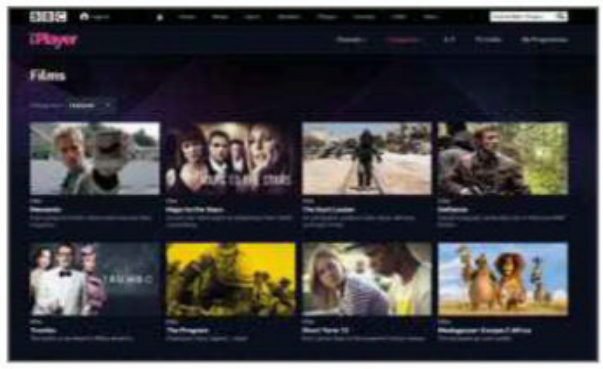
ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Fantastic free film sites



Moving Image Archive

bit.ly/archive492

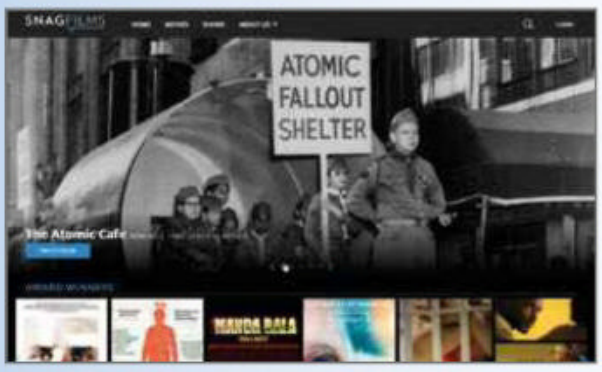
This section of the sprawling Internet Archive contains more than 5.2 million videos you can stream and download for free, including nearly 6,400 full-length feature films. Many of these are movies from the silent era, long out of copyright, including works by Charlie Chaplin, DW Griffith and Buster Keaton, as well as later black-and-white films starring the likes of Fred Astaire, Roy Rogers and John Wayne. There are also several classic horror movies, such as *Nosferatu*, *Bride Of Frankenstein* and *Night of the Living Dead*, as well as news and propaganda films, including the infamous *Reefer Madness*. The picture quality often isn't great but the quantity of free content spanning the last 130 years is amazing.



BBC iPlayer Films

bit.ly/iplayer492

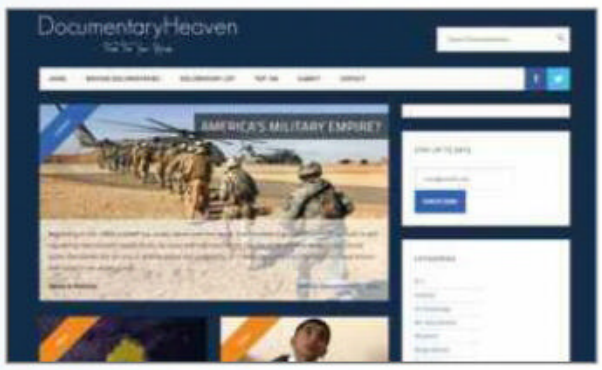
The iPlayer is primarily a TV-streaming service but it also offers a regularly updated selection of films, which you can watch for free (if you don't count the licence fee) in your browser or its mobile app. Unlike many free-movie sites, there are no ads, the picture quality is excellent, all titles feature optional audio description and sign language, and you can even download most of them to avoid buffering. Certain films remain on iPlayer for longer the others – current highlights include biopic *Burton and Taylor*, classic horror films *Cat People* and *I Walked With a Zombie*, and Bruce Willis in *The Jackal*, which is "available for over a year", as if it won't take a hint!



SnagFilms

www.snagfilms.com

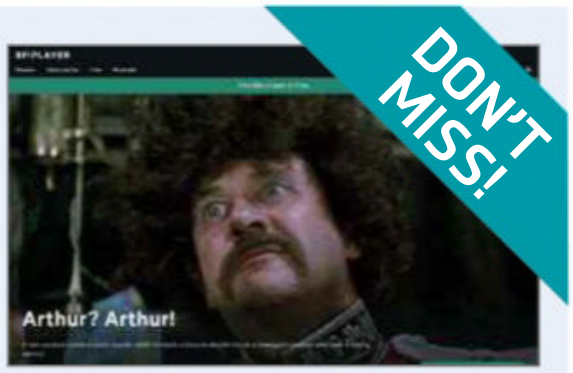
Now that Netflix has dropped its free trial (see last issue's What to Watch Online), you'll have to look elsewhere if you want to legally stream full movies without paying for them, and SnagFilms is certainly worth checking out. Like Netflix, its choice of titles is rather esoteric – don't expect to find any Hollywood blockbusters here – but there are some interesting documentaries, including the award-winning *Spinning Plates* and *Alive Inside*, lots of independent and foreign films, and classic movies including *Charade*, *Carnival of Souls* and *Desert Victory*. Videos play directly and instantly in your browser, you don't need to register with the site, and there are free SnagFilms apps for Android and iOS.



Documentary Heaven

documentaryheaven.com

Aiming to provide "food for your brain", this fantastic site rounds up thousands of free, full-length documentaries from YouTube, Vimeo and Dailymotion, and makes them much easier to browse than on their host sites. Categories include Archaeology, Biographies, Educational, Human Rights, Music, Philosophy, Technology and many more, and there's a handy top 100 list of the most popular videos on offer. When we visited, this was headed by the BBC's *Louis Theroux: Most Hated Family in America* and Channel 4's *The Trouble With Atheism*, along with lots of other British content. Documentary Heaven users rate all the films, and their comments are invariably much more insightful than those you find on YouTube.



Free Films on BFI Player

player.bfi.org.uk/free

As well as paid-for movie rentals and a subscription service (with a 14-day free trial), the British Film Institute offers a lot of terrific content from its archives for free. The biggest draw are the documentaries, travelogues and factual items shot around the UK over the last 120 years, with titles such as 'Tram rides through Nottingham (1902)' and 'Exeter after the Blitz (1942)'. We love the free collections based on themes such as football, cycling and public-information films, and you'll even find some full-length titles here, too, for example *Arthur? Arthur!*, starring Donald Pleasance.

Tell us about your favourite free movie sites via webuser@webuser.co.uk

Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight

Give your site a more distinctive background

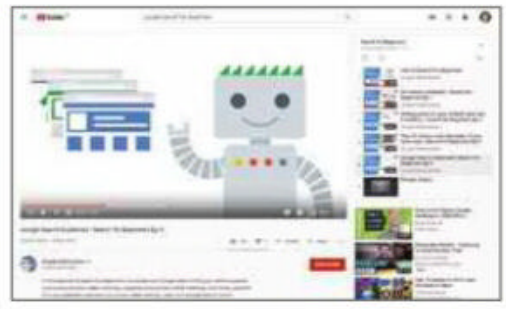
Background images are tiny squares that tessellate, which means you can use one small image file to create a repeating texture for an entire web page. They offer a subtle and efficient way of removing blank space.

Background Image Generator (bg.siteorigin.com) lets you create distinctive textures that match your site's colour scheme. Choose from the design and shade options in the panel on the left, then view a preview on the right.

Not every website will look better with a background texture, but experiment with it and see if it comes up with something that could enhance yours.

Keep watching the Googlebox

New videos are appearing thick and fast on Google's Webmasters channel, but one highlight is a



new series aimed at helping webmasters create Google-friendly sites. It's called *Search for Beginners*, and you can find it at bit.ly/sforb492. This lays down the basics of ensuring your site is listed on Google, but don't be fooled by its name – there's plenty of information in these episodes that could enlighten experienced site builders, too.

Deal of the Fortnight

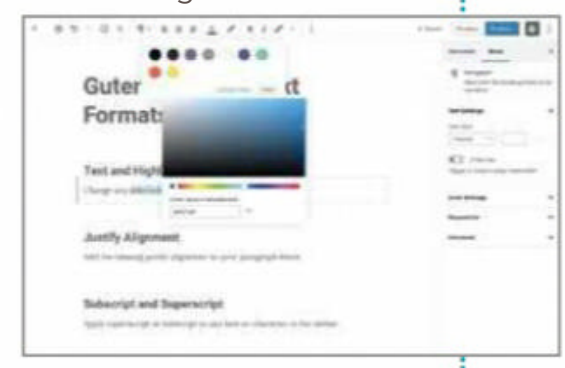
Ionos (www.ionos.co.uk) is offering its Business hosting for £1.20 per month, down from £6 per month, for the first 12 months.

Web-building Helpdesk

Q **I like the new blocks you can use to create websites in WordPress, but they don't give me much control over text colours and formats. Is there a way to change these without resorting to HTML or CSS?**

Garth Harris, via email

A Try installing the EditorsKit plugin (bit.ly/edkit492). This adds a toolbar to the top of the screen that provides more options for colouring and formatting text. It also recognises Markdown codes, making it easier to format text as you type.



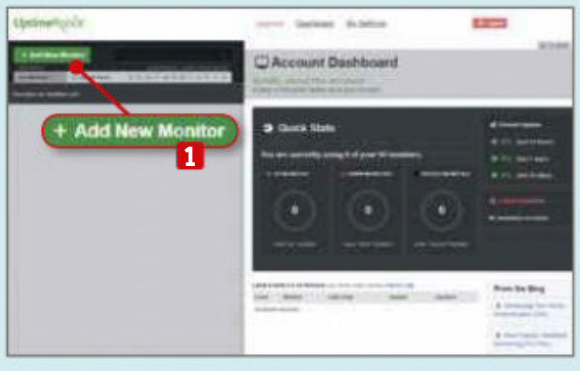
Other features include the ability to export block designs you've created, so you can use them elsewhere or share them with others.

Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor

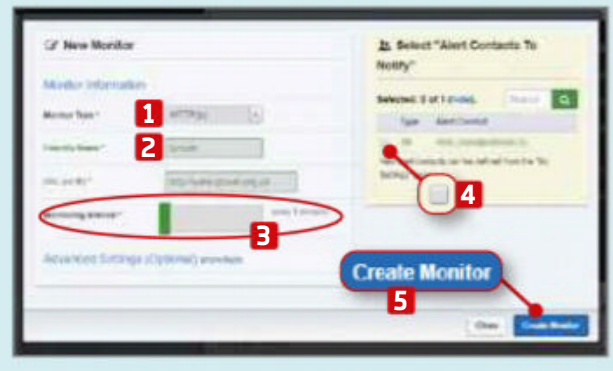
MINI WORKSHOP | Find out if your site goes offline

UptimeRobot: uptimerobot.com | 10 mins | Any browser

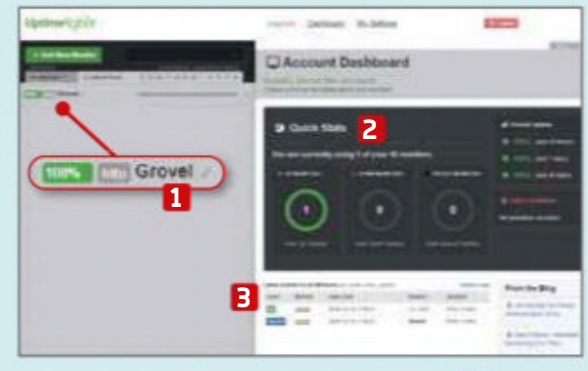
You pay your web host to keep your site online, but how can you tell if it's doing a good job? We show you how to set up a free robot to keep an eye on your site for you



1 Go to uptimerobot.com, click Sign-Up and choose the Free plan. You'll need to enter your name and an email address. Once you've signed in, go to the Dashboard and click the Add New Monitor button. 1



2 In the New Monitor box, choose the Monitor Type HTTP(s). 1 Give the monitor a name you'll recognise 2 and choose how often you want the monitor to visit. 3 Tick the box next to your email address, 4 then click Create Monitor. 5



3 Your monitor is now listed, 1 and you can set up to 49 more if you have more sites to watch. The Dashboard shows the general status of all your monitors, 2 and provides a log of events below. 3 Click the monitor to see your site's response time and find out if it's had any downtime.

Email us your website building questions at webuser@webuser.co.uk

tp-link | deco

STREAMING WITHOUT LIMITS

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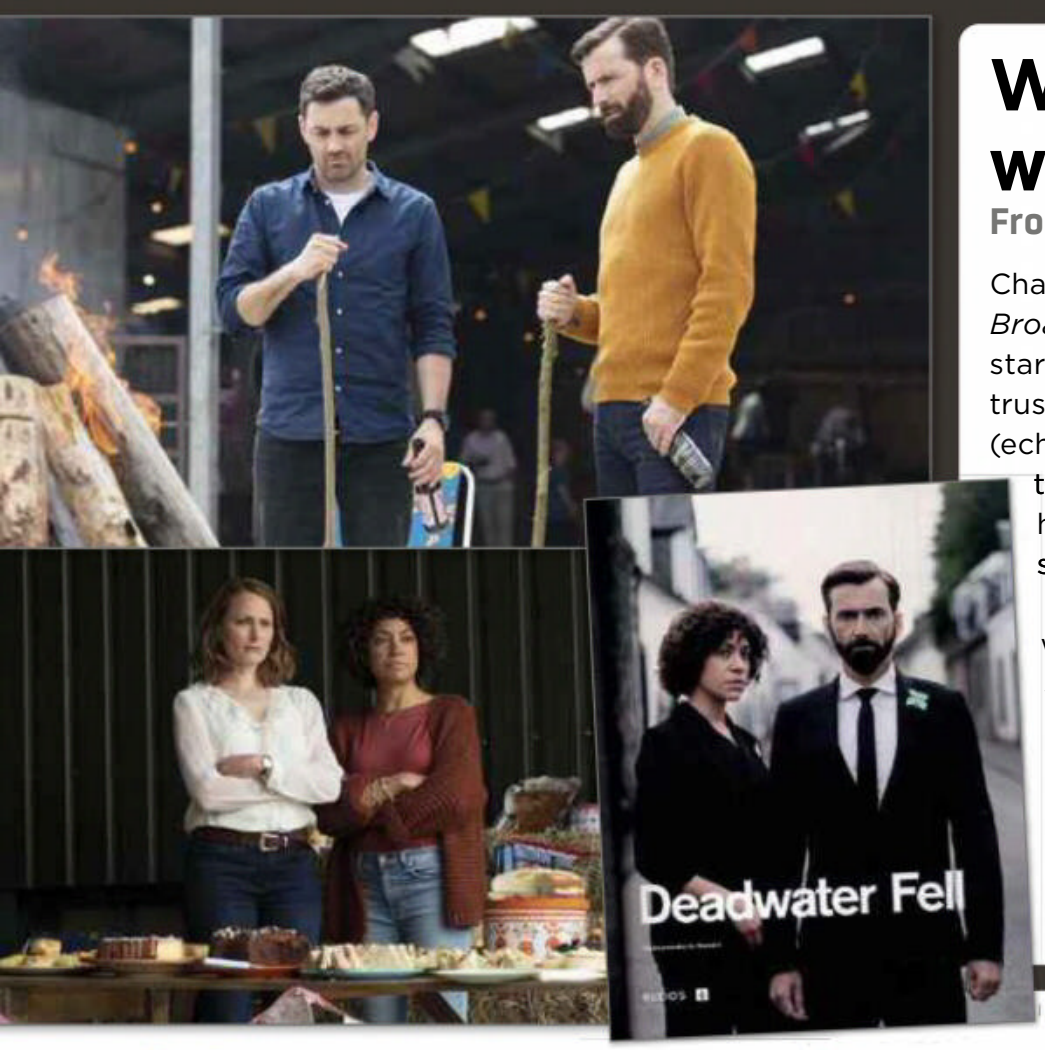
Quality of Service

What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight



Watch David Tennant in whodunnit *Deadwater Fell*

From 10 January

Channel 4's new four-part drama sounds like a cross between *Broadchurch* and Netflix's *Criminal* – and not just because they all star David Tennant. In *Deadwater Fell*, Tennant plays Tom, a trusted member of the community who falls under suspicion (echoes of *Criminal*) after a terrible crime rocks the close-knit town (just like *Broadchurch*). But Tom's family and friends harbour dark secrets, too, as the trailer hints: "Everyone has something to hide" (bit.ly/deadwater492).

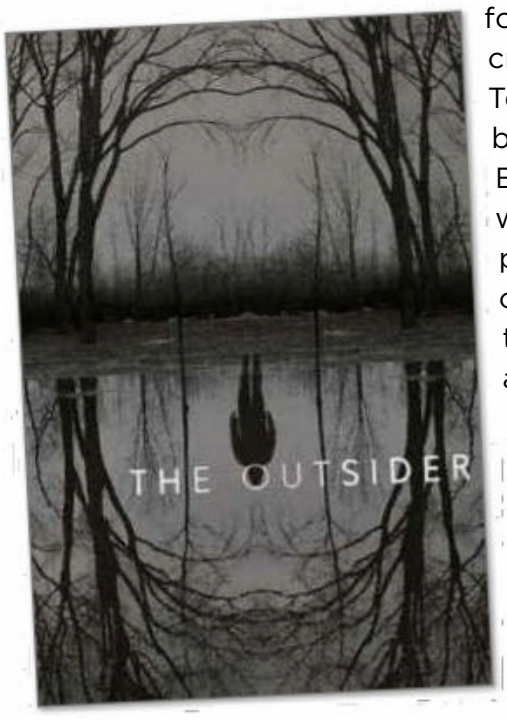
The show's writer, Daisy Coulam, also pens *Grantchester*, which happens to return to ITV for its fifth series at 9pm on 10 January, coinciding with *Deadwater Fell*'s debut on Channel 4. Both programmes will be available to stream on-demand after they've aired, via ITV Hub and All 4 respectively.

There was no new *Grantchester* trailer at the time of writing, but PBS – which broadcasts the show in the US – has a 'Hopes for Season 5' video at bit.ly/grant492. All four previous series are on BritBox at bit.ly/grantbox492.

Watch new Stephen King mystery *The Outsider*

From 13 January

Like *Deadwater Fell*, HBO's new 10-part miniseries centres on a popular small-town citizen who comes under suspicion for a terrible crime. Suspect Terry is played by Jason Bateman, who also produces and co-directs this adaptation of Stephen King's 2018 novel (bit.ly/king492).



The Outsider airs on Sky Atlantic in the UK, so you can watch on-demand via Now TV with an Entertainment Pass (£8.99 per month, bit.ly/nowent492). Head to YouTube for HBO's official teaser at bit.ly/outtease492 and a new trailer at bit.ly/outtrail492.

Watch RuPaul's new Netflix comedy *AJ and the Queen*

From 10 January

Drag Race meets *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* in this new Netflix comedy-drama created by RuPaul, along with *Sex and the City* writer Michael Patrick King. RuPaul stars as down-on-her-luck drag queen Ruby Red, travelling across America in a camper van with tough-talking 10-year-old stowaway AJ.

Judging by the official trailer (bit.ly/queen492) there's plenty here to delight RuPaul fans, including dressing-room wisdom, heartache survival and a ton of shade (both the cosmetic and the put-down kind). Watch all 10 episodes on Netflix from 10 January.

Watch *Bourne* spin-off *Treadstone*

From 10 January

Action drama *Treadstone* explores the origins of Operation Treadstone, the fictional CIA program that made a superhuman assassin of Jason Bourne.

Treadstone earned so-so reviews in the US for its disparate storylines, but the official trailer (free to watch on Amazon at bit.ly/treadstone492) is compelling stuff, as it introduces us to Treadstone killers all over the world. All 10 episodes arrive on Amazon Prime on 10 January.

If you're inspired to rewatch the *Bourne* films, they're on Now TV (all except 2016's *Jason Bourne*). Watch at bit.ly/bourne492 with an £11.99 per month Sky Cinema Pass.

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

Watch PM Robert Carlyle in political thriller *COBRA*

From 17 January

Britain is in meltdown and we're all going to die. That's the not-entirely-implausible scenario faced by Prime Minister Robert Carlyle, who must make "impossible decisions" in Sky's darkly witty new political thriller.

Carlyle looks rather Blair-like in the official trailer (bit.ly/cobra492), where we also glimpse Chief of Staff Victoria Hamilton (formerly Queen Mum in *The Crown*) and the all-knowing COBRA committee. Find out if we have a future when all six episodes come to Now TV as a box set on 17 January.

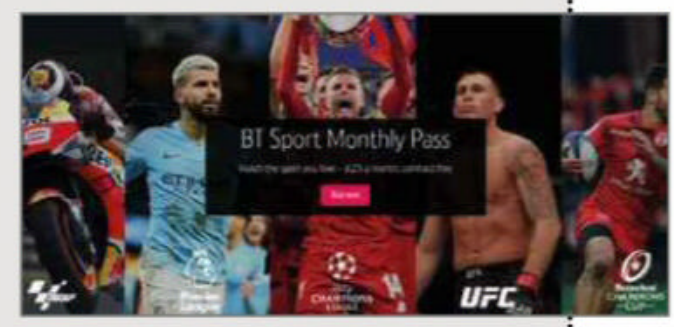
BT Sport launches £25 contract-free pass

BT Sport has launched a flexible monthly pass that allows fans to watch Premier League, Champions League and boxing coverage without having to sign up for BT TV or BT Broadband.

The BT Sport Monthly Pass costs £25 and includes access to all BT Sport channels on a month-by-month basis. There's no contract and no cancellation fee.

The pass is available through the BT Sport website, as well as apps for Android and iOS (bit.ly/btsport492), Chromecast, Apple TV, PlayStation 4 and Xbox.

At £25, the BT Sport Monthly Pass compares favourably with Now TV's £33.99 Sky Sports Pass (bit.ly/nowsport492), which also lets you watch Premier League games (as does Amazon Prime). Now TV has slashed its price to £16.99 for the first month, no doubt in response to competition from BT.



Watch Jude Law and John Malkovich in *The New Pope*

From 12 January

Jude Law reprises his *The Young Pope* role as Lenny Belardo, alias Pope Pius XIII, in this new 10-part comedy drama from Sky and HBO – and this time he has John Malkovich to deal with.

The New Pope sees ambitious Sir John Brannox (Malkovich) sworn in as Pius XIII's successor, only to learn that the young American pontiff isn't dead after all. Cue delicious melodrama.

HBO offers a trinity of teasers on YouTube, including the official trailer (bit.ly/newpope492) and 'Official Tease 2' (bit.ly/nptease492). Stream the show from 12 January on Now TV, where you can also watch *The Young Pope* at bit.ly/ypope492.

Watch ITV's Jeremy Bamber drama *White House Farm*

From 8 January

The infamous 1985 murder of the Bamber family – including two six-year-old boys – is not a story to approach lightly, especially as Jeremy Bamber continues to protest his innocence from prison. ITV's dramatisation is based on the book by Colin Caffell, widower of victim Sheila, so it's unlikely to paint Bamber in a sympathetic light.

Freddie Fox plays Bamber, along with an impressive cast that includes Stephen Graham, Mark Addy and Amanda Burton. *White House Farm*'s six episodes arrive on ITV Hub weekly – see the official trailer at bit.ly/whfarm492.

In case you missed it...

Stylish new crime thriller *Jett* is streaming now via Now TV, and you can watch the trailer at bit.ly/jett492.

New to Amazon Prime is James May's travelogue, *Our Man in Japan*. You know what to expect, but here's the trailer anyway: bit.ly/japan492.

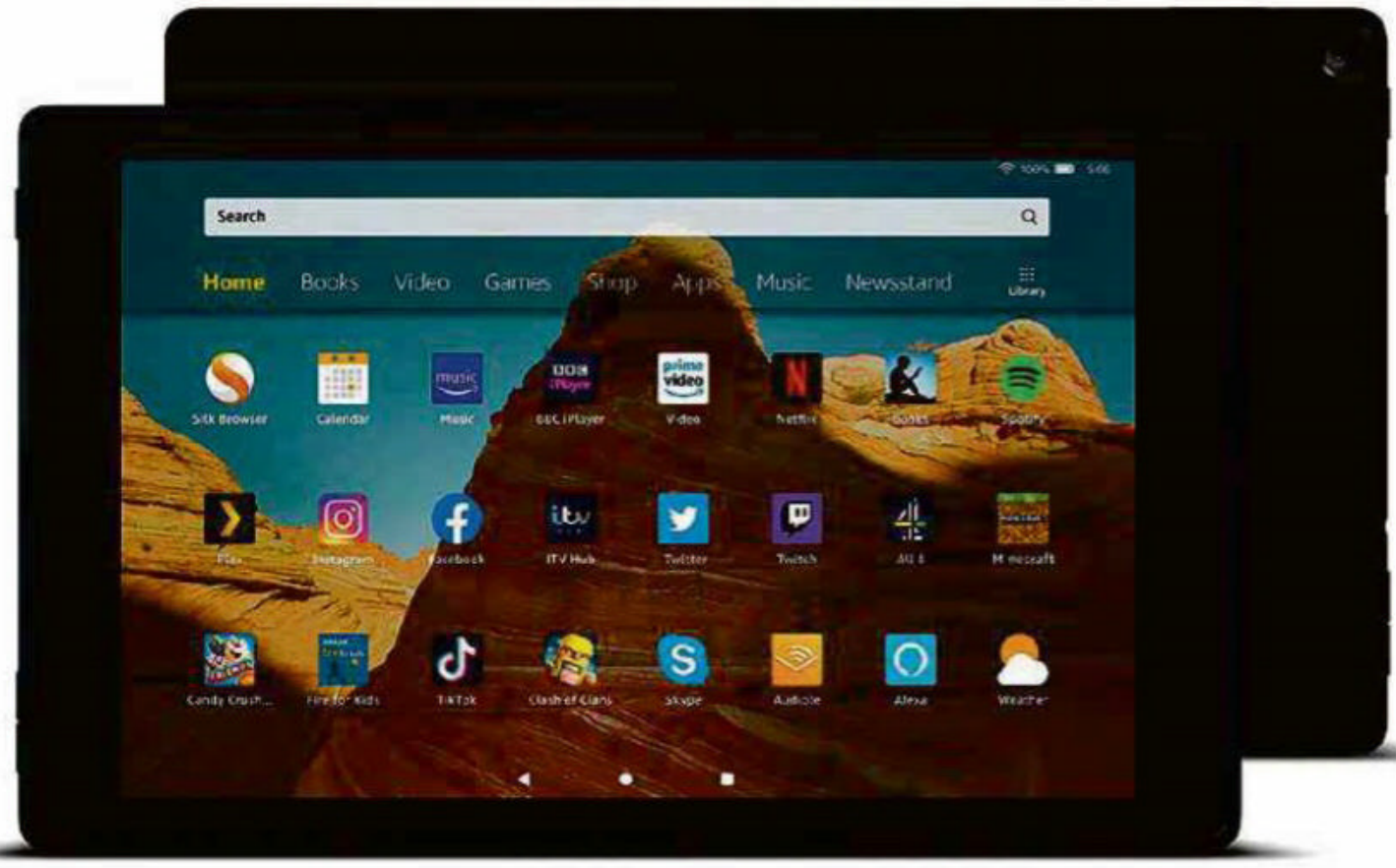
Long-running series returning to iPlayer include *Father Brown*, which has reached Series 8, at bit.ly/father492; *Call the Midwife*, Series 9 at bit.ly/midwife492; and *Silent Witness*, Series 23 at bit.ly/witness492. *Midsomer Murders* isn't far behind: the final episodes of Season 20 are now available to stream via ITV Hub at bit.ly/midsomer492.

Product Test

We test and compare the latest products

Amazon Fire HD 10 (2019)

Amazon's new Fire HD 10 tablet is a big step forward in performance and battery life



One by one, Amazon has been refreshing its range of Fire tablets. We got a new Fire HD 8 late in 2018, a new Fire 7 last spring and now, finally, the one we've been waiting for: a third generation of the Fire HD 10, last updated back in 2017. This is an important milestone because there aren't many quality budget tablets around and this is as large and as powerful as Amazon's tablets get.

Improvements and pricing

While the 2019 Fire 7 makes do with a 1.3GHz quad-core processor and a lonely 1GB of memory, the new Fire HD 10 not only gets double the memory but also double the cores and a faster clock speed. Its full HD 1,920 x 1,200-pixels screen falls far short of an iPad's but, for a budget device, it's a champion.

The Fire HD 10 costs £149.99 for the 32GB version or £179.99 for the 64GB one. Given that either option can add a microSD card of up to 512GB, you're probably best off saving your money and going for the cheaper model. Those prices include Amazon ads – you can pay an extra £10 to get one "without special offers", which we think is well worth the money.

Design-wise, it's largely the same as its predecessor, with enormous thick bezels and a chunky matte plastic casing. This time, however, you can pick from four colours – our test model was plain white, but we think both the plum and twilight blue shades look appealing. Overall, it's a slightly cleaner-looking product aesthetically because Amazon has taken a small step towards stripping back some of the branding by removing the full embossed Amazon logo on the back and leaving just the curved arrow.

More importantly, the micro-USB port has been replaced by USB Type-C, which means faster charging times and, if you've replaced your Android phone any time recently, you'll probably already have a spare cable.

Screen quality and Fire OS

The one element that continues to divide opinion is Amazon's Fire OS. This is a heavily skinned version of Android that prioritises pushing Amazon products at every opportunity, whether it's the store, Kindle books, Audible titles or Amazon Prime TV shows.

It takes a little getting used to and you'll have to sideload the Google Play store if you want access to the full range of Android apps. While this process isn't particularly daunting, it's probably beyond the scope of most casual buyers. And although Amazon's own app store has most of the popular bases covered, there are some significant omissions.

> "Its full HD 1,920 x 1,200-pixels screen falls far short of an iPad's but, for a budget device, it's a champion"

The 10.1in IPS screen is surprisingly good for the price. Our colourimeter measured an sRGB colour coverage of 86.7%, while contrast is a decent 890:1. In practical terms, this makes image quality detailed and lively, and streaming TV very watchable. It's not the kind of premium-quality panel you get on the 10.2in iPad but it does the job and is more than you have any right to expect for the price.

The only slight downer is that, at a maximum screen brightness of 398cd/m², it's not particularly bright. Indeed, it's actually slightly dimmer than the 2017 Fire HD 10 and the 2018 Fire HD 8, which both reached 455cd/m². That means it may struggle in the brightest sunshine, but if you're only planning on using the tablet indoors, you won't face any problems.

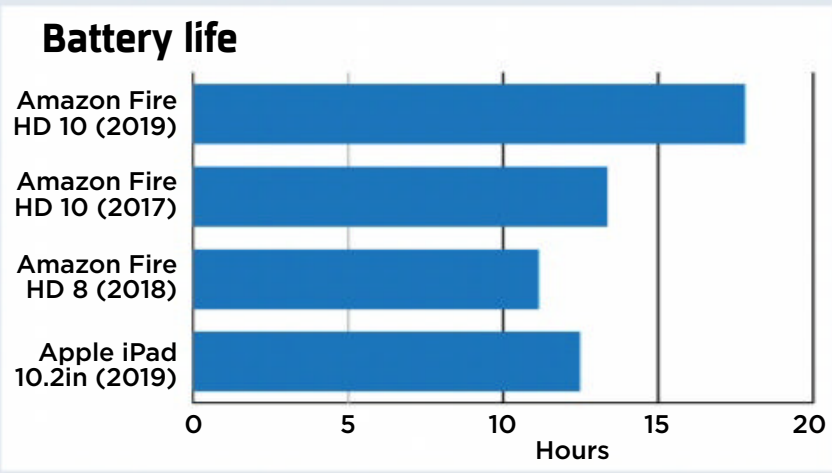
Apps, performance and battery life

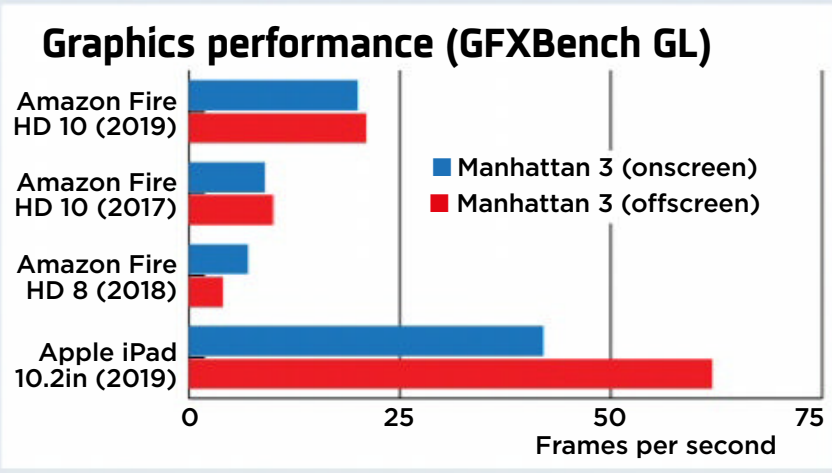
In day-to-day use, the HD 10 feels snappy and responsive. Amazon suggests a raft of useful apps to get you started, and we juggled between Spotify, Audible, Twitter and the built-in Silk web browser without any problems.

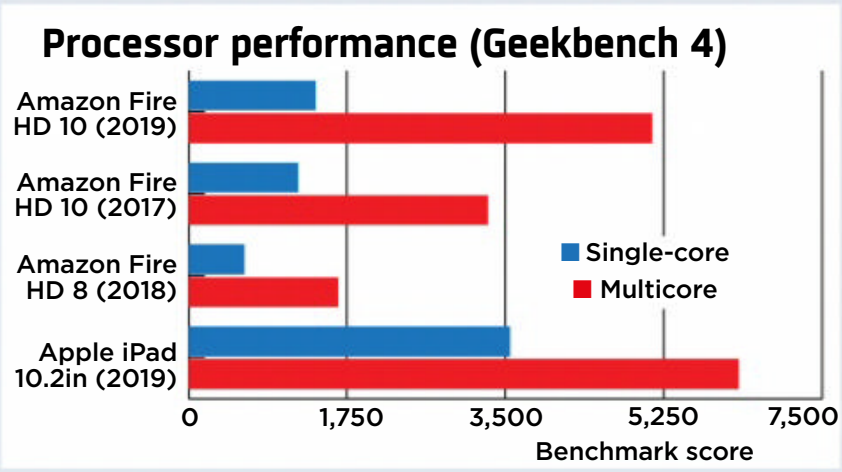
Looking at the benchmarks, the boast of a smoother Fire tablet is backed up by our results (see charts, right). Given that the new Fire HD has doubled the number of cores you got in the 2017 version, it's hardly surprising that multi-core performance has improved – but the degree to which this has boosted the device is still startling. It's now closing in on the 10.2in iPad and leaves all other Fire devices in the dust.

With regard to graphics performance, however, the Fire HD 10 is still some distance behind the iPad but it did prove to be around twice as fast as the 2017 version, which is impressive. In short, gaming works well for undemanding titles but you may experience some problems with particularly strenuous games, if you can even find your favourites on Amazon's store.

Battery life is another area where the Fire HD 10 excels. The 2019 version packs in a whopping 6,300mAh battery and, while Amazon didn't reveal a capacity for its previous version, this is clearly a huge leap forward. Our looping video battery test lasted 17hrs 48mins, six hours longer than the 2017 version, and some distance ahead of the 10.2in iPad, too.







OUR VERDICT

★★★★★

The 2019 version of the Fire HD 10 offers a huge boost to performance and battery life compared to its previous incarnation, but without raising the price. Even given its drawbacks – the hard plastic casing, the weak brightness and lack of apps due to Fire OS – you won't get another tablet as good as this for £149.99.

Yes, the 10.2in iPad is undoubtedly a better tablet, but you can buy two Fire HD 10s for that price and still have enough change left to splurge on a couple of fancy cases and a few months of an Amazon Prime subscription.

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

PRODUCT INFO

Amazon Fire HD 10

Price: from £149.99
Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/fire492

SPECIFICATIONS

- 2GHz octa-core processor
- 2GB of memory
- 32GB or 64GB of storage
- microSD slot, maximum capacity 512GB
- 10.1in 1,920 x 1,200-pixels resolution IPS touchscreen
- Dual-band 802.11a/b/g/n/ac Wi-Fi
- USB Type-C port
- 3.5mm stereo headphone socket
- 2-megapixels front camera
- 262 x 159 x 9.8mm
- 504g

FOR

- ✓ Impressive budget performance
- ✓ Keen pricing
- ✓ Brilliant battery life

AGAINST

- ✗ Lots of Amazon hard sell
- ✗ Missing Android staples thanks to Fire OS

MORE POWER

Apple iPad 10.2, £349
bit.ly/ipad492

MORE AFFORDABLE

Amazon Fire HD 8, from £79.99
bit.ly/afhd492

Roku Express

The new Roku Express is a cost-effective way to enjoy a full range of streaming services on older TVs

Roku was a pioneer of affordable, plug-in TV streamers (we reviewed the original Roku back in Issue 287, in 2012 – bit.ly/webuser287) but the field has since become a lot more crowded. From Amazon's Fire TV line to Sky's Now TV Stick (itself a rebranded Roku), there are plenty of affordable alternatives, but Roku is pushing back against its budget-priced rivals with its new updated Roku Express.

This is the cheapest of Roku's current range, which includes the Roku Premiere (increases the resolution from 1080p to 4K) and the Streaming Stick+ (boosts the Wi-Fi from 802.11n to 802.11ac). The Roku Express, priced at £24.99, is ideal for upgrading an older HDTV or for adding functionality to a kitchen or bedroom set.

PRODUCT INFO

Roku Express

Price: £24.99
Buy from Amazon:
bit.ly/roku492

SPECIFICATIONS

- Single-band 802.11b/g/n Wi-Fi
- Up to 1080p (1,920 x 1,080 pixels)
- Upscaling from 720p
- MicroUSB port for power
- HDMI 1.4b port
- 76 x 38 x 19mm
- 31g

FOR

- ✓ The best service line-up
- ✓ Straightforward controls
- ✓ Unbeatable for the price

AGAINST

- ✗ Awkward design
- ✗ No bundled power supply

Design and positioning

In most respects, the Roku Express is identical to the Roku Premiere. It looks the same and comes with an identical remote control. The compact, curved block is a tad chunkier than Roku's streaming sticks and sits near or on your TV. You have the option to attach it via the supplied adhesive pad.

Unlike the streaming sticks, the Roku Express needs line of sight to the remote control, so it must be placed in front of your TV. This isn't a huge drawback, given that it's so small, but if you choose to stick the device to your TV, you can't move it to another and, if you don't, it tends to get twisted by the cables.

At the back, you'll find a microUSB input, which supplies power from the USB port on your TV. If your TV doesn't have the necessary connection, you'll have to buy a mains adapter separately because there isn't one included in the box.

Range of services and setup

The main advantage Roku's streaming device has over other brands is that you get a full line-up of apps, including BBC iPlayer, Netflix, Now TV, Amazon Prime Video, All 4, ITV Hub, My5, YouTube and Google Play Movies & TV. No other devices offer all these services so, if you want it all, opt for a Roku. It even throws in apps for streaming local media from your network, which is handy if you have a NAS running a Plex or Twonky server.

> "Setting up the device is as easy as tapping in your Wi-Fi password"

Setting up the device is as easy as tapping in your Wi-Fi password. This is fiddly with the supplied remote, so we recommend downloading an app to offload the task to your phone because you'll also need to enter credentials for your streaming services. The app also makes it easier to search for content (the Roku lets you search for films across multiple services, which is particularly handy) and channel audio through your headphones.

OUR VERDICT

★★★★☆

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

If you want all the streaming services on a single device, get yourself a Roku. The Roku Express is the cheapest unit in the manufacturer's line-up but it's not as well designed as its more expensive siblings, and it's annoying that there's no power supply included.

If that's a deal-breaker, the Roku Premiere is worth spending extra money on.

However, if you just need a device to bring a full complement of streaming TV services to an older set, perhaps a spare that's been relegated to the kitchen or bedroom, the Express is all you need.

PCSPECIALIST

PC Specialist recommends Windows Windows 10

CUSTOM GAMING DESKTOPS & LAPTOPS

ORDER ONLINE NOW AT

WWW.PCSPECIALIST.CO.UK

GET A FURTHER £15 OFF WITH THIS EXCLUSIVE VOUCHER CODE: **CA298**

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Some features require Windows 10. Update available through Windows Store. Internet access required; fees may apply.
Microsoft, and Windows are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.

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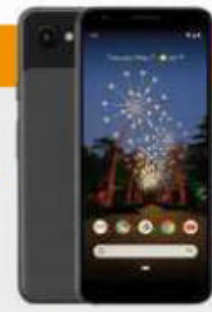
Web User's Best Buys

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

HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

SMARTPHONE



Google Pixel 3a

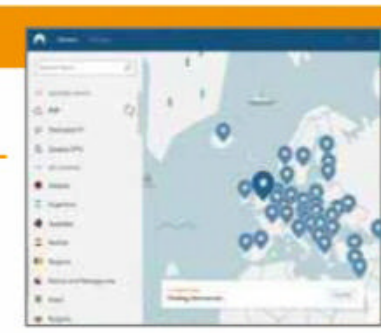
£399 from store.google.com
Tested: Issue 491

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

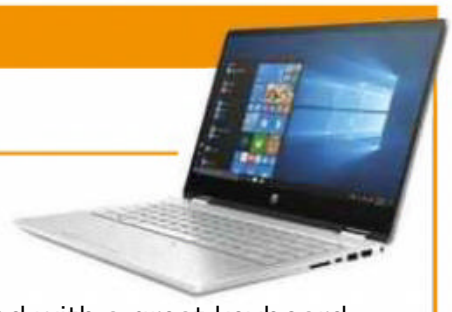
From £2.29 per month from nordvpn.com
Tested: Issue 489

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

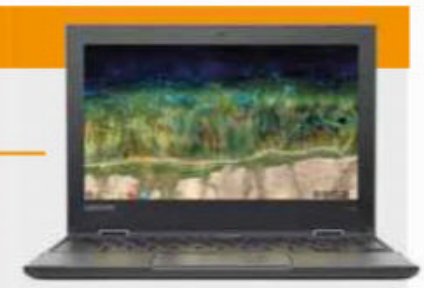
£679 from bit.ly/hp487
Tested: Issue 487

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/leno483
Tested: Issue 483

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

KEY SPECS

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

SECURITY CAMERA

Google Nest Cam IQ Outdoor

£279 from bit.ly/nest481
Tested: Issue 481

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

KEY SPECS

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

INKJET PRINTER

Canon Pixma TS6250

£114.36 from bit.ly/cango479
Tested: Issue 479

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

KEY SPECS

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

All prices correct at time of review

Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

OPEN-SOURCE CLOUD STORAGE

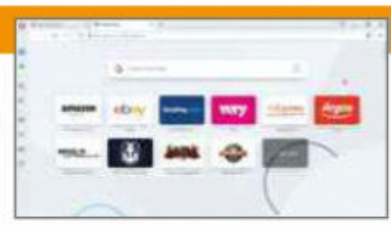
Cozy

NEW!

Free from cozy.io
Tested: Issue 491
Cozy is a cloud service that anyone can use – you don't need any extra tech know-how to get started. It's a great option if you want to switch from more famous storage providers.

PORTABLE BROWSER

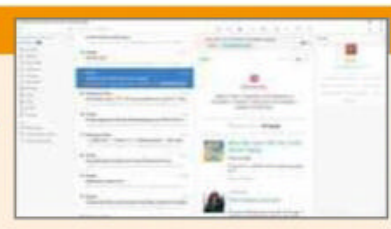
Opera



Free from 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.

EMAIL SOFTWARE

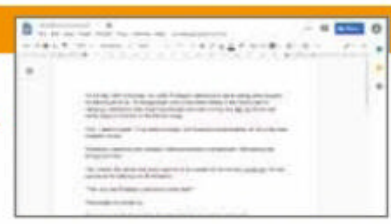
Mailspring



Free from 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

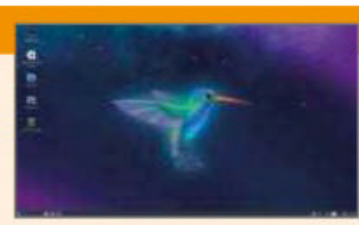
Google Docs



Free from docs.google.com
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

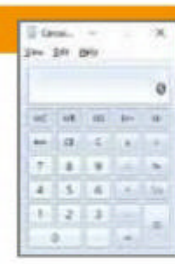
Lubuntu



Free from lubuntu.net
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
Tested: Issue 486
Old Calculator appears instantly when you call it, sits unassumingly in a corner of your screen when you're not using it and can perform all everyday calculations.

WebUser

BACK ISSUES DISC 2018

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

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

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

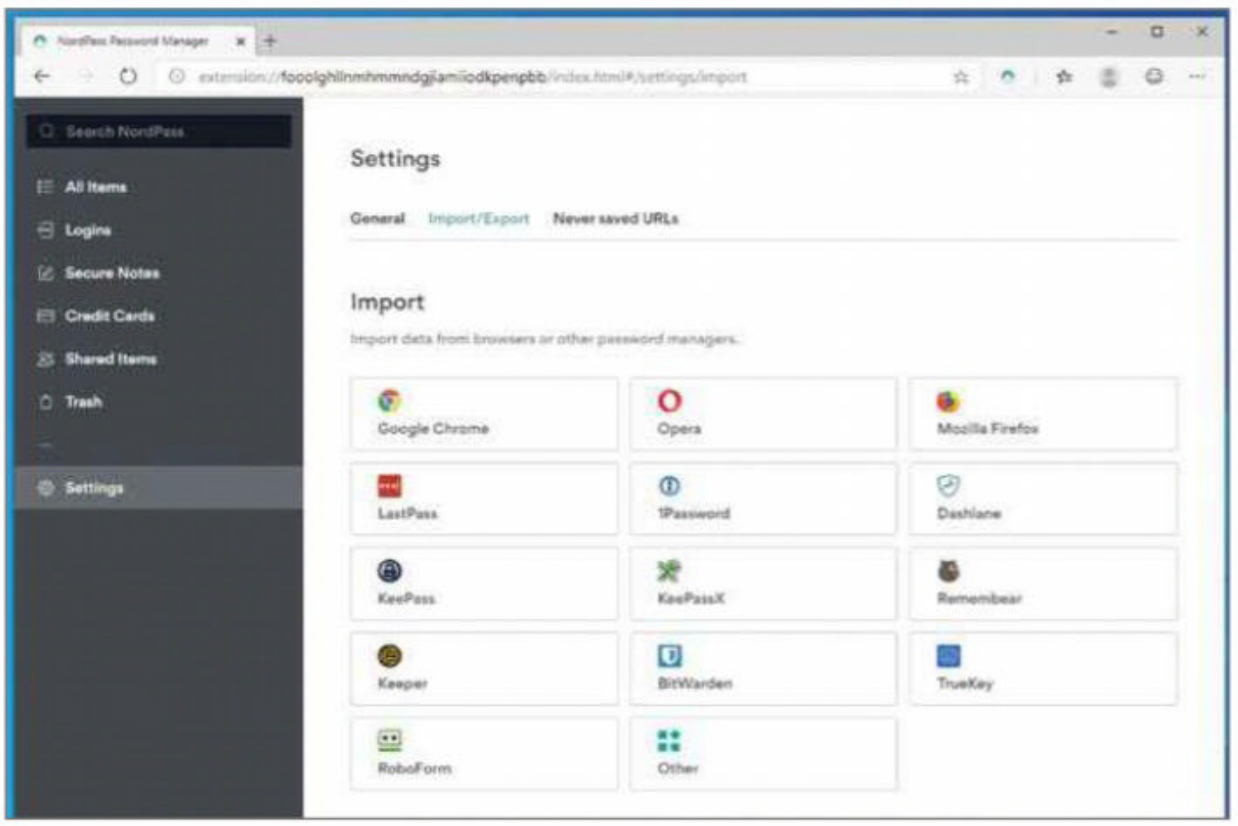
Best Free Software

PASSWORD MANAGER

NordPass (desktop version)

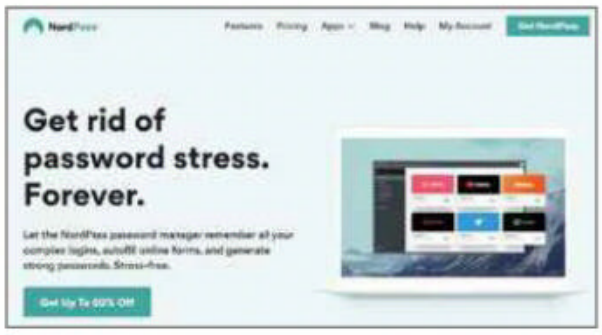
nordpass.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 8MB



We all have so many online accounts these days that it can be difficult to keep track of which password we used where. You can use your browser to store login details, but that's far from safe. To keep your logins completely secure and prevent them from falling into the wrong hands, you ideally need a password manager.

There are already plenty of options to choose from and now, the team behind the popular virtual private network NordVPN has created its own. We looked at the mobile app in last issue's Best Free Apps section, but the new desktop version works slightly differently and offers additional features.

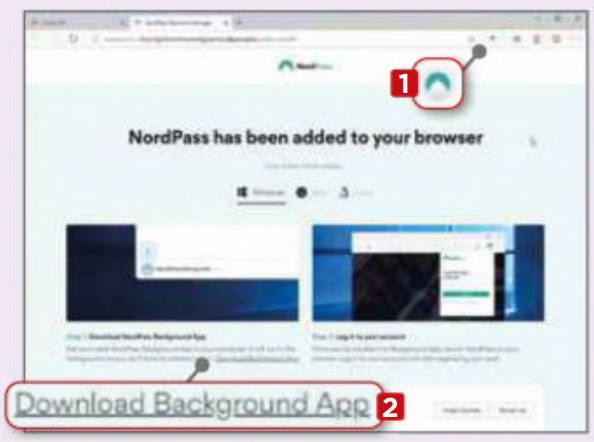


NordPass is a paid-for service – prices start from $2.49 (£1.86) a month for a two-year plan. The more limited free version comes with NordVPN or NordLocker, which we covered last issue. NordLocker itself is free, so sign up for that, then use the login to get NordPass. The password manager is available for all major browsers – Chrome, Edge, Opera and Firefox, as well as iOS and Android, which we named our 'App of the Fortnight' last issue.

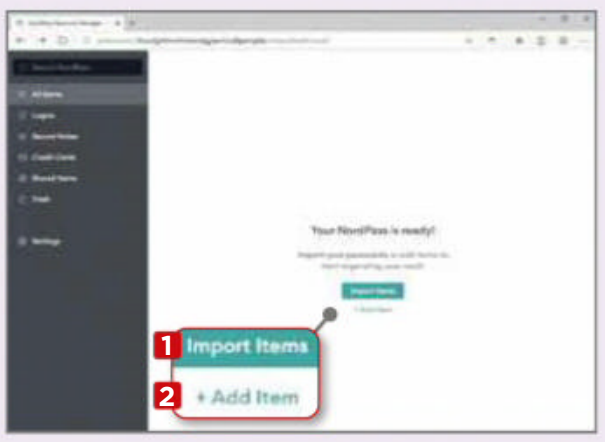
NordPass stores your credentials in a secure vault and offers optional two-factor authentication (2FA) for additional protection. The program stores your existing passwords (it can even import them from other password managers), automatically fills them in for you and suggests strong ones when you're signing up to a new site. It can also store private notes and credit card information.

The paid-for version of NordPass works across up to six devices and lets you share logins with trusted contacts. The free version limits you to one device and has no sharing option.

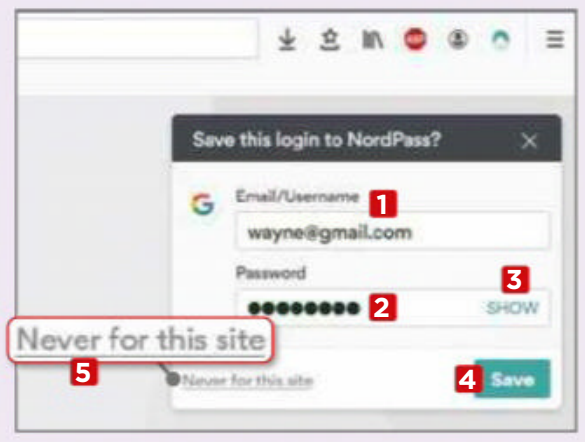
MINI WORKSHOP | Securely manage your logins with NordPass



1 Log into the NordPass site and go to the downloads page. Click the Download button, select the correct extension and follow the instructions to install it. Once it's installed, click the NordPass button in your browser, 1 then download and install the Background App 2 from the page that opens.

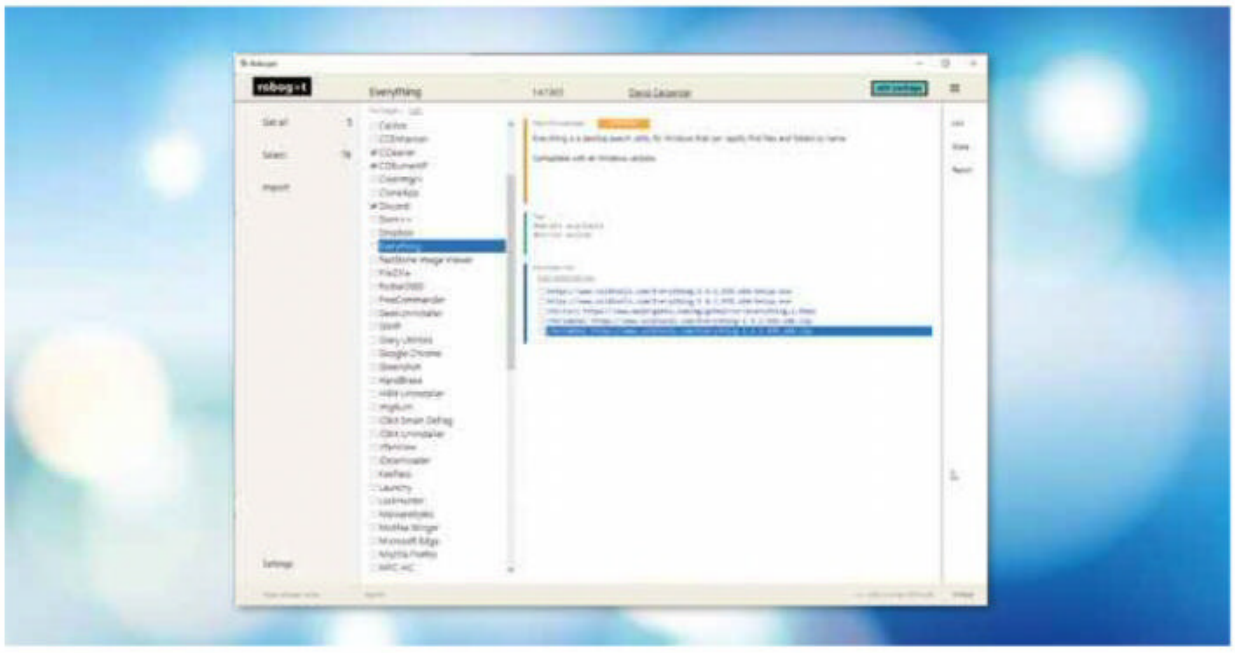


2 Enter your email address in the box. A six-digit code will be sent to you. Type this into the box, then enter your password and click the Unlock NordPass button. The vault will open. You can import items 1 from your browser or an existing password manager, or add them manually. 2



3 When you log into a new site, NordPass will spring into life and offer to save the email or username 1 and password for you. 2 Clicking Show 3 reveals the password so you can check it's correct. Click Save 4 to add it to NordPass or click 'Never for this site' 5 if you don't want the login details stored.

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



PROGRAM DOWNLOADER

Roboget

bit.ly/robo492

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 **File size:** 1.3MB

There are a number of applications you can use to download the newest releases of popular free programs such as Chrome, GIMP, CCleaner and 7-Zip. Roboget is the latest such downloader, and displays the full list of the software it supports as soon as you run it (no installation required). Just tick the items you want, then click the Add Package button. Clicking any program name will provide information about it, as well as links to download the item.

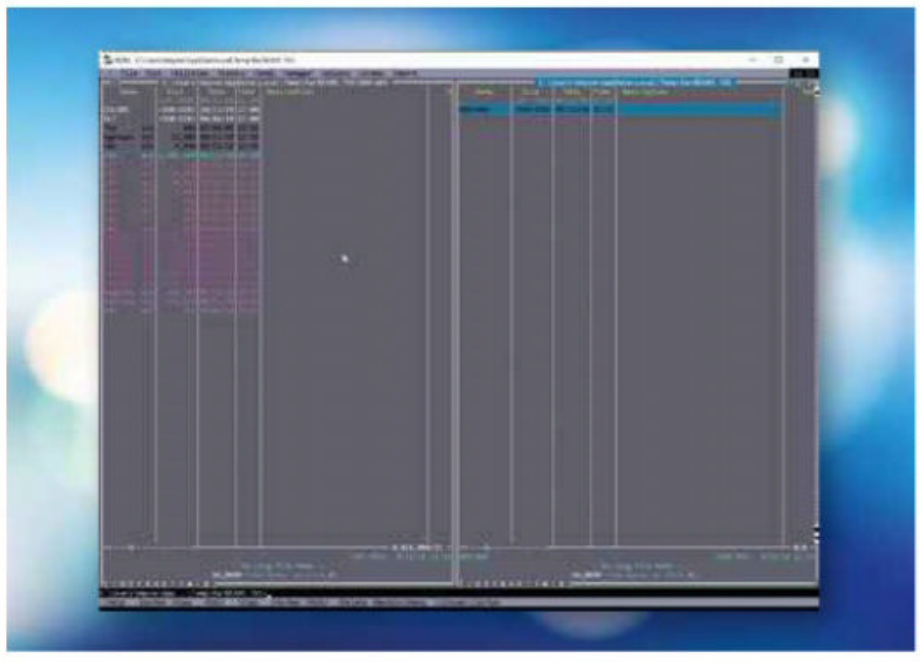
New Windows 10 App

Sketchable 5

bit.ly/sketch492

File size: 157MB

Sketchable is a feature-packed drawing and painting application that includes support for layers, the ability to create high resolution journals, a colour picker and a fully customisable interface. A recent update added new editing tools, including an advanced Selection feature, snowflake symmetry and colour swatches. Sketchable is free, but some tools need to be unlocked via in-app purchases.



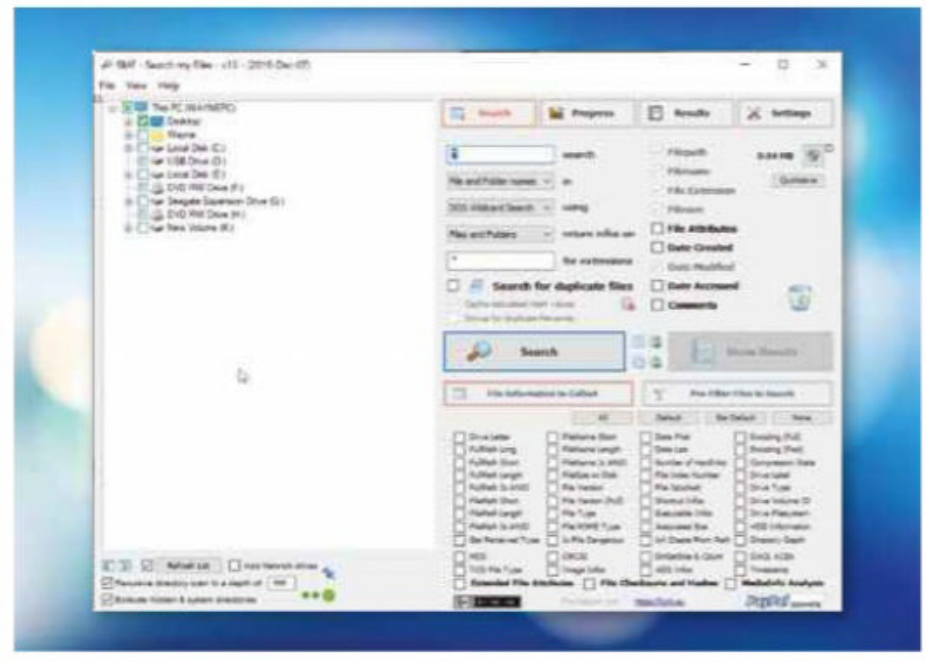
FILE MANAGER

NDN 3

ndn.muxe.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 or Linux **File size:** 2.5MB

The last version of the text-based file manager Norton Commander was released for MS-DOS in 1998. NDN – or Necromancer's Dos Navigator to give it its full name – is a clone of that tool. It's easy to use, very customisable, supports mouse and keyboard shortcuts, and performs tasks such as renaming files, browsing archives and searching for items. It comes with a number of other features, including a calculator, some games and a screensaver.



SYSTEM TOOL

Search My Files 13

funk.eu/smf

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10 **File size:** 7.9MB

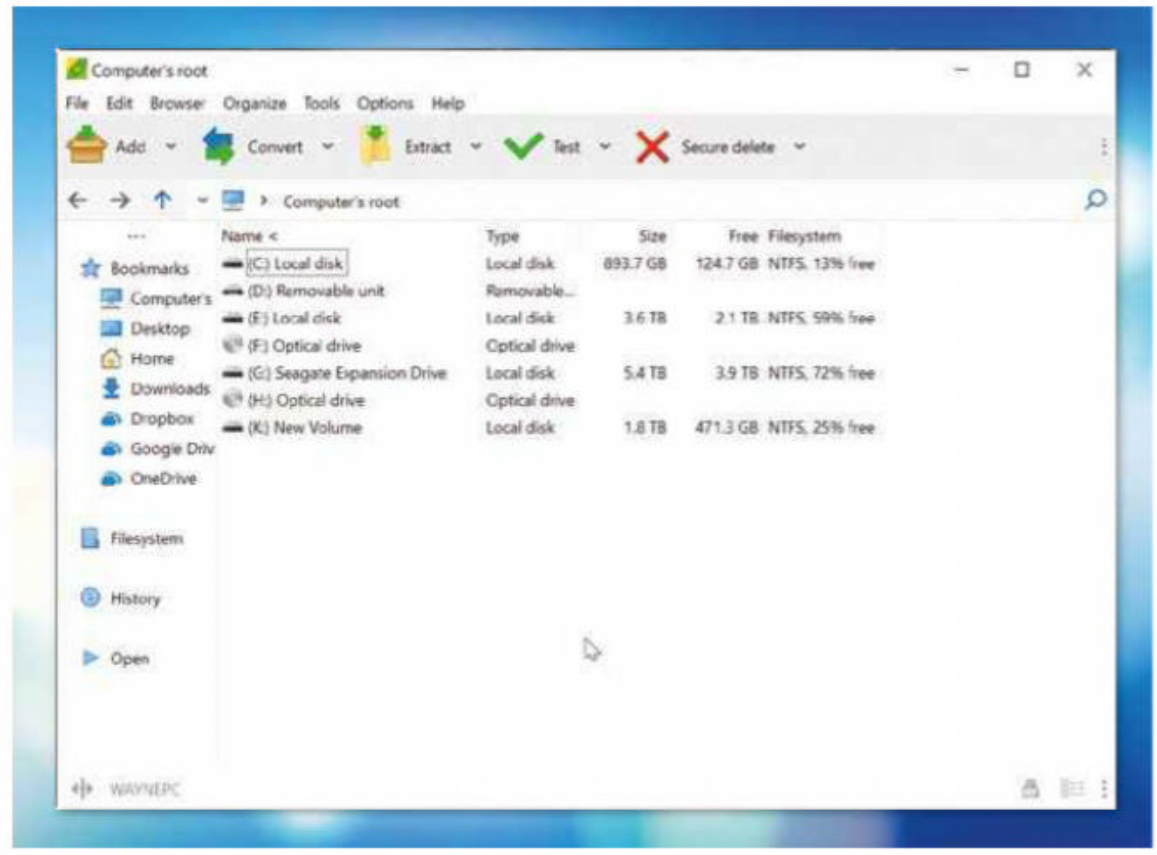
Search My Files can find, then move or delete, any duplicate files on your PC, as well as track down individual items using a range of criteria including name, size, date, song length (for audio files) and photo dimension. It also lets you copy, move or securely delete those items, and save your search results for future access. This latest version updates the reporting and media information tools, improves performance and fixes a number of bugs.

FILE-COMPRESSION TOOL

PeaZip 7

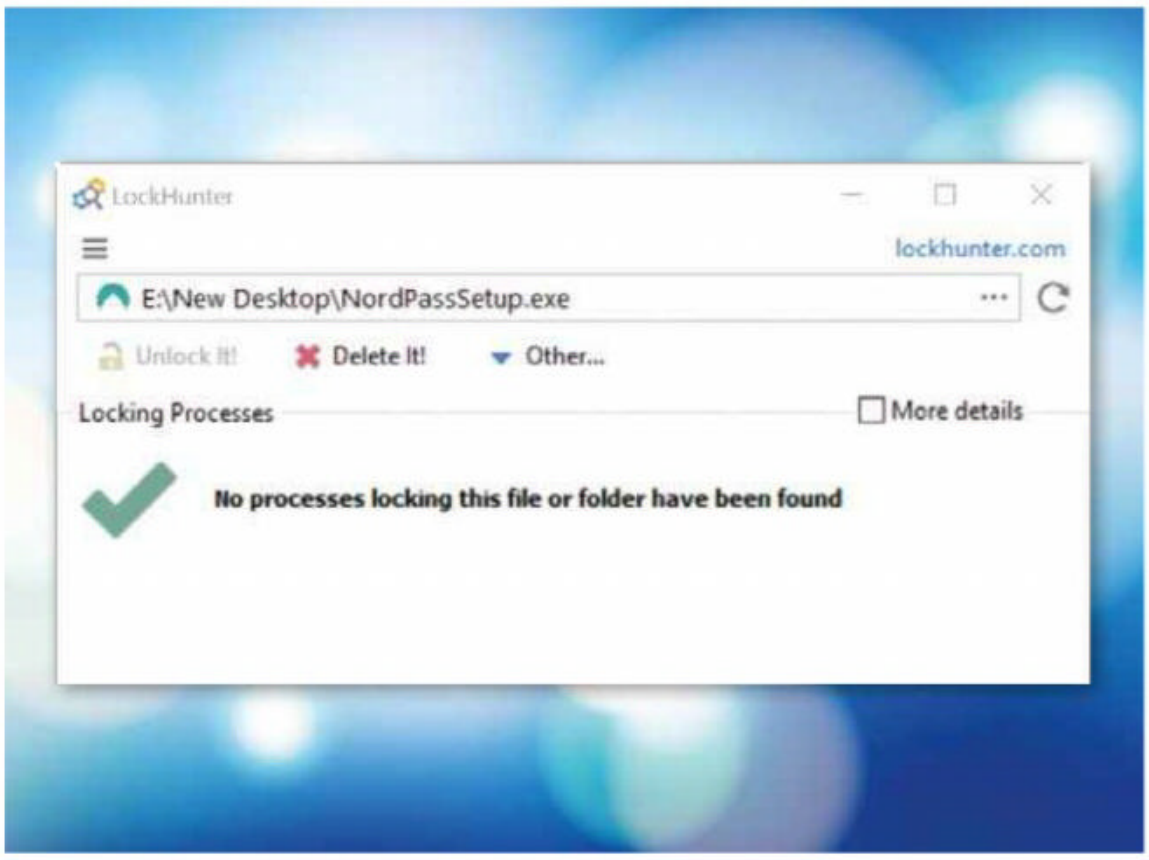
www.peazip.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10
File size: 8.1MB



PeaZip is an open-source file and archive manager that lets you create, convert and extract compressed files in all the popular formats. It's particularly useful for opening RAR files for free (although it can't create them). The latest release tweaks the interface so it scales and displays better on high DPI screens, and includes updated themes and icons. The program can now automatically open TAR archives, drag and drop has been enhanced, and it's easier to detect duplicate files and analyse the content of folders from the application's file manager.

Be sure to decline any bundled junk during installation.



FILE UNLOCKER

LockHunter 3.3

lockhunter.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10
File size: 3.2MB

It's usually pretty easy to delete unwanted files in Windows but, occasionally, you'll encounter one that's been locked by the operating system. This could be for a number of reasons – it may currently be in use or it may contain malware. LockHunter can forcibly remove these stubborn files, solving the problem.

This is the first big update to the tool since 2017. It introduces an improved user interface that displays which files (if any) you've chosen to delete when restarting Windows. You can also select multiple files, and LockHunter will tell you what is locking them all. Support for drag and drop has been added, too.

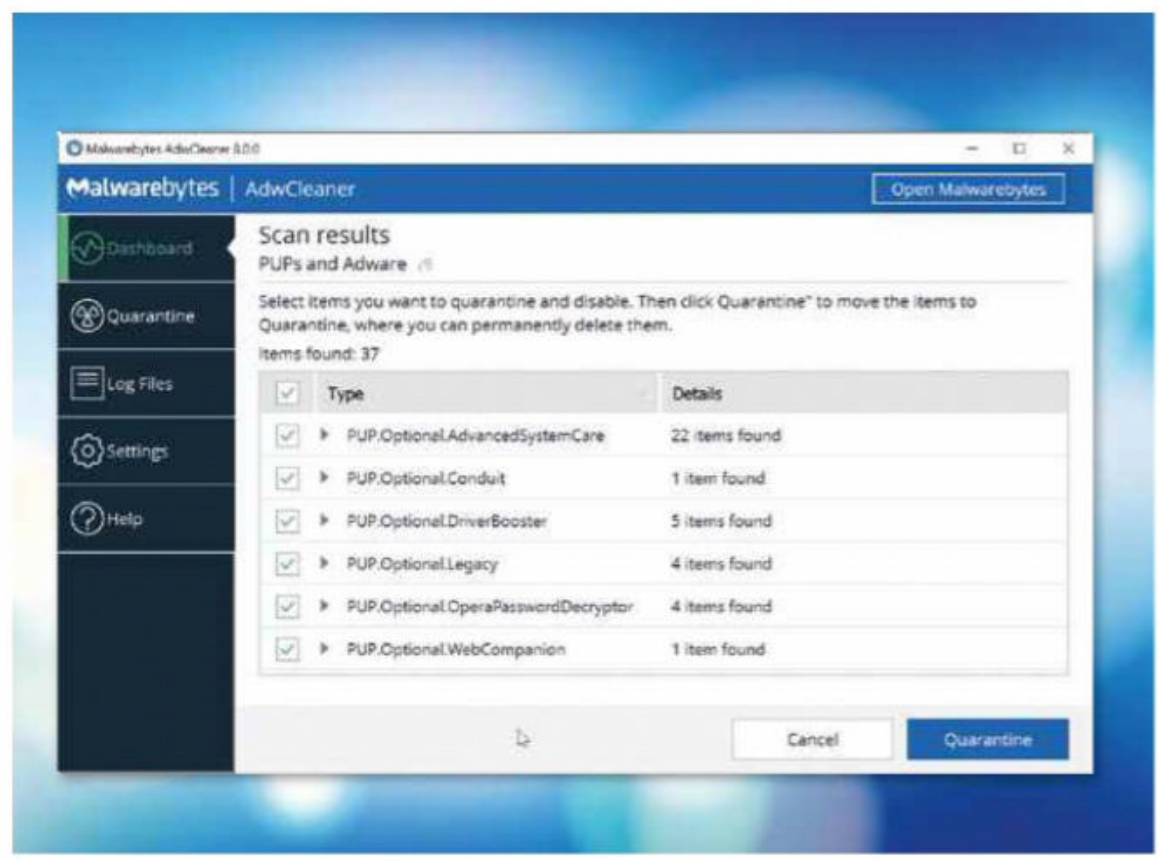
ANTI-MALWARE

Malwarebytes AdwCleaner 8

bit.ly/adwclean492

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10
File size: 7.8MB

AdwCleaner, which Malwarebytes acquired back in 2016, can remove toolbars, adware, hijackers and PUPs (potentially undesirable programs) from your web browsers, and doesn't require installation. Just launch the program and click the large blue Scan Now button to begin. This new version drops support for Windows XP and Vista, and gives users the option to install the newly released Malwarebytes 4 anti-malware software. The cleaner's core has been updated in this release, and the program once again works with the latest versions of Chrome. Firefox is currently not supported, however, but that will change in version 8.1.



GAME

Chalkboard

bit.ly/chalk492

Min requirements: Windows 7/8+/10
File size: 61.8MB

Chalkboard is an isometric exploration game inspired by the work of Dutch graphic artist, MC Escher. You can rotate the landscape and walk around the monochrome-sketch environment. Early on in the game, you'll pick up a piece of chalk that you use to interact with the world, drawing windows, doorways and other useful objects on blackboard walls to aid your progress.

✓ Install this program...

Stellarium

stellarium.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 248MB

This incredible open-source planetarium lets you explore the wonders of space from your desktop. Stellarium shows you a realistic 3D sky as if you were observing with your naked eye, binoculars or a telescope, and displays all the planets, stars and constellations that can be seen from a set viewpoint on Earth. Tell Stellarium where you are and it will replicate the night sky, let you view details and illustrations of constellations, and zoom in on celestial objects of interest. The software's default database contains more than 600,000 stars, but this can be expanded to include millions more – all for free.

...Not this one ✗

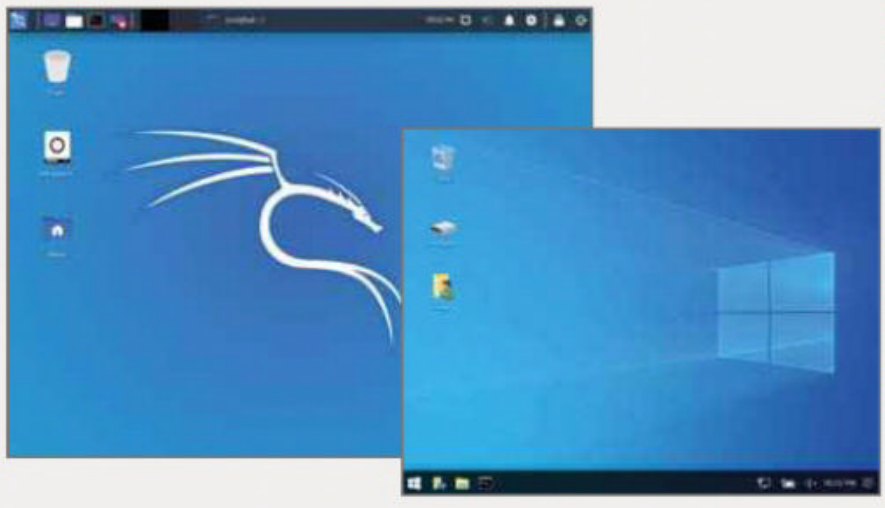
Space Engine

spaceengine.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8/10
File size: 1GB

Space Engine offers a stunningly realistic 3D model of the entire universe, but it feels more like an astronomical game than a desktop planetarium – indeed, the latest edition is only available through Steam for £19.49. On the plus side, older versions can now be downloaded from the SpaceEngine website for free.

OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS What's new for Linux and macOS



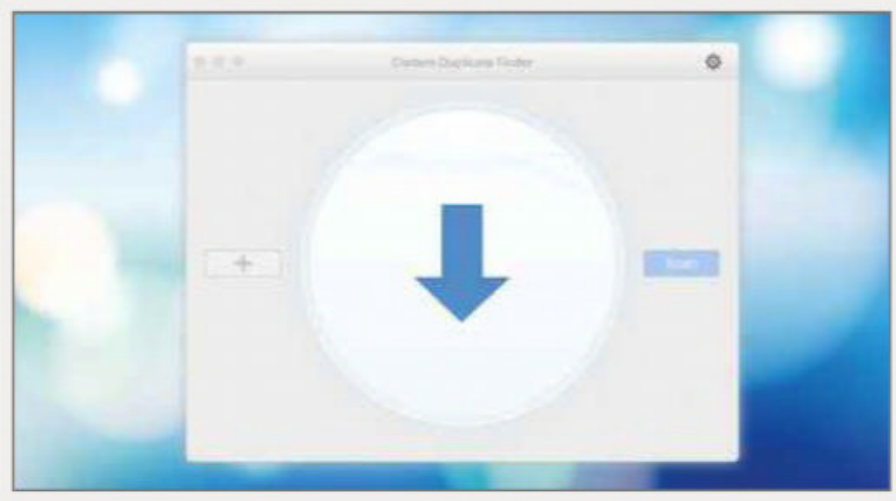
LINUX DISTRO

Kali Linux 2019.4

bit.ly/kali492

Min requirements: 20GB hard-drive space **File size:** 2.6GB

Kali Linux is a security-focused, Debian-based distro that's popular with hackers and penetration testers, although it can be used by anyone. The latest version of the operating system comes with a new default Xfce desktop environment and GTK3 theme. The Linux kernel has been updated and PowerShell has been added, too. The biggest new addition, however, is an Undercover Mode which disguises the OS so it looks as though you are actually running Windows 10.



DUPLICATE FINDER

Cisdem Duplicate Finder 5

bit.ly/macdup492

Min requirements: macOS 10.10+ **File size:** 9.1MB

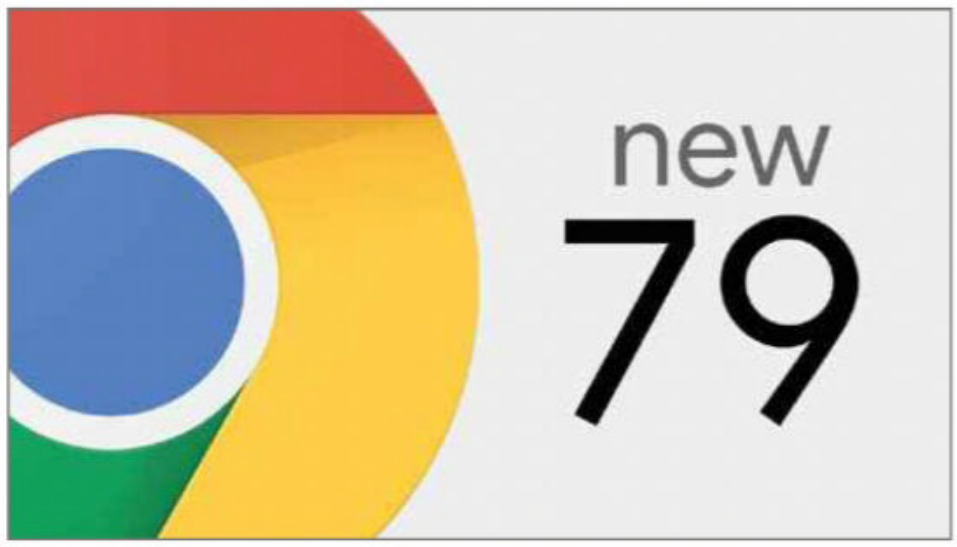
This app lets you find duplicate files (with the same content) on your Mac. It can detect similar images, scan any drive and preview items. It offers two scan choices and three removal methods. The new version can remove duplicates from a prioritised location and greatly improves the program's scanning and finding ability. The free version has some limitations, such as not being able to delete all selected duplicates at the same time. Upgrading costs $29.99 (£22.46) for a lifetime licence.

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

Best New Browser Tools

CHROME

Protect against security threats in Chrome

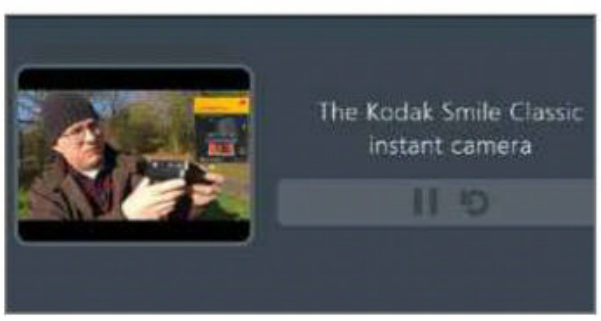


The latest version of Chrome, 79, is now available, and it introduces a host of new features, including enhanced security and better protection against phishing scams. The update extends predictive phishing protection to all Chrome users, not just those who have Sync switched on. What's more, the new browser receives the latest information on threats in real time rather than every 30 minutes, because "some phishing sites slip through the 30-minute window". To enable this option, visit `chrome://settings/syncSetup` and switch on 'Make searches and browsing better'.

Chrome 79 also features a built-in password checker that alerts you if one of your usernames or passwords has been involved in a data breach. You may also want to turn on three new experimental Clipboard flags (search `chrome://flags` for 'Clipboard'). These add a 'Send to' option to Chrome's context menu, making it easier to share content between devices.

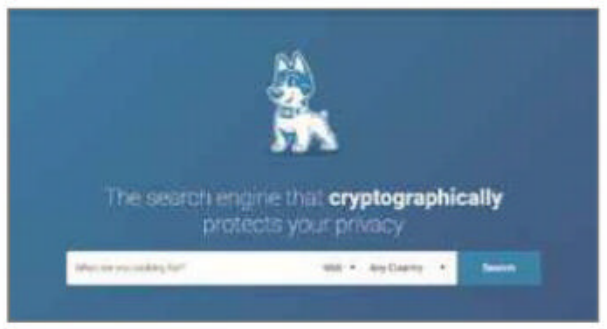
Play YouTube videos in audio only

Music Mode for YouTube (bit.ly/music492) redirects all YouTube links to an audio-only page that lets you listen without the accompanying images. To experience YouTube without the pictures, click the extension's toolbar button and make sure it's switched on. Then find a YouTube video embedded on a website. When you click it, you'll see just the video's title and thumbnail, along with basic playback controls: play/pause and replay. You can't search or skip to another video from this page – you'll need to do that manually. However, it's a useful way to stop unwanted distractions and is great for people who usually just stream music and podcasts, or those with patchy or limited bandwidth.



Search the web anonymously

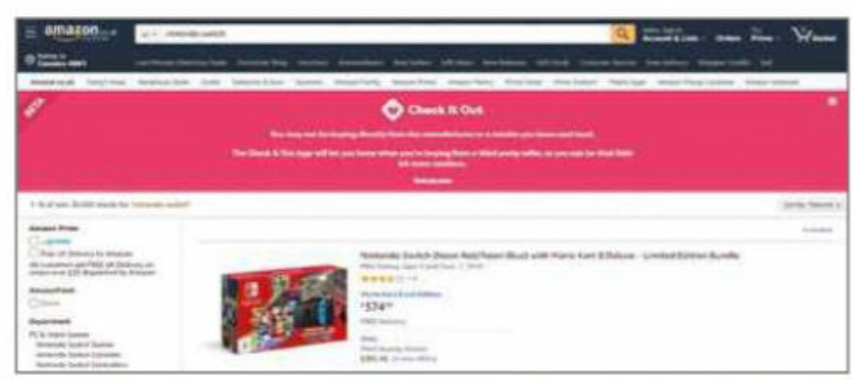
With a handful of notable exceptions, most search engines do more than simply monitor your search terms – they



also gather a host of additional information from you, including your location and IP address. Private.sh (private.sh) is different. According to the site's homepage, "every single search request from our website and extension is encrypted locally on the client and proxied through our service, stripping away your public IP address ensuring that only the search provider is able to decrypt and see your query without any knowledge of who you are". You can use the search engine by visiting its website, or install its extension for Firefox or Chrome (bit.ly/private492) that whisks you straight to Private.sh. Grab the browser tools from the relevant web store, or download a digitally signed standalone version directly from Private.sh.

Buy electrical goods with confidence

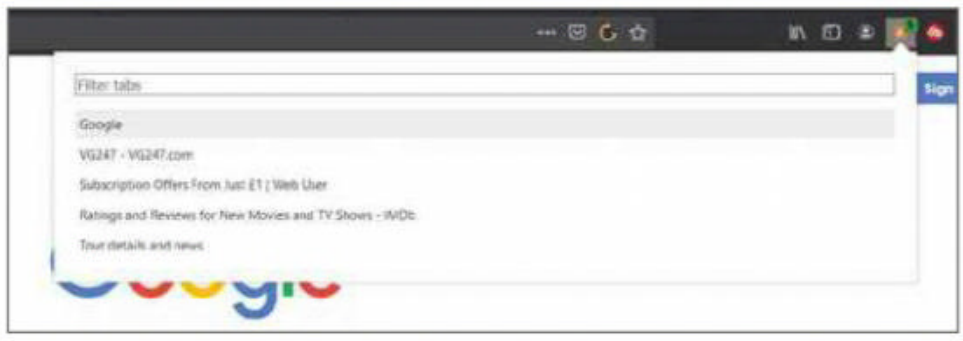
According to public awareness charity Electrical Safety First, which developed the browser tool Check It Out (bit.ly/check492), "in the last year, over 4 million UK shoppers bought a fake electrical product and a quarter of these were purchased from an online marketplace". These third-party sites makes it a lot easier for shady individuals to flog unregulated, counterfeit or unsafe electrical goods. Check It Out combats this issue on Amazon and eBay: when you search for electrical products, a large banner reminds you that "you may not be buying directly from the manufacturer or a retailer you know and trust". You'll also notice that when browsing on Amazon and eBay, the browser's toolbar button changes colour, giving you an extra reminder to remain vigilant.



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

FIREFOX

Find and switch between open tabs faster



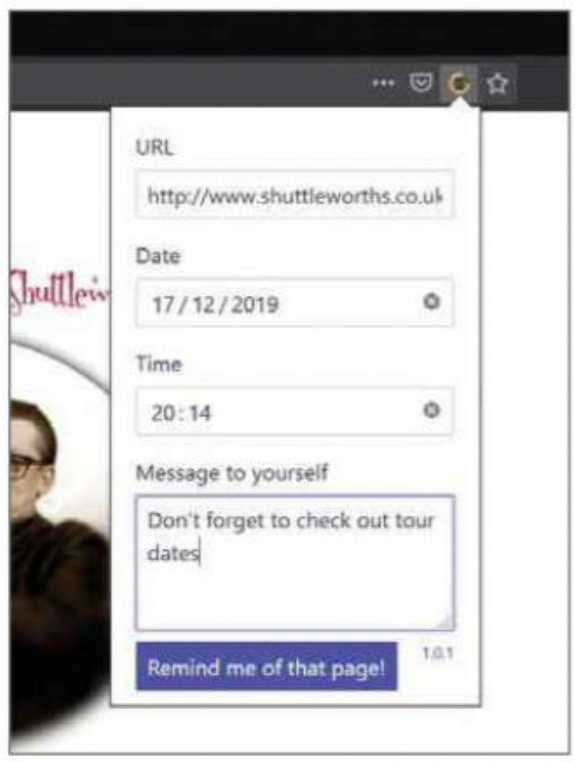
If you ever find you're overwhelmed by the number of tabs you've got open, give Tab Finder (bit.ly/finder492) a try. This tab-management add-on has no bells and even fewer whistles. To activate it, either click its toolbar button, which includes a badge count of open tabs, or press Ctrl+Spacebar (you can change the keyboard shortcut in the add-on's settings). The add-on displays a list of all your open tabs, and you can flick between them with a tap of your mouse or using your keyboard's arrow keys. Efficiency is Tab Finder's main benefit, because it lets you jump between every open tab without lifting your fingers off the keyboard. Tab Finder is fairly basic and focused on performing its single task, although it also includes a search bar for locating specific tabs quickly.

Get audio alerts for cookies

Listening Back (bit.ly/listen492) is like a watchdog for your browser, because it makes a noise to alert you of any cookie activity. Seeking to "expose real-time digital surveillance and consequently the ways in which our everyday relationships to being surveilled have become normalised", the extension lets you know whenever a cookie is added, deleted or overwritten. The sounds are gentle piano tones, which you can alter by right-clicking the add-on's toolbar button, selecting Manage Extension, then choosing Options. Even more useful is the option to assign specific tones to domains, so you can keep an ear out for when a site such as Facebook stores a cookie on your device, for example.

Remember websites to revisit later

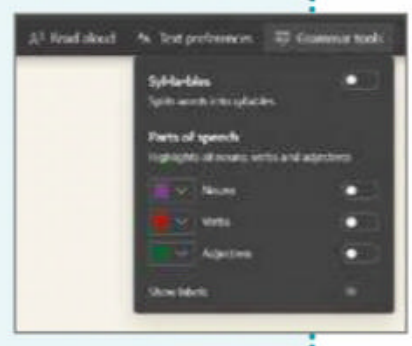
Ever stumbled across a website, promised yourself you'd return to it later and then promptly forgotten about it? If so, you might like to install Remind Me of That Page (bit.ly/remind492). This handy Firefox extension lets you create an iCalendar entry reminding you to revisit a website at a more convenient time. Click the toolbar button, add a date, time and a reminder of what the site is or why you want to return to it, then click 'Remind me of that page'. You can then create an iCalendar file for your email client so that it sends you a reminder to return to the website at the time you specified.



OTHER BROWSERS

Do more with Immersive Reader

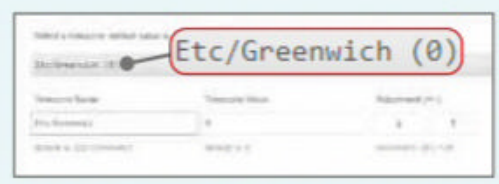
Microsoft has updated Edge's Immersive Reader, which helps make the web less distracting and improves accessibility for those who struggle with on-screen text. If you have the Canary version of Microsoft's new Chromium browser, visit a web page, then turn on Immersive Reader. Choose 'Text preferences', and you'll see that Edge now offers you a wider set of options than before, including more colour themes, so you can find the one that's easiest on your eyes. Another new addition is the text-spacing option, which helps to break up letters, words and paragraphs.



See our cover feature on page 40 for more new Edge tips.

Hide your location and time-zone

Change Geolocation (bit.ly/location492) and Change Timezone (bit.ly/time492) are two Opera add-ons from the same developer that help you maintain your privacy from snooping sites. To set them up, open Opera's Extensions menu, then select Options. Here you can modify your time zone or location using the text fields. Once you're satisfied with your selection, reload the tabs you're tricking and the extension does the rest. You don't need to use both extensions – in fact, it might get a tad confusing if you claim to be in Los Angeles but your clock's set to Tokyo time.



Best Free Apps

App of the Fortnight

HOME

NEW

Barkio: Dog Monitor

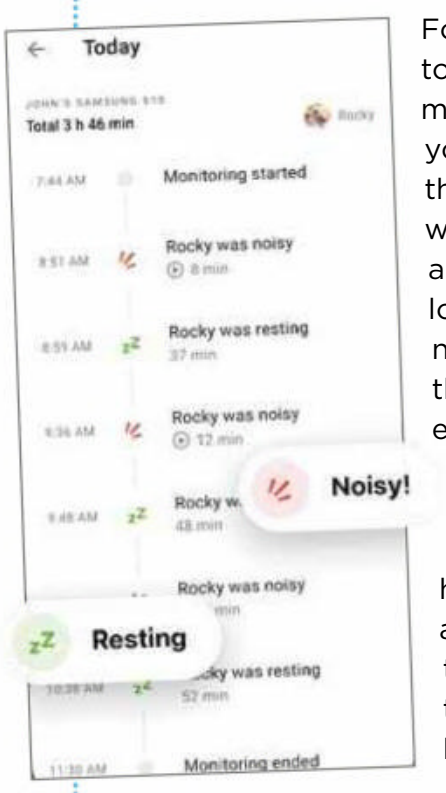
bit.ly/barkiodroid492
bit.ly/barkioios492

5 10

Do you worry that your canine companion might suffer from separation anxiety whenever you leave the house? Would you like to see what your dog gets up to when you're not around? Have you got an old phone or tablet that you no longer use? If so, you should give Barkio a shot.

This ingenious new app turns an old phone into a pet monitor so you can keep an eye on your four-legged friend from another device while you're out. Once you've set up the Barkio app and positioned your device somewhere in your home, you can view a live video stream over Wi-Fi or a mobile data connection from wherever you are. A handy Night Light feature even lets you see what's going on when it's dark.

The connection works both ways, so your dog can see and hear you, too. That means you can speak to your pet to calm them down if they seem anxious. For those times when you're too busy to chat, you can even pre-record messages and use them whenever you need them. If you're concerned that your dog might start barking while you're away, you can get the app to alert you to sounds, or view its log to see your dog's activities and noises. Best of all, you can achieve all this without having to fork out for expensive pet-monitoring or home security hardware.



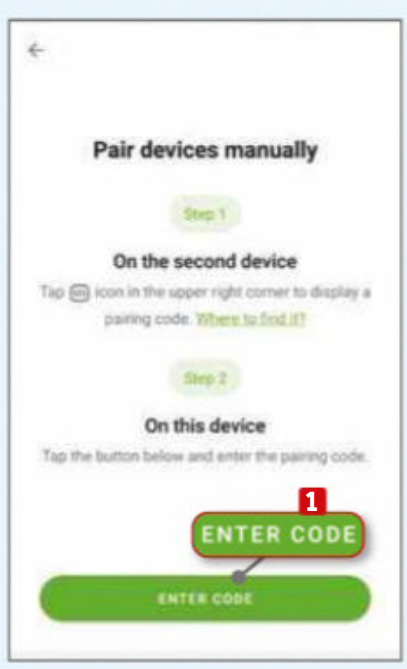
Barkio works on Android and iOS devices, and the company has announced plans to release apps for Windows and macOS, too. The only downside is that the free version of Barkio is limited to 10 hours of monitoring. Subscribing to the full service, which provides unlimited monitoring, costs £19.49 per year, which is still good value for pet peace of mind.

Our rating ★★★★★

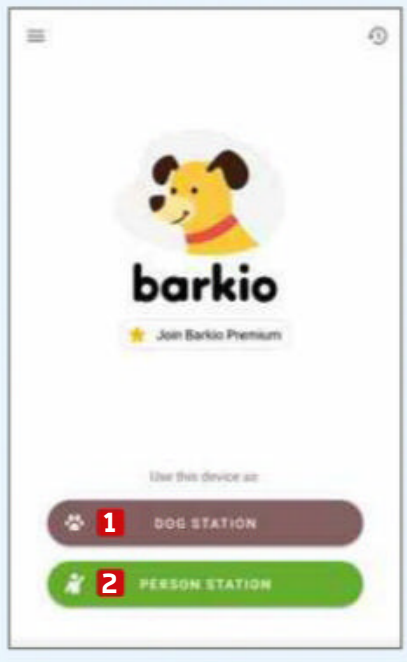
MINI WORKSHOP

Monitor your dog from your phone using Barkio

1 Install Barkio on the old phone or tablet you're going to use as your pet monitor and on your current mobile device. Open the app on both devices, then tap the Get Started button. In most cases, Barkio will discover your other device automatically and display it under Devices Ready To Pair. 1 Just press the Pair button 2 then tap Pair on the other device to connect.



2 If Barkio doesn't find your other device, press the button labelled 'Not Found? Pair Manually' at the bottom of the screen. On the other device, tap the small '123' icon in the top-right corner of the screen to generate a nine-digit pairing code. Then, on the first device, select Enter Code, 1 type the code shown on the other device's screen and tap Enter.



3 When your devices are paired, press Done. On the monitor device, tap the Dog Station button 1 under 'Use this device as', when prompted. Choose the Person Station option 2 on your other device and accept all permissions. Android users may need to give Barkio Do Not Disturb access, too. Press Connect on the Person Station to complete the setup process.

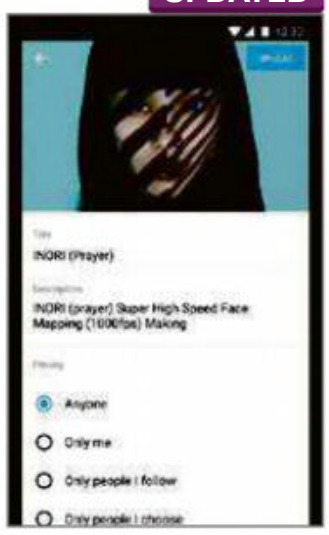
This fortnight's top free and paid-for apps for Android and iOS phones and tablets

VIDEO

UPDATED

Vimeo

bit.ly/vimeodroid492
bit.ly/vimeoios492
(varies)
11.4



Until recently, Vimeo's mobile app focused on letting you watch movies rather than make new ones. With its latest update, however, the online video-streaming service is finally giving fledgling film makers a way to record and upload clips or live-stream video directly from their phone or tablet. The only downside is that a free Basic Vimeo account limits the amount of video you can upload and doesn't allow live streaming.

Serious Vimeo users may want to upgrade to a paid-for subscription, from £6 per month.

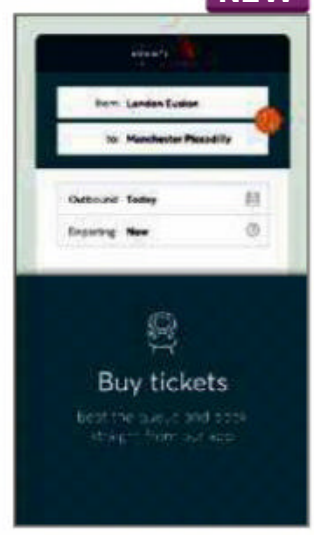
Our rating ★★★★☆

TRAVEL

NEW

Avanti West Coast

bit.ly/avantidroid492
bit.ly/avantiios492
4.4 9

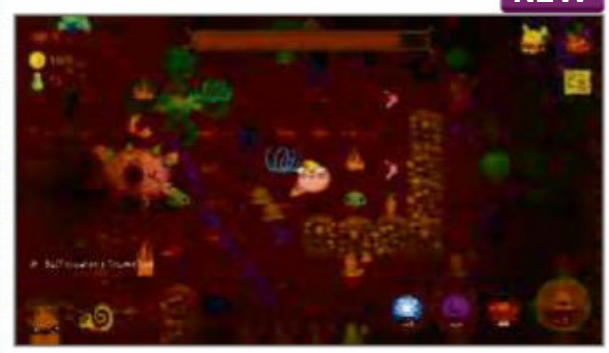


There are lots of train ticket apps around, but many of them charge booking fees and don't provide the most up-to-date information on the status of the service you're using. The good news for passengers on the West Coast main line is that its new operator, Avanti, has produced a dedicated app (as well as a new website – see page 14) that lets you buy tickets without paying booking fees. You can also use it to plan journeys, view your train's progress in real time and ditch paper tickets by downloading them directly to your device.

Our rating ★★★★☆

GAME

NEW



Poopdie

bit.ly/poopdie492
4.1

YouTube megastar PewDiePie recently announced that he's taking some time away from the spotlight. Could it be anything to do with this scatological adventure game, which the YouTuber co-created with developer Bulbware? This puerile game, which sees your character using "poopcrafting" abilities to survive a series of dungeons filled with gross-out enemies, is exclusive to Android, because Apple rejected it for being in poor taste. Still, some might find it fun!

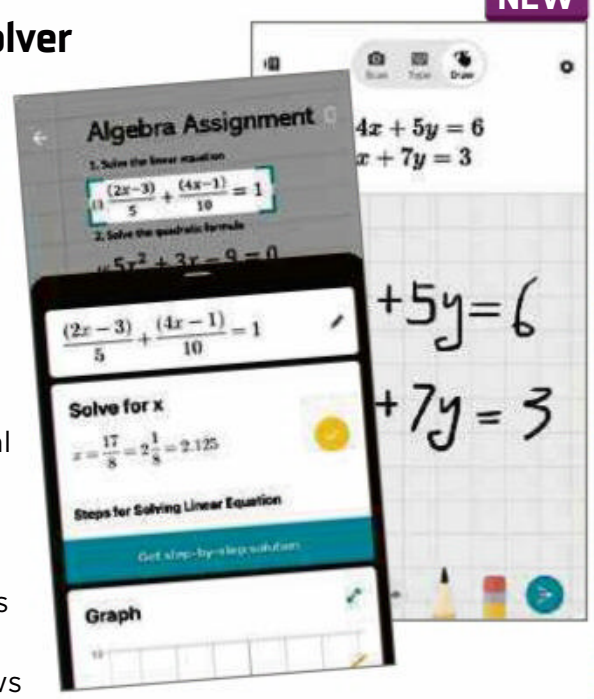
Our rating ★★☆☆☆

EDUCATION

NEW

Microsoft Math Solver

bit.ly/mathdroid492
bit.ly/mathios492
5 11



Whether you're a secondary school student with heaps of maths homework or someone who uses complex mathematical calculations in their everyday life, this brand-new app from Microsoft can help. It's a tool for solving equations, and it allows you to input your calculations in a number of different ways. For example, you can type an equation, scan a maths problem that's written on paper or use your finger to write it on screen. Rather than simply solving the equation, the app can help you understand the calculation using step-by-step explanations and graphs, as well as providing links to useful online resources and video lectures.

Our rating ★★★★★

TOOLS

NEW

Ring Master

bit.ly/ringmaster492
6

Android doesn't give you much control over your phone's ringtone options beyond a basic volume slider and on-off switch for vibration. Ring Master rectifies this omission by providing fine control over your device's ringtone and vibration functions. For example, you can set incoming calls to vibrate first then ring, or increase the volume gradually to prevent sudden shocks. Better still, you can apply these settings not only to phone calls but also to apps such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and more. Ring Master loses a few points for demanding an 89p in-app purchase to unlock its best features, however.

Our rating ★★★☆☆

5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

WEATHER

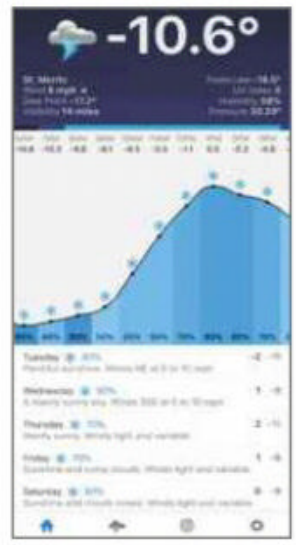
Snowflake Weather

bit.ly/snowflake492

Price: £4.99

11

If you own more than one Apple product and you like a bit of consistency in your life, consider this new weather app, which uses the same interface for its iPhone, iPad and Apple Watch versions.



TOOLS

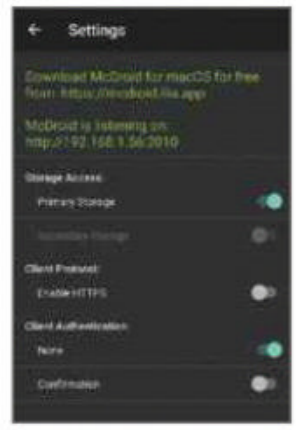
McDroid

bit.ly/mcdroid492

Price: £3.09

5

The number of Mac-owning Android phone users may be fairly small, but if that includes you, this app – which lets you transfer files wirelessly between Android devices and Macs – should come in very handy.



ENTERTAINMENT

AR Cybertruck

bit.ly/truckdroid492

bit.ly/truckios492

Price: £1.89 (Android), £1.99 (iOS)

7 11

Did you see Tesla's demonstration of its new battery-powered light commercial vehicle? This augmented-reality app, which lets you 'drive' a virtual Cybertruck, is currently the closest thing to owning one.

EDUCATION

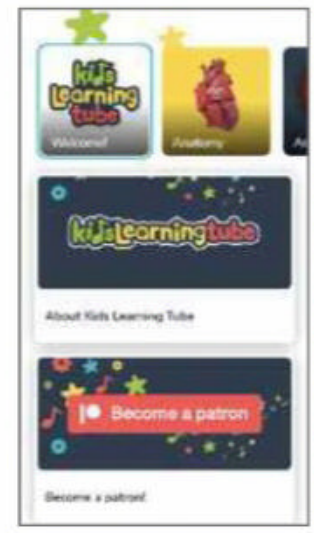
Kids Learning Tube

bit.ly/learning492

Price: 89p

6

This US educational resource for younger learners has distilled the best parts of its YouTube channel into a fun app, with animations and videos on subjects as varied as anatomy and astrology.



PUZZLE

Eclidus

bit.ly/eclidusdroid492

bit.ly/eclidusios492

Price: £1.69 (Android), £1.99 (iOS)

7 9

Flip sets of coloured triangles to match colours in this fiendish puzzle game that's reminiscent of the classic Rubik's Cube and takes pride in how incredibly tough it is to complete.

Snowflake Weather

McDroid

AR Cybertruck

Kids Learning Tube

Eclidus

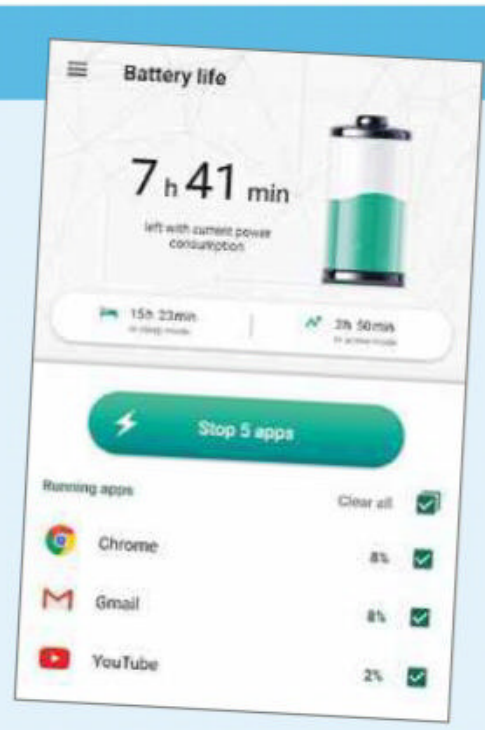
✓ Install this app...

Kaspersky Battery Life

bit.ly/kaspersky492

4.1

Fretting about your battery running out can take a lot of the fun – not to mention the usefulness – out of using your smartphone or tablet. Kaspersky's Battery Life app aims to ease some of these worries by automatically scanning your device for power-hungry apps and monitoring how much battery power they use in the background. Battery Life alerts you if any apps start using too much energy, so you can quit them and save power. It also helps by giving you a more accurate prediction of how much juice you have left in your device.



...Not this one ✗

Better Battery

bit.ly/better492

The sad truth is that many apps that claim to boost your battery life actually achieve the exact opposite – and Better Battery is a good example. In its description, it boasts that it will optimise your device's stand-by time and keep your battery's temperature down. But in fact it does nothing of the sort and just spams your device with adverts – all of which drain your battery rather than prolonging its life.

Take a Screen Break

Take a rest from your browser with our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you solve our 1960s-films emoji and guess our Wikipedia article?

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

CAN YOU GUESS THE 1960s FILMS 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?

1 "Its origins lie in a brainstorming session held by the podcasting company Odeo, which introduced the idea of an individual using an SMS service to communicate with a small group."

2 "The company's original logo was accompanied by an image of a bird that was later discovered to be a piece of clip art created by the British graphic designer Simon Oxley."

3 "Messages are public, but users can also send private 'direct messages'. Information about who has chosen to follow an account and who a user has chosen to follow is also public."

Credit: Brian Solis

5 "It is banned completely in Iran, China and North Korea, and has been intermittently blocked in numerous countries including Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Venezuela and Turkmenistan."

COMPETITIONS

WIN A...
Varidesk Pro Plus 36

WORTH £365

The Varidesk Pro Plus 36 transforms from a traditional workstation to a standing desk in seconds, giving you the best of both worlds. The two-tiered design is ideal for a dual-monitor setup, separating your screens from other computer accessories. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'varidesk' in the subject line. For more information, visit https://uk.varidesk.com and follow @Varidesk on Twitter.

WIN 1 OF 3
KitSound Accent 60 Wireless Headphones

WORTH £49.99 EACH

KitSound's new Bluetooth 5.0 headphones have a built-in amplifier to deliver a fuller, richer sound. Fully charged, they'll give you 35 hours of listening time. Use the joystick to control your music, then when you've finished, fold the headphones and tuck them away in the carry pouch. To enter, email your details to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Accent 60' in the subject line. For more info, visit www.kitsound.co.uk and follow @KitSoundUK on Twitter.

FAQ

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

Our guide to eSIM

From mini to micro to nano, phone SIM cards have been diminishing in size. Now they're effectively moving inside,as **David Crookes** explains

What is an eSIM?

As the name suggests, an eSIM is an electronic chip version of a SIM card – those tiny pieces of plastic that you insert into a mobile phone so you can connect to a network and use a number. Rather than take the form of a physical item, however, the eSIM is embedded in a chip inside the handset.

How do they work?

A standard SIM (short for Subscriber Identity Module) stores an International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) number that identifies every user on a cellular network. It also saves the authentication key that validates the IMSI, and can store contact names and numbers. While eSIMs still identify your user login credentials on a network, they also have the capability for that data to be rewritten over the air.

What are the advantages of an eSIM?

When you have an eSIM in your phone, you can switch between mobile networks with ease. There is no need to obtain a physical SIM card for the new provider because it's simply a case of opening an account and allowing the carrier to reprogram the eSIM with the necessary data. This should eliminate the hassle of switching and make it a more fluid process. There are no demands for PAC numbers and the move should be instant. Any updates to the eSIM can also be completed remotely by the network.

Credit: Hologram.io

An eSIM is much smaller than a standard SIM card and is fitted on a chip in your phone

Can't I have both a SIM and an eSIM?

Actually, yes, you can – and that's exactly what is currently happening. Apple's iPhone XS, iPhone XS Max, iPhone XR and later models all feature Dual SIM capability. This means they contain an eSIM, while also allowing you to insert a physical nano-SIM card. The clear benefit of this dual system is that you can still have your pick of networks because only a handful are currently supporting eSIMs.

The iPhone 11 is one of the handsets that supports both eSIMs and standard ones

Can I sign up to two networks?

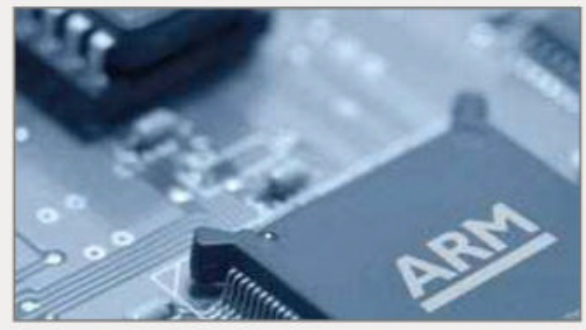
Yes. Another advantage to having both a SIM and an eSIM in your phone is that

eSIM VERSUS iSIM

While the mobile world is becoming fixated with eSIM, the British multinational semiconductor and software-design company Arm (www.arm.com) has been discussing a rival technology called iSIM.

Like eSIM, the iSIM is integrated in a device and replaces the nano-SIM cards we've grown used to. Configurable and reprogrammable, iSIM is able to carry information about carriers, numbers and data plans too.

But the big difference is that eSIMs are dedicated chips, soldered to a



product's board, while iSIMs are embedded in the silicon design of a device's system-on-a-chip, which cuts the size considerably – to practically zero.

you can have a secondary contract (assuming the phone is unlocked). Perhaps you want one number for business and another for personal calls, or you're travelling abroad and you want to use a local data plan to save on roaming fees. In these circumstances, you won't need to mess around swapping SIM cards but can just alter the phone's settings to switch between the two, although you can only use one data network at a time.

Are eSIMs secure?

When you want to switch to another network using an eSIM, everything on the chip is changed to work with the new carrier, including the network authentication keys. The level of security is on a par with SIM cards, according to GSMA, the association of mobile networks. In a white paper, it said: "eSIM provides an equivalent level of security as the removable SIM card" (bit.ly/esim492).

Which phones support eSIMs?

Aside from Apple's iPhones, Google has placed dual-eSIM/SIM capabilities in the Pixel 2, 3, 3 XL, 4 and 4 XL phones, while Samsung's Galaxy Fold allows for an eSIM and a physical micro-SIM card. It won't be long before more manufacturers climb aboard and we can expect to see a growing number of eSIM-compatible handsets over the coming months and years. The boldest company so far is Motorola, whose new Razr flip-phone only supports eSIMs (bit.ly/razr492).

Motorola's new Razr only supports the new eSIMs and not the old-fashioned kind

Will it save money?

To a degree, yes. A full move to eSIM would cut out a lot of physical product – not only the SIM cards themselves but even the need to make the tiny trays that they are housed in. It's unlikely that consumers are going to see massive reductions in cost as a consequence, though. Manufacturers will still need to make an eSIM chip and networks are likely to cash in on any saving they make themselves.

Good for the environment, though?

Yes, there will certainly be an environmental benefit because of the reduction in plastic and any extra packaging when SIMs are banished. Carriers won't need to transport eSIMs, either, to shops or direct to customers, so there will be a lot of saved fuel. That said, some companies are still using physical products. EE customers, for instance, are given eSIM activation cards with a QR code on them.

Setting up an eSIM on your Android phone or iPhone is relatively straightforward

How do you set up an eSIM?

All you need is a QR code provided by a mobile network or the SM-DP+ (Subscription Manager Data Preparation) server address and an activation code that can be entered manually. On an iPhone, for instance, you just go to Settings, Mobile Data and select Add Data Plan before using your camera to scan a QR code (or enter details manually). Google has an eSIM manager app (bit.ly/esimapp492 on the Play store) that allows users to download and manage operator profiles.

But will it make the phones better?

Since eSIM chips are even smaller than nano-SIM cards (measuring about 5 x 6mm, as opposed to 12.3 x 8.8 mm), removing the latter will free up space, allowing for further improvements to eSIM-capable handsets such as a larger battery. There will be no need to open the case to insert a SIM card, either, so the phones can look sleeker. Such enhancements would be up to the manufacturer, of course.

Are eSIMs purely for phones?

No. The smaller size of the eSIM chips makes them very versatile. They can be used in tablets and wearables, and they're likely to form a big part of the Internet of Things, placed into a multitude of devices including fitness trackers. Indeed, Apple is using a standalone eSIM in the iPad Pro (Vodafone and EE support it), as well as the Apple Watch Series 3, 4 and 5. Samsung has eSIM support in the Gear S2 and Gear S3 smartwatches, while Microsoft is allowing eSIM access in Windows 10 devices.

Smartwatches from Samsung are among the wearables that now support eSIMs.

Do all UK networks support eSIM?

Not yet, but the big ones – EE, O2 and Vodafone – do. These have been licensed by Apple in the UK, but it does mean we're waiting for other popular networks such as Three and GiffGaff to come on board. They will in time, we're sure.

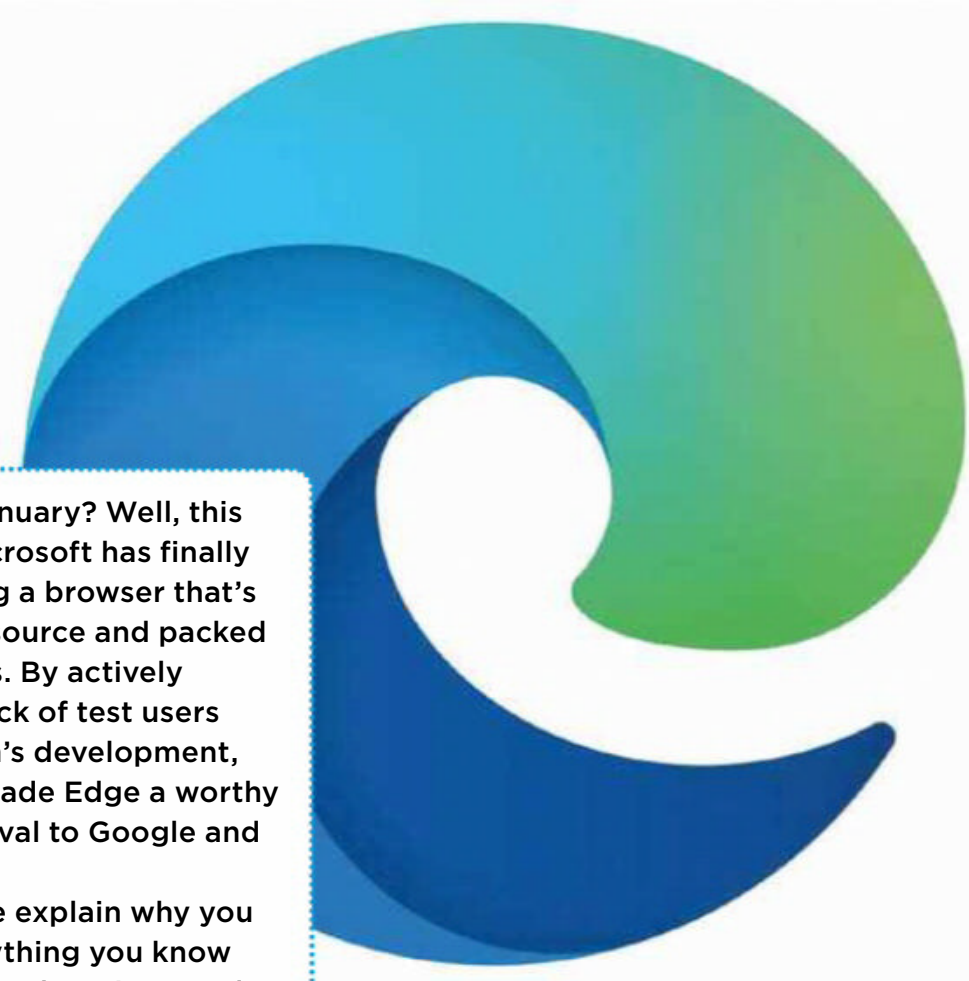
However, if people are able to switch networks with greater ease, mobile providers are likely to worry about losing their customers to a competitor. As manufacturers move towards eSIM chips, they may have little choice but to simply go with the flow.

Meet the Brilliant New...

MICROSOFT EDGE

COVER FEATURE

Forget everything you know about Microsoft's web browser. **Wayne Williams** reveals why the revamped, Chromium-based Edge is a revelation and explains how to make the most of it



The launch of a new or updated browser from Microsoft has often been a non-event. Internet Explorer, despite achieving a 95% share of the browser market at its peak, was frequently criticised for being buggy, derivative and unsafe – especially the notorious IE6. And although its replacement in Windows 10 was a better browser, most of us used Edge to download Chrome or Firefox, then never touched it again.

So why all the fuss about the new version of Edge (bit.ly/edge492), due for release on 15 January? Well, this time we believe Microsoft has finally got it right, creating a browser that's fast, secure, open-source and packed with useful features. By actively seeking the feedback of test users during the program's development, the company has made Edge a worthy – if not superior – rival to Google and Mozilla's browsers.

In this feature, we explain why you should forget everything you know about Edge and give the reinvented browser a chance.

Your Edge Questions Answered

Isn't Edge rubbish, though?

The original version of Edge had a bad reputation that was mostly justified. When Microsoft first rolled out the browser with Windows 10, it was very much a work in progress. The interface was far from intuitive – its Settings, Favourites and History appeared in weird flyout menus and, most bizarre of all, there was no address bar!

Edge heavily pushed the Bing search engine, too, without making it obvious how to switch to Google, which is the first thing most people using it would want to do. Even if you did change the default search engine, Bing would still appear in a number of places because it was hard-coded into the browser. Edge didn't support add-ons either, which was ridiculous, and when that feature was finally added a year later, there were only a few extensions available for it (and not many users left to care).

Foolishly, rather than focusing its attention on coming up with a browser that people actually wanted to use, Microsoft bombarded Windows 10 users with adverts singing its praises, claiming that it was faster and – because it used fewer resources – didn't drain laptop batteries as quickly as the competition. It even interrupted Chrome and Firefox installations to promote Edge.

Edge did have some uses – as Windows 10's default choice for opening PDF files, it did a good job; and you needed it to watch Netflix on your desktop in 1080p as it was the only browser that supported that resolution. On the whole, though, the old Edge was mostly rubbish. By contrast, the new Chromium Edge ('Chredge' to its friends) is a completely different browser and is actually very good.

What's different about this version?

The biggest difference is that Edge is now built around Chromium, the open-source engine that powers Google Chrome, Opera, Vivaldi and various other browsers. That's a huge change, and means that the revamped Edge supports all the current web standards and can run a lot more add-ons.

But there's more – Microsoft has built its new browser from the ground up, and added feature after feature to make sure that this time Edge is something special, rather than something you grudgingly put up with because it's built into your operating system.

Why is Microsoft using Google code?

Announcing the switch to Chromium, Joe Belfiore, corporate vice president of Windows, explained: "Ultimately, we want to make the web experience better for many different audiences. People using Microsoft Edge (and potentially other browsers) will experience improved compatibility with all websites, while getting the best possible battery life and hardware integration on all kinds of Windows devices".

The decision makes a lot of sense, because many developers optimise their sites with Chrome in mind. Edge isn't a direct clone of Chromium, though – Microsoft has removed many of the Google services that come bundled with the browser, including Safe Browsing, spellcheck, Web Store, Google Now, Google DNS, Link Doctor and Translate. It will (or already has) replaced some of these with its own equivalent services.

Which devices can I use Edge on?

Perhaps surprisingly for a Microsoft browser, Edge is available for most platforms, whereas the previous incarnation was only compatible with Windows 10. In addition to that operating system, you can run it on Windows 7 and 8.1, Windows Server and macOS. There are also Edge apps for both iOS and Android.

Linux is currently missing from the list of supported operating systems, but at its Ignite conference, Microsoft confirmed that the new Edge is "fully cross-platform" and will indeed be available for Linux "in the future", although there's currently no indication of how soon that will be.

How often will it be updated?

Microsoft will continue to release Edge Insider builds to testers via its Insider channels (www.microsoftedgeinsider.com), with new beta versions arriving roughly every six weeks. Dev Channel Insiders will get weekly updates, while Canary Channel testers will get them daily.

As to how often Stable users will see updates, that will depend on what new features Microsoft introduces, and how the testing of them has progressed. You should expect updates on a similar frequency to what users currently see with Chrome, Opera, and Firefox.

Will it replace the old Edge?

Yes, that's the plan. Microsoft has confirmed that the new Edge will be rolled out automatically via Windows Update to all PCs running Windows 10 1709 or later, starting from 15 January. You'll also be able to download it manually from bit.ly/edge492. In Windows 10, the old Edge browser will automatically update to the far superior new one.

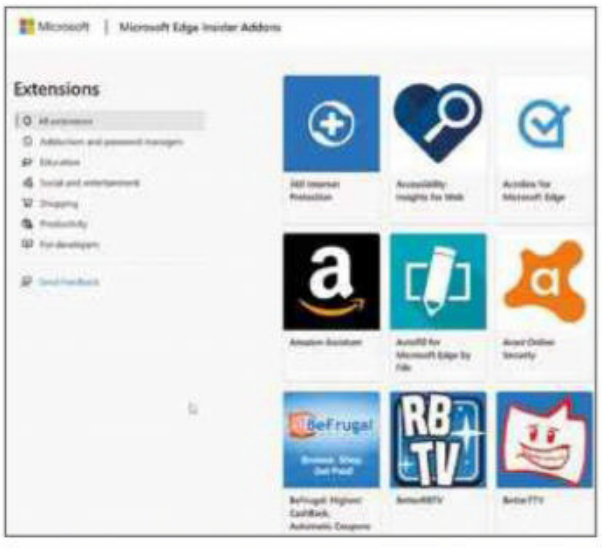
Edge's 20 Best New Tools

Microsoft's reinvented browser is packed with useful new features. Here are the smartest ways to make the most of Edge

1 Install lots more extensions

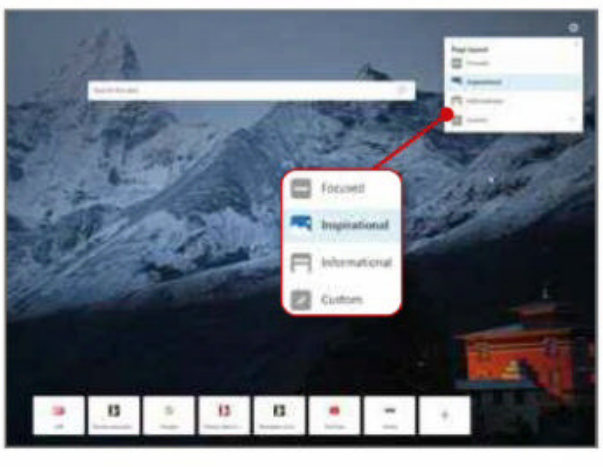
One of the (many) complaints about the original Microsoft Edge concerned its lack of add-ons. In the new version, you can download add-ons direct from the Microsoft Store (bit.ly/addons492), as well as install any extension from the Chrome Web Store.

We're using the beta version of Edge to write this feature, so bear in mind that the process may change in the stable version, once it's released. For now, though, you need to manually enable this ability, then browse Google's store for the add-ons you want. Go to `edge://extensions` or click the top-right menu button and choose Extensions, then 'Allow extensions from other stores' in the bottom-left corner. Click Allow, then go to the Chrome Web Store, find an add-on you want to install and click 'Add to Chrome'.



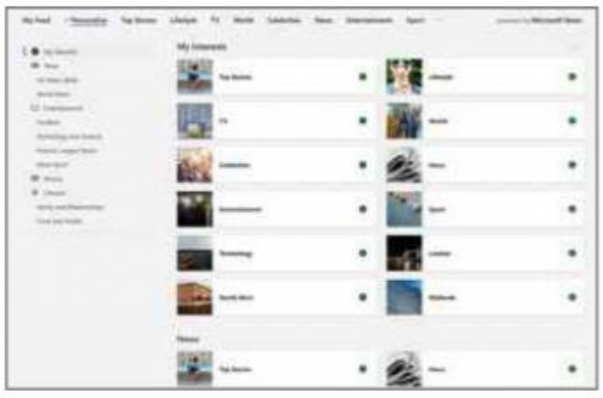
2 Customise your New Tab page

The page that's displayed when you open a new tab can be customised by clicking the cog button in the top-right corner. Pick a layout – Focused (minimal look), Inspirational (adds a background image), Informational (includes news) or Custom – and add your favourite sites to the Quick Links bar along the bottom of the page by clicking the plus button.



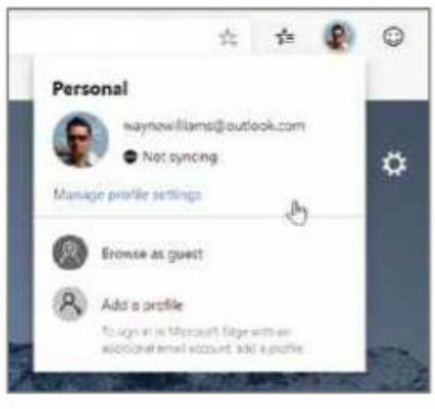
3 Customise your news feed

Edge has a customisable news feed, powered by Microsoft News, which you can view by scrolling down the New Tab page. You'll need to have selected either the Inspirational or Informational layouts to see the contents. Once visible, click the Personalise tab to select your interests and add or remove categories, so that the content is relevant to you. Options include Top Stories, TV, Lifestyle, Celebrities, Entertainment, Money, Technology and Sport. To hide the news feed, click the cog, choose Custom and select 'Content off'.



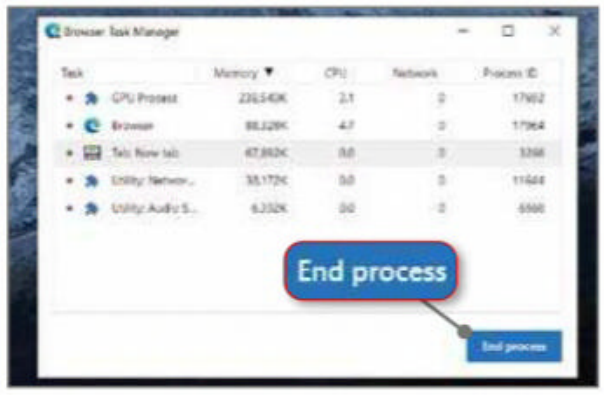
4 Switch between multiple accounts

You can set up Edge with different user profiles, to keep what you do online separate from other family members, or have different profiles for home and work. Edge lets you add both local and Microsoft accounts. Click the profile button in the top-right corner of the browser to manage your profile settings, browse as a guest (which stops Edge saving your browsing data, download history and cookies) and set up additional profiles.



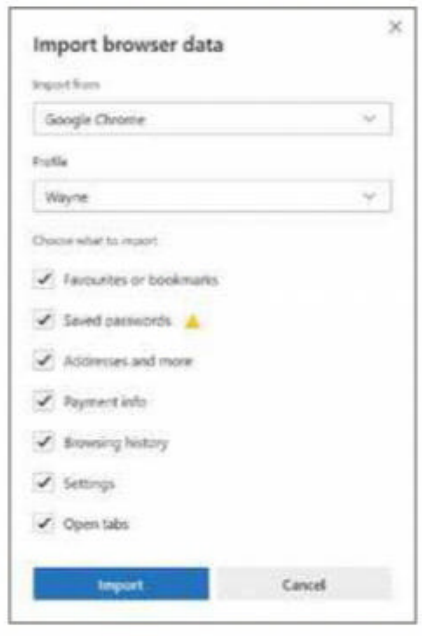
5 Kill resource-hungry processes

You can use Windows' built-in Task Manager to kill non-responsive or resource-hungry processes, but Edge, like Chrome and Firefox, now has its own Task Manager that you can use to identify and close problematic tasks and processes, such as memory-hogging extensions that slow your browser. To access it, click the top-right menu button and select 'More tools', 'Browser task manager'. You can sort the list by various criteria and end selected items that are causing trouble.



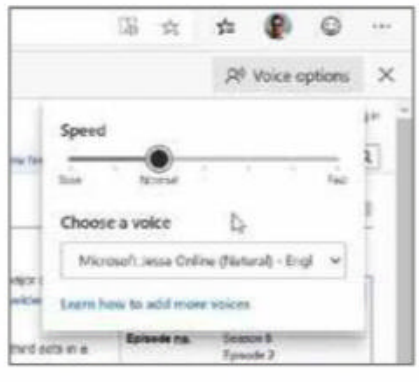
6 Import browser data from Chrome

Microsoft is keen for you to switch from using Google's browser to the new Edge, so it's made the transition as painless as possible by simplifying the process of importing your data. You can either go to Settings, 'Import browser data' and select Chrome in the drop-down menu, or you can type `edge://settings/importData` into the address bar to take you to the same page, where you can choose what to import – bookmarks, passwords, addresses, payment info, browsing history, settings and open tabs.



7 Hear web pages read aloud

Edge can read the content of any web page aloud, which is handy if your eyesight is poor or if you're occupied with something else and want to hear the latest news or get through an online article. Once you're on a page you'd rather listen to than read,



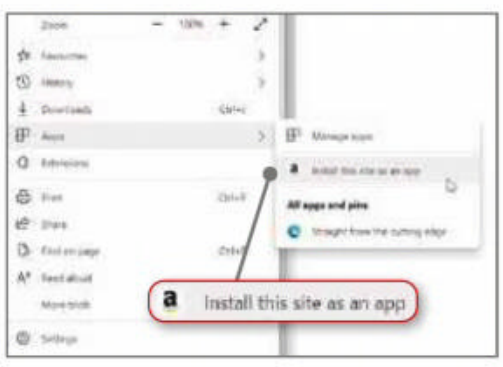
open the browser menu and choose Read Aloud. You can start and pause playback, jump backwards and forwards from one paragraph to another, choose a different reading voice and adjust the speed of the playback – making it a little faster will get you through the text more quickly.

8 Sync your data across devices

Edge can sync your history, bookmarks, passwords and other browser data across all your signed-in devices, so you can easily carry on browsing when you switch to another computer, phone or tablet. Open the Settings menu, select Profiles on the left and click Sync on the right. Click the 'Turn on sync' button and choose what you want to include. Not all options are available at the moment, but more will be added soon.

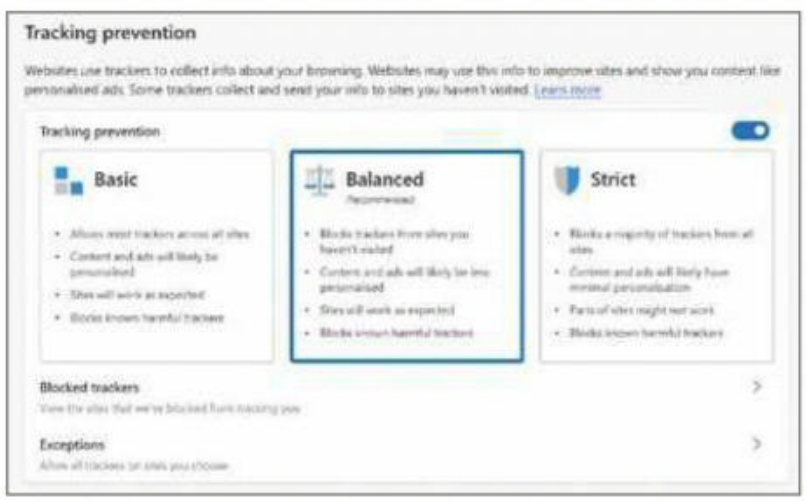
9 Turn websites into standalone apps

One new feature we particularly like in the reborn Edge is its ability to turn web pages into standalone apps that you can open and read independently from the browser. Just navigate to a web page you want to convert to an app, open the browser menu, go to Apps and select 'Install this site as an app'. You'll be able to access the new app from the Start menu, as well as directly through the browser menu.



10 Block unwanted trackers automatically

Internet giants such as Facebook and Google are known to track your every move on the web. Edge offers a tracking prevention feature that aims to stop sites that you aren't accessing directly from following you around in this way. You can manage the feature by going to Settings, 'Privacy and services'. By default, it's set to Balanced, which means it will block trackers from sites you haven't visited, as well as harmful ones, but sites will all work as expected. Basic protection only blocks harmful trackers, while Strict blocks most trackers but may prevent some sites from functioning properly. You can allow trackers on certain sites under Exceptions, and see which sites have been blocked to date under Blocked Trackers. Clicking the 'View site information' padlock on the left end of the address bar shows you how many trackers have been blocked so far.

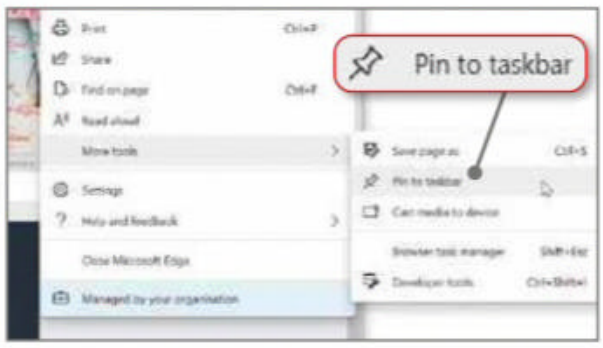


11 Block personalised ads

Microsoft can use your browsing history to personalise the ads you see, though this feature should be turned off by default. To check it's not activated, open Settings, select 'Privacy and services' and scroll down to 'Personalize your web experience'. You can also access the Microsoft privacy dashboard from here, which lets you manage your data and control additional advertising settings.

12 Pin sites to the taskbar

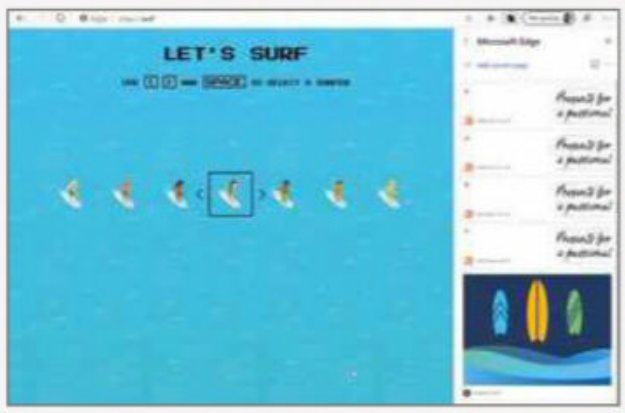
If you regularly visit certain sites, such as BBC News or Facebook, you can pin them to the taskbar for easy access, then click the relevant button to go straight there. Browse to a site you want to add, open the browser menu and go to 'More tools', 'Pin to taskbar.'



13 Switch between Light and Dark mode

Edge offers a choice of three themes – Light, Dark and System Default. To switch between them, open the menu, go to Settings and select Appearance on the left. Click the drop-down menu next to Theme on the right and choose the one you want. The change will be made instantly.

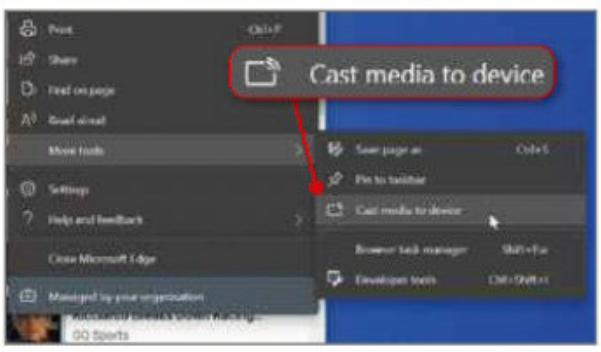
PLAY EDGE'S HIDDEN GAME



There's a fun surfing game hidden inside Chromium Edge, but you currently need to be running the Canary version of the browser to access it (you can run this alongside the stable build of Edge). To unlock it, type `edge://flags#edge-collections` into the address bar and enable the 'Experimental collections feature'. Restart your browser and go to any website, then click the new Collection icon to the right of the address bar and create a new collection called "Microsoft Edge". Now click the 'Add current page' link, right-click the entry, select Edit, remove the existing text and rename it `S.` (note the full stop). Repeat the process three more times, replacing the text each time so it spells out S.U.R.F. Drag the F. at the bottom to above the R., then drag it back down again. That will add the game to your collection, so you can play it at `edge://surf` – just choose a surfer and start surfing! The game may eventually be added to the stable version of Edge, too.

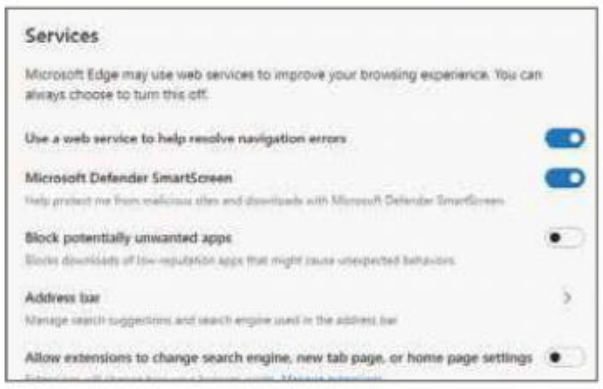
14 Stream videos to other devices

Edge can stream videos and other media to a connected device, such as a Google Chromecast. Find a page containing a video, then open the browser menu, go to 'More tools' and select 'Cast media to device'. The browser will look for any compatible devices in range, so you can stream content to them instead of watching videos on your PC.



15 Get protection against dangerous sites

Chromium Edge, like most modern browsers, helps protect you from malicious sites and downloads. It uses Microsoft Defender SmartScreen for the task, which is enabled by default, but if you decide you don't want to use the security feature for whatever reason, you can disable it. Open Settings, click 'Privacy and services', then scroll down and toggle the feature off. There's also an option to block potentially unwanted downloads "that might cause unexpected behaviours".

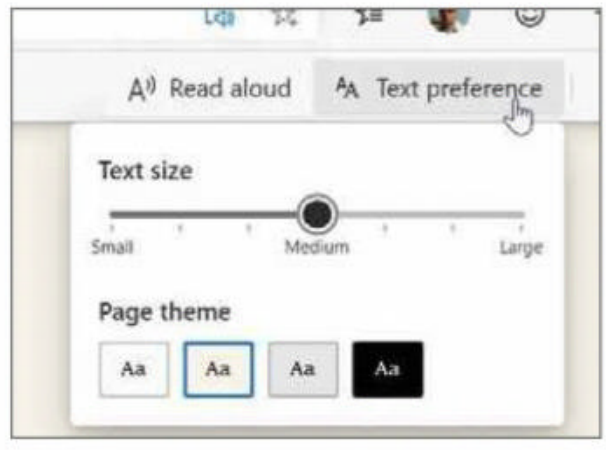


16 Control website permissions

Edge, like Chrome, lets you control exactly which permissions websites are granted. Open Settings and select 'Site permissions' on the left. The list of permissions is very long and includes cookies and site data, location, camera, microphone, JavaScript, Adobe Flash, pop-ups and redirects, ads, clipboard data, and much more. Click an option and you should be able to block or allow a permission, or have the browser ask you before allowing it.

17 Make web pages easier to read

When you find an interesting article on a web page, you can make it easier to read by stripping out ads and other junk. Click the Immersive Reader button to the right of the address bar to get started (note that this won't show up on every page). If you move your mouse to the top of the screen, you can have the page read aloud, adjust its text size and change the background colour.

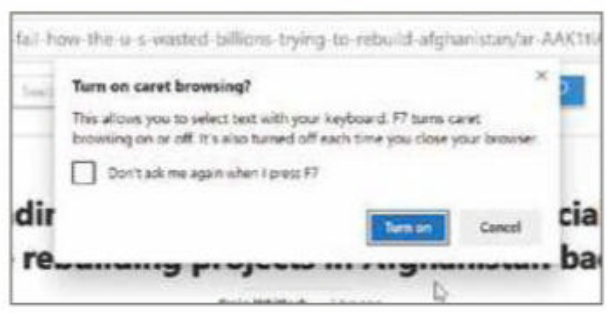


18 View PDFs in your browser

One of the best features in the original Edge browser was its built-in PDF reader. Thankfully, it's still here in the Chromium version, along with some useful tools. You can jump to a page, zoom in or out, rotate the PDF, draw on it (and erase the strokes afterwards), and print or save the document.

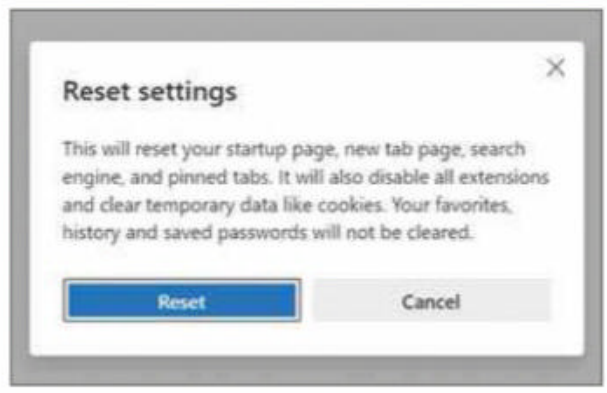
19 Select text using caret browsing

Caret browsing places an insertion-point cursor wherever you click. This lets you select text from a website using your keyboard, like in a word processor. To enable this feature, press F7 and a pop-up message asks if you want to turn on caret browsing. You can tell Edge not to ask this again in future.

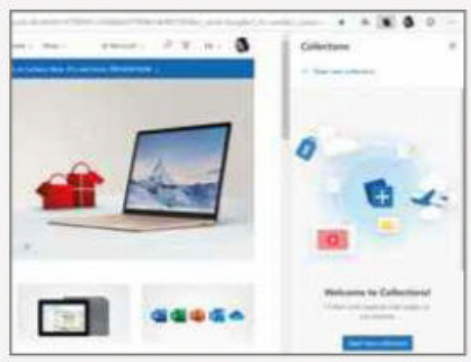


20 Reset your browser

If you've played around with the various settings in Edge and find things aren't working as well as before, you can reset the browser back to its default values (perform a factory reset, in other words). Open the menu, go to Settings and select 'Reset settings' on the left, then click the 'Restore settings to their default values' link on the right.



WHAT'S STILL TO COME IN EDGE?



The reborn Edge arrives with lots of changes and new features, but not all the planned elements made it into the first stable release. Additions you can look forward to in the coming months include improved tracking prevention (Edge will block even more of the trackers that follow you around the web), a new PDF text highlighter and Collections. This last feature makes it easier to collect, organise, sync and share web content, and is currently enabled in both the Dev and Canary builds of the browser. History and extension syncing will be added in due course, as will ARM64 support for devices such as the Surface Pro X. As mentioned earlier, Microsoft has announced a Linux version of Edge, but it's not expected to arrive for quite some time yet.

Secret Hacks For Edge

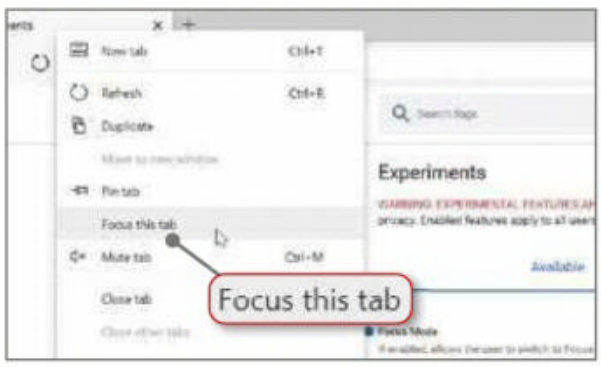
Some of Edge's cleverest features are tucked away below the bonnet. Here are seven of our favourite tricks for the browser

Apply Dark mode to all websites

We've already explained how to activate Edge's dark mode, but this just changes the colour of the browser's interface and doesn't have any effect on the web pages you visit. To force Edge into displaying web content in dark shades, type `edge://flags/` in the address bar and search for `dark` in the Search Flags box. Click the drop-down next to 'Force Dark Mode for Web Contents', then change this to Enabled and restart your browser when prompted.

Stay focused while browsing

It's much too easy to get distracted on the web, but Edge has a useful trick which can keep you on track. Focus mode opens the tab you should be spending time on in a separate window and removes the browsing controls so you can't move backwards and forwards (although you can open a new tab). To enable the feature, type `edge://flags` in the address bar and then search for `focus-mode`. Restart your browser, then right-click a site's tab and select 'Focus this tab'.



Organise tabs into groups

Edge lets you reorder your open tabs into groups, to make them easier to find. Type `edge://flags` in the address bar and search for `Tab Groups`. Enable this option and restart your browser.

Right-click the first tab and select 'Add to new group'. This places a small coloured circle to the left of that tab. You can now add more tabs to the same or different groups. Click a coloured circle to change its colour or add some text – for example, you could type the word `work` so tabs related to your work are preceded by that word.

Reduce memory consumption

Browsers are among the worst resource hogs on your PC, especially if you have a lot of tabs open. Edge has a hidden feature called Tab Freeze which reduces memory usage. When enabled, it freezes any tabs that aren't being used and have been idle for five minutes or so, releasing the RAM they would be using if active. To use this feature, open the flags page, search for `Tab Freeze` and enable it (there are various options available including no unfreeze, and unfreezing after a set period).

Check your spelling in UK English

The new Edge has English (United States) as the default language, but you can change this by opening Settings and clicking Languages on the left. Click 'Add languages' on the right and select English (United Kingdom), then click Add. Click the three dots next to its entry and select 'Display Microsoft Edge in this language', then restart your browser. You should also turn on the 'Check spelling' toggle next to the newly selected language.

Cram more sites into the Favourites bar

Edge, like all modern browsers, has a bookmarks bar at the top where you can store your favourite sites. This can be enabled, disabled and set to display on the new tab screen. You can also remove the text for each Favourite, so it just shows the 'favicon'. To do this, open the browser menu, go to Favourites, right-click a site under 'Favourites bar' and select 'Show icon only'.

Change your search engine

Changing the default search engine in Edge isn't a 'secret hack' as such, but it's harder than it should be. Open the menu, go to Settings, 'Privacy and services' and scroll down to the bottom. Under Services, click the 'Address bar' entry, then use the drop-down menu 'Search engine used in the address bar' to change it from Bing to something more useful, such as Google or DuckDuckGo. Under 'Manage search engines' you can remove any you don't want, except Bing (Microsoft really wants you to use it!).

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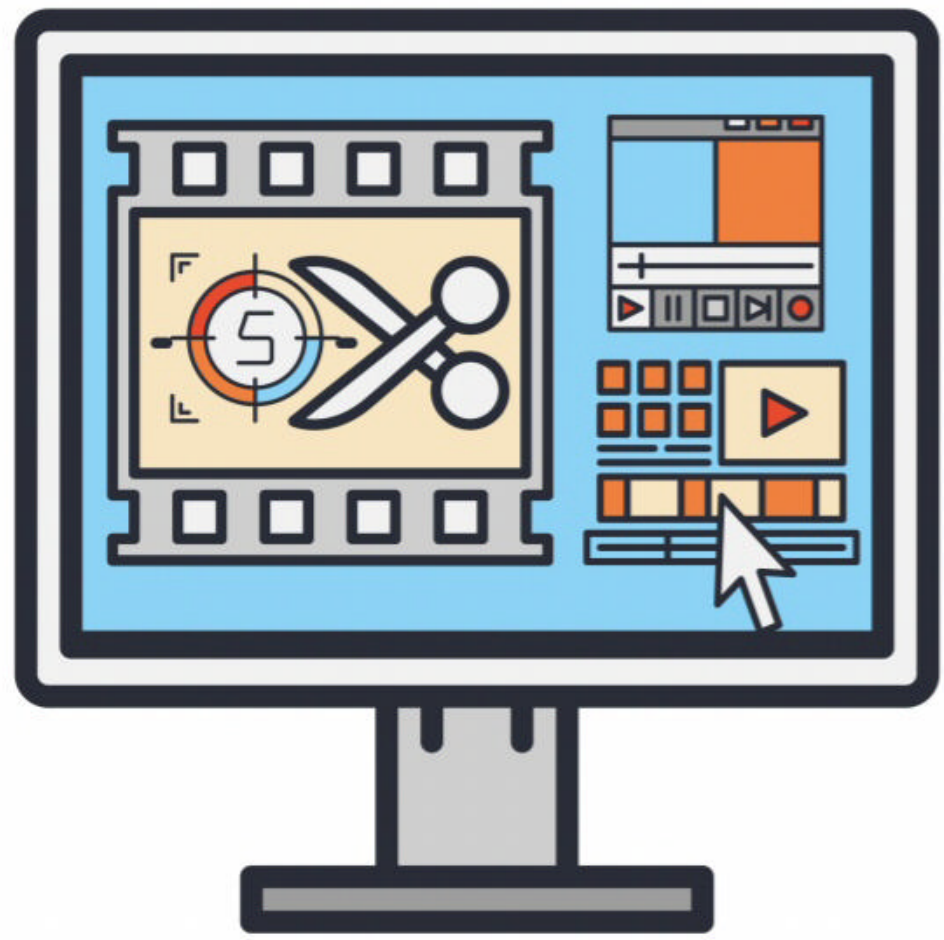
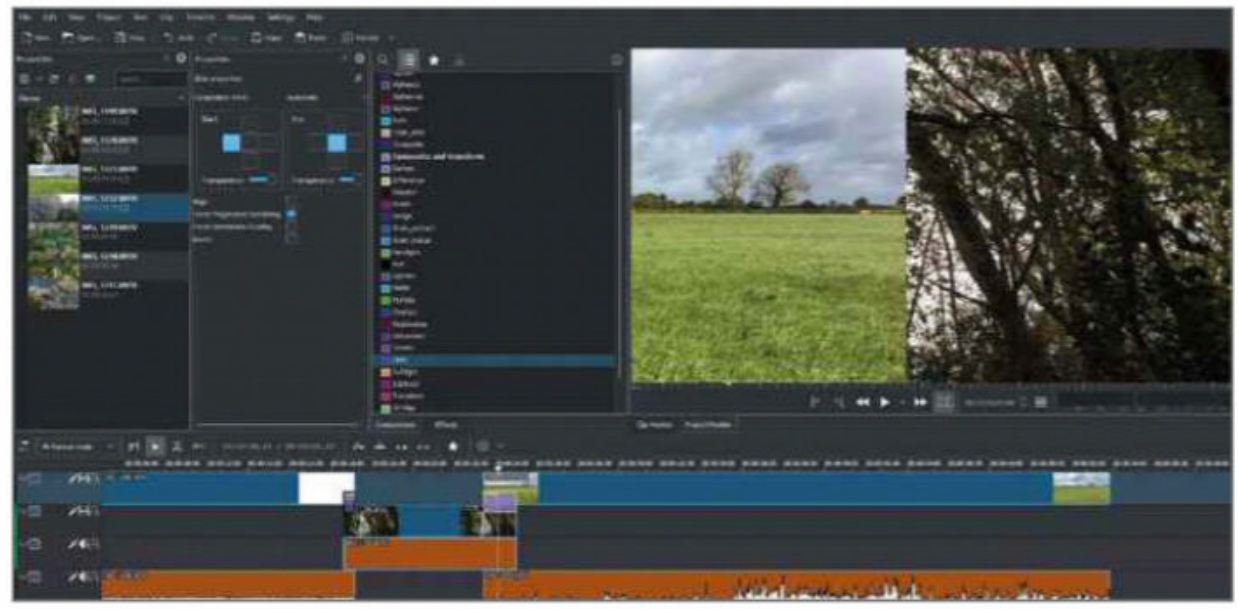
Best free video-editing software



The image-editing software bundled with Windows offers a few basic video-editing tools, but **Andy Shaw** is on the hunt for something with a little more creative flare. Here he compares six contenders

Kdenlive | kdenlive.org | ★★★★★

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



What we liked:

There was a time when free video-editing tools were far more basic than even fairly modest paid-for software. Now those days are over, as Kdenlive demonstrates with its wealth of advanced features.

The default interface should be familiar to anyone who's used video-editing software before. A window on the left of the screen stores your library of footage, while a preview window on the right lets you see your movie as you work. Drag and drop clips to the timeline below and use your mouse to shrink, chop and rearrange them. There are two video tracks, so you can drop simple cuts next to each other on the same timeline, or overlap them in separate timelines if you want to apply a transition or effect. Audio has two tracks of its own, so you can edit it separately. If you need more tracks, you can add them from the menu.

Adding transitions and effects is easy: choose one from the extensive list and drop it on the clip you want to apply it to. Transitions straddle two video tracks because they affect both clips. Click a transition to reveal contextual tools that let you control exactly how it works – such as which direction the screen 'wipes' to reveal the next clip. You can adjust the timing of an effect by stretching or shrinking it on the timeline.

These features are just the tip of the iceberg, however. Kdenlive is a phenomenal piece of software that's crammed with tools. There's even a standalone version that you can run without installing it on your PC.

How it can be improved:

Kdenlive isn't intuitive so it's worth committing some time to reading its online manual. Choosing from the list of effects and transitions can be tricky, too, because they're represented by tiny icons with technical names.

OUR VERDICT

Kdenlive's huge range of features can seem intimidating, but if you've outgrown simpler editing tools or you want more than a phone app can offer, you'll find that it gives you complete control over your videos. It isn't the easiest program to learn, but anyone who's used a video editor with a timeline should soon get to grips with it. While there's plenty of documentation available online, you can pick up a lot simply by experimenting – and the invaluable undo option means you can reverse any mistakes.

Shotcut | www.shotcut.org | ★★★★☆

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

WebUser SILVER AWARD

What we liked:

Shotcut is a less sophisticated video-editing tool than Kdenlive but more powerful than the Microsoft Photos app. When you first open the software, it presents you with a single track for video and another for audio, although you can add more if you wish.

To splice shots together, open them in the Playlist section, then drag them to the timeline. If you drop one file next to another and drag it so they overlap, the program automatically creates a gentle crossfade transition, which is a nice touch. To change this to a different type of transition, select it and open the Properties window. From there you can adjust a range of options, from the type of transition to exactly how the program renders the effect. It's less intuitive than using something like Apple's iMovie, but dragging and dropping clips in relation to one another feels like a more logical way to create transitions than having to juggle separate timelines.

How it can be improved:

The software hides any elements you're not using, which means you can waste a lot of time looking through the tabs and menus for the tool you want. This approach to tidiness seems a little overzealous, because if you use the software at full screen, there's plenty of room for a few additional items.

OUR VERDICT

We like the clarity and simplicity of Shotcut's interface and it certainly provides more tools than simple alternatives such as Microsoft Photos. However, it doesn't offer the same level of control as our Gold Award winner, Kdenlive.

Microsoft Photos | bit.ly/msph492 | ★★★☆☆

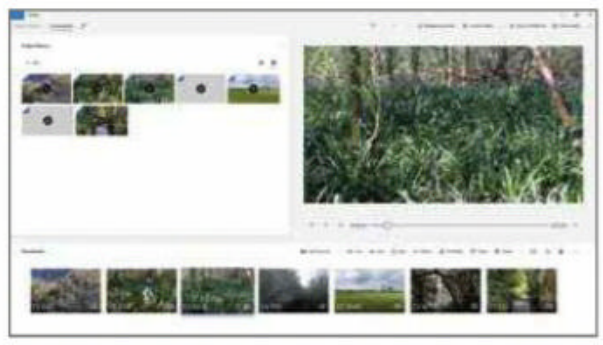
FEATURES ★★☆☆☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★☆☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★☆

WebUser BRONZE AWARD

What we liked:

Microsoft Photos is the successor to the eternally popular Windows Movie Maker, which Microsoft threw out with the bathwater when it decided that every piece of Windows 10 software must work on a touchscreen and come from its app store. It's a fairly basic tool, but if you just want to string a few video clips together, it can do the job.

The benefit of adding video-editing tools to the Photos app is that you can use them to make photo slideshows, and drop video clips in among your still images. It's perfect for this kind of project, with plenty of pan and zoom effects to make your photos look more dynamic.



How it can be improved:

The video tools have improved over time but Photos is aimed predominantly at photographers who have a few videos to slot into a slideshow. The worst omission is the lack of transitions. The only option you have with this software is to trim your clips and join them with straight cuts. It's adequate for tidying up a library full of messy videos, but if you're serious about editing, you'll need more tools.

OUR VERDICT

The main benefit of Microsoft Photos is that it comes with Windows, so you don't have to download any new software. It's fine if you want to trim clips to size and stitch them together, but it won't let you do anything more complicated than that, such as creating transitions between clips.

BEST OF THE REST

OpenShot Video Editor

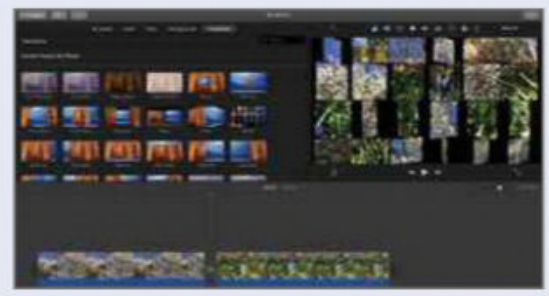
openshot.org

At first glance, we expected OpenShot to be simpler and easier to use than its rivals, thanks to a nicely laid-out interface, friendly looking buttons and thumbnails with curved corners. However, it starts you off with five video tracks, which is overwhelming. Its drag-and-drop tools look as if they should be simple, but working out how videos on different tracks interact with one another is a bewildering task.

iMovie

bit.ly/imov492

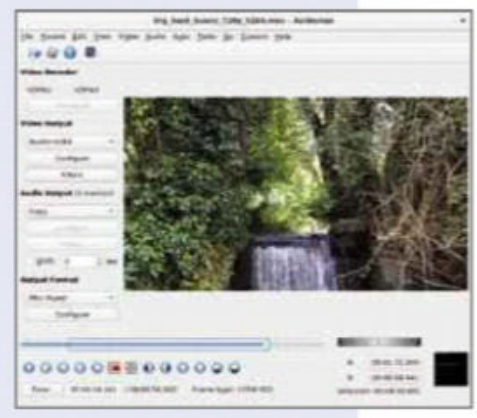
If you own an Apple Mac, you don't need to worry about downloading additional tools for editing videos because all Macs come with iMovie. The software hasn't seen any significant updates in a few years but it's vastly more capable than Microsoft Photos. The only downside is that you need an expensive Apple computer to run it.



Avidemux

avidemux.sourceforge.net

If you simply want to trim and adjust your video clips, the minimal Avidemux may suffice. It has an old-school Windows look to it and avoids anything as luxurious as a timeline or transitions. However, you can use it to trim the rough edges off a clip and apply a host of special effects. It's also good at transforming videos from one file format to another.



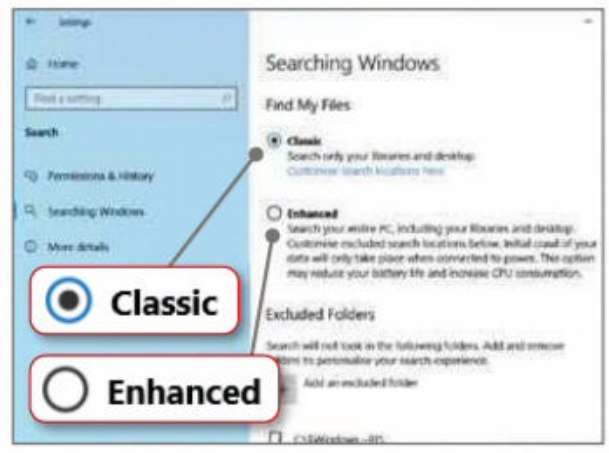
Find files faster in Windows

Microsoft is constantly improving Windows' built-in search tools. If you're not finding the files you need quickly enough, **Nik Rawlison** explains how to make your searches more efficient

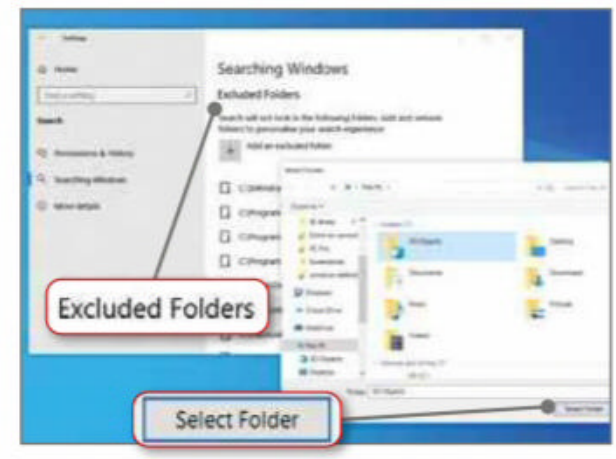
Dig deeper on your hard drive

The faster Windows works, the happier we are, which is why its built-in search tool only indexes files that appear in your Libraries, such as the Desktop and Documents, Pictures and Downloads folders. Anything outside these areas is ignored, unless you tweak the default options.

Open Settings by pressing Windows+i and click Search, followed by Searching Windows. Unless you've already made some changes, Classic search will be selected, so click the radio button beside Enhanced, then close Settings and wait for Windows to update its index. Over the next few hours, you will start to see a wider range of files in your search results.



For more comprehensive Windows search results, switch from Classic to Enhanced



Add specific folders to Classic search and exclude them from Enhanced search

If this approach seems like overkill, and the results it delivers are swamped by previously hidden files that you've never used before, you have two options: either stick with Enhanced search but exclude specific locations; or switch back to Classic and add a handful of extra folders yourself.

To exclude folders, return to the Searching Windows options and choose 'Add an excluded folder'. Navigate to the folder whose contents you don't want to see and click Select Folder. Its full contents, including any subfolders, will be excluded from search results.

To include specific folders, switch back to Classic and click 'Customise search locations here'. Click Modify, then click the arrow to the left of the drive containing the folders you want to add to the index. Continue clicking the arrows beside each subfolder to dig deeper through the directory tree, ticking the boxes beside the folders you need. When you've finished, click OK.

Refresh the Windows search index

If you've added all the locations you need but still aren't happy with the results displayed, you can force Windows to update its search index. Click Start and type `indexing`, then click Indexing Options.

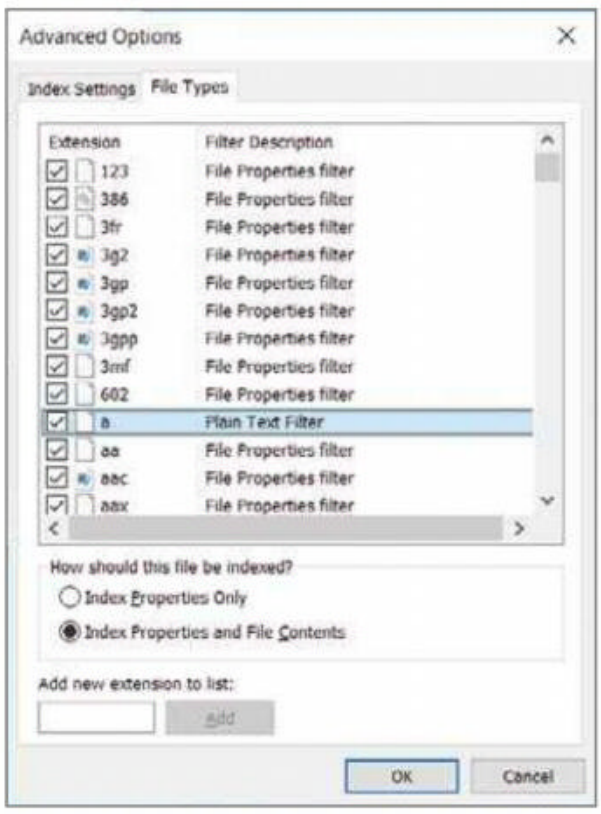
Click Advanced and choose whether

SEARCH FROM THE COMMAND PROMPT

Graphical operating systems such as Windows provide an attractive front end for what's happening behind the scenes, but you can often get more done in less time by interacting directly with the back end – and that also applies to search. Press Start and type `CMD`, then press Enter to launch the Command Prompt.

Type `dir` and press Enter to pull up a list of files and folders, and `cd` followed by a folder name to move down into that directory (for example, `cd documents`) until you reach the folder you want to search. Now type `dir` again but, this time, follow it with your search term in quotes. So, for example, type `dir "highlands*"` and press Enter. The asterisk is what's known as a wildcard and, in our example, it stands for anything that follows the word 'highlands', such as 'highlands .doc', 'highlands.xls' or 'highlands holiday plans.txt'.

If you're not sure where your file is located, then instead of manually navigating through your directories, search from the very top level of your hard drive and include every subfolder. The top level of the drive is represented by a backslash and, to include subdirectories, you add a forward slash and 's' to the end of the query – like this: `dir "\highlands*" /s`.

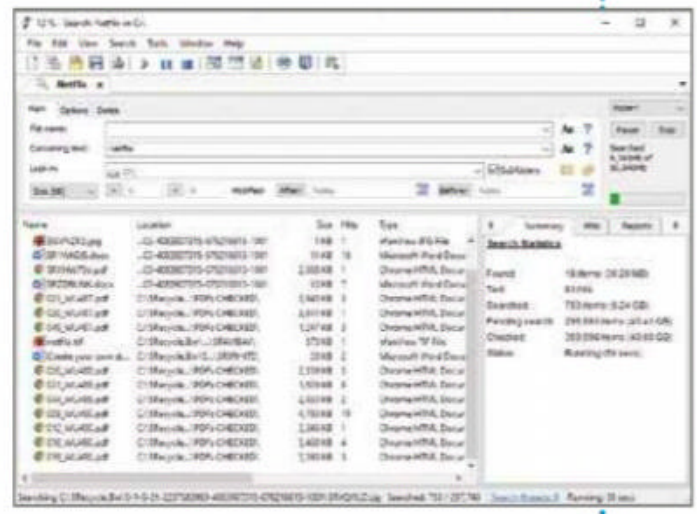


Set Windows to only index the contents of files that you can read yourself

USE A DEDICATED SEARCH TOOL

If none of this has helped, consider switching to a dedicated search tool. Our recommended program, which won our Gold Award back in Issue 449 (bit.ly/webuser449), is the Lite version of Agent Ransack (bit.ly/agent492). It's free for personal use and lets you search by filename, contents or extension, and filter your results by size and modification date.

Once you get the results you're looking for, you can click the tool's Summary tab for an overview of how many files have been searched and the number of matches, or click the Hits tab to see which lines of a found document the text you're searching for appears on.



Other search tools that are worth a look include the simple but comprehensive Everything (www.voidtools.com) and the super-fast WizFile (bit.ly/wizfile492).

you want to include encrypted files (tick 'Index encrypted files' if you do), then opt in or out of the setting to 'Treat similar words with diacritics as different words'. This latter option is best left unchecked because ticking it means you need to be more specific with your input to get any meaningful results. A diacritic is a mark above, below or on top of a character, such as an accent (é,ú, í) , umlaut (ö, ü), cedilla (ç) and a wide range of other graphical tweaks. If you tick the option, you won't be able to search for books by Charlotte Brontë or music from Beyoncé without including the appropriate umlaut or accent in their names; but if you leave the box unchecked, an 'e' in either case will deliver their names in your results.

Click the File Types tab and make sure that all the different formats you want to index have been ticked in the list of available extensions, and that Windows is set up to index either the filename or its contents. In general, you only want the latter selected for the kind of files you could read yourself, such as word-processed documents, emails and spreadsheets. There's no point asking Windows to index the contents of a configuration file because you'll never use them, so leave this set to index just the name. However, you might search for 'highlands' to pull up any file that internally mentions an upcoming Scottish holiday, even if the Highlands aren't mentioned in the filename.

Click the Index Settings tab, then select Rebuild to delete your existing index and to restart from scratch. The process can take some time, so don't expect to see an immediate improvement.

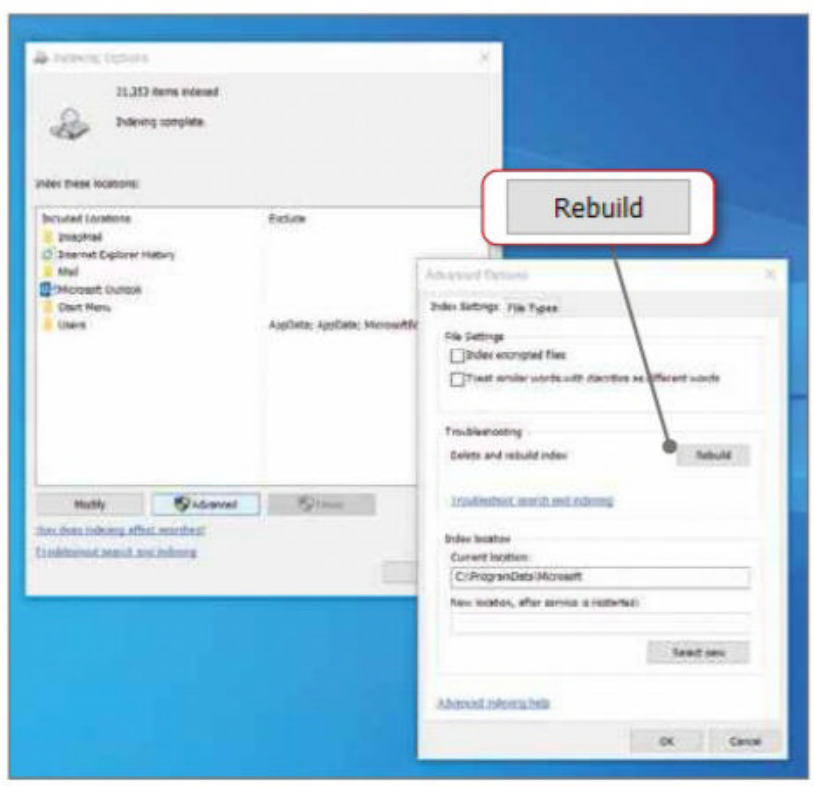
Tag your files with keywords

As with online searches, adding keyword tags to a file greatly increases the chance of it being found. Going back to our holiday example, we might want to group every file we've ever created relating to a vacation, regardless of when and where the photos were taken. In that case, adding the tag 'holiday' to any related file will group it in the search results for that term.

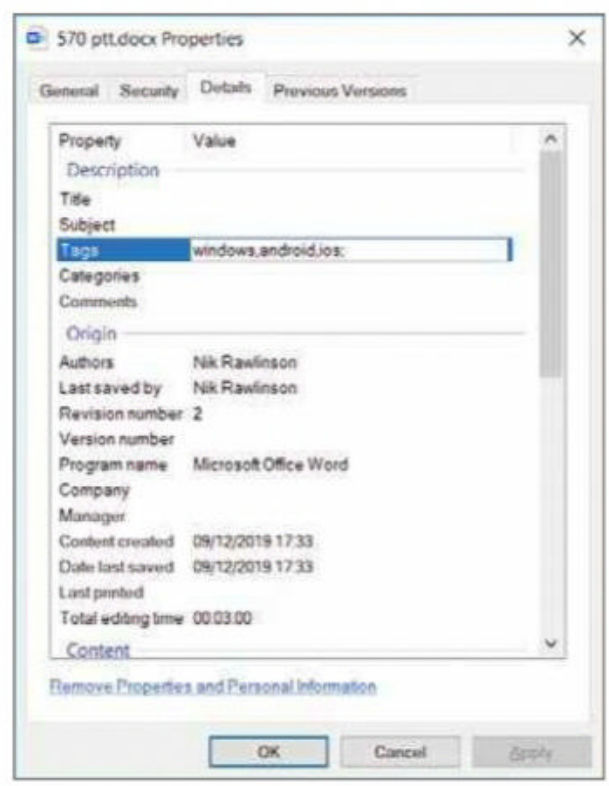
Get started by right-clicking the file you want to tag (or select a group of files and right-click one to change the tags on all of them simultaneously) and select Properties from the menu. Click the Details tab, then double-click the blank space next to Tags, below the Value header. Type your tags with a semicolon between each one and press Enter after the last one. Click Apply to add them to the file's underlying data.

Now, when you use any of the tags you've just added with one of Windows' various search tools, it will deliver these files among your other results, even if the tag doesn't appear in either the file's name or its contents.

Unfortunately, tagging isn't available for all file types, so if the Tags option isn't visible on the Details tab, you're out of luck. However, it does work on Office documents, and it's a feature we'd like to see Microsoft build on in the future.



If you're not seeing the search results you expect, try forcing Windows to rebuild its index of files



Add tags to Office documents to help you quickly locate them later

Regain access to locked accounts

Forgot your password? Hit by hackers? Or just trying to access an old account on a new device? **Jane Hoskyn** reveals how to get back in when you're locked out

Get back into your Google account

Google is quick to bring the shutters slamming down when it suspects unusual activity on your account. So it's all too easy to lock yourself out, for example, by mislaying your two-factor authentication (2FA) key or trying to set up a separate account for work.

To get back in, head for Google's 'Account recovery' tool (bit.ly/recovery492, or bit.ly/username492 if you can't remember the account's email address), then try to answer questions regarding the phone number, name and location you used when setting up the account, and even old passwords. Google's recovery algorithms respond better to good guesses than blank spaces, especially if you use a device the account recognises.

Once you've offered enough information, Google will send a verification message to an associated number or email. Change the account's password and other security info at myaccount.google.com/security, and ensure your data is backed up in case you get locked out again, using free tools such as Drive for PC (google.co.uk/drive/download) and Got Your Back for Gmail (bit.ly/back492).

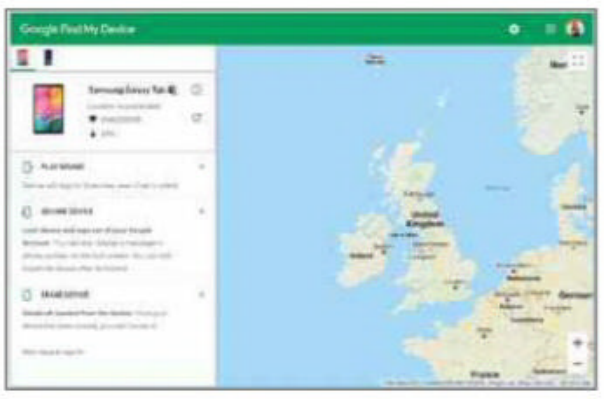
Pick your Google lock using 'Account recovery', even without the email address

Unlock your Android device without the PIN

Phones and tablets running **Android 4.4** and earlier are dead easy to unlock. Enter the wrong PIN or pattern five times, tap Forgot, then log into your Google account. Google wisely ditched this in Android 5 and introduced Smart Lock instead, which automatically unlocks the screen when you're on your home Wi-Fi, which means heading home may be all you need to do.

Samsung devices have another easy option. Go to findmymobile.samsung.com on your PC, click 'Unlock my screen' and you're in – but only if the device is logged into your Samsung account.

Google's own Find My Device (google.com/android/find) doesn't have an unlock option, but it does have Erase Device. Clicking this wipes everything, including the PIN or pattern lock, so it also unlocks your phone or tablet. If you've got the device to hand when doing this, you should remove its SD card first.



Bypass the screen lock on your Android using Google's Find My Device

Get back into your Microsoft account

To reset your password for Outlook.com, Skype and other **Microsoft** services, enter the account's linked email address at bit.ly/recover492. If that doesn't work, or you don't know the email, go to 'Recover your account' (bit.ly/msrecover492) and answer a range of questions, such as email addresses you've recently sent Outlook emails to and your passwords for old accounts. If that doesn't work, get in touch with Microsoft via bit.ly/mscontact492.

Unlock your iPhone, iPad or Apple account

Your iPhone or iPad will automatically 'disable' for one minute after six different incorrect passcodes are entered. After 10 attempts, it'll lock down for good and you'll have to restore it to unlock it. Connect the device to your computer, open iTunes and click 'Restore iPhone/iPad'. If this doesn't work, erase it using Find My iPhone (icloud.com/find).

You'll need to sign in with your Apple ID to do all this so, if you've forgotten that as well (for example, if you're trying

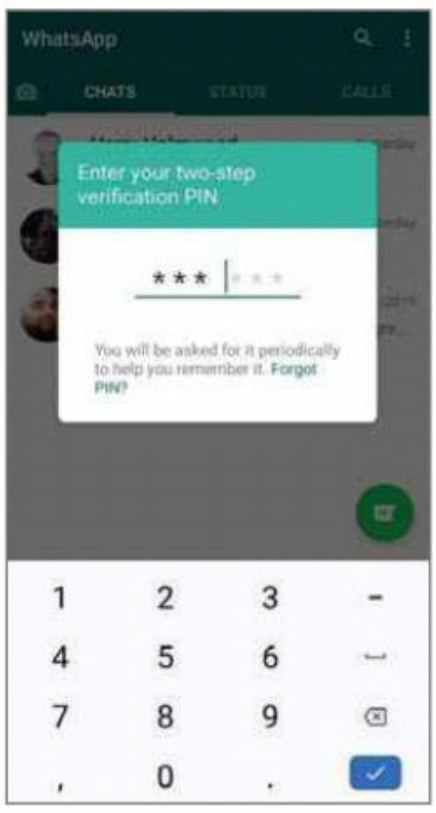
Erase your iPhone to unlock it, ideally after backing up its contents

to revive an old device), head to iforgot.apple.com and tackle the security questions. If you struggle with these, you can try again after 24 hours. Alternatively, ask a friend with an iPhone to install Apple Support (bit.ly/appsupp492), then open the app and go to Get Support, Apple ID, Forgot Apple ID Password, Get Started and then 'A different Apple ID'.

If you can get into your device but can't remember your Apple ID info, open Settings, then 'Sign in', 'Don't have an Apple ID or forgot it' and answer the questions. On iOS 10.2 and earlier, open iCloud, then 'Forgot Apple ID or Password'.

Reinstall WhatsApp to unlock its PIN

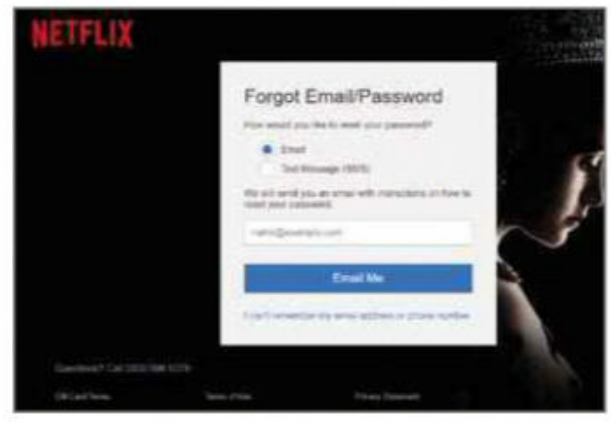
WhatsApp's PIN lock is well hidden (under 'Two-step verification' in Settings) but it's easy to set up. It's also easy to reset if you forget it: tap Forgot PIN when prompted, then use the reset link emailed to you. If this fails, or you didn't link an email address, you'll have to delete and reinstall the app. This doesn't delete your data.



WhatsApp's hidden PIN feature has a not-so-hidden 'Forgot?' option

There's no reset option for WhatsApp's new fingerprint lock, available on some devices. So if it locks you out after failing to recognise your fingerprint – or perhaps you used the wrong finger – then you'll need to reinstall the app to unlock it.

Unlock Facebook with a reset code, if you know the account's email address



Netflix is eager to help you get back in – it even puts a free phone number upfront

Get back into Facebook, Twitter or Instagram

Facebook's 'Forgotten account?' link and 'Reset Your Password' page (bit.ly/fbreset492) both let you request a six-digit password reset code, but they only work if the email and phone number linked to your account haven't changed. If they have, go to facebook.com/login/identify to answer a range of security questions, ideally on a device you previously used to access the account. You'll then have to reset your password and wait 24 hours before using it.

To guard against this happening again, set up a few 'trusted contacts'. These Facebook friends are authorised to handle a secure recovery code if you're locked out of your account. To set this up, go to bit.ly/fbsecurity492 while logged in and click 'Choose 3 to 5 friends to contact if you get locked out'.

If you get locked out of **Twitter**, you can request a new login at bit.ly/twitpass492.

Instagram lets you reset your password using email, mobile or Facebook, and offers detailed help at bit.ly/instalog492.

Get back into Spotify, Netflix or the iPlayer

BBC iPlayer automatically signs you out every two years, whether you use it or not, so you may suddenly need to re-enter a long-forgotten password. If the basic 'I've forgotten my password' page doesn't help (bit.ly/bbcforgot492), you may have registered using Facebook or Google – neither of which the Beeb supports any more. In which case, click 'Having trouble signing in?' then 'I normally sign in with Facebook or Google' to link your email to your BBC account.

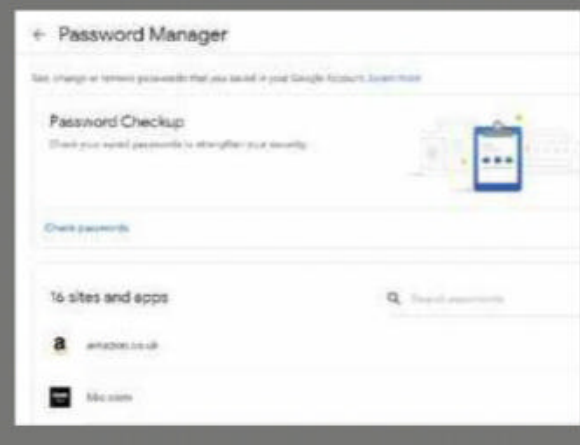
Netflix offers all sorts of ways to get back in. If you've forgotten the linked phone number or email, Netflix will accept billing info such as the debit card used for the subscription. To explore your options, go to bit.ly/netflix492 or call 0800 096 6379, now free from mobiles as well as landlines.

Spotify also has a basic password reset tool (bit.ly/spot492), but this may not work if you set up the account via Facebook. Go to bit.ly/spotlog492 and click Logging In, 'I can't reset my password', then I Still Need Help to contact the team. ■

MASTER KEYS: 5 TOOLS FOR LOCKED ACCOUNTS

Deseat Me (www.deseat.me) This free web tool securely searches your email archive for account sign-up emails, then helps you unlock and delete old accounts.

KnowEm (knowem.com) Enter your regularly used usernames on this site to discover where you hold accounts – you may have forgotten some of them existed.



Google Password Manager (passwords.google.com) Discover which email address or account – Facebook as well as Google – you used to create various third-party accounts.

Password Checkup (bit.ly/pcheck492) Google's new Chrome extension reveals if your passwords have been stolen by hackers, then lets you reset them securely.

LogDog (getlogdog.com) This free app for Android and iOS reveals whether your apps have been hacked, then lets you change the logins.

Create stories in Google Earth

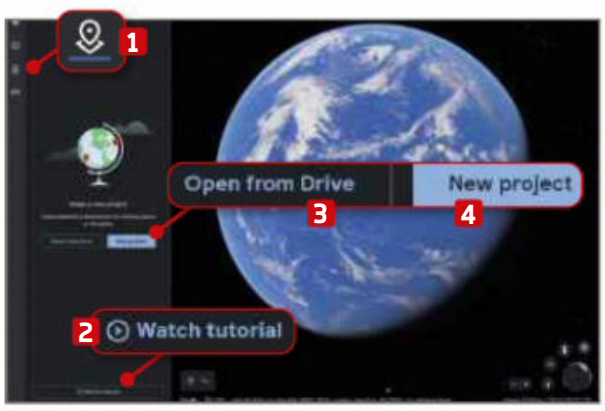
Google has added new tools to its virtual globe that let you create stories about the places that matter to you. Here's how to use them

Google Earth: earth.google.com/web | 20 mins | Any browser

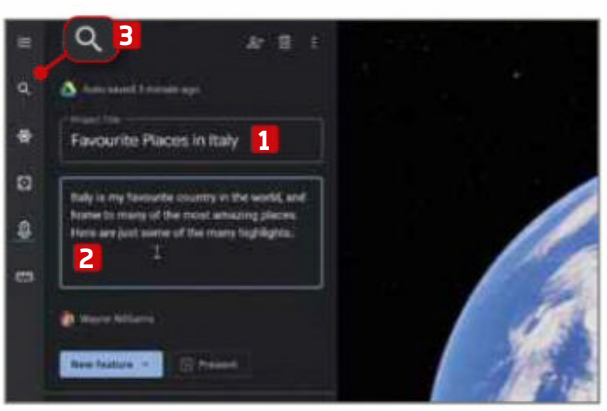
Google Earth was originally available as a standalone program but, as web technology improved, it eventually became possible to display the entirety of our little blue planet in a browser window.

You can do all sorts of cool things with Google Earth and a recent update now lets you construct your own maps and stories. There are new tools for adding placemarks, lines and shapes, and attaching custom text, images and videos to your creations.

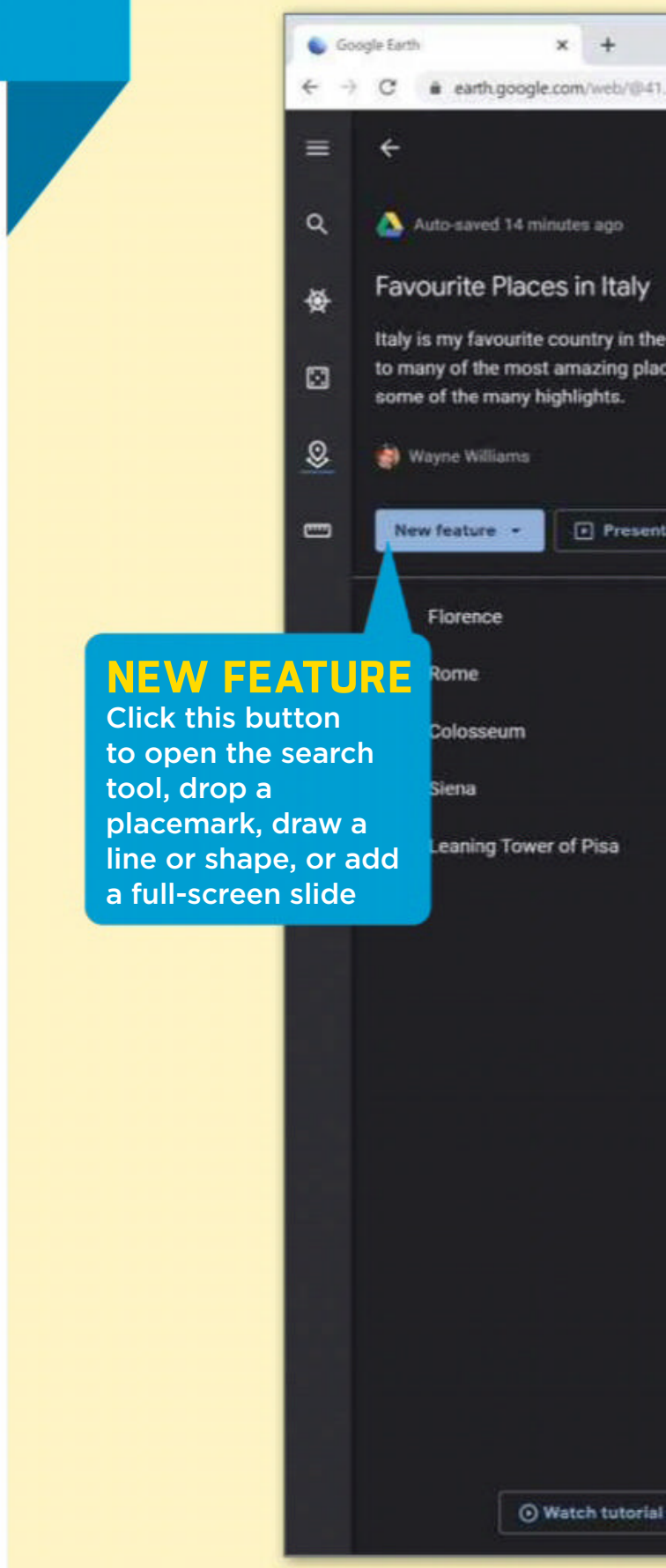
Projects are made in the web version of Google Earth, and can be viewed there or on your phone or tablet, provided you have the latest version of the app. Stories can be shared and collaborated on, too.



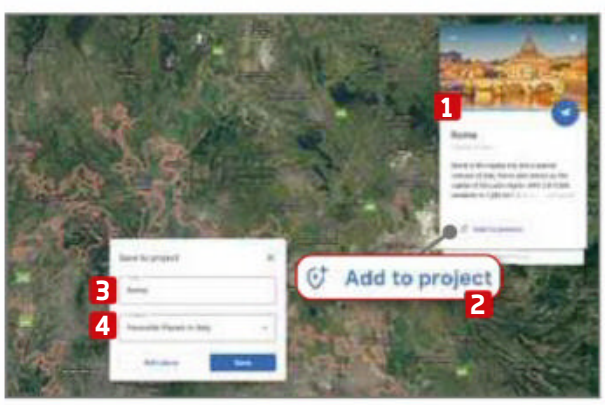
1 Open Google Earth in your browser and click the Projects button. 1 The 'Make a new project' sidebar appears with options to watch a tutorial, 2 load a previous project 3 or start a new one. 4 Projects are automatically saved to Google Drive.



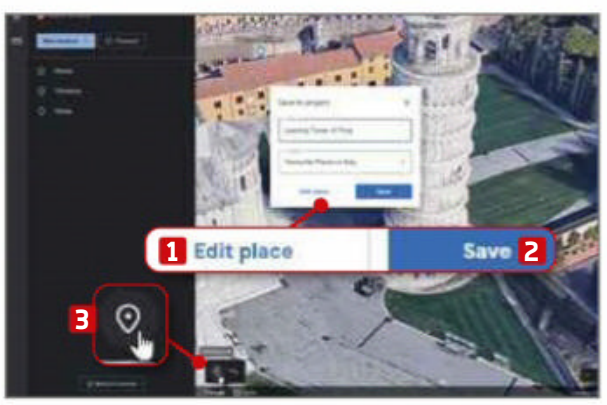
2 To name your project, click the Edit Project (pencil) button. You can change the default title 1 and add an optional description. 2 Any changes you perform are saved (to Google Drive) as soon as you make them. Next, click the magnifying-glass icon 3 to search for your first location.



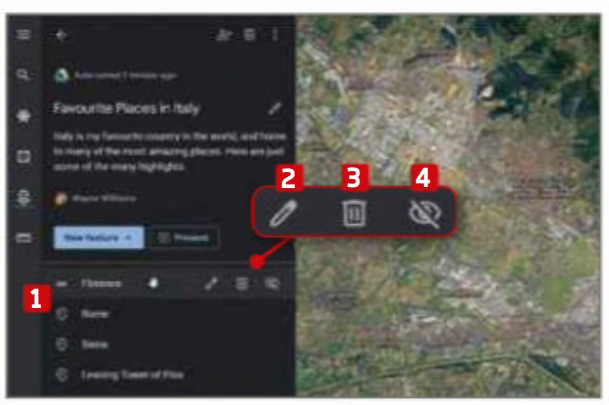
NEW FEATURE
Click this button to open the search tool, drop a placemark, draw a line or shape, or add a full-screen slide



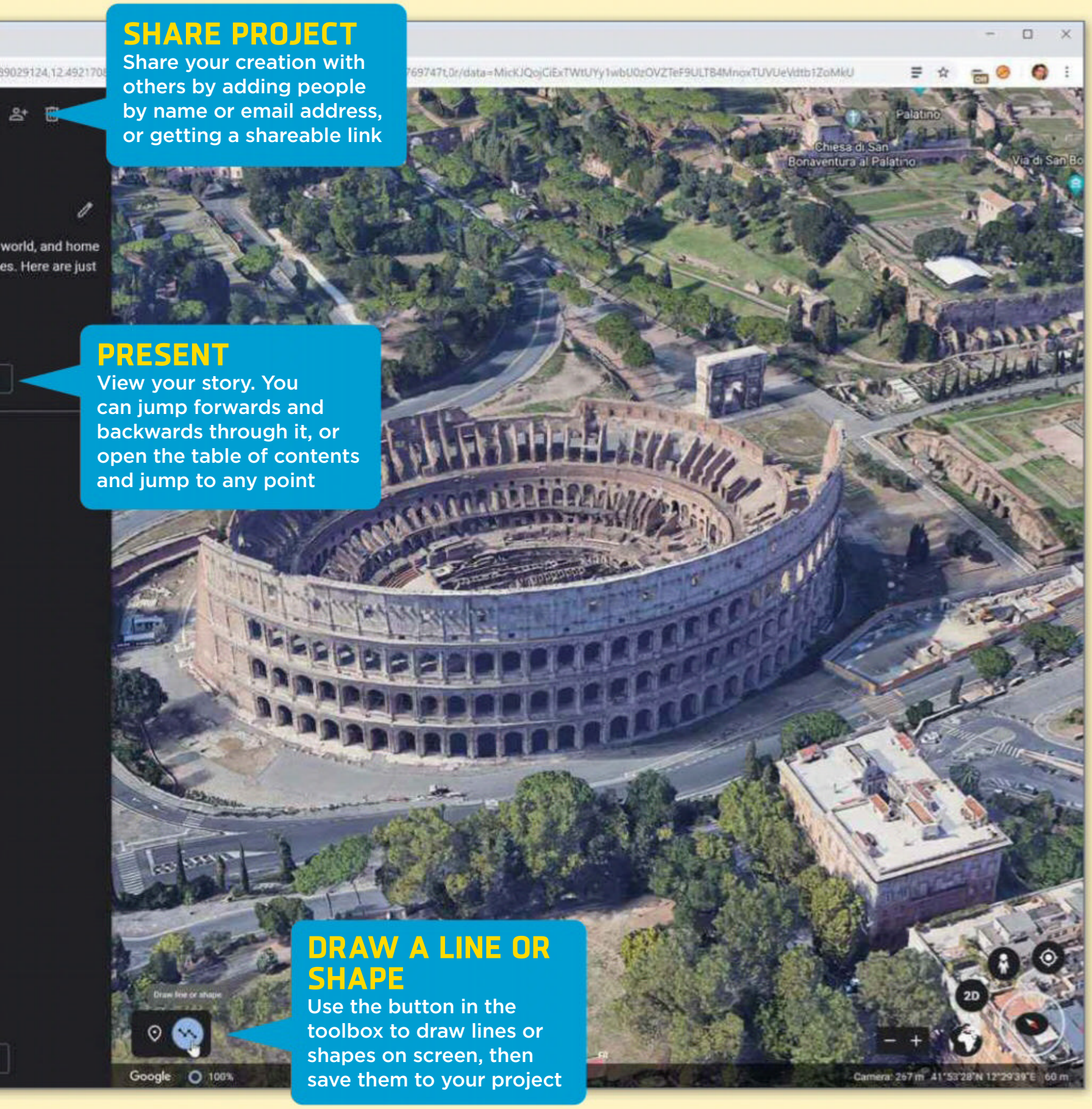
3 We're creating a story about Italy, so we've started by searching for Rome. Google Earth takes us to the Italian capital and displays a box describing the city. 1 Click the 'Add to project' button. 2 In the box that opens, you can change the title 3 and choose a project to add the location to. 4

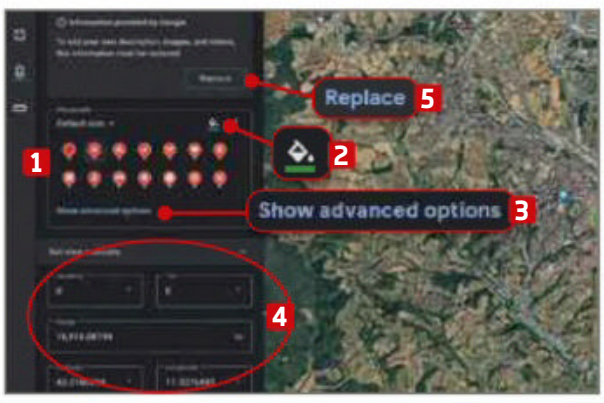


4 You can edit the place, 1 which we'll cover in the next step, or click Save 2 to add it to your project. You can now search for and add some additional locations. Alternatively, click on a place to drop a marker there or click the 'Add placemark' button 3 and drag it to a landmark of interest.

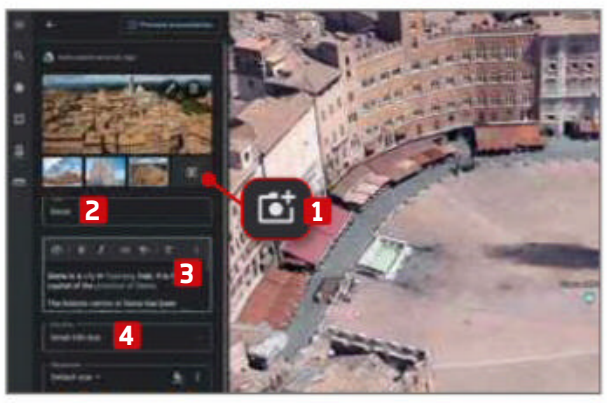


5 Places you've added appear in the project list. 1 You can reorder them by dragging and dropping. Hover over an item – or a 'feature', as Google Earth calls it – and you'll see options to edit, 2 delete 3 or hide it 4 fade into view. Click Edit.





6 You can pick a different style of placemark 1 and change its colour. 2 'Show advanced options' 3 lets you customise the label text. The view can be set manually using the boxes below. 4 Click the Replace button 5 to add your own description.



7 It's possible to add your own images and videos, 1 which can be uploaded or pulled directly from Google Images, YouTube, Google Drive, Your Photos or any URL. Change the title, if required, 2 add some text 3 and customise the info box. 4 This can be small, large or not shown.

8 Toggle the view between 2D and 3D, 1 and switch to Street View. 2 Click the 'Capture this view' button 3 to save it to your project. You can also draw lines or shapes on the screen. Clicking the 'Preview presentation' button at the top 4 lets you see how things look.

Stay anonymous using fake email addresses

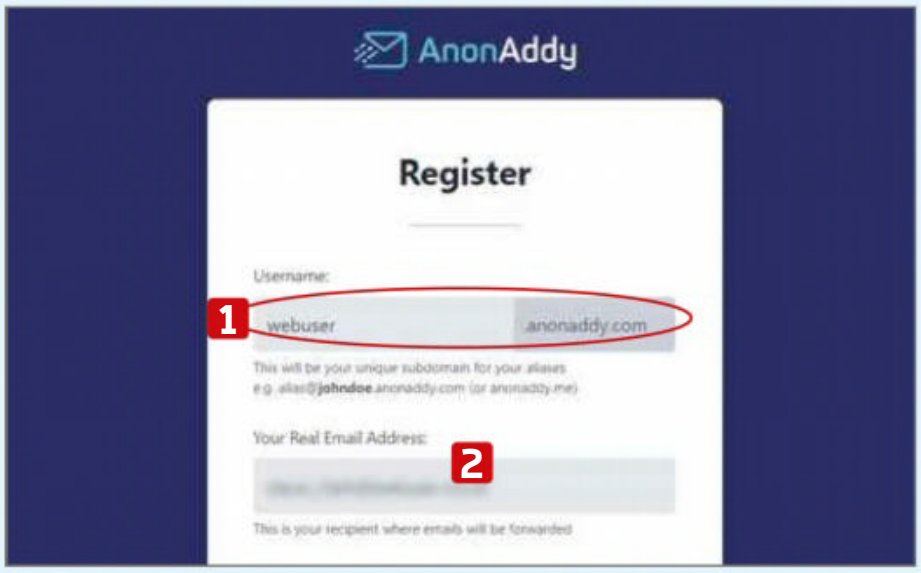
AnonAddy: anonaddy.com | 20 mins | Any browser

Plenty of us run multiple email accounts – for home, work and, possibly, a separate one for the mailing lists and newsletters we're forced to sign up for to use a website or service. AnonAddy lets you create unlimited aliases for specific websites so, rather than divulge your actual email address, you can provide a 'fake' one that's then forwarded to your real email address – and they'll never know. On the free plan, you can even add a second account and have certain emails sent there instead, giving you more control over any unwelcome correspondence. And because you can assign an alias to a specific site, AnonAddy is also useful for finding out which websites are flogging your data to third parties.

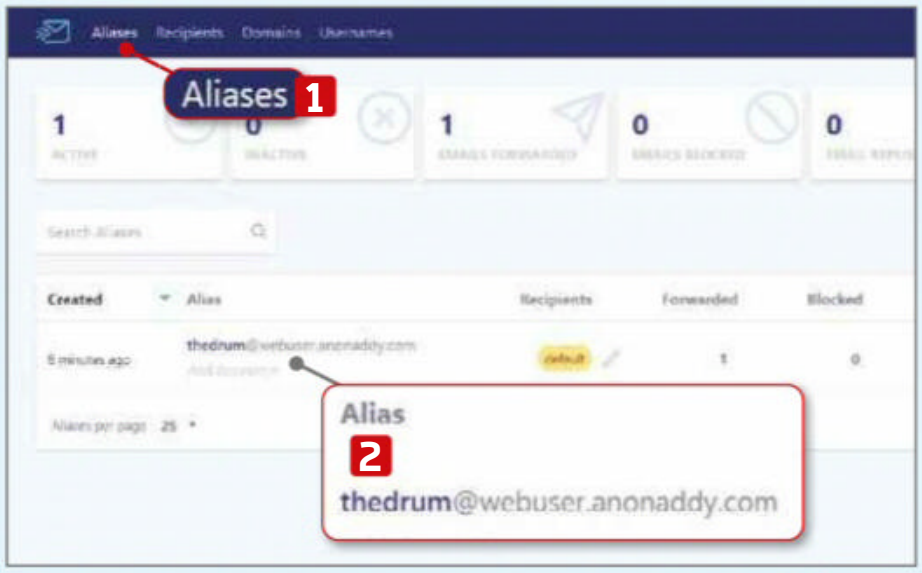
EXPERT TIP

Steve Clark says

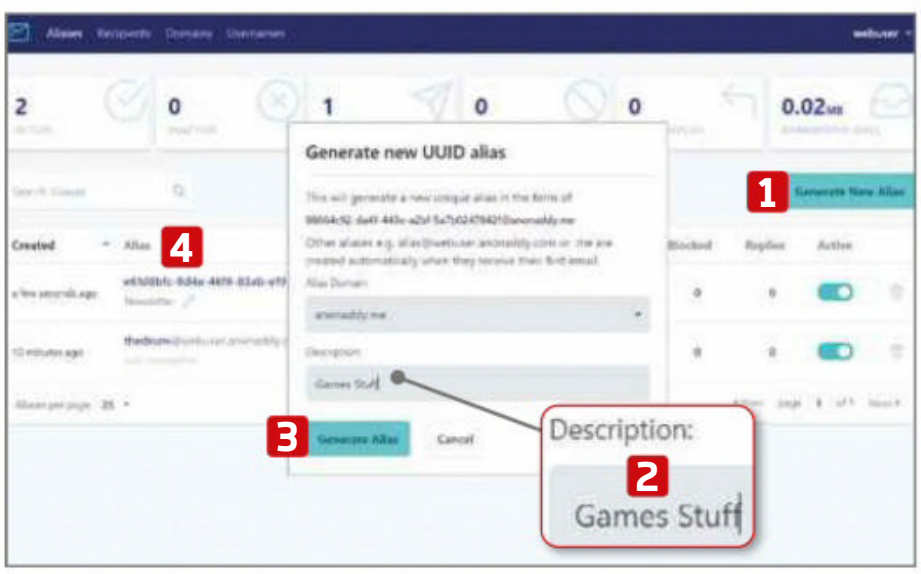
AnonAddy's free plan lets you create an unlimited number of standard aliases. However, you're limited to just 20 UUID aliases – completely anonymised addresses that hide your AnonAddy username. That should be enough for most basic users but you can sign up for a paid-for subscription if you need more. You can also add an extra layer of security: if you have GPG/OpenPGP public keys, these can also be added to your account.



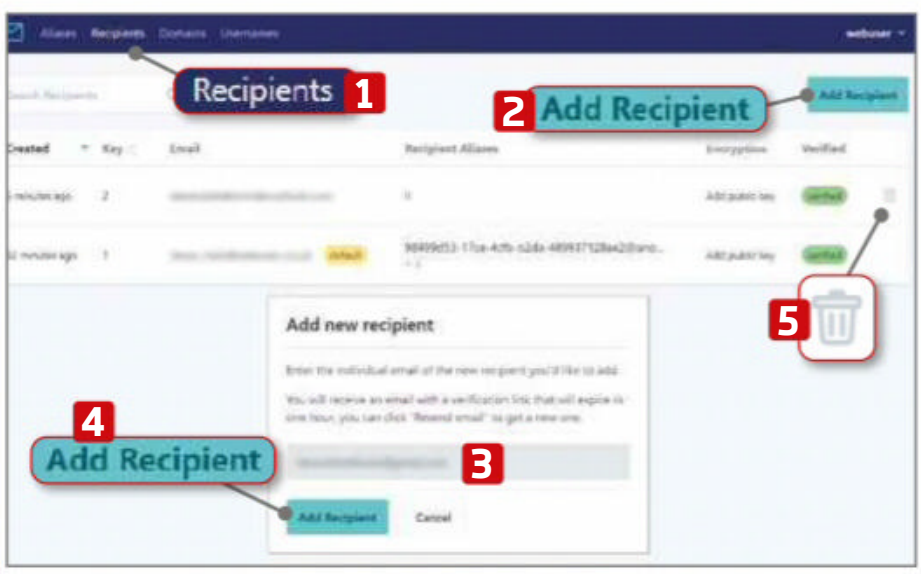
1 The first step is to register with AnonAddy. Take particular note of the Username section **1** because this alias will be part of the subdomain of your AnonAddy email address. You also need to provide your actual email address, **2** to which your anonymised emails will be forwarded.



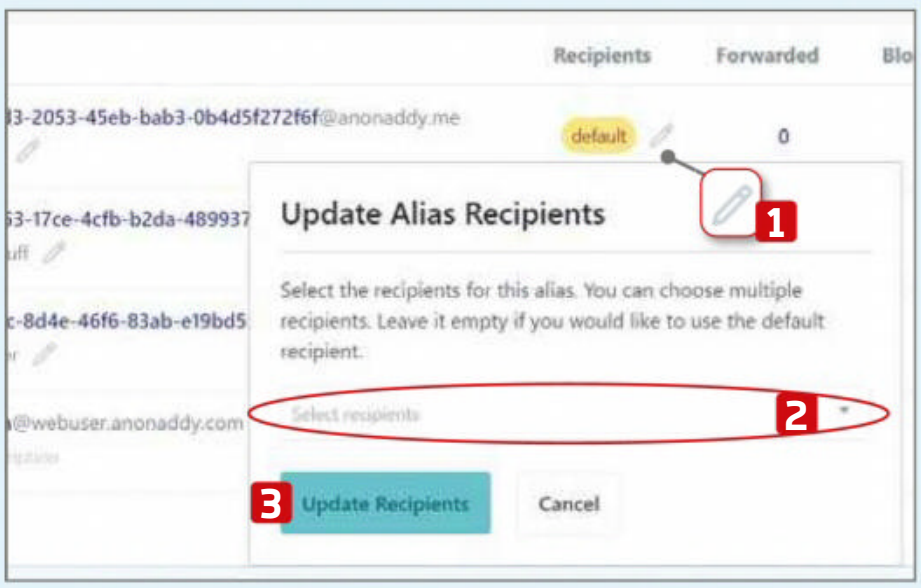
2 Once you're signed into AnonAddy, click Aliases. **1** Here, you'll see the usernames attached to your account. **2** There are two ways to create more: when signing up with a website, use a descriptor such as 'facebook' or 'newsletter', then add '@[alias].anonaddy.com'. These are automatically added to the Alias page, with management options.



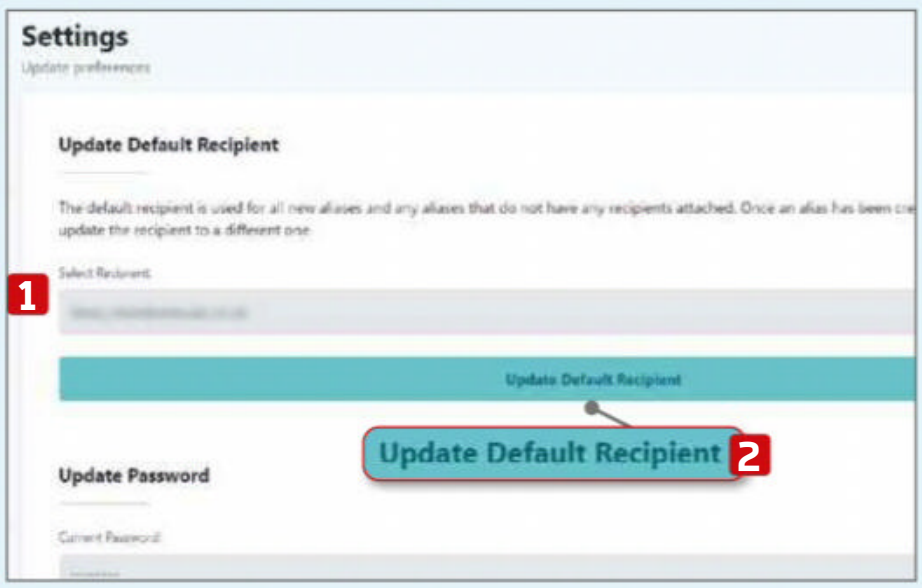
3 If you don't want the site you're signing up with to see your anonymous address, click Generate New Alias. **1** Ignore the Alias Domain drop-down but add a description, **2** then Click Generate Alias. **3** This is creates a wholly anonymised username, featuring only the '@anonaddy.com' subdomain. Click it in the list **4** to copy.



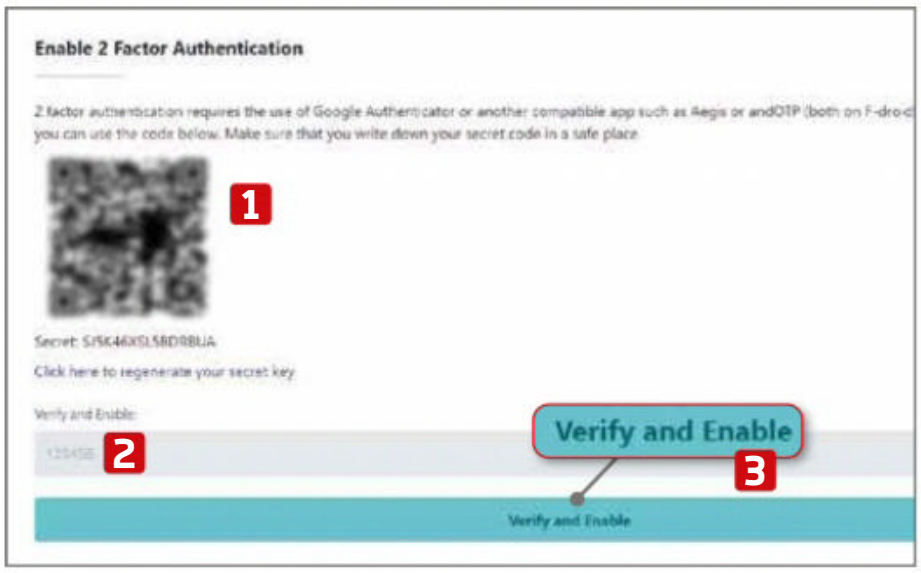
4 Go to the Recipients tab. **1** This shows your default recipient, where emails are forwarded. You can add more by clicking Add Recipient. **2** In the 'Add new recipient' pop-up, type the desired email address **3** and press Add Recipient. **4** You can now see how many aliases are connected to each user, and delete any recipients you don't want. **5**



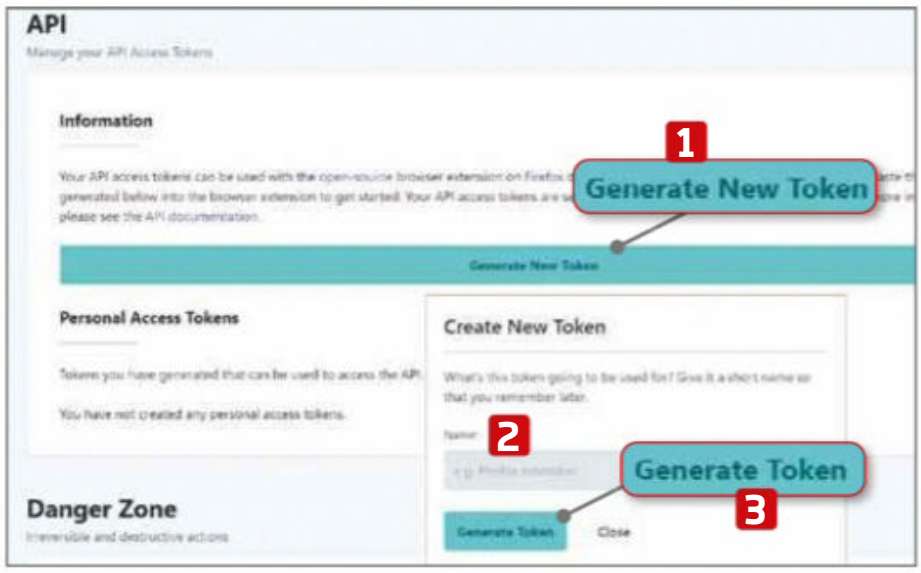
5 You can change which recipient receives specific emails. Go to Aliases. Your original alias is the default for all emails. Click the pencil under Recipients 1 and choose a different recipient from the drop-down menu. 2 Press Update Recipients 3 to have all future emails sent to a particular @[alias].anonaddy.com address forwarded to this new email.



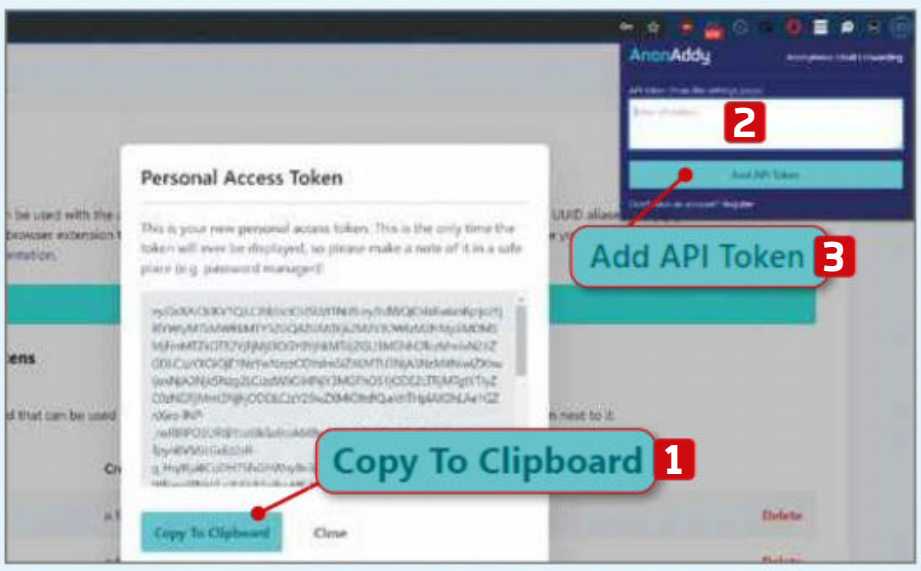
6 The other settings along the top of the site are for subscribers only, but you can click your username and select Settings. Scroll to find the Update Default Recipient, which lets you change where newly created aliases are sent by default. Use the drop-down menu to select a different email address, 1 then click Update Default Recipient. 2



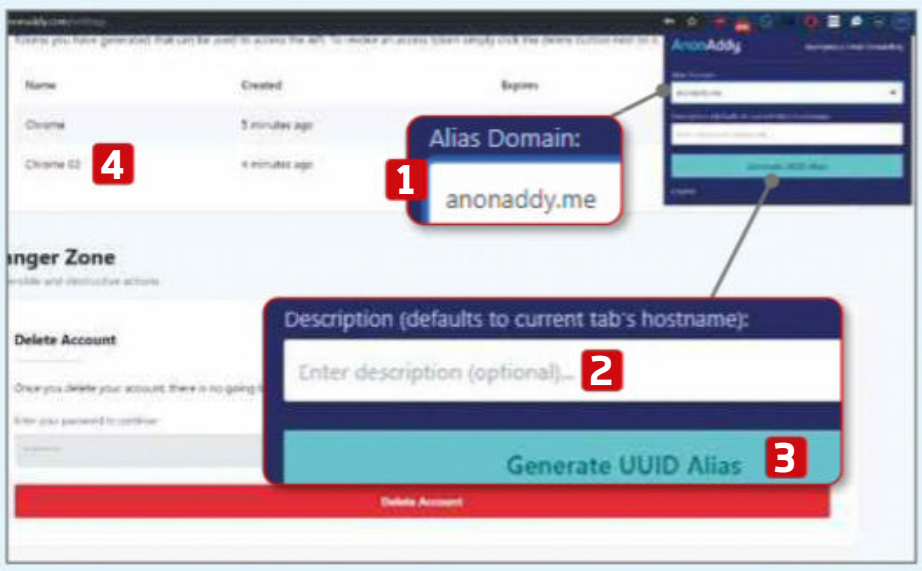
7 Further down the page is the option to 'Enable 2 Factor Authentication'. You need a 2FA app for this, such as Google Authenticator (bit.ly/auth492). Scan the QR code 1 to add your account and receive a verification code. Type this into the text field, 2 then press 'Verify and Enable'. 3 Make a note of the secret key it generates, as you may need it later.



8 AnonAddy is also available as an extension for both Firefox (bit.ly/anonff492) and Chrome (bit.ly/anon492). With these, it's possible to make a limited number of UUID aliases that don't show your username. Go to the API section on the settings page and click Generate New Token. 1 In the dialogue box, name this API 2 and click Generate Token. 3



9 Once you have the token, select Copy To Clipboard 1 or manually highlight and copy the text. Next, click the browser tool. Paste the token into the 'API token' text field, 2 before pressing Add API Token. 3 The steps are identical, regardless of which extension you use. You're now set up to quickly create UUID aliases whenever you need them.

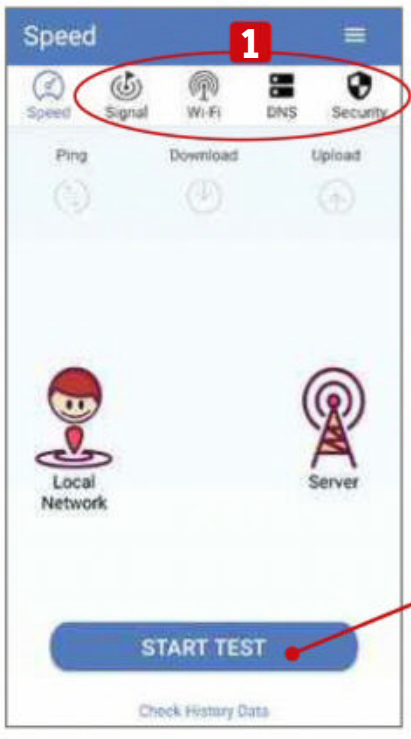


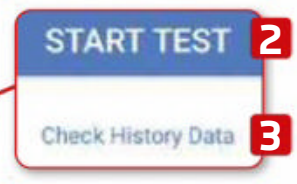
10 Click the add-on's toolbar button when you're on a site that requires your email. As on the Aliases page, select a subdomain 1 (only 'anonaddy.com' is free). Follow this up with the name or a description of the site you're signing up to. 2 Click Generate UUID Alias. 3 Finally, copy your new anonymous alias to your clipboard. 4

Monitor your Wi-Fi from your phone

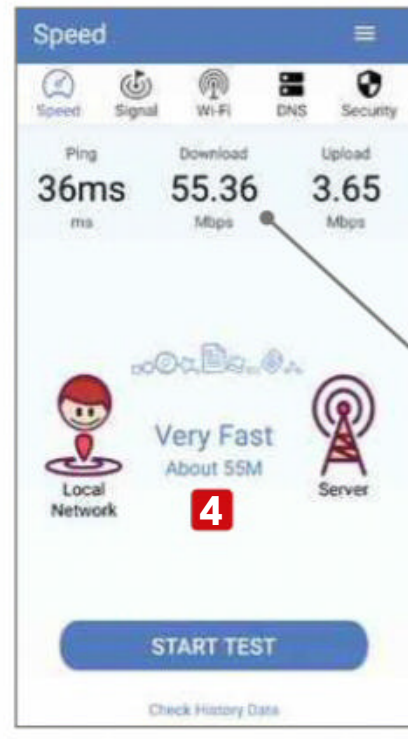
Managing your Wi-Fi usually entails logging into your computer to visit various websites and download additional tools, to view connected devices or run speed tests. Dr WiFi makes monitoring your Wi-Fi much easier by including everything in a single Android app, which lets you keep an eye on your entire internet connection – from how fast it is across your home to browsing via a DNS server.

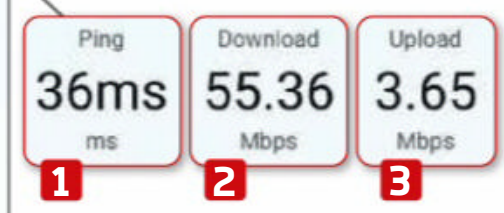
Dr WiFi: bit.ly/drwifi492 | **10 mins** | **Android 4+**





1 When you first open Dr WiFi, you're taken to the Speed test screen. Running along the top are other available tests: Signal, Wi-Fi, DNS and Security. 1 On the Speed screen, there are two options: Start Test 2 and Check History Data. 3 Select Start Test.





2 Wait for the app to run three tests, which check your Ping, 1 Download 2 and Upload 3 speeds. After completion, the results are displayed. Dr WiFi also gives a general overview of your current speed. 4

3 Tap the Signal icon. 1 You'll need to be standing up for this one. Press Start 2 and the app displays signal strength for your current position. 3 Start moving around your home and this changes. Tap Record 4 to note where your signal is weak and strong. 5

4 In the Wi-Fi section, 1 you can see all devices connected to your Wi-Fi. 2 This is useful to get an overview, although you can't manage these devices through the app. Most are labelled Unknown 3 but provide the IP address, 4 so you should be able to work out what each device is.

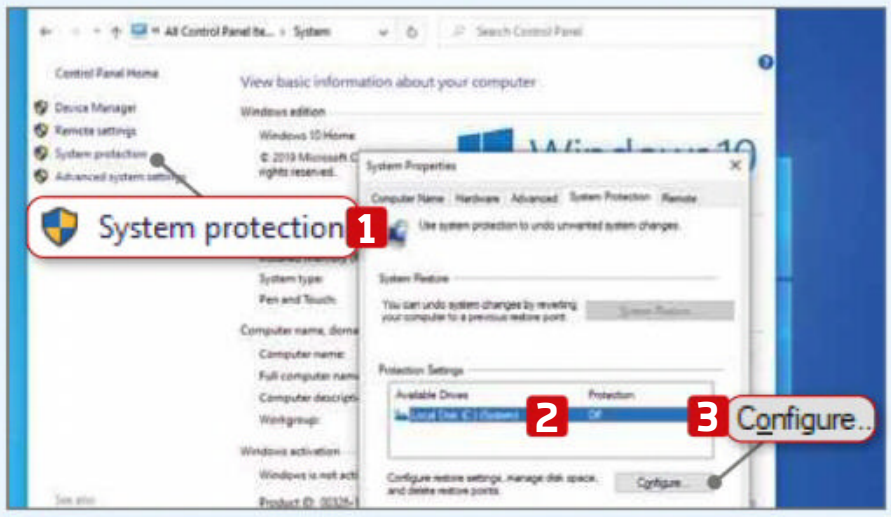
5 The DNS option 1 is handy for faster, more secure internet browsing. Google DNS is the default, but tap the button 2 to view additional DNS server options. You can also type your own DNS IP into the numeric fields. 3 When you're ready, tap Start 4 and allow the app to set up the connection.

6 Dr WiFi also offers a Security option. 1 On the startup screen, you get an overview of your current setup, including router name and IP address. Tap Check Security to allow the app to run its tests. Once the scan is complete, your results show you any risks to your connection, 2 which can help you identify vulnerabilities.

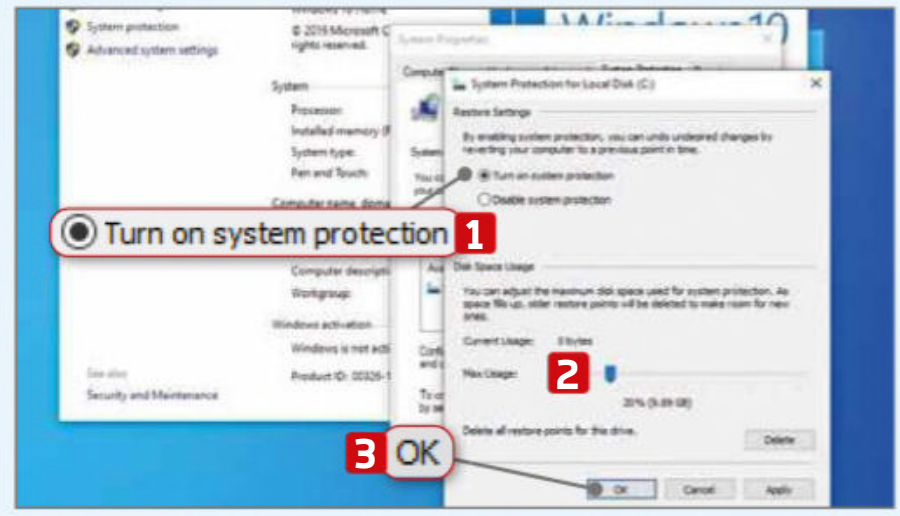
Control more Windows privacy settings

O&O ShutUp10 is a one-stop privacy shop that offers a single interface for adjusting all the Windows 10 settings that can leak information and compromise your privacy. It also offers guidance on which settings can be switched off without affecting the way Windows operates. The program's latest update adds new options to stop Windows storing your clipboard contents and other activities in the cloud.

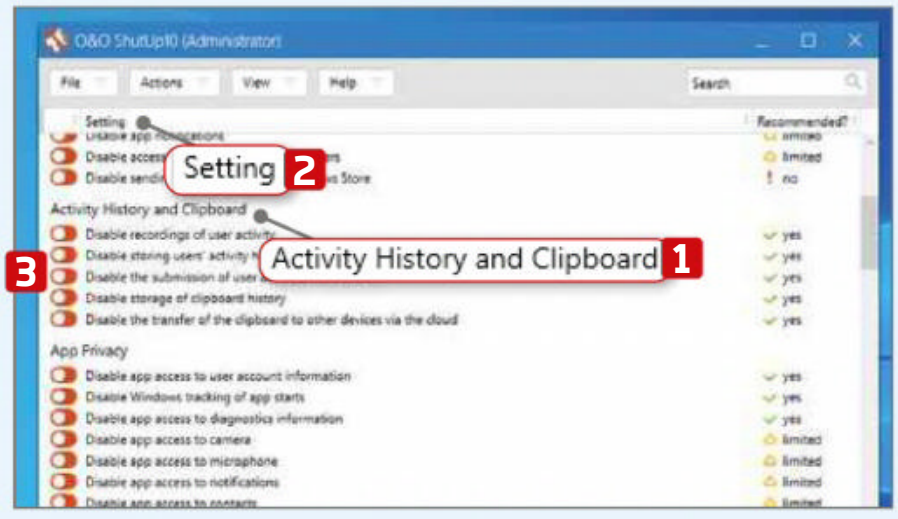
O&O ShutUp10: bit.ly/oosu492 | **10 mins** | **Windows 10**



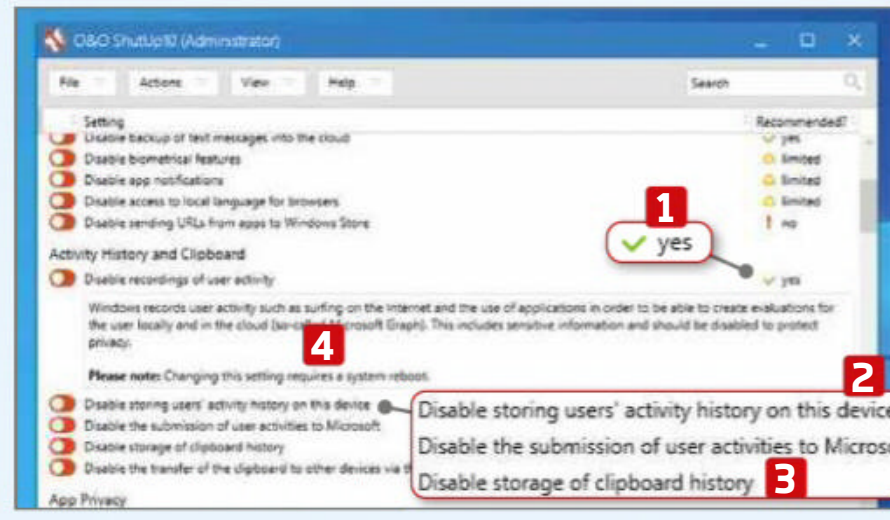
1 ShutUp requires you to create a System Restore point, so set this up first. Open the Control Panel and choose one of the 'icons' views, then select System and click the 'System protection' link. 1 Highlight the hard drive 2 and click the Configure button. 3



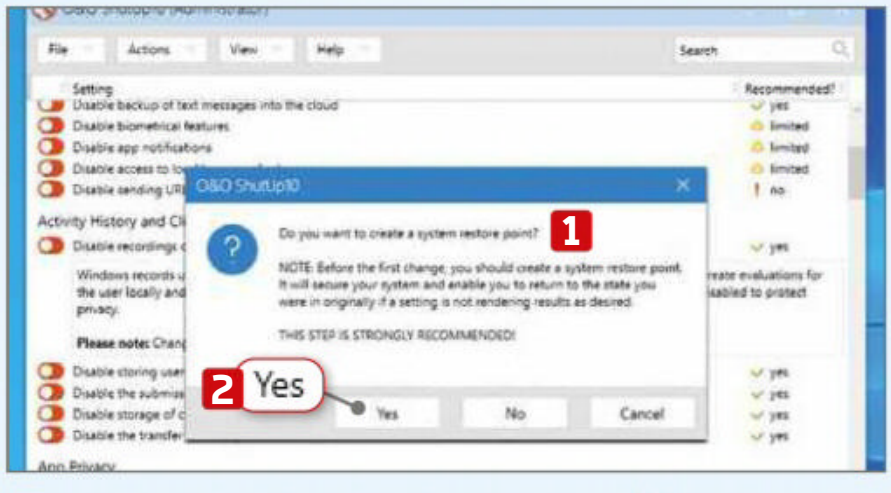
2 Choose 'Turn on system protection' 1 and use the slider to assign some hard-drive space to it. 2 Click OK. 3 You can now click the Create button and give the restore point a name. The backup is created and you can launch the ShutUp software.



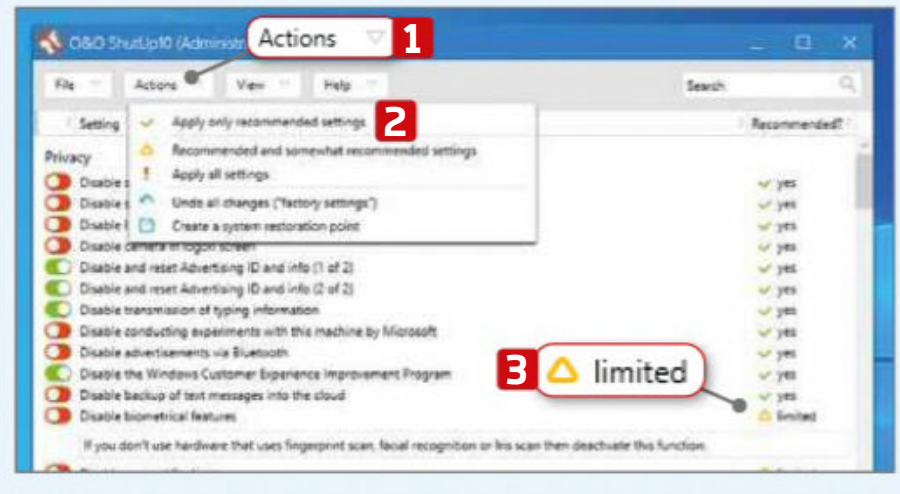
3 This latest version of the program has a new section called 'Activity History and Clipboard'. 1 Scroll down to find it or click the Setting heading 2 to bring it to the top (it's alphabetically first). All the switches are off 3 unless you've previously made your own changes to Settings.



4 Click any switches you'd like to activate. ShutUp recommends using them all 1 but, if you use Timeline or more than one device, you may want the activity history saved 2 or clipboard information stored in the cloud. 3 Click an option to reveal information about it. 4



5 You're asked to create a restore point, 1 even if you just made one as described in Steps 1 and 2. If you didn't do this (if it's not the first time you are using the software, for example), click Yes 2 to get the software to do it for you.



6 Scroll through the rest of the options and you can choose to enable specific privacy settings. To make it easier, click Actions 1 and choose 'Apply only recommended settings', 2 then click any labelled 'limited' 3 to get more information so you can make a decision.

Weekend Project

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

How to...

Perform new tricks with your smart speaker

Wayne Williams shows you how to get the most out of your smart speaker, whether you've just got it or have had it for a while

If you were lucky enough to get a smart speaker for Christmas (or you already have one), you'll already know a few things you can do with it. However, you're probably only scratching the surface because these devices can perform all manner of clever tricks. Whether you have an Amazon Alexa or Google Assistant-powered smart device, it can do much more than answer questions, play music, tell jokes, make rude noises and keep you abreast of the news and weather.

In this issue's Weekend Project, we reveal some of the most useful and recently added tasks you can put your device to, such as turning it into a security system, a clock radio or a white-noise generator.

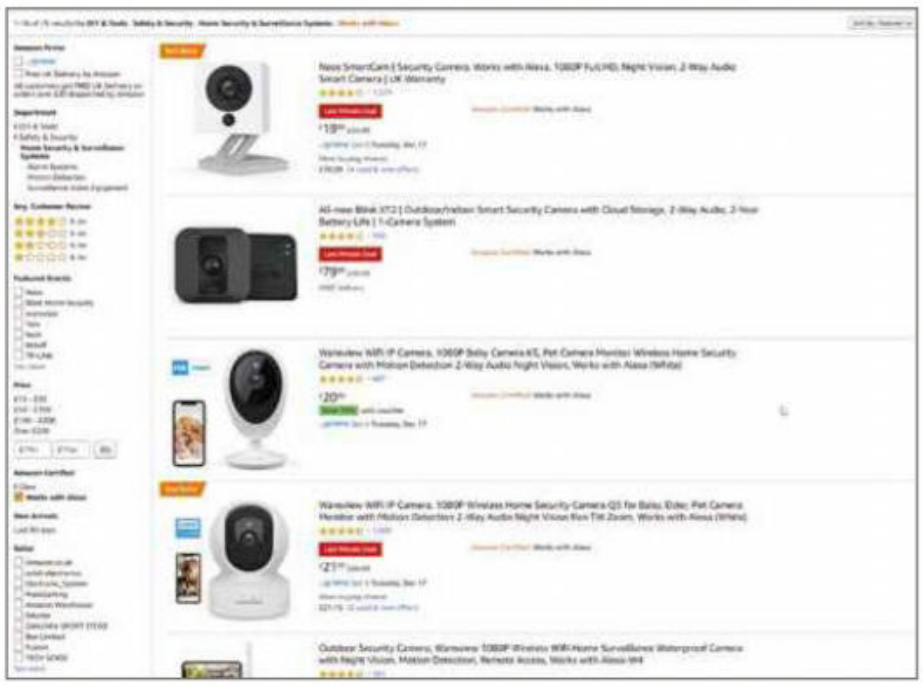
Turn your Echo into a smart home security system

Last May, Amazon began rolling out a new feature called Guard, which can turn its Echo devices into a security system. Once the feature is set up in the Alexa app, it is enabled by saying "Alexa, I'm leaving". Guard then listens for smoke or carbon-monoxide alarms going off, or the sound of breaking glass, which could indicate someone smashing a window.

In addition, it can turn lights on or off to make it look as if someone is home, and integrate with Ring or an ADT security system. However, Guard is currently only available in the US. It's planned to arrive in the UK "soon", but there's no firm date set.

That doesn't mean you can't already use your Echo device to protect your home. There are plenty of security and surveillance systems you can buy that work with Amazon's personal assistant, including cameras, home alarms, plugs and lightbulbs. View the list at bit.ly/alexasecurity492.

There are also a number of skills you can enable, such as Burglar Deterrent (bit.ly/burglar492), which plays sound on a loop to suggest someone is at home; and Intruder Alert (bit.ly/intruder492) which pretends to turn on audio and video recording and also fakes a call



Alexa users looking for a security camera are spoilt for choice when it comes to compatible devices

Google's latest Nest Mini offers improved sound over the original

to the emergency services. The latter also comes with a comedy Home Alone mode.

Play white noise and ambient sounds

Your smart speaker can play all manner of relaxing sounds – white noise, a crackling fireplace, lapping waves, a tropical rainstorm and more. Alexa Sounds (alexasounds.com) is a good choice for Echo owners and offers a varied selection of relaxing audio loops, such as thunderstorm, babbling brook, fireplace, fan, rainforest, airplane, white noise and pink noise. In total, there are 40 different ones to choose from, and they can be looped and set to stop after a set period of time. We show you how to set it up in our Mini Workshop, below.

There are plenty of other similar skills you can try, but check the reviews first. Sleep Sounds: White Noise (bit.ly/sleepsounds492), for example, sounds good, but users complain of a loud voice suddenly interrupting to promote the paid-for premium version.

If you want to connect your device to a better set of speakers, see our Mini Workshop on page 61.

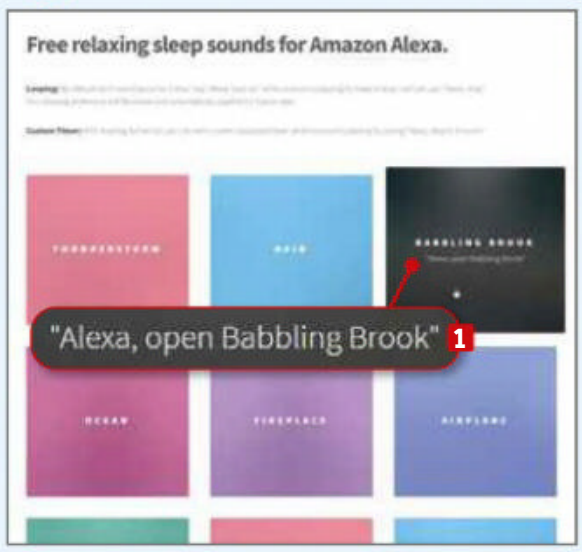
If you own a Google Home or Nest smart speaker, you can just say "OK Google, help me relax" or "OK Google, play ambient sounds". It will pick a sound at random, which may be a fireplace or running water. If there's a particular sound you want to listen to, such as a thunderstorm, you can specify this – "OK Google, play thunderstorm sounds".

Turn Alexa into a clock radio

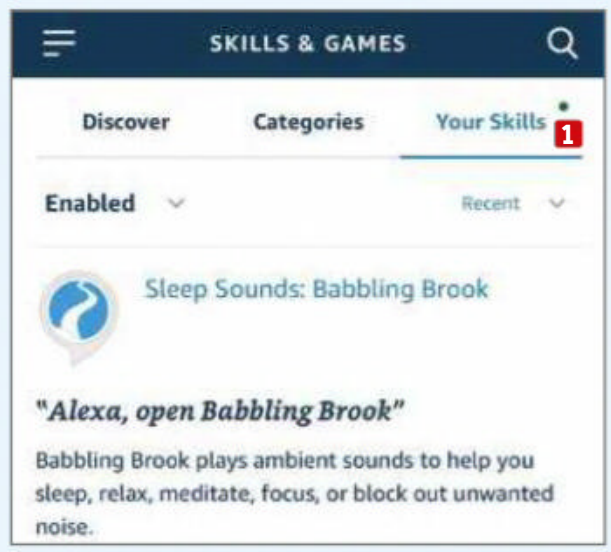
Alexa plays music on demand and it can also set an alarm for any time, so there's no reason why you can't combine the two features and have the digital assistant wake you up with your favourite tunes. Amazon's new Echo Dot with Clock (bit.ly/echoclock492), which costs £34.99, is the perfect device for this task as it comes with a built-in timepiece. Echo Show and Echo Spot are also good choices, equipped with screens that can display the time.

Regardless of what device you have, you can turn it into the modern equivalent of a clock radio by asking Alexa to wake you up to *xx* at *yy*. Replace *xx* with a song title, an artist radio station or get the TuneIn Skill (bit.ly/tunein492)

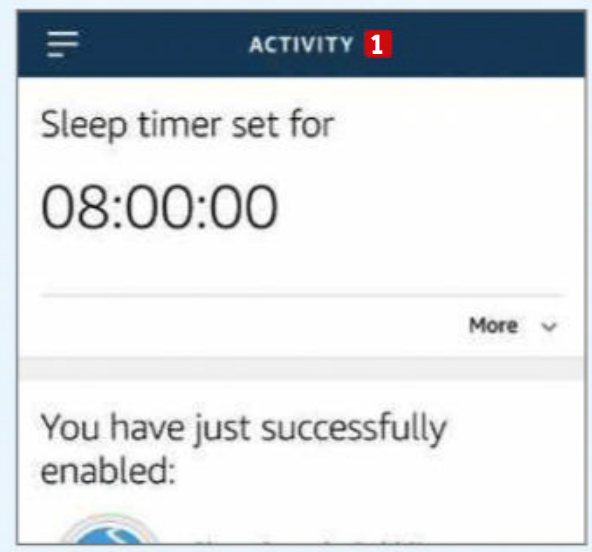
MINI WORKSHOP | Turn Alexa into an ambient-sound generator



1 If you or another member of your family (including babies and young children) have trouble sleeping, Alexa can play ambient sounds to help with relaxation. Go to Alexa Sounds (alexasounds.com) and hover your mouse over any of the tiles to view the command you need to speak to activate it. 1



2 Each of the sounds will play uninterrupted for one hour. If you want it to play for longer, you can say "Alexa, loop on" and it will keep playing until you say "Alexa, stop". Your preference will be remembered. You can view details on the current sound by going to Skills & Games in the app, then tapping Your Skills. 1



3 If you want the sounds to stop after a set period of time – eight hours, for example – start the audio looping and say "Alexa, stop in eight hours". This will show in the Activity section of the app. 1 You can stop the audio before then, if you choose to. You can also switch to a different sound.

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3	sky	Sky: Broadband Essential	£20.00 (£25 after 18 months)	18 months	11Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited *	£240.00
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Data supplied by www.broadbandgenie.co.uk. Correct as of 19 December 2019.

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

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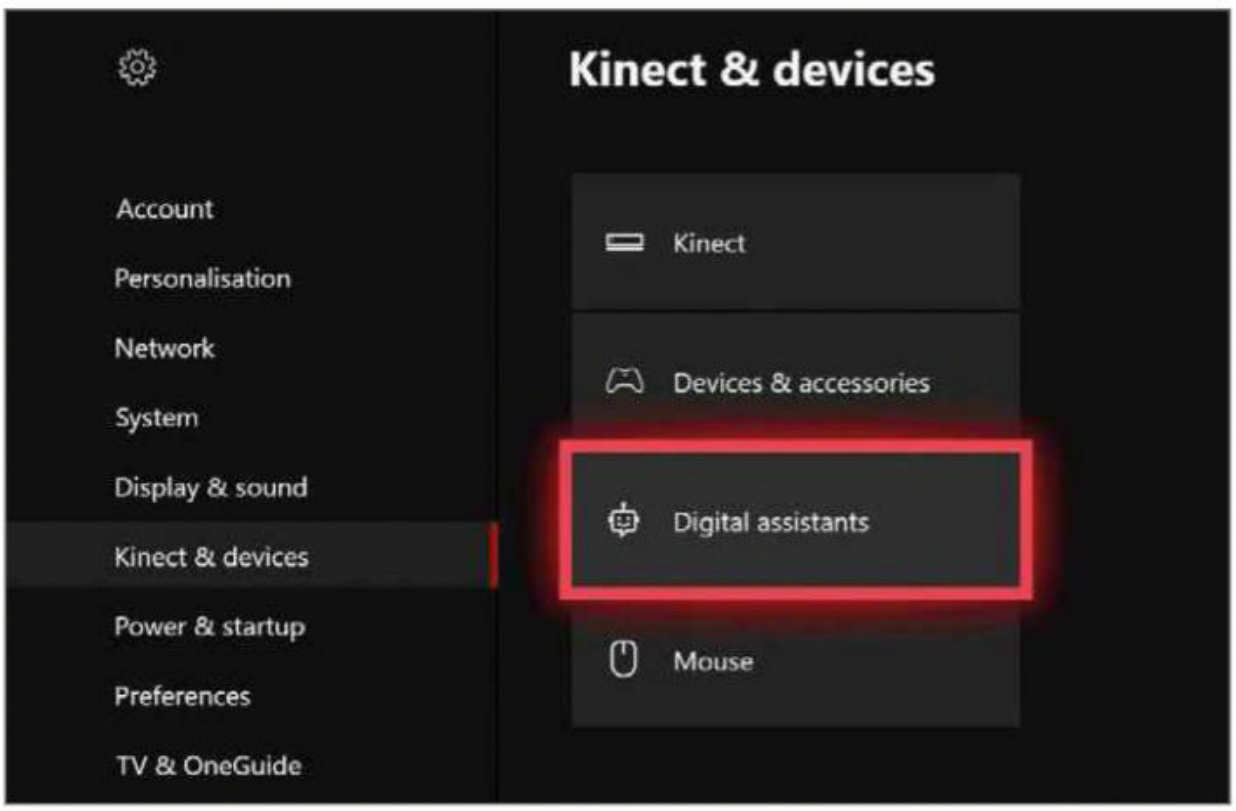
and use that to play almost any radio station. If you prefer to listen to the BBC's music stations, you can use the Beeb's own Alexa skill (you need to link Alexa to your BBC account).

Replace *yy* with the time you want the alarm to go off. So, for example, you might say "Alexa, wake me up to Robbie Williams Radio at 7am".

Connect your smart speaker to Xbox One

You can control Microsoft's games console using both Alexa and Google Assistant. To do this, you first need to enable digital assistant support on the Xbox One. Press the Xbox Guide button, go to System, then Settings, 'Kinect & devices' and select 'Digital assistants'.

If you have Alexa, fire up the app, open the menu and select Skills & Games.



The Xbox One can be controlled using Alexa or Google Assistant – just set it up first

Amazon's new Echo Dot with Clock makes the perfect clock radio

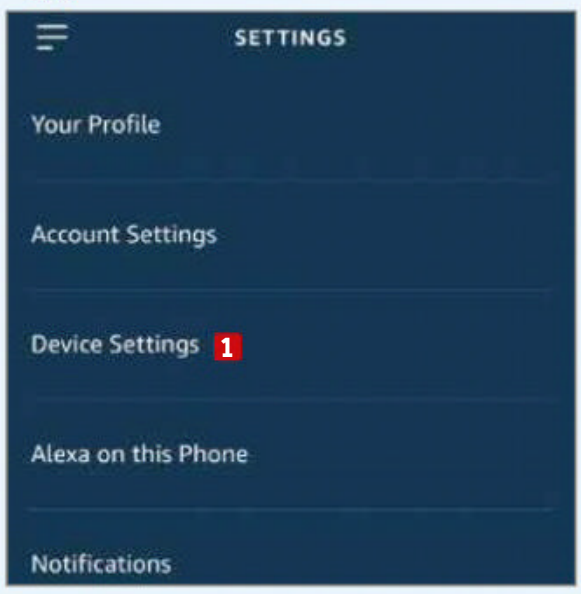
Search for Xbox and enable it, then sign in with your credentials.

If you have a Google device, open the Home app and tap Add, 'Set up device', 'Have something already set up?', then search for 'Xbox'. Sign into your Microsoft/Xbox account and follow the instructions to pair your console with your Google Assistant device and name your Xbox.

The voice support is actually very good and you can use your assistant to turn the console on or off, start a particular game, pause and resume the action, start and stop a recording, take a screenshot, control the volume or mute it, open Netflix or YouTube, and so on. The exact commands vary slightly but, essentially, you say something like "Alexa, tell Xbox to start FIFA 20" or "Hey Google, play Fortnite on Xbox".

You can view the full list of compatible commands for all supported digital assistants at bit.ly/commands492.

MINI WORKSHOP | Connect your Amazon Echo to a Bluetooth speaker or headphones



1 The sound quality of Echo speakers isn't bad but, if you prefer, you can have your music transmitted to a nearby Bluetooth device or headphones, which may have better quality speakers. Put your Bluetooth product into pairing mode, then open the Alexa app. Tap Settings, then find and tap Device Settings. 1

2 All devices with Alexa built in – including Echos, Fire devices (tablets, TVs and more), and your phone – appear in a list. Select the device you want to pair. Under Wireless, tap Bluetooth Devices. 1 On the next screen, tap the 'Pair a New Device' button.

3 All compatible Bluetooth devices within range appear in a list. 1 Select the one you want to use and complete the pairing process. Once that's done, you'll be able to select the device you require in future directly from the app's Bluetooth Settings screen. You can also use the web app at alexa.amazon.com.

NEXT ISSUE **How To...** Create a retro games console with Kodi

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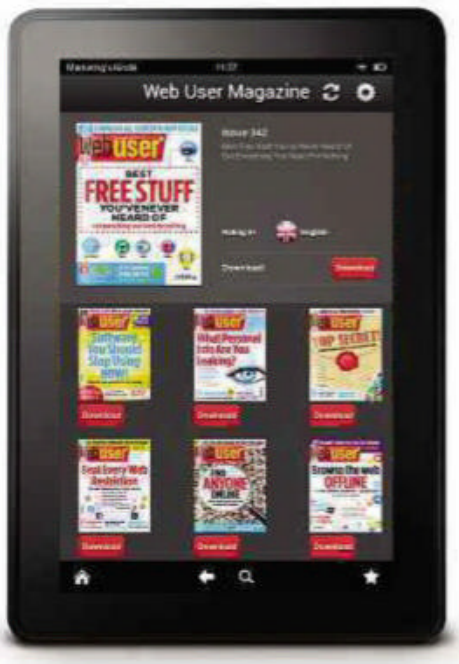

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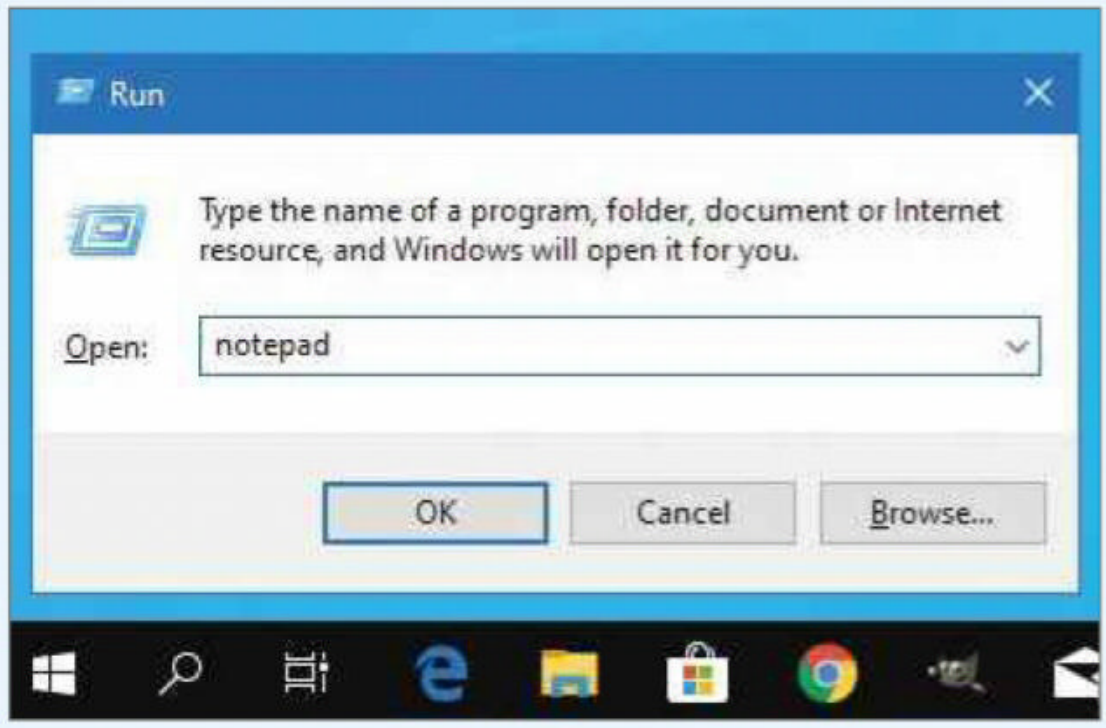
Web User Masterclass

Use the Windows Run box to access hiddden tools and power commands

Launch apps using commands in the Run box

Everybody loved the Windows 7 Start menu, which made it easy to find and run programs, and we were all shocked when Windows 8 killed it. Thankfully, Windows 10 brought it back again, but the slight tweaks to this reincarnated version mean that even now, finding the programs you want to run isn't as quick or easy as it was originally.

For this reason, it's sometimes more convenient to use the Run box than to search for the program you want in the Start menu. For example, pressing Windows+R to open the Run box and entering `notepad` will open Notepad faster than finding it on the Start menu. Type `calc` for Calculator, `mspaint` for Paint, `explorer e:` to open Explorer and show the E: drive, `write` for WordPad, `wmplayer` for Windows Media Player and `snippingtool` for screen captures.



Start Windows programs and tools by typing their filename into the Run box

Load websites and email

If a web browser isn't open or it's buried under other windows, it's quicker to type a website address into the Run box. Press Windows+R and type the URL, such as `www.wikipedia.org`, leaving out the 'https://'. As you type, a list of URL suggestions appears from your browsing history. Click one with your mouse or press the up or down arrow keys to select it, then press Enter.

Type `mailto:` in the Run box and your default email app opens with a new email. An address is optional and typing `mailto: someone@work.com` will save you typing it into the Mail program.

Access the Control Panel

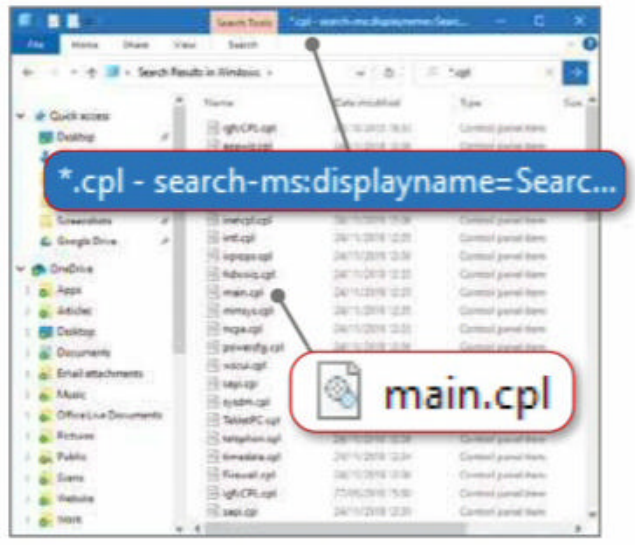
Microsoft has gradually been moving Control Panel functions to the Settings app but it's still essential for configuring many Windows settings and hardware components. Finding the Control Panel in a menu isn't as easy as it should be, however, so instead of searching for it, press Windows+R and type `control` to make it appear on the screen.

Each item in the Control Panel is a separate app that can be opened from the Run box – if you know the filenames. Open an Explorer window and go to C:\Windows. Enter `*.cpl` into Explorer's search box and press Enter. After a few seconds of searching, a list of Control Panel items appears.

Few of the filenames are descriptive so it can be difficult to tell which files match which items in the Control Panel. However, you can get to know what's what by pressing Windows+R and entering the filename. For example, enter `appwiz.cpl` and 'Programs and Features' appears, so you can uninstall software. Enter `powercfg.cpl` and Power Options appears. `joy.cpl` is more easily guessed – it opens the Game Controllers configuration window – but there are some less obvious ones, such as `main.cpl`, which opens the Mouse Properties window.

If Microsoft has moved a Control Panel item to the Settings app on a Windows 10 PC, typing the filename opens Settings. For example, press Windows+R and enter `desk.cpl`. The Settings app opens at the Display options section, so you can change the desktop resolution, the screen brightness and other settings.

We aren't suggesting you memorise lots of obscure filenames for Control



Search the Windows folder for `*.cpl` to find Control Panel filenames

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.

Panel items, but if there are two or three that you regularly access, it can be useful to learn their names. The Run box remembers commands you've used before so, as soon as you begin typing, the full command is suggested. For example, Press Windows+R, type `po` and you'll see `powercfg.cpl` suggested, which saves you having to type the whole name.

Defrag a hard drive

If you haven't switched to using a solid-state drive and still use a standard hard drive, keeping it defragmented is essential to maintaining performance. The disk defragmenter is on the Start menu but, instead of hunting for it, press Windows+R and enter `dfrgui` – short for defragmenter graphical user interface. It isn't an obvious name, but it is worth learning if you use it a lot.

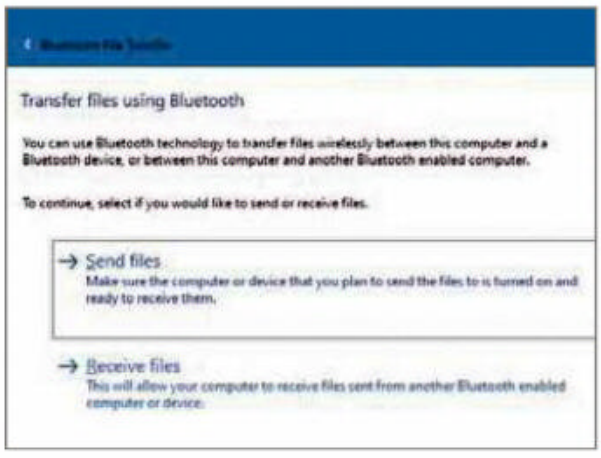
Select a hard drive and click Optimise to defrag it. Click Change Settings and choose a schedule, such as daily or weekly, to configure automatic defragmentation.

An even quicker way to use the disk defragmenter is to type `defrag c:` in the Run box.

Bluetooth file transfers

For some reason, Windows hides away several features and functions that could be useful if only we knew where they were and how to access them. For example, press Windows+R and enter `fsquirt`. This opens a tool that lets you transfer files over Bluetooth, which is a handy function for mobile phones and tablets. Run `fsquirt` and click either 'Send files' or 'Receive files', depending on the direction in which you want to transfer them.

For this to work, Bluetooth needs to be on and paired on both your computer and the phone or tablet. To do this, open Windows 10 Settings and click 'Devices, Bluetooth & other devices', then turn on Bluetooth. You then need to turn on Bluetooth on your phone and tap your computer's name to connect them.



Run 'fsquirt' to access this Bluetooth file-transfer tool

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Check for malware

Microsoft automatically runs this malware cleanup tool, but you can run it manually, too

Some malware programs interfere with your browsing by completely blocking internet access or redirecting you to websites that you didn't intend to visit. They do this by modifying the Hosts file in the Windows folder.

To check whether the Hosts file has been modified, press Windows+R and enter

```
notepad C:\Windows\System32\drivers\etc\hosts
```

This opens the Hosts file in Notepad. Normally, every line in hosts is commented out with a hash at the start of the line. Be suspicious of any lines that don't start with a hash.

The Microsoft Malicious Software Removal Tool is run automatically when there are Windows updates, but it can be run anytime you think you may have malware. Press Windows+R and enter `mrt`.

Configure the system

There are several system-configuration tools that are either not in the Start menu or are hard to find. One of the oldest and most useful is `msconfig`. Enter it into a Run box and a tabbed window appears. The Startup tab shows programs that automatically load with Windows in Windows 7, but this has moved to Task Manager tab in Windows 10.

On the General tab, you can choose from 'Normal startup', 'Diagnostic startup' and 'Selective startup'. The latter two could be useful if there's a problem with Windows. For example, if Windows is crashing or freezing, select 'Diagnostic startup' to load only basic devices and services. If the problem goes away, then it indicates that the issue is not with Windows but something else, such as a program or device you've added.

The Boot tab has more options for starting windows in various diagnostic modes. 'Safe boot' ignores everything except essential files to run Windows and can be useful for removing stubborn spyware or adware.

Select the Services tab and tick the box next to 'Hide all Microsoft services'. Those that remain are extra services added by software, so if your computer is infected with malware or is experiencing problems, you may find the cause here. Examine each item, Google the names and research anything suspicious.

The Tools tab has a collection of useful utilities and some are hard to find elsewhere. Select each one to display the command below. This can then be typed into the Run box, which saves having to open System Configuration first. For example, Event Viewer, which shows system messages, error messages and logs, is found at C:\WINDOWS\System32\eventvwr.exe, but all you need to enter in the Run box is `eventvwr`, which is the name of the EXE file. Resource Monitor is C:\WINDOWS\System32\resmon.exe, but you can simply type `resmon` in the Run box to open this system-monitoring tool.

More Run commands to try

`systempropertiesperformance`	Customise performance settings
`compmgmtlauncherm`	Open the Computer Management tool
`devmgmt`	Open Device Manager
`cleanmgr`	Open the Disk Clean-up utility
`perfmon`	Open the Performance Monitor tool
`regedit`	Open the Registry editor
`services.msc`	View and configure system services
`msinfo32`	Show detailed system information
`rstrui`	Use System Restore to restore a backup

Ask the Expert

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

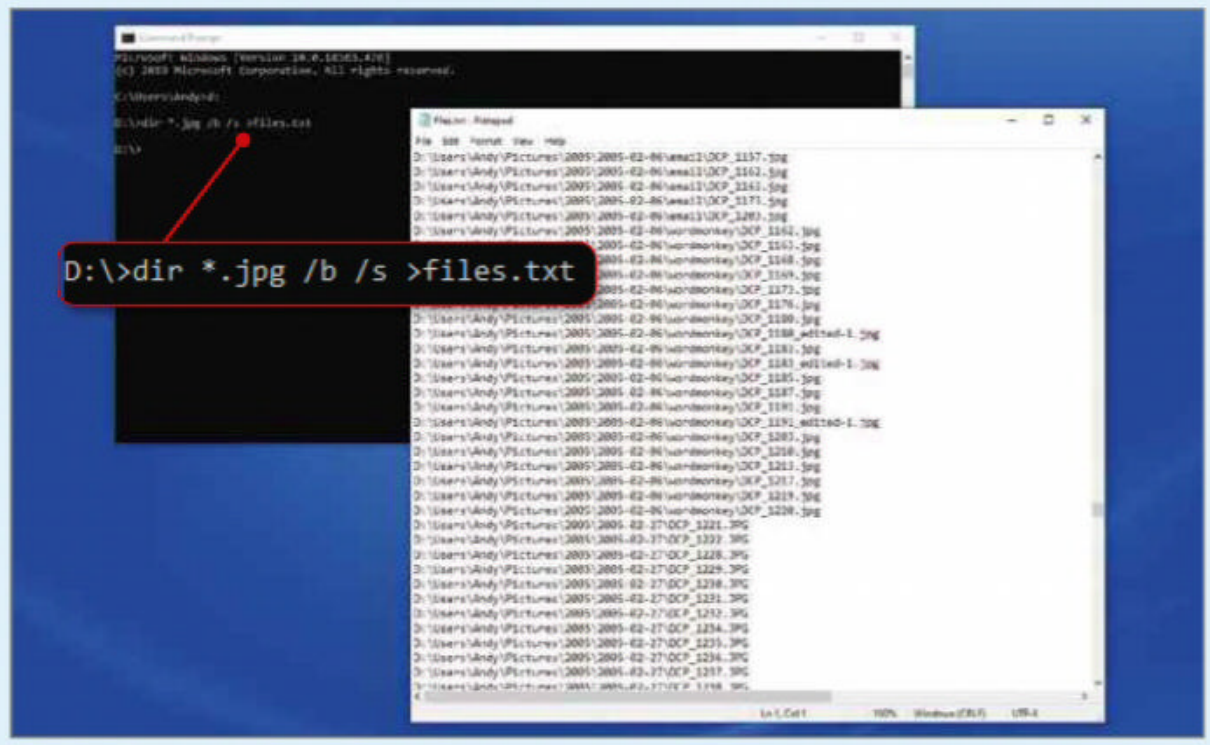
GENERAL PC

Print a list of files

Q I have a desktop computer, which I built myself with the help of a friend. It runs Windows 7 Home Edition and has a 1TB SSD installed, so there's plenty of space. I also have a 3TB external hard drive, which has some films on it in AVI format.

I'd like to be able to print the titles of these films so, when I next receive one, I can check whether I've already seen it. I have tried to do this in a variety of different ways, but to no avail.

JR Pound, via email



Use the Command Prompt to make a printable list of the files on your hard drive

A There's no simple way to do this from within Windows but it can be done from the Command Prompt using commands that date back to the days of MS-DOS. Press Windows+R and enter `cmd` to open the Command Prompt window. In the window, type:

```
e:\
dir *.avi /b /s >files.txt
```

The first command changes directory to the E: drive. Change the letter if your external drive – the one with the films on it – uses a different letter. The second command gathers all the filenames and saves them to a file. It has several parts and `dir` by itself lists all the files in the current folder. If you are only interested in the AVI files, then `dir *.avi` lists only those and no others.

The `/b` is for bare format, which means it will only show filenames and not headings, file sizes and other information. The `/s` tells the command to look in all subdirectories, so it will look in every folder on the E: drive. The `>files.txt` part tells the command to direct all output to a file called 'files.txt' instead of displaying it on the screen. The file is created if it doesn't exist or overwritten if it does.

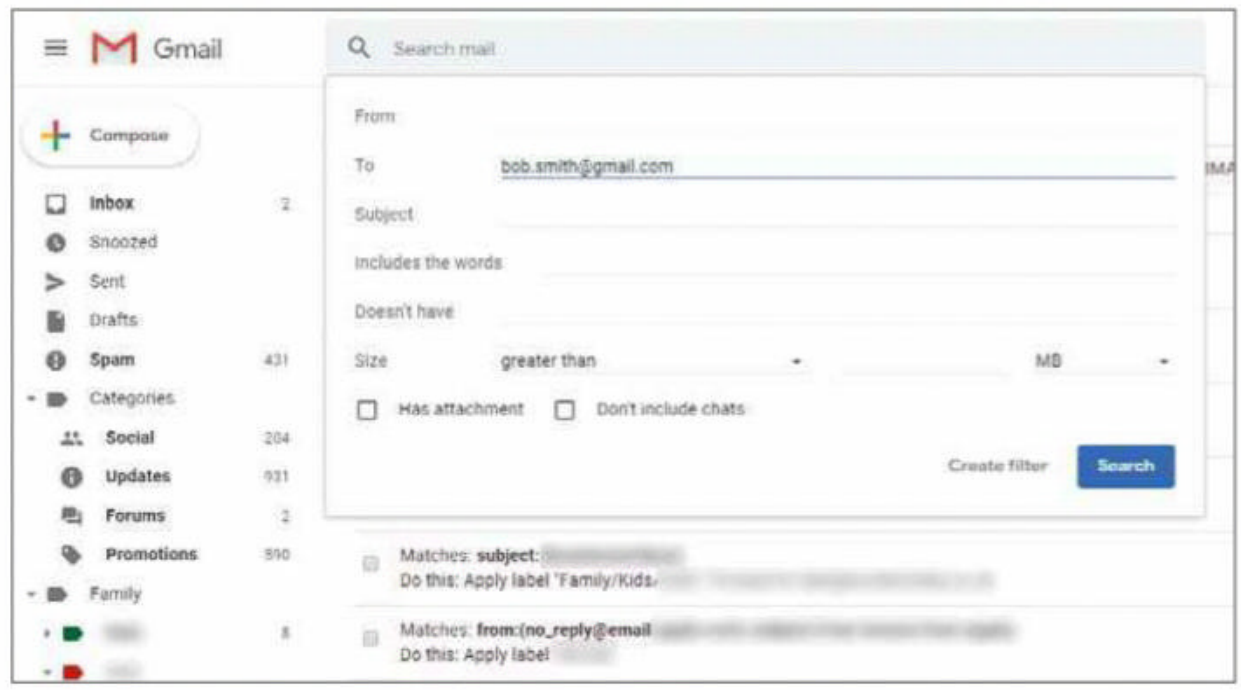
After running these commands, open Explorer and double-click 'files.txt' on the E: drive. This should open it in Notepad. You can print the list of files from Notepad by pressing Ctrl+P if you want a hard copy but, with the file list in Notepad, you could also use the Find command to search for filenames. Press Ctrl+F to find any text, such as a full or partial name of a file, to see if you already have it.

EMAIL

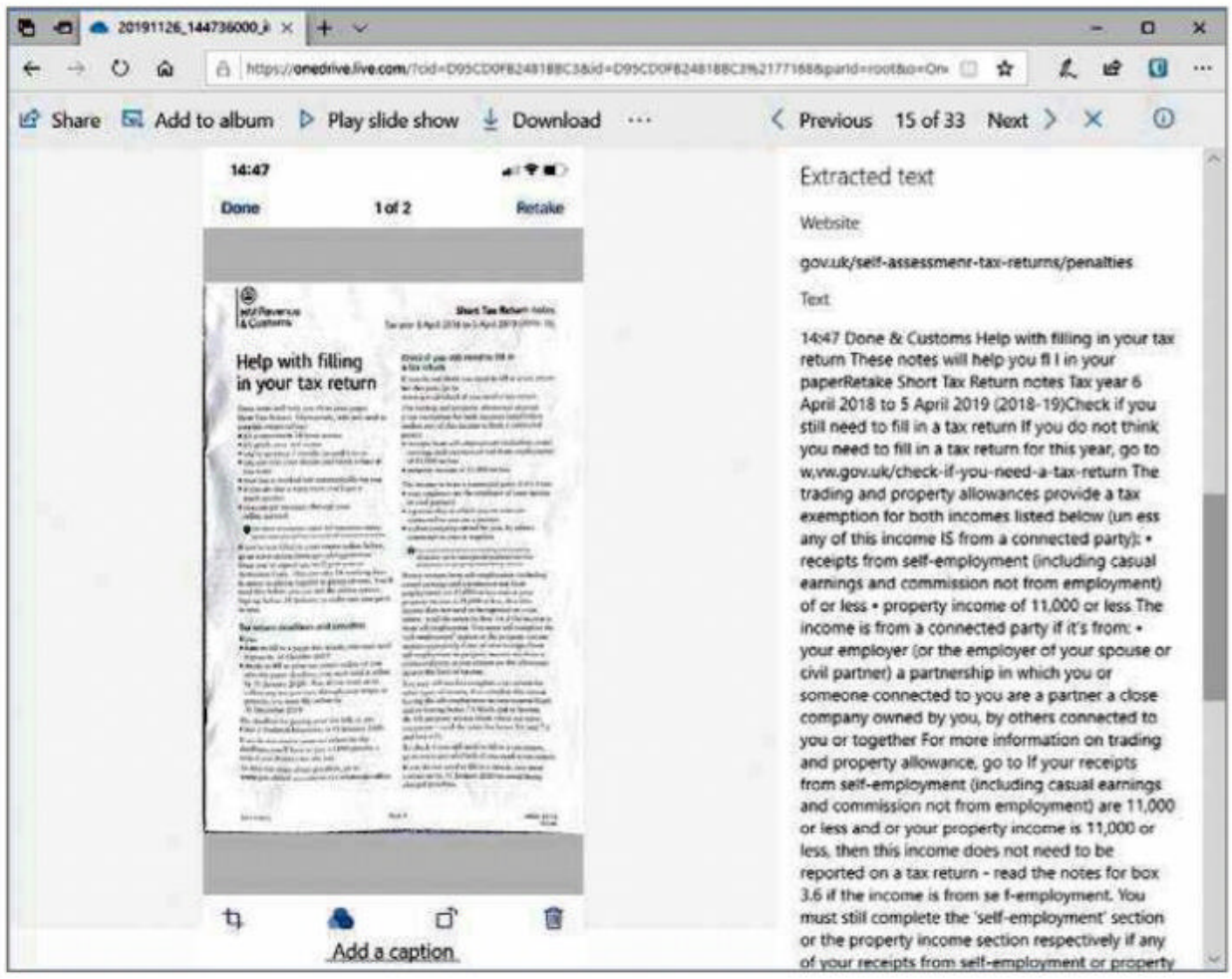
Add another Gmail address

Q I have three different Gmail addresses connected to my Google account and am trying to create another new one, but I'm not having much luck. In the past, I've been able to do this by logging into my Gmail address, clicking my profile picture, selecting 'Add account' and clicking 'More options'. However, the link isn't there any more.

Instead, I can only choose to 'Manage your Google account', which takes me to my Google account with no option I can find to create a new Gmail address; or click 'Manage accounts on this device', which takes me to a list of my three existing Gmail addresses, where I can



Set up filters to syphon off messages sent to variations of your Gmail address



OneDrive automatically scans images using OCR and extracts the text

either add another existing email address or delete one of my three existing email addresses.

I have searched Google for information but can only find instructions to add an existing email address or create a new Google account, which I already have and don't require another. I just want a new Gmail address.

Bob, via email

A The method for adding extra email accounts is as you describe – or, at least, it was – but we can't see a 'More options' link either. Perhaps this feature is no longer available. If you pay for G Suite (gsuite.google.com), which is the business version of Gmail, Docs and Drive, you can create up to 30 email aliases, so perhaps this feature is now only available to paying subscribers.

There are a couple of tricks that can be used with existing Gmail addresses to create extra ones. For example, a '+' sign followed by any characters can be added to your email address, such as 'bobsmith+2@gmail.com', 'bobsmith+home@gmail.com', 'bobsmith+work@gmail.com' and so on. All these emails end up in your inbox.

The other way to add email addresses is to insert full stops in the name, so 'bobsmith', 'bob.smith', 'b.obsmith', 'bob.s.m.i.t.h' and so on coupled with '@gmail.com' can be used. All these emails end up in your inbox, too.

Use '+' and '.' to add as many extra email addresses as you need. You can then filter them into different folders by clicking the cog icon and choosing Settings, 'Filters and blocked addresses'. Click 'Create a new filter', then click the To box and enter the alternative email address you want to use, such as 'bobsmith+work@gmail.com'. Click 'Create filter' and choose what to do with it. 'Apply the label' is a useful option and you can create a label for each email address. You can then see all emails sent to one particular address by selecting its label in the sidebar in Gmail.

GENERAL PC

Extract text from images

Q I am building a family tree and have some old documents that have been saved as images. What I would like to do is to save the text separately, so that it can be searched. There are too many documents and too much text to type it in manually, so I wondered if there is any software available that will automatically extract the text from an image and save it?

Luke Baker, via email

MOBILE

Get security apps for Apple mobile devices

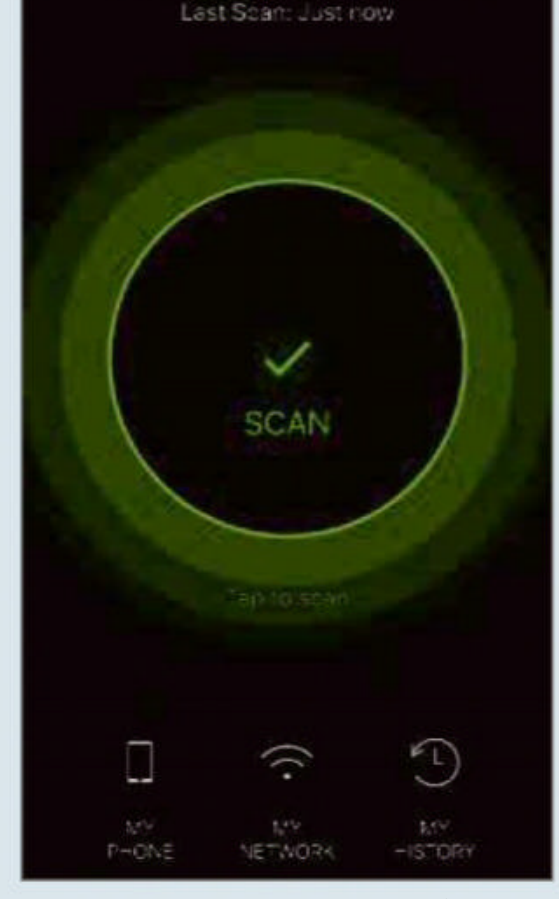
Q I use my iPad more than I use my computer these days. I have antivirus software on my computer to protect it, but I am worried about my iPad. Are there any security apps that protect it from malware?

Steve Morton, via email

A Yes, there are security apps for the iPad and iPhone, but there are no antivirus apps. Apple restricts the installation of software on the iPad and iPhone to apps that are in the App Store, and it has numerous rules and checks to ensure that they are free of malware. It may not be impossible, but it's certainly very difficult for any kind of virus, adware or spyware to get onto an iPad or iPhone. In other words, you don't really need to worry about it.

The security apps that are available for iOS focus on privacy and internet security, such as protecting you when using public Wi-Fi by accessing the internet through a VPN, for example. There are also secure vaults for photos, phishing detection, password storage, protection against online scams and a few more security and privacy threats.

The same companies that are known for good Windows security software usually have good iOS security apps, so look for Kaspersky (www.kaspersky.co.uk), Avast (www.avast.com), AVG (www.avg.com), Norton (uk.norton.com), ZoneAlarm (www.zonealarm.com), Avira (www.avira.com) and others. Steer clear of apps from developers you've never heard of and apps with only a few ratings, even if they are positive.



Apple's security apps focus on making the internet safer

Ask the Expert

A What you need is Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software, which scans images for text. There are several programs that can do this but you may already have everything you need. Microsoft has good OCR technology built into several of its products.

Put the document images into the OneDrive folder on your computer, so they're synced with OneDrive online. Now, open a web browser and go to your OneDrive account (onedrive.com). Click a document image file to view it, then click the 'i' button in the top right corner to open the Details pane.

Scroll down and you'll see that OneDrive has already scanned the image and all the text has been extracted from it. Click and drag over the text with the mouse and press Ctrl+C to copy it to the clipboard. It can be pasted into another program, such as Notepad, WordPad, Word and so on, and then saved. The text has no formatting and no paragraphs, but these are easily added.

Add the OneDrive app to your phone and you'll see options to take and upload a photo. These can be used to take snapshots of documents or you can use the Scan option to scan and upload them. You can then view them in a browser on OneDrive and copy the text from the Details panel.

If you prefer to use OCR software that runs on your computer, try SimpleOCR (bit.ly/simocr492).

GENERAL PC

Restore old Windows

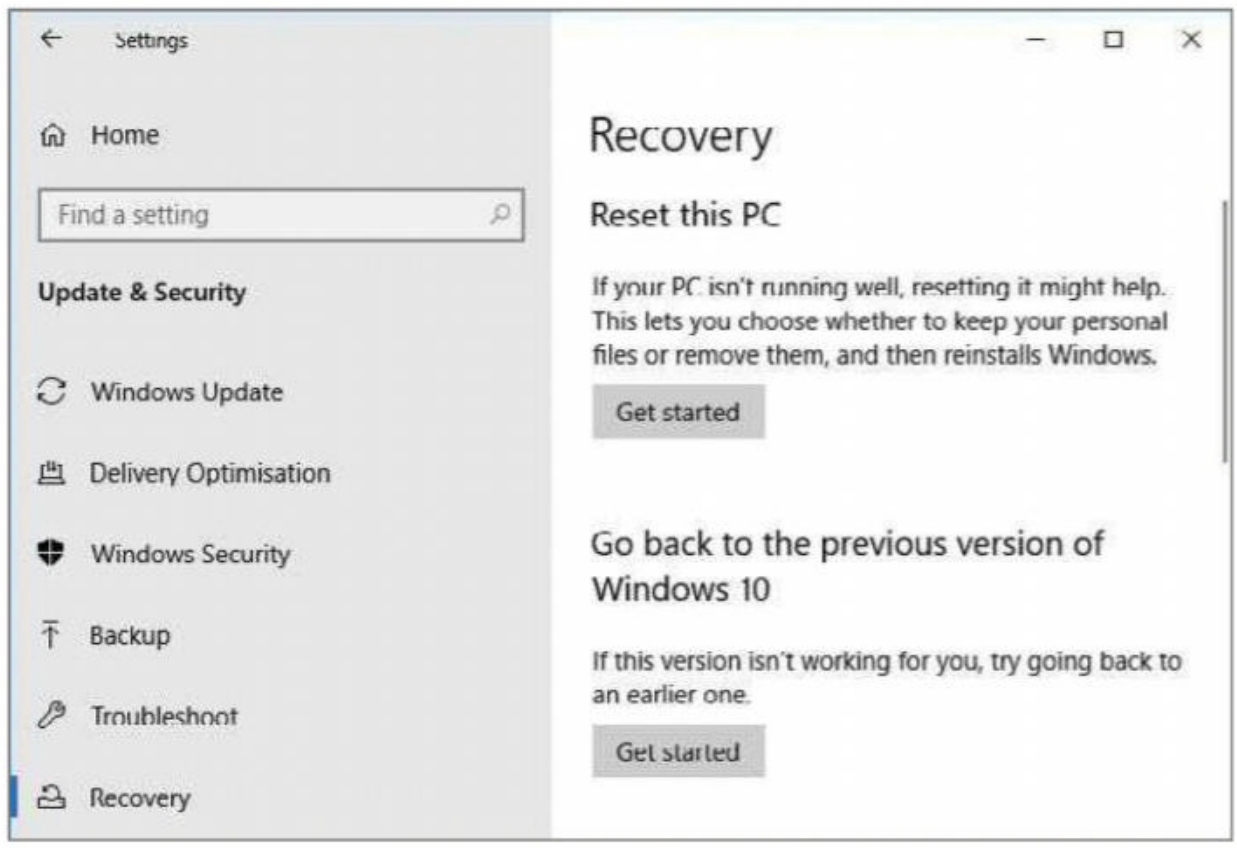
Q I noticed after the spring and autumn Windows 10 updates that there is now a 'C:\Windows.old' folder on my computer. Presumably, this is the previous version of Windows before the update. If I rename the current Windows folder and copy everything from 'C:\Windows.old' to 'C:\Windows', will it restore the previous version?

Kevin Andrews, via email

A No, because 'Windows.old' is not a copy of the Windows folder. It contains some – but not all – files and folders from the entire hard drive, including C\Windows, C:\Users, 'C:Program files' and others. If you open 'Windows.old' in Explorer, you'll see Program Files, ProgramData, Users, Windows and other folders. These are not complete copies and they only contain files that are important to Windows.

Don't try to restore the previous version of Windows manually using the contents of the 'Windows.old' folder. Instead, open Settings, Update & Security, Recovery. For a short time after a major update, there is an option to go back to the previous version of Windows. If this is not used, 'Windows.old' is eventually deleted.

Do not manually delete 'Windows.old'. Instead, click Start and type 'disk clean-up'. Click 'Run as administrator' and, when the list of items to clean appears, select 'Previous Windows installation(s)' and click OK.



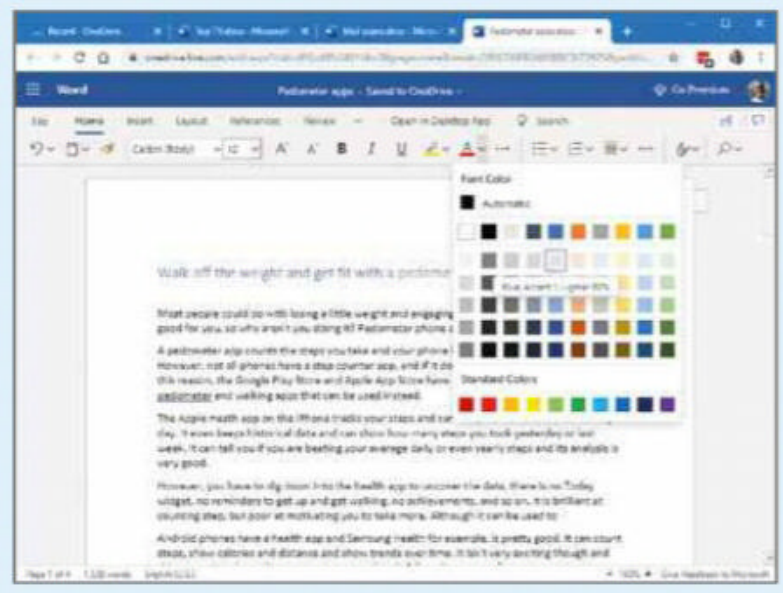
Use the 'Go back...' tool to roll back Windows to a previous version

MOBILE

View two Word documents at once

Q I have downloaded the Microsoft Word app from the Google Play store and it works fine on my Chromebook. However, the problem is that I cannot find a way to open two documents at the same time. I want to have one document open while referring to the other. How can I do this on a Chromebook?

Barry Jacobs, via email



Word's mobile apps only open one document at a time but you can open several in your browser

A The Microsoft Office apps – Word, Excel and PowerPoint – are available to download from the Google Play Store for the Chromebook and Android. However, they are cut-down versions of the software and have some limitations – one of which, unfortunately, is that you can't open two documents at the same time.

There is a solution, though. If your documents are stored on OneDrive and you have at least 5GB of space for free, you can access them in the Chrome browser at onedrive.com instead of the mobile apps. Chrome lets you open documents in separate tabs and you can switch between them with a click of the mouse. The web apps are limited compared to the Windows PC apps, but they have as many – maybe more – features than the Android apps.

This fortnight Roland is still working out his Christmas gifts, including an electric toothbrush with AI, USB and Bluetooth

Readers' Helpdesk

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

READERS RESPOND

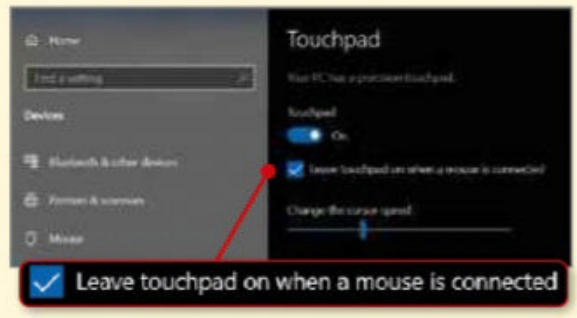
Back Issues disc winner

GENERAL PC

Disable a laptop's touchpad

A In Ask the Expert Issue 488 (bit.ly/webuser488), you advised Mark Thompson on how to disable the touchpad. Just below your suggested solution, there is an option to 'Leave touchpad on when a mouse is connected'. Simply untick that box and, whenever a mouse is attached, the touchpad won't respond. More helpfully, if your mouse dies, then unplugging it automatically enables the touchpad again. Disabling it completely means that if your mouse stops working, you'll need to find another one before you can use the laptop again.

Gary Bray, via email



Unticking this box switches off your touchpad when you're using a mouse

CAN YOU HELP?

webuser@webuser.co.uk

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

MESSAGING

Q Is it possible to create folders in WhatsApp? I know the app contains an Archive, but can I save messages to custom folders, too?

Mark Reinhardt, via email

HARDWARE

Q What are the main things to look out for when choosing a new tablet? I mainly want to stream Netflix and play games.

Gillian Cartwright, via email

STREAMING

Fix live TV streaming

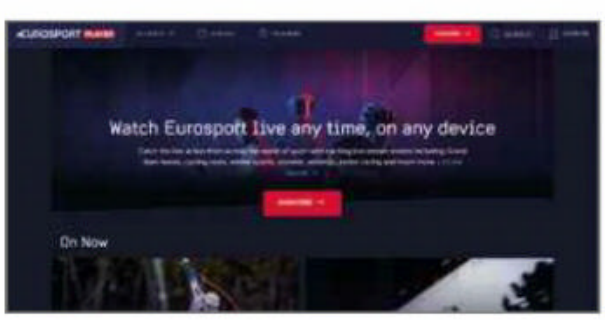
Q I recently signed up for Eurosport Player and set up my laptop to display the output to my TV via HDMI. The laptop is new, and connected to Virgin Media's Wi-Fi, with the router positioned less than two metres away.

I can watch a perfect HD Eurosport picture in this way for about 50 minutes, at which point the picture freezes and I get what looks like a 'buffering' image – a constantly revolving circle – on the screen. If I leave it for a couple of minutes, I get another 50 minutes before the picture stops again. Is it Virgin Media policy to 'downgrade' the data stream if I'm using 'too much data'? Or is this problem caused by something else?

I Machen, via email

A There are three possible offenders here: your laptop, Eurosport's servers or Virgin Media. According to the latter's Traffic Management Policy, it doesn't engage in data throttling on any broadband package. However, people have complained that Virgin Media struggles to stream longer forms of content, particularly in HD. High-def TV demands lots of data and a fast, steady stream, so try switching to a wired connection, and see if temporarily downgrading the video resolution has any effect. Your router's settings may also need adjusting – make sure you're taking advantage of both 5GHz and 2.4GHz frequencies. If problems persist, it's worth contacting Eurosport to see if it's having server issues.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



We expect streaming TV to work perfectly and it's frustrating when it doesn't

SOCIAL MEDIA

Revert to the old Facebook design

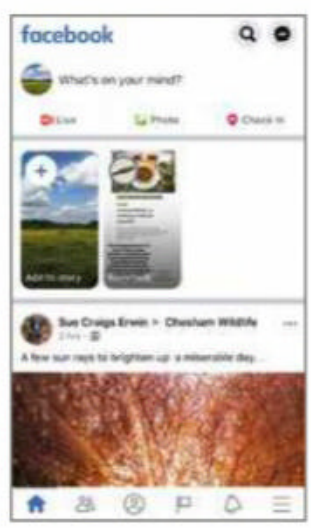
Q Facebook has decided to move my notification bar from the top to the bottom of my phone's screen. The app didn't even inform me it was going to change, just randomly moved it. I am getting royally fed up with Facebook and am considering quitting the whole warped, corrupt setup. In the meantime, though, could you please help me?

Karen Scott Knight, via email

A Facebook has a nasty habit of toying with its design. It's understandable why the app would move what's known as the Shortcuts Bar to the bottom of the screen, because it makes it easier to access on larger phones. It's likely that the company is testing the redesign on selected users before rolling it out to everyone (or quietly changing it back, if it's universally hated).

You have two options: wait until the next Facebook update, to see if it reverts to its original position; or visit a site such as APKMirror (apkmirror.com) and download a version of the Facebook app created before the latest update. Hopefully, that should nudge your notifications back where they belong.

Steve Clark, Features Writer, Web User



Download an older version of an app if you don't like its changes

Your Top Tips

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

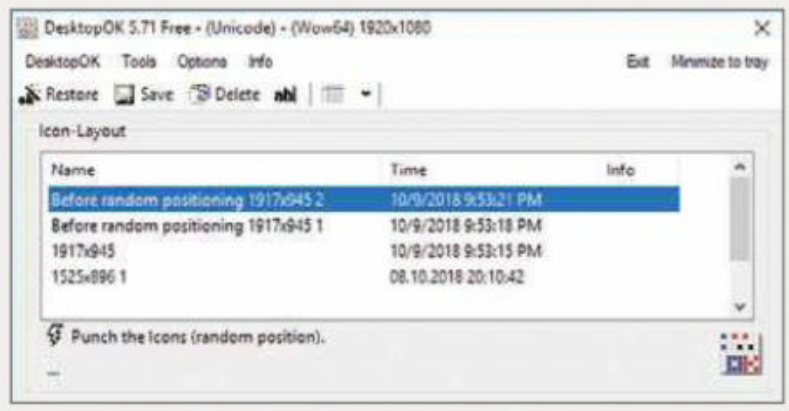
TOP TIP

Back Issues disc winner

GENERAL PC

Fix your desktop icons permanently

A glitch in Windows 10 can cause icons to jump back when you try to align them to the left of the desktop screen, even when Auto Arrange is deselected. Once you've managed to place your icons, install and run DesktopOK (bit.ly/dtok492) and click Save. You can now restore your icons to their correct position by clicking DesktopOK's Restore option. The Tools menu contains other useful features. Incidentally, you may have more luck moving and placing an icon if you click and hold down its left-hand side.



DesktopOK can help if your desktop icons randomly move about

R Seed, via email

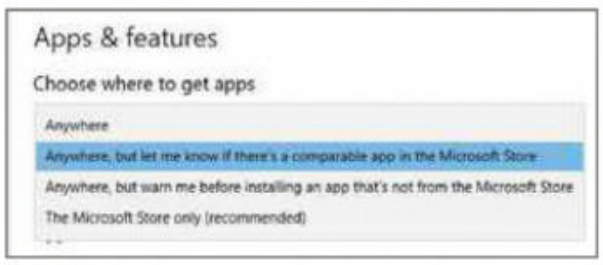
SOFTWARE

Get suggestions for app alternatives

Microsoft obviously thinks that the Microsoft Store is the best place to get software and that all other sources should be locked out. This might be a useful setting on a child's PC, where you don't want them downloading and installing dodgy software from who knows where, but it's not right for me.

In the Settings app, click Apps, then 'Apps & features'. At the top, under 'Choose where to get apps', a drop-down menu lets you restrict software installation to only apps from the Store. I think the best choice is 'Anywhere, but let me know if there is a comparable app in the Microsoft Store'. I've not had any suggestions yet, but I look forward to seeing what it comes up with.

Callum Robinson, via email



This setting provides alternative app suggestions when downloading software

GENERAL PC

Open your last used window from the taskbar

I often have multiple windows open, such as two or more browser windows, a couple of Notepad windows and so on. Click the Explorer icon in the taskbar to open a window, then Shift+click the icon to open additional windows.

It's useful to have two windows open when you're copying and pasting, or moving files from one drive or folder to another. When several windows are open, hover over the taskbar icon to display a thumbnail image of each one. You can look at the thumbnails and click the one you want to go to.

There's a Registry hack that lets you click the taskbar icon to automatically open the last window used, which is even quicker and easier.

Press Windows+R and enter `regedit` to run the Registry Editor. Go to the following Registry key:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\Explorer\Advanced

Go to the Edit menu and select New, then 'DWORD (32-bit) Value'. Enter `LastActiveClick` for the name, then double-click it and set the value to `1`.

Close the Registry editor and restart Windows.

To test this, open three Explorer windows looking at different drives or folders. Cover them with a browser window, for example, then click the Explorer icon to switch to the last used Explorer window. Thumbnails are still available if you let the mouse hover over the taskbar icon but, if you want the last used window, just click the icon.

Olly Walsh, via email

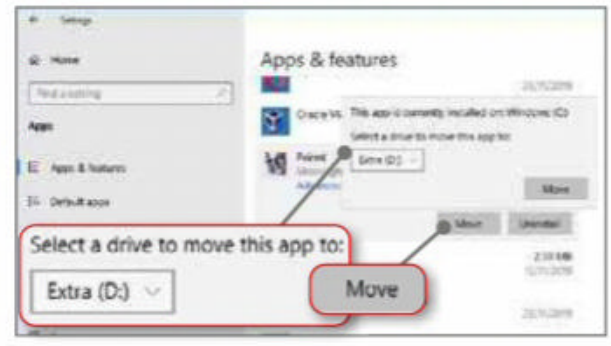
GENERAL PC

Make space by moving apps

Solid state drives (SSDs) are much faster than hard drives, but they are often quite small if you buy one as part of a budget PC. To solve this problem, I have increased the drive space on my new PC using an external USB drive.

Open the Settings app in Windows 10 and click Apps. As you click each app in the list, some will display a Move button, which lets you move it to another drive. Click this and select the drive in the small window that appears. Not all apps can be moved this way but, with those that can, at least some space is recovered.

Alan Dunlop, via email



Some apps can be moved to another drive if you're running out of space

GENERAL PC

Use a new Start menu

If you're not keen on the default Start menu, consider trying Start Everywhere (bit.ly/stev492). It's a portable program that puts pretty much every function within easy reach, whether it's desktop

apps, folders or system tools. As the name suggests, the Start Everywhere icon is accessible at all times, laid over every open window. Everything is conveniently arranged in alphabetical order, which makes it far less time-consuming to find what you want, compared to Windows 10's Start menu.

Sean Morris, via email

Start Everywhere is a well-organised alternative to Windows 10's Start menu

EMAIL

More space for Gmail

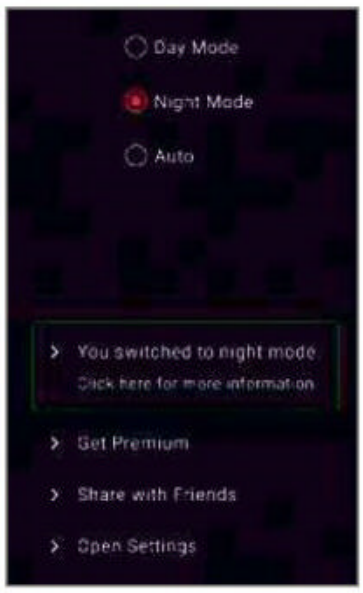
I use Gmail and have noticed a narrow panel down the right side of my inbox. There's a small arrow at the bottom, which hides this side panel, and clicking it means I now have a bit more space for my inbox.

Ron Harris, via email

MOBILE

Get Dark Mode on older Android phones

I'm a big fan of Dark Mode because it means I'm not being continuously blinded by the glare of a white screen. However, because my phone is quite old, I don't have this option built into Android. For this reason, I downloaded an app called Dark Mode (bit.ly/dark492) that's specifically designed for older Android phones. It might not work on every phone, but it's worth a shot.



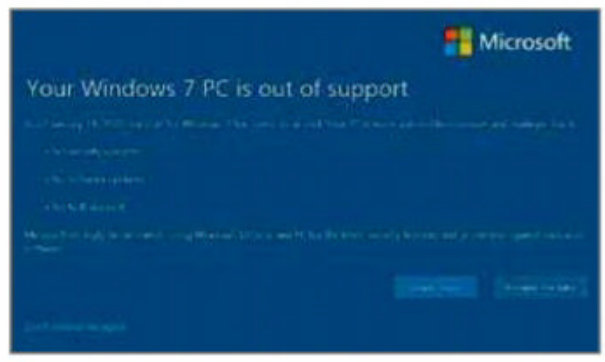
Bring Dark Mode to almost any Android phone

Des Scott, via email

WINDOWS 7

Stop the full-screen end-of-support pop-up

As your readers may know, Microsoft is ending support for Windows 7. And, in just the same way that the company nagged us to upgrade to Windows 10, it's now pestering us about the end of Windows 7 support. However, this time it's even more intrusive, using full-screen pop-ups to warn people.



If you're sticking with Windows 7, you can switch off Microsoft's nag screens

I anticipate this is going to irritate loyal Windows 7 users who choose to go against Microsoft's advice and stick with the old operating system anyway. If you're an advanced user and are happy to risk it, you can switch off the reminders. Open the Registry Editor and go to:

HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\Microsoft\Windows\CurrentVersion\EOSNotify

In the folder, set the DiscontinueEOS DWord value to 1. If you don't see this, just create a DWord with this name and set it as above.

H Jones, via email

GENERAL PC

Stop the Start menu opening automatically

Does it infuriate anyone else that, in the latest Windows update, the Start menu opens whenever you roll your cursor over the icon? I do it so often, and it was beginning to drive me crazy, until I found out that the Mach2 program (bit.ly/mach492) has a fix for this. Extract and open the tool, then open Command Prompt and locate the folder where you saved Mach2. Next, enter `mach2 disable 18715789`, then restart the Start menu by opening Task Manager, clicking Start and selecting 'End task'.

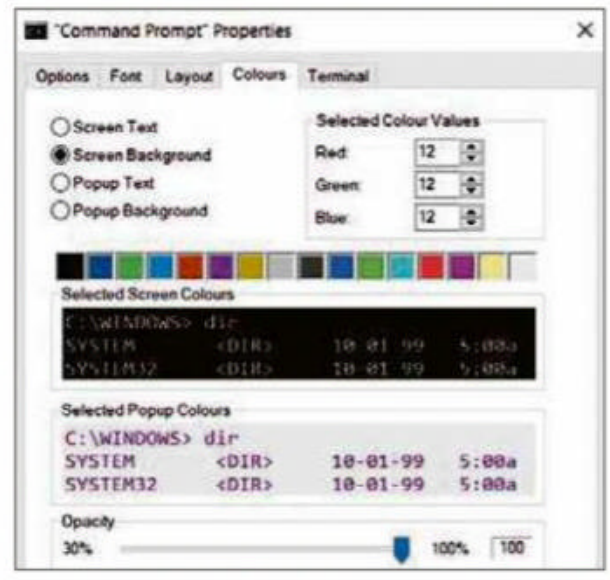
Petra Clyde, via email

GENERAL PC

Customise the Command Prompt

We're all familiar with the Command Prompt but did you know it's possible to change its appearance? Open the program by entering `cmd` in the search box, then right-clicking the title bar, where it says Command Prompt. Now, select Properties to modify the font type and size, layout, and the colour of the text and background.

Jen Skinner, via email



You can change the appearance of the Command Prompt

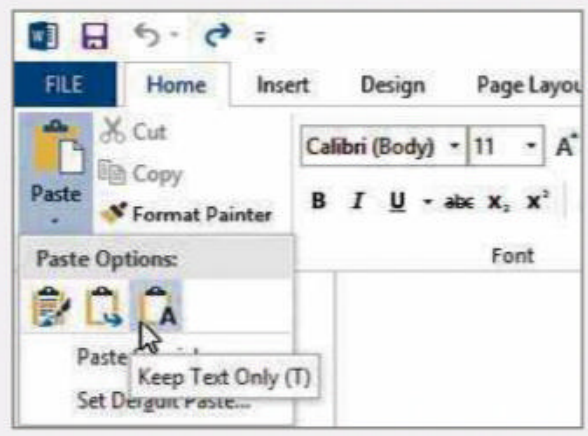
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

GENERAL PC

Strip away text formatting faster

Recently, I saw a tip about a browser add-on that lets you paste text from one place to another without including the formatting. I've spent a lot of time stripping formatting from text, so I'm always keen to learn new tricks. Did you know that there's a Paste option in the Word toolbar that lets you do this, and you can set it to be the default?

However, I've only just discovered the best trick of all and I'm kicking myself for not learning it before: the keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Alt+V. This universal shortcut pastes just the text, leaving behind the formatting, and works in almost all the programs I've tried it in, including word processors and browsers. It has saved me so much time!



Microsoft Word has a tool for pasting text without formatting

Ken Rowlands, via email

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

Inbox

You can let us know your views via:
editor@webuser.co.uk, www.facebook.com/webusermagazine
and www.twitter.com/webusermagazine

Star Email

Microsoft's rude response to reactivation

After experiencing numerous hardware-related problems with my custom-built PC, I recently decided to go for broke and replace the motherboard, processor and memory to clear the decks. Before I installed the new hardware, I checked with the Microsoft website that there would be no problems in reactivating my 100% legal copy of Windows 10 Pro. I was reassured that, provided my Microsoft account was linked to my licence (it was) and I retrieved the product ID from the system (I did), it would be fine.

So I went ahead, replaced all the hardware and went to reactivate Windows – but it failed because the

product ID was allegedly invalid. After several more attempts, I resorted to Microsoft's activation-help feature and, much to my surprise, got a phone call back, which proved to be *the* most unhelpful and unfriendly response I have ever received to a technical problem.

The essence of the call was that because I had replaced the motherboard, the only way I could reactivate Windows would be to use the key provided with the Windows 8 software I was using when I upgraded to Windows 10. Neither the fact that I had long ago 'lost' my 2012 copy of Windows 8, nor the fact that I already had a legal licence held any sway. The very blunt and unsympathetic response was that I would just have to buy a new licence for a 'special rate' – which turned out to be a staggering £219.99.

I would call that modern-day highway robbery, and Microsoft should be thoroughly ashamed of itself for treating people so badly.

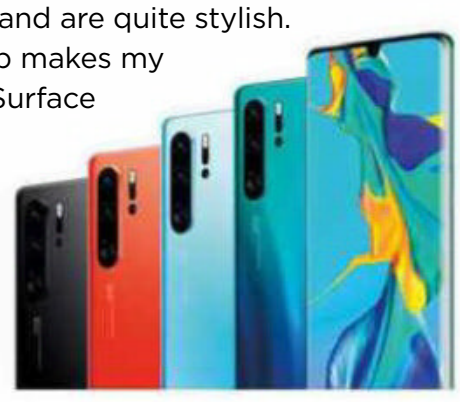
Geoff Sampher, via email

In praise of Huawei products

Last year, on my way to the UK, I bought a Huawei Nova 2i phone in Bangkok. It was such a success that I decided to get the Nova 3i this year as a backup, because I no longer have a landline (or that was my excuse!!).

While in the UK, I searched for the Huawei MateBook X Pro and eventually found one only a couple of days before my departure from London (hence, it was duty-free). A couple of months ago, I went to Bangkok for a week for dental treatment and found a tablet – the Huawei MediaPad M5 Lite – at my (by now) favourite Huawei shop. While there, I picked up a brochure, in which I saw that a Huawei mouse existed. Though not available there, or here in Melbourne, I bought one online.

I now have the complete 'suite' of Huawei products – quite the best products I have used, despite what Mr Trump says! They are all very well designed and are quite stylish. The laptop makes my previous Surface



Pro look like a toy, the tablet is a 10in and has a very clear screen and the mouse is cute. Its top is held on magnetically, hiding the AA battery within, which makes it a slimline model.

I can't recommend Huawei more highly!

Lynnette Hammet, Victoria, Australia

My excellent service from Ao.com

I read Welsh Legend's Star Email in Issue 490 about unreliable delivery services and would like to share my own experience. Waiting at home all day, not knowing what time a delivery will come and being unable to communicate properly with the courier can be very inconvenient and annoying.

I recently ordered a large fridge freezer from Ao.com. Not only did they tell me by text message when to expect delivery, but they gave me a phone number so I could speak directly with the driver, who called me 20 minutes before they arrived to say I was next.

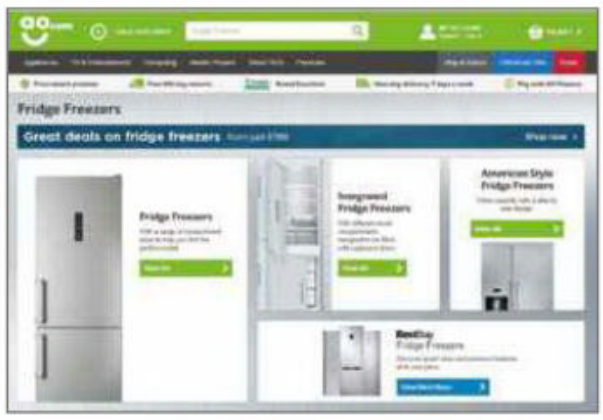
They even went the extra mile and carried the fridge freezer around to my back door and into the kitchen,

Quiz Answers: Issue 491

1. Bear Grylls
2. Mary Beard
3. Dawn French
4. Andrew Neil
5. Michael Parkinson
6. Claudia Winkleman

WINNER!
Well done to **Steve Beaumont** who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc

WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE
Android



negotiating obstacles on the way.

If Ao.com can provide such a good and efficient service, then why can't other companies do the same and learn from each other? I know where I'll be looking first the next time I do an online shop.

Gary Butler, via email

Uber operates within the law

In reference to your news story in Issue 490, 'Uber loses licence to operate in London', you are correct to a certain extent but wholly wrong in another.

For a start, it is TfL that issues the private hire licence to all drivers in London, and they have to sit a knowledge test the same as an ordinary hackney cab driver. It is TfL's responsibility to ensure that the driver holds the correct driving licence to drive in the UK and check for criminal records.

Uber do their own checks and, in fact, go far further than they are legally required to do. The company suspends drivers if they violate the terms and conditions set down by them, and I have even known Uber to completely withdraw drivers' badges and totally ban them.

TfL are using every excuse possible to get Uber off of the road, and the Mayor of London and his cohorts are only interested in keeping the black cabs. Uber are competition and other taxi drivers do not like this. That is what this issue is all about.

Uber will continue to operate within the law, but will not bow to undue pressure from a body that is totally failing in their statutory duty of regulating the hackney and private hire business, just because money is involved or they hold a grudge.

R Shannon, via email

What you say...

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE GADGET OF THE LAST DECADE?

My SkullCandy Bluetooth headphones. I thought I'd be fine without the headphone jack on my iPhone but, ever since getting these headphones, I listen to Spotify and podcasts nearly every day. The battery lasts and they are really comfy to wear!

Simon Mellor *@4KBacon*

My Bluetooth laser projection keyboard. It's not very practical but it makes me feel like I'm in *Star Trek*!

Caroline Chapman *@cantstopthesgnl*

My HTC Sensation phone. It had a nice interface, good apps and worked well. Plus, it was my first smartphone.

Goldmaster *@imthegoldmaster*

The Nissan Leaf (launched in 2011). It saves me about £1,000 annually in fuel, road tax and maintenance bills. That figure would be even higher if I did more miles rather than work from home.

Chris Armstrong

Choices, choices – I love my gadgets. The iPad Air, Samsung Galaxy phone (I rate the Galaxy over the iPhone, and I've had both), Amazon Kindle and definitely an honourable mention for the fidget spinner.

Nat Grove

It has to be the ever-evolving smart gadgets and apps such as Alexa and Siri. Most people I know have at least one.

David P-Smith *@david_p_s*

My beloved Amazon Kindle Paperwhite. Don't know where I'd be without it!

Anne Dimmock

HAVE YOU EVER HAGGLED A BETTER BROADBAND DEAL FROM YOUR ISP (bit.ly/broad492)?

Absolutely. If I don't get a good deal each time my contract is due for renewal, I'll switch.

Mark Chatham

Every year. I always get a good discount, so I'm happy with what I pay.

Eff Clarke

Every time. Virgin Media always offers a better deal if I ring them. Sadly, no offer ever involves actually reducing my services – I would love to dump my landline and a lot of the TV channels but, bizarrely, that never works out as a money saver.

Rich Grove

I don't haggle, I just change providers.

Dean Stockton

I always switch my ISP after the first 12 or 18 months, when the introductory price ends. I resent paying over £30 a month for a landline I never use.

Helen Markham

DO YOU WORRY ABOUT SMART DEVICES EAVESDROPPING ON YOU (bit.ly/eaves492)?

After I ask Google Nest (the new name for Google Home) what I want it to do, I then turn off the microphone. When I am not using Google Nest, I switch it off and unplug it.

Kevin Gadget Man Benton

No, because the mics on Google Nest devices can be physically switched off.

Shaun Thomas

They're only likely to hear me snore.

Paul W N Hughes

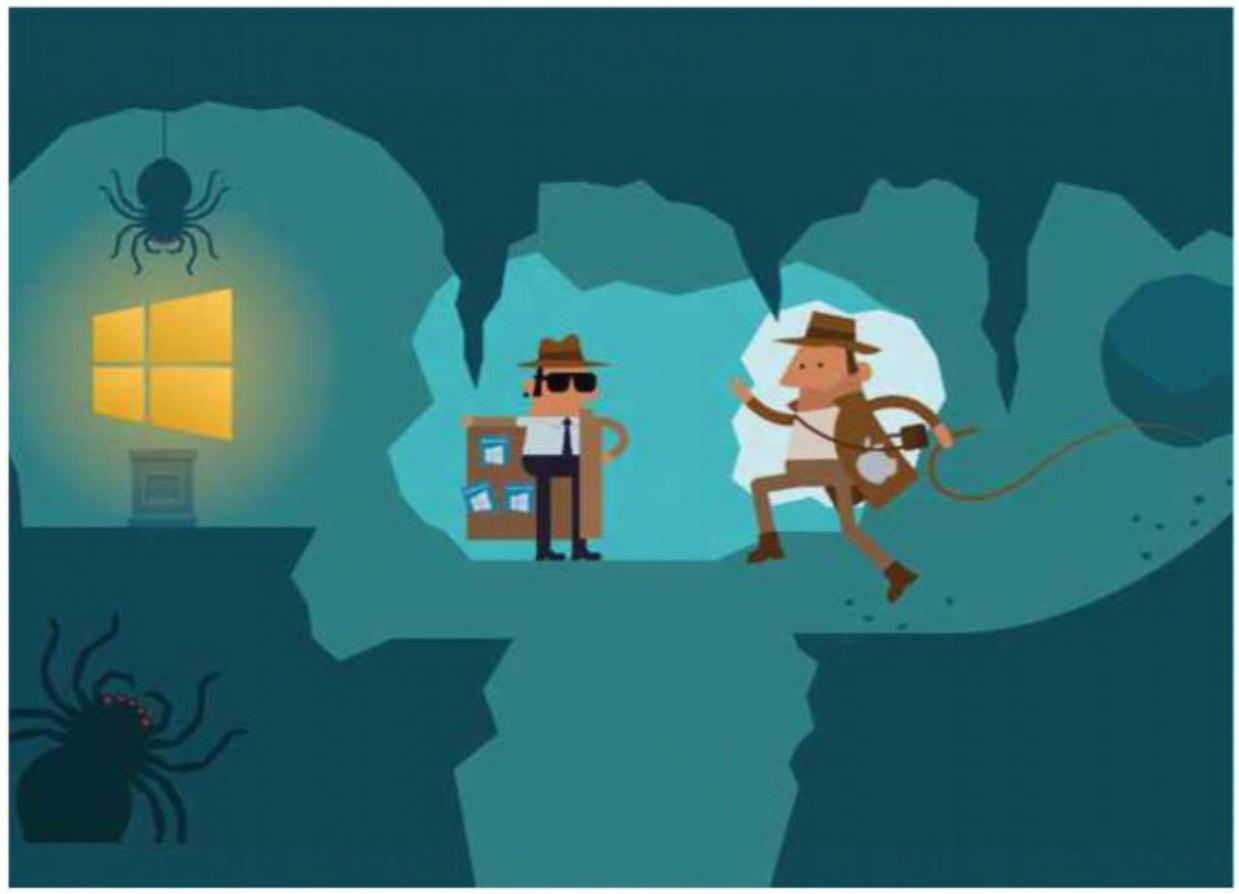
I very much doubt that smart speakers are constantly listening to everyone who owns them. Some people really overestimate their own importance.

Terry Cowley

Page 404

Barry Collins is baffled by Microsoft's Windows 10 pricing

Why should Mac users pay for Windows?



I recently bought my first Mac. I know, I know – cover me in tar and slather me in magical, space grey feathers, but I simply couldn't resist the 16in MacBook Pro with its awesome screen and speakers.

That said, I'm still a Windows boy at heart and, even though almost all the apps I use on a daily basis are available and almost identical on macOS, there are still a few Windows-only apps that I don't want to forego. So, one of the first things I did with my new Mac was to install the Parallels Desktop 15, which allows you to run Windows apps on your Mac as if they were native Mac apps.

Unlike Apple's Boot Camp, where you either boot into Windows or macOS, Parallels lets you run both Windows and Mac apps side by side. It is genuinely brilliant, even though it has followed that annoying trend of turning itself into a £70-per-year piece of subscription software, despite there being no good reason why it shouldn't just be a one-off purchase.

But if you thought the cost of Parallels was stiff, that's nothing compared to the price of the Windows 10 licence you need to run it. Most of us are now accustomed to thinking of Windows 10 as 'free', because of the way Microsoft offered free upgrades to anyone on Windows 7 and 8. But if you buy Windows 10 as a standalone operating system for a new computer you've built yourself or, in my case, so you can run Windows apps on your Mac, it's a long, long way from free.

If you want to buy Windows 10 Home from the official Microsoft UK Store, that will set you back £120. If it's the Pro version you're after, it really is deep-breath time because it weighs in at a staggering £220. That's about four or five times what Microsoft reportedly charges PC builders to install Windows 10 on their computers.

> "Amazon lists several sellers offering Windows licence keys for as little as a tenner, which are surely too good to be true"

Having just performed open-wallet surgery to get the Mac in the first place, I was in no mood to shell out another few hundred quid, so I started looking around for cheaper alternatives. Type "Windows 10 product key" into Google (because a 16-digit key is all you need, as Parallels has already downloaded and installed Windows 10), and you'll find all kinds of shifty-looking sites offering Windows 10 Pro keys for as little as £20.

Now, I've been around the block a few times. I know full well that many of the codes you get from these sites will be invalid or blocked by Microsoft because the same codes have been sold hundreds of times over. But sorting the genuine code sellers from the conmen isn't always easy. Even Amazon lists several sellers offering licence keys for as little as a tenner, which are surely too good to be true. Surely?

In the end, the cheapest legitimate way to get a product key was from Amazon – £100 for someone to send a boxed copy of Windows 10 on a USB stick, along with that all-important code. And I still had to wait a day or so for it to arrive in the post.

Only Microsoft could make it more than twice as expensive to send a 16-digit code via email than to have a box with an unwanted USB stick sent via snail mail.

Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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

WebUser

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER
FOR MORE INFO SEE PAGE 62

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