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PREMIUM**

Curved



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ebuyer.com

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OVERCLOCKERS UK



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BEST NEW

PORTABLE SOFTWARE

30 brilliant new tools you can run from a USB stick

☒ No installation ☒ No junk ☒ Just download and go! p40



PLUS

IS ANYONE ACTUALLY READING YOUR EMAILS?

Track your messages to find out

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STREAM UK RADIO ON YOUR PHONE

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USE TWO PCs WITH ONE MONITOR & KEYBOARD

Yes, it can be done - learn how

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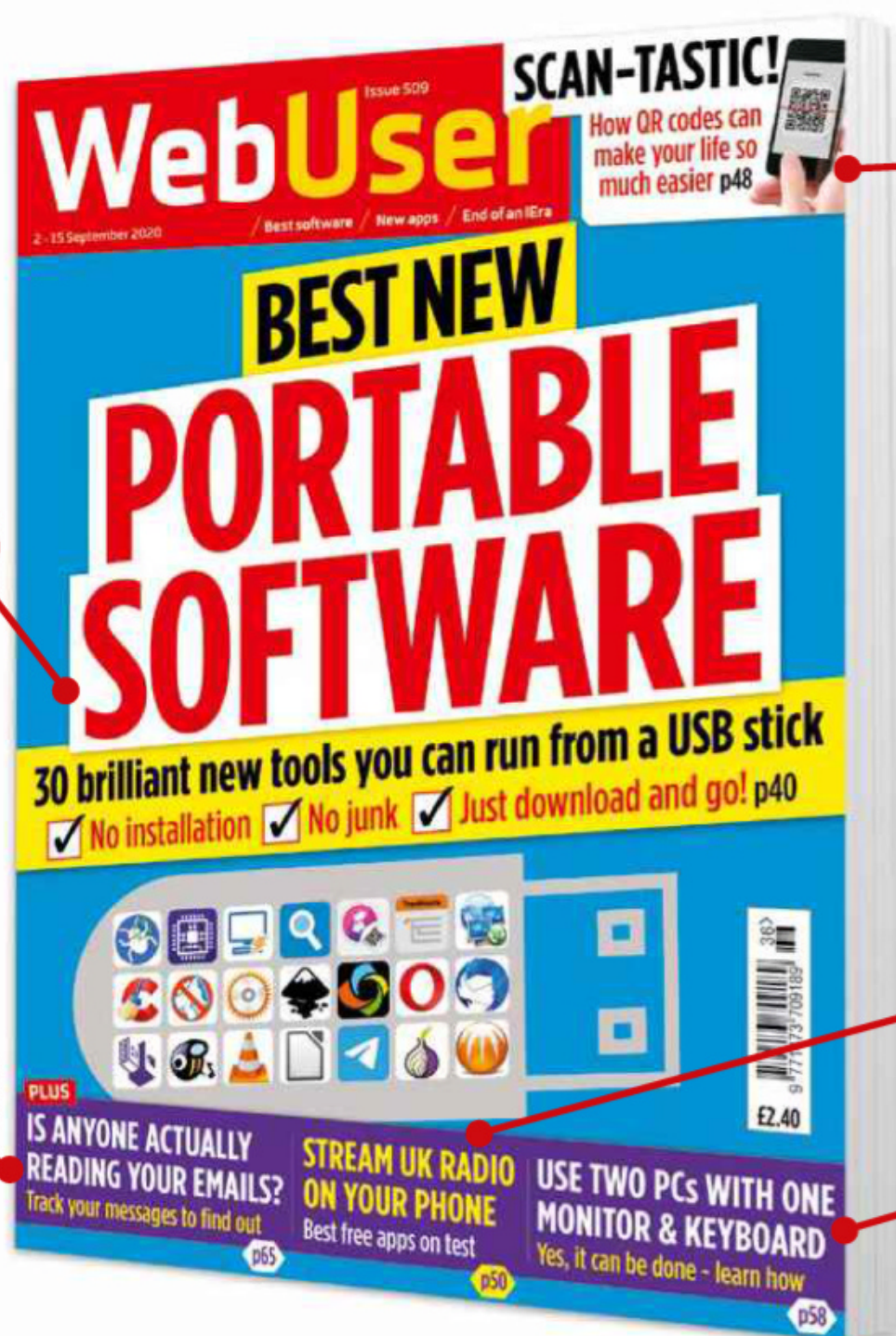
As I've adjusted to the 'new normal', I've had two major realisations: that most people don't know how far a metre is and that I need more pockets. Along with my keys, wallet and phone, leaving the house now involves taking a bottle of hand sanitiser and a face mask – plus a spare one in case I lose the first. With the weather too warm for a jacket, it's a veritable battle of the bulge. If only there was a way to fit everything in a tiny case and reclaim that valuable pocket space.

That, of course, is the appeal of USB memory sticks, and what better way to

maximise yours than to pack it with a plethora of portable programs? In this issue's cover feature, we round up the best new and updated free tools that you can carry around with you, or – if you're not going anywhere – that you can download and use instantly without installing. These include everything from system cleaners to video editors and anonymous browsers.

No junk, no bloat, no jacket required!

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



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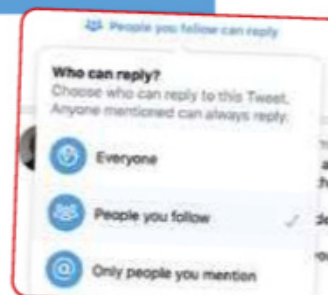
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We use Bitly links to shorten web addresses that would otherwise be too long to print in the magazine. Type these into the address bar of your browser – not the search box – and you'll be redirected to the relevant web page.



Average sales, Jan-Dec 2019, 24,266 copies per issue

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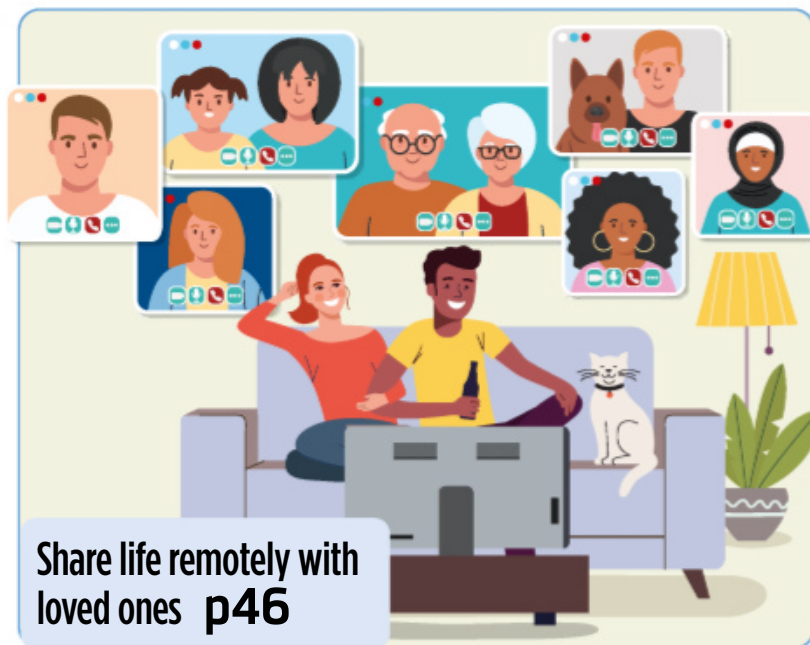
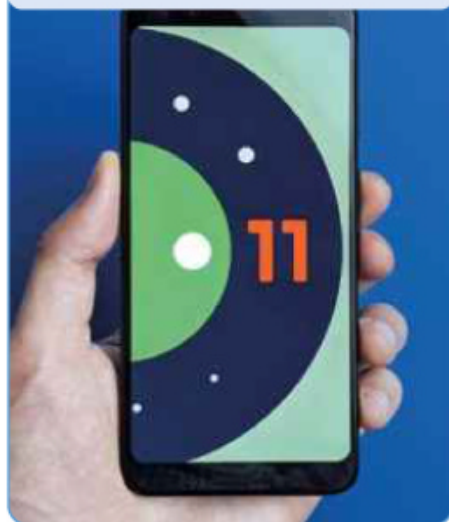
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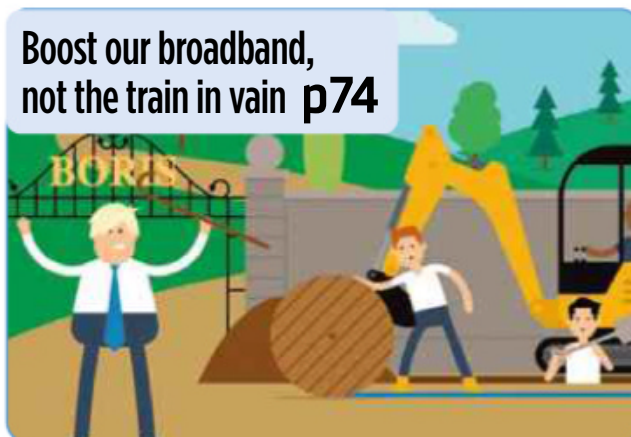
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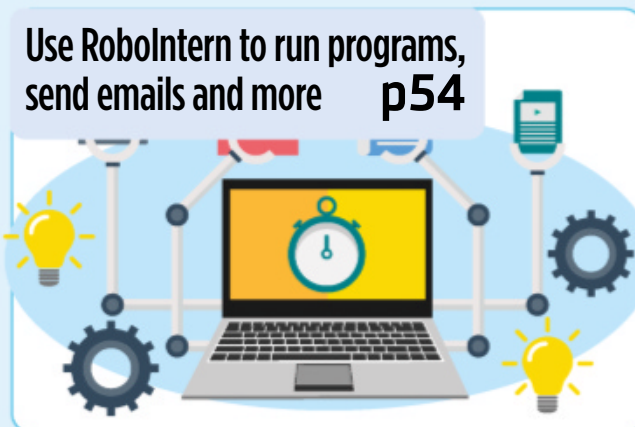
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PRINTING

Printed by Wyndeham Bicester, Oxon
Distributors Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 161 Marsh Wall, E14 9AP

Web User is produced by Robirv Limited and published fortnightly by Dennis Publishing Ltd, a company registered in England 1138891.

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A DENNIS PUBLICATION

Web User is published fortnightly by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, WC1E 7DP. Company registered in England. ISSN 1473-7094

WEB USER
PRINTED IN THE UK



What's New Online

Connect more easily with Instagram

Many of us have both Facebook and Instagram accounts, and the direct-messaging components of the two services are now being combined. This means you'll be able to launch Facebook Messenger and chat with friends who use Instagram (and vice versa) without needing to open both apps. You'll also be able to react using emoji and enjoy a colourful new chat interface.

Facebook is rolling out the change slowly but, when prompted, simply select Update and the arrow icon in the top-right of the Instagram screen will change to the Messenger logo to reflect the integrated service. It's the latest enhancement to Instagram following the launch of TikTok rival Instagram Reels, which we covered in our Best Free Apps section last issue. This lets you record and edit videos of up to 15 seconds in length and add snazzy effects.

Finally, you can now make it easier



for people to find you on Instagram and view your profile by using a QR code. You'll find yours by going to the Settings menu in your profile and selecting QR Code. Use the Colour



option to alter the style if you wish, and decide whether to share or save. Other people can scan your code with their device's camera.

See our feature on page 48 for more about QR codes.

www.instagram.com

Enjoy *Romeo and Juliet* as a social-media play

will-play-web.vercel.app

If Shakespeare's tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, was played out in modern life, the star-crossed lovers would probably spend much of their time conversing on social media. That's exactly where we find them in this online adaptation by the BBC, aimed at 13- to 16-year-olds – or anyone who enjoys interactive fiction.

The idea is to work your way through three distinctive group chats called Love, Hate and Death. This trio makes up

the romantic opening, violent central and tragic final acts of the Bard's story, and they're introduced by colourful Instagram-style posts that set up the premise of each one. Choose a Bitmoji-style avatar and you can start reading text messages and get involved when prompted. There's a quiz at the end to test what you've learned by typing the answers in the chat box.



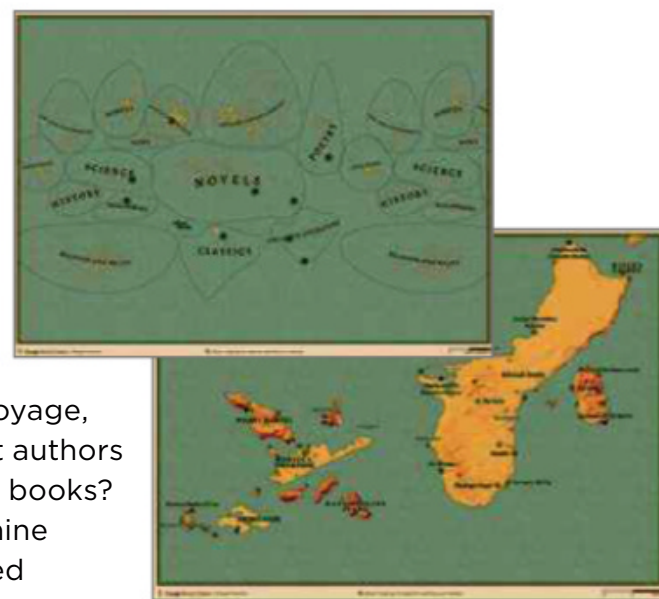
Explore an ocean of books

bit.ly/ocean509

Casting your net far and wide for a good read can be richly rewarding. So why not embark on Google Arts & Culture's ambitious new online voyage, where islands represent authors and cities are individual books?

Created using a machine learning technique called the Uniform Manifold Approximation, it presents you with a fantasy world split into regions including Classics, Poetry, Religion and Science. You can search for a writer or book, or zoom into any area to see the names of the authors. Keep zooming to view the books and click titles to read more about each one.

As you travel, take note of the authors on neighbouring islands. These have been calculated according to their online relationships with each other. For example, oceanographer Jacques Cousteau is close to astronomer Carl Sagan because articles often mention both together. It's an entertaining way to discover literary connections.

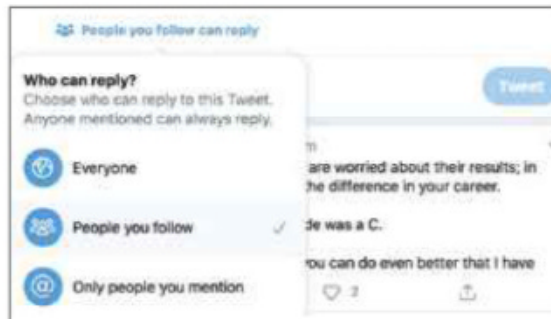


We pick the 10 best things you must do on the web this fortnight

Limit replies to your tweets

twitter.com

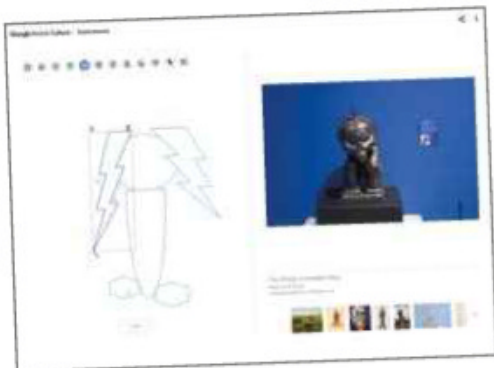
When you compose a tweet on Twitter, you can now restrict replies to certain groups. Select the default option 'Everyone can reply' and switch to either People You Follow or Only People You Mention, to get more control. If you want to prevent anyone from replying to your post, opt for the latter and don't namecheck anyone in your tweet.



Discover art by doodling

bit.ly/draw509

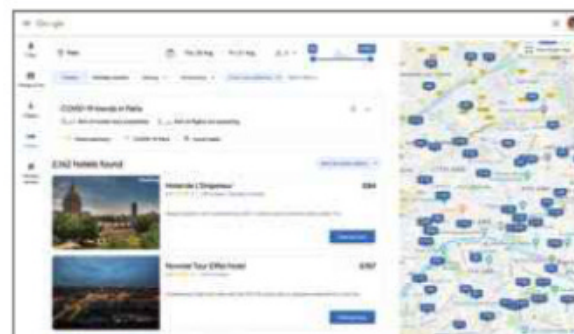
Can you vividly picture an artwork but can't recall its name? Or do you believe your random scribbles could represent something more accomplished? With Draw to Art, your doodles can be used to discover



paintings, drawings and sculptures, thanks to Google Arts & Culture's clever use of

machine learning. Select some geometrical shapes and start drawing, then watch as hundreds of thousands of potential matches from Georgia Tech's Sketchy dataset are considered. A handful of results are displayed as thumbnails and clicking their names reveals even more details.

Find hotels you can cancel for free



bit.ly/hotels509

Search Google for hotels in a specific area and you can now use a filter to find ones that let you cancel a booking for free. Click Free Cancellation when viewing the results on a desktop or mobile device, and the search engine will only show hotels that won't leave you out of pocket should restrictions force you to abandon your trip. You can also instantly see the percentage of hotels that have availability, as well as the percentage of flights that are currently operating, by looking in a new box called COVID-19 Trends.

Create instant surround sound

bit.ly/sound509

Start listening to Decameron Nights, a new series of folk tales by theatre company 1927, and you can use the BBC's new production tool Audio Orchestrator to produce a surround-sound experience. This lets you connect various devices – from iOS and Android to Mac and PC – via a link or QR code, and pump synchronised sound from their speakers.



NEW VOICE COMMANDS



Start the school day

Say "Hey Google, Start the school day" to hear a class bell and some familiar school sounds. You can even program your smart lights to react.



Update to the new Siri

Keep an eye out for Apple's Siri update in iOS 14, which you can install by going to Settings, General, Software Update. The new Siri will have 20 times more facts than three years ago.



Find a local tradesperson

Hire a professional to help with a task by saying "Alexa, open Checkatrade". You're prompted for a trade and a location, after which you'll get a list of candidates.



Check your area's lockdown status

lockdownapi.com

Lockdown rules seem vague at the best of times, and they fluctuate from one area to the next. Enter your postcode in this tool to see if local services and shops are open, and whether you're safe to meet up with other households.

Track trending TikTok songs

tiktometer.com

Music-based videos are popular on TikTok, and Tiktometer shows which tunes are being used most often, and the number of views they've gained. You can download MP3s of the trending tracks, too.

Guess the location

bit.ly/guess509

This fun quiz lets you select a country or continent, then guess from a series of videos where the footage was shot. Pinpoint your hunch on a map of the world and you'll be shown how close or far away your estimate was.

Need to Know

Fortnite pulled from iOS and Android in payments row

What happened?

The popular game Fortnite has disappeared from the App Store and Google Play, amid a long-running battle over the cut that Apple and Google take from payments made on their platforms.

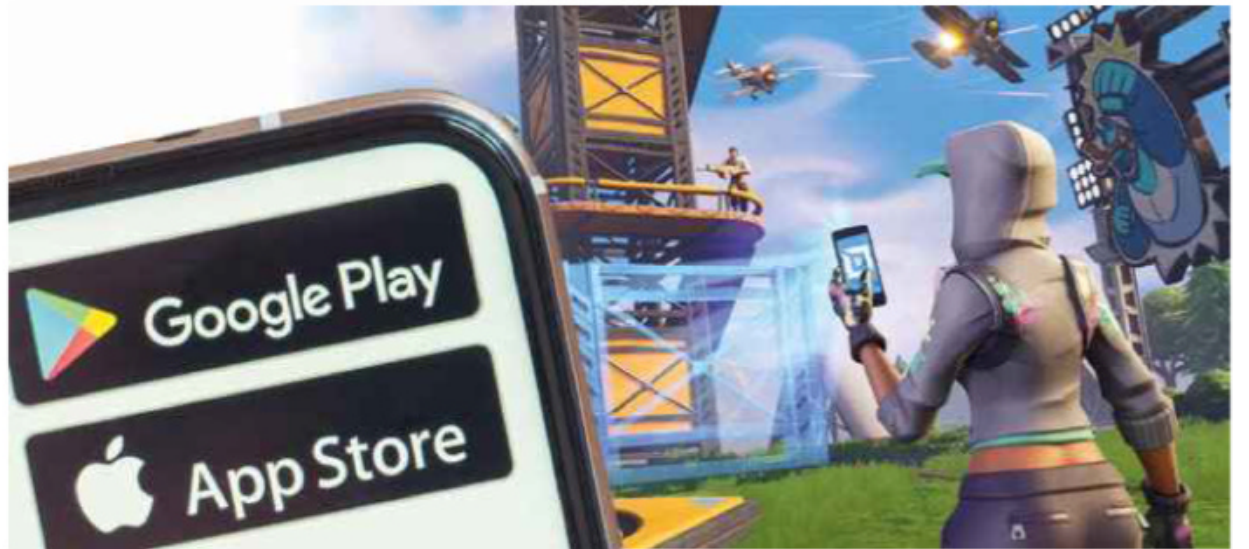
Epic Games' Fortnite has 350 million registered users, but only arrived in the app stores in April. The CEO of Epic Games, Tim Sweeney, said at the time that this was to avoid handing over revenue to Apple and Google, as the game features in-app purchases of which 30% goes to the tech giants. Instead, Epic offered a way to sideload the game on Android devices, but faced challenges because Google kept showing a warning that installing third-party apps can be dangerous.

That 30% cut is at the core of the current dispute. Fortnite offered a 20% discount to players who bought V-Bucks, the in-game currency, via a website rather than within the app, to avoid paying Google or Apple. Such practice runs contrary to both platforms' policies, so the game was removed from their respective app stores.

In response to these actions, Epic filed lawsuits against Apple and Google, saying the move was "yet another example of Apple flexing its enormous power", and that Google was "using its size to do evil upon competitors, innovators, customers and users".

The game developer isn't the first to complain about that 30% cut, which covers subscriptions, ebooks and any other payment made via the app platforms. Streaming service Spotify, ebook retailer Rakuten, messaging app Telegram and tracking-device maker Tile have all filed antitrust complaints with the EU, sparking an ongoing investigation.

Fortnite launched V-Bucks to avoid giving Apple and Google a 30% cut of its profits



Credit: Fascinadora / Shutterstock.com

That comes as tech giants, including Apple and Google, face pressure in the US over their market power.

Payments aren't the only issue holding back mobile gaming: Facebook, Microsoft and Google are unhappy that their cloud-gaming platforms aren't available on Apple devices. Apple has a rule against apps that act as storefronts for games or other apps, so xCloud, Stadia and Facebook games aren't available on devices such as the iPad and iPhone.

How will it affect you?

If you already have Fortnite installed on your iOS or Android device, it will continue working for the foreseeable future. It's unclear what will happen if or when an update is issued, but hopefully the dispute will be solved by then.

Fortnite remains available for desktop computers and can still be sideloaded on Android devices. Normally, that option isn't advisable because apps in the Google Play store are checked by Google to ensure they're legitimate (though some dodgy ones occasionally slip through), whereas third-party apps installed from a website could be fake or malicious. However, Fortnite may be the exception, provided you download the game directly from the Epic Games website. You can then simply open it and tell Android it's safe to install.

That isn't true for iPhones, which is why handsets with the game

preinstalled are now being listed for thousands of dollars on eBay. If you've never installed Fortnite on your iOS device, you're out of luck, but if you downloaded it and then removed it, you can reinstall it. Simply go to the My Purchases section in your version of the App Store, where the app should still be listed, and tap it to reinstall.

What do we think?

There's no question that 30% is a big chunk of revenue to hand over to Apple and Google. With a one-off fee to install an app, the developers can simply set a price that works for them, but the system is more complicated for subscriptions and in-game currency.

Developers could simply charge more for the convenience of signing up to a streaming service or whatever else, directly on a mobile device, but would you pay 30% more for Spotify, ebooks or V-Bucks just to avoid heading to your laptop to make a payment? It's clear something needs to change with how these app stores are operated, now that so many different types of apps and payments exist.

Apple and Google couldn't have imagined Fortnite's V-Bucks back when their platforms launched, so evolving their payment systems to keep up with such changes is reasonable. However, if they disagree, they may face the wrath of EU and US regulators, rather than just lawyers from Epic Games.



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

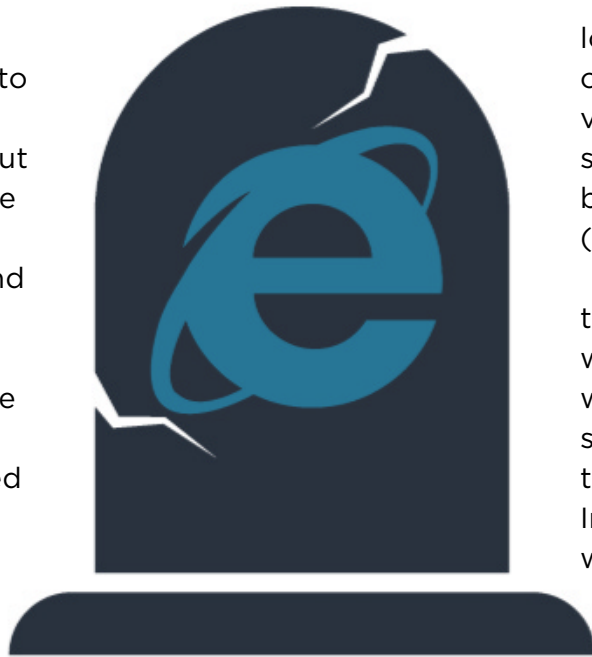
Microsoft finally kills off Internet Explorer

What happened?

Internet Explorer used to be the most popular browser in the world, but it's been five years since Microsoft released its replacement, Edge – and now IE is finally being fully terminated.

The last version of the old browser, Internet Explorer 11, was released in 2013, so anyone still using it should have already switched to a modern alternative, as plenty has changed in the intervening seven years.

Microsoft is also shutting down the original version of Edge in favour of the updated version that uses the same core



engine as Chrome, known as Chromium.

How will it affect you?

From November, Microsoft says its Teams communication tool will no

longer work with IE11, while other apps, such as online versions of Office, will stop supporting the ancient browser in August 2021 (bit.ly/internet509).

Microsoft acknowledges that some businesses created web tools specifically to work with IE11, which they still use, so those will still be allowed to function, thanks to an Internet Explorer mode within Edge. However, that mode won't support Microsoft's own apps – for those, you'll need to use an alternative browser.

The legacy version of Microsoft Edge will no longer receive new security updates after 9 March 2021, so make sure you move to another browser – the new Edge,

Chrome or Firefox, for example – before that date.

What do we think?

Most of us have used Internet Explorer in the past – in 2001, it had 96% of the global browser share. How times change.

Now, Microsoft's browser is running Chromium at its core, Google's Chrome has two-thirds of the market and Edge has about 4% globally, according to StatCounter. The 3% of web users still on IE need to upgrade their browser for their own safety, and there are plenty of options if Edge and Chrome don't appeal, including Firefox, Opera, Vivaldi, Brave and many more.

Google services stop working for five hours

What happened?

Several essential Google services crashed on 20 August, leaving users unable to access their email on Gmail or to connect to Google Drive – a very serious problem given that so many of us are currently relying on cloud services as we work or study from home. The outage lasted for more than five hours.

Some Gmail users reportedly couldn't connect at all, while others had more specific issues, such as being unable to attach files to emails or receive messages. Google Drive files weren't syncing for some, and YouTube users were unable to upload videos. Other

Google services, including Meet and Chat, were also impacted for some users.

At the time of writing, Google hadn't yet explained the cause of the outage.

How will it affect you?

If the threat of not being able to access your data alarms you, there are precautions you can take. Gmail, for example, can be set up for offline use. Under Settings, click the Offline tab, then tick the box to enable offline mail. This means your inbox will be accessible even if you can't connect to Gmail.

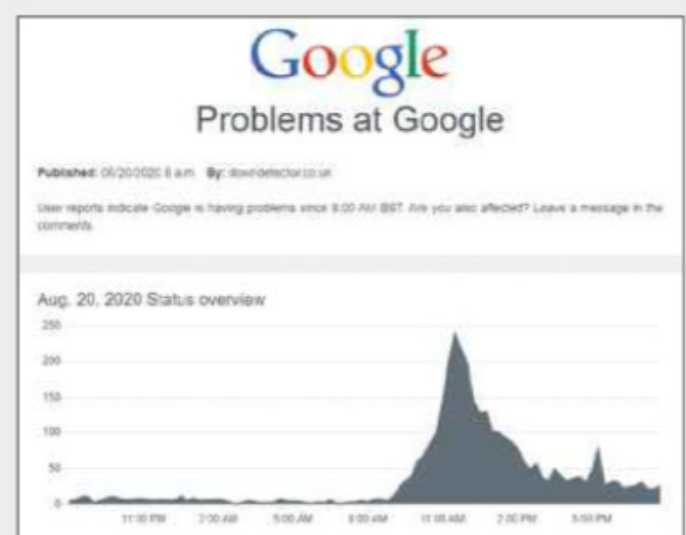
The same result can be achieved with Google Drive by installing the Google Docs Offline Chrome extension (bit.ly/docsoffline509) and selecting the files you'd like

to use offline.

Both these tools are handy for when you're working on an unreliable connection, such as on a train when commuting, or in an offline environment, such as during a flight.

What do we think?

If this is the first you're hearing about the Google outage – lucky you. For everyone else, it was a frustrating five hours of being unable to access work, school and personal items.



Such outages act as a reminder that we are heavily reliant on our internet connections and cloud services. If you can't live without your files or email for five hours, make sure you take precautions in case of an outage, because this is bound to happen again.

Credit: Downdetector

Airbnb bans house parties during pandemic

What happened?

Home-rental platform Airbnb has announced a ban on house parties to help tackle COVID-19, and also instituted a maximum guest limit of 16 people in most of its properties.

The move, more than four months after the World Health Organisation declared a pandemic, comes after explicit criticism from the UK's Bed and Breakfast Association, which represents more traditional holiday homes.

David Weston, chairman of the association, said: "While B&Bs and guest houses have been closed since 23 March, it seems these giant platforms have allowed bookings to be made and enabled the so-called 'lockdown parties', which have put guests, hosts, neighbours and communities at risk. It is about time these global platforms took some responsibility for the safety of their guests, their accommodation and showed some respect for local communities".

In response, Airbnb said: "Instituting a global ban on parties and events is in the best interest of public health. We think such conduct is incredibly irresponsible – we do not want that type of business, and anyone engaged in or allowing that behaviour does not belong on our platform".

Even before the advent of COVID-19, Airbnb was cracking down on unruly



house parties. Back in February, it revealed new rules preventing under-25s with fewer than three positive reviews from booking properties near where they live.

How will it affect you?

No more house parties – at least for the foreseeable future – and, hopefully, no more having to put up with noisy interlopers at your neighbours' rented properties. And don't even think about breaking this rule because Airbnb confirmed that it will pursue legal action against any guest or host who violates the ban. Furthermore, in an effort to help maintain social distancing, the app no longer lets you search for event-

friendly properties or those directly advertising spaces for events or parties.

What do we think?

In the name of public health, it's right to restrict house parties – and, in the name of public nuisance, even more so. But it's probably too late for this move to have a tangible impact on the spread of the virus. Airbnb house parties, while annoying, have never been widespread. In fact, 73% of properties offered on the platform don't allow parties at all. While banning them completely is the right thing to do, we can't help but feel the rival Bed and Breakfast Association wasn't being entirely altruistic about the issue.



FIRST LOOK

Razer Pro Click

bit.ly/click509

Razer is a byword for quality in the world of PC gaming peripherals, and the launch of the Razer Pro Click mouse – and its companion unit, the Pro Type keyboard – entirely confirms its reputation.

This is one of the best Bluetooth mice on the market. It's solidly built, with a satisfyingly robust click to the buttons. The thumb-rest area houses a couple of programmable buttons, and the mouse supports up to three different Bluetooth profiles – so you're not locked to one computer and can switch to different devices without constantly pairing and disconnecting from your main computer.

When you're on the go, the USB Bluetooth receiver nestles snugly



underneath the mouse, where you'll also find an advanced Razer 5G, 16,000 DPI optical sensor that offers incredible precision of movement.

The sleek design eschews any jazzy embellishments, such as unnecessarily sharp angles and the gaudy neon strips that make most gaming mice look like an attack chopper from some dystopian future. Instead, your hand blends effortlessly with the sweeping elegance

of the device, which feels comfortable even after several hours of use.

According to Razer, the mouse has been "engineered by top ergonomics scientists and designers, its added palm support prevents your wrist from anchoring onto work surfaces, alleviating strain and promoting better arm posture".

So what's the catch? Well, for a start, there's no USB-C port. Charging is via the slower (and, in tech terms, positively ancient) micro-USB. Worse still, the design of the connection, which fits into the front of the mouse, makes it almost impossible to use any other charger than the one you get in the box. On the plus side, the device's battery can last up to 400 hours on a single charge.

The Razer Pro Click is available to buy now for £100.



WHAT'S THE RUMOUR

Is Google creating a TV-streaming hub?

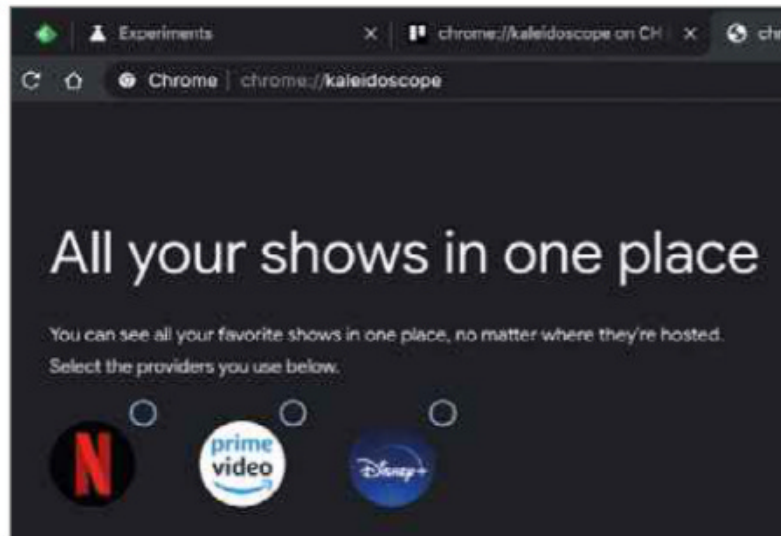
Rumour has it that Google is working on a TV hub that lets you watch all your streaming services in one place. Codenamed Chrome Kaleidoscope, and located at <chrome://kaleidoscope>, its web address is currently only available in the super-experimental Chrome Canary browser. Right now, visitors are shown an error message reading:

"Chrome Kaleidoscope is not currently available for your account. If you are a Googler, check out go/kaleidoscope-not-available for more information".

However, leaked images suggest you'll select and log into the streaming services you use, then watch within your browser. As with YouTube, you'll also be able to play and pause, and pick up where you left off on multiple devices (although, presumably, you'll need to be signed into your Google account and running the service through the Chrome browser).

Based on the rumours, it's believed that Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney Plus will all be supported. Expect more platforms to be added once (or, rather, if) the project leaves the internal testing stage.

Google, it seems, is seriously setting its sights on TV. In Issue 504 (bit.ly/webuser504), we looked at the



company's new Android TV dongle, codenamed Sabrina – a device that could be launched imminently. We wouldn't be surprised to hear more Google TV rumours in the future.

LIKELIHOOD RATING



With so many streaming services now available, a single viewing hub such as Kaleidoscope – in whatever form it takes – is a smart idea. If Google doesn't pursue this project, another company will (although Google has the advantage of owning the world's most popular web browser). Whether you're happy that Google can see what you're watching on, say, Amazon Prime and Netflix, is another matter.

WEBOMETER

WE LIKE...

↑ Hermes teams up with What3words

Courier company Hermes now lets customers use What3words addresses to ensure that packages are delivered to the right place. Your unique three-word address can be added to your My Places section in the Hermes mobile app.



↑ Zoom adds support for smart displays

Video-chat service Zoom will soon be compatible with smart displays including the Amazon Echo Show, Facebook Portal and Google Nest Hub Max, allowing users to interact hands-free, without the need for a computer or mobile device.



WE DON'T LIKE...

↓ Lightroom update wipes users' photos

An update to the Adobe Lightroom app for iOS irreversibly deleted users' photos, presets and other data that wasn't synced to the cloud. Adobe "sincerely apologised" for the issue, but said that it's impossible to retrieve the lost images.



↓ Facebook disables its classic design

Facebook has removed the option to switch from its new design to its 'classic' interface. The updated desktop layout was introduced in March, but users were previously able to revert to the old blue-and-white version if they didn't like the changes.



What's new on Kickstarter

Our favourite new project on the crowdfunding site

ZX Spectrum Next Issue 2

bit.ly/spectrum509 | £300

The ZX Spectrum Next Issue 2 – like its predecessor, the Kickstarter-backed ZX Spectrum Next – is a eulogy to the original 8-bit machine. Crafted by a team of retro gamers, its specs are authentically low (for the 21st century) – a Z80 3.5MHz processor, 1MB of RAM and 256-colour and 512 video – but include HDMI ports, internet connectivity, SD card support and other modern features. The system runs software from all Spectrum models, from the 48K right up to the +3. Pledges start at £300, but an extra £25 nets you the upgraded Accelerated model.



Stay Safe Online

News about the latest threats and advice from security experts

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

Alexa flaws put users' voice data at risk

Security flaws in Amazon Alexa-enabled devices could have allowed hackers to access users' voice data, according to researchers at Check Point. Their findings revealed that vulnerabilities in certain Amazon and Alexa subdomains enabled third parties to perform actions on a victim's behalf.

These flaws, which were reported in June and subsequently fixed by Amazon, could have allowed an attacker to install and remove third-party Alexa 'skills', get a list of all installed skills in the user's Alexa account, obtain a victim's voice history and steal their personal information. Alarmingly, the attack could have been conducted using a single link that would direct a victim



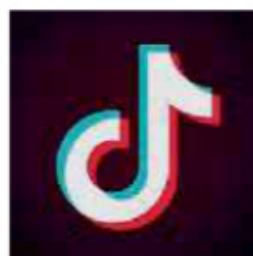
to the Amazon website, where the attacker could inject malicious code.

"The security of our devices is a top priority, and we appreciate the work of independent researchers like Check Point who bring potential issues to us," said an Amazon spokesperson. "We are not aware of any cases of this vulnerability being used against our customers or of any customer information being exposed."

bit.ly/alexa509

TikTok accused of tracking Android users

TikTok exploited an Android loophole so it could track users online, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. The popular video-sharing app is accused of violating the Google Play store's guidelines to collect and track users' MAC addresses – the 12-digit



codes that connect a mobile device to the internet.

MAC addresses are especially useful to advertisers because of their permanent nature, making it possible to track the behaviour of a user and build a profile based on their habits. In 2015, Google banned Android apps that collect "persistent device identifiers", such as MAC codes, without explicit user consent, but TikTok allegedly collected the data for at least 15 months, from 2018 to 2019.

In response to the accusation, TikTok said it is "committed to protecting the privacy and safety of the TikTok community. We constantly update our app to keep up with evolving security challenges, and the current version of TikTok does not collect MAC addresses."

Google told *The Wall Street Journal* that it is currently investigating the matter.

bit.ly/tiktok509

Security Helpdesk | Your questions answered by security specialists

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



Q How worried should Alexa users be about reported security flaws (see story, above)?

Mark Pringle, Twitter

A News that Amazon's Alexa-enabled smart home devices have allowed hackers to access personal information and voice

conversation history is particularly concerning, given the prevalence of these devices in homes across the UK.

The potential for criminals to access personal information, such as banking data history, makes consumers particularly vulnerable to attack. Device owners should be aware of how their smart home devices operate and, because Alexa communicates via a home Wi-Fi network, they must ensure that network is fully secure, or it could become compromised.

Furthermore, consumers



should be wary of malicious links and carefully check the sender authentication on Amazon emails, to ensure they are legitimate.

Ultimately, people need to educate themselves about the security vulnerabilities that these gadgets present, so they can try to find a reasonable compromise between safe practice and convenience.

Q Has the COVID-19 lockdown led to an increase in online fraud?

Anne Hammond, Facebook

A As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, consumers have become more reliant on e-commerce and home deliveries, which has provided fraudsters and cybercriminals with new opportunities to capitalise on vulnerable and unsuspecting individuals.

We've already seen evidence that criminals are using the pandemic to their advantage: online shopping fraud is now 55% higher than it was in 2019, while courier fraud has gone up 16% when compared to this time last year.

PHILIPS

Momentum

Take console gaming
to the **next level**

innovation ✨ you



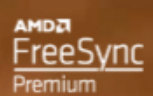
amazon



Available at:
ebuyer.com

55", 4K console gaming display 558M1RY

4K
Ultra HD



Sound by
Bowers & Wilkins

★ Best New Websites

Site of the Fortnight

SOFTWARE

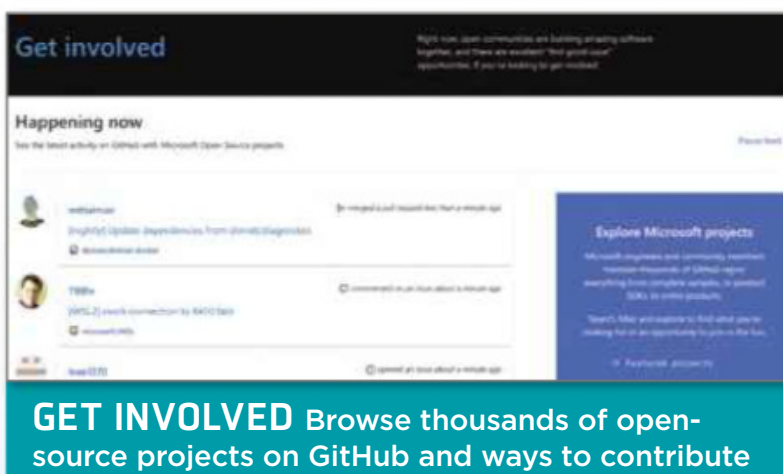
NEW

Microsoft Open Source

opensource.microsoft.com

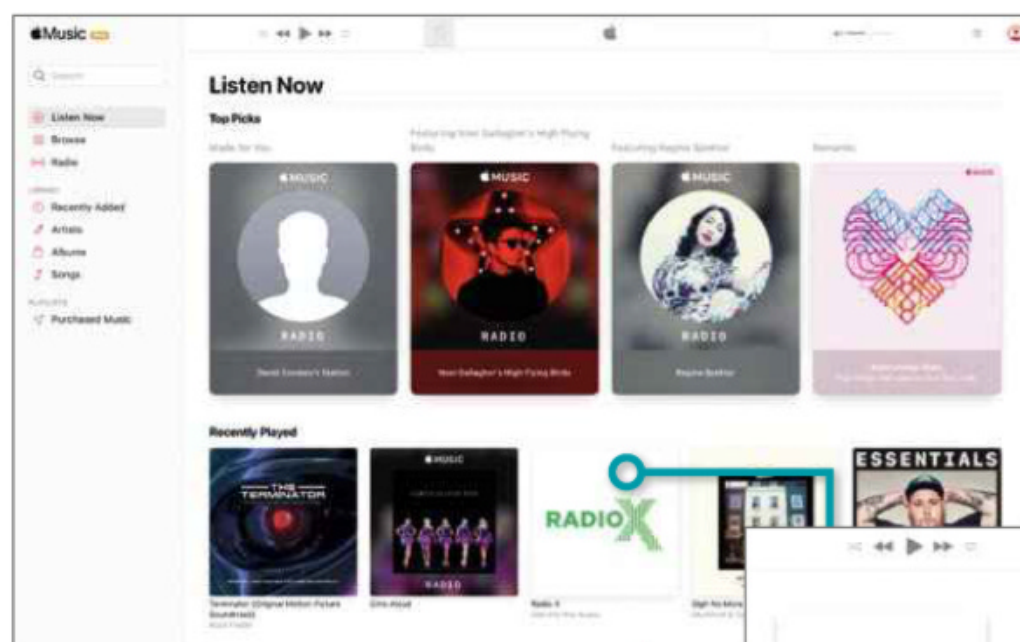
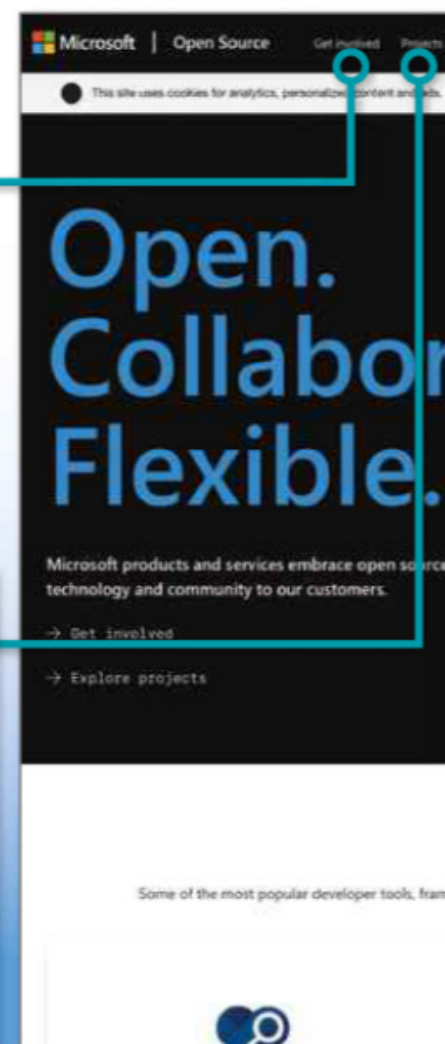
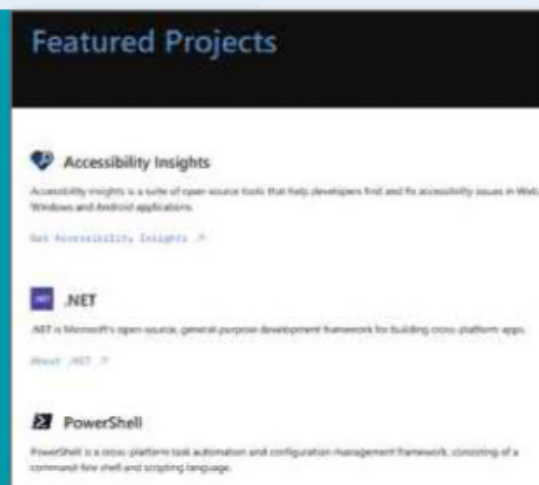
Having once considered open-source software as a major threat to its business model, Microsoft has since embraced the idea by investing in Linux development, buying GitHub and creating the .NET Foundation. Packed with open-source resources and projects, this site lets you get involved with new developments and explore notable Microsoft programs created by open communities. You'll need to be technically minded, but the site is brimming with blog posts and info about the ways in which Microsoft supports projects, so there's tons to get stuck into.

Our rating



GET INVOLVED Browse thousands of open-source projects on GitHub and ways to contribute

FEATURED PROJECTS Learn about Microsoft's most important open-source projects, such as Accessibility Insights, Visual Code Studio and Windows Terminal



MUSIC

NEW

Apple Music

bit.ly/applemusic509

The web version of Apple Music moved out of beta in April this year, but the latest pre-release version shows the service is continuing to test new features. A new Listen Now tab (replacing For You) is packed with top picks, your most recently played tunes and lots of recommendations and songs within featured categories. The design has also been refreshed to more closely resemble the look of the forthcoming iOS 14 and macOS Big Sur Music app – the new red logos have transparent backgrounds, for starters, although lyrics continue to be absent. Whether you like what you see or not, you can provide feedback by filling in a simple form.

Our rating



NEW

FITNESS

Fit & Well

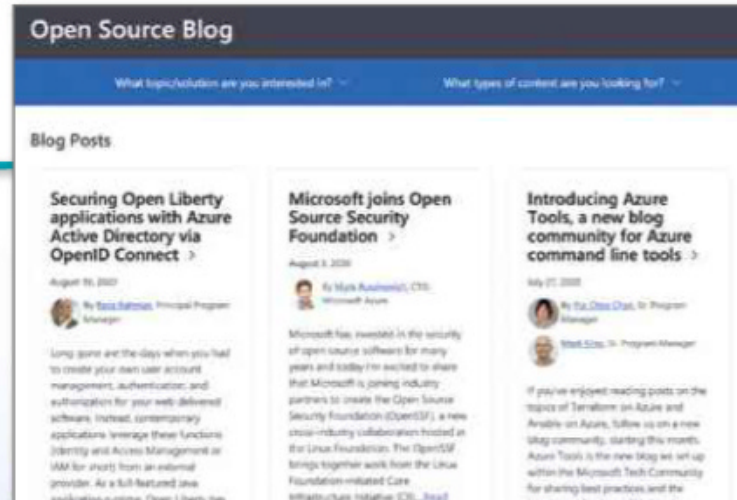
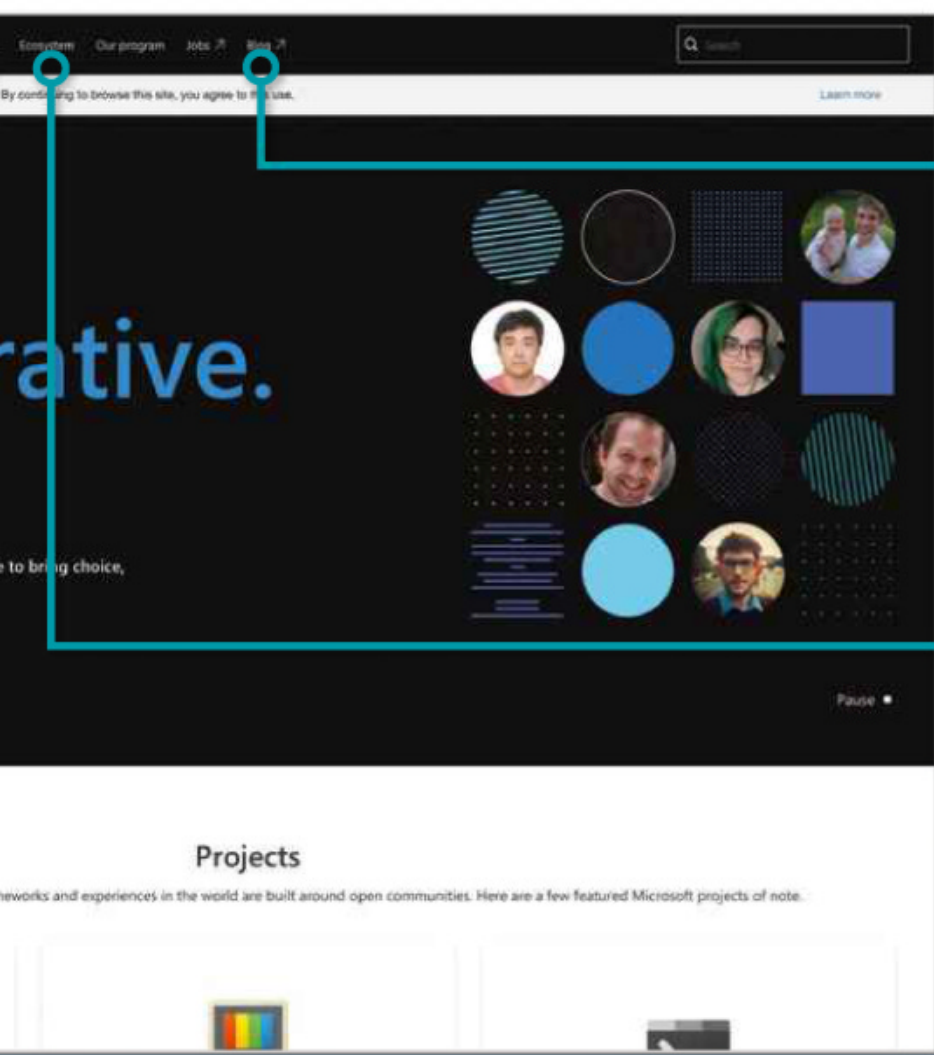
fitandwell.com

If you've piled on the pounds during lockdown, this new site is packed with motivational features that cover fitness, nutrition, weight loss and a healthy home, but there's also a great emphasis on reviews, tutorials and deals. As a result, the articles tend to end with a list of products you can buy from retail partners, but since this is how Fit & Well makes its money, the hard sell can be forgiven. More annoyingly, some of the well-written articles feel overwhelmed by images, links to other articles and adverts. Thankfully, the fresh content should keep you running back for more.

Our rating

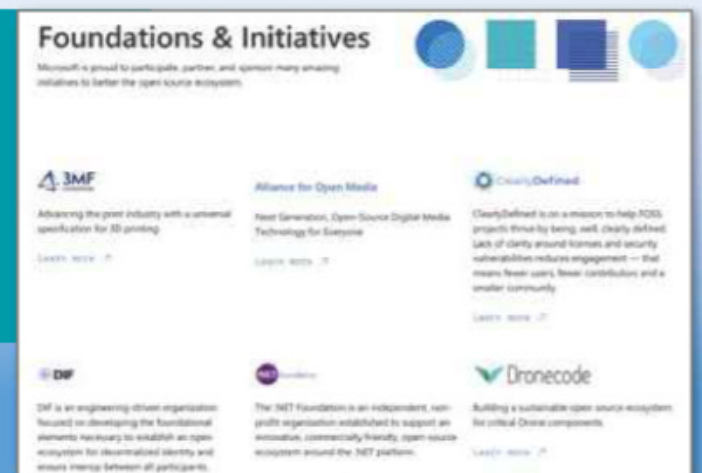


We review this fortnight's best new and relaunched websites and rate them for content, design and features



LATEST NEWS
Filter the blog posts by open-source topic, content and specific people you want to hear from

FIND FUNDED DEVELOPMENTS
Microsoft employees help pick projects worthy of sponsorship, and you can learn about the beneficiaries



SHOPPING

Print My Tops printmytops.co.uk

Offering to print and deliver personalised T-shirts and other goodies within 48 hours of placing an order, this family-run business has gone online for the first time. It could do with a few tweaks and a livelier design to properly compete with the web's more established players, but it's easy to navigate the site and find the items you're after. Personalising products with photos is cumbersome, however: You have to wait for the company to contact you by email and then send the requested image as an attachment, so you can't see the finished item before ordering, which is a bit off-putting.

Our rating

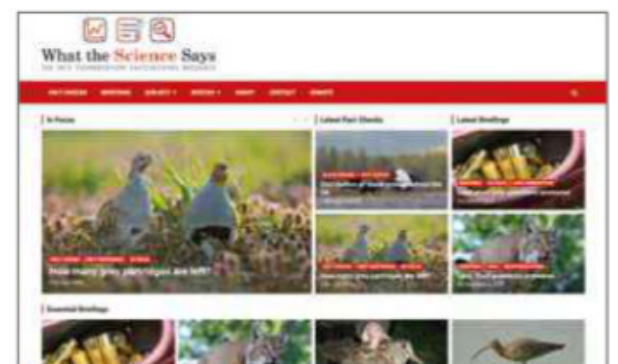


COMICS

Find The Metaverse findthemetaverse.com

Superman could surely fly around the world's comic conventions in the blink of an eye but the coronavirus pandemic has proved a fierce enemy. Many Comic Cons have postponed their physical gatherings but Find The Metaverse is saving the day by moving many events online. By visiting the site, you can discover more about cons in the UK and across the world and, when they begin, you'll be able to view panel discussions, meet-and-greets and even cosplay competitions and workshops, thanks to footage streamed via YouTube. You'll also be able to browse an event's marketplace and buy merch.

Our rating



SCIENCE

What the Science Says whatthesciencesays.org

Inaccurate conservation reporting is an ongoing problem so ecologists from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust are determined to set the record straight, fighting misinformation by picking up on claims made in the media and indicating whether or not they're correct, and why. Clear and concise answers are given at the top of each article, followed by a full explanation and references. If your thirst for knowledge is not satiated, you can read detailed briefings on a number of topics. It's easy to find what you're after, thanks to logical section headings and a simple but effective use of tags.

Our rating





EXERCISE

NEW

Greater Manchester Walking

www.gmwalking.co.uk

Northerners are being encouraged to go for a stroll in an effort to make Greater Manchester the country's first walking region. This site helps you find your way to the area's most interesting routes, along with facilities, local walking groups and courses being held across the county's 10 towns and cities. Inspiring stories discussing the benefits of exercise help to motivate and there's news of a virtual walking festival earmarked for October. There's not much difference in content between the news and blogs sections, but the site nevertheless gets its message across well.

Our rating



CULTURE

RELAUNCH

Leicester Museums

leicestermuseums.org

Aside from renaming Leicester's New Walk Museum as Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, the city's cultural bodies have created a new site promoting its attractions. Visit each one by clicking a name at the top of the screen or see what's going on across them all, with highlighted events and information about the collections ready to be explored. It's a beautifully clean and clear hub that also introduces a new booking system to aid social distancing, and you'll find cultural information about the city itself, if you prefer to take a stroll around public outdoor artworks. A list of these and a map of would come in handy, though.

Our rating



GARDENING

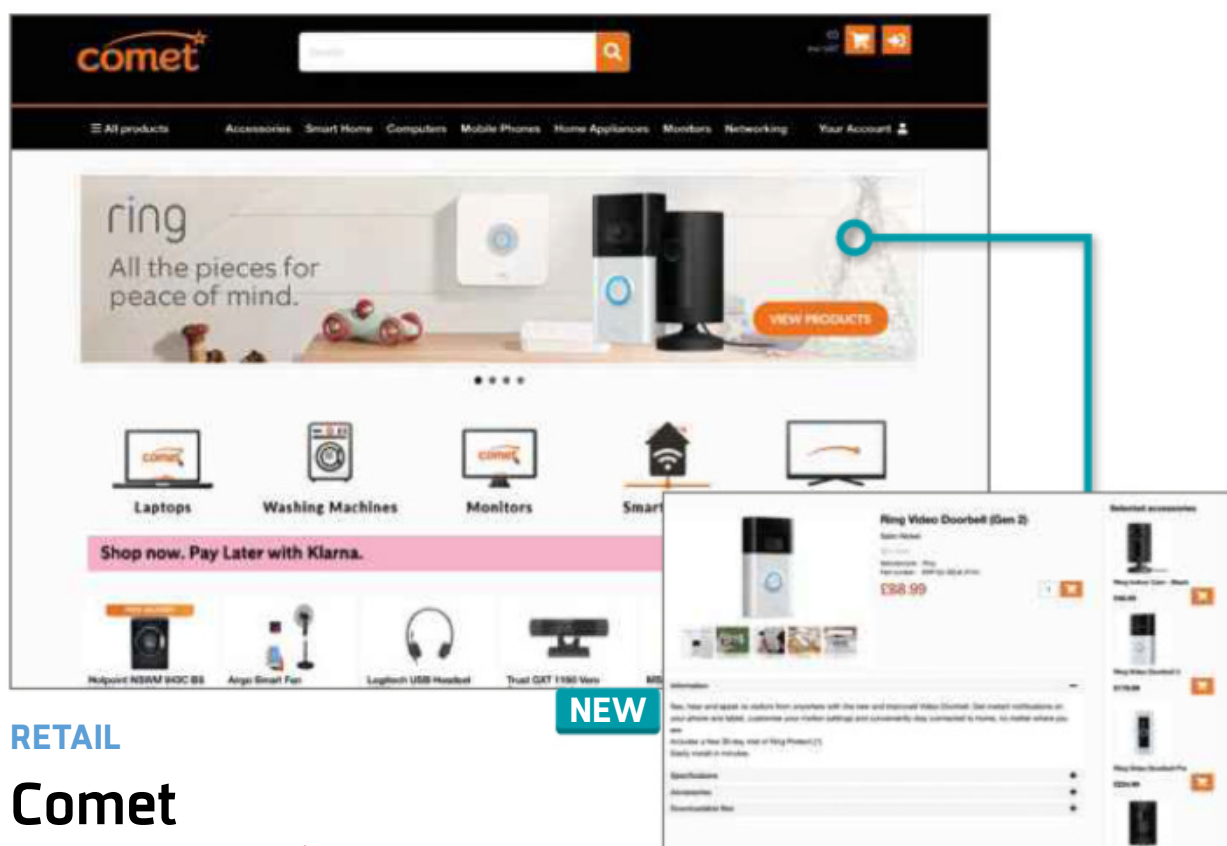
NEW

Gardening Etc

gardeningetc.com

Recognising that gardens should be an outdoor extension of your home, this site blooms with ideas about making the most of your available space. As well as giving you green-fingered tips about growing flowers and plants, it helps you develop your gardening style with a collection of design hints and guides: learn how to design an outdoor kitchen, update spaces on a budget or develop a garden that's perfect for working in. The site abounds with beautiful images and professionally shot videos though, oddly, many of these aren't available on the site's YouTube channel. Hopefully, this will be rectified soon.

Our rating



RETAIL

NEW

Comet

www.comet.co.uk

Having racked up losses of £230m, retailer Comet closed its doors in December 2012. Now the brand is set to return with a professional-looking site selling a wide range of electricals, from computers and mobile phones to home appliances and accessories. Product listings indicate whether an item is in stock and show the availability of free delivery. Certain products also include downloadable specification sheets for a more in-depth look, though some of the descriptions would benefit from better formatting. That said, there's a chat facility and a phone number if you need to ask questions, and prices are competitive. You can also buy now and pay later using Klarna.

Our rating



GAMING

NEW

Ninty Fresh

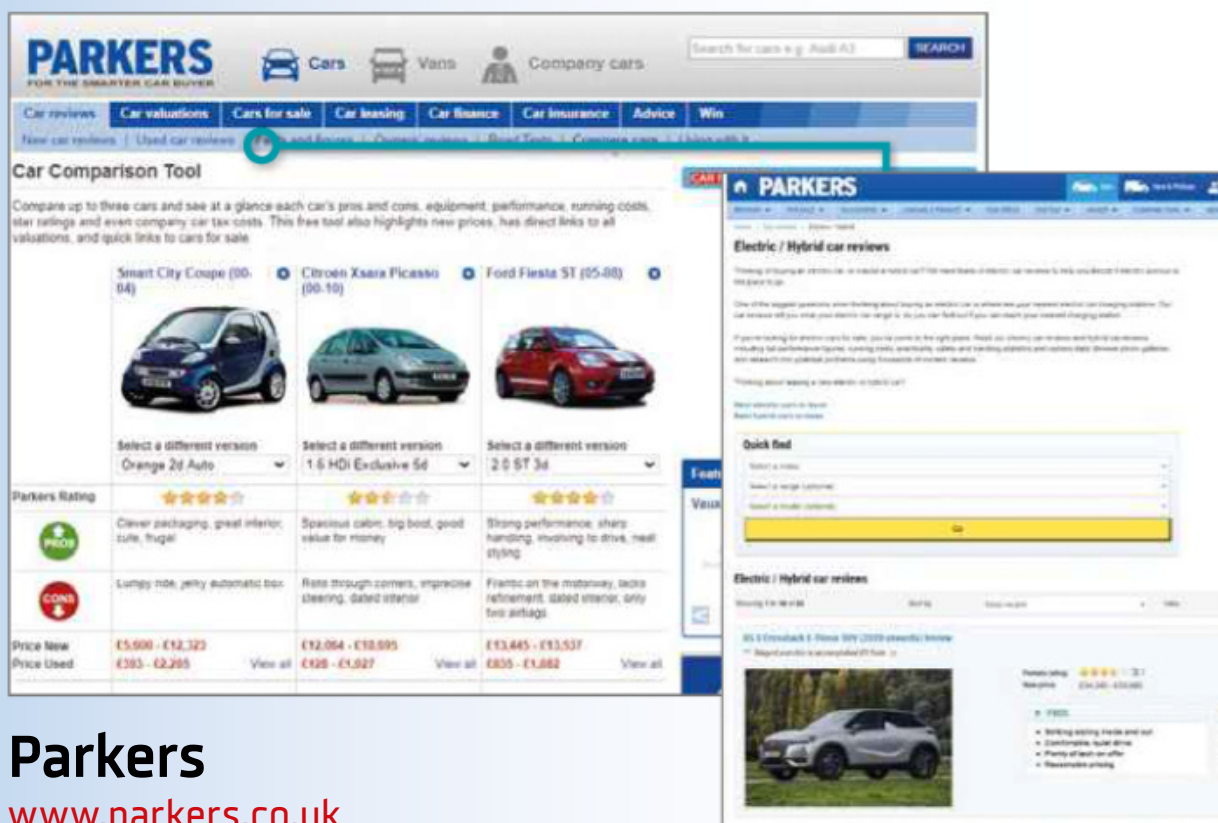
nintyfresh.net

Ninty Fresh is the first new UK magazine dedicated to Nintendo games since 2014. The first issue was funded via Kickstarter but it's now possible to snap up a copy by visiting this website which, rather disappointingly, is a somewhat stark, bare-bones affair that could do with levelling up. Buying the magazine is straightforward enough, but there's little else to hold your interest as yet. You'll see a list of contents for the first issue and some resources including a Super Mario colouring sheet and a PDF of puzzles, but a colourful, more playful design to draw in potential readers wouldn't go amiss.

Our rating



ESSENTIAL BOOKMARKS THIS ISSUE: Handy sites for road users



Parkers

www.parkers.co.uk

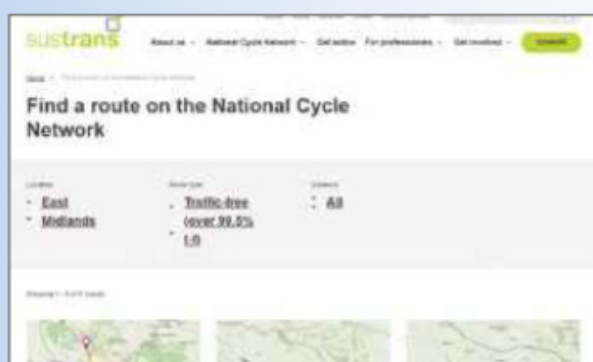
Discover all you need to know about buying, selling and running a car or van in the UK, using reviews written by real motorists and up-to-date advice and info from motoring pros. Parkers ran as a magazine for nearly 50 years but now there's just the website – it may lack the polish of the BBC's Top Gear site (www.topgear.com) but it has a bigger tank of genuinely useful detail. Dive into the reviews and buyers' guides by searching or browsing car types, from sports cars to electric, or by exploring the tabs at the top, such as Leasing & Finance (advice and calculators rather than hard sells), For Sale (there's a car-choosing tool and car history checklist) and Advice, which has sections on car jargon, news, and how to buy a vehicle during a pandemic.



Older Drivers

www.olderdrivers.org.uk

The specific challenges faced by mature drivers are explored in thorough, respectful detail by this excellent UK site from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (www.rospa.com). Main sections cover the law, including advice on reporting medical conditions and the rules on renewing your licence, plus how to keep your car safe, and your transport options if you decide to stop driving. All pages are free to download as PDFs (click the orange Print button), and the site links to a seven-year archive of articles at olderdriversforum.com. There's also a section for families, with advice on what to do if you feel it's unsafe for an older relative to continue driving.



Sustrans

www.sustrans.org.uk

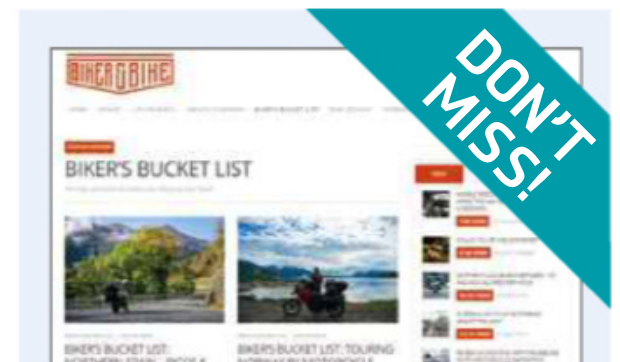
Four wheels good, two wheels better? That's the dream of Sustrans, the UK cycling organisation which helps fund and maintain the National Cycle Network (NCN). With the recent lockdown encouraging new cyclists to get in the saddle, Sustrans added a detailed Beginner's Guide (bit.ly/begin509), with advice on how to choose and buy a bike, what to wear when cycling and how to plan your route using Sustrans' own interactive map-based route planner (bit.ly/plan509). You can also download free printable guides to traffic-free cycling and walking trails all over the country (bit.ly/download509), and discover the latest cycle-friendly street changes made by your local authority, using the map at bit.ly/changes509.



Road Cycling UK

roadcyclinguk.com

A passion for road cycling may help you find your way around this website's event listings, racing galleries and 'Race Tech' blog posts, but you don't have to be a Lycra Bandit to be inspired and informed by this free online magazine. Even occasional pedallers should bookmark Road Cycling UK's excellent Maintenance pages (bit.ly/maintain509) – an expertly produced library of how-to articles and videos. These include content aimed at beginners, covering topics such as how to pump up a tyre, how to replace brake pads and how and why to clean your bike after a winter jaunt, along with plenty of other content for home mechanics, dealing with everything from replacing gear cables to building your own winter bike.



Biker And Bike

www.bikerandbike.co.uk

"Motorcycling is dangerous. By continuing to use this website you accept this". Disclaimer out of the way, this site for two-wheeled petrolheads dives straight in with an events calendar and Biker's Bucket List (which includes the Isle of Man TT, North Africa to Dakar and The Bike Shed Show), plus lots of articles fuelled by a passion for biking. It also incorporates the Stolen Motorbike Register (bit.ly/stolen509), with its live UK map of all currently registered lost and found bikes. Biker And Bike's articles and campaigns are not aimed at beginners but if you're in love with your silver dream machine, you'll feel right at home.

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A DISC
FOR
£6.95!**

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In this new Reader Offer, we're selling **Windows 10 Home** for just **£29.99** (1-PC, unlimited lifetime licence)! The normal price is a hefty £119.99, so our deal represents a whopping 75% discount.

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Build a Better Site

Specialist tips, top tools and practical help

Top Tips of the Fortnight



Listen to Google's webmaster podcast

Google Webmaster Central service has expanded from blogs (webmasters.googleblog.com) and videos (www.youtube.com/googlewebmasters), and now has a podcast called Search Off the Record (search-off-the-record.libsyn.com), offering the latest essential behind-the-scenes information for webmasters.

Explore WordPress 5.5

WordPress 5.5 is just around the corner – it may be available by the time you read this, so check your dashboard to see if your site has

updated. Top of the new features is a Block Directory, which lets you browse for and download new blocks, even if you're in the middle of creating a post or page. Lazy loading of images, where your site won't bother to load images if they aren't visible on the user's screen, will become the default – to make websites load faster. The new built-in site maps mean you won't have to use a plugin to help search engines find their way around your site.



Deal of the Fortnight

A2 Hosting's (www.a2hosting.com) Startup hosting package has dropped to £2.79 per month and includes 100GB of SSD storage.

Web-building Helpdesk

Q I'm really confused about the things I need to do to improve my site ranking on Google. What are the most important elements a site must have?

Mark Rush, via email

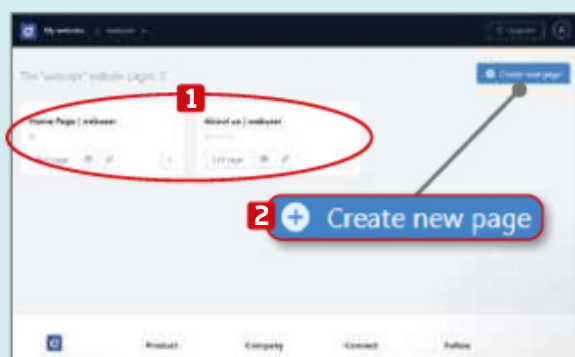
A Google insists that the most important thing isn't to stress over individual elements, but to build a compelling, interesting website that people genuinely want to visit. Theories come and go as to which elements do or don't help your ranking and, if Google notices such things being abused, advantage can quickly shift to disadvantage. The list of busted myths at bit.ly/mythbust509 shows elements that people have thought might help but have actually been confirmed by Google to be irrelevant.

Andy Shaw, Technical & Reviews Editor

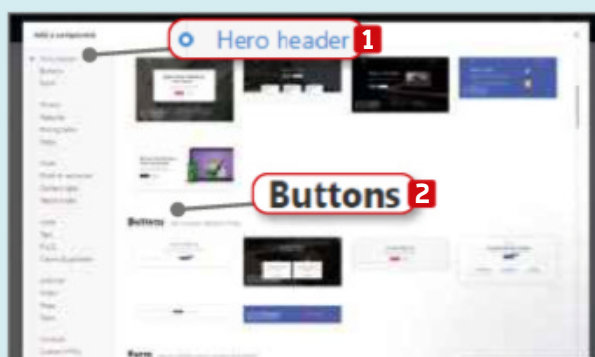


MINI WORKSHOP | Create a great-looking website in seconds
Unicorn Platform: unicornplatform.com |  10 mins | Any browser

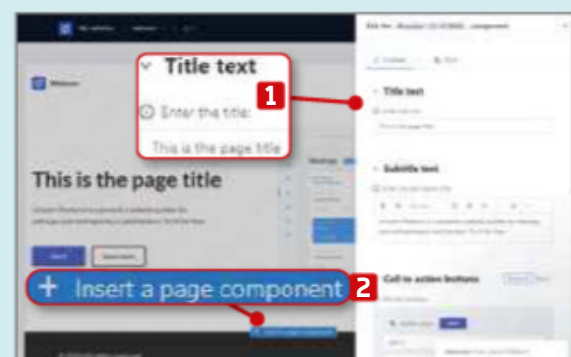
There are plenty of tools around for creating websites from scratch but we were particularly impressed with Unicorn Platform, which can help you build a single 10-page website for free.



1 Sign up for an account and confirm your email address. Click 'Create new website', choose a subdomain (such as webuser.unicornplatform.com) and click Create. Click 'Edit website pages' to display the first two pages of your site: Home Page and About Us. **1** Click 'Create new page' **2** to add more – up to 10 with a free account.



2 On one of the pages, click the 'Edit page' button, then click 'Add component'. This opens a long list of thumbnails showing all the elements you can choose to build your page, from hero headers **1** to individual buttons. **2** Choose one to get started.



3 Click the 'Edit component' button to open the sidebar, where you can change the content of the various sections that make up the element. **1** To add another element, click the 'Insert a page component' button. **2** When you're ready, click 'Publish page' and you can visit your site at the address you set up in Step 1.



What To Watch Online

Pick of the fortnight

NOWTV

Watch Jude Law in live episode of sci-fi drama *The Third Day*

From 15 September

Most TV dramas wait years before they risk broadcasting a live episode. *Coronation Street*, *The West Wing* and *EastEnders* all treated viewers to live real-time specials eventually, and *The Bill* did it twice.

Now Sky and HBO – who memorably teamed up for *Chernobyl* – will attempt to pull off the same feat halfway through a new sci-fi miniseries, starring Jude Law and Naomi Harris.

Law stars as Sam, a man drawn to a mysterious island off the British coast, in the first three episodes of *The Third Day*, aired weekly by Sky Atlantic from 15 September. Then, on 3 October, comes the live episode, which follows the events of a single day in real time, and is planned as a single continuous take. Then, from 6 October, come three further pre-recorded episodes, starring Naomi Harris as an outsider who arrives on the island. Emily Watson and Paddy Considine also appear, and the script is by *Utopia* creator Dennis Kelly.

Stream *The Third Day* via Now TV with an Entertainment Pass (£9.99 per month, bit.ly/nowntv509). The real-time episode will stream live, then remain online to watch on-demand. Watch the official trailer at bit.ly/thirdday509.



NOW Watch new Sky comedy *Two Weeks To Live*

From 2 September

Game of Thrones' Maisie Williams and *Fleabag*'s Sian Clifford co-star in Sky One's new comedy *Two Weeks to Live*, whose six episodes arrive on Now TV as an on-demand box set on 2 September. Williams plays Kim Stokes, a young misfit who leaves her

secluded rural life and immediately finds herself on the run from murderous gangsters and the police. Watch the trailer at bit.ly/weeks509.

prime video Welcome back comic-book vigilantes *The Boys*

From 4 September

Over a year since Season 1 of Amazon's



Garth Ennis comic book adaptation *The Boys*, Season 2 is finally here, and it promises to be even more brutal than the first. The satirical black comedy now welcomes "super terrorists" to present an even bigger headache for vigilante hero Billy Butcher (Karl Urban). Season 3 is underway, and creator Eric Kripke hints that its storylines are inspired by the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile Season 2's first three episodes arrive on Amazon Prime Video on 4 September, followed weekly by five further episodes. Behind-the-scenes show *Prime Rewind: Inside The Boys* arrived on Prime on 28 August.

N Blast off to Mars in *Away*

From 4 September

Oscar-winner Hilary Swank stars in this new 10-part Netflix Original as an astronaut embarking on a dangerous three-year mission to Mars. The show lands somewhere between *The Martian* (which you can also watch on Netflix) and *Gravity* (currently on Now TV), with extra servings of Earthbound family drama and interstellar office politics, plus the inevitable CGI fireball-filled fuselage. Find out who makes it to Mars when all 10 episodes of *Away* touch down at bit.ly/away509, where you can watch the trailer for free.



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



N Meet youthful sleuth *Young Wallander*

From 3 September

Netflix's new English-language drama casts Adam Pålsson as a younger version of Henning Mankel's troubled 'tec Kurt Wallander – played by Krister Henriksson in the Swedish *Wallander*, then Kenneth Branagh in the BBC version – but with a strange time twist. Unlike 1960s-set *Morse* prequel *Endeavour*, *Young Wallander* transplants its young sleuth to the modern day, complete with mobile phones and DNA evidence. Six episodes arrive on Netflix at bit.ly/youngwall509.

All four series of Branagh's *Wallander* are available via the BBC iPlayer and also Netflix (bit.ly/wallflix509).

N Watch mind-bending film *I'm Thinking of Ending Things*

From 4 September

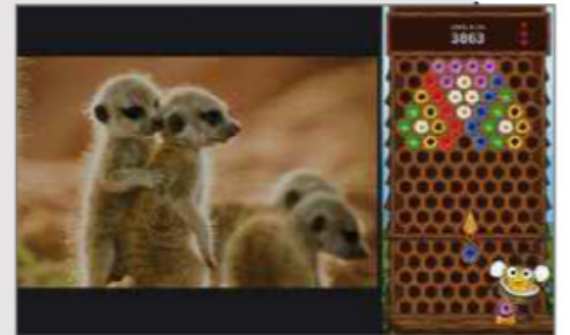
The new film from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Being John Malkovich* creator Charlie Kaufman

Beehive Bedlam buzzes back to Sky

Finally, some good news: Beehive Bedlam, the addictive game that filled the gap between shows for Sky+ users in the late 1990s, is back!

The fast-paced puzzle game is the latest addition to Sky Q's PlayWorks app, following a fan campaign and Change.org petition (bit.ly/petition509). The game is also now available for Android and iOS (bit.ly/beeapp509).

PlayWorks arrived on Sky Q and Sky Q Mini in May, and also includes such fun games as Tetris, Tomb Runner, Solitaire and Mahjong. It's all controllable by voice – for example, say "Start PlayWorks" or "Bee Bee Bee" to go straight to Beehive Bedlam.



heads straight for Netflix on 4 September. *I'm Thinking of Ending Things* stars Jessie Buckley as a young woman whose boyfriend (Jesse Plemons) takes her to see his parents (Toni Collette and David Thewlis) – and things get decidedly creepy, as you can see from the trailer (bit.ly/things509). The story, based on the 2016 novel by Iain Reid (bit.ly/thingsbook509), should appeal to Kaufman fans. Just don't expect it to make sense!

N Watch Katherine Ryan's sitcom *The Duchess*

From 11 September

Panel show regular Katherine Ryan has proved popular on Netflix with her stand-up specials (bit.ly/kath509). She has now written and stars in her own sitcom, playing a "fashionably disruptive" single mum juggling career, relationships and caring for her much-loved young daughter, while contemplating having a second child. Catch all six episodes of *The Duchess* from 11 September at bit.ly/duchess509.



▶ Watch new socially-distant *EastEnders*

From 7 September

Three months after the Beeb's top soap was booted off air by lockdown, *EastEnders* finally returns to the iPlayer on 7 September, as announced via the [@bbceastenders](https://twitter.com/bbceastenders) Twitter account (bit.ly/eetweet509). The new episodes are filmed under social-distancing guidelines, including DIY hair and make-up for the cast. There'll be four episodes per week, each 10 minutes shorter than usual, available to watch live and then on catch-up on iPlayer.



In case you missed it...

Robert Galbraith's (aka JK Rowling's) war vet-turned-private detective Cormoran Strike is back on the iPlayer in four-part adaptation *Strike: Lethal White*, again with Tom Burke as Strike and Holliday Grainger as sidekick Robin.

You can also watch three previous



series of *Strike* via the same page.

Now TV has finally added *Gomorra* prequel film *L'Immortale*, a spin-off from Sky Atlantic's Italian mafia thriller. Like the show's four seasons (bit.ly/gomorra509), the film is included with an Entertainment Pass.



Group Test

We test and compare the latest products

Monitors under £300

We look at four monitors, costing between £100 and £300, to see which models offer the best value for money

A few months ago, when all the office workers were setting up their desks to spend the next few months working from home, new monitors were very hard to come by. Thankfully, the manufacturers have now replenished their stocks, and it's now a much better time to buy.

To celebrate this, we've picked out four monitors to compare and contrast, all of which you can pick up for less than £300, with the most affordable costing just a smidgen over £100. In exploring the range of choices, we've used our tests to see whether the most affordable models compromise on quality, and whether the more expensive units have extras that are worth paying for.

HOW WE TESTED

Whenever we test a screen, we use a colorimeter to physically measure its performance. We test what percentage of colours in Microsoft's sRGB colour standard the monitor can reproduce, how bright it can get, what the contrast ratio is (the difference between its brightest white and darkest black) and the Delta-E score, which measures the average difference between the colour sent to a screen and the measured result – the smaller this number, the better.

AOC 24B2XH | £110.71 | Buy from Central Computers: bit.ly/aoc24b509

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

This AOC monitor is the cheapest IPS (In-Plane Switching) monitor we've ever seen. This is great news in itself, because IPS screens are generally a lot better than their cheaper rivals, but this one is particularly good. The screen only measures 24in across the diagonal but, with a resolution of 1,920 by 1,080 pixels, it's sharp enough not to show any jagged edges at normal viewing distances.

The monitor performed remarkably well in our tests. The contrast ratio is solid at 1,122:1 but the colour accuracy in the monitor's average Delta-E test returned 1.26 – a much better result than we usually see in monitors of this price, and the best result of all the monitors in this Group Test.

The 24B2XH's stand only allows for a small amount of forwards and backwards tilt adjustment, and is made of lightweight, flimsy-feeling plastic that wobbles a little when you knock your desk or prod at the screen. However, its slim bezels along the left, right and top edges salvage a sufficiently elegant design.

It's very slim, too, and AOC includes both HDMI and VGA cables in the box, so you're ready to go straight away. The one disappointment is that the power supply isn't built in. Instead, you've



got to find room on or around your desk for a dangling external adapter, which is less than satisfactory.

The monitor isn't exactly chock full of inputs, either. You get an HDMI and a VGA port, both situated in the centre of the rear panel next to a 3.5mm headphone output. This might not seem like much, but it does cover most PCs and laptops, though you would need an adaptor if your PC only has a USB Type-C port.

VERDICT ★★★★★

This monitor may not be equipped with luxuries such as USB Type-C connectivity or a height-adjustable stand, but it's got quality where it counts. The screen is phenomenal for the price, offering great contrast and colour accuracy. As long as your PC has the right type of connections, this would make a fabulous upgrade for remarkably little money.

Iiyama XUB2792QSU-W1 | £260.47 | Buy from Ebayer: bit.ly/iiyama509

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

This 27in monitor has QHD (Quad High Definition) resolution of 2,560 x 1,440 pixels, which makes it the highest resolution monitor in this test.

The unit is mostly white, even down to the bundled cables, which gives it a sleek and modern look without being flashy. There are black bezels at the top and sides, but they are so elegantly slim that you'd barely notice any gap if you were to stand two of these screens side by side in a dual-screen setup. The stand is highly adjustable, with the full set of height, tilt and pivot adjustments, as well as 90° rotation to put it in portrait mode.

The monitor has a pair of 2W speakers built in, which are fine for Windows sounds but not great for movies or music. However, there's also a 3.5mm line-out jack, so you can plug in your own speakers or headphones, and a line-in for connecting a microphone. It also has HDMI, DisplayPort, DVI and dual USB 3 ports for connecting your PC.

This Iiyama model performed very well in our tests. With the brightness set to 100 and everything else to its defaults, the screen reproduced 97.99% of the sRGB colour palette with a Delta-E score of 1.63. Its peak brightness reached 370cd/m², and its matt finish eliminates



any problem with glare.

While the Iiyama's high screen resolution hints at gaming prowess, this is a monitor that's best suited to office work. Its DisplayPort connection runs at up to 70Hz and is compatible with AMD FreeSync, if you have a compatible graphics card, but the remaining ports are 60Hz only and not FreeSync compatible. We found there was some blurring on fast moving objects, though it wasn't too bad.

VERDICT

★★★★★

This screen doesn't try to wow us with advanced features or cutting-edge connectivity, but matches a classy, practical design with a high-performing panel that works brilliantly straight out of the box. If you're working from home and need a generously sized monitor for multi-tasking various open windows, this is a brilliant option.

Philips 243B9 | £185.38 | Buy from CCL: bit.ly/philips509

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

Like our Gold Award-winning AOC monitor, this Phillips model's 24in screen runs at Full HD resolution (1,920 x 1,080 pixels). But there are some extras to justify its higher price.

The unit's USB Type-C port not only carries the video signal to your monitor but, if connected to a laptop, can also charge the battery. It has HDMI, DisplayPort and VGA inputs, and the IPS panel has a matt finish to keep glare to a minimum. In our tests, using its default setting, the screen recreated 97.2% of the sRGB colour standard, with a Delta-E score of 1.33. Peak brightness was 285cd/m² and contrast measured 980:1.

This is the most eco-friendly monitor of the group. Made from recycled plastic, its infrared detector senses when you're sitting in front of it and dims to save power if you wander off.



VERDICT

★★★★★

This excellent monitor would have fared better in our tests if it weren't for the similarly specified and equally strong AOC Gold Award-winning model undercutting its price. However, you may find its bonus features worth paying for.

AOC C27G2ZE | £279.97 | Buy from Laptops Direct: bit.ly/aoc27g509

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

If you're happy to spend more money to get gaming-specific features, this 27in screen incorporates a slight curve to make its extremities more immersive. Despite its generous size, the screen's resolution is only Full HD (1,920 x 1,080 pixels), but it's the refresh rate of 240Hz that makes this stand out.

The other monitors tested here peak at 75Hz, so if you have a compatible AMD FreeSync graphics card, this should produce significantly smoother gaming graphics. It comes with two HDMI ports and one DisplayPort.

Out of the box, we measured 97.9% of the sRGB colour standard and a peak brightness of 306cd/m², though colour accuracy was a bit disappointing with a Delta-E average score of 2.22. This screen uses VA (Vertical Alignment) rather than IPS, which provides high contrast – we measured it at 3,336:1.



VERDICT

★★★★★

If you're into gaming and want a monitor with a higher refresh rate, this is a good option that also looks the part. However, you are losing out on the IPS screens of its rivals, and it's significantly more expensive.

	 	 	 	
	AOC 24B2XH	Iiyama XUB2792QSU-W1	Philips 243B9	AOC C27G2ZE
WEBSITE	eu.aoc.com	iiyama.com	bit.ly/phil509	eu.aoc.com
PRICE	£110.71	£260.47	£185.38	£279.97
BUY FROM	Central Computers: bit.ly/aoc24b509	Ebuyer: bit.ly/iiyama509	CCL: bit.ly/philips509	Laptops Direct: bit.ly/aoc27g509
SIZE	24in	27in	24in	27in
RESOLUTION	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	2,560 x 1,440 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels	1,920 x 1,080 pixels
PANEL TYPE	IPS	IPS	IPS	VA
RESPONSE TIME	8ms	5ms	4ms	0.5ms
REFRESH RATE	75Hz	70Hz	75Hz	240Hz
PORTS	1 x HDMI, 1 x VGA	1 x DisplayPort, 1 x HDMI, 1 x DVI-D	1 x DisplayPort, 1 x HDMI, 1 x USB Type-C, 1 x VGA	1 x DisplayPort, 2 x HDMI
ADJUSTABLE STAND	Tilt	Height, tilt, swivel and portrait	Height, tilt, swivel and portrait	Tilt
USB	✗	2 x USB3	2 x USB2	✗
SPEAKERS	✗	✓	✓	✗
SYNCING TECHNOLOGY	✗	AMD FreeSync	AMD FreeSync	AMD FreeSync
WARRANTY	Three-years return-to-base	Three-years on-site	Two-years return-to-base	Three-years return-to-base

OUR VERDICT

Our Gold Award goes to the AOC 24B2XH, a 24in Full HD resolution monitor that offers amazing value for money. The screen itself is excellent for the price, and while it doesn't have the bells and whistles of its rivals, if you're just looking for an affordable monitor that's great to look at and does the job well, this model is worth every penny and more.

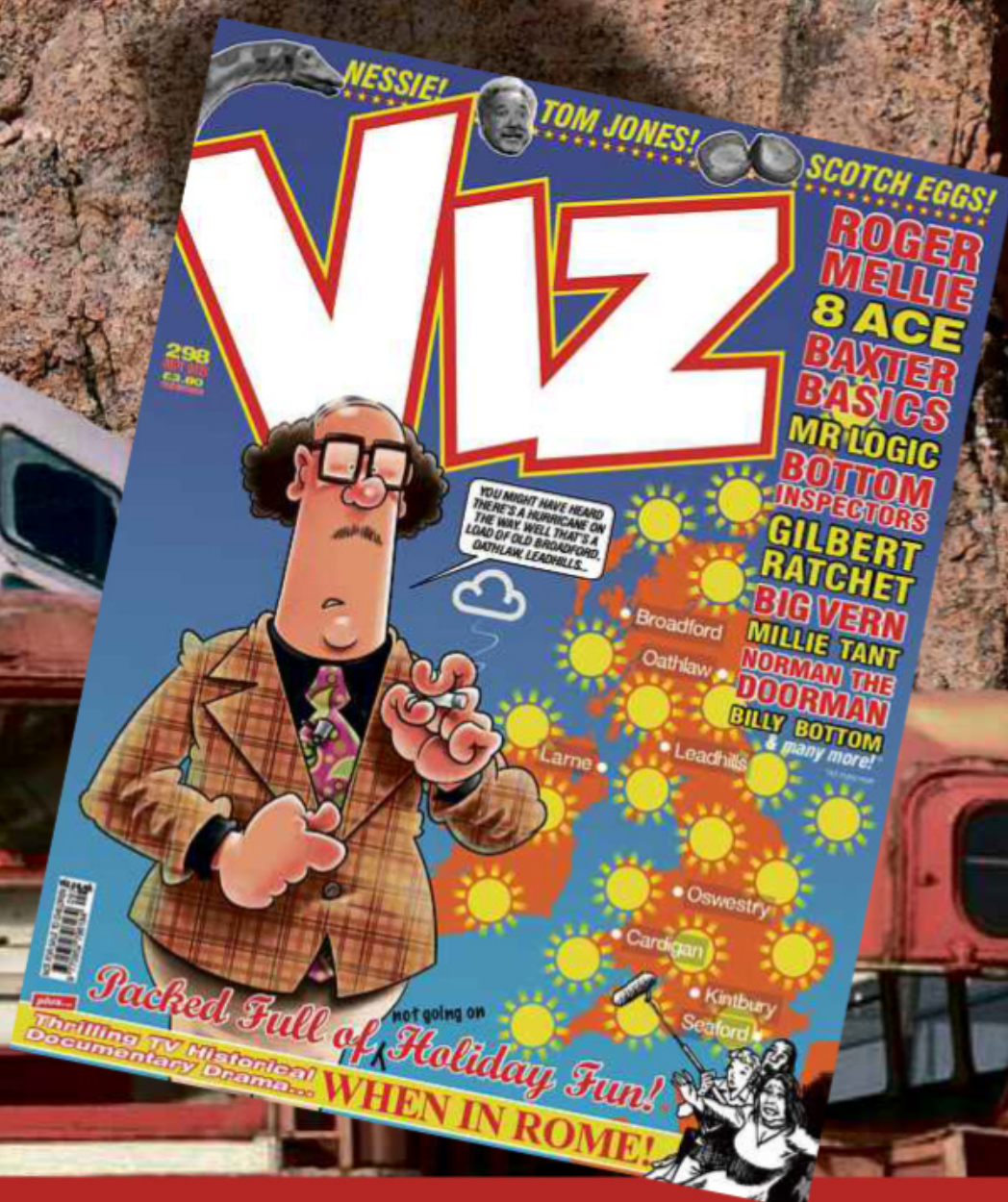
If your budget stretches further, and you're happy to pay more than double, the Iiyama XUB2792QSU-W1 has a larger screen, more flexibility and the highest screen resolution of

this group. There are few flashy gaming features but the monitor performed solidly in our suite of tests.

If it's extra features you're after, and you're happy to pay more for them, the Philips 243B9 is the same size and resolution as our Gold Award-winner but comes with a healthy smattering of bonuses, including a USB Type-C port that's great for connecting to modern laptops and an eco-friendly sensor to save electricity. ■



WE'RE NOT GOING ON A SUMMER HOLIDAY



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Web User's Best Buys

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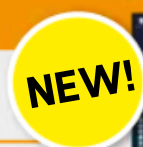
HARDWARE, SOFTWARE & SERVICES

MONITOR

AOC 24B2XH

£110.71 from bit.ly/aoc24b509

Tested: Issue 509



This monitor is the cheapest IPS screen we've ever seen, and it's phenomenal for the price, offering great contrast and colour accuracy. As long as your PC has VGA or HDMI connections, the AOC 24B2XH is a fabulous upgrade.

KEY SPECS

24in screen ■ 1,920 x 1,080 pixels resolution ■ IPS panel ■ 8ms response time ■ 75Hz refresh rate ■ 1 x HDMI, 1 x VGA ports (cables included) ■ Tilt stand ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty

TABLET

Apple iPad 10.2in

£349 from bit.ly/ipad507

Tested: Issue 507



The superb quality of the 10.2in iPad makes it easily the best tablet available for the price. It's wonderfully slim and light, has an excellent screen and easily connects to external drives and (for another £159) Apple's Smart Keyboard.

KEY SPECS

Quad-core 2.34GHz Apple A10 Fusion processor ■ 10.2in IPS screen, 2,160 x 1,620-pixels resolution ■ 1.2-megapixels front camera, 8-megapixels rear ■ 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 32GB storage ■ 3GB RAM ■ 251 x 174 x 7.5mm ■ 484g ■ 1-year return-to-base warranty

INKJET PRINTER

Canon Pixma TS8350

£162 from bit.ly/canonts505

Tested: Issue 505



The Canon Pixma TS8350 is hard to beat for all-round print, scan and copy quality, producing rich, crisp text and precise photo prints. The generous touchscreen makes it easy to use..

KEY SPECS

Thermal inkjet printer ■ 4,800 x 1,200dpi print resolution ■ 2,400 x 4,800dpi scan resolution ■ 10.8cm colour touchscreen ■ Double-sided printing ■ 200-sheet input ■ 373 x 319 x 141mm ■ 6.6kg ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

MESH WI-FI SYSTEM

Netgear Orbi RBK50

£299.99 from bit.ly/orbi503

Tested: Issue 503



The Orbi is a brilliant mesh Wi-Fi package. It's powerful, the units look good and it has a well-designed interface. It's pricey, particularly with the add-ons, but we think it's worth it.

KEY SPECS

Two nodes ■ Tri-band 802.11ac Wi-Fi ■ 2 x 2 MIMO system ■ 4 Ethernet ports ■ Router mode ■ WPS ■ Guest network ■ Parental controls ■ Alexa and Google Assistant voice control ■ 203 x 162 x 79mm ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

EXTERNAL SSD

SanDisk Extreme Pro 500GB

£131.99 from bit.ly/sandisk501

Tested: Issue 501



Robust, fast and reliable, the SanDisk Extreme Pro 500GB outperformed every other SSD in our tests. You pay a bit more per GB but, if you can afford the best, then why settle for less?

KEY SPECS

465GB formatted capacity ■ 28p per usable gigabyte ■ Also available in 1TB and 2TB capacities ■ USB Type-C connection ■ 96 x 50 x 9mm ■ 78g ■ Three-years return-to-base warranty ■ Sturdy and attractive design

FITNESS WATCH

Xiaomi Mi Smart Band 4

£25.98 from bit.ly/xiaomi499

Tested: Issue 499



The Xiaomi Mi Smart Band 4's colourful screen and excellent battery life mean you won't need to charge it more than a couple of times a month. For the low price, it's extraordinarily good value for money.

KEY SPECS

Pedometer ■ Heart-rate monitor ■ Sleep tracking ■ GPS from phone (Android or iOS) ■ Waterproof to depth of 50m ■ 240 x 120 pixels resolution ■ 0.95in AMOLED display ■ 20-days battery life ■ 22.1g ■ One-year return-to-base warranty

Gold Award winners

The best from our software tests

TEXT-TO-SPEECH TOOL

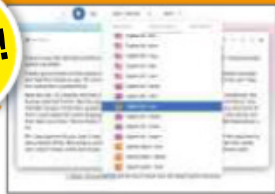
NaturalReader

Free from www.naturalreaders.com

Tested: Issue 508

This near-flawless text-to-speech tool is accurate and easy to use. Its clean design, cross-platform support and file-upload options make it ideal for hearing content read aloud.

NEW!



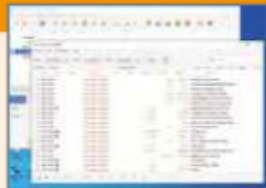
BANKING SOFTWARE

HomeBank

Free from homebank.free.fr

Tested: Issue 507

Personal banking software HomeBank gets the balance just right, making it easy to import your account information, and offering clear, useful tools to help you manage your budgets.



OCR SOFTWARE

SimpleOCR

Free from www.simpleocr.com

Tested: Issue 506

SimpleOCR does a brilliant job of extracting text from scanned documents and imported photos. Its spellcheck function is the stand-out feature.



GRAMMAR CHECKER

Grammarly

Free from www.grammarly.com

Tested: Issue 505

Grammarly is a thorough, effective way to check and correct your writing for spelling and grammatical errors. It's a capable and sophisticated language-analysis tool.



ENCRYPTION TOOL

Cryptomator

Free from cryptomator.org

Tested: Issue 504

Cryptomator's clean, modern interface and cross-platform support makes file encryption incredibly easy. Its security extends to cloud services and it has no hidden costs.



ONLINE IMAGE EDITOR

Photopea

Free from www.photopea.com

Tested: Issue 503

Photopea is a stunning photo-editing suite that has all the tools of Photoshop with none of the cost. It's worth taking the time to learn its ways to reap its many rewards.



WebUser

BACK ISSUES DISC 2019



Our **2019 Back Issues Disc** containing all 26 issues from last year is now on sale from Amazon

For more information, visit bit.ly/webuser2019 or search for 'webuser disc'

You can still buy our 2014-2018 Back Issues Discs
Search for 'webuser disc' on Amazon



Best Free Software

OFFICE SUITE

LibreOffice 7

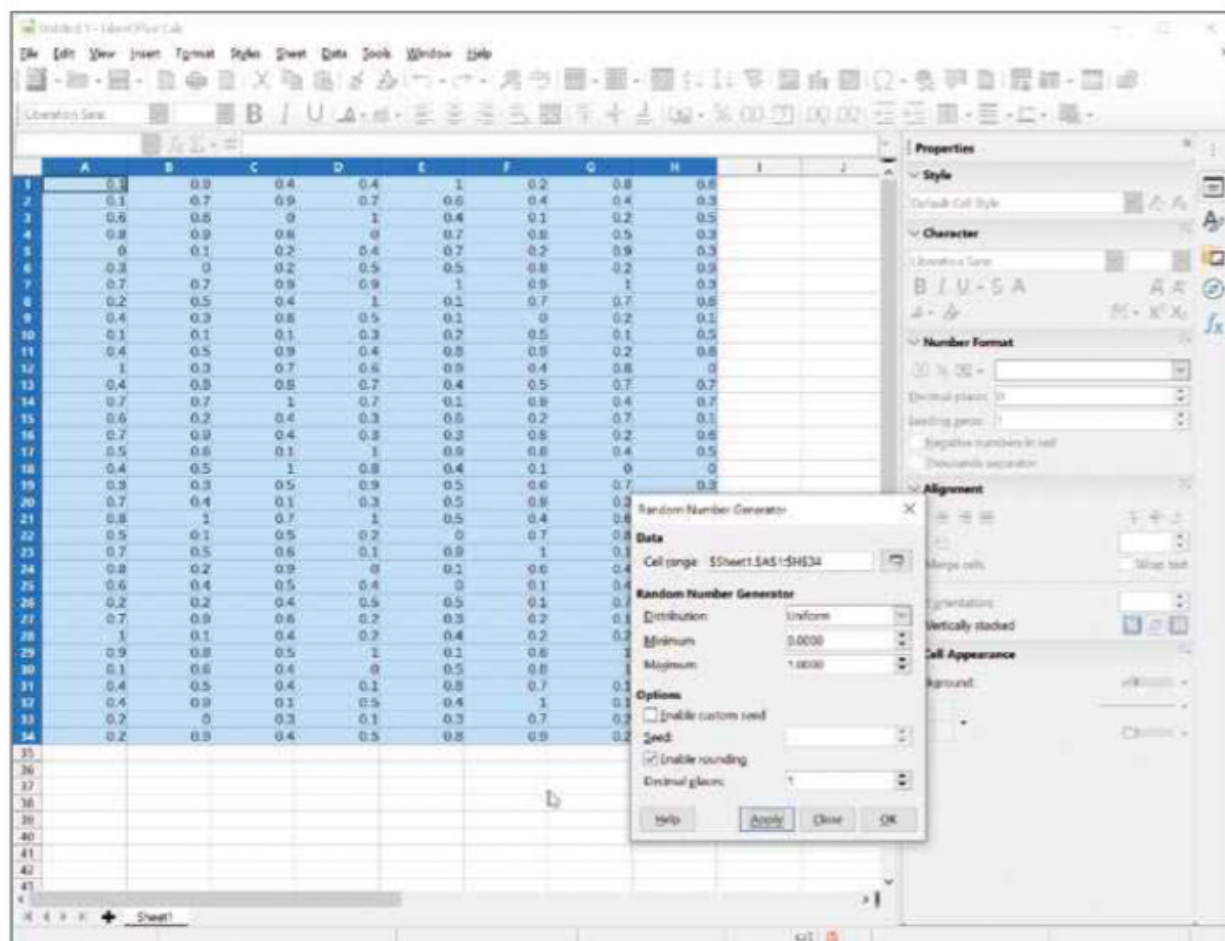
www.libreoffice.org

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 301MB

Microsoft Office is a fantastic product, but it's not cheap. The 2019 Home and Student edition is priced at £120, while Microsoft 365 Personal costs £60 a year, or £5.99 a month – though you do get 1TB of cloud storage with a subscription.

If you'd rather not pay for Office, the open-source LibreOffice is a great, free alternative. It offers six comparable applications: Writer (word processor), Calc (spreadsheet), Impress (presentation and slideshow creator), Draw (a vector-drawing program for creating diagrams and flowcharts), Base (database) and Math (a mathematical equations editor).

The LibreOffice suite has just been updated with some big changes, including better performance, courtesy of Vulkan GPU-based acceleration, and

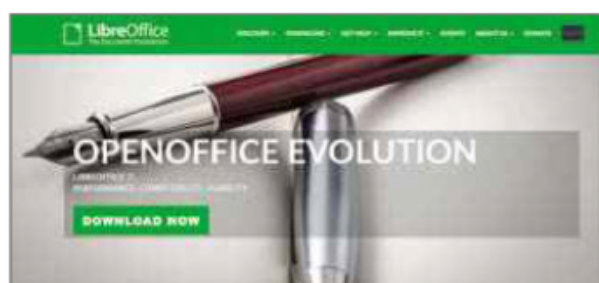


improved Microsoft Office compatibility – saving files in DOCX format now uses native Office 2013/2016/2019 mode rather than Office 2007.

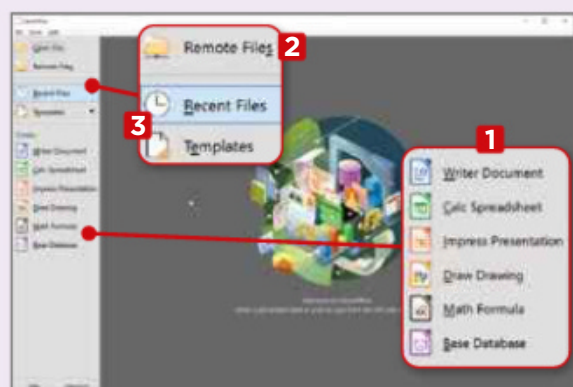
All the suite's applications have been updated, too: Writer now supports semi-transparent text and displays bookmarks inline in the text, and it's easier to navigate large documents; while Calc offers new functions for non-volatile random number generation,

using the RAND.NV() and RANDBETWEEN.NV() functions, and has a keyboard shortcut for auto-sum calculations. Impress and Draw have fewer changes to get excited about, but also offer semi-transparent text support and can produce much larger PDF files.

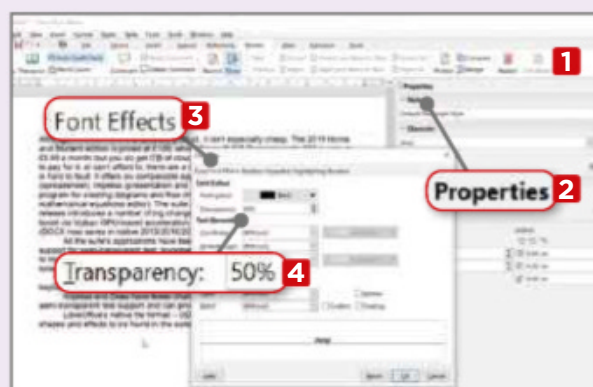
LibreOffice's native file format – ODF – has also been updated, and there are some new shapes and effects to be found in the suite.



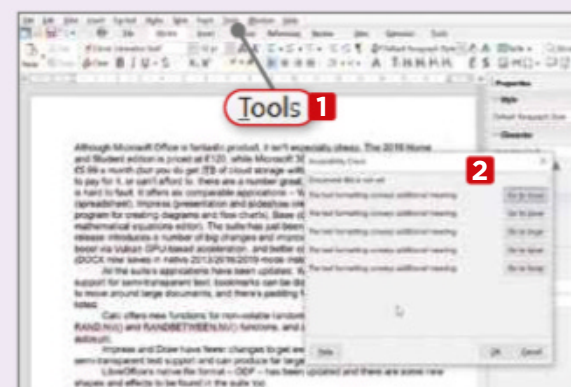
MINI WORKSHOP | Explore the main tools in LibreOffice 7



1 You can launch LibreOffice's various applications directly through the Windows Start menu, or open the LibreOffice menu and choose the one you want from the sidebar. **1** You can also open a local file, or a remote one, **2** and view recent files and templates. **3** Alternatively, open a document by dragging it to the main window.

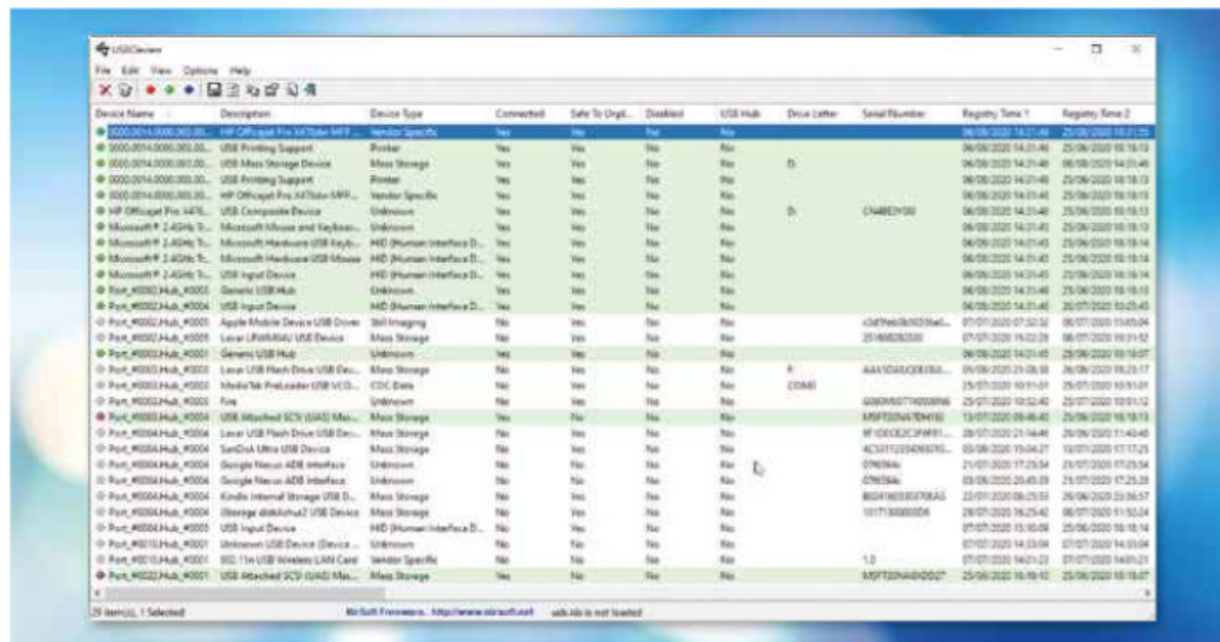


2 Writer is LibreOffice's word processor and has a Microsoft Office-style ribbon menu at the top. **1** There's a Properties panel on the right-hand side **2** that you can shrink or hide. To make selected text semi-transparent, go to Format, Character, click the Font Effects tab **3** and adjust the transparency percentage. **4**



3 Writer also gains a new tool for reviewing common accessibility problems. Find it under Tools, **1** Accessibility Check to see a list of all found issues. **2** The feature is classed as 'experimental', so it needs to be enabled. Go to Tools, Options, LibreOffice, Advanced and tick 'Enable experimental features'. Apply the change and restart LibreOffice.

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



SYSTEM DEVICE USBDeview 3

www.nirsoft.net

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 119KB

This tiny program from prolific software developer NirSoft lists all the USB devices that are currently connected to your computer, as well as any you've used previously. The program displays the device name and description, type, serial number, date and time the device was added and more. This updated version adds four new columns – Install Time, First Install Time, Connect Time and Disconnect Time – though these only appear when you run USBDeview as an Administrator.

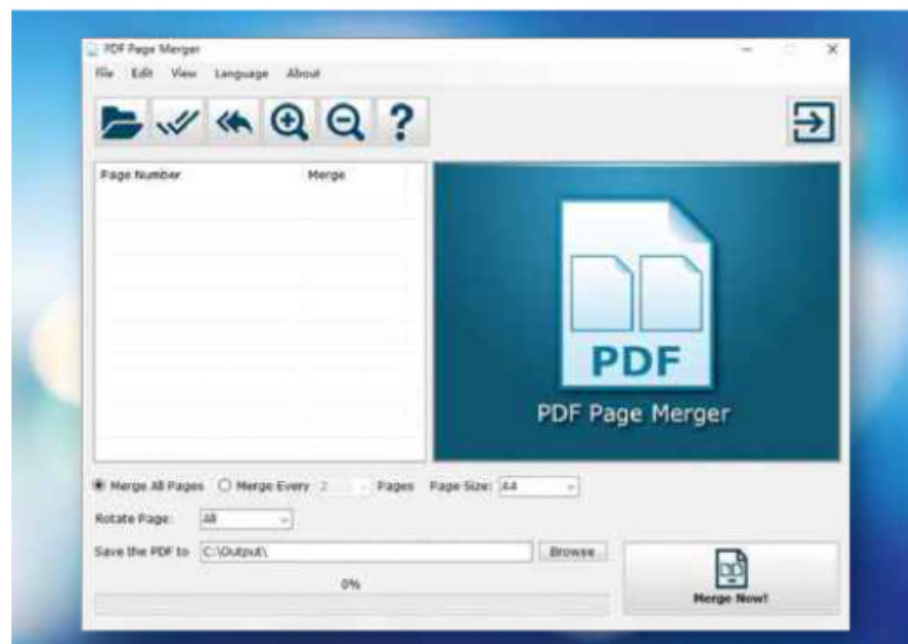
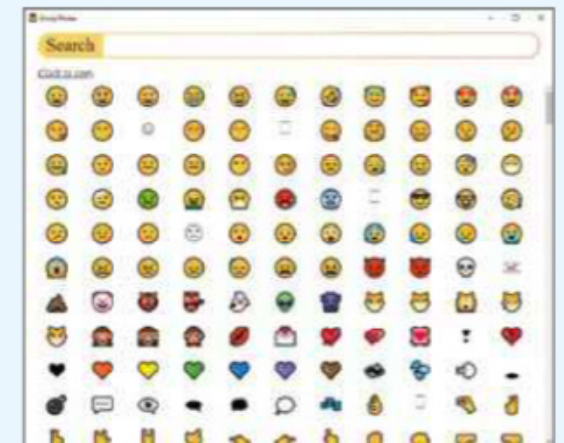
New Windows 10 App

Emojis Picker

bit.ly/emojis509

File size: 156MB

This Windows app lets you quickly find and copy any emoji to the Windows clipboard, so you can paste it into an email, message or document. Just browse the grid of options and click the emoji you want. You can also filter the options by entering a keyword, such as 'heart', and the app will display only relevant matches.

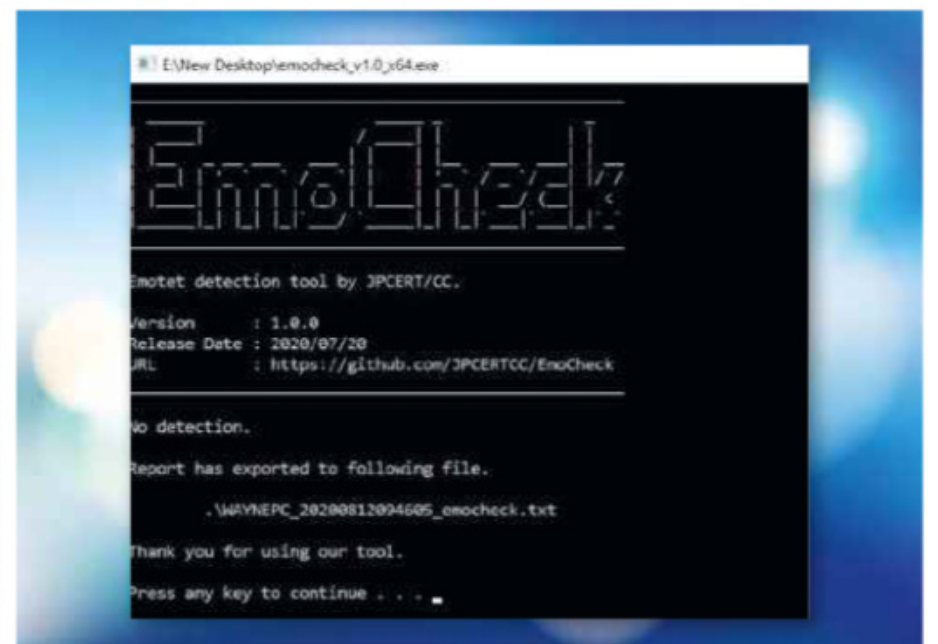


PDF TOOL PDF Page Merger

pdfpagemerger.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 12.3MB

PDF Page Merger is a simple, portable tool for merging multiple sheets into a single one-page PDF. You can drag a selection of pages to the interface, choose which ones to include or exclude, then scale the finished creation into one of the supported common paper sizes, such as A4, A3, B5 or Letter. The paid-for Pro version, with additional features, costs £22.90, but the site is currently giving away a free licence key that's valid until 15 October.



ANTI-MALWARE TOOL

EmoCheck

bit.ly/emoch509

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10 **File size:** 951KB

Emotet started life as a banking trojan designed to steal sensitive information, but has since evolved into a modular platform that can deploy multiple exploits and spread spam campaigns. It's the number one malware threat today.

EmoCheck is a very simple tool that looks for Emotet on your system. Just run it (no installation required) and the software will instantly report back if your PC is infected or not. There are 32- and 64-bit versions available.

DISK MONITOR

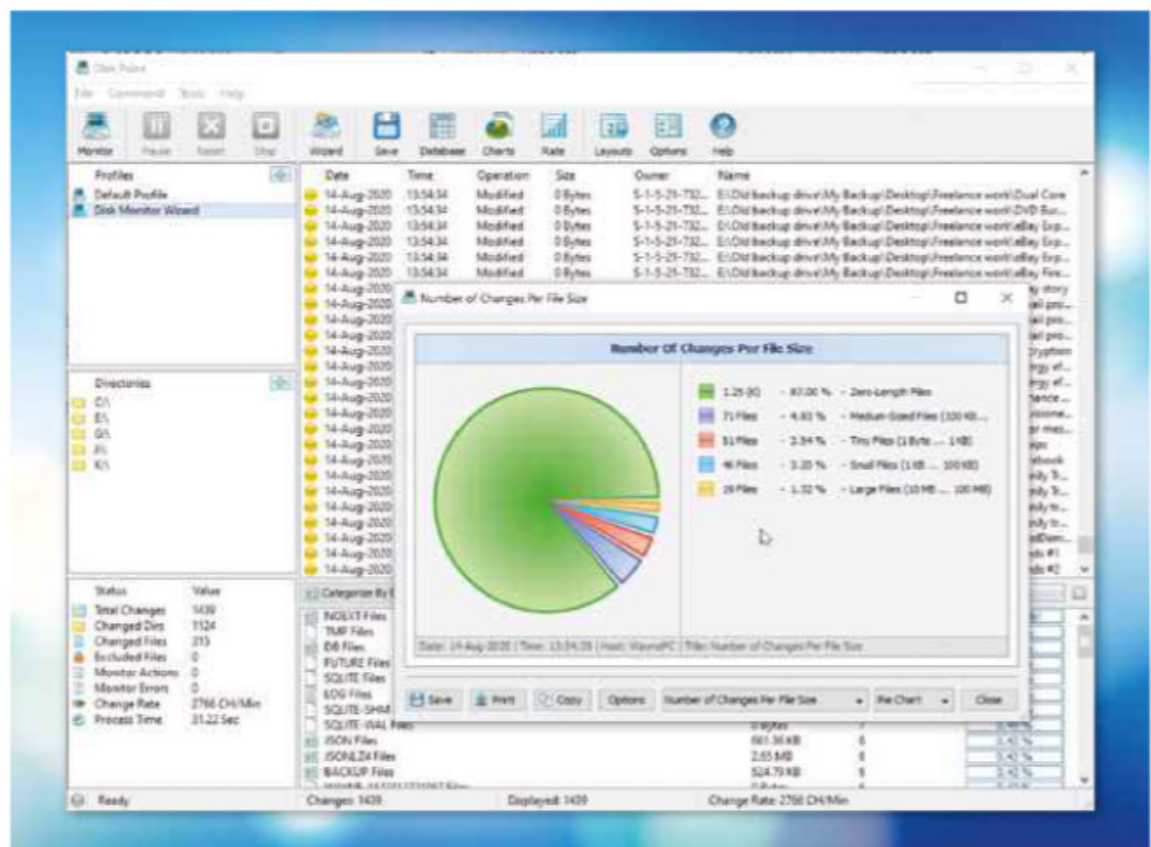
DiskPulse 13

www.diskpulse.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 6.1MB

DiskPulse shows you at a glance what's happening with your hard drive at any given moment, including which files are being accessed or changed. A wizard lets you choose what should be monitored from options that include all local disks, Windows system files, programs and executables, music, images, documents, archives and newly created files and folders. You can pause or stop monitoring at any time, and view recorded activity in a chart. This new version of DiskPulse improves the program interface, redesigns disk change monitoring actions and lets you save reports. It also improves notification sounds and fixes some bugs.



SYSTEM TOOL

Classic Color Panel 2

bit.ly/ccp509

Min requirements: Windows 10

File size: 447KB

If you don't like the default colour palette in Windows 10, you can use this tiny tool to replace most of the colours used in the operating system's borders, buttons, backgrounds, text and more. The program doesn't require installation – just run it and choose what to change, and select your preferred colours for each item. This new version of the tool adds an Apply Now button, hotkey support and an auto mode. There's also a new test option, a responsive layout for resizing the menu and a dark mode.

When you first run Classic Color Panel, the software will offer to save your current setup so you can restore it later if you wish.

SCREEN ARRANGER

ScreenGridy 2

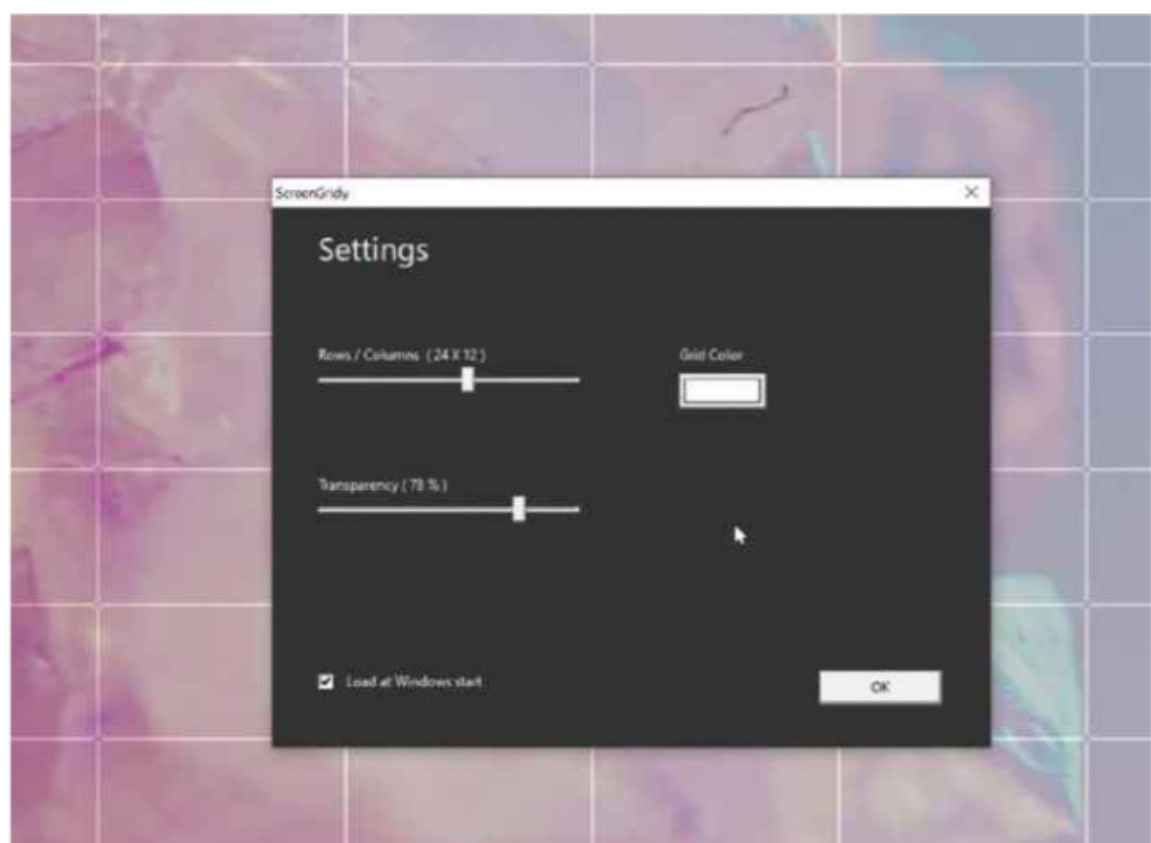
www.digola.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 839KB

Windows' built-in Snap feature makes it easy to tile multiple windows across your desktop. ScreenGridy is a more powerful free alternative that places a grid across the screen, then lets you resize the currently selected window by clicking and dragging it. You can summon the grid at any time by left-clicking the system tray icon, or pressing Alt+W. Right-clicking the icon lets you undo the last window change and open the program's Settings, where you can adjust the size, transparency and colour of the grid.

ScreenGridy's developers claim it changes the position and size of a window up to 10 times faster than Windows' default mode.





GAME

3 out of 10, EP 1: Welcome To Shovelworks

bit.ly/3out509

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10

File size: 623.9MB

3 out of 10 is an interactive episodic sitcom set in a fictional game-development studio. It's entirely free, and new episodes have been arriving every Thursday until September. The gameplay elements come in various forms and mini games. You need to log into Epic Games and download the Epic Games Launcher to play it.

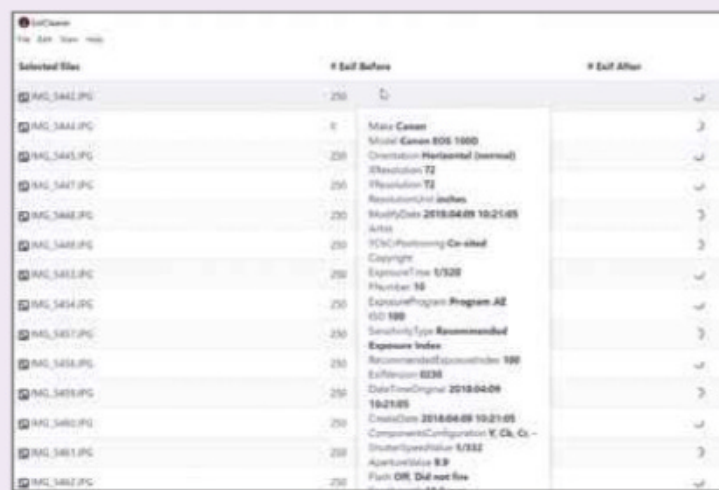
✓ Install this program...

ExifCleaner

exifcleaner.com

Min requirements: Windows 7/8.1/10, macOS or Linux **File size:** 54MB

When you take a photo, certain information gets written to the image file, such as the make and model of the camera or phone it was taken with, the image resolution, date and time, GPS coordinates and other relevant data. ExifCleaner shows you which of these details were recorded and lets you strip them out, to protect your privacy and reduce the image's file size. The latest version of this free program automatically switches to dark mode if your system uses it, and improves the cleaning process.



...Not this one ✗

JPEG & PNG Stripper

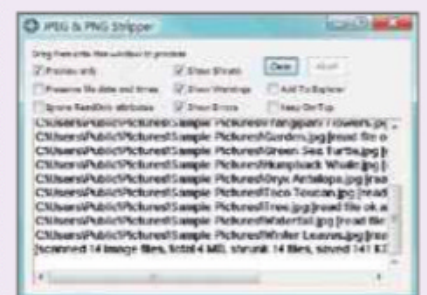
www.steelbytes.com

Min requirements:

Windows 7/8.1/10

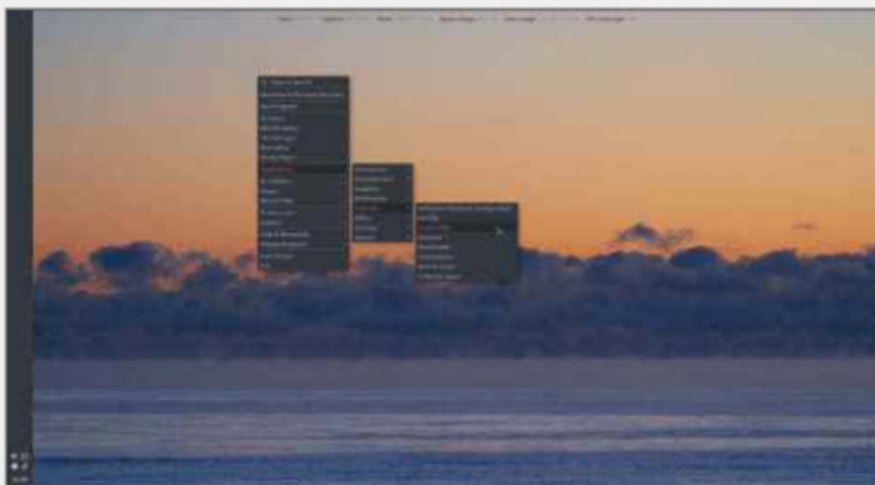
File size: 85KB

This program lets you remove the metadata from JPEG and PNG image files without affecting the image quality. Sadly, it hasn't been updated for six years – a lapse that is made all too evident by its outdated interface. Worse still, VirusTotal flags it as a rotten apple to be avoided at all costs, with four antivirus engines detecting malware.



OTHER OPERATING SYSTEMS

What's new for Linux and macOS



LINUX DISTRO

Linux Lithium

www.bunsenlabs.org

Min requirements: 2GB RAM, 20GB storage

File size: 1.2GB (64-bit) or 651MB (32-bit)

BunsenLabs' Linux Lithium is a community continuation of CrunchBang Linux, based on Debian Stable (codenamed Buster). It's very lightweight and comes with a highly customisable Openbox desktop with a choice of themes – including a new dark one – and wallpapers. There's an auto-updating applications menu, type-to-search function and support for Secure Boot. Lithium is available in two Live versions – a 64-bit DVD ISO and a minimal, 32-bit CD ISO.



OPERATING SYSTEM

macOS 10.16 Big Sur Public Beta

bit.ly/bigsur509

Min requirements: 15GB free hard-drive space

File size: 10GB

The next big update for Apple's desktop OS is coming soon, but you can install the beta now, though you may encounter bugs and some apps may break. Big Sur's new look echoes iPadOS, and there's a dedicated Control Centre and an improved Notification Centre. Safari gains a customisable start page and the option to set a background image, and Messages has been upgraded, too. To access the beta, sign up to the Apple Beta Software Program and enrol your Mac.

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

Best New Browser Tools



CHROME

View multiple sites on your New Tab page

Bored of New Tab tools that only offer note-taking tools, the weather or pretty pictures you scarcely glance at? SpiderTab (bit.ly/spider509) is one of the best 'productivity' extensions we've come across – one built for how we actually use the internet, not how we wished we used it – which lets you view the content from multiple web pages each time you launch Chrome or open a new tab.

Install the extension and you're prompted to add website URLs in the text box (you can add loads, but be mindful of space). Next to each web address are plus and minus buttons, which let you enlarge or shrink the column size to bump up the screen-space for your top sites, along with a Trash button to delete any you tire of.

Now you're all set up, open a new tab to be greeted with



multiple, fully functional websites on a single page – to save you having to visit each site individually. There's even a Google search bar along the top.

Jump to specific text on web pages

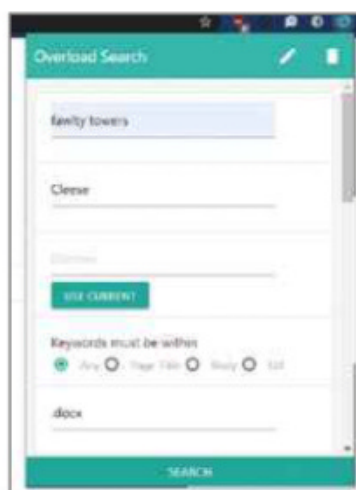
Run a Google search and chances are you'll read a snippet of text in the search results that's precisely what you're looking for. That's all very well, but finding it on the page is another matter, as you scroll down scanning for the relevant nugget. Take Me There (bit.ly/take509) does away with this time-wasting annoyance.

With the extension installed, the next time you search for something on Google, you'll see multiple (tMt) links within the search result snippets. Click any of these and, when the page opens, the text will automatically be centred on-screen, highlighted in yellow.



Improve your Google search results

Sticking with the topic of Google searches, Overload Search (bit.ly/overload509) simplifies the process of



fine-tuning your hunt when using search operators. As you may already know, Google's search operators can be used to define and refine your

results – for example, by placing `site:` at the start of your query to view all results from a specific domain name. Moz has a great cheat-sheet on the subject at bit.ly/operators509.

Simply click the Overload Search toolbar button and complete the entries that fit the bill. Options range from domains and dates to excluding websites that feature specific words and more. Each 'operator' field can be dragged, dropped and re-ordered, or removed entirely – just click the Pencil icon and hit the checkbox to ditch it.

Make email subject lines stand out

Formatted Email Subject Lines (bit.ly/format509) lets you shake up dull email subject lines by formatting the text. It's from serial extension developer



CloudHQ, so you know it's going to be good (see our Masterclass on page 64 for more examples). The tool was designed to help businesses create eye-catching sales and marketing emails, so they stand out among the list of messages in your inbox, but there's nothing stopping you from using it, too.

With the extension installed, compose your Gmail message and, after typing a subject line, click the megaphone icon to the right. A menu drops down, showing previews of your subject in 10 different formats ranging from basic bold, italic and underline to more artistic stylings, such as 'black square' and 'white bubble'. Highlight individual words, then select a different format to mix and match.

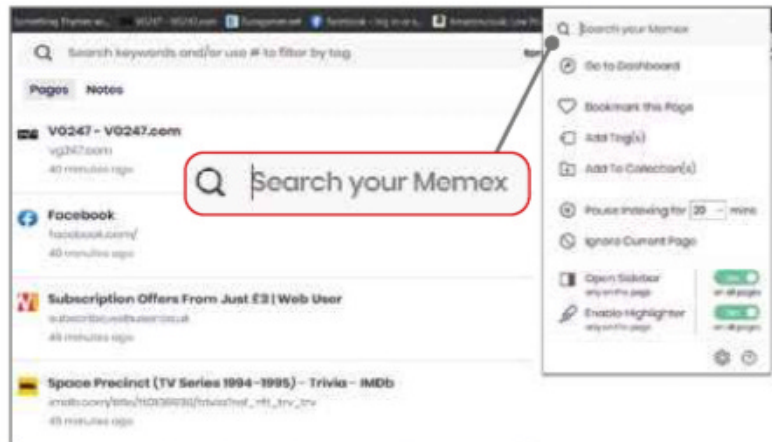
This fortnight's most useful tips and add-ons to help you get the most from Chrome, Firefox, Opera, Edge and more



FIREFOX

Remember everything you do online

Memex (mzl.la/3j18cNh) remembers what you've been up to online. Don't worry, it's not a privacy nightmare waiting to happen: all data is saved offline, then encrypted when synced across devices. Because yes, Memex also has iOS and Android companion apps.



Every website you visit for a minimum of 20 seconds is logged on your dashboard, and your browsing history is completely searchable. Here, you can also apply tags, place sites in a collection, bookmark them and view notes and highlights.

To add your annotations, visit any website, highlight text and right-click. After selecting Memex in the context menu, choose to either add a note or highlight the text for future reference. All this can then be backed up to your chosen cloud-storage service.

Play retro games in your browser

Retro Gamez (mzl.la/2FHwj5j) is a spin-off from website www.retrogames.cc. Each day, you can play a different game, chosen at random, from the website's wide-ranging library.



Start by opening the extension and selecting Play Now. After an admittedly long wait first time around, as the game loads – which, when you think about it, is entirely in keeping with old-school gaming – you can start playing.

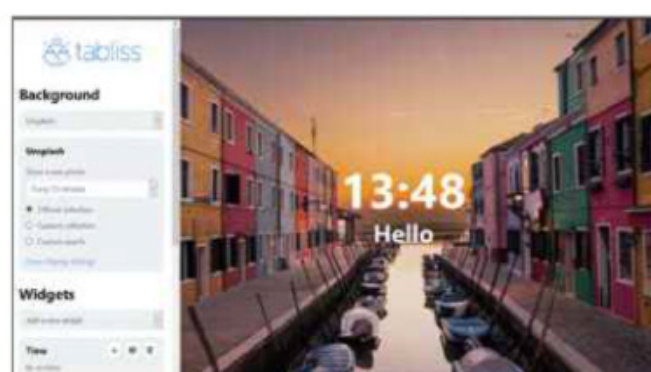
Running along the bottom of the screen are options to restart the game and create and load save states (so you can pick up where you left off next time). As with the

website, there are tons of familiar games on offer, including Super Mario Bros, Street Fighter and Tekken 3.

Customise your new tabs

Tabliss (tabliss.io) delivers a stunning New Tab-page experience that gives you control over everything from personal greetings to bonus tools. Click the cog in the top-left corner to reveal a menu of options for tweaking the new tab's appearance. For instance, you can switch the background to display images from the Giphy and Unsplash websites, or show your own pictures and colours, then choose when the background image cycles to a fresh one.

There are also lots of widgets on offer, including weather, calculator and to-do lists. Tabliss is also available for Chrome.



OTHER BROWSERS



Bring Wonder to your new tabs

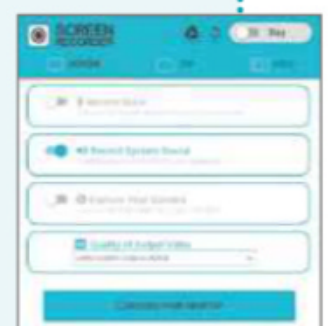
One for comic book fans – the Wonder Woman 1984 New Tab extension (bit.ly/wonder509) is out in preparation for the film's 2 October release, offering high-definition wallpapers that feature characters from the upcoming movie. You can cycle through these using the arrows.

It's not all trailers and promo shots, although you can view more info about the movie by clicking the WW84 icon below the search bar. At the bottom of the screen are links to code-breaking games, coding lessons and personality quizzes. Oddly, despite being made by Microsoft, Edge blocks the add-on, so you'll need to go into Extensions and switch it on.



Record sound and your screen

Screen Recorder (bit.ly/screen509) is a simple-to-use screen capture tool. Open the extension and click one of the three sections: screen, tab or area. Once you've chosen the option that best suits your needs, select your output type and use the switches to determine what audio is recorded. The default is system sound, which captures music from Spotify, YouTube videos and the like. You can also opt to record from the microphone and from your webcam. Videos can then be saved to your Google Drive.



Best Free Apps



App of the Fortnight

CAMERA

NeuralCam Live

bit.ly/neuralcam509



NEW



Lockdown triggered a video-calling craze, and it's likely that we'll continue using services such as Zoom much more than we used to, even now that restrictions are easing. NeuralCam Live is a clever tool for iOS that turns your iPhone into a webcam, which you can use with your Mac computer. Although most recent MacBook and iMac have a webcam built in, these don't always offer the best image quality, while Mac Minis don't include a webcam at all.

Not only is the iPhone camera's image quality excellent, but NeuralCam Live adds extra features that you don't get with built-in webcams, including a selection of styles to help you set the mood for your video calls, and AI-powered face tracking that hides your background but follows your head movement. The app also grades the quality of your facial image to help you look your best while you're participating in a call.

In our tests, NeuralCam Live worked very well once we'd set it all up (see our Mini Workshop, right, for instructions). The app is free to use, although the free version is ad-supported, limits you to a small selection of styles and has low-light mode locked out. To get these extras, plus access to further, regularly released video styles, you'll need to subscribe for £4.99 per month or £29.49 per year.

On the downside, NeuralCam Live doesn't currently support Windows or Linux and, annoyingly, it doesn't allow you to use your iPhone's microphone for video calling, which means you'll need another mic or headset plugged in if your Mac doesn't have a built-in one. We'd love to see these features added soon. We'd also like to see wider compatibility with video-calling apps: Zoom and Google Meet are among those supported, but FaceTime isn't yet.



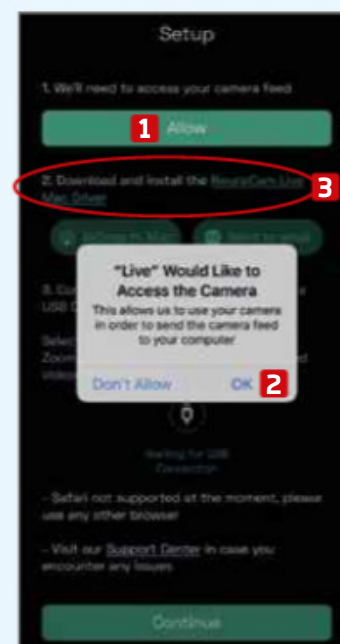
Our rating



MINI WORKSHOP

Turn your iPhone into a webcam with NeuralCam Live

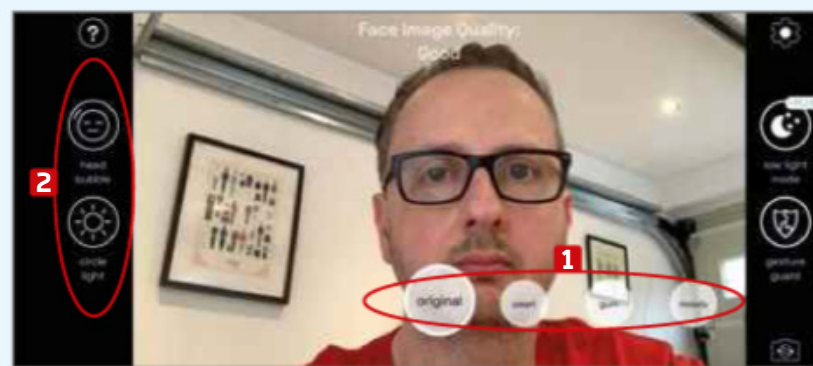
1 Launch the NeuralCam Live app on your iPhone and press the Start Setup button. For NeuralCam Live to work, you need to grant it permission to access your camera feed, so tap the Allow **1** button on the Setup screen, then tap OK. **2** You need to install the NeuralCam Live driver on your Mac, too, so make sure your Mac is nearby and switched on, then press the NeuralCam Live Mac Driver **3** link.



2 Once the download is complete, tap 'AirDrop to Mac' and select your Mac under Devices to send the installer to your computer (if this doesn't work, use



the 'Send to email' option instead). Now switch over to your Mac and double-click the NeuralCam Live Installer PKG file you AirDropped. Click Continue, then Install **1** and work your way through the installer, clicking Close when the process is complete.



3 Use a USB-to-Lightning cable to connect your iPhone to your Mac, then tap Continue. You'll now see the main NeuralCam Live screen. Position your phone to display your face clearly on-screen, then fire up a compatible video-conferencing tool and your iPhone will be recognised as a webcam. Choose one of the options along the bottom to change the filter. **1** Tap 'head bubble' or 'circle light' **2** to hide your background.

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

SECURITY

Secur

bit.ly/secur509

 4.4

Secur is a new cross-platform 2FA authenticator app from the people behind the Potato Open Sauce Project – a beautifully designed custom ROM (Read Only Memory) for Android. The app is very simple to use and easy on the eye, with a minimalist layout and fluid interface. It generates TOTP (time-based one-time passwords) and stores them locally, protecting them with strong AES-256 encryption and a randomly generated key. Secur allows you to export encrypted backups, and a cloud sync feature is due to be introduced in a future update to the app.



Our rating



TRAVEL

TfL Go

bit.ly/tflgo509

 11

Transport for London has launched a new app for people travelling around the capital (wearing their face masks, of course). Currently only available on iOS (due soon on Android), TfL Go is an attractive, easy-to-use app that lets you plan your journey and check the status of Tube lines, buses and train stations. TfL Go offers multiple ways to get you where you want, and will reroute you when disruption occurs. You can choose the quickest route or filter by specific types of transport. Enabling step-free mode helps you find the most accessible route to your destination.



Our rating



GAME

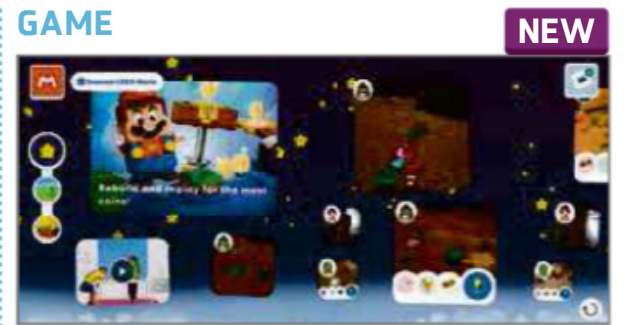
Lego Super Mario

bit.ly/mariodroid509

bit.ly/marioios509

 6  10.3

Released as part of Lego and Nintendo's new joint Super Mario-based multimedia project, this app is designed to let you connect to and interact with your real-world Lego toys via Bluetooth. The app lets you maintain a catalogue of the Lego Super Mario sets you own, access 3D building instructions for each set, record videos of your own creations and keep a score of how many coins you have collected during play. If you don't own any of the sets, though, there's not a lot to see here.



Our rating



AUGMENTED REALITY

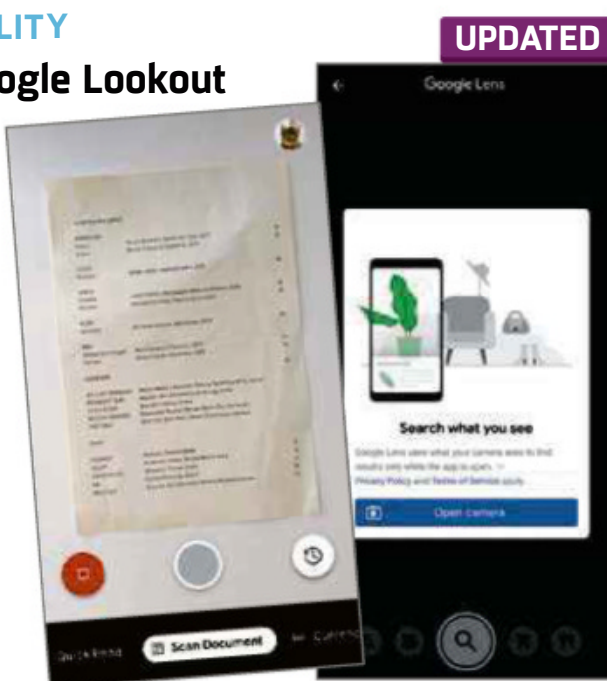
Google Lens/Google Lookout

bit.ly/lens509

bit.ly/lookout509

 6

We've lumped these two apps together because Google has recently updated them both with similar new AR-powered features. Lens is Google's handy tool that's mostly used for identifying stuff you point your camera at – dogs, plants, food, whatever. But it's now able to help kids with their homework – point it at a maths problem, and it will provide step-by-step instructions for reaching the solution. Meanwhile, Lookout – Google's seeing-eye app for the visually impaired – gains the ability to identify food products from their packaging, which should make shopping easier.



Our rating



NAVIGATION

Day One Journal

bit.ly/dayone509

 13.1

One of the best journal tools on the App Store just got even better, thanks to a massive update. Version 5 of Day One Journal introduces a redesigned landing screen, replacing the old Activity Feed with a new Today screen that aggregates your location data, calendar events, photos you've taken, recent entries and On This Day entries from previous years. Usability has also been overhauled, so it's now much easier to add photos and videos to your entries. You can export entries as PDFs or CSV files, and support has been added for Sign-in with Apple. Day One is free, but some features require in-app purchases.



Our rating



5 NEW APPS WORTH PAYING FOR

SECURITY

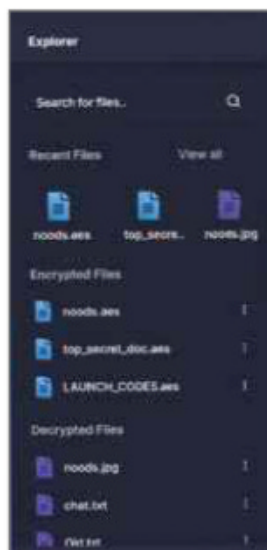
Crypt-It

bit.ly/cryptit509

Price: 59p



Crypt-It (as in, encryption rather than graveyards) lets you protect files with 256-bit military-grade encryption and unlock them with either a password or your fingerprint (on devices with a fingerprint sensor).



EREADER

Moon+ Reader Pro

bit.ly/moon509

Price: £6.49



A major update to this e-reader app introduces a number of useful new features, including a customisable reader bar, support for foldable devices and new ways to organise and search the My Shelf section.



HOBBIES

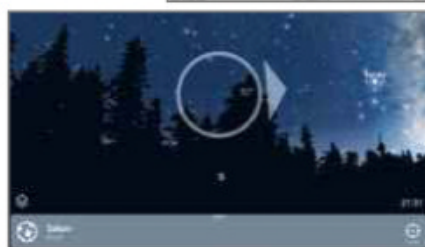
Stellarium Mobile PLUS

bit.ly/stelladroid509

bit.ly/stellaaios509

Price: £7.49 (Android)

£9.99 (iOS)



This brilliant stargazing app has been updated with tons of new features for amateur astronomers, including support for meteor showers, comets and satellites, better rendering of comet tails and much more.

GAME

Interloper

bit.ly/interloper509

Price: £5.99



Drop yourself into the cockpit of a space fighter, engage enemy ships and upgrade your craft in this excellent Star Wars-style flight sim that's more arcade combat action than realistic simulation.



GAME

Push Them All

bit.ly/pushthem509

Price: £1.09



In this deceptively challenging puzzle game, you push cubes onto squares to clear each level. It's a minimalist looking affair, but is curiously addictive, and offers infinite levels.



Crypt-It



Moon+ Reader Pro



Stellarium Mobile PLUS



Interloper



Push Them All



Install this app...

School Planner

bit.ly/schoolplan509



With children (finally) returning to school in September, this excellent personal organiser app is likely to be more invaluable than ever, helping pupils navigate their way through the potentially convoluted post-pandemic school week. School Planner is designed to help pupils plan every aspect of their school work, with a colour-coded lesson timetable, an agenda for homework and exams, and a calendar, reminders, notifications and more. You can log teachers' names, set term dates and customise the look and feel of your planner. The free version is ad-supported, but you can go ad-free for just £2.50.



...Not this one



School Timetable

bit.ly/timetable509

School Timetable feels disappointingly crude, and its rather dismal bare-bones lesson planner has more in common with a basic Excel spreadsheet than with School Planner's (see left) colourful, customisable timetable. It's unintuitive to use and offers none of School Planner's useful features, bar basic to-do tasks and a scientific calculator. To cap it all, its interface looks like it was designed at the dawn of the smartphone era.





Take a Screen Break

Take a rest from your browser with our fiendish fortnightly challenges. Can you guess our magazine emoji and Wayback Machine year?

WIN A WEB USER 2019 BACK ISSUES DISC!
Email your answers to editor@webuser.co.uk
- one correct entry will win a disc



CAN YOU GUESS THE MAGAZINES FROM THE EMOJI?

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | | 2 | |
| 3 | | 4 | |
| 5 | | 6 | |

GUESS THE WAYBACK MACHINE YEAR

Can you work out which year the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine captured the following websites?

WayBackMachine

<p>UK homes to get swine flu advice</p>	<p>"Windows 7 is here!"</p>	<p>Michael Jackson: Global mourning</p>
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COMPETITIONS

WIN 1 OF 5 CHERRY keyboard and mouse packs

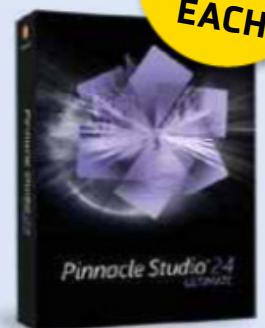
In this competition, CHERRY is offering five prize packs each containing the new STREAM keyboard (worth £24) and the GENTIX SILENT mouse (£12). The former has 10 keys for Office and multimedia, while the latter has rubber-coated side sections for a better grip. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'CHERRY' in the subject line. For more details, visit www.cherry.co.uk and follow [@org_cherry](https://twitter.com/org_cherry) on Twitter.



WORTH £36 EACH

WIN 1 OF 4 Pinnacle Studio 24 Ultimate

The new version of Pinnacle Studio Ultimate comes with a redesigned Title Editor, enhanced Video Masking and improvements that streamline your video-editing workflows. As always, it offers precision and power, inspiring limitless creative opportunities in moviemaking. To enter, email your address to webusercomp@dennis.co.uk with 'Pinnacle' in the subject line. For more details, visit www.pinnaclesys.com and www.facebook.com/PinnacleSys.



WORTH £114.95 EACH

? FAQ

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

Android 11

It's almost time to dial your smartphone up to 11, as Google releases the latest version of its mobile operating system. **David Crookes** reveals what's new



What is it?

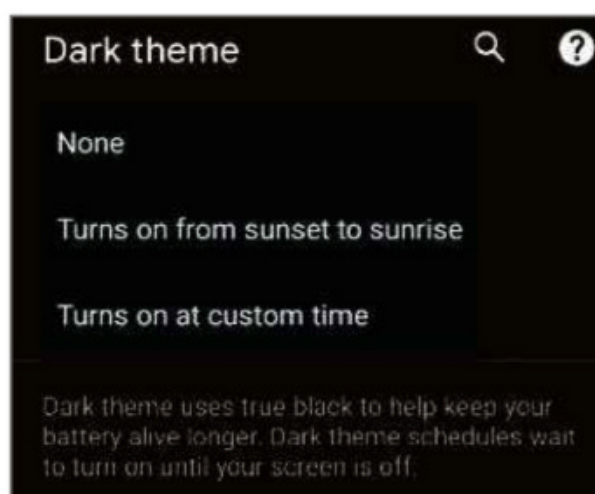
Android 11 is the latest version of Google's mobile operating system and it follows on from – you guessed it – Android 10, which was released last year. Thanks to the release of public betas (developer.android.com/preview), we've had a glimpse at what the near-future is set to bring and, while many of the new features are “under-the-hood”, they'll go a long way towards improving the user experience on compatible devices.

What are we going to call it?

Android 11. As with Android 10, Google has foregone adding a fun, sweet-treat themed name, so while we've previously enjoyed Cupcake, Donut, Eclair, Froyo, Gingerbread, Honeycomb, Ice Cream Sandwich, Jelly Bean, KitKat, Lollipop, Marshmallow, Nougat, Oreo and Pie, this practice has now been desserted [sic]. However, the codenames continue within the company, where the new operating system is reportedly referred to as Red Velvet Cake.

Will it look very different?

Not really. It generally resembles Android 10 but there are enough tweaks and flourishes to make it feel fresh. Dark theme, for example, was introduced in Android 10, but you'll now be able to set a schedule in the new version if you wish, choosing from a custom time or turning it on from sunset to sunrise. There's also an expanded and redesigned set of emoji – 117 additions including pinched fingers,



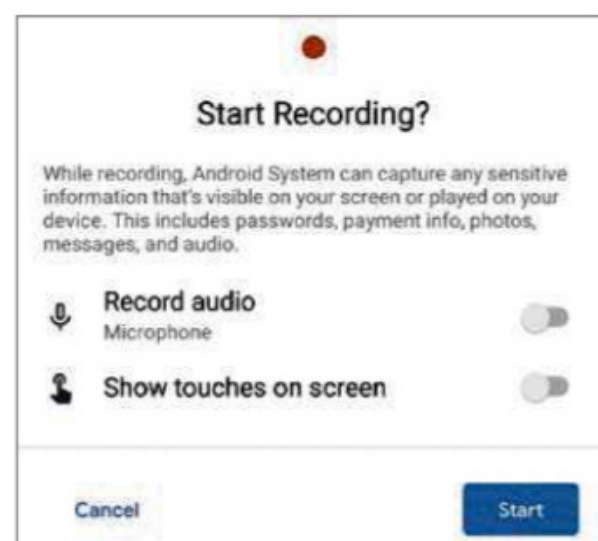
You can schedule Android 11's Dark theme to turn on at sunset and off at sunrise

a smiling face with a tear and a polar bear, along with more skin tones and gender variants.

Recommended apps now appear in a Home Screen dock, while the Recent Apps menu has larger cards, a button for taking screenshots and a Share option.

Does that make it easier to capture media?

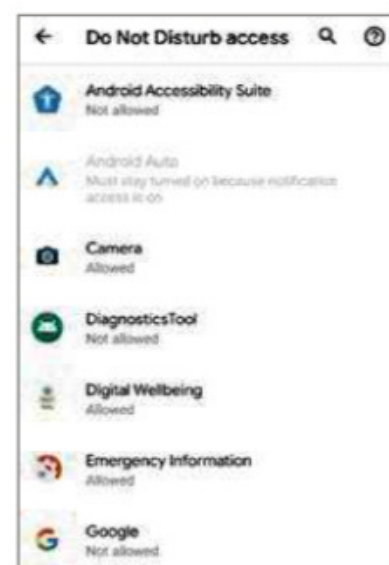
Yes, and Android 11 makes it possible to record your screen without needing to install an app. This was a feature that was supposed to be introduced in Android 10 (and ended up being added by LG and Samsung phones), and it's finally accessible from the Quick Settings menu. Just tap Start Now to begin recording, with options to stop, pause and cancel. The feature will even capture sound via the microphone, the device's audio or both. Screen recording will be very handy if you want to capture a video call, share your gaming skills or show someone how to perform a task.



Android 11 lets you record what's on your screen without using an app

So is Android 11 easier to use?

Well, you're certainly going to find it easier to keep in touch and get on with your intended tasks. Not only have keyboard suggestions been improved, but notifications have been redesigned so that some are given greater prominence over others. When they appear, they can be silenced or prioritised by long-pressing them and,



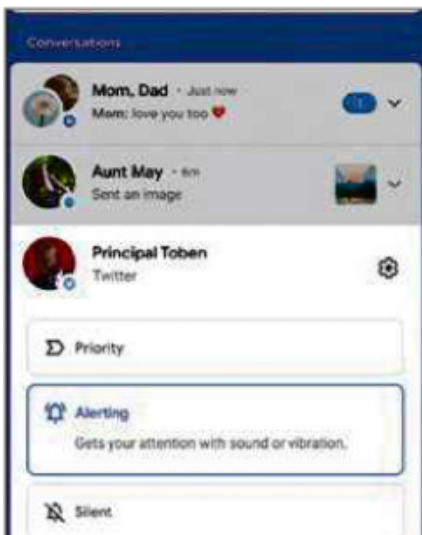
Android 11 gives you more control over notifications to stop them bothering you

Credit: Mr.Mikla / Shutterstock.com

if you don't want to be hassled while you're busy – recording a video, for example – you can choose to mute any notifications during that time. Recently dismissed notifications can also be found more easily – useful when you've accidentally swiped one away – and all notifications can be blocked, including charging reminders and Bluetooth alerts.

What about annoying messages?

Priority can be granted to specific conversations. Chats can also be



You can prioritise chats with certain people over more mundane conversations

conducted in chat bubbles, similar to Facebook Messenger's Chat Heads feature, and these remain at the top of the display regardless of which app you're using. You'll be able to engage with your contacts while carrying out other tasks, taking the direct-reply function introduced in Android 10 up a notch.

Do I get greater control over my device?

Yes. A recycle bin is being added to Android 11, which means deleted items are retained for 30 days, giving you time to change your mind and retrieve erased files via the app you used to trash them. You'll have more control over other things too, such as the shape of your screen icons and how you connect to your smart-home devices.

A new pop-up menu appears when you long-press the power button on your handset, bringing up the Device Control

The new Power menu in Android 11 lets you control your smart-home devices



hub. As well as letting you turn off the phone and restart it, you'll be able to control your smart-home devices such as your Google Nest speaker and Assistant-powered lights. This menu is also where you'll access any payment methods stored in your Google Wallet.

Is it easier to share content?

Android 11 makes it possible to pin your favourite apps and shortcuts to the Share menu. This will certainly eliminate the frustration of finding that the app you want to share is not immediately to hand. It's a matter of selecting a file to share, tapping the Share button and long-pressing the shortcut of the app you wish to pin before selecting Pin. An iOS AirDrop-like option is also coming, which will let you select a nearby device and send files straight to it.

What about playing videos and music?

Picture-in-picture videos can be resized and the media player is moving from the Notifications area to Quick Settings, where you can play content from apps including YouTube and Spotify. You'll find an option to hide the player when your

Improved media controls make it easier to switch between different streaming apps

viewing or listening session ends, and access track details, a timeline and a Like button when you enter the expanded view. The media player will also let you decide which speaker or headphones you want to listen through, and you can switch between two different audio and video apps that you may have playing at the same time.



Are privacy features being enhanced?

That seems to be a given these days. With Android 11, as with previous versions, apps will ask for permission to access your device's camera, contacts and more. This time, however, you can grant one-time permissions, ensuring that you have a tighter grip on what the apps are able to do (this goes for access to location settings, too). What's more, should an app remain idle in your device's app drawer for a prolonged period of time, then the permissions for that app will reset and you'll need to confirm once more that it's okay for that app to have certain access.

Will it have features specific to 5G?

Apps will be able to discover whether or not a handset is using 5G, 4G or Wi-Fi, potentially allowing developers to configure how their software should operate according to the connection they're on.



When can I get it?

The roll out of betas for Android 11 was pushed back due to the protests surrounding the death of George Floyd, but they've come thick and fast over the past couple of months (well, as long as you have a Pixel phone, anyway). We can now expect a full release this month and, as always, the new OS will be free. How soon you'll get it (and whether you'll get it at all), however, depends on your device. Pixel phones are expected to get Android 11 first and it could be a few months before it fully rolls out to all compatible handsets.

Watch out for new phones coming with Android 11 built-in, too.

IS IT EASTER ALREADY?

No, time isn't passing by that quickly but if you go to Settings, 'About phone', 'Android version' and tap 'Android Version 11' a few times, you'll see the operating system's Easter Egg, which begins in the form of a dial (which is the OS's logo). Keep trying to turn it and eventually you'll get up to 11. At this point, you'll see an emoji of a cat. From there, you can pop over to the Power menu, going to the screen for smart controls and selecting Add Controls. After tapping See Other Apps, you'll access an option called Cat Controls – a fun mini-game along the same lines as the one in Android Nougat, which should help you while away a few minutes.



BEST NEW PORTABLE SOFTWARE

COVER
FEATURE

Why bother installing programs when you can just download and go? **Wayne Williams** rounds up the latest free no-install software that you can run from a USB stick

In a year when many of us have barely left our homes, let alone travelled anywhere, you might think there isn't much call for portable versions of programs. But portable software has many benefits aside from letting you carry it around on your person: it doesn't require installation, so won't take up space on your system drive; it doesn't change your system settings, or run updates and other resource-hungry processes in the background; it's lightweight and free of bundled junk; and you can store all your favourite tools on a USB stick to use them on any PC.

The popular website-cum-suite PortableApps.com (see right) offers hundreds of portable apps, but you can also download lots of other useful tools individually from their developers' sites. In this feature, we round up our favourite new examples of free, no-install software for virtually every task you can think of.

WHY YOU SHOULD USE PORTABLEAPPS.COM

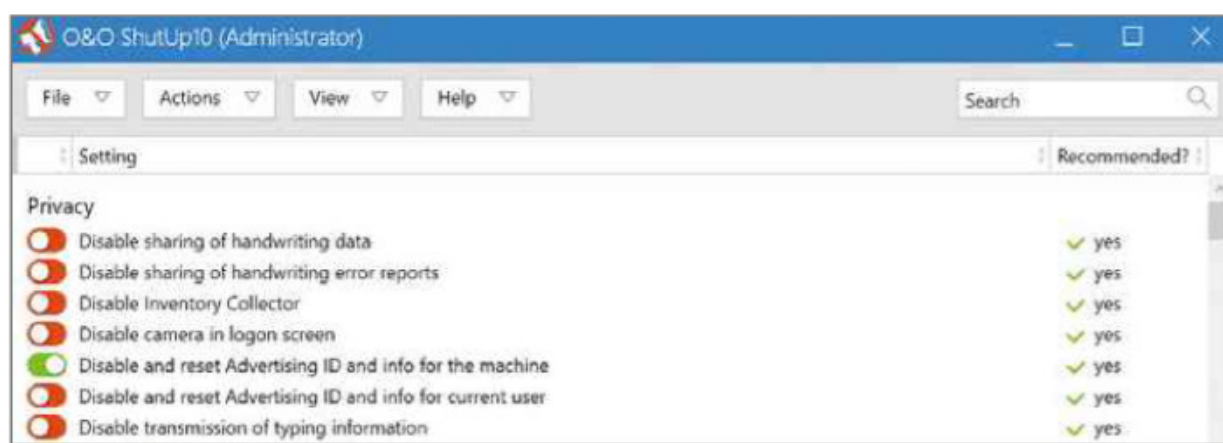
PortableApps.com (portableapps.com) is a Start menu and organiser with a built-in app store that makes it incredibly easy to find and install the latest portable software, including all the big names, such as Chrome, Firefox, VLC Media Player, uTorrent and GIMP. You don't even have to update your apps because the program takes care of this for you, downloading the latest editions.

In addition to the convenience and wide choice of portable apps, the PortableApps.com platform is very trustworthy, so you don't need to worry about junk being bundled with your software. There are some drawbacks, such as splash screens, although these can be disabled – see bit.ly/nosplash509 for details on how to do this. Additionally, it can take a while for newer versions of apps to be made portable – sometimes a matter of days, but other times much longer.

There are other alternatives to PortableApps.com you could consider, such as Zero Install (Oinstall.net), which is one of the best. This lets you find apps via feeds and run them with a single click. You don't need to install it, either – just unzip and run the ZeroInstaller.exe file.



SYSTEM & SECURITY



Stop Windows 10 spying on you by using O&O ShutUp to customise your privacy settings

Tweak Windows 10's privacy settings

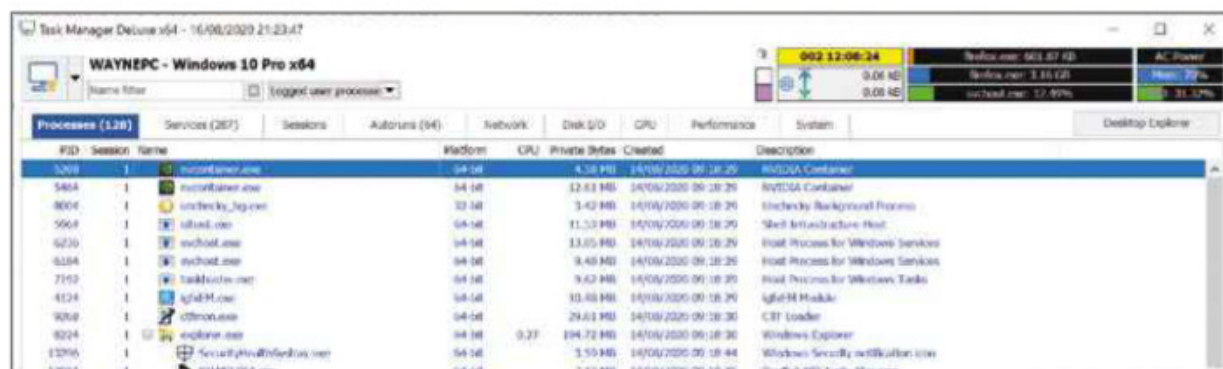
Windows 10 has a reputation for spying on its users and, although Microsoft has introduced a number of privacy controls over the years and made it easier for you to decide what information gets shared with the company, you still need to spend a fair amount of time configuring these options.

The free portable tool O&O ShutUp10 (bit.ly/shutup509) makes tweaking your privacy settings much easier by presenting you with a long list of all the Windows settings you can enable or disable, grouped by category: Privacy, Activity History and Clipboard, App Privacy, Security, Chromium Edge, Legacy Edge, Cortana, Location Services, User Behaviour, Windows Update and more. You can either choose which settings to change or have the program select the recommended options for you.

See what's happening on any PC

If your PC starts to slow down, is generally misbehaving or suddenly crashes, you can use the Windows Task Manager (press Ctrl+Shift+Esc) to try and identify the cause of your woes.

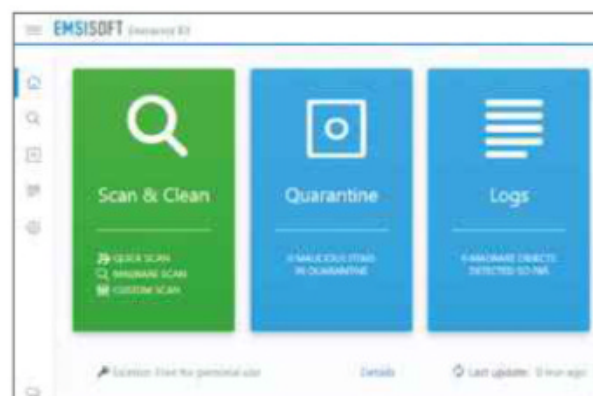
MiTeC Task Manager DeLuxe (bit.ly/mitec509) is a portable, more powerful alternative that shows, in real time, everything that's happening on your current PC, including all running processes, installed services and drivers, network traffic, disk activity and more, so you can work out what's impacting your PC's performance.



Identify the cause of PC problems using Task Manager Deluxe

Scan for malware on any PC

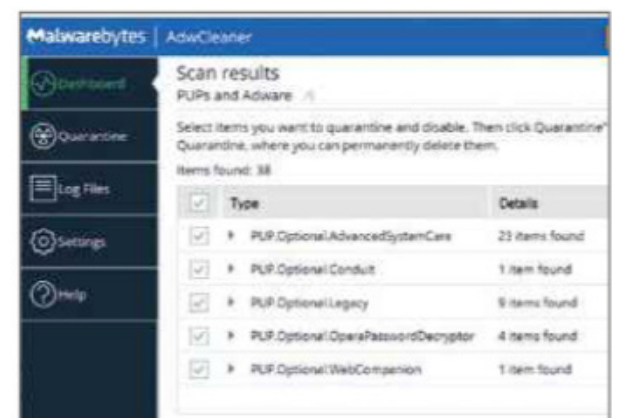
It can be useful to carry anti-malware software on a USB flash drive so you can use it to check for infection before working on someone else's computer. Emsisoft Emergency Kit (bit.ly/eekit509) is a collection of handy tools that can find and remove potential threats in a jiffy. Install it on a memory stick and run it from there. There are two versions: the main one, which uses a graphical interface; and (for more advanced users) a command-line scanner that you can use for running batch tasks. Select the type of scan and clean you require, and it will go to work.



Emsisoft Emergency Kit lets you check PCs for malware on the fly

Remove adware from any PC

Some free software comes bundled with PUPs (potentially unwanted programs) and browser toolbars that can spy on you and share your details with ad and marketing companies. AdwCleaner (bit.ly/adwclean509), which security firm Malwarebytes acquired back in 2016, can remove toolbars, adware, hijackers and PUPs from your web browser, and doesn't require installation. Just run the



AdwCleaner removes unwanted junk including toolbars, PUPs and adware

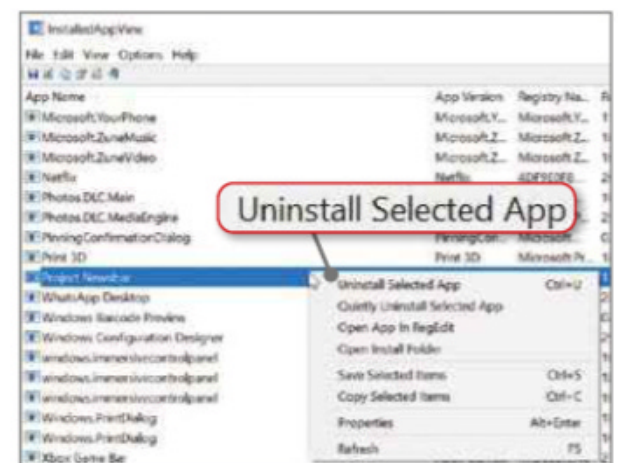
program and click the large blue Scan Now button to begin.

Find and remove junk

CCleaner's reputation has taken a battering in recent years – Microsoft Defender flagged it as a potentially unwanted application due to the inclusion of third-party bundled software – but it's still a great tool for finding and removing junk files. Just run the portable version, which doesn't come with any bloatware. You can download it from bit.ly/ccport509.

View and remove Windows 10 apps

Prolific software developer Nirsoft (www.nirsoft.net) offers a wide range of useful portable apps. InstalledAppView is one of its newer offerings and displays details of all of the Windows 10 apps on your system, including those bundled with the operating system. Right-click an installed app for the option to uninstall it, open its entry in Regedit or go to the installation folder.



InstalledAppView lets you instantly view and uninstall Windows 10 apps

Leave no trace on another PC

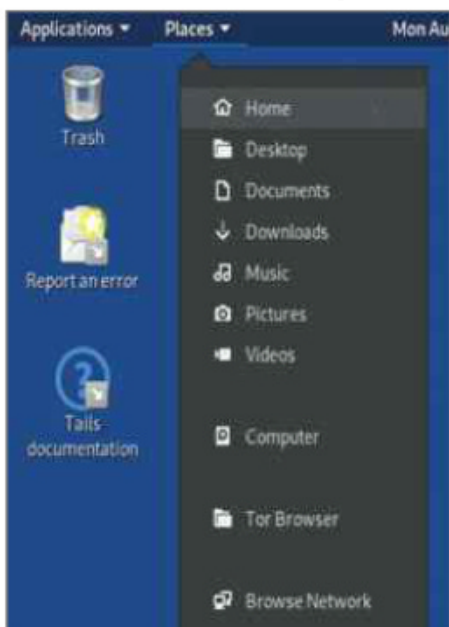
If you use someone else's computer, you might not want them to know what you've been doing or the sites you've browsed. PrivaZer (privazer.com) can remove all traces of private usage data from any PC you run it on. It cleans up after web browsers, the Registry, system memory, Pagefile.sys and Hiberfil.sys.



Keep your web activities private on the go by deleting data with PrivaZer

messenger programs, the Recycle Bin and more. Download the portable version of PrivaZer and save it to a USB stick. You can customise the tool for your particular needs by answering a few simple questions.

Run an anonymous operating system



Recently updated, Tails – or The Amnesiac Incognito Live System, to give it its full name – is a live Linux

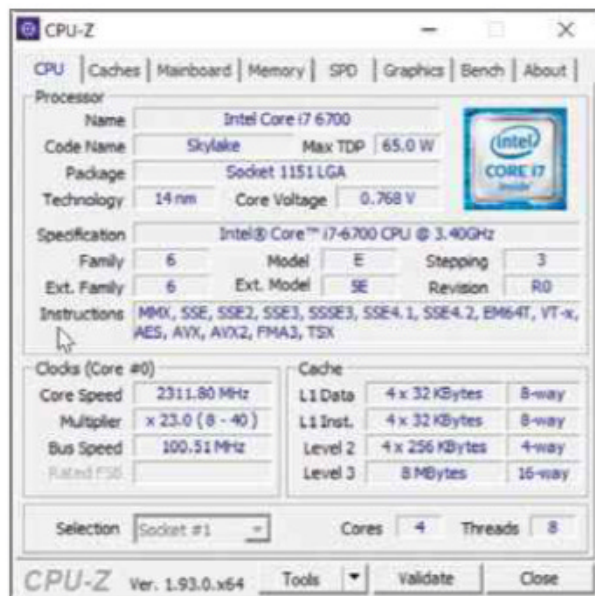
Tails is a free, anonymous OS you can run from a USB stick

operating system that you can boot into from a DVD, USB memory stick or SD card. It comes with a wide range of privacy-related features so you can browse the web, chat and send emails anonymously. Bundled tools include Tor Browser and Thunderbird.

When you've finished using Tails, just reboot and all traces of your activity will be wiped. You can download it directly from tails.boum.org.

Get a detailed report on your PC hardware

If you want to know everything about your PC setup – such as what processor you're running and its core speed, BIOS brand and version, memory type and size, and GPU info – CPU-Z (bit.ly/cpuz509) can tell you. It can also benchmark and stress-test your CPU.



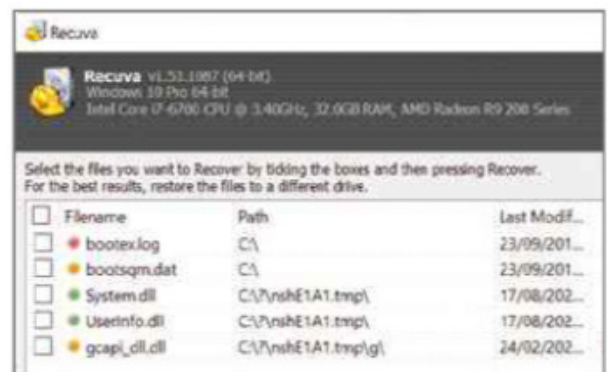
The portable version of CPU-Z provides detailed information about your PC

The developers would prefer you to use the installer version, but the website also offers a portable download (in ZIP format) and both 32- and 64-bit builds.

Recover deleted files for free

When you delete a file or a folder in Windows, it usually only gets moved as far as the Recycle Bin, making it easy to recover. Sometimes, though, items fail to make it to the bin and get deleted for real. Fortunately, just because something isn't in the bin doesn't mean it's gone for good. When an item gets deleted, only the reference to it is actually removed; the data itself remains on the drive – temporarily at least.

Piriform Recuva makes it easy to find and restore this deleted content. However, installing the software on your target PC isn't a good idea because you could end up overwriting the very files you want to save. Luckily, there's a portable version (bit.ly/recuvaport509) you can place on a USB flash drive, which solves this problem.



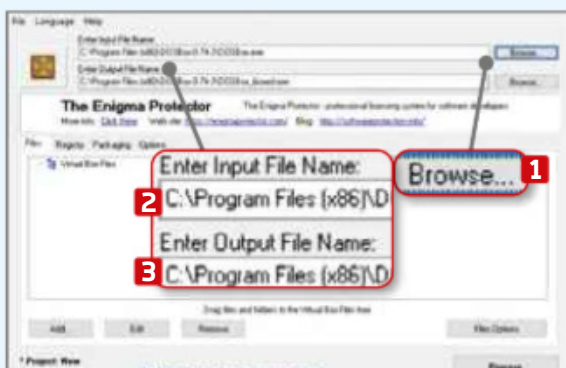
Recuva can restore deleted files without accidentally overwriting them



MINI WORKSHOP | Create your own portable apps for free

Not every program you want to use will be available as a portable app but, fortunately, Enigma Virtual Box (enigmaprotector.com) can package up your installed software so it can be run directly from a USB stick. There are a couple of downsides: the portable apps you create

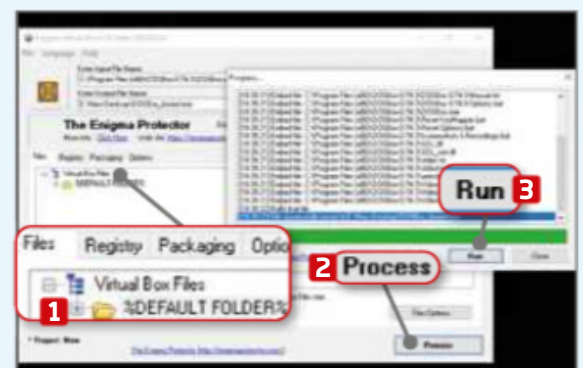
may run a little slower, and Enigma Virtual Box won't work on every program you try it with, although we found it succeeded with most. There are plenty of options available to help you troubleshoot any problems. Here's how to use the free tool.



1 Install and run Enigma Virtual Box, click the Browse button **1** next to Enter Input File Name and navigate to the folder that contains the application you want to compress (this will probably be in Program Files). Select the main executable file. **2** Enigma will fill in an Output File Name **3** but you may want to change this.



2 Click the Add button at the bottom **1** and select Add Folder Recursive. This will let you add any missing files that you need. In the window that opens, browse to the same folder containing the application, select it and click OK. Accept the default options in the window **2** by clicking OK. **3**



3 The folder you added will appear in the files window. **1** Click the Process button **2** and Enigma Virtual Box will begin boxing up the app. When it's finished (and provided the process completed successfully), click the Run button **3** to try the new version, or go to the output folder and run it there.



MUSIC & VIDEO

Manage your music collection

MusicBee (getmusicbee.com) lets you organise, find and play songs on your computer, and it can import tracks directly from a range of sources, as well as rip and burn CDs, manage duplicates, convert tracks from one format to another, create party playlists, stream songs from popular web-radio stations and tag your music library. You can also expand its capabilities with add-ons.

The portable version of the program lets you install the software on a USB flash drive so you can take your music with you to enjoy wherever you go.



MusicBee's portable version lets you take your favourite songs with you

Rip and burn CDs on the fly

If you're using someone else's computer, and it has a CD/DVD writer but no software, you can run the portable version of AnyBurn (www.anyburn.com) to write audio discs or rip audio CDs. The software does a lot more besides, including writing files and folders to

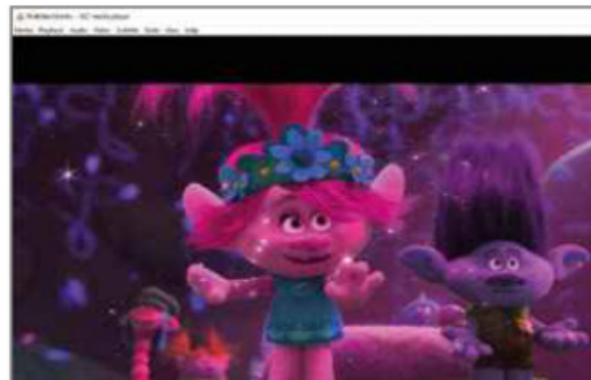


Burn discs on someone else's computer using AnyBurn's portable edition

disc, generating and writing image files, copying discs, making image files from CDs and DVDs, converting between image formats and erasing rewritable discs. AnyBurn also supports writing to Blu-rays, and all the options can be selected from the single screen menu.

Play videos on any PC

VLC Media Player is very easy to use, offers lots of useful features and can handle all the major audio and video formats. However, not everyone uses it, or has it installed, so it's worth having a copy on a USB drive that you can fire up



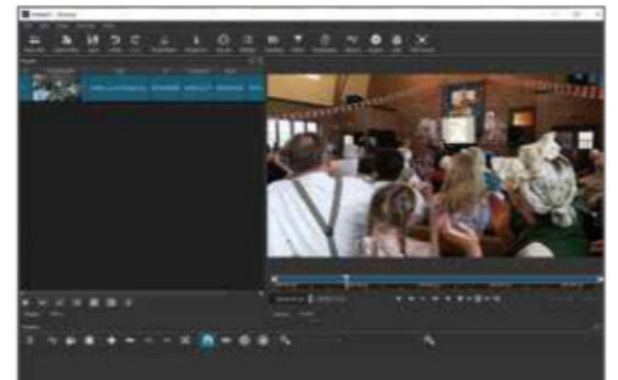
Download a third-party portable version of VLC to run from a USB stick

when required. VLC's developer VideoLAN (www.videolan.org) doesn't offer a portable version of its software but, thankfully, PortableApps.com does (bit.ly/vlcport509). Insert your memory stick and download the software to it, so you'll never be without VLC.

Edit videos on the go

Although your phone lets you edit any videos shot with it, the options available are often limited. Shotcut (www.shotcut.org) is a powerful, cross-platform video editor for Windows, macOS and Linux that can handle all the major video formats from a wide range of sources. It uses a multi-track timeline for editing, and offers lots of effects, filters and transitions. While it's easy enough for beginners to master, there are lots of advanced features for more experienced video editors to play around with.

There are 32- and 64-bit versions of Shotcut available in both installer and portable versions.



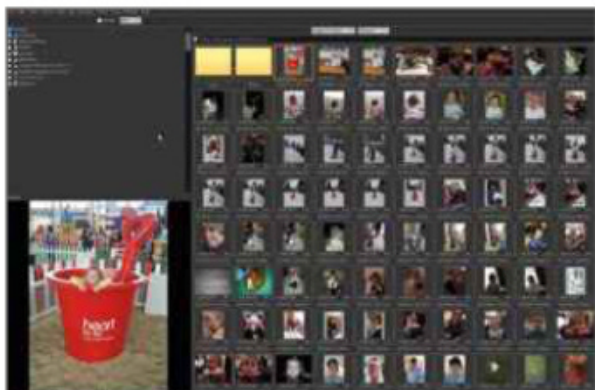
Shotcut lets you edit videos on any computer and offers lots of features



GRAPHICS & PHOTOS

Manage and edit your photos on the go

There are plenty of free web-based tools for editing photos on the go, but FastStone Image Viewer 7 (www.faststone.org) can be run from a USB stick. This tiny image browser, converter and editor supports all the major graphics formats and comes with a wealth of features. You can use it to

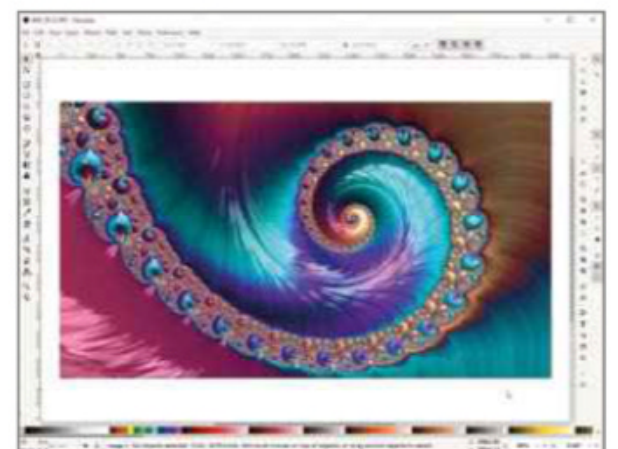


FastStone Image Viewer is the perfect portable tool for keen photographers

batch convert and rename selected images, losslessly rotate JPEGs, strip out metadata (to reduce the file size), compare images, remove redeye, create a musical slideshow and much more. There are installer and portable versions available to download from the website.

Create logos and drawings

InkScape (www.inkscape.org) is an open-source vector graphics program that can be used to design and create logos, drawings, creative art, web graphics, technical diagrams and more, and comes with a wide selection of drawing, shape and text tools. After 16 years in development, the program recently hit the 1.0 milestone and is available for Windows, macOS and Linux. The developer doesn't offer its own portable release, but the ever-reliable PortableApps.com does, and



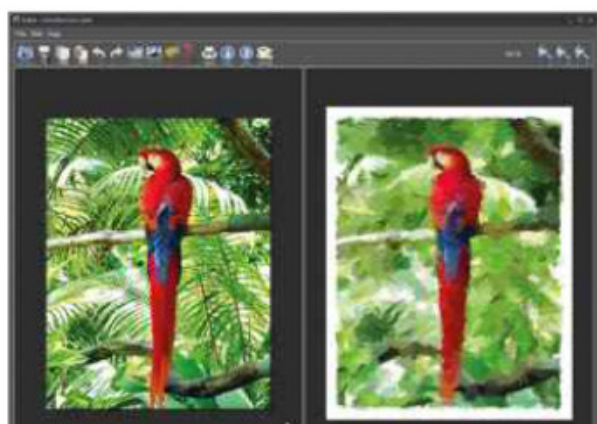
Create your own logos using the third-party portable version of Inkscape

you can get this through InkScape's website (bit.ly/inksport509).

Turn photos into works of art

FotoSketcher (www.fotosketcher.com) is a clever tool that can transform your photos into stylish works of art. Simply select an image and pick one of the





Transform photos into works of art using FotoSketcher's portable version

many painting and drawing styles on offer – such as pencil sketch, pen and ink, painting or stylised – and customise the effects as required. FotoSketcher also has options for adding a frame, texture and text to your photos. The download page links to a portable version of the program on PortableApps.com.

Find and delete duplicate images

If you copy photos from one folder to another instead of moving them, it's easy to end up with lots of duplicates cluttering your hard drive. Find.Same.



Rename this duplicate finder's installer file to make the program portable

Images.OK (bit.ly/findsame509) not only spots identical images in different locations (including other drives and over a network), but also those you've renamed, resized or rotated. Just select two folders to compare and click the Start button. The software recognises all major image file formats including JPEG, GIF, PNG, BMP, TIFF and even RAW.

To run Find.Same.Images.OK as a portable tool, rename the installer file to 'Find.Same.Images.OK.exe'.

Transfer photos from phone to PC

You can copy photos from your phone

to a PC by sending them via email, but ScanTransfer (scantransfer.net) offers a simpler method. Just unzip and run the portable version of the software and a unique QR code will be displayed on screen. Scan this with your iPhone or Android device and, provided you're on the same wireless network, you'll be able to transfer your media. You can choose where to save photos to, and whether or not to compress them before saving. If you don't have access to Wi-Fi, you can enable and connect to your phone's hotspot.

Note that the free version of Scan Transfer limits you to transferring 10 images at a time.



ScanTransfer copies photos from your phone to a PC using a QR code

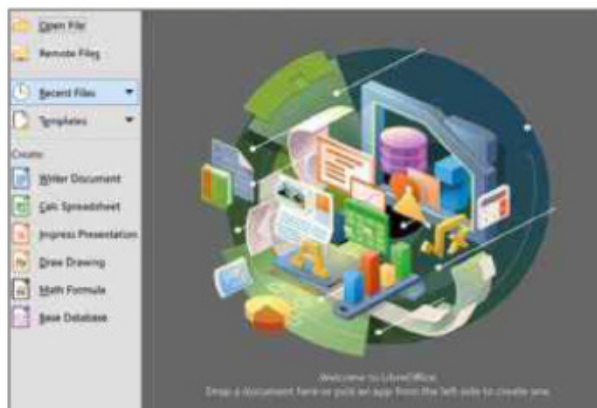


OFFICE & COMMUNICATION

Work with documents on the go

Due to the coronavirus, more people are working from home than ever before. If you still have to travel around, then the portable version of the open source LibreOffice (bit.ly/libreport509) lets you pick up where you left off, wherever you happen to be. It comes with a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation creator and more, and you can read all about the latest update – LibreOffice 7 – in this issue's Best Free Software section on page 28.

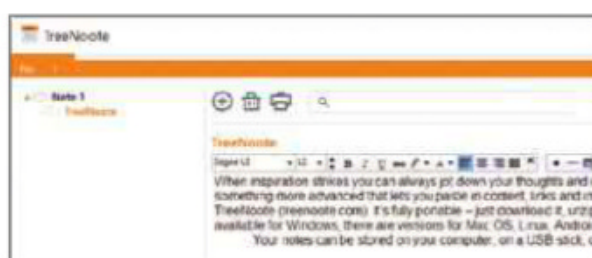
The portable release is packaged in PortableApps.com format, so either use it with that platform or run it standalone from a USB, cloud or local drive.



Continue working – wherever you are – using the portable version of LibreOffice

Take your notes with you

If you want to be prepared for when inspiration strikes, TreeNoote (treenote.com) lets you jot down your ideas and paste in content, links and images.



Create and save notes on a USB stick using the handy free tool TreeNoote

It's fully portable – just download, unzip and run the tool – and while it's currently only available for Windows, there are versions for macOS, Linux, Android and iOS in development.

Your notes can be stored on your computer, on a USB stick or synced with an online storage service.

Chat securely from your PC

Many chat tools promise end-to-end encryption but you're better off using a more secure, privacy-focused communication tool such as Telegram. You can install it on your phone but, if you want to chat from a PC, you'll need Telegram Desktop (desktop.telegram.org).

The portable version consists of a single EXE file which you need to double-click to launch Telegram.



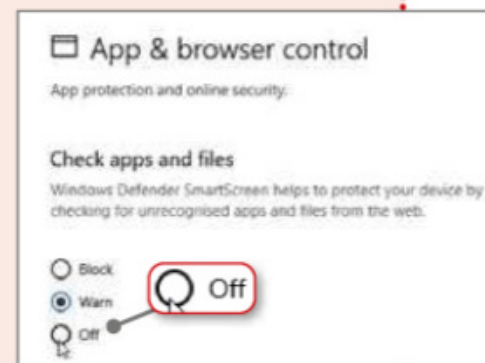
Telegram Desktop lets you chat securely from a PC

STOP WINDOWS BLOCKING PORTABLE TOOLS

Windows 10 doesn't trust portable program files, so its SmartScreen security guard often tries to block them. These false positives aren't just annoying, they're also unfair on developers and users. You can bypass SmartScreen's protection when trying to run a portable tool by clicking 'More info' and choosing 'Run anyway'.

For a second opinion, upload the program file to VirusTotal (virustotal.com) before running, to ensure that all (or nearly all) antivirus engines say it's safe.

Alternatively, if you use antivirus software other than Windows Security, you can disable SmartScreen altogether. Type `smartscreen` into the Windows search box, click 'App & browser control' and, under 'Check apps and files', select Off.





INTERNET & NETWORKING

Carry your web browser with you

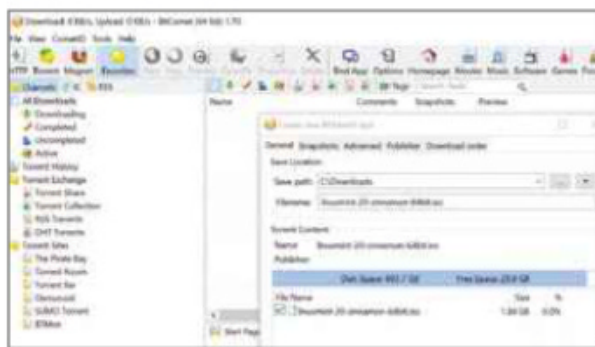
If you like to use the same web browser wherever you go, with all your add-ons, bookmarks and passwords in place, Opera Portable (bit.ly/operaport509) is a great solution. It's fast, lightweight and based on Chromium – the same open-source browser that Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge use – and it won our comparison of portable browsers in Issue 490 (bit.ly/webuser490). The portable version of Opera contains everything found in the standard desktop browser, including built-in ad blocking, a free VPN, visual bookmarks and a useful battery saver.



The portable version of Opera is packed with useful browsing features

Download torrent files from anywhere

If you want to be able to torrent files from any PC (no judgment here), then a portable BitTorrent client is the answer. BitComet has been around for years



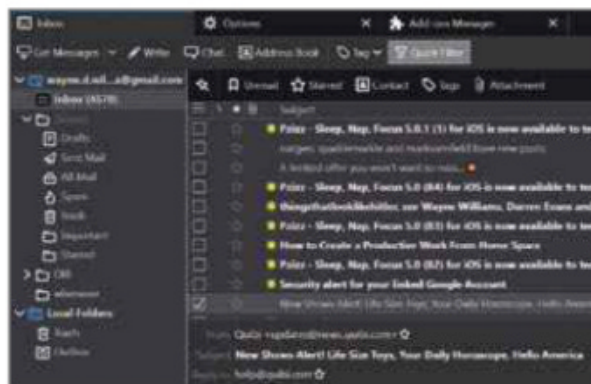
Download torrent files wherever you go with BitComet's portable version

and, although the recommended download is the installer version, you can grab a portable edition from the All Versions page at bit.ly/comet509.

Make sure you select the newest BitComet_x.xx.zip release to run the program from. There are 32- and 64-bit versions included.

Access your email offline

The beauty of webmail is you can access your email from anywhere, so long as you have a working internet connection – either Wi-Fi or a cellular signal. However, there may be times when you need to access your inbox offline, and for that you can use Mozilla Thunderbird. To run this without installing it, you need the PortableApps version from bit.ly/tbirdport509.

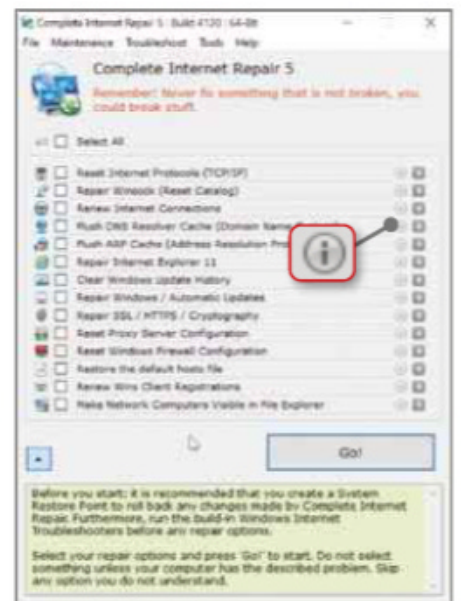


Read your emails without an internet connection using portable Thunderbird

Fix internet problems on any PC

If you can't get online, and you've ruled out the most likely causes – the router seems fine and your ISP isn't reporting any issues – then you'll need to begin the long process of troubleshooting your connection. The portable tool Complete Internet Repair (bit.ly/cir509) can help you get back online, and presents you with a list of possible fixes including Reset Internet Protocols (TCP/IP), Renew Internet Connections, Reset Windows Firewall Configuration

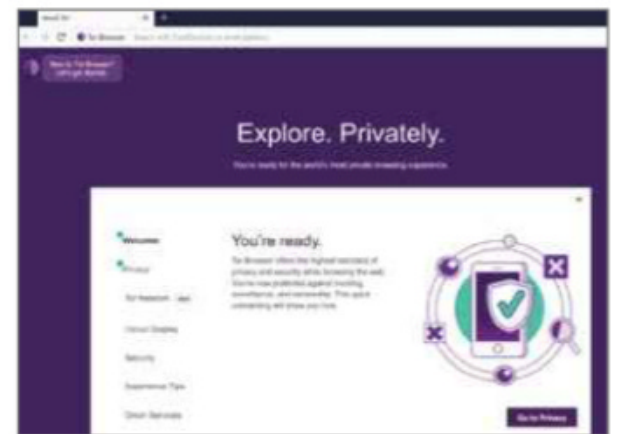
Solve connection problems by running Complete Internet Repair



and Flush DNS Resolver Cache (Domain Name System). If you're not sure what something does, click the 'i' information button next to a fix to view the details.

Browse anonymously anywhere

Tor Browser (www.torproject.org) is a Firefox-based browser for Windows, macOS, Linux and Android, but with a privacy focus. The browser uses the Tor network to protect your browsing and disguise your location by routing all traffic across Tor relays based around the world. It can also access sites with '.onion' addresses on the so-called dark web. There's no dedicated portable version of Tor Browser but you can extract the EXE file to removable media such as a USB stick or SD card. Follow the instructions at bit.ly/torport509. ■



Run Tor from a USB stick to browse the web anonymously, wherever you are

NEXT ISSUE

on sale Wednesday 16 September 2020

BRING YOUR
OLD TECH
BACK TO LIFE

Don't bin your failing phone, tablet and other devices – repair, reuse and recycle them



PLUS...

- ✚ **EDIT YOUR AUDIO FILES**
Best free tools for perfecting your sound recordings
- ✚ **SPEED UP YOUR SYSTEM**
Move Windows 10 from your hard drive to an SSD
- ✚ **REINVENT THE WEB**
Apply alternative designs to your favourite sites

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Share life remotely with loved ones

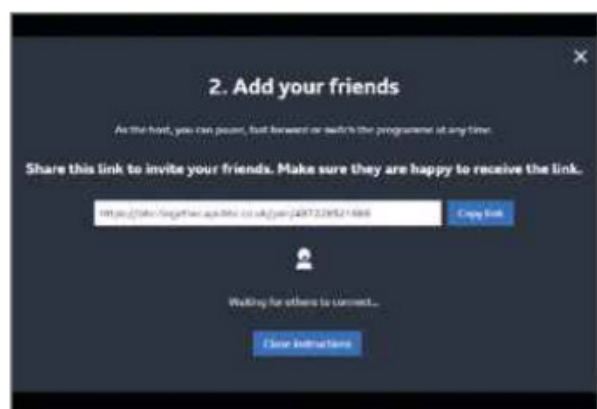


The coronavirus has swept away the joy of sharing experiences with friends and family – in person, at least. **Jane Hoskyn** reveals how you can watch, play and listen together while apart

Watch BBC TV shows with distant loved ones

Lockdown ruined event TV. Eurovision, Wimbledon and the football were cancelled, and even *EastEnders* vanished (it's back on 7 September, see page 21). And with shielding now the “new normal”, the only way to enjoy *Match of the Day* with your grandson is to text each other during the show. Unless, that is, you use BBC Together.

The Beeb's experimental tool, which launched in May and is only available in its current form until mid-September, lets you watch iPlayer shows in sync with invited friends anywhere in the UK. To use it, paste the show's iPlayer link into the box at bit.ly/together509, then copy and share the specially generated link. As the host, you get to control the on-demand stream that you all watch together, in perfect sync.



Send BBC Together's link to an absent friend to watch a show in tandem

Watch and chat about Netflix shows together

With impressive timing, free tool Netflix Party (bit.ly/party509) launched weeks before lockdown began in March. This third-party extension lets you watch Netflix films and shows in sync with friends anywhere in the world, as long as you all have a Netflix subscription and Chrome (or the new Edge). Annoyingly,



Host a Netflix watching session with a built-in chat room using Netflix Party

‘watch together’ extensions tend not to work in Firefox, Safari or Opera, or with apps for smart TV and mobile.

Click the Netflix Party toolbar button when you're on the Netflix website, then choose whether to let your guests pause and play the on-demand stream. You also get a group-chat panel, so you can share your thoughts as you watch together.

Watch YouTube together in a secret room

Watch Party (bit.ly/watchp509) automatically detects when you're on a supported video page and adds a WP button, bottom-right, which you click to create a PIN-protected room for invited friends. We found it worked with YouTube and Netflix, but not Amazon Prime Video (see box, opposite).

For a more lively collective YouTube



Invite friends to enjoy favourite YouTube videos in a PIN-protected virtual room

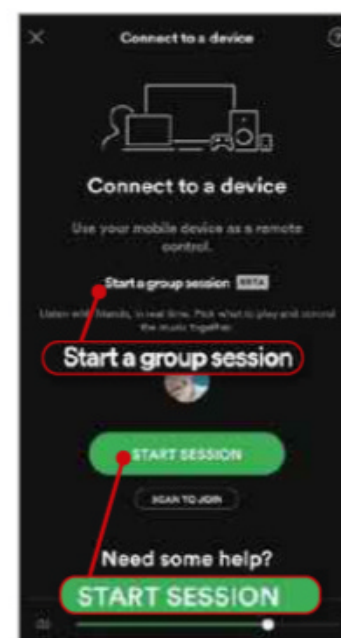
experience, the new free app Airtime (Android and iOS, www.airtime.com) creates a ‘secret’ video chat room for up to 10 people. You can watch YouTube videos together, share photos and videos from your devices, and play music from SoundCloud – all while chatting on the same screen.

Compile and listen to Spotify playlists together

Spotify's new Group Session tool lets you listen to music and podcasts in sync with distant friends. To use the feature, which launched in May and is still being tested in the app, tap the Connect icon at the bottom-right of the play screen, then Start Session. The main catch is that you all have to be using Spotify Premium (£9.99 per month, bit.ly/premium509).

To beat the cost, a couple of new Chrome extensions work with the free version of Spotify. Our favourite is Spotify Party (bit.ly/sparty509), which (unlike a similarly named rival) lets you listen to albums together as well as playlists.

Spotify also lets you create collaborative playlists with other users, both free and Premium. Create or select a playlist, open its menu, then select



Spotify's new Group Session tool is the easiest way to listen with friends

HOW TO BEAT AMAZON PARTY'S GATECRASH BAN

Amazon has launched a built-in tool for watching Prime Video with absent friends (up to 100 of them!) – but only in the US. Amazon Party (bit.ly/amparty509) will work in the UK and elsewhere “soon”, but until then, Amazon is so determined to keep out non-US gatecrashers that it even blocks VPNs.

What’s more, Prime Video isn’t supported by browser extensions that let you watch multiple streaming services in sync with friends, such as Stream Lounge (bit.ly/lounge509, which works very well with Disney+ and Netflix) and Watch Party (bit.ly/watchp509).

However, we managed to get it



Try the Prime Party beta until Amazon Party becomes available in the UK

working with Prime Party (bit.ly/primeparty509), currently in beta testing mode. Install it in Chrome, then click its toolbar button when you’re using Prime Video to generate a secure link to share with friends, who also need Prime subscriptions.

Facebook Messenger (www.messenger.com, up to 50 people per free video call), Google Meet (meet.google.com, up to 100) or Zoom (zoom.us, up to 100). Messenger now lets you share your screen with groups, but Zoom does this more efficiently. Click Advanced in Zoom to share your device’s screen and/or audio in video chats – for example, challenge players to identify musical intros from YouTube or Spotify. However, you can only use Zoom for free for 40 minutes before you have to restart the session.

Play virtual cards and board games

The web is full of sites for playing board and card games against remote opponents. For licensing reasons, these sites generally don’t have the big-name games like Monopoly, Scrabble or Risk, but they often have generic equivalents. Board Game Arena (boardgamearena.com) is free for playing against strangers, but charges £3.50 per month to invite friends. Tabletopia (tabletopia.com) has more games and a mobile app, and costs from \$4.99 (£3.75) per month to invite friends. Open-source program Vassal (www.vassalengine.org) is completely free, but you have to install it on your PC before connecting with friends online.

Currently the best free Scrabble game is Words With Friends, whose Facebook app lets you challenge a friend for free at bit.ly/words509. ■

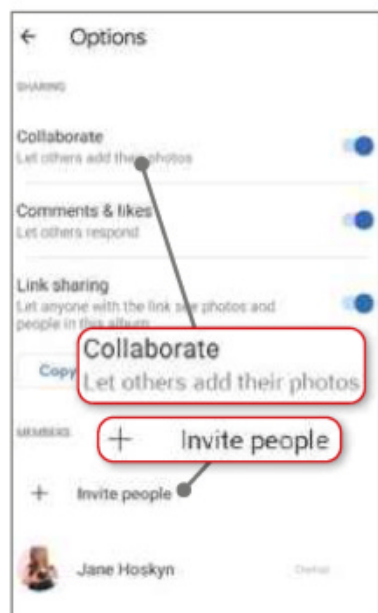


Play card and board games at Tabletopia, and take on unknown opponents for free

Make Collaborative to invite a friend to add, remove and move songs.

Create a collaborative Google Photos album

The Google Photos app has just been updated to let you invite remote loved ones to collaborate on your photo albums, by adding photos and videos from their own devices. First, you need to enable collaboration, which is rather well hidden. Tap Library, scroll down to Albums, tap an album (or create a new one), then tap its three dots. Tap



Use the collaboration features in Google Photos to create albums with friends and family

Options, enable ‘Link sharing’ and let the page refresh. You’ll now see a series of toggles, all enabled by default: Collaborate (which lets invited friends add photos and save photos to their device); ‘Comments & likes’ and

‘Link sharing’, with a ‘Copy link’ button to copy the invitation to your device’s clipboard.

Host a virtual pub quiz

Pubs may have reopened but quizzes are still banned under social-distancing rules, so quizzers have moved online, giving YouTube channels such as Jay’s Virtual Pub Quiz nearly 200,000



TriviaMaker’s YouTube channel shows how to host a Zoom quiz for up to 100 friends

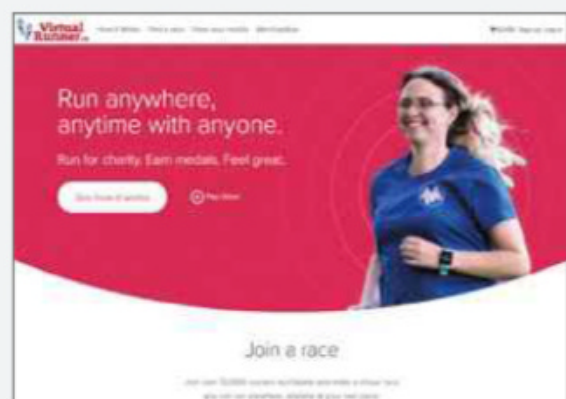
subscribers (bit.ly/jays509).

If you fancy yourself as quizmaster for chosen guests, MyQuiz (myquiz.org) is an easy place to start. Build multiple-choice rounds, including image and video challenges, and play with up to 25 family and friends for free. TriviaMaker (triviamaker.com) has advanced quiz-hosting features, including screencasting for multiple teams and integration with Zoom (explained on YouTube at bit.ly/triv509), for \$6.99 (£5.25) per month.

Alternatively, host a video quiz using

WALK OR RUN AGAINST REMOTE COMPETITORS

Fun runs and charity races have found creative ways to keep people moving. Virtual Runner (virtualrunneruk.com) lets you “join” more than 50,000 walking and running events worldwide by covering the miles on your own and then posting your results (with a screenshot – from Fitbit or Strava, for example – as proof). You can raise charity funds through the site, and even collect a medal for your efforts.



Use Virtual Runner to take part in a charity run, anywhere in the world

Clever uses for QR CODES

QR codes have been around since 1994, but have recently gained a new lease of life. **Robert Irvine** reveals eight ways to make the most of the code-scanning technology



Share web pages between devices

Rather than copying and pasting the URL of a web page you want to share with someone, or to browse on your mobile device, you can generate a QR code for the link. Chrome and Edge now have this option built in, although currently as an 'experiment'. To activate it, go to `chrome:flags` or `edge:flags`, search for 'Enable sharing page via QR Code' and select Enabled from the drop-down menu. Relaunch your browser and you'll be able to share web pages by right-clicking them and choosing 'Create QR code for this page'. The generated code – complete with Chrome's offline dinosaur in the centre – can either be scanned with a phone camera to open on that device

Chrome and Edge now let you share web pages by creating QR codes in your web browser



or downloaded as a PNG file.

To get this feature in Firefox, you'll need to install an add-on such as Offline QR Code Generator (bit.ly/offlineqr509).

Access restaurant menus and order food

To combat fears about the coronavirus spreading through contaminated surfaces and objects, many restaurants, cafés and pubs have replaced their physical menus with QR codes. Just scan the code on the table to access a PDF version of the menu on your phone. In some cases, the QR code will take you to the eatery's website or mobile app, so you can order and pay for your food and drink, too. QR-code menus also let owners save on paper-printing costs, include extra photos and nutritional information, and easily remove and replace dishes as required.

Additionally, many restaurants and pubs are using the technology for track-and-trace purposes, asking you to scan a QR code and enter your contact details on arrival, so they can contact



Scan QR codes on restaurant tables to bring up the menu and order your food

you if a fellow customer tests positive for COVID-19. The government's new contact-tracing app also incorporates this feature, and businesses can create a code via Gov.uk (bit.ly/create509).

Share your Wi-Fi network with guests

If a visitor asks for access to your Wi-Fi, rather than jotting the password down on a piece of paper or reading it off the router, let them scan a QR code.

On devices running Android 10, go to Settings, 'Network & Internet', Wi-Fi and select your Wi-Fi network's name. Tap the cog to the right of your network and, on the 'Network details' screen, tap the Share button and verify your identity to create the QR code. On older versions of Android, install the free app QR Code Generator (bit.ly/qrcode509), tap the Text button and choose WiFi from the mode menu.

On an iPhone or iPad, you can load the Share Wi-Fi shortcut (bit.ly/wifi509) in your device's Shortcuts app, but first you'll need to tweak iOS's security settings. Run any shortcut (it doesn't matter which), then go to Settings, Shortcuts and switch on Allow Untrusted Shortcuts. Add your Wi-Fi



Android 10 lets you share your Wi-Fi by creating a QR code

password to the shortcut, then generate the QR code.

Another option is to use the online tool QiFi (qifi.org). Enter your network's SSID, encryption type and key, and click Generate to get your code. No data is uploaded, so your details are safe.



Chat with WhatsApp on your computer

The web-based version of WhatsApp lets you use a proper keyboard to chat to friends, family and

colleagues from your computer, but you'll need to use a QR code to access the service. First, open the WhatsApp app on your phone, tap the three-dot menu button (in Android) or Settings (in iOS) and choose WhatsApp Web. Next, go to web.whatsapp.com in

Scan a QR code with your phone to use the web-based version of WhatsApp

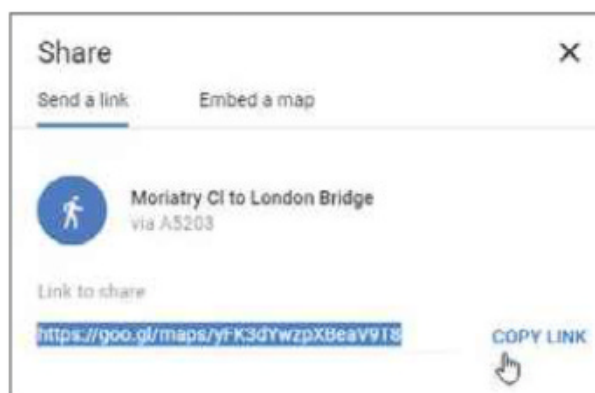
your desktop browser and scan the QR code using your phone. The devices will then be synced, so you can carry on chatting on the big screen.

WhatsApp's mobile app assigns you a personal QR code that people can scan to get your details (and vice versa). To access it, just open Settings and tap the QR-code icon in the top-right corner.



Share maps and directions in Google Maps

Although typing a postcode into Google Maps is hardly taxing, QR codes provide a much easier and more accurate means of sharing and looking up a location. Just search for a place on the Google Maps website, then click the three-dot menu in the top-left corner and choose 'Share or embed map'. Copy the link provided into a free online QR-code generator such as QRCode Monkey (www.qrcode-monkey.com) and download, print or email the result, so it can be scanned with a phone. It's



Copy a link to directions in Google Maps and turn it into a shareable QR code

particularly useful for including addresses on invitations, and also works for Google Maps directions (say, from the train station to a venue) and Street View images (so people can see what the place looks like).



Send a video message in a card

If you prefer sending physical greeting cards to e-cards, but you like the personal touch of a video message, why not combine the two for a multimedia missive? Record your video, upload it to YouTube (ensuring you choose the Unlisted privacy option so you don't attract unwanted viewers), then copy the link to a QR-code generator. QRStuff.com (www.qrstuff.com) offers a handy YouTube option for this purpose. Download, print and cut out the code, then stick it inside the card to deliver your video greeting.



Create a QR code of a YouTube video to include a multimedia message in a card



Provide your contact information

QR codes are a great way to share your contact details in a concise and relatively private manner, whether on a business card or affixed to your valuables (or pets' collars) in case you lose them. The aforementioned QRStuff.com provides an option for creating online 'vCards' containing your personal



Put a QR code on your business card containing your contact information

information. Just enter the data you want to include and generate a code that people can scan to access your vCard.



Pay for your groceries

Tesco's Pay+ app (bit.ly/tesco509) speeds up your

supermarket shopping by letting you pay using a QR code. Just scan the code at the checkout (or let the cashier do it) to take the payment from your account and earn Clubcard points, too, which effectively means you can leave your wallet at home.

With Sainsbury's SmartShop Scan (smartshop.sainsburys.co.uk), you scan the barcodes of items you put in your basket as you walk around the store, pay for them in the app (while collecting Nectar points) and then scan a QR code before you leave, to confirm your purchase, without needing to queue. It currently works in over 100 stores around the UK. ■



Tesco Pay+ lets you scan a QR code to pay for your shopping

HOW QR CODES WORK

Originally used by the Japanese company Denso Wave to track car parts during the manufacturing process, QR (quick response) codes are an extension of product barcodes. Each unique code consists of a matrix of black squares and dots that contain information about the item they're attached to or accompany. When you scan this code with your phone's camera, the data is translated into something understandable, often taking you to a website or app.

The cameras on most modern smartphones are able to scan and interpret QR codes, or you can install



an app for this purpose. In our Best Free Apps section - in which we provide QR codes for apps - we recently recommended Free QR Scanner (bit.ly/freeqr507) for Android. For iOS devices, try QR Code Reader (bit.ly/qrreader509).

Best free apps for streaming radio

Radio is more accessible and varied than ever, and there are thousands of stations available on the internet to enjoy for free. **Andy Shaw** explores the best mobile apps you can use to listen to them on your phone or tablet



BBC Sounds |  bit.ly/soundsand509  bit.ly/soundsapp509 | ★★★★★
FEATURES ★★★★★ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★ EASE OF USE ★★★★★

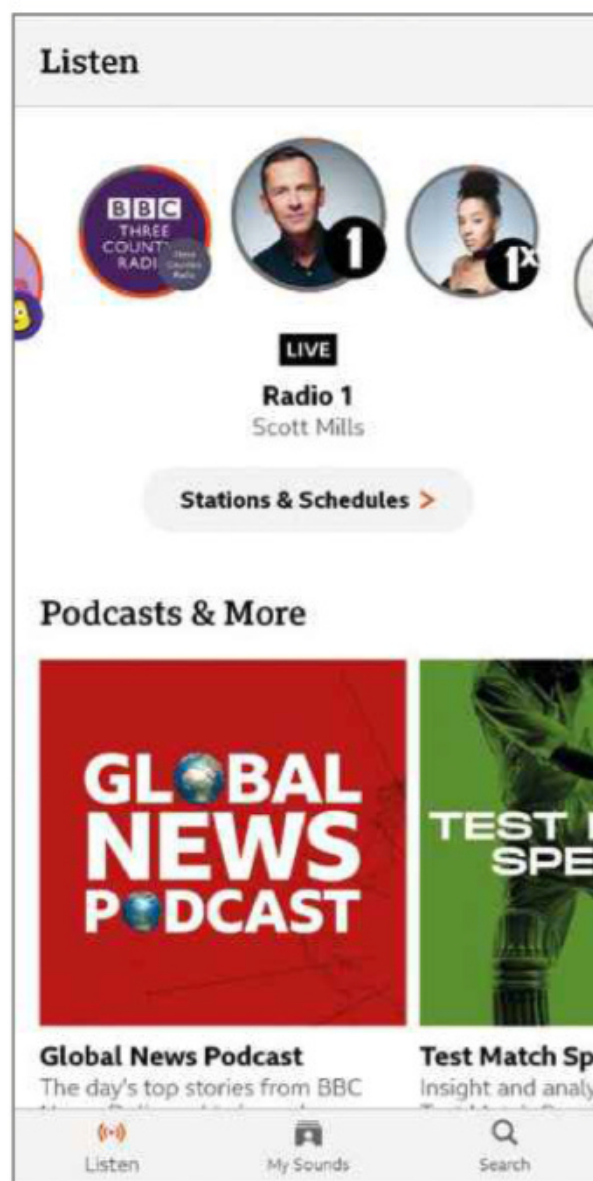
**WebUser
GOLD
AWARD**

What we liked:

We're spoiled rotten in the UK with our access to BBC radio services, which are collected along with all the Beeb's podcasts in the broadcaster's brilliant Sounds app. You can't access any non-BBC stations, but with the app covering local radio on a county level upwards, through to national and even international news through the World Service, there's a fine array of choice with enough breadth and diversity for most people's tastes.

The app itself is a marvel. Live radio is at the forefront and you can scroll through a dial of stations, many with live icons showing you what's being broadcast at the moment. Tap a button to get a schedule of what's coming up. If you can't find anything you like, the rest of the app is a shrine to BBC audio content, from listen-again services to a huge assortment of podcasts covering every imaginable category.

While the lack of commercial stations and the annoyance of having to create a BBC account might leave you wondering why Sounds gets our top billing, it wasn't a decision that was easily made. However, BBC Sounds' foibles pale into insignificance when



you compare it to some of the ugly ad-infested interfaces that plague almost every other radio app.

How it can be improved:

As we've already mentioned, the BBC Sounds app falls short in two key areas. Despite its breadth of content, there's a lot more to radio than the BBC and this simply isn't reflected here. Commercial radio is a big part of the British radio landscape – as ITV and Channel 4 are to terrestrial TV – and the Sounds app shuts them out and locks the door. You also need a BBC account to sign in. While this helps keep out anyone whose tax money isn't contributing to the phenomenal service, and is useful for discovering new programmes based on your listening habits, it's also a bit creepy if you value your privacy.

OUR VERDICT

The BBC's radio services are a national treasure and this app is the tool you need to help you explore its riches. Although it doesn't expand beyond the BBC into the wider world of radio, its superlative content and seamless presentation are peerless. If you want to listen outside of the BBC's realm, you'll need a different app, but we'd recommend installing one alongside – not instead of – Sounds.

Radioplayer | www.radioplayer.co.uk | ★★★★★☆
 FEATURES ★★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★☆

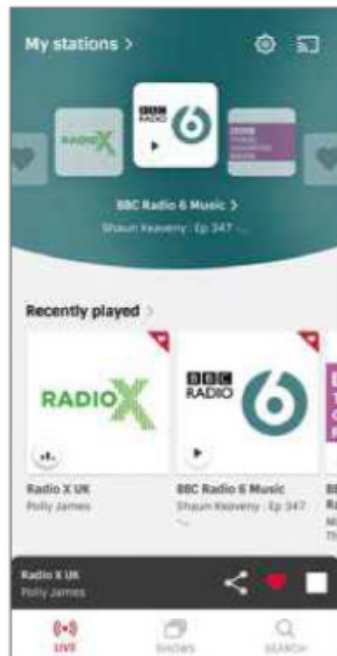
WebUser
SILVER
AWARD

What we liked:

If you want more than just BBC content, Radioplayer can fill some of the gaps. It's an app funded and run by a non-profit organisation that's effectively been set up in conjunction with the BBC and a smattering of commercial radio owners, including Global and Bauer. As a result, while its content isn't as broad as we'd hope, it has a much wider scope than the BBC Sounds app, with around 500 stations.

This means that, as well as all the BBC stations, you also get access to commercial stations such as Capital, Radio X, Gold and many local commercial stations – as long as they're run by participating companies.

The app itself is clearly inspired by the BBC Sounds app and even looks very similar, with an arc of your favourite stations accessible from the



top of the main screen.

How it can be improved:

While Radioplayer offers a broader choice of content than the Sounds app, it doesn't go far enough. If your favourite commercial stations fall into the right ownership groups, this could be all you need; but if you want smaller stations, this isn't the right fit. Also, despite being an obvious copy of Sounds, it just isn't as slick to use.

OUR VERDICT

Radioplayer is a sort-of BBC Sounds with extra commercial radio, and your enjoyment of the app will entirely depend on whether your favourite stations are included in its list of 500. While its interface is slicker than most of its rivals, it doesn't quite match the effortless functionality of Sounds.

TuneIn | tunein.com | ★★★★★☆
 FEATURES ★★★★★☆ PERFORMANCE ★★★★★☆ EASE OF USE ★★★★★☆

WebUser
BRONZE
AWARD

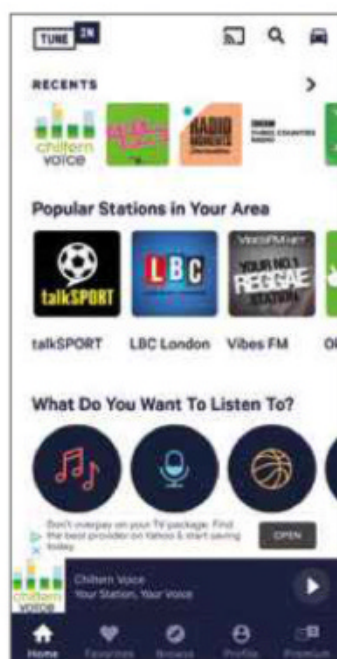
What we liked:

If all you care about is access to as many stations as you can handle, TuneIn is the place to come.

Because it isn't affiliated with any individual radio stations, it's got thousands of them – from ultra-local commercial stations to national stations from around the world.

Getting started with the app is a bit fiddly because although TuneIn provides a fully free service, it tries to get you to sign up to a free trial of the paid-for service instead. This ham-fisted upselling was almost enough to put us off, but once you've navigated through that minefield, it largely leaves you alone to find the stations you want.

The TuneIn app is riddled with ads but they're usually off to one edge or relatively easy to dismiss, which is more than can be said for many of its rivals.



How it can be improved:

Accessing content isn't too tricky, but once a station starts playing, your screen is entirely taken over by full-screen ads. Better here than making navigation difficult but, compared to the ad-free serenity of the Sounds app, this is vulgar and garish. Moreover, you can't get the BBC's main national stations: the local stations are there but you'll need to go back to Sounds or Radioplayer for Radio 2.

OUR VERDICT

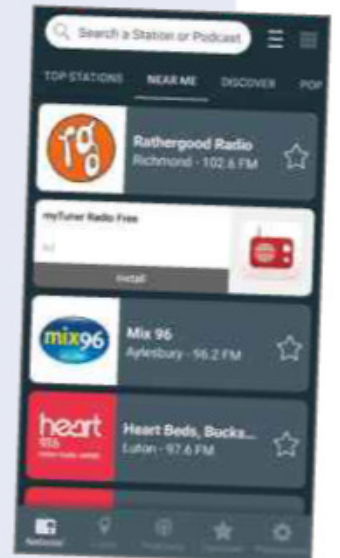
TuneIn is desperate to convert you from a free user to a paying customer, but its interface is easier to navigate than most commercial rivals, even if it's still an ad-packed horror show compared to the BBC Sounds app. It's a good option as a backup to Sounds, though.

BEST OF THE REST

Radio UK

www.app-mind.com

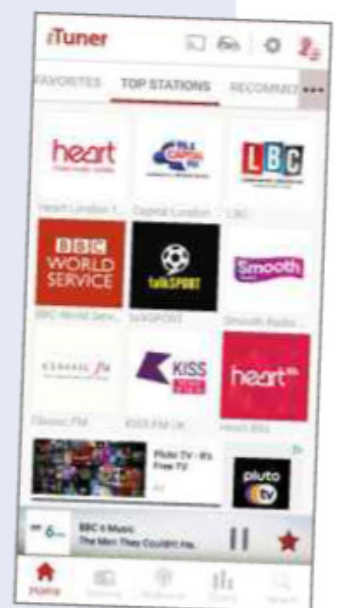
This app asks for your location but doesn't seem to know what to do with it. Instead, we persisted with its clunky search tool and surprisingly found everything we were looking for, from ultra-local stations to local and national stations from the BBC and commercial groups. However, ads are scattered across the interface in a very distracting manner and are sometimes full screen, leaving you struggling with your phone's Back button to return to the radio interface.



MyTuner

mytuner-radio.com

This is another single app you could install and use to listen to all the radio stations in the UK. We found our wishlist of ultra-local, commercial and national radio stations here, including the BBC's stations, which is a brilliant result. However, it missed out on an award thanks to its clunky interface and adverts nestled among the list of stations.



Radio England

bit.ly/radeng509

Called Radio UK on the Google Play store but installed as Radio England, this app still has radio stations from across the UK – except for the BBC's national stations, which are conspicuously absent. The interface is a simple list of stations with a search bar at the top, which makes it very easy to use, but it's a shame that full-screen adverts take over a little too often.





Practical WebUser

16 pages of workshops, tips, projects and problem solving

Edit your screen recordings

Glitterly adds backdrops, transitions, zooms and more to screen recordings. Here's how to use it

Glitterly: glitterly.app | ⌚ 20 mins | Any browser

Our cover feature in Issue 507 (bit.ly/webuser507) showed various ways to record on-screen activity, such as using Windows 10's built-in Game Bar. However, without editing and effects, the finished recording may not be very exciting to watch. Glitterly is a web-based tool that makes it easy to spice up your recordings with colourful backgrounds, transitions and introductions, then save the finished

result for watching and sharing.

It's still a work in progress, so not all the features – such as the ability to save your project as a GIF or share it directly on Twitter or Instagram – are available yet. However, Glitterly is completely free to use and there are no unwelcome annoyances such as adverts or watermarks to worry about. The only limit is that uploaded screen recordings have to be under 20MB in size.

UPLOAD

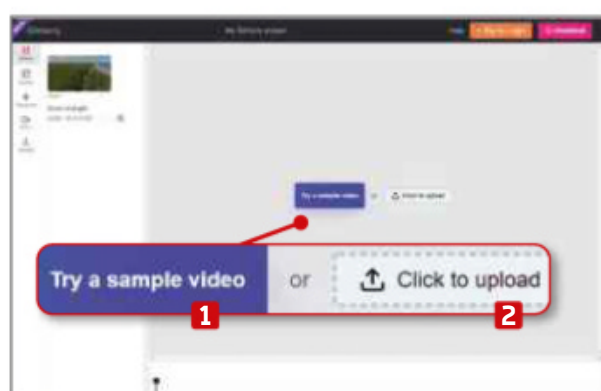
You can upload your screen recording directly from the sidebar but you can't have more than one video in a project



1 The first step is to record your screen. For this, we'll use Windows 10's Game Bar. Open the program, app or game you want to record. Press Win+G on your keyboard to open the tool, then click the Record button **1** and perform whatever task you want to record.



2 When you've finished, click the Stop button **1** to save the video to your Gallery. Click the 'Show all captures' link **2** to view your recordings. From here, you can change the name of the recording and open its location in File Explorer. Copy it to somewhere that's easy to find.



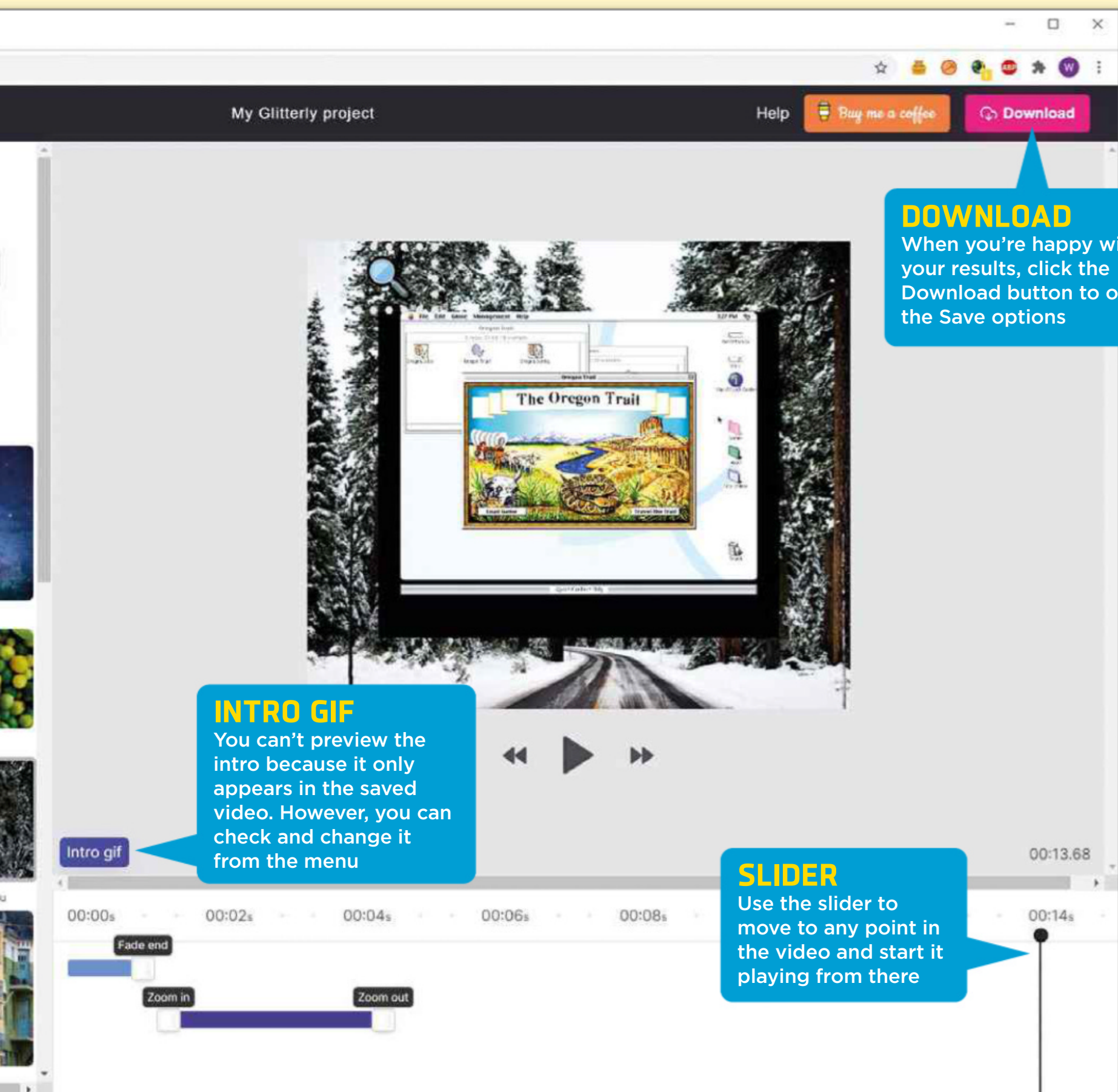
3 Open your browser and go to glitterly.app. Click the 'Make a video for free' button. You can test the tool by clicking the 'Try a sample video' button, **1** but we'll jump right in and make one using our recording. Click the upload button **2** and navigate to your video.



4 The video opens. Use the controls underneath to play it and jump backwards and forwards. **1** Glitterly can zoom into an area of interest in your recording. Use the slider below **2** to get to the point where the zoom should begin. Select Zoom, **3** then click the thumbnail **4** to enable it.



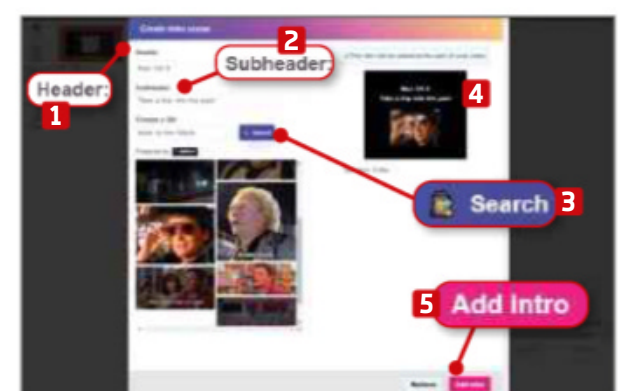
5 Click and drag the magnifying glass **1** to the area you want to focus on, then use the zoom slider to adjust the strength of the magnification. **2** Press Play to see how it looks. The next step is to add a background. Click the Frame button, **3** which opens a sidebar.



6 Click the Height and Width buttons **1** to adjust the thickness of the frame. You can Undo any changes you don't like. **2** Select a solid colour **3** or choose one of the copyright-free images from Unsplash. **4** It will be applied immediately. Now click Transition. **5**



7 The only transition available at the moment is Fade In. **1** Select it and it's applied to the beginning of your video. **2** Unlike the Zoom feature, you can't change its position or length on the timeline – it remains fixed at the start. Glitterly also lets you add an optional intro to your video. Click Intro. **3**

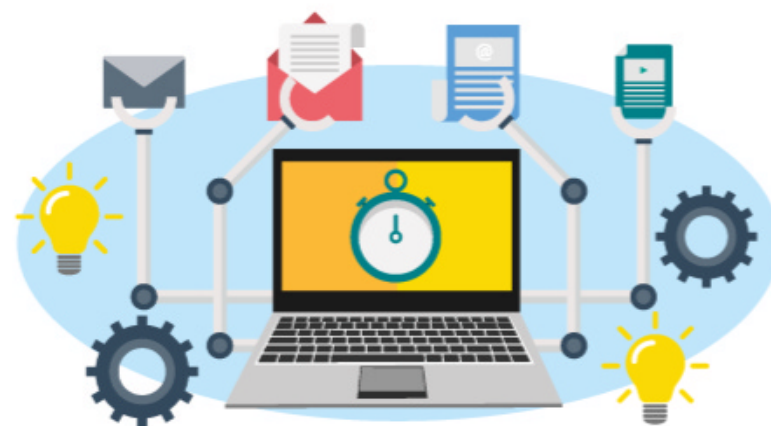


8 Give your introduction a header **1** and subheader. **2** If you want to add a GIF, search for a topic by name, **3** select one of the GIF choices below and check the preview. **4** Click 'Add intro' **5** and it's added to the start of your video.



Automate and schedule Windows actions

RoboIntern: robointern.tech | 20 mins | Windows 7, 8, 10



EXPERT TIP

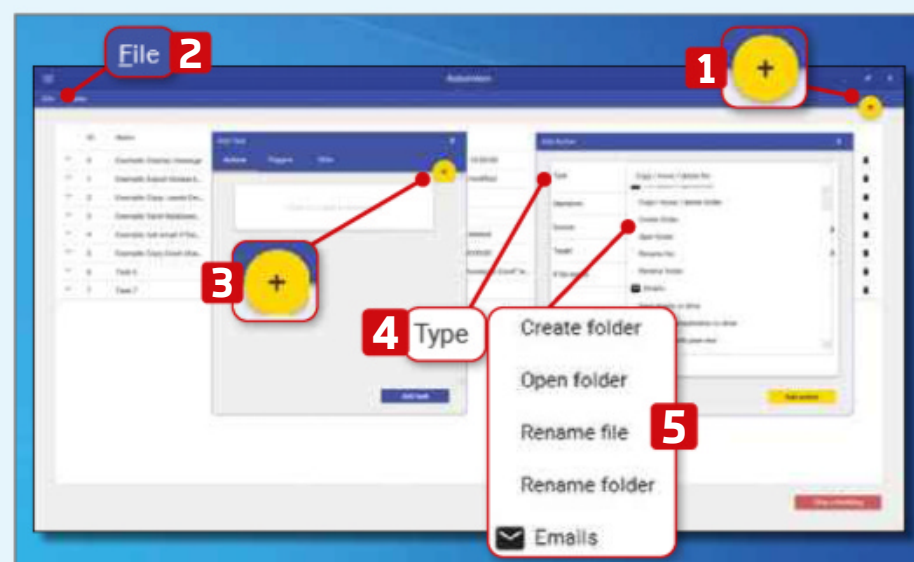
Steve Clark says

When creating automated emails in RoboIntern, you can pick between Microsoft, Google and 'Custom servers'. However, to use Gmail, you must allow 'Less secure app access'. Google's default setting blocks apps such as RoboIntern because it doesn't know whether they use account security that's as safe as Google's own default ones. To allow it to send emails through Gmail, turn the setting on at bit.ly/secure509. If you use two-factor authentication, this option won't be available.

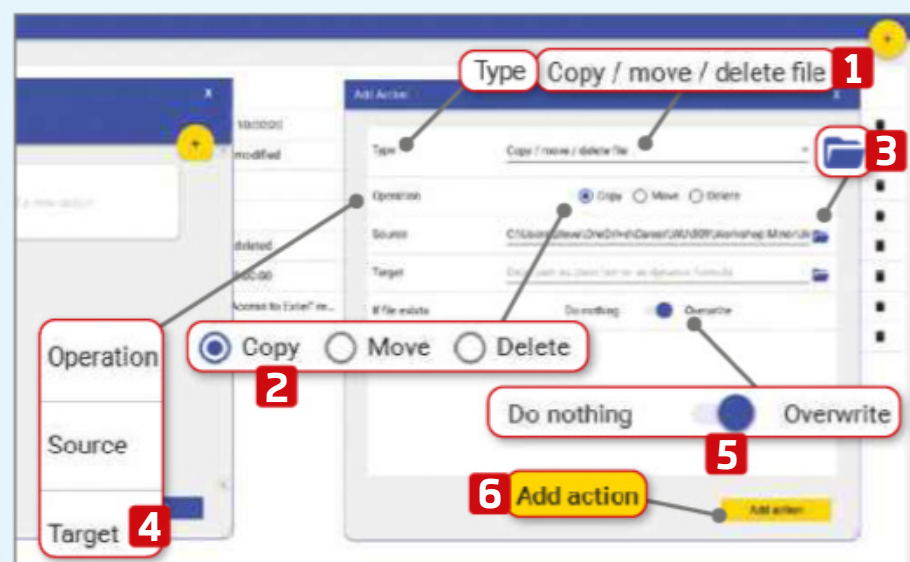
You can use your computer to make your life easier by setting it to perform simple, repetitive tasks that would otherwise take you time and effort. In this workshop, we look at two automation tools: RoboIntern (robointern.tech) and Auto Off (bit.ly/auto509).

Think of RoboIntern as a Windows-only IFTTT (ifttt.com), only much more powerful. It can perform countless PC tasks, offers some useful automated actions and is completely intuitive and efficient. The official tutorial at bit.ly/robotutorial509 provides even more ideas.

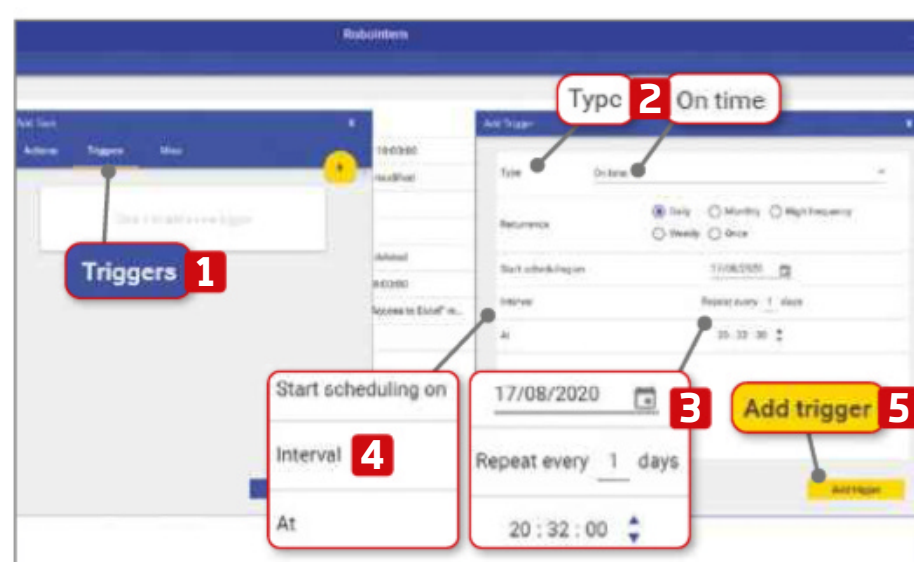
Auto Off, meanwhile, is a more focused tool for automating everyday tasks such as locking or turning off your computer.



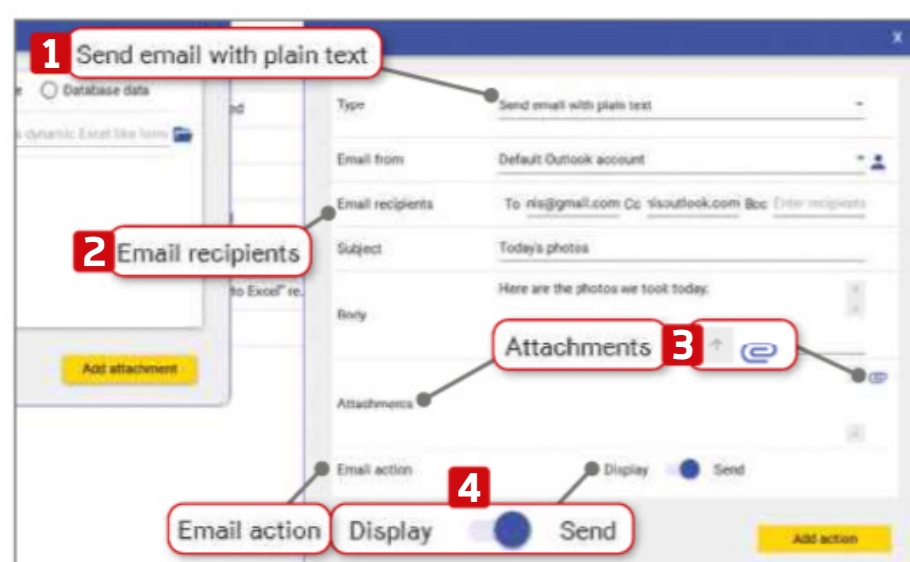
1 To automate an action in RoboIntern, start by clicking the Plus icon **1** or selecting New Task from the File menu. **2** Click the Plus icon **3** in the new window that opens to set an action. In the next window, click the Type drop-down menu **4** to see a list of actions, from running programs to sending emails. **5** Selecting an action changes the options available.



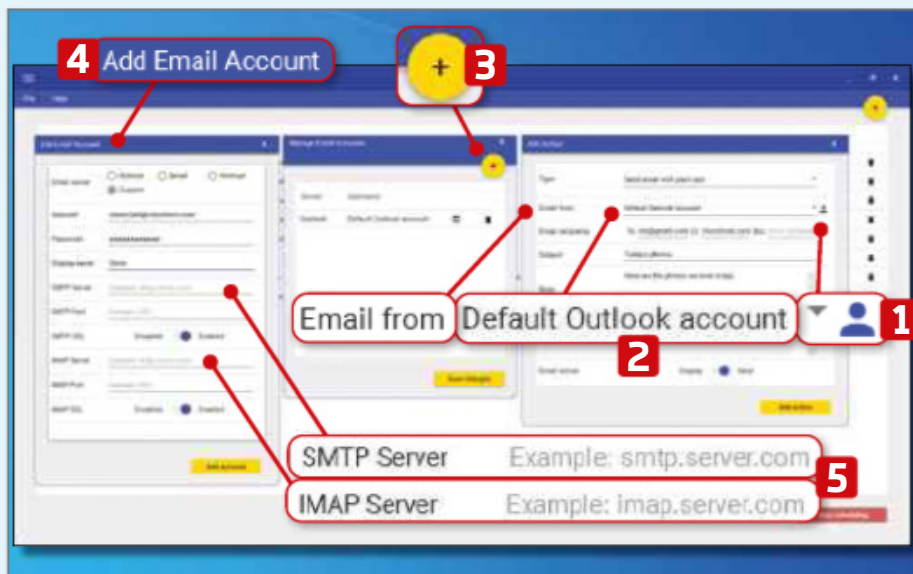
2 For example, choose 'Copy / move / delete file' **1** from the Type drop-down menu and, for Operation, select Copy. **2** Click the Source folder icon **3** and pick a file, then do the same for Target, **4** selecting a save location and giving the file a new name. Depending on use, switch the toggle to the Overwrite option. **5** Click 'Add action'. **6**



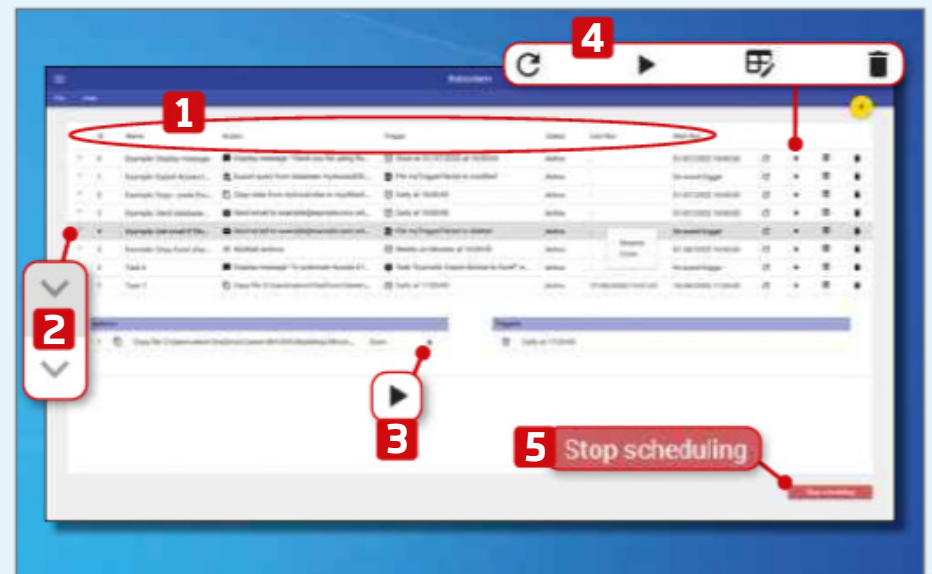
3 Once you've set an Action, it's added to your Task List. You can now Edit, Clone or Delete it. Next, you need to set a trigger that activates the action. Click the Triggers tab **1** and choose 'On time' from the Type drop-down menu. **2** Set a date and time **3** for the file to be copied, and set Interval **4** to 0 unless you want to repeat it. Click 'Add trigger'. **5**



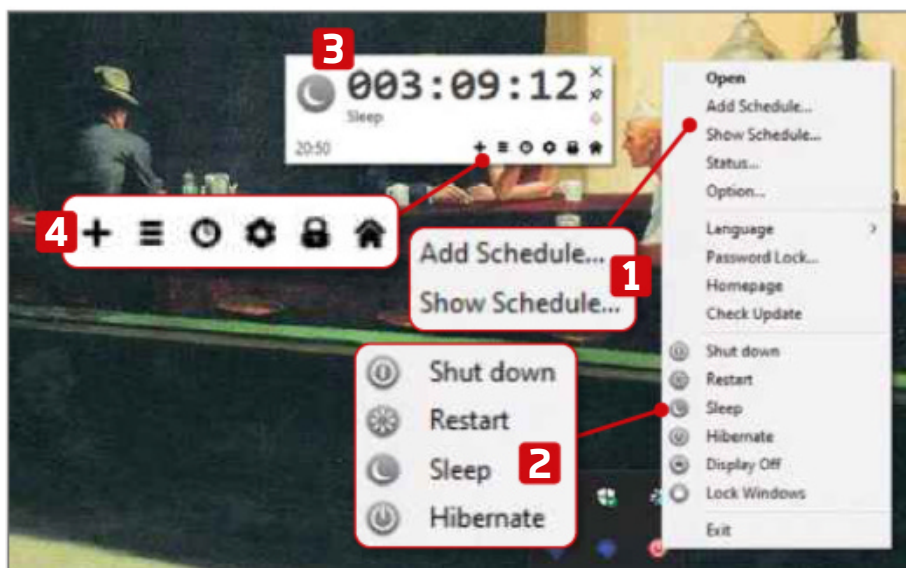
4 To demonstrate a more complex Action/Trigger combo, we'll create the action 'Send email with plain text'. **1** Skip 'Email from' - we'll return to that - and direct the email to multiple email addresses. **2** Enter the rest of the details, including adding attachments, and choosing the attachment type and location. **3** Toggle the 'Email action' to Send. **4**



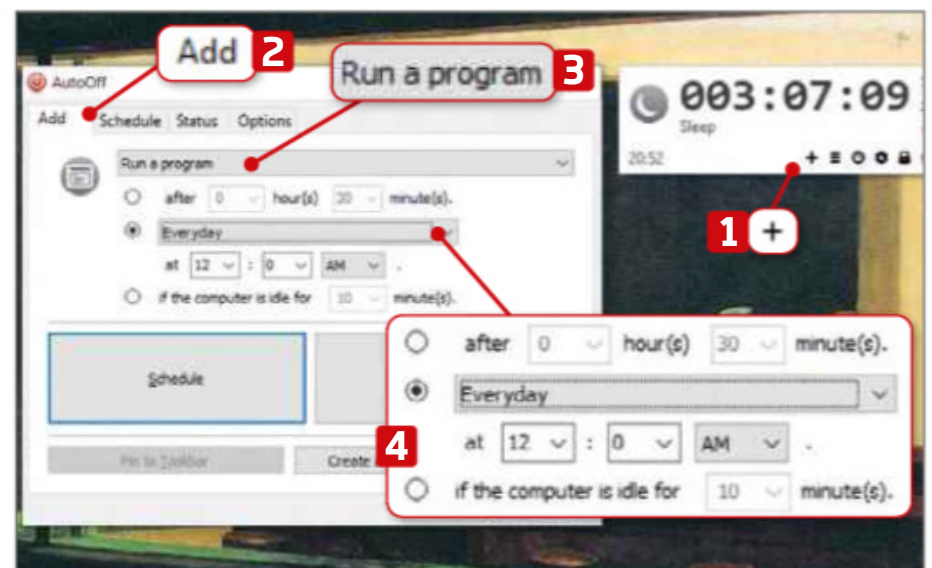
5 Now return to the 'Email from' option and click the Person icon. **1** By default, an Outlook account is listed, **2** but you can click the Plus icon **3** to add any other addresses. **4** Custom addresses require SMTP and IMAP details. **5** Be sure to set a trigger for this task by clicking Triggers, Plus and choosing the Type.



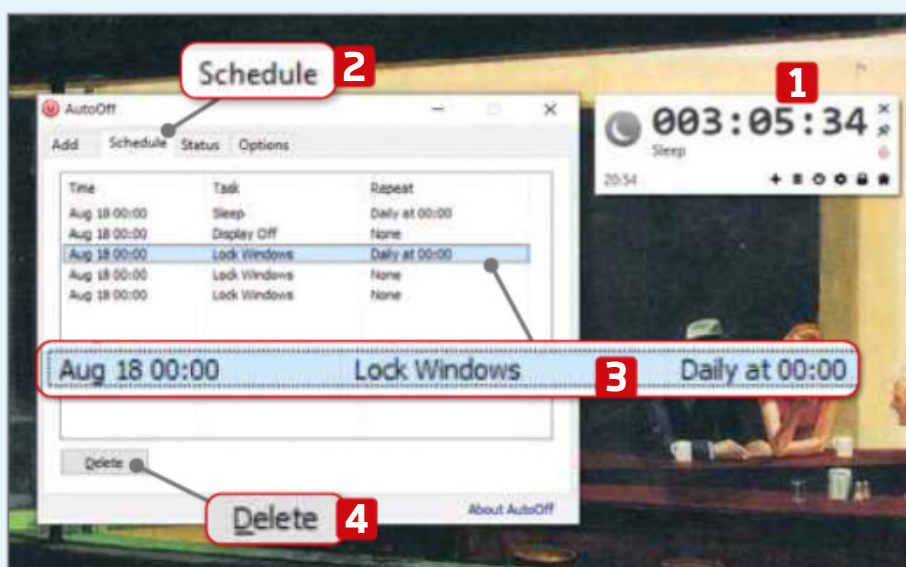
6 Back in the main window, you can sort tasks by clicking the column headers. **1** Press the down arrows **2** to expand entries, showing Action, Trigger and the Play button **3** to run them manually. The task options **4** are Reset, Run, Edit and Delete. Right-clicking lets you Rename or Clone. Press 'Start/Stop scheduling' **5** to pause or resume tasks.



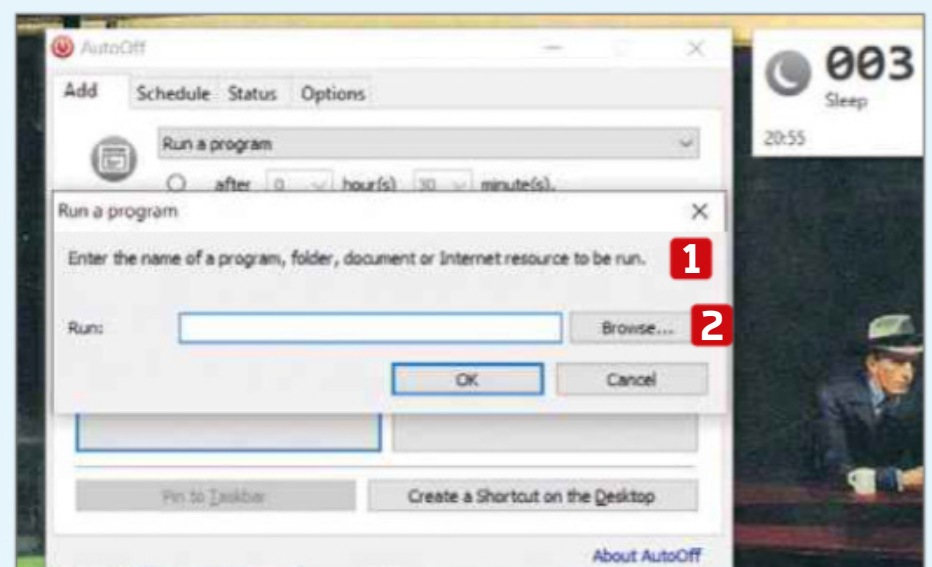
7 Switch to Auto Off (bit.ly/auto509), which runs in the taskbar. Right-click its icon to display shortcuts to task creations **1** and power options. **2** Open the tool to see a timer **3** and a row of buttons **4** to add tasks, view the current schedule and status, and modify Options. The padlock lets you enter a password, so Auto Off automatically unlocks Windows.



8 Click the plus-sign icon **1** and go to the Add tab. **2** Select an action from the drop-down menu. **3** Most are power-related, such as 'Shut down Windows' and 'Turn on the display', but you can run or stop programs and set alarms, too. Now choose a trigger – after a set time, on specific days at specific times or if the computer idles for too long. **3**



9 Click Schedule or Schedule Repeat to activate the task. The timer begins its countdown. **1** These tasks are moved to the Schedule tab, **2** displaying the trigger time, action and whether it repeats. **3** Unfortunately, there's no way to edit or rearrange set tasks, but you can highlight them and click Delete **4** when they're no longer needed.



10 Unlike other AutoOff tasks, when you run a program or set an alarm, you get an additional prompt. **1** Alarms require typing out a brief alarm message (good for reminders and to-dos). To run or kill a program, click Browse **2** and navigate through File Explorer to select it. When auto-terminating a program, make sure your work is saved.



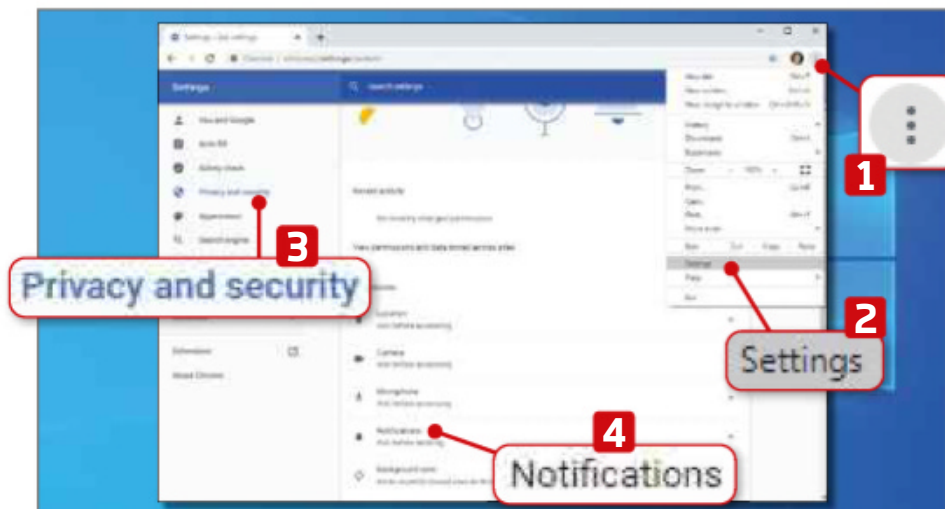
Use your browser's settings to limit notifications

It's annoying when half the sites you visit stop to ask whether you'd like them to send you notifications, especially since the answer is almost always "No, go away, I never want to see this again". The main browser developers have recently refined

their settings to allow for better control, so you can block these messages by default and ensure the sites you visit are less bothersome.



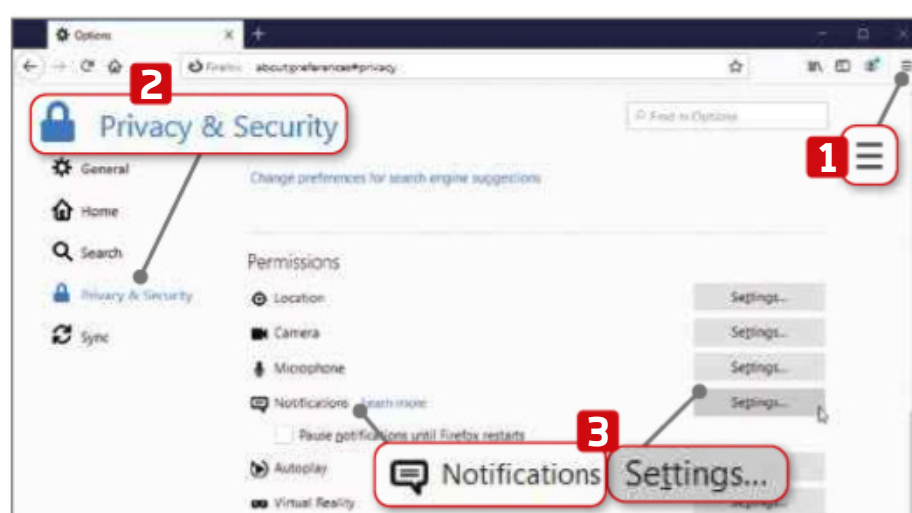
Chrome, Firefox and Edge | 10 mins | Chrome Firefox Edge



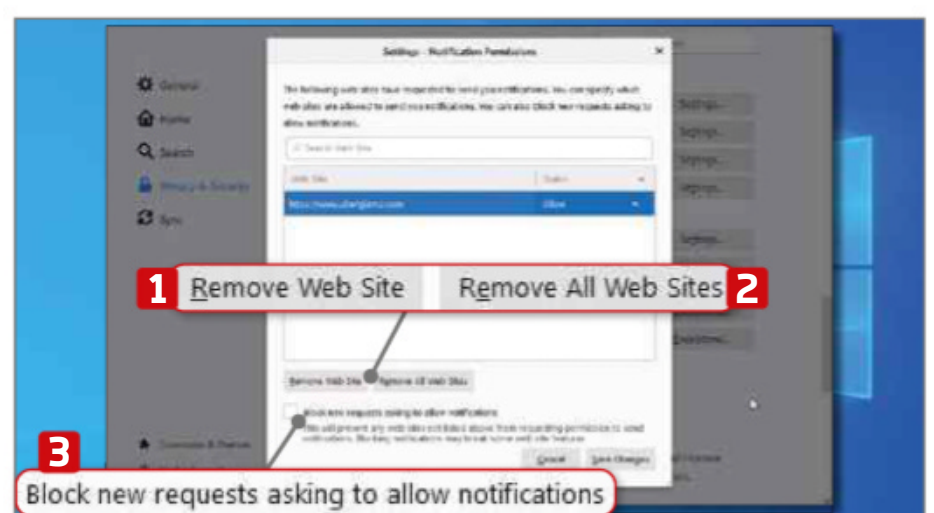
1 In Chrome, open the three-dot menu **1** and choose Settings. **2** In the left-hand panel, choose 'Privacy and security', **3** then 'Site settings'. Under Permissions, look for the Notifications option **4** and click it.



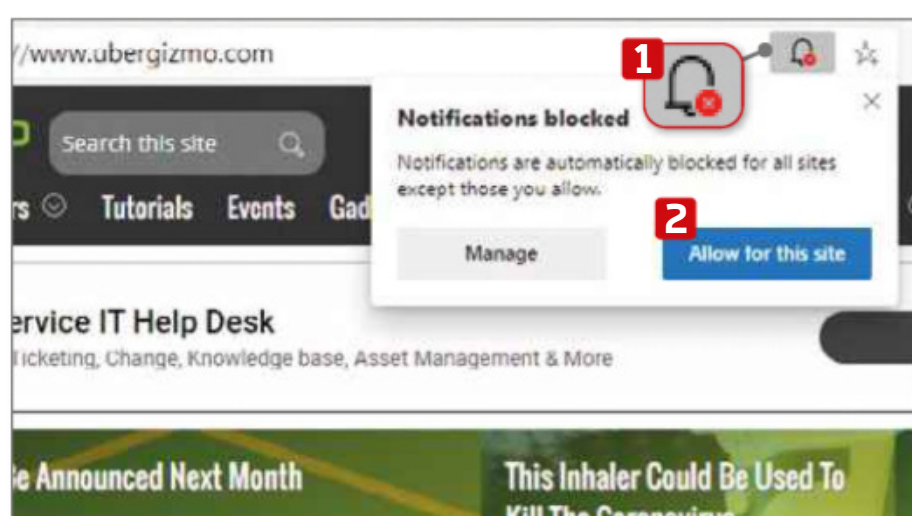
2 Chrome lets you blanket-ban notification requests by switching off 'Sites can ask to send notifications'. **1** Alternatively, leave it on and use 'quieter messaging' **2** to block requests that don't meet certain criteria. You can also add sites to the Block and Allow categories. **3**



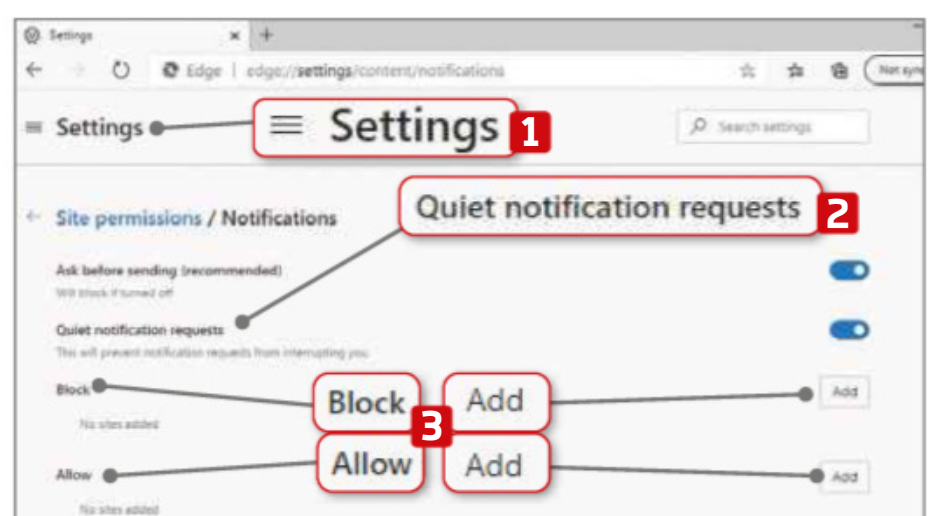
3 Firefox now blocks notifications by default, unless you have interacted with a site (clicked a link or pressed a key) before the request comes through. Open the three-line menu **1** and choose Options. Click the 'Privacy & Security' tab, **2** then click the Settings button next to Notifications. **3**



4 Use this window to manage individual sites that have permission to send you notifications. You can remove individual websites **1** or take them all off the list. **2** There's also the option to block all new notification requests, **3** which banishes these annoying messages forever.



5 Edge is the latest browser to join the notification-blocking party. Even with notifications switched on, Edge only shows a bell icon in the address bar if a request comes in. **1** You have to manually click this to be asked if you'd like to allow notifications in the future. **2**



6 To manage these further, open the menu and click Settings. Click the Settings menu **1** and choose 'Site permissions', then Notifications. Here, you can return to the default by turning off 'Quiet notification requests'. **2** You can also individually add sites to Block or Allow notifications. **3**

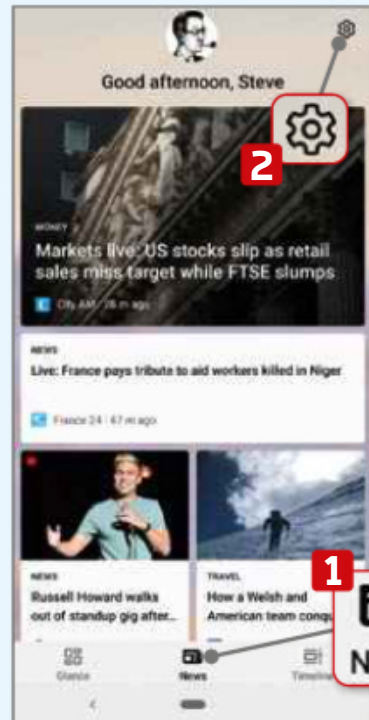


Try Microsoft Launcher's new features

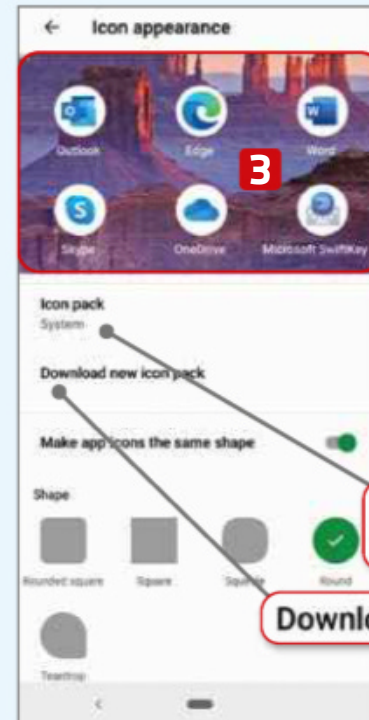
We've long hailed Microsoft Launcher as one of the best launcher apps for Android, thanks to a clean design, plenty of features and performance that keeps your phone zipping along. Best of all, it's free to use

Microsoft Launcher: bit.ly/mslaunch509 | ⌚ 10 mins | 🤖 Android 7+

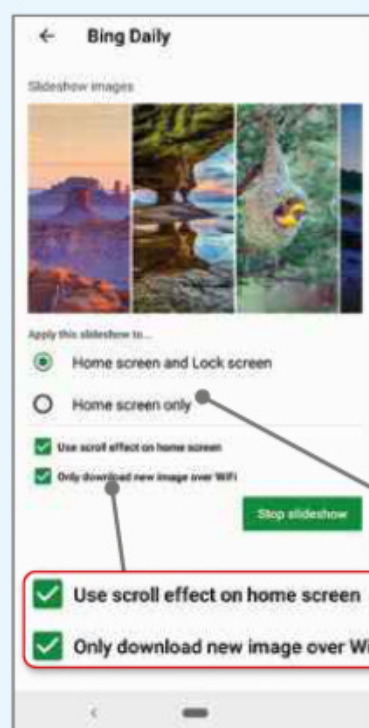
and free of adverts. Version 6 is now available for all, with improved performance and lots of new customisation settings to personalise your phone.



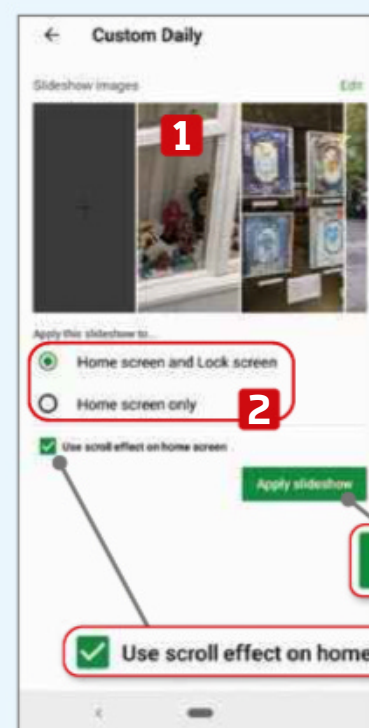
1 Swipe right from the home screen on your Android phone to find Microsoft Launcher's 'home', where you can check out its most notable update: personalised news stories. Tap News, **1** then the cog. **2** On the next screen, tap News, then 'News interests', and tick the boxes to set your favourite categories, such as Entertainment, Technology and Sport.



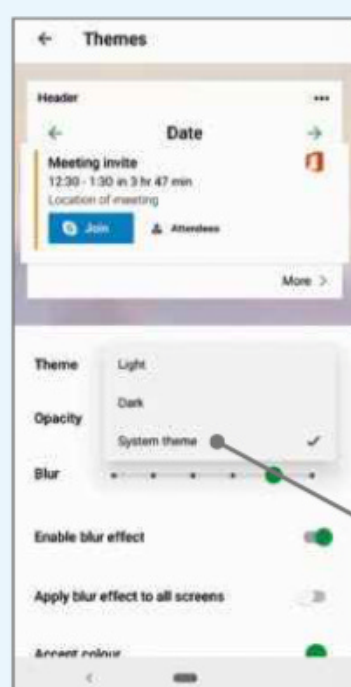
2 The new version of Launcher introduces customisable icons. Tap and hold the Home screen until you see the Launcher Settings button. Tap it, then select 'Home screen' and 'Icon appearance'. Switch between existing icon packs **1** or download new ones from the Play Store. **2** Previews are displayed in the upper pane. **3**



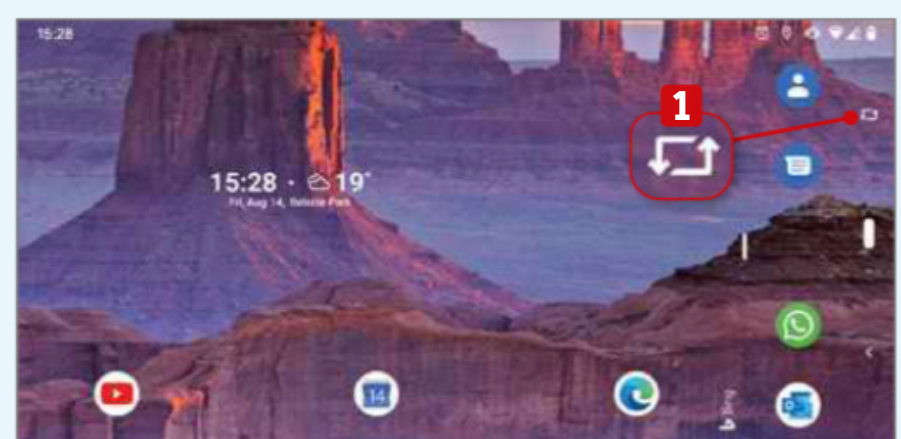
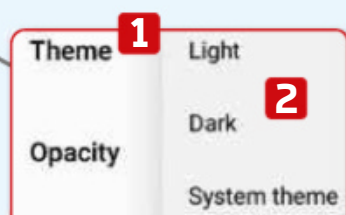
3 Tap and hold the Home screen again, then select 'Change wallpaper'. This lets you choose Bing Daily wallpapers, which you'll recognise from the Windows lock screen. Tap Bing Daily, then choose to have wallpapers apply to Home and Lock screen, or just Home. **1** We recommend trying the scroll effects and choosing Wi-Fi-only downloads. **2**



4 If you're not a fan of Bing's images, you can choose your own by tapping 'Change wallpaper', then Custom Daily. Select the images by tapping beneath 'Slideshow images' **1** and pick individual photos. Decide where the wallpaper displays **2** and choose the option to use the scroll effect. **3** Tap 'Apply slideshow'. **4**



5 To apply dark mode, open Launcher Settings and tap Themes. Using the Theme drop-down menu, **1** switch between Light, Dark and 'System theme', **2** which brings the launcher into line with the base Android settings. To alter the system theme, go to device Settings, Display and switch on 'Dark theme'.



6 Microsoft Launcher now supports landscape mode. How it works depends on your phone's rotation settings: if auto-rotate is on, just turn the phone sideways; if not, press the Rotation icon **1** beside the Home button.

Weekend Project

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



How to...

Control several computers from a single setup

Save space and time by setting up one screen, mouse and keyboard with several computers. **Wayne Williams** shows you how

In a workshop in Issue 506, we explained how to control several PCs with a single keyboard and mouse using Mouse Without Borders (bit.ly/mwborders509), a program created by Microsoft Garage. While this is a great tool, it has some limitations – for starters, you still need a separate screen for each device.

In this Weekend Project, we go a step further by adding screen-sharing to the mix. If you use a good-size monitor with your desktop PC, you can also connect it to other computers – such as a laptop or Raspberry Pi – and switch between them as required, so all your devices can benefit from the same large display.



What you need

Let's start with the monitor. Depending on your needs and where you'll be using your setup, the bigger the screen, the better. Obviously, having a lot of screen space means you'll get the most from leisure activities such as watching videos and playing games, but you can also use Windows' built-in Snap feature to arrange various windows – Word, email and your browser, for example – on a single display.

We've reviewed a selection of affordable screens on page 22, so choose one that best fits the connections you have on the devices you want to use it with.

Screens like this come with a wealth of ports that let you switch between various inputs. Just as you can switch between your various TV connections – set-top box, DVD player and so on – you'll be able to jump to whatever input you require, making it very easy to switch

from a desktop on DisplayPort 1 to a laptop on HDMI 1 or a Raspberry Pi 4 on HDMI 2. We go into more depth on how to set up and configure your screen in our Mini Workshop, opposite.

Next, you'll need a keyboard and mouse. You probably already have one (or more) of these, but it may be worth spending some extra money on a better model, for more flexibility. If you have a USB keyboard and mouse, you can just



Many monitors, like this one from Philips that we review on page 22, come with a variety of inputs



The Logitech's MX Keys keyboard lets you switch between three different devices

unplug them from one PC – such as your Windows desktop – and plug them into another computer, such as a laptop, Mac or Raspberry Pi, at the same time as you connect the monitor input.

However, this arrangement won't work if you want to connect a device that doesn't support USB, such as an iPad. The solution is to go for a Bluetooth keyboard and mouse, which will let you quickly hop between different devices with a minimum of fuss. Most modern computing devices come with built-in Bluetooth, so you don't need to do much to connect your peripherals, but if you have a desktop PC that doesn't support the wireless standard, you can buy a Bluetooth dongle for a few quid from Amazon. Bluetooth peripherals can sometimes be a little temperamental but disabling and then reconnecting them

usually fixes most problems.

Some keyboards, such as the MX Keys from Logitech (bit.ly/mxkeys509), can be paired with multiple devices (up to three, in the case of MX Keys) and you can quickly switch between them at the press of a button. Logitech's Flow-enabled MX Master 3 mouse (bit.ly/mxmouse509)



MX Master 3 mouse can be used with multiple computers at the same time



can not only be customised for use with supported programs such as Photoshop, Word and Google Chrome, but you can use it with multiple computers at the same time – provided they have their own screens. Move your mouse cursor to the edge of your laptop screen, for example, and it jumps to the display you're using for your desktop PC or Mac. It even lets you copy text, images and other files between computers by dragging and dropping.

Pairing the MX Master 3 mouse with the MX Keys makes your setup even smarter. When you move the mouse from one computer to another, the keyboard switches at the same time. Of course, there's a price to pay for this level of sophistication – buying the keyboard and the mouse will cost you £100 each.

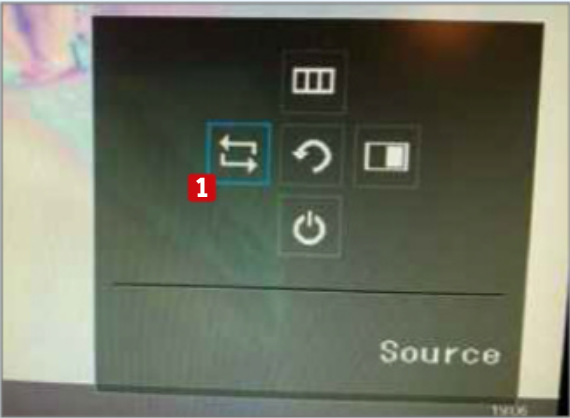
MINI WORKSHOP | How to connect different computers to a single monitor



1 Most modern screens come with a choice of inputs on the back for connecting your devices – this one has two HDMI ports **1** and a DisplayPort. **2** We'll keep the DisplayPort for our desktop computer (the primary PC) because the standard is well suited to that, and use HDMI for the other devices we're connecting.







2 Connect the relevant cables to the ports (HDMI and DisplayPort connectors look similar but are actually quite different). We're connecting DisplayPort to our desktop PC, and trailing the two HDMI cables to the front for our other devices. It can be useful to attach a label to the cables so you know which is which. **1**



3 Now, when we want to use a different computer – a laptop or a Raspberry Pi, for example – we can just plug in the relevant monitor cable and switch to it using the controls for the screen. **1**

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3		Sky: Superfast Talk and Line Rental	£27.00	18 months	59Mbps avg. speed	∞ unlimited*	£324.00
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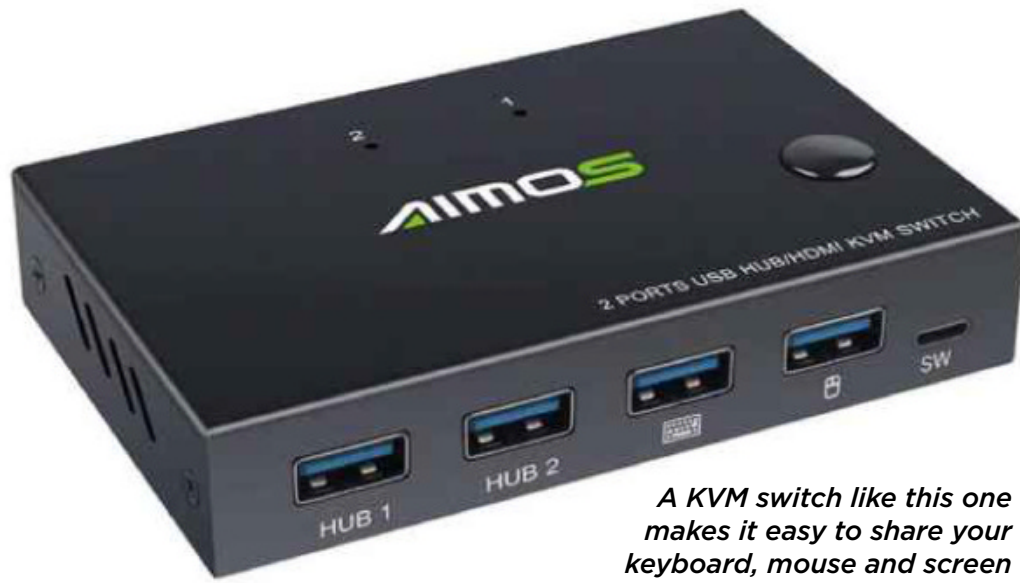
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A KVM switch like this one makes it easy to share your keyboard, mouse and screen

KVM solutions

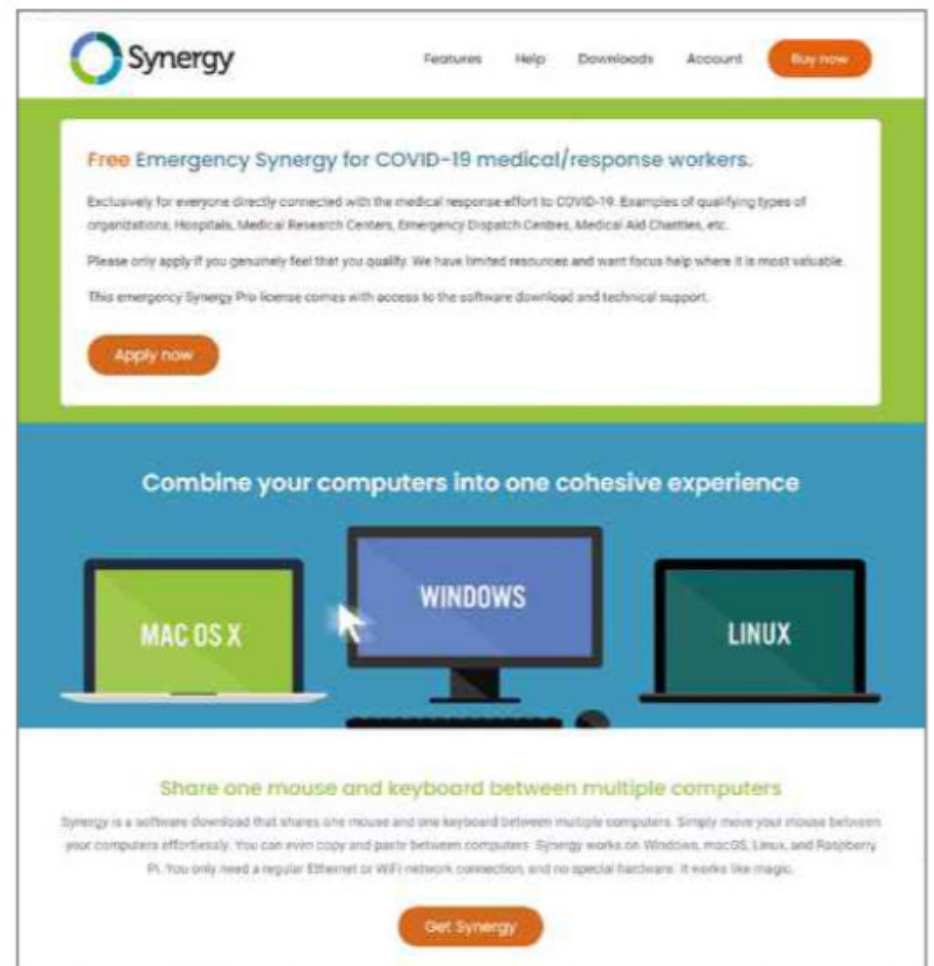
If you don't want to replace your existing peripherals, consider investing in a KVM switch. KVM stands for Keyboard, Video and Mouse – it's basically a hardware device that lets multiple computers make use of the same keyboard, mouse and screen.

Simply connect your peripherals – in some cases, these may also include a printer, scanner, card reader and USB storage – to the switch and hook it up to your other computers. You can switch from one device to another seamlessly with the press of a button. Prices for a hardware switch can vary significantly depending on what you require. Shop around and you should be able to pick up a decent switch for around £40.

If you prefer a software solution, then Synergy (bit.ly/syne509) is a good choice

that lets you share a mouse and keyboard (but not a screen) between multiple computers. It requires a wired or wireless network connection, and works on Windows, macOS, Linux and Raspberry Pi. It also supports clipboard sharing, so you can copy and paste between computers. Synergy costs \$29 (around £22) for a lifetime licence, although the company is currently offering a free Pro license to anyone helping to fight COVID-19.

If you want an entirely free solution, there's an offshoot of Synergy 1.9 called Barrier (bit.ly/barr509), which lets you use the keyboard and mouse from



Synergy is a software KVM solution that's currently free for those helping to fight COVID-19

machine A to control machine B. It's simpler, by design, than the current version of Synergy, with downloads available for Windows, macOS and Linux.

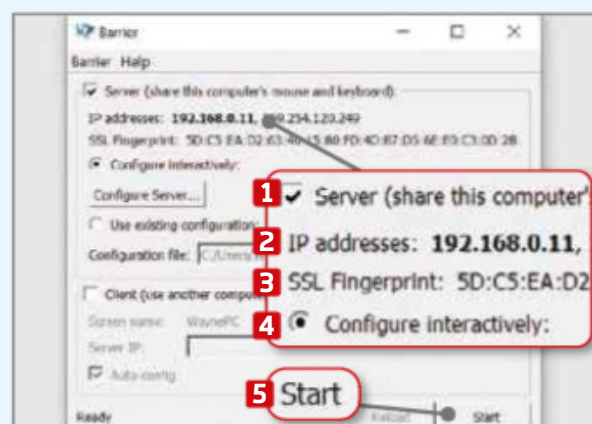
The latest version, released in July, fixes a lot of bugs, so it should be much more stable than before. Switching from one device to another can be done by moving your mouse to the edge of the screen or using a hotkey. We show you how to use Barrier in our Mini Workshop, below. ■



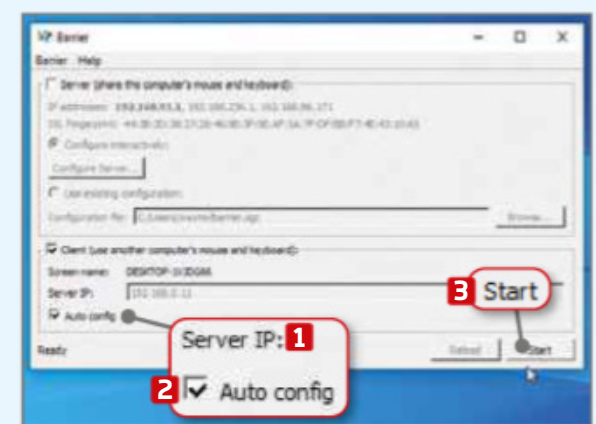
MINI WORKSHOP | Use Barrier to share a keyboard and mouse



1 Barrier can't share a screen but it lets you use the keyboard and mouse from one machine on another. Download the software for your main computer (the one the peripherals are connected to) and install and run it. Select your language and choose Server as the type. **1** Click Finish. **2**



2 The configuration window opens, with Server ticked. **1** Make a note of the IP address **2** and fingerprint, **3** because you'll need them shortly. You can interactively configure the server, including setting up hotkeys, **4** but you don't need to worry about that for now. Click the Start button. **5**



3 Install the software on a device that will share your peripherals. Choose your language and select Client. In the Server IP box, **1** enter the IP address from the other computer and tick 'Auto config'. **2** Install Bonjour, if prompted. Click Start **3** and trust the Barrier fingerprint. The connection will then be made.

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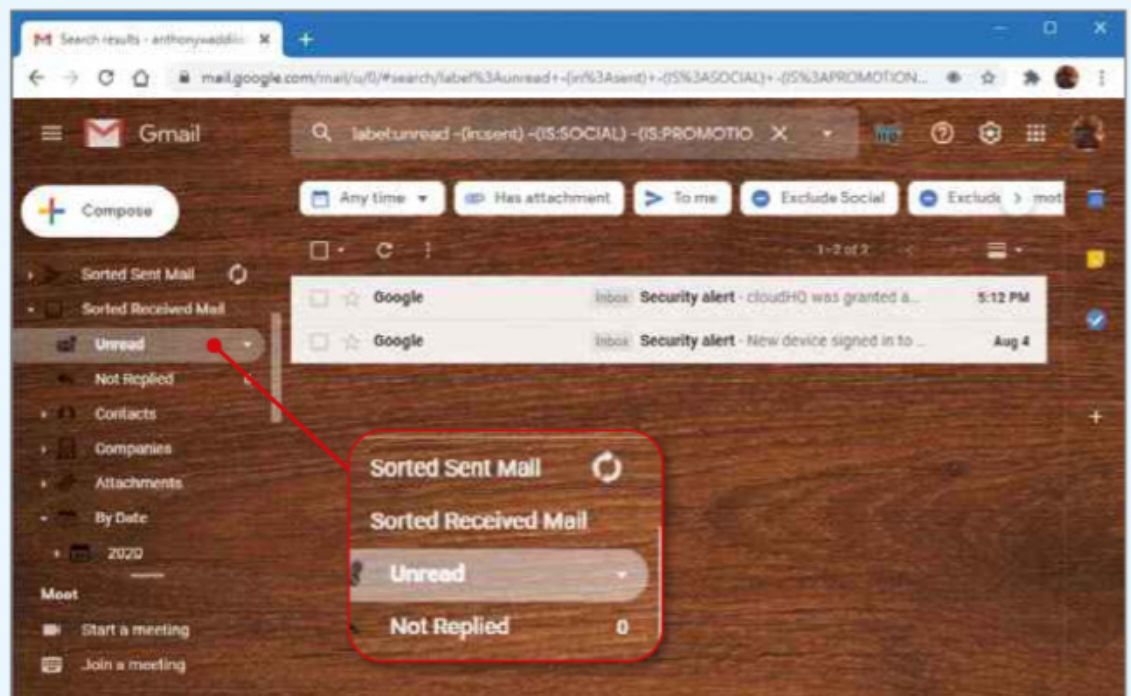
Web User Masterclass

Improve Gmail and Outlook using extensions and extra tools

Sort your emails and simplify searches

Gmail has a powerful search box at the top of the page, but it's not obvious how to get the most out of all the options it offers. Sort Gmail Inbox by cloudHQ simplifies searches by adding them as clickable items in the sidebar.

Install the Chrome extension (bit.ly/sort509) and create an account to give permission for the extension to work with Gmail. Go to Gmail and, in the sidebar, expand the headings for Sorted Sent Mail and Sorted Received Mail. Under Sorted Received Mail, you'll see Unread, Not Replied, Contacts, Companies, Attachments and more. Click them to view sorted and filtered emails, such as unread messages, those with attachments and so on. Look in the search box at the top to see what you'd have to type to recreate the search manually.



Use the Sorted Gmail Inbox extension to simplify advanced searches

Add a reading pane

Adding a reading pane to Gmail means you can see your inbox and emails at the same time, rather than hopping between windows. Click the cog icon and scroll down to the bottom, then select 'Right of inbox' or 'Below inbox' to try the two different layouts.

When you read an email, then delete or archive it, you're normally returned to the inbox. To display the next email instead, click the cog icon, then the 'See all settings' button. On the Settings page, open the Advanced tab and set Auto-advance to Enabled.



Enable the reading pane in Gmail and see your inbox and an email at the same time

Change the look of Outlook

There are several extensions that let you customise Outlook webmail but tweaking the built-in features also applies some handy changes. Click the cog icon, then 'View all Outlook settings'. Select Email in the first column and Layout in the second.

Scroll down to the options for showing a reading pane on the right or below the inbox listing. You can also show the sender name or subject first in the inbox, show or hide preview text and dates, and more.

Select 'Compose and reply' in the middle column to tweak 'Message format'. Choose the font, size and colour for messages, so you don't have to do this every time you write a message.

Further down, you can enable 'Joyful animations' to show a burst of coloured shapes when you read an email that, for example, wishes you a happy birthday.

Have you ever written an email and clicked Send, only to realise you forgot something, made a typing error or delivered your message to the wrong person? Drag the slider under 'Undo send' to the maximum and you'll now

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.

have 10 seconds to stop an email after clicking Send. Gmail offers this, too – just click Undo in the box that briefly appears in the bottom-right once you've clicked Send.

Add Google Drive and Dropbox to Outlook

The natural place for files used with Outlook email is OneDrive, but Microsoft doesn't stop you from using Google Drive, Dropbox or Box instead. Click the cog icon, choose 'View all Outlook settings', then select Email in the first column and Attachments in the second.

In the 'Storage accounts' section on the right, there are options to add alternatives. Click one and you're asked to let Microsoft access it.



Add Google Drive, Dropbox and Box online drives to Outlook email

OneDrive is then listed as your primary storage and Google Drive is listed under 'Other accounts'. Do the same with Dropbox and Box, if you have accounts.

Close the settings window and click the 'New message' button. Click Attach to add a file attachment to the email and a menu appears with 'Browse cloud locations'. Select it and you can browse the files on whichever storage services you've selected.

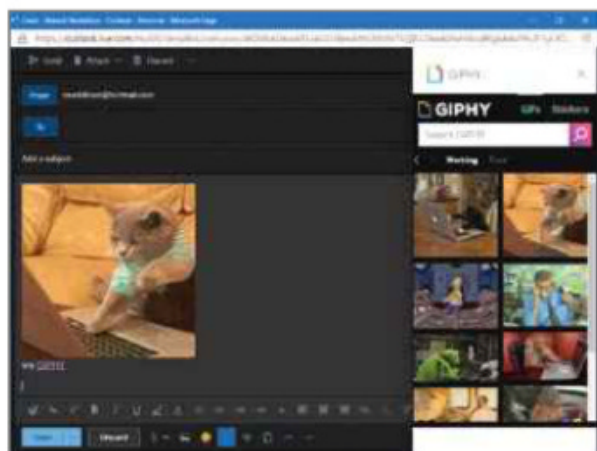
Install more Gmail add-ons

There are dozens of add-ons for Gmail that add extra features, and MailTrack is just one example. Click the plus sign at the right side of the inbox and you can add Trello, Asana and Evernote note-taking and to-do apps, Slack for work, DocuSign to digitally sign documents, Dropbox to work with online storage – and many more.

Install Outlook add-ons

You can customise Outlook by installing add-ons (which Microsoft confusingly calls 'add-ins'), which add extra features and functions. Create a new email, click the three-dot icon to the right of Send and select Get Add-ins.

Many of these add-ons are for business services but a few have more general uses: GIPHY inserts amusing animated GIFs in your messages; Evernote lets you access Evernote notes and insert items into emails; Boomerang and Bananatag provide several features, including email tracking and notifications that tell you if an email has been read.



Install add-ins in Outlook to add features, such as animated GIFs

TAKE IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

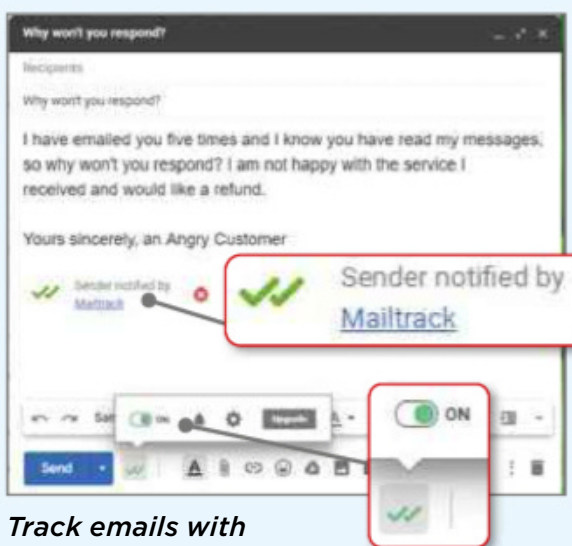
More advanced tips for when you're feeling brave

Find out if emails have been read

One of the most frustrating things about email is that you can never be sure that someone has received a message. Has the person read it but ignored it, or did they not receive it at all? Mail-tracking services let you see if an email you have sent has been opened. Some even tell you when and on what device, such as a computer or phone.

Install the MailTracker Chrome extension (bit.ly/track509) to see when emails you've sent have been read. Click MailTracker in the toolbar and sign in for free. Create a new email in Gmail and you get a green tick next to the Send button that shows email tracking is on. After sending your message, open Sent messages, click the message you tracked and a panel opens showing whether the person has read it.

Bananatag (track.bananatag.com), Boomerang (www.boomeranggmail.com) and MailTrack (mailtrack.io) also offer tracking, along with other features. In Gmail, click the plus button in the vertical bar on the right of the inbox list. Find and install MailTrack, clicking through the messages that appear – except the last one, which upgrades you to a paid-for account (we recommend sticking with the free version). Now close and reopen Chrome.



Track emails with MailTrack to find out whether your messages have been read

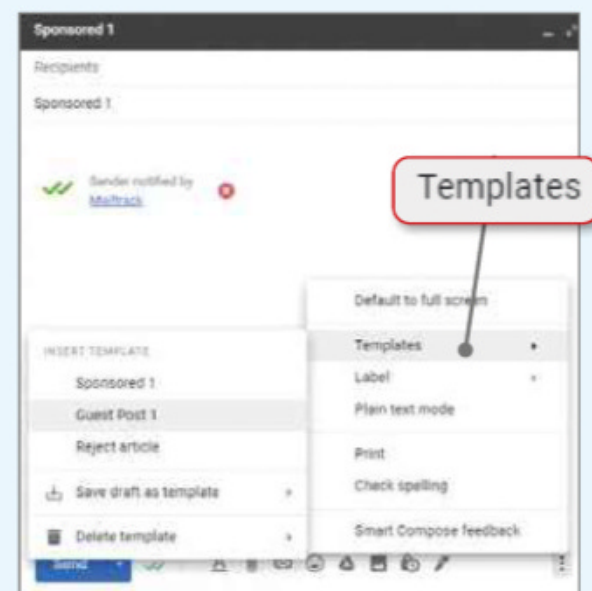
Create an email and it includes text saying the sender is notified by MailTrack. Open the Sent mailbox and you get a new double-tick column. Let the mouse hover over an email you sent with MailTrack (not the ones you sent before installing it), and it tells you if it has been read.

Use email templates

If you often write the same thing when responding to emails, you can save time and effort by preparing ready-made replies. This is common in businesses, which often have a template for replying to customer queries, but you might find personal uses, too.

Click the cog icon, choose 'See all settings', then Advanced, and enable Templates. Create a new email and write a standard response you often use when replying to emails. Click the three-dot icon in the bottom-right corner and select Templates, then 'Save draft as template'. The email content is saved and the draft can be deleted.

The next time you create an email or reply, click the three-dot menu and select Templates, then click the template you want to use from the menu to automatically insert it in your message, saving you time and effort.



Enable templates to save typing and send standard email responses

Add templates to Outlook

Templates can also be saved and applied in Outlook. Create a new email, click the three-dot button to the right of the Send button and select My Templates.

The My Templates panel opens and there are three ready-made options. Click the '+ Template' link to create your own. Enter a title for the template, then enter the text below. To format the text, select it and press Ctrl+B (bold), Ctrl+I (italic) and Ctrl+U (underline). To use a template in an email, just click the one you want in the My Templates panel.

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



WINDOWS

Install Windows updates safely and smoothly

Q I received an email with the message “Microsoft has Finally Fixed Most of the Bugs in Windows 10 Version 2004, there are only 4 remaining known issues...”. I’m not tech-savvy when it comes to computers, so I find the conflicting advice about installing Windows 10 version 2004 confusing.

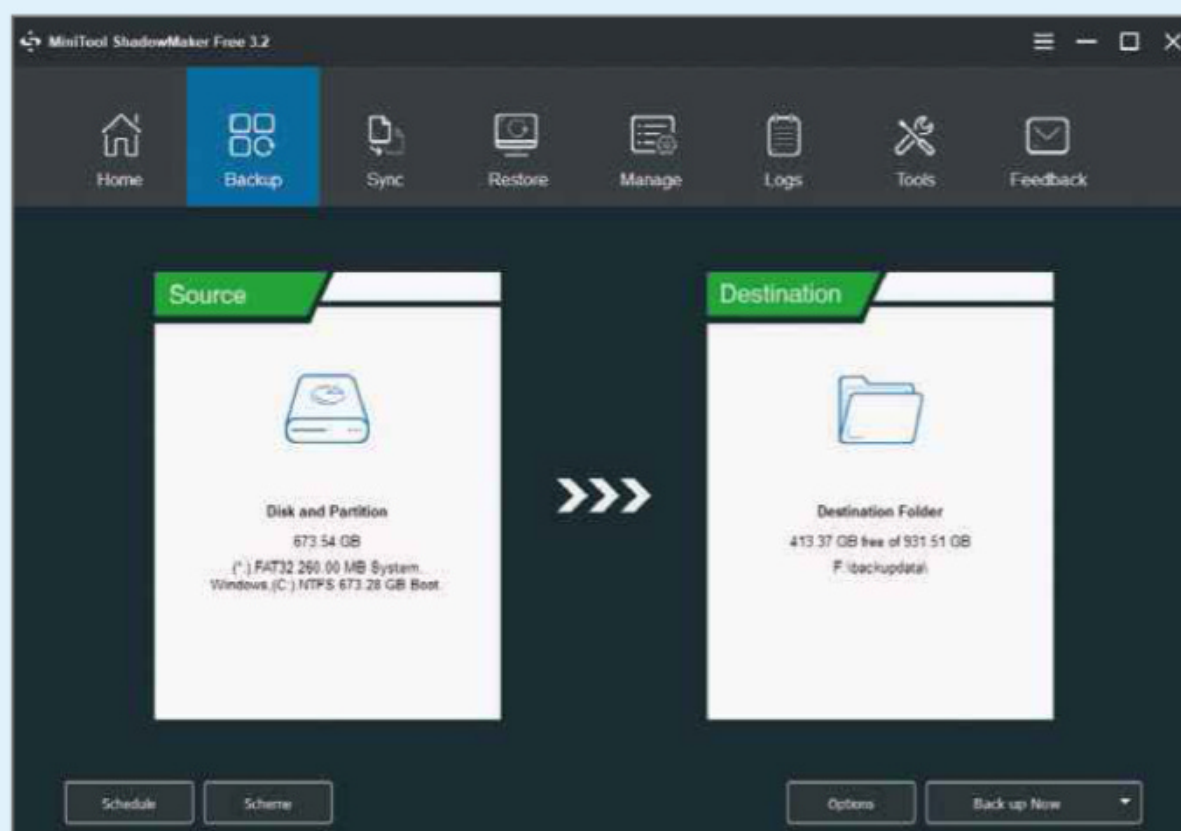
I am running Windows 10 version 1909 and now have the notification in Windows Update offering to download and install 2004 – all I have to do is click it to begin the process.

Is it safe to install or should I wait? If your recommendation is to wait, then how long do you think it will be before version 2004 is safe to install?

Mike, via email

A Smooth installations don’t make the news, so you won’t have heard about the millions of people who have experienced problem-free Windows 10 upgrades. It’s true that there can be risks to updating Windows, but they are minimal – in most cases, they just work.

However, it doesn’t hurt to take precautions. If you’re one of the few



Protect yourself from potential Windows update problems by making a backup

people who have problems updating Windows 10, just make sure you have a full system backup and a bootable recovery disc or USB memory drive so you can revert to the previous version.

The easiest way to do this is to get a USB hard drive and use free backup

software such as Todo Backup Free (bit.ly/todo509), Backup & Recovery Community Edition (bit.ly/para509) or ShadowMaker Free (bit.ly/shad509), all of which can undo any problems that Windows Update may cause.

HARDWARE

Print on both sides of a page

Q My Brother MFC-J6720DW printer should be able to print on one or both sides of the paper, but for some time, no matter what settings I use, it only prints on one side. I tried to use the Brother helpline, but I didn’t have a credit card to hand to pay the charge.

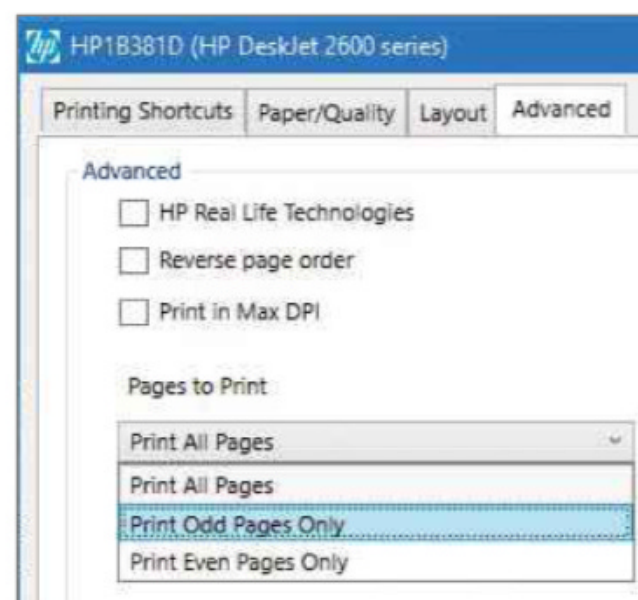
David Trigger, via email

A Make sure you have the most up-to-date software and drivers for your printer. Go to bit.ly/brother509 and click Downloads, then select your operating system and download the Full Driver & Software Package. You should

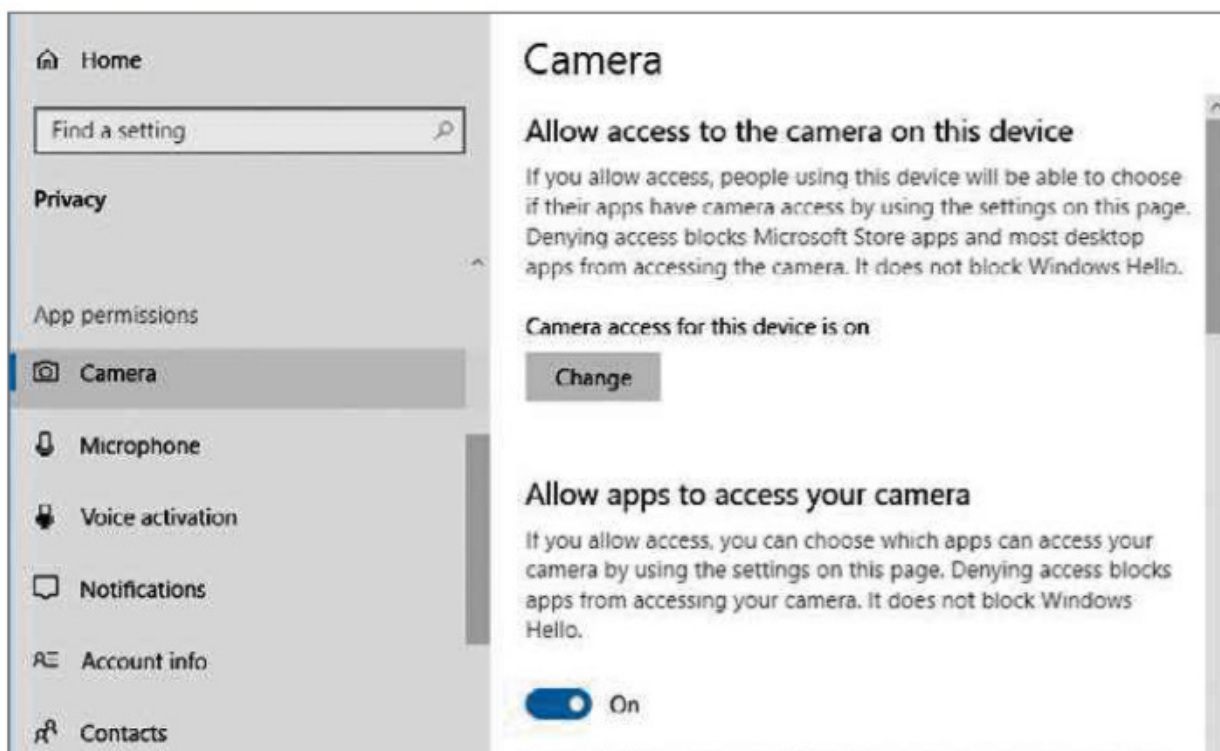
also apply the firmware update. This is the software that’s installed in the printer to fix any bugs.

Now try printing both sides of the paper again. Open an application such as a word processor (Windows WordPad will do) and add more than one page of text. Click File, Print and select the printer, if it’s not already selected.

Click the Preferences button to open the printing options in the printer driver. Among them is a 2-sided/Booklet drop-down list. Click it and select 2-sided. Click the 2-sided Settings button and you’ll see four options that let you set where the



Print both sides of the paper by first printing odd pages, then even ones on the other side



If your webcam isn't working, enable it in the camera and microphone permissions

binding is located – for example, a book needs a bigger margin along the paper that is glued into the spine. It should now print on both sides of the paper.

If it doesn't, print double-sided using the old manual trick. This works with any printer. Select Print in an application and see if there is an option to print odd or even pages. Print the odd pages, turn the paper over and put them back into the printer upside down. Then print the even pages on the back.

Some printers have the option to specify the pages to print as a list of numbers, so you could print 1,3,5,7, then 2,4,6,8 after inserting the pages upside-down in the printer. Other printers have a Duplex option that offers a degree of automation – it prints the odd pages, waits for you to insert the paper and then finishes by printing the even pages.

HARDWARE

Get a camera working with Skype

Q I have used Skype for years and not had any problems, but this week my webcam shows a black screen. It said another app was using the camera but, after tweaking the privacy settings, that disappeared. I have checked privacy settings and I believe they are fine.

I can use an external camera with Skype, just not my internal one. I have tried disabling, uninstalling and reinstalling the camera, but to no avail. It works with other programs but I checked anyway for updated drivers and changes to hardware in Device Manager, and couldn't see any problems.

I also checked the camera settings on Skype and have set everything to the default. Low-light background is on. I've repaired Skype, then reset it, uninstalled and reinstalled it. No change.

I removed Microsoft Teams, which I had downloaded, but never used, and also downloaded the Windows 10 2004 update, but that didn't help either.

Lastly, I ran the troubleshooter for apps, but it went on for so long that I cancelled it. The Skype version is 8.62.

I don't want to carry out a system restore, having downloaded the new update, but I've tried everything else I can, apart from going into the Registry, which I am not confident tweaking.

Stephanie Mayes, via email

A It sounds like you have already done this, but please check again. Open the Settings app and go to Privacy, then Camera. Click Change at the top and make sure that camera access is turned on. Also turn on 'Allow apps to access your camera' and, in the apps list below, make sure Skype is turned on. Repeat this for Microphone.

Open Skype, click the three-dot menu icon and open Settings. Select Audio & Video and choose the internal camera in the top-right corner. If you don't see a picture, close all other programs and try again.

MOBILE

Speed up an old iPad

Q When I bought my iPad Air, I was impressed by its speed, but it seems to be running a lot more slowly than it used to. I also used to get several days use from it, whereas I now have to charge it daily. Are there any speed fixes I can perform?

Greg Jones, via email

A The iPad operating system gets updated every year and even older models can run the latest version. However, new versions use more resources, such as processing power, storage and memory, and this makes the tablet run more slowly.

Over the years, apps have grown to many times their original size and, when launched, they use more storage, memory and processing power. Games put even more stress on the hardware than other apps, and some of the latest ones may run poorly on older iPads.

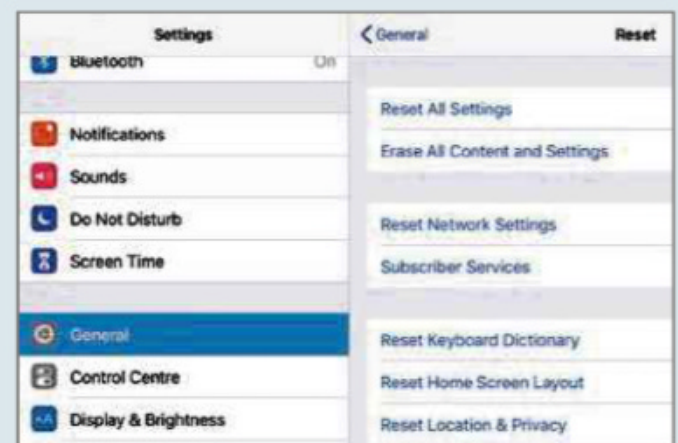
There isn't a lot you can do. Avoiding the latest – or, at least, the most demanding – games from the App Store helps. Games drain the battery faster than most apps and avoiding them boosts battery life.

Set streaming apps such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ and others to

use the lowest resolution to get the highest performance. Standard resolution streaming is lighter on resources than HD streaming.

A complete reset is the best way to speed up an old iPad. However, you should first make sure that everything is backed up, including photos and app data. Go to Settings, tap your Apple ID at the top, tap iCloud and make sure all the switches are on. Tap Manage Storage and you should see that Backups is backing up documents and data. When you're sure everything is safe, go to Settings, General, Reset, 'Erase All Content and Settings'.

Resetting clears everything but, with backups, you can log into your Apple ID and most things are restored. You will have to download your apps again, but any paid-for ones can be reinstalled for free. Make sure you've stored all your app login details in a password manager such as LastPass (lastpass.com).



Reset an iPad to speed it up, but make sure you back up everything first





NETWORKING

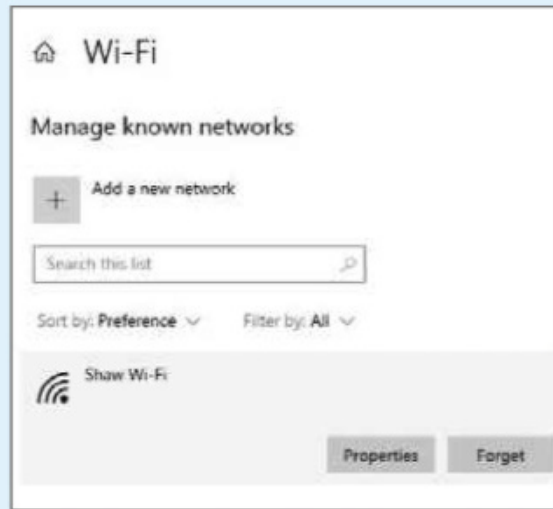
Get lost Wi-Fi back after an update

Q I successfully downloaded and installed the Windows 10 2004 update but I now have a problem with my Wi-Fi. The icon at the right-hand side of the taskbar is no longer the Wi-Fi icon, but a globe. When I click it, it says I am connected, but there is no internet access.

All the other devices connected to the router work fine (I am sending this email from my phone). I have restarted the computer several times, but it hasn't solved the problem.

Rachel Roberts, via email

A Your computer or router may have a corrupted setting. Open Settings and click 'Network & Internet', then select the Wi-Fi section and click 'Manage known networks'. Click your home Wi-Fi, then click



Reset your Wi-Fi by clicking it and choosing Forget

Forget. This clears the memory of your password, among other things, so make sure you know it.

Shut down the computer, turn off the router and count to 10. Now turn the router back on, switch on the computer and click the Wi-Fi icon. Select your network and enter the password to connect to it – hopefully, your Wi-Fi will be working again.

I have never been locked out and can always log in eventually, but occasionally end up having to login twice. Is there a fix for these problems?

K. Moore, via email

A When you start the computer and get to the lock and sign-in screens, Windows may be busy finishing setting something up, such as an update, so try waiting for 30 seconds.

You can allow for this delay, and avoid signing in twice, by tweaking the sign-in setting. Open the Settings app and click Accounts, then select 'Sign-in options' and scroll down to Privacy. Set the switch for 'Use my sign-in info to automatically finish setting up my device after an update or restart' to On.

The setting means it takes a little longer to get to the desktop, but it's more reliable.

HARDWARE

Safely eject USB drives

Q Can you settle an argument? I use a USB flash memory drive for carrying files and a USB hard drive for backups. I always thought that the advice with external drives was to right-click to eject them, or you might lose files. A friend says you don't need to do this and he has never had a problem. Do you need to eject them or not?

Ian, via email

A A drive doesn't need ejecting if it's not in use – you can just unplug it. However, you shouldn't unplug it if you are editing files or documents, or are in the middle of a backup. If in doubt, eject it first – it's the safest option.

Some security programs, such as antivirus software, have their own permission systems and can block access to certain features, including a built-in camera. All security programs are different, so we can't say where to look. You will just have to search the menus and buttons for privacy features.

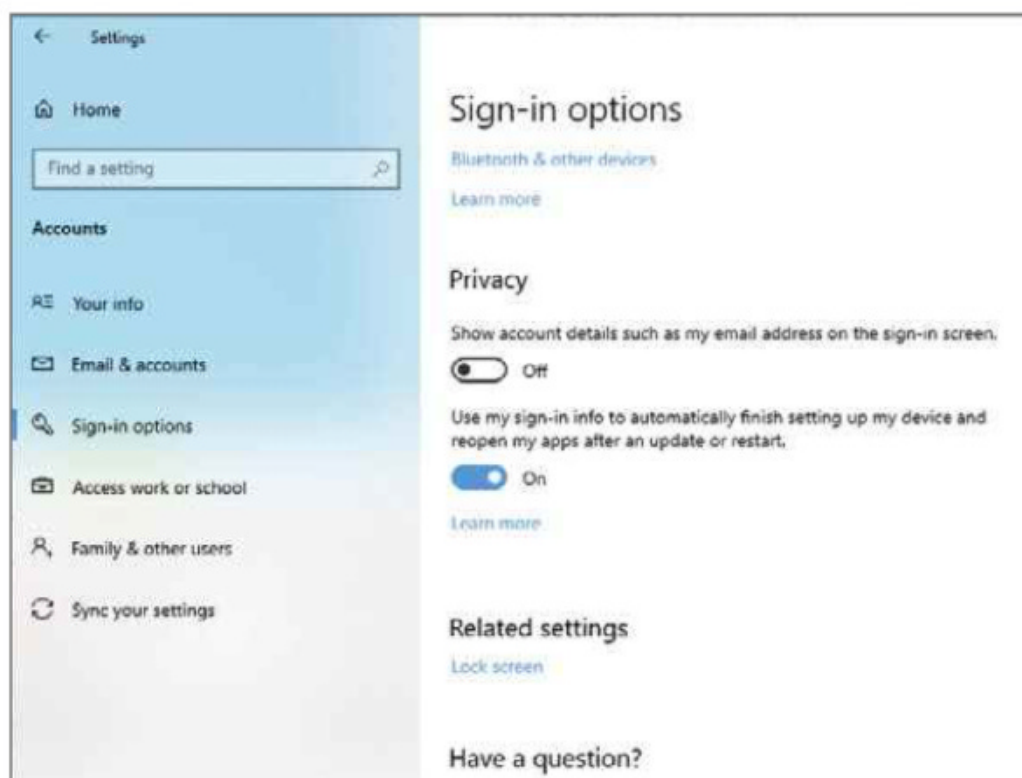
WINDOWS

Fix sign-in problems

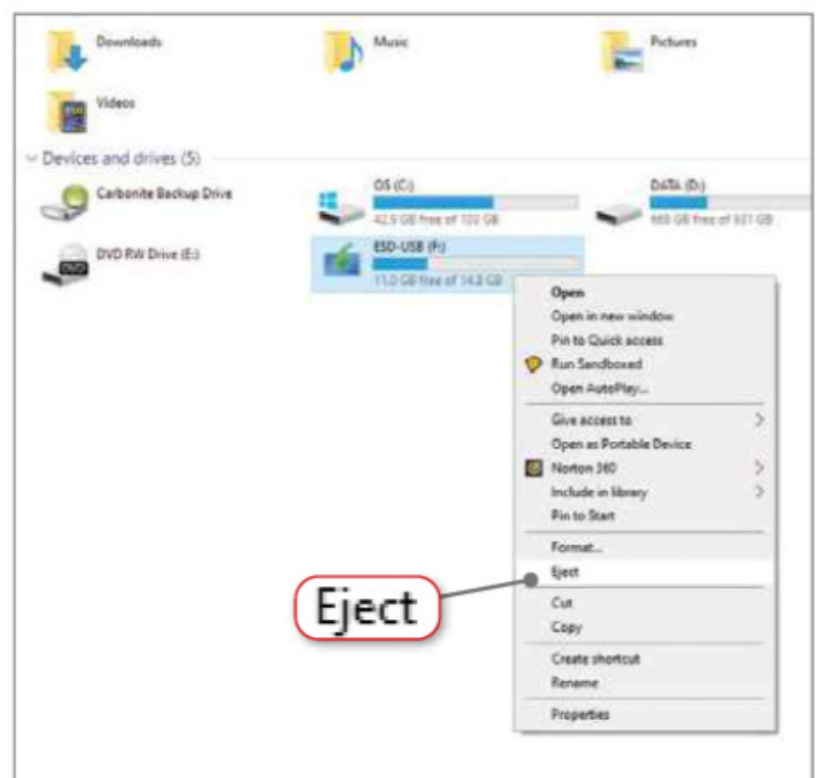
Q I am having some annoying problems signing into Windows 10

on my laptop. Sometimes, when I sign in after starting the computer, I get to the desktop and everything looks fine, but then a message appears saying Windows couldn't sign into my account. It tells me to log out and, after doing so, I can log in and everything is normal.

The other problem is the lock screen. I press a key and get the login box, but instead of being able to log in, it seems to freeze. Then, after a few seconds, it returns to the lock screen. I can then press a key and log in as normal.



Switch off the Privacy option to sign in automatically if you find you're having problems logging in



Better to be safe than sorry – eject your USB drives before unplugging to ensure you don't lose files



This fortnight, Roland has been uploading files from his PC to Google Drive to clear space on his hard drive



Readers' Helpdesk

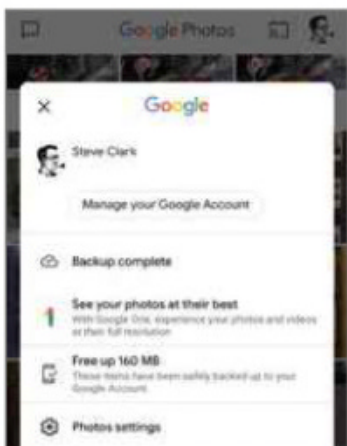
Can you help your fellow readers with their computer problems? Send your questions and answers to webuser@webuser.co.uk

MOBILE

Clear out old iPhone photos

Q I gave my daughter my old iPhone. She's obsessed with taking photos and now has about 50GB-worth of pictures, leaving enough storage space for Instagram and TikTok, but that's all. She even uninstalled WhatsApp to try to clear some space, but to no avail. I was under the impression that iCloud would store her photos, so she shouldn't need to keep copies on the device. However, I checked and the iPhone doesn't seem to be backing up. Have I got this wrong?

S George, via email



Back up your images to Google Photos to save storage space on your device

A First head into the iPhone's Settings and check that iCloud backups are switched on – I suspect this may reveal a clue: your daughter's cloud storage is full. Up to 5GB, iCloud is free, but beyond that, you need to pay a monthly fee (see costs at bit.ly/icloud509).

If she still has space, download Google Photos (bit.ly/google509), which offers free and unlimited high-quality (but not full resolution) photo storage. Set the app to back up images and, once completed, tap the Profile icon. Choose the 'Free up' option to delete photos that exist on both the phone and in Google's cloud storage.

Steve Clark, Features Writer

WINDOWS

Switch off the lock screen

Q Can I turn off the lock screen in Windows 10? While I appreciate all the lovely pictures, it feels like an unnecessary block to get to the login screen. I want to streamline that whole process. What can I do?

Ollie Pearson, via email

READERS RESPOND

HARDWARE

Fix computer power problems

A In Issue 505's Ask the Expert (bit.ly/webuser505), Patrick White asked for help with a Dell power issue: the On light is lit, but the computer is non-responsive. I found help on the Dell forum (www.dell.com/community).

This seems to be a known issue on several Dell models, and the cure is a hard reset. One member found this problem when using the computer connected to a Dell power unit, but not when on battery or with a third-party

A hard reset can fix a Dell laptop's power problems



power unit. Press the power button for several seconds to switch off, then the unit should work correctly (at least, mine did). Hope this helps.

Graham Watson, via email

Back Issues disc winner



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.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Q Recently, Facebook has begun displaying notifications for things that happened days, weeks and sometimes years ago. Why?

Bronia Barry, via email

HARDWARE

Q My laptop barely holds its charge, even after replacing the battery. It almost always needs to be connected to the mains. Any ideas how to fix this?

Tom Miller, via email

A To remove the lock screen, you'll need to edit the Registry. The usual caveats apply: it's a straightforward process but it's always best to create a backup before making any changes.

Once you've done that, open the Registry Editor and navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Policies\Microsoft\Windows

Look for the Personalization key. If you don't see it, create one by right-clicking and choosing New, then Key and naming it **Personalization** (note the US spelling). Right-click this key, then select New, then 'DWORD (32-bit) Value'. Rename this **NoLockScreen** and change the value to 1.

After a reboot, your lock screen should be gone, and you go straight to the login screen. To bring it back, modify the value

from 1 to 0, or delete the DWORD.

If you're the only one who has access to your computer, you can turn off sign-in entirely by going to Settings, Accounts, 'Sign-in options'. Under 'Require sign-in', change the drop-down setting to Never. Just be aware that this means your computer will be less secure.

Steve Clark, Features Writer



Use this Registry hack to ditch the attractive but unnecessary lock screen

Your Top Tips

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



TOP TIP

WINDOWS

Secure your PC with a second account

If you're the only person using your computer, you must be an administrator with the power to do anything. However, if malware infects your computer, it will also be granted admin powers. An administrator account is a security risk and you should create a second account that's a standard user account.

It's more work having two accounts on your home computer, and you might need to switch between them sometimes, but it's more secure and blocks or limits some types of malware.

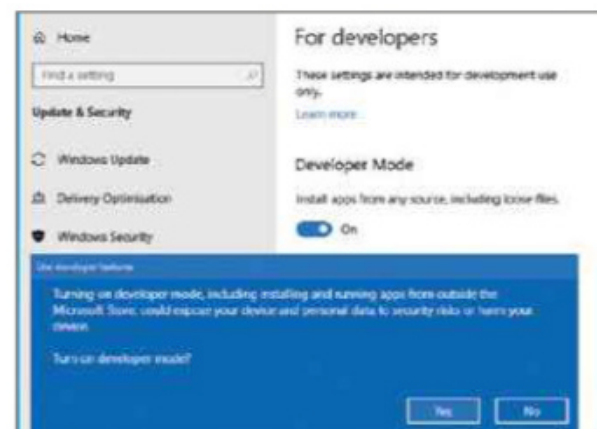
Open Windows 10's Settings and click Accounts. Select 'Family & other users' – not 'Email & accounts'. Under 'Other users', click 'Add someone else to this PC'. Microsoft tries to get you to sign in with a Microsoft account, email address or phone number, but if you look carefully, you can skip this. Click 'I don't have this person's sign in information'.



Create a standard user account – it's more secure than an admin account

In the next window, click 'Add a user without a Microsoft account', then enter a username and password for the account. You now have a local standard user account. Use this to browse the web, download and run software from the internet and so on. It doesn't make you immune from malware but it makes it harder for it to infect your main admin account.

Brian Forshaw, via email



Install apps from outside the Microsoft Store in Developer Mode

source and use them on your PC. Some people call it sideloading apps.

A word of caution, though. Microsoft checks apps in the store to make sure they are safe. Apps outside the store are not checked, so it's up to you and your antivirus software to determine if they are safe to install and use.

Neil Kingston, via email

SHOPPING

Monitor Amazon store prices

I've just read Stephen Preston's letter regarding highly variable prices on Amazon and wanted to recommend a website called Keepa (keepa.com). Once registered, you can search for the item you want, select it from the results and monitor the price. It lets you set limits on the price and get notifications when the item drops below your set limit, which works very well.

Within a couple of weeks, I obtained a couple of items at a price I was willing to



Use Keepa to track of prices on Amazon

pay, with significant savings. You can also see a history of item's price on Amazon and set limits based on the history. There is a limit of 10 items you can monitor.

Bill Adair, via email

WINDOWS

Install apps from anywhere

There are two types of software for Windows 10: store apps and the regular desktop programs that we've always had. Store apps include Microsoft apps such as Calendar, Mail, People, To-do, OneNote and Maps, and the many third-party apps in the Microsoft Store app.

I thought you couldn't install store apps outside the Microsoft Store but it turns out that you can, if you change a setting. Go to Settings, then Update & Security. Click 'For developers' on the left, then switch on Developer Mode. This is a new switch that appeared in the latest feature update. It lets you install apps from any

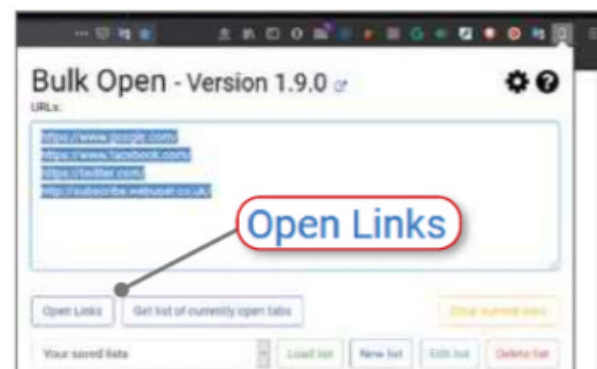
BROWSERS

Open multiple links at once

A good Chrome and Firefox extension I found recently, which I think other readers may appreciate, is Bulk URL Opener (bulkurl opener.com).

Interestingly, it's also available as a desktop app. Whenever you open the browser tool, it displays a list of currently open tabs, but you can also paste new links in the pane, then click Open Links.

If you've opened more tabs, you can refresh the list by selecting 'Get list of currently opened tabs'. Any addresses



Bulk URL Opener offers a quick way to open lots of URLs in one go



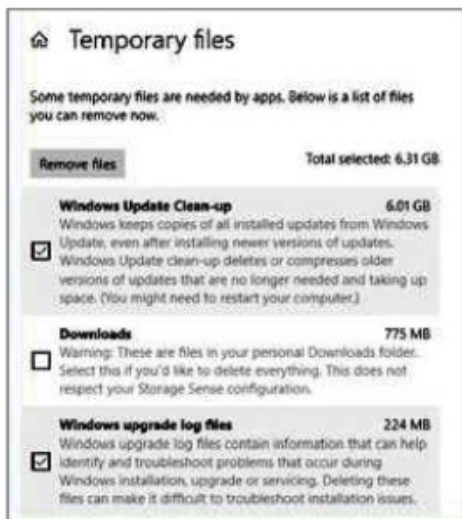
here can also be saved as editable lists for future retrieval.

P McKenna, via email

WINDOWS

Clean up after the latest Windows update

Following the big 2004 update to Windows 10 (mine finally arrived in August!), you may have a lot of junk files on your hard drive. To clean them up and free up space, go to the System section



Windows Update Clean-up can recover gigabytes of hard-drive space

of the Settings app and select Storage in the left-hand menu. No matter what 'Temporary files' says, click it and it finds more. All non-essential files are listed in a long list, with boxes to select the ones to clean.

Windows Update Cleanup was using a massive 6GB on my computer! This could be very important if you have a small hard drive – like some budget laptops that have 128GB SSDs.

Trevor, via email

WINDOWS

Find missing driver updates

You used to have to go to Device Manager to update drivers but the option has been moved by the recent Windows update. Open Settings, choose 'Update & Security' and click Windows Update on the left, then 'View optional updates'. This only appears if there are optional updates detected – if you can't see it, try clicking the 'Check for updates' button.

This takes you to a page listing all optional updates, including driver updates. Tick the boxes of any that you want to install.

James Walsh, via email

GENERAL PC

Manage all your mouse settings in one place

If you haven't done so already, you need to download WinMouse (bit.ly/winmouse509). It essentially places just about every mouse option in a single hub, from pointer speed to scroll settings. For the curious, there's also a Statistics tab, which lets you know how many times you've clicked the left button or how many miles you've scrolled.

My favourite feature is the highly customisable Screenwrap – when your



WinMouse unleashes the full potential of your cursor

cursor extends beyond the edge of the screen, it reappears on the other side. I've found this especially useful when using fiddly trackpads. It works on Windows XP and above and comes in both 32-bit and 64-bit portable versions.

Terry Pitts, via email

WINDOWS

Get Windows' new Start Menu early

Readers may have noticed that Microsoft's latest update for Windows (version 2004) introduced a preview of the new-look Start Menu that you can't actually use, unless you have the KB4568831 patch. First, open Windows' 'Check for Updates' and make sure you have build 19041.423. Next, open the Registry Editor and navigate to:

HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SYSTEM\CurrentControlSet\Control\FeatureManagement\Overrides\0\2093230218

In this folder, create a DWORD (32-Bit) Value called EnabledState. Set the value to 2. Make another DWORD (32-bit) named EnabledStateOptions with a value of 0. Restart your computer and your new Start Menu appears.

Ben Kelsey, via email

BROWSERS

Get better security with Firefox

For anyone that missed it (or needs a reason to move to Firefox), the latest update introduces a few changes. Privacy Protections has been renamed Protections Dashboard and now includes the option to sign up for data-breach alerts and check if your passwords remain secure. To reach the Protections Dashboard, go to `about:protections` or click the shield to the left of the address bar and select it from the menu.

SD Arkwright, via email



Is Firefox's Protections Dashboard enough to make you switch browsers?

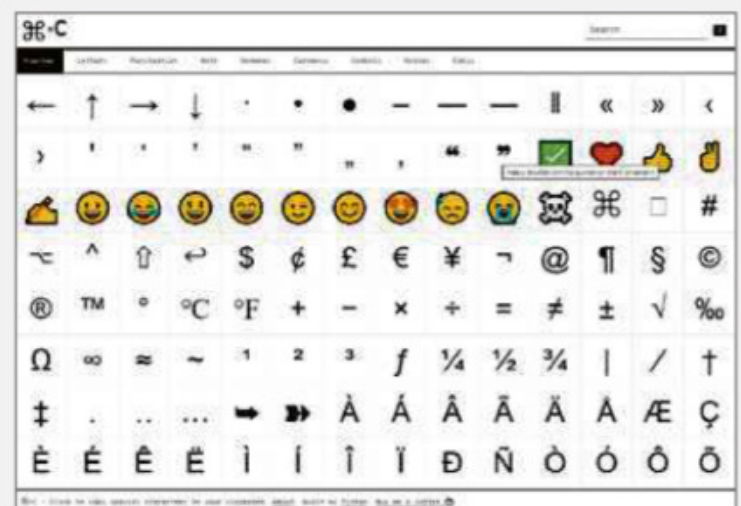
BLUNDER OF THE FORTNIGHT

PRODUCTIVITY

Copy special characters and emojis

Whenever I need a special character or emoji, I perform a Google search for a word that I know features the character, then copy it off Wikipedia or some such site. This can be quite time-consuming, though, when you need several different characters. I realise there are keyboard shortcuts for a lot of these, but I can never remember them.

To avoid this waste of time, I'd like to recommend CopyChar (copychar.cc), a website that hosts just about every special character you'll ever need. There's a categories section at the top of the page, and it's searchable, too.



Finally – no need to track down special characters using Google

Just click any character to copy it to your clipboard. You can then paste it wherever it's needed.

Wendy Manx, via email

Have you managed to fix a PC-related disaster?

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



Star Email

Samsung doesn't even stock its own tablets

Back
Issues
disc
winner



Being an Android fan, because Apple is too expensive and has a closed ecosystem, I read with interest your Group Test in Issue 507, in which the iPad 10.2in won your Gold Award.

I recently had a frustrating conversation with the Samsung shop regarding the new Galaxy Tab S7+. It's an impressive tablet with excellent specifications: 8GB of system memory, 128GB or 256GB of storage, and an SD card slot. My own Samsung Galaxy Tab S3 is a bit long in the tooth, so I was looking forward to the new release.

I really wanted to buy the S7+ 256GB version but, annoyingly, it isn't



available on the Samsung website. I phoned the Samsung shop to be told that it's not available at the moment, but I could buy the 128GB model and, if the

256GB version became available within 28 days, I could return my initial purchase for a refund and then buy the 256GB device. The shop didn't know when or even if the 256GB version will be available in the UK, so I'd have to pay £800 on the basis of being able to return it within 28 days.

It's very disappointing that a company competing with Apple doesn't have all models of its new tablet available in the UK – not even for preorder. Samsung UK has a lot to learn from Apple's sales and marketing teams approach to sales. Is it any wonder that Apple wins the awards?

Bill Adair, via email

A cheap phone is good enough for me

I couldn't agree more with Barry Collins – there's no point in splashing out hundreds of pounds on expensive smartphones ('High-end handsets can take a hike', Page 404, Issue 508). My Nokia 1.3, which I bought from Argos for under £80, has everything I need: web browsing, a good camera, email, Google Assistant – even phone calls! Plus the battery lasts all day on a single charge.

Why anyone would pay £1,000 for a phone is beyond me, especially as most of us have been stuck indoors for the last six months.

Mark Burnham, via email

How can I manage my money online?

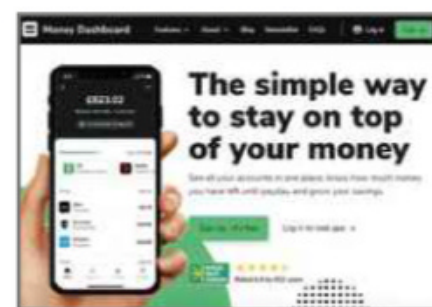
As someone who never gets paid the same amount, or on the same day, each month, I really have to keep a close eye on my finances. For years, that meant relying on Microsoft Money, so your article in Issue 507 about alternative personal-banking software was welcome. Personally, I've been using the wonderful Moneydance ([moneydance.com](https://www.moneydance.com)) for the last seven years and felt that it was the spiritual successor to Microsoft Money!

Unfortunately, my ageing Windows laptop is slowly dying, and I've already made the decision that my next machine will be a Chromebook, so I've been looking for a web-based alternative rather than a downloadable program. I've been testing Money Dashboard (www.moneydashboard.com) for the last month, but it just doesn't have the functionality that I need, and I've found it to be buggy (it triplicated all my direct debits, for example!).

I was hopeful that, given that your magazine is called *Web User*, you would have included some web-based finance

software in your list. If you or your readers have any recommendations, they would be very welcome!

*John Nichol,
Edinburgh*



Discrimination against deaf web users

I have recently received numerous emails about buying things online, asking me to confirm my mobile phone number or to download an app. I have been deaf

Quiz Answers: Issue 508

1 *Fiddler on the Roof*

2 *The Rocky Horror Show*

3 *Starlight Express*

4 *The Phantom of the Opera*

5 *Blood Brothers*

6 *School of Rock*



WINNER!

Well done to Chris Webb who wins a Web User Back Issues Disc



WAYBACK MACHINE

2006



for most of my life and cannot use a mobile phone or even a landline. I use a laptop with a large keyboard running Windows 10, and any apps referenced in these emails do not work with this operating system. Many organisations also demand a telephone number, even when I email them, so they can contact me via a method I am unable to use. Why am I being discriminated against because I cannot hear and cannot use a fiddly mobile phone keyboard? There should be equal access for everyone by any means possible.

Alan Pull via email

Keep Amazon off our high streets

Amazon has done enough damage to our high streets without opening its own 'bricks-and-mortar' stores (What's the Rumour, Issue 508). Even before the coronavirus lockdown, lots of once-popular shops were making redundancies and closing down because of the detrimental effect that Amazon had on their business.

I'm well aware of the arguments in favour of Amazon – that it's convenient for customers who are unable to leave the house, that it lets third-party retailers sell through its marketplace and, of course, that it's (usually) cheaper than elsewhere. But I find its ambition to be the *only* store that people need is not only greedy and anti-competitive, but rather terrifying, especially when you consider all the data it collects about customers – what they buy, what they look at and even what they say to their Echo speakers.

Jeff Bezos surely has enough money to allow other shops room in the retail market alongside Amazon. If I see an Amazon store in my town centre, I'll give it a wide berth and continue to support local, independent outlets.

Alan Beaumont, via email



Credit: VDB Photos / Shutterstock.com

What you say...

WHICH APP DO YOU USE TO LISTEN TO THE RADIO ON YOUR PHONE (see page 50)?

I use Radioplayer. Virtually every radio station you can think of is available on this app.

Brian Brown

I mainly listen to my own music or Spotify on my phone. When I want a change, I listen to Absolute Radio, using its app for Android.

Phil Ówen

The Absolute Radio app, because my portable DAB is very old and can't get their 80s station!

Caroline Chapman

Shoutcast, which has more than 89,000 live radio stations, and Radio.net which has over 10 million live radio stations and podcasts.

Kevin Gadget Man Benton

I really dig the BBC Sounds app. It's easy to use and has all the main national and local radio stations, as well as podcasts.

Paul Giddings

The best app is RadioGarden (radio.garden) – live radio from around the world and, if you're a radio station, you can add yours for free.

Colin Leonard

Radio apps are fine when you're on Wi-Fi, but I wouldn't use them otherwise because they eat into your mobile data.

Mark From-Central

I don't listen to the radio on my phone. It's for making calls and sending texts.

Dean Stockton

My phone has an FM radio.

Athol A Witter

SUPPORT FOR INTERNET EXPLORER ENDS IN 2021. WHEN DID YOU LAST USE IT?

Too far back to remember, it must be 20 years at least. I'm a Firefox user.

Geoffrey Boow

I last used it in early 2005. Firefox showed me what a browser could really be and I have never for a second considered using IE (or its successor, Edge) again.

Rich Grove

I have to use Internet Explorer all the time. On our office PCs, it is set as the default browser, so any time I click a link from an email, it opens in IE.

Nat Grove

I've never been a fan of IE. I first went online in 1996, when Netscape was the browser of choice, then I switched to Firefox, which is from the same 'stable', and I still use it. However, I will say that the new Edge is very good.

John Hewett

I suppose we'll still have to account for Internet Explorer when it comes to CSS? Someone, somewhere will always cling to this awful browser.

Small Biz Geek @SmallBizGeekUK

IS FACEBOOK MERGING INSTAGRAM AND MESSENGER A GOOD IDEA (see page 6)?

Seems like another way for Facebook to take over our lives. If people want to use Instagram to get away from Messenger chats, this change will now invade their privacy.

Keith Chard

Instagram is for photos; Messenger is for messages. Why can't Mark Zuckerberg understand that?

Sue Hutchings

Of all the things to worry about at the moment, this is way down the scale.

Colin Cresswell

No.

Iain Kenworthy-Neale

! Page 404



The home-working boom makes the £100bn rail plan ridiculous, writes **Barry Collins**

Give full-fibre broadband the green light

It is desperately hard – and desperately foolish – to make predictions about how the world will look after the coronavirus pandemic has passed. One thing I'm pretty confident we can be sure of, though, is that offices will never be the same again.

It's taken a global pandemic for many companies to discover that remote working isn't an excuse to sit at home watching *Cash In The Attic* while pondering whether you can die from an overdose of cheesy Wotsits. Instead, big corporations are falling over themselves to extend home working well into 2021, despite the government's attempts to cajole companies into reopening their offices at the first possible opportunity. Suddenly those glass-fronted, hugely expensive, air-conditioned atriums in the big cities are looking about as smart an investment as a round-the-world cruise. Starting in Florida.

At the same time, I read that two enormous tunnelling machines are starting to bore away under the Chilterns, as the HS2 rail project gets underway there. You know, the £100 billion-plus project that will connect those in the north to all the offices in London that nobody is working in anymore.

HS2 – a project not scheduled for completion until 2040 – was already derided as a 20th-Century solution to 21st-Century problems before the virus kicked off. Now it makes as much sense as reopening the coal mines.

If the government wants to build a high-speed network that's going to make a difference to tomorrow's workforce, it should start with

broadband, not trains. It would cost a fraction of the HS2 bill to connect every home and business in the country to a full-fibre broadband network than it would to complete that whitest of elephants. The National Infrastructure Commission puts the cost at around £33bn – a third of the cost of the trains.

“HS2 was already derided as a 20th-Century solution to 21st-Century problems before the virus kicked off”

“Hang on a minute,” chirps up Digital Minister Matt Warman from the front benches. The government already has a scheme to help pay for full fibre to rural areas and

£70m is still burning a hole in his suit pockets, waiting to be claimed. Unfortunately, that Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme is so full of ifs, buts and maybes that it's little wonder most of the money is still stashed in the Treasury's coffers, not least because of the requirement that residents wanting to apply for the funding first have to form a little group with their neighbours. The masterminds behind this project seems to think broadband deployment is comparable to a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

The government should nationalise Openreach and roll out full fibre to almost every doorstep in time for the next election, when it's likely to need all the votes it can get. Instead, it's clinging to a never-neverland project that won't be finished until Boris Johnson is 76 and safely tucked up in his mansion in the Chilterns, complaining about the rumbling noise from the high-speed trains that are ferrying half a dozen passengers from Manchester Piccadilly to Euston.

Home working is here to stay, which means the luxury trains will have to go.



Illustration: Andrew Torrens

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